

# **ISSUES AND EFFORTS IN REDUCING REOFFENDING: THE LATEST GLOBAL TRENDS**

Matti Joutsen  
Special Advisor, TIJ

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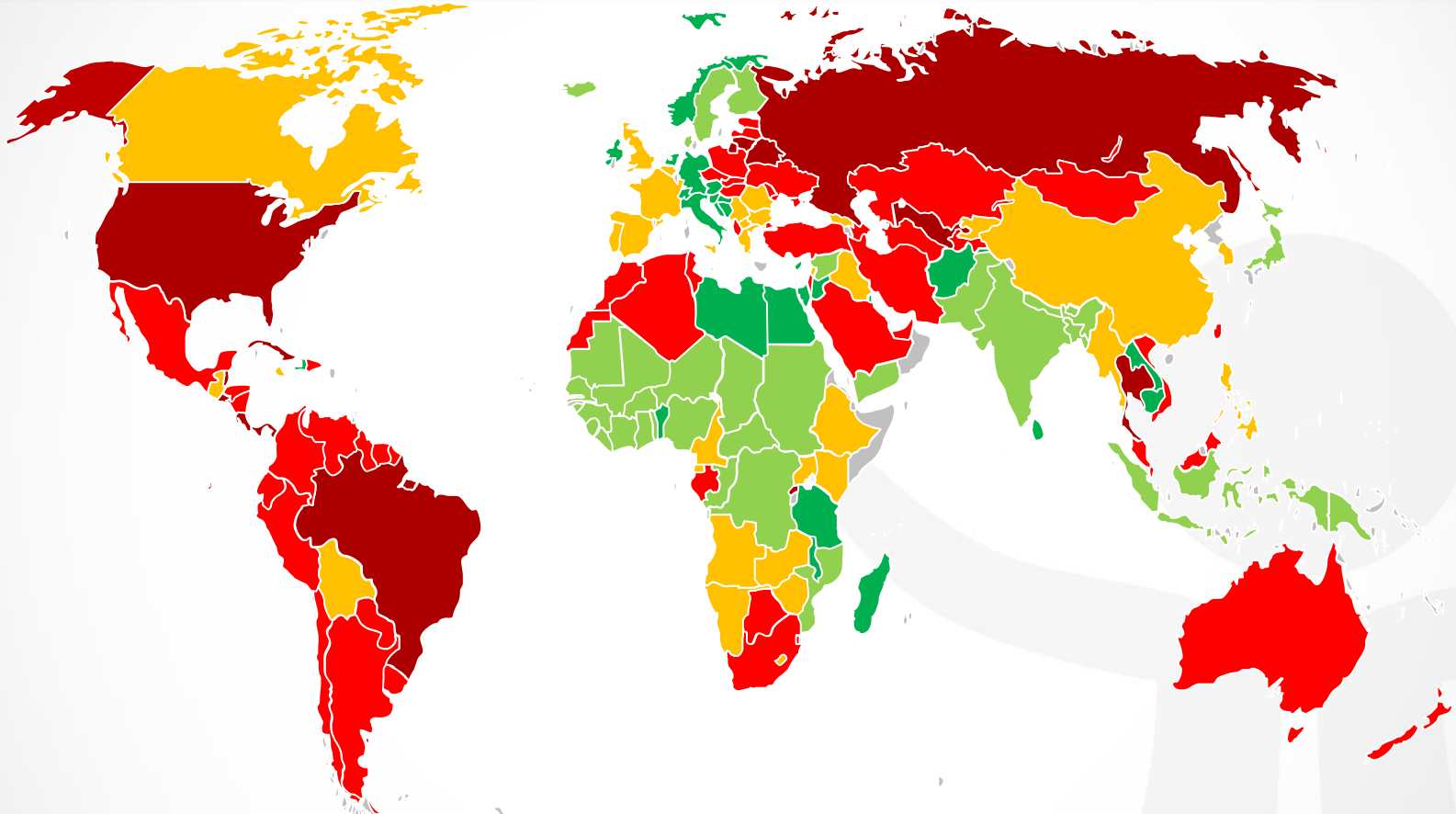
- preliminary question of definition: what is 're-offending' (recidivism)?
  - reconviction, re-arrest, committing a similar offence, committing any new offence?
  - do we consider the seriousness of the new offence, or the time period in which the new offence is committed?
- working definition: 're-offending' means that, after an intervention on the basis of an offence, a person again comes to the attention of the criminal justice system as an offender
  - 'desistance' from crime

making sense of global trends is challenging ...

- huge variety in forms of intervention
- today, **no single rationale for punishment dominates**
- the rationale varies from time to time, place to place, case to case, judge to judge
- this is because how we prioritize the various functions of punishment also seems to shift from time to time:
  - general prevention (deter, educate the public)
  - special prevention (deter, rehabilitate, incapacitate)
  - 'just deserts'
  - restorative justice
  - (other functions?)



# Issues and Efforts in Reducing Reoffending



## Prison population rates in 2014 (per 100,000)

Colour code: dark red: over 300; red: 150 – 299; yellow: 100 – 149; dark green: 70 – 99; light green: under 70

## Issues and Efforts in Reducing Reoffending

- (1) imprisonment – the mainstay of criminal justice systems -  
by and of itself does not reduce reoffending
  - overcrowding (prisoners are often “warehoused”)
  - overstretched resources
  - prisons themselves serve as “schools of crime”
  
- (2) non-custodial sanctions can be (and often are) more effective than imprisonment in preventing re-offending

## Issues and Efforts in Reducing Reoffending

- (3) we have gained extensive information on what works – and on what does not work
  - Robert Martinson (1974), “What works: Questions and answers about prison reform”
  - David Farabee (2005), “Rethinking Rehabilitation: Why Can’t We Reform Our Criminals?”
- (4) high-quality, well-targeted, well-resourced and well-supported interventions do have an impact
- (5) good practices (“what works”) have been identified (as have “what doesn’t work”)

- (6) growing interest (here and there) in non-custodial sanctions: new sanctions (new forms of probation, community service, electronic monitoring, different treatment programmes, restorative justice) and new investment
- (7) focus should be on interventions designed to reduce recidivism in a specific group (certain types of offences, certain types of offenders, certain cultural context... )
- (8) good practices can be replicated and expanded, perhaps also adapted to other systems and contexts



- (9) What we can do is remain open to learning from research and good practice (also in other countries), and learn from our mistakes – by rejecting interventions that have been shown not to work, or indeed to make the problem worse. (And among the biggest problems in this regard is custodial treatment)
- (10) “prevention is better than cure”: it is better to prevent crime: focus on development-led crime prevention and criminal justice

# Issues and Efforts in Reducing Reoffending

Thank you!

[matti.j@tijthailand.org](mailto:matti.j@tijthailand.org)