



Joint Public Safety Briefing: Sworn Staffing Forecast

Chief Lisa Davis, Austin Police Department | Chief Joel Baker, Austin Fire Department
Chief Robert Luckritz, Austin-Travis County EMS | Public Safety Committee | June 1, 2026

Austin Police

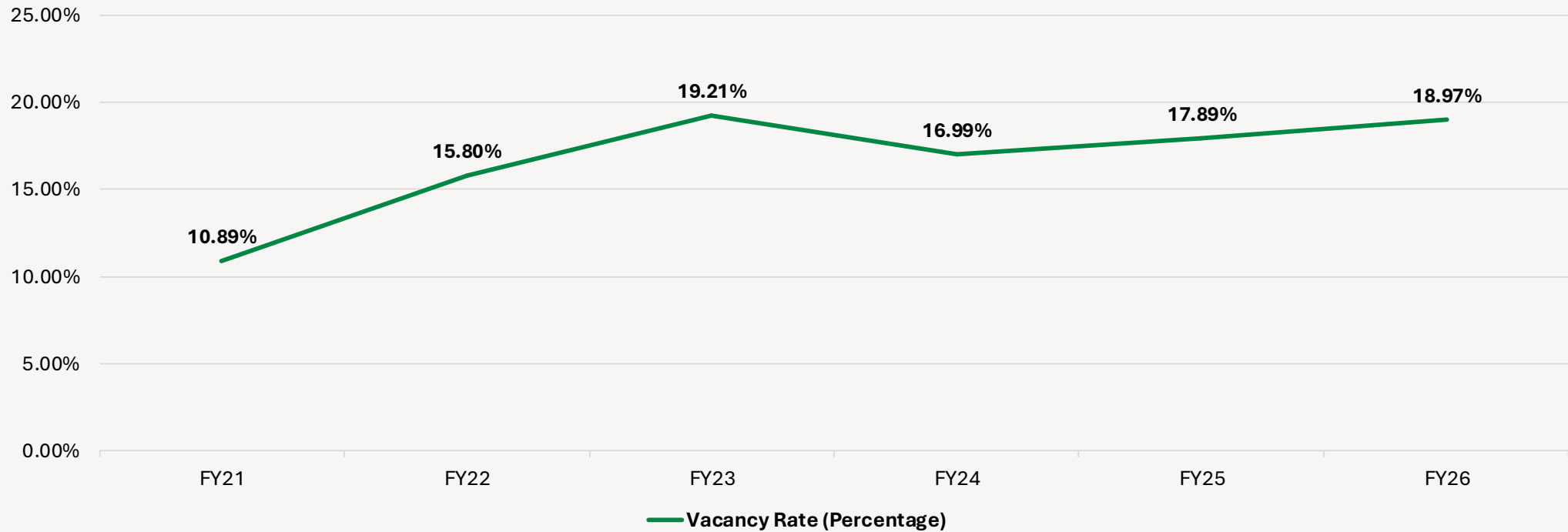
Sworn Staffing and Recruitment

Chief Lisa Davis

APD Vacancy Trends by Fiscal Year



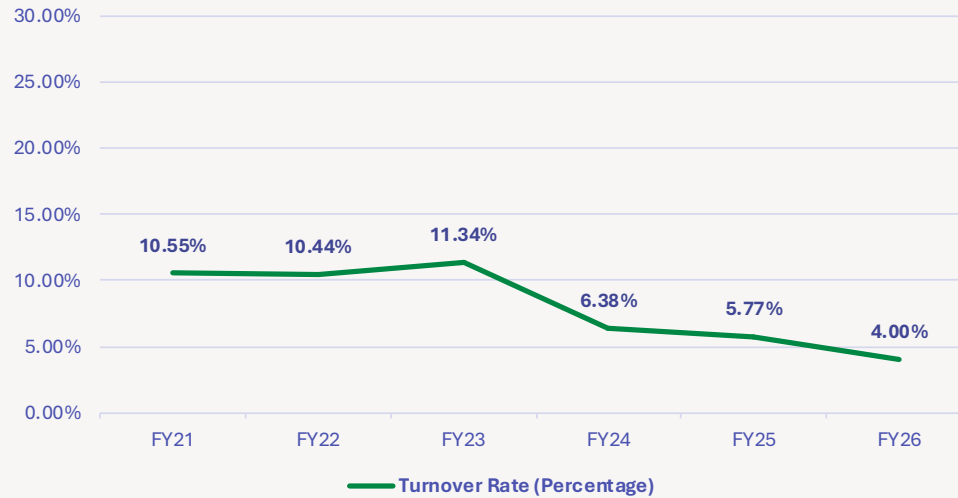
Vacancy Rate (Vacancies Divided by Authorized Staff as a Percentage)



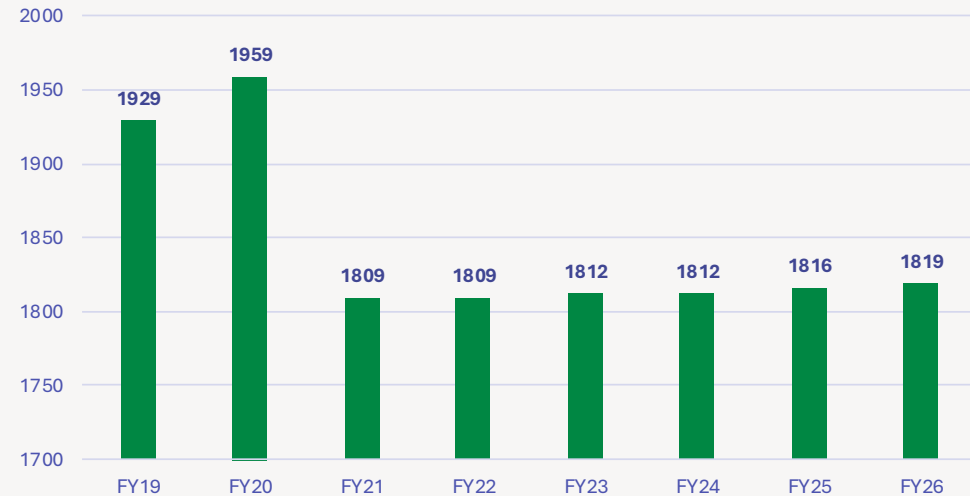
Sworn Turnover and Authorized Strength



Turnover Rate (Separations Divided by Filled Sworn Positions)



Total Authorized Sworn Staffing



- Significant reductions in sworn employee turnover indicate effectiveness of retention strategies
- FY25: Nearly 60% of separations were retirements

Notable changes in authorized strength:

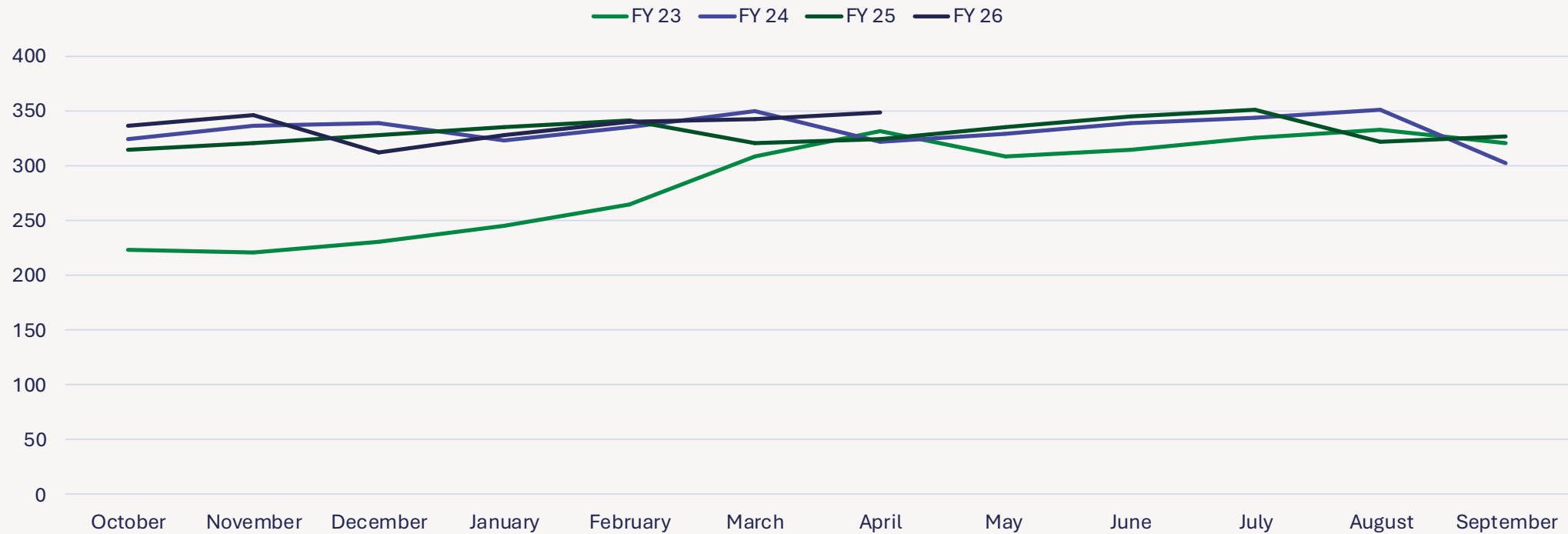
FY20: Addition of 30 Positions

FY21: Reduction of 150 Positions

APD Vacancy Trends – FY Comparisons



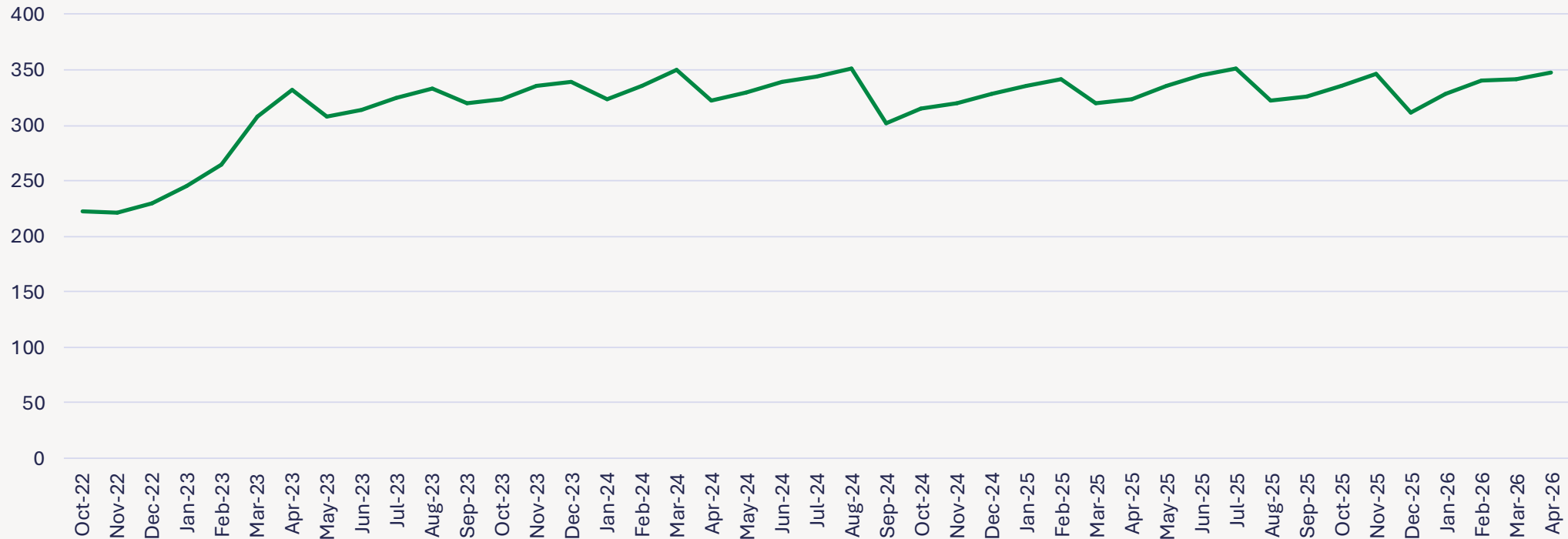
APD Vacancies by Month, October 2022-April 2026



APD Vacancy Trends by Month



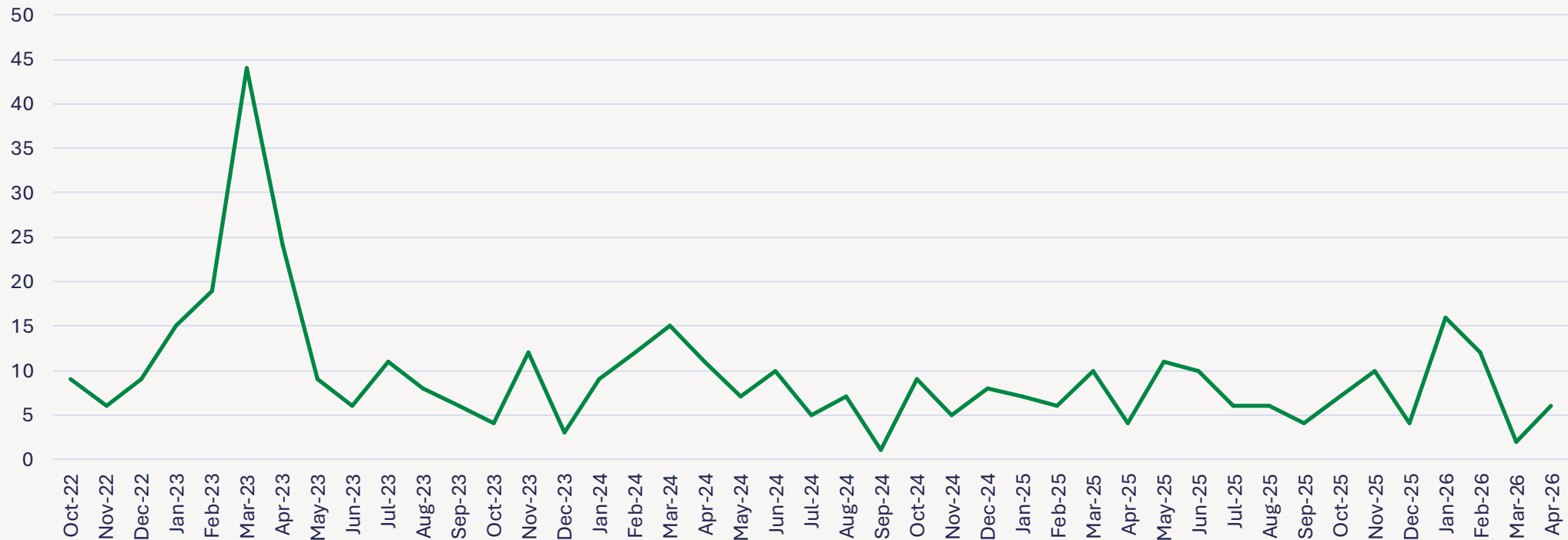
APD Vacancies by Month, October 2022-April 2026



