



Fines & Fees Collection and Enforcement In Wilmington, Delaware: Gains and Costs

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Executive Summary

In this report, we examine the revenue that the City collects from fines and fees, and how fines and fees impact those who receive parking and red light tickets.¹ The report consists of two sets of analyses. First, using municipal budget data, we report on the number of tickets issued and the corresponding amount of revenue generated by the City's fines and fees, and how this compares to the amounts collected by other cities. We then turn to a survey of motorists about their experiences with parking and red light tickets in Wilmington to assess the impact of these tickets. Taken together, this provides insight as to whether Wilmington's fines and fees are reasonable and equitable.

In our examination of City of Wilmington budget data, we come up with three principal findings:

- An historical analysis of fines and fees shows that revenue from fines and fees have increased substantially. After adjusting for inflation, in 2004 the City collected \$4.2 million in fines and fees (2.8% of general revenue), while in 2022 the City collected almost twice that amount (\$8.1 million or 4.4% of general revenue).
- The City of Wilmington collects fines and fees revenue in amounts that are substantially higher than is typical for US cities. Where fees and fines generate, on average, between 1% and 2% of a city's revenue, in 2022 fees and fines represented 4.4% of Wilmington's general revenue.
- Fines and fees are an inefficient revenue mechanism for the City of Wilmington. In every year since 2018, enforcement and collection costs have represented the majority of Wilmington's fees and fines revenue. In 2022, the city only netted 44 cents of every dollar collected in fees and fines to use for other municipal services.

In our examination of the survey collected by the Wilmington Fines and Fees Justice Team, we found that:

- Almost half (44%) of all respondents met the operational criteria we established for having been "more highly impacted" by parking and red light tickets.
- Over two-thirds (69%) answered affirmatively when asked if it had "ever been difficult for you financially to pay for parking or red light tickets or booting or towing costs?"
 - o Over half (56%) of the respondents also indicated that they had taken at least one of five specific measures of hardship to pay these associated fines and fees.

¹ The term "fines and fees," as used in this report, consists principally of fines collected from parking and red light camera violations and any subsequent fees added to the initial fine, as well as additional fines and fees added for subsequent booting and towing of vehicles. These sources account for roughly 90% of the City of Wilmington's total "fines" revenue. See City of Wilmington Office of Management and Budget (2023). *Proposed Budget: FY 2024*, pps. 28-29. Accessed at: <https://wilmbudget.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/2024-proposed-budget-book-final.pdf>.

- Those identified as being more highly impacted and/or experiencing hardship were disproportionately non-White (i.e., Black, multi-racial, other race categories, and/or Latino).
- In the more open-ended responses of the survey, respondents repeatedly indicated changes in behavior: involving how they shop, desire to move out of Wilmington, etc.; that are or would be detrimental to the City, and expressed dissatisfaction with how parking enforcement and collections were administered in Wilmington.

In summary, along with the high levels of fines and fees revenue collected by the City of Wilmington, we also found evidence that this revenue is collected in an inefficient and inequitable manner.

It is questionable how this situation benefits either the City or its constituents. From a revenue generating perspective, at best the net fines and fees revenue (i.e., after collection expenses) accounts for a small portion of the City's general revenue – between 1 to 2 percent. At worst, there are indications that collecting parking ticket revenue may be a money-losing proposition. The latter situation, about which the City has hinted but has not disclosed particulars,² would explain why the City has been reluctant to fulfill its stated commitment to reduce the high parking fine amount – it would create or increase an operating deficit.

Furthermore, the burden of tickets received and the hardships of paying the related fines and fees both appear to fall disproportionately on people of color. We cannot conclusively state the existence of this association due to the limitations of the survey. We can, however, point to the large White—non-White disparities that are in the survey, and we can connect these findings with those of numerous other studies that show consistent patterns of racial (and socioeconomic) disparity in the burdens of fines and fees enforcement in other cities. At a minimum, this warrants further investigation into the extent to which such inequities exist in Wilmington.

The findings of this report, when combined with the problems that the City is facing with the appeals system and towing practices (issues not covered in this report), suggests that changes need to be enacted to bring about a fines and fees system that better serves both the City and its constituents. An initial step toward this would be greater transparency and public availability of data on parking and red light enforcement, along with corresponding fines and fees collections, to further evaluate the findings in this report. The availability of such data could, for example, facilitate an assessment of the extent to which the contracts that the City has with Conduent for its enforcement services have led to the current situation that, paradoxically yields both high ticket costs and low return rates. It could also shed further light on whether the racial disparities that we find here hold up more generally, and the extent to which these racial disparities coexist with economic disparity in the burdens and hardships associated with the leveeing of fines and fees in Wilmington.

² City of Wilmington (2021). "City of Wilmington Responds to Wilmington Parking Coalition." May 21. Accessed at: <https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/wdel.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/2/30/23078698-bf28-11eb-9d17-1ff4f1c4a1bb/60affdb5753cf.pdf.pdf>.

I. Introduction

Wilmington, like many northeastern and midwestern US cities that lost industrial infrastructure and population over the latter part of the twentieth century, has struggled to fund municipal government and services from a declining tax base. In this context, the City has used fines and fees generated from parking and red light tickets as a revenue source.

For a city such as Wilmington, which has a majority (57%) Black population and (in 2021) a poverty rate of 26% (compared to 11% in New Castle County and 12% across Delaware), collecting money from fines and fees raises concerns related to economic hardship and equity. A growing research literature has consistently documented how nontax revenue sources, such as fines and fees, often take on a regressive nature that disproportionately impact low-income and minority residents.³ This concern has grown in the wake of the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson MO, where a federal investigation revealed the extent to which this city extracted wealth from its population using monetary sanctions from traffic violations, court fees and other infractions.⁴

No one suggests that Wilmington's practices are anywhere near as extreme as those found in Ferguson. However, Wilmington has had substantial difficulties with administering and processing its parking and red light tickets to the point where, in 2019, a report by the Mid-Atlantic AAA raised concerns about the fairness and equity of Wilmington's fines and fees system.⁵ Two of the main issues that the AAA report raised involved the City's ticket appeals process and its towing practices. Persisting problems with the accessibility and responsiveness of the City's appeals process led, in August 2023, to the City transferring appeals to Delaware's Justice of the Peace court system.⁶ The City's towing practices, which it contracts to a private company, has been criticized as arbitrary and irregular to the point where two Wilmington residents have filed a federal lawsuit charging the City with violating constitutional protections against illegal search and seizure.⁷

³ See, in particular, Thai V. Le & Matthew M. Young (2023). "Regressive Revenue Sourcing by Local Governments." *Urban Studies* 60(5): 811–828, DOI: 10.1177/00420980221124456 and Michael W. Sances & Hye Young You (2017). "Who Pays for Government? Descriptive Representation and Exploitative Revenue Sources." *The Journal of Politics* 79(3): 1090–94, DOI: 10.1086/691354.

⁴ US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (2015). *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*. https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf.

⁵ Ken Grant, Jim Lardear and Cathy Rossi (2019). *Parking Tickets, Appeals, Booting, and Towing Issues in the City of Wilmington, Delaware*. American Automobile Association (Mid-Atlantic chapter). The report is unavailable online.

⁶ Amanda Fries. "Wilmington parking appeals will be handled in court; city administrative process ends." *Delaware News Journal*, August 14, 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/2023/08/14/wilmington-shifts-parking-ticket-appeals-process-to-delaware-courts/70574878007/>.

⁷ Amanda Fries. "Tow company bid \$0 storage fee, but charged Wilmington drivers thousands anyway." *Delaware News Journal*, August 24, 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/2022/08/24/city-towing-charged-wilmington-drivers-thousands-storing-towed-vehicles/65404805007/>.

In this report, we examine the revenue that the City collects from fines and fees, and how fines and fees impact those who receive parking and red light tickets. First, using City of Wilmington budget data, we report on the number of tickets issued and the corresponding amount of revenue generated by the City’s fines and fees, and how this compares to the amounts collected by other cities. We then turn to a survey of motorists about their experiences with parking and red light tickets in Wilmington to assess the impact of these tickets. Taken together, this provides insight as to whether Wilmington’s fines and fees are reasonable and equitable.

“Fines and fees,” as examined in this report, consist principally of fines collected from parking and red light camera tickets and any subsequent fees added to the initial fine, as well as additional fines and fees added for subsequent booting and towing of vehicles. These sources account for roughly 90% of the City of Wilmington’s total fines and fees revenue. The remainder consists of “Criminal/Instant Ticket revenues,” which “are composed of State Criminal Fines remittances and the L&I Instant Ticketing Program (which involves L&I inspectors issuing tickets for violating the City’s sanitation codes).” Fines and fees revenues are reported as one, undifferentiated amount; breakdowns in fines and fees revenue by specific types of fines, or in ratio of fines to fees, or by type of fine cannot be systematically assessed using available data.⁸

⁸ “L & I” refers to the City’s Department of Licenses and Inspections. Quotes are from City of Wilmington Office of Management and Budget (2023). *Proposed Budget: FY 2024*, pps. 28-29. Accessed at: <https://wilmbudget.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/2024-proposed-budget-book-final.pdf>.

