



QuickFacts

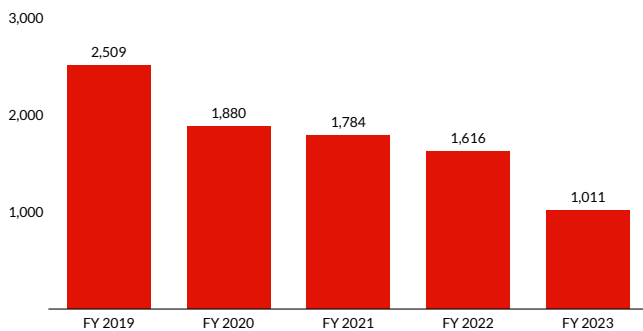
Heroin Trafficking

Population Snapshot

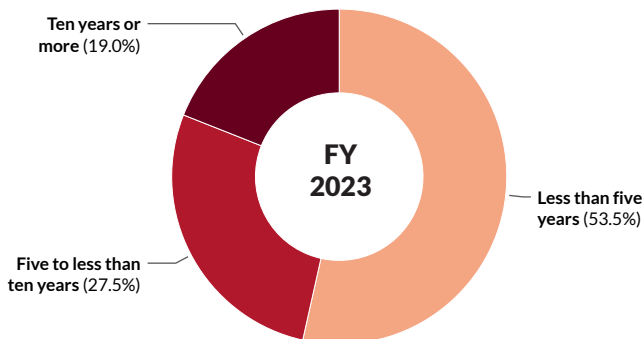
64,124 cases were reported in FY23;
19,066 involved drugs,¹
18,939 involved drug trafficking.²

5.3% of such cases involved heroin, down 59.7% since FY 2019.

Number of Heroin Trafficking Offenses



Sentence Length³



Individual and Offense Characteristics

83.2% of individuals sentenced for heroin trafficking were men.

45.8% were Hispanic, 34.3% were Black, 18.6% were White, and 1.3% were Other races.

Their average age was 39 years.

78.6% were United States citizens.

39.4% had little or no prior criminal history (Criminal History Category I); 6.5% were individuals sentenced under the career offender guideline (§4B1.1).

The median base offense level in these cases was 28, corresponding to between 700 grams and 1 kilogram of heroin.

Sentences were increased for:

- possessing a weapon (22.7%);
- a leadership or supervisory role in the offense (8.9%).

Sentences were decreased for:

- minor or minimal participation in the offense (15.9%);
- meeting the safety valve criteria in the sentencing guidelines (30.1%).

The top five districts for heroin trafficking offenses were:

- District of New Jersey (58);
- District of Utah (49);
- Northern District of Illinois (45);
- Southern District of Texas (42);
- Western District of Texas (39).

Punishment

The average sentence for heroin trafficking individuals was 67 months.

96.4% were sentenced to prison.

56.4% were convicted of an offense carrying a mandatory minimum penalty; 54.7% of those individuals were relieved of that penalty.

Means of Relief from Mandatory Minimum Penalty for Heroin Traffickers

	Percent
Safety Valve	28.6%
Substantial Assistance	14.9%
Both	11.2%



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Heroin Trafficking

Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range

Of the 60.2% of individuals sentenced for heroin trafficking under the *Guidelines Manual*:

- 51.6% were sentenced within the guideline range.
- 34.9% received a substantial assistance departure.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 58.0%.
- 5.5% received an Early Disposition Program (EDP) departure.⁴
 - Their average sentence reduction was 68.5%.
- 7.2% received some other downward departure.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 36.0%.

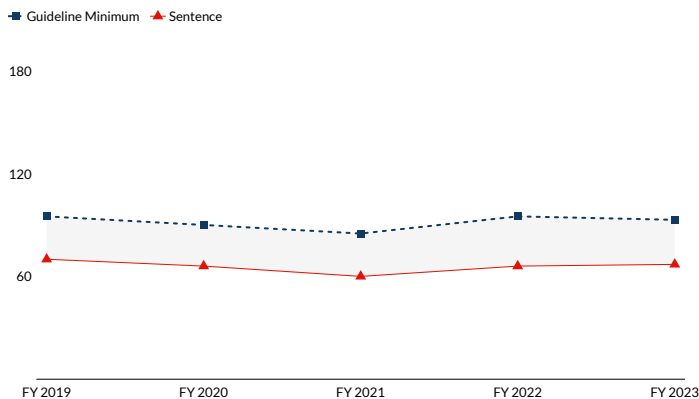
39.8% received a variance; of those individuals:

- 93.2% received a downward variance.
 - Their average sentence reduction was 44.0%.
- 6.8% received an upward variance.
 - Their average sentence increase was 55.6%.

