

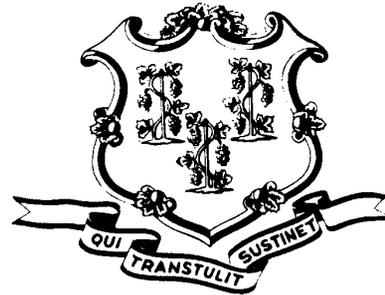
OFFICE OF POLICY & MANAGEMENT

Criminal Justice

Policy & Planning Division



Prison Population Forecast - 2019

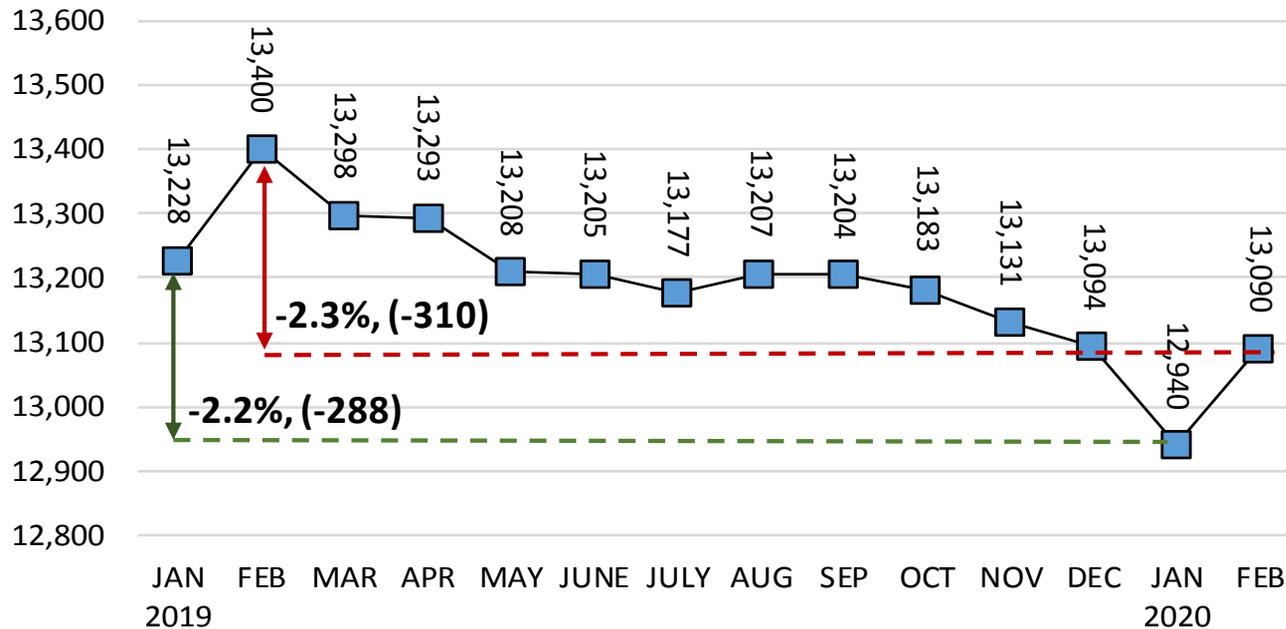


Presented

The Research and Evaluation Unit, CJPPD

January 2019

OPM's prison population forecast, February 2019



Each February the Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division at OPM is tasked with preparing a forecast of the state's prison population for the coming year. Based on an analysis of recent, prison population trends, OPM anticipates that the number of prisoners will contract 2.3% over the coming year.

Measured on a February-to-February basis, the prison population is expected to decline by approximately 310 prisoners. This past year, during the same period, the prison population shrank by 3.0%, or about 420 prisoners. The projected slower rate of contraction is based on OPM's belief that the sentenced population is no longer able to sustain large, system-wide population reductions.

Sentenced inmates and contraction in the prison system

The CT prison population, 1/1/19: 13,228



Inmates incarcerated by the CT DOC are supervised by their legal status as prisoners. Although they are not a homogenous group, sentenced prisoners constitute the largest single group within the system.

Over the last decade, almost the entire contraction in CT's prison population was accounted for by reductions in the state's sentenced population. Between 2008 and 2018, sentenced prisoners accounted for 91% of the entire drop in inmate numbers.

