

# Prison overcrowding - causes and effects, reforms to reduce the issue

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



## 1. Introduction

Prison overcrowding is a matter that has raised concern in many countries. For example in England and Wales the current number of prisoners totals 80,000 (André Kuhn 2009 p. 105), a space designed for one person is allocated two prisoners. In the U. S. and Canada, the situation is the same and also in many other countries. Under such circumstances, the prison services usually lack the capacity to provide the basic needs of the inmates. Sanitary facilities are inadequate and pose a threat to the health of the prisoners. More over, lack of such important facilities undermines human dignity among the inmates. The real meaning of imprisonment is not achieved since prisons become places of dehumanizing the prisoners unnecessarily, rather than serving as correction centers. Overcrowding results in undesirable situations such as prisoner strikes, epidemics, death, prison breaks amongst other things. Such situations are usually overwhelming to the prison administrations, and usually attract undue disapproval from human rights organizations (Cox et al 1984 p. 1149). This paper is a discussion and a critical evaluation of reforms that can reduce prison overcrowding.

### 1. 1Prison Overcrowding

#### 1. 11Causes of prison overcrowding

There are several factors that contribute to prison overcrowding. The laws of many countries require that suspects be kept in remand awaiting conviction. The number of crimes punishable by imprisonment is high, including some which fines can be an effective alternative. With the current rate of population increase, there is a possibility of a continuous rise in crime. This means that prisons will be receiving inmates from time to time, creating the

possibility of an increase in overcrowding within prisons.

### 1. 12 Effects of Prison Overcrowding

The behavior of prisoners is largely affected by overcrowding, mainly tending to lean towards anti-social actions facilitated by idleness and the presence of a large number of people with varied behavior in a small space. There is therefore need for reforms that could reduce prison overcrowding.

### 1. 13 Reforms to Reduce Prison Overcrowding

1. Shortening prison sentences would be significant in reducing prison overcrowding. It can help in avoiding the accumulation of prisoners since as more are brought in, others leave to create more space.

2. The offenders who are not violent and have been proved incapable of jeopardizing the security of the public can be put under community work until they complete their sentence. Parole reforms can play a significant role in reducing overcrowding in prisons

3. Constant evaluation of progress in terms of prisoner improvement is important in order to release prisoners who have reformed.

4. Establishment of new prisons to create space is also a significant move towards improvement of prison situation. This can help in reducing the circumstances whereby too many prisoners use few facilities such as sanitary and sleeping space.

5. Prisoner rehabilitation schemes can also significantly reduce overcrowding. The convicts can be engaged in particular jobs where they can get training, they can also be enrolled in useful courses that may change their lifestyles, including temperament management and other ethical courses.

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