II. Parking and Red Light Tickets in Wilmington

The City of Wilmington is responsible for maintaining parking and traffic order to ensure the safety of other citizens. By holding people accountable for their parking and red light tickets, City of Wilmington seeks to incentivize its citizens to be more careful and cognizant of others, and improves the overall safety and quality of life in the city. The resulting ticketing, and subsequent booting and towing of vehicles as a result of non-payment of these tickets, also generates revenue for City of Wilmington and the private companies with which it contracts.

The city's Department of Finance coordinates the issuing of parking and red light tickets, and collecting revenue in the form of fines associated with the tickets and additional fees when the tickets become overdue and/or delinquent. For parking, issuing tickets is handled by city employees. The City Finance Department contracts with Conduent State and Local Solutions (hereafter Conduent) to collect the associated fines and fees. This means that Conduent handles online payment processing, collection services, and booting of vehicles associated with unpaid parking tickets. The fine for parking at an expired meter is \$40, with higher fines for other parking violations. While there is a \$10 discount for paying early, parking ticket fines increase by \$20 increments when they are 21, 45 and 90 days delinquent.

The City of Wilmington also has a contract with Conduent to manage their red light camera ticketing program. Known as the Traffic Light Signal Violations Monitoring System Program, the city first installed red light cameras in 2001, citing the need "to reduce dangerous intersection crashes that typically cause injury or death, to aid in the redeployment of police officers to better serve our residential and business communities, and to avoid the cost associated with red light running traffic crashes, which typically includes right-angle crashes."⁹ There are 40 intersections in Wilmington that have red light cameras, including 17 that were added since the 2019 expansion of this program. The fine for running a red light is \$110, with additional \$10 assessments levied when the ticket is 14, 45 and 90 days delinquent.

After multiple unpaid parking tickets or red-light tickets (usually 3 unpaid tickets or \$200 in fines to a single owner), a vehicle is subject to getting booted or towed (even if the vehicle is parked legally), as a means to compel drivers with delinquent parking or red light tickets to pay their fines. City of Wilmington contracts separately with a towing company for this and receives no revenue from any towing charges collected by the contracted towing firms. Booting fees and corresponding fines and fees owed are collected by Conduent under contract with the City.

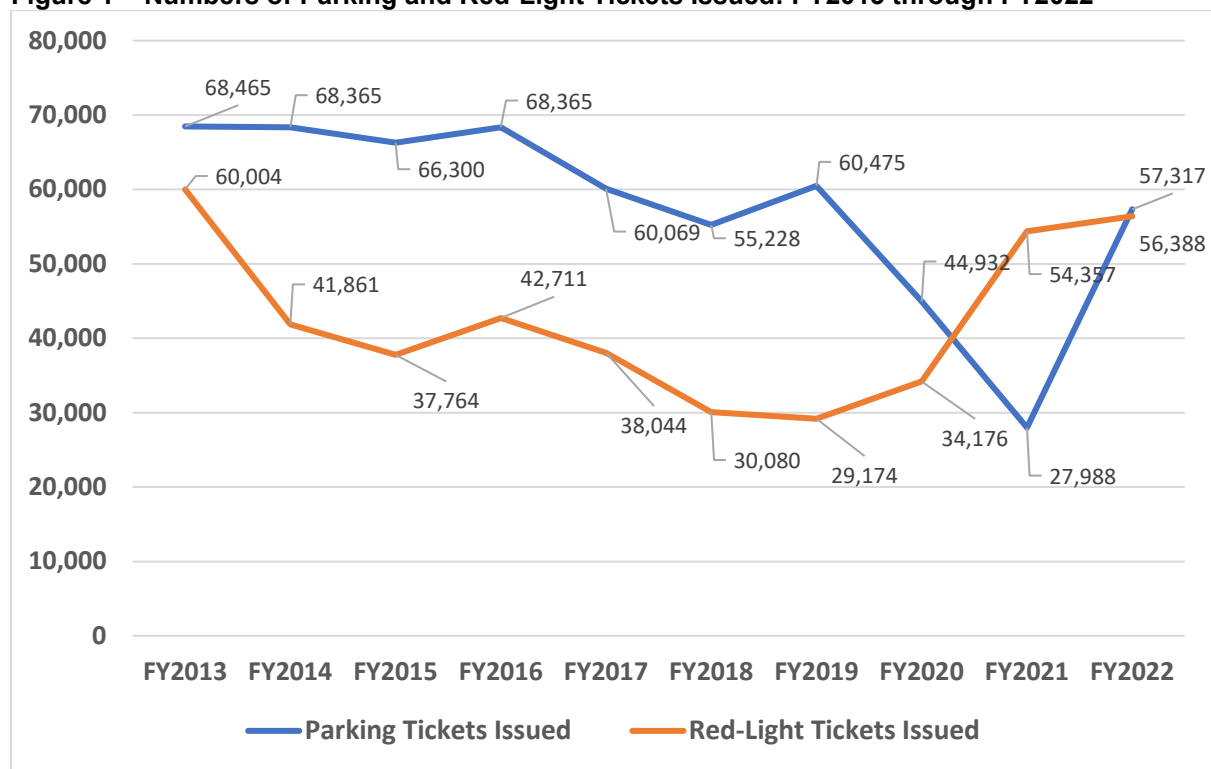
⁹ City of Wilmington Police Department and Department of Finance (2015). *Traffic Light Signal Violation Monitoring System Program Report for Fiscal Year 2015*, page 4. Accessed at: https://kipdf.com/city-of-wilmington-traffic-light-signal-violation-monitoring-system-program-repo_5b17b9447f8b9ad2338b45b4.html. For further information about red light camera enforcement, see David Randall Peterman (2020), *Safety Impact of Speed and Red Light Cameras*, Congressional Research Service, accessed at: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46552>.

Finally, the City’s practices of issuing tickets and collecting fines and fees are carried out independently from significant direct police involvement. Police rarely ticket for parking or red light tickets, and police citations for traffic violations such as speeding are a minor source of fines and fees revenue in Wilmington.

II.1 Parking and Traffic Tickets – Ticketing and Revenue Trends

Figure 1 shows the number of parking and red light tickets issued, by fiscal year (FY), from FY2013 through FY2022 by the City of Wilmington. For both parking and red lights, the highest number of tickets issued both occurred in FY2013 (i.e., July 2012 through June 2013), which was the earliest year for which data was available.

Figure 1 – Numbers of Parking and Red-Light Tickets Issued: FY2013 through FY2022



Source: City of Wilmington, *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2022*, p. 180.¹⁰

From this point, the number of parking tickets issued remained roughly constant and then declined somewhat through FY2019. Then came the first two years of the COVID pandemic, when Wilmington suspended much of its parking enforcement and the tickets that were issued

¹⁰ 2022 ACFR was accessed at: <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/11474/638158633469470000>.

declined more sharply (FY2020 and FY2021). After normal ticketing resumed (FY 2022), the numbers issued rose back to pre-COVID levels.¹¹

For red light tickets, the number issued trended downwards after FY2013 so that the number of tickets issued in FY2019 was about half that of FY2013. For the next three fiscal years (FY2020-22), red light ticketing rebounded to where, at the end of FY2022, it was almost back to 2013 levels. The reductions after 2016 were due at least in part from statewide legislation passed in 2016 that restricted red light ticketing. Subsequent increases came as the City expanded the number of intersections that were covered by red light cameras.¹² Beyond that, the reasons for the significant fluctuations in tickets issued is unknown.

Data on booted vehicles for unpaid parking and red light tickets is only available for FY2021 and FY2022. There were 2,410 incidences of booted vehicles in FY2021 and 3,675 bootings in FY2022, a 34% increase. Booting as a proportion of tickets issued also increased from FY2021 to FY2022, from 2.9% to 3.2%.¹³ The total number of vehicles towed annually is available for some years, but the number towed specifically due to delinquent parking and red light tickets cannot be ascertained from the data available.

Whether the FY2022 increases in parking tickets, red light tickets, and bootings will be sustained over FY2023 and beyond remains to be seen.

The revenue generated annually from parking tickets, red light tickets and associated booting is reported together each year in the City of Wilmington's *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report*. While we were unable to obtain consistently collected data that itemized revenue amounts for parking tickets, red light tickets and booting, the revenue line "fines and forfeitures" reports the combined amount generated annually from these three sources in a manner that is consistent over time. As described in the report: "Fines and Forfeitures are collected by the City for red light photo citations, parking tickets, criminal, and booting fines. The City recognizes revenues when the citizen pays the fine or forfeiture as opposed to when the fine is imposed."¹⁴

¹¹ Amanda Fries, "What Wilmington ending its COVID-19 emergency means for you." *Delaware News Journal*, July 27, 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2021/07/27/wilmington-ends-covid-19-emergency-how-does-impact-you/8091014002/>.

