

_____ **Research Report** _____

**The Impact of Temporary Absences
and Work Releases on Community
Outcomes**

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The Impact of Temporary Absences and Work Releases on Community Outcomes

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Executive Summary

Key words: *temporary absences, work release, community reintegration, dosage effects, returns to custody*

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 both options is to assist in community reintegration by allowing gradual and conditional access to the community while supporting offender rehabilitation efforts. This report focused only on the rehabilitative types of TAs, excluding those granted for medical or administrative purposes (as there is less discretion in granting these absences).

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs on release and community outcomes. The population included 27,098 offenders released to the community between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. Outcomes included type of first release, unemployment, any return to custody, return to custody without a new offence, and return to custody with a new offence.

Overall, 22% of offenders received an ETA and 4% received a UTA during their sentence. Additionally, 3% of offenders participated in a WR. Offenders participating in any TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs were significantly more likely to receive discretionary release such as day parole. These benefits were stronger for offenders with low Reintegration Potential Ratings. Moreover, participation in TAs/WRs was related to significantly lower levels of unemployment, returns to custody for any reason, returns to custody without a new offence, and returns with a new offence. These findings held true after controlling for differences between the two groups (those who participated and those who did not), with the exception that participation in WRs no longer significantly reduced returns to custody with a new offence. For all TAs and ETAs, there was also a significant dosage effect, whereby the more TAs the offender participated in, the greater the benefit to their community outcomes.

These findings indicate that participation in TAs/WRs is related to discretionary release and reduced negative outcomes in the community. TAs and WRs play an important role in gradual reintegration to the community, and generally, the more the offenders participate, the greater the benefits.

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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 via the 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 managed in the community. Experience with TAs and WRs are therefore taken into consideration when later determining the offender's suitability for additional forms of conditional release (i.e., day parole or full parole).

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 a gradual and controlled release (Johnson & Grant, 2001). The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA, 1992) sets the guidelines for the eligibility requirements, the permitting circumstances, and the maximum duration of the TA. Additional descriptions of TAs and WRs can be found in other reports (Ternes, Helmus, & Forrester, 2014; Helmus & Ternes, 2014b). 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 granted an escorted temporary absence (ETA) are supervised while in the community. Escorts are most commonly correctional officers, but may also include other CSC staff or a community volunteer (Ternes et al., 2014). The absences tend to be short in duration (i.e., less than one day; CSC, 2012b). 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). Additional information on the use of ETAs (e.g., reasons, failure rates, granting authority, timing) is available from Ternes, Helmus, and Forrester (in progress).

In addition to individual ETAs, offenders may also be permitted to leave the institution on a group ETA. Group ETAs are more cost-effective than individual ETAs as one CSC staff member or volunteer can escort and supervise multiple offenders. Group ETAs are usually

granted for either community service or rehabilitation purposes, allowing offenders to benefit from community programming that is not available in the institution, for example, taking a small group of offenders to attend community-run Alcoholics Anonymous groups. In a recent study, 26% of ETAs were for group absences (Ternes et al., in progress).

Unescorted Temporary Absence (UTA)

Unescorted temporary absences (UTAs) are granted after an offender has served a specified period of time (see CSC, 2012b) and has demonstrated the ability to behave appropriately in the community while on supervised excursions. UTAs comprise less than 10% of TAs (Ternes et al., 2014). Although UTAs are unescorted by definition, they may still involve some supervision; the offender may be required to check in with a local parole office or police department while in the community. The duration of UTAs 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 15 or 60 day absences for rehabilitative/personal development opportunities (Grant & Johnson, 1998). Additional information on the use of UTAs (e.g., reasons, failure rates, granting authority, timing) is available from Ternes and colleagues (in progress).

Work Release

WRs allow for offenders to gain work experience in the community while under supervision. WRs are granted by CSC and may be used for projects that directly meet the needs of the offender or for projects that provide services to the community, such as non-profit organizations or work on forest fire crews (Grant & Beal, 1998). WRs address a broad range of constructive correctional objectives; in addition to providing meaningful and productive work opportunities for offenders, they allow offenders to maintain and strengthen links with community organizations and allow staff to assess offender credibility with an eye toward future conditional releases (Haskell, 1996). 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.

Offenders on a WR can remain in the community for up to 60 days, with the possibility of renewal (CSC, 2012c). Grant and Beal (1998) found that, for offenders who have been granted a work release, the average number of work release days per year is 60, and that most offenders receive 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 800 WRs each year (Grant & Beal, 1998). From 2005/06 to 2012/13, the annual number of work releases has fluctuated from as low as 588 to as high as 1,280, although increases in their use were generally consistent with increases in the prison population (Ternes et al., 2014). In the same time period, offenders who received a work release spent an average of 23 days on work releases per year of their sentence, and a total average of 143 days throughout their sentence (median = 62; Ternes et al., 2014).

Who Receives Temporary Absences and Work Releases?

Early research suggested that offenders convicted of the most serious offences and multiple term offenders were less likely to receive TAs and they tended to serve a larger percentage of their sentence before receiving an ETA for family or community contact or a UTA (Grant & Belcourt, 1992). Correspondingly, offenders considered to be a lower risk for recidivism were more likely to be granted an ETA or UTA (Grant & Millson, 1998). More recent research, however, suggests that moderate risk offenders with more serious offences (and longer sentence lengths) are now the most likely to receive TAs and WRs (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b). This is consistent with the risk principle of effective correctional practice, which posits that higher risk offenders may benefit the most from these types of opportunities (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

Additionally, although early research found that Aboriginal offenders were less likely to receive TAs or WRs (Grant & Millson, 1998) and women were less likely to receive WRs (Grant & Beal, 1998), more recent research has found that Aboriginal offenders were more likely to receive ETAs, and women were more likely to receive any type of TA (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b). Neither group was less likely to receive a WR.

Reintegration Benefits

The conditional and gradual release of offenders back into the community is an important step in safely bridging offenders from incarceration to reintegration and is a key priority for CSC (CSC, 2014). In Canada, TAs and WRs play a key role in this gradual reintegration process and have been associated with improvements on a number of outcomes. For example, Grant and Gal (1998) found that offenders who had been granted TAs were more likely to be granted day parole. Additionally, among offenders on day parole, those who had TAs were less likely to have

technical violations and new offences (Grant & Gal, 1998). In a study that examined different types of TAs, Johnson and Grant (2001) found that offenders who had participated in reintegration UTAs had lower readmission rates than offenders who participated in non-reintegration TAs or reintegration ETAs. Similarly, Motiuk and Belcourt (1996) found that offenders granted UTAs were more likely than those granted ETAs to receive discretionary release and to be successful post-release. With regards to WRs, offenders who had completed WRs had an increased chance of being granted day parole (Grant & Beal, 1998).

Luong, MacDonald, McKay, Olotu, and Heath (2011) interviewed Canadian offenders who had taken part in ETAs, UTAs, or WRs. These offenders indicated that participation in TAs or WRs assisted in their transition from the institution to the community by familiarizing them with the community; providing them opportunities to connect with community resources, employers, and family members; and helping to manage their anxieties pertaining to their return to the community. For WRs, offenders have noted benefits including more constructive use of their time, increases in positive work habits, learning new skills and knowledge, and helping them to gain confidence with job skills (CSC, 2008). In line with this, the proportion of time spent in employment programming, such as WR, has been found to be predictive of job attainment in the community, although it is not predictive of job retention (CSC, 2008).

