

“Lived Experience” Criminology and Desistance from Crime

Prof. Shadd Maruna

s.maruna@qub.ac.uk

@Criminology (Twitter)



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**



Making Good

HOW EX-CONVICTS REFORM AND
REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Shadd Maruna

FOREWORD BY HANS TOCH

犯罪からの離脱と 人生のやり直し

元犯罪者のナラティブから学ぶ

シャッド・マルナ ● 著

津富 宏 / 河野 莊子 ● 監訳

Making Good

HOW EX-CONVICTS REFORM AND
REBUILD THEIR LIVES

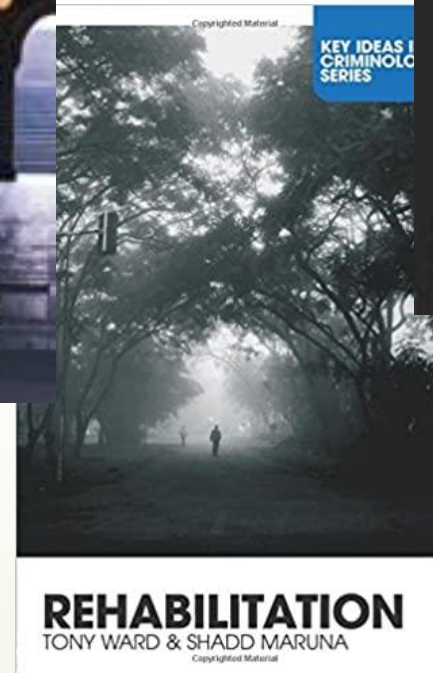
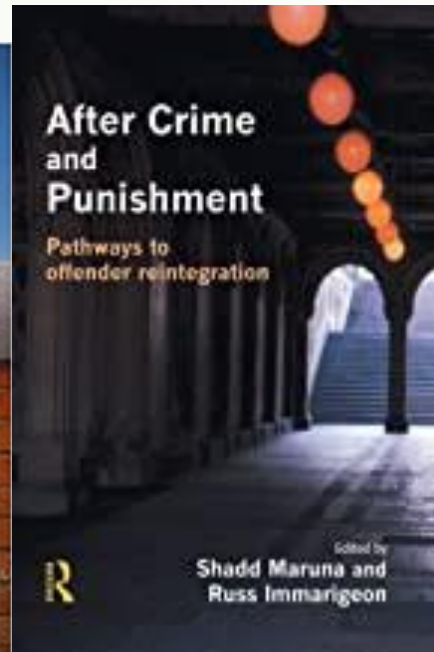
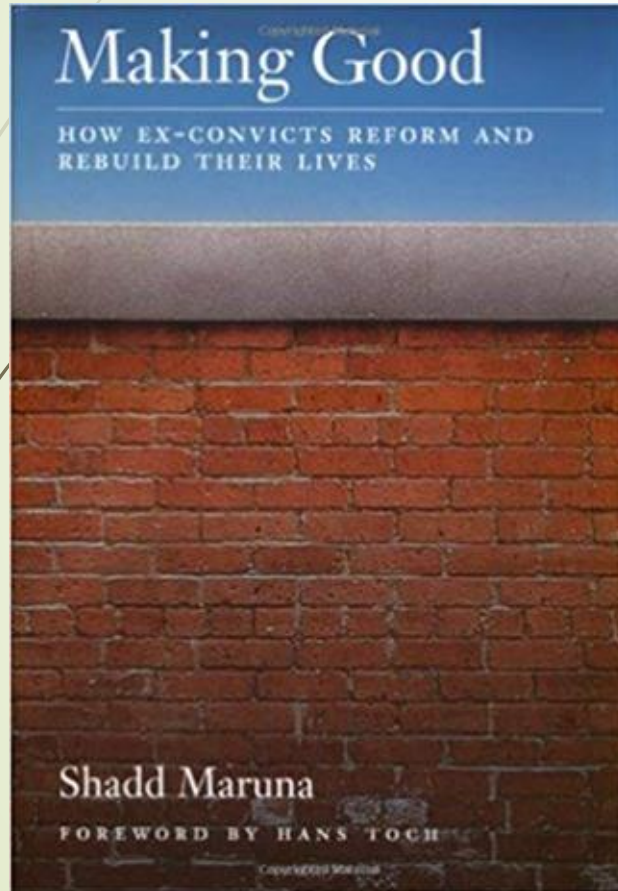


What is “Desistance” from Crime?

