

World Prison Population List (eighth edition)

Roy Walmsley

Introduction

This eighth edition of the World Prison Population List gives details of the number of prisoners held in 218 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 in early December 2008.

This is the third edition of the List to be published by the International Centre for Prison Studies and it complements the information which ICPS already publishes and updates monthly on the World Prison Brief section of its website www.prisonstudies.org.

The World Prison Population List is compiled 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 2006 and the end of November 2008. 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.

A number of points need to be noted. Figures are not available for six 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 official national totals if they are not under the authority of the prison administration.

It is hoped that this edition of the World Prison Population List will be found useful by those who are studying the extent of imprisonment world-wide or are interested in variations in criminal justice practice. The data 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

- ▶ More than 9.8 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, mostly as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or as sentenced prisoners. Almost half of these are in the United States (2.29m), Russia (0.89m) or China (1.57m sentenced prisoners). A further 850,000 are held in 'administrative detention' in China; if these are included the overall Chinese total is over 2.4 million and the world total over 10.65 million.
- ▶ The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, 756 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by Russia (629), Rwanda (604), St Kitts & Nevis (588), Cuba (c.531), U.S. Virgin Is. (512), British Virgin Is. (488), Palau (478), Belarus (468), Belize (455), Bahamas (422), Georgia (415), American Samoa (410), Grenada (408) and Anguilla (401).
- ▶ Almost three fifths of countries (59%) have rates below 150 per 100,000.
- ▶ The world population in 2008 is estimated at 6,750 million (United Nations); set against a world prison population of 9.8 million this produces a world prison population rate of 145 per 100,000 (158 per 100,000 if set against a world prison population of 10.65 million).
- ▶ 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 35 whereas for southern African countries it is 231;
 - in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 154 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 324.5;
 - in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian sub-continent) is 53 whereas for (ex-Soviet) central Asian countries it is 184;
 - in Europe the median rate for southern and western European countries is 95 whereas for the countries spanning Europe and Asia (e.g. Russia & Turkey) it is 229.
 - in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 102.5.
- ▶ 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 71% of these countries (in 64% of countries in Africa, 83% in the Americas, 76% in Asia, 68% in Europe and 60% in Oceania).

