



Research at a glance

Offenders' Perceptions on their Quality of Work and Reintegration: A Preliminary Investigation Using Qualitative Inquiry

KEY WORDS: *quality of employment, reintegration, community employment*

What it means

For a sample of offenders employed in the community, intrinsic rewards (e.g., relationships with co-workers, sense of belonging, and sense of achievement) are of primary importance in their assessment of the quality of their work. Thus, when considering the types of employment that would be most beneficial in facilitating successful reintegration, extrinsic rewards, such as pay and benefits, should not be the only factors considered.

What we found

The majority (80%) of offenders in the small selected sample reported working for CORCAN¹ while in the institution. Benefits described included higher wages, positive references, opportunities to be certified, and more appealing jobs. However, only 40% felt their institutional work experience prepared them for community employment. Over half (60%) indicated that they received assistance in obtaining their job from Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) or a community organization, while one-third indicated that they conducted their job searches independently.

Although extrinsic rewards such as pay were considered beneficial, offenders most valued that their jobs were interesting, meaningful, and provided them with a sense of achievement and belonging. Relationships at work, especially with managers, were also found to be highly valued and contributed to increased self-esteem. Offenders generally attributed their current work success to a positive attitude and strong work ethic. Most agreed that their employment helped them desist from further criminal activity by providing them with a productive and pro-social way to structure their time.

As one offender described his feelings about work:

"My job makes me feel like I am a somebody now... I'm not useless, I am needed somewhere, I am part

of something. This is great, like it's really great. I feel useful... I'm needed...I am part of a chain."

Why we did this study

The role that employment plays in successful reintegration and reducing recidivism has been widely supported in research. However, much remains to be known regarding what specific aspects of employment promote reintegration. We used the quality of work literature to shed light on the ways that released offenders may benefit from community employment. Through qualitative inquiry, a purposeful sampling strategy was employed to conduct preliminary analysis on a select number of offenders' perceptions on their quality of work and reintegration.

What we did

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 male federal offenders in the community. Interviewees were nominated by staff members of CSC stakeholders in the Ottawa region. Nominees were employed offenders for whom employment was thought to be a contributing factor in their successful reintegration. Interviews were analyzed using content analysis and relevant themes were identified.

For more information

Power, J., & Nolan, A. (2014). *Offenders' Perceptions on their Quality of Work and Reintegration: A Preliminary Investigation Using Qualitative Inquiry* (Research Report R-310). Ottawa, ON: 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.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

¹ CORCAN is a special operating agency within CSC that provides offenders with employment and employability skills training (on-the-job and third-party certified vocational training).