

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA**

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

# The Impact of Electronic Monitoring on Correctional Outcomes

*Electronic Monitoring contributes to improved community supervision practices and a lower risk of return to custody.*

**Why we did this study**

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) conducted a national Electronic Monitoring (EM) Research Pilot to examine its effectiveness in promoting positive community outcomes for federal offenders while maintaining public safety. This report focuses on the community supervision outcomes associated with the use of EM as a supervision tool. The outcomes investigated include impacts on correctional outcomes (e.g., suspensions, revocations), conditional release decision-making, offenders' behaviour in the community, as well as staff and offender experiences with EM.

**What we did**

Data for eligible EM participants were collected between July 27, 2015 and November 26, 2018. The referral criteria for the EM Research Pilot was restricted to medium/high risk offenders. A total of 770 EM participants were compared to a non-EM matched control group ( $N = 770$ ) based on demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, Indigenous status), offence and risk information (e.g., sex offender status, reintegration potential), and release characteristics (e.g., region of supervision, supervision type, special conditions, residency).

Staff with experience with EM (e.g., Community Parole Officers, Parole Officer Supervisors, other CSC staff;  $N = 300$ ), Parole Board of Canada Board Members ( $N = 32$ ) and offenders monitored using EM ( $N = 249$ ) also took the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences.

**What we found**

Overall, compared to non-EM offenders, EM participants had comparable revocations with or without an offence. Once controlling for other factors (e.g., security level at release, Criminal Risk Index level), the control group was 67% more likely to return to custody than the EM participants. EM participants also spent a longer period of time in the community prior to their first suspension or revocation. However, EM participants were more likely to have a suspension, although they were more likely to have those suspensions cancelled, expired, or withdrawn.

EM participants were more likely than the control group to be released by their eligibility date, suggesting that the

availability of EM may allow some offenders to be recommended for release when they otherwise would not have been recommended. EM participants also received fewer special conditions, and there were differences between groups in terms of the types of conditions imposed (i.e., beyond geographic, curfew and residency).

Most staff agreed that EM is an effective and efficient tool for monitoring geographic and curfew conditions. For the most part, findings showed that both staff and offenders reported no impacts of EM on the housing, family, or other relationships of EM participants. While staff did not report any impacts of EM on employment, offenders viewed EM as having negative effects in this area. However, objective measures indicated that EM participants were in fact more likely to be employed and for longer periods.

**What it means**

Taken together, the findings of the study suggest that the use of EM may contribute to reducing recidivism. The utilization of EM as a supervision tool also demonstrated added benefits over traditional supervision in facilitating the safe reintegration of eligible offenders into the community.

As one part of the overall community strategy, EM appeared to contribute to conditional release decision making. If EM is implemented nationally, enhanced effectiveness may be achieved by reserving its use for offenders with geographic conditions (or in combination with curfew conditions) as these offenders demonstrated more positive community supervision outcomes during the study period than offenders with curfews alone.

**For more information**

Hanby, L., Ridha, T., Sullivan, R., Smeth, A., & Farrell MacDonald, S. (2019). *The Impact of Electronic Monitoring on Offender Supervision and Correctional Outcomes* (Research Report R-428). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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