Office of the

Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security

REPORT ON THE OFFENDER POPULATION FORECASTS (FY2027 TO FY2032)

To The Governor and General Assembly



Commonwealth of Virginia

Richmond, Virginia

October 15, 2026

October 15, 2026

TO: The Honorable Abigail D. Spanberger
Governor

The Honorable Luke E. Torian
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chairwoman, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick A. Hope
Chairman, House Courts of Justice Committee

The Honorable Scott A. Surovell
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee

Each year, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security is required to present revised offender population forecasts to the Governor, as well as the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee, the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, the House Courts of Justice Committee, and the Senate Courts of Justice.

To revise the forecasts, my office brought together policy makers, administrators, and technical experts from all branches of state government for a series of meetings over the course of the summer and early fall. Using a consensus approach, with input from all those who participated in the process, a forecast for each of the four offender populations was adopted.

As required by the Appropriation Act, this report is respectfully submitted for your consideration. Please contact my office should you have questions regarding any aspect of the offender forecasts.

Sincerely,

Stanley M. Meador
Secretary

Authority

This report has been prepared and submitted to fulfill the requirements of Item 380 of House Bill 30 (2026) (see Appendix A, Legislative Directive). This provision requires the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to produce revised six-year forecasts for four confined criminal justice populations: the state-responsible adult offender population, the local-responsible adult offender population, the state-responsible juvenile population, and the local-responsible juvenile population. Pursuant to the Appropriation Act requirements, these forecasts are presented by October 15 of each year to the Governor, as well as the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee, the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, the House Courts of Justice Committee, and the Senate Courts of Justice Committee. In addition, the Secretary must ensure that the adult state-responsible population forecast includes an estimate of the number of probation violators in the overall population who may be appropriate for punishment via alternative sanctions. This document contains the Secretary's report for 2026.

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Executive Summary

Forecasts of persons confined in state and local correctional facilities are essential for criminal justice budgeting and planning in Virginia. The forecasts are typically used to estimate operating expenses and future capital needs and to assess the impact of current and proposed criminal justice policies. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security oversees the forecasting process, and, as mandated by the General Assembly (see Appendix A, Legislative Directive), presents updated forecasts annually to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee, the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, the House Courts of Justice Committee, and the Senate Courts of Justice Committee.

To produce the offender forecasts, the Secretary's Office uses a consensus forecasting process that brings together policy makers, administrators, and technical experts from many state agencies across all branches of state government. The objective is to ensure that statistical models meet high technical standards while also providing key policy-makers and administrators in the criminal justice system the opportunity to provide input into the forecast. See Virginia's Offender Forecasting Process (Section I) for more about Virginia's consensus forecasting, and Forecasting Methodologies (Section II) for more about the statistical modeling.

Offender Population Forecasts

FY2027 – FY2032

Fiscal Year	Adult Local-Responsible Jail Population (FY Average)	Adult State-Responsible Offender Population (June 30)	Technical Probation Violators in the Adult State-Responsible Offender Population (June 30)*	Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population (FY Average)	Juvenile Detention Center Population (FY Average)
FY2026 Actual Population	*15,627*	*26,865***	*1,636***	*330*	*456*
FY2027	15,463	26,889	1,723	276	484
FY2028	15,448	26,701	1,736	288	490
FY2029	15,437	26,691	1,772	291	492
FY2030	15,416	26,522	1,787	302	490
FY2031	15,403	26,443	1,794	310	490
FY2032	15,387	26,421	1,800	314	492
Average FY Change	*-0.3%*	*-0.3%*	*1.6%*	*-0.5%*	*1.3%*

*The Technical Probation Violator forecast is a subgroup of, and not in addition to, the Adult State-Responsible Offender Forecast.
**Preliminary

For more information about each population forecast, see their relevant sections:

- Section III, Adult local-responsible jail population
- Section IV, Adult state-responsible offender population
- Section V, Juvenile state-responsible direct care population
- Section VI, Juvenile local-responsible detention center population

I. Virginia's Offender Forecasting Process

The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security oversees the annual offender forecasting process. These forecasts are essential for criminal justice budgeting and planning in the Commonwealth. They are used to estimate operating expenses and future capital needs for state prisons, local and regional jails, and juvenile correctional facilities. In addition, the forecasts provide critical information for assessing the impact of current and proposed criminal justice policies.

The Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security uses a consensus forecasting process. First implemented in Virginia in the late 1980s, consensus forecasting is an open, participative approach that brings together policy makers, administrators, and technical experts from many state agencies across all branches of state government. The objective is to ensure that statistical models meet high technical standards while also providing key policy makers and administrators the opportunity to provide input into the forecast. The process also helps promote general understanding of the forecast and the assumptions that drive it.

The process is structured through committees. The Technical Advisory Committee is composed of experts in statistical and quantitative methods from several agencies. Analysts from the relevant agencies are tasked with developing each forecast. This includes the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) for the adult local-responsible jail forecast, the Department of Corrections (DOC) for the adult state-responsible offender forecast, and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) for the juvenile direct care and juvenile detention center forecasts. In each case, the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) produces a forecast as well, for comparison. Analysts from the separate agencies work independently of each other. While individual members generate the various forecasts, the Technical Advisory Committee as a whole scrutinizes each forecast model according to the highest statistical standards. Selected forecasts are recommended for consideration by the Secretary's Policy Committee.

Led by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, the Policy Committee is made up of agency directors, members of the General Assembly, and top-level officials from Virginia's executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The diverse backgrounds and expertise of the Policy Committee members promote in-depth discussions of the issues and trends in Virginia's criminal justice system.

The Policy Committee reviews the various forecasts recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee and considers them in light of any known outside factors that could not be accounted for in the statistical models (such as recent legislation or new alternatives to incarceration). The Policy Committee may make adjustments to the forecasts as it deems appropriate.

The forecasting process benefits from rigorous quantitative analysis by the Technical Advisory Committee and high-level review by the Policy Committee. Through the consensus process, a separate forecast is produced for each of the four major correctional populations.

II. Forecasting Methodologies

Analysts on the Secretary's Technical Advisory Committee use two types of methodologies to develop offender forecasts: time series modeling and computer simulation modeling.

Time series modeling is a set of statistical techniques that apply specifically to the analysis of data points that occur over time. Time series forecasting assumes that there is a pattern in the historical values that can be identified. The goal is to define the pattern, understand the short-term and long-term trends, and pinpoint any seasonal fluctuations. Significant policy changes made in past years can be included in the statistical model and the impacts quantified. Time series models then use the pattern, trend, and seasonal variation identified in the historical data to project future values. Examples of statistical forecasting techniques of time series data include exponential smoothing, Auto-Regressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) modeling, and regression-based machine learning. Models developed from the same data can differ based on the choice of criterion to optimize, the external factors included (factors that may be correlated with population changes), how many years of historical data are included in the analysis, etc.

When developing time series models, analysts on the Committee withhold the most recent twelve months of data, for testing. Individual models are used to predict those twelve months, and their degree of success is a major factor in choosing between models. Models are compared across a variety of accuracy statistics so that the model with the best set of statistical properties can be selected. Once a model is selected, it is re-run using all of the historical data to produce a forecast. Only forecasts produced from models meeting the Technical Advisory Committee's strict standards are presented to the Secretary's Policy Committee.

DOC and DJJ use computer simulation modeling to forecast the adult state-responsible inmate population and the juvenile direct care and detention center populations, respectively. Computer simulation models are designed to mimic the flow of offenders through a system over the forecast horizon. Both DOC and DJJ use Simul8 forecasting software for this purpose. Agency analysts can structure a simulation model to accurately portray their particular system. Key inputs required to accurately simulate the system are the number of people entering the system (admissions), and the number of people exiting the system (releases). The agencies have the necessary information (such as sentence length) to estimate releases. To estimate admissions, the agencies use time series models that are developed by the Technical Advisory Committee and approved by the Policy Committee.

