

NYC Touts Success of Court-Appearance Reminder Texts

AMANDA OTTAWAY January 24, 2018

MANHATTAN (CN) – New York City’s pilot program of texting reminders to people about upcoming court dates has been a success so far, Mayor Bill de Blasio said Wednesday.

“Little reminders can make a big difference, and these text messages will help people avoid a missed court appearance – and a warrant that could eventually lead to spending a night in jail,” de Blasio said in a statement. “We’ve found that these gentle

WARRANTS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IN 2014

320,000 scheduled arraignments **41%** FTA RATE



17,100 WARRANTS AVOIDED



3,700-14,300 WARRANTS AVOIDED

20,800-31,300 Total Warrants Avoided Per Year (APPROXIMATE)

This infograph appears in a January 2017 report by Ideas42 and the University of Chicago Crime Lab.

CNS Trends



Internet's Grumpy Cat Awarded \$710,001 in Licensing Spat



Grumpy Cat Is | Really Grumpy Now



Now Extinct, Eastern Cougar Removed From Endangered List



Suit Against Social Workers Over Bathtub Photos Revived



Lesbian Couple Slams Denial of Son's US Citizenship



Norwegian Glacial Melt Reveals Artifact Trove



Trump Nominates 12 More for Judgeships Nationwide



Deal May Be Near in Fight Over Billionaire's Art Forgeries



Sugar Cane Workers Claim Chemical Sprays Made Them Sick

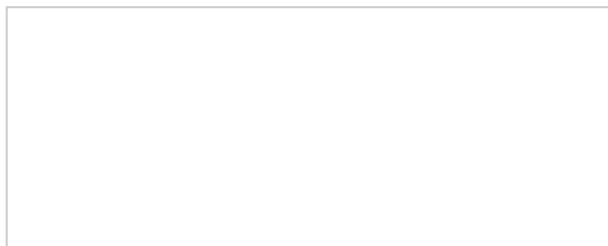
CNS Feed

nudges help New Yorkers remember when and where their court appearance is and reduce failure-to-appear rates, and that progress is a great step toward a fairer justice system.”

The text message pilot program, which the city rolled out in 2016, runs on the premise that sometimes people simply forget they have to go to court, don’t plan for it or do not fully understand the consequences of staying home. It is the latest stage in a multiyear effort by the city and several partners, including the nonprofit behavioral-design lab Ideas42, to get more New Yorkers to show up for their court dates.

Simple offenses such as drinking alcohol in public lead to court appearances in New York City, generally 60 to 90 days after the ticket is issued. Missing a court date is automatic grounds for an arrest warrant. But in 2014, according to a [report](#) by Ideas42 and the University of Chicago Crime Lab, roughly 41 percent of offenders in these low-level cases did not show up in court or resolve their summons by mail. That’s 320,000 avoidable warrants, which are costly for the justice system and can have lifelong consequences for people’s employment and housing opportunities.

“There was no previous procedure in terms of reminders before the court dates,” Ideas42 managing director Alissa Fishbane said in an email. “People got a summons citation, and that was it. Text messages are now scaled to everyone who provides a phone number on their summons form.”



About 96 percent of New Yorkers have mobile phones,

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COMING UP: Tomorrow night I'll cover Mexican President Vicente Fox's Q&A on Trump, #DACA and the current state of U.S. politics + a discussion of his book, Let's Move On. Story to come. Stay tuned.

