



---

# Oregon Corrections Population Forecast

---

October 2008

Volume XIV, No. 2

## **Background**

The Office of Economic Analysis produces the semi-annual Corrections Population Forecast which provides projections of the offender populations supervised by the Department of Corrections (DOC). The forecast estimates the number of inmates in the state prison system, offenders on probation, parole, and post-prison supervision, and felony offenders serving sentences of 12 or fewer months in county jails.

Executive Order 95-06 directs the Department of Administrative Services and the Corrections Population Forecasting Advisory Committee to produce the forecast. The forecast is mandated to estimate monthly populations over a ten year period and is due April 1 and October 1 of each year. State agencies, in particular the DOC and the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, are mandated to use the forecast for budgeting and policy development where the offender population is concerned.

The advisory committee is comprised of individuals with knowledge of the criminal justice system. It meets several times before each forecast to discuss issues related to the inmate population.

### **Corrections Population Forecasting Advisory Committee**

Honorable Julie Frantz (Chair)  
Todd Anderson  
Jason Carlile  
Greg Hazarabedian  
Steven Powers  
Craig Prins  
Donald Rees  
Chief Rosanne M. Sizer  
Troy Clausen  
Max Williams

Multnomah County Chief Criminal Judge  
Tillamook County Sheriff  
Linn County District Attorney  
Public Defender Services of Lane County  
Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision  
Criminal Justice Commission Executive Director  
Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney  
Portland Police Bureau Chief  
Director Marion County Community Corrections  
Director Department of Corrections

## Trends and Forecast Methodology

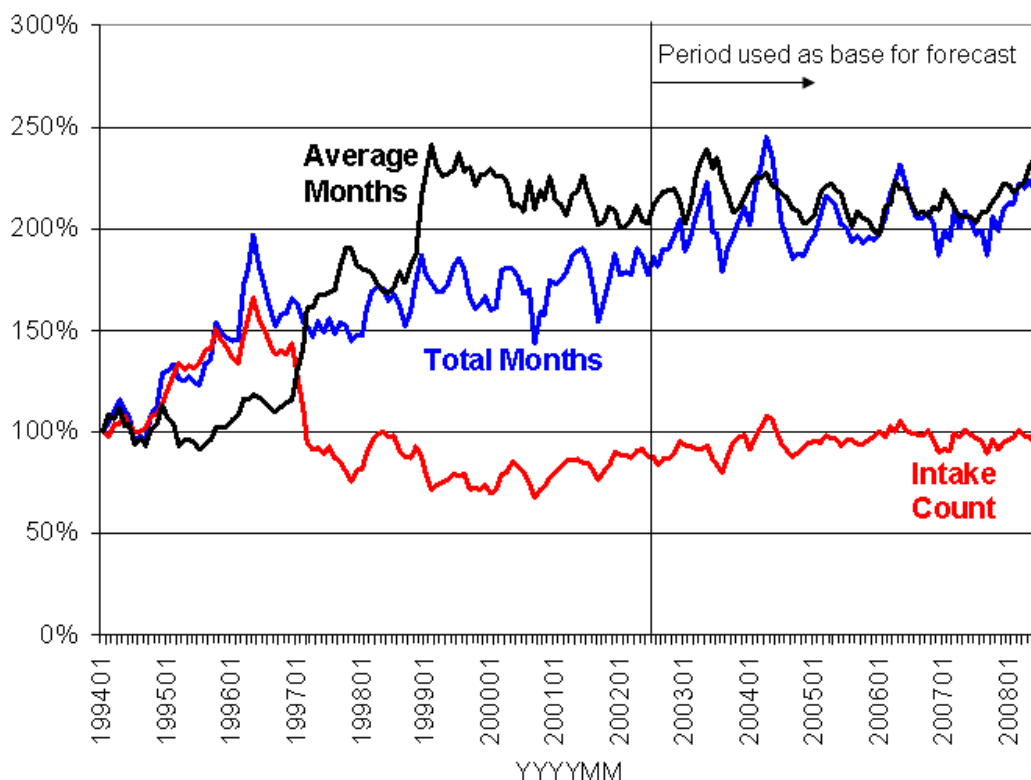
The forecast uses a model which simulates the flow of inmates from intake to the prison through their sentence, and final departure as prisoners are released. The primary driver of the forecast in the short term is the decay of the existing population base as current inmates are released. In the long term, new intakes drive population trends.

Intakes are forecasted based on historical trends. The trends integrate demographics, criminal justice practices, and other factors which influence intakes and sentence lengths. Although criminal activity (measured by arrests) has generally decreased in Oregon over the past decade, the prison population has gradually increased, primarily due to increasing lengths of stay.

