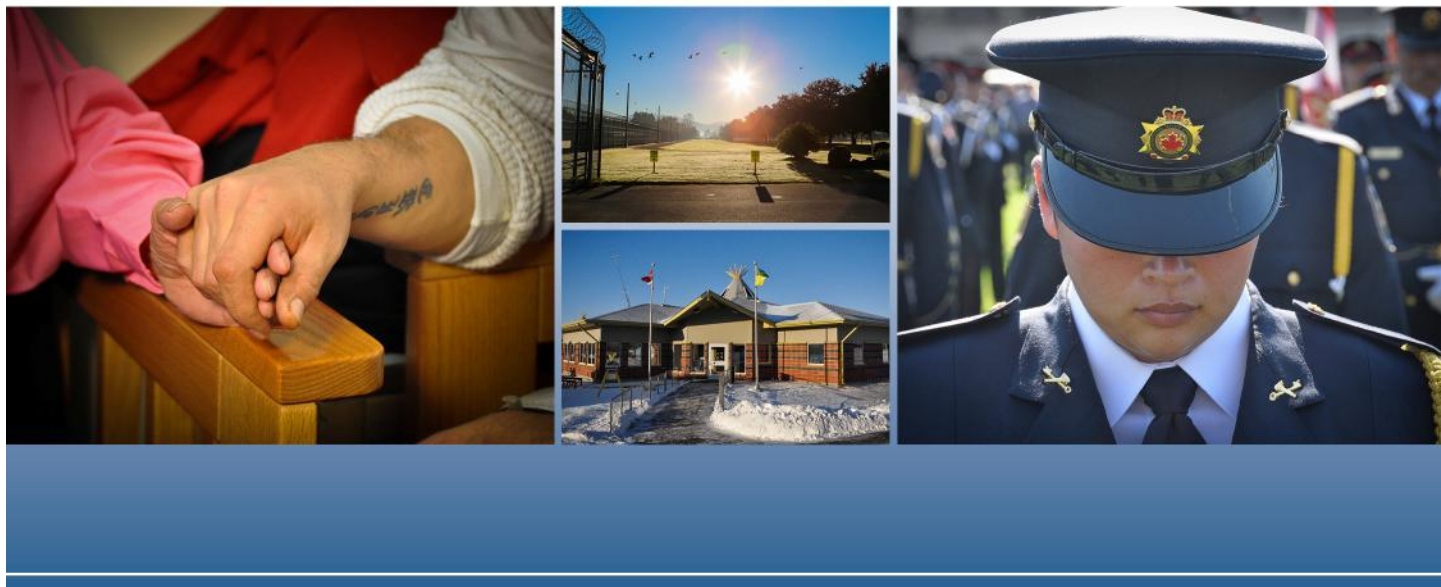


CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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RESEARCH REPORT

Institutional Behaviour and Post-Release Outcomes for Veteran Men Offenders

2020 N° R-435

ISBN: 978-0-660-36245-8
Cat. No.: PS84-155/2020E-PDF

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Institutional Behaviour and Post-Release Outcomes for Veteran Offenders

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December 2020

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the staff of the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Mental Health Branch for their support of this research, specifically Director General Manjeet Sethi, as well as Ginette Clarke, Michael Martin, and Cristina Busila. The support of the Veteran Affairs Canada (VAC) - CSC working group, and in particular the Research sub-committee including Michelle Morrison, Mary Beth MacLean, and Teresa Pound, is much appreciated. Finally, thanks to Dena Derkzen and Laura Hanby for overall support of this project, and to Dena for editorial feedback.

Executive Summary

Key words: *incarcerated veterans, Indigenous, institutional adjustment, post-release success*

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2012 in order to improve mental health and other health services for federal veteran offenders, to collaborate on ways to enhance staff knowledge in the area of mental health, and to share learning and strategies for building effective government and community partnerships. One objective of this partnership was to explore research projects of mutual benefit, with a focus on incarcerated veterans with mental health needs. This report adds to our knowledge about federal veteran offenders by providing a comprehensive examination of their institutional behaviour and post-release experiences.

Previous research has reported that in Canada veterans represent 2% of the general population while 2.5% to 3% of federal offenders have self-reported veteran status. Federal veteran offenders are more likely to be men, Caucasian, educated, and older than non-veteran offenders. They are more likely to have committed violent crimes, especially sex-related. They have lower criminogenic risk and needs and a higher reintegration potential than non-veterans. They are more likely to have mental health concerns than non-veterans, especially Indigenous veteran offenders (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a, 2020b).

Offenders assessed by the CSC's Computerized Mental Health Intake Screening System (CoMHISS) between August 2014 and March 2018 were included in this study. Overall, 374 men were categorized as veterans. Men offenders who did not self-report prior service in the Canadian Forces were categorized as non-veterans ($N = 14,471$). Indigenous men offenders accounted for 18% of veterans and 24% of non-veterans. When feasible, sub-analyses by Indigenous ancestry were conducted. Indicators of institutional behaviour (e.g., disciplinary charges, institutional incidents, and correctional program participation) as well as post-release outcomes (e.g., suspensions of release and returns to custody) were examined.

Overall, veteran offenders had more stable institutional behaviour than non-veterans as evidenced by fewer disciplinary charges, institutional incidents, and positive random urinalysis tests. Although fewer veterans were referred for correctional programming, the rates for program completion were comparable. Among offenders supervised on conditional release, veteran offenders had fewer suspensions of release and returns to custody (with or without an offence) than non-veterans. Although fewer veterans were employed during conditional release, among those employed, veterans were as likely as non-veterans to have full-time employment.

