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Convicts' Awareness of Post-Penitentiary Assistance

Abstract: The period leading up to a convict's completion of their sentence holds immense significance, not only for the them but also for their family, and for society. During the period of serving the sentence, and especially in the last 6 months, actions are taken to prepare the convict for reintegration into society. With regard to the practice of post-penitentiary assistance, it is important for the convict to be aware of the possibilities and scope of post-penitentiary assistance they can receive. The article presents a fragment of research that was carried out for the needs of the Local Council for Social Readaptation and Assistance to Convicts, established by the Silesian Voivode, of which the author is a member.

Key words: readaptation, post-penitentiary assistance, convicts

Introduction

When delving into a scientific discourse on the subject of isolation, it is anticipated that the classic concept of a total institution by Erving Goffman will emerge. Goffman defines a total institution as the residence and workplace for a large group of people in similar situations, isolated from the broader society for a specific period, leading a formalized lifestyle (Goffman, 2011, p.14). The daily routine of detainees is strictly planned from the top-down, leaving little room for the inmate to influence their day or the activities that impact them. These activities are part of an overarching plan integral to the institution's overall operation, imparting a

coercive dimension to the inmate. The author quoted above outlined several characteristics of total institutions with those applicable to prisons being:

- Division between superiors and subordinates.
- Strictly scheduled time during the day – the existence of a strict plan that defines the framework of life in the institution for the achievement of a specific goal.
- A system of penalties and rewards to reinforce specific behaviors.
- Limited contact with the outside world.
- Ubiquitous bureaucracy (Goffman, 1975, pp. 151–155).

Symbols representing prisons as total institutions include physical elements such as closed high metal gates, tall walls, barbed wire, concertina entanglements, guard towers, monitoring systems, cameras, and natural features like rock walls, cliffs, water, and forests.

According to Anthony Giddens, the reality of such institutions is characterized by tight order, precise planning, and careful supervision (Giddens, 2004, p. 372). Michel Foucault called prisons punitive organizations (Foucault, 2020). Such organizations house mechanisms of social discipline that create discipline through supervision, observation, and punishment. Many mechanisms developed and employed in prisons can be identified in other institutions such as schools, workplaces, and places of residence. Originally conceived as places for the social rehabilitation of individuals posing a social threat, these institutions have become entangled in a complex administrative network involving government agencies, the judiciary, and justice institutions, losing sight of their intended purpose (Fudali, 2017, pp. 111–122), contributing to institutional pathology (Nowak, Kosiński, pp. 91–105; Walancik, 2009, pp. 120–133).

Prisons are enclosed environments, challenging institutions that involve both the individuals held for committed crimes and the intricacies of their organizational structure and operations. In contrast to open society, these facilities gather a distinctive group characterized by negative behaviors and various behavioral and emotional disorders. However, it is essential to provide support during the post-penitentiary social readaptation process, enabling individuals to reintegrate into the social fabric of their local communities.

A defining aspect of the concept of crime lies in the looming threat of punishment for wrongdoing (Lernell, 1977). The question of how to address the perpetrator of a crime has persisted from ancient times (Gavrielides 2007, p. 20) to the present day (Woolford, Ratner 2003, pp. 178–179). Witold Świda posits that criminal acts are punishable not universally but only by those deemed criminally responsible, a status achieved not at birth but at a specific age (Świda, 1978, p. 184). Conversely, Andrzej Marek contends that criminal punishment serves as a reaction outlined by criminal law, expressing disapproval of both the criminal act and its perpetrator (Marek, 1997, p. 78). Imprisonment, as a disciplinary tool, has been utilized throughout history on both individual and societal levels.

Teodor Szymanowski, writing in the context of Poland, emphasizes the unique role of imprisonment in the state's criminal policy. Historically, its widespread use and lengthy average sentences have been notable (Szymanowski, 1989 p. 6). Acknowledging the distinctive role of imprisonment in view of the fact that it constitutes, apart from the death penalty, the most drastic punitive measure, underscores the severe and often irreversible consequences for the convict and their family (Szymanowski, 1989 p. 6). Therefore, recognizing the importance, relevance, and critical nature of post-penitentiary assistance for the convict and their family becomes imperative.

This article aims to present the findings of a study on convicts' awareness of post-penitentiary assistance in the context of their reintegration into society following the completion of their prison sentences.

Post-penitentiary and social assistance – readaptation of convicts

The period leading up to the moment when convicts regain their freedom is crucial yet challenging. This transitional phase is often characterized by intense emotions, ranging from joy and euphoria to anxiety (Szymanowska, p. 275). Convicts grapple with concerns about starting a new life, despite having made plans for their post-prison future while serving their sentences. This phase marks genuine engagement with post-penitentiary assistance, aiming to provide both material and psychological support to inmates upon their release. It plays a pivotal role in the process of reintegrating individuals into society and preventing recidivism (Musidłowski, 2003, p. 274). Wiesław Ambrozik aptly defines social readaptation as the process of an individual reintegrating into an active and independent life, involving the performance of social roles related to the fundamental spheres and aspects of human existence (Ambrozik, 2007, p. 190). For those serving a prison sentence, this represents the final phase of the social rehabilitation process within a specific community.

