



Juristat

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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ADULT CORRECTIONAL SERVICES IN CANADA, 1996-97

Micheline Reed¹

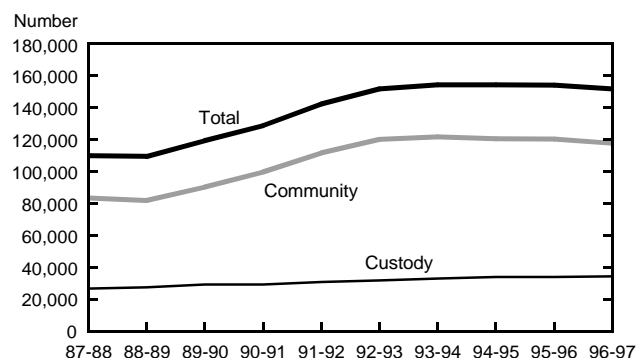
Julian V. Roberts²

Highlights

- After nearly a decade of rapid growth, Canada's adult correctional population has stabilized since 1993-94. On any given day, nearly 152,000 adults were incarcerated or under some form of community supervision in 1996-97, down almost 2% from a year earlier. Nearly eight in every ten of these people were on probation or parole. Despite the marginal drop, the average daily caseload in 1996-97 remained 38% higher than a decade ago.
- On any given day in 1996-97, approximately 34,167 adults were behind bars in Canada, an increase of just 382 people (1%) over the previous year. An average of 20,024 adults were in provincial/territorial institutions at any time during 1996-97, up 1.5% from the previous year. The average number of offenders in federal penitentiaries increased by almost 1% over the same period to 14,143.
- The typical offender serving a provincial/territorial sentence (under two years) was male, aged 31 years, convicted of a property offence, and serving a one month sentence. The typical federal offender (sentences of two years or more) was male, aged 36 years, convicted of robbery, and serving a 43 month sentence.
- One in four sentenced admissions to provincial/territorial custody was for failing to pay a fine.
- The vast majority of parolees serve their parole terms in the community without committing another criminal offence. Among federal parolees (the more serious offenders), less than 2% of parole terms were terminated for a violent criminal charge.
- Of the 92 inmate deaths in 1996-97, nearly one-half were suicides. The inmate suicide rate was more than twice that of the Canadian adult population.
- The proportion of admissions to federal institutions who are Aboriginal peoples is increasing: it was 15% in 1996-97 and 11% in 1991-92. Aboriginal peoples accounted for 16% of provincial sentenced admissions, up from 15% in 1991-92.
- While the custodial population remained virtually the same, the cost of housing an inmate for a year rose 3% from 1995-96 to average \$43,643 per inmate.

Figure 1

Average daily number of provincial/territorial and federal offenders in custody or under supervision in the community, 1987-88 to 1996-97



Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

When an offender is sentenced to confinement in a correctional facility, or to some community-based program, they come under the supervision of a correctional agency. These agencies will assume responsibility for implementing the sanctions imposed by the courts, assess the offender's needs (e.g. drug and alcohol treatment), and strive to minimize the offender's risk of re-offending.

The responsibility for administering corrections in Canada is shared between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. There are three distinct components to the Correctional population: remand prisoners³, offenders sentenced to custody, and offenders serving part or all of their sentences in the community. The federal government (Ministry of the Solicitor General Canada) is responsible for all offenders sentenced to a term of imprisonment of two years or more, and has jurisdiction over those same inmates who are then released into the community under some form of conditional release program (e.g., day parole, full parole). The provincial and territorial systems handle inmates serving a sentence of less than two years, including community-based sanctions such as probation. In addition, provincial and territorial systems are responsible for all persons held in remand, regardless of the seriousness of the crime committed. Correctional agencies thus assume responsibility for implementing sentences imposed by the courts. This responsibility includes ensuring that offenders comply with court-imposed conditions, and providing supervision and treatment to minimize the risk that offenders will re-offend once their sentences have been completed. Figure 2 presents an overview of the major events in the adult correctional system.

This *Juristat* will look at sentenced offenders who are serving a sentence either in a correctional facility or in the community. The size of these populations is affected by many variables. Changes in the crime rate will result in more or fewer cases being processed by the courts. This in turn will have an impact on the number of persons admitted to prison or to a period of probation. Changes in sentencing patterns as a result of evolving judicial attitudes towards sentencing alternatives (i.e., community service, restitution) may also have an effect on the correctional population. Finally, legislative reforms relating to the sentencing or parole systems will also determine the volume and nature of correctional populations. For example, recent federal legislation relating to the illegal use of firearms created mandatory 4-year minimum terms of imprisonment.

Over the past decade, correctional populations have increased considerably. A dramatic increase occurred between 1987-88 and 1992-93, when the average daily correctional population increased from 110,000 to 152,000 (+38%). However, the total correctional population declined for the third consecutive year in 1996-97.

