PhDr. Jan Drahoňovský
Charles University in Prague
Faculty of Arts
Department of Sociology

The Attitudes of Czech Inmates Towards Incarceration

Introduction

After 1989, the prison system in the Czech Republic underwent radical reform from the repressive socialist model to a modern Western prison system based on humanitarian principles. The role of guards and the overall treatment of prisoners have changed. Emphasis is being placed on the professionalism and training of staff.[1] The composition of the prison population has also changed, and the number of prisoners is now the second highest in the European Union.[2]

Despite all these changes, even after thirty years with a democratic prison system in the Czech Republic, we have only sketchy reports on how convicts perceive the institution that is supposed to provide their rehabilitation. Through this study, we would like to explore how convicts perceive relevant aspects of their prison sentence and how these attitudes relate to the time spent in prison and other demographic data. In doing so, we would like to contribute to the understanding of the prison population in the Czech Republic and the European-wide debate on the form of prison sentences.

Overview of the knowledge

The scholarly debate on the prison society and its attitudes took place mostly in the 1950s-1970s in the US. The sociologists of the Chicago School were the most important contributors to the field research. These researchers built on the pioneering work of Donald Clemmer (1958),[3] wherein he put forward a functionalist model of prison subculture (*Deprivation theory*).

The inmates' subculture[4] has been shown as a social phenomenon with coercive power on individuals (e.g., Allen, 1958). It can be seen as a reaction to continual surveillance, which prisoners perceive as responsible for their problems (Sykes, 1956); a reaction to the social isolation imposed by incarceration itself and at the same time an opportunity to co-operate with individuals who are in the same situation

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[1] Among other changes, an institution of the tutor and other professionals has been introduced. For more on this Czech specificity, see Drahoňovský, Bulavová, 2020.

[2] In 2019, there were about 21,000 imprisoned persons. That means 197 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants. It is the second highest rate in the EU (after Latvia) (Wilchová, 2020). The capacity was then filled to 104 %. It is higher than in 2008 (about 20,000), but less than in 2012 (more than 22,000) (Prison Service of the Czech Republic. *Statistical Yearbook for 2019*. 2020 [online]).

[3] 1st issue in 1940.

[4] Also called the 'inmates' system'.

(Berk, 1966); or the need to adapt to a bureaucratic system that is inherently unable to respond flexibly to the needs of the individual (Johnson, 1960).

The research on prisoners' attitudes at the time focused on the extent to which the individual identifies with the prison subculture. This process of becoming an inmate is called *prisonization* and is seen in contrast to resocialization (Clemmer, 1958). Most prisoners choose the path of conforming to the group and the unwritten *convict code* even at the cost of discomfort (Sykes, 1956). In some cases, we can see prisoners alternating between prison and formal institution, for example in their behavior towards a young inexperienced guard (Allen, 1958). It has been documented that informal prison leaders showed the most negative attitudes towards the institution, particularly in prisons with higher levels of deprivation (Berk, 1966).

Clemmer's assumption of a linear one-way process of prisonization was revised by Stanton Wheeler's research into the familiar *U-curve theory*: prisoners exhibit the highest level of conformity with the institution at the beginning of their sentence, the lowest in the middle phase, and then the curve rises again in the last phase. Surprisingly, the curve also appears for recidivists, i.e., the process of prisonization occurs anew with each sentence (Wheeler, 1961).

However, the research to confirm Wheeler's theory has been equivocal. The type of prison, its size, or the age composition of the inmates proved to be more important than the time spent in prison (Berk, 1966; Mylonas, Reckless, 1963).

In later years, the so-called *Importation theory* of prison subculture was promoted, a theory associated with the activity of violent gangs outside the prison walls. Research within this framework was carried out in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, most notably by Donald Cressey (1962) and James Jacobs (1977).

The authors, whose papers were published in the 1970s and 1980s, were concerned with radical criminology theory and pseudo-relationships in prison gangs. Christopher Thomas (1977) is cited most frequently. Wheeler's model has been reviewed regarding manifestations of maladaptive behavior. The U-curve was demonstrated for short sentences, but adaptation to long sentences proceeded differently (Flanagan, 1980).

The subsequent period from the late 1970s to the end of the millennium was less conducive to evidence-based research, the emphasis being on security and prison management (Dvorskin et al., 2011).

Only after 2000, there was a revival in interest and subsequently debate on the nature of prison subculture. The overwhelming majority of authors lean towards the importation model based on the predatory code and affiliation with violent gangs (Wacquant, 2001; Trammell, 2012; Fredman, 2013; Skarbek in Densley, 2015…) The same model, but with local peculiarities, has been demonstrated in Ukraine (Symkovych, 2018).

By contrast, Kreager et al. (2017) argue in favor of a cohesive system, referring to the concept of 'old heads' who enjoy universal authority in exchange for helping

young prisoners to adapt to the chaotic prison environment. The authors consider the system to be functional and relatively stable.[1]

Current research on prisoners' attitudes is already very diverse and sometimes focuses on very specific topics, e.g.: attitudes towards sexuality and HIV among transgender prisoners (Brömdal et al., 2019); attitudes towards violence and subsequent victimization (Steiner et al. 2014); attitudes towards different races in prison (Tetrault et al., 2020).

Attitudes towards work and satisfaction with life have been investigated by Polish researchers. Although incarceration itself harms attitudes towards work, permanent employment among prisoners greatly reduces the negative effects of incarceration (Jaworska, Parol, 2015).

A relevant, yet neglected, topic, namely the importance of food in prisoners' lives, is investigated in an Israeli study. This commodity is associated with the economic and social capital of convicts. Its confidential preparing is a symbol of resistance and a way of spending leisure time. Above all, distribution of food serves as a means of control of convicts by the staff (Einat, Davidian, 2019).[2]

Current studies capturing how the inmates assess the institution of prison are mostly conducted in the UK within the framework of the psychological concept of Quality of Life. British criminologists (Liebling et al., 2011) developed a questionnaire specifically for this purpose. The MQPL scale is capable of capturing the climate of the prison (e.g., the level of security, staff professionalism, contact with the outside…). Unfortunately, it does not reflect attitudes towards fellow inmates and the level of identification with them.

Some studies, especially of smaller prisons with a strong therapeutic program, are very positive (Liebling et al., 2019; Johnsen et al., 2017). Others are rather pessimistic, with staff-prisoner relationships characterized as impersonal or even antagonistic, thus contradicting the general ethos of prisons as rehabilitative institutions (Bullock and Bunce, 2020). However, there is considerable variation between prisons as documented by Crew et al. (2015). These differences are most marked in the dimension of staff evaluation, particularly when it comes to warders.

The role of the frontline staff has certainly changed over time. Officers can be significant agents in prisoners desisting from anti-social behavior (Ugelvik, 2021; Trammel et al. 2018). According to Crewe (2011), there has been a shift from 'coercion' to 'soft-power', i.e., an *individualistic neo-paternalistic approach* by warders.

The more common behavior style of the officers (at least in Europe) seems to be detachment, disinterest, inconsistency. In British private prisons, in particular, the failure of the warder component has been documented. Although convicts appreciate the friendliness of the officers and being addressed by their first name, this does not mean that they perceive the warders as professionals (the level of professionalism was lower than for the other dimensions). The lack of supervision and the associated lower

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[1] The finding is strongly supported by statistics. Despite a steep upward curve in the U.S. incarceration rate, prison homicides declined by 90 % between 1980 and 2000 (Mumola, 2005).

[2] It should be noted, however, that the Israeli prison staff can, by law, determine the food ratio for individual prisoners.

respect for officers is perceived negatively by prisoners and is related to a lower level of safety. One explanation for this may be that frontline guards do not feel they have the necessary support from the management in the case of a dispute (Crewe, 2015).[1] In some prisons, scholars documented almost total disinterest from the warders, with their actions limited to 'turning the key' (Crewe, Lewins, 2021).[2] A similar inconsistency in the officers' behavior (significantly associated with a higher number of disciplinary sentences and the presence of a violent prison subculture) was documented in Slovenia (Meško, Hacin, 2019).

Research similar to Wheeler's was carried out under the modern criminological *Coercion and Social Support theory*.[3] It focused on the manifestations of maladjustment to the institution (disobedience to orders, placement into correction, assaults on fellow inmates, or psychological problems) concerning the sentencing phase (<1 year; 1 - 5 years; >5 years). Convicts seem to focus on different issues in different stages of their sentences. In the first year, fear of assault dominates; in the middle phase, prisoners focus on relationships both with fellow inmates and outside the prison; and in the over-five-years phase, they appear to be already addressing issues related to release and are more open to cooperating with prison staff (Butler, 2019). This research broadly confirms Wheeler's conclusions, but with the finding that the peer group of prisoners may not be of paramount importance during the middle phase. The quality of relationships with the outside world can be even more important for the inmates in this stage of sentence.

Research on the prison population in the Czech Republic could only be carried out after the fall of the communist regime and the formation of the modern Prison Service in 1993.[4] Despite the almost 30 years of existence of a democratic prison system, few have conducted research into the prison population.

The prison environment has long been the center of interest for Lukáš Dirga and his team (2014; 2015; 2018…), whose main focus is on the institution of the prison itself and the roles of different actors (not only prisoners). Dirga draws on Goffman's classical theoretical model of the prison as a total institution. He made an extensive comparative study of the purpose of imprisonment from the perspectives of convicts, warders, professional staff, and prison management. Prisoners vote for the rehabilitative principle, but they are disappointed with its final form. Prison officers, on the other hand, are very skeptical about resocialization and are in favor of the isolation principle. The professional staff subscribes to the rehabilitation model, but they state that they have neither the time nor the conditions to implement it. The statements of prison management sound ambiguous and alibi-like. They claim that they cannot influence the state of affairs (Dirga, 2018).

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[1] Cf. DIRGA, 2014: in his study, he found a great deal of ambiguity about the role of guards and their actual share of power in the prison.

[2] Cf. the optimistic conclusions of the same author 10 years earlier (Crewe, 2011).

[3] Adaptation and non-adaptation to the institution are encouraged by coercion on the one hand and social support on the other.

[4] It is true, however, that the Penological Research Institute existed in 1968-1980. Its research activities focused mainly on a delinquent personality and rehabilitation methods during the sentence (Hladík, 2012).

In his field study, Drahoňovský (2016) focused on what is important for convicts during their incarceration. It turned out that treatment programs[1] are an abstract matter for prisoners. The program itself is less important than their relationship with a specific tutor. The officers are perceived in a rather neutral way; for the convicts they represent a necessary part of the general category 'regime'. It also emerged that convicts have a strongly ambivalent relationship with their fellow inmates. On the one hand, they participate in the informal community and benefit from its advantages, which are difficult to achieve through the formal system. On the other hand, they refuse to identify with the mass of prisoners because they are aware that prison harms them in the long run.

