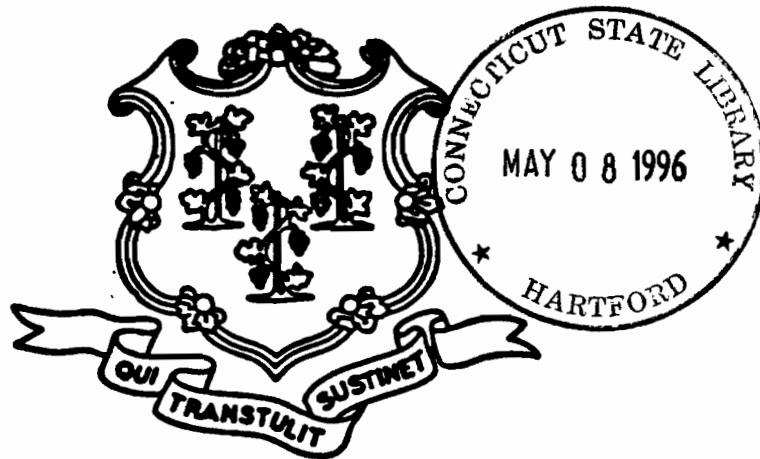


CRIME AND JUSTICE
IN CONNECTICUT

A STATE OF THE SYSTEM REPORT
1980 - 1985



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A STATE OF THE SYSTEM REPORT
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INTRODUCTION

The report that follows presents a brief overview of activities, developments, and progress within Connecticut's criminal justice system for the past five years.

What we call a criminal justice system is really a loose federation of agencies sharing a common obligation of crime control. The agencies that make up the system are different from and independent of each other. Because of the nature of this system, all of its parts do not always work perfectly, and in concert. The parts must work reasonably well together however, if the goals of better crime control and improved public safety are to be realized. It is therefore important to periodically assess criminal justice trends, issues and progress from a system operations perspective.

For the purposes of this report, the term criminal justice system refers primarily to the agencies with formal crime control and victim assistance responsibilities: police, courts, prosecution, defense, and correction. Because Connecticut has a centralized judicial and correction system, the State has primary responsibility for system operations with the exception of police which is predominantly a local function. There are other agencies or groups which affect the criminal justice system but do not have primary responsibility. Key among these are the state legislature, citizen groups with crime prevention activities, criminal justice planning and coordination, and an array of human service agencies including health, welfare, employment, education, and other related services.

Connecticut, like other states, has a separate and distinct system to handle juveniles. Connecticut is unlike most other states however in that the age of adulthood for criminal justice processing purposes is 16 rather than 18 years of age. This means that 16 and 17 year old persons are routinely prosecuted in our adult court system and are subject to the same penalties as those 18 and over, up to and including incarceration.

For those individuals under the age of 16 who are referred to the juvenile justice system, some of the adult criminal justice agencies may be involved but case processing, penalties, and treatment are quite different in most cases. The primary state agencies that deal specifically with offenders under the age of 16 are the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, and the Department of Children and Youth Services.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM PROGRESS

An ideal criminal justice system is one where crime is controlled within the constraints of due process and the clients of the system, offenders, witnesses, and victims are treated in an effective, safe, fair, and equitable manner. Since 1980, substantial progress has been made in the Connecticut criminal justice system toward this ideal.

- o The crime rate in Connecticut (number of crimes per 100,000 population) has decreased 22 percent from 1980 to 1985.
- o For the same period, clearance rates¹ for property crimes² have increased slightly from 19 to 20 percent.
- o Clearance rates for violent crimes³ have increased from 40 to nearly 45 percent.

A decreasing crime rate and increasing clearance rates are both indicators of improving crime control. Charts I and II show Connecticut crime rates and violent crime clearance rates by year for the years 1981-1985, and 1980-1984 respectively.

1

 Clearance rate refers to the percent of actual offenses that result in the arrest and charging of at least one person, or some element beyond police control precludes the physical arrest of the offender and the offense is thereby cleared by exceptional means. Examples of exceptional means of clearance are the offender commits suicide, the offender is killed by the police, an offender already in custody or serving a sentence on another charge confesses, extradition is denied, etc. As the name implies, clearances by exceptional means constitute a very small percentage of all clearances.

