

The Michigan Prison System in Context: a Nine-State Comparison

	Corrections as Percent of Total 2006 Expenditures ¹	2007 State Population ²	Rank	2006 Prison Population ³	Rank	2006 Crime Rate Per 100,000 ⁴		2006 Incarceration Rate Per 100,000 ⁵	2005 Cost Per Inmate ⁶
						Property	Violent		
Illinois	2.6	12,852,548	5	45,106	8	3,020	542	350	\$21,622
Indiana	3.1	6,345,289	15	26,091	18	3,052	315	411	\$21,531
Michigan	5.2	10,071,822	8	51,577	6	3,213	562	511	\$28,743
Minnesota	1.7	5,197,621	21	9,108	32	3,080	312	176	\$29,260
New Jersey	3.6	8,685,920	11	27,371	16	2,292	352	313	\$28,000
New York	2.7	19,297,729	3	63,315	4	2,053	435	326	\$42,202
Ohio	3.7	11,466,917	7	49,166	7	3,679	350	428	\$31,029
Pennsylvania	3.5	12,432,792	6	44,397	9	2,444	439	353	\$31,029
Wisconsin	3.3	5,601,640	20	23,431	21	2,818	284	393	\$28,932

1. *Corrections Expenditures as a Percent of Total Expenditures*, National Association of State Budget Officers, 2006 State Expenditure Report, page 59.
2. U.S. Census Bureau –July 2007 population estimates, <http://www.census.gov/popest/states/NST-pop-chg.html>.
3. *Prisoners in 2006*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p06.pdf>.
4. *Crime in the United States by State, 2006*, US Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2006/offenses/standard_links/state.html.
5. *Prisoners in 2006*, note 3, above.
6. *Public Spending, Forecasting America's Prison Population 2007 – 2011*, Pew Charitable Trust, (June 2007) page 33.

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Corrections spending varies widely from state-to-state as the result of differing policy choices about who goes to prison and how long they stay.

For the eight states other than Michigan, the average proportion of all state spending that was attributable to corrections was 3.0%. The national average in 2006 was 3.4%. At 5.2%, Michigan had the highest proportion of corrections spending in the nation. While a difference of one or two percent does not sound like much, Michigan's total budget in 2006 was more than \$41.5 billion. If corrections' share had been 3.7%, the state would have saved \$623 million.

Also noteworthy is the relationship between state population rank and prison population rank. Only Ohio has identical rankings for both. For seven states, the prison population ranking is lower. That is, the relative size of the prison system is less than would be expected from the size of the population. Only in Michigan is the situation reversed. While Michigan is the eighth largest state in total population, it has the sixth largest prison system.

The nine-state data indicate that Michigan's higher rate of incarceration, not its cost per prisoner, is the primary reason why its corrections spending is so high. At 511 prisoners per 100,000 citizens, Michigan's incarceration rate is substantially above that of Ohio, the next highest, at 428. Michigan's rate is 55% higher than that of New Jersey and New York.

The rank ordering of crime rates and incarceration rates shown below indicates there is no apparent correlation between either violent or property crime rates and the extent of incarceration.

	RANK ORDER		
	<u>Violent Crime</u>	<u>Property Crime</u>	<u>Incarceration Rate</u>
Illinois	2	5	6
Indiana	7	4	3
Michigan	1	2	1
Minnesota	8	3	9
New Jersey	5	8	8
New York	4	9	7
Ohio	6	1	2
Pennsylvania	3	7	5
Wisconsin	9	6	4

If high incarceration rates caused crime to decline, one would expect a state with a high incarceration rate to have a relatively low violent crime rate. Ohio appears to fit this pattern. However, Michigan has by far the highest incarceration rate and still has a very high rate of violent crime. Conversely, Minnesota has a very low violent crime rate even though it has an extremely low incarceration rate.

If high violent crime rates cause incarceration, one would expect all states with high crime to have high rates of imprisonment. However, Illinois' violent crime rate is virtually identical to Michigan's but its incarceration rate is much lower. In fact, New Jersey, New York and Illinois have incarceration rates within 37 points of each other, but their violent crime rates range from 352 to 435 to 542.

Thus, the data does not support either the assumption that more incarceration drives crime rates down or that higher incarceration rates are the result of more crime.