

Australia Worst Prison Statistics

The 2026 International Corrections and Prisons Association conference revealed Australia's recidivism rates as the highest in the world on the global stage.

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"Australia's prison shame has been graphically exposed to an international audience of the world's leading prison administrators", said John Dowd AO KC today, speaking as President of the Community Justice Coalition (CJC). "They were presented with a chart of various countries' recidivism rates (rates of re-offending after leaving prison), and the worst of them all—the country with the highest rate—was Australia, with a staggering rate of 54.9%. [Our Report](#) shows the chart on p.3 and attached."

[The conference](#) was held in Morocco by International Corrections and Prisons Association. The conference is attended by prison administrators, technology providers and civil society organisations from all over the world, including the UN and the International Red Cross launching [their Handbook](#) on the Use of Technology in Prison Settings.

"The UN and the Red Cross recognise, in their Handbook, that technology can support e-learning, mental health services, vocational training, and maintaining family connections. These support prisoner reform and development, so they can be released ready to succeed and contribute to society, rather than falling back - often out of simple need - into crime," said CJC Vice-President Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans.

"This failure rate is not surprising. Too many Australian prisoners are set up to fail, as there are almost no educational opportunities now available to prisoners. Education is the same as for the general public - online. Most prisoners are left in a cycle of feeling hopeless and helpless. Research shows education can reduce the cycle of reoffending by 43 per cent, yet access to online courses hasn't been turned on," said Mr Dowd.

"It is disappointing that 46.3 per cent of NSW prisoners are not convicted but are on remand, with one-third accused of domestic violence offences, yet they have no access to effective external counselling. Rather than rehabilitation from family interventions, they are breeding anger in cells," said Dr Chesterfield-Evans.

"Access to telecommunications in cells will unlock music, art, language, counselling, telehealth, and restorative justice – all resulting in a provably safer community. Violence against guards

could be reduced by 60% as shown internationally. The import model giving access to outside services is essential, providing trusted counselling without a conflict of interest with security, is already government funded, and keeps detainees emotionally connected to the outside community from arrest through to release," said Mr Dowd.

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