

World Prison Population List (sixth edition)

Roy Walmsley

Introduction

The World Prison Population List gives details of the number of prisoners held in 211 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. The information is the latest available at the end of February 2005.

This is the sixth edition of the List. Previous editions were published by the Research and Statistics Directorate of the UK Home Office. ICPS is happy to continue this work, which complements the information which it already publishes and updates regularly on the World Prison Brief section of its website www.prisonstudies.org.

It has been compiled, like previous editions, 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 mid-2002 and the end of February 2005. Since prison population rates (per 100,000 of the national population) are based on estimates of the national population they should not be regarded as precise. 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. Figures are not available for eleven countries and the information does 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 and drug addiction. 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 high costs and disputed efficacy of imprisonment.

Key points

- ▶ Over 9 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, mostly as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or having been convicted and sentenced. Almost half of these are in the United States (2.09m), China (1.55m plus pre-trial detainees and prisoners in 'administrative detention') or Russia (0.76m).
- ▶ The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, some 714 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by Belarus, Bermuda and Russia (all 532), Palau (523), U.S. Virgin Islands (490), Turkmenistan (489), Cuba (487), Suriname (437), Cayman Islands (429), Belize (420), Ukraine (417), Maldiv Islands (416), St Kitts and Nevis (415), South Africa (413) and Bahamas (410).
- ▶ However, almost three fifths of countries (58%) have rates below 150 per 100,000. (The rate in England and Wales - 142 per 100,000 of the national population - is above the mid-point in the World List.)
- ▶ 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 African countries is 52 whereas for southern African countries it is 324;
 - in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 152 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 324;
 - in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian sub-continent) is 55 whereas for (ex-Soviet) central Asian countries it is 386;
 - in Europe the median rate for southern European countries is 80 whereas for central and eastern European countries it is 184;
 - in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 111.
- ▶ Prison populations are growing in many parts of the world. Updated information on countries included in previous editions of the World Prison Population List shows that prison populations have risen in 73% of these countries (in 64% of countries in Africa, 79% in the Americas, 88% in Asia, 69% in Europe and 69% in Oceania).

