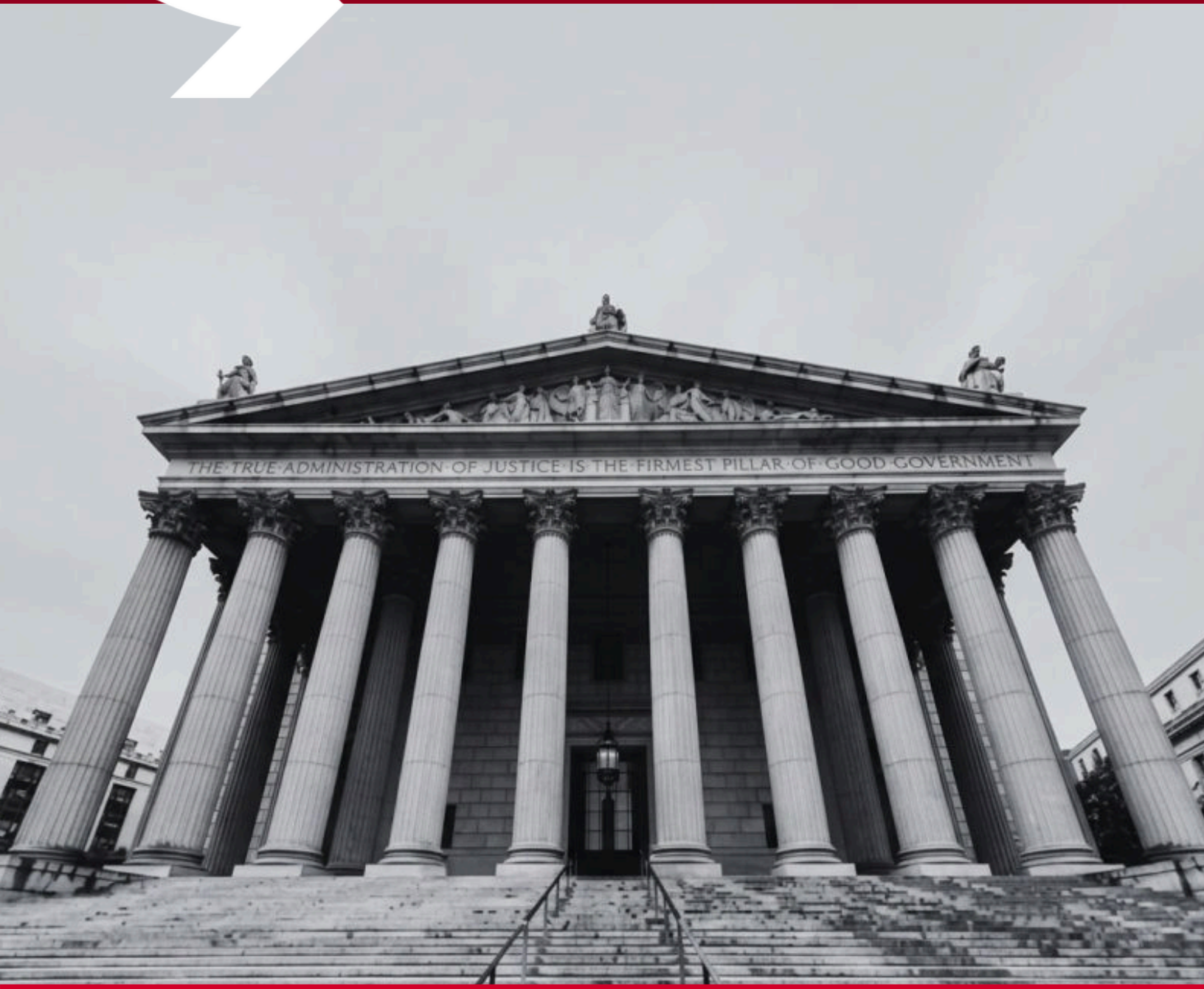
HER JUSTICE

HER JUSTICE POLICY AGENDA



Inside Family Court

An Analysis of New York State Child Support Data

July 2026

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 year[1] 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 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

[1] Ten-year average.

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*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents findings from an 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. Her Justice engaged in 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 child support legal services for women living in poverty.

Her Justice designed this research project in 2022 to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family court operations and child support cases. The pandemic disrupted court operations and courthouse shutdowns in New York City created a substantial case backlog. At the same time, this unprecedented moment brought about new interventions in court operations such as virtual or remote appearances. After submitting an initial request and receiving some data, Her Justice requested and received additional years of data. Over the years and with changes in the courts, the data told an evolving story. One key finding is that the duration of cases in the high-volume New York City Family Courts decreased in 2025, which appears to reflect the impact of interventions that year. This trend, along with its potential to deliver support to children quicker and impact the overall system positively, is an exciting area for further study.

The opportunity for Her Justice to conduct analyses around patterns in case features and outcomes with data that the court system typically collects for case management was inspiring. We hope our research methodology and findings as described in this paper are valuable as models for other researchers, advocates and reformers, and lawyers. As with all research, we view this project as laying the groundwork for further potential analyses with this dataset or additional data and igniting an interest in asking new questions of the data. Ultimately, we hope our research and analysis around case features such as number of appearances and overall duration sheds light on the experience of family court for litigants and lawyers and demonstrates the benefits of data transparency for court users and the system alike.

II. BACKGROUND

A. About Her Justice

Her Justice stands with women and gender-diverse people living in poverty in New York City by recruiting and mentoring volunteer lawyers to provide free legal help to address individual and systemic legal barriers. Through our "pro bono first" model, we pair thousands of volunteer attorneys with women who have urgent legal needs in the areas of family, matrimonial, and immigration law. Since 1993, Her Justice has provided life-changing free legal help to over 45,000 women and children and pursued policies that have bettered the experiences and outcomes for thousands more.

Her Justice is committed to bringing our three decades of expertise to reforming the civil justice system so that it produces the most favorable outcomes for women like our clients, through processes that are as equitable, empowering, and efficient as possible. We couple our direct legal

services with advocacy for policy reform that is fueled by the deep expertise of our lawyers and the lived experience of our clients — women living in poverty whose livelihood and well-being are often determined by the civil justice system. That civil justice system is often invisible to those outside of it, which makes a focus on elevating the reforms to this area — including the need for transparency of data about the system's operation — that much more essential. Taken together, our two-pronged approach combats barriers built into our civil justice system which reinforce and exacerbate gender, racial, and economic imbalances to the detriment of our clients and other New Yorkers and supports solutions for change.

