

\_\_\_\_\_ **Research Report** \_\_\_\_\_

**Temporary Absences and Work  
Releases: Characteristics and Patterns  
of Use**

Ce rapport est également disponible en français. Pour en obtenir un exemplaire, veuillez vous adresser à la Direction de la recherche, Service correctionnel du Canada, 340, avenue Laurier Ouest, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P9.

This report is also available in French. Should additional copies be required, they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.



**Temporary Absences and Work Releases: Characteristics and Patterns of Use**

Marguerite Ternes

Leslie Helmus

&

Trina Forrester

Correctional Service of Canada

February 2015



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Chris Hill from Institutional Reintegration Operations for his feedback around the research questions and Mike Hayden from Performance Measurement for his advice around data issues. We also would like to thank Shanna Farrell MacDonald for her feedback on the data pull. Finally, we would like to thank Sara Johnson for her overall guidance and advice on this project.



## Executive Summary

**Key words:** *temporary absences, work releases, failure rates, patterns*

Temporary absences (TAs) allow offenders to leave the institution for short periods of time to attend to administrative matters, perform community service, strengthen family contacts, receive medical attention, attend to parental responsibilities, engage in personal development, and/or attend rehabilitative programming in the community. These absences can be either escorted (ETA) by staff or volunteers, or unescorted (UTA). Work releases (WR) allow offenders to leave the institution for designated periods of time to obtain work experience in the community. The objective of TAs and WRs is to assist in community reintegration by allowing gradual and conditional access to the community while supporting offender rehabilitation efforts.

The goal of the current study was to examine the patterns of use and characteristics of TAs and WRs in the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) via two studies. The first study explored TAs and WRs at the event level, while the second study examined TAs and WRs at the offender level. Study 1 used two datasets. The first consisted of all 355,223 absences granted to federal offenders between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. The second dataset, used just for analyses surrounding granting authority, consisted of all 52,242 decisions to grant an absence between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013.

Overall, 89% of the absences granted were ETAs, 9% were UTAs, and 2% were WRs. For ETAs, the most common reasons for the absence were medical and personal development (for up to 15 days in length) while for UTAs, the most common reasons were for family contact or personal development (for up to 60 days in length). Across all types of absences, the failure rate was very low, with just 0.4% failing. Virtually all WRs were granted by CSC (99.7%) while 96% of ETAs and 65% of UTAs were granted by CSC (35% of UTAs were granted by the Parole Board of Canada [PBC]).

Study 2 also used two datasets. The first consisted of 27,098 offenders who had their first release from federal custody between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. The second, used for analyses around the timing of absences, consisted of 7,341 offenders who participated in TAs or WRs between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013, and who began their sentence in that timeframe.

Among offenders who were released between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011, 22% had participated in an ETA, 4% had participated in a UTA, and 3% participated in a WR prior to their first release. About 90% of offenders who participated in at least one UTA or WR also participated in an ETA. Seventy percent of offenders participating in an ETA were for a group ETA. On average, relative to their admission date, offenders participated in their first ETA 1.2 years after admission, their first UTA 1.5 years after admission, and their first WR 1.7 years after admission.

These findings describe the way TAs and WRs are currently being used and provide support for the effectiveness of the way CSC and PBC grant TAs and WRs. TAs and WRs appear to be used appropriately among offenders. Almost all offenders on TAs and WRs return to the institution without incident, indicating that they are safe initiatives for the community.





## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	ii
Executive Summary .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Temporary Absences .....	1
Work Releases .....	3
Previous Research .....	4
Purpose and Rationale .....	5
Study 1 Method .....	6
Population .....	6
Procedure .....	6
Study 1 Results .....	7
Type of Absence .....	7
Reason for Temporary Absence .....	8
Group Absences .....	10
Failure Rates of Absences .....	10
Escorts .....	13
Granting Authority .....	13
Summary of Study 1 Results .....	14
Study 2 Method .....	16
Population .....	16
Measures and Procedure .....	16
Study 2 Results .....	18
Participating in More than One Type of Absence .....	18
Group Absences .....	18
Days Spent on Absences .....	19
Timing of First Absences .....	20

Summary of Study 2 Results .....	22
Discussion .....	24
Conclusions.....	28
References .....	30
Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics of Population by Absence Type.....	33

## List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Percentage of each Type of Absence by Fiscal Year</i> .....	7
Table 2 <i>Percentages for Aboriginal Ancestry and Gender across Absence Type for Individual Absences</i> .....	8
Table 3 <i>Percentages and Frequencies of ETAs and UTAs Granted each Fiscal Year by TA Reason</i> .....	9
Table 4 <i>Success and Failure Rates for each Type of Absence across the Full Study Period</i> .....	12
Table 5 <i>Escort Type for each Escorted Temporary Absence Reason</i> .....	13
Table 6 <i>Percentages of Granting Authority for each Type of Absence</i> .....	14
Table 7 <i>Percentages of Granting Authority by ETA and UTA Reasons</i> .....	15
Table 8 <i>Descriptive Statistics for each Absence Type Based on Participation in Other Absence Types</i> .....	19
Table 9 <i>Mean Number of Days Spent on Absences by Offender</i> .....	20
Table 10 <i>Mean Number of Days and Percentage of Sentence Served until First Absence by Absence Type and Temporary Absence Reason</i> .....	21
Table 11 <i>Percentage of Offenders with First Absence at each Conditional Release Eligibility Date</i> .....	23

## List of Figures

<i>Figure 1. Percentage of escorted temporary absences granted as group absences by fiscal year</i>	10
<i>Figure 2. Failure rates (%) for each absence type by fiscal year</i> .....	11



## **Introduction**

To assist their successful reintegration into the community upon release, offenders may, on occasion, be authorized to leave the institution for short periods of time on temporary absences (TA) or work releases (WR). TAs and WRs are often the first step in community reintegration as they allow for offenders to engage in appropriate community behaviour and subsequently demonstrate that their risk can be successfully mitigated in the community. TAs and WRs can be part of gradual reintegration and are considered “best practices” for prisoner rehabilitation and preventing recidivism (Walsh, 2006). Experience with TAs and WRs are therefore taken into consideration when later determining the offender’s suitability for additional forms of conditional release. TAs also serve important administration purposes. That is, TAs provide a mechanism for offenders to enter the community for required medical services, legal obligations, or compassionate needs.

### **Temporary Absences**

The objective of TAs is to encourage offenders to maintain family and community ties and to take advantage of rehabilitative activities, with the goal of safely reintegrating them into the community as law-abiding citizens through gradual and controlled release (Johnson & Grant, 2001). The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA), introduced in 1992, changed the purposes for which TAs could be granted and restricted their use for some offenders. For example, prior to the CCRA there were four purposes for which TAs were granted (medical, compassionate, administrative, and socialization). The CCRA specified six purposes for TAs, leaving medical, compassionate, and administrative TAs in place, and subdividing the former socialization TAs into community service, family contact, and personal development for rehabilitative purposes. The CCRA also added parental responsibilities as one of the purposes for TAs. The CCRA and Commissioner’s Directive (CSC, 2014a) currently set the guidelines for the eligibility requirements, the permitting circumstances, and the maximum duration of the TA. More recently, Bill C-483 amended some provisions of the CCRA broadening the circumstances under which the Parole Board of Canada (PBC) is responsible for approving TA requests. The CCRA identifies two types of TAs: escorted and unescorted.

**Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA).** Given the potential risk to public safety that

arises with allowing offenders back into the community, offenders on an ETA are supervised while in the community by a correctional officer, other CSC employee, or a community volunteer. Additional security requirements such as handcuffs or leg irons may also be utilized during the absence. The absences tend to be short in duration (i.e., less than one day). ETAs permit the offenders to attend to administrative matters (e.g., attend court or other quasi-judicial hearing, or to deal with issues related to future release), perform community service, strengthen family contacts, receive medical attention, attend to parental responsibilities, engage in personal development, and/or attend rehabilitative programming in the community. Temporary absences can also be granted on compassionate grounds (CSC, 2014a), such as a request to attend a funeral for a family member. Although offenders become eligible for ETAs immediately once admitted to a federal institution, those granted early in the sentence are typically for medical or compassionate reasons (Grant & Millson, 1998). CSC has the authority for most decisions regarding ETAs, except for some circumstances with offenders serving a life sentence, where PBC approval is required (CSC, 2014a).

Grant and Millson (1998) reported that, from 1993/94 to 1995/96, about 45,000 to 50,000 TAs were granted each year. During this time period, there were approximately 14,000 offenders in custody, and over 90% of all TAs granted were ETAs. Between 1990/91 and 1995/96, 68% of TAs granted in Canada were granted for reintegration purposes (socialization, parental responsibility, community service, family contact, and personal development), followed by 27% for medical reasons, 3% for administrative reasons, and 2% for compassionate reasons (Grant & Millson, 1998).

