

HER JUSTICE
The logo features the words "HER" and "JUSTICE" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Between them is a white icon consisting of two diamond shapes pointing towards each other, forming a larger diamond.HER JUSTICE POLICY AGENDA
The logo features the words "HER JUSTICE" and "POLICY AGENDA" in a white, sans-serif font. Between them is a white circular icon with a curved arrow pointing clockwise.

Inside Family Court

An Analysis of New York State Child Support Data

July 2026



Inside Family Court: An Analysis of New York Child Support Data **Executive Summary**

Background

This paper presents findings from a groundbreaking analysis by Her Justice of statewide data from the New York Office of Court Administration on child support cases in the New York Family Courts. For many Her Justice clients and women living in poverty, the civil justice system provides a path to economic security and family stability through orders of child and spousal support, custody orders, or orders of protection. **Child support court orders are critical for many mothers raising children and the demands for court relief are substantial.** Child support cases in the New York Family Courts are legion — with more than 130,000 filings in 2025 representing 30% of all family court filings. At the same time, these cases are largely invisible to those outside the courts. More than 90% of parents navigate the courts without legal representation. And there is little publicly available system-wide data about child support case characteristics or outcomes.

Her Justice has been shining a light on the need for child support reform for decades. Our unique “pro bono first” model — with on average each year¹ 14 lawyers training and mentoring nearly 2,000 volunteer lawyers to provide legal services to 6,000 women and children — gives Her Justice broad insights into how the courts function and whether clients achieve their legal goals. Informed by our clients’ experiences, Her Justice has long been committed to advancing a more equitable, efficient, and empowering civil justice system through policy research and advocacy for system improvements. Our original policy research has included innovative court observation projects focused on the New York Family Courts. Our 2021 court watch project, *Towards Justice for Parents in Child Support Courts*, was the first of its kind to observe the under-resourced and over-burdened New York City child support courts and report on litigants’ experiences of brief court appearances and long case delays, along with the harm to parents. In 2024, we launched *Report From Court*, a platform for “real time” public reporting on the experiences of attorneys in New York City Family Court to increase transparency of the day-to-day experiences of those navigating the courts. Leveraging our clients’ experiences and our original research, over the past several years Her Justice has led and contributed to advocacy for New York court and law reform. We have advocated for a state legislative proposal we drafted to create an expedited court process for families seeking to reach agreement on child support and broaden the “menu of options” for resolving child support. The proposal has garnered statewide support from legislators and advocates.

Our original family court research and expertise form the backdrop to the unprecedented analysis of statewide child support court data that is the subject of this paper. Her Justice policy work is driven by core tenets that data can help illustrate the adequacy of our civil justice system response to common societal issues and that data transparency

¹ Ten-year average.



ensures the accountability of the system to people who engage with it and the public at large. Her Justice conducted this research to learn more about the characteristics of New York Family Court child support cases to both support our efforts to improve the civil justice system through policy reform and research-backed advocacy and to improve our legal services for women living in poverty in child support. With robust responses to our data requests and collaboration from the New York Office of Court Administration’s Division of Technology and Research, we were able to work with a rich, multi-year dataset. During our years of research, we analyzed data on key case features to assess the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on family courts and to examine the impact of new interventions. One such intervention was the New York City Family Court’s 2025 pilot of a triage approach to child support cases, which provided more individualized pathways to families resolving child support, including through settlement agreements in lieu of traditional, lengthy litigation.

Our analysis produced important findings and raised questions for further research that we hope to address through additional data requests and analyses. **Her Justice is optimistic that this work shows what is possible in analyzing case management data for large-scale case trends.** We hope the methodology and findings will be useful both for the court system itself and external advocates and researchers, including those in New York and in other states. And we are excited about a profound potential next step where the kinds of information presented in this paper — for example, how many court appearances are typical in a case or for how long the case will likely last depending on courthouse location — could be made accessible to families deciding whether to engage with the child support courts.

Scope of Research and Methodology

In March 2023, Her Justice requested statewide child support case data from the New York Office of Court Administration (“OCA”) through its Division of Technology and Court Research (“Division of Technology”). We requested data on court filings pre- and post-COVID. Our request omitted 2020 and 2021 when some courts were closed for child support filings and included data for subsequent years to assess the case backlog that resulted from shutdowns and changes in court operations. **Starting in February 2025, the Division of Technology provided deidentified, aggregated data on statewide child support filings for 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 totaling 791,250 records.** Her Justice then worked with the Division of Technology to understand the data definitions, identify the most useful data fields, and refine the datasets.