The use of simulation forecasting requires making certain assumptions, such as:

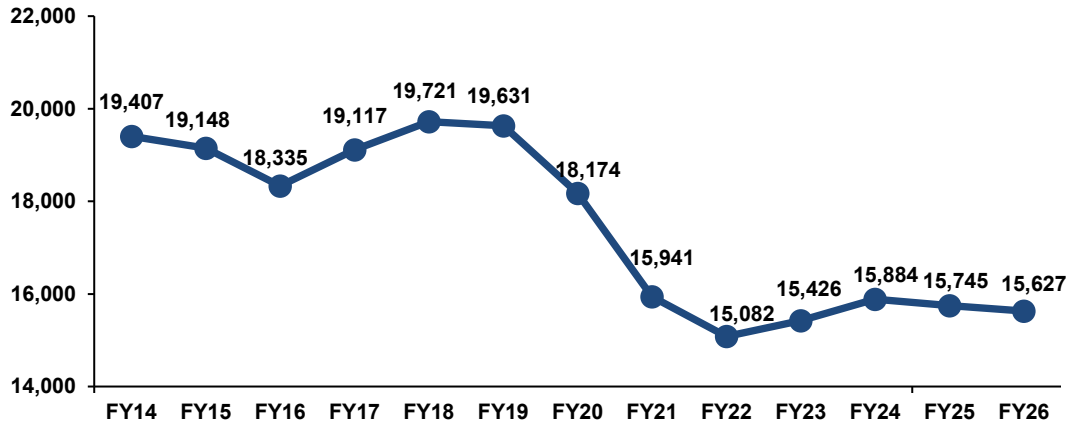
- the number of future commitments/admissions,
- the categories (types) of future commitments/admissions,
- the sentence lengths of future commitments/admissions,
- the rate at which future commitments/admissions will earn available sentence credits,
- the length of time individuals in the existing population will serve before release, and
- how confined individuals will be released in the future, if more than one release/exit type is possible (e.g., court order, discretionary parole, etc.).

III. Adult Local-Responsible Jail Population

The adult local-responsible jail population is defined as the number of persons confined in local and regional jails across the Commonwealth, excluding state and federal inmates and ordinance violators. Because jail populations fluctuate daily (with higher numbers on weekends) and seasonally (with peaks during late summer and early fall and lows during the winter months), the average daily population is used for reporting and forecasting purposes.

The local-responsible jail population has fluctuated over the last decade (Figure 1). The local-responsible jail population decreased 5.5% between FY2014 and 2016, then reversed to increase 7.6% by 2018. The population dropped 0.5% in FY2019, then dropped 7.4% in 2020 and 12.3% in 2021, due to steps taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It dropped another 5.4% in FY2022, before rising 2.3% in 2023 and 3.0% in 2024. The population then dropped 0.9% in FY2025, and 0.7% in FY2026.

Figure 1
Local-Responsible Jail Population, Fiscal Year Average Daily Population, FY2014-FY2026



Accuracy of the Forecast Adopted in 2025

The table in Figure 2 compares the monthly local-responsible jail population to the forecast approved in October 2024. The forecast averaged 0.1% above the actual population for FY 2025.

Figure 2
Accuracy of the Local-Responsible Jail Population Forecast Adopted in October 2025

	Actual	Projected	Difference	Percent Error
FY2026 Average Population	15,627	15,942	315	2.0%

The local-responsible jail population is comprised of four subpopulations: pretrial defendants, sentenced offenders with pending charges remaining, local-responsible (LR) felons, and sentenced misdemeanants. All four subpopulations showed substantial drops after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 3 for June populations). The greatest change was for sentenced misdemeanants, which dropped 70.2% between June 2019 and June 2020. The largest subpopulation, pretrial defendants, dropped 16.1% during that period. All subpopulations increased between June 2020 and June 2021 but then dropped again by June 2022. Between June 2022 and June 2023, the total local-responsible jail population increased 2.1%, driven mainly by an increase in the pretrial population. The total local-responsible jail population increased 0.2%

between June 2023 and June 2024, and 1.2% between June 2024 and June 2025, again driven mainly by the increase in the pretrial population.

Figure 3
Average Daily Population (ADP), Local-Responsible Jail Subpopulations, June 2019–June 2026

	Average Daily Pop., Local-Responsible Jail Subpopulations				
Month	Pretrial	Pending Charges	LR Felons	Misdemeanants	Total
June 2019	11,590	3,686	2,835	1,554	19,666
June 2020	9,723	2,679	1,323	463	14,188
June 2021	10,917	2,997	1,652	857	16,422
June 2022	10,357	2,785	1,500	827	15,469
June 2023	10,935	2,723	1,303	831	15,793
June 2024	11,048	2,696	1,218	856	15,818
June 2025	11,199	2,640	1,216	888	15,943
June 2026	11,061	2,502	1,122	852	15,538
June 2025 to 2026	***-1.2%***	***-5.2%***	***-7.7%***	***-4.0%***	***-2.5%***

Factors Affecting the Population

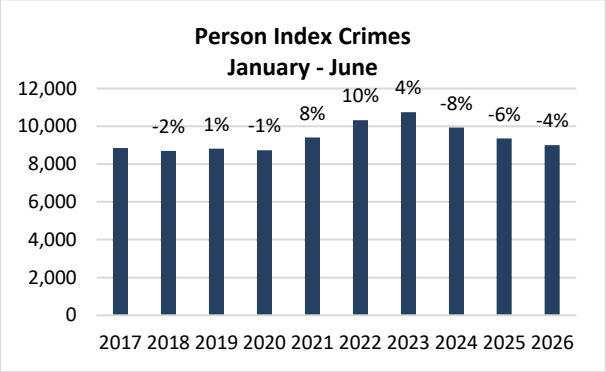
The single greatest factor impacting the local-responsible jail population in this decade has been the COVID-19 pandemic and state and local policies implemented to reduce its spread. The effect of these policies has faded, but they resulted in a shifting of the average population level from approximately 19,000-20,000 to roughly 15,000-16,000. The population will experience upward and downward changes going forward as it has in the past, but it is starting from a lower level.

Typically, the local-responsible jail population is driven largely by crime and arrest trends. Legislative changes, including the decriminalization of possession of marijuana (effective July 1, 2020), subsequent legalization (effective July 1, 2021), the increase in the felony threshold for larceny offenses (effective July 1, 2020), and the elimination of a felony charge for the third conviction of petit larceny (effective July 1, 2021) may have led to a reduction in arrests, particularly felony larceny arrests, thereby reducing the growth in this population.

Figure 4 presents monthly crime trends for the first six months of calendar years 2017-2026 (preliminary). (Data for Figures 4, 5, and 6 are from the Virginia Crime Repository, va.beyond2020.com, accessed 9/15/2026.) For person index crimes (murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault), the number of crimes reported in the first six months of the year stayed relatively level for 2017-2020, either increasing or decreasing between 1% and 2% each year. Starting in 2021, person crimes began increasing steadily; 8% in 2021, 10% in 2022, and 4% in 2023. That trend then reversed, dropping 8% in 2024, 6% in 2025, and 4% in 2026 (preliminary). The number of reported person crimes for January-June 2026 is 2% over the same period for 2017.

Property index crimes (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) were already dropping consistently in the years before the pandemic and then dropped more significantly in the first six months of 2020 and 2021. Overall, reported property crimes dropped 21% between the first six months of 2017 and the same period for 2021. They increased sharply (25%) in 2022, almost returning to the 2017 level. After increasing 1% in the first six months of 2023, reported property crimes dropped 3% in 2024, 11% in 2025, and 12% in 2026 (preliminary). The number of reported property crimes in the first six months of 2026 is 23% lower than the same period of 2017.

