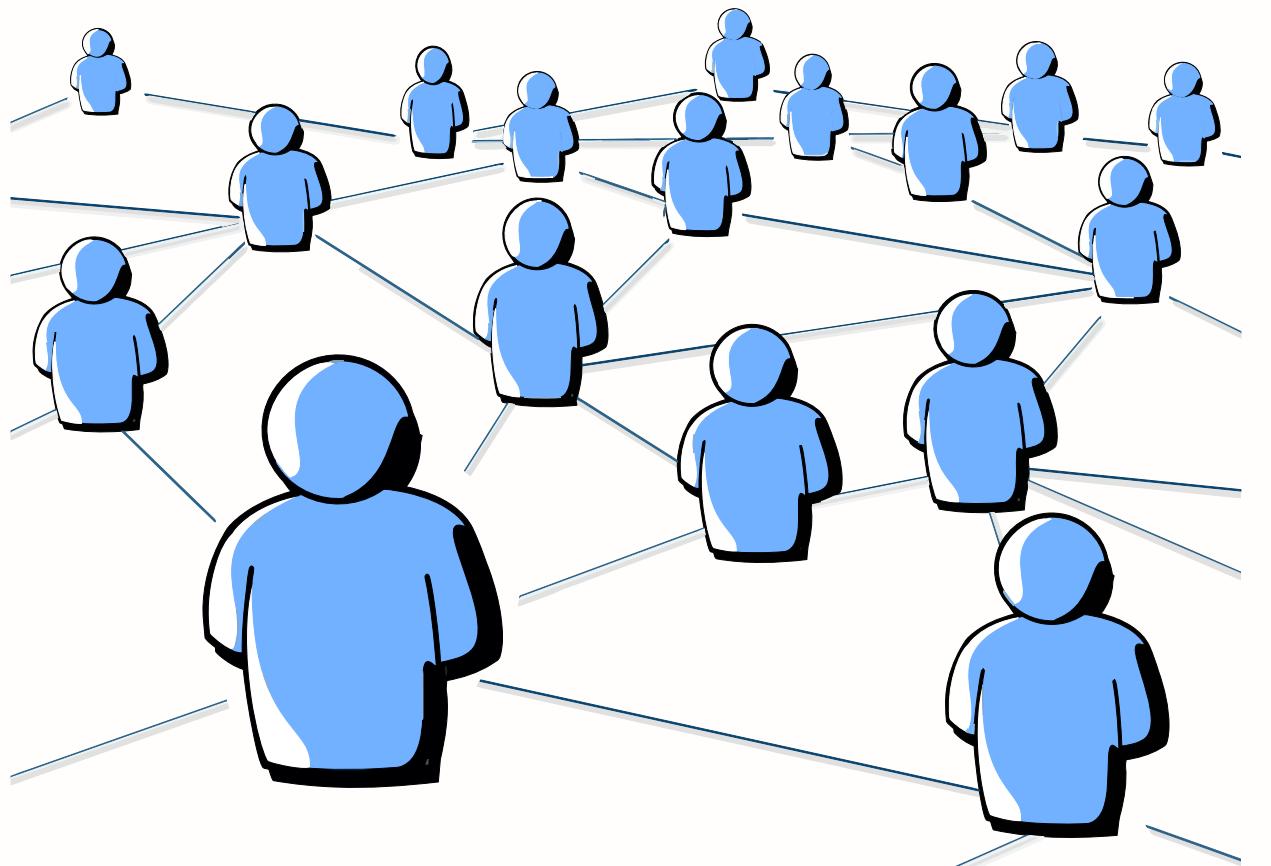




Increasing gate money for former Maine inmates

Amanda M. Rice



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What is gate money?

