RESEARCH FINDINGS No. 88

WORLD PRISON POPULATION LIST

Roy Walmsley

The World Prison Population List gives details of the number of prisoners held in some 180 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.

KEY POINTS

- ➤ Over 8 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, either as pre-trial detainees (remand prisoners) or having been convicted and sentenced. More than half of these are in the United States (1.7m), China (1.4m) or Russia (1m).
- ▶ Russia has the highest prison population rate in the world, some 685 per 100,000 of the national population, followed by the USA (645), the Cayman Islands (575), Belarus (505), Kazakhstan (495), Belize (490), the Bahamas (485) and Singapore (465).
- ► However, 65% of countries have rates of 150 per 100,000 or below. (The United Kingdom's rate of 125 per 100,000 of the national population places it at about the mid-point in the World List. Among European Union countries its rate is the second highest, after Portugal's 145.)
- 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 and central African countries is 60 whereas for southern African countries it is 250;
 - in the Americas the median rate for south American countries is 110 whereas for Caribbean countries it is 330;
 - in Asia the median rate for south central Asian countries (mainly the Indian subcontinent) is 45 whereas for (ex-Soviet) central Asian countries it is about 400;
 - in Europe the median rate for southern European countries is 50 whereas for central and eastern European countries it is 200;
 - in Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand) the median rate is 130.

The World Prison Population List has been 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. All figures relate to dates between the beginning of 1994 and the second half of 1998. Since prison population rates (per 100,000 of the national population) are based on estimates of the national population they have been rounded to the nearest five in order to avoid a spurious appearance of precision. 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. It lacks information on more than 30 independent countries and figures do 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. People held in custody are invariably 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 huge costs and disputed efficacy of imprisonment.

KEY TOSOURCES		
Council of Furance	CofF	Observatoire

Council of Europe CofE Observatoire International des Prisons OIP National prison administration NPA Penal Reform International PRI

Total in pen (including p detainees)	al institutions ore-trial	Date	Estimated national population	Prison popurate (per 10 national pop	0,000 of	Source of prison population total
Northern Africa						
Algeria	35,737	/96	28.6m	125	OIP, 1	
Egypt	c.40,000	/96	64.2m	c.60	OIP, 1	997
Morocco	48,600	/97	27.5m	175	OIP, 1	
Sudan	32,000	/97	27.9m	115	Confer	ence paper, Jan 1998
Tunisia	23,165	31/12/96	9.2m	250	United	Nations 5th Survey
Western Africa						
Burkina Faso	6,100	31/12/94	10.2m	60		ement Burkinaise de de l'Homme
Cape Verde	c.600	/97	406,000	c.150	Crim. ju	ustice expert, Cape Verde
Côte d'Ivoire	12,215	31/12/93	13.55m	90	UN end	quiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.:
Ghana	7,076	12/96	18.15m	40	NPA ar	nnual report
Guinea	c.4,000	/97	7.6m	c.55	PRI Ne	ewsletter 29, 1997
Mali	4,384	15/1/95	10.6m	40	OIP, 1	995
Mauretania	1,400	/97	2.4m	60	Confer	ence paper, Jan 1998
Nigeria	c.70,000	/96	115.0m	c.60	OIP, 1	
Senegal	4,653	9/97	8.8m	55	OIP, 1	
Togo	2,043	6/11/98	4.4m	45	NPA di	rect communication
Central Africa						
Cameroon	15,903	/97	13.9m	115	OIP, 1	998
Chad	2,521	1/96	6.4m	40	OIP, 1	
Sao Tomee Principe	99	/94	130,000	75	United	Nations 5th Survey
Eastern Africa						·
Burundi	9,411	/97	6.4m	145	OIP, 1	998
Djibouti	c.650	/94	566,000	115	OIP, 1	
Kenya	41,064	23/10/96	28.9m	140	OIP, 1	
Madagascar	19,743	1/9/97	15.9m	125	OIP, 1	998
Malawi	6,505	7/98	10.4m	65	NPA di	rect communication
Mauritius	3,239	/97	1.1m	295	NPA di	rect communication
Mozambique	c.4,500	5/94	15.5m	c.30	PRI	
Rwanda¹						
Tanzania	38,135	1/8/98	32.2m	120	NPA di	rect communication
Uganda	21,971	30/6/98	21.3m	105		rect communication
Zambia	27,048	/94	9.2m	295		Nations 5th Survey
Zimbabwe	18,271	3/8/98	11.9m	155		rect communication
Réunion (France)	1,019	1/10/98	682,000	150		Min. of Justice publication