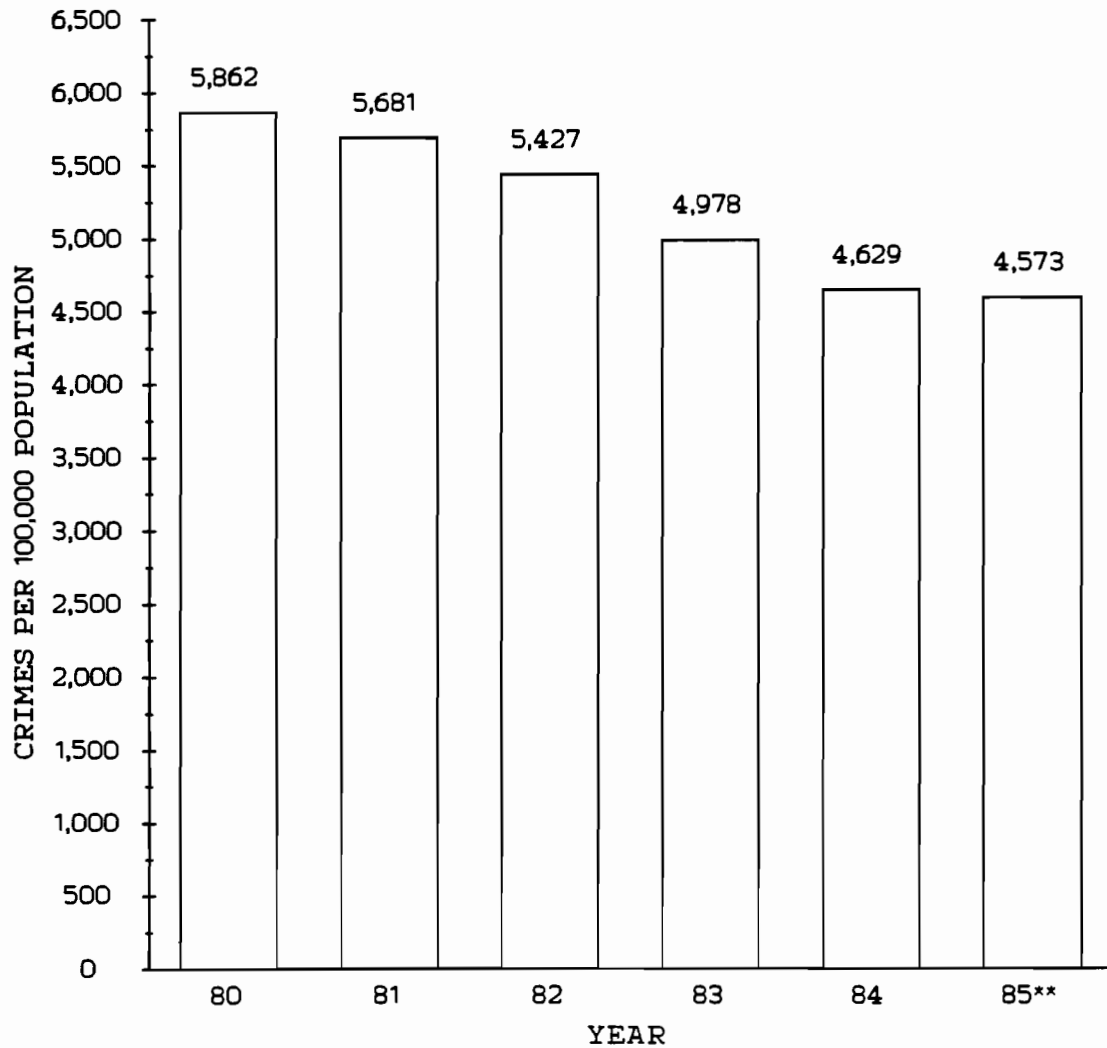
2 Property crimes include burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft.