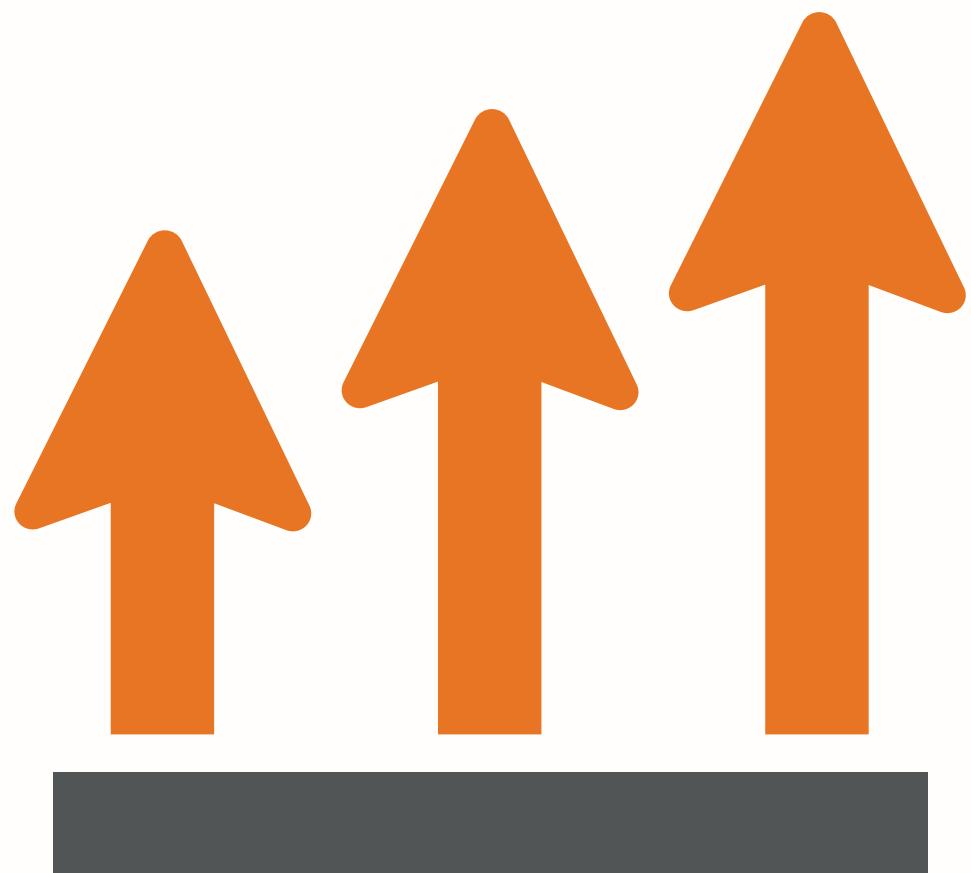
“

money paid to a prisoner
upon their release

Decreasing Recidivism Rates Through Increasing Gate Money to Returning Citizens

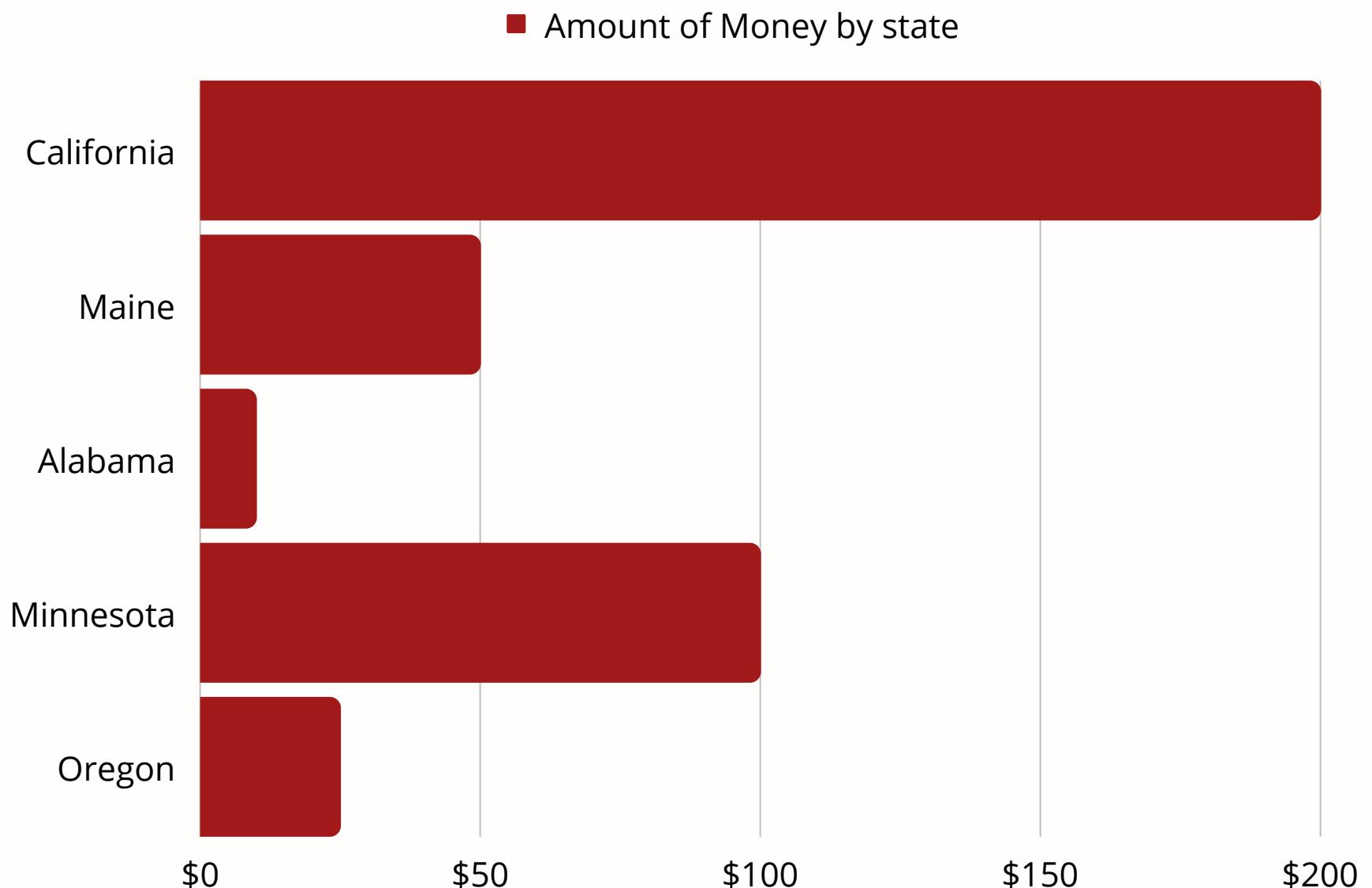
Maine's legislation regarding 'Money Upon Release' raises concern for the well-being of returning citizens. Money upon release, also referred to as gate money, are state-funded allocations to inmates released from prison.

Currently, these funds are insufficient for the cost of living in Maine and have failed to adjust to inflation. In 2004, Maine signed into legislation that each returning citizen would receive a maximum of \$50 on the day of inmate release (State of Maine Department of Corrections, 2004). In accordance with California's proposed law to increase gate money for returning citizens, Maine must increase gate money allocations from \$50 to \$2,340 by redistributing sin tax revenue. In doing so, recidivism rates will decrease, and returning citizens will have a greater opportunity to succeed in the free world, strengthening economic justice. This proposal emphasizes that halting recidivism and ensuring individual prosperity requires a considerable investment.



