

VIRGINIA CRIMINAL SENTENCING COMMISSION







Overview of Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines System

Impetus for Sentencing Guidelines

- In 1983, a Governor's task force released findings based on a small-scale study documenting evidence of sentencing disparities.
- Virginia's Chief Justice formed a judicial committee to examine the issue, which required the creation of a comprehensive database on felony sentencing.
- In 1987, analysis of historical sentencing decisions revealed evidence of unwarranted sentencing disparity.
- Circuit court judges voted to pursue development and testing of sentencing guidelines to reduce unwarranted sentencing disparity.
- Chief Justice formed a committee charged with developing a blueprint for a sentencing guidelines system.
- After pilot testing, voluntary guidelines were implemented statewide in January 1991.



Virginia's Sentencing Reform Legislation (1994)

Goals of Sentencing Reform:

Abolish parole

Establish truth-in-sentencing for felons (minimum 85% time served)

Target violent felons for longer terms of incarceration

Keep the average time served the same for nonviolent felons

Redirect lowest-risk nonviolent felons to less restrictive sanctions

Expand alternative punishment options for nonviolent felons

Reduce sentencing disparities

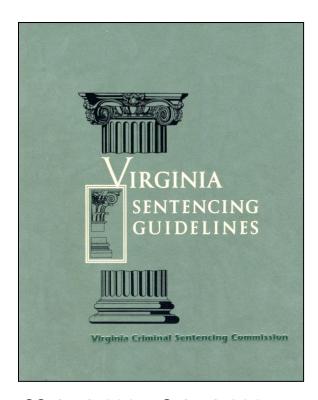
Create a sentencing commission to oversee voluntary guidelines system

Sentencing reform provisions took effect for felonies committed on or after January 1, 1995.



§§ 17.1-800 – § 17.1-806 and § 19.2-298.01 Code of Virginia

Important Features of Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines



§§ 17.1-800 – § 17.1-806 and § 19.2-298.01 *Code of Virginia*

Unlike the federal sentencing guidelines, Virginia's guidelines are based on examination of data.

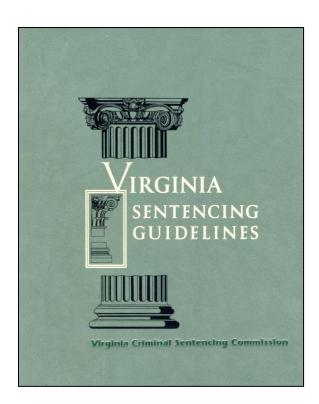
The Commission does not set or modify guidelines based on subjective opinion or normative judgments.

Virginia's guidelines have broader ranges than many other systems.

By law, judges must be presented with and consider the guidelines recommendation.

Compliance with the guidelines is voluntary. Judges must file a written explanation of departure when sentencing outside of the recommended range (§ 19.2-298.01).

Important Features of Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines



§§ 17.1-800 – § 17.1-806 and § 19.2-298.01 *Code of Virginia*

(continued)

Failure to follow guidelines is not reviewable on appeal (§ 19.2-298.01).

"Violent offender" is determined based on the entire criminal history, including juvenile delinquency adjudications. Burglaries are defined as violent crimes (§ 17.1-805).

Mandatory minimum sentences required by the *Code of Virginia* take precedence over sentencing guidelines recommendations.

Jury sentencing is retained; however, juries are not permitted to receive guidelines information (§ 19.2-298.01).

Methodology Used to Create Historically-Based Sentencing Guidelines

UNDER THE PAROLE SYSTEM

- Analyzed historical data to identify all statistically significant factors that influenced sentencing decisions.
- Identified non-legal factors to eliminate their influence on future sentencing decisions (e.g., race).
- Created guidelines forms that captured the remaining factors and their relative importance.
- Prison recommendation (in/out decision) was tied to the historical incarceration rate.
- Prison sentence length recommendations were tied to the middle 50% of historical sentences, eliminating the extreme sentences at the high and low end (to reduce disparity in sentences).



Methodology Used to Create Historically-Based Sentencing Guidelines

UNDER THE NO-PAROLE SYSTEM

Started with historical time served.



