

## **Using juries to educate and inform the public about crime and sentencing issues.**

Large scale surveys of public opinion demonstrate that the public has very little accurate knowledge about the criminal justice system and many misperceptions about the nature and extent of crime and court outcomes. This has implications for the criminal justice system because it has also been shown that punitive attitudes and a lack of confidence in courts and the legal system are linked to inaccurate knowledge about crime and sentencing. For this reason it is suggested that educating the public about these issues would both improve confidence and reduce punitiveness.

This paper will describe the results of a jury study which has two aims: first, to explore the possibility of using jurors as a means of ascertaining public opinion about sentencing and secondly, to investigate the usefulness of using the jury as a means to inform the public about crime and sentencing issues. The focus of this paper is on the second aim. The study's methodology and results will be described and the advantages and disadvantages of using jurors as a means of educating the public about crime and sentencing discussed.

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