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PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD OFFENDERS AND REHABILITATION IN CROATIA: THE IMPACT OF GENDER, AGE, EDUCATION AND LEVEL OF URBANIZATION¹

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ABSTRACT

The basic goal of this study is to establish the structure and direction of public attitudes toward convicts and rehabilitation, considering gender, age, education and urbanization level of subjects. It would be of particular scientific and practical interest to examine the characteristics of the attitudes toward rehabilitation in Croatia, especially because of numerous socioeconomic and political changes that have taken place within the past few years. Also, the present research should yield some ideas about what may happen during the course of alternative sanctions in community recently introduced in Croatia - will convicts meet resistance or acceptance?

Keywords: public opinion, attitudes, convicts, rehabilitation

1. INTRODUCTION

To date, there has been no research conducted in the Republic of Croatia concerning public attitudes toward convicts and ex-convicts, although the need for such studies is obvious. The penal law, applied since January 1, 1998, foresees the possibility of moving from prison punishment to community based sentences (with convict acceptance). Further, the competent institutions are now elaborating the concept of probation. Additionally, under the proposed Penal Law, the possibility of community service to be performed by incarcerated offenders is now, among other things, also being developed.

All these innovations are predicated on community support, but basic community attitudes toward convicts and rehabilitation programs have not been identified, nor have been identified citizen attitudes toward juvenile offenders, although juvenile probation is being applied in Republic of Croatia already for years.

Accordingly, we have looked at research in North America for guidance in developing the research reported in this paper. More specifically, our research was modeled upon the study by Palmer, Guimond, Baker and Begin (1989). The results obtained by Palmer and his colleagues

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indicated the existence of two factors: "trust" and "punitiveness", which, in general, are similar to the factors obtained by some other authors (Brillon 1984; Brillon and Louis-Guerin 1985; Carroll, Perkovitz, Lurigio and Weaver 1987). It appears that rehabilitative and punitive orientations of subjects can be identified. One of the main objectives of this research was to examine the structure of the Questionnaire and compare it with the above mentioned results (Budanovac, Mikšaj-Todorović, 1998).

The basic goal of present study was to establish the direction of public attitudes toward convicts and rehabilitation, considering gender, age, education and urbanization level of subjects. Also, the present research was expected to yield some ideas about what might happen during the course of alternative sanctions in community - will convicts meet resistance or acceptance?

2. METHOD

2.1. The Questionnaire

The Begin and Couture attitude scale (1980) consisted of 16 items translated into Croatian.

Another 5 original items were added to this questionnaire, resulting in 21-items overall.

Items

1. I don't want to have anything to with an ex-convict.
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose,
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.
11. Living conditions in detention centers should be improved.
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.

13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.

14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.

15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.

16. Parole condition should be stricter.

17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.

18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.

19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.

20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.

21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.

The subjects were asked to respond to each of these items in terms of a Likert scale from 1 to 5, with 1 equaling total disagreement and 5, total agreement.

2.2. Sample

The sample consisted of 2133 subjects of both sexes (1164 females and 969 males), divided into three age groups: 18 - 25 (N=929), 26 - 40 (N=615) and 41 - 60 (N=589). By the level of education they were divided in three groups: low education (N=160), high school education (N=1283) and university education (N=690).

Seven hundred and twenty two subject were from the capital (Zagreb), 899 from other cities, and 512 from villages.

2.3. Procedures

The sample was selected from the croatian Telephone Books and subjects were selected by the method of random numbers. Fifty previously - briefed interviewers collected the data by interviewing subjects in their homes (one person in each home) during the period from March, 1997 to March, 2000. The collected data were processed on the descriptive level, and by the method of discriminant analysis