Post-penitentiary assistance is implemented on the basis of the Polish Executive Penal Code (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 90, item 557, as amended), the Social Welfare Act of 12 March 2004 (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, as amended) and other legal regulations.

The Polish Executive Penal Code mandates that to facilitate social readaptation and prevent recidivism, convicts and their families should receive necessary assistance, including material, medical, job, and housing support, as well as legal advice (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 90, item 557, as amended). To implement post-penitentiary assistance, a designated Fund for Victims' Assistance and Post-Penitentiary Assistance, hereinafter referred to as the "Fund," has been established (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1760, as amended). Associations, foundations,

organizations, and institutions dedicated to assisting in the social readaptation of convicts may collaborate in the implementation of social readaptation (Journal of Laws 2016, item 2305). Representatives of these entities may be appointed by government administration bodies, such as the prime minister or governor, to councils and other collective bodies tasked with providing assistance to convicts and their families or coordinating the interaction of society with prisons and detention centers (Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 113, item 723).

The period of assistance to the inmate is pivotal in the process of social rehabilitation and reintegration, and it can be delineated into two stages:

1. The stage in prison preceding the completion of the sentence, occurs 6 months before conditional release or the end of serving the sentence.
- 2 .The post-sentence stage.

The first stage can be termed as 'relational' and is exceptionally significant. The condition is that the convicted person is aware of the possibility of post-penitentiary assistance and is prepared for it in the prison. During the first period, the convict should establish relationships with the community to which they intend or desire to return. Factors related to residence and post-sentence employment will determine these actions. For this purpose, a person serving a sentence may be granted permission for meetings totaling 14 days within a 6-month period. The importance of establishing contact with entities in the support system, such as probation officers, social welfare authorities, and NGOs, is emphasized. This period is determined by the penitentiary commission or the penitentiary court.

No less important is the second stage after the end of serving the sentence. In its initial phase, communication should be established, and documents should be submitted to institutions such as the Municipal Social Welfare Center, housing cooperatives, housing associations, city halls, municipalities, Labor Offices, and Primary Health Care (POZ) facilities, as well as business entities announcing job recruitment.

It is worth noting that the current implementation involves a so-called dynamic approach to post-penitentiary assistance in the Polish penitentiary system, providing assistance to convicts not only 6 months before leaving prison but from the moment of admission to prison, in accordance with the European Prison Rules. (European Prison Rules and Mandela Rules¹. According to Rule 4 of the European Prison Rules, objective of a prison sentence can be realized when the prison administration and other competent authorities proactively provide education, vocational training, and employment opportunities to the inmate during their sentence. The range of assistance offered also encompasses various other forms of support that are deemed suitable and are accessible within the country's

¹ European Prison Rules and Mandela Rules, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Europejskie%20regu%C5%82y%20wi%C4%99zienne%20i%20regu%C5%82y%20Mandeli%20-%20Zalecenia%20Mi%C4%99dzynarodowe.pdf>.

penitentiary system. These may include rehabilitative, moral, spiritual, health, and sports measures. All comprehensive assistance encompassing programs, activities, and services, should be delivered with due consideration to the individually identified needs of the prisoner².

A crucial role in the implementation of post-penitentiary assistance to persons deprived of their liberty, released from prisons and detention centers, and those closest to them, is undertaken by professional probation officers (Journal of Laws of 2001, No. 98, item 1071, as amended, Journal of Laws of 2003, No. 112, item 1064, as amended, Journal of Laws of 2016, item 969, Journal of Laws of 2023, item 896), and Prison Service officers.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to assess inmates' knowledge regarding the availability of post-penitentiary assistance. This formulation of the aim of the study necessitated its execution within a normative paradigm (Rubacha, 2011, s. 311). The survey (Babbie, 2001, p. 268) used a specially designed questionnaire, and the analysis of the gathered data facilitated the development of the article. The research was conducted on behalf of the Field Council for Social Readaptation and Assistance to Convicted Persons of the Silesian Province. The research problem was formulated as follows: What is the knowledge/awareness of convicts regarding post-penitentiary assistance? The selection of individuals for the research sample was voluntary (Babbie, 2008, s. 204), based on the availability of the subjects and their informed consent to participate in the study. A total of 122 inmates voluntarily participated in the survey, comprising 97 men and 25 women. The survey was conducted at the turn of 2021/2022 in Prisons under the jurisdiction of the District Inspectorate of the Prison Service (OJSW) in Katowice. At the time of the study, OJSW was among the largest in Poland, consisting of 16 basic penitentiary units. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire to be filled out (Babbie, 2001, p. 278). The primary survey was preceded by a pilot questionnaire conducted among 20 inmates (Presser, Blair, 1994, pp. 73–104). Approval for the survey was obtained from the Director of OJSW and the participating inmates. Ethical principles were strictly adhered to during both the research and analysis phases. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS-28 software. The formulated research objectives necessitated a univariate analysis, represented by calculated percentages. Additionally, a bivariate analysis was conducted, employing the χ^2 test of independence to demonstrate the relationship between selected qualitative variables, and the V-Cramer coefficient measured the level of dependence between

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² Ibidem, p. 2.

the two qualitative variables. Furthermore, the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test (for more than two groups) were employed to compare groups.

