

The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice
Summer 2017 Interim Prison Population and Parole Caseload Projections
July 2017

Introduction

The DCJ 2015 prison population forecast indicated that the Colorado adult prison population would increase 1.2% between the end of fiscal year (FY) 2016 and June 30, 2017. However, the actual increase in the population more than doubled this expectation, at 2.5%. Based upon the population fluctuations observed since the release of the DCJ 2016 forecast, recent trends in admissions to and releases from prison, and recent legislation, these interim projections significantly adjust the DCJ 2016 prison population projection upward. In response to these same factors and the adjustment to the inmate population forecast, the parole caseload forecast has been adjusted upward.

Inmate Population

While the pattern of growth followed that reported in the DCJ December 2016 projection, the degree of the fluctuation exceeded the expectation. The primary source of error was the extraordinary 1.4% growth that occurred in the January-March quarter. This degree of growth in a single quarter has not been observed since 2006, during the decades-long period of continuous growth in the population. The population remained relatively stable over the final quarter of the year, with releases of all types exhibiting an upward trend. However, early indications indicate strong growth returning in July 2017.

The unexpected growth can be attributed to substantially more new court commitments and parole returns with a new crime in FY 2017 than expected. While these groups combined were expected to increase 5.7%, the actual rate of growth was 12.3%.

Parole revocations due to technical violations were expected to continue the pattern of decline observed over the prior two years, due to recent legislation requiring the provision of reentry services to offenders and the use of alternative sanctions for parole violations prior to revocation. Such admissions did indeed decline, by 13.5% by the end of FY 2017. This pattern will continue to moderate growth in the prison population across the next few years.

Additionally, the advent of HB 17-1326 will significantly reduce the amount of time certain parolees returned to prison for technical violations will spend in prison. This is expected to result in a reduction in the population beginning in September 2017 and continuing through the following quarter, and significantly moderating growth through FY 2018. Since technical returns comprise approximately a quarter of all admissions, and their length of stay in prison is already very short, this impact will be short-lived.

In spite of the decline observed in FY 2016, forecasts have consistently predicted growth in upcoming years. However, these interim projections have increased the rate of growth expected in FY 2019 and beyond. This expectation is primarily based on the 12.3% growth in the number of admissions with new sentences observed in FY 2017, in combination with recent increases in arrests and criminal court filings.

The DCJ Summer 2017 interim prison population projections are presented below in Tables 1 and 2, and graphically displayed in Figure 1.

Female prison population

The proportion of the inmate population comprised of women stabilized at the end of FY 2017 and into early FY 2018, at lower level than assumed for the DCJ December 2016 forecast. Additionally, a larger proportion of women are eligible for the reduction in parole revocation time conferred by HB 17-1326, as a larger proportion of men are incarcerated for violent crimes than are women.

Based on these factors, the expected rate of increase in the female prison population has been moderated. A comparison of this interim projection to the DCJ December 2016 projection is displayed in Figure 2.

