

Colorado Division of Criminal Justice

Summer 2015 Interim Prison Population and Parole Caseload Projections

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The Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Summer 2015 Interim Prison Population and Parole Caseload Projections

Introduction

The DCJ 2014 prison population projection forecasted that the Colorado adult prison population would increase by 2.5 percent during fiscal year (FY) 2015, from 20,522 at the end of FY 2014 to 21,026 by the end of FY 2015. The actual population as of June 30, 2015 was 20,623, an increase of only 0.5 percent. *Based on the actual size of the year-end prison population, trends in admissions and releases observed over the past year, and recent legislation the DCJ 2014 prison population projection has been significantly lowered through FY 2021.* While the 2014 projection anticipated a 16.6 percent increase in the prison population between the ends of FY 2014 and FY 2021, these interim projections expect slower growth, with an increase of only 10.5 percent over this time period.

Conversely, *the DCJ parole caseload projection has been adjusted significantly upward.* While the domestic parole caseload was expected to decline by 5.6 percent by the end of FY 2015, the actual decline was only 3.3 percent.

Inmate Population

While the DCJ 2014 projection predicted an increasing trend throughout the projection period, the current modified projection presented here predicts an initial decline in the population through December 2015, followed by an upward trend (see Figure 1).

Discretionary parole releases. The 2.0 percent error in the initial FY 2015 figure was primarily due to a significant decline in the last quarter of the year whereas an increase had been expected. This was partially due to the underestimation of discretionary parole releases. While expected to fall by 22.0 percent between FY 2014 and FY 2015, the actual decline was 17.5 percent. Rather than continuing a declining trend, numbers of discretionary releases stabilized early in FY 2015 and have even exhibited an upward trend in the last quarter of the year.

Future admissions estimates. An additional source of error was found in estimates of future admissions. While a slight reduction was expected in new court commitments, such admissions remained very stable across the year. This error may be partially due to an overestimation or a premature incorporation of the expected impact of recent legislation, particularly House Bills 13-1160 (addressing theft limits) and 13-250 (reducing sentences for drug offenses).

Technical parole returns. Additionally, while parole returns to prison were expected to fall slightly, the actual decline significantly exceeded the expectation. Returns due to technical parole violations fell by 10.9 percent, and parole returns with a new crime declined by 7.9 percent. The drop in technical returns in particular accelerated in the last half of the year, with an 18.0 percent decline between the first 6 months and the last 6 months of FY 2015.

Additional factors influencing the modification to the 2014 projection include:

- **House Bill 15-1043**, which increases penalties for repeat DUI offenders is expected to increase new court commitments beginning in FY 2017, leveling off in mid-FY 2018.
- In September 2014, the Department of Corrections implemented the "**Sure and Swift**"

pilot program, which imposes short time jail sanctions in lieu of revocation to prison. The program was reinstated and expanded in August 2015. This will impose downward pressure on the prison population, while serving to increase the parole caseload.

- **Senate Bill 15-124** is expected to reduce the numbers of admissions due to revocations for technical violations of parole. This will also force the prison population down and increase the parole caseload.
- **House Bill 15-1341** (which increases the penalty for sexual exploitation of a child), and **House Bill 15-67** (concerning assault to emergency responders) are expected to exert a small degree of upward pressure on the population.
- **House Bill 14-1355** (described in further detail below) is expected to reduce revocations in the future, driving down the population in the short term.

As outlined in Tables 1 and 2, and as graphically displayed in Figure 1, the population is expected to continue to decline in early FY 2016, returning to a pattern of growth midyear and continuing throughout the projection period. This pattern is expected as the decline in parole returns will drive the population down in the short term, whereas increasing numbers of new court commitments, who have much longer lengths of stay in prison, will drive the population up in future years.

Female Inmate Population

The projected number of women in prison has also been adjusted upward, as shown in Figure 2. The female population at the end of FY 2015 was 2,009, which is 2.1 percent higher than the DCJ 2014 projection. As with the total inmate population, the majority of this error was due to excessive growth projected in the last quarter of the year.

Women have made up an increasing proportion of the prison population since mid-FY 2013, when women made up 8.5 percent of the total population. Since then, this figure has consistently increased to the current 9.5 percent, the highest proportion observed in the past 5 years. If this trend continues, the female population could return to the levels observed between 2005 and 2008, when women consistently comprised over 10 percent of the prison population.