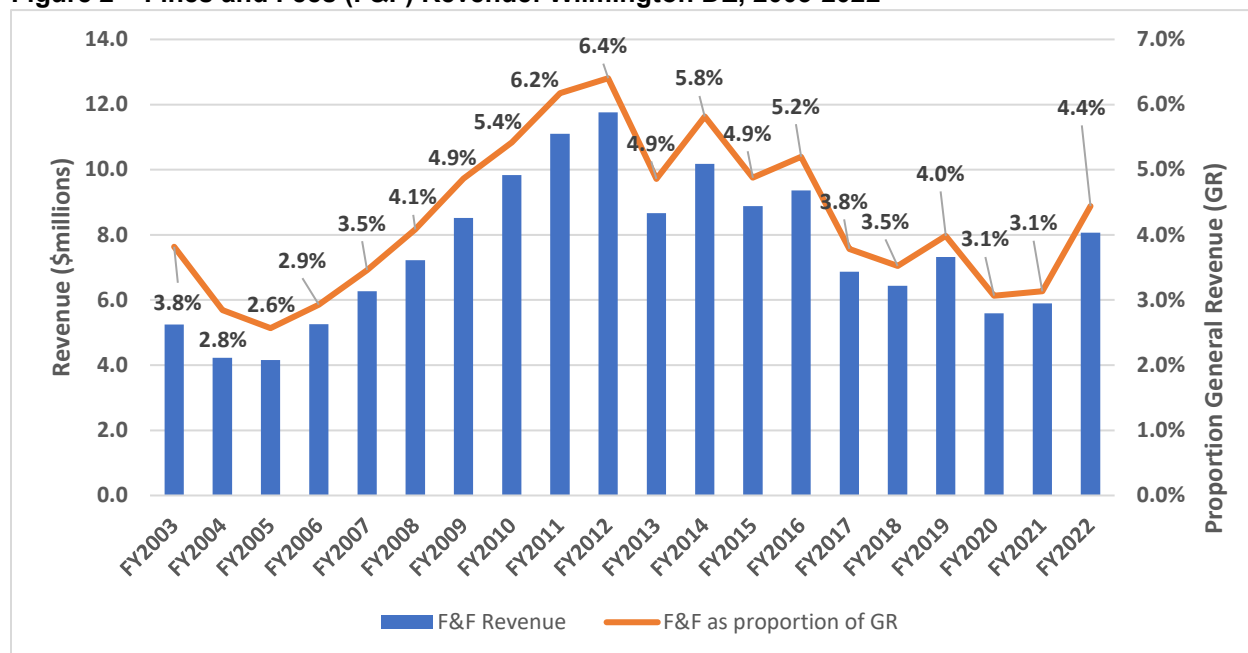
¹² Amanda Fries, "Are Wilmington's red light cameras a revenue trap or a safety measure? It depends." *Delaware News Journal*, May 18, 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/2022/05/18/wilmingtons-red-light-cameras-most-dangerous-intersections/7366476001/>.

¹³ City of Wilmington Finance Department (2023). FY2024 Budget Hearings PowerPoint presentation. Accessed at: <https://wilmdebudget.org/departamental-budgets/finance/>.

City of Wilmington Finance Department (2022). FY2023 Budget Hearings PowerPoint presentation. [No URL located].

¹⁴ City of Wilmington Department of Finance (2023). Annual Comprehensive Financial Report: FY 2022 ACFR, p.13. Accessed at: <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/11474/638158633469470000>.

Figure 2 – Fines and Fees (F&F) Revenue: Wilmington DE, 2003-2022



Total fines & fees revenue amounts (bars) are indexed for inflation to 2022 dollar values.

Figure 2 shows the amount of revenue collected from fines and fees¹⁵ over two decades (from FY2003 through FY2022), and these fines and fees as a proportion of the City of Wilmington’s annual general fund revenue. Even with reductions in fines and fees during the initial COVID years (FY2020 and FY2021), the amount of fines and fees collected annually has roughly doubled over this time period, after adjusting for inflation, and has increased by almost 50% as a share of the general revenue.

II.2 City of Wilmington Fines and Fees Revenue as Compared to Other Municipalities

As a next step, we take the findings reported in Figures 1 and 2 (and Table 1) and compare them to fees and fines collections in other municipalities in order to place Wilmington’s practices in a more general perspective.

We found only one study that specifically mentioned Wilmington as part of a more systematic analysis of fines and fees revenue. In a 2019 article in *Governing* magazine,¹⁶ data journalist Mike Maciag reviewed 2017 and 2018 revenue data from municipal documents for jurisdictions nationwide that reported collecting over \$100,000 in fines and fees revenue. Here Maciag identified 840 jurisdictions as collecting “relatively high fine or court revenues compared to other localities.” His criteria for identifying high-collection jurisdictions were that their “fines

¹⁵ Wilmington, in their municipal budget reports, refers to “fines and fees” as “fines and forfeitures.” As per the city’s definition, this term is interchangeable with “fines and fees” as is more commonly used. There is no indication that actual civil asset forfeitures are included in this category.

¹⁶ Maciag, Mike (2019). “Addicted to Fines.” *Governing*. Accessed at: <https://www.governing.com/archive/fine-fee-revenues-special-report.html>.

and court revenues accounted for more than 10% of general revenues, or revenues exceeded \$100 per adult resident.” Wilmington, by virtue of its \$103 per-adult collection rate, made the cut for being a high-collection jurisdiction, even though fines and fees represented 3.5% of general fund revenue,¹⁷ which fell short of the other high-collection criterion.¹⁸

In a 2023 study from a peer-reviewed academic journal,¹⁹ sociologist Brenden Beck systematically compiled data on the revenue (including fines and fees revenue) on 2,716 U.S. municipalities from 2009 to 2018 as collected by the US Census Bureau in its Census of Governments (COG) survey.²⁰ Beck reported that the average proportions of total annual municipal revenue that comes from fines and fees was 1.3%, and, when only looking at cities with high (15+ percent) proportions of Black people in its population (like Wilmington), this average proportion went down slightly, to 1.1%.

We replicated this analysis for the City of Wilmington using COG data, allowing our findings to be directly comparable to Beck’s aggregate findings.²¹ The corresponding proportions for the City of Wilmington were 3.1% (in 2009 and 2010); 3.2% (2011); and 3.9 (2012). This leaves Wilmington, as a city whose population is 57% Black, as having fines and fees revenue that, when adjusted for overall municipal revenue, is roughly three times higher than that of the average city with a population that is disproportionately Black.

In a similar measure, Wilmington had an average per capita fines and fees revenue (i.e., total fines divided by municipal population) of \$88 in 2009, compared to \$26 that Beck reports as the corresponding average per capita amount in 2009 for the 2,716 municipalities in his dataset. By either measure, Wilmington’s level of fines and fees revenue was considerably higher during the time period measured (2009-2012) than the average US municipality.

¹⁷ The 3.5% share of general fund revenue that Maciag found is consistent with what we report in Figure 2.

¹⁸ Other Delaware cities to make this high-collection list include Newark, Newport, Felton, Laurel, Rehoboth Beach, and Dewey Beach.

¹⁹ Brenden Beck (2023). “Police Killings and Municipal Reliance on Fine-and-Fee Revenue.” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 9(2): 161–81. DOI: 10.7758/RSF.2023.9.2.07.

²⁰ Census of Governments survey is compiled annually by the US Census Bureau. See: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cog.html>.

²¹ We collected corresponding COG measures for Wilmington from 2009 to 2012 (which were presumably also included in his dataset), to directly compare measures of fines and fees revenue collected by City of Wilmington with the summary statistics Beck provides for all 2,716 municipalities for the years covered in the study period. All Census of Government data used for this comparison was available and downloaded from the US Census Bureau website at: <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2021/econ/local/public-use-datasets.html>. Data fields for fines and fees revenue in the COG survey matched those in City of Wilmington budget data, Beck looked at fines and fees as a proportion of total municipal revenue. Total municipal revenue figures are more inclusive than the general fund revenue amounts used in Figure 2, thus the proportional fines and fees revenues are lower (i.e., more conservative) than the expenditure proportions presented in Figure 2 (3.1% vs. 4.9% in 2009; 3.1% vs. 5.4% in 2010; 3.2% vs. 6.2% in 2011; and 3.9 vs. 6.4% in 2012).

