

World Prison Population List

(tenth edition)

Roy Walmsley

Introduction

This tenth edition of the World Prison Population List gives details of the number of prisoners held in 222 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 beginning of October 2013.

The first five editions of the List were published by the Research and Statistics Directorate of the UK Home Office; this is the fifth 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 September 2011 and September 2013. 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 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 complete, notably for China, and they are not available for Eritrea, Guinea Bissau, Somalia and North Korea (D.P.R.K.). Again, 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 a form of custody which is not under the authority of the prison administration are usually omitted from official national totals.

It is hoped that this edition of the World Prison Population List will be found useful by those who are studying the use 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 10.2 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 (2.24m), Russia (0.68m) or China (1.64m sentenced prisoners). In addition at least 650,000 are reported to be in pre-trial or 'administrative' detention in China and 150,000 in North Korea (D.P.R.K.); if these were included the world total would be more than 11 million.
- ▶ The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, 716 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by St Kitts & Nevis (714), Seychelles (709), U.S. Virgin Is. (539), Barbados (521), Cuba (510), Rwanda (492), Anguilla – U.K. (487), Belize (476), Russian Federation (475), British Virgin Is. (460) and Sint Maarten – Netherlands (458).
- ▶ However, more than half of countries and territories (54%) have rates below 150 per 100,000.
- ▶ The world population at the beginning of 2013 was about 7.1 billion (from United Nations figures); set against the world prison population of 10.2 million this produces a world prison population rate of 144 per 100,000 (155 per 100,000 if set against a world prison population of 11 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 46 whereas for southern African countries it is 205;
 - in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 202 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 376;
 - in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian sub-continent) is 62 whereas for eastern Asian countries it is 159.5;
 - in Europe the median rate for western European countries is 98 whereas for the countries spanning Europe and Asia (e.g. Russia & Turkey) it is 225.
 - in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 151.
- ▶ Prison populations are growing in all five continents. In the 15 years since the first edition of the World Prison Population List the estimated world prison population has increased by some 25-30% but at the same time the world population has risen by over 20%. The world prison population rate has risen by about 6% from 136 per 100,000 of the world population to the current rate of 144.