The long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending.

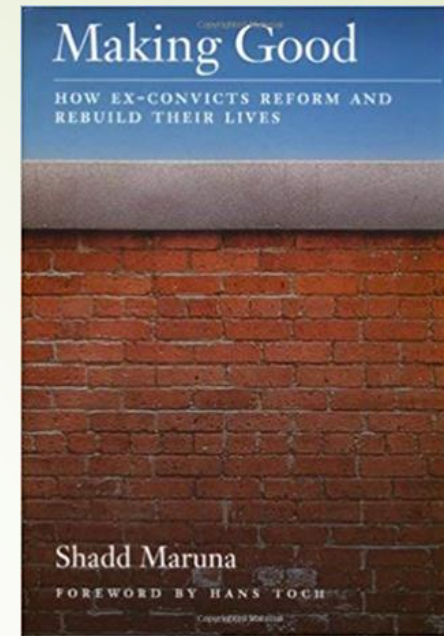
Desistance is a process, even a journey, not an event. The focus is not on any particular “moment” of change, but rather on the maintenance of that change in the face of a life’s many obstacles and frustrations.

20 Years Down the Road



CO-producing Desistance

- Apprenticeship in desistance (mentors, role models)
- Someone “saw something in me” that made me “realise I could achieve something”
- Finds an empowering role as helper (not just help-recipient)
- Change in behaviour formally recognised and celebrated by others





Phase One: The Shift to Desistance

Changing Lenses in Research

Disrupts criminology's perception of so-called "offenders" as somehow fundamentally different than others

Recognises the desisting person as the expert on his or her own story and experience.

Phase 2: Impact on Justice Practice

- ➡ Desistance-inspired programming
(over half of all UK accredited programmes)
- ➡ “Good Lives Model”
- ➡ “Rehabilitative Culture”

“I can say with confidence that research into desistance from crime has significantly impacted on both policy and operational practice, and is shaping the culture and service delivery models of providers across all aspects of offender services.”

Ian Poree, Director, Rehabilitation Programme, Ministry of Justice

The Shift to a Desistance Model

Changing Lenses in Practice

- 1) From “What Works?” to “How Does it Work?”
- 2) From a medical model to a “naturalistic” model
- 3) From “treatment effects” to **relationships**
- 4) From correcting **deficits** to showcasing **strengths**
- 5) From expert outsiders to the wisdom of **‘experts by experience’**

Wounded Healers: Apprenticeships in Rehabilitation

“Our greatest resource, largely untouched, to aid in the rehabilitation of offenders is other offenders. ... Only a skilful guide can encourage a person to go straight. I suspect that the best guide is the one who has himself gone through it” (Eglash, 1958, p. 621).

Folsom Prison Associate Warden once said:

“The [ex-prisoner counsellors] tell the men the same things we’ve been telling them for months. But the difference is that the inmates listen.” (Eglash, 1958, p. 237).

How “Experts by Experience” Help Others

With such backgrounds, reformed ex-prisoners are living examples of the transformation that is possible . . . When the going gets tough, it is possible to say, ‘He did it, so can I.’ *The role model derives legitimacy from his having traversed the same route.* To expect prisoners to accept role models who have not had that experience is to expect an atypical, unusual and treacherous identification. *Perhaps only prisoners are expected to be so unusually responsive to persons different from themselves*

(Lofland, 1969, p. 268).



