



Department of Corrections

Staffing

The New York Times

Vermont May Be the Face of a Long-Term U.S. Labor Shortage

Employers are pulling out all the stops to attract workers as the state's population grows older, offering a likely glimpse of the country's future.

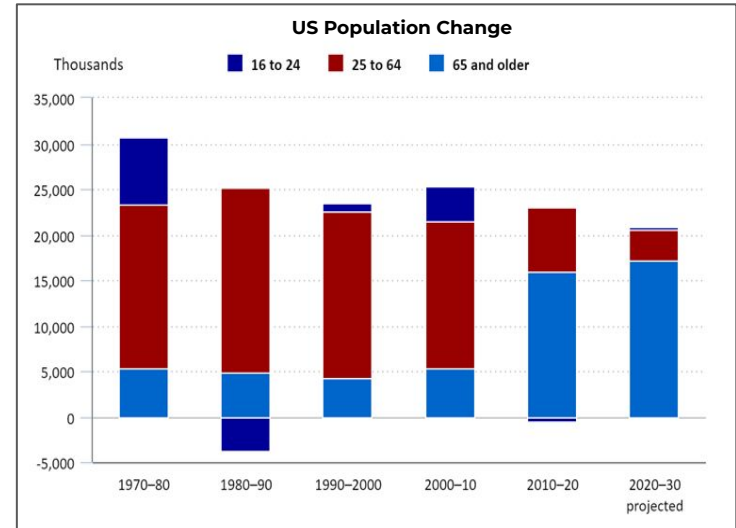
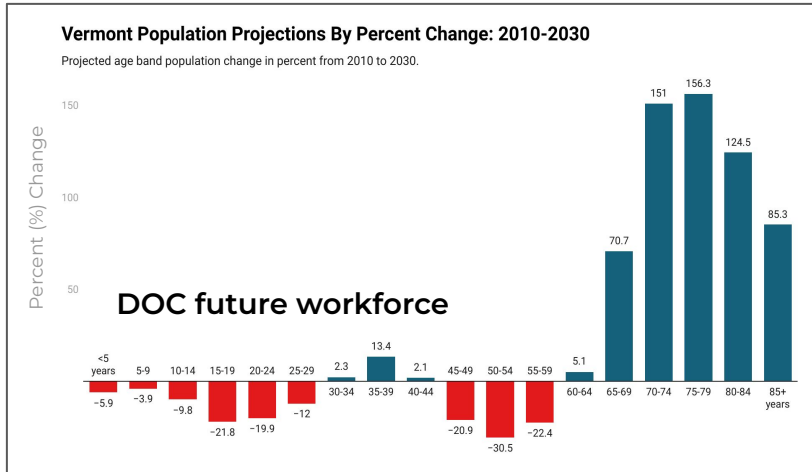
Nov. 12, 2023



Future of Vermont Workforce

A disproportionate share of Vermonters are **at or near retirement age**: more than a fifth are 65+, and more than 35% are 54+, the age at which Americans typically begin to exit the workforce.

No state has a **smaller share** of residents in prime working years.



National Correctional Context

Chronically understaffed [redacted] prisons set stage for prison bus escape and massacre of family

Investigative reviews by the [redacted] and independent consultants found the severely short-staffed prison routinely bypassed crucial security checks, leading to a convicted murderer's escape.

BY JOLIE MCCULLOUGH · DEC 9, 2022 · 3 PM CENTRAL

SHARE · REPUBLISH

Independent jail monitor says staffing crisis at root of [redacted] escape

"This is a statewide and a national issue," said [redacted].



[redacted] corrections secretary anxious burnout exacerbating uniformed-officer shortages

State prison system struggles to fill 380 officer vacancies

BY TIM CARPENTER · JANUARY 20, 2023 · 10:40 AM

CRIMINAL JUSTICE · WORK & THE ECONOMY

As prison populations rise, states face a stubborn staffing crisis

the situation is as prisoners languish and remaining employees struggle.

Prisons struggle with high attrition and burnout among staff

State prisons struggle with staff vacancy rates as high as 40%

Violence, suicides mount in [redacted]'s woefully understaffed prisons

'Dangerous place.' Attorneys and family seek answers after man's death in [redacted] prison

BY KATIE MOORE
UPDATED DECEMBER 20, 2023 3:21 PM

JUSTICE, NEWS

10 guards, 900 inmates: [redacted] prisons see dire results of ignored warnings

An extreme shortage of guards at [redacted] prisons slowed basic operations to a crawl. Inmates escaped, prisons locked down and conditions deteriorated.

