CFCN
Canadian Families and Corrections Network

RCAFD
Regroupement canadien d'aide aux familles des détenu(e)s

FORGOTTEN VICTIMS:

The Mental Health and Well-Being of Families Affected by Crime and Incarceration in Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) is "*to build stronger and safer communities by assisting families affected by criminal behavior, incarceration and community reintegration*". CFCN is a national charity organization, overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors from across Canada and a member of the Public Safety Roundtable, Correctional Service of Canada Community Corrections Working Group, the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ) and The Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. CFCN has over 20 years of experience and has contributed in an important manner to Canadian research, policy, resources and service delivery to families affected by crime.

CFCN serves families who are have a loved one involved in the criminal justice system and works to create valued resources, respected research, unique programs and solid policy development to strengthen the family unit and the lives of everyone in it.

In September of 2014, CFCN was contracted by Public Safety Canada to research the emotional, cognitive, and mental-health effects on incarceration on families of offenders. In doing this, we were to look at the short and long-term effects of crime on adults and children, the availability of resources and support systems, as well as addiction and criminal justice related involvement among family members.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network joined in partnership with Dr. Stacey Hannem, Associate Professor at the Department of Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford Campus) to complete this ground-breaking research and analysis. The project and its methodology were reviewed and approved by the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (Certificate #4260) in accordance with the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Research activities included an anonymous, Canada-wide, structured, mixed-method qualitative and quantitative data survey of family members who have a loved one in the criminal justice system. Several methods were used to recruit family members including direct conversations, emails, phone calls, social media, and an incentive to participate. As this target group is often stigmatized and shamed by the actions of their family member's crime, it can be a challenge to encourage them to respond. The survey was online for over three months and elicited 140 responses. Information on demographics, mental health challenges, best practice coping mechanisms, and criminogenic factor experiences were all collected.

A qualitative follow up interview was offered and 66 respondents were willing. Ultimately, 44 interviews were conducted on selected families via telephone or in person over a two and a half month period. Further information on families' mental health, relationship status and crime impact were solicited.

The research used the ALERT Mental Wellness Assessment scale and found that families with a loved one incarcerated experienced more distress on average than the general population. In fact, this familial population scores much closer to a clinical population - community members seeking psychological or counselling for mental distress.

Our survey asked respondents to indicate the status of their mental health and wellness prior to involvement in the criminal justice system, at the time of the offence, and at the time of our survey (current). Participants' self-reported mental health concerns and diagnoses increased over time, while

overall help-seeking declined. The survey revealed concerning information about the impact of crime and criminal justice system involvement on families, with almost 2/3 of participants reporting increased anger and irritability since their loved one was arrested.

In terms of coping mechanisms, family members sought many types of professional, peer, and self-care options; exercise and peer support were felt to be the most beneficial. They also sought negative coping choices, reporting smoking, alcohol, eating disorders, prescription misuse and suicidal attempts. Having a loved one involved in the justice system may also further criminal activity, as some participants self-reported using street drugs and breaking the law to provide for their family as coping choices.

Almost 79% of our respondents maintain a strong relationship with their incarcerated loved one and most feel this relationship is very positive even though they report losing relationships with family members and friends, worrying about their incarcerated family member, being stigmatized in the community, and having financial difficulties. Many feel that their inside family member understands the effect of their crime on their family and community.

Thematic analysis of the interview data and qualitative survey responses found key situational factors that have a negative impact on mental health and stress, or exacerbate existing emotional wellness concerns. Consistent with previous research, lack of information, inability to access resources and support, financial difficulties, lack of understanding by support persons/community, and a sense of injustice were identified as challenges that many families face. In addition to compounding mental health concerns, these challenges further pose significant barriers to help-seeking and accessing supportive services.

Outcomes from the research are the development of a family mental health resource entitled '*Coping Over Time*' which outlines the best practices, positive coping strategies, successful treatment options and beneficial ideas for assistance to families affected by crime; a CFCN Families and Corrections Journal focusing on Mental Health; the development of a speaking engagement presentation promoting public awareness about incarceration, mental health, and the effects of the criminal justice system on families; and suggestions for further research that might assist mental health and wellbeing of family members affected by crime.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network and Dr. Stacey Hannem wish to express appreciation to Public Safety Canada and, in particular Cliff Yumansky and Dariusz Galczynski, for their support of CFCN and this project. Further thanks go to Margaret Holland and Cindy Pelletier, CFCN researchers, student research assistant, Chelsey Kerr, and Dr. Jennifer Lavoie and Dr. Antony Christensen at Wilfrid Laurier University, who offered technical support with the statistical analysis. Finally, we extend our deepest thanks to the family members of those who have a loved one involved in crime who gave their time and shared their stories to contribute to *The Mental Health and Well-Being of Families Affected by Crime and Incarceration in Canada* Research Project.

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The mandate of Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) is "*building stronger and safer communities by assisting families affected by criminal behavior, incarceration and community reintegration*." CFCN serves families affected by crime and incarceration, who we know are always victims of the 'consequences' of crime. Families deal with financial hardship, physical separation, stigma, emotional harm, a sense of isolation from community, and uncertainty about the future. Family members left behind experience feelings of loneliness, shame, anger and grief; and stress from loss of family income. Those who have an incarcerated spouse or partner often experience deep sadness that their partners are not present to watch and participate as the children grow up; children of offenders are ignored, teased and often bullied at school because they have a parent in jail, which may affect their self-esteem, scholastic marks and interpersonal skills. Many family members also have the challenge of being a direct victim of the crime for which the offender is serving time and deal with the effects of victimization on mental wellbeing and trust. There are many documented effects of crime and incarceration on the family of offenders, but the full impact of this experience on mental health and well-being has never yet been the focus of systematic research in Canada.

Most people do not consider the well-being of innocent families affected by crime; this is an important group which may have unique experiences and mental health needs. The overarching goal of this research is to examine and raise awareness about the mental health needs of this population, in an effort to ensure that appropriate resources and information are made available to assist the families of offenders in coping with the long-term effects of crime.

This research on families affected by crime seeks to:

- Determine the emotional and mental impact on Canadian families when a family member becomes involved in crime, measuring current mental health status as well as retrospective indicators from the time of the offence
- Identify challenges to family members in the community experiencing Mental Health issues
- Identify if families of incarcerated persons are moving toward crime or engaging in risky behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse
- Determine best practices in terms of coping treatments and solutions – 'what works' for families
- Identify the role of offender accountability in family mental health issues

Research Questions

To contribute to the mandate and goals outlined above, the primary research question addressed in this report is:

> **What is the impact on the mental health and well-being of family members when a loved one is involved in crime?**

This broad question can be broken down into a series of focused questions, including:

1. What was the state of the individual's mental wellbeing at the time of their family member's incarceration and entrance into the criminal justice system?
2. How do adults and children on the outside cope with the stress of a loved one's crime?
3. What resources do family members draw on in the community to aid them in dealing with the impact of crime on their lives?

4. Do these accessed resources have an understanding of the impact of crime and incarceration on families and their mental health and well-being?
5. Do families have ready access to necessary and desired support services?
6. What are the short-term and long-term effects of crime on families?
7. Does the offending family member on the inside show any understanding or accountability for the mental wellness of their family members?
8. Are other kinds of wellness issues or maladaptive coping mechanisms related to the experience of crime in the family?
9. Is having an incarcerated family member a risk factor for criminality and Canada's public safety?

Operational Definition

For the purposes of this research, families of offenders are broadly defined to include all those people who claim a kinship relationship with someone who has been charged or convicted of a criminal code offence. This includes spouses or intimate partners, children, parents or step-parents, siblings or step-siblings, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, or other immediate in-laws.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a growing international body of academic literature and research on families affected by crime and incarceration. The majority of this research comes from the USA and UK, but there is also a small body of Canadian literature. Most of the existing literature focuses on describing the social, material, and emotional difficulties faced by families of offenders, but very few researchers have framed these experiences in the context of understanding the implications for mental health, nor systematically evaluated the mental health and well-being of their research participants (see, for example, Hannem 2012, 2011, 2008; Comfort 2008; Ricordeau 2008; Condry 2007; Christian, Mellow & Thomas 2006; Braman 2004; Withers 2003; Girshick 1996; Fishman 1990). Research has, however, focused on the experiences of prison visiting as being both an important coping mechanism for families dealing with forced separation due to incarceration, but also potentially difficult and traumatic for families (see Arditti 2003, 2005, 2012; Braman & Wood 2003; Carleson & Cervera 1992; Christian 2005; Comfort 2003; 2008). The potential difficulties posed by family visiting are consistently found to be exacerbated by difficult interactions with correctional staff, either in arranging the necessary clearance for visits, or in the process of entering the institution. A review of the existing academic and grey literature on families affected by crime and mental health shows that there is currently very little information specifically on the subject of mental health concerns faced by families of offenders, and no literature in the Canadian context.

The earliest research on prisoners' wives consistently identified serious needs in five areas which contribute to stress: information, financial/material, social, family relationships, and help in raising children (Daniel & Barrett 1981; Anderson 1965, 1967; Morris 1965). Later research consistently continued to identify these themes as areas of need, although less concern was found about raising children in more recent studies (Fishman 1990; Hannem 2008, 2011). Bakker et. al. (1978) were the first to refer to prisoners' families as "hidden victims of crime". Their study of the family's experience in the justice system, from arrest to incarceration, confirmed findings of financial and emotional hardships, increased stress levels, feelings of stigmatization by criminal justice officials/staff, and lack of information about the criminal justice process and incarceration. Bakker et. al. (1978) reiterated the claim made by Schneller (1976) that the incarceration of the individual *punishes* the family, and that society has an obligation to ensure, as much as practically possible, that the pains of punishment do not extend to the families of offenders.

The first study specifically designed to address the question of prisoners' wives' mental health was conducted in 1981 with a sample of 20 women in Kansas, USA (Daniel & Barrett 1981). Daniel & Barrett (1981) compared the prisoners' wives symptoms of grief and stress to those measured in the wives of prisoners of war and servicemen missing in action (McCubbin, Dahl, Lester & Ross 1975; 1977) and found that, on average, the prison wives scored higher on these variables of emotional distress. They concluded their study with the recommendation that information about the criminal justice process be systematically provided to prisoners' wives, and that local agencies should develop peer support groups with appropriate information and resources to assist the women in processing their grief (Daniel & Barrett, 1981). Thirty-four years later, the present research has the same recommendations, suggesting that this is an ongoing problem and a systematic blind-spot that has yet to be addressed. Lowenstein (1984, 1986) considered the effects of 'temporary' single parenthood due to incarceration on the wives' experience of stress and coping, and on children's behaviour. She concluded that those women with greater personal and family resources were better able to cope with the husband's absence – the women's level of education was the single most significant factor in determining coping and successful family adaptation to the absence of a spouse and father.

