Department of Management

Division of Data, Planning, and Improvement

Annual Prison Population Forecast

2025-2035

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Completion of this report fulfills the legislative obligation outlined in Iowa Code to maintain a correctional policy project. Points of view and opinions expressed in this report are those of DOM's Data, Planning, and Improvement division. Staff would like to acknowledge the Iowa Department of Corrections for providing information on current and planned prison population data and capacities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Iowa Department of Management, Division of Data, Planning, and Improvement developed this report to assist the Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC), in addition to the executive and legislative branches of government, in annually assessing the impact of current criminal justice policy on Iowa's prison population. The forecast is a guide for programmatic and policy changes to improve outcomes for incarcerated individuals.

Reporting Time Period

Please note, counts are provided for the federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30). Prior to 2022, counts were provided for the state fiscal year (July 1-June 30). This change was made to provide more recent numbers to the Iowa Department of Corrections.

In 2025, all historical data were re-compiled to ensure greater accuracy. As a result, figures presented in this report may differ slightly from those published in prior reports.

Unless otherwise noted, all 10-year percent changes in this report are a comparison between FFY2016 and FFY2025.

Dashboard Tool

In 2025, an interactive dashboard was created to display the IDOC datasets used in the forecast. This tool allows users to filter and select the data to get the information and visualizations they want to see. The dashboard can be found using **this link.**

This report is a point-in-time count and will not exactly match the numbers in the dashboard. The data in the report is a reflection of the official records contained in the system at the time the information was extracted to the Iowa Justice Data Warehouse. Some edits to these records may have occurred within the system after the extraction and such updates would be made in the data warehouse during the next upload cycle.

Current prison population (as of September 30, 2025)

- Iowa's prison population totaled 8,476 incarcerated individuals as of September 30th, 2025, representing a 1.1% increase from the previous fiscal year.
- The population composition was 91.8% male and 8.2% female. Capacity utilization showed a 10.5% undercapacity in female facilities and a 25.2% overcapacity in male facilities.

- The racial breakdown of the prison population was 60.6% White, 27.5% Black, 8.2% Hispanic, and 3.8% Other.

Forecast

One-Year Projection:

- The short-term forecast predicts an increase in the prison population from 8,476 incarcerated individuals on September 30, 2025 to 8,488 on September 30, 2026; an increase of 12 incarcerated individuals (0.1%).

Ten-Year Projection:

- The long-term forecast projects the population will increase to 9,658 individuals) by the end of FFY 2035, representing an increase of approximately 13.9% over the ten-year period.

New admissions to prison

In the past decade:

- New admissions have decreased by 22.1%, dropping from 3,681 in FFY 2016 to 2,866 in FFY 2025). Admissions trended upward until 2020 (coinciding with the pandemic), experienced a subsequent decline, and have been increasing since.
- The average time served for newly admitted incarcerated individuals increased by 2.4%, rising from 20.5 months to 21.0 months.
- Methamphetamine remains the most consistent drug associated with new admissions to prison.
- New admissions for violent offenses increased 3.8% during the period, rising from 994 in FFY 2016 to 1,032 in FFY 2025.

Over the next decade, new admissions are projected to increase 11.2%, from 2,866 in FFY 2025 to 3,188 in FFY 2035.

Return admissions to prison

In the past decade:

- Returns decreased 29.9%, from1,988 in FFY 2016 to 1,393 in FFY 2025.
- Average time served for return admissions to prison increased 36.9%, from 11.1 months to 15.2 months.

Over the next decade, return admissions are projected to decrease 1.9% from 1,393 in FFY 2025 to 1,366 in FFY 2035.

Mandatory Minimum Sentence:

As of FFY 2025, 21.2% of incarcerated individuals had an offense eligible for a mandatory minimum sentence under the relevant Code.
In the past decade:

- The number of incarcerate individuals whose offenses were eligible for a mandatory minimum sentence increased 18.2% from 1,519 in FFY 2016 to 1,796 in FFY 2025.

Community Based Corrections:
In the past decade, Community-Based Corrections (CBC) supervision statuses decreased. The exceptions to this trend were revocations from special sentences and parole, which increased 42.1% and 4.6%, respectively.

- **Special sentence**
  - There was a 72.4% increase in individuals serving special sentences, from 1,179 in FFY 2016 to 2,033 in FFY 2025.
  - Releases from prison to special sentence increased 7.2%, from 166 in FFY 2016 to 178 in FFY 2025.
- **Parole**
  - There was a 4.0% decrease in individuals serving parole, from 6,582 in FFY 2016 to 6,322 in FFY 2025.
  - Releases from prison to parole decreased by 2.5%, 2,158 in FFY 2016 to 2,103 in FFY 2025.

Possible Actions for Altering the Forecasted Prison Population

Based on the analysis of the data the following action actions, if implemented, could impact on the prison population growth projected in this report, including, but not limited to:

- Assess institutional and community-based programming to mitigate and divert revocations of individuals in the community.
- Reserve the lifetime special sentence for the highest risk individuals and allow judicial discretion on the length of special sentences.
- Reduce mandatory minimum prison sentences.
- Increase the use of effective treatment courts throughout the state.
- Examining the effectiveness of mental health treatment courts.
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify mental health resources available to justice-involved individuals across the state.
- Identify and utilize appropriate services needed in the criminal justice system to address mental health issues.
- Expand apprenticeship and other skill education programs in correctional institutions.
- Assess the policies/laws allowing youth under 18 years of age to be prosecuted in adult court and the impact on the prison population.
- Utilize predictive analytics for prison releases and returns to determine the likelihood and potential reduction of recidivism.

POPULATION

The prison population was **8,476 incarcerated** individuals on September 30, 2025.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In FFY 2025, the population was predominantly **Male (91.8%)** and **White (60.6%)**.

Sex and race of the 2025 prison population are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively.

FIGURE 1: SEX OF PRISON POPULATION IN FFY 2025

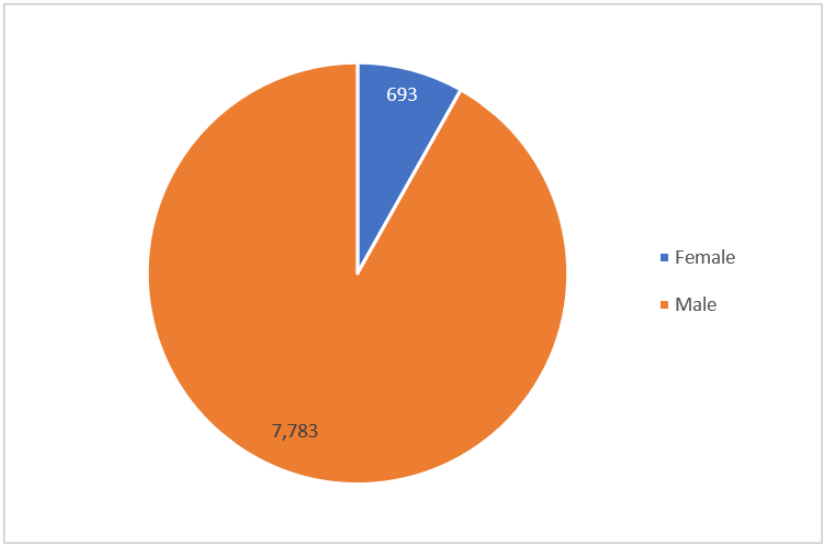
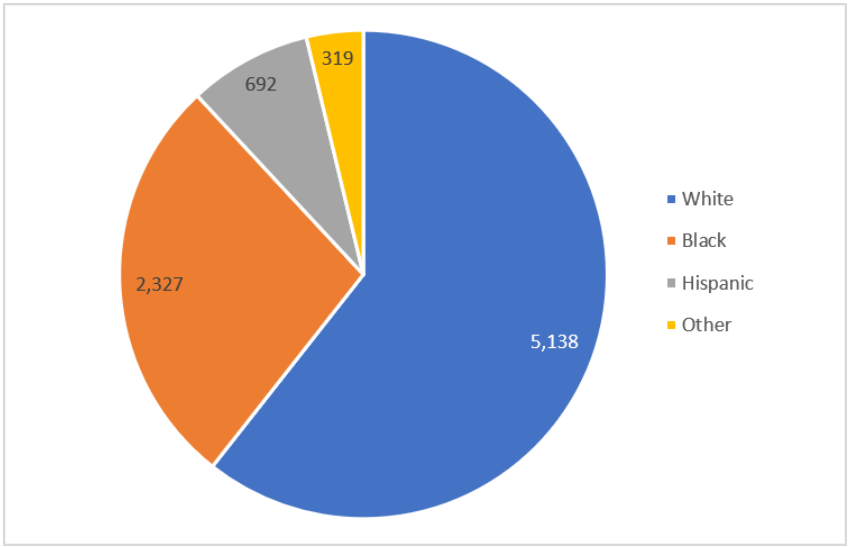