Gate money, by state

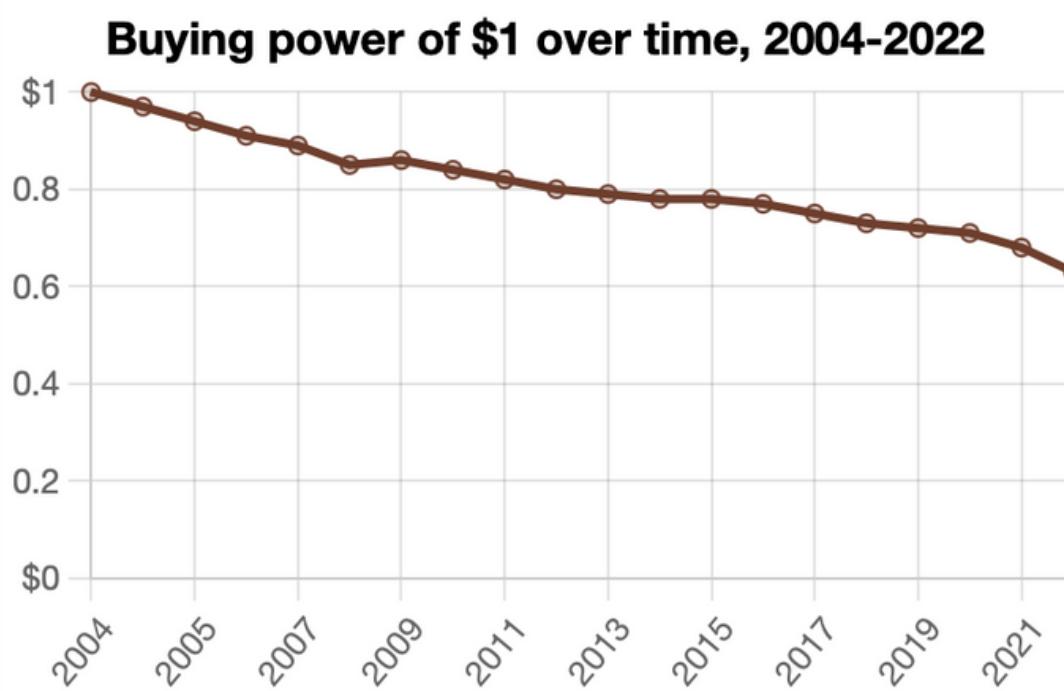
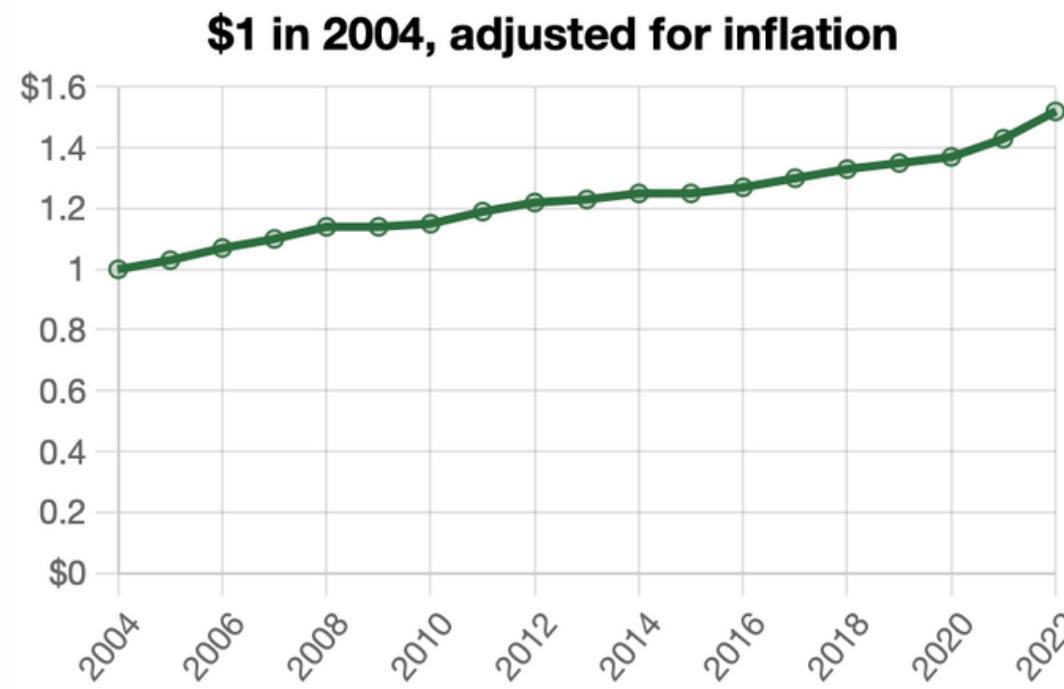
- **California:** "(With six or more months served) inmates are given **\$200**, less cost of clothing, and public transportation is provided by facility."
- **Maine:** "Clothing, up to **\$50**, transportation to home or employment or to state border in cases of parole."
- **Alabama:** "Inmates receive a suit of clothes, appropriate to the weather, **\$10**, and a bus ticket to their county of conviction."
- **Minnesota:** "Clothing and **\$100**."
- **Oregon:** "(If indigent), **\$25**, dress-outs if no clothing, bus voucher if needed."