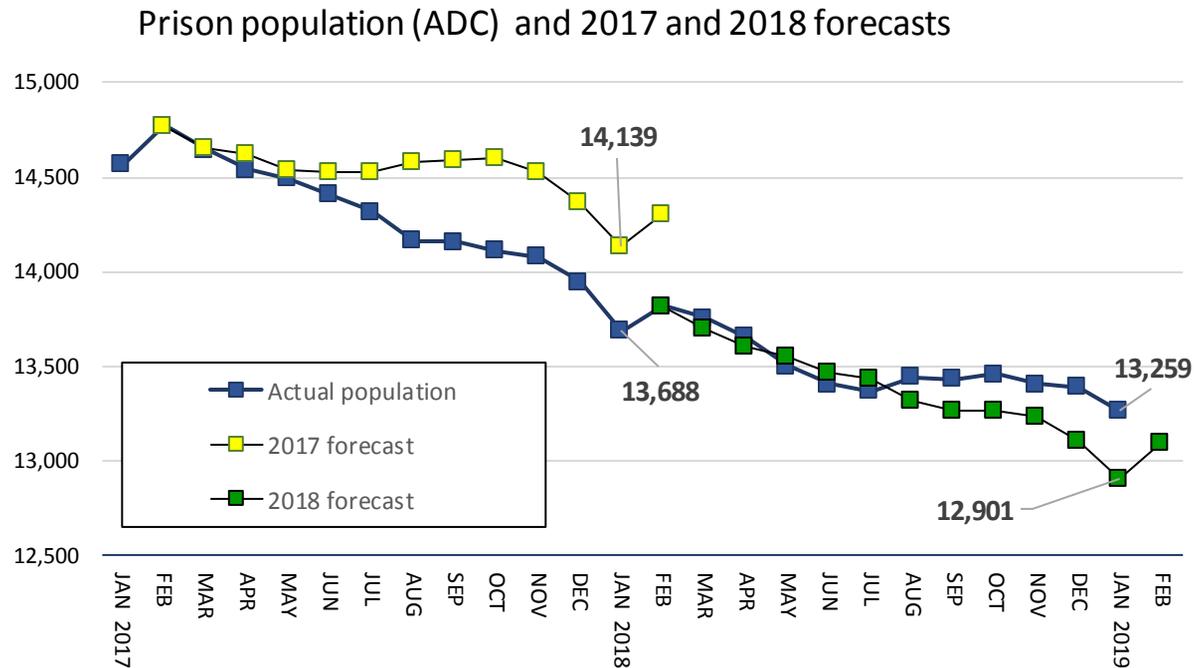
Contraction in the prison population

July 1st to July 1st	Drop in total prison population	Drop in sentenced prisoners	% drop from sentenced
2008 to 2018	-6,042	-5,499	91.0%
2012 to 2018	-3,220	-2,966	92.1%
2016 to 2018	-1,971	-1,949	98.9%
2017 to 2018	-964	-1,053	109.2%

In recent years, the contribution of sentenced prisoners to the prison system's contraction has increased dramatically. In between July 2016 and July 2018, sentenced prisoners accounted for 98.9% of the drop in the size of the prison population.

Note: Because the pre-trial population grew between 2017 and 2018, the contributions of the sentenced population increased to 109% of the system-wide contraction.

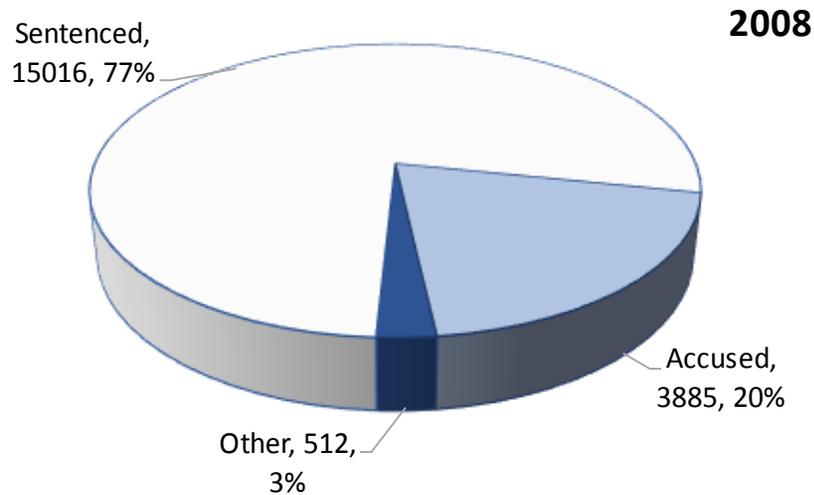
Recent efforts to forecast the prison population



In the last two forecast cycles, OPM has overestimated and underestimated the size of the prison population. In January 2018, there were 450 fewer inmates in prison compared with the figure OPM had anticipated in its February 2017 forecast. In January 2019, there were 358 more prisoners incarcerated than OPM projected in its February 2018 forecast.

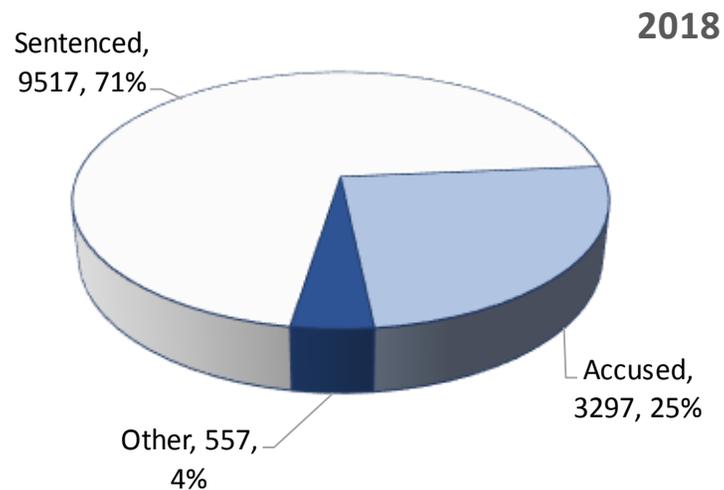
OPM believes that its 2017 forecast underestimated the impact of recently streamlined review and release processes and a diminishment in the overall size of the sentenced population due to fewer sentenced prisoner admissions. In 2018, OPM believes that it erred in not anticipating that an inflection point would appear during the year, effectively signaling a slowing rate in the prison system's contraction.