3. RESULTS

The descriptive results obtained from the questionnaires are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies					
ITEM	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
1. I don't want to have anything to do with an ex-convict.	533 25.0	691 32.4	338 15.8	342 16.0	229 10.7
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.	652 30.6	472 22.1	628 29.4	265 12.4	116 5.4
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.	273 12.8	368 17.3	477 22.4	684 32.1	331 15.5
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose.	322 15.1	303 14.2	487 22.8	651 30.5	370 17.3
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.	219 10.3	238 11.2	503 23.6	703 33.0	470 22.0
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.	636 29.8	685 32.1	346 16.2	312 14.6	154 7.2
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.	544 25.5	678 31.8	356 16.7	367 17.2	188 8.8
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.	847 39.7	651 30.5	354 16.6	211 9.9	70 3.3
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.	339 15.9	662 31.0	565 26.5	416 19.5	151 7.1
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.	689 32.3	467 21.9	360 16.9	317 14.9	300 14.1
11. Living conditions in detention centres should be improved.	164 7.7	167 7.8	646 30.3	487 22.8	669 31.4
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.	178 8.3	197 9.2	694 32.5	512 24.0	552 25.9
13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.	111 5.2	220 10.3	160 7.5	668 31.3	974 45.7
14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.	985 46.2	229 10.7	331 15.5	206 9.7	382 17.9
15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.	157 7.4	356 16.7	424 19.9	660 30.9	536 25.1
16. Parole condition should be stricter.	169 7.9	245 11.5	786 36.8	516 24.2	417 19.5
17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.	467 21.9	445 20.9	337 15.8	423 19.8	461 21.6
18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.	1052 49.3	452 21.2	273 12.8	224 10.5	132 6.2
19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.	286 13.4	266 12.5	350 16.4	537 25.2	694 32.5
20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.	178 8.3	243 11.4	290 13.6	608 28.5	814 38.2
21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.	61 2.9	29 1.4	102 4.8	377 17.7	1564 73.3

Items 1-5 and 10 refer to personal attitude toward ex-convicts. This attitude is positive in more than 50% for five items. This trend is reverse only in item that refers to living in the same apartment with ex-convict. Subjects more often would not share accommodation with ex-convicts. On the average, 20% of subjects could not decide how they feel about ex-convicts, while the rest manifest negative attitudes.

Items 6-9, 13 and 15 refer to general attitudes toward convicts and ex-convicts. Little more than 50% subjects reported positive attitudes - convicts could be trusted, it was not uncomfortable to socialize with them, they were capable to hold job; subjects would not be ashamed if someone from their family ends up in prison. At the same time, subjects held that convicts deserved their fate. About 15% subjects remained indecisive.

The next group consisted of the items 11, 12, 16, 20 and 21. These items referred to the attitudes toward prison sentence. Subjects had more liberal attitudes toward living conditions; it was of special importance the attitude toward work and education - most of the subjects (above 90%) agreed that convicts in prison should receive education and professional training, so they could participate in community. Also, about 70% of subjects commented that convicts should pay for their staying in prison with work.

Items 14, 17 and 18 referred to the ways of fighting delinquency. More than 50% subjects think that death sentence is unnecessary. About 70% did not think that punishing should be cancelled. The subjects were divided about implementing more severe prison sentences.

This data showed that more than 50% of subjects did not manifest negative prejudices, accepted the possibility of personal help to ex-convicts in their return to community, had notions about rehabilitative goals of prison sentences, but also manifested realistic attitude about the role of sentencing in fighting crime.

Overall, it can be seen that most of the subjects advocate just treatment of convicts (they think that convicts deserve the consequences of their crimes, that they should earn for their living in prison, that they are human beings with the same rights as other people).

3.1 Gender

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation
1	.037	100.0	.188

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.964	76.686	21	.000

Item	C1	F1
1. I don't want to have anything to with an ex-convict.	.287	.411
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.	-.180	-.325
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.	.101	-.260
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose.	-.607	-.508
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.	.332	.013
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.	.007	.215
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.	.192	.332
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.	-.187	.062
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.	.217	.257
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.	.130	.277
11. Living conditions in detention centers should be improved.	-.119	.086
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.	.197	.199
13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.	.380	.288
14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.	-.353	-.401
15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.	-.130	-.101
16. Parole condition should be stricter.	.151	.083
17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.	-.183	-.146
18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.	.183	.181
19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.	-.198	-.060
20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.	.171	.067
21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.	-.117	-.024

Table 5: **Functions at Group Centroids**

Gender	F1
Women	.175
Men	-.210

The discriminant function was defined by items 1, 2, 4, 7 and 14, but also 13, 10 and 9. Higher results on the function described following attitudes: don't want to have anything with the ex-convicts, don't want to share apartment with them, don't want to invite them in home, it is unpleasant to socialize with ex-convicts, the death penalty is unnecessary, convicts are also human beings, ex-convict would repeat the crime, shame of ex-convicts in family.

