

**The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice**  
**Summer 2019 Interim Prison Population and Parole Caseload Projections**  
**June 2019**

**Introduction**

Historically, the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice has prepared interim prison population and parole caseload projections at the end of each fiscal year, adjusting the forecasts traditionally prepared in December of the prior year based upon more recent trends in the population. At the request of the Colorado Department of Corrections and the Office of State Budget and Planning, the timing of these interim projections has been moved up slightly. Therefore, actual year-end data for Fiscal Year 2019 regarding the size of the prison population and numbers of admissions and releases are not available, and can only be estimated.

The DCJ 2018 prison population forecast indicated that the Colorado adult prison population would remain very stable across FY 2019, followed by consistent growth through FY 2025. However, the population has decreased slightly, and is expected to decline by 0.5% by the end of the current fiscal year. Based on patterns of admissions and discharges observed since the development of the 2018 forecast, recent policy changes and new legislation, the forecast has been adjusted significantly downward throughout the forecast horizon.

At the time of the December 2018 forecast, the domestic parole caseload was expected to increase 3.3% by the end of FY 2019. Based on factors discussed below, expected growth in the parole caseload has been adjusted significantly upward. The caseload is expected to increase 6.7% by the end of FY 2019, and by an additional 8.5% by the end of FY 2025.

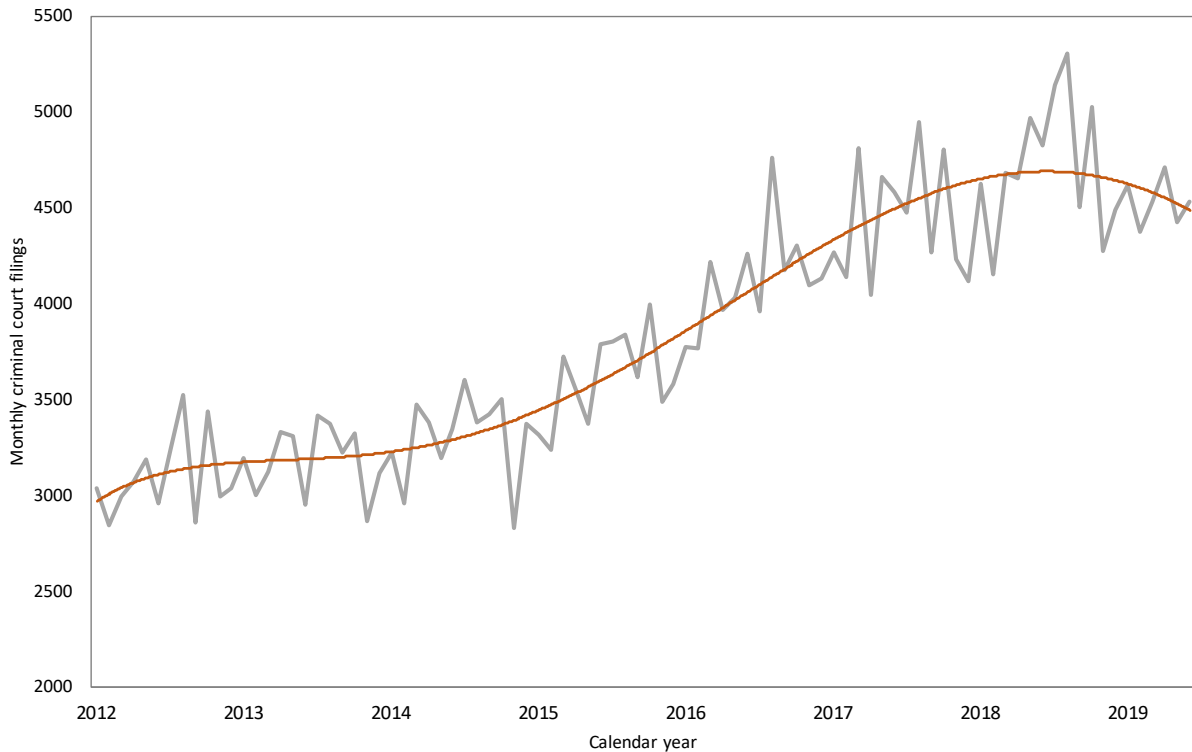
**Inmate Population**

Much of the growth previously predicted for new court commitments to prison was based on historical patterns in felony court filings. Criminal filings increased by 4.7% in FY 2018, after experiencing 12.5% growth over each of the prior two years. Estimates concerning the number of filings observed in FY 2019 indicate a leveling in this growth. This trend significantly moderates the projected numbers of in new court commitments in upcoming years (see Figure 1).