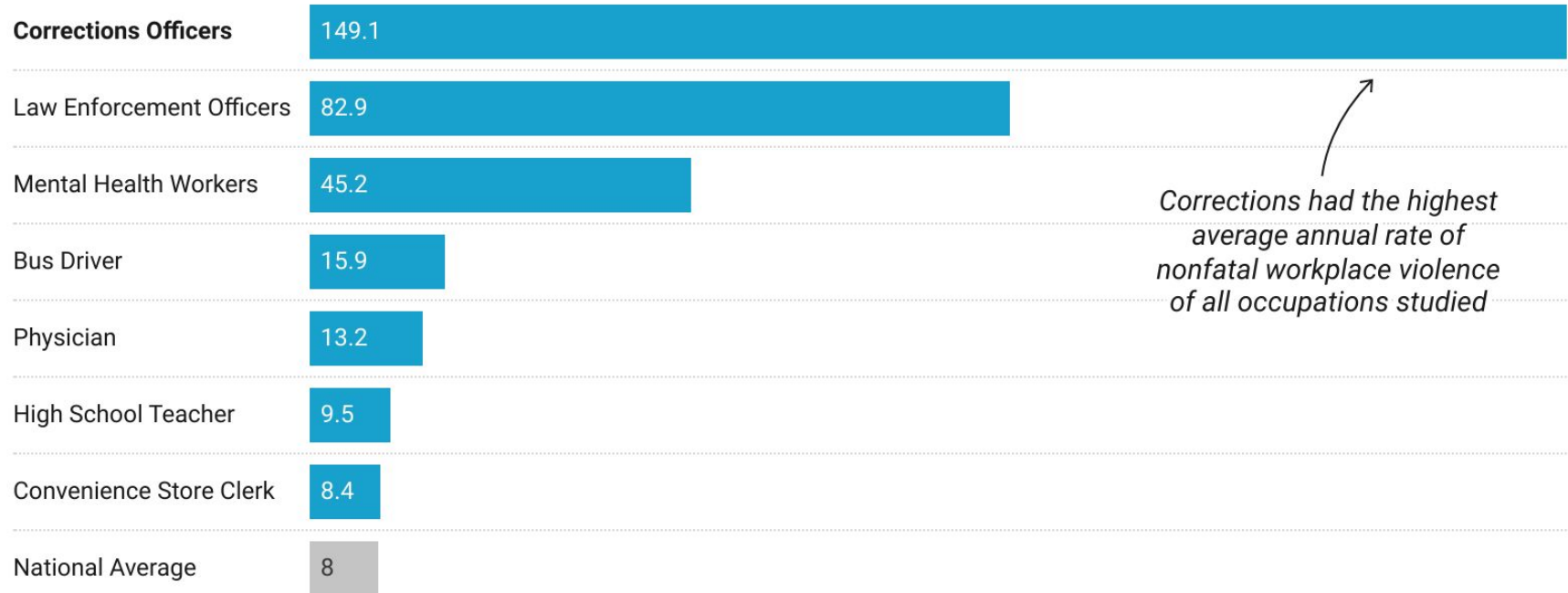
6

BY MARIO KORAN OF THE NEW YORK TIMES AND

WATCH AND JUSTIN MAYO OF BIG LOCAL NEWS · FEBRUARY 2, 2024

Average Annual Rate of Nonfatal Workplace Violence

Incidents per 1,000 workers aged 16+



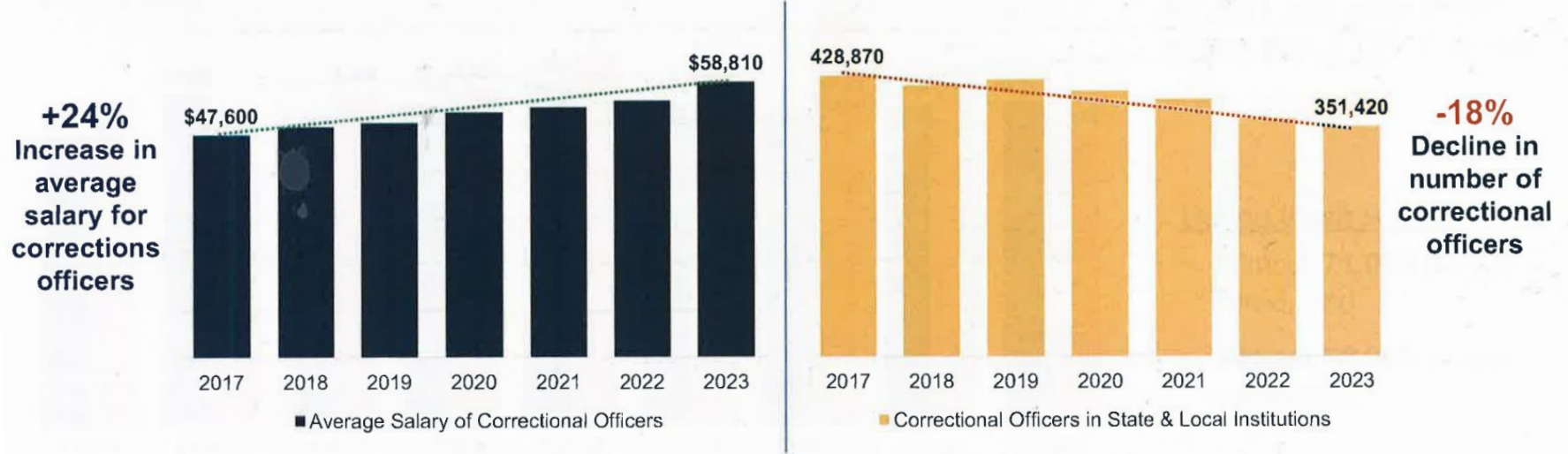
Source: BJS Special Report: Indicators of Workplace Violence , 2019 (2022); National Crime Victimization Survey • Created with Datawrapper

National Context

- Correctional systems nationwide face high vacancy rates:
 - Federal Bureau of Prisons: **24%**
 - Texas: **25%**
 - Michigan: **17.4%**
 - New Hampshire: **25%**
- A DOJ interstate workgroup found correctional systems, including Vermont, make up **50% of all state overtime costs**
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a **7% decline** in correctional officer workforce over the next 10 years

National Context

National Employment Trends for Correctional Officers
2017-2023



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) data tables, 2017 to 2023



Key Staffing Efforts

Recruiting & Retaining Staff



Key Context:

- **Fundamental system changes are needed** to achieve sustainable staffing levels

Ongoing Efforts:

- **DOC redesigning the role of the correctional officer** and staff experience to recruit and retain all levels of today's workforce
 - **Invested over \$30M** to increase compensation for correctional staff in FY24-25
 - Redesigned shift schedules to create more work/life balance
 - Created Facility Staff Experience Supervisor (SES) position to check in with new COs for continued support
 - Created Central Operations Specialist team to **reduce staffing pressures** on field and facilities

Efforts **reduced vacancies by 50%** since July 2022



Recruiting & Retaining Staff



Next Steps:

- Piloting **remote correctional academy** to increase accessibility for new recruits
- Implementing **strategic plan** with key focus on staffing
 - Removing paper-based processes and automating tasks to reduce workload
 - Investing in supervisory training to improve staff experience
 - Increasing opportunities for mentorship and professional development
 - Free Community College Courses for staff and family
- Using **data-driven** approach for informed decision-making

DOC Facility Staff Vacancies: January 2019 to January 2025



Hospital Coverage

Key Context

- Facility staffing crisis required Field (P&P) hospital coverage
- Paid standby limits staff travel and recreation
- Sicker incarcerated pop. requires more frequent ED trips
- Transports and hospitalizations present highest risk to staff

Hospital Central Operations Specialists (COS) Team

- 11 dedicated staff **focused solely on hospital coverage**
- Spending on Field hospital standby **fell 71%** from 2023 to 2024 (\$702,397 → \$200,792)

