

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.



### Gender and Cultural Considerations in the Management of Offenders

Presentation to the 167<sup>th</sup> Training Course – UNAFEI  
Tokyo, Japan

## Overview of Presentation

- Gender and culture – why do they matter?
- Research on a gender-informed approaches
- Research on cultural issues
- Discussion

## Exercise – Gender and Culture Considerations

- Do gender and/or culture matter in terms of the management and reintegration of offenders?
- Why or why not?
- What does a gender-informed and/or culturally-informed approach to corrections look like?

## Gender and Culture – Why Do They Matter?

- Another look at the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model ...

## Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model (Andrews, Bonta and Hoge, 1990)

- **Responsivity Principle** – treatment services delivered in a style and mode that matches learning style and ability of the offender
- Two types of responsivity factors to be considered:
  - General
  - Specific

## General Responsivity

- Focuses on attributes of intervention that are **external** to the individual
- Posits that cognitive social learning interventions are the most effective way to teach people new behaviours regardless of the type of behaviour.
- Additionally, effective cognitive social learning strategies operate according to the following two principles:
  1. The Relationship Principle (establishing a warm, respectful and collaborative working alliance with the client optimizes effectiveness)
  2. The Structuring Principle (influence the direction of change towards the pro-social through appropriate modeling, reinforcement, problem-solving, etc.).

## Specific Responsivity

- Focuses on **internal** characteristics of the individual
- Treatment interventions need to consider personal strengths and socio-biological-personality factors. Interventions should be tailored to these factors, as they have the potential to facilitate or hinder treatment
- These characteristics include factors such as gender, ethnicity, cognitive functioning, literacy level and motivation to change

### Does Research Support the Need to Consider Specific Responsivity Factors Like Gender and Culture?

- Part I: Focus on Gender
- Part II: Focus on Culture





## Part I: Gender Considerations



### International Data Women in the Criminal Justice System

Penal Reform International notes that:

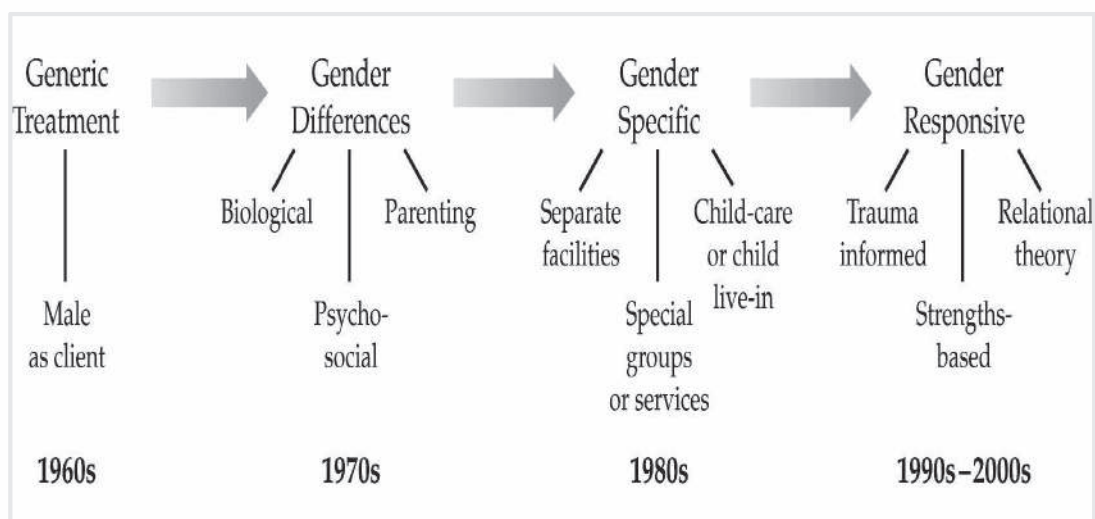
- World-wide, more than 700,000 women and girls are held in prison settings
- Offences committed by women are often closely linked to poverty
- According to the World Health Organization, 80% of women prisoners have an identifiable mental illness and are more likely to harm themselves or commit suicide than male prisoners
- Gender roles and cultural expectations in many parts of the world mean that women in prison face greater stigma than men
- Children are often the hidden victims of a parent's imprisonment.