The passage of House Bill 19-1263, which reclassifies several existing drug felonies as drug misdemeanors, is expected to divert up to 295 new commitments per year. This contributes to the expected decline in the population in FY 2021 and slowing the projected increase in the ensuing years.

Additionally, prison admissions for technical parole violations have declined. Revocations during the most recent 3 months (March-May 2019) fell by 31.7% over the number observed during the same time frame in the previous year. This may be partially due to additional funding available to DOC to provide services to parolees that help reduce technical violations and revocations to prison.

**Figure 1. Monthly criminal court filings: 2012 through May 2019**



Source: Colorado Judicial Branch

Parole revocations for technical violations are expected to continue to fall at an increasing rate due to Senate Bill 19-143, which was signed into law on May 28, 2019. This legislation is expected to result in fewer parole denials, increases in discretionary parole releases, and far fewer parole revocations. However, the length of stay on parole for certain revoked parolees could increase significantly. The impact of this legislation is impossible to determine or estimate at this time, due to a lack of relevant data and the very recent passage of this bill.

However, in concert with the expected increase in releases to parole, the parole caseload is expected to increase 6.7% by the end of FY 2019, double the growth expected at the time of the December 2018 forecast. This increase in the caseload will result in a corresponding increase in parole returns in ensuing years, due to both technical violations and new sentences, providing upward pressure on the size of the inmate population.

While admissions to prison have decreased, releases from prison have increased. Between March and May of 2019, discretionary parole releases increased 57.7% over the number observed in the same time frame the prior year. As expected, mandatory releases decreased, though to a lesser extent.

This increase is not unexpected, as the Parole Board has made concerted efforts to work with the Governor's Office to address the capacity issues of the Colorado Department of Corrections and expedite releases. In response to the Governor's request, the Board has worked to review cohorts of offenders and expedite their release prior to their mandatory release date or previously set re-parole

dates. The Board has also focused on reviewing offenders who are on tabled status to ensure they are released efficiently after they complete their tabled requirements.

As such, the year-end population forecast has been revised downward from the figure expected at the time of the December 2018 forecast. Negative growth is expected through FY 2021, followed by slow growth through FY 2025. The prison population is expected to reach 20,878 by the end of FY 2025, 13.9% lower than the figure predicted in December 2018.

### **Female prison population**

Trends in criminal filings and convictions may to some extent explain why the number of women in prison has remained relatively stable, while the number of men has declined in early FY 2019. While the overall growth in criminal court filings has slowed, the increase in filings on women exceeds that for men. Filings increased by 3.8% for men in FY 2018, and by an estimated 2.3% in FY 2019. Filings among women have increased more than double these rates, with increases of 7.7% in FY 2018, and an estimated 5.7% in FY 2019. An increasing proportion of filings are comprised of women: in FY 2010 20.5% of all filings were on women. This proportion increased steadily over the years to 24.4% in FY 2018 and to an estimated 25.1% by the end of FY 2019.

These trends have and will continue to exert more upward pressure on the female inmate population, who comprise an increasing proportion of the overall prison population. Nonetheless, it is expected that the impacts of the recent legislation may be seen in numbers of women both admitted to and released from prison. In response, the female prison population is expected to decrease at a greater rate than expected for the male population through FY 2022, but is subsequently expected to increase at a greater rate through FY 2025.

### **Parole Caseload**

Very strong growth in the parole caseload is expected through FY 2020 due to increases in parole releases, and a significant decrease in parole revocations. The caseload is expected to remain somewhat stable across the following two years, as releases to parole will drop consequent to the decline in the prison population. Growth is expected to return in FY 2023, continuing through FY 2025.