Characteristics of survey participants

The survey comprised 122 prisoners, with 80% being men and 20% women. Detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (n = 122)

Item		Number of people	Percentage of people %
Gender	Men	97	79.5
	Women	25	20.5
Age	15–21 y.o.	2	1.6
	22–30 y.o.	22	18.0
	31–40 y.o.	47	38.5
	41–50 y.o.	36	29.5
	51 y.o. and older	15	12.3
Marital status	Bachelor/Miss	39	32.0
	Married	21	17.2
	Living in a free relationship	28	23.0
	Widow/widower	5	4.1
	Divorced	29	23.8
Education	Incomplete primary or primary	20	16.4
	Junior high school	20	16.4
	Vocational education	45	36.9
	Secondary	26	21.3
	Higher	10	8.2
	No answer	1	0.8
Place of permanent residence	Village	24	19.7
	City with a population of up to 100,000	36	29.5
	City with a population of 100,000 to 200,000	37	30.3
	City with a population of 200,000 or more	24	19.7
	No answer	1	0.8

Source: author's own study.

Those surveyed were primarily in the age range of 31 to 50, with nearly 40% falling between 31 and 40 years old. Only two individuals (1.6%) were under the age of 21. Thirty percent each were from cities with a population of up to 100,000 or 100–200,000, while 20% were from rural areas or cities with a population of 200,000 or more. The largest proportion of respondents had vocational education, accounting for 39.6%. The second-largest group consisted of individuals with secondary education, making up 21.3%. Those with incomplete primary or primary and junior high school education comprised 16.4% of respondents, while those with higher education constituted 8.2%.

Key characteristics considered in the study were the nature of the criminal act, time remaining to serve the sentence, and classification subgroup. Data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the sample based on criminal act, remaining time of sentence, and classification subgroup (n = 122).

Item		Number of people	Percentage of people %
Legal wrong	Crimes against health and life, Articles 148–162 of the Polish Criminal Code	20	16.4
	Crimes against traffic safety, Articles 173–180 a of the Polish Criminal Code	13	10.7
	Crimes against sexual freedom and morality, Articles 197–204 of the Polish Criminal Code	4	3.3
	Crimes against the family and guardianship, Articles 206–211 a of the Polish Criminal Code	16	13.1
	Crimes against the activities of state institutions and local government, Articles 222–231 b of the Polish Criminal Code	4	3.3
	Crimes against property, Articles 278–295 of the Polish Criminal Code	37	30.3
	Crime as defined in the Act on Counteracting Drug Abuse	8	6.6
	Other	31	25.4
Time remaining until the end of the sentence	Up to 6 months	48	39.3
	6 months –1 year	51	41.8
	1–2 years	13	10.7
	2–3 years	4	3.3
	Over 3 years	2	1.6
	No answer	4	3.3

Item		Number of people	Percentage of people %
Classification subgroup	P-1 serving sentence for the first time/closed-type unit	12	9.8
	P-2 serving sentence for the first time/semi open-type unit	36	29.5
	P-3 serving sentence for the first time/closed-type unit	2	1.6
	R-1 penitentiary recidivists/closed-type unit	20	16.4
	R-2 penitentiary recidivists/semi open-type unit	24	19.7
	R-1 Z penitentiary recidivists/closed-type unit/regular system	1	0.8
	R-2 P penitentiary recidivists/semi open-type unit/program system,	11	9.0
	No answer	16	13.1

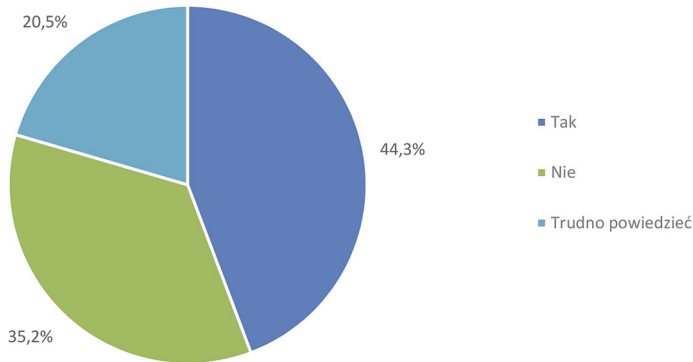
Source: author's own study.