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	60,000	5/13	36.96m	162	NPA
Egypt	c. 66,000	/11	82.5m	c. 80	US State Dep't human rights report
Libya	5,328	24/1/13	6.55m	81	NPA
Morocco	72,000	1/1/13	32.75m	220	NPA
Sudan	20,000	/11	36.0m	56	US State Dep't human rights report
Tunisia	21,300	/12	10.7m	199	NPA
Western Africa					
Benin	6,908	/10	9.2m	75	Ombudsman's report, Benin
Burkina Faso	4,899	31/12/12	17.68m	28	Ministry of Justice
Cape Verde	1,348	/12	504,000	267	US State Dep't human rights report
Côte d'Ivoire	7,086	31/12/12	20.8m	34	US State Dep't human rights report
Gambia	c. 1,000	31/12/12	1.8m	c. 56	US State Dep't human rights report
Ghana	14,021	26/8/13	26.18m	54	NPA
Guinea (Conakry)	c. 2,600	/12	10.5m	c. 25	US State Dep't human rights report
Liberia	1,930	/12	4.2m	46	NPA
Mali	5,817	28/9/11	15.94m	36	US State Dep't human rights report
Mauritania	1,602	/12	3.6m	45	Ministry of Justice
Niger	6,899	/12	16.6m	42	US State Dep't human rights report
Nigeria	54,144	31/5/13	169.9m	32	NPA
Senegal	8,428	21/12/12	13.25m	64	NPA
Sierra Leone	3,281	18/9/13	6.28m	52	NPA
Togo	4,060	20/12/12	6.35m	64	US State Dep't human rights report
Central Africa					
Angola	21,634	6/13	20.64m	105	Ministry of the Interior
Cameroon	24,000	12/11	20.2m	119	US State Dep't human rights report
Central African Rep.	845	11/11	4.5m	19	US State Dep't human rights report
Chad	4,831	25/1/12	11.7m	41	NPA
Congo (Brazzaville)	c. 1,300	31/12/12	4.25m	c. 31	US State Dep't human rights report
Dem. Rep. of Congo	c. 22,000	/10	66.0m	c. 33	Joint Prison Coordination, D.R. Congo
Equatorial Guinea	c. 650	/12	686,000	c. 95	US State Dep't human rights report
Gabon	c. 2,750	2/06	1.4m	c. 196	US State Dep't human rights report
Sao Tome e Principe	217	/12	169,000	128	US State Dep't human rights report
South Sudan	c. 7,000	4/13	10.7m	c. 65	NPA
Eastern Africa					
Burundi	6,477	28/2/13	8.95m	72	NPA
Comoros	c. 120	/12	773,000	c. 16	US State Dep't human rights report
Djibouti	750	/11	906,000	83	US State Dep't human rights report
Ethiopia	112,361	2009-10	82.42m	136	Central Statistics Agency, Ethiopia
Kenya	52,000	10/12	42.97m	121	Legal Resources Foundation
Madagascar	18,507	/12	21.19m	87	US State Dep't human rights report
Malawi	12,236	31/12/12	16.05m	76	NPA
Mauritius	2,663	16/1/13	1.32m	202	NPA
Mozambique	15,249	10/10	23.56m	65	NPA
Rwanda	55,618*	31/12/12	11.3m	492*	US State Dep't human rights report
*The prison population includes many thousands sentenced or awaiting trial in connection with the genocide of 1994.					
Seychelles	628	30/10/12	88,600	709	US State Dep't human rights report
Tanzania	36,552	1/13	47.0m	78	Parliamentary committee, Tanzania
Uganda	34,940	30/11/12	36.0m	97	NPA
Zambia	17,021	17/9/13	14.29m	119	NPA
Zimbabwe	16,902	2/13	13.1m	129	NPA
Mayotte (France)	185	1/9/13	218,300	85	French Ministry of Justice
Réunion (France)	1,138	1/9/13	878,000	130	French Ministry of Justice
Southern Africa					
Botswana	4,241	12/12	2.07m	205	US State Dep't human rights report
Lesotho	2,564	/12	2.12m	121	US State Dep't human rights report
Namibia	4,314	10/11	2.26m	191	Ombudsman's Office, Namibia
South Africa	156,370	20/8/13	53.1m	294	NPA
Swaziland	3,411	3/12	1.2m	284	NPA

