



# QuickFacts

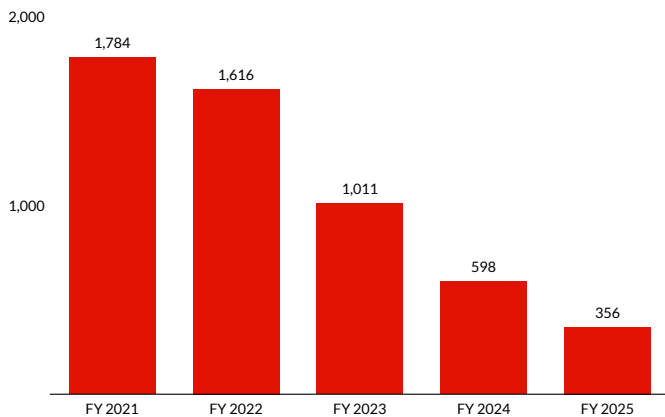
## Heroin Trafficking

### Population Snapshot

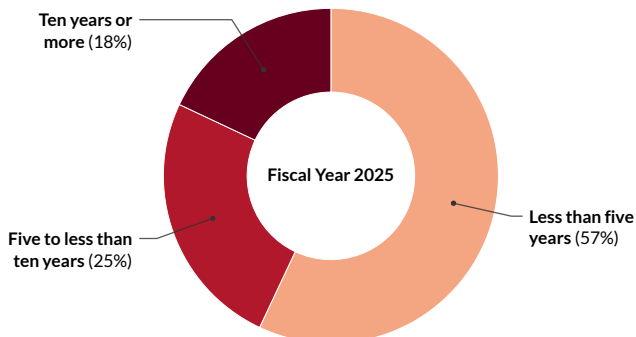
66,662 cases were reported in FY25;  
 16,234 involved drugs,<sup>1</sup>  
 16,144 involved drug trafficking.<sup>2</sup>

2% of such cases involved heroin, down 80% since FY21.

### Number of Heroin Trafficking Offenses



### Sentence Length<sup>3</sup>



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### Individual and Offense Characteristics

82% of individuals sentenced for heroin trafficking were men.

61% were Hispanic, 25% were Black, 11% were White, and 2% were Other races.

Their average age was 40 years.

69% were United States citizens.

54% had little or no prior criminal history (Criminal History Category I); 5% were individuals sentenced under the career offender guideline (§4B1.1).

The median base offense level in these cases was 30, corresponding to between one and three kilograms of heroin.

Sentences were increased for:

- possessing a weapon (22%);
- a leadership or supervisory role in the offense (10%).

Sentences were decreased for:

- minor or minimal participation in the offense (20%);
- meeting the safety valve criteria in the sentencing guidelines (41%).

The top districts for heroin trafficking offenses were:

- Western District of Texas (23);
- Northern District of Illinois (22);
- District of New Jersey (19);
- Northern District of Texas (18);
- Four Districts (17).

### Punishment

The average sentence for individuals trafficking heroin was 62 months.

94% were sentenced to prison.

49% were convicted of an offense carrying a mandatory minimum penalty; 60% of those individuals were relieved of that penalty.

### Means of Relief from Mandatory Minimum Penalty for Heroin Trafficking

Means of Relief	Percent
Safety Valve	32%
Substantial Assistance	18%
Both	10%



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### Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range

54% of sentences for heroin trafficking were under the *Guidelines Manual*.

- 25% were within the guideline range.
- 21% were substantial assistance departures.
  - *The average sentence reduction was 62%.*
- 5% were Early Disposition Program (EDP) departures.<sup>4</sup>
  - *The average sentence reduction was 65%.*
- 3% were some other downward departure.
  - *The average sentence reduction was 65%.*
- 1% were upward departures.<sup>5</sup>

46% of sentences for heroin trafficking were variances.