APD Sworn Separations by Month



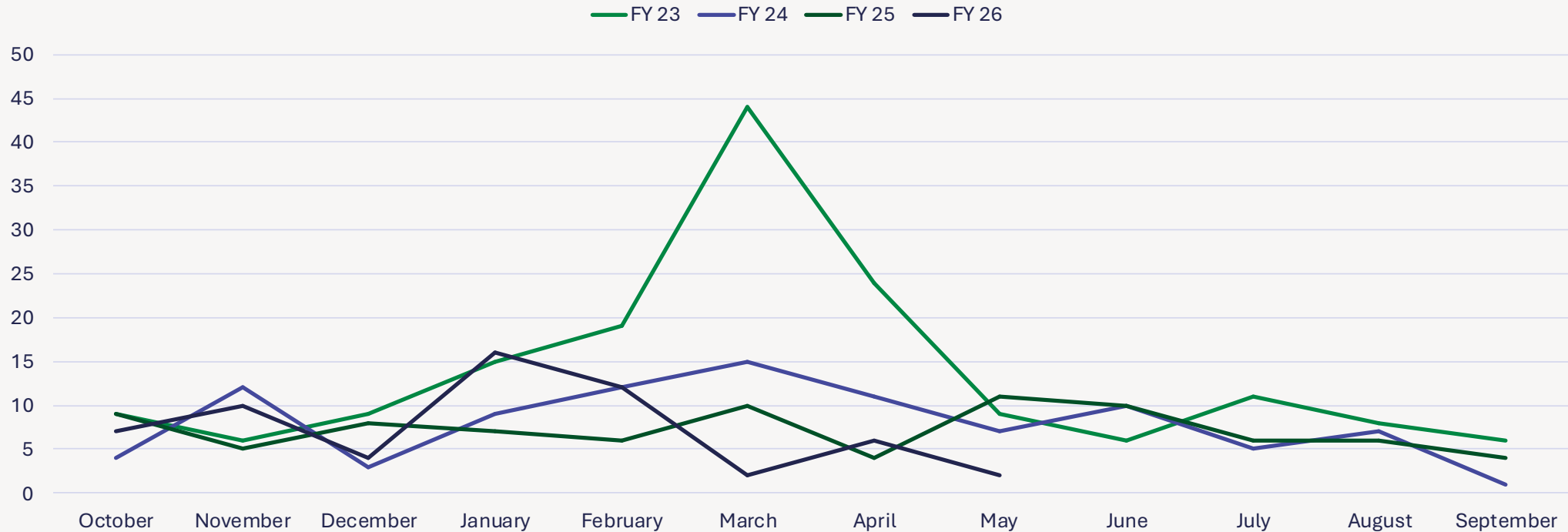
APD Separations by Month, October 2022-April 2026



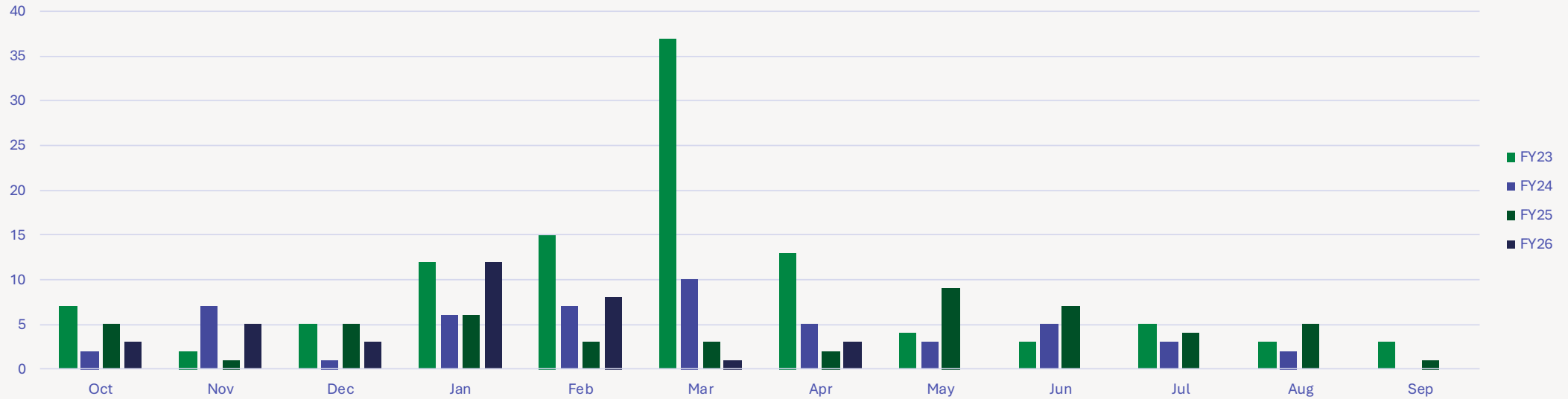
APD Sworn Separations – FY Comparisons



APD Separations by Month, October 2022-April 2026



Sworn Retirements by Fiscal Year



FY	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Total
2023	7	2	5	12	15	37	13	4	3	5	3	3	109
2024	2	7	1	6	7	10	5	3	5	3	2	0	51
2025	5	1	5	6	3	3	2	9	7	4	5	1	51
2026	3	5	3	12	8	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	35
Total	17	15	14	36	33	51	23	16	15	12	10	4	246

Cadet Attrition (FY23 – Current)



Class	# Cadets Started	# Cadets Graduated	Attrition Percentage	Academy Dates
147	55	33	40.00%	10/10/22 – 5/19/23
148	34	19	44.12%	1/30/23 – 9/8/23
149	34	25	26.47%	5/22/23 – 1/5/24
150	-	-	-	Class Cancelled
151	49	39	20.41%	9/11/23 – 4/19/24
152	79	54	31.65%	2/12/24 – 9/20/24
153	61	29	52.46%	7/15/24 – 3/7/25
154	73	35	52.05%	1/6/25 – 8/29/25
155	63	38	39.68%	4/21/25 – 12/12/25
156	49	36	26.53%	9/8/25 – 5/1/26
157	57	-	28.07%	1/26/26 – 9/18/26*

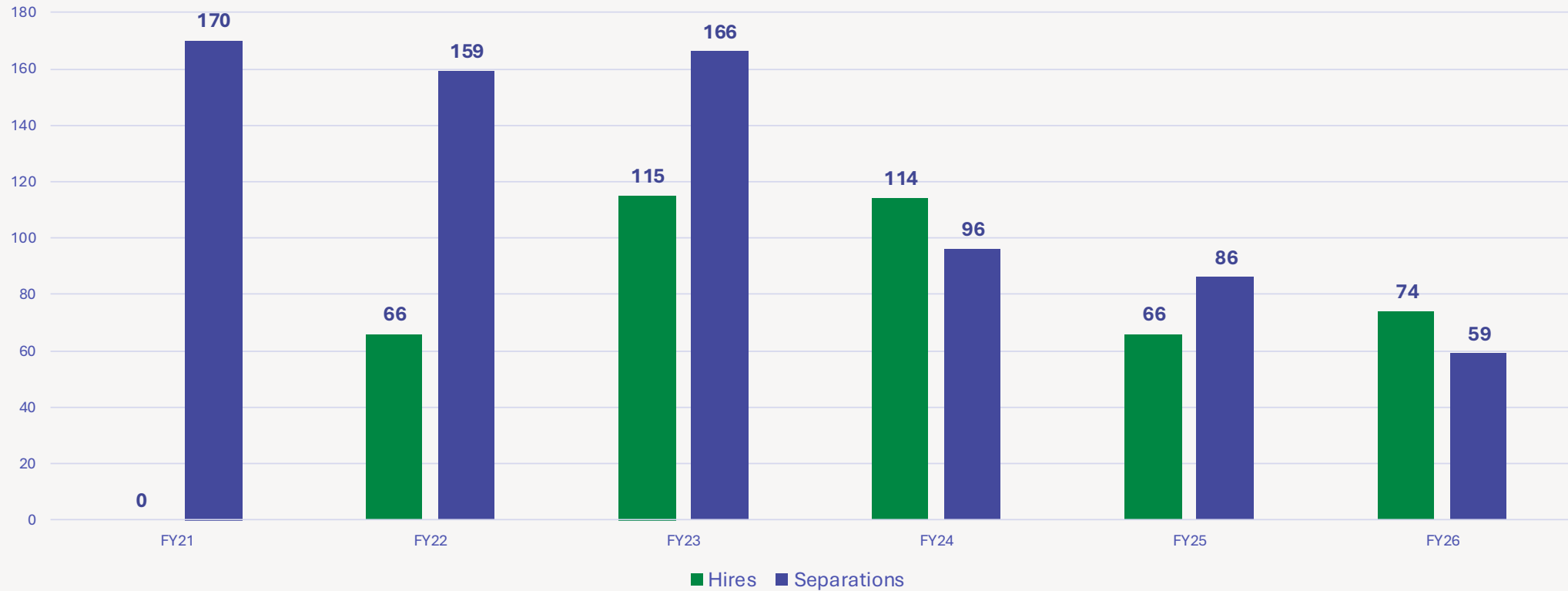
Cadet Retention Efforts



APD's 3-year strategic plan for Recruiting and Training aims to reduce the cadet attrition rate to below 20% per class. Ongoing efforts include:

- Integrating study skill and writing courses into Academy Foundations coursework
- Connecting cadets with in-house Victim Services staff to provide support as they transition into the Academy
 - Counselors meet individually with each cadet at least once early in the program
- Providing pre-Academy physical fitness coaching and workout sessions
- Providing additional physical fitness or other training/coaching before or after scheduled classes
- Providing office hours/study sessions before or after scheduled classes and during lunch breaks
- Offering personalized guidance through the Cadet Mentorship Program

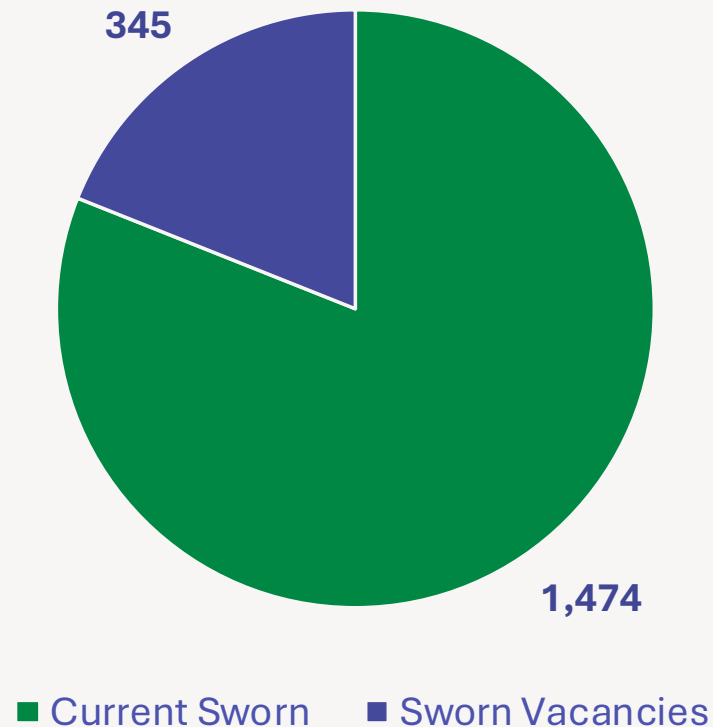
Sworn Hiring and Separations by Fiscal Year



Current Strength & Resource Optimization



Sworn Staffing (Authorized 1,819)



- 18.97% sworn vacancy rate
- 174 Patrol Officer vacancies
- Reallocated approximately 70 officers back to Patrol (August 2025)
- Reworked Patrol sectors to include district-level coverage
- Seeing improvements to Patrol response times

APD Staffing Projections



Currently 9.5% of APD's sworn workforce is eligible to retire (141 sworn employees)

If APD hires 180 cadets per year:

- In three years, APD would have 1,575 officers.
- In five years, APD would have 1,615 officers.

If APD hires 240 cadets per year (with an immediate increase):

- In three years, APD would have 1,650 officers.
- In five years, APD would have 1,766 officers.



Five Year Plan and Expected Outcomes



Recruitment

- Developing lateral academy for experienced police officers
- Strengthening recruitment pipelines with increased youth engagement
- Leveraging technology solutions for candidate scheduling and online assessments

Retention

- Continued investments in employee wellness programs and departmental resources
- Strong focus on leadership development training for all supervisors and managers
- Auxiliary recruiter program keeps employees at all levels of the organization engaged with recruiting the next generation of police officers

Expected 5-Year Outcomes

- Streamlined hiring process with increased candidate engagement
- Increased interest from out-of-state candidates and local youth
- Stabilized patrol staffing and deployment of specialized teams

Content Development & Partnerships



Austin Fire

Sworn Staffing and Recruitment

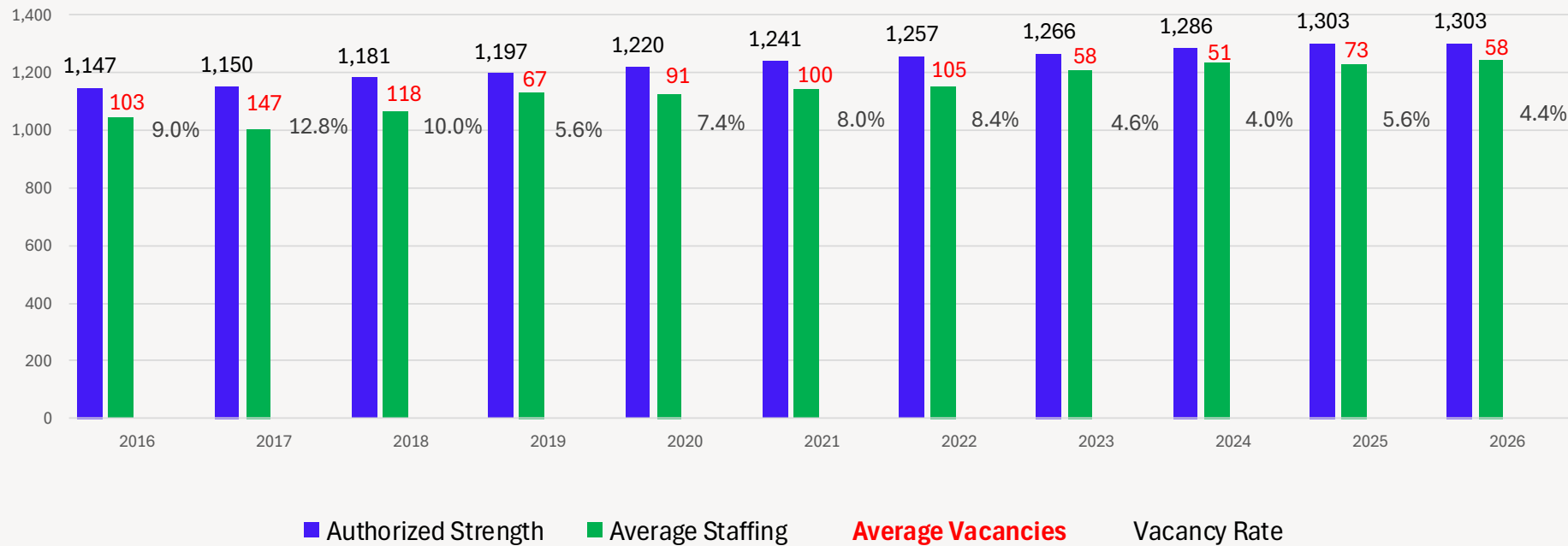
Chief Joel Baker

Historical Sworn Staffing



- Austin Fire has experienced low sworn vacancy rates around 6%
- Exceeded 10% vacant in FY2017 and FY2018 during the DOJ consent decree when hiring was delayed

10 Years of Austin Fire Staffing



Recruiting



Pass The Torch

- 41 Pass the Torch students graduated on Nov 15, 2025.
- Recently ran mentoring sessions for previous Pass the Torch graduates who are in the current hiring process - included workouts to physically prepare applicants for the academy.
- There have been 46 Pass the Torch graduates since 2017 who made it into the fire academy.

Explorers

- Spring classes started in February.
- Trained and competed in the first annual ATX Fire Explorer Games held May 2nd at our training facility on Shaw Lane.

