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FEMALE INMATES, ABORIGINAL INMATES, AND INMATES SERVING LIFE SENTENCES: A ONE DAY SNAPSHOT

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HIGHLIGHTS

The data presented in this *Juristat* are based on a “One-Day Snapshot” survey of all inmates who were on-register in adult correctional facilities on Saturday, October 5th, 1996¹.

Female Inmates:

- Female inmates were less likely than males to be incarcerated for violent crimes.
- Women in federal facilities were most often convicted of homicide/attempted murder (37%) and drug-related offences (27%) as their most serious offence. Women in provincial/territorial facilities were most often convicted of drug-related offences (13%) of theft (12%).
- Female inmates tended to be in their early 30's, single, with grade 9 education or less, and unemployed.
- Female inmates were classified as lower risk than male inmates. While female inmates in provincial/territorial facilities had higher needs than males on most dimensions those in federal facilities had lower needs than males.

Aboriginal Inmates:

- The proportion of Aboriginal inmates in correctional facilities was larger than the proportion of Aboriginal adults in the Canadian population (17% versus 2%).
- Aboriginal inmates were incarcerated for assault offences more often than non-Aboriginal inmates.
- Aboriginal inmates were younger on average, had less education, and were more likely to be unemployed than non-Aboriginal inmates.
- Aboriginal inmates were considered higher risk to re-offend and had higher needs than non-Aboriginal inmates.

Lifers:

- Inmates serving a life sentence (“lifers”) comprised 18% of the total federal inmate population.
- Lifers were typically older than the rest of the inmate population, primarily male, non-Aboriginal, single and had lower levels of education than the rest of the inmate population.
- Lifers were incarcerated for fewer but more serious offences than non-lifers.
- Lifers had high needs in the areas of personal/emotional needs and substance abuse.

¹ “On-register” refers to the number of inmates who have been placed at that facility to serve their sentence. Inmates may not be physically located at the facility on Snapshot day because they were away from the facility (e.g., on temporary absence, serving an intermittent sentence in the community, away for medical reasons or court appearances, etc.).



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INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years there has been growing concern regarding increases in the correctional population. Between 1988-89 and 1997-98, the overall number of admissions to custody and community supervision increased by 17% (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, 1997-98). Among the reasons cited for the increased offender population are an increasing number of serious offenders in correctional facilities (e.g., sex offenders, violent offenders), harsher measures for more serious offences (e.g., four year minimum sentences for firearms), increased female involvement in the criminal justice system, the continued over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system and the growing accumulation of “lifers” in correctional facilities.

This *Juristat* presents profiles of three segments of the inmate population: females, Aboriginal inmates, and inmates serving life sentences. Although there has been considerable research on women and Aboriginal inmates, and some research has focused on lifers, this is the first time that extensive data on inmate characteristics have been collected on a national level. The *Juristat* will present data for these three groups from the One-Day Snapshot survey of inmates in federal and provincial/territorial adult correctional facilities, including the number of inmates in custody, inmate characteristics, offences, sentence length, and accommodations. Information on risk and need profiles were provided by a select number of jurisdictions and will be discussed where possible, in relation to these sub-populations.

The “**One-Day Snapshot**” was undertaken on Saturday, October 5th, 1996. The data described all inmates who were “on-register” in federal and provincial/territorial facilities at midnight on Snapshot day. The “on-register” population refers to the number of inmates who have been placed in a facility to serve their sentence.

The data gathered covered the number and types of facilities in each jurisdiction and the nature and amount of accommodation available. As well, it covered inmate demographic and background information (e.g., marital status, education, employment experience, language, and citizenship); case characteristics such as the inmate’s legal status, security classification, offence and sentencing data; security concerns; use of segregation; and, information on the level of risk and the nature of the program needs of inmates for a number of jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, in collaboration with federal and provincial/territorial correctional authorities, conducted a census of inmates in all adult correctional facilities in Canada on October 5th, 1996². The purpose of the project was to provide more detailed information on the make-up of federal and provincial/territorial inmate populations in Canada. In Canada, the responsibility for housing offenders sentenced to a term of incarceration is shared between the federal and the provincial/territorial governments. Correctional Service Canada (CSC) is responsible for offenders sentenced to two or more years. Provincial/territorial corrections are responsible for offenders who receive custodial sentences of less than two years³ and for housing persons charged with offences who have been “remanded” to custody while awaiting trial⁴.

It should be noted that data in this *Juristat* are based on inmates who were in a facility on one particular day. As such, generalizations should be made with caution.

² For more information see “A One Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada’s Adult Correctional Facilities” by Robinson, Millson, Trevethan and MacKillop, 1998 in *Juristat* Vol. 18 no.8 Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE and “A One Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada’s Adult Correctional Facilities” by Trevethan, Carrière, MacKillop, Finn, Robinson, Porporino and Millson, 1999, Catalogue no. 85-601-XPE.

³ In special cases inmates who are serving less than two years may be transferred to a federal facility. As well, inmates in provincial/territorial facilities may be federal inmates who are awaiting transfer to a federal facility, or inmates being held under an Exchange of Service Agreement.

⁴ Remand refers to persons who have been charged with an offence and ordered by the court to custody while awaiting a further court appearance. They have not been sentenced to custody or community service 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.).

What does past research tell us?

About Women Inmates:

- *Criminologists and policy makers have tended to overlook female crime because women make up such a small proportion of offenders and are involved in less serious crimes than men (Boritch, 1997).*
- *Since 1977, the total number of women charged per year has increased 54%(Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR), 1997).*
- *Three-quarters of charges laid against women by police are for shoplifting or fraud, or for violations of drug or liquor regulations (Boritch, 1997; Johnson, 1986).*
- *Aboriginal women account for approximately 30% of all female admissions to provincial/territorial facilities (Lipinski, 1991).*

About Aboriginal Inmates:

- *Aboriginal persons are over-represented in correctional facilities (Correctional Law Review, 1988; Robinson et. al., 1998).*
- *Aboriginal inmates tend to show a higher incidence of single-parent homes, family problems and foster-home placements (Cawsey, Bear, Bertolin, Cooper, Frenklin, Galet and Gallagher, 1991; Correctional Law Review, 1988; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).*
- *Economic and social deprivation is a major underlying cause of the proportionately high rates of criminality among Aboriginal people (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).*

About Inmates Serving Life Sentences:

- *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 1997-98 (Reed and Roberts, 1999).*
- *Those serving a life sentence or an indeterminate sentence are less likely to have two or more previous federal incarcerations (Weekes, 1992).*
- *In comparison to the total federal offender population in Canada, life-sentence offenders are older and have less extensive criminal histories (Porporino, 1991).*
- *Although the largest proportion of the federal offender population are serving their first federal commitment (59%), an even larger proportion of life-sentence offenders are serving their first federal term (70%) (Porporino, 1991).*

CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE INMATES

Although women comprise a relatively small proportion of persons involved in crime, the proportion has increased over the past decade and has put new demands on the police, courts, correctional facilities and community programs. In 1997, approximately 18% of adults charged were female, an increase from 16% in 1986 and 13% in 1977 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 1977 to 1997). In 1997-98, females represented 9% of adult sentenced admissions to provincial/territorial custody, up from 7% in 1986-87. Further, they represented 5% of admissions to federal institutions, up from 2% in 1986-87 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, 1986-87 to 1997-98). Since females comprise a relatively small proportion of the inmate population, accommodations and program planning may be more of a challenge than for male inmates. A better understanding of the characteristics of female inmates can help program planners and policy makers decide how to best utilize limited budgets to address the needs of this population. As well, it may help identify areas for prevention, which could reduce the incidence of females committing offences.

