

# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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## SPECIAL REPORT

### 2018 International Survey of Correctional Services: Community Reintegration

2018 N° SR 18-01

Ce rapport est également disponible en français. Pour en obtenir un exemplaire, veuillez vous adresser à la Direction de la recherche, Service correctionnel du Canada, 340, avenue Laurier Ouest, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P9.

This report is also available in French. Should additional copies be required, they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9

## **Background**

Correctional organizations experience a continuously changing landscape and must be proactive in addressing the challenges facing their agencies. For the fourth consecutive year, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has conducted an international consultation to gain a better understanding of the challenges nations face in their correctional organizations and the strategies used to address them. Each consultation has a different focus, with previous surveys exploring areas such as ageing infrastructure, rapid technological development, offender health, and operational issues ([2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#)). In anticipation of the 2018 Annual International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA) conference which will have as its theme community reintegration, the focus of the present consultation is to better understand the community reintegration policies and practices being used globally.

## **Purpose**

CSC conducted an international consultation to develop a broader understanding of the community reintegration challenges faced by correctional organizations and to learn about the innovative policy and practice changes being used currently and planned for the future to address these issues. The international consultation was completed in collaboration with CSC's Intergovernmental Relations Division, CSC's Strategic Policy and Planning Division, and representatives from the ICPA.

## **Procedure**

The 2018 *International Survey of Correctional Services* was developed and disseminated by staff at CSC's Research Branch in collaboration the Intergovernmental Relations Division. It was available in English and French, and could be completed online or on paper. The survey was comprised of both multiple choice and open-ended questions. Given the survey's focus on community reintegration, central challenges in this area were identified and questions specific to each challenge were developed. The resultant survey was organized based on the following three overarching areas of challenge: (1) community reintegration tools and intervention capacity; (2) community capacity; and (3) governance issues, including performance measurement,

evaluation, and research.

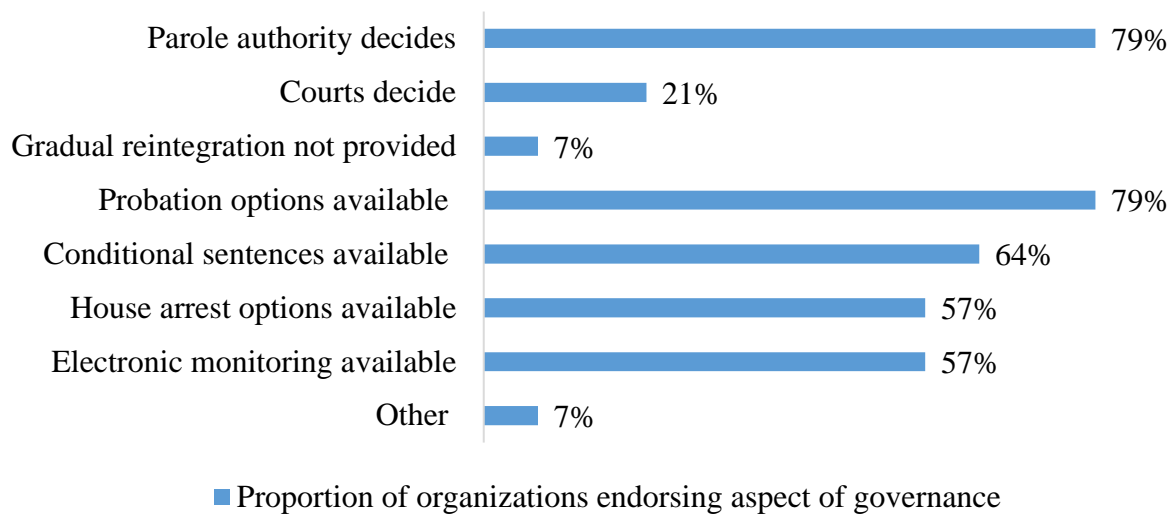
The target sample included approximately 170 international correctional organizations affiliated with the ICPA, as well as Canadian provincial and territorial departments. Respondents were able to access the survey between May 18th and July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018. A total of 14 correctional organizations representing eight countries responded to the survey (see the Appendix for a list of participating organizations). As in previous years, the majority of responses were received from individuals at the executive-level of their organization (64%), followed by those at the senior management-level (29%) and those in “other” roles/rankings (7%). The respondent who selected “other” specified that they were the National Director of their organization.

