

_____ **Research Report** _____

**Who Gets Temporary Absences and
Work Releases?: A Profile**

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Who Gets Temporary Absences and Work Releases: A Profile

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Executive Summary

Key words: *temporary absences, work release, community reintegration, profile*

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 who received TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. The population included 27,098 offenders released to the community between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. Overall, 22% of offenders received an ETA and 4% received a UTA during their sentence. Additionally, 3% of offenders participated in a WR.

The strongest predictor of who participated in TAs/WRs was sentence length; offenders with longer sentences were more likely to participate. Additionally, TAs/WRs were also more common for moderate risk offenders who were rated higher on motivation level and had fewer problems with institutional adjustment and on prior periods of community supervision. This appears to balance the risk principle of effective correctional practice (i.e., not investing valuable resources on the lowest risk offenders) without undue risk to public safety (i.e., by selecting offenders with better institutional and community behaviour and who displayed higher motivation ratings). Women were more likely to receive TAs, ETAs, and UTAs than men, and Aboriginal offenders were more likely to receive TAs and ETAs than non-Aboriginal offenders.

Some factors predicted ETAs in the opposite direction compared to UTAs and/or WRs. For example, offenders with higher levels of need in the substance abuse and personal/emotional domain and with higher scores on offence severity were more likely to receive ETAs but less likely to receive UTAs compared to offenders with lower scores in these domains. Additionally, offenders with a current sex offence and with higher levels of need in the family/marital domain were more likely to receive ETAs but less likely to receive UTAs and WRs.

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 indicates that appropriate offenders are being selected for these opportunities. Analyses to examine the impact of participating in TAs and WRs on community outcomes (e.g., employment, returns to custody) is currently underway and will further our understanding of the important role of TAs and WRs in sentence management.

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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 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. 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 by a correctional officer, other CSC employee, or community volunteer. Additional security requirements such as handcuffs or leg irons may also be required during the absence. The absences tend to be short in duration (i.e., less than one day). ETAs permit offenders 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 (CSC, 2012b). Temporary absences can also be granted on compassionate grounds (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). An updated analysis also found parental responsibility ETAs tended to occur earliest (Ternes, Helmus, & Forrester, 2014). An earlier report indicated that the majority of ETAs are granted to offenders residing in minimum security institutions, with those in medium and maximum institutions having

historically comprised less than 20% of all ETAs (Grant & Millson, 1998). Additional information on the use of ETAs (e.g., reasons, failure rates, granting authority, timing) is available from Ternes et al. (2014).

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, 70% of ETAs (examined at the level of each ETA per offender) were for group absences (Ternes et al., 2014).

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. Fewer UTAs are granted than ETAs, although they were used in greater numbers historically. 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), and by 2012/13, they represented 8% of all TAs (Ternes et al., 2014). UTAs can be longer in duration than 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 (2014).

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).

Previous Research on Who Receives Temporary Absences and Work Releases

Early research suggested that the majority of TAs are granted for medical reasons (Grant & Belcourt, 1992). 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). Aboriginal offenders have been found to be less likely to receive TAs or WRs, though this finding is most likely related to offence seriousness and criminal history (Grant & Millson, 1998). Aboriginal offenders were more likely to be granted a TA for compassionate reasons than any other racial group (Grant & Beal, 1998; Grant & Belcourt, 1992; Grant & Millson, 1998; Grant & Porporino, 1992). Considering gender, Grant and Belcourt (1992) found that women were not treated differently from men in terms of the number of TAs received, although Grant and Beal (1998) found that women were less likely than men to receive WRs.

Research has not examined whether these findings change if examining the more exclusively rehabilitative and compassionate types of TAs (given that there is less discretion in granting medical and administrative TAs). Although there are security concerns related to

granting TAs to the highest risk offenders, the risk principle of effective correctional practice would also suggest that high risk offenders stand to benefit the most from them (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). In fact, prioritizing low risk offenders for absences may be the least effective approach, as they may be most likely to reintegrate effectively without them.

