

A Look Inside the New York City Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget

Despite Mayor Adams’s commitment in his State of the City address to close the “pipeline that feeds Rikers” along with the notorious jail complex itself, the fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget continues to overinvest in the Department of Correction (DOC) and New York Police Department (NYPD) while making cuts to community-based services proven to support neighborhood safety.¹

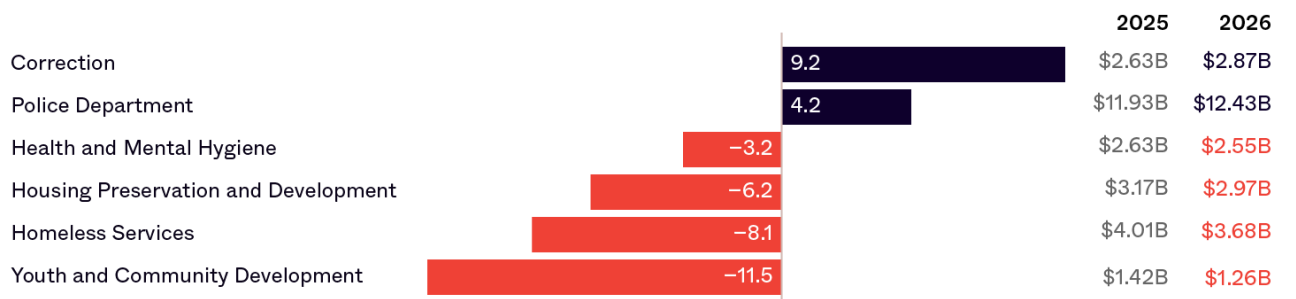
To build long-term safety and fiscal responsibility, the city should:

- eliminate DOC’s uniformed vacancies, which would save up to **\$149.6 million**;
- rein in wasteful DOC and NYPD overtime spending, which cost the city **\$724 million** in unbudgeted overtime costs last fiscal year alone;
- more detailed budgets to enable greater accountability for DOC; and
- invest an additional **\$56.1 million** in community-based safety solutions.

Police and corrections spending rise yet again at the cost of crucial services.

This year’s preliminary city budget includes \$2.87 billion for the DOC (a 9 percent increase from last year’s adopted budget) and \$12.4 billion for NYPD (a 4 percent increase).² In contrast, despite some large proposed investments in safe haven beds and temporary housing, funding is set to decrease for agencies that provide community-based services to New Yorkers, including the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).³

Percentage change, FY 2025 adopted to FY 2026 preliminary budget



Budget figures

Note: Budget figures include fringe benefits, pension contributions, and debt service
 Source: IBO budget data, OMB FY 2025 adopted and FY 2026 preliminary budgets

New York City cannot punish its way to safety. Instead, we must increase funding for supportive housing, a community-based continuum of care for New Yorkers experiencing mental illness, alternatives to incarceration, and reentry services. Contact with law enforcement can increase the likelihood of future criminal behavior, and even one day incarcerated can increase the likelihood of rearrest.⁴ Rather than fund agencies that trap New Yorkers in an ongoing cycle of instability, arrest, and incarceration, New York’s leaders must invest in evidence-backed services that prevent crime, respond to people in crisis, and stop violence. These investments are also essential to lowering the jail population on Rikers Island so that it can be closed and replaced with the four smaller, modern borough-based jails.

Corrections and police budgets are high, and they are likely to climb higher throughout the year.

