OFAC Enforcement Action Data Set (v3.0)

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Introduction:

All OFAC enforcement action data from 2003-2022 is publicly available from the U.S. Department of Treasury. OFAC publishes enforcement actions and findings of violation as they are released here:

https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/civil-penalties-and-enforcement-information[1]

The data set captures all enforcement actions (including finding of violations) from 2003 to December 31, 2022. OFAC does not provide data before 2003. OFAC indicated after a FOIA request in 2019 that they do not retain records before 2003.[2]

Updates:

The data set an update of the original data set used in Early and Preble (2020). It contains enforcement actions since 2019 and includes some additional variables and corrections:

1. The original data set included enforcement actions through 2019, although the 2020 paper's analysis stopped in 2018 (our piece in *The Washington Quarterly* extended the analysis through almost all of 2019). Version 2.0 has been updated to carry enforcement actions through 27 November 2021. Version 3.0 has been updated to carry enforcement actions through 30 December 2022.

2. A new variable, **FOV**, has been added to the data set with the penalty amount coded as missing (.). **FOV** stands for "Findings of Violation."
    a. Findings of violation (**FOV**) are no longer coded with penalties of $0.00 and are now left as missing values, which will change the average penalties across administrations somewhat.
    b. OFAC is inconsistent in its discussion of FOVs so we no longer capture whether the indicators for the FOV were the result of voluntary disclosures or not.

[1] Please note that OFAC is updating its web site as of 22 March 2023, so the URL may change as the web site is updated and moved to a potentially new URL.
[2] In a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request conducted by the authors in 2017, OFAC's public affairs office acknowledged that records prior to 2003 had not been retained.

3. Three enforcement actions in January 2017 *before* the Trump Administration took office were incorrectly coded as being Trump Administration enforcement actions; they have been recoded and associated with the Obama Administration:
    a. Aban Offshore Limited ($17,500)
    b. Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy Foundation and 1 unnamed individual ($10,000)
    c. TD Bank ($516,105).

4. We now code whether a violation was incurred due to a violation of OFAC's Reporting Procedures and Penalties Regulations (RPPR); these are most common in findings of violation (FOV).

5. We now code whether an enforcement action is the result of violations of sanctions against Venezuela (**Venezuela21)**.

6. The original penalty amounts in real 2018 USD for the *Security Studies* article are included but stop in 2018. Additional penalty values in 2021 and 2022 USD are included in the data set.

7. Some variable names have been updated but the data remain unchanged; they are indicated in the codebook below.

Citations:

Please cite the following if using v3.0 of the data set:

Early, Bryan R., and Keith A. Preble. "Going Fishing versus Hunting Whales: Explaining Changes in How the US Enforces Economic Sanctions." *Security Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020): 231–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2020.1722850.

If performing replication or using the *Security Studies* version of the data set (2003-2018), please use the data set on Harvard Dataverse and cite Early and Preble 2020 above:
https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/UD3FFR

Variables:

Date: Day-Month-Year according to the date of the enforcement action. Please note that sometimes OFAC publishes two dates: the date the item was published online and the date that the entity/individual was informed of the decision. If checking enforcement actions published on Treasury's web site, please keep this in mind.

Year: Four-digit year when enforcement action occurred.

Updated in v3.0: **Entity_Name:** Name of the company. Individuals are never named in OFAC enforcement actions. The number of individuals cited in a given enforcement action are indicated in this field. For example, a value of "12" indicates that 12 individuals were cited. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

EntityType: Dichotomous variable. 1 = Entities (entities are firms), 0 = Individuals and other non-entities.

Updated in v3.0: **Entity_Individual:** String, indicating whether enforcement action targets entities, individuals, or both simultaneously. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

US_State: State where entity or individual (when known) is domiciled.

Updated in v3.0: **Country_Name:** Country in the international system where entity (or individual, when known) is domiciled. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

COWcode: COW code for country. Countries that no longer exist, are not considered countries, or enforcement action includes two or more countries are coded as 999; please see Notes field for more information when coded "999."

Updated in v3.0: **Financial_Services:** String variable; coded "Yes" if a financial services entity or "No" if not. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

FinServ: Dichotomous variable; coded "1" if entity is in the financial services sector; "0" if not.

PSAmt: This is the penalty amount in **current USD** for the enforcement action.

Updated in v3.0: **Voluntary_Disclosure:** String variable; Coded "Yes" if enforcement action is voluntarily disclosed, "No" if not voluntarily disclosed or "N/A" if unknown/not applicable. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

VoluntDisc: Dichotomous variable; coded "1" if enforcement action is voluntarily disclosed, "0" if not voluntarily disclosed, or "9" if not applicable either because it is a finding of violation or enforcement action does not indicate.

- *We do not track voluntary disclosure details for findings of violation as OFAC is not consistent. Findings of Violation (FOV) are coded "9" (not applicable).*

Individual: Dichotomous variable; Coded "1" for individuals, "0" for entities and other non-individuals.

Updated in v3.0: **Number_Individuals**: Count variable; indicates the number of individual enforcement actions levied on a particular date. Enforcement actions against individuals wane considerably after the Bush Administration. **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

Entity: Dichotomous variable; Coded "1" for entities (firms, businesses, nonprofits), "0" for individuals.

Democratic: Dichotomous variable; Coded "1" for Democratic Administration, "0" for Republican.

Republican: Mirror image of **Democratic variable**.

Foreign: Dichotomous; 1 if entity is foreign, 0 if entity is US-domestic. This variable is coded as missing (.) for individuals.