### **Participating organizations**

Slightly more than half of the participating organizations (57%) were at the State/Regional level of government, and the remaining 43% were at the Federal/National level. No responses were received from organizations at the Local/Municipal level. The majority of organizations indicated that they supervised both custodial and non-custodial sentences (71%), while the remaining 29% indicated that they supervised only custodial sentences. Notably, none of the participating organizations supervised only offenders with non-custodial sentences.

With respect to the framework governing community reintegration efforts, there was some variability across participating organizations (see Figure 1). Most respondents indicated that, in their jurisdiction, decisions regarding community reintegration were made by a paroling authority (79%), while 21% indicated that courts were responsible for making community reintegration decisions. Note that selecting the response “Parole authority decides community reintegration approach” and “Courts decide community reintegration approach” were not mutually exclusive, and one organization indicated that both parties were involved in community reintegration decisions. Only a minority of respondents (7%) indicated that gradual reintegration procedures were not provided. The vast majority of organizations indicated that probation was available as part of their offender reintegration process (79%), and over half indicated that house arrest (57%), and electronic monitoring (also 57%) options were available. Conditional sentencing options were offered by most of the participating organizations (64%), and one organization indicated that other approaches to community reintegration (e.g., supervised probationary liberty, community service options) were available in their jurisdiction.

Figure 1. Proportion of organizations endorsing aspects of community reintegration governance.



As part of the survey, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of offenders in their current offender population that fell into a number of different demographic and descriptive categories. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the offenders supervised by participating organizations were men, with women offenders accounting for between 1-10% and 11-20% of the supervised populations (see Table 1). As illustrated in the table below, the population characteristics supervised by participating organizations were, overall, quite diverse. For example, offenders belonging to visible minority groups accounted for less than one percent of the supervised population for one organization, yet constituted 71-80% of the offender population for another. Likewise, gang-affiliated offenders represented a range from less than one percent to 81-90% of offenders, depending on the correctional agency.

Considerable variability was also evident with respect to offence characteristics. Proportions of offenders incarcerated for drug-related offences, for example, varied from 1-10% and 61-71%. Despite considerable variability in reported sentence characteristics across agencies, it is worth noting that, overall, the majority of offenders supervised were serving relatively short sentences. Though not unexpected, multiple respondents noted that short sentence length did entail a number of challenges with respect to case planning and offender management; issues that will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Organizations were asked to provide estimates regarding the proportions of offenders in their offender populations with specific needs. Although some organizations reported relatively young and healthy offender populations, others indicated that the majority of the offenders they

supervised were ill and/or ageing. Likewise, while several agencies reported that less than a quarter of their offender population struggled with mental illness, several others reported figures closer to 50%, and one agency indicated that almost all (91-99%) of their offender population had a diagnosed mental illness. A contributing factor to this variability may be that a definition for mental illness was purposefully not provided so that organizations could define this term within their cultural context. Some agencies may have included offenders with substance misuse disorders and antisocial personality disorders in their definition of mental illness, which would increase the prevalence rates. Finally, all respondents estimated that a significant proportion (31-40% to 100%) of the offenders they were responsible for would benefit from educational programming and/or vocational training.

