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Risk Factors for Homelessness Among Recently Released Offenders

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The current study examined characteristics related to homelessness among released offenders to improve housing services for this group. Forty-one incarcerated Canadian prisoners were interviewed approximately 3 months prior to release about their former and anticipated accommodations. Homelessness prior to incarceration was positively related to violent institutional behavior, violence risk level, and criminogenic needs but not recidivism. Stable housing prior to incarceration was positively related to greater community support. Recommendations include creating more community and institutional housing programs for offenders more likely to experience housing difficulties in the community.

Obtaining stable housing is an important step in any prisoner's successful reintegration back into the community. Appropriate accommodation has been cited by offenders and correctional service professionals as one of six critical domains for successful offender reintegration (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & McPherson, 2004). Therefore, it is not surprising to find a cyclical relationship between housing and prison. Being homeless increases the likelihood of being incarcerated, although imprisonment increases the likelihood of homelessness when released and the length of time that homeless

people spend in shelters (Metraux & Culhane, 2006). More specifically, offenders who are released without established accommodation have been found to be three times more likely to reoffend than those who have kept their accommodation (Banks & Fairhead, 1976).

Individuals convicted of sex offences, in particular, often face housing restrictions due to residence laws that severely limit housing options (Zandbergen & Hart, 2006). For example, housing restrictions have forced offenders to move out of their current residences and prevented them from living with supportive family members and finding affordable housing (Levenson & Cotter, 2005). Furthermore, Levenson and Hern (2007) found that many individuals convicted of sex offences were unable to return to their homes after being released or had a landlord refuse to rent to them. As a result, individuals convicted of sex offences face increased isolation, financial hardship, and emotional stress, all of which can then lead to decreased personal stability and reoffending (Levenson & Cotter, 2005). For example, in a study of community reintegration planning for individuals convicted of child molestation, Willis and Grace (2008) found that lack of appropriate accommodation was the most strongly linked factor that was related to sexual recidivism.

Homelessness in itself may increase risk to reoffend as it has been linked to a criminal lifestyle. Baron and Kennedy (1998) found that serious street (i.e., homeless) youth are immersed in a lifestyle of crime, drugs, and criminal peers. In addition, long-term homelessness has been found to increase risk for violence on the street (Baron & Hartnagel, 1998) and many serious chronic offenders are drawn from the street youth population (Baron, 1995). Consequently, accommodation, or lack thereof, is included in commonly used risk assessment tools such as the Level of Supervision Inventory—Revised (LSI-R; Andrews & Bonta, 1995).

Offenders represent an important subgroup of the homeless population. Many of them face a multitude of challenges, such as mental health and substance abuse issues, which prevent them from obtaining and maintaining stable housing. As a result, stable housing is important for individuals with substance abuse issues and mental disorders as they require additional support and services due to their increased needs (Somers, Druckers, Frankish, & Rush, 2007). Evidence suggests supportive housing is effective for rehabilitating these individuals. Proper housing has been found to create a safer society and housing the homeless has been found to create financial savings in criminal justice and correctional services (Eberle, Kraus, Pomeroy, & Hulchanski, 2001). In addition, offenders serving longer sentences, such as federal offenders in Canada, all of whom are sentenced to at least two years, are likely to face greater challenges obtaining stable housing than offenders serving shorter sentences of less than two years. Longer time away from the community is likely to result in additional difficulty obtaining stable housing for reasons that include the loss of past relationships and support.

Many housing initiatives focus on increasing affordable housing (e.g., Canada's Affordable Housing Initiative); however, few focus on specific factors that lead to homelessness and the longer-term solutions that such research might generate. Identifying the characteristics of offenders who become homeless can aid in addressing the root causes of their homelessness. Many people who become homeless face a multitude of problems aside from financial issues that prevent them from obtaining stable housing. For example, many offenders who are released into the community not only experience poverty, but also emotional instability, difficulty finding jobs, mental illness, and a lack of social support (Petersilia, 2001). Nonetheless, the research literature on housing issues for ex-offenders remains minimal in spite of the fact that homelessness has been linked to criminality and many offenders who are released from prison are at risk of being homeless (Lindelius & Salum, 1976).

