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RECIDIVISM AND RE-ENTRY INTO PRISON IN BRAZIL: What Studies Say About the Factors That Contribute to This Trajectory

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RECIDIVISM AND RE-ENTRY INTO PRISON IN BRAZIL:

What Studies Say About the Factors That Contribute to This Trajectory

Ludmila Ribeiro and Valéria Oliveira¹

Introduction

This report presents the results of a systematic review of the Brazilian academic literature on factors explaining recidivism among both young people and adults, along with an investigation into re-entry influencing factors. The exploration of scientific production on the subject across open-access databases, as well as a survey of bibliographic references provided by these initial texts, yielded a total of 189 studies.

For this analysis, only studies with an empirical perspective were selected, particularly those focused on elucidating the factors contributing to new arrests or detentions among adolescents, in addition to those assessing the efficacy of care (or rehabilitation) programs for individuals with prior incarcerated experience.

The findings from 144 studies will be presented here, comprising articles (71), monographs, master's dissertations, Ph.D. theses (42), research reports (19), as well as books and

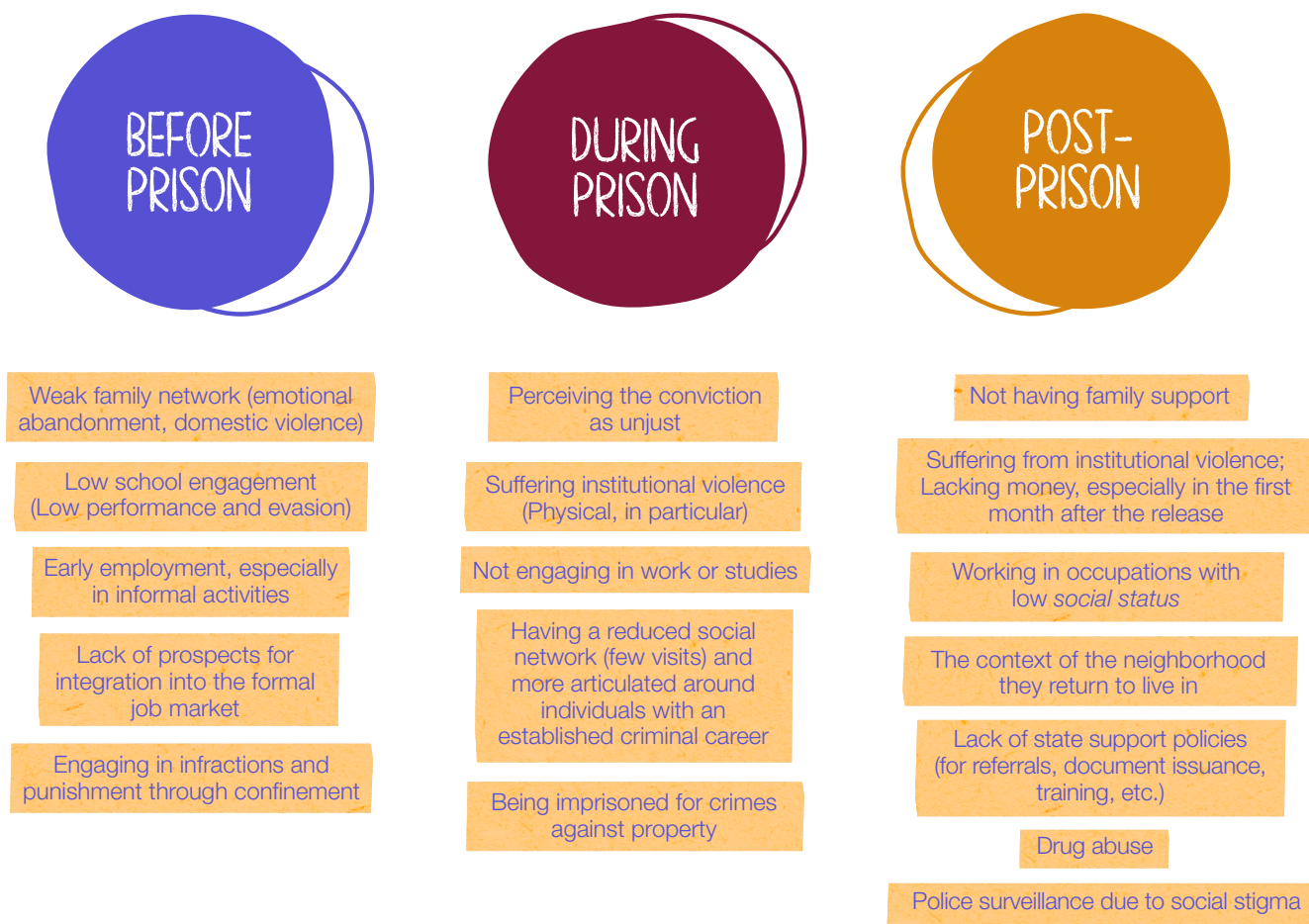
book chapters (12). These studies indicate that the experience of recidivism develops gradually, emphasizing that solely examining the moment after incarceration provides an incomplete picture of the situation. It's crucial to factor in the individual's journey prior to, during, and post-incarceration/confinement to gain a thorough grasp of how the reiteration of criminal acts is shaped in reality and why policies aimed at formerly incarcerated individuals tend to present limited results.

What we found is that recidivists face significant accumulation of disadvantages before, during, and after incarceration (Figure 1), making it extremely difficult to change their trajectory upon release.² Recidivism mirrors the flaws within the criminal justice system, highlighting the necessity of connecting preventive measures that intervene prior to incarceration – especially during childhood and adolescence – with those available post-release.

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² For a theoretical approach to the problem, see: Sampson, Robert J.; Laub, John H. "A life-course theory of cumulative disadvantage and the stability of delinquency." *Developmental theories of crime and delinquency*, v. 7, pp. 133-161, 1997.

FIGURE 1 – Factors that contribute to the accumulation of disadvantages that condition the trajectory of prison recidivism.



Hence, the challenges in preventing recidivism begin long before conviction, given the myriad of vulnerabilities to which these individuals were exposed, such as precarious socioeconomic conditions, substance abuse, and family violence (Marinho, 2013). Within prisons, the problem is aggravated by the deplorable conditions – including overcrowded cells designed for five people housing twenty (Andrade, 2015), devoid of educational and vocational opportunities (Julião, 2009), where torture practices are employed to enforce obedience (Fischer, 1981). Moreover, the lack of positive behavioral models perpetuates a cycle where problems are resolved through force or corruption (Ferreira, 2010).

Following a conviction, the individual's reintegration into their prior social networks and the process of reconciling with the time lost can pose significant challenges. The family has already undergone restructuring to adapt to the absence of this member, often resulting in increased household expenditures upon their release from prison (Melo, 2012). The search for an occupation (formal or informal) requires financial resources for various expenses such as clothing, communication tools, and transportation, which are not provided by public programs and much less by those within one's immediate social circle who often face financial constraints (Pastore, 2011). It also demands the speedy regularization of documents such as voter registration, given the suspension of civil rights during imprisonment

(Castanho, 2019; Pepper, 2014). Technology has changed and, if this person “was already at a disadvantage in the face of the job market and in the society’s needs, those disadvantages seem to be maximized after their imprisonment” (Marinho, 2013, p. 130).

According to the statistical analysis conducted, the two factors that most increase recidivism rates are the lack of family reintegration after incarceration and having committed the first offense during adolescence. The lack of employment is also a variable that impacts the dynamics of recidivism but as a mediation between the other two. Certainly, individuals without family support upon release from incarceration may struggle to find employment, especially if they began their criminal activities early, accumulating a large number of encounters with the police, even when very young.³

Existing programs aimed at assisting formerly incarcerated people are challenging to access, largely because they are located far from the communities where these individuals reside (Madeira, 2008). Moreover, the primary need – integration into the job market – is the area where these initiatives often fall short (Julião, 2009). This is partly because the social security incentives for hiring current people in jail cease once they are released (Rocha, 2013).

Furthermore, many formerly incarcerated individuals' primary connections and references are fellow former justice-impacted individuals, narrowing their social circles predominantly to those associated with criminal activities (Castanho, 2019). Given the myriad of disadvantages they face – whether familial, communal, technological, informational, relational, or vocational – it is concerning, yet perhaps not surprising, that roughly a third of those released from prisons engage in new criminal activities, such as robberies, thefts, and drug trafficking.

Contrary to the high recidivism rates of 70% to 80% often cited by the media and even by the National Penitentiary Department (Depen), our study indicates that the average recidivism stands at approximately 32%.⁴

The new crimes of formerly incarcerated individuals tend to be readily identified by the police, given the over-policing of the poor neighborhoods surrounding major cities (Paixão, 1983), which have as a special focus “ex-convicts” (Monteiro & Cardoso, 2013). Such a pattern contributes to a second imprisonment, which will have severe effects on the new experience of deprivation of freedom. After all, as Almeida (2012) points out, from a legal point of view, recidivism increases the penalty (because it is one of the aggravating factors provided for in the Criminal Code), delays the granting of benefits (since the laws of heinous crimes and drugs put different rules for serving sentences for those who are recidivists in these crimes) and hinders access to programs during and after incarceration (the focus of these initiatives tends to be in “recoverable individuals”).

Individuals who face a second punishment often find themselves further stigmatized with the label of “criminal” (Bredow, 2007). When these individuals come out of prison for the second time, they will be over 40 years old and will hardly be able to get rid of the disadvantages they have accumulated throughout their lives (Adorno & Bordini, 1991). Crime will become an option not only for survival but also for integration into community life (Tejadas, 2005). However, this is not the formation of a criminal career, as individuals do not specialize in committing a single crime (Beato & Caminhas, 2020), but engage in various modalities based on income opportunities or a sense of belonging to a community, even if it is within the “criminal world” (Ramalho, 2008).

³ These results are very consistent with North American studies on the accumulation of disadvantages throughout life (Sampson & Laub, 1997). For a helpful review of these studies applied to young people, see Sapori et al. (2020).

⁴ The methodology of this calculation will be explained in the following pages.

What we found is that 70% of individuals sentenced to incarceration will mobilize the scarce resources they possess to overcome the disadvantages accumulated throughout their trajectories, with a willingness to stay away from crime (Pimenta, 2014). Existing reintegration assistance programs, besides being very punctual in terms of the location where they are implemented, have methodologies that only favor those who already have some support (family, financial, and informational) to access them (CNJ, 2020). Therefore, the profile of those who participate in these initiatives is well-defined: they are, as a rule, people who have studied and worked in prison (Julião, 2009), in addition to having a well-defined professional experience prior to prison (Rocha, 2014; Wood, 2008).

Key Insights from the Document: A Systematic Overview

- Prison recidivism is not arbitrary. It arises from a series of disadvantages that individuals face throughout their lives — including before, during, and after incarceration.
- Of the 111 studies we examined, the predominant factors influencing recidivism include (i) Socioeconomic family vulnerabilities and post-release family relationships; (ii) Committing the first offense during adolescence; and (iii) Unemployment after release.
- Immediate post-release needs are crucial in preventing recidivism. These necessities encompass (i) Documentation regularization; (ii) Funds for clothing and transportation; and (iii) Reliable income sources.
- The most frequent need among formerly incarcerated individuals is job market integration.
- Based on the studies analyzed, the average recidivism rate in Brazil is 32%.
- Support and care programs for formerly incarcerated people have limited reach and are mostly centralized in urban areas. This often benefits those with a more structured life, sidelining the average justice-impacted person — after all, the services end up focusing on the people who already know about the program, have funds to come and go to places of care, and had opportunities to study or work in prison.
- Minimizing recidivism entails enhancing social support and social protection for vulnerable individuals throughout life.
- There is a marked correlation (not necessarily causality) between drug usage and criminal activity. For this reason, reintegration policies must address individuals with problematic drug use.
- Even individuals with legitimate jobs might resort to crime if their earnings are inadequate, emphasizing the importance of well-paying job opportunities.
- Perceptions of injustices within the criminal justice system, whether regarding sentencing or execution, are an important driver of recidivism.
- Formerly incarcerated individuals face significant stigma, adversely affecting their chances of securing formal employment.