On Snapshot day, females accounted for 5% of inmates on-register in Canadian correctional facilities (1,807 women out of 37,541 inmates). In provincial/territorial facilities, 7% of the inmates were women, whereas in federal facilities, less than 2% of the inmates were women. Within individual jurisdictions, Alberta had the highest proportion of females accounting for 10% of the total inmate population.

Accommodations for female and male inmates differed

As illustrated in Table 1, in provincial/territorial facilities, the largest proportion of both males and females were accommodated in

Measures of Correctional Activity: Admissions and Inmate Counts

Admission data are collected when the offender enters the institution or community service program. While admission data describe and measure the changing caseload of correctional agencies overtime, these data do not indicate the number of individuals using correctional services. A person can be included several times in annual admission totals.

Inmate counts are used to describe the number of inmates imprisoned or serving a sentence in the community at a given point in time. Correctional officers perform daily counts of inmates in the facility. For example, on Snapshot Day, inmates serving a life sentence comprised 18% of the total federal inmate population. In correctional systems the daily population is affected by the sentence lengths associated with the admissions. Therefore, offenders with longer sentences are over-represented in the population, whereas inmates with shorter sentences are under-represented.

either maximum or multi-level security facilities. However, females were more likely than males to be housed in maximum-security facilities. Almost one-half of female inmates (46%) serving time in provincial/territorial facilities on Snapshot day were housed in maximum-security institutions, compared to 39% of male inmates. A further one-third (35%) of females were accommodated in multi-level facilities. The largest proportion of males were in multi-level facilities (41%). This might be because of the lack and variety of institutions available for females in Canada⁵.

⁵ In 1996 on Snapshot day there were 73 provincial/territorial correctional facilities which could accommodate female inmates. Of those, only 10 were designated as female only facilities.

Women's Federal Correctional Facilities

In 1989, a Task Force recommended the establishment of four regional facilities and a Healing Lodge (for Aboriginal female inmates) to replace the Prison for Women. The majority of women receiving federal sentences would be accommodated in one of these regional facilities, normally the facility closest to their home. As well, an arrangement could be made with the province to provide accommodation for women under provincial sentence. In addition, an Exchange of Service Agreement had been negotiated between CSC and the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW). The BCCW (a provincial facility) has some unique programs, which federally sentenced women have been able to access since its opening in 1990.

In 1996, five new regional facilities were established for federally sentenced women. These include: the Edmonton Institute, Nava Institute, Grand Valley, OKIMAW Healing Lodge and the Joliet Institute for Women. Prior to 1996, federally sentenced women were either housed in the Prison for Women (Kingston, Ontario), in provincial/territorial institutions under Exchange of Service Agreements, or were on conditional release in the community. Because they were few in numbers, they were generally incarcerated away from their families and home communities. As well, the range of programming available to them was limited.

The design of the regional facilities is such that there is basically one type of accommodation - community living houses (in the One Day Snapshot survey these facilities were reported as multi-level facilities). However, there are differences in the degree of liberty of movement within the facility accorded to each inmate, which is linked to behaviour rather than sentence or offence. Before assigning a security and management level, the system takes into consideration all available information including the results of the initial needs assessment, identification of the program requirements for each inmate and the information provided by the community. Inmates are classified as minimum, medium or maximum-security.

A *Security Management System* for the new regional facilities was approved in April 1995. This system provided guidelines governing daily management, participation in programs and activities, and freedom of movement inside the facility. The System focuses on the majority of the federally-sentenced women population rather than the few who persistently use violence and aggression. It contains six management levels, of which five are related to security classification and one is used exclusively for admission status.

The approach of the new regional facilities is more holistic and community-oriented with an emphasis on utilization and integration of existing community services when and wherever feasible. Some programs developed and offered within the facility may be open to the community, particularly in the absence of community counterparts.

(Correctional Service of Canada, 1992; 1995a; 1995b)

The federal picture is quite different, with the majority of female inmates (86%) accommodated in multi-level facilities. In contrast, the largest proportion of male inmates were in medium-security facilities (64%).

Table 1

Distribution of Female and Male Inmates by Security Level

Security Level	Provincial/Territorial		Correctional Service Canada	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
	%		%	
Minimum	8	13	14	6
Medium	13	7	64	8
Maximum ¹	39	46	20	-
Multi-level	41	35	2	86
Total	100	100	100	100

- Nil or zero.

¹ Although there were 0% of women in maximum security facilities, this does not mean that there were no women in maximum security facilities.

Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics: A One Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities Survey (1996).

At the provincial/territorial level, a higher proportion of female (57%) than male (43%) inmates were housed in shared accommodations (i.e., double-bunked, cottage or dormitory). However, in federal facilities, 94% of females were housed in single accommodations compared to 72% of male inmates.

Female inmates were less likely to be segregated than male inmates. In jurisdictions that reported data⁶, 3% of the females were in segregation on Snapshot day compared to 6% of males. At both the provincial/territorial and federal level the proportion of males in segregation was double the proportion of females (5% versus 2% in provincial/territorial facilities; 6% versus 3% in federal facilities).

Female inmates were less likely than males to be incarcerated for crimes against the person

Upon examining the most serious offence⁷ for which inmates were incarcerated on Snapshot day, there were some areas where female and male inmates differed (see Table 2). Results indicated that a smaller proportion of incarcerated females than males were convicted of crimes against the person in both provincial/territorial (28% versus 34%) and federal (64% versus 74%) facilities.

The most serious offence for the largest proportion of females in provincial/territorial facilities, was a property crime or "other"

⁶ Segregation data were provided by Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and CSC. The use of segregation takes into account reasons such as protective custody, observation, disciplinary dispositions, and safety and security of inmates and staff.

⁷ The most serious offence is based on the Seriousness Index of the Revised Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey Violation Coding Structure that defines seriousness in terms of length of maximum sentence and the degree of injury or threat of injury to the victim. Offences are grouped into the following major offence categories: Crimes Against the Person, Property Offences, and Other Criminal Code and Federal Statute Offences.