A recent study by the John Howard Society of Toronto (2010) was conducted on 363 interviews with adult men who spent a minimum of five consecutive nights in jails in a major Canadian city and who were within days of scheduled release. The report documented prisoners' housing plans on discharge, as well as their immediate and anticipated service needs in the months after release. Interviews revealed that 23% of prisoners were homeless prior to being incarcerated. This included those living in shelters and living with friends without paying rent. The prisoners' housing plans upon release indicated that their rate of homelessness would probably double as 44.6% either did not know where they were going to live when released or were going to a homeless shelter or somewhere that would not be considered adequate shelter.

Furthermore, homeless prisoners were found to be older offenders, many of whom had severe health impairments. Many homeless prisoners relied on income support programs that they lost while in jail and would have to reapply for when released (John Howard Society, 2010). Not surprisingly, homeless prisoners requested more types of services to deal with community reentry than housed prisoners.

Female offenders also face a number of housing challenges. Many women who repeatedly go to jail are being released without adequate housing, income, or connections to community services (Lasovich, 1996). Furthermore, Schram, Koons-Witt, Williams, and McShane (2006) found that 35% of women released on parole in a western U.S. state had unstable living arrangements upon release. They concluded that accommodation issues did not receive sufficient attention prior to women's release from custody.

Although the previously described studies offer a glimpse of the issues pertaining to homelessness among released prisoners, little research has been conducted on the general and criminal characteristics of offenders that may be related to their homelessness. By identifying specific characteristics of offenders that are related to homelessness, those who are at high risk for

being homeless upon their pending release from custody may be identified. Then they may be earmarked for more support and services prior to their release, including plans for accommodation that are sensitive to their personal characteristics and needs. In this manner, the identification of characteristics of individuals who are high risk for homelessness may also aid in preventing homelessness and providing long-term solutions to the housing difficulties of federally released offenders.

The current investigation surveyed a sample of federal inmates from the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) in a central Canadian province (Saskatchewan) who were earmarked for release within 3 months about their housing situations prior to incarceration and their housing plans upon release. Police and corrections records were also examined to explore any possible relationship between homelessness and recidivism. This exploratory study was designed to identify some of the housing issues that relatively long-term offenders face and to derive possible methods of addressing them.

METHOD

Participants

Approximately 200 to 250 federal offenders are released to the community somewhere in the province of Saskatchewan every year. A target sample of 100 federal offenders to be released in the province during the data collection period (a span of 6 months) was identified for potential inclusion in the study. Forty-one of these identified inmates (36 male and 5 female) participated in the study. The remainder of the identified potential participants were excluded for the following reasons. Thirty-seven offenders released from Saskatchewan institutions relocated to other provinces. Thirty-two offenders were not contacted by their parole officer, which was part of the approved research protocol, or were contacted after the inmate was already released. Fifteen offenders declined to participate. Finally, seven women offenders were excluded because approval to include women in the study was not granted by CSC until after they had already been released from custody.

Procedure

A list of offenders being released from federal correctional facilities in Saskatchewan during the six-month study period in 2009 was obtained from the CSC's Offender Management System (OMS). Attempts were made to contact all offenders being released from federal correctional institutions in Saskatchewan to participate in the study through their parole officers during

the time of data collection. If the potential participants were interested in learning more about the study, their names were forwarded to the research team. One of the researchers then met with the potential participants at their institution to review the study and obtain consent. If the prisoner agreed to participate, the interview commenced. Participants were interviewed within 3 months prior to their release to the community to obtain offender descriptive information and to ascertain their housing situation prior to incarceration and housing plans upon release. One of the researchers conducted all of the interviews, which took place in five federal institutions in Saskatchewan, two of which were minimum security, one was medium security, and two were multiple security levels.

The researchers also attempted to maintain contact with the participants through their parole officers to conduct postrelease interviews approximately 2 months after their release from custody to determine their housing situations in the community. However, this procedure proved to be quite ineffective with offenders. Some offenders declined their community interview, whereas others had lost contact with their parole officers or were reincarcerated. In the end, only 11 (26.8%) postrelease interviews were conducted, a number deemed too few for further quantitative analysis.