Other literature, using different samples and methods, consistently found fines and fees to account for 1% of the typical municipality's overall revenue. Examples of this include:

- The Urban Institute's 2022 study *Following the Money on Fines and Fees* found that, on average, municipalities collected 1.1% of their general revenue from fines and fees and, "on average, smaller cities—those with populations under 10,000—collected 3.4 percent of their general revenue from fines, fees, and forfeitures, whereas larger cities—those with populations over a million—collected 1.1 percent."²²
- The Vera Institute of Justice's 2020 study *The High Price of Using Justice Fines and Fees to Fund Government in New York* found that "Of the 60 cities [in New York] for which Vera collected data, fines and fees brought in \$80 million in revenue in fiscal year 2018. In the median city, collections were \$13 per capita and made up 0.7 percent of the budget. City fine and fee revenue is heavily dominated by parking fee revenue, which made up more than \$50 million of the total. Two cities—White Plains and Yonkers ...—collected more than 3 percent of their total budgets in fines and fees."²³
- In Le & Young's 2023 study "Regressive Revenue Sourcing by Local Governments," data on 452 California cities from 2002 to 2016 showed that, on average, fees and fines represented 1.6% of a city's "own-source revenue," with the highest share for any city at 27%.²⁴

Several studies, including at least two already mentioned here, also used, as an alternative measure of the magnitude of a municipality's fines and fees revenue, a per capita measure of fees and fines per local population. The average and mean per capita rates all were substantially lower than those of Wilmington. Three illustrations of this are:

- the Vera Institute of Justice study, which reported a median per capita rate in 2018 of \$11 (compared to \$80 in Wilmington);
- Goldstein, Sances & You's study (not yet cited) of 5,935 municipalities nationwide, which reported an average \$10 per capita rate in 2012 (compared to \$133 in Wilmington).²⁵

²² Aravind Boddupalli & Livia Mucciolo (2022). *Following the Money on Fines and Fees: The Misaligned Fiscal Incentives in Speeding Tickets*. Washington DC: Urban Institute, p.3. Accessed at: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/following-money-fines-and-fees>.

²³ Mai & Rafael, *The High Price of Using Justice Fines and Fees to Fund Government in New York*, p. 6. Cited in a previous note.

²⁴ Le & Young, "Regressive Revenue Sourcing by Local Governments." Cited in a previous note.

²⁵ Rebecca Goldstein, Michael W. Sances & Hye Young You (2018). "Exploitative Revenues, Law Enforcement, and the Quality of Government Service." *Urban Affairs Review*, pps. 1–27. DOI: 10.1177/1078087418791775. Accessed at: <https://hyeyoungyou.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/finesandpolicing.pdf>.

- Beck's study, which reported an average per capita rate of \$26 in 2009 (compared to \$88 in Wilmington).

There is variation across municipalities as to what is included under fines and fees and how overall general revenue is counted, and reporting methods also differ in the various studies. All this indicates using caution in interpreting the comparisons made in this subsection. Yet in every instance found, and as demonstrated in the examples we provide here, Wilmington's level of revenue collection from fines and fees, whether measured as a proportion of municipal revenue or per capita, far exceeds that of the great majority of US cities and to an extent that transcends variation in measurement and calculation.

II.3 Fines and Fees: Gross vs. Net Revenue in Wilmington

Revenue generated by fines and fees goes into the City of Wilmington's general revenue fund without earmarking for any particular use. However, there are also costs associated with issuing, collecting and administering these fines and fees, which must be accounted for before assessing the extent to which fines and fees benefit the City more generally. At its essence, this is a matter of gross versus net revenue. In another way to address this, one can ask how much of every dollar collected in fines and fees can fund other municipal expenses.

The expectation here is that a substantial proportion of the revenue collected from fines and fees will go to operating costs for parking and red light enforcement. As Manville and Pinski, in their overview of curb parking management, explain:

[E]nforcement is itself expensive. So revenue rises as enforcement improves, but costs do as well. ... When cities fine violators ... they collect more money (because fines are higher than meter rates) but also do more work. They must deploy personnel to find and cite the violator, then collect and process the fine payment. These costs can add up. ... [E]ven high fines can yield little net revenue.²⁶

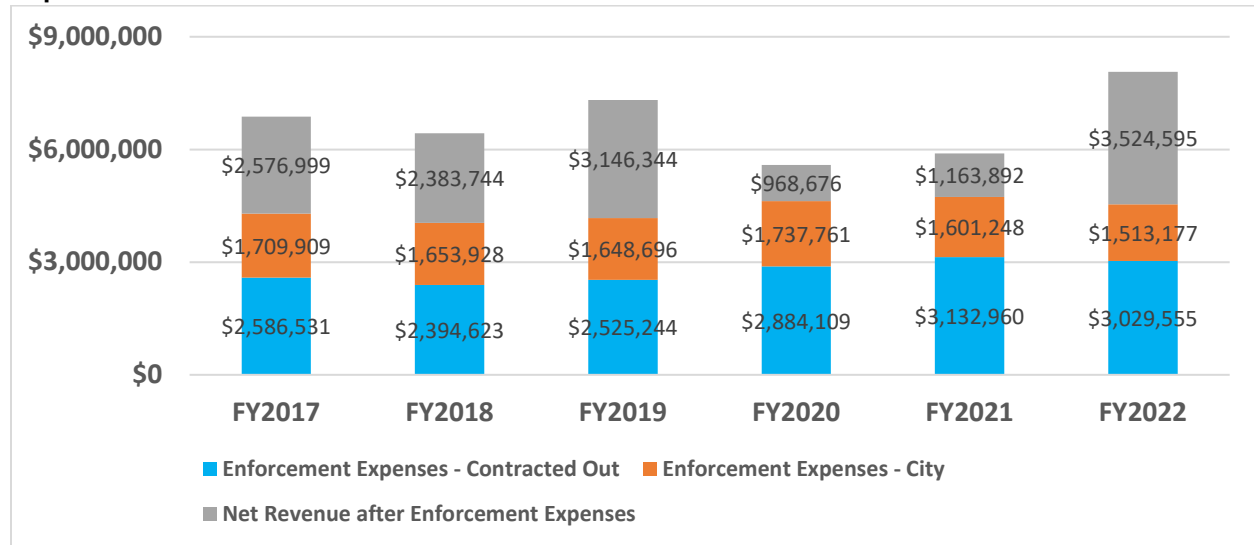
To get more detailed information on the expenses of administering parking and red light enforcement in Wilmington, we used line item-level cost information for the Parking and Red Light Enforcement Division of the City of Wilmington's Department of Finance for a six-year period (FY2017 through FY2022) that were laid out in two documents.²⁷ From these documents we compared costs incurred for administering the department's enforcement activities, both for

²⁶ Michael Manville & Miriam Pinski (2021). "The causes and consequences of curb parking management." Transportation Research Part A 152: 295–307. Open access at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2021.07.007>. Quote on p. 303.

²⁷ City of Wilmington's Office of Management and Budget's *Budget Summary: FY 2024* report (page 106), accessed at: <https://wilmbudget.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/2024-proposed-budget-book-final.pdf>. We also used the *Budget Summary: FY 2021* (page 104), which does not appear to be available online.

municipal operations and external vendors. Most, if not all, of the department’s payments to contractors went to Conduent (as described earlier in this report) under two contracts – one for parking-related ticket processing and collection services and the other for operating the City’s red light camera system. All of the cost information used for this subsection is provided in Table 2, located in the appendix.

Figure 3 – Fines and Fees Revenue Collected by the City of Wilmington, Broken Down by Enforcement Expenses (municipal and contracted out) and Net Revenue after Enforcement Expenses



All Revenue amounts are 2022 dollars.

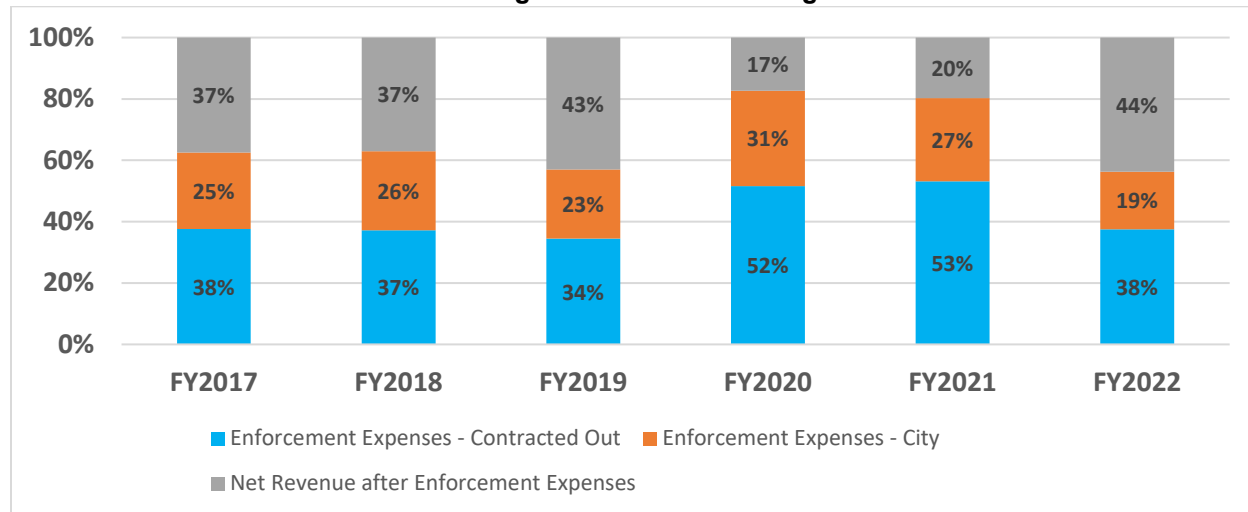
Figure 3 confirms that, for the City of Wilmington, parking and red light enforcement is indeed expensive. In every year except FY2022, payments to Conduent and other contractors for their enforcement work exceeded the funds that went to the general revenue for other uses, and in none of the years did the net funds exceed funds paid out for enforcement. Enforcement costs more or less held steady over these six years, and payments to Conduent and other contractors actually increased in both of the initial years of the COVID pandemic, years in which the City’s revenue share dropped steeply. In FY2022, the most recent year for which data was available, just the cost of operating the fees and fines enforcement system (\$4.5 million) represented 2.5% of total municipal revenue collected in that year.

