



PRESS RELEASE

New York State
Unified Court System

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Hon. A. Gail Prudenti
Chief Administrative Judge

www.nycourts.gov/press

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State Court System Reports Dramatic Cut in Bronx Felony Case Inventory, Announces Plan to Slash the Borough's Misdemeanor Backlog and Names New Bronx Appointment

NEW YORK – Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman and Chief Administrative Judge A. Gail Prudenti today reported a dramatic reduction in Bronx County's felony case backlog — and a substantial increase in felony trials in the borough — since the inception earlier this year of a comprehensive program in the county's Supreme Court. When the program was first implemented, there were some 950 felony cases pending two years or more in the Bronx. Today, that backlog has been eliminated by more than half, with thousands of felony cases disposed of via the program over the past ten months. In addition, the median age of the felony caseload has gone down 36 percent since last year, from 371 days to 273 days.

First announced by Judge Lippman last January, the program was launched in partnership with the Bronx County District Attorney's Office to decrease the felony backlog. A variety of factors were linked to the borough's backlog, including a shortage of jurors, a limited number of prosecutors and defense attorneys to handle the most serious felony cases, and the experimental — and since dismantled — merger of the county's misdemeanor and felony courts.

Among the components critical to the Bronx Supreme Court initiative's success were the infusion of additional judicial resources, including the assignment of a dedicated judge to push

for plea agreements or compel the attorneys to prepare for immediate trial when a plea cannot be negotiated; adherence to strict case management practices; and regular and careful monitoring of caseloads.

“I am extremely pleased with the dramatic reductions in the Bronx felony backlog and anticipate further advances as we refine measures to more effectively manage the borough’s formidable felony caseload. I wish to thank Bronx County District Attorney Robert Johnson and his staff, the defense bar and the entire Bronx criminal justice community for their critical support — and in particular the court’s hardworking judges — all of whom have enabled the clearing of hundreds and hundreds of older felony cases off the docket and paved the way for ongoing improvements,” said Chief Judge Lippman.

“I join Judge Lippman in lauding the Bronx judges and non-judicial employees for their hard work and dedication. I also extend my appreciation to Administrative Judge Douglas McKeon and Deputy Administrative Judge Robert Torres for their outstanding efforts in implementing and overseeing the program; and Hon. Patricia DiMango, who did an extraordinary job of presiding over a “blockbuster” part that successfully resolved hundreds of the oldest felony cases,” said Judge Prudenti.

Judge Prudenti announced that Judge McKeon, who since January 2013 has served as Bronx County’s Administrative Judge for Criminal and Civil Matters, will now resume his full-time duties as the county’s Administrative Judge for Civil Matters. Judge Torres will replace Judge McKeon as the county’s Administrative Judge for Criminal Matters, effective January 1, 2014.

“Judge Lippman and I congratulate Judge Torres on his appointment and look forward to working with him in his new capacity as we seek even further reductions in the borough’s felony caseloads and increase efficiencies to best serve the justice needs of the people of Bronx County,” said Judge Prudenti. “We are very grateful to Judge McKeon, who so graciously took on the additional role of Administrative Judge for Criminal Matters over the past year. Judge McKeon’s vast expertise and exceptional leadership have been integral to the program’s success.”

Judge Lippman and Judge Prudenti also announced a new set of reforms to be instituted in the Bronx’s lower criminal court to reduce the borough’s misdemeanor case backlog. Factors contributing to the misdemeanor backlog include a large misdemeanor inventory left over from the merger of the county’s felony and misdemeanor courts; unduly long adjournment intervals

between court appearances; and insufficient trial capacity, exacerbated by a shortage of judges to consistently preside over jury trial parts.

The new Bronx misdemeanor initiative, under the direction of New York City Criminal Court Administrative Judge Barry Kamins, will combine measures to achieve immediate case backlog reductions with long-term case management practices. Key features of the plan include:

- A “blockbuster” court part to handle the oldest cases;
- Assignment of three additional judges to the Bronx to preside exclusively over misdemeanor trials;
- Implementation of strict case management practices, such as shorter adjournments and tighter motion schedules;
- A new court part to handle misdemeanor quality of life offenses, to focus greater attention on these cases and alleviate caseloads in the court’s other parts;
- A new part to monitor defendants’ adherence to court-imposed conditions, such as community service or participation in a treatment program, to be fulfilled before the case can be disposed of.