Understanding Recidivism

The major takeaway from this report is how prison recidivism is not something that just happens. It is the result of a series of disadvantages that accumulate throughout the individual's life. This is a result of paramount importance because recidivism prevention programs cannot focus solely on the post-release period. While this moment is relevant, it would be better to build crime prevention policies that target various moments of life where the risk of offending is high, thereby preventing individuals from entering or remaining in criminal networks. At this point, imprisonment only accentuates delinquency and, for some, increases the chance of criminal recidivism. Let us now examine the main conclusions regarding the life course of the individuals who went through confinement in socio-educational units and/or detention within the prison system.

Recidivists are generally individuals who experienced a difficult childhood and adolescence (Barbalho, 2014). They are children born into homes with significant social vulnerability, often headed by only one parent (most often, just the mother) who, due to their poverty, needed to juggle various paid activities, thus unable to provide effective care for their children, especially in terms of supervision (Silva et al., 2018). It can be said that these children experienced emotional neglect (Sá, 1987), which is often combined with violence (physical, moral, and sexual) (Assis & Souza, 1999). Together, these factors make them more susceptible to early abandonment of their home (before the age of 15) for living on the streets, with relatives, or in state shelters (Sá, 1987; Santos, 2013).

These children and adolescents are more exposed to early drug use and contact with a network of family members and friends with some experience in the prison system (Chies & Varella, 2009). From the age of seven, they begin to feel the pressure to increase their income to supplement the family budget

(Adorno, 1991), which pushes them to drop out of school, with most of them not even completing elementary school (Lucena & Ireland, 2013). School activities are often deemed uninteresting, and teachers seem to be unsympathetic to their vulnerability (Assis, 1999). The school is viewed as either irrelevant or as a punitive institution, attempting to shape the behavior of young people in a way that seems disconnected from their daily experiences (Adorno, 1991), given the limited prospects for formal employment and/or social mobility (Toledo et al, 2014).

When interviewed in adulthood, the incarcerated individuals noted that they realized from an early age that higher education was not for them, although many expressed a desire to achieve such a level of education (Melo, 2012). Indeed, a few who exited the criminal crime did attain higher education. However, in their professional lives, they grappled with the lingering stigma of their incarceration history (Reif, 2016).

Those who continue committing crimes after their first incarceration often come from backgrounds where, from a young age, they were compelled to earn money. This was not just for personal desires typical of a consumer-oriented adolescent, like sneakers, t-shirts, and cell phones, but also to contribute to household expenses. Sometimes, they conceal the source of their earnings from family members. Their endeavors also aimed at gaining some level of recognition in their communities (Assis, 1999; Smith, 2010; Tejasdas, 2005).

The need for belonging, especially when familial social ties are weak, drives from undervalued legitimate jobs, such as manual labor, towards petty theft, robbery, and drug dealing (Silva, 2002; Rodrigues, 2010). This shift does not go unnoticed by the police, who intensively patrol areas plagued by social disadvantages, like inadequate infrastructure and public services (Fischer, 1981; Passion, 1983; Malvasi, 2011; Martins & Oliveira, 2013). As a result, many young individuals are apprehended, and subsequently, face harder socio-educational penalties. The justice system seems to acknowledge and perpetuate the labeling of these adolescents (Dinu, 2010; Smith, 2010).

At this point, it is worth highlighting that the type of accountability received by the youth involved in the justice system can significantly influence their criminal trajectory as an adult. The studies examined show that confinement during adolescence elevates the likelihood of reoffending in adulthood (Silva et al. 2018). This probability is further heightened if the individual feels the punishment was disproportionate to the crime, fostering a sense of injustice (Tejadas, 2005).

According to Assis (1999), confinement can erode beneficial social connections that might otherwise deter criminal paths. Such confinement limits adolescents' interactions with their families and can distort their perception of education, causing them to see schools more as punitive institutions. Crucially, it reduces their social circle diversity.

Before confinement, an adolescent typically interacts with community members, family, and schoolmates. However, within a confinement setting, their network largely consists of peers with related stories of social vulnerabilities and criminal behavior (Tejadas, 2005). Marinho's (2013) interviews with some adolescents revealed that confinement often exacerbates drug use, glorifies violent crimes (like homicide) as a means of gaining status, and solidifies a "criminal" identity. The environment inside reinforces a "contagious" effect. Upon release, many of these adolescents, now deeply emotionally tied to illicit activities, return to their original communities even more entrenched in criminal paths.

Many young individuals may avoid criminal activities during their adolescence but often find themselves in low-skilled jobs within the informal sector early on. This can pave the way to crime (Adorno, 1993; Cruces, 2006). A plethora of studies have underscored the link between drug use and criminal behavior (Assis, 1999; Pereira, 2008; Rodrigues, 2010; Smith, 2011; Lee 2012; Maruschi et al., 2012; Melo, 2012; Tavares et al., 2012; Muniz, 2014; Gallassi, 2015; Ribeiro, 2015; Rodrigues,

2018; TJDFT, 2018). These analyses suggest that drug use begins as a means to alleviate the distress stemming from living in severe vulnerability and poverty. What might begin as a recreational respite after a hard day's work can escalate into chronic abuse (Rodrigues, 2018). The prevailing societal stance in Brazil, which often skirts around the issue, results in a lack of comprehensive programs that address the issue head-on and assist these individuals. Consequently, without such support systems, many resort to minor offenses, particularly theft and robbery, as a means to support their addiction (Dávila & Gonçalves, 2014).

A second notable conclusion is that many individuals involved in criminal activities simultaneously engage in legitimate jobs, such as general services, delivery, and construction work. This blurs the once-clear distinction from the 1990s sociological literature on crime (Zaluar, 1985), which drew a line between "workers" and "bandits." Today, numerous individuals navigate both realms, striving for higher income, either to support drug habits, acquire consumer goods that would not be obtained with just "income from honest work," or slightly uplift their family's conditions (Melo, 2012; Ribeiro, 2015; Rodrigues, 2018). Many of these individuals often get caught in the act during a moment of misfortune – as they are not experienced or sophisticated criminals, they lack elaborate strategies to elude police detection (Beato & Caminhas, 2020). Some find themselves arrested during their drug purchases, only to be mislabeled and prosecuted as traffickers (Barbalho & Barros, 2014). Such encounters initiate their prison journey, an experience that leaves an indelible mark on their lives.

During incarceration, some factors will contribute to sealing the fate of recidivism. The first is the perception of injustice towards the actions of the criminal justice system. On the one hand, some complain that they were not traffickers and thus did not deserve prison, which is why they expect to commit new crimes upon release to retaliate against

injustices of the system (Kahn, 2019). On the other hand, some revolt against the conditions of incarceration and, in this context, crime is a form of vendetta against the treatment received during prison (Sá, 1987). Ferreira (2010) emphasizes that, in most cases, incarcerated individuals recognize the crimes they committed and think that the conviction was a fair measure in the face of wrongdoing. The complaint is of the humiliating situation to which they are subjected: cells that should house five with 20 people, scarce food, availability of drugs that contribute to sediment addiction, and lack of legal and health assistance. Regarding the health care structure, the reports account for great precariousness, as well described by a participant in Castanho's study (2019, p. 46), "I have never seen an infirmary without a doctor, without a lamp, without a blanket, and without food." Institutional violence, permeated by the physical punishments still adopted in various units of the system, is another element that contributes to recidivism (Lemgruber, 1990; Smith, 2010; Marine, 2013; Brown, 2019).

Other dimensions that have long populated the imagination about what contributes to the justice-impacted individual's resocialization were also identified in this literature review. Not working and not studying in prison are factors that generally increase the chances of re-incarceration (Lemos et al., 1998; Costa, 1998; Julian, 2009; Oak, 2009; Smith, 2010; Wood, 2008; Shikida & Bogliatto, 2008; Silva and Saraiva, 2016; Guimarães et al., 2017).

Excessive idleness, lack of time regulation between work and sleep, non-development of skills to perform a job (even cleaning), and even the greater time to think about how to avenge the injustices of prison were other factors pointed out by the incarcerated individuals regarding why work and study should be mandatory in prison units (Julião, 2009; Smith, 2010; Rodrigues, 2010; Brown, 2019).

The problem here is the well-known diagnosis about the Brazilian prison system: with more than 750,000 incarcerated individuals and only 350,000 vacancies, disrespect for physical integrity is the order of the day (CNJ, 2019). First-time justice-involved individuals are incarcerated alongside recidivists due to lack of space, preventing any treatment according to their specificities (Brazil, 2009). The same goes for adolescents serving socio-educational measures, under the argument of keeping the intervention limited to the infraction that led to their last confinement, hindering specific work for this group (Rodrigues, 2018).

Prison architectures do not even contemplate work and study stations and, thus, to make these policies available, reforms and adaptations are necessary, which burden a state eager to incarcerate more but unwilling to invest in their social reintegration (Melo, 2012). In summary, the justice-involved individuals repeat in unison that the prison system should "enable study, professionalization, health, leisure, legal, social and psychological assistance, occupation of idle time with crafts, reading, respect, and above all, with work" (Ferreira, 2010, p. 65), so that recidivism would not happen.

After several years inserted in this logic of abuse and deprivation of various kinds, the incarcerated person is once again set free. As Pastore (2011) points out, not even the exit from prison is planned by the public authorities, as they don't even provide money for the bus fare for this released individual. Ramalho (2018, p. 91) points out that the situation of helplessness "was aggravated even more because the incarcerated individual, upon leaving jail, find themselves without financial funds to start life anew." If the person does not have a family to welcome them with open arms, offering them shelter, food and clean clothes, the option is to live with formerly incarcerated individuals and friends who, at times, remain connected to the world of crime or end up on the streets (Pinto & Hirdes, 2006). In fact, "this is such a significant aspect that being a formerly incarcerated person has become a characteristic of part of the homeless population served by the equipment of the Social Assistance policy" (CNJ, 2020, p. 41).

Another option is to live off small gigs and informal work while managing the intense surveillance of the police, always ready to arrest formerly incarcerated individuals at the first slip-up (Madeira, 2004). With this, the justice-involved person goes “surviving at the expense of the family or in the informal economy” (Wauters, 2003, p. 37). Getting a job is not as easy as it seems, since even the least qualified and manual activities (such as those related to cleaning, general services, and construction, among others) require “attestation of good antecedents and the mark of passage through the jail can mean an undesirable belonging to the world of crime” (Ramalho, 2018, p. 91). Added to this is the fact that, often, to survive in the prison environment, it is necessary to be linked to a criminal organization, which does not dissolve with the return to freedom. “The dependence established by exchanging favors of different kinds in the prison context can continue and be added to the difficulties encountered in entering the formal job market” (CNJ, 2020, p. 42).

In this heightened state of vulnerability, “the surrounding community often exacerbates the situation by further promoting drug use and association with traffickers” (Oliveira & Assis, 1999, p. 843). Drug abuse, in particular, has been repeatedly identified as a significant contributor to recidivism. A staggering 27 studies pinpointed this factor as a driving force leading individuals to commit minor crimes. There is an urgent need for a drug abuse prevention policy tailored specifically for this demographic, aiming to curtail recidivism rates.

And what about the support programs for released individuals? A survey conducted by the National Council of Justice (CNJ, 2020) revealed that only 16 out of the 27 capital cities have initiatives of this kind, and the situation is even more dire in rural areas. Existing programs typically start after release from prison, overlooking the pivotal transitional phase from incarceration to freedom, which is when formerly incarcerated individuals often need the most assistance (Pastore, 2011).

Studies underscore that the initial period post-release is critical for reintegration, with some studies emphasizing the very first week as the most vital (Pires & Gatti, 2006). Effective interventions should commence even before release from prison. While the Social Inclusion Program for Prison System Released Individuals (PrEsp) in Minas Gerais attempted to address this need, it was short-lived. Regrettably, it concentrated its efforts primarily on those already outside the prison system, particularly emphasizing individuals required to fulfill conditional release obligations under the program’s supervision (PrEsp, 2013).

Participation in these programs is voluntary, not mandatory. Therefore, only those formerly incarcerated individuals who are aware of such policies and have families to assist with the necessary logistics can access them (CNJ, 2020). Typically, participants in these programs have strong family bonds (Barbalho & Barros, 2014), have engaged in work and education during their incarceration (Julião, 2009), and receive support to adjust to their new life before facing the pressure of financially contributing to their households (Castanho, 2019). This context sheds light on the assessment by the CNJ (2020, p.50) which concludes that broadly speaking, “there’s a limited engagement in these initiatives among those who are permanently released and have severed all legal ties with the prison system.”