Table 1. DCJ Summer 2017 Interim Quarterly Prison Population Projections

Fiscal Year	End of month:	Total Population	% Change	Male Population	% Change	Female Population	% Change
2016*	Jun-16*	19,619	0.35%	17,768	0.31%	1,851	0.76%
2017*	Sep-16*	19,757	0.70%	17,837	0.39%	1,920	3.73%
	Dec-16*	19,825	0.34%	17,899	0.35%	1,926	0.31%
	Mar-17*	20,092	1.35%	18,147	1.39%	1,945	0.99%
	Jun-17*	20,101	0.40%	18,108	-0.21%	1,993	2.47%
2018	Sep-17	20,071	-0.15%	18,082	-0.15%	1,989	-0.20%
	Dec-17	19,991	-0.40%	18,008	-0.40%	1,983	-0.30%
	Mar-18	20,069	0.39%	18,074	0.39%	1,995	0.59%
	Jun-18	20,114	0.22%	18,114	0.22%	2,000	0.23%
2019	Sep-18	20,226	0.56%	18,215	0.56%	2,011	0.57%
	Dec-18	20,361	0.67%	18,335	0.66%	2,026	0.75%
	Mar-19	20,515	0.76%	18,474	0.76%	2,041	0.77%
	Jun-19	20,680	0.80%	18,622	0.80%	2,058	0.81%
2020	Sep-19	20,799	0.58%	18,728	0.57%	2,072	0.66%
	Dec-19	20,941	0.68%	18,855	0.68%	2,086	0.69%
	Mar-20	21,086	0.69%	18,985	0.69%	2,101	0.70%
	Jun-20	21,248	0.77%	19,130	0.76%	2,118	0.85%
2021	Sep-20	21,382	0.63%	19,252	0.64%	2,130	0.55%
	Dec-20	21,551	0.79%	19,404	0.79%	2,147	0.80%
	Mar-21	21,710	0.74%	19,545	0.73%	2,164	0.81%
	Jun-21	21,859	0.69%	19,680	0.69%	2,180	0.70%
2022	Sep-21	21,989	0.59%	19,796	0.59%	2,193	0.61%
	Dec-21	22,135	0.67%	19,926	0.66%	2,209	0.74%
	Mar-22	22,325	0.86%	20,096	0.85%	2,229	0.91%
	Jun-22	22,474	0.67%	20,230	0.67%	2,244	0.68%
2023	Sep-22	22,587	0.50%	20,331	0.50%	2,256	0.54%
	Dec-22	22,760	0.77%	20,484	0.76%	2,276	0.86%
	Mar-23	22,916	0.68%	20,624	0.68%	2,292	0.69%
	Jun-23	22,981	0.28%	20,683	0.28%	2,298	0.28%

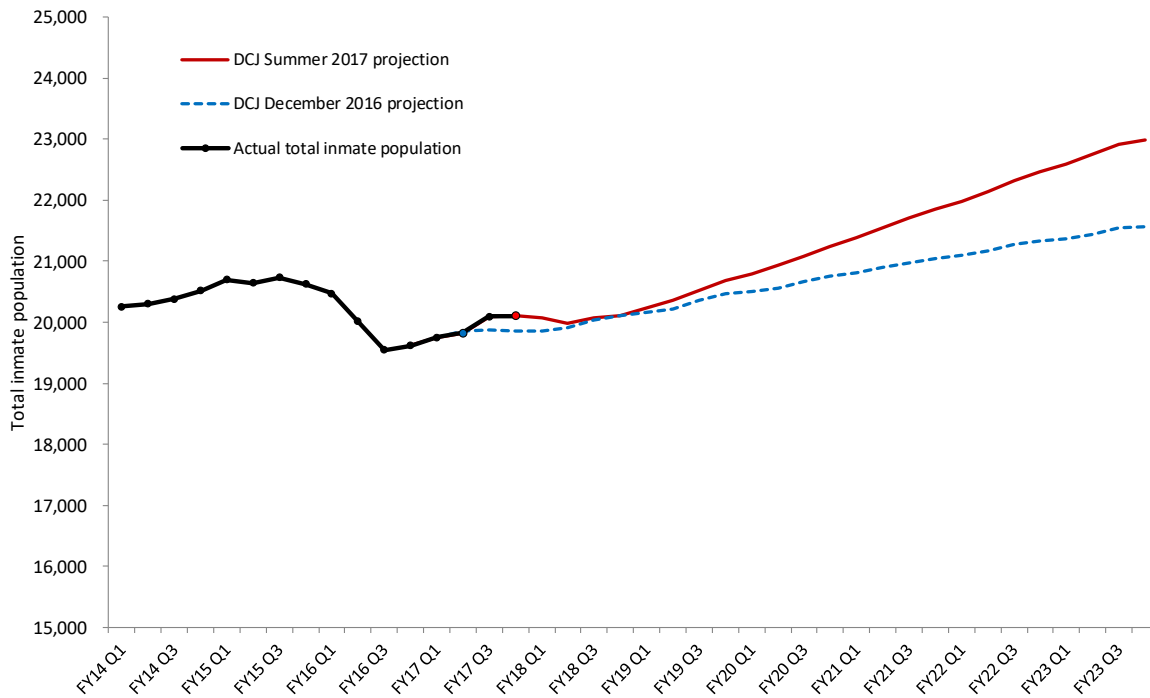
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Table 2. DCJ Summer 2017 Interim End of Fiscal Year Prison Population Projections

