



# Research at a glance

## A Profile of Women under Community Supervision

**KEY WORDS:** women offenders, community supervision, Aboriginal women

### What it means

The research found that the two areas in which women could most benefit from additional support are employment and Aboriginal-specific needs. Current Correctional Service Canada (CSC) initiatives focus on these areas. Specifically, in 2010, CSC implemented a revised *National Community Strategy for Women Offenders*, which includes both employment and needs specific to Aboriginal women. In addition, CSC has implemented its *Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Corrections*, which reflects culturally-informed services and interventions offered throughout the sentence, including within the community. Subsequent profiles will allow for the identification of the impact of these initiatives on community-supervised women offenders.

### What we found

Women generally demonstrated considerable need in the personal and emotional domain as well as with substance abuse, and had limited previous educational and employment attainment. Opportunities for improvement were identified with respect to women's involvement in institutional employability programs and community employment.

The women were successful after release, with rates of suspension of conditional release on the current sentence at about 10%. In most cases where a suspension occurred, it was due to a failure to report rather than to a criminal activity, suggesting that some women may be experiencing difficulty in adapting to the expectations of community supervision.

Relative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, Aboriginal women were found to have less extensive educational and employment histories and lower rates of employment post-release. They also had more extensive substance abuse problems, and, in keeping with this, more frequently had a special condition imposed at release requiring them to abstain from drugs and/or alcohol. They were also more frequently suspended – typically due to failure to report. Together with the fact that they were less

likely to be granted discretionary release, Aboriginal women spent shorter proportions of their sentences in the community and were, overall, less frequently successful in their reintegration relative to their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

### Why we did this study

Virtually all federal women offenders will serve a portion of their sentence in the community under conditional release. Women under community supervision are a growing population, with an increase of 20% recorded between 2003 and 2012. A better understanding of this population can contribute to the development or refinement of gender-informed policy and programs aiming to facilitate reintegration.

### What we did

A profile was completed of the 509 women under community supervision on March 30, 2014. In addition to demographics, sentence- and release-related information, the profile focused on risk and needs across a number of domains; institutional education, employment, and correctional programming; special parole conditions; community employment; and, post-release returns to custody.

### For more information

McConnell, A., Rubinfeld, S., Thompson, J. & Gobeil, R. (2014). *A profile of women under community supervision* (Research Report R-287). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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**Prepared by:** Ashley McConnell, Sara Rubinfeld, Jennie Thompson, & Renée Gobeil

