



**EL PACCTO**

**2.0**

EU-LAC Partnership on  
justice and security

# **MAPPING EXERCISE: ALTERNATIVE MEASURES IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION**

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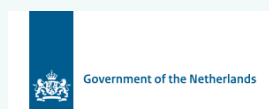
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# INTRODUCTION

Prison overcrowding is a major challenge in the Caribbean. High incarceration rates, often coupled with limited resources, have placed significant strain on national prison systems.<sup>1</sup> This situation not only undermines the effective functioning of justice institutions, but also hinders rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Against this backdrop, the promotion and implementation of alternative measures,<sup>2</sup> such as probation, community service, and electronic monitoring, are increasingly seen as essential to alleviate pressure on penitentiary systems and promote more effective justice outcomes.

In addition, the regional commitment to address prison overcrowding was reinforced through the Needham's Point Declaration (2023).<sup>3</sup> This emphasized the collective commitment in the Caribbean to address the most pressing issues in the criminal justice chain, and the importance of penal reform, rehabilitation, and alternatives to incarceration as key strategies to strengthen justice systems in the region. The declaration provides an important political framework that continues to inform regional and international cooperation initiatives, including those supported under the EL PACCTO 2.0 programme.

In recognition of the role of the penitentiary system as a critical component in combating transnational organised crime, EL PACCTO began its first phase by

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP. (2012). Caribbean Human Development Report: Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security. United Nations. <https://www.undp.org/publications/caribbean-human-development-report-2012>

<sup>2</sup> Probation activities may include alternatives to imprisonment, such as alternative sanctions, as well as supervisory measures, for example parole following detention. For the sake of brevity, the term *alternative measures* is used here to encompass both alternative sanctions and probation-related measures.

<sup>3</sup> Needham's Point Declaration on Criminal Justice Reform: Achieving a Modern Criminal Justice System. (2023). Caribbean Criminal Justice Academy. <https://ccjacademy.org/programmes/needhams/point/declaration/>

Key points from the Needham's Point Declaration relevant to this study include:

- Recognition that a piecemeal, siloed approach to criminal justice reform will not adequately address the growing complexity of criminality or produce sustainable improvements to the system. (Preamble)
- That laws be enacted, and appropriate measures implemented, to provide the diversion of young offenders, and the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of all offenders. Measures must include the enhancement of

probation and parole services, court diversion programmes and problem solving/wellness courts. (8)

- That laws be enacted, and appropriate measures implemented to provide for children in conflict with the law with the opportunity for diversion from the criminal justice system. (9)
- That laws be enacted to guarantee prisoner remand timelines; to replace Preliminary Inquiries with sufficiency hearings and/or paper committals; provide for Maximum Sentence Indications (MSI) hearings and effective Early Guilty Plea/Plea Bargaining Schemes. (10)
- That courts view sentencing as an effective tool for deterrence and/or for rehabilitation and as such should use that tool appropriately in individual cases. (30)
- That courts should make greater use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods, including mediation and restorative justice, within the Magistrate/Parish Court for some first-time offenders. (35)
- That courts should encourage greater levels of co-operation and where appropriate, encourage consultation among criminal justice sector stakeholders, through measures such as Criminal Justice Boards. (38)

identifying the penitentiary chain as one of the key actors in this fight. Prison management systems are among its key areas of improvement.

In this regard, alternative measures are considered as essential in decreasing the prison population, and by doing so preventing overcrowding. The expansion and diversity of alternative measures need to be explored in such a way that the support from the justice agencies in the region is guaranteed and that – where possible – countries can assist each other in bringing about changes in their own jurisdiction. International and regional cooperation can be an important leverage in this regard.

As part of EL PACCTO 1.0, a bi-regional conference on the development of alternatives to imprisonment was held in Montevideo on 20 September 2019. This conference resulted in the adoption of the Montevideo Declaration, endorsed by Ministers of Justice and senior representatives of justice ministries from participating countries.<sup>4</sup> The declaration emphasized the role of alternative measures in combating organised crime, noting that the frequent reliance on imprisonment as the standard sanction has contributed to prison overcrowding, weakened institutional control, and created

conditions in which prisons could become “universities of crime”.

Following this, a catalogue of alternatives to deprivation of liberty was developed, providing an overview of legal and policy options for the use of alternative measures at various stages of the criminal justice process, and the enforcement of custodial sentences.<sup>5</sup>

With EL PACCTO 2.0, a more explicit effort has been made to integrate the Caribbean region into regional cooperation efforts.<sup>6</sup> The programme has committed to the improvement of prison management systems, with particular attention to implementing alternatives to detention as a means of addressing overcrowding, while activities will support the development and implementation of alternative measures specifically tailored to the Caribbean context. Against this background, the primary objective of the present study is to map the current situation of alternative measures in the Caribbean region. By assessing the use, availability, and institutional support for alternative measures, this mapping exercise aims to identify opportunities for reform, facilitate regional collaboration, and inform future technical assistance within the EL PACCTO 2.0 programme.

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<sup>4</sup> EL PACCTO, COPOLAD II, & EUROsociAL+. (2019, September 20). *Montevideo Declaration: Final declaration of the bi-regional conference on alternative measures to deprivation of liberty*. [https://elpaccto.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DeclaracionMVD\\_FINAL\\_ES.pdf](https://elpaccto.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/DeclaracionMVD_FINAL_ES.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> EL PACCTO (2019). Catalogue of Alternatives to Deprivation of Liberty. <https://elpaccto.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Catalogo-Medidas-Alternativas.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of EL PACCTO 2.0, the Caribbean region is understood to encompass: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana,

Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago.

# METHODOLOGY

As an initial step towards identifying opportunities to expand the use of alternative measures, a scan of the current situation and of the needs and priorities of the participating countries was undertaken. The findings are intended to provide a basis for discussion and to inform the development of an action plan within the framework of EL PACCTO 2.0. As the Caribbean region is currently being implemented in the second phase of EL PACCTO, it was decided that this study should focus solely on the Caribbean, taking into account the specificities of the area and providing a tailor-made approach to alternative measures. It is clear that the contexts in which penitentiary and parole institutions operate differ from those in Latin America. In addition, the smaller size and inmate populations of Caribbean countries, compared to those of Latin America, call for a dedicated study on the Caribbean, while also recognising the variations among the Caribbean states themselves.

The report presents the findings of a survey aimed at assessing the current situation regarding alternative measures, as well as the priorities and needs of the countries involved. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire (Annex I), followed by online interviews with the respondents. In addition, publicly available information was consulted, including data on alternative measures and probation services published on the official websites of

Caribbean justice systems. Scientific literature on alternative measures in the Caribbean remains limited. Drawing on these sources, country data sheets were prepared and shared with the respective countries for verification. The final versions of these data sheets are included in Annex III and available upon request from EL PACCTO 2.0. The length and level of detail of each data sheet vary according to the information provided by respondents. The data collection was carried out over the period from April to December 2025.

Completed questionnaires were received from all participating countries. For several countries, more than one interview was conducted, as the initial contact – often from the prison department – recommended speaking to additional individuals with greater expertise on community sanctions and probation.

In addition, special consideration was given to Haiti, whose context presents distinct challenges within the Caribbean region. A completed questionnaire and an interview were provided, accompanied by further information from national counterparts. Together, these sources offer valuable insights into the country's justice system and its current priorities. At the same time, Haiti continues to face complex socio-economic and security challenges that inevitably influence institutional capacities. In light of these realities, the country's immediate focus on expanding alternative measures may understandably differ from that of other participating states. Nonetheless, Haiti's inclusion in this

study ensures that regional analyses and future cooperation efforts appropriately reflect its specific context and needs.

The questionnaire comprised five sections. Section one addressed the general implementation of alternative measures currently in place. Sections two and three focused on the details of these measures and the institutions responsible for their implementation. Sections four and five explored the main challenges and opportunities in applying alternative sentences, as well as the current and potential future support from international partners. A final section provided respondents with the opportunity to share additional comments or information not specifically addressed in the preceding sections. Reference was made to the Domains and Enablers Model in shaping the questionnaire, as detailed in Annex IV.

To ensure methodological consistency and to reflect diverse perspectives, all quotations included in this report have been anonymised. Given that the information in this chapter is based on a very limited number of persons, we have opted not to identify the source for each country. Taken together, however, the respondents' contributions reflect the breadth and diversity of views across the participating countries.

# CHAPTER 1.

## PRISON DATA

An underlying assumption of the EL PACCTO 2.0 programme is that overcrowding in penal institutions can be reduced through a combination of sometimes interrelated measures. These include limiting the inflow of detainees, for example through alternatives to pre-trial detention and alternatives to prison sentences, and reducing the duration of pre-trial detention by addressing case backlogs.

To obtain the most accurate picture of the current situation regarding prison overcrowding, this study relied on the World Prison Brief online database.<sup>7</sup> The datasets are largely derived from governmental or other official sources. However, for the countries participating in EL PACCTO 2.0, certain limitations apply. In some cases, the data are not fully up to date (for a few countries, the most recent data available date from 2022, while most

others provide more recent figures). Moreover, updates from individual countries on the World Prison Brief sometimes showed significant shifts, raising questions about whether the latest or preceding figures offer the most accurate reflection of reality. This underscores the importance of regular publication of prison statistics by governments, as such data form the foundation for evidence-based policymaking and corrective measures.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the study considers the World Prison Brief data to provide a broadly reliable overview of the current situation, particularly as the figures were validated and, where necessary, updated through the online interviews conducted for this research.