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	54,000	11/07	34.1m	158	NPA
Egypt	64,378	31/12/06	76.15m	87	United Nations 10th Survey
Libya	12,748	6/07	6.1m	209	NPA
Morocco	53,580	31/12/06	32.15m	167	NPA
Sudan	c.12,000	3/03	33.2m	c.36	NPA
Tunisia	c.26,000	/04	9.9m	c.263	Tunisian Human Rights League
Western Africa					
Benin	6,083	1/08	9.15m	66	Non-gov't organisations in Benin
Burkina Faso	2,800	9/02	12.2m	23	NPA
Cape Verde	755	12/99	423,000	178	NPA
Côte d'Ivoire	10,621*	31/12/07	19.2m	55*	US State Dep't human rights report
*Relates only to prisons under Government control.					
Gambia	450	9/02	1.4m	32	NPA
Ghana	12,736	29/9/06	23.0m	55	NPA
Guinea (Conakry)	3,070	mid-02	8.4m	37	NPA
Liberia	1,022	8/07	3.5m	29	NPA
Mali	4,407	/04	13.4m	33	Ministry of Justice, Mali
Mauritania	815	12/05	3.1m	26	US State Dep't human rights report
Niger	5,709	27/5/06	12.5m	46	NPA
Nigeria	39,438	31/1/07	143.0m	28	NPA
Senegal	6,425	10/4/07	12.1m	53	NPA
Sierra Leone	1,899	30/9/07	5.8m	33	Prison Watch, Sierra Leone
Togo	3,200	8/03	4.9m	65	Afrol News
Central Africa					
Angola	c.8,300	10/05	16.0m	c.52	NPA
Cameroon	22,734	av.04-05	16.3m	139	Ministry of Justice, Cameroon
Central African Rep.	1,233	10/07	4.2m	29	US State Dep't human rights report
Chad	3,416	8/05	9.7m	35	US State Dep't human rights report
Congo (Brazzaville)	c.900	/06	4.1m	c.22	US State Dep't human rights report
Gabon	c.2,750	2/06	1.4m	c.196	US State Dep't human rights report
Dem. Repub. Congo	c.30,000	1/04	52.8m	c.57	Crim. justice experts, D.R.Congo
Sao Tome e Principe	160	7/06	193,400	83	NPA
Eastern Africa					
Burundi	9,114	31/5/08	8.8m	104	NPA
Comoros	c.200	/98	658,000	c.30	Criminal justice expert, Comoros
Djibouti	384	16/12/99	629,000	61	Min. of Foreign Affairs, Djibouti
Ethiopia	c.80,000	10/9/07	82.0m	c.98	US State Dep't human rights report
Kenya	47,036	9/06	36.2m	130	'The Nation', Kenya
Madagascar	17,495	31/12/06	19.3m	91	NPA
Malawi	10,830	31/12/07	13.9m	78	NPA
Mauritius	2,223	9/5/08	1.3m	171	NPA
Mozambique	c.15,000	/07	20.5m	c.53	NPA
Rwanda	58,598*	31/12/07	9.7m	604*	US State Dep't human rights report
*Prison population includes about 39,000 sentenced or awaiting trial in connection with the genocide of 1994.					
Seychelles	221	/07	81,900	270	US State Dep't human rights report
Tanzania	43,911	1/9/06	39.0m	113	NPA
Uganda	26,273	30/4/07	30.8m	88	NPA
Zambia	14,347	2/12/05	11.8m	122	NPA
Zimbabwe	17,967	18/6/07	13.2m	136	NPA
Mayotte (France)	179	1/10/07	210,570	85	French Ministry of Justice
Réunion (France)	1,307	1/10/07	810,000	161	French Ministry of Justice
Southern Africa					
Botswana	5,917	31/5/07	1.8m	329	NPA
Lesotho	2,701	25/7/07	1.88m	144	NPA
Namibia	4,064	31/12/07	2.1m	194	NPA
South Africa	164,297	31/10/08	49.0m	335	NPA
Swaziland	2,546	2/6/08	1.1m	231	NPA

Figures not available

Western Africa: Guinea Bissau. **Central Africa:** Equatorial Guinea.

