



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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Contact: John McKay (212) 669-4328, jmckay@comptroller.nyc.gov

**COMPTROLLER STRINGER 2015 ANALYSIS:
VIOLENCE AT CITY JAILS SPIKES DRAMATICALLY
AND COST PER INMATE EXPLODES
EVEN AS INMATE POPULATION DECLINES**

NEW YORK, NY – New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer today issued a follow-up to his 2014 analysis of rising violence and escalating expenditures in the City’s jails. The new analysis finds that the problem has continued to grow, with taxpayers spending more money on fewer inmates.

“There is definitely something wrong with this picture: the jail population in New York City is the lowest in thirty-one years, but the rate of violent incidents is accelerating at an alarming pace,” commented Comptroller Stringer. “At the same time, the Department of Correction is pouring huge amounts of money into this problem, but we aren’t seeing any real results or improvements. We need to find ways to protect both guards and inmates, while at the same time making sure that the substantial resources being spent on this problem aren’t simply wasted.”

Comptroller Stringer’s analysis showed that:

- The average daily number of inmates held in New York City’s jails declined by 10 percent in FY15 compared to FY14, to a 31-year low of 10,240. In contrast, between FY07 and FY14, the population declined an average of just 2.9 percent a year.
- At the same time, the Department of Correction’s spending continued to rise. As a result, the annual cost per inmate reached \$112,665, an increase of 17 percent over the FY14 cost. This was the largest yearly percentage increase in at least three decades.
- Agency-wide overtime costs also surged, despite a higher uniformed officer-to-inmate ratio. During 2015 overtime expenses increased 41 percent over the previous year. In contrast,

the annual average increase between FY07 and FY14 was about 5 percent. The average FY15 overtime expense per employee was over \$19,200^[1].

- Overtime on a per-inmate basis in FY15 – the total overtime expense incurred, divided by the average daily number of inmates -- increased a staggering 57 percent compared to the year before.
- Despite the substantial increase in spending, City jails have become more dangerous in recent years, with the rate of fight/assault infractions increasing 19 percent in FY15, reflecting a rate of 920 altercations per 1,000 average daily population (ADP). In comparison, the rate in FY14 was 774 altercations per 1,000 ADP.
- Assaults committed by inmates on staff rose 46 percent, increasing from 70.8 assaults per 1,000 ADP in FY14, to 103.2 assaults per 1,000 ADP in FY15.
- Incidents and allegations of the use of force by uniformed employees on inmates increased by 27 percent, reaching 471 complaints per 1,000 ADP in FY15, as compared to 370 in FY14.
- Overall, between FY07 and FY15, the Correction uniformed headcount declined by almost five percent, a smaller rate of decline than the inmate population. As a result, the uniformed employee to inmate ratio has risen from 0.66 per inmate in FY07, to 0.86 per inmate in FY15 - the highest uniformed employee to inmate ratio since at least 1977 – the earliest year that this data appeared in the City’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).
- New York City’s costs per inmate are more than twice as high as a number of other large cities, including Philadelphia, Los Angeles County, Cook County, and Miami-Dade County.

The Administration has invested in various new initiatives to help address the violence in City jails. In 2014, the City implemented alternatives to solitary confinement for inmates with a mental illness. This past March, the Department of Correction developed an Anti-Violence Reform Agenda tasked with developing strategies to reduce violence in jails. These changes include more security camera coverage, new housing strategies and inmate programming. Last month, the City Council passed several bills with new reporting requirements aimed at increasing transparency at the Department of Correction.

“This is the second year in a row that we have seen an escalation of disturbing trends,” added Comptroller Stringer. “With costs per inmate that are twice as high as many other cities, it is clear the situation at New York City jails is completely out of hand.”

[Click here to view charts in PDF.](#)

¹ The figure represents the agency’s total overtime expense divided by the total number of full time employees. The average overtime payment to Department of Correction employees who earned overtime in FY15 was over \$20,500.