Source:

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/hardtime/gatemoney/index.html>

The Substantial Increases of Maine's Cost of Living and Inflation Since 2004



"Inflation reduces the value of a currency's purchasing power" – Adam Hayes (2021)

The Maine statute that grants a maximum of \$50 was last visited in 2004 (State of Maine Department of Corrections, 2004), signifying that the current maximum dollars granted to each person has failed to account for the increase in inflation and cost of living expenses. Maine has the 13th highest cost of living expenses in the United States – 15% more expensive than the national average (Cost of Living Data Series, 2021). Over and above that, inflation has increased 48.83%, denoting that \$100 in 2004 has the purchasing power of nearly \$150 today (Inflation Rate Between 2004–2022, 2022). Everything considered, the average monthly living cost per person in the United States is about \$2,600 (Rhim, 2022).

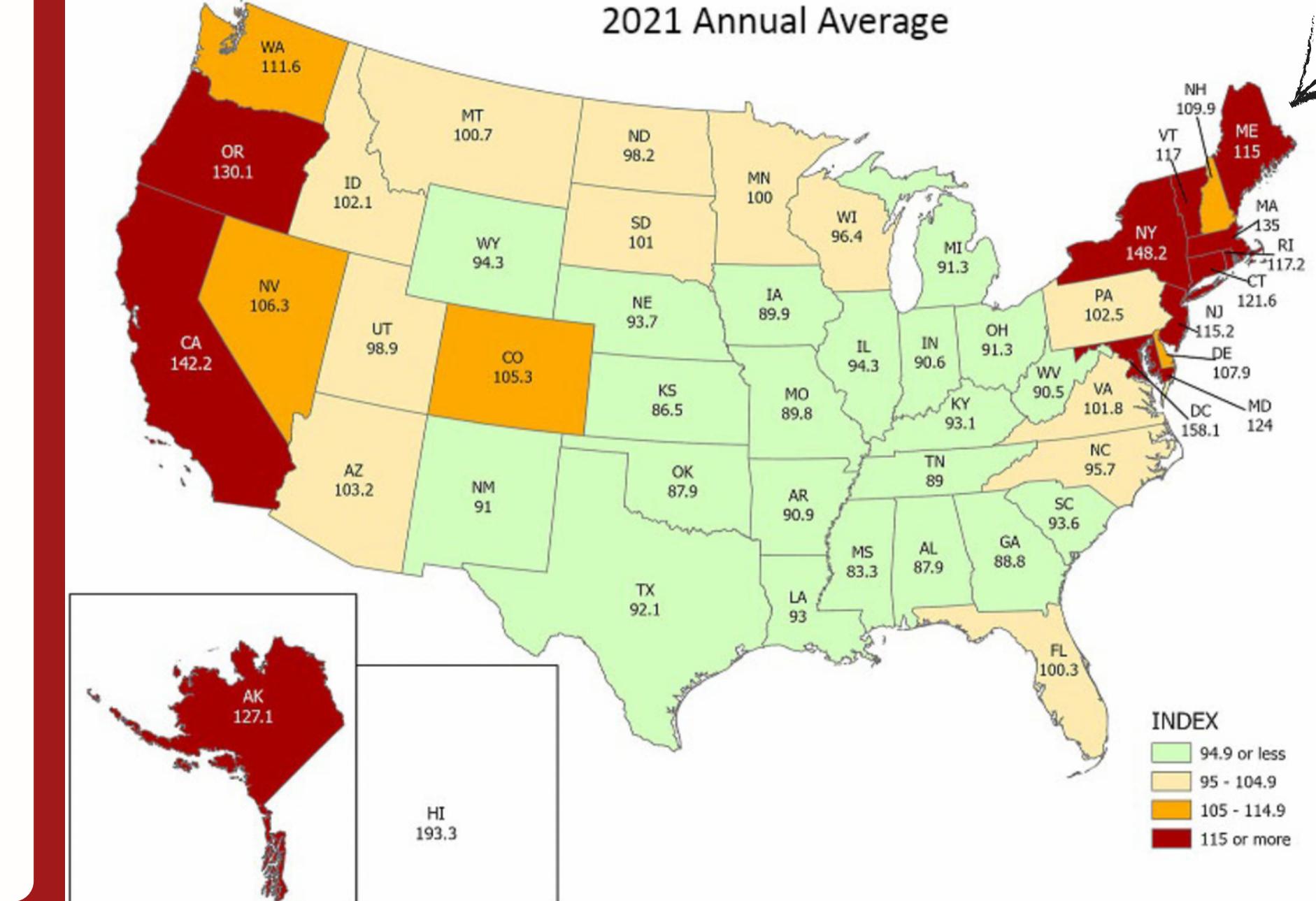
Maine's high cost of living

The **Cost of Living Index** measures regional differences in the cost of consumer goods and services. It is based on more than 50,000 prices covering almost 60 different items for which prices are collected three times a year by chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, or university applied economic centers in each participating urban area.

source: <https://www.coli.org/annual-average-2021-cost-of-living-index-released/>

Composite Cost of Living Index

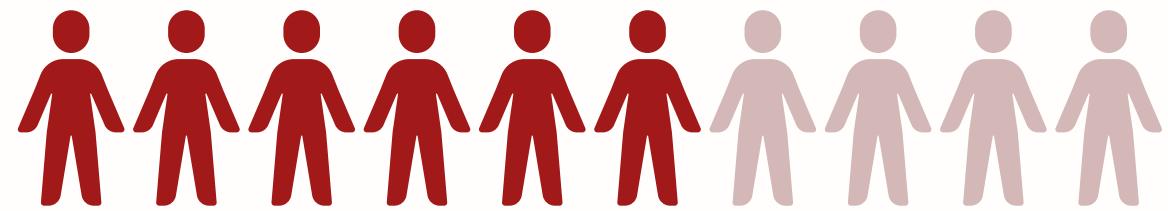
2021 Annual Average



Recidivism: The Irrelevance of Habilitative Services in the Absence of Increased Gate Money

Recidivism, or the likelihood of reoffending, is a prevalent issue within the criminal justice system. The Maine State Prison System's mission "encourages the offender to re-enter society as a law-abiding productive citizen" without providing the means to do so (Maine State Prison, n.d.). Despite inmate's successful completion