In addition to individual ETAs, offenders may also receive a group ETA. These are more cost-effective because one CSC staff member or volunteer can escort and supervise multiple offenders (Grant & Belcourt, 1992). Group ETAs are usually granted for either community service or rehabilitation purposes, such as taking a small group of offenders to attend community-run Alcoholics Anonymous programming. Historically, group ETAs have accounted for approximately 79% of all reintegration ETAs and show a very low failure rate (0.2%; Grant & Millson, 1998).

**Unescorted Temporary Absence (UTA).** Most offenders are eligible for a UTA at half the period required to be served before the offender's parole eligibility date, or six months after starting their sentence, whichever is greater. Offenders serving a life sentence or an

indeterminate sentence are not eligible for UTAs until three years before their parole eligibility date, while offenders classified as maximum security are not eligible for UTAs (CSC, 2014a). Although offenders on UTAs do not require constant supervision, they may be required to check in with a local parole office or police department while in the community. Another unique feature of UTAs is that their duration can be much longer than for ETAs. Medium security offenders can be granted a 48 hour absence, and minimum security offenders can be absent for up to 72 hours. Additionally, offenders can be granted absences up to 15 or 60 days in length for rehabilitative/personal development opportunities.

Fewer UTAs are granted than ETAs, although they were used in greater numbers in the past. For example, in the mid 1970s, UTAs comprised 40% of all TAs granted, but by the early 1990s, they comprised only 15% (Grant & Belcourt, 1992). While CSC can approve the majority of UTAs, those requested by offenders who have committed serious offences require additional clearance from the PBC. Approximately 15% of UTAs granted were approved by the PBC from 1993/94 to 1994/95. This proportion declined the following year as a result of an agreement between the PBC and CSC, authorizing CSC to approve UTAs for a wider variety of offenders (Grant & Millson, 1998).

### **Work Releases**

Work releases (WRs) are granted by CSC and may be used to gain valuable employment experience in the community, or to participate in community services, such as work on forest fire crews (Grant & Beal, 1998). Generally, the offender is required to return to custody or to a halfway house each day, and to return to custody at the end of the WR. Although only inmates eligible for UTAs are eligible to apply for work releases, WRs are structured similarly to ETAs in that offenders can be supervised by CSC staff or volunteers while in the community and WRs are granted by CSC without consulting the PBC. For WRs, offenders can remain in the community for up to 60 days, with the possibility of renewal (CSC, 2014b). Grant and Beal (1998) found that for offenders granted a WR, the average number of days per year was 60, and that most offenders received multiple-day work releases, with 9.5% extended to over 130 days. WRs are granted on a relatively limited basis, with a historic average (1992-1996) of approximately 300 offenders receiving a total of 800 WRs each year (Grant & Beal, 1998), although the total number of work releases granted each year has declined in recent years (Luong et al., 2011).

## Previous Research

Given that the CCRA (1992) altered some aspects of TAs and WRs, the majority of CSC research on this topic has focused on assessing the impacts of these changes. The last comprehensive overviews of TAs and WRs were completed in 1998 (Grant & Beal, 1998; Grant & Millson, 1998) following the 1992 Pepino Inquiry (Pepino, Pépin, & Stewart, 1992). Additionally, several other research reports were produced in the 1990s that focused on more specific aspects of TAs, such as personal development temporary absences (Grant & Johnson, 1998) and the impacts of TAs on day parole (Grant & Gal, 1998). More recently, WRs and TAs were considered in evaluations of CSC's employment strategy (CSC, 2008) and CSC's community correctional interventions (Luong et al., 2011).

Considering the effect of changes in the CCRA on TAs, personal development TAs were first introduced with the CCRA and by 1998 accounted for 20% of all TAs (Grant & Millson, 1998). However, the number of offenders granted reintegration ETAs (i.e., for community service, family contact, or personal development) declined from 1991/92 to 1995/96, although the offender population increased during that time. The decline seemed to be mainly due to a decline in the use of parental responsibility, family contact, and community service TAs during that time, although there was a rapid increase in the use of personal development TAs throughout those years. The use of UTAs declined following the CCRA, while the use of medical TAs (ETAs and UTAs) increased.

Internationally, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in gradual reintegration by treating and supervising prisoners in the community (Cheliotis, 2009). For example, the number of TAs granted to incarcerated offenders in England and Wales increased 75% from 1995 to 2002 (Home Office, 2003a, 2003b). German prisons have also shown increases in prison leaves and work releases (Bammann & Feest, 2004). France, the United States, Greece, Sweden, and Ireland also have active temporary absence and/or work release programs (American Correctional Association, 2004; Estrada, Pettersson, & Shannon, 2012; Cheliotis, 2005, 2006; Ministère de la justice, 2011; O'Donnell & Jewkes, 2011).

**Failure Rates.** Grant and Millson (1998) identified the six-year average failure rate (1990-1996) for each type of TA. In their study, TAs were classified as failures if they were suspended by PBC, if the offender became unlawfully at large, detained by police, intoxicated, or breached one or more conditions of the TA release. They found that the failure rate for all (i.e.,



both ETA and UTA) medical, administrative, and compassionate TAs was less than 1%. Similarly, ETAs for socialization, community service, family contact, parental responsibility, and personal development also had very low failure rates (<1%) with approximately 2 out of every 1,000 of these ETAs leading to failure. As expected given the reduced supervision inherent in UTAs (increasing opportunities for negative behaviour), the failure rates for all UTAs were slightly higher than that for ETAs but remained extremely low overall: the six-year average failure rate was just over 1% with the highest annual average peaking at 1.5% (Grant & Millson, 1998). These failure rates have shown consistency over time. Grant and Belcourt (1992) examined failure rates over a larger time period (i.e., 16 years spanning from 1976 to 1991) and also found the average failure rate for ETAs was less than 1% and that for UTAs was approximately 1%. Grant and Beal (1998) found a failure rate of approximately 2.4% for WRs from 1993/94 to 1995/96.

Similarly low failure rates for prison furloughs (similar to temporary absences) were found among German offenders: Dünkler (2004) found that only 1% of offenders returned to the institution late or did not return at all. Slightly higher failure rates were found among Finnish and Greek offenders: less than 5% of offenders in Finland who had been granted a furlough breached conditions (Moran & Keinänen, 2012) and 2.5% of Greek offenders granted furloughs failed to return to prison within 24 hours (Cheliotis, 2005). Substantially higher failure rates were found for WRs in a Washington study, where 30% of offenders on WR were unsuccessful and were returned to prison to complete their terms (Turner & Petersilia, 1996).

## **Purpose and Rationale**

The goal of the present study was to examine the patterns and characteristics of TAs and WRs in CSC. Specifically, the current report examined patterns in TAs and WRs in terms of type of TA (escorted or unescorted, reason, group vs. individual), granting authority, length of TA or work release, success rates, how many absences an offender receives within a sentence, when in an offender's sentence absences occur, and whether certain types of temporary absences are more likely to be granted at certain timepoints throughout the sentence. These issues were examined via two studies; the first study explores TAs and WRs at the event (i.e., TA or WR) level while the second study explores them at the offender level. These two approaches allow us to get a picture of the current state of TAs and WRs in CSC.

## **Study 1 Method**

### **Population**

This study used two separate population datasets. The first dataset consisted of all absences granted to federal offenders between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. In total, this dataset included 355,223 permits, representing 30,411 offenders. While each permit is represented once in the dataset, offenders may be represented in the dataset multiple times if they had participated in more than one absence during this time period. Every escorted temporary absence (ETA), unescorted temporary absence (UTA), and work release (WR) during this time period was included. Each group absence was counted as one absence, although it applied to more than one offender, because this dataset was being used to examine absences on the event (absence) level.

The second population dataset (used solely for analyses of granting authority) consisted of all decisions to grant a TA or WR between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. This dataset consisted of 52,242 permits, representing 13,505 offenders. Every ETA, UTA, and WR granted during this time period was included. There are fewer decisions in the second dataset (at both the permit-level and offender-level) than in the first dataset because a single decision could represent several occasions for an offender (e.g., a recurring absence, such as to attend a series of rehabilitative sessions).

### **Procedure**

The Offender Management System (OMS) is an electronic administrative and operational database used by CSC to maintain all offender records from sentence commencement to sentence completion. Data extracted from the OMS was used in the present study to examine information about temporary absences. In order to maintain consistency with recent CSC publications on TAs, all permits with completion codes of “cancelled” and “did not participate” were excluded from all analyses. For analyses examining success indicators, permits that were missing completion codes were also excluded. “Successful” TAs included the completion codes of “on time” and “extended.” “Other completion” TAs included “late” and “deceased” completion codes, while “failed” TAs included all other completion codes (e.g., UAL, detained by police, breached conditions).

