

Online Appendix

Standing in Prisoners' Shoes:
A Randomized Trial on How Incarceration Shapes Criminal Justice
Preferences

Arto Arman, Andreas Beerli, Aljosha Henkel, Michel André Maréchal

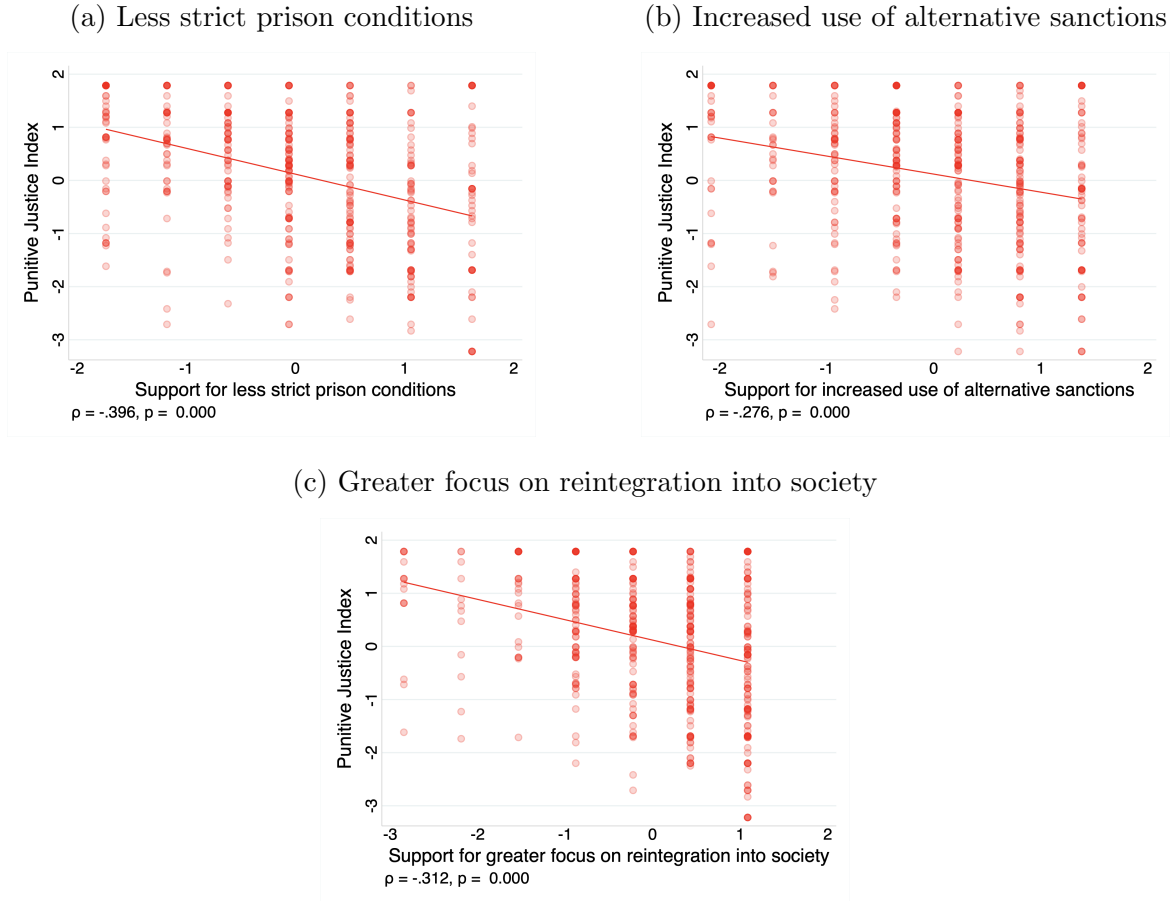
April 3, 2026

Contents

A Additional Figures	1
B Additional Tables	5
C Coding of memorable impressions	11
D Baseline Survey	12
E Endline Survey	16