Purpose of the Current Study

Although previous research has found that lower risk offenders are more likely to receive TAs and WRs, there is a need for updated research. Most of the previous research at CSC used data in the 1990s. Given historical changes in the use of TAs (e.g., Grant & Belcourt, 1992; Grant & Millson, 1998; Luong, MacDonald, McKay, Olotu, & Heath, 2011; Ternes et al., 2014), more current research is needed. Additionally, excluding medical and administrative TAs may provide a clearer picture of the discretionary decisions in granting TAs. The purpose of the current study was to examine which offenders received temporary absences and work releases. Specifically, we examined which demographic, offence-related, and risk factors predicted participation in temporary absences and work releases (excluding medical and administrative TAs). These questions were analyzed separately for all TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and work releases. In addition to addressing the research question of who receives TAs and WRs, these analyses will also contribute to an upcoming report on the impact of TA/WR participation on community outcomes by identifying the important group differences that will need to be controlled for in analyses of the impact of TAs and WRs.

Method

Population

The final population dataset included 27,098 offenders under CSC jurisdiction who were granted their first release to the community between April 1, 2005 and March 31, 2011. Given that this dataset was also be used for a related report examining the impact of participation in TAs and WRs on community outcomes, 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 ($n = 1,683$). Additional demographic information is included in the results section, separated based on whether the offenders participated in a TA or WR.

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) is a 137-item scale design to assess criminal risk based on static (i.e., historical) risk factors. It is rated for all offenders and has three subscales: Criminal History Record (CHR - 38 items), Offence Severity Record (OSR - 71 items), and Sex Offence History Checklist (SOHC - 28 items). Each item is rated as “present” or “absent.” After rating all items, the parole officer forms an overall judgement of whether the static risk posed by the offender is low, moderate, or high. The Static Factors Report in the Offender Management System (OMS) includes the overall summary risk rating, as well as total scores for each of the subscales. Although subscale scores are not used in practice, they were included in this study based on previous research demonstrating their moderate to strong relationships to community outcomes (Helmus & Forrester, 2014b). 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 is rated for all offenders at intake (CSC, 2012a). 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 (factor seen as asset, no immediate need for improvement, some need for improvement, or considerable need for improvement; some domains do not have the first rating option). Lastly, 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. Given that the scaling of the domain ratings were altered in the revision, analyses of domain ratings included only 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 offenders' 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

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. Additionally, criminal history and offence severity items from the SFA were also examined, focusing on those related to institutional behaviour and prior performance on supervised release.

Overview of Analyses

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. Analyses used the Area Under the Curve (AUC) from receiver operating characteristic curve analyses. 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. Additionally, 95% confidence intervals were reported for AUCs because significant predictors were used as covariates in an upcoming study on the impact of TAs/WRs on community outcomes.

Results

Analyses explored which factors predicted participation in any TA, any ETA, any UTA, and any WR. Categorical predictors were examined first, including demographic and sentence information, global assessments (risk, need, reintegration potential, motivation), selected static risk factors, and dynamic need domains. Next, continuous predictors were explored, including age, CRS subscales, SFA subscales, and sentence information. For all predictors, descriptive data are presented (e.g., percentages or means and standard deviations) as well as the effect size. After describing the results, an overall summary table will be presented to highlight which predictors were related to which types of absences/WRs.

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. Table 1 presents results for demographic, offence-related, and sentence-related variables. For example, 24% of offenders with a previous federal sentence received a TA, compared to 21% of offenders without a prior federal sentence, and the AUC for this difference was .52, which was quite small. Offenders with a previous federal sentence and with a current violent offence were significantly more likely to receive any TA, an ETA, a UTA, or a WR, though effects were generally small (AUCs between .52 and .58). Similarly, offenders with an indeterminate sentence were more likely to receive all TAs and WRs, with larger effect sizes (e.g., AUCs between .54 and .63). For offenders with and without a current sex offence, there was no difference in their likelihood of receiving any TA, though sex offenders were significantly more likely to receive an ETA. For UTAs and WRs, however, the effect was in the opposite direction, whereby sex offenders were significantly less likely to receive UTAs and WRs. Aboriginal offenders were significantly more likely to receive any TAs and ETAs, but were less likely to receive a WR (there was no difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders in receiving UTAs). Additionally, women offenders were significantly more likely to receive any TA, ETAs, and UTAs, but were no different in their likelihood of receiving WRs. All significant effect sizes in Table 1 were small or trivial in magnitude, with the largest effects found for having an indeterminate sentence (they predicted UTAs and WRs with an effect size of .62 and .63, respectively).

