

HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

'25DEC02 AM 7:48 CITY CLERK

ANDRIA TUPOLA
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT I
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5001
FAX: (808) 768-1217
EMAIL: atupola@honolulu.gov

December 1, 2025

Council Chair Tommy Waters
Members of the City Council
530 S. King Street, Room 202
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Report of the Honolulu Police Department Staffing and Retention Task Force
Resolution 25-160, CD1, Establishing A Task Force To Address Honolulu Police
Department Vacancies And Officer Retention

Dear Chair Waters,

The members of your Honolulu Police Department Staffing and Retention Task Force respectfully submit this report to the City Council in accordance with Resolution 25-160, CD1.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Tupola".

Andria Tupola
Honolulu City Councilmember, District 1
Chair, Honolulu Police Department Staffing and Retention Task Force

REPORT OF THE HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING AND RETENTION TASK FORCE



Submitted to the Honolulu City Council
December 2025

Table of Contents

I	Executive Summary
II	Introduction and Membership
III	Glossary / Definition of Terms
IV	Findings and Discussion
V	Review of HPD Vacancies
VI	Review of HPD Recruitment
VII	Review of HPD Retention
VIII	HPD Hiring and Retention Practices
IX	Recommendations
X	Conclusion
XI	References

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Honolulu Police Department (“HPD”) continues to navigate ongoing staffing challenges affecting both sworn officers and civilian personnel. Between 2021 and 2025, the Department experienced an overall increase in vacancies, and civilian staffing levels remained below authorized levels. A significant portion of civilian employees are also eligible for retirement in the near future, which creates additional challenges for long-term workforce stability.

While interest in HPD positions has grown, only a small share of applicants complete the hiring process. Early testing losses, the length of the hiring timeline, and competitive opportunities within and outside of Hawai‘i present obstacles to converting applicants into new hires. Some employees also depart before achieving permanent status, which places additional importance on early-career support and training.

Retention continues to be an area of focus. Many departures among both sworn and civilian personnel over the past five years have been voluntary and reflect a variety of personal and professional factors, including retirement decisions, family needs, and alternative career pathways. Employee feedback indicates that workload, communication, and organizational support are important considerations for those choosing to stay or leave.

To better understand these issues, the Task Force reviewed staffing data, recruitment and separation trends, retirement eligibility, and employee feedback, along with national practices used by other law-enforcement agencies. This report outlines the primary factors contributing to HPD’s staffing needs and offers recommendations intended to strengthen recruitment, improve retention, support employees throughout their careers, and help ensure that HPD is well-positioned to continue fulfilling its public-safety mission for the City and County of Honolulu.



II. INTRODUCTION AND MEMBERSHIP

Pursuant to the Honolulu City Council's Resolution 25-160, the Honolulu Police Department Staffing and Retention Task Force ("Task Force") was established to review the HPD's vacancies; analyze recruitment and retention; evaluate existing hiring practices; and develop recommendations to reduce vacancies and improve retention.

The Task Force held six meetings between August 12, 2025, and November 25, 2025, to review staffing and vacancy data, examine hiring and separation trends, analyze HPD's workforce capacity, and develop recommendations.

The Task Force was led by Honolulu City Council Vice Chair Andria Tupola, with research and drafting support by Meeka Sarabano-Garcia and Kaiwiola Coakley, and membership consisted of representatives from the HPD, administrative agencies, labor organizations, law enforcement, and subject-matter experts, including:



Krishna F. Jayaram
Deputy Managing Director
City & County of Honolulu



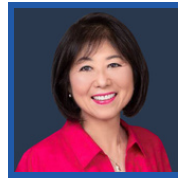
Rade K. Vanic
Interim Chief of Police
Honolulu Police Department



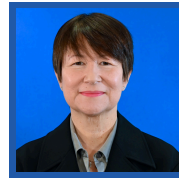
Aaron Takasaki-Young
Assistant Chief of Police
Honolulu Police Department



Parker Bode
Metropolitan Police Major
Honolulu Police Department



Nola N. Miyasaki
Director
Department of Human Resources



Sarah Hirakami
Acting Assistant Director
Department of Human Resources



Jonathan Frye
Vice President
State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers



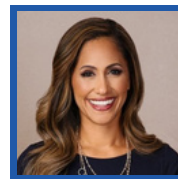
John Higgins
Senior Outreach Agent
Hawaii Government Employees Association



Kenneth Silva
Chair
Honolulu Police Commission



Thomas Kekoa Carvalho
Background Investigations Supervisor
Portland Police Bureau



Andria Tupola
Task Force Chair - Councilmember, District 1
Honolulu City Council

III. GLOSSARY / DEFINITION OF TERMS

Actual Strength reflects the number of positions that are currently filled with active personnel.

Authorized Positions refers to the number of positions the department is permitted to staff based on its approved budget.

Cadet / Police Services Officer is a paid trainee position within HPD that provides classroom instruction, physical training, and practical work experience in non-hazardous police functions to prepare individuals for eventual appointment as Metropolitan Police Recruits.

Civilian Personnel follow the chain of command for formal communication with superiors and subordinates in accordance with the organizational chart and their position descriptions.

Emergency Response Operator (ERO) handles incoming emergency calls and routes them to the appropriate Communications Officers.

Metropolitan Police Recruit is an entry-level, sworn trainee in HPD who attends the police recruit school, receiving classroom instruction, physical training, and field exercises to learn police principles, procedures, and techniques in preparation for appointment as a Uniformed Officer / Metropolitan Police Officer.

Police Communications Officer (PCO) or dispatcher speaks with callers, gathers information and coordinates a response with Responding Police Officers

Uniformed Officer / Metropolitan Police Officer is a sworn member of the Honolulu Police Department who has successfully completed recruit training and is authorized to perform full law enforcement duties, including patrol, crime prevention, investigation, and enforcement of laws and ordinances within the City and County of Honolulu.

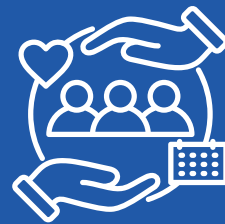
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Task Force reviewed data on uniformed and civilian personnel, hiring and separation trends, and departmental operating conditions for the years 2021–2025. The Task Force identified two primary categories contributing to the HPD’s ongoing staffing challenges: recruitment and retention. These factors are interconnected and influence the department’s ability to maintain sufficient staffing levels for both uniformed officers and civilian personnel.

