DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED CONVICTIONS

STATISTICAL REPORT





DRIVING WHILE IMPAIRED CONVICTIONS AND SENTENCES IMPOSED

STATISTICAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2024 OCTOBER 2025

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides detailed information about driving while impaired (DWI) convictions sentenced under North Carolina General Statute (hereinafter G.S.) 20-179 during Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024). These data reflect the laws and practices that were in place during this time period.

G.S. 20-179 prescribes sentencing for convictions for impaired driving (G.S. 20-138.1), impaired driving in a commercial vehicle (G.S. 20-138.2), a second or subsequent conviction for operating a commercial vehicle after consuming alcohol (G.S. 20-138.2A), and a second or subsequent conviction for operating a school bus, school activity bus, child care vehicle, ambulance, other EMS vehicle, firefighting vehicle, or law enforcement vehicle after consuming alcohol (G.S. 20-138.2B). Under G.S. 20-179, offenders convicted of any of the above offenses are subject to punishment in one of six punishment levels (Aggravated Level 1, Level 1 through Level 5).

The following impaired driving offenses are excluded from this report:

- Aiding and Abetting DWI (G.S. 20-179(f1))
 - Although sentenced in Level 5, the conduct does not involve impaired driving
- Habitual Impaired Driving (G.S. 20-138.5(b))
 - Sentenced under Structured Sentencing as a Class F felony

REPORTING OF CONVICTIONS AND SENTENCES

The report is based on data entered into the Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC's) legacy criminal case index and integrated case management systems by the court clerk following the imposition of the sentence. The report covers all North Carolina counties. The unit of analysis is a *sentencing episode*, which includes cases disposed through conviction on a given day of court. Within a sentencing episode, this report examines only the most serious conviction. For the sake of simplicity, throughout the report the unit of analysis is referred to as "conviction."

While a sentencing episode involves one offender, in the reporting time frame an offender may be represented by more than one sentencing episode (meaning that within the fiscal year the number of offenders will be the same as or less than the number of sentencing episodes reported).

A SENTENCING
EPISODE IS
IDENTIFIED
FROM COURT
RECORDS AS
THE SENTENCE
IMPOSED FOR
THE MOST
SERIOUS
CONVICTION
ON A GIVEN
DAY OF COURT.

During FY 2023, the AOC began transitioning from its long-standing database, Automated Criminal Infraction System (ACIS), to Enterprise Justice (Odyssey). The data reflected in this report are based on data migrated or entered into Enterprise Justice for the counties in which implementation had begun by the end of July 2024 and on data entered into ACIS for the remaining counties. As implementation continues, more data in this report will be based on information entered into Enterprise Justice.

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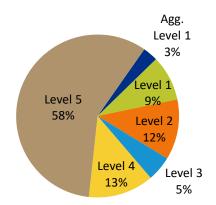
¹ The report's unit of analysis differs from the unit of analysis used in the AOC's Trial Court Caseload Statistics. See A Comparison of Trial Court Caseload Statistics and the Structured Sentencing Statistical Report available at www.NCSPAC.org for details.

The report presents information on the number of DWI convictions, the distribution of DWI convictions across the six punishment levels, the types of sentences imposed, as well as data about several other issues. The Appendix includes data on DWI convictions by district and county, as well as additional analyses by punishment level.

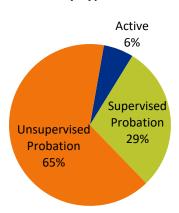
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FY 2024 DWI CONVICTIONS

During FY 2024, sentences for 24,694 DWI convictions were imposed. Under G.S. 20-179, offenders convicted of DWI are subject to punishment in one of six punishment levels (Aggravated Level 1 and Level 1 through Level 5). Most DWI convictions were sentenced in Level 5 (58%) and nearly two-thirds of offenders received unsupervised probation (65%).

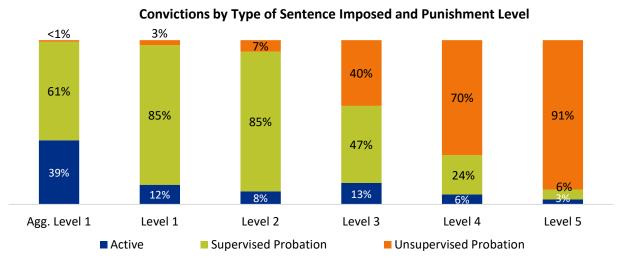
Convictions by Punishment Level



Convictions by Type of Sentence



Overall, 6% of DWI convictions resulted in an active sentence; the highest percentage of active sentences imposed was for offenders in Aggravated Level 1 (39%). Supervised probation was the most common type of sentence imposed for Aggravated Level 1 and Level 1 through Level 3 convictions — ranging from 47% for Level 3 to 85% for Level 1 and Level 2. Unsupervised probation was the most common type of sentence imposed for Level 4 (70%) and Level 5 (91%) convictions.



DWI CONVICTIONS IN FY 2024

DWI CONVICTIONS

This report contains information on DWI convictions sentenced under G.S. 20-179² during FY 2024 (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024) and reflects the laws and practices that were in place during this time period. Overall, sentences for 24,694 DWI convictions were imposed. (This number excludes sentences imposed for aiding and abetting DWI, even though convictions for this offense are sentenced in Level 5 (G.S. 20-179(f1)). The offense of Habitual Impaired Driving is sentenced under Structured Sentencing as a Class F felony. Information on convictions for this offense is also excluded from this report.

Punishment Level

Figure 1 shows the distribution of DWI convictions across punishment levels. The majority of convictions were in Level 5 (n=14,409 or 58%). The percentage of convictions increased from Aggravated Level 1 (3%) through Level 2 (12%), and then again from Level 3 (5%) through Level 5 (58%). Aggravated Level 1 through Level 2 punishments are based on the presence of grossly aggravating factors, 3 while Level 3 through Level 5 punishments are based on the presence and weighing of aggravating and mitigating factors. Information on how many and which of the factors (grossly aggravating, aggravating, and mitigating) that determined offenders' punishment levels is not readily available in the AOC's integrated case management systems.

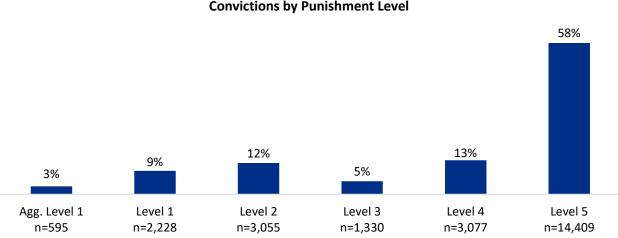


Figure 1
Convictions by Punishment Level

² In addition to convictions for impaired driving (G.S. 20-138.1), G.S. 20-179 also prescribes sentencing for impaired driving in a commercial vehicle (G.S. 20-138.2), a second or subsequent conviction for operating a commercial vehicle after consuming alcohol (G.S. 20-138.2A), and a second or subsequent conviction for operating a school bus, school activity bus, child care vehicle, ambulance, other EMS vehicle, firefighting vehicle, or law enforcement vehicle after consuming alcohol (G.S. 20-138.2B). Convictions for these offenses are included in this report.

³ For a list of the four grossly aggravating factors, see G.S. 20-179(c).

Time to Sentencing

Time to sentencing refers to the amount of time between the date the offender was charged with DWI and the date the sentence was imposed. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of time to sentencing for convictions by punishment level. Overall, time to sentencing was 6 months or less for 23% of convictions, 7 months to 1 year for 36% of convictions, between 1 and 2 years for 29% of convictions, and more than 2 years for 12% of convictions; over half (59%) of convictions were sentenced within 1 year or less. A smaller percentage of Aggravated Level 1 convictions were sentenced within 1 year compared to Level 1 through Level 5 convictions. Information on time to sentencing by method of disposition can be found in the Special Issues section.

Agg. Level 1 17% 27% 33% Level 1 Level 2 34% Level 3 24% 33% 29% 14% Level 4 38% Level 5 25% 38% 10% Total 23% 36% 29% 12% ■ 6 Months or Less 7 Months to 1 Year ■ Between 1 and 2 Years ■ More than 2 Years

Figure 2
Time to Sentencing by Punishment Level

Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 30 convictions with discrepant date values were excluded from the figure.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Month of Sentencing

Figure 3 shows the number of convictions by month of sentencing during FY 2024. Convictions generally decreased during the first half of the fiscal year and increased during the second half. Convictions were lowest in December 2023 and were highest in August 2023.