The following section presents data on the total prison population, the prison population rate, the percentage of pre-trial detainees, and occupancy rates. Additional information on juveniles, women, and foreign nationals is provided in the annex II.

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<sup>7</sup> [The World Prison Brief](#) is an online database providing free access to comparative data on prison systems worldwide. It is hosted by the [Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research \(ICPR\)](#) at Birkbeck, University of London, as part of its World Prison Research Programme. This programme, implemented in collaboration with research partners, civil society organisations and policymakers, aims to inform and promote policy reform through comparative research projects, publications and civil society engagement. Country information is monthly updated using data primarily derived from governmental or other official sources, and includes prison population totals and rates, the use of imprisonment for women, juveniles and foreign nationals, the extent of pre-trial or remand detention, prison overcrowding levels, official reports on prison conditions,

and details of responsible authorities and local organisations.

<sup>8</sup> “The collection and publication of statistics about the use and practice of imprisonment are essential if governments are to assess the effectiveness of criminal justice policies. Accurate and updated statistics also help to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the prison estate; enable civil society to monitor overcrowding and associated human rights violations and public health risks in prisons; and help to generate evidenced proposals for reform.” Allen, R., & Fair, H. (2024, July). *Prison data collection: A guidance note*. Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research. <https://www.prisonstudies.org/research-publications>

**TABLE 1: Prison Population Total (high to low)**

Country	Prison population total (including pre-trial detainees /remand prisoners)	Reference / Date
Haiti	7.163	June 2025
Trinidad and Tobago	3.802	April 2021
Jamaica	3.596	September 2025
The Bahamas	2.510	2024
Guyana	2.300	January 2024
Belize	1.308	May 2025
Surinam	808	November 2023
Barbados	692	November 2023
Saint Lucia	579	December 2024
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	404	July 2024
Antigua and Barbuda	circa 400	May 2023
Grenada	370	October 2024
Dominica	260	March 2024
Saint Kitts and Nevis	228	July 2025

This table illustrates the considerable variation between the countries. Haiti has around 7.200 detainees, while Saint Kitts and Nevis has only 228; in eight of the countries concerned, the number of detainees is below 1.000; in three countries it ranges between 1.000 and 3.000; and in three countries it exceeds 3.000.

**TABLE 2: Prison Population Rate (high to low)**

Country	Prison population rate (per 100,000)	Reference / Date
Saint Kitts and Nevis	422	Based on an estimated population of 47.000 in November 2025
Antigua and Barbuda	circa 400	Based on an estimated population of 100.000 in May 2023
The Bahamas	381	Based on an estimated population of 404.000 in July 2024
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	361	Based on an estimated population of 112.000 in July 2024
Dominica	356	Based on an estimated population of 73.000 in March 2024
Grenada	324	Based on an estimated population of 114.300 in October 2024
Saint Lucia	310	Based on an estimated population of 186.500 in December 2024
Belize	302	Based on an estimated population of 433.400 in May 2025
Guyana	288	Based on an estimated population of 799.600 in January 2024
Trinidad and Tobago	276	Based on an estimated population of 1.38 million in April 2021

Barbados	240	Based on an estimated population of 288,370 in November 2023
Surinam	134	Based on an estimated population of 603,900 in November 2023
Jamaica	132	Based on an estimated population of 2.84 million in September 2025
Haiti	59	Based on an estimated population of 12.09 million in June 2025

From this table, it can be seen that in most Caribbean countries the number of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants is high. For comparison, the prison population rate in Spain, Italy, France and the Netherlands is 117, 106, 124 and 64 respectively. The figures in the Caribbean are more comparable to those of Latin American countries such as Mexico (182), Honduras (188) and Costa Rica (345).

**TABLE 3: Pre-trial Detainees / Remand Prisoners (high to low)**

Country	Pre-trial detainees / Remand prisoners (%)	Reference / Date
Haiti	82%	June 2025
Saint Lucia	64%	December 2024
Trinidad and Tobago	60%	September 2018
Barbados	55%	December 2018
The Bahamas	52%	2024
Dominica	48%	March 2024
Saint Kitts and Nevis	45%	July 2025

Jamaica	45%	September 2025
Antigua and Barbuda	43%	July 2022
Belize	36%	May 2025
Surinam	33%	November 2023
Guyana	27%	September 2022
Grenada	20%	December 2017
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	16%	July 2024

This table also shows that the differences between countries are large. In nine countries the number of remand prisoners is above 40%, while in other countries it is below this level.

Finally, this table presents the occupancy rates.

**TABLE 4: Occupancy Level (high to low)**

Country	Occupancy level / rate (%)	Reference / Date
Saint Kitts and Nevis	380%	July 2025
Haiti	302%	January 2024
Antigua and Barbuda	267%	May 2023
Grenada	206%	October 2024
The Bahamas	162%	December 2020
Guyana	151%	September 2022
Saint Lucia	103%	August 2022
Surinam	102%	November 2023

Jamaica	92%	September 2025
Trinidad and Tobago	82%	September 2018
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	80%	2018
Dominica	73%	July 2015
Belize	65%	May 2025
Barbados	62%	July 2022

In six countries, the occupancy is rate below 100%. In four countries, it exceeds 200% and in four countries it falls between 100 and 200%. In countries with more than one prison, overcrowding can be particularly high in certain facilities. A notable example is the CERMICOL prison in Haiti, where occupancy exceeds 500%.

## TO SUM UP

- Haiti has a prison population of 7.163 which is high in proportion to its population, and suffers from severe overcrowding (above 300%).
- Antigua and Barbuda has a relatively small prison population (400), but also a very high occupancy rate (267%), indicating a capacity issue despite the low numbers. There might be a correlation with the high proportion of remand prisoners (43%).
- Dominica, Belize and Barbados show the lowest occupancy rates (73%, 65%, and 62%), indicating relatively well-matched capacity.
- Saint Kitts and Nevis, Haiti and Antigua and Barbuda face serious overcrowding challenges, while several smaller countries appear to manage their capacity efficiently.
- Haiti (82%), Saint Lucia (64%) and Trinidad and Tobago (60%) have a high proportion of prisoners in pre-trial detention, indicating either slow legal processes or frequent use of preventive detention.
- By contrast, Grenada (20%) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (16%) maintain relatively low rates of pre-trial detention.

## Vulnerable groups and foreign nationals

The appendices contain tables on certain vulnerable groups in detention and on foreign nationals. As regards vulnerable groups in detention, key observations are as follows:

### Juveniles:

- Surinam (6%) and Barbados (6%) have relatively high numbers of juvenile detainees.
- In six countries, juveniles make up 1% or less of the prison population.
- In Dominica, juveniles represent 0% of detainees, possibly reflecting the use of alternatives to detention or effective prevention programs.

### Women:

- The Bahamas (10%) has the highest percentage of female inmates among the total population.
- In four countries (Belize, Dominica, Grenada and Saint Kitts and Nevis), the percentage of women is lower than 2%. In other countries, the proportion ranges from 2% to 6%.

Juveniles and women constitute a relatively large proportion of detainees in some countries. This highlights the need for specialised facilities, and raises the question of how some countries succeed in keeping these numbers low, particularly for juvenile detainees.

### Foreign nationals:

- Antigua and Barbuda (31%), Surinam (10%), and the Bahamas (10%) have notably high percentages of foreign detainees.
- In most countries, foreigners account for less than 10% of the total population, usually around 3%.
- In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, foreign detainees are virtually absent from the prison population.

The background to these differences is unclear. Countries with a high number of foreign prisoners in the institutions are confronted with specific management challenges.

## Interim conclusion

The general conclusion from the analysis of the available data is that there is scope to reduce both the number of prison sentences and the problem of overcrowding. In addition to accelerating procedures, a greater use of alternative measures could contribute to achieving this goal, including:

- Alternatives to pre-trial detention (including conditional suspension);
- Alternative measures;
- Parole.

In many Caribbean countries, there is a growing interest in alternatives to judicial settlement, particularly with regard to juveniles. While such measures can have clear positive effects on young people, their families, and society at large, the effect on reducing overall imprisonment in the short term is likely to be limited, with the exception of those countries where a relatively high proportion of juveniles are currently held in detention.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that while the countries share certain similarities, there are also notable differences to consider. Differences in scale bring inherent limitations. For example, the range of alternative measures and organisational structures possible in Jamaica, such as specialisation, separate units for juveniles and adults, or dedicated policy staff for probation, may not be feasible in smaller countries like Dominica. In the further development of alternative measures and probation systems, a shared vision and agreed framework can serve as valuable inspiration. At the same time, differences in scale and economic resources must be taken into account to ensure practical and sustainable implementation.