## Study 1 Results

This section will describe TAs and WRs in terms of types and reasons, prevalence of group absences, failure rates, prevalence and types of escorts, and granting authority. Particular attention will be paid to patterns across time.

### Type of Absence

Of the 355,223 absences granted to federal offenders between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013, 89.5% were Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs), 8.6% were Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTAs), and 1.9% were Work Releases (WRs). As presented in Table 1, although the number of absences increased over the years, the proportions of absence type remained relatively stable during each fiscal year of the study period. Additionally, the increase in absences is concurrent with increases in the incarcerated federal offender population; between 2005/06 and 2012/13, the total number of absences increased 18.8%, whereas the incarcerated offender population increased by 16.4% (Public Safety Canada, 2013).

The 274,354 individual absences<sup>1</sup> granted between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013 were granted to 29,783 federal offenders. Of these offenders, 21.8% were Aboriginal, 78.2% were

Table 1  
*Percentage of each Type of Absence by Fiscal Year*

Fiscal Year	ETA		UTA		WR		Total	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
2005/06	89.9	36,804	7.7	3,162	2.4	994	100	40,960
2006/07	87.8	37,975	10.5	4,560	1.7	733	100	43,268
2007/08	89.3	38,983	9.3	4,073	1.4	588	100	43,644
2008/09	88.7	37,190	9.7	4,068	1.7	691	100	41,949
2009/10	89.3	37,945	8.3	3,529	2.5	1,042	100	42,516
2010/11	89.9	40,547	7.3	3,292	2.8	1,280	100	45,119
2011/12	90.2	44,265	8.2	4,021	1.7	812	100	49,098
2012/13	90.5	44,054	7.9	3,857	1.6	758	100	48,669

*Note.* ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release

<sup>1</sup> Only individual absences were considered for these analyses because group absences did not have associated offender information.

non-Aboriginal, 91.9% were men and 8.1% were women. Women and Aboriginal offenders are both over-represented among recipients of TAs/WRs. In the same time period, women have represented between 5.4% to 6.8% of new Warrant of Committal admissions to CSC, and Aboriginal offenders have comprised between 17.2% and 20.5% of federal offenders between 2008/09 and 2012/13 (Public Safety Canada, 2013). Proportions related to Aboriginal ancestry and gender for each absence type are presented in Table 2. Aboriginal offenders were more likely to obtain an ETA (22% of offenders receiving ETAs) compared to the other absence types (approximately 18% of offenders receiving UTAs and WRs). Women offenders were most likely to get a UTA (13% of offenders) compared to the other types (where they represented approximately 8% to 9% of offenders receiving absences).

Table 2

*Percentages for Aboriginal Ancestry and Gender across Absence Type for Individual Absences*

Number of Offenders	ETA ( <i>n</i> = 236,894)		UTA ( <i>n</i> = 30,562)		WR ( <i>n</i> = 6,898)	
	29,406		2,451		1,990	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Aboriginal	22.0	6,473	18.0	440	18.1	360
Non-Aboriginal	78.0	22,933	82.0	2,011	81.9	1,630
Men	91.8	26,993	87.4	2,142	90.8	1,807
Women	8.2	2,413	12.6	309	9.2	183

*Note.* ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release

### **Reason for Temporary Absence**

There are eight reasons for a TA: administrative, medical, compassionate, community service, family contact, parental responsibilities, personal development (for up to 15 days), and personal development (for up to 60 days; the latter is for UTAs only). The proportions of reasons for ETAs have not fluctuated much over each fiscal year examined (see Table 3). Since 2005, the proportions of family contact and personal development (for up to 15 days) UTAs decreased, while the proportion of personal development (for up to 60 days) UTAs increased. There were also some differences in the most frequent reason for a TA, depending on whether it is escorted or unescorted. For ETAs, the most common reasons are medical and personal development (for

Table 3

*Percentages and Frequencies of ETAs and UTAs Granted each Fiscal Year by TA Reason*

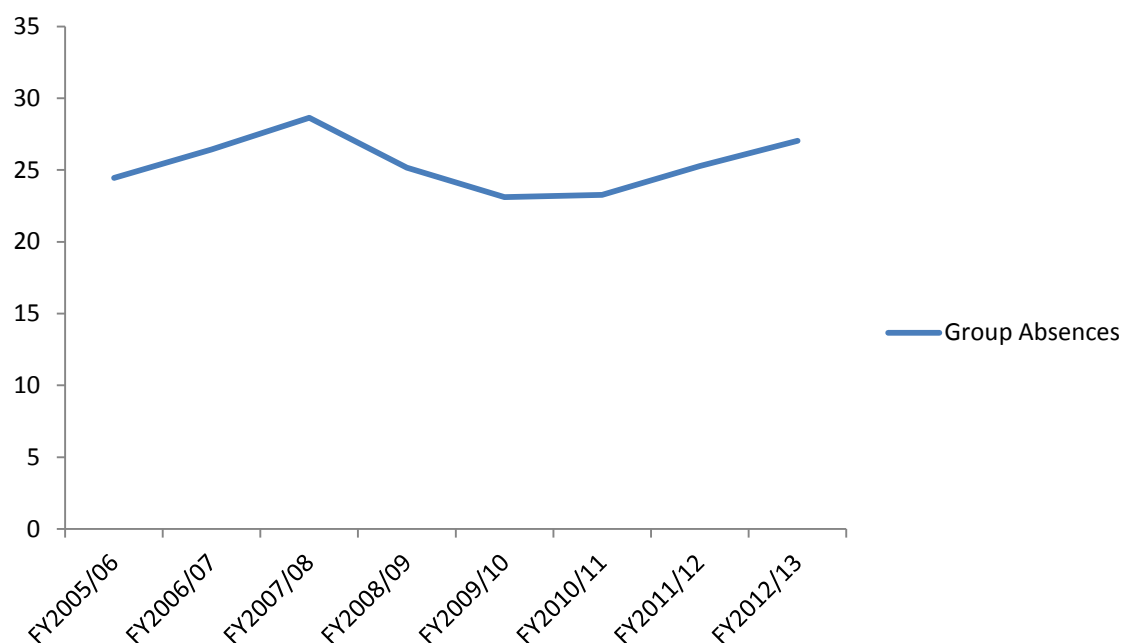
Escorted temporary absence (ETA)																	
	Administrative		Community service		Family contact		Compassionate		Parental responsibilities		Personal development up to 15 days		Personal development up to 60 days		Medical		Total
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
2005/06	1.26	463	14.52	5,344	5.71	2,101	1.89	694	0.08	31	31.68	11,659	-	-	44.86	16,512	36,804
2006/07	0.96	364	16.99	6,453	5.12	1,945	1.71	651	0.05	19	30.09	11,427	-	-	45.07	17,116	37,975
2007/08	0.77	301	18.13	7,067	4.73	1,844	1.61	628	0.26	100	29.60	11,539	-	-	44.90	17,504	38,983
2008/09	0.63	236	16.39	6,095	4.76	1,772	1.57	584	0.15	55	27.28	10,147	-	-	49.21	18,301	37,190
2009/10	0.65	247	16.22	6,153	4.32	1,638	1.60	606	0.06	24	27.70	10,509	-	-	49.46	18,768	37,945
2010/11	0.73	294	16.18	6,561	5.03	2,039	1.43	580	0.06	26	27.65	11,210	-	-	48.92	19,837	40,547
2011/12	1.06	468	17.06	7,553	5.10	2,256	1.49	659	0.09	39	26.46	11,713	-	-	48.75	21,577	44,265
2012/13	1.17	517	19.57	8,622	4.94	2,176	1.42	626	0.03	14	26.60	11,718	-	-	46.26	20,381	44,054
Unescorted temporary absence (UTA)																	
	Administrative		Community service		Family contact		Compassionate		Parental responsibilities		Personal development up to 15 days		Personal development up to 60 days		Medical		Total
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
2005/06	4.71	149	0.32	10	49.84	1,576	0.44	14	0.13	4	6.83	216	34.35	1,086	3.38	107	3,162
2006/07	4.04	184	0.55	25	44.36	2,023	0.26	12	0.04	2	5.75	262	36.29	1,655	8.71	397	4,560
2007/08	3.46	141	1.03	42	46.58	1,897	0.25	10	0.22	9	4.69	191	37.15	1,513	6.63	270	4,073
2008/09	2.95	120	0.88	36	42.90	1,745	0.10	4	0.10	4	5.63	229	41.08	1,671	6.37	259	4,068
2009/10	3.51	124	4.79	169	35.36	1,248	0.14	5	0.00	0	2.07	73	49.22	1,737	4.90	173	3,529
2010/11	3.71	122	3.55	117	39.09	1,287	0.49	16	0.27	9	3.07	101	44.62	1,469	5.19	171	3,292
2011/12	5.10	205	1.64	66	38.03	1,529	0.60	24	0.07	3	2.36	95	48.45	1,948	3.76	151	4,021
2012/13	4.12	159	2.26	87	38.40	1,481	0.31	12	0.44	17	2.96	114	48.56	1,873	2.96	114	3,857

up to 15 days), followed closely by community service ETAs. For UTAs, however, the most common reasons are for family contact or personal development (for up to 60 days).

