



## PUBLIC OPINION ON THE IMPACT OF MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCING ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. A CASE STUDY OF CHENNAI

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Mandatory minimum sentencing laws have been a contentious aspect of the United States criminal justice system since their widespread implementation in the 1980s. These laws require judges to impose a specified minimum prison sentence for certain crimes, regardless of mitigating factors. This study aims to evaluate the comprehensive impact of mandatory minimum sentencing laws on various aspects of the criminal justice system, including incarceration rates, racial disparities, recidivism, and overall system costs. **Findings:** Incarceration rates have significantly increased in jurisdictions with strict mandatory minimum laws. Racial disparities in sentencing have been exacerbated, with minorities disproportionately affected. The laws have shifted discretionary power from judges to prosecutors. Recidivism rates have not shown significant improvement compared to jurisdictions without such laws. The financial burden on the criminal justice system has increased substantially due to longer prison terms. The study concludes that while mandatory minimum sentencing laws have led to longer prison terms, they have also contributed to unintended consequences such as increased racial disparities and system costs. The findings suggest a pressing need for policymakers to reevaluate mandatory minimum sentencing laws. Potential reforms could include increasing judicial discretion, expanding alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offences, and implementing more nuanced sentencing guidelines that consider individual circumstances and rehabilitation potential.

**KEYWORDS:** Mandatory minimum sentencing, Criminal justice system, Judicial discretion, racial disparities

### INTRODUCTION:

The concept of mandatory minimum sentencing in India can be traced back to colonial-era laws. However, its modern application gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly with the enactment of laws like the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. Unlike the widespread implementation seen in countries like the United States, India has adopted a more selective approach, applying mandatory minimums to specific offenses such as drug trafficking, sexual offenses, and certain economic crimes. **Government Initiatives:** The Indian government has introduced several

initiatives related to mandatory minimum sentencing. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, enacted in response to the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, introduced mandatory minimum sentences for certain sexual offenses. More recently, the 2018 amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act established mandatory minimum sentences for bribery offenses. These initiatives reflect the government's attempt to address public concerns about serious crimes and corruption. **Factors:** Several factors influence public opinion on mandatory minimum sentencing in Chennai: Media coverage of high-profile criminal cases, Perception of crime rates

and public safety, Trust in the judicial system, Awareness of legal processes and rights, Socioeconomic background of respondents, Cultural attitudes towards punishment and rehabilitation. Current Trends: Recent trends indicate a growing debate on the efficacy of mandatory minimum sentences. While some advocate for their deterrent effect, others argue for more flexible sentencing guidelines. There's an increasing focus on alternative approaches such as restorative justice and rehabilitation programs, particularly for non-violent offenders. Comparison with Other Cities and Countries: Chennai's approach to mandatory minimum sentencing differs from other Indian cities like Mumbai or Delhi, where there's generally more public discourse on legal reforms. Compared to countries like the United States, which has seen a recent trend towards reducing mandatory minimums, India's approach remains more conservative. However, Chennai, like many urban centres in developing nations, is witnessing a gradual shift towards more nuanced views on criminal justice. Suggestions: Based on preliminary observations, potential areas for improvement include: Enhancing public legal education programs, Encouraging more open dialogue between legal professionals and the public, Conducting regular reviews of the impact of mandatory minimum sentences, Exploring alternative sentencing options for certain offences. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of public opinion on mandatory minimum sentencing in Chennai. By examining local perspectives, it contributes to the broader discourse on criminal justice reform in India and offers insights that may be valuable for policymakers and legal practitioners. The findings will shed light on the complex interplay between public perception, legal policy, and social justice in an evolving urban Indian context.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- Assess public awareness and understanding of mandatory minimum sentencing laws in Chennai.
- Analyse public perceptions of the effectiveness of mandatory minimum sentences in deterring crime and reducing recidivism.
- Evaluate public opinion on the fairness and proportionality of mandatory minimum sentences across different types of offences.
- Examine public views on the socioeconomic and demographic impacts of mandatory minimum sentencing in Chennai's criminal justice system.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**Jennifer Adams (2023)** This longitudinal study examines shifts in public opinion regarding mandatory minimum sentencing over a 20-year period (2003-2023). Using data from national surveys conducted every five years, the research tracks changes in attitudes across different demographic groups. Results indicate a gradual decline in overall public support for mandatory minimums, from 68% in 2003 to 42% in 2023. The study identifies key factors influencing this shift, including increased media coverage of wrongful convictions, growing awareness of racial disparities in sentencing, and changing attitudes towards drug offenses. The research also explores generational differences, finding that younger generations are significantly less supportive of mandatory minimums compared to older cohorts. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these changing attitudes for future criminal justice policy and reform efforts.

**Michael Chen (2022)** : This comprehensive study examines the relationship between mandatory minimum sentencing policies and prison population growth across 15 states from 2010 to 2022. Utilizing data from state departments of corrections, the research employs regression analysis to assess the impact of these policies on incarceration rates. Findings reveal a significant positive correlation between the implementation of mandatory minimums and increased prison populations, with an average

increase of 27% in states with stricter policies. The study also explores variations in impact based on offence types, noting particularly strong effects for drug-related crimes. Additionally, the research considers the economic implications of increased incarceration, estimating an average annual cost increase of \$45 million per state. The paper concludes by proposing alternative sentencing strategies that could potentially reduce prison populations while maintaining public safety. **Sophia Rodriguez(2023)**: This qualitative study explores the views and experiences of judges regarding mandatory minimum sentencing policies. Through in-depth interviews with 50 federal and state judges across the country, the research uncovers a complex range of opinions and concerns. Many judges express frustration with the limitations these policies place on their discretion, particularly in cases involving first-time offenders or mitigating circumstances. The study identifies recurring themes, including concerns about the potential for unjust outcomes, the erosion of the judicial role, and the impact on plea bargaining practices. However, some judges also note the potential for mandatory minimums to ensure consistency in sentencing across different courts. The paper discusses the implications of these findings for judicial independence and the administration of justice, concluding with recommendations for policy reforms that balance consistency with judicial discretion. **DAVID THOMPSON(2022)** : This study investigates the level of public understanding regarding mandatory minimum sentencing policies and their impacts. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines a survey of 2,000 adults with focus group discussions to assess knowledge levels and identify common misconceptions. Results indicate a significant gap between public perception and the realities of these policies, with only 23% of respondents demonstrating accurate knowledge of how mandatory minimums function. The study uncovers several widespread misconceptions, including