More recent attempts to research and discuss the unique mental health concerns of families affected by crime and incarceration have focused on the families of death row prisoners in the US (Long 2011; Jones & Beck 2007; Beck & Jones 2006; Beck et al., 2007; King 2006; Sharp 2005; King & Norgard 1999; Smykla 1987). This focus on "disenfranchised grief" highlights the exacerbation of loss and trauma that "occurs when a loss cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" (Doka 1989; Jones & Beck 2006, p. 285). While the families of Canadian prisoners do not face the trauma of the possible execution of their loved one, prior research has found that the families of Canadian prisoners often describe the shock of the crime and the resulting separation as "like a death", and similarly describe a lack of social support for their loss and grief (Hannem 2008, forthcoming). In the Canadian context, this comparison to death is most often made by the families of prisoners facing lengthy sentences. Thus, the experience of disenfranchised grief and its accompanying stresses may be more broadly identified as affecting the families of incarcerated persons and not confined to the families of death row inmates.

While not the primary focus of this research, there is a small but significant body of literature which addresses the impact of parental incarceration on children[1]. This research focuses on the emotional and social impacts of parental incarceration including family separation, trauma, isolation, behavioural problems, and increased risk of offending behaviour (see Shaw 1992; Gabel & Johnstone 1995; Seymour & Hairston 2001; Boswell & Wedge 2002; Marstone 2005; Bernstein 2005; and Murray, Farrington & Sekol 2012). The children of prisoners have been found to exhibit a range of symptoms related to attachment disruption, post-traumatic stress (Bocknek, Sanderson & Britner 2009), depression, antisocial behaviour, and poor self-esteem (Murray & Farrington 2008). Children who are exposed to abuse and violence in their household prior to the parent's incarceration, predictably, are found to suffer greater mental health effects. However, the quality of the prison visitation experience has also been identified as a key factor in the level of distress experienced by children; negative prison visitation experiences and visitation policies which are not "family friendly", such as non-contact visits, restrictions on movement and touching, and an environment which is generally perceived by the child as hostile or scary can have a negative impact on that child's relationship with the incarcerated parent and increase levels of distress related to the incarceration (Arditti 2012).

[1] For a comprehensive summary of difficulties faced by children of incarcerated parents, and their effect on children's outcomes, see Murray, Farrington & Sekol (2012).

Although the body of literature on the effects of crime and incarceration on families is relatively small (as compared to other, more established bodies of research), the key findings over time are strikingly cohesive. There can be no question that the involvement of a family member in the justice system is a difficult situation that has negative effects for families. The research that we have undertaken adds to the growing documentation of these effects and attempts to focus specifically on the implications for mental health and well-being. We find, however, that mental health is often inextricably tied to the myriad of other difficulties that families face. This suggests that piecemeal solutions to address mental health are unlikely to be effective in the absence of larger, systemic change.

METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on the mental health and well-being of families affected by incarceration. An online survey, available in both French and English, was used to collect quantifiable self-report data on demographics, distress levels / mental health, physical health, coping strategies, help-seeking, relationship with the offender, and experiences of integration and support in the community. The survey included the ALERT Wellness Assessment scale – a 24 item instrument which measures the participant's current global distress level, including behavioural health symptom severity, functional impairment, and self-efficacy. The instrument also includes indicators of substance use risk and medical-behavioural co-morbidity. This scale was developed as part of a study by the National Institute for Mental Health in 2006 and was re-released in 2007 following a psychometric evaluation of the items' fit, scale reliability, dimensionality, construct validity, item correlations, frequencies and distributions. The revised (2007) scale has a scale reliability of α=.87.

In addition to the structured questions, respondents were also provided several opportunities to give unstructured responses to open-ended questions about their experiences with help seeking and coping. Survey respondents were given also the option of self-selecting to participate in a follow-up telephone interview about their well-being and the impact of crime on their families[2].

The research protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University (Project #4260), in accordance with the Canadian *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.* In accordance with these policies, informed consent was required of all participants and was obtained anonymously as part of the online survey access. Participants who agreed to be contacted to participate in follow-up telephone interviews provided oral consent to the interviewer.

The survey (see *Appendix A*) launched on November 25, 2014 and remained open until March 3, 2015. The link to the survey was posted on CFCN's website, publicized on social media (FaceBook, Twitter), through email networks, and CFCN staff shared information about the research with their clients. There were 140 total respondents (133 English & 7 French); 115 surveys were fully completed and 24 were partially completed, but unfinished[3]. Cases were excluded from analysis where relevant information was not provided. The survey responses were anonymously collected through the Qualtrics online survey platform and compiled into SPSS for analysis. Sixty-three survey respondents indicated a willingness to

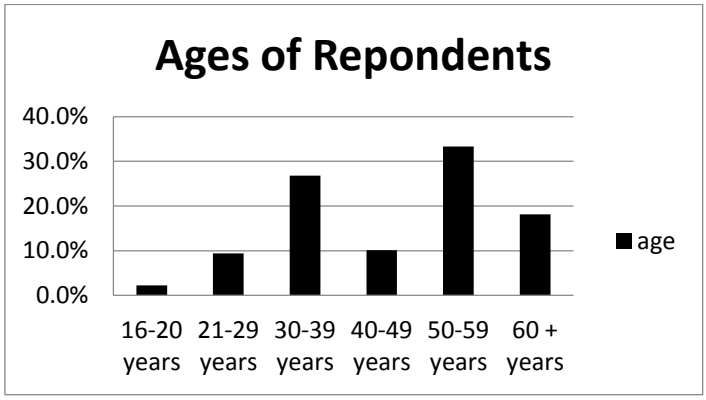
[2] The option to participate in an interview was closed on February 4, 2015 to facilitate the completion of data collection and analysis. The remainder of the survey remained open until March 3, 2015.

[3] The survey design permitted participants to skip or decline to answer any question, therefore not all questions were answered by 100% of participants whose surveys were considered "complete" (i.e. the *n* for each question does not necessarily equal 140).

participate in a follow-up interview and, ultimately, 44 interviews were conducted, ranging from 30-60 minutes (see *Appendix B* for interview questions). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and transcripts and responses to the open-ended survey questions were uploaded into NVivo qualitative analysis software, which was used to organize and sort the data. The qualitative data was subject to an initial thematic open-coding, and a second round of coding was used to further parse the data, expanding and regrouping themes.

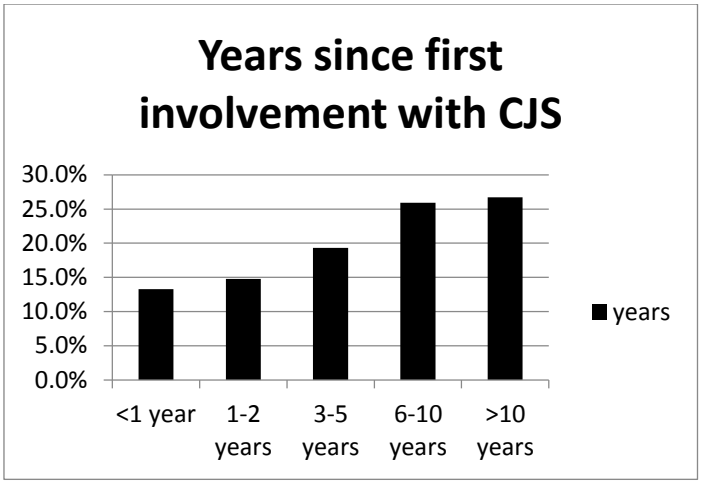
The total self-selected survey sample was comprised of 125 women (89%) and 15 men. While this skewed gender representation is not reflective of the general population, it is consistent with previous research which suggests that women are more likely to maintain a relationship with an incarcerated family member and to be involved in a "caring role" which results in collateral victimisation and hardships (see Girschick 1996; Casey-Acevedo & Bakken 2002; Maidment 2006; Codd 2008; Comfort 2008; Hannem 2008, 2011). This gendered effect is true regardless of whether the incarcerated family member is male or female (Codd 2008). The sample covered a wide range of ages: 2.2% 16-20 years of age (n=3), 9.4% 21-29 years (n=13), 26.8% 30-39 years (n=37), 10.1% 40-49 years (n=14), 33.3% 50-59 years (n=46), and 18.1% 60+ years (n=25).

Figure 1



Participants also reported a wide range of experience in terms of the length of familial involvement with the justice system : 13.1% had been involved with the justice system for less than one year (n=18), 14.6% for 1-2 years (n=20), 20.4% for 3-5 years (n=28), 25.5% for 6-10 years (n=35), and 26.3% had been involved with the justice system for more than 10 years (n=36).

Figure 2



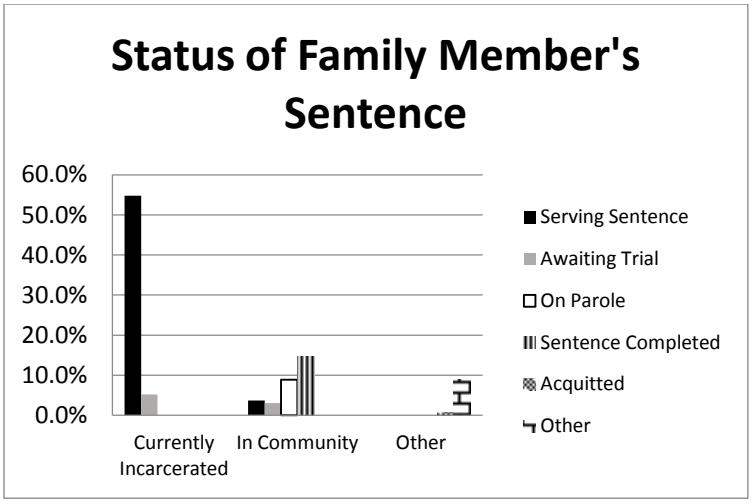
Participants reported a variety of familial relationships to the convicted/incarcerated person, with the majority reporting that the incarcerated person was either their husband/ex-husband (37.2%, n=51) or son / step-son (35.8%, n=49). Other family relationships reported included brother (n=10), father (n=6), nephew (n=6), daughter (n=4), uncle (n=3), boyfriend (n=3), mother (n=2), grandson (n=2), wife/ex-wife (n=2), aunt (n=1), niece (n=1), various "in-laws" (n=5) and "other" (n=7). In this case, the total number of familial relationships exceeds the number of respondents, as participants were able to indicate more than one family member's involvement with the criminal justice system. Eight individuals, or 5.7% of the respondents, indicated that they had multiple family members involved with the criminal justice system.

Ten participants (7.1%) reported that the convicted/incarcerated family member was a woman, which is roughly slightly higher than the representation of federally sentenced women (4.9%), but under-represents the proportion of female offenders in provincial custody (11%).

Almost sixty percent of respondents indicated that their family member was still incarcerated (n=74 sentenced and n=7 awaiting trial); a further 20% were on parole from (n=12) or had completed a sentence of incarceration (n=15). 7.4% of family members were currently serving (n=5) or had completed (n=5) a community sentence, and 3% (n=4) were awaiting trial in the community. 1 individual had been acquitted of the charges[4].

[4] Twelve respondents (8.9%) indicated their family member's status in the criminal justice system as "other". At least one of these had died in custody, according to the qualitative response data.

