

# Solitary Watch

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2012/03/19/new-resource-solitary-confinement-faq/>

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by [James Ridgeway and Jean Casella](#) | March 19, 2012

Our amazing intern/reporter/researcher Sal Rodriguez, author of several fact sheets and articles on this site, has produced a new resource: [Frequently Asked Questions on Solitary Confinement](#). Questions include:

**What is solitary confinement?**

**How many people are held in solitary confinement?**

**Who gets put in solitary confinement?**

**What are conditions like in solitary confinement?**

**How long do people spend in solitary confinement?**

**What are the psychological effects of solitary confinement?**

**Are people with mental illnesses put in solitary confinement?**

**Are juveniles held in solitary confinement?**

**What effect does solitary confinement have on recidivism?**

**How much does solitary confinement cost?**

**How have the courts ruled on solitary confinement?**

**What are the alternatives to solitary confinement?**

**How do other countries use solitary confinement?**

**What do international bodies say about solitary confinement?**

This comprehensive source of information has a permanent home at the **FAQ** page link above. To download the FAQ as a printable Word document, scroll down to link at the bottom or just click here: [Solitary Confinement FAQ](#)

The FAQ is meant to be a community resource, collecting the most relevant data on various aspects of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails. Please send suggestions for changes and additions to [solitarywatchnews@gmail.com](mailto:solitarywatchnews@gmail.com).

James Ridgeway (1936-2021) was the founder and co-director of Solitary Watch. An investigative journalist for over 60 years, he served as Washington Correspondent for the Village Voice and Mother Jones, reporting domestically on subjects ranging from electoral politics to corporate malfeasance to the rise of the racist far-right, and abroad from Central America, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. Earlier, he wrote for The New Republic and Ramparts, and his work appeared in dozens of other publications. He was the co-director of two films and author of 20 books, including a forthcoming posthumous edition of his groundbreaking 1991 work on the far right, *Blood in the Face*. Jean Casella is the director of Solitary Watch. She has also published work in The Guardian, The Nation, and Mother Jones, and is co-editor of the book *Hell Is a Very Small Place: Voices from Solitary Confinement*. She has received a Soros Justice Media Fellowship and an Alicia Patterson Fellowship. She tweets @solitarywatch.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment

system.

by [Jean Casella](#)

December 29, 2021

by [Jean Casella](#)

December 23, 2021

by [Events and Announcements](#)

December 3, 2021

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

Without listing the total of the other 42 states you write:

eight state prison systems and the federal prison system alone hold a combined total of more than 44,000 prisoners in isolated confinement, and it has become a control strategy of first resort in many prisons and jails.

It also points out the sad truth of who gets placed in these holes for their own protection or because of mental illness, and lists the added costs to our society both monetarily and morally. When we think of the mental damage caused by this system and the fact that it does little to prevent future crimes by these inmates one has to conclude that these costs are way too high to continue to bare.

To make the point stick I hope that someone can get a hold of the number held in the remaining 42 states. And also the average number in county jails and juvenile facilities on any given day?

It must be an exponentially larger number than 44K.

Its enough to make the Statue of Liberty shed a tear.

Land of the free, yeah right, until with the countless laws on the books, we are not, then we become mere numbers on a balance sheet and left mentally scared while bearing a scarlet letter for life. How do we go on from that point?

Thank you Solitary Watch and Sal for this great report. Makes our work as advocates so much easier to have this hard to find data at our finger tips. I will use it often and will recommend Solitary Watch as a must read for those involved in criminal justice reform.

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