The severity of the penal institution has been examined by Pleva. His survey shows that the factors that are perceived most acutely are those that result from the sentence itself (overcrowding, little privacy, little hot water, few programs on TV), whereas there were no complaints of ill-treatment by guards and other staff (Pleva, 2010).

Czech penitentiary system

To understand fully the results of this study, we must introduce some specifics of the Czech penitentiary service.

Since 2017, there have been only two types of prison facilities: prison and maximum-security prison, as specified in legal sentencing. However, prisons are divided into three subtypes according to their security level: lower, medium and higher level of security. All these subtypes can be present in one prison, e.g., one building (or unit) with a higher level of security and another with a medium level. The transfer from one level to another is governed by the prison officials (not the justice) according to the risk that an individual inmate represents for security inside the prison or security outdoors. The regime differs between the security levels. For example, the prisoners in lower (or even medium) level regimes can work outside the prison.

Prison staff in the Czech penitentiary service consist of both prison officers and civilians (professionals). Prison officers may be divided into two main groups: warders (who facilitate the inside security) and guards (they guard the fences and the gate).

A unique feature of the Czech system is the civilian professional staff who take care of the prisoners' resocialization process. This staff includes a psychologist, special pedagogue, social worker, therapist, and, above all, a tutor. This professional is the main contact person for every prisoner. They are in charge of the prisoners in their unit: they facilitate the contact of the inmates with the outside, arrange work for them, arrange the resocialization activities and validate the treatment program (which every inmate must follow). Unlike the other civilian members of staff, the tutor communicates with their subordinates on a daily basis.[2]

Prisons in the Czech Republic vary in size and type. Most of the facilities are medium-sized prisons (from 200 to 600 prisoners). The prisoners usually live, in blocks which are divided into units, and these units consist of collective dormitories. The cell

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[1] The core component of the resocialization process of the convicted (Prison Service of the Czech Republic. *Concept of Prison System until 2025.* 2014 [online]).

[2] For more about this institution see also: Dirga, 2018.

system is normally only used in maximum-security prisons and in custodies. Individual accommodation is very rare[1] (Prison Service of the Czech Republic [online]).

Current study

Research question

What attitudes do Czech male convicts hold towards relevant aspects of their imprisonment, and how are these attitudes related to previous prison experience and other demographic factors?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by levels of security in a prison.

2. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by age.

3. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between classes.[2]

4. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between first-timers and recidivists.

5. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by age of the first imprisonment.

6. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by the total length of imprisonment over a lifetime.

7. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by time spent in a particular prison.

8. There is no significant difference in attitudes towards incarceration between groups by stage of the current sentence.

Method

To address the research question, we decided to conduct a statistical survey by questionnaire on a sufficiently large and representative sample. The investigation took place in one male prison in the Czech Republic selected because the local psychologist facilitated access to the prison.

The sample population for us represents all the inmates of one medium-sized male prison, which housed 497 inmates at the time of the survey (July 2019). Of these,

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[1] This system is a remainder from the socialistic regime era, when the prisoners were first and foremost a labour force for industry and is typical for all of the post-Soviet countries (Vaičiūnienė, Tereškinas, 2017).

[2] Three-class incentive system (also "differential groups"). The convict starts in the middle class II. He can, by his exemplary compliance with the treatment program, work his way up to class I (but not earlier than six months), which comes with benefits. Or, on the contrary, by non-compliance and violation of the internal rules, he can fall into class III without any benefits (Prison Service of the Czech Republic. *Concept of Prison System until 2025*. 2014 [online]).

about ¾ were in the higher-security level and ¼ in the medium-security level.[1] The blocks for the convicts are divided into units (with a capacity for 60 or 40 men), which consist of dormitories of 10 men each. In addition to the standard units, the prison also has a therapeutic section. The occupancy rate of the whole prison was about 70 %. This prison can be regarded as a typical one for the Czech Republic in terms of its accommodation conditions and the composition of its inmate population.[2]

Data collection

The inquiry included questions on independent variables (e.g., age of the first imprisonment and sum of lifetime imprisonment). We computed the stage of the sentence based on knowledge of the time served and the remaining part of the sentence as a relative measure on a 0-1 scale.[3]

Regarding attitudes, we were inspired mainly by the research of Drahoňovský (2016), as well as some recent studies.[4] We asked questions about the regime, the tutors, the conditions in the prison (e.g., satisfaction with the number of people in a unit), and other inmates. Extra questions were added, or existing questions slightly modified based on the recommendations of a local psychologist and tutor.

A 1-4 scale was used to capture attitudes, with 1 being the most positive attitude and 4 the most negative.[5] We also added five items where the respondents could write an explanation (about officers, prison, and inmates). The header explained the purpose of the survey, emphasized its voluntary nature and anonymity.

The questionnaires were distributed by the psychologist. She visited each unit and asked the unit representatives[6] to give the sheets to the individual inmates. They dropped them individually in the post box at the unit when completed. The tutor then delivered the documents to the psychologist, thereby protecting the anonymity of the participants.

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[1] It is a common model in the Czech Republic, where there are two or three types of prisons within one prison.

[2] Distribution of convicts per type of prisons within the whole population: lower-security 4 %; medium-security 28 %; higher-security 61 %; maximum-security 6 %; juveniles 0.4 % (Prison service of the Czech Republic. *Statistical Yearbook for 2019*. 2020 [online].) Sample: medium 22 %; higher 78 %. We tested whether the sample came from the population using the Chi-square test. The test criterion came out to be 2.17; the critical value is 3.87. Thus, we do not reject the hypothesis and the particular prison can be considered a representative sample of the population (in terms of the prison type criterion).

[3] This approach differs from Wheeler (and others), who operate only with a fixed length of sentence already served without knowing the remainder of the sentence. Convicts place considerable subjective value on the relative time in prison, e.g., they think differently about the time before and after the middle of their sentence (Moran, 2016). At the same time, for inmates with very short or, conversely, very long sentences, a fixed time designation may not make sense.

[4] For example, the food item is inspired by the Israeli study.

[5] E.g., "This punishment: 1) I can handle just fine. 2) I can handle it. 3) I rather can't handle it. 4) I absolutely can't handle it."

[6] An inmate who represents the concerns of the unit members and who facilitates the main communication between the inmates and the tutor. This does not mean any coercive power is exerted on his fellow prisoners.

The return rate of questionnaires usable for the survey is 282 out of 497, i.e., 56.74 %. The sample can be considered sufficiently large for statistical processing.

The data were transcribed into an Excel spreadsheet and checked for out-of-range values and blanks. There is a moderate incidence of blanks (up to 5 % per question) and their distribution is across questions and respondents. For two items (strictness of officers and professionalism of officers), we observed a 17 % proportion of blank fields. We assessed this as a misunderstanding of these items due to inappropriate wording and dropped them from the next survey. Thus, attitudes towards guards are represented to us only by the 'regime' scale, which should be sufficient.[1]

Results

Independent variables

Graph 1: Level of security
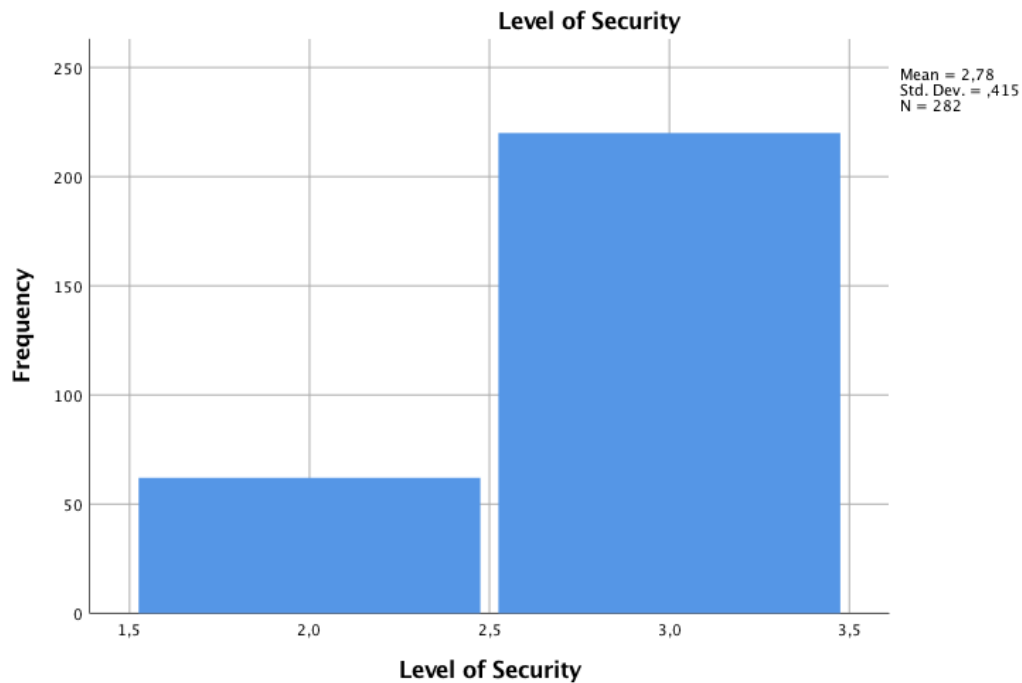
The representation of respondents from medium-security level is lower than from higher-security, but roughly proportionally adequate (¼).

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[1] See DRAHOŇOVSKÝ, 2016: the designation 'regime' emerged as an important factor, which was mainly related to the strictness and attitude of the officers.

Graph 2: Class
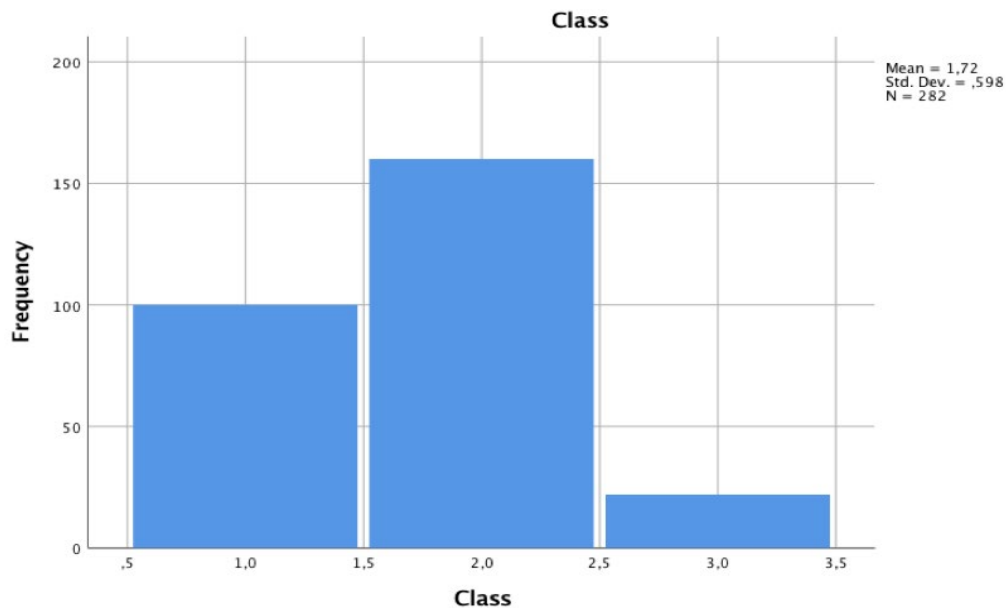
The most represented class is the middle one. The very low representation of class III is not surprising because of the generally lower motivation of these prisoners.

