

Offender Aggregate Data

CSOSA, Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE)

October 2023

The provided file includes all the requested estimates except the counts of offenders with substance use disorder and/or mental health diagnoses, which we are unable to provide at this time. What follows are some notes explaining the structure and interpretation of the data file and the approach taken to generate the estimates.

The estimates reflect the requested cohort period (i.e., September 1, 2021 through September 30, 2023) and the state of the agency's records as of October 4, 2023, two business days following the end of the cohort period. That is, events, updates, and state transitions recorded *after* that October date are *not* reflected in the estimates. This is especially relevant to the interpretation of lagged events, such as reasons for revocation stemming from Alleged Violation Reports and the types of sanctions applied to alleged violations.

Structure of Data File

We assembled the estimates into a six-column record structure as follows:

1. **UnitOfAnalysis:** Categorical column denoting the entity (e.g., Offender, Alleged Violation, Alleged Violation Report) being counted by the row.
2. **Attribute:** Categorical column denoting the attribute (e.g., "Age", "Employment Status", "Sanction Type") of the **UnitOfAnalysis** characterized by the row.
3. **Value:** Categorical column denoting the observed value of the **Attribute** characterized by the row. In other words, the **Values** are nested within **Attributes**.
4. **SupervisionType:** The type of supervision (i.e., 'Probation', 'Supervised Release', or 'Parole') characterized by the row. Note that we included in the 'Probation' category all offenders given the benefit of the DC Superior Court's probation-before-judgement diversion program known as 'Deferred Sentencing Agreement'. Such offenders are generally lower risk and are subject to few, if any, surveillance or risk-containment measures during their time on CSOSA's caseload.
5. **Year:** Integer denoting the calendar year of the cohort characterized by the row.
6. **Month:** Integer denoting the calendar month of cohort characterized by the row. The number 1 denotes 'January', 2 denotes 'February', and so on.
7. **Total:** The count of unique units of analysis matching the criteria denoted by the row. A value of '<10' should be interpreted to mean 'fewer than 10 but at least 1'. We applied this coarsening of the small counts to minimize the risk that offenders' identities might be discerned through deductive disclosure. If a row is missing from

a time series, as are many of the month-specific rows where `UnitOfAnalysis` is 'Alleged Violation Report', the implied value of `Total` is '0'.

Offender

The offender-level estimates include demographics, top-charges, housing stability, and employment status. We prepared these estimates first, identifying all offenders under CSOSA jurisdiction for one or more days during the cohort period (i.e., September 2021 through September 2023) for DC Code violations and the court dockets that are the predicates of their supervision obligations. The estimates where `UnitOfAnalysis` is 'Alleged Violation' and 'Alleged Violation Report' are restricted to this same cohort of offenders to ensure internal consistency.

Since an offender may be supervised simultaneously under multiple supervision types (e.g., supervised release and probation), we applied a prioritization rule to each offender's supervision periods to allow us to aggregate the records to the person level. Under the rule, the supervision types are, in descending order of priority: parole, supervised release, and probation. An offender who was supervised on both supervised release and probation matters during a calendar month would be counted in the supervision type column as a supervised release case and *not* as a probation case.

A few Attribute-specific notes to aid interpretation:

- **Sex, Ethnicity, Education:** These attributes are treated as time-invariant, with the consequence that the variation in the counts (`Total`) are due to entries and exits from the caseload and not due to within-offender status changes. While some offenders do increase their educational attainment during supervision, CSOSA does not systematically record such changes and the associated dates.
- **Age:** The offenders' ages were calculated at the *end* of each calendar month and binned into ranges (e.g., '25 and under', '26-35') selected to minimize the need to coarsen estimates with small values. We calculated the offenders' age at the end of each calendar month during which they were under CSOSA jurisdiction one or more days. We treated the end of the calendar month as the reference date for the age calculation even if the offender exited CSOSA jurisdiction during the month.
- **Employment Status:** The offenders' employment status reflects the *earliest* employment status recorded as applying to each calendar month. Once CSOSA records an employment status for an offender, it remains their status until superseded by another status or the offender exits CSOSA's jurisdiction, whichever comes first.
- **Housing Stability:** This attribute is implemented similar to `Employment Status` and reflects the *earliest* housing stability categorization recorded as applying to each offender in each calendar month. Once a housing stability category is applied to an offender, it is counted as applicable until superseded or the offender exits CSOSA's jurisdiction.

- **Top Charge:** This reflects the category of the “most serious” charge on any of the court dockets that were predicates for the offenders’ supervision during each month. This means that, if an offender is simultaneously under supervision on two dockets—one with a robbery charge (categorized as 1 - Violent and/or sexual) and another with a gun possession charge (categorized as 2 - Weapon)—and the first docket expires during month 1, the offender’s top charge category will change during month 2. Since no seriousness scale or categorization scheme was prescribed, we developed a 9-category scheme and encoded an ordinal reflecting seriousness in the category labels. The category 1 - Violent and/or sexual is most serious followed by 2 - Weapon and so on through 9 - Unknown. Note that drug offenses involving simple possession or possession of paraphernalia, as opposed to distribution or intent to distribute, are categorized as 5 - Public order.

Alleged Violation

When CSOSA determines that an offender has violated one or more terms of their supervision, we record an alleged violation. Positive drug tests and missed appointments for specimen collection *automatically* generate alleged violation records. Other types of detected behaviors (e.g., failures to report, new arrests) are recorded into alleged violation records manually, typically by the community supervision officer (CSO) assigned to the case. Since drug testing violations are recorded automatically, some are unfounded, for example, because the offender is able to produce a valid prescription for medication that could have triggered the positive test result or because the positive test result reflects an episode of drug use that was also detected (at higher concentrations) by an earlier test (i.e., a residual positive result). When preparing the estimates, we attempted to remove alleged violation records that were unfounded for these reasons.