Table 2



Distribution of Offence Types¹

	# of Inmates	Crimes Against the Person						Property Crimes				Other Criminal Code (CC) / Federal Statutes							
		Homicide/ Attempt Murder	Sexual Assault	Serious Assault	Minor Assault	Robbery	Other Violent	TOTAL	B & E	Theft	Fraud	Other Property	TOTAL	Weapons Offences	Admin. of Justice	Impaired Driving Offences	Drug Offences	Other CC / Fed.	TOTAL
Gender																			
Correctional Services Canada²																			
Males	13,619	24	14	4	--	24	7	74	12	1	--	2	15	--	--	1	8	2	11
Females	210	37	1	10	-	13	3	64	-	4	--	--	7	--	-	-	27	--	29
Provinces/Territories³																			
Males	20,537	3	7	6	6	9	3	34	19	7	3	6	35	3	3	6	9	10	31
Females	1,484	5	2	6	3	9	2	28	8	12	10	5	36	2	4	5	13	13	36
Aboriginal Status																			
Correctional Services Canada²																			
Non-Aboriginal	11,865	24	12	3	--	25	8	72	12	1	--	2	15	--	--	1	9	3	13
Aboriginal	1,964	23	20	10	--	21	4	79	13	1	--	--	16	--	-	1	2	1	5
Provinces/Territories⁴																			
Non-Aboriginal	17,721	4	6	5	5	9	3	31	18	7	4	6	35	3	3	6	10	11	33
Aboriginal	4,144	3	9	12	8	8	2	42	17	8	2	6	34	2	4	6	6	7	24
Inmates Serving Life Sentence																			
Correctional Services Canada⁵																			
Lifers	2,432	91	4	--	-	1	4	99	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	--	-	--
Non-Lifers	11,387	9	16	5	--	29	7	68	14	2	--	2	18	1	--	8	10	3	13

- Nil.

-- Amount too small to be expressed.

¹ Based on the current most serious offence.

² Missing data for 33 inmates (<1%).

³ Missing data for 1,658 inmates (7%).

⁴ Missing data for 1,814 inmates (7%).

⁵ Missing data for 10 inmates (<1%).

Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities Survey (1996).

Criminal Code/Federal Statute offence (36% each). In contrast, similar proportions of males were convicted for property crimes, crimes against the person, and "other" *Criminal Code/Federal Statute* offences (35%, 34%, and 31%, respectively). Females were most often convicted for drug-related offences (13%) or theft (12%). Males, on the other hand, were most often convicted for break and enter (19%).

In federal facilities, a smaller proportion of females were convicted for property offences compared to males (7% versus 15%). However, a larger proportion of females were convicted for "other" *Criminal Code/Federal Statute* offences (29% versus 11%). The largest proportion of females were convicted for homicide/attempted murder (37%) and drug-related offences (27%) as their most serious offence. The largest proportion of males were convicted for homicide/attempted murder and robbery (24% each).

The data also reveal that female inmates were convicted for fewer offences for their current term of imprisonment. In provincial/territorial facilities on Snapshot day, 38% of female inmates had only one current offence compared to one-third of males (33%). The difference was more pronounced in federal facilities where more than one-half of female inmates (55%) compared to one-quarter of males (26%) had only one current offence.

Prior adult convictions give some further insight into the characteristics of female inmates. Female inmates in provincial/territorial facilities had a less extensive criminal history than male inmates. One-half (50%) of female inmates in provincial/territorial facilities had no or one prior adult conviction, compared to 36% of male inmates. Of further interest, the proportion of males with five or more previous convictions was almost double that of female inmates (21% compared to 12%). Prior conviction data were not available for federal inmates.

Consistent with having fewer and less serious offences, female inmates had shorter aggregate sentences than male inmates. An offender can be convicted of multiple charges in a single court disposition, or in several court dispositions. In such cases, the judge may order that the various prison sentences be served either consecutively to (following) or concurrently with (at the same time as) one another. The "aggregate sentence" is the total time for all sentences that the offender must serve in the institution. As illustrated in Figure 1, one-half (51%) of females in provincial/territorial facilities were serving aggregate sentences of less than six months compared to 44% of males. The median aggregate sentence length for females in provincial/territorial facilities was 153 days (approximately five months) compared to 184 days (approximately six months) for males. The median aggregate sentence length for females in federal facilities was 1,643 days (approximately 4½ years) compared to 1,796 days (5 years) for males (See Figure 2).

Figure 1

Distribution of Aggregate Sentence Length for On-Register Inmates in Adult Provincial/Territorial Correctional Facilities

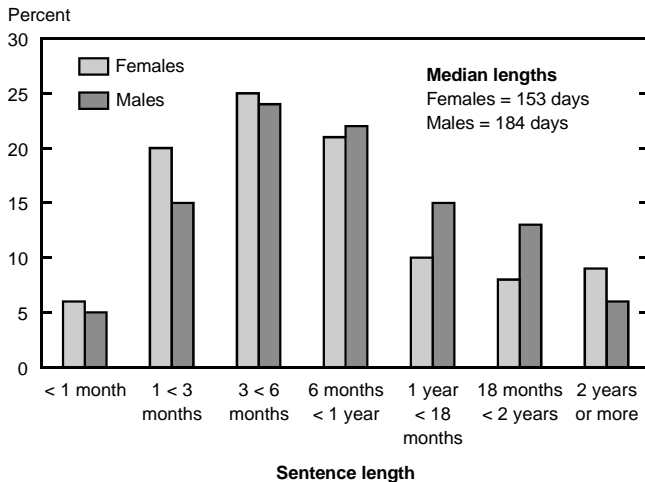
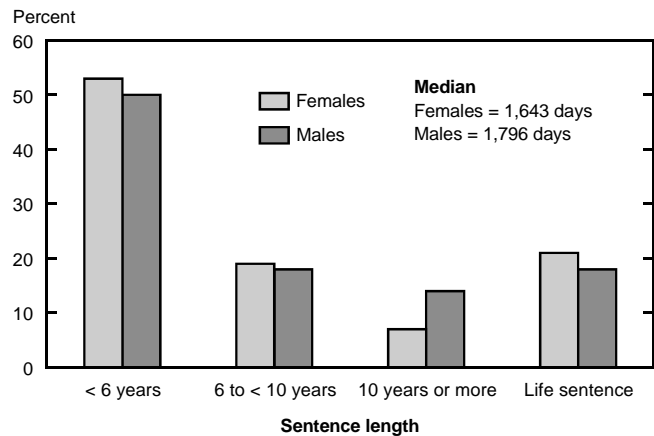


Figure 2

Distribution of Aggregate Sentence Length for On-Register Inmates in Adult Federal Correctional Facilities



Female inmates tended to be between 25-34 years of age, unattached, with grade 9 education or less, and unemployed

As shown in Table 3, the largest proportion of female inmates in both provincial/territorial and federal facilities were between 25 and 34 years of age (43% and 40%, respectively). The median age for females was 32 in provincial/territorial facilities and 33 in federal facilities. In provincial/territorial facilities, females were slightly older than male inmates (median age of 32 versus 31), whereas they were slightly younger in federal facilities (33 versus 34).

As also illustrated in Table 3, female inmates were over-represented among Aboriginal inmates. On Snapshot day in provincial/territorial facilities, Aboriginal female inmates accounted for almost one-quarter (23%) of the female inmate population, whereas Aboriginal males accounted for 18% of the male inmate population. This was similar in federal facilities - Aboriginal female inmates accounted for 20% of the female inmate population, whereas Aboriginal males accounted for 14% of the male inmate population.