Sentenced inmates – 2008 to 2018



In 2008, 77% of prisoners in CT DOC facilities were sentenced inmates. By 2018, the percentage of sentenced inmates had fallen to 71% of the entire prison population.

Over the course of the decade, the sentenced population shrank from 15,016 to 9,517, a 37% drop.

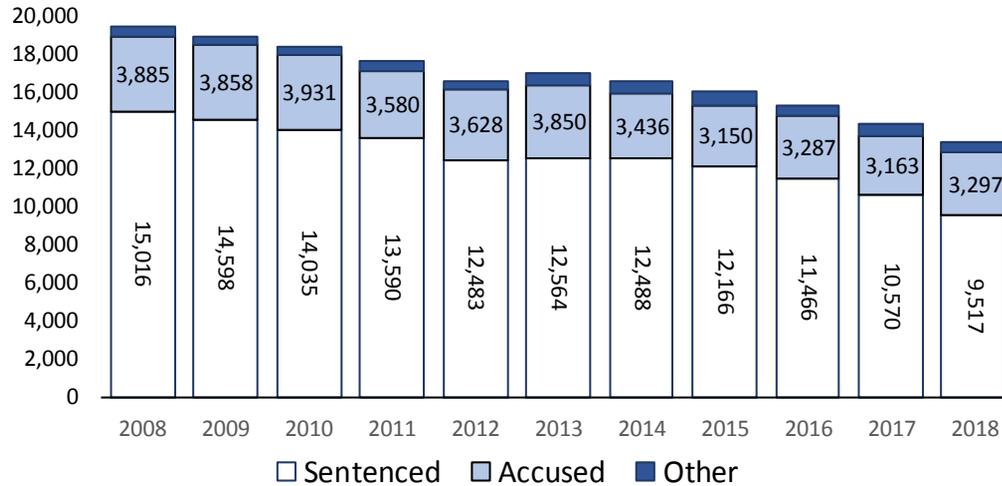


Over the same time period, the accused population, i.e., the pre-trial population, grew from 20% to 25% of the total prison population. This increase occurred despite a 15% drop in the size of the state's pre-trial prison population.

The DOC's ability to control the size of the incarcerated population is generally constrained by the size of the sentenced population. The size of the pre-trial population is largely dependent on external factors.

Sentenced inmates – 2008 to 2018 (2)

July 1 prison population, 2008 - 2018

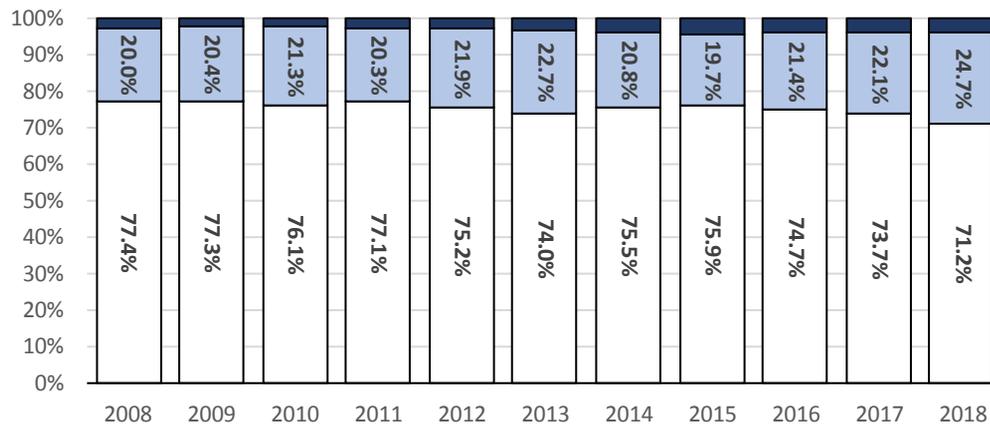


The prison population has declined considerably over the last decade. The chart to the left illustrates that the rate of contraction in was not linear. In fact, between 2012 and 2014, the decline in the prison population actually stalled and in one year – 2013- it actually increased.

