

This House Believes Community Service is a Better Punishment than Prison for Non-Violent Crimes

- Is the harm that non-violent criminals do to society serious enough to deserve prison?
- Prison is a harsh and cruel environment, where people are deprived of their freedom. Does a crime like theft really deserve this kind of punishment?
- What about fraudsters who steal from 1000s of people, often destroying their entire lives?
- Is prison really the best way to help criminals improve their ways and go back into society without committing crime?
- Criminals have cost society large amounts of money, both through their crimes and then the costs of catching them and putting them on trial. Should they not pay society back through hard work?
- Could community service teach criminals valuable skills that they could then use to benefit society and themselves?
- Even if someone is not violent, they might be very likely to commit crime again. Should such a person not be imprisoned to keep society safe from them?
- Prisons often have education programmes for inmates, who can learn skills like computer programming. Is this better than Community Service?

Fact: Community Service involves people doing a regular form of work for a charity or community organisation for a fixed number of hours.

Fact: Examples include helping to paint public buildings, pick up rubbish from the streets, planting public gardens and removing graffiti.

Fact: Normally, community service is imposed when the court thinks that a criminal deserves some punishment, but their crime was not bad enough to go to prison for.

Fact: The work is meant to be hard and boring, but also useful to the community.

Fact: About 80% of people who go to prison commit another crime after they are released. That number is considerably lower for those who do community service.