

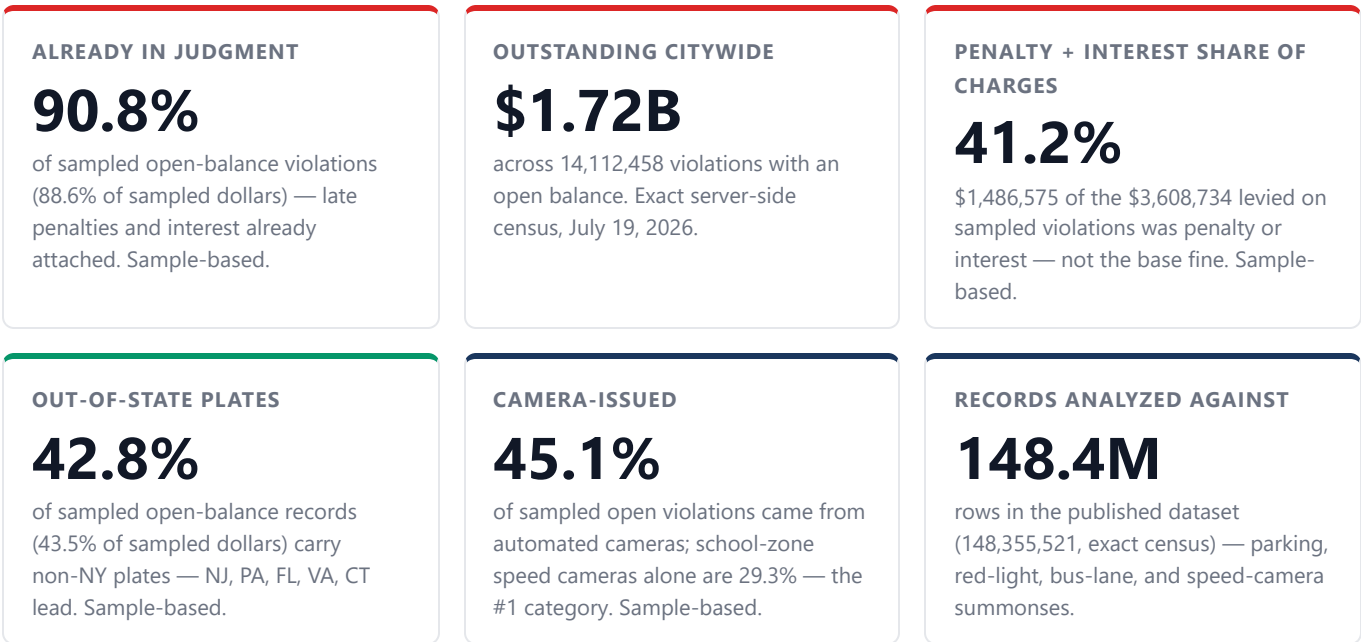
New York City Parking & Camera Violations: An Open-Data Analysis

What 148 million published violation records reveal about unpaid balances, penalty escalation, out-of-state exposure, and the growing dominance of automated camera enforcement.

Prepared July 2026 · partnerships@thetrafficapp.app · thetrafficapp.app

1 Executive summary

New York City publishes one of the largest municipal violation datasets in the country: **Open Parking and Camera Violations** (NYC Open Data, Socrata dataset **nc67-uf89**), covering roughly **148 million** summonses. On July 19, 2026 we ran exact server-side census queries plus a 30,000-row extract of open-balance records and analyzed them end to end. The headline: for the open-balance records we sampled, non-payment is rarely a fresh ticket awaiting payment — **it is debt that has already escalated**. Roughly nine in ten sampled open-balance violations have gone to judgment, meaning late penalties and interest were already attached before the balance was resolved.



Key findings

- **Escalation precedes visibility.** 89.9% of sampled open-balance violations show no hearing record at all — they were never contested, and most defaulted into judgment. Every dollar of interest observed in the sample sits on a judgment record: interest begins only after escalation.

