

RELIGION IN PRISON

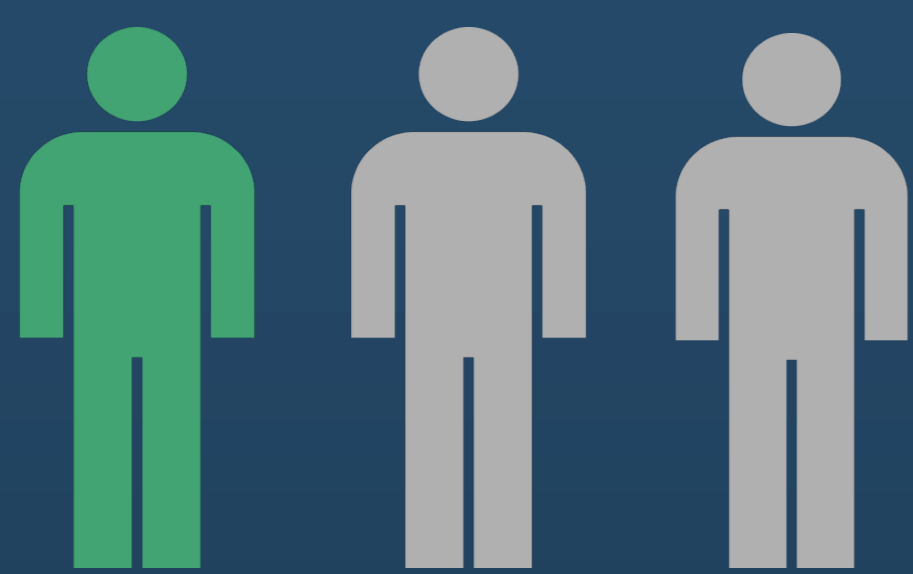
Research and assessment of this phenomenon indicates that has a **positive effect** on the organization of prisons, the behaviour of individuals and on treatment.

Historically, religion in prison has had a prominent position. The **Philadelphic System** (s. XVIII – XIX, William Penn, head of the Quaker religion) was **based on** solitude and silence, leading to reflection and so to repentance. Prisons should have a chapel where cell isolation 24/7 was the ideal for the **only allowed activity**: the study of the Bible.

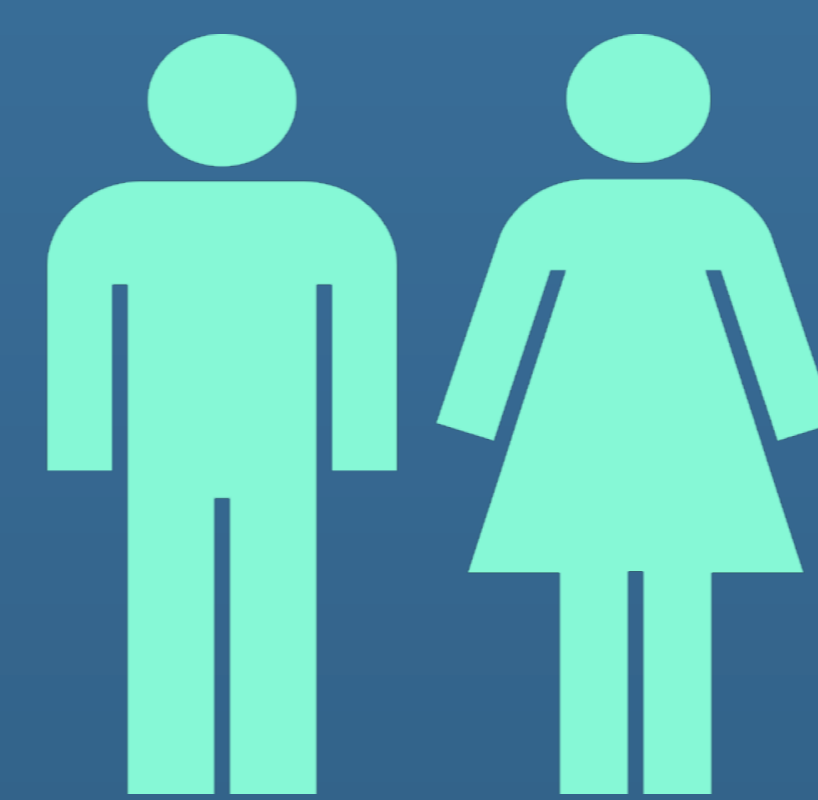
in Catalonia, over

30 %

of inmates use
religious
services



A Cultural and
Religious Diversity
Committee was formed by
Catholics, Pentecostals
and Muslims



about
500
volunteers
working regularly

20 h
training



VOLUNTEERING IN PRISON

Volunteers are considered **essential** by the Prison System to carry out the fundamental objective of imprisonment: **reintegration into society** (Circular 1/2001, Volunteer Management prisons of Catalonia).

In Spain, since its origin, volunteering in prison has been made from a **Christian evangelical motivation** (Martinez, 2001).

The first people were linked to religious organizations, especially the Catholic Church. They were gathered mainly to accompany the prison **chaplain to perform activities to humanize and evangelize the inmates**.