## Group Absences

Overall, 22.8% of ETAs granted were for group absences. No UTAs or WRs were for groups. As displayed in Figure 1, this proportion has shown some fluctuation over the years, with 23% to 29% of ETAs being group absences. Overall, 69.1% of ETAs granted for community service were group absences, followed by 45.9% of ETAs granted for personal development (for up to 15 days), 11.0% of ETAs granted for administrative reasons, 2.5% of ETAs granted for medical reasons, and 0.3% of ETAs granted for compassionate reasons. Altogether, 48.0% of ETAs granted for reintegration purposes (i.e., community service, family contact, parental responsibilities, personal development) were group absences. These proportions have remained relatively stable over the past eight years.

*Figure 1. Percentage of escorted temporary absences granted as group absences by fiscal year*

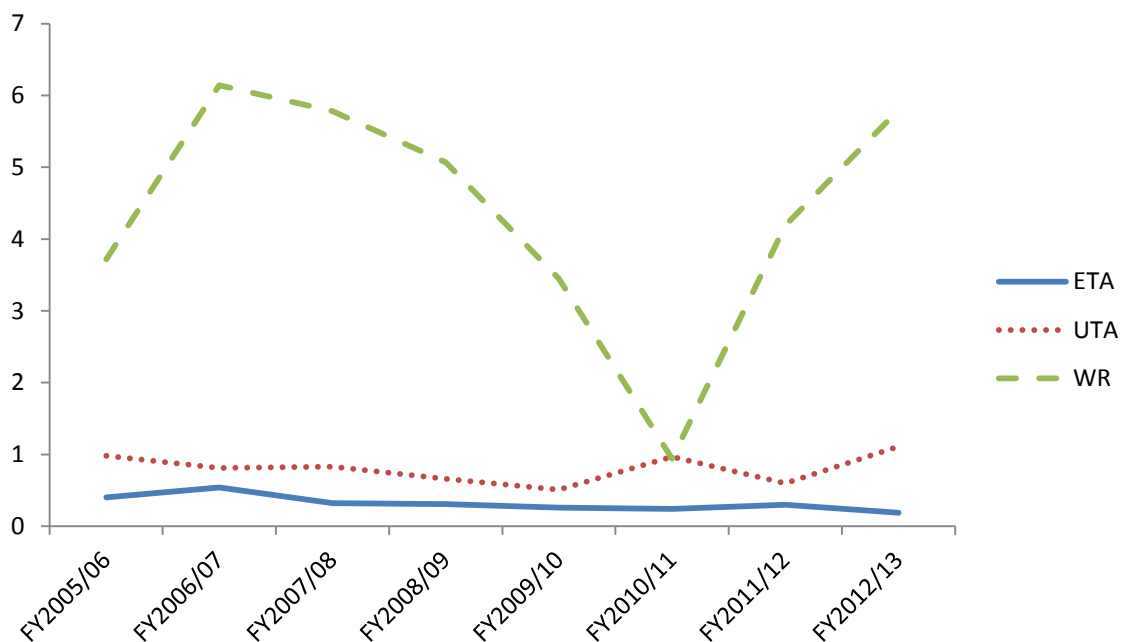


## Failure Rates of Absences

Across all types of absences, the success rate was very high (98.6%), with 0.4% failing (e.g., UAL, detained by police for a new offence, breached conditions) and 1.0% classified as another

type of completion (e.g., late, deceased). From 2005/06 to 2012/13, ETAs have tended to have the lowest failure rates (0.3%), followed by UTAs (0.8%), and WRs (4.0%). With regards to ETAs and UTAs, these proportions have remained relatively stable over the years (see Figure 2). However, the failure rate for WRs has fluctuated from a high of 6.1% in 2006/07 to a low of 0.9% in 2010/11, back up to 5.8% in 2012/13. These fluctuations are likely due to the small sample size of WRs per year (Table 1 presented total WRs per year). Specifically, across the study period, the number of failed WRs (excluding 2010/11) varied between 34 and 45, whereas in 2010/11 the number of failed work releases dropped to 12. The fact that the following two years returned to typical levels suggests that the rate from 2010/11 was anomalous.

*Figure 2. Failure rates (%) for each absence type by fiscal year*



The success rate for group ETAs was very high (99.4%), with 0.3% failing and 0.3% classified as another type of completion. These proportions remained stable throughout the examined time period.

Across the various reasons for ETAs and UTAs, there was some variability in the success and failure rates (see Table 4). Note that some reason categories contain very small numbers, which would contribute to greater fluctuation. For ETAs, the failure rates were pretty stable

Table 4

*Success and Failure Rates for each Type of Absence across the Full Study Period*

	Successful		Failure		Other Completion	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
ETA	98.7	313,610	0.3	1,005	1.0	3,174
Administrative	98.4	2,845	0.4	10	1.2	35
Community Service	99.5	53,563	0.3	177	0.2	108
Family Contact	97.8	15,421	0.3	42	2.0	308
Compassionate	95.3	4,790	0.4	22	4.3	216
Parental Responsibilities	98.4	303	0.3	1	1.3	4
Personal Development – up to 15 days	99.3	89,268	0.3	260	0.4	394
Medical	98.3	147,394	0.3	493	1.4	2,109
UTA	98.5	30,102	0.8	246	0.7	214
Administrative	97.4	1,173	0.8	10	1.7	21
Community Service	98.7	545	0.9	5	0.4	2
Family Contact	98.7	12,616	0.5	65	0.8	105
Compassionate	96.9	94	0.0	0	3.1	3
Parental Responsibilities	89.6	43	10.4	5	0.0	0
Personal Development – up to 15 days	98.7	1,264	0.7	9	0.6	8
Personal Development – up to 60 days	98.5	12,758	1.2	149	0.4	45
Medical	98.0	1,609	0.2	3	1.8	30
Work Release	95.4	6,584	4.0	277	0.5	37

*Note.* Two ETAs not falling into these categories were excluded from this table. ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release

across the different reason types. Among the other types of completion (e.g., late, deceased), the lowest rates were found for community service ETAs (0.2%) and the highest rates were found for compassionate grounds ETAs (4.3%). For UTAs, there was a bit more fluctuation, partly due to much smaller sample sizes. Although the average UTA failure rate was 0.8%, the failure rate for parental responsibilities UTAs was much higher at 10.4%, even though only 48 absences for this reason type were granted across the eight-year study period. Similar to compassionate grounds ETAs, the rate of ‘other completion’ for compassionate grounds UTAs was higher than average (3.1%, compared to 0.7% for all UTAs combined). These rates remained generally stable over time.



## Escorts

Offenders on an ETA were most often escorted by a correctional officer (58%) or community volunteer (30%). The remainder were escorted by contract staff<sup>2</sup> (5%) and non-security CSC staff (7%). Correctional officers were the most likely escorts for compassionate ETAs (90%) and ETAs for medical reasons (79%). Approximately equal proportions of correctional officers (44%) and community volunteers (43%) escorted offenders on ETAs for parental responsibilities. Community volunteers were most likely to escort offenders on a community service ETA (71%) or an ETA for personal development (for up to 15 days; 60%). Escort types across ETA reasons are presented in Table 5. Over time, these proportions have remained relatively stable.

Table 5

*Escort Type for each Escorted Temporary Absence Reason*

Reason	Correctional officer		Community volunteer		Contract staff		Non-security CSC staff	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Administrative	54.9	1,521	14.6	405	15.1	418	15.4	425
Community service	16.9	8,751	70.6	36,489	2.9	1,506	9.5	4,921
Family contact	64.6	10,029	24.4	3,792	4.8	738	6.3	978
Compassionate	89.5	4,433	2.6	129	3.4	188	4.5	222
Parental responsibilities	43.8	134	42.5	130	5.6	17	8.2	25
Personal development – up to 15 days	15.4	13,660	60.1	53,249	11.4	10,127	12.5	11,034
Medical	78.7	141,990	0.3	369	1.1	1,688	2.7	3,973

## Granting Authority

These analyses used the second population dataset in this study. As would be expected given the policy on granting authority for absences, 92.7% of all absences were granted by CSC,

<sup>2</sup> Contract staff includes Section 81 staff and other contract staff. Section 81 of the CCRA allows for the provision of correctional services to offenders by an Aboriginal community. This legislation supports a wide range of custodial or service delivery arrangements for Aboriginal offenders, such as healing lodges or centres.

and 7.2% were granted by the Parole Board of Canada (PBC; 0.1% were granted by other authorities, such as a healing lodge). This varied according to absence type. Virtually all WRs were granted by CSC (99.7%), 96.3% of ETAs were granted by CSC, and 65.1% of UTAs were granted by CSC (see Table 6). Over time, these proportions have remained relatively stable. Across the various reasons for ETAs and UTAs, there was some variability in the granting authority. For example, the PBC was more likely to grant ETAs for compassionate reasons or family contact compared to medical or administrative. The PBC was also more likely to grant UTAs for administrative, family contact, or personal development reasons compared to medical, community service, or compassionate reasons (see Table 7). These rates also remained stable over time. Notably, these analyses predated Bill C-483, which relegated ETA granting authority to PBC for additional circumstances affecting offenders serving a life sentence. However, the policy changes should impact only a small proportion of ETAs.