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	38,348*	07-08	33.1m	116	Statistics Canada
*Average daily population, including young offenders, 1/4/2007-31/3/2008.					
USA	2,293,157	31/12/07	303.15m	756	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bermuda (UK)	261	31/10/07	66,300	394	NPA
Greenland (Denmark)	188	27/11/07	56,340	334	Danish NPA
Central America					
Belize	1,334	1/6/08	293,000	455	NPA
Costa Rica	8,924	31/10/08	4.5m	198	NPA
El Salvador	14,682	12/07	7.05m	208	US State Dep't human rights report
Guatemala	7,477	31/12/06	13.05m	57	US State Dep't human rights report
Honduras	11,589	9/12/05	7.2m	161	NPA
Mexico	222,671	30/9/08	107.4m	207	NPA
Nicaragua	6,060	12/06	5.65m	107	US State Dep't human rights report
Panama	10,036	17/11/08	3.4m	295	NPA
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	208	1/08	69,650	299	NPA
Bahamas	1,400	/07	332,000	422	US State Dep't human rights report
Barbados	1,030	2/08	271,500	379	'The Nation', Barbados
Cuba	c.60,000	11/06	11.3m	c.531	Prof. Nils Christie, Oslo University
Dominica	254	30/8/07	73,000	348	NPA
Dominican Republic	16,457	30/9/08	10.0m	165	NPA
Grenada	367	/07	90,000	408	US State Dep't human rights report
Haiti	6,370	10/07	9.0m	71	US State Dep't human rights report
Jamaica	4,709	1/10/07	2.7m	174	NPA
St Kitts & Nevis	232	11/07	39,430	588	Jail delivery, St Kitts & Nevis
St Lucia	503	9/05	166,000	303	NPA
St Vincent & Grenadines	376	/07	118,150	317	US State Dep't human rights report
Trinidad & Tobago	3,510	31/12/07	1.3m	270	US State Dep't human rights report
Anguilla (UK)	55	9/10/07	13,730	401	NPA
Aruba (Netherlands)	277	6/07	100,000	277	C of E CPT report
Cayman Islands (UK)	207	31/8/08	54,430	380	NPA
Guadeloupe (France)	790	1/10/07	453,000	174	French Ministry of Justice
Martinique (France)	763	1/10/07	399,000	191	French Ministry of Justice
Neth. Antilles (Netherlands)	713	mid-07	223,650	319	C of E CPT report & prison director
Puerto Rico (US)	13,215	31/12/07	4.0m	330	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Virgin Islands (UK)	117	26/5/08	24,000	488	NPA
Virgin Islands (US)	555	31/12/07	108,330	512	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
South America					
Argentina	60,621	31/12/06	39.3m	154	Ministry of Justice, Argentina
Bolivia	7,682	10/06	9.4m	82	NPA
Brazil	440,013	6/08	194.2m	227	NPA
Chile	51,244	31/10/08	16.8m	305	NPA
Colombia	69,689	9/08	46.7m	149	NPA
Ecuador	17,065	8/08	13.5m	126	NPA
Guyana	1,955	1/12/06	752,000	260	NPA
Paraguay	6,031	27/11/08	6.2m	97	NPA
Peru	41,745	1/08	28.5m	146	NPA
Suriname	c.1,600	/05	449,000	356	US State Dep't human rights report
Uruguay	6,947	31/8/06	3.6m	193	NPA
Venezuela	22,000	4/08	28.0m	79	'Venezuela Analysis', Venezuela
French Guiana/Guyane (France)	746	1/10/07	204,500	365	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	701	/04	739,000	95	United Nations 9th Survey
Iraq	27,366	30/6/08	29.5m	93	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
Israel	22,788	3/08	7.0m	326	NPA
Jordan	c.7,500	4/08	6.1m	c.123	NPA
Kuwait	c.3,500	/05	2.7m	c.130	US State Dep't human rights report
Lebanon	5,870	/07	3.7m	159	NPA
Oman	2,020	/00	2.5m	81	United Nations 7th Survey
Qatar	465	31/12/04	850,000	55	United Nations 9th Survey
Saudi Arabia	28,612	/02	21.7m	132	United Nations 8th Survey
Syria	10,599	/04	18.2m	58	United Nations 9th Survey
United Arab Emirates	11,193	/06	4.7m	238	United Nations 10th Survey
Yemen	14,000*	/98	16.9m	83*	PRI Newsletter 33, 1998
			*Government managed prisons only.		
Central Asia					
Kazakhstan	56,012	1/1/08	14.8m	378	Penal Reform International, Almaty
Kyrgyzstan	8,427	1/3/08	5.4m	156	Penal Reform International, Almaty
Tajikistan	7,350	1/1/08	6.75m	109	Penal Reform International, Almaty
Turkmenistan	10,953	/06	4.9m	224	United Nations 10th Survey
Uzbekistan	48,000	8/03	26.1m	184	NPA
South Central Asia					
Afghanistan	9,600	1/07	31.8m	30	United Nations, Kabul
Bangladesh	83,000	19/9/08	161.3m	51	NPA
India	373,271	31/12/06	1,127.5m	33	National Crime Records Bureau
Iran	158,351	8/07	71.3m	222	NPA
Maldives	1,125*	/04	328,000	343*	United Nations 9th Survey
			*Sentenced prisoners only.		
Nepal	c.6,700	1/1/08	28.5m	c.24	Home Ministry, Nepal
Pakistan	90,000	/07	164.6m	55	US State Dep't human rights report
Sri Lanka	25,537	31/7/07	21.1m	121	NPA
South Eastern Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	486	13/8/07	391,000	124	NPA
Cambodia	10,337	mid-07	14.6m	71	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Indonesia	136,017	10/08	236.0m	58	NPA
Laos	4,020	mid-04	5.8m	69	NPA
Malaysia	50,305	mid-07	26.2m	192	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Myanmar (Burma)	65,063	mid-07	51.5m	126	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Philippines	91,530	/06	84.5m	108	United Nations 10th Survey
Singapore	11,768	avrge 07	4.4m	267	NPA
Thailand	166,338	2/08	64.7m	257	NPA
Timor-Leste	c.320	1/2/03	778,000	41	UN High Commiss'r for Human Rights
Vietnam	98,556	mid-06	85.3m	116	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Eastern Asia					
China	1,565,771*	31/12/05	1,319.7m	119*	NPA
			*Sentenced prisoners only. According to official statistics a further 850,000 are held in two types of 'administrative detention'.		
Japan	81,255	31/12/06	128.25m	63	NPA
Korea (Republic of)	47,097	30/6/08	48.4m	97	NPA
Mongolia	6,593	mid-06	2.7m	244	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Taiwan	63,370	31/10/08	22.94m	276	NPA
Hong Kong (China)	10,434	30/9/08	7.3m	143	NPA
Macau (China)	894	31/8/08	554,600	161	Macau statistical directorate (DSEC)

