

# THEY ALL COME OUT

## MAPPING THE DESISTANCE JOURNEYS OF 150 PRISON-LEAVERS OVER 18 MONTHS

**HELEN KOSC**

Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Oxford

[helen.kosc@sociology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.kosc@sociology.ox.ac.uk)

### THE STUDY

I am conducting an 18-month ethnographic study on the resettlement of 150 prison-leavers from His Majesty's Prison Bullingdon...

To learn about the mechanisms that contribute to the **desistance vs persistence of criminal activity** and better inform future reintegration policy

**83,687 ppl incarcerated in UK prisons**

150 prison-leavers

18 months

go-along ethnography



deep & rich micro-level data

unstructured, sequential interviews

Long-term participant observation

### BEFORE RELEASE

- Met with men in custody
- Made 'plan' for release
- Set goals and ambitions
- Discussed what kind of support they would need upon release.

### DURING RELEASE

- Picked up men 'at the gate' on the morning of release
- Accompanied them to Probation Meeting
- Supported them on their first day out in the community

### AFTER RELEASE

- Follow-up with them fortnightly
- Revisit goals and ambitions

**1/3 return to prison within FIRST month of release**



### PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

- 86% of my sample were released from prison, **homeless**
- Only 11/150 men (7% of my sample) was able to gain employment
- Nearly **62%** were **recalled** or **reoffended** during the 18 months.
- With at least **10%** admitting to actively seeking out arrest, to 'buy' themselves a few weeks in prison to guarantee a roof over their head, a bed, and 3 meals a day.
- The men in my sample had '**multiple disadvantages**' with a history of poverty, unemployment, rough-sleeping, very little education, severe mental health issues, substance abuse, and learning difficulties.
- Before we can expect **recidivism & reoffending** rates to drop, we need **serious policy efforts** to address the multiple disadvantages of this population, and invest in support for their reintegration post-prison.

"If the people around me keep treating me like I am not enough, maybe I am not enough. Maybe a life of crime is exactly what I am 'enough' for."

"Every time I come out of prison I come out homeless."

"I feel like the world has given up on me. I can't get a job, nowhere will hire me. I can't even get a roof over my head. I'm on the street with no money. 'Hello world, does anybody see me?'"