[www.penalreform.org](http://www.penalreform.org)

## Research on Gender Issues

- Several authors have noted that existing paradigms for offenders are founded on male models of change and fail to consider arguments that women and men have different pathways to crime and different desistance patterns
- From this work, women-centered perspectives have emerged that advocate that correctional interventions for women offenders require a different approach

## Evolving Treatment Approaches



From: Stephanie S. Covington, Ph.D. *Implementing Gender-Responsive Interventions for Girls and Women* Adult and Juvenile Female Offenders Conference  
October 13, 2015, Session 30, Hartford, CT – Adapted from Grella, C.E. (2000)

## Research on Gender Issues

- Research has found evidence that a number of gender-responsive factors contribute to criminal behavior among women, including trauma.
- Other factors supported by research include:
  - family separation and community isolation
  - poor quality of life conditions
  - lack of secure, stable and legal employment
  - substance abuse

## Challenges in Conducting Research on Women Offenders

- Substantially fewer women involved in the criminal justice system than men
- As a result, studies on the characteristics of women offenders as well as the impact of interventions are hindered by factors such as low numbers and low base rates (e.g., of reoffending)
- Advanced statistical methods such as meta-analysis can assist in examining these issues by analyzing the results of multiple studies

## Research on Women Offenders

- A recent meta-analytic study by Gobeil, Blanchette and Stewart (2016) examined whether correctional interventions work for women offenders and in particular, whether gender-informed approaches are effective in reducing recidivism.

Gobeil, R., Blanchette, K. and Stewart, L. (2016) A Meta-Analytic Review of Correctional Interventions for Women Offenders: Gender-Neutral Versus Gender-Informed Approaches *CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEHAVIOR*, 2016, Vol. 43, No. 3, March 2016, 301–322.

## Results – Meta-Analysis (Gobeil, Blanchette & Stewart, 2016)

- Examined 37 studies and nearly 22,000 women offenders
- Found that women who participated in correctional interventions had 22% to 35% greater odds of community success than non-participants. Specifically, correctional interventions for women were at least as effective as the published rates for men.
- Gender-informed and gender-neutral interventions were equally effective; however, when analyses were limited to studies of higher methodological quality, gender-informed interventions were significantly more likely to be associated with reductions in recidivism.
- These findings support recent research indicating that women and girls are more likely to respond well to gender-informed approaches if their backgrounds and pathways to offending are associated with gendered issues.

## Research on Women involved in Security Threat Groups

- A 2012 study by CSC's Research Branch (Scott, 2012) found that, compared with non-affiliated women, gang-involved women:
  - had more extensive criminal histories, static risk and dynamic risk (needs), lower motivation and reintegration potential, and poor institutional adjustment indicated by involvement in institutional incidents and involuntary segregation.
  - At intake, were more likely to be rated as medium or maximum security.
  - Had both prior youth and adult convictions, and had previously served a sentence of up to 4 years.
  - Had specific needs in the areas of pro-criminal attitudes and associates
  - Were more likely to be involved in violent incidents and disruptive behaviour in the institution
  - Participated in more core correctional programs for violent offenders, substance abuse, education, living skills, and women's' programs than their non-gang involved counterparts

## Radicalized Women

- No women are currently incarcerated for a terrorist-related offence in CSC
- UNODC Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremists in Prisons (2016) notes that, although the role of women as violent extremists remains largely unexplored, research to date indicates that many of the factors that motivate men to become terrorists also motivate women.
- Additional motives for women becoming involved in extremism have also been suggested:
  - Vulnerable to being physically coerced or socially blackmailed, particularly in patriarchal societies
  - Influence or coercion by family members

## International Initiatives Related to Women Offenders

- United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (i.e., “The Bangkok Rules”)
- adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2010 to fill a long-standing lack of standards providing for the specific characteristics and needs of women offenders and prisoners.

## The Bangkok Rules

- Historically, prisons and prison regimes have been designed for the male prison population – from the architecture of prisons, to security procedures, to healthcare, family contact, work and training.
- The 70 Rules give guidance to policy makers, legislators, sentencing authorities and prison staff to reduce the imprisonment of women, and to meet the specific needs of women in case of imprisonment

## Areas covered by the Bangkok Rules Women in Correctional Settings

- Provision of appropriate healthcare
- Humane treatment
- Preservation of dignity during searches
- Protection from violence
- Provision for children affected by parental imprisonment

## Correctional Service Canada - Women Offenders

- Role of the Women Offender Sector
- History of women's federal corrections
- Current challenges and initiatives