### **Summary**

This interim forecast indicates the overall prison population will experience slow growth by the end of FY 2025, from the actual population of 20,136 as of the end of FY 2018 to 20,878 by June 2025 (a 3.7% increase). The number of men in prison is expected to increase 3.4% by the end of FY 2025, reaching 18,734 male inmates. The number of women in prison is expected to increase at a greater rate overall (6.6%), reaching 2,144 by the end of FY 2025. Likewise, the domestic parole caseload is expected to increase 15.8% between the ends of fiscal years 2018 and 2025, reaching 10,132 parolees.

The DCJ Summer 2019 interim prison population projections are presented below in Tables 1 and 2. Figures 2 and 3 provide comparisons of this interim projection to the DCJ December 2018 projection for the total and female inmate populations, respectively.

Updated estimates of annual admissions and releases by type are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The interim domestic parole caseload projection is presented in Table 5, below. A comparison of the DCJ December 2018 parole caseload projection to this interim projection is displayed in Figure 4.

**Table 1. DCJ Summer 2019 Interim Quarterly Prison Population Projections**

FY	End of month:	Total population	% change	Male inmates	% change	Female inmates	% change
2018	Jun-18*	20,136	1.23%	18,125	1.18%	2,011	1.67%
2019	Sep-18*	20,041	-0.47%	18,058	-0.37%	1,983	-1.39%
	Dec-18*	20,200	0.79%	18,152	0.52%	2,048	3.78%
	Mar-19*	20,140	-0.30%	18,115	-0.20%	2,025	0.40%
	Jun-19	20,034	-0.53%	18,000	-0.63%	2,034	0.44%
2021	Sep-19	20,000	-0.17%	17,976	-0.13%	2,023	-0.52%
	Dec-19	19,955	-0.22%	17,945	-0.18%	2,011	-0.63%
	Mar-20	19,922	-0.17%	17,920	-0.14%	2,002	-0.44%
	Jun-20	19,863	-0.29%	17,871	-0.27%	1,992	-0.49%
2021	Sep-20	19,848	-0.07%	17,863	-0.05%	1,985	-0.32%
	Dec-20	19,816	-0.16%	17,843	-0.11%	1,974	-0.60%
	Mar-21	19,794	-0.12%	17,827	-0.09%	1,966	-0.37%
	Jun-21	19,763	-0.16%	17,809	-0.10%	1,953	-0.67%
2022	Sep-21	19,770	0.04%	17,829	0.11%	1,942	-0.58%
	Dec-21	19,772	0.01%	17,839	0.06%	1,933	-0.44%
	Mar-22	19,768	-0.02%	17,856	0.10%	1,912	-1.11%
	Jun-22	19,775	0.04%	17,879	0.13%	1,896	-0.84%
2023	Sep-22	19,828	0.27%	17,925	0.26%	1,902	0.35%
	Dec-22	19,868	0.20%	17,962	0.20%	1,906	0.19%
	Mar-23	19,963	0.48%	18,040	0.43%	1,923	0.90%
	Jun-23	20,039	0.38%	18,102	0.35%	1,937	0.73%
2024	Sep-23	20,122	0.41%	18,166	0.35%	1,956	0.98%
	Dec-23	20,174	0.26%	18,207	0.23%	1,968	0.57%
	Mar-24	20,318	0.71%	18,313	0.58%	2,006	1.94%
	Jun-24	20,430	0.55%	18,393	0.44%	2,037	1.56%
2025	Sep-24	20,557	0.62%	18,489	0.52%	2,067	1.49%
	Dec-24	20,648	0.44%	18,560	0.38%	2,088	0.99%
	Mar-25	20,781	0.64%	18,662	0.55%	2,119	1.48%
	Jun-26	20,878	0.47%	18,734	0.39%	2,144	1.17%

