

The exponential growth of the Brazilian prison population and its social and economic consequences.

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Summary

Brazil has experienced exponential growth in its prison population in recent decades, placing it among the countries with the highest absolute number of people deprived of their liberty in the world. This article aims to analyze the factors that have contributed to the expansion of incarceration in the country and examine its main social, economic, and legal consequences. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, of a bibliographic and documentary nature, based on specialized literature, official data, and institutional reports. The results indicate that punitive penal policies, the excessive use of pretrial detention, and the current drug policy are central elements of this phenomenon. It concludes that mass incarceration has not produced a significant reduction in crime, but has intensified human rights violations, strengthened criminal organizations, and deepened structural inequalities, highlighting the need for reforms in the Brazilian penal system.

Keywords: Mass incarceration; Prison system; Criminal policy; Human rights; Public security.

Abstract

Brazil has experienced, in recent decades, an exponential growth in its prison population, ranking among the countries with the highest number of incarcerated individuals worldwide. This article aims to analyze the factors that contributed to the expansion of incarceration in the country and examine its main social, economic, and legal consequences. A qualitative bibliographic and documentary methodology was adopted, based on specialized literature and official institutional data. The findings indicate that punitive criminal policies, excessive use of pretrial detention, and current drug policy are central elements of this phenomenon. It is concluded that mass incarceration has not significantly reduced crime rates; instead, it intensifies human rights violations, strengthens criminal organizations, and exacerbates structural inequalities, highlighting the need for reforms in the Brazilian penal system.

Keywords: Mass incarceration; Prison system; criminal policy; Human rights; Public security.

1. Introduction

The growth of the Brazilian prison population constitutes one of the most significant contemporary challenges.

relevant in the context of public security and human rights. In recent decades, the

Incarceration has come to occupy a central position in the country's criminal policy, resulting in a

The number of people deprived of their liberty continues to increase.

This phenomenon cannot be explained solely by the increase in crime, but must be...

understood as a result of legislative, institutional, and political choices that favored the

Punishment at the expense of preventive measures and alternative penalties. In this context, the present article

This study seeks to analyze the causes of the exponential growth of the Brazilian prison population and its... main consequences, contributing to the academic debate on the crisis of the penal system.

2 Methodology

The research adopts a qualitative approach, with a bibliographic and documentary character.

Books, scientific articles, institutional reports, and official data on the prison system were analyzed.

Brazilian. The method adopted allowed for a critical analysis of penal policies and their impacts.

social, economic and legal.

3. Historical Overview of the Growth of the Brazilian Prison Population

The increase in the Brazilian prison population intensified starting in the 1990s, a period...

marked by the tightening of criminal policies and the expansion of the use of custodial sentences.

freedom. In just a few decades, the number of prisoners has grown disproportionately to the growth

The country's population is growing. This increase stems primarily from the adoption of incarceration as a response.

The pattern of crime, the criminalization of conduct associated with poverty, and the increased use of imprisonment.

preventive.

4. Punitive Criminal Policies and Hardening of the State Response

The penal policies adopted in Brazil have a markedly punitive character. The legislation

related to the fight against drugs played a central role in this process, expanding

significantly increases incarceration, especially of individuals in vulnerable situations.

social.

Furthermore, pretrial detention has become a recurring practice, often as

anticipation of the sentence, which contributed directly to the overcrowding of the prison system and to the

Violation of fundamental constitutional guarantees.

5. Socioeconomic Profile and Selectivity of the Penal System

An analysis of the profile of the Brazilian prison population reveals a clear pattern of selective prosecution.

The population is predominantly young, black, poor, and with low levels of education, which highlights the direct relationship between incarceration and social inequality.

The penal system primarily affects historically marginalized groups, while Crimes committed by socially privileged sectors rarely result in imprisonment, which reinforces structural inequalities.

6. Overcrowding and Degrading Conditions in the Prison System

Overcrowding is one of the most visible consequences of exponential population growth. prison. Many units operate far above their capacity, offering poor conditions. hygiene, food, health and safety. These conditions violate fundamental rights. guaranteed by the Federal Constitution and international human rights treaties, in addition to to promote institutional violence and the spread of disease.