Goal:

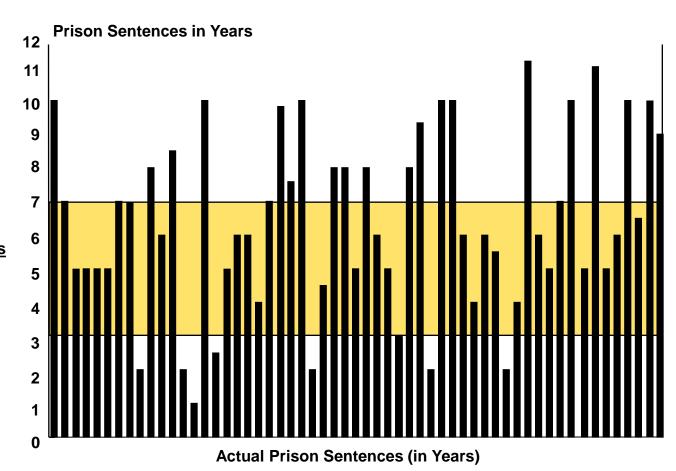
Keep the average time served the same for nonviolent felons.

- Used 1988-1992 time-served distribution for similarly situated offenders.
- Prison recommendation (in/out decision) was tied to the historical incarceration rate.
- Eliminated highest 25% and lowest 25% of time-served values (to reduce disparity in time to be served).
- Increased historical time served by 13.4% (anticipated reduction in time served for good conduct).
- Identified the median time-served of the selected cases.
- This served as the new base recommendation.



Sentencing Guidelines Recommendation Based on Historical Sentences (Pre-1995)

Sale Schedule I/II Drugs for Profit No Prior Record



Guidelines range based on historical sentences

Excludes the highest 25% and lowest 25% of sentences

Sentencing Guidelines Recommendation Based on Historical Time Served (Pre-1995)

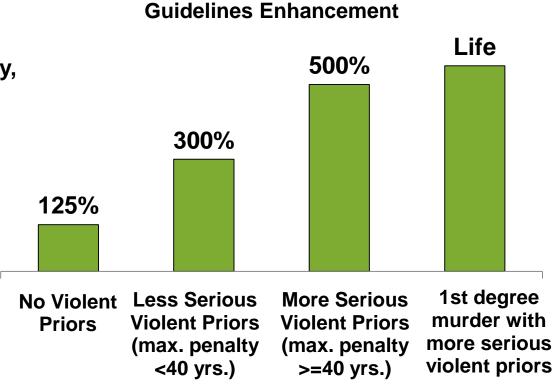
Sale Schedule I/II Drugs for Profit No Prior Record



For 1st and 2nd degree murder, rape (§ 18.2-61), forcible sodomy, object sexual penetration, and aggravated sexual battery,

the base recommendation was increased by:







For voluntary manslaughter, robbery, aggravated malicious or malicious wounding, burglary of a dwelling, and burglary with a deadly weapon,

the base recommendation was increased by:







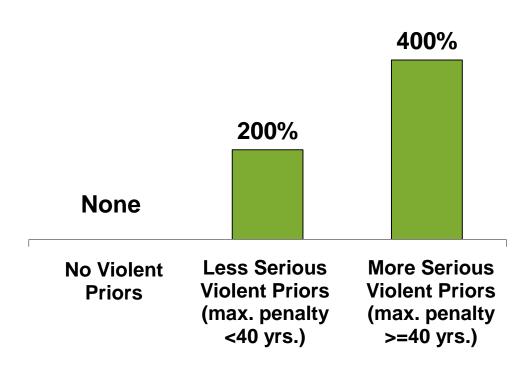
For manufacturing, selling, giving or distributing with intent, etc. a

Schedule I or II drug,

the base recommendation was increased by:



Guidelines Enhancement

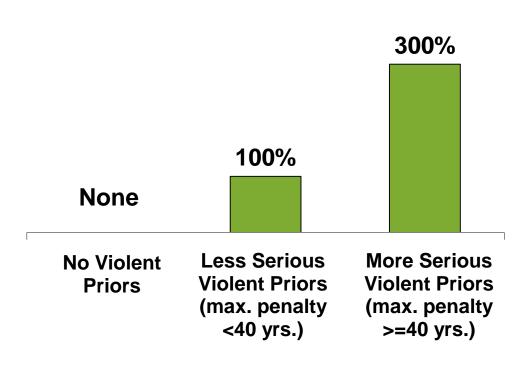




Guidelines Enhancement

For all other felony offenses, the base recommendation was increased by:







Examples of Violent Offenses as Defined in § 17.1-805

Murder

Voluntary manslaughter

Aggravated involuntary manslaughter

Robbery

Certain kidnapping offenses

Rape, forcible sodomy, object sexual penetration

Aggravated sexual battery, felony infected sexual battery, indecent liberties, incest

Certain carnal knowledge offenses

Certain commercial sex trafficking and prostitution/pandering offenses

Child pornography, use of communication system (e.g., internet) to solicit a minor

Most felony assault offenses

Strangulation

Abuse of child or incapacitated adult resulting in injury

Using force/threats for gang recruitment

Certain arson offenses (e.g., arson of an occupied dwelling/building)

Burglary

Certain weapon felonies (e.g., felon in possession of a firearm, brandish weapon or discharge firearm on school property, discharge firearm at an occupied building or from a vehicle)

Certain prisoner offenses

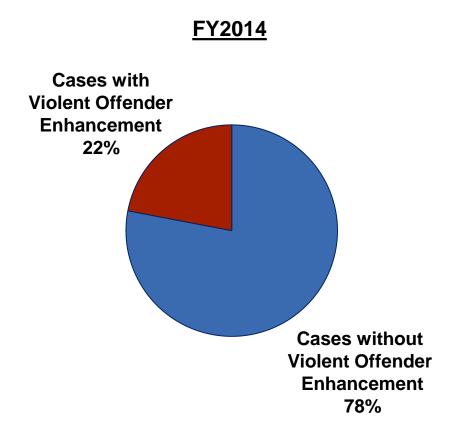
Felony stalking offenses

Please see the Virginia Sentencing Guidelines Manual, Appendix A, for complete list of offenses in § 17.1-805.

"Violent offender" is determined based on the offender's entire criminal history, including juvenile delinquency adjudications.

All burglaries are defined as violent prior felony offenses.

Approximately one in five offenders receives a guidelines enhancement.





Legislative Directive for Nonviolent Offender Risk Assessment

- In 1994, Virginia's legislature directed the newlycreated Sentencing Commission to:
 - Develop an empirically-based risk assessment instrument predictive of an individual's relative risk to public safety to determine appropriate candidates for alternative sanctions; and
 - Apply the instrument to nonviolent felons recommended for prison, with a goal of placing 25% of those offenders in alternative sanctions.



Nature of Offender Risk Assessment

- In practice, risk assessment is often an informal process in the criminal justice system based on intuition or judgement.
- Empirically-based risk assessment, however, is a formal process using knowledge gained through observation of behavior of individuals.
- No risk assessment research can ever predict a given outcome with 100% accuracy.
- The goal is to produce an instrument that is broadly accurate and provides additional useful information to judges.



Development of Virginia's Risk Assessment Instrument

- The Commission studied 1,500 property and drug felons in Virginia and examined over 200 factors relating to the offense, criminal record, substance abuse, employment history, etc.
- A risk assessment worksheet was developed based on the factors that were statistically significant in predicting recidivism.
- After pilot testing and refining, risk assessment was implemented statewide in 2002.
- Following a new study of more recent felony cases, revised risk assessment instruments became effective July 1, 2013.



Use of Nonviolent Offender Risk Assessment

- Risk assessment is completed in larceny, fraud and drug cases for offenders who are recommended for incarceration by the sentencing guidelines.
- Offenders recommended for probation without incarceration do not undergo risk assessment.
- Offenders must also meet the eligibility criteria (e.g., those with a current or prior violent felony conviction (defined in § 17.1-805) are excluded.
- Nonviolent offender risk assessment can only lessen the potential sanction, not add to it.
 - The sentencing guidelines for these offenders recommend incarceration.
 - Risk assessment identifies the lowest risk of jail and prison-bound offenders and recommends alternative punishment.