There are few job opportunities available for individuals released from the prison or socio-educational system, even when considering companies that establish agreements for the training of these men and women while they are still in prison (Schweitzer & Schmitt, 2020). Added to this is the fact that the programs often do not accommodate all types of released individuals. For example, Rocha (2013), when analyzing the experience of three companies in Ceará that welcome people who have already been incarcerated, found that those convicted of drug trafficking were not accepted, thus highlighting that “the criteria for the recruitment and selection of a

justice-involved individual are more related to behavior than to qualification” (p. 202). The argument that they are poorly qualified as a reason for not hiring, therefore, seems to point to a mismatch with the training programs available to the public inside and outside the prison. The courses and trades developed in these policies are not consistent with the needs of the formal job market (Chies & Varela, 2009).

Entrepreneurship strategies also appeared as outlets for the prevention of recidivism. Albuquerque (2018), when interviewing formerly incarcerated individuals who opted for this path, found that the difficulties of finding formal employment led many of them to entrepreneurship. Other reasons cited were the need for personal fulfillment and the recognition of the opportunity to open a business. However, in terms of operation and sustainability, the scenario is not as simple as it seems. In addition to the “bureaucracy to open a company,” “high tax burden,” “lack of capital,” “lack of support,” and “venture risk,” justice-impacted individuals face stigma and prejudice for having been arrested. Therefore, many choose to hide their incarceration history, justifying that it would be difficult to deal with the opinions of customers and suppliers if they knew of their past.

Overall, the selection bias of the programs for released individuals makes them be considered highly efficient, with lower recidivism rates than the general population (Madeira, 2008). Since, during screening, these programs either choose or are more sought after by individuals with more appealing profiles (or with fewer factors predisposing them to recidivism), it becomes more feasible to achieve the “positive” results they showcase (Pozzebon, 2007). Here the term “positive” is put in quotes due to the lack of proper evaluation strategies, which should be built from a comparison between a group that experiences the support of the reentry program and a group that does not but has the same characteristics as the beneficiaries. Moreover, the existing strategies are small-scale, being unable to support all individuals released annually across the country (CNJ, 2020). Therefore, this is a research project that urgently needs to be considered to prevent recidivism more effectively in our country.

Recidivism Driving Factors: Can They Be Grouped?

Once outlined how recidivism can be seen as the result of the accumulation of disadvantages, the second step was to understand which factors seem to contribute significantly to this outcome. Of the 144 coded texts, 111 identified an element that explained why the individual re-entered the socio-educational system or the prison system. This is the body of work that will be analyzed in this section.

Combined, these 111 materials identified 38 factors influencing recidivism, which include (i) socioeconomic characteristics of individual behavior traits (such as gender, age, race, education, degree of self-control, level of aggressiveness, and self-esteem), (ii) family characteristics (experience with domestic violence in childhood, presence of father and/or mother, number of siblings, strength of social ties, cohabitation, support after prison), (iii) contextual characteristics (living in a drug trafficking area, with intense police surveillance, presence of peers who committed crimes), prison experiences (violence, corruption, torture, work, education, visits from family), post-prison problems (unemployment, homelessness, drug use), and other factors (such as social stigma, the crime for which they were first arrested, feelings of injustice about the arrest, and police violence).

TABLE 1 – Factors listed as conditioning factors for recidivism by the mapped texts (n=111)

Factor	Texts that mention	
	n	%
Low qualification/Few opportunities	49	44.1
Lack of work activity	36	32.4
Low schooling/Dropping out of school	35	31.5
Social stigma	32	28.8
Fragile family ties	30	27.0
Drug use	27	24.3
Imprisonment for crimes against property	27	24.3
Lack of schooling	24	21.6
Unemployment	23	20.7
Existence of criminal records	15	13.5
Influence/Relationship with peers who have committed crimes	15	13.5
First justice-involvement in adolescence	14	12.6
Age 18 to 29	13	11.7
Drug arrest	13	11.7

CONTINUATION

Factor	Texts that mention	
	n	%
Police surveillance	12	10.8
Prison as a school of crime/Incorporation of prison rules	11	9.9
Low-paying legal activities/Informal activities	11	9.9
Low self-control/Emotional instability	9	8.1
Slowness of the justice system/"Justice is unjust"	8	7.2
Male Gender	8	7.2
Having children/Being responsible for the household	7	6.3
Black or brown	7	6.3
Left their parents/guardians home in adolescence	7	6.3
Low self-esteem	6	5.4
Punishment or violence in prison	6	5.4
Crime against person	6	5.4
Being Single	4	3.6
30 years old or older	4	3.6
White	4	3.6
After release, returned to an area vulnerable to drug trafficking or crime	4	3.6
Did not return to live with the family after leaving prison/confinement unit	4	3.6
Victim of public officer's violence	3	2.7
Orphanhood in childhood or adolescence	3	2.7
Use of firearms	3	2.7
Does not benefit from the corruption of public officers	3	2.7
Extended family (with many siblings)	2	1.8
In a stable relationship/married	1	0.9
Female Gender	0	0.0

Source: Instituto Igarapé

The most cited factor, present in 44% of the texts, was low qualification and few opportunities, which is the standard explanation of much of the literature for recidivism. Neri (2004) even highlights how the incarcerated individuals tend to share the same characteristics as the unemployed Brazilians: "they are men, single, Afro-descendants, born in the city, with low educational attainment and without religion" (p. 1). So, if before imprisonment it was already difficult for individuals to enter the formal job market, afterward it becomes more painful given the accumulation of typical issues from imprisonment, such as diseases, lag in educational, professional and technological skill, and even violence.

Next, with more than 30% of citations, are the lack of work activity and low schooling/school drop out. Fragile family ties, drug use, and imprisonment for property crimes are the factors that follow. On the other hand, the items that do not seem to contribute greatly to recidivism, since they were mentioned in a few texts, would be the extended family (with many siblings) and being in a stable relationship/married. Being female was not mentioned in any of the texts as a factor that increases the chance of recidivism because, comparatively, women have lower rates of repeated criminal behavior/imprisonment (Adorno & Bordini, 1985).

However, this extensive list does not help much in understanding the driving factors of recidivism because some of them might be measuring the same phenomenon. For example, limited opportunity might be associated with the lack of work activities and low educational levels, all of which could correspond to a single factor. To determine to what extent the drivers of recidivism can be organized into broader explanatory categories, which facilitate the identification of thematic axes, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis based on the extraction of the main components of individual, familial, contextual, and institutional characteristics identified in the texts as conditioning determinants of recidivism.

Factor analysis is a statistical technique that aggregates a set of variables into groups based on a correlation matrix, thus relying on the association between them (Mingoti, 2005). With this, synthetic factors are created that identify the latent dimensions of a set of variables by recognizing similarities in their response pattern. The profiles extracted from the analysis represent a synthesis of a set of elements that express the fact that the presence of one tends to increase the chances that the other is also present.

In our exercise, the conditioning factors identified in the texts were transformed into binary variables (classified as 0 or 1), which reflect the presence (1) or lack (0) of that aspect as a conditioning factor of recidivism in the analyzed material. The variable "female gender" was excluded from the factor analysis since no study identified this as a key factor for recidivism. The variable "30 years or older" was also excluded because it was not a category strongly associated with any of the latent dimensions. Thus, for the analyses whose results are presented below, 36 conditioning factors of recidivism were considered.

The factor analysis resulted in the extraction of 13 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, meaning they explain a reasonable portion of the variability of that data set comprising the factor. We reduced the determinants of recidivism from 36 to 13 factors, but this number is quite high for a technique used to provide a simplified view and analysis of the data. At the same time, the variance explained by each latent dimension is very low. In other words, the factors pointed out by the authors of the reviewed studies are specific, perhaps because most of them use small samples, with the mobilization of the interview, followed by content analysis to verify what are the elements that, in the discourse of formerly incarcerated individuals/current incarcerated individuals, contributed to recidivism.

By observing the behavior of each of the 36 variables concerning the extracted factors and selecting those that show a correlation higher than 0.5 (factor load) with the corresponding factor (latent dimension), it was possible to identify some clues about the 13 factors that seem to be determinants of recidivism among the reviewed studies (Chart 1). The observation of the factor loadings (described in Appendix 1), that is, the correlation coefficient between the observed variables and the latent dimensions constructed from the model is what allows the substantive interpretation of the results. Variables that do not show a correlation greater than 0.5 with any of the factors do

not effectively distinguish the cases within the groups, and their presence in the analysis adds little in terms of explaining the variation. Specifically, the gender of the aggressor, low self-control, and the fact of having left home during adolescence were the variables that did not strongly converge towards any constituted latent dimension based on the empirical design. The remaining variables were correlated with each of the 13 factors, as indicated in Table 1. The set of variables in each group contributed to the label assignment of this category which we refer to as empirical because it was defined based on the objective criteria provided by the statistical analysis.

CHART 1 – Summary of the factor analysis of the 36 determinants of recidivism identified in the revised texts (n=111)

Variable	Factor	Empirical Category	Self-worth	% of explained variance
In a stable relationship (marital status)	1	Family socioeconomic vulnerability	3.606	10.017
Extended family (with many siblings)				
Orphanhood in childhood or adolescence				
Did not return to live with family when leaving prison/confinement unit				
Having children/Being responsible for the household				
Age under 29	2	Young profile	3.208	8.912
Single				
Other racial categories				
First offense committed in adolescence				
Unemployment	3	Poor integration into the formal job market	2.790	7.749
Low qualification/Few opportunities				
Low-paying legal activities/Informal activities				
Use of firearms	4	Insertion into the "world of crime"	2.236	6.210
Drugs				

CONTINUATION

Variable	Factor	Empirical Category	Self-worth	% of explained variance
Difficulties with the flow of the justice system Victim of public officers' violence	5	Institutional violence	1.929	5.357
Lack of schooling Lack of work activity	6	Poor social reintegration strategies	1.754	4.872
Police surveillance Black or Brown Social stigma	7	Stigmatization and Labeling	1.674	4.650
Fragile ties with the family Low schooling/Dropping out of school	8	Distance from support and supervision networks	1.562	4.340
Does not benefit from the corruption of public officers Low self-esteem After release, returned to an area vulnerable to drug trafficking or crime	9	Vulnerability to violence	1.374	3.817
Drug use Influence/Relationship with peers who have committed crimes	10	Social learning from crime	1.293	3.591
Punishment and/or violence in prison Prison as a school of crime/Incorporation of prison rules/Prison culture	11	Violence in prison	1.152	3.199
Existence of criminal records Crime against property	12	Criminal record	1.068	2.966
Crime against person	13	Urban crime	1.030	2.861
Left their parents/guardians home in adolescence Low self-control/Emotional instability Male gender	Low correlation with any factor			

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

The first category, which we classify as “family socioeconomic vulnerability,” explains just over 10% of the variation in the set of items in the model and brings together aspects that offer general traits of the formerly incarcerated individual's household composition, in terms of size and proximity to their relatives. On the one hand, it represents a situation of greater responsibility for this individual who, in addition to themselves, relies on other people who survive from the same income sources. On the other hand, it aggregates conditions related to the higher chance of economic deprivation, such as orphanhood in childhood and adolescence, and the fact that, after leaving prison, he did not return to family life. Even though they seem to talk about contradictory factors, both groups refer to situations of greater economic tension, which characterizes *the vulnerable status* of those released from prison or the socio-educational system.

The second category, extracted through factor analysis, synthesizes the conditioning factors related to the socio-demographic profile of the formerly incarcerated person. It is noteworthy how this factor brings together studies that identify, at the same time, the fact of being young, single, and having committed the first crime in adolescence. In addition to them, there are empirical exercises that point to another racial category, different from the Black population, as a factor of greater exposure to the risk of recidivism. Despite this characteristic of studies that identified that white people had a higher chance of reoffending, the latent trait characteristic of this set of information is youth.

The third group gathers information about the insertion of formerly incarcerated individuals in the job market. Issues such as unemployment after leaving prison or a detention unit, the lack of opportunities caused by low professional qualifications, and the perception that the formal job market is unprofitable compared to the returns from crime are addressed in the results of the studies that make up this category. Access

to firearms and imprisonment motivated by crimes related to narcotics make up the empirical category that we call “insertion in the world of crime” and that points out the level of engagement of the egress with more structured criminal networks that can provide opportunities for the practice of more serious crimes due to the level of violence that access to firearms imposes.