For this study, Her Justice employed an exploratory research methodology. The primary purpose of this project was to better understand the types of child support cases filed, case outcomes, case duration, and the number of scheduled appearances. In addition to calculating these individual variables, we compared them to the county of filing — creating categories for the New York City counties and grouping the remaining counties as ‘outside of NYC’ — and the year filed. Our methodology is further explained in the main paper.



Key Limitation

A key limitation in the overall dataset is that 17% of child support cases were still open (marked as Not Disposed) at the time Her Justice received the data. The number of open cases ranged from 112 in the 2019 dataset to 23,010 in the 2025 dataset. In the main paper, we discuss the implications of this limitation for our analysis.

Key Findings and Implications

- 1. Petitioners most commonly requested modification of child support orders.** For all years, the most common child support relief sought in petitions filed was Modification (34%). These are cases in which parents return to court seeking an increase or decrease in a prior child support award generally based on a change in the families' financial circumstances.
 - *Implications:* Further study of modifications as indicators of the long-term impact of court engagement around child support on families' lives would be valuable, as described below.
- 2. A high percentage of petitions were dismissed without any action.** For all years, 30% of filings had an outcome of Petition Dismissed, which means the court discharged the petition and ended the case without any action. This category was three times the percentage of filings with an outcome of Order of Support in Place. Of the petitions ending in dismissal, a significant percentage sought substantive relief such as modification, order of support, and enforcement of underlying order of support, as opposed to mere administrative adjustments to orders of support.
 - *Implications:* Further study of potential reasons for this trend would be valuable, including litigant preparedness, court functionality, or other systemic issues. More information could explain why dismissals occur at this rate and shed light on the impact of dismissals on court operations and resources and on litigants.
- 3. How long cases lasted varied by location.** For all years, while it took an average of 2.8 months to complete a case outside of New York City, it took an average of 6.7 months to complete a case in the city.
 - *Implications:* This finding may reflect the fact that the New York City courts have a higher volume of cases, among other differences.
- 4. Average number of court appearances stayed the same.** For all years, all cases had the same average number of appearances (2.4), regardless of whether they were filed within New York City or outside of the city. Number of appearances did vary based on type of case



disposition, with cases ending in Violation Found, Order of Support in Place, and Modification having higher-than-average number of appearances.

- *Implications:* Higher-than-average numbers of appearances for cases ending in Violation Found, Order of Support in Place, or Modification are consistent with Her Justice’s experience representing clients in these cases. They often involve presentation of evidence over the course of several court appearances and may involve hearings or trials.
5. **In New York City, it took less time to obtain an order of support in 2025.** From 2022 to 2025, the average number of months to obtain an order of support decreased across all New York City boroughs. The largest decreases were found in the Bronx (12.9 months in 2022 to 6.4 months in 2025); Brooklyn (18.1 months in 2022 to 4.3 months in 2025); and Queens (16.4 months in 2022 to 6.7 months in 2025).
- *Implications:* As an organization dedicated to helping deliver affordable support to children more quickly and advocating for policies that advance this goal, Her Justice was encouraged by the decrease in average time to obtain an order of support in some New York City counties in this period and the courts’ progress in addressing the post-COVID case backlog. As described further in the main paper, this could indicate that recently piloted triage processes in these courts with opportunities for expedited settlement are reducing the wait time for a child support order. While promising, this interpretation must be caveated because some 2025 cases were not yet closed at the time we received the data. Her Justice is eager to obtain the remainder of 2025 case data to assess whether this trend holds.

Areas for Further Study

The opportunity to analyze statewide child support court data spanning several years raised additional areas of interest for Her Justice. With additional data for 2025, we could continue to study case duration for cases disposed with orders of support to assess whether and how substantially the trend of decrease in timeline holds for that year overall. Further, given the high percentage of filings in the dataset seeking modification of underlying orders of support, it would be interesting to obtain longitudinal data that would allow us to study families’ court engagement throughout the life cycle of child support, from first filing to return to court. Finally, additional data could allow for analysis of the impact of interventions like legal representation for litigants and the courts’ use of virtual instead of in-person appearances, which was expanded with the COVID-19 pandemic.

We invite readers to explore the findings and data presented in this paper in more depth using the [Her Justice Child Support Court Data Dashboard](#).