B. Child Support in New York

Since our founding, Her Justice has assisted clients seeking child support as a key legal pathway to securing financial support for families. In the last ten years alone, Her Justice has provided legal assistance to 1,309 clients in child support matters. Our commitment to studying child support as a policy issue was informed by decades of experience serving individuals in New York and the firsthand knowledge of how important child support is to families' stability and security, especially those living in poverty.[1]

New York Family Courts and Child Support Cases

To obtain court-ordered child support, a custodial parent — the parent with whom the child primarily resides — typically files a petition in family court against the noncustodial parent and is the "petitioner."[2] (The party responding to a petition is called the "respondent.") In family court, child support cases are determined by support magistrates who are appointed by court administrators.[3] Once a support magistrate determines child support and issues an order, either parent can object to that order, and the case will be reviewed by a family court judge.[4]

In addition to petitions to establish child support, the family court can hear modification petitions seeking an increase or reduction in the amount of support ordered and petitions for enforcement alleging that the noncustodial parent has failed to comply with the order.[5] In some cases, the court hears modification and enforcement petitions together, for example, where a custodial parent seeks enforcement of an order that has not been paid and the noncustodial parent files a modification petition to reduce the order alleging inability to pay. In New York, there is no right to counsel for parties in child support cases, with the exception of respondents in enforcement cases who face potential incarceration for failure to pay support.[6] **Ninety-percent (90%) of parents in New York child support cases do not have lawyers.**[7]

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[1] *See* Vicki Turetsky and Diana Azevedo-McCaffrey, *Understanding TANF Cost Recovery in the Child Support Program*, at 2 (July 2024), https://www.cbpp.org/research/income-security/understanding-tanf-cost-recovery-in-the-child-support-program#_ednref5 (for families with incomes below the federal poverty level, child support represents, on average, 41 percent of their income when received and 65 percent of income for families living below 50 percent of poverty level).

[2] *Child Support,* NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYS., https://www.nycourts.gov/help/families-children/child-support. A custodial parent may also request child support as part of a divorce in Supreme Court. *See* N.Y. Dom. Rel. Law § 240.

[3] N.Y. F.C.A. § 439; N.Y. Uniform Rules for the Family Court, §§ 205.32-205.44.

[4] N.Y. F.C.A. § 439(e).

[5] N.Y. F.C.A. §§ 451, 453.

[6] N.Y. F.C.A. § 262(a)(vi). *See id*. §§ (a)(i)-(ix) (setting forth other case types where there is a right to counsel for indigent litigants).

[7] *See* Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, *Report to the Chief Judge of the State of New York*, at 40 (2019), http://ww2.nycourts.gov/sites/default/files/document/files/2018-04/2015_Access_to_Justice-Report-V5.pdf; *see also* Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, *Report to the Chief Judge of the State of New York*, at 14 n.71 (2021), https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/accesstojusticecommission/21_ATJ-Comission_Report.pdf (citing 2019 report).

State IV-D Child Support Agency

Within the federal child support program, as authorized by Title IV-D of the federal Social Security Act to combat childhood poverty, each state runs a child support enforcement program with funding and regulatory oversight from the federal government.[8] The state program must, among other things, establish, modify and collect/enforce child support orders. In New York, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance is the state agency responsible for supervising the administration of New York's Child Support Program pursuant to Title IV-D and providing assistance through its Division of Child Support Services. Child support cases are considered "IV-D" cases in the following situations:

> (1) the petitioner parent opts for assistance from the child support agency with collection and enforcement of child support payments; and
> (2) families who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) public assistance assign their rights to pursue child support to the state; the state can pursue child support to recoup its assistance expenditure.[9] In these cases, the New York Department of Social Services (DSS) is the petitioner in an action for child support against the noncustodial parent.

Cases are considered "private" or non-IV-D where they do not involve these scenarios. Her Justice's 2021 policy report, *Towards Justice for Parents in Child Support Courts*,[10] further described below, contains additional background information on the New York child support system.

C. <u>Her Justice Policy Research: Family Court Functionality and Child Support</u>

Court data from the civil justice system that illustrates the nature of participants' experiences and outcomes is critical for accountability. Data shines a light on challenges and inequities and supports advocacy for common-sense solutions for needed reforms. A challenge in formulating policy reforms and solutions is that the New York court system (and its administrative arm the Office of Court Administration, "OCA") does not make publicly available data around the nature and outcomes of cases or make-up of litigants who engage with the courts.[11] OCA annually reports on high-level data relating to the number of case filings and dispositions for various courts, including the family court.[12] OCA reports on similar data (with slight variation), along with number of cases pending and general information about types of cases, in a Family Court Caseload Activity Dashboard.[13] But these databases give limited information about how effectively the courts function that would provide a basis for improving the system.[14]

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[8] *See* Congressional Research Service, *Child Support Enforcement: Program Basics*, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/RS22380.
[9] *See id.*
[10] https://herjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Her-Justice-Policy-Report-Towards-Justice-for-Parents-in-Child-Support-Courts.pdf.
[11] There is no known publicly available collection of demographic data about litigants in the New York courts. A 2020 report about the New York Unified Court System addressed race in the courts among jurists and litigants and noted that there were "no statistics from [the Office of Court Administration] that track the races of litigants in [New York City]." *See* Jeh Charles Johnson, *Report from the Special Adviser on Equal Justice in the Courts*, at 36 (2020), https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/SpecialAdviserEqualJusticeReport.pdf [https://perma.cc/2KHN-54FN].
[12] *See, e.g.*, N.Y. STATE UNIFIED CT. SYS., 2024 ANNUAL REPORT [hereinafter 2024 ANNUAL REPORT], https://www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/24_Annual_Report.pdf.
[13] *Family Court Caseload Activity*, N.Y. UNIFIED CT. SYS., DIV. OF TECH & CT. RSCH., https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMTExOWU2ZWEtNWMyNi00MGU1LTllMmYtODY4OTU5MDA4YjJmIiwidCI6IjM0NTZmZTkyLWNiZDEtNDA2ZC1iNWEzLTUzNjRiZWMwYTgzMyJ9.
[14] *See id.*

Given the relative invisibility of the experience of attorneys and litigants in family court, and the far-reaching impact of family court decisions on the lives of indigent New Yorkers, we know that collecting and sharing information about these issues is critical for court reform. Her Justice has been committed to research around civil court experience and outcomes to back policy reform and efforts to generate data, especially focused on family court, through original research projects. Her Justice's policy work has addressed questions around how court users, the concerned public, and policymakers know what happens in court on a systemic level and how information would help shape opportunities for improvement of the system. Our research has addressed family court functionality and factors that could impact operational challenges, including the enormity of demand and lack of legal representation — especially significant in child support cases — and probed potential explanations including whether the family courts are adequately resourced to handle such critical matters that affect the safety and stability of many New Yorkers, in particular people living in poverty who rely on the courts.

Child Support Court Watch Project

Informed by extensive experience with clients' legal needs and the systemic barriers they face to fair child support, in 2017, Her Justice launched the *Child Support Court Watch Project*. In consultation with the Fund for Modern Courts, an organization with expertise in designing and implementing court watch programs, we trained and engaged volunteers to observe the courts from an average person's viewpoint and to provide common-sense perspectives on how courts serve the public. Our goal was to better understand the relatively invisible experience of litigants in child support proceedings since the majority are unrepresented. We focused both on the practical experiences of litigants like our clients, as well as on litigant trust in the system overall and procedural justice values, which recognize that how disputes are addressed in court can have more of an impact on litigants' view of their court experience than the case outcome. Volunteers' observations — summarized in a report that Her Justice released in 2021[15] — shed light on areas for improvement in the system that would benefit all parents and families. The report also included important interviews with Her Justice clients about their experience seeking child support in the New York City Family Courts.

Her Justice leveraged the report to shed light on the often-invisible problems in family court child support cases, sharing it with colleagues in the legal field, pro bono partners, and policymakers to shed light on the courts in a new way. In the years since its release, as described below, we used the report to support advocacy for a New York 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.

