



Research at a glance

Gender Differences in Disciplinary Sanctions within the Canadian Federal Offender Population

KEY WORDS: *offender discipline, sanctions, gender, institutional offences*

What it means

Overall, the extent of differences in disciplinary sanctions was relatively minimal between men and women offenders, while regional differences were consistently prominent. Where specific gender differences did exist, sanctions tended to be more concrete for women (e.g., extra duties, segregation) than men (e.g., warnings). Although it was not feasible, due to the nature of the data, to ascertain why these discrepancies occurred, potential explanations were explored. For example, given the emphasis placed on dynamic security in women's institutions, certain gender differences may be due to staff relying more frequently on informal sanctions with women than men prior to administering more concrete sanctions. Variation by region may be due to differences in regional offender populations, operational practices, or in the interpretation and application of directives.

What we found

The men and women offenders who received sanctions differed on certain demographic, sentence, and correctional indicators. These differences, however, tended to be minor and were not expected to have an impact on the type of charges or sanctions they may receive for their institutional behaviour. The most common sanctions were fines (45%), suspended sanctions (24%), and warnings (18%). All other sanction types occurred 5% or less of the time, including segregation.

Variation in type of sanction administered occurred by gender, Aboriginal ancestry, region, offender security level, the number of previous institutional offences, number of days incarcerated, and offence severity. For example, women were more likely than men to receive "other" sanctions or segregation; however, women on average were sanctioned for significantly less time in segregation than men. Individuals of Aboriginal ancestry were more likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to receive a fine, and the monetary value tended to be slightly higher as well. Offenders in higher security levels, with a greater number of institutional charges, and a greater number

of days incarcerated, and who had been charged with a serious offence tended to receive more concrete sanctions than their counterparts (e.g., fines, segregation, other).

Why we did this study

One of the Correctional Service of Canada's strategic priorities is to ensure the safety and security of staff and offenders, which includes a focus on order and proper conduct within the institutions. Accordingly, disciplinary practices aim to discourage misconduct and ensure institutional safety. Given that research in this area is limited in Canada, the main objective of the current study was to understand the differences and patterns in the use of disciplinary sanctions, with a particular focus on gender.

What we did

All disciplinary sanctions administered for institutional offences received between April 1st, 2010 and March 31st, 2013 were examined. Person-specific information was also considered for those offenders who were the recipients of these sanctions.

A total of 57,405 sanctions that occurred in the time period for 696 women and 12,839 men were examined (sanctions included fines, suspended sanctions, warnings, segregation, and "other").

For more information

Harris, A., & Thompson, J. (2014). *Gender Differences in Disciplinary Sanctions within the Canadian Federal Offender Population* (Research Report R-329). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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