

Prison population

Did you know?

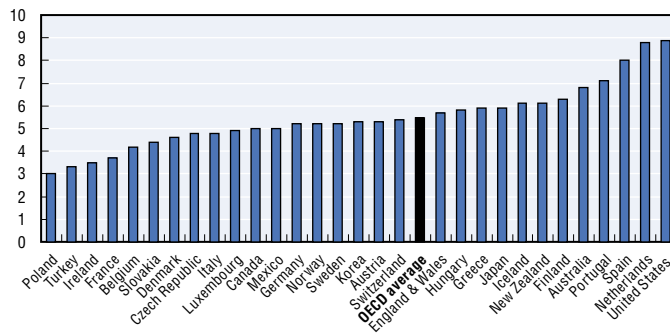
The *Prison Population Rate* is the number of people (adults as well as those under 18) in prison per 100 000 population.

In every country far more men are in prison than women but there are large differences between countries. For instance, there are the same number of female prisoners per 100 000 population in the United States as female and male prisoners combined in Japan.

In all OECD countries except Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands and the United States less than 7% of prison populations are women. The commonest crimes for which women are convicted include prostitution, drug abuse and fraud. These offences are not punished by prison sentences in most countries although the high percentage of women in American prisons is partly explained by prison sentences for economic crimes such as cheque and credit card fraud.

Female prisoners as a percentage of total prison population

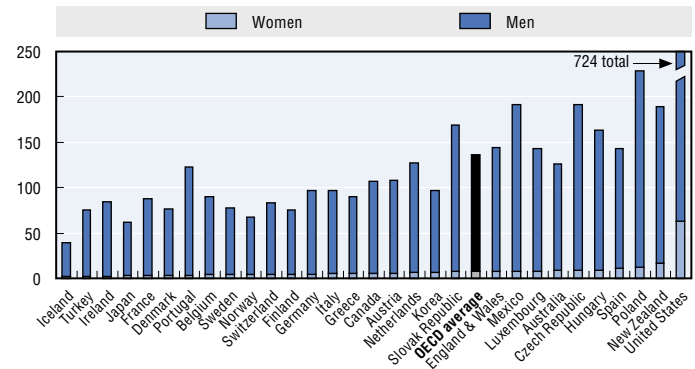
Including pre-trial and remand prisoners 2004 or latest year available



Half of the OECD countries have less than 100 people in prison per 100 000 inhabitants. Thirteen have between 100 and 200. Two countries exceed this – Poland with 230 and the United States with more than 700. The US rate is the highest in the world followed by Russia with about 600 per 100 000 inhabitants. Except in the United States imprisonment rates for women are negligible.

Prisoners per 100 000 inhabitants

Including pre-trial detainees and remand prisoners
2004 or latest year available



Source: International Centre for Prison Studies, King's College, London, website: www.prisonstudies.org and then select World Prison Brief.

Further reading:

OECD (2006), *OECD Factbook 2006: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD, Paris.