



Research in Brief

Short Sentences among Federally Sentenced Women Offenders

KEY WORDS: *women offenders, shorter sentences, sentencing*

What it means

A third or more of recently admitted women offenders are sentenced to 25 months or less, but these women differ very little from those serving longer sentences. Women serving shorter sentences are as likely to present elevated levels of risk and need as their counterparts serving longer sentences which means both groups are equally likely to require correctional programs. Although program delivery could be challenging for those serving shorter sentences, the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) holistic program model for women, launched in 2011, facilitates their efficient and timely delivery.

What we found

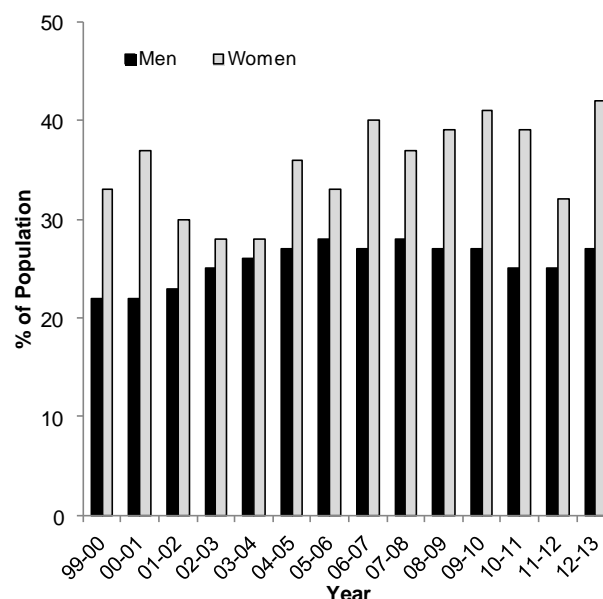
Despite considerable variability (due to the small women offender population), it is clear that a greater proportion of women than men receive sentences of 25 months or less (about 35% vs. about 26%). Follow-up analyses revealed that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women were about equally likely to receive these shorter sentences.

When women who were sentenced to 25 months or less were compared to their counterparts sentenced to three years or more, very few differences were found. The groups did not differ in terms of their age, risk and need profiles, previous contact with the criminal justice system, or the offences of which they were most likely to be convicted, with drug-related offences being most common for both groups. Women serving shorter sentences were, not surprisingly, less likely to have been convicted of a violent offence, although the difference between the two groups seemed to be decreasing over time.

Why we did this study

In the last decade, the number of offenders serving sentences of three years or less has grown. Given the unique management challenges associated with this group, those serving especially short sentences of 25 months or less were examined further.

Proportion of Women and Men Serving Sentences of 25 Months or Less



What we did

Federally-sentenced offenders admitted each fiscal year from 1999-2000 to 2012-2013 were included in analyses. The proportions of women and men sentenced to 25 months or less were calculated, and the women were compared on a variety of characteristics (e.g., offence profile, static and dynamic risk, reintegration potential, motivation, and ethnicity) to women serving longer sentences. All data were obtained from the Offender Management System, the CSC's automated electronic record system.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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