

**Citizens Jury Project  
Fall 2000 Report on Juror Concerns:  
April 1, 2000 – October 31, 2000**

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## Preface

The Citizens Jury Project Ombudservice was created in 1995 following the recommendation of the Jury Project, a blue ribbon panel formed by New York State Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye to review and reform jury service in New York State. Originally proposed as a guardian to protect jurors from abusive employers, the Ombudservice has expanded to include the full panoply of juror concerns – from the seemingly mundane (e.g., New Yorkers’ chronic need for accessible coffee) to the constitutional (e.g., the voir dire process). This comprehensive role for the Ombudservice is consistent with the Jury Project’s aspiration for a new standard in jury service – one that considers the needs and expectations of the citizen juror.

Working with the Unified Court System, the Citizens Jury Project has provided service and information to more than 8,000 jurors in its five-year history, first as a demonstration project of the Vera Institute of Justice, and now as a permanent project of the Fund for Modern Courts. This first report by Modern Courts analyzes the comments of nearly 1,000 jurors interviewed since April 2000.

The good news is that jurors increasingly comment on the vast number of improvements in the courts and the jury system. Jurors appreciate patient and informative clerks and physical improvements to the assembly rooms in certain courthouses, and they notice that more people are serving less frequently and for less time. Things are getting better, and jurors say so.

However, problems remain. Jurors complain about shoddy physical conditions in many of the city-owned buildings – slovenly bathrooms, broken chairs, inadequate heating or cooling, and dangerous elevators. Jurors summoned from their busy lives to then sit idly in jury assembly rooms complain bitterly about wasted time. Increasingly tech-savvy New Yorkers demand more access to phone lines, Internet connectivity, and workspace.

None of these issues is insoluble. In cooperation with the Unified Court System, the Citizens Jury Project is committed to making jury service in New York State a model for the rest of the country – one that is premised on respect for the citizen juror.

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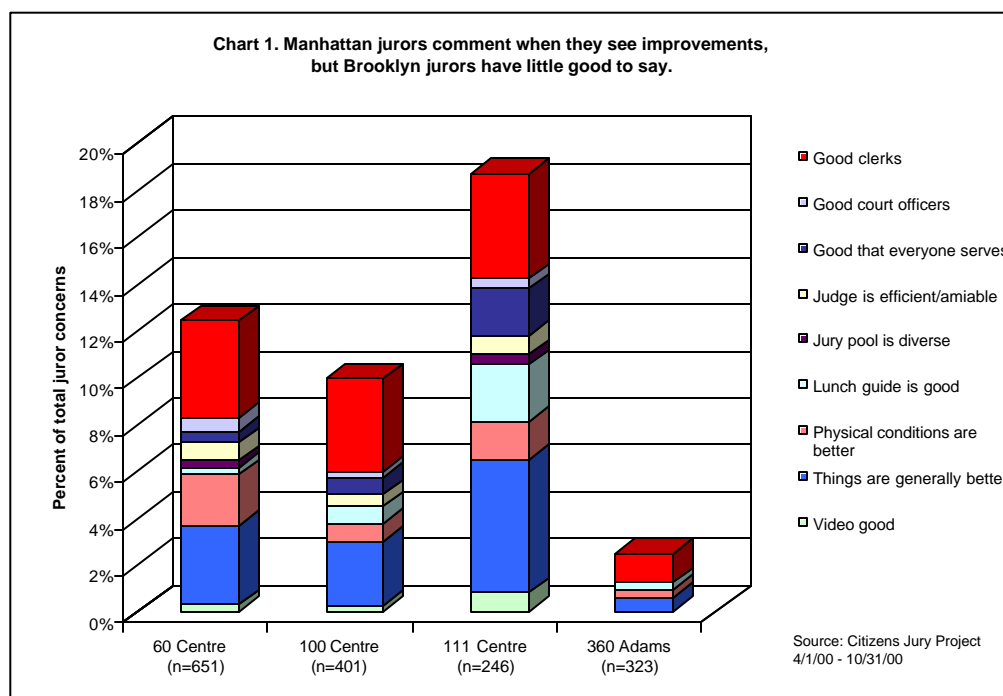
## 1. New York City Juror Comments: An Overview

New York City’s jurors of the new millennium continued to praise improvements in jury service—civil clerks, some better physical conditions, and increased fairness in summoning procedures. Despite improvements, jurors complained about overall poor physical conditions, inadequate technology, and the impact of jury service on their personal and professional lives.

The charts and tables in this report reflect data from the four Ombudservice booths (60 Centre Street, 100 Centre Street, 111 Centre Street, and 360 Adams Street) and the on-line Ombudservice ([www.juryproject.org](http://www.juryproject.org)). Data from disqualified jurors (e.g. non-citizens, former felons) was removed and is presented in Appendix B.