## Women Offenders in CSC

- In the last ten years, the number of women admitted to federal jurisdiction increased 32.5%
- Overall, women continue to represent a small proportion of the total number of admissions in comparison to men (i.e., 7.6% in 2014-15)
- In 2016-2017 the average number of women under CSC's jurisdiction was 1,299 – 684 women in custody and 615 under supervision in the community

Sources: Corrections and Community Release Statistical Overview  
2015 – Public Safety Canada; CSC Corporate Business Plan 2017/18

## Role of the Women Offender Sector

**The Deputy Commissioner for Women (DCW) holds functional responsibility for women's corrections.**

### **The DCW and the Women Offender Sector:**

- establish national policies, programs and guidelines and give related advice, assistance and guidance;
- provide corporate expertise and strategic guidance on women offender issues;
- give input and guidance to other Sectors as they develop policies, plans and procedures that will impact women offenders;



## History of Women's Corrections in Canada: Pre-1934

- Early 19th century: Women offenders were housed in city or county jails until the opening of Kingston Penitentiary in Ontario.
- 1835: women offenders moved to Kingston Penitentiary where they were often housed alongside male offenders.
- 1913: a separate standalone building for women offenders was built within the walls of Kingston Penitentiary called Prison for Women.

## History of Women's Corrections: Prison for Women



- 1934: Prison for Women (P4W) was opened in Kingston, Ontario. Women Offenders from across Canada were incarcerated at this one location.
- 1938: The Royal Commission on the Penal System (Archambault Commission) was the first to call for its closure.

## History of Women's Corrections: Creating Choices

- 1989: CSC established the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, co-chaired by CSC and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, and comprised of a diverse mix of government representatives, correctional practitioners, community advocates, Aboriginal organizations, and women offenders.
- 1990: The Task Force released its groundbreaking report entitled *Creating Choices*, which – among other recommendations – advocated for the closure of P4W, the establishment of a Healing Lodge, and the establishment of regional facilities for women offenders.

## Creating Choices: A new vision for federal women's corrections

- Five overarching principles were identified in the report as the foundation for a correctional strategy for women offenders: Empowerment, Meaningful and Responsible Choices, Respect and Dignity, Supportive Environment, and Shared Responsibility.
- These 5 principles remain relevant today and continue to guide the development of policies, programs and interventions for women offenders.

## A vision for federal women's corrections

- It is recognized that women offenders require a gender based approach to address their unique pathways to crime, significant history of trauma, and gender differences that impact incarceration and community supervision. This approach is research based and is considered in all areas of federal women's corrections including:
  - Design of Institutions
  - Correctional Interventions
  - Operations
  - Human Resources
  - Policy

## The results: 5 New Institutions... (1995 – 2004)



Edmonton Institution for Women (Prairie)



Grand Valley Institution for Women (Ontario)



Joliette Institution (Quebec)



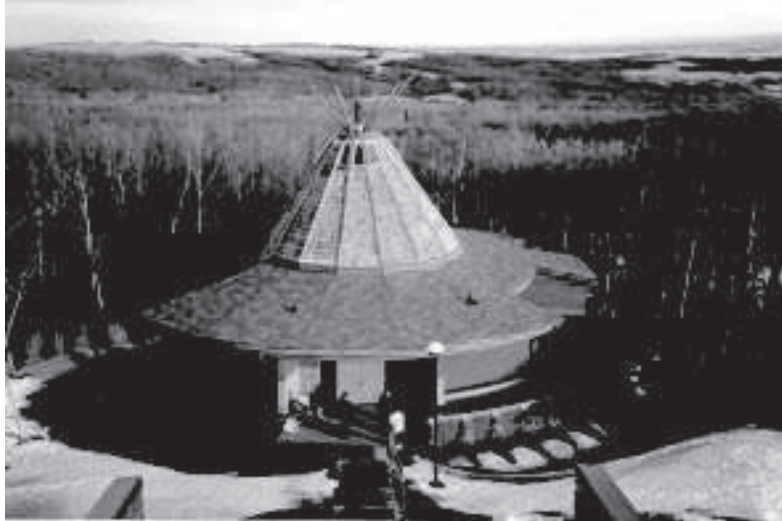
Nova Institution for Women (Atlantic)

**and...**



Fraser Valley Institution (Pacific)

## ...an Aboriginal Healing Lodge



Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge (Prairie)

