

**Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice
Local Law 25 of 2018 Report
December 16, 2024**

I. Introduction and Reporting

This report is submitted by the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) in accordance with Local Law 25 of 2018, which provides that MOCJ will use “best efforts” to “seek the accuracy of records regarding outstanding criminal warrants,” “facilitate the reduction of outstanding criminal warrants” and “seek access to efficient processes for members of the public to rectify inaccurate criminal warrants.”

As of January 3, 2024, there were 1,291,251 outstanding criminal warrants in the City of New York, as set forth below.

Court	Outstanding Warrants	Percent of All Outstanding Warrants
Summons	827,945	64%
Criminal	414,601	32%
Supreme	48,705	4%

This represents an approximate 0.15% increase from the 2023 total (as of January 4, 2023).

II. Background

Individuals charged with crimes who miss court appearances may be issued criminal warrants, known as bench warrants, for their failure to appear. These warrants can subject individuals to arrest and unnecessary periods of incarceration. Notably, recent policy changes at both the City and State level are likely to have a long-term impact on the number of bench warrants issued in New York City.

In June 2017, the Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA), legislation passed by the City Council and signed by the Mayor, went into effect. CJRA gives law enforcement the option to issue civil summonses instead of criminal summonses for a group of common low-level offenses such as open container, public urination, and littering. In the year following implementation of the CJRA, warrants for failure-to-appear on CJRA-eligible offenses declined by 94% in the year following implementation.¹

In addition, in April 2019, the New York State Legislature passed a series of bills to reform the State’s bail system as well as several other aspects of the State’s criminal procedures. Among other reforms, the new law prohibits courts from issuing a warrant for 48 hours whenever a defendant fails to appear, unless the defendant is charged with a new crime or there is evidence of a “willful” failure to appear. During the 48-hour period, the defense attorney can contact the defendant and encourage a voluntary return. As discussed in further detail below, changes to

¹ MOCJ NYC. “Summons Reform: One Year After Legislation (CJRA)” 5 Sept. 2018, https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/summons_ref_factsheet_v3.pdf. Compared to the 2021 total, there was an approximate 1% decline in the number of outstanding warrants for CJRA-eligible offenses in the 2022 total.

court operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency have meant that the impact of these reforms could not be properly evaluated and quantified during this reporting period.

III. 2023 Updates

In 2023, court conditions remained largely similar to 2022, as the court system and criminal justice agencies largely completed their return to pre-COVID-19 practices. Following the resumption of in-person court appearances, judges rarely allowed virtual appearances. Criminal parts in Supreme Courts in each of the five boroughs issued more warrants for failure to appear in 2023 in comparison to 2022 due to in-person operations resuming. Warrants are now issued for failure to appear after the applicable adjournment, if any. In the Criminal Court Summons part, if the individual failed to appear on the arraignment date, the matter was adjourned for 45 days and the individual was notified. The summons was then reviewed for legal sufficiency and if it was deemed legally insufficient, the matter would have been calendared to be dismissed the following week. The individual would have been notified of this dismissal. If the summons survived review and the individual failed to appear on the date the case was adjourned to (45 days after first failure to appear), a warrant would have been issued.

The New York Criminal Justice Agency (CJA) continued to send out notifications via robotext, robocall, live calls, letters and email, reminding individuals of their upcoming court appearances. In sum, 2023 did not have the same widespread interruptions in in-person operations as seen in 2020 or 2021, but the New York City court system was still rebounding from two years of anomalous court operations. Over the course of the next year MOCJ will continue to make best efforts and work with criminal justice partners to seek the accuracy of records regarding outstanding criminal warrants, facilitate the reduction of outstanding criminal warrants with other criminal justice stakeholders of the City of New York, and seek access to efficient processes for members of the public to rectify inaccurate criminal warrants in furtherance of Local Law 25.