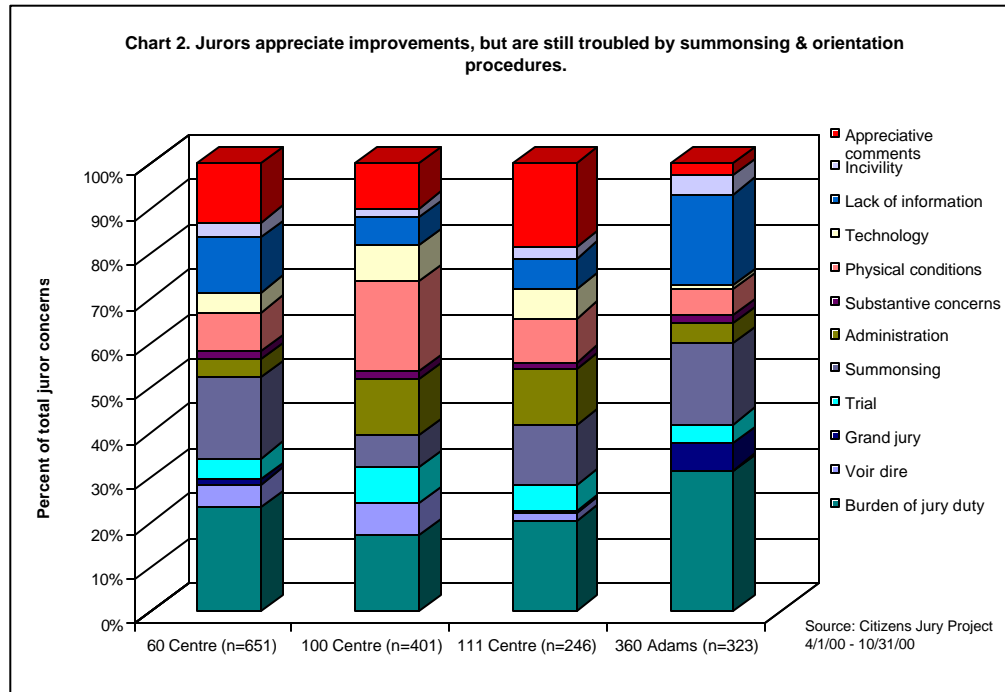
### (a) Appreciative comments

Jurors frequently commented on improvements in the courts (Chart 1). The most frequent appreciative comment was that “things are generally better” (in bright blue), followed closely by praise for the jury clerks at all courthouses (red)—this is a first in Brooklyn. Other jurors expressed appreciation for improved physical conditions at some courthouses (pink). An increasing number of jurors also praised the changes to the summoning regulations that now require all New Yorkers to serve, regardless of status or profession (dark blue).



*(b) All juror comments*

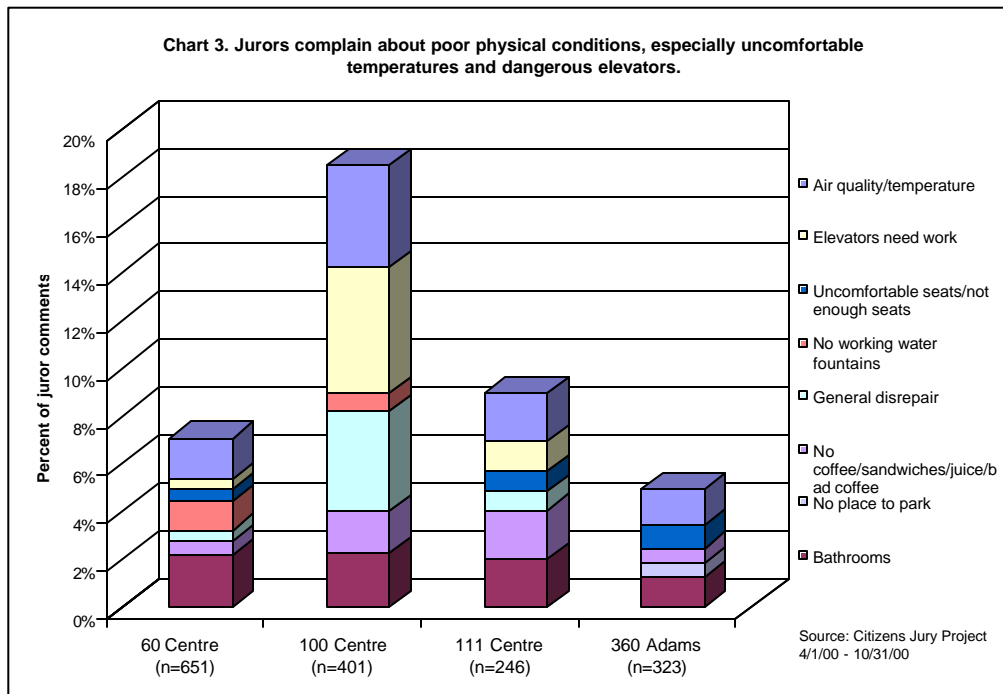
Overall, a high percentage of juror comments were positive (Chart 2). However, many continued to find jury service a burden to their professional and personal lives (green), and many had difficulty with the summoning procedures and rules (gray-blue). Comments about poor physical conditions (pink) and inadequate technology (yellow) also increased.