of habilitative services, such as vocational training and academic programs (Quinn, 2003), insufficient gate money allocations are a key factor in Maine's recidivism rates. Data supports that **recidivism is most likely to occur within the first 72 hours of release because of the difficulties adjusting to life outside of prison** (Recidivism Rates by State 2022, 2022); therefore, **because poverty is the strongest indicator of recidivism, state-funded habilitative service programs in the absence of adequate gate money are ineffective at reducing recidivism**. Under these circumstances, it is arguable that recidivism rates in Maine have the potential to decrease through expanding the budget for gate money.

Poverty and Recidivism: Improving the Financial of Returning Citizens



6 in 10
are re-arrested
because of
economic suffering
in the free world
(Abadi et al, 2019)

The Prison Policy Initiative found that **“formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public”** (Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People, n.d.), resulting in engagement in the informal economy; thereby, increasing the propensity to get involved in deviant behavior.

Edelman (n.d.) found that **improving returning citizens' financial situation can decrease recidivism.**

Increasing gate money allocations will **benefit all communities** involved and **ease economic injustices.**

Evaluation Approach: Pilot Study Proves the Benefits

A non-profit organization pilot program allocated over \$2,000 to returning citizens and found that participants were “connected to employment and financial support” (Evaluating Outcomes, 2021).

participants involved in the study reported spending the \$2,000 on clothing, rent, and personal care items to “prepare themselves for employment” (Evaluating Outcomes, 2021).

Increasing gate money allocations has the potential to strengthen the economy by increasing employment rates as well as improving the livelihood of returning citizens.