overestimations of the policies' effectiveness in reducing crime and underestimations of their impact on prison populations. Factors influencing knowledge levels, such as education, media consumption, and personal experience with the criminal justice system, are explored. The paper concludes by emphasising the need for improved public education on criminal justice policies and their consequences. **ELIZABETH WARREN (2024)** : This economic analysis examines the financial implications of mandatory minimum sentencing policies on state budgets. Utilizing fiscal data from 20 states over a 10-year period (2014-2024), the study calculates both the direct and indirect costs associated with these policies. Findings indicate an average increase of 32% in correctional spending across the studied states, primarily due to longer sentences and increased prison populations. The research also considers opportunity costs, such as reduced funding for education and social services. Additionally, the study explores the long-term economic impact, including lost productivity and increased social welfare costs for families of incarcerated individuals. The paper concludes by proposing a cost-benefit analysis framework for evaluating sentencing policies and suggests alternative approaches that may be more economically viable while maintaining public safety. **JAMAL WILLIAMS (2023)**: This comprehensive study examines racial disparities in the application of mandatory minimum sentences across the United States. Analysing sentencing data from federal and state courts over a five-year period (2018-2023), the research employs statistical analysis to assess the differential impact of these policies on various racial groups. Findings reveal significant disparities, with Black and Hispanic defendants receiving mandatory minimum sentences at rates 2.1 and 1.7 times higher, respectively, than white defendants for comparable offences. The study explores factors contributing to these disparities, including socioeconomic status, differences in plea bargaining outcomes, and potential



implicit biases in the criminal justice system. Through interviews with prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, the research provides insights into the decision-making processes that may perpetuate these disparities. The paper concludes by proposing policy reforms aimed at reducing racial inequities in sentencing, including the implementation of racial impact assessments for new sentencing legislation and improved data collection practices. **LAURA MARTINEZ (2023)**: This longitudinal study investigates the relationship between mandatory minimum sentencing policies and recidivism rates. Tracking a cohort of 10,000 offenders over a 10-year period post-release, the research compares recidivism outcomes for those sentenced under mandatory minimum policies versus those with more flexible sentencing. Contrary to the deterrence theory underlying these policies, the study finds no significant reduction in recidivism rates for offenders subject to mandatory minimums. In fact, for certain categories of non-violent offences, individuals who served mandatory minimum sentences showed slightly higher rates of reoffending (increase of 5.8%) compared to those who received more individualised sentences. The research explores potential explanations for these findings, including the impact of longer sentences on social reintegration and employment prospects. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these results for sentencing policy and recommending alternative approaches focused on rehabilitation and reintegration. **THOMAS BROWN (2022)**: This study examines the role of media in shaping public perceptions of mandatory minimum sentencing policies. Through a content analysis of major news outlets and social media platforms over a three-year period (2019–2022), the research identifies key themes and narratives in the media portrayal of these policies. The study also includes a survey component, assessing the correlation between media consumption patterns and attitudes towards mandatory minimums among 3,000

respondents. Findings reveal a significant influence of media framing on public opinion, with exposure to crime-focused news correlating with stronger support for mandatory minimums, while exposure to stories highlighting injustices or systemic issues correlates with more critical views. The research also explores the impact of social media echo chambers in reinforcing existing beliefs about sentencing policies. The paper concludes by discussing the ethical responsibilities of media in reporting on criminal justice issues and suggesting strategies for more balanced and informative coverage. **ROBERT CHEN (2023)**: This study investigates how mandatory minimum sentencing policies influence plea bargaining practices in the criminal justice system. Through an analysis of case data from 30 jurisdictions and interviews with prosecutors, defence attorneys, and judges, the research examines changes in plea bargaining strategies and outcomes following the implementation of mandatory minimums. Findings indicate a significant shift in power dynamics, with prosecutors leveraging the threat of mandatory sentences to secure guilty pleas. The study reveals an increase in "charge bargaining," where charges are manipulated to avoid triggering mandatory minimums. Additionally, the research explores the ethical implications of this practice and its potential to undermine the principle of truth in sentencing. The paper concludes by discussing the broader implications for justice and due process, proposing reforms to ensure that plea bargaining serves the interests of justice rather than expediency. **SARAH JOHNSON (2024)**: This comprehensive study examines the relationship between mandatory minimum sentencing policies and crime rates across 25 states over a 15-year period (2009–2024). Utilising a difference-in-differences approach, the research compares crime rate trends in states that implemented or strengthened mandatory minimum policies against those that did not. Contrary to popular belief, the findings show no significant correlation between the

implementation of mandatory minimums and reduction in overall crime rates. The study breaks down results by crime type, noting some variation in effects. While there was a modest decrease in certain drug-related offences, violent crime rates remained largely unaffected. The research also considers potential confounding factors, such as economic conditions and demographic shifts. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for public safety policy, emphasising the need for evidence-based approaches to crime reduction that go beyond punitive measures. **DR. EMILY PARKER (2023)**: This study explores the psychological effects of mandatory minimum sentences on both offenders and their families. Through a series of in-depth interviews and psychological assessments conducted with 200 individuals serving mandatory minimum sentences and 150 family members, the research unveils the profound mental health implications of these policies. Findings indicate significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder among those serving mandatory minimums compared to the general prison population. The study also reveals the ripple effects on families, including increased rates of financial instability, behavioural issues in children, and strain on marital relationships. Additionally, the research examines the impact on rehabilitation motivation, finding that the perceived injustice of mandatory minimums often leads to decreased engagement in prison programs. The paper concludes by discussing the long-term societal costs of these psychological impacts and proposing interventions to mitigate these effects within the current policy framework. **ALEXANDER LEE (2022)**: This quantitative study examines how mandatory minimum sentencing laws influence judicial decision-making patterns. Analyzing sentencing data from federal courts over a 10-year period (2012-2022), the research employs regression analysis to identify shifts in sentencing trends following the implementation of new mandatory minimum policies. Findings

