ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

OVERTIME PAY SNAPSHOT

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Introduction

Over the past several years, Ulster County's budget has grown as new programs, positions, and operational responsibilities have been added. At the same time, the County faces current and future budget pressures that may require difficult decisions regarding services, staffing, and revenues. As these discussions occur, it is critical that recurring expenditures and existing operations receive the same level of review as potential new revenue sources.

Overtime is one example of a recurring cost driver. Understanding where overtime occurs, why it occurs, and whether current practices are sustainable are essential to long-term financial planning. Readers are encouraged to view the Comptroller's [Payroll Dashboard] for more information.

Overtime

Overtime consists of hours worked beyond an employee's standard schedule, for which employers typically provide premium pay, or additional compensation. The pay rate and availability of overtime differ by collective bargaining unit.

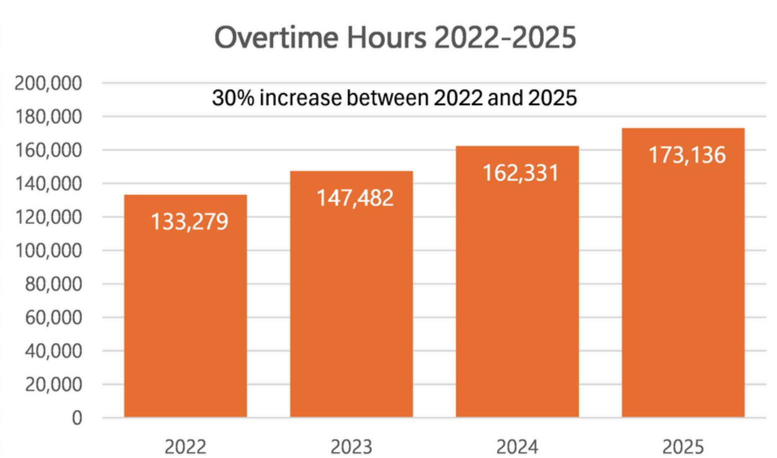
It is important to daylight overtime because it represents a significant and growing cost to County taxpayers. In addition, overtime is not distributed evenly across the workforce. The overtime assignment is managed at the department level and, for some employees, can substantially increase total annual compensation and pensionable earnings.

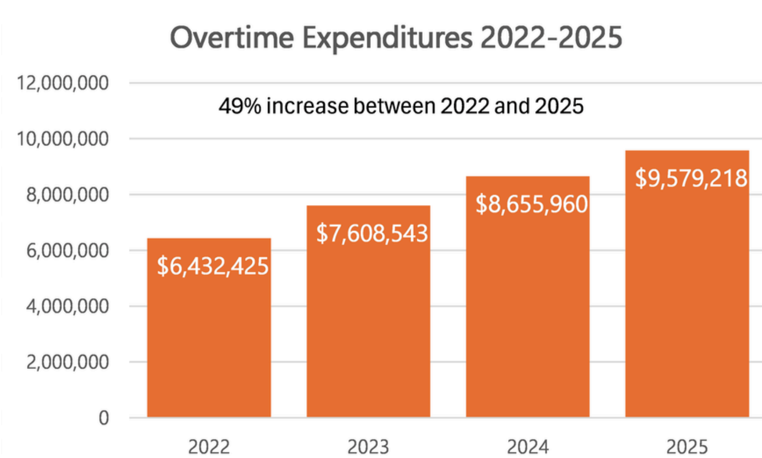
Between 2022 and 2025 Ulster County's total overtime hours have increased from 133,279 to 173,135, a 29.9% increase. Overtime expenditures have increased over the last four years from $6.43 million to $9.58 million for an increase of $3.15 million or 49.0%.

This report provides an overview of Countywide overtime and on-call trends. Further examination is warranted on the distribution of overtime, including the positions generating the highest overtime usage and the extent to which overtime contributes to overall employee compensation.

OVERTIME SNAPSHOT

- Total OT Paid (2022-2025): **$32.3 Million**
- Total OT Hours (2022-2025): **616,226**
- Employees earning over $100,000 in OT over the four-year period: **87**
- Highest individual OT earnings over four-year period: **Sheriff's Correction Officer $596,728**
- Largest OT department in 2025: **Sheriff's Office (69.1% of 2025 OT)**





The department with the largest overtime expenditures in 2025 was the Sheriff's Office with $6.6 million in overtime which represented 69.1% of the County's total overtime pay for the year. This concentration means that changes in Sheriff's Office staffing levels, vacancies, and operational requirements have a significant impact on overall County overtime trends. While these factors are key drivers of overtime usage, the amount of overtime incurred is also influenced by operational efficiency and management practices. Accordingly, effective workforce planning, scheduling, and overtime oversight are essential to managing overtime costs while maintaining the staffing levels necessary to meet operational and public safety requirements.

The Sheriff's Office has seen a 33.1% growth in overtime hours between 2022 and 2025 going from 82,445 hours of overtime to 109,699 hours of overtime. When evaluating Sheriff's Office overtime, it is important to understand the factors that affect Sheriff's Office staffing.

2025 Ulster County Overtime Pay by Department	
Department	Amount
Sheriff	$ 6,614,799
Public Works	1,522,230
Emergency Management	507,325
Social Services	451,922
UCAT	395,449
Health	28,664
District Attorney	19,502
Probation	13,720
Information Services	11,497
Finance	6,322
Purchasing	5,442
All Other Departments	2,346
Total	$ 9,579,218

Minimum corrections staffing requirements for the Sheriff's Office are established by the State Commission on Corrections. The Comptroller's Office issued an Audit of Sheriff's Office Corrections Capacity and Staffing in 2020 that examined how this results in mandated staffing. Mandated shifts are exacerbated by vacancies in the staffing plan because required posts must be filled regardless of staffing levels. As vacancies increase, overtime becomes one of the primary tools available to maintain minimum staffing requirements.

