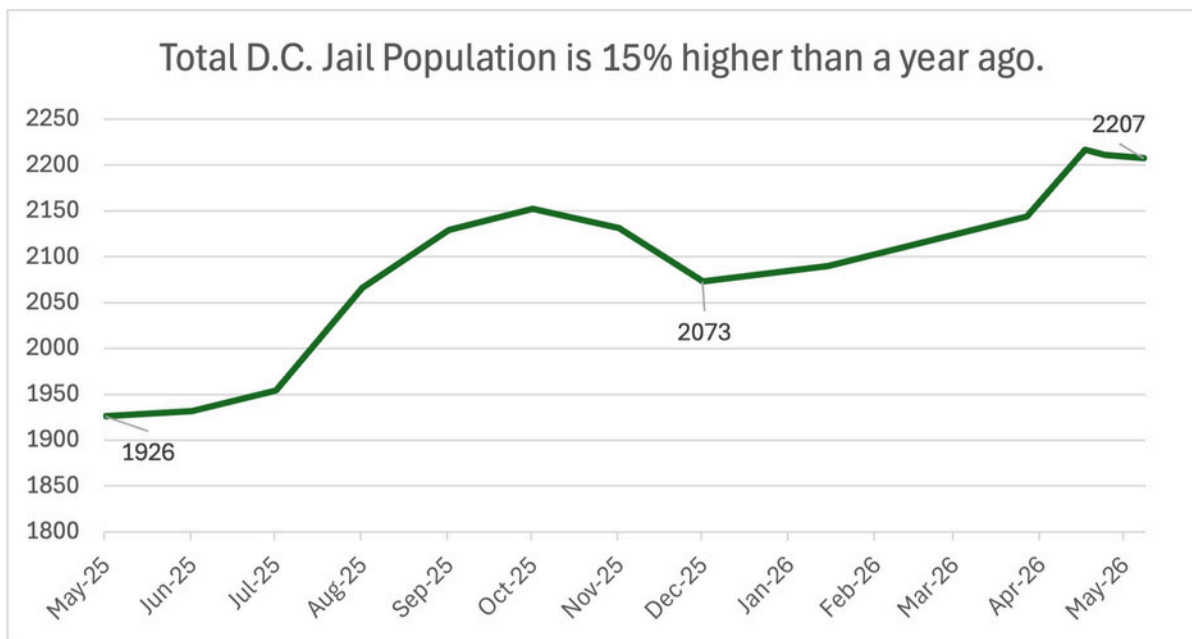


Data Snapshot: 2026 D.C. Jail Population Rises Above 2025 Surge Level

Growing population strains staff and services and threatens safety

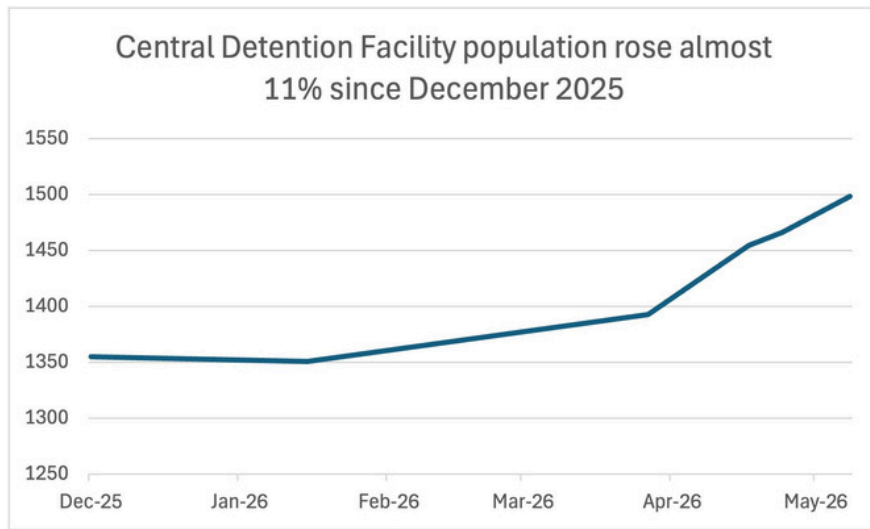
1. D.C. Jail numbers have been rising throughout 2026.

As CCE reported in September, The number of people in the jail rose rapidly during the federal law enforcement surge in the summer and fall of 2025. After a small decline in late 2025, the population began rising again, according to weekly facility data published by the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC). The weekly average daily population (ADP) of people in DOC custody rose to 2,207 the week ending May 8th, which is about 15% more than a year earlier.



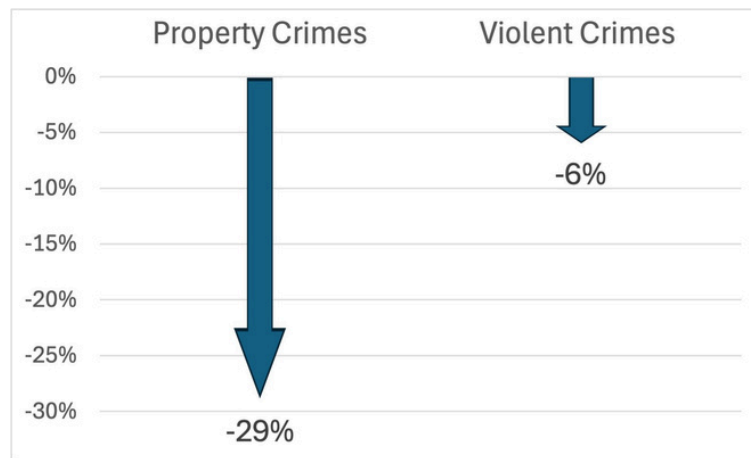
2. The population increase in 2026 has been concentrated in CDF.

The D.C. Jail includes two correctional buildings: the Central Detention Facility (CDF), the larger facility that houses only males and the conditions of which have deteriorated over its half-century history; and the Correctional Treatment Facility (CTF), where all women and some men in specialized units are held. In CTF, the population grew sharply through October 2025, when it stood at 748. It has remained mostly in the mid 700's since. At CDF, however, the population rose over 10% so far in 2026: from an average daily population of 1,355 in December 2025 to 1,498 the week ending May 8, 2026.



This increase in the jail population is occurring at the same time that crime in the District is dropping. Property crime from January – May 2026 is down 26% and violent crime is down 6% compared to the same period in 2025.

Crime is down in D.C. from January 1 – May 12, 2026 compared to same period in 2025



3. Reducing the population would improve safety and conditions in the jail.

A 37-year-old man died at CDF around 2 a.m. on May 8. From October to December 2025 – prior to the recent population surge – there were 18 reported assaults involving injuries. In FY2018, when the jail population was 2,086, a study by a national jail expert concluded that 1,082 uniformed staff were needed to safely operate DOC facilities. In January 2026, DOC reported that only 713 of 814 funded uniformed positions were filled.

If D.C. continues to allow its jail population to grow, the District will need to increase spending by millions of dollars just to keep residents and staff safe and ensure constitutional requirements related to food and healthcare are met. This could mean fewer resources will be available for programs and services shown to help people and communities thrive. CCE and the D.C. Jails and Justice Taskforce have made multiple recommendations on ways to safely reduce the number of jail residents.

Our Mission

Council for Court Excellence's (CCE's) mission is to bring people together to conduct research, educate, and advocate to make D.C.'s unique legal systems more just, equitable, and accountable to the community.

Sources for all statistics in this publication can be obtained by contacting info@courtexcellence.org.

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