Use of Nonviolent Offender Risk Assessment

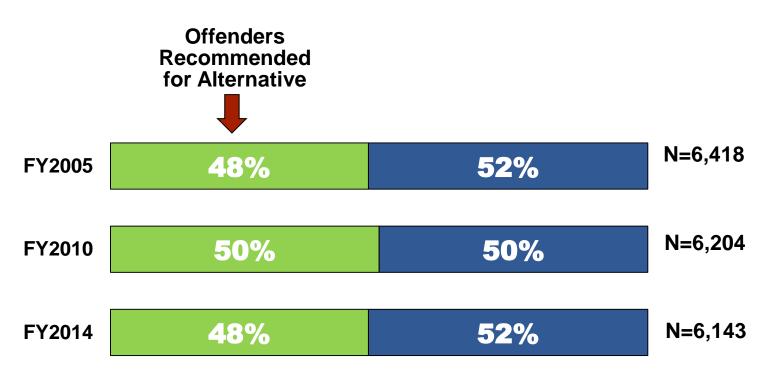
- For offenders who score low enough on the risk scale, the sentencing guidelines cover sheet indicates a dual recommendation:
 - Traditional incarceration
 - Alternative punishment
- As with the sentencing guidelines, compliance with the risk assessment recommendation is discretionary.
- If a judge follows either sentencing recommendation, he or she is considered in compliance with the guidelines.



Namiclant Di	als Assassment	-t- Francis C.	etien B
Nonviolent Ris	sk Assessment	→ Fraud Soc	Offender Name:
♦ Ineligibility Condi A. Was the offender re	Nonviolent R	isk Assessmen	nt +- Larceny Section D
Are any prior record Are any of the offens D. Do any of the offens	 Ineligibility Cond A. Was the offender B. Are any prior reco C. Are any of the offe 		Offender Name: Risk Assessment → Drug/Other Soction D Offender Name:
If answered YES to Not App	D. Do any of the offe	Ineligibility Condi A. Was the offender r B. Do any of the offender grant of a combined grant g	litions recommended for Probation/No Incarceration on Section B?
◆ Offender Age at T Younger than 21 yea	If answered YES Not Ap	C. Are any prior reD. Are any of the o	Offender Name:
21 to 29 years 30 to 43 years Older than 43 years	Younger than 21 y 21 to 29 years 30 to 43 years	E. Do any of the o	B. Do any of the offenses at sentencing involve the sale, distribution, or possession with intent, etc. of cocaine of a combined quantity of 28.35 grams (1 ounce) or more?
◆ Gender Offender is Female Offender is Male	Older than 43 year	Offender Age at Younger tha	D. Are any of the offenses at sentencing violent (Category I/II listed in Appendix A of the Guidelines Manual)?
Prior Adult Felony Number 0 of Counts: 1 - 2 3 or	Offender is Femal Offender is Male	21 to 29 yea 30 to 43 yea Older than 4	Not Applicable. If answered NO to ALL, complete remainder of Section D worksheet. Offender Age at Time of Offense Younger than 21 years
Prior Adult Incard	Prior Adult Felor Number 0 of Counts: 1-	Offender is (21 to 29 years 6 30 to 43 years 3 Older than 43 years 11
1 - 9 10 c	Prior Adult Incar	◆ Prior Juvenile // No prior juvenile Female with prior ju Male with prior ju	♦ Gender Offender is Male
◆ Legally Restraine	Number: 0 . 1 - 10	☐ Juvenile ◆ Prior Adult Felc Number	♦ Prior Juvenile Adjudication
Tot	◆ Legally Restrain	of Counts:	Female with prior juvenile adjudication
		Prior Adult Inca	♦ Prior Adult Felony Convictions 0 Number 0

Using empirical risk assessment, roughly 3,000 of the eligible drug, larceny, and fraud offenders are recommended for alternative sanctions in lieu of traditional prison or jail.

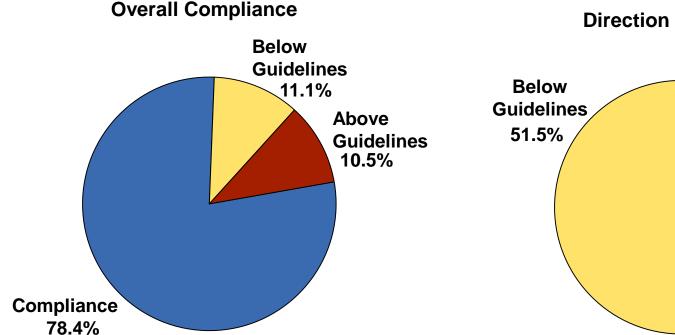
Risk Assessment Outcomes for Eligible Nonviolent Offenders



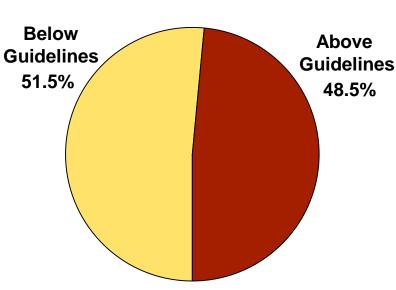


Analysis is based on offenders recommended by the sentencing guidelines for prison or jail incarceration.