7 Consequences for Public Health and Safety

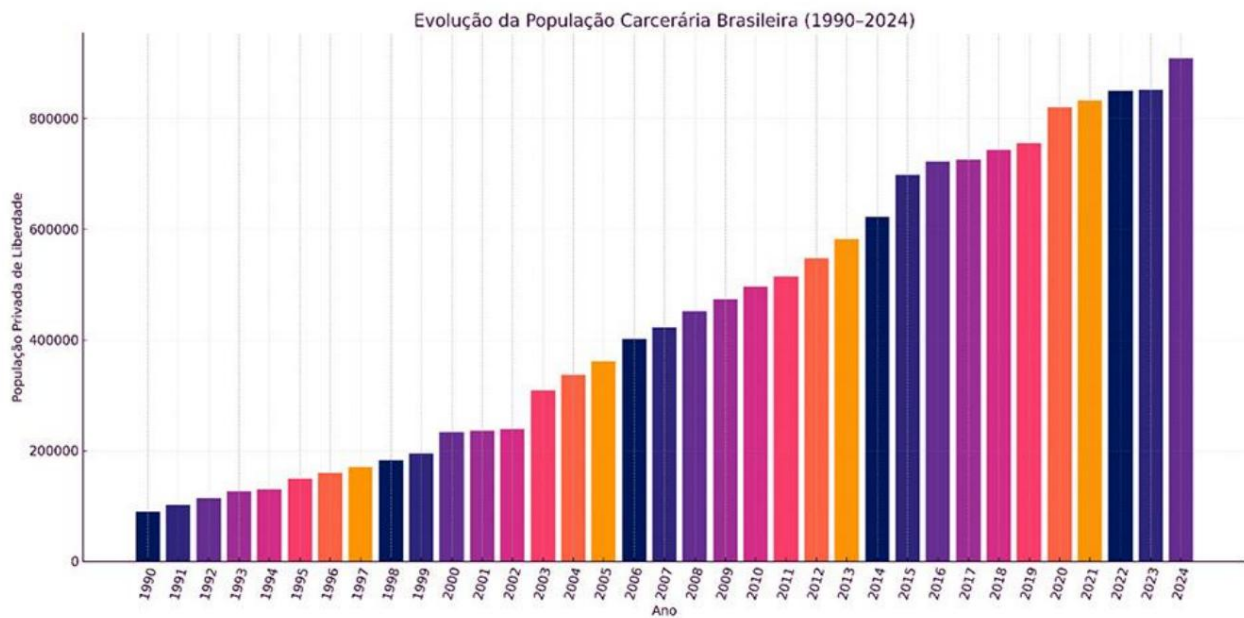
Overcrowded prison environments favor the spread of infectious diseases, which This constitutes a serious public health problem. Furthermore, the structural deficiencies of the system... This contributes to rebellions, internal conflicts, and deaths, highlighting the state's inability to guarantee safety and dignity.

8. The Strengthening of Criminal Factions

The absence of the State within prison units has enabled the strengthening of factions. criminals, who began to exert internal control and use the prison system as a space Strategic for recruitment and expansion of illicit activities. This is a reality that plagues all states of the federation; currently, it has been proven that... In every state in the country, there are units and cells of criminal factions, and this has a very significant impact. Given the strong increase in crime rates across all regions, and the fight against organized crime, it must... This must be everyone's duty, across all three levels of the federation, because only through the sum of... With sufficient force, it will be possible to combat organized crime, which has been proven to be infiltrated everywhere. Given this situation, it is crucial that social segments have a strategic plan to combat... If it is effective and brings strong and promising results, there is no prospect of victory if it is not. If this union of efforts occurs, municipalities, states, and the federal government must act together so that... so that it can confront criminal factions in Brazil.