- 44% were downward variances.
  - *The average sentence reduction was 43%.*
- 3% were upward variances.
  - *The average sentence increase was 100%.*

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

- The average guideline minimum was 85 months in fiscal year 2021 and 95 months in fiscal year 2025.
- The average sentence imposed was 60 months in fiscal year 2021 and 62 months in fiscal year 2025.

<sup>1</sup> Drug offenses include cases where individuals were sentenced under USSG Chapter Two, Part D (Drugs). There were 361 individuals sentenced for heroin offenses under USSG Chapter Two, Part D (Drugs) in FY 2025.

<sup>2</sup> 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).

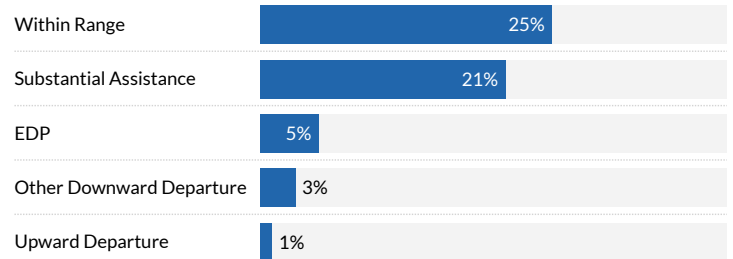
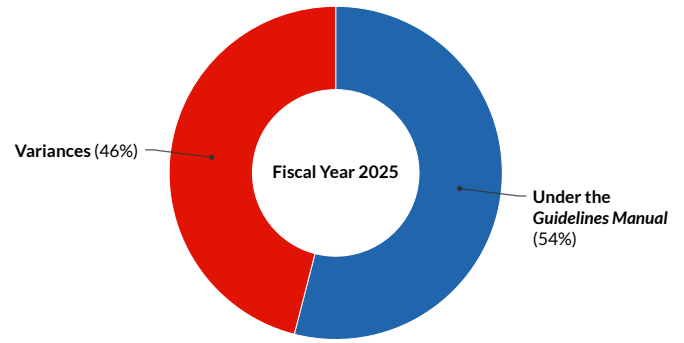
<sup>3</sup> Cases with incomplete sentencing information were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>4</sup> “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.

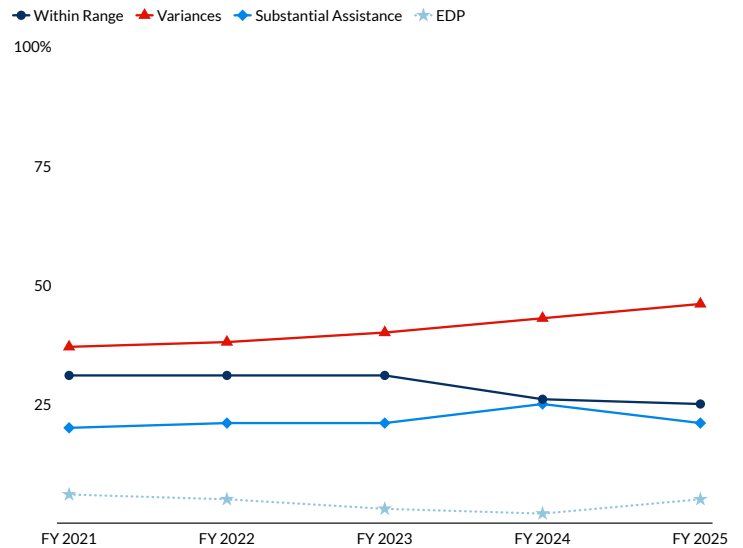
<sup>5</sup> The Commission does not report the average for categories with fewer than three cases.

SOURCE: United States Sentencing Commission, FY 2021 through FY 2025 Datafiles, USSCFY21-USSCFY25.

### Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range



### Sentences Relative to the Guideline Range by Fiscal Year



### Average Guideline Minimum and Average Sentence (months)

