

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Use of Force and Race: Profile and Institutional Experience

Some differences in use of force characteristics by ethnocultural group were identified. However, across ethnocultural groups, offenders in the use of force groups were found to have higher static risk and dynamic need.

Why we did this study

A recent investigation by the Office of the Correctional Investigator found an over-representation of Indigenous and Black individuals in use of force incidents (2021). In collaboration with the Security Branch, the purpose of this study is to provide additional context to these findings. The profile and institutional experience of offenders involved in use of force incidents were examined by ethnocultural group, and in comparison to similar offenders with an incident that did not result in a use of force.¹

What we did

The sample consisted of all federal offenders with a use of force incident between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2022 incarcerated at men's institutions ($N = 4,299$) and a comparison group of offenders with an incident that did not result in use of force during the same period ($N = 4,299$). The groups were matched based on relevant variables including race, incident type, incident role, Offender Security Level, and region at the time of the incident. The sample was comprised of 39% White, 37% Indigenous, 14% Black, and 7% Other.²

What we found

Across ethnocultural groups, offenders in the use of force groups had higher static risk and dynamic need relative to the comparison groups. They were lower in motivation and accountability levels, and were less likely to be engaged in their correctional plan relative to the comparison groups. There were slight differences in the offence and sentence characteristics across ethnocultural groups, though overall the use of force group was more likely to be serving a sentence for a violence offence. Offenders with a use of force incident were more likely to have any previous minor and serious guilty disciplinary charges, a previous incident where they were identified as the instigator, and a previous use of force incident, regardless of ethnocultural group.

There were some differences in use of force characteristics by ethnocultural group. For instance, inflammatory agents were used as a force measure in 61% of the incidents

involving Black offenders and 58% involving Indigenous offenders, compared to 53% of White offenders (54% of Other offenders). Where three or more force types were used, 21% of the incidents involved Black and 22% involved Other offenders, in comparison to 12% of White and Indigenous offenders. Planned uses of force and the use of the Emergency Response Team were slightly more pronounced amongst Black offenders. Lastly, the incident required a Level 2 or Level 3 review 63% of Indigenous offenders, compared to 58% of White offenders.

An examination of the review process that occurs following any incident with a use of force showed that the majority of assessments (91%) concluded that the use of force was both necessary and that the amount of force used was proportionate to the situation. Despite the differences observed in use of force characteristics by ethnocultural group, no significant differences emerged in ethnocultural group between offenders with a use of force that was determined to be necessary and proportionate and those where it was not.

What it means

Some differences in use of force characteristics by ethnocultural group were identified in this study. However, overall, offenders with a use of force incident presented with unique and more complex needs and demonstrated more problematic institutional behavior compared to similar offenders with an incident that did not result in a use of force.

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.

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 Note that the results are presented descriptively for comparison purposes but were not tested for statistical significance due to sample size constraints.

² Asian, Hispanic, and Multiracial/Bi-racial groups were collapsed into the Other group due to small sample sizes.