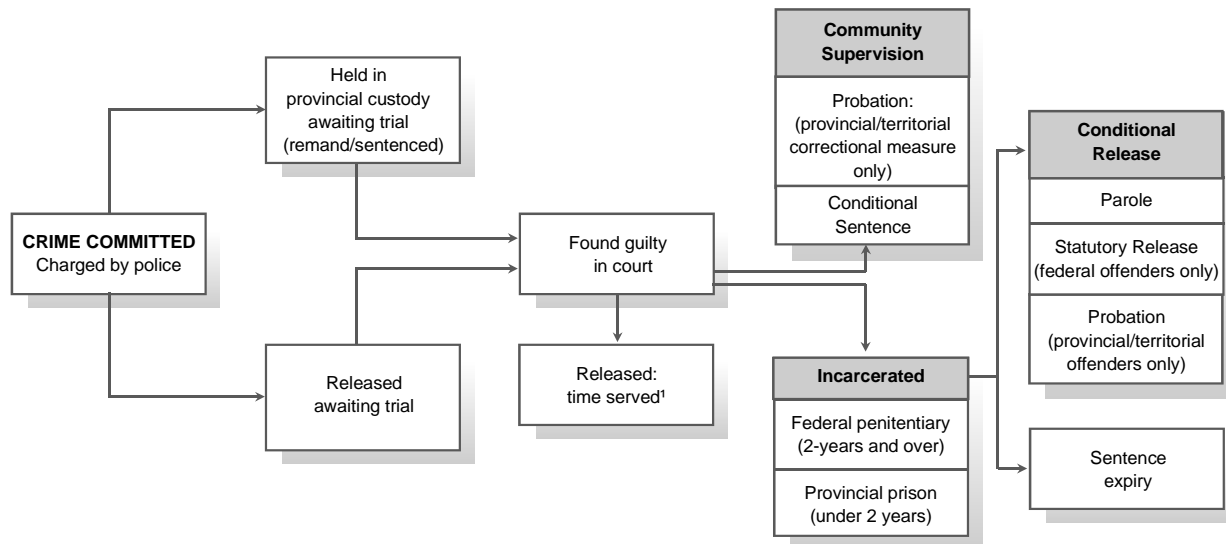
This *Juristat* addresses a number of important questions, including the following: Have there been any changes in the correctional populations? What kinds of offenders are being sent to prison, and for what offences? Has there been any change in the profile of the average offender sentenced to custody? Are Aboriginal persons still over-represented in the correctional system? How many offenders are serving sentences in the community? Are correctional operating costs increasing?

The data summarized in this *Juristat* are drawn from the Adult Corrections Survey (ACS) which provides a comprehensive overview of the adult prison population, the population of offenders serving sentences in the community as well as operating costs. Additional information about the issues explored in this *Juristat* can be found in the annual report Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 1996-97 (Catalogue No. 85-211XPE).

³ Remand prisoners are persons charged with a criminal offence and who are detained in custody awaiting a further court appearance. These persons have not been convicted or sentenced for an offence and can be held in detention for a number of reasons (e.g., offender is at risk to re-offend or not appear for their next court date).

Figure 2

An overview of events in the adult correctional system



¹ An individual whose sentence approximates time already served in custody (i.e. while awaiting trial) is generally released by virtue of having already served their sentence.

Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Table 1

Average Daily Count and Total Number of Admissions to Provincial/Territorial and Federal Corrections, 1987-88 to 1996-97

	Average daily counts				Total number of admissions			
	Custody	Community	Total	% change from previous year	Custody	Community	Total	% change from previous year
1987-88	26,634	83,318	109,952	2.8	198,638	64,651	263,289	2.9
1988-89	27,466	81,859	109,325	-0.6	206,891	63,893	270,784	2.8
1989-90	29,150	90,314	119,464	9.3	209,555	68,792	278,347	2.8
1990-91	29,233	99,658	128,891	7.9	217,238	76,000	293,238	5.3
1991-92	30,723	111,682	142,405	10.5	249,091	89,691	338,782	15.5
1992-93	31,709	120,116	151,825	6.6	251,329	91,902	343,231	2.3
1993-94	32,803	121,650	154,453	1.7	246,376	94,609	340,985	-0.7
1994-95	33,759	120,542	154,301	-0.1	243,785	93,077	336,862	-1.2
1995-96	33,785	120,411	154,196	-0.1	234,732	90,082	324,814	-3.6
1996-97	34,167	117,683	151,850	-1.5	230,031	89,248	319,279	-1.6

Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Recent sentencing reforms

The most recent major reform to the sentencing process occurred in September 1996, when Bill C-41 became law. This act contained a number of sentencing reforms which are designed to protect the public, assist victims and instill a greater sense of responsibility in offenders. An additional objective of this Bill is to promote the use of alternatives to imprisonment. It has long been argued by various Commissions of Inquiry that Canada imprisons a large

number of offenders, and that a greater proportion could receive a community-based sentence. While the Canadian rate of incarceration (115 per 100,000 total population) is well below that of Russia (690), the United States (600), and South Africa (265), it exceeds the rate in England/Wales (100), France (95), Germany (85), Sweden (65), Japan (37)⁴, and many others.

⁴ Marc Mauer. Americans Behind Bars: U.S. and International Use of Incarceration, 1995. Washington, D.C.: The Sentencing Project.

An important policy objective of the federal government has been to promote the greater use of alternatives to imprisonment. Alternatives to imprisonment, where appropriate, could result in less crowded and safer prisons. As well, the criminal justice system could devote greater resources to the incarceration and treatment of offenders for whom imprisonment is a necessity.