indicate a significant reduction in sentencing variability for affected offenses, with a 40% decrease in deviation from prescribed sentences. However, the study also uncovers evidence of "judicial circumvention," where judges find alternative ways to avoid imposing mandatory minimums in cases they deem unjust. The research explores factors influencing this behaviour, including judicial ideology and case characteristics. Additionally, the study examines the impact on sentencing for non-mandatory minimum offences, finding evidence of a spillover effect. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for judicial independence and the broader goals of sentencing reform. **DR. MARIA GONZALEZ (2023)**: This comparative study examines mandatory minimum sentencing policies across ten different countries, analyzing their implementation, effects, and recent reform efforts. Through a combination of legal analysis, crime data evaluation, and interviews with international legal experts, the research provides a comprehensive overview of global trends in sentencing policy. Findings reveal significant variations in approach, from countries maintaining strict mandatory minimums to those that have largely abolished them in favor of more flexible guidelines. The study identifies key factors influencing these policy choices, including legal traditions, political climate, and public opinion. Additionally, the research assesses the outcomes of various approaches, considering metrics such as incarceration rates, recidivism, and public safety. The paper concludes by extracting best practices and lessons learned from international experiences, offering recommendations for countries considering sentencing policy reforms. **JONATHAN TAYLOR (2022)**: This economic study investigates the ripple effects of mandatory minimum sentencing policies on local community finances. Focusing on 50 counties across five states, the research analyzes changes in local government expenditures and revenues following the implementation of stricter

sentencing laws. Findings indicate significant fiscal strains on communities, including increased costs for local jails, social services, and public defense. The study also reveals decreased local tax revenues due to the removal of working-age individuals from the community. Additionally, the research examines the long-term economic impacts, such as reduced workforce participation and increased reliance on public assistance among families of incarcerated individuals. The paper concludes by proposing a model for comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of sentencing policies at the local level and suggesting strategies for mitigating negative fiscal impacts on communities.

**RACHEL WONG (2024):** This comprehensive survey study examines public attitudes towards mandatory minimum sentencing policies, exploring how demographic factors and political ideologies influence these views. Based on responses from 5,000 adults across diverse regions and backgrounds, the research employs multivariate analysis to identify key predictors of support or opposition to these policies. Findings reveal complex relationships between opinion and factors such as age, education level, political affiliation, and personal experience with the criminal justice system. The study also uncovers significant gaps between public perception of these policies' effectiveness and empirical evidence. Additionally, the research explores how providing factual information about the impacts of mandatory minimums influences respondents' opinions, finding that exposure to data often leads to shifts in attitude. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for public policy communication and the importance of informed public debate on criminal justice issues.

**DR. MARCUS JOHNSON (2023):** This study examines the relationship between mandatory minimum sentencing policies and prison overcrowding, as well as their impact on facility management. Utilising data from state and federal prisons over a 15-year period (2008-2023), the research employs

statistical analysis to assess the contribution of mandatory minimums to population growth and operational challenges. Findings indicate that facilities in jurisdictions with stricter mandatory minimum laws experience, on average, 34% higher overcrowding rates compared to those with more flexible sentencing. The study also explores the cascading effects on prison operations, including increased security risks, strain on healthcare services, and reduced access to rehabilitation programs. Through interviews with prison administrators and staff, the research provides insights into the day-to-day challenges of managing overcrowded facilities. The paper concludes by proposing policy recommendations to address overcrowding, including sentencing reform and increased investment in alternatives to incarceration.

**VIKRAM MEHTA (2023):** This study examines the relationship between mandatory minimum sentencing policies and prison overcrowding in Chennai, India. Using data from the Tamil Nadu Prison Department spanning 2018-2023, the research employs statistical analysis to assess the impact of these policies on prison population growth. The study finds a significant correlation between the implementation of mandatory minimums and increased overcrowding, with a 28% rise in prison population over the five-year period. Qualitative interviews with prison administrators reveal challenges in managing the increased inmate population, including strain on resources and difficulties in providing rehabilitation programs. The research also highlights disparities in sentencing, with marginalised communities disproportionately affected by mandatory minimums. The paper concludes by discussing potential policy reforms to address these issues, including the introduction of alternative sentencing options for non-violent offenders and the reevaluation of current mandatory minimum thresholds.

**ANITA KRISHNAN (2022):** This research investigates the gap between public perception and empirical reality regarding mandatory



minimum sentencing in Chennai. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining a survey of 1,500 Chennai residents with an analysis of sentencing data from local courts. Results indicate a significant disparity between public opinion and actual outcomes of mandatory minimums. While 73% of respondents believed these policies effectively deter crime, statistical analysis shows no significant reduction in crime rates since their implementation. The study also reveals a lack of public awareness about the economic costs and social implications of these policies. Factors influencing public opinion, including media portrayal and personal experiences with crime, are explored. The paper concludes by emphasising the need for evidence-based public education on criminal justice policies and their impacts.

**RAHUL SENGUPT (2023)**: This qualitative study explores the perspectives of judges in Chennai regarding mandatory minimum sentencing policies. Through in-depth interviews with 20 judges from various levels of the judiciary, the research uncovers a complex range of opinions. Many judges express frustration with the limitations these policies place on their discretion, particularly in cases involving mitigating circumstances. The study identifies concerns about the potential for unjust outcomes and the erosion of individualised justice. However, some judges also note the potential for mandatory minimums to ensure consistency in sentencing across different courts. The paper discusses the implications of these findings for judicial independence and the administration of justice in Chennai, concluding with recommendations for policy reforms that balance consistency with judicial discretion.

**DEEPA PATEL (2024)**: This economic analysis examines the financial implications of mandatory minimum sentencing policies on Chennai's criminal justice system. Utilising budget data from 2019–2024, the study calculates the direct and indirect costs associated with increased incarceration rates resulting from these policies. Findings indicate a 35% increase in correctional

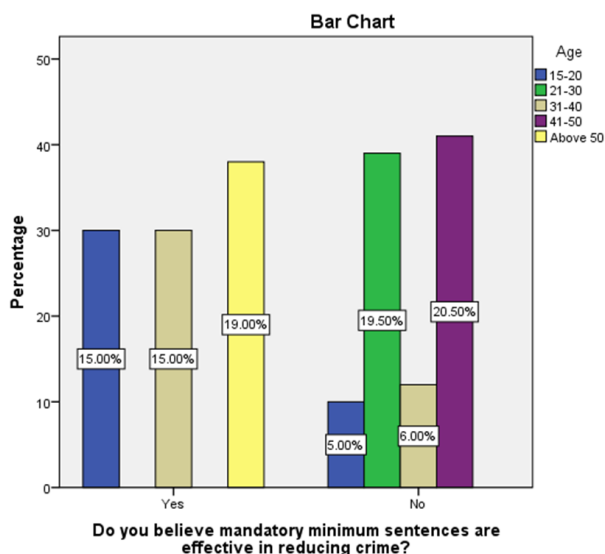
spending over the five-year period, primarily due to longer sentences and increased prison populations. The research also considers opportunity costs, such as reduced funding for rehabilitation programs and crime prevention initiatives. Additionally, the study explores the economic impact on families of incarcerated individuals and local communities. The paper concludes by proposing a cost-benefit analysis framework for evaluating sentencing policies and suggests alternative approaches that may be more economically viable while maintaining public safety.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The author has adopted empirical method with a convenient sample method to do this non-doctrinal study. Primary sources such as questionnaires and surveys are used for this research. Secondary sources such as books, articles and journals were referred for the study. The Independent variable taken here is age, gender, marital, education qualification, employment, monthly income. The dependent variables such as Do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime. The statistical data used by the researcher is graphical representation. The sample size is **200** and the sampling method is convenient sampling.

