

**City Budget Behind Bars:
Increasing Prison Population
Drives Rapidly Escalating Costs**

A PICA Issues Report

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City Budget Behind Bars: Increasing Prison Population Drives Rapidly Escalating Costs

Overview

The rapid increase in Philadelphia's prisons population is not just a prison problem, a new problem or even just a Philadelphia problem. The increasing prisons population is part of a nationwide criminal justice system problem that has led to overcrowding in facilities across the country.

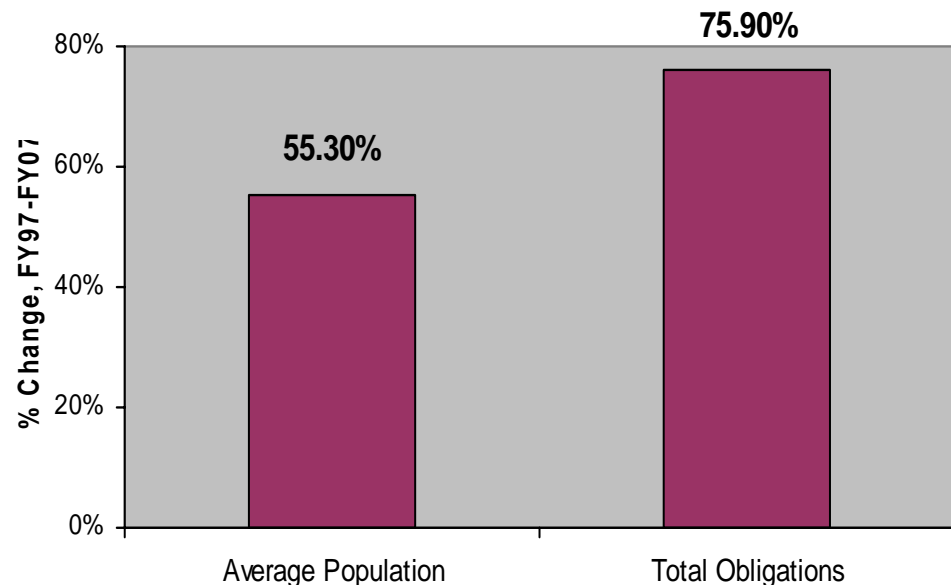
This report will document the growth in prisons costs over the last decade, look at the components of that growth, at what is happening in correctional systems in other jurisdictions and at what steps those jurisdictions are taking to contain their population growth and costs. Finally, the report will recommend steps that Philadelphia can take to control the growth in its prisons population.

City Budget Behind Bars: Increasing Prison Population Drives Rapidly Escalating Costs

Increasing Census and Costs

- The prison population has been growing rapidly and that growth has led to increases in the City's costs.
- The prison system's costs are driven by more than just change in its population. Since FY00, costs have grown faster than the prison population.

Since FY97, Prisons Costs Have Been Growing Faster than the Prison Population

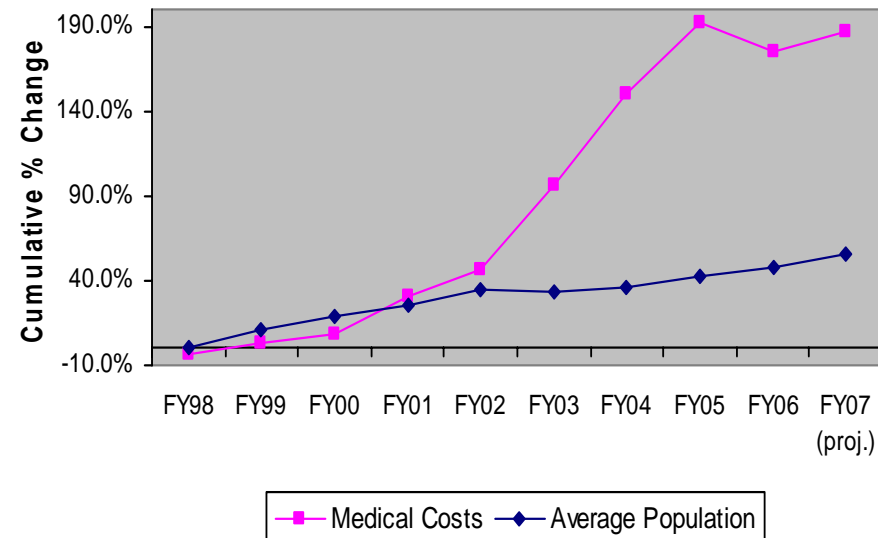


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Factors Driving Up Costs -- Contracts