Some 130,000 people are believed to be held in penal institutions in Rwanda (PRI Newsletter 32,1998) following the genocide in that country which has created a unique set of circumstances.

Southern Af	frica
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Lesotho	4,738	31/12/94	2.0m	235	United Nations 5th Survey
Namibia	4,397	31/8/98	1.7m	260	NPA direct communication
South Africa	142,410	31/12/97	44.3m	320	NPA annual report
Swaziland	2,221	14/9/98	931,000	240	NPA direct communication

(No information: N.Africa: Libya. W. Africa: Benin, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Sierra Leone. C.Africa: Angola, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Kinshasa), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon. E.Africa: Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Seychelles, Somalia. S.Africa: Botswana.)

Total in pena (including pr detainees)		Date	Estimated national population	Prison popula rate (per 100,0 national popu	000 of	Source of prison population total
North America						
Canada	34,166 ¹	/97-98	30.0m	115	Canadi	ian Centre of Justice Stats, 19
USA 1	,725,842	30/6/97	267.5m	645	US Bur	reau of Justice Stats, 1998
Bermuda (UK)	226	31/3/94	63,000	360	United	Nations 5th Survey
Greenland (Denmark)	78	25/8/98	56,000	140	Danish	NPA, direct communication
¹ Average daily populati	ion (1/4/97-31/	3/98)				
Central America						
Belize	1,118	1/98	229,000	490	Survey	for UN by Wendy Singh
Costa Rica	5,495	31/12/96	3.55m	155	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
El Salvador	8,725	31/12/96	5.9m	150	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Guatemala	6,931	31/12/96	11.05m	65	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Honduras	9,457	31/12/96	5.9m	160	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Mexico	103,262	31/12/96	94.9m	110	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Nicaragua	3,692	31/12/96	4.5m	80		ID (UN) Paper, Feb 199
Panama	7,322	31/12/96	2.7m	270		ID (UN) Paper, Feb 199
Caribbean						
Antigua & Barbuda	225	11/95	65,000	345	Inform	ation from W. Singh, PF
Bahamas	1,401	1/98	290,000	485		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Barbados	772	1/98	263,000	295	Survey	for UN by Wendy Sing
Cuba	c.33,000	/97	11.1m	c.300	•	hristie, Oslo University
Dominica	243	12/97	74,000	330		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Dominican Republic	11,114	30/6/97	8.1m	135	•	ewsletter 31,1997
Grenada	327	1/98	99,000	330		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Haiti	2,300	2/96	7.25m	30	-	ation from W. Singh, PF
Jamaica	3,629	1/98	2.5m	145		y for UN by Wendy Sing
St Kitts & Nevis	109	1/98	43,600	250	-	y for UN by Wendy Sing
St Lucia	325	1/98	145,000	225	-	y for UN by Wendy Sing
St Vincent & Grenadine	s 420	1/98	111,000	380		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Trinidad & Tobago	4,715	30/4/98	1.3m	365		rect communication
Aruba (Netherlands)	223	11/98	89,000	250	Dutch N	NPA direct communication
Cayman Islands (UK)	210	/97	36,600	575	PRI Ne	ewsletter 30, 1997
Guadeloupe (France)		1/10/98	444,000	160		Min. of Justice publication
Martinique (France)	547	1/10/98	392,000	140		Min. of Justice publication
Neth.Antilles			,			,
(Netherlands)	780	11/98	213,000	365	Dutch N	NPA direct communication
Puerto Rico (US)	14,971	1/10/98	3.8m	395	Inform	ation from W. Singh, PF
Virgin Islands (US)	417	31/12/97	117,000	355		reau of Justice Stats, 1998
South America			,			,
Argentina	43,174	31/12/96	35.35m	120	M. Salt,	, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Bolivia	5,412	31/12/96	7.7m	70		, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Brazil	167,066	31/12/97	157.1m	105		y for prisons paper, Brazi
Chile	54,818	31/12/96	14.55m	375		, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Colombia	43,000	/98	37.7m	115		hristie, Oslo University
Ecuador	9,961	31/12/96	11.8m	85		, from M. of Justice, Argentir
Guyana	1,697	1/98	852,000	200		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Paraguay	3,097	31/12/96	5.1m	60	•	y for UN by Wendy Sing
Peru	20,899	/95	23.8m	90		rence paper, March 98
Suriname	560	1/98	440,000	125		y for UN by Wendy Sing
Uruguay	3,190	/95	3.2m	100	-	rence paper, March 98
Venezuela	25,000	/98	23.2m	110		hristie, Oslo University
French Guiana/	23,000	190	20.2111	110	IVIIO UI	inisite, Osio Oniversity
	2/171	10/09	144 000	240	Eronoh	Min of Justice publication
Guyane (France)	3471	10/98	144,000	240	riench	Min of Justice publication

