

# Prisons in Europe 2005-2015

## Latvia Country Profile

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This country profile on Latvia 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		LATVIA		TRENDS 2005-2015	
	2014/15	Comparative		Evolution 2005-2014/15	
		CoE 47	EU 28	Average	% Change
Prison population rate (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants) on 01.09.2015	223.4	High	High	284.2	↓↓↓
Rate of entries into penal institutions in 2014 (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants)	625.6	High	High	714.2	↓↓
Rate of releases from penal institutions in 2014 (inmates per 100,000 inhabitants) – Available since 2009	177.7	High	High	171.8*	↑↑
Average length of imprisonment in 2014 based on the total number of days spent in penal institutions (in months)	---	---	---	---	---
Average length of imprisonment in 2014 based on stock and flow (in months)	4.6	Low	Low	4.9	↓
Prison density on 01.09.2015 (inmates per 100 places)	75.2	Low	Low	76.5	↓
Median age of the prison population on 01.09.2015 (in years)	40.0	High	High	35.6	↑↑
Percentage of female inmates (01.09.2015)	7.7	High	High	6.3	↑↑↑
Percentage of foreign inmates (01.09.2015)	3.5	Low	Low	1.4	↑↑↑↑
of which: in pre-trial detention	78.6	High	High	52.3	↓↓↓
Percentage of non-sentenced inmates (01.09.2015)	28.4	High	High	28.6	↓↓
Rate of deaths per 10,000 inmates in 2014	58.2	High	High	39.0	↑↑↑↑
Rate of suicides per 10,000 inmates in 2014 (n=5)	10.4	High	High	7.6	↑↑↑↑
of which: % in pre-trial detention (n=1) – Available since 2013	20.0	Medium	Medium	NAP	NAP
Ratio of inmates per staff (number of inmates per 1 staff person)	1.7	Medium	Medium	2.0	↓↓↓
Percentage of custodial staff in the total staff	65.6	Medium	Medium	53.4	↑
Total budget spent by the prison administration (in Euro) – Available since 2011	41 454 507	NAP	NAP	37 898 218**	↑↑
Average amount spent per day for the detention of one inmate (in Euro) – Available since 2008	22.6	Medium	Low	16.5***	↑

\*Average calculated from 2009 to 2014

\*\* Average calculated from 2011 to 2014

\*\*\* Average calculated from 2008 to 2014

## Latvia in brief

- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators show a *decrease*: prison population rate (-29%), rate of entries into penal institutions (-16%), average length of detention based on stock and flow (-9%), prison density (-5%), percentage of pre-trial detainees among foreign inmates (-21%), percentage of non-sentenced inmates (-14%), and ratio of inmates per staff (-25%).
- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators show an *increase*: rate of releases from penal institutions (+11%), median age of the population (+18%), percentage of female inmates (+36%), percentage of foreign inmates (+873%), rate of deaths per 10,000 inmates (+45%), percentage of custodial staff in the total staff (+6%), total budget spent by the prison administration (+14%), and average amount spent per day for the detention of one inmate (+8%).
- Comparing 2014/15 to 2005, the following indicators remain *stable*: percentage of suicides (+1%).

## Latvia in comparative perspective

- Compared to other European countries, in 2014/15 Latvia presents:
  - **Low**: Average length of detention based on stock and flow, prison density, percentage of foreign inmates.
  - **Medium**: Percentage of suicides in pre-trial detention, ratio of inmates per staff, percentage of custodial staff in the total staff.
  - **High**: Prison population rate, rate of entries into penal institutions, rate of releases from penal institutions, median age of the prison population, percentage of female inmates, percentage of pre-trial detainees among foreign inmates, percentage of non-sentenced inmates, rate of deaths per 10,000, percentage of suicides.
- When the average amount spent per day for the detention of one inmate is calculated, the Latvian average is medium compared to the member States of the Council of Europe, but low compared to the member States of the European Union.