- *A Foreign entity is any entity operating outside the United States (this may include US subsidiaries operating internationally)*.

New in v3.0: **Sector:** Categorical variable ranging from 1-26, which each value connected to a specific sector (for example: 1 = airlines/aviation, 26 = wholesale). This variable is useful for making figures and tables.

- All financial services firms (banks, insurance, money service providers) are all categorized under a single umbrella category (financial services).
- Individuals are coded with missing values as they are not identified by OFAC and fines are reported in the aggregate if multiple individuals are cited.

Sect*: Variables that begin with **Sect*** are dichotomous ("dummies"). There are 34 sectors coded in the data set. When coded 1, the entity in question is a member of that sector. When coded 0, it is not a member of that sector.

- **SectIndividual** indicates enforcement action targeted one or more individuals.
- **SectAllFinSvcs** is coded 1 if any of the 8 individual financial services sectors are coded 1.

Updated in v3.0: **Egregious:** Categorical; This variable is coded:

- "0" if the enforcement action is non-egregious. If egregiousness is not stated explicitly, it is coded as non-egregious.

- "1" if the enforcement action is egregious; this is clearly stated in the enforcement action.
- "9" if egregiousness does not apply ("non applicable") to the action, which is common in findings of violation (FOV).
- ***Egregiousness is captured from 2010 onward.***

Updated in v3.0: **Egregious_alt**: Categorial; This variable is a variation of **Egregious** but with some changes:

- "0" if the enforcement action is non-egregious.
- "1" if the enforcement action is egregious; this is clearly stated in the enforcement action.
- "2" if it is "unknown" as to whether the enforcement action is egregious or non-egregious.
- "9" if egregiousness does not apply ("non applicable") to the action, which is common in findings of violation (FOV).
- ***Egregiousness is captured from 2010 onward.***

Updated in v3.0: **Presidential_Admin:** String variable, which captures the last name of the president when the enforcement action was issued (Bush, Obama, Trump, or Biden). *Please note that there is one enforcement action against an individual during the Bush Administration that was appealed and resolved during the Obama Administration.* **The variable name has been updated from v2.0.**

IEEPEA: Dichotomous variable indicating when the International Emergency Economic Powers Enhancement Act went into effect. Passed in October 2007, the act initiated a reform of OFAC regulations regarding the enforcement of economic sanctions, which provided OFAC with the ability to impose higher penalties. The regulations were completed in 2009, but the first enforcement actions utilizing the higher fines did not begin until 2010; Coded "1" for all observations after 2007 and "0" otherwise.

Administration: Categorical. Coded "0" for Bush Administration, "1" for Obama Administration, "2" for Trump Administration, "3" for Biden Administration. *Please note that there is one enforcement action against an individual during the Bush Administration that was appealed and resolved during the Obama Administration.*

FOV: Finding of violation, a dichotomous variable that captures whether the entity was targeted by a finding of violation rather than a full-on civil enforcement. Finding of violations do not typically result in a fine (usually because the statute of limitations has expired).

Sanctions Program Variables

The variables below are dichotomous: 1 if the sanctions enforcement action involved a violation of one or more of the sanctions programs below, 0 if not. Please note that enforcement actions may include multiple violations of one or more sanctions programs.

Taliban1: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Taliban sanctions program. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Burma2: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Burma sanctions program. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Liberia3: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Liberia sanctions program. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Cuba4: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Cuba sanctions program. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Kingpin5: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Kingpin (drug cartels) sanctions program. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Iran6: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Iran sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Iraq7: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Iraq sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Libya8: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Iraq sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

NorthKorea9: Enforcement action is the result of violation of N. Korea sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Sudan10: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Sudan sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Terrorism11: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Terrorism sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Yugoslavia12: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Yugoslavia sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

WMD13: Enforcement action is the result of violation of WMD sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

EAR14: Enforcement action is the result of violation of EAR related sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Belarus15: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Belarus sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Syria16: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Syria sanctions programs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Other17: Enforcement action is the result of violation of other sanctions programs not represented in categories presented here. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Zimbabwe18: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Zimbabwe sanctions programs not represented in categories presented here. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

UkraineRussia19: Enforcement action is the result of violation of Ukraine/Crimea/Russia sanctions programs not represented in categories presented here. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

RPPR20: Enforcement actions due to violations of reporting, procedures, and penalties regulations, which often are levied due to poor responses to OFAC questionnaires, false/misleading statements, or missing reporting deadlines. These violations are often combined with violations of other sanctions programs and are commonly associated with FOVs. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

New in v3.0: **Venezuala21:** Enforcement action is the result of violation of Venezuela sanctions programs and/or executive orders. *For all sanctions programs, please note that a single enforcement action may be the result of violations across several sanctions programs.*

Additional Variables

Notes: This field contains useful notes, data, information on enforcement actions.

RealPSAmt2018: Penalty in 2018 USD; this value is used in our *Security Studies* article published in 2020; this variable is used for all enforcement actions from 2003-2018. Uses GDP Deflator: https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPDEF#0

RealPSAmt2021: Penalty in 2021 USD; this value is used in various publications we have published together or individually for all enforcement actions from 2003-2021. Uses GDP Deflator: https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPDEF#0

New in v3.0: **RealPSAmt2022**: Penalty in 2022 USD; this value is used in various publications we have published together or individually for all enforcement actions from 2003-2022. Uses GDP Deflator: https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GDPDEF#0