

## CA reduces prison population by thousands, almost meets Supreme Court target

California's prison system has been shedding an average of 933 inmates a week since the governor's realignment plan took effect this fall, and the state almost hit a court-mandated goal to reduce the population to 133,000 inmates by Dec. 27.

As of today, the state's prisons held 134,804 inmates — just 1,800 short of the target and far closer to that goal than many expected.

California prison officials announced the numbers Tuesday and said they are in the midst of preparing a report, due by Jan. 10, that details the progress made toward meeting the court-ordered reductions.

The U.S. Supreme Court [ruled in May](#) that California must obey a lower court order to reduce its prison population, agreeing with federal judges who had found that overcrowding was the main cause of “grossly inadequate provision of medical and mental health care.” In the 5-4 ruling, the high court agreed that the prison system — which has held nearly twice its designed capacity for more than a decade — should cut its population to [110,000 by spring of 2013. The court also set a series of benchmarks for state officials to reach before then.](#)

While state officials did not meet the first target — 167 percent of designed capacity, or 133,000 inmates — by Dec. 27, they got pretty close. In a short statement announcing the numbers, prison officials appeared to credit Gov. Jerry Brown's [realignment plan](#) for the progress. The plan calls for most lower-level and nonviolent offenders to serve their prison sentences in local jails and report to county probation departments instead of the state parole agency upon release. In the written statement, prison officials said the plan — instituted Oct. 1 — has resulted in state prisons taking in an average of 933 fewer inmates per week.

The progress puts the state exactly where it said it would be [in an August court filing](#). In that filing, state officials predicted they would miss the 167 percent by two percentage points (the system is now at 169.2 percent of capacity) but would hit the next goal, a reduction to 155 percent, or 124,000 inmates, by June 27.