



Highlights of [GAO-03-619T](#), testimony before the Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Natural Resources and Regulatory Affairs, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires federal agencies to minimize the paperwork burden they impose on the public. The act also requires agencies to obtain approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) before collecting covered information. At the Subcommittee's request, GAO examined changes during the past fiscal year in federal agencies' paperwork burden estimates and their causes, focusing on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). GAO also examined changes in the number of violations of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations. However, because IRS accounts for most federal paperwork and for most of the increase in the governmentwide estimate, OMB could focus more of its burden reduction efforts on that agency. Also, OMB and the agencies could do more to reduce violations. For example, OMB could promote the use of "best practices" used in agencies with good compliance records.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-619T.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Victor Rezendes at (202) 512-6806 or rezendesv@gao.gov.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

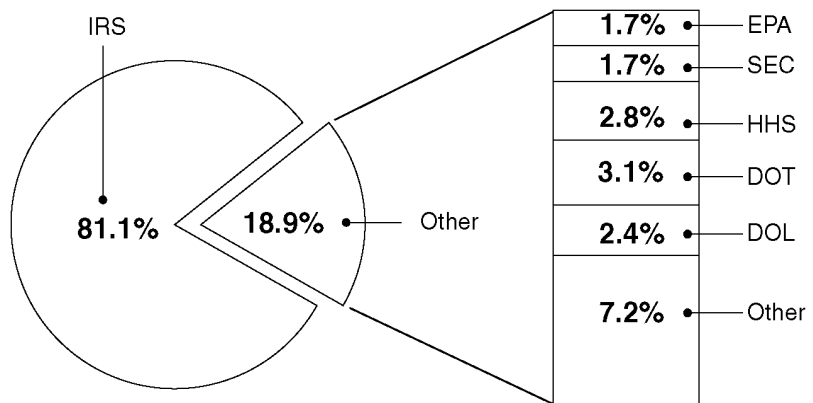
Record Increase in Agencies' Burden Estimates

What GAO Found

As of September 30, 2002, federal agencies estimated that there was about 8.2 billion "burden hours" of paperwork governmentwide. IRS accounted for about 6.7 billion burden hours (81 percent) of this estimate. The federal paperwork estimate increased by about 570 million burden hours during fiscal year 2002—nearly double the previous record increase for a 1-year period. IRS and the Department of Transportation (DOT) accounted for almost 90 percent of the increase. IRS increased its paperwork estimate by about 330 million burden hours during fiscal year 2002, which the agency said was primarily caused by growth in the number of taxpayers using Form 1040. DOT's burden estimate rose by about 165 million burden hours, an increase that the department said was almost entirely attributable to the reintroduction and reestimation of one information collection.

Federal agencies identified 244 violations of the PRA during fiscal year 2002—a significant reduction from the number of violations reported during the previous fiscal year. OMB deserves a great deal of credit for this decrease in violations. However, 244 violations of the law during a single fiscal year are still troubling and should not be tolerated. Also, although some longstanding violations have been resolved, others remained open at the end of the fiscal year and, in some cases, had been open for 2 years or more. OMB has not taken some of the actions that we previously recommended to improve compliance with PRA.

IRS Accounted for More than 80 Percent of the Estimated 8.2 Billion Hours of Federal Paperwork Burden as of September 30, 2002)



Source: OMB and the Department of the Treasury.