In recent years, circuit court judges have complied with the sentencing guidelines in 78% to 80% of cases overall.



Direction of Departures



FY2014

Number of Cases = 25,742

(719 excluded from analysis due to worksheet errors or omissions)

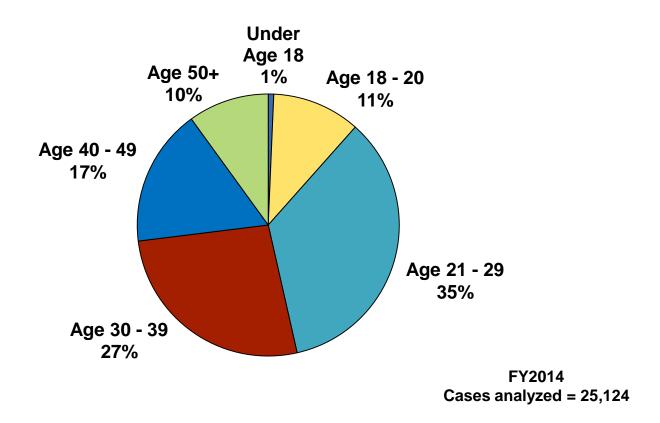


Felony Sentencing Events by Disposition FY2014

Type of Most Serious Offense at Sentencing	Probation/ No Incar- ceration	Jail up to 12 Mos.	1 to 5 Yrs.	Prison More than 5 Yrs. up to 10 Yrs.	More than 10 yrs.	Number of Sentencing Events
Person	9%	22%	38%	15%	16%	3,314
Burglary/B&E	21%	22%	48%	8%	2%	1,556
Larceny/Fraud	30%	43%	26%	0%	0%	8,286
Schedule I or II Drug	34%	33%	29%	3%	1%	6,950
Felony Marijuana	32%	48%	19%	1%	0%	881
Other Drug	46%	35%	19%	0%	0%	600
Felony Traffic	6%	47%	45%	1%	0%	1,731
Weapon	26%	24%	49%	1%	0%	699
Other	31%	45%	23%	1%	0%	1,107
TOTAL	27%	36%	31%	4%	2%	25,124



Defendant Age at Time of Offense FY2014





Defendant Age at Time of Offense By Offense Type FY2014

	Most Seriou	Most Serious Offense at Sentencing				
Age at Offense	Person	Burglary/ B&E	Property/ Drug/Other	Number of Sentencing Events		
Under Age 18	63%	14%	23%	170		
Age 18 – 20	21%	14%	65%	2,732		
Age 21 – 29	13%	7%	80%	8,754		
Age 30 - 39	11%	5%	84%	6,669		
Age 40 – 49	10%	4%	86%	4,260		
Age 50+	13%	3%	84%	2,505		
TOTAL	13%	6%	81%	25,090		



Felony Sentencing Events by Disposition for Select Offenses FY2014

Most Serious Offense at Sentencing	Probation/ No Incar- ceration	Jail up to 12 Mos.	Median Jail Sentence	Prison 1 Yr. or More	Median Prison Sentence	Number of Sentencing Events
Non-Drug						
Homicide—1st degree	0%	0%	N/A	100%	36.0 yrs.	62
Homicide—2 nd degree	0%	0%	N/A	100%	20.0 yrs.	76
Manslaughter	4%	12%	8 mos.	84%	5.0 yrs.	75
Rape/Sexual Assault	6%	12%	6 mos.	82%	8.0 yrs.	473
Robbery	8%	6%	6 mos.	86%	6.0 yrs.	771
Assault	11%	37%	7 mos.	52%	2.3 yrs.	1,438
Burglary/B&E	20%	22%	6 mos.	57%	3.0 yrs.	1,547
Larceny/Fraud	30%	43%	4 mos.	27%	1.5 yrs.	8,342
Drug		1		1		1
Sales, Distribution, Manufacture (Sched. I or II drug or Marijuana)	18%	33%	6 mos.	49%	2.3 yrs.	3,290
Possession with Intent to Distribute (Sched. I/II drug, 1st off.)	11%	24%	8 mos.	65%	2.0 yrs.	794
Simple Possession (Sched. I or II drug)	51%	38%	3 mos.	11%	1.5 yrs.	4,041