An offender may serve multiple supervision obligations, to the same or different release authorities, simultaneously. Some release conditions, so-called “general conditions,” apply to all supervision obligations whereas others are “special conditions” and apply only to specific supervision obligations at the discretion of the release authority. In preparing the estimates, we removed all violations of *special* conditions that applied to supervision obligations that did not meet the cohort criteria. For example, if an offender was supervised during the cohort period on a probation obligation sentenced by the DC Superior Court (DCSC) and a Civil Protection Order (CPO) issued by the same court, we disregarded any special condition violations associated with the CPO.

Once an alleged violation has been recorded, the assigned CSO may, in consultation with their supervisor, decide not to sanction the offender (encoded as `Value = “No Sanction”`), to apply an administrative sanction (encoded as `Value = “Administrative Sanction”`), or to submit an Alleged Violation Report (AVR) to the release authority (encoded as `Value = “AVR”`). For any alleged violation where both administrative sanctions *and* an AVR were applied, we counted the alleged violation in the (more serious) “AVR” category. We used the date of the violation, not the date of the sanction(s), to anchor the alleged violations in

time, and we imposed no limit on the time elapsed between the violation and the application of sanctions. For example, if a violation occurred in Month 1, was met with an administrative sanction in Month 2, and an AVR was sent in Month 3, we counted the alleged violation in Month 1 with a sanction type of “AVR”. This explains why the proportion of alleged violations met with an administrative sanction or AVR is lower for alleged violations recorded in the final months of the cohort period. If an AVR was submitted near the end of the cohort period, its outcome (e.g., revocation) may not have been known by the October 4 reference date.

Our estimates of the number of alleged violations are affected by at least two exogenous circumstances. The first of these is the COVID-19 pandemic, which was ongoing at the start of the requested cohort period in September 2021. At that time, only offenders who were assessed as posing a high risk to public safety were required to submit specimens for drug testing surveillance. Since most of the alleged violations the agency records are related to drug testing surveillance, this restriction attenuated the volume of alleged violations at the beginning of the cohort period. In March 2022, the agency relaxed the restriction limiting drug testing to high-risk offenders, and the volume of drug tests increased substantially. That increase drove a sharp increase in the volume of alleged violations. By the middle of the cohort period in September 2022, drug testing volume remained somewhat below pre-pandemic levels.

The second notable exogenous circumstance is the deployment of CSOSA’s new case management system in October 2021 and the migration of the records from the old system into the new. The transition affected the agency’s recordkeeping practices. Most notably, the number of alleged violations recorded dipped in October 2021 and rebounded in February and March 2022. Because the timing of this dip overlapped with the pandemic-related restriction on drug testing and the timing of the rebound was approximately coincident with the relaxation of that restriction, it is difficult to separate the effects of the two exogenous circumstances.

Alleged Violation Report

Alleged Violation Reports (AVRs) are written notices of alleged violations sent by CSOSA to the release authority. It is not uncommon for CSOSA to send an AVR to request actions less severe than revocation of supervision (e.g., letters of reprimand, sanction hearings).

In September 2021, the CSOSA’s case management system supported an integrated workflow allowing fully electronic submission of AVRs to the USPC. By contrast, AVRs destined for the DCSC were exported to a paged file format (e.g., PDF) and manually uploaded to the Court’s e-filing system. Beginning in October 2021, with the deployment of the new case management system, the integrated workflow for submission to the USPC was temporarily unavailable. It was restored in September 2023, near the end of the cohort period for this request. In contrast to the manual submission process used with the DCSC, the integrated submission workflow reduces procedural friction and ensures the submission date is accurately and reliably recorded.

When preparing our counts of AVRs leading to revocation, several additional limitations emerged. To conform to the request as closely as possible, we anchored the AVRs in time based on the date of submission, not the date of revocation. With our time anchor established, we needed to identify AVRs that led to revocations. That raised the next challenge: CSOSA does not record revocations as consequences of specific AVRs. This reflects the business process: Although CSOSA participates in the revocation process by submitting AVRs, the release authorities have no obligation to express the rationale for their decisions to CSOSA. Moreover, it is not uncommon for CSOSA to submit multiple AVRs related to an offender before a revocation decision is made. In such a case, it may be reasonable to infer that the revocation was a consequence of the accumulated evidence across two or more AVRs. As a consequence, our estimates reflect every time a supervision period included in our cohort ended with a revocation *after* the time anchor date we selected for each AVR, and *each* of the offender's prior AVRs were counted as leading to revocation.

At this point, another peculiarity of the AVR workflow becomes consequential: Once an AVR is sent, there is no way to revise it except to submit a second AVR characterizing the same violation(s). When new facts emerge after the submission of an AVR, CSOSA staff are directed to prepare a new AVR and designate it as subordinate to the original. To the extent that direction is followed, our estimates should be valid: We counted only original AVRs, ignoring any subordinate updates or revisions. However, to the extent that CSOSA staff created new AVRs expressing updates without denoting them as subordinate, our estimates may be inflated.

The upshot of these considerations is that **our estimates of the number of AVRs leading to revocation may be somewhat inflated**. A hypothetical example may illustrate how. Imagine an offender against whom CSOSA submitted an AVR in Month 1, a second, subordinate, AVR in Month 2, and an AVR concerning a new alleged violation in Month 3. If that offender were subsequently revoked, say, in Month 4, we would count both the AVRs in Months 1 and 3 as having led to revocation. The AVR in Month 2 would not be counted, because it was recorded as a subordinate addendum to the AVR filed in Month 1.