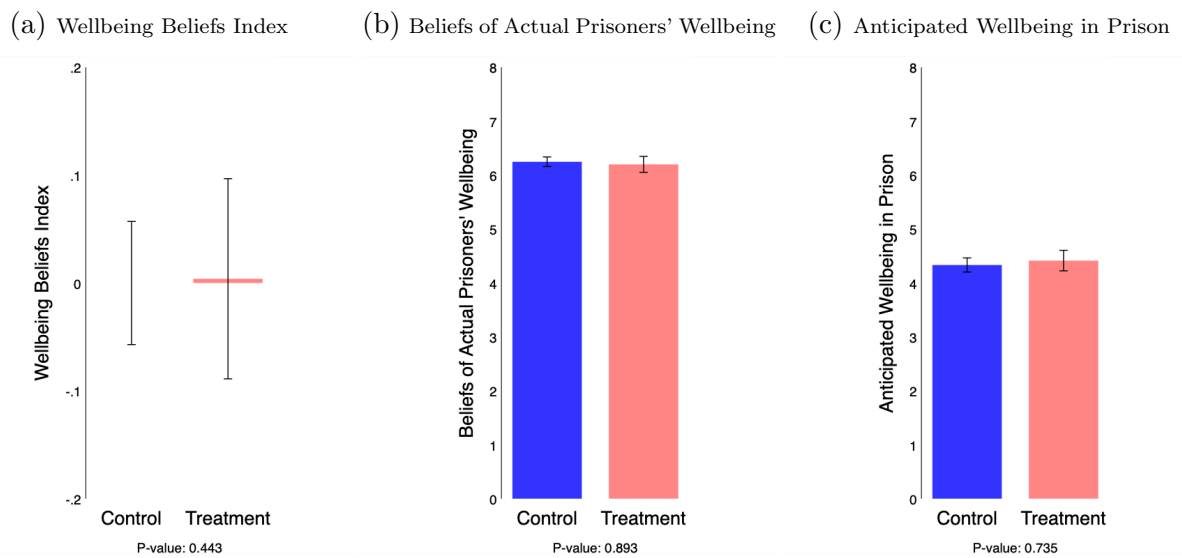
A Additional Figures

Figure A.1: Correlation Analysis: Punitive Justice Index and Policy Preferences



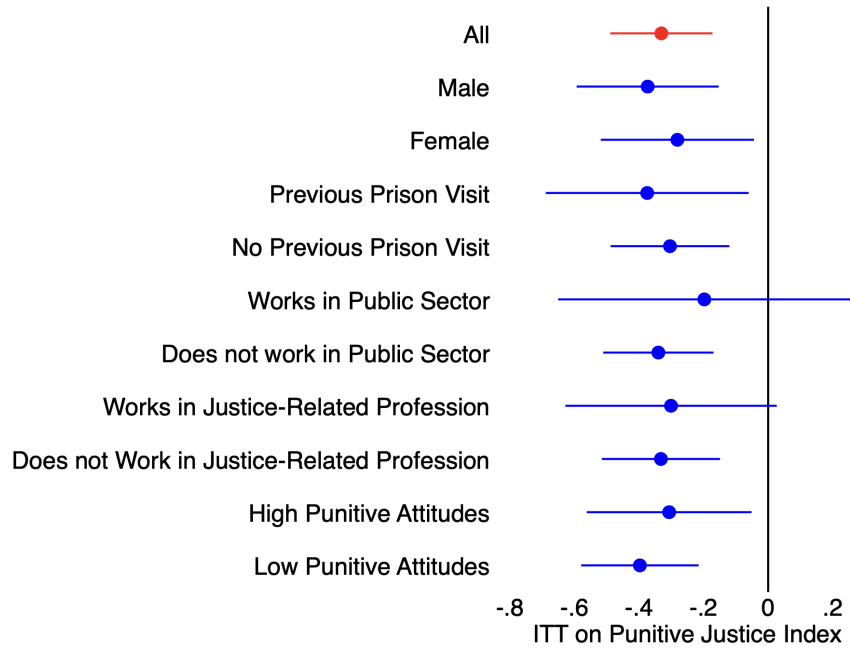
Note: This figure shows the correlation between the punitive justice index and preferences for three criminal justice policy proposals (all normalized to a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1). The data was elicited in collaboration with CINT in an online sample ($N = 497$) broadly representative of the Swiss voting population with respect to age, gender and income. Subjects' policy preferences were measured using a standardized Likert scale from 0 (do not at all support) to 6 (fully support), answering to the question: "How strongly do you support the following practices in the penal system?". Panel (a) reports the correlation with policy preferences for "less strict prison conditions (e.g. open prison, more opportunities for contact with the family, etc.)" (Spearman's $\rho = -0.396$). Panel (b) shows the correlation with policy preferences for an "increased use of alternative forms of punishment as opposed to imprisonment (fines, electronic ankle bracelets, community service, etc.)" (Spearman's $\rho = -0.276$). Panel (c) reports the correlation with policy preferences for a "stronger focus on reintegration into society (e.g. offering further vocational training, access to therapy places)" (Spearman's $\rho = -0.312$).

