

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Black Federal Offenders in Structured Intervention Units and the Mainstream Population

Black offenders in SIUs distinguish themselves from others in SIUs and those in the mainstream population.

Why we are doing this study

In 2019, Bill C-83 transformed federal corrections to focus on rehabilitation and mental healthcare. This legislation also brought about the elimination of both administrative and disciplinary segregation and introduced Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) for those inmates who could not be managed in the mainstream population. In 2020-21, a total of 323 (representing 6.7%) Black offenders were admitted to the federal system and at fiscal year-end there were 1,043 (representing 8.9%) in federal custody. Comparing the case characteristics of Black inmates in SIUs with others in SIUs as well as the mainstream Black inmate population may yield some important information especially with respect to providing targeted interventions to these individuals.

What we did

All federal offenders in SIUs were drawn from Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Offender Management System on February 28, 2021. On that date, there were 24 Black men in SIUs and there were 1,015 in the mainstream institutional population. For those in SIUs, 88% were serving federal sentences for violence offences whereas 80% in the mainstream population. In accordance with the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the reasons for SIU placement were: 13 (or 54%) *jeopardizes the security of the institution or the safety of any person*, 11 (or 46%) *inmate is in danger*, and 0 *interferes with an investigation*. SIU group comparisons were made in relation to the Black SIU, non-Black SIU, as well as Black and non-Black mainstream inmate population at that time.

What we found

An intake assessment measure was used to gather criminal history background (Criminal Risk Index or CRI). Analyses revealed that in SIUs, Black inmates were less likely than non-Black to have a high/very high risk of re-offending rating (65% and 74%, respectively). Substantial differences also emerged for the Black SIU population relative to the Black mainstream institutional population with respect to CRI high/very high risk of re-offending (65% and 34%, respectively).

For Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (case needs) assessed at intake to federal custody there were considerable differences observed between Black and non-Black inmates in SIUs. Overall, the Black SIU population relative to the non-Black SIU, Black and non-Black mainstream populations were found to be rated as "high needs" (96%, 98%, 70%, and 73%, respectively).

Upon closer examination, Black SIU inmates were more likely than non-Black SIU inmates to be assessed as "high needs" in the Associates domain (55% and 49% respectively). An unpacking of domain indicators revealed that Black SIU inmates were more likely to be suspected of affiliation with street gang / organized crime (48% and 24%, respectively). Also notable, Black SIU inmates were more likely than non-Black SIU inmates to be assessed as "high needs" in the Employment / Education domain (23% and 13%, respectively). On the other hand, Black SIU inmates were less likely than non-Black SIU inmates to be assessed as "high needs" in the Marital/Family domain (5% and 17%, respectively); the Community Functioning domain (5% and 10% respectively) and most striking the Substance Misuse domain (14% and 61%, respectively).

Albeit lower for the Black SIU relative to the non-Black SIU population, noteworthy is the presence of "high needs" in the Attitudes domain (68% and 79%, respectively) and "in the Personal/Emotional domain (55% and 70%, respectively). In the Attitudes domain, there were found to be characteristics such as: displays negative attitudes towards the criminal justice system (95% and 89%, respectively); displays negative attitudes towards the correctional system (76% and 78%, respectively); and supports instrumental / goal-oriented violence (95% and 88%, respectively). For the Personal/Emotional domain the following were found: being impulsive (86% and 93%, respectively), frequently acts in an aggressive manner (81% and 80%, respectively), and frequently interprets neutral situations as hostile (67% and 50%, respectively).

What it means

These analyses confirm that the Black SIU population distinguish themselves as a group from the non-Black SIU and mainstream Black inmate population in a number of important attitudinal and cognitive-behavioural ways. Overall, Black inmates in SIUs display complex needs and require intensive levels of service. This reinforces that interventions be culturally relevant and focused on motivation to change, problem solving, violence prevention and interpersonal relations. Moreover, these services need to be delivered by well-trained and qualified correctional practitioners.

For more information

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

Prepared by: Larry Motiuk and Leslie-Anne Keown

