

Introduction

This ninth 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 May 2011.

The first five editions of the List were published by the Research and Statistics Directorate of the UK Home Office; this is the fourth 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 end of 2008 and the beginning of May 2011. 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 seven 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 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 10.1 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 (0.81m) or China (1.65m sentenced prisoners). In addition more than 650,000 are in 'detention centres' in China; if these are included the overall Chinese total is over 2.3 million and the world total more than 10.75 million.
- ▶ The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, 743 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by Rwanda (c. 595), Russia (568), Georgia (547), U.S. Virgin Is. (539), Seychelles (507), St Kitts & Nevis (495), British Virgin Is. (468), Belize (439), Dominica (431), Bermuda (428), Grenada (423) and Curacao (422).
- ▶ However, more than half the countries and territories (54%) have rates below 150 per 100,000.
- ▶ The world population at mid-2010 was estimated at 6.9 billion (United Nations); if set against the world prison population of 10.1 million this would produce a world prison population rate of 146 per 100,000 (156 per 100,000 if set against a world prison population of 10.75 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 47.5 whereas for southern African countries it is 219;
 - in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 175 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 357.5;
 - in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian sub-continent) is 42 whereas for eastern Asian countries it is 155.5;
 - in Europe the median rate for western European countries is 96 whereas for the countries spanning Europe and Asia (e.g. Russia & Turkey) it is 228.
 - in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 135.
- ▶ Prison populations are growing in all five continents. Updated information on countries included in previous editions of the World Prison Population List shows that prison populations have risen in 78% of countries (in 71% of countries in Africa, 82% in the Americas, 80% in Asia, 74% in Europe and 80% in Oceania).

World Prison Population List (ninth edition)

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	58,000	/10	35.42m	164	NPA
Egypt	64,378	31/12/06	79.35m	81	United Nations 10th Survey
Libya	13,242	8/4/10	6.52m	203	NPA
Morocco	61,405	31/8/10	32.45m	189	Ministry of Justice
Sudan	19,144	mid-09	42.3m	45	NPA
Tunisia	31,000	1/11	10.43m	297	Ministry of Justice
Western Africa					
Benin	6,908	/10	9.2m	75	Ombudsman's report, Benin
