HOME OFFICE RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND STATISTICS DIRECTORATE

RESEARCH FINDINGS No. 116

WORLD PRISON POPULATION LIST (second edition)

Roy Walmsley

The World Prison Population List gives details of the number of prisoners held in some 200 independent countries and dependent territories. It shows the differences in the level of imprisonment across the world and makes possible an estimate of the world prison population total.

KEY POINTS

- Some 8.6 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, either as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or having been convicted and sentenced. Half of these are in the United States (1.85m), China (1.4m) or Russia (1.05m).
- Russia has the highest prison population rate in the world, some 730 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by the USA (680), the Cayman Islands (665), Belarus (575), Kazakhstan (495), the Bahamas (485), the US Virgin Islands (475), Belize (460), Bermuda (445) and Kyrgyzstan (440).
- However, almost two thirds of countries (64%) have rates of 150 per 100,000 or below. (The United Kingdom's rate of 125 per 100,000 of the national population places it at about the midpoint in the World List. Among European Union countries its rate is the second highest, after Portugal's 130.)

Prison population rates vary considerably between different regions of the world, and between different parts of the same continent. For example:

- in Africa the median rate for western and central African countries is 50 whereas for southern African countries it is 260;
- in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 115 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 330;
- in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian sub-continent) is 45 whereas for (ex-Soviet) central Asian countries it is about 260;
- in Europe the median rate for southern European countries is 70 whereas for central and eastern European countries it is 220;
- in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 120.
- Prison populations are growing in many parts of the world. Updated information on countries included in the first edition of the List shows that prison populations have risen in 70% of these countries; a similar pattern is evident in all continents.

This second edition of the World Prison Population List has been compiled, like the first edition, from a variety of sources. In almost all cases the original source is the national prison administration of the country concerned, or else the Ministry responsible for the prison administration. Most figures relate to dates between the beginning of 1996 and the end of 1999. Since prison population rates (per 100,000 of the national population) are based on estimates of the national population they have been rounded to the nearest five in order to avoid a spurious appearance of precision. In order to compare prison population rates in different regions of the world, and to estimate the number of persons held in prison in the countries for which information is not available, median rates have been used because they minimise the effect of countries with rates that are untypically high or low.

The List has a number of weaknesses. It lacks information on 19 independent countries and figures do not relate to the same

date. Comparability is further compromised by different practice in different countries, for example with regard to whether all pre-trial detainees and juveniles are held under the authority of the prison administration, and also whether the prison administration is responsible for psychiatrically ill offenders and offenders being detained for treatment for alcoholism. People held in custody are usually omitted from national totals if they are not under the authority of the prison administration.

Despite its limitations it is hoped that the World Prison Population List will be found useful by academic criminologists who are studying the use of imprisonment world-wide and by non-governmental organisations who are interested in variations in criminal justice practice. The data – for all its imperfections – may prompt fresh thought among policy makers and other criminal justice experts about the size of the prison population in their country, given the huge costs and disputed efficacy of imprisonment.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

KEY TO SOURCES

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NPA	Natio

Council of Europe UN Latin American Institute National prison administration oip Pri Observatoire International des Prisons Penal Reform International

