### FORMER INCARCERATED YOUNG ADULTS VIEWS OF CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS IN QUEBEC'S PRISONS AND THEIR PERCEIVED IMPACT ON DESISTANCE FROM CRIME

Isabelle F.-Dufour (ULaval) Natacha Brunelle (UQTR) and David Livernoche (UdeM) ASC, NOVEMBER 16TH 2022

# YOUNG ADULTS IN CANADIAN PRISONS

Men constitute 93% of those incarcerated at the federal level and 85% in the provincial-territorial;

Men aged 20 to 39 are OVER-REPRESENTED, as they account for two-thirds of federal prisoners (61%) and more than half of provincial prisoners (58%) while they represent 17% of adults in Canada;

Women aged 20 to 39, for their part, are UNDER-REPRESENTED, because they represent only 5% of federal prisoners and 11% of provincial prisoners (they also account for 17% of the adult population).

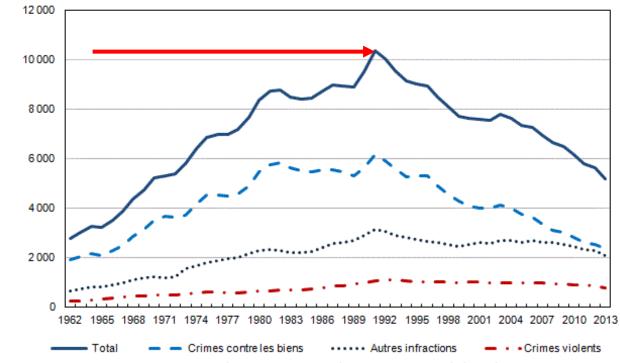
# CRIME IN QUÉBEC

In Quebec, the overall crime rate has decreased by 32% over the past ten years to about 3,000 per 100,000 inhabitants;

If we compare to the peak reached in the years 1992-1993 when it reached approximately 10,000 per 100,000 inhabitants: this is a drop of 70%

#### Graphique 1 Taux de crimes déclarés par la police, 1962 à 2013

taux pour 100 000 habitants



Note: L'information figurant dans le présent graphique est tirée du Programme agrégé de déclaration uniforme de la criminalité et elle permet d'établir des comparaisons entre les années à compter de 1962. En 2009, on a adopté de nouvelles définitions pour les catégories de crimes et celles-ci sont disponibles dans la nouvelle version pour les données à partir de 1998. Par conséquent, les chiffres figurant dans le présent graphique ne correspondent pas aux données diffusées selon la nouvelle version.

Source: Statistique Canada, Centre canadien de la statistique juridique, Programme de déclaration uniforme de la criminalité.

# CRIME IN QUÉBEC

The Crime Severity Index has also fallen by 32% over the past ten years.

#### 1.3 L'Indice de gravité de la criminalité est moins élevé qu'il y a dix ans

Tout comme le taux de criminalité au Québec, l'IGC<sup>8</sup> a diminué graduellement dans la première moitié de la décennie pour se stabiliser par la suite. Alors que l'IGC diminuait en moyenne de 6,6 % par année avant 2015, la variation annuelle moyenne de l'IGC était de -1,2 % par la suite. Depuis 2010, l'IGC a globalement diminué de 32,4 %, mais la diminution est de seulement 4,6 % depuis 2015 (graphique 3).

#### Graphique 3 Évolution de l'Indice de gravité de la criminalité, Québec, 2010 à 2019P



a : données actualisées p : données provisoires Source : Ministère de la Sécurité publique. Données du Programme DUC 2.2