International studies on temporary absences, also known as furloughs, have found similar benefits. In Ireland, prison absences were associated with significantly fewer returns to custody and the reintegration benefits increased for longer absences (Baumer, O'Donnell, & Hughes, 2009). Systematic reviews on the effectiveness of temporary releases found that TAs and WRs can help to reduce recidivism and increase employment rates (Cheliotis, 2008; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). In a more recent study, Northcutt Bohmert and Duwe (2012) evaluated the effects of a prison work crew program in Minnesota. Compared to a matched comparison group, participants in the program were more likely to obtain employment, but only in the construction field (and there was not a significant reduction in recidivism rates).

Purpose of the Current Study

Previous examinations of the outcomes for participating in TAs have compared offenders with different types of TAs (e.g., Johnson & Grant, 2001; Motiuk & Belcourt, 1996) or been restricted to offenders on day parole (Grant & Gal, 1998). For work release, the only outcome examined has been release decisions (Grant & Beal, 1998). As of yet, research has not examined

whether all released offenders receiving TAs or WRs perform better in the community (in terms of increased employment, reduced returns to custody with or without offence) compared to all released offenders who did not participate in TAs/WRs.

The purpose of the current study was to determine the impact of TA/WR participation on release and community outcomes. When comparing the outcomes of offenders who participated in TAs and WRs to those who did not, validity of the conclusions are only possible when the two groups (e.g., those who received a TA versus those who did not) are comparable (Collaborative Outcome Data Committee, 2007). Consequently, a related project using this same dataset (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b) was used to select variables to include in the current study to control for differences between groups. The following research questions were analyzed separately for all TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and work releases. Separate analyses of Aboriginal offenders and women offenders are available elsewhere (Helmus, 2014; Helmus & Ternes, 2014a).

- 1) Is participation in temporary absences and work releases related to first release?
- 2) Does participation in temporary absences and work releases impact outcomes in the community? Specifically, do offenders who participated in temporary absences and work releases show higher rates of employment and lower rates of returns to custody compared to those who did not participate and after controlling for relevant differences between the two groups identified in a previous report (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b)?
- 3) If temporary absences and work releases have a positive impact on community outcomes, is there evidence of a dosage effect? Specifically, does effectiveness increase with greater numbers of temporary absences and work releases and is there a threshold at which the added benefits start to diminish?

Method

Population

The final population included 27,098 offenders under CSC jurisdiction who were granted their first release to the community between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011 (463 offenders whose ‘release type’ was for death, deportation, or due to court order were excluded, as were an additional 284 offenders who were deported or died during the two-year follow-up period). For those offenders who served more than one sentence during the study period, only information pertaining to the first sentence was retained in the final dataset. Of the full sample, 18.6% self-reported Aboriginal ancestry ($n = 5,039$) and 6.2% were women ($n = 1,683$). For additional demographic information, separated based on whether the offenders participated in a TA or WR, see Helmus and Ternes (2014b).

Measures

Temporary Absences and Work Releases. All medical and administrative TAs were excluded, as there is substantially less discretion in granting these TAs. Additionally, 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 this study. Analyses examined any TA (ignoring the distinction between ETAs and UTAs), ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Each TA variable was calculated and analyzed separately. For example, if an offender had two ETAs and one WR in their sentence, they would be counted as having had two TAs, two ETAs, and one WR.

Static Factors Assessment (SFA). The SFA (CSC, 2012a; Motiuk, 1993) assesses the static risk level of the offender. The final risk rating (low, moderate, or high) is a professional judgement informed by 137 static items assessing criminal history, offence severity, and sex offence factors (if applicable). The overall SFA is related to other measures of recidivism risk (Helmus & Forrester, 2014a) and is also related to returns to custody (Helmus & Forrester, 2014b).

Dynamic Factors Intake Assessment (DFIA). The DFIA (CSC, 2012a; Motiuk, 1993) is rated for all offenders at intake. 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 develops a structured professional

judgement rating for each domain, on a three or four-point scale. Lastly, guided by the item and domain ratings, the parole 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 (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. Given that the scaling of the domain ratings were altered in the revision, domain ratings were used only from the original DFIA (the original scale was chosen because approximately 95% of offenders were scored on that version).

Custody Rating Scale (CRS). The CRS (Solicitor General Canada, 1987) is used to inform initial security classification decisions. It has 12 items grouped into two subscales: Institutional Adjustment (5 items) and Security Risk (7 items). Each item has specific coding rules and can have up to 11 response categories. For each response category, points are assigned based on the strength of that predictor in the original development sample.

Reintegration Potential Rating. The offender's Reintegration Potential Rating is automatically calculated based on the Custody Rating Scale (a security classification scale), the Revised Statistical Information on Recidivism (a static risk scale), and the SFA overall rating (CSC, 2012a). For Aboriginal and women offenders, however, it is computed based on the Custody Rating Scale, the SFA overall rating, and the DFIA overall rating. Generally, offenders with high reintegration potential are considered to not require formal interventions, though they may benefit from community interventions or other services, work placements, and risk management strategies. Offenders with medium reintegration potential ratings generally require institutional correctional programs and community maintenance. Offenders with low reintegration potential require both institutional and community interventions as well as other risk management strategies.

Motivation Level. As part of their correctional plan, the motivation level of offenders is assessed (CSC, 2012a). Motivation is rated as high if the offender is self-motivated and is actively addressing problem areas, medium if the offender may not fully accept the overall

assessment, but will participate in recommended programs or other interventions, and low if the offender strongly rejects the need for change.

Procedure and Outcomes

All data were obtained from the Offender Management System (OMS), which is the computerized offender file management system maintained by CSC. For all composite assessments (e.g., SFA, DFIA, Reintegration Potential, and Motivation Level), only the offender's initial assessment was examined.

Four community outcomes were examined: employment, any return, return without a new offence, and return with a new offence. All outcomes except for returns without an offence were coded for a fixed follow-up period of two years after the first release for all offenders. Offenders were considered 'unemployed' if there was no record of any full-time or part-time employment during the two year follow-up period. Any return to custody included any revocation (with or without an offence) as well as any readmission to CSC custody with a new sentence within two years of first release. Returns with outstanding charges were excluded. Returns without an offence used a one-year fixed follow-up period and included any revocation without a new offence. These analyses were restricted to offenders who had at least one year of community supervision (i.e., one year between their release date and their Warrant Expiry Date) to ensure there was opportunity for revocation ($n = 18,821$). Return with a new offence included any revocation with an offence or a new CSC sentence (i.e., a new Warrant of Committal for a custodial sentence of two years or more) within the follow-up period.

Overview of Analyses

In addition to descriptive statistics, correlations, this report also included Cramer's ν , Areas Under the Curve (AUCs) and logistic regression. Additionally, all analyses were conducted separately to examine group ETAs versus individual ETAs. Findings were not meaningfully different based on this distinction; consequently, group and individual ETAs were combined. Following Cohen (1992), Cramer's ν values of .10, .30, and .50 were considered small, moderate, and large, respectively.

AUCs were used to identify variables that predicted who received a TA, ETA, UTA, or WR in the previous report (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b), as well as to examine how well the propensity score captured group differences between those receiving a TA, ETA, UTA, or WR

and those who did not. The AUC is an effect size statistic appropriate when one variable is dichotomous (e.g., participating in a TA) and the other is either dichotomous, ordinal, or interval (Swets, Dawes, & Monahan, 2000). AUC values can vary between 0 and 1, with .500 indicating no difference on the predictor variable between offenders who did and did not participate in a TA (or ETA/UTA/WR). AUCs below .500 indicate that offenders with higher scores on the predictor were less likely to have a TA. AUC values between .500 and 1 indicate that offenders with higher scores were more likely to have a TA. As a rough heuristic, an AUC of .560 corresponds to a small effect size, while .640 reflects a moderate effect, and .710 reflects a large effect size, as these values roughly correspond to Cohen's *ds* of .2, .5, and .8 (see Rice & Harris, 2005). Conversely, AUC values of .440, .360, and .290 reflect small, moderate, and large effect sizes in the opposite direction.