27

Dispositions for Simple Possession of a Schedule I or II Drug FY2014

Number of Prior Felony <u>DRUG</u> Convictions/Adjudications	Probation/ No Incar- ceration	Jail up to 12 Mos.	Prison 1 Yr. or More	Median Prison Sentence	Number of Sentencing Events
None	64%	32%	4%	1.6 yrs.	2,521
1 or 2	31%	53%	16%	1.7 yrs.	1,062
3 or 4	19%	42%	39%	1.5 yrs.	322
5	24%	22%	54%	1.5 yrs.	46
6 or more	22%	22%	56%	1.5 yrs.	59

FY2014 Cases analyzed = 4,010

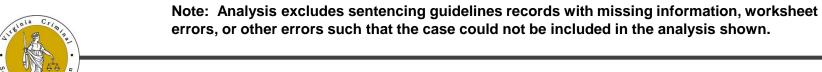


Dispositions for Selling, Distributing, etc., a Schedule I or II Drug* FY2014

Number of Prior Felony <u>DRUG</u> Convictions/Adjudications	Probation/ No Incar- ceration	Jail up to 12 Mos.	Prison 1 Yr. or More	Median Prison Sentence	Number of Sentencing Events
None	14%	35%	51%	1.8 yrs.	1,402
1 or 2	7%	19%	74%	2.0 yrs.	613
3 or 4	9%	9%	82%	2.3 yrs.	202
5	11%	0%	89%	2.9 yrs.	37
6 or more	3%	5%	92%	4.0 yrs.	38

^{*} Excludes offenders who were sentenced under penalty enhancements for second or subsequent distribution, etc., offenses.

FY2014 Cases analyzed = 2,292





Dispositions for Felony Larceny FY2014

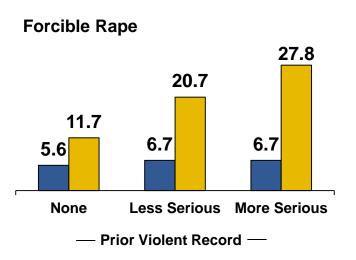
Number of Prior Felony PROPERTY Convictions/Adjudications	Probation/ No Incar- ceration	Jail up to 12 Mos.	Prison 1 Yr. or More	Median Prison Sentence	Number of Sentencing Events
None	43%	50%	7%	1.5 yrs.	3,082
1 to 8	14%	44%	42%	1.5 yrs.	2,915
9 or more	6%	16%	78%	2.0 yrs.	155

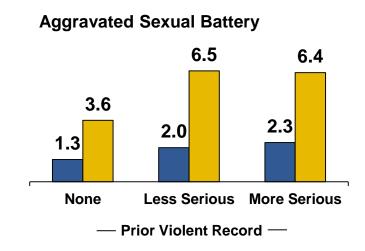
FY2014 Cases analyzed = 6,152

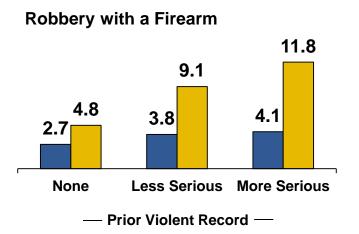


Violent offenders, and particularly repeat violent offenders, are serving longer under truth-in-sentencing.