FIGURE 2: RACE OF PRISON POPULATION IN FFY 2025



MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCE

In FFY 2025, 21.2% of incarcerated individuals had an offense eligible to carry a **mandatory minimum sentence.**[1] **1.4%** of incarcerated individuals were serving time for an **enhanced sentence**[2] (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: PRISON POPULATION SERVING MANDATORY OR ENHANCED SENTENCE IN FFY 2025

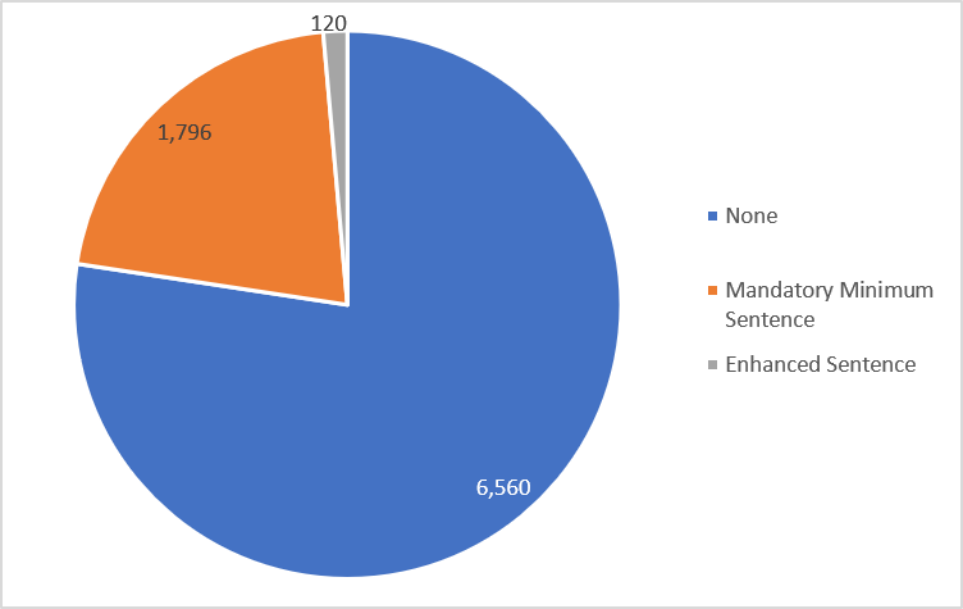
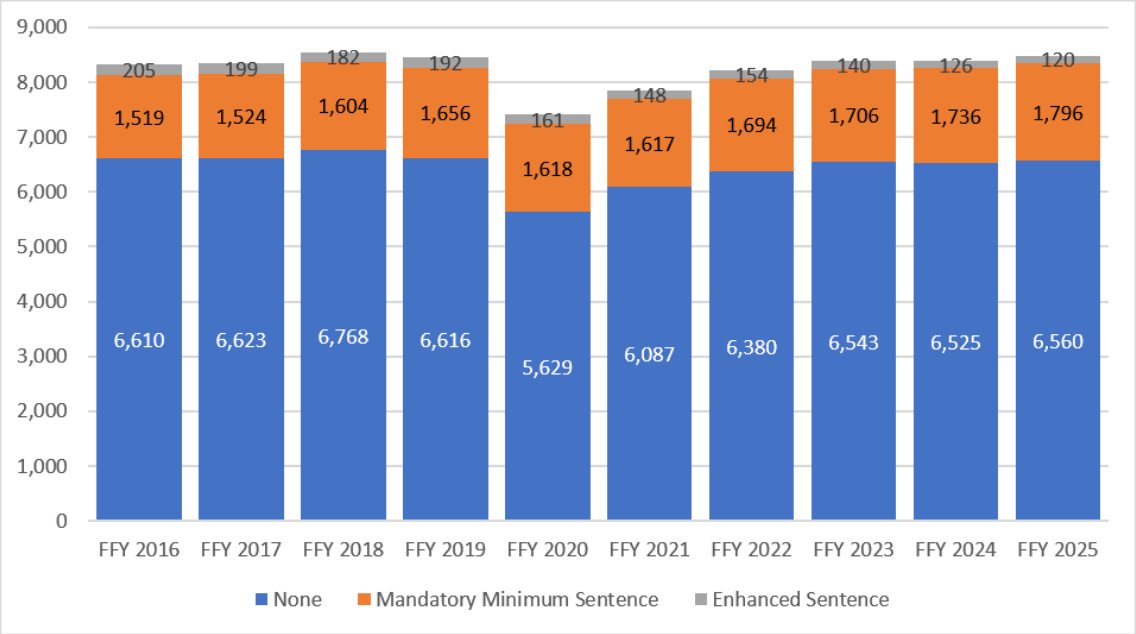


Figure 4 shows the number of incarcerated individuals serving mandatory minimum or enhanced sentence from FFY 2016 to FFY 2025 compared to incarcerated individuals who have neither of these types of sentences.

[1] *Mandatory Minimum includes ***all*** individuals with offenses under Codes 707.3, 707.11, 707.11(5)c, 709.3, 709.3(1)(a), 709.3(1)(b), 710.3, 711.3, 707.6A(1), 707.6A(2), 709.23, 709.23(2), 726.6(4), 726.6(5), 711.2, 712.2, 728.12(1), 708.2A(4), 901A.2(1)B, 901A.2(2)A, 901A.2(2), 901A.2(3), 901A.2(4). These are offenses eligible for carrying 85% mandatory sentences under Code 902.12. Also included, are convicting offenses coded Felony-Mandatory Minimum.

[2] Enhanced sentences were identified as a convicting offense coded Felony- Enhancement to Original Penalty. These are second or subsequent offenses for Drug Trafficking under Code 124.11.

FIGURE 4: PRISON POPULATION SERVING MANDATORY OR ENHANCED SENTENCE FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



In the past decade, the percentage of incarcerated individuals serving mandatory minimum sentences has **increased 18.2%,** from 1,519 in FFY 2016 to 1,796 in FFY 2025 (see Figure 4). The number of individuals serving mandatory minimum sentences consistently increased from FFY 2020 to FFY 2025, reaching its highest number in FFY 2025.

Passed in 2024, HF 2191[3] removed the requirement that earned time accrued be applied to reduce mandatory minimum sentences under Codes 902.7, 902.8, and 902.11. This is anticipated to increase the length of stay (LOS) in prison for individuals serving mandatory minimum sentences.

Passed in 2025, SF 462[4] repealed Code 724.31A. The bill increased penalties and added a mandatory minimum sentence to the control, possession, receipt, or transportation of a firearm or weapon by a felon. Penalties increased from a Class D Felony to a Class D felony with a mandatory sentence of two years (first offense), Class D Felony with a mandatory sentence of four years (second offense), Class C felony with a mandatory sentence of seven years (third offense), and Class C felony with a mandatory sentence of 10 years (fourth offense). In FY 2024, there were 65 individuals admitted to prison and 172 individuals admitted to CBC under Iowa Code 724.26(1). It was estimated that the length of stay for the 65 incarcerated individuals would have increased from approximately 13.1 months to at least 24.0 months.