Logistic regression (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000) was used to examine the impact of participating in TAs/WRs on community outcomes. Logistic regression is a form of regression in which the dichotomous dependent variable (e.g., return to custody: yes/no) is transformed into log odds. The effect of participating in a TA or WR is expressed as an odds ratio, which is defined as the odds of the outcome for those who participated in a TA/WR divided by the odds of the outcome for those who did not participate. Odds are calculated as the probability of the outcome (e.g., return to custody) divided by the probability of *not* having the outcome. For example, if 25 out of 100 offenders who had a TA returned to custody, the odds are $.25/.75 = .33$. If 50 out of 100 offenders who did not have a TA returned to custody, the odds are 1 ($.50/.50$). In this example, the odds ratio would be .333 (odds of TA group divided by odds of non-TA group, or $.333/1$), meaning that the odds of returning to custody for those who had a TA are one-third of the odds of returning for those who do not have a TA. For continuous predictors, such as the number of temporary absences an offender participated in, the odds ratio is interpreted as the amount by which the odds of the outcome changes for each additional temporary absence.

An advantage of logistic regression is that it allows for estimating the odds ratio while controlling for important differences between the two groups (e.g., the TA group versus the no-TA group). In these analyses, to control for as many important differences as possible, we calculated a propensity score. This was done separately for analyses of TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. The propensity score included all variables that significantly distinguished the two groups in a previous report using this population (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b), excluding AUC values

between .490 and .510 (as these effects were considered too small to be meaningful). For example, to estimate the effect of participating in a temporary absence, we first ran a logistic regression model with the 29 significant predictor variables identified from the previous report. This calculated for each offender their predicted probability of obtaining a temporary absence (this is their propensity score). Then, in analysing the effect of TAs on a community outcome (e.g., being returned to custody), we controlled for the propensity score, thereby controlling for all 29 variables that distinguished the two groups in the first place. This isolates the effect of the TA, removing differences between groups regarding who participates in TAs.

Given the large number of variables that were related to TA/WR participation, this meant the propensity score models controlled for many variables (22 or more). Controlling for more variables was considered to be advantageous as it would provide the most conservative results about the effectiveness of TAs/WRs. In other words, if we found a significant benefit for participating in TAs but did not control for all significant differences between groups, this could reduce confidence in the findings. Additionally, including these variables in one propensity score (as opposed to entering them all in the logistic regression model examining the outcomes) reduces the problem of unstable regression results due to too many variables in the model. In building the propensity score, inspection of the data did not reveal problems with unacceptable multicollinearity among the variables.

To determine whether there was a dosage effect for temporary absences, logistic regression was used to estimate the effect of the *number* of TAs/WRs an offender participated in, after controlling for the dichotomous variable of whether they participated in a TA/WR at all, and controlling for the propensity score. Given the finding of dosage effects, further analyses were conducted to model the dosage effect by adding squared and cubic variables for the number of TAs. This allows the logistic regression analysis to model non-linear effects. In other words, the relationship between the number of TAs and the outcome is not likely to be a straight line – it is possible that the line has curves in it (e.g., the effect tapers off after a certain number of TAs). The model included as many curvilinear functions as were needed to significantly improve the model (e.g., what was needed to best fit the relationship between TAs and the outcome), as well as controlling for the propensity score and the dichotomous effect of participation (yes/no). The results of the final dosage effect model are presented in graphs to best convey the relationship between TAs and the outcomes.

Results

Overall, 22% of offenders received any TA during their sentence: 22% received an ETA and 4% received a UTA. Additionally, 3% of offenders participated in a WR. Analyses first examined the relationship between participation in temporary absences/work releases and type of first release. The next section examined whether participating in temporary absences and work releases reduced negative community outcomes (i.e., unemployment and returns to custody). Lastly, the final section explored whether there was a dosage effect for temporary absences.

Relationship to Release

Table 1 presents the relationship between type of first release and participation in any TAs/WRs. TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs were associated with significantly more discretionary releases, though all relationships were considered small in magnitude. For example, 55% of offenders who had a TA received day parole as their first release, compared to 40% of offenders who did not participate in any TAs. Of offenders who did not participate in a UTA or WR, 43% were released on day parole, compared to 64% to 65% of offenders who had a UTA or WR, respectively.

Although it is clear from Table 1 that offenders participating in TAs and WRs are more likely to receive discretionary release, these findings are likely confounded with offender characteristics. For example, offenders with higher Reintegration Potential may be more likely to receive TAs and to receive discretionary release. To better examine the potential relationship between TAs/WRs and first release type, Appendix A presents the same information as Table 1, but separately for each level of Reintegration Potential (low, moderate, and high). For offenders with low Reintegration Potential ratings (i.e., higher risk offenders), unsurprisingly, they were less likely to receive discretionary release than the overall sample. However, the benefits of participating in a TA, ETA, UTA, or WR were doubled for this group compared to the overall sample (i.e., Cramer's ν effect sizes were doubled in magnitude). In particular, for offenders with low Reintegration Potential ratings who did not participate in a UTA, roughly 15% were released on day parole compared to 61% of offenders who had participated in a UTA. Findings for offenders with moderate Reintegration Potential were generally similar to the overall results in Table 1. For offenders with high Reintegration Potential ratings, participating in TAs and WRs

Table 1

Relationship Between First Release Type and TA/WR Participation (N = 27,098)

Release Type	Did not participate (%)	Participated (%)	Cramer's ν
All TAs			.10
Day parole	40.5	54.8	
Full parole	3.6	2.7	
Statutory release	50.8	41.1	
Other	5.1	1.4	
ETA			.13
Day parole	40.5	54.9	
Full parole	3.5	2.7	
Statutory release	50.8	40.9	
Other	5.2	1.5	
UTA			.09
Day parole	42.8	65.2	
Full parole	3.4	2.4	
Statutory release	49.3	32.4	
Other	4.5	0.0	
WR			.08
Day parole	43.1	64.4	
Full parole	3.4	1.6	
Statutory release	49.1	33.7	
Other	4.4	0.3	

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release.; Other release types include detained past statutory release but released prior to warrant expiry, released at warrant expiry, and released at warrant expiry on a long term supervision order.

were related to first release type, but the benefits were much smaller than the overall sample. For example, roughly 62% of high Reintegration Potential offenders who did not participate in a TA were granted day parole, compared to 66% of offenders who did have a TA.

Effect of TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs on Community Outcomes

The next set of analyses explored whether offenders participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs had better community outcomes (specifically, lower levels of unemployment and returns to custody) than offenders who did not participate. Appendix B presents the outcome

rates for offenders based on TA/WR participation. These direct comparisons can be misleading, however, given that the two groups (e.g., those who had a TA versus those who did not) may have differed in their risk to reoffend to begin with. To take into account pre-existing differences between groups, four sets of propensity scores were calculated for each offender using logistic regression (one for TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs, respectively). For example, 29 variables that significantly predicted which offenders received any temporary absence in a previous study (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b) were entered into a logistic regression model to build an estimated probability of receiving a TA for each offender (this probability predicted who received TAs with a large AUC of .74). This variable can be viewed as a composite summary of the key differences between offenders who received a TA and those who did not (on the 29 variables included in the score). Controlling for this propensity score when testing the effect of TAs then controls for these group differences, helping to isolate the effect of participating in a TA. Table 2 identifies which variables were included in each propensity score. The propensity score for ETAs included 28 variables and predicted ETA participation with a large AUC (.74). The propensity scores for UTAs and WRs had 27 and 22 variables, with similarly large AUCs (.80 and .74, respectively).