Table 6

*Percentages of Granting Authority for each Type of Absence*

Authority	ETA		UTA		WR		Overall	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
CSC	96.3	39,188	65.1	4,261	99.7	4,983	92.7	48,432
PBC	3.6	1,490	34.8	2,275	0.0	0	7.2	3,765
Other <sup>a</sup>	0.1	24	0.1	6	0.3	15	0.1	45

<sup>a</sup> “Other” includes facilities such as healing lodges (e.g., Buffalo Sage Wellness House in Edmonton, Alberta) that house Federal offenders under an agreement between community or provincial organizations and Public Safety Canada.

*Note.* ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release

## Summary of Study 1 Results

The vast majority of absences from institutions are ETAs (nearly 90%). ETAs are most commonly given for medical reasons or personal development (for up to 15 days), whereas UTAs are more commonly given for family contact reasons or personal development (for up to 60 days), with the latter demonstrating increased use over time. Roughly one quarter of absences are for more than one offender (group absences). Success rates for TAs are exceptionally high: ETAs and UTAs generally have failure rates of less than 1%, and WRs have a low failure rate of 4%. Just over half of ETAs are supervised by correctional staff, with the remainder supervised

by volunteers, contract staff, or non-security CSC staff. The PBC grants roughly one third of UTAs and a small number of ETAs (4%). Virtually all findings were stable across the study period.

Table 7

*Percentages of Granting Authority by ETA and UTA Reasons*

	CSC		PBC		Other	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
ETA						
Administrative	98.2	2,330	1.8	42	< 0.1	1
Community Service	96.7	6,903	3.3	236	< 0.1	1
Family Contact	94.5	5,710	5.4	329	< 0.1	1
Compassionate	93.9	4,997	6.1	323	< 0.1	0
Parental Responsibilities	95.5	107	3.6	4	0.9	1
Personal Development – up to 15 days	97.0	18,656	2.9	556	0.1	19
Medical	99.8	479	0.0	0	0.2	1
UTA						
Administrative	38.6	186	61.4	296	0.0	0
Community Service	86.4	108	13.6	17	0.0	0
Family Contact	69.3	1,500	30.5	659	0.2	4
Compassionate	84.7	61	15.3	11	0.0	0
Parental Responsibilities	85.7	18	4.8	1	9.5	2
Personal Development – up to 15 days	59.5	213	40.5	145	0.0	0
Personal Development – up to 60 days	55.9	1,448	44.1	1,143	0.0	0
Medical	99.6	727	0.4	3	0.0	0

*Note.* ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence

## Study 2 Method

### Population

Two population datasets were used for Study 2. The first dataset included all federal offenders who were released from federal custody between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. Only those experiencing their first release for their current sentence in that timeframe were included.<sup>3</sup> The release population included 27,098 offenders. The admission dates ranged from January 17, 1966 to March 22, 2011. Offenders in the dataset served an average of 1.9 years ( $SD = 2.4$ , ranging from 0.3 to 43.1 years,  $mdn = 1.3$ )<sup>4</sup> in federal custody from admission to first release.

The second dataset, which was also used in Study 1, consisted of all absences granted to federal offenders between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2013. This dataset was used solely for analyses of the timing of TAs and WRs. This population dataset included 355,249 permits, representing 30,411 offenders. As this dataset was used to examine the timing of absences, only offenders with sentences beginning on or after April 1, 2005 were kept in the dataset to ensure that we were able to look at the first absence in a sentence. This resulted in removing 9,633 offenders from the dataset (and disproportionately removing offenders with longer sentences). All medical and administrative TAs were also removed from the dataset,<sup>5</sup> resulting in a further 13,316 offenders being removed from the dataset. Finally, offenders on indeterminate sentences ( $n = 121$ ) were removed due to the biasing effect this might have on the timing of absences. The final dataset used for this study included 7,341 offenders. Separate datasets were created for each absence type (ETA, UTA, and WR) and TA reason to examine the timing of the first of each of these absences for offenders.

### Measures and Procedure

As in Study 1, data extracted from the OMS were used to examine information about TAs,

---

<sup>3</sup> Offenders with certain types of releases (death, deportation, court order) were removed from the dataset. We also removed offenders who were deported or died during follow-up because this dataset was taken from another study requiring follow-up information.

<sup>4</sup> There was a small number of offenders who served only a short period of time in CSC custody before their release date. For 1.8% of the population, there were fewer than four months between admission and release. Common reasons for this short time served include serving a portion of their sentence in a provincial correctional facility, remand centre, or in a foreign country. Additionally, some offenders may have received accelerated parole review.

<sup>5</sup> Medical and administrative TAs were removed from the dataset because there is less discretion in granting practices.

WRs, and demographic and sentence information. To maintain consistency with recent CSC publications on TAs, all permits with completion codes of “cancelled” and “did not participate” were excluded from all analyses.

**Risk.** The Static Factors Assessment (CSC, 2012; Motiuk, 1993) is a 137-item scale designed to assess risk of general recidivism based on static (i.e., historical) risk factors. It is rated for all offenders and has three subscales: Criminal History Record (38 items), Offence Severity Record (71 items), and Sex Offence History Checklist (28 items). Each item is rated as “present” or “absent.” After rating all items, the officer forms an overall judgement of whether the static risk posed by the offender is low, moderate, or high.

**Need.** The Dynamic Factor Intake Assessment (DFIA) is rated for all offenders at intake (CSC, 2012). The original DFIA consisted of 197 dichotomous indicators, organized into seven need domains: employment, marital/family, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, and attitude. After rating each item, the parole officer or primary worker developed a structured professional judgement rating for each domain, on a three or four-point scale. Guided by the item and domain ratings, the officer makes an overall judgement of the level of dynamic need (low, moderate, or high). The DFIA has demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability (with few exceptions) and predictive accuracy, although predictive accuracy was somewhat lower for Aboriginal offenders (Brown & Motiuk, 2005).

Following recommendations from the Brown and Motiuk (2005) review, a revised DFIA (the DFIA-R) was implemented in 2009. It has the same general structure and domains, but the total number of indicators was reduced to 100 and the rating scale for each domain has been modified. For the current study, analyses of the final dynamic rating used the low/moderate/high rating, regardless of whether the original or revised DFIA was used.

## Study 2 Results

Study 2 focuses on offenders participating in more than one type of absence, participation rates in group absences, days spent on absences, and the timing of absences in relation to key eligibility dates. Overall, 22% of offenders in the release population received an ETA, 4% received a UTA, and 3% participated in a WR. Characteristics of offenders (gender, Aboriginal ancestry, risk level, need level, most serious offence, indeterminate sentence, age at admission, and sentence length) by absence type are presented in Appendix A. With the exception of most serious offence, these differences are discussed in more detail in a related report (Helmus and Ternes, 2014a). A key finding regarding offence type was that whereas 6% of the population had homicide as their most serious offence type, the rates were much higher for those receiving an ETA (15%), UTA (30%), or work release (35%). Offenders who received a UTA and WR were also substantially less likely to have sexual assault or assault as their most serious offence, compared to the overall population.

### Participating in More than One Type of Absence

In the population, 4% ( $n = 1,008$ ) of offenders participated in both an ETA and a UTA, 3% ( $n = 697$ ) participated in both an ETA and a WR, 1% ( $n = 363$ ) participated in both a UTA and a WR, and 1% ( $n = 342$ ) participated in all three within their sentence, prior to their first release. A majority of offenders who participated in a UTA or WR had also participated in an ETA during their sentence (91% and 88%, respectively). Furthermore, almost half of WR participants had also participated in a UTA (46%). Offenders who participated in all absences at least once participated in a larger number of ETAs and UTAs than all other groups, and an equivalent number of WRs to those who had a WR in combination with an ETA or a UTA (see Table 8). In general, those who had multiple types of absences (i.e., all groups other than ETA only, UTA only, and WR only) had a larger number of each relevant absence type than those who only participated in each type.