Total in per	nal institution	s Date	Estimated	Prison pop	ulation Source of
(including detainees)		5 5 4.0	national population	rate (per 10	0,000 of prison population
Western Asia					
Israel	10,148	1/1/94	5.4m	190	United Nations 5th Survey
Jordan	3,749	31/12/93	5.1m	75	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1
Kuwait	1,735	/97	1.7m	100	Conference Paper, Jan 98
Lebanon	5,000	/97	3.1m	160	Conference Paper, Jan 98
Qatar	527	31/12/93	540,000	100	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1
Saudi Arabia	7,939 ¹	31/12/93	17.2m	45 ¹	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1
Syria	14,000	/97	15.0m	95	Conference Paper, Jan 98
United Arab Emirate	es ²				•
Yemen	14,000°	/98	16.9m	85³	PRI Newsletter 33, 1998
¹ Sentenced prisoners	· ·				
² Two sources give wi		t figures.			
³ Government manage		-			
J					
Central Asia					
Kazakhstan	82,945	1/5/97	16.8m	495	NPA direct communication
Kyrgyzstan	19,857	1/5/97	4.5m	440	NPA direct communication
Tajikistan	c.6,000	/96	6.3m	c.95	Crim. justice expert, Tajikistar
Turkmenistan	c.18,000	/98	4.5m	c.400	Estimate from incomplete data
Uzbekistan	c.60,000	/96	23.3m	c.260	Crim. justice expert, Uzbekista
	·				• •
South Central Asia					
Bangladesh	44,111	/95	120.4m	35	David Biles, from NPA
India	231,325	/97	960.2m	25	David Biles, from NPA
Iran	101,801	31/12/93	65.0m	155	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1
Nepal	6,200	/94	21.35m	30	David Biles, from NPA
Pakistan	72,700	/96	144.5m	50	PRI Newsletter 28, 1997
Sri Lanka	14,090	/97	18.3m	75	David Biles, from NPA
South Eastern Asia	•				·
Brunei Darussalam	285	29/10/98	313,000	90	NPA direct communication
Cambodia	2,909	/97	10.5m	30	David Biles, from NPA
Indonesia	41,699	/97	203.5m	20	David Biles, from NPA
Malaysia	24,400	12/97	21.2m	115	Crim. justice expert, Malaysia
Myanmar (Burma)	53,195	31/12/93	45.0m	120	UN enquiry (A/CN.15/1996/16 Add.1
Philippines}	35,864	31/12/93	65.5m	55	UN enquiry (A/CN.15.1996/16/Add.1
Philippines}	19,541	/97	70.7m	30 ⁴	David Biles, from NPA
Singapore	15,746⁵	/97	3.4m	465⁵	David Biles, from NPA
Thailand	130,997	30/9/97	59.3m	220	NPA annual report
Vietnam	43,000	/96	76.2m	55	David Biles, from NPA
⁴ Does not include thos	•				, -
⁵ Almost half of this tota	•				
	•	ŭ			
Eastern Asia					
China	1,410,000	/97	1,243.7m	115	David Biles, from NPA
Japan	49,414	/97	125.6m	40	David Biles, from NPA
Korea (Republic of)	70,303	30/6/98	46.1m	155	NPA publication
Mongolia	6,085	31/12/93	2.3m	265	UN enquiry (A/CN.15.1996/16/Add.1
Taiwan	c.31,000	/98	20.5m	c.150	Crim. justice expert, Taiwan
Hong Kong (UK ⁶)	11,637	/97	6.2m	190	David Biles, from NPA
Macau (Portugal)	642	/97	415,000	155	David Biles, from NPA
⁶ UK dependency unti	042	191	- 10,000	100	David Diles, Holli NI A

