



Research Snippet

Correctional Program Participation: Are There Differences Among Offenders of Various Racial Backgrounds?

KEY WORDS: *ethnic offenders, correctional programs participation*

Impetus

Correctional programs are a key strategy within CSC to promote offender reintegration. CSC monitors participation in programs to ensure that all offenders requiring a program are able to attend whatever their backgrounds. This research examined whether there are differences among various racial groups in the proportion of offenders from each group enrolled in Nationally Recognised Correctional Programs (NRCP). The research examined: 1) whether high risk and high need offenders are assigned to a NRCP; 2) whether offenders assigned to their first NRCP program are enrolled in their *first* NRCP; and 3) whether offenders assigned to *any* NRCP are enrolled in these programs.

What we did

Offenders with known racial backgrounds and who started new sentences during the 2008/2009 fiscal year were identified. A total of 4,799 offenders had known racial backgrounds and started a new federal sentence in 2008/2009. Of these offenders, 3,392 (71%) had assignments to correctional programs during this sentence. Of these offenders, 63% were Caucasian, 23% were Aboriginal, 8% were Black, and 6% were of Other racial backgrounds.

What we found

To determine whether offenders of various racial backgrounds are systematically deferred from taking correctional programs at the correctional planning stage we looked at all offenders from 2008-2009 who came into CSC with a high criminal risk and high criminogenic need rating. Normally, most of these offenders would meet referral criteria for a NRCP. Results confirmed that about 76% of these offenders were assigned a program, but Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be assigned a program than other ethnic groups. Next, we examined whether there are differences in the proportions of offenders of different racial backgrounds who are enrolled in their first

correctional program assignment. We found no differences between any groups. Over 95% of all offenders assigned to a first program are eventually enrolled in this program.

Finally, we examined *all* correctional program assignments to determine whether there were differences in the proportions of offenders of different racial background who were enrolled in assigned correctional programs. Table 1 illustrates that Black offenders were slightly less likely to have a program assignment that resulted in a program enrolment than offenders in other racial groups.

Table 1. *Percentage of All Program Assignments that Resulted in Enrolment in a NRCP*

Racial Group	Enrolment in all Program Assignments	
	%	<i>n</i>
Caucasian	92.62	4,492
Aboriginal	92.10	1,806
Black	87.97	490
Other	91.73	377
Total	92.11	7,165

What it means

There is no apparent systemic bias impeding offenders' from various ethnic groups assignments to correctional programs or impeding offenders who are assigned to their first program from being enrolled in that program. However, looking at *all* program assignments slightly fewer Black offenders are enrolled in a correctional program they are assigned to than offenders from the other racial groups. Further research would be required to determine the reason for this result.

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For more information

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