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MEDIA RELEASE

Violence, stress on rise for corrections workers

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The severity of job violence and stress faced by B.C.'s correctional workers precipitates a need for changes in their workplace, according to a new study by Simon Fraser University criminologist [Neil Boyd](#).

Correctional Officers in British Columbia, 2011: Abnormal Working Conditions, a report released today, tracks more than 200 workers over the spring and summer of 2011. More than 90 per cent cite more difficulty and stress in their jobs in recent years.

Increased concern for their personal safety, high inmate-to-staff ratios, poor relationships with management and increased counts of mentally disordered and gang-involved inmates were among key stress factors.

Boyd is calling for a reduction in the inmate to staff ratio to a pre-2002 level of 20-to-one, as well as a review of direct supervision.

"These workplaces have deteriorated significantly over the past decade—more assaults on staff, less safety for inmates," says Boyd. "The provincial government needs to invest more human capital in corrections."

Among the report's findings:

- More than a quarter of workers had been physically assaulted by an inmate, while two-thirds had received a credible threat of harm from an inmate
- More than 90 per cent had been exposed to blood and 75 percent to feces, spit and urine
- More than 90 per cent had responded to requests for staff assistance and to medical emergencies, and one in five have witnessed an inmate's death

Boyd says the provincial government needs to acknowledge abnormal working conditions and suggests B.C. Corrections and correctional officers should work collaboratively to find solutions.

The 2011 survey was created with consultation from the B.C. Government Employees' Union (BCGEU) and individual correctional officers.

In a study nearly a decade ago (2002) Boyd found B.C.'s correctional officers are at higher risk of on-the-job criminal violence than any other employees in the province.

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