



# The Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative: *Connecting Returning Prisoners to Work*

Presented at the American Enterprise Institute Conference  
*Can We Put Poor Men to Work?*

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# MPRI Overview [1 of 4]

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## ■ History

- Then-Attorney General Jennifer Granholm included prisoner reentry in her justice policy platform for her gubernatorial campaign. She is now in her second term.
- When elected, she appointed Dennis Schrantz as a deputy director of MDOC to design and implement the MPRI and a new administration was formed to focus on the transformative work.
- Planning began in 2003; PPA and the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency were selected as planning partners.
- Operations began in 2005

# MPRI Overview [2 of 4]

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The MPRI is evidence-based: work, housing, substance abuse, mental health, and cognitive issues all shown to make a difference in results

- Three phases

- Getting Ready: Assessment, creation of accountability plan, and in-prison programming
- Going Home: Prison in-reach links prison and community staff, planning for continuation of risk-reduction services and supervision
- Staying Home: Delivery of appropriate services, supervision and eventually, discharge

# MPRI Overview [3 of 4]

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- Changes in culture as well as operations
  - Collaborative case management inside prisons and in the field for community supervision.
  - Graduated sanctions and increased services used increasingly to reduce revocation
  - MDOC – both prison and field staff – closely linked with community service providers
- The MRPI is now statewide with 18 regions led by local steering teams and administrative agencies covering all of Michigan's 83 counties.

# MPRI Overview [4 of 4]

- Strong focus on employment readiness and employment
  - 14 of 18 local MPRI sites are housed in Michigan Works! Agencies, our federally funded One-Stop Career Centers.
  - In-prison employment readiness is being restructured.
- Close leadership collaboration between the MPRI and the Michigan Works! directors and Association.
- Design and oversight of the in-prison employment readiness efforts will be led by a new “Employability Council.” Members will include:
  - Michigan Works! Association
  - Michigan Community College Association
  - Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth – Workforce Transformation and Adult Education Divisions

# The Scale of the MPRI

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- 16,223 MPRI prisoners released through February of 2009
- All incoming prisoners, about 11,000 per year, are now receiving risk and needs assessment leading to individualized “Transition Accountability Plans.”
- Over time, everyone released will be part of the MPRI.
  - 12,000 prisoners per year
  - Level of supervision and services will vary according to levels of risk and need.

# Strengths of the MPRI

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- Focus is on complete system change, so effort can be taken fully up to scale with all prisoners and staff involved.
- Started with promise by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and led by MDOC Director Patricia L. Caruso and her top leadership team.
- System wide and increasing buy-in from MDOC staff.
- Driven by evidence of what reduces recidivism.
- State-level strategy, great flexibility for local implementation, clarity of design, and expectations.

# Challenges: Individual

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- Most have weak prior workforce connections, low employment readiness, and minimal job skills.
- Many do not see themselves as people who go to work, pay taxes, support a family, etc.
- Employers fear for the safety of their employees, families, customers, and property.

# Challenges: Environmental

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- Michigan's economy is in a deep recession.
  - Tough conditions statewide.
  - Most prisoners return to particularly stressed communities.
- Former prisoners compete with others for workforce resources as well as jobs.
- For those who do all that is asked but can't get a job, supported work will be necessary. Very expensive.

# Preliminary Evidence [1 of 3]

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- Employment:
  - Improvements in some communities.
  - Very difficult to untangle results for prisoners from effects of the economic recession.
  - Dual focus: working with employers while developing “social enterprises” designed specifically to employ former prisoners.
  - “Ready 4 Work Model” being used in several locations.
  - Use of federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars will help boost jobs for former prisoners.

*Difficult to measure change statewide.*

# Preliminary Evidence [2 of 3]

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- **Recidivism:** Compared to a 1998 cohort of prisoners with less serious characteristics, returns-to-prison are 29% below expected levels.  
Cannot yet show a causal relationship between the MPRI and the results, but this is the magnitude of improvement predicted by prior research.  
Comprehensive evaluation in development.
- **Prison population:** Down 3,500 from a peak of 51,000; more paroles, fewer returns and commitments.