- By far the largest reason for the increase in general fund costs has been the growth in healthcare costs. Since FY97, general fund healthcare costs have grown almost 200% while the average inmate census has grown 55%.
- The per inmate cost of healthcare for inmates has grown 85 percent since FY97, only slightly faster than the 79 percent growth in the employee healthcare costs for the union that represents prisons employees.
- The growth in prison healthcare costs appears to be a result of systemic changes in health insurance costs.

Medical Costs Have Grown Far More Quickly Than Have the Number of Inmates

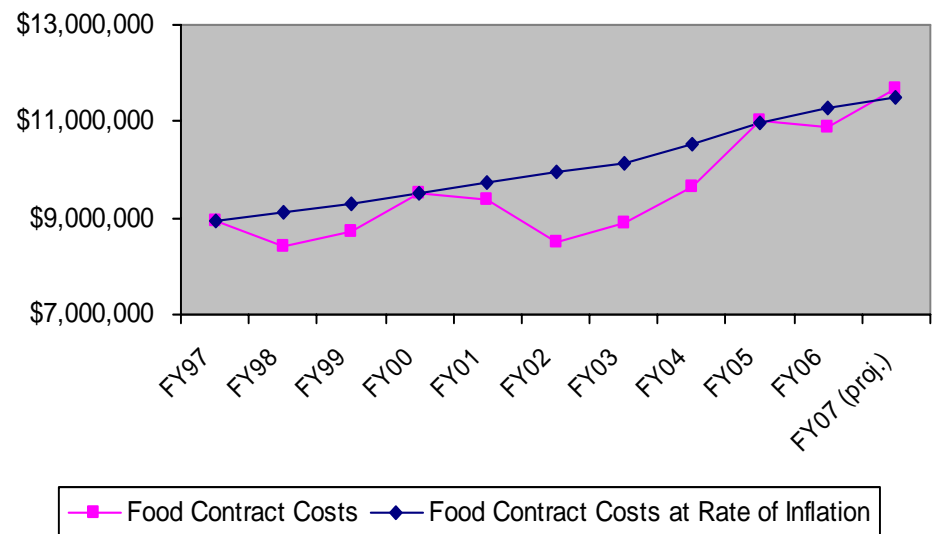


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Factors Driving Up Costs -- Contracts

- Food costs have increased by about 30 percent since FY97 – roughly at the rate of inflation. On a per-inmate basis, however, the cost of food has dropped by about 16 percent.
- As the increase in the number of inmates has forced the City to look outside the prisons it runs for space, the cost for contractors to house prisoners has ballooned. Housing contract costs are projected to be roughly five times higher in FY07 than they were in FY97.

