



METHODOLOGY

Data Source

Issue 12 (June 2024) of the Sentencing Snapshot examines juveniles sentenced in adult circuit courts from fiscal years (FY) 2014 through 2023. Juveniles are defined as individuals who were under 18 years old as of the date of the most recent offense for which they are being sentenced. Laws pertaining to juvenile jurisdiction, including procedures for charging juveniles as adults, are located in Title 3, Subtitle 8A of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, Annotated Code of Maryland.

The data in these analyses were obtained from sentencing guidelines worksheets submitted to the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy (MSCCSP) via either the Maryland Automated Guidelines System (MAGS) or paper guidelines worksheets. Sentencing guidelines worksheets are completed for all criminal sentencing events involving an incarcerable offense that originate in and are sentenced in Maryland circuit courts. Additionally, guidelines worksheets are completed for sentencing events involving jury trial prayers (JTPs) and appeals from the District Court, if a pre-sentence investigation (PSI) is ordered. A sentencing event is defined as one individual, sentenced in front of the same judge, on the same day. A sentencing event may contain multiple offenses.

These analyses exclude sentencing guidelines worksheets submitted for sentence reconsideration/modification hearings and three-judge panel reviews.¹ Sentencing guidelines worksheets are not completed for violations of probation or parole. Sentencing guidelines worksheets are not submitted to the MSCCSP for District Court cases.

As such, these analyses do not reflect statewide totals or trends for those offenses in which the District Court has exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction, nor do the analyses include data from non-guidelines eligible cases sentenced in the State's circuit courts (e.g., JTPs and District Court appeals without a PSI ordered; probation/parole violation sentences).

¹ From FY 2014 through FY 2023, less than 1% of sentencing events for which a guidelines worksheet was submitted were for sentence reconsideration/modification hearings or three-judge panel reviews.



Analyses

This section of the methodology provides statistics that correspond to the figures in Sentencing Snapshot #12.

Table 1 provides the total number and type of juvenile and adult guidelines-eligible criminal sentencing events and offenses, sentenced in Maryland adult circuit courts from FY 2014 to FY 2023.

Table 1. Guidelines-Eligible Criminal Sentencing Events and Offenses Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Type of Offense, FY 2014 through FY 2023								
	Juveniles				Adults			
	Offenses		Sentencing Events		Offenses		Sentencing Events	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Crimes of violence	1,328	47.0%	884	48.9%	22,019	16.4%	15,007	15.5%
Firearm/weapons offenses	422	14.9%	383	21.2%	16,988	12.6%	15,051	15.6%
Other person offenses	694	24.6%	572	31.7%	34,304	25.5%	27,495	28.5%
Drug offenses	105	3.7%	99	5.5%	35,439	26.4%	31,859	33.0%
Property offenses	276	9.8%	221	12.2%	25,677	19.1%	19,816	20.5%
Total	2,825		1,806		134,427		96,625	

Notes. Juveniles were under the age of 18 years as of the date of their most recent offense. Crimes of violence are defined pursuant to Criminal Law Article, § 14-101.

A sentencing event is defined as one individual, sentenced in front of the same judge, on the same day. Sentencing event percentages do not sum to 100% as a sentencing event may contain multiple offenses from multiple crime categories.



Table 2 provides the number and percentage of guidelines-eligible juveniles and adults sentenced in Maryland adult circuit courts, by fiscal year.

Table 2. Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Fiscal Year					
	Total	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	#	%	#	%
FY 2014	10,560	199	1.9%	10,361	98.1%
FY 2015	10,725	195	1.8%	10,530	98.2%
FY 2016	10,396	171	1.6%	10,225	98.4%
FY 2017	10,103	184	1.8%	9,919	98.2%
FY 2018	10,901	208	1.9%	10,693	98.1%
FY 2019	10,976	220	2.0%	10,756	98.0%
FY 2020	7,684	172	2.2%	7,512	97.8%
FY 2021	6,299	159	2.5%	6,140	97.5%
FY 2022	10,468	155	1.5%	10,313	98.5%
FY 2023	10,319	143	1.4%	10,176	98.6%
Total	98,431	1,806	1.8%	96,625	98.2%

Note: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense.