- **The added cost is measurable.** For every \$1.00 of base fine levied on sampled violations, an additional \$0.56 of penalty and \$0.14 of interest was charged — a 70% surcharge that timely payment avoids entirely.
- **NYC violation debt is a national problem.** ~43% of sampled open-balance records belong to out-of-state plates. Camera tickets are mailed to the registered address; a driver in Virginia or Maryland can accrue NYC camera debt without ever seeing a windshield ticket.
- **Cameras are the growth segment.** Nearly half of sampled open violations are camera-issued, led by school-zone speed cameras — violations owners frequently learn about late, or never.
- **Debt is concentrated.** 21.5% of sampled plates carry more than one open violation, and those plates hold 60.1% of the sampled open dollars. Exact plate-level queries confirm single plates carrying \$34,221 (281 open violations) and \$21,073 (195 open violations).

2 Data & methodology

DATASET	Open Parking and Camera Violations — NYC Department of Finance (DOF), published on NYC Open Data
IDENTIFIER / ENDPOINT	Socrata nc67-uf89 · data.cityofnewyork.us/resource/nc67-uf89.json (SODA/SoQL API)
SIZE (EXACT CENSUS)	148,355,521 rows as of July 19, 2026; refreshed by the city approximately weekly
FIELDS USED	plate (masked in this report), state, license type, summons number, issue date, violation description, judgment entry date, fine / penalty / interest / reduction / payment amounts, amount due, county, issuing agency, violation status
PULL TIMESTAMP	2026-07-19 17:09 UTC, scripted (Node.js against the public SODA API); all aggregation code retained and reproducible

How each figure was computed

- **Census figures (exact).** Total row count, and the count and dollar sum of all records with *amount_due* > 0, were computed server-side by the Socrata engine over the full 148M-row table: **14,112,458 open-balance records, \$1,723,276,940 outstanding**. Two plate-level totals quoted in Section 6 are also exact single-plate census queries. These are not estimates.
- **Why sampling was necessary.** Grouped aggregate queries (by state, violation type, etc.) over the full 148M-row table exceed the public API's execution limits and time out. Distributional analysis therefore uses a **30,000-row extract** of open-balance records (*amount_due* > 0), returned in the dataset's default row order and aggregated client-side. Every figure below is labeled **SAMPLE** or **CENSUS** accordingly.
- **Derived statistics.** Averages, medians, percentiles, shares, and compositions were computed from the raw 30,000 sampled rows. Dollar aggregates are rounded to whole dollars; shares to one decimal.

Honest limitations

A sample is an estimate — and this one has a known skew we quantified rather than hid. The 30,000-row extract is not a uniform random sample: it reflects the dataset's default return order. The slice it returned is dominated by nearly-settled judgment debt — 99.1% of sampled records carry partial payments, and every sampled residual balance is \$10.00 or less. By contrast, the exact census implies a **mean open balance of \$122.11** (\$1.72B ÷ 14.1M), so the full population clearly contains a heavy tail of larger unpaid balances that this slice under-represents. We therefore (a) quote dollar *levels* from the sample only as within-sample values, benchmarked against the census; and (b) rely on the sample mainly for *compositional* statistics (state mix, violation mix, judgment share). A companion 30,000-row pull on July 18, 2026 produced materially identical shares (NY ≈ 57%, school-zone cameras the #1 category, ~43% out-of-state) — the shares are stable across pulls, though because the extraction method is deterministic the two pulls overlap and stability is not independent confirmation. Additional caveats: the dataset reflects DOF's publishing pipeline (~weekly refresh); balances shown on the city's official payment portal are authoritative; and minor data-quality artifacts exist in the source (documented in Section 10).