The table of group centroids shows that women manifested those attitudes more often than men.

Therefore, women were more suspicious at personal contacts toward convicts and have some prejudices, but at the same time, they thought that convicts were also human beings and that death penalty was unnecessary. Those differences in attitudes were probably the result of the fact that convicts were often males; attitudes toward them are determined by the physical and cultural characteristics of sexes. Men manifested less negative attitudes toward personal contacts with ex-convicts, and less prejudices about them committing new crime again.

3.2. Age

Table 6: **Eigenvalues**

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Canonical Correlation
1	.102	87.0	.304
2	.015	13.0	.122

Table 7: **Wilks' Lambda**

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	.894	237.512	42	.000
2	.985	32.033	20	.043

Table 8: **Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients (C) and Structure (F)**

Item	C1	C2	F1	F2
1. I don't want to have anything to with an ex-convict.	.060	-.039	.305	.048
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.	.128	.265	-.081	.244
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.	-.468	.141	-.399	.104
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose.	.177	-.170	-.165	-.009
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.	.032	.338	-.134	.213
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.	.161	.637	.346	.443
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.	.197	-.039	.440	.142
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.	.403	-.422	.483	-.120
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.	-.497	.125	.001	.162
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.	-.038	.426	.197	.355
11. Living conditions in detention centres should be improved.	.061	-.017	-.070	-.178
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.	.083	-.392	-.016	-.245
13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.	-.058	.202	-.113	.089
14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.	.001	-.185	.134	-.184
15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.	-.090	-.258	.042	-.190
16. Parole condition should be stricter.	-.226	.089	.032	.065
17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.	.391	.130	.452	.087
18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.	.286	.233	.220	.193
19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.	.309	-.380	.473	-.130
20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.	.267	.284	.484	.132
21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.	.051	.037	.090	.040

Age	F1	F2
1.00	-.354	0.030
2.00	.183	-.180
3.00	.367	.140

Second discriminant function, although statistically significant, was poorly defined for interpretation. Because of that, we shall discuss only the first function. It is defined by the variables 7, 8, 17, 19, 20, 13, 6 and 1. Upper end of the function means following: it was unpleasant to socialize with ex-convicts, they were incapable of keeping job, crime would decline with more severe prison sentences, convicts should not live for free in prisons, they should work for their accommodation, one should not socialize with the persons on probation, persons who were in prison are not to be trusted, one should have nothing with the ex-convicts.

The table of group centroids shows that those attitudes are more strong with the age of subjects.

3.3. Education

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	.061	76.5	76.5	.240
2	.019	23.5	100.0	.136

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	.925	165.714	42	.000
2	.981	39.614	20	.006

Item	C1	C2	F1	F2
1. I don't want to have anything to with an ex-convict.	.262	-.151	.482	-.166
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.	.223	.195	-.050	.304
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.	.200	.027	-.181	.228
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose.	-.161	.410	-.321	.414
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.	-.059	-.168	-.280	.060
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.	.394	.074	.615	.032
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.	-.245	.025	.347	.035
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.	.250	.407	.556	.276
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.	.082	-.161	.470	-.037
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.	.281	.240	.509	.145
11. Living conditions in detention centres should be improved.	-.422	.223	-.275	.048
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.	.479	-.372	-.036	-.053
13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.	-.076	.164	-.196	.240
14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.	-.153	-.533	.072	-.553
15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.	.172	-.284	.263	-.341
16. Parole condition should be stricter.	-.279	.154	.047	-.004
17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.	.427	-.128	.487	-.210
18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.	.111	.069	.045	.156
19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.	.082	.289	.259	.220
20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.	-.030	.116	.241	.151
21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.	-.088	.082	-.149	.168