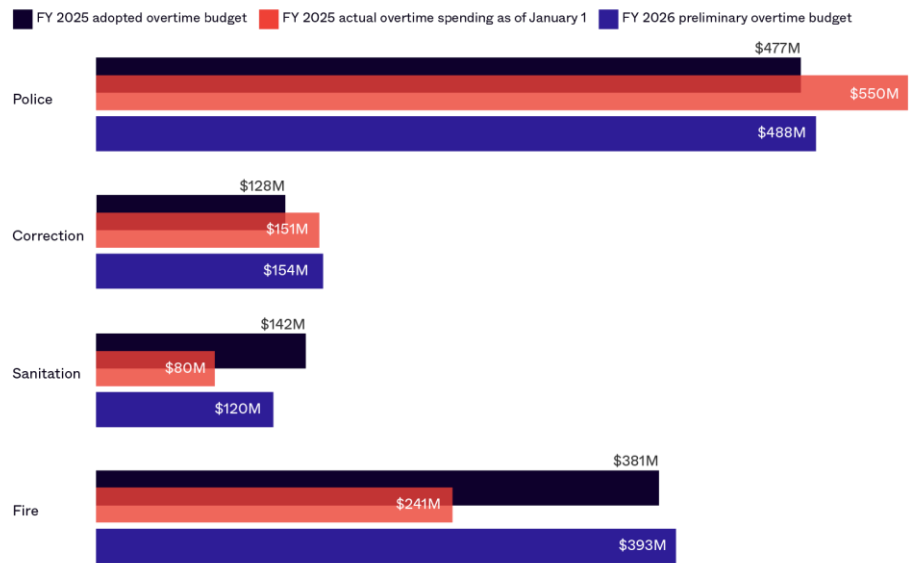
The preliminary budgets for DOC and NYPD are already astronomical; the city is slated to spend more than \$15 billion on these two agencies alone next fiscal year. However, based on previous years, actual spending on corrections and police is likely to be even higher than indicated in the preliminary budget. NYPD overspent its budget by 13 percent in FY2023 and 25 percent in FY2024. DOC’s budget also drifted upward, by 6 percent in FY2023 and 10 percent in FY2024. This is not the norm across city agencies: in contrast, DYCD underspent on its budget by \$4.7 million in FY2023 and—controlling for the midyear addition of the Office of Neighborhood Safety, which was moved from the Office of Criminal Justice—spent 4 percent less than budgeted in FY2024. DOHMH’s budget drifted up by just 2 percent in FY2023 and 6 percent in FY2024, driven primarily by increased spending on supplies for disease control and family and child health.⁵

Although some of DOC and NYPD’s overspending in recent years was likely due to renegotiated union contracts, NYPD overspent on its overtime budget alone by \$498 million in FY2023 and \$575 million in FY2024. DOC overspent its overtime budget by \$161 million and \$149 million in the last two fiscal years.⁶ Troublingly, there seems to be little correlation between DOC uniformed headcount and overtime spending.⁷ Together, DOC and NYPD’s total overtime spending last fiscal year alone—\$1.37 billion—was more than seven times larger than the Office of Neighborhood Safety’s entire FY2024 spending (\$190 million) on community-based programs that address systemic drivers of crime and violence.⁸

As of January 1, 2025, NYPD and DOC had already overspent their annual uniformed overtime budgets, which are meant to last through the end of June. In contrast, the Department of Sanitation and Fire Department, two agencies with large uniformed workforces, had only spent 57 and 63 percent of their respective overtime budgets as of January 1.⁹

And although the FY2026 preliminary budget includes increases to NYPD and DOC overtime budgets (increases of 2 percent and 19 percent respectively), these are marginal when compared to the agencies’ astronomical overspending. Moving forward, the city must insist on accurate and transparent overtime budgets.

Uniformed overtime budgets for NYPD, DOC, DSNY, and FDNY



Source: New York City Independent Budget Office

City leaders must increase budget accountability for DOC and rein in unnecessary staffing costs.

In the FY2026 preliminary budget, 87 percent of DOC spending is related to personnel costs.¹⁰ Reining in DOC’s budget—which translated to \$507,000 per incarcerated person per year in 2023—will require addressing the agencies’ staffing levels.¹¹ In the last several years, recruitment efforts have failed to keep pace with attrition.¹² DOC’s preliminary budget includes funding for 7,060 uniformed officers, despite currently employing fewer than 6,000.¹³ Eliminating the current 1,152 uniformed vacancies—which would

not entail a single layoff—would save \$149.6 million.¹⁴ Allowing DOC to budget these vacancies every year gives them additional funding that is not subject to rigorous oversight.

