

State public safety spending needs re-evaluation to reduce prison population

February 4 2010

State policymakers must evaluate spending priorities involving public safety, including programs that assist former inmates with their re-entry into society, to reduce Michigan's prison population, a new research at the University of Michigan indicates.

Focusing on state programs designed to reduce recidivism rates, such as the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative and the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, is one way to deter crime and ensure [public safety](#), the research says.

High rates of offenders returning to [prison](#) and long prison stays both contribute to Michigan's incarceration rate, according to a new research brief on prison population and corrections expenditures by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, which is located in the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

The center analyzed prison data from the 1960s to 2008. Michigan made substantial gains in crime reduction beginning in the mid-1980s, going from an index crime rate above that of neighboring states and higher than national index crime rate to a rate that is lower than most neighboring states and is lower than the national rate.

Recently, the ratio of inmates to the state population has stabilized, and even declined in some years, fluctuating around 500 prisoners per 100,000 residents, but Michigan's incarceration rate is still high relative to neighboring states.

Declines in the index crime rate are mainly attributed to reductions in property crime offenses, such as burglary, larceny, and motor-vehicle theft.

However, the violent crime rate in Michigan - which includes murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault - remains higher than that in most neighboring states and the national rate.

A main component of the current reform is the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI). The MPRI focuses on identifying offenders' risks and needs while in prison, upon reentry into the community, and during initial the parole period. While it is too early to definitively report on the effectiveness of the MPRI, CLOSUP officials say descriptive data suggest it may have positive effects, reducing the number of offenders returning to prison and slowing the growth of the prison population.

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: State public safety spending needs re-evaluation to reduce prison population (2010, February 4) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-02-state-safety-re-evaluation-prison-population.html>

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