Table 1 AFRICA	4				
(no. in pe incl. pre-t	oulation total nal institutions rial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison popu rate (per 100 national pop	,000 of prison population
Northern Africa					
Algeria	35,737	/96	28.6m	125	OIP, 1997
Egypt	c.80,000	/98	66.0m	c.120	Crim. justice expert, Egypt
Libya	c.6,750	/98	5.3m	c.125	Crim. justice expert, Libya
Morocco	48,600	/97	27.5m	175	OIP, 1998
Sudan	32,000	/97	27.9m	115	Conference paper, Jan 1998
Tunisia	23,165	31/12/96	9.2m	250	United Nations 5th Survey
Western Africa					
Benin	3,937	23/8/99	5.9m	65	NPA direct communication
Burkina Faso	6,100	31/12/94	10.2m	60	Burk. Faso human rights movement
Cape Verde	775	30/6/99	418,000	185	Crim. justice expert, Cape Verde
Côte d'Ivoire	13,670	5/11/98	14.4m	95	NPA document
Gambia	478	12/7/99	1.25m	40	Min. of Interior direct communication
Ghana	9,523	12/99	19.7m	50	NPA direct communication
Guinea	4,014	31/12/96	7.25m	55	Response to UN enquiry
Mali	3,135	12/98	10.8m	30	Rept. of Spec. Rapp. on Afr. prisons
Mauretania	1,400	/97	2.4m	60	Conference paper, Jan 1998
Niger	5,263	1/10/98	10.15m	50	NPA direct communication
Nigeria	44,797	31/10/99	109.0m	40	Crim. justice expert, Nigeria
Senegal	4,653	9/97	8.8m	55	OIP, 1998
Togo	2,043	6/11/98	4.4m	45	NPA direct communication
Central Africa	4 004	6/11/00	10 Em	40	
Angola	4,884	6/11/99 /97	12.5m 13.9m	40	UN mission in Angola
Cameroon Chad	15,903 2,521	1/96	6.4m	115 40	OIP, 1998 OIP, 1997
Congo (Brazzaville		/93	2.4m	40 40	PRI, from NPA
Sao Tome e Princ		/93 /94	130,000	40 75	United Nations 5th Survey
Eastern Africa	ipe 33	/34	130,000	75	Officed Nations Still Sulvey
Burundi	9,411	/97	6.4m	145	OIP, 1998
Comoros	c.200	/98	658,000	c.30	Crim. justice expert, Comoros
Djibouti	384	16/12/99	629,000	60	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Djibouti
Kenya	41,064	23/10/96	28.9m	140	OIP, 1997
Madagascar	20,109	31/7/99	15.5m	130	NPA
Malawi	7,341	10/4/99	10.5m	70	NPA document
Mauritius	3,239	/97	1.1m	295	NPA direct communication
Mozambique	c.10,800	12/97	18.5m	c.60	Rept. of Spec. Rapp. on Afr. prisons
Rwanda	143,021*	30/11/98	6.9m	_ *	Rwanda Human Rights League
*(Prison po	opulation total inclu	udes an estim	ated 135,000 he	ld on suspicion	of participation in genocide.)
Seychelles	157	27/10/99	76,000	205	NPA
Tanzania	45,715	1/12/99	33.0m	140	NPA direct communication
Uganda	21,971	30/6/98	20.6m	105	NPA direct communication
Zambia	12,500	/99	9.0m	140	NPA direct communication
Zimbabwe	19,256	1/99	11.45m	170	PRI Newsletter 36, 1999
Mayotte (France)	123	1/9/98	131,300	95	French Ministry of Justice
Réunion (France)	1,019	1/10/98	682,000	150	French Ministry of Justice
Southern Africa					
Botswana	6,413	5/3/99	1.6m	400	NPA direct communication
Lesotho	2,552	4/99	2.1m	120	NPA direct communication
Namibia	4,397	31/8/98	1.7m	260	NPA direct communication
South Africa	161,163	30/11/99	40.1m	400	NPA report to UN Congress
Swaziland	2,221	14/9/98	958,000	230	NPA direct communication
(No information	Western Africa:	Guinea Biss	au, Liberia, Sie	rra Leone. Cen	tral Africa: Central African Republic,
					a: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia.)

