



## Maryland Sentencing Guidelines Data Access and Dissemination

**RIGHT OF ACCESS** Maryland's Public Information Act (PIA), found in the General Provisions Article (GP), §§ 4-101 through 4-601, Annotated Code of Maryland, grants a broad right of access to public records while protecting legitimate governmental interests and the privacy rights of individual citizens. This includes access to sentencing guidelines data collected and maintained by the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy (MSCCSP). Under the PIA, the MSCCSP is required to fulfill all public requests for records unless an exception to the PIA applies to the information. The MSCCSP does not have an obligation to create records to satisfy a request, only to provide records that already exist. For example, the MSCCSP is not required to analyze data or create a custom report to satisfy a PIA request.

The MSCCSP routinely publishes reports summarizing the sentencing guidelines data on its website, provides an online data dashboard for crimes of violence sentenced in Maryland circuit courts, and offers a data download tool that allows the public to download the available data directly from the MSCCSP website (see below).

**MSCCSP REPORTS** Individuals interested in summaries of the sentencing guidelines data are encouraged to view the MSCCSP's online [reports](#). These publications cover a wide range of sentencing topics, from judicial compliance with the guidelines to average sentence lengths for various offenses. Key reports include the *annual report* summarizing the MSCCSP's activities in the prior calendar year and guidelines compliance in the prior fiscal year, the *common offense report* summarizing sentencing guidelines compliance and average sentence for the five most common single count offenses in each crime category (person, drug, and property) in the prior fiscal year, and the *Sentencing Snapshot* which provides a quick overview of sentencing trends and other topics of interest.

Any request for information not available in an MSCCSP report is considered a custom report. Due to limited staff resources, the MSCCSP is unable to generate custom reports. However, as described below, the sentencing guidelines data are accessible from the MSCCSP website and may be utilized by individuals to conduct their own analyses for information requests that are not covered by the MSCCSP generated reports.

**CRIMES OF VIOLENCE DATA DASHBOARD** The MSCCSP launched the [Crimes of Violence Data Dashboard](#) on its website on January 31, 2023, fulfilling the requirements of [Chapter 141 \(S.B. 763\), Acts of 2022](#). The dashboard summarizes demographic and sentence information for all guidelines-eligible crimes of violence sentenced in Maryland circuit courts for fiscal year 2022 forward. The MSCCSP updates the dashboard annually each January.

**MSCCSP DATA DOWNLOAD** Individuals interested in conducting analyses of the sentencing guidelines data are encouraged to download the data directly from the MSCCSP website using the [data download tool](#). The data are provided via an Excel file (.xlsx). **To obtain meaningful information from the data download file requires some data manipulation and analysis on the part of the user.** Prior to working with the data, users are encouraged to review the supporting materials provided on the [data page](#) of the MSCCSP website, including the description of the [source and scope of the data](#) and the [data codebook](#).



**QUESTIONS/REQUESTS** Individuals with questions about the publicly available reports and data, as well as those with requests for information beyond what is provided on the MSCCSP website, should contact the MSCCSP's Research Director, Dr. Stacy Skroban Najaka at [snajaka@umd.edu](mailto:snajaka@umd.edu) or 301-403-2709.

The MSCCSP will determine the feasibility of requests based on the amount of information requested, the time and resources needed to successfully complete the report, and the available staff resources. As noted above, the MSCCSP does not have an obligation to create records to satisfy a request, only to provide information available within its current system. If a request is denied, the MSCCSP will provide a written statement of the reasons for the denial, legal authority for the denial, and notice of its remedies for review of denial. If a request requires substantial staff time and resources, the person(s) or institution(s) requesting the information may be required to pay for the materials, processing, and, if more than two hours, staff time. The MSCCSP will fulfill requests no later than 30 days upon receipt unless an extension is granted. The MSCCSP will notify the requester in 10 days if the MSCCSP is the wrong agency for the request. In responding to requests for information, the MSCCSP reserves the right to establish priorities based on staff resources.