

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Offender Perspectives on Electronic Monitoring

Though physically uncomfortable, EM is reported by offenders to positively impact their compliance with conditions.

Why we are doing this study

As part of the Correctional Service of Canada's Electronic Monitoring (EM) Research Pilot, EM provides a discretionary tool available to parole officers for moderate and high risk offenders who receive a special geographic condition and/or a curfew order. This multi-year project examines the effects of EM on offenders, staff, and stakeholders, as well as on community supervision practices and public safety.

Previous research (Hanby & Nelson, 2017) found that EM is not viewed by staff to negatively impact the daily lives or relationships of offenders. This report focuses on offenders' perspectives and presents preliminary findings regarding the impact of EM on compliance with conditions and programming, on daily lives and relationships, and physical impacts of the devices.

What we are doing

Offenders who had been monitored using EM for a minimum of two weeks were invited to complete a questionnaire. A total of 171 offenders participated between the implementation of the pilot in July 2015 and December 2017. The sample consisted of 163 men and 8 women, and 152 non-Indigenous and 19 Indigenous offenders. Approximately half of the offenders had successfully completed their EM term (52%), while 39% had been removed from EM and 9% were still active on EM. Early removals from EM were typically due to suspension or a decision by the case management team.

What we have found so far

The majority of offenders reported that EM had no impact on their ability to comply with their conditions and programming. However, substantial proportions of offenders reported that EM did have a positive impact in increasing their ability to abide by geographic/curfew conditions (31%), avoid committing a new offence (18%), and accept responsibilities for their actions (31%).

Most offenders reported that EM had either a negative impact or no impact on various aspects of their daily lives and relationships. The main areas of concern where EM

was reported by offenders to have a negative impact were in the quality of job they could get (32%) and their ability to find a job (30%), as well as their relationships with their spouse/partner (29%) and friends (28%). These findings are inconsistent with staff perspectives (Hanby & Nelson, 2017), highlighting the importance of the multi-method research design utilized in the pilot.

The physical impacts of the devices reported by offenders were consistently negative. The majority of offenders reported that the EM device was physically uncomfortable (80%). Further, 59% agreed that the EM device physically got in the way of daily tasks and 43% agreed that it physically interfered with their job tasks.

What it means

The findings of this research suggest that EM has the potential to influence the behaviour of offenders by creating a digital footprint of their whereabouts. This provides offenders with an opportunity to increase accountability and build credibility by demonstrating adherence to their geographical conditions.

Given the feedback received by offenders on the physical impacts of the EM device, the utilization of more comfortable and discrete devices should be explored by CSC. This may also result in less negative impacts on offenders' daily lives and relationships.

Reference

Hanby, L. & Nelson, A. (2017). *Staff Perspectives on the EM Research Pilot* (ERR 16-25). Ottawa, Ontario: 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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