Figure A.2: Effect on Beliefs about Wellbeing in Prison



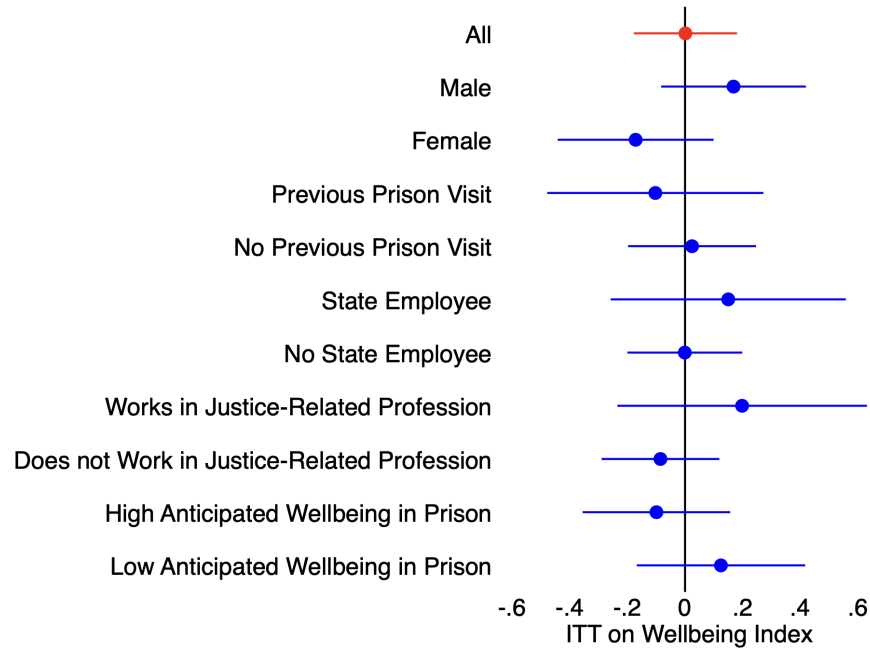
Note: The figure shows average values for beliefs about wellbeing in prison in the endline survey ($N = 433$), disaggregated by treatment status. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean. Panel (a) reports the average score of the beliefs about wellbeing in prison index (normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1). Panel (b) depicts the subjects' average beliefs about the wellbeing of actual prisoners using an 11-point Likert-scale. Panel (c) shows the average of citizens' anticipated wellbeing in prison, i.e., they were asked about their personal wellbeing if they were incarcerated for six months using an 11-point Likert scale. In all panels, higher scores indicate greater wellbeing.

Figure A.3: Heterogeneous Effects on the Punitive Justice Index



Note: The figure presents regression coefficients and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals for the effect of treatment assignment on the punitive justice index (normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) across different subpopulations using OLS regressions. Row 1 shows our main intention-to-treat effect (ITT) using the entire sample ($N = 418$) as in Table 4 column 2. The following rows present the ITTs for different subpopulations by gender (rows 2 and 3), by previous prison visits (rows 4 and 5), by employment in the public sector (row 6 and 7), by employment in a justice-related profession (rows 8 and 9), and by above or below median score of punitive attitudes at baseline (row 10 and 11). The regressions include the same control variables as in Table 4 column 2.