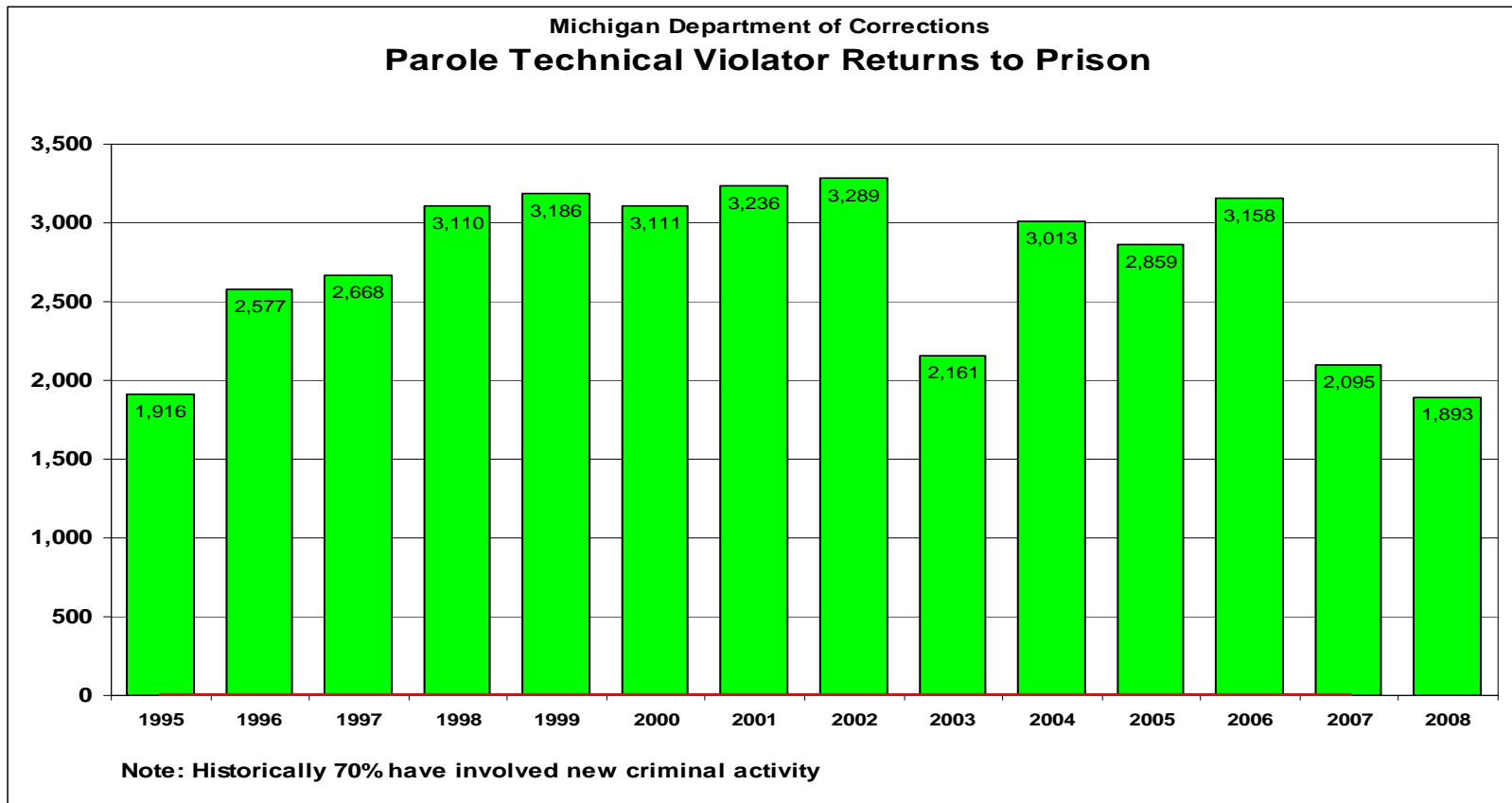
# Preliminary Evidence [3 of 3]

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- MPRI has provided improved resources to Parole Board in form of training and more sophisticated assessment instruments such as Vermont Assessment of Sex Offender Risk (VASOR).
- Annual parole revocations are down by 42% since record high year of 2002, despite a 40% increase in size of parole population.
- Successful MPRI process mitigates and controls risk. Raises Parole Board confidence in parole plans and outcomes, enabling higher parole approval rates.
- Improved parole guidelines are being developed to sustain and expand the impact of these improvements.

# PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE:

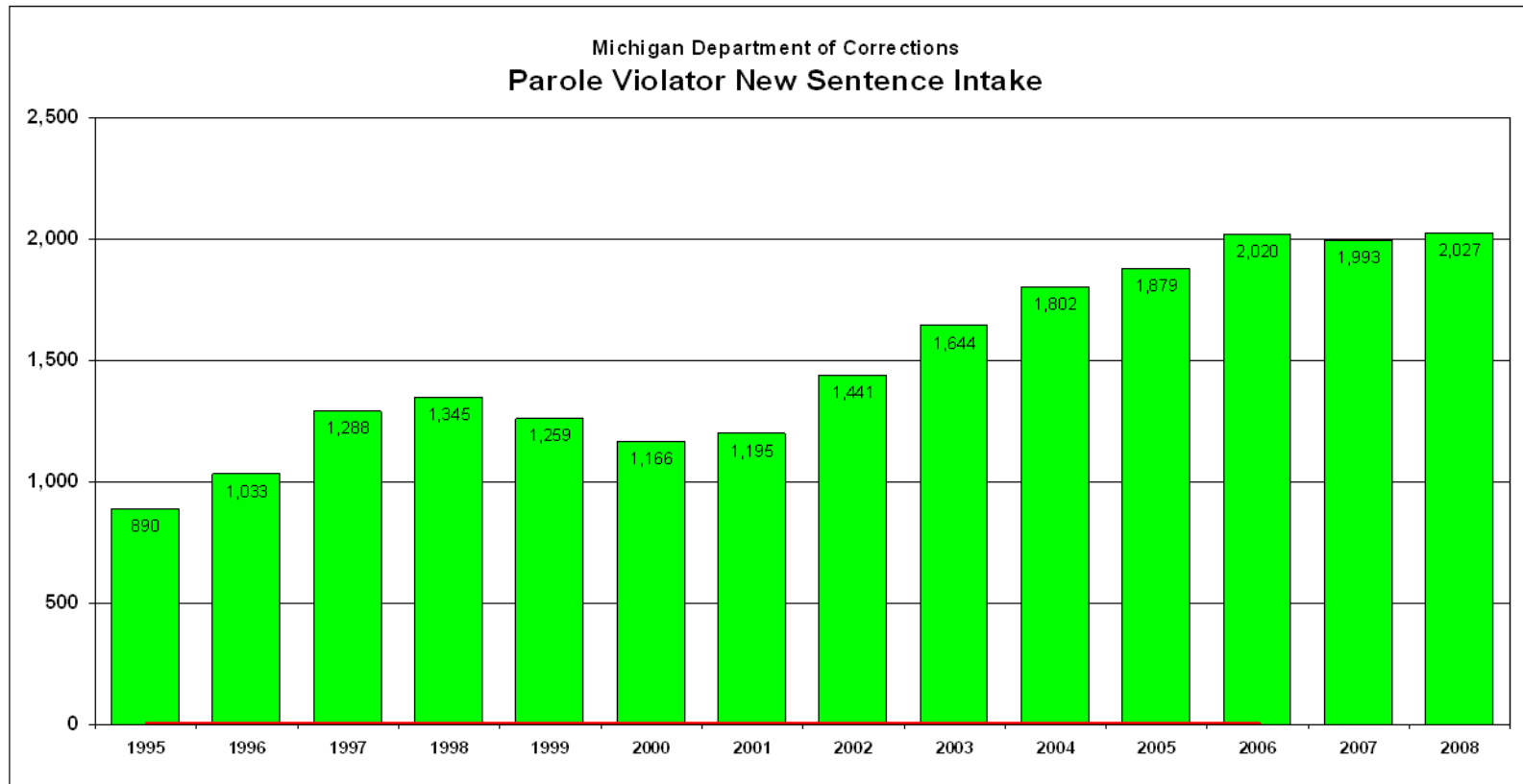
Parole violator *technical returns* to prison decreased to the lowest number since 1992 despite a record high parole population



*Alternative progressive sanctions a major contributor, along with collaborative case management.*

## PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE:

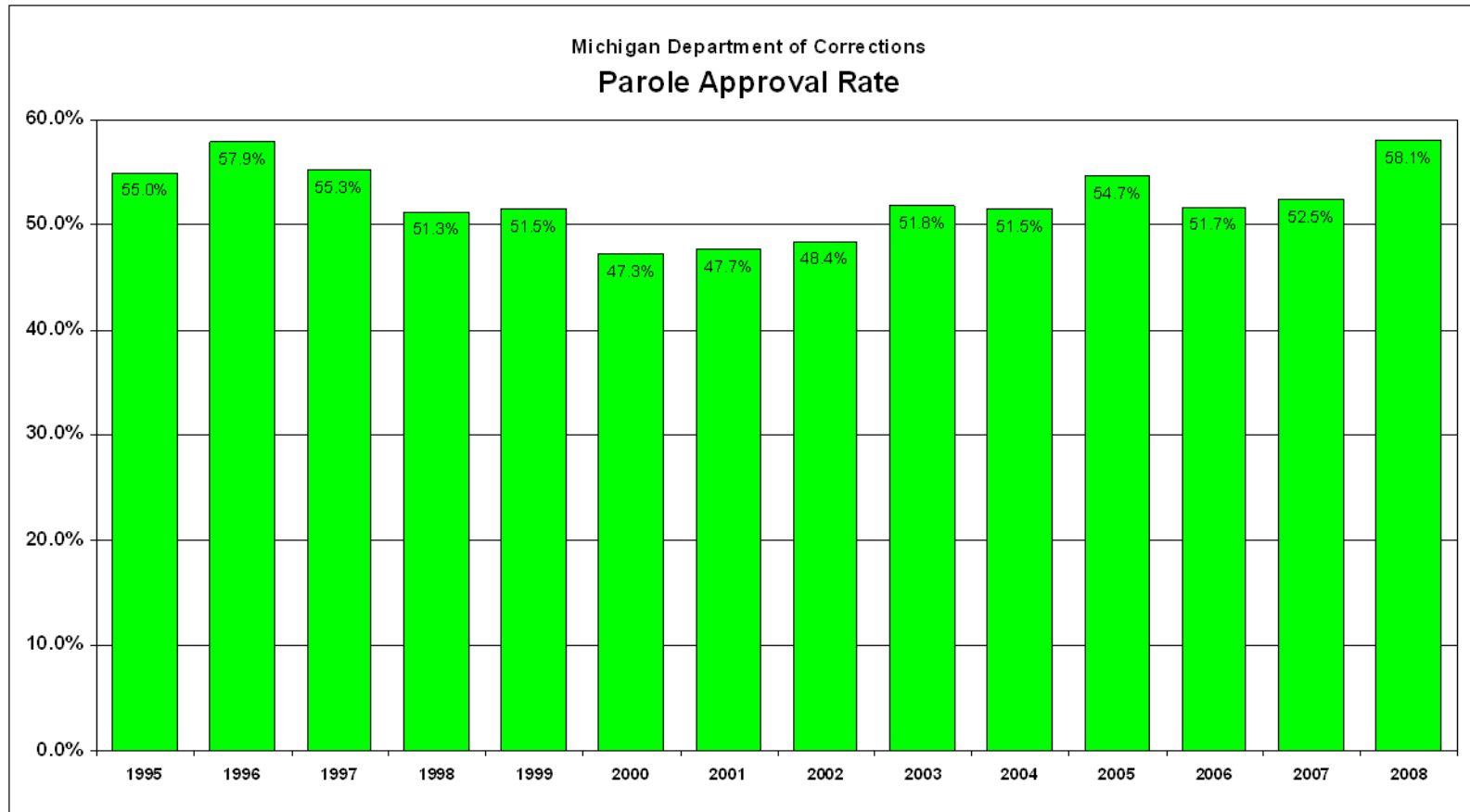
Parole violator *new sentence* returns have been stable for three years despite about 3,000 more offenders on parole



*Reasons still not clear: Lower rate could reflect changes in arrests or charges or actual improvements in parolee behavior.*

# PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE:

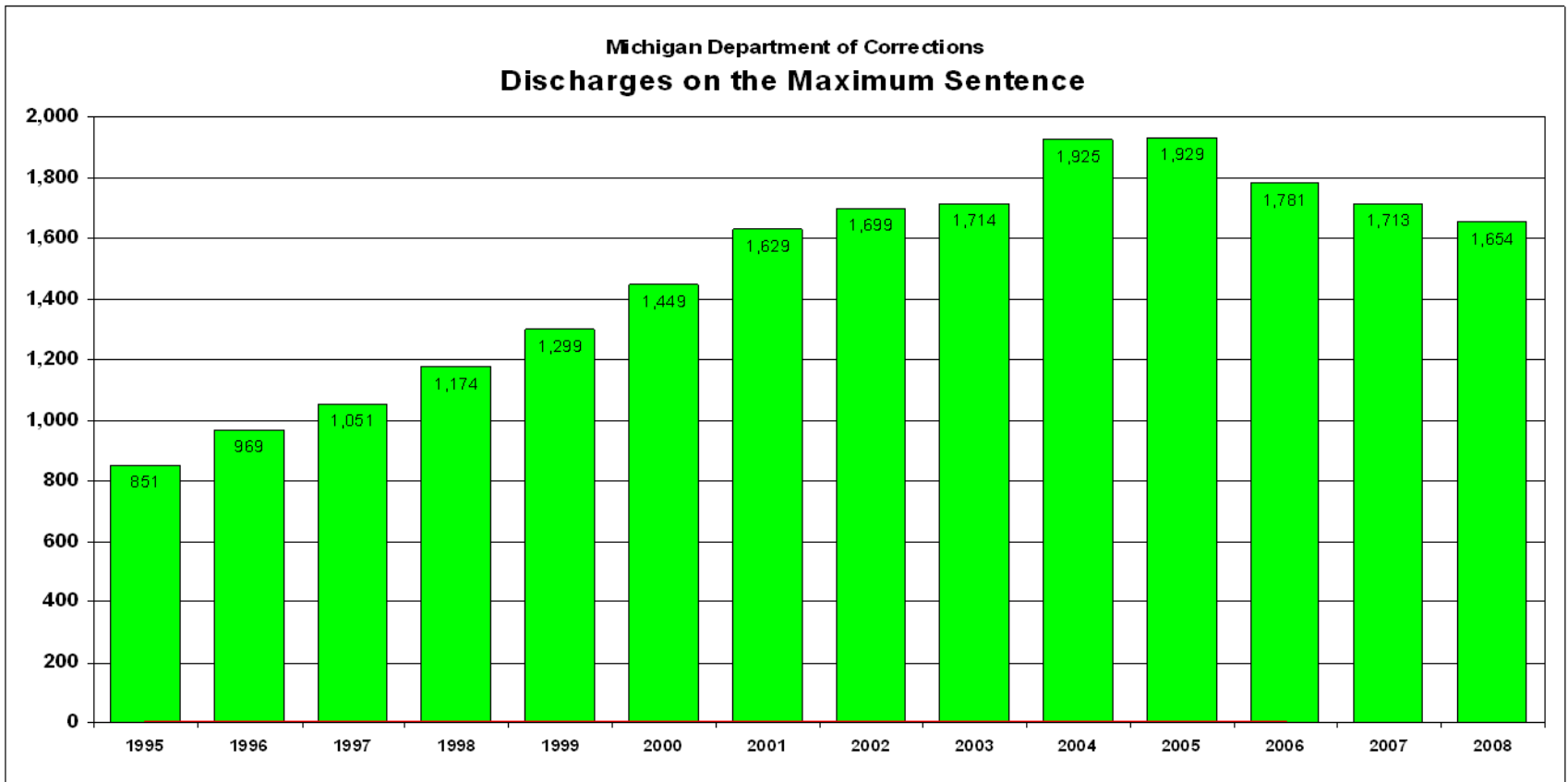
2008 parole approval rate at highest level since 1993