Data were collected from criminal case files and interviews with inmates residing in Saskatchewan federal correctional facilities. With the permission of CSC, the OMS database was searched to obtain data on the criminal histories, demographics and other background characteristics of the sample. Recidivism data were collected from OMS and Canadian Police Information Centre records, which constitute a national offender information system that is maintained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The average follow-up time was 7 months from the time of an offender's release from custody.

Materials

CRIMINAL CASE FILE REVIEW

Data was collected from criminal records and case files stored on the OMS. The information obtained from criminal records and case files included prior criminal history, information relevant to release, parole officer reports, some demographic and descriptive information, and postrelease recidivism information. The parole officer reports documented parolees' progress and included information about criminal attitude, impulsive behavior, program participation, progress made on criminogenic risk factors,[1] motivation and

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[1]Criminogenic risk factors are dynamic or changeable predictors of criminal behavior, also known as dynamic risk factors or criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). The major risk/need factors are history of antisocial behavior, antisocial personality pattern, antisocial cognition, antisocial associates, family/marital circumstances, school/work, leisure/recreation, and substance abuse.

insight. The parole officer reports also included assessments of community factors, such as reintegration potential at or just before release and an assessment of the release destination. An existing coding sheet was used to record the parole officer reports on the previously mentioned items. Higher scores indicated that an item was present or that a negative assessment was submitted. For example, in the item, "Parole Officers' Assessment of Criminal Attitude," a score of 0 would indicate "the offender consistently displays a prosocial attitude" and a score of 1 would indicate "the offender has a well-entrenched criminal attitude."

OFFENDER INTERVIEW

A structured interview protocol was developed to guide the interviews, which took approximately 30 min to complete. The interview schedule consisted of a list of questions which asked the inmates to describe their housing situation prior to their last offence and whether they were satisfied with their prior housing situation. Participants were also asked to describe their housing plans upon release, how satisfied they were with their release plans, and whether they had any difficulties planning a place to live. They were also invited to list any community support or services they thought were needed to help ex-offenders obtain stable housing.

Outcome Measures

The current investigation included two outcome measures. As noted previously, one was recidivism, whereas the second one was a measure of homelessness. *Recidivists* were defined as those whose release provisions (typically statutory release) were suspended and those who received a new charge or conviction at any time during the follow-up period of an average of 7 months postrelease.

Generally, there are three kinds of definitions of homelessness: the literal definition, the subjectivist definition, and the cultural definition. The present study used a cultural definition of homelessness that identifies three segments of the homeless population (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001). The primary homeless are people without conventional accommodation and are "living on the streets, in deserted buildings, in cars, under bridges, and in improvised dwellings" (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001, p. 39). The secondary homeless are "people moving between various forms of temporary shelter, including friends, relatives, emergency accommodation and boarding houses" (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001, p. 39). The tertiary homeless are "people living in single rooms in private boarding houses on a long-term basis—without their own bathroom, kitchen or security of tenure. They are homeless because their accommodation does not have the characteristics identified in the minimum community standard" (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001,

p. 39). Participants categorized as "not homeless" did not fit any of the above categories and were deemed to have a stable home. Our homelessness measure was defined as follows: 0 = not homeless, 1 = tertiary homelessness, 2 = secondary homelessness, and 3 = primary homelessness.

Data Analysis

A number of descriptive statistics were generated to describe the overall sample including their housing status prior to incarceration and their anticipated housing status upon their release. Several statistical analyses were conducted to determine what characteristics were associated with homelessness in federal offenders and to assess group differences. More specifically, when the number of participants being compared were large enough, t-tests were conducted to compare groups with interval data and chi-square analyses were used to compare groups with nominal/ordinal data. Correlational analyses were conducted to determine whether specific offender characteristics were related to homelessness prior to incarceration and expected homelessness upon release. A 2×2 mixed-design ANOVA was used to compare recidivists and nonrecidivists on their degree of homelessness both before and after their incarceration. When sample sizes were less than the generally accepted minimum number of participants for adequate power in statistical analyses, only frequency and percentages are provided. For example, t-tests require a cell size of no lower than 7 per cell for adequate power and chi-square analyses require at least a total of 20 participants with no cells smaller than 5 (Wilson-VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007). Correlations typically require a minimum sample of 30 participants (Chen & Popovich, 2002).