3 Violent crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

CHART I
CONNECTICUT
PART I CRIME RATES*

1980-1985

DOWN 22 PERCENT



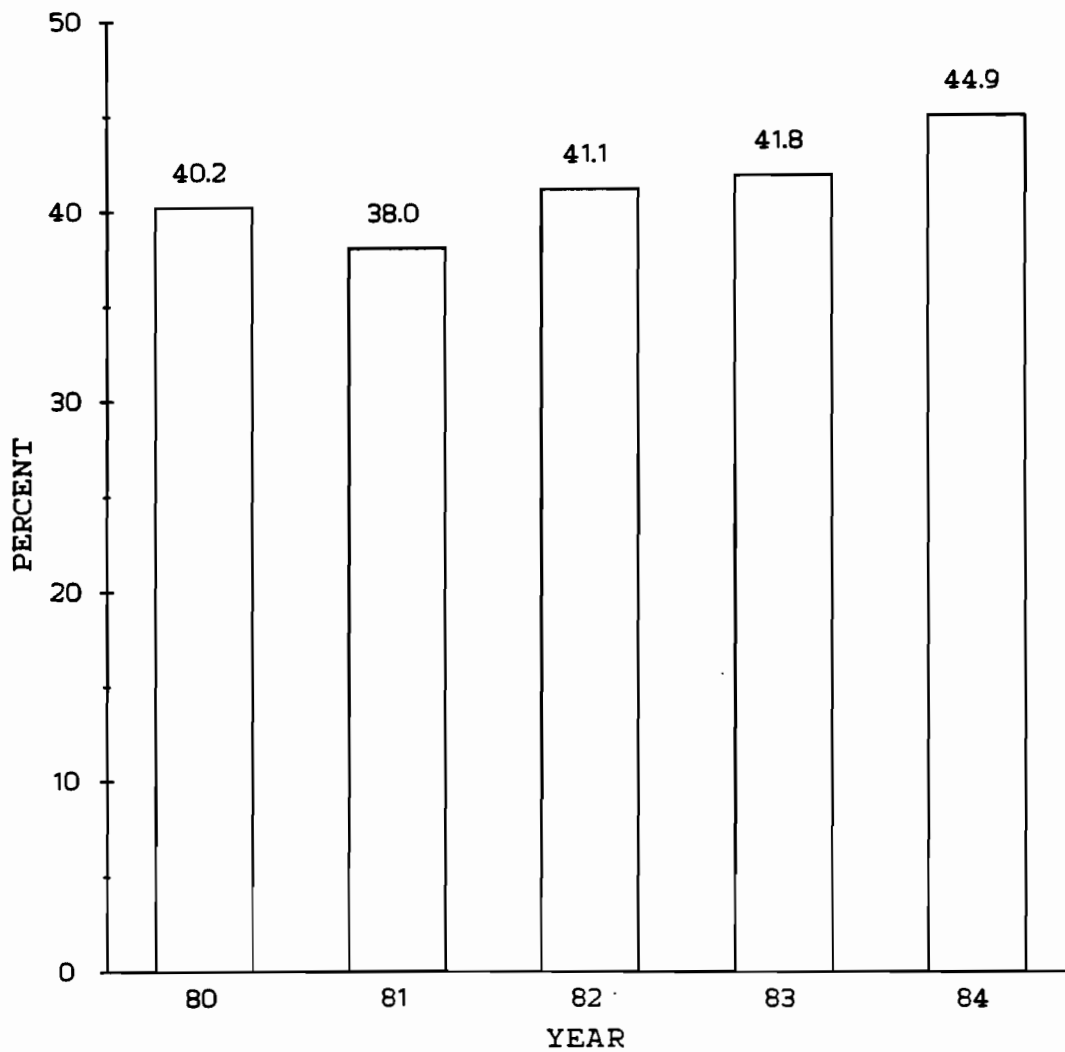
Sources: Crime in Connecticut 1980-1984
UCR Quarterly Crime Index Jan-June, 1985

* MURDER, RAPE, ROBBERY, AGG. ASSAULT, BURGLARY, LARCENY & MV THEFT

**Estimate Based on First Six Months of 1985

CHART II
CONNECTICUT
VIOLENT CRIME CLEARANCE
RATE BY YEAR

1980-1984



JUDICIAL PROCESSING

The price of improving clearance rates is increasing pressure on Connecticut's prosecutors, public defenders, criminal courts, probation, and corrections to deal efficiently and fairly with offenders, witnesses, and victims in order to assure continued improvement in public safety.

The response of prosecutors, public defenders and the Judicial Department to increased pressure can be seen clearly in the disposition of serious cases⁴ by the Connecticut Superior Court from 1980 to 1984. The number of serious criminal cases disposed of rose from 4,280 in fiscal year 1979-80 to 7,939 in fiscal year 1983-84, an increase of over 85 percent. Chart III shows the year by year increase in the number of serious criminal cases disposed of by Connecticut courts.

In spite of this substantial increase in the number of serious felony cases processed, a conviction rate of 70 percent for serious cases was maintained. Of those convicted of felonies, 60 percent are incarcerated.

The average length of sentence for convicted felons in Connecticut has not increased significantly since 1980 but sentence length for certain very serious offenders has increased substantially. For example, the average sentence length for robbery increased 73 percent from 1980 to 1984 and the average sentence length for serious sexual assault in 1984 is four times what it was in 1980.