Only after the fines and fees revenue exceeds the amount of the fixed costs for its enforcement operations and in its external contracts does the City gain a substantial share of subsequent revenue. After this break-even point, there remains a revenue share incentive with Conduent, thereby incentivizing both parties to keep collecting revenue.

In Figure 4, the expenses and net revenue that were examined in Figure 3 are cast as proportions. This provides another perspective on how much revenue the City nets once expenses are accounted for. An intuitive way of looking at this is that, in FY2022, for each dollar in fines and fees revenue the City received, 56 cents went back into enforcement expenses. Thus,

\$22.40 out of a standard \$40 parking ticket went back into enforcement expenses. While this proportion fluctuates, in none of these six years did net revenue ever exceed expense totals.

Figure 4 – Proportionate Shares of Expenses (Municipal and Contract) and Remaining (Net) Revenue from Fines and Fees in Wilmington DE: FY2017 through FY2022.



This analysis of the extent to which operating costs offset the revenue collected from fines and fees provides context for the mayor’s office walking back a pledge made over a year ago to reduce the fine for an expired meter from \$40 dollars to \$25. Instead, in October 2023 the Mayor’s office announced that it would introduce legislation that would discount parking tickets from \$40 to \$25 if the ticket were paid within fourteen days of issuance. According to the *Delaware News-Journal*, city officials initially “estimated a ‘nearly \$1 million’ loss in revenue with reducing parking ticket costs, but the latest plan reduces that financial burden to about \$185,000.”²⁸

Thus, even though the City’s parking fines are high, so are the expenses that the City faces. We found that, based on publicly available budget statements, in FY 2022 the \$8 million revenue stream that the City received from fines and fees only added \$3.5 million (1.9% of general revenue) toward City services beyond parking and red light enforcement. This leaves the City more reliant on fines and fees revenue to fund the expenses necessary to collect these revenues than it depends upon these funds to underwrite municipal services. City officials acknowledged this in a 2021 open letter to the Wilmington Parking Coalition that, even prior to COVID, “the cost of providing parking enforcement services in Wilmington exceeds the revenue generated by the program.”²⁹

²⁸ Amanda Fries, “Wilmington plans to reduce parking tickets to \$25 for those who pay early.” *Delaware News Journal*, October 16, 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/2023/10/16/wilmington-looks-to-reduce-parking-ticket-cost-for-those-who-pay-early/71154970007/>.

²⁹ City of Wilmington (2021). “City of Wilmington Responds to Wilmington Parking Coalition.” May 21. Accessed at: <https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/wdel.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/2/30/23078698-bf28-11eb-9d17-1ff4f1c4a1bb/60affdb5753cf.pdf.pdf>.

This puts the City in a bind. Many of these expenses are contractual obligations to Conduent and other contractors that represent fixed costs, which would not go down if the City lowered its fine structure.³⁰ Thus if the City lowered fine amounts, the full amount of the cuts would come out of the revenue proceeds that would otherwise go to the general fund. If this cut goes beyond a break even point, it would resemble a situation like Detroit faced in 2012, where a \$30 citation cost \$32 to process.³¹

II.4 Section Summary

There are three principal takeaway messages from this section.

First, an historical analysis of fines and fees shows that fines and fees have increased substantially since 2003. This includes the two initial COVID years, when pandemic measures sharply curtailed fees and fines revenue.

Second, the City of Wilmington collects fines and fees revenue in amounts that are substantially higher than the large majority of US cities, after adjusting for budget size. Wilmington residents face the burden of paying most of this cost. As such, this may amount to *de facto* and regressive “taxation by citation.”³² We examine this further in the next section.

Finally, fines and fees are an inefficient means by which to raise revenue, and Wilmington is no exception to this general rule. Much of the burden imposed by Wilmington’s fines and fees, and paid for by its residents, goes to contractors like Conduent (which spun off from Xerox in 2017) or to the City’s parking and red light enforcement division. This has put the City in the position where its enforcement structure precludes its being able to reduce fines for parking tickets without having its collections operations actually lose money.

In the next section, we use results from a survey to examine fines and fees from the perspective of people who pay parking and red light tickets, and the extent to which this burden is equally distributed and engenders hardships related to paying the fees and fines.

³⁰ The language of the current parking contract between the City of Wilmington and Conduent supports this interpretation, by which Conduent will provide services “for the period of two (2) years and two (2) months commencing on the date of execution of the Amendment at an estimated price of one hundred thousand, two hundred six dollars (\$100,206.00) per month (which will increase by two-and-a-half percent (2.5%) every twelve (12) months after execution of the Amendment) plus thirty percent (30%) of net revenue from collection efforts, with the possibility of two (2) additional extensions of one (1) year thereafter at the same price.” Taken from Ordinance 19-055-4754 (*An Ordinance to Authorize a Multi-year amendment of Contract 15O55DFP*), accessed at: <https://perma.cc/KXJ7-5KA4>.

³¹ Manville & Pinski, “the Causes and consequences of curb parking management,” p. 303. Cited in a previous note.

³² Melinda Cooper (2021). “Infinite Regress: Virginia School Neoliberalism and the Tax Revolt.” *Capitalism: A Journal of History and Economics* 2(1): 41–87. DOI: 10.1353/cap.2021.0002.

III. Experiences with Parking and Traffic Enforcement in Wilmington: A Survey

In this section, we report findings based upon a recent survey of experiences and consequences related to receiving parking and red light tickets in Wilmington, Delaware that was conducted by the Wilmington Fines and Fees Justice Team.³³ Responses were solicited from people through neighborhood canvassing, from tables set up at public meetings, and via an online version of the survey. From 249 responses, we retained the 188 responses from local residents and visitors who disclosed receiving parking and/or red light tickets.³⁴

These responses are a convenience sample. As shown on Table 3 (see appendix for tables), demographically the people surveyed are predominantly female (71%); have a median age of 47; and roughly equal proportions are non-Latino White and Black (38% and 37%, respectively), with 11% Latino (exclusive). As such, this is not a representative slice of Wilmington's general population. Additionally, substantial numbers of respondents (30%) declined to respond to the questions that provided the data for tables 3 and 4, and non-responses were not included in the table results reported here.

Looking at the additional respondent characteristics on Table 4, although income was not directly measured, indirect measures indicate that survey respondents were economically better off than the general Wilmington population, judging by: education (85% had at least some college); income source (82% disclosed work as their primary income source); homeownership rate (55%, compared to 43% of overall Wilmington population);³⁵ and receipt of SNAP benefits (10%, less than half of the rate in the overall Wilmington population).³⁶ Finally, 87% were Wilmington residents and half the sample was either from the west side neighborhoods (41%) or the Downtown/Market Street/Riverfront area (12%).

Although the distributions of the characteristics shown on Tables 3 and 4 are substantially different than those for Wilmington's general population, the survey data nonetheless provides a rich source of information related to parking and red light tickets as they are experienced and perceived by those receiving such tickets and faced with having to pay the resulting fines and fees.

³³ According to their website, Wilmington Fines and Fees Justice Team is a collaborative of community members and City Council members pushing for reforms of Wilmington's fines and fees and collections practices, with a focus on parking/red light tickets and water billing. More information is available at <https://www.wilmfeesfinesreform.com/>.

³⁴ The 61 responses (24%) that were discarded provided no data on parking or red light violations, and due to the sample selection method they could not be used to determine a generalizable estimate of the proportion of Wilmington motorists who received such violations.

³⁵ US Census Bureau (2023). *Quick Facts: Wilmington city Delaware*. Accessed at: <https://247wallst.com/special-report/2022/07/22/the-city-where-the-most-people-use-food-stamps-in-every-state/>.