## General comments

**Figure 1 (177)**

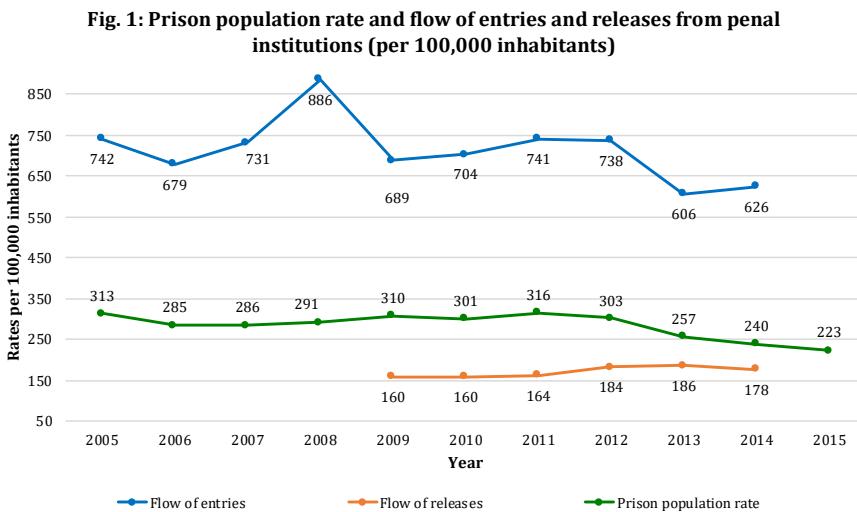


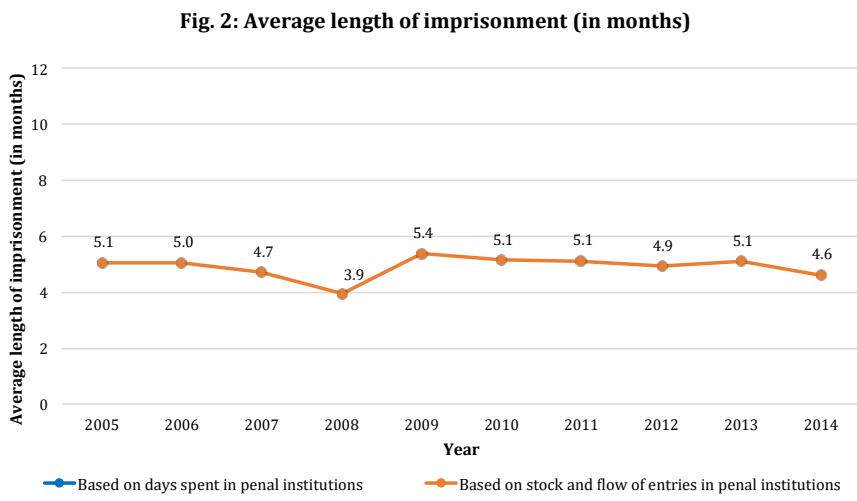
Figure 1 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the prison population rate of Latvia (stock) decreased by 29%. In 2005, the country had 313 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2015 it had 223.

From 2005 to 2014, the rate of entries (flow of entries) decreased by 16%. In 2005, there were 742 entries into penal institutions per 100,000 habitants, while in 2014 there were 626.

From 2009 to 2014, the rate of releases (flow of releases) increased by 11%. In 2009, there were 160 releases from penal institutions per 100,000 habitants, while in 2014 there were 178.

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

**Figure 2 (178)**



From 2005 to 2014, the average length of imprisonment computed on the basis of the ratio between the stock and the flow decreased by 9%. In 2005, the average length of imprisonment was 5.1 months, while in 2014 it was 4.6 months.

Data were not available for the estimation of the average length of imprisonment based on the number of days spent in penal institutions.

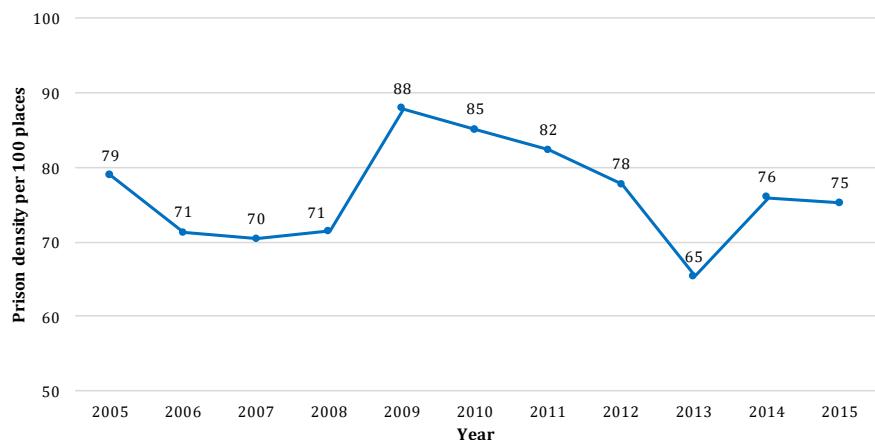
**Figure 3 (179)****Fig. 3: Prison density per 100 places (Overcrowding)**

Figure 3 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the prison density of Latvia decreased by 5%. In 2005, the country had 79 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants, while in 2015 it had 75.