Figures not available W. Africa: Guinea Bissau. E. 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	40,544*	2011-12	34.45m	118	Statistics Canada
*Average daily population, including young offenders, 1/4/2011-31/3/2012.					
USA	2,239,751	31/12/11	312.72m	716	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bermuda (UK)	271	5/12	65,000	417	Bermuda prison administration
Greenland (Denmark)	170	1/12/12	56,400	301	Danish NPA
Central America					
Belize	1,562	31/12/12	328,000	476	US State Dep't human rights report
Costa Rica	14,963	31/7/12	4.77m	314	NPA
El Salvador	26,568	27/5/13	6.3m	422	NPA
Guatemala	16,336	13/8/13	15.5m	105	NPA
Honduras	12,263	1/13	8.0m	153	Office of the Attorney General
Mexico	246,226	30/6/13	117.05m	210	NPA
Nicaragua	9,168	31/12/12	6.0m	153	Government of Nicaragua
Panama	15,126	31/8/13	3.68m	411	NPA
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	371	25/7/13	92,000	403	NPA
Bahamas	1,600	8/12	360,000	444	NPA
Barbados	1,507	21/6/13	289,000	521	Minister of State for National Security
Cuba	57,337	5/12	11.25m	510	El diario oficial Granma
Dominica	266	3/13	68,000	391	NPA
Dominican Republic	24,744	10/5/13	10.3m	240	NPA
Grenada	441	/12	104,000	424	US State Dep't human rights report
Haiti	9,936	4/8/13	10.4m	96	United Nations mission (MINUSTAH)
Jamaica	4,201	22/9/13	2.77m	152	NPA
St Kitts & Nevis	330	26/8/13	46,200	714	NPA
St Lucia	568	11/12	179,000	317	US State Dep't human rights report
St Vincent & Grenadines	410	/12	109,000	376	US State Dep't human rights report
Trinidad & Tobago	3,800	avrge 12	1.35m	281	US State Dep't human rights report
Anguilla (UK)	76	18/12/12	15,600	487	Anguilla prison administration
Aruba (Netherlands)	235	9/12	104,700	224	US State Dep't human rights report
Cayman Islands (UK)	185	avrge 12	56,100	330	Cayman Is. government publication
Curacao (Netherlands)	440	/12	152,000	289	US State Dep't human rights report
Guadeloupe (France)	871	1/9/13	470,000	185	French Ministry of Justice
Martinique (France)	918	1/9/13	411,000	223	French Ministry of Justice
Puerto Rico (US)	11,452	31/12/11	3.68m	311	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
St Maarten (Netherlands)	180	11/12	39,300	458	US State Dep't human rights report
Virgin Islands (UK)	138	7/12	30,000	460	British Virgin Is. prison administration
Virgin Islands (US)	587	1/1/11	109,000	539	US Virgin Is. prison administration
South America					
Argentina	60,789	31/12/11	41.33m	147	Ministry of Justice
Bolivia	14,770	/13	10.53m	140	Andean Information Network
Brazil	548,003	12/12	199.8m	274	NPA
Chile	46,718	31/7/13	17.57m	266	NPA
Colombia	118,201	31/7/13	48.24m	245	NPA
Ecuador	21,080	12/12	14.15m	149	Ministry of Justice
Guyana	1,962	31/10/11	755,000	260	NPA
Paraguay	7,901	23/9/12	6.71m	118	NPA
Peru	61,390	12/12	30.34m	202	NPA
Suriname	994	/12	535,000	186	NPA
Uruguay	9,524	31/7/12	3.39m	281	Ministry of the Interior