All female inmates surveyed had no more than 1 year left on their sentence (68% – no more than 6 months). For male respondents, this applies to 80%, with 33% having no more than 6 months left.

Level of inmates' awareness of post-penitentiary assistance

Receiving assistance in any form when physically isolated from society for a significant period of time seems to be crucial to the individual's rehabilitation. Therefore, the respondents were asked about their awareness of the possibility of receiving assistance after leaving prison. The data is presented in Figure 1.

Nearly half of the inmates surveyed were of the opinion that they could count on receiving assistance after leaving prison. This opinion was more prevalent among women (60%) than men (40%). Approximately 35% of both genders did not expect assistance after leaving prison. Significantly, one-fifth of respondents could not confirm whether they are entitled to such assistance or not. It is noteworthy that 20% of respondents, primarily men (25% versus 4% of women), were uncertain about what to expect regarding post-isolation assistance, whether they are entitled to such assistance or not. Gender differentiates these opinions significantly ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.938$, $p = 0.051^*$), but not strongly (V-Cramer coefficient $V = 0.221$). Conversely, there are no significant differences by age ($\chi^2 (6) = 3.527$, $p = 0.740$), marital status ($\chi^2 (8) = 5.988$, $p = 0.649$), place of residence ($\chi^2 (6) = 3.827$, $p = 0.700$), education ($\chi^2 (8) = 9.863$, $p = 0.275$).



Tak – Yes; Nie – No; Trudno powiedzieć – hard to say

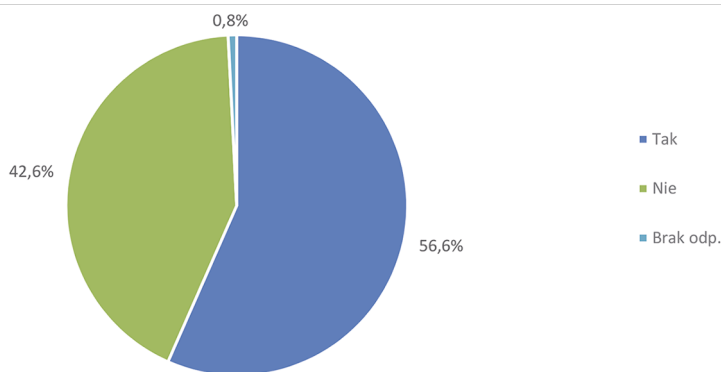
Fig. 1. Awareness of receiving assistance after leaving prison (n = 122)

Source: author's own study.

The percentage of people expecting to be helped after leaving prison is similar for each type of crime, with no significant differences. Notably, none of the inmates under Articles 197–205 of the Criminal Code and the Act on Counteracting Drug Abuse expect to receive assistance. About 45–48% of inmates with less than a year of imprisonment left to serve expect assistance after leaving prison, but also one of two inmates with more than three years left to serve (compared to roughly 25% of those with one to three years left). In the P classification group, the percentage reaches 48%, and for R – 39%.

In the context of awareness of receiving or not receiving post-isolation assistance, it was crucial to inquire if respondents were aware that legal regulations guarantee such assistance. The data in this scope is presented in Figure 2.

More than half of the respondents encountered the opinion that convicts are not entitled to assistance after leaving prison. Nevertheless, a similar number of people (43%) encountered the opinion that convicts are entitled to assistance after leaving prison (more often women – 71%, people aged 51 and over – 67%). Three-quarters of the respondents were convicted for crimes against the activities of state institutions and local government (Articles 222–231a). On the other hand, all surveyed inmates with a sentence under Articles 197–204 of the Criminal Code (crimes against sexual freedom and morality) and who have more than three years of sentence left, as well as 3/4 with crimes under the Act on Counteracting Drug Abuse and 54% for crimes against property (Articles 278–295 of the Criminal Code) answered “yes.” In the case of other characteristics, differences in opinions in this regard are insignificant, and statistically insignificant for all (including the above). Significant differences apply only to one classification category –



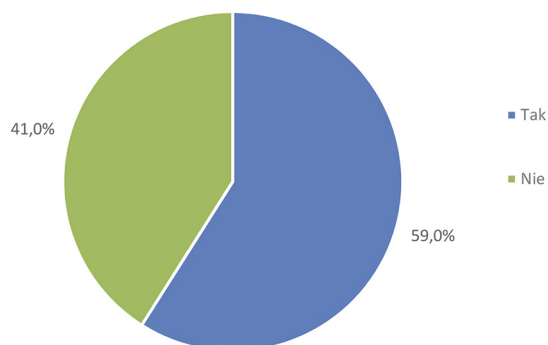
key: Tak – Yes; Nie – No; Brak odp. – No answer

Fig. 2. Respondents' belief that convicts are not entitled to assistance after leaving prison (n = 122)

Source: author's own study.

inmates in category R encountered this opinion significantly more often (54%) than inmates in category P (34%, $V = 0.197$, $\chi^2(1) = 4.100$, $p = 0.043^{**}$). More often, these were the respondents from subcategories R-1 (70%), R-2 (50%), but also P-1 (50%) than others.