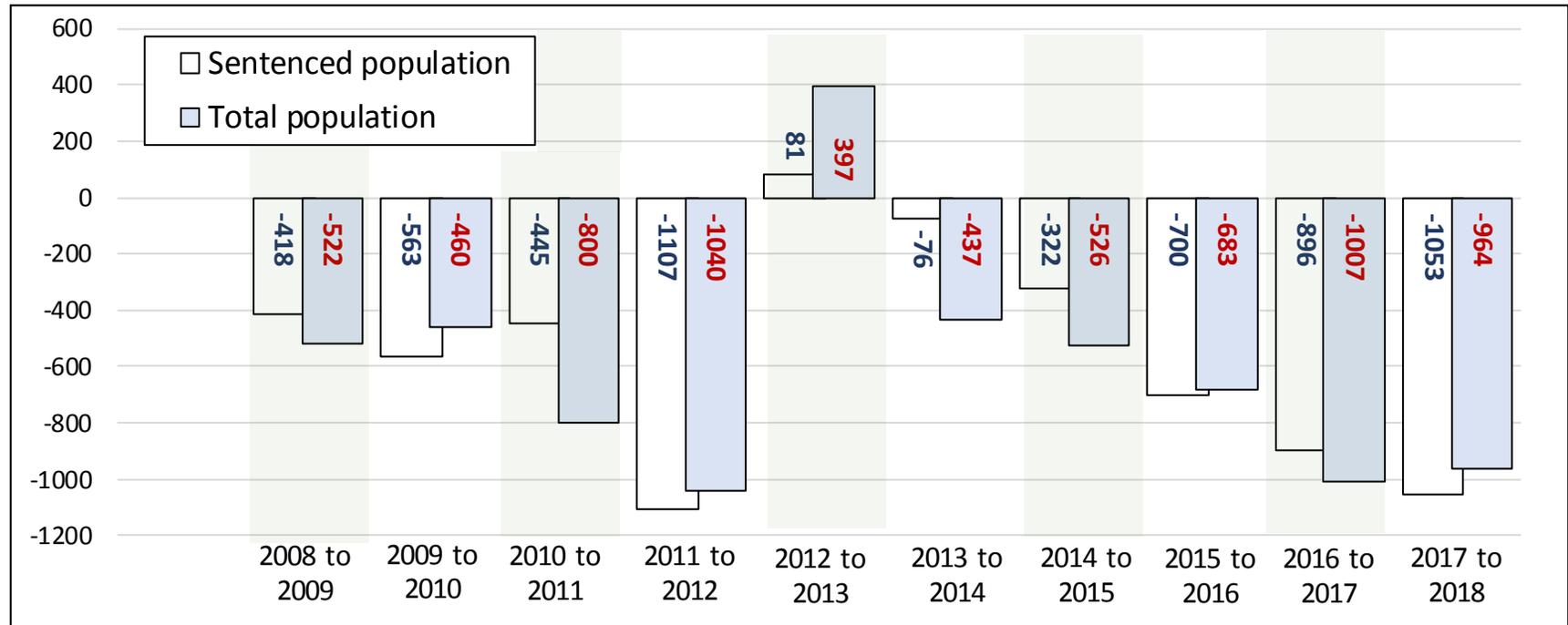
Some of the largest annual declines in the prison population occurred after 2015. In this this period, the CT DOC was able to implement new procedures that streamlined and centralized the re-entry review process. During the same period, efficiencies at the Board of Pardons and Paroles increased the timeliness of the parole hearing process.

These changes accelerated the rate of decline in the state’s sentenced prison population. In turn, this drove the contraction of the entire prison population.