The extent to which alternative measures are applied in practice is described in the next chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> "Much of the literature suggests it is best to avoid getting non-violent offenders involved with the court system to begin with. Diverting minor crimes away from the courts and corrections system and towards alternative sentences or treatment programmes (drug, alcohol, trauma, or mental health) can save resources and reduce re-offending. Restorative justice programmes aim to help victims work through their feelings and reach a solution, together with offenders, outside of the courts. An international review of the research on these programmes (Sherman and Strang 2007) found that victims were more satisfied, taxpayers saved money, and re-offending rates for some offences were lower than for those who were incarcerated. These programmes can also expand access to justice by bypassing some of the cost and logistical obstacles to the courts. Both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have begun studying the wider application of restorative justice programmes in recent years. It will be important to follow the development of these programmes and their impact." Sutton, H., & Ruprah, I. (2017). *Restoring paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting violence with numbers*. Inter-American Development Bank. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/restoring-paradise-caribbean-combatting-violence-numbers>

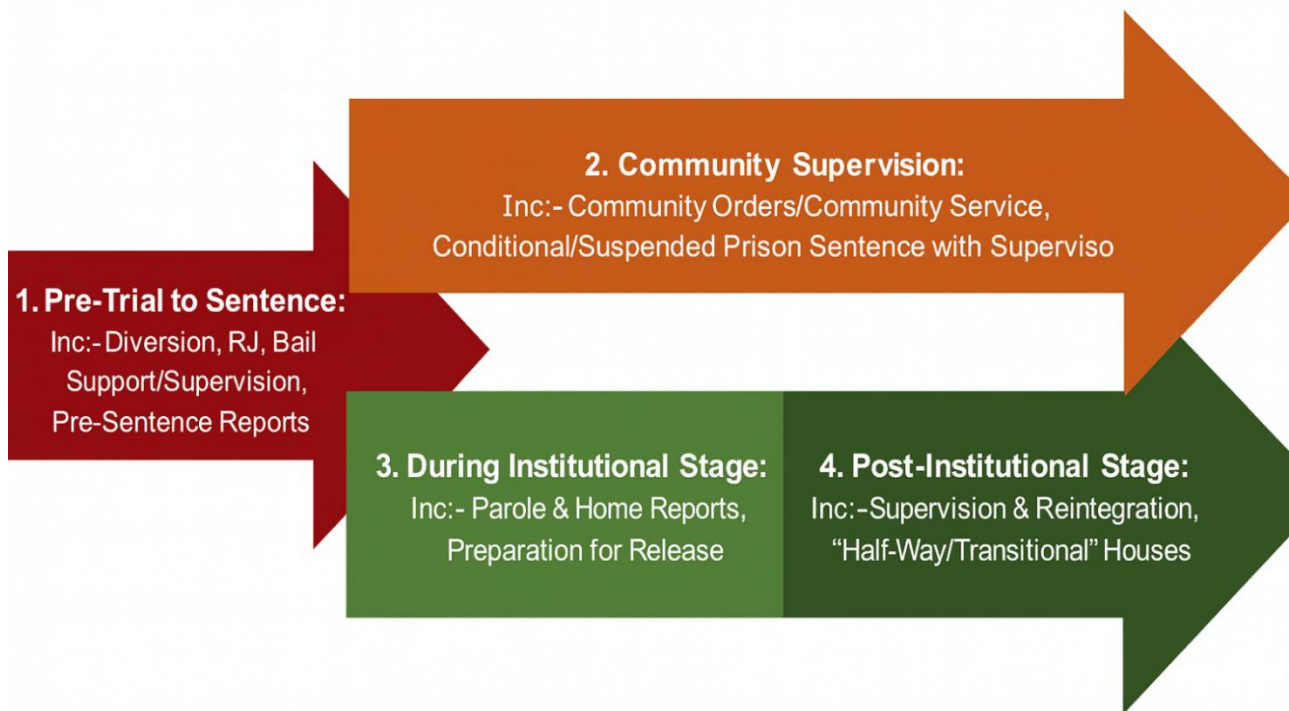
# **CHAPTER 2.**

## **ALTERNATIVE MEASURES AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROBATION ORGANISATIONS**

In reviewing alternative measures and the functions of probation organisations, irrespective of their specific designation, relevant international guidance has been consulted. This includes the following regulations:

- The Tokyo Rules, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/110 of 14 December 1990)
- The Nelson Mandela Rules, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (General Assembly resolution 70/175, annex, adopted on 17 December 2015)
- European Probation Rules, (Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Probation Rules, Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 January 2010)
- European Prison Rules, (Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe Prison Rules, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 and revised in July 2020).

From these regulations, a set of responsibilities or “competencies,” also referred to as domains, can be identified. These include pre-sentence work, non-custodial options, custodial options, early and post-release supervision.



Pitts, S., & Tigges, L. (2023, November). Building probation capacity: What works? Learning from the European Experience of Probation Service Development in the 21st Century. Confederation of European Probation. <https://www.cep-probation.org/research-report-online-building-probation-capacity-what-works/>

The questionnaire covered all of these responsibilities. Prior to presenting the results on this topic, it is important to first consider whether the organisations operate with minors, adults, or both.

## MINORS AND ADULTS

The questionnaire examined whether alternative measures are applicable to juveniles and adults, and which organisation is responsible for preparing and implementing them. The findings indicate that in all countries surveyed, alternative measures may be imposed for both juveniles and adults.

**TABLE 5: Juvenile and Adult Probation Services**

	Juveniles	Institution	Adults	Institution
Antigua and Barbuda	No		No	
The Bahamas	Unknown		Yes	Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services
Barbados	Yes	Barbados Probation Service	Yes	Barbados Probation Service
Belize	Yes	Juvenile Probation Unit (part of Community Rehabilitation Department)	Yes	Adult Probation Unit (part of Community Rehabilitation Department)
Dominica	Yes	Probation Unit	Yes (but not practiced)	Probation Unit
Guyana	Unknown		Yes	Parole Board
Haiti	No		No	
Jamaica	Yes	Rehabilitation and Probation Aftercare Division	Yes	Rehabilitation and Probation Aftercare Division
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Yes	Probation Department (within Ministry of Social Development)	Yes	Probation Department (within Ministry of Social Development)
Saint Lucia	Yes	Probation and Parole Services	Yes	Probation and Parole Services
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Yes	Police	No	

Surinam	Yes	Child Protection (within Ministry of Justice)	Yes	Probation Department (within Ministry of Justice)
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	Probation Services Office	Yes	Probation Services Office

At least a rudimentary form of alternative measures is in place in five countries, administered by an organisation responsible for both minors and adults. In two countries, there are currently no mechanisms to impose or implement alternative measures for either group.

## ALTERNATIVE MEASURES AND PROBATION OPTIONS

To determine the extent to which alternative measures are already in use, the questionnaire invited respondents to indicate which options apply in their respective countries. The options included:

**TABLE 6: Alternative Measures Options**

Measure type	Frequency
Conditional suspended sentence with supervision	9
Community service or unpaid work	9
Early conditional release	7
Suspension of pre-trial detention under conditions	5
Electronic monitoring with probation guidance	4
Suspension of the execution of the prison sentence under conditions	3

The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate which alternative measures are applicable in their countries. As penal systems differ among countries, and comparable measures may be referred to by different names, the results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the data indicate that community service and conditional suspended sentence with supervision, often referred to as probation order in common law countries, are the most frequently applied measures. Early conditional release, also known as parole, is possible in eight of the thirteen participating countries. In two countries, the prison sentence may be suspended at a certain stage, allowing the remainder to be served outside the facility. Electronic monitoring with probation supervision is available in four countries, while the possibility of placement in a halfway house is reported in only one country.

In some countries, such as Haiti and Antigua and Barbuda, no alternative measures are available. By contrast, six countries (Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago) reported five or more alternative options.

Two countries (The Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago) also highlighted Drug Courts as a positive innovation. However, the extent to which such courts exist or function in other countries, and their role in reducing reliance on custodial measures, remains unclear. It is important that this development be subjected to closer scrutiny.

**FREQUENCY OF APPLYING**

To determine how often alternative measures are applied in practice, interviews were conducted and publicly available sources were reviewed. In most cases, however, reliable data were not available. Nevertheless, in three countries (Barbados, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia) such measures appear to be applied relatively frequently. The available data for these countries are presented below.

Barbados (2024):

- 89 persons were placed on probation
- 211 persons were on probation
- 173 persons were placed to undergo a community service order

If the number of people under probation supervision (probation and community service) in 2024 is taken together, this amounts to 384 individuals. This corresponds

to a probation population rate of 133. For comparison, the prison population rate stands at 240.

Saint Lucia (2024):

- 116 persons were placed on probation
- 39 juvenile clients were on supervision and guidance orders
- 35 clients were doing community service
- 8 persons were on parole.

On the basis of these stock statistics the probation population rate is 106, compared to a prison population rate of 308.

Jamaica (2025):

No “flow” data per probation activity were provided for Jamaica. However, stock data for September 2025) were shared, indicating a probation rate of 78.

**TABLE 7: Comparative analysis of prison and probation rates across three countries**

Country	Probation Rate	Prison Rate	%
Barbados	133	240	55
Saint Lucia	106	310	34
Jamaica	78	132	59

The following conclusions can be drawn from these data:

1. Prison sentences remain the dominant form of sanction.
2. Jamaica makes relatively limited use of both prison sentences and probation sanctions.

