



# Research at a glance

## Twenty years later: Revisiting The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women

**KEY WORDS:** *women offenders, Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, Shaw survey*

### Why we did this study

In 1989, a Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women was created to examine the lives, experiences and broader social context of women serving federal sentences in Canada. The Task Force appointed a team of researchers to survey all federally sentenced women in Canada and provided recommendations for the future of women's corrections.

Twenty years later, women's corrections in the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) have dramatically changed. To document the changes and assess their impacts, a new survey of federal women offenders was conducted.

### What we did

The survey was similar to the original survey and was distributed to all women located at the regional facilities in the fall of 2007. As the data contained in the survey was entirely qualitative, statistical analyses primarily consisted of frequency distributions for all survey questions. Any comments were analyzed for reoccurring themes using content analyses. Importantly, results of this survey reflect the perceptions of the women.

### What we found

A need for a greater variety of programming had been identified in the original survey. Women in the current survey expressed greater satisfaction with a number of programs (e.g., DBT, Circles of Change). However, the unavailability of certain programs, long wait lists, and programs that ran infrequently were cited by many of the women.

Approximately three quarters of the women in the current survey indicated they had children. Most women kept in contact with family through telephone and letters, they expressed concern about the costs associated with phone calls and transportation/travel.

In terms of physical health, many more women in the current survey reported participating in physical activities. However, they wanted more opportunities for, and types of, physical activities. Women also indicated they wanted easier access to dentists and doctors and the opportunity to see specialists (e.g., gynaecologist, nutritionists, testing for STIs).

Institutional employment and vocational training was an area identified by the women in 1989 as requiring improvement in terms of choices. The women currently surveyed reported a greater variety of work, including employment with CORCAN Graphics, in various vocational programs and in other roles. Nonetheless, women still reported wanting more opportunities for work placements and trade/training certifications.

### What it means

Results of the survey revealed that many of the changes that came from the initiatives implemented following the Task Force recommendations have brought about improvements for the women. However, women reported a desire for further development in such areas as, increased access to medical services, diversity of available programs options, and increased educational and employment opportunities.

### For more information

Barrett, M. R., Allenby, K., & Taylor, K. (2010). *Twenty years later: Revisiting The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women*. Research Report R-222. Ottawa: Correctional Service Canada.

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