

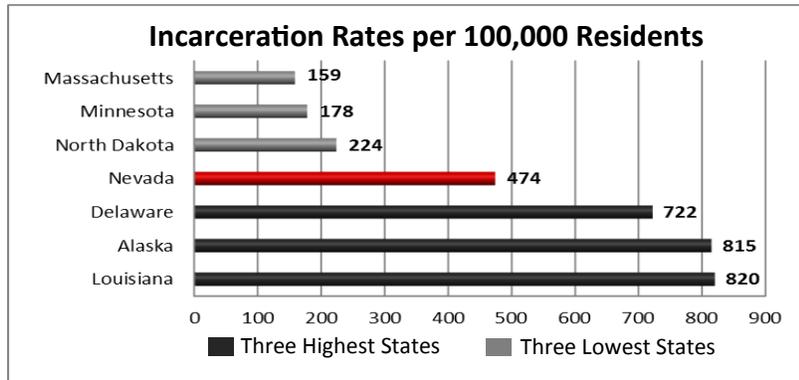
Incarceration Costs in Nevada: 2010-2015

By Jaelyn Parker Keen

Nevada's total prison expenditure for 2015 was about \$244 million. When adjusted by the population of nearly 2.9 million residents, it cost about \$85 per state resident to fund Nevada's prison system. Compared to other states, Nevada's per capita expenditure ranks the 7th lowest among the 45 states with available data.

Key Stats

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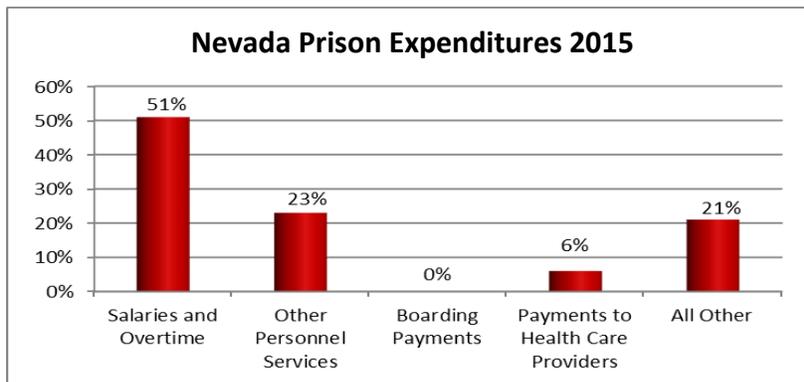


Source: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017

Nevada had 13,665 inmates in state prisons in 2015.

Nearly 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States in federal and state prisons and county jails. The national average cost of housing a prison inmate is about \$33,000 per year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015; Vera Institute of Justice, 2017).

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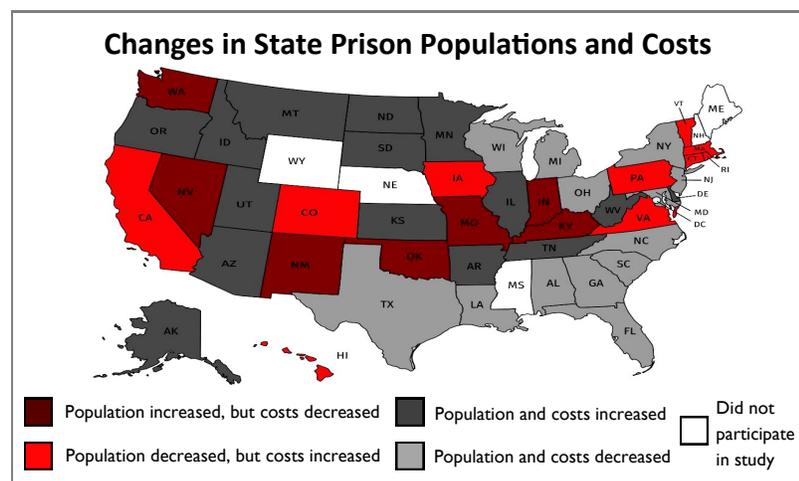


Source: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017

Salaries and overtime pay account for about half of the yearly expenditures for corrections in Nevada.

Salary increases and rising healthcare expenditures are among the factors that contribute to a state's increase in prison costs. In 2015, Nevada's total prison expenditures were about \$244 million.

3



Source: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017

Between 2010 and 2015 state prison populations and expenditures have decreased slightly. In Nevada, spending decreased by 15%, but population increased by 8%.

Nevada decreased overall prison spending in recent years, but this decrease presents a potential concern for staff and inmate safety due to the increasing size of the prison population.

Incarceration Trends 2010-2015

Nearly 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States in federal and state prisons and county jails. The national average cost of housing a prison inmate is about \$33,000 per year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015; Vera Institute of Justice, 2017).

Efforts have been made nationally to cut back on the cost of confinement, including increasing the utilization of diversion programs (i.e. drug courts or parole) and decreasing the number of employees. Despite various efforts to control costs, most states increased their prison spending between 2010 and 2015 (Vera Institute of Justice, 2017). A consequence of the increased spending within departments of corrections is less funding for other criminal justice institutions (i.e., policing, courts).

This *Stat Sheet* describes the spending trends in Nevada's prisons and compares them with national averages. It examines the change in prison population and prison spending trends from 2010 to 2015 and further breaks down the allocation of funds within the prison system.

Prison Spending Trends 2010-2015

Given the large differences in states' residential populations, total prison expenditures vary widely across states. At one extreme, a state rated among the lowest in its residential population (North Dakota) spends about \$65 million per year in total prison costs, whereas California, one of the most populous states, spends more than \$8 billion a year in this area (Vera Institute of Justice, 2017).

Nevada's total prison expenditures for 2015 were about \$244 million. When adjusted by the population of 2.9 million residents, it cost about \$85 per state resident to fund Nevada's prison system. Compared to other states, Nevada per capita expenditure ranks the 7th lowest among the 45 states with available data.

The total U.S. prison population decreased slightly (4%) between 2010 and 2015, and a similar decline (1%) occurred in total prison costs over this time period (Vera Institute of Justice, 2017).



Nevada's total prison population increased by over 1,000 inmates (i.e., an 8% rise) between 2010 and 2015, but total prison costs decreased by about \$42 million (i.e., 15% decline).

Several factors can contribute to changes in a state's prison expenditures. For example, states have reduced their prison cost by decreasing the number of employees and incarcerated people, while states have increased their prison costs by salary increases and rising healthcare expenditures (Vera Institute of Justice, 2017). Between 2010 and 2015, Nevada's decrease in prison spending (despite increases in its prison population) can be attributed to (1) a 4% decline in the number of prison employees, (2) policies requiring state employees to take one unpaid furlough day per month, and (3) a decline in spending on employee fringe benefits (Vera Institute of Justice, 2017). Budget cuts can increase a concern for facility safety and correctional effectiveness, because there may be fewer resources to meet the demands of growing facilities. Low staff-to-inmate ratios, for example, can result in compromised safety of staff and inmates.

For references in this Stat Sheet, see the CCJP website: www.unlv.edu/CCJP

Stat Sheets are produced by the Center for Crime and Justice Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The Center is housed in the Department of Criminal Justice, which is located in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. *Stat Sheets* provide summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada and other states.