

PRISON POPULATION

Crime causes great suffering to victims and their families, but the costs associated with imprisonment can also be considerable. These costs are normally justified by the need to inflict retribution to offenders; to deter others from behaving in a similar way; and to prevent re-offending. The size of the prison population depends on the level of crime, the legislative measures and the efficiency of the enforcement measures.

Definition

The indicator shown here considers the total prison population, including pre-trial detainees and remand prisoners, per 100 000 of national population. This information has been collected by the *International Centre for Prison Studies* since 1992, every 3 years or so. It should be noted that not everyone in prison has been found guilty of a crime, due to the inclusion of those awaiting trial or adjudication.

Overview

Over the last fifteen years, most OECD countries have experienced a continuous rise in their prison population rates. On average, across the 30 OECD countries, this rate has increased from a level of 100 persons per 100 000 unit of the total population in the early 1990s to 140 persons in the late 2000s. The prison population rate is highest in the United-States, where 760 per 100 000 population were in prison in 2008: such level is three to four times higher than the second highest OECD country (Poland), and has increased rapidly.

The increase in the prison population extends to most other OECD countries. Since 1992, the prison population rate has more than doubled in the Netherlands, Mexico, and Turkey, while it declined in Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Korea and Switzerland.

There are large differences across countries in the make-up of the prison population. On average, one in four prisoners is a pre-trial detainee or a remand prisoner, but these two categories account for a much higher share of the prison population in Italy, Luxembourg and Turkey. Women and youths (aged below 18) account, on average, for 5% and 2% of the prison population respectively. A much larger share of prisoners is accounted for by foreigners (22% of all prisoners, on average), with this share exceeding 40% in Luxembourg, Switzerland, as well as Austria, Belgium and Greece. In several countries, the rapid rise in the prison population has stretched beyond the receptive capacity of existing institutions; occupancy levels are above 100% in more than half of OECD countries, and above 125% in Greece, Mexico and Spain.

Comparability

Imprisonment rates may vary by country according to the extent to which they apply home detention or residential rehabilitation as judicial sanctions. These latter applications of the justice system have some prison-like features, but they do not constitute incarceration in an official institution. Additional comparative information is available from the above source: this includes information on shares (in the total prison population) of pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners, female prisoners, young prisoners, foreign prisoners, and occupancy levels (in percentage) relative to official prison capacity.

Sources

- Walmsley, R. (2009), *World Prison Population List* (eighth edition), International Center for Prison Studies, London., www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/law/research/icps/worldbrief/.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2009), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators – 2009 Edition*, OECD, Paris, (See www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/SAG).
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2009), *United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (eleventh survey)*, UNODC, Vienna, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html.

Web sites

- OECD Social and Welfare Statistics, www.oecd.org/statistics/social.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, www.unodc.org.



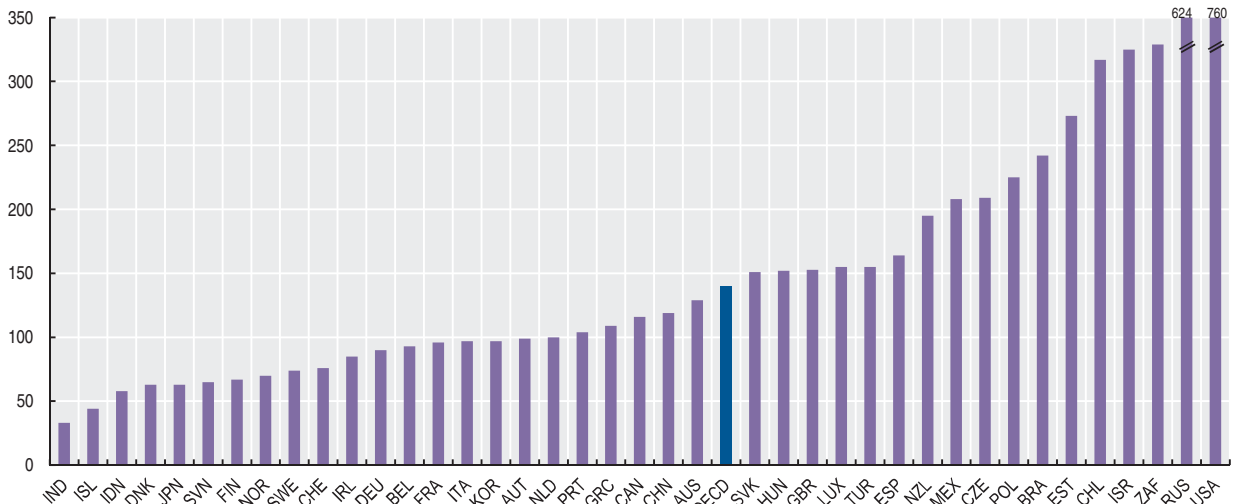
Prison population rate
Number per 100 000 inhabitants

	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2009
Australia	89	96	107	116	120	129
Austria	87	78	87	86	110	99
Belgium	71	75	81	85	88	93
Canada	123	131	126	117	108	116
Czech Republic	123	181	209	210	169	209
Denmark	66	66	64	59	70	63
Finland	65	59	50	59	66	67
France	84	89	86	75	92	96
Germany	71	81	96	98	98	90
Greece	61	56	68	79	82	109
Hungary	153	121	140	170	164	152
Iceland	39	44	38	39	39	44
Ireland	61	57	71	78	76	85
Italy	81	87	85	95	96	97
Japan	36	38	42	51	60	63
Korea	126	133	147	132	119	97
Luxembourg	89	114	92	80	121	155
Mexico	98	102	133	164	183	208
Netherlands	49	66	85	95	123	100
New Zealand	119	128	143	152	160	195
Norway	58	55	57	59	65	70
Poland	160	158	141	208	211	225
Portugal	93	124	144	128	125	104
Slovak Republic	124	147	123	138	175	151
Spain	90	102	114	117	138	164
Sweden	63	65	60	68	81	74
Switzerland	79	80	85	71	81	76
Turkey	54	82	102	89	100	155
United Kingdom	91	100	125	126	140	153
United States	505	600	669	685	723	760
OECD average	100	111	119	124	133	140
Brazil	74	92	102	133	183	242
Chile	155	155	181	225	238	317
China	..	101	115	111	118	119
Estonia	306	295	330	351	339	273
India	28	30	30	33
Indonesia	21	21	26	31	44	58
Israel	201	189	147	153	209	325
Russian Federation	487	622	688	638	587	624
Slovenia	42	41	38	58	54	65
South Africa	280	280	387	409	333	329

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Prison population rate

Number per 100 000 inhabitants, 2009 or latest available year



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