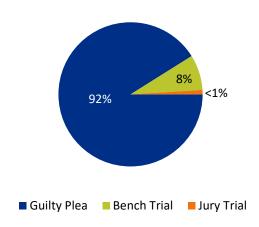
Figure 3
Convictions by Month of Sentencing



Method of Disposition

Figure 4 shows that 92% of DWI convictions in FY 2024 resulted from guilty pleas and 8% from bench trials. Jury trials occurred for less than 1% of convictions (n=27). Across all punishment levels, guilty pleas were the most common method of disposition, ranging from 92% (Level 2, Level 3, and Level 5) to 94% (Aggravated Level 1 and Level 4) of convictions.

Figure 4
Convictions by Method of Disposition

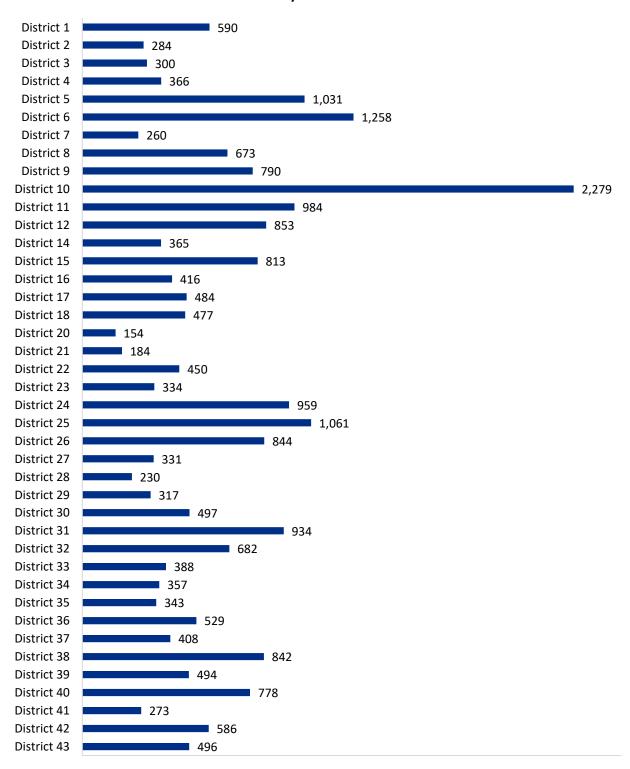


SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

District Court District

Figure 5 shows the total number of convictions by district court district (N=24,694). District 10 (Wake County, n=2,279), District 6 (New Hanover and Pender Counties, n=1,258), District 25 (Cabarrus County, n=1,061), and District 5 (Duplin, Jones, Onslow, and Sampson Counties, n=1,031) had the most DWI convictions and accounted for a combined 23% of convictions in FY 2024. Additional information about DWI convictions by district and county can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 5
Convictions by District Court District



OFFENDER CHARACTERISTICS

This section provides information about convictions by offenders' sex, race, age at offense, and blood alcohol concentration (BAC).

Sex, Race, and Age at Offense

Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 74% were for males (see Figure 6). Overall, the majority of DWI offenders were White (52%), followed by Black (30%), Hispanic (9%), and Other (9%). White females comprised a larger percentage of convictions for females (60%) compared to White males as a percentage of convictions for males (50%). While Black males and females comprised similar percentages by sex (29% and 31% respectively), the percentage of convictions for Hispanic males was larger (10%) compared to Hispanic females (4%).

Figure 6

Convictions by Sex and Race Male **Female** Black **Black** 29% Hispanic 31% 10% Hispanic Other 4% White 11% White 60% Other 50% 5% Male 74% Female 26%

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 1 shows convictions by age at offense and punishment level. Overall, the average age of DWI offenders was 37, with Level 3 offenders being slightly older on average (39) than offenders sentenced in the other punishment levels. Most convictions were for offenders aged 21-40 at the time of offense, ranging from a low of 56% for Level 3 to a high of 66% for Level 1. Forty-three percent (43%) of all Level 5 convictions were for offenders aged 30 and younger. As shown in Figure 7, the volume of offenders peaked at age 30, and then generally declined as age increased.

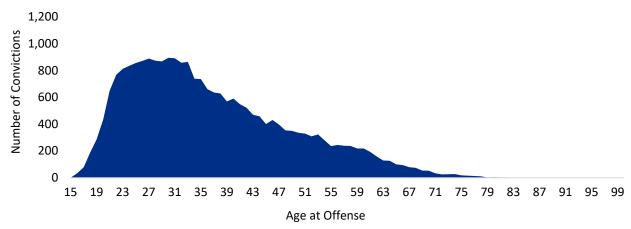
Table 1
Convictions by Age at Offense and Punishment Level

		_	Age at Offense					
Punishment Level	#	Average Age	<21	21-30	31-40	41-50	>50	
			%	%	%	%	%	
Agg. Level 1	595	38	1	28	35	21	15	
Level 1	2,228	37	1	30	36	20	13	
Level 2	3,055	38	2	29	31	20	18	
Level 3	1,329	39	3	24	32	21	20	
Level 4	3,072	38	4	29	29	20	18	
Level 5	14,397	36	5	38	27	15	15	
Total	24,676	37	4	34	29	17	16	

Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 18 convictions with missing values for offender age were excluded from the table.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Figure 7
Distribution of Convictions by Age at Offense

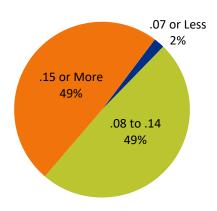


Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 18 convictions with missing values for offender age were excluded from the figure.

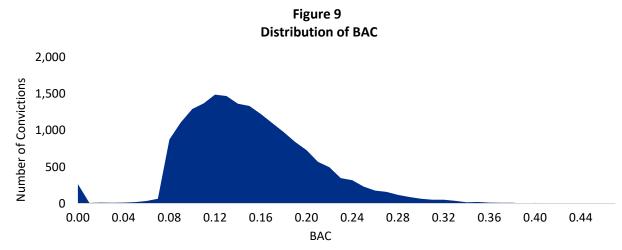
Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

BAC levels were available for 75% of convictions.⁴ Figure 8 shows the percentage of convictions by BAC category. The .08 to .14 category and the .15 or More category each comprised 49% of convictions. Figure 9 provides the distribution of BAC for DWI offenders. A BAC of .12 was the most frequent (1,491), followed closely by .13 (1,471). These two BAC levels accounted for 16% of all convictions with a BAC.

Figure 8
Convictions by BAC



Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 6,276 without recorded BAC levels were excluded from the figure. SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data



Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 6,276 convictions without BAC levels were excluded from the figure. SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

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⁴ BAC data from the AOC's integrated case management systems include information other than numeric BAC values. Clerks can use the same field to record information about breathalyzer and blood tests (e.g., directed, administered, refused), whether the DWI charge stemmed from controlled substances other than alcohol, and whether offenders were incapable of taking a breathalyzer test. As a result, BAC values are not readily available for every DWI conviction involving alcohol. Efforts are ongoing to identify BAC values for a larger percentage of convictions (e.g., the BAC results of blood tests), as well as the percentage of DWI convictions where controlled substances other than alcohol were involved.

G.S. 20-179(e)(1) defines an alcohol concentration that does not exceed .09 as a mitigating factor in terms of sentencing; likewise, G.S. 20-179(d)(1) establishes alcohol concentrations of .15 or more as an aggravating factor. A weighing of aggravating and mitigating factors determines whether offenders, who do not have any grossly aggravating factors, will be sentenced in Levels 3, 4, or 5.⁵ Aggravating and mitigating factors may also be used in determining the type and length of sentences of offenders receiving Aggravated Level 1, Level 1, and Level 2 punishments.⁶

Figure 10 shows the percentage of convictions by punishment level with a BAC of .09 or less and those with a BAC of .15 or more. Level 3 and Level 4 convictions had the highest percentage of convictions with BAC levels greater than or equal to .15 (79% and 72% respectively). Correspondingly, these same punishment levels also had the lowest percentage of convictions with BAC levels of .09 or less (7% each). Level 5 convictions had the highest percentage of convictions with BAC levels of .09 or less (15%).

