

Comparing Massachusetts and National Population Trends

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Prepared by:

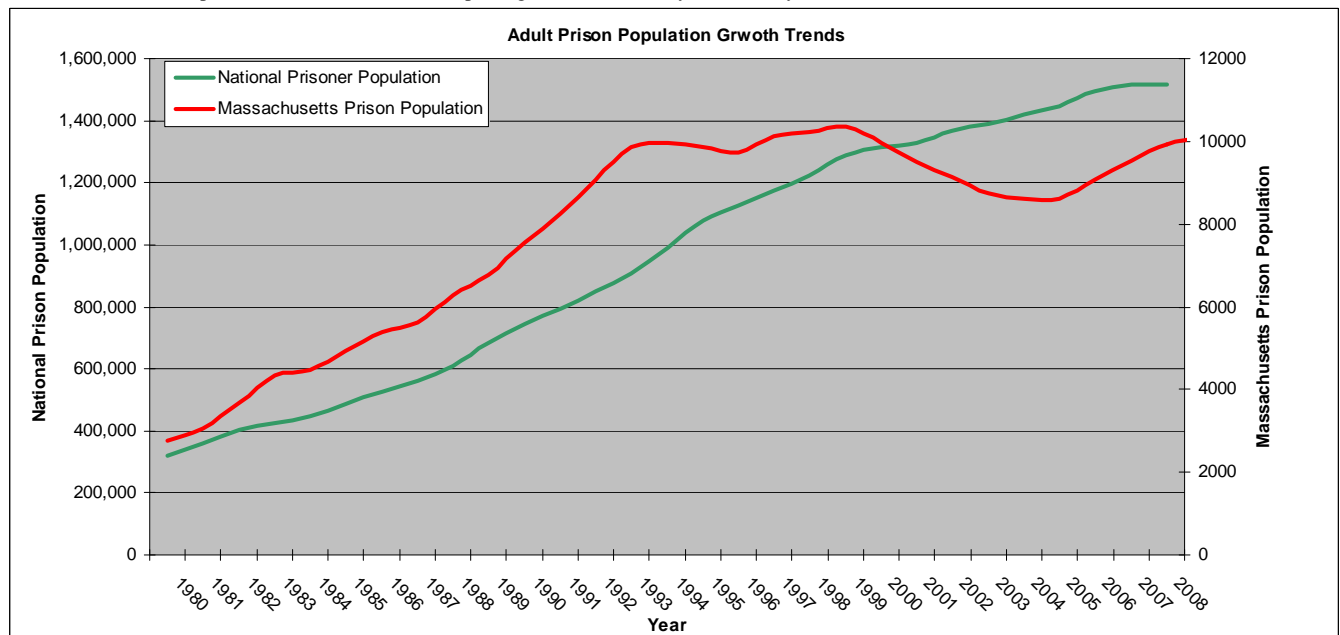
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Population Trends

The Massachusetts adult custody prison population includes criminally sentenced inmates held in Massachusetts Department of Correction facilities. This population does not include criminally sentenced DOC inmates serving time in county houses of correction, other states' facilities, or federal facilities. Between 1980 and 2008, the Massachusetts custody prison population more than tripled, increasing from 2,754 to 9,930 people. The population hit an all time high of 10,356 in 1999. Like the national prison population, the state population was on a steady rise from 1980 to 1994. It declined slightly in the mid-1990's and then continued to increase from 1997 to 1999. From 1999 to 2005 the population steadily declined, inversely to the national population trend, and then began rising again from 2006-2008 (Figure 1). National Statistics for the years 2009-2010 are not available to date, however in Massachusetts the population has risen above the ten thousand mark with a population of 10,094 in 2009 and 10,056 in 2010.

Figure 1. U.S. and Massachusetts Adult Prison Populations, 1980-2008

*All Prison Populations are based on data snapshot gathered on January 1st of each year.