[3] HF2191
[4] SF462

Together, HF 2191 and SF 462 eliminate or restrict the use of earned time and expand mandatory minimums for serious and firearm-related felonies. Both measures are projected to increase Iowa's prison population and correctional costs by lengthening sentences and reducing early-release options.

Preliminary analysis indicates the average time served for affected offenses could increase substantially, potentially adding 124 new admissions to prison each year for Possession of Firearm or Offensive Weapon by a Felon – 1st offense.

Because the estimate is based on simplified assumptions, a more detailed analysis would be needed to quantify the total impact across all offense categories.

ACCURACY OF HISTORICAL FORECASTS

Except for the pandemic in 2020, the one-year prison population projections have been relatively accurate.

Forecasts since the pandemic have predicted a greater population increase, but instead, the population increase has been slower and more stable.

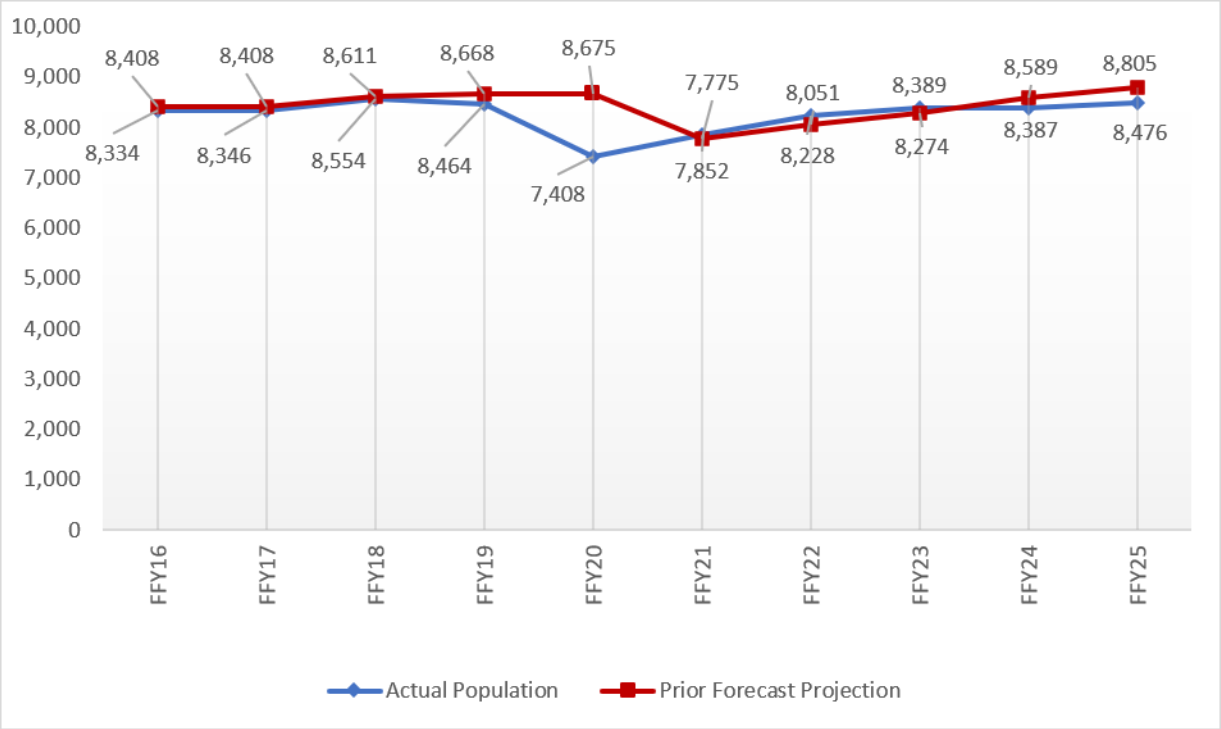
Last year, the **predicted** population was **8,805** through September 30, 2025.

This year, the **actual** prison population was **8,476** on September 30, 2025.

Figure 5 shows prison forecast estimates for the past 10 fiscal years and highlights the accuracy of the short-term projections.

Please note that *projections* in years prior to 2022 were based on State Fiscal Year (SFY), which differs from the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) currently reported. The *actual population* numbers for all years are based on the FFY.

FIGURE 5: PRISON FORECAST ESTIMATES AND ACTUAL POPULATION FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse and Prison Forecast Estimates

FUTURE POPULATION PROJECTIONS

This section reflects the prison population on September 30 each year. The forecast is based on historical trends of the prison population over the past decade, assuming current criminal behaviors and justice system trends, policies, and practices remain consistent.

LAST YEAR

Since last year, Iowa's prison population **increased 1.1%,** from 8,387 incarcerated individuals at the end of FFY 2024 to 8,476 in FFY 2025.

ONE-YEAR PROJECTION

Next year, the population is projected to **increase 0.1%,** from 8,476 incarcerated individuals in FFY 2025 to 8,488 in FFY 2026.

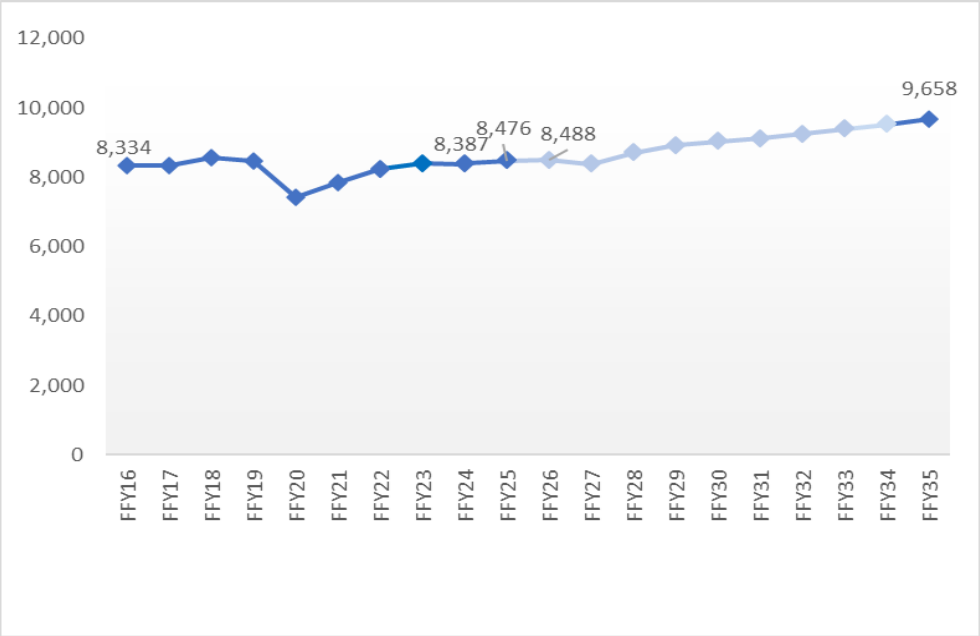
TEN-YEAR PROJECTION

In the next decade, the population is projected to **increase 13.9%,** from 8,476 incarcerated individuals in FFY 2025 to 9,658 in FFY 2035.

Figure 6 shows the actual and projected number of the total incarcerated individuals over the prior and future 10 years.

Please note that the small dip predicted from FFY 2026 to FFY 2027 is likely a product of the ARIMA model[5] attempting to account for low counts in 2020.