## The transition to new units: Resulting challenges

- Creating Choices emphasized the importance of physical environments that were conducive to reintegration, highly interactive with the community and reflective of the generally low risk presented by women offenders.
- The move from P4W to the regional facilities however was not without challenges.
- Edmonton Institution for Women experienced significant difficulties during the transition period with a number of suicide attempts, instances of self-injury, assaults on staff, escapes, and ultimately the homicide of an inmate.
- This resulted in women classified as maximum-security being transferred out of the regional facilities until such time as a strategy could be developed that would ensure the safety

## Infrastructure at Women Offender Institutions

- House and apartment style accommodation for women classified as minimum security and house style accommodations for women classified as medium security
- Women are responsible for their own budgets, groceries, cleaning, cooking, laundry
- Mother-Child program available at each women offender facility
- Traditional cell accommodation in separate Secure Units for women classified as maximum security
- Structured Living Environments for minimum and medium security women with cognitive and/or mental health issues (also house style accommodation)

## Types of Interventions

- Correctional Programs (Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal)
- Mental Health
- Education
- Vocational and Employment
- Social Programs
- Other Programs and Interventions

## Correctional Programs

- Address multiple factors contributing to criminal behaviour
- Reduce re-offending by helping offenders make positive changes
- Must be relevant in dealing with needs of women offenders
- Are gender based, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive
- Research based

## Interventions

- CSC offers a comprehensive array of interventions to engage and motivate women offenders to make changes that lead to pro-social lifestyles.
- All interventions consider the relational nature of women offenders and the research based factors that increase the likelihood of returning to custody. These are targeted in a holistic manner.

## Social and Other Programs and Interventions

- Social Integration Program for Women
- Institutional Mother Child Program
- National Employment Skills Program
- Peer Mentor Program
- Therapeutic and Vocational
- Horse and K9 Programs

## Challenges

- Small number of women compared to the male offender population (higher costs, limited economies of scale)
- Population pressures and population growth
- Addressing chronic self-injury, mental health and behavioural issues
- Further addressing the needs of specific populations (maximum security women, and Aboriginal women, specifically those in maximum-security and Inuit women)

## Challenges (continued)

- Employment (institutional and community)
- Ensuring that we have the right number of beds in the right places for women in the community
- Building new partnerships and sustaining existing ones
- Capacity-building
- Female/male Primary Worker ratio

## Part II: Cultural Considerations



## Cultural Considerations

- Another specific responsivity factor that must be considered in assessment and interventions within correctional settings is ethnicity and culture

## Cultural Considerations – The Canadian Context

- CSC manages a culturally diverse offender population:
  - 58% of all offenders (in institutions and the community) are Caucasian
  - 23% are Indigenous
  - 19% are a visible minority

## Indigenous Offenders

- Indigenous peoples represent 4% of Canadian population, but approximately 25% of the federal offender population
- Due to cultural and social history factors these offenders require interventions that recognize and respect their unique cultural needs
- CSC addresses this through specific interventions for Indigenous offenders, including culturally-appropriate programs, specialized units and institutions (Pathways Units and Healing Lodges) and involvement of Elders
- Social history factors (e.g., the impact of colonization, residential schools) are also considered in all levels of decision-making related to Indigenous offenders

## Indigenous Offenders

- CSC research has demonstrated that culturally appropriate interventions for Indigenous offenders have a positive impact on reintegration results (i.e., return to custody)

Kunic, D. & Varis, D.D. (2009). *The Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP): Examining the effects of successful completion on post-release outcomes*. Ottawa ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

Stewart, L. A., & Wilton, G. (2014). *Outcomes of federal Aboriginal offenders in correctional programs: Follow-up from the ICPM evaluation* (Research Report R-328). Ottawa ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

## Ethnocultural Offenders

- As noted, close to 20% of offenders under CSC jurisdiction are a member of a visible minority group
- CSC has conducted research to better understand these offenders (Keown, L.A., Gobeil, R., Biro, S.M. & Ritchie, M.B. (2015) *Ethnocultural Offenders: An Initial Investigation of Social History Variables at Intake*. R-362, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada)
- The following slides explore the findings of this research

