

JUSTICE SECTOR

Justice Sector forecast

One-year prison population forecast, August 2015

This is a report on the latest short-term forecast of the prison population, breaking it down by gender and by status (remand or sentenced). The period covered is August 2015 to August 2016. It is expected to be published four times a year, in February, May, August and November.

The intent of the short-term forecast is to respond more immediately to developing trends in the criminal justice system. While every attempt is made to accommodate new legislation and operational change in the annual forecast, their impacts can develop on a shorter timescale than a year. A quarterly forecast will pick up these developments more quickly. It does mean that the forecast may vary significantly from quarter to quarter as the actual consequences of trends become clearer.

The forecast carries a degree of inaccuracy. While there is a degree of seasonality in the annual pattern, it does vary from year to year, and the forecast is unlikely to pick up the precise form that will occur this year. In addition, the impact of forthcoming changes may not agree with expectations.

Comparison with previous forecast

The new forecast compares with the previous short-term forecast (covering May 2015 to May 2016) as follows:

- Average remand population: new forecast: 2,295; previous forecast: 2,099, an increase of 196;
- Average sentenced population: new forecast: 6,809; previous forecast: 6,780, a fall of 86;
- Average total population: new forecast: 8,989; previous forecast: 8,879, a rise of 110.

The principal difference between the forecasts continues to lie in the rising remand population. The male remand population took a step upward in late 2014 and has remained at that level. The female remand population showed a similar step at the same time, then fell to a more usual level, but has since climbed back.