Figure A.4: Heterogeneous Effects on the Wellbeing Index



Note: The figure presents regression coefficients and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals for the effect of treatment assignment on the wellbeing beliefs index (normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1) across different subpopulations using OLS regressions. Row 1 shows our main intention-to-treat effect (ITT) using the entire sample ($N = 416$) as in Table 5 column 2. The following rows present the ITTs for different subpopulations by gender (rows 2 and 3), by previous prison visits (rows 4 and 5), by employment in the public sector (row 6 and 7), by employment in a justice-related profession (rows 8 and 9), and by above or below median score of punitive attitudes at baseline (row 10 and 11). The regressions include the same control variables as in Table 5 column 2.

B Additional Tables

Table B.1: Regression Analysis: Sub-sample excluding Subjects finishing the Baseline Survey after Communication of Treatment Assignment

	Punitive Justice Index		Punitive Justice Donation	Punitive Attitudes
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment Group	-0.325*** (0.082)	-0.330*** (0.082)	-0.300*** (0.093)	-0.297*** (0.082)
Strata FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Criminal and Risk Attitudes	×	✓	✓	✓
Previous Prison Visit	×	✓	✓	✓
Socio-Demographics	×	✓	✓	✓
Adjusted R-squared	0.440	0.443	0.256	0.485
Observations	415	415	415	415

Note: This table shows the effect of treatment assignment on punitive attitudes measured in the endline survey using OLS regressions and *excluding* the three subjects that completed the baseline survey after being informed about their treatment assignment. Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering of the error term for individuals who spent time together in the same cell. In columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is the punitive justice index. In column 3 and 4, the dependent variables are punitive justice donations and punitive attitudes, respectively. All three dependent variables are normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. All regressions include baseline outcomes and strata fixed effects, i.e., a dummy for subjects working in the public sector. Baseline outcomes include measures of anticipated wellbeing in prison, punitive attitudes, trust in institutions, and perceptions of procedural fairness. Columns 2 to 4 include further controls for baseline criminal attitudes and risk attitudes, whether subjects previously visited a prison and socio-demographics, including subjects' age, and dummies for males, tertiary education, and employment in a justice-related profession. Levels of significance: $*p < .1$, $**p < .05$, $***p < .01$.

Table B.2: Local Average Treatment Effects on the Punitive Justice Index

	Punitive Justice Index	Punitive Justice Donation	Punitive Attitudes
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treatment	-0.587*** (0.143)	-0.532*** (0.164)	-0.527*** (0.141)
Strata FE	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Outcomes	✓	✓	✓
Criminal and Risk Attitudes	✓	✓	✓
Previous Prison Visit	✓	✓	✓
Socio-Demographics	✓	✓	✓
Adjusted R-squared	0.447	0.258	0.489
Observations	418	418	418
First-stage F-statistic: 129.578			

Note: This table shows the local average treatment effect (LATE) of test run attendance on punitive attitudes using two-stage least squares regressions (columns 1–3). Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering of the error term for individuals who spent time together in the same cell. The dependent variables are punitive justice index (column 2), the punitive justice donation (column 3) and punitive attitudes (column 4). All three dependent variables are normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. Regressions in column 1–3 include baseline outcomes and strata fixed effects, i.e., a dummy for subjects working in the public sector. Baseline outcomes include measures of anticipated wellbeing in prison, punitive attitudes, trust in institutions, and perceptions of procedural fairness. They further include controls for baseline criminal attitudes and risk attitudes, whether subjects previously visited a prison and socio-demographics, including subjects' age, and dummies for males, tertiary education, and employment in a justice-related profession. Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.3: Correlation Analysis: Previous Prison Visits

	Punitive Attitudes		Punitive Justice Index	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Previous Prison Visit	-0.281*** (0.090)	-0.297*** (0.090)	-0.271** (0.132)	-0.301** (0.132)
Strata FE	×	✓	×	✓
Risk Attitudes	×	✓	×	✓
Socio-Demographics	×	✓	×	✓
Sample	Total Sample		Control Group	
Observations	650	649	297	297