Table 1

*Characteristics of offender populations supervised by participating organizations*

| <b>Demographic Characteristics</b>                     | <b>Proportion of Offender Population<br/>(Range, in %)</b> |
|--|--|
| Women  | 1-10% to 11-20%  |
| Visible Minority                                       | <1% to 71-80%  |
| Gang-Affiliated  | <1% to 81-90%  |
| <b>Sentence Characteristics</b>                        |  |
| Violent Offence  | 1-10% to 61-70%  |
| Sexual Offence   | 1-10% to 31-40%  |
| Drug Offence   | 1-10% to 61-70%  |
| Less than one year                                     | <1% to 91-99%  |
| 1 to 2 years   | 1-10% to 71-80%  |
| 2 to 10 years  | <1% to 71-80%  |
| 10 years or more but not indeterminate / life sentence | <1% to 11-20%  |
| Indeterminate / life sentence                          | <1% to 21-30%  |
| Custodial sentence                                     | <1% to 100%  |
| <b>Offender Needs</b>                                  |  |
| Chronically ill or ageing                              | <1% to 81-90%  |
| Diagnosed mental disorder                              | 11-20% to 91-99%   |
| Would benefit from educational programming             | 31-40% to 100%   |
| Would benefit from vocational training                 | 31-40% to 100%   |

The collectively high rates of a range of offender needs across correctional agencies highlights the importance of accommodating their needs through community reintegration efforts. In support of these objectives, the current consultation set out to explore how agencies globally work to address offender needs.

The results of this report are organized according to the three main challenge areas explored in the survey. As the survey questions were presented in different formats, both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained; findings from both types of questions are presented together. The quantitative results speak to the availability of different types of

assessment tools and rehabilitation/correctional programs that promote offender reintegration and the scope of the capacity- and governance-related challenges experienced across organizations related to their community reintegration efforts. Next, themes that emerged from the qualitative responses describing organizations' specific capacity and governance challenges, best practices, and current and/or planned mitigation strategies are presented. An integrated summary of the current findings and a discussion of lessons learned over the course of all international consultations are provided at the end of the document.

## **Results**

### **Community Reintegration Tools and Intervention Capacity**

To begin, correctional organizations who oversee offenders in the community (71% of all responding agencies) were asked to indicate the types of assessment tools and interventions used to aid with community reintegration. As illustrated in Table 2, participating organizations indicated that they had access to variety of assessment tools; all respondents reported access to the assessment tools listed below with the notable exceptions of tools intended for the assessment of educational, and mental and physical health (all 90%). Similarly, 100% indicated that that educational, substance misuse, sex offender, and domestic abuse programming was available in their organization, and almost all (90%) indicated that employment, and violent offender programming was also available. Notably, the lowest response rate was for reintegration and spiritual/religious programming, with only 80% reporting availability for each. Several agencies also reported that they offered “other” programs, for example, programs targeting cognitive skills, ADHD and learning disabilities, domestic skills, and parental skills. Collectively, results showed that correctional organizations had a diverse portfolio of tools available to them to support the reintegration of offenders in the community. This did not, however, preclude the presence of challenges relating to the reintegration tools and intervention capacity.



Table 2

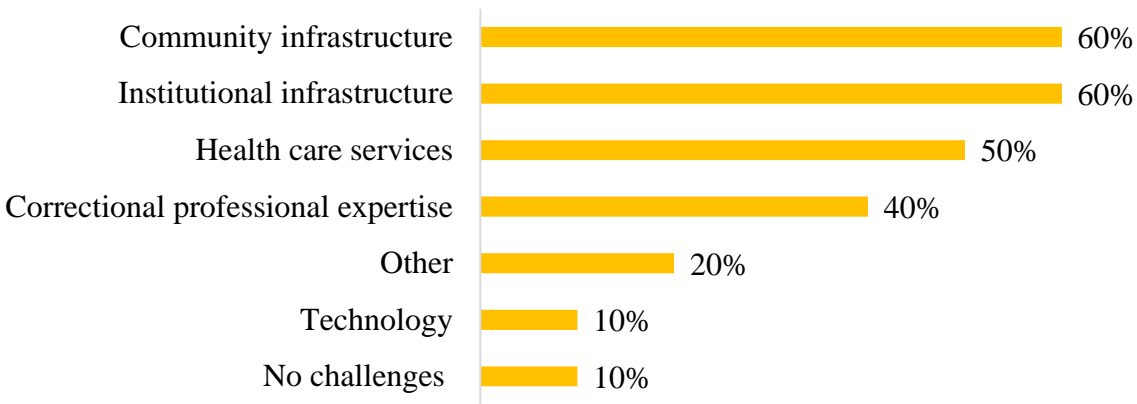
*Availability of assessment tools and rehabilitation/correctional programs used to aid in community reintegration across surveyed organizations*