The last factor with the greatest explanatory capacity in the factor analysis model, taking the cutoff point of 5%, was classified as “institutional violence.” In it are aggregated the studies that indicate that the functioning of justice, its slowness, or the possible “injustices” caused by deviations in its execution increase the chances that the individuals released from the prison or socio-educational system will have their freedom again restricted by the practice of a new crime. This factor would represent a type of symbolic violence, defined by the lack of direct physical or verbal aggressions, but which limits the access to rights of a segment of the population. The other variable present here is the “blood violence” perpetrated by public officers outside of prison to avenge problems, with the police being the institution most identified as agents of this type of action.

Beyond these five factors, the factor analysis also pointed out other empirical categories. These are: the “poor social reintegration strategies” due to the precariousness of job initiatives, training and schooling; “stigmatization and labeling” processes, driven by the social stigma that follows formerly incarcerated individuals; the “distance from support and supervision networks,” mainly represented by family and school; and the “vulnerability to violence,” given by a scenario that combines emotional fragility and greater exposure to situations involving proximity to criminal practices or fragile integration into well-structured criminal groups, exposing the individual to more rigorous action by control institutions; “social learning of crime,” given by ties and practices more favorable to rule-breaking behaviors; the experience of “violence

in prison,” committed by public officers or peers; the existence of “criminal records,” which did not compose any other factor already established from other variables; and, finally, the commitment of “urban crimes,” which are related to events that should prompt greater investigative action from the police, such as those against property (of higher value) and violent crimes against individuals.

The substantial number of latent dimensions and the low percentage of variance explained by the created indicators points to the fragility of factor analysis as a viable strategy for the construction of robust factors of recidivism determinants. Nor would it be enough for this exercise to have such a large number of thematic categories, since the proposal would be to identify more limited groups that would allow for the classification of the studies that make up this systematic review and, therefore, explanatory axes for recidivism.

Given this, we chose to start from the results of the factor analysis to construct theoretically informed categories, aggregating the factors

extracted from the principal component analysis. The consistency of these measures was assessed using a reliability indicator, Cronbach’s alpha metric, which ranges between 0 and 1, indicating a closer alignment of response patterns as higher values are achieved.

In trying to maintain the uniformity of the indicated categories and guided by the reliability measure, we arrived at nine thematic categories that classify each text with the code (1) if at least one of the factors present in that group was observed in the study. As an illustration, in the thematic category “vulnerability to violence,” a new variable was added to the database that identified whether the reviewed texts made any mention of that specific factor. Thus, cases were marked with (1) if the material identified that the former inmates were “committed” (indicating they were married or in a civil union), or had children, or had an “Extended family (with many siblings),” had experienced “orphanhood during childhood or adolescence,” or upon leaving prison or confinement did not return to live with their families (Table 2).

TABLE 2 – Thematic categories that aggregate the recidivism factors indicated by factor analysis (n=110)

Thematic categories	Original Factors	Cronbach's alpha	n	% References	% Texts
Vulnerability to criminal and violent practices	8,9,10	0,473	73	21,9%	66,4%
Urban crime	13	0,430	59	17,7%	53,6%
Poor formal job market integration	3	0,655	52	15,6%	47,3%
Stigmatization and labeling	7	0,43	39	11,7%	35,5%
Poor social reintegration strategies	6	0,759	39	11,7%	35,5%
Young profile	2*	0,645	26	7,8%	23,6%
Violence of the public security, criminal justice, and penitentiary systems	5,11	0,512	20	6,0%	18,2%
Insertion in the "world of crime"	4	0,539	13	3,9%	11,8%
Family socioeconomic vulnerability	1	0,564	12	3,6%	10,9%
Total references to thematic categories			333	100,0%	

* Includes the variable "male gender", although it did not present an intense correlation with any latent dimension.

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

Most of the thematic categories reflect the combination of variables suggested by the factor analysis. It is worth noting, however, those in which there were changes. The first refers to measures related to exposure to the risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence (factors 8, 9, and 10 in Chart 1). Although the internal consistency is median (Cronbach's alpha = 0.473), we consider it pertinent to aggregate the categories considering that they represent situations that are not very favorable to the behavior of compliance with rules, due to the lack of supervision and positive reinforcements given by the family and school context, which would eventually explain the presence of incentives to commit crimes.

This thematic category is present in 73 of the 110 studies (66.4%) that have explanatory items mentioned among the nine categories previously described. It also represents 21.9% of the 333 references to conditioning categories present in the set of materials analyzed.

The items that did not show correlation with any latent dimension, except the male indicator, do not compose the sets of thematic categories identified in Table 2. This excluded a text that had as its only corresponding conditioning factor one of these variables. The fact of being a man was incorporated into factor 2 for the construction of the category "young profile," which is pointed out as an explanatory factor of recidivism in 7.8% of the references and 23.6% of the texts. Finally, the factors "institutional violence" and "violence in prison" were brought together in what we call "violence in the public security, criminal justice and penitentiary systems," a group of constraints mentioned in 20 studies.

Table 2 suggests, therefore, that the factors that were most often identified as conditioning factors of criminal recidivism in Brazil refer to the structural conditions and urban violence in the country. Vulnerability to criminal and violent practices, for example, brings together a series

of conditions that, although they do not imply the practice of deviations, expose individuals to a significant risk of becoming victims of violence in the period before arrest and increase the chance of involvement in criminal dynamics. In this case, the theory of social learning argues that criminal activity is a learned action, just like any other that takes place in society. So, if the individual never exposes themselves to environments where there are delinquent actions, he will hardly commit a crime. On the other hand, as Silva (2002, p. 11) argues, if violent behaviors are apprehended, they can also "be unlearned and replaced by others healthier for the person."

The practice of offenses that we call "urban crime," due to its overt nature and increased institutional surveillance, ranks in the second position, mentioned in 59 papers (53.6% of references). In this category, robbery, and theft play a significant role, given that many of the subjects studied by the authors of the reviewed texts engaged in delinquent activities through the commission of these crimes. As demonstrated by Souza (2019), in some contexts, those who commit drug-related offenses have a lower risk of reoffending.


The third position, which operates from the first years of the young adult's life and extends to the post-prison period, is the withdrawal from the formal job market. The assets that these individuals have, such as low education and low specialization, make them already have an enormous chance of integrating the unemployed contingent before incarceration (Neri, 2004).

After this, they tend to compose the ranks of the discouraged, that is, those who give up looking for a job/occupation, given the amount of not received (Chaves & Rabinovic, 2010). The more time passes for these formerly incarcerated individuals, the greater the temptation to commit crime as a survival strategy.


Family socioeconomic vulnerability was the last dimension inserted, being composed of a factor better structured by factor analysis. Aspects such as marital status, age, household composition, the fact of having participated or not in work activities and schooling in prison or socio-educational units are factors that are easy to capture, including through face-to-face interviews or self-administered surveys. In this sense, the greater presence of these conditioning factors may reflect a difficulty in measuring other explanatory elements of post-recidivism criminal behavior.

Therefore, the factors that seem to increase the chance of recidivism are: (i) family socioeconomic vulnerability, which leads the individual to feel unsupported and often seen as an additional burden on the family, increasing tension to seek some income; (ii) insertion in the "world of crime", resulting from the closure of the formerly incarcerated individual's social network to people who have experienced the same situation and can therefore understand them; (iii) violence of the public security, criminal justice and penitentiary systems, which increase the revolt of being treated as a sub citizen and the feeling that it is necessary to avenge the aggressions suffered; (iv) young profile, which is the main public of the prison system, since many begin their trajectory of incarceration still in adolescence with confinement in a socio-educational center, going through prison after the age of majority and ending with the release around 40 years; (v) poor social reintegration strategies, since the few existing programs have a selection bias, which significantly serves people with greater ease of reconnection with family and work life; (vi) stigmatization and labeling, making the justice-involved individual always the prime suspect of any crime in their living context, increasing the chances of re-incarceration; (vii) poor

formal job market integration, resulting from low schooling, lack of professionalization, and also the technological gap resulting from the period of incarceration; (viii) urban crime, which includes imprisonment for crimes against property and against the person; and, finally, (ix) vulnerability to criminal and violent practices, which includes low self-esteem and the desire to belong to certain groups through the practice of acts of "violence" or the possession of consumer goods.



The family's socioeconomic vulnerability makes the formerly incarcerated individual feel unsupported and often seen as an additional "burden" on the family, increasing tension to seek income.



What Are the Recidivism Rates?

The starting point for measuring recidivism rates is understanding the definition adopted by the authors. Depending on the understanding of the re-engagement in criminal activities, recidivism rates can vary significantly. Out of the 144 texts analyzed in this literature review, 41 failed to specify the recidivism concept they used, a notable limitation. By not informing the reader about the breadth of this category, there may be a mistaken understanding of the factors contributing to the individual's re-entry in incarceration, as the author may also be counting arrests by the police that are later dismissed by the justice system. The remaining studies presented five distinct definitions of recidivism (See Chart 2). The "penitentiary" definition emerged as the most commonly used. As outlined by Coined by Bordini & Abreu (1986), this concept encompasses four crucial elements: (a) serving a custodial sentence or undergoing a socio-educational measure, (b) subsequent release to freedom, (c) committing another crime while free, (d) re-incarceration or return to confinement due to new crimes. Originally designed to comprehend recidivism within the prison system, this definition has been applied to the socio-educational system. This versatility arises from its compatibility with both judicial and police records, readily available via the judiciary's electronic systems and the civil police database (Santos et al., 2018; Sapori et al., 2017; 2020).

Out of the 144 texts included in this literature review, 41 failed to specify the recidivism concept used.

CHART 2 – Definitions of recidivism found in the texts, by the number of studies mapped

Type of recidivism	Definition	Number of texts	Percentage share of the total
Penitentiary	An individual who, after serving a prison sentence or confinement measure, commits another crime and is readmitted to a prison or confinement unit, irrespective of subsequent conviction.	52	36.1%
Generic or police-related	An individual who has committed multiple offenses, as recorded by the police or judicial system, is viewed in the context of what the Penal Code designates as having "bad records."	20	13.9%
Legal	A combination of the following elements: (a) previous conviction that has become final, regardless of the nature of the sentence; (b) commission of a new felony or misdemeanor five years after the end of the sentence; (c) new conviction.	16	11.1%
Institutional	What the prison administration or reentry support programs consider recidivism, and this definition can be based on any of the three previous concepts.	8	5.6%
Self-declaration	What individuals who are currently serving sentences/socio-educational measures, or those who are formerly incarcerated or involved in these systems, consider as recidivism. This definition may be based on any of the four previous concepts.	7	4.9%

Source: Igarapé Institute.

Even institutional studies produced by the government, such as Brazil (2009) and CNJ (2019a), use the concept of penitentiary recidivism. In part, this is because the legal definition is more restrictive since it requires the combination of two factors: (a) the previous conviction must have become final, and (b) the new crime must have been committed within five years of the previous conviction (Almeida, 2012). For some judges even, the conviction for the new crime needs to happen in this lapse of five years, counted from the end of the fulfillment of the previous sentence, which would further restrict the scope of this institute (Ifanger & Gravina, 2020).

Other categorizations found were (i) generic recidivism, also called police recidivism, which consists of the police record of a new crime, which has the egress as the author, even if such conduct does not unfold in process and conviction; (ii) recidivism by self-declaration, when the currently or formerly incarcerated person says that after the arrest they committed new crimes, even if the police have not registered such an offense; (iii)

institutional recidivism, thus categorizing the studies that considered as “recidivists” what the prison administration classified as such, without elucidating what was the concept mobilized by managers for such a framework.

Of the 144 studies mapped, 81 calculated the recidivism rate. The fact that 43.75% of the texts deal in some way with recidivism, but do not present its magnitude can be explained by the high incidence of studies of a qualitative nature among the reviewed, which seek to understand in detail how the formerly incarcerated individuals or those who are in prison understand their trajectory and what are the factors that they consider determinants for the return to crime/prison.

The 81 texts that indicated the recidivism rates mobilize different concepts, and the mean of the values is at the level of 32% (Table 3). It is important to emphasize that the mean percentages found do not present statistically significant differences depending on the classification of recidivism adopted (Anova, $F=1.369$, $GL=80$, $p>0.050$).

