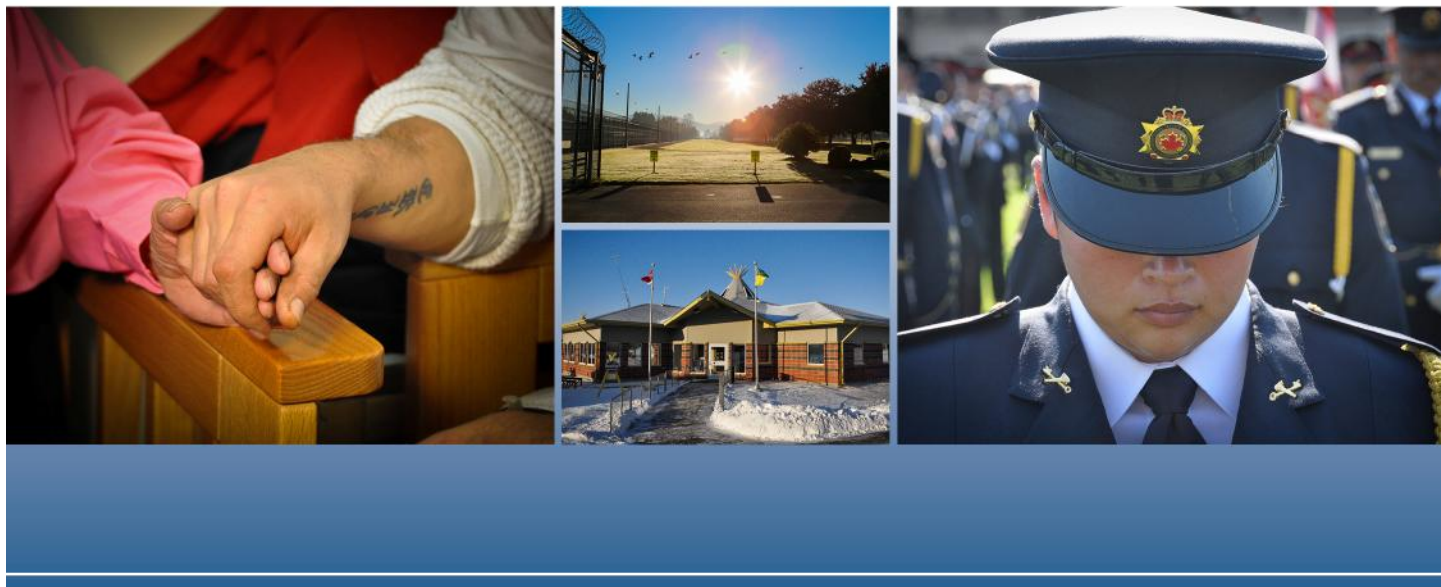# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

SPECIAL REPORT

2016 International Survey of Correctional Services: Corrections in Transformation

2016 Nº SR-16-04

Correctional Service Canada   Service correctionnel Canada

Canada

Background

In 2015, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) conducted an international survey[1] with the objective of gaining a better understanding of the challenges other nations encounter in their correctional organizations and the best practices being applied to address them. Responses from 24 organizations revealed themes related to infrastructure, resources, technology, and offender health and mental health as significant challenges. These identified challenges provided indications of where international correctional organizations are facing difficulties; however, further details would have provided greater insight into these difficulties and the responses organizations have made to address them. Thus, the 2016 survey was designed to increase our knowledge of the issues and transformation plans being used to address these challenges as well as the best practices learned through actions undertaken to deal with them.

Purpose

CSC conducted an international consultation with several correctional organizations around the world to gain a better understanding of not only the challenges various nations encounter in their correctional organizations, but also the strategies implemented to address these challenges. The international consultation was completed in collaboration with CSC's Intergovernmental Relations Division (IGR) and representatives from the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA).

Overview

The following is a summary of the responses received for the International Survey of Correctional Services. The survey was developed by staff at CSC's Research Branch and Strategic Policy and Planning. It was available in English and French and could be completed online or on paper. The structure of the survey included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. Core problematic areas in correctional practices were identified and questions specific to each area were developed.

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[1] Correctional Service Canada (2016). *2015 International survey of correctional services: Summary of Results.* Ottawa, ON: Author.

The survey was organized into four key parts:

- Part I: Physical Infrastructure
- Part II: Technology
- Part III: Offender Health
- Part IV: Offender Rehabilitation

The target sample was approximately 170 correctional organizations affiliated with ICPA and IGR. Respondents were able to respond to the survey between July 28th and September 14th, 2016. Although 19 correctional organizations responded, results are based on 18 correctional organizations representing agencies in 12 as one submission was removed from the analyses due to data quality issues (see Appendix A for a list of participating countries). Regarding the characteristics of participating organizations, the majority of organizations were at the Federal/National level of government (53%), followed closely by organizations at the State/Regional (41%) and Local/Municipal (6%) levels. The offender population supervised by organizations was evenly split between only those with custodial sentences (47%) and those with both custodial and non-custodial sentences (53%). Notably, no organizations indicated that they only supervise those with non-custodial sentences.

