



U.S. CONTINUES TO BE WORLD LEADER IN RATE OF INCARCERATION

As a result of the continuing rise in the prison population in the United States along with a major prisoner amnesty in Russia, the U.S. rate of incarceration surpassed that of Russia in 2000 and the U.S. is now the world leader in imprisonment. The U.S. rate of 699 prisoners per 100,000 population¹ is now greater than the Russian rate, which declined from 730 per 100,000 in 1999 to 644 per 100,000 in 2001.²

Russia has been facing severe overcrowding in its penal facilities for many years, with inmates in pretrial detention sometimes waiting as long as several years for their cases to come to trial. In response to this crisis, the Russian Parliament approved an amnesty that resulted in the release of 120,000 pretrial detainees and sentenced offenders. This reduced the inmate population to 934,000 as of February 2001. As many as 250,000 more prisoners may be released as a result of the amnesty during the next two to three years.³

The U.S. rate of incarceration has been increasing continuously for nearly thirty years. From approximately 330,000 inmates in prison and jail in 1972, the inmate population has grown to 1,933,503 by the end of 2000.⁴ In comparison to other industrialized nations, the U.S. rate of incarceration is 5-8 times that of Canada and most of western Europe.

A majority of inmates in U.S. prisons are housed for non-violent offenses. The population in state prisons is comprised of 48% violent offenders, 21% property offenders, 21% drug offenders, and 10% public order and other offenses. In federal prisons, the inmate breakdown consists of 11% violent offenders, 7% property offenders, 57% drug offenders, and 24% public order and other offenders.⁵ Of the 621,000 inmates in local jails, 56% are awaiting trial and 44% are serving sentences. There are an estimated 485,000 persons either serving time or awaiting trial for a drug offense.⁶

The attached tables list the world's ten leading nations in rate of incarceration and provide comparisons of the U.S. rate of incarceration.

¹ US rate is for December 2000, from Allen Beck and Paige Harrison, *Prisoners in 2000*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, August 2001.

² The Russian rate of incarceration is calculated for February 2001 from figures provided to the International Center for Prison Studies by the Russian State Statistics Committee, adjusted to reflect the recent releases.

³ RIA news agency, Moscow, quoted in Penal Reform International's *Newsletter on Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, Spring/Summer 2001.

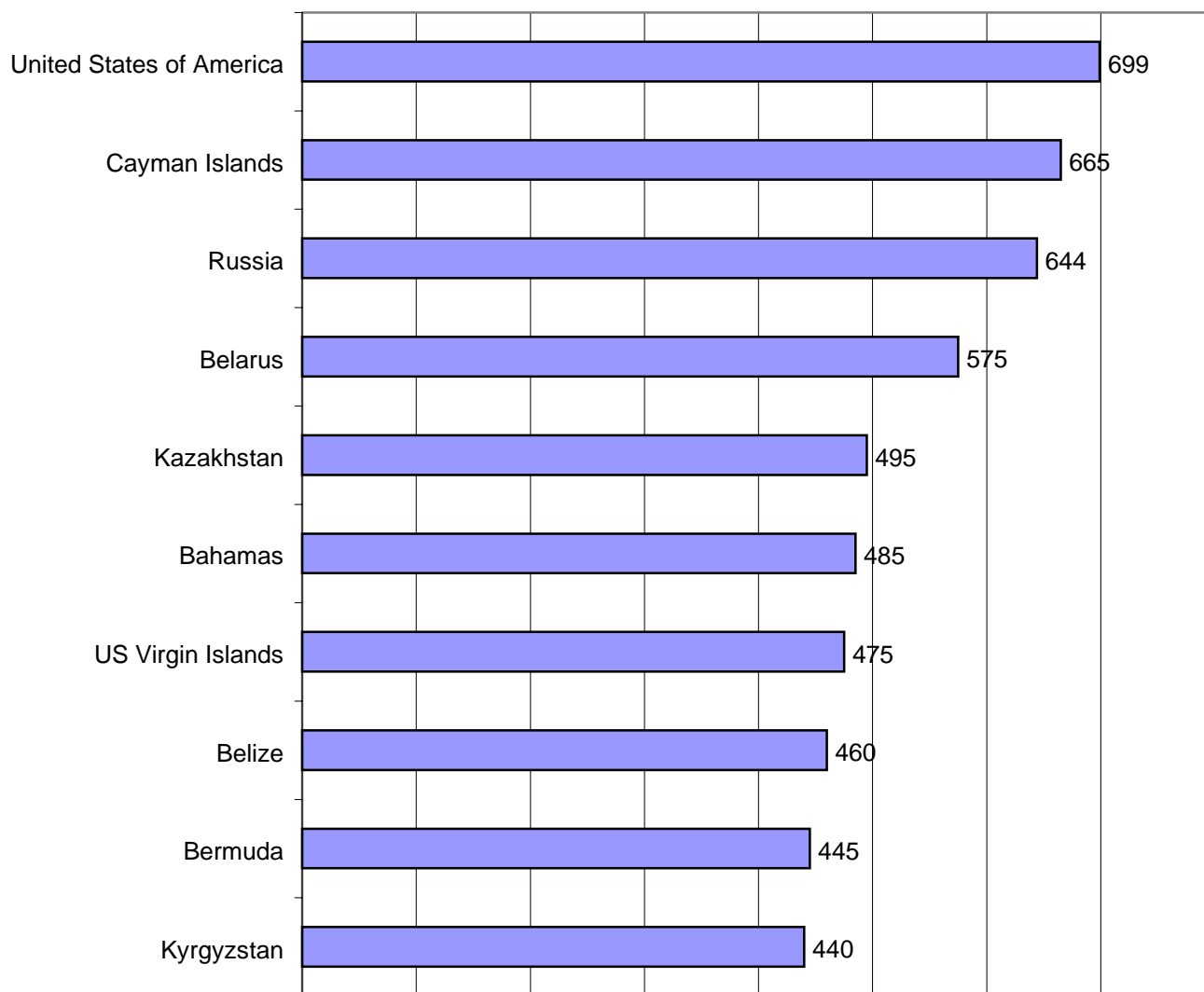
⁴ Beck and Harrison.