Veteran offenders are a small sub-group within the federal offender population with more prevalent mental health concerns, although they have more stable institutional behaviour and greater post-release success than non-veteran offenders. However, Indigenous veterans would benefit from additional supports both during incarceration and post-release to improve their correctional outcomes. Finally, enhancing data capacity to examine the experiences of veteran offenders would provide on-going research opportunities and ensure that these offenders receive the support necessary to address physical and mental health impacts of their service.

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Introduction

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2012 in order to improve mental health and other health services for federal veteran offenders, to collaborate on ways to enhance staff knowledge in the area of mental health, and to share learning and strategies for building effective government and community partnerships. One objective of the VAC and CSC partnership was to explore research projects of mutual benefit to both departments, with a focus on incarcerated veterans with mental health needs. To date, two profiles examining the characteristics of federal veteran offenders (Derksen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a), a profile of Indigenous federal veteran offenders (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020b) and a brief literature review exploring mental health and veteran offenders (Agterberg, Beauchamp & Farrell MacDonald, 2018) have been completed. This report adds to our research knowledge about federal veteran offenders by providing a comprehensive examination of the correctional and post-release experiences of federal veteran offenders in Canada.

Veterans in Canada

As of 2018, VAC estimated that there were 649,300 veterans in Canada, accounting for 2% of the Canadian general population (Statistics Canada, 2019; VAC, 2018), of which less than 20% receive services from VAC¹ (Van Til, MacLean, Sweet, & McKinnon, 2018). The veteran population is comprised of two groups, those with war service (7%) and those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF; 93%; VAC, 2018). About one-third of Canadian veterans are from Ontario, with 19% from Quebec, 17% from the Prairie provinces, 14% each from British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces, and less than 1% from the territories or from foreign countries. On average, war service veterans are 92 years old compared to 58 years for former CAF members. Current estimates are not available concerning the proportion of Indigenous veterans in Canada. However, 1.5% of veterans who completed the 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey indicated Indigenous ancestry (Van Til et al., 2018) while about 2.5% of the current CAF self-identify as Indigenous, 6.7% of RCMP members self-identify as Indigenous,

¹ VAC also provides services to former Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members.

and up to 40% of the 5,000 Canadian Rangers² may be Indigenous (Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2019).

Van Til and colleagues (2017) indicated that about one-third (32%) of veterans who completed the Life After Service Survey in 2016 indicated difficulty in transitioning to civilian life following their departure from the armed forces but that 84% indicated being satisfied or very satisfied with their life. The average age of veteran respondents was 48 years, with over half (53%) being 50 or older. The majority were male (88%) and very few were unemployed (8%) or had less than a high school diploma (4%). Slightly less than one-third indicated less than 10 years of service. Overall, 21% of veterans reported experiencing depression while 15% reported anxiety, 14% reported post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), all of which were higher than the general Canadian population. Heavy alcohol use was reported by 27% of veterans and 8% indicated suicidal ideation in the 12 months prior to the survey. In addition, veterans more recently released indicated greater difficulty adjusting to civilian life as well as more mental health concerns. One area of particular concern for VAC is the rate of suicides among veterans, with men veterans being 1.4 times higher risk of death by suicide compared to the Canadian general population and women veterans being 1.8 times higher risk (Simkus, Van Til, & Pedlar, 2017).

Also, Van Til and colleagues (2018) found that veterans were more likely to have activity limitations than the general Canadian population, less likely to have a low income, and were comparable with respect to overall life stress and heavy drinking. Although veterans released between 1954 and 2003 had comparable self-reported mental health, veterans released between 1998 and 2012 were more likely to indicate mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety.

In general, Canadian veterans are well educated and have high life satisfaction with stable sources of income. These results also indicate, however, that veterans will experience greater future need in regards to mobility and mental health than the Canadian general population. Mental health issues are especially relevant for veterans who have most recently left the CAF, and suicide prevention for veterans is a key public health issue for VAC (Simkus, et al., 2017;

² Canadian Rangers are a part of the Canadian Armed Forces reserve that provide limited military presence in Canada's remote areas, particularly in the Northern and coastal areas (Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2019).

Van Til, et al., 2017; Van Til, et al., 2018).

Incarcerated Veterans

Internationally, the proportion of correctional populations that identify as veterans varies. Depending on the source, 4% to 9% of offenders in the United Kingdom (UK) have been identified as veterans (Bensimon & Ruddell, 2010). In the United States, veterans represent 8% of state and federal prison and jail populations (Bronson, Carson, Noonan, & Berzofsky, 2015), although this number has decreased slightly from earlier estimates of 10% in 2004 and have drastically decreased from 21% since the mid 1980s (Mumola 2000; Noonan & Mumola, 2007). In Canada, 2.5% to 3% of federal offenders have self-reported veteran status (Bensimon & Ruddell, 2010; Derkzen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a; Farrell, Gileno & Grant, 2009). Based on these findings, federal veteran offenders are representative compared to the proportion of veterans in the Canadian general population, although lower than other jurisdictions. For Indigenous veteran men offenders, however, there is an over-representation, with 18% of the federal men veteran offender population identifying as Indigenous compared to 1.5%-2% of the Canadian general veteran population (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020b; Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2019), which is similar to the pattern of overrepresentation among non-veteran federal Indigenous offenders.