Past research on female offenders has shown that women inmates are more likely to be unattached (including single, divorced, separated or widowed) than males (Boritch, 1997; Johnson, 1986). The data from the One-Day Snapshot partially support these findings. In federal facilities, a larger proportion of females than males were unattached at the time of admission (69% versus 58%). However, the same proportion of females

and males in provincial/territorial facilities were unattached (76% each). It should be noted that these data refer to marital status at time of admission to the facility, so it is possible that during the sentence marital status will change.

Both female and male inmates had fairly low educational levels compared to the total population of Canada⁸. Approximately one-third of female and male inmates in provincial/territorial facilities had a grade nine education or less (35% and 34%, respectively). This was the case for an even larger proportion of those in federal facilities - about one-half of female and male inmates (48% and 46%, respectively). In Canada, in 1996, 19% of adults had a grade nine education or less.

A substantially greater proportion of female than male inmates were unemployed at the time of admission to the correctional facility. For those inmates for which information was available⁹, 64% of female inmates in provincial/territorial facilities and 80% of females in federal facilities were unemployed at the time of admission, compared to 43% and 54%, respectively of male inmates. In comparison, 10% of adults (males and females) in Canada in 1996 were unemployed¹⁰.

⁸ Education data were not available for British Columbia and Yukon, and for 64% of CSC inmates.

⁹ Employment data were not available for Quebec and Ontario, and for 81% of CSC inmates.

¹⁰ Percent unemployed refers to those not employed and seeking work. It does not include those who report that they would like work, but who have stopped searching because they believe no work is available.

Table 3



Selected Characteristics of Female Inmates

	Correctional Service Canada			Provincial/Territorial		
	# of Inmates	Males	Females	# of Inmates	Males	Females
AGE^{1,2}		%			%	
18-24	1,825	13	17	6,131	26	18
25-34	5,322	38	40	8,916	37	43
35-44	4,075	29	30	5,897	25	27
45-54	1,833	13	10	1,979	8	8
55 +	805	6	2	718	3	2
Total	13,860	100	100	23,641	100	100
ABORIGINAL STATUS³						
Non-Aboriginal	11,891	86	80	19,216	82	77
Aboriginal	1,971	14	20	4,277	18	23
Total	13,862	100	100	23,493	100	100
MARITAL STATUS^{4,5}						
Married	5,629	41	31	4,435	24	24
Single	6,378	46	52	11,901	64	56
Separated, Divorced or Widowed	1,686	12	17	2,345	12	20
Total	13,693	100	100	18,681	100	100
EDUCATION^{6,7}						
Grade 9 or less	2,294	46	48	6,798	34	35
Grade 10-11	1,464	29	28	7,701	39	25
Grade 12 or higher	1,244	25	25	5,403	27	30
Total	5,002	100	100	19,902	100	100
EMPLOYMENT STATUS^{8,9}						
Unemployed	1,118	54	80	4,979	43	64
Employed	1,484	46	20	4,025	57	36
Total	2,602	100	100	9,004	100	100

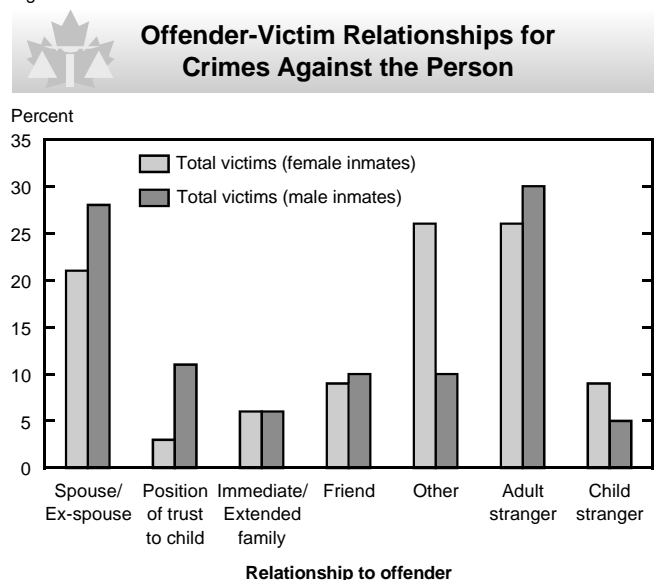
¹ Data for 1 inmate in Correctional Service Canada under 18 was excluded from analysis (<1%).
² Data were missing for 23 Provincial/Territorial inmates in the Gender analysis (<1%), 207 Provincial/Territorial inmates in the Aboriginal analysis (1%) and data for 15 Provincial/Territorial inmates under the age of 18 were excluded from analyses.
³ Data were missing for 186 Provincial/Territorial inmates (1%).
⁴ Data were missing for 169 inmates in Correctional Service Canada (1%).
⁵ Data were missing for 4,998 Provincial/Territorial inmates (21%).
⁶ Data were missing for 8,660 inmates in Correctional Service Canada (64%).
⁷ Data were missing for 3,777 Provincial/Territorial inmates (16%).
⁸ Data were missing for 11,242 inmates in Correctional Service Canada (81%).
⁹ Data were missing for 14,441 Provincial/Territorial inmates (62%).
 Source: The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. A One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Canada's Adult Correctional Facilities Survey (1996).

Offender-victim relationships are different for female and male inmates

The nature of the relationship between the offender and the victim is often not well-documented in inmate case files, and correctional statistics are sparse. The Snapshot survey examined the offender-victim relationship for up to three victims for the most serious offence in the inmate's current offence record. Relationship data were only available from seven jurisdictions¹¹. In this review, the offender-victim relationship is only examined for crimes against the person because for many other offences a larger proportion of relationship information was not known.

For female inmates with crimes against the person, the victim was most often known to the offender. The largest proportion of victims were in "other" relationships such as a boyfriend/girlfriend or acquaintances (26%) or spouse/ex-spouse (21%) (Figure 3). One-quarter (26%) of victims were adult strangers to the offender, and 9% were child strangers. Compared to male inmates, female inmates were less likely to have victimized a spouse, ex-spouse

Figure 3



¹¹ Relationship data were available for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

or a known child. For male inmates the largest proportion of victims that were known were a spouse or ex-spouse (28%).

Female inmates were classified as being a lower risk to engage in future criminal activity than male inmates. Female inmates had higher needs than males on most dimensions in provincial/territorial facilities and lower needs than males in federal facilities

A set of criminal history and need indicators were collected for the inmate populations in eight jurisdictions¹².

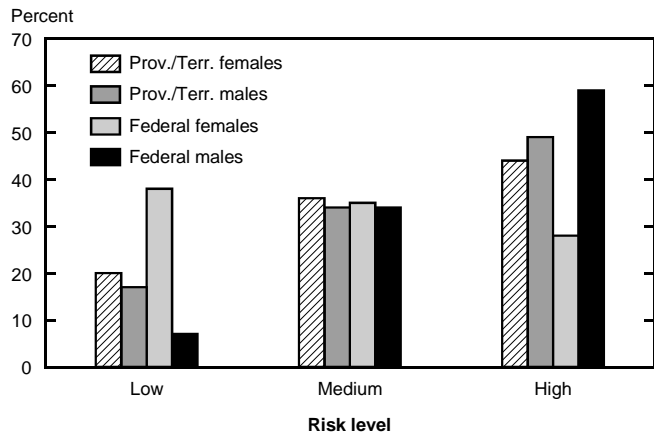
As illustrated in Figure 4, female inmates in both provincial/territorial and federal facilities were classified as lower risk to re-offend than males. Less than one-half (44%) of provincial/territorial female inmates compared to 49% of male inmates were classified as high risk. The difference was more pronounced for inmates in federal facilities. Just over one-quarter (28%) of female inmates, compared to 59% of male inmates, were classified as high risk.

