CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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Substance Use Patterns of Men Offenders: An Ethnocultural Comparison

Indigenous and White offenders have greater substance use needs than other ethnocultural groups.

Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) offender population has seen a proportional increase and diversification of ethnocultural groups since 2000[1]. In addition, close to 70% of incarcerated men were identified as having substance use issues[2], underscoring the importance of exploring the substance use patterns of offenders from various ethnocultural backgrounds.

What we did

The Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (CASA) assesses substance use patterns at admission to federal custody. Between April 2016 and March 2019 4,982 men offenders were assessed. Substance use indicators were compared across the following ethnocultural groups: White, Indigenous, Black, Arab, Southeast Asian, Latin American, South Asian, other Asian, Filipino, and Other[3].

What we found

Other ethnocultural groups demonstrate lower substance use severity than White or Indigenous offenders (see Table); Black, Arab, and South Asian offenders were least likely to have an identified substance use issue.

Examination of other substance use indicators show that:

- Early drug or alcohol use (15 years or younger) was most common for White and Indigenous offenders.
- Alcohol and marijuana were most likely to be used by all study groups in the 12 months prior to arrest. Central Nervous System (CNS) stimulants were more likely used by Filipino or Indigenous offenders while Indigenous and White offenders were more likely to report cocaine/crack or opioid use. Filipino offenders had comparable rates of cocaine/crack use as Indigenous and White offenders.
- Black, South Asian, Filipino, and Other Asian offenders were less likely to have a history of injection drug use.
- Black, Filipino, and Other Asian offenders were also less likely to have a link between their substance use and criminal offending or to have used opioids in the 12 months prior to arrest.

Table: Examination of Substance Use Indicators across Ethnocultural Groups

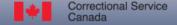| Characteristic	Ethnocultural Groups (%)									
	White	Indigenous	Black	Arab	Southeast Asian	Latin American	South Asian	Filipino	Other Asian	Other
Overall Substance Use Severity										
None	22	8	40	47	32	37	39	26	38	29
Low	38	32	47	30	39	46	44	63	56	40
Moderate to Severe	40	60	13	23	29	17	18	11	6	32
Early alcohol use (15 years or less)	50	70	24	23	27	34	23	22	7	39
Early drug use (15 years or less)	48	63	29	27	17	38	19	5	0	35
Substance Used Most-12 months prior arrest										
Alcohol	27	19	35	22	23	37	32	37	56	29
CNS Stimulants	10	13	1	2	9	5	5	15	0	6
Cocaine/Crack	12	11	4	9	7	2	5	11	6	9
Marijuana	23	30	27	22	17	31	26	11	13	23
Opioids	10	13	1	6	9	5	4	0	0	8
History of Injection Drug Use	19	25	2	5	5	6	2	0	0	11
Link between substance use and offending	44	62	19	27	25	25	26	11	13	38

What it means

CASA data demonstrates that Indigenous and White offenders have higher rates of substance use issues compared to other ethnocultural offenders. Understanding the substance use patterns of other ethnocultural offenders, such as Black, Filipino, or Other Asian offenders, can inform CSC's management and intervention strategies to address offenders' substance use needs during incarceration and upon community reintegration.

For more information

Please e-mail the Research Branch or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the Research Publications section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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[1] Gottschall, S. (2012). *Ethnic Diversity in Canadian Federal Offender Admissions* (R-263). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.
[2] Kelly, L. & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2015). *Lifetime substance use patterns of men offenders* (RIB14-43). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

[3] White ($n = 2,562$), Indigenous ($n = 1,008$), Black ($n = 459$), Arab ($n = 94$), Southeast Asian ($n = 94$), Latin American ($n = 65$), South Asian ($n = 57$), Other Asian, which includes Chinese, Japanese, and Korean ($n = 57$), Filipino ($n = 27$), and Other, including all multi-ethnic and unidentified offenders ($n = 601$).