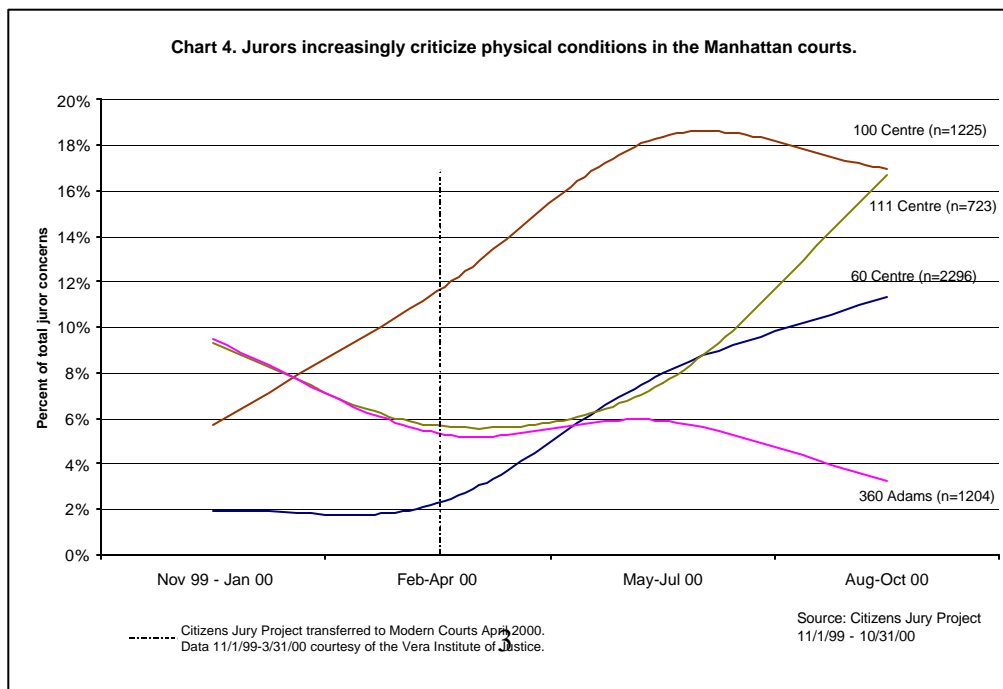
*(c) Physical conditions*

Jurors appreciated the restoration and look of 60 Centre Street. Although physical condition complaints were typically low at 60 Centre, jurors commented on the poor upkeep of bathrooms—particularly the lack of paper products and soap (Chart 3). The jury clerks were quick to respond when jurors complained, but jurors resented finding the problems at all. The week in mid-summer when the one working water fountain was damaged during renovations also drew criticism. Jurors at 111 Centre and 360 Adams complained about air quality (gray-blue), uncomfortable and broken seats (dark blue), and the ever-present lack of convenient food or coffee (purple). 100 Centre fared the worst—jurors frequently commented that the elevators were slow, frightening, and dangerous (yellow). Assembly room temperatures were especially bad during air conditioning outages in mid-summer. One juror commented that the bathrooms

were good for a public facility—much better than in the Tombs, the old holding pens for those awaiting trial. Most jurors have higher expectations (dark red).

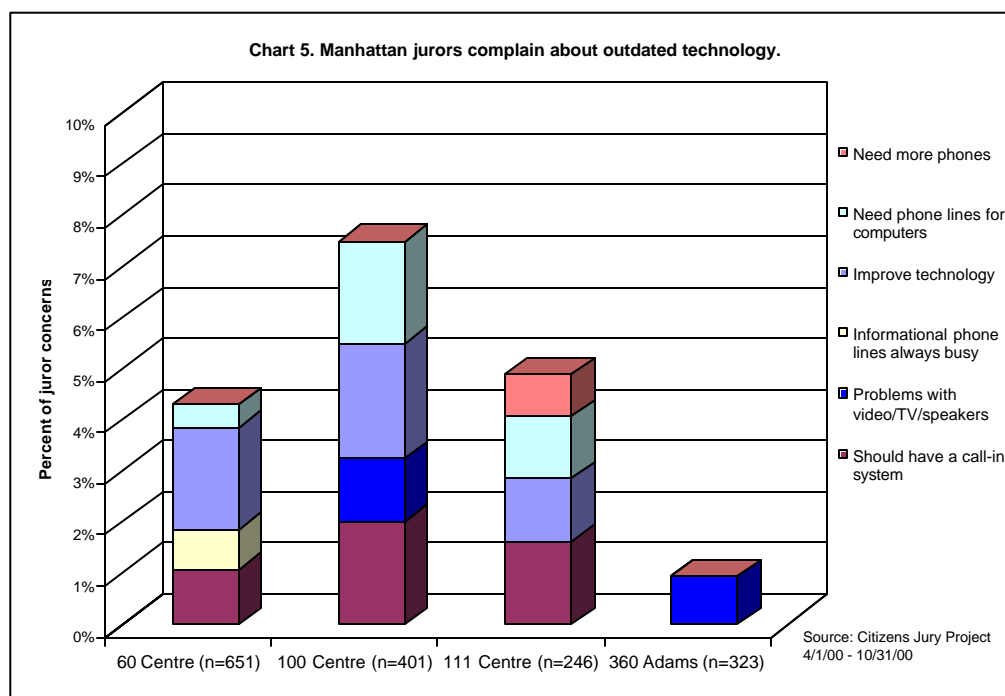


Juror complaints about physical conditions increased over the past year in the Manhattan courts (Chart 4). Almost 20 percent of the comments at 100 Centre were about the poor conditions, up from six percent last winter. 60 Centre and 111 Centre also received increasingly more complaints. Complaints at 360 Adams dropped appreciably, mainly due to more comfortable seating and the fully renovated grand jury rooms.