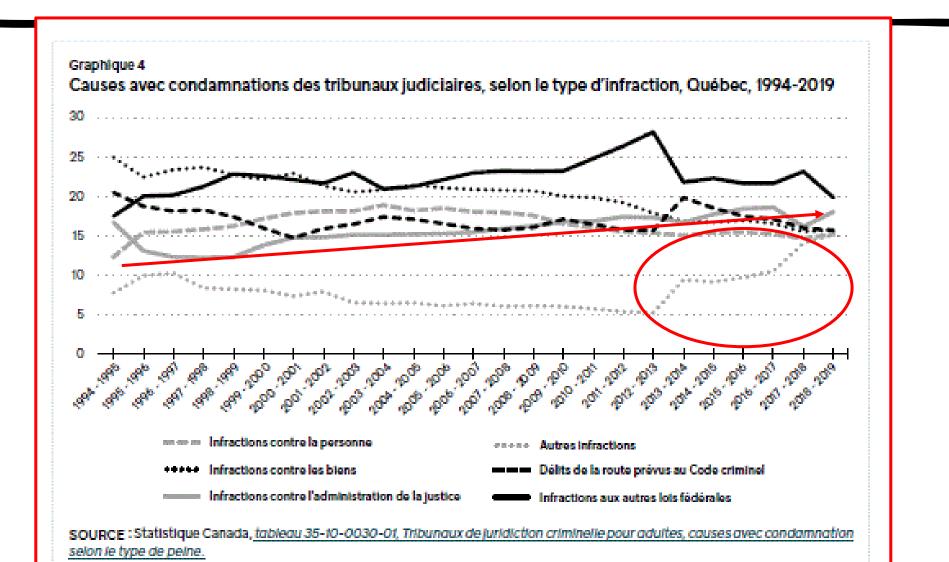
# BUT, INCARCERATION RATES ARE RISING



# HOW TO EXPLAIN SUCH A STRANGE PHENOMENOM?



### IT CAN BE PARTLY EXPLAINED BY « BACKDOOR SENTENCING » (TRAVIS ET FISHER, 2005) AND THE PENALIZATION OF MARGINALITY (WACQUANT, 1999)



# AND BY RECIDIVISM RATES OF YOUNG ADULTS

Variables sociodémographiques	Nombre de dossiers retenus	Nouveau contact avec les SCQ (avec ou sans condamnation) <sup>12</sup>	Taux de récidive/reprise		
			Nouvelle condamnation	Nouvelle incarcération	Condamnation à une peine d'incarcération de 2 ans et plus
Ensemble des libérés	100 % (8 960)	60 % (5 415)	54 % (4 808)	42 % (3 755)	2 % (202)
Sexe					
Femmes	10 % (872)	59 % (518)	53 % (465)	39 % (338)	1 % (5)
Hommes	90 % (8 088)	61 % (4 897)	54 % (4 343)	42 % (3 417)	2 % (197)
Âge à l'admission					
18-24	19 % (1 720)	73 % (1 26)	65 % (1 125)	50 % (857)	3 % (51)
25-34	27 % (2 439)	64 % (1 561)	56 % (1 368)	44 % (1 071)	2 % (51)
35-44	26 % (2 358)	61 % (1 447)	55 % (1 290)	13 70 (1 009)	2 % (46)
45 et +	27 % (2 443)	47 % (1 146)	42 % (1 025)	33 % (818)	2 % (54)
Origine				in a second second	
Allochtone	94 % (8 436)	60 % (5 036)	53 % (4 455)	41 % (3 487)	2 % (192)
Autochtone <sup>13</sup>	6 % (524)	72 % (379)	67 % (353)	51 % (268)	2 % (10)

 Lalande, P., P. Dolmaire et R. Lévesque (2018). La récidive/reprise de la clientèle confiée aux Services correctionnels du Québec, cohortes 2010-2011. Québec : Direction générale adjointe aux programmes, au conseil et à l'administration, Direction générale des services correctionnels, ministère de la Sécurité publique du Québec, 112 p.

# NOW THEN: WHY PRISON?



# CANADIAN'S FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- 1- To punish (retribution): "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth";
- 2- To contain (incapacitation): the fact of being imprisoned "prevents" the commission of offences;
- 3- Discourage (deterrence): not wanting to go back;
- 4- Restore (rehabilitate): correct the person's problems to make them more able to function in society.

Is based on the idea that people who commit crimes make the calculation of gains and benefits and that they will avoid at all costs to (re)commit an offense which is punishable by incarceration.