The results of this report are organized according to each key area assessed. The qualitative results examine the challenges and associated transformation plans for each sub-area are examined. Subsequently, the qualitative themes associated with the issues leading to transformation, the ongoing transformation projects that have occurred in the past year, as well as any best practices garnered throughout the transformation process are discussed. A summary of findings is provided at the end of the document.

Results

Part I: Physical Infrastructure

For the majority of organizations – maintenance of infrastructure (83%), offender capacity (61%) and space for specialized populations (56%) were identified as significant challenges in the area of physical infrastructure (see Figure 1). Consistent with these top identified challenges, the majority of organizations reported that they had undertaken transformation in the following areas of physical infrastructure in the past year: maintenance of infrastructure (78%); offender capacity (72%); space for specialized populations (72%). Fifty percent of organizations also identified that they had been undergoing transformation in the sub-area of offender conditions in the past year. Generally, most areas identified as challenges had more organizations indicating that these areas were undergoing transformation in the past year. Two exceptions included: the maintenance of infrastructure and space for management of offenders in the community.

Organizations were also asked to describe the issues leading to transformation, the ongoing transformation projects that had occurred in the last year, as well as any best practices gleaned throughout the transformation process. Specific to the issues leading to transformation in the physical infrastructure area, two major themes were identified – a growing population of offenders and aging facilities. With regard to action plans associated with transformation, several organizations indicated that in the past year there was an increased requirement for maintenance of facilities as well, as construction of new, larger, and specialized facilities undertaken to deal with these challenges. One agency described a particularly unique plan to address limited physical space by using technology to provide interventions through wireless networks and mobile devices. Several organizations describing best practices that had been developed through the process of transformation noted two themes: the inclusion of stakeholders in the planning process, and long-term planning that considers all aspects of infrastructure projects such as the design, build, cost, and maintenance.
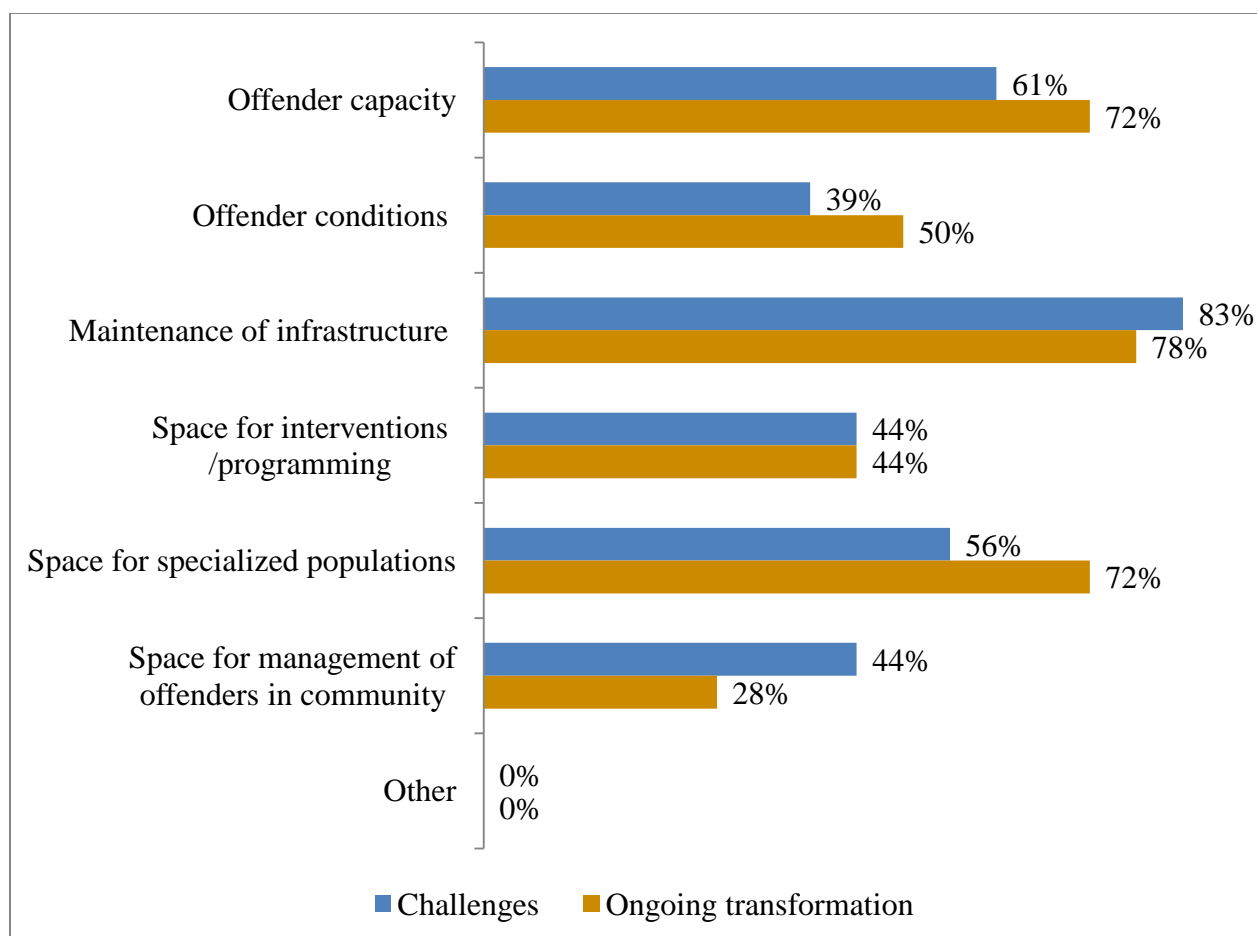
Figure 1. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of physical infrastructure.