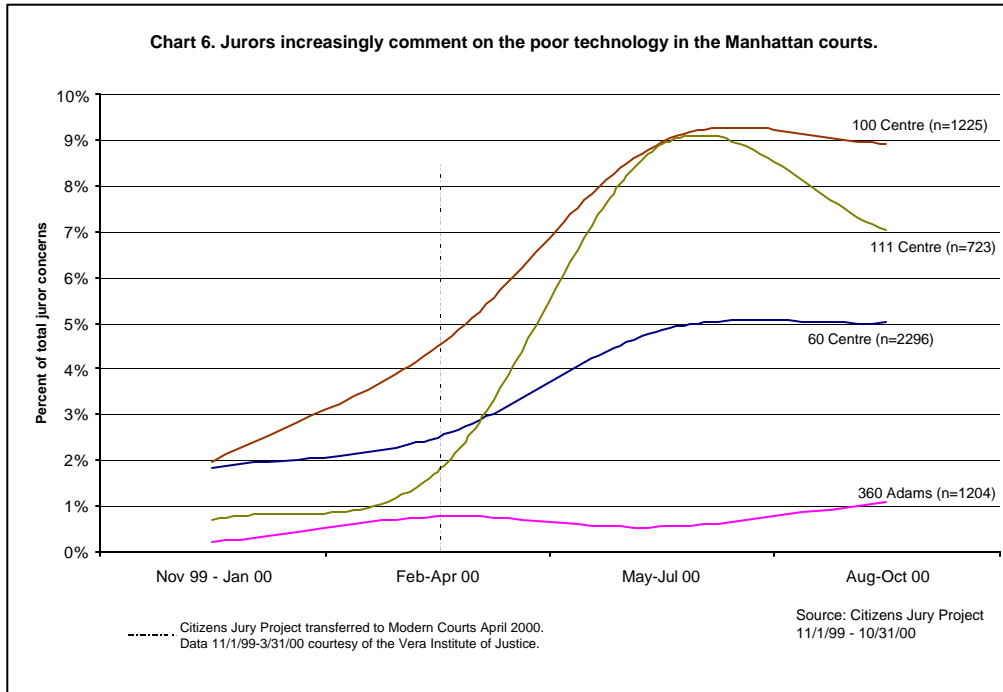


(d) Technology

Jurors increasingly commented on poor technology in the courts (Chart 5). Although new scanners speed up juror processing in the morning by automatically reading the summons, court technology does not meet the standards to which Manhattan jurors are accustomed. Despite the lone e-mail data port at 60 Centre Street, jurors at 60, 100, and 111 Centre Street frequently asked for Internet ports so they could work and communicate during long waits in the assembly rooms (light blue). Jurors at all Manhattan courts said that a call-in system would be less burdensome (dark red). Jurors we spoke with at 60 Centre—although referred from all Manhattan courts—complained that informational phone lines were constantly busy (yellow). For whatever reason, Brooklyn jurors did not comment about the lack of high technology. Their tech comments focused on the incomprehensible announcement system and problems with the assembly room televisions (bright blue).