### Group Absences

Approximately 54% ( $n = 3,191$ ) of offenders who participated in an ETA (12% of the release population) participated in at least one group ETA. Of those who received an ETA, on average they participated in 18 group ETAs ( $SD = 52.2$ ,  $mdn = 1$ ). Of all ETAs participated in by

offenders in the present dataset ( $n = 152,695$ ), 70% of them were group TAs ( $n = 106,896$ ). This prevalence is much higher than Study 1 (which found that approximately one quarter of TAs were group absences) because Study 1 counted a group TA as one event, whereas in this dataset at the offender level, a group TA for 10 offenders, for example, would be counted 10 times.

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for each Absence Type Based on Participation in Other Absence Types*

	ETA			UTA			WR		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
ETA only	13.6	30.0	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
UTA only	-	-	-	4.8	12.0	2	-	-	-
WR only	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	1.1	1
ETA and UTA only	61.0	109.8	24	11.1	18.4	5	-	-	-
ETA and WR only	50.2	115.0	24	-	-	-	4.3	10.2	2
UTA and WR only	-	-	-	13.8	19.7	9	4.1	4.7	2
ETA, UTA and WR	93.4	125.9	48	16.9	22.9	10	4.0	5.7	2

*Note.* ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release

### Days Spent on Absences

Table 9 summarizes the number of days offenders spent on absences. Personal development TAs (for up to 15 days or 60 days) were excluded because it was not possible to obtain reliable data on the number of days they were absent (e.g., the absence may have covered a 60-day period, but the offender may have been absent only one day a week; Grant & Johnson, 1998). Of offenders granted an ETA, on average they spent 23.5 days on ETAs ( $mdn = 3$ ) during their sentence. The most time was spent on ETAs for social reasons ( $M = 95$  days,  $mdn = 2.5$ ); however, it should be noted that in 1992 the CCRA sub-divided this reason into community service, family contact, and personal development.<sup>6</sup> This was followed by ETAs for community service ( $M = 46$  days,  $mdn = 15$ ). Offenders spent less than 10 days, on average, on each of the other types of ETAs. Of offenders who had been granted a UTA, on average they spent 27.2 days

<sup>6</sup> Although the dataset includes offenders released between 2005 and 2011, some of the offenders would have begun their sentences prior to the 1992 removed of 'social' TAs, which is why this category is still included in this dataset.

on UTAs (*mdn* = 16). The most time was spent on UTAs for family contact (*M* = 27 days, *mdn* = 17), community service (*M* = 18 days, *mdn* = 7), and social reasons (*M* = 18 days, *mdn* = 18). Offenders spent less than 10 days, on average, on each of the other types of UTAs. Of offenders who had been granted a WR, on average they spent 143.3 days on WRs (*mdn* = 62).

When time served (i.e., between admission and first release) was considered for ETAs, offenders who participated in at least one ETA spent an average of 8.2 days per year on ETAs. Of offenders who participated in ETAs for each of the ETA reasons, the most days per year were spent on ETAs for community service (10.5 days/year). Offenders who participated in at least one UTA spent on average 8.3 days per year on UTAs. The most days per year were spent on UTAs for family contact (5 days/year). Offenders who participated in at least one WR spent an average of 23.3 days per year on WRs.

Table 9

*Mean Number of Days Spent on Absences by Offender*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Min	Max	Number of days per year
Escorted temporary absence	23.5	72.5	3	1	1,331	8.2
Community service	45.5	96.6	15	1	1,308	10.5
Family contact	7.1	21.1	3	1	413	1.6
Compassionate	1.8	1.6	1	1	34	0.5
Parental responsibilities	4.1	11.1	2	1	77	1.1
Social	95.1	314.0	2.5	1	1,181	3.9
Unescorted temporary absence	27.2	42.1	16	1	843	8.3
Community service	18.0	29.9	7	1	128	3.0
Family contact	27.2	41.9	17	1	843	5.0
Compassionate	2.9	2.1	2	1	10	0.8
Parental responsibilities	6.6	7.5	3	1	25	1.7
Social	18.0	4.4	18	13	23	0.7
Work release	143.3	184.4	62	1	2,551	23.3

*Note.* Personal development TAs (for up to 15 days or 60 days) were excluded from these analyses.

### Timing of First Absences

To examine the timing of first absence of each type/reason, only offenders with determinate sentences were considered (see Table 10). For information on indeterminate offenders, see Ternes (in preparation). On average, offenders granted an ETA participated in



Table 10

*Mean Number of Days and Percentage of Sentence Served until First Absence by Absence Type and Temporary Absence Reason*

	<i>Number of days until first absence</i>						<i>Percentage of sentence served until first absence</i>				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Min	Max	<i>M (%)</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Min	Max
Escorted temporary absence	6,962	438.2	328.2	348	3	2,735	33	18	29	<1	99
Community service	1,814	519.7	344.5	413	32	2,674	36	16	33	3	92
Family contact	1,990	486.0	349.9	379	66	2,647	34	16	31	3	93
Compassionate	2,394	444.5	370.4	346	3	2,562	33	22	28	<1	99
Parental responsibilities	48	428.2	280.4	331	82	1,176	32	16	29	8	69
Personal development – up to 15 days	3,845	469.7	331.4	373	37	2,735	35	16	32	4	91
Unescorted temporary absence	1,058	556.2	333.1	456	143	2,340	40	16	38	6	91
Community service	45	508.3	279.3	419	212	1,820	40	11	40	18	63
Family contact	771	552.1	322.9	452	173	2,340	39	15	37	6	86
Compassionate	38	482.2	301.5	418	209	1,747	41	17	36	17	88
Parental responsibilities	9	464.9	244.4	405	204	936	38	20	40	17	82
Personal development - up to 15 days	99	649.3	425.4	510	184	2,090	45	17	42	15	84
Personal development – up to 60 days	433	571.7	335.2	475	143	2,175	44	16	42	11	91
Work release	920	636.3	390.7	525	153	2,792	42	16	39	8	92

*Note:* Numbers may not add up to totals in each absence type because offenders may have more than one absence of each type.

their first ETA 1.2 years after their sentence commenced (after serving, on average, 33% of their sentence). Of all TAs, ETAs for parental responsibilities occurred earliest ( $M = 1.2$  years; after 32% of their sentence had been completed). UTAs and WRs tended to occur later in the sentence, after 1.5 and 1.7 years, respectively, and after 40% and 42% of their sentence had been completed, respectively. Of all TAs, UTAs for personal development (for up to 15 days) tended to occur latest in an offender's sentence ( $M = 1.8$  years; after 45% of their sentence had been completed).

Table 11 provides information regarding the timing of TAs/WRs in relation to key eligibility dates. Overall, very few offenders received their first absence, of any type, subsequent to their statutory release eligibility date (only two individuals; this would be expected given that most offenders would have had their first release before their statutory release date). Approximately 35% of offenders received their first ETA before their day parole eligibility date, 26% between their day parole and full parole eligibility dates, and 39% between their full parole and statutory release eligibility dates. Of all absences, first ETAs for compassionate reasons were the most likely to occur prior to day parole eligibility date, with almost 41% occurring at this time, while parental responsibility and community service ETAs were most likely to occur between the full parole eligibility and statutory release date. Once again, UTAs and WRs occurred later in offenders' sentences. More than half of offenders received their first UTA (56%) or first WR (59%) between their full parole and statutory release eligibility dates. First UTAs for community service were the most likely of all absences to occur between full parole and statutory release eligibility dates, with 82% occurring at this time, followed by UTAs for personal development (for up to 60 days; 68%), compassionate grounds (67%), and personal development (for up to 15 days; 64%).

## **Summary of Study 2 Results**

Overall, 22% of offenders were granted an ETA, 4% were granted a UTA, and 3% participated in a WR. Most offenders who participated in UTAs or WRs had also participated in ETAs. Offenders who had participated in more than one type of absence generally participated in more absences overall. Most TAs that offenders participated in were group absences (70%). On average, offenders who received an ETA participated in ETAs for 24 days before their first release (on average, 8 days per year). Results were similar for UTAs. Offenders participating in

Table 11

*Percentage of Offenders with First Absence at each Conditional Release Eligibility Date*

	Before day parole eligibility		Between day parole and full parole eligibility		Between full parole and statutory release eligibility		After statutory release eligibility	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Escorted temporary absence	34.7	1,578	26.4	1,203	38.9	1,768	0.04	2
Community service	25.1	317	27.9	352	47.0	593	-	-
Family contact	29.3	410	29.9	418	40.8	570	-	-
Compassionate	40.7	578	19.7	280	39.5	561	0.07	1
Parental responsibilities	26.5	9	26.5	1	47.0	16	-	-
Personal development – up to 15 days	29.0	736	28.0	710	43.0	1,090	0.04	1
Unescorted temporary absence	15.1	117	28.9	223	56.0	433	-	-
Community service	10.7	3	7.1	2	82.1	23	-	-
Family contact	17.2	101	30.6	179	52.2	306	-	-
Compassionate	6.7	2	26.7	8	66.7	20	-	-
Parental responsibilities	-	-	42.9	3	57.1	4	-	-
Personal development – up to 15 days	7.6	5	28.8	19	63.6	42	-	-
Personal development – up to 60 days	10.1	29	21.6	62	68.3	196	-	-
Work release	13.2	80	28.0	170	58.9	358	-	-

*Note:* Eligibility dates were missing for a number of offenders. Numbers may not add up to totals in each absence type because offenders may have more than one absence of each type.