TABLE 3 – Comparison of means of recidivism, by concept adopted ($n=81$)

What was the concept of recidivism used?	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard Deviation
Concept not covered	5	15.0	40.7	27.23	10.69
Penitentiary	42	8.3	70.5	35.19	16.31
Legal	13	10.5	61.4	30.82	11.89
Generic or police-related	10	5.8	68.0	31.30	19.29
Institutional	7	7.0	32.8	19.88	10.69
Self-declaration	4	18.3	44.7	31.35	10.82
Total	81	5.8	70.5	32.01	15.43

Source: Igarapé Institute.

Another dimension that deserves to be analyzed is the range of variation in recidivism rates. The lowest value was 5.8%, recorded in the CEPIA report (2016), which considers as recidivist those who commit new violence against women while inserted in a support program. The highest rate, of 70.8%, was reported by Santos et al. (2018), who considered penitentiary recidivism as a concept to understand the trajectories of 435 individuals who entered the Francisco de Oliveira Conte Prison Unit, located in Rio Branco (Acre) in 2015.

A study that illustrates well how the conceptualization of recidivism can lead to different results is that of Júnior (2014), who worked with the distinction between penitentiary recidivism and reiteration (which would be generic or police recidivism). The recidivists, who represented 16.57%, were those who, at the time of arrest, had previous definitive convictions.

The recidivists (51.6%) were those with some kind of record in the criminal justice system (criminal proceedings, inquiries, detailed terms, arrest warrants, or even sentencing processes with provisional guidance, that is, without the finality of a conviction). The nearly 70% recidivism rate was only achieved by combining the two measures, which does not correspond to a fair classification, as it may assign guilt to individuals who have not yet been convicted. The constitutional principle that “no one shall be deemed guilty until the final penal conviction sentence”⁵ does not seem to be relevant to understanding what recidivism is.

In none of the studies measuring the recidivism rate was found the value of 80%, a figure often attributed to Depen reports, which are not accessible on the institution’s website.⁶

Numerous authors have argued that this rate is biased, non-existent, or fabricated to incite more moral panic. We would like to highlight a text by Rodello et al. (1986) While suggesting a methodology for measuring recidivism, they emphasized how the 70% index, frequently mentioned in newspaper reports from the 1970s, relied on opinions rather than empirical research. It appears this is a myth we have been led to believe for decades.

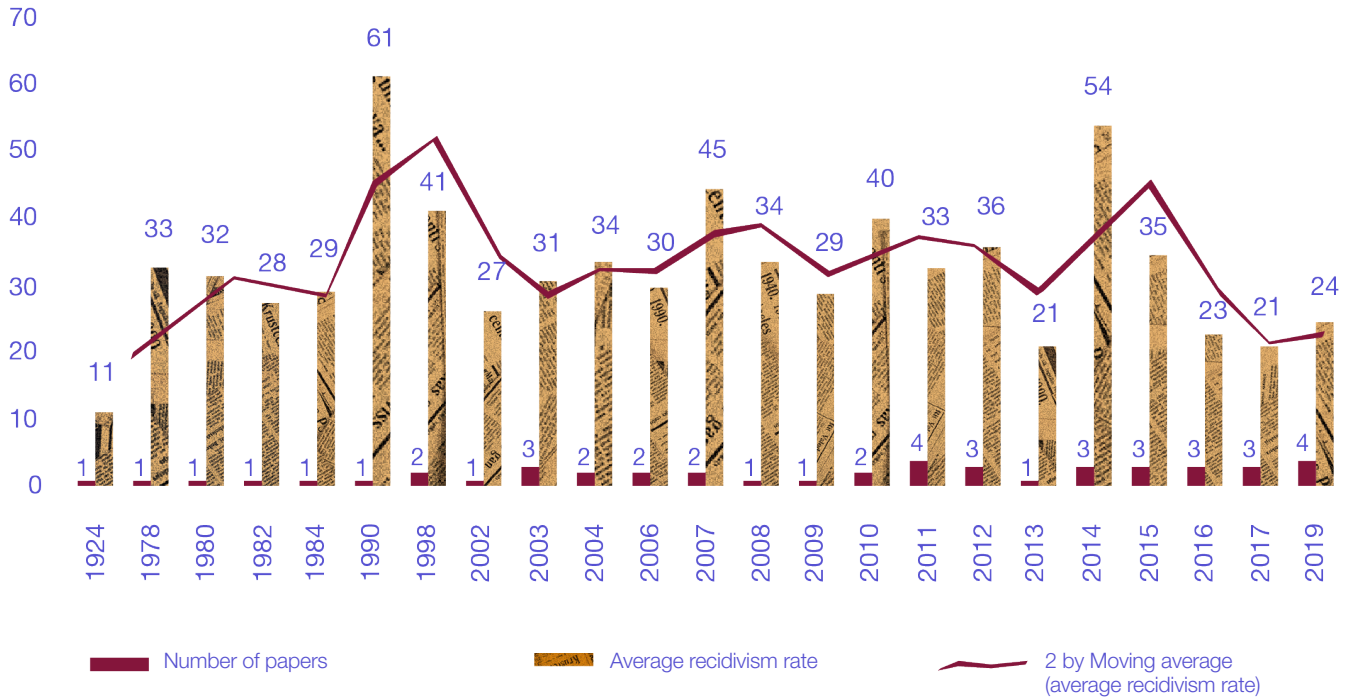
When the recidivism rate is disaggregated by the year in which the data collection for the study ended, we found that there is no clear trend of either growth or stability (Graph 1). It is worth mentioning that the variations found in Graph 1 are related to four factors: (i) the number of papers whose research ended that year, since in some years we have more texts (for example, four in 2019) and in others less (for example, 2013 has only one work); (ii) the concepts of recidivism used (since generic recidivism tends to present much higher numbers than the legal one); (iii) the size of the samples mobilized for this calculation – which vary between all the prisoners of two APACs of Itaúna (Muhle, 2013) and 137,150 prisoners who transited in the Court of Criminal Executions in 10 years (1996 to 2006) (Julião, 2009); and (iv) the different recidivism rates presented among the studies.

Despite these questions, Graph 1 gives us a sample of how diverse the rate can be, depending on the starting point. In 1924 this percentage was 11%, as indicated by the study by Fausto (1984), in the 1990s, this value reached the level of 61%, as reported by Altoé (2009), falling to 21% in 2013, as reported by Marinho (2013). For studies completed in 2011, the recidivism rate is 57.5% (CNJ, 2012), 41.6% (Santos, 2013), and 12.32% (Ipea, 2015), which results in an average of 33%.

5 Constitution of the Brazilian Republic of 1988, art. 5, clause LVII - No one shall be considered guilty until the final and unappealable judgment of a criminal conviction.

6 The reports from the National Penitentiary Department available are only those regarding the number of inmates and prison units. See: <http://antigo.depen.gov.br/DEPEN/depen/sisdepen/infopen/relatorios-sinteticos/relatorios-sinteticos> Accessed on April 22, 2021.

GRAPH 1 – Recidivism rate, per year of the end of data collection for the research and number of papers closed in that year (n=81)



Source: Instituto Igarapé.

Therefore, the point to be highlighted here is the need to create a national recidivism indicator, which can be calculated annually by the states, based on information gathered by the prison system. Just as the Sou da Paz Institute has been notifying states to understand the elucidation rates for homicides,⁷ it may be possible, through the Access to Information Law, to request that the Criminal Trial Courts indicate every year the numbers of those who, once released from the prison system, returned to the unit due to the commission of a new crime, within the framework of the work coordinated by Imesc (1981) in the last century. In this case, the option for the legal concept of recidivism, concerning what is established in the Federal Constitution of 1988 would be preserved. Moreover, we would have a better understanding of the profile of formerly incarcerated individuals who return to prison

labeled as recidivists, which would aid in a better comprehension of the phenomenon, and, consequently, in the formulation of public policies aimed at preventing the recommitment of crimes.

Understanding the Factors Influencing Recidivism Rates

In this concluding analytical section, we aim to understand the factors that influence the fluctuation in recidivism rates. From the material analyzed, we specifically selected those that addressed both the determinants of recidivism (found in 111 materials) and the actual recidivism rates (included in 81 documents). While several materials noted the recidivism rate without detailing the influencing factors (and vice versa), we narrowed it down to 65 units for analysis.

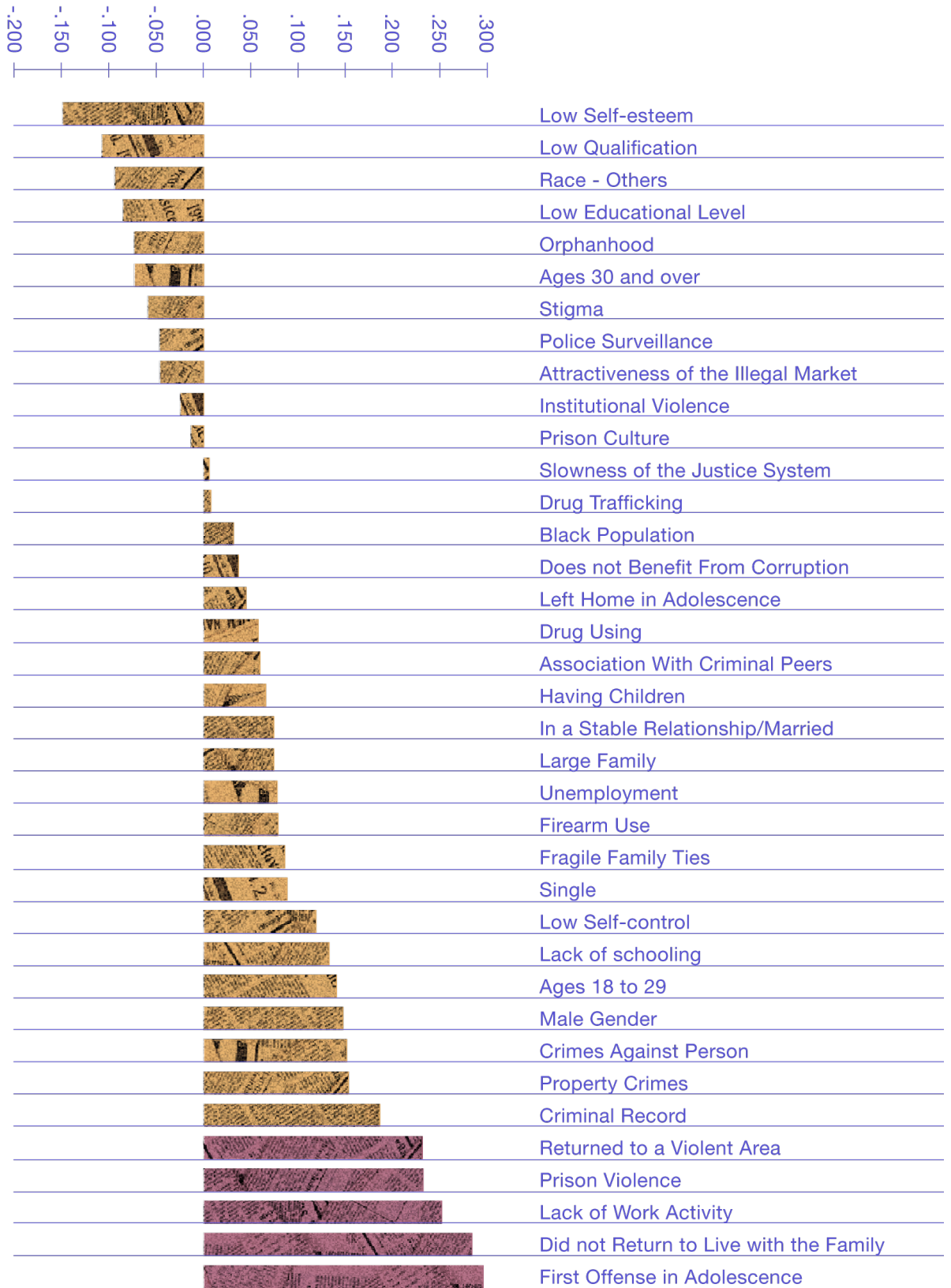
⁷ See: <http://soudapaz.org/noticias/instituto-sou-da-paz-expoe-mapa-da-impunidade-de-crimes-contra-a-vida-no-brasil-em-3a--research-editing/> Accessed on April 23, 2021.

From these 65 cases, the recidivism rate fluctuated between 8.25% and 70.5%, with an average of 33% and a standard deviation of 14.55%. Notably, these statistics do not vary significantly from the figures in the preceding section, enabling us to conduct more intricate statistical analyses to discern the factors linked to recidivism rates.