Table 3 summarizes the impact of participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs on the four outcomes (unemployment, any returns to custody, returns to custody without a new offence, and returns with a new offence), while controlling for differences between groups (using the propensity scores). Sample sizes were reduced from the original 27,098 because not all offenders had sufficient information to calculate propensity scores. After controlling for differences in who receives temporary absences and work releases, participation in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs significantly reduced each of the four outcomes, with the exception of work releases, which did not significantly reduce returns to custody with a new offence. For example, for offenders who had a TA, the odds of being unemployed were about two-thirds ($OR = .66$) of the odds of being unemployed for offenders who did not have a TA. Also for offenders who had a TA, the odds of returning to custody with a new offence were .82 of the odds of returning to custody for those who did not have a TA (in other words, the odds were nearly 20% lower).

For all TAs/WRs, the effects were largest in reducing unemployment, with odds ratios between .39 and .66 (reflecting 61% and 34% reductions in the odds of unemployment). Not surprisingly, the largest effect on unemployment was for work releases, where the odds of

Table 2

Variables Included in Propensity Scores

Variable	TAs	ETAs	UTAs	WRs
Sentence length (including indeterminates)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Past federal sentences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of previous federal sentences	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current violent offence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current sex offence	-	-	Yes	Yes
Aboriginal	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Woman	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
SFA – moderate risk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DFIA – moderate risk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reintegration Potential Rating	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Motivation Level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Previous youth convictions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior failure during community supervision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior segregation placement for disciplinary infractions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prior reclassification to higher level of security	Yes	Yes	-	-
Prior failures on conditional release	Yes	Yes	-	-
Less than 6 months since last incarceration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No crime free period of 1 or more years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Previous violence offences	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Previous sex offences	-	-	Yes	Yes
Three or more previous victims	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DFIA - employment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DFIA – family/marital	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DFIA – associates/social interaction	Yes	Yes	-	-
DFIA – substance abuse	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
DFIA – community adjustment	Yes	Yes	-	-
DFIA – personal/emotional	-	Yes	Yes	-
DFIA - attitude	Yes	Yes	-	-
Age at admission	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
CRS institutional adjustment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CRS security risk	-	-	Yes	Yes
SFA criminal history subscale score	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SFA offence severity subscale score	Yes	Yes	Yes	-

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release; SFA = Static Factors Assessment; DFIA = Dynamic Factors Intake Assessment; CRS = Custody Rating Scale.

unemployment for offenders with a work release were less than half the odds of unemployment for those who did not have a work release (OR = .39). In terms of return to custody outcomes, TAs and ETAs had larger effects in reducing returns with a new offence (ORs of .82 and .83,

Table 3

Effect of TA/WR Participation, Controlling for Propensity Scores

Outcome	N	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Wald	p	Odds Ratio with No Statistical Controls
Participating in Any TA						
Unemployed	21,772	.661	(.615, .710)	127.75	<.001	.633
2-year any return	21,772	.905	(.844, .971)	7.75	.005	.791
Return without offence – 1year follow-up	14,923	.873	(.794, .960)	7.94	.005	.748
2-year return with new offence	21,772	.823	(.744, .910)	14.47	<.001	.726
Participating in ETA						
Unemployed	21,776	.664	(.618, .714)	122.81	<.001	.638
2-year any return	21,776	.905	(.844, .971)	7.70	.006	.795
Return without offence – 1year follow-up	14,925	.874	(.795, .961)	7.71	.006	.753
2-year return with new offence	21,776	.828	(.748, .916)	13.48	<.001	.732
Participating in UTA						
Unemployed	22,099	.540	(.456, .640)	50.47	<.001	.390
2-year any return	22,099	.715	(.610, .839)	16.86	<.001	.505
Return without offence – 1year follow-up	15,119	.656	(.521, .826)	12.87	<.001	.410
2-year return with new offence	22,099	.715	(.555, .922)	6.68	.010	.456
Participating in WR						
Unemployed	21,959	.389	(.311, .486)	69.18	<.001	.289
2-year any return	21,959	.810	(.673, .975)	4.98	.026	.632
Return without offence – 1year follow-up	15,019	.679	(.519, .887)	8.06	.004	.498
2-year return with new offence	21,959	.873	(.664, 1.147)	0.95	.330	.594

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release; CI = confidence interval.

respectively, which reflect nearly 20% reductions in the odds of a new offence) compared to returns without a new offence, whereas UTAs had the strongest effect on returns without a new offence (OR = .66, reflecting a 34% reduction in the odds of returns without a new offence).

Additionally, all odds ratios were lower for UTAs compared to ETAs or any TAs, indicating that UTAs produced larger reductions in the outcomes compared to other types of TAs.

For comparison purposes, the last column in Table 3 presents what the odds ratios would be for the full sample if we did not control for pre-existing differences between the groups. Without these statistical controls, all the odds ratios are lower, indicating stronger effects in reducing the outcomes (and all are statistically significant). In other words, controlling for propensity scores provided a more conservative estimate of the positive impact of TAs/WRs. Additionally, given that sentence length was by far the strongest predictor of who received TAs and WRs (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b), another set of analyses controlled only for sentence length.¹ These effects were intermediate between those that controlled for no variables and those that controlled for the full propensity scores (analyses not reported but available upon request).

Dosage Effects

The previous analyses indicated that TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs were associated with significantly lower unemployment and returns to custody (with and without new offences, and overall), with the exception that work releases did not significantly reduce returns with a new offence. The next set of analyses examined the impact of the *number* of TAs or WRs the offenders participated in. Like the previous analyses, these logistic regression analyses included propensity scores (to control for group differences), and the dichotomous effect of participating in a TA, ETA, UTA, or WR, but then also tested if the number of TAs or WRs significantly improved outcomes, after controlling for the other variables. These results are presented in Appendix C. Note that odds ratios are expected to be smaller for tests of the number of TAs because it is a continuous variable; the odds ratio examines differences between just one point (e.g., 10 TAs versus 11 TAs). Each increase in TAs would be expected to have a small effect, but they would accumulate (e.g., the difference between having 10 TAs and 20 TAs would be much larger). The number of TAs and the number of ETAs were both significantly related to all four community outcomes, demonstrating a dosage effect. Specifically, above and beyond the value of participating in a TA or ETA (as a dichotomous variable), the more the offender participated in, the better their outcomes. Dosage effects for UTAs and WRs were not statistically significant. Notably, however, statistical power would be substantially reduced for these analyses. For

¹ To include offenders with indeterminate sentences in these analyses, there were scored as having a 42-year sentence, as this was one year longer than the longest determinate sentence in the population.

example, of the overall sample, only 4% of offenders received a UTA, and therefore the ability of the dosage analyses to further isolate differences in the magnitude of the effect among that 4% after controlling for other factors is limited.

These analyses indicated that for TAs and ETAs, more is better, but they do not indicate the shape of that relationship. For example, is it always linear or after a certain point, do the benefits of additional TAs start to taper off? To identify the shape of the relationship between the number of TAs or ETAs and the outcomes, curvilinear effects were added into the statistical model to improve the fit of the relationship. For temporary absences, the shape of the relationship was best described with two curves added for unemployment and any returns to custody, one curve added for returns without a new offence, and no curve added for returns with a new offence (i.e., this effect was linear).