Graph 3: Age
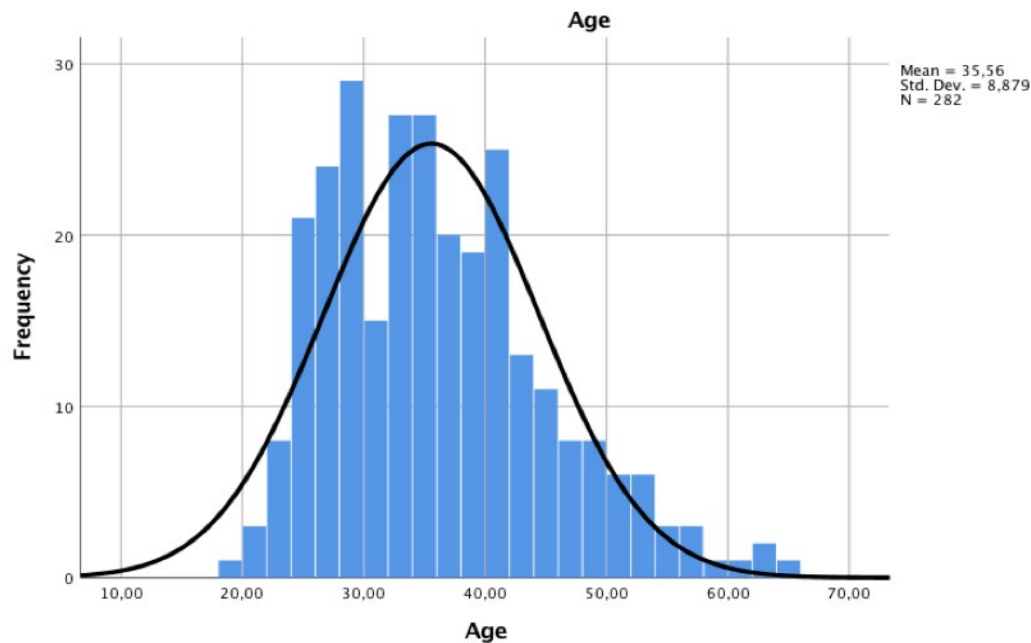
The age of the respondents is close to a normal distribution. The group aged between 28 and 33 is the most prevalent. There is little representation of those aged under 24 and over 52. Compared to the whole population, our sample has a more numerous representation of younger inmates (around 25 years old).[1]

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[1] Prison service of the Czech Republic. *Statistical Yearbook for 2019*. 2020 [online].

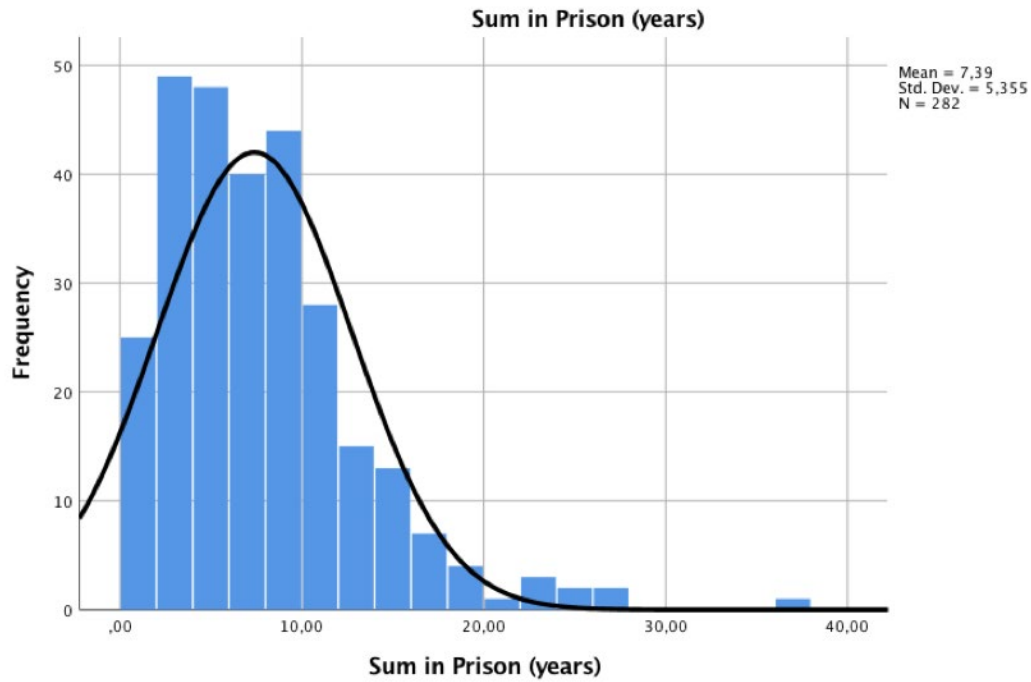*Graph 4: Number of imprisonments*
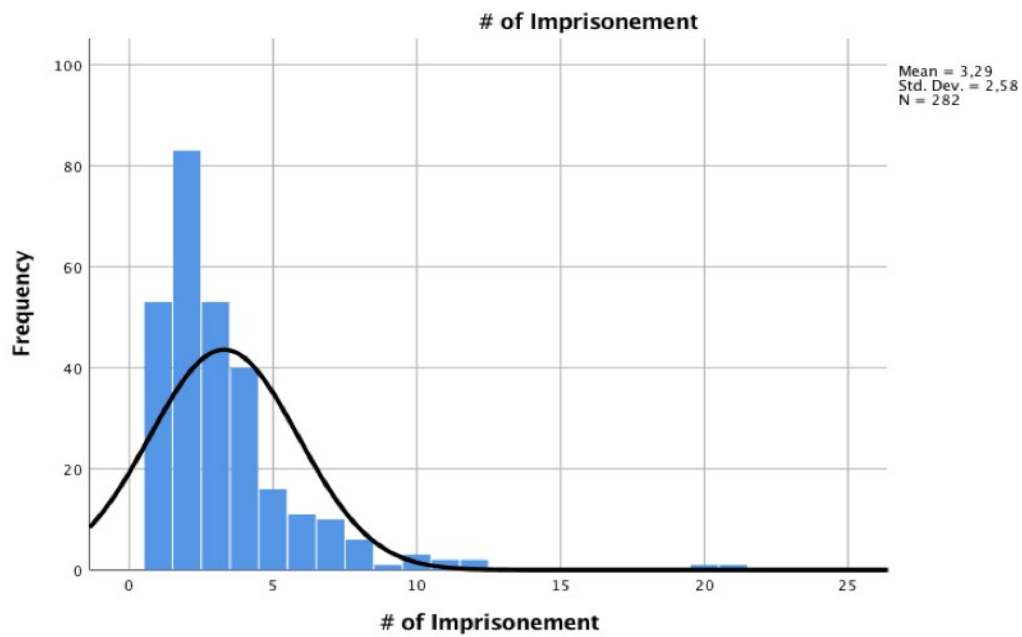
The vast majority of cases are currently in their first to their fourth imprisonment. There are 53 first-time prisoners among the respondents (18.8 %).
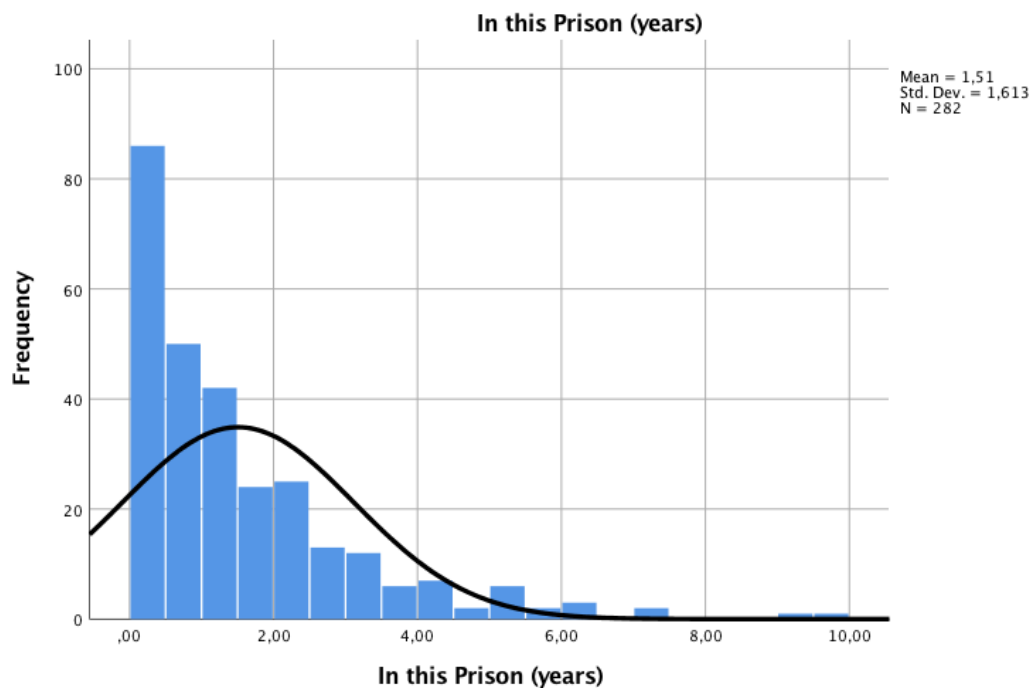
Graph 5: First time in prison (age)
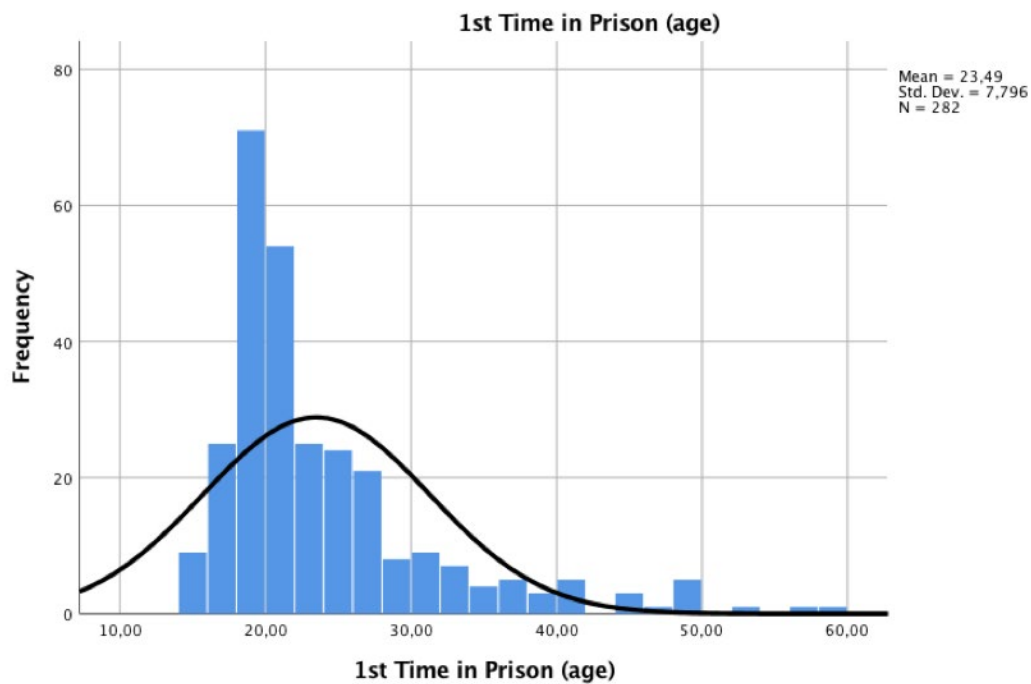
This chart shows the age when the individual was first incarcerated (most often around the age of 20).