Intuitively: it seems logical, but it doesn't hold water If that deterred people, we would not have a reincarceration rate of between 70% and 90% in the three years following release (according to studies);

If it deterred people, people who would be traumatized (victimized and threatened in prison) by their incarceration would not return. However, their risk of recidivism is higher than other inmates (Petrich et al., 2021);

If that deterred people, we would see much lower crime rates in

# IN FACT, PETRICH AND COLL

Conducted a meta-analysis of 116 studies, based on 4,5 millions of persons in 15 different countries came to the conclusion:

«Custodial sanctions have no effect on reoffending or slightly increase it when compared with the effects of noncustodial sanctions [...] This finding is robust regardless of variations in methodological rigor, types of sanctions examined, and sociodemographic characteristics

## REHABILITATION: RNR

Some evaluations have shown that this intervention model can reduce the risk of recidivism for prisoners by 20% to 30% (Andrews and Dowden, 2006; Landenberger and Lipsey, 2005; Pearson, Lipton, Cleland and Yee, 2002);

### • Studies that "show" effects rely on flawed mathematical models Howns and Reith S2021 ALSU IN DUUBI...

- 73% of the studies which also show that actuarial risk tools (LSC/MI) are able to clearly contrast people at high risk and those at low risk (the basis of the RNR model) were carried out by researchers-collaborators- creators of this tool;
- Non-partisan studies show that the tool distinguishes the two groups very poorly (Prins and Reich, 2021);
- Non-partisan studies also show that RNR interventions offered in prison do not work:

9,443 participants treated with this approach have recidivism rates comparable to those of the control (untreated) group (Beaudry et al.,

•BUGwWH&tivationEforter angework of the BugwWhetivation or the presence of angework importsiveness (Garrett, 1985; Mulvey, BEALS, ARE 1993).

- Poor assessment of responsivity (Koehler, Losel, Akoensi, & Humpreys, 2013);
- Misuse of risk measurement tools (Luong and Wormith, 2011);
- Poor fit between risk measurement and intervention targets (Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon and Yessine, 2008; Flores, Travis and Latessa, 2004; Manchak and Cullen, 2015);
- Inadequate training of stakeholders in the model (Thompson and McGrath, 2012;

Manchak and Cullen, 2015);

• Inadequate implementation of the approach (Gendreau,

# IN SHORT... IT IS NEVER THE 'FAULT' OF THE APPROACH

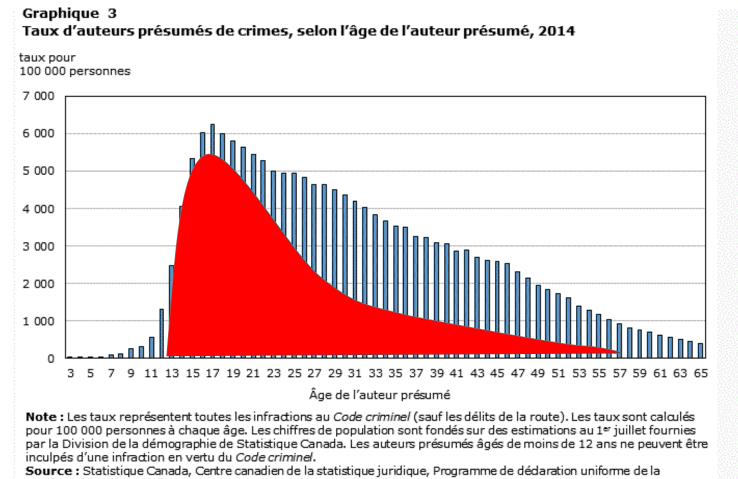




# DESPITE EVERYTHING... ABOUT 30% YOUGN QUEBECER'S DO NOT RECIDIVATE

The study of desistance from crime focuses precisely on these young people who manage to give up their "criminal career".

# 1- BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL EXPLAINATION



criminalité fondé sur l'affaire, 2014.

# 2- STRUCTURAL EXPLAINATIONS

It is also during the transition to adulthood that we can see the "positive effects" of the environment on the offender.

