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# Emerging Research Results

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## Self-Reported Physical Health Status of Incoming Federally-Sentenced Women Offenders: Comparison to Men Offenders

**KEY WORDS:** *health conditions, offender health status, women offenders*

### What it means

The results of this study, in conjunction with those found for incoming federally-sentenced men, provide valuable information on the self-reported physical health status of offenders at the beginning of their incarceration. This information can be used as a benchmark to examine health trends in Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) over time.

### What we have found so far

The most common health conditions reported by incoming women offenders are back pain (26%), head injury (23%), hepatitis C (19%), and asthma (16%). Women's prevalence rates of chronic health conditions are similar to, or higher than, those of men. Notably, rates of cancer, back pain, obesity, and blood-borne viruses are higher. Higher rates of head injury for men is an exception to this pattern.

#### *Chronic Health Conditions*

System	Condition	Women	Men
		(N = 280)	(N = 2,273)
Cancer	Any cancer	6	2
Central nervous	Head injury	23	34
	Seizures	8	4
	Spinal injury	4	3
Cardiovascular	Hypertension	10	9
	Arrhythmia	5	2
	Cholesterol	3	5
	Angina	3	1
	Heart attack	1	2
Respiratory	Stroke	1	0.7
	Asthma	16	15
	Bronchitis	3	3
Gastro intestinal	Lung disease	0.4	2
	Ulcers	7	3
Endocrine	Diabetes	5	4
	Back pain	26	19
Musculoskeletal	Arthritis	9	8
	Osteoporosis	1	0.4
	Hepatitis C	19	9
Blood-borne	HIV/AIDS	2	1.3
	Obese	30	21
Lifestyle Risk Factor	Injects drugs	27	21
	Current smoker	20	21

*Note.* Percentages were calculated excluding missing or unknown values for each condition. Percentages were rounded.

### Why we are doing this study

CSC requires information on the prevalence of chronic health conditions among newly-admitted federal inmates to plan for necessary treatment and make provisions for those with functional impairments. The correctional health literature suggests that offenders generally report poorer health than individuals in the community. Furthermore, some studies suggest that women offenders may have poorer health than men offenders.

### What we are doing

This study compares the rates of chronic health conditions among incoming men and women offenders in CSC.

All consecutive incoming federal offenders in CSC are approached to consent to a health assessment. Health professionals interview offenders guided by standardized health forms to determine their self-reported health conditions and health behaviours. From April 2012 to May 2013, health data from 280 women offenders on new warrants of committal were recorded. Rates of chronic health conditions were examined and compared to those of incoming federally-sentenced men collected in an earlier study; and, where data were available, to adult women in the Canadian population.

### For more information

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

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

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