

To: Governor Dannel P. Malloy
From: Mike Lawlor, Under Secretary for Criminal Justice Policy and Planning
Date: September 9, 2016
Subject: 2016 Mid-Year Update on Crime Trends

Executive Summary

Each summer we have presented you with a mid-year briefing on crime trends. This supplements our annual “Trends in the Criminal Justice System” report issued each January. Updates are arranged by topic below, but there are several key points:

On September 3, 2016, the prison population dropped below 15,000 offenders for the first time since January 1997. Reviewing the impact of the Second Chance Act, the Legislative Office of Fiscal Analysis predicted that the inmate population could shrink by 1,120 offenders. The drop in offenders from September 2015 to September 2016 exceeded their prediction and fell by 1,130 offenders.

Reported violent crime in Connecticut dropped by an estimated 7% in 2015. This is on top of the 9.7% drop in 2014 which was the fourth biggest decrease in the nation.

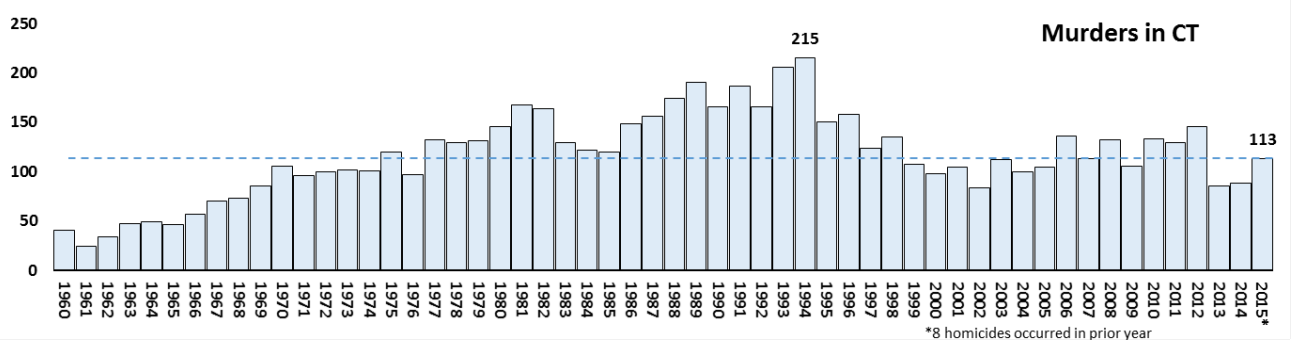
There was an increase in the number of murders over 2014, however the spike in murders in Hartford and the discovery of 8 bodies from murders committed years ago explain almost all of the increase. Thus far in 2016 there have been 36% fewer murders in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport compared to last year to date.

Finally, there was a steady downward trend in 2015 for total crimes reported, arrests made and admissions to prison. The inmate population is currently at a 20 year low. One troubling aspect of the decrease in inmate population is that the total number of male inmates has dropped significantly while the number of incarcerated women has held constant for more than two years.

Perhaps the most encouraging trend of all is the steady decline in the number of young people being arrested and being incarcerated. This is encouraging for two reasons: First, crime committed by the youngest adults seems to be dropping more rapidly than crime committed by older offenders, presumable due to the success of reform initiatives such as “Raise the Age” and a variety of school-based diversionary options and second, since most crime is committed by a relatively small number of career criminals; fewer younger offenders entering the system and beginning a life of crime should mean significantly less crime in the future.

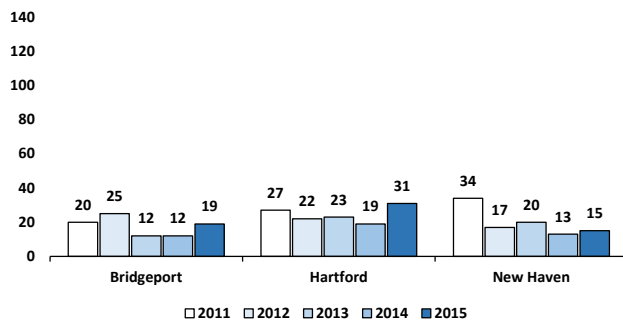
Crime Reduction

Following two years of historically low totals, murders increased in 2015. The Connecticut State Police report 113 murders in 2015, a year-over-year increase of 25.

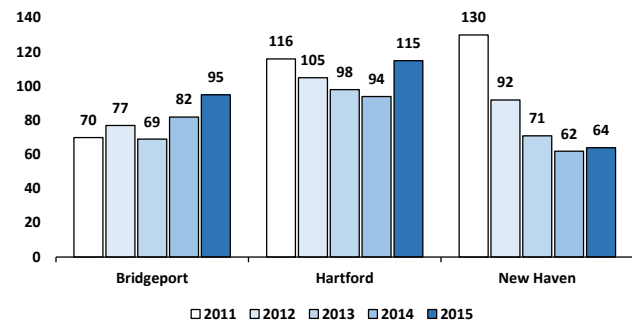


The uptick can be explained by two factors. The victims in eight (8) murders reported in 2015 were killed in prior years. Six bodies were discovered in New Britain, victims of a single offender. One other victim was from Hartford, another from Bridgeport. In addition, the city of Hartford reported a spike in homicides during 2015. The city witnessed 12 more murders in 2015 than it did in 2014.

