

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

REVISED POPULATION PROJECTIONS

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ACQUISITIONS

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POPULATION FIGURES TAKEN FROM MONTHLY FACT SHEET

SEPTEMBER	1979	3241
OCTOBER	1979	3260
NOVEMBER	1979	3365
DECEMBER	1979	3399
JANUARY	1980	3425
FEBRUARY	1980	3457
MARCH	1980	3556
APRIL	1980	3703
MAY	1980	3808
JUNE	1980	3859

PROJECTED PRISON POPULATION

JULY	'80	3910	+60/month
AUGUST		3970	+70/month
SEPTEMBER		4040	+60/month
OCTOBER		4100	
NOVEMBER		4140	
DECEMBER		4180	
JANUARY	'81	4220	+40/month
FEBRUARY		4260	
MARCH		4300	
APRIL		4330	
MAY		4360	
JUNE		4390	
JULY		4420	+30/month
AUGUST		4450	
SEPTEMBER		4480	
OCTOBER		4505	
NOVEMBER		4530	
DECEMBER		4555	+25/month
JANUARY	'82	4580	
FEBRUARY		4600	
MARCH		4620	
APRIL		4640	+20/month
MAY		4660	
JUNE		4680	

In summary, given current conditions, policy, laws, etc., population should continue to grow but at a steadily decreasing rate of growth.

INPUT INTO THE PROJECTION PROBLEM

Prison population cannot be thought of as a natural occurrence responding only to past trends. Prison populations are sensitive to changes brought about by social and political pressures. Among these are public outcry to crime, pressures exerted on parole boards and state legislatures, and of course, the availability of correctional resources in terms of both administrative and monetary. It has been suggested that as prisons begin to reach their maximum capacity, judges adjust sentence lengths and parole boards exercise their discretion in releasing inmates to help stabilize inmate populations.

A most important aspect of this study is to understand the correctional population response to pressures induced by these changes and also understand the consequences of the policies presently in force, i.e., the armed robbery law for example.

Present prison levels reflect current policies and it is possible to extrapolate past established trends in order to express the continuation of present policies and to estimate the population results of future policy changes.

FACTS ABOUT THE PRESENT SYSTEM

ADMISSIONS ARE INCREASING

New Commitments are entering at about 138/month; increasing at 120 per year, an average of 10 per month.

Parole/Probation revocations are entering at about 45/month; increasing at 72 per year, an average of 6 per month.

Major Crime Categories

Armed robbers are entering at 20/month; increasing at 24 per year, an average of 2 per month.
 Residential burglars are entering at 10/month; increasing at 24 per year, an average of 2 per month.
 Burglars (general) are entering at 35/month; decreasing at 24 per year, an average of 2 per month.
 Larcenists are entering at 17/month; increasing at 36 per year, an average of 3 per month.

SENTENCE LENGTHS FOR NEW COMMITMENTS ARE DECREASING

Armed robbery sentence lengths are currently at approximately 13 years, declining slightly.
 Residential burglary sentence lengths are currently at approximately 4.5 years, no change.
 Burglary (general) sentence lengths are currently at approximately 3.6 years, increasing slightly.
 Larceny sentence lengths are currently at approximately 3 years, declining slightly.
OVERALL SYSTEM sentence lengths are currently at approximately 7 years, decreasing.

Sentence length of new commitments that have entered into the system since July, 1978 are decreasing. This seems to be a direct contradiction to published reports stating an increase in average length of sentence. True, sentence length of inmates currently leaving the system is increasing but remember that they also entered the system at a point in time when average length of sentence was increasing. The average length of sentence of new commitments currently entering the system (since July 1, 1978), some of which are still incarcerated, is decreasing. As more inmates enter into the system with a decreasing average sentence length then exits from the system with a decreasing average sentence length will begin to be evident. The following graph may help to give a clearer understanding of what is happening.

In order to accurately assess the present growth in prison population levels, the factors favoring growth must be weighed against those favoring a decline in population levels. There are three major factors favoring population growth:

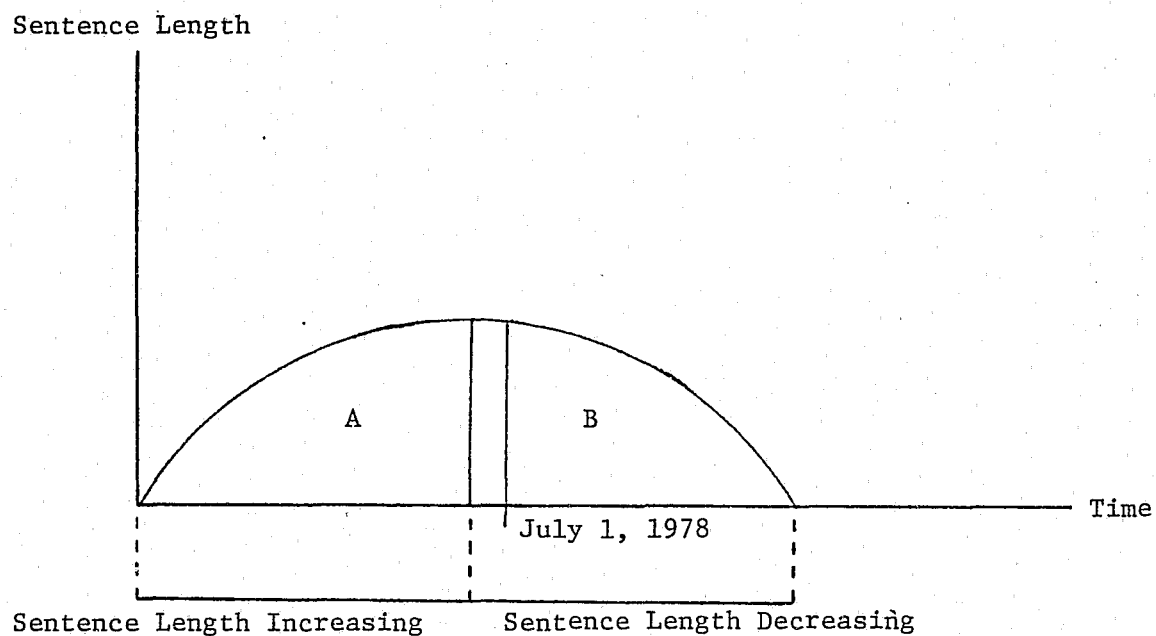
1. An increase in parole revocations. If parole revocations continue to increase in the present direction, they will increase an average of 5/month/year. This noted increase in parole revocations may be a result of increased pressures on the parole board to reduce prison population levels by releasing inmates who might not otherwise have been released.
2. Present economic situation. The impact of present economic conditions on prison population levels may be the most difficult factor to assess. Obviously, high rates of inflation and increased unemployment rates will, in all probability, be a factor in increased crime rates.
3. Armed robbery law. The obvious effect of the armed robbery law has been to increase prison population levels by increasing the amount of time an inmate is actually incarcerated. Due to the lag factor associated with parole eligibility and different sentence lengths, we may not be feeling the full effect of our present armed robbery law, as yet. As more offenders are sentenced under the armed robbery law, the greater will be the impact on population growth.

Factors favoring a decline in population growth are:

1. Major decline in overall sentence lengths. Declining sentence lengths is an important factor in checking prison population levels in both the longrun and shortrun. The shortrun effect will not immediately relieve population pressures but will certainly be effective in slowing future growth.
2. Decline in "high-risk" population. The "baby boom" post World War II population has currently past the "high-risk" age group (29 or less). Since our prison population is largely of this makeup, the number incarcerated for this age group should decline accordingly.

POPULATION EXPECTATIONS

Much time was spent evaluating what was currently happening within our system in order to predict in what direction our future population will move. Admissions by major crime categories were plotted



Inmates entering the system before July 1, 1978 (section A) entered at a point in time during which average sentence length was increasing or just beginning to decrease. They may have been released in either A or B time periods or may still be incarcerated. New commitments entering after July 1, 1978 (section B) are entering the system at a point in time where average length of sentence is decreasing.

to determine any increase or decrease in admission levels. Actual sentence lengths being handed down by the courts were evaluated to try to determine any change in sentencing patterns. Overall, admissions were found to be increasing while at the same time sentence lengths were found to be declining.

With this supportative evidence plus the fact that our high risk population is decreasing, our belief is that the population will be increasing at a decreasing rate.