Fiscal Year	Total Population	% Change	Male Population	% Change	Female Population	% Change
2016*	19,619	-4.87%	17,768	-4.75%	1,851	-5.95%
2017*	20,101	2.46%	18,108	1.91%	1,993	7.67%
2018	20,114	0.06%	18,114	0.04%	2,000	0.33%
2019	20,680	2.81%	18,622	2.80%	2,058	2.93%
2020	21,248	2.75%	19,130	2.73%	2,118	2.93%
2021	21,859	2.88%	19,680	2.87%	2,180	2.89%
2022	22,474	2.81%	20,230	2.80%	2,244	2.97%
2023	22,981	2.25%	20,683	2.24%	2,298	2.40%

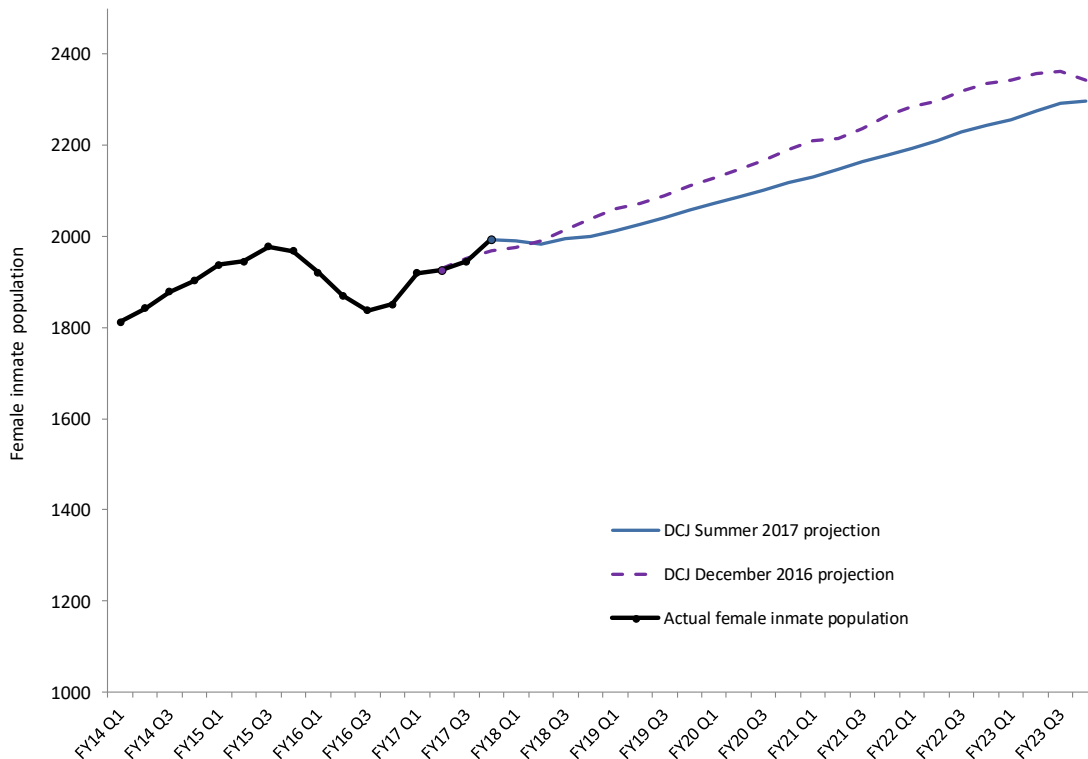
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Figure 1. Quarterly Inmate Population FY 2014 through FY 2017, DCJ December 2016 Population Projection and Summer 2017 Interim Projection through FY 2023



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2017. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

Figure 2. Quarterly Female Inmate Population FY 2014 through FY 2016, DCJ December 2016 Population Projection and DCJ Summer 2017 Interim Projection through FY 2023



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2017. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

Parole Caseload

The parole caseload declined by 0.4% in FY 2017, much less than the 1.1% forecast in the December 2016 projection. This discrepancy was driven by both a larger than expected decline in parole revocations for technical violations, and stronger than expected growth in admissions with new sentences. Parole returns for technical violations decreased by 13.2% in FY 2017, while the expected decline was 9.2%. New court commitments and parole returns with a new crime increased by 12.3%, much higher than the expected 6.2%.