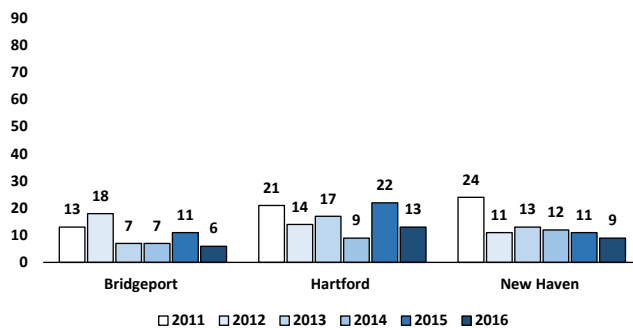
Homicides, 2011-2015



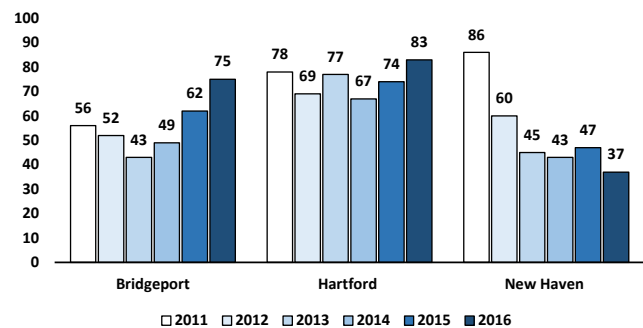
Fatal and Non Fatal Shootings, 2011-2015



Homicides through Aug. 30



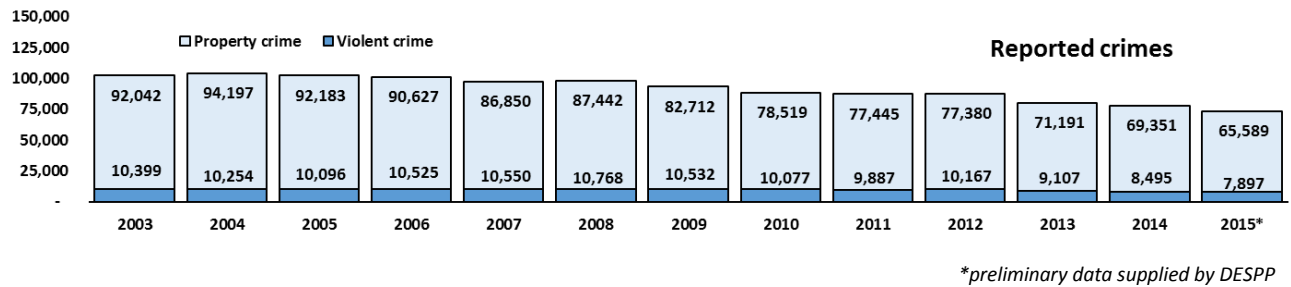
Fatal and Non Fatal shootings through Aug. 30



You will recall that you called a summit of federal, state and local law enforcement leaders on July 20 of last year to develop a plan to reduce the violence in Hartford. Following the summit you allocated additional law enforcement resources, including State Police and Department of Correction staff. This resulted in a significant reduction in the months that followed. On the date of that summit, Hartford had already experienced ten additional murders compared to this year to date. Bridgeport also experienced a small uptick in murders in

2015. On a more positive note, Hartford has realized a year-to-date reduction in homicides of -41% compared to last year. In fact, according to Project Longevity data, 2016 homicides in the three major cities are down 36% compared to last year. If these trends continue through the remainder of 2016, we will return to pre-2015 figures.

According to the FBI, reported “Index Crimes” (crimes involving victims, i.e. murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft and arson) dropped 20.7% in Connecticut between 2008 and

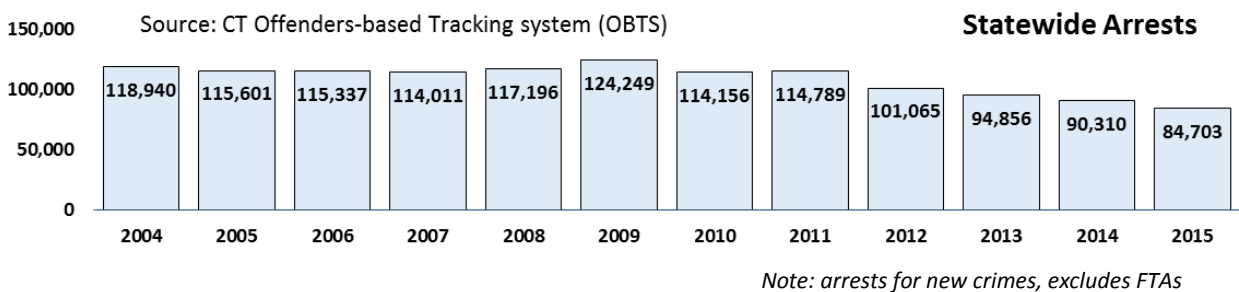


2014. Preliminary data from the Connecticut State Police indicates this trend continued in 2015. The tentative number for reported Index Crimes, in 2015, is 73,486, down 5.6% from 2014. Violent crime is down by an even greater margin, from 8,495 to 7,897, or 7%.

