

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

What does the termination of Security Threat Group (STG) designation signify?

Reasons for termination were identified for less than half of previously affiliated STG offenders; among these offenders, the main factors identified were internal to the STG (e.g., disbanding, being forced out, or separation) or that there was insufficient file information to confirm continued STG affiliation.

Why we did this study

Understanding the reasons for Security Threat Group (STG)^{1,2} disaffiliation may assist the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) in encouraging and supporting offenders to disengage from a STG. A recent review of the disaffiliation literature indicated that various “push” (internal to the STG) and “pull” (external to the STG) factors work in combination to facilitate STG disaffiliation.³ This study explored the reasons why an offender with a previous STG affiliation would have a terminated status in CSC’s administrative data system.

What we did

Using CSC’s Offender Management System (OMS), all federal offenders with a prior STG affiliation and a “terminated” status⁴ between 2009 and 2020 in the STG Affiliation screen were identified. In total, 161 offenders were included in the study. A detailed coding manual was created, where case management documentation⁵ in OMS was coded to determine the reasons for the termination status. Demographic, sentence, offence, and criminogenic risk and need information for the sample were examined.

What we found

Offenders with a terminated status were predominantly men (99%) and, on average, were 38 years of age. Overall 37% were Indigenous, 36% were White, 16% were Black, and 11% were from other ethnocultural groups. The majority of offenders in the study were previously affiliated with street or Indigenous gangs (65%), while 17% were previously affiliated with outlaw motorcycle gangs or traditional organized crime and 18% with all other STGs.

Prior to termination, 83% of offenders were identified as active in their STG. Three-quarters (76%) of offenders had committed violent offences, and almost two-thirds (63%) were serving a second or subsequent sentence. Over one-quarter (29%) were serving a sentence of less than four years.

Although 72% of offenders had a medium security classification at the time of their termination, these offenders were assessed as high static risk (83%), high dynamic need (87%), and 57% had a high Criminal Risk Index (CRI) score. Two-thirds were engaged in their correctional plan and 71% had a low reintegration potential.

Reasons for the termination status were recorded for only 44% of offenders in OMS and, therefore, results should be interpreted with caution. Among offenders with this information ($n = 71$), the three primary reasons provided for a change in STG status to “termination” were a lack of current documentation to maintain or confirm the STG affiliation (i.e., security intelligence staff were unable to confirm continued STG involvement), the disbanding of the STG, or the offender being forced out of the STG. The remaining reasons identified for termination were recorded for very few offenders (i.e., less than five each), but included: physical/geographic separation from the STG, disillusionment with the STG, parental responsibilities, maturation of the offender, pro-social supports, employment, or access to programming.

What it means

Although termination reasons were available for less than half of the study group, these findings indicate that factors internal to the STG (“push” factors) were more commonly identified than external factors (“pull” factors) for STG termination in case management documentation. In order to understand offender motivation for STG disengagement and disaffiliation, future qualitative research would be beneficial. Finally, if CSC wants to routinely track STG disengagement or disaffiliation, additional data categories in OMS would need to be explored.

For more information

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¹ STGs: formal or informal ongoing offender group, gang, organization with three or more members that may include: street gangs, Indigenous gangs, prison gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, traditional organized crime, white supremacy groups, Asian gangs, subversive groups, terrorist groups, or hate groups (CSC, 2016).

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

³ Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. (in press). *Disaffiliation from Security Threat Groups: A review of the literature* (RR 21-02). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

⁴ STG affiliation is identified and confirmed through a standardized assessment process conducted by security intelligence staff. Assessments are conducted any time there are changes in an offender’s STG status or after a new federal admission.

⁵ OMS case management document types examined included: preliminary assessments, criminal profiles, correctional plans, assessments for decisions, elder reviews, and community assessments.