The next step of the research procedure was to analyze the inmates' knowledge of the legislation governing post-penitentiary assistance. The data is presented in Figure 3.



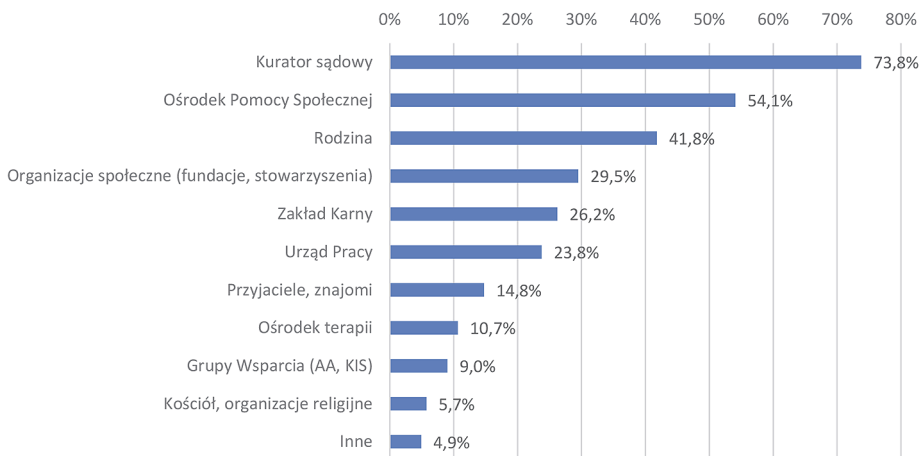
key: Tak – Yes; Nie – No

Fig. 3. Awareness of inmates of the legislation governing the area of post-penitentiary assistance (n = 122)

Source: author's own study.

The majority of respondents (59%) confirmed their awareness of regulations governing post-penitentiary assistance. Age appears to play a certain role, although not reaching statistical significance ($p = 0.133$) – younger individuals tend to be less informed. None of the respondents in the 15–21 age group had such knowledge, while among those aged 22–30, 60% lacked awareness (compared to 34–40% in older age groups). Inmates under Articles 173–180 of the Criminal Code (crimes against traffic safety) and Articles 222–231b (crimes against the activities of state institutions and local government) exhibit a better degree of information – three out of four and all, respectively, are familiar with these provisions. Conversely, inmates under Articles 197–205 of the Criminal Code (crimes against sexual freedom and morality) and the Act on Counteracting Drug Abuse show the weakest degree of information, with only one in four having heard of them. The percentage of affirmative responses is lower for inmates with 1–2 years left in their sentence (39%). For other characteristics, differences in opinion in this area are minimal, and statistically insignificant for all (including the above). Significant differences apply only to one classification category – inmates in category R are significantly more likely (68%) to know about such regulations than inmates in category P (44%, $V = 0.240$, $\chi^2(1) = 6.121$, $p = 0.013^{**}$). This trend is more prominent in the R-1 (75%), R-2 (71%), and P-3 subcategories (both respondents) compared to others, with the lowest percentage in P-2 (39%).

The survey aimed to determine if respondents could name the entities providing post-penitentiary care. The data in this scope is presented in Figure 4.



key: Kurator sądowy – Probation officer; Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej – social welfare center; Rodzina – family; Organizacje społeczne (fundacje, stowarzyszenia) – social organizations (foundations, associations); Zakład Karny – prison; Urząd Pracy – Labor Office; Przyjaciele, znajomi – friends, acquaintances; Ośrodek terapii – therapy center; Grupy wsparcia (AA, KIS) – support groups (AA, Social Integration Club); Kościół, organizacje religijne – church, religious organizations; Inne – other.

Fig. 4. Entities that provide post-penitentiary assistance ($n = 122$)

Source: author's own study.

The vast majority of inmates (74%) identified probation officers and social welfare centers (54%) as the key entities responsible for post-penitentiary assistance. The third most frequently mentioned source (by 41% of respondents) was family. It can be inferred that inmates predominantly pointed to institutional support, given that the next most commonly indicated sources (with a percentage of 29.5%) were social organizations such as foundations and associations. Following closely were the prison (26.2%) and the Labor Office (23.8%).