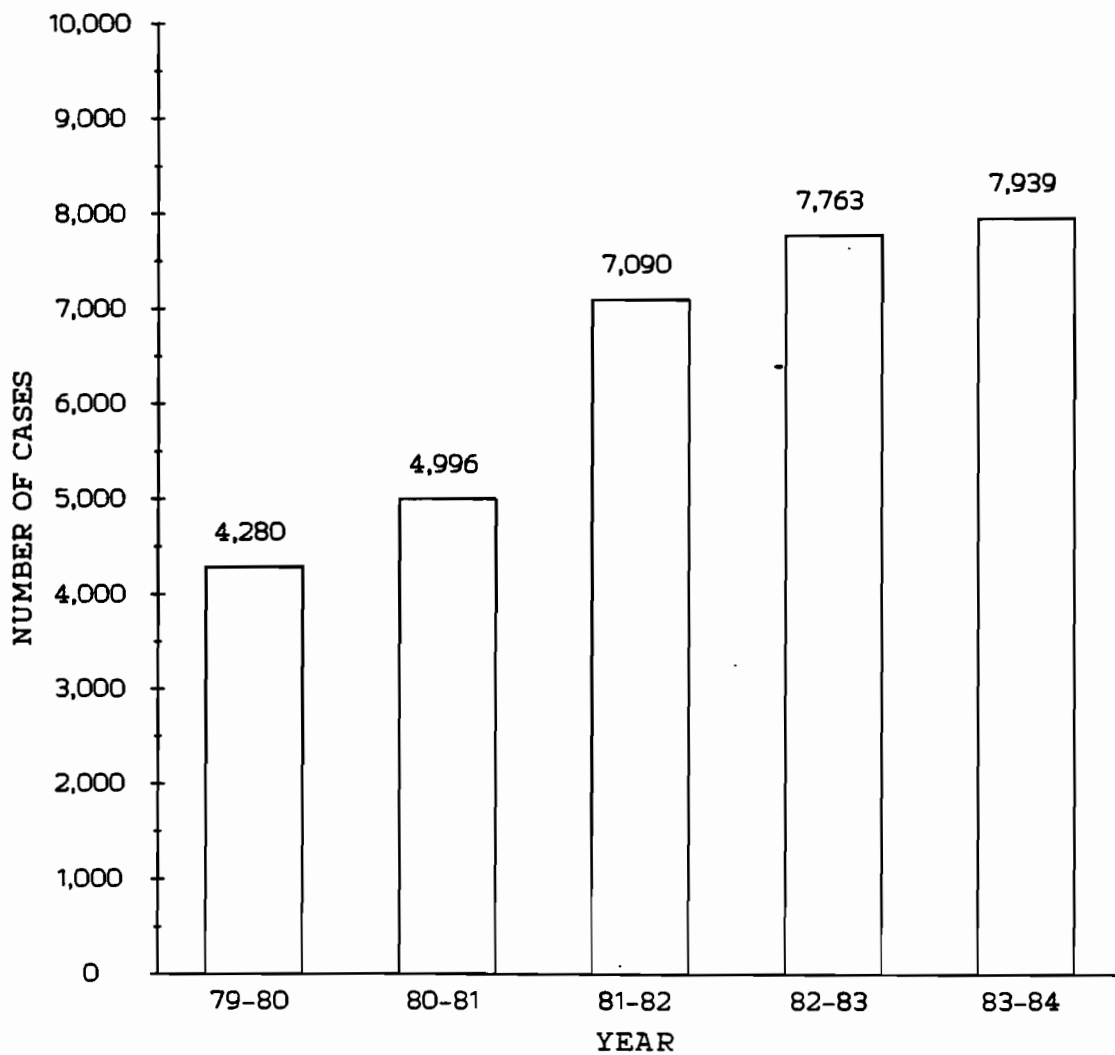
Justice delayed is very often justice denied. The Connecticut Judicial Department is very cognizant of this and has set stringent standards with regard to the processing time for serious criminal cases.⁵

⁴ Serious cases are defined as capital, A, B and C felonies.

⁵ Time standards imposed by the Judicial Department for the disposition of more serious criminal matters at JD locations are one year for cases in the judicial districts of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury, and six months for the remaining judicial districts.

CHART III
CONNECTICUT
DISPOSITION OF SERIOUS
CASES BY YEAR

1980-1984



From 1981 to 1985, the average disposition time for serious criminal cases fell from 13.6 months to 4.9 months, thus virtually assuring compliance with the deadline imposed by the Speedy Trial Act on July 1, 1985⁶.

Chart IV shows the average disposition time for serious criminal cases by year for the period 1981-1985.

Along with the increased number of serious criminal cases, the Connecticut courts disposed of 111,663 cases involving less serious criminal offenses⁷ in 1983-84 compared to 100,567 such cases in 1980-81, an 11 percent increase. The number of motor vehicle cases disposed of also increased from 336,424 in 1980-81 to 392,138 in 1983-84, a 17 percent increase.

The number of civil cases disposed of from 1980 through 1984 has remained fairly constant but the number of civil cases pending, although still high (53,432 cases), has actually decreased over 12 percent from 1980 to 1984. The number of jury cases pending decreased 10 percent from 1983 to 1985. This is due to a number of major factors including the attorney trial referee program, the transfer of civil non-jury cases from larger judicial districts to more rural areas, the return to the civil division of some of the judges who had been reassigned to the criminal division in the early 1980's, the fact finders program, and a decline in civil case filings.