Figure 4
Crimes Reported to Law Enforcement in Jan-Jul CY2017 – CY2026 (Preliminary)



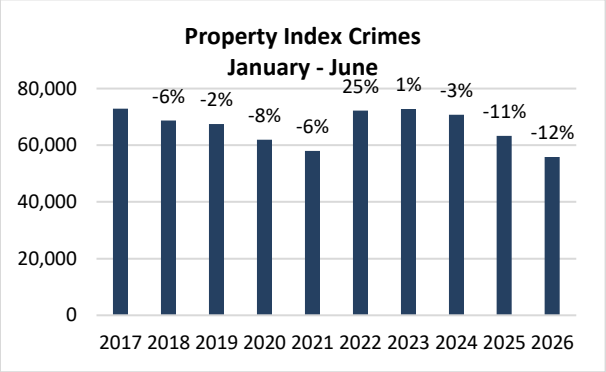
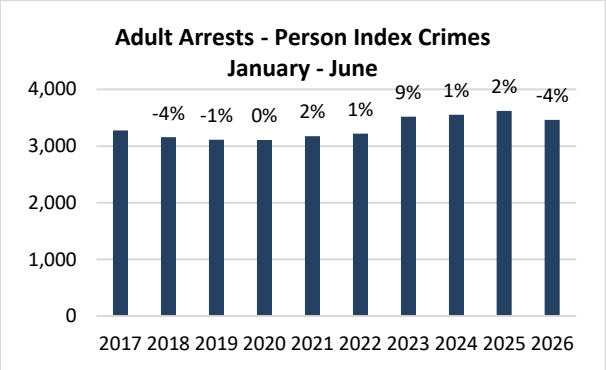


Figure 5 presents similar data on adult arrests. After dropping in 2018 and 2019, the number of adult arrests for person index offenses in the first six months of 2020 remained flat. They then increased 17% between 2020 and 2025, before dropping 4% in 2026 (preliminary). Adult arrests for property index crimes dropped substantially in the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic, with arrests for the first six months of 2021 being 33% below the same period of 2017. They then increased 46% between 2021 and 2024, before dropping 9% in 2025 and 11% in 2026 (preliminary).

Figure 5
Adult Violent and Property Arrests in Jan-Jun CY2017-CY2026 (Preliminary)



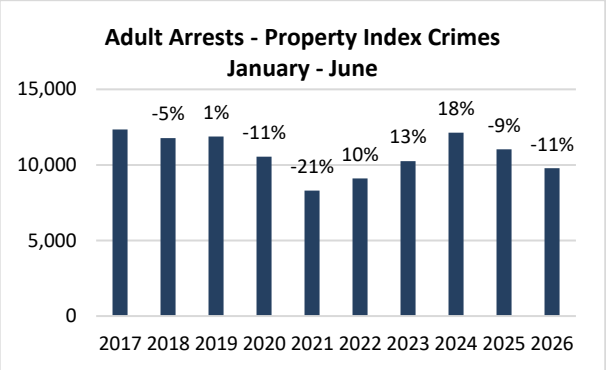
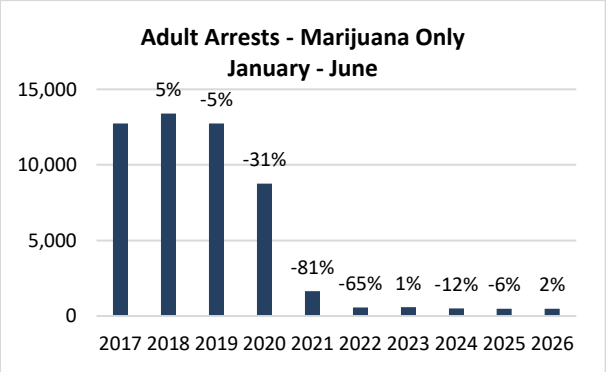
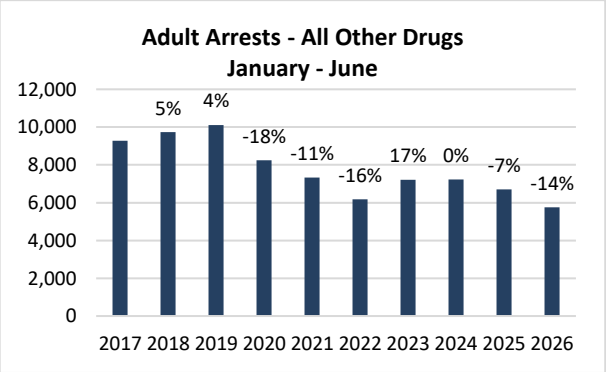


Figure 6 compares adult arrests for marijuana charges with arrests for all other drugs. Marijuana arrests dropped 88% between the first six months of 2018 and 2021, following legalization of possession of up to one ounce. Arrests for other drugs dropped 39% between January-June 2019 and the same period of 2022, then increased 17% in 2023, and staying flat in 2024. Arrests for other drugs then dropped 20% between the first six months of 2024 and 2026 (preliminary).

Figure 6
Adult Drug Arrests in Jan-Jun CY2017-CY2026 (Preliminary)



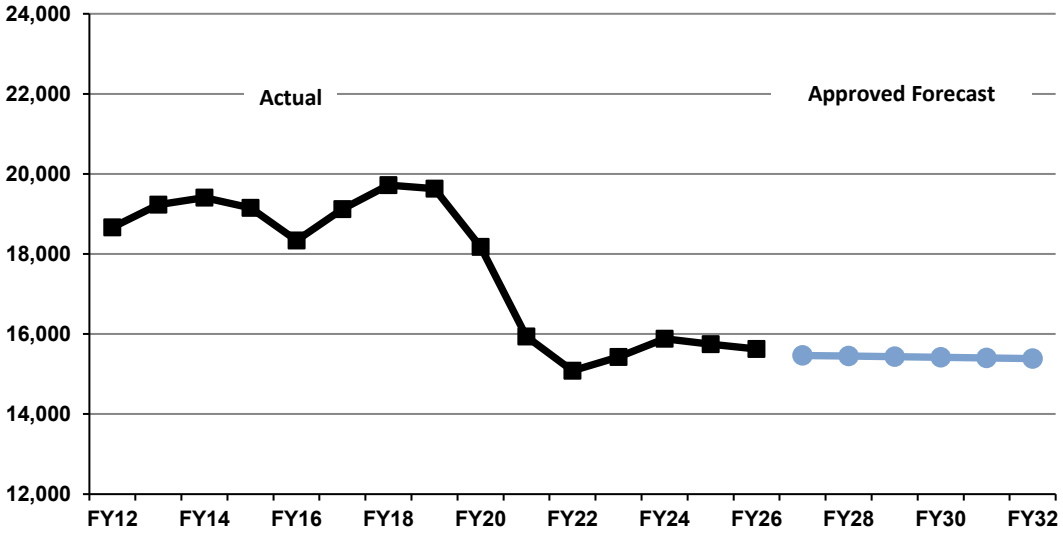


Forecast of the Local-Responsible Jail Population

Forecasts of the local-responsible jail population were produced by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB). Both agencies used time series techniques to forecast this population (time series forecasting techniques are described in the Forecasting Methodologies section of this report). Both models fit the historical data reasonably well as determined by the Technical Advisory Committee, which recommended an average of the two models. Averaging time series models can improve accuracy. Upon review, the Policy Committee approved this recommendation.

The FY2027-2032 local-responsible jail population forecast is shown in Figure 7. The fiscal year average population is projected to decrease 1.1% in FY2027, then decrease 0.1% each year in FY2028-20232, for an average annual decrease of 0.3%. This results in a projected average daily local-responsible jail population of 15,463 in FY2027, declining to 15,387 in FY2032.

Figure 7
Approved Local-Responsible Jail Population Forecast, Fiscal Year Average Daily Population, FY2027-FY2032