Table 2 AMERICAS						
Prison popula		Date Estimated		Prison popul	ation Source of	
(no. in penal i			national	rate (per 100		
incl. pre-trial	detainees)		population	national pop	ulation) total	
North America						
Canada	32,970*	/98-99	30.65m	110	Canadian Centre of Justice Statistics	
			daily population	1/4/98-31/3/99)		
	860,520	30/6/99	272.9m	680	US Bureau of Justice Statistics	
Bermuda (UK)	286	29/12/99	64,000	445	NPA direct communication	
Greenland (Denmark)	78	25/8/98	56,000	140	Danish NPA, direct communication	
Central America	4 007	100		(00		
Belize	1,097	/99	239,000	460	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Costa Rica El Salvador	8,526	/99	3.7m 6.25m	230	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Guatemala	6,868 8 160	/99 /99	0.25m 11.7m	110 70	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Honduras	8,169 10,869	/99 /99	6.3m	175	Elias Carranza,ILANUD,from NPA et al Elias Carranza,ILANUD,from NPA et al	
	139,707	/99	97.4m	145	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Nicaragua	7,198	/99	5.05m	145	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Panama	8,517	/99	2.8m	305	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Caribbean	0,011	733	2.011	000		
Antigua & Barbuda	225	11/95	65,000	345	Information from W. Singh, PRI	
Bahamas	1,401	1/98	290,000	485	Survey for UN by Wendy Singh	
Barbados	772	1/98	263,000	295	Survey for UN by Wendy Singh	
	c.33,000	/97	11.1m	c.295	Nils Christie, Oslo University	
Dominica	298	/99	71,000	420	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Dominican Republic	14,188	/99	8.35m	170	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Grenada	327	1/98	99,000	330	Survey for UN by Wendy Singh	
Haiti	4,152	/99	7.9m	55	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Jamaica	4,288	/99	2.5m	170	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
St Kitts & Nevis	135	/99	40,000	340	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
St Lucia	365	/99	150,000	245	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
St Vincent & Grenadir	nes 405	/99	110,000	370	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Trinidad & Tobago	4,794	/99	1.365m	350	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Aruba (Netherlands)	223	11/98	89,000	250	Dutch NPA direct communication	
Cayman Islands (UK)	244	6/12/99	36,600	665	NPA direct communication	
Guadeloupe (France)	706	1/10/98	445,000	160	French Min. of Justice publication	
Martinique (France)	547	1/10/98	390,000	140	French Min. of Justice publication	
Neth.Antilles						
(Netherlands)	780	11/98	214,000	365	Dutch NPA direct communication	
Puerto Rico (US)	16,524	31/12/98	3.8m	435	US Bureau of Justice Statistics	
Virgin Islands (UK)	43	19/8/99	20,000	215	Pris.reform coord'tor, UK O'seas Terr's	
Virgin Islands (US)	447	31/12/98	94,000	475	US Bureau of Justice Statistics	
South America	20.004	/00	20.0-	405		
Argentina	38,604	/99	36.2m	105	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Bolivia Brazil	8,315 194,074	/99	8.15m 171.0m	100 115	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
		/99			Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Chile Colombia	30,852 57,068	/99 /99	15.0m 37.4m	205 155	Elias Carranza,ILANUD,from NPA et al Elias Carranza,ILANUD,from NPA et al	
Ecuador	57,068 8,520	/99 /99	12.4m	70	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Guyana	8,520 1,697	1/98	852,000	200	Survey for UN by Wendy Singh	
Paraguay	4,088	/99	5.45m	75	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Peru	4,088 27,452	/99	25.6m	105	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Suriname	1,933	/99	442,000	435	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Uruguay	6,198	/99	3.25m	190	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et al	
Venezuela	23,147	/99	23.7m	100	Elias Carranza, ILANUD, from NPA et all	
French Guiana/		,00				
Guyane (France)	3,47	10/98	144,000	240	French Min. of Justice publication	
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No. 116