We know that:

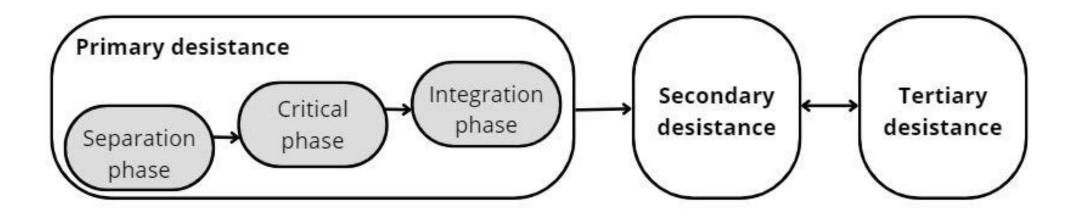
- getting involved in a romantic relationship (Sampson & Laub, 1993);
- obtain a job deemed satisfactory (Oswarld, 2020);
- form a family (Michalsen, 2011), or;
- create new friendships (Warr, 1998); ...

May promote desistance from crime

- Central role in this process (F.-Dufour, 2015; F.-Dufour, Aucoin, Marcotre And Horth, 2021; LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2019; Maruna, 2020; Na & Paternoster, 2019; Stone et al., 2018);
- Changes also need to be observable in the person's behavior (ie ceasing to commit offences) as well as in their relationships. In general, it is argued that behavioral change (primary desistance) precedes identity change (secondary desistance which, in turn, leads to a change in the relationship between the person and the community (tertiary desistance);
- Identity change can also *precede* the cessation of criminal behavior and socio-community (re)integration can also

# HEALY (2012) ADAPTED FROM VILLENEUVE AND COLL (2020)

#### The crime desistance process





(RÉ)intégration sociocommunautaire Partenariat recherche communauté

# PRESENT STUDY

(RE)SO 16-35: an ambitious partnership research program bringing together 16 researchers and 23 community partners (public and community) in three regions of Quebec;

140 young people aged 16 to 35 participate in a first interview; Almost half were seen for a second interview 24 months later; An interview guide that focuses on their perceptions of the services received: on what was helpful and what was less so.

Can RNR interventions initiate desistance from crime in young adults?



- 38 former incarcerated young adults (17 men, 10 women, 1 non binary)
- Mean 28 years old
- Only 10% add a full time job, others were living under some form of welfare assistance
- All together, they were recognised guilty of 6 sex-related crimes; 49 crimes against the property; 34 crime against the person; 37 drug-related offense; 10 DUI; 2 gangsterism and 18 non compliance to a condition.

# WHAT DO THEY THINK ABOUT

# INTERVENTIONS IN PRISON?

# THEME ONE: ACCESSIBILITY OF INTERVENTIONS

## ACCESSIBILITY BY CLASSIFICATION

At the detention centre [name], you have like three blocks. C is for those who go to school, those who work... D is the medium. In D, you have no access to anything. You can't do programs. You can't go to school, you can't work, you can just do your time. And then there's E, that's for the real troublemakers. In the E, too, you have no right to do anything. You have one hour of access to the gym three times a day. If not, you're in your wing, you have two and a half hours of school leave, one hour in the morning and one and a half hours in the

# ACCESSIBILITY AND LENGHT OF THE SENTENCE

There was nothing available to me. It was just long enough to be bored, but not long enough to get into a program or a job or whatever. Like, the maximum I did [in the same place] was 3-4 months... Whatever programs are available, you have to have been there for at least 6 months and it's like you've got 6 months of time every day, 24 hours a day and nothing to do (Anaïs, 25 years old).

# ACCESSIBILITY AND URGENCY OF THE SITUATION

Y'know, now it's like if you wanna talk to someone, you have to be suicidal. They'll ask you: 'Are you suicidal?' No. 'Do you have any dark ideas?' No. 'Well, if you don't have dark ideas, you're ok. Go back to the cell.' Then if you say you're suicidal, they send you to the padded. So you've got no help, no support, but you're in a padded cell. Naked. Filmed 24/24. Then they tell us they priorize social reintegration. Look... F\*ck off!