3 Judgment analysis: open balances are escalated balances

A violation "goes to judgment" when it remains unanswered long enough for the city to docket a default judgment against the vehicle owner — the point at which maximum late penalties apply, interest begins to accrue, and enforcement tools (booting, towing, collections) become available. In the sampled open-balance records, judgment is not the exception. **It is the norm.**

Share of sampled open-balance violations in judgment

SAMPLE n = 30,000 open-balance records · pulled July 19, 2026



What escalation does to a balance

The sample lets us observe the mechanics of escalation directly, because each record itemizes fine, penalty, and interest separately:

- **Interest exists only after judgment.** 100% of the \$294,910 in interest observed in the sample sits on judgment records. Records not in judgment show \$0 interest.
- **Penalties multiply at judgment.** On judgment records, penalties equal **61.4%** of the base fines (\$1,165,415 on \$1,896,925). On sampled records *not* in judgment, penalties are only **11.7%** of base fines — a five-fold difference.
- **Most owners never engaged at all.** 89.9% of sampled open-balance records (26,964 of 30,000) carry no hearing record — never contested, never adjudicated. Only 0.04% ended in a not-guilty finding.

Hearing status of sampled open-balance violations

SAMPLE n = 30,000 · pulled July 19, 2026

STATUS	RECORDS	SHARE
No hearing record (never contested / defaulted)	26,964	89.9%
Hearing held — guilty	2,361	7.9%
Hearing held — guilty with reduction	356	1.2%
Hearing pending or adjourned	179	0.6%
All other outcomes (appeals, admin actions, not guilty)	140	0.5%

Reading: by the time a balance is visible as "open," escalation has usually already happened. Any intervention that depends on the owner noticing a mailed notice is failing for roughly nine out of ten of these records. The window that matters is the one *before* judgment — which is precisely the window a proactive notification service targets.

4 Composition: how much of the burden is avoidable

Each record itemizes what was levied. Across the 30,000 sampled open-balance violations, total charges of **\$3,608,734** break down as follows:

Charges levied on sampled open-balance violations, by component

SAMPLE n = 30,000 · \$3,608,734 total levied · pulled July 19, 2026



- **41.2% of everything levied** on these violations — \$1,486,575 — was penalty and interest, not the underlying fine. For every \$1.00 fined, the eventual bill averaged **\$1.70**.
- **The money was ultimately paid.** Payments recorded against these violations total \$3,368,626 — 93.3% of what was levied (reductions account for another \$28,041, and \$218,144 remains open). These owners were not refusing to pay; they paid *late*, and the lateness itself cost them roughly \$1.5 million on this slice alone.
- **Scaled illustration.** The city's open balance is \$1.72B (census). If the levied composition observed in the sample is even broadly indicative of escalated debt citywide, a nine-figure share of that balance is penalty and interest rather than base fines. We flag this explicitly as an illustration, not a measurement — the sample's composition cannot be directly projected onto the full population.

5 The amount-due distribution — and what it revealed about the data

Within the sampled slice, remaining balances are small and tightly clustered: **average \$7.27, median \$7.19, 90th percentile \$9.94** — and a hard ceiling of exactly **\$10.00** on every one of the 30,000 rows returned. Combined with the fact that 99.1% of sampled records carry partial payments, the extract is unambiguous: it is a block of **almost-settled judgment debt** — residual balances (largely trailing interest) on violations whose principal has been paid down.

Remaining balance per sampled record

SAMPLE n = 30,000 · pulled July 19, 2026 · within-slice values, not citywide levels



Percentiles: min \$0.01 · p10 \$4.86 · p25 \$5.63 · median \$7.19 · p75 \$8.98 · p90 \$9.94 · max \$10.00.

