



Research at a glance

Changes in the Profile of Offender Populations Residing in Community Facilities: 1998 and 2008

KEY WORDS: *community correctional centres, community residential facilities, profile*

Why we did this study

Very little research has been done concerning offenders on conditional release residing at community-based residential facilities. Recently, a review of Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) residential facilities presented preliminary information related to the risk and needs of offenders residing in the community, however no comprehensive report has been produced regarding this population of offenders. Our study was designed to address this gap in knowledge and to illustrate trends over a ten year period.

What we did

We collected data from two points in time – March 31st, 1998 and March 31st, 2008 – to investigate changes in the profile of offenders living in either a Community Correctional Centre (CCC) or a Community Residential Facility (CRF). Analyses were conducted on data including risk and need, release type, offence history and various indicators of mental health functioning. Characteristics of the population were also investigated in relation to type of release (i.e. long term supervision order, parole, statutory release) and whether or not an offender was given a condition to reside at a community facility.

What we found

From 1998 to 2008, federal offenders living in either CCCs or CRFs have shown a significant increase in risk and need based on a variety of indicators. In addition, rates of substance abuse and aggression increased over the ten-year period in both types of facilities. Offenders also presented with a greater number of psychological/psychiatric difficulties. This trend is more pronounced in the CCCs where all indicators of mental health functioning have shown statistically significant increases. For example, the rates of mental health diagnoses at admission have more than tripled from 4.7% to 18.5%.

Offence characteristics have also changed. There were more offenders with histories of violence, including assault charges, in 2008 than in 1998. As well, CCCs and CRFs were dealing with offenders who had long term supervision orders as a result of legislative changes in 1997. Offenders on parole were generally low risk and presented with fewer mental health issues. Offenders with residency conditions were significantly more likely to be high need and suffer from mental health issues than those without a residency condition.

What it means

The dramatic changes in the profile of offenders in residence, including increasing risk and mental health issues, highlight the need for further development of existing strategies to manage offenders residing in community facilities. Offenders with mental health issues and those serving long term supervision orders demand a significant amount of CSC resources. Recent reports have recommended the priority status of mental health care in the correctional system, which this research supports. CSC will continue to monitor the changing profile of this population in order to effectively address their needs.

For more information

Abracen, J., Axford, M., & Gileno, J. (2011). *Changes in the Profile of Offender Populations Residing in Community Facilities: 1998 and 2008*. Research Report, R256. Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, contact the following address: research@csc-scc.gc.ca

Prepared by: Jeff Abracen, Marsha Axford & Justin Gileno

Contact
Research Branch
(613) 995-3975
research@csc-scc.gc.ca