“This expansive reform plan builds on the momentum of the felony backlog reductions in the borough’s Supreme Court. I am confident that this new initiative will lead to immediate and substantial reductions of the borough’s oldest misdemeanor cases and provide safeguards against future backlogs, enhancing the administration of justice for all those who come before the Criminal Court,” said Judge Lippman.

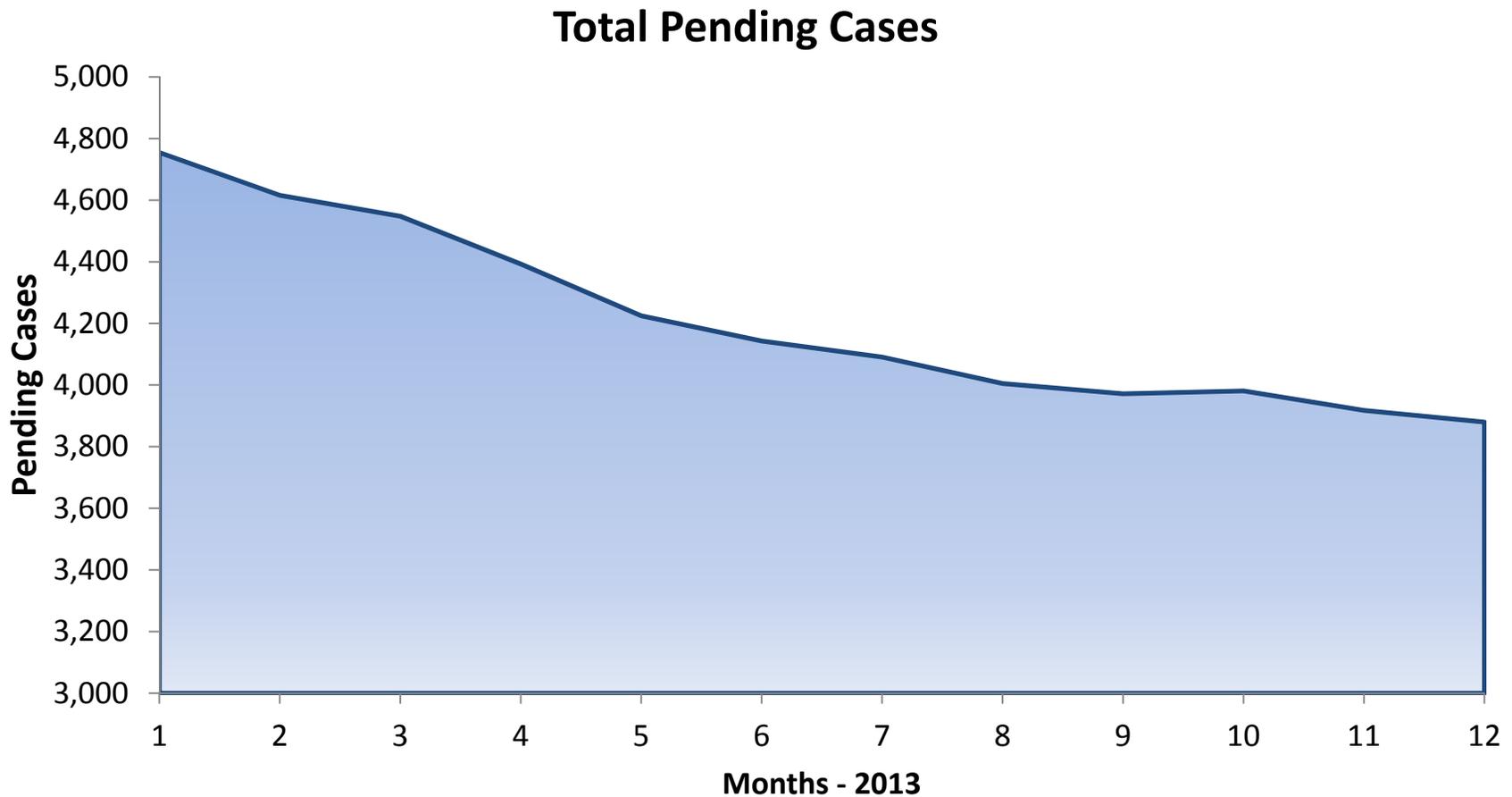
“I am eager to work with Judge Kamins and the court’s judges as we embark on this important endeavor to reduce the borough’s misdemeanor case inventory and avert unnecessary case delays moving ahead. Judge Lippman and I look forward to reporting on the progress of the Bronx County Criminal Court plan in the coming months,” said Judge Prudenti.