Part II: Technology

Organizations were asked about the challenges they experience related to technology in several sub-areas. A majority of organizations (56%) cited entrance security as a challenge (see Figure 2). The next most frequently identified challenges were related to the sub-areas of search and surveillance technology and institutional security (44% for each). Notably, 33% of organizations reported having a problem in an "other" area related to technology. Several organizations provided examples of areas related to technology that their organization found challenging. Examples included: the use of technological equipment in contraband prevention (e.g., cell phone); development and improvement of offender data management system as well as case management systems, and the use of tablet and internet technology by offenders.
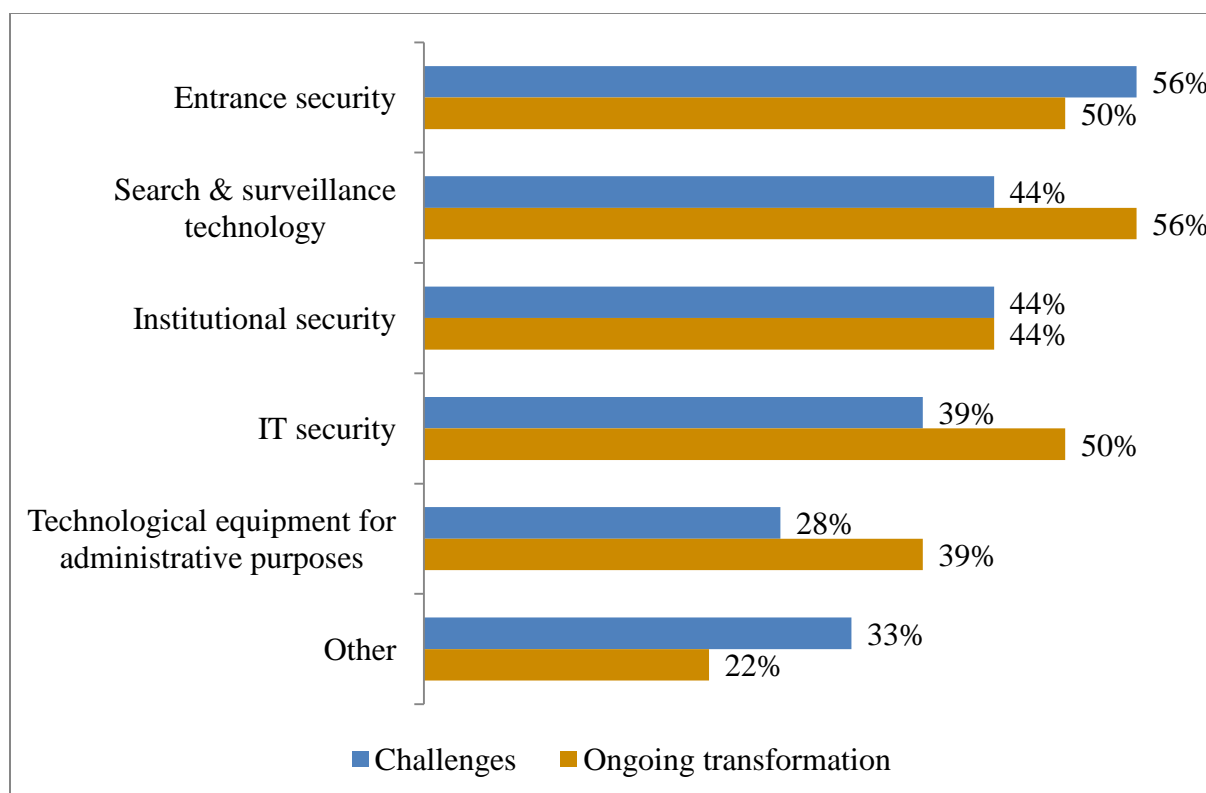
Figure 2. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of technology.