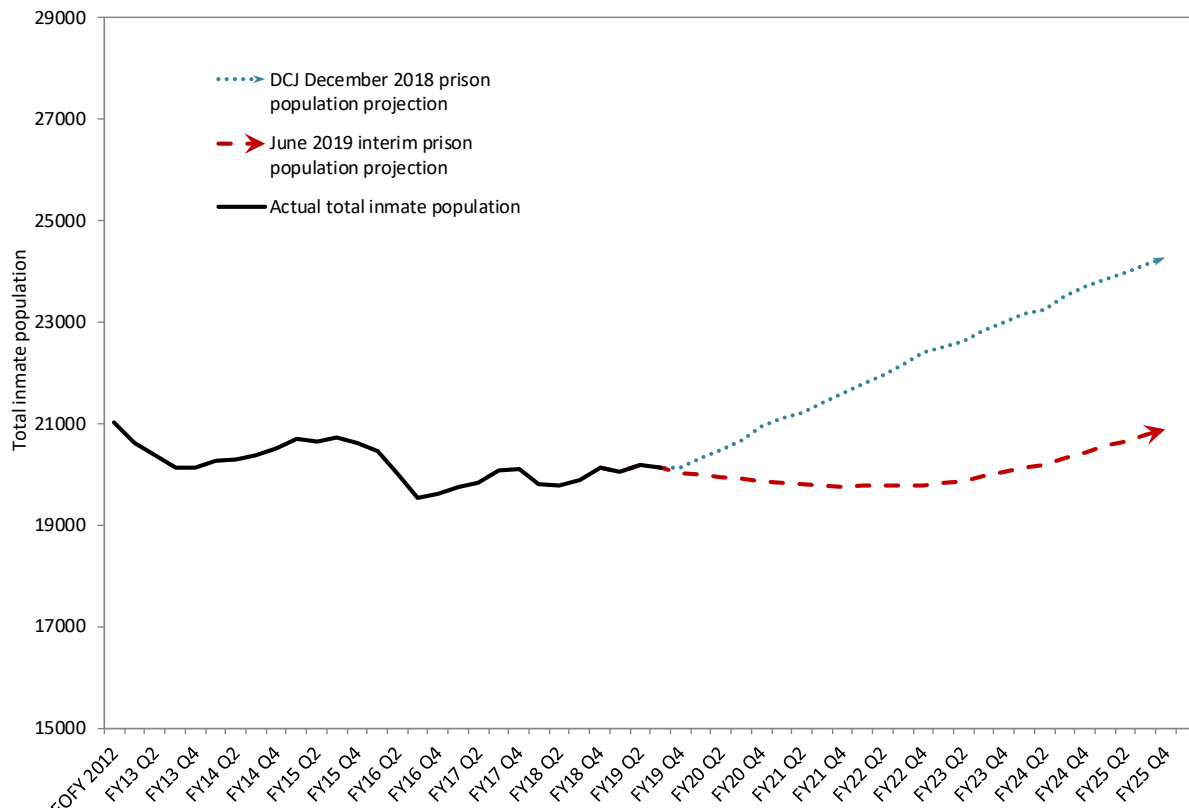
\* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

**Table 2. DCJ Summer 2019 Interim Annual Prison Population Projections**

FY	Total population	% change	Male inmates	% change	Female inmates	% change
2018*	20,136	0.17%	18,125	0.09%	2,011	0.90%
2019	20,034	-0.51%	18,000	-0.69%	2,034	1.14%
2020	19,863	-0.85%	17,871	-0.72%	1,992	-2.07%
2021	19,763	-0.51%	17,809	-0.35%	1,953	-1.95%
2022	19,775	0.06%	17,879	0.39%	1,896	-2.93%
2023	20,039	1.34%	18,102	1.24%	1,937	2.19%
2024	20,430	1.95%	18,393	1.61%	2,037	5.15%
2025	20,878	2.19%	18,734	1.86%	2,144	5.24%