Tables 3 through 6 provide the characteristics of guidelines-sentenced individuals and offenses sentenced in Maryland adult circuit courts.

Table 3. Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Age at Offense, FY 2014 through FY 2023				
	Juveniles		Adults	
Age (Years)	#	%	#	%
11	1	0.1%	-	-
12	0	0.0%	-	-
13	5	0.3%	-	-
14	9	0.5%	-	-
15	67	3.7%	-	-
16	474	26.2%	-	-
17	1,250	69.2%	-	-
Total	1,806		-	-
Mean age (years)	17.2		31.2	

Note: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense.



Table 4. Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, FY 2014 through FY 2023

	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	%	#	%
Sex				
Male	1,561	94.1%	78,437	87.2%
Female	97	5.9%	11,554	12.8%
Missing	148		6,634	
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	1,272	77.5%	55,880	62.7%
White	203	12.4%	26,838	30.1%
Hispanic	152	9.3%	5,191	5.8%
Other	15	0.9%	1,185	1.3%
Missing	164		7,531	
Total	1,806		96,625	

Notes: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense. Percentages exclude missing data.

Definitions: Race and Ethnicity are separate fields on the sentencing guidelines worksheet. The following selections are available for Race: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Other, and Unknown. The guidelines worksheet preparer may select more than one race. For the purposes of these analyses, some categories of race and ethnicity are combined. The Other race category combines the following race options: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other. The Other race category also includes guidelines-sentenced individuals for whom multiple race categories were selected. Unknown race is classified as missing. The Ethnicity field asks whether the guidelines-sentenced individual is of Hispanic or Latino origin, with possible responses Yes, No, or Unknown. Yes responses are classified as Hispanic, regardless of selections made in the Race field. Worksheets with missing race, ethnicity, or sex, sentenced from calendar years 2018 through 2020, were supplemented with race, ethnicity, and sex data from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), where available.



Table 5. Juvenile Delinquency Scores for Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, FY 2014 through FY 2023

	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	%	#	%
At least 23 years or 0 delinquency findings w/in 5 years of offense date	917	51.2%	90,440	95.0%
Less than 23 years and 1-2 delinquency findings w/in 5 years of offense date	553	30.9%	3,478	3.7%
Less than 23 years and 3+ delinquency findings w/in 5 years of offense date	321	17.9%	1,274	1.3%
Missing	15		1,433	
Total	1,806		96,625	

Table 6. Guidelines-Eligible Criminal Sentencing Events and Offenses Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Felony/Misdemeanor Classification, FY 2014 through FY 2023

	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	%	#	%
Felony(s) only	928	51.4%	48,978	50.7%
Felony(s) and misdemeanor(s)	321	17.8%	9,905	10.3%
Misdemeanor(s) only	557	30.8%	37,742	39.1%
Total	1,806		96,625	

Notes: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense. Percentages exclude missing data. Instructions for calculating the juvenile delinquency score component (part C) of the offender score are located in the Maryland Sentencing Guidelines Manual (MSGM), Version 16.0, Chapter 7.1.C.



Tables 7 and 8 provide sentencing guidelines compliance and disposition type for juvenile and adult sentencing events in Maryland adult circuit courts.

Table 7. Sentencing Guidelines Compliance for Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, FY 2014 through FY 2023				
	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	%	#	%
Within	1,431	79.2%	77,064	79.8%
Below	298	16.5%	15,635	16.2%
Above	77	4.3%	3,878	4.0%
Missing	0		48	
Total	1,806		96,625	

Notes: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense. Percentages exclude missing data.