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Table 1 AFRICA

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl. pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
Northern Africa					
Algeria	38,868	1/1/04	32.05m	121	NPA
Egypt	c.80,000	/98	66.0m	c.121	Criminal justice expert, Egypt
Libya	11,790	31/7/04	5.7m	207	NPA
Morocco	54,200	6/04	31.1m	174	Moroccan human r'ts c'ttee report
Sudan	c.12,000	3/03	33.2m	c.36	NPA
Tunisia	23,165	31/12/96	9.15m	252	United Nations 5th Survey
Western Africa					
Benin	4,961	30/9/00	6.1m	81	NPA
Burkina Faso	2,800	9/02	12.2m	23	NPA
Cape Verde	755	12/99	423,000	178	NPA
Côte d'Ivoire	10,355	8/3/02	16.6m	62	NPA
Gambia	450	9/02	1.4m	32	NPA
Ghana	11,379	26/12/03	21.25m	54	NPA
Guinea (Conakry)	3,070	mid-02	8.4m	37	NPA
Mali	4,040	2/02	11.9m	34	NPA
Mauritania	1,185	9/03	2.9m	41	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Niger	c.6,000	mid-02	11.6m	c.52	NPA
Nigeria	39,153	29/2/04	126.0m	31	NPA
Senegal	5,360	9/02	9.9m	54	NPA
Togo	3,200	8/03	4.9m	65	Afrol News
Central Africa					
Angola	6,008	4/4/03	13.6m	44	NPA
Cameroon	20,000	6/03	16.0m	125	NPA
Central African Rep.	4,168	/01	3.8m	110	NPA
Chad	3,883	mid-02	8.4m	46	NPA
Congo (Brazzaville)	918	/93	2.4m	38	PRI, from NPA
Dem. Repub. Congo	c.30,000	1/04	52.8m	c.57	Crim. justice experts, D.R.Congo
Sao Tome e Principe	130	4/02	165,000	79	NPA
Eastern Africa					
Burundi	7,914	/03	6.8m	116	Ministry of Justice, Burundi
Comoros	c.200	/98	658,000	c.30	Crim. justice expert, Comoros
Djibouti	384	16/12/99	629,000	61	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Djibouti
Ethiopia	c.65,000	mid-03	70.7m	c.92	Crim. justice expert, Ethiopia
Kenya	55,000	9/04	32.5m	169	Office of Vice President, Kenya
Madagascar	c.19,000	/03	17.4m	c.109	Ministry of Justice, Madagascar
Malawi	8,566	20/11/03	12.2m	70	NPA
Mauritius	2,565	4/03	1.2m	214	NPA
Mozambique	8,812	31/12/99	17.6m	50	UNDP report
Rwanda	112,000*	mid-02	8.1m	- *	NPA
*(Prison population total includes 103,134 held on suspicion of participation in genocide.)					
Seychelles	149	/03	80,000	186	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Tanzania	43,244	1/5/04	37.2m	116	NPA
Uganda	c.21,900	5/02	24.7m	c.89	NPA (15,902)+c.6,000 in local prisons
Zambia	13,200	12/03	10.8m	122	NPA
Zimbabwe	c.20,000	31/12/03	12.9m	c.155	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Mayotte (France)	161	1/12/04	189,000	85	French Ministry of Justice
Réunion (France)	1,054	1/12/04	772,000	137	French Ministry of Justice
Southern Africa					
Botswana	6,105	3/12/04	1.8m	339	NPA
Lesotho	3,000	mid-02	2.1m	143	NPA
Namibia	4,814	31/12/01	1.8m	267	NPA
South Africa	186,739	31/8/04	45.2m	413	NPA
Swaziland	3,245	31/12/02	1.0m	324	NPA

Figures not available

Western Africa: Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone.

Central Africa: Equatorial Guinea, Gabon.

Eastern Africa: Eritrea, Somalia.

Table 2 AMERICAS

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl. pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
North America					
Canada	36,389*	02-03	31.44m	116	Statistics Canada
	*(Average daily population, including young offenders, 1/4/2002-31/3/2003)				
USA	2,085,620	31/12/03	292.2m	714	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bermuda (UK)	343	11/11/03	64,500	532	NPA
Greenland (Denmark)	107	5/10/04	56,400	190	Danish NPA
Central America					
Belize	1,074	/03	256,000	420	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Costa Rica	7,619	11/04	4.3m	177	Ministry of Justice, Costa Rica
El Salvador	12,117	/04	6.6m	184	Int'l Corrections+Prisons Assoc'n
Guatemala	8,307	2/03	12.2m	68	PRI Newsletter 53, 2003
Honduras	11,236	mid-04	7.1m	158	Int'l Corrections+Prisons Assoc'n
Mexico	191,890	28/11/04	105.5m	182	NPA
Nicaragua	5,610	31/10/04	5.6m	100	NPA (excl. those in police lockups)
Panama	10,630	3/03	3.0m	354	Criminal justice expert, Panama
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	184	24/1/05	68,320	269	NPA
Bahamas	1,280	10/02	312,000	410	NPA
Barbados	992	11/11/03	270,000	367	NPA
Cuba	c.55,000	/03	11.3m	c.487	Nils Christie, Oslo University
Dominica	243	31/12/03	72,000	337	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Dominican Republic	13,836	28/4/04	8.8m	157	NPA
Grenada	237	22/2/05	89,400	265	NPA
Haiti	3,519	/03	8.3m	42	NPA (excl. those in police lockups)
Jamaica	4,744	18/11/03	2.7m	176	NPA
St Kitts & Nevis	195	9/03	47,000	415	US State Dep't human r'ts report
St Lucia	460	8/03	160,000	287	US State Dep't human r'ts report
St Vincent & Grenadines	397	1/2/05	117,000	339	NPA
Trinidad & Tobago	3,991	10/03	1.3m	307	NPA
Aruba (Netherlands)	231	21/1/05	71,200	324	NPA
Cayman Islands (UK)	187	17/12/04	43,600	429	NPA
Guadeloupe (France)	767	1/12/04	444,000	173	French Ministry of Justice
Martinique (France)	671	1/12/04	396,000	169	French Ministry of Justice
Neth. Antilles (Netherlands)	780	11/98	214,000	364	Dutch NPA
Puerto Rico (US)	15,046	31/12/03	3.9m	386	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Virgin Islands (UK)	43	19/8/99	20,000	215	Prison reform coordinator, UK Overseas Territories
Virgin Islands (US)	559	31/12/03	114,000	490	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
South America					
Argentina	56,313	31/12/02	38.15m	148	Prison statistics system 'SNEEP'
Bolivia	6,768	12/03	8.9m	76	NPA
Brazil	330,642	6/04	180.7m	183	NPA
Chile	33,098	30/6/02	15.6m	212	NPA, via ILANUD
Colombia	68,545	10/04	45.2m	152	NPA
Ecuador	13,045	/03	13.0m	100	NPA
Guyana	1,295	1/05	768,000	169	NPA
Paraguay	4,088	/99	5.48m	75	ILANUD, from NPA
Peru	32,129	10/04	28.1m	114	NPA
Suriname	1,933	30/6/99	442,000	437	ILANUD, from NPA and others
Uruguay	7,100	9/03	3.4m	209	Criminal justice expert, Uruguay
Venezuela	21,342	8/7/03	25.7m	83	NPA
French Guiana/ Guyane (France)	691	1/12/04	193,000	358	French Ministry of Justice