Very strong growth in admissions with new sentences is expected to continue, both moderating the expected decline over the next two years, and increasing growth over the following four years.

House Bill 17-1326 will shorten the time some parolees will spend in prison due to revocation, thereby increasing the amount of time spent on the parole caseload. Additionally, with greater restrictions on the amount of time spent incarcerated as the result of a revocation, more of these parolees will return to the caseload rather than discharging their parole as inmates.

Based on all of these factors, the expected degree of decline in the caseload over the next two years has been moderated, with stronger growth than originally expected occurring over the following four years. Figures 3 and 4 compare the DCJ December 2016 parole caseload forecast to the interim forecast.

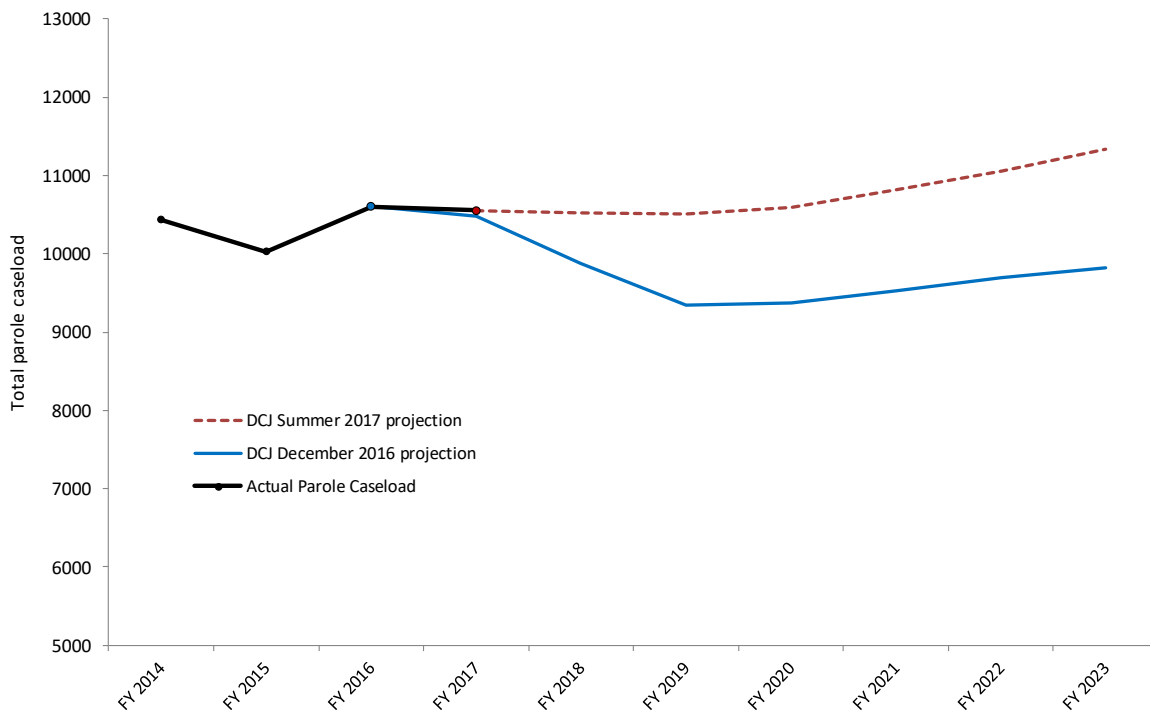
The same factors discussed above apply to the domestic parole caseload forecast. In addition, while the growth in the domestic caseload generally follows that of the overall caseload, the ratio of the domestic caseload to the overall has trended downward somewhat over the past year. Therefore, an additional upward adjustment was made to the domestic parole caseload. The interim parole caseload forecast for FY 2018 through FY 2023 is presented in Table 3, below. The comparison of the DCJ December 2016 parole caseload forecast to the current interim forecast is displayed in Figures 3 and 4.