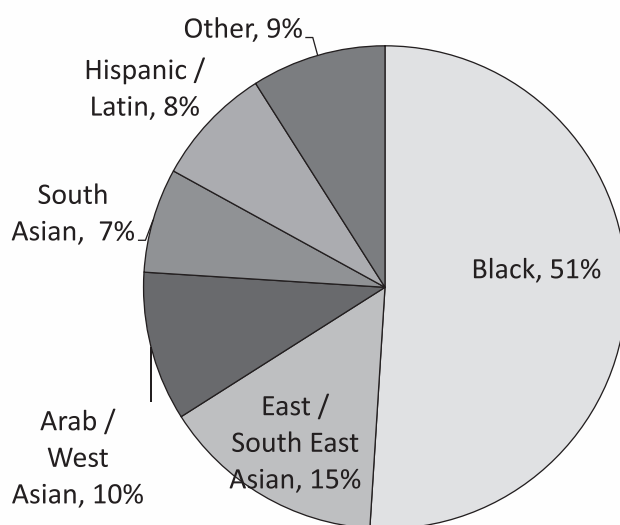
## Method - Social History

- Social history factors can be useful in contextualizing and understanding behaviours
- Though detailed social history information is not necessarily available for all offenders, existing information was examined

## What was Examined

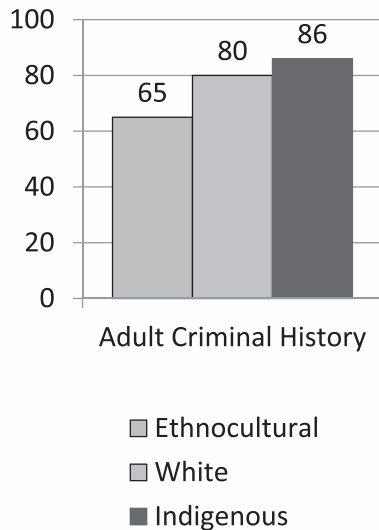
- The study utilized what was likely the best available source of information on offenders' lives and experiences prior to incarceration - CSC's Offender Intake Assessment (OIA). Domains examined included:
  - Family / marital
  - Personal / emotional
  - Substance use
  - Community functioning
  - Education / employment
  - Associates
  - Attitudes
- Criminal history was also examined

## Sample Characteristics



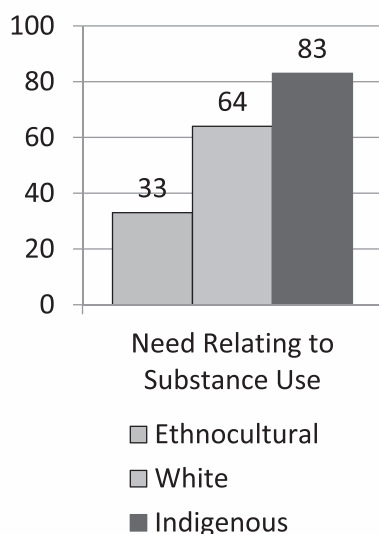
In total, data were available for 725 ethnocultural offenders. Half of these offenders were Black.

## Findings - Criminal History



- Ethnocultural offenders less frequently had previous adult convictions than did White and Indigenous offenders
- Rates of youth criminal history were similar for ethnocultural and White offenders

## Findings - Substance Use



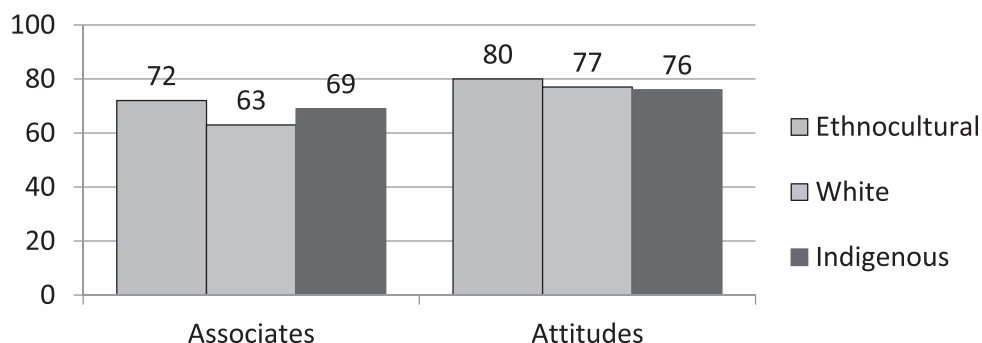
- Overall, rates of problematic substance use were much lower for ethnocultural offenders
- The lowest rates were found for Black offenders and for East / South East Asian offenders

## Findings - Substance Use, *cont.*

- Relative to White and Indigenous offenders, ethnocultural offenders **less** frequently reported:
  - Beginning drinking and taking drugs at young ages
  - Substance use that impacted relationships, employment, or contributed to conflicts with the law
  - Having alcohol or drug use as part of their offence cycle
  - Having friends, family members, or intimate partners with substance use problems