Graph 6: Sum in prison (years)

The total time spent in prison over lifetime may vary, but the representation of inmates with over 11 years of prison experience is rare.

Graph 7: In this prison (years)

The following chart shows the time spent in this particular prison. Convicts generally have no more than about two years of experience in this prison.
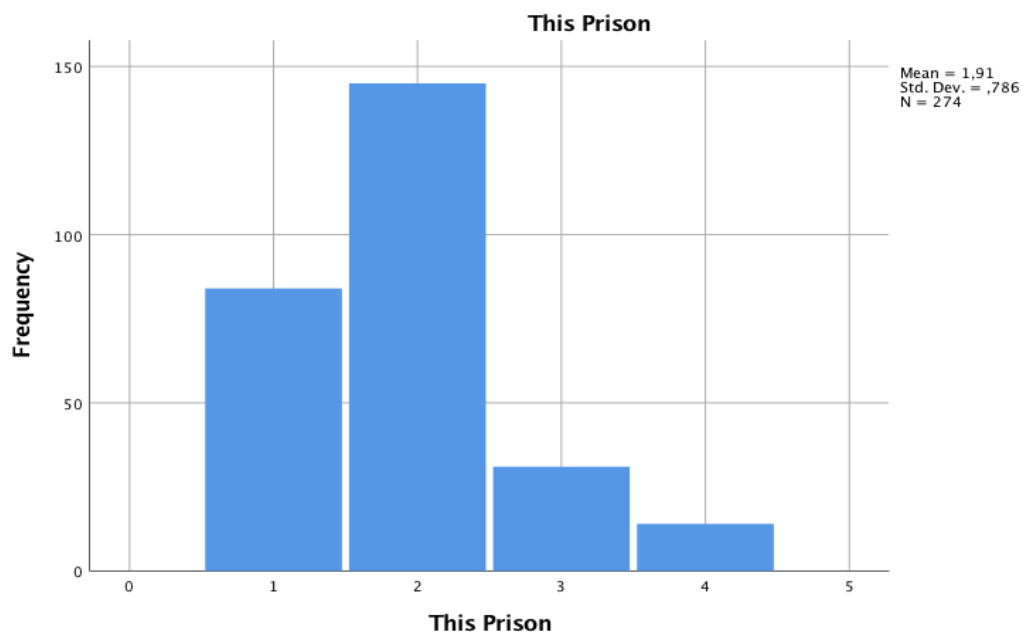
Graph 8: Stage of the sentence (relative value)
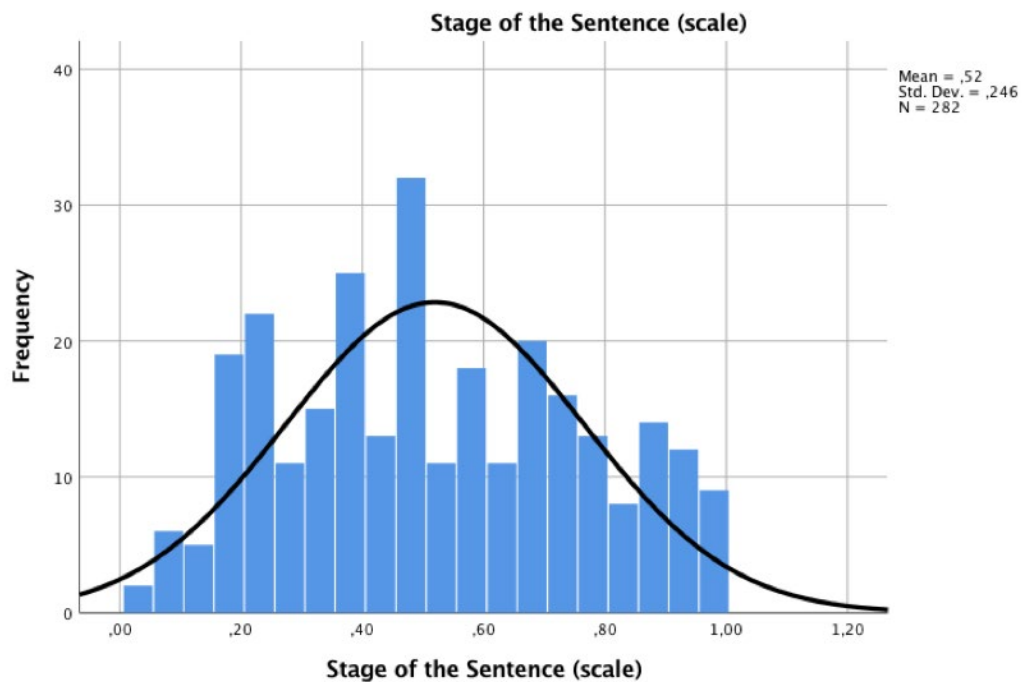
The variable stage of the sentence is a relative variable, ranging from 0 to 1. The distribution of this variable is close to normal.
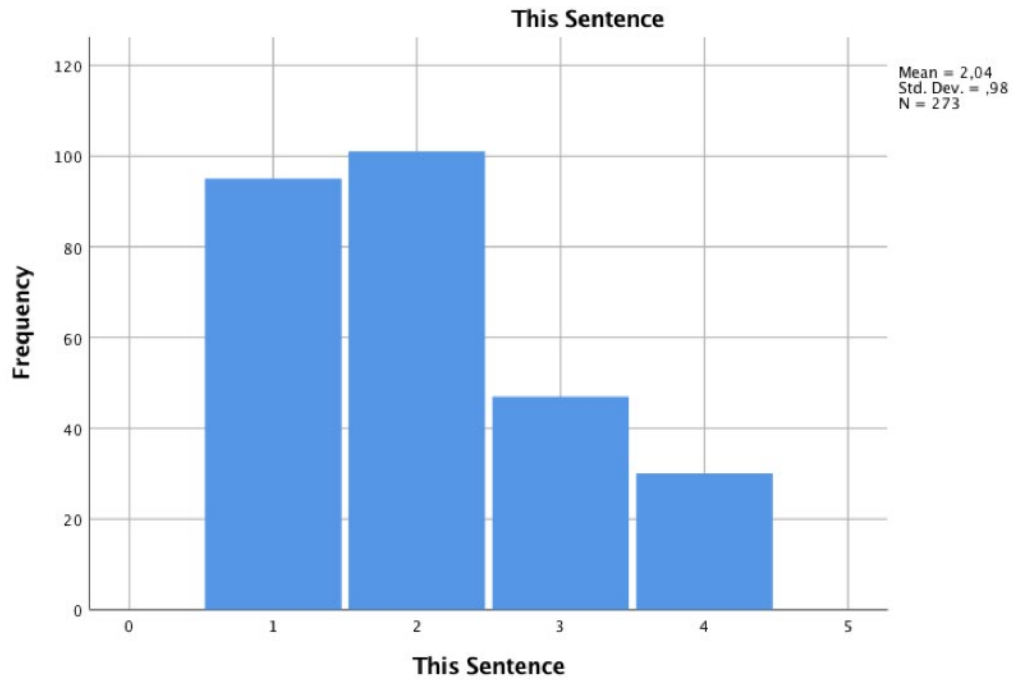
Attitudes towards the aspects of imprisonment (dependent variables)

Graph 9: This prison

Respondents had positive attitudes towards this particular prison. There were a negligible number of outright negative attitudes.

Graph 10: This sentence

Inmates are generally coping with their current sentence without any problems. Just under 30 respondents ticked adjustment problems ("I absolutely cannot handle this sentence.").