Risk refers to the probability that an offender will engage in criminal behaviour in the future. Well-established methods for assessing level of risk for offenders rely on a combination of criminal history indicators (e.g., previous convictions, prior failure on supervision) and "need" factors (e.g., substance abuse problems, employment instability).

Risk analysis is one method for informing correctional administrators on how they can best focus their efforts. It points to which offenders may need the greatest or least level of support, intervention or supervision in order to reduce the chances of re-offending. Risk analysis is integrated with other information about offence history and the personal circumstances of the offender. It provides a useful and well-validated starting point for making important decisions about the management of offender populations.

Figure 4

Distribution of Risk by Gender: Provincial/Territorial and Federal Facilities



In terms of needs, female inmates in provincial/territorial facilities who reported needs data were rated as having slightly higher needs than male inmates on all need dimensions, except social interaction (Figure 5). Female inmates demonstrated the highest needs in the areas of substance abuse (40%) and marital/family (33%).

¹² Risk/needs data were available from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Correctional Service Canada. Although data were collected for Ontario, they are not included in the overall analysis because they were based on a different instrument and may not be comparable. In addition, risk data collected for CSC may not be directly comparable with other jurisdictions. It should be noted that risk assessments are not completed on all inmates (i.e., remand inmates are excluded, as are some sentenced inmates - typically those serving short sentences).

Figure 5

Distribution of Assessed High Needs by Gender^{1, 2}



¹ Data were available for Nfld., N.S., N.B., P.E.I., Manitoba, Yukon and N.W.T.

² Data were available from Ontario but were excluded because the rating method used to assess need levels was distinct from the other jurisdictions.

³ Data were missing for 1,738 inmates in Correctional Service Canada (13%).

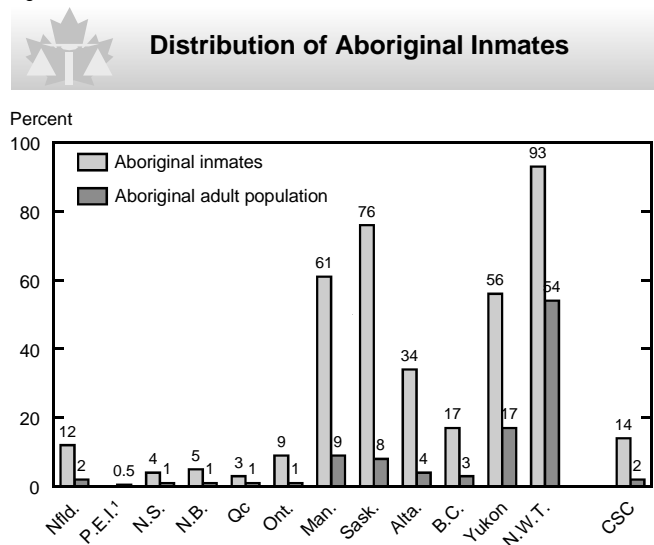
Among federal inmates, a smaller proportion of females than males exhibited high levels of need on all need dimensions (Figure 5). Females were recorded as having the highest needs in the areas of substance abuse (40%) and personal/emotional needs (38%). The greatest difference between female and male inmates was in the area of attitude. Only 7% of female inmates were rated as high need in this area compared to 39% of males.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ABORIGINAL INMATES

The over-representation of Aboriginal offenders in correctional facilities continues to be a major issue for government, justice officials and Aboriginal people generally. Over the last few years, the proportion of Aboriginal offenders admitted to custody has not changed substantially. In 1997-98, while Aboriginal persons comprised 2% of the adult population, Aboriginal persons made up 15% of admissions to adult provincial/territorial institutions (down from 19% in 1988-89) and 17% of federal admissions (up from 13% in 1988-89) (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, 1988-89 to 1997-98).

Data from the One-Day Snapshot support research findings that typically show an over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in the justice system. Aboriginal persons accounted for 17% of the inmates on Snapshot day. In provincial/territorial facilities, Aboriginal persons accounted for 18% of the inmates, while in federal facilities they accounted for 14%. As illustrated in Figure 6, in all jurisdictions the proportion of Aboriginal inmates was substantially larger than the proportion of Aboriginal persons in the population.

Figure 6



¹ Number of Aboriginal inmates too small to be expressed.

Aboriginal inmates serving provincial/territorial sentences tended to be housed in maximum or multi-level security facilities, while Aboriginal inmates serving federal sentences tended to be housed in medium security facilities

On Snapshot day, the largest proportion of Aboriginal inmates in provincial/territorial facilities were accommodated in either maximum security or multi-level security facilities (35% each). This was also the case for non-Aboriginal inmates (40% and 41%, respectively). Conversely, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were accommodated in medium (18% versus 11%) or minimum (12% versus 8%) security facilities. Of those serving federal sentences, the largest proportion of Aboriginal inmates were accommodated in medium security facilities (74%). This was true to a lesser extent for non-Aboriginal inmates (62%).

In addition, at the provincial/territorial level, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were segregated from the rest of the inmate population (11% versus 4%). There were no differences in segregation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates within federal facilities (6%). In provincial/territorial facilities¹³, almost three-quarters (74%) of Aboriginal inmates were housed in double or shared accommodations compared to two-thirds (65%) of non-Aboriginal inmates. In federal facilities, there was little difference in accommodations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates.

Aboriginal inmates were incarcerated for assault offences more often than non-Aboriginal inmates

