

Ohio Prison Population Projections and Intake Estimates FY 2006 - FY 2015

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Introduction

This report presents the latest ten-year prison population forecast for the period covering July 2006-July 2015. These projections are based on revised intake estimates and a comprehensive update of major population parameters last revised in December 2004. These updates are based on the latest available admission and stock population summaries, recidivism and violation patterns, and parole hearing data. While the impact of the *Ankrom* ruling on the prison population is expected to be minimal, this report does not include a formal impact analysis of that ruling, nor is there sufficient information available yet to gauge the prison population impact of the *Hernandez* decision. This report first summarizes recent population and intake trends, and then discusses the current set of projections and intake forecast.

Recent Patterns and Forecast Summary

Figure 1 presents a line graph of actual and projected population levels from January 2005 through July 2008. Female levels are shown separately. Following a significant dip in the first three months of 2005, total population levels climbed rapidly to over 45,000 by the end of the year, an increase of over 1,500 inmates (about 3.5%) in just nine months. The female population grew by over five percent (about 150 inmates) in the same period. It is important to note that in terms of total population, there has not been an increase of this magnitude since 1998. Population growth last year is due largely to record levels of court intake, which increased nearly five percent over 2004 levels. Intake patterns are discussed in more detail below.

The updated population projections through July 2008 (by month) are graphed in Figure 1. Table 1 presents projected annual levels by sex for the entire forecast period, July 1, 2006 through July 1, 2015. By July 2006, the total population is expected to reach **45,725**, an increase of 500-600 over present levels. It is then expected to rise by 2,900 inmates over the following two years (roughly 3% annually), to **47,194** by July 2007 and **48,633** by July 2008. **The current forecast is a significant upward revision of the September 2005 projections**, which underestimated the surge in court intake in the last quarter of 2005. The total population now projected over FY 2007-FY 2008 is **1,100 to 1,800** higher than previously forecast, and is expected to surpass within three years the

Department's record level of 49,000 inmates set back in mid-1998. The female population is expected to rise by 4.3%, on average, over the same two-year period, to 3,558 by July 2008. Projected growth among females over the entire ten-year forecast is largely consistent with the September projections, though the numbers are slightly lower in the short term. The projections assume no significant changes in crime patterns or criminal code that would affect the overall level or composition of admissions or length of sentence, and no additional community diversion slots are anticipated over the span of the forecast period.

Table 1. ODRC Prison Population Projections, by Sex, for July 1, 2006- July 1, 2015*

Date	Percent		Female	Percent		Total	Percent Change
	Male	Change		Change	Change		
1/30/06*	41912		3267			45179	
7/1/2006	42454	1.013	3271	1.001		45725	1.012
7/1/2007	43752	1.031	3442	1.052		47194	1.032
7/1/2008	45075	1.030	3558	1.034		48633	1.030
7/1/2009	45958	1.020	3688	1.037		49646	1.021
7/1/2010	46883	1.020	3833	1.039		50716	1.022
7/1/2011	47736	1.018	3926	1.024		51662	1.019
7/1/2012	48476	1.016	3918	0.998		52394	1.014
7/1/2013	49474	1.021	3998	1.020		53472	1.021
7/1/2014	50463	1.020	4117	1.030		54580	1.021
7/1/2015	51241	1.015	4170	1.013		55411	1.015

** Actual population from January 30, 2006 Weekly Population Count

Intake Estimates

There were roughly 25,850 new court admissions to ODRC in CY 2005, a 4.8% increase over CY 2004 and about 400 more than estimated in the September 2005 projections. Intake increased by 11% during the last three months of 2005 compared to the same period in 2004, suggesting that growth in intake has begun to accelerate. This pattern is holding so far in 2006. January 2006 commitments, unexpectedly, were 13% higher than in the previous year. On the other hand, growth in female intake slowed to about 3% in 2005, down from 17% a year ago.