Graph 11: Numbers of people in the unit
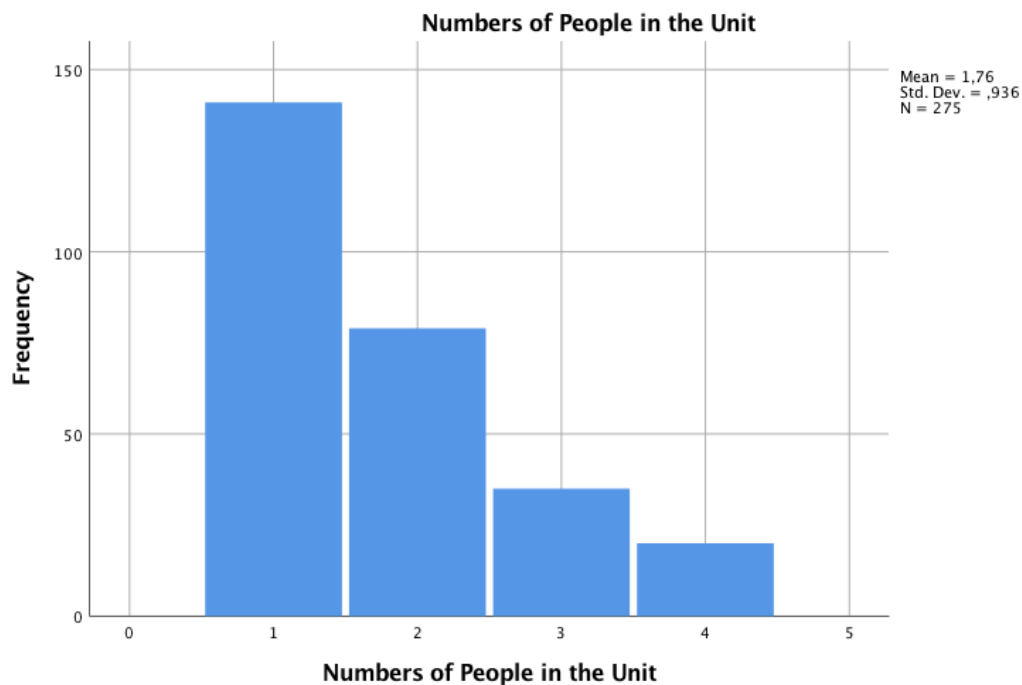
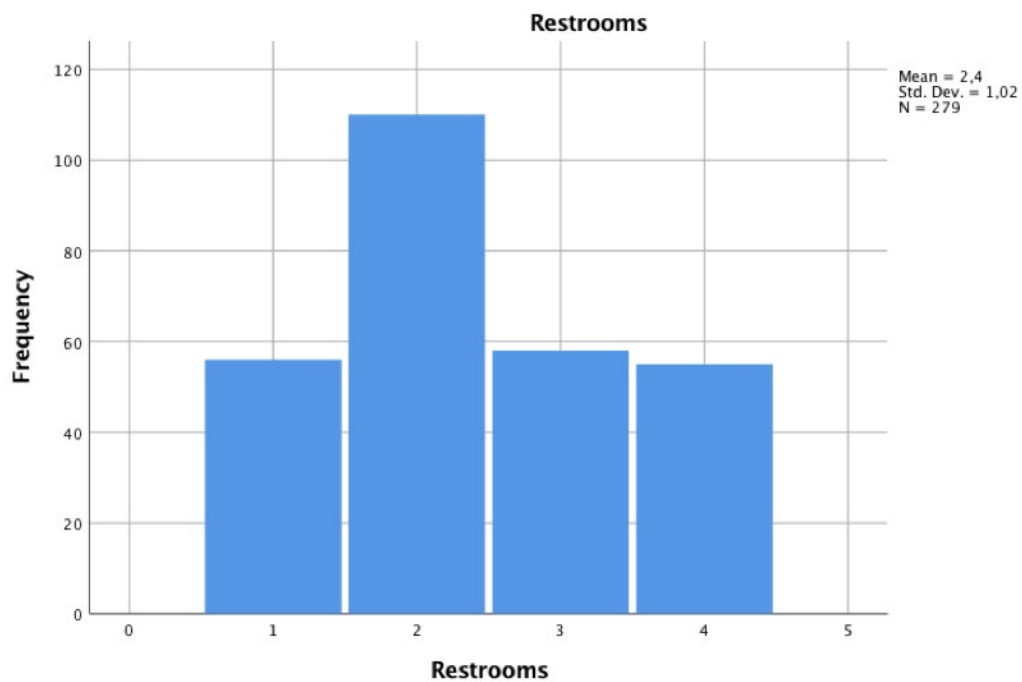The numbers of people in the unit were rated very positively.

Graph 12: Numbers of people in the dormitory

Numbers of People in the Dormitory

Mean = 1,45
Std. Dev. = ,89
N = 277
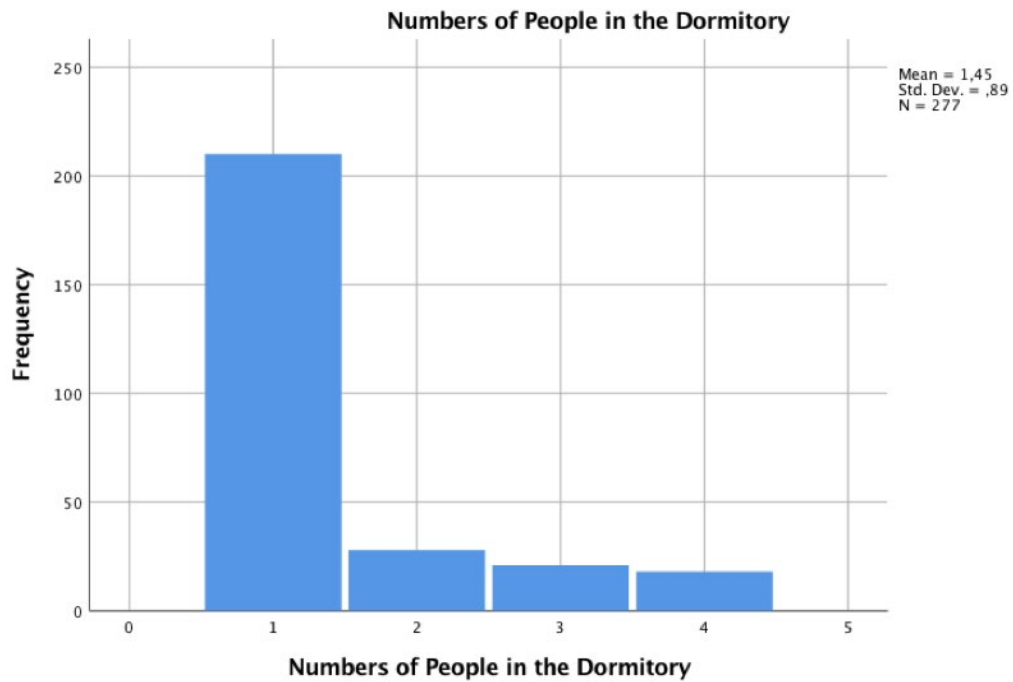
The numbers of people in the dormitory were rated as excellent by prisoners.

Graph 13: Restrooms

Restrooms

Mean = 2,4
Std. Dev. = 1,02
N = 279

Ratings of the washrooms and toilets tended to be positive, but inconclusive.

Graph 14: Food

Food

Mean = 3,13
Std. Dev. = ,928
N = 281
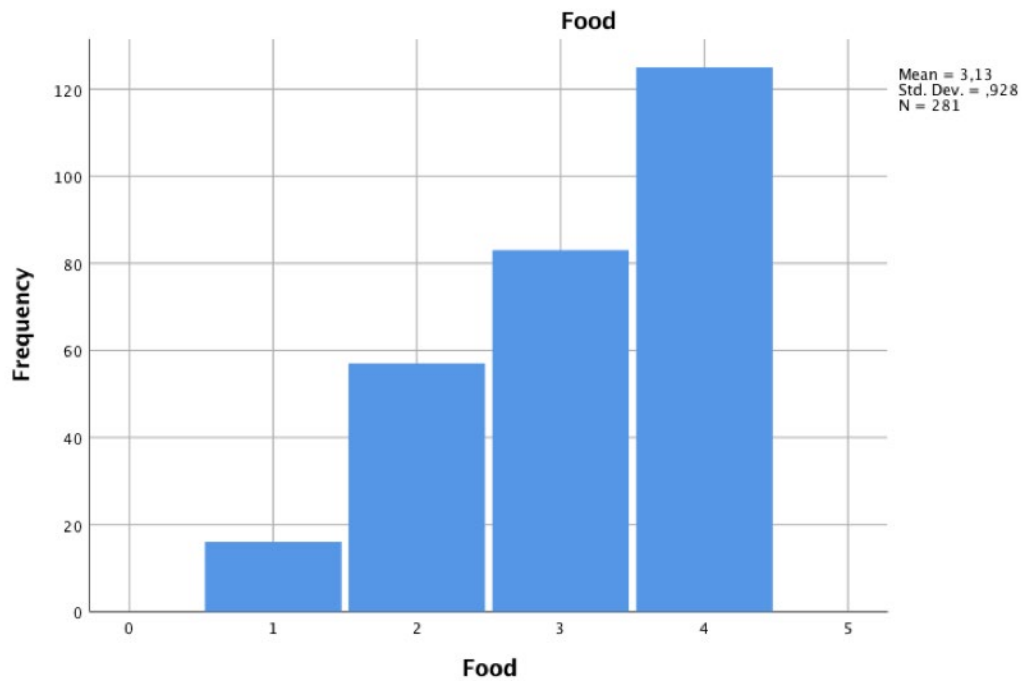
The ratings show clearly negative attitudes concerning food.

Graph 15: Regime

Regime

Mean = 1,91
Std. Dev. = ,704
N = 279
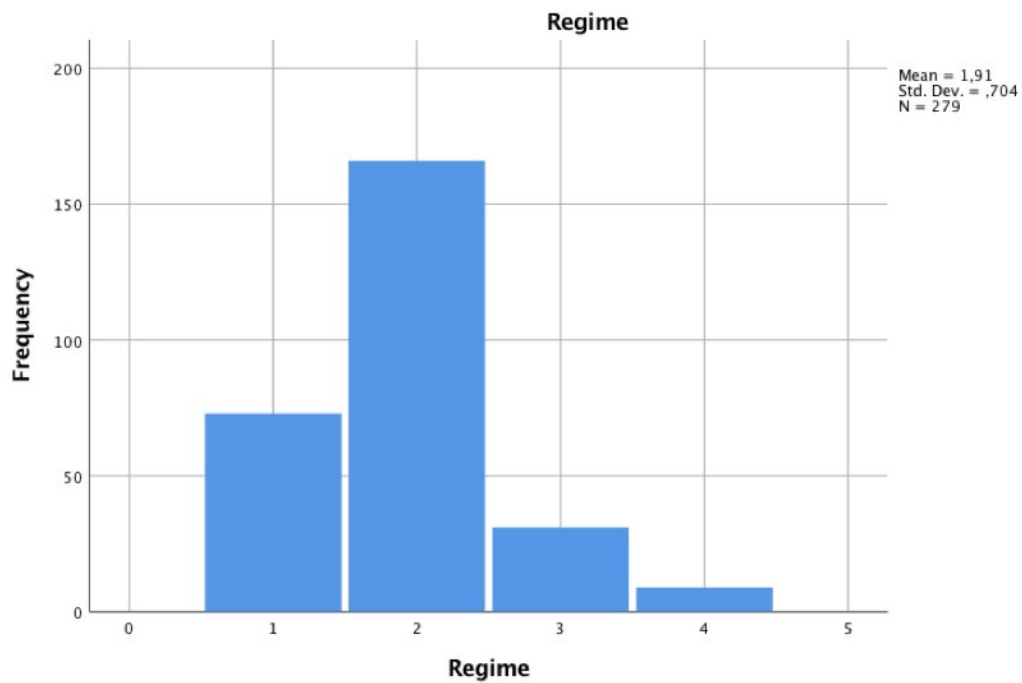
The regime (officers) was evaluated positively, with only sporadic negative attitudes.