While the Northeast Region continues to experience dropping crime, Connecticut’s rate of decline exceeds the regional drop. From 2013 to 2014, the number of violent crimes in Connecticut dropped 9.7% versus all of New England’s 6.1%. Connecticut’s violent crime fell in 2015 despite a dramatic drop in 2014.

FBI data for the first half of 2015 reveals that violent crime, nationally, was up 1.7%. For the Northeast Region, for the same period, violent crime was down 3.2%. According to full-year data for 2015, Connecticut realized a reduction drop in violent crime of 7%. For further analysis, full year nationwide data will not be available until released by the FBI.

Based on data from the Connecticut offender based tracking system, the total number of statewide arrests for all crimes (Index and non-index crimes combined) has dropped 31.8% between 2009, the last peak, and 2015. In 2009 there were 124,249 arrests statewide. In 2015 there were 84,703 a drop of 6.2% from 2014.

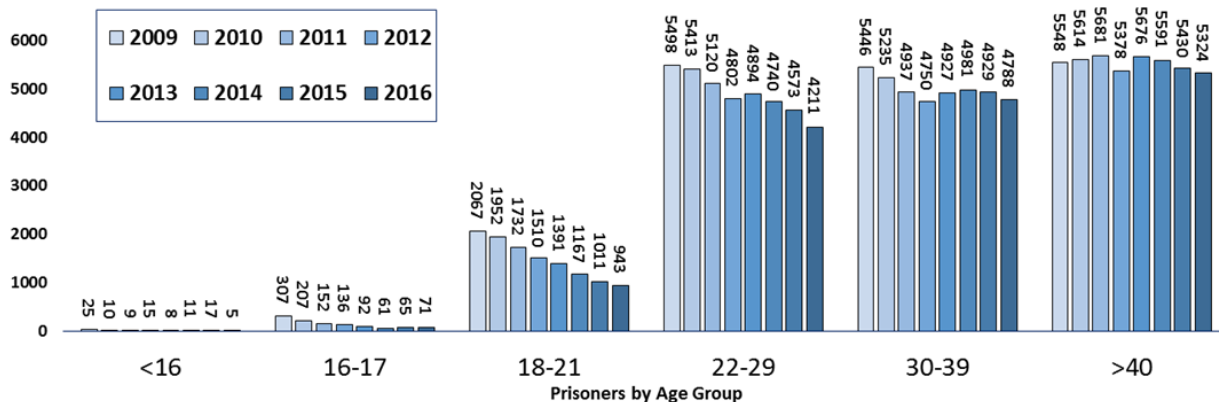


On July 1, 2016 Connecticut had 943 inmates aged 18-21, down from 2,067 on July 1, 2009, a 54% decrease. The reduction has been constant each year since 2009 and allows Connecticut to plan for a lower total prison population in the years to come.

There has been a similar decline in the number of inmates aged 22-29 (23%), but the drop has not been as steep as that of the younger cohort. The number of older inmates (>40) has been relatively constant over that same period, fluctuating between 5,300 and 5,600. Inmates under the age of 18 have dropped from 332 in 2009 to 76 in 2016, a decrease of 77%. Much of this is due to the "Raise the Age" initiative that took full effect in July 2012. The dramatic decline in younger adult inmates tracks the decline in the number of arrests of persons 18-21. Between 2008 and 2015, the drop was 53%.

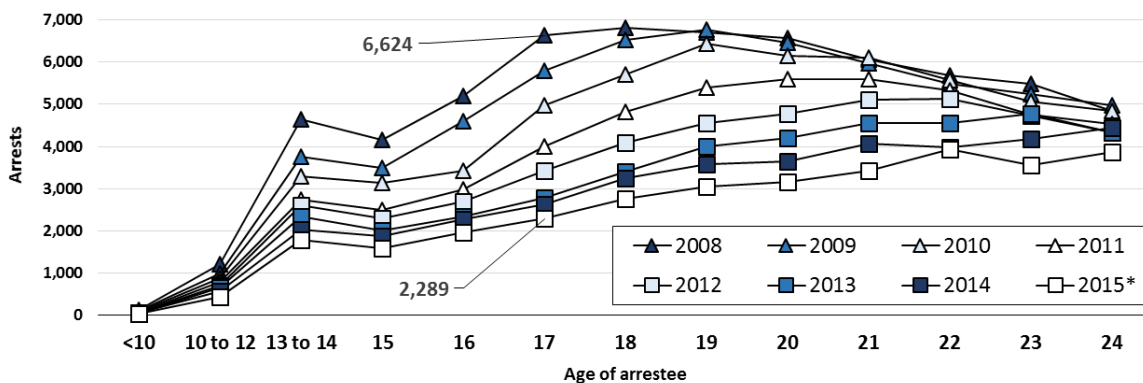
The charts below illustrate the changes in inmate population by age cohort and the changes in total arrests by age cohort.

Age ranges of offenders incarcerated in CT, 2009 through 2016



CT-OPM, Criminal Justice Police & Planning Division

Statewide arrests by age at of arrestee, 2008-2015



Source: Crime in CT Reports, 2008-2014. 2015 arrest data is preliminary. ARRESTS of 18 to 21 year olds dropped 53% between 2008 and 2015.