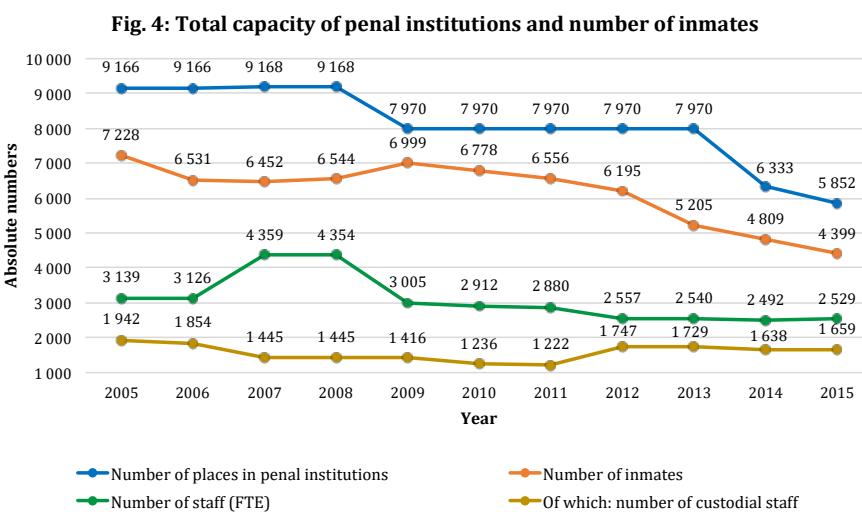
**Figure 4 (180)**

Figure 4 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the total number of places in penal institutions in Latvia decreased by 36%. In 2005, the country had 9,166 places, while in 2015 it had 5,852. According to the information provided by the SPACE national correspondent, the number of places in penal institutions decreased due to the closure of some prisons. To comply with the proposed actions in the Cabinet Declaration of 20 December 2007, set in paragraph 1.8., on the need to ensure the modernization of the penal institutions in accordance with international standards, as well as optimize the number of prisons, since 31 October 2008, four separate prisons were combined and two larger prisons were created. In particular, Matisa prison and Central prison were merged together. Grīvas and Daugavpils prisons were also merged together. On the other hand, in 15 December 2015 Pārlielupes prison was closed. As a result, the number of prisons was reduced from 15 to 12.

Similarly, to assess whether the existing prisoners are provided with dignified residence conditions, on 11 September 2013 the Prison Administration issued the order "The prison accommodation audit". On the basis of this order an auditing commission was created, which included the officials and employees of the Latvian Prison Administration and the Ministry of Justice. From October 2013 to May 2014, the Commission conducted a survey of all residential premises in penal institutions according to the following criteria:

- The adequacy of the living space: The living space in dormitory type of premises has to be at least 4 square meters per inmate, but in solitary cells it must be at least 9 square meters;
- The need for capital and/or cosmetic repairs;

- The sufficiency of natural and artificial lighting;
- The existence and adequacy of ventilation;
- The existence and adequacy of delimitation of the sanitary unit;
- The individual bed space;
- A minimum of microclimate parameters;
- The compliance with the general conditions of hygiene and epidemiological safety.

All the information collected by the survey commission was compiled in accordance with the referred criteria and proposals were submitted to the Ministry of Justice to ensure that the residential space complies with human dignity, and the conditions do not encourage inhuman, humiliating treatment and ill-treatment of persons. The commission also submitted proposals about financial investment to improve the living space (separately for each prison).

In the light of the above, on 2 July 2014, the Minister of Justice issued two orders, namely: Order No. 1-1/259 "On the types of the deprivation of liberty institutions and the number of prisoners" and Order No. 1-1/260 "The elimination of the deprivation of liberty institution". In compliance with these Orders, on 1 November 2014 the Administration closed the Skirotava prison. As a result, the total number of prisons was reduced from 12 to 11.

In accordance with the Ministry of Justice Order No. 1-1/492 of 30 December 2014, "On the types of the deprivation of liberty institutions and the number of prisoners", which established a maximum number of inmates in all places of imprisonment, from 2013 to 2015, the number of inmates was reduced by 2'118 (from 7'970 to 5'852).

From 2005 to 2015, the total number of inmates decreased by 39%. In 2005, the country had 7,228 inmates, while in 2015 it had 4,399.

From 2005 to 2015, the total number of staff decreased by 19%. In 2005, Latvia had in total a staff of 3,139 persons, while in 2015 it had 2,529.