Definitions (MSGM, Version 16.0, Chapter 13):

- **Within:** A sentence is defined as guidelines-compliant if it meets at least one of the following conditions:
 - The non-suspended sentence (defined as the sum of incarceration, credit for time served, and home detention) is within the guidelines range;
 - The non-suspended sentence exceeds the upper guidelines limit but includes only credit for time served;
 - The sentencing event was disposed of via an ABA plea agreement or, effective April 1, 2021, an MSCCSP binding plea agreement; or
 - The sentencing event involved the imposition of one or more corrections options and the total sentence falls within or above the recommended guidelines range (excluding sentencing events that contain a crime of violence, child sexual abuse, or escape).
- **Below:** A non-guidelines-compliant sentence where the non-suspended sentence length falls below the guidelines range.
- **Above:** A non-guidelines-compliant sentence where the non-suspended sentence length falls above the guidelines range.



Table 8. Disposition Type for Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, FY 2014 through FY 2023				
	Juveniles		Adults	
	#	%	#	%
ABA/MSCCSP binding plea agreement	805	46.9%	38,191	41.7%
Other plea agreement	627	36.5%	34,835	38.0%
Plea, no agreement	201	11.7%	14,272	15.6%
Jury trial	18	1.0%	772	0.8%
Court trial	67	3.9%	3,560	3.9%
Missing	88		4,995	
Total	1,806		96,625	

Notes: Percentages exclude missing data. Age is as of the date of the most recent offense.

Definitions (MSGM, Version 16.0, Chapter 4.8):

- **MSCCSP binding plea agreement:** The term an MSCCSP binding plea agreement replaced the term ABA plea agreement in the MSGM effective April 1, 2021. An ABA plea agreement was defined as: A plea agreement that a court has approved relating to a particular sentence, disposition, or other judicial action. The agreement is binding on the court under Maryland Rule 4-243(c). (MSGM, Version 12.4). Currently, an MSCCSP binding plea agreement is defined as: “A plea agreement presented to the court in agreement by an attorney for the government and the defendant’s attorney, or the defendant when proceeding pro se, that a court has approved relating to a particular sentence and disposition. An MSCCSP binding plea agreement means an agreement to a specific amount of active time (if any), not merely a sentence cap or range. The court has the discretion to accept or reject the plea. The agreement is binding on the court under Maryland Rule 4-243(c) if the court accepts the plea.
- **Other plea agreement:** A disposition resulted from a plea agreement reached by the parties that did not include an agreement to a specific amount of active time (if any) and/or the agreement was not approved by, and thus not binding on, the court.
- **Plea, no agreement:** When the defendant plead[s] guilty without any agreement from the prosecutor or judge to perform in a particular way.
- **Jury trial:** A disposition resulted from a trial in which a jury decided the factual questions.
- **Court trial:** A disposition resulted from a trial without a jury in which the judge decided the factual questions.



Table 9 provides the number and percentage of guidelines-eligible juvenile and adult sentencing events involving one or more firearms/other weapons offense, sentenced in in Maryland adult circuit courts, by fiscal year.

Table 9. Guidelines-Eligible Individuals Sentenced in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts for Firearms/Weapons Offenses, by Fiscal Year						
	Juveniles			Adults		
	Total Sentencing Events	Sentencing Events Involving 1+ Firearms/Weapons Offense		Total Sentencing Events	Sentencing Events Involving 1+ Firearms/Weapons Offense	
	#	#	%	#	#	%
FY 2014	199	28	14.1%	10,361	979	9.4%
FY 2015	195	24	12.3%	10,530	1,114	10.6%
FY 2016	171	31	18.1%	10,225	1,174	11.5%
FY 2017	184	23	12.5%	9,919	1,253	12.6%
FY 2018	208	31	14.9%	10,693	1,514	14.2%
FY 2019	220	43	19.5%	10,756	1,721	16.0%
FY 2020	172	42	24.4%	7,512	1,193	15.9%
FY 2021	159	54	34.0%	6,140	1,045	17.0%
FY 2022	155	52	33.5%	10,313	2,344	22.7%
FY 2023	143	55	38.5%	10,176	2,714	26.7%
Total	1,806	383	21.2%	96,625	15,051	15.6%

Notes: Age is as of the date of the most recent offense.



