



Research at a glance

Profile of Federal Offenders with histories of Intimate Partner Violence

KEY WORDS: *Program needs of domestic violence offenders, profile of domestic violence offenders, typologies*

Why we did this study

Previous research has indicated that prevalence rates for domestic violence (DV) are high among offender populations. An up-to-date profile of this population in the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is required to determine the treatment needs of offenders with this history.

What we did

A sample of 15,166 offenders was drawn from those currently under custody who had a suspected history of domestic violence based on the Family Violence Risk Assessment (FVRA) screening process. We also obtained a sample of 6,144 domestic violence offenders identified as moderate to high risk since 2002 on the Spousal Assault Risk Assessments (SARA) who were compared to offenders without a history of DV during the same time period. Further analyses compared high and moderate risk DV offenders and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal DV offenders.

What we found

Forty percent of offenders currently under CSC supervision have a suspected history of DV. Of these, 45% were rated as either moderate or high risk on the SARA, providing an estimate of at least 18% of the CSC population with a confirmed history of DV. The population of federal offenders assessed as moderate or high risk on the SARA indicated that DV offenders scored higher on criminal history risk ratings, had more learning disabilities and mental health problems, and were rated as higher need than non-DV offenders. DV offenders had extensive and varied offence histories with 79% having had at least one other violent offence and 18% had a sexual offence.

Aboriginal offenders were over-represented among the DV perpetrators with 57% having a suspected history and 30% a confirmed history. Aboriginal DV offenders generally had higher criminal risk ratings

and higher need ratings than non-Aboriginal DV offenders; in particular, they had more substantial histories of alcohol abuse indicating that interventions for Aboriginal offenders with DV must include treatment for substance abuse. The rate of DV among Inuit offenders is particularly high with over 48% having a confirmed history.

When the DV group was assessed against the current program referral criteria, 40% meet the criteria for a violence prevention program, over 37% meet the criteria for a substance abuse program, and 22% meet the criteria for a sex offender program.

Of concern are results that indicate that almost half (47%) of confirmed DV offenders would not qualify for participating in a family violence prevention program unless over-ride provisions are invoked.

What it means

Domestic violence offenders in CSC present with multiple criminogenic and mental health needs but are unique in the extent to which they have needs in the family and marital domain. Current referral guidelines mean that 47% of these offenders no longer qualify to attend a DV program to address this area and would not be treated for this offence pattern.

For more information

Stewart, L., Power, J., & Cousineau, C. (2012). *Profile of Federal Offenders with Histories of Intimate Partner Violence*. Research Report R-265. Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, contact the following address: research@csc-scc.gc.ca

Prepared by: Lynn Stewart

Contact

Research Branch
(613) 995-3975
research@csc-scc.gc.ca