FIGURE 6: ACTUAL AND PROJECTED NUMBER OF INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2035



Source: Justice Data Warehouse and Prison Forecast Estimates

PRISON CAPACITY

FEMALES

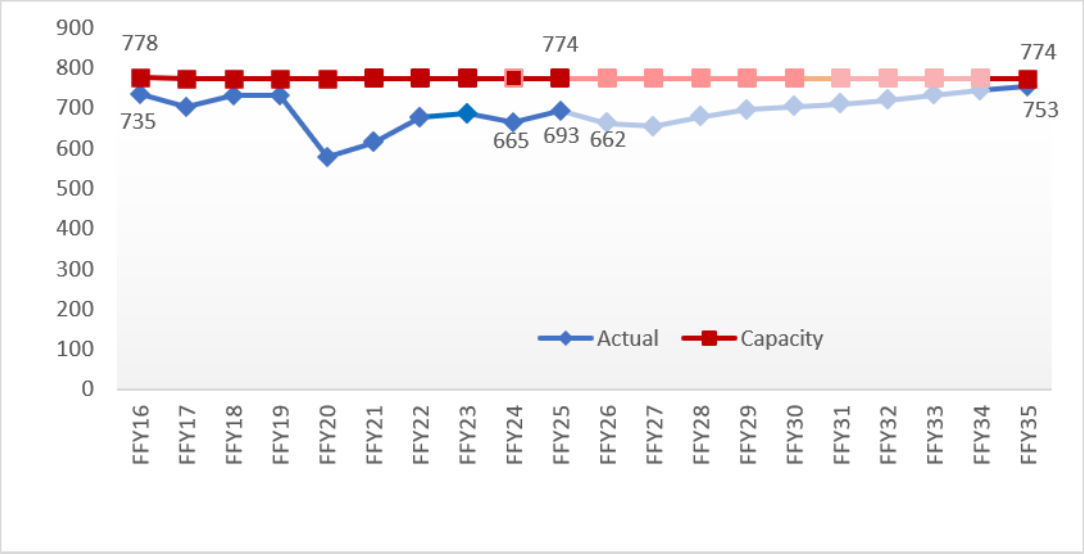
In FFY 2025, there were **693 females incarcerated**. Female prison facilities were **10.5% undercapacity**.

In the next decade, the forecast predicts the number of incarcerated females will **increase 8.7%,** reaching 753 individuals in FFY 2035 (2.7% undercapacity).

Figure 7a shows the actual and projected number of incarcerated females over the prior and future 10 years.

[5] Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA). ARIMA modeling constitutes "a class of statistical models for analyzing and forecasting time series data." The ARIMA models in this report take the difference between consecutive, lagged time points to forecast 10 non-stationary future time points. The statewide prison-population forecast and policy simulation model used in this analysis is a matrix that distributes Iowa's prison population over the projection period by quarter.

FIGURE 7A: INCARCERATED FEMALES AND PRISON CAPACITY FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2035



Source: Justice Data Warehouse and Prison Forecast Estimates

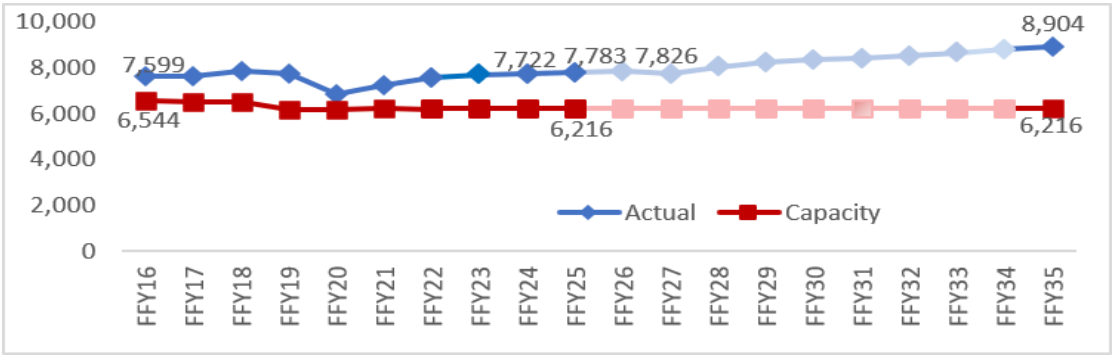
MALES

In FFY 2025, there were **7,783 males incarcerated.** Male prison facilities were **25.2% overcapacity**.

In the next decade, the population of incarcerated males is expected to **increase 14.4%,** reaching 8,904 individuals in FFY 2035 (43.2% overcapacity).

Figure 7b shows the actual and projected number of incarcerated males over the prior and future 10 years.

FIGURE 7B: INCARCERATED MALES AND PRISON CAPACITY FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2035



Source: Justice Data Warehouse and Prison Forecast Estimates

PRISON ADMISSIONS

NEW PRISON ADMISSIONS

In FFY 2025, the number of new admissions was **2,866 individuals**.

Since last year, new admissions **decreased 1.9%** from 2,922 individuals in FFY 2024.

In the next decade, this number is predicted to **increase 11.2%** to 3,188 individuals in FFY 2035**.**

RETURN ADMISSIONS

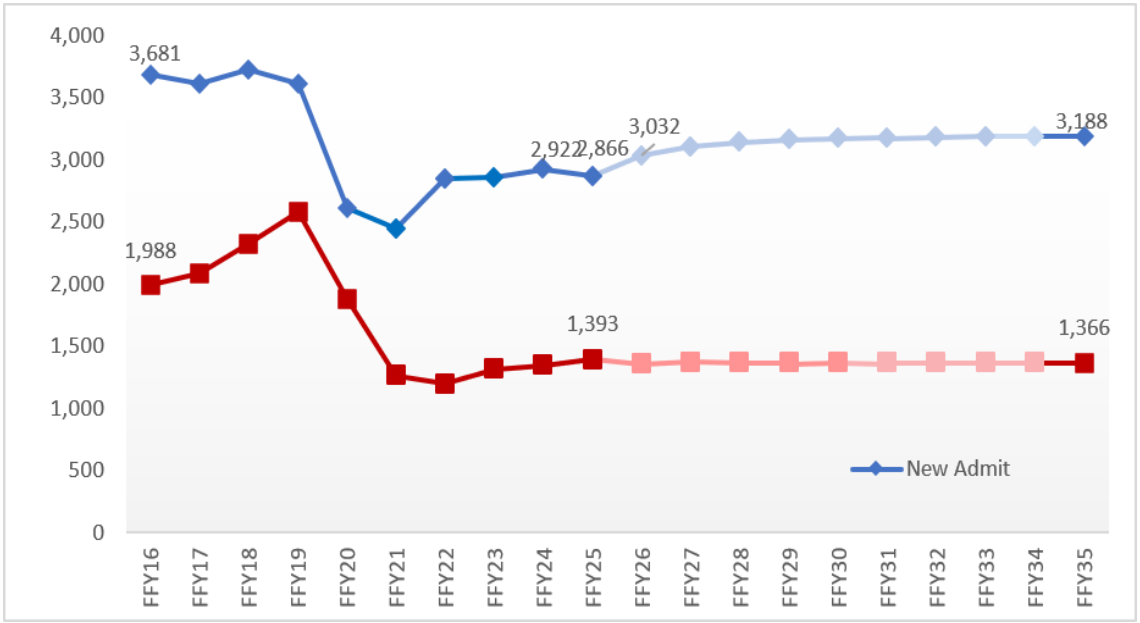
In FFY 2025, the number of admissions for prison returns was **1,393 individuals.**

Since last year, returns **increased 3.6%** from 1,344 individuals in FFY 2024.

In the next decade, this number is predicted to **decrease 1.9%** to 1,366 individuals in FFY 2035.

Figure 8 shows the actual and forecasted new admissions and return admissions over the prior and future 10 years.

