

SPECIAL EDITION

QuickFacts



For an in-depth analysis of this topic, visit www.ussc.gov.

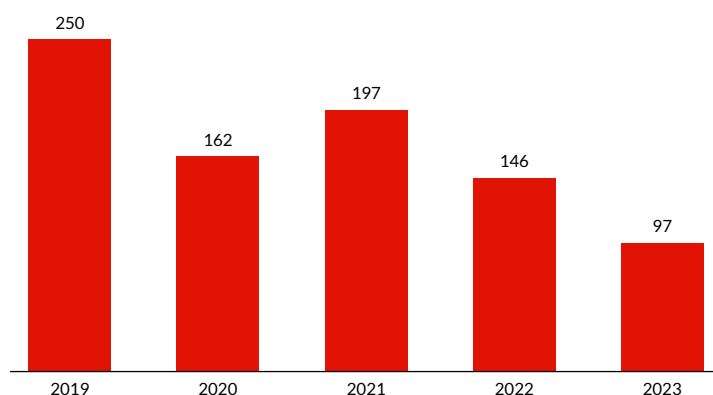
Prison Contraband

Items that can pose a risk to the prison environment or threaten the security of the facility. This can include illegal items that can cause harm (e.g., drugs and weapons) or items that are prohibited within the secure area of the facility (e.g., cell phones). Individuals convicted in the federal system of providing or possessing contraband in prison are sentenced under §2P1.2 of the Guidelines Manual.

Overview

Over a five-year study period, a total of 852 individuals were sentenced under §2P1.2.¹

Number of Prison Contraband Offenses Over Time



Individuals sentenced for contraband offenses were incarcerated at the time of the offense in:

- 99.5% of weapon contraband cases;
- 90.4% of cell phone contraband cases; and,
- 70.9% of drug contraband cases.

Contraband Types²

The most common types of contraband were:

- cell phones (47.8%);
- drugs (34.7%); and,
- weapons (24.9%).
- Weapons were most often in the form of shanks (89.2%) or blades (7.5%).

Facility Types

Contraband was most often found in low- and medium-security Federal Bureau of Prisons' (FBOP) facilities.

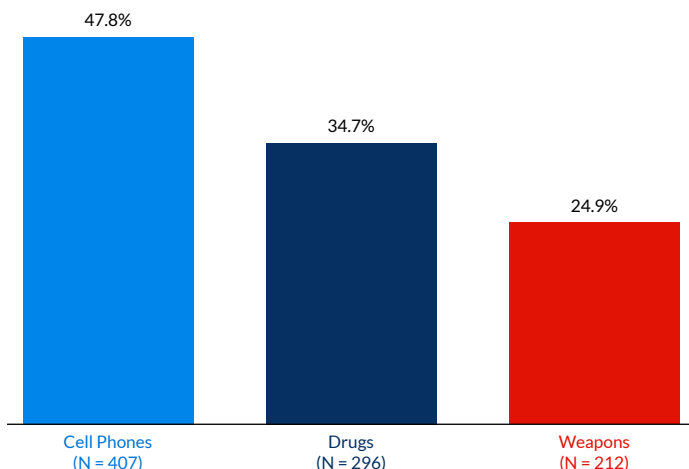
- 83.8% of cell phones;
- 59.3% of drugs;
- 53.3% of weapons.

One-quarter of weapon contraband (25.9%) was found in high-security FBOP facilities.

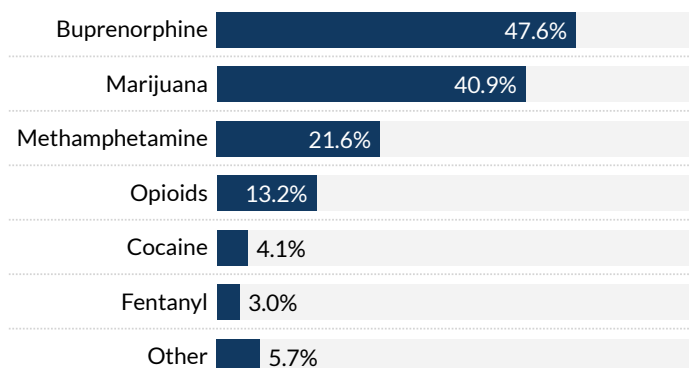
Contraband was most often found within the secure areas of the facility rather than in the visitation room or prison lobby:

- 99.5% of weapons;
- 89.3% of cell phones;
- 67.6% of drugs.

