

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**  
**Pursuant to P.A. 121 of 2024**  
**Article II, Section 317**  
**Prison Population Projection Report**  
**March 2025**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Michigan prison population decreased by 208 prisoners during calendar year 2024 to a total of 32,778 prisoners at the end of the year (-0.6%). The prison-only population continues to hover at 1991 levels – a 30-year low first reached in March 2021 - and the total prisoner population at 1989 levels when Michigan had prisoners reacclimating to society while serving sentence in halfway houses (Community Residential Programs – CRP – were eliminated in 1998 by the Truth in Sentencing statutes).

The 2024 year-end prison population was 36.4% smaller than the record high of 51,554 prisoners reached in March of 2007 (18,776 prisoners smaller than the peak population).

During 2024, the net operating capacity of the prisons decreased by 132 beds leaving the capacity of the system 95.5% occupied at the end of the year with 1,552 beds available at various security levels across 26 prison facilities.

The population projections issued in March of last year were 98.7% accurate at the end of 2024 (430 projected prisoners higher than the actual prisoner population).

**FACTORS DRIVING PRISON POPULATION CHANGE**

The two biggest contributors to the prison population decline in 2024 were less prison intake and more movements to parole.

Prison intake was the largest contributor, and declined for the first time since pandemic-related recovery began in 2021 (down 6.0% from 2023). Probation violators (sent to prison either for probation violations or because of new sentences for crimes committed on probation) made up the larger part of this decrease, down 7.1% from 2023. Also contributing were new court commitments, down 5.5% from 2023.

Movements to parole also played a significant role in the prison population decline, increasing 5.7% from 2023.

**PRISON POPULATION PROJECTION METHODOLOGY**

Michigan’s prison population projections are generated by a computerized simulation model, developed originally by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). It was then adapted for Michigan by research and planning staff in the Michigan Department of Corrections. The computerized simulation model mimics the movement of prisoners through the Corrections system and uses past practice and prior year trends to predict future patterns.

The projection model itself is simply an automated shell into which numerous probability distribution arrays must be fed (after creation outside the model by extensive statistical analyses), regarding how and when prisoners move through the various points in the corrections process (e.g., intake at reception, time to each subsequent parole hearing, likelihood of parole at each hearing, timing of release to parole, chances of

return as a violator, and discharge from sentence). These arrays are broken down by the various population subgroups with particular characteristics (i.e., offense, sentence length, etc.).

Michigan's projection model incorporates finer resolution than the original NCCD model. For example, Michigan's model has up to 50 distinct maximum-term groups, each of which can have up to six minimum-term pairings. This level of detail allows particular attention to relatively short sentences of 2 years or less, which have the most influence on 3-to-5-year projection accuracy.

The projection model does not forecast the annual number of prison admissions; but once entered as values, the model does disaggregate admissions randomly based on past distributions. Then, the projection model simulates the flow of the existing prison population and new intake through the system, including feedback loops for parole violators with and without new sentences.

The source of the raw data for the projection is downloads from the MDOC data systems and the data are analyzed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Once the projection model shell is populated with probability distribution arrays, numerous iterations of the model are run, "fine tuning" against two or more years of historical, actual trace vectors for purposes of validating the rebuilt data.

After a successful result is obtained (which must track past trends accurately and must correspond to short-term expectations for the future informed by considerable independent analysis of recent trends), then the projections are issued by the Department.

Multiple projection runs can be combined – especially in times of particular uncertainty – to generate a confidence interval based on the monthly minimums and maximums for all of the runs, with the expectation that future population will more assuredly fall within the confidence interval. The model can also be used for "what if" analyses, such as simulating the impact of proposed legislative sunset provisions or modifications to sentencing laws.

Exceptions to the model's track record of better than 99% short-term projection accuracy have sometimes occurred over the years, when criminal justice practices and trends deviated from the past or showed unstable or uncharacteristic patterns – in which case the problem has generally been inadequate history against which to validate and fine-tune the results.

Long-term projections are generally considered less reliable because of the difficulty associated with predicting multi-year prison intake volume as well as changes in laws and policies that may affect the underlying statistical distributions which drive the model. That is why the projections are updated at least once each year – to adjust for any new laws, policies, court rulings, operational practices or trends.

## **NEW PRISON POPULATION PROJECTION ASSUMPTIONS**

The prison population projections in this report are a baseline forecast that assumes no new legislative or policy initiatives. Therefore, the assumptions underlying these projections pertain to the key factors that drive prison population, specifically prison intake, paroles, and parole revocations.