Venezuela	48,262	/12	30.0m	161	Ministry of Penitentiary Services
French Guiana/ Guyane (France)	694	1/9/13	250,000	278	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	2,307	/12	839,000	275	US State Dep't human rights report
Iraq	37,014	30/6/12	33.7m	110	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
Israel	17,279	31/12/12	7.75m	223	NPA
Jordan	6,066	6/12/11	6.4m	95	NPA
Kuwait	4,179	/10	3.05m	137	US State Dep't human rights report
Lebanon	5,094	13/12/12	4.33m	118	US State Dep't human rights report
Oman	1,403	/02	2.3m	61	United Nations 8th Survey
Qatar	c. 1,150	/11	1.92m	c. 60	US State Dep't human rights report
Saudi Arabia	47,000	2/13	29.1m	162	NPA
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	14,150	2/13	25.93m	55	NPA
Central Asia					
Kazakhstan	48,684	1/1/13	16.49m	295	NPA, via Penal Reform International
Kyrgyzstan	9,828	1/1/12	5.43m	181	NPA, via Penal Reform International
Tajikistan	9,317	12/10	7.15m	130	NPA
Turkmenistan	10,953	/06	4.9m	224	United Nations 10th Survey
Uzbekistan	c. 42,000	3/12	27.7m	c. 152	NPA
South Central Asia					
Afghanistan	25,289	/12	33.1m	76	US State Dep't human rights report
Bangladesh	72,104	16/4/13	170.58m	42	Official sources
Bhutan	1,001	7/11	740,000	135	National Assembly Human Rights Committee
India	385,135	31/12/12	1,266.8m	30	National Crime Records Bureau
Iran	217,000	25/12/12	76.4m	284	NPA
Maldives	994*	/12	324,000	307*	US State Dep't human rights report
*Sentenced prisoners only.					
Nepal	14,936	8/12	31.08m	48	NPA
Pakistan	74,944	31/12/12	194.6m	39	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
Sri Lanka	27,000	9/13	20.5m	132	NPA
South Eastern Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	507	9/12	414,500	122	US State Dep't human rights report
Cambodia	15,397	11/12	14.52m	106	Ministry of the Interior
Indonesia	144,332	31/12/12	245.01m	59	Ministry of Law and Human Rights
Laos	4,020	mid-04	5.8m	69	NPA
Malaysia	39,144	6/13	29.74m	132	Ministry of Home Affairs
Myanmar (Burma)	60,053	mid-09	50.0m	120	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Philippines	108,305	31/12/12	97.2m	111	NPA
Singapore	12,504	31/12/12	5.44m	230	NPA
Thailand	279,854	1/8/13	70.4m	398	NPA
Timor-Leste	295	/12	1.17m	25	US State Dep't human rights report
Vietnam	130,180	mid-12	89.7m	145	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Eastern Asia					
China	1,640,000*	mid-12	1,354.1m	121*	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
*Sentenced prisoners only. The total does not include those in pre-trial detention or 'administrative detention'.					
Japan	64,932	30/6/13	127.26m	51	Ministry of Justice
Korea (Republic of)	48,497	30/6/13	48.84m	99	NPA
Mongolia	8,193	1/10/12	2.85m	287	NPA
Taiwan	65,288	30/4/13	23.34m	280	Ministry of Justice
Hong Kong (China)	9,189	30/6/13	7.19m	128	Hong Kong prison administration
Macau (China)	1,083	31/10/12	566,200	191	Macau statistical directorate (DSEC)