RESULTS

Sample Description

The 41 participants were on average 34.78 ($SD = 10.99$) years of age and ranged from 20 to 70. More than half of the participants ($n = 23$; 56.1%), were Aboriginal (i.e., Native-Canadians), while 17 (41.5%) were Caucasian, and 1 (2.4%) was Southeast Asian. Approximately half ($n = 20$; 48.8%) of the participants were released from a minimum security institution, 15 (36.6%) were released from a medium security institution, and 6 (14.6%) were released from a maximum security institution. The majority of participants ($n = 32$; 84.2%) were released on their statutory release date or after two-thirds of their sentence was completed, whereas three (7.9%) were released on day parole and three (7.9%) were released at the end of their sentence (warrants expiry).

Participants had an average of 31 nonviolent convictions, five violent nonsexual convictions, and 0.2 sex offence convictions. Seven (17.1%) of the

participants were gang members. A majority of the participants ($n = 29$; 71%) had at least one violent conviction and five (12.2%) had at least one sex offence conviction. Substance abuse was a risk factor for 35 (85.4%) of the participants. Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith (2006) identified substance abuse as one of eight major offender risk/need factors.

Three participants (7.3%) had a mental disorder, eight (19.5%) had a possible mental disorder (there were behavioural indicators of a mental disorder but no formal diagnosis on record), 23 (56.1%) did not have a mental disorder and there was no information on mental status in the case files for seven (17.1%) of the participants.

Past and Anticipated Accommodation

Prior to conducting the main analyses, a description of the participants' housing situation prior to their incarceration and their expected living situation at release was generated. Where numbers allow, statistical analyses were conducted to determine if there were any differences between participants' housing status prior to incarceration and their housing plans upon release. Table 1 lists the number of participants living in urban and rural areas and their place of residence prior to their incarceration and their expected residence upon release. Urban areas included nine cities in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Rural locations included towns, villages, reservations, farms, and isolated country homes.

More offenders expected to live in urban areas after release (78.0%) than did prior to incarceration (62.5%), χ^2 (1, $N = 40$) = 4.215, $p = .04$. In general, the type of accommodation shifted from living in houses, apartments,

TABLE 1 Type of Geographic Setting and Type of Offenders' Residence Prior to Incarceration and Planned Upon Release

	Prior to incarceration	Plan when released
	n (%)	*n* (%)
Geographic setting		
Urban*	25 (62.5%)	32 (78.0%)
Rural	15 (37.5%)	9 (22.0%)
Total	40 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)
Type of accommodation		
House	25 (61.0%)	18 (43.9%)
Apartment/suite/condo	11 (26.8%)	7 (17.1%)
Homeless	3 (7.3%)	1 (2.4%)
Other	2 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Halfway house/shelter	0 (0.0%)	15 (36.6%)
Total	41 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)

Note. One participant did not state what geographic setting he/she was living in prior to incarceration.
*$p < .05$.

TABLE 2 Homelessness Status Prior to Incarceration and Expected Homelessness Status Upon Release

Type of homelessness (score)	Homelessness prior to incarceration n (%)	Expected homelessness upon release n (%)
Primary homeless (3)	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.4%)
Secondary homeless (2)	10 (24.4%)	27 (65.9%)
Tertiary homeless (1)	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.3%)
Not homeless (0)	29 (70.7%)	10 (24.4%)
Mean score (*SD*)*	0.63 (1.02)	1.46 (.90)
Total	41 (100.0%)	41 (100.0%)

*$p < .05$.

and condominiums to planning to live in halfway houses or shelters (0.0% to 36.6%) after incarceration. However, the number of participants was not large enough to conduct a meaningful statistical analysis on the specific types of accommodation.

Participants were asked whether they rented or owned their mode of accommodation prior to incarceration.[2] There were few home owners in the sample ($n = 4$; 11.1%) prior to incarceration. The majority were renters ($n = 22$; 61.1%), one-quarter ($n = 9$) resided with friends or family at no cost, and 2.8% ($n = 1$) paid rent occasionally to friends or family.