Note: This table shows the correlation of having previously visited a prison with a subjects' punitive attitudes measured in the baseline survey and the punitive justice index, using OLS regressions. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. In columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is participant's punitive attitudes measured in the baseline survey. In columns 3 and 4, the dependent variable is the punitive justice index. Both dependent variables are normalized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. In column 2 and 4, the regression includes dummies for males and tertiary education, as well as participants' age and risk attitudes. The sample for columns 1 and 2 includes all participants who completed the baseline survey. Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.4: External Validity: Comparison with Representative Sample

	Experiment (baseline) N = 418		Representative Sample N = 497		<i>p-val</i> (5)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
Punitive Attitudes (baseline)	4.376	(1.37)	4.276	(1.36)	0.160
Anticipated Wellbeing in Prison (baseline)	4.170	(2.45)	4.169	(2.83)	0.649
Willingness to take Risk	4.885	(2.12)	4.171	(2.75)	0.000
Trust in Institutions (baseline)	7.971	(1.41)	6.952	(2.13)	0.000
Procedural Fairness (baseline)	4.732	(0.90)	4.322	(1.23)	0.000
Criminal Attitudes	1.368	(1.23)	1.074	(1.09)	0.000
Age	39.237	(13.20)	43.950	(12.99)	0.000
Male	0.519	(0.50)	0.481	(0.50)	0.249
Previous Prison Visit	0.270	(0.44)	0.171	(0.38)	0.000
Works in Justice-Related Profession	0.230	(0.42)	0.054	(0.23)	0.000
Tertiary Education	0.615	(0.49)	0.352	(0.48)	0.000

Note: The table displays descriptive statistics of the experimental sample at baseline (columns 1 and 2) and a sample that is representative of the Swiss voting population with respect to age, gender, and income (columns 3 and 4). The descriptive statistics include measures for punitive attitudes, citizens' anticipated wellbeing in prison, willingness to take risks, trust in institutions, perception of procedural fairness, criminal attitudes, the subjects' age, the proportion of subjects who identify as male, have previously visited a prison, work in a justice-related profession, and completed tertiary education. Column (5) contains p -values from χ^2 -square tests for binary variables and Wilcoxon rank-sum tests for continuous variables, respectively.

Table B.5: Regression Analysis: Effects on Beliefs about Wellbeing in Prison; Using Weights to Reflect the Swiss Voting Population

	Wellbeing Beliefs Index		Beliefs about Prisoners' Wellbeing	Anticipated Wellbeing in Prison
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treatment Group	0.022 (0.211)	0.013 (0.203)	0.030 (0.208)	-0.010 (0.175)
Strata FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Baseline Outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Criminal and Risk Attitudes	×	✓	✓	✓
Previous Prison Visit	×	✓	✓	✓
Socio-Demographics	×	✓	✓	✓
Adjusted R-squared	0.338	0.354	0.134	0.447
Observations	416	416	416	416

Note: This table shows the effect of treatment assignment on measures of beliefs about wellbeing in prison in the endline survey, using weighted OLS regressions (i.e., the experimental sample is re-weighted based on the means and covariance of the 11 baseline variables shown in Table B.4). Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering of the error term for individuals who spent time together in the same cell. In columns 1 and 2, the dependent variable is the index for beliefs about wellbeing in prison. In columns 3 and 4, the dependent variable is beliefs about the wellbeing of actual prisoners and anticipated wellbeing in prison, respectively. All three dependent variables are normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. All regressions include baseline outcomes and strata fixed effects, i.e., a dummy for subjects working in the public sector. Baseline outcomes include measures of anticipated wellbeing in prison, punitive attitudes, trust in institutions, and perceptions of procedural fairness. Columns 2 to 4 include further controls for baseline criminal attitudes and risk attitudes, whether subjects previously visited a prison and socio-demographics, including subjects' age, and dummies for males, tertiary education, and employment in a justice-related profession. Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.6: Bounds for Punitive Attitudes following Lee (2005) and Behaghel et al. (2015)