Conditional sentences

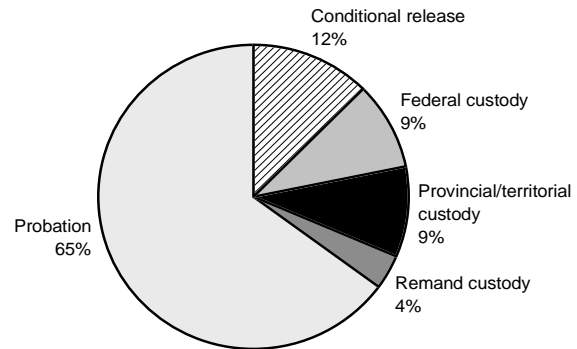
An important provision of Bill C-41 was the creation of a new type of community-based alternative to imprisonment called a conditional sentence. If certain legal criteria are fulfilled, a judge may sentence to a conditional term of imprisonment an offender who would otherwise have been sent to prison. According to the terms of a conditional sentence, the offender will spend the term of imprisonment in the community, provided that he/she abides by conditions imposed by the court as part of the conditional sentence order. If the offender violates these conditions, he may be sent to prison to serve the balance of that sentence. The goal of the conditional sentence is to reduce, in a principled and safe way, the number of offenders being sent to prison.

TRENDS IN THE CORRECTIONAL POPULATION

Since the number of offenders in the correctional population varies from day to day (as inmates are released, and other prisoners admitted), correctional authorities conduct daily counts of inmates under their care. Daily counts are then used to calculate an annual average count. On any given day in 1996-97 an average of 151,850 adult offenders were in prison or under community supervision. Of this total, the majority (65%) were offenders on probation. A further 18% were in provincial/territorial or federal custodial facilities, 12% were on conditional release and the remainder (4%) were on remand (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Adult correctional population, 1996-97



Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Average number of offenders in prison stable

The average number of people in provincial/territorial facilities in 1996-97 was 20,024⁵, up 1.5% from the previous year. This includes 14,031 inmates sentenced to a period of custody, down 1.5% (218 inmates) from 1995-96. There were also 5,737 remand prisoners, up 9% (471 inmates) from the previous year. The average number of federal inmates in 1996-97 was 14,143 (Table 2), up 1% from the average number in the previous year (14,055). The historical trend in custodial populations is portrayed in Figure 1, from which it can be seen that the rise in the average daily number of persons in custody, which was apparent at the beginning of the decade, has now levelled off.

⁵ The total includes a small number of individuals held in temporary detention (255).

Table 2

Average Daily Count of Offenders in Provincial/Territorial and Federal Custody, 1996-97								
Jurisdiction	Sentenced count	% change from previous year	Remand count	Other ¹	Total offender count ²	% change from previous year	Rate per 10,000 adults charged	% change from previous year
Newfoundland	281	-11.9	32	-	313	-11.8	349	-6.3
Prince Edward Island	71	-26.0	13	6	90	-15.9	364	-21
Nova Scotia	327	-5.5	78	-	405	-0.5	197	-11.7
New Brunswick	339	-3.9	54	7	400	-2.8	277	-6.7
Quebec	2,267	-1.6	1,158	-	3,425	-1.3	198	0.5
Ontario	4,819	2.8	2,710	237	7,766	5.6	272	8.8
Manitoba	639	-8.2	340	5	985	0.01	253	-2.3
Saskatchewan	980	-9.9	195	-	1,175	-7.3	320	-11.6
Alberta	1,983	-4.8	487	-	2,470	-3.1	334	-7.7
British Columbia	1,961	1.5	623	-	2,584	6.2	257	-0.4
Yukon	53	-15.9	17	-	70	-16.6	457	1.3
Northwest Territories	311	11.9	30	-	341	7.6	1,045	20.9
Provincial/Territorial Total	14,031	-1.5	5,737	255	20,024	1.5	268	0.8
Federal Total	14,143	0.6	...	...	14,143	0.6	269	2.7

- nil or zero.

... figures not appropriate or applicable.

¹ Includes temporary detention such as immigration detentions.

² Columns may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Total number of admissions to prison or community supervision stable

Another way of looking at the correctional population is to examine the number of admissions. Admission data describe and measure the changing caseflow of correctional agencies over time. These data do not indicate the number of unique individuals using correctional services since the same person can be included several times in annual admission totals. For instance, a person held in custody before their trial (remand), could then be sentenced to nine months in prison, and later be released on parole to complete their sentence in the community. Admission data allow correctional administrators to monitor the workload associated with each individual (remand, sentenced to prison, parole). The relatively short stay in provincial/territorial facilities (31 days) accounts for a large number of admissions.

In 1996-97, 319,279 offenders were admitted to custody and/or to a community-based sanction such as probation or parole, a 2% drop from the previous year. Of these offenders, the vast majority (72%) were admissions to custody (includes remand); the remainder (28%) were offenders under community supervision. The number of admissions to custody in 1996-97 was down 2% from the year before, and represented the fourth straight annual decline. Similar declines were observed for admissions to community-based sanctions. Despite the overall decline, the number of admissions was still 21% higher than a decade ago (Table 1).

Provincial/territorial admissions to custody down, federal admissions up

The decline in sentenced admissions (-6%) hides a different pattern for federal and provincial/territorial custody populations (excludes remand and other temporary detentions). There were 4,569 admissions to custody at the federal level in 1996-97 (up 4%). However, provincial/territorial admissions to custody over the same period declined by 6% (down to 107,997). One possible interpretation of this pattern is that the new conditional sentence of imprisonment has had an effect in reducing provincial/territorial admissions to

custody. Conditional sentences affect only persons sentenced to prison terms of less than two years; accordingly, any reduction in admissions as a result of the new disposition would be seen in the provincial/territorial and not the federal admission statistics (Table 3).