FIGURE 8: PRISON ADMISSIONS BY TYPE FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2035



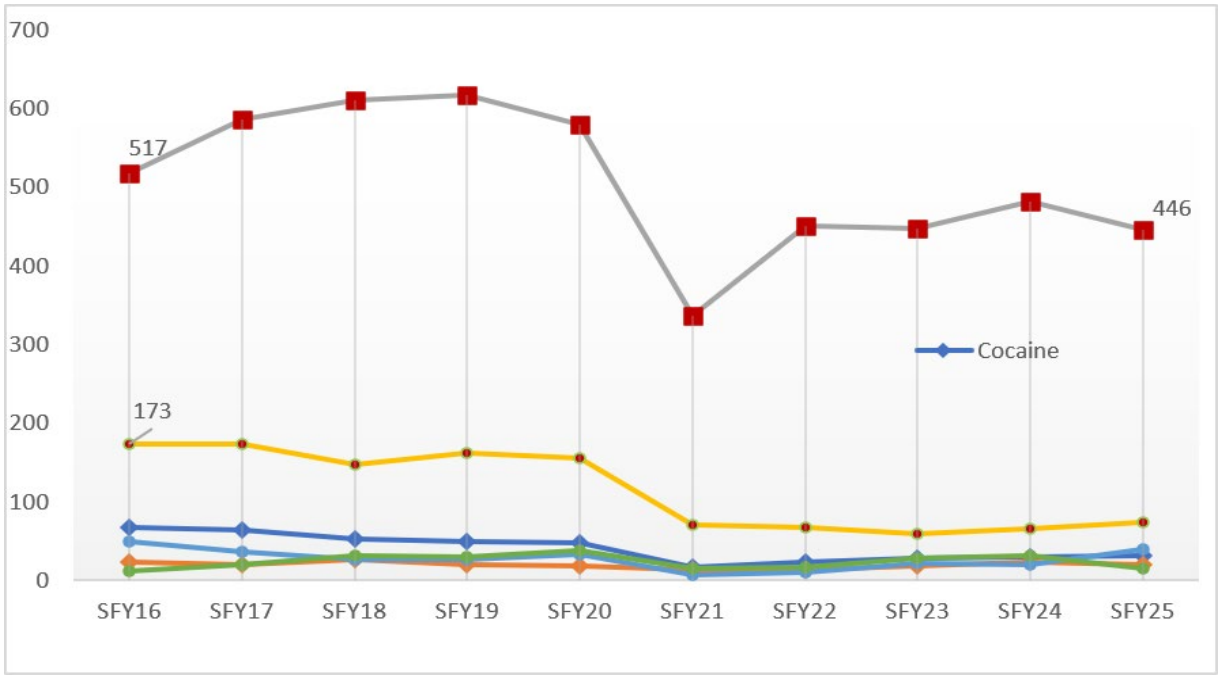
Source: Justice Data Warehouse and Prison Forecast Estimates

DRUG OFFENSES FOR NEW ADMISSIONS

IDOC collects information on the primary drug related to a most serious drug offense. Please note that drug counts are based on State Fiscal Year (SFY), which differs from the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). IDOC uses the SFY timeframe, due to the amount of time it takes to manually determine primary drug information for each individual.

In SFY 2025, there were **446 methamphetamine** new admissions. New admissions for methamphetamine have **decreased 13.7%** in the past decade. There have also been decreases in the number of admissions for cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and prescription drugs in the past decade (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9: PRIMARY DRUG INVOLVED IN NEW PRISON ADMISSIONS FROM SFY 2016 TO SFY 2025[6]



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

Passed in 2025, HF 182[7] **designated additional chemicals and precursor substances as controlled substances under Iowa Code 124**. This law aligns Schedule I, III, and IV controlled substances under Iowa Codes 124 and 124B to conform to the specific chemical designations in Federal Regulations for Title 21. The penalties for a violation involving a controlled substance vary depending on the type of drug and amount of drug involved. It could carry a Class B felony, in addition to the 25-year mandatory minimum term of imprisonment, a Class C felony, or an aggravated misdemeanor. Making additional chemical substances illegal could impact future prison forecasts.

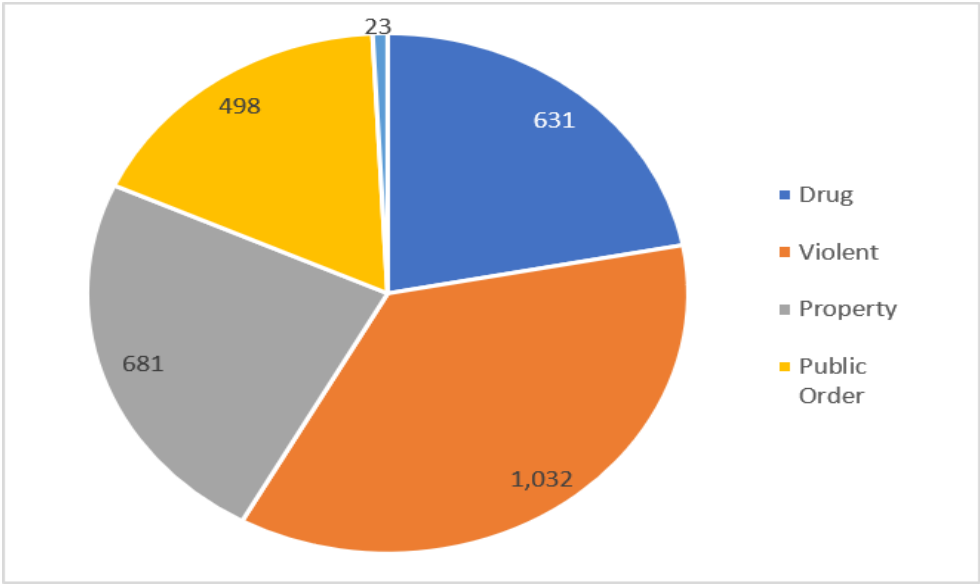
[6] Includes new admissions within a particular State Fiscal Year whose most serious offense was a drug offense.
[7] HF182

OFFENSE TYPE FOR NEW ADMISSIONS

This section examines the most serious offense type for new admissions.

In FFY 2025, **36.0%** of new admissions were **violent** offenses (see Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: OFFENSE TYPE FOR NEW ADMISSIONS IN FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

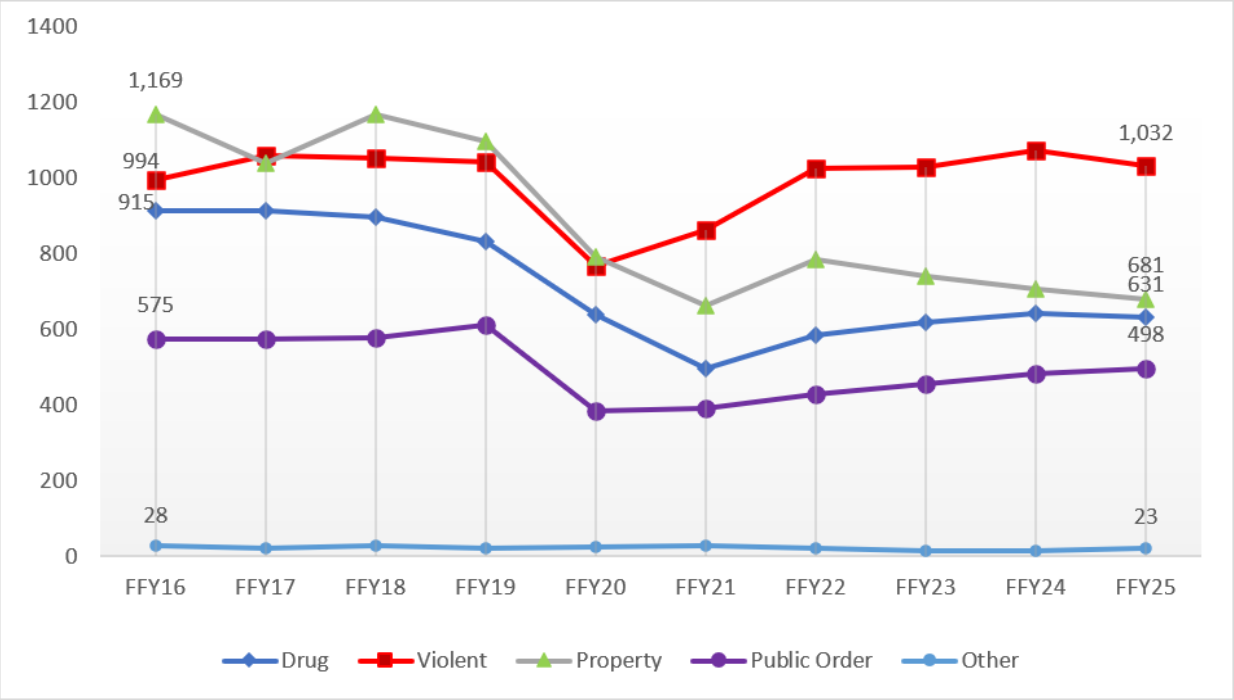
In the past decade, (see Figure 11)
There were **decreases** in new admits for:

- **Drug** offenses, 31.0%
- **Property** offenses, 41.7%
- **Public order** offenses, 13.4%
- **Other** offenses, 17.9%

There were **increases** in new admits for:

- **Violent** offenses, 3.8%

FIGURE 11: OFFENSE TYPE FOR NEW ADMISSIONS FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

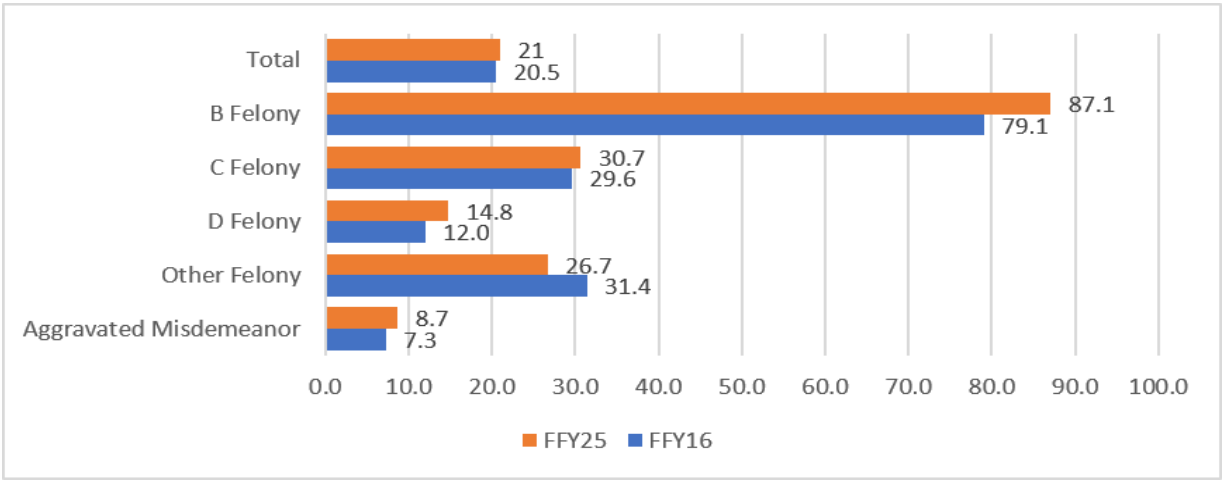
AVERAGE LENGTH-OF-STAY (LOS)

NEW ADMISSIONS

In the past decade, average **LOS increased 2.4%** for new admissions, from 20.5 months in FFY 2016 to 21.0 months in FFY 2025.

Figure 12 shows the average LOS (in months) for new admissions, by offense class.

FIGURE 12: LOS (MONTHS) FOR NEW ADMISSIONS, BY CLASS, FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

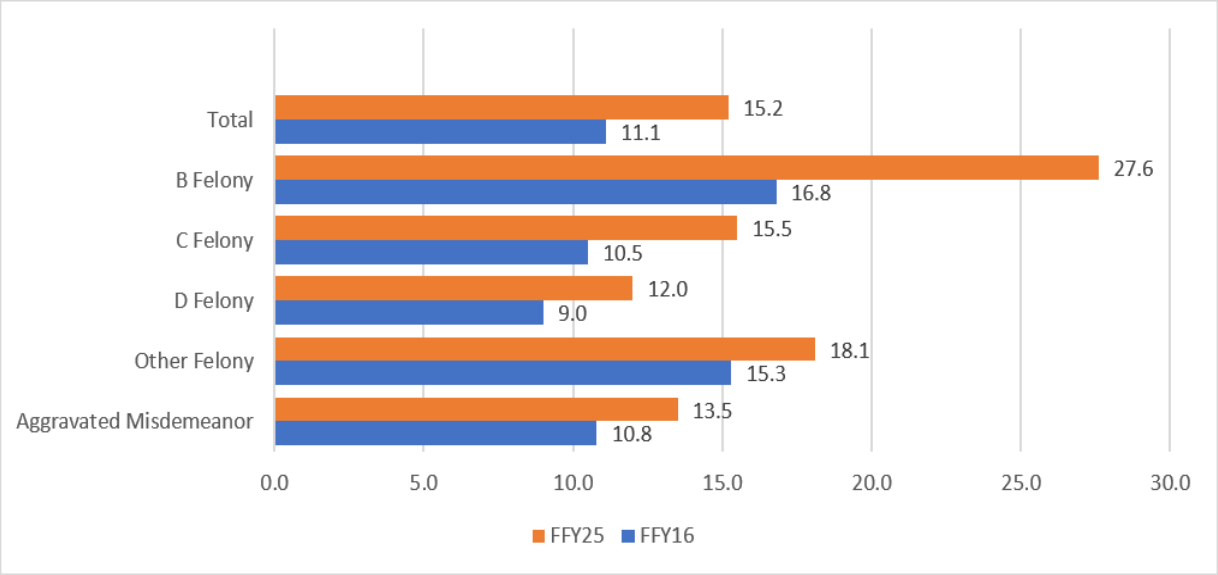
RETURN ADMISSIONS

In the past decade, average **LOS increased 36.9%** for return admissions from 11.1 months in FFY 2016 to 15.2 months in FFY 2025.

Average time served for return admissions tends to be shorter than for new admissions due to serving a significant portion of their sentences prior to their original release.

Figure 13 shows the average LOS (in months) for return admissions, by offense class.

FIGURE 13: LOS (MONTHS) FOR RETURN ADMISSIONS, BY CLASS, FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



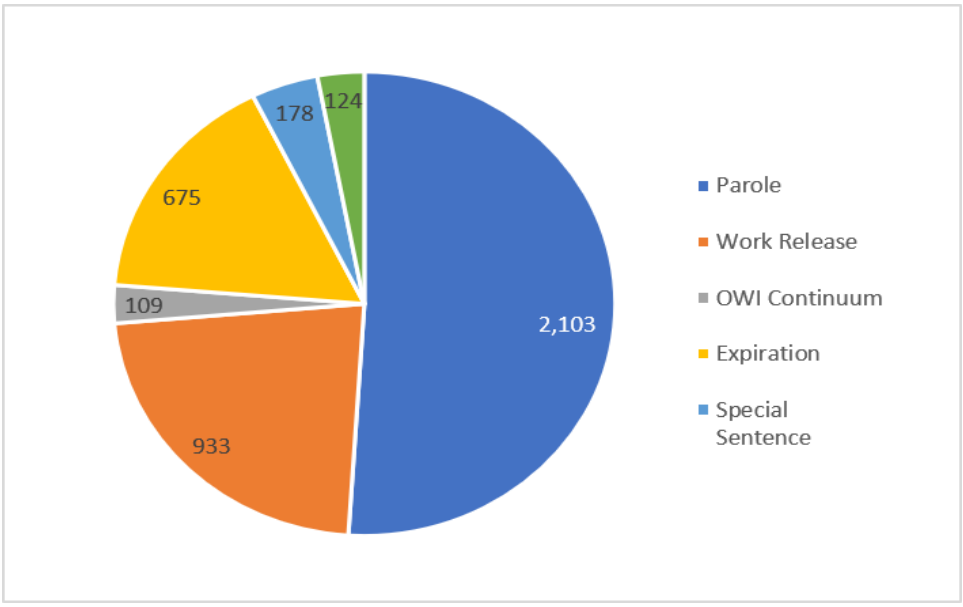
Source: Justice Data Warehouse. Other Felony category includes: felony enhancements, mandatory minimum sentences, and "other." Counts in some categories are small.