*Parole board appears more comfortable with current parole candidates.*

# PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE:

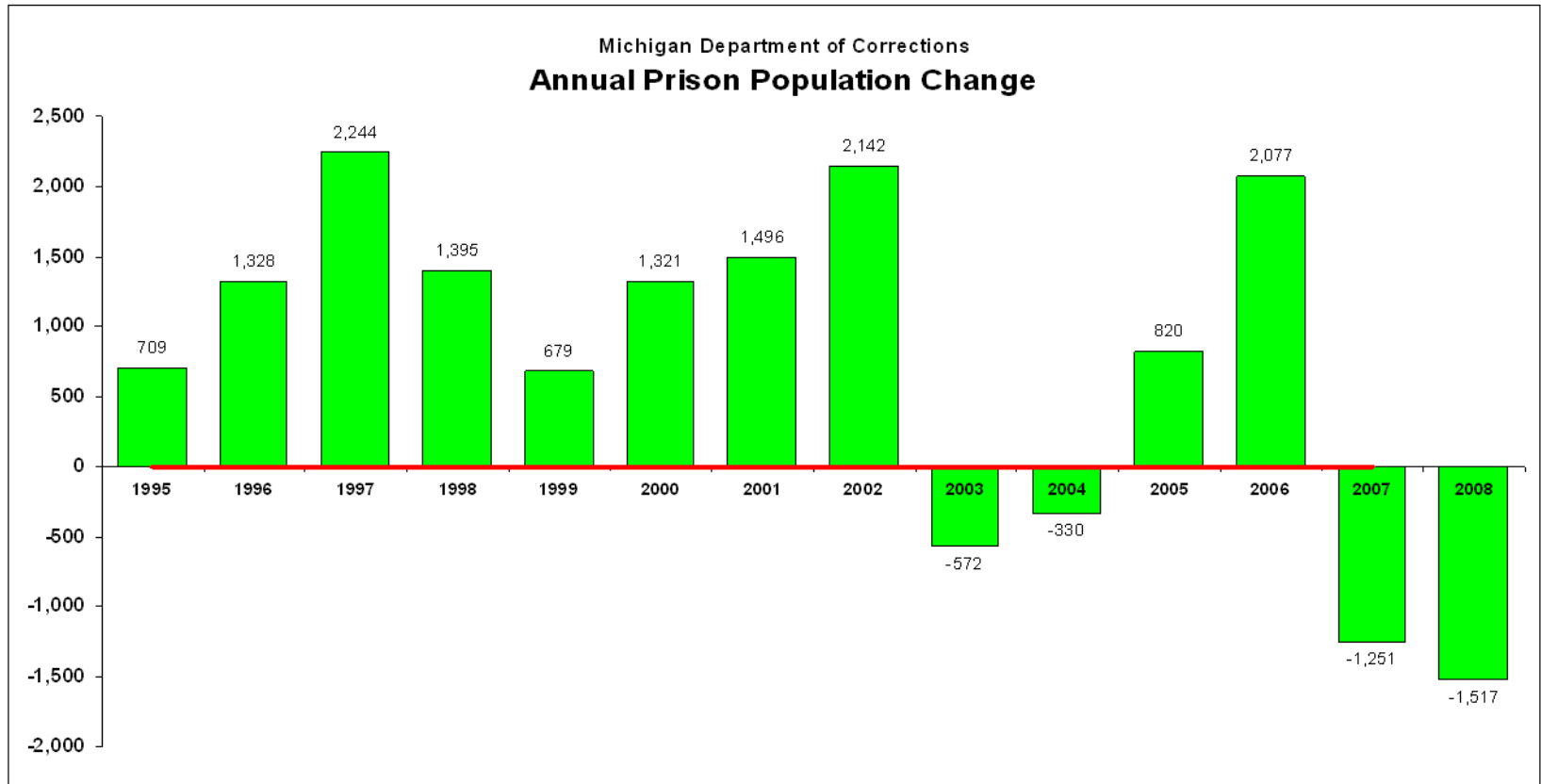
“Max-outs” have declined for three years – following more than a decade of annual increases – to the lowest level since 2001



