



# Research at a glance

## Resilience Factors Related to Success on Release for Offenders with Mental Disorders

**KEY WORDS:** *offenders with mental disorders, resilience factors, desistance, recidivism*

### What it means

Factors such as relationships with prosocial community supports, involvement in structured activities and community programs, access to mental health services, and personal motivation to remain in the community, may help to promote at least temporary criminal desistance among high risk, high need mentally-disordered offenders.

### What we found

In the first of two studies, 25% of the 297 high risk, high need offenders with mental disorders included in the sample succeeded in staying in the community without a return to custody in the first year after their release. Of the 75% who returned to custody, most did so for technical violations; 23% returned with a new offence. The majority of returns occurred within the first six months of release.

Results indicated that two of the demographic factors examined were related to offenders' higher likelihood of success on release: older age and having had a previous sexual offence. Static risk factors that distinguished those who succeeded on release from those who returned were only associated with the greater juvenile history of the unsuccessful group. Dynamic risk factors that distinguished the two groups were: social support from families, prosocial partners and friends, involvement in structured activities (particularly employment), and motivation to stay in the community. Most offenders were also involved in some form of mental health service. Participation in community programming may also have improved the chances of remaining in the community.

Results of a second qualitative study revealed that recently released offenders perceived their involvement in volunteer activities and prosocial supports to be of the greatest importance to their success in the community. Additionally, all offenders indicated they had access to mental health services, making it a likely factor implicated in their success.

### Why we did this study

The literature identifies a number of protective factors that contribute to the successful reintegration of offenders and facilitate the process of criminal desistance. Much less is known about what facilitates desistance among offenders with a mental disorder, many of whom remain crime-free for an extended period of time after release. Determining the factors that signal desistance from crime for this group could help parole officers focus their supervision on the most constructive case management strategies.

### What we did

Two studies were conducted to examine protective factors related to success in the community for offenders with mental disorders. The first study looked at a group of high risk, high need offenders with mental disorders ( $N = 297$ ), comparing the demographic profiles, offence histories, and dynamic risk factors of those who successfully remained in the community for one year to those who returned within the same time period. An additional analysis randomly selected 20 offenders from each of these two groups and conducted a detailed case management file review for the presence of protective factors. In the second study, interviews were conducted with four offenders with mental health issues who remained in the community without revocation for at least three months. Offenders were asked to provide insight on the factors they believed promoted their success on release.

### For more information

Stewart, L., Brine, K., Wilton, G., Power, J., & Hnain, C. (2015). *Resilience factors related to success on release for offenders with mental disorders* (Research Report R-336). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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