OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division
Prison Population Projection

Highlights

- OPM projects that the prison population will experience a modest decline over the coming year. By January 2016, the prison population could fall to 15,686. If this projection proves accurate, the prison population would be at its lowest level since Sept. 1997.

- In terms of the criminal justice system, things are trending well in CT. According to federal Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), the number of index crimes reported in the state are down 18.2% since 2008. Statewide criminal arrests have declined by 27.3% since 2009, and admissions to prison have been reduced by 20.7%. Prison recidivism rates have gradually been edging downward and the number of new people being admitted to prison on pre-trial status is down 32% since 2008. In combination, this all bodes well for the prospect of a reduced prison population in the coming year. A summary of criminal justice trend data is available on the OPM's Criminal Justice homepage.

- The number of young offenders incarcerated in the state is down significantly in recent years. While raise-the-age legislation has virtually eliminated the number of youth under the age of 18 who are incarcerated, the number of inmates aged 18 to 21 has almost been halved since 2009. Since young offenders generally recidivate at the highest rates, the drop in young offenders entering prison is certainly good news for the state.

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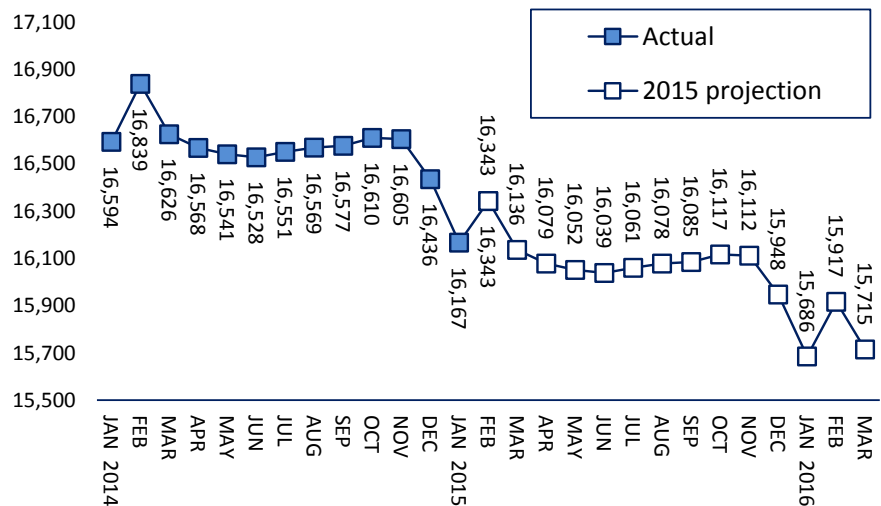
Forecasting the size of the prison population

Each year in February, the Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division at OPM produces a forecast of the state's prison population for the coming year. The forecast is based on 1) analysis of prison population data 2) use of an input-output model of the prison system that monitors operational flows and tracks rates of change in the size and composition of the prison population 3) an assessment of the potential impact of proposed policy changes, and 4) seasonal variations. This information is used to project how OPM anticipates the prison population will trend over the next 12 to 18 months.

During 2014, the prison population, measured on a February -to- February basis, declined by 2.9%, or 496 prisoners. In relation to recent years, this reduction, measured in percentage terms, fell into the mid-range. In 2008, 2009 and 2011, the prison population dropped by 4.0%, 3.8% and 3.6 % respectively. In 2012 and 2010, the prison population contracted by 2.5% and 2.9%. 2013 was the only year since 2007 in which the prison population actually increased. The 2013 increase is widely recognized to have resulted from an anomalous set of circumstances related to changes in the procedures and processes governing offender releases to community supervision.

With this year's projection, OPM anticipates that the prison population will decline at a modest 2.6% annual rate, or by 426 prisoners, measured from February 1, 2015 to February 1, 2016.

