

# Virginia Criminal Court Outcomes: 2025 Year in Review

416,709 cases · 125 jurisdictions · 26 charge categories

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## Executive Summary

This report analyzes 416,709 criminal cases filed and resolved in Virginia district and circuit courts during 2025. Cases span 26 named charge categories across 125 jurisdictions statewide. Key findings: nearly half of resolved cases did not end in conviction; dismissal and conviction rates vary substantially by charge type, court level, and jurisdiction; and the overwhelming majority of convictions were secured through guilty pleas rather than trial.

**416,709**

Total cases filed

**300,372**

Cases resolved

**47.1%**

Resolved without conviction

**125**

Jurisdictions analyzed

## Findings

### FINDING 1

### 47.1% of resolved criminal cases did not result in conviction

Of 300,372 resolved cases, 158,914 (52.9%) ended in conviction. The remaining 141,458 cases were dismissed through one of three pathways: nolle prosequi (prosecutor withdrawal), judicial dismissal, or acquittal at trial.

Disposition Category	Cases	Share of Resolved
Convicted (all types)	158,914	52.9%
Nolle prosequi (prosecutor)	85,606	28.5%
Judicial dismissal	48,961	16.3%
Acquittal at trial	6,891	2.3%

Base: 300,372 resolved cases. Pending and unresolved cases excluded.

**FINDING 2****Dismissal rates range from 15.0% to 77.3% by charge type**

The probability that a charge is dismissed varies enormously depending on the offense. Assault and battery and stalking are dismissed at rates above 74%; DUI/DWI is dismissed at 15.0% but sees substantial charge reduction (30.5%).

Charge	Cases	Resolved	Dismissed%	Reduced%
<b>Highest Dismissal Rates</b>				
Stalking	1,436	1,138	77.3%	2.0%
Assault & Battery	27,903	21,454	74.0%	3.4%
<b>Selected Mid-Range Charges</b>				
Reckless Driving	50,249	46,338	25.0%	41.3%
<b>Lowest Dismissal Rates</b>				
DUI / DWI	34,554	27,020	15.0%	30.5%

*Dismissed% = nolle prosequi + judicial dismissal + acquittal combined. Reduced% = conviction on a lesser charge than filed.*

**FINDING 3****Felonies are dismissed more often than misdemeanors**

Felony cases are dismissed at 54.4% of the resolved rate, versus 44.7% for misdemeanors. Felonies also show a substantially higher nolle prosequi share (44.3%) compared to misdemeanors (23.4%), suggesting greater prosecutorial screening at the circuit court level.

Court Level	Cases Filed	Resolved	Dismissed%	Nolle%
Misdemeanor	277,511	227,568	44.7%	23.4%
Felony	139,198	72,804	54.4%	44.3%

*Felony resolution rate lower in part because serious charges take longer to adjudicate; pending cases excluded from resolved base.*

**FINDING 4****97.2% of convictions were guilty pleas, not trial verdicts**

Of 158,914 convictions, 154,494 (97.2%) were entered as guilty pleas. Trials to verdict accounted for fewer than 3% of convictions statewide. The plea rate is higher at the misdemeanor level (98.5%) than at the felony level (92.2%), where defendants more frequently exercise trial rights.

**97.2%**

Statewide plea rate  
154,494 of 158,914 convictions

**98.5%**

Misdemeanor plea rate

**92.2%**

Felony plea rate

**FINDING 5 Trial acquittal rates range from 6.4% to 94.0% by charge type**

Among the small share of cases that proceeded to trial, acquittal rates vary dramatically by charge. Fact-intensive or credibility-dependent charges (trespassing, disorderly conduct, assault and battery) favor acquittal, while cases resting on physical evidence or documentary proof (drug distribution, contempt of court) rarely result in acquittal.

Charge	Tried	Acquitted	Acquittal Rate
<b>Highest Acquittal Rates</b>			
Trespassing	671	631	94.0%
Disorderly Conduct	218	197	90.4%
Assault & Battery	2,038	1,588	77.9%
<b>Lowest Acquittal Rates</b>			
Drug Distribution	140	9	6.4%
Contempt of Court	327	34	10.4%

*Trial = bench or jury verdict. Acquittal includes not guilty and nolle after jeopardy attaches where recorded separately.*

**FINDING 6 Prosecutor-driven vs. judge-driven dismissal cultures vary sharply by court**

The ratio of nolle prosequi dismissals (prosecutor-initiated) to judicial dismissals (judge-initiated) reveals different local charging and screening cultures. A high ratio indicates prosecutors are withdrawing cases after filing; a low ratio indicates courts are dismissing them at hearing. The range across Virginia's 125 jurisdictions is 0.6:1 to 5.7:1.