During the same period, the total number of custodial staff decreased by 15%. In 2005, the total custodial staff was 1,942 persons, while in 2015 it was 1,659.

According to the information provided by the SPACE national correspondent, the increase in the number of staff observed in 2007 was due to the European Community initiative EQUAL project "New solutions for the promotion of the employment of former prisoners" (hereafter, the "Project"). Within the framework of the Project, psychologists and social workers were employed and then recruited as Prisons Administration staff at the end of the Project.

In the context of the economic crisis of the country, and according to a decision adopted in Cabinet meeting on 1 July 2008 (Protocol No. 45 31. § paragraph 16) the total number of State Administration employees in 2008-2009 had to be reduced by at least 5%. The staff reductions also took place in the Latvian Prison Administration and the number of staff was significantly reduced. For example, on 1 June 2009, a major reduction of staff took place in Olaine Prison (Latvian Prison Hospital) where some of the prison units were closed. As a consequence, 170 positions were eliminated, including 31 officers, 10 employees and 129 medical practitioners.

The number of persons employed in the prison administration continued to decline slightly in 2014, but increased slightly in 2015, pursuant to the Law "On the state budget for 2015" programme of the Ministry of Justice "Criminal enforcement", sub-programme "Places of imprisonment". Thus, in 2014, the Prison Administration initiated a new policy initiative, "The implementation of re-socialization process of sentenced persons", to ensure the implementation of the re-socialization process of convicted persons in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 191 of 9 April 2013 "Implementing procedures for re-socialization of sentenced persons". Thus, new positions for psychologists, social workers, chaplains and narcologists were created.

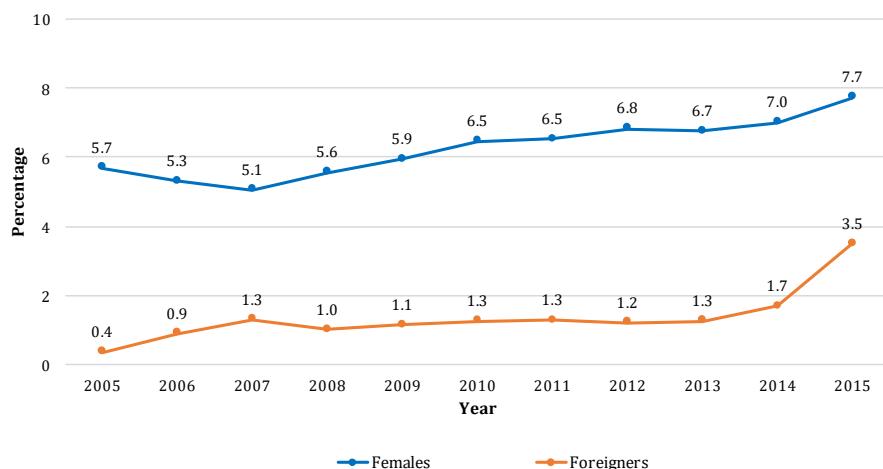
**Figure 5 (181)****Fig. 5: Percentage of females and foreigners in the prison population rate**

Figure 5 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the percentage of female inmates increased by 36%. In 2005, 5.7% of the inmates were females, while in 2015 they represented 7.7% of the total prison population.

During the same period, the percentage of foreign inmates increased by 873%. In 2005, 0.4% of the inmates were foreigners, while in 2015 they represented 3.5% of the total prison population. According to the information provided by the SPACE national correspondent, the percentage of foreign inmates increased dramatically in 2015 due to the imprisonment of citizens from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, who were accused of illegal crossing of the State border of the Republic of Latvia. For illegal crossing of the State border of the Republic of Latvia, the criminal court usually sentenced the persons concerned with deprivation of liberty for up to six months and, as an additional sanction, the forced expulsion from the Republic of Latvia after serving their sentence.

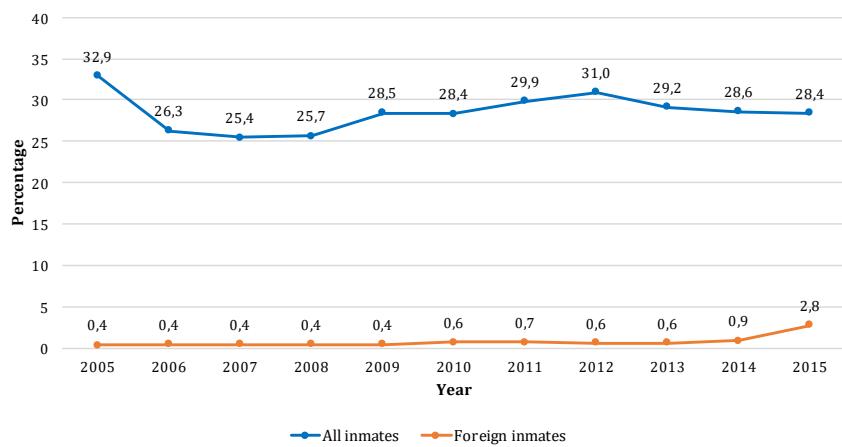
**Figure 6 (182)****Fig. 6: Percentage of inmates and foreign inmates without a final sentence**