July 1 prison population, percent



Contractions in the prison system - 2008 to 2018

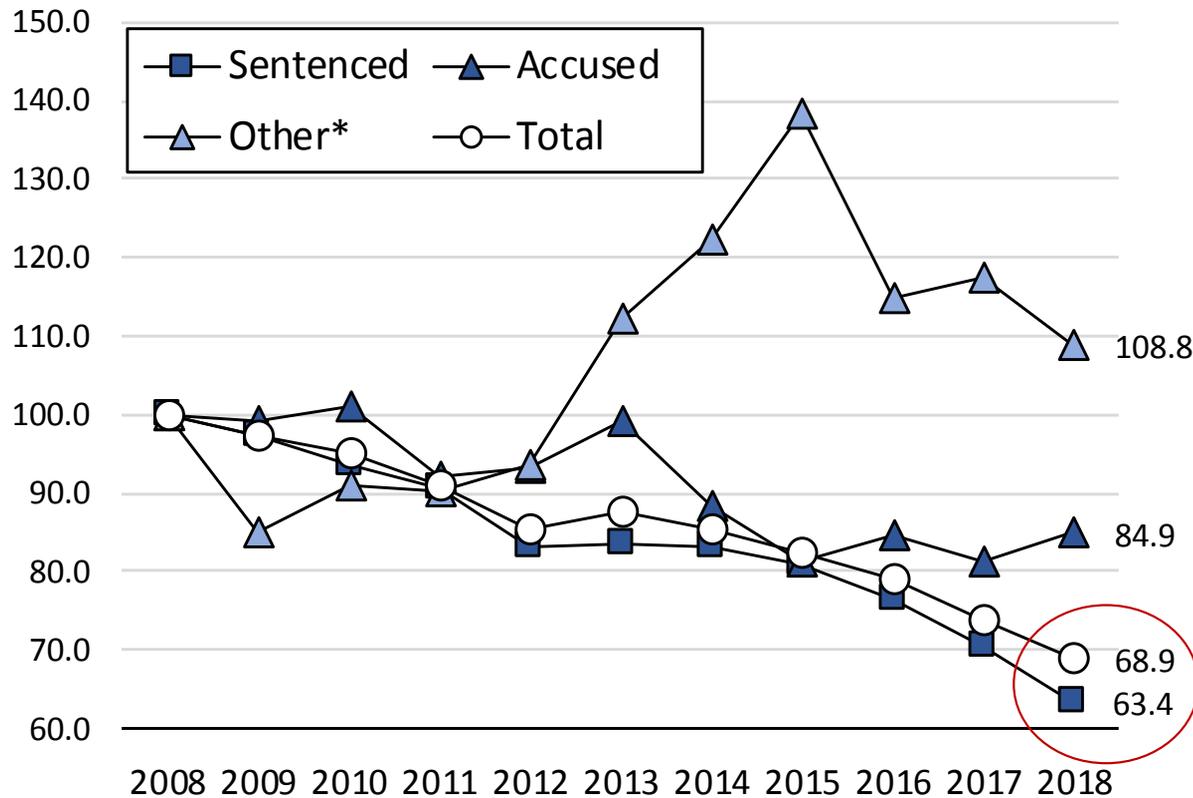


In the chart, shown above, the annual change in the size of the total prison population is shown in light blue. The amplitude of the annual change is shown in red. The annual change in the number of sentenced prisoners is shown in the adjacent rectangles, the amplitudes are in black.

With the exception of the period between 2012 and 2014, most reductions in the size of the state's prison population were closely aligned with drops in the size of the sentenced population. This was especially evident in the period following the creation of CRU in 2015.

Prison system contraction by prisoner type

Prison population indexed by prisoner type



Note: Because of the smaller numbers involved, the "Other" category exhibits large volatility.

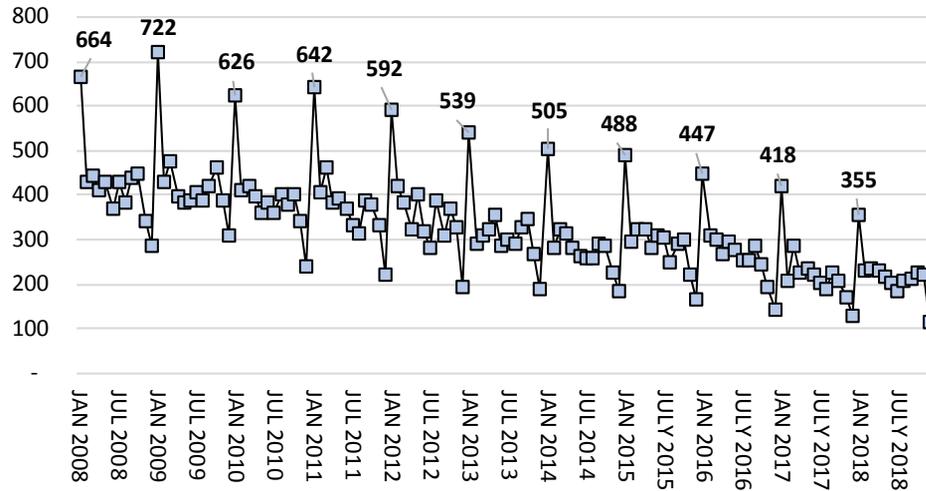
Indexing different prisoner groups from 2008 illustrates how the decline in the state's total prison population was inextricably linked with reductions in the size of the sentenced population.

The cumulative drop in the number of sentenced prisoners can be explained by the alignment of several factors including:

- 1) Fewer sentenced admissions to prison
- 2) Raise-the-age legislation
- 3) Risk-reduction earned credits (RREC)
- 4) Greater efficiency over re-entry review processes (CRU)
- 5) More expeditious parole processes
- 6) Lower rates of recidivism

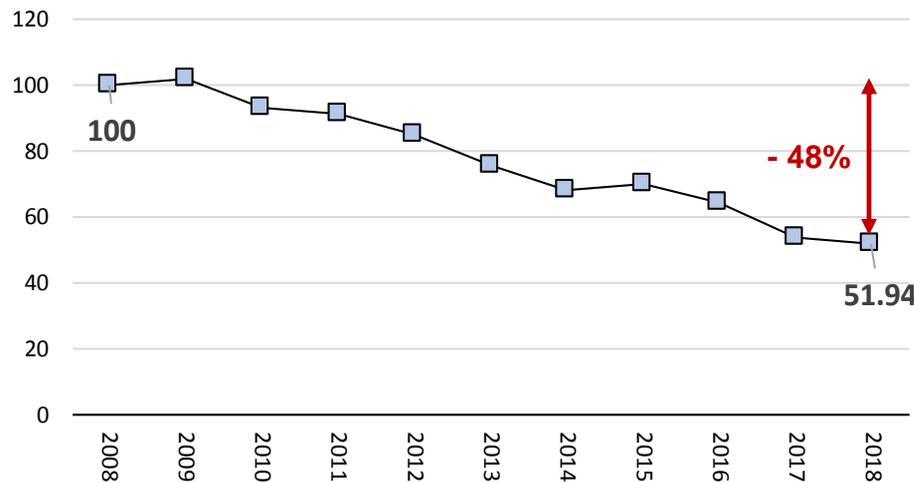
Fewer sentenced prisoners entering the system

Monthly sentenced admits



At the beginning of each year, avid DOC watchers observe what has become known as the January ‘bounce,’ a phenomenon driven largely by the courts where convicted offenders who have been sentenced to prison are allowed to turn themselves in to the DOC after the Holidays. This bounce, which typically accounts for 15% of total annual sentenced admits, has also been shrinking in recent years.