Burkina Faso	5,238	/10	16.3m	32	US State Dep't human rights report
Cape Verde	c. 1,300	/10	513,000	c. 253	US State Dep't human rights report
Côte d'Ivoire	11,143*	30/9/08	19.8m	56*	US State Dep't human rights report
*Relates only to prisons under Government control.					
Gambia	780	31/12/09	1.73m	45	US State Dep't human rights report
Ghana	13,573	9/8/10	24.2m	56	NPA
Guinea (Conakry)	2,780	12/08	9.85m	28	United Nations 11th Survey
Liberia	1,524	/10	4.1m	37	US State Dep't human rights report
Mali	6,700	mid-09	13.0m	52	Paralegal Advisory Service Institute
Mauritania	1,700	/10	3.37m	50	US State Dep't human rights report
Niger	c. 7,000	31/12/10	16.2m	c. 43	US State Dep't human rights report
Nigeria	50,000	30/4/11	161.2m	31	NPA
Senegal	7,550	12/09	12.68m	60	Ministry of Justice
Sierra Leone	2,237	31/10/10	5.74m	39	NPA
Togo	4,116	11/10/10	7.0m	59	US State Dep't human rights report
Central Africa					
Angola	16,183	9/09	18.6m	87	US State Dep't human rights report
Cameroon	23,368	31/12/09	19.7m	119	US State Dep't human rights report
Central African Rep.	1,320	12/10	4.5m	29	US State Dep't human rights report
Chad	3,416	8/05	10.1m	34	US State Dep't human rights report
Congo (Brazzaville)	c. 1,000	31/12/10	3.8m	c. 26	US State Dep't human rights report
Dem. Rep. of Congo	c.30,000	1/04	52.8m	c. 57	Crim. justice experts, D.R.Congo
Gabon	c. 2,750	2/06	1.4m	c. 196	US State Dep't human rights report
Sao Tome e Principe	305	/10	165,000	185	US State Dep't human rights report
Eastern Africa					
Burundi	9,844	12/10	8.62m	114	NPA
Comoros	c. 130	31/12/10	700,000	c. 19	US State Dep't human rights report
Djibouti	c. 600	/10	879,000	c. 68	US State Dep't human rights report
Ethiopia	c. 85,450	31/12/10	86.1m	c. 99	US State Dep't human rights report
Kenya	49,757	31/12/10	41.4m	120	Legal Resources Foundation Trust
Madagascar	18,647	6/10	20.1m	93	US State Dep't human rights report
Malawi	11,672	31/12/10	15.91m	73	US State Dep't human rights report
Mauritius	2,354	30/11/09	1.29m	182	US State Dep't human rights report
Mozambique	15,249	10/10	23.56m	65	NPA
Rwanda	c. 62,000*	31/12/10	10.42m	c. 595*	US State Dep't human rights report
*Prison population includes many thousands sentenced or awaiting trial in connection with the genocide of 1994.					
Seychelles	432	17/11/10	85,200	507	US State Dep't human rights report
Tanzania	40,111	1/9/09	44.0m	92	NPA
Uganda	30,312	31/8/10	34.0m	89	US State Dep't human rights report
Zambia	15,544	mid-09	12.9m	120	NPA
Zimbabwe	c. 15,000	10/10	12.4m	c. 121	NPA
Mayotte (France)	211	4/11	203,000	104	Mayotte prison administration
Réunion (France)	1,307	1/10/07	810,000	161	French Ministry of Justice
Southern Africa					
Botswana	5,216	2/9/09	1.95m	267	NPA
Lesotho	2,498	/10	2.08m	120	NPA
Namibia	4,251	1/12/10	2.29m	186	NPA
South Africa	159,265	28/2/11	50.44m	316	NPA
Swaziland	2,628	19/10/09	1.2m	219	NPA

