

Media Release

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Restorative Justice – the Community View

A recent survey conducted by Relationships Australia on restorative justice found that almost half of respondents felt that victim support was the most important response to crime. This contrasts with men (15%) and women (7%) indicating they thought that punishment was the most important response to crime.

“Many of the respondents to the survey felt that the community response to crime was complex and needs to take into account victim support, perpetrator punishment, apology and forgiveness,” Alison Brook, National Executive Officer of Relationships Australia said. “Interestingly, we still see that many people believe that supporting victims is the most important aspect.”

Restorative justice provides an alternative to punitive responses to crime. Inspired by indigenous traditions, it brings together the people harmed by a crime with the people responsible for the harm. The meeting environment occurs in a safe and respectful space, promotes dialogue, accountability, the building of relationships and a stronger sense of community.

Restorative approaches are associated with:

- improved social skills, reduced aggression and reduced exclusion of students in education settings;
- a reduction in the number of children in out of home care, as well as the number of families with a child protection plan and children at risk in social care environments;
- reductions in re-offending in youth justice across different offence types and regardless of the gender, criminal history, age or cultural background of the offenders; and
- improved health outcomes and reduced dependence on the health system.

More than 850 people responded to the Relationships Australia online survey in September, with close to 80% of survey respondents identifying as female. The survey asked respondents who they thought suffered the most when crimes were committed, the most important responses to crime and whether perpetrators of crime should be aware of the feelings of victims.

“Another interesting finding was that three-quarters of women (76%) and men (71%) reported that prison was not the most appropriate way to punish criminals, regardless of what crime they committed,” Ms Brook said. “Just under 70 per cent of survey respondents disagreed with prison being positioned as a place for rehabilitation.”

You can access the full report of the September 2017 survey results [here](#).

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Interviews can be organised with a Relationships Australia spokesperson.

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