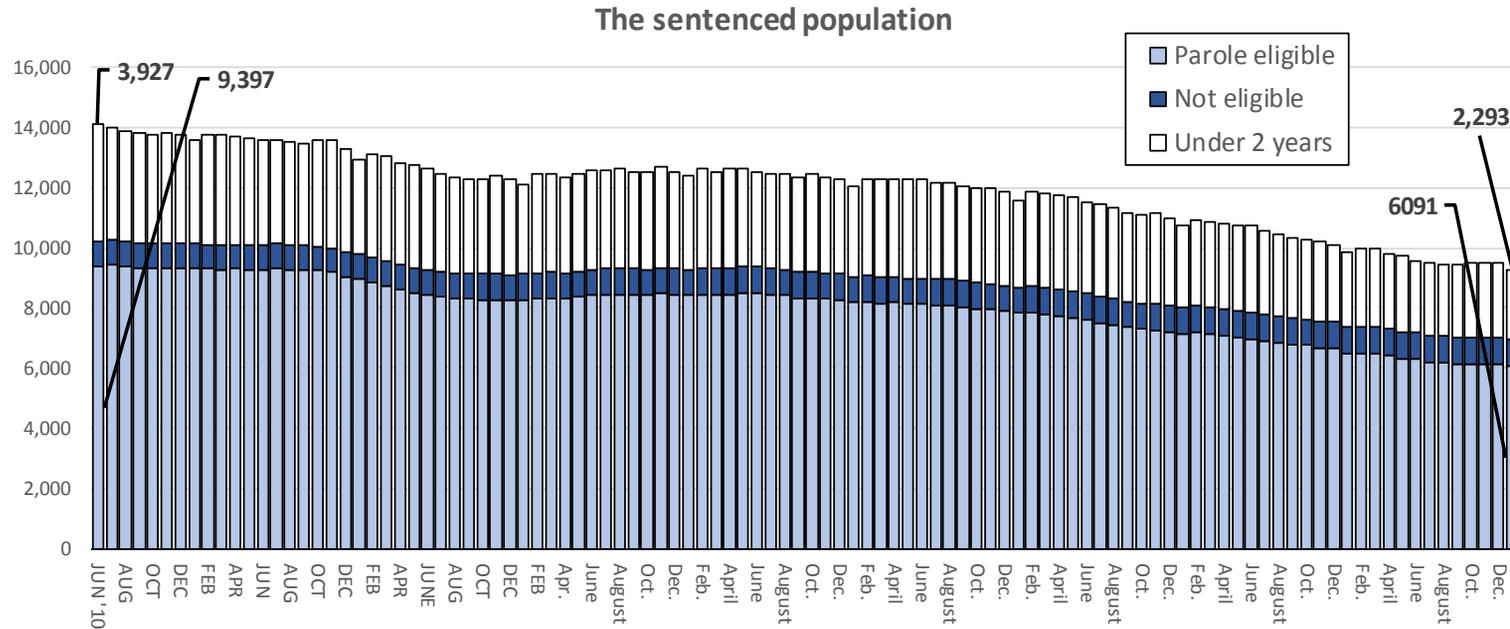
Annual sentenced admits, indexed to 2008



Since 2008, the number of people admitted to prison as sentenced prisoners has dropped by almost 50%.

	Annual sentenced admits	Sentenced admits, indexed
2008	5,079	100.0
2009	5,169	101.8
2010	4,722	93.0
2011	4,619	90.9
2012	4,317	85.0
2013	3,824	75.3
2014	3,471	68.3
2015	3,551	69.9
2016	3,261	64.2
2017	2,723	53.6
2018	2,638	51.9