Graph 16: Tutor

Tutor

Mean = 1,66
Std. Dev. = ,917
N = 271
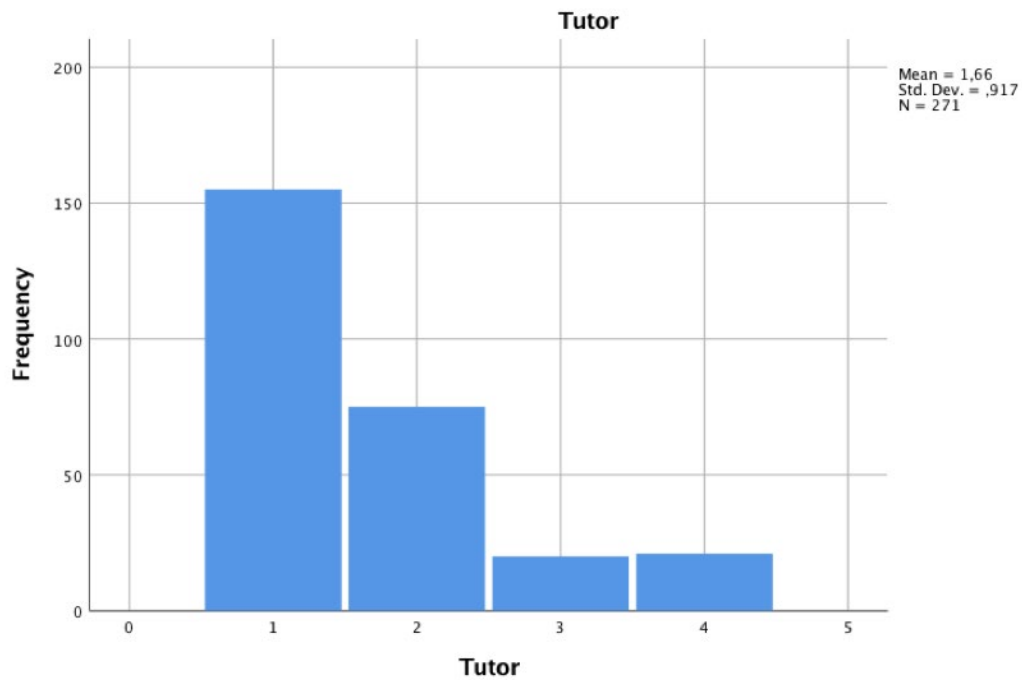
The prisoners' evaluation of the tutor was mostly excellent.

Graph 17: Relationships in the unit

Relationships in the Unit

Mean = 2,05
Std. Dev. = ,828
N = 274
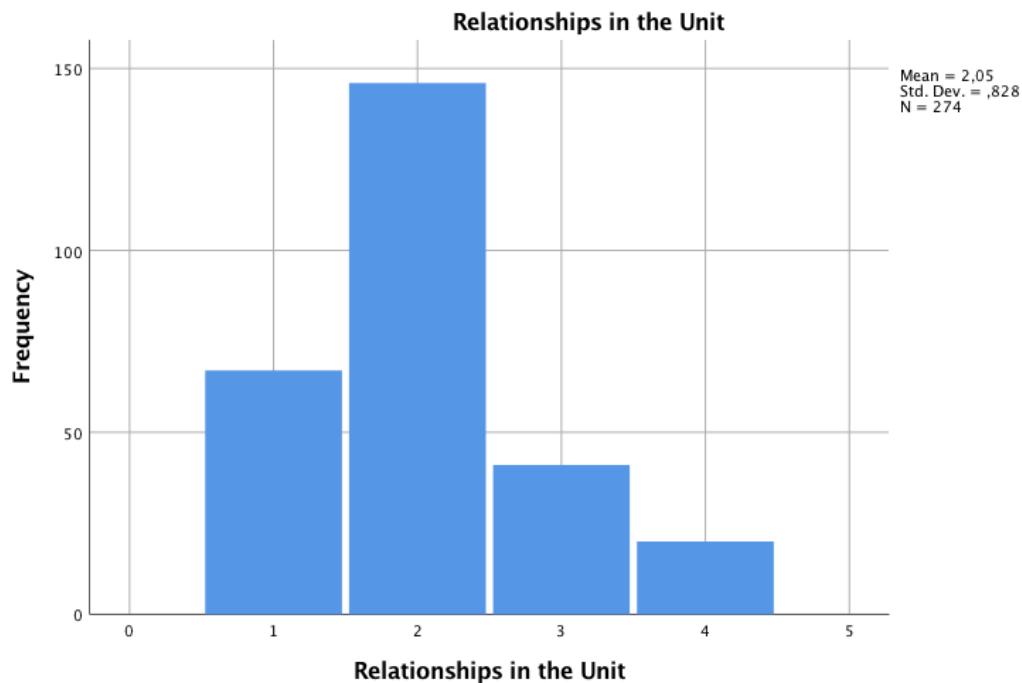
Relationships with fellow inmates within the unit were rated as mostly good.

Graph 18: Relationships in the dormitory

Relationships in the Dormitory

Mean = 1,48
Std. Dev. = ,677
N = 279
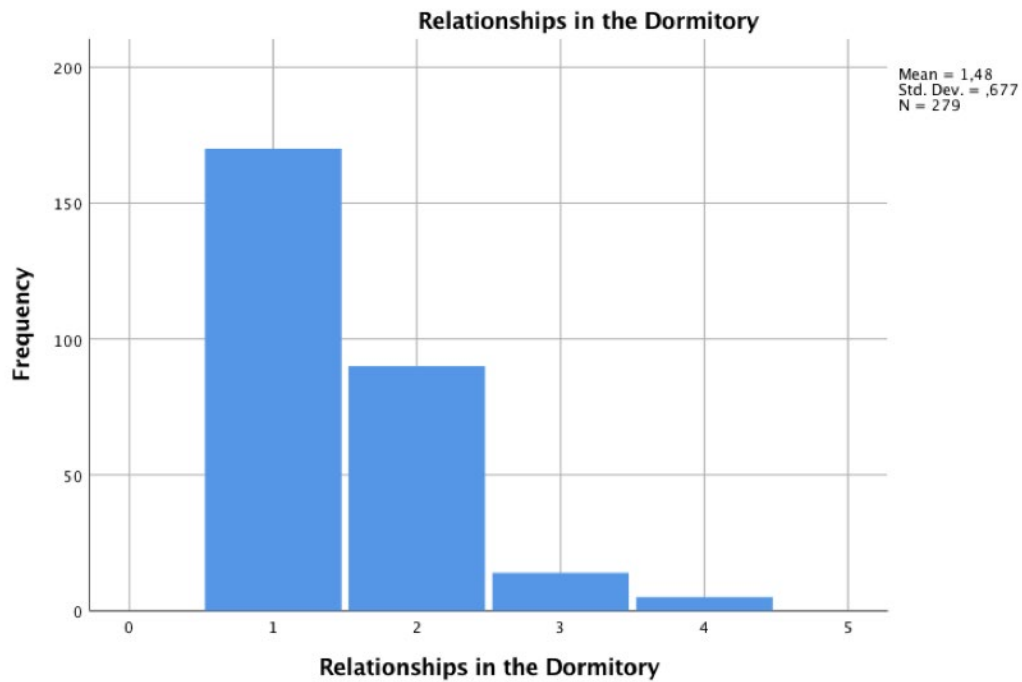
Relationships within the dormitory are considered excellent, with only sporadic dissatisfaction.

Graph 19: Inmates in general

Inmates in General

Mean = 2,19
Std. Dev. = ,988
N = 278
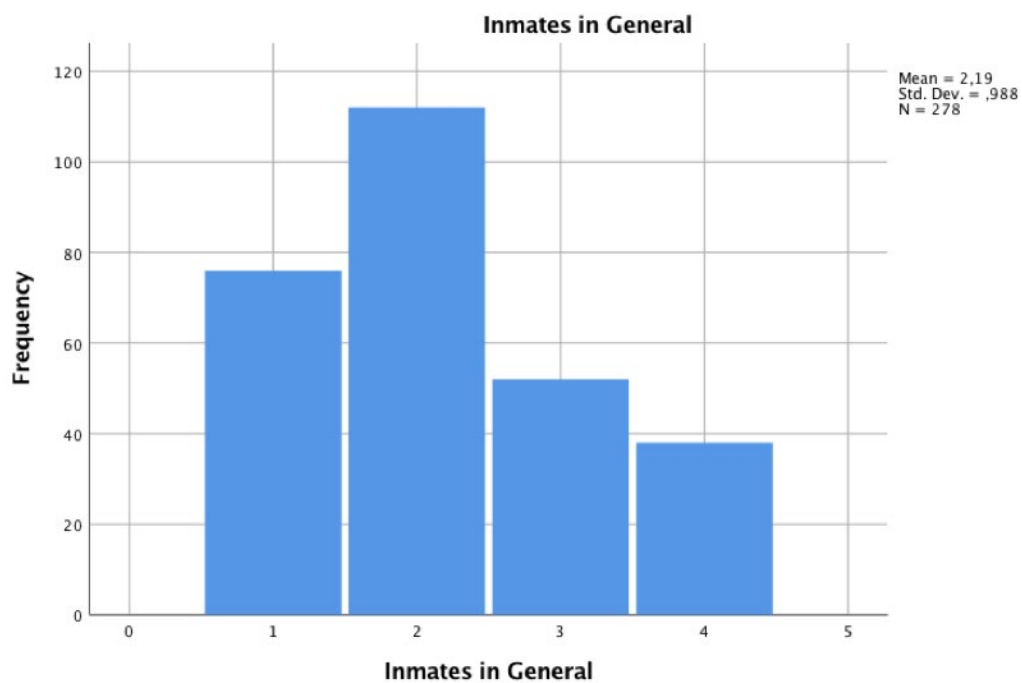
When asked about the prisoners in general, the ratings also tend to be positive, but all options are represented.

Summary of descriptive statistics

The results are more positive than expected. Almost all aspects of the prison experience are positively rated. Prisoners are satisfied with the regime (warders) and significantly satisfied with their tutor and accommodation. Although there were comments about too many people in a unit or dormitory, prisoners are mostly satisfied with these numbers. This corresponds with the satisfaction with the inmates in the unit and in the dormitory. The overall satisfaction with fellow inmates is not clear-cut, yet the positive experience prevails. There is only one item that significantly deviates from this trend, namely food, which is rated as very poor.