Tables detailing Bronx County’s felony and misdemeanor caseloads are attached.

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FELONIES

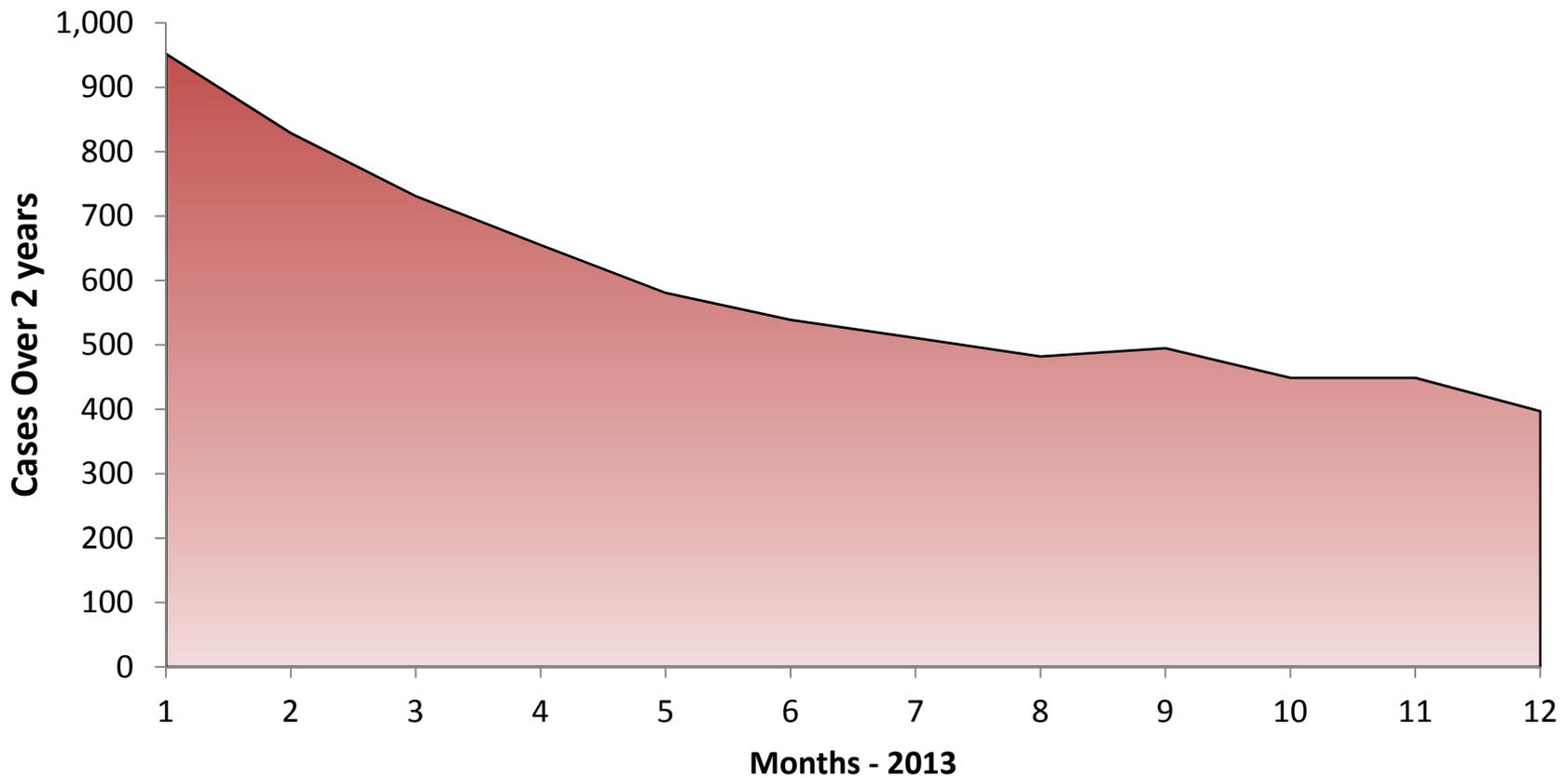
Pending inventory is down 23% from the beginning of 2013. Starting at 4,755, we currently have 3,880. The Blockbuster Part alone led to the disposition of almost 1,000 cases.