| <b>Assessment tools</b>       | <b>%</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Criminal history risk         | 100      |
| Criminogenic needs            | 100      |
| Housing needs                 | 100      |
| Financial needs               | 100      |
| Employment needs              | 100      |
| Education needs               | 90       |
| Mental health needs           | 90       |
| Physical health needs         | 90       |
| Other assessment tools        | 0        |
| <b>Offender interventions</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Education programs            | 100      |
| Substance misuse programs     | 100      |
| Sex offender programs         | 100      |
| Domestic abuse programs       | 100      |
| Employment programs           | 90       |
| Violent offender programs     | 90       |
| Spiritual/Religious programs  | 80       |
| Reintegration programs        | 80       |
| Other programs                | 30       |

For the majority of organizations, community infrastructure (60%), institutional infrastructure (60%), and health care services (50%) were identified as significant challenges in the area of community reintegration tools and intervention capacity (see Figure 2). Notably, all organizations indicated that they were experiencing challenges in this area. Organizations were asked to describe the impact of these challenges on their correctional organizations, particularly related to the reintegration of offenders in the community. Many agencies referenced infrastructure challenges pertaining to increasing prison populations leading to over-crowding

and ageing infrastructure that cannot accommodate advancements in technology. Other commonly cited challenges were the lack of affordable community housing, limited access to physical/mental health services, and difficulties recruiting psychologists and other health care staff.

*Figure 2.* Proportion of organizations facing challenges in the area of community reintegration tools and intervention capacity.



■ Proportion of organizations facing challenges in the area of reintegration and intervention capacity

Of the organizations who reported experiencing challenges in the area of community reintegration tools and intervention capacity, nearly all (89%) reported recently implementing policies or practices in an attempt to mitigate these issues. Best practices learned from these changes included further developing their approach to rehabilitating offenders, such as developing new intervention programs and cultivating strategies to address mental health, substance use, and housing issues. Other best practices included initiatives to improve staff recruitment and developing and strengthening relationships with partners, whether partnering with local communities, regional health agencies, or other government departments to support the reintegration of offenders into the community.

All organizations, regardless of whether they were currently experiencing challenges in the area of community reintegration tools and intervention capacity, were asked whether their organization was developing or planning changes in policies or practices in the next five years in this area. Again, nearly all organizations (80%) indicated that they did have ongoing plans. Many of these plans were consistent with what was considered to be best practices (e.g., rehabilitation