Report From Court

Building on our groundbreaking *Child Support Court Watch Project*, in 2024, Her Justice launched *Report From Court*,[16] a platform for "real time" public reporting on the experiences of attorneys in New York City Family Court. *Report From Court* collects information from Her Justice attorneys and pro bono attorneys working with our clients about their experiences in family court by

[15] *See Towards Justice for Parents in Child Support Courts* (2021), https://herjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Her-Justice-Policy-Report-Towards-Justice-for-Parents-in-Child-Support-Courts.pdf.
[16] *See* reportfromcourt.org.

having them answer a brief survey after each court appearance. Survey responses related to litigant demographics, case types, court appearance outcomes, and litigants' meaningful participation in court are aggregated and displayed on the *Report From Court* website to increase transparency of the day-to-day experiences of those navigating the family courts. Data collected through *Report From Court* also invigorates public awareness of the courts' impact on New Yorkers, especially people living in poverty. It also supports the advocacy of Her Justice and allies for improvements in family court.

Legislative Advocacy

As a complement to our original research, Her Justice engages in legislative advocacy to promote policy change and court reform. Following the release of our *Child Support Court Watch Project* report, Her Justice leveraged the data and analysis in conversations with New York policymakers and the court administration about areas for improvement in the child support courts, especially given the case backlog post-pandemic. We also drafted New York State legislation that would create an expedited settlement process in family court for families who agree on child support. The legislation is aimed at delivering affordable support to some children quicker and shrinking the backlog of cases in the family courts, which will allow the courts to dedicate more time to complex litigations. In 2022, we obtained legislative sponsorship for the bill and it has had consistent support since.[17] Her Justice has been committed to advocacy for a greater menu of options for families seeking child support in the courts, including alternatives to lengthy litigation, paired with identification of the best option for families' needs early in the court process. We have engaged in dialogue with policymakers, government officials, and the court administration about the legislation and the principles behind it and presented information — including the data from this project — to support our view that a key question for New York is not *whether* there is a need for reform but *how* to achieve it.

III. OCA DATA REQUEST AND REFINEMENT

A. Data Request

To build on our original policy research, and to learn more about the New York family courts and support our advocacy, Her Justice began to research and prepare a data request to the Office of Court Administration Division of Technology and Court Research ("Division of Technology"). In connection with a research project years earlier, Her Justice submitted a data request to the Division of Technology and learned about the Division's discretionary review of requests. In the fall of 2022, Her Justice engaged a team of graduate students in the Capstone program at NYU Wagner School of Public Policy to help update our research around the available mechanisms for requesting court data in New York, including assessing models in other states, and draft a data request. Through the Capstone team, we learned further that the Division of Technology supports OCA in handling all court data requests for New York State courts. Although the division provides some public-facing data reporting tools, including as a requirement of legislation, its primary focus is collecting and maintaining data to support case management rather than providing data to the public.[18]

[17] S.245/A.3531 in the 2025-26 session.

[18] Notes from the Wagner Capstone team of a conversation with the Division of Technology on February 28, 2023. (Notes on file with Her Justice.) The Capstone team confirmed our understanding that there is no statutory directive pursuant to which OCA must report on case-level family court child support data.

In March 2023, with support from the Wagner Capstone team, Her Justice submitted a request for statewide child support case data to the Division of Technology. **We requested anonymized data about child support cases resolved in the New York Family Courts in 2019 and 2022 with the following stated purpose**:

> This project would provide critical insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted family court operations pertaining to child support cases. Insight into child support case duration would supplement the insights from the OCA Family Court Caseload Activity dashboard. This research would improve attorneys' and litigants' understanding of case processing and family court overall caseload. It would also provide information that would help highlight the need for additional resources for the family courts, benefitting litigants and the courts.

We listed our "metrics of interest" as follows: date the petition was filed, date the case was disposed (resolved), case outcome, and county of filing.

In May 2023, we received two Excel spreadsheets with deidentified child support case data from OCA's Universal Case Management System. One spreadsheet contained child support cases disposed or concluded in 2019 and the other contained cases disposed in 2022, reflecting data from a total of 297,000 child support cases in the state. The Division of Technology noted (via email) that no research agreement was necessary for sharing deidentified data.

As described below, immediately following the initial production of data and in the years since, we worked with the Division of Technology to clarify definitions and categories in the dataset and request additional data. To date, we have received the following sets of statewide child support case data (in Excel):

- 2019 Child Support Filings
- 2022 Child Support Filings
- 2023 Child Support Filings
- 2024 Child Support Filings
- 2025 Child Support Filings
- 2019 Child Support Dispositions
- 2022 Child Support Dispositions
- 2023 Child Support Dispositions
- 2024 Child Support Dispositions
- 2025 Child Support Dispositions

For this report, we focused our analysis on child support filing data so that we could compare cases that were filed before the COVID-19 pandemic to those filed afterwards. By comparing cases with the same filing year — in essence at the same starting line — we could analyze how quickly they resolved year over year. By contrast, disposition data shows all cases closed within the same year. These cases may have been filed in different years — some pre-COVID and some post-COVID. If we analyzed a dataset with cases with different start years, it would be challenging to assess whether variables such as the average length of time to resolve a child support case or the number of scheduled appearances change over time.

One note regarding the datasets is that overall, 17% of child support cases were still open (Not Disposed) at the time Her Justice received the data. The number of open cases ranges from 112

in the 2019 dataset to 23,010 in the 2025 dataset. It is possible that a number of these cases have closed since Her Justice received the data. Below we discuss the implications of this for our analysis.

B. Data Clarification with the Division of Technology

In the Summer and Fall of 2023, we worked closely with the Division of Technology to clarify the parameters and definitions used in the dataset. The Division of Technology team was responsive to our requests for clarification and proposed revisions to the team's SQL query to provide additional data. One issue we sought to clarify was that almost all the cases in the dataset were categorized as "IV-D." Her Justice sought to understand whether cases categorized as IV-D involved the Department of Social Services as a petitioner or collection through the state child support agency, as described above. We worked with the Division of Technology to revise its query to capture whether the Department of Social Services was listed as a party on cases in the dataset.

We also cross-referenced the data to the New York Family Court Caseload Activity Dashboard and found a slight discrepancy in the number of cases in the dataset. For example, as of June 25, 2026, the dashboard shows 196,125 child support cases were filed in 2019 while our dataset shows 196,951 cases were disposed in that year — a difference of 826 cases. After discussing this with the Division of Technology, we came to understand that the discrepancy may be explained by the fact that OCA regularly updates the dashboard and the datasets we received are static. We do not believe that any discrepancies significantly impact Her Justice's analysis of the data.

A second place of divergence between the figures in the New York Family Court Caseload Activity Dashboard and the number of records Her Justice analyzed for this project is that the original datasets we received included cases in which litigants sought only spousal support. We eliminated these cases from the original datasets to focus exclusively on child support cases. For example, of the 196,951 cases included in the 2019 filing dataset that OCA provided, we eliminated 2,406 records that only pertained to spousal support, for a final tally of 194,545. The chart that follows captures these details described as to the overall number of records Her Justice analyzed for this project.

Table 1: Comparison of Number of Records in Each Year's Data

Filing Year	Number of Filings, OCA Dashboard (as of 6/25/26)	Number of Records OCA Provided to Her Justice	Number of Records Excluded by Her Justice*	Number of Records in Final Analysis by Her Justice
2019	196,125	196,951	2,406	194,545
2022	156,002	156,000	1,178	154,822
2023	160,517	160,114	1,101	159,013
2024	156,642	154,677	1,109	153,568
2025	130,438	130,376	1,074	129,302
All Years Combined	**799,724**	**798,118**	**6,868**	**791,250**

*Petitions for spousal support only.