Truth-in-Sentencing

Total DOC population has dropped by 2,246 offenders since January 1, 2011, or about 13%, (calculated January 1, 2011 vs. January 1, 2016). Over that same period, the total number of releases from prison has declined by 20%, year over year. Reported crime also declined by almost 16% (CT UCR 2011 – 87,332, Preliminary 2015 – 73,486).

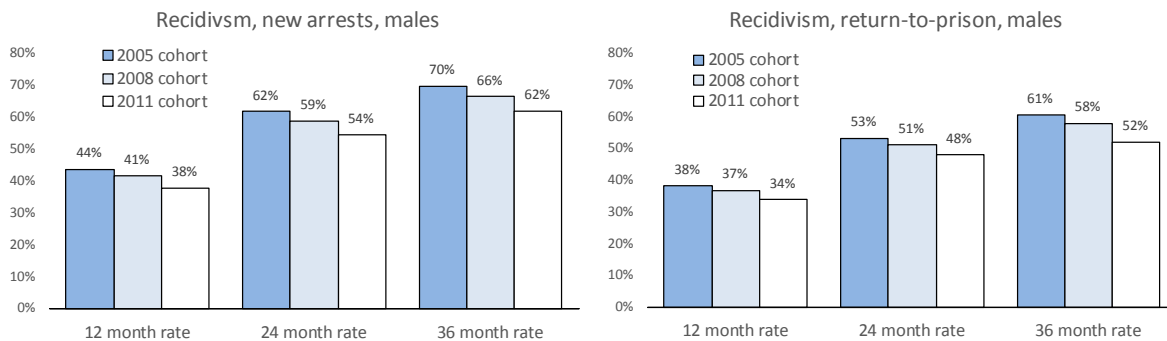
Through improvements to the offender re-entry process, discretionary releases have ticked up recently. OPM projections for 2016 suggest more offenders will be released than in the recent past. The DOC and the Board of Pardons and Paroles have improved efforts to identify candidates for re-entry and helped them transition, safely, back into the community.

Better efficiency at BOPP, measured by 1) the number of hearings, and 2) increasing parole caseloads, has clearly contributed to the fall-off in the number of sentenced prisoners. So too has centralization of the process for reviewing and approving discretionary prisoner releases. From its inception last year, the Community Release Unit (CRU) has introduced consistency and accountability to a once-murky and somewhat disjointed effort. Recent positive trends for both community supervision caseloads and sentenced-prisoner counts are tightly aligned with Commissioner Semple’s decision to create CRU in early 2015.

- **RREC**

The CT DOC recently introduced changes to the Risk Reduction Earned Credit (RREC) program that was authorized by the CT State Legislature in 2011. With these changes, all eligible offenders will no longer be awarded 5 days of earned credit each month. Instead, the amount of credit earned by an offender will be based on the level of risk posed by each offender. Level 4 offenders-the most high risk prisoners- will only be eligible to earn three days of credit per month. Level 2 and Level 3 offenders may earn four days per month. Level 1 offenders will continue to be eligible to earn five days of credit per month. The DOC hopes that this change will incentivize prisoners to engage in programming and behavior that leads to a reduction in security level.

- **Recidivism Reduction**



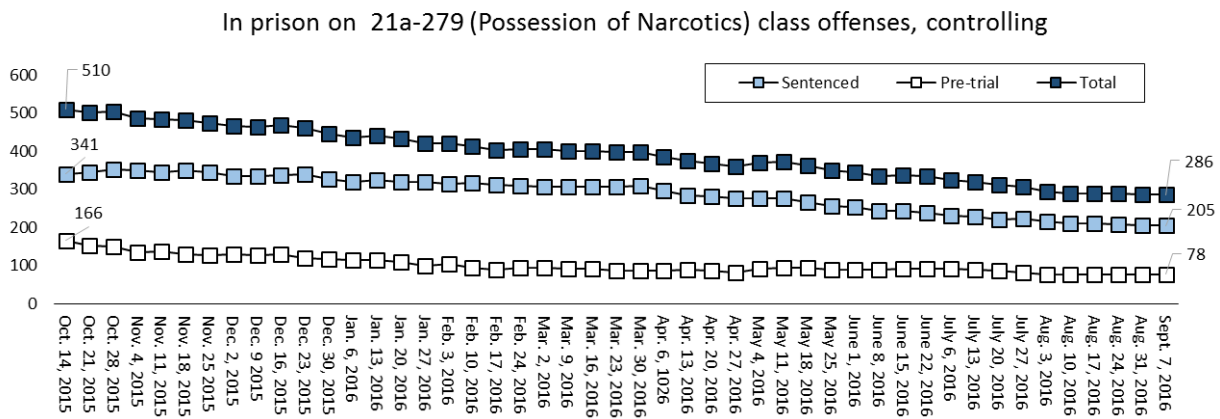
Aggregate recidivism figures are stable and trending downward. Given the stability of recidivism rates on a year-to-year basis, our focus has shifted to investigating the specific re-offense and recidivism rates for offender subgroups like young offenders, violent offenders, women, etc. In the coming year, the Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division will conduct a reexamination of sex offender recidivism, updating its 2012 Sex Offender Recidivism Report to determine 5-year outcomes for offenders released from prison in 2011. In

the coming year, the Division will also determine 1-year return-to-prison rates for offenders who were released from prison during 2014.

