

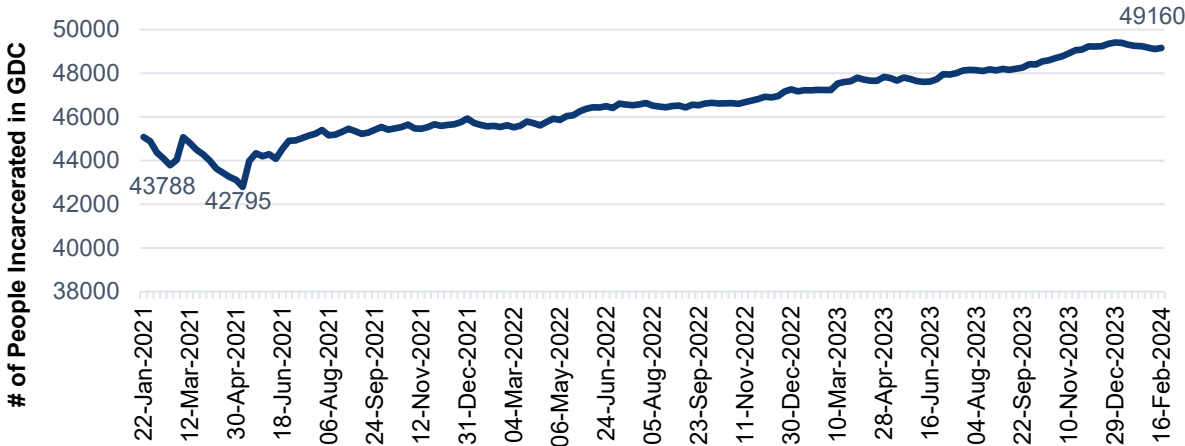
Overview: 2025 Fiscal Year Budget for Georgia Department of Corrections

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For Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, Governor Brian Kemp proposed a \$1.48 billion budget for the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), an agency overseeing the state’s prison system. The FY 2025 proposed budget is nearly \$153 million higher than what was approved initially for FY 2024. This increase is primarily attributed to cost-of-living adjustments for eligible, full-time GDC staff; maintenance, repairs and added operations costs; and physical health and pharmacy service contracts. These latest proposals mark a three-year trend in rising state prison spending, serving as fiscal responses to acute safety and staffing concerns while incentivizing long-term growth in prison populations.

Legislative, programmatic and agency changes under Kemp’s administration have operated in tandem with rising prison populations across the state. One of the latest legislative proposals supported by Kemp is Senate Bill 63 which, if passed, would expand pre-trial detention and reduce access to legal representation. Layered with recent or other potential law and order policies, it could serve as another step to effectively reverse criminal justice policy reforms passed under the Deal administration.

**Georgians Experiencing Incarceration in GDC:
Population Trend from 2021 to 2024**



Source: Georgia Department of Corrections "Friday Report". Incarceration population totals exclude Georgians under GDC jurisdiction while serving parole or probation.

Georgia's state prison population fell below 43,000 following pandemic crises that fueled statewide court case delays and decreased the number of individuals experiencing incarceration. However, as criminal legal system processes rebounded to their pre-pandemic levels, Georgia's prison population has grown. By January 2024, it reached nearly 51,000 incarcerated Georgians, including those under GDC jurisdiction while serving parole or probation.¹ Black Georgians continue to represent an outsized 58% share of the state's prison population (comprising only 33 percent of the overall state population), evidence of the state's legacy of slavery, segregation, Jim Crow, racialized criminalization through over-policing in communities of color, racially biased school punishment and historic disinvestments in communities of color.²

For FY 2025, Governor Kemp has proposed spending increases that give 4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increases to full-time eligible staff, not to exceed \$3,000 per employee. He also proposes increased funds for physical health and pharmacy services contracts for the second consecutive year, \$3,000 salary raises for POST-certified law enforcement officers,³ added funding for meals on weekends and increases in vocational education contracts with the state's technical college system.