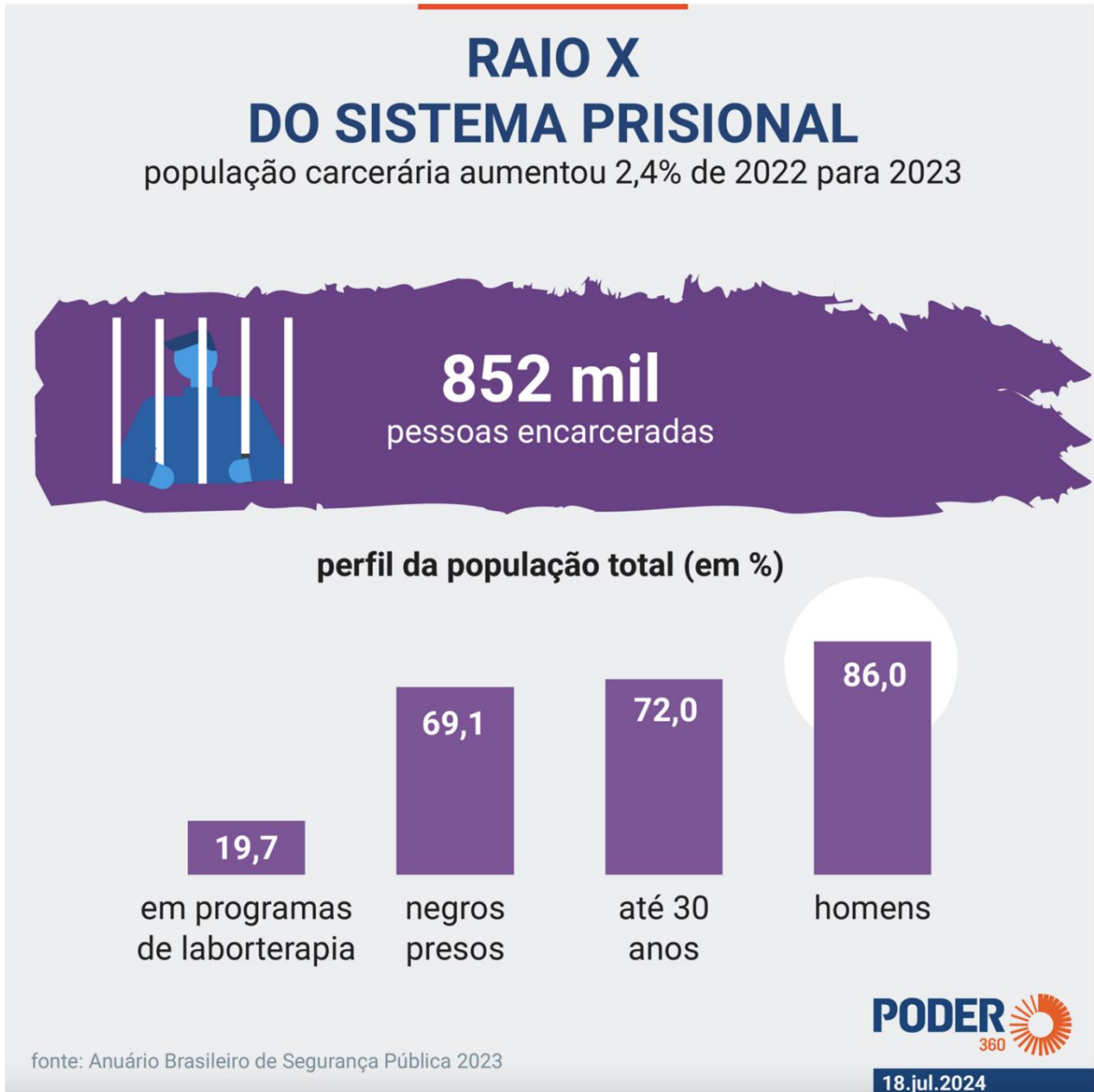
9. Mass incarceration as an instrument of social control.

Mass incarceration can be understood as a mechanism of social control aimed at...
to the most vulnerable segments of the population. The penal system assumes the role of managing problems
It addresses structural issues, such as poverty and exclusion, and reinforces historical inequalities.
Below is a chart demonstrating the exponential growth of the prison population in Brazil from 1990 to...
2024:



10. Drug Policy as a Vector of Mass Incarceration

Brazilian drug policy is one of the main factors contributing to the expansion of incarceration.
Law No. 11,343/2006 broadened the scope of police and judicial discretion, resulting in...
Mass incarceration of poor and marginalized individuals.
This policy has not proven effective in reducing trafficking or consumption, but it contributes to...
Strengthening of organized crime and overcrowding of the prison system. Below, a chart.
Demonstration of the profile of the prison population in Brazil:



11. Pretrial Detention, Judicial Delay, and Violation of Fundamental Guarantees

The excessive use of pretrial detention, coupled with the slowness of the judicial system, keeps thousands in prison. of people deprived of their liberty for long periods without a final judgment, violating principles such as the presumption of innocence and due process of law.