Agg. Level 1 56% ■ .09 or Less 13% Level 1 50% ■ .15 or More 12% Level 2 56% Level 3 79% 7% Level 4 15% Level 5 40% Total

Figure 10
Convictions by Mitigating and Aggravating BAC Levels and Punishment Level

Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 6,276 convictions without BAC levels were excluded from the figure. SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

SENTENCES IMPOSED

This section provides information on DWI convictions by the type of sentence imposed (active sentence, supervised probation, or unsupervised probation) and the method of disposition (guilty plea, bench trial, or jury trial). This section excludes 103 of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024 for which the type of sentence imposed could not be determined. An additional 15 convictions were excluded from analyses involving suspended sentence length.

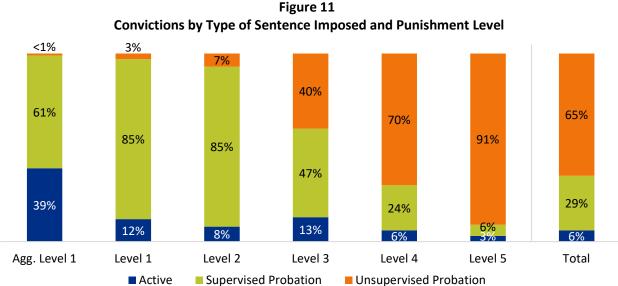
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⁵ G.S. 20-179(f)(1)-(3)

⁶ G.S. 20-179(c)

Type of Sentence Imposed and Punishment Level

Figure 11 and Table 2 show that 6% of DWI convictions in FY 2024 resulted in an active sentence, 29% resulted in supervised probation, and 65% resulted in unsupervised probation. The highest percentage of active sentences was imposed for offenders with an Aggravated Level 1 punishment (39%). Supervised probation was the most common type of sentence imposed for Aggravated Level 1 and Level 1 through Level 3 convictions – ranging from 47% for Level 3 to 85% for Level 1 and Level 2. Unsupervised probation was the most common type of sentence imposed for Level 4 (70%) and Level 5 (91%) convictions. Despite being a lower punishment level, the percentage of convictions that resulted in an active sentence for Level 3 punishments (13%) was higher than for Level 2 punishments (8%). As noted previously, Aggravated Level 1 through Level 2 punishments are based on the presence of grossly aggravating factors, while Level 3 through Level 5 punishments are not.



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 2 Convictions by Type of Sentence Imposed and Punishment Level

	Type of Sentence Imposed						
Punishment Level	Act	ive	Supervised	Supervised Probation		Unsupervised Probation	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Agg. Level 1	229	39	363	61	1	<1	593
Level 1	260	12	1,892	85	69	3	2,221
Level 2	231	8	2,585	85	224	7	3,040
Level 3	172	13	617	47	533	40	1,322
Level 4	202	6	725	24	2,137	70	3,064
Level 5	436	3	884	6	13,031	91	14,351
Total	1,530	6	7,066	29	15,995	65	24,591

Figure 12 shows the percentage of convictions that resulted in an active sentence for each punishment level by method of disposition. In FY 2024, 6% of all convictions obtained by guilty plea resulted in an active sentence compared to 4% of all convictions resulting from bench trials. With the exception of Aggravated Level 1, higher percentages of active sentences for guilty plea convictions were found across all punishment levels.

43% 38% 14% 12% 11% 7% 7% 6% 6% 4% Agg. Level 1 Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Total ■ Guilty Plea ■ Bench Trial

Figure 12
Percentage of Active Sentences by Method of Disposition and Punishment Level

Note: Jury trials were excluded from the figure due to the limited number of observations (n=27). The overall percentage of active sentences for jury trials was 16%.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Sentence Length Imposed

Under G.S. 15A-1351(b), judges must impose a maximum term of imprisonment and may impose a minimum term. For the purpose of this analysis, sentence length refers to the maximum term imposed.⁷ Table 3 examines active sentences only and shows the average active sentence within the context of the statutory minimum and statutory maximum sentences. When an active sentence was imposed (n=1,530), the average length was 7 months. Among convictions in Level 1 through Level 5, the average active sentence length was generally half of the statutory maximum.

Table 3
Average Length of Active Sentences by Punishment Level

Punishment Level Statutory Minimum		Average Active Sentence	Statutory Maximum	
Agg. Level 1	12 months 21 months		36 months	
Level 1	30 days 13 months		24 months	
Level 2 7 days		6 months	12 months	
Level 3	72 hours	4 months	6 months	
Level 4	48 hours	2 months	120 days	
Level 5	el 5 24 hours		60 days	
Total		7 months		

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

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⁷ For more information on the use of minimum and maximum terms, see Figure 19.

Figure 13 provides a comparison of the average sentence imposed for active sentences and suspended sentences. As punishment level decreased, the average sentence length decreased for both active and suspended sentences. Aggravated Level 1 DWI convictions had the longest average active and suspended sentences imposed. For each punishment level, the average sentence for offenders who received a suspended sentence was longer than the average sentence for those who received an active sentence. However, the overall average sentence for active sentences was longer than the average sentence imposed for suspended sentences due to the large volume of Level 5 suspended sentences.

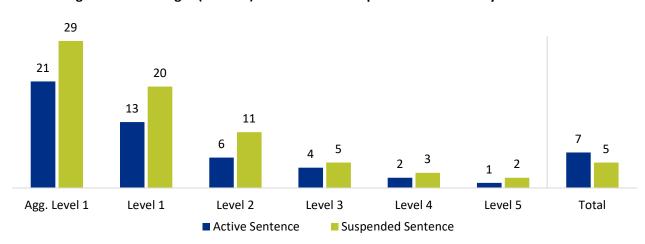


Figure 13
Average Sentence Length (Months) for Active and Suspended Sentences by Punishment Level

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Suspended Sentences with Probation

This section summarizes information about suspended (i.e., probationary) sentences. Pursuant to G.S. 20-179, a suspended sentence may be imposed in each of the six levels of DWI punishment if the sentence contains certain conditions of probation (e.g., special probation). For all punishment levels receiving a suspended sentence, the defendant must obtain a substance abuse assessment and complete any recommended treatment or education. Unless a judge determines that supervised probation is necessary, an offender who receives a suspended sentence for DWI and meets certain conditions must be placed on unsupervised probation.⁸ The precise length of a probation term for a DWI conviction is not prescribed by statute. The court may place a convicted offender on probation for a period not to exceed five years.⁹

Probation was imposed for all 23,061 DWI convictions in FY 2024 with a suspended sentence. Figure 14 summarizes the type of probation – supervised or unsupervised – for suspended sentences. Overall, over two-thirds (69%) of offenders received unsupervised probation. Nearly all Aggravated Level 1 and Level 1 offenders with a suspended sentence received supervised probation (100% and 96% respectively). Level 5 offenders accounted for 60% of all suspended sentences with probation (i.e., 13,915 of 23,061

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⁸ G.S. 20-179(r) outlines the circumstances in which offenders should receive unsupervised probation. Absent a judge's determination that supervised probation is necessary, unsupervised probation must be imposed if the following conditions are met: 1) if the person has not been convicted of an offense of impaired driving within the seven years preceding the date of the offense for which the defendant is being sentenced, 2) if Level 3, Level 4, or Level 5 punishment is imposed, and 3) if the defendant has obtained a substance abuse assessment and completed any recommended treatment or training program.

⁹ Pursuant to G.S. 15A-1342.

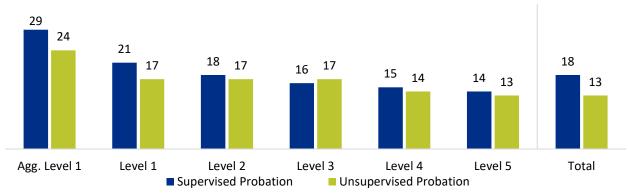
offenders). As punishment level decreased, a higher percentage of offenders received unsupervised probation.

Figure 14 Suspended Sentences by Type of Probation and Punishment Level <1% 46% 69% 75% 94% 100% 96% 92% 54% 31% 25% Agg. Level 1 Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Total n=364 n=1,961 n=2,809 n=1,150n=2,862 n=13,915 N=23,061■ Supervised Probation Unsupervised Probation

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Figure 15 provides the average length of probation by punishment level and type of probation. The average length of probation was 18 months for supervised and 13 months for unsupervised probation. With the exception of Level 3, most offenders with supervised probation received longer probation terms than offenders with unsupervised probation. Generally, as punishment level decreased, the average length of probation supervision decreased.

