

Profile and Institutional Experience of Offenders with Use of Force

Offenders with a use of force incident have unique and complex needs and demonstrate more problematic institutional behaviour prior to the use of force.

Why we did this study

While research regarding use of force in corrections remains under-explored, studies in policing settings suggest that individual, officer, and situational factors may impact the use of force. In collaboration with the Security Branch, the purpose of this study is to examine the profile and institutional experience of offenders involved in use of force incidents relative to similar offenders with an incident that did not result in a use of force.

What we did

The sample consisted of all in-custody federal offenders with a use of force incident between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2022 ($N = 4,533$) and a matched comparison group of offenders with an incident that did not result in use of force during the same period ($N = 4,533$). The groups were matched based on relevant variables including race, incident type, incident role, Offender Security Level (OSL), and region at the time of the incident.

What we found

Overall, offenders with a use of force incident presented with unique and more complex needs compared to similar offenders with an incident that did not result in a use of force. Offenders with a use of force were more likely to have committed a violent offence and were serving longer sentences than the comparison group. Offenders with a use of force were younger, and were more likely to be rated low in motivation and accountability, and less likely to be engaged in their correctional plan. They were also more likely to be rated high in static risk and dynamic need, and low in reintegration potential. At men's institutions, offenders with a use of force were more likely to have a security threat group affiliation.

For both men's and women's institutions, offenders with a use of force demonstrated more problematic institutional behaviour in terms of previous incidents, uses of force, minor disciplinary charges, and serious disciplinary charges. At men's institutions, once controlling for other relevant factors (e.g., OSL, region, offender role, and mental health need), offenders with a use of force incident were 1.77 times more likely to have a prior guilty disciplinary charge and 2.18 times more likely to have a

prior incident in which they were identified as instigator. At women's institutions, once controlling for those same relevant factors, offenders with a use of force incident were 2.07 times more likely to have a prior guilty disciplinary charge and 3.07 times more likely to have a prior incident in which they were identified as instigator.

For offenders involved in use of force incidents, it was of interest to examine whether there were differences in the profile or institutional behaviour of the offenders where the use of force was deemed to be necessary and proportionate compared to those where it was not. While there were few meaningful differences between groups in profile or institutional behaviour, uses of force that were deemed not necessary and/or not proportionate were more likely to involve behaviour related incidents, a planned use of force, and used force types of physical handling, restraint equipment, and/or batons.

What it means

The findings of this study provides evidence of the individual level factors that may impact the use of force. While the myriad of interconnecting issues in and of themselves require targeted supports and interventions (e.g., addressing criminal history, mitigating risk and need, addressing substance use, providing interventions related to mental health needs), a holistic and integrated approach may be the most effective in addressing the multi-faceted nature of these characteristics. Future research may consider a more comprehensive examination of factors influencing use of force expanding beyond those at the individual level to include factors at the officer and situational levels.

For more information

Hanby, L., Smeth, A., & Cram, S. (2023). *Profile and Institutional Experience of Offenders Involved in Use of Force Incidents* (Research Report R-457). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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