C. Anonymity of Data

The Division of Technology shared anonymized, aggregated data with Her Justice, having assigned an artificial identification number to each case record. Her Justice took additional steps to

ensure the privacy of the court data, for example, by aggregating findings for counties outside of New York City to ensure that the small size of some counties would not pose a risk to anonymity.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Description of Datasets

In this analysis, we focused on filing data from all five years because it allowed us to more thoroughly examine cases from start to finish. Each dataset included the same variables. Examples of these variables included filing date, disposition date, number of scheduled appearances, and county where the case was filed. Table 2 includes a complete description of each variable that we used in our final analyses. The following is a more comprehensive explanation of certain variables in the datasets.

Table 2: Description of Variables

Variable Name	Description
Anonymized ID Number	Artificial identification number OCA assigned to replace the original number and protect litigant confidentiality.
County	New York City County (Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond) or outside of New York City.
Case Type	IV-D Support Case (petitioner parent opts for state agency collection/enforcement or state petitions for support on behalf of family receiving TANF); Support Case (no state involvement).
Filing Date	Date that litigant filed child support petition.
Relief Type Sought	Relief stated in child support petition.
Disposition Date	Date that case closed.
Disposition Category	Final outcome of the case.
Number of Appearances	Number of times litigant appeared in court.
Number of Adjournments	Number of appearances that were adjourned (postponed).
DSS as Petitioner	Department of Social Services (DSS) filed the child support case.
Total Case Time	Number of months from filing to disposition, calculated using Filing Date and Disposition Date.

Litigant Location. The original datasets included the name of the county in which each case was filed. To protect litigant confidentiality and simplify our analyses, we recoded the county variable into six categories: the five counties or boroughs that make up New York City (Bronx, Brooklyn (Kings), Manhattan (New York), Queens, and Staten Island (Richmond)) and one category encompassing the counties in the rest of the state.

Case Type and DSS as Petitioner. Most of the cases in the dataset were classified as IV-D cases. As described above, this designation applies to support cases in two scenarios. First, cases are considered IV-D when the custodial parent opts for the New York State Division of Child Support Services to collect or enforce child support payments. Second, cases are considered IV-D where the state pursues child support on behalf of a child who receives TANF public assistance. In these cases,

DSS is the petitioner in an action seeking child support from the noncustodial parent. This is reflected in the DSS as Petitioner category in the dataset.

Relief Type Sought. This field refers to the type of child support relief that the petitioner seeks. In the original datasets, many cases listed multiple types of relief sought. In total, there were 39 individual categories, making it difficult to conduct meaningful analyses of this field. We combined these 39 categories into 19. For the analyses in this paper, we focused on the top eight categories by *n* size, with a ninth Other category for cases lacking any of the top eight relief sought categories. Each of the five datasets had the same top eight categories by *n* size. Table 3 provides definitions for these eight categories.

Table 3: Description of Recategorized Relief Sought Categories

Category	Description
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	The New York State OTDA Division of Child Support Services adjusts support orders for cost of living (COLA) every two years per statute. Litigants filing an objection to a COLA are also included in this category.
Decision on Foreign Order	A prior child support order issued outside of the state or the filing county. Litigant is either filing to register this foreign order or seeking a vacatur to set it aside.
Enforcement or Violation	A child support order has not been paid in whole or part. The litigant requests a court order enforcing the support order based on a finding that the noncustodial parent violated the order.
Health Insurance	The litigant is requesting an order directing the noncustodial parent to provide health insurance to the child(ren).
Modification	A request for modification of a previous child support order (either increase or decrease).
Support	Litigant is seeking a child support order. No previous child support orders have been issued.
Transfer	Transfer of an existing child support case from one court to another (e.g., to family court from New York Supreme Court).
Vacate or Terminate Order	Litigant is seeking to vacate or terminate an existing child support order.
Other	All other categories not included above.

Disposition Types. There were 43 disposition type categories in the original datasets. As with the relief sought variable, we recategorized and condensed the list to 19 categories. Among the disposed cases,[19] all five years had the same top seven disposition categories in terms of *n* size. We included an eighth Other category to capture the remaining cases that did not fit in the top seven categories. Table 4 provides a description of these categories.

[19] For cases filed in 2025, 'Not Disposed' — the designation for cases that were still open at the time Her Justice received the data — was in the top seven disposition type categories. This is not surprising, as we received the dataset early in 2026. To simplify categorization across years, we excluded Not Disposed from the rankings and focused on cases that closed. For 2025, we included the eighth most common disposition category, which aligned with the most common categories for all other years.

Table 4: Description of Recategorized Disposition Categories

Category	Description
Decisions on Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	COLA was entered, withdrawn, or a decision was made about a COLA objection.
Modification	Decision on a petition for child support modification (increasing or decreasing the support obligation).
Order of Support in Place	New child support order entered.
Order of Support No Longer in Place	Previous child support order was terminated or vacated.
Petition Dismissed	Litigant's petition was dismissed by the magistrate without any action.
Violation Found	Magistrate determined that the noncustodial/payor parent violated a child support order by failure to pay.
Withdrawn	Litigant withdrew the original petition.
Other	All other categories that are not included above.

B. Research Questions

Our primary research questions were related to case features such as location, length of time from case filing to disposition, disposition type, and number of appearances. We were curious about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shutdown of the courts on case duration. We also sought to study the impact of court changes during this period on case resolution, including the increase in virtual appearances following the pandemic and the introduction of measures to resolve case backlog such as the triage pilot described below. For all issues, we were interested in analyzing any differences between New York City and counties in the rest of the state.

These key questions guided the research:

1. What percentage of all cases are IV-D cases? What percentage of cases are filed by DSS (categorized as DSS as Petitioner)? Are there any differences between cases with DSS as Petitioner and other IV-D cases?
2. What are the most common types of relief that petitioners request in child support filings?
3. What are the most common types of dispositions or outcomes for child support filings?
4. Are there differences between the length of time from filing to disposition by location and disposition type?
5. Does the number of scheduled appearances in child support cases differ by court location, i.e., New York City as compared with the rest of the state? Does the number differ between New York City counties? Does the number of scheduled appearances differ by disposition type?
6. Does the duration of cases with dispositions of order of support differ by court location or year of filing? What percentage of these cases were resolved with one court appearance?

V. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

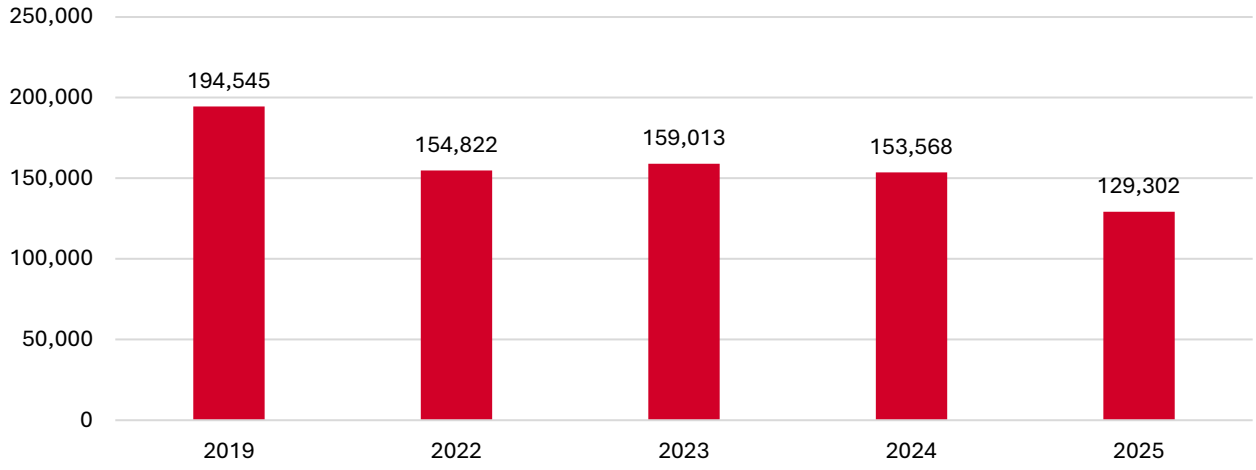
A. Overall Filings

Following are some findings that describe features of the overall dataset.

Number of Cases Filed per Year

The dataset contained a total of 791,250 child support cases filed statewide across all five years. The largest number of cases was filed in 2019 (194,545). Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the number of cases filed by each year in the dataset.

Figure 1: Total Number of Child Support Filings by Year, New York State



Number of Cases Filed in New York City Compared to Rest of State

Child support filings in the New York City Family Courts comprised 28% of the total dataset across all five years. Table 5 illustrates the differences in the number of child support filings between New York City and the rest of the state by year.

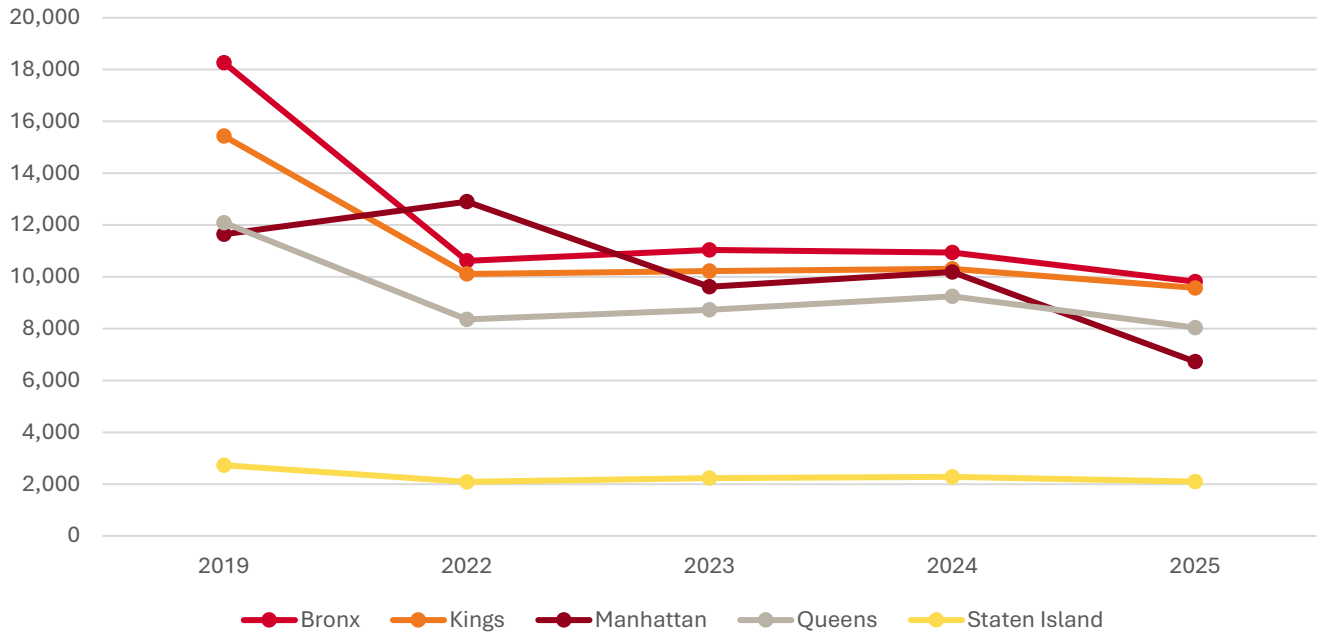
Table 5: Number of Child Support Filings Overall and by Year, New York City versus Rest of State

Year	Number of Child Support Filings – NYC (and % of annual total)	Number of Child Support Filings – Outside of NYC
2019	60,162 (31%)	134,383
2022	44,090 (28%)	110,732
2023	41,839 (26%)	117,174
2024	42,962 (28%)	110,606
2025	36,247 (28%)	93,055
All 5 Years Combined	**225,300 (28%)**	**565,950**

As presented in Figure 2, the number of child support cases filed decreased from 2019 to 2022 in most New York City boroughs, except for Manhattan. Across all five boroughs, the number of filings stayed relatively flat in 2023 and 2024. All five boroughs saw a decrease in child support filings

from 2024 to 2025. This is in line with a statewide decrease in the number of child support cases filed, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Number of Child Support Filings by County - NYC



B. Research Questions

1. Case Type and DSS as Petitioner

What percentage of all cases are IV-D cases? What percentage of cases are filed by DSS (categorized as DSS as Petitioner)? Are there any differences between cases with DSS as Petitioner and other IV-D cases?

As previously noted, 99% of child support filings across all five years statewide were classified as IV-D child support cases. However, only approximately one quarter of these IV-D cases listed DSS as a petitioner in the case, which means that most cases categorized as IV-D were those where the custodial parent elected to receive assistance with collection or enforcement from the agency's Support Collection Unit. Table 6 shows the differences between the number of IV-D cases and the number of cases with DSS as petitioner for all five years.

Table 6: Differences Between Number of IV-D Cases and Number of Cases with DSS as Petitioner (Statewide)

Year	Number IV-D Child Support Filings	Number of Filings with DSS as Petitioner
2019	190,643	52,313
2022	153,149	42,070
2023	157,472	40,145
2024	151,872	37,494
2025	127,569	29,263
All 5 Years Combined	780,705	201,285

2. **Relief Sought**

What are the most common types of relief that petitioners request in child support filings?

Among the 19 condensed categories for this variable, nine consistently appeared in large numbers of cases throughout all five years of data. Modification was the most common relief type litigants requested, followed by requests for an Order of Support, and Enforcement/Violation petitions. Table 7 illustrates the total number of filings across all five years for these nine categories.

Table 7: Total Number of Filings Statewide by Relief Sought (all years combined)

Relief Sought	Total Number of Filings (and Percent of Total)
Modification	267,075 (34%)
Support (Requesting Initial Order)	205,531 (26%)
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	149,706 (19%)
Enforcement/Violation of Prior Order	148,473 (19%)
Vacate or Terminate Order	27,715 (4%)
Health Insurance	16,041 (2%)
Transfer to Other Court	8,685 (1%)
Decision on Foreign Order	7,934 (1%)
Other	10,074 (1%)

3. **Disposition Types**

What are the most common types of dispositions or outcomes for child support filings?