Figures not available Eastern Asia: North 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	4,091	1/9/13	5.61m	73	NPA
Estonia	3,186	30/9/13	1.34m	238	Ministry of Justice
Finland	3,134	1/1/13	5.43m	58	NPA
Iceland	152	1/9/13	321,400	47	NPA
Ireland	4,068	30/9/13	4.6m	88	NPA
Latvia	6,117	1/1/13	2.01m	304	NPA
Lithuania	9,729	1/1/13	2.96m	329	NPA
Norway	3,649	1/9/13	5.1m	72	NPA
Sweden	6,364	1/10/12	9.53m	67	NPA
United Kingdom					
– England & Wales	84,430	27/9/13	57.06m	148	Ministry of Justice
– Northern Ireland	1,851	27/9/13	1.84m	101	NPA
– Scotland	7,855	27/9/13	5.33m	147	NPA
Faeroe Is. (Denmark)	10	avrg 12	48,230	21	Danish NPA
Guernsey (UK)	97	4/13	65,800	147	Guernsey prison administration
Isle of Man (UK)	97	9/9/13	86,700	112	Isle of Man prison administration
Jersey (UK)	163	10/9/13	98,750	165	Jersey prison administration
Southern Europe					
Albania	4,505	1/1/13	2.85m	158	Council of Europe
Andorra	33	1/1/13	86,900	38	Council of Europe
Bosnia & Herzegovina					
– Federation	1,883	1/1/13	2.35m	80	Council of Europe
– Republika Srpska	1,027	31/12/12	1.4m	73	Rep. Srpska prison administration
Croatia	4,741	1/1/13	4.38m	108	Council of Europe
Cyprus	905*	1/9/11	854,700*	106	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).					
Greece	12,479	1/1/12	11.29m	111	NPA
Italy	64,835	31/8/13	61.14m	106	Ministry of Justice
Kosovo/Kosova	1,691	31/12/12	1.82m	93	US State Dept human rights report
Macedonia (F Yug Rep)	2,515	1/9/11	2.06m	122	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Malta	610	1/7/13	420,050	145	Ministry of Justice & Home Affairs
Montenegro	1,297	1/1/13	622,600	208	Council of Europe
Portugal	14,264	1/9/13	10.49m	136	NPA
San Marino	2*	1/9/11	32,100	6*	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*By agreement with Italy, most persons imprisoned by San Marino are held in Italian prisons.					
Serbia	10,226	31/12/12	7.21m	142	NPA
Slovenia	1,357	1/9/13	2.06m	66	NPA
Spain	68,220	23/8/13	46.27m	147	NPA
Gibraltar (UK)	70	avrg 11	29,450	238	Gibraltar prison administration
Western Europe					
Austria	8,273	1/1/13	8.48m	98	NPA
Belgium	12,126	1/1/13	11.19m	108	Council of Europe
France	62,443*	1/9/13	63.94m*	98	NPA
*Metropolitan France, excluding departments and territories in Africa, the Americas and Oceania.					
Germany	64,379	31/3/13	81.96m	79	German Federal Statistical Office
Liechtenstein	9*	1/1/13	36,800	24*	Council of Europe
*By agreement with Austria, some persons imprisoned by Liechtenstein may be held in Austrian prisons.					
Luxembourg	656	1/1/13	538,000	122	Council of Europe
Monaco	27*	1/1/13	36,900	73*	Council of Europe
*By agreement with France, some persons imprisoned by Monaco may be held in French prisons.					
Netherlands	13,749	30/9/12	16.79m	82	NPA
Switzerland	6,599	5/9/12	8.01m	82	Swiss Federal Statistical Office
Europe/Asia					
Armenia	4,756	1/1/13	2.9m	164	Council of Europe
Azerbaijan	37,989*	1/9/11	9.19m	413*	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*Includes pre-trial detainees not held in the prisons of the Ministry of Justice.					
Georgia	10,202*	30/4/13	4.54m*	225	Ministry of Corrections and Legal Affairs
* Does not include Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have declared independence from Georgia.					
Russian Federation	681,600	1/9/13	143.4m	475	NPA
Turkey	137,133	17/9/13	76.43m	179	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	31,700	1/10/12	9.45m	335	NPA
Bulgaria	10,996	10/12	7.3m	151	US State Dep't human rights report
Czech Republic	16,257	30/8/13	10.54m	154	NPA
Hungary	18,388	13/6/13	9.9m	186	NPA
Moldova	6,710*	1/4/13	3.56m*	188	NPA
*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Transdniestria/Transnistria/Pridnestrovie.					
Poland	83,610	31/8/13	38.55m	217	NPA
Romania	33,015	24/9/13	21.25m	155	NPA
Slovakia	10,152	31/8/13	5.42m	187	NPA
Ukraine	137,965	1/9/13	45.21m	305	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	29,383	30/6/12	22.68m	130	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Fiji	1,537	11/12	882,000	174	NPA
Kiribati	118	10/12	103,650	114	US State Dep't human rights report
Marshall Islands	c. 32	12/12	55,000	c. 58	US State Dep't human rights report
Micronesia, Fed States of	90	31/12/12	112,000	80	US State Dep't human rights report
Nauru	26	31/12/12	9,400	277	US State Dep't human rights report
New Zealand	8,597	30/6/13	4.47m	192	NPA
Palau	62	/12	21,000	295	US State Dep't human rights report
Papua New Guinea	3,467	mid-12	7.2m	48	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Samoa	c. 430	/12	188,650	c. 228	US State Dep't human rights report
Solomon Islands	321	30/9/13	584,000	55	NPA
Tonga	158	31/12/12	105,000	150	US State Dep't human rights report
Tuvalu	12	12/12	10,000	120	US State Dep't human rights report
Vanuatu	194	31/12/12	255,000	76	US State Dep't human rights report
American Samoa (US)	167	31/12/11	69,500	240	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Cook Islands (NZ)	25	21/11/11	23,000	109	NPA
French Polynesia (France)	427	1/9/13	280,500	152	French Ministry of Justice
Guam (US)	696	4/6/13	161,000	432	Guam prison administration
New Caledonia (France)	402	1/9/13	264,000	152	French Ministry of Justice
Northern Mariana Is. (US)	162	31/12/11	61,300	264	US Bureau of Justice Statistics

Abbreviations

C of E Council of Europe

NPA National prison administration

Roy Walmsley is a consultant to the United Nations and an Associate of the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS). 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 (2nd edition 2012) and the World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List (2008, 2nd edition scheduled for 2014), which complement the World Prison Population List and the World Prison Brief and are also published by ICPS.

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