Homelessness

Table 2 lists the number and percentage of participants in each category of homelessness prior to incarceration and who were expected to be in each category upon their release from custody based on their interview accounts shortly before their release. Prior to incarceration 70.7% of participants were not homeless. Upon release only 24.4% of the participants expected not to be homeless. Prior to incarceration, 24.4% of the participants had secondary homeless status, whereas 65.9% expected to be in a secondary homeless situation upon their release. The secondary homelessness category was further analyzed to determine where these participants planned to live when released. Nine (33.3%) of these participants planned to go to a halfway house, eight (29.6%) planned to live with their parents, three (11.1%) planned to live with siblings, two (7.4%) planned to go to a homeless shelter, two (7.4%) planned to live with their children, one (3.7%) planned to live with a friend, one (3.7%) planned to live with a girlfriend, and one (3.7%) planned to live with his grandfather.

The mean score of the homelessness measure prior to incarceration was 0.63 indicating that offenders' most common housing scenario was

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[2]Responses were missing for two participants and were not applicable for the three participants who were homeless.

somewhere between tertiary homelessness and not homeless. The mean score of expected homelessness upon release was 1.46 indicating that upon release offenders were expecting to be somewhere between secondary homeless and tertiary homeless. The mean expected homelessness score upon release was significantly higher than the mean score of actual homelessness prior to incarceration, paired $t(40) = -4.58$, $p < .001$.

Characteristics Related to Homelessness

The homelessness measure (prior to incarceration and anticipated status upon release) was correlated with a number of demographic and offender background characteristics to determine whether past and anticipated homelessness was related to any of the descriptive legal and demographic characteristics that were obtained from offender files (see Table 3). The degree of homelessness prior to incarceration was related to a number of parole officer ratings of offenders. These included parole officers' assessments of violent institutional behavior, $r(41) = .413$, $p = .007$, the assessment of offenders' violent risk level, $r(36) = .342$, $p = .041$, and the number of identified criminogenic needs of the offender that have yet to be addressed, $r(41) = .469$, $p = .002$. Understandably, homelessness prior to incarceration was negatively related to the amount of community support, $r(36) = -.405$, $p = .014$.

Although being convicted of a sex offence was not correlated with pre-incarceration homelessness, $r(41) = .061$, *ns*, individuals convicted of a sex offence expected a significantly greater degree of homelessness upon release, $r(41) = .310$, $p = .049$. Although Aboriginal offenders did not anticipate a greater degree of homelessness upon their release than non-Aboriginal offenders, offenders who participated in Aboriginal programming did anticipate a greater degree of homelessness than those who did not participate in such programming, $r(41) = .367$, $p = .018$. A review of the interviews indicated that those involved in Aboriginal programming expected to stay with family members, go to a halfway house, or go to a homeless shelter upon release. Many measures were not related to homelessness. For example, substance abuse issues were not related to homelessness prior to incarceration, $r(41) = .124$, *ns*, or expected homelessness upon release, $r(41) = -.095$, *ns*.

Recidivism

The average follow-up time, which was the period between participants' release date and when their files were examined for recidivism, was 209.82 days ($SD = 71.17$; range = 7–278 days), or approximately 7 months.[3] Nineteen

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[3]Unexpectedly, three participants were not released into the community between the time of the initial interview and the collection of recidivism data and thus were excluded from this calculation and any analyses involving recidivism.

TABLE 3 Correlations between Offender Characteristics and Homelessness Status Prior to Incarceration and Anticipated Homelessness Status upon Release

