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Emerging Research Results

Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders Among Incoming Federal Offenders: Prairie Region

KEY WORDS: prevalence of mental disorders, offenders, concurrent disorders

What it means

The results demonstrated that male offenders, in the Prairie region¹ of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), have elevated rates of alcohol and substance use disorders and anxiety disorders. These high rates have implications for service delivery and offender management. For example, the needs of offenders with a mental disorder must be considered when planning resource allocation as they may be more likely to require more interventions and services than those without a mental disorder. This information will aid Mental Health Services in further developing population management strategies.

What we have found so far

Newly admitted male federal offenders in the Prairie region have high rates of current alcohol and substance use disorders and also have high rates of antisocial personality disorder and anxiety disorders (see Table), compared to the general community population. Additional analyses revealed that over 39% of offenders met the criteria for a current diagnosis of a mental disorder other than substance abuse or antisocial personality disorder.

Prevalence Rates of Current Diagnosis for Mental Disorders

Disorder Categories	N = 328
Mood disorders	16%
Primary psychotic	2%
Alcohol/substance use disorders	59%
Anxiety disorders	23%
Eating disorders	0.3%
Pathological gambling	6%
Borderline personality disorder	14%
Antisocial personality disorder	40%

Note. Percentages do not add to 100 as offenders could receive more than one diagnosis.

Twenty-eight percent of the sample was of Aboriginal ancestry. Approximately 80% of Aboriginal offenders met the diagnostic criteria for alcohol or substance use disorders compared to 51% of non-Aboriginal offenders. Gambling disorder was also higher in the Aboriginal offender sample. Non-Aboriginal offenders

had higher rates of borderline personality disorder than their Aboriginal counterparts (16% vs. 9%, respectively).

The prevalence rates of mental disorders observed in the Prairies are similar to those found in the Atlantic, Ontario, and Pacific regions for most categories. Alcohol and substance use disorder rates, however, were elevated in comparison to the Atlantic and Ontario regions but were similar to the rates that have been previously reported in the Pacific region.

Why we are doing this study

CSC requires information on the prevalence rates of major mental disorders in incoming federal offenders. Obtaining accurate rates will ensure that the CSC can plan appropriately for the intervention and programming needs of our changing offender population.

What we are doing

All incoming offenders on new warrants of committal were approached at intake during a 6-month period in 2013 at four reception centres in the Prairie region. The Structured Clinical Interview for DMS-IV-TR Axis I and Axis II (SCID I and II) disorders was used to assess for the presence of the following categories of disorders: 1) mood; 2) psychotic; 3) substance use; 4) anxiety; 5) eating; 6) pathological gambling; 7) antisocial personality disorder; and 8) borderline personality disorder. Lifetime and current (i.e., past month) prevalence rates were determined. Data collection for this study was previously completed in the Atlantic, Ontario, and Pacific regions and is currently underway in Quebec.

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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¹ The Prairie region consists of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.