We began by constructing a correlation matrix to understand the interplay between recidivism rates and the identified determinants. The gray-highlighted values represent factors that many formerly incarcerated individuals manage to successfully address despite challenges. Their lack of statistical correlation with recidivism rates does not deny their potential influence on reoffending tendencies. They simply are not primary indicators when compared to the factors highlighted in red. Out of the lot, only three determinants displayed statistical significance: lack of work activity, not residing with family after release from prison or a confinement unit, and committing a first offense during adolescence. For each of these, Pearson's coefficient was positive, suggesting they amplify the recidivism rate, as evidenced by the studies under review (Graph 2). These findings align with the statistical model proposed by Silva et al. (2018, p. 82), which pinpointed elements that increase the risk of recidivism. According to their findings, unemployed individuals, those who committed their inaugural crime in adolescence, and those with unmarried parents were more prone to reoffend than other profiles examined.

Only three determinants displayed statistical significance: lack of work activity, not returning with family after release from prison or a confinement unit, and committing a first offense during adolescence.

GRAPH 2 – Pearson’s correlation between the factors and rate (n=65)



 p-value < 0,1

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

The next step was to understand when these three variables together contribute to the variation in the recidivism rate. Therefore, a linear regression model was estimated, in which the dependent variable was the recidivism rate measured in the studies and the independent variables were the study having mentioned the three factors that presented statistical significance with the correlation analysis.

A linear regression model is nothing more than an approximation of reality and can be summarized from a mathematical equation represented as follows:

The recidivism rate is the dimension that is intended to be explained. The linear regression model was chosen because the response variable (recidivism rate) presents a continuous measurement scale (ranging between 8.25% and 70.5%). We assume, then, that it tends to be distinct according to the independent

variables, inserted into the equation using uppercase letters. In this context, X represents the mention of the lack of work activity as a determining factor of recidivism, and Z indicates whether the text pointed out the fact that the individual has returned to live with their family after being deprived of freedom as a determinant of recidivism, and K identifies if the person committed their first crime still in adolescence as a factor of recidivism.

The estimated model presented an adjusted R² of 0.179, indicating that factors such as the lack of work engagement, not having returned to live with family post-incarceration, and having committed the first crime during adolescence together explain 17.9% of the variation in the recidivism rate reported by the studies. Of the three variables, only the lack of work activity lacked statistical significance. The other two factors reveal pressing concerns regarding recidivism as an accumulation of disadvantages (Table 4).

TABLE 4 – Results of the linear regression model about the determinants of the recidivism rate (n=65)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Statistics of Colinearity	
	B	Standard Deviation	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	28.375	2.068		13.719	.000		
Lack of work activity	5.766	3.735	.179	1.544	.128	.957	1.045
Did not return to live with family when leaving prison/ confinement unit	19.408	7.995	.282	2.427	.018	.950	1.053
First offense committed in adolescence	11.691	4.251	.314	2.750	.008	.982	1.018

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

The results shown in Table 4 show that, on average, the recidivism rate recorded in the studies starts at the level of 28.38%. If the study mentions that those released did not return to live with their families after incarceration (either as a juvenile or as an adult), this percentage increases, on average, by 19.4%. If the text indicates that the individual committed the first crime when he was still an adolescent, which would be an indication of the chronic infraction trajectory (Sapori et al., 2020), the recidivism rate increased, on average, by 11.7%. The lack of work activity, although it did not reach statistical significance in the model, is also a key factor for mediating the two other phenomena and, thus, also contributing to an increase in the recidivism rate.

Therefore, the greater the situation of vulnerability of the family, the more difficult it becomes for the individual to return to it, since they can become a greater burden. Thus, the chance of living on the streets, surviving through small gigs, and engaging in drug use increases. The sooner a person experiences these anxieties, the greater the likelihood that they will resort to petty crimes. After the first incarceration, the probability that this cycle will be repeated to exhaustion becomes much higher, given the absence of factors that help the individual to break free from this trajectory.

The reviewed studies indicate that the recidivism rate of individuals who have weak ties to the family or inserted themselves into criminal dynamics early in life is higher than those who do not have such characteristics. It is important to highlight that these results are similar to others found in the international literature, especially the one that works with the accumulation of social disadvantages throughout life (Sampson & Laub, 1997). Among the studies reviewed, Silva et al. (2018) found that having committed a crime in adolescence increases the chance of recidivism by 17.11 times. Sapori et al. (2020, p. 17) stress that “adolescents with a history of living on the streets before undergoing socio-educational measures have a 32% higher chance of recidivism than adolescents who live with their family of origin.”

Comparable results were observed by Sá (1987) when he stressed that if the justice-involved person does not have a family that welcomes them after prison, recidivism is only a matter of time.

These conclusions point to the critical need for public policies that reduce the disadvantages of individuals at two key life stages. Firstly, during youth, to prevent social vulnerabilities from leading to criminal behavior. Secondly, upon release from prison, a lack of family support, both emotionally and financially, can propel formerly incarcerated individuals back into criminal activities.

The lack of family support can propel formerly incarcerated individuals back into criminal activities.

Methodological Considerations

In the last section of this document, we explain the methodological procedures employed in this systematic review of the literature. To identify the materials that would be the object of analysis, repositories of academic texts were scrutinized, such as the National Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of Capes, and the portals Scielo and Capes Periodicals, some of the most important national repositories of peer-reviewed scientific articles.

Initially, a database with 100 texts was created, which was added to several other studies from the citations found in the reviewed studies. In the end, we cataloged 189 materials including articles, monographs, theses, dissertations, books, book chapters, and research reports. However, 17 items could not be found. Most of them are from research reports that are either old (such as Fischer & Adorno, 1987) and precede the practice of making these materials available on the internet, or are of more restricted circulation, such as Moraes (2001), consolidate the experience of his research group. At this point, the disappearance of the reports of the Depen before the years 2010 is noteworthy, something that would be of paramount importance for understanding how the national rate transitions from one value to another and how it reached the value of 80% – which, it should be stressed, did not appear in any text reviewed in this study.

It should be noted that since the 1980s, Bordini & Adorno (1985) already scored: the 70% recidivism rate, in an urban legend-like tone. From the institutional point of view, the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea) report (2015) mentions another Depen report,

from 2001, where this rate of 80% appears for the first time,⁸ being later replaced by a more accurate measure of reality, which would place recidivism around 70%.⁹ However, none of these reports are available on the Ministry of Justice's website.

So, the erasure of institutional memory is something that may need to be the subject of attention, with the creation of a repository that condenses all this information in one place.

Another 28 texts were read but did not fit the criteria elaborated for the construction of the database, being used for other purposes (such as historical contextualization, or the guidelines for understanding the limits and possibilities of each concept of recidivism). Either they were studies that, although widely cited, did not have any empirical research (case of Texeira, 2009), or they were reflections on the problem, but from literature reviews, as is the case of Carlen (2007) who presents a concept of “reintegration industry” to explain the profusion of policies of assistance to formerly incarcerated individuals that only support those who do not have a myriad of disadvantages and, therefore, they have lower chances of recidivism.

Of the 144 materials reviewed, the most commonly debated theme was related to public policies for the care of formerly incarcerated individuals, which often rely on an analysis of the main factors that determine recidivism in the view of those assisted by the project (Table 5). Next is the motivation for the entry/exit of crime by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals of the penal system, which was the focus of this work, followed by texts that address the profile of these individuals. Finally, there are the analyses that are intended to calculate the recidivism rate and then, those that aim to point out the effects of this in the process of a new felony.

8 Ministry of Justice, National Penitentiary Department (Depen). National Penitentiary Information System – InfoPen, 2001.

9 Ministry of Justice, National Penitentiary Department (Depen). National Penitentiary Information System – InfoPen, 2008.

TABLE 5 – Main topics addressed by the reviewed papers*

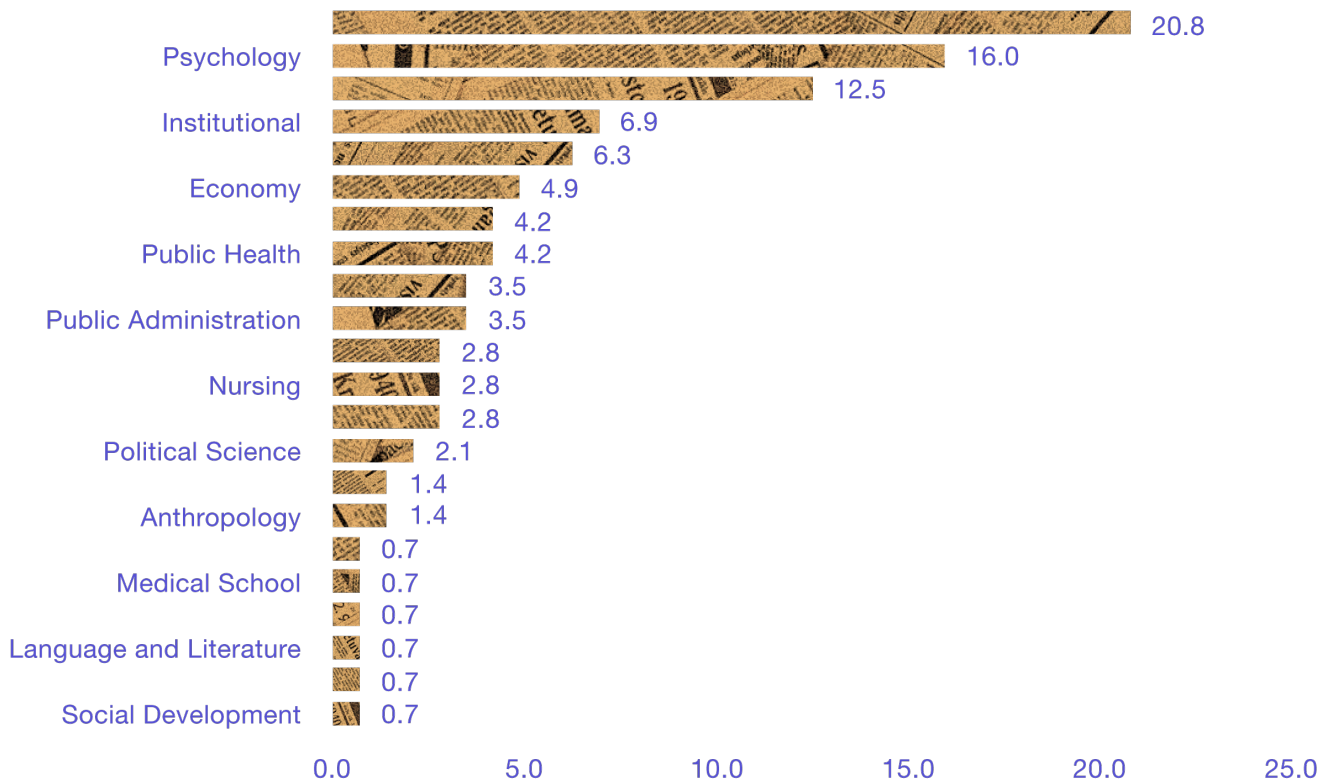
Main topics	n	%
Public policies for the reintegration of incarcerated/formerly incarcerated individuals	43	30%
Profile of incarcerated/formerly incarcerated/recidivists individuals	38	26%
Motivation for entering/leaving crime	37	26%
Calculation or estimate of the re-entry/recidivism rate	32	22%
Effects of recidivism on the process	3	2%

*As the same work can have more than one theme, the total adds up to more than 100%.

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

An item that deserves to be highlighted is the enormous diversity of fields that are interested in this theme, verified in the wide variety of areas of activity of the first authors of the scrutinized texts. The authors come from sociology, psychology, or law (Graph 3). Then there are institutional texts, such as those written by the CNJ or Ipea, which have significantly contributed to greater knowledge about the factors that influence recidivism.

GRAPH 3 – Area of training of the first authors of each material reviewed (n=144)



Source: Instituto Igarapé.

The multiple foundational backgrounds help to understand the research techniques employed to understand the phenomenon. The research designs range from simulating how many days the length of detention increases the chance of recidivism (Costa, 2001), to survival analyses, which would be the most suitable statistical technique to identify the time until re-entry into the prison system, considering that most individuals will not experience this event (Souza et al, 2016).