Staffing Challenges

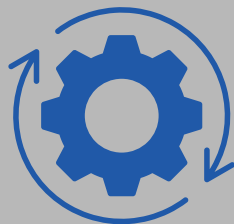


RECRUITMENT



RETENTION

Solutions



CURRENT
PRACTICES



FUTURE
RECOMMENDATIONS

V. REVIEW OF HPD VACANCIES

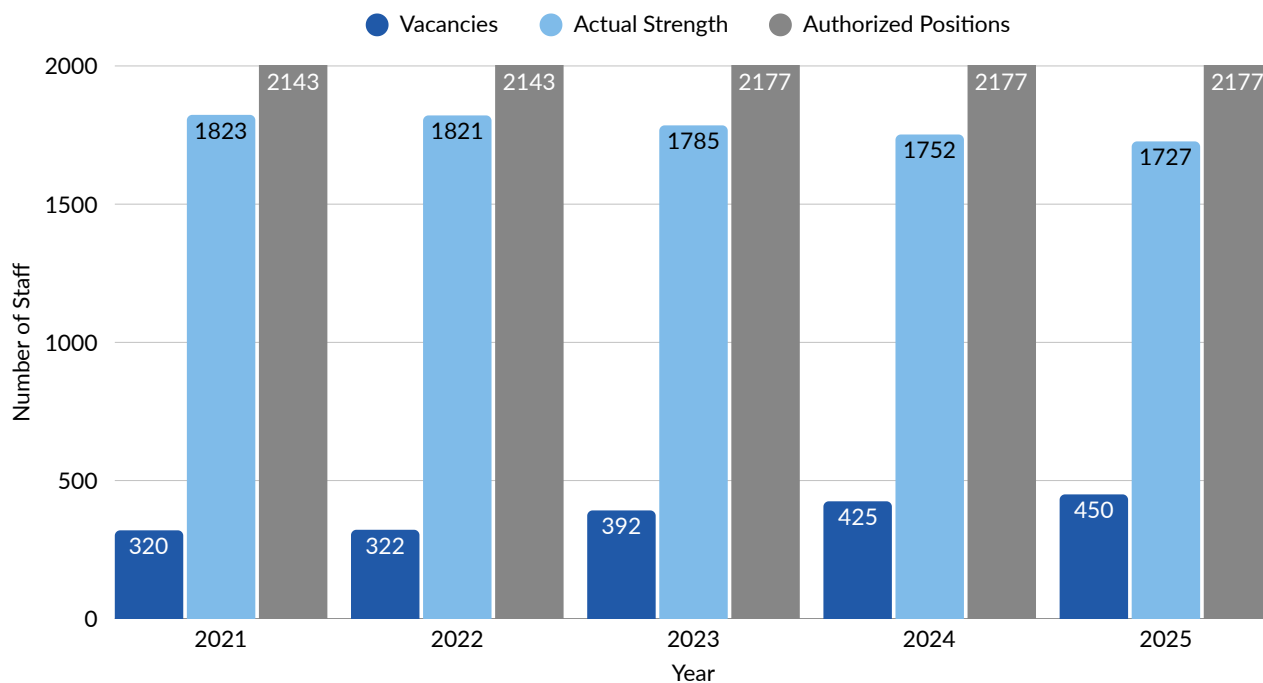
Uniformed Officer Vacancies

Between 2021 and 2025, the HPD experienced a steady increase in vacancies. Authorized positions remained relatively unchanged during the period, holding at 2,143 positions in 2022, before increasing slightly to 2,177 positions beginning in 2023, representing a net gain of 34 funded positions (1.6%) over five years.

As shown in Figure 1, while uniformed officer strength remained stable, actual staffing fell from 1,823 officers in 2021 to 1,727 officers in 2025, a loss of 96 officers (5.3%). This steady decline demonstrated that attrition continues to outpace new uniformed officers.

Figure 1. Staffing Levels for Uniformed Officers*

*Numbers do not include training pool

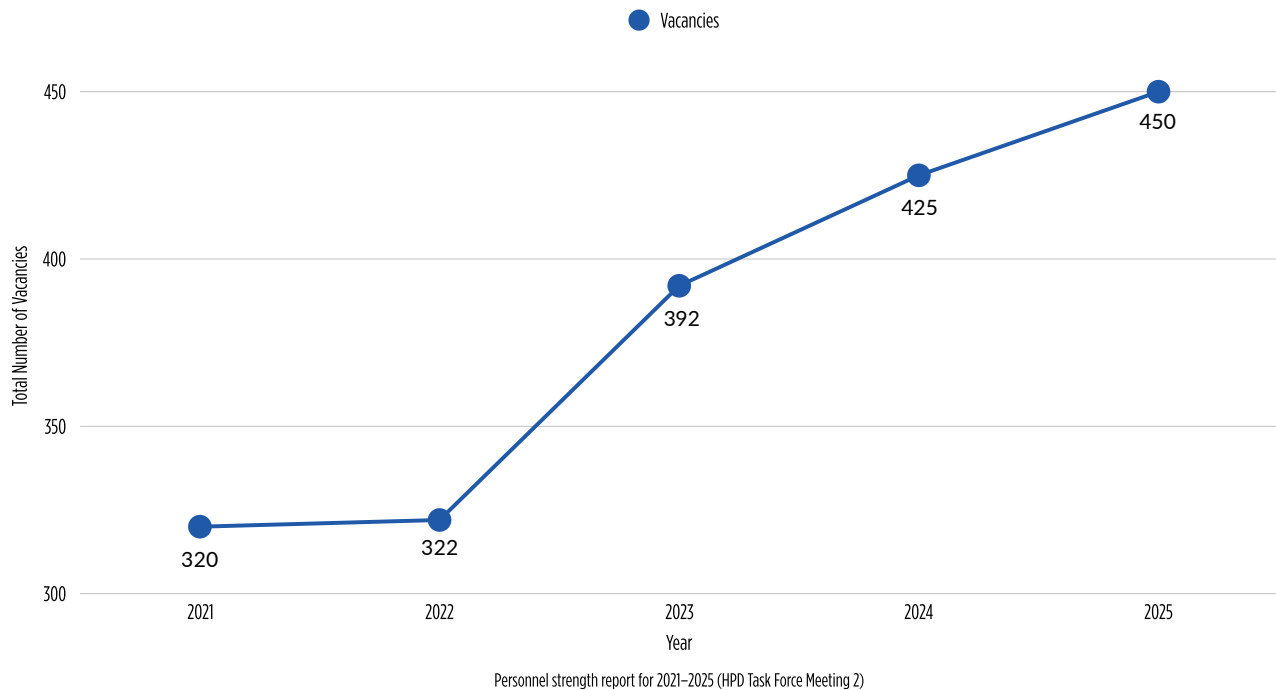


Personnel strength report for 2021–2025 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2)

Vacant positions increased from 320 in 2021 to roughly 450 in 2025—an increase of 130 vacancies (41%). The largest year-over-year increase occurred between 2022 and 2023, when vacancies grew by approximately 70 positions, reflecting sustained difficulty filling new and existing openings. More recent data indicate this trend continued into mid-2025, when total vacancies reached roughly 465 (44%).