From 2022 to 2025, the average monthly Corrections Officer vacancies remained persistently high and increased overall from 29 positions to 36. While staffing mandates and vacancies contribute significantly to overtime usage, the persistence of overtime growth over multiple years demonstrates that overtime has become a recurring staffing strategy rather than a temporary solution and may not be sustainable long-term.

Monthly Average Corrections Officer Vacancies			
	full-time, half-time and more than half-time	less than half time	total
2022	14	15	29
2023	24	9	33
2024	17	16	33
2025	22	14	36

The Sheriff's Office is not the only department with growth in overtime between 2022 and 2025. Although the District Attorney's Office has gone from 5 hours of overtime in 2022 totaling $245 to 349.5 hours in 2025 totaling $19,502, the total volume remains relatively small compared to departments with continuous operational staffing requirements. Factors driving District Attorney's overtime include new responsibilities related to discovery reform, chronic understaffing, vacancies and increased workload. The second largest overtime expenditure in 2025 was in the Public Works Department, totaling $1.5 million. Public Works overtime grew from 29,195 hours for $1,315,861 to 31,933 for $1,522,230 in 2025. Public Works regularly operates with vacant positions, and the nature of the department's responsibilities can create fluctuating overtime needs, particularly during extreme weather events and emergency response situations.

ON CALL SNAPSHOT

- Total On Call Paid 2022-2025: $2.7 million
- Total On Call Hours 2022-2025: 9,712
- Employees earning over $100,000 in On Call over the four-year period: 2
- Highest individual OC earnings over four-year period: Assistant Public Defender III for $101,334

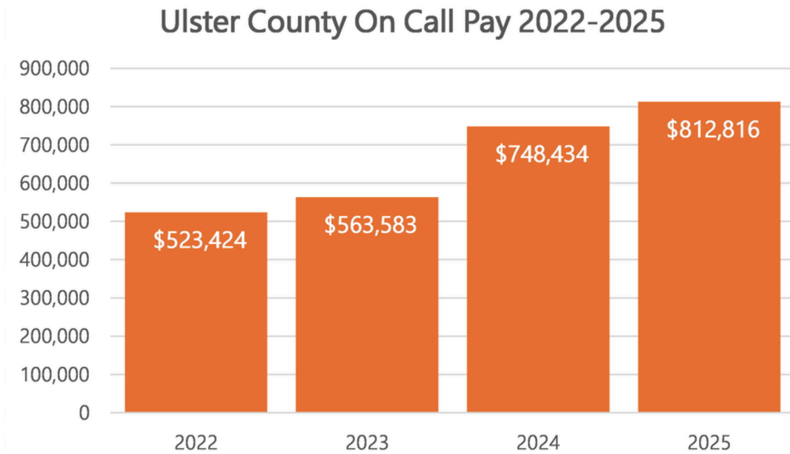
On Call Pay

On call pay is compensation an employee receives to remain available for work outside of regular work hours. Although on call pay represents a much smaller expenditure than overtime, it has increased significantly during the period examined and contributes to overall compensation costs.

Eligibility for on call pay varies by collective bargaining agreement, and the assignment of on call duties is managed at the department level. Like overtime, these assignments can add substantially to an employee's total compensation and pensionable earnings.

On call pay for Ulster County has grown 55.3% between 2022 and 2025, growing from $532,424 to $812,815.

Growth in on call expenditure is concentrated primarily within the Sheriff's Office and Public Defender's Office, which together accounted for approximately 59% of all on call pay in 2025.



The Sheriff's Office experienced the largest dollar increase in on call pay, increasing by $127,584, or 66.3% between 2022 and 2025. The Public Defender's more than doubled during the same period, increasing by $79,847, largely due to the introduction of the Centralized Arraignment Part Court which requires public defenders be available for night work and are funded with state aid.

2025 Ulster County On Call Pay	
Department	On Call Pay
Sheriff	$ 319,909
Public Defender	158,200
Social Services	110,338
Probation	100,896
Health	73,348
Emergency Management	27,725
Risk Management	22,000
District Attorney	400
Total On Call Pay	$ 812,816

Conclusion

The data suggests that overtime and on call expenditures are influenced by factors beyond overall workforce size. Persistent vacancies in critical positions, mandated staffing requirements, expanded operational responsibilities, scheduling practices, and collective bargaining provisions all contribute to these costs.

However, the existence of these factors does not eliminate the need for continued review and management of overtime reliance. Between 2022 and 2025, overtime expenditures increased by $3.15 million, or 49%, representing a significant recurring cost to County taxpayers. As County leaders evaluate future budgets, service levels, and potential revenue needs, reviewing existing operations and identifying opportunities for efficiencies should remain a critical part of the discussion. We recommend that management evaluate staffing models, scheduling practices, and operational efficiencies to better manage long-term payroll costs.

While overtime remains an important operational tool, sustained reliance on overtime and on call coverage can increase payroll costs and concentrate additional compensation among smaller groups of employees, and, in positions requiring extended or consecutive shifts, may contribute to employee fatigue and burnout. Understanding not only where overtime occurs, but how overtime is distributed across positions, is critical when evaluating the long-term fiscal and operation impacts of overtime reliance.