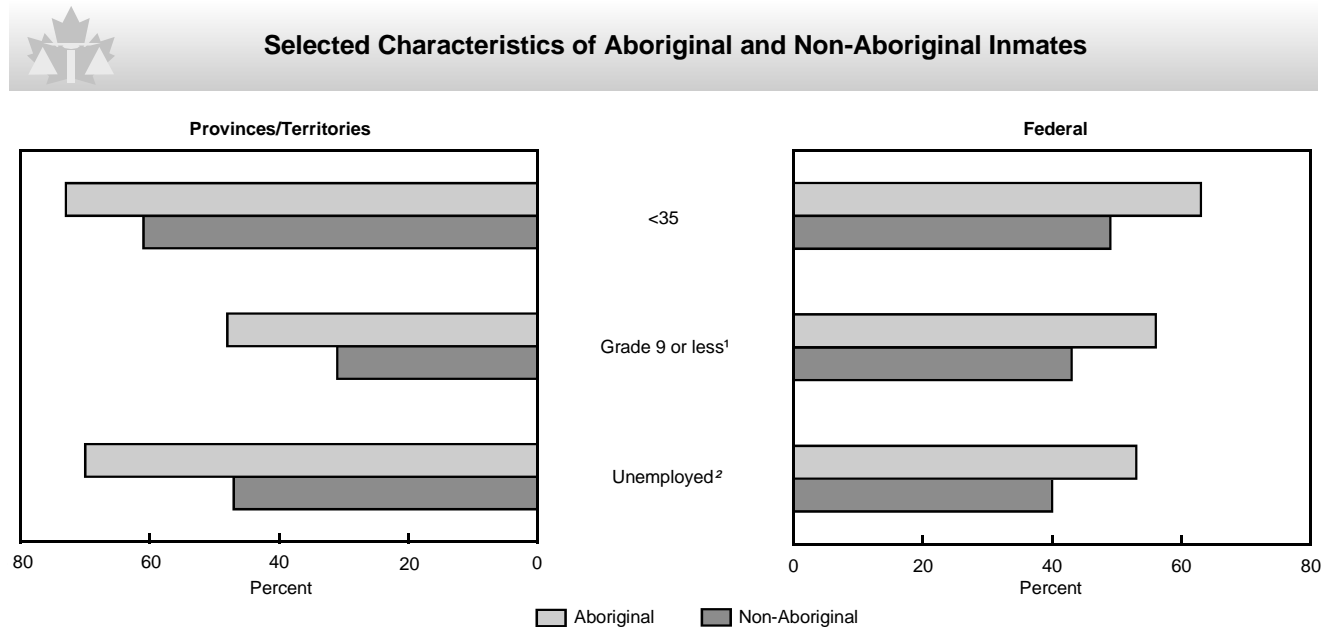
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates in provincial/territorial and federal facilities were convicted for similar types of offences. However, as illustrated in Table 2, a larger proportion of Aboriginal inmates were convicted of crimes against the person compared to non-Aboriginal inmates (42% versus 31% within provincial/territorial facilities; 79% versus 72% within federal facilities). In particular, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were convicted for assault. Among provincial/territorial inmates, slightly larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were convicted of serious assault (12% versus 5%), minor assault (8% versus 5%) and sexual assault (9% versus 6%). Among federal inmates, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were convicted of serious assault (10% versus 3%) and sexual assault (20% versus 12%).

Criminal histories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates serving provincial/territorial sentences demonstrate some similarities¹⁴. Larger proportions of Aboriginal than non-

¹³ Data on type of accommodation were available from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

¹⁴ Full criminal history data were available for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Yukon. Ontario, Quebec, and the Northwest Territories were able to provide some criminal history data.

Figure 7



¹ Data not available from B.C. and Yukon (Provinces/Territories).

² Data not available from Ontario and Quebec (Provinces/Territories).

Aboriginal inmates had two or more previous adult convictions (74% versus 62%), prior provincial/territorial incarcerations (77% versus 72%), and escape/attempt escape (9% versus 6%). However, slightly larger proportions of non-Aboriginal inmates had failed probation (24% versus 21%).

Aboriginal inmates were younger, had less education, and were more likely unemployed than non-Aboriginal inmates

As illustrated in Figure 7, Aboriginal inmates tended to be younger than non-Aboriginal inmates. Almost three-quarters (73%) of provincial/territorial Aboriginal inmates were less than 35 years of age, compared to 61% of non-Aboriginal inmates. The median age for Aboriginal inmates was 29 compared to 32 for non-Aboriginal inmates. At the federal level, almost two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal inmates were less than 35, compared to about one-half (49%) of non-Aboriginal inmates. The median age for federally incarcerated Aboriginal inmates was 31 compared to 35 for non-Aboriginal inmates.

Aboriginal inmates had lower levels of education than non-Aboriginal inmates¹⁵. At the time of admission to the correctional facility, almost one-half (48%) of Aboriginal inmates in provincial/territorial facilities had a grade nine education or less, compared to less than one-third (31%) of non-Aboriginal inmates. In federal facilities, more than one-half (56%) of Aboriginal inmates had a grade nine education or less, compared to 43% of non-Aboriginal inmates. The proportion of Aboriginal inmates with a grade nine education or less was more than twice that of Aboriginal persons in the Canadian population (20%), and almost four times that of the general population (12%) (Statistics Canada, 1996).

A larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were unemployed¹⁶. Seventy percent of Aboriginal inmates in provincial/territorial facilities, and 53% of Aboriginal inmates in federal facilities, were unemployed at time of admission to the facility. In comparison, less than one-half of non-Aboriginal inmates were unemployed (47% provincial/territorial and 40% federal). This also reflects what was happening in the general population for Aboriginal persons, that is, higher rates of unemployment for Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal persons. Based on the 1996 Census, the unemployment rate was 24% for Aboriginal persons in Canada, compared to 10% for all persons in the population (Statistics Canada, 1996).

Aboriginal inmates were incarcerated slightly more often than non-Aboriginal inmates for victimizing a spouse/ex-spouse or a friend

Based on those jurisdictions that were able to provide data on the offender-victim relationship for instances of crimes against the person¹⁷, a slightly larger proportion of victims of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates knew the offender (70% versus 66%). As illustrated in Figure 8, the largest proportion of victims of Aboriginal inmates were a spouse or ex-spouse (31%),

¹⁵ Education data were not available for British Columbia and Yukon, and for 64% of CSC inmates.

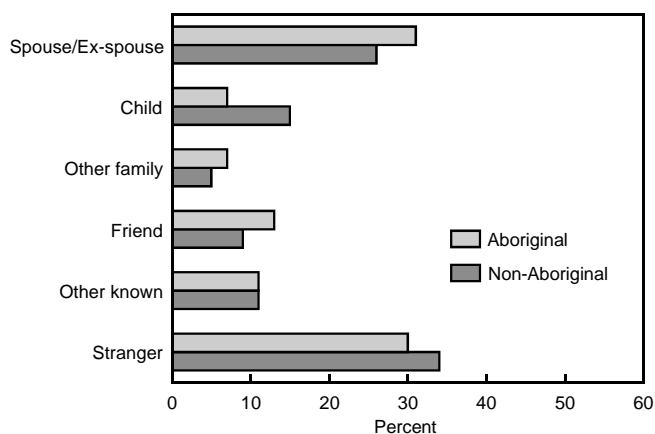
¹⁶ Employment data were not available for Quebec and Ontario, and for 81% of CSC inmates. Percent unemployed refers to those not employed and seeking work at the time of admission. It does not include those who report that they would like work, but who have stopped searching because they believe no work is available.

¹⁷ Relationship data were available for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

followed by strangers (30%), and friends (13%). The largest proportion of victims of non-Aboriginal inmates were strangers (34%), followed by spouses/ex-spouses (26%), and their child or a child in trust (15%).

Figure 8

Offender-Victim Relationships for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Inmates¹



¹ Data were available from Nfld., NS., NB., Manitoba, Yukon and NWT.

