

Prisons in Europe 2005-2015

Belgium Country Profile

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This country profile on Belgium is taken from the report *Prisons in Europe 2005-2015* ([link](#)), which contains 51 profiles on the prison populations in the Prison Administrations of the 47 member States of the Council of Europe.

Prisons in Europe 2005- 2015 presents data on prison populations across Europe from 2005 to 2015. It is divided in two volumes: Volume 1 presents country profiles based on several indicators concerning prison populations, and Volume 2 includes all the data used for the report. The report has been prepared by the University of Lausanne and co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Each country profile includes a Table with Key Facts about the country, which are presented in the form of several indicators referring to the latest available year and to the evolution during the latest ten years, as well as the relative position of the country (low, medium or high) for each indicator compared to the 28 member States of the European Union (“EU 28”) and the 47 member States of the Council of Europe (“CoE 47”). The classification in “low”, “medium” and “high” is based on the comparative indicators presented in Part 2 of the study. The country profile is divided in four sections and includes 8 Figures. The four sections are the following:

- Key facts
- The country in brief: This section summarizes the trends shown in the key facts from 2005 to 2014/15. It illustrates which indicators have increased, which have decreased and which have remained stable. The indicator is considered as showing a stable trend if the variation is lower than 5%.
- The country in comparative perspective: This section compares each country to the rest of the countries included in the study.

General comments:

This section includes eight Figures, comments to these Figures and some possible explanations of the observed trends. The eight Figures are numbered from 1 to 8 within each country profile and also include, between brackets, their absolute number from 1 to 408.

The Key facts include indicators of stock and flow. The stock indicators refer to the situation on 1st September 2015. The flow indicators refer to the situation during the year 2014. On the basis of the data included in this study, we have calculated for each indicator the average for the 10 to 11 years under study. This average is presented in the fifth column of the country profiles.

Finally, the last column of the country profiles provides a graphic indicator of the trend observed when one compares the last year of the series (2014 and 2015 respectively) to the first one (2005). The arrows included in this column reflect the evolution of the indicator according to the following table:

↔	+/- 4.9%	stable
↑	+5 to +9%	slight increase
↑↑	+10 to +19%	moderate increase
↑↑↑	+20 to +49%	substantial increase
↑↑↑↑	+50% and more	huge increase
↓	-5 to -9%	slight decrease
↓↓	-10 to -19%	moderate decrease
↓↓↓	-20 to -49%	substantial decrease
↓↓↓↓	-50% and more	huge decrease

COUNTRY PROFILE	BELGIUM		TRENDS 2005-2015		
Key Facts					
	2014/15	Comparative		Evolution 2005-2014/15	
		CoE 47	EU 28	Average	% Change
Prison population rate (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants) (01.09.2015)	113.7	Medium	Medium	104.5	↑↑↑
Rate of entries into penal institutions in 2014 (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants)	172.4	Medium	Medium	165.5	↑↑
Rate of releases from penal institutions in 2014 (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants) – Available since 2009	178.5	High	High	164.4*	↑↑
Average length of imprisonment in 2014 based on the total number of days spent in penal institutions (in months)	7.3	Medium	Medium	7.1	↔
Average length of imprisonment in 2014 based on stock and flow (in months)	8.2	Medium	Medium	7.5	↑↑
Prison density (inmates per 100 places) (01.09.2015)	127.0	High	High	124.9	↑↑
Median age of the prison population (in years) (01.09.2015)	35.0	Medium	Medium	33.9	↔
Percentage of female inmates (01.09.2015)	5.0	Medium	Medium	4.3	↑↑↑
Percentage of foreign inmates (01.09.2015)	40.1	High	High	41.5	↔
of which: in pre-trial detention	34.7	Medium	Medium	38.4	↓↓↓
Percentage of non-sentenced inmates (01.09.2015)	33.4	High	High	39.0	↑↑
Rate of deaths per 10,000 inmates in 2014	44.7	High	High	43.3	↑↑↑
Rate of suicides per 10,000 inmates in 2014 (n=18)	13.6	High	High	12.7	↑↑
of which: % in pre-trial detention (n=10) - Available since 2013	71.4**	High	High	NAP	NAP
Ratio of inmates per staff (number of inmates per 1 staff person) (01.09.2015)	1.4	Low	Low	1.4	---
Percentage of custodial staff in the total staff (01.09.2015)	73.6	High	High	75.6	---
Total budget spent by the prison administration in 2014 (in Euro) – Available since 2011	594 640 286	NAP	NAP	587 238 071 ***	↔
Average amount spent per day for the detention of one inmate in 2014 (in Euro) – Available since 2014	137.3	High	High	---	---