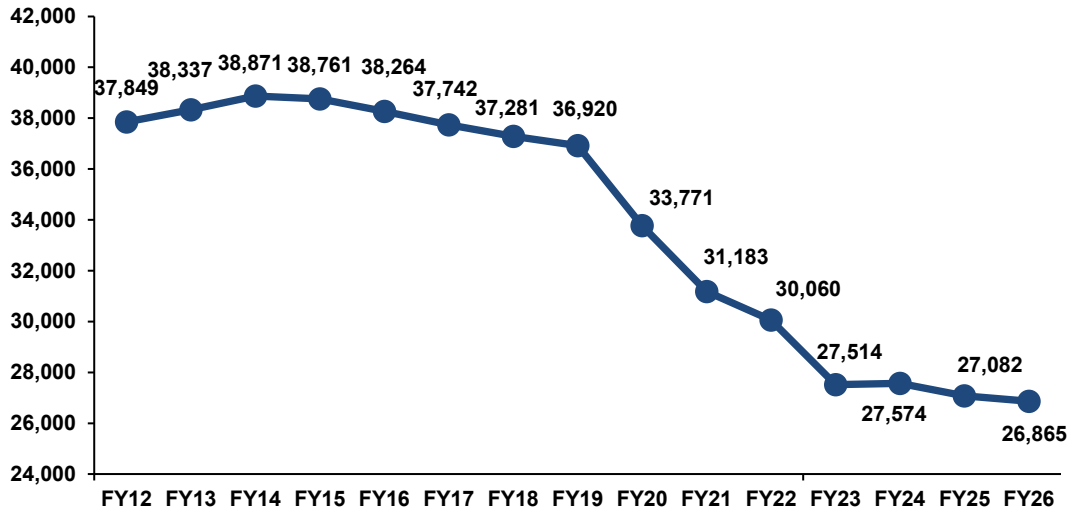
Fiscal Year	Historical	Forecast	Change	Percent Change
FY2020	18,174			
FY2021	15,941		-2,233	-12.3%
FY2022	15,082		-859	-5.4%
FY2023	15,426		344	2.3%
FY2024	15,884		458	3.0%
FY2025	15,745		-139	-0.9%
FY2026	15,627		-118	-0.7%
FY2027		15,463	-165	-1.1%
FY2028		15,448	-15	-0.1%
FY2029		15,437	-11	-0.1%
FY2030		15,416	-21	-0.1%
FY2031		15,403	-13	-0.1%
FY2032		15,387	-16	-0.1%

IV. Adult State-Responsible Inmate Population

The largest of the forecasted populations, the adult state-responsible inmate population includes inmates incarcerated in state prisons as well as state-responsible inmates housed in local and regional jails around the Commonwealth. For forecasting purposes, state-responsibility begins on the day an inmate receives a state sentence (i.e., a sentence of one year or more for a felony offense). If the inmate has multiple court cases, state-responsibility starts on the most recent sentencing date that occurs prior to the inmate's classification by the Department of Corrections (DOC). To calculate the total number of state-responsible inmates, two data sources are used. The first source is the DOC Facility Population Summary Report for the last day of each month. The second source is the Local Inmate Data System (LIDS-CORIS) maintained by the State Compensation Board (SCB). The LIDS-CORIS system contains data on all individuals held in jails and the reason for the confinement. This information is used to determine the number of state inmates in jail on the last day of each month. The LIDS-CORIS system is complex, as inmates in jails can proceed through many statuses over time. Thus, for individuals held in the jails, it is not just a matter of reporting head count figures but also determining the legal status of the inmate on the last day of the month. This process can be complicated as inmates may have multiple legal actions occurring, and court records need to be received and interpreted to determine the individual's status. Due to the dynamic nature of this jail data, it takes some time for it to stabilize. Based on a review by the Technical Advisory Committee, this data may take three to five months to mature. Thus, the most recent population figures are considered preliminary.

Beginning in January 2012, the state-responsible inmate population grew from 37,608 to 39,171 in October 2014. However, the population began to gradually decline thereafter, reaching 36,535 in February 2020. Between February 2020 and June 2023, the state-responsible population decreased by more than 9,000 inmates. This decline was due to a combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Enhanced Earned Sentence Credits (ESC) implemented on July 1, 2022, and applied retroactively. According to preliminary figures, the number of state-responsible inmates was 26,865 as of June 30, 2026 (Figure 8).

Figure 8
State-Responsible Inmate Population, June 30 Population, FY2012-FY2026



Accuracy of the Forecast Adopted in 2025

In the fall of 2025, the Policy Committee adopted a forecast calling for a 0.5% increase in the population by the end of FY2026 followed by an average annual increase of 0.4% through the end of FY2031. However, the actual state-responsible inmate population did not increase in FY2026 to the extent anticipated by the forecast. By June 30, 2026, the actual population (based on preliminary figures) was 315 inmates lower than projected (Figure 9).

Figure 9
Accuracy of the State-Responsible Inmate Population Forecast Adopted in October 2025

	Actual (preliminary)	Projected	Difference	Percent Error
6/30/2026 End of Month Population	26,865	27,180	-315	-1.2%

Factors Affecting the Population

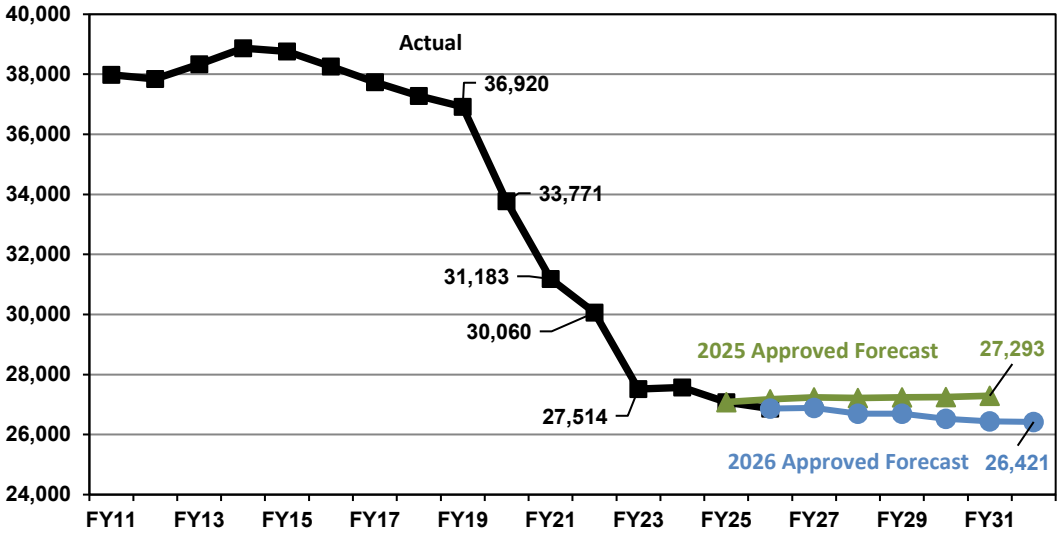
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several factors affected the state-responsible inmate population. These included: the number and types of felony crimes reported to law enforcement, the number and types of arrests for felony offenses, charging practices of local Commonwealth's attorneys, the number of offenders convicted in Virginia's circuit courts, and the sentencing practices of circuit court judges.

Since March 2020, the state-responsible population has been influenced by a combination of factors: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic (court closures, COVID Early Release Authorization); 2) the implementation of Enhanced Earned Sentence Credits (EESC) effective July 1, 2022 and applied retroactively; 3) the revision of the state's marijuana laws including legalization of marijuana possession (HB2312/SB1406, 2021 General Assembly, Special Session I); 4) the increase in the felony larceny threshold in 2018 and 2020, as well the repeal of the Class 6 felony for a third or subsequent conviction for petit larceny (HB 2290, 2021 General Assembly, Special Session I); 5) the caps on sentences for technical probation violations (HB2038, 2021 General Assembly, Special Session I); and 6) changes to how EESC are applied based on language changes in the Budget Bill effective July 1, 2024 and applied retroactively. The collective impact of these changes is difficult to quantify precisely, particularly if criminal justice decision-makers begin to adjust their practices in response to the legislation.

Forecast of the State-Responsible Inmate Population

The Secretary's Offender Forecasting Policy Committee adopted a state-responsible inmate forecast that calls for an average annual decrease in the population through the end of FY2032 of 0.3% per year (Figure 10).

Figure 10
Approved State-Responsible Inmate Population Forecast, June 30 Population, FY2027-FY2032



Fiscal Year	Historical	Approved Forecast	Change	Percent Change
FY11	37,983			
FY12	37,849		-134	-0.4%
FY13	38,337		488	1.3%
FY14	38,871		534	1.4%
FY15	38,761		-110	-0.3%
FY16	38,264		-497	-1.3%
FY17	37,742		-522	-1.4%
FY18	37,281		-461	-1.2%
FY19	36,920		-361	-1.0%
FY20	33,771		-3,149	-8.5%
FY21	31,183		-2,588	-7.7%
FY22	30,060		-1,123	-3.6%
FY23	27,514		-2,546	-8.5%
FY24	27,574		60	0.2%
FY25	27,082		-492	-1.8%
FY26	26,865		-217	-0.8%
FY27		26,889	24	0.1%
FY28		26,701	-188	-0.7%
FY29		26,691	-10	0.0%
FY30		26,522	-169	-0.6%
FY31		26,443	-79	-0.3%
FY32		26,421	-22	-0.1%

The state-responsible inmate forecast is disaggregated by gender below (Figure 11).