## Antisocial Attitudes and Associates

- Ethnocultural, White, and Aboriginal offenders were about equally likely to have needs relating to associates and to attitudes
- Among ethnocultural offenders, rates were lowest for East and South East Asian offenders

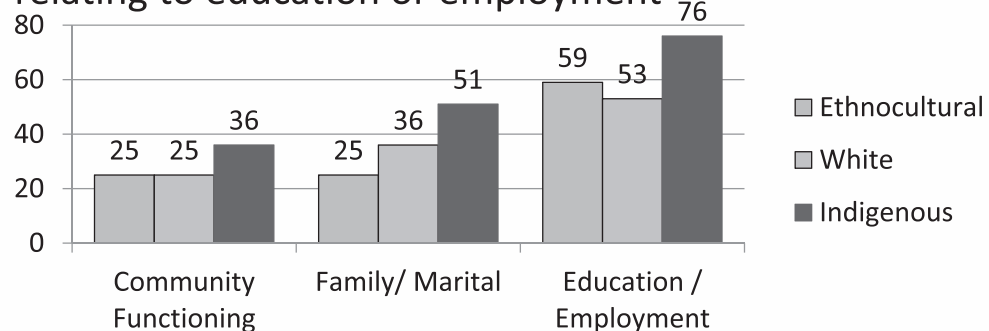


## Antisocial Attitudes and Associates, *cont.*

- Relative to White offenders, ethnocultural offenders **less** frequently reported:
  - Attitudes disrespectful of personal, commercial, or public property
- On the other hand, ethnocultural offenders were **more** likely than White offenders to:
  - Report attitudes supportive of instrumental or goal-oriented violence
  - Be suspected of being affiliated with a gang

## Family and Community Stability

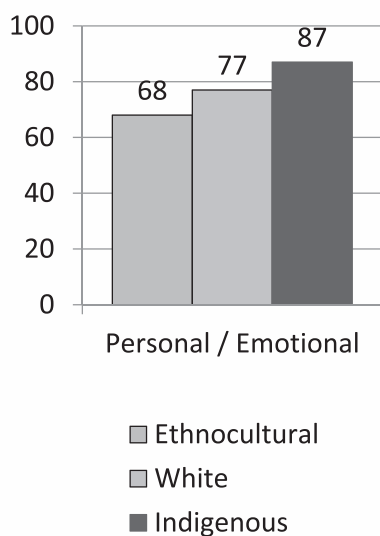
- Overall, a quarter of ethnocultural offenders had elevated need relating to community functioning and their family / marital situation
- Just over half of ethnocultural offenders had needs relating to education or employment



## Family and Community Stability, *cont.*

- Relative to White and Indigenous offenders, ethnocultural offenders **more** frequently demonstrated:
  - Housing stability
  - Financial stability
  - Pro-social support from friends, family, and intimate partners
- **Similar** proportions of ethnocultural and White offenders:
  - Had completed high school
  - Were employed at arrest and had job skills
- There was a great deal of variability among ethnocultural offenders in the percentage who resided in high-crime areas.

## Personal Characteristics



- Overall, about two-thirds of ethnocultural offenders had elevated needs in this domain
- The lowest rates were found for Arab, East, South East, and West Asian offenders



## Personal Characteristics, *cont.*

- Relative to White offenders, ethnocultural offenders were **less** frequently assessed as:
    - Impulsive
    - Having difficulty coping with stress
    - Having difficulty solving interpersonal problems
    - Giving up easily when challenged
  - **Similar** proportions of ethnocultural and White offenders were identified as:
    - Displaying narrow and rigid thinking
    - Being able to link actions to consequences
- 

## Contribution and Interpretation

- This study provided a snapshot of the current ethnocultural offender population in federal corrections in Canada, which added to existing knowledge and could act as a baseline to allow detection of trends over time
- Overall, ethnocultural offenders differed from their White and Indigenous counterparts in many ways; that said, it is important to recall that there is as much variability **within** the ethnocultural population as across groups

## The Importance of Situating Findings

- Aggregate-level descriptions are helpful, in that they can assist in developing cultural competency and allocating resources
- However, moving beyond description to understanding how to incorporate these findings in case management requires:
  - Consideration of each offender's unique background and social history
  - Examination of why certain factors may be present
- Important to consider each offender and each case management decision on a case-by-case basis

## Questions and Discussion

### **For more information:**

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