How Helping Others Helps Experts by Experience

From interviews with Prison “Listeners” (Perrin & Blagden, 2014)

“When I started, ... you kind of see *skills in you that you never knew you had* and I’m shocked because like, I never really regarded myself as being smart to be honest ... It’s just something good and I don’t know about anyone else but I’m just *craving for positivity* in here, and to restart my life again and come back a good person into the community. (Andy)



Recognition and Rewards

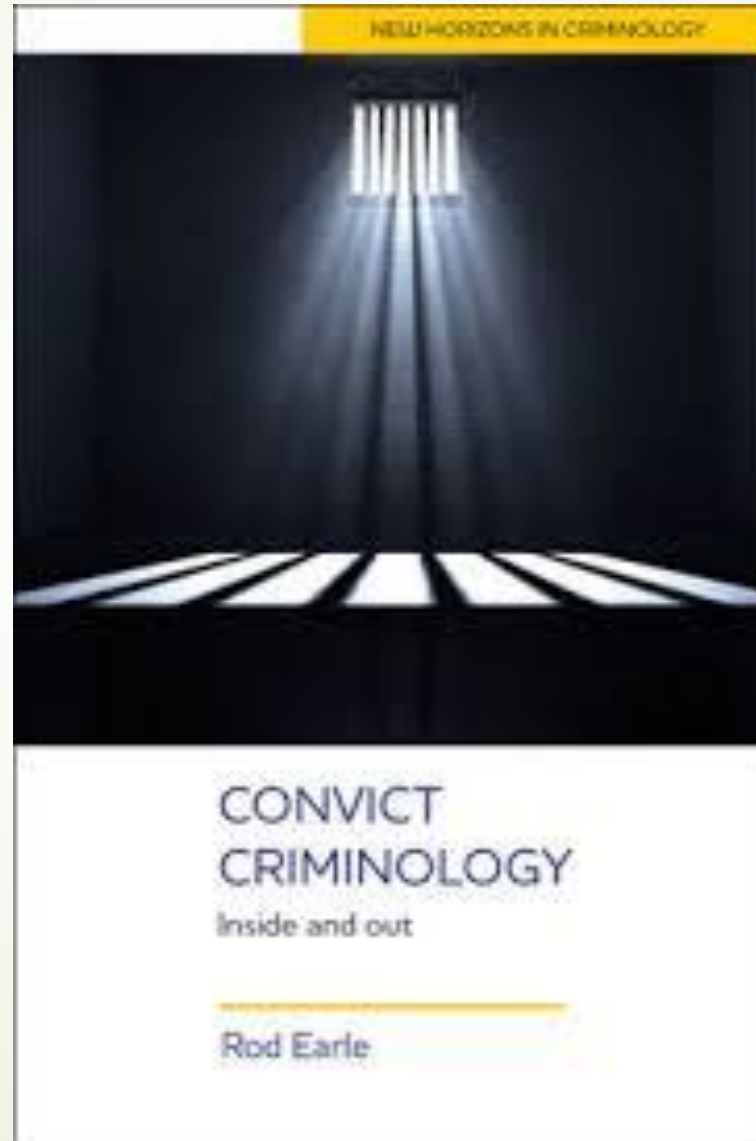
“Governors recognise it, staff recognise it, ‘he’s a good lad he is, he’s one of my Listeners’. Lads come up and thank you ... they say ‘Fair play to you that you do stuff like that’. Staff on the wing thank you. You know, my family, even friends say ‘I never knew you could do something like that’. They’ve seen a different side to me. (Steve)

“When you see [progress] happen it makes you feel good because you’ve done something good and given something back. I’m not saying it makes up for the crime you’ve committed, but you are giving something back and you’re turning something into a positive” (Andy)

What about the world of research and knowledge production?

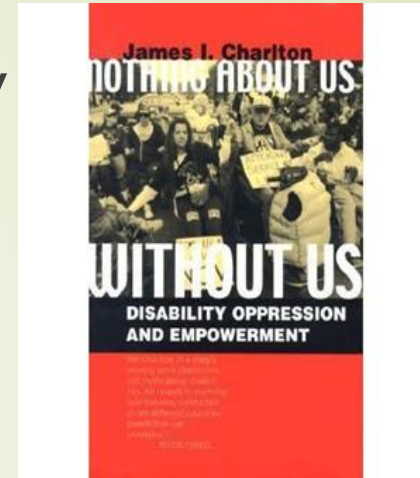



Phase 3: “Lived Experience” Criminology



Nothing About Us Without Us

Activists in the disability rights and neuro-diversity movements have insisted that in the future there be “nothing about us without us” (“Nihil de nobis, sine nobis”) (Charlton, 1998).





NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

A manifesto by people who use illegal drugs

We are among the most vilified and demonized groups in society. Simply because we use illegal drugs, people and governments often deny us our rights and dignity.

We are the “junkies” and “crackheads” of the popular media.

We are tagged as “undeserving troublemakers” even among some of those who provide services to us.

We have been hard hit by the epidemics of HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

We are often sent to prison or to compulsory detoxification and rehabilitation, instead of having access to the evidence-based prevention and treatment programs we need.

We suffer oppression and human rights abuses in countries waging a “war against drugs” that all too often has turned into a war against people who use drugs.

We are regularly excluded from the decisions that affect our lives and those of our brothers and sisters.

We are your sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters.

And we have the same human rights as everyone else.

We have the right to meaningfully participate in decision making on issues affecting us.

We have the right to be able to make informed decisions about our health, including what we do or do not put into our bodies.

We have unique expertise and experiences and have a vital role to play in defining the health, social, legal and research policies that affect us.

Today, we demand to have a say

We have the capacity to:

- educate and be educated;
- represent our community;
- serve on government consultative



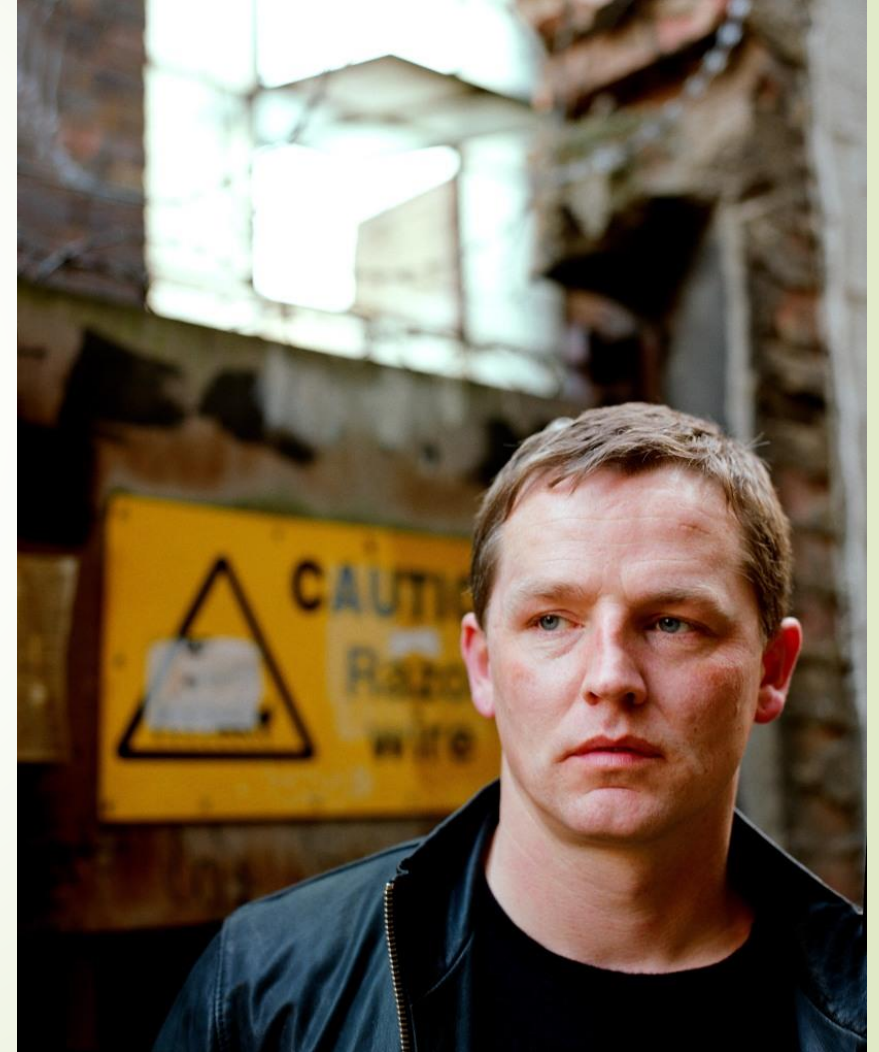
Participatory Action Research

Participatory research methods in which “research participants are regarded as potential collaborators in the co-production of knowledge and become co-researchers” have “fundamentally changed the dynamic of research” (**Schubotz**, 2019: 3).