Aboriginal inmates were considered higher risk to re-offend and had higher needs than non-Aboriginal inmates

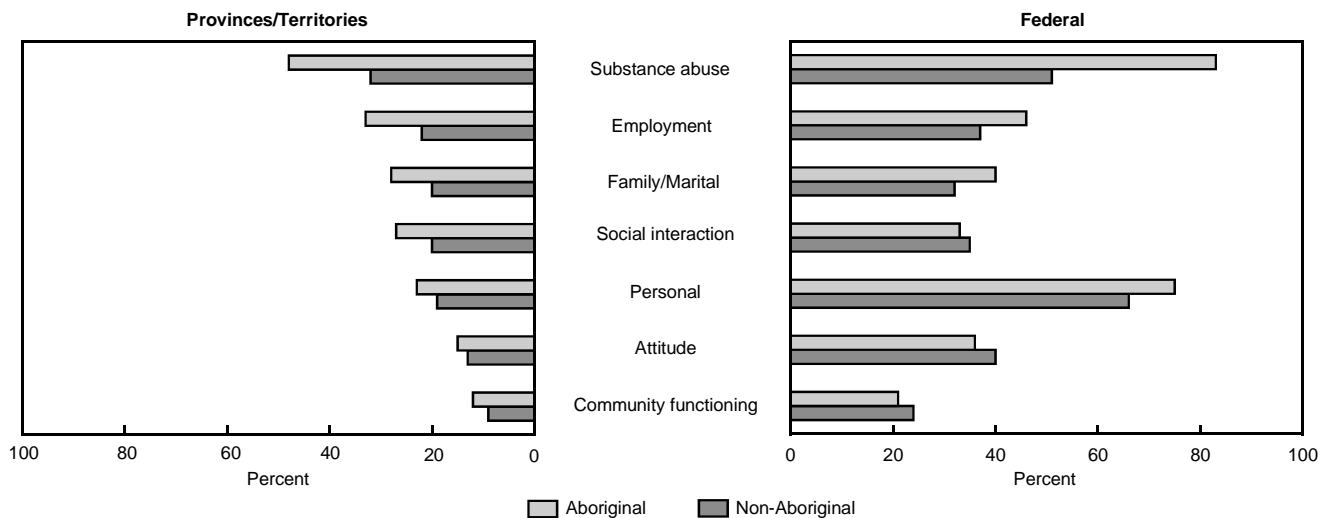
As discussed earlier, a set of risk and need indicators were collected for the inmate populations in eight jurisdictions¹⁸. Based on data received, a larger proportion of Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal inmates were classified as high risk to re-offend. In provincial/territorial facilities, 57% of Aboriginal inmates were classified as high risk, compared to 44% of non-Aboriginal inmates. Similarly, in federal facilities, 69% of Aboriginal inmates were classified as high risk, compared to 57% of non-Aboriginal inmates.

Aboriginal inmates also were classified as having higher needs than non-Aboriginal inmates on most dimensions (Figure 9). In provincial/territorial facilities, Aboriginal inmates scored higher on all need dimensions. In particular, they were classified as having high needs on substance abuse (48% of Aboriginal inmates compared to 32% of non-Aboriginal inmates) and employment (33% versus 22%). At the federal level, Aboriginal inmates scored higher on four of the seven dimensions. These included substance abuse (83% compared to 51% of non-Aboriginal inmates), personal needs (75% versus 66%), employment (46% versus 37%), and family/marital needs (40% versus 32%).

¹⁸ Risk/needs data were available from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Correctional Service Canada. Although data were collected for Ontario, they are not included in the overall analysis because they were based on a different instrument and may not be comparable. In addition, risk data collected for CSC may not be directly comparable with other jurisdictions.

Figure 9

Distribution of Assessed High Needs – Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Inmates¹



¹ Data were available from Nfld., NS., NB., Manitoba, Yukon, NWT and CSC.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDERS SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE¹⁹

There are many issues associated with offenders serving life sentences including aging, program availability and planning, security, and segregation. Inmates serving a life sentence or "lifeters" comprise a relatively small proportion of annual adult admissions. In 1997-98, "lifeters" accounted for 4.3% of sentenced admissions to federal facilities. This is up slightly from 3.6% in 1986-87 (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey, 1986-87 to 1997-1998).

However, on Snapshot day, inmates serving a life sentence comprised 18% (2,433) of the total federal inmate population²⁰. The proportion of inmates serving a life sentence in federal correctional facilities in Canada varied by region. The distribution of lifeters as a proportion of all inmates was the largest in British Columbia where 28% of all federal inmates were serving a life sentence. The range in the remaining federal facilities was between 7% in Nova Scotia and 21% in Ontario.

Inmates serving a life sentence were more likely accommodated in maximum-security facilities and in single accommodations than inmates who were not serving a life sentence

On Snapshot day, the largest proportion of both lifeters and non-lifeters were accommodated in medium security facilities (55% and 65%, respectively). However, a larger proportion of lifeters than non-lifeters were accommodated in maximum security facilities. More than one-quarter (27%) of lifeters were in maximum security facilities compared to 18% of non-lifeters.

A greater proportion of lifeters than non-lifeters were housed in single accommodations. Of inmates serving a life sentence, nine out of ten (89%) were housed in single accommodations compared to two-thirds (69%) of non-lifeters.

Some of the types of crimes that typically receive a life sentence include first-degree/capital murder, second-degree/non-capital murder, manslaughter, and attempted murder. One might expect that some of these individuals may be segregated either for the protection of the other inmates or for their own protection. In fact, data from the Snapshot indicate that lifeters were no more likely than non-lifeters to be segregated from the rest of the inmate population. Of all inmates who were serving a life sentence, 5% were segregated from the total inmate population on Snapshot day, compared to 6% of non-lifeters.

Lifeters were incarcerated for fewer but more serious offences than non-lifeters

On Snapshot day, more than one-half of lifeters (55%) were currently incarcerated for only one offence compared to 20% of inmates not serving a life sentence. However, almost all inmates serving a life sentence (99%) compared to just over two-thirds (68%) of non-lifeters had a crime against the person as their most serious offence (see Table 2). The remaining 1% of lifeters were incarcerated for property offences, specifically break and enter.

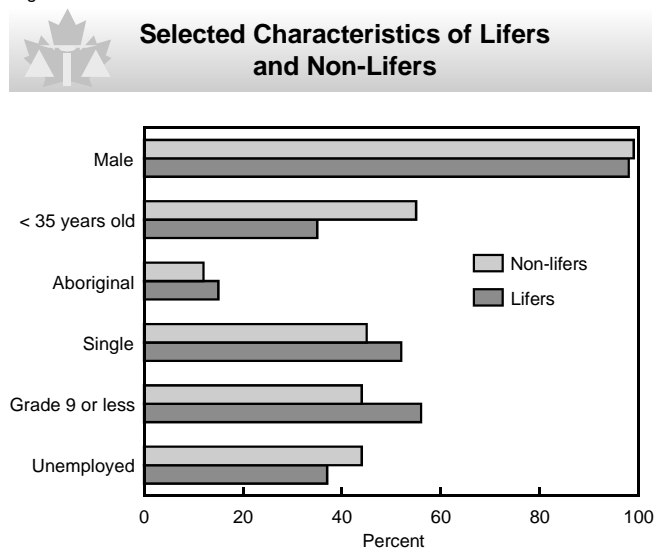
Lifeters were generally older, and more likely to be non-Aboriginal, single, less educated, and employed on admission than other inmates

As shown in Figure 10, individuals serving life sentences tended to be older than non-lifeters. Whereas over one-half (55%) of non-lifeters were between the ages of 18 and 34, only one-third of lifeters (35%) were in that age range. On Snapshot day, the median age for lifeters was 39 compared to 33 for non-lifeters.