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• •	lation total Il institution al detainees)		Estimated national population	Prison popula rate (per 100,0 national popu	000 of prison population			
Western Asia								
Bahrain	305	31/12/93	549,000	55	Response to UN enquiry			
Israel	9,337	1/11/99	6.15m	150	NPA direct communication			
Jordan	3,749	31/12/93	5.1m	75	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1			
Kuwait	1,735	/97	1.7m	100	Conference paper, Jan 98			
Lebanon	5,000	/97	3.1m	160	Conference paper, Jan 98			
Qatar	527	31/12/93	540,000	100	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1			
Saudi Arabia	7,939*	31/12/93	17.2m	45 *	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1			
Currie	44.000		entenced prisoner		Conference near lan 00			
Syria	14,000	/97	15.0m	95	Conference paper, Jan 98			
United Arab Emirate	•	12/98	2.4m	c.250	Criminal justice experts in U.A.E			
Yemen	14,000*	/98 *(govern	16.9m ment managed p	85*	PRI Newsletter 33, 1998			
Central Asia		(govern	ment managed p					
Kazakhstan	82,945	1/5/97	16.8m	495	NPA direct communication			
Kyrgyzstan	82,945 19,857	1/5/97	4.5m	495	NPA direct communication			
Tajikistan	c.6,000	/96	4.5m 6.3m	c.95	Crim. justice expert, Tajikistan			
Turkmenistan	c.6,000	4/99	4.4m	c.135	Government statement, Turkmenistar			
Uzbekistan	c.60,000	/96	23.3m	c.260	Crim. justice expert, Uzbekista			
South Central Asia		730	20.011	0.200	Onini. Justice expert, Ozbekistal			
Bangladesh	c.50,000	/98	125.8m	c.40	Conference paper, Apr 99			
India	381,147	/98	982.0m	40	Conference paper, Apr 99			
Iran	101,801	31/12/93	65.0m	155	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1)			
Maldive Is.	1,098*	/96	265,000	415*	Ministry of Justice, Maldive Is.			
*(sentenced prisoners only)								
Nepal	7,000	/98	23.4m	30	Report by Rani Shankardass			
Pakistan	74,485	1/1/99	150.0m	50	Crim. justice expert, Pakistan			
Sri Lanka	18,619	/99	18.6m	100	David Biles, from NPA			
South Eastern Asi	-							
Brunei Darussalam	286	/99	322,000	90	David Biles, from NPA			
Cambodia	3,832	/99	10.9m	35	David Biles, from NPA			
Indonesia	55,026	/99	209.3m	25	David Biles, from NPA			
Malaysia	27,148	/99	21.8m	125	David Biles, from NPA			
Myanmar (Burma)	53,195	31/12/93	45.0m	120	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16 Add.1)			
Philippines}	35,864	31/12/93	65.5m	55	UN enquiry (A/CN.15.1996/16/Add.1)			
Philippines}	21,287*	/99	74.5m	30*	David Biles, from NPA			
	*(does	s not include th	nose in municipal	and provincial pris	sons)			
Singapore	11,858*	/99	3.5m	340*	David Biles, from NPA			
*(does	not include the	se in drug reh	abilitation centre	s run by the Singa	pore Prison Service)			
Thailand	197,214	/99	60.9m	325	David Biles, from NPA			
Vietnam	55,000	/98	77.6m	70	David Biles, from NPA			
Eastern Asia								
China	1,408,860	/99	1,266.8m	110	David Biles, from NPA			
Japan	52,715	/99	126.5m	40	David Biles, from NPA			
Korea (Republic of)	69,102	/99	46.5m	150	David Biles, from NPA			
Mongolia	6,414	/99	2.6m	245	David Biles, from NPA			
Taiwan	c.31,000	/98	20.5m	c.150	Crim. justice expert, Taiwan			
Hong Kong (China)	11,215	/99	6.65m	170	David Biles, from NPA			
Macau (Portugal)*	778	/99	459,000	170	David Biles, from NPA			

No. 116

(*No information* Western Asia: Iraq, Oman. South Central Asia: Afghanistan, Bhutan. South Eastern Asia: Laos. Eastern Asia: Korea (Democratic People's Republic of North Korea.)

