



QuickFacts

Career Offenders

What is a Career Offender?

A career offender is someone who commits a crime of violence or a controlled substance offense after two prior felony convictions for those crimes. The sentencing guidelines assign all career offenders to Criminal History Category (CHC) VI and to offense levels at or near the statutory maximum penalty of the offense of conviction.²

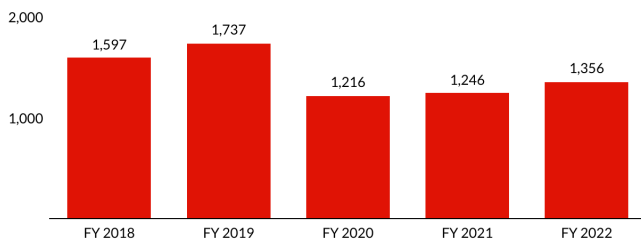
Population Snapshot

64,142 cases were reported in FY22;

1,356 involved career offenders.¹

In 92.9% of such cases, career offender status increased the guideline range.

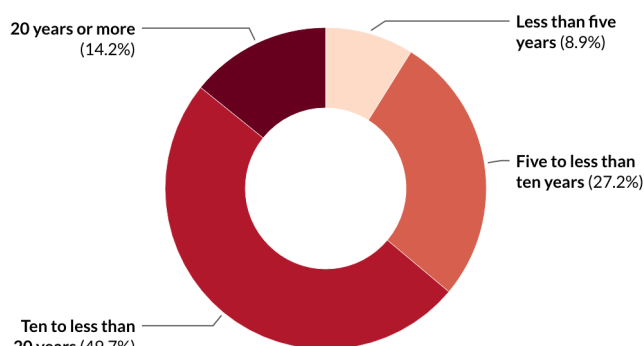
Numbers Over Time



Most Common Guidelines

Crime Type	Number of Offenders
Drug Trafficking	1,083
Firearms	124
Robbery	77
Other	71

Sentence Length



Offender and Offense Characteristics

- 95.7% of career offenders were men.
- 57.7% of career offenders were Black, 23.6% were White, 16.8% were Hispanic, and 1.9% were Other races.
- Their average age was 40 years.
- 97.5% were United States citizens.
- 43.4% would not change from CHC VI if the career offender provision had not been applied;
 - 0.1% would have been CHC I;
 - 0.7% would have been CHC II;
 - 8.7% would have been CHC III;
 - 21.8% would have been CHC IV;
 - 25.3% would have been CHC V.
- The top five districts for career offenders were:
 - Southern District of New York (56);
 - Central District of California (44);
 - Southern District of California (44);
 - Eastern District of Arkansas (42);
 - District of New Jersey (41).

Punishment

- The average sentence for career offenders was 146 months.
- 99.7% were sentenced to prison.
- 62.1% were convicted of an offense carrying a mandatory minimum penalty.

Impact of Career Offender Status³

- 40.3% of career offenders had an increase in both Final Offense Level (FOL) and CHC.
 - Their average FOL increased from 24 to 31 and the average CHC increased from IV to VI.
- 36.4% of career offenders had an increase in just the FOL.
 - Their average FOL increased from 24 to 31.
- 16.2% of career offenders had an increase in just the CHC.
 - Their average CHC increased from IV to VI.
- 7.1% of career offenders had no increase in FOL or CHC.



QuickFacts

Career Offenders

Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range

Of the 45.2% of career offenders sentenced under the *Guidelines Manual*:

- 44.7% were sentenced within the guideline range.
- 38.0% received a substantial assistance departure.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 49.2%.
- 13.2% received some other downward departure.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 47.0%.
- 3.8% received an Early Disposition Program (EDP) departure.⁴
 - Their average sentence reduction was 63.9%.

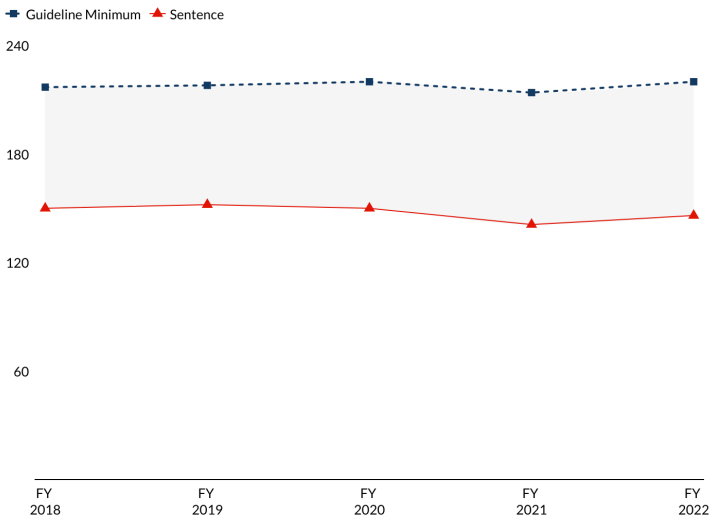
54.8% received a variance; of those offenders:

- 99.2% received a downward variance.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 39.9%.
- 0.8% received an upward variance.
 - Their average sentence increase was 21.7%.

