

PRETRIAL SERVICES AGENCY FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

A Federal Executive Branch Agency



Key Data and Operational Information

FY 2025

Release Rates for Pretrial Defendants in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia: FY 2025

The Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia (PSA) assists judges in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the United States District Court for the District of Columbia by conducting a risk assessment for every arrested person who is presented in court, identifying detention eligibility and formulating release recommendations, as appropriate. Recommendations are based on several factors, including criminal history, drug use and/or mental health information and select demographic information. For defendants placed on conditional release pending trial, PSA provides proper supervision and risk mitigation services intended to reasonably assure defendants return to court and do not engage in criminal activity pending their trial and/or sentencing.

PSA tracks two primary release points which are used to calculate the overall release rate: “initial detention/release” and “subsequent release.” Initial detention/release occurs at an arrestee’s initial appearance before a judge at arraignment or presentment. At this point, the arrestee may be detained while awaiting a hearing under one of the statutory preventive detention provisions of the United States Code, placed on conditional release with PSA supervision, or released on personal recognizance (PR) with no PSA supervision. All releases resulting from this first appearance are referred to collectively as “initial release.” For FY 2025, the initial release rate for all cases (felony and misdemeanor) in the District Court was 37%, which is below FY 2024 (61%).

The remaining 63% of cases resulted in detention under one or more provisions of the preventive detention statute. PSA refers to this as “initial detention.” Under federal law, detained defendants are entitled to a hearing within three to five days of initial appearance to determine whether there are conditions of release that will reasonably assure the defendant’s future court appearance and public safety. The result of this hearing can be continued detention, release to PR or PSA supervision, or dismissal of the charge. For FY 2025, of the 63% initially detained, 24% of the cases resulted in “subsequent release”, most at the time of the detention hearing. In some cases, subsequent release can occur later during the pretrial period, but prior to case disposition (e.g., if a felony case is not filed within the statutory timeframe).

When the initial and subsequent release rates are examined collectively, 52% of District Court cases result in defendants being released pretrial. This leaves 48% of cases resulting in detention until disposition of the case.

During FY 2025, a total of 544 criminal cases were filed in the District Court. The table below shows the ultimate release outcomes for those cases.

Pretrial Process Points	Felony		Misdemeanor		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Cases Filed	449	100%	95	100%	544	100%
Initially Released	135	30%	65	68%	200	37%
Initially Detained	314	70%	30	32%	344	63%
Subsequently Released [1]	73	23%	11	37%	84	24%
Total Released Pretrial	208	46%	76	80%	284	52%
Total Held Pretrial	241	54%	19	20%	260	48%

¹ Percentage rates are calculated using the number of papered cases as the denominator, except for the subsequently released rate, which is a subset analysis that uses the number of initially detained cases as the denominator.