Figures not available

W. Africa: Guinea Bissau. C. Africa: Equatorial Guinea. 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	39,132*	08-09	33.4m	117	Statistics Canada
*Average daily population, including young offenders, 1/4/2008-31/3/2009.					
USA	2,292,133	31/12/09	308.4m	743	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bermuda (UK)	278	/09	65,000	428	Bermuda prison administration
Greenland (Denmark)	194	1/12/09	57,000	340	Danish NPA
Central America					
Belize	1,396	4/11	318,000	439	NPA
Costa Rica	11,635	15/12/10	4.67m	249	NPA
El Salvador	24,283	12/10	6.21m	391	NPA
Guatemala	11,140	7/10	14.39m	77	NPA
Honduras	11,846	12/10	7.69m	154	US State Dep't human rights report
Mexico	222,330	30/11/10	110.9m	200	NPA
Nicaragua	6,803	30/6/08	5.7m	119	NPA, via E. Carranza, ILANUD
Panama	12,293	9/10	3.52m	349	NPA
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	295	15/12/10	89,500	330	US State Dep't human rights report
Bahamas	1,322	/10	346,000	382	US State Dep't human rights report
Barbados	910	10/10	257,200	354	NPA
Dominica	289	29/12/10	67,000	431	US State Dep't human rights report
Dominican Republic	21,050	25/8/10	9.9m	213	Chief Inspector of Prisons
Grenada	440	/10	104,000	423	US State Dep't human rights report
Haiti	5,331	31/12/10	9.7m	55	US State Dep't human rights report
Jamaica	4,709	1/10/07	2.7m	174	NPA
St Kitts & Nevis	260	20/4/11	52,500	495	'Jail Delivery' report
St Lucia	551	21/12/10	175,000	315	US State Dep't human rights report
St Vincent & Grenadines	413	/10	109,000	379	US State Dep't human rights report
Trinidad & Tobago	3,591	26/1/10	1.3m	276	NPA
Anguilla (UK)	58	/09	15,000	387	Parliamentary Answer, UK
Aruba (Netherlands)	277	6/07	103,000	269	Council of Europe CPT report
Cayman Islands (UK)	198	avrge 09	54,900	361	Government publication
Curacao (Netherlands)	590	6/6/07	139,840	422	Council of Europe CPT report
Guadeloupe (France)	784	1/3/11	466,000	168	Report by French Senate
Martinique (France)	914	25/2/11	407,000	225	Report by French Senate
Puerto Rico (US)	12,130	31/12/08	4.0m	303	US Bureau of Justice Statistics
St Maarten (Netherlands)	140	10/2/11	37,400	374	Ministry of Justice, St Maarten
Virgin Islands (UK)	117	7/10	25,000	468	British Virgin Is. prison administration
Virgin Islands (US)	587	1/1/11	109,000	539	US Virgin Is. prison administration
South America					
Argentina	60,611	31/12/08	40.14m	151	Ministry of Justice
Bolivia	8,700	7/10	10.03m	87	NPA
Brazil	496,251	12/10	196.4m	253	NPA
Chile	52,563	30/4/11	17.22m	305	NPA
Colombia	84,444	31/12/10	46.61m	181	NPA
Ecuador	11,800	7/10	13.78m	86	NPA
Guyana	2,122	31/10/10	761,000	284	NPA
Paraguay	6,146	7/09	6.35m	97	NPA
Peru	47,164	3/11	29.75m	159	NPA
Suriname	915	31/12/09	522,000	175	US State Dep't human rights report
Uruguay	6,783	31/8/10	3.37m	261	NPA
Venezuela	43,461	10/10	29.17m	149	Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones
French Guiana/ Guyana (France)	c. 680	18/2/11	229,000	c. 297	Report by French Senate

Figures not available Caribbean: Cuba.