Incarcerated veterans, in general, are more likely to be men, Caucasian, educated, and older than non-veteran offenders (Bronson, et al., 2015; Derkzen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a; Mumola, 2000; Noonan & Mumola, 2007; Timko, et al., 2014; White, Muley, Fox, & Choate, 2011). In regards to offending, veteran offenders are more likely to have committed violent offences (MacManus, et al., 2019; Noonan & Mumola, 2007; Timko, et al., 2014), especially sex-related offences (Bronson, et al., 2015; Derkzen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a), although they often have fewer prior arrests than non-veterans (Bronson, et al., 2015). Finally, especially in more recent studies, veteran offenders were more likely than their non-veteran counterparts to have identified mental health concerns (Bronson, et al., 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a; White, et al., 2011), particularly depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders (Blodgett, et al, 2015). A recent study in the UK (MacManus, et al., 2019) found that mental health and alcohol issues were associated with increased risk of offending for ex-military personnel and that socio-economic stability (e.g., absence of debt, stable housing, and positive relationships) was protective for these veterans.

Within a Canadian sample, a recent study reported that federal veteran men offenders had lower need in all criminogenic need areas than non-veterans and were assessed as lower static risk, had higher reintegration potential, and were less likely to have an identified link between their criminal offending and substance use (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a). Additionally, an examination of federal Indigenous veteran men offenders showed these men had even more prevalent mental health concerns than their non-Indigenous veteran counterparts or Indigenous non-veteran offenders (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020b).

Institutional behaviour

There is a limited body of research examining the institutional adjustment of incarcerated veterans while in correctional facilities. Logan and Pare (2017) used inmate survey data to examine the relationship between veteran status and misbehaviour during incarceration. Across twelve indicators of negative prison behaviour (for example, verbal abuse of inmates or staff, physical assaults, insubordination, drug/alcohol related incidents, or contraband related incidents), those with prior military service were less likely to engage in these incidents than non-veteran inmates. Empirical studies examining the suicide rate among incarcerated veterans are non-existent, however it is estimated that since both veterans and offenders have higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicidal incidents than the general population, they are a particularly vulnerable population for these incidents and determining the suicide rate among incarcerated veterans is of importance (Wortzel, Binswanger, Anderson, & Adler, 2009).

In the United States, veteran service units, dorms, or pods have been created to support veteran offender rehabilitation during incarceration and to prepare veteran offenders for release (Goggin, Mitchell, & Tsai, 2018). These units emphasize military culture, structured roles and responsibilities, fostering group cohesion, addressing substance use and mental health issues, leadership development, and creating links with community supports. As of 2018, 84 units existed in a variety of correctional settings (Edelman & Benos, 2018). Although explicit rationales for their creation was not provided, these units provide the opportunity to deliver veteran specific interventions and address the underlying criminogenic risk factors that may be specific to veteran offenders.

Post-release behaviour

As with institutional adjustment, there is limited information on the rate of recidivism

among incarcerated veterans (Blonigen, et al., 2016), although Timko and colleagues (2014) suggest that veterans have lower recidivism rates as a greater proportion are first-time offenders and fewer offenders have lengthy criminal records compared to non-veterans, especially in US state facilities. In a study examining re-entry issues for veteran sex offenders, Schaffer (2011) identified that outreach supports and services, after in-custody treatment was completed, were necessary to mitigate the potential for homelessness following incarceration as well as reincarceration. In addition, Hoyt and colleagues (2014) determined that veterans who perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV) had lower rates of IPV reoffending than non-veterans offenders after a one-year follow-up period. Finally, another study identified that older veterans are at an increased risk of attempted suicide, drug overdose, or accidental death after returning to the community, and that prevention and intervention resources may be necessary to ensure easier community transitions for these offenders (Barry et al., 2018)

Purpose of the Study

Building on the earlier research examining the characteristics of Canadian federal men offenders, this study will examine the institutional and post-release experiences of veteran men offenders in comparison to non-veterans. Specifically, this study will answer the following questions:

1. How does the institutional adjustment (disciplinary charges, random urinalysis, institutional incidents, and program participation) of federal veteran men offenders compare to non-veterans?
 - a. How do institutional incidents related to suicide, suicide attempts and self-harm compare between federal veteran and non-veteran men offenders?
2. What are the post-release outcomes (community employment, community urinalysis, suspensions of release, and returns to custody) for federal veteran men offenders compared to non-veterans?

Method

Study Cohort

Offenders assessed by the CSC's Computerized Mental Health Intake Screening System (CoMHISS) between August 2014 and March 2018 were included in this study. Overall, 385 offenders self-reported previous service in the Canadian Forces; 11 women and 374 men were categorized as veterans. For the purpose of this study, only men offenders who completed the CoMHISS were included. Men offenders who did not self-report prior service in the Canadian Forces were categorized as non-veterans ($N = 14,471$).³ Men offenders who completed the CoMHISS accounted for 83% of all men offenders admitted to federal custody during the study period. Indigenous men offenders accounted for 18% of veterans and 24% of non-veterans.⁴ When feasible, sub-analyses by Indigenous ancestry were conducted. For a comparison of the demographic, sentence, offence, and mental health characteristics of the study cohort, please refer to Farrell MacDonald & Cram (2020a).

Data Sources

The CoMHISS is a mental health supplementary assessment completed during the offender intake assessment process (CSC, 2017; CSC, 2018). According to CSC's *Integrated Mental Health Guidelines* (2019), mental health screening should occur between 72 hours and 14 days after admission to a federal CSC facility. Veteran service was identified using the CoMHISS.

The Offender Management System (OMS) is CSC's electronic administrative and operational data system that records offender information from sentence beginning to end. Demographics, sentence and offence information were extracted. Information related to disciplinary charges (minor and serious), institutional incidents, random urinalysis testing, program participation during incarceration, employment and education participation during

³ Offenders who responded "Unknown" or "Declined to answer" were included in the non-veteran group (16%, $n = 2,316$) as 90% of offenders assessed in the Pacific Region were in this category (and none of the remaining 10% self-reported veteran status). Confirmatory analyses were conducted, excluding these offenders from the non-veteran group, which indicated that the results were consistent with or without these offenders. To ensure representation from offenders in the Pacific region, they were retained. Therefore, it is important to note that the 2.5% estimate for veteran offenders in Farrell MacDonald & Cram (2020a) is a conservative one and the true estimate is likely closer to the 3% found in other studies (Bensimon & Ruddell, 2010; Derkzen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell, Gileno, & Grant, 2009).

