

Systemic Barriers – Correctional Service of Canada Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Recommendation 3

CSC should provide the Committee with a report explaining how its diversity information on the inmate population has been improved and aligned with that of Statistics Canada. In addition, CSC should provide the Committee with the findings of its full gender-based analysis plus.

Response:

Improving Offender Diversity Information

Entrusted with changing lives and protecting Canadians, CSC recognizes both the importance of effective correctional programs in achieving its mandate, as well as the fact that said programming must be evidence-based and responsive to the diverse needs of offenders to be effective. Accordingly, CSC agreed to undertake a review of its approach to data collection with the aim of aligning with Statistics Canada standards and committed to continue monitoring the diversity of the offender population to inform its policies, programs and practices.

CSC has taken an ongoing approach to improve its data collection and reporting for visible minority offenders. Specifically, CSC has made progress in simplifying and defining race categories, which have been implemented in corporate reporting systems, including the Structured Intervention Unit dashboard.

As part of its commitment to review its approach to align with Statistics Canada standards, CSC explored the option of integrating changes to data for ethnocultural offenders into its existing Offender Management System (OMS). Following consultation with relevant stakeholders, it was determined that implementing such changes into the current iteration of OMS was not feasible or advisable, given that efforts are currently underway to modernize this system in its entirety.

Accordingly, the Auditor General's recommendations are being pursued in the context of CSC's OMS-Modernization project. While the Auditor General noted a disparity in visible minority information/categories collected between Statistic Canada and CSC, following the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada has noted challenges with its own methods for collecting information on and categorizing visible minorities. Specifically, Statistics Canada suggested that growing diversity in Canada means that many individuals identify with multiple visible minority groups, and it is revisiting its data collection methods in response to this increased complexity. Moving forward, any changes to visible minority offender information integrated into the next iterations of CSC's OMS system will be informed by currently evolving Statistics Canada standards,

intersectional analysis, and CSC's need to ensure data continuity for the purpose of consistent and comparable reporting over time.

In summary, CSC has acted to address the Auditor General's recommendation by improving data collection practices and aligning with Statistics Canada standards around the collection of visible minority data, including the ability to report on and utilize this information to monitor the impact of correctional policies, programs and interventions on different groups of offenders and strengthen CSC's GBA Plus assessments.

GBA Plus

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) is an analytical tool used to support the development of responsive and inclusive policies, programs, and other initiatives. It is an analytical framework that goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences to consider other factors, such as age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography (including rurality), language, race, religion, and sexual orientation, as well as an understanding of how these factors intersect.

While the Auditor General assessed that there was no evidence of CSC conducting a GBA Plus assessment of its correctional programs and services for diverse groups of the offender population and suggested a potential gap in CSC considering intersectional factors in the design and implementation of correctional programs, GBA Plus is integrated into CSC's organizational structure, as well as many aspects of its business processes.

CSC's current organizational structure was established to enable CSC to meet its legislative mandate of supporting inmates with unique and intersecting needs. CSC has staff across the country dedicated to issues related to women offenders, Indigenous offenders, ethnocultural offenders, and victims of crime. This includes various branches and sectors within national headquarters, bolstered by national bodies, that can carefully consider potential differential impacts of policy, programs and legislation on different offender populations, and make the necessary adjustments.

Examples of this include CSC's:

- **Indigenous Initiatives Sector (IIS):** Led by a Deputy Commissioner for Indigenous Corrections, IIS develops CSC's strategic plans and priorities for Indigenous corrections. CSC provides Indigenous offenders with support through spiritual and cultural teachings and by offering culturally relevant case management, program delivery, health services, and reintegration.
- **Women Offender Sector (WOS):** WOS develops and implements CSC's policies for women's corrections. The principles that govern programs, interventions and services for women include empowerment, meaningful and

responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environments, and shared responsibility.

- **Gender Considerations Secretariat (GCS):** The GCS serves as a centre of expertise with respect to gender diverse offenders, providing guidance and advice to support CSC operations across the country, and playing a key role in the decision-making process for penitentiary placements and voluntary transfers.
- **Ethnocultural Advisory Committees:** The National Ethnocultural Advisory Committee (NEAC) and the Regional Ethnocultural Advisory Committees (REAC) advise CSC on services and interventions that contribute to ethnocultural offender reintegration and enhance public safety. Committees are composed of influential members of the community who come from ethnocultural backgrounds or have experience working in the area of multiculturalism.
- **Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion Directorate:** This directorate is responsible for corporate oversight and the implementation of CSC's Anti-Racism Framework and Action Plan. The Action Plan focuses on offenders, employees and stakeholders and is implementing solutions to barriers faced by ethnocultural, Indigenous, Black and racialized individuals. As part of this overall framework, CSC is developing a Black Offender Strategy aimed at addressing barriers faced by Black federal offenders.

CSC is responsive to the emergent needs of its increasingly diverse offender population, adjusting its organizational structure to enable it to remain agile to evolving demands. To support this agility, has ethnocultural site coordinators. Additionally, CSC collects, monitors and reports on performance data, which are disaggregated, where applicable, by gender, race and other intersecting identity factors, thereby enabling the identification of impacts of programs or initiatives on specific groups of offenders. As indicated previously, CSC has and will continue to take action to improve its data collection and reporting around visible minority offenders to enable it to be responsive to the policy implications of this increased diversity.

With respect to CSC policy development generally, CSC's Strategic Policy Division is the organization's focal point for formal GBA Plus assessments. The division provides guidance and support to other areas of CSC to ensure that a GBA Plus lens is effectively applied to the development of responsive and inclusive policies. Further, consultations on CSC policies under development include CSC sectors and regions, inmate committees, and a broad range of external stakeholders representing the interests of different non-profit organizations, community representatives, academia, experts in various fields and offender groups. GBA Plus is also integrated into CSC's policy and fiscal decision-making processes by ensuring budget proposals, Memorandum to Cabinet, and Treasury Board Submissions includes a rigorous assessment of the potential implications of policies and programs on diverse

populations.

Finally, CSC leverages its relationships with diverse partners, stakeholders, victims' organizations, and others involved in support of public safety. CSC partners and works in collaboration with a number of entities that reflect various perspectives in the criminal justice system and corrections more specifically, as well as reflect the diversity of offenders. These partnerships enable CSC to evolve its understanding of the needs of offenders, identify barriers, and facilitate their safe return to communities. One such example, is CSC's active collaboration with the Department of Justice and the Ministry of Public Safety on the development of Canada's Black Justice Strategy. The Strategy is the federal government's response to anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination that has led to the overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system, including as victims of crime. It aims to ensure that Black people have access to equal treatment and equal protection before the law in Canada and is being developed in collaboration with an external steering group of Black experts and leaders in consultation with Black communities across Canada. This work will ensure that CSC's efforts to address any identified systemic barriers under its own Black Offender Strategy reflects the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and regional realities of Black people in Canada, as well as different intersectionalities. CSC is similarly collaborating with the Department of Justice on an Indigenous Justice Strategy that, in consultation with Indigenous communities, is seeking to address the systemic discrimination and overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system.

Taken together, CSC's existing organizational structure, business practices and collaborative relationships enable it to bring an integrated and intersectional perspective to bear on its policies, programs, and interventions. Notwithstanding these efforts, CSC continues to participate in interdepartmental communities of practice and undertake ongoing initiatives aimed strengthening the department's GBA Plus capacity.