*Average calculated from 2009 to 2014

**Data refers to 2013

*** Average calculated from 2011 to 2014

Belgium in brief

- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators show a *decrease*: percentage of pre-trial detainees among foreign inmates (-20%), and percentage non-sentenced inmates (-23%).
- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators show an *increase*: prison population rate (+27%), rate of entries into penal institutions (+19%), rate of releases from penal institutions (+10%), average length of imprisonment based on stock and flow (+11%), prison density (+15%), percentage of female inmates (+23%), rate of deaths per 10,000 inmates (+27%) and percentage of suicides (+16%).
- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators remain *stable*: average length of imprisonment based on the total number of days spent in penal institutions (0%), median age of the prison population (+1%), percentage of foreign inmates (-3%), and total budget spent by the prison administration (+3%).

Belgium in comparative perspective

- Compared to other European countries, in 2014/15 Belgium presents:
 - **Low:** Ratio of inmates per staff.
 - **Medium:** Prison population rate, rate of entries into penal institutions, average length of imprisonment based on stock and flow, average length of imprisonment based on the total number of days spent in penal institutions, median age of the prison population, percentage of female inmates, percentage of pre-trial detainees among foreign inmates.
 - **High:** Rate of releases from penal institutions, prison density, percentage of foreign inmates, percentage of non-sentenced inmates, rate of deaths per 10,000 inmates, rate of suicides per 10,000 inmates, percentage of suicides in pre-trial detention, percentage of custodial staff in the total staff, average amount spent per day for the detention of one inmate.

General comments

Figure 1 (41)

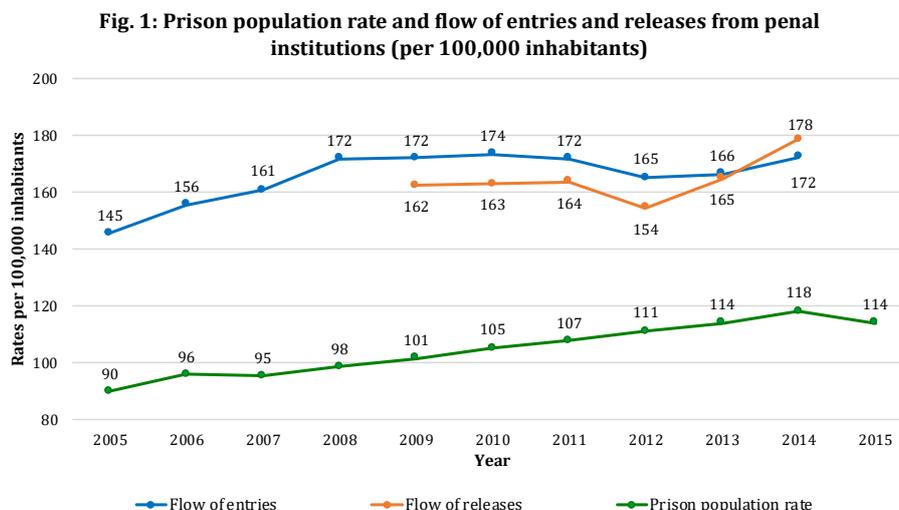


Figure 1 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the prison population rate of Belgium (stock) increased by 27%. In 2005, the country had 90 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2015 it had 114. According to the information collected during this research, the slight decrease observed in 2015 is partly due to the opening of a new Forensic Psychiatric Centre in Ghent, which is not directly managed by the Belgian Prison Service. Some inmates were released to be transferred to this new facility.

From 2005 to 2014, the rate of entries (flow of entries) increased by 19%. In 2005, there were 145 entries into penal institutions per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2014 there were 172.

From 2009 to 2014, the rate of releases (flow of releases) increased by 10%. In 2009, there were 162 releases from penal institutions per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2014 there were 178.

The flow of entries and the flow of releases show relatively similar rates and trends.