⁴ Other ethnocultural groups accounted for 14% ($N = 54$) of veterans, however, the largest specific group had 12 offenders. Therefore, analyses across other ethnocultural groups were not undertaken.

incarceration, release (day/full parole versus statutory release/long term supervision orders), suspensions of release, community employment, community urinalysis testing, and returns to custody (with or without an offence) were also examined.

Analysis

As all offenders who completed CoMHISS during the study period were included, inferential statistics were not used. Descriptive analyses (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were conducted. Bivariate analyses were used to examine associations between veteran status and indicators of institutional behaviour (such as charges and incidents) and post-release outcomes (e.g., suspensions and returns to custody).

Results

The results section consists of two main sections: institutional behaviour and post-release outcomes. Within the institutional behaviour section, comparisons between self-reported veterans and non-veterans were conducted for random urinalysis results, disciplinary charges with a guilty verdict, institutional incidents including instances of self-injurious behaviour, correctional program participation, as well as institutional education or employment participation. For post-release outcomes, suspensions of release, community employment, community urinalysis, and returns to custody (with or without an offence) were examined. All tables for the sub-analyses by Indigenous ancestry are contained in Appendix A.

Institutional Behaviour

As shown in Table 1, veteran men offenders had more stable institutional behaviour as evidence by fewer offenders with positive urinalysis tests or refusals to provide urinalysis samples as well as fewer guilty disciplinary charges (serious or minor). Also, veteran offenders were in custody about one and a half months longer than non-veterans, on average, before their first guilty charge. As shown in Table A1 (Appendix A), Indigenous veterans were twice as likely as non-Indigenous veterans to have a positive urinalysis test or to have a guilty disciplinary charge, although they were comparable to Indigenous non-veterans. Non-Indigenous veterans had more stable institutional behaviour than their non-veteran counterparts.

Examination of the substances found in the positive urinalysis tests⁵ showed that veterans and non-veterans were about as likely to test positive for marijuana (81% versus 84%, respectively), followed by opioids (19% versus 17%) and other drugs (8% versus 10%).⁶ No veterans tested positive for cocaine or benzodiazepines while less than 2% of non-veterans who tested positive had taken these substances. Indigenous veterans (67%) were least likely to have a positive urinalysis test due to marijuana compared to Indigenous non-veterans (84%), non-Indigenous non-veterans (84%), or non-Indigenous veterans (88%). Indigenous veterans were slightly more likely to test positive for opioids (22% versus 17%-18%) but were comparable to Indigenous non-veterans for other drug types (11% versus 12%), but more likely than non-Indigenous offenders regardless of veteran status (6% -9%).

⁵ Due to small cell counts for the specific substance analysis, these data were not presented in the table.

⁶ Multiple substances could be found in one sample; therefore, the substance types found do not total 100%.

Table 1

Institutional disciplinary charges and random urinalysis information by self-reported veteran status

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran Men
	(<i>N</i> = 374)	(<i>N</i> = 14,471)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Random Urinalysis		
Positive Tests	9 (26)	13 (1,439)
Refused to Provide	5 (15)	9 (999)
Disciplinary Charges		
Any Charges	37 (139)	46 (6,682)
Serious Charges	18 (66)	26 (3,793)
Minor Charges	31 (118)	38 (5,436)
Days to First Charge <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	263.2 (244.9)	219.1 (192.6)

Institutional incidents information were categorized into eight categories: assault related, behavioural, contraband related, escapes, miscellaneous, property, and self-injurious behaviour/death related (including those that resulted in serious bodily injury and those that did not). For an explanation of the incident categories, please see Appendix B.

Table 2 shows that veterans overall have fewer institutional incidents than non-veterans, particularly with respect to assault related, behavioural, and contraband incidents. A similar proportion of veterans had miscellaneous or property related incidents. Death related incidents or incidents involving self-injurious behaviour were also comparable for veterans and non-veterans (see Table 2).

Examination of incidents by Indigenous ancestry indicated that non-Indigenous veterans were least likely to have institutional incidents (41%) compared to non-Indigenous non-veterans (49%), Indigenous non-veterans (63%), or Indigenous veterans (70%; see Table A2, Appendix A). Indigenous veterans were most likely to have behavioural and miscellaneous related incidents compared to the other study groups, especially compared to non-Indigenous veterans (see Table A2).

Table 2

Institutional incidents information by self-reported veteran status

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran Men
	(<i>N</i> = 374)	(<i>N</i> = 14,471)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Any Institutional Incident	46 (173)	52 (7,546)
Assault related	12 (44)	20 (2,896)
Behavioural	17 (63)	25 (3,570)
Contraband	20 (75)	29 (4,223)
Escapes	0 (0)	0.5 (66)
Miscellaneous	23 (85)	21 (2,987)
Property	3 (11)	3 (436)
Self-injurious Behaviour/Death ^a	4 (15)	3 (468)
Self-injurious Behaviour ^b	3 (10)	2 (287)

Note. ^aAll deaths in custody for veterans (0.8%) were due to natural causes compared to 63% (*n* = 26) of deaths for non-veterans. ^bSelf-injurious behaviour includes suicide, attempted suicide, and self-harm. Examination of self-injurious behaviour that resulted in serious bodily injury or death showed that 1% of men veteran offenders had an incident that met that criteria compared to 1% (*n* = 107) of non-veterans.