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	1,100	/10	807,000	136	Ministry of the Interior
Iraq	31,645	31/12/09	31.3m	101	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
Israel	22,725	3/09	7.13m	319	Ministry of Public Security
Jordan	c. 8,500	1/12/09	6.4m	c. 133	US State Dep't human rights report
Kuwait	4,179	/10	3.05m	137	US State Dep't human rights report
Lebanon	5,122	5/09	4.22m	121	NPA
Oman	1,403	/02	2.3m	61	United Nations 8th Survey
Qatar	551	31/12/08	1.34m	41	United Nations 11th Survey
Saudi Arabia	44,600	1/09	25.0m	178	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	11,313*	/09	23.58m	48*	Ministry of the Interior
					*Ministry of the Interior prisons only.
Central Asia					
Kazakhstan	55,552	1/3/11	15.83m	351	NPA, via Penal Reform International
Kyrgyzstan	10,163	/10	5.55m	183	US State Dep't human rights report
Tajikistan	9,317	12/10	7.15m	130	NPA
Turkmenistan	10,953	/06	4.9m	224	United Nations 10th Survey
Uzbekistan	c. 42,000	/09	27.5m	c. 153	NPA
South Central Asia					
Afghanistan	18,283	11/10	29.5m	62	Ministry of Justice
Bangladesh	69,650	31/12/10	165.56m	42	Ministry of Home Affairs
India	384,753	31/12/08	1,192.1m	32	National Crime Records Bureau
Iran	220,000	3/11	75.7m	291	NPA
Maldives	1,125*	/04	328,000	343*	United Nations 9th Survey
					*Sentenced prisoners only.
Nepal	10,923	3/11	30.25m	36	NPA
Pakistan	75,586	31/12/10	186.7m	40	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
Sri Lanka	26,798	mid-10	20.41m	131	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
South Eastern Asia					
Brunei Darussalam	379	mid-10	407,000	93	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Cambodia	14,043	15/12/10	14.93m	94	NPA
Indonesia	117,863	mid-10	232.5m	51	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Laos	4,020	mid-04	5.8m	69	NPA
Malaysia	38,387	mid-10	27.91m	138	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Myanmar (Burma)	60,053	mid-09	50.0m	120	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Philippines	102,267	6/09	92.0m	111	NPA
Singapore	12,978	31/12/10	4.89m	265	US State Dep't human rights report
Thailand	224,292	1/3/11	68.4m	328	NPA
Timor-Leste	223	/09	1.13m	20	Independent needs assessment team
Vietnam	108,557*	mid-10	89.0m	122*	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
					*Sentenced prisoners only.
Eastern Asia					
China	1,650,000*	mid-10	1,354.1m	122*	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
					*Sentenced prisoners only. The total does not include those in pre-trial detention or 'administrative detention'.
Japan	74,476	mid-10	127.9m	58	NPA, Asia-Pacific annual conference
Korea (Republic of)	45,681	31/12/10	48.6m	94	Ministry of Justice
Mongolia	7,265	/10	2.7m	269	US State Dep't human rights report
Taiwan	64,420	31/1/11	23.17m	278	Ministry of Justice
Hong Kong (China)	9,988	31/12/10	7.1m	141	Hong Kong prison administration
Macau (China)	935	31/10/10	550,000	170	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	4,091	1/4/11	5.56m	74	NPA
Estonia	3,405	28/3/11	1.34m	254	Ministry of Justice
Finland	3,189	1/1/11	5.38m	59	NPA
Iceland	189	1/11	315,900	60	NPA
Ireland	4,495	5/11	4.49m	100	Department of Justice & Equality
Latvia	7,055	1/1/10	2.25m	314	NPA
Lithuania	9,139	1/1/11	3.31m	276	NPA
Norway	3,602	1/5/11	4.94m	73	NPA
Sweden	7,106	1/10/10	9.32m	78	NPA
United Kingdom					
– England & Wales	84,883	15/4/11	55.44m	153	Ministry of Justice
– Northern Ireland	1,628	25/4/11	1.81m	90	NPA
– Scotland	8,000	29/4/11	5.24m	153	NPA
Faeroe Is. (Denmark)	11	avrge 09	48,850	23	Danish NPA
Guernsey (UK)	69	31/12/10	66,200	104	Guernsey prison administration
Isle of Man (UK)	97	31/12/10	80,000	121	Isle of Man prison administration
Jersey (UK)	192	25/11/10	93,100	206	Jersey prison administration
Southern Europe					
Albania	4,482	1/9/09	3.19m	141	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Andorra	61	31/12/10	83,700	73	Ministry of Justice & the Interior
Bosnia & Herzegovina					
– Federation	1,671	31/12/10	2.3m	73	US State Dep't human rights report
– Republika Srpska	1,046	31/12/10	1.4m	75	Rep. Srpska prison administration
Croatia	5,165	1/1/11	4.42m	117	NPA
Cyprus	883*	1/9/09	801,100*	110	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).					
Greece	11,547	1/12/09	11.3m	102	NPA
Italy	67,615	28/2/11	60.68m	111	Ministry of Justice