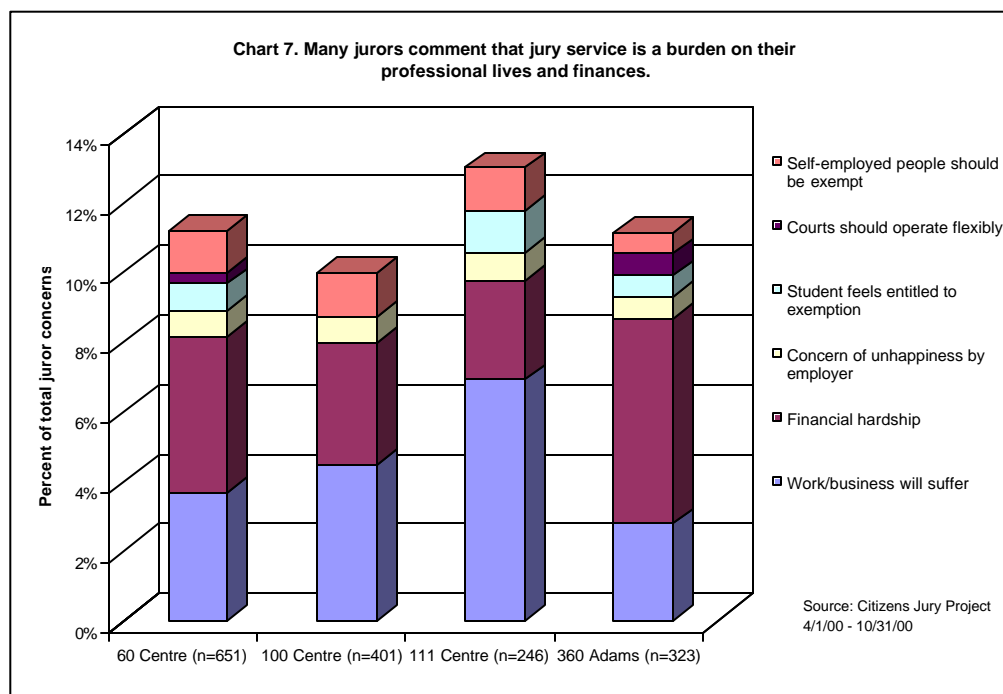


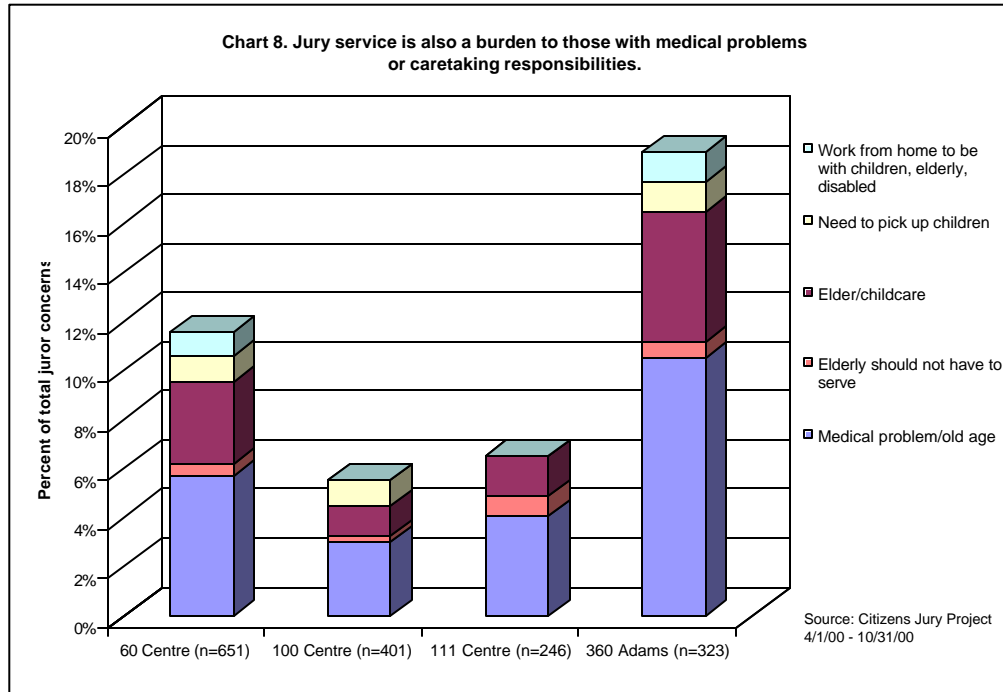
As high-tech amenities become more common in juror’s lives, they increasingly notice their absence in the courts (Chart 6). The proportion of juror complaints about poor technology rose dramatically since the beginning of the year.



*(e) Personal and professional burdens*

Although jurors derived some satisfaction from the reforms requiring all New Yorkers to serve, jury service remained a burden on juror’s professional lives (Chart 7). Jurors away from their jobs worried about their finances and the state of their business (gray-blue)—sole-proprietors were especially anxious (pink). Employees were concerned about their employer’s unhappiness (yellow).





**2. 60 Centre Street**

*(a) Summary of juror concerns*

Praise for good clerks increased dramatically, surpassing “things are generally better” as the top appreciative comment at 60 Centre. Despite increased complaints about physical conditions, jurors continued to express their appreciation for the stately physical appearance of 60 Centre.

Lack of information remained the most common critical concern, followed by the burdens of jury service—jurors with small children, elderly to care for, or medical problems, find service arduous.

<b>Top Juror Concerns—60 Centre Street 4/1/00-10/31/00 (Total Concerns = 651)</b>	
<b>Top 5 Appreciative Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good clerks	27
Things are generally better	22
Physical conditions	14
Trial experience was good/OK	13
Judge is efficient/amiabile	5

<b>Top 10 Critical Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Lack of information/incorrect information	65
Would like a postponement/deferral	52
Medical problem/old age	37
Elder/childcare	22
Wasted time	15
Disproportionate summoning	15
Problems with name or address	15
Bathrooms	14
Needed information ahead of time	13
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	13

*(b) Breakdown of juror concerns*

Jurors who served at 60 Centre Street often said they felt they were summoned to a real courthouse and they appreciated it. Physical condition complaints were typically low—most centered on poor upkeep of the bathrooms, particularly the women’s bathroom outside room 452.