Offender characteristics	Homelessness prior to incarceration	Expected homelessness upon release
Age	−.130	−.192
Number of prior escapes	.048	−.085
Number unlawfully at large	−.035	−.248
Number of revocations	.151	−.129
Number of breaches of probation	−.196	.063
Number of breaches of conditional release	−.197	−.133
Number of prior violent nonsexual convictions	.035	−.182
Number of prior sex offence convictions	.051	.292
P.O. assessment of criminal attitude	.178	−.189
Security level at release institution	.131	−.096
P.O. assessment of violent institutional behavior	.413**	.181
Substance abuse a risk factor[a]	.124	−.095
P.O. assessment of impulsive behavior	.401	−.245
P.O. assessment of general risk level	.065	−.142
P.O. assessment of violent risk level	.342*	.099
Number of minor institutional charges	.177	−.043
Number of major institutional charges	.032	−.117
P.O. assessment of program participation	.079	.143
Number of considerable needs identified	.469**	.083
Number of required programs completed	.171	.065
Number of awareness/other programs completed	.140	−.012
Number of education/employment programs completed	.206	−.019
P.O. assessment of progress on criminogenic factors	.095	.232
P.O. assessment of motivation	−.254	−.051
P.O. assessment of insight	−.185	.175
P.O. assessment of compliance before release	−.082	.111
P.O. assessment of pre-release reintegration potential	−.287	.152
P.O. assessment of unsuitable release destination[b]	.021	−.051
P.O. assessment of community support[c]	−.405*	.017
Gang member[a]	.229	.128
Convicted of sex offences[a]	.061	.310*
Aboriginal programming	.056	.367*

Note. P.O. = Parole Officer.
[a]0 = no; 1 = yes;
[b]Responses to the question were recoded as "Suitable" (0) and "Unsuitable" (1) for analysis;
[c]Responses to the question were recoded as "Inadequate/Not Present" (0) and "Adequate/Present" (1) for analysis.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

of 38 offenders (50%) had their release conditions suspended during the follow-up period and another two (5.3%) had new charges or convictions during the follow-up period, for an overall recidivism rate of 55.3%.

Analyses were also conducted to determine whether recidivism was associated with homelessness. Recidivism was not significantly correlated with the participants' level of homelessness prior to incarceration,
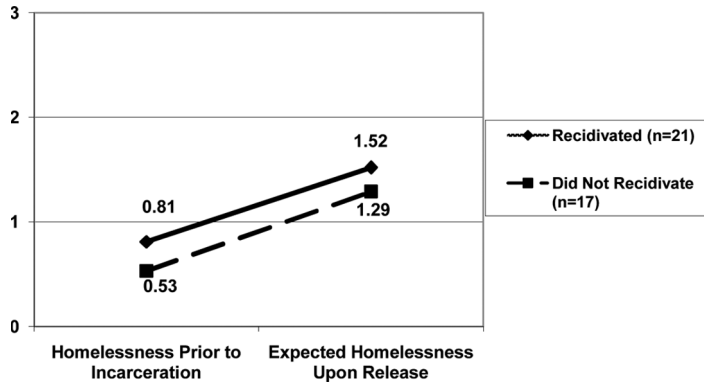
FIGURE 1 Average Scores on Homelessness (0 = not homeless; 1 = tertiary homeless; 2 = secondary homeless; 3 = primary homeless) prior to incarceration and expected homelessness upon release between recidivists and nonrecidivists.

$r(38) = .135$, $p = .418$, or expected homelessness upon release, $r(38) = .126$, $p = .451$. Similarly, those who recidivated and those who did not recidivate did not differ on their homelessness score prior to incarceration (.81 vs. .53), $t(36) = -.820$, $p = .418$, or on their expected homelessness following their release (1.52 vs. 1.29), $t(29.779) = -.741$, $p = .464$, although the mean scores were in the expected direction. Moreover, when homelessness was examined in a 2×2 mixed-design ANOVA with recidivism (yes vs. no) and time of homelessness score (prior to incarceration vs. expected upon release) as the independent variables, the interaction between recidivism and time of homelessness assessment was not significant, $F(1, 36) = .017$, $p = .896$ (see Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated past and anticipated homelessness in relation some legal and demographic characteristics of a group of Canadian federal offenders who were about to be released from custody. Offenders' housing status prior to their incarceration was compared to their expected housing plans upon release. The finding that 29% of the sample was living in less than satisfactory accommodations at the time of their offence is noteworthy in itself. It is comparable to a study by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) in the United Kingdom which reported that 32% of offenders were homeless directly prior to their imprisonment. These rates are higher than that found in a study of offenders in provincial jails in Toronto, Ontario where 22.9% were homeless prior to their incarceration (John Howard Society, 2010).

