

News Release



New Jersey Courts
Independence • Integrity • Fairness • Quality Service

STUART RABNER
Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court

For more information contact:
PETER McALEER
MARYANN SPOTO
Office of Communications and Community Relations

609-815-2910 www.njcourts.gov

RICHARD J. HUGHES JUSTICE COMPLEX • P.O. BOX 037 • TRENTON, NJ 08625-0984

For immediate release: **Dec. 7, 2022**

NJ Judiciary Releases 2021 Annual Criminal Justice Reform Report

The latest annual Criminal Justice Reform report, released today by the Administrative Office of the Courts, examined the justice system's response during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The [report](#) found the average time to dispose of cases increased significantly during the pandemic, triggering an increase in the jail population for the first time since the start of Criminal Justice Reform (CJR). However, the jail population continued to consist mostly of defendants charged with first- or second-degree offenses.

Many of the findings in the report reflect the challenges posed by the pandemic. Criminal trials were shut down across New Jersey for the majority of 2020 or severely limited to allow for social distancing in courtrooms. This led to a longer pretrial period for many 2020 defendants. Crime rates also rose nationwide during the pandemic.

During that same time period, the percentage of defendants charged with indictable offenses while on pretrial release, which held below 14 percent for three consecutive years, rose to 20.3 percent. The increase in the average length of the pretrial period for defendants likely increased the chances of a pretrial rearrest. However, the number of defendants charged with serious crimes while on release remained at 1.2 percent, a lower percentage than after the first year of CJR in 2017.

Court appearance rates, on the other hand, improved significantly for defendants arrested in 2020, surpassing 97 percent for the first time. Many court proceedings were held virtually, allowing defendants to appear by phone or video instead of travelling to the courthouse.

The report also showed CJR continued to balance public safety and the rights of the accused by detaining those who pose the greatest risk to the public. A one-day snapshot of New Jersey's jails taken in October 2021 showed more than 69 percent of defendants had been charged with or sentenced for first- or second-degree offenses. Conversely, just 1.1 percent of defendants detained at the time of the snapshot had been charged with or sentenced for disorderly persons offenses as their most serious charge.

The use of monetary bail continued to decline. Since 2017, the court has ordered bail in just 0.02 percent of cases.

First appearances for defendants continued to be held promptly. In nearly 99 percent of cases, judges made initial pretrial release decisions within 24 or 48 hours, just as they had done in prior years.

#