Since the new conditional sentence has only been in use for little more than a year, it is too soon to know exactly what effect it has had on provincial/territorial prison populations. A significant number of conditional sentences (9,027) were imposed within the first six months of its creation. Further analyses next year may be able to provide an estimate of the impact of the new sanction on the number of offenders being admitted to custody at the provincial/territorial level.

Changes in provincial/territorial prison admissions highly variable

Overall, provincial/territorial admissions to custody are down (-6%). However, the decline in provincial admissions is far from uniform across the country. While the number of admissions to custody were marginally up in Quebec (+2%), declines in admissions were observed in all other provinces and territories. In some jurisdictions the decrease in admissions to custody was far higher than the national average. For example, admissions to custody were down 34% in Newfoundland, 25% in Saskatchewan and 21% in the Yukon (Table 3).

What accounts for this considerable degree of variation in admissions to custody? There are several possible explanations. First, if the number of convictions has changed at a different rate in some parts of the country, this will result in differences in the number of admissions to custody. If the number of people convicted in a given province/territory is above the national average, then the number of admissions to custody will also be above the national average. Another possible explanation concerns the use of conditional sentences. If judges in some provinces/territories are more likely to use the new sanction or at a greater rate, then provincial admissions in those jurisdictions are likely to be below the national average.

Remand Admissions to Provincial/Territorial Facilities, 1996-97

Jurisdiction	Number of admissions	% change from previous year	
Newfoundland	251	-1.2	Remand admissions include persons who have been charged with an offence and remanded (ordered by the court) to custody while awaiting a further court appearance. They have not been sentenced to custody or community sanctions but can be held for a number of reasons (e.g. risk that they will fail to appear for their court date, risk to re-offend, etc.)
Prince Edward Island	128	37.6	
Nova Scotia	1,432	25.7	
New Brunswick	1,108	12.1	
Quebec	31,325	-8.3	
Ontario	44,829	3.8	
Manitoba	2,835	-21.3	
Saskatchewan	6,202	10.3	
Alberta	9,359	8.6	
British Columbia	10,179	19.3	
Yukon	253	-1.2	While the focus of this report will not include a detailed analysis of remand prisoners, this group is still important in monitoring the overall correctional population.
Northwest Territories	..	..
Provincial/Territorial Total	107,901	1.3	
.. data not available.			The number of remand admissions has decreased 6% over the last five years. During 1996-97, 48% of all custodial admissions were for remand.
Source: Adult Correctional Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.			

Table 3



Sentenced Admissions to Provincial/Territorial and Federal Custody, 1996-97

Jurisdiction	Number of admissions	% change from previous year	Rate per 10,000 adults charged	Per cent female	Per cent Aboriginal Peoples	Median age
Newfoundland	1,568	-34.3	1,946	7	8	30
Prince Edward Island	867	-12.7	4,446	6	11	31
Nova Scotia	2,113	-19.4	1,273	5	5	31
New Brunswick	2,919	-13.7	2,384	5	5	29
Quebec	28,753	2.4	2,517	8	2	32
Ontario	36,530	-1.6	2,060	9	9	31
Manitoba	2,069	-15.0	819	9	58	30
Saskatchewan	4,802	-24.9	1,569	10	74	29
Alberta	16,535	-9.9	2,832	12	39	30
British Columbia	11,531	-7.2	1,513	7	18	31
Yukon	310	-21.1	2,670	5	65	32
Northwest Territories	..	...	...	...	...	...
Provincial/Territorial Total	107,997	-5.7	2,057	9	16	31
Federal Total	4,569	3.8	87	4	15	36

... figures not available.

... figures not appropriate or applicable.

Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Some provinces use prison more than others

Table 3 also reveals significant variation in the rates of admissions to custody expressed in terms of the number of adults charged. The national average at the provincial/territorial level was 2,057 per 10,000 adults charged. However, the rate of admissions varied from a low of 819 in Manitoba, to a high of 4,446 (per 10,000 persons charged) in Prince Edward Island. The rate of admissions in Prince Edward Island was therefore over five times higher than the rate of admissions to custody in Manitoba. It is unlikely that differences between provinces/territories in the seriousness of crimes, or the number of recidivists can explain this variation. For example, the percentage of violent crimes was lower, not higher, in Prince Edward Island than in Manitoba (19% compared to 36%).

One possible explanation for the variation in custody rates is that the judiciary in some jurisdictions may be more inclined to sentence offenders to custody. For example, sentencing statistics reveal that the incarceration rate for offenders convicted of impaired driving is much higher in Prince Edward Island: it is 75% compared to a national average of 16% for this offence.⁶ This would account for the higher overall rates of admissions to custody in that province. Another factor that could account for variations in jurisdictional custody rates is the inconsistent use of court decisions such as stays and withdrawals. These disposition categories refer to the court stopping or interrupting criminal proceedings against the accused. Jurisdictions that use a higher proportion of stays/withdrawals to dispose of charges would tend to have lower rates of admission to custody, since fewer charges would result in convictions, and even fewer custody sentences.

Incarceration at the provincial/territorial level is usually brief

With over 100,000 sentenced admissions to custody annually, and less than 15,000 people actually in provincial/territorial facilities on an average day, it is clear that people sentenced to provincial/territorial custody do not spend very long in prison. One-quarter of admissions to custody at the provincial/territorial level are for two weeks or less; over one-third are for periods of less than 30 days. In fact, the median⁷ provincial/territorial term of imprisonment is 31 days. Most inmates do not serve their entire sentence in prison (many serve the last portion of their sentence in the community). The median length of time actually served in prison in 1996-97 was 24 days. The median term of imprisonment has changed little over the past five years.

