

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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A summary of staff and client experiences with the Black Social History pilot in the Ontario Region

The Black Social History pilot provided adequate training and development resources to staff, which positively affected their knowledge and awareness of how BSH factors have impacted Black clients.

Why we did this study

Black individuals are overrepresented in the Canadian criminal justice system in Ontario¹. Statistics Canada has reported that Black individuals make up 4.7% of Ontario's general population², while Correctional Service Canada (CSC) data demonstrates that Black individuals make up 17.4% of the federally incarcerated population and 16.3% of the of those under community supervision in the Ontario Region³. To help address this overrepresentation, and to help improve community outcomes for Black individuals under community supervision, a group of CSC staff from the Ontario Region developed the Black Offender Social History (BSH) pilot. The BSH pilot aims to improve CSC employees' understanding of the historic social, political, and systemic context surrounding the lived realities of Black individuals under supervision and integrate this information into assessments and CSC decisions. The purpose of the current study was to examine the experiences of staff and Black clients⁴ with the BSH pilot in the Ontario Region.

What we did

BSH feedback questionnaires were administered to Parole Officers (POs) and to Black men either incarcerated or supervised in the community. POs filled out and submitted their questionnaire on an online platform, while clients completed and mailed paper-and-pencil questionnaires to the Research Branch at National Headquarters (NHQ). Data were downloaded, entered, and analyzed by Research Branch staff at NHQ.

What we found

One-hundred POs from men's sites participated in the BSH questionnaire. Fifty-one worked in an institution and 49 worked in the community (i.e., at a Parole Office or Community Correctional Centre). The largest proportion of staff (68.0%) indicated that the BSH training and associated documentation was helpful in understanding how BSH factors can be incorporated into case management and correctional planning for Black clients. Eighty-three POs also participated in the 2023-2024 Parole Officer Continuous Development (POCD) training, which was led by a professor who provided context and guidance on BSH implementation. Among these 83 individuals, the largest proportion ($n = 60/83$; 72.3%) indicated that the training was useful in assisting their understanding of BSH. Lastly, among the 85 POs who had applied the BSH to at least one of their clients, the largest proportion ($n = 57/85$; 67.1%) indicated that the process assisted the Case Management Team (CMT) to better understand Black clients' history, risk, and needs.

One-hundred and nineteen people completed the client questionnaire. One-hundred and four (87.4%) were incarcerated and 15 (12.6%) were under some form of community supervision. Among the 36 clients who had the BSH applied to their case, 14 (38.9%) indicated that the BSH questions helped their CMT to understand how their social history contributed to their offence cycle. Similarly, the largest proportion ($n = 14/36$; 38.9%) felt that BSH discussions increased their working relationship with their PO. Several other themes emerged in client responses to other questions, including a desire for more specialized roles within CSC and more Black client-specific programming/supports.

What it means

The largest proportion of staff participants indicated that BSH training resources positively affected their knowledge and awareness of how BSH factors have impacted Black individuals on their caseload. Of note, the proportion of staff who found the BSH process helpful in understanding their clients' histories (67.1%) was higher than the proportion of clients who felt that completing a BSH helped their CMT understand their offence cycle (38.9%). This discrepancy could be because the BSH pilot is still being rolled out, and some staff requiring more time and experience with incorporating it into case management and correctional planning in a way that results in more obvious changes being observed by clients. Overall, these findings suggest that staff feel encouraged by the potential of the BSH, but clients are less likely to see the desired impacts quite yet. While these results highlight the benefits of existing training and learning opportunities, they also underscore the importance of promoting engagement in these activities as BSH is considered for implementation in other CSC Regions.

For more information

Filoso, D., Chadwick, N., Johnson, S., & White, A. (2025). *A summary of staff and client experiences with the Black Social History pilot in the Ontario Region*. (Research Report R-485). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#).

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

¹ Department of Justice Canada. (2022). *Overrepresentation of Black people in the Canadian Criminal Justice System*. Retrieved from: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/tp-pr/jr/obpccjsspnspjpc/index.html>

² Statistics Canada. (2019). *Diversity of the Black population in Canada: An overview*. Retrieved from: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2019/statcan/89-657-x/89-657-x2019002-eng.pdf

³ Corporate Reporting System—Modernized. (2024). *Offender Profile*. Retrieved from: <https://pbirs-prod.csc-scc.gc.ca/PowerBIReports/powerbi/PMR-MRRG/CRS-M SIR-M/Offender Profile-Profil des d%c3%a9linquants>

⁴ To use more inclusive language, we refer to incarcerated individuals and individuals under community supervision as 'clients' of CSC. If the term 'offender' is used (i.e., in the results/tables), it is because that is the terminology that was used on the questionnaire.