Figure 11
State-Responsible Inmate Forecast by Gender
(for June 30 of each year)

Year	Males	Change
FY27	24,845	-0.2%
FY28	24,630	-0.9%
FY29	24,597	-0.1%
FY30	24,397	-0.8%
FY31	24,322	-0.3%
FY32	24,295	-0.1%

Year	Females	Change
FY27	2,044	2.8%
FY28	2,070	1.3%
FY29	2,094	1.1%
FY30	2,125	1.5%
FY31	2,121	-0.2%
FY32	2,127	0.3%

As required (see Appendix A, Legislative Directive), the forecast has been disaggregated to identify the number of probation violators within the overall population who may be appropriate for punishment via alternative sanctions. By the end of FY2032, it is projected that the state-responsible population will include 1,800 technical probation violators (Figure 12). Technical violators are supervisees who violated the rules of probation but have not been convicted of a new crime. However, this forecast should be considered a maximum, as the DOC will continue to analyze this subpopulation**.** As the criminal history repository is updated with new conviction information, the proportion of violators identified as technical violators (i.e., those with no new convictions) will decrease.

Based on a previous study, DOC has estimated that 53% of technical violators with a state-responsible sentence may be suitable for alternative sanctions such as its Community Corrections Alternative Program. DOC concluded that approximately 47% of technical violators entering DOC are likely not good candidates for such alternatives due to convictions for violent offenses (22%), mental health issues (15%), or medical conditions (10%).

Figure 12
Technical Probation Violator Population Forecast
The Technical Probation Violator forecast is a subgroup of, and not in addition to, the State-Responsible Inmate Forecast.

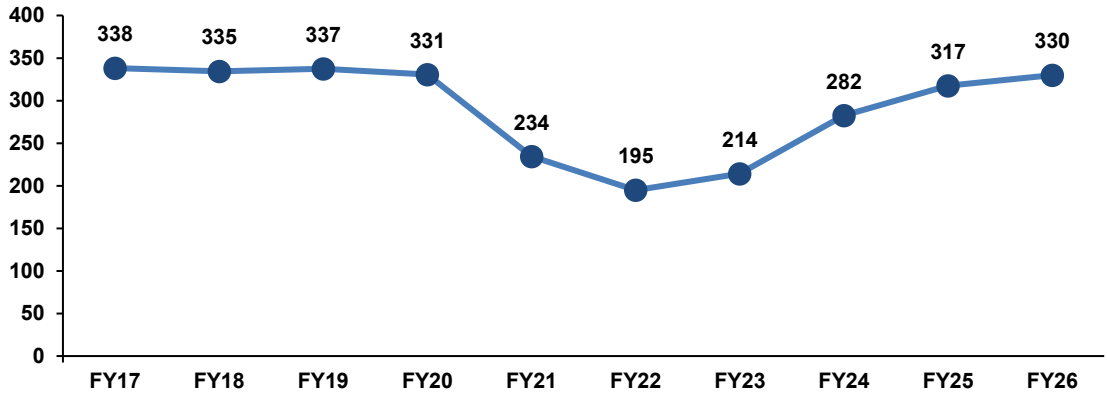
Year	Forecast
FY27	1,723
FY28	1,736
FY29	1,772
FY30	1,787
FY31	1,794
FY32	1,800

V. Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population

Juvenile state-responsible offenders are committed by a court to Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). They are housed in juvenile correctional facilities around the state, or they are placed in re-entry, community placement, or other programs; collectively, these make up DJJ's correctional center/direct care population. Virginia's juvenile justice system differs substantially from the adult system. While Virginia has moved to a more determinate sentencing system for its adult offenders, dispositions involving commitment in the juvenile justice system remain largely indeterminate. In FY2026, 67.4% of commitment orders to DJJ were for an indeterminate period of confinement.[1] This means that DJJ, rather than a judge, determines the length of the juvenile's commitment, which is governed by guidelines approved by the Board of Juvenile Justice. The courts commit a smaller percentage of juvenile offenders to DJJ with a determinate, or fixed length, sentence; a juvenile given a determinate commitment may be reviewed by the judge at a later date and may be released at the judge's discretion prior to serving the entire term. In Virginia, juveniles tried and convicted as adults in circuit court may also be committed to DJJ, at the judge's discretion.

The number of juveniles in the correctional center/direct care population has declined overall since FY2000. Statutory changes, use of validated risk assessment instruments, and continued decline in the number of juvenile intake cases at Court Services Units have contributed to the long-term downward trend. Between FY2017 and FY2019, the population began to level off, with the average population ranging from 335 to 338 during these years (Figure 13). In FY2021, the population averaged 234 juveniles, a drop likely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and state and local response measures. In FY2022, the decline in the correctional center/direct care population continued, reaching an average of 195 juveniles. However, in FY2023, the population increased and reached an average of 214 juveniles. This increase is likely due to the population returning to pre-pandemic levels and the change in the length-of-stay (LOS) guidelines that went into effect on March 1, 2023. This increase continued for the next three fiscal years with the population reaching an average of 282 juveniles in FY2024, 317 juveniles in FY2025, and 330 juveniles in FY2026.

Figure 13
Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population, Fiscal Year Average Population, FY2017-FY2026



[1] An individual juvenile may be admitted to direct care with more than one commitment order. In FY2026, 66.5% of juveniles admitted to direct care had indeterminate commitments only (this excludes any juveniles that came in with both indeterminate and determinate sentences or with both indeterminate and blended sentences; it is strictly juveniles with only indeterminate commitment orders).

Accuracy of the Forecast Adopted in 2025

The juvenile correctional center/direct care population projection adopted in 2025 was higher than the actual population throughout FY2026. On average for the year, the forecast was 17 juveniles (or 5.2%) higher than the actual population (Figure 14).

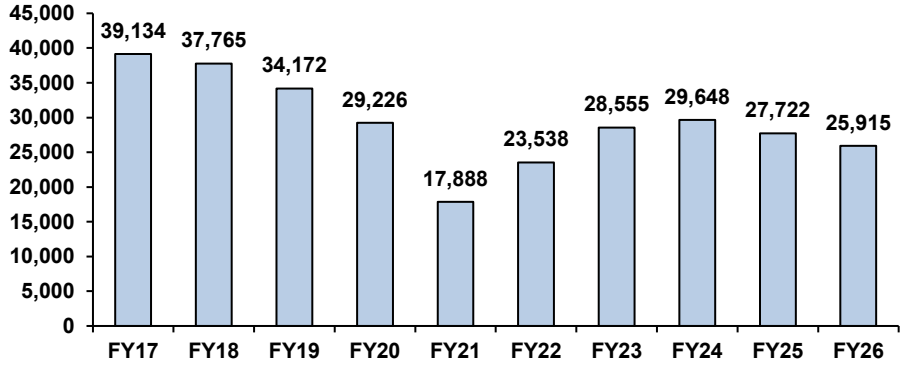
Figure 14
Accuracy of the Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population Forecast Adopted in October 2025

	Actual	Projected	Difference	Percent Error
FY2026 Average Population	330	347	17	5.2%

Factors Affecting the Population

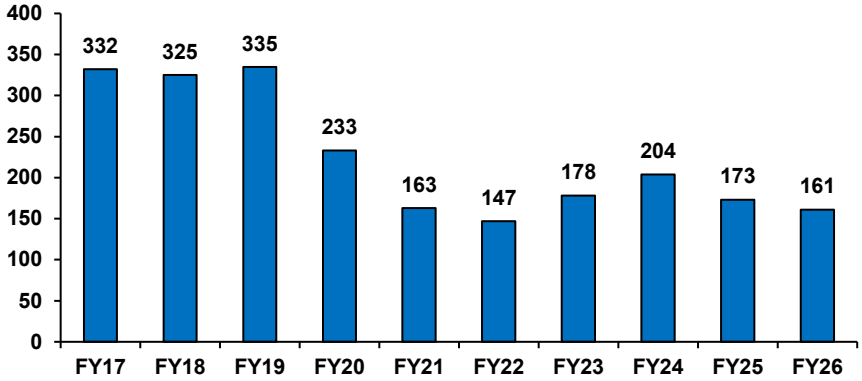
There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of juveniles in the state's correctional center/direct care population. As noted above, statutory changes, use of validated risk assessment instruments, and a significant decline in the number of juvenile intake cases at Court Services Units are among the factors contributing to the smaller population. While the number of juvenile intake cases at Court Services Units (the point of entry into the juvenile justice system) has declined, the percentage decrease in intakes in FY2021 was much larger than in any other year in the past decade (Figure 15). In FY2021, juvenile intake cases fell by 38.8%. However, in FY2022, juvenile intake cases increased by 31.6%. This increasing trend continued in FY2023 with the juvenile intake cases increasing by 21.3%. Another slight increase of 3.8% continued in FY2024. Then, the juvenile intake cases decreased by 6.5% in both FY2025 and FY2026.