WRs spent more time on their absences (143 days overall, or 23 days per year). On average, offenders who were granted an ETA participated in their first ETA 1.2 years after their sentence commenced (after 33% of their sentence had been completed). UTAs and WRs tended to occur later in the sentence compared to ETAs.

## Discussion

TAs and WRs provide opportunities for offenders to participate in activities outside the highly structured prison environment. They allow offenders to complete community service, participate in treatment programs, gain work experience, and visit with family members. In addition, TAs provide a means by which offenders can receive medical treatment that is not available in the institutions, deal with court and other legal issues, and attend to urgent family matters. The goal of the present report was to examine the current state of TAs and WRs in CSC. Generally, the findings were consistent with previous research. That is, TAs and WRs continue to be used frequently with high levels of success.

Overall, the number of TAs granted each year seems to be increasing. While nearly 41,000 TAs were granted in the 2005/06 fiscal year, by the 2012/13 fiscal year, this number had risen to over 48,000, though this increase is comparable with increases in the federal offender population in the same timeframe (Public Safety Canada, 2013). The numbers of absences are comparable to the results reported by Grant and Millson (1998), where about 48,000 TAs were granted each year from 1990/91 to 1995/96.

Of all absences granted to federal offenders during our study period, 89.4% were ETAs and 8.6% were UTAs (the remaining 1.9% were WRs). Considering just TAs, the proportion of ETAs ranged from 89.3% to 92.5% per year. Grant and Millson (1998) noticed that the proportion of UTAs, relative to ETAs, declined to 12% after the introduction of the CCRA in the 1992/93 fiscal year, then remained steady at 12% until the end of their study period, the 1995/96 fiscal year. Since that time the proportion of UTAs relative to ETAs seems to have declined even further, to 8.1% in the last year of the current study period (when work releases were excluded, to match the methods of Grant and Millson, 1998).

The number of reintegration TAs granted per year seems to have declined in the years since Grant and Millson's study (1998). They reported approximately 32,000 reintegration TAs per year from 1990/91 to 1995/96, with 28,000 being ETAs. The frequency of reintegration TAs has declined even further: the current report found that approximately 23,500 reintegration TAs were granted per year of our study period, with almost 20,000 being ETAs. The proportions of reasons for ETAs remained steady throughout the years examined for the present report, for both reintegration and non-reintegration ETAs. However, for UTAs, the proportions of family contact

and personal development (for up to 15 days) UTAs decreased during the present study period, while the proportion of personal development (for up to 60 days) UTAs increased.

Across all types of absences, only 0.4% were considered to be failures. Not surprisingly, when an offender was escorted on a TA, the failure rate was lower than when an offender was unescorted (0.3% vs. 0.8%, respectively), although both rates were very low. These rates are comparable to those reported by Grant and Millson's (1998). When Forrester and Grant (2013) examined unsuccessful UTAs, they found that only half represented genuine failures (i.e., the permit had to be terminated while the offender was in the community or the offender did not return). Some of the other reasons UTAs were coded as unsuccessful, which were not considered genuine failures include: the permit had actually been cancelled before the offender was released; offenders returned late, with late times ranging from a few minutes to 2.5 hours and with some offenders calling to indicate they would be late; the offender died while on the UTA; or the permit was miscoded as unsuccessful. This suggests that allowing offenders to participate in UTAs presents even less risk to the community than the official numbers indicate. Furthermore, compared to failure rates for absences in other countries (Cheliotis, 2005; Dünkel, 2004; Moran & Keinänen, 2012; Turner & Petersilia, 1996), the rates in the present study tended to be lower, suggesting that the current criteria for granting absences from federal prison in Canada is effective. That is, virtually all offenders who have been granted an absence successfully return to custody.

The failure rate was relatively higher (though still very low) for WRs (4%). This rate was higher than the 2.4% rate reported by Grant and Beal (1998), who looked at the completion rate for WRs between 1993/94 and 1995/96. Future research should explore possible reasons for these failure rates and the fluctuations in the failure rate for WRs. Even though the failure rate for WRs was higher in the present study than it had been historically, the present results show a much lower rate of failure than the 30% rate reported by Turner and Petersilia (1996) in an American study. Moreover, the vast majority of offenders who had participated in a WR successfully completed it, providing further support for the current granting procedures.

At the TA-level, roughly one quarter of ETAs granted were for group absences (e.g., a group absence for 20 offenders was counted as 1 absence). In Study 2, examining each TA departure, 70% of ETAs were group ETAs (e.g., a group absence for 20 offenders was counted as 20 absences), which is comparable with the 79% rate reported by Grant and Millson (1998).

Compared to Grant and Millson's (1998) findings, the current study found that offenders spent a greater average number of days on TAs during their sentence. Grant and Millson (1998) found that offenders were on a TA for an average of 17 days of their sentence, while the current study found that offenders were on ETAs for an average of 24 days of their sentence and on UTAs for an average of 27 days of their sentence. This discrepancy can likely be attributed to the different ways in which TA days were counted in each study. For Grant and Millson, TA days indicated the number of different days on which a TA was granted. If an offender had three TAs on one day, this would only count as one day. In the present study, TA days were calculated from departure date to arrival date. If an offender had three TAs on one day, he would have three departure dates and arrival dates on that day, so it would have counted as three TA days. Also, Grant and Millson (1998) looked at TAs granted within a specific time period (i.e., 1990/91 to 1995/96), while Study 2 considered any TA participated in within an offender's sentence, which would reflect a longer period of time in which an offender would have the opportunity to participate in a TA. During their sentence, offenders who participated in a work release spent an average of 143 days on release (with a median of 62 days), which is very similar to Grant and Beal's (1998) findings.

More than half of the ETAs were escorted by correctional officers (58%), with 30% being escorted by community volunteers. These results differ from those reported by Grant and Millson (1998), where most ETAs were escorted by community volunteers. However, Grant and Millson found that the use of correctional officers as escorts had increased during their study period, which suggests that the increased tendency to use correctional officers as escorts had started in the 1990s.

Almost all ETAs and WRs were granted by CSC, while 65% of UTAs were granted by CSC and 35% were granted by PBC. It was expected that a greater proportion of UTAs, as compared to ETAs and WRs, would be granted by PBC because UTAs are a less stringent type of absence, requiring additional clearance in some circumstances. The proportion of UTAs granted by the PBC is more than twice as high as the proportion found by Grant and Millson (1998). Unfortunately the database containing the information regarding granting authority could not be linked to the database containing other absence information. The granting authority database had a much smaller number of absences, as compared to the absence database, which may explain this discrepancy. It is not clear if the smaller database is due to an issue with

recording the decisions regarding absences or if decisions are made in batches rather than on an individual basis. Either way, it would be helpful if a common identifier was used to link the granting authority database with the other databases regarding absences.

Offenders were granted ETAs earlier in their sentences than UTAs or WRs. This is in line with the eligibility requirements for absences, as set by the CCRA. That is, offenders are eligible for an ETA at any point in their sentence, but for a UTA or WR, they are not eligible until they have served at least six months of their sentence. The fact that offenders typically served almost a year of their sentence before being granted a discretionary ETA and well over a year before being granted a UTA or WR, suggests that CSC and PBC are cautious in granting these absences.

About 17% of offenders who participated in at least one ETA also participated in a UTA and 12% also participated in one WR. However, 91% of those who participated in at least one UTA also participated in an ETA and 88% of those who participated in at least one WR also participated in an ETA. These proportions support the idea that successfully completing an ETA may contribute to the likelihood of being granted a UTA or WR, and that offenders are rarely granted UTAs and WRs without first demonstrating the ability to complete an ETA. Further analyses would be necessary to examine the contribution of successful ETA completion to receiving a UTA or WR permit.

## **Conclusions**

Altogether, this study supports the effectiveness of CSC's use of TAs and WRs. TAs and WRs appear to be well-used among offenders and careful screening for these absences ensures that public safety is not compromised by offenders who are in the community for short periods of time while serving their sentences. Almost all offenders on TAs and WRs return to the institution without incident, making them safe initiatives for the community.