   The finding that the Canadian rate ballooned to an anticipated rate of 75% upon release is dramatic. It was largely, although not entirely, due to

planned accommodation in half-way houses. Previous studies have also found that imprisonment increased the likelihood of homelessness (e.g., Metraux & Culhane, 2006). In particular, lack of friend or family support as a result of incarceration may be especially detrimental to the housing situations of released offenders resulting in living in homeless shelters or the streets. The possibility that incarceration contributes to the destabilization of offenders' accommodation in the community must be considered.

Urbanization of offenders, at least those in a largely rural jurisdiction, may be another consequence of incarceration as the number of offenders who expected to live in urban areas increased after release. There are several reasons why offenders may plan to move to urban areas after release. For example, compared to rural areas, urban areas provide more employment opportunities, higher paying jobs, affordable housing, anonymity, and substance abuse and mental health treatment and services (Wodahl, 2006), Furthermore, because rural areas have relatively small population sizes, rural residents tend to know many of its residents. As a result, a returning offender may find it difficult to reintegrate into a community where everyone is aware of his or her previous criminal activities (Wodahl, 2006). Rural communities have been particularly unlikely to accept violent and dangerous sex offenders back into their population (Saulis, Fiddler, & Howse, 2000).

Other important findings from this study pertain to offender characteristics that were found to be related to homelessness. For example, the extent of an offender's homelessness at the time of the current offence was related to the number of criminogenic needs identified by his or her parole officer. Other correlations with violent institutional behavior and rated risk for violence support the notation that offenders who were homeless at the time of their admission to prison are high risk and therefore deserve attention, preferably with empirically supported interventions, such as those based on the principles of risk, need, and responsivity (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990). Conversely, those who had more stable housing were also more likely to have greater community support.

One reason why criminogenic needs, violent institutional behavior, rated risk for violence and community supports were not correlated with expected homelessness may be because offenders had unrealistic expectations about their housing situations upon release or that their housing plans had changed after they were released. Future research should strive for a larger community follow-up sample and better tracking methods to determine actual homelessness upon release. Past research looking at homelessness among offenders has not looked at how violence and greater criminogenic needs are related to homelessness. The current research found that the violent behavior and greater needs may be factors related to homelessness prior to incarceration. However, it is uncertain whether violence and greater needs was a cause or result of homelessness. However, the study does provide some evidence that offenders with greater needs are at risk for

homelessness. In addition, establishing community support may be an important factor in housing stability, but it may be more difficult to attain for violent offenders and those with greater needs.

Although being an individual convicted of a sex offence was not related to past homelessness status, it was related to anticipated homelessness upon release. Clearly, individuals convicted of sex offences have lost, or at least perceive that they have lost, whatever community support they enjoyed prior to their current incarceration. They expected to have more problems finding housing upon release, either because of past or current sexual offences. This result does not come as a surprise as many residences do not accept offenders with a history of sex offences (Levenson & Cotter, 2005).

Unexpectedly, substance abuse was not related to homelessness. However, it should be noted that only 15% of the sample did not have a substance abuse issue. Consequently, there was little variability on this dichotomous variable, thus reducing the capacity to demonstrate a significant correlation with homelessness. Another unexpected finding was that mental disorders were not related to homelessness prior to incarceration or expected homelessness even though mental illness has been found to be common in homeless populations generally (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2007).

Because being Aboriginal was not related to homelessness, it was curious to find that taking Aboriginal programming was related to expected homelessness upon release. The sample was not large enough to conduct further analyses to determine if there were any variables that interacted with Aboriginal programming to produce this quizzical finding. However, it is possible that Aboriginal offenders who were referred to programming were referred in particular because they were high risk and lacked plans for appropriate housing upon release.

Age was also not related to homelessness. Past research has linked older age with homelessness (e.g., John Howard Society, 2010). This may indicate that causes of homelessness among federal offenders may differ from provincial offenders and the general population of the homeless. One is reminded that the average age of this offender sample was 35 years, which is consistent with other reports (Pohl, 2001). Future research should include a large sample size that would enable the opportunity to control for factors such as age when assessing the relationship between recidivism and homelessness.