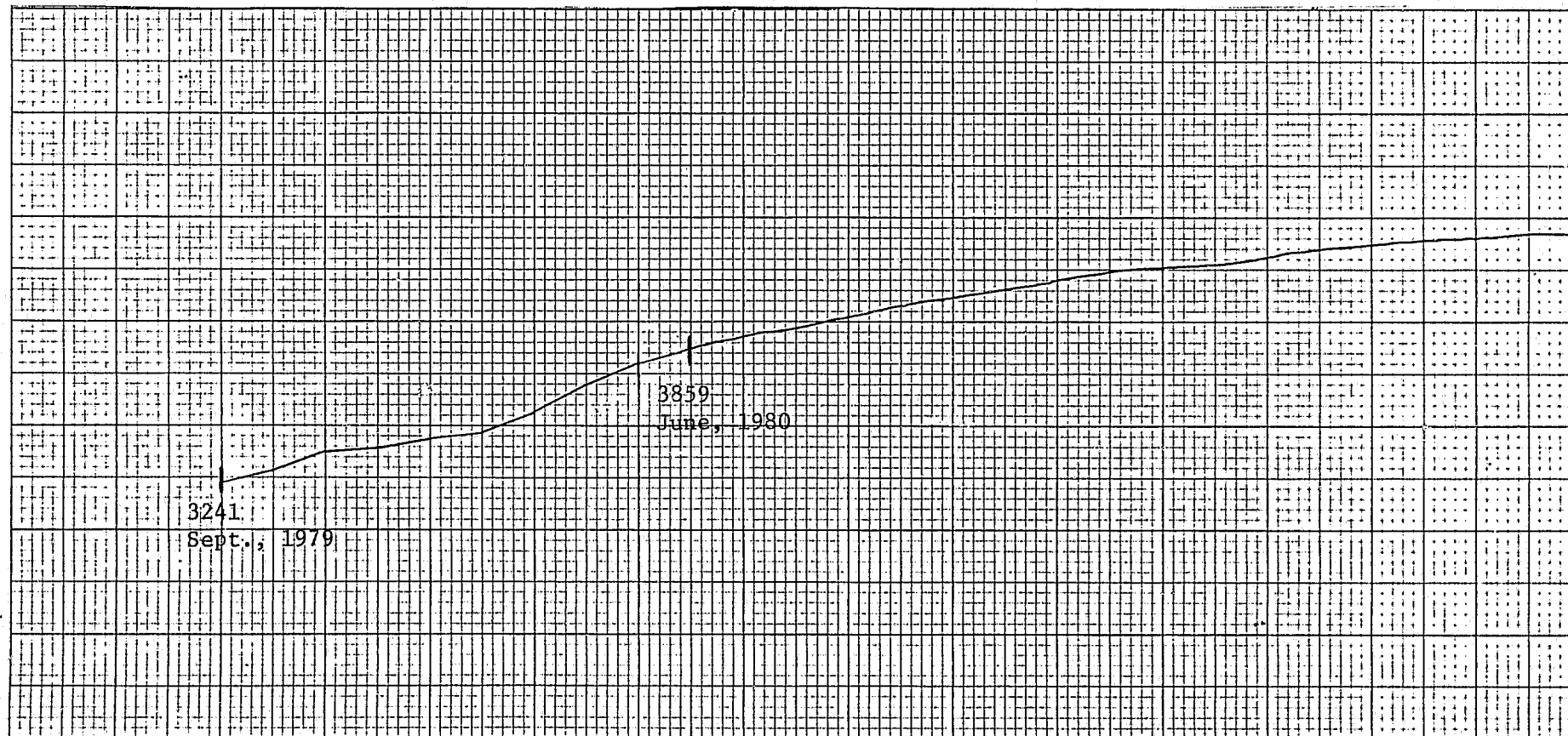
Previously, we had used multiple regression analysis to try to explain what changes were occurring within our population levels. Regression analysis assumes that all changes will be constant and in the same direction. With some experience now behind us in making these projections, we know that this is not always the case. There have been some rather drastic changes in the economy since the initial projections were made. Also, variables used in regression analysis must be quantitative variables, and as is obvious, it is impossible to assign values to many of the factors affecting changes in population levels such as administrative policy decisions, judges sentencing patterns, etc.

Based on current trends and policies the evidence supports the fact that the population will continue to increase but at a decreasing rate.

The following graph gives a nine month picture of actual population levels and we have extrapolated from that point forward the direction in which the population should move based on our findings.

Actual population figures for September, 1979 thru June, 1980 taken from monthly fact sheets published the first of each month and projected change in population based on current trends and policies.

NOTE: Population will continue to increase at a decreasing rate.



FACTORS THAT COULD INVALIDATE THE PRESENT PROJECTIONS

There are five major considerations that could possibly invalidate the present projections based on the relative importance of each and the magnitude of the change. These changes could result in either an overestimation or underestimation of population levels.

1. A major improvement or worsening of the economy. With the present economic situation as volatile as it presently is, any major change in the economy in either direction could directly affect prison population levels.
2. Major plea bargaining in armed robbery. Sentences being reduced from armed robbery to simple robbery and therefore making more inmates eligible for parole will have a marked effect on time served, thus helping to lower population levels.
3. Major changes in parole revocation rates. Increases or decreases in numbers returned from parole will affect admission levels.
4. Any new law affecting larceny and/or burglary. A mandatory sentencing law aimed at reducing crimes of burglary and larceny by increased length of sentence could be disastrous in terms of increased growth in population.
5. Changes in split-sentence and/or shock probation policy. Obviously, with judges taking advantage of split-sentence and shock probation policies, the effect will be to decrease sentence length even more.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It should be obvious from the facts presented that there is no one factor that is determinate in establishing prison population levels, but rather a combination of factors unique to each state's individual situation. Population levels are the result of social and political pressures, a few of which are administrative policy, the economy, the availability of corrections resources, and public outcry to reduce crime. There are several factors to watch in this instance:

1. The number of admissions and sentence lengths for armed robbery vs. simple robbery
2. Parole revocation numbers
3. Overall average sentence lengths
4. Economy (unemployment) correlated with property crimes (burglary and larceny)

It is very important to remember that if there is no room for these new admissions in either the penitentiary or county jails, the population obviously cannot reach the projected levels. The maximum level the population can reach is absolutely defined by the maximum number of available beds.

END