



## Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders Among Incoming Federal Offenders: Atlantic, Ontario, & Pacific Regions

**KEY WORDS:** prevalence of mental disorders, offenders, concurrent disorders

### What it means

Incoming male federal offenders have high rates of alcohol and substance use disorders and antisocial personality disorder (APD). In addition, over 35% of these offenders also meet the criteria for at least one other mental disorder, indicating high rates of co-morbidity. The degree of impairment implies that many offenders with mental disorders face serious challenges that will affect their ability to complete their correctional plans and reintegrate once released to the community. Many offenders may require interventions to address both their criminogenic risk factors and their mental health problems.

### What we have found so far

The highest prevalence rates for Axis I mental disorders across all three regions were for alcohol and substance use disorders, with rates of current diagnoses for either of these disorders ranging from 43% to 60%. There were similar prevalence rates for current diagnoses of posttraumatic stress disorder and panic disorder (included in the anxiety disorders category), and pathological gambling across the regions. Additional analyses revealed that over 40% of offenders met the criteria for a current diagnosis other than substance abuse or APD.

*Prevalence Rates of Current Diagnosis for Mental Disorders (N = 588)*

Disorder Categories	Atlantic	Ontario	Pacific
	n = 154 %	n = 296 %	n = 138 %
Mood disorders	18.8	16.6	15.2
Primary psychotic	6.5	3.4	2.2
Alcohol or substance use disorders	50.0	42.9	60.1
Anxiety disorders	29.9	34.5	30.4
Eating disorders	0.0	0.0	3.6
Pathological gambling	7.1	5.1	8.7
Borderline personality disorder	11.0	15.2	23.9
Antisocial personality disorder	54.5	36.5	63.8

Offenders with lifetime and current diagnoses were also assessed to determine their degree of functional impairment as reflected by ratings on the Global Assessment of Function scale (GAF). Approximately 60% of offenders with a current diagnosis in any category were rated as experiencing no, minimal or

moderate impairment. Offenders who met the diagnosis for a psychotic disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder had the highest degree of impairment.

### Why we are doing this study

The Mental Health Branch requires information on the prevalence of major mental health disorders in newly admitted federal offenders to plan for their treatment, interventions, and programming needs. Previous research has reported higher rates of mental disorder in offender populations than community samples and there is evidence to suggest that the rates of mental disorder in incarcerated populations may be rising.

### What we are doing

The present study determined the prevalence rates of major mental disorders among male offenders newly admitted to Correctional Service Canada (CSC) using the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM Axis I and Axis II Disorders (SCID-I and SCID-II). The following disorders are assessed: 1) mood; 2) psychotic; 3) substance use; 4) anxiety; 5) eating; 6) pathological gambling; 7) antisocial personality disorder (APD); and 8) borderline personality disorder. Estimates were obtained for both lifetime and current prevalence rates (i.e., the past month). Over a six month period, all consecutive admissions to the reception centres in the Atlantic, Ontario, and Pacific regions who were on new warrants of committal were approached to obtain their consent to participate in the diagnostic interview. Plans are in place to complete national data collection in the Prairies and Quebec regions.

### For more information

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.

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