Figure 15
Average Length of Probation (Months) by Type of Probation and Punishment Level



Note: The average length of probation for unsupervised probation in Aggravated Level 1 was based on 1 observation. SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 4 explores the most frequently imposed probation length (mode) for each punishment level by type of probation. Among all offenders who received unsupervised probation, 12 months was the most frequently imposed probation length. More variation in probation length occurred among offenders who received supervised probation, ranging from 12 to 36 months.

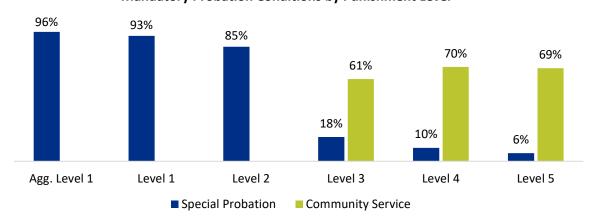
Table 4

Most Frequently Imposed Probation Length by Type of Probation and Punishment Level

				Type of	Probation		
Punishment Level	Total	Sup	ervised Probat	ion	Unsu	pervised Prob	ation
	1000		Months			Months	
		#	(Mode)	%	#	(Mode)	%
Agg. Level 1	364	363	36	41	1	24	100
Level 1	1,961	1,892	24	49	69	12	43
Level 2	2,809	2,585	18	44	224	12	56
Level 3	1,150	617	12	43	533	12	54
Level 4	2,862	725	12	68	2,137	12	74
Level 5	13,915	884	12	81	13,031	12	86
Total	23,061	7,066	12	39	15,995	12	82

Special probation is required for Aggravated Level 1 through Level 2 offenders who receive probation, ¹⁰ while either special probation or community service is required for Level 3 through Level 5 offenders who receive probation. ¹¹ Mandatory probation conditions by punishment level are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16
Mandatory Probation Conditions by Punishment Level



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 5 shows the number, percent, and average days of special probation ordered within the context of statutory requirements. Of all suspended sentences with probation, 25% (n=5,872) had special probation ordered (see Table 5). The average number of special probation days was highest for Aggravated Level 1 offenders and generally decreased as punishment level decreased.

¹⁰ Offenders sentenced in Aggravated Level 1 through Level 2 may receive community service as part of their sentence. Four percent (4%) of Aggravated Level 1 sentences, 6% of Level 1 sentences, and 11% of Level 2 sentences included community service. ¹¹ Special probation and community service may be imposed together in Level 3 through Level 5, although this occurred for less

than 1% of convictions.

13

Table 5
Suspended Sentences with Special Probation by Punishment Level

Punishment Level	Suspended Sentences #	Special Probation Ordered %	Average Special Probation Days	Statutory Length Days
Agg. Level 1	364	96	146	At least 120
Level 1	1,961	93	32	At least 30 or at least 10 (if CAM)
Level 2	2,809	85	10	At least 7
Level 3	1,150	18	8	At least 3
Level 4	2,862	10	3	2
Level 5	13,915	6	3	1
Total	23,061	25	23	N/A

Note: All suspended sentences with special probation ordered are shown regardless of whether the lengths of special probation are consistent with the terms in G.S. 20-179(f3), (g)-(k). CAM stands for continuous alcohol monitoring. SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 6 provides information on fines imposed for suspended sentences by punishment level. Fines were imposed for the majority of DWI convictions (81%), ranging from a low of 58% for Aggravated Level 1 offenders to a high of 84% for Level 4 offenders. For each punishment level, the average fine amounts were much lower than the statutory maximum. Nearly all fines imposed (96%) were \$500 or less. The average fine amount decreased as punishment level decreased.

Table 6
Suspended Sentences with a Fine Imposed by Punishment Level

Punishment Level	#	Fine Imposed %	Statutory Maximum	Average	Mode
Agg. Level 1	212	58	\$10,000	\$944	\$500
Level 1	1,450	74	\$4,000	\$538	\$500
Level 2	2,218	79	\$2,000	\$388	\$300
Level 3	952	83	\$1,000	\$277	\$200
Level 4	2,390	84	\$500	\$184	\$200
Level 5	11,347	82	\$200	\$108	\$100
Total	18,569	81	N/A	\$203	\$100

SPECIAL ISSUES

This section reviews issues of special interest including time to sentencing, sentence lengths imposed relative to the statutory minimum and maximum sentences, and credit for time served.¹²

Time to Sentencing by Punishment Level and Method of Disposition

Figure 17 examines the median time to sentencing by punishment level and method of disposition. The median time to sentencing for DWI convictions was 11 months. Overall, and across all punishment levels, bench trials had a longer median time to sentencing than guilty pleas.

Figure 17
Median Time to Sentencing (Months) by Punishment Level and Method of Disposition



Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 30 convictions with discrepant date values were excluded. There were 27 jury trials (not included in figure) with a median time to sentencing of 44 months.

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Sentence Length Relative to the Statutory Minimum and Maximum Sentences

Figure 18 examines how often the minimum sentence imposed is equal to the statutory minimum or statutory maximum sentence length. Overall, the majority of minimum sentences imposed were equal to the statutory maximum (68%) and only 2% were equal to the statutory minimum – for a total of 70% on one of these two "spots." However, active sentences were only imposed on a spot 37% of the time compared to 72% of suspended sentences. The statutory minimum sentence was imposed very infrequently regardless of whether the sentence was active or suspended (with the exception of Aggravated Level 1 convictions).¹³

¹² For some analyses in this section, 103 of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024 for which the type of sentence imposed could not be determined were excluded. An additional 15 convictions were excluded from analyses involving suspended sentence lengths.

¹³ Overall, 23% of Aggravated Level 1 offenders were sentenced to the statutory minimum (12 months), 44% were sentenced to the statutory maximum (36 months), and 33% were sentenced to a different amount of time, for a total of 67% sentenced on either the statutory minimum or statutory maximum.

Active Sentence

Spot: 37%

Spot: 72%

Suspended Sentence

Spot: 70%

Total 2%

Spot: 70%

Spot: 70

Figure 18
Sentence Length Relative to the Statutory Minimum and Maximum Sentences

Use of Minimum and Maximum Sentences

■ Equal to Stat Min

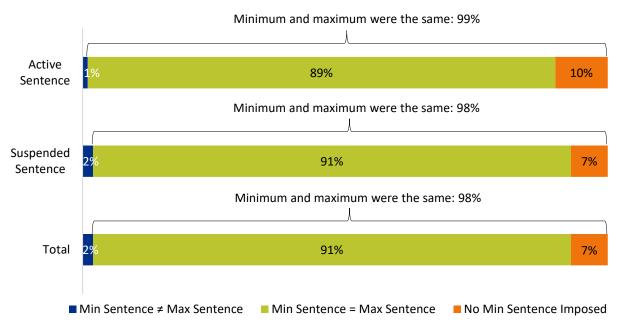
Judges must impose a maximum term of imprisonment and may impose a minimum term. ¹⁴ Figure 19 examines whether a minimum term was imposed and whether the minimum term equaled the maximum term. Overall, 91% of sentences imposed included a minimum term that was equal to the maximum term (e.g., 12 months minimum and 12 months maximum). In an additional 7% of sentences, no minimum term was indicated and only a maximum term was imposed. In the remaining 2% of sentences imposed, the minimum and maximum terms differed, indicating a range of months (e.g., 12 months minimum and 36 months maximum). The use of a sentencing range occurred infrequently regardless of whether an active or a suspended sentence was imposed.

■ Equal to Stat Max

■ Not Equal to Stat Min or Max

¹⁴ G.S. 15A-1351(b)

Figure 19
Use of Minimum and Maximum Sentences



Credit for Time Served

Credit for time served refers to the amount of time an offender has spent committed to or confined in a State or local correctional, mental, or other institution prior to sentencing. Eighteen percent (18%) of all DWI offenders received credit for time served (see Table 7). Sixty-one percent (61%) of offenders who received active sentences received credit for time served compared to only 15% of those who received suspended sentences. Offenders who received an active sentence averaged a higher amount of credit for time served than those who received a suspended sentence (65 and 15 days respectively).