With regard to sub-areas in which transformation had been undertaken in the past year, the majority of organizations reported taking action in: entrance security (56%), search and surveillance (56%) and IT security (50%). Almost one-quarter of organizations reported having undertaken transformation in the past year in an "other" area related to technology. For example, organizations cited transformation related to health technologies such as e-health connections, and electronic health records. Some countries had actions focussed on technologies to upgrade case management platforms, while other countries focussed their transformation on providing offenders with access to the internet or a "prison cloud" environment, as well as the adaptation of technology in correctional programming (e.g., use of tablets, gamification, and the use of sensor technology for aggression recognition).

When considering all of the technology-related sub-areas, most topics identified as challenges had more organizations indicating that these areas were undergoing transformation in the past year. Two exceptions, however, were entrance security and other areas of technology.

Several organizations noted challenges that lead to the need for transformation. Four

major themes were identified as issues that required transformation related to technology. First, many countries cited issues with institutional security that prompted the need for transformation in this area – examples included dealing with contraband (especially cell phones), dealing with the sophistication of crimes, and the use of CCTV and other surveillance methods to deal with growing offender populations. Second, some organizations also noted the need to keep pace with the use of technology in the community such as the need of offenders to be connected to the digital world. Third, other organizations focussed on the need to have better automated systems for record keeping, improving efficiencies. Finally, others pointed to the need for better IT support for the electronic monitoring of offenders in the community. Related to the themes identified as leading to the need for transformation in the area of technology, several organizations highlighted actions related to the implementation of technology in the past year related to CCTV, scanners, cell sense, and facial recognition technology. Several countries had also recently put into operation new administrative management systems, electronic health records, and technologies for inmate self-service (such as self-serve kiosks or use of prison clouds). With regard to best practices learned through transformation in the area of technology, some countries highlighted the importance of the extensive research, testing, and training that is needed prior to the implementation of technology to ensure for smooth transitions.

Part III: Offender Health

Organizations were asked about the challenges they have identified in the area of offender health. For the majority of organizations – addictions, mental health, costs associated with providing health services (59% for each), physical health, and geriatric care (53% for each) were identified as substantial challenges (see Figure 3). Interestingly, organizations indicating "other" challenges in the area of offender health revealed that infection control (e.g., HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis, STDs) and client evaluation of corrections services, including health services, were areas of challenge.
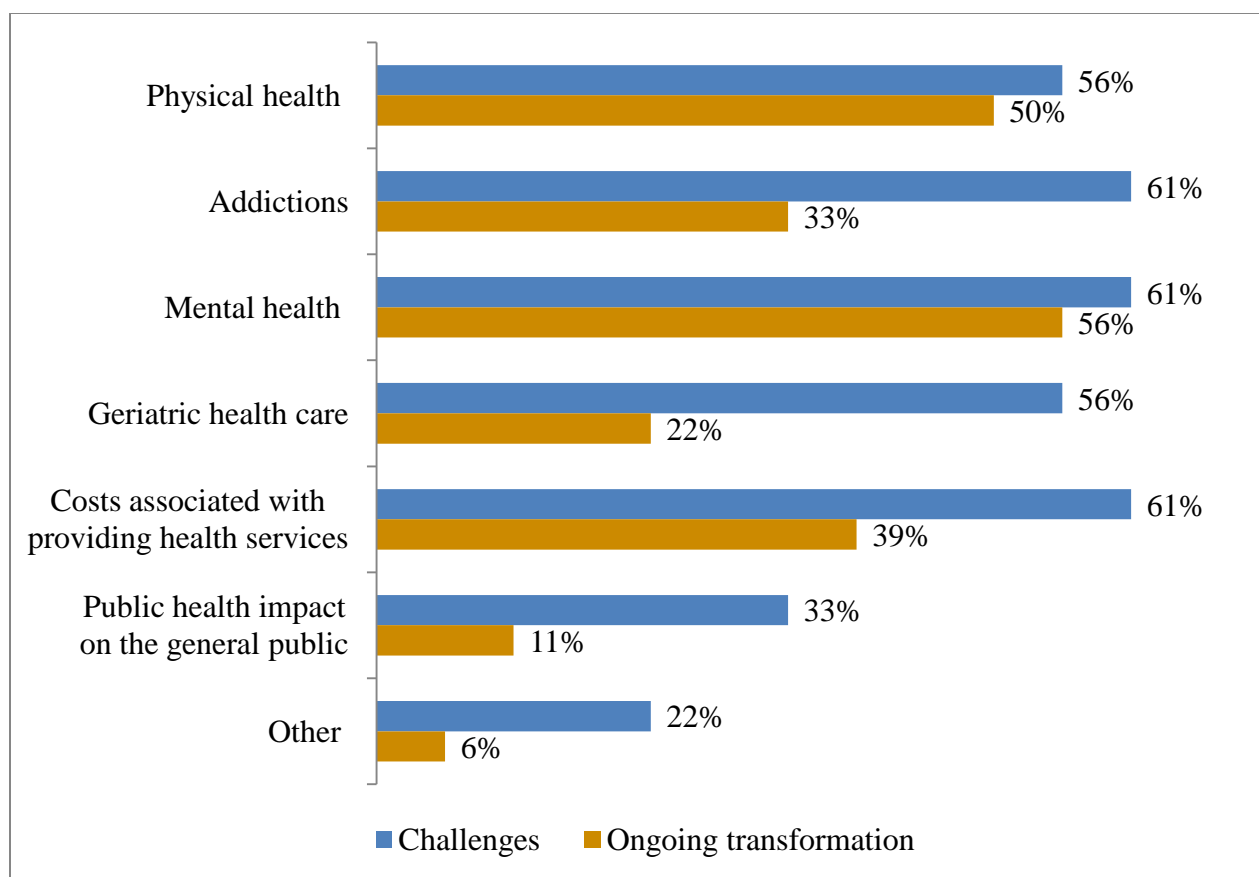
Figure 3. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of offender health.