Food Costs Have Grown At Approximately the Rate of Inflation

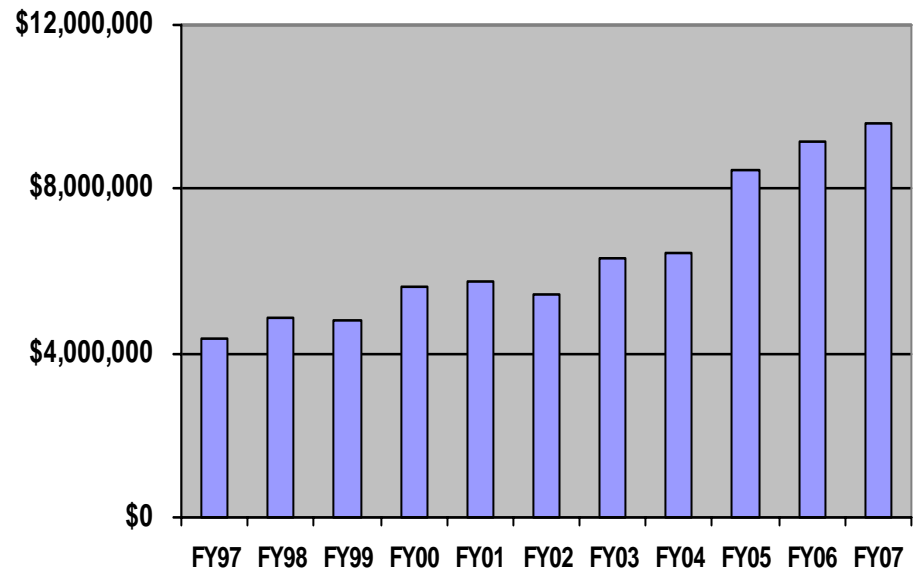


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Factors Driving Up Costs -- Contracts

- The costs for maintenance contracts has increased dramatically with the opening on two facilities (Curran Fromhold Correctional Facility and the Riverside Correctional Facility). The two facilities are maintained by outside contractors.
- By FY07, costs are projected to be more than double FY07's \$4.3 million.

Maintenance Contract Costs Have More Than Doubled Since FY97

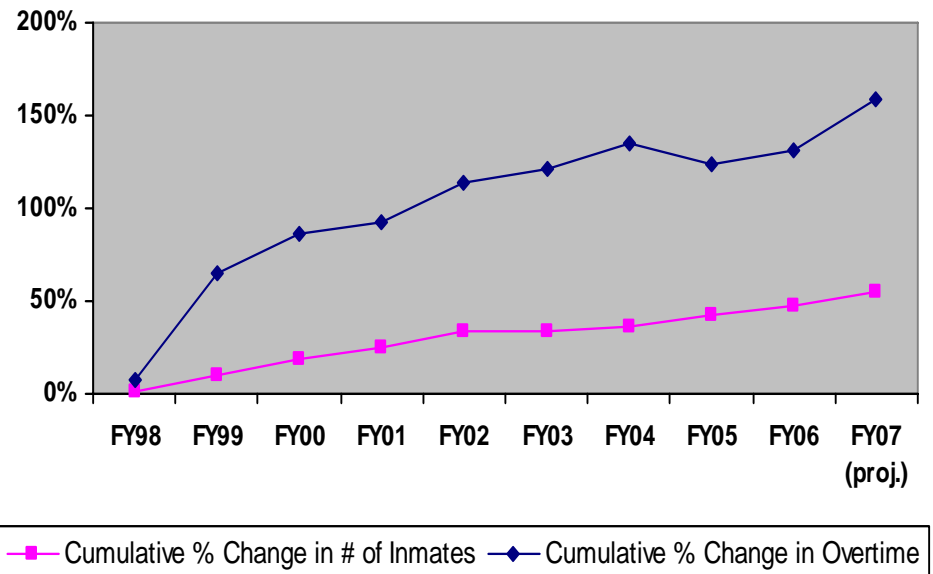


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Factors Driving Up Costs -- Overtime

- Overtime costs have skyrocketed as the prisons system has been unable to hire enough guards to keep pace with the ever-increasing number of inmates.
- By FY07, overtime costs are projected to be 160% higher than they were in FY97 and those costs have grown much more rapidly than the number of inmates.
- While non-overtime personnel costs have grown steadily – 40% since FY97, they have been overshadowed by overtime, which now consumes 19% of personnel costs – up from 11% in FY97.