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between number of TAs and the probability of being unemployed throughout the two-year follow-up period, controlling for propensity scores (i.e., controlling for differences between those who received TAs and those who did not), restricted to offenders with between 0 and 100 TAs throughout their sentence. The x-axis indicates the number of TAs the offender participated in, and the y-axis presents their estimated probability of being unemployed. There is a marked decline in the probability of being unemployed going from zero TAs to one TA. However, after one TA, the probability of unemployment continues to decline with additional TAs. Although the shape is curvilinear (as opposed to a straight line), the benefits of participating in TAs continue to accumulate, tapering off only somewhat at approximately 60 TAs. Overall, offenders who participated in 60 or more TAs had substantially lower unemployment rates compared to offenders who participated in 20 to 30 TAs, who also had substantially lower rates of unemployment than offenders with only 1 to 5 TAs.

Figures 2 through 4 present the same information for the three return to custody outcomes. In these graphs, the general pattern appeared the same; that is, the benefits of additional TAs continued to accumulate. An important difference, however, is that the dispersion in the predicted outcome values appeared much wider, even for the same number of TAs. This means that the propensity score is contributing more strongly to differences in the return to custody outcomes compared to analyses of unemployment (i.e., returns to custody are better predicted by the covariates than unemployment). However, despite the large variability due to

propensity scores, the probability of the outcomes continued to decline with greater numbers of TAs. This suggests the dosage effect is largely cumulative and without a clear point at which the added value diminishes. The same analyses were conducted for the dosage effects of ETAs. The figures from these analyses are not presented because they largely resemble the patterns for the overall TAs (they are, however, available upon request). These analyses were not conducted for UTAs or WRs given that no significant dosage effect was found.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Number of TAs (ETA or UTA) and Unemployment

