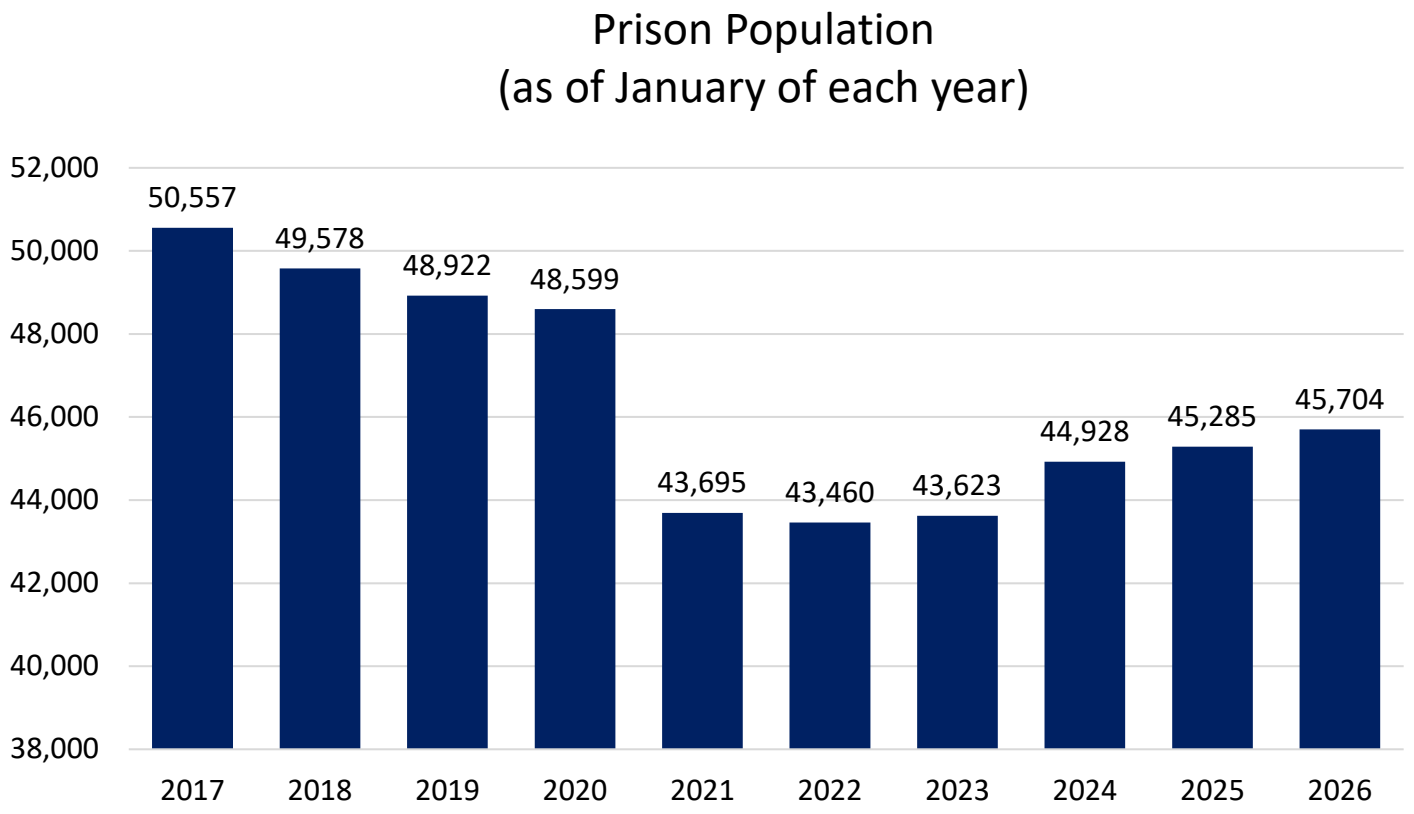
Ohio's prison population remains below pre-pandemic levels



Source: Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

- In January 2026:
  - Ohio's prison population totaled 45,704, an increase of 0.9% (419 inmates) from the previous year.
  - The prison system consisted of 28 correctional institutions (three privately operated) and 11,702 institutional staff (not including private prisons), of whom 6,194, or 53%, were correction officers.
  - The daily institutional costs per offender averaged $117.41 and marginal costs, $16.41. Institutional costs are fixed (e.g., staff, maintenance, security). Marginal costs (e.g., food, medical care, clothing) fluctuate with the prison population.
- During the ten-year period from 2017 to 2026, Ohio's prison population has decreased by 9.6% (4,853 inmates).
  - From 2017 to 2020, the population hovered around 50,000 inmates. For context, the population peaked at 51,273 inmates in November 2008.
  - From 2017 to 2020, the population slowly decreased by an average of 1.3% per year.
  - From 2020 to 2021, the prison population sharply decreased 10.1% (4,904 inmates). This decrease was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic beginning March 2020.
  - Although the population has risen each year since 2022, it remains lower than pre-pandemic levels.