



Increasing Share of Scarce Resources Spent on Corrections Neighboring States Spend Far Less than Wisconsin on Corrections

Spending on corrections is taking up an increasingly large share of the state budget. The result: fewer resources available for initiatives that promote the well-being of our communities and invest in the future.

Bringing our expenditures on corrections in line with those in nearby states represents both a challenge and an opportunity, one that could free up millions of dollars to devote to projects that would have a better rate of return in tackling our economy and human capital.

About the Data

Wisconsin General Purpose Revenue (GPR) spending over the last decade comes from Wisconsin Department of Administration publications, and has been adjusted for inflation.

State and local government spending on corrections comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and represents spending figures for fiscal year 2008, the most recent year available.

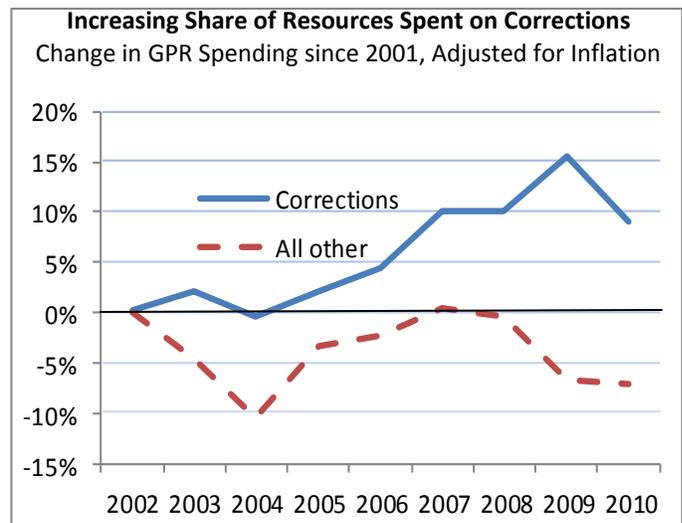
Figures on imprisonment rates by state are from a Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics.

Share of Budget Spent on Corrections Climbs

Corrections spending by the state is up, even as all other spending by the state is down. From 2001 to 2010, state GPR spending on corrections has increased 9.1 percent, or \$90 million in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Over the same period, state spending on programs other than corrections *decreased* by 7.2 percent, as shown in the chart. This means state spending on programs other than corrections decreased by more

than \$900 million dollars in 2010 compared to 2001, in inflation-adjusted dollars.



Other programs, many of which make significant contributions to Wisconsin's economic growth, saw steep cuts in funding over the same period. While corrections spending shot up nine percent, state spending on the University of Wisconsin System decreased more than 20 percent, as shown in Table 1. State support for K-12 schools declined by 6.3 percent.

**Table 1: Changes in State Spending
2001-2010, Adjusted for Inflation**

Program	% Change
Corrections	+9.1%
Aid to cities & counties (Shared Revenue)	-35.3%
UW System	-20.3%
K-12 Schools	-6.3%

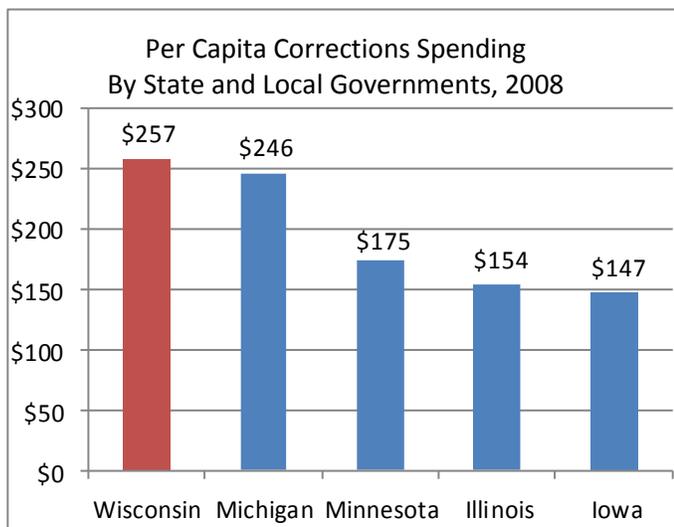
One result of the growth in corrections spending is that Wisconsin is not always able to make investments in other areas necessary to secure the state's economic future. The increase in spending on corrections isn't solely responsible for the budget deficit, but it does make it harder to devote resources to other important initiatives.

Neighboring States Spend Far Less than WI

If we were able to limit Wisconsin's corrections spending to the same level as some of our neighboring states, we would be able to make significant investments in areas of our state with better returns for our economy.

Wisconsin state and local government spends more on corrections per capita than all our neighboring states — in some cases, more than half again as much. (When making comparisons among states, it's useful to combine state and local government spending, since various duties are performed at different levels of government in different states.)

For example, on a per capita basis, Wisconsin state and local governments spent 47 percent more on corrections than those governments do in Minnesota in 2008, and 75 percent more than Iowa. The chart below shows a comparison.



If Wisconsin spent the same amount on corrections per capita that Minnesota did, our state and local governments would spend \$463 million less on corrections each year. To put that in perspective,

that's more than the amount Wisconsin state government and local governments spent on housing and community development in 2008.

One of the reasons Wisconsin spends more per capita on corrections than our neighboring states is that Wisconsin imprisons more people per capita than all our neighboring states except Michigan.

Wisconsin imprisons 369 people per 100,000 residents, as shown in Table 2. That is nearly twice the rate of Minnesota, which imprisons just 189 people per 100,000. Wisconsin's violent crime rate is similar to that in Minnesota and Iowa, and is much lower than that of Michigan and Illinois.

State	Rate
Michigan	457
Wisconsin	369
Illinois	349
Iowa	292
Minnesota	189

Increased Corrections Spending Comes at a Cost

Corrections spending is one of the few areas of state spending that has increased over the last decade. Meanwhile, the state has reduced or delayed investments in other areas of the state's economy that are important to creating educational opportunities and jobs.

Given that Wisconsin has a higher rate of imprisonment than our neighboring states, it shouldn't come as a surprise that Wisconsin has higher correction costs. But that means reining in corrections spending will be a challenge, one that requires structural changes to the corrections programs. Meanwhile, the Legislature has moved to repeal early release for low-risk prisoners, which has the potential to increase costs.

At a time when the state has limited ability to devote resources to programs that have proven track records of creating jobs, the state needs to take a hard look at controlling corrections spending.