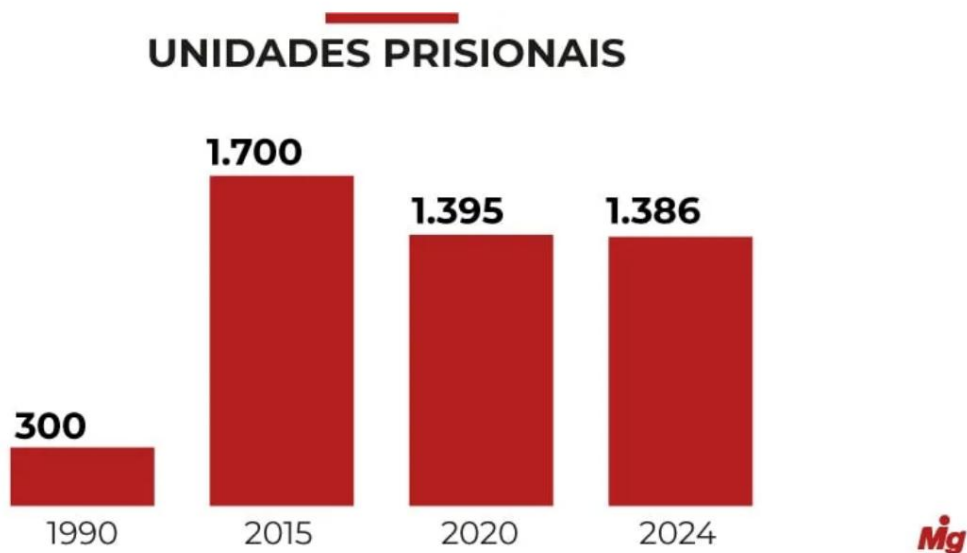
12 Human Rights and the International Responsibility of the Brazilian State

The degrading conditions of the Brazilian prison system constitute systematic violations of human rights, exposing the Brazilian State to international accountability before organizations protection of fundamental rights.



13 Psychosocial Impacts of Incarceration

Prolonged incarceration in precarious conditions generates serious psychological impacts on... individuals deprived of their liberty, in addition to profoundly affecting their families, perpetuate cycles intergenerational social exclusion.



14. Failure of Rehabilitation and Criminal Recidivism

Overcrowding makes effective rehabilitation policies unfeasible. The absence of programs Educational and vocational training contributes to high rates of criminal recidivism. highlighting the inefficiency of mass incarceration.

15 Economic Impacts of the Prison System

The cost of maintaining the prison system is high and compromises public resources that could be used for other purposes. to be allocated to social policies. Perpetual recidivism generates continuous expenses, making the Mass incarceration is financially unsustainable.

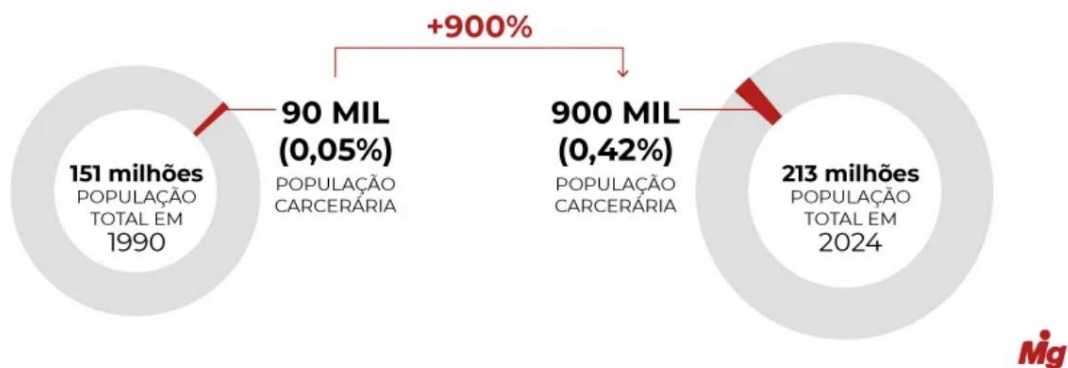
16 Incarceration, Democracy and Citizenship

Mass incarceration weakens democracy by systematically excluding segments of the population. specific population limitations in the full exercise of citizenship, amplifying stigmas and barriers to reintegration. social.

17 Comparative Experiences and Alternatives to Incarceration

International experiences demonstrate that reducing incarceration is possible through more rational penal policies, such as restorative justice, decriminalization of conduct, and... Strengthening social policies.

POPULAÇÃO GERAL X POPULAÇÃO CARCERÁRIA NO BRASIL



Final Considerations

The exponential growth of the Brazilian prison population highlights the failure of the penal model. based solely on punishment. Its consequences affect public health, the economy, and... Democracy and human rights.



Overcoming this crisis requires a paradigm shift, with integrated public policies and respect for... constitutional guarantees and the adoption of alternatives to mass incarceration, aiming at building of a more just, effective and humane penal system.

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