⁵ Beck and Harrison.

⁶ Data calculated from various reports of the Bureau of Justice Statistics.



TEN LEADING NATIONS IN INCARCERATION RATES

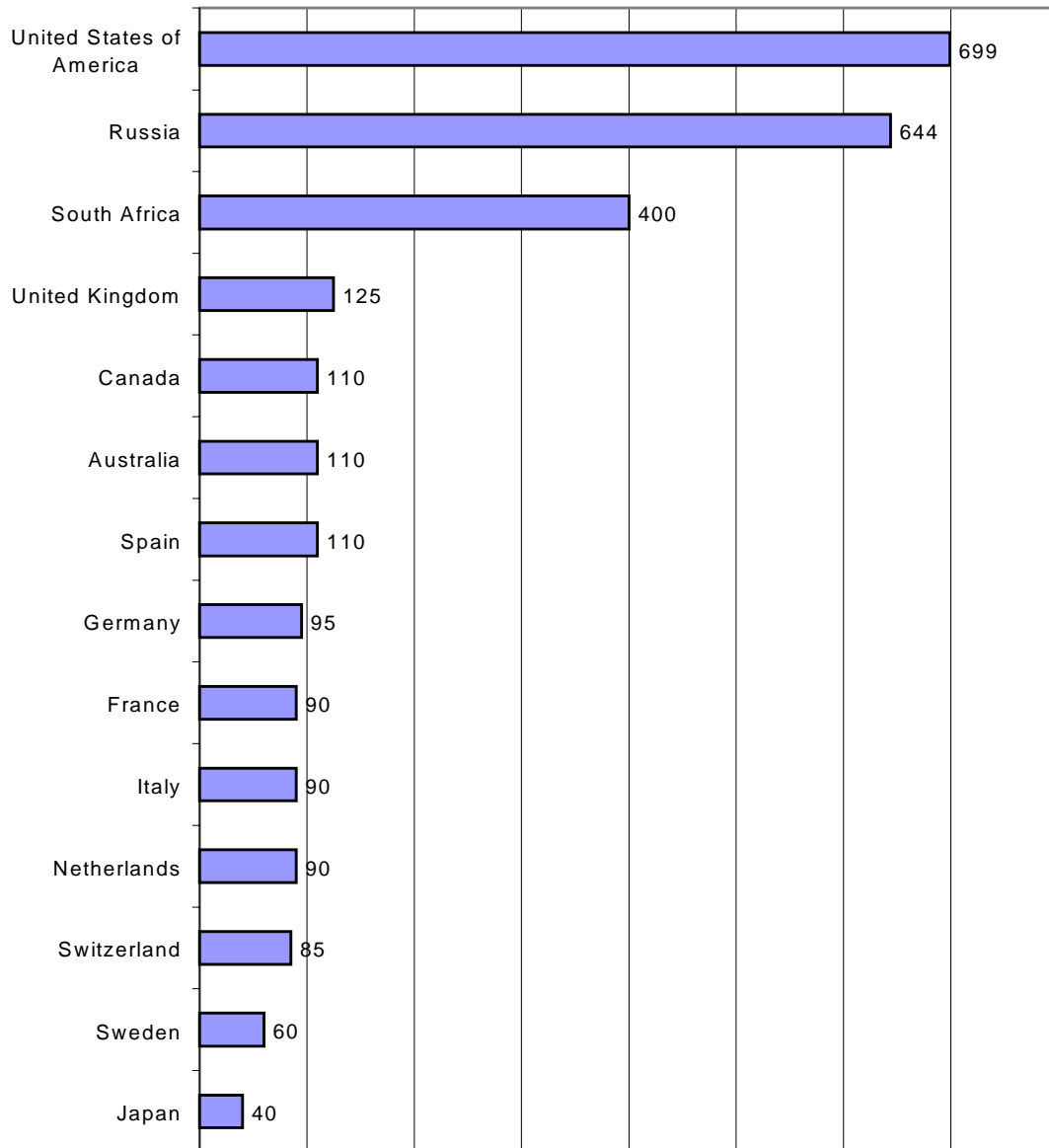


Incarceration Rate (number of people in prison per 100,000 population)

Source: Rate for Russia calculated from figures cited on previous page; for the US *Prisoners in 2000*: for all other nations, Roy Walmsley, *World Prison Population List* (2nded.), United Kingdom Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, July 2000. Incarceration data were collected on varying dates within the period 1997 through 1999.



RATE OF INCARCERATION IN SELECTED NATIONS



Incarceration Rate (number of people in prison per 100,000 population)

Source: Rate for Russia calculated from figures cited on previous page; for the US *Prisoners in 2000*: for all other nations, Roy Walmsley, *World Prison Population List* (2nd ed.), United Kingdom Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, July 2000.