Figures not available

South Central Asia: Bhutan.

Eastern Asia: Korea (Democratic People's Republic of 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	3,448	4/9/08	5.49m	63	NPA
Estonia	3,467	1/1/08	1.34m	259	NPA
Finland	3,370	1/1/08	5.30m	64	NPA
Iceland	140	1/9/08	318,700	44	NPA
Ireland	3,325	26/10/07	4.39m	76	NPA
Latvia	6,548	1/1/08	2.27m	288	NPA
Lithuania	7,866	1/1/08	3.36m	234	Statistics Lithuania
Norway	3,276	1/8/08	4.74m	69	NPA
Sweden	6,770	1/10/07	9.17m	74	NPA
United Kingdom					
– England & Wales	83,392	28/11/08	54.56m	153	NPA
– Northern Ireland	1,562	24/11/08	1.78m	88	NPA
– Scotland	7,893	28/11/08	5.18m	152	NPA
Faeroe Is. (Denmark)	11	avrge 07	47,500	23	Danish NPA
Guernsey (UK)	74	30/9/08	65,765	113	NPA
Isle of Man (UK)	97	29/9/08	76,300	127	NPA
Jersey (UK)	186	30/9/08	91,590	203	NPA
Southern Europe					
Albania	5,041	6/08	3.18m	159	NPA
Andorra	30	1/9/06	80,300	37	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Bosnia & Herzegovina					
– Federation	1,750	30/4/08	2.6m	67	Ministry of Justice, Federation of B&H
– Republika Srpska	928	1/9/07	1.4m	66	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Croatia	4,127	1/7/07	4.44m	93	NPA
Cyprus	671*	31/8/08	805,100*	83	NPA
					*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).
Greece	12,300	11/08	11.25m	109	Ministry of Justice, Greece
Italy*	55,057	30/6/08	59.86m	92	Ministry of Justice, Italy
					*By agreement with Italy, persons imprisoned by Vatican City are held in Italian prisons.
Kosovo/Kosova*	c.1,300	2/06	2.1m	c.62	UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)
					*Recognised as independent by 52 countries at the end of November 2008.
Macedonia (F Yug Rep)	2,200	3/08	2.05m	107	'Southeast European Times'
Malta	387	avrge 07	409,200	95	Ministry of Justice & Home Affairs, Malta
Montenegro	734	1/9/03	680,000	108	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Portugal	11,017	15/11/08	10.63m	104	NPA
San Marino*	1	1/9/06	30,200	-*	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
					*By agreement with Italy, most persons imprisoned by San Marino are held in Italian prisons.
Serbia	8,978	1/9/07	7.38m	122	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Slovenia	1,317	1/9/08	2.04m	65	NPA
Spain	73,687	28/11/08	46.02m	160	NPA
Gibraltar (UK)	43	24/9/08	28,010	154	NPA
Western Europe					
Austria	7,909	1/8/08	8.35m	95	NPA
Belgium	10,002	17/6/08	10.71m	93	NPA
France	59,655*	1/7/08	62.10m*	96	NPA
					*Metropolitan France, excluding departments and territories in Africa, the Americas and Oceania.
Germany	73,203	31/8/08	82.16m	89	German Federal Statistical Office
Liechtenstein*	7	5/9/07	35,400	20	C of E CPT report
					*By agreement with Austria, some persons imprisoned by Liechtenstein are held in Austrian prisons.
Luxembourg	745	1/9/07	481,300	155	Ministry of Justice, Luxembourg
Monaco*	36	1/9/07	34,400	105	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
					*By agreement with France, some persons imprisoned by Monaco are held in French prisons.
Netherlands	16,416	31/8/08	16.44m	100	NPA
Switzerland	5,715	5/9/07	7.56m	76	Swiss Federal Statistical Office
Europe/Asia					
Armenia	3,520	1/10/07	3.23m	109	NPA
Azerbaijan	19,559	31/12/06	8.53m	229	United Nations 10th Survey
Georgia*	18,170	31/1/08	4.38m	415	NPA
					* Does not include Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have declared independence from Georgia.
Russian Federation	891,738	1/11/08	141.83m	629	NPA
Turkey	101,100	1/11/08	71.33m	142	NPA