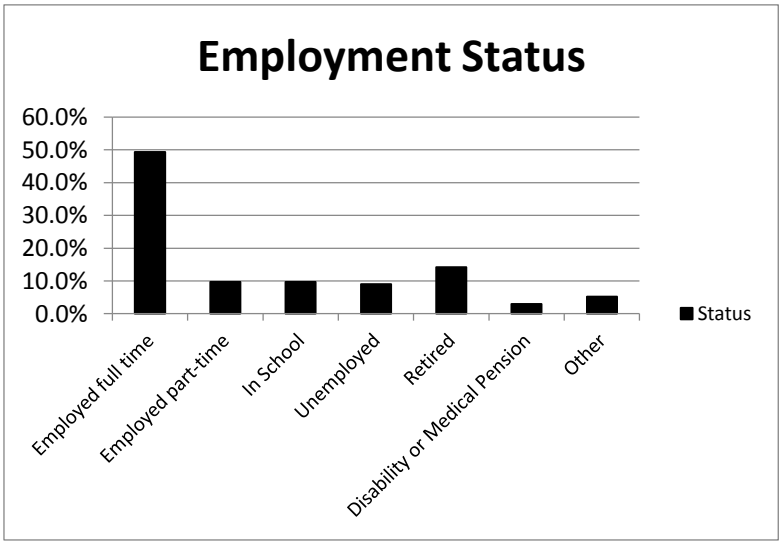
Figure 3



Those respondents whose family member was incarcerated were asked to indicate how far the correctional institution was located from their residence. Only about one in six reported living in the same city (11.3%) or less than fifty kilometers from the correctional institution (5.3%). 16.5% lived between 100 and 199 kilometers away, and approximately one third (33.8%) lived between 200 and 499 kilometers from the prison. Six percent lived 500 to 1000 kilometers away and 6.8% lived more than 1000 kilometers away.

Asked to self-identify ethnic background, without discrete categories provided, 85.4% of the sample self-identified as Caucasian or White Canadian (5.2% of these explicitly identified as French Canadian), 8.6% identified as Aboriginal, 2.6% identified as Asian or south Asian. Less than 4% of the sample identified as East Indian (n=1), Hispanic (n=1), Armenian (n=1), and Lebanese (n=1). Most participants were employed (full-time 49.3%, part-time 9.7%), while 9.7% were in school, and 14.2% were retired. Nine percent were unemployed, and three percent collected a disability or medical pension.

Figure 4

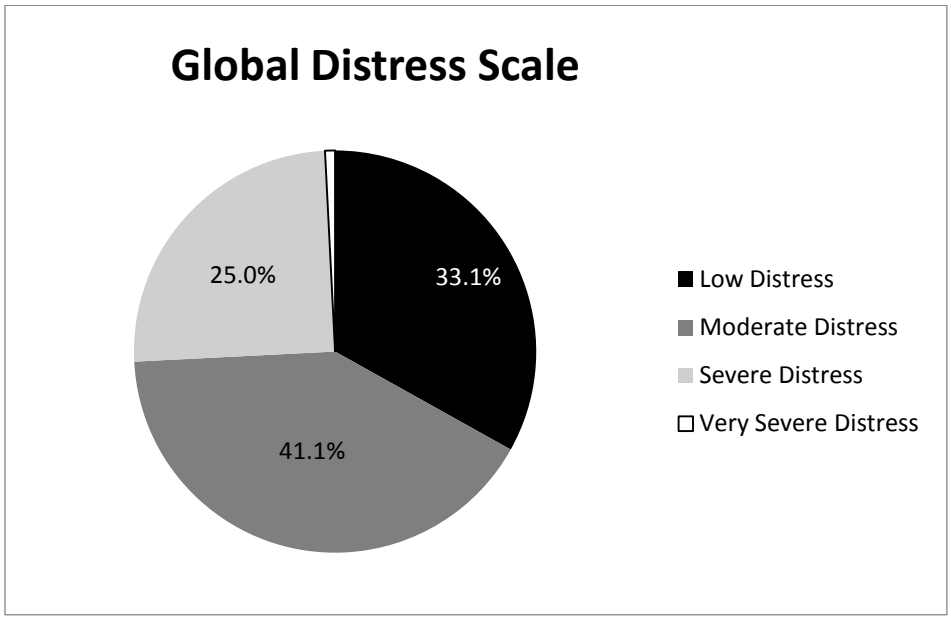


ANALYSIS OF FAMILIES AND MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY

As described in the methodology above, the instrument used to evaluate current mental wellness was the ALERT Mental Wellness Assessment scale. The core of the instrument is a 15 item scale measuring symptoms (anxiety and depression), functioning, and well-being/efficacy (reverse-scored). The responses to each item are scored from 0 to 3 and a total score is derived by summing the values for each individual item response. The total scores can range from 0-45 and map on to a categorization of low, moderate, severe and very severe distress. Figure 5 below demonstrates the breakdown of the global distress scores by category and percentage of completed surveys.

A score of 0-11 is categorized as low (or no) distress, 12-24 moderate distress, 25-38 severe distress, and 39+ very severe distress. Based on established benchmarks and repeated testing with both clinical and community-based populations, the expected mean for a non-clinical, community sample is 7.33 (SD 6.44). For the sample of individuals affected by crime and incarceration in the family, the mean score on the global distress scale was 16.78 with a standard deviation of 10.88, indicating the wide range of scores from 0-43. This population of individuals clearly experiences significantly more distress, on average, than we would expect from a random sample of community members and scores much closer to the expected mean for a clinical sample of 19.92 (SD 9.51).

Figure 5: Frequency of Global Distress Categorization

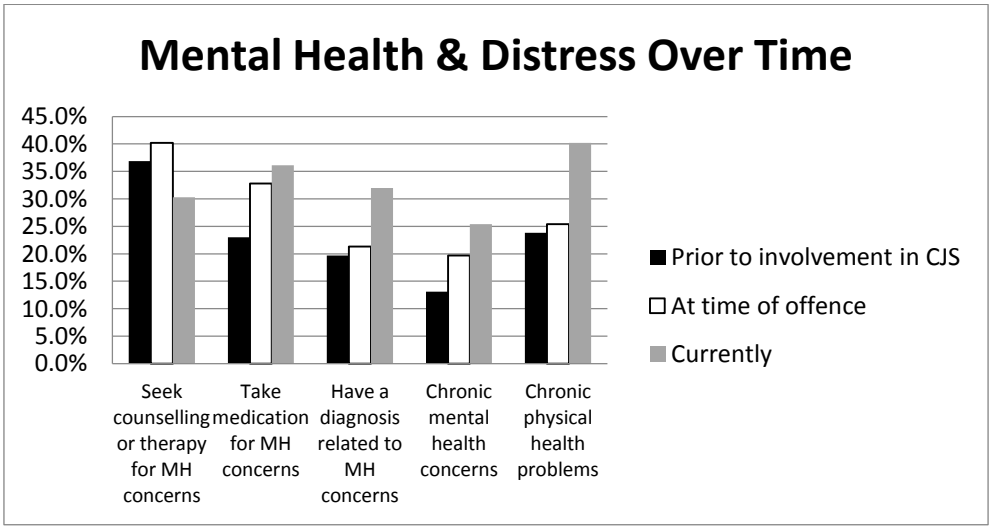


Participants were asked to respond to a range of questions about their mental health and help-seeking *prior to* becoming involved with the justice system as the family member of an accused person. The Kruskal-Wallis *H* test showed no correlations between global distress scores and self-reported prior mental health diagnoses, prior use of medication for mental health conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety),

prior chronic mental health concerns, or prior chronic physical health problems[5]. However, the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test did find that global distress was moderately correlated to self-reported current chronic mental health concerns ($H(1) = 5.56$, $p=.02$), and also to self-reported current chronic physical health problems ($H(1)=4.692$, $p=.03$). While it is not surprising that global distress would be correlated to mental health concerns and physical health problems are not surprising, these relationships do provide a secondary measure of validation to the scale indicators; the fact that there was no statistically significant relationship between current global distress scores and mental health and chronic health problems prior to involvement in the criminal justice system indicates that the distress currently experienced by families of offenders cannot be attributed to pre-existing factors.

Respondents were asked to self-report on indicators of mental health distress over time at three points (prior to involvement in the criminal justice system, at the time of the offence, and currently). A minority of respondents reported prior chronic mental health concerns (13.1%) and mental health diagnoses (19.7%), but these measures did increase over time (see Figure 6). The only measure of mental health concerns and distress that declined was use of counselling or therapy services. The open-ended comments and interview data indicate that possible reasons for this decline include a lack of satisfaction with available counselling/therapy services, financial constraints, or a sense that the counselling was no longer helping.

Figure 6

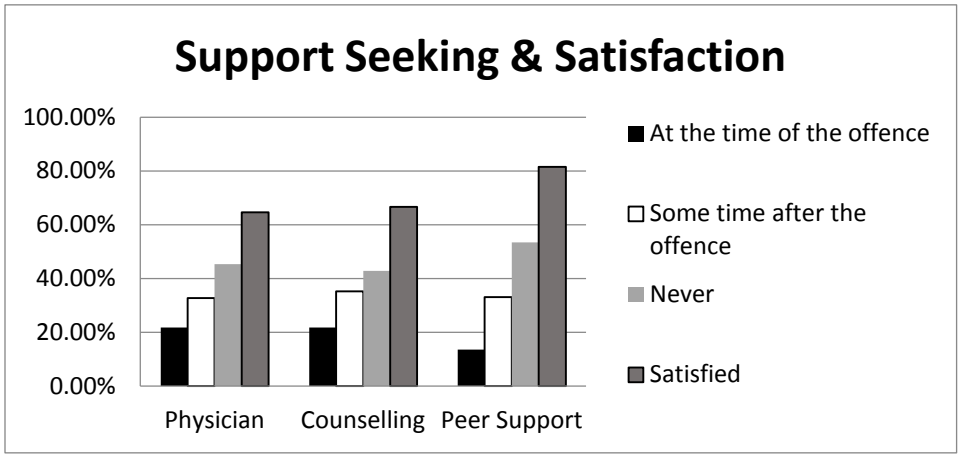


Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had sought assistance from a physician, counsellor, or peer support group to address concerns related to the experience of crime in the family. More than half of all respondents (54.6%) had sought help from a family physician either at the time of the offence or at

[5] The Kruskal-Wallis *H* test is a non-parametric test that can be used to compare more than two populations in a completely randomized design.

some point following; 57.1% had sought the assistance of a counsellor, and 46.7% had sought out a peer support group[6] (see Figure 7).[7]

Figure 7



As indicated in Figure 7, while 64.6% of those who had seen a physician were satisfied with their physician's response, and 66.7% were satisfied with their counsellor's assistance, levels of satisfaction with peer support were significantly higher at 81.5%. This suggests that peer support is viewed very positively by family members and provides valuable assistance to them[8]. We endeavour to put these results into context in the qualitative analysis that follows below.