Contraband Types



Drug Contraband Types





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Prison Contraband
Fiscal Years 2019-2023

Smuggling Conduct

Weapons were almost always homemade within the prison (97.4%).

Cell phones were most often smuggled in by correctional officers and other prison employees (38.6%).

Drugs were most often smuggled in through visitation (38.3%) and the mail (23.3%).

Discovery Methods

Surveillance tools (e.g., video surveillance, call monitoring, and body scanners) were important tools for detecting drugs (27.6%) and cell phones (21.4%).

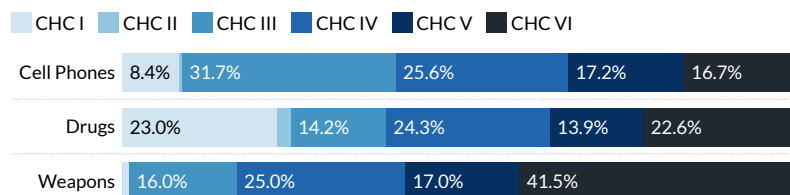
- When surveillance was used to discover contraband, video surveillance was the most used tool for all types (51.3%).

Over half (53.0%) of weapons were discovered through a physical search of the person's body.

Criminal History

Individuals sentenced for weapon contraband had higher criminal history scores, on average, than individuals sentenced for other contraband types.

- 41.5% of individuals sentenced for weapons were assigned to the highest Criminal History Category (CHC VI).
- 23.0% of individuals sentenced for drugs had little or no prior criminal history (CHC I).



Punishment

The average sentence for individuals sentenced for prison contraband was 11 months.

- Individuals with weapons received the highest average sentence of 20 months.
- Individuals with drugs received an average of 16 months.
- Individuals with cell phones received an average of 5 months.

Smuggling Method by Contraband Type

Method	Cell Phones	Drugs	Weapons
Homemade	5.7%	6.3%	97.4%
Visitation	10.0%	38.3%	0.0%
Mail	7.1%	23.3%	0.5%
Correctional Officer/ Prison Employee	38.6%	18.4%	0.0%
Possess at Booking	2.9%	7.8%	1.0%
Over/Through Prison Fence	21.4%	4.4%	0.5%
Drone	7.1%	1.0%	0.0%
Conspiracy	4.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Other	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%

Individual Characteristics by Contraband Type

	Cell Phones	Drugs	Weapons
<i>Race</i>			
White	20.9%	27.8%	15.2%
Black	58.9%	43.4%	49.3%
Hispanic	19.1%	26.4%	31.8%
Other	1.0%	2.4%	3.8%
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	96.1%	75.0%	100.0%
Female	3.9%	25.0%	0.0%
<i>Citizenship</i>			
U.S. Citizen	93.3%	95.9%	92.9%
Non-U.S. Citizen	6.7%	4.1%	7.1%
<i>Average Age</i>	39 Years Old	37 Years Old	34 Years Old

Sentence Relative to the Guideline Range by Contraband Type

	Cell Phones	Drugs	Weapons
Within Range	80.4%	53.4%	45.7%
Below Range	16.0%	41.4%	50.0%
Above Range	3.6%	5.2%	4.3%

¹ The information in this publication was collected as part of a research project on the application of §2P1.2 "Providing or Possessing Contraband in Prison" of the *Guidelines Manual* in cases reported to the Commission for fiscal years 2019 through 2023. Staff examined various aspects of the case, including the type of contraband possessed, how the contraband was smuggled into the facility, where and how the contraband was discovered, and the individual who was sentenced for the contraband offense.

² Some individuals possessed more than one type of contraband. While these three contraband types represent the primary and most serious contraband found in these cases, individuals possessed other forms of contraband including alcohol, tobacco, electronic charging equipment and accessories, tools, and other items prohibited in a Bureau of Prisons Facility. Additionally, individuals who possessed drug or weapon contraband may have possessed more than one type of drug or weapon.

SOURCE: U.S. Sentencing Commission 2019 through 2023 Prison Contraband Datafiles, USSCPC19-USSCPC23.