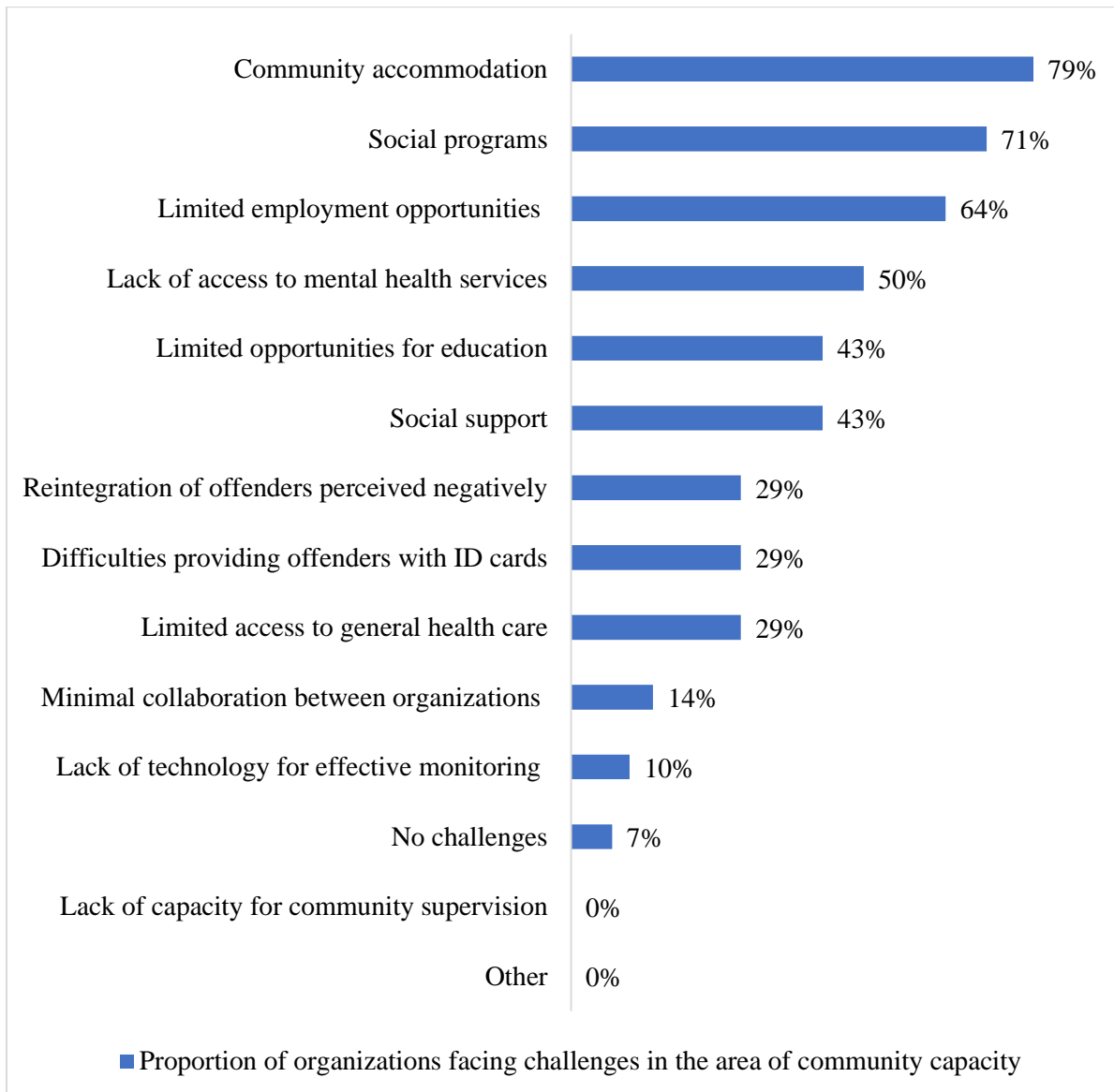
strategy improvements), but a number of organizations also cited initiatives to undertake infrastructure planning and development. This included both business infrastructure planning (e.g., resettlement service contract development) and physical infrastructure planning (e.g., building new prisons).

### **Community Capacity**

Organizations were asked to identify community-based capacity challenges affecting their ability to assist in offender re-entry efforts and to describe the specific impact of these challenges. As shown in Figure 3, nearly all organizations reported facing some kind of challenge, and many (79%) indicated that their ability to advance offender reintegration was limited by insufficient availability of safe accommodation in the community. A lack of community-based social programs to assist with addressing offender needs was the next most frequently cited challenge (71%), closely followed by limited employment opportunities for offenders (64%), and limited access to mental health services (such as substance misuse treatment; 50%). Almost half (43%) of the surveyed organizations reported facing challenges related to the lack of available opportunities for offenders to further their education or vocational training, and 43% indicated that offenders' lack of support from social groups (e.g., friends and family) presented a barrier with respect to aiding in their reintegration. Twenty-nine percent of respondents also reported challenges pertaining to negative perceptions regarding the reintegration of offenders, practical difficulties associated with providing offenders with accepted identification cards, and the availability of general health care for offenders in the community. Encouragingly, relatively few respondents (14%) indicated that they experienced challenges stemming from a lack of collaboration between governmental organizations.

