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BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS
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CRIME LABS RECEIVED AN ESTIMATED 2.7 MILLION CASES IN 2005

WASHINGTON — Federal, state, and local forensic crime labs received evidence from an estimated 2.7 million criminal investigations during 2005, according to a report by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). These cases included requests for a variety of forensic services, such as DNA analysis, controlled substance identification, and fingerprint examination.

An estimated 359,000 cases were backlogged (or not completed within 30 days) at the end of 2005— a 24 percent increase from the estimated 287,000 cases backlogged at yearend 2002.

Publicly funded crime labs employed an estimated total of 12,000 full-time personnel in 2005. Forensic crime analysts made up about 60 percent of all crime laboratory employees. About half of laboratories reported outsourcing some requests for forensic services to private laboratories in 2005. The estimated combined annual budget for all publicly funded laboratories in 2005 exceeded \$1 billion.

A typical lab conducted on average six different forensic functions in 2005. Most labs—about 9 in 10—performed controlled substance identification. About 6 in 10 performed firearms and toolmarks analysis, biology screening, latent print analysis, or trace evidence examination. About half of forensic crime labs performed DNA or toxicology analysis.

DNA analyses were more time consuming and complex than other forensic services, such as controlled substance identification. A typical DNA analyst completed an average of 77 requests in 2005. By comparison, the average controlled substance examiner completed about 10 times the number of requests that year (752).

The 2005 Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories was a follow-up to the first BJS national census of publicly operated crime labs in 2002. In 2005 about 80 percent of public forensic crime labs were accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board. State-operated labs accounted for more than half of all forensic crime laboratories in 2005.

(MORE)

The BJS study found that about 80 percent of forensic requests backlogged from 2004 and new requests received in 2005 were completed by the end of 2005. The remaining 20 percent were backlogged at yearend. To achieve a 30-day turnaround on all 2005 requests, the different forensic disciplines would have needed varying increases in the number full-time examiners performing that work – ranging from an estimated 73 percent increase in DNA analysts to a 6 percent increase in examiners conducting toxicology analysis.

During 2005, the backlog grew for a range of commonly performed services. Labs performing controlled substance identification began 2005 with a median backlog of 44 such requests, which increased to 107 at yearend. A typical lab performing DNA testing began 2005 with 86 backlogged requests for DNA analysis and finished the year with a backlog of 152 requests.

Information was collected from 351 of the nearly 400 publicly funded federal, state and local crime labs operating in 2005.

The report, *Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories, 2005*, (NCJ 222181), was written by BJS statistician Matthew R. Durose. Following publication, the report can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cpffcl05.htm>.

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has five component bureaus: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime. Additionally, OJP has two program offices: the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy, and the Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking (SMART) Office. More information can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>.

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