Second Chance Society Implementation Update

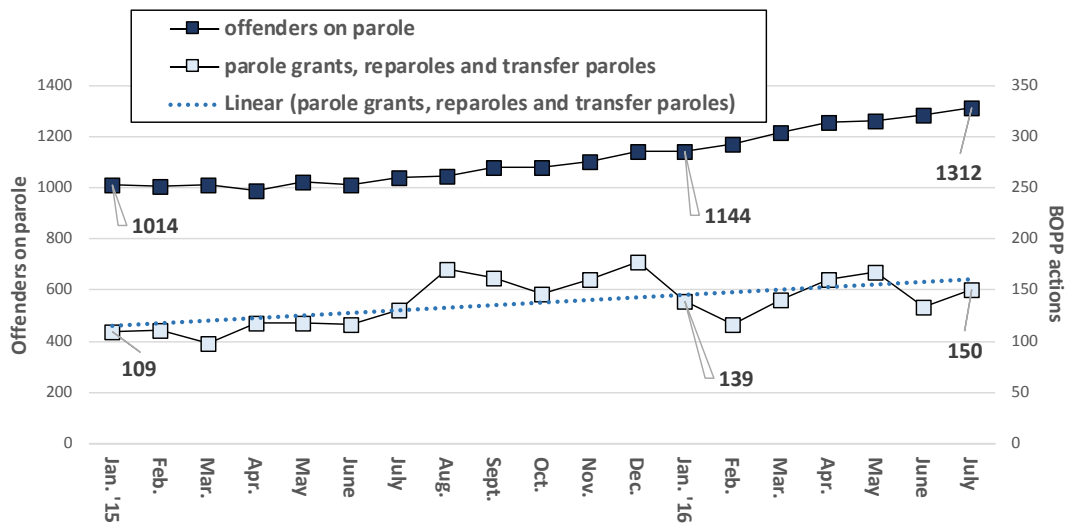
PA June Special Session 15-2 changed the penalty for drug possession from an unclassified 7 year felony to a Class A Misdemeanor [1 year in jail maximum] effective October 1, 2015. As of August 28, 2015, there were 513 prisoners where the controlling offense is Possession of Narcotics. We note that on June 30, 2010, 783 people were incarcerated for this offense.

Since the change, the number of prisoners incarcerated for drug possession has fallen by 44%. In the first year, the largest impact has been on the pretrial population, with a 54% reduction (166 to 78).



- **Expedited parole hearings**

Over the past year, the Board of Pardons and Paroles has implemented structured-decision making procedures to improve the performance and quality of the parole-review process. Compared to the previous year, the number of new parole cases that were reviewed, and the number of cases considered for re-parole have



increased. In addition, the Board also reinstated transfer parole releases for the most appropriate, low-risk offenders.

- **Expedited Pardon Review**

The 2015 Second Chance Society legislation required the Board of Pardons and Parole to develop an “expedited pardons” process that would allow persons convicted of non-violent crimes to obtain a pardon without the necessity of a full hearing. In the recent past, many applicants have waited for more than two years to have a hearing, even in cases involving misdemeanor convictions that are more than a decade old. The legislature’s Regulations Review Committee approved final regulations for Expedited Pardons at its July 26, 2016 meeting. These expedited proceedings should begin in the early fall of this year. Under the new regulations, felony convictions that are more than five years old and misdemeanor convictions more than three years old are eligible to be considered for the expedited process. Violent felonies and misdemeanors are not eligible. If there is a victim in a non-violent case, a full hearing will be required if the victim requests such.

The Board has eliminated its long-standing backlog of pardons applications following the appointment of five new board members pursuant to the 2015 legislation. Last year the Board doubled the number of applications considered. The table below provides the data for both FY 15 and FY 16:

	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	% Change
Applications Received	1103	1802	63%
Eligible Applications	963	1343	39%
Pardons Granted	317	674	113%