The forecast relies on the concept of volume of intake. That measure, in person-months, is the number of intakes multiplied by the length of stay for each. For example, a given month could have 5 intakes each with a 10 month stay which would contribute 50 person-months to the volume of intake for that month. This is an apt measure for forecasting since it captures length of stay information which influences the population prospectively.

The graph below shows the number of new intakes (red line labeled Intake Count), the average expected length of stay (black line labeled Average Months), and the volume of intake (blue line labeled Total Months) for the new intakes as an index relative to January 1994. Although the number has remained relatively constant, there has been a general increase in length of stay.

**Figure 1**  
**Intakes and Lengths of Stay**  
**(Indexed to 1994)**



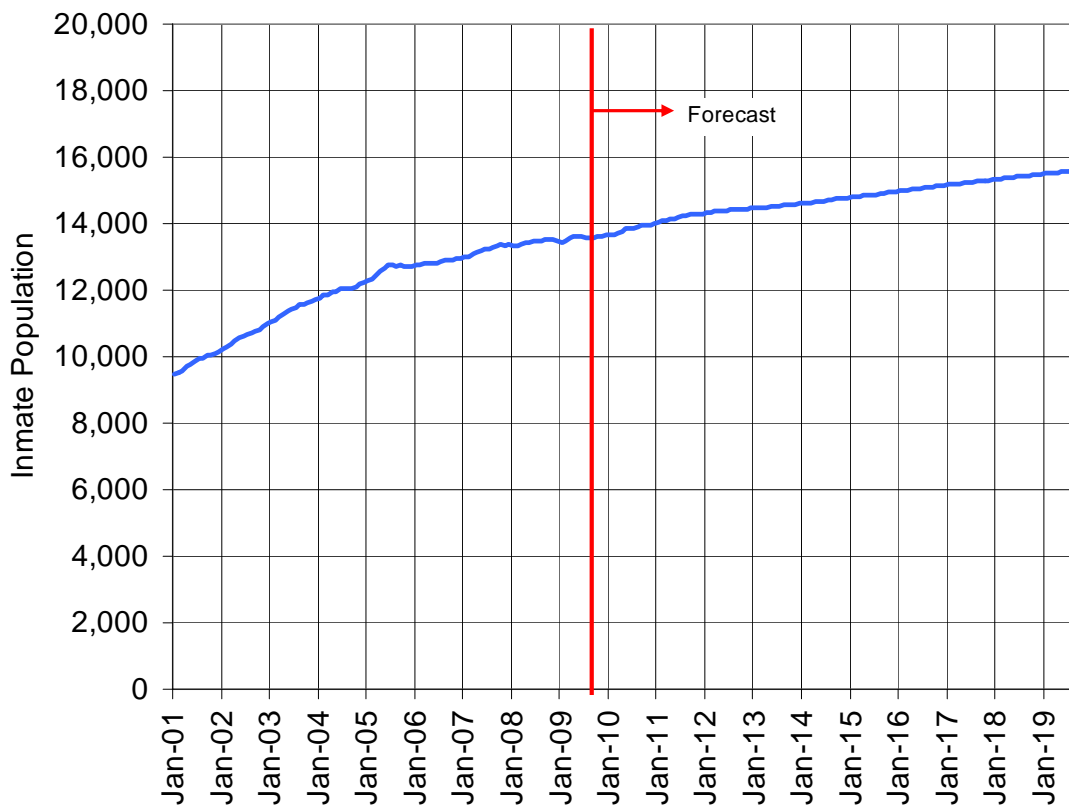
Each forecast month starts with a base population distributed based on expected length of stay. Lengths of stay less than one month represent inmates who will be released and are removed from the model. The volume of intake is projected for each month based on history and flows into the base for the next month. The equation below represents the elements:

$$\text{Population Base (Month 2)} = \text{Population Base (Month 1)} + \text{Intakes} - \text{Releases}$$

The historical and forecast prison population is represented below. The historical period represents a relatively stable period in terms of law changes.

