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How Much Does It Cost to Incarcerate a Person?

California's Annual Average Cost to Incarcerate a Person

2025-26 Enacted Budget

Type of Expenditure	Per Person Cost
Security	\$52,194
Health Care	\$41,834
Medical care	26,880
Mental health care	8,123
Pharmaceuticals	4,835
Dental care	1,997
Facility Operations and Records	\$11,747
Facility operations (maintenance, utilities, etc.)	7,791
Classification services	2,686
Maintenance of records	971
Reception, testing, assignment	267
Transportation	32

Administration	\$10,814
Support	\$5,709
Food	3,196
Employment and canteen	1,715
Clothing	397
Religious activities	197
Activities	205
Rehabilitation Programs	\$4,761
Academic education	2,154
In-prison programs	1,937
Vocational training	671
Miscellaneous	\$728
Total	\$127,788

Note: Detail may not add due to rounding.

- The average annual cost for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to incarcerate a person was \$127,800 per person at the time the 2025-26 budget was enacted. It represents the amount CDCR was budgeted to spend on average per person on prison operations in 2025-26.
- Since 2010-11, the annual average cost has increased by about \$78,900 or 161 percent. This includes an increase of \$28,000 for security and \$27,400 for health care. Significant drivers of this increase include spending to comply with court orders (particularly those related to health care) and employee compensation costs. For more on these cost increases, please see our publication, [State Correctional Spending Increased Despite Significant Population Reductions](#).

California's Annual Marginal Cost to Incarcerate a Person

2025-26 Enacted Budget

Type of Expenditure	Per Person Cost
Health Care	\$16,291
Medical care	\$6,909
Psychiatric services	3,660
Integrated substance use disorder treatment	1,664
Pharmaceuticals	3,125
Dental care	932
Facility Operations and Records	\$2,221
Correctional Counselors	\$1,290

Case Records Technicians	801
Housekeeping	129
Support	\$2,580
Food	\$1,602
Voice calling	346
Employment and canteen	326
Clothing and personal care	297
Religious and recreation activities	8
Rehabilitation Programs	\$87
Vocational training	\$45
Academic education	41
Miscellaneous	\$355
Total	\$21,534

Detail may not add due to rounding.

- When CDCR has a change in population that does not result in facilities being activated or deactivated, its budget is typically adjusted by about \$21,500 per person per year. This is known as the annual marginal cost. About three-quarters of this cost is related to health care.
- The annual marginal cost is lower than the annual average cost because it generally only includes funding budgeted directly based on the size of the prison population, such as funding for food, clothing, and certain types of staffing. It generally excludes funding that changes only when facilities are activated or deactivated. For example, most security spending is excluded from the annual marginal cost as it is largely driven by the number and type of facilities CDCR has activated rather than the number of people held in those facilities.
- The annual marginal cost is used to estimate the fiscal effects of changes in the population that do not result in the activation or deactivation of prison facilities.

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