³⁶ Michael Sautter (2022). "The Place Where the Most People Use Food Stamps in Every State." *24/7 Wall Street* (July 22). Accessed at: <https://247wallst.com/special-report/2022/07/22/the-city-where-the-most-people-use-food-stamps-in-every-state/>.

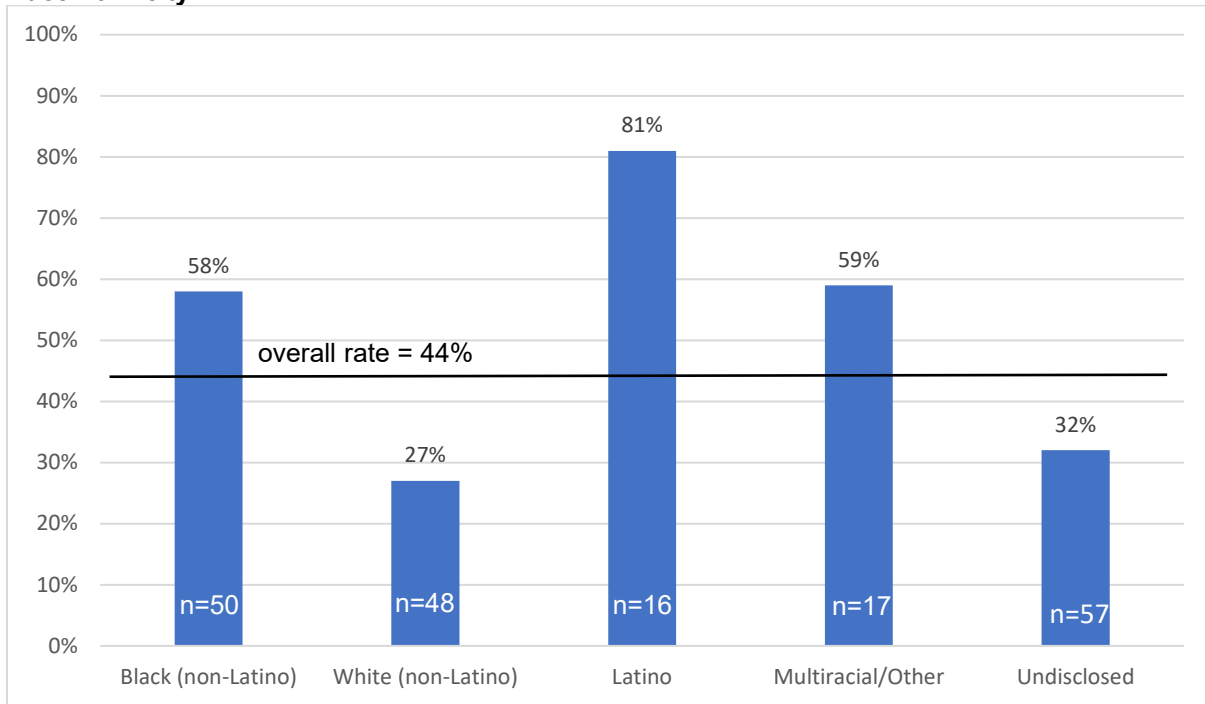
III.1 Fees and Fines

Table 5 (in the appendix) contains results from the survey respondents' self-reported information related to their receipt of parking and red light tickets. We used this information as a basis for assigning relative levels of impact from fines and fees. We considered a respondent to be "more highly impacted" if, in the last five years, they either:

- paid or owed at least \$400 in combined parking and red light fines and fees; and/or
- received a combination of 7 or more parking and red-light tickets; and/or
- had their vehicle either booted or towed at least once.

This "more highly impacted" designation functions to distinguish the survey respondents with more frequent receipt of parking and red light-related fines and fees from those who faced such fines and fees more occasionally. Nearly half (44%) of all respondents met this operational criteria.

Figure 5 - Proportion of Survey Respondents Who Indicated Being "More Highly Impacted" by Fines and Fees Related to Parking Tickets, Red Light Tickets, Booting and Towing; Grouped by Race/Ethnicity



We used this dichotomy to test whether or not the impact of fines and fees were consistent among different racial and ethnic groups. Figure 5 shows the proportion by which this designation occurred in each of four racial and ethnic categories, as well as for a fairly sizeable group who did not provide this information. The results show that, compared to the White group, disproportionately and significantly higher levels of people in the three groups that represent people of color—Black, Latino and Multiracial/Other—were "more highly impacted" by these

finest and fees. These differences were both substantial and statistically significant.³⁷ However, drawing conclusions from this finding must be done with caution, given the non-representativeness and small size of the sample, and the large number of respondents with missing data. This notwithstanding, these findings are consistent with many other reports that find that, when compared to Whites, higher proportions among people of color face heightened levels of fines and fees.

III.2 Hardships Incurred

In another way to measure the impact of fines and fees on individual respondents, over two-thirds (69%) answered affirmatively when asked if it had “ever been difficult for you financially to pay for parking or red light tickets or booting or towing costs?” (Table 6). Over half (56%) also indicated that they had taken at least one of five specific measures to pay these associated fines and fees:

- sacrificing payment of another bill to pay requisite fines and fees (54%);
- borrowing money from friends or relatives (37%);
- seeking out support from organizations in the community (25%);
- taken out a loan to pay the associated fines and fees (11%); and
- used a payday or title loan to pay the associated fines and fees (9%).

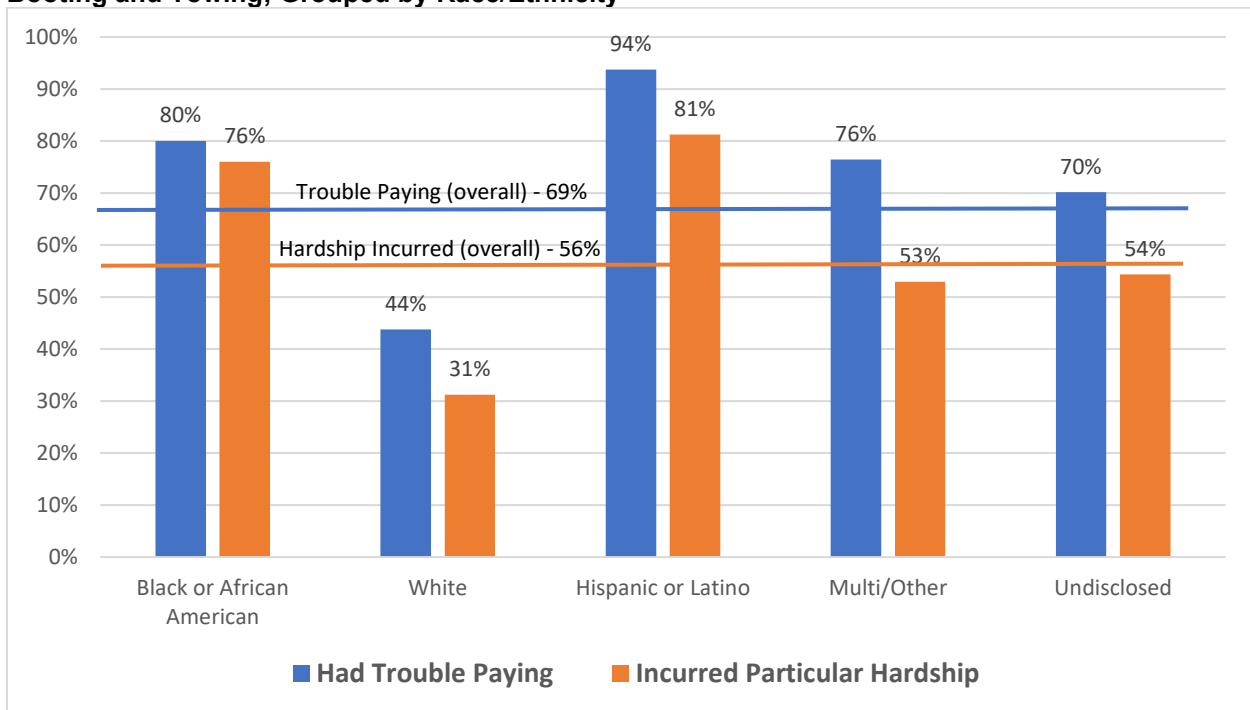
As with the impact measure that we presented in the previous subsection, non-White respondents were disproportionately affected by financial hardship that they associated with these fines and fees. Figure 6 shows that over three-quarters of those identifying as Black, Latino, and multi-racial or “other” reported incurring hardship, and majorities of each of these groups reported taking at least one of the five measures described above. In contrast, among those identifying as White, 44% and 31%, reported financial hardships and taking these specific measures, respectively.

These differences are both substantial and statistically significant.³⁸ As with the impact indicator that we broke down by race/ethnicity (Figure 5), and with similar limitations, these results suggest that the economic burdens that are associated with parking and red light tickets (including booting and towing) in Wilmington fall disproportionately on people of color.