Prison Time Served (in years)





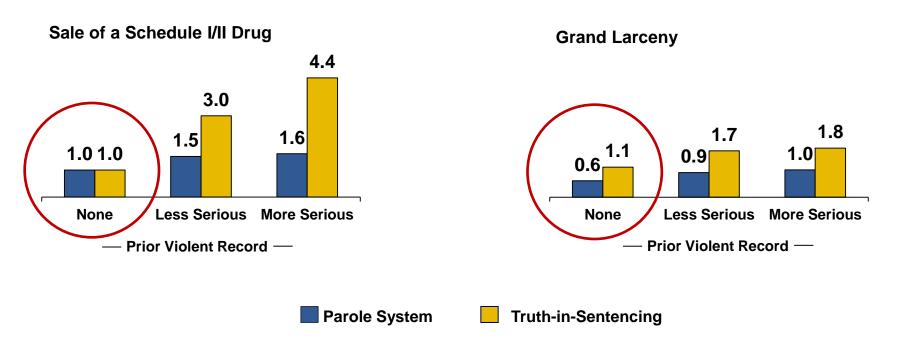




These figures present values of actual incarceration time served under parole laws from 1988 through 1992 and expected time to be served under truth-in-sentencing provisions for cases sentenced in FY2010 through FY2014. Time served values are represented by the median (the middle value, where half the time served values are higher and half are lower). Truth-in-sentencing data include only cases recommended for, and sentenced to, incarceration of more than six months.

Nonviolent offenders who do not have prior violent felony convictions are serving roughly the same amount of time, on average, as they did prior to the abolition of parole.

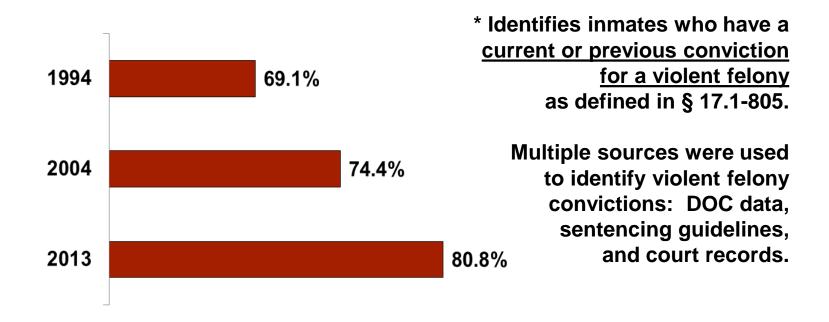




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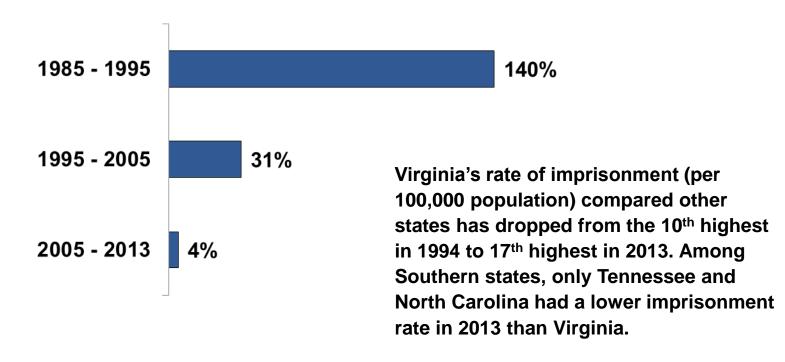
A larger share of Virginia's prison beds are occupied by violent felons.

Percent of State Prison Beds Holding Violent Felons*



Virginia's prison population growth has slowed.

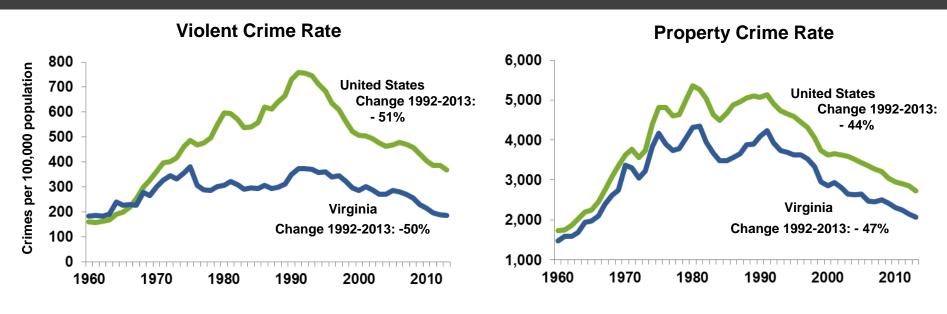
Prison Population Growth in Virginia





Sources: Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission - 2014 Annual Report;
Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Imprisonment rate of sentenced prisoners under the jurisdiction of state or federal correctional authorities per 100,000 U.S. residents, December 31, 1978-2013). Generated using the Corrections Statistical Analysis Tool at www.bjs.gov.