	Punitive Justice Index		Punitive Justice Donation		Punitive Attitudes	
	Lee	Behaghel et al.	Lee	Behaghel et al.	Lee	Behaghel et al.
Lower Bound	-0.71***	-0.41***	-0.67***	-0.33***	-0.68***	-0.42***
Upper Bound	-0.09	-0.27	0.25*	-0.20	0.31**	-0.27*
Effect 95% CI	(-0.94, 0.13)	(-0.66, 0.01)	(-0.91, 0.52)	(-0.55, 0.07)	(-0.95, 0.55)	(-0.67, -0.03)
Observations	435	402	435	402	435	402

Note: This table presents bounds and 95% confidence intervals for the treatment effect on the punitive justice index (columns 1 and 2), punitive justice donations (columns 3 and 4), and punitive attitudes (columns 5 and 6) using the methods of Lee (2005) and Behaghel et al. (2015). Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.7: Bounds for Wellbeing Beliefs Outcomes following Lee (2005) and Behaghel et al. (2015)

	Wellbeing Beliefs Index		Beliefs about Prisoners' Wellbeing		Anticipated Wellbeing in Prison	
	Lee	Behaghel et al.	Lee	Behaghel et al.	Lee	Behaghel et al.
Lower Bound	-0.32**	-0.11	-0.34**	-0.15	-0.10	-0.01
Upper Bound	0.43***	0.02	0.41***	-0.05	0.35***	0.10
Effect 95% CI	(-0.55, 0.65)	(-0.36, 0.28)	(-0.58, 0.61)	(-0.38, 0.21)	(-0.33, 0.55)	(-0.22, 0.32)
Observations	433	401	433	401	433	401

Note: This table presents bounds and 95% confidence intervals for the treatment effect on the wellbeing beliefs index (columns 1 and 2), beliefs about the wellbeing of actual prisoners (columns 3 and 4), and anticipated wellbeing in prison (columns 5 and 6) using the methods of Lee (2005) and Behaghel et al. (2015). Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.8: Correlation Between Public Attitudes Toward Law and Order and Voting Outcomes

Dependent variable	Share Yes-votes		Self-reported Yes-vote
	Municipality	Canton	Individual
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Law-and-Order Attitudes	0.084*** (0.005)	0.033*** (0.010)	0.144*** (0.020)
Mean dependent variable	0.593	0.579	0.577
R-squared	0.341	0.365	0.086
Observations	608	26	575

Note: This table reports OLS estimates linking public law-and-order attitudes to voting outcomes. Robust standard measures are reported in parentheses. The dependent variables is the share of "yes" votes for the popular initiative on lifelong custody for incurable and dangerous sex offenders and violent criminals in Switzerland (ballot on February 8, 2004) aggregated at the municipality level in column (1) and at the cantonal level in column (2). In column (3) the dependent variable is an indicator for self-reported "yes" vote for the corresponding initiative based on individual-level survey data from the VOX post-initiative survey (GfS-Forschungsinstitut, 2017). 'Law-and-Order Attitude' is measured using the VOX question "Do you wish for a Switzerland where peace and order are given little emphasis, or a Switzerland where peace and order are strongly emphasized? [1 little emphasis, ..., 6 strong emphasis]". For columns (1) and (2), we average responses across all VOX waves from 1996–2016 and aggregate to the municipality (using municipalities with at least 30 survey responses in column 1) and canton (column 2) levels; column (3) uses the corresponding individual responses from the post-initiative wave. Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

Table B.9: Peer Effects: Cell Mate’s Punitive Attitudes

	Punitiv Justice Index	Punitive Justice Donation	Punitive Attitudes
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Punitive Attitudes of Cell Mate	-0.151 (0.144)	-0.037 (0.152)	-0.240 (0.157)
Adjusted R-squared	0.085	0.042	0.096
Observations	49	49	49

Note: This table shows the correlation of a cell mate’s baseline punitive attitudes with a participant’s punitive attitudes measured in the endline survey using OLS regressions. Standard errors (in parentheses) are corrected for clustering of the error term for individuals who spent time together in the same cell. In column 1 the dependent variable is the punitive justice index. In column 2 and 3, the dependent variables are punitive justice donations and punitive attitudes, respectively. All three dependent variables are normalized to a control group mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. All regressions include dummies for males, smokers, and for treatment group assignment. The sample only includes test run participants who finished the endline survey and shared a cell with a participant with a completed baseline survey. Levels of significance: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$.