The over-representation of Aboriginal persons is an ongoing issue in correctional institutions with policy makers and program planners. However, the Snapshot data revealed that there was a slightly lower proportion of Aboriginal inmates among non-lifeters (12%) compared to the proportion of Aboriginal inmates among lifeters (14%).

A larger proportion of lifeters than non-lifeters were single. More than one-half (52%) of inmates serving a life sentence were single compared to 45% of non-lifeters. Finally, among those inmates for which information was available²¹, lifeters had lower levels of education, but were less likely to be unemployed, than non-lifeters. Over one-half (56%) of lifeters had a grade nine education or less compared to 44% of non-lifeters. But, 37% of lifeters were unemployed at the time of admission to custody compared to 43% of non-lifeters. However, both lifeters and non-lifeters had substantially higher percentages of unemployment than did the adult population in Canada in 1996 (10%) (Statistics Canada, 1996).

Figure 10



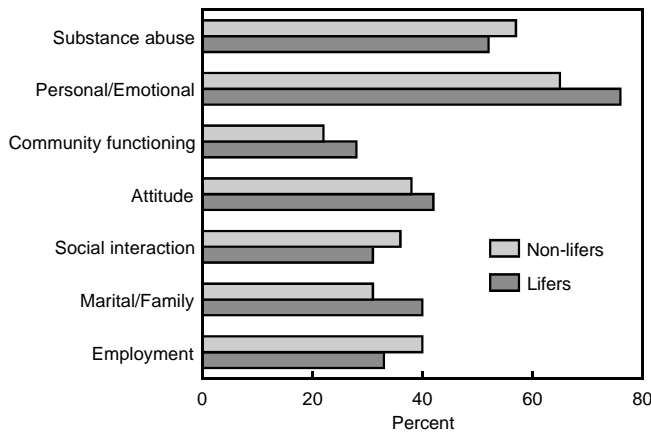
¹⁹ Under section 745 of the Criminal Code of Canada, a person is given a life sentence if they have been convicted of (a) high treason, first degree murder, (b) second degree murder and have previously been convicted of culpable homicide that is murder, or (c) second degree murder. Parole eligibility varies from minimum ten years served to minimum 25 years served.

²⁰ The larger proportion inmates serving a life sentence compared to the annual adult admissions is a result of the fact that once a "lifter" is admitted they are serving a life sentence.

²¹ Education data were not available for 64% of CSC inmates and employment data were not available for 81% of CSC inmates. Percent unemployed refers to those not employed and seeking work. It does not include those who report that they would like work, but who have stopped searching because they believe no work is available.

Figure 11

Distribution of Assessed High Needs – Lifers and Non-Lifers¹



¹ Data were missing for 1,738 inmates in Correctional Service Canada (13%).

Managing Long-Term Inmates in Minimum-Security Institutions

The following is an example of a project to manage long-term inmates.

Ste-Anne-des-Plaines a federal minimum-security institution in Quebec set up a support program for long-term inmates (10 or more years). Inmates are transferred there toward the end of their sentence. The objectives of the program are:

1. to actively encourage inmates to take part in social and personal skill development activities (for example to serve as a mentor for other inmates who may be experiencing specific problems);
2. to involve inmates in the management of their sentence (with emphasis on sobriety, literacy and participation in volunteer projects);
3. to encourage exchanges between inmates and staff (to develop a relationship of mutual trust through the participation of staff in activities organized for inmates in the program as well as increased opportunities for inmates in the program to act as representatives to the administration); and
4. to harmonize relations among the inmate population (the presence of long-term inmates within the institution encourages a stabilizing influence on the general prison population. They hold leadership positions, and represent the institution on special activities).

(Aubertin, 1992)

Lifers were classified as higher risk to re-offend and had higher needs on dimensions of personal/emotional, community functioning, attitude and marital/family than non-lifers

A much larger proportion of lifers were classified as high risk to re-offend, compared to non-lifers (84% versus 53%). Further,

looking at the needs assessment for lifers²², data from the Snapshot indicate that lifers had higher needs than non-lifers on four of the seven need dimensions (Figure 11). They had higher needs than non-lifers on the personal/emotional, community functioning, attitude and marital/family dimensions.

SUMMARY

This study provides a profile of female inmates, Aboriginal inmates, and inmates serving life sentences in provincial/territorial and federal correctional facilities. In summary, this research has explored inmate characteristics such as marital status, education and employment, offences, sentence length and accommodations. The findings in this report illustrate the potential uses of the Snapshot data. This type of data on on-register inmates in federal and provincial/territorial facilities is useful for policy decision makers and provides new information to the public regarding the corrections population. Further research in this area could examine remand inmates, intermittent sentences, and programs for high and low risk inmates.

METHODOLOGY

This *Juristat* used data primarily from the One-Day Snapshot of Inmates in Adult Correctional Facilities. Other data sources include: the 1996 Census of population, the Adult Correctional Services (ACS) survey, and the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey.

The One-Day Snapshot was conducted on Saturday, October 5th, 1996. A Saturday was chosen in order to include inmates serving intermittent sentences (please refer to text box in introduction). In light of resource limitations at local levels, data for the risk and needs assessment components of the survey could not be produced for Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Further, although risk and need data were collected for Ontario, they were not included in the analyses because data comparable with other jurisdictions were not collected in all categories. Risk and need data were available for CSC inmates; however since a different scoring method was used, the data may not be comparable to other jurisdictions.

Analysis on the “most serious offence” is based on the Seriousness Index of the Revised Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey Violation Coding Structure. The UCR coding structure defines seriousness in terms of length of maximum sentence and the degree of injury or threat to the victim represented by the offence. Offences are grouped into the following major offence categories (based on UCR categories): (1) Crimes Against the person (including homicide/attempt murder, sexual assault, serious assault, minor assault, robbery, and other violent); (2) Property offences (including break and enter, theft, fraud, and other property); and, (3) Other *Criminal Code* and federal statute offences (including weapons offences, administration of justice offences, impaired driving offences, drug offences, and other *Criminal Code*/federal statute offences).

²² Refer to the text box in the section on female inmates for a description of risk and needs.

1996 Census of Population: is the periodical collection of the characteristics of the Canadian population. Census Day is usually the first Tuesday in June and is taken every five years. The information provided by individuals is used to develop aggregate or anonymized information. Some of the indicators measured include age, sex, marital status, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion and education.

The Adult Correctional Services (ACS) Survey: collects aggregate data concerning custodial and non-custodial services provided to adults (18 years and over) in provincial, territorial and federal jurisdictions across Canada. Caseload, case characteristics and revenues, expenditures and personnel (REP) data are collected in addition to basic qualitative information, which describes the organization and delivery of correctional services.

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