Virginia's crime rate is at a 40-year low, and Virginia's ranking relative to other states has improved.



	Virginia's
	Violent Crime
Year	Ranking
1994	14th lowest
2004	14th lowest
2013	3 rd lowest

	Virginia's
	Property Crime
Year	Ranking
1994	11 th lowest
2004	13 th lowest
2013	8 th lowest

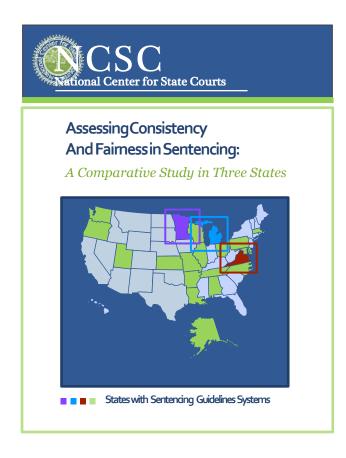
Sources:

<u>Virginia Crime Rates</u>: Virginia State Police Incident-Based Crime Reporting Repository System as analyzed by the Dept. of Criminal Justice Services Research Center

<u>US Crime Rates</u>: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Data Online, available at http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/StateCrime.cfm (through 2012); Crime in the United States 2013

<u>State Rankings</u>: FBI, *Crime in the United States 2013*, Table 5 (https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/5tabledatadecpdf/table_5_crime_in_the_united_states_by_state_2013.xls)

Research suggests that unwarranted sentencing disparities have been reduced.



Findings

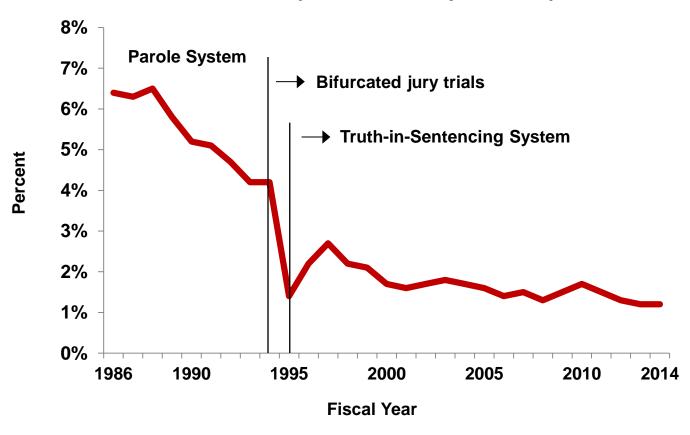
Guidelines effectively limit undesirable sentencing disparity by reducing the role of factors that should not play a role in the sentencing decision.

There is no evidence of a direct relationship between the voluntary/ mandatory nature of state guidelines and undesirable racial, gender, age, or geographical disparities.

Virginia showed no substantively significant discrimination in sentencing outcomes.

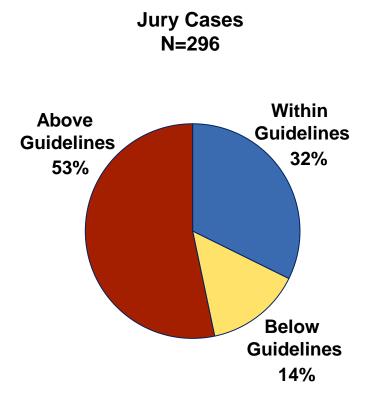
Felony Conviction Cases Adjudicated by Juries Parole System v. Truth-in-Sentencing System

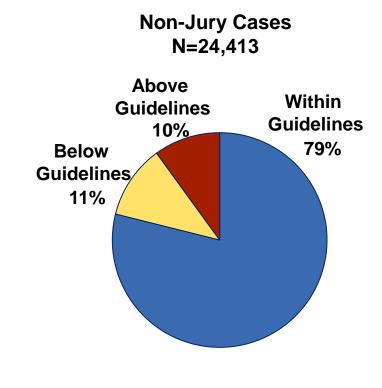
Percent of Felony Convictions Adjudicated by Juries





Concurrence with the Sentencing Guidelines in Jury and Non-Jury Cases









VIRGINIA CRIMINAL SENTENCING COMMISSION





