

# Societal Protection

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover a specific function of punishment known as societal protection, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Societal Protection
2. Community-Based Corrections
3. Prisons and Criminal Recidivism
4. Death Penalty

## 1. SOCIETAL PROTECTION

**Societal protection**, a specific function of punishment, is a way to control deviance and to protect society by locking up offenders temporarily for a period of time in a prison, or permanently by executing them via the death penalty. There are different degrees of punishment for varying degrees of crime, so there are three different ways to punish offenders: prisons, the death penalty, and community-based corrections programs.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Societal Protection**

A way to control deviance in society by locking up offenders in prisons or sentencing them to the death penalty.

## 2. COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONS

**Community-based** corrections are forms of punishment that operate outside of jails and prisons, aimed at reform rather than just mere incarceration. There are several kinds of community-based corrections:

- **Probation** is a form of punishment whereby the convicted offender stays in the community but must undertake a court-imposed treatment regime. This regime can include counseling, drug treatment, and staying away from certain people who are criminally suspect. You must check in with a probation officer regularly, and alcohol and drug use is prohibited.



### HINT

Think of probation as ‘restricted freedom.’ You're in the outside world, but you have a certain set of stipulations that you must follow that are court ordered.

- **Shock probation** is a combination of prison and probation. Shock probation occurs when the judge sends the offender to prison for a brief period of time to ‘shock’ them or scare them, after which they resume a normal probation with court-ordered stipulations. This is reserved for cases that involve more serious infractions than those assigned to probation.
- **Parole** occurs when an inmate is released early, and they're allowed to finish up the rest of their sentence in society rather than locked away in a prison. It is common for this to happen when an inmate exhibits good behavior, for example.

## IN CONTEXT

Sometimes people get sentenced to life without parole, although this is rare and unlikely. Even ‘life sentences’ don't mean life. Sometimes a life sentence actually translates to 13 years, or 26 years, etc. A governing body decides what the actual term of the life sentence is, and if you behave well in prison, you can be released on parole--it is a very common part of the rehabilitation process.



## TERMS TO KNOW

### Community-Based Corrections

Forms of punishment aimed at reform, rather than mere incarceration, and operate outside of jails and prisons.

#### Probation

A form of punishment where the convicted offender stays in the community but must undertake a court imposed treatment regime.

#### Shock Probation

A form of punishment where the judge sends the offender to prison for a part of the sentence to "shock" them, and then lets them serve the rest of their sentence in the community with probation conditions.

#### Parole

When an inmate is released early and gets to serve the rest of his or her sentence outside the prison under the loose supervision of a parole officer.

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## 3. PRISONS AND CRIMINAL RECIDIVISM

In addition to protecting society, punishment also performs the role of reducing **criminal recidivism**, which is repeated criminal offenses. Any offense after your initial offense is an example of criminal recidivism. The U.S. has a very high rate of criminal recidivism, because jails are often hostile places that don't function to reform convicts in the way that society intends.

➡ **EXAMPLE** If you recall the Stanford Prison Experiment, you can see how the prison becomes a very hostile place and not conducive to rehabilitation.

The U.S. also has high rates of criminal recidivism because crime is socially and culturally patterned. Certain

people, for social and cultural reasons, are more likely to be criminals than others.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Criminal Recidivism

Repeated criminal offenses. Any offense after an initial offense is an example of criminal recidivism.

## 4. DEATH PENALTY

The final and most severe form of societal protection is the death penalty. The **death penalty** is defined as sentencing someone to death because of severe crimes that they committed. The death penalty is a morally debated topic, with advocates on both sides.

### IN CONTEXT

Not every state in the country has the death penalty. The states of California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Texas have put the most people to death. Research suggests that the death penalty may not deter crime in the way that the criminal justice system intends, which provides ammunition for those who oppose the death penalty.

The death penalty is also unevenly applied. A recent study found that convicts of color were more likely to be sentenced to death than white people of equivalent criminality.

➦ **EXAMPLE** If there's a case involving a white man who murders a white woman and a similar case involving a black man who murders a white woman in a similar fashion, this study found that the black man is more likely to be sentenced to death row. This makes the case against the death penalty because racial prejudices can affect the outcome, even though that is not supposed to happen according to due process.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Death Penalty

A sentence of death reserved for severe crimes.



#### SUMMARY

Today you learned about **societal protection**, a specific function of punishment, by exploring the different ways to punish offenders: **prisons**, the **death penalty**, and **community-based corrections** programs. You also learned about **criminal recidivism** and the role of punishment in its reduction.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

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**Criminal Recidivism**

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**Death Penalty**

A sentence of death reserved for severe crimes.

**Parole**

When an inmate is released early and gets to serve the rest of his or her sentence outside the prison under the loose supervision of a parole officer.

**Probation**

A form of punishment where the convicted offender stays in the community but must undertake a court imposed treatment regime.

**Shock Probation**

A form of punishment where the judge sends the offender to prison for a part of the sentence to "shock" them, and then lets them serve the rest of their sentence in the community with probation conditions.

**Societal Protection**

A way to control deviance in society by locking up offenders in prisons or sentencing them to the death penalty.