User Voice UK

- Our role is to improve rehabilitation...
- **...through collaboration.**
- Rehabilitation is possible, and people with convictions can turn their lives into an active force for good in society. Rehabilitation is the goal of all our work, a process which goes deeper than reducing offending, although that is an outcome.

"Only Offenders Can Stop Re-Offending"



Second Chance!

A national network of ex-inmates of juvenile training schools



Tatsushi Saimon (President; ex-inmate of JTS)

Hiroshi Tsutomi (Founder: ex-worker at JTS and currently
Professor of University of Shizuoka)



**Who are the Experts on the Lived
Experience of Prisoners during this
Pandemic?**

OR

**Shouldn't Someone Ask the People
in Prison?**



Returning to chaos is not an option



The realisation that an unseen enemy could indiscriminately destroy our lives suddenly became a reality

Nobody should be in any doubt whatsoever that the POA shaped the lockdown within our prisons. Thankfully, at last, both the government and the employer listened to our union and agreed that we had to severely restrict regimes to protect all those who inhabit our secure settings.

LOCKDOWN WAS WITH US

All those in power had serious concerns about how prisoners would react. To get so used to being unlocked, just for the sake of being unlocked, to lose contact with your loved ones in the form of social visits and to only be let out

for essential activities in a very limited way would of course bring back thoughts of what had occurred in Italian Prisons during similar circumstances. We also had to contend with the so called prison 'experts' who so often take the form of reform groups or psychologists who have never walked in our shoes, complaining that human rights had been breached and we were implementing draconian unnecessary measures. For sure, in their eyes, mental health would deteriorate and self-harm would significantly rise. No way would we come out of this unscathed and we would be on the receiving end of a prisoner revolt and backlash.

It is testament to the professionalism, bravery and dedication of prison staff that we now see a controlled, well ordered, less violent and more stable prison estate despite the concerns of the critical few.

We await the statistical evidence during the lockdown period, but our own initial analysis would highlight a significant reduction in prisoner on staff assaults, prisoner on prisoner assaults, including in some prisons a dramatic reduction in self-harm incidents and a significant reduction in ACCT referrals.

We must learn lessons from this period and must ensure that we restrict prisoner numbers, particularly during unlock, to not only prevent further outbreaks but to ensure we maintain that stability and control we have regained. Having less prisoners unlocked but more staff available is the key to our success.

RETURNING TO CHAOS IS NOT AN OPTION

We have had the opportunity to press the reset button and we must not allow prison regimes to dictate levels of violence, if we do this we will be back to the chaotic state we were in before the lockdown. We must ensure that we have the resources to maintain the stability and control we have regained.

The Prison Officer's Association Version

➡ "It is testament to the professionalism, bravery and dedication of prison staff that we now see a controlled, well ordered, less violent and more stable prison estate *despite the concerns of the critical few* ... about how prisoners would react [after being] so used to being unlocked. ... We also had to contend with the so-called prison 'experts' who so often take the form of reform groups or psychologists who have never walked in our shoes, complaining that human rights had been breached and we were implementing draconian unnecessary measures."



Continued

“We await the statistical evidence during the lockdown period, but our own initial analysis would highlight a significant reduction in prisoner on staff assaults, prisoner on prisoner assaults, including in some prisons a dramatic reduction in self-harm incidents and a significant reduction in [mental health] referrals.

"The government **should listen to the experts in prisons - the staff** - who say the situation is now safer and more stable."

WHO WE ARE

This is a collaborative ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded research project between Queens University Belfast and User Voice.



User Voice is a charity run by ex-offenders. User Voices' participation ensures the research is truly Peer Led at every stage.



Queens University Belfast is internationally recognised for its research contributions in criminology. Queens participation ensure all aspects of the research meet high standards and rigor of academic research.

OBJECTIV ES

- Develop an innovative participatory research design that involves prisoners and former prisoners at every stage of the research from design to dissemination.
- Provide the first systematic overview of the impact of the unprecedented COVID lockdown in prisons across England and Wales on the mental health and well-being of prisoners across the system.
- Provide systematic first-hand evidence that can feed into the discussion of how to safely transition prisons from these lockdown conditions to more rehabilitative cultures.