FELONIES

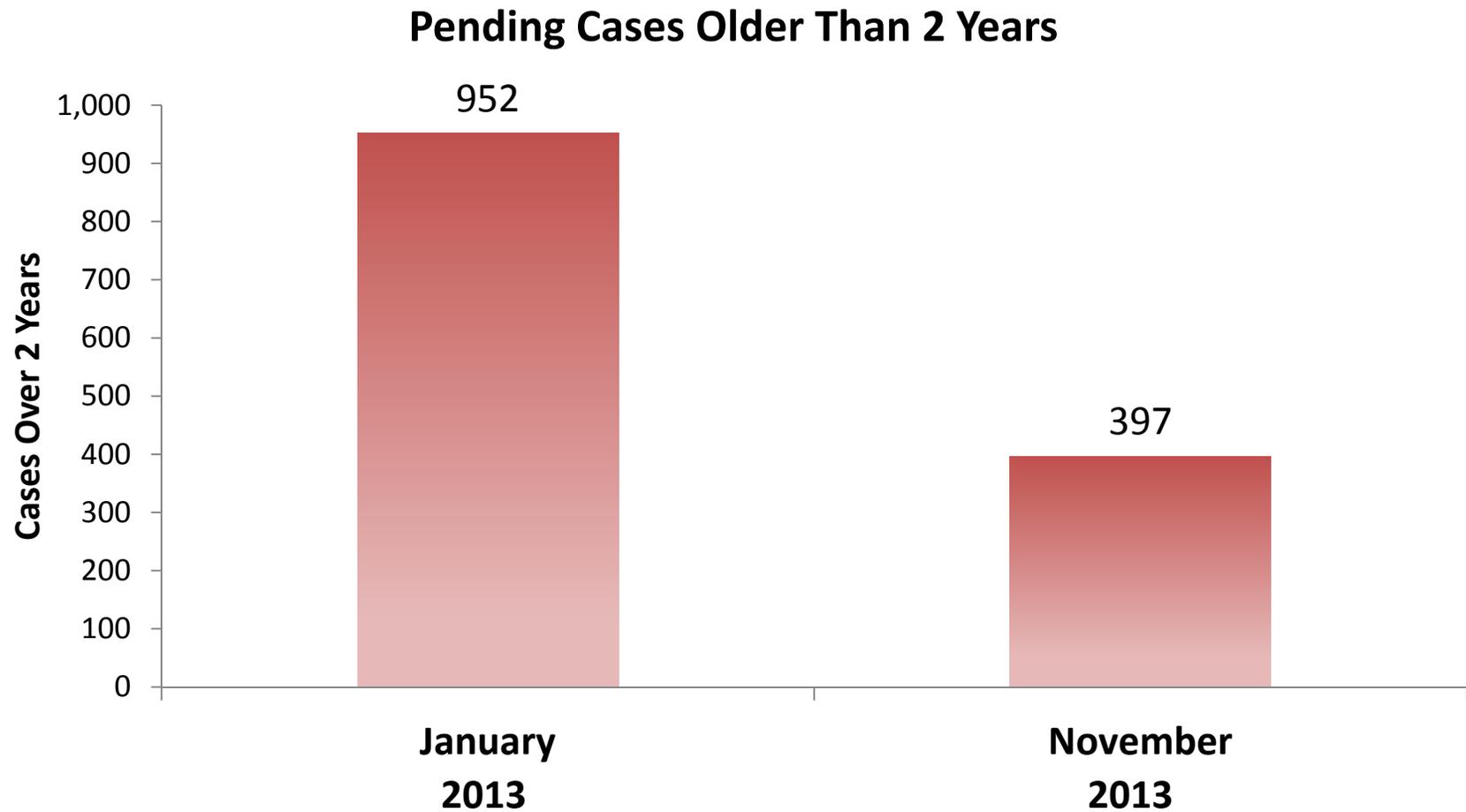
Backlog over 2-years old was cut by more than half in the past year, going from 952 cases to 397.