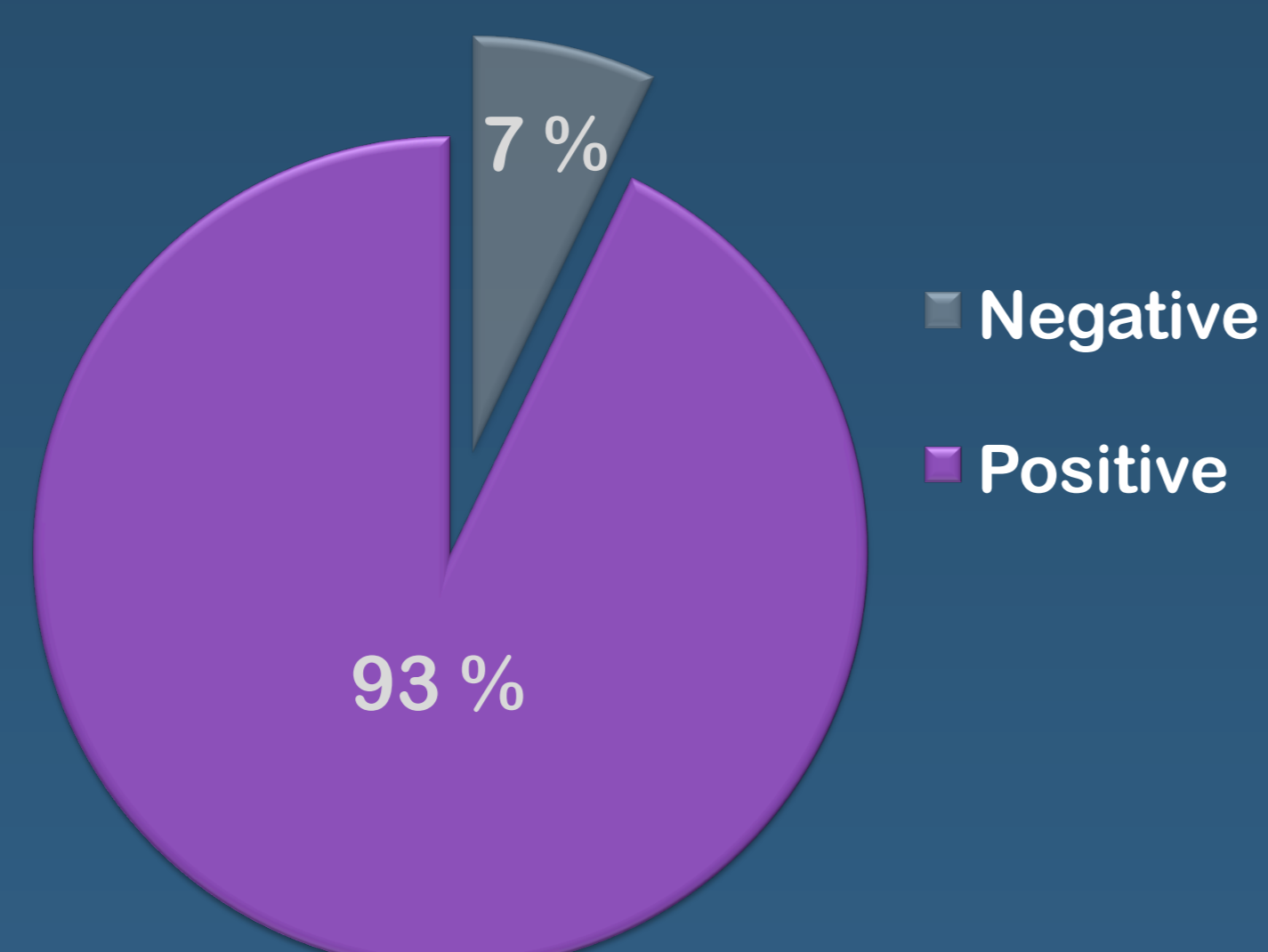
Today, the organization is through the Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat Prison (SEPA), that **encourages and coordinates** those members who want to **work as volunteers in prevention, rehabilitation and social reintegration**.

RELIGION AND DESISTANCE

Specific research on the relationship between religion and desistance determines that **there is a positive impact** on the process, but it is not stable over time. Results have been found in the first year after release.

Chu, (2007) found it about drug abuse, and **Giordano (2008)** points out the effect on the social network to help the individual to desist: the contact with a religious institution provides assets like a job, a home, emotional support, counselling, etc.

93 % of the research literature in this topic published since 1969 shows an **inverse relationship** between religiosity and recidivism (Sturgis, 2008).



... IN CATALONIA

In 2009, the Catalan Justice Department explored the situation, unfolding interesting results in the **inmate's perceptions**. **This results are the same in the English context** (Home Office, 2001; Burnside, 2005).

- They value the non-profit work, solidarity and the fact that the volunteers do not belong to the Criminal Justice System
- They also appreciate the emotional support
- All these make them feel confident

This data gives a perspective that the volunteer work can be a **trigger for the desistance process** of those convicted.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This project aims to **analyse religious practices** in the Catalan Prison System, especially with the lens focused on religious volunteering and **the way it affects the desistance process**. Our questions are:

- Does religion have an impact on the desistance process?
- What is the causal mechanism? Is it the same for all individuals?
- Do the work of religious volunteers have different impacts on inmates at release?

1st religious and non-religious volunteer programmes will be analysed to compare them (contents, teaching materials, the volunteers' education, hidden curriculum) using **content analysis technique**.

2nd the desistance process will be studied to examine the influence of those programmes. 3 typologies will be constructed: individuals who have participated in religious programmes, those who have participated in non-religious ones, and inmates that have not participated in either one, regardless the type of offences. To delimit the size of the sample **saturated speech technique** will be utilized.

3rd all members of the Cultural and Religious Diversity Committee will be **interviewed** to determine the management of the religious practice and their personal perception about the influence on treatment.