Kosovo/Kosova	c. 1,450	31/12/10	2.20m	c. 66	US State Dep't human rights report
Macedonia (F Yug Rep)	2,329	11/10	2.04m	114	Ombudsman, Macedonia
Malta	583	4/10	417,800	140	Ministry of Justice & Home Affairs
Montenegro	1,438	10/10	633,700	227	US State Dep't human rights report
Portugal	12,038	1/5/11	10.65m	113	NPA
San Marino	2*	1/9/09	30,750	0*	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*By agreement with Italy, most persons imprisoned by San Marino are held in Italian prisons.					
Serbia	12,000	26/3/10	7.30m	164	Ombudsman, Serbia
Slovenia	1,304	31/12/10	2.06m	63	NPA
Spain	73,459	29/4/11	46.20m	159	NPA
Gibraltar (UK)	50	31/12/09	29,500	169	Gibraltar prison administration
Western Europe					
Austria	8,658	avrge 10	8.39m	103	NPA
Belgium	10,561	1/3/10	10.85m	97	Ministry of Justice
France	59,655*	1/7/08	62.10m*	96	NPA
*Metropolitan France, excluding departments and territories in Africa, the Americas and Oceania.					
Germany	69,385	30/11/10	81.62m	85	German Federal Statistical Office
Liechtenstein	7*	avrge 10	36,050	19*	US State Dep't human rights report
*By agreement with Austria, some persons imprisoned by Liechtenstein are held in Austrian prisons.					
Luxembourg	706	1/6/10	507,200	139	NPA
Monaco	23*	1/9/09	33,000	70*	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
*By agreement with France, some persons imprisoned by Monaco are held in French prisons.					
Netherlands	15,604	30/4/10	16.61m	94	NPA
Switzerland	6,181	1/9/10	7.80m	79	Swiss Federal Statistical Office
Europe/Asia					
Armenia	4,807	avrge 10	3.09m	156	Ministry of Justice
Azerbaijan	20,470	1/9/09	8.96m	228	C of E Annual Penal Statistics
Georgia	23,995*	30/4/11	4.39m*	547	NPA, via Penal Reform International
* Does not include Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which have declared independence from Georgia.					
Russian Federation	806,100	1/5/11	141.93m	568	NPA
Turkey	124,074	30/4/11	73.95m	168	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	36,533	1/6/09	9.59m	381	Parliamentary Committee Chairman
Bulgaria	9,071	1/12/09	7.58m	120	NPA
Czech Republic	23,028	27/4/11	10.56m	218	NPA
Hungary	16,537	12/10	10.00m	165	NPA
Moldova	6,324*	1/1/11	3.56m*	178	NPA
*Does not include the internationally unrecognised Transdnistria/Transnistria/Pridnestrovie.					
Poland	83,401	30/4/11	38.21m	218	NPA
Romania	29,126	26/4/11	21.41m	136	NPA
Slovakia	10,031	31/12/10	5.44m	184	NPA
Ukraine	154,027	1/1/11	45.60m	338	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	29,700	30/6/10	22.34m	133	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Fiji	1,150	1/9/10	855,000	135	NPA
Kiribati	102	8/10	100,300	102	US State Dep't human rights report
Marshall Islands	43	12/10	63,500	68	Ministry of Justice
Micronesia, Fed States of	100	31/12/10	111,200	90	US State Dep't human rights report
Nauru	20	31/12/10	14,400	139	US State Dep't human rights report
New Zealand	8,755	31/3/11	4.41m	199	NPA
Palau	79	/10	20,900	378	US State Dep't human rights report
Papua New Guinea	4,268	31/12/10	6.97m	61	US State Dep't human rights report
Samoa	300	31/12/10	179,000	168	US State Dep't human rights report
Solomon Islands	265	31/12/10	542,000	49	US State Dep't human rights report
Tonga	159	31/12/10	104,200	153	US State Dep't human rights report
Tuvalu	8	10/10	10,000	80	US State Dep't human rights report
Vanuatu	187	9/3/10	246,000	76	NPA
American Samoa (US)	132	31/12/08	66,750	198	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	12/7/10	176,000	318	Guam prison administration
New Caledonia (France)	326	1/10/07	245,000	133	French Ministry of Justice
Northern Mariana Is. (US)	124	31/12/08	87,600	142	US Bureau of Justice Statistics

Abbreviations

C of E	Council of Europe
CPT	Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
ILANUD	United Nations Latin American Institute
NPA	National prison administration

Roy Walmsley is a consultant to the United Nations and an Associate of the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS), University of Essex. 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 (2006) and the World Pre-trial/Remand Imprisonment List (2008), which complement the World Prison Population List and the World Prison Brief and were both published by ICPS.

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