Of the 19 condensed disposition type categories, most cases fit into eight categories. The most common disposition types were Petition Dismissed, Cost of Living (COLA) Decision, and Modification. Table 8 provides a breakdown of number of dispositions by each type, across all five years.

Table 8: Total Number of Filings Statewide by Disposition Type (all years combined)

Disposition Type	Total Number of Dispositions
Petition Dismissed	235,058
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Decision	147,771
Order of Support in Place	75,415
Modification	74,011
Petition Withdrawn	65,727
Order of Support No Longer in Place	50,022
Violation Found	41,091
Other	74,335

Overall, the total number of petitions dismissed is more than three times greater than the total number of cases concluding with orders of support in place. Of the petitions ending in dismissal, the most common relief sought types were Modifications (39%), Orders of Support (37%), and Enforcement/Violations (34%).

We further explored issues related to court engagement and timing for cases ending in dismissals. As shown in Table 9, the average number of appearances for cases that concluded with a dismissal was roughly the same when we compared New York City boroughs to the rest of the state. However, we did find somewhat large differences in the *case duration* for dismissed cases based on location. For example, dismissed cases in Brooklyn lasted an average of 7.4 months, compared to 2.5 months for counties outside of New York City.

Table 9: Average Number of Appearances and Average Case Duration by Location for Dismissed Cases

Location	Average Number of Scheduled Appearances	Average Number of Months to Disposition
Bronx	2.2	6.4
Brooklyn	2.4	7.4
Manhattan	2.3	4.9
Queens	2.2	6.1
Staten Island	2.7	4.9
Outside of NYC	2.2	2.5

4. **Case Duration by Location and Disposition**
   Are there differences between the length of time from filing to disposition by location and disposition type?

For our analysis of case duration, we removed Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) cases, which compose a substantial percentage of the disposition types.[20] As described above, COLA filings and dispositions are primarily administrative, with most COLA cases lasting less than one month. Without COLA cases, we could more accurately assess the average duration of cases that require substantive judicial intervention rather than administrative action. When we removed COLA decisions from the dataset, the length of time to close a case rose from an overall average 3.2 months to 3.7 months statewide.

[20] Note that among COLA-related filings and dispositions, 25% of these cases took place in New York City and 16% took place in counties outside of New York City.

Location. We analyzed the average duration of cases based on location. When we compared New York City to the rest of the state, we found a sizable difference in case duration. **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.** Figure 3 shows that among individual counties in the New York City area, Brooklyn had the longest average time to disposition (8.1 months) and Manhattan had the shortest (5.3 months).

Location and Disposition. Next, we examined the differences in time to disposition by final disposition type. Statewide, cases with the following disposition types had the longest duration: Order of Support in Place, Petition Dismissed, Other, [21] and Modification. For a number of disposition types, we saw a stark difference in duration between New York City and the rest of the state. Table 10 illustrates the average duration for the most common disposition types by location. Interestingly, cases with the disposition type Order of Support in Place lasted an average of 10.5 months in New York City, but only 3.6 months outside of the city.

Table 10: Average Time to Disposition by Disposition Type and Location

Final Disposition Category	***Average Number of Months From Filing to Disposition***	
	NYC	**Outside of NYC**
Order of Support in Place	10.5	3.6
Modification	8.4	2.9
Petition Dismissed	6.3	2.5
Other	6.0	2.9
Order of Support No Longer in Place	5.9	1.7
Withdrawn	5.9	2.5
Violation Found	4.7	3.1
Cost of Living Adjustment Decision (COLA)	1.0	1.0

5. **Number of Scheduled Appearances**
   Does the number of scheduled appearances in child support cases differ by court location, i.e., New York City as compared with the rest of the state? Does the number differ between New York City counties? Does the number of scheduled appearances differ by disposition type?

The datasets included the number of scheduled court appearances, along with the date for each appearance and a description of what happened, including first appearance, adjournment, and trial. Using this description field, we calculated the number of appearances, grouping first appearances, adjournments and trial dates for each case. On average, there were 2.4 scheduled appearances for cases among all years. The average number of *adjournments* was one and the average number of scheduled *trial dates* was less than one (0.34).

[21] 'Other' includes categories such as Petition Settled, Petition Granted, Arrears Set – Final, and Suspended Judgment. Further inquiry is necessary to understand the Division of Technology's definitions of these categories — in particular, Petition Granted and Petition Settled — and significance in terms of the average case duration of each.

We analyzed whether the number of appearances differed by year. Among all five years of data, 2019 had a slightly higher average number of appearances than the other years, with 2.7 appearances that year compared to 2.4 in 2022, 2023 and 2024, and 2.3 in 2025.

We also analyzed whether the number of appearances differed by location. It was our hypothesis that cases in higher volume courts would have more scheduled court appearances given the potential impact of caseload on court functionality, efficiency, and resources. As shown in the bold text in Table 11, we found that **all cases, regardless of whether they were filed within New York City or outside of the city, had the same average number of appearances (2.4).** Among individual New York City counties, we found small differences in the average number of scheduled appearances, but these differences were not meaningful. Overall, we found no meaningful differences in number of scheduled appearances among the filing years or filing locations.

Table 11: Average Number of Scheduled Appearances by Filing Location, All Years Combined

Location	Average Number of Scheduled Appearances
Bronx	2.4
Brooklyn	2.7
Manhattan	1.9
Queens	2.5
Staten Island	3.3
All NYC Counties, Combined	**2.4**
Outside of NYC	**2.4**

As shown in Table 12, we also analyzed whether the number of scheduled appearances differed by disposition type. Several disposition types had a higher-than-average number of appearances. Cases with a disposition of Violation Found had an average of 4.8 appearances. Cases that resulted in an order of support had an average of 3.1 appearances.[22] Finally, cases with a final disposition of Modification had an average of 2.9 appearances.

Table 12: Average Number of Scheduled Appearances by Disposition Type, All Years Combined

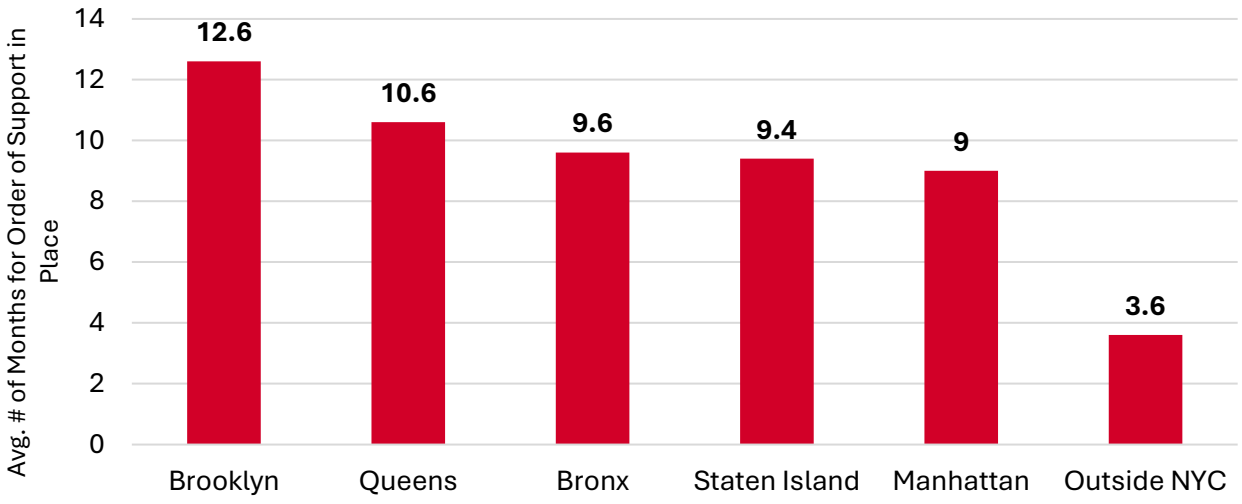
Disposition	Average Number of Scheduled Appearances
Violation Found	4.8
Order of Support in Place	3.1
Modification	2.9
Withdrawn	2.5
Petition Dismissed	2.2
Order of Support No Longer in Place	1.7
COLA Decision	1.1

[22] This analysis examines all cases filed across the state. See Figure 6 below for a discussion of cases that concluded with an Order of Support in Place with only one appearance.

