

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF REHABILITATION: HOW THE PUBLIC VIEWS POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice

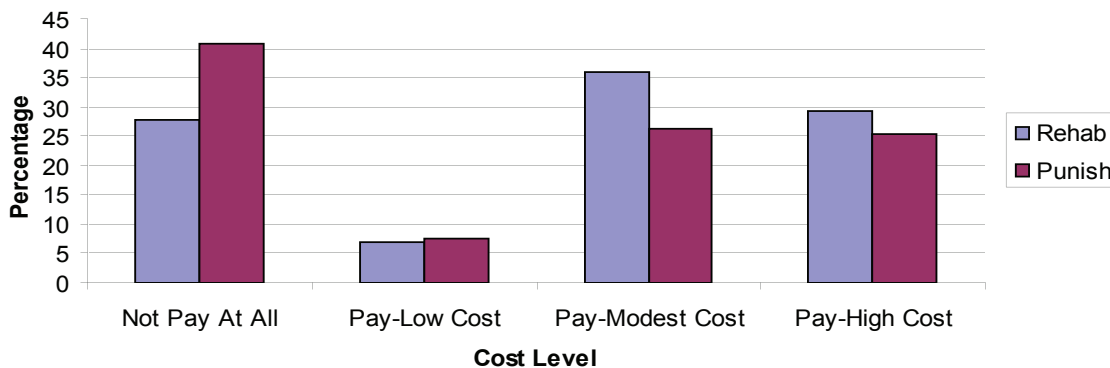
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Accurately gauging the public’s support for alternative responses to juvenile offending is important, because policymakers often justify expenditures for punitive juvenile justice reforms on the basis of popular demand for tougher policies.

In this study, we assess public support for both punitively and non-punitively oriented juvenile justice policies by measuring respondents’ willingness to pay for various policy proposals. We employ a methodology known as ‘contingent valuation’ (CV) that permits the comparison of respondents’ willingness to pay (WTP) for competing policy alternatives. Specifically, we compare CV-based estimates for the public’s WTP for two distinctively different responses to serious juvenile crime: incarceration and rehabilitation.

The analysis indicates that the public is at least as willing (if not more so) to pay for rehabilitation as punishment for juvenile offenders; specifically, the average WTP was almost \$20 higher for the addition of rehabilitation services, \$98.10/household, than for the addition of an extra year of incarceration, \$80.97.

Willingness to Pay



The findings suggest that lawmakers should more actively consider policies grounded in rehabilitation, and, perhaps, be slower to advocate for punitive reforms in response to public concern over high-profile juvenile crimes. Such lawmakers may be reassured that the public response to such initiatives will not be hostile.

Willingness to Pay

