



Cause Kit

Sister by Chai Yee Wei

What do you need to know?

Singapore has the second highest prisoners-per-population rate in Southeast Asia, second to Thailand with a rate of 526 per 100,000. (World Prison Brief, 2017).

Since 1998, the Singapore Prisons Service (SPS) has moved beyond its custodial function, towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders as responsible citizens.¹ The rehabilitation process includes teaching offenders core skills (eg: stress management), offering work and vocational training, and religious services.²

Faith-based groups have historically played an important role in rehabilitation efforts, due to the official view that religion can be a powerful way to change an inmate's thinking and behaviour.³

Why should you care?

It is easy to believe that prisoners deserve the harshest treatment. While the role of prison as a deterrence is important, rehabilitation and reintegration work is also critical to ensure inmates don't re-offend. Historically, a "revolving door" of offenders led to overcrowded prisons and a strain on Singapore's resources.⁴ Ex-offenders who persist in a life of crime also remain a threat to society.

Finally, a good rehabilitation process can maximise the potential of inmates and transform them into responsible persons.

The SPS's shift toward a rehabilitation model is thought to have contributed to a decline in Singapore's recidivism rate from 44.4% in 1998 to 27.4 per cent in 2011.⁵ That said, the recidivism rate today is not insignificant, with roughly 1 out of 4 ex-offenders being re-admitted into prison within two years of their release.⁶

Finally, it is important to ensure society remains open to the idea that ex-offenders can change for the better. As the Yellow Ribbon Project states, stigmatising attitudes are akin to a "second prison" and can complicate the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

¹ Civil Service College. [Case Study: Toward a Society Without Reoffending](#).

² [Singapore Prison Service](#)

³ The Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association. [Community-based Approaches to the Prevention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Drug Offenders](#).

⁴ Civil Service College. [Case Study: Toward a Society Without Reoffending](#).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [Data.gov.sg](#)

Where is help available?

The Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network, set up by the SPS, coordinates the efforts of various voluntary welfare organisations and community agencies that provide after-care support for ex-offenders.

Fei Yue, Lutheran Community Services, The Salvation Army, The New Charis Mission and Awful Grace all have programmes that help with both in-care and after-care support for inmates and their families.

Faith-based organisations play an important role in rehabilitation and reintegration. According to the Singapore Prison Service, there are five major faith-based organisations operating in the prisons: Prison Fellowship Singapore; Singapore Buddhist Federation; Roman Catholic Prison Ministry; Darul Ghufuran Mosque; and Sikh Welfare Council.

How can you help?

Be a Donor

The 70 x 7 initiative by Prison Fellowship Singapore reaches out to 150 inmates annually through their victim empathy programme to help put offenders on the path towards community restoration. Support 70 x 7 on giving.sg.

Be a Volunteer

70 x 7 provides frequent volunteering opportunities to volunteers. They require daily help from volunteers on Victim Empathy Programme. Volunteer for the cause at giving.sg.

Be an Advocate

Help to spread awareness about the transformative potential of the prisoner rehabilitation process. Host a screening of Sister with your friends, colleagues, and families.

Be a 15 Shorts ambassador, visit www.15shorts.com.