Qualitative responses

The qualitative data from the questionnaire helps us to understand the reasons for positive or negative choices. These are fill-in blanks where the prisoner could explain the reasons for ticking a given attitude choice. Completion of these items was optional.

The table shows: 1) how many respondents out of a total of 282 respondents commented on the item; 2) the percentage of those who commented; 3) the number of answers given to the question (respondents gave more than one answer in some cases). From this, we can get an idea of the main concerns of the inmates in this prison.

Table 1: Qualitative responses

Item	Respondents who answered	%	Number of responses
I want to go to another prison	56	20 %	57
Objections to the guards	104	37 %	108
Objections to this prison	155	55 %	187
Convicts I get along with	212	75 %	242
Convicts that bother me the most	216	77 %	352

About half of the respondents indicated various complaints about the prison. In contrast, only 20 % of respondents are looking for a way out of this prison. About a third of respondents had objections to the warders. For these supplementary questions, a single reason usually appeared in the box. In contrast, full ¾ of respondents took the opportunity to comment on their fellow prisoners (either positively or negatively). In the case of the positive choice, they mostly gave one reason; for the negative choice, they gave two or more reasons.

For the item *"I want to go to another prison"*, the most common reason given was to get closer to home and therefore increase visits from relatives (56 %). It was followed by the possibility of increasing the chances of parole by 12 %. The other responses were either unspecified or occurred sporadically.

For the item *complaints about officers*, the highest number of respondents reported arrogance (36 %). Next was unhelpfulness, laziness (10 %), and door banging, especially during night checks (8 %). Other complaints related to unprofessionalism, rudeness, or unnecessary badgering.

For the item *complaints about the prison*, respondents could comment on anything that was currently bothering them. We used a coarse sieve to sort the 187 responses:

- 43 % - conditions in the prison: TV (e.g., not enough programs), inability to cook food in the unit, not enough gym equipment, not enough food, overcrowded dormitories… In only four cases, a warder or a tutor appeared in the objections.[1]
- 52 % - prisoners and their behavior: prisoners in general, recklessness, arrogance, lack of hygiene, noise…
- 3 % - other: the fact of imprisonment itself, boredom…

There was a wide range of responses to the question *"I get along most with prisoners..."* These items are difficult to quantify because of the use of synonyms. Very common responses were *normal, smart, educated, older, polite, respectful of others, also in the same dormitory*.

Respondents felt the need to give two or more answers to the question *"What bothers me most about convicts..."* Here again, one needs to be cautious with the quantification of responses. Interestingly, the most frequent response was *arrogance* (10 %). The answers *stupid (in all its variations), primitive, without hygiene habits, reckless, aggressive, 'world champions', snitches*… were also frequent. There is no space in this paper to go into these answers in more detail.

Data preparation for hypotheses testing

The *level of security* is represented quite naturally by the two groups represented in the prison: medium and higher level. Also, the class is given by (I; II; III). For the item *Stage of the sentence*, we divided the respondents into thirds according to how much of their sentence they had already served (relative to the whole sentence).

For the item *age*, we divided the prisoners into three groups based on the calculation of percentiles (33.33 and 66.67), with the age thresholds in this case being 30 and 38 years. We followed the same procedure for the items: *First time in prison* (thresholds of 19 and 24 years); *In this prison* (0.54 and 1.63 years); *Sum in prison* (4 and 9 years).

For hypotheses testing, attitudes had to be reduced to the lowest number of factors. To do this, we used **factor analysis**. The data proved to be well analyzable (KMO index = 0.811; Bartlett's test = 0.000).

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[1] Cf. PLEVA, 2010.

Graph 20: Factors
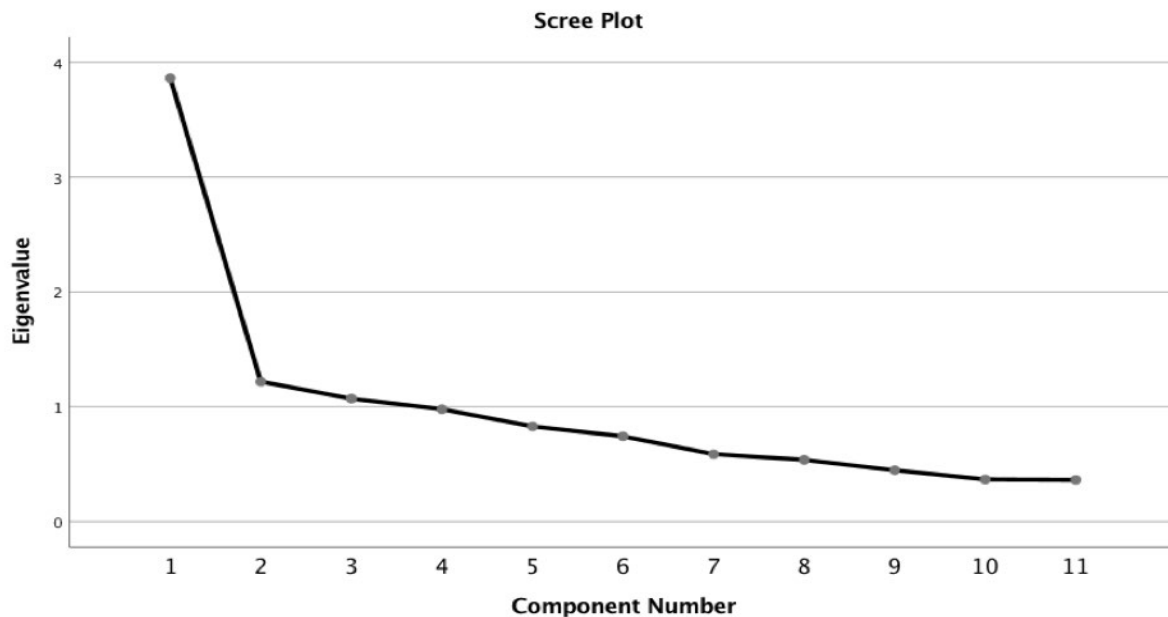
In the principal analysis, we found three potential factors. Only one factor is strong (Eigenvalue = 3.86; variance = 35 %) the other two factors are only just above 1 and explain 11 % and 9 % of the variance, respectively. The rotated solution did not give us a better explanation of the variance of the values, so we opted for a single-factor solution.

Table 2: Component matrix

Item	Component 1
This prison	.653
This sentence	.590
Regime	.635
Numbers of people in the unit	.777
Numbers of people in the dormitory	.447
Restrooms	.476
Food	.375
Tutor	.503
Relationships in the unit	.711
Relationships in the dormitory	.551
Inmates in general	.672

Next, we performed a **reliability analysis**. Keeping all 11 items, we obtained Cronbach's alpha = 0.801. We excluded three items with values below 0.5 *(Number of people in the dormitory, Restrooms, Food)*, which slightly raised Cronbach's alpha to 0.805. Finally, we decided to exclude the not-so-conclusive item *Tutor*, which raised our alpha to 0.812. Excluding other items has already led to a decrease in reliability. We, therefore, retained seven items for further analysis.

From these seven items, we computed the arithmetic mean. We called this main factor *Incarceration*.

Hypotheses testing

*Table 3: Analysis of variance ANOVA (alpha = 0.05)*

	Hypothesis	p-value	Result
1	Level of security (medium or higher)	.904	0
2	Age (group)	.521	0
3	Class (I; II; III)	.347	0
4	First timer / Recidivist	.765	0
5	First time in prison (group)	.010	Rejected
6	Sum in prison (group)	.528	0
7	Time in this prison (group)	.098	0*
8	Stage of this sentence (group)	.585	0

*Not rejected at alpha = 0.05, but could be rejected at alpha = 0.10.

Rejected Hypothesis 5

We illustrate that there is a significant difference between the first and second group by age of the first incarceration. Specifically, this means that convicts who first went to prison at the age of 19 or earlier show significantly more positive attitudes towards incarceration than those who first went to prison at the ages of 20-24. However, those who first went to prison at 25 or later were no different.[1]

Graph 21: Means plot First time in prison (groups)
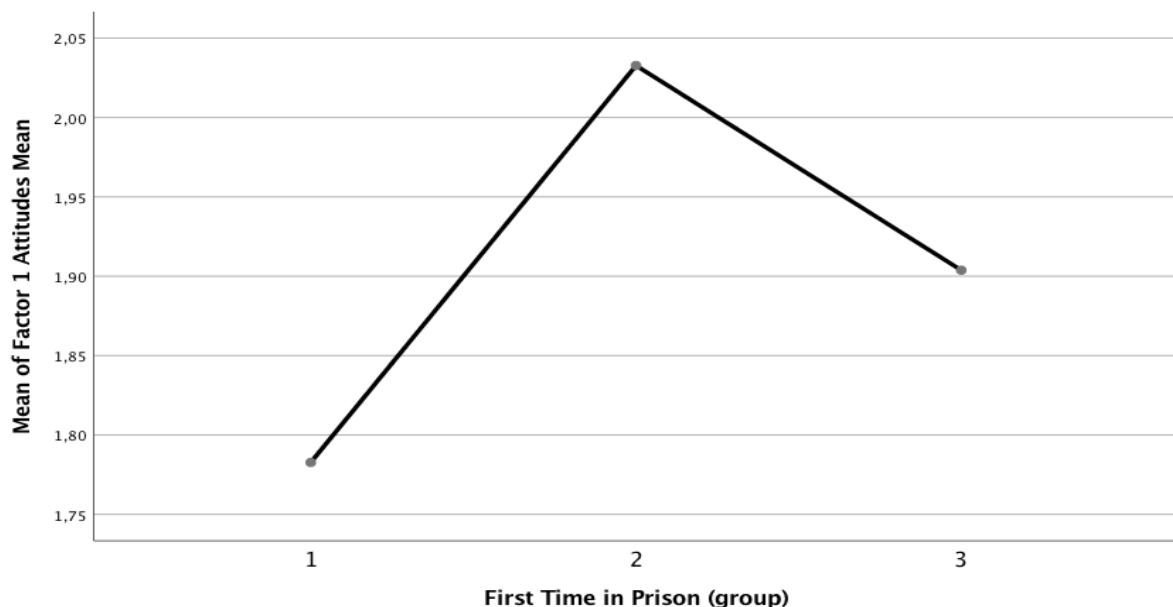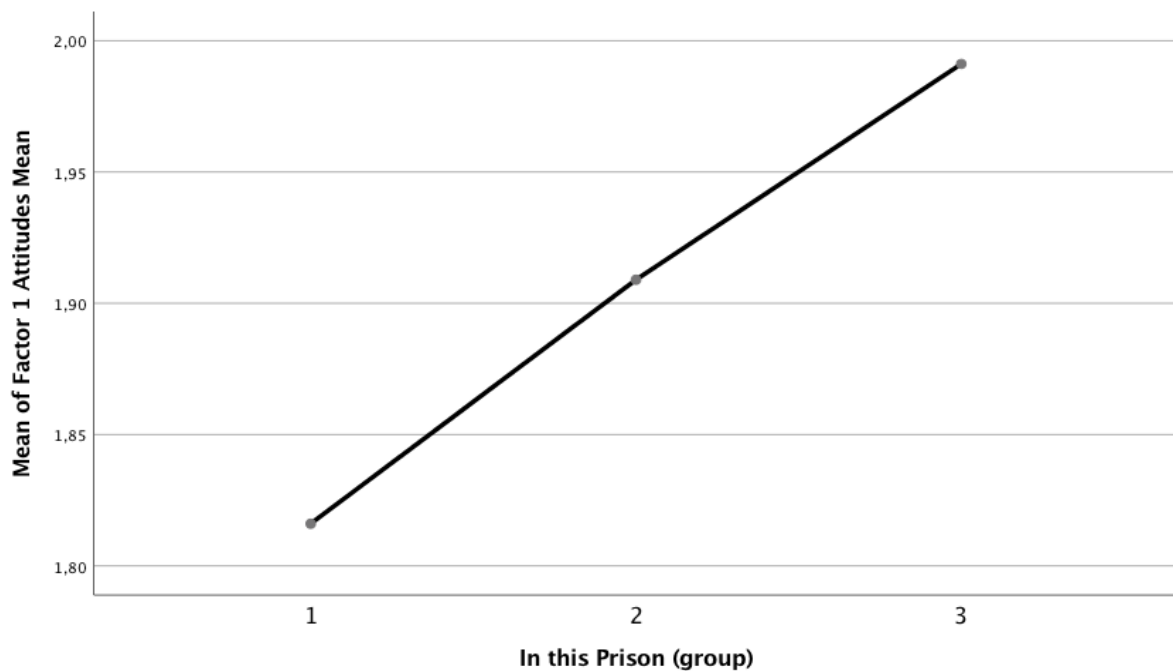

