

FAILURE TO OBEY

Baltimore City District Court has heard at least 13,437 cases that have at least one charge of Failure to Obey a Reasonable and Lawful Order included in their charges.

In total, these cases have 28,762 charges spanning 203 different CJIS codes*, with **Failure to Obey and Disorderly Conduct** accounting for almost two-thirds of all charges.

13,437

cases with at least 1 Failure to Obey charge

86.6%

of those cases had all charges dropped

6,909

cases with Failure to Obey as the top charge

89.6%

of those cases had all charges dropped

A staggering majority of these cases are fully dropped, and yet the state took the time to charge and book the person behind the case number. This is an indictment of how we respond to people in crisis. The answer to an unhoused person, or to a person with a mental illness existing in public space cannot be to charge them and bring them to jail. Jail is not a home, it is not a treatment center. Rather than relying on a criminal charge, let's explore a different way to engage community members who need help.

***CJIS code** – the unique numerical code that the Maryland Criminal Justice Information System assigns to each “chargeable offense” (e.g. “2 0055” = Fail to Obey a Reasonable and Lawful Order of a Law Enforcement Officer)

FAILURE TO OBEY

Methodology

Data were collected on July 14, 2021 using Open Justice Baltimore's Case Harvester and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. The initial query simply asked, "Give me all District Court cases that have a charge of cjis code = "2 0055."

```
SELECT * FROM public.dscr_charges  
where cjis_code = '2 0055'
```

There was no time parameter; so, this would include any and all cases in the entire database. Notably, this query would not return an instance where the CJIS code was blank in Maryland Judiciary Case Search but the written description describes a "Failure to Obey."

Once the query returned the cases, another query was run that asked, "Give me all the charges and dispositions associated with these case numbers (i.e. the cases returned in the initial query.)"

```
SELECT * FROM public.dscr_charges  
where case_number = '<insert case#>'  
or case_number = '<insert case#>'...
```

Such a query allows for the analysis of the entire case outcomes versus the outcomes of just the target CJIS code. In other words, with this query, we can answer, "Do all the charges in a case get dropped? Or just the Failure to Obey charge?"

To be considered a case that has had all charges dropped, all charges in the case must have a disposition of either Nolle Prosequi, Dismissed, Stet, or any combination of those three dispositions.

Further, another query was run in the public.dscr table using the previously identified case numbers in order to get the court system (i.e. Baltimore City, Montgomery County, or Prince George's County), case disposition, and status.

```
SELECT * FROM public.dscr  
where case_number = '<insert case#>'  
or case_number = '<insert case#>'...
```

In order for the case to be included in the dataset of analysis, the court system must = Baltimore City, case disposition must = TRIAL and the case status must = CLOSED. This requirement established the parameters to identify the cases that did not move up to Circuit Court and that are now fully adjudicated and closed.