The median varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, in Prince Edward Island the median term was 19 days, while in Saskatchewan and Manitoba it was 90 days (Figure 4). This variation can reflect many factors. It is possible that some provinces/territories have a higher percentage of more serious crimes, which would result in a longer median term of imprisonment. Another explanation is that the judiciary in different parts of the country use imprisonment in different ways. In some jurisdictions it is possible that judges sentence more people to prison, but for shorter periods of time.⁸

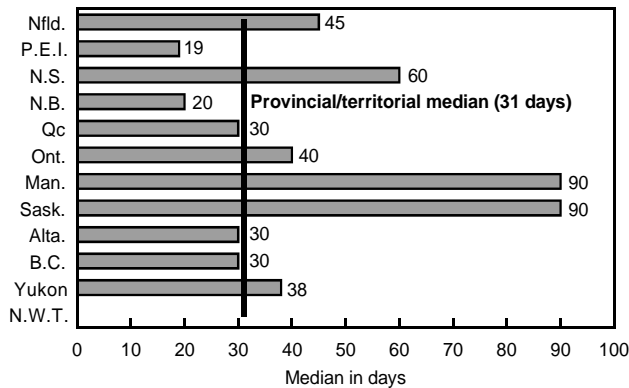
⁶ For more information, see "Sentencing in Adult Provincial Courts", by A. Birkenmayer and J.V. Roberts in *Juristat* (Catalogue No.85-002-XPE, Volume 17, No. 1).

⁷ The median represents the mid-point when all values are arranged in order of magnitude. One-half of the observations have a value less than or equal to the median, one-half have a value greater than or equal to the median.

⁸ For more information on sentencing patterns across the country, see "Sentencing in Adult Provincial Courts", by A. Birkenmayer and S. Besserer: Statistics Canada (Catalogue No. 85-513-XPE).

Figure 4

Median sentence length on admission to provincial/territorial¹ custody, 1996-97



¹ Data for the Northwest Territories were unavailable.
Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Another important consideration is that the median sentence length is affected by the shorter sentences associated with the large number of fine defaulters (29,000 or 24%) who are required to serve a short jail sentence in default of paying a fine. Though a number of jurisdictions have established “fine option” programs (e.g. Manitoba) to divert fine defaulters from jail, fine default continues to place considerable demands on correctional resources. A fine option program allows offenders to work in lieu of paying their fine.

Number of inmates admitted for life is increasing

Periods of incarceration at the federal level are by definition longer, as they all must be two years or more in duration. The average sentence length in 1996-97 at the federal level was 43 months. The most frequent sentence length category was between two years and three years (40% of all admissions). It is also noteworthy that the percentage of offenders sentenced to life terms of imprisonment, while still small, is growing. Admissions for life terms rose from 3% of all admissions in 1992-93 to 5% in 1996-97. In terms of the number of offenders, this means an increase from 173 inmates in 1992-93 to 210 in 1996-97.

Female offenders represent less than 10% of admissions to custody

In 1996-97, males represented 91% and females 9% of all admissions to provincial/territorial prisons. This gender ratio has not changed in recent years as women accounted for the same percentage in 1992-93. Female offenders represent an even smaller percentage (4%) of admissions to federal penitentiaries (Table 3). This difference between the federal and provincial/territorial prison populations is accounted for by the fact that male offenders are more likely (than are females) to commit and/or be convicted of the more serious crimes of violence which result in sentences in excess of two years.

Prison population is ageing

There has been a slight increase in the age of persons admitted to custody: in 1996-97 the median age was 31 years at the provincial/territorial level (up from 29 in 1992-93), and

36 at the federal level (up from 32 in 1992-93). The increase in the age of offenders reflects the ageing of the general population. The higher average admission age of federal offenders reflects the fact that federal inmates tend to have longer or more serious criminal records which have accumulated over a number of years.

Aboriginal offenders still over-represented in prison admissions

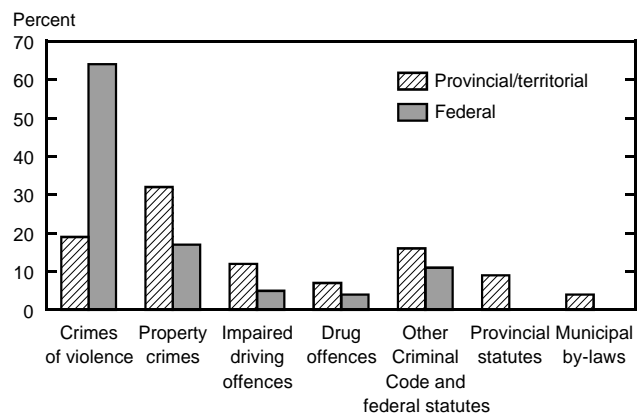
Aboriginal persons are over-represented in correctional institutions relative to their numbers in the general population. Aboriginal peoples represent 3% of the population in Canada. As in the past, admissions statistics in some provinces reveal high percentages of Aboriginal offenders. Aboriginal offenders represented 16% of total provincial/territorial admissions but accounted for 74% of admissions to custody in Saskatchewan, 65% in the Yukon, 58% in Manitoba and 39% in Alberta (Table 3). In contrast, Aboriginal people accounted for 11% of Saskatchewan’s population, 20% of Yukon’s, 12% of Manitoba’s and 5% of Alberta’s. Aboriginal offenders accounted for 5% or less of admissions in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec. The percentage of federal admissions that are Aboriginal is increasing: it was 15% in 1996-97 compared to 11% in 1991-92.