Coping

Participants were asked about a range of positive and negative coping mechanisms that they may have engaged to manage their feelings about their family member's crime and involvement in the criminal justice system. The most commonly reported coping mechanisms were exercise (46.9%), peer support (40.6%), journaling / writing (39.8%), religious practice / prayer (39.1%), use of prescription medication (36.7%), meditation (31.3%), smoking (23.4%) and use of alcohol (17.2%). Some participants also indicated that they had engaged in harmful coping mechanisms such as eating disordered behaviour (18.9%), prescription misuse (9.4%), and self-harm (7.1%)[9]. Since their family member became involved with the criminal justice system, 13.4% had struggled with drug or alcohol abuse, 7.1% had attempted suicide, 6.3% used street drugs, and 4.7% had broken the law to provide for their families. Of significance, 62.2% reported increased anger or irritability and 63% of respondents reported financial difficulty. Having an incarcerated husband was found to be significantly correlated to financial difficulty, with 82% of wives/partners reporting financial problems (r = .284, p = .001).

[6] While most respondents interpreted this question as pertaining to a peer support group specifically for families of offenders, qualitative responses indicated that at least a few people sought assistance from more general groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or faith-based support groups.
[7] The total percentage exceeds one hundred percent because respondents could indicate that they had sought assistance from more than one source.
[8] The correlational analysis did find that those who were satisfied with the peer support the received were more likely to have a lower global distress score, however, this correlation was not statistically significant. Physician help-seeking was the only help-seeking indicator found to be significantly correlated to lowered global distress, r = -.223, p = .024.
[9] Total responses exceed 100% of the sample as respondents could indicate their use of multiple coping mechanisms.

Relationships with Family & Friends

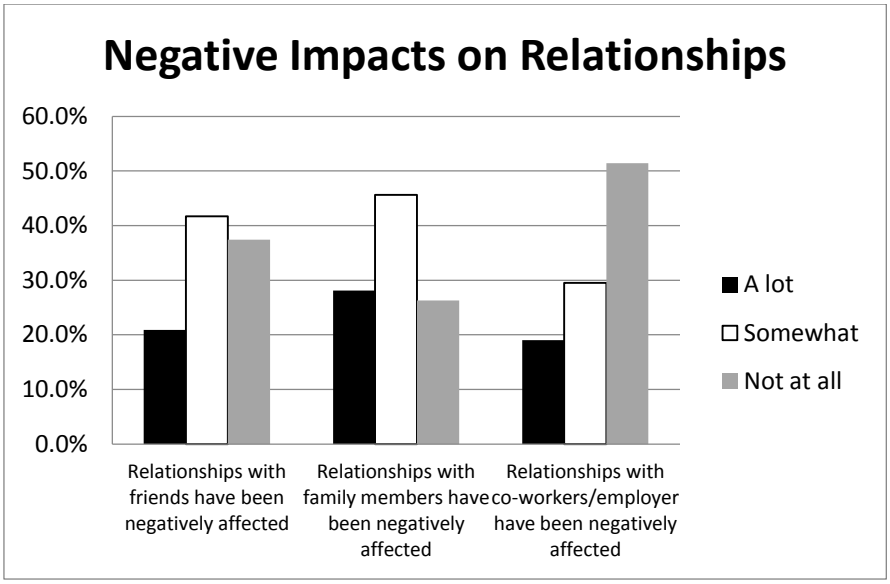
Respondents were also asked a range of questions about their relationships with friends and family members, including their incarcerated/criminally-involved family member, and their sense of belonging in the community. Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported having "a lot" of contact with their family member who was involved in criminal activity, while 10.5% reported some contact, and 10.5% reported no contact at all. This high level of contact was also reflected in the qualitative data in which the cost of travel to visit an incarcerated loved one was a frequent concern, reflecting the reality that approximately one third of respondents (33.8%) lived between 200 and 499 kilometers (one way) from the prison where their loved one was incarcerated. Despite the often great physical distance, 63.5% of respondents felt that their relationship with their incarcerated or criminally-involved family member was very positive, 26.1% reported that it was somewhat positive, while 10.4% felt that it was not at all a positive relationship[10]. The majority of respondents felt that their family member understood the effects of his/her crime on their well-being, with 40.9% of respondents indicating that their family member understood "a lot", while 43.5% felt that their family member understood the effects "somewhat". This indicator was significantly positively correlated to believing that the relationship with the family member was positive ($r = .447$, $p < .001$), and was also positively correlated to continued contact with the family member ($r = .225$, $p = .016$). This suggests that families affected by crime and incarceration are more likely to maintain contact and to have a positive relationship if the offender expresses an understanding of the impact that he/she has had on his/her family members' lives (or perhaps that continued contact allows the offender to appreciate the impact that s/he has had on the family).

Respondents reported relatively strong levels of support from family and friends; 36.5% indicated that their family was very supportive and 47.8 % reported that their family was somewhat supportive, with fewer than 1 in 6 reporting that their family was "not at all" supportive (15.7%). 32.1% reported that friends were very supportive, 56.3% were somewhat supportive, and slightly more than 1 in 10 (11.6%) reported that their friends were "not at all" supportive. Interestingly, having supportive friends and family were both found to be significantly positively correlated to the belief that the offending family member understood the impact of the crime. (Supportive family was found to have a correlation of $r = .336$, $p < .001$, and supportive friends were correlated at $r = .229$, $p = .015$). This finding may suggest that family and friends are more likely to be supportive if they see value in the relationship with the offender, or believe that the offender is remorseful. Further research would be necessary to confirm the nature of this relationship.

Although levels of support from family and friends seemed high, the data did indicate that respondents were sensitive to the negative impacts of crime in their family on relationships with family and friends (See Figure 8). Relationships with co-workers and employers seemed to be least likely to be affected by the impact of crime in the family (51.4% indicated that their relationships in this arena were "not at all" affected). The qualitative data suggested that this can be explained by the fact that many individuals did not disclose to their co-workers or employers that they had a family member involved in the criminal justice system. On average, relationships with family members were most likely to be negatively affected with 45.6% indicating that family relationships were somewhat affected and 28.1% indicating that family relationships were very affected.

[10] While exactly the same number of respondents (n=12) indicated that they had no contact with their offending family member as indicated that the relationship with the offending family member was not at all positive, these response categories did not entirely overlap. 8.8% of respondents (n=10) indicated that they had not contact with the offending family member *and* that this was not at all a positive relationship.

Figure 8

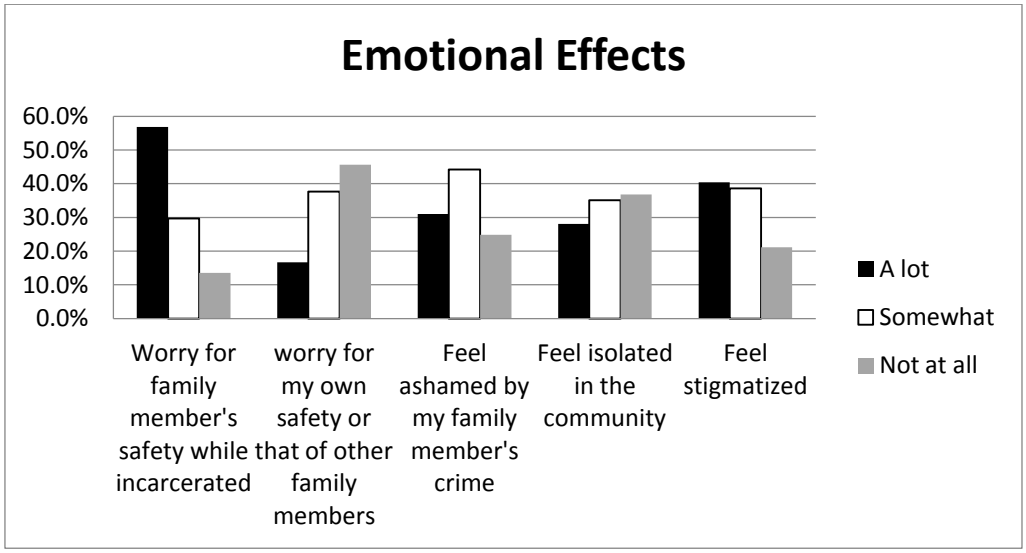


Emotional Effects

The family members in this sample also disclosed a range of negative emotional and social outcomes related to crime in the family (See figure 9 below). More than half of the survey respondents disclosed that they worry "a lot" for the safety of their incarcerated family member while s/he is incarcerated. This finding is further supported by the interview data, in which concern for incarcerated loved ones is a strong theme. While individuals might be expected to have a sense from the media that prison can be a violent place, interviewees frequently discussed that their family members had been victims of violence, mistreatment, and perceived abuse while incarcerated and these incidents clearly contributed to their levels of concern.

The stigma associated with having a family member who has committed a crime is another strong theme in the qualitative data that was borne out by the survey responses. 40.4% reported feeling very stigmatized and 38.6% felt somewhat stigmatized. Relatedly, many family members experience a sense of shame about the offence, or about having a loved one involved with the criminal justice system; 44.2% reported feeling somewhat ashamed and 31% were very ashamed. The feeling of isolation appeared to be less salient to the respondents, possibly due to the high levels of support from family and friends, but more than half of the respondents still indicated some degree of isolation from the community, with 35% feeling somewhat isolated and 28% feeling very isolated.

Figure 9



These numbers provide us with an interesting picture of a group of people who are profoundly affected by their loved one's involvement in crime and the justice system. Presenting with mental health distress that far exceeds average levels found in the general population, our survey paints a picture of people who continue to struggle, even years following the initial trauma of the crime (more than 50% of the survey respondents had been involved with the criminal justice system for more than 6 years and more than one quarter had been involved for more than ten years). It is clear that the trauma of crime in the family is not one that is short-lived, nor easily dealt with. In the next section, we move beyond the numbers to examine the qualitative data in more depth, providing contextual analysis for the quantitative survey and highlighting key issues that family members believe have an effect on their well-being and mental health.

CONTEXTUALIZING FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH – THE QUALITATIVE DATA

After completing the online survey, forty-four people took part in a semi-structured follow-up telephone interview; the interview guide consisted of eight open-ended questions that were asked of all participants (see *Appendix B*). The interviewers asked probing questions to encourage participants to expand on their answers and to identify other areas of concern. Of the interview participants, 19 were the parent of a person involved in the criminal justice system (16 sons and 3 daughters), 15 were wives/partners of incarcerated men, 6 had a brother or brother-in-law who had been convicted, and one each had an uncle, nephew, father involved in the system. One interview participant was, himself, a former convict and discussed his perspective on how that had affected his children's lives. We also received 85 type-written responses to the open ended question at the end of the survey, in which participants were invited to discuss in more detail "how your family member's crime has affected your health and well-being", with particular attention to things that were "helpful or not helpful".

While participants discussed many issues in the interviews and survey responses, this report will be confined to those thematic areas which appeared to have a significant impact on family members' well-being or mental health and which elucidate spaces for improved services, resources, and attention to family members as a population that is significantly impacted by crime and the criminal justice system.