³⁷ Chi-square tests of difference show statistically significant variation from expected values (all at the $p < .001$ level) for comparisons between: Black and White ($n=98$, chi-square=9.49, 1 degree of freedom); Black, Latino and White ($n=114$, chi-square=17.49, 2 degrees of freedom); and Black, Latino, Multiracial/Other, White and Missing ($n=188$, chi-square=23.63, 4 degrees of freedom).

³⁸ Chi-square tests of difference show statistically significant variation from expected values (all at the $p < .001$ level) across both sets of comparisons (hardship indicator and the “least one measure taken” indicator) between: Black and White ($n=98$, chi-square=13.6 (hardship comparison) and 19.6 (measures comparison), 1 degree of freedom (both comparisons)); Black, Latino and White ($n=114$, chi-square=20.6 (hardship comparison) and 24.3 (measures comparison), 2 degrees of freedom (both comparisons)); and Black, Latino, Multiracial/Other, White and Missing ($n=188$, chi-square=22.0 (hardship comparison) and 24.4 (measures comparison), 4 degrees of freedom (both comparisons)).

Figure 6 - Proportion of Survey Respondents Who Indicated a) Having Trouble Paying and b) Incurring Specific Hardships from Fines and Fees Related to Parking Tickets, Red Light Tickets, Booting and Towing; Grouped by Race/Ethnicity



III.3 Respondent Perceptions and Opinions

Ticketing and the threat of getting a ticket impacts behavior and perception in ways that go beyond just being careful about where and how long to park. There was some opportunity in the survey for respondents to express their thoughts and opinions more generally in the form of short answer responses to the questions “has the fear of parking tickets, booting, and towing kept you from going to certain parts of the city?” and “how would you like to see Wilmington's parking ticket/red light ticket system change?” These responses, when looked at together, give some idea of the respondents view about how parking and red light tickets are administered in Wilmington.

Fifty-six percent of the responses answered affirmatively when asked whether the fear of parking restrictions and tickets influence their traveling to certain parts of the city. This was most commonly expressed by people avoiding going to downtown Wilmington and the Market Street business corridor. “I choose to shop elsewhere, not downtown Wilmington Delaware! It's awful!” is typical of an oft-expressed sentiment in the survey. More specific comments included:

- “I don’t go out Downtown often, especially for lunch on a weekday, because [getting a ticket] feels virtually guaranteed sometimes.”
- “I stay away from Market Street as parking is hard to find and I don’t want a \$40 ticket.”

- “Unfortunately, going Downtown during certain hours is not possible for fear of receiving a ticket due to unclear signs.”

To a lesser extent, people mentioned how this will lead them use alternatives that were in places with less restrictive and cheaper parking options, including traveling out of the city for shopping and other errands.

Another common focus of fears and resentments over parking problems involved getting tickets in one’s own neighborhood and the daily struggle that Wilmington residents face with regards to parking. “Getting ticketed for parking outside your home is ridiculous” reflects an oft-expressed sentiment. Furthermore, confusions and problems with the residential parking permits, and with moving cars in conjunction with the city’s street cleaning operations frequently came up as topics around which respondents wanted change. In the most extreme cases, some responses indicated that parking problems are a factor that enter into their thoughts of moving out of Wilmington:

- “I moved into the city for my blind spouse's ability to walk to work and businesses, but we are considering moving back out of the city because of the constant parking issues.”
- “If you are a resident and have a residential permit you should not have to pay for parking. I love living in the city but I am moving because it's not fair that I come home from work at night and I have to unsafely walk 2 or 3 blocks to my apartment.”
- “I want to move because I get harassed by police when taking groceries into my building because there’s no parking spaces. Yet, I pay to live where there’s barely any parking.”

Coupled with the difficulties and frustrations expressed here were many calls to “reform the ticket system,” “more fair ticketing prices,” and even “stop giving tickets.” Much of the call for reform focused on the City’s administrative appeals system, which has received widespread criticism beyond this survey as being opaque, unresponsive, and dysfunctional. Following (and unrelated to) this survey, the City of Wilmington announced in August that it would no longer handle appeals for tickets and has transferred that process to the state’s Justice of the Peace court system.³⁹

In a similar manner, calls in the survey to “lower the fines to \$20-\$25” are consistent with the City’s stated commitment, first made in October 2022, to reduce the \$40 parking fine to \$25. However, the city has never carried out this pledge, and in October 2023 modified it to where the \$40 fine amount would remain, but will be discounted to \$25 if the ticket is paid within fourteen days (this adjustment has yet to be implemented). There has been no discussion

³⁹ Amanda Fries, “Wilmington parking appeals will be handled in court; city administrative process ends.” *Delaware News Journal*, August 14, 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/local/2023/08/14/wilmington-shifts-parking-ticket-appeals-process-to-delaware-courts/70574878007/>.

of similarly modifying or discounting the \$110 red light violation fee. The call to do away with or drastically scale back the whole ticketing system, which was expressed in one way or another by at least 23 survey respondents (12%), has not received serious consideration in the Wilmington context.

IV. Conclusion

It seems like it is used more like a revenue stream than an attempt to keep people safe and make parking easier. I think it is a complicated issue that needs a multi prong solution. I would like to see the system be less of a financial burden on those that live here. ~ Survey Respondent

This report demonstrates how, adjusting for budget expenditures, the City of Wilmington collects considerably more revenue from fines and fees than do typical US cities. While this is, to our knowledge, the first systematic, publicly available analysis of the City of Wilmington's fines and fees revenue, many residents are unlikely to be surprised by this finding, as the high ticket rates and collection practices have been a longstanding source of complaint.

By examining this collection process, involving primarily parking and red light tickets (including associated booting and towing), we also find two aspects of Wilmington's fines and fees collection that signal major problems. First is the inefficient means by which the city collects this fees and fines revenue. While exact proportions vary, the majority of the fines and fees revenue collected (and as high as 80 cents from every fines and fees dollar during the initial COVID years) goes back into paying for the collection process. In effect, the primary function of fines and fees becomes funding the processes that generate and collect the fines and fees.

It is questionable how this situation benefits either the City or its constituents. From a revenue generating perspective, at best the net fines and fees revenue (i.e., after collection expenses) accounts for a small portion of the City's general revenue – between 1 to 2 percent. At worst, there are indications that collecting parking ticket revenue may be a money-losing proposition. The latter situation, about which the City has hinted but has not disclosed particulars, could explain why the City has been reluctant to fulfill its stated commitment to reduce the high parking fine amount – it would create or increase an operating deficit.

The second troubling aspect is the indication, based upon a survey of parking and red light ticket recipients, that the burden of tickets received and the hardships of paying the related fines and fees both appear to fall disproportionately on people of color. We cannot conclusively state the existence of this association due to the limitations of the survey data. We can, however, point to the large White—non-White disparities that are in the survey, and we can connect these findings with those of numerous other studies that show systematic racial (and socioeconomic) disparities in the burdens of fines and fees enforcement across other cities. As such, we present more than enough evidence here to warrant further investigation into the extent to which such inequities exist in Wilmington.

The findings of this report, when combined with the problems that the City is facing with the appeals system and towing practices (issues not covered in this report), suggests that changes need to be enacted to bring about a fines and fees system that better serves both City and its constituents. An initial step toward this would be greater transparency and public availability of

data on parking and red light enforcement, along with corresponding fines and fees collections, to further evaluate the findings in this report. The availability of such data could, for example, facilitate an assessment of the extent to which the contracts that the City has with Conduent for its enforcement services have led to the current situation that, paradoxically yields both high ticket costs and low return rates. It could also shed further light on whether the racial disparities that we find here hold up more generally, and the extent to which these racial disparities coexist with economic disparity in the burdens and hardships associated with the leveeing of fines and fees in Wilmington.

Appendix – Summary Tables of Budget and Survey Data

Table 1 – Fees and Fines Revenue: Wilmington DE, 2003 – 2022.