<b>60 Centre: Physical Conditions</b>	<b>Count</b>
Bathrooms	14
Air quality/temperature	11
No working water fountains	8
No coffee/sandwiches/juice/bad coffee	4
Elevators need work	3
General disrepair	3
Poor accommodations for disabled	3
Uncomfortable seats/not enough seats	3
Noise	2
Not enough work carrels	2

Manhattan jurors are too familiar with the latest technology to stand for anything less. Jurors who found themselves waiting for cases often asked why they couldn’t call in to see if they were needed.

<b>60 Centre: Technology</b>	<b>Count</b>
Improve technology	13
Should have a call-in system	7
Informational phone lines always busy	5
Need phone lines for computers	3

Summoning and orientation complaints centered on disproportionate summoning, and difficulties with the summons. Jurors who served after August 1998 complained when summoned within two years, after having been promised a four-year exemption.

<b>60 Centre: Summoning &amp; orientation</b>	<b>Count</b>
Would like postponement/deferral	52
Disproportionate summoning	16
Problems with name or address	15
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	13
In non-compliance	9
Problem with payment	5

Jurors want to see greater efficiency in the process. They often complained about wasted time and lack of information—a problem compounded by busy informational phone lines.

<b>60 Centre: Administration of service</b>	<b>Count</b>
Lack of information/incorrect information	65
Wasted time	15
Needed information ahead of time	13
Service is too long	6
Adopt one-day-one-trial rule	2
Process does not start on time	2
Service should be more flexible/accommodating	2
Needed directions to the courthouse	2

While praise for good clerks was common, comments that some clerks were unhelpful or rude remained.

<b>60 Centre: Incivility</b>	<b>Count</b>
Clerks are unhelpful/rude	10
Lawyers are rude	4
Court officers are unhelpful/rude	3
General incivility	3
Judges are unhelpful/rude	3

Financial and employment burdens continued to be a problem, especially for the self-employed.

<b>60 Centre: Financial/Employment Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Very disruptive to my work	12
Financial hardship	9
Self-employed people should be exempt	8
Pay is not enough	7
My business/patients will suffer	7
Financial hardship	6
Am losing major work assignments	5
Concern of unhappiness by employer	5
Student feels entitled to exemption	5
Only get paid for hours worked	4
Employers should pay salary	3
Doctors should be exempt	2
Courts should operate flexibly—nights/weekends	2

Improved flexibility and technology could help ease the burden on jurors with medical concerns or family members to care for.

<b>60 Centre: Family/Health Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Medical problem/old age	37
Elder/childcare	22
Need to pick up children	7
Work at home to be with children, elderly, disabled	6
Elderly should not have to serve	3

Jurors who made it to trial usually said they had a good experience. Many were impressed with the integrity of their fellow jurors. Some found sequestration difficult.

<b>60 Centre: Trial</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good/OK experience	13
Wasted time	5
Bad experience	4
Other jurors are late	2
Sequestration difficult/unfair/outrageous	2
Waiting too long for trial to start	2

<b>60 Centre: Voir dire</b>	<b>Count</b>
Time wasted by attorneys	9
Should be pre-screening	4
Too many people are called/dismissed	4
No reading rule is annoying	2
Refuse to choose anyone in insurance	2
Refuse to choose attorneys/paralegals/law enforcement	2
Refuse to choose doctors/nurses	2
Voir dire should be eliminated	2

**3. 100 Centre Street**

*(a) Summary of juror concerns*

The good-humored clerks at 100 Centre continued to offset juror complaints about poor physical conditions—one juror said he would like to “clone them for customer service bureaus everywhere.”

Critical comments focused on physical conditions—the slow, badly maintained elevators, the hot, stale, air, and the general disrepair of the courthouse. Employment burdens continued to be a problem for some jurors.

<b>Top Juror Concerns—100 Centre Street 4/1/00-10/31/00 (Total Concerns = 401)</b>	
<b>Top 5 Appreciative Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good clerks	16
Trial experience was good/OK	15
Things are generally better	11
Good that everyone serves	3
Lunch guide is good	3

<b>Top 10 Critical Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Wasted time	34
Elevators need work	21
Lack of information/incorrect information	20
Air quality/temperature	17
General disrepair	17
Medical problem/old age	12
Very disruptive to my work	11
Would like a postponement/deferral	10
Bathrooms	9
Improve technology	9

*(b) Breakdown of juror concerns*

Jurors consistently complained about broken, frightening, and potentially dangerous elevators. More than one juror commented that they were trapped on their way up; others resorted to the stairs—a desperate measure for the 15<sup>th</sup> floor juror assembly room. The stale, hot air, bathrooms, and lack of food and coffee remained problems.

<b>100 Centre: Physical Conditions</b>	<b>Count</b>
Elevators need work	21
Air quality/temperature	17
General disrepair	17
Bathrooms	9
No coffee/sandwiches/juice/bad coffee	7
No working water fountains	3
Uncomfortable seats/not enough seats	2

A few jurors complained about being summoned within two years of August 1998, but summoning complaints focused generally on fairness and efficiency.

<b>100 Centre: Summoning &amp; Orientation</b>	<b>Count</b>
Would like a postponement/deferral	10
Disproportionate summoning	5
Received multiple summons	4
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	3
Not fair--some people never called	2
Switch civil to criminal (or v.v.)	2

Manhattan jurors continued to be frustrated by poor technology.