New court commitments in particular have increased throughout this time. However, the reasons for this increase in women sentenced to prison, and other driving factors are unknown. Identifying the relevant factors will take more research, and will be addressed in the upcoming 2015 DCJ projection report.

Table 1. DCJ Summer 2015 Interim Quarterly Prison Population Projections

Fiscal Year	End of month:	Total Population	% Change	Male Population	% Change	Female Population	% Change
2014	June 2014*	20,522	0.67%	18,619	0.61%	1,903	1.33%
2015	September 2014*	20,702	0.88%	18,764	0.78%	1,938	1.84%
	December 2014*	20,645	-0.28%	18,700	-0.34%	1,945	0.36%
	March 2014*	20,736	0.44%	18,759	0.32%	1,977	1.65%
	June 2015*	20,623	-0.54%	18,655	-0.55%	1,968	-0.46%
2016	September 2015	20,538	-0.41%	18,565	-0.48%	1,973	0.27%
	December 2015	20,546	0.04%	18,575	0.05%	1,971	-0.10%
	March 2016	20,637	0.44%	18,654	0.43%	1,983	0.61%
	June 2016	20,696	0.29%	18,692	0.20%	2,004	1.05%
2017	September 2016	20,781	0.41%	18,766	0.40%	2,015	0.55%
	December 2016	20,819	0.18%	18,815	0.26%	2,004	-0.56%
	March 2017	20,946	0.61%	18,936	0.64%	2,010	0.29%
	June 2017	21,051	0.50%	19,033	0.51%	2,018	0.43%
2018	September 2017	21,190	0.66%	19,167	0.70%	2,023	0.22%
	December 2017	21,263	0.34%	19,256	0.46%	2,007	-0.81%
	March 2018	21,383	0.57%	19,368	0.58%	2,015	0.42%
	June 2018	21,517	0.63%	19,482	0.59%	2,035	1.01%
2019	September 2018	21,646	0.60%	19,596	0.59%	2,050	0.73%
	December 2018	21,678	0.15%	19,641	0.23%	2,037	-0.62%
	March 2019	21,803	0.57%	19,748	0.54%	2,055	0.87%
	June 2019	21,914	0.51%	19,841	0.47%	2,073	0.85%
2020	September 2019	22,041	0.58%	19,961	0.60%	2,080	0.36%
	December 2019	22,051	0.05%	19,987	0.13%	2,064	-0.79%
	March 2020	22,153	0.46%	20,076	0.45%	2,077	0.63%
	June 2020	22,275	0.55%	20,185	0.54%	2,090	0.66%
2021	September 2020	22,435	0.72%	20,331	0.72%	2,104	0.66%
	December 2020	22,452	0.07%	20,345	0.07%	2,107	0.13%
	March 2021	22,545	0.42%	20,433	0.43%	2,112	0.26%
	June 2021	22,667	0.54%	20,547	0.56%	2,120	0.35%