# ACCESSIBILITY OF 'THEIR' APPOINTED AGENT

• Things always have to be bad if you wanna see someone faster.. Y'know once in a while, I'd like him to meet me when things are going well too. Not just when things go wrong and he comes up to me and says, 'Oh, you're in the hole here? You want to get gassed? Are you going to get violent with the agents?' I'm like 'Hey, it's not just me! Come and see me when it's going well, you might understand? (Raymond, 32)

### THEME TWO: THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF INTERVENTIONS

# INSTRUMENTALISATION FOR MONEY

Y'know me, I was trying to take this seriously. You've got a lot of guys who talk to the others in the cells, about their next crime. They don't care, they don't. So, they go there... as long as they're inside and have nothing to do, they go for five bucks. You can't necessarily open up as much as you'd like. Y'know, they're gonna give you a hard time. They're just there to mess around (Adrien, 31)

## INSTRUMENTALIZATION AGAINST JUDICIAL AND PENAL BENEFITS

• The world is using these programs for cards to put in their pocket for if they have to go to court. Y'know, the guy's waiting for trial for a slap on the face, well he does 3-4 violence programs, then he's already done four months. Four months that count for six. You need more programs. Well he puts the cards on his side to get out (Francis, 23)



- It was more of a hobby for me (Charles, 32);
- I liked it and it was mostly to get me out of the sector. Because the subject, to be honest with you, I don't remember much about the subject I saw in prison (Francis, 23)
- Prison becomes dull as hell. Because if I did all the therapies that I did for the number of times I've been in prison I still wouldn't be out today (Raphael 23)

# THEME THREE: WHETHER OR NOT TO NEED THE INTERVENTIONS

### NOT NEEDING IT BECAUSE YOU HAVE A BETTER LIFE IN PRISON

The more crimes you commit, the hotter you feel [feeling dangerous and brave]. It's funny to say, sad to say at the same time. You can love being unhappy, you understand? You can make yourself addicted to finding this life normal. There are a lot of people who are in prison, and they live better in prison than outside, you understand? So, I think I started to get a taste for it, I started to think of it as normal. To get back from prison, get out, and then get back into prison. I can't count the

#### NOT NEEDING IT BECAUSE YOU FEEL 'HOME', 'HAVE FUN' IN PRISON

- I returned in and out since 2014 (21 to 28 years old). [Interviewer: when you say in and out, you mean the detention centre--name?]. Yes, this is **my** prison. I grew up not far away (Leonard, 32).
- It was hell in prison, but there were moments when I had fun too. When you take out 20 litres of mud [handcrafted alcohol made in prison] and you get stone drunk, \*\*, that was fun! Y'know it's fun, but you can't

## DOING PROGRAMS WHILE DOING CRIME

I continued to do programs like this for myself. Even though I was involved in [illegal gambling and alcohol production], I did the same. I was thinking, the day I go out, I will apply it (Charles, 32).

#### PROFITING FROM IT, A GENDERED EXPERIENCE?

- Just as outside prison where men are less likely to seek and benefit from therapeutic assistance (L'Heureux, Tremblay, Nolet & Lusignan, 2019), it appears that prison interventions are more beneficial to the women in our sample.
- Y'know, I kept all my notes, my binder... Y'know, there were many things I already knew, but at the time, I think that what was most helpful was to have the

#### WHILE MEN...

Crimes are discussed, then addiction, then violence. But y'know, it's hard, because in prison, everybody has their image. And then, talking about the business they did in front of the world, it's not too much their style. It's hard to talk about your experience, about misery. It's hard because they don't trust anyone and they won't let the other person make a judgment in their head. [...] If it were one-on-one meetings, it would be easier to talk about the drugs, the violence you experienced when you were young or you were abused.

### VERY LIMITED GAINS

Well, unconsciously, some of the stuff they told us sinks in. It's good to have programs, because it's oxygen for the brains of inmates. Y'know, it takes them out of their area. \*\* I saw some who went to the "father in prison" program,

# THEME FOUR: WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL?

- I did my schooling while I was inside anyway. I had my notebook and I was all alone. I saw the teacher once a week. Then finally, I succeeded in the end (Claudine, 24)
- I've done construction programs. I took a course on chemical products. I took a course on working at heights. I finished school there. I finished grade 11.
   When I went into prison I was in grade 8. I didn't

#### FORMATION

I came out of there with a laundry degree. Like what, I had done so many hours of laundry, then it's a diploma that comes from school. So, y'know, it's not marked prison. So, I can give my name in a laundry room. Y'know, I've already done so many hours in laundry. So, I can mark it on my resume.

