In 2006 there were an estimated 9.3 million people in prison worldwide at any one time. Half of them were held in just 3 territories: the United States 24%, China 17% and the Russian Federation 9%. Worldwide 0.15% of the population are in prison, that is one person in every 670.

The highest percentages of population that are imprisoned are in the United States, at 0.75%, and the Russian Federation, at 0.60%. The lowest rates of imprisonment are in Burkina Faso and Nauru. In both territories only 0.02% of the population is imprisoned.

The rate at which people are imprisoned varies widely and reflects different customs.

Territory size shows the proportion of people living in prison worldwide that live there.

― Data are from the World Prison Brief Online, 2006.
― Data collected since 2000, with most recent available data used. Data available for 187 of territories mapped. Others take regional averages.
― Population data for 2002 is used to calculate rates.
― See website for further information.

“\"The thoughts of a prisoner - they’re not free either. They keep returning to the same things.\"”

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 1962

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