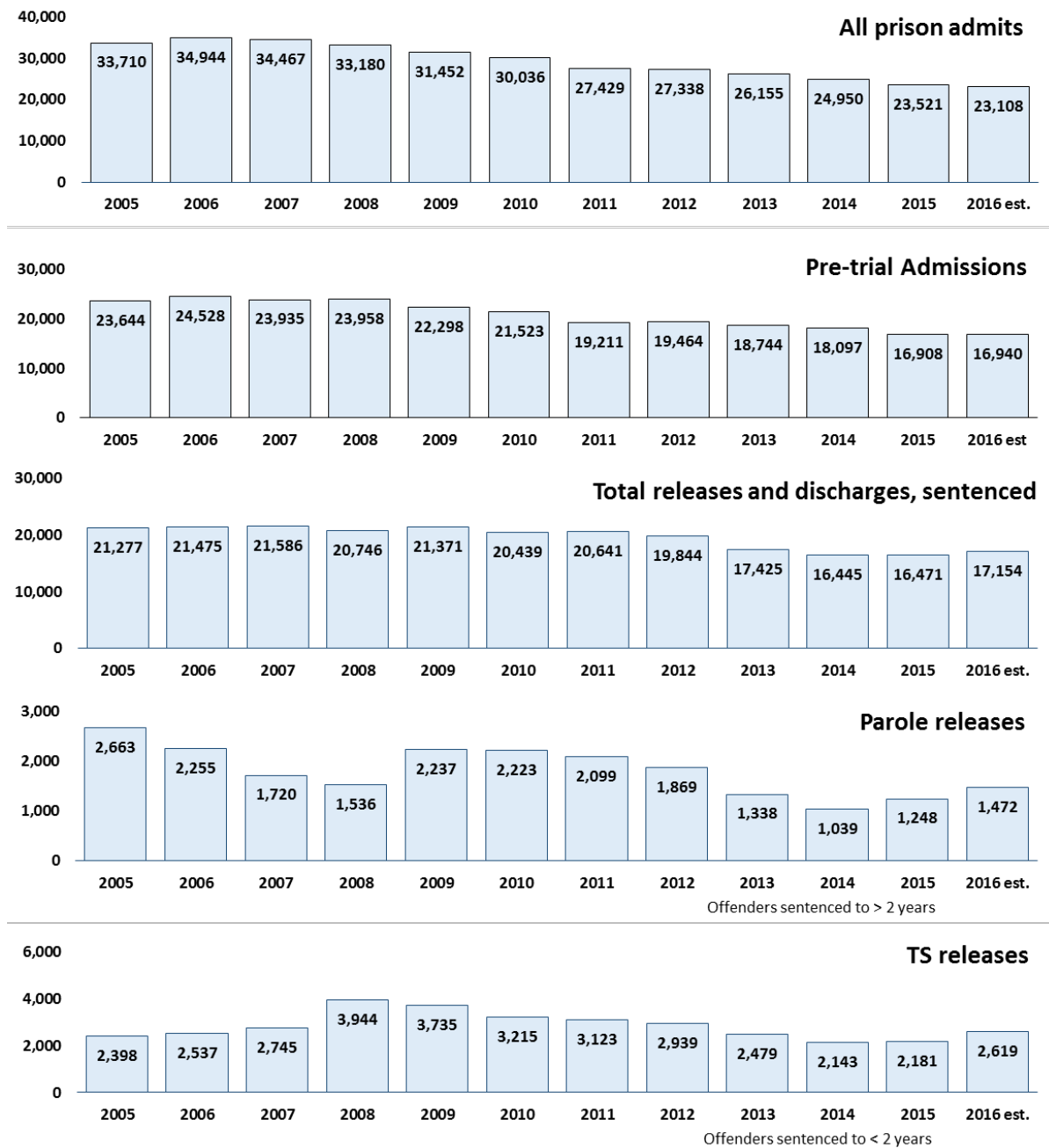
- **Parole hearings for offenders convicted in their youth**

Public Act 15-84: AN ACT CONCERNING LENGTHY SENTENCES FOR CRIMES COMMITTED BY A CHILD OR YOUTH AND THE SENTENCING OF A CHILD OR YOUTH CONVICTED OF CERTAIN FELONY OFFENSE, gave parole eligibility to offenders sentenced in their youth. Hearings began in June. As of this writing, 10 hearings have been held. 7 offenders were granted parole, 3 were denied. An additional 30 hearings are scheduled through December 2016.

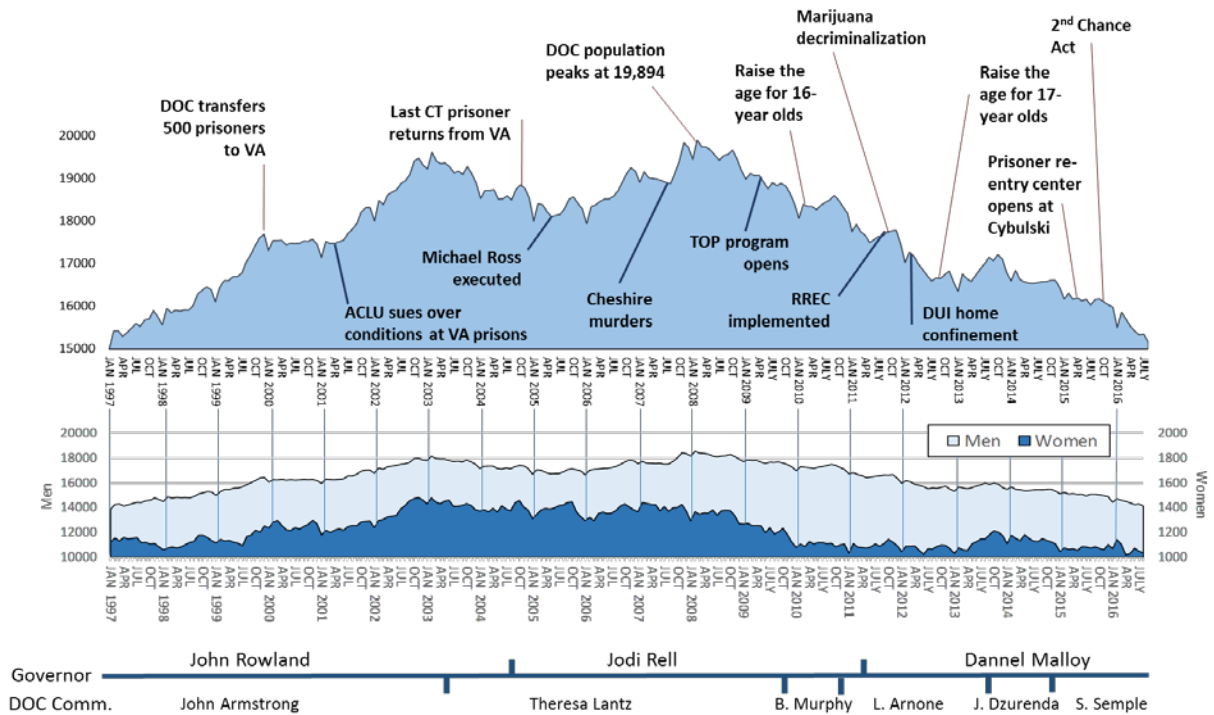
Our office had projected that the reforms in the 2015 Second Chance Society bill would result in a total prison population reduction of 1,120 within one year. The Legislature’s non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis agreed with that estimate. To date the actual reduction in the prison population has been 1,100 since one year ago, and the downward trend appears to be sustained. As a result of the dropping inmate population, the total Department of Correction budget will drop from \$667 in FY16 to \$623 million in FY17, a reduction of 7%.

