

Presentation title:

The public sense of justice - Furthering and developing a nordic research tradition

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20 years ago, the late Ulla Bondeson argued that the public's support for harsher punishment constituted an obstacle to humane reforms of the criminal justice system. For politicians, ignoring the public's wishes would allegedly be unwise. This was the start of what has become a two-decade long research tradition in the Nordic countries mapping public opinion on crime and punishment, with several studies conducted in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland on the topic. Lately, politicians increasingly refer to public opinion when arguing for stricter sentencing. But do the politicians know what the public wants? In a recent study from Norway, we found a significant change in the public sense of justice during the last decade, where the support for stricter sentencing has plummeted. This presentation will contain a brief overview of the Scandinavian research tradition on the public sense of justice as well as the main findings from the recent Norwegian study.