Changes over time in patterns of use for TAs and WRs have been fairly minimal, with a few exceptions. Increases in TAs and WRs match increases in the federal offender population and overall, there are slightly fewer absences granted compared to the early 1990s. The proportion of TAs that are unescorted have continued to decline. UTAs for family contact and personal development (for up to 15 days) have been declining, whereas UTAs for personal development (for up to 60 days) have been increasing. For TAs, failure rates are similar to or lower than previous studies. WR failure rates are slightly higher than previous studies, but



remain low overall. Group ETAs have remained fairly similar, though CSC staff are more likely to serve as the escorts compared to previous research.

TAs and WRs can be viewed as elements in the process of gradual reintegration. ETAs provide a first opportunity to observe the offender in a community setting and to assess the offender's ability to function safely. Successful participation provides the offenders with increased community exposure without increasing the risk to society, as indicated by the extremely low failure rates. UTAs provide the first opportunity for the offender to return to the community without direct supervision, but for a very limited period of time.

By describing the current state of CSC's use of TAs and WRs, the present study can be considered a first step in examining their effectiveness. The current study does not provide insight into how TAs contribute to future release decisions or how they affect post-release outcomes. Previous research has shown that participation in TAs and WRs may be positively associated with discretionary release and negatively associated with returns to custody among some offenders (Grant & Beal, 1998; Johnson & Grant, 2001; Motiuk & Belcourt, 1996). This research is currently being updated to examine the effects of participating in TAs and WRs for all offenders participating in these absences compared to those who did not participate (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b).

## References

- American Correctional Association. (2004). Survey summary: Re-entry/reintegration. *CorrectionsCompendium*, 29, 8-24.
- Bammann, K., & Feest, J. (2004). Correctional system in the Federal Republic of Germany. In J. A. Winterdyk (Ed.) *Adult Corrections: International Systems and Perspectives* (pp. 131-157). Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.
- Brown, S. L., & Motiuk, L. L. (2005). *The Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis (DFIA) component of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process: A meta-analytic, psychometric and consultative review* (Research Report No. R-164). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
- Cheliotis, L. K. (2005). The prison furlough programme in Greece: Findings from a research project in the Male Prison of Korydallos. *Punishment & Society*, 7, 201-215.
- Cheliotis, L. K. (2006). Demystifying risk management: A process evaluation of the prisoners' home leave scheme in Greece. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 6, 163-195.
- Correctional Service Canada (2010). *Speakers binder: Section 2 - the mandate, mission and priorities of the CSC*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Correctional Service of Canada. (2012). *Correctional planning and criminal profile. Commissioner's Directive 705-6*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Correctional Service Canada (2014a). *Temporary absences Commissioner's Directive 710-3*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Correctional Service Canada (2014b). *Work releases Commissioner's Directive 710-7*. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (1992). C-20. Retrieved on January 10, 2013 from <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-44.6/page-1.html>
- Dünkel, F. (2004). Reducing tension and improving rehabilitation by opening prisons: Day leave and prison furloughs in Germany. In Council of Europe (Ed.) *Crime Policy in Europe: Good Practices and Promising Examples*, (pp. 159-180). Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.
- Estrada, F., Pettersson, T., & Shannon, D. (2012). Crime and criminology in Sweden. *European Journal of Criminology*, 9, 668-688.
- Forrester, T. K., & Grant, B. (2013). *Descriptive Analysis of Unsuccessful Unescorted Temporary Absences* (RS-13-08). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Grant, B. A. & Beal, C. A. (1998). *Work release program: How it is used and for what*

- purposes*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Grant, B. A., & Belcourt, R. L. (1992). *An analysis of temporary absences and the people who receive them*.(R-25). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Grant, B. A., & Johnson, S. L. (1998). *Personal Development Temporary Absences*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Grant, B. A., & Millson, W. A. (1998). *Temporary absence program: A descriptive analysis*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Helmus, L., & Ternes, M. (2014a). *Who gets temporary absences and work releases?* Report submitted. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
- Helmus, L., & Ternes, M. (2014 b). *Impact of participating in temporary absences and work releases on community outcomes*. Report submitted. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
- Johnson, S. L., & Grant, B. A. (2001). Using temporary absence in the gradual reintegration process. *Forum on Corrections*, 13.
- Luong, D., MacDonald, C., McKay, M., Olotu, M., & Heath, S. (2011). *Report of the Evaluation of CSC's Community Corrections Chapter 1: Correctional Interventions*. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- Ministère de la justice. (2011). *Les chiffres clés de l'administration pénitentiaire* [Key figures regarding prison administration]. Paris: Author.
- Moran, D., & Keinänen, A. (2012). The 'inside' and 'outside' of prisons: Carceral geography and home visits for prisoners in Finland. *Fennia*, 190, 62–76.
- Motiuk, L. L. (1993). Where are we in our ability to assess risk? *Forum on Corrections Research*, 5(2), 14-18.
- Motiuk, L. L., & Belcourt, R. L. (1996). *Prison work programs and post-release outcome: A preliminary investigation* (RR-43). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada.
- O'Donnell, I., & Jewkes, Y. (2011). Going home for Christmas: Prisoners, a taste of freedom and the press. *The Howard Journal*, 50, 75-91.
- Pepino, N. J., Pépin, L., and Stewart, R. J. (1992). *Report of the Panel Appointed to Review the Temporary Absence Program for Penitentiary Inmates*. Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada.
- Public Safety Canada (2013). *Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview 2013* (Cat no. PS1-3/2012E). Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Turner, S., & Petersilia, J. (1996). Work release in Washington: Effects on recidivism and corrections cost. *The Prison Journal*, 76, 138-164.

Walsh, T. (2006). Is corrections correcting? An examination of prisoner rehabilitation policy and practice in Queensland. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 39, 109-133.

## Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics of Population by Absence Type

	Any TA ( <i>n</i> = 6,032)		ETA ( <i>n</i> = 5,933)		UTA ( <i>n</i> = 1,107)		WR ( <i>n</i> = 793)		Population ( <i>n</i> = 27,098)	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Gender										
Men	87.7	5,290	87.7	5,202	90.2	999	94.1	746	93.8	25,415
Women	12.3	742	12.3	731	9.8	108	5.9	47	6.2	1,683
Aboriginal Ancestry <sup>a</sup>										
Aboriginal	28.8	1,730	29.2	1,725	18.8	208	15.7	124	18.7	5,039
Non-Aboriginal	71.2	4,271	70.8	4,177	81.2	897	84.3	667	81.3	21,879
Risk <sup>b</sup>										
Low	15.9	868	15.9	849	14.1	119	11.7	69	16.5	4,152
Moderate	45.5	2,479	45.4	2,431	56.4	478	49.7	293	43.5	10,957
High	38.5	2,097	38.7	2,070	29.5	250	38.6	228	40.0	10,071
Need <sup>c</sup>										
Low	10.7	644	10.6	628	9.9	109	8.8	70	11.9	3,224
Moderate	38.7	2,336	38.6	2,292	43.2	478	40.6	322	34.2	9,250
High	50.6	3,052	50.8	3,013	47.0	520	50.6	401	53.9	14,587
Most Serious Offence <sup>d</sup>										
Homicide	14.6	862	14.7	857	30.4	329	34.6	270	5.7	1,522
Sexual Assault	11.6	684	11.7	682	2.8	30	6.3	49	11.0	2,921
Assault	11.3	671	11.4	663	4.4	48	6.5	51	13.0	3,458
Robbery	19.7	1,166	19.5	1,138	17.0	184	15.8	123	18.2	4,858
Property Offence	12.0	710	11.9	693	10.1	109	10.5	82	16.0	4,278
Drug Offence	15.2	899	15.1	879	18.0	195	11.0	86	21.7	5,783
Other Violent Offence	3.3	194	3.3	194	2.5	27	3.3	26	4.1	1,100
Other Non-Violent Offence	12.4	736	12.3	717	14.9	161	11.9	93	10.4	2,766
Indeterminate sentence <sup>e</sup>	7.1	430	7.2	428	25.3	280	26.1	207	1.7	458
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age at admission (mean, SD)	35.8	10.9	35.7	10.9	36.7	10.9	40.9	10.6	34.5	11.0
Sentence length (mean, SD)	4.0	3.4	4.0	3.4	3.9	5.2	4.2	4.4	3.4	2.4

Note: <sup>a</sup>31 missing ethnicity information; <sup>b</sup>1,918 missing static risk information; <sup>c</sup>37 missing need information; <sup>d</sup>412 missing offence information; <sup>e</sup>Offenders serving an indeterminate sentence were not included in the sentence length calculations.