

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Indigenous Offenders Affiliated with Security Threat Groups (STGs)

Indigenous offenders are overrepresented among STG affiliated offenders and have common factors associated with STG affiliation.

Why we did this study

Security threat group^{1,2} (STG) affiliation among offenders poses operational, safety, and security concerns for federal institutions in Canada. In a recent study,³ Indigenous offenders accounted for almost half of STG affiliated men and 90% of STG affiliated women in-custody. This study synthesizes findings specific to STG affiliated Indigenous offenders across a variety of indicators.

What we did

STG affiliated Indigenous federal offenders based on year-end snapshots from FY2013-2014 to FY2018-2019 from the Offender Management System (OMS) were included. For details on the methodologies refer to the specific publications identified in the appropriate footnotes.

What we found

Prevalence. Indigenous offenders are prevalent among STG affiliated offenders, particularly among the in-custody population. As of May 2020, 22% of Indigenous men and 13% of Indigenous women in-custody were STG affiliated.⁴

Trajectories. Social networks, marginalization factors, and experience with childhood adversity have been recognized as trajectories to STG affiliation.⁵ All STG affiliated Indigenous women offenders had at least one of these factors; 74% had experience with all three trajectory types,⁶ with a history of substance misuse (92%), homelessness (91%), history of abuse (81%), family fragmentation (68%), and STG affiliated friend networks (59%) being the most common.⁷ Although the information was not as uniformly recorded for men,⁸ over half of STG affiliated Indigenous men had experienced all of these trajectories,⁹ with unemployment (90%), history of substance misuse (80%), family fragmentation (63%), STG affiliated friend networks (57%), and history of abuse (55%) being most prominent.

Involvement Status. Active engagement in a STG versus those who were inactive was examined.^{10,11} Half (49%) of

STG affiliated Indigenous men in-custody were active compared to 44% in the community. Similar to the broader study, those inactive were higher risk/need, and were more likely to be serving sentences for violent offences;¹¹ however, actively engaged STG affiliated Indigenous men offenders in custody were more likely to be maximum security. Institutional indicators and post-release outcomes were similar across involvement status. Among STG affiliated Indigenous women, 57% in-custody and 54% in the community were actively engaged. The results for Indigenous women were similar to the broader study in that actively engaged women were higher risk/need, more likely to have committed a violent offence, and more likely to have a suspension of release.¹⁰

STG subgroups. From this study,³ the majority (93%) of STG affiliated Indigenous women were affiliated with Indigenous or street gangs; less than half were identified as members in their STG. For Indigenous men, the majority (88%) were also affiliated with Indigenous or street gangs and three-quarters were members. Offenders in Indigenous and street gangs were more likely than other STG affiliated offenders to have guilty disciplinary charges, institutional incidents, and release suspensions.

What it means

Indigenous offenders were overrepresented in STGs. The various research studies indicate that Indigenous offenders have common factors related to STG affiliation and would likely benefit from addressing these issues in order to disengage from these groups. Future research could also explore the interplay between STG affiliation and Indigenous identity for these offenders.

For more information

For more information, please email [Research Branch](#). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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¹ STGs are defined as street gangs, Indigenous gangs, prison gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, traditional organized crime, Asian gangs, white supremacy groups, subversive groups, terrorist organizations and hate groups.

² The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is currently reviewing and updating the STG definition.

³ Farrell MacDonald, S., Smeth, A., Cram, S., & Derkzen, D. *Comparing characteristics, institutional adjustment, and post-release outcomes of Security Threat Groups (STGs; R-451)*. Ottawa, Ontario: CSC.

⁴ Farrell MacDonald, S. (2022). *Federal offenders affiliated with Security Threat Groups* (RIB 20-09). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

⁵ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Pathways to Security Threat Groups: A review of the literature* (RR 21-01). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

⁶ Thirty percent of STG affiliated non-Indigenous women had experience with all three pathways types.

⁷ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Women offenders' pathways to Security Threat Group affiliation* (RIB 21-16). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

⁸ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Men offenders' pathways to Security Threat Groups (STGs) affiliation* (RIB-23-06). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

⁹ For STG affiliated non-Indigenous men, 18% experienced all three types of pathways factors (highest for White or Black offenders at 38%).

¹⁰ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Federal women offenders' involvement in Security Threat Groups (STGs; RIB 21-23)*. Ottawa, ON: CSC.

¹¹ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Examining involvement status of Security Threat Group affiliated men offenders* (RIB 21-24). Ottawa, ON: CSC.