Prison population total (no. in penal institutions) Date particle Estimated national population Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population) Source of trate (per 100,000 of national population) Northern Europe Demark 3,496 1/9/99 5.3m 65 NPA direct communication Estonia 4,465 1/1/299 1.45m 310 NPA, C of E steering group Finland 2,399 1/2/199 2.45m 300 NPA, C of E steering group Lativia 8,665 20/11/99 2.45m 360 NPA, C of E steering group Lithuania 14,259 3/10/99 3.7m 86 NPA, C of E steering group Lithuania 14,259 3/10/99 3.7m 86 NPA, C of E steering group Lithuania 14,259 3/10/99 3.7m 80 NPA direct communication Norway 2,095 (11/9) 1.7m 70 NPA direct communication -Southand 6,101 3/0/11/99 1.7m 70 NPA direct communication -Southant 192 3/0/11/99	Table 4 EUROPE						
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Iceland 103 1/8/98 275,000 35 C of E Annual Penal Statistics Ireland 2,929 12/11/99 3.7m 80 NPA direct communication Latvia 8,868 20/11/99 2.45m 360 NPA, C of E steering group Norway 2,695 30/9/99 4.85m 60 NPA direct communication Sweden 5,270 30/9/99 8.85m 60 NPA direct communication -England & Wales 6,593 30/11/99 52.8m 125 NPA direct communication -Socitand 6,010 30/11/99 51.m 120 NPA direct communication -Rarce Is. (Denmark) 7 29/9/98 43.000 15 Danish NPA direct communication Jersey (UK) 135 30/11/99 86,500 155 NPA direct communication Jersey (UK) 135 30/11/99 86,500 30 Tribunal de Corts, Andorra Jersey (UK) 135 30/11/99 86,500 30 Tribunal de Corts, Andorra Jersey (UK)	Estonia	4,465	1/12/99	1.45m	310	NPA, C of E steering group	
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	-			5.4m	190		
Turkey 64,907 1/9/98 63.6m 100 C of E Annual Penal Statistics							
	Turkey	64,907	1/9/98	63.6m	100	C of E Annual Penal Statistics	

Table 4 cont. EUROPE

Central and East	stern Europe							
Bulgaria	11,773	1/9/98	8.25m	145	C of E Annual Penal Statistics			
Belarus	58,879	31/12/97	10.2m	575	United Nations 6th Survey			
Czech Republic	23,060	31/12/99	10.3m	225	Inst for Crim&Soc Prevention, Cz.R			
Hungary	15,110	31/12/99	10.05m	150	NPA direct communication			
Moldova	10,044*	1/1/99	3.65m*	275	NPA direct communication			
*(does not include the internationally unrecognised Transdniestria. Including Transdniestria								
	the national pop	ulation of Moldov	a is estimated a	at 4.3 millions	in 1998.)			
Poland	56,765	31/12/99	38.65m	145	Publicat. of Inst. of Justice, Warsaw			
Romania	49,790	31/12/99	22.45m	220	NPA website			
Slovakia	6,628	1/9/98	5.4m	125	C of E Annual Penal Statistics			
Ukraine	217,400	12/99	50.7m	430	NPA direct communication			
(No information Southern Europe: Yugoslavia.)								

Table 5 OCFANIA

(no. in p	oopulation total enal institution -trial detainees	S	Estimated national population	••	Ilation Source of 0,000 of prison population pulation) total
Australia	20,656*	/99	18.7m	110	David Biles from NPA
		^(average	daily population	n, 1999)	
Fiji	1,180	/99	806,000	145	David Biles from NPA
Kiribati	91	/95	70,000	130	David Biles from NPA
Marshall Is.	23	/94	52,000	45	United Nations 5th Survey
Micronesia, Fed Sta	tes of 39	/97	114,000	35	F S Micronesia Stats. Yearbook
New Zealand	5,778	/99	3.8m	150	David Biles from NPA
Papua New Guinea	3,566	/98	4.6m	80	David Biles from NPA
Samoa	176	/98	174,000	100	David Biles from NPA
Solomon Is.	134	/99	430,000	30	David Biles from NPA
Tonga	87	/94	100,000	85	David Biles from NPA
Tuvalu	1	10/92	9,000	45	David Biles from NPA
Vanuatu	46	/99	183,000	25	David Biles from NPA
American Samoa (U	IS) 112	31/12/98	63,000	180	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Cook Is. (NZ)	45	/95	20,000	225	David Biles from NPA
French Polynesia (Fr	ance) 280	1/10/98	220,000	125	French Min. of Justice publication
Guam (US)	629	31/12/98	162,000	390	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
New Caledonia (Fra	nce) 303	1/10/98	197,000	155	French Min. of Justice publication
Northern Mariana Is.		31/12/98	70,500	160	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
(No information Na	auru, Palau.)				

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No. 116