Transformations in offender health were not frequently reported in many of the sub-areas; however, the majority of respondents were undergoing transformation in the area of mental health (53%). Compared to other major areas examined in this survey, organizations reported more challenges than transformation in the other sub-areas relating to offender health.

When asked to describe the issues leading to transformation, several themes were identified. Many organizations cited the challenges associated with offenders with mental health concerns (e.g., the need for dedicated space for these offenders, the rehabilitation and offender management challenges posed by offenders with mental health and substance use disorders). The aging offender population was also mentioned by organizations – specifically, some organizations noted the need for specialized infrastructure and health services. Other challenges also noted included the requirement to meet community care standards and to manage public and offender health interests. With regard to ongoing transformation to address these challenges,

several organizations indicated they were maximizing cost efficiency through partnerships (e.g., other government agencies or with private partners), expanding the use of technology in the area of healthcare (e.g., electronic health records, telemedicine, telepsychiatry),and the recruitment of qualified staff. A unique ongoing transformation was the exploration of Aboriginal models of health care. Across many organizations, developing partnerships with other government agencies to find efficiencies was identified as a best practice learned through transformation.

Part IV: Offender Rehabilitation

Four sub-areas in particular were examined as part of Offender Rehabilitation – offender management, correctional interventions, offender education and employment, and community corrections. Most organizations did not report having significant challenges in these areas or having undergone related transformation in the last year; however, this did vary by sub-area examined; further details are provided below. In addition to these sub-areas, 17% of respondents indicated they were experiencing challenges in "other" areas of offender rehabilitation. Examples of these "other" challenges include community education and employment, as well as a need to shift from a punitive correctional paradigm to a rehabilitative one. Eleven percent of organizations reported that they had undergone transformation in an "other" area related to offender rehabilitation in the past year.

Offender Management

Offender assessment was reported to be a challenge for the majority of organizations (56%; see Figure 4). All other sub-areas of offender management were reported as being a challenge by 33% or fewer organizations. Interestingly, however, with the exception of offender assessment – most sub-areas had proportionally more organizations identifying transformation occurring in these areas than challenges. More specifically, the three most frequently reported sub-areas to have had transformation in the past year included: Offender assessment (50%); offender security classification (44%) and staff engagement with offenders (33%).
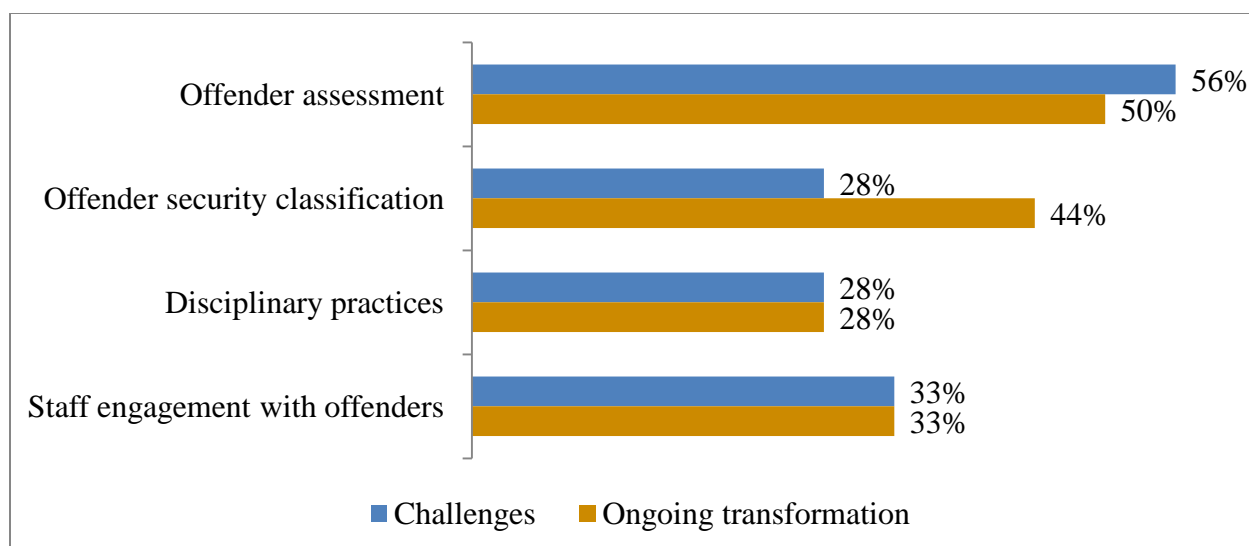
Figure 4. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of offender management.