Below are four additional charts that will provide you with a twelve-year historical perspective on the changes outlined above. 2016 estimates are full year projections based on actual numbers for the first seven months of the year.

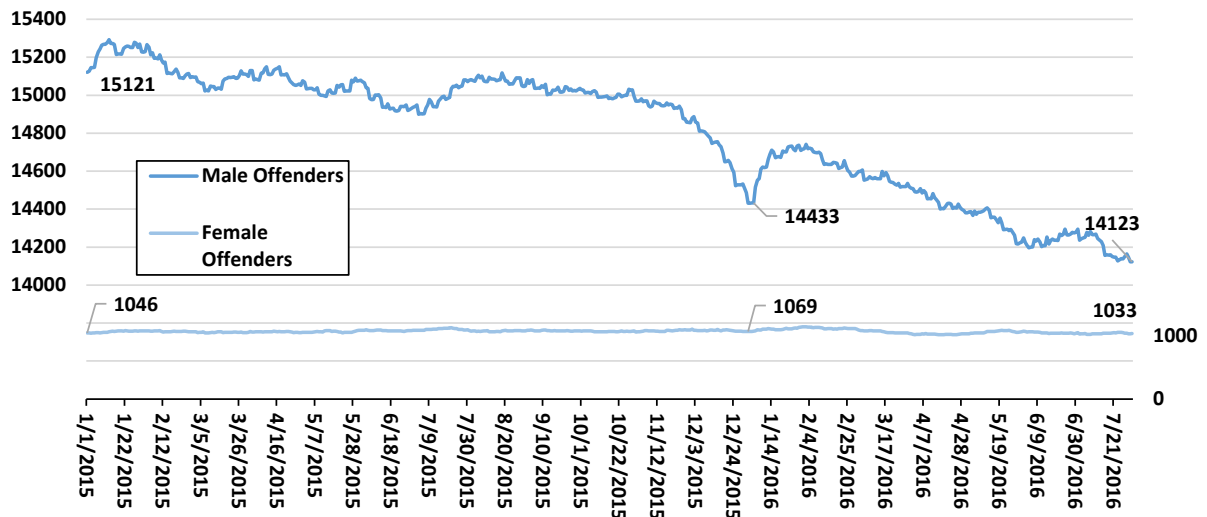
The offender re-entry process has become more efficient. The uptick seen below in parole releases is evidence that the Board of Pardons and Paroles has streamlined its processes to assess risk and approve offenders eligible for parole (sentence > 2 years). In addition, the Community Release Unit (CRU) at the Department of Correction, a product of a LEAN event, has streamlined the DOC's offender re-entry process.



The CT Prison population, January 1997 through January 2016

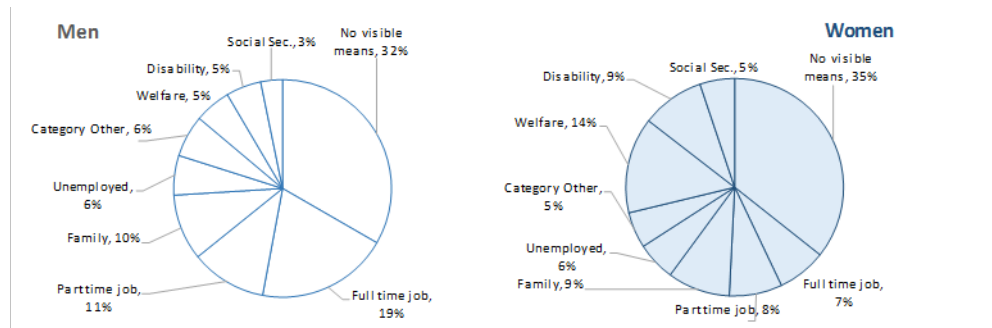


Connecticut Correctional Facility Population by Gender



The women's prison population has remained relatively stable over the past several years. In an effort to reduce the female incarceration rate, OPM CJPPD is developing a federal grant funded Women Offender Initiative as a component of the Second Chance Society. The federal funds will support strategies and services to reduce risk of re-arrest, re-incarceration and improve chances of successful community re-entry for female offenders. The grant will focus on mental health and substance abuse treatment, diversion services and community re-integration services provided through DOC, CSSD and DMHAS.