THE APPROACH

1. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Focus groups



Diaries



Surveys



2. PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Prisoners and ex-prisoners involved at every stage

Design



Fieldwork



Analysis



3. PRISONERS TRAINED IN RESEARCH METHODS

Accredited OCN LEVEL 1 course with certificate

OCN London is a not-for-profit awarding organisation that provides national qualifications for colleges, adult education centres, community groups, training providers, charities and employers

WHAT WE'VE DONE

...SO FAR

1

Interviewed 160 PRISONERS ACROSS 10 PRISONS

- Conducted 2 focus groups in each prison; Bronzefield, Pentonville, Wormwood Scrubs, Brinsford, Wakefield, Woodhill, Hewell, Full Sutton and Wymott
- Forest Bank this week.
- Mix of category, location, age & gender.

2

TRAINED 60 PEER RESEARCHERS

- Open College Network level 1 or level 2 qualifications
- 8 hours of training plus workbooks to be completed on own.
- Responsible for all data collection
- Involved in presentation of data to prison governors

3

1000+ SURVEYS ARE CURRENTLY BEING ANALYZED

- Data entry still in progress
- All results available by late December
- Expect an average of 150+ questionnaires completed per prison. However some have completed 300+.

Bleak Regime

62% have not had a single in-person visit since the pandemic began.

72% said they were out of cell for an hour or less per day during the first six months of the Covid pandemic.

57% said they were out of cell for an hour or less per day under their **current** regime

Just 1 in 5 agree that lockdown has reduced violence and bullying

Just 7% agree that "This prison is listening to the concerns of residents"

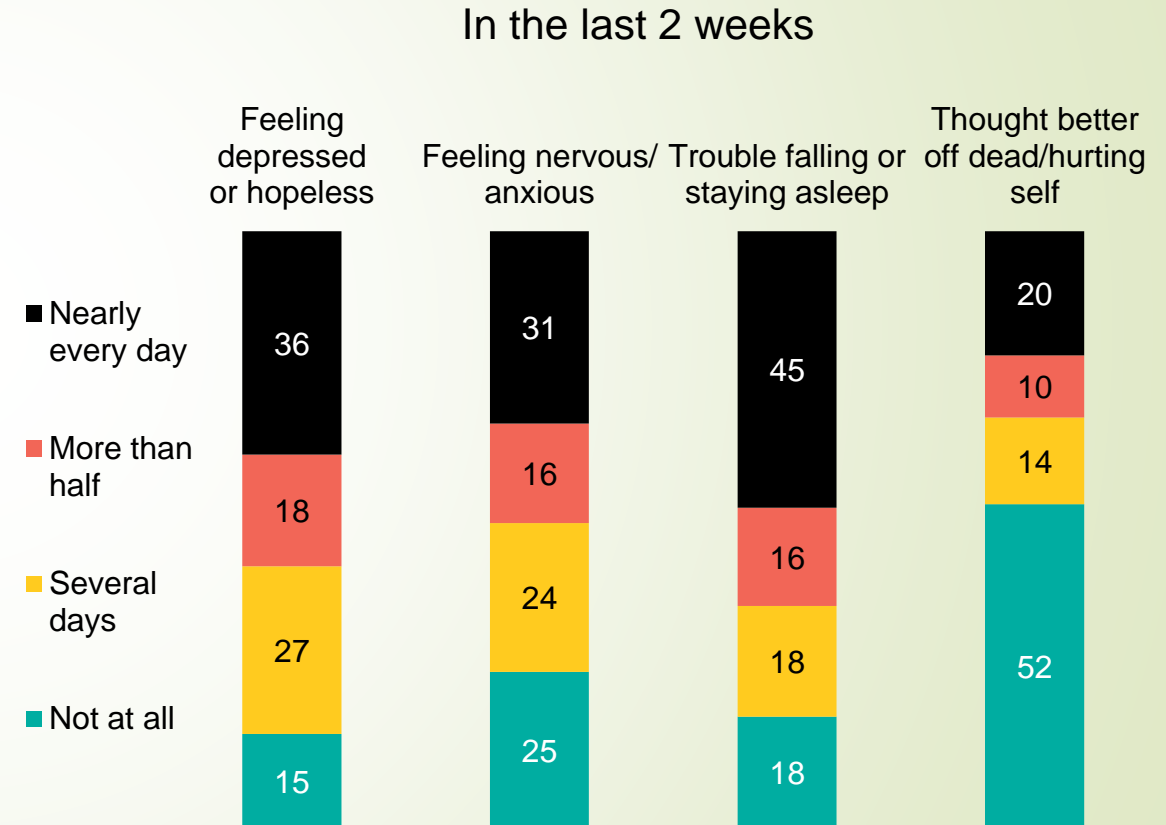
Rate the communication about regime changes