### **Prison Intake**

After three consecutive years of prison intake increases (due to recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic), prison intake decreased in 2024.

This is a difficult time to make assumptions about prison intake. On one hand, prison intake recovered to and appears to be following the pre-pandemic prison intake decline. Similarly, felony court dispositions are down for the second year in a row and appear to have also returned to a pre-pandemic decline.

On the other hand, prison intake is lower than it has been in four decades (other than during the COVID-19 pandemic). The last four times prison intake hit a “bottom”, the prison intake rose for at least two consecutive years.

The prudent course is to assume a subtle increase in prison intake, with male intake remaining flat at the levels seen in the second half of 2024 and female intake continuing the increase seen in recent years. This projection update thus assumes annual prison admissions will experience a 2.6% decrease in 2025, a 1% increase in 2026, another 1% increase in 2027, and then stability thereafter.

### **Paroles**

Despite a slight decrease in the parole grant rate (down 0.6% from 2023), an increase in Parole Board Decisions (up 10.6% from 2023) led to an increase in 2024 paroles. This is the first significant increase since 2016, and a result of more prisoners becoming eligible for parole after years of increased intake.

Assuming the parole grant rate continues at the 2024 level through the projection period results in a continued increase of moves to parole through 2025, followed by a gradual decline in moves to parole for 2026 and 2027.

### **Parole Revocations**

Parole violator technical (PVT) returns to prison remained flat for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in 2024. Similarly, parole violators returned with new sentences (PVNS) also flattened in 2024, again reaching historic lows after two years of decline.

Parole revocations are related to the number of paroles that occur. The increase in paroles can be expected to produce an increase in parole revocations. This projection update thus assumes the number of PVTs will increase in 2025 and 2026 and then remain flat through the remainder of the projection period. PVNS are expected to remain flat.

### **Implications for the New Prison Population Forecast**

Given the above discussion regarding assumptions, it is projected the prison population will gradually decline through 2027, flatten in 2028, and then continue a slow decline through 2029.

Again, keep in mind this baseline projection makes no assumptions about future changes in criminal justice statutes, policies or practices that would further affect the size of the prison population.

It should be remembered that the prison population projection is not expected to be precisely on-target from one month to the next, but rather will be expected to see the actual population alternately curving under and over the projection line periodically during the course of time, to even out the month-to-month fluctuations in favor of the longer-term trend.

## **PRISON POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

The following chart summarizes the revised and extended baseline prison population projections through calendar year 2029. Table 1 (quarterly) and Table 2 (monthly) show the figures corresponding to the projection line in the chart.