Figure 6 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the percentage of inmates without a final sentence decreased by 14%. In 2005, 33% of the inmates did not have a final sentence while, in 2015, inmates without a final sentence represented 28% of all inmates.

During the same period, the percentage of foreigners held in pre-trial detention increased by 665%. In 2005, they represented 0.4% of the total number of inmates, while in 2015 they represented 2.8% of them (see the comment on Figure 5 concerning foreign inmates).

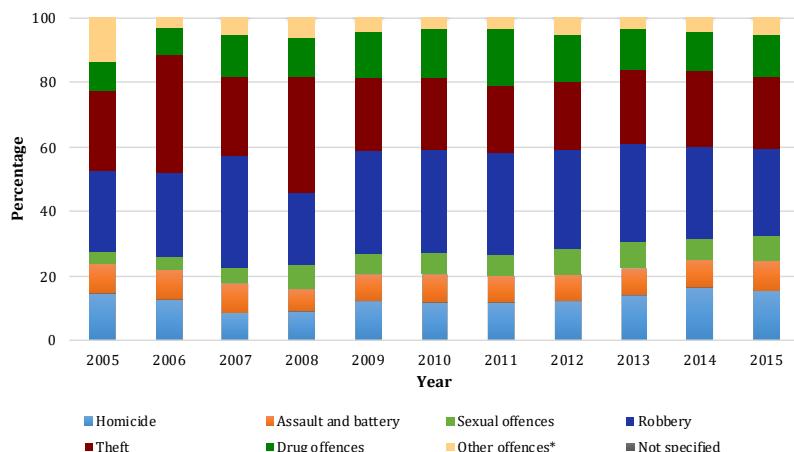
**Figure 7<sup>123</sup> (183)****Fig. 7: Distribution (in percentage) of sentenced prisoners by offence**

Figure 7 shows that, from 2005 to 2015, the percentages of prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences, robbery, and drug offences have increased; while the percentages of those serving sentences for theft and other types of offences have decreased.

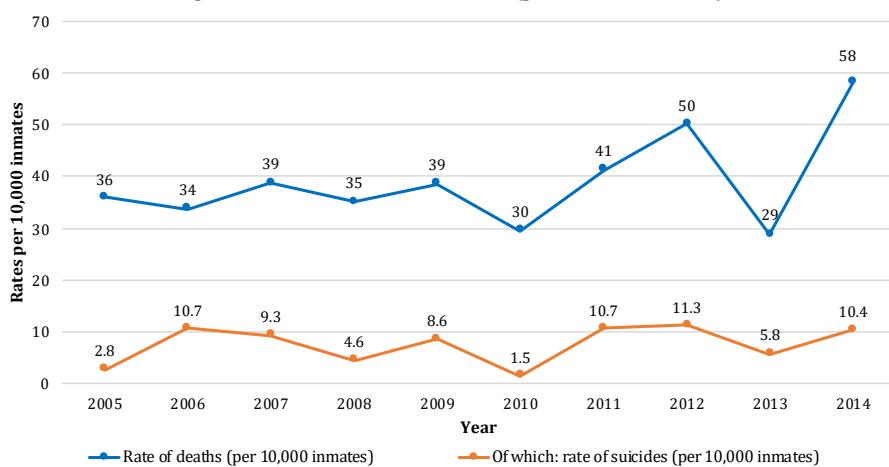
**Figure 8 (184)****Fig. 8: Rate of deaths and suicides (per 10,000 inmates)**

Figure 8 shows that, from 2005 to 2014, the rate of deaths of inmates in penal institutions per 10,000 inmates increased by 62%. In 2005, there were 36 deaths per 10,000 inmates, while in 2014 there were 58.

Any interpretation of the rates and trends of suicides would be misleading because, from a statistical point of view, the absolute numbers are too low (between 1 and 8 suicides per year) to reach reliable conclusions.

<sup>1</sup> The figures provided by the country do not always add to 100%.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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).