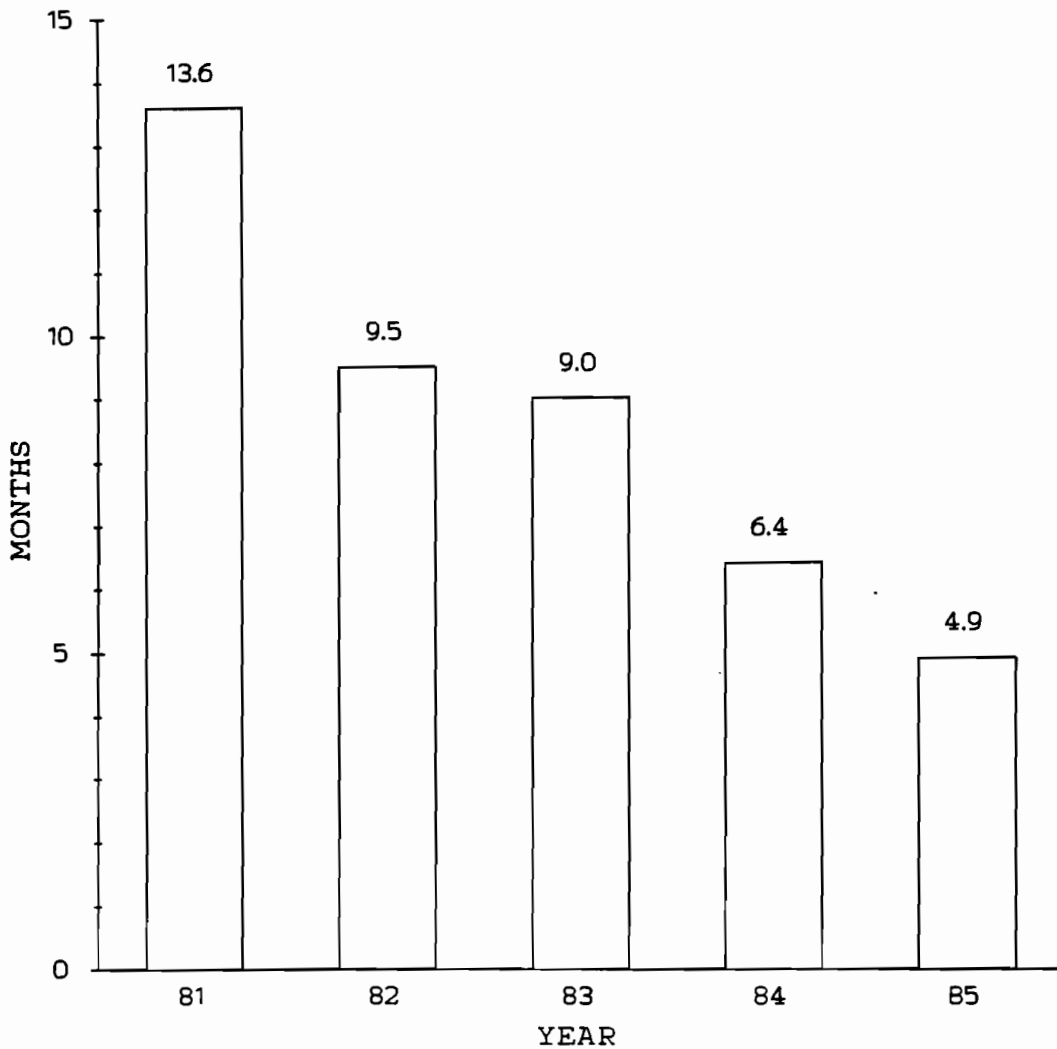
This combination of factors also resulted in a reduction of the average time it takes to dispose of a civil case, once it is placed on a trial list.⁸ On July 1, 1981, the average time to dispose of a civil case placed on the Connecticut jury trial list was 32.2 months. By July, 1985, the average time had decreased to 23.8 months. The average disposition time for civil cases placed on the court trial list has decreased from 20.5 months in July, 1981 to 8.2 months in July, 1985.

6 On July 1, 1985 time standards for felony cases were compressed to eight months for confined defendants and one year or non-confined defendants.

7 Less serious criminal offenses are class D felonies and all misdemeanors

8 The average civil case disposition times do not include time from filing of a case until its placement on a trial list.

CHART IV
CONNECTICUT
AVERAGE DISPOSITION TIME
FOR SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES*



*Capital, A, B and C Felonies

PROBATION AND CORRECTIONS

The criminal justice responsibility of the State does not end with a criminal conviction. The large increase in criminal case disposition since 1980 has placed pressure on probation, and the Department of Correction to deal with the unprecedented additional number of individuals placed under their supervision.

In fiscal year 1980-81, the Connecticut Probation Department was responsible for the supervision of 20,690 cases. By fiscal year 1984-85, cases under supervision had risen to 48,000, a 132 percent increase.

Chart V shows growth in probation cases by year. During the same period the number of staff available to work with cases increased from 152 to 160, a five percent increase. A probation officer in Connecticut supervised an average of 290 probationers in 1984 compared to 136 in fiscal year 1980-81.

In the Department of Correction the average number of persons incarcerated on any day increased from 4,043 in 1980 to 5,383 in 1984. The average number for the month of November, 1985 was 5,872, a 45 percent increase over the 1980 figure. Chart VI shows the growth in the number of persons incarcerated from 1980 to 1984. This increase would have been much larger (83% rather than 45%) without the State's efforts to control the number of persons incarcerated. Part of this effort consisted of alternatives to incarceration such as an upgraded and expanded Bail Commission wherein a greater number of persons accused of non violent offenses could be released prior to case disposition, a supervised pretrial release program, halfway houses, supervised home release, and intensive probation.

It is estimated that without the alternatives more than 2,000 additional persons would be incarcerated. The increase in alternatives to incarceration has been accompanied by an increase in the number of beds available in the Department of Correction facilities. The new Cheshire, Enfield, and Gates facilities together with leased space have provided nearly 1,200 new beds during 1981-1985. Nine hundred additional beds are planned for a total of nearly 2,200 new beds. The table on page 12 shows the chronology of major increments in the number of permanent beds added to DOC from 1981 through early 1986.