Table 2 presents the intake forecast on which the current projections are based. The model assumes overall intake growth of roughly four percent and three percent in the current and following years, respectively. These predicted increases correspond to commitment levels of 26,832 in CY 2006 and 27,637 in CY 2007, about 1,000 admissions higher per year than assumed in the last projections. Female intake has been generally more volatile in recent years, but based on patterns in the second half of 2005, increases are expected to be 2.5% in CY 2006 and 3% in CY 2007.

The overall growth assumptions used in this model are based largely on steady increases in criminal case filings in Ohio courts, which increased over two percent in 2004 and will likely rise even more in 2005, based on preliminary data from common pleas courts in Cuyahoga and Franklin counties. UCR data for Ohio show a relatively flat trend in violent crime overall since 2001, but a small increase in 2004 and mixed pattern among cities in the first half of 2005. Thus, there continues to be no basis for assuming any near-term reduction in court commitments without significant expansion of diversionary opportunities. Indeed, these assumptions should be considered conservative, potentially understating population levels if intake growth continues for the rest of the year at its January rate.

Table 2. ODRC New Court Admission Estimates, by Sex, CY 2006-CY 2015

Date	Male	Percent Change	Female	Percent Change	Total	Percent Change
CY 2005*	22658		3195		25853	
CY 2006	23558	3.97	3274	2.48	26832	3.79
CY 2007	24264	3.00	3373	3.01	27637	3.00
CY 2008	24628	1.50	3424	1.50	28051	1.50
CY 2009	24997	1.50	3475	1.50	28472	1.50
CY 2010	25372	1.50	3527	1.50	28899	1.50
CY 2011	25753	1.50	3580	1.50	29333	1.50
CY 2012	26139	1.50	3634	1.50	29773	1.50
CY 2013	26531	1.50	3688	1.50	30219	1.50
CY 2014	26929	1.50	3743	1.50	30673	1.50
CY 2015	27333	1.50	3800	1.50	31133	1.50

* Preliminary count from DOTS Research Download File.

Population Analysis and Violator Patterns

Analyses of the latest admission and stock populations continue to show that several factors are combining to partly offset the population impact of vigorous growth in court commitments. Although the percentage of F4 and F5 commitments in FY 2005 dropped below 60% of all new commitments, aggregate sentence terms within all felony categories were unchanged since FY 2004 after declining modestly over the previous five years. Discretionary PRC releases have remained in the 10-12% range, thus limiting the size of potential violator populations.

As the currently incarcerated parole-eligible population continues to decline, it has become increasingly concentrated among life sentence and long, consecutive-term inmates. In the aggregate, however, continuation lengths and projected stays have declined by several months over the past two years. These parameters have been revised in the current projections. Compliance with the *Ankrom* decision has led to several hundred additional hearings among the longer-term population, but should serve to further lower the overall parole rate and thus have little impact on population levels.

Recidivism patterns and associated supervision practices continue to play a complex role in population growth. The overall three-year recidivism rate has remained virtually unchanged at roughly 38% since 1998. Technical return rates, however, continued to decline slightly in the latest available follow-up analysis, while the current revocation population (parole and PRC) has remained stable at only two percent of all inmates. Current supervision practices continue to support population management efforts through more judicious use of holder placements and violation hearings, reducing the monthly violation return rate throughout all of last year. On the other hand, higher risk profiles among released prisoners are likely associated, in part, with rising felony re-commission rates in recent years.

Summary and Conclusions

- After alternating periods of decline and fluctuation, the prison population at the end of the current fiscal year will have grown by more than 2,000 inmates in just 15 months. The projections presented here indicate that population levels will exceed 49,000 inmates within three years under current sentencing patterns and conservative assumptions of moderate growth in court intake.
- The shift to determinate sentencing under Senate Bill 2 has so far created minimal upward population pressure. Instead, that pressure has come from new prison commitments, which have shown disproportionate growth in recent years in the felony 3 offense categories generally, as well as among such specific crimes as non-support, DUI, and domestic violence. These developments would be consistent with efforts to increase opportunities for diversion and early release. On the other hand, current proposals to increase Felony 1 penalties and impose indefinite sentence terms on large numbers of sex offenders will likely offset the benefits of expanded diversions.

Figure 1. Total and Female Population Counts, Actual and Projected, Through July 2008