Impact of Crime on Families

It is certainly not a novel finding that the experience of crime in the family has serious implications; the effects of crime spread out in waves from the person who has committed an offence, most affecting his closest family members and loved ones, but having a ripple effect throughout wider kinship and friendship networks, and out to the larger community. Family members who are closest to the offender often report that they are shocked by the news that their loved one has committed a crime. The mother of an incarcerated man described:

> *Shock that your son could do something horrible, something socially unacceptable and so it's sort of nothing you ever prepare for. You prepare for things in life for your children but you know when your son was little he never said, when I grow up I want to be a criminal… So you don't prepare for this, it's just such a shock when it happens and it shocked the whole family and before you can even, you know like when you know something's coming, you prepare for the impact but this you can't prepare for the impact, it just hits you. [FMH25]*

The immediate shock and trauma of the crime and arrest is not necessarily mitigated by time. Throughout the interviews, and in the open-ended survey responses, family members described a number of symptoms of continued emotional and mental health distress. In response to the Global Distress Scale, which measured participants' *current* levels of mental distress, participants most often reported, feeling "sad or blue" (On a scale of 0-3, mean response= 1.69, mode= 2), difficulty sleeping (mean= 1.56/3, mode= 3), and feeling that everything is an effort (mean= 1.43/3, mode= 1). They reported reduced ability to work, requiring days off or reduced work-load, frequently mentioning anxiety, depression, lack of sleep, and physical illness, which they attributed to the stress of their involvement with crime and the justice system. Sixty-two percent of survey respondents disclosed that they experienced "increased anger or irritability" since they had become involved with the justice system. It was clear that the participants in this research experienced emotional distress related to the experience of crime in their family.

> *I was very over-emotional; I was crying all the time and not sleeping and worrying about everything. Even things that weren't related I was worried about so. I knew I had to do something. [FMH28]*

Some research participants, particularly the mothers of incarcerated men and women, revealed a sense of guilt and/or sorrow related to the crime which made it difficult for them to move forward.

> *Physically, mentally it takes a toll on you. And again, like I say, I know, I feel really sorry for the people who lost their lives at my son's hand; oh my God. I know what a mother would feel like, I feel horrible, horrible. [FMH05]*

In addition to processing the shock and trauma of the crime, family members are also struggling to come to terms with the loss of their family member. As Hannem (2008) has previously described, this loss is not just about the physical loss and separation due to incarceration, but also the loss of the person they thought they knew, who has done something unthinkable, as well as their hopes and dreams for that individual, most acutely felt by partners and parents.

> *I'm extremely clear that this is not who he is, this is not his personality this is not what he does. I know about all the many, many good things that he's done in his life and yet what I'm reading about him in the press and hearing about from other sources is terrible things that he's done so I'm trying to figure out did I not know my son or do I know my son? And I'm just confused about everything. I feel completely heartbroken. I feel in despair about the loss of life of his victim. I just feel like nobody in our family has ever hurt anyone before and now suddenly somebody's dead so absolutely gobsmacked. [FMH09]*

Many family members have serious difficulty in reconciling their understanding of the person that they thought they knew with the reality of the crime they have committed. This is a complicated type of loss, made all the more stressful because there is so little societal acknowledgement of the loss experienced by families of offenders, and very little support for them. Whether related to the physical separation, or a more figurative loss, families experience what Doka (1989) described as "disenfranchised grief".

> *Okay so the impact has been absolutely devastating because now we are grieving. So we're feeling, you know we're going through the grief and loss cycle as well and I have no way to explain to them [my children], you know, you're not alone and what you're feeling, is normal and is part of this. And I can say it but there's nobody else, there's no support that I can take them to and they can say it to them, 'yeah, you know, there's other children that are going through this, you're not the only children who've lost their parent due to incarceration." Locally there's nothing. [FMH15]*

At the time of the survey, 30.3% of respondents were in counselling or therapy, 36.1% were taking medication for depression, anxiety or other mental health concerns, 32% had a mental health diagnosis, and 25.4% disclosed experiencing ongoing or chronic mental health concerns.

Impact of the Justice System on Families' Mental Health

The crime and separation itself is experienced as a traumatic event by family members, regardless of whether the family member is the direct victim of the crime or a victim of the collateral damages. The implication of this is that family members are already made vulnerable to mental health challenges by the circumstances. This reality cannot be discounted in the analysis and speaks to an overarching need to make appropriate resources and support uniformly available to this group of people, much as we have made efforts to do for primary victims of crime.

The distribution of the scores on the Global Distress Scale administered in the survey replicated what would be expected in a clinical population seeking psychological counselling for mental distress, confirming that families affected by incarceration are more frequently in distress than those in the general population.

However, our data also shows that the initial trauma of crime in the family may be subsequently compounded by a range of experiences and consequences – many of which are directly related to the criminal justice process and system. Our qualitative research found that lack of information, lack of accessible support & difficulty in obtaining assistance, financial stress, stigma, worry for the incarcerated loved one, and a general sense of injustice in a system that does not consider their needs are all experienced as additional trauma by the families of offenders.

Lack of Information

A common thread that ran through all of the interviews was a sense that families are not provided enough information about the criminal justice process, their role(s) and rights in the process, and what to expect. This is a consistent theme in the existing literature on the experiences of families of offenders, dating back to the earliest research conducted with this population in the 1960s (Hannem 2008, 2011; Codd 2008; Comfort 2008; Braman 2004; Fishman 1990; Daniel & Barrett 1981; Anderson 1966; Morris 1965). This lack of information pervades all aspects of the criminal justice system, from the moment of arrest until the offender is released back to the community on parole and throughout the period of reintegration. Family members describe their struggles to obtain information about the trial process, access to the offender and visitation while incarcerated, their role in the parole process and their responsibilities with respect to community assessments. This lack of information is clearly detrimental to family members' well-being; it exacerbates stress, draws on emotional and financial resources in the process of seeking help, and generally compounds what is already a difficult experience. Family members describe feeing "lost", "uncertain", and "anxious" and discuss the steep learning curve that they encountered and often navigated alone and without assistance. As the mother of one incarcerated man put it:

> *I learned a lot of stuff, but for families being involved for the first time in crime, boy there's just not much help out there to get through a network of paperwork, and who do you contact, and how do you get there, and what you need to know? And so that to me would be the biggest thing - that there should be some kind of a help for the families, so they're not left hanging in mid-air not knowing what to do. [FMH28]*

As another mother suggested:

> *There's not enough information available for people on first time offenses. There's just not enough information available to the family, to the inmate, to anybody that has anything to do with it- there's just not. When you have to go to a criminal to find out how the system works and what's the next step, that's bad. [FMH19]*

While some families obtained useful information about criminal justice processes and "what to expect" through peer support groups, these kinds of informal resources are not available to all families, nor are all family members able to effectively seek out information and resources. Keeping in mind that these individuals are already in shock, overwhelmed, and grieving, their ability to seek out assistance may be compromised.

While there are organizations, like Canadian Families and Corrections Network, that develop resources and information for families, those who have a loved one incarcerated struggle to locate this help quickly. It is clear in the data that a lack of information during the period of incarceration has a particularly negative impact on family member's well-being. Family members are concerned about their incarcerated loved one and experience distress when they are unable to ascertain their safety, whereabouts, or unable to make contact for prolonged periods of time (often due to administrative errors, delays in processing security clearance, or inmate transfers). The mother of one incarcerated man described the struggle that she had in attempting to visit her son at a federal prison after she was told that she would be able to visit and then was unable to obtain clearance:

> *How did I cope with that? Well basically just constantly calling the prison and finding out where he was. There was no parole officer at the time so I didn't really have any contact person, but I have to say that the guards at the front who answered the phone were kind and as empathetic as they can be, I guess, because they did not always know either. [FMH32]*

There are obvious gaps in policy which may prevent families from being notified or provided detailed information in the event that their loved on is at risk, ill, or injured. The natural inclination to be worried about a loved one's safety is exaggerated in the face of the very real possibility that one may not even be aware in the event of an emergency. The sister of an incarcerated man who eventually died in prison was understandably upset that she was not notified when he became ill. In another case, the wife of an inmate related:

> *He attempted suicide [in prison]… When they had taken him to the hospital, they couldn't even tell me why he was there; they couldn't let me go see him. It was just horrible. I thought that was very cruel. It was terrible for me to go through, to experience that. I thought it was just unbelievable. And the way CSC looks at it, is that he was their client and I was a nobody. [FMH41]*

The policy barriers, including federal privacy legislation, that are intended to protect the privacy of individuals often result in unintended consequences in the context of the correctional system. Families feel shut out and are frustrated with their inability to gain access to information about their loved ones and find that they are often unable to access assistance in making contact with their loved one.

> *I would like to see more help for family members to stay in touch well with the family member in jail. There is no one that you can personally contact to see how your family member is doing while serving their time. I have not talked to my son since before Christmas of 2014. I have tried to contact the prison he is at but got nowhere. I was told that they could not help me – it was not their job. They told me my son has to talk to his case worker, but I cannot tell him that with no contact with him. I feel there is not much out there for the family members of someone who is in jail. They need to make improvements. [Survey respondent]*

The various information that participants raised as being of concern to them, as family members, ranged from information about the trial process, visiting procedures and processes for both provincial and federal facilities, how to deal with creditors seeking payment from an incarcerated loved one, dealing with child custody issues, child protective services, and assistance for grandparents who take custody of the grandchildren left alone when a parent is incarcerated. It is clear that each situation is unique and that no single resource would be able to answer all questions, however, there are standard concerns about criminal justice process, timelines, and visiting procedures that could be easily addressed. As one survey respondent stated:

> *Prison visits and correspondence can be frustrating. Families are expected to know all the rules, while nobody seems to be responsible for telling us the rules. [Survey respondent]*

Family members also commented on the lack of uniformity among federal prisons' visitation policies and processes and the difficulties that this posed when a family member was transferred to another prison and the prison expectations were changed, without any notice to the family member. The standardization of visitation policies and easily accessible information about visitation at each level of security would go a long way toward alleviating some of the anxiety and frustration that result when families feel uninformed about what to expect.

Lack of Accessible Support

Related to a lack of information, our research finds that support for family members is not uniformly available, nor necessarily easy to find. Where specialized resources and peer support groups do exist, it is often a fortuitous connection or personal referral which alerts a family member to the possibility of assistance. Family members are not systematically informed of services available in their communities, the wife of a previously incarcerated man explained:

> *I think that we've been really grateful to have support from our family and friends and just being able to find some of the resources in the community, but initially those resources were really hard to find. It felt like we had to really seek that out or it come about in a really roundabout way. There was no easy way to find that out. It would have been really helpful when the police or family and children services were first involved to say, here are some resources to help you deal with this, here's what to expect. You know 'here's some phone numbers, here's some local programs that are run.' I really didn't feel like that information was offered to us at any point. Whether it was because individuals in those professions were unaware of the programs, or didn't understand the importance or benefits of them, I'm not sure. But that would have been helpful to have some of that community support earlier on in the process. (FMH13)*

There are many communities in which peer support and specialized resources for families affected by crime are not available. Many of the participants in this research described that they were unable to find supportive services.

