

OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division

Prison Population Projection

Highlights

- OPM, conservatively, estimates that the prison population will experience a modest decline over the coming year. By January 2017, the prison population could fall to 15,227. If this projection proves accurate, the prison population would be at its lowest point since December 1996.
- Things have been trending well for a number of years in Connecticut according to a variety of key public safety/criminal justice indicators. The number of reported crimes are down significantly. So too are statewide criminal arrests and the number of admissions to prison. There are also many fewer young people incarcerated today than five years ago and the number of new people entering the prison system has been declining in recent years.
- The state's prison population is gradually aging. Thanks to raise-the-age legislation and broader societal changes, the number of young people in prison is down dramatically. The number of 18-to-21 year olds in CT prisons dropped by 55% between 2009 and 2016. During the same period, the number of 16-and 17-year olds in prison dropped by 76%.
- Although Governor Malloy's proposed Second Chance Society initiatives should significantly reduce the state's prison population, the implementation of these changes remains a way off.

Forecasting the size of the prison population

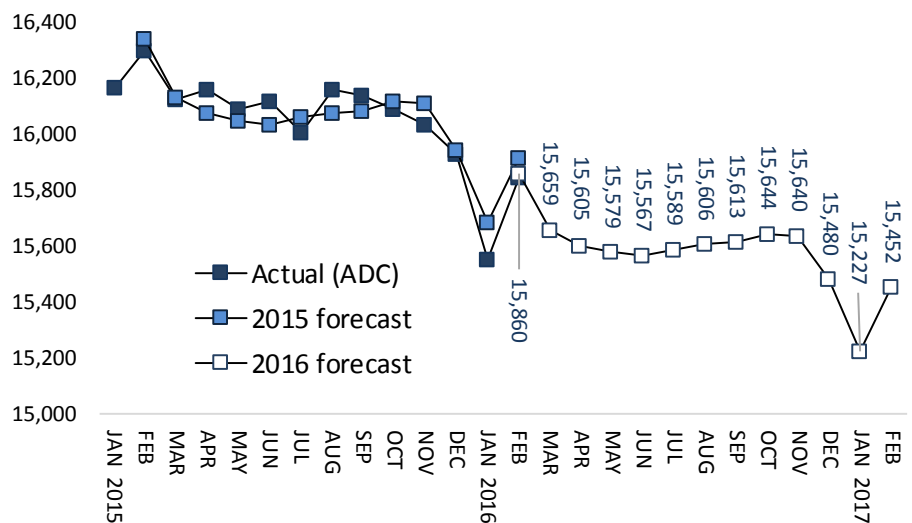
Each year in February, the Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division at OPM produces a forecast of the state's prison population for the coming year. The forecast relies on 1) an analysis of prison-population trend data 2) use of an input-output model to track operational flows and rates of change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

During past year, the prison population, measured on a February-to-February basis, declined by 2.7%, or 442 prisoners. A year earlier it declined by 2.9% (496 prisoners). In relation to other recent years, these reductions, measured in percentage terms, were modest. During 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 a more reasonable 2.5% and 2.9%. In fact, 2013 was the only year since 2007 in which the prison population actually increased.

Despite Governor Malloy's ambitious criminal justice agenda, OPM does not currently anticipate any significant impact from these initiatives on the size of the state's prison population during the coming year. In fact, a tightening of the state's RREC program may actually slow the pace of the projected decline.

If OPM's 2016 projection is accurate, the prison population will drop, on a February-to-February basis, by about 400 prisoners or -2.6%.

Connecticut's prison population, actual and projected

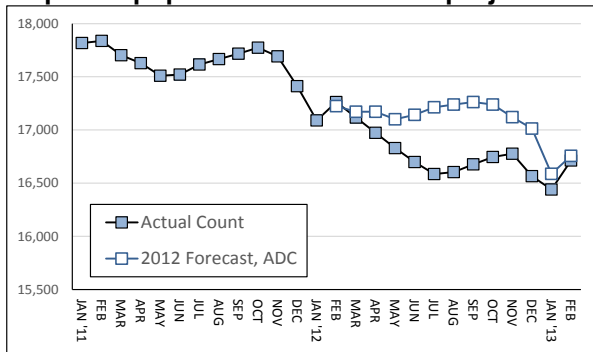


Recent OPM forecasts

OPM projections are intended to help policy makers by providing benchmark estimates 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 provided an early alert that some element of the system was off-kilter.