Overtime Has Grown Much More Quickly Than The Prison Population

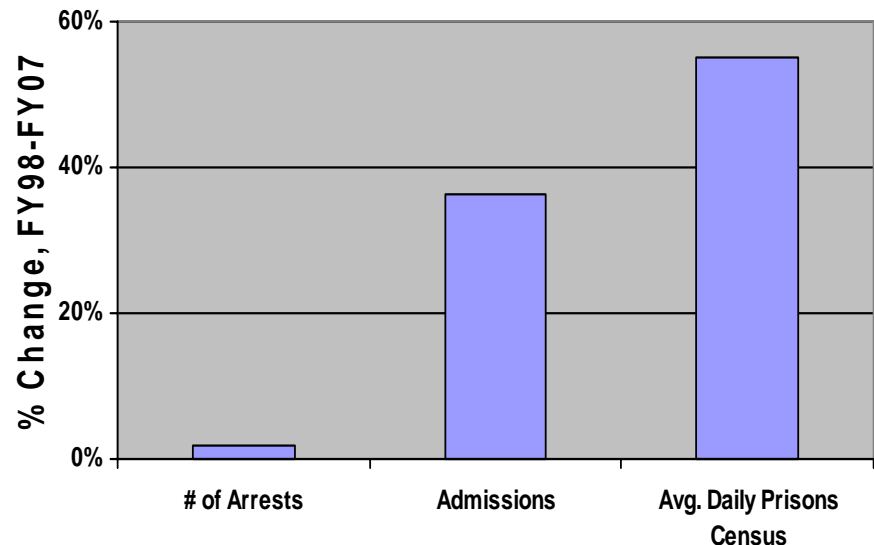


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Factors Driving Up Prisons Population

- The prison system's average daily census has grown faster than both the number of arrests and the number of admissions to prisons.
- The average census has been growing faster than arrests and admissions because inmates are remaining in prison longer.
- The median number of days in confinement has increased nearly 80 percent since 1991 from 50 days to 89 days.

The Prisons Census Has Grown Much More Quickly Than the # of Arrests and # of Admissions Since FY98



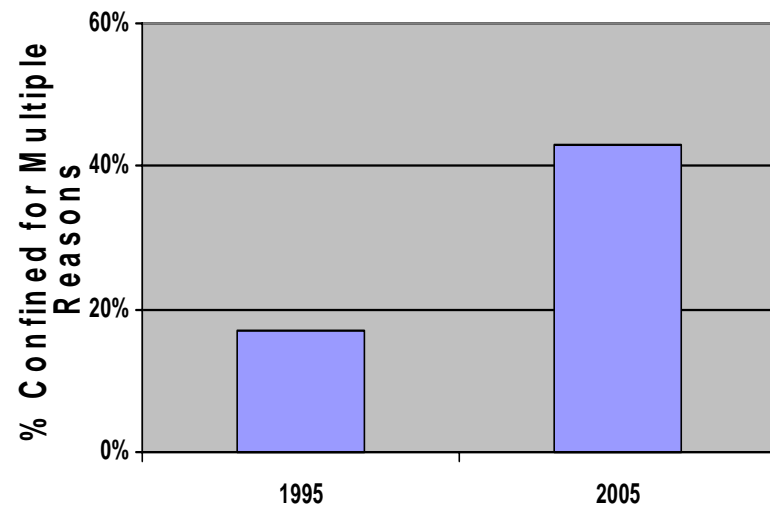
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Factors Driving Up Prisons Population

A number of factors have contributed to lengthening the amount of time inmates are incarcerated, including the following:

- More inmates are being held for more than one reason – 43% in 2005, up from 17% in 1995. (reasons for being held include bench warrants, serving sentences, probation and parole detainers, and not having paid bail). When inmates have more than one reason for being held, it likely makes it harder to resolve all of their issues and secure their release.
- The end-of-the-year inventory of undisposed municipal court cases has grown from under 7,500 in 1995 to over 26,944. As more cases remain open, it becomes more likely that inmates will wait in prison longer before their cases are adjudicated.