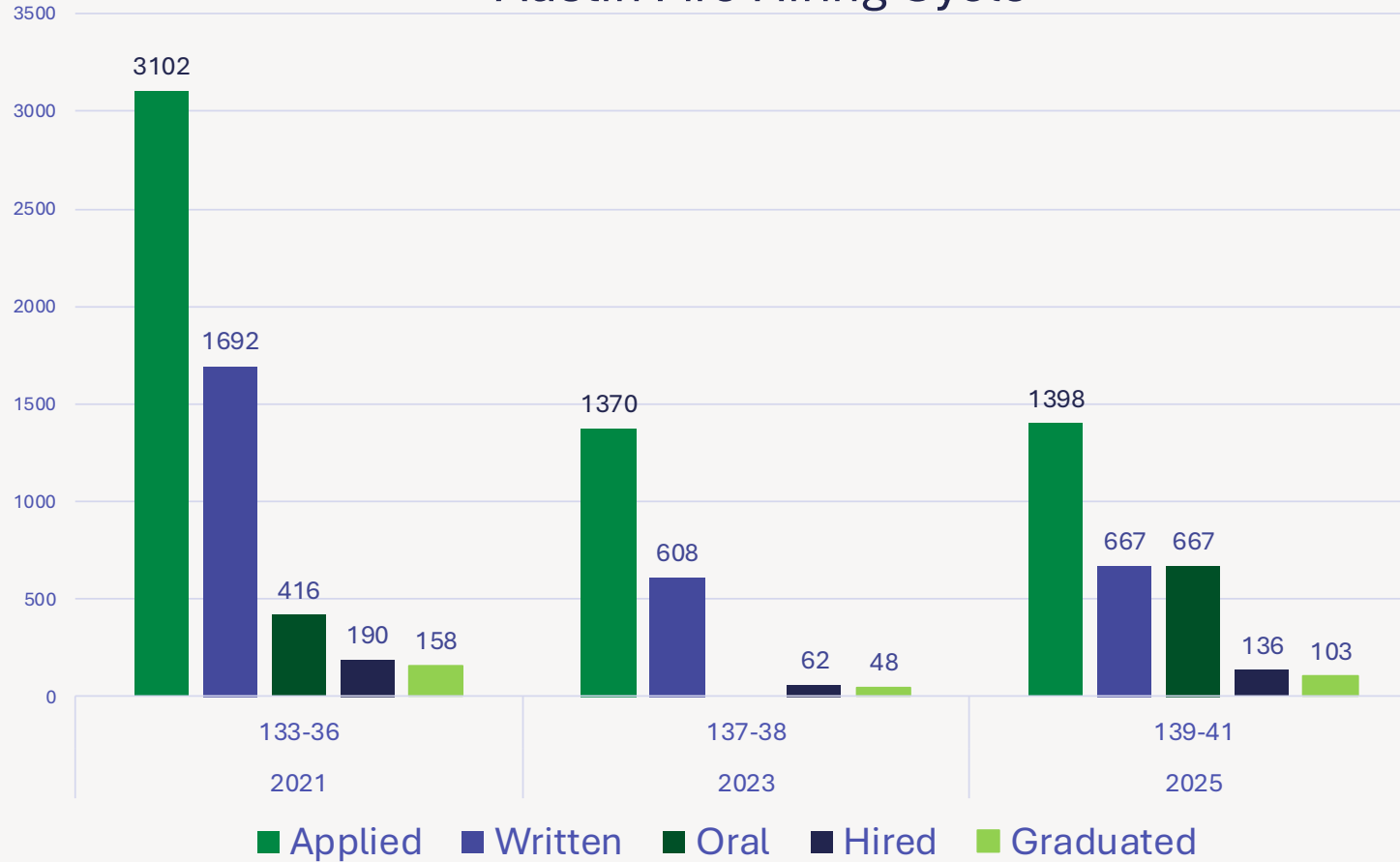
Online

Use of targeted advertising for each cadet hiring cycle.

Hiring



Austin Fire Hiring Cycle



- Declining number of applications is a national trend in the fire service
- 2023 – no oral interview because department did not have a labor contract
- 2025 – same number of written and oral interviews due to administration of exams on the same day

2026 Recruiting and Hiring



Traditional hiring model

- 1,654 qualified applicants in January 2026
- 765 took the written and oral interview exam
- 55 active candidates ready to start training in July

Lateral hiring model

- 235 applications submitted in March 2026 – only 131 met the minimum qualifications
- 71 took the written exam – oral interview exam not required

Separations



Austin Fire Sworn Separations
through May 16, 2026



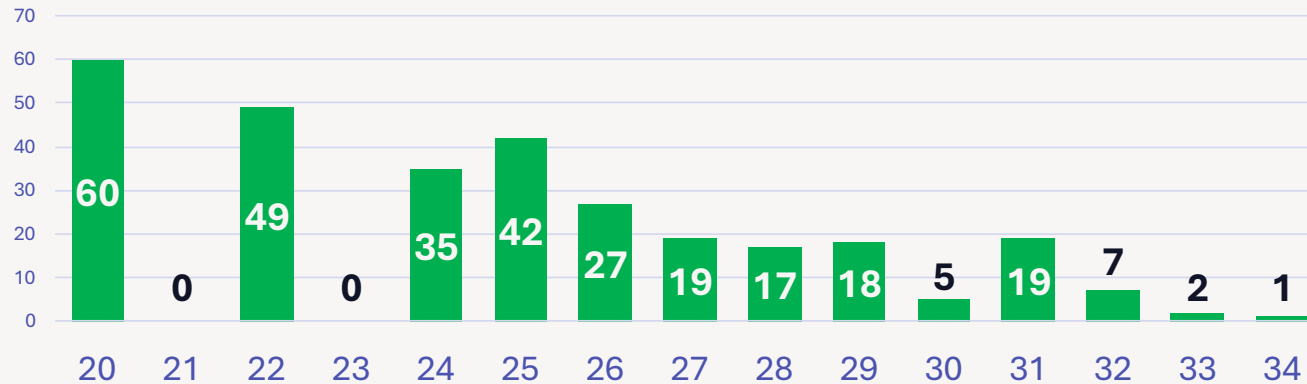
Average Years of Service:
Retirements: 27-30 Years
Resignations: 2-5 Years

Uptick in 2025 expected to
continue due to large cadet
classes 25-30 years ago

Projections



Number of Sworn by Years of Service as of May 2026



Years of Service	# of Sworn
20+	309
25+	157
27+	88
30+	34

Austin Fire graduated zero cadets in 2003 and 2005 due to the dot-com bust.