Correctional Interventions

Few organizations reported having challenges in the sub-areas of correctional interventions with the exception of interventions for specific populations. Sixty-five percent of organizations report this area a challenge (see Figure 5). Consistent with the challenges noted in the area, 56% of organizations had undergone transformation in the past year in the area of interventions for specific populations. Interestingly, all sub-areas were endorsed more frequently for having challenges than transformation activities being undertaken in the past year, although the percentage of organizations reporting challenges was generally low in the sub-areas (<35%).

Offender Education and Employment

Less than 45% of organizations reported facing challenges with any of the sub-areas of offender education and employment (see Figure 6). The two most frequently endorsed were challenges related to educational programs and employability skills (44%). Similarly, 44% of organizations reported having undergone transformation activities in the past year related to prison employability skills and prison industries. Although the overall endorsement of education and employment related challenges was low, three of five sub-areas were endorsed for having more challenges than transformation activities being undertaken in the past year: offender pay, vocational training, and educational programs.
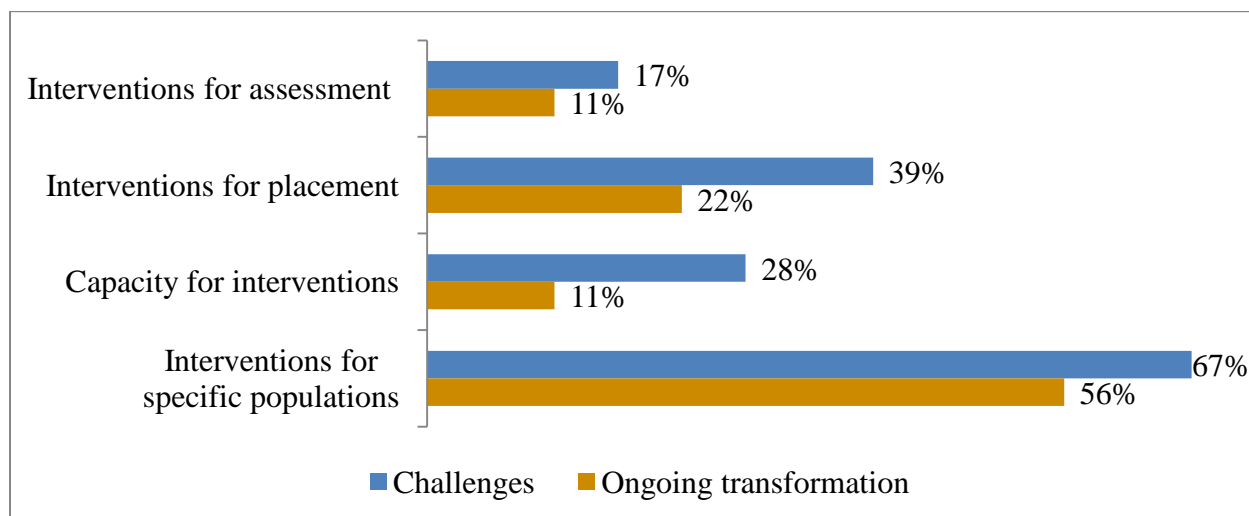
Figure 5. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of correctional interventions.
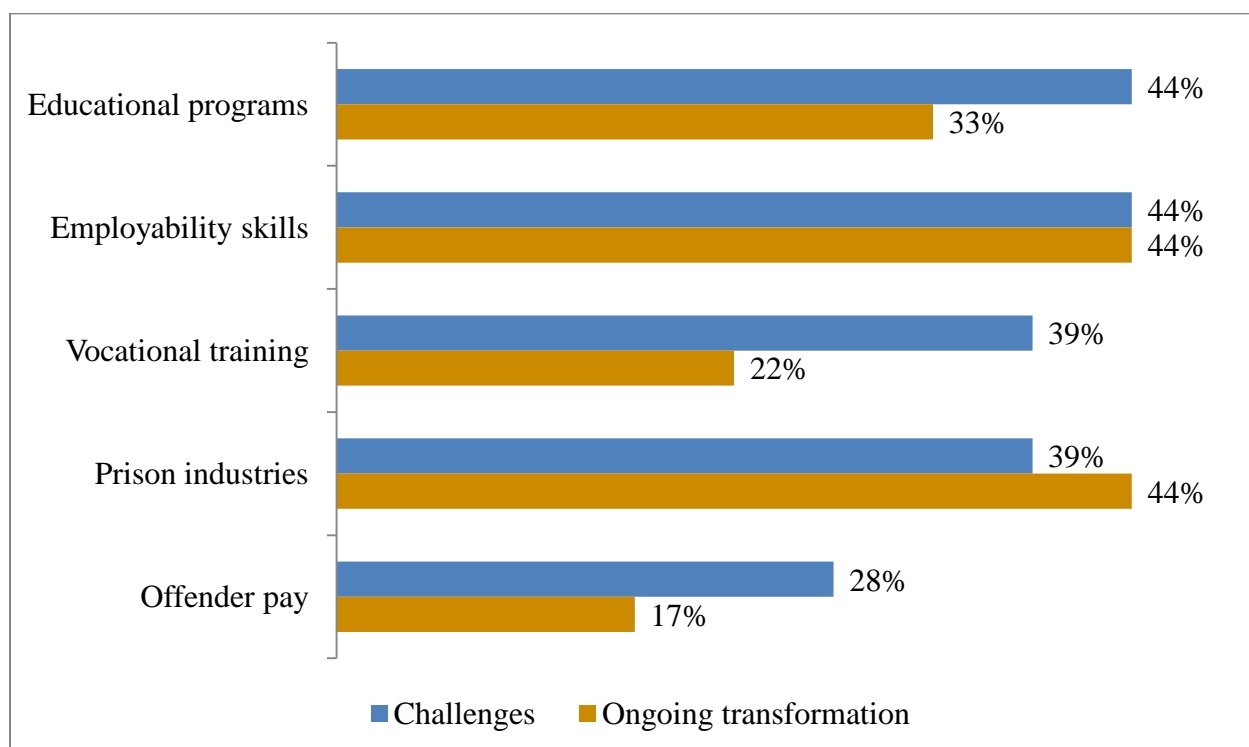

