

OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division

Prison Population Projection

Highlights

- The state's prison population has been falling on a January-on-January basis, since 2008. Between January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2013, the prison population shrank by 3,091 offenders, a 15.9% decline.
- OPM projects that 16,010 people will be incarcerated in state prisons on January 1, 2014. If the forecast proves accurate, the prison population will fall by 337 offenders, or approximately 2.1%, over the coming year.
- Over the last two years, several factors combined to push down the state's prison population. Risk Reduction Earned Credits (RREC), DUI Home Confinement and raise-the-age legislation all contributed to a decline of almost 1,300 prisoners since January 2011.
- Total prison admits during 2012 declined by 9.0% compared to 2010. In 2012, statewide criminal arrests were down 12.0% compared to 2011 and 18.7% compared to 2010.
- Pre-trial admits were up by 1.8% in 2012, compared to 2011. They were down 10.3%, however, compared to 2010. Remands were also down compared to 2010.
- During the coming year, OPM does not foresee any major policy initiatives that should significantly reduce or expand the prison population.

Email your questions and comments to:
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Forecasting the size of the prison population

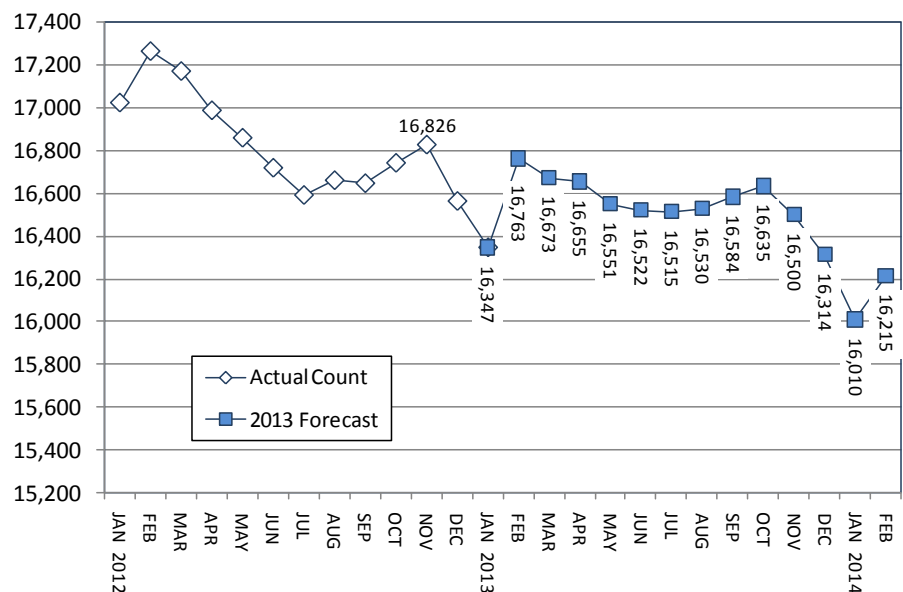
Each year in February, the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division at OPM produces a forecast of the state's prison population for the upcoming year. The forecast is based on historical prison population data, analysis of historic rates of change in the prison system, the composition of the prison population, seasonal factors and a survey of policy changes that might impact the size of the prison population. With this information, OPM makes an assumption about where the prison population will be trending over the next 12 to 18 months. The assumption is then matched against a range of pre-calculated trend lines.

In the last 13 years the state's population has risen and fallen twice. Between January 2000 and January 2013, the prison population was greater than 17,500 in 133 out of 156 months; it was greater than 17,000 in 147 of the same 156 months. During the last 9 months of 2012, the prison population never rose above 16,986.

On average, the state's prison population has fallen by 3.7% in each of the last four years. At the end of 2012, there were 675 fewer offenders in prison, a 3.9% drop, than there were at the beginning of the year.

Over the coming year, OPM anticipates that the prison population will continue to decline although at a more moderate pace than we have witnessed in recent years. In this forecast, OPM estimates that the prison population on January 1, 2014 will be in the vicinity of 16,010. The last time the prison population fell below 16,010 on a January 1st was in 1998.