> *I have phoned local agencies and they don't have any programs, they don't have anything specific to this. I have tried to access, there's a program on grief and loss; unfortunately it's not running right now so that's the closest I could come to finding something. Every time I go to the correctional institution I ask the correctional officer if they know of any family support that I could access, and for some reason everybody thinks I'm meaning financial support and I'm not, I'm actually meaning emotional support. And no, I have been unable to access anything and I've definitely tried, and I've emailed, and I've called, and that's how I came across your interview. [FMH15]*

Services for children are particularly difficult to locate, and many participants told us that their children would benefit from age appropriate counselling or play therapy with individuals who are sensitive to the situation faced by children who have been separated from a loved one due to incarceration. Respondents were asked in an open-ended survey question to discuss the impact of the crime on any minor children; they were most likely to report that children were affected by the arrest and incarceration of a father or uncle. While some children are able to access counselling through their school or other local family services, there is a sense that, for many, services specifically for children affected by incarceration could assist them in understanding that they are not the only children who are facing this difficult situation, as children may often feel isolated and face stigma from their peers (or parents of peers). Where these kinds of specialized supports are available, parents describe them as "wonderful", but unfortunately these kinds of services are few and far between:

> *I would say our biggest problem is I'm having a hard time finding any supports for my children… [FMH3]*

Even more troubling, good programs are sometimes difficult to maintain:

> *[My children] were in a program run by [a community organization] here… but because of*

> *funding and cut backs the program got axed. That program would have helped many kids here. [Survey respondent]*

Families want access to services that can address their unique needs as families affected by crime and incarceration. Peer support services emerged as a particularly helpful resource, where they were available. Family members described turning to online support groups and chat-boards for families of offenders that were based in the USA. While this was of limited help in reassuring family members that they are not the only ones experiencing these kinds of hardships, most members of American chat-groups were not familiar with the Canadian system and could not offer practical advice. One value of peer support is in providing a voice of experience that can assist newcomers in navigating the complicated labyrinth of the criminal justice system and the implications of crime in the family. As a member of one particularly active peer support group told the interviewer:

> *We deal with things like, right now collection agencies that are coming after the sons. I dealt with it myself and there's another mom going through that right now and the whole issue of parole. My son got parole in September, another mom's son got parole in November and another mom's son was denied parole in December so we're dealing with the whole issue of parole. And at our meetings we also have a lot of guest speakers, so we had someone who was a past member of the parole board who came and spoke to us and then on the basis of that, three of us got together and made very a comprehensive document on parole - the whole process that you go through and, you know, pitfalls and so forth that we now have available for our members because there's a lot with sons and parole […] We've got a document about TV packages for inmates and how to get TV for your loved one if they're in the federal system. We've got a whole list of books that we have collected that our members can sign out. So the thing is that we're there to give support and just help with emotional support, but also to give out as much information as we've been able to gather. We gathered information from every mom's experiences and we put that all together and then it's ready to help the next mom that comes along in that particular situation. [FMH14]*

Given the importance for families of being able to access this kind of practical support, we would recommend that efforts be made to establish peer support groups for families affected by crime in all major centres across Canada. Further, a Canadian online family support group should be established to provide assistance to those who might not have a support group locally available to them, or who prefer the anonymity of the online medium. In addition to providing useful and practical information, the mother above also alludes to another very significant benefit of peer support groups that is directly related to the next criteria that we identified – the need to be understood and not judged.

Need for Understanding

Participants in this research repeatedly emphasised the importance of feeling understood and the value of obtaining support from individuals who could demonstrate their comprehension of the myriad ways in which crime and incarceration negatively affect individuals and families. When individuals were accessing support from professionals in the community, they were more likely to report that the assistance was helpful to them if the service provider had a clear understanding of what they were facing did not hold them responsible for their loved one's crime, nor underestimate the impact on their life and family. One woman described her relationship with her psychiatrist:

> *I get a feeling of empathy from him. Like he really understands how severely I'm hurt. How much it hurt me when all this stuff happened and how much of an impact it's had on our family. And*

> *he's able to help me see what I'm doing that could be possibly be making things worse and changing my behaviours to make it work better with my other family members. [FMH06]*

On the other hand, some participants seemed unconvinced that those who did not have the experience of crime in their family could identify enough to provide truly helpful support:

> *I think they [service providers] try to [understand], but unless you have gone through it people don't really know. People will say, 'that must have been really hard,' 'yes that is horrific.' But no, they don't really know. [FMH20]*

As demonstrated in our survey data, when family members feel understood by service providers or those giving support they are more likely to have positive outcomes from support or counselling services and less likely to report worsening mental health conditions over time. As such, the quality of support being offered to families is key and service providers should have access to training that would sensitize them to the unique needs of these clients. Participants felt that access to counselors who understood their situation was lacking:

> *For victim's assistance you know they have counselors who kind of know, they know you know what the victim is going through and all that. Whereas there's nobody that knows that I've found yet what the family members of the incarcerated are going through. [FMH24]*

The desire to be understood also has implications for the establishment of peer support groups. While 85% of those who sought out a peer support group were happy with the group's response to their concerns, those who had negative experiences of peer support reported that it was because group members or leaders made them feel "judged", or had "an air of superiority". Community agencies or individuals who are interested in starting peer support groups for families affected by crime should be provided with resources and best practices to facilitate an inclusive and supportive environment that will best meet the needs of family members.

Financial Effects

Consistent with the body of existing literature on families affected by crime and incarceration, the financial impact of a loved one's crime remains one of the leading causes of stress for families. Participants in this research repeatedly raised financial difficulties as a significant factor in their lives that affected their physical and mental well-being. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents reported that they had experienced financial difficulty or increased financial strain. They described mortgaging their homes to pay legal bills, putting money in institutional accounts to ensure that their loved one can make phone calls and purchase necessities at the prison canteen, shouldering the burden of travel to and from the prison for family visit days, and paying for the cost of groceries for private family visits. Traditionally, the largest financial burden of incarceration has fallen on the shoulders of the wives or partners of inmates who lose an income earner and also incur additional costs associated with incarceration (see Hannem 2008; 2011). However, our data suggests that the parents of incarcerated persons are often also very affected by these costs. Many of the survey respondents and interview participants were on fixed incomes and found these kinds of additional expenses to be significant hardships. As for any individual, financial distress may have a negative impact on mental health, increasing stress and anxiety.

While there may be little that that can be done to systematically alleviate the financial difficulties faced by the families of offenders, and their attendant mental health implications, there are many small

changes which could, collectively, serve to reduce the financial burden placed on families and increase their sense of value and inclusion in the correctional system. Such changes might include reducing or eliminating the costs of phone calls from inmates to their families, providing low- (or no) cost accommodations close to prisons for families visiting incarcerated loved ones, providing modest food staples and meals for families in private family visits, reimbursing travel expenses for prison visits (particularly in situations when visits are unexpectedly cancelled due to prison lock-downs or other security issues). Low cost accommodations were previously available to families visiting prisons in the city of Kingston through the non-profit charity "Bridge House", which lost its funding and was forced to close its doors in 2010. The impact of the loss of this resource can be seen in interview participants who struggled with finding affordable accommodations for their visits. As one mother suggested:

> *I would really like it if the federal workers here in the local area could sort of, direct, or give somebody a number […] They should be able to give that information and say, "Oh, yes, by the way, this is all new to you and you've never gone through this so, here's a number, here's people who can absolutely help you and guide you through this, the whole process of setting up your visits and what to expect and the hotels and, you know, it's a huge expense. [FMH32]*

Given the known benefits of family contact and relationships for successful offender reintegration, small investments in facilitating family contact and improving family relationships with correctional services would pay dividends in increased public safety and lowered recidivism, and also relieve some of the financial burden that families shoulder.

Sense of Injustice

Family members who lacked information about the criminal justice system and about their loved one's case or situation, and/or who experienced negative treatment themselves from people working in the criminal justice system, often developed a sense that the system was "unjust". Many family members had a high expectation that the deprivation of liberty alone should comprise the punishment for their family member's crime and that additional indignities, deprivations, or abuses constituted unfair treatment on the part of the prison system. Some family members described believing, for example, that their incarcerated loved one did not receive adequate food, medical treatment, or was treated unfairly by correctional staff.

> *It's gone beyond any reasonable treatment of people, I mean is it not they're supposed to lose their freedom, that's all that they're supposed to lose is their freedom, but they lose everything. They seem to think that freedom is attached to everything that they do. My husband has allergies. He can't eat certain foods, do they make an effort to try to get him anything that he's not allergic to? I think not. He's had to contact Ottawa on several occasions just to get some food that he can eat brought in to him and it's not that it's anything special it's just things like soya milk or non-dairy cheese. A few things like that, like he can't eat eggs, you know like I just- I could go on with this for hours. [FMH22]*

> *My son was thrown in segregation because he refused to go into, when they brought him into a range. He was supposed to go into protective custody and they put him in segregation and it was solitary confinement. They took everything away from him and all he was allowed in there was a bible. But he didn't have one. […] He wasn't violent he didn't do anything, it was just something that they decided because they felt like it. There's some things that just don't make sense to me and I mean I know he's, I know he did something wrong, I know he's a criminal but my goodness, even human rights tells you. I mean they take you from one cell to another cell that hasn't even*

> *been cleaned and, 'oh no, you can't clean it until the weekend, we're on lockdown.' […] Well how can you put somebody in somebody else's squalor? [FMH19]*

Put in context, these individuals are already worried about their loved one's well-being, and they have no ready source of information and communication with the correctional system; they react with anger against a system that makes them feel powerless. Other family members discussed their belief that the prison system should be preparing inmates for successful release – that the correctional focus should be on rehabilitation and reintegration, rather than harsh punishment. They are concerned that the treatment of the correctional system will make their loved one "worse" rather than better able to return to the community:

> *So I've come from a position of caring and loving and trying to make people better and I'm suddenly in a world that is actually setting out to structure things to make people worse. […] Why we pay all this money to make people worse I do not know, but we do. [FMH09]*

Family members clearly experience distress over the treatment of their family members. It was evident that many have grown to distrust or have little respect for criminal justice officials, including police, lawyers, and correctional staff. This sense of injustice may also emerge from their own treatment by people working in the system and the sense of transferred stigma or "courtesy stigma" (Goffman 1963) in which the family members of offenders are treated as though they are themselves criminal (see Hannem 2012, 2011). While some participants in this research reported positive interactions with correctional staff, many reported very negative experiences and characterise their interactions with the prison as "traumatic":

> *The worst part of this whole situation is how I get treated by the prison staff and the traumatic events they have put me through when trying to pass through security. I have been accused several times of contraband when this is completely against my character and values, and yet it is their word against mine…The system is set up to make it very hard and discouraging for family members to visit their loved ones. [survey participant]*

> *Corrections has done nothing to help our family. In fact, they have put more stress on us by the way me and my children get treated by the guards when we go into visits. My kids have a very negative view of the guards – not because of anything I have said or done but by the manner in which the guards treat the visitors. They have been witness to some pretty disturbing acts by the guards and my kids have no respect for them as they see the abuse of power. [survey participant]*

When inmates' family visits are restricted, family members perceive this as a punishment to *them.* The wife of one prisoner had this to say about the fact that private family visits were restricted to one every 8 weeks, due to capacity issues:

> *They should have half a dozen or ten personal family visit units. If you can afford it you should be able to go there every weekend if you want to. I mean, why should I suffer because of what my husband did? That's not even logical. I'm punished as well as he's punished- we're all punished. [FMH22]*

Repeatedly, family members described a sense that the Correctional Service of Canada and provincial corrections did not do enough to facilitate family contact with incarcerated loved ones. The link between strong family relationships, lowered recidivism, and successful reintegration has long been acknowledged by correctional officials; yet, this recognition has not seemingly filtered into the

development of family-friendly policies and a conscious strategy of enabling family contact and support. Families continue to experience many negative interactions with correctional staff and perceive themselves as the unfair scapegoats of prison anti-drug strategies. Families are keenly aware that they are treated differently than correctional staff when it comes to surveillance and drug scanning:

> *We are searched, and my sister and brother have been out to visit my son and the dog goes over them with a fine tooth comb and finds nothing. My brother insists there's no way any drugs could get into the institution and yet they have a drug problem in the institution, but they don't do the same kind of stuff for staff. I've seen their staff walk in and out all the time. And that's the sort of stuff, let alone what they're doing for the people who are dropping off the food or whatever other supplies have to come into the place. I doubt that the problem really is visitors. [FMH09]*

As with previous research, although family members recognize the need for institutional security to keep drugs out of the prison, they argue that the system over-emphasises the risk posed by family visitors, while at the same time neglecting the risk posed by staff (see Hannem 2008, 2011, 2012). When family members experience the criminal justice system as unjust, their confidence in the system is diminished and they experience greater anxiety about their loved one's well-being and safety, and about their own interactions with the system, all of which may exacerbate emotional and mental distress. This finding emphasises the importance of developing and enforcing policies which take into account the well-being of family members, treat family members with respect, and avoiding policies which stigmatize or label family members based solely on their relationship with an accused or convicted person.

Barriers to Help Seeking

While many family members in this study did seek assistance from community agencies, health and mental health professionals, and from friends and family, a significant number did not initially seek help or described hesitation to seek help. Each of the factors discussed above has implications for help seeking. For example, if information on available services is not provided, or assistance is not easily accessible, family members are less likely to seek it out and less likely to find supportive services. If family members do not feel understood or encounter unsympathetic responses from service providers, they will discontinue their use of services; several participants described ending therapeutic relationships with counsellors or psychologists who they felt did not understand the effects of criminal justice involvement on their well-being, and participants abandoned peer support groups that were not perceived as helpful or inclusive. It is very clear that fears of stigmatization or judgement impact individuals' decisions to seek help and their ability to access support in the community. As the partner of one incarcerated man described:

> *I think the biggest difficulty that I have faced is the feeling that I was all alone; feeling that nobody would understand. Believing I guess is the word. Believing that there was nobody there quite in my situation, and that nobody would really genuinely understand why I made the decision that I made. I think that somebody experiences that same feeling when they decide to stay with someone who has committed an offence. I actually decided to become involved with someone who had committed an offence, so it is the same sort of thing. It is just that being judged, it is the biggest obstacle. I was judged by many, many people. People who I thought were my friends, professionals, a psychiatrist judged me...he said to me, "I think that you know you have been a very, very reasonable person 'till now." I mean, he actually said that. [FMH30]*

Financial struggles also affect help-seeking; many participants disclosed that they were unable to afford private counselling or psychological services, and believed (correctly or incorrectly) that coverage was

not available to them, so therefore they did not seek out support. The provision of information on available provincial coverage for mental health counselling or "sliding-scale" payment structures that are locally available would be a great benefit for many families.

Finally, mistrust of the criminal justice system also prevents some family members from accessing services. Although it is clear that family members require support and assistance from the moment that their loved one is arrested and charged, many family members are concerned about the possible legal implications of talking to a counsellor. One research participant disclosed fears that confidential conversations with a counsellor might be subpoenaed as evidence in her son's trial. Some family members were advised by lawyers against seeking out peer support or talking about the situation with a counsellor. Family members often perceive members of the criminal justice system as the "gatekeepers" of information that they need, but they are reluctant to engage with them for fear of negative treatment or negative repercussions to their loved one.

Each of these barriers represents a space of opportunity for those working in the helping professions and the criminal justice system to develop family-friendly policies and responses that would make it easier for families to obtain the assistance that they need.

CONCLUSION

While the survey data paints a vivid picture of individuals and families in distress, our conversations with these family members do provide hope. Families affected by incarceration face many difficulties, and yet, one is struck by their resilience, their tenacity in the face of a system that is not set up to accommodate them, and the incredible strength of their family bonds and commitment to maintaining relationships, despite heartbreak and hardships. The wife of an incarcerated man said:

> *Just because someone does something wrong, you don't stop loving them. You can't make yourself stop loving the person no matter what they do, whether it's good or whether it's bad. So as their journey escalates you're taken along on that journey too and no matter how bad it is or how good it is, you are part of it and so it affects every facet of your life. [FMH22]*

The choice to continue to support a family member convicted of a crime has serious consequences for one's life, and yet it is a choice that many people make, often because they can see no other way – they firmly believe that families continue to love and support one another. As one mother said:

> *I have always said, I don't know when you would abandon a child, what point you would say no more. [FMH35]*

In other cases, families affected by incarceration do end relationships with convicted persons. In our data, this was most common in cases of estranged spouses/partners, or in cases where the family member was also the primary victim of the crime ("family-victims" – see Hannem & Leonardi 2014). While these individuals were still affected by their proximity to crime and incarceration (they may suffer long-term financial and emotional consequences), they viewed the choice to end the relationship and contact as a positive step forward for them. Relationship breakdown is a common phenomenon among women married to men who are incarcerated for long periods of time, which makes those relationships that do last that much more remarkable.

Families of offenders should be viewed as key partners in the correctional journey – their presence and support is vital to the successful release and reintegration of their loved ones. We all benefit when family

relationships are kept strong. As such, we have a social obligation to look for ways to alleviate the family's struggles, where possible, and to ensure that family members have the necessary services they need to address the emotional trauma and distress caused by their loved one's crime. These people have not been convicted of a crime, and do not deserve to be punished. By engaging them as partners, providing information, respecting their needs, and ensuring access to adequate support services, we will help to ensure better outcomes for families affected by crime and incarceration, better outcomes for offenders, and an increase in public safety. In conclusion, we have the following concrete recommendations to offer, emerging from this research and drawing on the needs expressed by the families who participated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policies on prison visiting should respect the dignity and needs of everyone in Canadian institutions – staff, inmates and prisoners' family members should all be subject to the same rules across the country and treated with courtesy and respect.
2. Prison visiting facilities and policies should be "family-friendly", to the extent that this can be accomplished without unduly compromising the safety of inmates and staff.
3. Increase in services that support programming and knowledge resources for family members of those in the criminal justice system.
4. Establishment of peer support groups and resources for families affected by crime in each major centre in Canada.
5. Establishment of an online peer support group / discussion board for families affected by crime, operated and moderated by a non-profit organization with expertise in the effects of crime on families.
6. Affordable and effective support services for children affected by crime and incarceration should be made available across Canada, and easily accessible to parents.
7. Each arm of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections, parole) develops a standard resource to be provided to families of accused/convicted persons at first contact; the resource should describe the criminal justice process, what the family member might expect to happen, and provide contact information for an individual who can assist with inquiries [see recommendation #8]. This resource should also be readily available online and accessible by key search terms.
8. Each arm of the criminal justice system should employ a family liaison officer who is easily accessible to families and equipped to provide timely and accurate responses to family inquiries and referrals to local resources / supports.
9. Development of training modules for mental health professionals, counsellors, social service providers, and individuals working in the criminal justice system that would raise awareness of the effects of crime and incarceration on families and provide best practices for effectively serving this population.
10. Take measures to reduce the financial burden of incarceration on families of offenders, including covering the costs of telephone calls, private family visits, and accommodations for families who travel to visit their loved ones.
11. Continued efforts to destigmatize families of offenders, including community awareness of the impact of crime on families and challenging myths and stereotypes about families affected by crime and incarceration.
12. Continued research concerning the intersections of crime and children and the effects of parental incarceration with respect to children visiting in prison, segregated visitation and video visitation.

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Mental Health Effects of Crime on the Family Survey

This research is being conducted by Dr. Stacey Hannem from the Department of Criminology at Wilfrid Laurier University on behalf of Canadian Families and Corrections Network. The research is funded by the Department of Public Safety Canada. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the effects of crime on the family of those who have committed a criminal offence. If you are an individual over the age of 16 years whose family member has been charged and/or convicted of a criminal offence, you are eligible and invited to participate in this research and share the impact of crime on your mental health and well-being.

If you choose to participate in this research you will be asked to answer questions and provide personal information about your current and past mental and physical wellness, the kinds of services and assistance you have accessed and your satisfaction with them, your use of coping strategies, your relationship to the loved one who committed the crime, and your social integration. You will respond to these questions through a survey comprised of 43 questions, which should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. There are no physical or social risks to your participation in this study, however, some of the questions may cause you to feel sad or uncomfortable. You have the right to decline to answer (skip) any questions that you choose and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you require assistance to complete the survey, you may contact CFCN at 1-888-371-2326 and provide your answers over the telephone.

We currently lack information about the impact of crime on the well-being of the offender's family members; specifically, we do not have a clear picture of the scope of the effect on mental health, the services accessed by family members, or if families are being well served by existing programs and resources. By participating in this survey you are helping to provide a better understanding of the kinds of difficulties that family members face and the kind of services that are needed to better respond to the harms caused by crime. For your participation, you may enter into a draw for a $100 gift card by providing contact information at the end of the survey. At the end of the survey you will also be offered the opportunity to provide a contact name and number to participate in an optional follow-up telephone interview. You do not have to agree to be contacted for a follow-up interview in order to participate in the survey or to be eligible for the draw.

All of the information that you provide is anonymous and cannot be traced to you, as an individual participant. If you choose to provide your contact information for the draw, it will be used only for this purpose and will not be linked to your survey responses in any way, nor used for follow-up contact unless you give your express consent. While we have made every effort to ensure the confidentiality of your responses, this cannot be guaranteed, due to the nature of the internet. Information transmitted over the internet cannot be secured and may possibly be intercepted by a third party.

If you have questions at any time about the study, or you experience negative effects as a result of participating in this study please contact the Lead Researcher, Dr. Stacey Hannem at shannem@wlu.ca or 519-756-8228 ext 5785 or Louise Leonardi, Executive Director of CFCN at national@cfcn-rcafd.org ; 1-888-371-2326. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University (Project #4260).

The results of this research will be published in a report to Public Safety Canada, the funders of this research; the report will be available on the CFCN website (*www.cfcn-rcafd.org*) at the conclusion of this project and no later than June 2015. The data may be used for other publications such as conference presentations, journal articles, or book chapters, which will also be made available on the CFCN website. If you wish to receive copies of any publication of the research results, you may contact CFCN or the Lead Researcher (Dr. Stacey Hannem) at any time.

