



# Research at a glance

## Self-Reported Physical Health Status of Newly Admitted Federally-Sentenced Men Offenders

**KEY WORDS:** *offender health conditions, health survey, aging offenders, Aboriginal offenders' health status*

### What it means

This study highlights the most prevalent health issues among federal men offenders at admission, and provides a benchmark that can be used to examine health trends in the Correctional Service Canada (CSC) over time. Rates of health conditions among older offenders indicate that it may be important to examine the overall management of health care services for this group of offenders. The management of health care services for other higher-risk groups such as intravenous drug users may also merit attention.

### What we found

Results indicate that the most common health conditions reported by newly-admitted men offenders are head injury (34%), asthma (15%), and back pain (19%). With the exception of blood-borne viruses (HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C) and asthma, rates of chronic health conditions do not appear to be significantly higher in the population of incarcerated men than the general population of Canadian men; indeed, rates of hypertension and arthritis are lower, possibly due to a higher proportion of younger men in the incarcerated population. Rates of most chronic conditions are significantly higher for CSC men offenders over the age of 50 years, a proportion of the CSC offender population that has been increasing. Compared to non-Aboriginal offenders, Aboriginal men have higher rates of head injury and blood-borne viruses at all ages. Intravenous drug users and obese offenders are among the subgroups of offenders suffering from higher rates of chronic health conditions. Canadian men offenders appear to be healthier on a number of measures than men offenders sampled in a recent Australian health survey.

It should be noted that these results capture offenders' health status at intake and may not reflect the prevalence rates of health problems of offenders who are already in the prison population.

### Why we did this study

CSC requires information on the prevalence of chronic health conditions among newly-admitted federal inmates to plan for necessary treatment or provisions for functional impairments. International health studies indicate that offenders have higher rates of infectious diseases, chronic diseases, and physical and psychiatric disorders relative to the general population.

### What we did

All newly admitted federal offenders are routinely approached to consent to a health assessment at intake. Health professionals interview offenders guided by hard copies of standardized health forms (1244 series) to determine their self-report of health conditions and health behaviours. Over a six-month period from April 2012 to October 2012, data from these forms was digitized for 2,273 offenders on new warrants of committal. The study compared rates of chronic health conditions by Aboriginal ancestry and across two age bands. Further analysis compared the self-reported health conditions of men offenders to data available for the general population of Canadian men as well as to men offenders in other countries (e.g., Australia).

### For more information

Stewart, L., Sapers, J., Nolan, A., & Power, J. (2014). *Self-Reported Physical Health Status of Newly Admitted Federally-Sentenced Men Offenders* (Research Report R-314). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, 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.

