

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## Institutional Behaviour and Post-Release Outcomes for Veteran Men Offenders

*Veteran offenders have more stable institutional behaviour and better post-release outcomes than non-veterans.*

### Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2012 in order to improve mental health and other health services for federal veteran offenders, to collaborate on ways to enhance staff knowledge in the area of mental health, and to share learning and strategies for building effective government and community partnerships. One objective of this partnership was to explore research projects of mutual benefit, with a focus on incarcerated veterans with mental health needs. This report adds to our knowledge about Canadian federal veteran offenders by providing a comprehensive examination of their institutional behaviour and post-release experiences.

In Canada, 2.5% to 3% of federal offenders have self-reported veteran status compared to 2% of the general population. Federal veteran offenders are more likely to be men, white, educated, and older than non-veteran offenders. They are more likely to have committed violent, especially sex-related offences, and to have identified mental health concerns. They have lower criminogenic risk and needs and a higher reintegration potential.<sup>1</sup>

### What we did

Offenders assessed by the CSC's Computerized Mental Health Intake Screening System (CoMHIS) between August 2014 and March 2018 were included in this study. Men offenders who self-reported former service in the Canadian Forces were identified as veterans ( $N = 374$ ) while all other men offenders were categorized as non-veterans ( $N = 14,471$ ).<sup>2,3</sup> Additional information from CSC's Offender Management System (OMS) was extracted.

### What we found

Overall, veteran offenders had more stable institutional behaviour than non-veterans as evidenced by fewer disciplinary charges (37% versus 46%), institutional incidents (46% versus 52%), and positive random

urinalysis tests (9% versus 13%). Although fewer veterans than non-veterans were referred for correctional programming (61% versus 70%), the rates for program completion were comparable (58% for moderate intensity and 13% to 16% for high).

Eighty percent of veterans and 75% of non-veterans were released during the study period. Among offenders supervised on conditional release, veteran offenders had fewer suspensions of release (28% versus 35%) and returns to custody (with or without an offence; 21% versus 25%) than non-veterans. Although fewer veterans were employed than non-veterans during release (55% versus 64%), among those employed, veterans were as likely as non-veterans to have full-time employment (74% to 76%). Also, veterans were more likely to be unemployed due to having other sources of income or barriers that prevented them from working (19% versus 12%).

### What it means

Veteran offenders are a small sub-group within the federal offender population with mental health concerns, although they have more stable institutional behaviour and greater post-release success than non-veteran offenders. Finally, enhancing data capacity to examine the experiences of veteran offenders would provide on-going research opportunities and ensure that these offenders receive the support necessary to address physical and mental health impacts of their service.

### For more information

Farrell MacDonald, S., & Cram, S. *Institutional behaviour and post-release outcomes for veteran offenders* (Research Report R-435). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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<sup>1</sup> Farrell MacDonald, S., & Cram, S. *Characteristics of offenders who self-reported veteran status* (RIB-20-01). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>2</sup> Only 11 women reported veteran status, therefore women were excluded from this study.

<sup>3</sup> Offenders assessed using CoMHIS represented 83% of all federal offenders admitted to CSC during the study period.