Table 3 ASIA

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl.pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
Western Asia					
Bahrain	911	31/12/97	589,000	155	United Nations 6 th Survey
Iraq	c.15,000	4/04	25.2m	c.60	'Washington Times', USA
Israel	13,603	6/9/04	6.5m	209	NPA
Jordan	5,448	2/02	5.15m	106	PRI
Kuwait	c.3,700	/03	2.5m	c.148	US State Dep't human r'ts report
Lebanon	5,375	12/11/04	3.7m	145	NPA
Oman	2,020	/00	2.5m	81	United Nations 7 th Survey
Qatar	570	/00	599,000	95	United Nations 7 th Survey
Saudi Arabia	23,720	/00	21.6m	110	United Nations 7 th Survey
Syria	14,000	/97	15.0m	93	Conference paper, January 1998
United Arab Emirates	c.6,000	12/98	2.4m	c.250	Criminal justice experts in U.A.E
Yemen	14,000*	/98	16.9m	83*	PRI Newsletter 33, 1998
			*(government managed prisons only)		
Central Asia					
Kazakhstan	58,300	31/8/03	15.1m	386	Penal Reform International, Almaty
Kyrgyzstan	19,500	3/02	5.0m	390	NPA
Tajikistan	c.10,000	9/03	6.3m	c.159	Criminal justice expert, Tajikistan
Turkmenistan	c.22,000	10/00	4.5m	c.489	BBC, from Interfax
Uzbekistan	48,000	8/03	26.1m	184	NPA
South Central Asia					
Bangladesh	74,170	5/04	149.5m	50	NPA
India	313,635	mid-03	1,065.5m	29	National Human Rights Commission
Iran	133,658	7/04	69.0m	194	NPA
Maldive Is.	1,098*	/96	265,000	414*	Ministry of Justice, Maldive Islands
			*(sentenced prisoners only)		
Nepal	7,132	/02	24.2m	29	Penal Reform International
Pakistan	86,000	/04	157.3m	55	Criminal justice expert, Pakistan
Sri Lanka	20,975	31/12/03	19.15m	110	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
South Eastern Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	463	mid-04	366,000	127	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Cambodia	6,778	mid-04	14.5m	47	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Indonesia	84,357	9/03	219.9m	38	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Malaysia	43,424	mid-04	24.9m	174	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Myanmar (Burma)	c.60,000	04	50.1m	c.120	NPA
Philippines	70,383	/99	74.5m	94	UNAFEI, from crim. just. expert, Phil's
Singapore	16,835*	mid-04	4.3m	392*	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
			*(does not include those in drug rehabilitation centres run by the Singapore Prison Service)		
Thailand	168,264	31/12/04	63.85m	264	NPA
Timor-Leste	c.320	1/2/03	778,000	41	UN High Commiss'r for Human Rights
Vietnam	55,000	mid-98	77.6m	71	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Eastern Asia					
China	1,548,498*	12/03	1,308.7m	118*	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
			*(sentenced prisoners only)		
Japan	73,734	1/1/04	127.8m	58	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Korea (Republic of)	57,902	30/6/04	48.0m	121	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Mongolia	6,400	mid-04	2.6m	246	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Taiwan	57,037	11/04	22.7m	251	NPA
Hong Kong (China)	13,226	30/6/04	7.0m	189	NPA
Macau (China)	875	30/6/04	445,000	197	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference

Figures not available

South Central Asia: Afghanistan, Bhutan.

South Eastern Asia: Laos.

Eastern Asia: Korea (Democratic People's Republic of North Korea).

Table 4 EUROPE

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl. pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
Northern Europe					
Denmark	3,774	5/10/04	5.41m	70	NPA
Estonia	4,571	1/4/04	1.35m	339	NPA
Finland	3,719	15/4/04	5.22m	71	NPA
Iceland	115	1/9/04	292,000	39	NPA
Ireland	3,417	30/9/04	4.03m	85	NPA
Latvia	7,796	1/1/05	2.31m	337	NPA
Lithuania	8,063	1/1/04	3.45m	234	NPA
Norway	2,975	1/9/04	4.6m	65	NPA
Sweden	6,755	1/10/03	8.96m	75	NPA
United Kingdom					
– England & Wales	75,320	25/2/05	53.02m	142	NPA
– Northern Ireland	1,275	24/2/05	1.78m	72	NPA
– Scotland	6,742	25/2/05	5.11m	132	NPA
Faeroe Is. (Denmark)	14	5/10/04	46,700	30	Danish NPA
Guernsey (UK)	107	2/12/04	65,100	164	NPA
Isle of Man (UK)	62	24/11/04	74,800	83	NPA
Jersey (UK)	168	26/11/04	90,600	185	NPA
Southern Europe					
Albania	3,778	11/03	3.6m	105	NPA
Andorra	61	1/9/03	67,800	90	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Bosnia & Herzegovina					
– Federation	1,509	31/1/05	2.6m	58	Ministry of Justice, Federation of B+H
– Republika Srpska	1,052	31/12/04	1.4m	75	Ministry of Justice, B+H Rep. Srpska
Croatia	3,010	30/6/04	4.44m	68	NPA
Greece	8,760	16/12/04	10.65m	82	Ministry of Justice
Italy*	57,046	30/6/04	58.17m	98	NPA
*(by agreement with Italy, persons imprisoned by San Marino and Vatican City are held in Italian prisons.)					
Macedonia (F Yug Rep)	1,598	1/9/03	2.06m	78	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Malta	278	1/9/03	388,000	72	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Portugal	13,498	1/12/04	10.54m	128	NPA
Serbia & Montenegro					
– Serbia	7,487	1/9/03	8.1m	92	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
– Montenegro	734	1/9/03	680,000	108	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
– Kosovo	1,182	7/03	1.9m	62	Statistical Office of Kosovo
Slovenia	1,129	24/2/05	2.0m	56	NPA
Spain	59,899	18/2/05	42.93m	140	NPA
Gibraltar (UK)	19	17/12/04	27,800	68	NPA
Western Europe					
Austria	8,700	1/2/05	8.18m	106	NPA
Belgium	9,245	1/3/04	10.5m	88	NPA
France	55,028*	1/12/04	60.14m*	91	French Ministry of Justice
(metropolitan France, excluding departments and territories in Africa, the Americas and Oceania)					
Germany	79,329	31/8/04	82.60m	96	Federal Ministry of Justice
Liechtenstein*	18	1/9/03	34,200	53	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*(by agreement with Austria, some persons imprisoned by Liechtenstein are held in Austrian prisons.)					
Luxembourg	655	16/2/05	455,300	144	NPA
Monaco*	13	10/98	33,000	39	Information from Pierre Tournier
*(by agreement with France, some persons imprisoned by Monaco are held in French prisons.)					
Netherlands	19,999	1/7/04	16.32m	123	NPA
Switzerland	6,021	1/9/04	7.39m	81	Federal Statistical Office
Europe/Asia					
Armenia	2,866	1/4/04	3.21m	92	NPA
Azerbaijan	16,345	1/9/03	8.24m	198	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Cyprus	355*	1/9/03	709,000*	50	NPA
* (does not include the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Including TRNC the population of Cyprus is estimated at about 809,000 in 2003, plus about 100,000 Turkish settlers.)					
Georgia	7,091	18/8/04	4.3m	165	PRI
Russian Federation	763,054	1/1/05	143.4m	532	NPA
Turkey	67,772	3/04	71.43m	95	NPA