In Jamaica however, within the overall sanctioning framework, probation plays a comparatively larger role than in the other two countries.

**ADVICE REPORTS**

An important function of the probation service is to issue information reports for the court, providing advice on the appropriate sentencing modality and the suitability for alternative sentences, as well as recommendations regarding the

granting of parole. Under the Tokyo Rules, such pre-sentence reports are referred to as *social enquiry reports*.

**TABLE 8: Availability and Use of Pre-Sentence Reports and Parole Advice**

	Pre-sentence reports	Number	Advice on granting parole	Number
Antigua and Barbuda	No		No	
The Bahamas	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	
Barbados	Yes	468 pre-sentencing reports; additional on-site assessments at the Magistrate Court for Community Service suitability (2024)  190 progress reports (2024)	No (parole system does not exist)	
Belize	Yes	526 juveniles, 397 adults) (2024)	No (parole officers in the prison submit progress reports after parole begins)	
Dominica	Yes (pre-sentence reports are prepared for both the	12 (5 juveniles, 7 adults) (July 2025)	Yes (if someone is placed on probation,	6 (July 2025)

	Magistrate's/Juvenile court and the High Court)		sentence update or progress reports are submitted to the court on their behalf)	
Grenada	Unknown		Unknown	
Guyana	No		The prison service may submit conduct reports upon Parole Board request	12 (2024)
Haiti	No		No	
Jamaica	Yes	Number unknown but significant	Unknown	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Yes	26 (July 2025)	Unknown	
Saint Lucia	Yes	275	Yes	12
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	No		No (parole system does not exist)	
Surinam	Yes	6 adults (Community Service suitability)  Number of juveniles unknown (handled by separate	Yes	486 (2024)

		organisation) (2024)		
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	Unknown	Yes	384

The extent to which pre-sentence reports are prepared varies considerably across the Caribbean region. In four countries (Barbados, Saint Lucia, Belize, Jamaica), the preparation of such reports for the judicial authorities constitutes a significant task. In contrast, five countries either do not perform this task at all (Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) or do so only to a limited extent (Surinam).

The situation is even more diffuse with regard to parole reports. In Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines no formal parole system exists. In Belize and Guyana, prison authorities themselves issue opinions on parole. In the remaining countries, the preparation of parole reports occurs only to a very limited degree.

## Interim conclusion

The situation across participating countries reflects considerable variation. Key observations include:

- Except for Barbados, Jamaica, and Saint Lucia, the scope of tasks assigned to probation organisations, both in terms of content and frequency, is either limited or absent.
- Similarly, the preparation and issuance of social enquiry reports is restricted in most countries.
- The involvement of the probation organisation in preparing for release of prisoners is generally limited. More broadly, the system for granting and implementing conditional release could be strengthened.
- Alternative measures are predominantly focused on juveniles, and to a much lesser extent on adults. If this pattern persists, questions arise as to whether expanding and strengthening the probation services will meaningfully reduce the number of adult detainees.
- Encouragingly, several countries have already made notable progress, and there is generally strong interest in expanding alternative measures and further developing probation organisations.

# CHAPTER 3.

## EMBEDDING PROBATION

## ORGANISATIONS IN THE

## JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

## CONTEXT

This chapter examines the relationships of organisations responsible for implementing alternative measures with the external environment. The analysis addresses the following areas:

- Relationships in the judicial chain
- Connections with municipalities and private institutions
- Relations with civil society and volunteers
- Communication with the media

The last three topics are closely related and may overlap in certain cases.

The questionnaire was designed to map the role of implementing organisations within the justice chain,

and their connections to the wider social environment. This aspect is important, as the effectiveness of alternative measures depends on recognition and support within the judicial chain. Similarly, the success of reintegration efforts requires cooperation and engagement from the broader community. When interpreting the survey results, it should be noted that most questionnaires were completed by a single respondent, meaning that personal perceptions may have influenced the answers. Furthermore, in some jurisdictions, the limited development and application of alternatives measures means that responses tend to reflect the perspective of correctional institutions.

## **Relationships with courts, public prosecutors, police, prisons**

Most countries report constructive and cordial working relations with other organisations within the justice chain. This is to be expected, as these organisations depend on one another to fulfil their respective responsibilities. The justice chain thus forms the natural environment for their work.

An illustrative example from country J: *"All legal entities work in tandem with each other in order for community sentencing to run smoothly. The police, court, the Community Rehabilitation Department and prosecution are to communicate at each step for continuum of service."*

And country I: *"The probation has a good understanding with the chain partners. There is always room for improvement, to learn more about each other's tasks and duties and to have better understanding and communication where those overlap."*

Country M stresses to actively seek improvement in mutual coordination: *"While collaboration has traditionally been informal, there are increasingly structured linkages being developed to improve coordination, particularly around alternative measures, early release, and case management."*

Country D notes: *"As partners of all agencies involved in the criminal justice process, we undertake certain valuable projects together and share information for the benefit of processes and clients."*

Finally, an example from country B: *"Strong coordination exists between the*

*judiciary, probation, prisons, and police. Gaps remain in real-time data sharing."*

In general, working relations in the justice chain are reported to be positive. It is expected that systematic efforts to expand alternative measures, both in variety and scope, will further strengthen these working relations and relates processes. For example, in country C, it was noted that *"all the justice organisations participate in training workshops together and collaborating on projects and initiatives."* At the same time, in country E, certain challenges remain with *"data collection and statistical reporting"* identified as key issues.

## **Relationships with municipalities, neighbourhoods and private institutions**

The importance of maintaining positive relationships with municipalities, neighbourhoods and private institutions is recognised by all participating countries. In many cases, implementing organisations actively work on strengthening these relationships as part of their practice. The following examples highlight such initiatives and illustrate the variety of approaches taken.

Country M

*"The Department of Correctional Services has been building and maintaining collaborative relationships with a range of stakeholders at the community and institutional level. These partnerships play a vital role in the reintegration of offenders, the delivery of alternative measures, and the promotion of public safety."*

Country C

*"The Probation Service has an outreach programme that offers services to communities and private institutions."*

Country E

*"Practitioners within the Department of Correctional Services engage with municipal authorities on technical matters, including building approvals, wastewater management, and other regulatory concerns. The Department of Correctional Services also actively collaborates with stakeholders in various neighbourhoods adjacent to correctional institutions, probation aftercare offices, and other administrative facilities. This inclusive approach has facilitated the development and maintenance of purposeful relationships, particularly in support of offender reintegration."*

Country D

*"In enforcing alternative measures, probation and parole officers are required to maintain positive relationships with communities and the private sector. Communities provide officers with vital information about their offender in relation to their reintegration and resettlement and their compliance with the conditions of alternative measures. The private sector is an essential player in the process of community rehabilitation as they provide services that address the criminogenic risks and needs of offenders. However, the buy-in from the private sector as it relates to providing employment to offenders remains an area for improvement."*

The final comment attributed to Country D is also reflected by other countries, such as Country L: "No

*formal partnerships exist to support the execution or supervision of community service or other non-custodial conditions. Community engagement strategies are undeveloped, and municipalities do not play a defined role."*

In this context, country D noted that: *"The buy-in from the private sector as it relates to providing employment to offenders remains an area for improvement."*

Finally, a similar comment was made by country B: *"More formal partnerships and coordination with local government bodies are needed."*

## **Involvement of civil society and volunteers**

In general, many countries report encouraging experiences with the involvement of civil society and volunteers. These efforts are most often undertaken within the prison sector. Some examples include:

Country H

*"The Home Advancement Program for the Poor and Indigent (HAPPI) families, is a program developed under the Ministry of Social Transformation Human Resource Development Gender and Youth Affairs. This program was developed to improve the living conditions of our vulnerable families. The inmates contributed by building houses for vulnerable individuals in society. It promoted a sense of purpose, accountability, and skill development among the inmates."*

#### Country M

*"The Department of Correctional Services works intensively with faith-based organisations (weekly worship services and Bible studies, counselling and spiritual mentorship, donation of hygiene supplies, reading materials, and clothing). While fewer in number, some NGOs offer services in skills training (e.g., sewing, literacy, entrepreneurship), re-entry preparation (e.g., resume writing, interview coaching), and drug rehabilitation support."*

#### Country C

*"The Probation Service has a mentorship programme for the previously incarcerated and at-risk youth. Mentors are volunteers from civil society."*

#### Country N

*"The Prison Service has a good relationship with civil society, and the prison service volunteers their services when called upon at regional and national levels."*

#### Country E

*"The Department of Correction Services has cultivated sustainable partnerships with a range of civil society organizations, which has played a pivotal role in the design and delivery of rehabilitation programmes within correctional centres. These initiatives, including skills training, psycho-social support, and literacy development, contribute significantly to offender rehabilitation and their successful reintegration into society. In addition, the department collaborates closely with numerous faith-based organizations to address the spiritual and emotional needs of inmates."*

#### Country D

*"The Department of Probation and Parole Services has a history of working with civil society organisations. The Clinical Counselling Services of the Men's Crisis Centre has been used for many years. Currently, there is a partnership with Drug Counselling and Education Service of Barbados. There are also working relationships with women CSO."*

#### Country B

*"NGOs provide critical support (e.g., Vision on Mission, Rebirth House). Volunteers assist in mentoring and training."*

In some jurisdictions, fewer positive experiences were reported.