Figure 15
Juvenile Intake Cases at Court Services Units



The number of admissions to the correctional center/direct care population decreased by 6.9% in FY2026 compared to a decrease of 15.2% in FY2025 and an increase of 14.6% in FY2024 (Figure 16). It is not definitively known if the decision-making of juvenile court judges and other stakeholders contributed to the increase in FY2023 and FY2024. However, this increase in admissions is the primary driver to the rising population in both FY2023 and FY2024.

Figure 16
Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Admissions

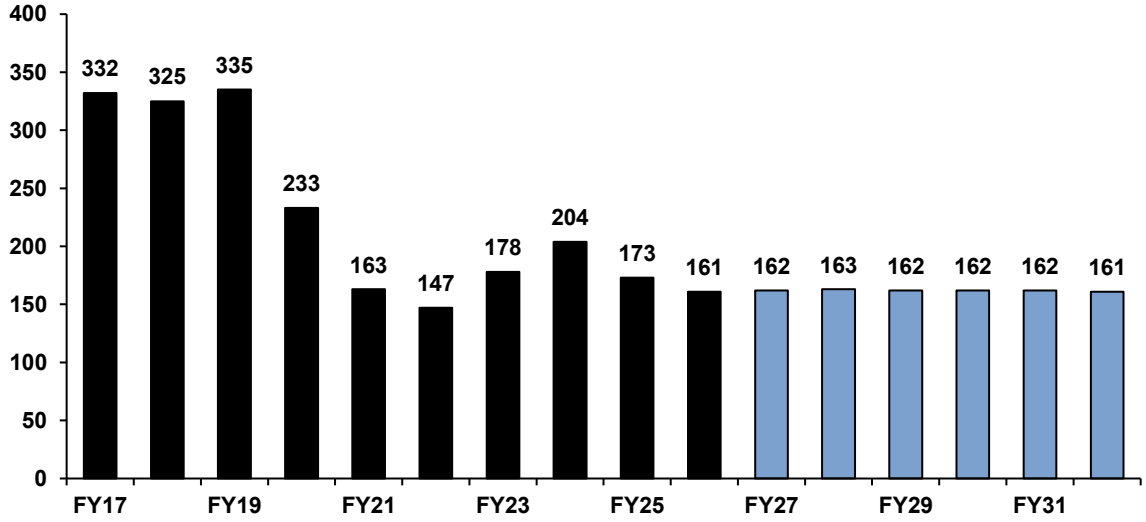


While the number of admissions dropped significantly during the pandemic, juveniles with a determinate commitment set by the court accounted for a slightly larger share of admissions and these juveniles stay longer, on average, than other juveniles.

New Admissions Forecast

The admission forecast is one of the key inputs into DJJ's simulation model. For this year's forecast, the Policy Committee approved of an average of DJJ's forecast and DPB's forecast as the official forecast for FY2027 through FY2032 (Figure 17). Both DJJ's model and DPB's model used time series forecasting techniques as described in the Forecasting Methodologies section of this report. Under this approved forecast, the admissions are expected to remain flat from 161 actual admissions in FY2026 to 162 projected admissions in FY2027. Admissions are expected to remain flat and will end the forecast timeframe with 161 admissions in FY2032.

Figure 17
Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Admissions Forecast



Assumptions for the Department of Juvenile Justice's Simulation Model

DJJ utilizes a computer simulation model to develop its forecast of the juvenile correctional center/direct care population. A description of simulation modeling can be found in the Forecasting Methodologies section of this report. Use of simulation forecasting requires several assumptions regarding commitments and releases. The following are the important assumptions incorporated into DJJ's simulation model:

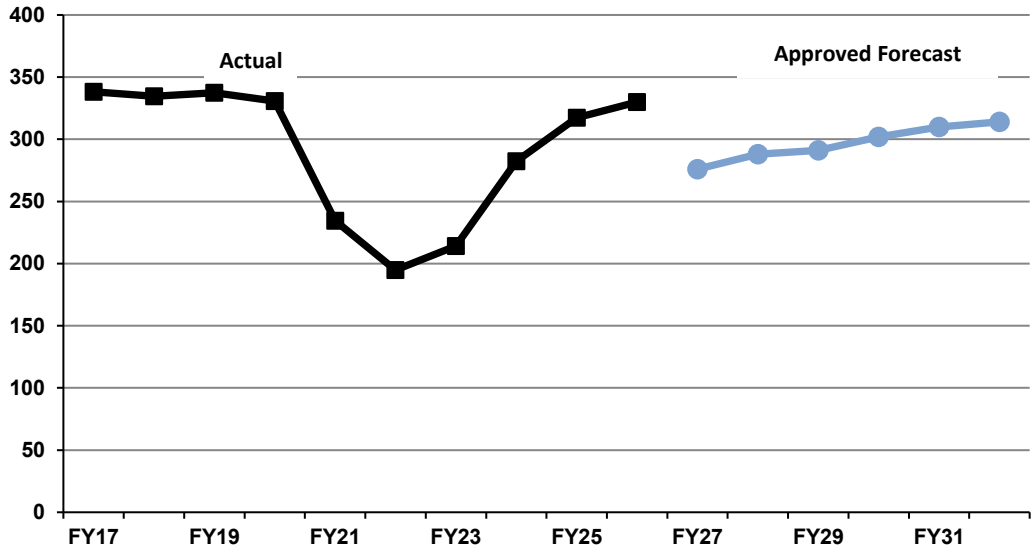
- The number of future admissions will reflect the admissions forecast approved by the Policy Committee (see above);
- Future admissions will have the same characteristics (e.g., offenses, prior record adjudications, treatment assignment, institutional offenses, etc.) as admissions in FY2024 - FY2026;
- Juveniles given a determinate commitment or blended sentence will comprise the same percentage of admissions as they did during FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 (three-year average); and
- Juveniles with indeterminate commitments will be assigned length-of-stay categories according to DJJ's length-of-stay guidelines that went into effect March 1, 2023; based on an average of FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 admissions characteristics, projected future admissions will be assigned to one of the length-of-stay categories.

Forecast of the Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population

Forecasts for the juvenile correctional center/direct care population were produced by both DJJ and DPB. After reviewing the juvenile correctional center/direct care population's long-term trend and the most recent figures, the Policy Committee approved the use of DJJ's computer simulation model, programmed with the best available data, to generate a forecast for this population.

The correctional center/direct care population forecast generated by DJJ's simulation model is shown in Figure 18. Given the decrease in the population in the most recent months, DJJ's simulation model projects an initial decrease in FY2027 before increasing consistently through FY2032. The approved forecast projects a decrease in FY2027 when the population is expected to drop to an average of 276 juveniles. By FY2032, the correctional center/direct care population is expected to reach an average of 314 juveniles.