These indicators show that HPD faces a structural and persistent vacancy problem. Recruitment increases alone have not been sufficient to stabilize the workforce. Without additional measures to retain existing officers and strengthen leadership continuity, vacancy growth is expected to continue.

Figure 2. Vacancy Rate for Uniformed Officers



Civilian Personnel Vacancies

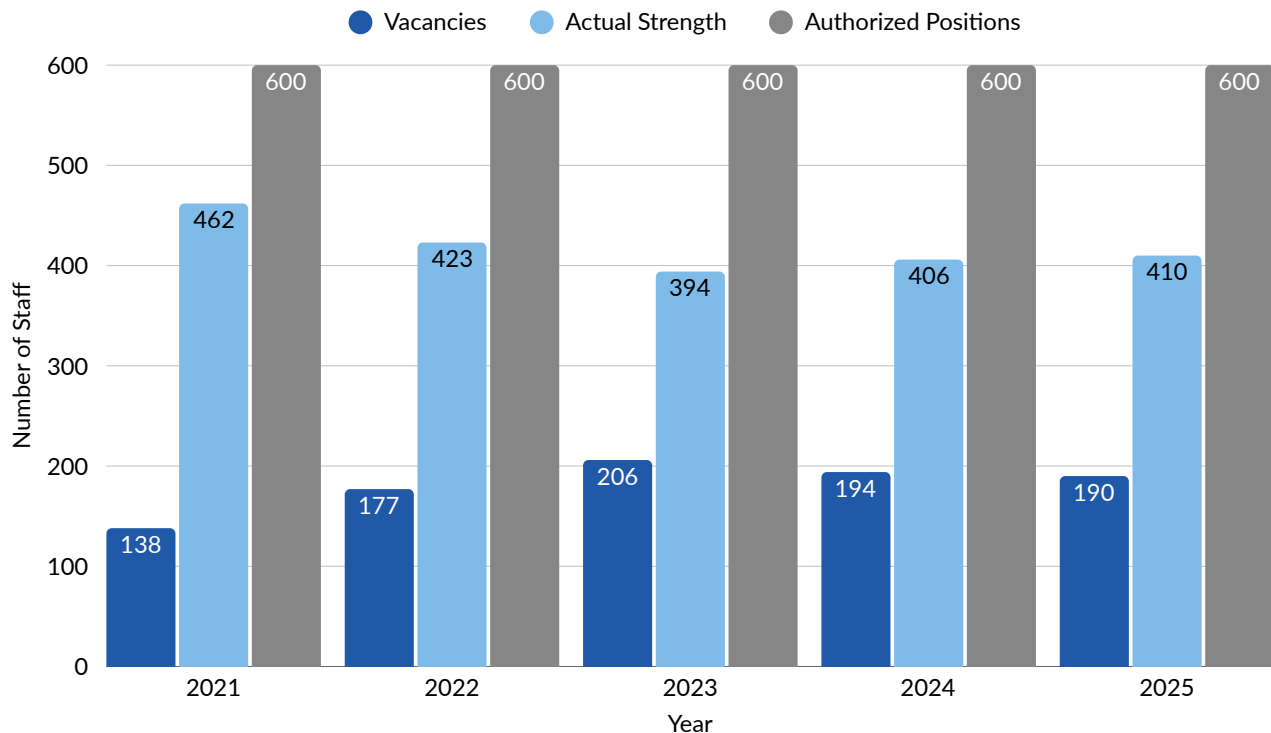
Civilian personnel perform essential support functions in records management, communications, administrative services, and technical operations. Despite a consistent authorization of 600 positions from 2021–2025, actual staffing declined sharply during this period.

As shown in Figure 3, Civilian personnel staffing totaled 462 employees in 2021; counts dropped to 394 employees by 2023, the lowest level observed, before recovering slightly to 410 employees in 2025. Even with this modest rebound, the civilian personnel remained roughly 30% below authorized levels.

Vacancies peaked at 206 positions in 2023 and remained elevated at approximately 190 positions in 2025, demonstrating ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining specialized support personnel. These shortages have occurred alongside strong external competition for administrative and technical workers.

In addition, approximately 101 of 352 civilian personnel (29%) are currently eligible to retire. Retirement-eligible staff represent a significant continuity concern, particularly in highly technical or specialized work units where expertise cannot be quickly replaced. The Department estimates that more than 80 employees already have over 20 years of service, increasing the likelihood of near-term retirement. Occasional understaffing has required uniformed officers to perform clerical and administrative duties typically assigned to civilian personnel, diverting valuable time away from patrol, operational, and investigative work.

Figure 3. Staffing Levels for Civilian Personnel



Personnel strength report for 2021–2025 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2)