Table 4 cont. 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
Central and Eastern Europe					
Belarus	45,416	31/12/06	9.71m	468	United Nations 10th Survey
Bulgaria	10,271	1/1/08	7.64m	134	NPA
Czech Republic	18,901	31/12/07	10.38m	182	NPA
Hungary	14,911	2/9/08	10.04m	149	NPA
Moldova	8,130*	1/9/07	3.58m*	227	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Transdnistria/Transnistria/Pridnestrovie.					
Poland	84,321	31/10/08	38.11m	221	NPA
Romania	26,551	25/11/08	21.49m	124	NPA
Slovakia	7,986	31/12/07	5.40m	148	NPA
Ukraine	149,690	1/1/08	46.37m	323	NPA

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	27,615	30/6/08	21.37m	129	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Fiji	892	/08	844,000	106	NPA
Kiribati	88	31/5/07	107,600	82	NPA
Marshall Islands	47	/06	60,400	78	US State Dep't human rights report
Micronesia, Fed States of	72	/05	108,100	67	F S Micronesia Statistical Yearbook
Nauru	3	30/4/05	13,000	23	NPA
New Zealand	7,887	30/6/08	4.27m	185	NPA
Palau	97	30/4/05	20,300	478	NPA
Papua New Guinea	4,056	30/4/05	5.9m	69	NPA
Samoa	186	26/9/07	187,000	99	NPA
Solomon Islands	211	7/6/07	501,000	42	NPA
Tonga	86	mid-07	117,000	74	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Tuvalu	3	26/7/07	12,000	25	NPA
Vanuatu	117	21/6/07	219,000	53	NPA
American Samoa (US)	236	31/12/07	57,580	410	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Cook Islands (NZ)	27	4/05	21,400	126	NPA
French Polynesia (France)	404	1/10/07	264,500	153	French Ministry of Justice
Guam (US)	559	29/7/08	176,000	318	NPA
New Caledonia (France)	326	1/10/07	245,000	133	French Ministry of Justice
Northern Mariana Is. (US)	131	10/7/08	86,600	151	NPA

Abbreviations	C of E PRI	Council of Europe Penal Reform International	NPA	National prison administration
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Roy Walmsley is a consultant to the United Nations and an Associate of the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS), King's College, London. At ICPS he is director of the World Prison Brief, a comprehensive database of information on the prison systems of the world, which is available free of charge at www.prisonstudies.org

He has also produced the World Female Imprisonment List (June 2006) and the World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List (January 2008), which complement the World Prison Population List and the World Prison Brief and were both published by ICPS.



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