<b>100 Centre: Technology</b>	<b>Count</b>
Improve technology	9
Need phone lines for computers	8
Should have a call-in system	8
Problems with video/TV/speakers	5

Jury service caused greater stress and hardship to the ever-increasing number of freelancers and the self-employed.

<b>100 Centre: Financial/Employment Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Very disruptive to my work	11
Pay is not enough	6
Self-employed people should be exempt	5
Am losing major work assignments	3
Concern of unhappiness by employer	3
Only get paid for hours worked	3
Financial hardship	5
Doctors should be exempt	2
My business/patients will suffer	4

Parents balancing jobs and children, and those with pervasive medical concerns, were similarly burdened.

<b>100 Centre: Family/Health Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Medical problem/old age	12
Elder/childcare	5
Need to pick up children	4

As usual, incivility complaints at 100 Centre were few.

<b>100 Centre: Incivility</b>	<b>Count</b>
Clerks are unhelpful/rude	4
Judges are unhelpful/rude	2

Jurors resented intrusive personal questions during voir dire and having personal information read aloud in front of defendants. Those who appreciated the jury system were disdainful of those who used every excuse to get out of jury service.

<b>100 Centre: Voir dire</b>	<b>Count</b>
Too many people are called/dismissed	6
Intrusive personal questions	4
No reading rule is annoying	4
Made to wait in halls	3
Object to name being called in front of defendants	3
Should be pre-screening	3
Voir dire should be eliminated	2

Trial jurors were generally pleased with their experience.

<b>100 Centre: Trial</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good/OK experience	15
Bad experience	5
Jury disbanded, case settled after waiting	2
Sequestration difficult/unfair/outrageous	2
Should be allowed to ask questions	2
Waiting too long for trial to start	2
Wasted time	2

Lack of information and wasted time remained problems.

<b>100 Centre: Administration of service</b>	<b>Count</b>
Wasted time	34
Lack of information/incorrect information	20
Needed information ahead of time	4
Adopt one-day-one-trial rule	4
Service is too long	4
Not enough cases for jurors	3
Process does not start on time	3

#### 4. 111 Centre Street

##### (a) Summary of juror concerns

Although most appreciative comments at 111 Centre focused on the system overall, jurors increasingly praised the clerks of Room 362.

Business and employment concerns, and lack of information, were the common problems at 111 Centre.

<b>Top Juror Concerns—111 Centre Street 4/1/00-10/31/00 (Total Concerns = 246)</b>	
<b>Top 5 Appreciative Concerns</b>	
	<b>Count</b>
Things are generally better	14
Good clerks	11
Lunch guide is good	6
Good that everyone serves	5
Physical conditions are better	4
<b>Top 10 Critical Concerns</b>	
	<b>Count</b>
Wasted time	16
Would like a postponement/deferral	15
Lack of information/incorrect information	12
Medical problem/old age	10
My business/patients will suffer	6
Very disruptive to my work	6
Am losing major work assignments	5
Financial hardship	5
Air quality/temperature	5
Bathrooms	5

##### (b) Breakdown of juror concerns

Jurors said service is a burden to their professional lives.

<b>111 Centre: Financial/Employment Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
My business/patients will suffer	6
Very disruptive to my work	6
Am losing major work assignments	5
Financial hardship	5
Self-employed people should be exempt	3
Concern of unhappiness by employer	2
Pay is not enough	2

Likewise, the elderly or infirm found jury service onerous.

<b>111 Centre: Family/Health Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Medical problem/old age	10
Elder/childcare	4
Elderly should not have to serve	2

Incivility complaints were very infrequent, especially about the clerks.

<b>111 Centre: Incivility</b>	<b>Count</b>
Judges are unhelpful/rude	2
Clerks are unhelpful/rude	2

Jurors commented readily about poor air quality, dirty bathrooms, and the lack of decent food at 111 Centre.

<b>111 Centre: Physical Conditions</b>	<b>Count</b>
Air quality/temperature	5
Bathrooms	5
No coffee/sandwiches/juice/bad coffee	5
Elevators need work	3
General disrepair	2
Uncomfortable seats/not enough seats	2

Again, low-tech courts did not impress Manhattan jurors.

<b>111 Centre: Technology</b>	<b>Count</b>
Should have a call-in system	4
Improve technology	3
Need phone lines for computers	3
Problems with video/TV/speakers	3
Need more phones	2

<b>111 Centre: Summoning &amp; Orientation</b>	<b>Count</b>
Would like a postponement/deferral	15
Not fair—some people never called	5
Disproportionate summoning	4
Problems with name or address	3
Received multiple summons	3
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	2

<b>111 Centre: Administration of service</b>	<b>Count</b>
Wasted time	16
Lack of information/incorrect information	12
Adopt one-day-one-trial rule	4
Process does not start on time	4
Service is too long	4
Needed information ahead of time	4
Not enough cases for jurors	2

**5. 360 Adams Street**

*(a) Summary of juror concerns*

Brooklyn received few appreciative comments, but comments about good clerks rose above general appreciation—a first for Brooklyn.