Pending Cases Older Than 2 Years



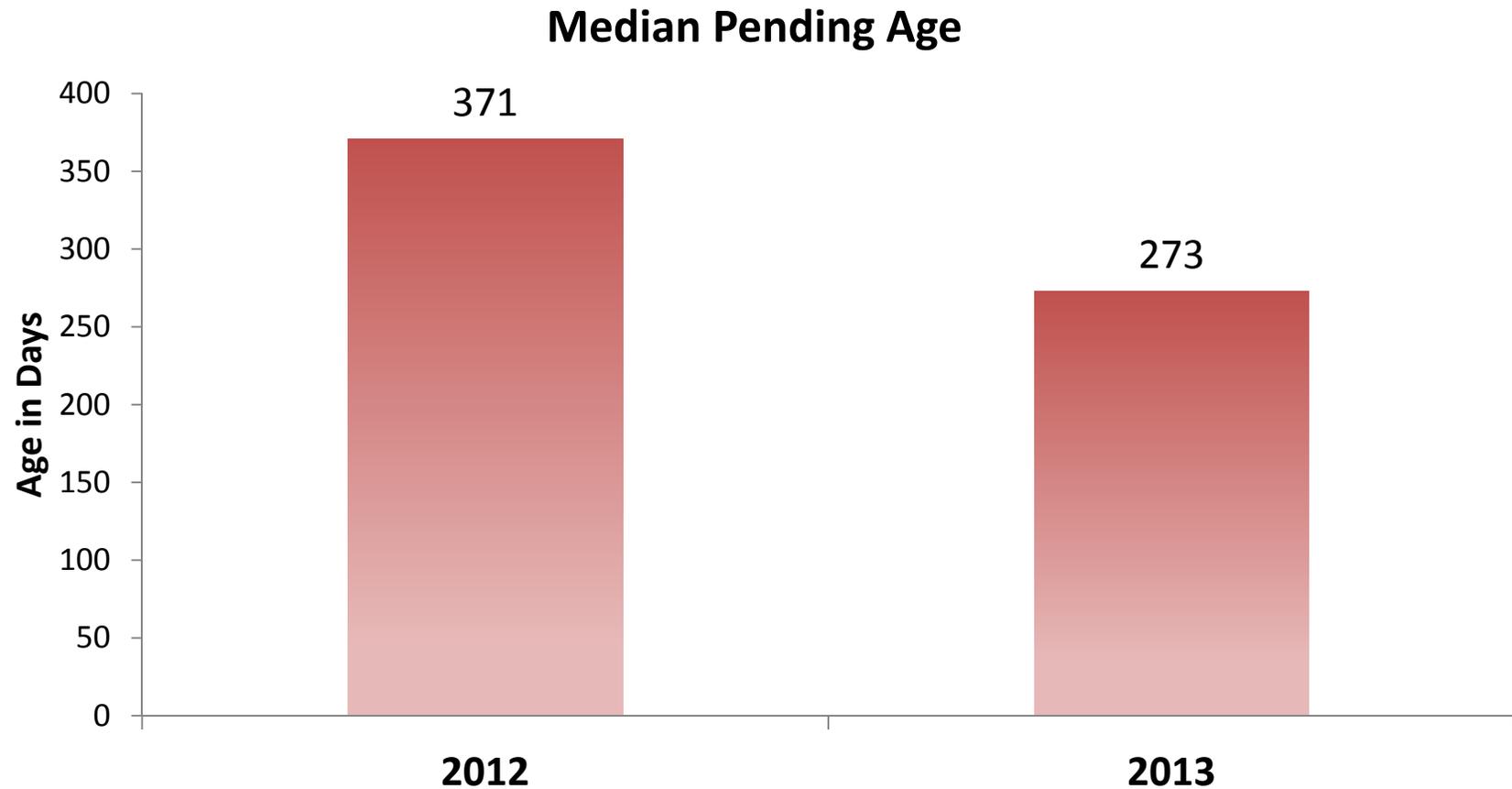
FELONIES

Pending cases older than two years decreased 58%.



