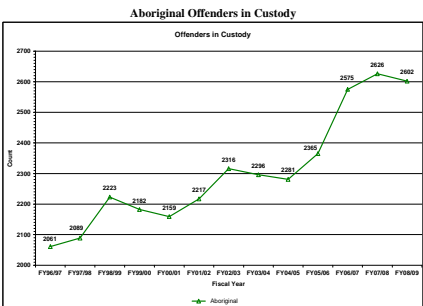


# The Changing Federal Offender Population

## Aboriginal Offender Highlights 2009

### Key Results:

- During the period 1996/97 to 2008/09 there has been a change in the proportion of Aboriginal offenders in federal custody. Although the proportion of Aboriginal offenders in custody has steadily increased over the past 12 years (from 15% to 20%), the representation of Aboriginal admissions has remained relatively steady at 18%.
- Relative to non-Aboriginal offenders, in 2008/09 there was a higher proportion of younger (i.e., under 30) Aboriginal offenders admitted (45%), with low reintegration potential (59%), gang affiliations (26%) and who had served a prior youth or adult sentence (93%).
- In contrast with non-Aboriginal offenders, Aboriginal offenders also had more breaches on conditional release (49%), were more often sentenced for sex offences (15%), and fewer were sentenced for drug-related offences (15%).
- The federal population of Aboriginal people in custody is higher today than it was in 1996/1997 (2,061 vs. 2,602), and over the last four years the number has risen steadily (2,281 to 2,602).



### Changing Length of Sentence:

- In keeping with the overall federal offender profile, most new Aboriginal offender admissions were serving a sentence of under three years in 2008/2009 (57% versus 51% for non-Aboriginal offenders). For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, the current proportion of offenders admitted with a sentence of under three years represents a 20% increase over admissions in 1996/1997.
- A slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal offenders than non-Aboriginal offenders (27% vs. 24%) in custody are serving sentences of under three years.
- For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders, the largest proportion of sentences served in custody are three to six years (31% for both groups).

### Changing Offence Categories:

- The proportion of new admissions for drug related offences have increased over the last three years for both Aboriginal (14% to 15%) and non-Aboriginal offenders (27% to 32%). However, both the overall proportion, and the proportional increase was greater for non-Aboriginal offenders.
- The proportion of new admissions for robbery has decreased over the last three years for both Aboriginal (20% to 18%) and non-Aboriginal offenders (21% to 18%), with a slightly steeper decrease for non-Aboriginal offenders.
- While the overall proportion of Aboriginal offenders in custody serving a sentence for sex offences is higher than that of non-Aboriginal offenders (20% vs. 18%) this proportion has decreased in Aboriginal offenders from 1996/1997 to 2008/2009 by 9%.
- Non-Aboriginal offenders, relative to Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be serving a sentence for drug-related offences (25% vs. 16%).

### Changing Initial Custody Level:

- There was a higher proportion of Aboriginal offenders admitted at a maximum security custody level (15% vs. 12%), however, the largest proportion of offenders for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders is consistently at the medium security level (58% and 50%, respectively).
- Over the last 12 years, admissions at a maximum security level has increased for both Aboriginal (5% increase) and non-Aboriginal (6% increase) offenders.

### Changing Criminal Associations:

- One-in-four Aboriginal offender admissions had gang affiliations. This proportion has increased slightly over the last three years from 24% to 26%.
- Aboriginal offenders in custody, relative to non-Aboriginal offenders had a higher proportion of criminal friends (57% vs. 47%), and criminogenic living (50% vs. 28%).

### Changing Mental Health:

- The proportion of Aboriginal offenders presenting mental health problems at admission has increased from 5% in 1996/97 to 14% in 2006/2007, but has settled to 9% in the 2008/09 fiscal year.
- There has been a decrease in Aboriginal offenders admitted with current mental health related prescriptions in the last three years (21% to 18%).

### Changing Breaches of Trust:

- The proportion of Aboriginal offenders in custody who have previously breached their conditional release has increased slightly over the last three years. The proportion of breaches in 2005/2006 was 49% in contrast with a proportion of 51% in 2008/2009. Conversely, the proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders who have previously breached their conditional release has declined by one percent over each of the last three years with a current proportion of 42%.

Prepared by the Research Branch

Data Source: Offender Management System (OMS)