

Punishment Versus Rehabilitation

A historical examination of the purposes of prison indicates periods of severe punishment and harsh treatment as well as times when great efforts toward rehabilitation and reformation were made. Considering only recidivism rates, it appears neither approach results in a large percentage of inmates who live a crime-free life post-incarceration.

Think About It

1. Given this information and the knowledge learned from this text, if you were a policymaker, which type of approach would you prefer and why?
2. We know that housing an ever-increasing population of inmates is costly to taxpayers at the expense of other social programs such as education and transportation. What would you recommend to remedy this problem?
3. How could you save money for taxpayers without jeopardizing their safety?
4. Why would attempts made in the past work today?
5. Are there really only two approaches (punishment or reformation)? Or is there another novel approach you'd take? How might your new approach be better?