Figure 2 (42)

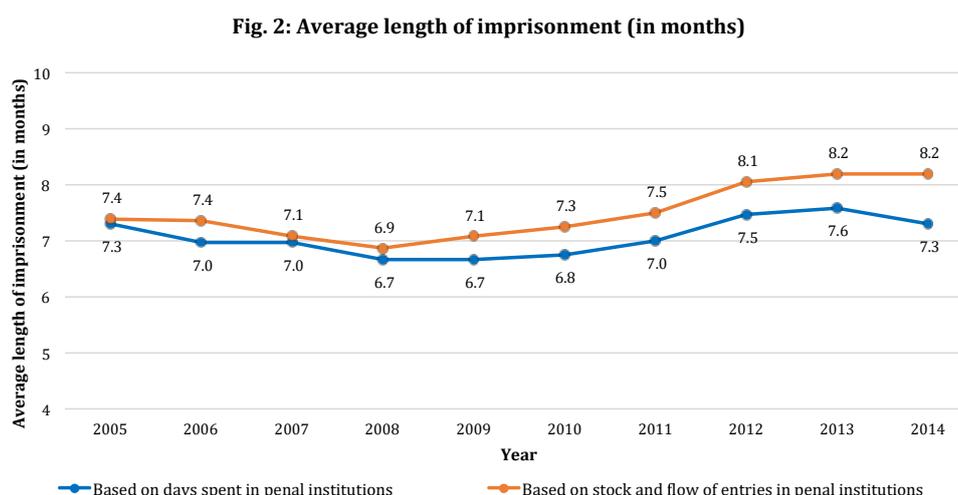


Figure 2 shows that, in 2005 and 2014, the average length of imprisonment based on the number of days spent in penal institutions remained stable. In 2005 and 2014, the average length of imprisonment was 7.3 months.

When the average length of imprisonment is computed on the basis of the ratio between the stock and the flow, it shows an increase of 11%. According to this indicator, in 2005 the average length of imprisonment was 7.4 months, while in 2014 it was 8.2 months.

Figure 3 (43)

Fig. 3: Prison density per 100 places (Overcrowding)

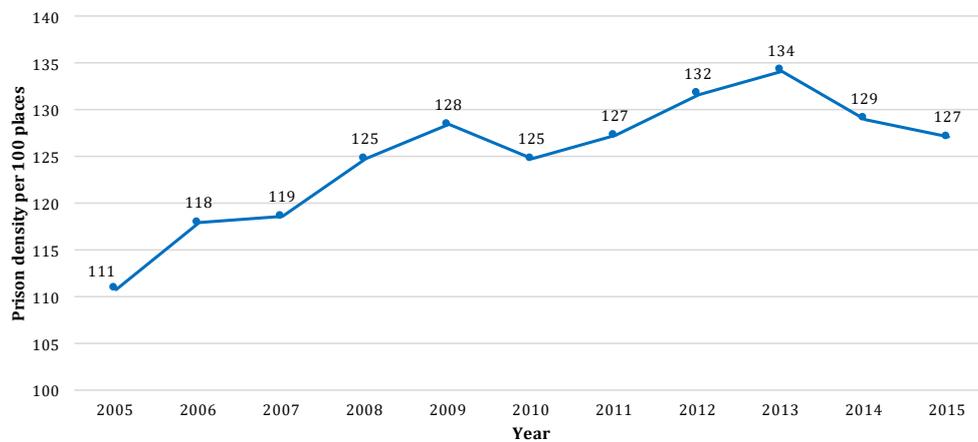


Figure 3 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the prison density of Belgium increased by 15%. In 2005, the country had 111 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2015 it had 127.

Figure 4 (44)

Fig. 4: Total capacity of penal institutions and number of inmates

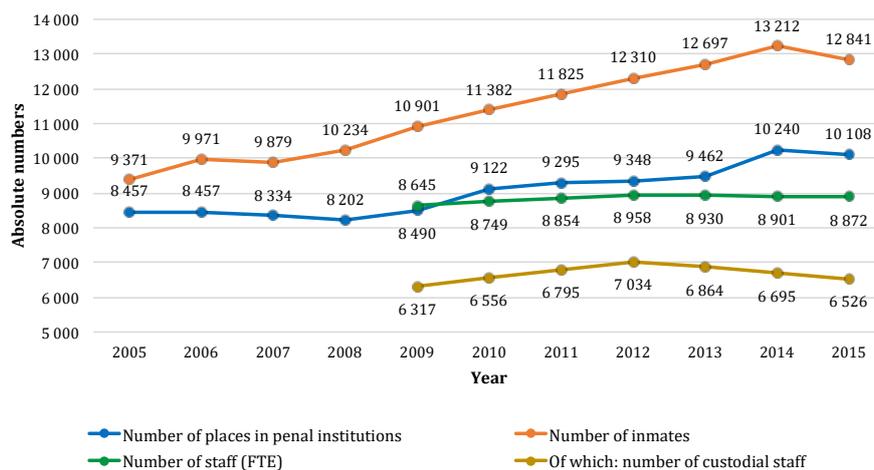


Figure 4 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the total number of places in penal institutions in Belgium increased by 20%. In 2005, the country had 8,457 places, while in 2015 it had 10,108. According to the information collected during this research, this is due to the construction and renovation of prisons, as well as the rental of detention places in penal institutions located in the Netherlands.