Figure 18
Approved Juvenile Correctional Center/Direct Care Population Forecast, Fiscal Year Average Population FY2027-FY2032



Fiscal Year	Historical	Forecast	Change	Percent Change
2017	338			
2018	335		-4	-1.1%
2019	337		3	0.9%
2020	331		-7	-2.0%
2021	234		-96	-29.1%
2022	195		-40	-16.9%
2023	214		19	9.9%
2024	282		68	31.9%
2025	317		35	12.4%
2026	330		13	4.0%
2027		276	-54	-16.4%
2028		288	12	4.3%
2029		291	3	1.0%
2030		302	11	3.8%
2031		310	8	2.6%
2032		314	4	1.3%

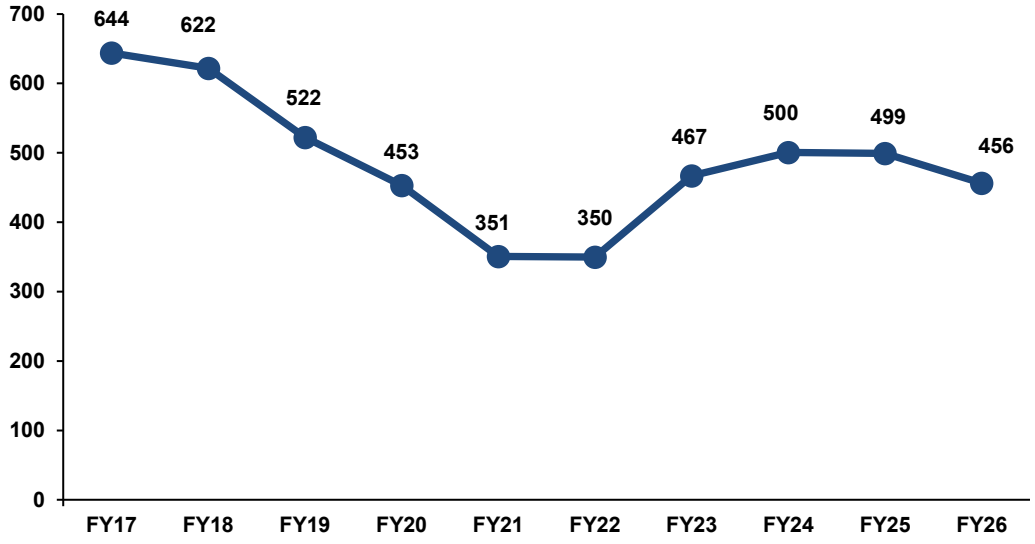
Historical and forecast populations are rounded numbers. The change and percent change were calculated based on the raw data.

VI. Juvenile Detention Center Population

Local governments or multi-jurisdictional commissions operate secure juvenile detention centers (JDCs) throughout the Commonwealth. The Board of Juvenile Justice promulgates regulations, and the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice is responsible for the certification of these facilities. A judge may order a juvenile to be held in pre-dispositional detention pending adjudication, disposition, or placement. To be eligible for pre-dispositional detention, there must be probable cause establishing that the juvenile committed an offense that would be a felony or a Class 1 misdemeanor offense if committed by an adult, violated the terms of probation or parole for such offense, or knowingly and intentionally possessed or transported a firearm. To be eligible for post-dispositional detention, the juvenile must be 14 years or older and have been found to have committed a non-violent juvenile felony or Class 1 or Class 2 misdemeanor offense. A judge may order an adjudicated juvenile to be held in post-dispositional detention up to 30 days or, if the juvenile detention center operates a post-dispositional detention program, up to 6 months. Historically, most of the JDC population has been comprised of juveniles in pre-dispositional status (pending adjudication, disposition, or placement).

The detention center population declined from an average of 644 juveniles in FY2017 to an average of 522 juveniles in FY2019 (Figure 19). Lower numbers of intakes at Court Services Units and procedures to reduce detention of low-risk juveniles have been important factors in the downward trend. While the overall average population was 453 juveniles in FY2020 and 351 juveniles in FY2021, the monthly population figures decreased significantly between February and June 2020 (from 498 to 345 juveniles). In FY2022, the overall average population was 350 juveniles. However, the overall average population for FY2023 increased to 467 juveniles as the population was returning to pre-pandemic levels. This increase continued in FY2024 with an average of 500 juveniles. The population remained relatively flat in FY2025 with an average of 499 juveniles before decreasing in FY2026 to an average of 456 juveniles.

Figure 19
Juvenile Detention Center Population, Fiscal Year Average Population, FY2017-FY2026



Accuracy of the Forecast Adopted in 2025

The juvenile detention center population forecast adopted in 2025 was higher than the actual population in FY2026. On average for the year, the forecast was 30 juveniles (or 6.6%) higher than the actual population (Figure 20).

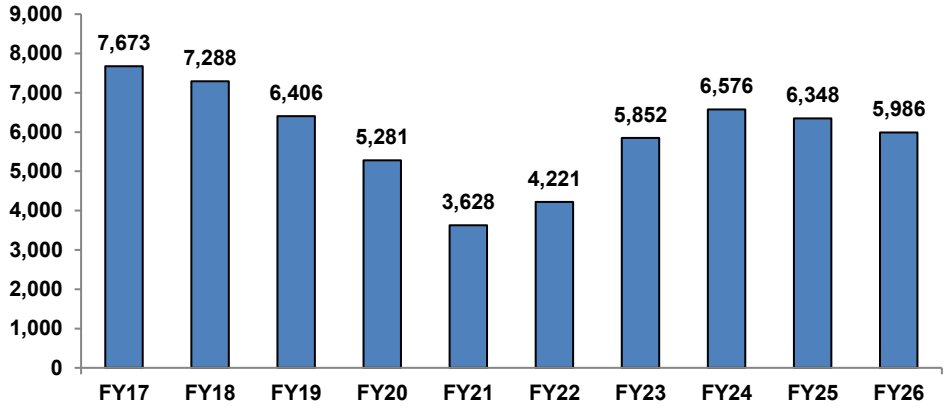
Figure 20
Accuracy of the Juvenile Detention Center Forecast Adopted in October 2025

	Actual	Projected	Difference	Percent Error
FY2026 Average Population	456	486	30	6.6%

Factors Affecting the Population

Many of the same factors that drive the correctional center/direct care population, including juvenile intake cases at Court Services Units, also impact the detention center population. As described in the previous chapter, the number of juvenile intake cases at the state's court services units have declined significantly since FY2017. Reflecting this downward trend in intakes, detention center admissions (the first admission of a continuous detention stay, excluding transfers[2]) has declined, particularly after FY2017 (Figure 21). Detainments rose by 16.3% in FY2022, the first increase in the last decade. This increasing trend continued into the next fiscal year with detainments rising by 38.6% in FY2023. In FY2024, detainments continued rising and rose by 12.4%. This growth brought the population back to pre-pandemic levels. Detainments decreased slightly in FY2025 with a decrease of 3.5% and continued decreasing in FY2026 with a decrease of 5.7%.

Figure 21
Juvenile Detention Center Admissions – Distinct Detainments (excluding Transfers)

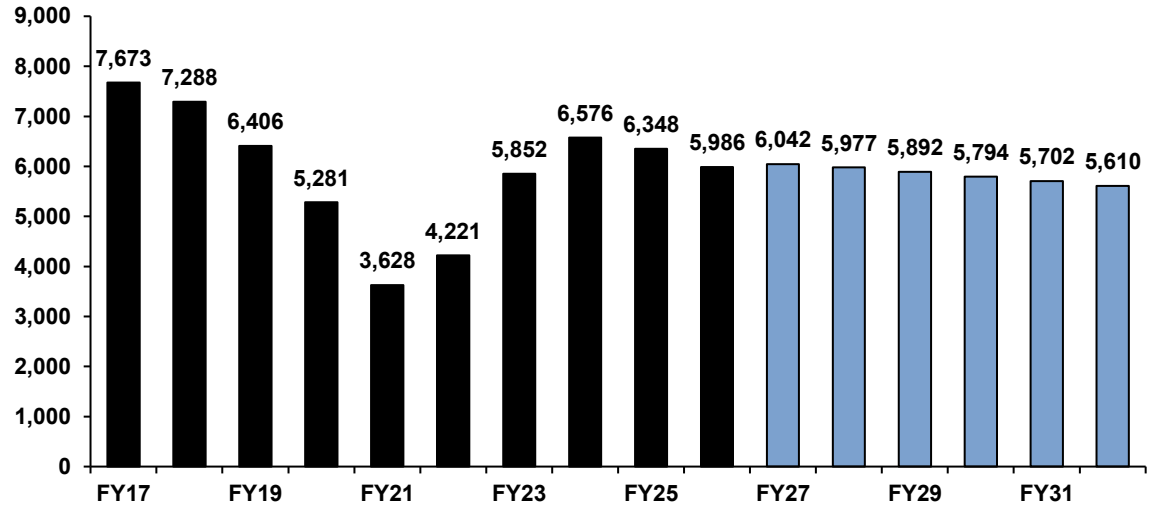


[2] A new detainment is not counted if a juvenile is transferred to another JDC or has a change in dispositional status before being released. An individual juvenile may have more than one detainment in a fiscal year.