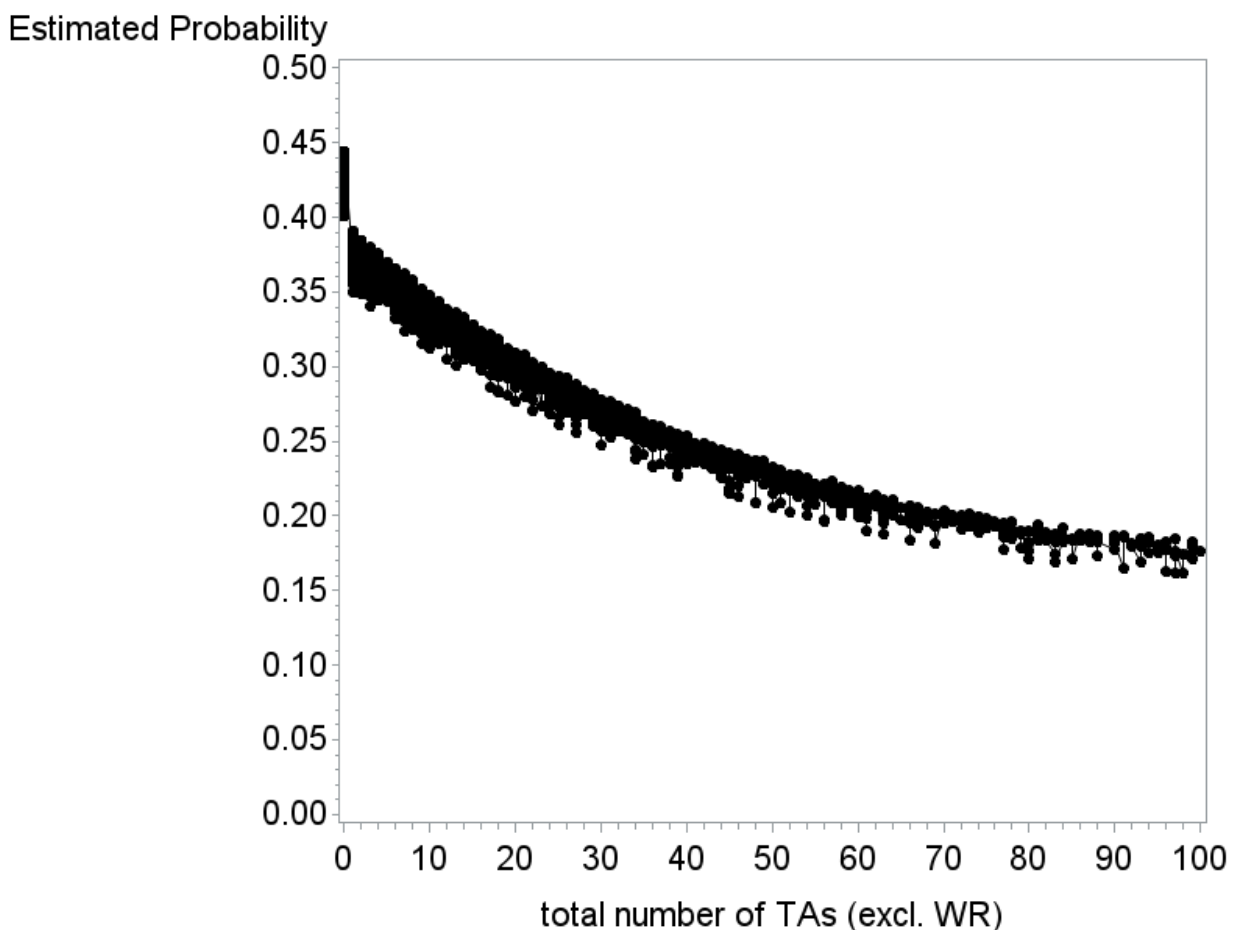


Figure 2. Relationship Between Number of TAs (ETA or UTA) and Any Return

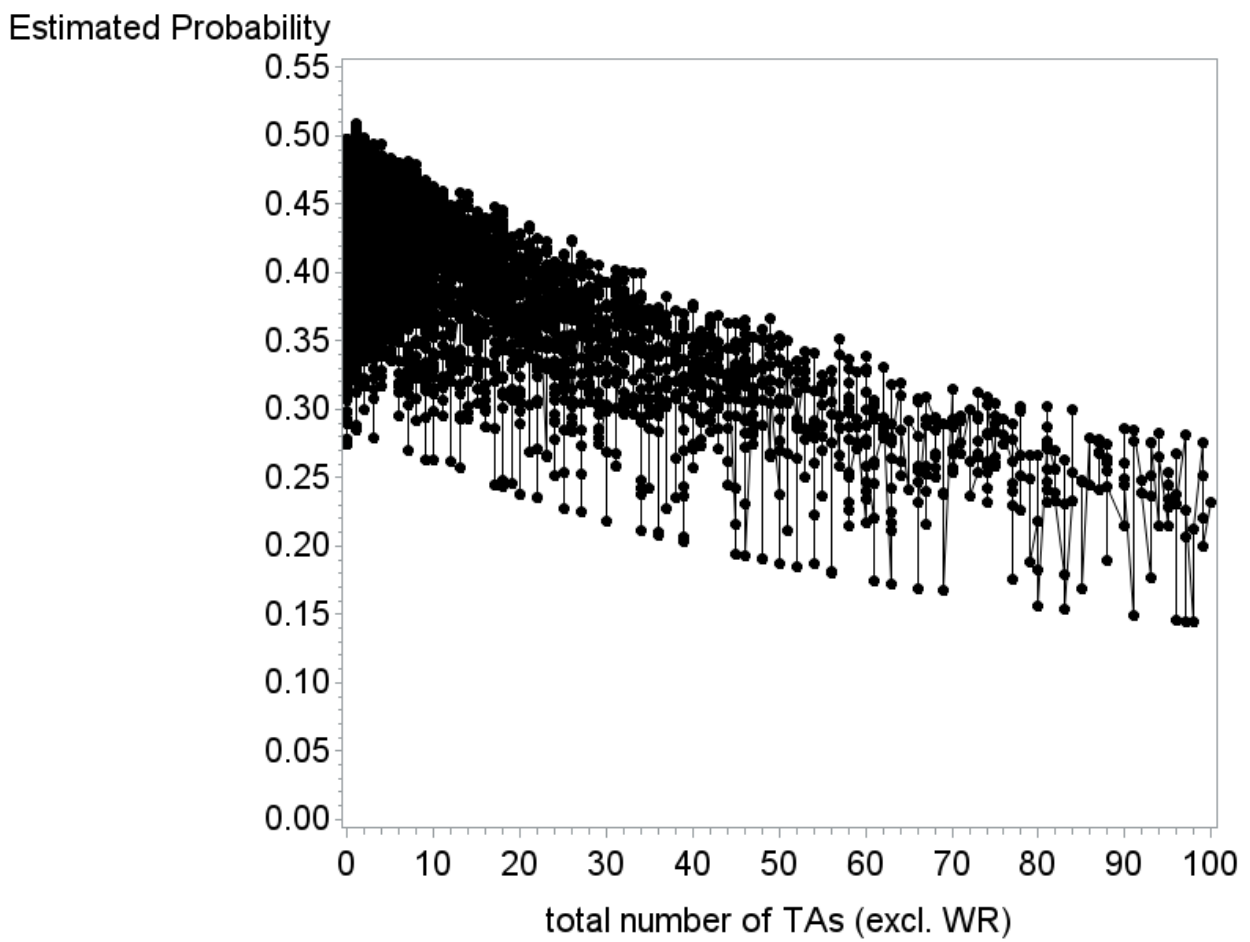


Figure 3. Relationship Between Number of TAs (ETA or UTA) and Returns without a New Offence

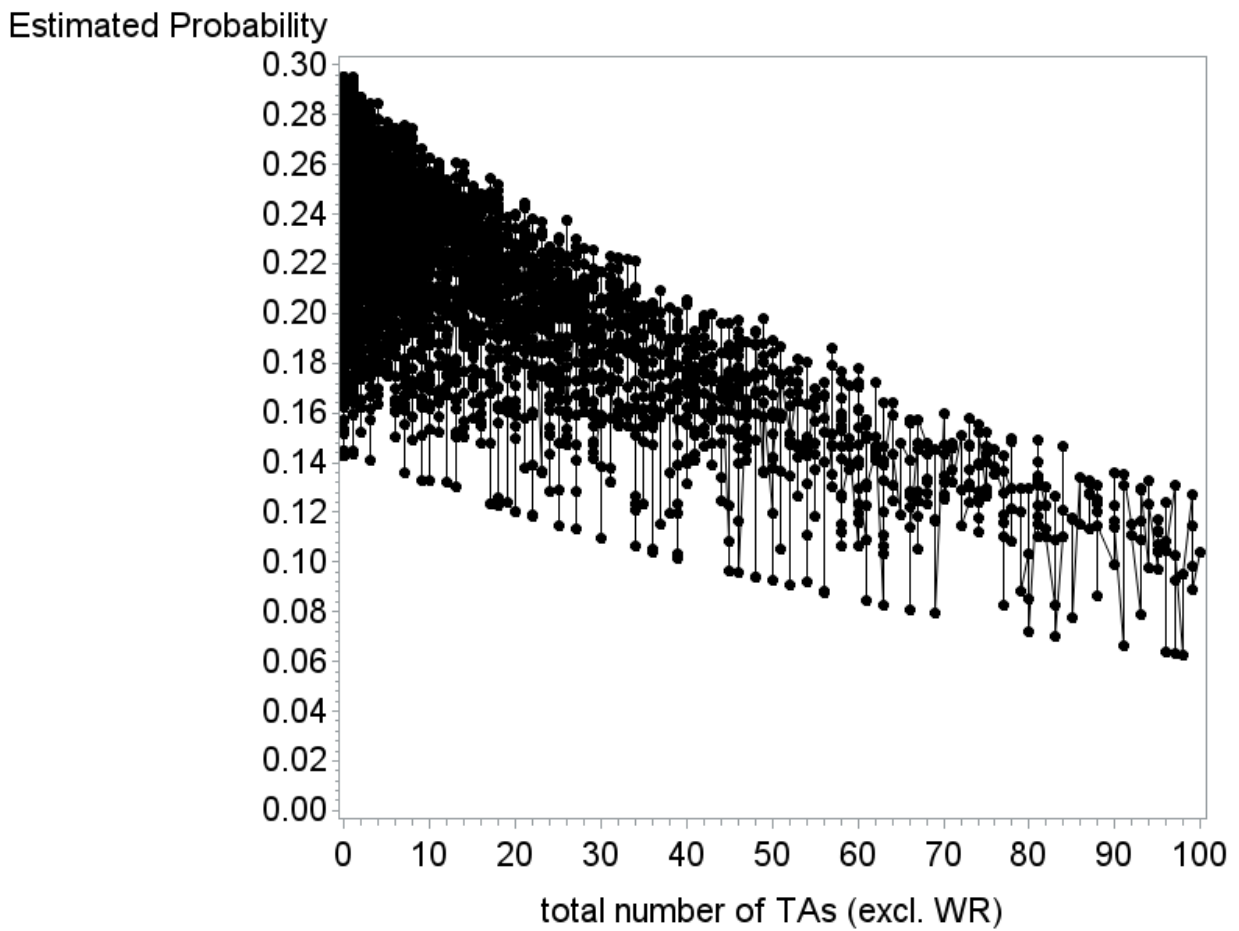
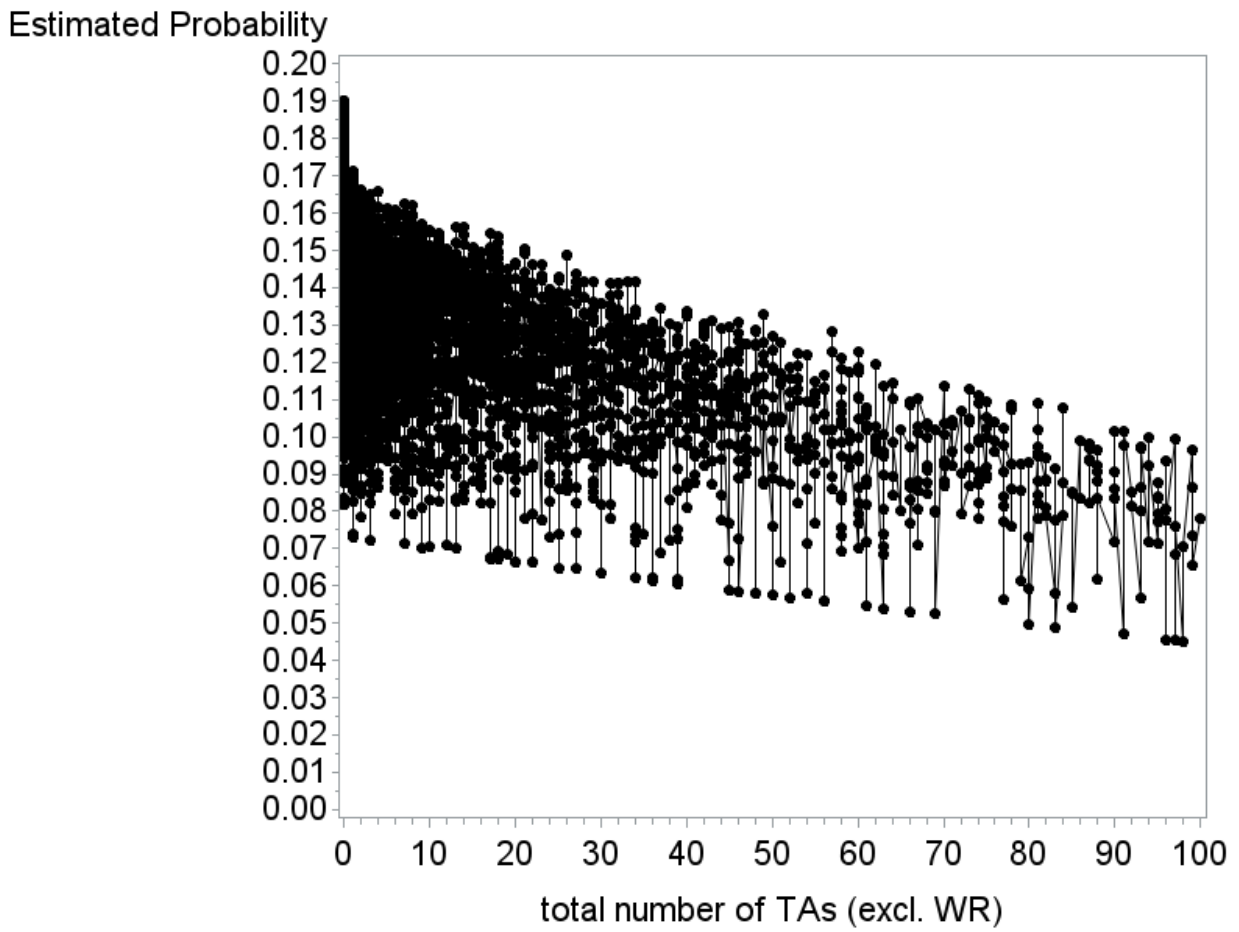