#### Country J

*"We involve as much as they are available to us however, there is a very low involvement in this regard."*

#### Country F

*"This mechanism is not fully utilized."*

#### Country L

*"Civil society organisations do not have a formal role in the implementation or support of alternative measures. There is interest in expanding their role, particularly in rehabilitation services and post-sentencing support." However, it is encouraging that "civil society has called for greater involvement in early intervention."*

In general, some countries report substantial positive experience in engaging civil society and volunteers, while in other countries these experiences are absent. Nevertheless, there is a broad recognition of the

need for a more active outreach. In this regard, countries could benefit from systematic exchange of experiences to strengthen such practices.

## **Media communication**

Some countries have an active media outreach or are working on developing this. Some examples include:

### **Country E**

*"The Department of Correction Services maintains a cordial and cooperative relationship with media entities, recognizing their critical role in shaping public perceptions and fostering greater awareness of the organization's mandate and operations. Through regular press releases, interviews, and media features, information on key initiatives is shared, including rehabilitation programmes, vocational training, reintegration support services, and institutional reforms. For example, media coverage of inmates and staff completing tertiary degree programmes through partnership with the university ceremonies, community service projects, and skills exhibitions has helped to highlight positive outcomes and humanize the correctional process. In times of heightened public interest or crisis such as incidents within correctional facilities or policy shifts affecting inmate welfare the Department of Correctional Services utilizes media platforms to provide timely and transparent communication, reinforcing accountability and public trust."*

### **Country C**

*"The probation has a separate website and publishes yearly an annual report."*

In other jurisdictions, media outreach is absent or limited:

### **Country L**

*"There is no public awareness or media communication strategy regarding the use or benefits of alternative measures. Public understanding of these options remains low, and there is no communication protocol within the justice sector for promoting or explaining the intent behind non-custodial sentences."*

### **Country B**

*"Public awareness about alternatives is limited. Some media coverage has been provided to Drug Treatment Court Process and community service. There's a need for more strategic, stigma-reducing messaging."*

### **Country F**

*"Media communication is not fully utilized."*

### **Country I**

*"There is an information film about the implementation of alternative measures made by the prosecutions office to make the society aware about this way of sentencing."*

Interactions with the media vary, with some experience proving less positive.

### **Country H**

*"The media has played both a positive and negative role in relation to the prison system, including in discussions around alternative measures. On the*

*positive side, media coverage has helped raise public awareness about prison conditions, rehabilitation efforts, and the need for alternative sentencing options. In some instances, the media has even lobbied directly or indirectly for policy changes and reform through investigative journalism or human-interest stories. However, the media has also had a negative impact at times, particularly when coverage reinforces stigma, sensationalizes incidents, or presents a biased view of inmates and correctional efforts. Such portrayals can undermine public support for rehabilitation and non-custodial measures, making reform efforts more challenging."*

Overall, experiences with media communication differ across countries. In some, they are substantial and predominantly positive, while in others there is recognition that such communication should be developed strategically, with attention to reducing stigma. Countries stand to benefit from sharing experiences to maximise success and minimise counterproductive effects.

## **Interim conclusion**

The embedding of alternative measures and probation presents a mixed picture across the countries studied. Different degrees of public engagement can be distinguished, ranging from high to low, with many variations in between.

This diversity within the Caribbean region offers grounds for optimism: some countries have, under comparable circumstances, reached a stage of development that could be attainable for other countries in due course. Realising this potential, however, depends on a genuine interest in each other's experiences and a willingness to learn from them. This topic will be further explored in the chapters ahead.

# CHAPTER 4.

## WISHES FOR SUPPORT AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

This chapter presents the expressed wishes and preferences of the participating countries regarding support, and examines the potential role of regional partnerships in this regard.

### Opportunities

Across almost all participating countries, there is growing consensus on the importance of promoting alternatives to custodial sentencing and placing greater emphasis on rehabilitation. In doing so, it is often mentioned that processes are already underway in this direction. Examples include:

#### Country C

*"The Office of the Attorney General is currently leading on the reform of the Criminal Justice Sector."*

#### Country F

*"The proposed Child Justice Bill makes provisions for alternative measures for youth offenders through Diversion options for youth in conflict with the law."*

#### Country E

*"The implementation of the National Correctional Services Policy recently tabled as a White Paper is expected to catalyse significant reforms in the justice sector."*

**The need to combat overcrowding in prisons is often mentioned as a key driver for reform.**

#### Country F

*"Implementing non-custodial sentences can help ease pressure on the state prison, improving overall justice system efficiency."*

#### Country L

*"There is increasing recognition of the need to strengthen and expand alternative sentencing as part of broader criminal justice reform and efforts to address prison overcrowding."*

**As an opportunity, in addition to addressing the need to combat overcrowding in prisons, many countries also emphasized the broader necessity of strengthening restorative justice and rehabilitation.**

Country J

*"...the desire to adopt more rehabilitative, community-based approaches to justice... aligns with broader goals of restorative justice and reducing recidivism through more effective, personalized interventions."*

Country F

*"The strong community ties and emphasis on rehabilitation could support programs like mediation and victim-offender reconciliation."*

Country D

*"From our experience, we assess a fertile environment for alternative measures during our encounters with victims and community persons. Our mediation practice also evidences this fertile opportunity."*

Country E

*"...there is growing public interest, with civil society and the media playing a role*

*in shaping discourse on penal reform and restorative justice."*

**In most countries, it has also been noted that many or all chain partners are already involved.**

Country M

*"While the progress has been gradual, multiple stakeholders are showing active or emerging involvement."*

Country I

*"There is willingness from involved actors"*

In two countries, it was noted that a reduction in custodial sentences could free up labour, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the economy (Country J and E). Three countries explicitly identify regional cooperation as an opportunity (Country F, L and B).

## **Challenges**

As part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the main challenges in relation to alternatives measures. The diverse responses have been grouped into the categories below, ranked in descending order of frequency. It should be noted that some categories overlap.

## **PUBLIC / SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE / MINDSET**

This category includes issues such as limited social acceptance, public scepticism, buy-in from community, stigma, and misunderstanding of alternative measures.

Country H

*"The lack of legislation and limited social acceptance continue to hinder the implementation of alternative measures and measures."*

Country J

*"Challenges could be the buy-in from the public."*

Country L

*"There is a lack of public understanding and civil society involvement."*

## **FUNDING / FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS**

This category concerns challenges related to insufficient financial resources, inconsistent funding, and limited budgets for staffing, materials, and infrastructure.

Country D

*"Funding, facilities and location."*

Country I

*"Financial means and other materials/computers/transport etc."*

Country G

*"Inconsistent funding."*

## **STAFFING / HUMAN RESOURCES SHORTAGES**

This category refers to challenges arising from limited staff, shortages of trained or qualified social workers,

insufficient trained personnel, and overall limited organisational capacity.

Country L

*"Limited staffing and lack of training"*

Country I

*"Shortage of graduated social workers"*

## **PRISON OVERCROWDING / CUSTODIAL POPULATION**

This category relates to overcrowding in prisons, which acts both as a driver for implementing alternative measures and a challenge to their effective implementation.

Country D

*"The ability to effectively implement and monitor those alternative measures due to resource constraints: human and equipment."*

## **LACK OF OR WEAK LEGISLATION / LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

This category concerns the absence of specific laws for diversion, delays in updating penal codes, and legal obstacles to implementing alternative measures.

Country H

*"The lack of legislation continues to hinder the implementation of alternative sanctions and measures."*

Country D

*"There are legal challenges for adult diversion, as there are not specific laws to facilitate this in the Criminal Code."*

Country K

*"The proposed draft new penal code includes the introduction of alternative measures. However, the entry into force of this code has been postponed due to the lack of sufficient consensus around this draft."*

## **MONITORING / TECHNOLOGY/ TOOLS DEFICITS**

This category concerns insufficient monitoring systems, limited ICT infrastructure, and fragmented or incomplete data systems.

Country B

*"Fragmented data systems."* (Country B)

Country L

*"Inadequate monitoring tools and ICT infrastructure."* (Country L)

## **Assistance in (further) developing alternative measures**

The questionnaire included a question on the types of assistance countries require to further develop alternative measures. Examination of the answers showed a high degree of detail and consensus among respondents. For clarity, the responses have been grouped under five main headings.

### **LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT**

A common need expressed is support in drafting and updating legislation related to alternative measures and probation, as well as ensuring its effective implementation.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Closely related to legislation is the need for a coherent policy framework. Countries expressed the desire to align their current practices with international standards and best practices from other jurisdictions. This includes the development of sentencing guidelines, such as criteria for custodial sentences, alternative punishments, and special considerations for target groups such as juveniles and women. The creation of protocols for interagency coordination among justice actors and strategies for stakeholder engagement were also emphasized. Additionally, several respondents noted the need for legislation, policy, and protocols on halfway and transitional housing.