New Detainments Forecast

The detainments forecast is one of the key inputs into DJJ's new detention center simulation model. DJJ introduced this simulation model for the first time in FY2024, and this is the second year where detainments were included in the forecasting process. For this year's forecast, the Policy Committee approved of an average of DJJ's forecast and DPB's forecast as the official forecast for FY2027 through FY2032. Both DJJ's model and DPB's model used time series forecasting techniques as described in the Forecasting Methodologies section of this report (Figure 22). Under this approved forecast, the detainments are expected to increase from 5,986 actual detainments in FY2026 to 6,042 projected detainments in FY2027. From there, detainments are expected to decrease to 5,610 detainments in FY2032.

Figure 22
Juvenile Detention Center Detainments Forecast



Assumptions for the Department of Juvenile Justice's Simulation Model

DJJ utilizes a computer simulation model to develop its forecast of the juvenile detention center population. A description of simulation modeling can be found in the Forecasting Methodologies section of this report. Use of simulation forecasting requires several assumptions regarding commitments and releases. The following are the important assumptions incorporated into DJJ's simulation model:

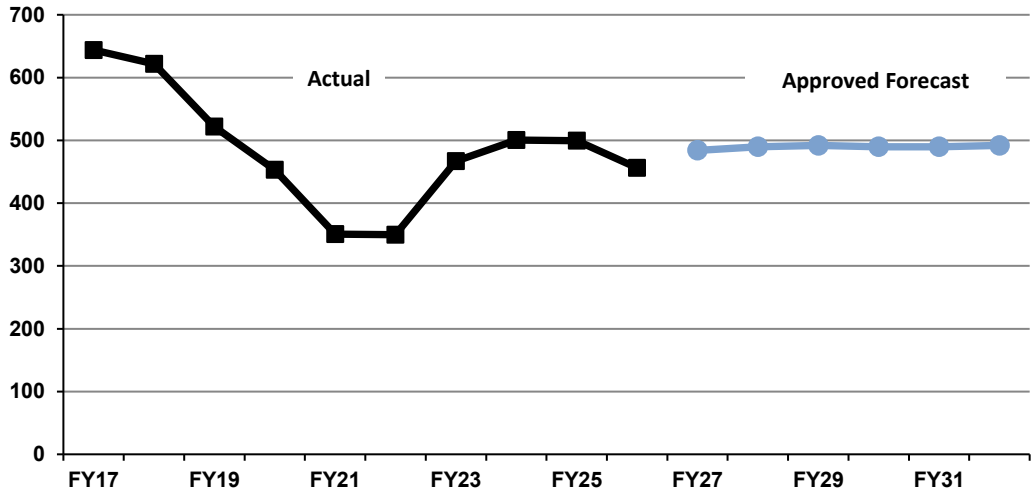
- The number of future detainments will reflect the detainments forecast approved by the Policy Committee (see above);
- Future detainments will have the same characteristics (e.g., individual offenses, one or more dispositional statuses, etc.) as detainments in FY2024-FY2026; and
- Juveniles given a pre-dispositional status, post-dispositional no program status, post-dispositional with program status, and other[3] status will comprise the same percentage of detainments as they did during FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 (three-year average).

[3] Other status includes appealed, awaiting placement, committed to state, committed to state – pending charges, removed from post-dispositional pending court, restoration of mental competency, and transferred to circuit court.

Forecast of the Juvenile Detention Center Population

Forecasts for the juvenile detention center population were produced by both DJJ and DPB. DJJ used a new computer simulation model to forecast this population. DPB used time series techniques to forecast this population. After reviewing the most recent available data as well as DJJ's and DPB's proposed models, the Policy Committee approved of an average of DJJ's forecast and DPB's forecast as the official forecast for FY2027 through FY2032. This decision was made because DJJ's simulation model is newer and this population is more difficult to forecast using this type of model, so by taking an average, it could reduce the possible error that either model might have on its own. Under the approved forecast, the population is expected to increase to 484 in FY2027 and slowly increase to 492 through FY2032 (Figure 23).

Figure 23
Approved Juvenile Detention Center Population Forecast, Fiscal Year Average Population FY2027-FY2032



Fiscal Year	Historical	Forecast	Change	Percent Change
2017	644			
2018	622		-22	-3.5%
2019	522		-100	-16.0%
2020	453		-69	-13.3%
2021	351		-102	-22.6%
2022	350		-1	-0.3%
2023	467		117	33.5%
2024	500		33	7.2%
2025	499		-1	-0.2%
2026	456		-43	-8.7%
2027		484	28	6.1%
2028		490	6	1.2%
2029		492	2	0.4%
2030		490	-2	-0.4%
2031		490	0	0.0%
2032		492	2	0.4%

Historical and forecast population are rounded numbers. The change and percent change were calculated based on the raw data.

Appendix A

Legislative Directive

2026 Session

Budget Bill – HB30 (Enrolled)
Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Item 380 Administrative and Support Services
https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/item/2026/2/HB30/Enrolled/1/380/

Authority: Title 2.2, Chapter 2, Article 8, and § 2.2-201, Code of Virginia.

A. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security shall present revised six-year state and local juvenile and state and local responsibility adult offender population forecasts to the Governor, the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees, and the Chairs of the House Courts of Justice and Senate Courts of Justice Committees by October 15 of each year. The secretary shall ensure that the revised forecast for state-responsible adult offenders shall include an estimate of the number of probation violators included each year within the overall population forecast who may be appropriate for alternative sanctions.

Appendix B

2026 Committee Members

2026 Offender Population Forecasting Policy Committee

Stanley Meador, Chair
Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger

Rebecca Eichmann
Policy Director
Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger

Gerica Goodman
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Executive Secretary
Compensation Board

Joseph W. Walters
Director
Virginia Department of Corrections

Robert Birmingham Jr.
Director
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Jody T. Fridley
Director
Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

Colonel Jeffrey Katz
Superintendent
Virginia State Police

Lieutenant Colonel Keenon Hook
Deputy Superintendent
Virginia State Police

Alka Lohmann
Director
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James Heo
Deputy Secretary of Finance
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Ashaki McNeil
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Captain Julia Gunderson
Division Commander
Criminal Justice Information Services Division
Virginia State Police

Travis Hill
Chief Deputy Attorney General

David Reynolds
Legislative Fiscal Analyst
House Appropriations Committee

Kristin Burhop
Associate Director, Public Safety Division
Virginia Department of Planning and Budget

Catherine Robertson ("Catie")
Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Senate Finance & Appropriations Committee

Daryl Washington
Commissioner
Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Jae K. Davenport
Deputy Attorney General, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Division

Jonathan Goff
Senior Court Management Data Analyst
Supreme Court of Virginia

Senator Russet Perry
Senate of Virginia

Delegate Rae Cousins
Virginia House of Delegates

Jacquelyn Katson
Deputy Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger

Dillon Taylor
Deputy Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger

Nathan Tatum
Policy Advisor, Public Safety and Homeland Security Secretariat
Office of Governor Abigail Spanberger

2026 Committee Members

2026 Technical Advisory Committee*

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Director of Research
Virginia Department of Corrections

Huafeng Ding, Ph. D.
Data Manager
Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Lawrence Getzler, Ph.D.
Chief Economic Analyst
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Senior Court Management Data Analyst
Supreme Court of Virginia

Kari B. Jackson
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Michaela Korovin
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Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Chang Kwon, Ph.D.
Chief Methodologist
Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

Jon Lamp
Court Data Analyst
Supreme Court of Virginia

Charlotte Lee
Budget and Finance Manager
Compensation Board

Warren McGehee
Assistant Director of Research
Virginia Department of Corrections

Oscar Ozfidan, Ph.D.
Chief Econometric Analyst
Virginia Department of Planning and Budget

Sarah Smith
Methodologist
Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission

*An agency may have more than one analyst serving on the committee, but each agency has only one vote.