Veteran offenders were less likely to be enrolled in correctional programming while in custody than non-veterans, but similar proportions of participants completed moderate and high intensity programming (see Table 3). In addition, veteran offenders were less likely than non-veterans to have an identified need for employment or education based on both the offender intake assessment domain (32% versus 51%, respectively) and their self-reported education level in CoMHISS; 57% of veterans compared to 31% of non-veterans indicating having completed high school or at least some post-secondary education. As such, it is not surprising that a smaller proportion of veterans participated in institutional education or employment initiatives (see Table 3).

Table A3 indicates that a higher proportion of Indigenous veterans were enrolled in correctional programming than non-Indigenous veterans (71% versus 59%), although they were less likely to be enrolled than Indigenous non-veterans (85%). Indigenous veterans were less likely to complete moderate intensity programming, but were comparable to non-Indigenous non-veterans for high intensity program completion. Their institutional employment was slightly

higher than non-Indigenous veterans (13% versus 9%), but comparable proportions participated in institutional education initiatives (26% versus 27%, Table A3, Appendix A).

Table 3

Correctional program, education, and employment information by self-reported veteran status

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran Men
	(N = 374)	(N = 14,471)
	% (n)	% (n)
Correctional Programs		
Enrolled in Correctional Programming	61 (229)	70 (10,101)
Completed Moderate Intensity Programming	58 (132)	58 (5,885)
Completed High Intensity Programming	13 (30)	16 (1,650)
Participated in Institutional Employment	10 (22)	14 (1,375)
Participated in Institutional Education	27 (62)	37 (3,734)

Post-Release Outcomes

Overall, 80% ($n = 298$) of veterans and 75% ($n = 10,816$) of non-veterans were released during the study period. On average, veteran offenders were older at release than non-veterans (45 years versus 38 years) and were more likely to be released from minimum security (58% versus 50%, respectively). Table 4 presents the indicators of post-release outcomes. Veteran offenders were more likely to be released on discretionary release, i.e. day or full parole, than non-veterans (63% versus 59%), and less likely to have a suspension of release (28% versus 35%) or a return to custody (21% versus 25%). Although both groups, on average, had their first suspension at 81 days of release, veteran offenders returned to custody slightly faster than non-veterans (see Table 4).

Table A4 (Appendix A) shows the post-release information for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. Indigenous veterans were least likely to be released on discretionary release (38% versus 42%-68%). Although Indigenous veterans were more likely than non-Indigenous veterans to have a suspension of release (47% versus 25%) or a return to custody (36% versus 18%), they were less likely than Indigenous non-veterans to experience these events. Indigenous veterans also had the least amount of time in the community before experiencing either event (see Table A4).

Table 4

Release type, suspension of release, and returns to custody by self-reported veteran status

Post-release Indicators	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran Men
	(N = 298)	(N = 10,816)
	% (n)	% (n)
Discretionary Release (day or full parole)	63 (188)	59 (6,327)
Suspension of Release	28 (84)	35 (3,756)
Breach of Conditions/ To Prevent Breach	70 (59)	70 (2,617)
Risk to Public Safety	30 (25)	30 (1,133)
Days to First Suspension <i>M (SD)</i>	81.3 (74.6)	80.9 (75.9)
Return to Custody	21 (62)	25 (2,730)
Return to Custody for New Offence	3 (8)	4 (432)
Days to Return to Custody <i>M (SD)</i>	205.4 (108.7)	226.1 (135.6)

Community employment and community urinalysis information is presented in Table 5. Fewer veteran offenders were employed during conditional release than non-veterans (55% versus 64%), however, more veterans were unemployed due to having other income sources or due to barriers that prevented them from working (19% versus 12%). Very few offenders in either group were unwilling to work (2% each), although a similar proportion of offenders did not have community employment information available (see Table 5). Among those employed, a similar proportion of veterans and non-veterans had full time jobs (76% versus 74%).

Community urinalysis testing results indicated that veteran offenders were less likely to test positive than non-veterans (22% versus 28%) and very few refused to provide urine samples

in the community (2% each).⁷ Among those with positive tests,⁸ marijuana was still identified most often for non-veterans (46%) followed by cocaine (33%) and other drugs (33%). For veteran offenders, other drugs were identified most often (41%), followed by cocaine (38%) and marijuana (34%). In the community, veteran offenders were less likely to test positive for opioids than non-veterans (9% versus 20%). Very few offenders in either group tested positive for benzodiazepines (3%-4%).

Table 5

Community employment and community urinalysis information by self-reported veteran status

Community supervision indicators	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran Men
	(N = 298)	(N = 10,816)
	% (n)	% (n)
Community Employment Status		
Employed	55 (164)	64 (6870)
No Employment: Other Income or Barriers to Working ^a	19 (55)	12 (1,340)
Searching for Employment	17 (50)	14 (1,573)
Unwilling to Work	2 (7)	2 (203)
No Employment Information	7 (22)	8 (830)
Among Employed, Type of Employment		
Full time employment	76 (125)	74 (5,101)
Part time employment	5 (9)	10 (680)
Both	18 (30)	16 (1,089)
Community Urinalysis		
Positive Tests	22 (32)	28 (1,788)

Note. ^aOther income/barriers includes retired, required program participation, primary caregiver in home, other legal sources of income, educational/vocational upgrading, volunteering, disability, cognitive or mental health issue, lack of opportunity for employment, transportation issues, skills shortage, educational deficit, lack of pertinent identification for employment. For veterans, other income accounted for 11% and barriers 8%. For non-veterans, other income accounted for 8% and other barriers 5%.

⁷ Due to small cell counts for refusals and the specific substance analysis, these data were not presented in the table.