During the same period, the total number of inmates increased by 37%. In 2005, the country had 9,371 inmates, while in 2015 it had 12,841.

Data for the total number of staff and custodial staff are only available from 2009 to 2015 and show a relative stability.

Figure 5 (45)

Fig. 5: Percentage of females and foreigners in the prison population rate

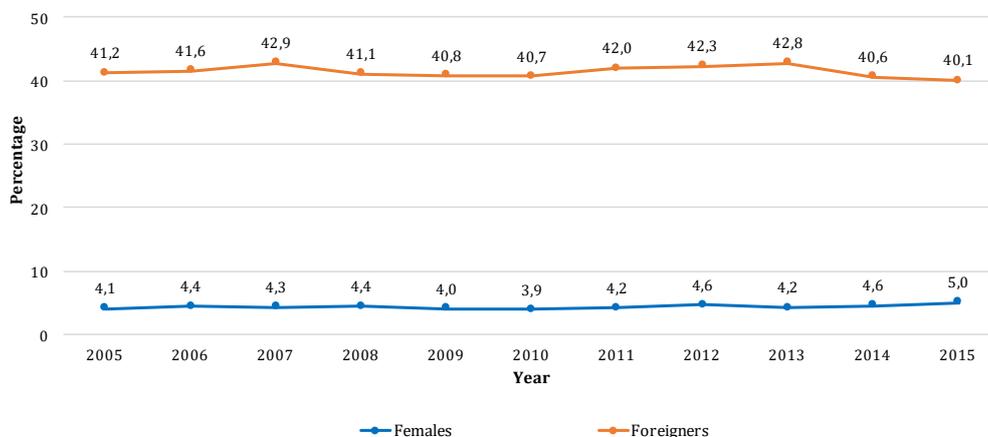


Figure 5 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the percentage of female inmates increased by 23%. In 2005, 4.1% of the inmates were females, while in 2015 they represented 5.0% of the total prison population.

During the same period, the percentage of foreign inmates decreased by 3%. In 2005, 41% of the inmates were foreigners, while in 2015 they represented 40% of the total prison population.

Figure 6 (46)

Fig. 6: Percentage of inmates and foreign inmates without a final sentence

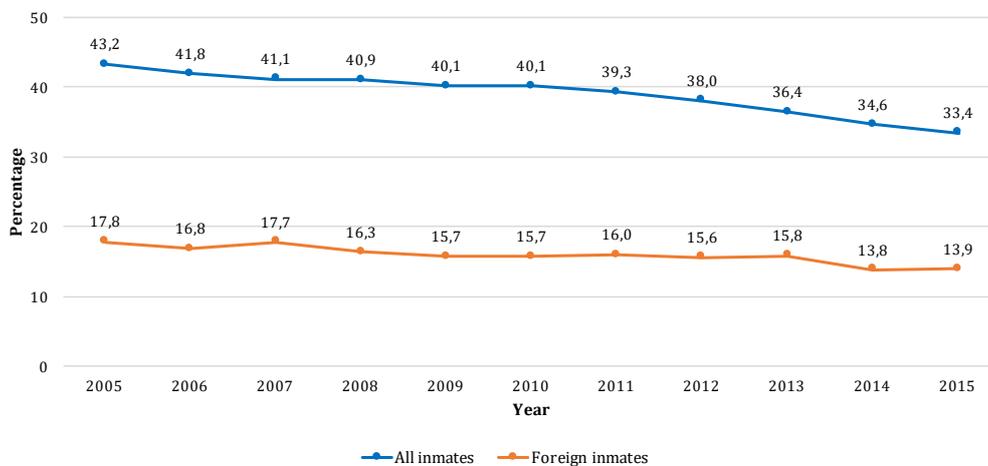
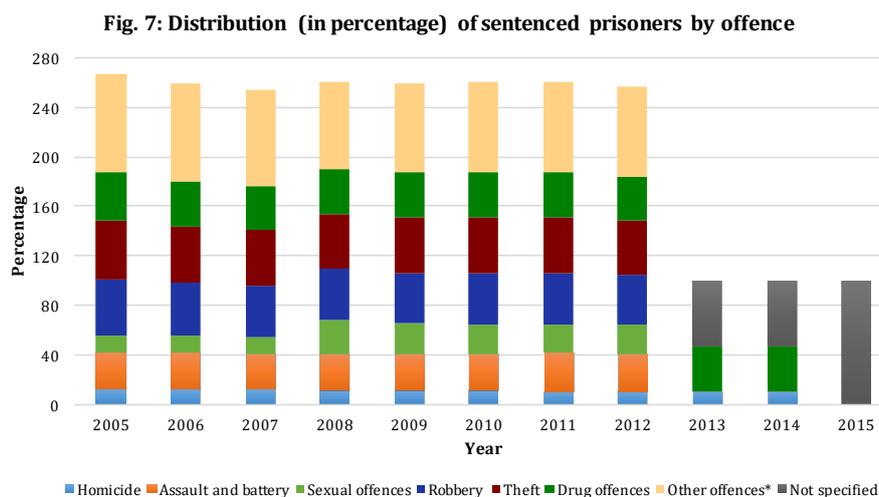