Complaints about medical problems and childcare difficulties remained disproportionately high in Brooklyn. Complaints about incivil clerks and court officers decreased dramatically—perhaps due to increased supervision.

<b>Top Juror Concerns—Brooklyn/360 Adams 4/1/00-10/31/00 (Total Concerns = 323)</b>	
<b>Top 4 Appreciative Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good clerks	4
Things are generally better	2
Lunch guide is good	1
Physical conditions are better	1
<b>Top 10 Critical Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Lack of information/incorrect information	47
Medical problem/old age	34
Would like a postponement/deferral	34
Elder/childcare	17
Needed information ahead of time	13
Pay is not enough	7
Service is too long	6
Needed directions to the courthouse	6
Religious/personal objection	6

*(b) Breakdown of juror concerns*

Complaints about physical conditions in Brooklyn centered on air quality and bathrooms.

<b>360 Adams: Physical conditions</b>	<b>Count</b>
Air quality/temperature	5
Bathrooms	4
Uncomfortable seats/not enough seats	3
No coffee/sandwiches/juice/bad coffee	2
No place to park	2

Brooklyn jurors commented frequently that jury service interfered with their job and financial security.

<b>360 Adams: Financial/Employment Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Pay is not enough	7
Financial hardship	7
Very disruptive to my work	5
My business/patients will suffer	4
Car fare	3
Concern of unhappiness by employer	2
Self-employed people should be exempt	2
Student feels entitled to exemption	2
Work nights	2
Employers should pay salary	2

Brooklyn jurors with medical problems or children to care for found jury service to be a significant burden.

<b>360 Adams: Family/Health Burden</b>	<b>Count</b>
Medical problem/old age	34
Elder/childcare	17
Need to pick up children	4
Work at home to be with children, elderly, disabled	4
Elderly should not have to serve	2

Complaints about rude and unhelpful clerks were unusually low as new jury clerks were hired and supervision of all jury clerks increased in rooms 458 and 156.

<b>360 Adams: Incivility</b>	<b>Count</b>
Clerks are unhelpful/rude	9
General incivility	5

The pilot project reducing grand jury service from one month to two weeks continued this year. More grand jurors were summoned, but some only served ten days. Although complaints about the burden of grand jury continued, the most common comment was that serving on a grand jury is a good experience. This is another first.

<b>360 Adams: Grand jury</b>	<b>Count</b>
Grand jury is good experience	10
Very disruptive to my work	3
Wasted time	3
One month is too long	2

Lack of information remained the most common complaint from Brooklyn jurors.

<b>360 Adams: Administration of service</b>	<b>Count</b>
Lack of information/incorrect information	47
Needed information ahead of time	13
Needed directions to the courthouse	6
Service is too long	6
Wasted time	5
Process does not start on time	3
Adopt one-day-one-trial rule	2

<b>360 Adams: Summoning &amp; Orientation</b>	<b>Count</b>
Would like a postponement/deferral	34
Problems with name or address	6
In non-compliance	5
Would like to volunteer	5
Received multiple summons	4
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	3

## APPENDIX A: All Manhattan Courts

<b>Top Juror Concerns--All Manhattan Courts</b> <b>4/1/00 – 10/31/00</b> <b>(Total Concerns =1312)</b>	
<b>Top 10 Appreciative Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Good clerks	54
Things are generally better	47
Trial experience was good/OK	20
Good experience	16
Physical conditions are better	17
Lunch guide is good	11
Good that everyone serves	8
Judges are nicer	8
Good court officers	6
Video good	5
Plants are good	3
<b>Top 25 Critical Concerns</b>	<b>Count</b>
Lack of information/incorrect information	97
Would like a postponement/deferral	77
Wasted time	65
Medical problem/old age	59
Air quality/temperature	33
Elder/childcare	31
Very disruptive to my work	29
Bathrooms	28
Elevators need work	27
Disproportionate summoning	24
Improve technology	23
General disrepair	22
Needed information ahead of time	21
Religious/personal objection	19
Problems with name or address	19
Should have a call-in system	19
Summoned w/in two years of Aug. 1998	17
Self-employed people should be exempt	16
Financial hardship	16
Received multiple summons	16
Pay is not enough	15
No coffee/sandwiches/juice	15
Service is too long	14
My business will suffer	14
Need phone lines for computers	14

**APPENDIX B: Disqualifications**

<b>60 Centre: Disqualifications</b>	<b>Count</b>
Doesn't speak English	28
Not a resident of the county	16
Not a citizen	13
Former felon	5

<b>100 Centre: Disqualifications</b>	<b>Count</b>
Doesn't speak English	5
Not a resident of the county	2
Not a citizen	1

<b>111 Centre: Disqualifications</b>	<b>Count</b>
Doesn't speak English	6
Not a resident of the county	3
Not a citizen	2
Former felon	1

<b>360 Adams: Disqualifications</b>	<b>Count</b>
Doesn't speak English	40
Not a citizen	17
Former felon	4
Not a resident of the county	3