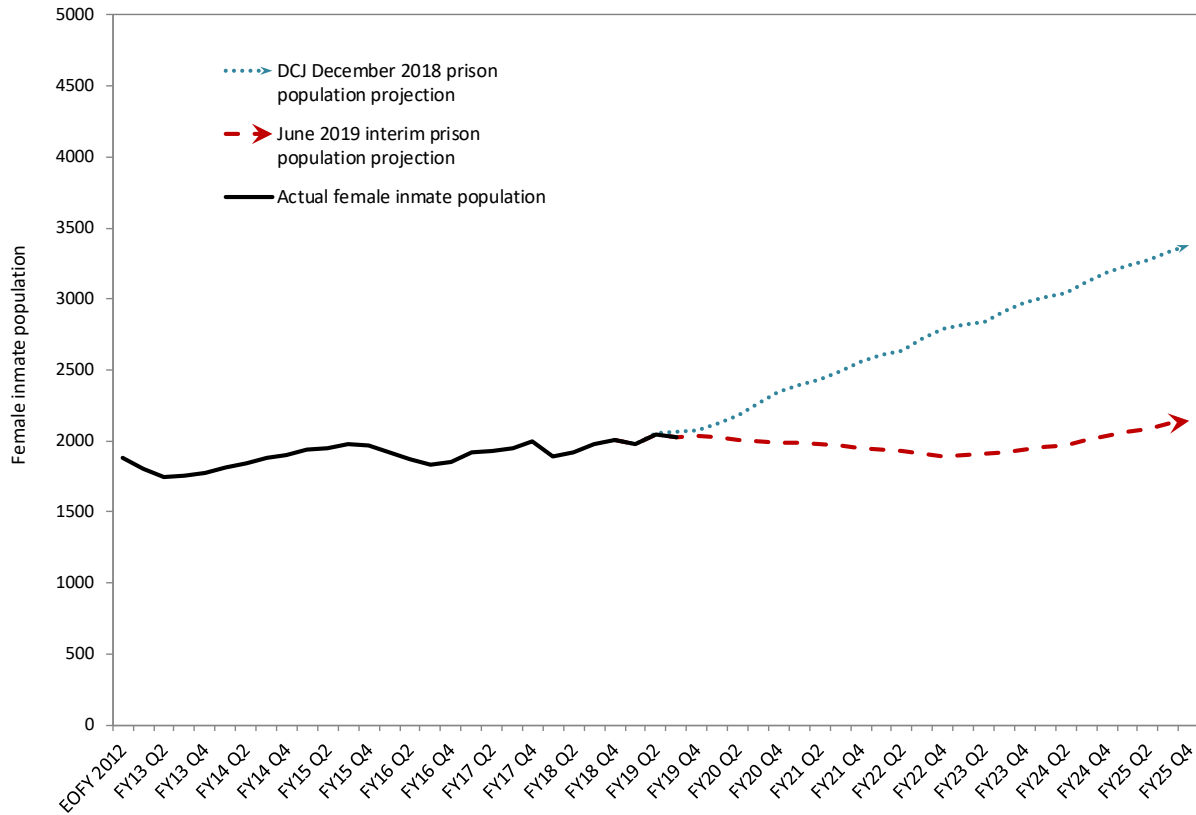
\* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

**Figure 2. Comparison of DCJ 2018 quarterly prison population projection and DCJ June 2019 interim projection**



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2018. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

**Figure 3. Comparison of DCJ December 2018 quarterly female prison population projection to DCJ June 2019 interim projection**



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2018. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

**Table 3. DCJ June 2019 Interim Prison Population Projections: Estimated prison admissions by type**

SFY	New court commitments	Technical violation returns	Parole returns with a new crime	Other	Total admissions
<b>2018*</b>	6,172	2,660	1,072	68	9,972
<b>2019</b>	6,322	2,249	1,193	68	9,832
<b>2020</b>	6,549	1,807	1,251	79	9,686
<b>2021</b>	6,626	1,852	1,296	81	9,856
<b>2022</b>	6,648	1,899	1,317	83	9,947
<b>2023</b>	6,896	1,921	1,344	86	10,247
<b>2024</b>	7,139	1,992	1,376	88	10,594
<b>2025</b>	7,327	2,044	1,409	90	10,870