More broadly, DOC's budget lacks granularity. The FY2026 budget includes only six units of appropriation for personal services (PS) and five for other than personal services (OTPS).¹⁵ In contrast, NYPD's preliminary budget includes 14 units of appropriation for PS and 11 units of appropriation for OTPS, including two new units this year for the detective bureau and chief of department.¹⁶ Units of appropriation are important because they give elected officials and members of the public insight into an agency's spending. In addition, if agencies want to spend 5 percent more or less than a unit of appropriation allows, they must seek city council approval.¹⁷

To increase transparency and enable greater oversight over DOC's budget, City Council should pass a budget resolution requiring DOC to introduce new units of appropriation. At a minimum, these units of appropriation should include PS and OTPS related to executive management and programming for incarcerated people.

NYC must invest more in comprehensive community-based safety solutions.

The safest communities are those with the most support, not the largest jails or police departments.¹⁸ To increase safety via the FY2026 budget, city leaders should invest \$56.1 million in annual funding as follows:

- **\$4.8 million for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH).** Also, reissue the request for proposals for 380 new units with higher service funding levels, bringing the total number of units to 500. The budget should give JISH its own unit of appropriation within DOHMH to increase budget accountability.
- **\$22 million for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams,** a 50 percent increase from current IMT funding levels that will help to clear the waitlist of people seeking vital mental health support.
- **\$7 million for Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams,** a 50 percent increase from current funding levels that will enable more justice-involved New Yorkers with mental health needs to access care.
- **\$8 million to restore slated cuts to reentry services** that help New Yorkers returning from incarceration find stable housing, employment, and mental health and substance use treatment.
- **\$3.8 million to restore slated cuts for alternatives to incarceration (ATIs)** to enhance and support the use of ATIs citywide.
- **\$4.5 million for adequately paid peer specialists** to staff mental health and crisis response teams.
- **\$6 million for four new crisis respite centers,** two of which must be opened by the end of 2025 per legislation passed in 2023. These centers provide up to 28 days of housing and care for people experiencing mental health crises.

Beyond helping to keep New Yorkers safe, these investments will also divert people from incarceration, an important step towards closing the jails on Rikers Island.¹⁹ Given the ongoing abuse and trauma taking place there, closing the notorious jail complex once and for all must be a priority.²⁰

Longer-term, city leaders should champion solutions that keep neighborhoods safe by increasing funding for initiatives like community violence intervention and round-the-clock outreach programs to connect New Yorkers on the streets and subways to services. By increasing funds for evidence-backed, community-based supports, New York City can improve safety, increase justice, and raise quality of life for all New Yorkers.