⁸ Multiple substances could be found in one sample; therefore, the substance types found do not total 100%.

Table A5, Appendix A, presents the community employment and community urinalysis information by Indigenous ancestry. Indigenous veterans (36%) were less likely to be employed than Indigenous non-veterans (49%) or non-Indigenous veterans (58%). Compared to non-Indigenous veterans, Indigenous veterans were equally as likely to have other income or barriers to employment as non-Indigenous veterans (18%-19%), but were more likely to have these reasons for non-employment than Indigenous non-veterans (13%) or non-Indigenous non-veterans (12%). Over one-quarter of Indigenous veterans were searching for employment, which was almost double the proportion for non-Indigenous veterans, but comparable to Indigenous non-veterans (see Table A5). However, among those employed, comparable proportions across all four groups were employed full time (70%-76%).

With respect to community urinalysis, a greater proportion of Indigenous veterans tested positive (43%) or refused to provide a sample (11%) compared to the other groups (see Table A5).⁹ For Indigenous veterans, positive tests for marijuana (50%), other drugs (50%), and cocaine (25%) were most common. This was comparable to Indigenous non-veterans (47% marijuana, 36% other drugs, and 33% cocaine). Non-Indigenous veterans were most likely to test positive for cocaine (45%), followed by other drugs (35%) or marijuana (25%), while non-Indigenous non-veterans were most likely to have positive tests for marijuana (45%), followed by cocaine (42%) and other drugs (31%). Although opioids were detected more often among non-veterans (Indigenous: 21%, non-Indigenous: 19%), Indigenous veterans were three times as likely as non-Indigenous veterans to test positive for opioids (17% versus 5%, respectively).

⁹ Due to small cell counts for refusals and the specific substance analysis, these data were not presented in the table.

Discussion

This study examined the institutional behaviour and post-release success of veteran offenders compared to non-veteran offenders. Comparisons of veterans and non-veterans across Indigenous ancestry also demonstrated differences between Indigenous veterans and Indigenous non-veterans but also between Indigenous and non-Indigenous veterans.

Overall, veteran offenders had more stable institutional behaviour as evidenced by fewer disciplinary charges, institutional incidents, and positive random urinalysis tests than non-veterans. Although veteran offenders were less likely than non-veterans to have committed institutional incidents, they were comparable in the proportion of miscellaneous, property, and self-injurious behaviour/death related incidents. Miscellaneous incidents were most common for veterans while contraband and behavioural incidents were more common for non-veterans, indicating that veteran offenders are less likely to engage in violent incidents or those that greatly disrupt the functioning of the institution (e.g., assault, behavioural, or contraband related). Property and self-injurious behaviour/death related incidents were infrequent for both study groups, and all death related incidents among veterans were due to natural causes, likely due to their older age compared to non-veterans as a third were 50 years or older. Finally, although their institutional behaviour demonstrates positive institutional adjustment, veteran offenders were less likely to enroll in correctional programming or participate in education or employment initiatives while in custody. Veteran offenders were assessed as having fewer needs with respect to employment or education (32% compared to 51% of non-veterans) plus were assessed as lower static or criminogenic risk than non-veterans (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a), thereby being less likely to require these interventions while incarcerated. In addition, veterans had higher educational attainment and previous employment experience based on their service in the armed forces, and as mentioned were older, therefore likely making retraining less necessary than for the non-veteran group.

Among those under conditional release, veteran offenders had fewer suspensions of release and returns to custody (with or without an offence) than non-veterans. As previously mentioned, veterans had lower static risk or criminogenic risk as well as lower dynamic need and a higher reintegration potential than non-veterans. In addition, although fewer veterans were employed than non-veterans during release, among those employed, veterans were as likely as

non-veterans to have full-time employment. However, among unemployed offenders, veterans were more likely to have other income sources or barriers that prevented them from working. These differences may highlight the unique circumstances of the veteran offender subgroup, indicating a group that overall reintegrates well into society following release and a group that may have fewer employment needs post-release than non-veterans.

Institutional behaviour and post-release outcomes for Indigenous veterans indicated that they were more likely than the non-Indigenous counterparts (veterans or non-veterans) to have more problematic institutional behaviour as evidenced by more disciplinary charges, institutional incidents and positive urinalyses tests. Their institutional adjustment indicators, however, were more similar to Indigenous non-veterans, although they were less likely to be following an Indigenous healing plan. With respect to release outcomes, Indigenous veterans were more likely to be suspended than non-Indigenous veterans or non-veterans. Also, they were slightly less likely than Indigenous non-veterans to be granted discretionary release (day or full parole) or to participate in a Section 84 release (a release strategy whereby Indigenous communities support Indigenous offenders on release). They also were less likely to have a suspension of release but were comparable with respect to returns to custody (both with or without offending). Indigenous veterans also returned to custody quicker than Indigenous non-veterans and were less likely to have employment during release, often as a result of barriers to employment or an unwillingness to search for employment. Overall, these findings demonstrate that Indigenous veterans would benefit from additional supports both during incarceration and post-release to improve their correctional outcomes. It would also be of benefit to examine why Indigenous veterans are less likely than Indigenous non-veterans to participate in culturally specific interventions and services.

Veteran offenders account for about 2.5% to 3% of federal offenders compared to 2% of the general Canadian population (Derkzen & Wardrop, 2015; Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a; Statistics Canada 2019; VAC 2018). However, this group has unique characteristics. They are more likely than non-veterans to commit violent offences, particularly sex-related offences. Although not explored in this study, the higher proportion of sex related offending may be due to the pervasiveness of sexually inappropriate language, jokes, comments and unwelcome sexual touching in the CAF, which was identified in a 2015 review of sexual misconduct and harassment (Deschamps, 2015; Eichler, 2015). As well, the prevalence of sexual assault is higher

in the CAF regular forces and primary reserves than the general Canadian working population (Burczycka, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2016). Exploring whether veteran offenders in federal custody had experience with sexual incidents during their CAF service would be an area of further examination that may substantiate this premise.