Table 7
Convictions with Credit for Time Served by Punishment Level

			Convictions with Credit for Time Served			
Punishment Level	Sentence Type	#	%	Average Days	Median Days	
	Active	229	53	99	43	
Agg. Level 1	Suspended	364	39	62	31	
	Subtotal	593	44	79	38	
	Active	260	55	72	45	
Level 1	Suspended	1,961	33	27	16	
	Subtotal	2,221	35	35	21	
	Active	231	53	80	49	
Level 2	Suspended	2,809	30	15	7	
	Subtotal	3,040	31	24	7	
	Active	172	60	79	55	
Level 3	Suspended	1,150	20	16	3	
	Subtotal	1,322	26	35	11	
	Active	202	68	61	37	
Level 4	Suspended	2,862	15	9	2	
	Subtotal	3,064	19	21	5	
	Active	436	71	39	30	
Level 5	Suspended	13,915	8	6	1	
	Subtotal	14,351	10	13	2	
Total	Active	1,530	61	65	38	
	Suspended	23,061	15	15	3	
	Total	24,591	18	26	7	

TRENDS FOR DWI CONVICTIONS

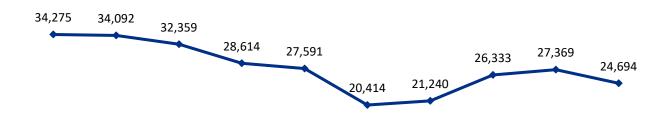
TRENDS FOR DWI CONVICTIONS

The previous sections focused on a single fiscal year of data (FY 2024); this section examines DWI convictions from FY 2015 to FY 2024, with a focus on the past five years (FY 2020 through FY 2024). Trend data allow for the examination of changes over time, including (but not limited to) the composition of offenders and changes in sentencing practices.

Volume of DWI Convictions

The number of DWI convictions has declined since FY 2015 (see Figure 20). The sharpest decline occurred following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, with a 26% decrease from FY 2019 to FY 2020. DWI convictions decreased 10% from FY 2023 to FY 2024.

Figure 20 DWI Convictions

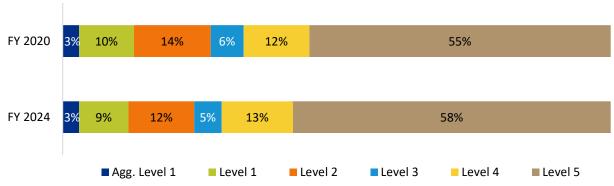


FY 2015 FY 2016 FY 2017 FY 2018 FY 2019 FY 2020 FY 2021 FY 2022 FY 2023 FY 2024 SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2015 – FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Punishment Level

The distribution of DWI convictions by punishment level has remained stable (see Figure 21). Most convictions were in Level 5, while a small percentage were in Aggravated Level 1.

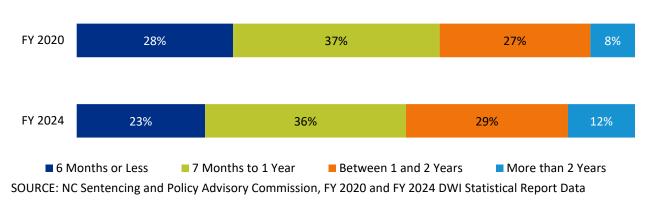
Figure 21
Convictions by Punishment Level



Time to Sentencing

In FY 2024, a lower percentage of DWI convictions were sentenced in one year or less; correspondingly, the percentage of convictions sentenced in more than two years has increased (see Figure 22).

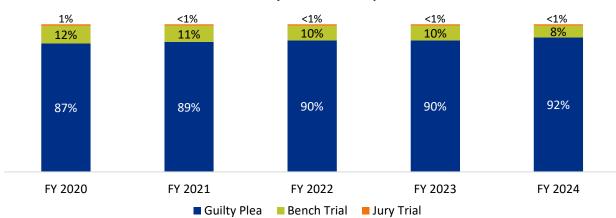
Figure 22
Time to Sentencing



Method of Disposition

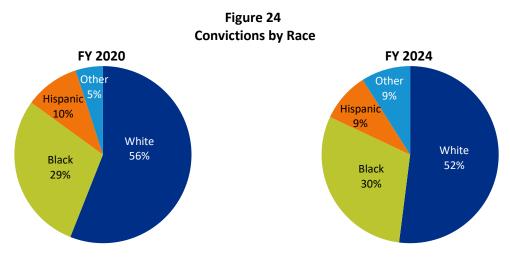
The majority of DWI convictions resulted from guilty pleas (see Figure 23), increasing from 87% in FY 2020 to 92% in FY 2024. The percentage of DWI convictions that resulted from bench trials has declined. The percentage of convictions resulting from jury trials has remained stable at 1% or less.

Figure 23
Convictions by Method of Disposition



Offender Characteristics

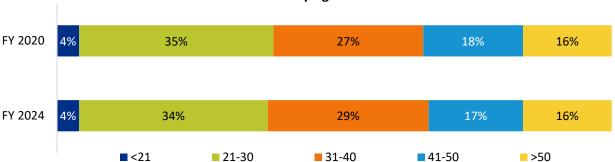
The distribution of offenders by sex has remained consistent over time, with males accounting for around 75% of convictions. Figure 24 shows DWI convictions by race. White offenders comprised the majority of DWI convictions in both years shown; however, the percentage has decreased since FY 2020.



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2020 and FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

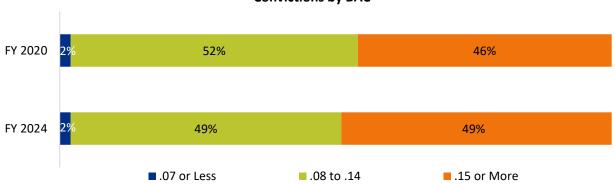
As shown in Figure 25, the age distribution for DWI convictions has remained similar with over 60% of offenders between age 21 and 40 at the time of offense. The average age at offense was the same in FY 2020 and in FY 2024 (both 37).

Figure 25
Convictions by Age at Offense



In both years, BAC levels were available for about three-fourths of convictions. As shown in Figure 26, the BAC distribution has shifted slightly, with a lower percentage of offenders having a BAC in the .08 to .14 category and a higher percentage having a BAC in the .15 or More category in FY 2024.

Figure 26
Convictions by BAC

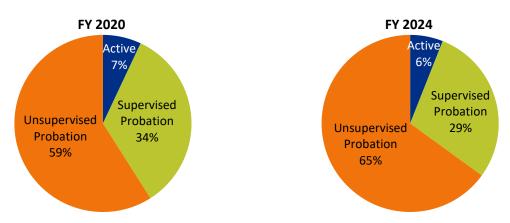


SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2020 and FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Sentences Imposed

Figure 27 shows convictions by type of sentence imposed. While the percentage of offenders who received active sentences was similar, the percentage of offenders receiving unsupervised probation increased and the percentage receiving supervised probation decreased from FY 2020 to FY 2024.

Figure 27
Convictions by Type of Sentence Imposed



The percentage of active sentences by method of disposition has remained consistent. For convictions resulting from a guilty plea, the percentage with an active sentence was 8% in FY 2020 and 6% in FY 2024; the percentage of active sentences as a result of a bench trial was 4% in both years.

Figure 28 shows the percentage of active sentences imposed by punishment level. The percentage of active sentences in each punishment level for FY 2024 was within 2 percentage points of the FY 2020 rate.

Figure 28
Percentage of Active Sentences by Punishment Level

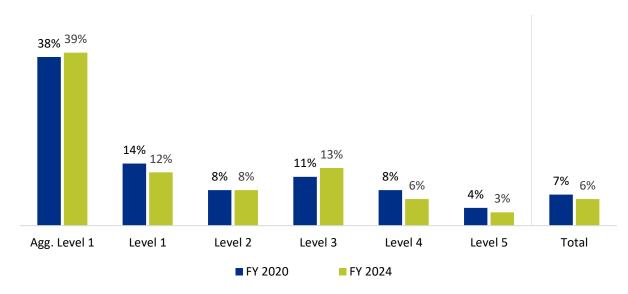


Table 8 shows the average sentence length for active and suspended sentences by punishment level. Among both active and suspended sentences, the average length of sentences was consistent overall and by punishment level.

