

Ethics in criminal justice

Law



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Summary of PEW report “ One in 100 behind bars in America 2008.” The PEW Report on the prison population in the United s (2008) describes the slow rise in the proportion of citizens who are locked up in prisons, and compares the figures with those of other Western countries. The results show that Americans are significantly more likely than people in other countries to find themselves behind bars. More than one in a hundred people were in prison in 2008, which is high compared to other countries. The financial implications of this are very great, causing federal and state budgets to come under increasing pressure, at a time when resources are already tight because of other factors. More worrying than this is the social impact of such high imprisonment rates, on individuals and families. Some worrying trends are also reported, including the great variation in the imprisonment rates according to gender, ethnic origin, and state. Men are more than ten times more likely to be imprisoned than women, and African American men most likely of all to be imprisoned. Additional costs such as the medical care and education costs of prisoners are growing fast. The report explains how changes in policy are causing this alarming growth and sets out many graphs and tables which give a breakdown of these costs between the different states. There is no clear recommendation at the end of the report, but the facts speak for themselves: this trend is in danger of running out of control, and there must be ways to ensure that the costs are kept within reason, and the system is applied more uniformly, and by implication more fairly, across different states. The report ends with a suggestion that it is time to look for new approaches such as reducing sentence lengths and pursuing other forms of crime prevention in order to halt this worrying trend.

References

One in 100 behind bars in America 2008. (2008)