At the conclusion of this project and no later than June 2015, a summary of the research findings will be made available on the CFCN website:

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If any of the questions make you uncomfortable, or you do not wish to answer for any reason, you may choose not to answer them and "skip" the

question. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw from the study, every effort will be made to remove your data from the study and have it destroyed. Because this project employs e-based data collection techniques, the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission. Please print or save a copy of this information page for your records.

By giving consent below, you indicate that you have read the above description of the research and your rights and that you give consent for the researchers to collect and use the data that you provide for the purposes of this study.

Please circle an option below. If you do not wish to participate, please return your survey to the researcher.

I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICPATE

Demographics

1. Gender:

□Female
□Male
□transgender
□Other

2. Age range:

□16-20 years
□21-29 years
□30-39 years
□40-49 years
□50-59 years
□60+

3. How many years has it been since your first involvement with the criminal justice system?

□ Less than one year
□ 1-2 years
□ 3-5 years
□ 6-10 years
□ More than 10 years

4. The convicted or incarcerated family member is my:

□ mother
□ father
□ husband (married or common law)
□wife (married or common law)
□aunt
□uncle
□ niece
□ nephew
□ step-mother
□step-father
□son
□daughter
□grandfather
□grandmother
□boyfriend
□girlfriend
□brother
□sister
□other:

_____

5. Employment status:

□ Employed full-time
□Employed part-time
□In school
□Unemployed
□Retired
□Disability or medical pension
□Other

6. In which province or territory do you currently reside?
□Alberta
□British Columbia
□Manitoba
□New Brunswick
□Newfoundland and Labrador
□North West Territories
□Nova Scotia
□Nunavut
□Ontario
□Prince Edward Island
□Quebec
□Saskatchewan
□Yukon Territories

7. What is the status of your family member who was charged or convicted of a crime?
□Currently incarcerated
□Currently serving community sentence (i.e probation or house arrest)
□On parole
□Previously incarcerated- sentence completed
□Completed community sentence
□Incarcerated while awaiting trial (remand)
□Awaiting trial in the community (on bail)
□Acquitted
□Other

8. If your loved one is/was incarcerated approximately how far is the prison from your place of residence? (one way travel)
□In the same city
□Less than 50 km
□50-99km
□100-199km
□200-499km
□500-1000km

□More than 1000km
□Not Applicable

9. What is your ethnic background?

Wellness Assessment Scale

10. In the past WEEK how much did the following problems bother you? Please check the most appropriate answer for each problem.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot
Nervousness or shakiness				
Feeling sad or blue				
Feeling hopeless about the future				
Feeling everything is an effort				
Feeling no interest in things				
Your heart pounding or racing				
Trouble sleeping				
Feeling fearful or afraid				
Difficulty at home				
Difficulty interacting with family/friend or others				
Difficulty at work or school				

11. How much do you agree with the following? Please check the most appropriate answer for each statement.

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot
I feel good about myself				
I can deal with problems				
I am able to accomplish the things I want				
I have friends or family that I can count on for help				

12. In the past week, approximately how many alcoholic beverages did you drink?

_____

13. In general would you say that your health is:
□Excellent
□Very Good
□Good
□Fair
□Poor

14. Please indicate if you have a serious or chronic medical condition (select all that apply):
□Asthma
□Diabetes
□Heart Disease
□Back or other chronic pain
□Other:

_____

15. In the past 6 months approximately how many times did you visit a medical doctor?

_____

16. In the past month, how many days were you unable to work because of your physical or mental health? (Answer only if employed or in school).

_____

17. In the past month, how many days were you able to work, but had to cut back on how much you got done because of your physical or mental health? (Answer only if employed or in school).

_____

18. In the past month have you felt you ought to cut down on your drinking or drug use?
□Yes
□No

19. In the past month have you ever felt annoyed by people criticizing your drinking or drug use?
□Yes
□No

20. In the past month have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking or drug use?
□Yes
□No

Health Status and Assistance Over Time

21. Prior to involvement with the criminal justice system did you: (check all that apply)
□Seek counselling or therapy for emotional or mental health concerns?
□Take medication for depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns?
□Have a diagnosis related to mental health concerns (i.e depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress)
□Have ongoing or chronic health problems?
□Have ongoing or chronic mental health concerns?

22. At the time of the offence did you: (check all that apply)

□Seek counselling or therapy for emotional or mental health concerns?
□Take medication for depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns?
□Have a diagnosis related to mental health concerns (i.e depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress)
□Have ongoing or chronic health problems?
□Have ongoing or chronic mental health concerns?

23. Do you currently: (check all that apply)

□Seek counselling or therapy for emotional or mental health concerns?
□Take medication for depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns?

□Have a diagnosis related to mental health concerns (i.e depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress)
□Have ongoing or chronic health problems?
□Have ongoing or chronic mental health concerns?

Services Accessed

24. Have you ever sought assistance from a physician to address concerns related to your experience of crime in the family?
□Yes, at the time of the offence
□Yes some time after the offence
□No, never

25. Were you satisfied with your physician's response to your concerns?
□Yes
□No
□Not applicable

26. Please comment on any positive or negative experiences:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

27. Have you ever sought assistance from a counsellor/therapist or psychologist to address concerns related to your experience of crime in the family?

□Yes, at the time of the offence
□Yes, some time after the offence
□No, never

28. Were you satisfied with your counsellor/therapist's response to your concerns?
□Yes
□No
□Not applicable

29. Please comment on any negative or positive experiences:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

30. Have you ever sought assistance from a peer support group to address concerns related to your experience of crime in the family?

□Yes, at the time of the offence
□ Yes, some time after the offence
□No, Never

31. Were you satisfied with your peer support group's response to your concerns?
□ Yes
□No

32. Please comment on any positive or negative experiences:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Coping Strategies

33. Please indicate if you have used any of the following coping mechanisms in response to crime in the family: (check all that apply)
□Exercise
□Prescription medication
□Over the counter medication
□Meditation
□Street drugs
□Alcohol
□Peer support
□Journaling/writing
□Art
□Yoga
□Religious practice/prayer
□Other:

---

34. What coping mechanisms have you found to be most helpful in dealing with crime in your family? (Please list:)
_____
_____
_____
_____

35. Since becoming involved with the criminal justice system have you: (check all that apply)
□Attempted suicide?
□Broken the law to provide for your family
□Engaged in self-harm (i.e. cutting, hair-pulling or other forms of self-injury)?
□Struggled with abuse of drugs or alcohol?
□Engaged in eating disorder behaviour?
□Misused or overused prescription medication?
□Experienced financial difficulty or increased financial strain?
□Experienced increased anger or irritability?

Social/Family Context

36. How much do you agree with the following statements

	Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
My family member understands the impact of his/her crime on my well-being			
My financial situation has been negatively affected by the experience of crime in my family.			
My family is supportive			
My friends are supportive			
My relationships with friends have been negatively affected by the experience of crime in my family			
My relationships with family members have been negatively affected by the experience of crime in my family.			
My relationships with co-workers and/or my			

employer have been negatively affected by the experience of crime in my family.			
I continue to have contact with my family member who is involved with the criminal justice system.			
I have a positive relationship with my family member who is involved with the criminal justice system.			
I worry for my family member's safety while incarcerated.			
I worry for my safety or the safety of other family members.			
I feel ashamed by my family member's crime and/or involvement in the criminal justice system			
I feel isolated in my community			
I feel stigmatized due to my family member's involvement in the criminal justice system			

37. If you have a child(ren) in your family who has/have been affected by your family's experiences with crime and the justice system, please comment on how you feel the child(ren) have been affected by this experience.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

38. What resources or supports have the child(ren) in your family been provided with in response to the impact of crime on your family? Were these supports or resources adequate to address their needs?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

39. We would like to give you the opportunity to explain in more detail how your family member's crime has affected your life and well-being. We are particularly interested in hearing about anything that was helpful or not helpful so that we can better assist other families. If you would like to provide any additional information about your situation or experience, please enter it below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

40. I am willing to be contacted directly by the researcher and/or the Canadian Families and Corrections Network to participate in a follow up telephone interview about the impact of crime and the criminal justice system on my well-being

☐Yes
☐No

41. I wish to be contacted directly by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network to receive more information or referrals to community resources

☐Yes
☐No

42. If we can contact you, please provide your first name and preferred contact phone number or email:

43. Draw and Finish

Thank you for your time!
If you wish to be entered into a draw for a $100 gift card, please enter your email address below. This information will not be associated with your responses and will only be used to contact you if you win the draw.

APPENDIX B

Mental Health Effects of Crime on the Family
Follow-up Interview

Verbal Consent Statement

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. I need to confirm that you are aware that this is a follow-up interview for the purposes of our research on the effects of crime on the mental health and well-being of families. The research is being conducted by Dr. Stacey Hannem from Wilfrid Laurier University in partnership with Canadian Families and Corrections Network, and the research is funded by Public Safety Canada. Did you receive the research information sheet that was sent to you after we last spoke? Do you have any questions about the information that was provided?

As indicated at the beginning of the web survey, this research was approved by the research ethics board of Wilfrid Laurier University. If you agree to participate in the interview today, you will be asked to talk about the impact of your family member's crime on your life and well-being. This interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes of your time. If at any time, my questions cause you to feel sad or uncomfortable, or you don't want to answer, please just let me know that you would prefer not to answer the question and we can move on to something else. You can refuse to answer any questions or end the interview at any time. There will be no negative repercussions if you end the interview or decline to take part. You will still be welcome to contact CFCN and use any services that we offer at any time.

In any response that you provide, I will alter any names or identifying information that you mention, including places or details of events that might enable people to identify you and the data will be store and analysed without identifying information.

If you agree, I will be recording our conversation to ensure that I accurately capture your answers. If you don't agree to be recorded, I will be taking detailed notes of what you say. Will you agree to be recorded, or would you prefer not?

When we write up the research, we may wish to use direct quotes from this interview. May we quote you directly? Do you wish to have the opportunity to review any direct quotes before we use them? Do you have any questions about this research?

Do you CONSENT to take part in this research and allow us to use your answers to these questions for the purposes of our analysis and written report(s) and articles?

Thank you. Is now a good time to continue with the interview?

1. Describe the impact of your family member's crime on your life and well-being?
2. What are the biggest difficulties that you have faced and how have you coped with these?
3. What kind of help have you sought to deal with the impact of the crime on your life?
    a. How did you make the decision to seek help or not?
4. Were you happy with the help that you received? Why or why not?

5. Did you feel that the person/people who assisted you (counsellor, doctor, etc.) understood the impact of crime on your mental wellness and on your family?
6. What is your relationship with the family member who has committed a crime? What kind of contact do you have with this person? Is this a positive or negative relationship for you?
7. What kind of community/social support do you have? Is this support helpful for your mental well-being?
8. If you have children, or there are children in your family who have been affected by this experience, please comment on any impact of their family member's crime on their lives that you have seen.

Thank you. Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that you think is important about the impact of crime on your well-being and that of your family?

Note: This is a semi-structured interview and, as such, all interviews will include the above questions, but the interviewer may probe responses and allow the participant to share additional concerns that are not specifically reflected in these questions.