Table 4 EUROPE (continued)

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl. pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
Central and Eastern Europe					
Belarus	52,500	/03	9.87m	532	Ministry of Internal Affairs
Bulgaria	11,060	1/2/05	7.76m	143	NPA
Czech Republic	18,830	31/1/05	10.22m	184	NPA
Hungary	16,700	20/11/03	10.11m	165	NPA
Moldova	10,729*	1/9/03	3.61m*	297	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*(does not include the internationally unrecognised Transdniestria. Including Transdniestria the national population of Moldova is estimated at 4.3 millions.)					
Poland	79,087	31/10/04	38.17m	209	NPA
Romania	39,015	11/1/05	21.65m	180	NPA
Slovakia	8,891	8/1/04	5.38m	165	NPA
Ukraine	198,386	1/9/03	47.7m	416	C of E Annual Penal Statistics

Table 5 OCEANIA

	Prison population total (no. in penal institutions incl. pre-trial detainees)	Date	Estimated national population	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population)	Source of prison population total
Australia	23,362	mid-04	19.9m	117	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Fiji	1,083	mid-04	847,000	128	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Kiribati	81	mid-04	100,800	80	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Marshall Is.	23	/94	52,000	44	United Nations 5th Survey
Micronesia, Fed States of	39	/97	114,000	34	F S Micronesia Statistical Yearbook
Nauru	6	2/03	12,500	48	'The Grand Island Independent', Nebraska, USA
New Zealand	6,802	mid-04	4.06m	168	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Palau	103	19/2/03	19,700	523	Ministry of Justice
Papua New Guinea	3,302	mid-02	5.0m	66	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Samoa	281	12/11/03	178,000	158	NPA
Solomon Is.	275	mid-04	491,000	56	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Tonga	116	mid-04	110,200	105	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Tuvalu	6	mid-00	10,800	56	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Vanuatu	93	mid-03	212,000	44	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
American Samoa (US)	174	31/12/03	57,900	301	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Cook Is. (NZ)	19	mid-03	21,000	90	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
French Polynesia (France)	327	1/12/04	250,000	131	French Ministry of Justice
Guam (US)	579	31/12/03	164,000	353	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
New Caledonia (France)	286	1/12/04	235,000	122	French Ministry of Justice
Northern Mariana Is. (US)	136	31/12/03	78,400	173	US Bureau of Justice Statistics

Abbreviations	C of E	Council of Europe	PRI	Penal Reform International
	ILANUD	UN Latin American Institute	UNAFEI	UN Asia and Far East Institute
	NPA	National prison administration	UNDP	UN Development Programme

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