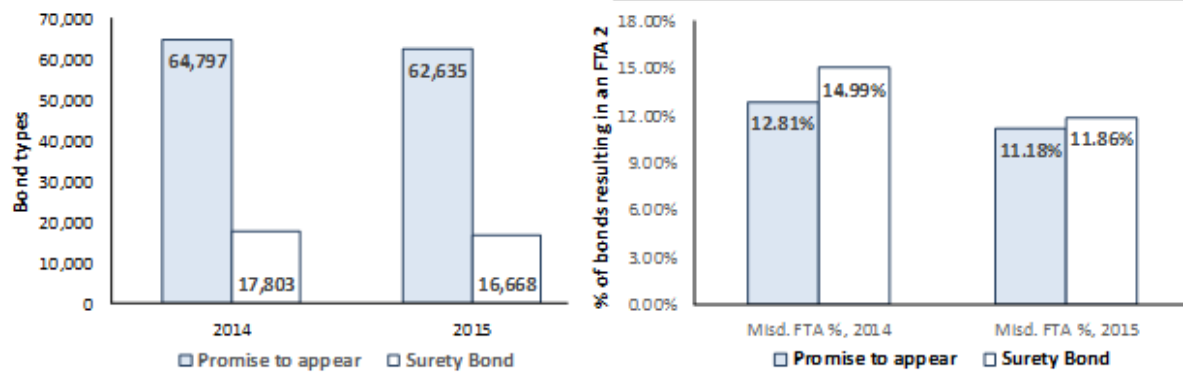
Means of support, pre-trial prisoners, 2011



As part of an on-study study of the state's pre-trial prison population, OPM obtained data from the DOC on 15,898 people who were admitted to prison on pre-trial status during 2011.

Court Support Services Division (CSSD), in the Judicial Branch, agreed to try to match this data with a variety of information collected by their Jail Re-interview Program (JRIP). Each month, JRIP staff interview almost every pre-trial detainee in an attempt to ease the jail population through bail modifications or appropriate programming. CSSD was able to match JRIP data with 13,059 persons in our 2011 pre-trial cohort. The data in chart 2a contains information on major means-of-support for 97% of the men and women in the sample. Among men, 32% reported no visible means of support. Among women the figure was 35%. Only 19% of men had a full-time job. For women the figure was 7%. This information may help to explain why many pre-trial prisoners remain incarcerated with - what on the face of it appear to be - very low bonds.

Bail and Misdemeanor failure-to-appear rates



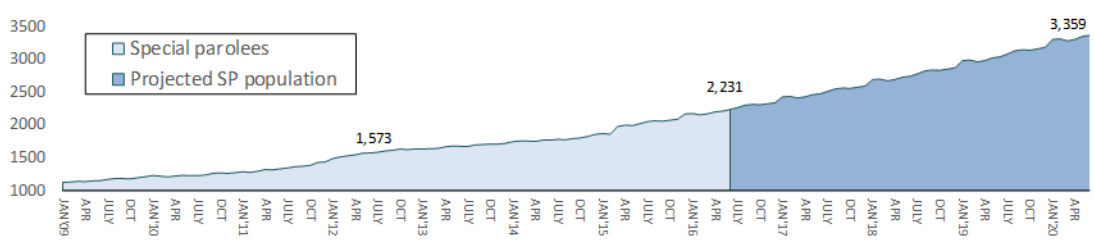
The Legislature is currently considering changes to the state's bail system that would largely eliminate court-imposed, cash bonds for most misdemeanor offenses.

For decades, opponents of cash bonds have argued that the bail system unduly punishes the poor without adequate evidence to demonstrate increased public safety. The bail industry counters that without their services, the pre-trial prison population would inevitably mushroom, and for those offenders released without bail, failure-to-appear (FTA) rates would sky-rocket.

OPM recently reviewed Judicial Branch data on offenders released to bond in 2014 and 2015. This data suggests that misdemeanor FTA rates, in fact are slightly higher among offenders with surety bonds compared to offenders who were released on promise-to-appear agreements. Though not definitive, this data bolsters those who assert that current FTA rates will not be adversely affected.

It is too early to project the impact of proposed bail-reform legislation on the size of the state's jail population given the dynamics of the Connecticut's pre-trial system.

Projected growth in the Special Parole population



In November 2014, this paper reported on a disquieting expansion in the size of the state's special parole population. At that time, the state had 1,822 special parolees. Today there are over 2,200* and the data suggests that the number of offenders sentenced to special parole is accelerating.

Since last June, the state's special parole population - both in the community and on remand - is up 10.4%. Were this rate-of-increase to continue unchecked, OPM estimates there will be 3,359 special parolees in CT by June 1, 2020.

Records for the 11,500 offenders currently serving a prison sentence in a DOC facility indicate that 2,628, or 23%, will serve a term of special parole when they leave prison. If we add the increasing use of special parole as an option in sentencing and the high remand rate for technical violations among special parolees (see Monthly Indications Report, October 2015), it might be reasonable to wonder whether OPM's estimate for June 2020 is too conservative.

This issue will not resolve itself on its own. The relevant parties should consider; reviewing the state's expectations of special parole, seek to identify the types of offenders that are most appropriate for special parole supervision, and to review current sentencing guidelines and practices.

*in the community, in halfway houses and on prison remand.