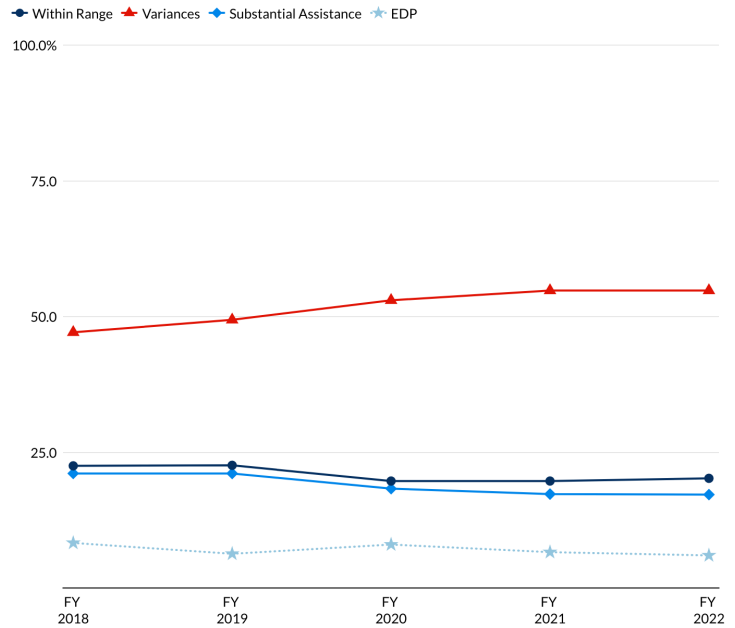
The average guideline minimum slightly increased and the average sentence imposed fluctuated over the past five years.

- The average guideline minimum increased from 217 months in fiscal year 2018 to 220 months in fiscal year 2022.
- The average sentence imposed increased and decreased throughout the fiscal years. The average sentence was 150 months in fiscal year 2018 and 146 months in fiscal year 2022.

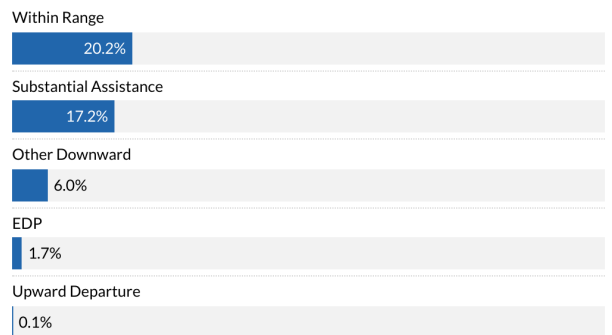
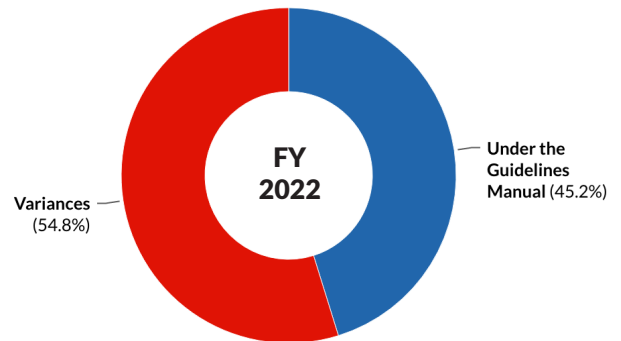
Average Guideline Minimum and Average Sentence (in months)



Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range



Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range



¹ Cases with incomplete sentencing information were excluded from the analysis.

² In some cases, a state offense classified under state law as a misdemeanor (e.g., in Iowa, Massachusetts, and Michigan) is considered a felony in determining career offender status. For more information, see USSG §4B1.1.

³ Cases missing Ch. 2 guideline data and cases in which §4B1.1(c) applied were excluded for this part of the analysis. Cases where both §4B1.1 and §4B1.4 (Armed Career Criminal) applied were assigned to the provision with the higher offense level.

⁴ "Early Disposition Program (or EDP) departures" are departures where the government sought a sentence below the guideline range because the defendant participated in the government's Early Disposition Program, through which cases are resolved in an expedited manner. See USSG §5K3.1.