Table 3. DCJ Summer 2017 Interim Total and Domestic Parole Caseload Projections

Fiscal Year	Total Parole Caseload	% change	Domestic Parole Caseload	% change
2016*	10,603	5.76%	8402	6.83%
2017*	10,557	-0.43%	8268	-1.59%
2018	10,518	-0.37%	8257	-0.12%
2019	10,506	-0.11%	8246	-0.13%
2020	10,596	0.86%	8316	0.84%
2021	10,816	2.07%	8487	2.06%
2022	11,051	2.18%	8670	2.16%
2023	11,333	2.56%	8893	2.56%

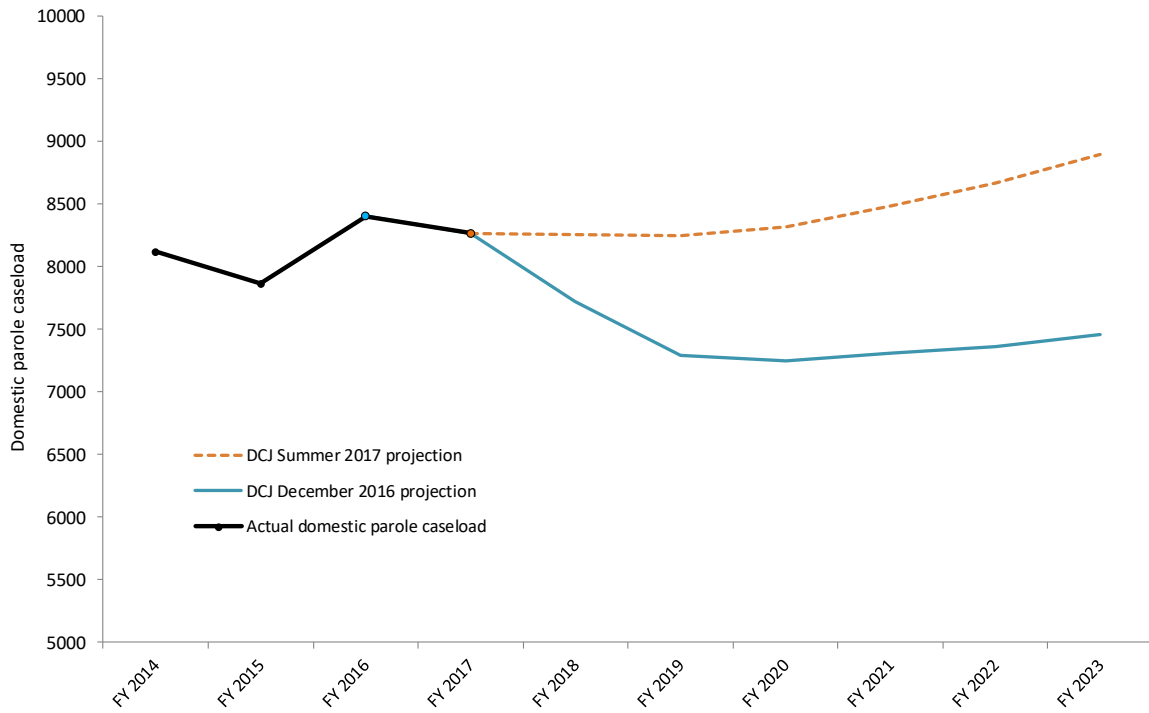
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Figure 3: Total Parole Caseload FY 2014-FY 2017, DCJ December 2016 and DCJ Summer 2017 Parole Caseload Projections through FY 2023



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2017. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

Figure 4: Domestic Parole Caseload FY 2014-FY 2017, DCJ December 2016 and DCJ Summer 2017 Interim Domestic Parole Caseload Projections through FY 2023



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; *Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2017*. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.