By The Numbers

Amended 2024 Fiscal Year Budget

- \$7 million to provide a \$1,000 bonus to eligible, full-time staff
- \$6.1 million to fund a recruiting campaign and agency work culture review
- \$65.3 million to increase funds for physical health and pharmacy services contracts
- \$5.6 million in increased funds for safety, security and technology initiatives
- \$4.7 million to fund operational costs to add 400 transition center beds

2025 Fiscal Year Budget

- \$71.9 million to increase funds for physical health and pharmacy services contracts
- \$21.2 million to provide 4% cost-of-living adjustments for eligible full-time state employees
- 21.6 million to provide \$3,000 salary increases for POST-certified law enforcement officers
- \$17.5 million for capital maintenance and repairs
- \$10 million to provide a year's worth of projected funds to cover ongoing operational costs to add 400 transition center beds
- \$6.9 million to provide 200 temporary beds at Coffee and Wheeler state prisons to allow for maintenance and repairs
- \$6.1 million to fund a recruiting campaign and agency work culture review
- \$1.2 million to provide additional meals on weekends
- \$172,000 to increase funds for state technical college system vocational education contracts

Despite nearly \$220 million in proposed added spending for AFY 2024 and FY 2025, these priorities continue to ignore the multi-million-dollar financial burdens placed on Georgians experiencing incarceration and the loved ones who support them. These individuals are further

burdened with phone and mail communication fees, which provide millions of dollars in annual commission revenue for the state. Furthermore, those incarcerated Georgians must bear the increased prices of basic necessities like hygiene products due to a more than \$5 million spending cut in FY 2021. Meanwhile many of them are forced to perform unpaid labor that subsidizes public and private profits, manufacturing goods that could land in the stores of countless retailers through complex supply chains.⁴ This added spending also fails to prioritize and appropriate for humane accommodations for the varied, rising and specific needs incarcerated women and birthing people experience—including postpartum pumping rooms, lactation programs and child-friendly spaces for children visiting parents experiencing incarceration.

State and local revenue streams that depend upon the incarceration of people are highly regressive⁵ and will increase the state's prison population, worsening conditions for many Georgians of color and magnifying racist tropes that harm all communities. Without a change of course, our criminal legal system will continue to undermine collaborative state efforts towards holistic community health, economic security and workforce prosperity.

Endnotes

¹ Georgia Department of Corrections. (2023, January). *Profiles of all inmates report*. Retrieved February 16, 2023, from <https://gdc.georgia.gov/profile-all-inmates-during-2024>

² For a time, criminal legal system reforms from Georgia Governor Nathan Deal helped reduce the number and percentage of Black Georgians experiencing incarceration from 62% in 2009 to 53% in 2017, see Rankin, B. (2018, January 25). "Number of African-Americans sent to Georgia prisons hits historic lows." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

<https://www.ajc.com/news/local/proportion-black-people-sent-state-prison-hits-historic-lows/kSVudQ2MbdLJHu4WUWmtxJ/>; see also, Gottlieb, A, & Flynn, K. (2021, March) The legacy of slavery and mass incarceration: Evidence from felony case outcomes. *Social Service Review*. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/713922>

³ The Georgia Peace Officer and Training Council (POST) sets the standards and curriculum for training and certification, administers the regulatory process, and provides essential technical assistance to the state's law enforcement community, including those employed by the GA Department of Corrections.

⁴ McDowell, R., Mason, M. (2024, January 29). *Prisoners in the U.S. are part of a hidden workforce linked to hundreds of popular food brands*. AP News.

<https://apnews.com/article/prison-to-plate-inmate-labor-investigation-c6f0eb4747963283316e494eadf08c4e>

⁵ Khalfani, R. (2022, December 6). *Regressive revenue perpetuates poverty: Why Georgia's fines and fees need immediate reform*. Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. <https://gbpi.org/regressive-revenue-perpetuates-poverty-why-georgias-fines-and-fees-need-immediate-reform/>