PRISON RELEASES

In FFY 2025, (see Figure 14)

- **4,122** individuals were **released** from prison.
- The **most common** release type was **parole**, **51.0%.**

FIGURE 14: PRISON RELEASE BY TYPE IN FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

In the past decade,
There were **decreases** in release to community supervision for:

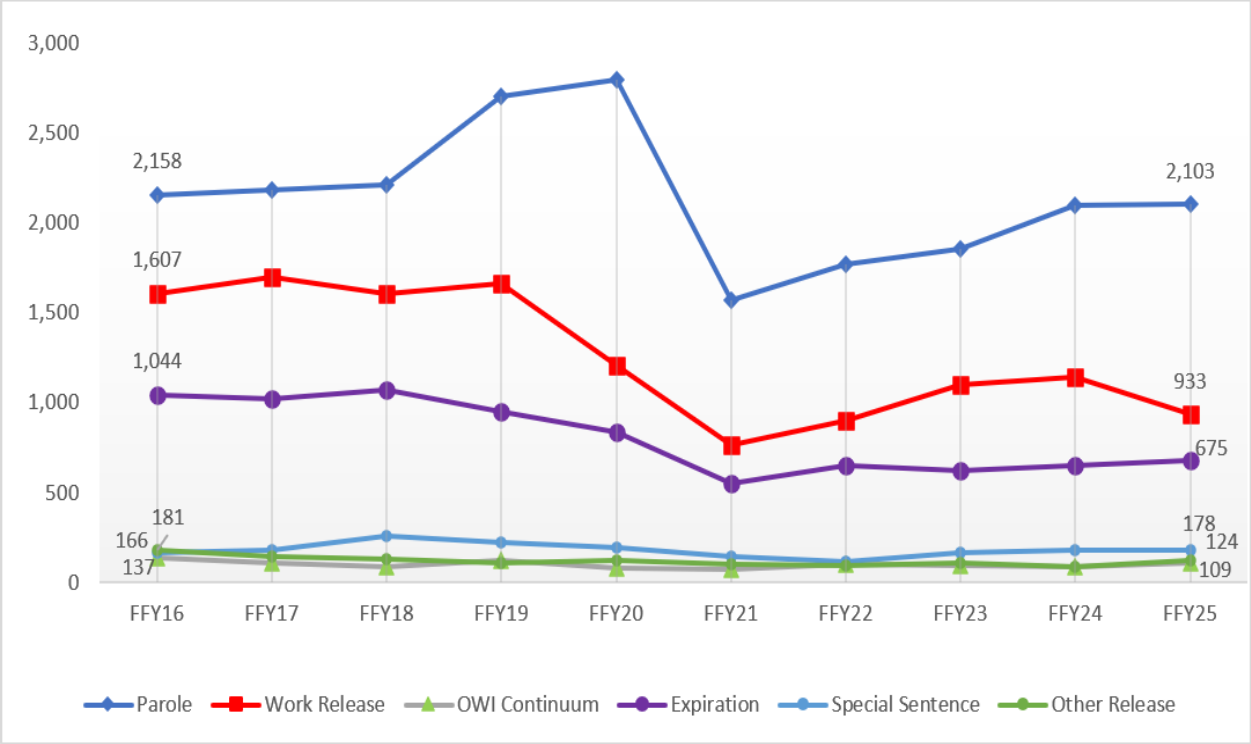
- **Parole,** 2.5%
- **Work release,** 41.9%
- **OWI continuum,** 20.4%
- **Expiration of sentence,**35.3%
- **Other release,** 31.5%

There were **increases** in release to community supervision for:

- **Special sentence,** 7.2%

Figure 15 provides the supervision status for individuals released from FFY 2016 to FFY 2025.

FIGURE 15: PRISON RELEASES BY TYPE FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025

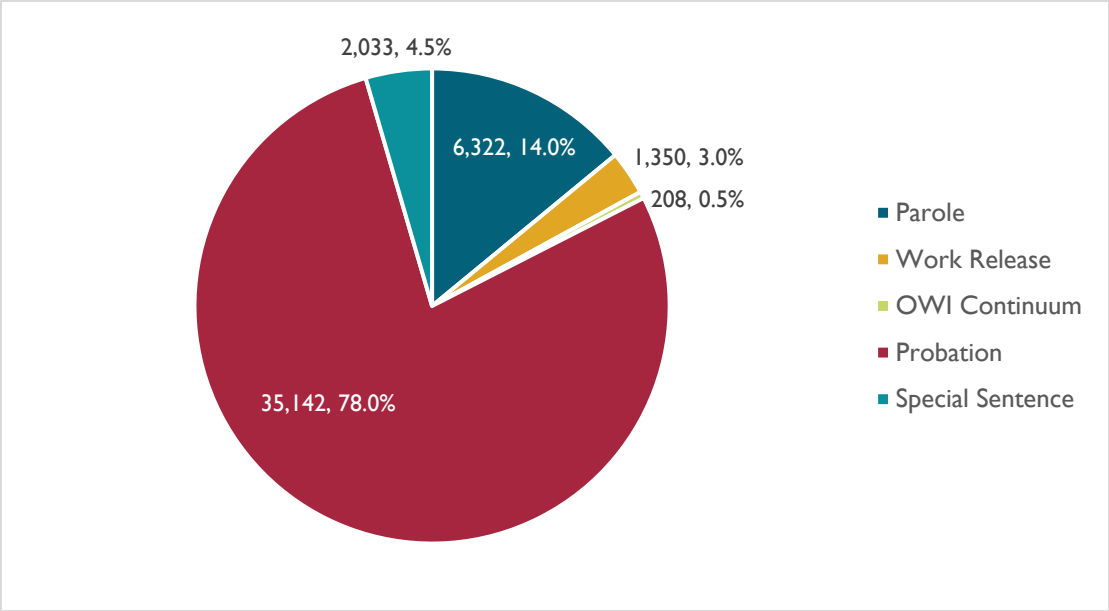


COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONS (CBC)

OFFENDERS SERVED

In FFY 2025, there were **45,055** offenders served in the community and residential facilities (see Figure 16).

FIGURE 16: COMMUNITY-BASED OFFENDERS SERVED IN THE FIELD AND RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES IN FFY 2025



REVOCATIONS

In the past decade,
Revocations from CBC **decreased** for:

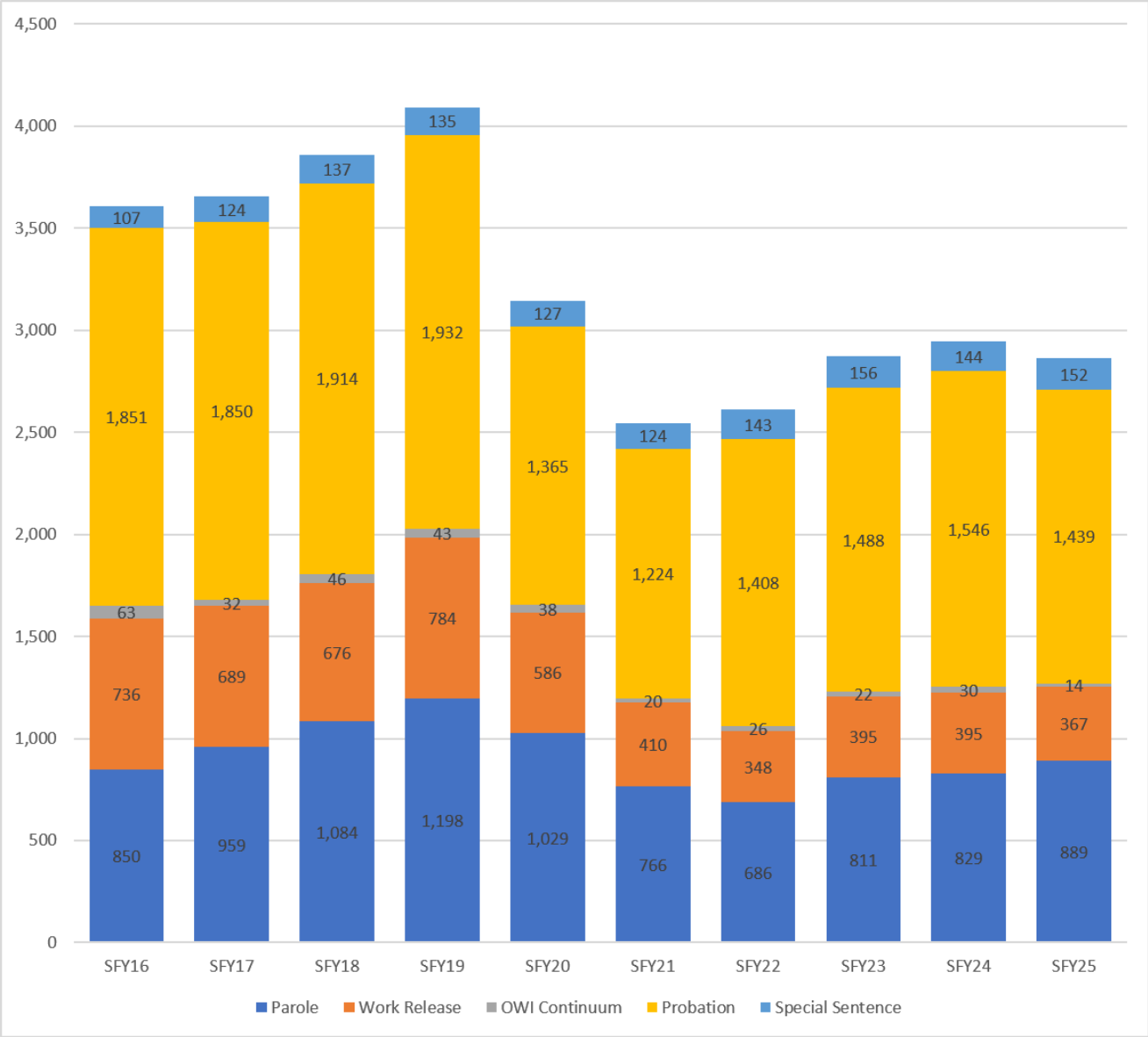
- **Probation**, 22.3%
- **Work release**, 50.1%
- **OWI continuum**, 77.8%