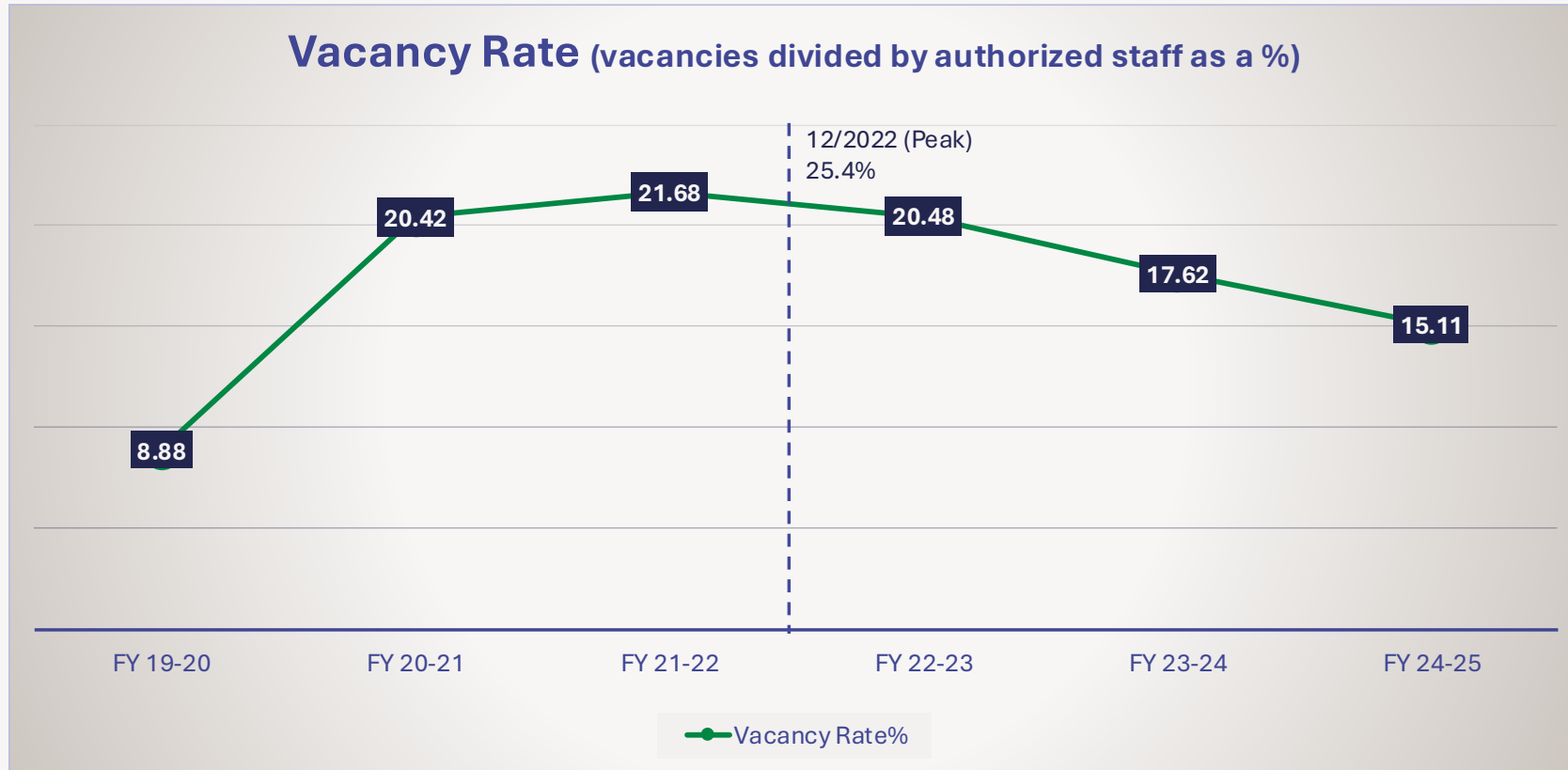
- Increased separations over the next 5 years
- 54 new positions added in FY26 and FY27 to cover Operations work week reduction in October 2027
- Need 2 or 3 cadet classes per year to keep up with vacancies
- Vacancies result in increased overtime expenditures due to backfill for mandatory 4-person staffing

Austin-Travis County EMS

Sworn Staffing and Recruitment

Chief Robert Luckritz

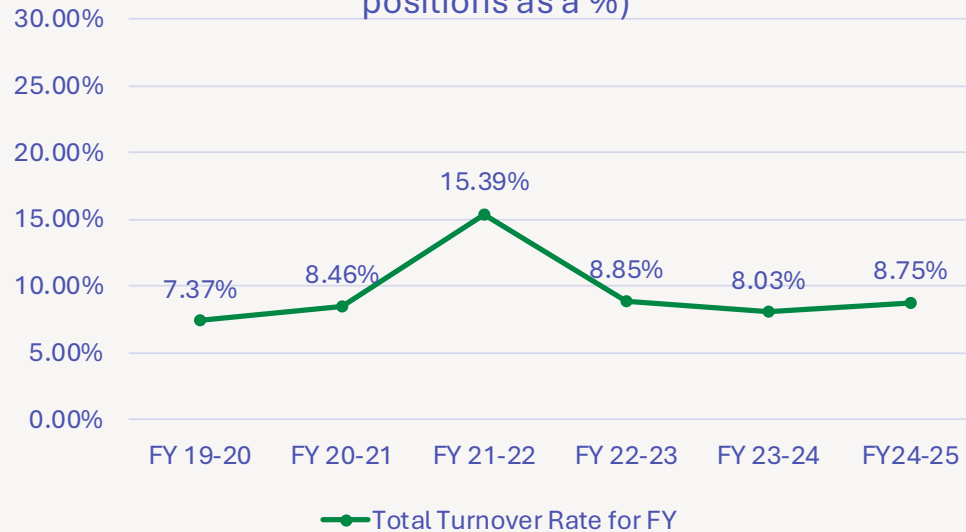
Historical Vacancy Rate



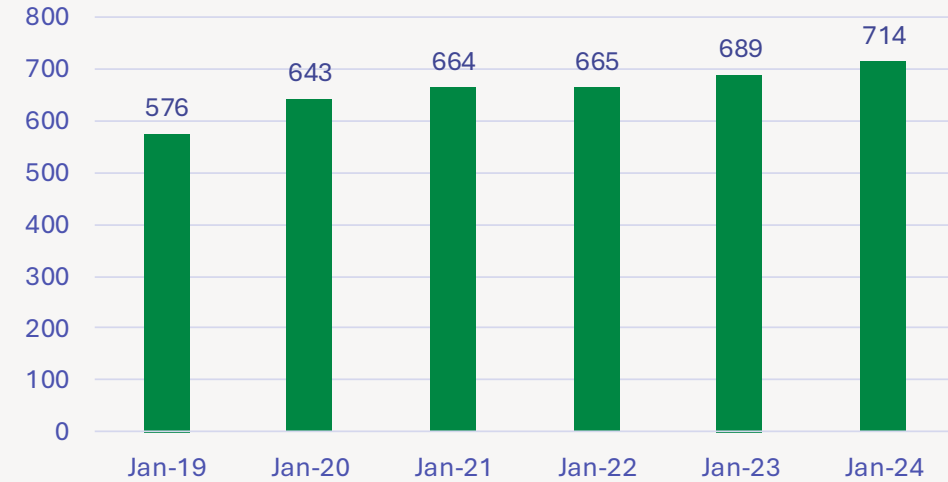
Turnover & Growth



Turnover (Separations divided by Filled Sworn positions as a %)



Total Authorized Sworn Staffing



- Turnover continues to remain below EMS industry averages of 30%
- Primary drivers: retirements and non-preventable life events
- COVID-related impacts peaked in FY22
- FY25: Nearly 30% of separations are retirements