(No information: W.Asia: Bahrain, Iraq, Oman. S.Central Asia: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldive Islands. S.E.Asia: Laos. E.Asia: Korea (Democratic Peoples Republic of North Korea.)

Table 4 EUROPE					
Total in pena (including p detainees)		s Date	Estimated national population	Prison poprate (per 19 national po	00,000 of prison population
Northern Europe					
Denmark	3,508	6/11/98	5.3m	65	NPA direct communication
Estonia	4,647	1/7/98	1.45m	320	NPA direct communication
Finland	2,798	1/9/97	5.1m	55	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Iceland	113	1/9/95	270,000	40	HEUNI Papers10, 1997, Helsinki
Ireland	2,424	1/9/97	3.6m	65	NPA direct communication
Latvia	10,070	31/12/97	2.45m	410	NPA direct communication
Lithuania	13,205	1/9/97	3.7m	355	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Norway	2,318	1/9/97	4.4m	55	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Sweden	5,221	1/9/97	8.85m	60	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
United Kingdom	(73,545)	(30/9/98)	(59.2m)	(125)	Calculated from next three entries
-England & Wales	65,906	30/9/98	52.4m	125	NPA direct communication
-Scotland	6,098	30/9/98	5.1m	120	NPA direct communication
-Northern Ireland	1,541	30/9/98	1.7m	90	NPA direct communication
Guernsey (UK)	64	16/10/98	59,500	110	NPA direct communication
Jersey (UK)	108	16/10/98	86,500	125	NPA direct communication
Isle of Man (UK)	82	16/10/98	72,500	115	NPA direct communication
Southern Europe					
Albania	1,077	1/6/94	3.4m	30	NPA direct communication
Bosnia & Herzegovir	na				
(Federation)	769¹	31/1/98	2.5m ¹	30	NPA direct communication
Croatia	2,119	31/12/97	4.5m	45	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Greece	5,577	1/9/97	10.5m	55	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Italy	49,477	1/9/97	57.5m	85	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Macedonia	965	1/9/97	2.0m	50	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Malta	190	1/9/96	374,000	50	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Portugal	14,336	15/3/98	9.8m	145	NPA direct communication
San Marino ²					
Slovenia	752	31/12/97	1.9m	40	NPA direct communication
Spain	42,827	1/9/97	39.7m	110	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Gibraltar (UK)	34	16/10/98	27,000	125	NPA direct communication

¹ Excludes Bosnia & Herzegovina (Republika Srpska) with an estimated population of 1.4m.