Figure 4. Relationship Between Number of TAs (ETA or UTA) and Returns with a New Offence



Discussion

This study addressed two primary research questions: how are temporary absences and work releases related to release and community outcomes (e.g., unemployment, returns to custody), and is there a dosage effect for this relationship? The overall findings were that participation is associated with higher rates of discretionary release, reduced unemployment in the community, and reduced returns to custody. Additionally, TAs and ETAs demonstrated a dosage effect (i.e., more TAs are associated with better outcomes).

Offenders who participated in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs were significantly more likely to receive discretionary release compared to offenders who did not participate, especially among those with low Reintegration Potential ratings. For those with a high Reintegration Potential Rating, they were still significantly more likely to receive discretionary release if they participated in a TA or WR, but not by much. This finding is also in line with the risk principle (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), which would predict that lower risk offenders (i.e., high Reintegration Potential ratings) would benefit the least from TA/WR participation (as they are likely to receive discretionary release anyway) and high risk offenders (low Reintegration Potential) stand to benefit the most.

After controlling for important differences in who received TAs/WRs, we also found that offenders who participated in any TA, ETAs, and UTAs had significantly lower levels of unemployment and returns to custody (overall, without a new offence, and with a new offence). Additionally, offenders who participated in WRs had significantly lower levels of unemployment, returns to custody for any reason, and returns to custody without a new offence, though participation in WR was not significantly related to returns with a new offence, after controlling for relevant group differences. This means that TAs and WRs contribute to improved community outcomes and can be considered an important component of the safe and gradual transition of offenders into the community, consistent with the mission of CSC. This is the first major study examining the impact of TAs/WRs on community outcomes, although these findings are consistent with previous reports (Grant & Gal, 1998; Johnson & Grant, 2001).

In analyses of dosage effects, we found that for temporary absences, above and beyond participating once, the more temporary absences an offender received, the lower their likelihood of unemployment and returns to custody (any return, without an offence, and with an offence).

After modeling this relationship and graphing the results, it appeared that the benefits of temporary absences consistently accumulated, with slight evidence that they tapered off after approximately 60 absences. In other words, participating in one absence demonstrated a rehabilitative benefit, but more was better. Offenders who received 50 or more TAs clearly had better chances of success than offenders who received 20 to 30 TAs, and these offenders had better chances of success than offenders who had 1 to 5 TAs. This is consistent with research on treatment programs, finding that more intensive treatment is more effective, particularly for higher risk offenders (Bourgon & Armstrong, 2005). It is also similar to findings from Ireland that longer absences were associated with fewer returns to custody (Baumer et al., 2009).

The fact that a small number of offenders received 60 or more temporary absences during a single sentence may sound surprising. However, particularly for lifers, who may serve 25 years or more before being released, 60 TAs could be as little as 2 to 3 per year. Additionally, based on how absences were counted in the dataset, a one-day absence could count as two TAs. For example, if the offender had a TA for family contact reasons in the morning, followed by an AA meeting in the afternoon, this would be counted as two TAs in their sentence.

We did not find significant dosage effects for UTAs and WRs. However, given the small proportion of the sample who participated in these UTAs/WRs (e.g., 3-4%), there was likely insufficient statistical power to model gradations of effects in such a small subset of the sample. Although the overall sample size was quite large (approximately 27,000), modeling patterns within a variable with such a low base rate (such as WR participation) would be unstable. This should be considered a limitation of these analyses. In other words, more confidence should be placed in the analyses of dosage effects for any TA and for ETAs, as these had more acceptable base rates and in these analyses, a dosage effect was found.

Other limitations of the current study are that the conclusions are limited by the quality of the data. To the extent that violations of conditional release or new offences are undetected, or that staff are not diligent in recording community employment, this would introduce additional errors in the analyses.

A major strength of this study was that the tests of the effectiveness of TAs/WRs controlled for important differences between groups. This responds to one of the primary threats to the validity of studies examining program effectiveness on outcomes (lack of group equivalency; Collaborative Outcome Data Committee, 2007). Specifically, when comparing two

groups (e.g., those who participated in TAs and those who did not), if there are any differences in their outcomes, it can be difficult to establish whether those differences are due to the program's impact or because the groups were different to begin with (unless the groups are shown to be equivalent, or relevant differences are controlled for). In this study, controlling for propensity scores allowed for consideration of a large and diverse number of relevant differences between the groups, helping to better isolate the effects of TAs and WRs. Additionally, rather than hypothesize which key factors would be important to control for, a separate study was conducted to allow for an empirical examination of the key differences between the two groups (Helmus & Ternes, 2014b), better informing the selection of control variables for the propensity score.

Conclusions

This study found that participation in temporary absences (including both ETAs and UTAs) and work releases was significantly related to reduced unemployment and returns to custody. For temporary absences, we also found that more is better: the more absences an offender received, the less likely they were to have negative outcomes in the community.

These findings support the important role of temporary absences and work releases in successful community reintegration. 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. This study illustrates that temporary absences and work releases are adequately meeting their objectives and contributing to the mission of CSC. To further elucidate the benefits of these programs, additional research could examine whether the degree of effectiveness depends on different types of ETAs or UTAs. Such subanalyses, however, would require even larger samples than the current study.