**Figure 2**  
**Prison Population**

---



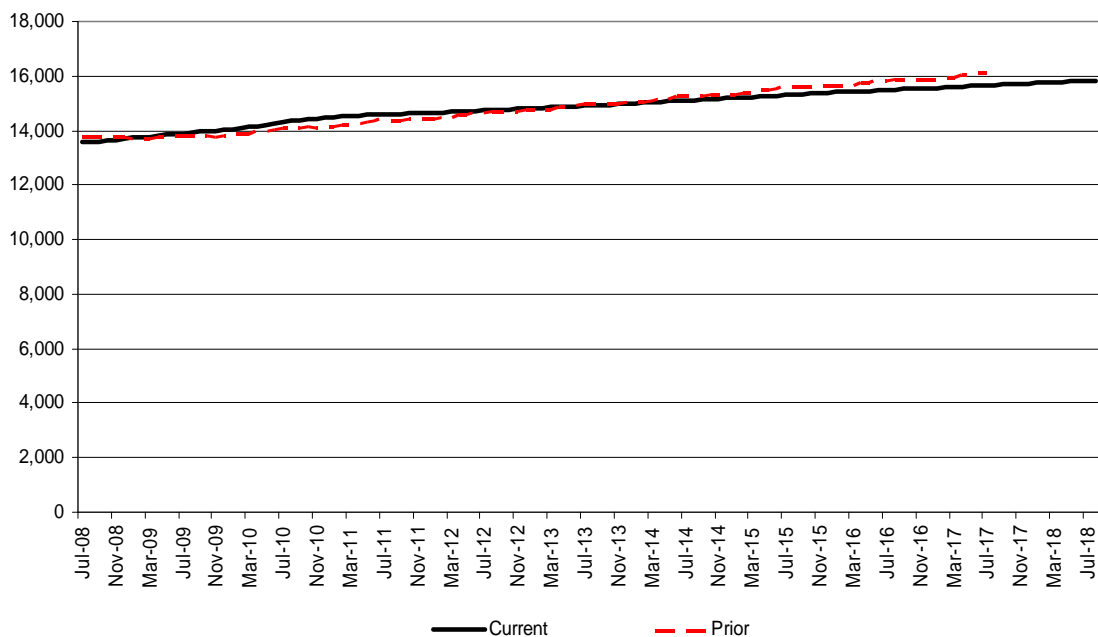
## Forecast

The prison population at the beginning of July 2008 was approximately 13,550, or 0.5 percent higher than one year before. Over the next two years, the population is expected to grow at a rate of 2 to 3 percent. This is a faster rate than previously forecast. The faster rate is due to longer projected lengths of stay for recent intakes and changes in the Alternative Incarceration Program (AIP) from HB 3638 (2007). In later years, the inmate population is expected to grow at just over 1 percent, a slower rate than previously forecasted. The slower long term growth is a reflection of intake trends over the past 6 years whereas previous forecasts based trends on a longer historical period.

The impact of HB 3638 (2007) was based on the fiscal impact statement that accompanied the legislation. It is phased in over one year starting in September 2009. The law changed criteria related to the AIP. In the long term, it is expected to add about 200 to the population. Approximately three-quarters of the increase is associated with inmates who will be excluded from AIP under the new law, while approximately one-quarter of the impact is related to AIP participants who receive smaller sentence reductions under the new law.

By mid 2018, the prison inmate population is expected to exceed 15,800.

**Figure 3**  
**Prison Inmate Population**



The Probation caseloads, the Parole/PPS caseloads, and the Local Control and Level III Sanction population are expected to grow in a steady manner. The forecast is based on long term trends with adjustments for recent changes in caseloads and flows from the inmate population. The Probation caseload is currently approximately 22,600 and is expected to reach 24,000 by 2018. The Parole and Post Prison Supervision caseload is currently approximately 14,500 and is expected to grow to 15,000 by 2018. The Local Control and Level III Sanction population is expected to grow more rapidly, from 1,500 currently to 2,200 by 2018.

Detailed monthly tables are available as an appendix to this document and can be downloaded from <http://oregon.gov/DAS/OEA/corrections.shtml>.

## Forecast Risks

The forecast assumes that current laws and current criminal justice practices continue as they are now. It also assumes trends in criminal activity continue and that demographics follow expected trends. If those and other assumptions fail, the forecast is at risk.

Law enforcement and judicial system practices have a significant effect on the flow of individuals through the court system and into the prisons. Emphasis on specific criminal activity and plea practices, for example, can change based on political policy.

The forecast is a high level look at the prison population, and does not attempt to predict the population on a given day. From month to month, intakes vary considerably. Due to that, differences from forecast of 100 or more can reasonably be expected for a given month.

There are three specific risks that could impact the prison population as early as 2009.

***November 2008 ballot measures 57 and 61.*** Law changes pose the greatest risk to the forecast and have been a major source of forecast error historically. November 2008 will see a vote on two ballot measures related to minimum sentencing. If one becomes law, the prison population is expected to increase significantly in coming years and a new forecast will be undertaken.

***Cessation of federal timber payments.*** Some counties have relied heavily on this source for funding county jails. A lack of funding for jail operations could influence plea practices and case flow in ways which are difficult to predict.

***House Bill 3638 – Alternative Incarceration Programs.*** The impact of HB 3638 (2007), as incorporated in the forecast, may not bear out. The forecast uses the same assumptions that were used for the fiscal impact statement.