Table 13: Functions at Group Centroids

Education	F1	F2
1.00	.765	.229
2.00	0.027	-.111
3.00	-.228	.153

Discriminant analysis by the level of education yielded two significant functions. The second function was mathematical artifact, therefore need not be analysed. The first function was defined by the variables 6, 8, 10, 1, 9, and 17. Upper end of this function represents following attitudes: One could not trust to someone who was in prison, ex-convicts are incapable to keep a job, one could be ashamed if someone in one's family was in jail, one should have nothing with the ex-convicts, ex-convict would easily repeat his/her crime, crime would decline with more severe prison punishment. These attitudes were characteristic for subjects with lower levels of education; subjects with the higher levels of education, attitudes have less punitive attitudes.

3.4. Residence

Table 14: Eigenvalues

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	,038	80,4	80,4	,192
2	,009	19,6	100,0	,096

Table 15: Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	,954	99,791	42	,000
2	,991	19,777	20	,472

Table 16: Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients (C) and Structure (S)

Item	C1	C2	F1	F2
1. I don't want to have anything to with an ex-convict.	.125	-.064	.297	.119
2. I would share an apartment with an ex-convict.	-.168	-.053	-.165	-.100
3. I would spend time with someone who is on parole.	.337	-.242	.004	-.229
4. I would invite an ex-convict to my home if the occasion arose,	.085	.046	-.091	-.076
5. I would give an ex-convict a job.	-.203	.303	-.236	.071
6. You can't trust someone who has been in prison.	.254	.150	.344	.265
7. It is unpleasant to associate with convicts.	-.120	-.222	.243	.134
8. Convicts are incapable of holding down a job.	.232	.106	.355	.275
9. An ex-convict will always be ready to repeat his or her crime.	-.485	.381	-.010	.435
10. I would be ashamed if someone in my family has been in prison.	.500	.359	.500	.401
11. Living conditions in detention centers should be improved.	-.227	-.020	-.314	.077
12. Convicts often live in difficult conditions that should not be tolerated.	-.034	.265	-.219	.182
13. A convict is a human being who has the same right to respect as you and I.	.186	-.081	.039	-.091
14. I want to see a return to the death penalty.	-.301	.017	-.145	.004
15. Convicts deserve their fate, even if it's very unpleasant.	-.071	.213	.029	.180
16. Parole condition should be stricter.	-.118	-.158	.061	-.069
17. Crime will decline if we implement more severe prison sentences.	.245	-.074	.268	-.027
18. The punishments should be cancelled; we should fight against crime by other means.	.283	.268	.207	.235
19. It is not right that convicts in prison live on government expense.	.274	-.793	.464	-.369
20. Convicts in prison should be forced to work and earn for their accommodation.	.272	.579	.467	.151
21. Convicts in prison should be educated and learned to work so after sentence they could become the part of community.	-.051	-.187	.007	-.167

Table 17: Functions at Group Centroids

Residence	F1	F2
Zagreb	-.262	0.039
Other city	0.08	-.106
Village	.228	.130

The discriminant function extracted by the criteria of residence was defined by the following variables: 10, 19, 20, 8, 6, and 11. The upper end means following attitudes: one should be asamed if someone in one's family was in jail, is it not OK that convicts in prisons live at state's expense, convicts should be made to earn for their accomodation, they are incapable to keep a job, one could not trust to someone who was in jail, the living conditions in prisons should not be improved.

These attitudes were in the correlation with the level of urbanization: subjects from rural areas have more punitive attitudes, and those from capital have most positive attitudes toward convicts.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data clearly indicated that population had positive attitudes toward ex-convicts and rehabilitation. This result contributes to possibility of implementing alternative sanctions in community.

The examination of attitudes between parts of population showed that men, younger people, more educated people and people from bigger cities have more positive attitudes. Therefore, in implementing the alternative sanctions one should count primarily on the support of this parts of population. Also, there is visible need for educating other parts with more negative attitudes - older subjects, less

educated, from rural areas.

The development of rehabilitative attitudes in population could be of some significance, because we hold that this approach in sentencing policy yields best results in time.

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