## **DATA SYSTEMS, MONITORING AND RESEARCH**

There is a clear need for centralised case management and tracking systems to monitor offenders effectively. Respondents stressed the importance of establishing outcome measurement indicators for alternative measures, with particular attention to completion rates and recidivism. Several countries, furthermore, expressed interest in developing a regional information sharing network in order to track mobile offenders and coordinate supervision efforts. More broadly, there is a need for research into the effectiveness of alternative measures and for ensuring that such findings are accessible.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING OF NGOS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Capacity building of NGOs and community partners is seen as essential to enable and support the implementation of alternative measures. This includes enabling monitoring, establishing compliance, and engaging volunteers as mentors. NGOs and the wider society will need to be mobilised, making public communication and education campaigns a necessary component of successful implementation.

## **STRENGTHENING PROBATION SERVICES**

Finally, it was strongly put forward that probation departments need to be strengthened. This involves establishing separate units for probation work, expanding their capacities and operational effectiveness, and increasing their working methods and professionalism. To this end, an Offender Assessment Tool is seen as essential. This would support the following:

- Developing individualized sentence plans;
- Tailoring rehabilitation interventions and community supervision;
- Informing court sentencing, early release eligibility, and case management;
- Evidence-based policy decisions across the criminal justice system.

It should be noted that such a tool must be culturally adapted to each country's specific context and be accessible to courts, probation services, and correctional institutions.

## **Beliefs on promoting alternative measures from a regional perspective**

The questionnaire also asked how alternative measures could be promoted at the regional level. The responses have been grouped under seven main headings. Content-related suggestions included:

## **LEARNING FROM REGIONAL CORRECTIONAL SYSTEMS**

Respondents emphasized the value of examining and adapting lessons from correctional systems in other countries in the region with comparable socio-economic and cultural contexts.

## **REGIONAL POLICY HARMONIZATION**

Many expressed the need for a common framework of non-custodial sentencing, with shared guidelines across jurisdictions. There is a general perception that there is a need to look beyond national boundaries. Particularly in smaller states, harmonised policy frameworks and shared guidelines could strengthen the implementation of alternative measures. Related to this prospect, perhaps, is the third point noted below.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

Communication efforts were identified as essential, but also challenging, given their cost, technical requirements, and the need to ensure cultural appropriateness. While campaign content could be developed jointly, the design should remain sensitive to jurisdiction-specific contexts.

The following elements were mentioned as means to exchange knowledge and experiences:

## **REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE CENTRE**

A hub was proposed to consolidate monitoring and evaluation data, and to serve as an evidence-based platform on rehabilitation programmes, probation outcomes, and restorative justice pilot projects.

## **REGIONAL COOPERATION IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Proposals included regional training hubs for judges and probation officers, peer learning and workshops, the integration of alternative measures into curricula of regional institutions, and the creation of a regional probation and community justice officer certification scheme.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION**

Organisations such as CARICOM and the OECS could play a facilitating role by providing policy dialogue, technical assistance, and support for legislative harmonization. In this context, the suggestion was made to create a

CARICOM network of NGOs and faith-based groups involved in offender reintegration and alternative sentencing.

In addition, the recently formed Caribbean Association for Probation and Parole (CAPP) could encourage exchanges of probation professionals to empower them and promote acknowledgement of the role of probation and parole organisations. The CAPP is a young, but growing association, formally established in September 2024 following informal exchanges among professionals that highlighted the need for stronger collaboration. It is committed to strengthening probation and parole services across the Caribbean and currently includes members from Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Grenada, The Bahamas, Bermuda, Montserrat, Cayman Islands, and the Caribbean Netherlands.

On the [CAPP's website](#) four key initiatives are outlined:

### **1. Standardization of Probation Practices**

Creating consistent and efficient probation and parole systems across the Caribbean

### **2. Professional Training and Development**

Access to resources, webinars, and certification courses for continuous professional growth.

### **3. Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange**

Bringing together professionals from across the region to share best practices.

#### **4. Advocacy and Policy Reform**

Advocating for progressive reforms that strengthen rehabilitation efforts

In September 2025, the second annual conference of the CAPP was held in Saint Lucia under the theme *Exploring Evidence-Based Practices for Sex Offender Management and Working with Gang-Involved Clients*. The conference brought together representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Anguilla, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and the Caribbean Netherlands, alongside regional and international experts. Discussions focused on pressing issues such as responses to sexual offending in the face of troubling data trends, strategies for addressing criminal justice challenges, and the role of mediation and best practices in reducing crime while strengthening probation and parole systems. During the conference, EL PACCTO 2.0 presented the initial findings of the present survey on alternative sentencing and probation and parole practices across 13 Caribbean countries.

### **Interim conclusion**

An overview of the respondents' answers to the above questions,

particularly regarding the further development of alternative measures and their promotion from a regional perspective, provides a good starting point for reflection. It raises important questions about the completeness of the enumeration of issues identified, the priorities to be set, and the forms of cooperation that could be pursued both among countries and with regional partners. Equally important is the consideration of the role that EL PACCTO 2.0 could play in supporting these efforts in the coming years. Encouragingly, in the final section of the questionnaire, confidence was expressed about the added value of EL PACCTO 2.0.

- *"Technical support from EL PACCTO 2.0 would be timely and highly valued."* (Country L)
- *"We encourage EL PACCTO 2.0 to continue engaging with countries of the region to ensure interventions are culturally responsive, contextually appropriate, and sustainable."* (Country J)
- *"We are committed to expanding non-custodial sentencing options. However, this must be coupled with holistic support systems, greater inter-agency coordination, and public education. EL PACCTO 2.0 can play a critical role in strengthening these areas and facilitating regional learning."* (Country B)

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## Introduction

The Caribbean countries participating in the EL PACCTO 2.0 programme have expressed a clear interest in focusing on alternative measures and probation as viable options to reduce overcrowding in penitentiary institutions. To support policy development in this field, the request was made to conduct a comprehensive scan of the current state of affairs regarding alternative measures and probation in the region. This chapter builds on the findings from the conducted questionnaire, interviews, literature review, and desk research, and translates them into concrete recommendations to guide future policy development within the framework of EL PACCTO 2.0.

## Summary of (key) findings

The main issues addressed in the study can be summarized as follows:

### INCARCERATION

- **Overcrowding in prisons**

In eight countries, prison occupancy rates are around 100%, while in others the problem is significantly more serious, ranging between 150% and 380%.

- **High prison population rate**

The number of prisoners per capita is high. In seven countries, this rate exceeds 300 per 100,000 inhabitants, with one outlier (Saint Kitts and Nevis, 422).

In the other five countries, the prison population rate is below 300, with notable exceptions such as Jamaica (132) and Surinam (134). To place this phenomenon in perspective, in France (124), Spain (117) Italy (106) and the Netherlands (64), incarceration rates are considerably lower.

- **High remand rate**

In most of the countries, the percentage of remand prisoners exceeds 40%, with some notable exceptions (for instance Haiti at 82%).

## ALTERNATIVE MEASURES AND PROBATION

- **Legal options**

The number of alternative measures legally available varies across the participating countries. In nine countries, the following options are available: conditional suspended sentence with supervision (probation) and community service. In seven countries, conditional release (parole) is available. The other options are less frequently available: suspension of pre-trial detention under conditions (five countries) and electronic monitoring (four countries).

- **Frequency of use**

Data on the actual use of available options are limited. However, information has been collected from three countries: Saint Lucia, Barbados, and Jamaica. In Barbados, probation is the most commonly imposed non-custodial sentence, followed by community service. In Saint Lucia, this pattern is reversed, with community service being used more frequently than probation. Notably, in two countries no probation options are currently available (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda).<sup>10</sup>

- **Prison-Probation use ratio**

For three countries, it was determined to what extent probation – in the broadest sense of the word – is imposed in relation to incarceration. The prison population rate and the probation population rate are known for Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Barbados. The data reveal that, despite the availability of probation measures, imprisonment remains overwhelmingly the dominant form of sanction.

- **Juveniles and minor offenses**

In all countries where probation services are available, they are primarily aimed at less serious offenses and juveniles.

- **Reports**

The preparation of pre-sentence reports is an important responsibility of probation services in Barbados, Saint Lucia, and Jamaica. In five countries, however, such reports are not produced. With regard to parole reports, six

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<sup>10</sup> Sutton and Ruprah reached the same conclusion: "Many probation departments struggle with resources, particularly in terms of their capacity to refer clients to adequate rehabilitation and support services. Some countries, such as Jamaica and Barbados, have experimented with connecting probation to community corrections strategies (community service, community-based rehabilitation programmes, appointment of community members to parole boards, etc.). However, such programmes often come and go and shift in times of budget crises or changing political environments. In 2014, The Bahamas approved and Trinidad and Tobago proposed new legislation regarding installing functioning parole systems. In both cases, significant work remains to identify, develop, and implement suitable systems and procedures, establish the required infrastructure to select those eligible for parole, and prepare and monitor them prior to and after release." Sutton, H., & Ruprah, I. (2017). *Restoring paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting violence with numbers*. Inter-American Development Bank. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/restoring-paradise-caribbean-combatting-violence-numbers>

countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) do not have a parole system in place. In three countries (The Bahamas, Belize, and Guyana), advice on parole is instead provided by the prison service. In the remaining countries, probation services do prepare parole reports, but the number of such reports remains limited.