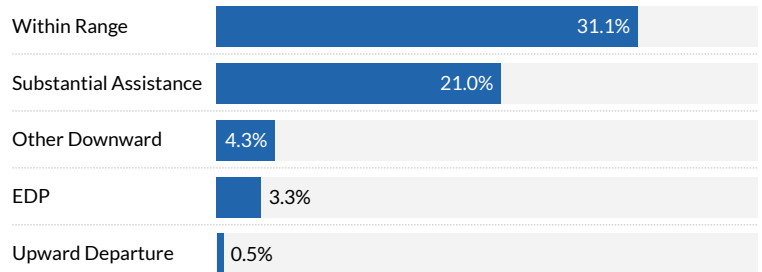
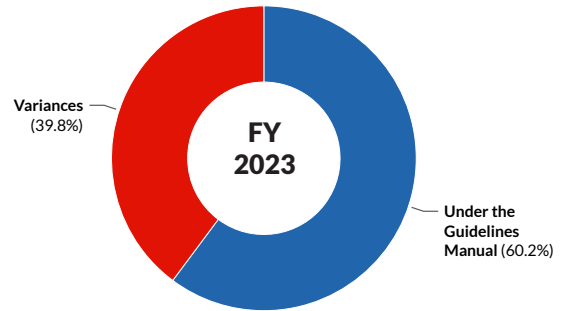
The average guideline minimum decreased and the average sentence imposed fluctuated over the past five years.

- The average guideline minimum decreased from 95 months in fiscal year 2019 to 93 months in fiscal year 2023.
- The average sentence imposed increased and decreased throughout the fiscal years. The average sentence was 70 months in fiscal year 2019 and 67 months in fiscal year 2023.

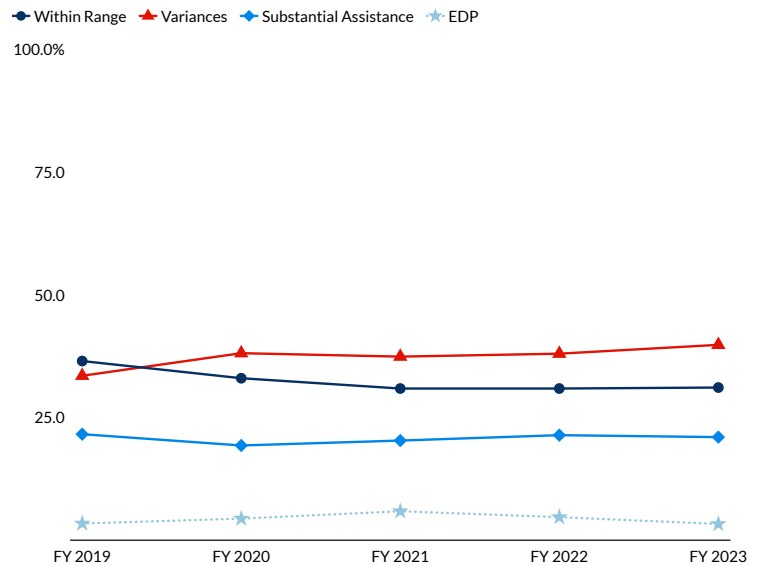
Average Guideline Minimum and Average Sentence (months)



Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range



Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range



¹ Drug offenses include cases where individuals were sentenced under USSG Chapter Two, Part D (Drugs). There were 1,012 individuals sentenced for heroin offenses under USSG Chapter Two, Part D (Drugs) in FY 2023.

² Individuals sentenced for drug trafficking were sentenced under USSG §§2D1.1 (Drug Trafficking), 2D1.2 (Protected Locations), 2D1.5 (Continuing Criminal Enterprise), 2D1.6 (Use of a Communication Facility), 2D1.8 (Rent/Manage Drug Establishment), 2D1.10 (Endangering Human Life), or 2D1.14 (Narco-Terrorism).

³ Cases with incomplete sentencing information were excluded from the analysis.

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.