

# Russian Prisons ‘Lost’ Up to 17,000 Convicts in 2022 - Mediazona

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Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of mercenary outfit Wagner. [t.me/concordgroup\\_official](https://t.me/concordgroup_official)

The number of prisoners in penal colonies across 35 Russian regions decreased by 17,248 in 2022, according to the report [released](#) Monday by independent news outlet Mediazona.

The drop, according to Mediazona, was likely the result of the recruitment of prisoners for the Wagner mercenary group.

As the Mediazona report only counted prisoner numbers in under half of Russia’s regions, the nationwide figures could be much higher.

Mercenary company Wagner last year recruited thousands of prisoners from Russian prisons to help the Kremlin solve the country’s manpower problems in Ukraine. In exchange for a six-month contract, prisoners were offered a pardon.

There are no official figures for how many inmates signed up to join Wagner.

The largest regional “loss” revealed by Mediazona’s analysis was in Russia’s Samara region

where the local prison population dropped by 2,723 in 2022.

This change, according to Mediazona, contradicts the existing dynamics in prison population numbers.

In 2021, the year prior to the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the number of prisoners in Samara region grew by more than 300 people, according to Mediazona.

Mediazona's findings are based on regional data released by Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service (the agency stopped releasing nationwide data last year).

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