Sentenced inmates, sentence length and parole eligibility

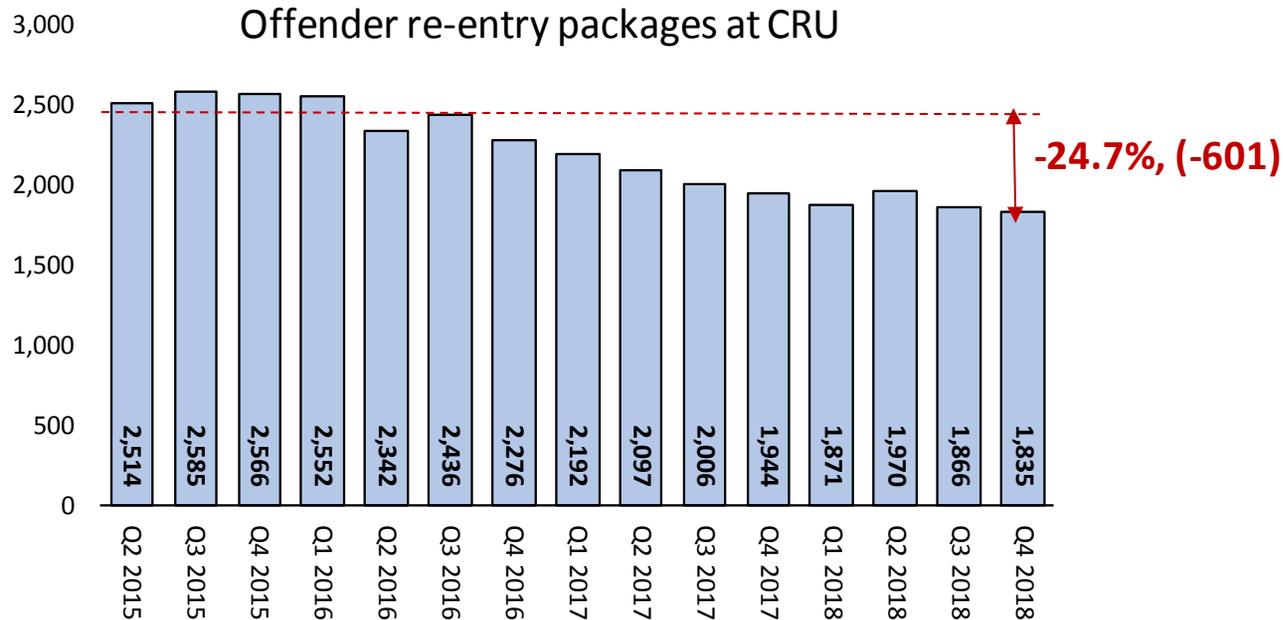


The sentenced population can be segmented into three groups:

- 1) Parole eligible offenders (sentences over 2 years – light blue)
- 2) Non-parole eligible offenders (sentences over 2 years – dark blue)
- 3) Offenders with sentences under 2 years (white).

Offenders serving sentences of under 2 years are most likely to be released in any given month. The number of these offenders has dropped by 41% since 2010 (3,927 to 2,293). During the same period, the parole eligible population declined by 35%.

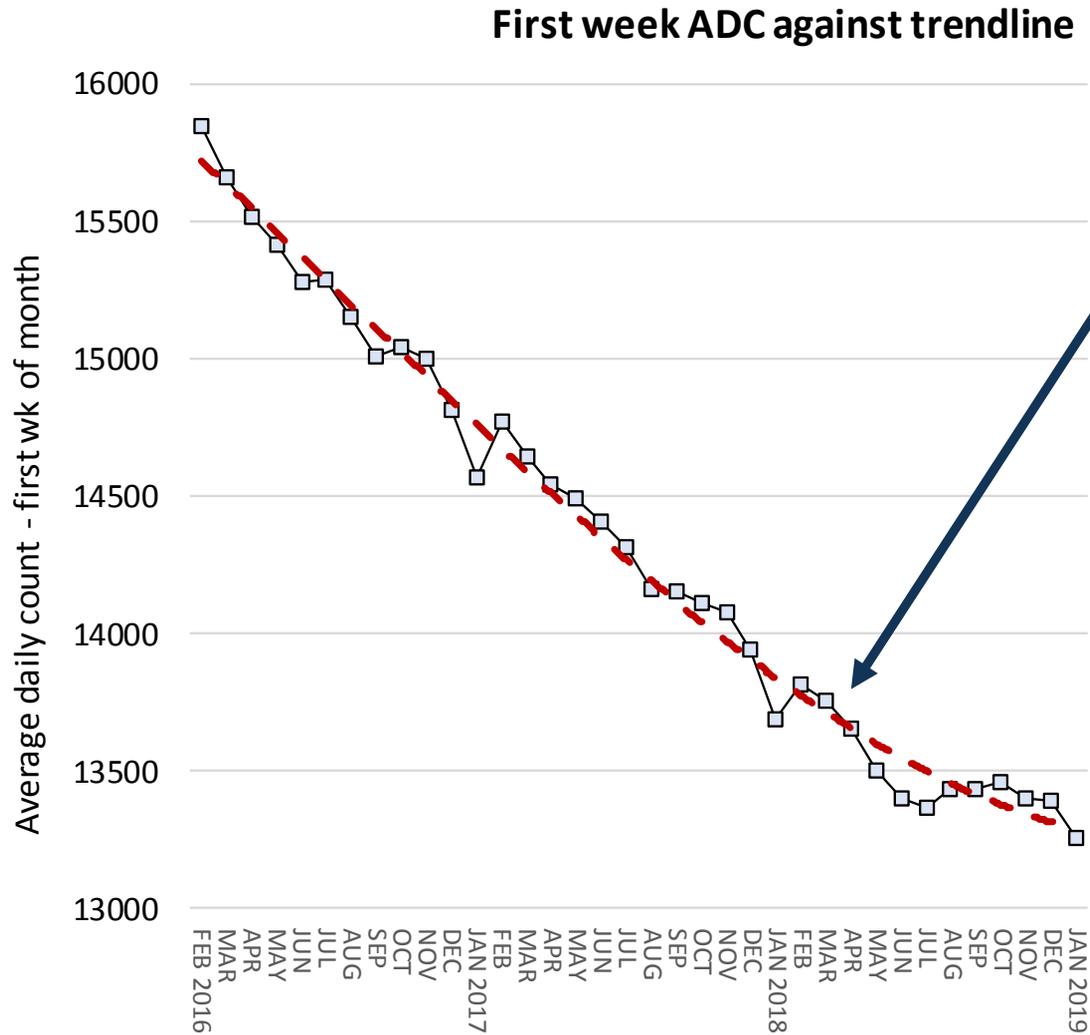
CRU's contribution to system-wide contraction



In March 2015 the Semples Administration at CT DOC created the Community Re-entry Unit (CRU), in an effort to streamline the process governing the review of release-eligible offenders. Prior to CRU, the discretionary release review and decision-making was done at 15 prison facilities. Ample evidence suggested that many release-eligible prisoners were sitting in prison longer than they were required to. Once CRU became fully operational it had an immediate impact on the entire DOC re-entry process. Within several months, the sentenced population began to fall as hundreds of release-eligible prisoners were moved into the community as expeditiously as possible.