Notably, of the organizations that indicated they supervised offenders serving non-custodial sentences none indicated that they experienced challenges related to insufficient capacity to provide efficient community supervision. Furthermore, only 10% reported that their ability to effectively monitor offenders in the community was hampered due to insufficient access to relevant technology. It is also worth noting that no "other" challenges were identified by any of the survey respondents.

Figure 3. Proportion of organizations facing challenges in the area of community capacity.



In addition to identifying community capacity challenges, organizations were invited to elaborate on the impact of these challenges. Many agencies indicated that these challenges presented additional complexities when it comes to case-planning, especially for high-risk and vulnerable offender sub-populations (e.g., women offenders and offenders with mental disorder), and in general, simply makes it more difficult to adequately prepare offenders for release. Several agencies also provided additional contextual information, identifying aggravating factors such as lack of organizational funding, resource constraints from being located in small and/or rural communities, and the brevity of average sentence length.

Encouragingly, nearly all of the respondents reported that they were either currently

implementing, and/or planning to initiate, changes to address these challenges. Specifically, 77% reported having recently developed and implemented strategies intended to mitigate these challenges. Some of these new policies and approaches which represent accumulated best practices geared toward improving reintegration capacity, included: (1) a more explicit focus on pre-release planning (e.g., offering pre-release workshops, helping offenders obtain necessary identification cards, planning release destinations and arranging accommodation); (2) developing in-house capacity (e.g., building housing on prison land or community correctional centres, providing annual staff training); and (3) working more closely with community partners (e.g., reaching out to community organizations to help offenders secure employment, working with regional partners to develop a housing strategy or contracting out accommodation services, and working with health agencies to improve access to services).

Moreover, most of the respondents (79%) indicated that their correctional organizations were planning (and in some cases had already begun undertaking) important changes to enhance their ability to deal with their re-entry based challenges over the course of the next five years. Two central themes emerged from the responses, with multiple agencies affirming planned or ongoing organization-wide strategic planning initiatives and/or plans to focus more explicitly on the development of comprehensive offender management strategies.

With respect to strategic planning initiatives, a number of organizations cited plans to revisit current priorities, to evaluate available resources with an eye to reallocating funding, and to establish measureable goals and associated evaluation criteria. Also, consistent with the results presented in the above section, several of the respondents noted plans related to offender accommodation and infrastructure, such as investing in resettlement services and infrastructural re-design. Campaigns to increase communication and facilitate offenders' transitions throughout the release, supervision, and reintegration continuum were also cited as part of comprehensive offender management initiatives. For example, several agencies expressed a desire to improve communication and collaboration between correctional organizations and community service partners, and amongst staff working in diverse reintegration-related roles. Considered as a whole, a more complete and efficient integration of correctional and community services emerged as a common goal; respondents' current best practices and planned initiatives were reflective of a shared desire to take an increasingly holistic and uninterrupted approach to offender re-entry with the expressed intent of improving community reintegration outcomes.

## Governance

Relative to other areas examined, governance (i.e., the legislation and/or policies that govern how an organization carries out its' responsibilities) was not as frequently reported as a particular challenge (see Figure 4), with half of respondents (50%) reporting no challenges in this area. For those organizations citing it as an issue, however, the most frequently cited challenges were related to outdated or inflexible legislation and policies (21%), with respondents describing struggles with legislation and policies that were no longer reflective of the current needs of their organization. Other challenges included issues relating to a weak link between legislation and governance (7%) and being a new/developing correctional system (also 7%). Correctional agencies described the need for legislators to have a better understanding of the correctional system and of the challenges associated with handling the increasingly demanding responsibility of supervising detained/remanded individuals awaiting trial. Notably, a number of organizations cited “other” challenges (14%) relating to difficulties in the relationship between custodial and community governance and the relationship between public sector and private sector service providers.