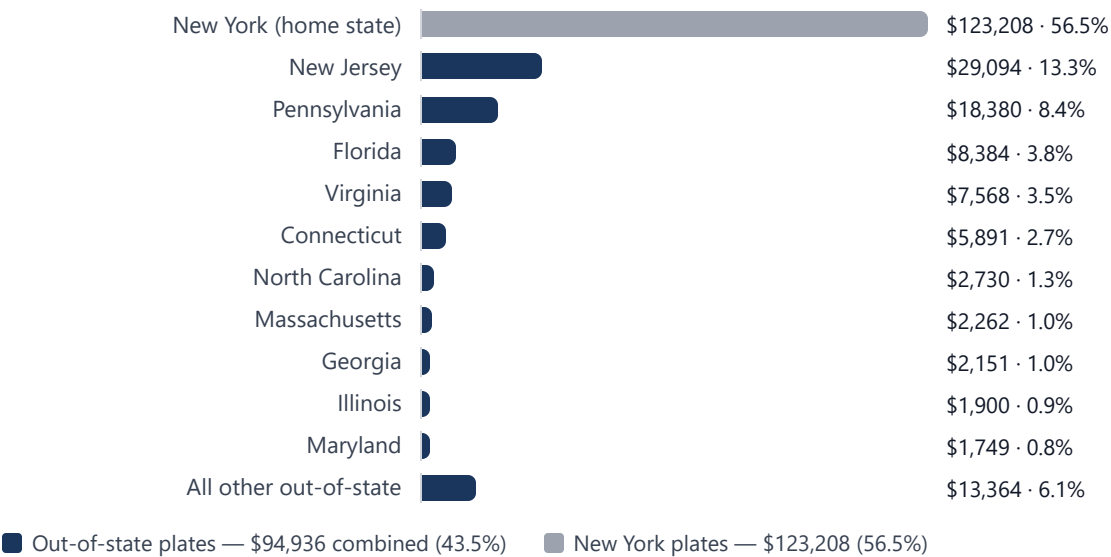
The census tells the other half of the story. Across all 14.1M open-balance records the mean balance is **\$122.11** — nearly 17× the sampled slice's mean — and exact plate-level queries surface individual plates owing \$21,000–\$34,000 (Section 6). The open-balance population is therefore highly skewed: a large mass of small residual balances coexists with a heavy tail of fully-unpaid, multi-violation debt that dominates the dollars. Detecting this skew — by benchmarking every sample statistic against exact census totals instead of quoting sample means as citywide facts — is precisely the kind of check we build into our data pipeline.

6 Out-of-state exposure: a national debt footprint

New York City's violation debt does not stay in New York. Of the 30,000 sampled open-balance records, **12,829 (42.8%) carry non-NY plates**, holding **\$94,936 (43.5%)** of the sampled open dollars — consistent with our July 18 companion pull (~43%). New Jersey and Pennsylvania lead, but the tail spans the country, including 1,263 records (4.2%) on Virginia and Maryland plates — TheTrafficApp's home market.

Sampled open-balance dollars by plate state

SAMPLE n = 30,000 · \$218,144 total · pulled July 19, 2026 · bars scaled to New York