Property crimes account for highest percentage of admissions to provincial/territorial custody

Property crimes continue to account for the highest percentage of admissions to custody at the provincial/territorial level. Almost one-third of provincial/territorial admissions and 17% of federal prison admissions, are offenders convicted of crimes involving property⁹. Offenders convicted of crimes involving violence accounted for 19% of provincial/territorial prison admissions and 64% of federal admissions (Figure 5). The high percentage of admissions to

Figure 5

Most serious offence committed on admission to custody¹, 1996-97



¹ The percentage breakdown shown in this chart represents jurisdictions reporting either most serious disposition or most serious offence.
Note: Offence data were known for 84% of federal admissions.
Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

⁹ When offenders are admitted to prison for more than a single offence, the most serious of the offences is reported.

institutions for property crimes reflects the influence of two factors. First, property crimes are far more frequent than crimes of violence. (Property offences account for over half of all convictions in provincial/territorial courts.) Secondly, property offenders generally have longer criminal records. After the seriousness of the crime, an offender's criminal history is the most important determinant of the severity of the sentence imposed.

In any given month, the average number of persons under community supervision (117,683) declined slightly (-2%) in 1996-97. The number of persons on probation declined from 101,918 in 1995-96 to 99,220 (-3%) in 1996-97 (Table 4). This decline most likely reflects a decline in the number of cases before the courts, rather than a decrease in the rate of probation orders imposed, for as will be seen below, there has been no change in the probation rate.

Suicide most frequent cause of death in the custodial population

There were 92 inmate deaths in Canada's correctional institutions in 1996-97, two fewer than in the previous year. Of these, 44 occurred in provincial/territorial institutions, 48 in federal penitentiaries. Suicide continues to be the most frequent cause of death in custody, accounting for 27 (61%) of the provincial/territorial inmate deaths, and 10 (21%) of the federal inmate deaths. The number of suicides recorded in federal institutions was down from 17 in 1995-96, and is the smallest number recorded in a decade. In contrast, the number of suicides recorded in provincial/territorial institutions in 1996-97, while down from the previous year, was the second highest in a decade. When looked at as a rate per 10,000 adults, the inmate suicide rate is more than twice that found in the adult Canadian population (4.0 and 1.7 respectively). Five murders were recorded in Canada's prisons in 1996-97, one in a provincial institution and four in the federal system (Figure 6).¹⁰

Escapes from federal institutions still rare

The number of escapes from federal institutions remained constant from the previous year (58 down from 59). This number is the lowest in many years. Between 1992-1994, for example, the average annual number of federal escapes was 205. The vast majority of escapes involved individuals who walked away from minimum security facilities.

Provincially, the number of escapes increased by 119 in 1996-97 to 1,220. Over 50% of all escapes were individuals who failed to report to an institution to serve an intermittent sentence (e.g., sentences served on weekends).

¹⁰ The remaining deaths were from natural causes or were classified as "other".

Figure 6

Causes of death in the provincial/territorial and federal custodial population



Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

It is worth noting that impaired driving offences accounted for a large number of admissions to provincial custody. In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, almost one-quarter of all provincial admissions to custody (21% and 23% respectively) were for impaired driving offences. In Canada as a whole, over 15,000 individuals were admitted to provincial/territorial custody for an impaired driving offence in 1996-97 (12% of all admissions).

TRENDS IN COMMUNITY-BASED CORRECTIONS: PROBATION AND PAROLE

Community-based corrections include a number of different categories such as offenders on probation, offenders on parole, and, since September 1996, offenders serving a conditional sentence of imprisonment (defined earlier). Probation is a sentence imposed by a judge, usually instead of, but sometimes in addition to, a term of imprisonment. It allows a person to live in the community under the supervision of a probation officer. Parole may be granted after the offender has served part of the sentence in an institution, allowing the offender to live in the community under supervision for the remainder of the sentence. The decision to grant parole is the responsibility of a board of parole.

Probation admissions rise

There was a noticeable change in the number of persons given a term of probation from 1995-96 to 1996-97¹¹ (Table 4). While overall probation admissions increased (5%), there was a substantial degree of variation across the country. Among the provinces, admissions to probation expressed as a rate per 10,000 adults charged varied from 627 in Quebec to 3,544 in Prince Edward Island. The national average was 1,463 per 10,000 adults charged with a criminal offence.

The most frequently imposed length of probation (accounting for 27%) was 12 months.¹² The profile of persons sentenced to probation differed little from the profile of persons admitted to custody. The median age was 31 years and 12% were Aboriginal offenders. However, female offenders accounted for a greater percentage of probationers than admissions to provincial/territorial prisons (16% compared to 9%). This finding reflects the fact that women tend to be convicted of less serious offences, which are more likely to result in a less severe sanction (such as probation) than imprisonment.

¹¹ Probation admissions for 1996-97 were unavailable for Nova Scotia and were excluded from previous years when making year to year comparisons.

¹² It was also the median length of probation imposed.