Figure 6. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of offender education and employment.

Community Corrections

Of the 10 organizations that supervise both custodial and non-custodial sentences, 50% reported challenges with the public perceptions of offender release (see Figure 7); all other sub-areas were reported by 40% or less of organizations. With regard to having undergone transformation in the past year, again 40% or fewer of the organizations reported transformation in these community correction sub-areas. The most frequent sub-area to be endorsed as having undergone change in the past year was offender transition from institution to the community (40%). Although the sub-areas of community corrections were seldom noted by organizations to be challenges (e.g., 40% or less), all the sub-areas had more respondents reporting challenges than transformation undertaken in the past year, with the exception of transitioning from the institution to community.
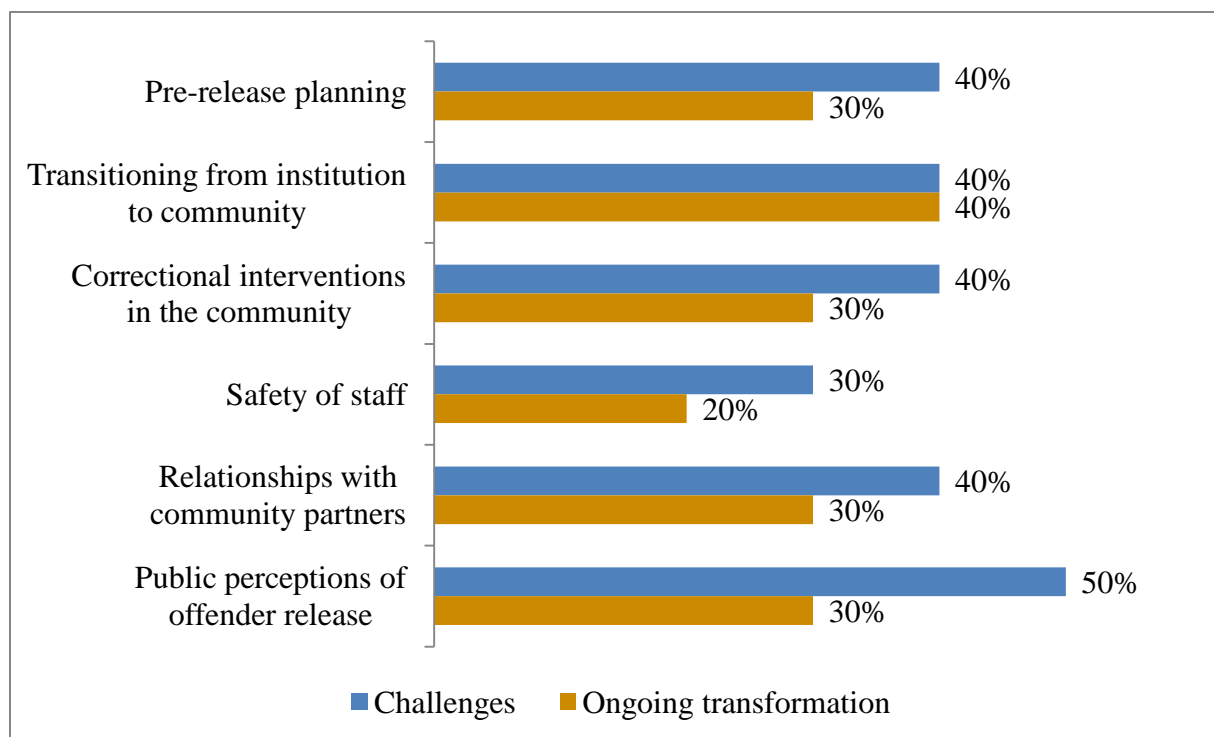