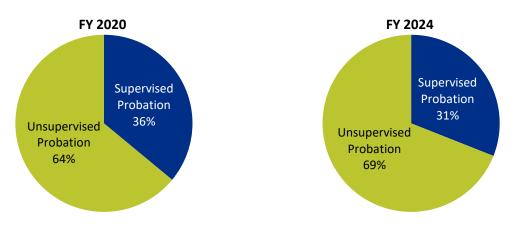
Table 8
Average Sentence Length for Active and Suspended Sentences by Punishment Level

Danish was and	Active				Suspended			
Punishment Level	2020		2024		2020		2024	
	# Months		#	# Months		# Months		Months
Agg. Level 1	212	19	229	21	345	30	364	29
Level 1	269	12	260	13	1,740	20	1,961	20
Level 2	214	6	231	6	2,672	11	2,808	11
Level 3	139	4	172	4	1,087	5	1,150	5
Level 4	217	2	202	2	2,361	3	2,862	3
Level 5	422	1	436	1	10,723	2	13,901	2
Total	1,473	7	1,530	7	18,928	6	23,046	5

SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2020 and FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

When a suspended sentence was imposed, most DWI offenders received unsupervised probation (see Figure 29). The use of unsupervised probation for suspended sentences has increased since FY 2020.

Figure 29
Suspended Sentences by Type of Probation



SOURCE: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2020 and FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data

Table 9 shows the average length of probation in months by type of probation. As with average sentence length, the average lengths of supervised and unsupervised probation by punishment level were very similar for FY 2020 and FY 2024.

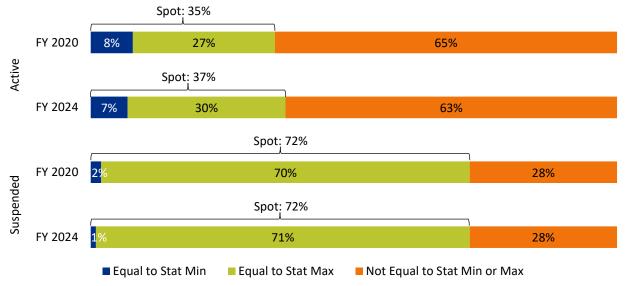
Table 9
Average Length of Probation by Type of Probation

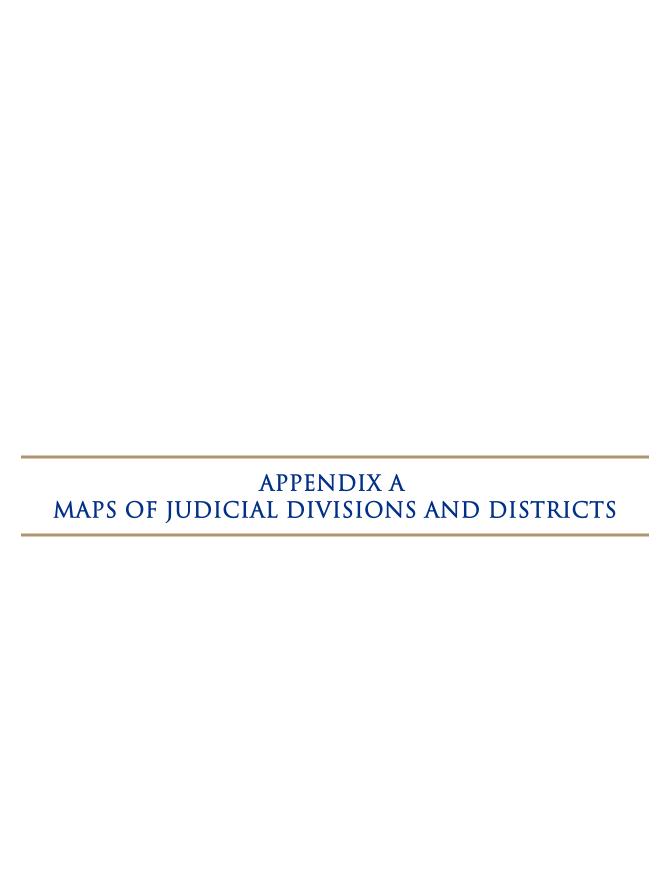
D	Supervised Probation				Unsupervised Probation			
Punishment Level	2020		2024		2020		2024	
	#	Months	# Months		# Months		#	Months
Agg. Level 1	343	29	363	29	2	36	1	24
Level 1	1,674	21	1,892	21	66	18	69	17
Level 2	2,434	18	2,585	18	238	16	224	17
Level 3	669	17	617	16	418	18	533	17
Level 4	723	15	725	15	1,638	14	2,137	14
Level 5	998	14	884	14	9,725	13	13,031	13
Total	6,841	18	7,066	18	12,087	14	15,995	13

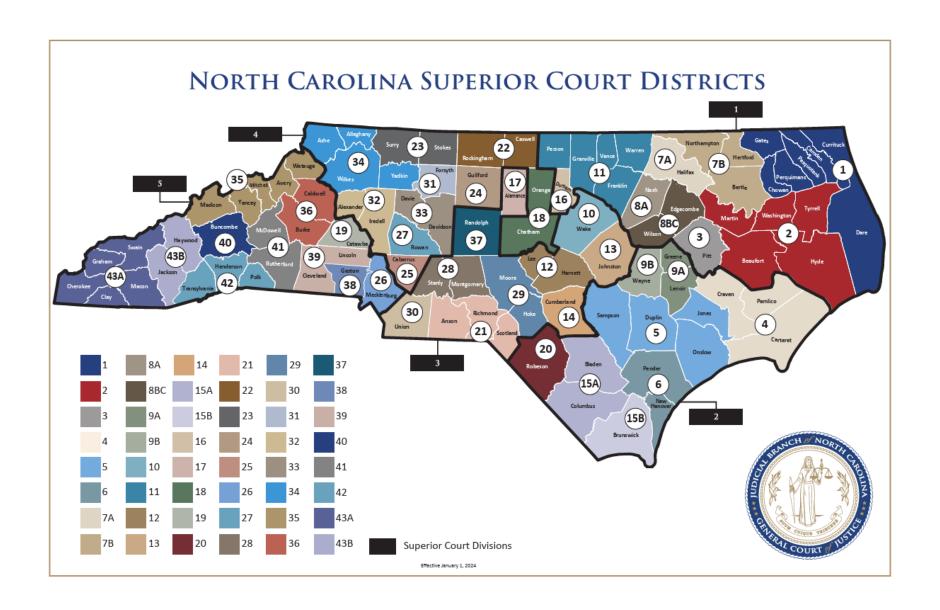
Sentence Length Relative to the Statutory Minimum and Maximum Sentences

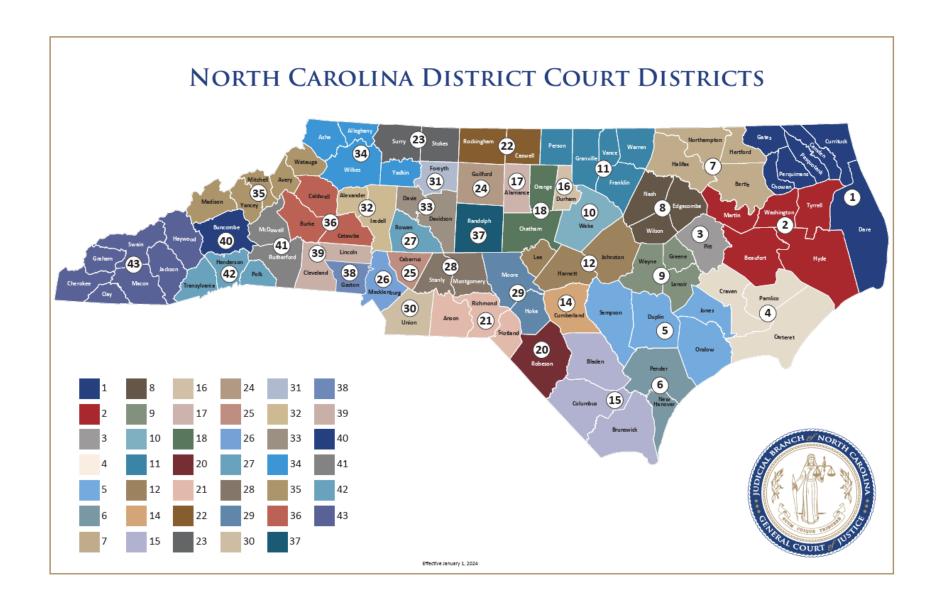
Figure 30 examines how often the minimum sentence imposed was equal to the statutory minimum or statutory maximum sentence length. For both years, the majority of active sentences were not equal to the statutory minimum or statutory maximum sentence, while the majority of suspended sentences were equal to the statutory maximum sentence. For active sentences, the percentage of sentences equal to the statutory maximum has increased slightly.