Over the past two years, the number of re-entry packages - a measure of how many offenders can be reviewed for release within 120 days - has contracted significantly. OPM believes this to be another indicator that recent rates of contraction in the prison system cannot be sustained.

An inflection point in early 2018

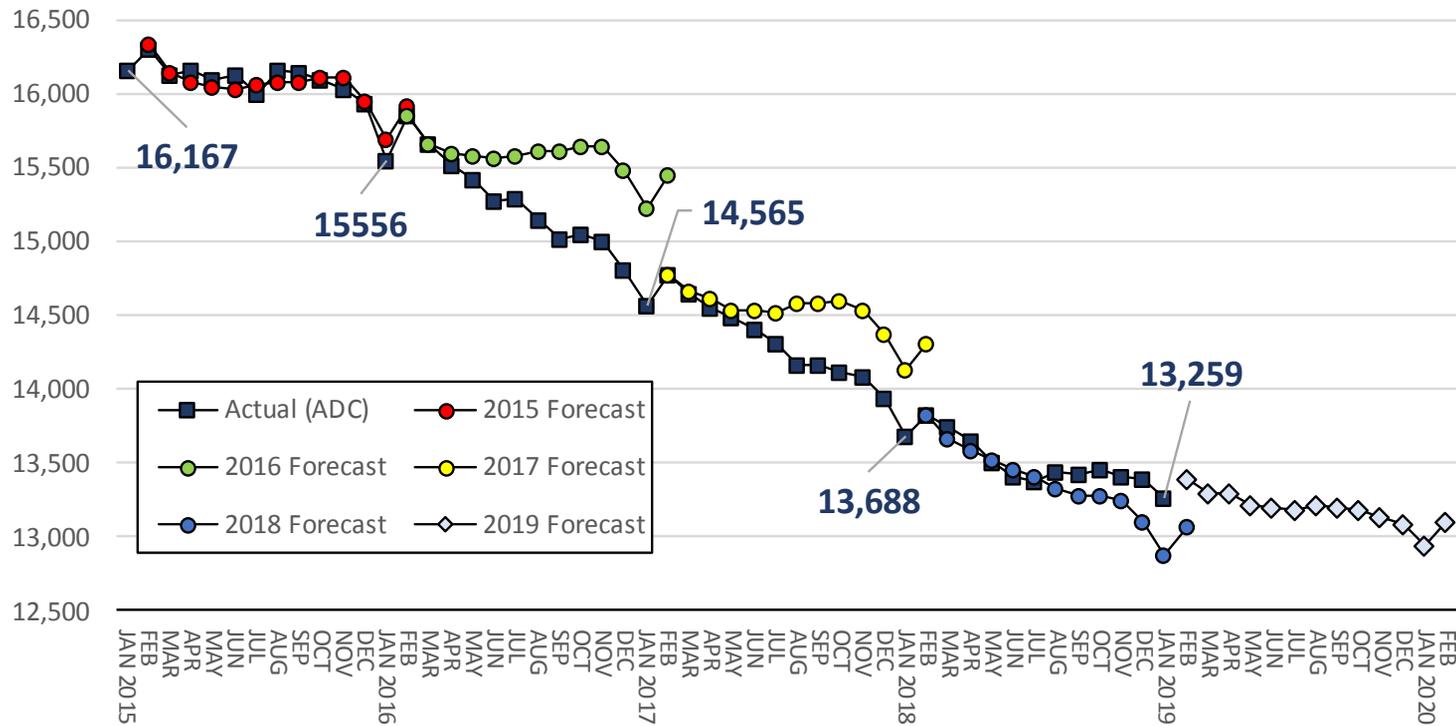


An inflection point - or knee - in the rate of decline in the prison population was observed at the beginning of 2018.

Given the dynamics of the prison system, OPM believes this inflection is a portend of an overall slowing in the contraction of the prison system.

Without significant structural change to the way the system currently operates, it appears unlikely that drops in the prison count witnessed in 2016 and 2017 can be replicated in the near term.

The 2019 forecast against the previous four forecasts



OPM's prison population forecast is intended to provide administrators with a reasonable expectation of how the prison population should trend over the next year given the information that is currently available.

OPM's 2019 prison population forecast anticipates a moderate slow down in the rate of contraction of the prison system. Measured on a February-to-February basis the prison population is expected to fall by about 300 inmates over the coming year.

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**Presentation produced by OPM's
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Ivan Kuzyk, Kyle Baudoin & Kendall Bobula

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