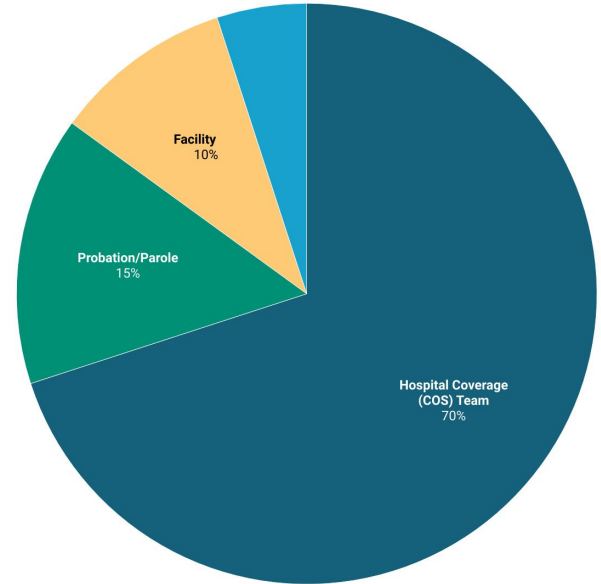
Data

- **17,652 hours** of hospital coverage from November 2023 to December 2024:
 - 12,240 filled by COS
 - 2,628 filled by Field
 - 1,800 filled by Facility
 - 780 filled by volunteers

Vermont DOC Hospital Shift Coverage

November 2023 to November 2024

■ Hospital Coverage (COS) Team ■ Probation/Parole ■ Facility ■ Volunteers



Staff Recognition

Key Context

- New **unique pay scale and retirement group** for DOC staff
- Enhanced Annual Rewards and Recognition ceremony to:
 - Recognize staff accomplishments, acts of valor, life-saving actions
- More than 50 staff members celebrated in 2024 ceremony for distinguished years of service ranging from 20 to 40 years.
- Distributed approximately **175 Merit Bonuses** awarded to staff members in 2024 in recognition of their performance.
- Streamlined retirement recognition procedure for consistency and efficacy





Questions?

Contact



Isaac Dayno

Executive Director of Policy

(802) 793-4392 • isaac.dayno@vermont.gov

Haley Sommer

Director of Communications & Legislative Affairs

(802) 793-9075 • haley.sommer@vermont.gov

Constituent Services

ahs.doconstituentmanagement@vermont.gov



Appendix

VISION

We create safety and equity by seeing potential, supporting change, and serving communities.

MISSION

We lead through innovation

We advance restorative justice practices

We support staff wellness

We create meaningful partnerships

We create rewarding career opportunities

We provide justice-involved individuals with opportunities for self-improvement

We ensure our facilities and field offices are safe, secure, and healthy



VALUES

Accountability
We, individually and collectively, act in accordance with our mission and values in service to our vision.

Collaboration
We succeed when we have diverse and equitable partnerships that include our communities and the people in our care and custody.

Compassion
We treat everyone with respect and dignity and respond empathetically to people's lived experience.

Equity
We address systemic barriers that hinder opportunity and use fair and impartial decision-making.

Innovation
We use evolving research from diverse communities to identify, develop, and implement effective practices.

Integrity
We practice our values in an honest and transparent way.

Safety
We create an equitable culture of physical, emotional, and material wholeness.

DOC Strategic Plan





Vermont Department of Corrections

Roadmap to 2030: Mission-focused, values-driven



STAFF AND STAFFING

Build a sustainable correctional workforce that invests in professional growth and staff wellbeing.



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Achieve a holistic health and wellness system to improve outcomes for incarcerated and supervised individuals.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION FOR A JUST SYSTEM

Advance diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices into all that we do to achieve a just corrections system.




MODERNIZATION

Modernize systems, structures, technologies, and processes to achieve the nation's leading model of corrections.

Strategic Plan Goals

STAFF AND STAFFING

Build a sustainable correctional workforce that invests in professional growth and staff wellbeing.



GOAL 1: Staff are empowered by a workplace cultivated to embrace and support the full spectrum of individual experience and identity.

GOAL 2: By 2030, staffing levels and staff retention are optimal and sustainable.


GOAL 3: Roles and processes are optimized to enhance staff engagement and operational efficiency.

GOAL 4: Opportunities for professional development and career growth are offered through a fair and transparent system.

GOAL 5: The Department provides opportunities and an environment that promotes staff health and wellness.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Achieve a holistic health and wellness system to improve outcomes for incarcerated and supervised individuals.



GOAL 1: The Department prioritizes health and wellness as a fundamental obligation.


GOAL 2: The Department engages Vermont's community members to support health and wellness outcomes for the population we serve.

GOAL 3: Health and wellness systems and processes operate efficiently and effectively.