Connecticut's prison population, actual and projected



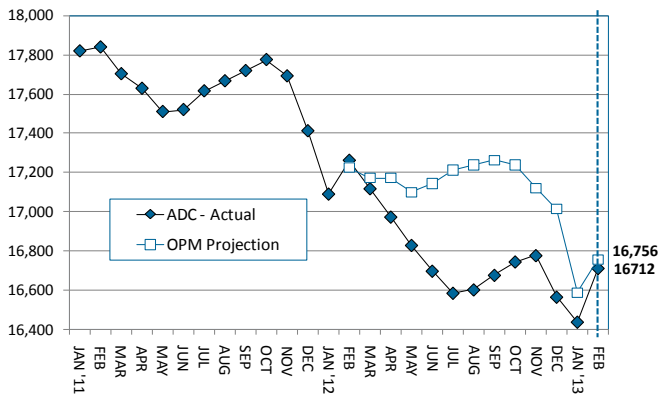
Note: Connecticut has a unified prison system, i.e., the Department of Correction administers both the state's prison and its jails.

OPM's 2012 forecast

The assumptions behind last year's forecast proved to be too conservative. Although OPM's estimate was only 44 prisoners, or 0.3%, off the actual count on February 1, 2013, it was off by considerably more for most of the year. For two months it was off by over 600 prisoners.

Last year it became evident, relatively quickly, that several factors were acting in unison to shrink the state's sentenced prison population much faster than anticipated. The DUI home confinement program, which launched in March 2012, rapidly contributed to a drop in the prison population of about 125 offenders each month.

CT prison population and 2012 projection



Risk Reduction Earned Credits (RREC) shortened the effective length of incarceration for thousands of offenders over the course of 2012. Although most offenders received less than 40 days credit, the cumulative effect of thousands of prisoners receiving incremental reductions of prison time contributed to a much larger- and quicker-than-expected reduction in the prison population.

A preliminary analysis of recidivism among offenders released with RREC showed that these offenders returned to prison at a lower rate than offenders released in previous years. The drop in recidivism was explained, almost entirely, by a decline in the number of prison remands. Nevertheless it translated into fewer prisoners.

During the early fall, the difference between the forecast and the actual prison population narrowed. The typical end-of-year drop-off saw the prison system shrink by 479 prisoners between November 1, 2012 and January 1, 2013.

The area between the actual population curve and the forecast can be viewed, to some degree, as a rough measure of saved prison-bed days.

OPM's 2013 forecast

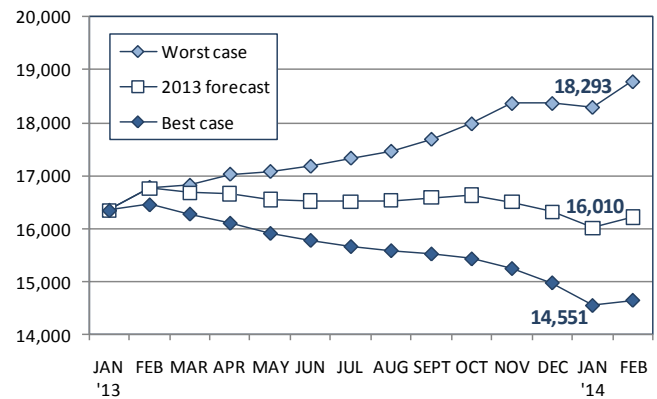
Over the coming year, OPM expects the prison population to adhere to typical seasonal patterns and to decline by 2.1% measured from January 1, 2013 to January 1, 2014.

CT's prison population, actual and estimated

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
JAN	18,053	17,746	17,022	16,347	16,010*
FEB	18,383	17,915	17,262	16,756	16,214*
MAR	18,330	17,739	17,169	16,673*	
APR	18,331	17,655	16,986	16,655*	
MAY	18,259	17,486	16,858	16,551*	
JUN	18,364	17,555	16,718	16,522*	
JUL	18,431	17,631	16,591	16,514*	
AUG	18,490	17,648	16,660	16,530*	
SEP	18,593	17,739	16,646	16,583*	
OCT	18,481	17,762	16,741	16,634*	
NOV	18,320	17,774	16,826	16,500*	
DEC	18,172	17,459	16,563	16,313*	

Estimated values are denoted with an asterisk (*).

This year's estimate is based on recent prison-population trends and on assumptions about where the prison population is heading. OPM's model is based on historical rates of expansion and decline in the prison population over the last 20 years. The worst- and best-case scenarios, shown below, present the theoretical maximum and minimum limits to growth or decline within the prison system on an annual basis. The probability of the prison system approaching these limits is almost zero.



Methodology

OPM's forecast methodology remains unchanged from previous years. Trend lines were calculated from analysis of population change by month, by quarter and annually back to 1999.

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