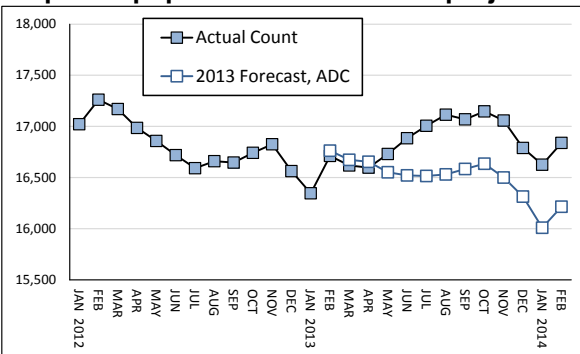
Although OPM's 2012 annual forecast was off by only 44 prisoners at the end of the forecast year, during the summer, it over-estimated the prison population by several hundred prisoners. Two initiatives contributed to significant, unanticipated reductions in the prison population during 2012: DUI home 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 during the last 9 months of the year. The bulge in the prison population was driven by downstream impacts from the RREC on the Board of Pardons and Paroles and a major slowdown in the volume of discretionary releases.

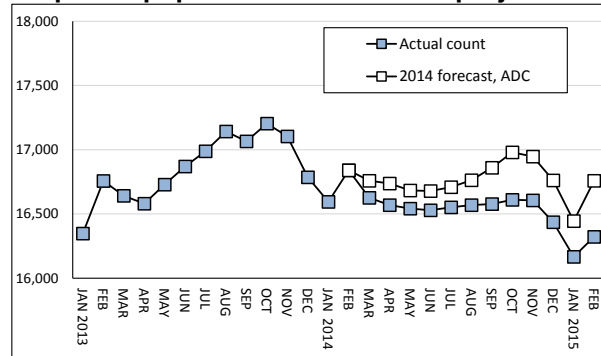
CT prison population and the 2013 projection



Due to 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 being housed in areas designated as overflow.

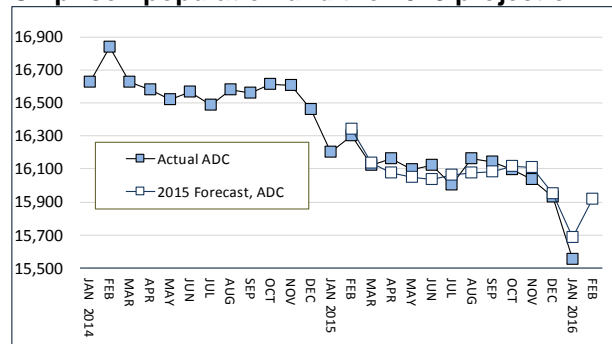
During 2014, the prison system followed a more-typical pattern compared to 2013. Although the number of parole releases continued to lag the levels seen in previous years, the DOC was able to bring other system efficiencies to bear, such as an expanded use of Transitional Placement. Between February 1, 2013 and February 1, 2014, the prison count declined by 2.9%, or almost 500 inmates.

CT prison population and the 2014 projection



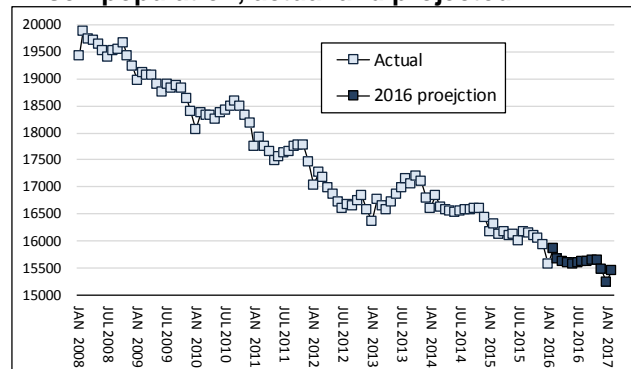
There were no major upheavals in the criminal justice system during 2015. By centralizing re-entry planning, the administration realized some efficiencies. Consequently, the prison population tracked closely to OPM's projection.

CT prison population and the 2015 projection



Connecticut's prison population has been declining consistently since 2008. In light of this, OPM considers this forecast to be moderately conservative.

Prison population, actual and projected



A
S
S
E
S
S
M
E
N
T