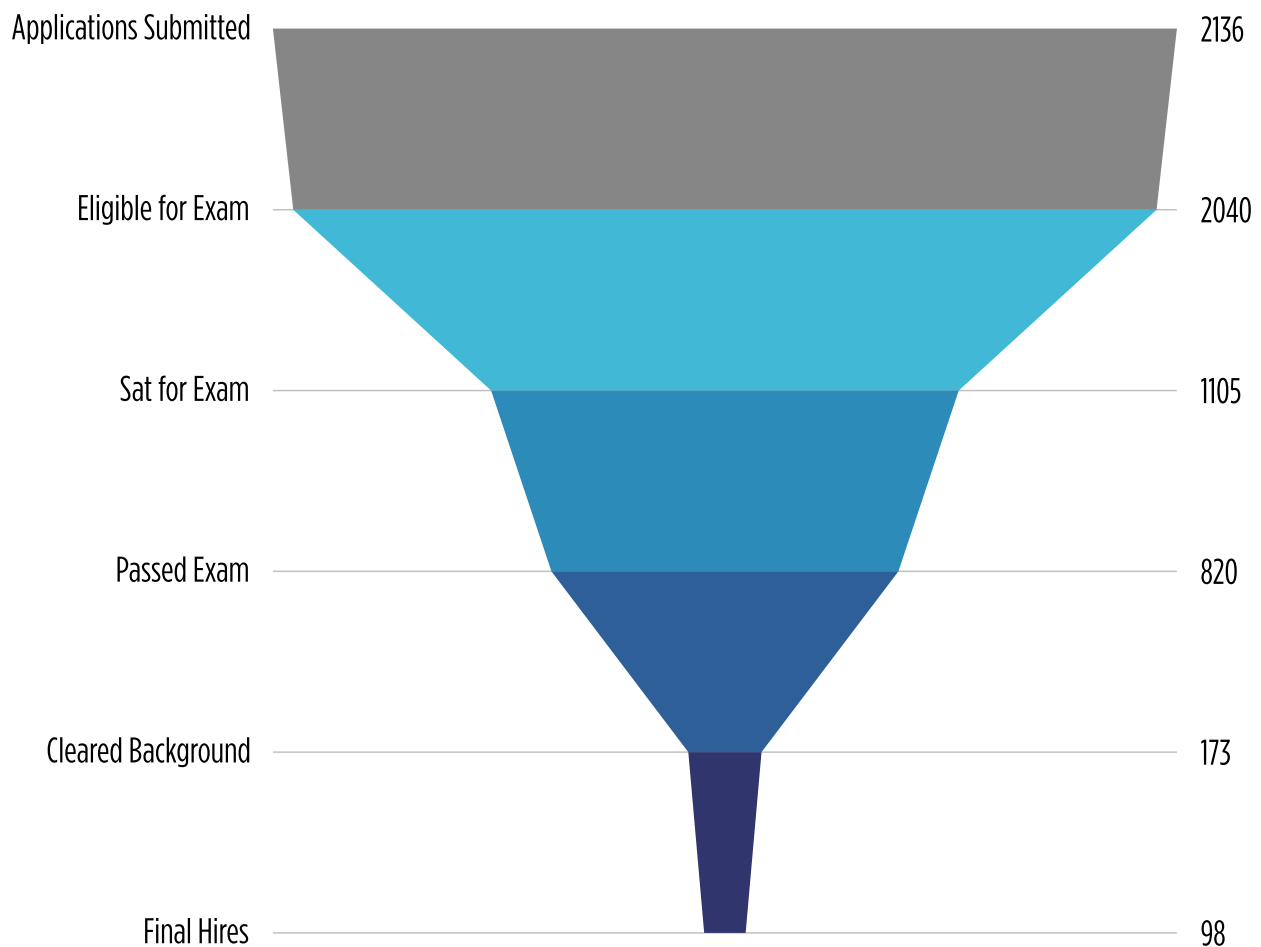
VI. REVIEW OF HPD RECRUITMENT

Uniformed Officer Recruitment

Recruitment for uniformed officers generated strong applicant volume between 2023–2024; however, hiring conversion rates remained very low. In 2024, the HPD received 2,136 applications, an increase from 1,788 applications in 2023 (19%). Despite this growth, only 98 uniformed officer hires were completed, resulting in an overall yield of approximately 4%—similar to 2023, when 78 candidates were hired.

The greatest attrition occurred in the earliest stages of the process. More than 35% of applicants did not schedule or appear for the written entrance exam, representing the single largest loss point. Among those who tested, written exam failures increased substantially from 154 in 2023 to 285 in 2024, an 85% year-over-year increase. These results suggest that many candidates may lack sufficient preparation, access to study materials, or familiarity with the testing format and expectations.

Figure 4. Uniformed Officer Applicant Attrition in 2024



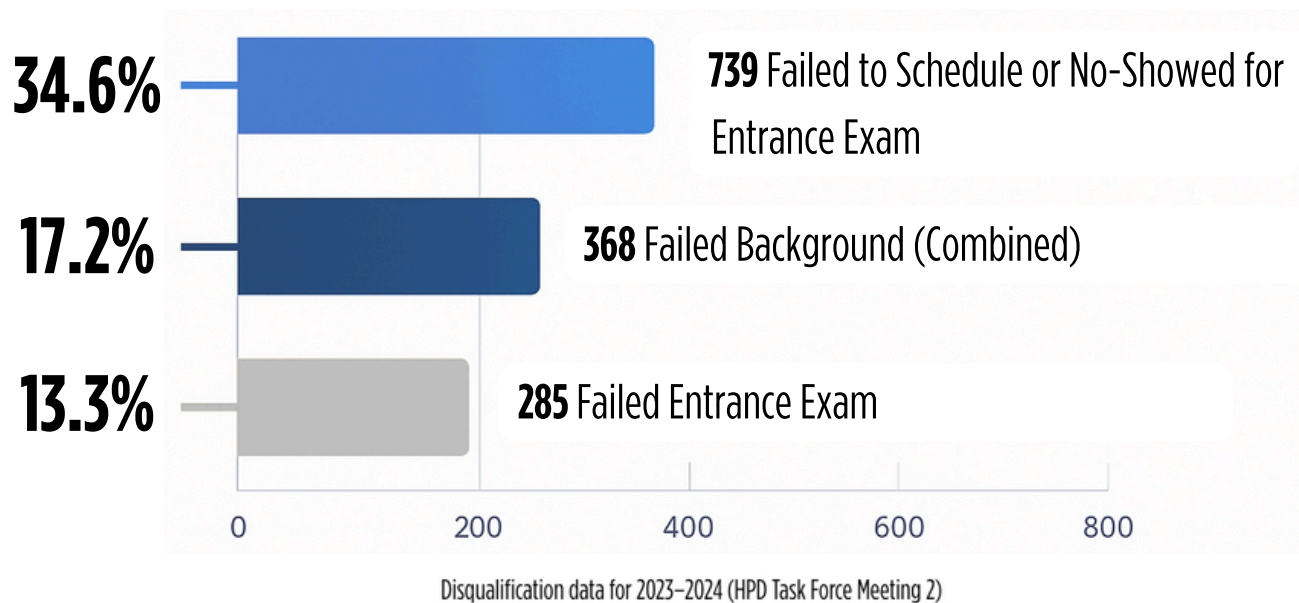
Disqualification data for 2023–2024 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2)

Additional losses occurred during background investigations, with 368 applicants failing in 2024, up from 320 in 2023. The most common background disqualifications involved drug-use history or dishonesty. Because background investigations occur late in the screening process, this attrition also represents a significant loss of resources.

Although mid-process withdrawals declined slightly, overall conversion remained low. Contributing factors include process length, limited recruitment marketing, and benefits

that remain less competitive compensation than out-of-state police departments. These persistent pipeline losses demonstrate the need for improved pre-testing support, targeted marketing, streamlined processing, and more competitive compensation.

Figure 5. Top 3 Recruit Disqualifiers in 2024



Civilian Personnel Recruitment

Police Communications Officer

Police Communication Officer (PCO) applicant volume remained high across both cycles, but overall hiring yields continued to be extremely low. Early-stage testing again accounted for the majority of applicant losses. In 2023, 183 candidates failed the online performance examination, representing 39.6% of the entire applicant pool. In 2024, failures decreased slightly to 86 candidates (32.0%), but still remained the single largest point of attrition.

Failure to schedule or report for the online examination represented an equally significant loss. In 2023, 192 applicants (41.6%) never scheduled or appeared for their exam. This figure declined to 79 applicants (29.4%) in 2024, but together with exam failures still accounted for more than half of all candidates exiting the process.

Other forms of attrition—particularly voluntary withdrawal—also increased in 2024. Withdrawals rose from 15 in 2023 to 25 in 2024, a 67% increase, mirroring the drop-off patterns observed in other civilian and sworn applicant groups. Background-related disqualifications showed mixed changes: some categories remained minimal, while others,

such as truthfulness/omissions (increasing from 3 to 15 candidates), became more prominent in 2024.