C Coding of memorable impressions

Approximately eleven months after the test run, we were able to invite the selected group of VIP participants (consisting of politicians, judges, and journalists) to an anonymous qualitative online survey asking which aspects of their prison stay they found most memorable. These participants had a guaranteed slot in the test run and were therefore not subject to randomization. Of the 66 VIPs invited for the test run, 57 attended. We invited these 57 participants to the follow-up survey, of whom 26 completed it. Participants answered the following open-ended question:

“Which aspects of your experience were most memorable? Please describe in two to three sentences the aspects that left a particularly strong impression on you.”

To systematically classify participants’ most memorable experiences, we followed a coding procedure based on [Haaland et al. \(2025\)](#). First, we developed a coding scheme to guide human coders in identifying whether specific topics were mentioned in a given response. We constructed the scheme by reviewing all responses and compiling a list of recurring topics. For each topic, we formulated illustrative example statements to ensure consistent interpretation across coders. We subsequently refined the scheme based on feedback from a large language model.

In a second step, five research assistants independently coded the open-ended responses using the coding scheme. During this process, we collected feedback from the coders regarding disagreements arising from ambiguities in the scheme and used this feedback to refine it further. In the final step, we coded a theme as present if a majority of coders agreed that it was mentioned in a given response. Overall, coders reached full agreement on whether a given topic was mentioned or not mentioned in 87.4% of the coded statements, indicating a high level of coding consistency.

D Baseline Survey

English Translation of German Original.

[Welcome Page]

Welcome!

This study is conducted by the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. Our goal is to better understand the opinions of Swiss citizens regarding the Swiss justice system. By carefully filling out this survey, you will help us gain a better understanding of these views.

All your answers remain completely anonymous and will be used solely for scientific purposes. The University of Zurich and ETH Zurich will not receive any personal data from Prison Zurich West (meaning neither your name, email address, nor postal address). Any insights from the survey will always be communicated anonymously and in aggregated form, ensuring that no conclusions about your identity are possible.

Please note that your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Zurich.

The survey takes approximately 5 minutes. For the success of our research, it is very important that you answer honestly and read the questions carefully before responding. Thank you very much for your support.

[Trust in Institutions]

First, we will ask you some questions about your opinions regarding crime, the Swiss legal system, and prisons. Please read the questions carefully and answer them as honestly as possible.

How much trust do you have in Switzerland's legal system?

[0. No trust at all, ..., 10. Complete trust]

[Procedural Fairness]

In your opinion, how fairly are citizens treated by the Swiss justice system?

[0. Not fair at all, ..., 6. Very fair]

[Punitive Attitude]

How strongly do you support strict and harsh prosecution of criminals?

[0. Do not support at all, ..., 6. Fully support]

[Citizens' Anticipated Wellbeing in Prison]

Imagine you were to be incarcerated tomorrow for six months. On a scale from 0 to 10, what do you think your personal wellbeing would be during the incarceration?

[0. Very bad, ..., 10. Very good]

[Criminal Attitude]

How strongly do you agree with the following statement: If everyone obeyed the laws, our quality of life would be better.

[0. Strongly disagree, ..., 6. Strongly agree]

[Willingness to Take Risk]

Please give us a few details about yourself.

Are you a person who is generally willing to take risks, or do you try to avoid taking risks?

[0. Completely unwilling to take risks, ..., 10. Very willing to take risks]

[Employment Status]

Which employment status best describes your current situation?

[1. Employed full-time, 2. Employed part-time, 3. Student, 4. Retired, 5. Unemployed, 6. Other]

[Education]

What is your highest educational qualification?

[1. None, 2. Primary school, 3. Secondary school, 4. Vocational school, 5. High school diploma (Matura), 6. University or college degree, 7. Other]

[Justice-Related Job]

Are you professionally involved with the justice system (e.g., police, prosecution, politics)?

[Yes, No]

[Media]

Do you work as a journalist?