Figure 6 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the percentage of inmates without a final sentence decreased by 23%. In 2005, 43% of the inmates did not have a final sentence while, in 2015, inmates without a final sentence represented 33% of all inmates.

During the same period, the percentage of foreigners held in pre-trial detention decreased by 22%. In 2005, they represented 18% of the total number of inmates, while in 2015 they represented 14% of them.

Figure 7¹²³ (47)

As can be seen in Figure 7, data on the distribution of sentenced prisoners by offence were not fully available for the last three years of the series. The data available for the years 2005 to 2012 produces percentages that exceed 100% because the country does not apply the principal offence rule. As a consequence, it is not possible to reach reliable conclusions about the trends observed, except in the case of homicide, which constitutes the most serious offence. Prisoners sentenced for homicide represented 12.9% of all sentenced prisoners in 2005 and 11% in 2014, which represents a decrease of 15%.

Figure 8 (48)

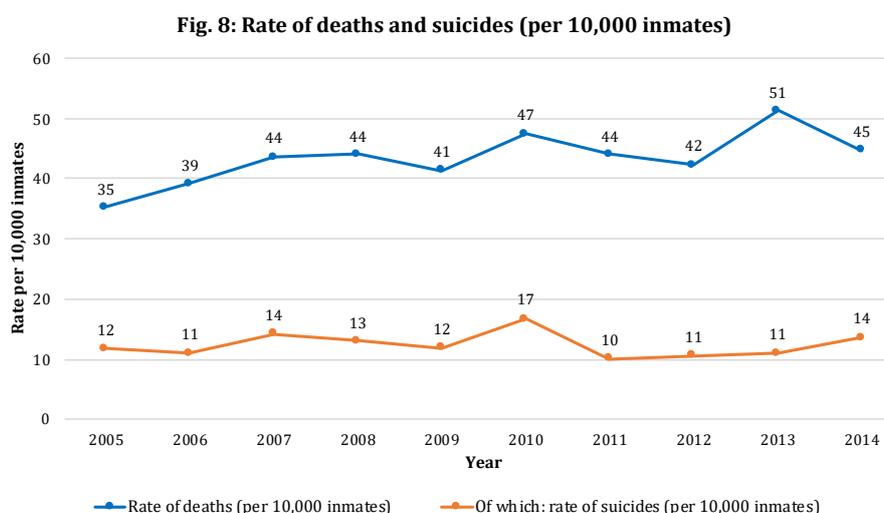


Figure 8 shows that, from 2005 to 2014, the rate of deaths of inmates in penal institutions per 10,000 inmates increased by 27%. In 2005, there were 35 deaths per 10,000 inmates, while in 2014 there were 45. The rate of suicides was also 16% higher in 2014 than in 2005 but, from a statistical point of view, the absolute numbers are too low (between 8 and 18 suicides per year) to reach reliable conclusions about the observed trends.

¹ The figures provided by the country do not always add to 100%.

² Sexual offences include (1) rape (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2005), and (2) other sexual offences (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2008).

³ Other offences include (1) economic and financial offences (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2008); (2) terrorism (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2007); (3) organised crime (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2007); (4) cybercrime (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2014); and (5) other cases (included in the SPACE questionnaire since 2005).