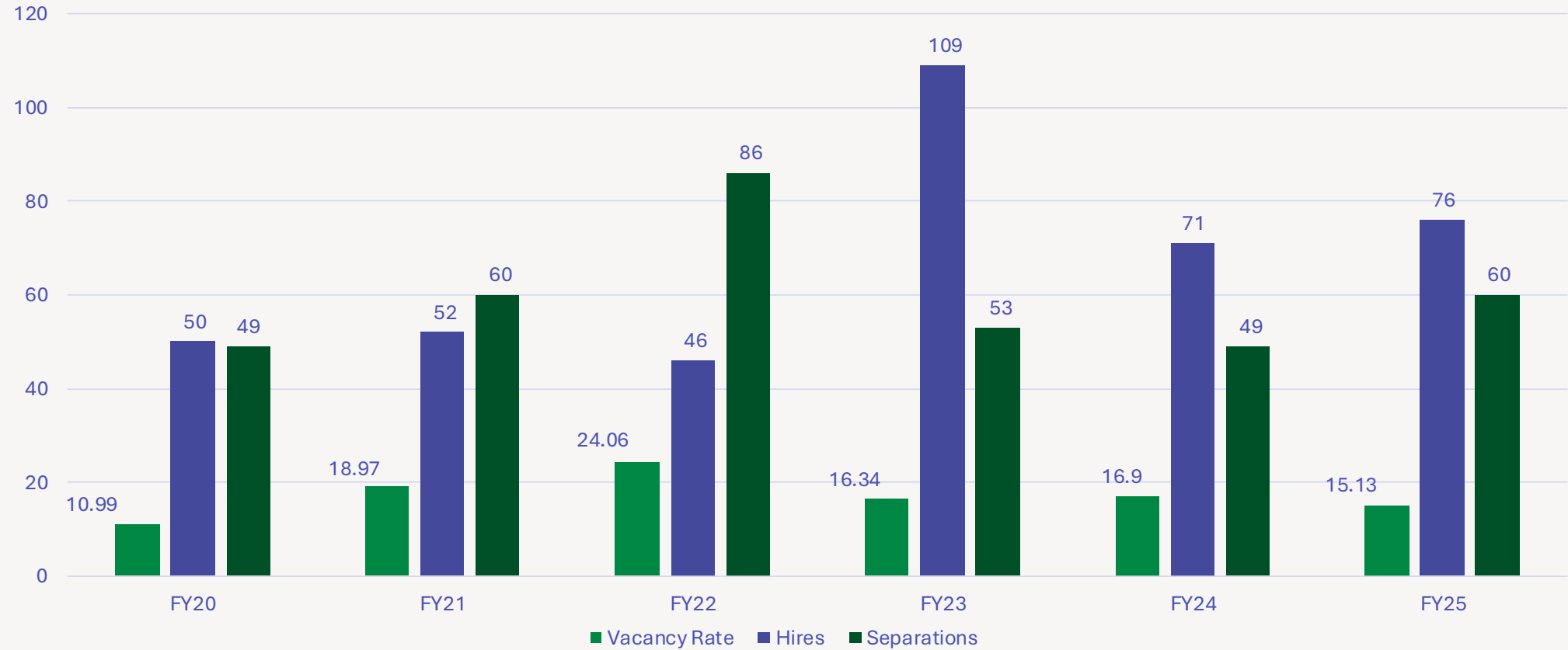
FY20: Addition of 67 Positions

FY21: Addition of 21 Positions

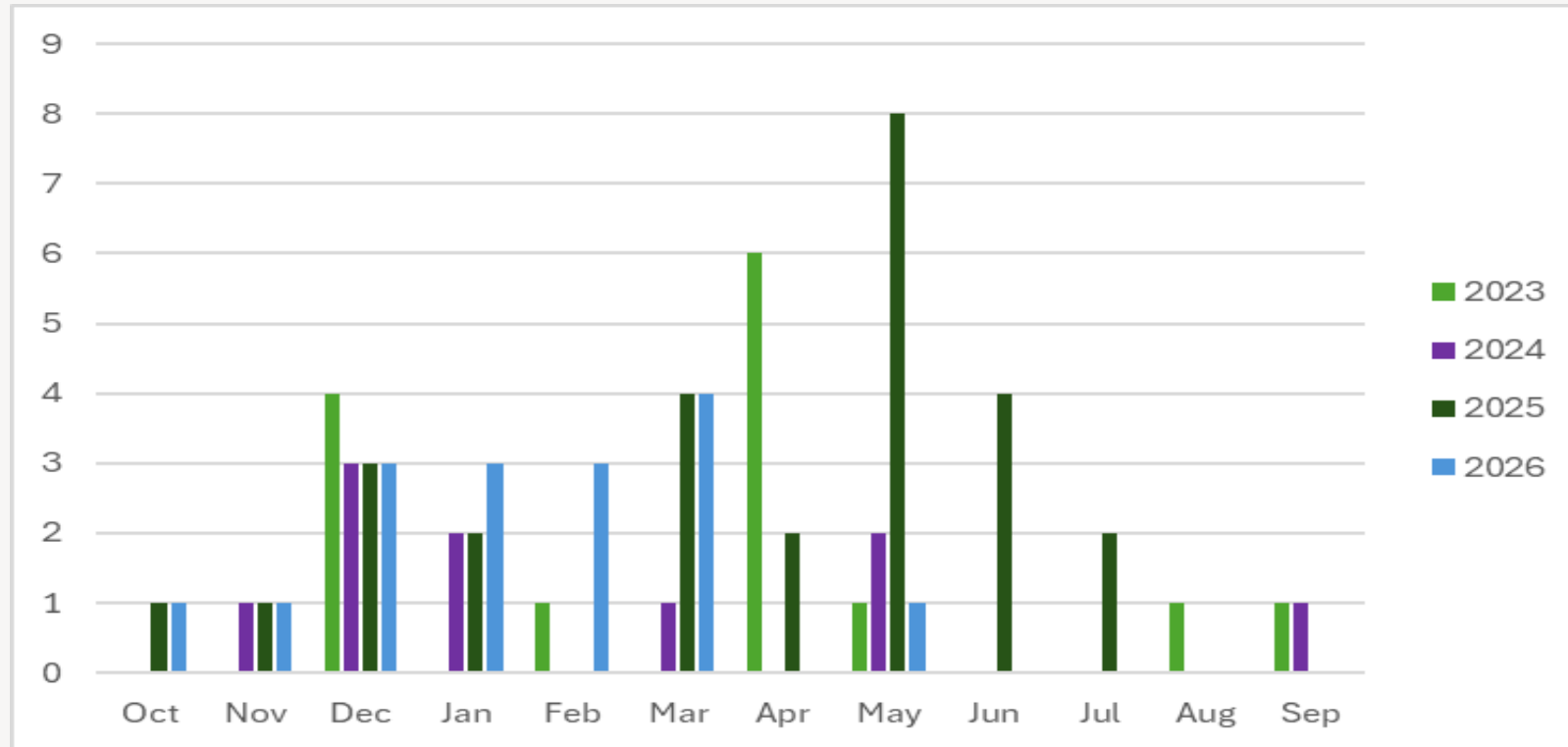
FY23: Addition of 24 Positions

FY24: Addition of 25 Positions

Hiring and Separations



Retirements



Fiscal Year	Total
2023	14
2024	10
2025	27
2026	16
Total	67

***46 Sworn eligible for retirement**



Five Year Plan and Expected Outcomes

Recruitment

- Paramedic New Hire Academy attracts career paramedics nationwide.
- Year-round academies create consistent recruitment cycles.
- Stronger recruitment pipelines to ensure ATCEMS can consistently meet staffing needs.

Retention

- Shorter, blended academy model improves learning retention.
- Early hands-on experience reduces field clearance failures.
- Expanded Field Training Officer capacity ensures cadets receive higher-quality support.

Expected 5-Year Outcomes

- Stronger long-term staffing reliability.
- Greater organizational resilience and operational readiness.
- Increased throughput with improved quality control.

Strategic Improvements Implemented



- To address academy performance, recruitment competitiveness, and long-term retention, ATCEMS has implemented several major operational and structural changes:

Expansion to Four Academies Per Year :

Benefits:

- Reliable hiring cycles
- Predictable workload for instructors
- Stronger recruitment pipelines
- Better alignment with citywide staffing projections

Academy Redesign From 10-Week Classroom to 8-Week Blended Model

The academy has transitioned from a *10-week classroom-only* format to an *8-week blended education model* that integrates both classroom and field training.

Benefits of the new structure:

- Improved retention through hands-on practice
- Earlier exposure to field realities
- Shorter field clearance timelines
- Stronger skill confidence upon academy graduation

Academy Throughput



Over the past three years (March 2022–October 2025), ATCEMS has trained **276 cadets** across **14 academy classes**. Of these:

242 cadets (87.68%) successfully cleared to independent duty

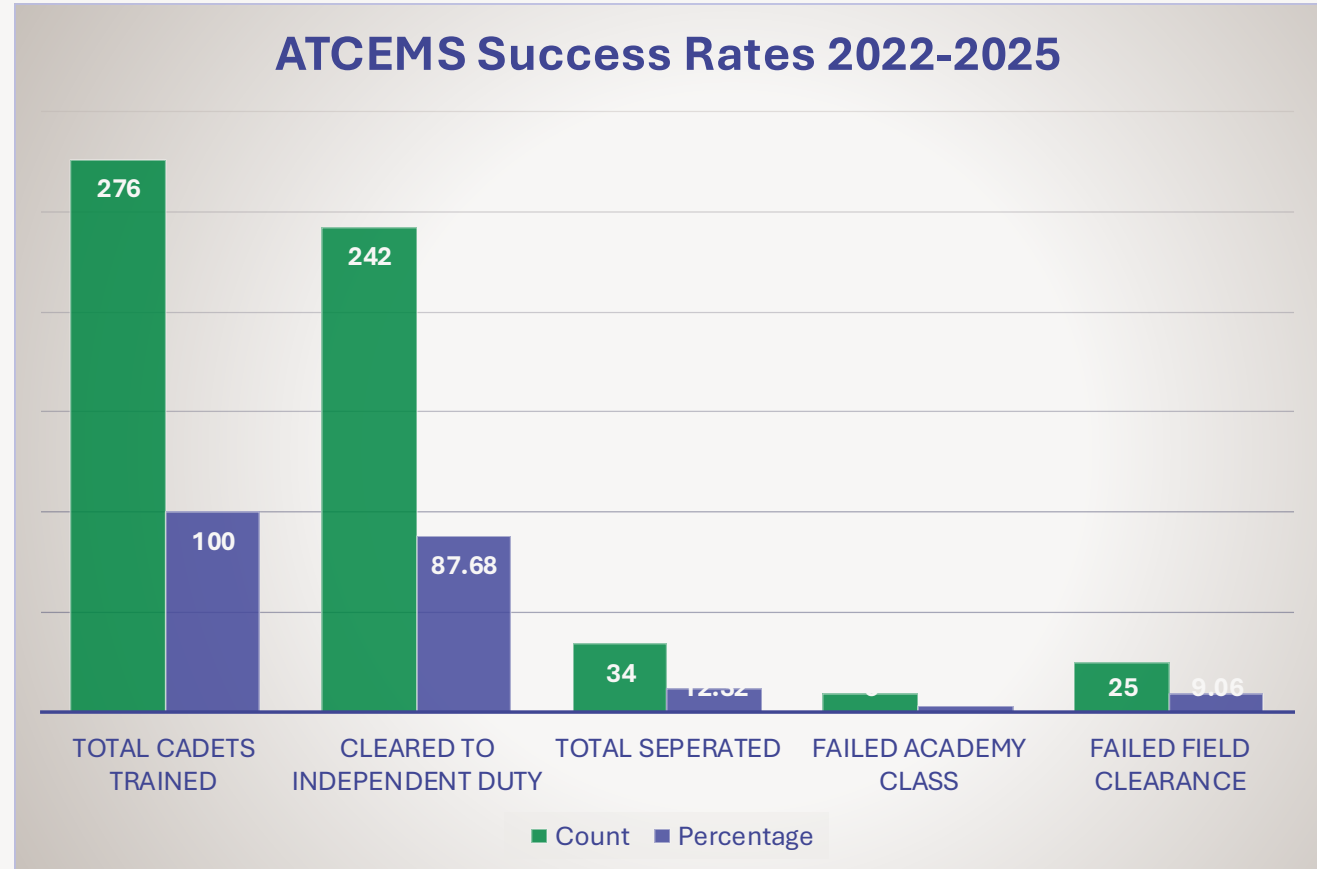
34 cadets (12.32%) separated from the department before clearance to independent duty

9 failed the academy class

25 did not pass field clearance

Historically, most of the attrition has occurred during the **field clearance phase**, signaling a need for stronger consistency and capacity in field training support.

ATCEMS Success Rates 2022-2025



Recruiting



▪ **Recruiting Strategy & Pipeline Development**

- Expanding applicant pipeline through targeted digital marketing, conference engagement, and academic partnerships.
- Building new pathways with high schools, universities, and paramedic programs to strengthen future Academy applicant flow and internal career development.

▪ **Open Application Window**

- Implemented a continuously open application window to give candidates flexibility in planning around personal and professional commitments.
- Aligns applicant timelines with Academy start dates for improved readiness and retention.

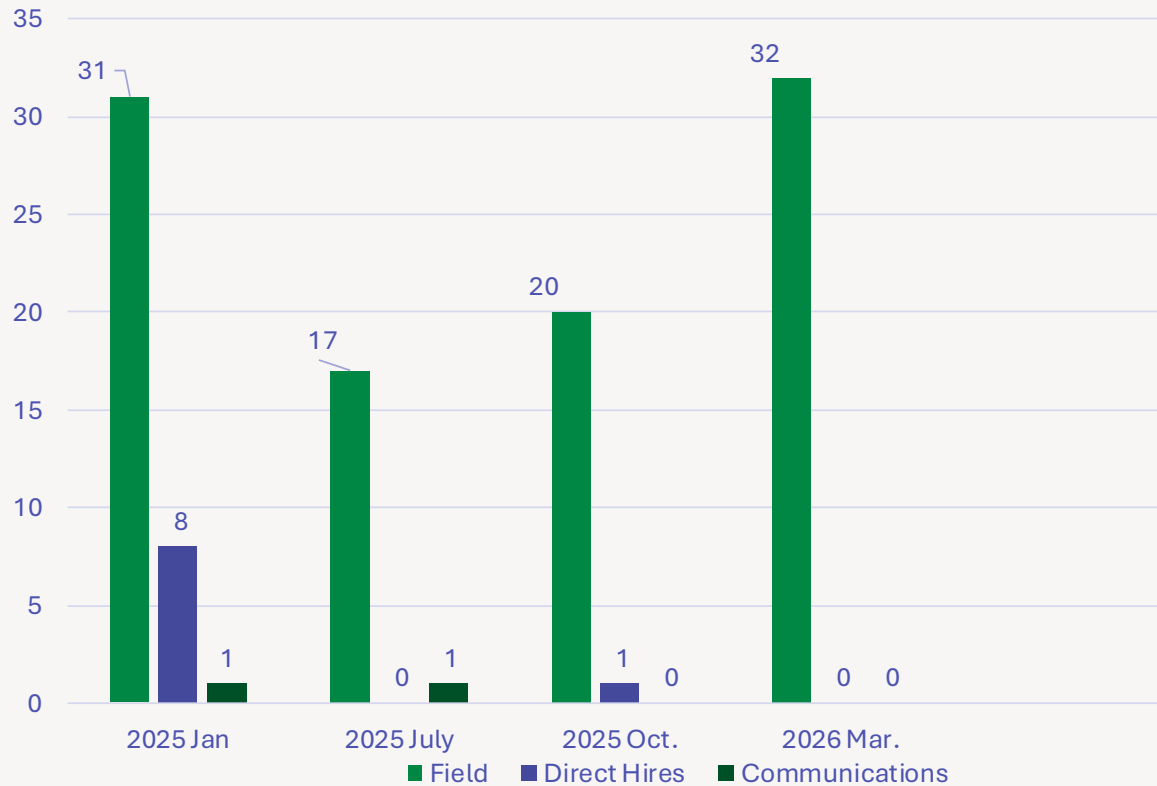
▪ **Process & Platform Improvements**

- Updating the Structured Oral Interview (SOI) to increase efficiency and job relevance.
- Refreshing the EMS recruitment website with modern content and visuals.
- Enhancing tracking and follow-up for prospects from events and online leads.
- Expand KPI recruitment metrics to entirely reflect vital recruitment statistics

▪ **Academy Expansion & Hiring Standards**

- Increased the number of Academies and cadet capacity while maintaining quality standards.
- Updated job requirements to emphasize public-facing experience and two years of driving history to improve applicant qualification.

Staffing Projections



Current Status:

- July 2026 Academy: 53 Cadets
- October 2026 Academy: 47 Applicants , In Phase II Background Process
- January 2027 Academy: Currently Accepting Applications

***May 18, 2026 Academy Graduated 33 Cadets**

Regional Growth Implications



- Hays County ESD9 (March 2026-July 2026) ~40 personnel
- Bastrop County ESD 3 (April 2026- September 2026) ~90 personnel
- City of San Marcos EMS (July 2026-October 2026) ~50 personnel

**The Central Texas Region has added near 200 *new* EMS
Field Provider positions in 2026**



Questions?

Chief Lisa Davis, Austin Police Department
Chief Joel Baker, Austin Fire Department
Chief Robert Luckritz, Austin-Travis County EMS