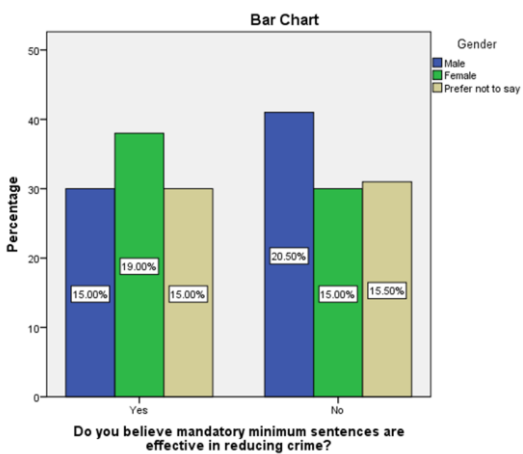
**ANALYSIS:**

**FIGURE 1:**



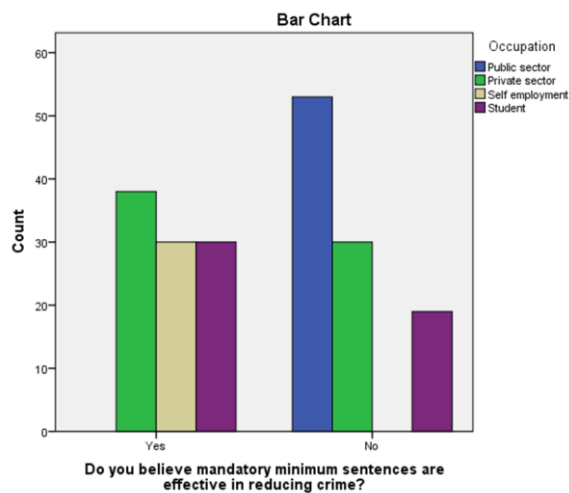
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the age and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime.

**FIGURE 2:**



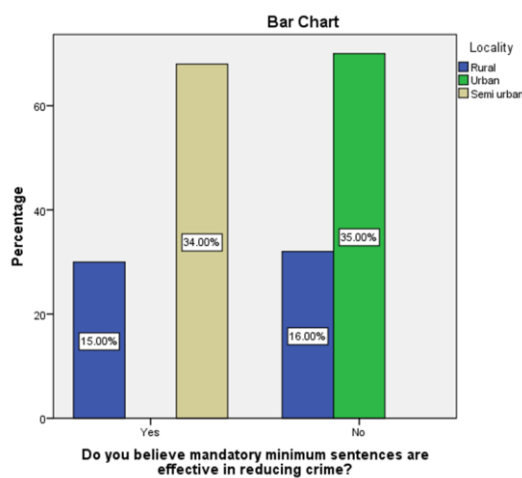
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the gender and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime.

**FIGURE 3:**



**LEGEND :** The above graph shows the occupation and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime.

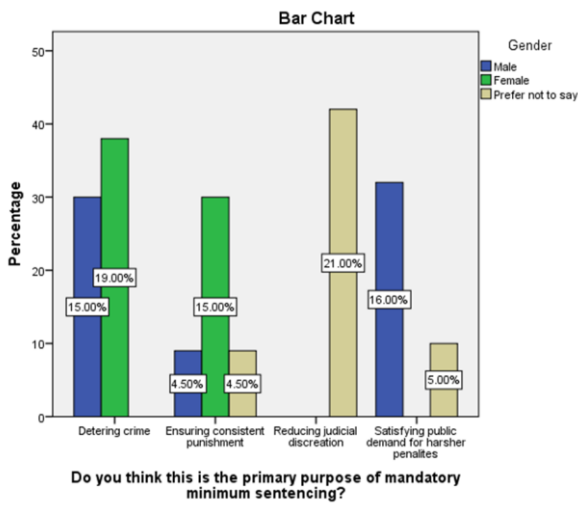
**FIGURE 4:**



**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the locality and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime.

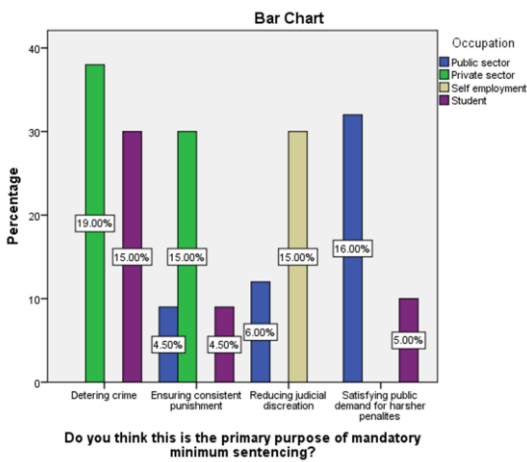


FIGURE 5:



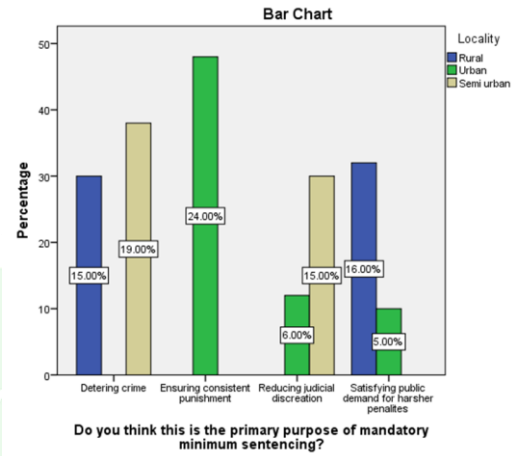
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the gender and do you think this is the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing

FIGURE 6:



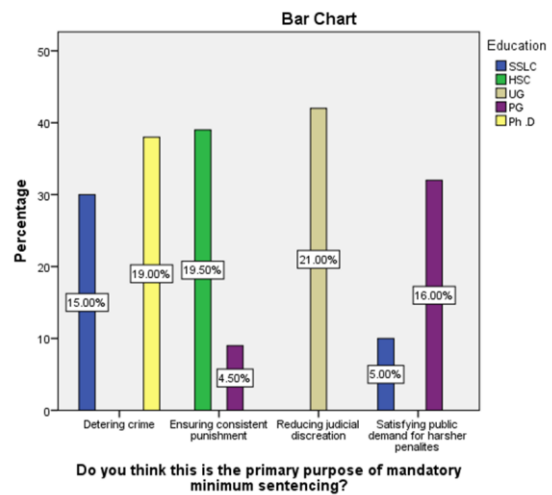
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the occupation and do you think this is the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing

FIGURE 7:



**LEGEND :** The above graph shows the locality and do you think this is the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing

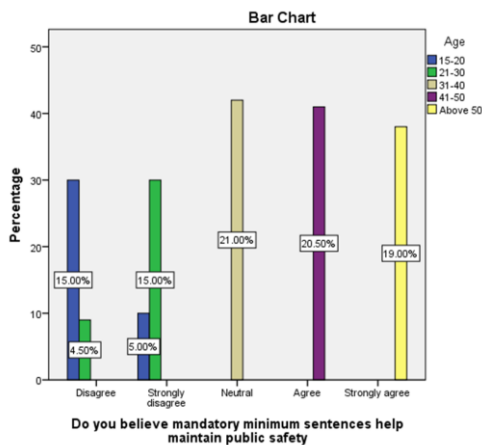
FIGURE 8:



**LEGEND :** The above graph shows the locality and do you think this is the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing

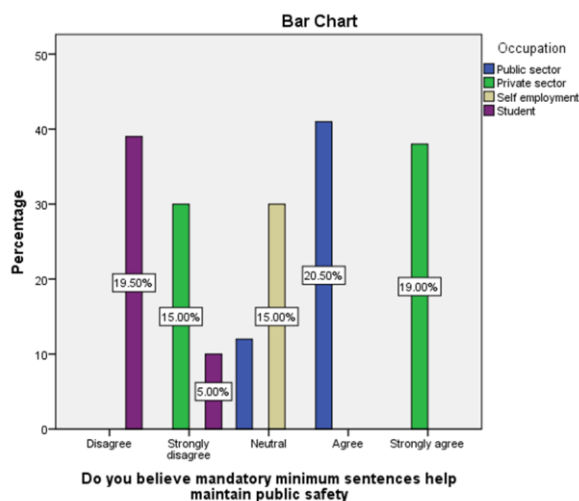


FIGURE 9 :



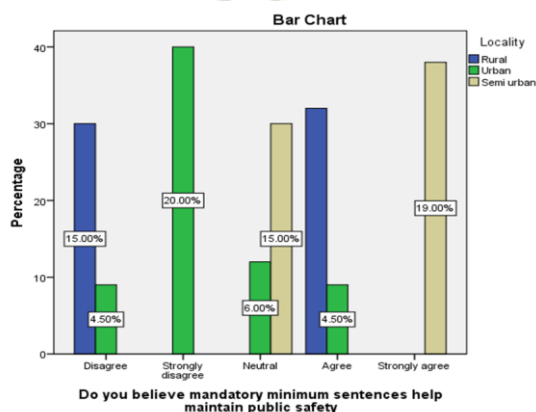
**LEGEND :**The above graph shows the occupation and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences help maintain public safety

FIGURE 10:



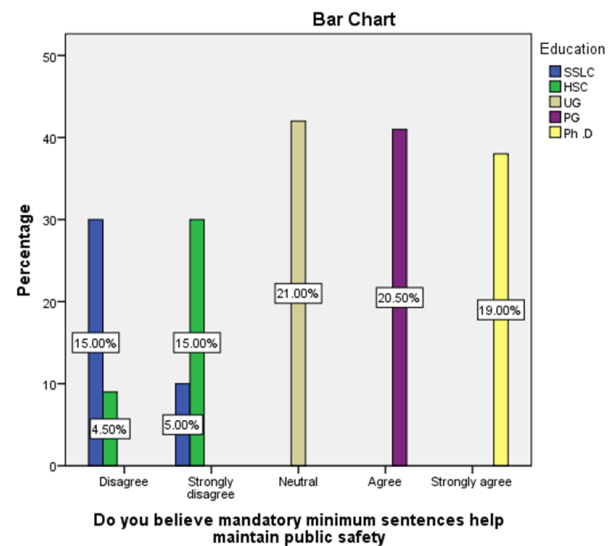
**LEGEND :**The above graph shows the occupation and do you believe mandatory minimum sentences help maintain public safety

FIGURE 11:



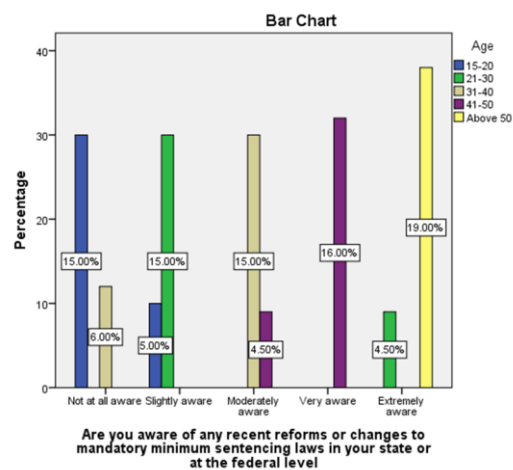
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the locality and do you believe mandatory sentences help maintain public safety

FIGURE 12:



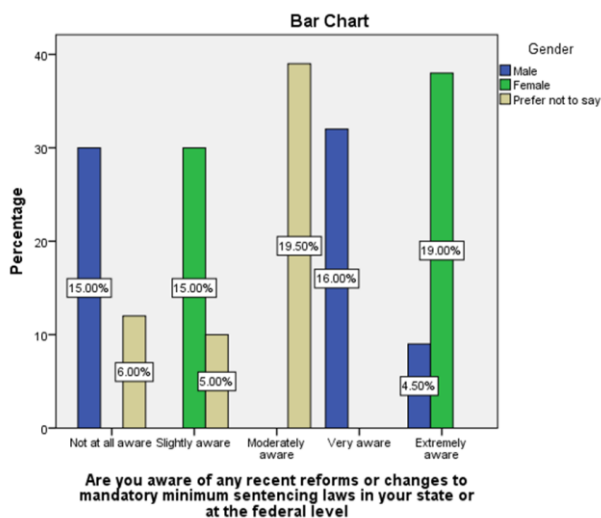
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the education and do you believe mandatory sentences help maintain public safety