Despite similar application volumes (478 in 2023 vs. 488 in 2024), hiring outcomes remained extremely limited. Only 3 PCOs were hired in 2023 (0.6%) and 8 hires were completed in 2024 (1.6%). While the number of hires in 2024 more than doubled, overall yield remained exceptionally low due to the extensive losses at the testing and reporting stages, as well as continued process withdrawals.

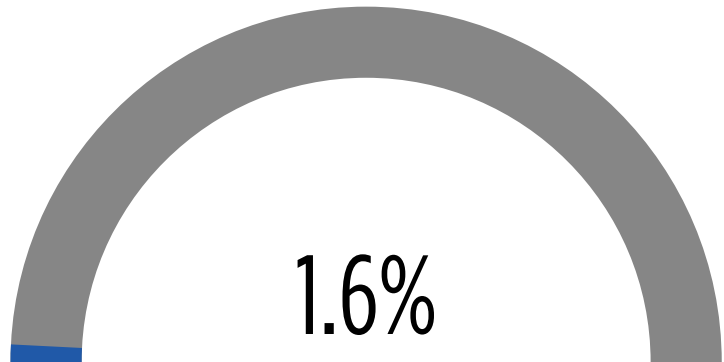


Figure 6. Out of 488 total applications for PCOs, only 8 were hired in 2024 according to HPD Disqualification Data.

As with other departmental recruitment pipelines, the length and complexity of the hiring process, competing opportunities in the job market, and limited departmental outreach continue to prevent larger hiring gains, even when applicant volume remains strong.

VII. REVIEW OF HPD RETENTION

Uniformed Officer Retention

Retention of uniformed officers continues to pose a substantial challenge. Over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, the department experienced 846 sworn-personnel separations. Of these, 521 separations (62%) were voluntary, consisting of 387 retirements (46%), 135 permanent resignations (16%), and 199 probationary resignations (24%). Retirements were the single largest category of loss, averaging about 77 per year, and representing predictable but significant reductions to operational staffing and institutional experience.

Probationary resignations remain a major vulnerability. The data shows a total of 199 resignations occurring from 2020 to 2025, reflecting officers who separated during academy or initial field training.

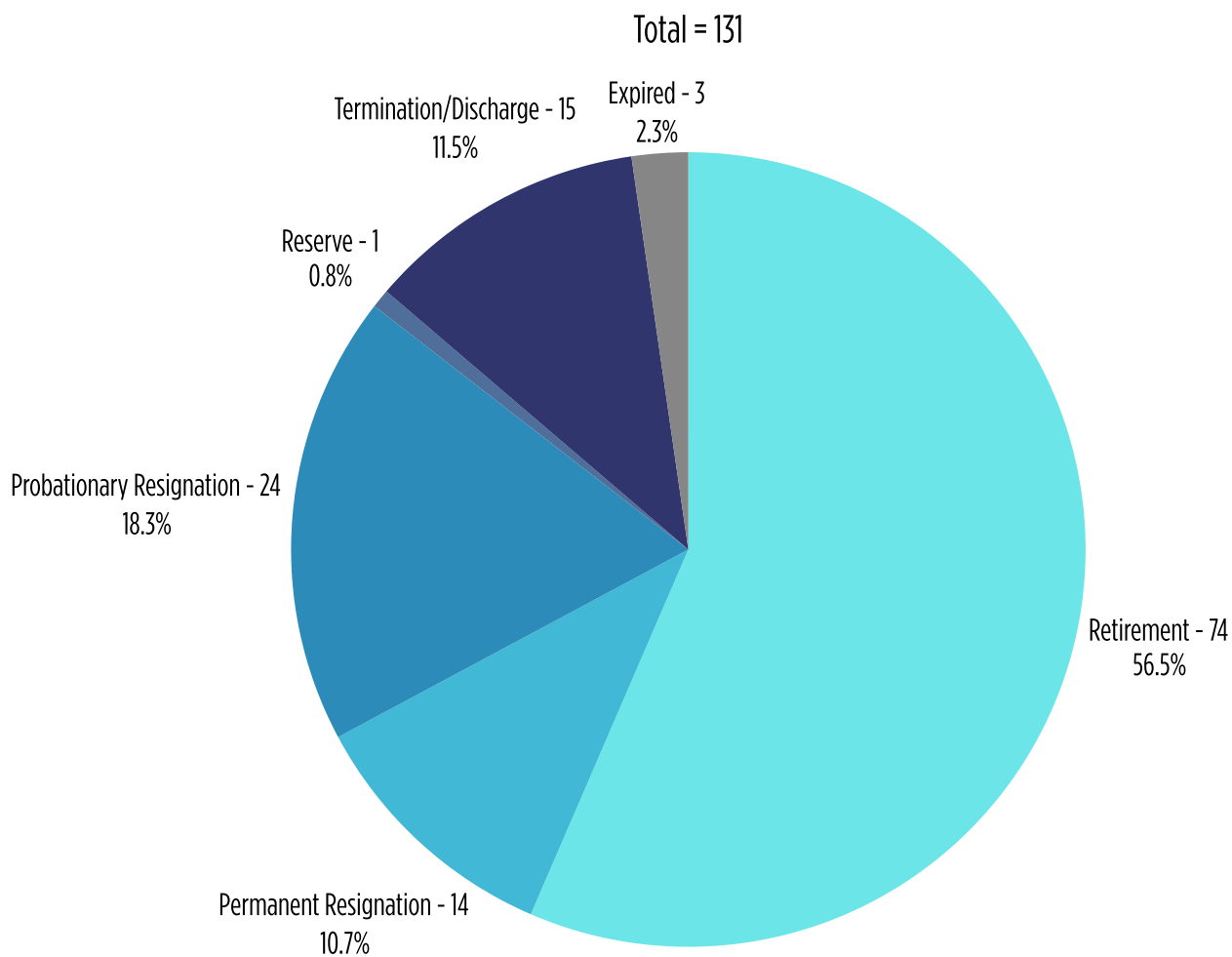
Voluntary resignations across all tenure levels represent a substantial portion of total departures. When combining probationary resignations (199) with permanent resignations (135), these 334 resignations account for nearly 40% of all separations. This includes both

early-stage departures and officers leaving mid-career for other agencies or exiting policing entirely.

Involuntary separations were comparatively limited. Termination or discharge events totaled 113 cases (13%) over the five-year period. The most notable spike occurred in 2021, when 42 terminations were recorded, but counts stabilized to 14–15 per year from 2022 to 2024. Expired appointments (11) and reserve separations (1) were minimal.