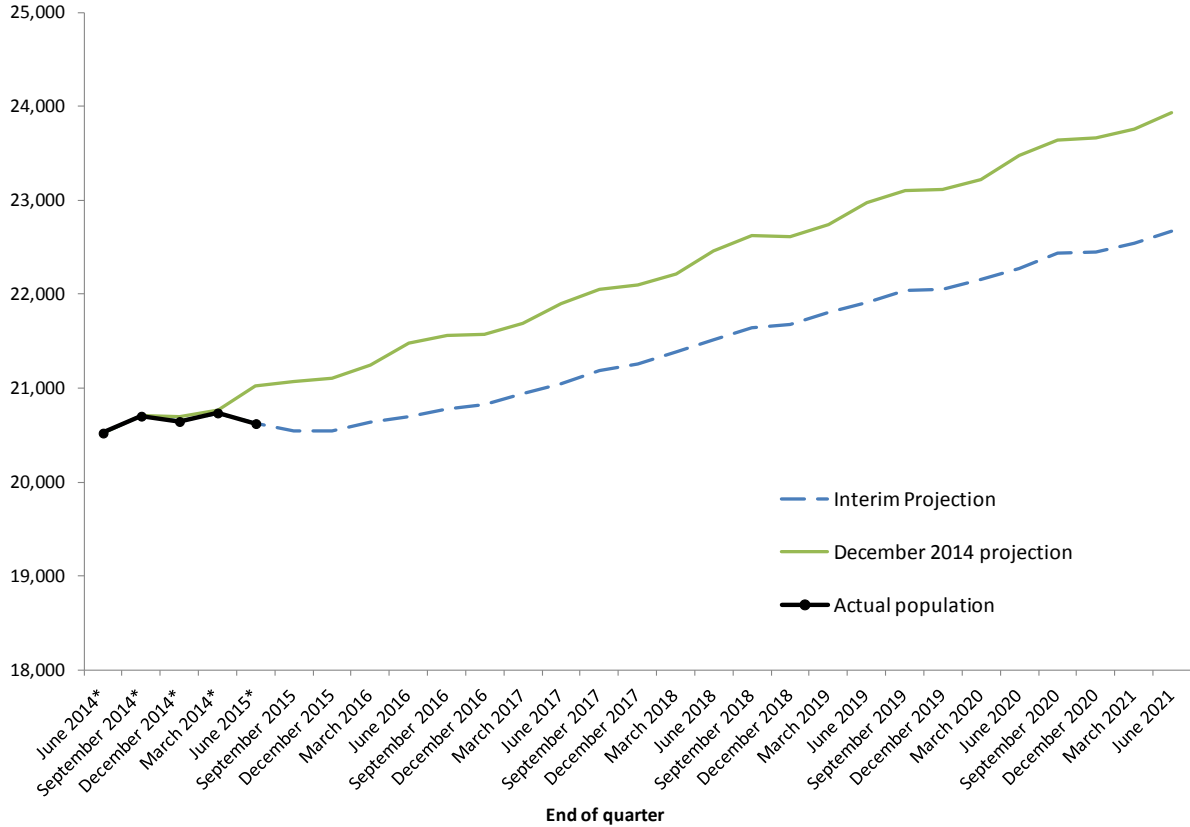
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Table 2. DCJ Summer 2015 Interim End of Fiscal Year Prison Population Projections

Fiscal Year	Total Population	% Change	Male Population	% Change	Female Population	% Change
2014*	20,522	1.92%	18,619	1.44%	1,903	6.91%
2015*	20,623	0.49%	18,655	0.19%	1,968	3.42%
2016	20,696	0.36%	18,692	0.20%	2,004	1.85%
2017	21,051	1.71%	19,033	1.82%	2,018	0.71%
2018	21,517	2.21%	19,482	2.36%	2,035	0.83%
2019	21,914	1.84%	19,841	1.84%	2,073	1.83%
2020	22,275	1.65%	20,185	1.73%	2,090	0.86%
2021	22,667	1.76%	20,547	1.80%	2,120	1.41%