Tables 10 and 11 provide the number and percentage of and sentence type for guidelines-eligible juveniles and adults sentenced for life-eligible offenses in Maryland adult circuit courts.

Table 10. Guidelines-Eligible Juveniles Sentenced for Life-Eligible Offenses in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Sentence Type and Fiscal Year								
	Total Sentencing Events	Life-Eligible Offenses						
		Total Life-Eligible Sentencing Events	Active Life		Life (Partially Suspended)		Non-Life	
			#	#	%	#	%	#
FY 2014	199	8	4	50.0%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%
FY 2015	195	7	2	28.6%	3	42.9%	2	28.6%
FY 2016	171	13	2	15.4%	8	61.5%	3	23.1%
FY 2017	184	5	1	20.0%	3	60.0%	1	20.0%
FY 2018	208	9	1	11.1%	7	77.8%	1	11.1%
FY 2019	220	6	1	16.7%	3	50.0%	2	33.3%
FY 2020	172	16	3	18.8%	12	75.0%	1	6.3%
FY 2021	159	4	1	25.0%	2	50.0%	1	25.0%
FY 2022	155	11	4	36.4%	6	54.5%	1	9.1%
FY 2023	143	14	3	21.4%	6	42.9%	5	35.7%
Total	1,806	93	22	23.7%	52	55.9%	19	20.4%
Average		9.3	2.2		5.2		1.9	

Notes: Percentages exclude missing data. Age is as of the date of the most recent offense. **Life-eligible offenses** are those for which the statutory maximum penalty is life, including Murder, 1st Degree; Rape, 1st Degree; and attempts, conspiracies, and solicitations of these offenses. A **life (active) sentence** consists of life imprisonment, with or without parole, and no suspended time. A **life, partially suspended sentence** consists of a life sentence, a portion of which is suspended, and typically a period of probation. A **non-life sentence** includes a defined period of imprisonment that is less than life, a portion of which may be suspended, and may include a period of probation.



Table 11. Guidelines-Eligible Adults Sentenced for Life-Eligible Offenses in Maryland Adult Circuit Courts, by Sentence Type and Fiscal Year

	Total Sentencing Events	Life-Eligible Offenses						
		Total Life-Eligible Sentencing Events	Active Life		Life (Partially Suspended)		Non-Life	
			#	#	%	#	%	#
FY 2014	10,361	142	57	40.1%	43	30.3%	42	29.6%
FY 2015	10,530	147	46	31.3%	53	36.1%	48	32.7%
FY 2016	10,225	137	49	35.8%	47	34.3%	41	29.9%
FY 2017	9,919	154	56	36.4%	56	36.4%	42	27.3%
FY 2018	10,693	154	67	43.5%	57	37.0%	30	19.5%
FY 2019	10,756	144	68	47.2%	43	29.9%	33	22.9%
FY 2020	7,512	110	42	38.2%	41	37.3%	27	24.5%
FY 2021	6,140	40	17	42.5%	15	37.5%	8	20.0%
FY 2022	10,313	124	43	34.7%	53	42.7%	28	22.6%
FY 2023	10,176	199	85	42.7%	80	40.2%	34	17.1%
Total	96,625	1,351	530	39.2%	488	36.1%	333	24.6%
Average		135.1	53.0		48.8		33.3	

Notes: Percentages exclude missing data. Age is as of the date of the most recent offense. **Life-eligible offenses** are those for which the statutory maximum penalty is life, including Murder, 1st Degree; Rape, 1st Degree; and attempts, conspiracies, and solicitations of these offenses. A **life (active) sentence** consists of life imprisonment, with or without parole, and no suspended time. A **life, partially suspended sentence** consists of a life sentence, a portion of which is suspended, and typically a period of probation. A **non-life sentence** includes a defined period of imprisonment that is less than life, a portion of which may be suspended, and may include a period of probation.