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SPAC
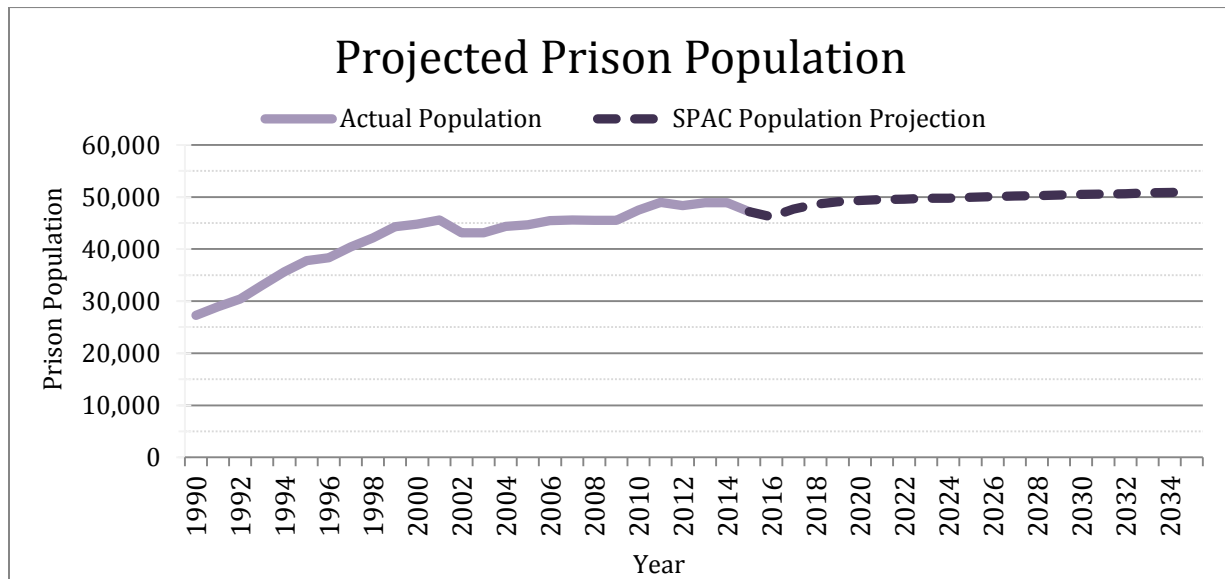Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council

Baseline Illinois Department of Corrections Population Projection

The SPAC prison population projection takes the two key policy levers—admissions and length of stay—to create a reasonable estimate of the State's future prison population. Both admissions and the average prison terms are held constant from the average of the past three years. This approach gives a plausible baseline to compare any simulated policy changes. The implicit assumptions are also familiar to system stakeholders—for example, if a reader believes admissions were abnormally low for the past three years, they can read the model's output as a conservative underestimate of the future prison population. Likewise, a reader who believes admissions will continue to fall can read the output as an overestimate of the future prison population. Both can understand the projection based on familiarity with past experience.

SPAC projected the prison population for FY2016-2035 using the average prison admissions, sentences, and policy positions of FY2013-2015. The projection model projects the prison population to increase to around 50,000 by FY2025 and then to stay relatively flat with a slight annual increase occurring in the future.

The assumption of constant admissions results in a projection with a fairly constant slope in the future. The model currently over-projects (at least in the short-term) due to assuming future admissions would look like the average admissions from FY2013-2015. In reality, prison admissions have declined substantially and the higher number of admissions in FY2013-2014 causes the projection to be high. Several adjustments can remedy this overestimate if SPAC chooses to deviate from the constant admissions assumption (*i.e.*, assume a continual decrease in admissions). SPAC is currently incorporating new data from FY2016.