

largely exaggerated. In addition, the “vast majority” of individuals convicted of a sex offense will never reoffend. This is in contrast to the common myth among the public that sex offenders can never be “cured” and will inevitably reoffend. According to the study, a mere 11% of treated sex offenders will commit another sex offense. And finally, the impression that sex offenders always progress to “more serious and predatory offenses” (offense amplification) has been primarily communicated by news accounts but is without “solid empirical backing.”

Almost forty years ago, the “nothing works” philosophy began to shape what scholars call the “punitive era” in the United States. As a result, “get tough” reforms swept the nation. Mass incarceration and post-incarceration sanctions were favored over rehabilitative efforts. The perception that the public is unreceptive to treatment interventions has pervaded crime policy the past 25 years, the study found.

According to the study, the public’s perception about sex offenders and the laws used to control, punish, and rehabilitate them are based on faulty presumptions. Noting that the public has “tremendous influence” on policy-makers and their “get tough” sex crime laws and restrictions, the challenge is for these policy-makers to disseminate accurate information about sex crimes in a “fair and balanced manner,” the report noted.

The study found that “public opinion has been a driving impetus in policy creation and additional sex offender restrictions,” and that punitive attitudes need to be altered in favor of “the amenability for sex offenders to be reformed through treatment.” This study drew on national poll data and used multinomial logistic regression to identify predictors of treatment views and to analyze public opinion on sexual offenders’ amenability to treatment.

Source: *“Is the Public Convinced That ‘Nothing Works?’:*

*Predictors of Treatment Support for Sex Offenders Among
Americans,"* *Crime* *and*
Delinquency, www.sagepub.com/journal/Permissions.nav

Published April, 2017, PLN