The Percent of Inmates Confined For Multiple Reason More Than Doubled from 1995 to 2005

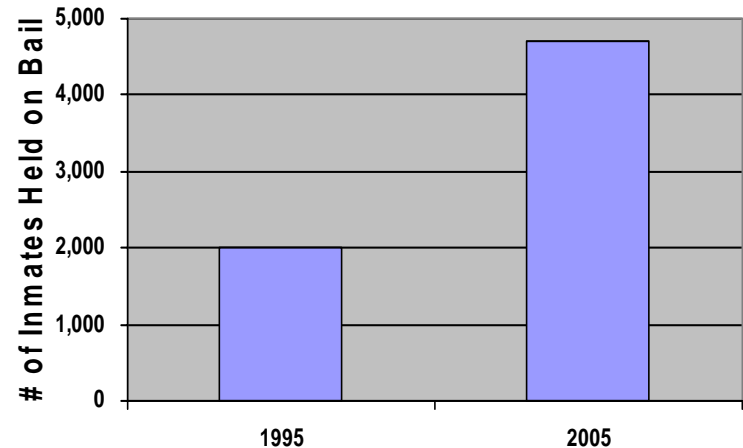


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Factors Driving Up Prisons Population

- The number of inmates held on bail increased from just under 2,000 in 1995 to over 4,700 in 2005.
- Over a quarter of the criminal cases have five or more continuances. If the defendants in those cases are being detained, every continuance lengthens the amount of time the inmate will be incarcerated before trial.
- The maximum length of a sentence in county prisons in Pennsylvania is supposed to be 24 months, but less than a third of sentenced inmates had sentences of under 23.5 months. That means that almost 70 percent of sentenced inmates at the facility had a sentence that was as long as is technically permissible in a county jail.

The Number of Inmates Held on Bail Skyrocketed from 1995 to 2005



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Factors Driving Up Prisons Population

- Many of the system's inmates return multiple times.
- In 2003, more than two thirds of the inmates released from the prisons had been incarcerated at least one other time since 1996. Additionally, almost one fifth of the inmates released during a year had been released at least one other time during that year.
- Of the 8,780 inmates who were released in 2003 after serving a sentence, just under 80 percent had been released from the system at least one other time since 1996.

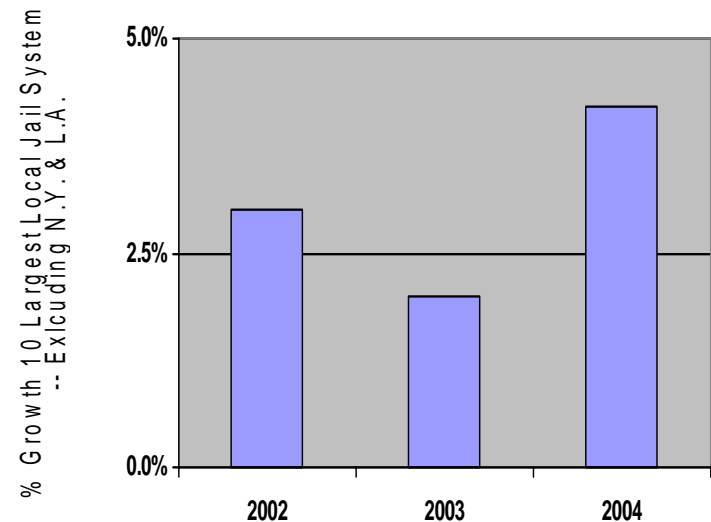
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The Problem is Not Unique to Philadelphia: Trends in Other Jurisdictions

Eight of the 10 largest count jail systems in the country had census increases in 2002, 2003 and 2004 – the last year for which information is available. Many of the largest systems also face overcrowding problems.

- Harris County Texas, ranked fifth nationally in the latest Justice Department list, was fined by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards for overcrowding.
- Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix and has the fourth largest jail system in the country, projects that that average daily population, which was well under 8,000 as recently as FY02, will top 10,000 this fiscal year.
- Cook County, which includes Chicago and has the third largest jail system, has seen its jail population grow from 6,825 inmates in 1990 to about 10,000. Since 1991, Cook County has built three new jail additions. But, according to the County's budget "Even with the construction of new detention facilities, the County potentially still faces a jail overpopulation problem."