These opinions are similar for women and men (in the chi-square independence test for the entire set, $\chi^2(11) = 6.386$, $p = 0.847$) and among different age groups ($\chi^2(33) = 27.712$, $p = 0.728$, although it is worth noting that respondents aged 41–50 mentioned community organizations less frequently than others (20%), along with therapy centers and support groups (3% each); the youngest respondents were more likely than others to mention probation officers (88%) and friends (25%), while those aged 31–40 mentioned the church (11%) more often). There were no significant differences based on education level (for the entire set, $\chi^2(11) = 7.200$, $p = 0.783$). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that individuals with secondary or higher education were slightly more inclined than those with at most vocational education to mention social organizations (39% vs. 26%), the church (11% vs. 4%) and therapy centers (17% vs. 8%). Additionally, respondents from urban areas do not differ, in general, in this regard from those living in rural areas (for the entire set $\chi^2(11) = 13.850$, $p = 0.241$). However, probation officers were statistically significantly more frequently indicated by city dwellers (78% vs. 54%, in a test for proportions, $p = 0.016^{**}$). Marital status generally does not differentiate these opinions ($\chi^2(11) = 7.247$, $p = 0.779$), although family was mentioned significantly more often by those in a relationship (formal or informal) – 53% compared to those who were single (34%, in a test for proportion $p = 0.039^*$).

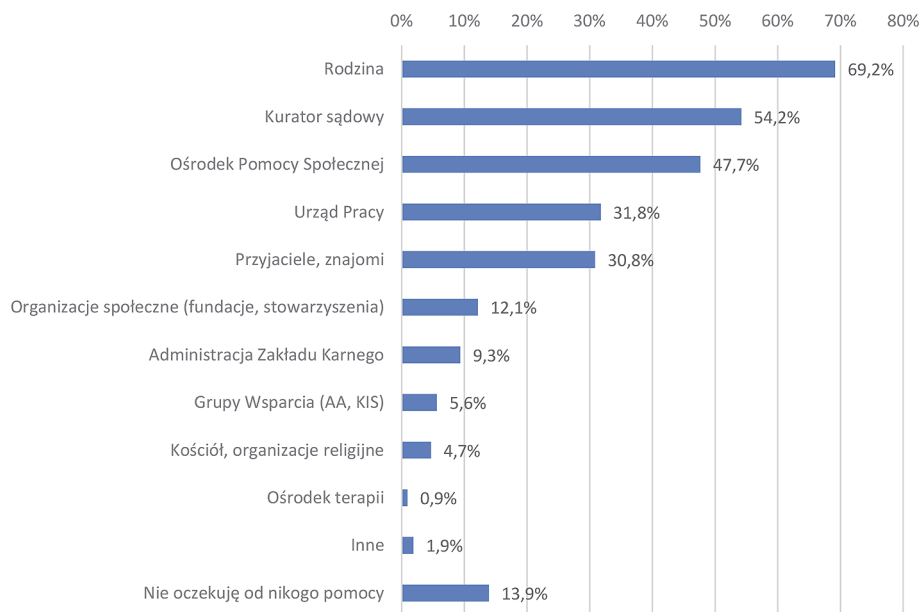
Regarding inmate classification, those with the R classification group are not significantly different from those with the P group ($\chi^2(11) = 9.425$, $p = 0.583$). Although the Labor Office, therapy center and support groups were slightly more frequently mentioned by inmates with category P, and the prison and community organizations were mentioned by inmates with category R, the differences are small. Analyzing the most numerous subcategories, it can be noted that inmates in the R-1 category mentioned friends, support groups, and therapy centers less frequently than others (5% each), and prison (50%), social organizations (45%) and church (15%) more frequently than others. On the other hand, those with the P-1 subcategory mentioned prison (8%), support groups (17%) less often than others, and friends (25%) more often than others. Social welfare centers were most often mentioned by inmates with the R-2 subcategory (79%), and the Labor Office was mentioned with P-2 (33%). The type of crime makes little difference in these opinions, although probation officers were significantly less frequently mentioned by inmates convicted under Articles 173–180 of the

Criminal Code (54%), with similar findings for family (31%), friends (8%), and the Labor Office (15%). Family was indicated less frequently by inmates convicted under Articles 206–211A (31%). Those convicted under Articles 197–205 of the Criminal Code, on the other hand, pointed only to family, probation officers, social welfare centers, and Labor Offices. Significant differences can be observed only for inmates convicted under Articles 278–295 of the Criminal Code (for this set, $\chi^2(11) = 27.578$, $p = 0.004$) – they mentioned social organizations (46%, in the test for proportions, $p = 0.009$), social welfare centers (76%, in the test for proportions, $p = 0.002$) and the prison (38%, in the test for proportions $p = 0.054$) significantly more frequently than others. In contrast, there are no significant differences according to the time remaining on the sentence ($\chi^2(33) = 24.366$, $p = 0.966$). At the same time, it is worth noting that inmates who are more than 3 years away from leaving solitary confinement mentioned only probation officers, the prison, social organizations, social welfare centers and family, while those with the shortest time to serve indicated primarily probation officers (83%), social welfare centers (50%), family (42%), the prison (31%), social organizations and the Labor Office (25% each) and friends (21%).

