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NYC Criminal Justice Reforms Effective in Diverting Offenders, Report Finds

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By Andrew Denney | September 05, 2018



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In the six months following the June 2017 implementation of a package of bills known as the Criminal Justice Reform Act, the report states, there was a roughly 90 percent decrease in the number of criminal summonses issued citywide for a group of low-level offenses that include public drinking, public urination, littering, excessive noise and violations of rules for city parks.

The report was compiled by the Misdemeanor Justice Project at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The decline in criminal summonses issued—down to 3,661 in the second half of last year, compared with more than 58,400 for the same period in 2016—means that criminal courts are issuing fewer warrants for the low-level offenses, the report states, as well as seeing [fewer cases filed](#).

Instead, police have been issuing more civil summonses for low-level offenses, which diverts [more matters](#) into the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings and can provide for greater flexibility for offenders in terms of payment options for their tickets and for appearing for hearings.

“So far it is achieving its goal of reducing the number of people who are receiving a permanent criminal record for a low-level, non-violent offense,” said Preeti Chauhan, director of John Jay’s Misdemeanor Justice Project, in a news release, referring to the city’s enactment of criminal justice reform laws.

But the researchers also found some disparities in enforcement patterns: after implementation of the reforms, males were more likely than females to receive criminal summonses, as well as individuals aged 35 to 65 years in relation to other age groups.

Criminal summonses were also more likely to be issued in the Bronx and on Staten Island when compared with the other three boroughs.

Additionally, [according to figures](#) from the New York City Police Department that were not included in the report, civil summonses are disproportionately issued to black and Latino

individuals—in the second quarter of this year, police issued 10,089 civil summonses, or 66 percent of the total for that timeframe, to black and Latino people.

But the drop in criminal summonses comes at a time when stop-and-frisk stops by police have tapered off and overall crime in the city is down, said Elizabeth Glazer, director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, in an interview.

“That is a very encouraging sign that it is possible to encourage law-abiding behavior without resorting to summonses, arrests and other kinds of enforcement,” Glazer said.

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