6. **Cases with Order of Support Disposition**
   Does the duration of cases with dispositions of order of support differ by court location or year of filing? What percentage of these cases were resolved with one court appearance?

Given the significance of order of support cases in which families secure financial support for children and their comparatively lengthy duration, we further analyzed case duration for order of support cases in New York City. Among individual counties in New York City for all years, Brooklyn had the highest average duration for cases concluding with an Order of Support in Place (12.6 months), followed by Queens (10.6 months). Figure 4 shows differences in the amount of time to issue an order of support by New York City borough, compared to the rest of the state.

Figure 4: Average Number of Months for Order of Support in Place, All Years Combined

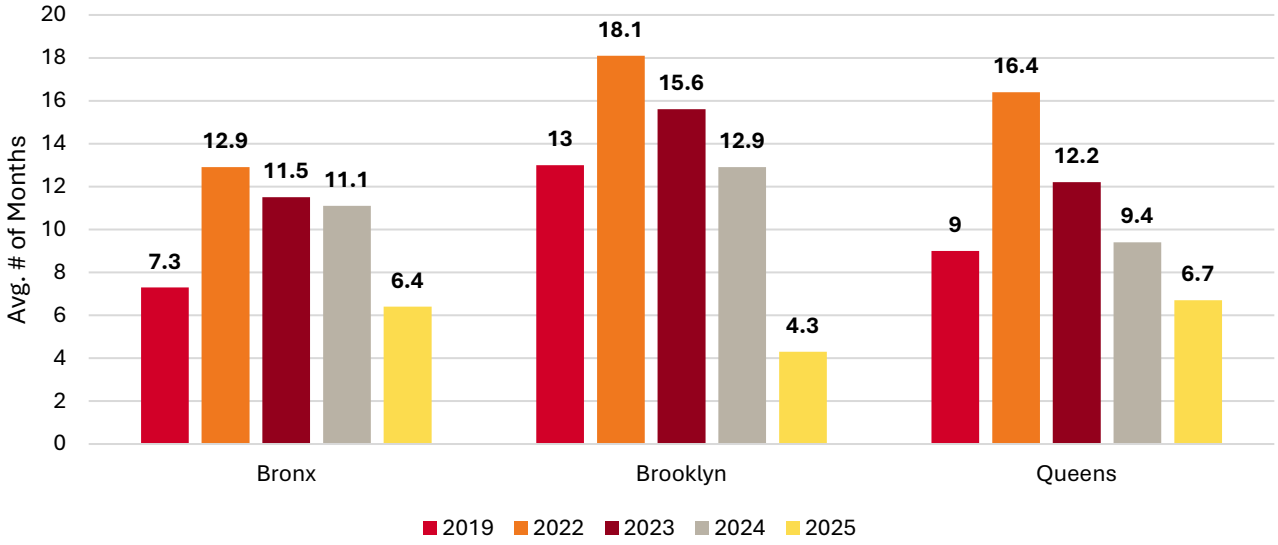


From 2022 to 2025, the average number of months to obtain an order of support decreased across all New York City boroughs. The largest decreases were found in Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens:

- **Bronx: average of 12.9 months in 2022 to 6.4 months in 2025.**
- **Brooklyn: average of 18.1 months in 2022 to 4.3 months in 2025.**
- **Queens: average of 16.4 months in 2022 to 6.7 months in 2025.**

Figure 5 shows the average number of months it took to obtain an order of support across all years of data in these three counties.

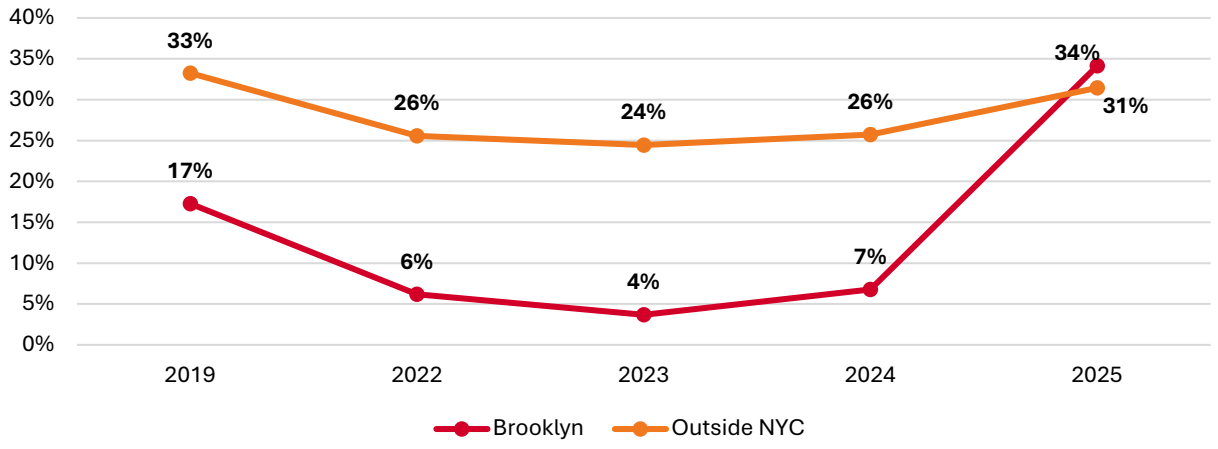
Figure 5: Average Number of Months for Order of Support in Place Over Time Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens



While these findings are promising, they are based on a partial dataset. As noted above, some of the cases in the dataset were not closed or marked 'disposed' at the time we received the data. For all cases filed in the Bronx in 2025, 37% were still open at the time Her Justice received the data in February 2026. Among child support cases filed in 2025 in Brooklyn, approximately one quarter of them were still open. In Queens, 29% of cases filed in 2025 were still open at the time Her Justice received the data. Her Justice plans to request the 2025 filing data from the Division of Technology at the beginning of 2027 so that we can repeat our analysis and determine if these case duration findings have changed.

Finally, we were interested in studying the **percentage of cases that concluded with an order of support in only one appearance** and chose to focus on Kings County Family Court data. As shown in Figure 6, the percentage of cases that concluded with an order of support and only had one court appearance increased from 7% in 2024 to 34% in 2025. For comparison, cases in counties outside of New York City — where cases generally are resolved more quickly — concluded with an order of support in one appearance 31% of the time in 2025.