Figure 30
Sentence Length Relative to the Statutory Minimum and Maximum Sentences









APPENDIX B DWI PUNISHMENT TABLE

Table B.1
Sentencing for Impaired Driving Offenses

Punishment Levels	Factors	Punishment		Fine
Aggravated Level 1 (20-179(f3))	3 grossly aggravating factors apply. (20-179(c))	Active sentence range: Min: 12 months Max: 36 months	Or split sentence: at least 120 days	Maximum of \$10,000
Level 1 (20-179(g))	Grossly aggravating factor #4 ¹⁵ or 2 other grossly aggravating factors apply.	Active sentence range: Min: 30 days Max: 24 months	Or split sentence: at least 30 days ¹⁶	Maximum of \$4,000
Level 2 (20-179(h))	1 grossly aggravating factor (other than #4) applies.	Active sentence range: Min: 7 days Max: 12 months	Or split sentence: at least 7 days ¹⁷	Maximum of \$2,000
Level 3 (20-179(i))	Aggravating factors substantially outweigh mitigating factors. (20-179(d) and (e))	Active sentence range: Min: 72 hours Max: 6 months	Or split sentence: at least 72 hours Or community service: 72 hours	Maximum of \$1,000
Level 4 (20-179(j))	No aggravating or mitigating factors or factors substantially counterbalance each other.	Active sentence range: Min: 48 hours Max: 120 days	Or split sentence: 48 hours Or community service: 48 hours	Maximum of \$500
Level 5 (20-179(k))	Mitigating factors substantially outweigh aggravating factors.	Active sentence range: Min: 24 hours Max: 60 days	Or split sentence: 24 hours Or community service: 24 hours	Maximum of \$200

Offenses

Impaired driving (G.S. 20-138.1); impaired driving in a commercial vehicle (G.S. 20-138.2); operating a commercial vehicle after consuming alcohol (second or subsequent) (G.S. 20-138.2A); operating a school bus, school activity bus, child care vehicle, ambulance, other EMS vehicle, firefighting vehicle, or law enforcement vehicle after consuming alcohol (second or subsequent) (G.S. 20-138.2B).

Sentence

A sentence to imprisonment must impose a maximum term and may impose a minimum term. The impaired driving judgment may state the minimum term or may state that a term constitutes both the minimum and maximum terms. (G.S. 15A-1351(b))

Place of confinement for active sentences

For convictions on or after January 1, 2015: DWI defendants must be sentenced to the Statewide Misdemeanant Confinement Program. (G.S. 15A-1352(f))

¹⁵ Child under 18 or person with mental or physical disability in the vehicle at the time of the offense.

¹⁶ Not less than 10 days if a condition of special probation is imposed to require that a defendant abstain from alcohol consumption and be monitored by a continuous alcohol monitoring system, of a type approved by the DAC, for a period of not less than 120 days.

 $^{^{17}}$ Abstain from consuming alcohol for at least 90 consecutive days, as verified by a continuous alcohol monitoring system.

APPENDIX C ADDITIONAL CONVICTION DATA BY DISTRICT COURT DISTRICT AND COUNTY

Table C.1
Convictions by District Court District and County

	ourt District and County	DWI Convictions	Convictions per 1,000 Adults (18+)
District 1	Camden	37	4
2.0000 _	Chowan	33	3
	Currituck	118	5
	Dare	270	9
	Gates	27	3
	Pasquotank	75	2
	Perquimans	30	3
	Total	590	5
District 2	Beaufort	170	5
	Hyde	9	2
	, Martin	68	4
	Tyrrell	24	9
	Washington	13	2
	Total	284	4
District 3	Pitt	300	2
	Total	300	2
District 4	Carteret	202	3
	Craven	149	2
	Pamlico	15	1
	Total	366	2
District 5	Duplin	208	5
	Jones	43	6
	Onslow	509	3
	Sampson	271	6
	Total	1,031	4
District 6	New Hanover	1,051	5
	Pender	207	4
	Total	1,258	5
District 7	Bertie	37	3
	Halifax	157	4
	Hertford	47	3
	Northampton	19	1
	Total	260	3
District 8	Edgecombe	139	4
	Nash	309	4
	Wilson	225	4
	Total	673	4
District 9	Greene	66	4
	Lenoir	194	5
	Wayne	530	6
	Total	790	5

			Convictions
District Co	urt District and	DWI	Convictions
C	ounty	Convictions	per 1,000
District 10	Make	2 270	Adults (18+)
District 10	Wake Total	2,279	2 2
District 11		2,279	4
District 11	Franklin	271	4
	Granville Person	214	6
	Vance	191 236	8
	Warren	72	5
	Total	984	5
District 12	Harnett	155	1
District 12	Johnston	605	3
	Lee	93	2
	Total	853	2
District 14	Cumberland	365	1
District 14	Total	365	1
District 15	Bladen	117	5
2.50.100 25	Brunswick	559	4
	Columbus	137	3
	Total	813	4
District 16	Durham	416	2
2.50.100 20	Total	416	2
District 17	Alamance	484	3
	Total	484	3
District 18	Chatham	132	2
	Orange	345	3
	Total	477	2
District 20	Robeson	154	2
	Total	154	2
District 21	Anson	50	3
	Richmond	61	2
	Scotland	73	3
	Total	184	2
District 22	Caswell	83	4
	Rockingham	367	5
	Total	450	5
District 23	Stokes	108	3
	Surry	226	4
	Total	334	4
District 24	Guilford	959	2
	Total	959	2
District 25	Cabarrus	1,061	6
	Total	1,061	6

continued

Table C.1
Convictions by District Court District and County

District Court District and County		DWI Convictions	Convictions per 1,000 Adults (18+)		rt District and ounty	DWI Convictions	Convictions per 1,000 Adults (18+)	
District 26	Mecklenburg	844	1	District 36	Burke	211	3	
	Total	844	1		Caldwell	82	1	
District 27	Rowan	331	3		Catawba	236	2	
	Total	331	3		Total	529	2	
District 28	Montgomery	67	3	District 37	Randolph	408	4	
	Stanly	163	3		Total	408	4	
	Total	230	3	District 38	Gaston	842	4	
District 29	Hoke	92	2		Total	842	4	
	Moore	225	3	District 39	Cleveland	271	3	
	Total	317	2		Lincoln	223	3	
District 30	Union	497	2		Total	494	3	
	Total	497	2	District 40	Buncombe	778	3	
District 31	Forsyth	934	3		Total	778	3	
	Total	934	3	District 41	McDowell	112	3	
District 32	Alexander	63	2		Rutherford	161	3	
	Iredell	619	4		Total	273	3	
	Total	682	4	District 42	Henderson	368	4	
District 33	Davidson	287	2		Polk	80	5	
	Davie	101	3		Transylvania	138	5	
	Total	388	2		Total	586	4	
District 34	Alleghany	28	3	District 43	Cherokee	40	2	
	Ashe	68	3		Clay	42	4	
	Wilkes	157	3		Graham	12	2	
	Yadkin	104	3		Haywood	149	3	
	Total	357	3		Jackson	109	3	
District 35	Avery	44	3		Macon	102	3	
	Madison	58	3		Swain	42	4	
	Mitchell	43	4		Total	496	3	
	Watauga	147	3	State Total		24,694	3	
	Yancey	51	3					
	Total	343	3					

SOURCES: NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, FY 2024 DWI Statistical Report Data and NC Office of State Management and Budget, 2024 Population Estimates from https://demography.osbm.nc.gov/explore/ (see Population Projections)