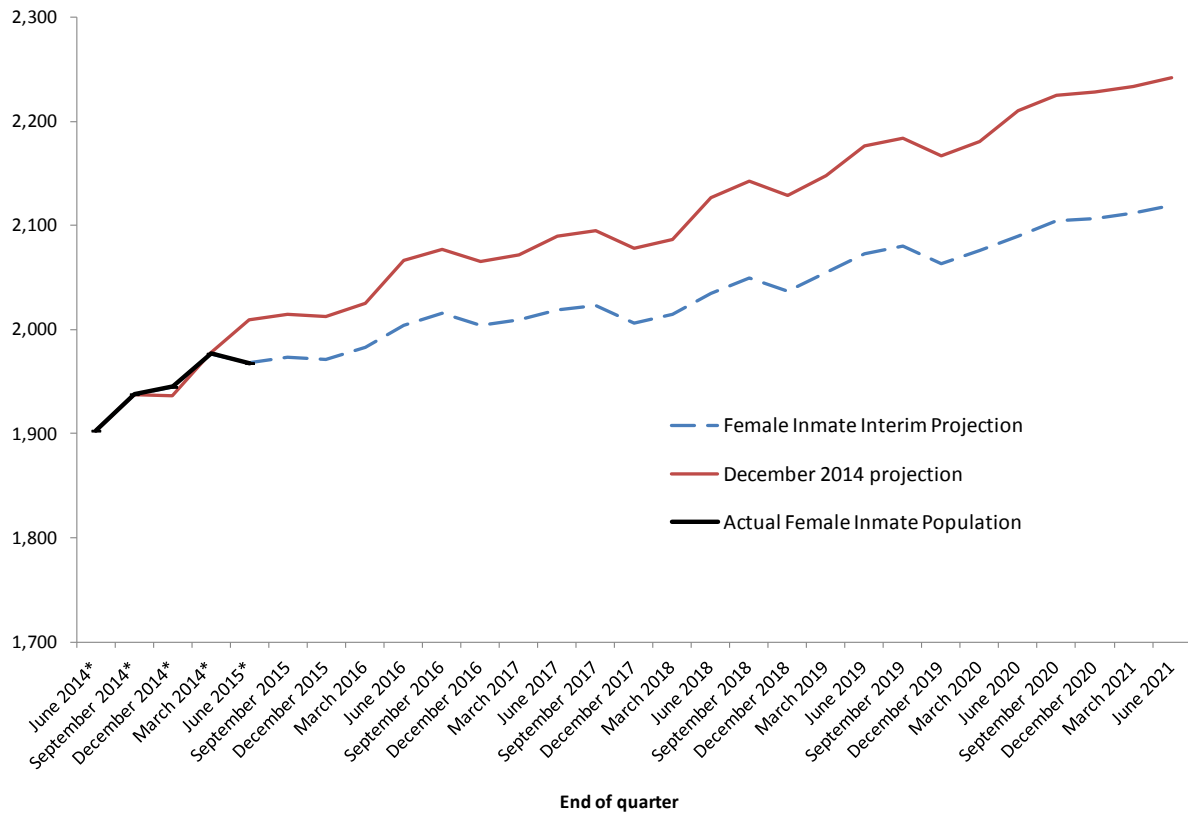
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Figure 1. Quarterly Inmate Population FY 2015, DCJ Winter 2014 Population Projection and Summer 2015 Interim Projection through FY 2021



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2015. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

Figure 2. Quarterly Female Inmate Population FY 2015, DCJ Winter 2014 Population Projection and Summer 2015 Interim Projection through FY 2021



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; *Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2015*. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

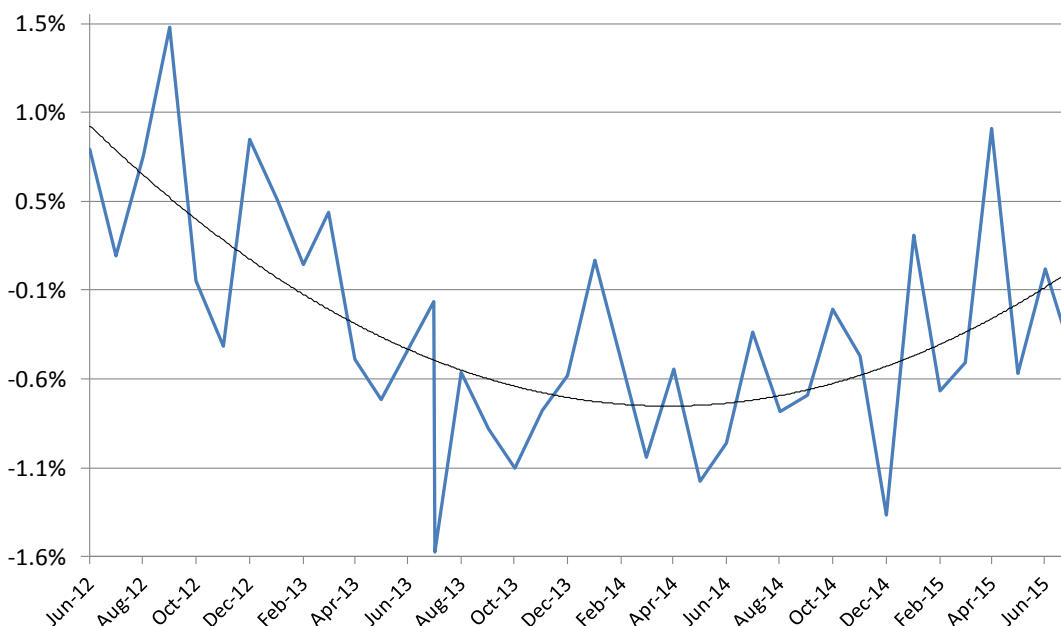
Parole Caseload

While the parole caseload was originally projected to decline between FY 2014 and FY2017, followed by a period of growth, the projection has been significantly modified such that the caseload is expected to increase 2.6 percent by the end of FY 2016, with the growth pattern accelerating across the following 2 years (see Figures 4 and 5). The adjusted interim parole caseload forecast is presented in Table 3.