Figure 7. Proportion of organizations facing challenges and ongoing transformation in the area of community corrections.

With respect to offender rehabilitation, organizations were asked to expand more generally, rather than within each specific sub-area, on what issues had lead to the need for

transformation, what actions had been taken in the past year to address these issues, and what best practices were identified through the transformation process. In reference to the challenges faced by organizations, four themes emerged. Many organizations cited difficulties ensuring offenders are placed at the appropriate security level. As well, many organizations indicated an increasing number of radicalized offenders within their institutions. Another challenge was the desire to increase the capacity for offender reintegration and decrease recidivism (e.g., a focus on rehabilitation as opposed to retribution, the desire to decrease recidivism by the way of changes to offender management and intervention). A frequently mentioned challenge was the need to have evidence-based programming.

In responding to what transformation had occurred in the past year to address these challenges, many organizations referenced the introduction and/or improvement of evidence-based programs (e.g., correctional, education, domestic violence, and sex offender programs). Similarly, some organizations specified the development of radicalized offender programs for offenders and training for correctional staff. An additional theme that emerged was the development and improvement of post-release support. This included approaches such as increased planning/support pre-release, employment support within the community, transitional accommodation (e.g., halfway houses), and community-based programming. Another prevalent theme was related to ensuring an appropriate match between offender risk and security placement. A number of organizations recognized the need to use the least restrictive security measures (e.g., reducing the number of offenders being housed in segregation units) and ensuring that offenders are placed in the appropriate security level.

Throughout these transformations, a handful of best practices were identified. The adoption and use of risk assessment tools were noted to be important for assigning offenders to the appropriate level of security or the facility that is best suited for their needs. Similarly, improved assessment tools aided in correctional planning and case management. Lastly, developing partnerships with other enforcement and security services allowed for improved communication of information.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by correctional organizations around the world and the transformation plans implemented to address them. A number of areas emerged as common challenges and most organizations had action plans in place to respond to them. This suggests that correctional organizations recognize the difficulties facing their organizations and find ways, often through creative means, to address them. The most notable exception to this appeared to with regard to managing offender health; challenges in this area were reported by over 50% of organizations but fewer than 50% of these organizations reported that they had undertaken change to address these challenges in the past year. Aside from offender health, it is important to note that organizations reported other challenges they were facing where action plans still need to be developed.

The survey highlights the fact that many organizations are facing similar challenges leading to transformation. While the area of offender rehabilitation tended to have the most individualized responses, the consistency by which organizations brought up the themes of aging infrastructure, growing offender populations, the need for automated record keeping, and evidence-based programming suggests that on a global level, correctional organizations encounter many similar challenges. Given that the noted best practices tended to be unique across organizations, it may be possible, through international partnerships and knowledge sharing for organizations to assist each other in the ongoing process of improving correctional management.

Appendix A: Participating Organizations

- Australian Capital Territory Corrective Services, Australia

- Belgian Prison Service, Belgium

- Connecticut Department of Correction, USA

- Correctional Service of Canada, Canada

- Correctional Services Department, Hong Kong

- Corrective Services New South Wales, Australia

- Custodial Institutions Agency, Netherlands

- Direction de l'Administration Pénitentiaire, Central African Republic

- Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service, Norway

- Federal Public Service of Justice, Belgium

- Georgia Department of Corrections, USA

- Idaho Department of Correction, USA

- Latvia Prison Administration, Latvia

- Lesotho Correctional Service, Lesotho

- North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, USA

- Singapore Prison Service, Singapore

- Swedish Prison and Probation Prison Service

- Uganda Prisons Service, Uganda

- Wyoming Department of Corrections, USA