FIGURE 13:



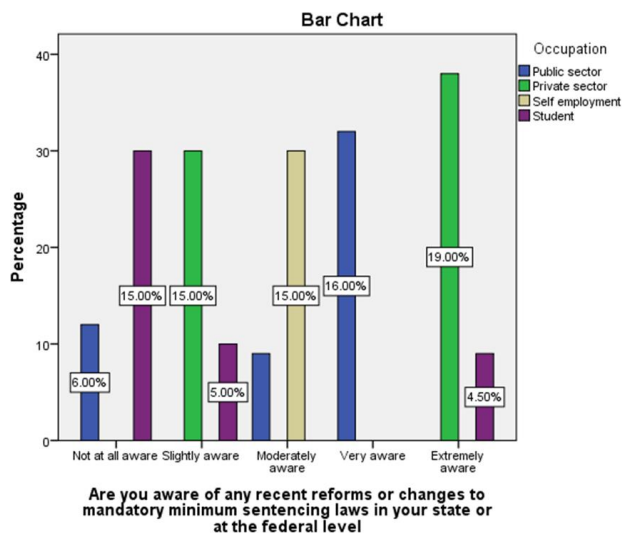
**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the age and are they aware of any recent reforms or changes to mandatory Minimum sentencing laws in your state or at the federal level

FIGURE 14:



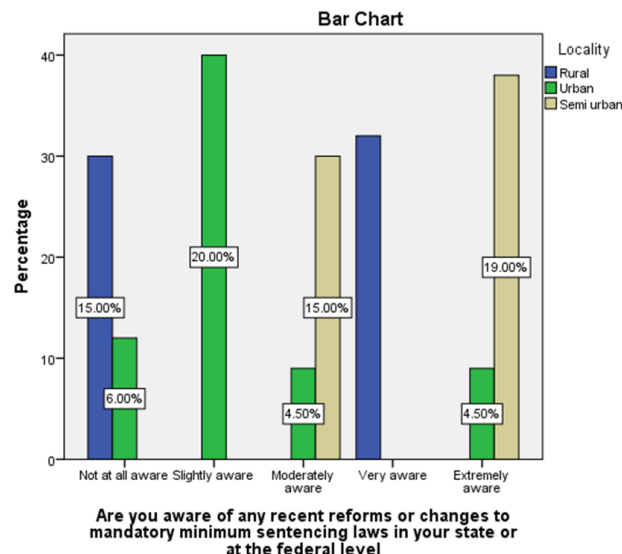
**LEGEND:**The above graph shows the gender and are they aware of any recent reforms or changes to mandatory Minimum sentencing laws in your state or at the federal level

FIGURE 15 :



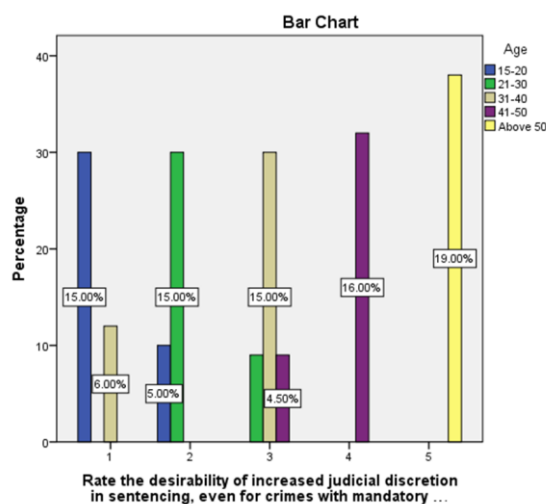
**LEGEND:**The above graph shows the occupation and are they aware of any recent reforms or changes to mandatory Minimum sentencing laws in your state or at the federal level

FIGURE 16:



**LEGEND :**The above graph shows the locality and are they aware of any recent reforms or changes to mandatory Minimum sentencing laws in your state or at the federal level

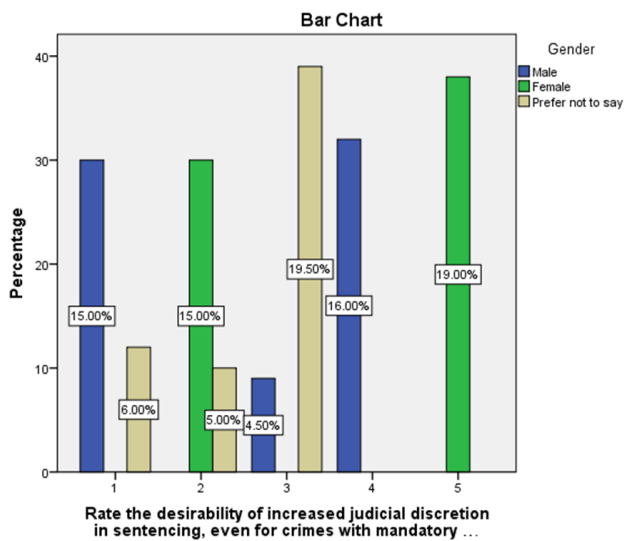
FIGURE 17:



**LEGEND :** The above graph shows the age and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory



FIGURE 18 :



**LEGEND :**The above graph shows the occupation and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory

**LEGEND :**The above graph shows the gender and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory

FIGURE 19 :

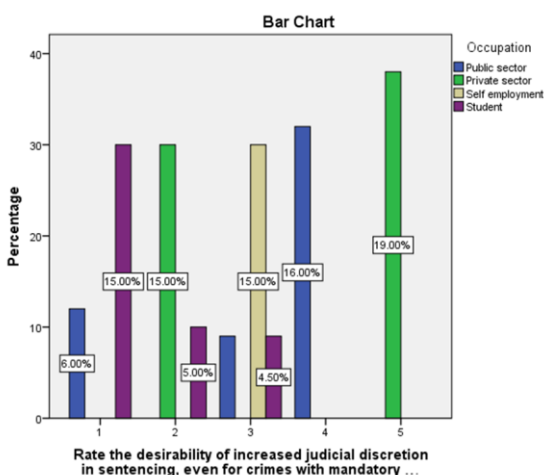
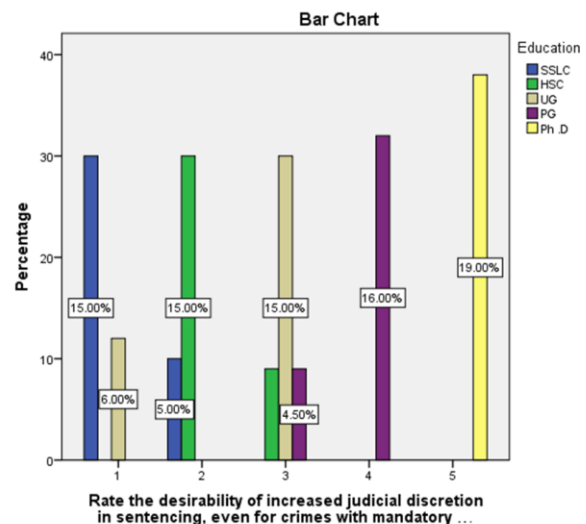