Data show that the uniformed officer workforce is affected far more by voluntary exits—retirements and resignations—than by disciplinary or administrative removals. The dominance of voluntary separation patterns underscores the ongoing difficulty of retaining both new recruits and experienced personnel.

Figure 7. Exit Trends and Categories for Uniformed Officers in 2024



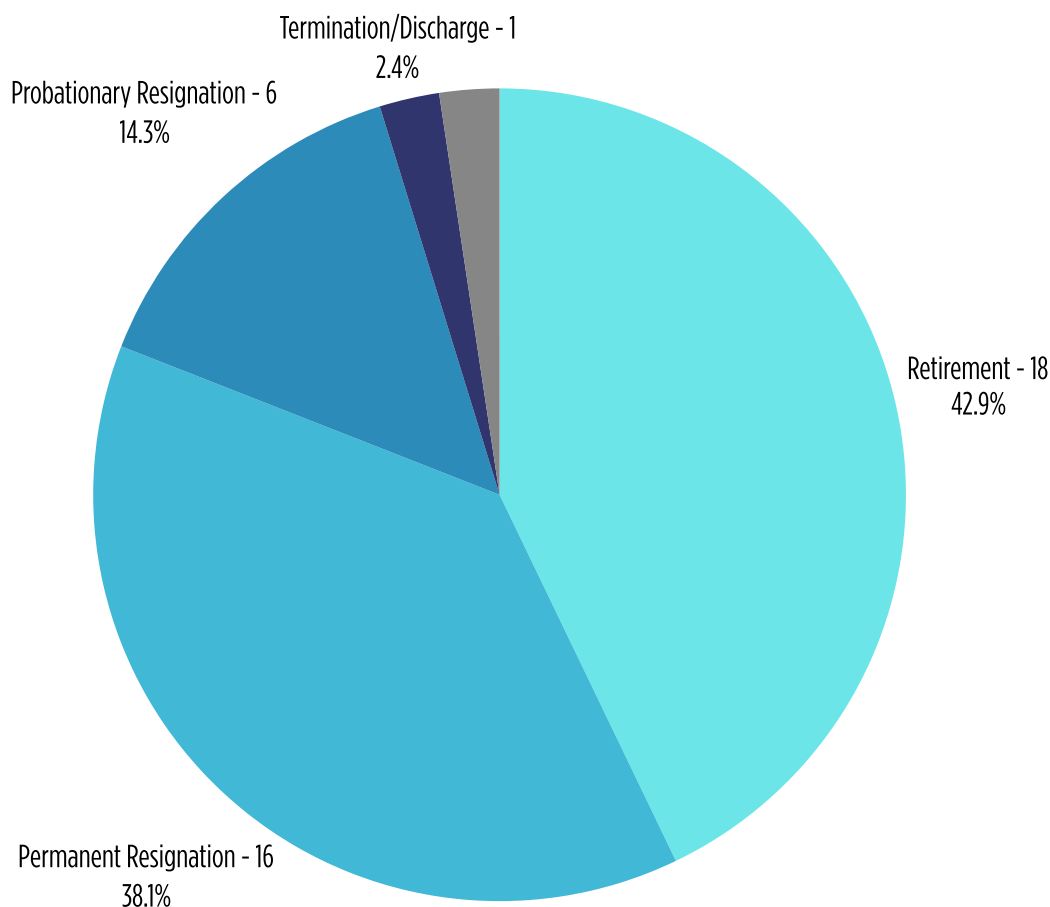
Retention documents and requests summary (HPD Task Force Meeting 3)

Civilian Personnel Retention

Civilian personnel staffing continues to experience significant retention pressures. Over the five-year period from 2020 to 2024, approximately 97% of all civilian separations (237 of 245) were voluntary, underscoring the need for strategies that strengthen long-term employee tenure.

Retirements accounted for about 39% of all separations (95 of 245), reflecting the aging profile of the civilian workforce and signaling a continuing risk of vacancy growth in the coming years. Voluntary resignations represented the largest share—approximately 47% (115 of 245)—driven largely by external wage competition and opportunities in both the private sector and other government agencies. Probationary resignations comprised approximately 11% (27 of 245), indicating a measurable loss of early-career employees before they reach full productivity.

Figure 8. Exit Trends and Categories for Civilian Personnel in 2024
Total = 42



Retention documents and requests summary (HPD Task Force Meeting 3)

Involuntary resignations were minimal: termination/discharge (6) and expired positions (2) collectively made up just over 3% of total departures, confirming that nearly all losses stem from employees choosing to leave rather than organizational removal.

Compounding these trends, approximately 101 of 352 civilian personnel (29%) are currently eligible to retire, and more than 80 employees have already surpassed 20 years of service. Many of these long-tenured staff could realistically retire in the near term. If even half of eligible employees choose to retire as anticipated, HPD could lose more than 50 highly experienced civilians, including in mission-critical areas such as dispatch, records, and investigative support—roles that rely on deep institutional knowledge and cannot be easily reassigned or quickly backfilled.

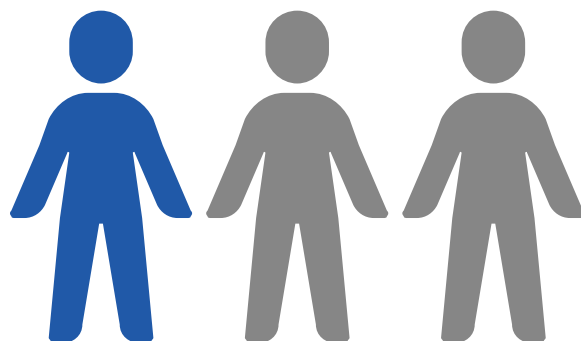


Figure 9. 1 in 3 civilian employees are currently eligible for retirement. This represents 101 of 352 personnel as of the latest assessment according to HGEA Civilian Staffing Data.

High civilian turnover ultimately increases the workload placed on uniformed officers, who must absorb clerical, administrative, and technical responsibilities when vacancies persist. Sustained investment in civilian retention—competitive compensation—remains essential to stabilizing operations and preserving critical support functions across the department.

VIII. HPD HIRING AND RETENTION PRACTICES

The Honolulu Police Department has already implemented several initiatives to improve employee support, professional development, and staffing conditions:

Year	Description
2018	Modernization of policies related to tattoos.
2019	Hiring process timeline made more efficient to reduce hiring time.
2023	Alternate Work Schedule pilot and a Flexible Working Hours program introduced for civilian personnel.
	The Police Services Officer (PSO, formerly “Cadet”) recruitment was re-opened in which applications for the program were accepted.