In terms of the population surveyed, the majority of the texts (107) focus on adults. Out of this total, five are specifically about women who have experienced incarceration. Adolescents are covered in 37 materials and are the preferred subject of fields such as psychology and law. These fields use participatory research strategies (like drawing human figures) for data collection with smaller groups. This is a more consolidated practice in studies about childhood and youth, aiming to understand the factors that influence the chance of re-entry into the socio-educational system.

A point that deserves to be emphasized here is the similarity of the factors that increase the chances of recidivism in both populations, given that both are related to the social vulnerability of adolescents and adults.¹⁰ Especially when these individuals have low levels of education, live in contexts of poverty, and are exposed to criminal networks, there is an increased likelihood of another encounter with the confinement system and/or prison system.

Most research designs used by authors to understand why adolescents and adults are brought back to detention institutions are quantitative, accounting for 30% of the reviewed texts. These studies aim to describe, in percentage terms, the characteristics of individuals who reoffend versus those who do not, giving a better understanding of the factors that differentiate these two groups (37.5% of the mapped texts).

The research design that best contributes to understanding the factors influencing recidivism is the mixed method. Quantitative analysis indicates the patterns and situations associated with the prevalence of re-entry in prison, while qualitative research elucidates how and why these events occur. This format was employed by 30% of the studies aiming to understand how these narratives justifying the return to prison/incarceration facilities are constructed and which variables are statistically associated with this situation.

10 A work that defines this concept well and creates an extremely interesting indicator for its measurement is from the Sou da Paz Institute (2018).

TABLE 6 – Research designs used to understand recidivism (n=144)

Research design	n	%
Quantitative	54	37.5
Mixed (quantitative and qualitative)	43	29.9
Qualitative	42	29.2
Experimental (or quasi-experimental) quantitative	5	3.5
Total	144	100.0

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

For the evaluation of the public policies effectiveness, however, the best design would be the quasi-experimental, in which a group that undergoes the intervention (for example, the care by a program of formerly incarcerated individuals or the experience of confinement) is compared with another group that does not experience this policy. As the previous table indicates, this research design is quite rare, being found, above all, in those studies conducted in the area of public health, which is why, of the five studies identified, two are in the journal of *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*. Attention is drawn to the analyses that compare individuals with an infraction trajectory with their siblings (Assis & Souza, 1999), as well as those that compare those who experience cognitive therapy with those who do not (Cortez et al., 2005) or those that compare the trajectories of those who were sentenced to prison with those who experienced another outcome in the criminal process (Rodello et al, 1986).

Therefore, to thoroughly understand the factors that either expose or protect formerly incarcerated individuals from committing new crimes, we must invest in new investigative methodologies. Mixed models contribute to enriching the portfolio of hypotheses to be investigated in more detail in research with a quasi-experimental design, for example. The evaluation of public policies oriented to this

group can test specific protection factors, outlining the instruments to verify the role of each of these pieces of information, especially those involving the public power and how its performance can contribute sometimes to protection, sometimes to recidivism.

Another point that deserves to be highlighted is the way data are collected for the analysis of recidivism. The most appropriate format would be longitudinal, because, assuming that recidivism does not happen at a specific time, being the accumulated result of several factors that intervene in the life of the individual, it would be best to accompany them for a while after leaving prison to see how they deal with adversities. This would allow us to see if the change of context (for example, entry into a care program) contributes to the change of trajectory (definitively or temporarily) and to the reduction of social vulnerabilities that increase the chance of recidivism, which would help in understanding which interventions may be more promising for reducing recidivism.

However, as shown in Table 7, this design is little used in research on recidivism. Public funds that would be ideal to accompany the development of the individual throughout his life cycle, essential for understanding how the accumulation of disadvantages occurs, are scarce in Brazil (Murray et al., 2013). The choice then becomes to follow small groups

of adolescents into adulthood (a strategy widely used by psychology professionals) or to track these individuals through police and/or judicial records (a methodology that Sapori has used to understand the recidivism of adults or adolescents). The problem with these approaches is that they

do not allow for generalizations: neither for all the young people who experience the passage through the socio-educational system nor for those who might, for example, resort to police corruption to avoid once again being caught in the nets of the justice system.

TABLE 7 – Research designs, by focus audience (n=144)

			Research design		Total
			Cross-sectional	Longitudinal	
Surveyed Audience	Adolescents	n	25	12	37
		%	22.10%	38.70%	25.70%
	Adult females	n	5	0	5
		%	4.40%	0.00%	3.50%
	Adult male	n	83	19	102
		%	74.10%	61.30%	71.30%
Total		n	112	31	144
		%	100.0%	100.0%	

Chi-squared=4.823, GL=2, P>0.050

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

Given the difficulties of operationalizing longitudinal analyses, the option becomes the use of the cross-sectional design, which is nothing more than a photograph of the situation at that moment. With this, it is seen what the percentages of recidivists are and what the causes attributed to these phenomena. However, it is not possible to understand how this combination of factors changes over time, especially with the aging of the individuals. In addition to

the abandonment of crime, which tends to happen after the age of 40 (as indicated by Sampson & Laub, 1997), there is also the shift in the focus of police surveillance, which tends to focus especially on young people (Fischer, 1981). But, to say which of these two explanations best suits the Brazilian scenario, longitudinal data are indispensable, still relatively unavailable in the current context (Murray et al, 2013).

Criteria for Assessing Study Quality

Given the many methodological reservations about the empirical studies reviewed in this study, we propose to conclude the product with a proposal to qualify research in terms of its rigor in the execution and dissemination of results.

The topic of criminal recidivism, in the field of violence and public security studies, mobilizes a large number of researchers in Brazil, as we have seen throughout the preparation of this report. However, it is still a challenge to establish best practices not only for social reintegration policies but also for the preparation of scientific studies that can safely answer the following questions: after all, what is the national recidivism rate? Is it higher for certain types of crimes? What is the estimated average time that, in the absence of any intervention, a formerly incarcerated individual is exposed to the maximum risk of committing a new crime?

We understand that these questions can only be reasonably answered when the field focuses on producing scientific knowledge with greater validity and reliability on the individual. With that said the construction of a quality measurement index for studies is important both to identify the rigor used in the analyses and to, through them, have more confidence to point out what the main risk factors for recidivism are and the most promising intervention strategies.

The challenge, however, is to identify the essential elements to define the quality of this type of scientific communication, especially given the variety of objectives of this research.

Just remember that, among the 144 studies we reviewed, some deal with estimating recidivism in a given population (22.2%), but there are also exercises that analyze public policies supporting formerly inmates (29.9%) or try to outline the profile of this individual leaving prison (26.4%), identifying their motivations to continue (or interrupt) their criminal trajectory (25.7%). All share a concern with recidivism and how it can be identified and thus be a focus of intervention.

For this reason, in the construction of what we will call the “Recidivism Production Quality Indicator,” we identified four dimensions aimed at qualifying the ways to measure and report research results on the topic (Table 8).

To calculate this index, an indicator with four dimensions was created, which varies between 0 (zero) and 1 (one), being the result of the standardization of the sum of the scores of the texts. This sum, in turn, varies between 0 and 14, and standardization is the result of the division between the value of the indicator subtracted by the minimum of the distribution and the amplitude of the same distribution (Production Quality Indicator on Recidivism – $\text{Min/Max} - \text{Min}$).

TABLE 8 – Dimensions and categories evaluated in the Production Quality Indicator on Recidivism

		Pontuação	Frequência	%
Operationalization of Recidivism (DIM1)	Does not cover	0	41	28.5%
	Self-declaration or Institutional	1	15	10.4%
	Generic or Police-related	2	20	13.9%
	Penitentiary	3	52	36.1%
	Legal	4	16	11.1%
Time Variable Handling (DIM2)	No mention of the data collection time	0	14	9.7%
	Cross-sectional, observing only 1 point in time or more than one point, as long as within the same year	1	63	43.8%
	Longitudinal with a research duration of up to 1 year or cross-sectional lasting more than 1 year.	2	36	25.0%
	Longitudinal with research duration between 1 and 4 years	3	14	9.7%
	Longitudinal with research duration of 5 years or longer	4	17	11.8%
Technique for Quantitative Data Analysis(DIM3)	Does not mention a case follow-up strategy	0	16	15.7%
	Uses descriptive analysis and frequency tables or cross-referencing	1	54	52.9%
	Uses association tests such as chi-squared, ANOVA, or mean difference	2	9	8.8%
	Uses multivariate analyses (e.g., regression models)	3	18	17.6%
	Experimental quantitative (or quasi-experimental)	4	5	4.9%
Technique for Qualitative Data Analysis (DIM3)	Does not mention the analysis strategy	0	29	34.1%
	Describe the analysis strategy used	1	56	65.9%
Reports Information On Time (DIM4)	Does not describe the analysis strategy used	0	14	9.7%
	Mentions the analysis strategy	1	130	90.3%
Data Reporting (DIM4)	Observation periods and research duration are not reported	0	34	23.6%
	Number and selection/sampling processes of the cases are reported	1	110	76.4%

Source: Instituto Igarapé.

The first dimension taken into account is the “Operationalization of the concept,” evaluating the strategy for defining and measuring recidivism. This is an essential aspect, not only because of the potential differences in the number of recidivists based on the utilized concept but mainly due to the variability that each of these choices brings to the results. In this regard, Table 3 suggests that the recidivism figures derived from studies using generic or police definitions are those with the highest standard deviations. This is because there is no strict definition regarding how to account for these events, leading to adaptations that result in significant differences in the outcomes. And, of course, this is not necessarily a shortcoming of the methodology. Given the difficulty in accessing official information about the conviction history of formerly incarcerated individuals, which would allow for a legal perspective, the most feasible option is to rely on organizations where this record-keeping is already part of the standard procedure, such as the police (Paixão, 1983).

Consequently, higher scores were assigned to more complex definitions of recidivism in terms of the consulted sources, the tracking during post-release, and the criteria to attribute a new crime to the individual. If a text does not address the issue of recidivism, it scores zero (0). Those that use an “institutional” definition or one based on “self-declaration” are classified as (1), precisely because they leave room for many interpretations regarding the concept and the best way to measure it. Next up are the “generic or police” definition (2), “penitentiary” (3), and “legal” (4) definitions.

The second aspect considered for the classification of the texts was the “management of the time variable,” since it is an essential factor in determining whether an individual is considered a recidivist. For how long should a released individual be monitored to reliably measure recidivism? Monitoring for just a few months might be insufficient, especially considering that the law itself deems the post-release situation to last for a year, and rehabilitation (when the individual no longer has a criminal record) takes five years after serving the sentence (Almeida, 2012).

From our systematic review, we observed that not all analyses are short-term. A significant set of studies was developed by Adorno and colleagues during the 1980s (Adorno, 1991; Adorno, Bordini, 1985; Rodello, Adorno & Bordini, 1984). These studies, notable contributions from the Institute of Social Medicine and Criminology (Imesc) of the State of São Paulo, could potentially be a model for other states of the federation. They offer a blend of official data analysis, combined with in-depth interviews with incarcerated people.¹¹

Thus, the “management of the time variable” dimension awards the maximum score (4) to studies with a longitudinal approach, tracking a cohort of inmates or released individuals for five years or more, which is the time limit established by the Penal Code for rehabilitation (Pastore, 2011). Next, we scored studies with a longitudinal approach that followed individuals between 1 and 5 years with a score of (3). Studies with a timeframe shorter than one year were given a score of (2), as were cross-sectional studies considering more than one point in time. Single-point cross-sectional studies, which did not gather information from different periods in distinct years, received a score of (1). Studies that did not specify their chosen reference period were not awarded any points.

¹¹ Most of the results of this research are available in the editions of the *Temas Imesc* magazine. For more information, see: <https://imesc.sp.gov.br/index.php/publicacoes/> Accessed on April 23, 2021.

The third dimension concerns the "Data Analysis Techniques" and has particularities that consider whether the study is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed, integrating methodologies. For quantitative studies, those deemed to be of higher rigor were either those that presented quasi-experimental designs, or those that, even when investigating only associations (and not causal relationships), went beyond mere description of results and ventured into inferential analysis. Thus, research based solely on the presentation of frequency tables or cross-reference data and basic descriptive statistics was assigned the value of (1).

Studies that relied on tests of association between variables such as mean comparison, correlation, analysis of variance, or chi-square were assigned a code of (2). The use of regression and other multivariate models characterizes the studies to which a score of (3) was given, while the maximum value (4) was dedicated to quasi-experimental studies.