Figure 4. Proportion of organizations facing challenges in the area of governance.



Of the organizations experiencing challenges in the area of governance, only 43% reported recently implementing policies or practices to mitigate their effects. Best practices

identified included reforming legislation and policies to update governance structures and align operations across the organization. Further, several organizations identified the benefits of conducting research and performance measurement in order to better understand the governance challenges facing their organization and to facilitate organization-wide improvements.

All organizations, regardless of whether they were currently experiencing challenges in the area of governance were asked whether their organization was developing or planning changes in policies or practices in the next five years. Encouragingly, around two-thirds of organizations (64%) reported having plans. Many of these proposals revolved around reviewing existing legislation and policies to find and make necessary improvements. For some organizations, this included policy changes with respect to how transgender offenders are housed and managed, the use of electronic monitoring, and shifting health care and social services responsibilities to larger service providers to facilitate offender access to care. As well, a somewhat unique plan mentioned by one respondent was to make a conscious effort to educate legislators about the realities of the correctional system through public testimonies.

### **Performance measurement, evaluation, and research**

Within the theme of governance, respondents were asked whether they track performance with regards to the efficiency or effectiveness of their organization. Positively, the majority of organizations (86%) indicated that they did conduct evaluations or outcome research. For many organizations, this involved regular reporting of performance measurement indicators, both at the organization-level and for individual institutions and community sites. Correctional organizations routinely cited assessing the needs of their offender population (e.g., substance misuse, mental health needs) and evaluating whether the programs, services, and initiatives put in place were affecting measurable change in offenders' lives. Furthermore, while many agencies referenced the in-house evaluation/research capacity of their organizations, they often discussed working with partners outside of the organization to contribute to the evidence-based knowledge of their agency. This included providing data to other government departments who conduct research in an independent manner or working with other correctional agencies to share knowledge and develop standardized performance indicators.

Of the organizations that conduct evaluations or outcome research, over half (58%) reported experiencing challenges related to performance measurement, evaluation, and/or

research. Elaborating on these challenges, many organizations mentioned struggles associated with not having enough internal staff with the statistical knowledge for extensive evaluations/research and the related challenges of having increased demand for data-driven results. Further, many organizations cited challenges associated with measuring meaningful outcomes. When assessing outcomes, privacy issues can arise when linking correctional data to other governmental administrative databases, and cross-jurisdictional comparisons are difficult due to variability of performance measurement definitions. There were also difficulties noted that were inherent to the measurement of outcomes of initiatives that involve contributions from multiple government departments (e.g., government-wide housing programs).

Encouragingly, close to three-quarters of respondents (71%) reported plans for the next five years to address these performance measurement, evaluation, and research challenges. While a small number of organizations reported addressing resource/staffing issues by partnering with university researchers and other government agencies to facilitate increased research output, the majority of them elaborated future plans revolved around developing more advanced and detailed performance measurement and evaluation frameworks *within* the organization. Correctional jurisdictions are acknowledging the essential role evidence-based policies and practices have in the future of corrections. By advancing the frameworks within which measurement and research function, correctional agencies noted that they would be better positioned to identify gaps in service delivery, focus efforts on initiatives that achieve improved results, and recognize new and emerging challenges facing their organizations in the future.

### **Summary of Findings**

Overall, the results of this international consultation offered insights into current community reintegration efforts internationally. Even given the considerable diversity among the responding agencies and the characteristics of offenders under their care, the challenges they faced were often remarkably similar. Many of the participating correctional organizations noted common challenges concerning institutional and community infrastructure and the availability of community accommodation, social programs, and community employment opportunities. Fewer organizations indicated ongoing challenges in the area of governance, but those that did specifically noted struggles with legislation and policies that no longer reflected the current correctional reality and also indicated that they did not have the resources to effectively track



performance with regard to the efficacy of their organization.