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Appendix A: Relationship Between First Release and TA/WR Participation Based on Reintegration Potential Rating

Table A1

Relationship Between First Release Type and TAs/WR Participation for Offenders with Low Reintegration Potential Ratings (N = 7,214)

Release Type	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	Cramer's ν
All TAs			.26
Day parole	11.5	34.6	
Full parole	0.5	1.6	
Statutory release	75.9	59.3	
Other	12.1	4.5	
ETA			.26
Day parole	11.6	34.6	
Full parole	0.5	1.6	
Statutory release	75.9	59.3	
Other	12.0	4.5	
UTA			.21
Day parole	14.7	61.3	
Full parole	0.7	0.5	
Statutory release	73.7	38.2	
Other	10.9	0.0	
WR			.16
Day parole	15.1	55.6	
Full parole	0.7	2.7	
Statutory release	73.4	40.4	
Other	10.8	1.3	

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release. Other release types include detained past statutory release but released prior to warrant expiry, released at warrant expiry, and released at warrant expiry on a long term supervision order.

Table A2

Relationship Between First Release Type and TAs/WR Participation for Offenders with Moderate Reintegration Potential Ratings (N = 7,985)

Release Type	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	Cramer's χ^2
All TAs			.17
Day parole	35.3	53.9	
Full parole	1.5	1.4	
Statutory release	59.5	43.7	
Other	3.7	1.0	
ETA			.17
Day parole	32.3	54.1	
Full parole	1.5	1.5	
Statutory release	59.5	43.4	
Other	3.7	1.0	
UTA			.14
Day parole	38.2	69.3	
Full parole	1.5	1.0	
Statutory release	57.1	29.7	
Other	3.2	0.0	
WR			.12
Day parole	38.6	69.3	
Full parole	1.6	0.6	
Statutory release	56.7	30.1	
Other	3.2	0.0	

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release. Other release types include detained past statutory release but released prior to warrant expiry, released at warrant expiry, and released at warrant expiry on a long term supervision order.

Table A3

Relationship Between First Release Type and TAs/WR Participation for Offenders with High Reintegration Potential Ratings (N = 11,862)

Release Type	Did not participate (%)	Participated (%)	Cramer's χ^2
All TAs			.06
Day parole	62.5	66.1	
Full parole	6.8	4.2	
Statutory release	29.4	29.5	
Other	1.3	0.2	
ETA			.06
Day parole	62.4	66.3	
Full parole	6.8	4.2	
Statutory release	29.5	29.3	
Other	1.3	0.2	
UTA			.03
Day parole	63.3	63.5	
Full parole	6.3	4.3	
Statutory release	29.3	32.2	
Other	1.1	0.0	
WR			.04
Day parole	63.3	64.0	
Full parole	6.3	2.1	
Statutory release	29.3	33.9	
Other	1.1	0.0	

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release. Other release types include detained past statutory release but released prior to warrant expiry, released at warrant expiry, and released at warrant expiry on a long term supervision order.

Appendix B: Impact of TAs and Work Releases on Release Outcomes: Frequencies

Note that effect size information for these data (odds ratios) are presented in Table 8 of this report.

Table B1

Relationship Between All TAs and Community Outcomes

Outcome	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	N
Unemployed within 2 years			
No	57.0	67.7	27,098
Yes	43.0	32.3	
Any return within 2 years			
No	56.2	61.8	27,098
Yes	43.8	38.2	
Return without a new offence (1 year follow-up)			
No	75.1	80.1	18,821
Yes	24.9	19.9	
Return with a new offence within 2 years			
No	84.4	88.2	27,098
Yes	15.6	11.8	

Note. TA = temporary absence.

Table B2

Relationship Between ETAs and Community Outcomes

Outcome	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	N
Unemployed within 2 years			
No	57.1	67.6	27,098
Yes	42.9	32.4	
Any return within 2 years			
No	56.2	61.8	27,098
Yes	43.8	38.2	
Return without a new offence (1 year follow-up)			
No	75.1	80.0	18,821
Yes	24.9	20.0	
Return with a new offence within 2 years			
No	84.4	88.1	27,098
Yes	15.6	11.9	

Note. ETA = escorted temporary absence.

Table B3

Relationship Between UTAs and Community Outcomes

Outcome	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	N
Unemployed within 2 years			
No	58.6	78.4	27,098
Yes	41.4	21.6	
Any return within 2 years			
No	56.8	72.3	27,098
Yes	43.2	27.7	
Return without a new offence (1 year follow-up)			
No	75.7	88.4	18,821
Yes	24.3	11.6	
Return with a new offence within 2 years			
No	84.9	92.5	27,098
Yes	15.1	7.5	

Note. UTA = unescorted temporary absence.

Table B4

Relationship Between WRs and Community Outcomes

Outcome	Did Not Participate (%)	Participated (%)	N
Unemployed within 2 years			
No	58.7	83.1	27,098
Yes	41.3	16.9	
Any return within 2 years			
No	57.1	67.8	27,098
Yes	42.9	32.2	
Return without a new offence (1 year follow-up)			
No	76.0	86.4	18,821
Yes	24.0	13.6	
Return with a new offence within 2 years			
No	85.0	90.5	27,098
Yes	15.0	9.5	

Note. WR = work release.

Appendix C: Effect of the Number of TAs/WRs Participated in, Controlling for Propensity Scores

Outcome	Variable	<i>N</i>	Odds Ratio	95% CI	Wald	<i>p</i>
All TAs						
Unemployed	Absence Number	21,772	.744	(.688, .806)	53.49	<.001
			.992	(.990, .994)	41.56	<.001
2-year any return	Absence Number	21,772	.999	(.925, 1.078)	<0.01	.972
			.994	(.991, .996)	32.99	<.001
1-year return without offence	Absence Number	14,923	.991	(.893, 1.100)	0.03	.869
			.992	(.988, .995)	43.21	<.001
2-year return with new offence	Absence Number	21,772	.887	(.794, .990)	4.55	.033
			.995	(.991, .998)	8.35	.004
ETA						
Unemployed	Absence Number	21,776	.744	(.687, .806)	52.91	<.001
			.992	(.989, .994)	37.98	<.001
2-year any return	Absence Number	21,776	.998	(.924, 1.078)	<0.01	.954
			.993	(.991, .996)	32.17	<.001
1-year return without offence	Absence Number	14,925	.989	(.890, 1.098)	0.05	.830
			.991	(.988, .995)	22.69	<.001
2-year return with new offence	Absence Number	21,776	.896	(.802, 1.002)	3.73	.054
			.994	(.990, .998)	9.14	.002
UTA						
Unemployed	Absence Number	22,099	.588	(.481, .720)	26.51	<.001
			.991	(.978, 1.003)	2.07	.150
2-year any return	Absence Number	22,099	.732	(.607, .883)	10.62	.001
			.998	(.987, 1.008)	0.20	.657
1-year return without offence	Absence Number	15,119	.705	(.538, .925)	6.35	.012
			.992	(.975, 1.009)	0.88	.348
2-year return with new offence	Absence Number	22,099	.663	(.492, .893)	7.32	.007
			1.008	(.993, 1.022)	1.06	.302
WR						
Unemployed	Absence Number	21,959	.392	(.308, .501)	56.61	<.001
			.997	(.967, 1.029)	0.03	.862
2-year any return	Absence Number	21,959	.874	(.708, 1.078)	1.58	.208
			.975	(.942, 1.010)	1.92	.166
1-year return without offence	Absence Number	15,019	.749	(.543, 1.034)	3.08	.079
			.964	(.895, 1.039)	0.92	.337
2-year return with new offence	Absence Number	21,959	.996	(.706, 1.403)	<0.01	.978
			.951	(.870, 1.041)	1.18	.278

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA/UTA = escorted/unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release; CI = confidence interval.