## **ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR THE PROBATION SERVICE**

Most countries report that probation services face insufficient resources to expand their workforce. Even in cases where financial resources are available, recruiting qualified personnel remains a challenge.

Relationships between probation organisations and the justice system, including prison service, public prosecutor's office, and the judiciary, are generally cordial and constructive. However, contact is limited due to the relatively low number of offenders in contact with probation agencies.

Probation agencies often operate in a penal climate that is not immediately receptive to their role and contributions. Public and political attitudes tend to be punitive, and there is concern among politicians about being perceived as “soft on crime.”<sup>11</sup> This underlines the importance of demonstrating the value of alternative measures and communicating their benefits to society at large.<sup>12</sup> Strengthening relationships with the wider community and the media is essential in this regard, as is the establishment of formal partnerships with local governments. In addition, greater attention should be given to the involvement of volunteers in probation work.

## **WISHES FOR ASSISTANCE**

Respondents identified a range of areas where assistance would be valuable. In summary, these include:

- Legislative support and policy framework
- Data systems, monitoring and research
- Capacity building of justice chain, NGO's and community partners
- Institutional strengthening of probation departments

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<sup>11</sup> Bernard, G.S. (2024). Delinquency among Juveniles in the Caribbean: Trends, Factors and Determinants. In W. Wallace (Ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Caribbean Criminology*, 53-73, Palgrave Macmillan. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-52378-6\\_4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-52378-6_4)

<sup>12</sup> A survey among 11,000 respondents in seven Caribbean countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) measured public opinion on several aspects of criminal justice policy. The study found that punitive and progressive attitudes were positively related in all seven nations, and that respondents also supported certain extrajudicial responses to offending. The authors note that “*although politicians often operate on the assumption that they must be ‘tough on crime’ to reflect the will of the people, our results suggest that policymakers do not have to choose between being tough on crime and supporting progressive strategies. ... Our results suggest that the public is likely to favour recent ‘smart on crime’ initiatives in the USA and elsewhere, which promote more balanced policy choices and have garnered bipartisan political support.*” Maguire, E., & Johnson, D. (2015). The structure of public opinion on crime and policy: Evidence from seven Caribbean nations. *Punishment & Society* 17(4), 502-530. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1462474515604385>

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

All respondents expressed strong support for expanding the range of alternative measures and emphasized the value of regional cooperation to facilitate knowledge exchange and draw on promising examples within the Caribbean region. A joint effort toward policy harmonisation and the establishment of a regional framework for non-custodial sentencing was seen as a priority. Suggested initiatives included public awareness campaigns, staff development programmes, and the creation of a regional knowledge centre to collect, process, and disseminate cross-country data and best practices. Three countries already possess notable experience in this area and could serve as role models for others.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that countries differ significantly in terms of population, geography, and economic resources, which in turn shapes what is feasible in the provision of probation services in each jurisdiction. Any collaborative effort must therefore reflect this diversity. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC) and CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) were identified as potential partners for policy dialogue and implementation. Notably, probation services in the region expressed considerable enthusiasm and confidence in the Caribbean Association for Probation and Parole (CAPP), an organisation established by the services themselves, which is already seen as an important platform for cooperation.

## Conclusion

The findings point to considerable potential for expanding alternative measures and reducing reliance on pre-trial detention. Alongside efforts to address delays in case processing, priority should be given to strengthening and expanding the role of probation services.<sup>13</sup>

Assuming that reducing overcrowding is a central objective, consideration should be given to broadening the current focus of probation services beyond juveniles and minor offenses to include adults and more serious offences. Experience in other regions demonstrates that such expansion can contribute significantly to lowering incarceration rates. A prerequisite for this development is the reinforcement of the probation service's advisory role, particularly regarding pre-sentence reports and parole advice, both in terms of quantity and quality.

While relationships between probation services and justice system partners are generally positive, the envisaged expansion of probation services will require clear

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<sup>13</sup> Sutton and Ruprah observed that *“while we have seen that the Caribbean suffers from particularly high levels of violent crime, the prison population is made up largely of individuals who have committed drug offences or burglary/theft. Given the situation of prison overcrowding, it would seem to warrant investigation as to whether many of these offenders could not be serving probation or alternative sentences (i.e., halfway houses, electronic monitoring, substance-abuse treatment and rehabilitation).”* Sutton, H., & Ruprah, I. (2017). *Restoring paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting violence with numbers*. Inter-American Development Bank. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/restoring-paradise-caribbean-combatting-violence-numbers>

agreements on lead times, procedures, performance standards, and communication protocols. This will demand a strong commitment from all stakeholders.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this stocktaking, several recommendations can be formulated across different thematic areas.

### **A. Policy and legislative recommendations**

- It is encouraged that each country carries out an independent assessment of the current state of alternative measures and probation. Conducting such analyses across the justice chain can foster a broader understanding of the importance of probation and generate political and societal support for tailored development plans. Representatives from other countries in the region, as well as experts from Europe, could be invited to contribute to this process. A comparable assessment in Surinam has already yielded valuable insights and actions.
- Drawing on their own national analyses and the data presented in this scan, participating countries are encouraged to jointly design a strategic plan. Such a plan should define priorities for strengthening alternative measures and probation, and outline strategies for the application of non-custodial sanctions, with particular attention to specific target groups.
- Promote harmonisation of legislation and policies on alternative measures within the region through collaborate approaches. Determine which initiatives can be undertaken jointly and which require national adaptation.

### **B. Capacity building**

- Invest in the justice chain and in increasing political support.
- Invest in the development and professionalization of probation services.
- Develop and implement standardised training modules and certification programs for probation staff, preferably coordinated at the regional level.

### **C. Data, monitoring, and evaluation**

- Establish systematic data collection, uniform monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms. Identifying probation activities and the caseload of probation services would provide essential insights for policymakers, the public, and justice chain partners. The Council of Europe's statistical framework for alternative measures could serve as a useful reference for developing Caribbean-wide standards.
- Stimulate (empirical) research into the effectiveness and social impact of alternative measures. In this regard, collaboration with universities can play a pivotal role.

#### **D. Cooperation and participation**

- Facilitate the regional exchange of knowledge and experiences on probation and parole practices through dedicated platforms such as the Caribbean Association for Probation and Parole (CAPP).
- Involve civil society organisations, municipalities, and the private sector in the implementation of probation and parole measures through public-private partnerships.
- Strengthen the role of universities as partners and observers. They can become critical friends.

#### **E. Communication and public perception**

- Develop a joint communication and information strategy on alternative measures, aimed at public acceptance and reducing stigmatisation.<sup>14</sup>

### **Final remarks**

In 2012, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the *Caribbean Human Development Report: Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security*. Chapter 5 of that report highlighted enduring challenges within the region's criminal justice systems, including prison overcrowding, limited alternatives to incarceration, delays and backlogs in case processing, and weak statistical infrastructure. While many of these issues were identified more than a decade ago remain, the emergence of probation as a cornerstone of criminal justice reform represents a meaningful and positive development. In several Caribbean countries, this area has gained both visibility and measurable progress. Notably, the establishment of the Caribbean Association of Probation and Parole (CAPP) stands as a significant milestone, providing a regional platform dedicated to advancing the development and effectiveness of alternative measures.

This progress creates a clear opportunity to further strengthen and support the CAPP as it continues its work. The next phases of EL PACCTO 2.0 should therefore be implemented in close partnership with the CAPP, and in coordination with key regional institutions such as the ECSC and CARICOM IMPACS. Such coordination is particularly important given their recognised roles in promoting regional justice cooperation, enhancing legislative frameworks, and supporting capacity-building initiatives. Moreover, insights gathered throughout this study suggest that collaboration with these entities can enhance policy coherence and facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices across jurisdictions.

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<sup>14</sup> Inspiration may be found at the Confederation of European Probation (CEP), which is currently developing a public relations strategy. For literature, see Bosker, J., Tigges, L., & Henskens, R. (2021, November). *Probation: Why and how*. HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. <https://www.hu.nl/onderzoek/publicaties/probation-why-and-how--brochure>. The brochure states that developing a strong probation service and promoting community sentences can be a "smarter" approach to dealing with offenders, providing multiple benefits: probation is cost-effective; it reduces the prison population; it reduces reoffending; it assists judges and prosecutors; it promotes rehabilitation; and it encourages reparation and restitution.

Collectively, these efforts align with the principles outlined in the Needham's Point Declaration introduced at the beginning of this report. They are also consistent with the UNODC's Model Strategies on Reducing Reoffending, which are currently in the ratification phase.<sup>15</sup> The recommendations presented here build upon this shared vision, promoting a stronger, more effective, and sustainable application of alternative measures across the Caribbean.