MENTAL HEALTH

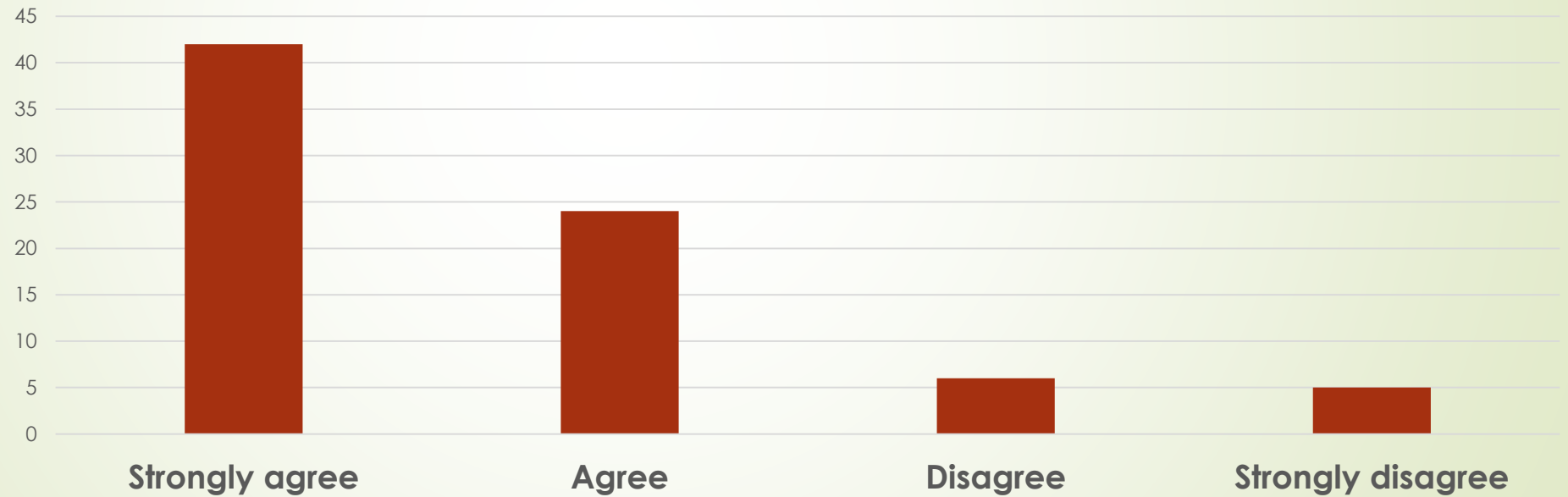
68% agree that mental health has never been worse

- **Deteriorating mental health** – depression, tension, increased use of medication and self-medication to cope
- **Increase in incidents and/or severity of self-harm**
- **Higher need for support but none available**
- **Diminished use of “prison listeners” (Samaritans) and active prevention of informal peer support**
- Staff not trained to deal with mental health fall out, often **punish rather than support the most vulnerable**



Ticking Time Bomb of Despair

"Many people in this prison are becoming desperate and losing hope"



Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics

Prisons are manipulating statistics on self-harming and violence to extend the lockdown in prison



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



**Who are the Experts on the Lived
Experience of Prisoners during this
Pandemic?**

OR

**Shouldn't Someone Ask the People
in Prison?**



THANKS

Prof. Shadd Maruna

@Criminology (Twitter)

Queen's University Belfast