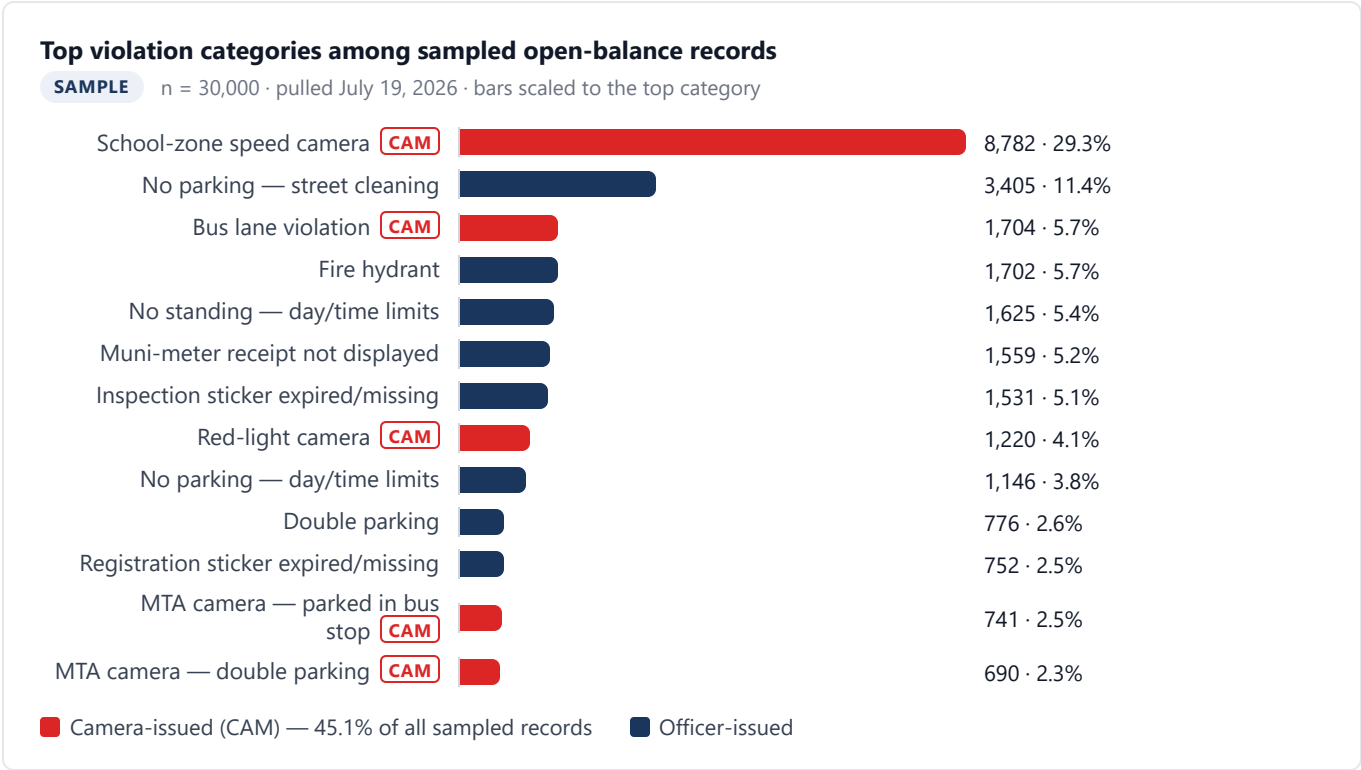
Concentration: a repeat-plate problem

- The 30,000 sampled records belong to **14,804 distinct plates**. 3,179 plates (21.5%) appear more than once — and those repeat plates hold **61.3% of the sampled violations and 60.1% of the sampled dollars**. One plate appears 74 times within the sample alone.
- Exact plate-level census queries (July 19, 2026) confirm the tail beyond the sample: one New York passenger plate (masked: **KV...98**) carries **281 open violations totaling \$34,221**; one Florida plate (**QK...83**) carries **195 open violations totaling \$21,073** — an out-of-state balance New York City has limited practical means to pursue.

Why this matters: camera violations attach to the vehicle owner and are noticed by mail. An out-of-state driver — 43% of this debt — may never see a windshield ticket, may miss mailed notices entirely, and typically has no reason to check a New York City portal. This is the single clearest gap that cross-jurisdiction monitoring closes, and it is invisible to any single city's own outreach.

7 Violation mix: cameras dominate what goes unpaid

School-zone speed cameras are the largest single category of sampled open-balance violations — nearly three times the runner-up. Counting all automated enforcement (school-zone speed, red-light, bus-lane, and MTA bus-mounted cameras), **45.1% of sampled open violations (13,541 records; \$97,939, 44.9% of sampled dollars) are camera-issued** — tickets that arrive by mail, or not at all.