Western Europe

Western Europe					
Austria	6,946	1/9/97	8.1m	85	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Belgium	8,342	1/9/97	10.2m	80	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
France	53,259°	1/10/98	58.7m	90	French Min. of Justice publication
Germany	74,317	1/9/97	82.2m	90	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Liechtenstein	18	22/5/94	30,000	60	United Nations 5th Survey
Luxembourg	431	1/9/96	418,000	105	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Monaco⁴					
Netherlands	13,618	1/9/97	15.65m	85	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Switzerland	6,259	/97	7.1m	90	CofE Annual Penal Statistics

³ Includes 3,202 in penal institutions in French departments and territories in Eastern Africa, the Caribbean and Oceania (figures shown in those sections)

Europe/Asia

Lui operasia					
Armenia	7,608	2/98	3.8m	200	CofE report, Armenian prison system
Azerbaijan	24,881	2/7/97	7.7m	325	NPA, for CofE report
Cyprus	235⁵	1/9/96	640,000 ⁵	35	CofE Annual Penal Statistics
Georgia	7,900	5/97	5.4m	145	Crim. justice expert, Georgia
Russian Federation	1,009,863	1/1/98	147.0m	685	NPA publication
Turkey	59,275	1/9/97	63.5m	95	CofE Annual Penal Statistics

⁵ Excludes the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Including TRNC the population of Cyprus is believed to have been about 840,000 at the end of 1996, but other sources give a total of about 750,000.

² By agreement with the Italian government, institutions in Italy are used to hold persons imprisoned by San Marino.

⁴ Monaco has one penal institution, for pre-trial and short-sentence prisoners only. It held 13 people in 10/98.

Table 4 cont. EU	IROPE				
Central and Easte	rn Europe				
Bulgaria	11,814	1/7/98	8.3m	140	NPA direct communication
Belarus	52,033	31/12/95	10.3m	505	NPA direct communication
Czech Republic	22,138	22/10/98	10.3m	215	NPA direct communication
Hungary	13,405	31/12/97	10.1m	135	NPA direct communication
Moldova	9,812 ⁶	1/10/96	3.75m ⁶	260	NPA direct communication
Poland	56,596	31/10/98	38.7m	145	NPA direct communication
Romania	45,121	31/12/97	22.5m	200	NPA direct communication
Slovakia	7,511	14/1/98	5.4m	140	NPA conference paper, 1998
Ukraine	211,568	1/1/98	51.2m	415	CofE Annual Penal Statistics

Excludes the internationally unrecognised Transdniestria. Including Transdniestria the estimated national population of Moldova was 4.4 millions in mid-1996.

(No information: S.Europe: Andorra, Yugoslavia.)

Total in per (including detainees)	pre-trial	ons Date	national	•-	ulation Source of 0,000 of prison population pulation) total
Australia	17,661 ¹	/97	18.2m	95	Australian Institute of Criminolog
Fiji	1,091	/97	773,000	140	David Biles from NPA
Kiribati	91	/95	70,000	130	David Biles from NPA
Marshall Is.	23	/94	52,000	45	United Nations 5th Survey
New Zealand	5,236	/97	3.65m	145	David Biles from NPA
Papua New Guinea	3,728	/96	3.75m	100	David Biles from NPA
Solomon Is.	147	/97	380,000	40	David Biles from NPA
Tonga	87	/94	100,000	85	David Biles from NPA
√anuatu	89	/95	164,000	55	David Biles from NPA
Western Samoa	255	/95	165,000	155	David Biles from NPA
American Samoa (US)	102	31/12/97	60,500	170	US Bureau of Justice Stats, 1998
Cook Is. (NZ)	45	/95	20,000	225	David Biles from NPA
French Polynesia (Franc	ce) 280	1/10/98	220,000	125	French Min. of Justice publication
Guam (US)	464	31/12/97	146,000	320	US Bureau of Justice Stats, 1998
New Caledonia (France	e) 303	1/10/98	197,000	155	French Min. of Justice publication
Northern Mariana Is. (U	•	31/12/97	63,500	100	US Bureau of Justice Stats, 1998

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