[Yes, No]

[Previous Prison Visit]

Have you ever been inside a correctional facility (e.g., to visit an incarcerated person, to take part in other test runs, or something similar)?

[Yes, No]

[Motivation]

Finally, we would like to learn something about your reasons for participating in the test run at Prison Zurich West.

What was your motivation to participate in the test run at Prison Zurich West?

[Free text]

[Comments]

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. We are now almost at the end.

Do you have any comments on the next steps or the study?

[Free text]

E Endline Survey

English Translation of German Original.

[Welcome Page]

Welcome and thank you for your participation!

This study is conducted by the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. Our goal is to better understand the opinions of Swiss citizens regarding the justice system. By carefully completing this survey, you help us gain a better understanding of these views.. Additionally, you have the chance to win a Galaxus voucher worth CHF 10. Every fourth participant wins.

All your answers remain completely anonymous and will be used solely for scientific purposes. The University of Zurich and ETH Zurich will not receive any personal data from Prison Zurich West. Any insights from the survey will always be communicated anonymously and in aggregated form, ensuring no conclusions about your identity are possible.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from this study at any time. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Zurich.

The survey takes approximately 5 minutes. For the success of our research, it is very important that you answer honestly and read the questions carefully before responding. Thank you very much for your support.

Please answer the following questions regarding your opinion about the Swiss legal system.

[Trust in Institutions]

How much trust do you have in Switzerland's legal system?

[0. No trust at all, ..., 10. Complete trust]

[Procedural Fairness]

In your opinion, how fairly are affected individuals treated by the Swiss justice system?

[0. Not fair at all, ..., 6. Very fair]

[Punitive Justice Donation]

Now you must make a decision that carries real financial consequences.

Typically, most popular votes in Switzerland feature a wide array of civil-society groups, organizations, and political actors that either support or oppose specific proposals.

In the following, you must decide whether we should, on your behalf, donate to an organization that promotes certain policy proposals, or to a party that opposes them. We will transfer your donation to the relevant organizations shortly after the survey is completed.

Are you more inclined to direct us to donate to an organization that supports a tougher penal system, or to an organization that supports a more moderate penal system?

[Rather donate to an organization that supports a tougher penal system; Rather donate to an organization that supports a more moderate penal system]

You can now decide how much we should donate on your behalf to an organization that supports a [tougher/more moderate] penal system. How many francs should we transfer to this organization? Please click on the scale and then drag the slider to your desired position between CHF 0 and CHF 5.

[CHF 0, ..., CHF 5]

[Punitive Attitudes]

How strongly do you support strict criminal prosecution and harsh sentencing?

[0. Do not support at all, ..., 6. Completely support]

[Beliefs About Wellbeing of Actual Prisoners]

We would now like to know your assessment of prison conditions in Switzerland.

We invited all inmates at Prison Pfäffikon to take part in an anonymous survey about their wellbeing. They answered the following question:

Please rate your personal wellbeing on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you feel extremely bad and 10 means you feel extremely good.

What do you think was the average score given by the prison inmates? Try to estimate as accurately as possible. Among the most accurate estimates we will raffle off three additional Galaxus vouchers worth CHF 50 each.

Please click on the scale and drag the slider to your desired position between 0 and 10.

[0. Very bad, ..., 10. Very good]

[Citizens' Anticipated Wellbeing in Prison]

Imagine you were to be incarcerated tomorrow for six months. On a scale from 0 to 10, what do you think your personal wellbeing would be during the incarceration?

[0. Very bad, ..., 10. Very good]

[Media Reports]

Finally, we would like to know if you have learned about the experiences of the participants in the test run at Prison Zurich West through the media.

I have encountered reports about the participants' experiences in the test run at Prison Zurich West...

- ...in the newspaper? *[Yes, No]*
- ...on the radio? *[Yes, No]*
- ...on TV? *[Yes, No]*

[Comments]

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Do you have any comments on the next steps or about the study?

[Free text]

Would you like to be informed about the results of the study in the future?

[Yes, No]

If you answered Yes, you will be redirected to a separate webpage so that your email address cannot be linked to your survey responses.

[Free text field for email address]