For qualitative studies, the maximum score was assigned to texts that described the type of analysis applied to the materials. Most of them use the tool of participant observation and interviews and, in some cases, we have little information about the criteria guiding, for example, the construction of analytical categories and the selection of statements. The studies that described this process were, therefore, given the maximum score. The rest did not score.

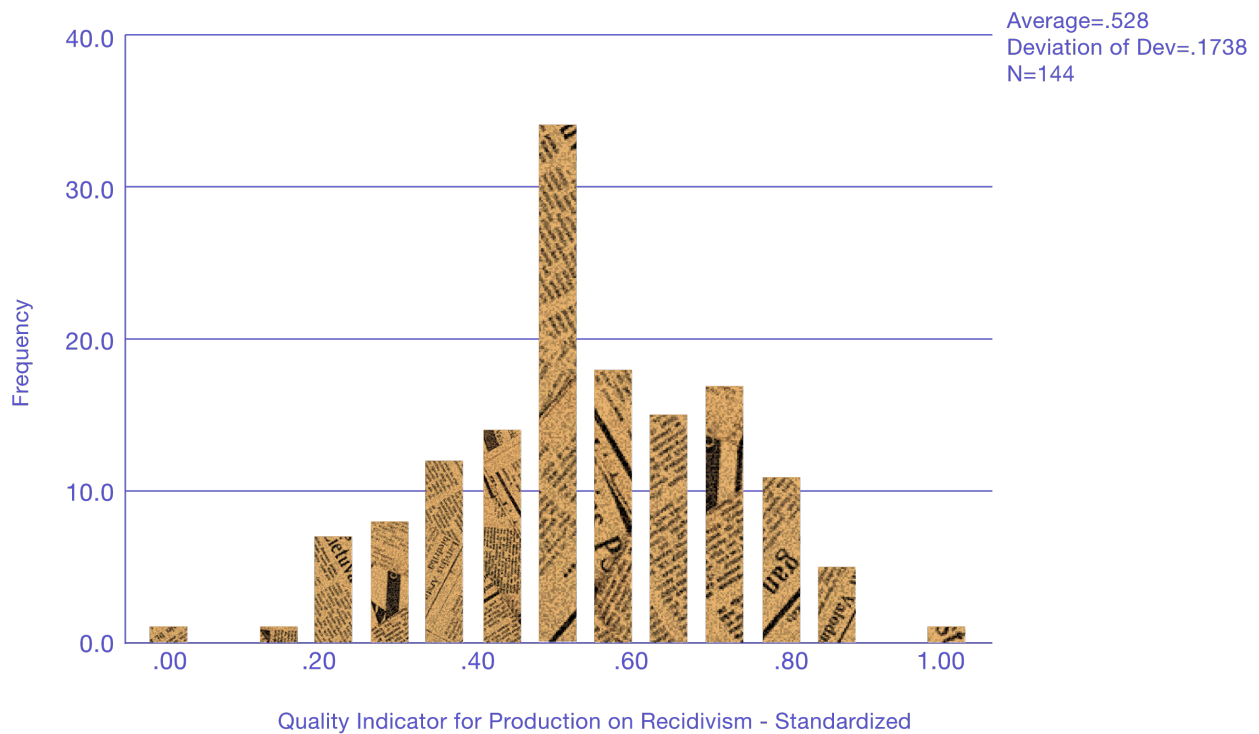
The mixed studies, with integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, were evaluated from the two criteria described, that is, the type of statistical analysis and textual data. In the construction of the general indicator, in the dimension "Data analysis technique" they were assigned the average of these two indicators.

Finally, we evaluate with additional points two good practices of research data reporting: the presentation of the number of cases and other detailed information about their selection for the study (1), which partially integrates the dimension of time management, and the presentation of information about the collection and reference timeframe of the study (2).

The result of the construction of the indicator is presented in Chart 4. In it, we perceive the concentration of the works in average values, with a small negative asymmetry, indicating the greater frequency of works in indexes higher than the average.

Only one text was classified with the lowest value in the index. This is Adorno (1991), a short but very significant work where the author discusses young people who have already committed crimes and their relationship with school. Recidivism is not addressed directly, which explains the extremely low score. However, it was retained in the review as it presented already at that time the dichotomy between upstanding citizens and the "criminals/delinquents" who should not be part of shared social spaces, such as the school. This is certainly a conception that modulates the behavior of institutions concerning this group, which shares with formerly incarcerated individuals many characteristics, especially the structural constraints.

GRAPH 4 – Distribution of the Production Quality Indicator on Recidivism (standardized) ($n=144$)



Source: Instituto Igarapé.

At the other extreme, there is the work of Rodello et al. (1984), which aims to estimate criminal recidivism in the state of São Paulo based on data provided by the criminal registry of the Secretariat of Public Security. It is a quasi-experimental design that uses the legal definition of recidivism (although it highlights how it can be biased due to the slowness of the judiciary in prosecuting new crimes) to understand what factors differentiate an initial sample of 5,000 cases that received a final conviction between 1920 and 1982 from another sample of 5,000 cases, which did not receive a conviction between 1920 and 1982, even having committed the same crime (treatment and control group, respectively). The results indicate that the recidivism rate tends to be higher among those sentenced to prison and that the recidivism rate tends to decrease over time, which may be a result of a greater number of offenses and the judiciary taking longer to make decisions. The recidivism rate was 50% from the 1920s to the 1940s and dropped to 30% in the 1980s. On the other

hand, the phenomenon of female recidivism was only verified from the 1950s onwards, a time when women began to return to prison for committing new offenses.

This study is not only an excellent model of academic research conducted with data produced by the government, but a sample of how we could move towards greater integration between research institutions and public administration. The judiciary has invested substantively in collecting data in criminal cases and creating informational systems that help improve legal services in the country. Perhaps, allowing access to the data from criminal cases for a more detailed analysis of the effects of deprivation of freedom on recidivism is a field that deserves to be better explored in the coming years. Public policies to reduce violence and crime would benefit immensely from more technical and less impressionistic decision-making processes, like those that for years have repeatedly stated that the recidivism rate is around 70% without any empirical basis.

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Appendix 1

Table A1 – Factor loadings of the factor analysis of the 36 determinants of recidivism identified in the revised texts (N=111)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Low qualifications/few opportunities	0.070	-0.036	0.739	-0.136	0.007	0.275	0.059	0.313	-0.084	0.053	0.002	-0.106	-0.128
Unemployment	0.180	-0.003	0.722	-0.092	-0.060	-0.075	0.019	-0.028	0.141	0.053	0.237	-0.119	-0.021
Low-paying activities/easier to engage in informal activities	-0.103	-0.058	0.710	0.059	0.023	-0.083	0.062	-0.135	0.113	-0.017	-0.144	0.144	0.049
Social stigma	-0.076	-0.245	0.364	-0.080	0.164	0.073	0.554	0.230	-0.102	-0.019	-0.093	0.000	-0.168
After release, returned to an area vulnerable to drug trafficking or crime	-0.069	0.168	0.245	0.000	-0.087	0.079	0.051	0.191	0.584	0.210	-0.170	-0.058	-0.054
Single	-0.042	0.569	0.211	0.031	0.014	0.185	-0.207	0.021	0.067	-0.062	-0.161	-0.212	-0.116
Influence/relationship with criminal peers	0.004	0.063	0.171	-0.094	0.053	0.075	0.146	0.079	0.035	0.788	-0.016	-0.042	-0.029
Not returning to live with family after leaving prison/confinement unit	0.577	0.021	0.170	-0.126	-0.031	0.050	0.034	0.193	-0.128	0.117	0.431	0.056	0.084
Lack of work activity	-0.023	-0.062	0.102	-0.068	0.011	0.839	0.000	-0.007	-0.088	-0.006	0.089	-0.020	-0.018
Fragile family ties	0.177	-0.088	0.087	-0.005	0.142	0.035	0.058	0.795	0.027	0.161	0.054	0.148	0.012
In a stable relationship/married	0.899	0.048	0.084	-0.068	-0.054	-0.066	-0.037	0.050	0.011	-0.096	0.034	0.132	-0.007
Police surveillance	0.003	-0.059	0.078	0.020	0.059	-0.115	0.783	-0.079	0.112	0.069	0.112	-0.190	0.035
Slowness of the Justice System/"Justice is unjust"	0.031	-0.109	0.042	-0.159	0.713	-0.008	0.080	0.001	-0.169	0.167	0.018	0.117	-0.081
Having children/being responsible for the household	0.549	0.117	0.038	0.240	0.467	0.007	0.032	-0.199	0.046	-0.066	-0.195	-0.235	-0.038
Prison as a school of crime/ incorporation of prison rules/ prison culture	-0.056	-0.135	0.025	-0.028	-0.049	0.142	0.008	-0.107	0.047	-0.072	0.705	-0.103	-0.127
Does not benefit from the corruption of public officers	0.020	0.050	0.022	-0.068	0.391	0.073	0.348	0.055	0.629	-0.012	-0.051	-0.009	0.053

CONTINUATION

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Extended family (with many siblings)	0.821	-0.026	0.021	0.384	-0.033	-0.056	-0.037	-0.068	0.001	-0.037	-0.049	-0.052	-0.078
Low self-esteem	-0.029	-0.140	0.015	-0.036	-0.154	-0.102	-0.105	-0.126	0.690	0.052	0.210	-0.022	-0.078
Male gender	0.004	0.433	0.013	-0.048	0.385	0.039	-0.023	-0.200	0.106	-0.033	-0.091	-0.152	0.251
Existence of criminal records	0.145	0.033	-0.028	0.128	0.104	-0.091	-0.147	0.099	-0.057	-0.060	-0.113	0.777	-0.007
Crimes against person	-0.048	-0.151	-0.033	-0.022	-0.072	-0.007	-0.101	0.059	-0.046	-0.051	-0.065	-0.022	0.836
Punishment and/or violence in prison	-0.034	0.084	-0.051	0.147	0.484	-0.032	0.133	0.121	0.027	-0.017	0.664	0.027	-0.010
Drug crimes	-0.040	0.030	-0.055	0.708	-0.114	-0.071	0.197	0.008	-0.061	-0.093	-0.055	0.351	0.297
Property crimes	-0.015	0.337	-0.059	0.466	0.126	-0.100	0.175	-0.117	-0.085	-0.050	-0.104	0.096	0.621
Ages 18 to 29	0.242	0.720	-0.061	-0.046	-0.071	-0.092	-0.063	-0.203	-0.096	-0.075	0.034	0.236	0.029
Orphanhood in childhood or adolescence	0.657	-0.042	-0.065	-0.120	0.012	0.065	-0.021	0.148	-0.076	0.246	-0.091	0.117	-0.056
Low schooling/dropping out of school	-0.054	0.211	-0.068	0.286	-0.080	-0.239	-0.227	0.512	-0.029	-0.018	-0.209	-0.400	-0.049
Victim of violence committed by public officers	-0.075	0.035	-0.070	0.227	0.731	-0.024	0.071	0.243	0.072	0.008	0.145	0.078	0.009
Use of firearms	0.068	-0.056	-0.074	0.876	0.117	-0.062	-0.132	0.051	-0.016	0.050	0.077	-0.063	-0.077
Low self-control/emotional instability	0.324	-0.078	-0.099	-0.205	-0.068	-0.399	-0.280	0.092	0.114	-0.185	0.010	-0.116	0.061
1st offense committed in adolescence	-0.083	0.699	-0.100	0.181	0.161	0.044	0.110	0.241	-0.232	-0.130	-0.056	0.176	-0.002
Lack of schooling	0.020	-0.014	-0.117	-0.094	-0.050	0.848	-0.162	0.003	0.130	-0.067	0.038	-0.093	-0.012
Other	-0.071	0.671	-0.130	-0.082	-0.130	-0.163	0.033	0.008	-0.161	0.174	0.027	-0.111	-0.069
Drug use	0.069	-0.168	-0.174	0.122	0.114	-0.188	-0.209	0.048	0.211	0.685	-0.058	-0.038	-0.061
Left their parents/guardians home in adolescence	0.394	-0.015	-0.191	-0.089	0.233	-0.123	0.140	0.384	0.127	-0.262	-0.128	0.065	0.174
Black or Brown	-0.024	0.312	-0.297	0.032	0.110	-0.115	0.494	0.125	0.052	-0.229	0.061	0.286	-0.046

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Converged rotation in 16 iterations.



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