Although we did not reject *Hypothesis 7*, it would be possible to reject it at alpha = 0.10. The trend is a linear deterioration of attitudes with increasing time in this prison.[2]

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[1] Matrix of significance level between groups: 1-2 = 0.007; 1-3 = 0.317; 2-3 = 0.294.
[2] Matrix of significance level between groups: 1-2 = 0.524; 1-3 = 0.080; 2-3 = 0.621.

Graph 22: Means plot in this prison (groups)

Discussion

The **reliability** of the research is supported by the large sample size of n = 282, which allows for quite solid statistical calculations. The participation rate was 56 % of the convicts. The results may have been biased in a positive direction, mainly due to the low proportional representation of the 3rd class. Unfortunately, we were not able to control for this; the recruitment of participants was based on voluntary participation and was not associated with any profit. The good news is the visible trends in responses for each item, the frequent use of the opportunity to add an opinion, and the existence of one robust factor.

Ratings for almost all items were very positive, which surprised both us and the prison staff. In particular, the tutor item seems to have been unrealistically overestimated (perhaps because of concerns that the tutor might read the questionnaires). For the other items, however, the respondents had no reason to distort their answers. They could comment on anything that bothered them, and many did so.

Satisfaction with the prison and punishment is most closely linked to relations in the unit. Getting into the right team is probably absolutely crucial to overall satisfaction within a prison. A positive experience was predominant. A slightly less strong predictor were the dormitory relationships, which were rated as excellent. This can be interpreted that the inmate can choose a suitable collective within the unit and, to some extent, within the prison. The very positive evaluation of the tutor is consistent with this. See the explanations by both Dirga (2018) and Drahoňovský, Bulavová (2020): tutors are overwhelmed with administration and have no time to work with convicts. That leads to a *laissez-faire* educational style. Convicts seem to welcome this state of affairs.

The other prisoners were generally rated rather positively. On the other hand, they also received the most negative comments. Full ¾ of the respondents took the opportunity to complain about the behavior of fellow inmates. This ambivalence was also found in the qualitative research of Drahoňovský (2016).

The positive assessment of the regime is not surprising. In the research of Dirga (2014) and Drahoňovský (2016), officers are not referred to as a repressive force. Also, the comments in the qualitative section on this component were not nearly as frequent as on the convicts.

What is surprising, however, is that the regime, along with the assessment of inmates (whether within the dormitory, the unit, or overall), became part of *one common factor of incarceration*. Thus, the two groups are not in opposition from the perspective of convicts. This raises the question of the very existence of a prison subculture. In this study, we have no evidence for a prison subculture, certainly not according to the traditional model. Rather, we might speak of a prison climate.

A potential *second factor* is the pairing *Food and Restrooms*. We could call it *Material equipment*. Here we could probably include other items that we did not ask about, but which were widely mentioned in the qualitative part: *number of programs on TV, DVD player, availability of hot water, possibility to prepare hot food in the unit…* These things are certainly important for the inmates, but they do not correspond closely with the overall satisfaction with the current sentence. This second factor may represent what convicts imagine by the term *humanization of the prison system*, i.e., primarily improving their material conditions (cf. Dirga, 2018). In any further research, it is appropriate to elaborate on this area.

We must admit, unfortunately, that we neglected one issue that can be of great importance for the inmates: medical care in prison. Although the respondents did not mention this in the qualitative part, this item would probably receive a negative assessment (like food).

During **hypotheses testing**, virtually none of the independent variables proved to be significant concerning attitudes towards incarceration. Convicts gave similar assessments regardless of age, recidivism, previous prison experience, and stage of the sentence.

The only hypothesis that we rejected was the one concerning the groups by age of the first incarceration. Those who were first incarcerated at age 19 or earlier showed significantly more positive attitudes towards their incarceration than the middle group. A possible explanation for this is that these young offenders are very delinquent individuals for whom incarceration does not represent a significant inconvenience in their lives; rather, they perceive their time in prison as an adventure.

There is *no difference between the groups* according to prison experience. Those with short prison experience gave the same ratings as those who had long sentences (and therefore an experience of multiple prisons). The same was true for the first-time prisoners and recidivists (though it is true that first-time prisoners were only 1/5 of the sample). How is it possible that newcomers perceive their incarceration the same way as seasoned prisoners? The participants' experience with this prison is relatively short (median = 1 year) and represents only a portion of their sentence (about ½). Experiences of different prisons are certainly widely discussed among prisoners, with some consensus emerging.

We also did not observe a difference in issues of formality such as level of security and differences between the classes. We conclude that, in this prison, differentiation among convicts is more of an administrative matter without any real impact.[1] This may not necessarily be the case for the classes, as the representation of the 3rd class was lower in the sample. It is possible that convicts who would have given negative ratings did not participate.

Only among those grouped according to the time spent in this prison was there an insignificant trend of linear deterioration, although there was a difference of only 1.2 years between group 1 and group 3. Since attitudes were still in a positive mode even for group 3, we can interpret this more as acclimatizing to the prison (or getting bored of it). Indeed, some respondents who sought to move elsewhere gave the need for change as the reason.

The research **design** is very close to the modern prison climate research by, for example, Crewe et al. (2011, 2015, 2021…). Our questionnaire contains more questions about fellow inmates, while other questions are missing (e.g., staff professionalism). It is true, however, that Czech prison staff differ from British staff (e.g., the existence of the tutor), For this reason, adopting the MQPL scale could be misleading. Even so, the research is informative enough to convey an idea of how prisoners perceive their punishment; comparisons with English studies are possible.

The **main limitation** of our study is its low generalizability, as it was a purposive sample. While the results can be considered valid for this specific prison, considerable caution is needed in their transferability to the entire population of male inmates. Positive deviance is suspected in this case. Also, some aspects may be locally specific (e.g., no factual difference between levels of security or poor food).

Unfortunately, it was only during the evaluation that we realized that we could have added other relevant items to the questionnaire that would have helped us to clarify the picture of the prison, e.g., possibility of visits from close persons, opportunities for work in the prison, material conditions in the unit, medical care, and leisure possibilities. These areas should be added to future studies, preferably of a comparative nature between several prisons.

Another limitation is the fact that the data was collected in 2019, before the Covid period. The situation in prisons was quite different back then as the pandemic meant many restrictions were placed on prisoners (limitations on visits and on work outside of prison). It is true, however, that during the pandemic, it was extremely difficult to carry out a survey inside a prison. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to conduct another survey for comparative purposes in the post-Covid time and in another prison(s).

Conclusion

It is clear that prisoners are not suffering in any particular way and are generally satisfied. This is in line with, for example, Dirga (2018) on the ongoing process of humanization of the prison system, which is manifested in ever less severe treatment

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[1] Prison staff confirmed to us that assignment to medium-level of security in this prison may increase the chances of getting a job, but is otherwise essentially no different from assignment to higher-level.

and attitudes from warders and other staff. Thus, prisoners' dissatisfaction is only manifested in sub-items of a material nature. The absence of differences (with one exception) between demographic groups shows us that the evaluation of attitudes towards imprisonment is more related to the prison itself and the common prison experience. However, these results are valid for the pre-Covid era and may not be entirely accurate for the current situation.

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S U M M A R Y

This study was designed to examine Czech inmates' attitudes towards the relevant aspects of incarceration concerning time spent in prison and other demographic characteristics. The sample consisted of 282 male inmates from a typical prison. Ratings on almost all aspects were positive and one major factor was found to exist. The convicts evaluated their incarceration as a whole concerning their specific prison. With one exception, there was no relationship between the attitudes and independent variables. Attitudes towards incarceration do not differ between different groups of inmates and are stable over the course of a sentence. The results have been discussed.

Keywords: inmates' subculture, attitudes, prison, incarceration.

R E S U M É

DRAHOŇOVSKÝ, Jan: POSTOJE ČESKÝCH VĚZŇŮ K UVĚZNĚNÍ

Tato studie měla za úkol prozkoumat postoje českých odsouzených k podstatným aspektům uvěznění ve vztahu k času ve vězení stráveném a dalším demografickým charakteristikám. Vzorek sestával z 282 odsouzených mužů z jedné věznice s ostrahou. Hodnocení téměř všech aspektů bylo pozitivní a prokázala se existence jednoho hlavního faktoru. Odsouzení hodnotí své uvěznění jako jeden celek, a to ve vztahu ke konkrétní věznici. Krom jediné výjimky nebyl prokázán vztah mezi postoji a nezávislými proměnnými. Postoje k uvěznění se neliší mezi různými skupinami odsouzených a jsou stabilní v průběhu výkonu trestu. Výsledky byly diskutovány.

Klíčová slova: vězeňská subkultura, postoje, vězení, uvěznění.