## THEME FIVE: UNMET NEEDS...

## THEY DO NOT WANT HELP IN, BUT OUT OF PRISON

- It is understood that there is no one who learns his lesson while going to prison. No one comes out and says 'ah well, I feel much better, and so I'm not going to do anything silly again.' No! You come out of there and you're f\*cked, you've lost everything. You find yourself on the street again, then that's it! Y'know, the little you tried to quickly rebuild your life, well it's demolished while you're locked up in a cage. It doesn't help anyone. (Anaïs, 25).
- They should help us find a place to stay before we go out. If you have a place to stay, that's the basic thing. Maybe there's a cheque [social assistance] waiting for you. Start preparing for release before getting

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS



- Before concluding, it is important to keep in mind that Canadian society is at an important crossroads: for the first time in 200 years, the crime curve (as it has been known since Quételet, 1831) is moving to the right.
- The slope falls more rapidly from the age of 18 but is extended in the first years of the transition to adult life. Young adults commit 70% fewer offenses that are 30% less serious than those of previous generations, yet they are overrepresented in Canadian prison systems and at very high risk of re-incarceration within a year of release.
- Clearly, incarceration is not the appropriate response to their criminality, since the qualitative results of our study seem to be in line with the quantitative findings of Petrich et al. (2021) and Ryerson (2021): prison does not appear to have a deterrent effect on young adults' criminal careers.
- Although being incarcerated is negatively experienced by young adults, many reported that they have become accustomed to the experience and even find

### WHY PRISON?

- From a deterrent perspective, it seems completely counterproductive to incarcerate young adults (especially since their offenses are less serious and less numerous than those of the previous generation). A simple solution to the problem of overrepresentation of young adults in Canadian prisons would be to restrict their use to those who have committed violent offenses (15% of admissions in 2018-2019) and to transfer all the resources saved to community services.
- This would prevent the "backdoor entry" phenomenon, which further weakens young adults (e.g., loss of property and places of residence, loss of significant ties, etc.) and creates a prisoniarisation effect

## RNR IN PRISON?

- Our data also illustrate how young adults in our study derive relatively little benefit from the interventions that are offered to them in custody as a result of the intervention targets proposed by the RNR evaluation (e.g., the anger management program). This phenomenon is extremely worrying and requires a response that is better adapted to their needs.
- Our results show that it is very difficult to maintain the gains made in prison when young adults are faced with the realities of sociocommunity reintegration. This observation has been repeated many times: the behaviour of individuals who are detained is not representative of their behaviour when they are released. Indeed, prison is a very distinct environment with its codes and procedures that can "encourage" certain violent acts in a peaceful individual or repress them in a more violent individual.
- Thus, even an individual who is extremely involved in his therapeutic monitoring in prison can lose all his gains as soon as he is released.
- Beaudry et al. (2021) also reach this conclusion, since the only studies that show positive effects

## RNR IN PRISON?

- While our respondents see the relevance of the intervention programs offered in prison, most of them say they have benefited primarily from interventions that relate to training and employability.
- This is hardly surprising, since it is a minority of incarcerated Quebecers who have a college (4.1%) or university (4.1%) education (Tricher & Hébert, 2021), while 64.6% of Quebecers have post-secondary education (Hurteau, 2019). If these young people want to reintegrate after they leave prison, it seems appropriate to complete their schooling.
- Young adults who have been re-educated express with great eloquence how they
  have been able to take advantage of their training to rebuild a positive image of
  themselves that has helped them in their desistance process. In addition, in the
  context of labour shortages in most industries, it also seems counterproductive to
  keen young adults idle while incarcerated

#### IN SHORT

• Our findings, similar to those in Australia, demonstrate how young Canadian adults are in greater need of "someone (such as a mentor) instead of something (such as a program addressing criminogenic needs) to help steer their way through the myriad of challenges posed by incarceration and release" (Halsey, 2016; p, 206).



## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

• For list of references or comments:

Isabelle.f-dufour@fse.ulaval.ca