Figure C.1
Convictions by District Court District and Punishment Level

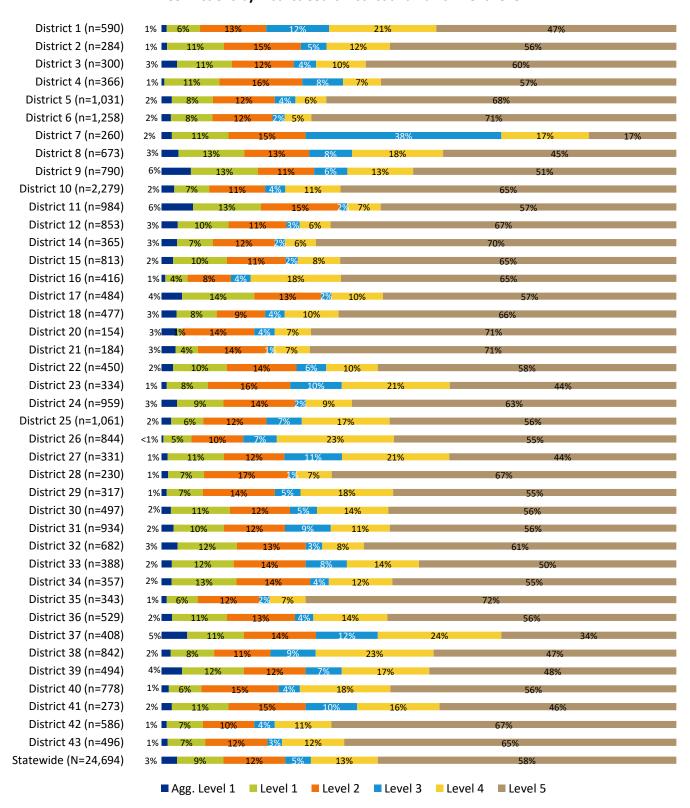
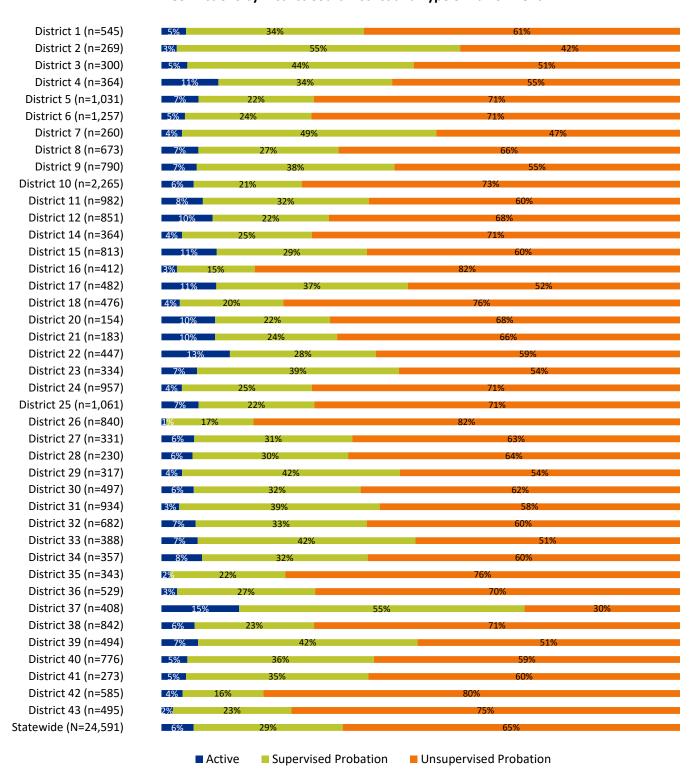


Figure C.2
Convictions by District Court District and Type of Punishment



Note: Of the 24,694 DWI convictions in FY 2024, 103 convictions with missing values for type of sentence imposed were excluded from the figure.

APPENDIX D ADDITIONAL CONVICTION DATA BY PUNISHMENT LEVEL

Table D.1
Offender Characteristics and Punishment Imposed by Punishment Level N=24,694

		Agg. Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Offender Characteristics		n=595	n=2,228	n=3,055	n=1,330	n=3,077	n=14,409
Sex							
	%	80	75	79	81	77	72
Female	%	20	25	21	19	23	28
Race/Ethnicity							
White	%	38	45	53	47	51	55
Black	%	48	39	33	39	31	26
Hispanic	%	6	7	6	6	9	9
Other	%	8	9	8	8	9	10
Age at Offense							
< 21 Years	%	1	1	2	3	4	5
21-30 Years	%	28	30	29	24	29	38
31-40 Years	%	35	36	31	32	29	27
41-50 Years	%	21	20	20	21	20	15
>50 Years	%	15	13	18	20	18	15
Average Age		38	37	38	39	38	36
Median Age		35	35	36	37	36	33
Blood Alcohol Concentration							
.07 or Less	%	4	4	3	3	3	2
.08 to .14	%	40	46	41	18	25	58
.15 or More	%	56	50	56	79	72	40
Punishment Imposed							
Method of Disposition							
	%	94	93	92	92	94	92
•	%	6	7	8	8	6	8
Jury Trial	%	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Sentence Type							
	%	39	12	8	13	6	3
	%	61	85	85	47	24	6
•	%	<1	3	7	40	70	91
Sentence Length/Location							
Active							
Average Length (Months)		21	13	6	4	2	1
	%	34	5	4	0	0	3
	%	19	24	25	41	31	36
	%	47	71	71	59	69	61
Suspended	, -	• •	· -]	
Average Length (Months)		29	20	11	5	3	2
	%	16	2	1	1	1	1
	%	61	- 69	81	68	63	71
	%	23	29	18	31	36	28

Note: Convictions with missing data were excluded from the table.

Table D.2
Conditions of Probation for Suspended Sentences by Punishment Level
N=23,061

	Agg. Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
	n=364	n=1,961	n=2,809	n=1,150	n=2,862	n=13,915
%	100	96	92	54	25	6
%	5	19	34	43	69	81
%	13	25	44	42	21	13
%	37	49	19	14	9	5
%	45	7	3	1	1	1
	29	21	18	16	15	14
%	<1	4	8	46	75	94
%	0	47	57	54	75	89
%	0	26	26	29	17	7
%	100	23	13	12	7	3
%	0	4	4	5	1	1
	24	17	17	17	14	13
%	96	93	85	18	10	6
%	4	6	11	61	70	69
%	4	5	7	1	1	<1
%	58	74	79	83	84	82
%	2	2	2	2	3	9
%	7	11	17	20	47	84
%	8	16	20	33	36	6
%	15	27	34	29	11	1
%	68	44	27	16	3	<1
	\$944	\$538	\$388	\$277	\$184	\$108
	\$500	\$400	\$300	\$250	\$150	\$100
	% % % % % % % % % % % % % % %	% 100 % 5 % 13 % 45 29 % 0 % 0 % 100 % 0 % 96 % 4 % 4 % 58 % 7 % 8 % 15 % 68 \$944 \$500	% 100 96 % 5 19 % 13 25 % 37 49 % 45 7 29 21 % 0 47 % 0 26 % 100 23 % 0 4 24 17 % 96 93 % 4 6 % 4 6 % 4 6 % 7 11 % 8 16 % 15 27 % 68 44 \$944 \$538 \$500 \$400	% 100 96 92 % 5 19 34 % 13 25 44 % 37 49 19 % 45 7 3 29 21 18 % 0 47 57 % 0 26 26 % 100 23 13 % 0 4 4 24 17 17 % 96 93 85 % 4 6 11 % 4 6 11 % 58 74 79 % 2 2 2 % 7 11 17 % 8 16 20 % 15 27 34 % 68 44 27 \$944 \$538 \$388 \$500 \$400 \$300	% 100 96 92 54 % 5 19 34 43 % 13 25 44 42 % 37 49 19 14 % 45 7 3 1 29 21 18 16 % 45 7 3 1 29 21 18 16 % 0 47 57 54 % 0 26 26 29 % 100 23 13 12 % 0 4 4 5 24 17 17 17 % 96 93 85 18 % 4 6 11 61 % 4 5 7 1 % 58 74 79 83 % 2 2 2 2 % 7 11 17 20 % 8 16	% 100 96 92 54 25 % 5 19 34 43 69 % 13 25 44 42 21 % 37 49 19 14 9 % 45 7 3 1 1 29 21 18 16 15 % 0 47 57 54 75 % 0 26 26 29 17 % 100 23 13 12 7 % 0 4 4 5 1 24 17 17 17 17 14 % 96 93 85 18 10 % 4 6 11 61 70 % 4 6 11 61 70 % 4 5 7 1 1 % 58 74 79 83 84 % 2 2 2 2 2 % 7 11 17 20 47 % 8 16 20 33 36 </td

Note: Convictions with missing data were excluded from the table. The average length of probation for unsupervised probation in Aggravated Level 1 was based on fewer than 10 observations.

Disclaimer for AOC Data

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