



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER: CITY COLLECTED ALL-TIME HIGH \$1.9 BILLION IN FINES AND FEES LAST YEAR

Comprehensive analysis finds 13.3% increase in fines and fees over last four fiscal years

Parking violations account for 59% of all fine revenue in FY 2015

Dirty sidewalk and recycling violations up 40% since FY 2012

Reduced pedestrian deaths from Vision Zero reflected in enforcement of speed and bus lanes

(New York, NY) — Fines and fees have risen by 13.3% over the past four fiscal years to \$1.9 billion in Fiscal Year 2015—more than the Commercial Rent Tax (\$787 million), Utility Tax (\$398 million), Hotel Tax (\$560 million), and Cigarette Tax (\$50 million) *combined*, according to a new budget brief released today by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer.

“While fines and fees are critical tools to protect public health and safety, it is essential that they are applied equitably to all New Yorkers,” Stringer said. “The Mayor’s successful effort to reduce pedestrian deaths through Vision Zero, for example, is reflected in enhanced enforcement of speed and bus lane cameras. As the City’s chief fiscal officer, it’s my job to make sure taxpayers are getting their money’s worth for the fees they pay, and that we are balancing the need for enforcement with fairness.”

Fines are imposed by the City for violations of various rules and statutes. Fees cover a broad range of municipal activities, from tuition charges paid by CUNY community college students, to those assessed for building, elevator and electrical system inspections. The Comptroller’s report analyzed fines and fees levied by the City from FY 2012 through FY 2015.

Findings include:

Fines

- In FY 2015, the City took in \$957 million in fines, an increase of 7.5% over the prior fiscal year and 12% since FY 2012.

- Parking violations accounted for more than 59% of all fines last fiscal year (\$565 million of \$957 million), and have increased 10.3% since FY 2012.
- After declining in the prior two fiscal years, revenue from red light cameras inched up in FY 2015 to \$29 million, an increase of 6.9% over the year before. The rise was part of an overall 41% increase in camera revenues since FY 2012, driven largely by a 15-fold increase in school zone speed cameras, deployed for the first time in FY 2014, and a 117% increase in bus lane camera violations over the same period. Greater use of these cameras is a critical component of the Vision Zero initiative.
- In FY 2015, the City issued fines for 623,758 “quality of life” violations, such as littering and noise pollution. Such fine revenue rose to \$150 million in FY 2015, a 4.9% increase over FY 2012. Much of the increase was driven by a 40% rise in recycling and dirty sidewalk violations since FY 2012.
- Fine revenue related to restaurant inspections by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene fell from \$54 million in FY 2012 to \$33 million in FY 2015. Meanwhile, fine revenue from retail stores and tobacco dealers fell 33% in FY 2015, following the launch of the Mayor’s “Small Business Relief Package” in July 2014.

Fees

- In FY 2015, the City took in \$974 million in fees, an increase of \$124 million, or 14.6%, since FY 2012.
- Revenue from CUNY students increased 22.3% from FY 2012 to FY 2015, largely due to a 25% rise in tuition rates at community colleges over the same period.
- Following CUNY, the largest fee revenue sources for the City in FY 2015 were:
 - Revenue from 85,000 parking meters and 39 municipal garages (\$211 million)
 - Fire Department inspections and fire insurance fees (\$93 million)
 - City Register publication fees (\$28 million)
 - Towing by the Police Department (\$23 million)
- The amount of money collected by the City for credit card “convenience” fees increased from \$7.5 million in FY 2012 to \$10.5 million in FY 2015, a rise of 40%. This fee is imposed when New Yorkers pay fines, fees, and taxes online via credit card.

“As fines and fees increase, it’s important for New Yorkers to see and understand what they are being charged for,” Stringer said.

[To view the full report please click here.](#)