Factors influencing this modification include:

- **Slowed rate of decline.** Although the caseload declined over the past two years, by 8.7 percent in FY 2014 and 3.9 percent in FY 2015, the rate of this decline slowed toward the end of FY 2015. The total caseload dropped 3.5 percent in the first 6 months of FY 2015, while the 2nd 6 months saw a decline of only 0.4 percent. The domestic parole caseload dropped 2.8 percent in first 6 months, and remained level in the second 6 months. While monthly growth has remained primarily negative, the RATE of change has been on an incline (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Parole caseload growth, FY 2014 through FY 2015.



Source: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

- **Parole revocations down.** Significantly fewer parole revocations (both technical and new crime returns) occurred in FY 2015 than had been expected in the DCJ Winter 2014 projections. Technical returns in particular fell consistently each quarter throughout the year. The actual 10.9 percent decline far exceeded the expected 2.8 percent.
- **Discretionary releases.** Additionally, more parole releases took place than expected. This was particularly evident in discretionary releases. This, in combination with the decrease in revocations, served to drive the parole caseload up.
- **Re-entry services.** House Bill 14-1355 provided about \$8.2 million and 78.4 FTE per year for reentry programs for adult parolees. Initiatives funded by the bill are to include

programs to prepare inmates for release to the community, assist in the transition from a correctional facility into the community, and provides equipment, training, and programs to enhance the supervision of parolees. These initiatives are expected to reduce revocations in the future, which will increase the parole caseload.

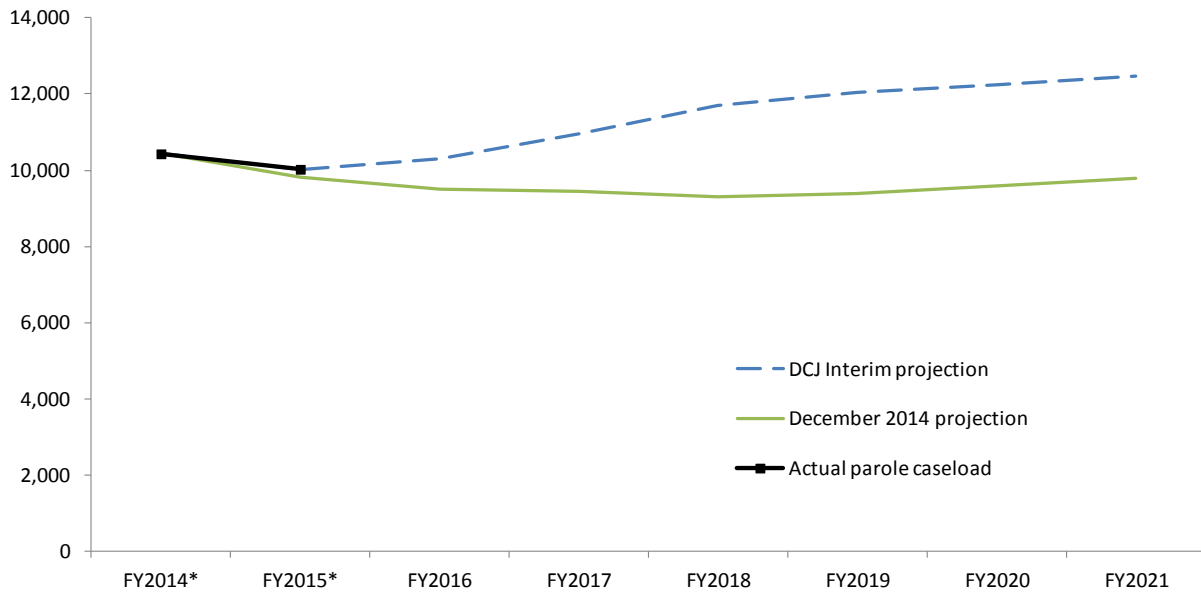
- **Senate Bill 15-124**, which requires the use of intermediate sanctions prior to revocation, is expected to reduce the number of revocations for technical violations of parole. This will also result in increases in the parole caseload.
- **Intermediate sanctions.** Additionally, the "Sure and Swift" program, which was a 180-day pilot program to impose up to 3 days in jail as an intermediate sanction in lieu of revocation, was reinstated effective August 2015. The program, which was initially piloted in three counties, has been expanded to other areas of the state. This initiative could place upward pressure on the parole caseload.
- **Increase in length of stay on parole.** The length of stay on parole has increased slightly, by 4.3 percent, since the end of FY 2013. Increases in the length of stay will serve to drive the caseload up.
- **Growth in prison population.** Lastly, the growth in the prison population between FY 2016 and FY 2019 will result in growth for the parole population in subsequent years.