Year	Description
2023	High school and college student-athlete ambassador program established to promote HPD positions to high school and college athletes through department personnel connected to their alma maters, including current coaches and former student-athletes.
	Internal campaign to educate current employees on the application process, available positions, and common application pitfalls, enabling them to recruit family and friends, which remains the primary motivation for many applicants.
	In partnership with the State Department of Education (DOE), HPD established a one-week externship program for DOE educators to provide exposure to the policing profession. This initiative enables participating educators to serve as an extension of the recruitment team by promoting the department to their students.
	Physical fitness program called the Applicant and Conditioning Training (ACT) program was created to help recruit applicants prepare for the physical demands of the police academy.
	Formalized a mentorship program to support the development of future leaders. Designated commanders are assigned to recruit classes and meet throughout their academy training to impart leadership knowledge and guidance.
	A three-day workweek patrol schedule was adopted to enhance work-life balance and mitigate fatigue associated with sustained vacancies and overtime.
2024	Implementation of a Scheduled Ride-Along Program that strategically pairs officers with participants to foster stronger connections.
	Partnership with Honolulu Community College to establish a cooperative education internship program for vocational roles within HPD, such as radio technicians and mechanics.
	Out-of-state testing, including the entrance exam and physical readiness assessment, to expand recruitment beyond Hawaii and attract a larger pool of applicants.
	Partnership with local universities, a college internship program was created to expose soon-to-be graduates to the policing profession and prepare them for the police academy.

Year	Description
2024	Leadership capacity strengthened through revisions to STRIPES supervisory training and increased access to professional development.
	Approval of authorized alternative uniforms, uniform belts, and equipment carriers to better accommodate officers' needs and enhance comfort.
	Partnership with the Department of Defense, HPD launched an internship program for retiring or exiting service members, providing them with valuable civilian work experience as they transition from military service.
	In-person testing events that cover multiple steps of the application process to accommodate working professionals. Testing locations have included: Chaminade University, Castle High School, Leilehua High School, Kapolei High School, Mililani High School, and Waipahu High School.
	Partnership with local comedian Xavier Cummings (@howsdisguy) to highlight the police recruit application process in a humorous and engaging way. The campaign generated over 2.8 million views, a 900% increase across HPD social media platforms.
	A \$25,000 hiring incentive is now offered upon successful completion of tiered performance standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ \$2,500 for successfully passing the police academy's comprehensive exam ◦ \$5,000 for graduating from the police academy ◦ \$7,500 for successfully completing their initial probationary period ◦ \$10,000 for three years of service as a Metropolitan Police Officer
	Creation of a pre-academy orientation to introduce soon-to-be recruits to the police academy, helping to reduce stress and increase their comfort before training begins.
2025	Increase of tuition reimbursement to \$9,600 annually to support continuing education, enabling both uniformed officers and civilian personnel staff to pursue career-advancing coursework.
	Implementation of a second-opinion review process for the psychological examination and interview components of the police recruit and police dispatcher application processes, aiming to reduce subjectivity.
	Campaign to conduct mass hiring for entry-level civilian positions, holding dozens of interviews over multiple days to fill several vacancies.

Year	Description
2025	Introduction of a comprehensive police entrance exam preparation course designed to help applicants familiarize themselves with the exam format, review key subject areas, and develop the knowledge and skills needed to successfully pass the police entrance exam.
	Re-evaluation of background selection standards to align with evolving societal norms including a reduction in the disqualification period related to marijuana use.
	<p>Compensation structures have been supplemented with service-based bonuses and monthly incentives for Police Communications Officers (PCO) & Emergency Response Operators (ERO) to improve stability within critical dispatch operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ PCO II = \$2K ◦ PCO I = \$1K ◦ ERO = \$500
	New collective bargaining agreement approved through Resolution 25-284, providing a cumulative 27% increase in uniformed officer compensation through 2029. The agreement includes annual 5% across-the-board raises, a one-time \$1,800 retention bonus in 2026, continued employer contributions covering 60% of health insurance premiums, and full funding of life insurance coverage.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

To support the HPD to decrease vacancies and increase retention, the Task Force presents the following potential actions, organized by category, that we believe could have a positive impact on recruitment, retention, and staffing. Most of these have precedents in other jurisdictions, or are extensions of HPD's already existing efforts.

Recruitment



Recruitment Referral Bonus (\$80K/year)

Consider paying \$2,000 to employees who refer candidates who are hired and complete early service milestones. Personal networks are a low-cost, high-yield source of applicants; structured bonuses formalize and scale what already happens informally. Tampa PD operates a similar staged referral system.

Pre-Academy Candidate Assistance and Mentoring Program (\$50K-\$100K/year)

Consider standing up a Pre-Academy Candidate Assistance & Mentoring Program that provides report-writing coaching, physical conditioning, expectations briefings, and consistent mentorship from the time candidates pass screening through academy start. This reduces washouts at predictable pain points and improves academy readiness. San Diego PD's CAMP is a proven model.



Retention



Housing Stipend (\$12.8M/year)

Consider a monthly housing stipend of \$500 to all uniformed officers and civilian personnel. Honolulu's high housing costs are the most frequently cited cause of recruitment failures and voluntary departures. A comparable program exists at the Atlanta Police Department, which offers up to \$850/month to officers as a residency and retention tool.



Increase Employer Health Insurance Contribution (\$7.7M/year)

Consider increasing the City's share of employee medical premiums to improve take-home pay and reduce mid-career attrition. The County of Kaua'i recently moved to zero-premium employee health insurance, demonstrating the recruiting and retention value of enhanced employer contributions.

Civilian Parking Stipend (\$480K/year)

Consider providing \$200/month for civilian personnel parking (Uniformed officer staff currently park at no cost). This measure removes a recurring financial burden that disproportionately affects civilian retention, and helps stabilize critical support functions (e.g. records, dispatch, administrative processing).



Retention Bonus for Senior Employees (\$310K/year)

Consider offering up to \$25,000 in retention incentives paid as \$5,000/year for five years to uniformed officers and civilian personnel with 25+ years of service. The goal is to delay retirement, preserve institutional knowledge, and avoid the steep cost of backfilling experienced roles. The Dallas Police Department uses a tiered retirement-deferral bonus (up to \$40,000) to a similar effect.

Accelerated Progression to Top-Step Pay (\$5M/year)

Reform the pay schedule so employees reach the top step within 8–10 years (versus 28 years today). The specifics will remain subject to negotiation between the Employer and the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (SHOPO), as required under the collective bargaining process. Phoenix PD and Las Vegas Metropolitan PD reach top pay far sooner, illustrating the market standard.



Overall Staffing Levels



Expand Civilianize Administrative Uniformed Officer Roles (Net capacity gain; cost varies)

Consider converting 30–50 uniformed officer administrative positions to frontline or investigative assignments. Civilian roles are less expensive to staff and sustain, while uniformed officer capacity is best deployed in public-facing operations. Baltimore PD demonstrated measurable patrol gains through civilianization.