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

**Table 4. DCJ June 2019 Interim Prison Population Projections: Estimated prison releases by type**

SFY	Parole releases			Sentence Discharge	Other	Total Releases
	Mandatory	Discretionary	Total			
2018*	5,333	3,436	8,769	1,052	123	9,944
2019	4,332	4,315	8,647	1,161	126	9,934
2020	3,604	5,206	8,810	940	110	9,860
2021	3,609	5,273	8,882	962	116	9,960
2022	3,676	5,158	8,835	984	117	9,936
2023	3,769	5,182	8,951	916	124	9,991
2024	3,899	5,252	9,152	932	126	10,210
2025	4,029	5,340	9,369	921	132	10,422

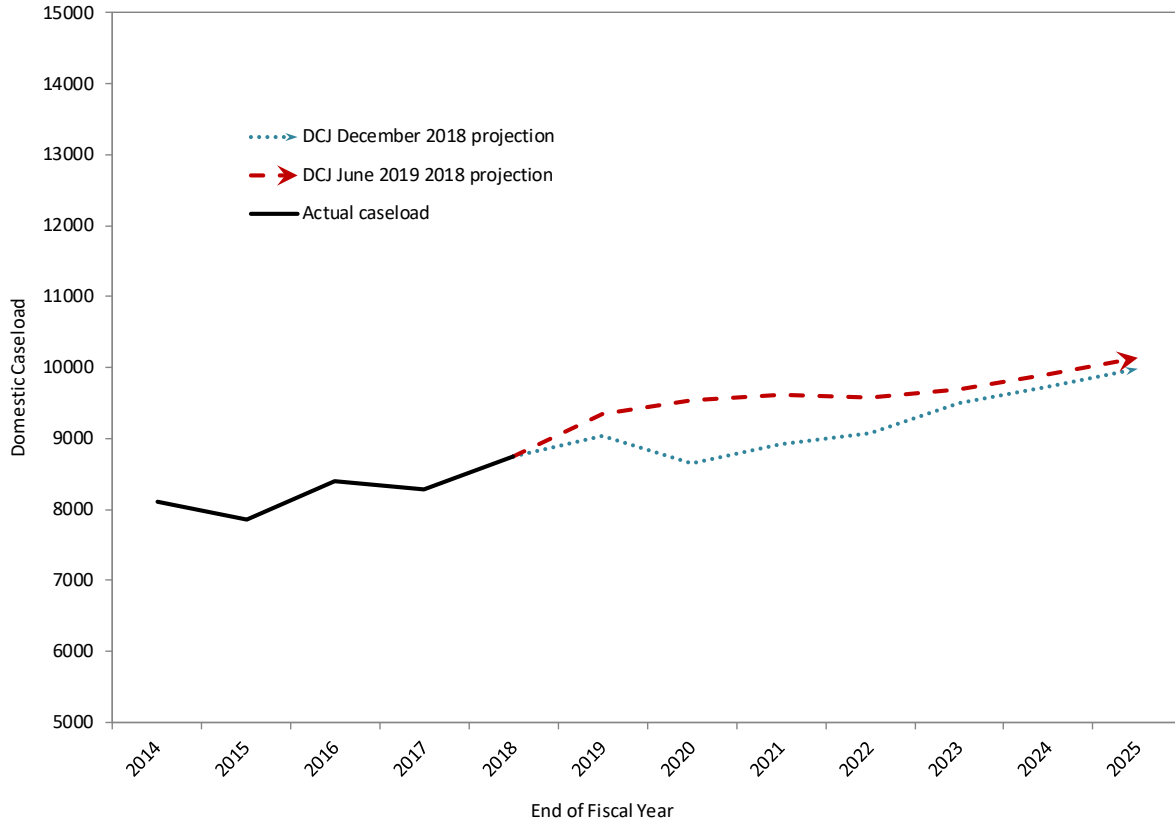
\* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

**Table 5. DCJ June 2019 Interim Domestic Parole Caseload Projection**

FY	Domestic Caseload	% change
2018*	8,752	5.62%
2019	9,341	6.73%
2020	9,531	2.03%
2021	9,616	0.90%
2022	9,575	-0.43%
2023	9,687	1.17%
2024	9,898	2.17%
2025	10,132	2.36%

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

**Figure 4: Domestic parole caseload FY 2014-FY 2018, DCJ December 2018 and DCJ June 2019 interim parole caseload projections through FY 2025**



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.