Encouragingly, the responses indicated that correctional organizations are addressing these community reintegration challenges with a variety of creative solutions. Often this involves developing organization-wide strategies to improve access to a variety of rehabilitative and health services, developing procedures to prepare offenders for community reintegration *before* release, and developing partnerships with community organizations and other government departments to improve offender outcomes. Many agencies noted the need for their organizations to routinely assess the efficacy of these initiatives and critically evaluate progress towards their stated goals.

### **Connections with previous consultations**

As previously discussed, preceding consultations have focused on the challenges faced by correctional organizations in the areas of physical infrastructure, technology, offender health, offender rehabilitation (2015 and 2016), and correctional operational issues (2017). While the number of responding organizations has varied from year to year (ranging from 11 to 24), many of the same correctional agencies (up to 55%) repeatedly contribute information regarding their organizations. Findings from these surveys offer valuable insight into the challenges nations face in their correctional organizations and the strategies (both current and planned) used to address them.

Moreover, there are several parallels between the results of this year's survey and previous international survey consultations that are worth noting. While each consultation differs in focus, many of the same themes reappear every year. Challenges associated with offender physical and mental health were repeatedly referenced, with many organizations discussing concerns associated with offenders experiencing high rates of mental health or age-related health issues, difficulties providing adequate health services to those in custody through in-house capacity or accessing community-based specialists (e.g., financial resources and possible security concerns), and insufficient health-related resources available to offenders in the community. Another reoccurring challenge facing correctional agencies was issues related to managing a diverse and inherently complex offender population comprising security threat groups, offenders with substance misuse or mental health concerns, transgender offenders, ethnocultural offenders, and women offenders. Responding organizations highlighted the need for individualized case-management approaches tailored to the specific needs of each individual. Finally, difficulties

associated with preparing offenders for re-entry into the community was a theme that emerged consistently throughout all international consultations. Many organizations cited the need to develop evidence-based correctional programs, to support offenders in the aim to improve education levels and employment skills, and to provide more comprehensive release-planning support (e.g., linking the offender with community-based resources, stable accommodation, and employment opportunities, etc.) to promote reintegration success.

Best practices being used to address the challenges were also remarkably consistent, regardless of the issue at hand. Correctional agencies often address issues by reviewing the functions of the organization holistically and looking for ways that multiple sectors of the organization can collaborate to make improvements. For example, offender health may be improved by updating policies pertaining to level of care requirements, hiring more/specialized healthcare staff, working with IT services to update the record-keeping of health information or to upgrade network/bandwidth connections for accessing telehealth options, and working with frontline staff to better communicate healthcare options available to offenders. Coordinated efforts to address challenges can result in improved outcomes.

Over the last four years, organizations have regularly highlighted the importance of working with partners and stakeholders when addressing the challenges facing their agencies, acknowledging that correctional organizations function within the broader framework of society. Other government departments, community-based organizations, and the community as a whole should be involved in and contribute to changes in correctional practice. Community and interdepartmental cooperation could come in the form of government-wide housing strategies for vulnerable populations, working with community members to help offenders find employment and other supports upon release, and working with local universities to increase the research capacity of the organization. In engaging with external partners, correctional agencies strengthen the capacity of their organization.

## **Conclusion**

On the whole, this international consultation, as well as consultations completed in previous years, highlight the value of international partnerships and knowledge sharing between correctional organizations. Agencies often face similar challenges and considerable benefits can be gained by disseminating knowledge on best practices.

## **Appendix: Participating Organizations**

1. ACT Corrective Services, Australia
2. Alberta Correctional Services Division, Canada
3. Argentine Federal Prison Service, Argentina
4. British Columbia Corrections Branch, Canada
5. Correctional Service of Canada, Canada
6. Corrective Services New South Wales, Australia
7. Criminal Sanctions Agency, Finland
8. Custodial Institutions Agency (Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen - DJI), Netherlands
9. Department of Corrections, New Zealand
10. Department of Justice, Government of Yukon, Canada
11. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
12. Nevada Department of Correction, United States of America
13. Nova Scotia Department of Justice, Correctional Services, Canada
14. Tasmania Prison Service, Australia