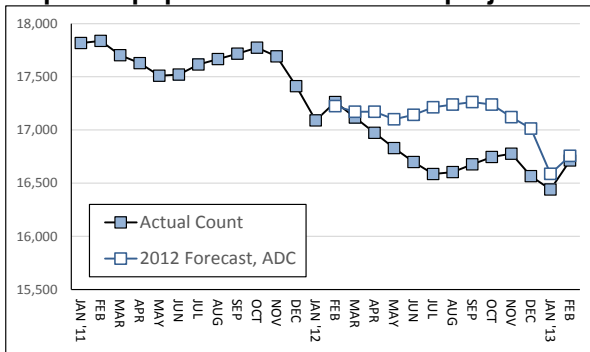### Connecticut's prison population, actual and projected

Recent OPM forecasts

OPM's prison population projections are intended to assist state policy makers by establishing a benchmark for the size of the state's prison population under standard operating parameters. In recent years, when the actual prison population has veered off OPM's forecast, the forecast has helped to identify and trouble-shoot localized and system-wide inefficiencies.
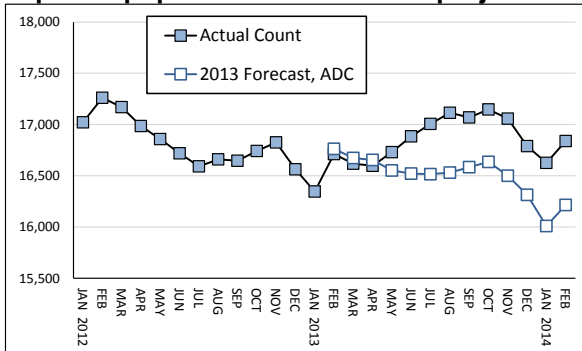
Although OPM's 2012 annual forecast was off by only 44 prisoners at the end of the forecast year on February 1, 2013, for most of the year it over-estimated the prison population by several hundred. Two factors contributed to significant reductions in the prison population during 2012: DUI home confinement and Risk-Reduction Earned Credits (RREC).

CT prison population and the 2012 projection

Unlike the 2012 projection, OPM's 2013 forecast under-estimated the prison count for the last 9 months of the year. The bulge in the prison population was driven by the unanticipated downstream impact of the RREC roll-out on the Board of Pardons and Paroles and a major slowdown in the volume of discretionary releases.
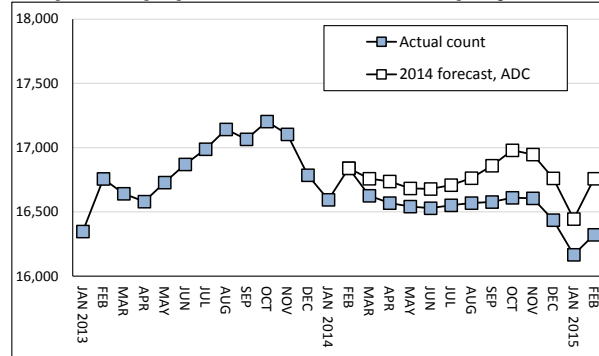
CT prison population and the 2013 projection

In 2013, as a result of these factors, the CT DOC recorded its first annual increase in the prison population since 2007. During the late summer of 2013, approximately 800 inmates were housed in areas designated as overflow.

During 2014, the prison system returned to a more typical pattern. Although the number of parole releases continued to lag the level seen in previous years, the DOC was able to bring other system efficiencies to bear, including expanded use of Transitional Placement.

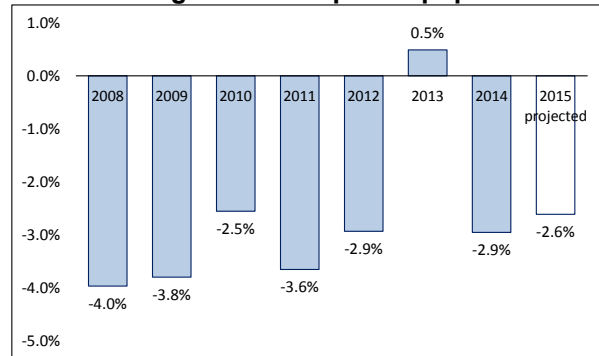**CT prison population and the 2014 projection**

Between February 1, 2013 and February 1, 2014, the prison declined by 2.9%, or almost 500 inmates.

OPM's 2015 forecast

Over the coming year, OPM expects the prison population to decline at a relatively modest 2.6% annual rate.

Annual change in state's prison population

Prison population, actual and projected