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<sup>15</sup> UNODC. (2025). *Open-ended intergovernmental expert group on model strategies on reducing reoffending*. United Nations. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/justice-and-prison-reform/cpcj-model-strategies-on-reducing-reoffending-documentation.html>

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# ANNEX I. QUESTIONNAIRE

## 1. Are alternative sanctions (already) being implemented?

- If so, please describe what type of sanctions are involved and in what numbers

To select a topic, simply click on the relevant check boxes. You can elaborate or add details in the text box below.

- ☐ Suspension of pre-trial detention under conditions
- ☐ Community service/unpaid work
- ☐ Conditional suspended sentence with supervision
- ☐ Electronic monitoring with probation guidance
- ☐ Suspension of the execution of the prison sentence under conditions
- ☐ Execution of the sentence in "open society"
- ☐ Early conditional release
- ☐ Halfway & transitional houses
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other alternatives, and if so, which...

Your answer here.

- What experiences have been gained so far with these alternative sanctions? Use the text box below to elaborate on either one or multiple of these topics.

Your answer here.

## 2. Organisation; advice reports

2a. Which service is currently responsible for the preparation and implementation of alternative sanctions (e.g. police, prison service, probation and parole service, others)?

*Your answer here.*

**2b. Does your organisation in charge of alternative sanctions write any advice reports to public prosecutors, the courts or the prisons? If so, can you elaborate on this (frequency, purpose, experiences)?**

*Your answer here.*

### **3. Enabling Alternative Sanctions**

**Can you describe the situation in your country with regards to the following topics?**

- **Legislation on alternative sanctions and measures** (any special legislation for women)?

*Your answer here.*

- **Number of staff** (men/women/other)

*Your answer here.*

- **Level of education and training of staff** (men/women/other)

*Your answer here.*

- **Trainings institute**

*Your answer here.*

- **Budget**

*Your answer here.*

- **ICT equipment and facilities**

*Your answer here.*

- **Relationships with Courts, public prosecutors, police, prisons**

*Your answer here.*

- **Relationships with municipalities, neighbourhoods and private institutions**

*Your answer here.*

- **Involvement of civil society and volunteers**

*Your answer here.*

- **Media communication**

*Your answer here.*

#### 4. Interest/Drive and Opportunities/Challenges

**4a. Is there any current interest in (further) developing and expanding alternative sanctions in your country? Who is involved?** (Ministry of Justice, Prosecutors, Judges, Prison Service, Community, Probation and Parole Service, University, Press, others)

*Your answer here.*

**4b. What do you see as the main opportunities and challenges in your country in the (further) development of alternative sanctions?**

*Your answer here.*

#### 5. International and regional assistance

**5a. Has your country in the past received any help from other countries or programmes in setting up or improving the implementation of alternative sanctions. If so, from what country or programme and in what form?**

*Your answer here.*

**5b. What kind of assistance do you need in (further) developing alternative sanctions?**

*Your answer here.*

**5c. Do you have any ideas as to how alternative sanctions can be promoted from a regional perspective?**

*Your answer here.*

## **6. Final Comments**

**Are there any other issues or remarks that you would like to raise to the EL PACCTO 2.0 team?** *Please use the text box below to provide your answer.*

*Your answer*

# ANNEX II. STATISTICS ON JUVENILES, WOMEN, AND FOREIGN NATIONALS

## JUVENILES (HIGH TO LOW)

Country	Juvenile Prisoners (%)	Year / Definition
Barbados	5.9%	December 2016 – under 20
Surinam	5.7%	2005
Jamaica	4.3%	2025
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2.8%	September 2018
Haiti	2.3%	September 2021
Bahamas	2%	2024
Trinidad and Tobago	1.9%	September 2018
Saint Lucia	1.2%	August 2024
Grenada	0.9%	September 2016
Belize	0.6%	May 2025 – under 18
Guyana	0.6%	December 2015
Antigua and Barbuda	0.4%	July 2022 – under 18
Dominica	0.0%	March 2024
Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.0%	July 2025

# FEMALES (HIGH TO LOW)

Country	Female Prisoners (%)	Year / Reference
Bahamas	10%	2024
Antigua and Barbuda	5.5%	July 2022
Jamaica	5.2%	2025
Haiti	3.5%	January 2024
Guyana	3.2%	January 2024
Surinam	3.1%	November 2023
Barbados	3.0%	November 2023
Trinidad and Tobago	2.9%	September 2018
Saint Lucia	2.7%	August 2022
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2.0%	July 2024
Belize	1.8%	May 2025
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1.7%	July 2025
Grenada	1.6%	August 2023
Dominica	1.2%	March 2024

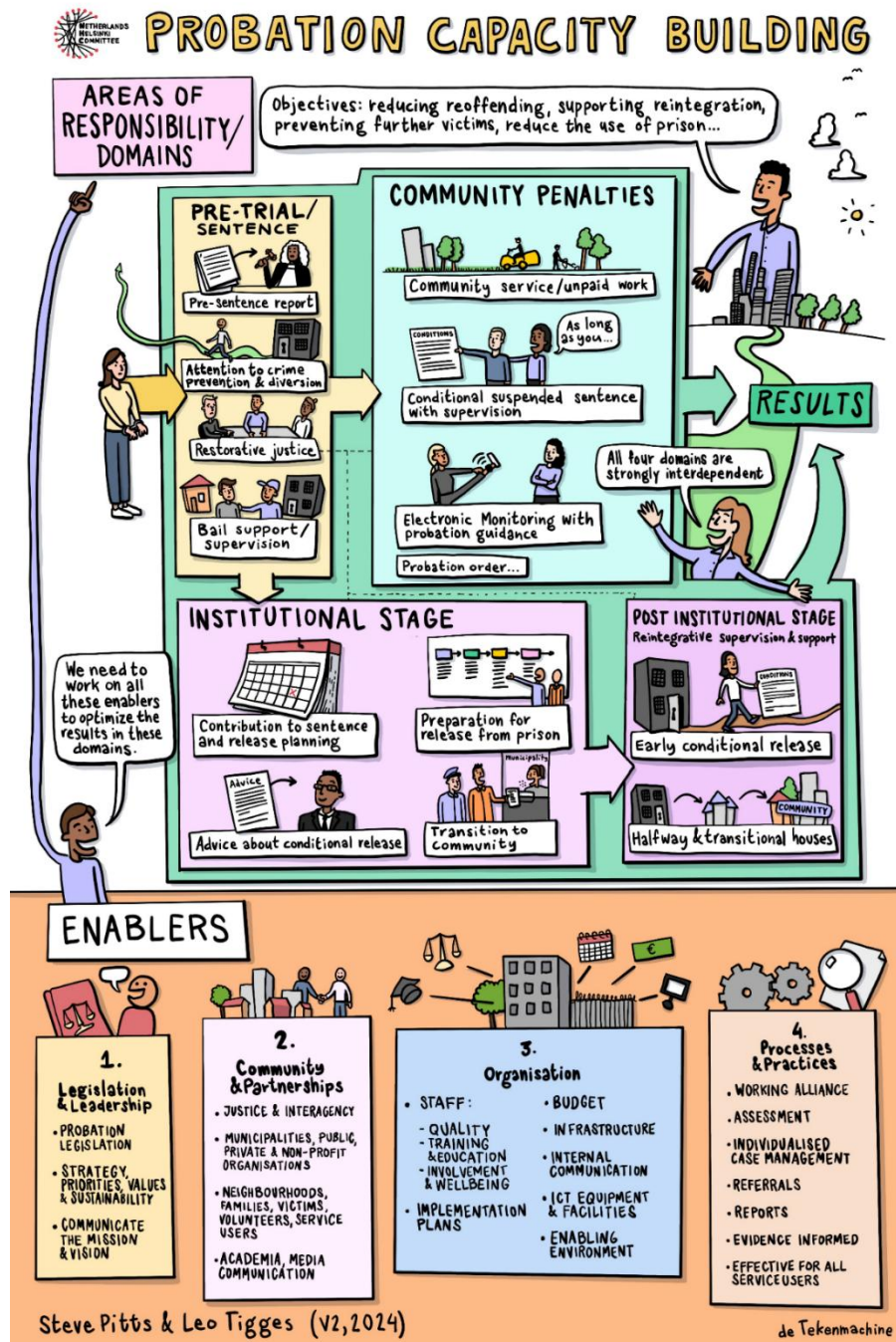
# FOREIGN NATIONALS (HIGH TO LOW)

Country	Foreign Prisoners (%)	Year / Reference
Antigua and Barbuda	30.6%	September 2007
Surinam	10%	2023
Bahamas	10%	2025
Dominica	9.6%	March 2024
Barbados	9.1%	2023
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8%	2022
Belize	5.9%	May 2025
Grenada	4.8%	2023
Trinidad and Tobago	3.7%	2020
Guyana	3.2%	2023
Saint Lucia	1.7%	December 2024
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1%	2023
Jamaica	0.2%	2025
Haiti	N/A	N/A

# ANNEX III. DATA SHEETS

Available upon request from EL PACCTO 2.0.

# ANNEX IV. THE DOMAINS AND ENABLERS MODEL<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Pitts, S., & Tigges, L. (2023, November). Building probation capacity: What works? Learning from the European Experience of Probation Service Development in the 21st Century. Confederation of European Probation. <https://www.cep-probation.org/research-report-online-building-probation-capacity-what-works/>



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