CHART V
CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION
TOTAL CASELOAD BY YEAR
1980-1985

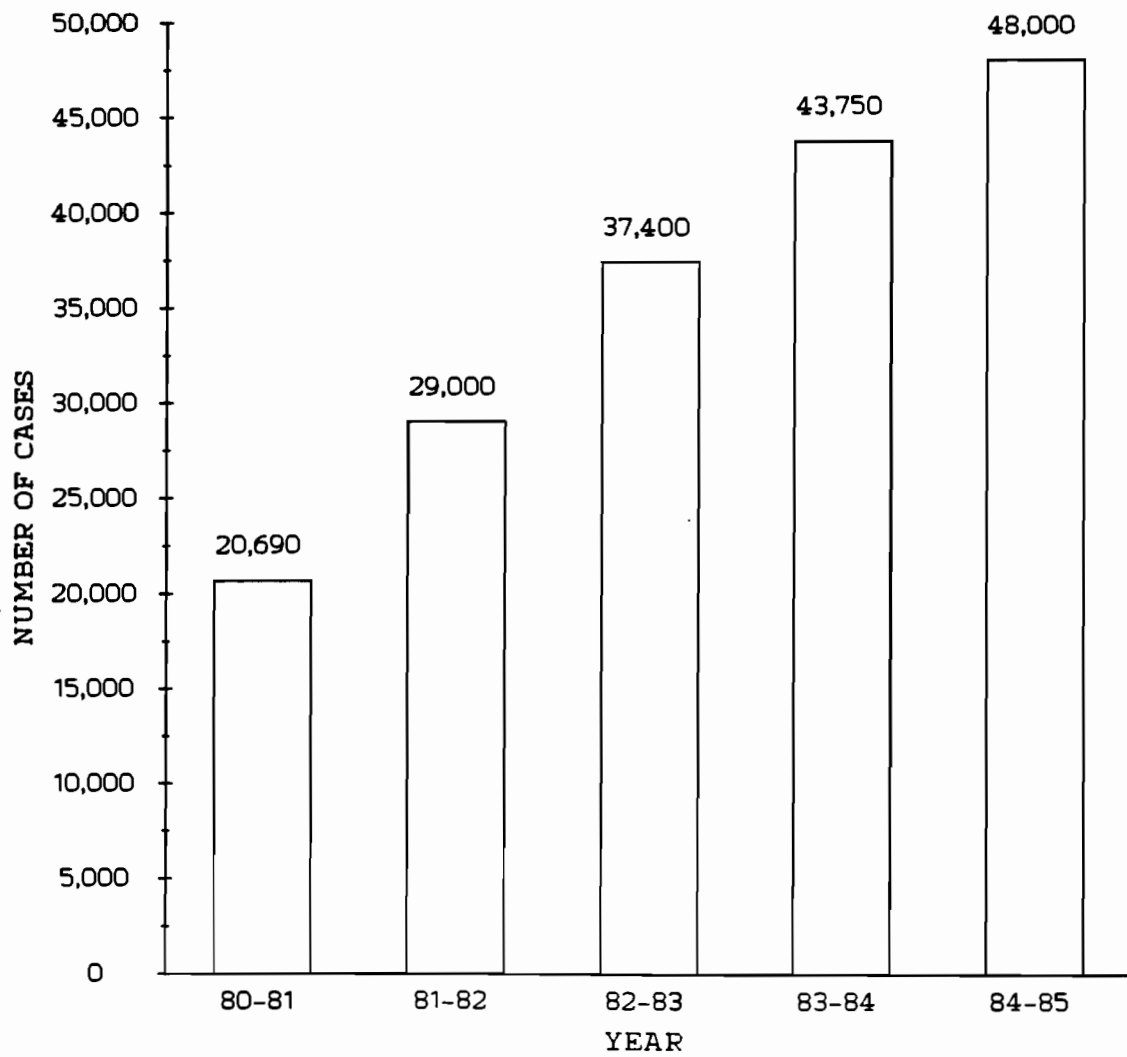
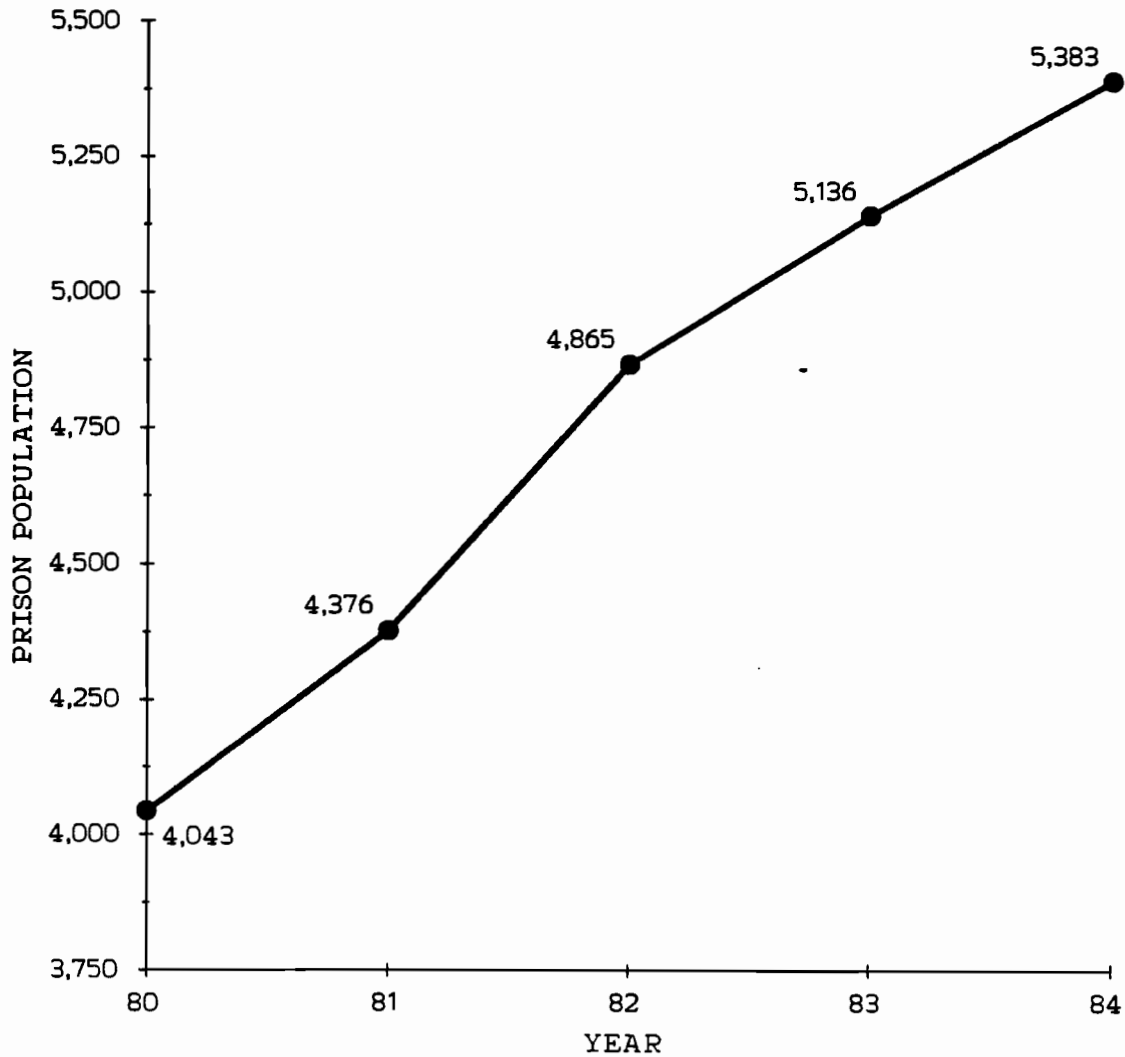