Although past research found that homelessness is related to recidivism (e.g., Metraux and Culhane, 2006), the current study did not. For example, Schram et al. (2006) found that unstable housing was the strongest predictor of parole failure among a comprehensive list of static risk and dynamic need areas increasing the odds of recidivating by over 900%. In addition, Willis and Grace (2008, 2009) found that poor planning for community reintegration, particularly accommodation, is a risk factor for sexual recidivism.

However, the failure to find a relationship between homelessness and recidivism may have been due to the study's small sample size, use of parole violations as a recidivism measure, and the short follow-up time of 7 months after release.

Overall, the present study provided valuable findings on specific factors that are associated with homelessness among federally released offenders. These findings may assist in relevant housing program development by government and other community-based organizations. For example, it appears that accommodation planning is important because offenders' housing plans were less stable after their release from incarceration. Because the quality of reintegration planning has been found to be related to recidivism (Willis & Grace, 2008, 2009), providing inmates with more time and resources to plan for their release accommodations may help increase the stability of their housing situations upon release and reduce recidivism.

Furthermore, because offenders who have higher needs and have less community support are more likely to be homeless prior to incarceration, efforts to prevent homelessness should include addressing violence and providing community support, which may also help to reduce recidivism. As such, this study supports the contention that appropriate and accessible accommodation is the foundation of successful rehabilitation (Home Office, 2004).

Housing has been found to have a positive impact on health and social outcomes for people with substance abuse and mental disorders, the impact of which can be maximized by matching the type and intensity of resources with the needs of the individual (Somers et al., 2007). Therefore, it is recommended that community and institutional housing programs should be targeted to federal offenders who are high risk for housing problems upon release.

LIMITATIONS

One of the major limitations of the present study was the small sample size, which limited statistical analyses to correlations and chi-squares. In fact, chi-square analyses could not be conducted for several potential analyses because the cell sizes were too small. A larger sample size would have allowed more sophisticated analyses and analysis of follow-up data in the community.

Offenders present a unique challenge being contacted in the community due to their often transient and unstable lifestyles, involvement in further criminal activities, and reincarceration. This had an impact on the ability to determine actual homelessness when offenders were released, because few of the initial participants could be contacted in the community. As a result of the small number of participants followed up in the community, actual homelessness when released into the community was excluded from the analyses and only housing plans established prior to release could be

assessed. One particular limitation of assessing housing plans only is that it is quite possible that the housing plans participants reported while still incarcerated could have changed by the time they were released. This may explain why the characteristics associated with prior homelessness were not the same as those associated with expected homelessness upon release. Although it may be difficult to interview released offenders in the community, it may provide imperative information regarding the housing situations of released offenders. Regardless, the results should be interpreted with caution, because actual homelessness in the community was not assessed.

One way to address this limitation in future studies is to include a larger sample of offenders followed in the community which will require more time and resources that were available for the present study. Larger samples would also allow the assessment of interactions and gender comparisons and increase the power of the statistical analyses that were conducted. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies conduct follow-up interviews shortly after offenders are released to avoid excluding them due to reincarceration or relocation.

Our interest was to examine issues related to housing among relatively long-term offenders. Consequently, the current study was limited to federal offenders who were released from federal correctional facilities in Saskatchewan to the Saskatchewan community. It excluded all provincial offenders, who were serving sentences of less than 2 years, and federal offenders who might be moving or returning to Saskatchewan from facilities in other provinces. As a result of these limitations, the generalizability of the findings are narrow and should be approached with caution.

In conclusion, the present study was undertaken to begin a systematic, empirical analysis of homelessness among federal offenders released from custody and to encourage dialogue and examination of this surprisingly under researched topic. The findings of this study lead to several conclusions. Incarceration may increase homelessness. Characteristics of homeless federal offenders tend to differ from those of the general homeless population. Offenders who were violent, had greater criminogenic needs, were convicted of sexual offences, or lacked community support were more likely to have housing related problems. Although a causal relationship cannot be determined from the current correlational study, it is clearly apparent that homeless offenders have an abundance of criminogenic needs.

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