FELONIES

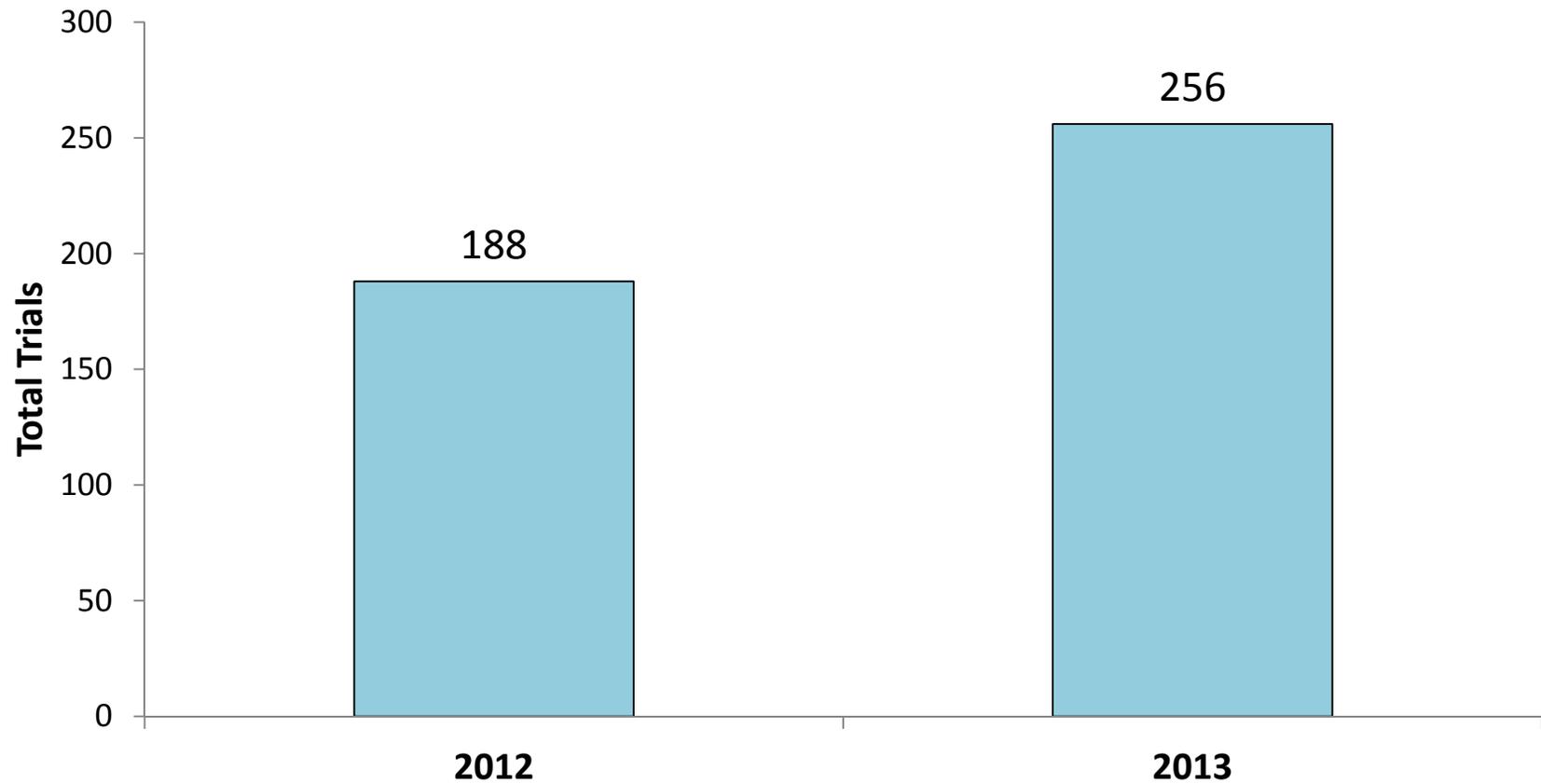
The median age of the court's total pending caseload inventory has gone down 36% since last year.



FELONIES

There have been 36% more trials this year compared to last year.

Trials Through November



MISDEMEANORS

The Bronx has a far greater number of misdemeanor cases pending over one year than the other New York City counties.