Expand Reserve Officer Program / Rehire Retirees (\$1.2M/year)

Consider rehiring retired personnel into part-time, limited-duty roles (training, records, investigations, court services) to preserve expertise and free uniformed officers for patrol and investigative work. This provides immediate operational relief at a lower cost than hiring new full-time employees. Mesa PD runs a retiree-rehire program serving similar ends.



Digital Evidence Modernization (\$500K–\$750K/year)

Consider implementing a secure electronic evidence intake and management system and funding civilian evidence specialists. This reduces officer administrative time, accelerates case preparation with prosecutors, and improves chain-of-custody reliability. Kaua'i PD's "Kākou" platform is a local model.

Simulation-Based Training Investments (\$2.3M one-time)

Consider acquiring a modern scenario-based VR simulation system and a modular live-fire/judgment facility to improve decision-making, de-escalation, and confidence while reducing liability. Kaua'i PD has deployed Axon VR and has built a modular range capacity





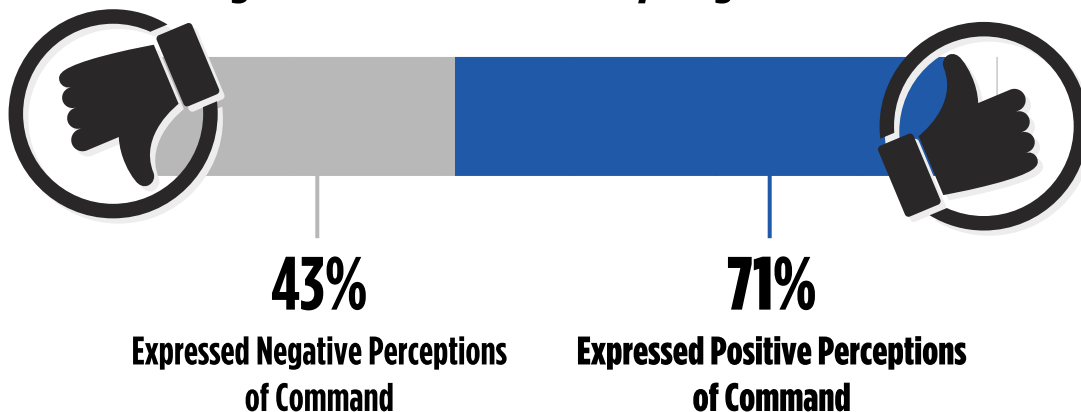
Recruitment & Retention Special Fund (Value \$15M–\$30M/year)

Consider creating a dedicated fund capitalized by lapsed salary savings from vacancies so that dollars already appropriated for staffing remain invested in staffing solutions (housing, healthcare offsets, recruitment, leadership development, mental-health supports). Phoenix and San Diego have used similar mechanisms to sustain recruitment and retention programs

Organizational Culture

Employee morale and leadership perception continue to influence retention. The 2024 Commander Survey data indicate that employees generally hold favorable views of their first-line supervisors, with 71% expressing positive perceptions. In contrast, employees report substantially lower confidence in upper-level leadership, with 43% expressing negative perceptions of command-level decision-making. Key concerns include limited communication, inconsistent supervision, perceived favoritism, lack of transparency, and insufficient support for field staff.

Figure 10. Commander Survey Insights in 2024



Expand STRIPES Program to Include Mandatory Leadership Training (Low–Moderate cost)

Consider requiring all newly promoted sergeants and lieutenants to complete expanded, standardized leadership training (communication, fairness, coaching, accountability). Consistent first-line supervision is the most cited day-to-day driver of morale and retention. Peer agencies—Phoenix, LVMPD, and LAPD—require supervisory certification for promotion.





Stay Interviews (Minimal cost)

Consider institutionalizing recurring “stay interviews” for at-risk cohorts (years 3–7, high-stress units, pre-retirement windows) to surface issues before employees choose to leave. This is a low-cost, high-insight practice that enables targeted fixes and leadership accountability. Columbus PD uses a structured model.

360-Degree Evaluations (\$50K–\$75K/year)

Consider adopting a 360° review for supervisory positions to incorporate subordinate and peer feedback into performance management. This improves accountability, identifies coaching needs, and reinforces expectations for respectful, effective leadership. The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department uses comparable tools.



Leadership Accountability Metrics (Low–Moderate cost)

Consider developing transparent metrics that track retention, professional development, morale indicators, and complaint trends at the unit-leadership level. Making outcomes visible and tied to expectations aligns supervisory behavior with workforce stability. Public accountability models (e.g., Chicago COPA, Seattle OPA) demonstrate feasible approaches to tracking and publishing integrity trends.

X. CONCLUSION

The Task Force's review shows that continued staffing shortages among sworn and civilian personnel affect the Honolulu Police Department's ability to meet current and future public-safety needs. Vacancy increases, early-career resignations, low applicant conversion, and upcoming civilian retirements all contribute to operational strain and reduced capacity.

The Task Force also found areas of strength, including strong applicant interest, dedicated employees, and opportunities to modernize systems and improve communication. These factors provide a foundation for measurable improvement.

Based on the data and national practices reviewed, the Task Force recommends advancing a coordinated strategy focused on: improving recruitment processes, strengthening early-career support, enhancing leadership and communication, and stabilizing the civilian workforce through updated personnel systems. Together, these actions can help HPD build a more reliable and sustainable workforce.

Continued collaboration among HPD, City leadership, bargaining units, and community partners will be essential. With shared commitment to these priorities, the Department will be better positioned to provide consistent, effective public-safety services for the residents of Honolulu.

XI. REFERENCES

Boylan, P. (2025, August 3). *Honolulu police, city, SHOPO try to tackle record vacancies.* *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*. <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2025/08/03/hawaii-news/honolulu-police-city-shopo-try-to-tackle-record-vacancies/>

City and County of Honolulu. (2025, November 5). Resolution 25-284: *Approving collective bargaining cost items for the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers Bargaining Unit 12 included, excluded, and excluded managerial employees of the City and County of Honolulu.* <https://hnldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnldoc/measure/3514>

City and County of Honolulu. (2025, May 22). Resolution 25-160: *Establishing a task force to address Honolulu Police Department vacancies and officer retention.* <https://hnldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnldoc/measure/3368>

Hawaii Government Employees Association. (2025, September). *Civilian staff eligible for retirement (HPD Task Force Meeting 3).*

Honolulu Police Commission. (2024). *Commander performance survey.*

Honolulu Police Department. (2025, August). *Current civilian recruitment strategy for 2021–2025 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2).*

Honolulu Police Department. (2025, August). *Disqualification data for 2023–2024 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2).*

Honolulu Police Department. (2025, August). *Personnel strength report for 2021–2025 (HPD Task Force Meeting 2).*

Honolulu Police Department. (2025, September). *Retention documents and requests summary (HPD Task Force Meeting 3).*