*Fewer prisoners are released without supervision or a plan.*

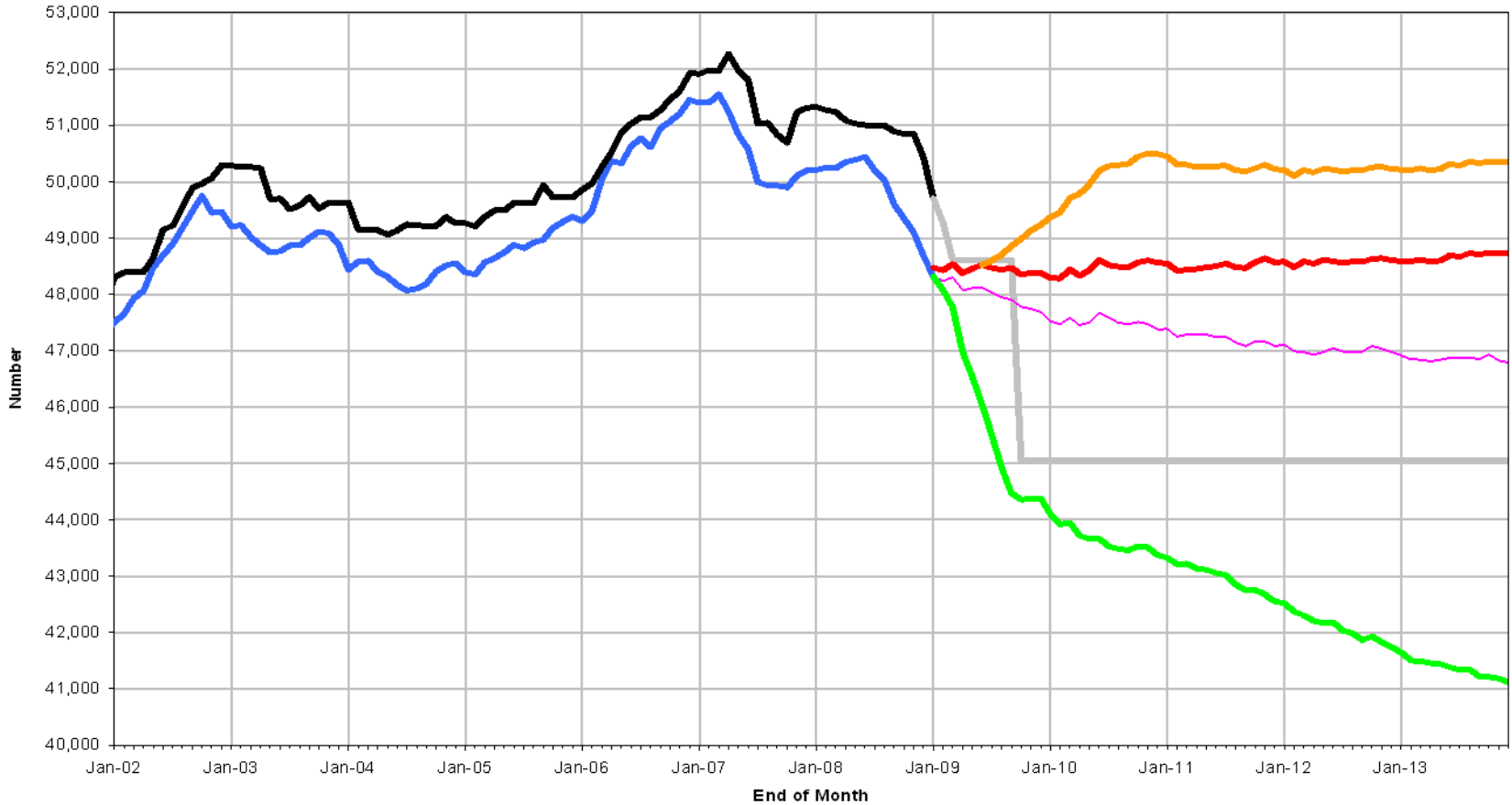
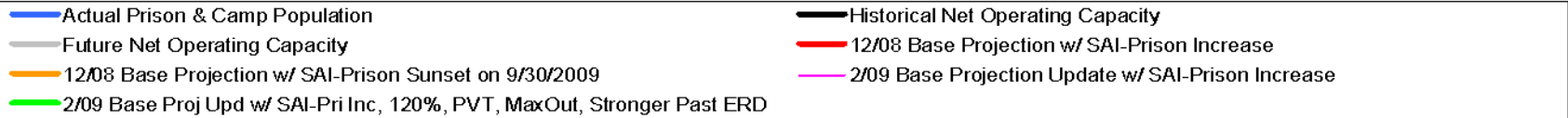
## IMPACT ON SYSTEM:

Population declined for two straight years for the first time since 2003-04.



*Decline of more than 2,700 inmates  
in two years is unprecedented.*

**UPDATED POPULATION PROJECTION: CSG Options & Stronger Past ERD Reduction**



*A decline of 10,000 would save \$300+ million per year.*



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