



**Fact Sheet on Literature Reviewed for the Public Opinion Project**  
**Prepared by K. Bliss and D. Crocker**  
**March 2008**

---

#### Public Opinion about the Criminal Justice System

- The Canadian public is highly interested but badly informed about criminal justice system processes. [1, 2]
- The Canadian public generally lacks confidence in the criminal justice system. [1, 3-5]

#### Punitiveness

- Research has found that the Canadian public generally agrees with punishment as a consequence of crime [6, 7] but the literature is actually methodologically limited. [2, 8]
- The Canadian public generally believes that sentences are not harsh enough.[9]

#### Sentencing

- The Canadian public is not well informed about sentencing options other than prison. [9, 10]
- When informed of alternatives to prison, the Canadian public is supportive of the alternatives. [9, 10]

#### Youth Justice

- Canadians have had a longstanding dissatisfaction with the youth justice system. [11]
- Canadians have tended to think that the youth justice system does not adequately punish young offenders [1] but that this attitude mainly surrounds violent offences. [12]

#### Restitution

- The public is generally supportive of restitution, especially for property offences. [13-15]

#### Restorative Justice

- The public shows tentative support for RJ in general. Support is less for the use of RJ for serious offences.[15-18]
- Support for RJ for young offenders is stronger than support for use of RJ more generally. [18]

## References

1. Roberts, J. and M. Hough, *Sentencing young offenders: Public opinion in England and Wales*. Criminal Justice, 2005. **5**(3): p. 211-232.
2. Roberts, J.V. and A.N. Doob, *Sentencing and Public Opinion: Taking False Shadows for True Substances*. Osgoode Hall Law Journal, 1989. **27**(3): p. 491-515.
3. Adams, M., *Canadian Attitudes Toward Crime and Justice*. Forum on Corrections Research, 1990. **2**(1).
4. Reid, A., *Public Confidence in the Justice System*. 1997.
5. Paciocco, D., *Getting Away with Murder*. 1999, Toronto: Irwin Law.
6. Roberts, J.V., *Empirical Research on Sentencing*. 1988, Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada.
7. Kaukinen, C. and S. Colavecchia, *Public perceptions of the courts: an examination of attitudes toward the treatment of victims and accused*. Canadian Journal of Criminology, 1999. **41**(3): p. 365-384.
8. Matthews, R., *The Myth of Punitiveness*. Theoretical Criminology, 2005. **9**(2): p. 175-201.
9. Tufts, J. and J.V. Roberts, *Sentencing Juvenile Offenders: Comparing Public Preferences and Judicial Practice*. Criminal Justice Policy Review, 2002. **13**(1): p. 46-64.
10. Hough, M. and J.V. Roberts, *Sentencing Trends in Britain: Public Knowledge and Public Opinion*. Punishment & Society, 1999. **1**(1): p. 11-26.
11. Hartnagel, T.F., *The rhetoric of youth justice in Canada*. Criminal Justice, 2004. **4**(4): p. 355-374.
12. Ghetti, S. and A.D. Redlich, *Reactions to Youth Crime: Perceptions of Accountability and Competency*. Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 2001. **19**: p. 33-52.
13. Bae, I., *A Survey on Public Acceptance of Restitution as an Alternative to Incarceration for Property Offenders in Hennepin County, Minnesota, USA*, in *Restorative Justice on Trial*, H. Messmer and H.-U. Otto, Editors. 1992, Kluwer Academic Publishers: Netherlands. p. 291-307.
14. Umbreit, M.S., *Restorative Justice and Mediation: Is the Public Interested?*, in *Victim Meets Offender: The Impact of Restorative Justice and Mediation*, M.S. Umbreit, Editor. 1994, Willow Tree Press, Inc.: Monsey, NY. p. 1-13.
15. Lee, A., *Public attitudes towards restorative justice*, in *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives*, B. Galaway and J. Hudson, Editors. 1996, Criminal Justice Press: Monsey (NY). p. 338-347.
16. Bilz, K., *Restorative Justice and victim offender mediation: A new area for social psychological inquiry?* 2002.
17. Stuart, C. and S.C.A. Vermeulen, *Perceptions of Crime, Safety and Justice: A Whitehorse City Survey*. 1998, Yukon College: Yukon.
18. Roberts, J.V. and L.J. Stalans, *Restorative Sentencing: Exploring the Views of the Public*. Social Justice Research, 2004. **17**(3): p. 315-334.