GOAL 4: The Department supports and fosters holistic wellness for those in its care and custody.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION FOR A JUST SYSTEM

Advance diverse, equitable, and inclusive practices into all that we do to achieve a just corrections system.



GOAL 1: Staff recognize and appreciate the daily impact of identity and why JEDI is vital to our success.


GOAL 2: The Department's systems, structural environment, policies and procedures are informed by trauma-informed practices, JEDI principles, and individuals with lived experience within the criminal justice system.

GOAL 3: Supervision, programs, and intervention services reflect the diverse needs of the people we serve.

GOAL 4: JEDI-responsive principles are embedded into all Department processes and retention efforts to equitably serve every staff member.

MODERNIZATION

Modernize systems, structures, technologies, and processes to achieve the nation's leading model of corrections.



GOAL 1: Vermont's correctional system employs modernized systems, structures, technologies, and processes.

GOAL 2: The Department cultivates meaningful partnerships to advance community engagement and restorative practices.

GOAL 3: Modernization is embedded within each strategic initiative and advances innovative, efficient, evidence-based, and data-driven solutions Department-wide.

DOC Facility Staff Vacancies: January 2019 to January 2025



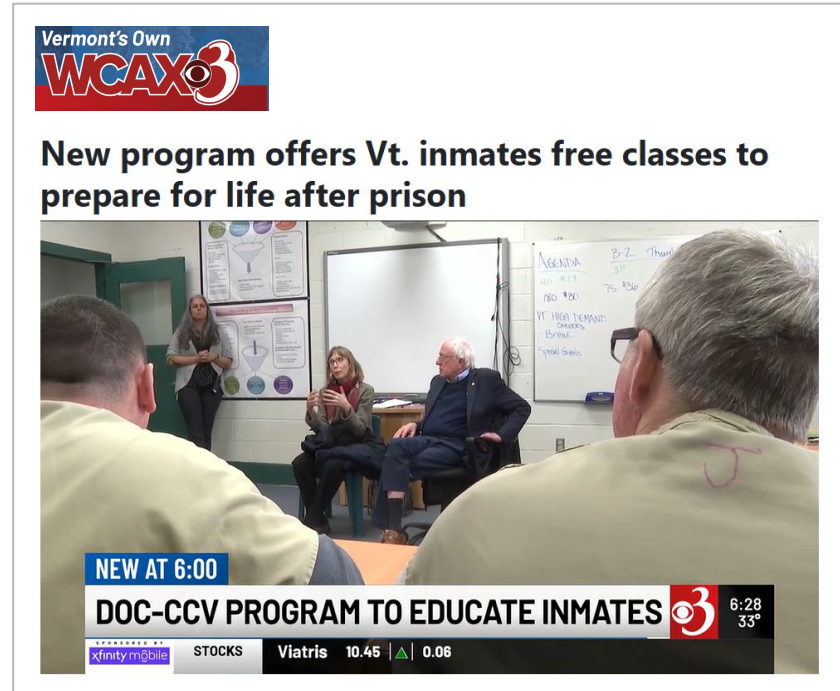
DOC & Community College of Vermont

Key Context

- [Free community college](#) for incarcerated individuals and DOC staff
- Supported by **\$4.5M CDS** from Sen. Sanders via DOJ
- Classes available at **all major DOC sites** (exploring expansion to St. J and Rutland via expanded tech)
- **Expanded course offerings** for incarcerated individuals and eligibility for family members of correctional staff

Next Steps

- **Secure WiFi** to offer increased diversity of courses and different teaching modalities
 - Continued Pell funding dependent on WiFi
- Continue to resolve operational hurdles (space, facility scheduling, CCV staff schedules, technology)
- Offer **vocational training** modules



System Challenges



Staffing

- Vacancies, retention, state workforce demographics, overtime costs, physical workplace environment

Health & Wellness

- Serving physical/mental health needs of incarcerated individuals, particularly those detained awaiting trial
 - Lack of access/poor connection to medical care prior to justice-involvement
 - Sequelae of heavy substance use

DEI & Justice

- Remote hearings and court backlogs
- Lack of coordinated community reentry services and geographic disparities
- Paucity of community service providers, particularly for male-identifying individuals

Modernization

- Lack of WiFi and access to basic technology
- Lack of transitional housing stock/availability
- Deteriorating physical infrastructure
- Antiquated and highly manual data systems (OMS)