Veteran offenders are more likely to have mental health issues, particularly Indigenous veterans (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a; 2020b). For non-Indigenous veterans, the increased mental health concerns was not associated with problematic behaviour in custody or during release. However, for Indigenous veterans, more support is necessary as their behaviour patterns are more problematic than non-Indigenous veterans, and their mental health needs are greater than Indigenous non-veterans. Future research would more fully explore the impact of their military service on federal veteran offenders' criminality and mental health concerns. In an unpublished thesis, DrummelSmith (2019) indicated that the 16 federal veteran offenders interviewed identified early life experiences, problematic post-service adjustment, and the impact of their service as contributing to their mental health issues. It would be important to more fully examine the factors contributing to mental health concerns among veteran offenders, particularly for Indigenous veterans, as their experiences may be unique from non-Indigenous veterans due to Indigenous Social History factors and other systemic barriers.

Physical health issues were not examined during this study due to a lack of available data. Veterans in the community are identified with greater health needs with respect to mobility issues (especially back problems), arthritis, obesity, and high blood pressure, particularly among more recent-era veterans (Van Til, et al., 2018). As one-third of federal veteran offenders are fifty years of age or older (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020a), service demands to address physical health concerns will rise in the upcoming years. In addition, research has shown that physical health concerns among veterans is associated with suicidal ideation and risk (Thompson, et al., 2014), therefore having an understanding of the physical health needs of veteran offenders, particularly their experience with traumatic brain injury, and the impact of these needs on veterans' mental health is necessary.

Veteran offenders have better institutional adjustment and post-release success than non-veterans. Although this study treated men veteran offenders as one group, it is important to consider other aspects of the veteran offender experience that may impact their correctional experience. For instance, exploring characteristics, mental health, institutional adjustment, and

post-release success by duration of service has shown that those with shorter periods of involvement in the armed forces have greater mental health concerns and more problematic institutional and post-release outcomes (Farrell MacDonald & Cram, 2020c). Examination of the types of services (combat, peace keeping, or other types of service), the branch of the armed forces (army, navy, air forces, reserves, etc.), how recent the service was (Van Til, et al., 2018), and the reason for discontinuation of service (honorable discharge, medical discharge, dishonorable discharge, etc.) may provide additional nuances to understand the needs of this population.

As with all studies, there are limitations to this research. There were no self-identified veterans from the Pacific region. Previously, about 1.6% of offenders who answer this question from the Pacific region indicated veteran status (Farrell, Gileno, & Grant, 2009), while VAC estimates about 14% of Canadian veterans are from British Columbia (VAC, 2018). Having more complete information from this region may affect the overall characteristics, institutional and post-release indicators examined. Second, due to the small number of women who indicated veteran status ($n = 11$), it was not possible to undertake an examination of this sub-population. Federal women offenders are very different from federal men offenders (Covington & Bloom, 2003; Savage, 2017); therefore, it would be beneficial once sufficient data is available concerning veteran women offenders to conduct specific research to understand their needs and experiences. Finally, although CoMHISS contains a question that allows the identification of veteran offenders, there is very little known about the service history or specific forces experience of these veterans. Extensive file review for the 374 federal men veterans indicated that their service was not uniformly reported in OMS. As of January 2018, there is a “Served in the Canadian Forces” flag. Examination of the available file information for offenders with this flag indicates that improvement has been made with respect to documenting offenders’ service history, however there is not a uniform structure to this information, and does not ensure that mental and physical health needs, or issues the offenders have stemming from their service experience, are being documented. Future research concerning veteran offenders will need to be discussed by the VAC-CSC working group in consultation with internal CSC partners.

Conclusions

Veteran offenders are a small sub-group within the federal offender population. Although they are more likely to report mental health concerns, they have more stable institutional

behaviour and greater post-release success than non-veteran offenders. However, Indigenous veterans would benefit from additional supports both during incarceration and post-release to improve their correctional outcomes. Finally, enhancing data capacity to examine the experiences of veteran offenders would provide on-going research opportunities and ensure that these offenders receive the support necessary to address physical and mental health impacts of their service.

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Appendix A: Sub-analysis by Indigenous and Non-Indigenous ancestry

Table A1

Disciplinary charges and random urinalysis information by self-reported veteran status for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 66)		Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 3,424)		Non-Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 308)		Non-Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 11,047)	
	% (n)		% (n)		% (n)		% (n)	
	Random Urinalysis							
Positive Tests	17	(9)	16	(440)	7	(17)	12	(999)
Disciplinary Charges								
Any Charges	61	(40)	60	(2,042)	32	(99)	42	(4,640)
Serious Charges	30	(20)	38	(1,284)	15	(46)	23	(2,509)
Minor Charges	55	(36)	48	(1,632)	27	(82)	34	(3,804)
Days to First Charge M (SD)	254.8	(231.0)	207.7	(184.7)	266.6	(251.3)	224.1	(195.7)

Table A2

Institutional incidents information by self-reported veteran status for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 66)	Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 3,424)	Non-Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 308)	Non-Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 11,047)
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Any Institutional Incident	70 (46)	63 (2,159)	41 (127)	49 (5,387)
Assault related	26 (17)	30 (1,034)	9 (27)	17 (1,862)
Behavioural	39 (26)	32 (1,100)	12 (37)	22 (2,470)
Contraband	33 (22)	39 (1,335)	17 (53)	26 (2,888)
Escapes	0 (0)	0.9 (30)	0 (0)	0.3 (36)
Miscellaneous	33 (22)	23 (775)	20 (63)	20 (2,212)
Property	8 (5)	5 (155)	2 (6)	3 (281)
Self-injurious Behaviour/ Death ^a	8 (5)	5 (170)	3 (10)	3 (298)

Note. ^aSelf-injurious behaviour includes suicide, attempted suicide, and self-harm.