Respondents were asked about the sources of assistance they would seek after leaving prison. The data are presented in Fig. 5.

After leaving prison, the majority of individuals expect assistance from their family (69%), with approximately half anticipating assistance from a probation officer and/or social welfare center. Slightly less than one in three inmates also expect assistance from the Labor Office and/or friends/acquaintances. Other entities were mentioned less frequently, by no more than 12.1% of respondents. The “other” responses included: “bank, none do anything” (3 people), “work” (1). One respondent indicated that social assistance should be provided obligatorily, while 14% do not expect any assistance, with one inmate justifying this stance by expressing confidence in their abilities.

These opinions are similar for women and men (for the entire set, $\chi^2(12) = 12.835$, $p = 0.381$), and only the assessment of the importance of support groups was significantly more frequent for women (12%) than for men (3%, in a test for proportions $p = 0.066$). Notably, none of the women mentioned a church, and none of the men pointed to a therapy center. Probation officers were slightly more frequently mentioned among women (60%) than men (44%). Overall, there are no significant differences for people in different age groups either in the entire set ($\chi^2(36) = 42.609$, $p = 0.154$), although an analysis of individual entities/persons reveals that respondents aged 15–30 and 31–40 (about 60–64%) were significantly more likely than those over 40 to indicate a probation officer (55% for those aged 41–50 and only 17% for those 51+ years old). Welfare centers were indicated significantly less often than the others by people aged 51+ (8% vs. about 50–55%). Regarding family, friends, and other institutional entities, opinions were quite similar across age groups. The inclusion of the Prison Administration



key: Rodzina – family; Kurator sądowy – Probation officer; Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej – social welfare center; Urząd Pracy – Labor Office; Przyjaciele, znajomi – friends, acquaintances; Organizacje społeczne (fundacje, stowarzyszenia) – social organizations (foundations, associations); Administracja Zakładu Karnego – prison administration; Grupy wsparcia (AA, KIS) – support groups (AA, Social Integration Club); Kościół, organizacje religijne – church, religious organizations; Ośrodek terapii – therapy center; Inne – other; Nie oczekuję od nikogo pomocy – I do not expect anyone to help me

Fig. 5. Sources of expected assistance ^a (n = 122)

^a Three most important entities/persons were pointed out.

Source: author's own study.

was increasingly rare in successively older age groups (from 18% for 15–30 years old to 0% for 51+). Respondents aged 51+ were more likely than younger people to point to the church and religious organizations (17%), and less likely (8%) to point to the Labor Office. Those aged 15–30 are noticeably less likely than others not to expect help from anyone (8%).

Family situation also does not play a significant role in this regard (marital status, for the entire set $\chi^2(12) = 13.695$, $p = 0.321$), with single ones being significantly more likely to expect help from no one (22% vs. 6% of those in a relationship, statistically significant differences at $p = 0.018$). Family, on the other hand, was indicated slightly more often by those in a formal or informal relationship (69%) than by those who are single (55%). Social welfare centers were indicated by those who are single (45%) more frequently than by those who are in a relationship (37%), but these differences are not statistically significant (similar to other entities and persons). Similarly, there are no significant differences

by education (for the entire set, $\chi^2(12) = 15.700$, $p = 0.205$), and even less by place of residence ($\chi^2(12) = 6.105$, $p = 0.911$). It is worth noting at the same time that a probation officer was indicated less frequently by those with secondary or higher education (36% vs. 52% for those with at most vocational education), with similar findings for social welfare centers (31% vs. 46%), while the opposite is true for community organizations (17% vs. 8%). Respondents with at most vocational education are more likely to expect no help from anyone (18% vs. 11%), as are urban residents (18% vs. 8%).

The status of the inmates is also not relevant in this regard. Respondents in the R and P classification groups have similar opinions (for the entire set, $\chi^2(12) = 11.416$, $p = 0.494$), with Prison administration being significantly more frequently indicated by the R group than the P group (14% vs. 2%, in a test for proportion $p = 0.023$). Referring to the four most common subcategories, inmates in the P-1 subcategory were noticeably less likely to indicate the Labor Office (17%, which is twice as low as for R-1). In contrast, Prison administration (20%) and community organizations (15%) were clearly mentioned more often for R-1. Inmates in subcategory P-1 are the group least likely to mention family, but also most likely to mention friends (42% each). The indicated group is the only one to mention a therapy center. However, the differences were not significant (they take place in the sample, although it is difficult to say that they also occur in the general population). Those who would be released sooner were less likely to point to family and friends than inmates who were between one and three years away from completing their sentences. Those who will be released in no less than 2 years also indicated the church (2 out of 6 people), while one in three people indicated that they do not need help. In contrast, not one person in this group mentioned therapy centers and support groups. Among those with a sentence that ends in no more than a year, 15% do not expect assistance, and social organizations appeared less frequently in this context than for the others.