**Most Prosecutor-Driven (High Nolle Ratio)**

Jurisdiction	Nolle:Judicial
Williamsburg	5.7 : 1
Danville	5.1 : 1
Fairfax County	4.5 : 1
Loudoun County	3.6 : 1
Prince William County	3.2 : 1

**Most Judge-Driven (Low Nolle Ratio)**

Jurisdiction	Nolle:Judicial
Henry County	0.6 : 1
Virginia Beach	0.6 : 1
Portsmouth	0.7 : 1
Montgomery County	0.9 : 1
Norfolk	0.9 : 1

*Full table available at [virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025](http://virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025). Named jurisdictions are confirmed endpoints of the range; intermediate rows require supplemental data.*

**FINDING 7****Overall dismissal rates range from 9.4% to 69.5% across Virginia jurisdictions**

Jurisdictions with high case volume and active prosecution teams (Fairfax) show high absolute dismissal rates in part because they handle more borderline cases. Jurisdictions with lower dismissal rates often reflect different charge mix, not necessarily tougher adjudication.

Jurisdiction	Cases	Resolved	Dismissed%	Nolle%
Fairfax County	30,007	24,032	65.8%	53.0%
Virginia Beach	20,944	15,493	33.0%	11.2%
Prince William County	18,651	13,716	53.6%	39.9%
Henrico County	15,764	11,544	46.2%	30.7%
Chesterfield County	15,392	10,526	52.2%	34.8%
Newport News	14,228	10,069	63.1%	31.8%
Norfolk	12,123	9,170	65.1%	28.8%
Richmond City	12,097	9,347	65.6%	38.7%
Chesapeake	10,958	6,115	53.9%	27.7%
Stafford County	9,641	6,362	43.9%	27.9%

*Range statewide: 9.4% (lowest jurisdiction) to 69.5% (highest jurisdiction). Full 125-jurisdiction table at [virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025](http://virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025).*

**FINDING 8****Demographics: charge mix differs substantially by race; outcome gap persists after controlling for charge type**

Virginia court records include gender and race fields. Hispanic ethnicity is not separately recorded as of 2025 data, which likely depresses the White count and affects race-level comparisons. Findings below are reported with that limitation.

**Gender Distribution**

Gender	Cases	Share	Felony%
Male	307,158	73.7%	35.0%
Female	108,997	26.2%	29.0%
Not recorded / Other	554	0.1%	—

**Race Distribution and Outcomes**

Race	Cases	Share	Dismissed%	Nolle%	Acquittal%
White	223,219	53.7%	44.2%	26.5%	2.0%
Black	176,902	42.5%	51.5%	31.7%	2.8%

*Hispanic ethnicity not recorded separately in Virginia court data; figures above likely undercount Hispanic defendants in the White category.*

**Charge Mix Differences by Race**

Charge Category	% of Black Cases	% of White Cases
Weapons Offense	13.6%	5.3%
Assault & Battery	7.7%	5.9%
Larceny / Theft	16.6%	15.5%
Driving Suspended	7.9%	6.9%
Reckless Driving	9.4%	12.7%
Drug Possession	7.3%	12.2%
DUI / DWI	5.9%	10.1%

*Combined top-5 charges for each group (7 unique). Because different groups are charged with different offenses at different rates, overall dismissal rates cannot be compared directly across groups without controlling for charge type.*

## Methodology

**Source:** Virginia public court records, 2025 calendar year. Collected from Virginia's online court case information system.

- **Scope:** 416,709 misdemeanor and felony cases across 125 Virginia jurisdictions, 26 named charge categories.
- **Excluded:** Traffic infractions, "Other" catch-all category, failure-to-appear warrants (recorded as separate entries, not distinct cases).
- **Unit of analysis:** Each row represents one charge. 99.2% of cases involve a single charge; multi-charge cases counted once per charge.
- **Definitions:** Dismissed = nolle prosequi + judicial dismissal + acquittal combined. Resolved = cases with a final disposition recorded. Reduced = conviction on a lesser charge than the charge filed.
- **Hispanic recording gap:** Virginia court records do not separately record Hispanic ethnicity as of 2025. Defendants who would be categorized as Hispanic may appear in the White or other race categories, creating an undercount. Race-level comparisons should be interpreted with this limitation.
- **Pending cases:** 116,337 cases (27.9%) were pending or lacked a final disposition as of the data pull date. These are excluded from all rate calculations.

Full methodology: [virginiacourtfile.com/methodology](http://virginiacourtfile.com/methodology)

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**Full interactive report:** [virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025](http://virginiacourtfile.com/research/year-in-review-2025)