Table 3. DCJ Summer 2015 Interim Total and Domestic Parole Caseload Projections

Fiscal Year	Total Parole Caseload	% change	Domestic Parole Caseload	% change
2014*	10,432	-8.70%	8,116	-7.20%
2015*	10,026	-3.89%	7,865	-3.09%
2016	10,292	2.66%	8,131	3.38%
2017	10,942	6.31%	8,699	6.99%
2018	11,711	7.03%	9,316	7.09%
2019	12,044	2.85%	9,587	2.91%
2020	12,248	1.69%	9,755	1.75%
2021	12,461	1.74%	9,931	1.80%

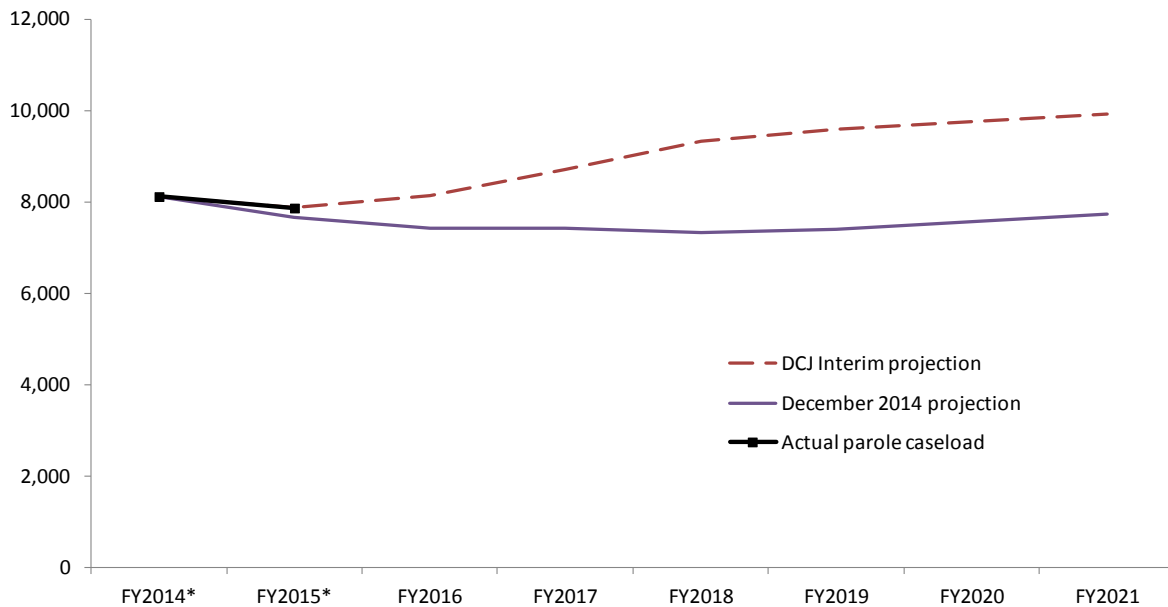
* Actual data provided by Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports

Figure 4: Actual Total Parole Caseload FY 2014-FY 2015, DCJ Winter 2014 and Summer 2015 Interim Parole Caseload Projections through FY 2021



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; *Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2015*. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.

Figure 5: Actual Domestic Parole Caseload FY 2014-FY 2015, DCJ Winter 2014 and Summer 2015 Interim Parole Caseload Projections through FY 2021



Sources: Colorado Department of Corrections Monthly Population and Capacity Reports; *Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Correctional Population Forecasts, January 2015*. Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Denver, Colorado.