There are also some differences across crime types. For example, the church only pointed out by those serving sentences for sexual crimes, as well as for crimes against family and guardianship and state bodies. Those sentenced for sexual crimes mentioned only family (100%) and friends, as well as the aforementioned church and welfare center (one person does not need help), family is also very important (3/4 of responses) for those violating the Act on Counteracting Drug Abuse. Analyzing the more common groups of crimes, the social welfare center is the most important support entity for respondents convicted under Articles 148–162 and 206–211A (more important even than the family) Social organizations were mentioned most frequently by inmates convicted under Articles 173–180 (23% vs. even just 5% for Articles 148–162). Prison administration was mentioned more frequently by convicted under Articles 173–180 and 278–295 (15–19%). At the same time, these differences are not statistically significant.

Some respondents (35%) also indicated which entity they considered most important, naming the family first (60%), followed by probation officers and social welfare centers (16% of them each). In the opinion of the article's author, this is not a utopian thesis, a dream that cannot come true.

Summary

Post-penitentiary assistance in Poland is guaranteed by the legal system. There are institutions, foundations that handle its implementation at the central, regional, and primarily local community levels. Can it therefore be assumed that the system of post-penitentiary assistance, which is crucial and plays a significant role in determining whether individuals return to crime after serving their sentences, functions effectively in the minds of those completing the sentence? Based on the survey findings, it can be concluded that there is a significant deficiency in the awareness of convicts regarding the availability of post-penitentiary assistance fund. Only slightly more than two-fifths of respondents are aware that they can receive assistance. Notably, one-fifth of those surveyed are unsure if they can receive assistance at all. Women, however, demonstrate a significantly higher level of awareness in this area. Other characteristics such as age, place of residence, and education did not differentiate the responses. Marek Konopczyński argues that the objective of social rehabilitation education is to support socialization processes. Where socialization is defective, the aim is to make educational corrections, modeling, and supplementation (Konopczyński, 2006 p. 173–174). It should be assumed that social rehabilitation is associated with an increased level of quality of functioning concerning the subject of interaction – an individual displaying a syndrome of social maladjustment. This necessitates more active involvement from various services and the family, both during the sentence in a closed-/open-type unit, as well as after serving the sentence. It definitely demands increased activity from various factors following the end of isolation. It is essential to emphasize and implement counteraction, prevention, and risk reduction of recidivism through education in various forms of raising awareness (Mrazek, Haggerty 1994). Investing in the prisoner at every stage of their stay in isolation, in various forms, is deemed worthwhile (Lewicka-Zelent, Trojanowska, 2019). Serving a sentence represents a crisis situation for the convict (Parry, 1990). The period leading up to the end of the sentence, as well as just after leaving prison, is a crisis situation filled with emotions (Hoff, 1995). Therefore, efforts should be made, and education should be implemented at all levels and in various forms to prepare convicts to leave the penitentiary and equip them for the process of social reintegration.

Probation officers were overwhelmingly indicated by the convicts as the implementers of post-penitentiary assistance, listed first among all entities. Younger convicts pointed decisively to probation officers (nearly 90%), and urban residents

were more likely to point to them, followed by friends. Respondents aged 30–40 mentioned the church. Recidivists mentioned prison more frequently than friends and support groups. It can be assumed that after leaving prison, most of the respondents expect help from their family, probation officers and social welfare centers. There is a convergence of opinions in this case.

Therefore, it is worth investing in building the convicts' awareness of their social functioning in the social environment (Muskafa, 2006). supported by the survey results, with more than half encountering the information that convicts are not entitled to assistance, with recidivists being more likely to be aware of it. However, it should not be argued as a comforting fact that recidivism is supposed to increase inmates' awareness of their rights. It may be of concern that younger people lack basic legal awareness despite widespread access to digital information.

Education and building awareness among educators, probation officers, prison service, police, social workers, workers in the social rehabilitation area, and the convicts themselves, along with their families, as well as the convicts themselves and their families, through various forms (studies, training, workshops, meetings, occasional talks), will help in their work, reduce stress, and decrease turnover in positions (Paterson-Young et al. 2019, pp. 150–151), which is crucial in the case of convicts. If research indicates that convicts count on help from probation officers, prison officers, and family, thus placing trust in them, we make these expectations realistic, thereby building awareness of the right to available assistance and the need for it among different groups of convicts. The return of convicts to the community after serving their sentences is not an easy process (Przybyliński, 2010, pp. 7–9), but efforts can be made to facilitate it. It is worth ensuring that the content related to post-penitentiary assistance and social readaptation is systematically increased and updated in the curricula of first and second-cycle studies, within modules, and in the field of pedagogy, especially in specialties such as social rehabilitation pedagogy, penitentiary pedagogy, pedagogy of care, social assistance, and social prevention, among many others, conducted at various levels and in various formats.

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