

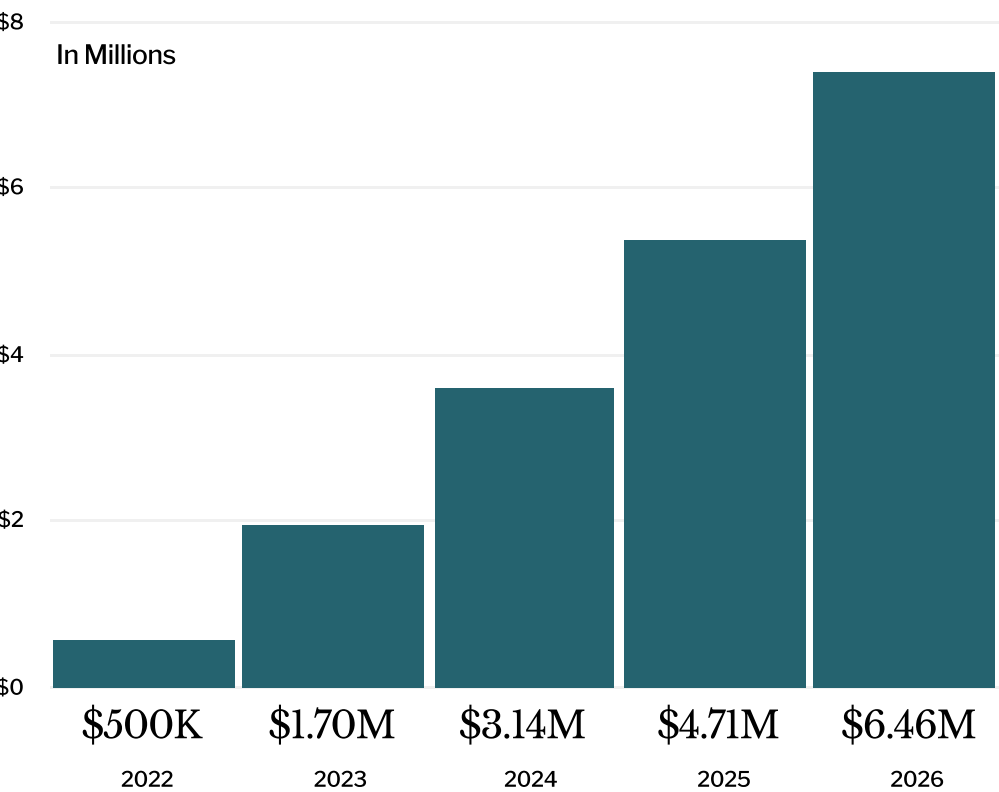
Increased Parole Eligibility in South Carolina

5-year impact in South Carolina

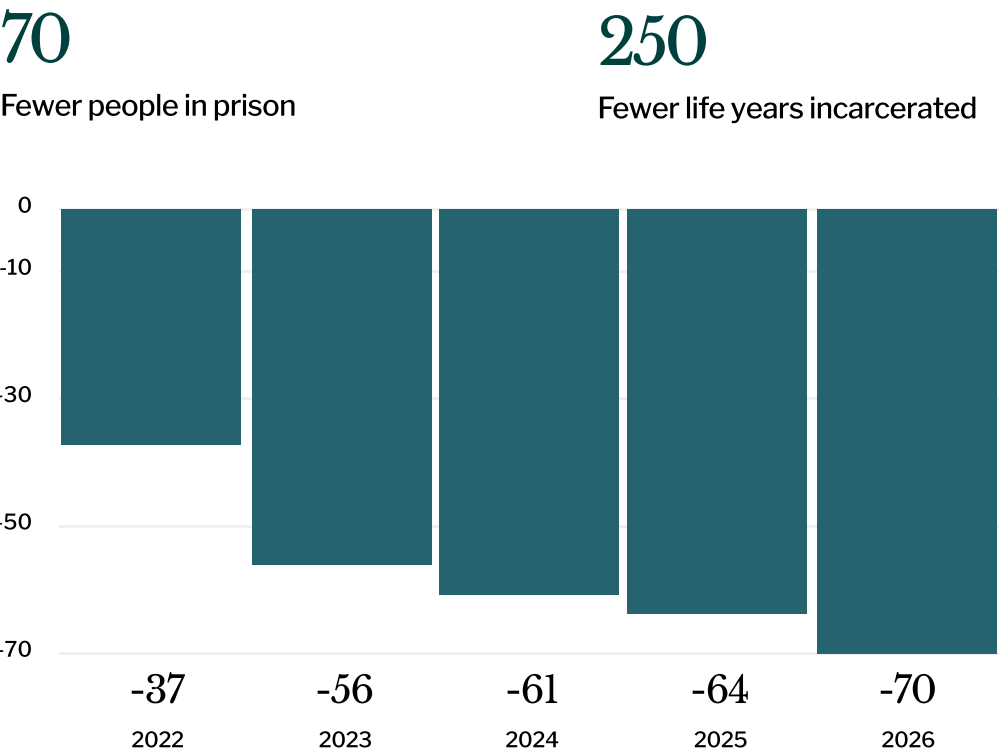
By allowing individuals convicted of most drug offenses to become parole eligible after serving 65% of their sentence (rather than 85%), the state of South Carolina could avoid \$6.46M in costs, reduce the prison population by 70, and give back 250 life years over the next 5 years.

Projected impacts are calculated using the average cost to incarcerate one individual of \$25,836 per year and current parole grant rates.

Cumulative cost avoidance of incarceration



Prison population change



The opportunity

Between 1983 and 2009, South Carolina’s prison population grew from 9,000 to more than 25,000, resulting in an increase in costs associated with incarceration from \$64 million to \$394 million. During the same time period, there was a sharp increase in people sent to prison for drug and property crimes. The share of people incarcerated for drug offenses went from 6% in 1980 to 20% in 2009. After significant parole and probation reforms in 2010, South Carolina saw lower prison populations, lower costs, and lower recidivism rates, saving taxpayers more than \$400 million.

15% of people

incarcerated in South Carolina have drug crimes as their most serious offense (March, 2021)

\$515,000,000

annual cost of South Carolina’s Department of Corrections (2019-2020 budget)

South Carolina’s prison population remains over 17,000 (March, 2021), resulting in a state DOC budget of over \$515M (2019-2020 budget). Of that population, 15% have drug crimes as their most serious offense. The proposed bill would allow those eligible for parole to request a parole board hearing after serving 65% of their sentence, rather than 85%, if they’ve completed rehabilitative or educational programming and have no major disciplinary infractions.

Similar policies in other states

West Virginia

In 2020, West Virginia expanded parole eligibility for those convicted of certain non-violent crimes by allowing them to become automatically eligible for release once they serve their minimum prison sentence. The bill passed with near-unanimous consent in both the House and Senate. The state’s Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation estimated that between 1,000 and 1,600 individuals could be released under parole reform and this could save the state up to \$49 million in just one year.

Texas

In Texas, people in prison for a majority of offenses are eligible for parole once their time served (including good conduct time) equals 25% of their sentence has been completed or 15 years, whichever comes sooner. Even with one of the most expansive parole eligibility policies in the country, the state has seen violent crime rates decline by 15% and property crime rates decline by 40% between 2009 and 2019.