Endnotes

- ¹ Eric Adams, “Transcript: Mayor Adams Lays Out Ambitious Agenda to Make New York City Best Place to Raise A Family in Fourth State of the City Address,” January 9, 2025, Official Website of the City of New York, <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/013-25/transcript-mayor-adams-lays-out-ambitious-agenda-make-new-york-city-best-place-raise-a>.
- ² The budget numbers presented in this brief were provided to Vera by the New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) throughout January and February 2025 and are on file with the authors. Vera used data from IBO to have the most up-to-date numbers; for more information, contact Benjamin Heller at bheller@vera.org. Note that all fiscal year (FY) 2026 preliminary and FY2025 adopted departmental budget totals include fringe benefits, pension fund contributions, and debt service, which Vera drew from the New York City Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to supplement the IBO figures. See OMB, *The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2026: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2025), 40E-41E (for Department of Correction) and 29E-31E (for New York Police Department), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan25/perc1-25.pdf>; and OMB, *The City of New York Adopted Budget Fiscal Year 2025: Expense Revenue Contract* (New York: OMB, 2024), 104E (for Department of Correction) and 70E-71E (for New York Police Department), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/adopt24/erc6-24.pdf>.
- ³ IBO budget data, January 2025; and Alice Gainer, “New \$650 Million Plan to Address NYC’s Mentally Ill Homeless Unveiled by Mayor Eric Adams,” CBS News, January 15, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/bridge-to-home-nyc-mentally-ill-homeless-plan>.
- ⁴ Juan Del Toro, Tracey Lloyd, Kim S. Buchanan, et al., “The Criminogenic and Psychological Effects of Police Stops on Adolescent Black and Latino Boys,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 116, no. 17 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1808976116>; Abigail Novak and Shelby Gilbreath, “Police Stops and Subsequent Delinquency and Arrest: Race and Gender Differences,” *Justice Quarterly* 40, no. 7 (2023), 910-949, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2023.2235416>; and Core Correctional Solutions, *The Hidden Costs of Pretrial Detention Revisited* (Houston, TX: Arnold Ventures, 2022), <https://perma.cc/4UQV-4S4Q>.
- ⁵ IBO budget data, January 2025.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Arden Armbruster, *A Shrinking System with Similar Spending: A Decade of Jail Trends (2014-2023)* (New York: IBO, 2024), <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/a-shrinking-system-with-similar-spending-a-decade-of-jail-trends-2014-2023-september-2024.pdf>.
- ⁸ IBO budget data, January 2025.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*; fringe benefits, pension fund contributions, and debt service from OMB, *Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2026, 2025, 40E-41E*. Vera calculated the percentage of DOC’s budget spent on personnel costs by dividing the sum of DOC’s personal services, fringe benefits, and pension fund contributions by the total DOC budget including fringe benefits, pension fund contributions, and debt service.
- ¹¹ Office of the New York City Comptroller, *Ensuring Timely Trials* (New York: Office of the New York City Comptroller, 2024), 2, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Ensuring-Timely-Trials.pdf>.
- ¹² New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, “Department of Correction (DOC),” dashboard, access February 18, 2025, Department of Correction (DOC) <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/services/for-the-public/department-of-correction-doc/dashboard>.
- ¹³ January 2025 staffing levels (5,908 officers) from IBO. Budgeted headcount from OMB, *Fiscal Years 2025-2029: Full-Time and Full-Time Equivalent Staffing Levels* (New York: OMB, 2025), 35, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/jan25/jan25-stafflevels.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ OMB, *Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2026, 2025, 40E-41E*. To calculate this number, Vera first calculated that for every dollar spent on personal services, DOC spent an extra \$1.46 on fringe benefits and pension fund contributions. Using that figure, Vera then determined that the \$52,804 starting salary for officers as reported on DOC’s website cost the agency an additional \$77,093 in fringe benefits and pension fund contributions. In total, therefore, each new officer costs an average of \$129,897. Multiplying that figure by DOC’s 1,152 uniformed vacancies as of January 1, 2025, leads to a total savings of \$149,641,444.
- ¹⁵ OMB, *Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2026, 2025, 40E-41E*.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29E-31E.
- ¹⁷ Logan Clark, *Budget Building Blocks: Units of Appropriation* (New York: IBO, 2023), 2, <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/budget-building-blocks-units-of-appropriation-november-2023.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ For example, see Thea Sebastian, Hanna Love, Sam Washington, *A New Community Safety Blueprint: How The Federal Government Can Address Violence And Harm Through A Public Health Approach* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2022), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach>.
- ¹⁹ City of New York, “A Roadmap to Closing Rikers,” <https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us>.
- ²⁰ For example, see Sam McCann and Erica Bryant, “Fifth Confirmed Jail Death in 2024 Brings New York City’s Total to 33 Under Mayor Adams,” Vera Institute of Justice, August 21, 2024, <https://www.vera.org/news/nyc-jail-deaths>; and Erica Bryant, *It’s a Torture Chamber: Stories from Rikers Island* (New York: Vera, 2022), <https://www.vera.org/its-a-torture-chamber>.