Revocations **increased** for:

- **Special Sentence**, 42.1%
- **Parole**, 4.6%

Figure 17 shows the number of individuals served in CBC and the number of revocations by supervision status.

FIGURE 17: CBC REVOCATIONS FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



SPECIAL SENTENCE

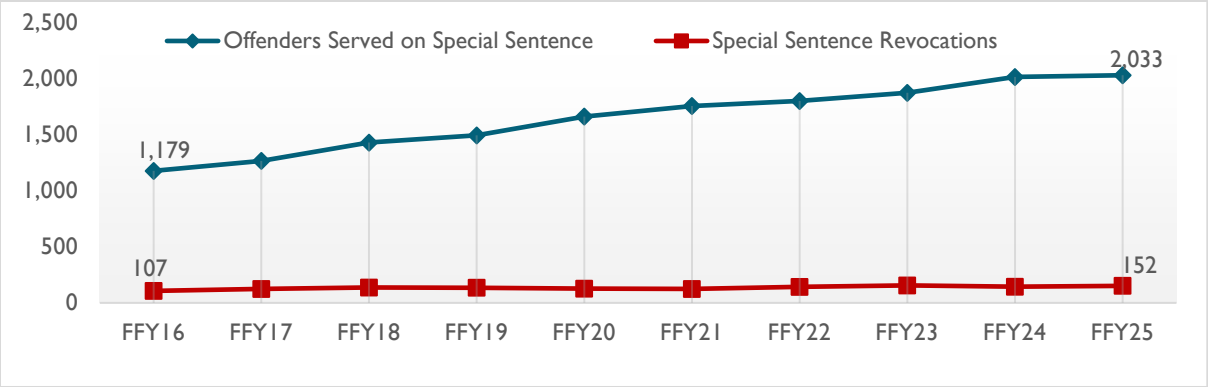
The special sentence is a term of community supervision that applies only to individuals convicted of sex offenses under *Iowa Code* §709, §726.2, and §728.12. Individuals convicted of Class A, B, and C felony sex offenses receive life-time community supervision and those convicted of a Class D felony and misdemeanor receive 10-year supervision sentences.

In the past decade, there has been a **72.4% increase** in individuals serving special sentences in the community from 1,179 in FFY 2016 to 2,033 in FFY 2025.

In FFY 2025, there were **152 revocations** of individuals serving the special sentence.

Figure 18 shows the number of individuals serving the special sentence and the number of revocations from the special sentence.

FIGURE 18: INDIVIDUALS SERVING SPECIAL SENTENCE AND REVOCATIONS FROM FFY 2016 TO FFY 2025



Source: Justice Data Warehouse

Passed in 2025, SF150[8] modifies Code 728.12(3), pertaining to the sexual exploitation of a minor in visual depictions. The law allows violations involving multiple visual depictions of the same minor to be prosecuted and punished as separate offenses. The first offense is a Class D felony.

HF 306[9] creates increased sentences for second and subsequent offenses for disseminating obscene material to minors under Code 728.2. Currently, the offense carries a serious misdemeanor. The new law provides increased penalties for a second offense (aggravated misdemeanor) and a third offense (Class D felony). These laws could impact future forecasts.

In 2024, DOM staff studied 6,345 registered sex offenders in Iowa. Among these offenders, 12.5% were convicted of a subsequent sex offense and 26.5% were convicted of a monitoring violation. Being under age 18, victimizing both minors and adults, and higher registry classification were associated with higher recidivism.[10]

[8] SF 150
[9] HF 306
[10] Yates, C., and Mattingly, M. (2024). "Analysis of Iowa's Sex Offender Registry." Department of Management Division of Data, Planning, and Improvement.

CONCLUSION

This report serves as a tool, providing the IDOC and Iowa Board of Parole (BOP) with data on historical trends, current population statistics, and projected prison growth. The IDOC remains committed to minimizing the prison population and continues to collaborate with state officials and policymakers to ensure the actual population remains below these projections.

Over the past decade, Iowa's prison population saw a 1.7% increase, rising from 8,334 to 8,476 incarcerated individuals. The trajectory was interrupted in 2020 when the pandemic significantly reduced the population.

Since the last year, key population drivers have shown mixed trends:

- New prison admissions decreased 1.9% (from 2,922 to 2,866),
- Returns to prison increased 3.6% (from 1,344 to 1,393),
- Prison releases decreased 22.1% (from 5,293 to 4,122).

As of November 2025, all correctional facilities are operating above capacity, except for the state's women's prison.[11] Under the assumption of status quo, meaning no changes to current policy and legislation, the prison population is projected to increase by 13.9% to 9,658 incarcerated individuals by the end of FFY 2035. This growth would result in facilities being overcapacity by 38.2% in FFY 2035.

TRENDS CONTRIBUTING TO PRISON POPULATION CHANGE

Mandatory minimums, violent crimes, and drug offense sentencing are contributors to Iowa's prison overpopulation. Individuals may be more effectively rehabilitated through community-based programs, when appropriate, to minimize the prison population.

- **Fewer people are being admitted to prison.** In the past decade, prison admissions decreased 22.1% for new admissions and 29.9% for return admissions.
- **Violent offenses are driving the prison population.** In FFY 2025, violent offenses comprised the highest percent of the current incarcerated population, representing 36.0%. In the past decade, new admissions decreased for all offense types, except for violent offenses, which increased 3.8%.
- **Incarcerated individuals are spending more time in prison.** In the past decade, the average LOS for individuals newly admitted to prison

[11] Prison Daily Statistics. Iowa Department of Corrections.

increased by 2.4% for new admissions and by 36.9% for return admissions.

- **In the past decade, the number of people serving mandatory minimum sentences has increased 18.2%.** Increases in this population are expected as more individuals are convicted and must serve lengthy mandatory minimum sentences, and as new legislation has future impacts (such as, SF 462 and HF 2191).
- **In the past decade, the number of individuals serving special sentences in the community has increased 72.4%.** In the next decade, this trend is expected to continue as more individuals convicted of sex crimes are gradually released from prison onto the special sentence, and as new legislation is passed penalizing sex offenders (such as SF150 and HF306).
- **People on special sentences and parole are being revoked more often.** In the past decade, the number of revocations for all CBC supervision statuses decreased. The exception was for revocations from special sentences and parole, which increased 42.1% and 4.6%, respectively.