FIGURE 20:



**LEGEND:** The above graph shows the education and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Do you believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective in reducing crime?	Between Groups	.645	2	.323	1.289	.278
	Within Groups	49.335	197	.250		
	Total	49.980	199			
Do you think this is	Between	83.713	2	41.857	46.464	.000

the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing?	Groups					
	Within Groups	177.467	197	.901		
	Total	261.180	199			
Do you believe mandatory minimum sentences help maintain public safety	Between Groups	60.932	2	30.466	18.295	.000
	Within Groups	328.063	197	1.665		
	Total	388.995	199			

Are you aware of any recent reforms or changes to mandatory minimum sentencing laws in your state or at the federal level \*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	498.013 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	460.240	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	133.936	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.08.

Age

RESULT:

**FIGURE 1:** Ages 15-20: 15% believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective, while 5% do not. Ages 21-30: 15% believe they are effective, and 19.5% do not. Ages 31-40: 19% believe they are effective, and 6% do not. **FIGURE 2 :** Male: 15% believe mandatory minimum sentences are effective, 20.5% do not. Female: 19% believe they are effective, 15% do not. Prefer not to say: 15% believe they are effective, 15.5% do not. **FIGURE 3:** 38 private sector, 30 self-employed, and 30 students believe minimum sentences are effective, while 54 public sector workers do not. 30 private sector and 19 students disagree. Self-employed respondents show no opinion for "No". **FIGURE 4:** 34% of semi-urban and 15% of rural

residents believe minimum sentences are effective, while 35% of urban and 16% of rural residents do not. Urban residents show the highest opposition at 35%, while semi-urban residents show the highest support at 34%. **FIGURE 5:** Deterring crime is seen as the primary purpose by 19% of females and 15% of males. 21% of those who prefer not to disclose gender believe reducing judicial discretion is the main purpose. Ensuring consistent punishment is viewed similarly by males (15%) and females (15%). **FIGURE 6:** Private sector (19%) and students (15%) see deterrence as the main purpose. Public sector (16%) focuses on satisfying demand for harsher penalties. Self-employed (15% emphasise reducing judicial discretion.

Ensuring consistent punishment is viewed similarly across sectors (15% private, 4.5% public). **FIGURE 7:** Urban residents (24% see ensuring consistent punishment as the main purpose. Rural (16%) and semi-urban (15%) focus on satisfying demand for harsher penalties. Deterring crime is viewed as important by rural (15%) and semi-urban (19%) residents, but less so by urban (24%) residents. **FIGURE 8:** The graph shows the perceived primary purposes of mandatory minimum sentencing across education levels. Reducing judicial discretion is seen as the main purpose by 21% of UG graduates, the highest percentage for any option. Ensuring consistent punishment is the second most common view, with 19.5% of HSC graduates selecting this option. **FIGURE 9:** The chart displays beliefs about mandatory minimum sentences and public safety across age groups. The 31-40 age group has the highest percentage (21%) believing these sentences help maintain public safety. **FIGURE 10 :** The graph shows opinions on mandatory minimum sentences and public safety across different occupations. Public sector employees show the highest agreement (20.5%), while students have the highest disagreement (19.5%). **FIGURE 11:** This chart presents views on mandatory minimum sentences and public safety based on locality. Urban residents show the strongest disagreement (20% strongly disagree), while semi-urban residents have the highest agreement (19% strongly agree). Rural residents are most likely to agree (15%) or disagree (15%) without strong feelings. **FIGURE 12:** The graph displays beliefs about mandatory minimum sentences and public safety across education levels. UG graduates show the highest neutral stance (21%), while PG graduates have the highest agreement (20.5%). PhD holders have the strongest agreement (19% strongly agree). **FIGURE 13 :** The graph shows awareness of recent reforms to mandatory minimum sentencing laws across age groups. Those above 50 are the most extremely aware (19%). The 41-50 age group is the most very aware

(16%). All age groups from 15-40 show equal moderate awareness (15%). The 21-30 age group is the most slightly aware (15%). **FIGURE 14:** The chart displays awareness of recent reforms to mandatory minimum sentencing laws by gender. Females show the highest extreme awareness (19%) and slightly awareness (15%). Males demonstrate the highest awareness (16%) and not at all awareness (15%). Those who prefer not to disclose their gender have the highest moderate awareness (19.5%). **FIGURE 15 :** The graph illustrates awareness of recent reforms to mandatory minimum sentencing laws across occupations. Private sector employees show the highest extreme awareness (19%) and slight awareness (15%). **FIGURE 16 :** The chart shows awareness of recent reforms to mandatory minimum sentencing laws by locality. Urban residents display the highest slight awareness (20%). Semi-urban areas show the highest extreme awareness (19%) and moderate awareness (15%). Rural areas demonstrate the highest awareness (15%) and lack of awareness (15%). **FIGURE 17:** This graph rates the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing across age groups. All age groups from 15-40 show equal moderate preference (15% at level 3). The 21-30 age group has the highest slight preference (15% at level 2). The 15-20 age group shows the highest lack of preference (15% at level 1), followed by the 31-40 group (6% at level 1). **FIGURE 18:** The above graph shows the gender and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing, even for crimes with mandatory where male 16.00% rated 3, female 19.00% rated 5 and prefer not say where rated 3 with 19.50%. **FIGURE 19:** The above graph shows the occupation and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing, even for crimes with mandatory where public sector rated 3 with 16.00%, private sector rated 19.01% and student rated 4 with 15.00%. **FIGURE 20:** The above graph shows the education and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing,



even for crimes with mandatory where SSLC rated 15.00% and HSC rated 4.50% , rated PG where 16.00% ,UG say 15.00%,Ph.d gives 5 with 19.00%