CHART VI
CONNECTICUT
AVERAGE DAILY IN HOUSE
POPULATION BY YEAR

1980-1984



Growth in DOC Permanent Beds

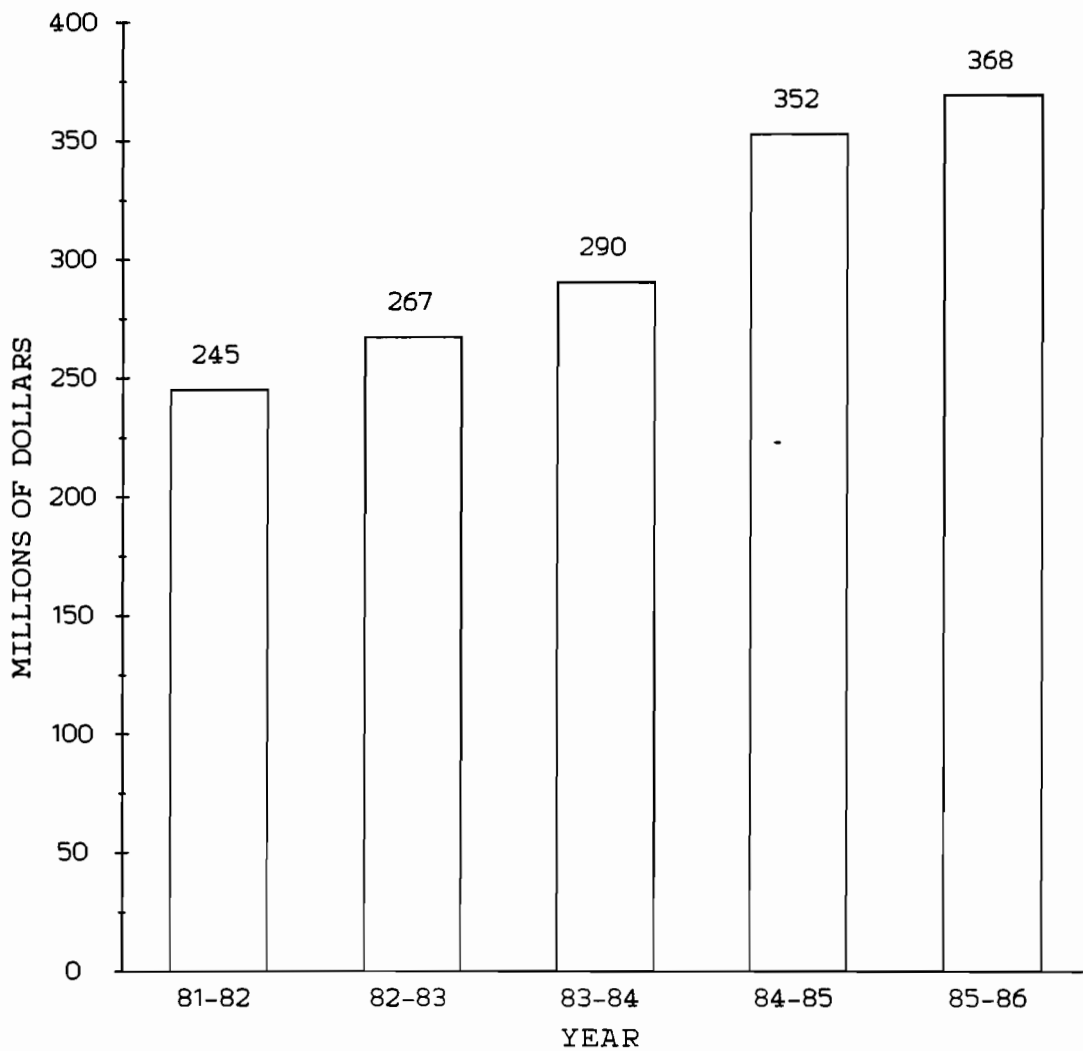
<u>Facility</u>	<u>Number of Beds</u>	<u>Date Available</u>
Gates	90	February, 1981
Manson Youth	360	September, 1982
Morgan St. (Hartford)	90	January, 1983
Union Ave. (New Haven)	50	January, 1984
Enfield	200	November, 1985
Enfield	100	January, 1986
Enfield	300	February, 1986

The demonstrated improvement in performance of Connecticut's criminal justice system during the last five years could not have taken place without substantial support from state government. Since 1981, state funding for criminal justice has increased from \$245 million to \$368 million in fiscal year 1985-86, a 50 percent increase.

Chart VII shows the growth in criminal justice funding by year since fiscal year 1981-82. The policy of judiciously allocating more resources for Connecticut's criminal justice system has measurable benefits and should be continued.

In addition to increased facilities and personnel for the Department of Correction, the expansion of Connecticut's criminal justice funding has provided 58 more sworn personnel for the Connecticut State Police, improved communications systems, expanded forensic science capabilities and computerized criminal case histories. The judicial department has 18 additional judges plus supporting staff. New court buildings have been built. Information and case management systems have been computerized. The number of prosecutors increased from 115 in 1980 to 138 in 1985 and special units have been created to deal with career criminals, and others. The number of attorneys for public defense increased from 67 to 92. These are just a few examples of the benefits emanating from the infusion of resources into the States criminal system for the past five years.

CHART VII
CONNECTICUT
*FUNDING FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE**
1981-1985



Source: State Budget for Fiscal Years 1981-82 through 1985-86

*Includes Appropriations and Bond Authorizations

TRENDS AND ISSUES

Population projections for the State of Connecticut indicate that the number of males in the 20-34 year old age group will continue to increase until 1990, and won't return to the 1985 level until 1995. This age group makes up the largest segment of Connecticut's incarcerated population and is also the age group which commits the most violent crime and consequently most likely to be prosecuted and incarcerated. This is supported by the Uniform Crime Reports showing that violent crime is not declining as rapidly as property crime. This, combined with the fact that the proportion of persons incarcerated who are long term prisoners is increasing indicate that the pressures on courts, probation, and prisons in this state is not likely to ease significantly in the next ten years.

It is evident that:

1. There is a need to continue public education of Connecticut citizens with regard to crime prevention in order to further reduce suppressable crimes.
2. Connecticut courts will continue to receive a high number of serious criminal cases for the next ten years;
3. Increased resources will have to be allocated in order to further reduce the still substantial backlog of civil cases while maintaining case processing standards for criminal cases. Alternative means of case disposition such as the magistrates program must have continued support;
4. Probation is the one area in Connecticut's criminal justice system where resources have not kept pace with the growth in cases. This is clearly an area that should receive very serious consideration for increased resources.
5. Continuing if not increased support for alternatives to incarceration consistent with community safety, on all fronts such as the Bail Commission, probation, and community corrections, is essential.

6. There is a continuing need for all authorized medium and maximum security correction beds. Every effort should be made to get all authorized beds funded and in place as soon as possible;
7. It may be necessary to reexamine DOC classification systems to determine if more inmates can be placed in a minimum security environment.
8. Increasing attention will have to be devoted to resources and programs for long term prisoners;