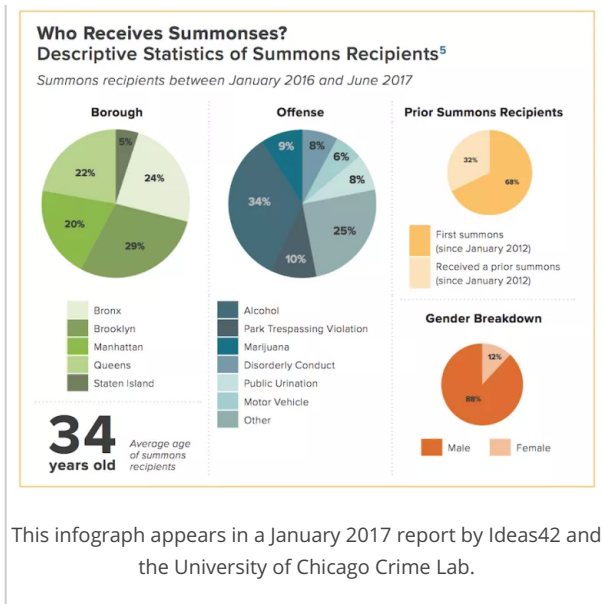
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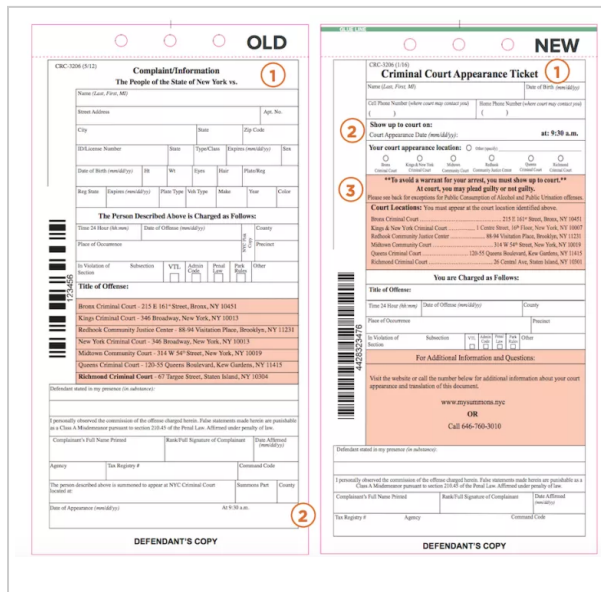
Fishbane noted, but robocalls are sent to a landline for the remaining population.

Reminder messages that also warned of the potential consequences of an absence, offered

planning advice and guided recipients on what to expect were the most effective text messages in the pilot. These combination messages cut the failure-to-appear rate by 26 percent.

Messages said things like: “Helpful reminder: go to court on Mon, Jun 3 09:30AM. We’ll text to help you remember. Show up to avoid an arrest warrant. Reply STOP to end texts,” and “Most people show up to clear tickets but records show you missed court for yours. Go to court at One Centre Street Manhattan.”

The text-message pilot was the next step after the city partnered with Ideas42 in 2014 on updating the summons form. They moved the time, date and



location of the court appearance

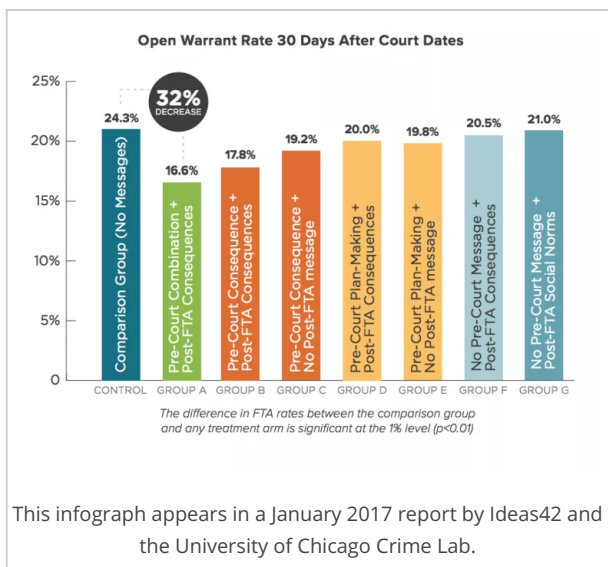
A January 2017 report by Ideas42 and the University of Chicago Crime Lab includes a side-by-side comparison of how New York City updated its court-appearance tickets.

from the bottom of the page to the top; added clearer titles; and clarified in large text the penalties of not appearing. The new form reduced the failure-to-appear rate by 13 percent, according to the report.

Both the text-message program and the summons-form update were relatively inexpensive modifications. The messages cost less than 1 cent each (\$0.0075) to send, and the form change was a onetime cost. The report also notes the changes are scalable and could be adapted by other courts and cities.

The message pilot was funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

Fishbane said in a statement Wednesday that the two advances highlight “how solutions based on behavioral science insights can effectively complement existing policies and benefit all stakeholders, including the court system, law enforcement, and most importantly, the public.”



The [Criminal Justice Reform Act](#), passed in 2017, also attempts to limit the disproportionate impact of a minor offense like a

littering or open
container charge,
sending tens of thousands of those cases to civil court instead
of criminal.

Representatives from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
did not immediately return an email for comment
Wednesday afternoon.

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