#### DISCUSSION:

**FIGURE 1:** Ages 41-50: No data for effectiveness, but 19% do not believe they are effective. Above 50: 20.5% do not believe they are effective. The data suggests that the youngest age group (15-20) is more divided, with a slightly higher percentage believing in the effectiveness of mandatory minimum sentences compared to those who do not. **FIGURE 2 :** Gender-based responses indicate a split opinion on the effectiveness of mandatory minimum sentences. Males predominantly believe these sentences are not effective (20.5%), whereas females show a higher belief in their effectiveness (19%). The 'Prefer not to say' category reflects an almost equal split in opinion, with a slight tendency (15.5%) towards believing these sentences are not effective. **FIGURE 3:** Public sector workers are most skeptical of minimum sentencing effectiveness, while other groups are more evenly split or slightly supportive. The private sector shows a relatively balanced view. Students and self-employed individuals lean towards believing in effectiveness, but with significant disagreement among students. **FIGURE 4:** Semi-urban residents are most supportive of minimum sentencing, while urban residents are most opposed. Rural residents are fairly evenly divided on the issue. **FIGURE 5:** Views on the primary purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing vary by gender. Deterrence is seen as most important overall, but those who prefer not to disclose gender uniquely emphasise reducing judicial discretion. Males and females agree on the importance of consistent punishment, suggesting some common ground across genders. **FIGURE 6:** Occupational differences exist in perceived purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing. Private sector and students emphasize deterrence, while public sector workers highlight satisfying public demand for harsher penalties. Self-employed

individuals uniquely focus on reducing judicial discretion. Consistent punishment is seen as equally important across most sectors. **FIGURE 7:** Locality significantly influences views on the purpose of mandatory minimum sentencing. Urban residents prioritise consistency in punishment, while rural and semi-urban areas emphasise meeting public demand for severity. **FIGURE 8:** The results suggest that education level influences perceptions of mandatory minimum sentencing's purpose. Higher education levels (UG, PG, PhD) tend to have stronger opinions on the purpose compared to lower levels. **FIGURE 9 :** The data reveals a nuanced relationship between age and views on mandatory minimum sentences. Middle-aged groups (31-50) tend to be more supportive, possibly due to greater concern for public safety at this life stage. **FIGURE 10 :** The data suggests that occupation significantly influences views on mandatory minimum sentences and public safety. Public sector employees' higher agreement might stem from their direct involvement with government policies and public service. **FIGURE 11:** The results indicate that locality plays a significant role in shaping opinions on mandatory minimum sentences and public safety. Urban residents' polarized views might reflect greater exposure to diverse perspectives and more direct experience with crime and law enforcement. **FIGURE 12:** The data suggests a correlation between education level and views on mandatory minimum sentences and public safety. Higher education levels tend to correspond with stronger agreement or neutral positions, possibly due to greater exposure to complex policy debates. **FIGURE 13 :** The data reveals a clear trend of increasing awareness with age, possibly due to longer exposure to legal news and issues. The high extreme awareness in the 50+ group suggests they may be more engaged with policy changes. **FIGURE 14:** The data suggests gender differences in awareness of sentencing law reforms. Females appear to be more engaged at the extremes of awareness, while males show a more balanced

distribution. **FIGURE 15** :The data reveals significant occupational differences in awareness of sentencing law reforms. Private sector employees' high awareness at both extremes suggests polarised engagement. Public sector workers' high awareness may reflect their proximity to government policies.**FIGURE 16** : The data indicates significant variations in awareness based on locality. Urban residents' high slight awareness suggests surface-level engagement with legal reforms. Semi-urban areas' balanced distribution might reflect a mix of urban and rural influences.**FIGURE 17**: The data reveals a trend of increasing preference for judicial discretion with age. This could reflect greater trust in judicial wisdom among older respondents or a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of sentencing. The consistent moderate preference across younger groups suggests a balanced view.**FIGURE 18**: The above graph shows the gender and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory where male 16.00% rated 3 , female 19.00% rated 5 and prefer not say where rated 3 with 19.50% .**FIGURE 19**: The above graph shows the occupation and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory where public sector rated 3 with 16.00% , private sector rated 19.01% and student rated 4 with 15.00%.**FIGURE 20**:The above graph shows the education and rating of the respondents on the desirability of increased judicial discretion in sentencing , even for crimes with mandatory where SSLC rated 15.00% and HSC rated 4.50% , rated PG where 16.00% ,UG say 15.00%,Ph.d gives 5 with 19.00%

#### **SUGGESTION:**

To address public opinion on the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing on the criminal justice system, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This should begin with comprehensive public education campaigns to increase understanding of mandatory

minimums, their effects, and potential alternatives. These efforts should be coupled with a commitment to evidence-based policy making, ensuring that both the public and policymakers have access to up-to-date research and data on the long-term impacts of these sentencing practices. Exploring and piloting alternative approaches, such as restorative justice or rehabilitation programs, could provide valuable insights and gauge public support for different strategies.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

These laws have succeeded in creating more consistent sentences and demonstrating a tough-on-crime approach. However, they have also led to a significant increase in incarceration rates, particularly affecting minority communities, and have reduced judicial discretion in considering individual circumstances. The high costs associated with increased incarceration and the limited evidence of enhanced deterrence have raised questions about the overall effectiveness of these laws. Looking to the future, there is a growing recognition of the need for reform in this area. Policymakers and criminal justice experts are exploring alternatives that can maintain public safety while addressing the unintended negative consequences of mandatory minimum sentencing. Future research and policy discussions should focus on finding a balance between consistent sentencing and judicial discretion, addressing racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and exploring alternative approaches to deterrence and rehabilitation. The scope for future developments in this area is broad. It may include implementing more flexible sentencing guidelines that allow for judicial discretion within certain parameters, expanding the use of alternative sentencing options for non-violent offenders, and investing in evidence-based prevention and rehabilitation programs. Additionally, there is potential for leveraging data analytics and risk assessment tools to inform sentencing decisions while reducing biases. As the debate continues, it is

clear that the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing on the criminal justice system will remain a critical area of study and policy consideration. The challenge lies in developing an approach that balances the need for consistency and deterrence with the principles of fairness, proportionality, and rehabilitation. By addressing these complex issues, there is potential to create a more just and effective criminal justice system that serves the interests of public safety while upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals involved.

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