Table 4



Average Count and Number of Probation Admissions, 1996-97

Jurisdiction	Average monthly probation count	% change from previous year	Probation admissions						
			Number of admissions	% change from previous year	Rate per 10,000 adults charged	% change from previous year	Per cent female	Per cent Aboriginal Peoples	Median age
Newfoundland	2,264	1.6	1,946	-4.2	2,415	2.1	18	6	30
Prince Edward Island	682	-23.2	691	5.9	3,544	13.3	..	..	29
Nova Scotia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
New Brunswick	2,696	3.3	1,781	0.6	1,455	-2.6	17	..	27
Quebec	10,007	5.1	7,162	10.8	627	13.2	11	5	30
Ontario	50,116	0.7	33,463	4.6	1,887	10.7	17	8	30
Manitoba	5,558	3.7	3,657	14.0	1,447	21.4	..	..	..
Saskatchewan	3,579	2.3	3,012	-10.0	984	-11.6	18	62	28
Alberta	7,914	3.4	8,440	3.3	1,445	1.7	22	21	..
British Columbia	14,953	2.1	16,152	5.9	2,119	4.0	16	15	30
Yukon	534	23.3	515	56.1	4,436	87.6	10	88	32
Northwest Territories	917	-3.6	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Provincial/Territorial Total	99,220	1.7	76,819	4.9	1,463	7.2	16	12	31

.. data not available.

... figures not appropriate or applicable.

Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Types of conditional release

There are three types of conditional release by which federal offenders can be released into the community: day parole, full parole and statutory release.

- **Day parole** provides offenders with the opportunity to participate in on-going community activities. Usually the offender resides at a correctional institution or halfway house in the community. Inmates are granted day parole in order to help them reintegrate back into the community, participate in educational or training programs, work and prepare for eventual full parole or statutory release.
- **Full Parole** is a form of conditional release from prison, granted at the discretion of the parole authorities. Offenders released from prison on full parole serve part of their sentence in the community under supervision. If the offender violates the conditions of parole, he or she may be returned to prison to serve the balance of the sentence in custody. Most federal inmates are eligible to apply for full parole after having served one-third of their sentences.¹³ Decisions regarding parole for federal inmates, as well as inmates in provincial and territorial institutions (except in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec which have their own parole boards) are made by the National Parole Board (NPB).
- **Statutory release** requires that federal inmates serve the final one-third of their custodial sentence in the community under supervision. Offenders on statutory release are typically inmates who either waived full parole, or who were denied release on full parole.¹⁴

¹³ For a limited number of offences, the sentencing judge can defer the parole eligibility date from one-third to one-half of the sentence. Inmates serving life terms have different parole eligibility dates, depending on the seriousness of the crime for which their life terms were imposed.

¹⁴ Some offenders will be detained in prison for the full sentence.

Different levels of government share responsibility for parole services

Three provinces (Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia) operate parole boards that have jurisdiction over all inmates in their provincial institutions. The National Parole Board has jurisdiction over all offenders serving sentences of two years or more, and offenders serving sentences in provincial and territorial correctional institutions where there are no provincial boards of parole.

The supervision of parolees in the community is provided by the appropriate correctional agency. In the cases of persons granted parole by the NPB, the responsibility rests with Correctional Service Canada. Inmates released on parole

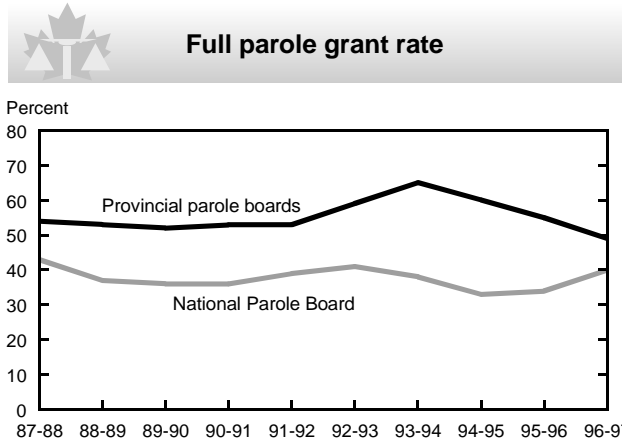
by a provincial parole board are supervised by probation and parole officers in that province.

Provincial parole grant rates down, federal parole grant rates up

For the third consecutive year, provincial full parole grant rates have declined (Figure 7). In 1996-97, the overall provincial parole rate was 49%, down from 55% in 1995-96 and 65% in 1993-94¹⁵. In contrast, the federal parole rate has increased over the past few years. In 1996-97, 40% of full parole applications to the NPB were granted. This is up from 34% in 1995-96, and 33% in 1994-95.

¹⁵ The parole grant rate for 1996-97 was unavailable for British Columbia and was excluded from previous years when making year to year comparisons. In 1995-96, the parole grant rate in British Columbia was 48%.

Figure 7



Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

As in previous years, there is considerable variation among the provincial parole boards in terms of their grant rates. The

grant rate in Ontario in 1996-97 was 35%; in Quebec it was 65%. This difference in grant rates was apparent in previous years. The five-year (1992-1997) average grant rate in Quebec is 70% compared to 48% in Ontario. However, the higher provincial grant rate in Quebec was accompanied by a slightly lower parole success rate than in Ontario (73% versus 85%).

Success rate of offenders on parole remains high

The vast majority of parolees serve the balance of their sentences in the community without violating their parole conditions. Of the provincial full parole population in 1996-97, 75% were completed successfully. As noted above, the success rate was somewhat higher (85%) in Ontario than in Quebec (73%).

The federal parole success rate is also high. In 1996-97, less than 2% of all federal parole revocations involved a violent criminal charge (Table 5). Of federal paroles that were revoked, the most frequent cause was for violation of parole conditions (25%), such as refraining from alcohol or drug consumption. Overall, 82% of day parole terms were completed successfully, 65% of full paroles and 56% of statutory releases.