Fiscal Year	General Fund Revenue (GFR)	Fees & Fines (F&F) Revenue	F&F Revenue (2022 dollars)	F&F as a Proportion of GFR
2003	\$88,935,712	\$3,394,601	\$5,252,533	3.8%
2004	\$97,873,996	\$2,783,406	\$4,225,426	2.8%
2005	\$109,722,327	\$2,818,007	\$4,154,572	2.6%
2006	\$126,509,453	\$3,705,122	\$5,253,089	2.9%
2007	\$130,407,527	\$4,512,276	\$6,267,376	3.5%
2008	\$132,799,531	\$5,422,146	\$7,222,027	4.1%
2009	\$131,523,076	\$6,395,262	\$8,515,627	4.9%
2010	\$139,949,663	\$7,583,731	\$9,839,772	5.4%
2011	\$140,863,672	\$8,698,896	\$11,105,457	6.2%
2012	\$148,103,764	\$9,484,531	\$11,764,308	6.4%
2013	\$146,028,001	\$7,096,186	\$8,663,707	4.9%
2014	\$145,550,367	\$8,466,787	\$10,176,389	5.8%
2015	\$151,495,644	\$7,387,420	\$8,887,018	4.9%
2016	\$151,733,581	\$7,889,370	\$9,362,308	5.2%
2017	\$156,856,354	\$5,936,872	\$6,873,441	3.8%
2018	\$160,948,051	\$5,670,871	\$6,432,296	3.5%
2019	\$164,568,512	\$6,553,856	\$7,320,284	4.0%
2020	\$167,198,740	\$5,129,680	\$5,590,548	3.1%
2021	\$175,171,554	\$5,487,633	\$5,898,100	3.1%
2022	\$181,651,149	\$8,067,327	\$8,067,327	4.4%

“Fines and fees” consist principally of fines collected from parking and red light camera tickets and any subsequent fees added to the initial fine, as well as additional fines and fees added for subsequent booting and towing of vehicles. These sources account for roughly 90% of the City of Wilmington’s total fines and fees revenue. The remainder consists of “Criminal/Instant Ticket revenues,” which “are composed of State Criminal Fines remittances and the L&I Instant Ticketing Program (which involves L&I inspectors issuing tickets for violating the City’s sanitation codes).” See City of Wilmington Office of Management and Budget (2023). Proposed Budget: FY 2024, pps. 28-29 (<https://wilmbudget.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/2024-proposed-budget-book-final.pdf>).

Data source: City of Wilmington, DE Annual Financial Reports: Fiscal Years 2003-2022. Annual reports are available at: <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/city-departments/department-of-finance/financial-reports>.

Inflation adjustment made based upon calculations at: https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

Table 2 – Fines & Fees – Associated Expenses and Net Revenue

	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
Total Fines & Fees						
Unadjusted	\$5,936,872	\$5,670,871	\$6,553,856	\$5,129,680	\$5,487,633	\$8,067,327
2022 dollars	\$6,873,439	\$6,432,295	\$7,320,284	\$5,590,546	\$5,898,100	\$8,067,327
City Expenses						
Unadjusted	\$1,476,919	\$1,458,144	\$1,476,079	\$1,594,506	\$1,489,812	\$1,513,177
2022 dollars	\$1,709,909	\$1,653,928	\$1,648,696	\$1,737,761	\$1,601,248	\$1,513,177
% of total	24.9	25.7	22.5	31.1	27.1	18.8
Contract Expenses						
Unadjusted	\$2,234,093	\$2,111,159	\$2,260,853	\$2,646,352	\$2,914,928	\$3,029,555
2022 dollars	\$2,586,531	\$2,394,623	\$2,525,244	\$2,884,109	\$3,132,960	\$3,029,555
% of total	37.6	37.2	34.5	51.6	53.1	37.6
Expenses – Total						
Unadjusted	\$3,711,012	\$3,569,303	\$3,736,932	\$4,240,858	\$4,404,740	\$4,542,732
2022 dollars	\$4,296,440	\$4,048,551	\$4,173,940	\$4,621,870	\$4,734,208	\$4,542,732
% of total	62.5	62.9	57.0	82.7	80.3	56.3
Net Revenue						
Unadjusted	\$2,225,860	\$2,101,568	\$2,816,924	\$888,822	\$1,082,893	\$3,524,595
2022 dollars	\$2,576,999	\$2,383,744	\$3,146,344	\$968,676	\$1,163,892	\$3,524,595
% of total	37.5	37.1	43.0	17.3	19.7	43.7

The source of the total fines and fees revenue figures is the City of Wilmington Department of Finance’s annual financial reports, available at: <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/city-departments/department-of-finance/financial-reports>.

The remaining revenue figures are retrieved from the line item budget amounts for the Parking Enforcement Division of the City of Wilmington’s Department of Finance. These are included, for FY2020-FY2022, in the City of Wilmington’s Office of Management and Budget’s *Budget Summary: FY 2024* report, page 106. This was accessed at: <https://wilmbudget.files.wordpress.com/2023/03/2024-proposed-budget-book-final.pdf>. We also used the *Budget Summary: FY 2021* (page 104) for the FY2017-FY2019 data. This volume does not appear to be available online.

Inflation adjustment made based upon calculations at: https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

Table 3 – Survey Participant Demographics (total N=188)

Gender (n=131)		
Female	93	71%
Male	35	27%
Non-binary	3	2%
Race/Ethnicity (n=131)		
Black or African American	50	38%
White	48	37%
Hispanic or Latino	16	12%
Multi/Other	17	13%
Age Group (n=132)		
18-24	7	5%
25-34	18	14%
35-44	38	29%
45-54	25	19%
55-64	24	18%
65+	20	15%

Table 4 – Survey Participant Characteristics (total N=188)

In what area of the city do you live? (n=188)		
West Side (West Center City/Cool Spring/Tilton/Hilltop/Little Italy)	77	41%
Northside	20	11%
Downtown/Market Street/Riverfront	12	6%
Triangle/Ninth Ward	11	6%
Forty Acres/Highlands/Rockford Park/Trolley Square	11	6%
Hedgeville/Browntown/Bayard Square	11	6%
East Side/Southbridge	10	5%
Other	12	6%
Not a city resident	24	13%
Type of Housing (n=131)		
Apartment	40	31%
House	91	69%
Rent or Own (n=132)		
Own	72	55%
Rent	57	43%
Other	3	2%
Education level (n=131)		
High School Diploma/GED	19	15%
Some college	28	21%
College degree (2-year or 4-year)	40	30%
Graduate degree	44	34%
Primary Income Source (n=131)		
Employment (full time, part time or self)	107	82%
Disability	5	4%
Social Security	9	7%
Other	3	2%
None	7	5%
Receive SNAP (food stamps) Benefit Assistance (n=131)		
	13	10%

Table 5 – Self-reported Impacts of Fines and Fees on Survey Respondents (total N=188)

	Parking Tickets Only	Red Light Tickets Only	Parking AND Red Light Tickets	Total
Any Ticket in last 5 years (% of 188)	37 (64%)	31 (20%)	120 (16%)	188 (100%)
Frequency of Parking Tickets (% of column)				
Parking Tickets - Light 1 to 3 tickets	8 (22%)		60 (50%)	68 (36%)
Parking Tickets - Moderate 4 to 10 parking tickets	26 (70%)		45 (37.5%)	71 (38%)
Parking Tickets - Frequent 11 or more parking tickets	3 (8%)		15 (12.5%)	18 (10%)
Parking Tickets – Over \$500 in fines/fees paid in last 5 years	3 (8%)		25 (21%)	28 (15%)
Parking Tickets – Currently owes fines/fees	2 (5%)		26 (22%)	28 (15%)
Frequency of Parking Tickets (% of column)				
Red Light Tickets - Light 1 to 3 tickets		27 (87%)	93 (78%)	120 (64%)
Red Light Tickets - Moderate 4 to 6 red light tickets		4 (13%)	22 (18%)	26 (14%)
Red Light Tickets - Frequent 7 or more (red light tix)		0	5 (4%)	5 (4%)
Red Light Tickets – Over \$400 in fines/fees paid in last 5 years		3 (10%)	15 (13%)	18 (10%)
Red Light Tickets – Currently owes fines/fees		7 (13%)	43 (36%)	50 (27%)
Booting and Towing in last 5 years* (% of column)				
Vehicle booted in past 5 years	6 (16%)	2 (6%)	34 (28%)	42 (22%)
Vehicle towed in past 5 years	2 (5%)	3 (10%)	23 (19%)	28 (15%)
“More Highly Impacted” by fines & fees	7 (19%)	9 (29%)	67 (56%)	83 (44%)

“More Highly Impacted” by fines and fees includes all who, in the last five years, reported a) paying and/or owing at least \$400 in fines/fees; receiving 7 or more parking and red light tickets, and/or have had their vehicle either booted or impounded at least once.

Table 6 – “With regards to parking or red light tickets, booting or towing, [did the respondent] ever...”:

	N	%
... have difficulty with paying associated fines and fees?	129	69%
... have any one of the following five hardships:	106	56%
Sacrificed paying another bill or necessity to cover paying fines and fees?	101	54%
Accepted food or money for necessities (like utilities) from a church, faith-based organization, or other charity because you did not have money after paying associated fines and fees?	47	25%
Used a payday or title loan to pay associated fines and fees?	17	9%
Borrowed money from a relative or friend to pay associated fines and fees?	70	37%
Taken out a loan to pay associated fines and fees?	20	11%
...answer affirmatively to:		
One of these five hardship indicators	28	15%
Two of these five hardship indicators	32	17%
Three of these five hardship indicators	28	15%
Four of these five hardship indicators	11	6%
All five of these hardship indicators	7	4%

n=188