Table A3

Correctional program, education, and employment information by self-reported veteran status for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

Indicator of Institutional Behaviour	Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-	Non-Indigenous
	Veteran Men	Non-Veteran	Indigenous	Non-Veteran
	(N = 66)	Men	Veteran Men	Men
		(N = 3,424)	(N = 308)	(N = 11,047)
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Correctional Programs				
Enrolled in Correctional Programming	71 (47)	85 (2,927)	59 (182)	65 (7,174)
Completed Moderate Intensity Programming	55 (26)	62 (1,826)	58 (106)	57 (4,059)
Completed High Intensity Programming	17 (8)	12 (352)	12 (22)	18 (1,298)
Participated in Institutional Employment	13 (6)	16 (476)	9 (16)	13 (899)
Participated in Institutional Education	26 (12)	39 (1,128)	27 (50)	36 (2,606)

Table A4

Release type, suspension of release, and returns to custody by self-reported veteran status for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

Post-release Indicators	Indigenous Veteran Men (<i>N</i> = 45)	Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (<i>N</i> = 2,361)	Non-Indigenous Veteran Men (<i>N</i> = 253)	Non-Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (<i>N</i> = 8,455)
	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)	% (<i>n</i>)
Discretionary Release (day or full parole)	38 (17)	42 (987)	68 (171)	63 (5,340)
Suspension of Release	47 (21)	54 (1,266)	25 (63)	29 (2,490)
Breach of Conditions	81 (17)	63 (801)	66 (42)	58 (1,456)
Risk to Public Safety	19 (#)	24 (297)	33 (21)	34 (836)
Days to First Suspension <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	62.3 (72.0)	68.6 (66.9)	87.6 (74.9)	87.1 (79.3)
Return to Custody	36 (16)	38 (906)	18 (46)	22 (1,824)
Days to Return to Custody <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	158.4 (50.5)	205.7 (120.7)	221.7 (118.8)	236.2 (141.3)

Note. # Number suppressed as less than 5.

Table A5

Community employment and community urinalysis information by self-reported veteran status for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders

Community Indicators	Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 45)	Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 2,361)	Non-Indigenous Veteran Men (N = 253)	Non-Indigenous Non-Veteran Men (N = 8,455)
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Community Employment Status				
Employed	35 (16)	49 (1,146)	58 (148)	68 (5,724)
No Employment due to				
Other Income or Barriers to Working ^a	18 (8)	13 (318)	19 (47)	12 (1,022)
Searching for Employment	27 (12)	25 (592)	15 (38)	11 (981)
Unwilling to Work/ No				
Employment Information	20 (9)	13 (305)	8 (20)	9 (728)
Among Employed, Type of Employment				
Full time employment	75 (12)	70 (798)	76 (113)	75 (4,303)
Part time employment	0 (0)	15 (168)	6 (9)	9 (512)
Both	25 (#)	15 (180)	18 (26)	16 (909)
Community Urinalysis				
Positive Tests	43 (12)	31 (510)	17 (20)	27 (1,278)

Note. ^aIndigenous veterans in this category did not have other sources of income – unemployment for this group was due to barriers to working. For Indigenous non-veterans 6% were unemployed due to barriers. Other income/barriers includes retired, required program participation, primary caregiver in home, other legal sources of income, educational/vocational upgrading, volunteering, disability, cognitive or mental health issue, lack of opportunity for employment, transportation issues, skills shortage, educational deficit, lack of pertinent identification for employment. # Number suppressed as less than 5.

Appendix B: Categorization of Institutional Incidents

Institutional Incident Study Category	Institutional Incident Sub-Type
Assault related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assault – all other • Assault – domestic • Assault on inmate • Assault on staff – fluids/waste • Assault on staff – physical • Assault on visitor • Attempted murder • Forcible confinement • Hostage taking • Inmate fight • Sexual assault
Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell extraction • Disciplinary problems • Disruptive behaviours • Major disturbance • Major disturbance – riot • Minor disturbance • Under the influence • Utter threats
Contraband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing in contraband • Found contraband • Found unauthorized item • Manufacturing (drugs) • Possession of contraband • Possession of unauthorized item • Receive/transport contraband • Receive/transport unauthorized item

Institutional Incident Study Category	Institutional Incident Sub-Type
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Escapes

- Escape from Section 81 facility
- Escape from CSC Escort
- Escape from medium or higher level
- Escape from minimum
- Fail to report
- Fail to return to Community Correctional Centre (CCC)
- Fail to return to Community Residential Facility (CRF)
- Walkaway from CCC
- Walkaway from CRF

Miscellaneous

- Accident
- Armed robbery
- Arrest offender
- Attracted significant media attention
- Government security policy breach
- Information/technology related
- Intelligence
- Intervention for medical purposes
- Major disruption
- Potential to attract media attention
- Protective custody request
- Relation to public health
- Section 127
- Section 128
- Section 53 search
- Security threat
- Threat risk assessment – visitor

Institutional Incident Study Category	Institutional Incident Sub-Type
Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to government property • Damage to personal property • Fire • Theft • Other
Self-injurious Behaviour/Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempted suicide • Hunger strike • Overdose interrupted • Self-inflicted injuries • Suspected overdose interrupted • Awaiting coroner's report • Death (natural causes, overdose, or unknown cause) • Murder of an inmate • Suicide