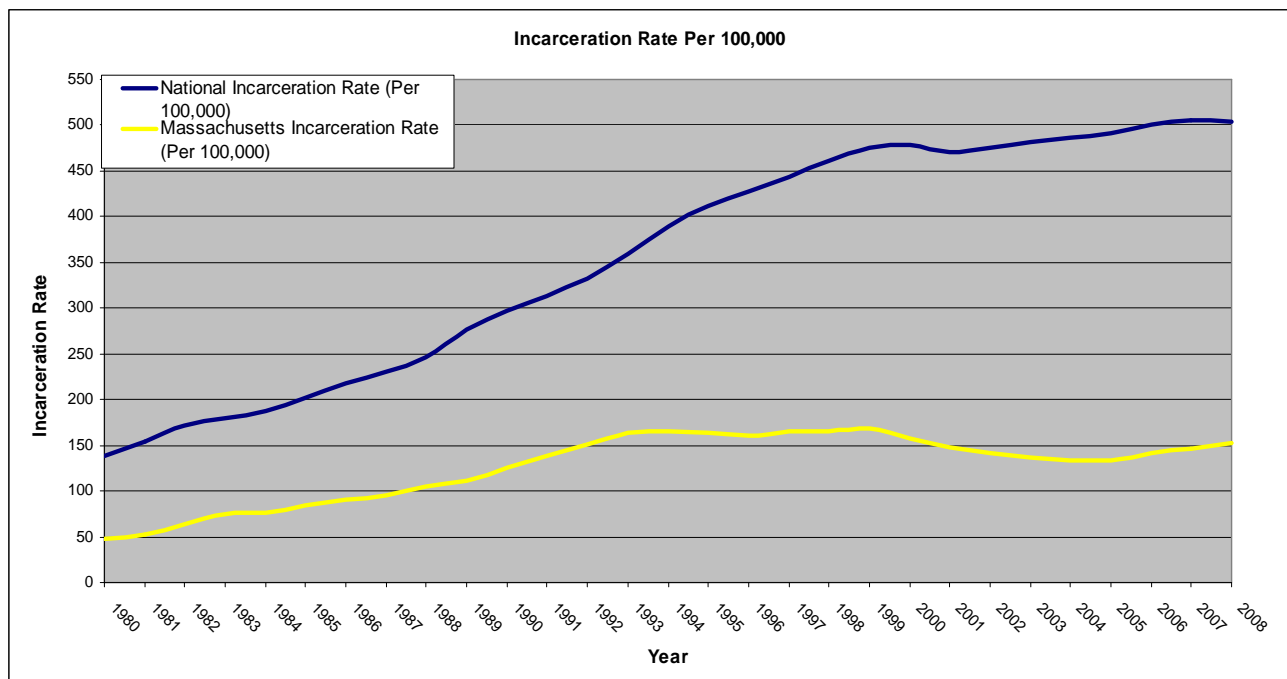


Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Massachusetts Department of Correction, National Prisoner Statistics

As the prison population in Massachusetts grew, so too did the adult incarceration rate—the number of people incarcerated per 100,000 residents (Figure 2). The per capita rate of imprisonment in Massachusetts rose from 48 to 153 per 100,000 residents between 1980 and 2008. The incarceration rate per 100,000 in Massachusetts steadily rose from 1980 to 1993. The rate began to plateau from 1993 to 1999, when it began to decrease from 1999 to 2003, only to begin to increase again from 2005 to 2008. 2009 is not displayed because national incarceration rates beyond 2008 are not yet available to date, however in Massachusetts the rate remains equal to the 2008 rate of 153. When comparing the Massachusetts prison incarceration rate to National incarceration rate it is important to note Massachusetts only includes criminally sentenced inmates held in Massachusetts Department of Correction facilities and excludes other populations, such as county inmates, which some other states may include.

Figure 2. Adult Prison Incarceration Rate per 100,000 Residents, United States and Massachusetts, 1980-1998

*National and State Resident Populations Estimates provided by US Census Bureau Historical Annual Population Estimates from 1980-2008.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Massachusetts Department of Correction

This Research Brief was written and prepared by Garrett Diemer, Northeastern University Coop Student. Any comments or questions can be addressed by e-mail: Research@doc.state.ma.us. Copies of publications from the Office of Strategic Planning & Research can be found on www.mass.gov/doc.