Table 5

Federal Release Success Rate, 1992-93 to 1996-97

Type of release	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
SUCCESS RATE:					
Completion ¹					
Day parole	66.0	73.5	75.4	79.5	82.0
Full parole	70.0	58.2	62.6	66.6	65.3
Statutory release	54.1	49.8	57.6	57.3	56.3
Revocation for violation of parole conditions					
Day parole	25.5	19.8	19.3	15.4	14.4
Full parole	16.8	26.4	26.2	22.8	24.1
Statutory release	27.8	31.5	30.8	30.2	31.6
Total success rate					
Day parole	91.5	93.3	94.7	94.9	96.4
Full parole	86.8	84.6	88.8	89.4	89.4
Statutory release	81.9	81.3	88.4	87.5	87.9
RECIDIVISM RATE²:					
Convicted of a non-violent offence					
Day parole	6.6	5.1	3.8	3.5	2.7
Full parole	10.8	12.6	8.7	8.7	8.9
Statutory release	13.1	14.7	8.3	9.3	10.0
Convicted of a violent offence					
Day parole	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.5	0.8
Full parole	2.4	2.8	2.4	1.9	1.7
Statutory release	5.0	3.9	3.2	3.3	2.1
Total recidivism rate					
Day parole	8.4	6.8	5.3	5.0	3.5
Full parole	13.2	15.4	11.1	10.6	10.6
Statutory release	18.1	18.6	11.5	12.6	12.1

¹ The supervision period has been completed without the commission of a new Criminal Code offence.

² The supervision period has been revoked as a result of an additional conviction for either a non-violent or violent offence.

Source: National Parole Board, Offender Management System.

Temporary absences from prison are almost always completed

In addition to day and full parole, inmates may apply for temporary absences. These allow the inmate to leave the institution for a limited period of time. They are granted for a variety of reasons which include medical, administrative (e.g., court appearances), and for compassionate reasons. Temporary absences can last from a few hours up to a few days. The absence may be either escorted or unescorted.

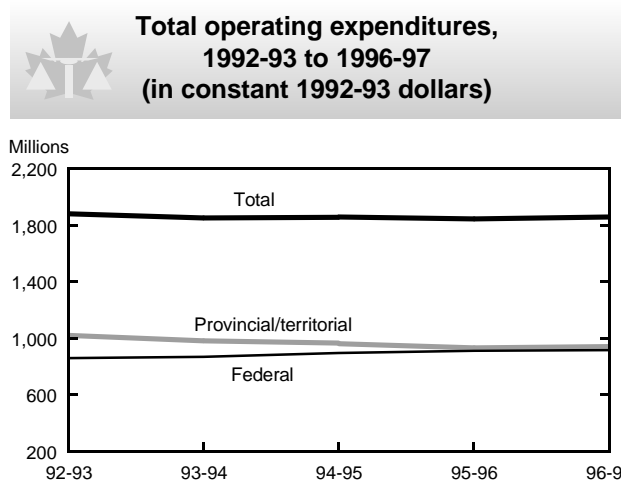
In 1996-97, Correctional Service Canada approved 43,666 escorted temporary absences and 5,963 unescorted absences. Of these, only 30 were not completed (17 escorted and 13 unescorted) for a success rate of 99.9%. The number of unescorted temporary absences rose by 37% in 1996-97, compared to 6% for escorted absences.

ADULT CORRECTIONAL EXPENDITURES

Cost of jailing offenders rises

In 1996-97, combined federal and provincial/territorial corrections expenditures reached \$1.97 billion, compared with \$1.88 billion five years earlier (Figure 8). Adjusting for inflation, total operating expenses increased marginally (+1%) in 1996-97 from a year earlier.

Figure 8



Source: Adult Corrections Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Federal expenditures in 1996-97 reached \$970 million, up 13% since 1992-93 (a 7% increase when adjusted for inflation). Provincial/territorial expenditures dropped 2% to \$998 million over the same five years (an 8% decline when adjusted for inflation).

Nationally, the average annual cost of housing an inmate in a correctional institution was \$43,643, an increase of 3% since 1995-96. Provincial/territorial governments spent an average \$40,165 a year on each inmate in their jail systems in 1996-97, up slightly (+2%) from the previous year. The average cost per inmate in federal penitentiaries rose 5% to \$48,468. When adjusting for inflation, the average federal costs over the past five years increased (+2%) while provincial/territorial costs fell by 7%.

Conclusion

The public perception of crime, often shaped by highly negative and sensational incidents, has moved the correctional decision making process (e.g. early releases) to an increased level of public scrutiny. The portrait of correctional populations that emerges from this analysis is generally one of stability, both in terms of correctional populations and costs. It is still too early to evaluate the impact of specific legislative reforms (such as the Sentencing Reform Bill of 1996) which was aimed at reducing the number of offenders sent to prison. Understanding the impacts of such recent legislation will be an important goal of future research in the field of corrections in Canada.

Methodology and data limitations

The information presented in this *Juristat* is derived from the Adult Corrections Survey. This survey is conducted annually (on a fiscal year basis from April 1 to March 31) and is designed to collect caseload and case characteristics information on adult offenders 18 years of age and over. Data pertain to both the provincial/territorial and federal corrections sectors. Statistics relating to operating expenditures are also collected on a fiscal year basis through the Resource, Expenditures and Personnel Survey. It is important to note that the expenditure data reported do not include "capital costs" (e.g. facility construction) which are incurred over and above daily operational costs.

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics

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