Excluding New York and Los Angeles,
the Number of Inmates Grew Rapidly in the
Largest Local Jail Systems

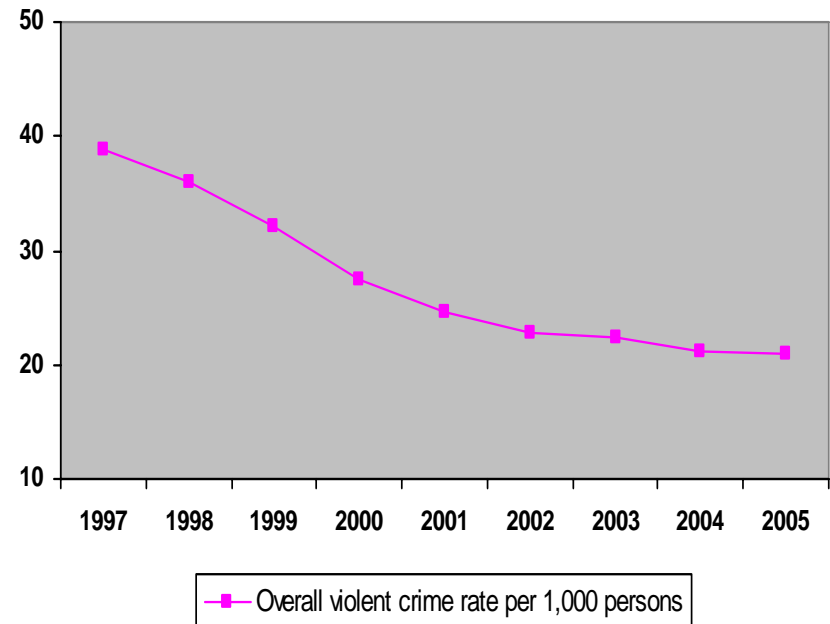


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The Problem is Not Unique to Philadelphia: Trends in Other Jurisdictions

- Prison populations are increasing despite reductions in violent crime.
- The Bureau of Justice statistics attributed this dynamic to several factors, including mandatory drug sentences, “three-strikes-and-you’re-out” laws for repeat offenders, and “truth-in-sentencing” laws that restrict early releases.
- The longer sentences mean that prisons are facing an aging population with longer sentences and often no chance for parole.

National Trends in Violent Crime*



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Reactions to the Increasing Population: What Other Jurisdictions are Doing

- California has announced a 10-point plan that includes examining sentencing guidelines, revamping its probation and parole systems, and doubling funding for drug treatment, counseling, housing assistance and other anti-recidivism programs.
- Maricopa County is focusing on reducing inmates' length of stay; establishing a program to divert seriously mentally ill individuals who commit crimes to care other than jails; increasing funding for probation; and moving cases through the criminal justice system more quickly.
- New York City implemented Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs, which enable judges to sentence offenders to treatment, education and employment training in the community. Those sentenced remain under strict supervision, but not in prison facilities. Offenders can be incarcerated if they don't succeed in the programs.

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Recommendations

The experience of Philadelphia and other large jurisdictions make it clear that in order to slow or reverse the growth of prison systems' populations, criminal justice systems must take a number of steps, including the following:

- Provide alternatives to incarceration where appropriate;
Among the alternates that are used by jurisdictions are electronic monitoring, psychological treatment, and drug and alcohol counseling.
- Ensure that cases are processed through the criminal justice system as quickly as possible;
In addition to moving cases through the system quickly, the participants in the criminal justice system should seek ways to lessen the amount of time that non-violent offenders are incarcerated only because they cannot pay their bail.

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Recommendations

- Prepare inmates for reentry into society;
Jurisdictions, including Philadelphia, offer a wide variety of programs to inmates including high school equivalency courses, employment training and drug treatment. Steps should be taken to ensure that the programs Philadelphia offers are sufficient to meet the needs of its inmates.
- Enhance probation and parole;
Jurisdictions have taken a variety of actions including increasing the number of parole officers and ensuring that inmates are not returned to custody for technical violations of parole. Philadelphia should pursue both of these actions.
- Review sentencing to ensure that guidelines are appropriate and are followed.
Sentenced inmates should not be sent to Philadelphia facilities if they are convicted of offenses that would normally carry sentences that would require incarceration in a state facility.