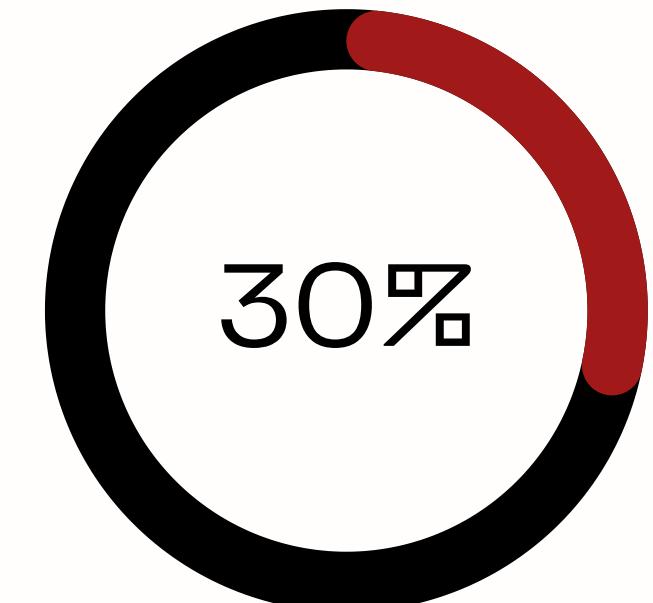
Save Taxpayers Dollars

It costs Maine taxpayers nearly \$50,000 to incarcerate a fellow community member (Delaney, 2012). Therefore, it is more efficient and cost effective to provide each returning citizen with \$2,340 upon the day of release than to re-incarcerate them. As Maine data shows, 3 out of 10 persons released from prison recidivate (Recidivism Rates by State, 2022), therefore it costs taxpayers more than \$150,000 to re-incarcerate these persons. If gate money allocations were increased to \$2,340 per person, Maine taxpayers could save over \$150,000.

Taxpayer cost to incarcerate a person

\$50,000

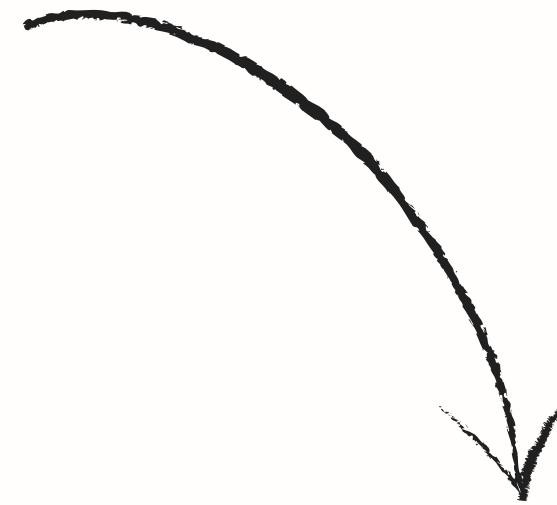
Maine Recidivism Rate



Policy Recommendation: Increase Gate Money Allocations from \$50 to \$2,340

California proposed a bill that would increase gate money allocations from \$200 to \$2,600 to adjust to inflation and increased cost of living (Sing, 2022). Maine's cost of living is 10% less than that of California (Cost of Living in Maine Compared to California, n.d.), therefore, in following the guidelines of California, **Maine should increase its gate money budget by redistributing sin tax revenue to sufficiently supply each returning citizen with \$2,340.** This is an administratively feasible proposal because Maine has the 36th highest revenue from sin taxes in the United States, totaling over \$475 million (Suneson, 2019); it follows that there is a surplus of revenue after meeting its yearly budget requirements (Should Maine Give Extra Tax Revenue Back?, n.d.). As stated previously, decreasing recidivism requires a demanding investment and Maine has the financial power to expand the gate money budget. In doing so, Maine will benefit the prosperity of the community through enhancing the lives of returning citizens, therefore, achieving greater economic equity.

Discover more



Guest column: More gate money, more second chances for former Maine inmates

Nowadays, you grudgingly fill your car with gas. "Over \$50! How!" you painstakingly mumble to yourself, hoping no one heard your complaints and outrage.

 Press Herald / Apr 8

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