# Michigan Department of Corrections ACTUAL AND PROJECTED PRISON POPULATION

— Actual Prison Population      ..... 3/2025 Prison Population Projection

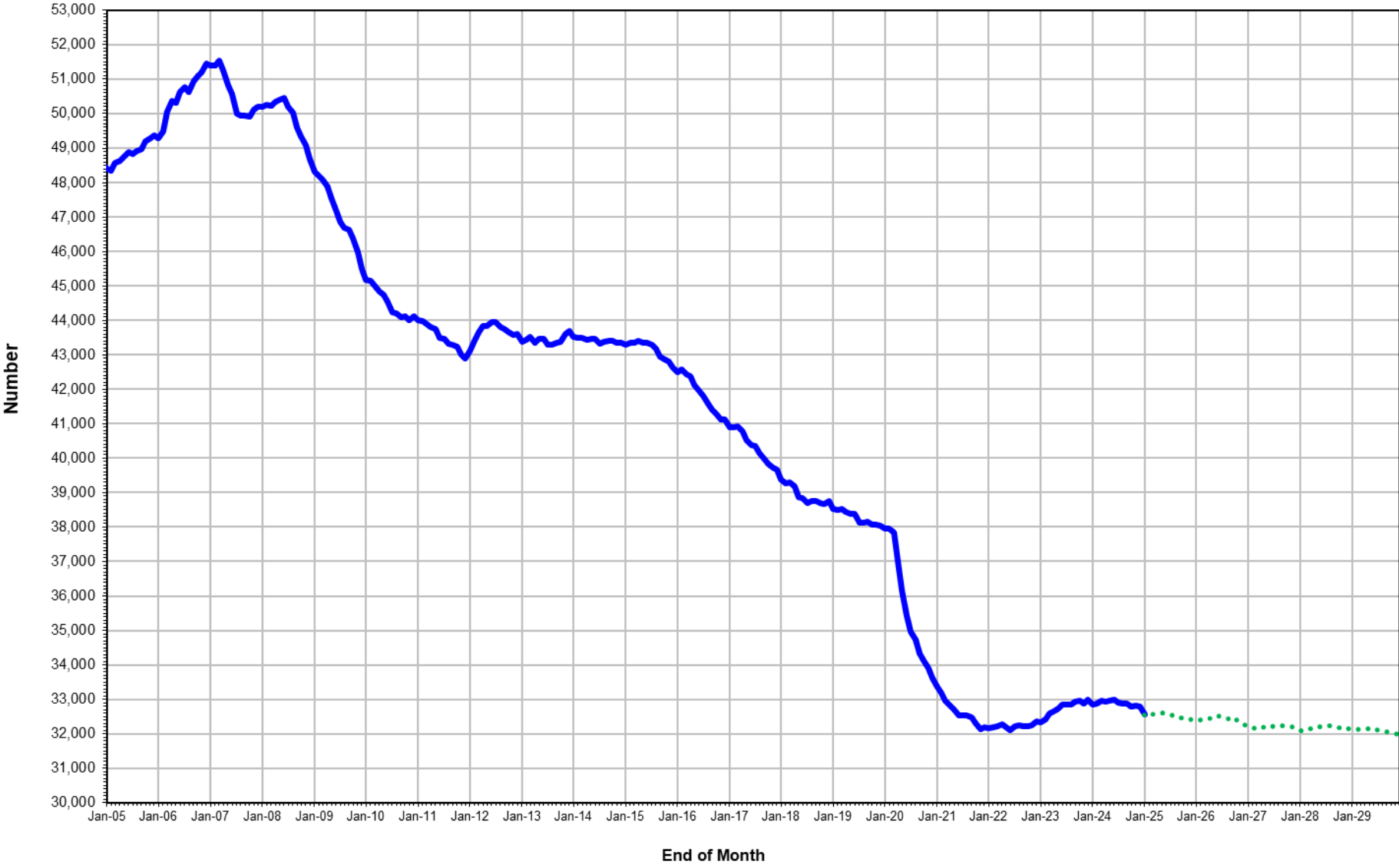


Table 1

<b>Prison Population Projection</b>		
<b>March 2025</b>		
<u>End of Month</u>	<u>Projected Prisoner Population</u>	<u>Yearly Change</u>
Mar-25	32,623	
Jun-25	32,649	
Sep-25	32,510	
Dec-25	32,460	-318
Mar-26	32,461	
Jun-26	32,568	
Sep-26	32,426	
Dec-26	32,307	-153
Mar-27	32,199	
Jun-27	32,269	
Sep-27	32,284	
Dec-27	32,198	-109
Mar-28	32,189	
Jun-28	32,259	
Sep-28	32,253	
Dec-28	32,200	2
Mar-29	32,191	
Jun-29	32,144	
Sep-29	32,118	
Dec-29	32,008	-192

Table 2

**Prison Population Projection  
March 2025**

<u>End of Month</u>	<u>Projected Prisoner Population</u>	<u>Yearly Change</u>
Jan-25	32,555	
Feb-25	32,545	
Mar-25	32,623	
Apr-25	32,618	
May-25	32,659	
Jun-25	32,649	
Jul-25	32,591	
Aug-25	32,577	
Sep-25	32,510	
Oct-25	32,521	
Nov-25	32,497	
Dec-25	32,460	-318
Jan-26	32,423	
Feb-26	32,456	
Mar-26	32,461	
Apr-26	32,472	
May-26	32,563	
Jun-26	32,568	
Jul-26	32,545	
Aug-26	32,504	
Sep-26	32,426	
Oct-26	32,483	
Nov-26	32,404	
Dec-26	32,307	-153
Jan-27	32,285	
Feb-27	32,230	
Mar-27	32,199	
Apr-27	32,207	
May-27	32,279	
Jun-27	32,269	
Jul-27	32,255	
Aug-27	32,289	
Sep-27	32,284	
Oct-27	32,282	
Nov-27	32,264	
Dec-27	32,198	-109
Jan-28	32,146	
Feb-28	32,127	
Mar-28	32,189	
Apr-28	32,203	
May-28	32,263	
Jun-28	32,259	
Jul-28	32,277	
Aug-28	32,280	
Sep-28	32,253	
Oct-28	32,226	
Nov-28	32,243	
Dec-28	32,200	2
Jan-29	32,195	
Feb-29	32,173	
Mar-29	32,191	
Apr-29	32,182	
May-29	32,181	
Jun-29	32,144	
Jul-29	32,173	
Aug-29	32,150	
Sep-29	32,118	
Oct-29	32,067	
Nov-29	32,046	
Dec-29	32,008	-192