In fiscal year 2015, there were 682 government benefits fraud offenders, who accounted for 1.1% of all offenders sentenced under the guidelines. The number of government benefits fraud offenders increased by 1.9% from fiscal years 2013 to 2015.

**Offender and Offense Characteristics**

- In fiscal year 2015, two-thirds of government benefits fraud offenders were male (66.0%).
- Over one-third were White (35.7%) followed by Black (33.5%), Hispanic (24.5%), and Other Races (6.3%).
- The average age of these offenders at sentencing was 43 years.
- Over three-quarters of government benefits fraud offenders were United States citizens (78.5%).
- The majority of government benefits fraud offenders had little or no prior criminal history (73.5% of these offenders were assigned to Criminal History Category I).
- The median loss for these offenses was $64,857.
  - 40.6% of government benefits fraud offenses involved loss amounts of $30,000 or less.
  - 16.0% of government benefits fraud offenses involved loss amounts greater than $1 million.
- Sentences for government benefits fraud offenders were increased for:
  - Use of sophisticated means to execute or conceal the offense (13.6%).
  - Use of an unauthorized means of identification (15.7%).
  - Leadership or supervisory role in the offense (8.8%).
  - Abusing a public position of trust or using a special skill (4.8%).
  - Obstructing or impeding the administration of justice (2.6%).
- Sentences for government benefits fraud offenders were decreased for:
  - Minor or minimal participation in the offense (6.9%).

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1 Theft, property destruction, and fraud offenses include cases with complete guideline application information in which the offender was sentenced under §2B1.1 (Larceny, Embezzlement, and Other Forms of Theft; Offenses Involving Stolen Property; Property Damage or Destruction; Fraud and Deceit; Forgery; Offenses Involving Altered or Counterfeit Instruments Other than Counterfeit Bearer Obligations of the United States) using a Guidelines Manual in effect on November 1, 2001 or later. See www.ussc.gov/research/quick-facts for the Quick Facts on §2B1.1 offenders.

2 Government benefits fraud includes cases where the offense conduct as described in the Presentence Report involved a false claim to the federal or state government involving assistance programs from federal agencies.
Punishment

- The majority of government benefits fraud offenders were sentenced to imprisonment (61.9%).
- The average sentence length for government benefits fraud offenders was 15 months.

Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range

- During the past three years, the rate of within range sentences for government benefits fraud offenders has decreased from 54.4% in fiscal year 2013 to 48.4% in fiscal year 2015.
- In each of the past three years, approximately 13 to 17 percent of government benefits fraud offenders received a sentence below the applicable guideline range because the government sponsored the below range sentence.
  - Substantial assistance departures were granted in approximately seven to nine percent of government benefits fraud cases in each of the past three years.
    - These offenders received an average reduction of 70.3% in their sentence during the three year time period.
  - Other government sponsored departures were granted in approximately five to eight percent of government benefits fraud cases in each of the past three years.
    - These offenders received an average reduction of 70.3% in their sentence during the three year time period.

- The rate of non-government sponsored below range sentences increased slightly during the past three years from 30.8% of government benefits fraud cases in fiscal year 2013 to 35.8% in fiscal year 2015.
  - These offenders received an average reduction of 63.8% in their sentence during the three year time period.

- Both the average sentence and the average guideline minimum for government benefits fraud offenders increased during the past three years.
  - The average sentence imposed increased from 11 months to 15 months during that time period.
  - The average guideline minimum increased from 15 months to 22 months during that time period.