Where and when

BOROUGH (NORMALIZED FROM 15 RAW COUNTY CODES)	RECORDS	SHARE	OPEN \$ (SAMPLED)
Brooklyn	8,377	27.9%	\$61,333
Queens	7,507	25.0%	\$54,018
Manhattan	6,866	22.9%	\$50,812
Bronx	5,384	17.9%	\$38,321
Staten Island	1,006	3.4%	\$7,469
County blank in source	860	2.9%	\$6,191

SAMPLE n = 30,000 · pulled July 19, 2026 · the source county field uses 15 distinct spellings ("BK", "K", "Kings"...) which we normalized to the five boroughs

The sampled debt is recent: **89.1% of sampled open-balance violations were issued in 2021 or later**, and 2025 is the largest single issue-year (10,218 records, 34.1%), with 2024 second (6,670, 22.2%). Open balances are being created faster than legacy debt ages out — this is a live, growing problem, not an archival one.

8 What this means: the notification gap

Three findings in this analysis point at the same underlying failure — not unwillingness to pay, but **a gap between when a violation occurs and when its owner finds out**:

- **Escalation is the default outcome.** ~91% of sampled open-balance violations reached judgment, and 90% were never contested at all. The penalties and interest that follow — 41 cents of every levied dollar in the sample — are charges a timely alert renders avoidable. The sampled owners did eventually pay 93% of what was levied; what they could not do was pay *on time*, because the notice pipeline (a mailed letter to a registration address) failed them.
- **Camera enforcement widens the gap.** Nearly half of the sampled open violations were issued by automated cameras with no in-person notice. As camera programs expand, the share of violations an owner can miss entirely grows with them.
- **Out-of-state owners fall through completely.** 43% of this debt belongs to plates from other states — drivers with no reason to check a New York City portal and the least reliable mail linkage. No single jurisdiction's outreach can reach them; cross-jurisdiction monitoring can.

TheTrafficApp operates plate-based violation monitoring that covers New York City today: users register a license plate and receive alerts when new violations appear in the city's published data, with per-ticket detail (original fine, penalty, interest, hearing status) and deep links to the official summons image where the dataset publishes one. The same pipeline that produced this report powers that monitoring.

9 About TheTrafficApp

TheTrafficApp is a Maryland-based traffic-violation monitoring service founded by Keya Gemechu. The service monitors parking, toll, and camera violations across multiple jurisdictions — including Washington DC, Montgomery County (MD), Detroit, and New York City — and alerts vehicle owners before late penalties attach. Our approach is partnership-first: we work from official public data and published APIs, and we seek formal data partnerships with the agencies whose residents we serve. Analyses like this one are how we vet every jurisdiction we cover.

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10 Disclaimers & data notes

- **Public data.** All figures derive from the "Open Parking and Camera Violations" dataset published by the NYC Department of Finance on NYC Open Data (Socrata [nc67-uf89](#)), retrieved July 19, 2026 (17:09 UTC) via the public SODA API. Where noted, context figures reference our companion pull of July 18, 2026.
- **Estimates.** Figures tagged **SAMPLE** are estimates computed from a 30,000-row extract of open-balance records and are subject to sampling and selection error, as detailed in Section 2. Figures tagged **CENSUS** are exact server-side query results as of the pull timestamp.

- **Point in time.** The dataset is refreshed by the city approximately weekly; all figures are as of the pull dates stated on each chart and table and will drift as the dataset updates.
- **No affiliation.** TheTrafficApp is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or acting on behalf of the New York City Department of Finance or any government agency. Any individual balance should be verified on the city's official payment portal, which is authoritative.
- **Privacy.** License plates are published in the source dataset by the city; this report masks all example plates (e.g., KV•••98) and contains no personal information.
- **Source data-quality artifacts** observed and handled during analysis: 22 sampled records (0.07%) carry impossible issue years (2028, 2097–2099); the county field uses 15 distinct spellings for the five boroughs (normalized here); and sentinel plate values (e.g., "BLANKPLATE" with state code "99") appear in the source and were retained but flagged. Figures are otherwise reported as published.