Figure 6: Percent of Order of Support Dispositions that Were Concluded in One Appearance (Brooklyn Compared to Counties Outside of NYC)



C. Implications of Findings

The findings above have several implications for those who engage with the New York Family Court for child support and the court system itself and suggest further research questions.

Decrease in Number of Child Support Case Filings

From 2019 to 2025, the number of child support cases filed across the state decreased. New York is not the only state in which the number of child support filings decreased during the past few years. For example, Pennsylvania saw a decrease in child support filings from 162,275 in 2019 to 109,763 in 2024. In Florida, child support filings decreased from 11,758 in 2019 to 8,319 in 2024. Texas saw a 20% decrease in the number of child support filings from 2020 to 2024. Nationally, IV-D caseloads have decreased from 13.2 million in 2020 to 11.6 million in 2024. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, custodial mothers who reported having child support agreements dropped from 53% in 2019 to 43% in 2022. The reasons for these declines have not been established in research.

More than One-Third of Cases in the Dataset Were Dismissed Without Action

Most dismissed cases were filed as modifications, requests for orders of support, or enforcement/violation. We understand this to mean that courts dismissed a substantial number of cases in which petitioners sought substantive relief relating to the amount of child support ordered. Moreover, the total number of petitions dismissed is more than three times greater than the total number of cases concluding with orders of support in place. Further study of the reasons for this trend would be valuable, including whether litigant preparedness, court functionality or other systemic issues made an impact. More information could explain why dismissals occur at this rate and shed light on the impact of dismissals on the court system and litigants.

We also found that while the number of appearances for dismissed cases was roughly the same for counties in New York City compared to the rest of the state, cases took longer in New York City. While further research is warranted, this finding may suggest that higher caseloads in New York

City cause cases to last longer, with longer stretches of time between appearances compared to the rest of the state.

The Length of Time to Obtain an Order of Support Decreased

Across all locations that we studied, the length of time to obtain an order of support decreased from 2022 to 2025. Some decreases have been more dramatic than others, such as the change in Brooklyn. One potential reason for the decrease in time to obtain an order of support in Brooklyn could be the triage process that was implemented in Kings County Family Court in or around June of 2025. In meetings with court administrators and personnel, we learned that the purpose of this program is to better identify families' child support needs early in litigation, provide information about the process, and guide them toward opportunities for resolution, including a settlement option for families who choose to agree on support.[23] It is our understanding that additional New York City boroughs began piloting this intervention in 2025, with others planning to pilot in 2026. We also understand that the triage pilot not only has resulted in quicker resolution of cases, but in fewer court appearances, especially for cases that are resolved by settlement agreement. As seen in Figure 6 above, the percentage of cases in which the Kings County Family Court issued an order of support after only one appearance rose from 7% in 2024 to 34% in 2025. Shorter case resolution timeframes and fewer appearances can help families establish child support more quickly with less time in court. This can also free up the court's time to handle more complex child support cases. These findings seem to indicate that the triage child support program is a promising intervention in resolving cases faster.

Her Justice's court research and policy work has long been dedicated to studying delays in delivering support to children and the burden on families of unnecessary time in court.[24] We hope to continue studying these issues, including with court data as analyzed for this report, and that our approach to this project motivates additional research to support continued improvement in the efficiency and equity of the family courts.

Number of Appearances

We found no large differences in the average number of scheduled appearances by year of filing or location. However, cases that had an outcome of Violation Found, Order of Support in Place, and Modification had the highest average number of scheduled appearances among all disposition types. These findings are consistent with Her Justice's experience representing individual clients in family court child support cases. It is typical that cases in which a party seeks an order of support, modification, or enforcement of a child support order require parties to present legally sufficient evidence of financial circumstances or income. In litigation, each party can examine and contest the other's financial disclosure. The court then decides the merits of the petition based on the evidence presented. Each stage often requires at least one court appearance. Since these cases involve litigation, we would expect them to have a higher-than-average number of court appearances as compared to the overall dataset.

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[23] As described above, since 2022 Her Justice has advocated for New York State legislation that we drafted (S.245/A.3531 in the 2025-26 session) that would create an expedited settlement process for families who agree on child support. We have been committed to this advocacy for a greater menu of options for families seeking child support, including alternatives to lengthy litigation.

[24] *Towards Justice for Parents in Child Support Courts*, at 18-21, https://herjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Her-Justice-Policy-Report-Towards-Justice-for-Parents-in-Child-Support-Courts.pdf.

VI. AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

The opportunity to analyze such a large dataset was illuminating and exciting. We believe our approach and findings contribute to awareness both within and outside the courts as to how cases work on a systemic level. Our work also raised additional questions about data on child support cases in the New York Family Courts and highlighted areas of interest for further study as described below.

Modifications and Supplemental Filings

Our analysis of the data showed that child support modifications comprise the majority of filings across all years of study. We also found large numbers of supplemental filings, which indicate that families filed for additional relief following the initial petition, for example to modify or enforce existing orders. From our work on individual child support cases, Her Justice knows that families seek modification when parents' income changes or when a parent alleges the original order was not calibrated to income available for child support. We know, too, that there is often a gap in time between when circumstances change and parents return to court for modification. It would be illuminating to obtain and analyze longitudinal data that follows families throughout the child support litigation process — from initial petition through all supplemental ones. Such data could help shed light on how much time families spend engaging with family court for child support needs; how long after the initial order families return to court with a supplemental filing; and what are the outcomes of modifications and supplemental petitions. Findings on these issues could help support system improvement and efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the child support courts for litigants.

Virtual Versus In-Person Appearances

As described above, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the family courts introduced virtual appearances for parties for some appearances in some cases. The datasets that Her Justice received did not include the modality of appearances (virtual or in-person). This information would be valuable to determine the impact of increased use of virtual appearances on factors such as case duration and total number of appearances.

Continued Examination of Average Case Duration for an Order of Support

As mentioned above, the data shows a large decrease in the length of time to implement an order of support among cases filed in 2025 in New York City. More research is needed to determine if this decrease holds for all *disposed* 2025 filings. Additional data or information from the court system would also be valuable to fully assess causes of the shorter duration of these cases, for example, whether the courts introduced other interventions or made operational changes in this time period, and the impact of the triage pilot.

Impact of Legal Representation

Her Justice is dedicated to providing legal representation for clients in complex child support cases in family court; we know firsthand how complex navigating these cases can be for the many litigants who are self-represented. It would be interesting to analyze the impact of legal

representation, if data were made available, on other data points, for example, numbers of scheduled appearances or time from case filing to disposition.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we shared our methodology for requesting, obtaining, and refining usability of data from the Office of Court Administration on child support cases filed in family court throughout the state of New York. This novel work — both for its rare access to such a large set of court data and its approach to the analysis of the data — can be a model for advocates and researchers in other communities. The project shows what is possible when large-scale court data is made accessible to researchers and advocates. We can illuminate trends and peek behind the curtain of the court system to determine how it is serving families seeking fair orders of child support for economic security. Court data research and analysis can also help probe the impact of court innovations and interventions, as this project does with the recent introduction of case triaging with opportunities for expedited settlement in the New York City Family Court. And, importantly, the research shared in this paper points to areas for further study that could benefit New Yorkers engaging with the courts, policymakers, and the system itself.

Her Justice would like to express its deepest appreciation to the data team at the Division of Technology for providing the data necessary to complete this analysis and working with us to explain and refine the dataset.

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*.