



## Women Offenders' Community Employment and Employability

**KEY WORDS:** *women offenders, employment, employability, community reintegration*

### What it means

Women offenders can improve employability skills through participation in women-centered programs and job training opportunities within the institution. By developing and fostering partnerships with community organizations that provide employment resources and services to women under supervision, employability skills gained pre-release can increase the chances of obtaining and maintaining employment post-release.

Overall, this research may inform updates to the *Revised National Community Strategy for Women Offenders (2010)*<sup>1</sup> and other initiatives focused on the employment needs of women.

### What we have found so far

A profile of women under community supervision found that of the 74% of women available for work, 58% were employed. The majority of these jobs were in the areas of Sales and Services, and Trades. Suspension and revocation were the most common reasons for leaving employment, particularly among Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women (92% vs. 60%).<sup>2</sup>

In another study, parole officers reported that they perceived having a criminal record, having emotional issues, and lacking the appropriate skill set to be the most important barriers to employment for women. Overall, parole officers reported viewing women offenders as moderately employable. Forty-four percent of parole officers reported that institutions have provided sufficient skills and experience for women to gain employment post-release. They expressed a need for more job training opportunities, women-centered programs, and training funds for women under community supervision.<sup>3</sup>

An examination of services available to women under community supervision through partnerships with external stakeholders identified that 35% of the community organizations offered community-based services for education and/or employment. These

services include employment counselling, employer contacts, résumé development, and adult education.<sup>4</sup>

### Why we are doing this study

Employment is a priority for the Correctional Service of Canada and has also been identified as a protective factor in the reintegration process of women offenders.<sup>5</sup>

### What we are doing

Three research reports were recently completed regarding the needs of women under community supervision,<sup>2,3,4</sup> and each examined aspects of women's employment and employability. The purpose of the current one-pager was to provide an overview of this research.

### References

1. Correctional Service of Canada. (2010). *Revised national community strategy for women offenders*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
2. McConnell, A., Rubinfeld, S. Thompson, J., & Gobeil, R. (2014). *A profile of women under community supervision (R-287)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
3. Thompson, J., Lutfy, M., Derkzen, D., & Bertrand, M. (in press). *The needs of women offenders under community supervision*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
4. Thompson, J., Trinneer, A., McConnell, A., Derkzen, D., & Rubinfeld, S. (in press). *Community services for women under supervision: 2011 overview (R-311)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
5. Gobeil, R. (2008). *Staying out: Women's perceptions of challenges and protective factors in community reintegration (R-201)*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

### For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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