Table 1

Relationship Between TAs/WRs and Demographic and Sentence Information

Predictor Variable	N	Any TA		Escorted TA		Unescorted TA		Work Release	
		% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC
Overall	27,098	22.3		21.9		4.1		2.9	
Past federal sentence			.518*		.518*		.561*		.536*
No	19,062	21.4		21.0		3.4		2.6	
Yes	8,036	24.4		23.9		5.7		3.6	
Current violent offence			.554*		.556*		.527*		.575*
No	12,828	18.3		17.8		3.6		2.0	
Yes	13,859	25.8		25.5		4.5		3.7	
Current sex offence			.504		.505*		.457*		.476*
No	23,766	22.0		21.6		4.4		3.1	
Yes	2,921	23.4		23.4		1.0		1.7	
Aboriginal			.565*		.567*		.500		.484*
No	21,879	19.5		19.1		4.1		3.0	
Yes	5,039	34.3		34.2		4.1		2.5	
Woman			.539*		.539*		.518*		.498
No	25,415	20.8		20.5		3.9		2.9	
Yes	1,683	44.1		43.4		6.4		2.8	
Indeterminate sentence			.535*		.535*		.624*		.626*
No	26,639	21.0		20.7		3.1		2.2	
Yes	459	93.9		93.5		61.2		45.1	

Note. Due to missing information on cell variables, not all sample sizes add up to 27,098. TA = temporary absence; AUC = area under the curve.

* $p < .05$

Table 2 presents similar analyses for composite assessments of risk/need (using the SFA and DFIA/DFIA-R), as well as intake assessments of Reintegration Potential and Motivation Level. The patterns of TAs and WRs based on risk level on the SFA and DFIA/DFIA-R were unexpected; moderate risk/need offenders were consistently the most likely to receive a TA or WR, with little differences between low and high risk/need offenders. This means that the relationship between risk/need level and TA/WR is actually an inverse-U relationship as opposed to a linear one. Consequently, additional dichotomous variables were created for both the SFA and DFIA/DFIA-R to separate moderate risk/need offenders from others. In these analyses, moderate risk/need offenders are significantly more likely to receive a TA, ETA, UTA, and WR than offenders who are not moderate risk/need. For Reintegration Potential Ratings, the relationship was closer to linear, with higher Reintegration Potential ratings generally associated with receiving a TA, ETA, and UTA (for WR, it was not a significant predictor). For static risk, dynamic need, and Reintegration Potential, however, all effects were very small (AUCs of .57 and lower). There was a clear linear relationship for Motivation Level, with higher motivation ratings associated with receiving all types of TAs and WRs. These effects were all small (AUCs of at least .56) but were generally larger than the other effects in this table.

Table 3 focuses on static risk factors examining criminal history, institutional behaviour, and prior performance on community supervision. The table notes which items were restricted to the offender's adult criminal history; the remainder examined the full criminal history. Offenders who received TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs were all significantly less likely to have previous youth offences, prior failures on community supervision, prior segregation placements for disciplinary infractions, less than 6 months of time in the community before their current incarceration, no crime-free periods of one year or more, previous violent offences, previous sex offences, and three or more previous victims. Additionally, offenders participating in any TA and in ETAs were significantly less likely to have a prior escape or UAL, prior failures on conditional release, and prior re-classifications to a higher level of security (these findings were not significant for UTAs and WRs). In other words, offenders receiving TAs and WRs were generally offenders with less history of serious offending, and were less likely to have previous problems in institutions and while on community supervision. Having had 15 or more previous adult convictions, however, was unrelated to TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. All significant effects were quite small (AUCs between .44 and .49).

Table 2

Relationship Between TAs/WRs and Assessments of Risk, Need, Reintegration Potential, and Motivation

Predictor Variable	N	Any TA		Escorted TA		Unescorted TA		Work Release	
		% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC
Static Factors Assessment			.494		.495		.462*		.509
Low risk	4,152	20.9		20.4		2.9		1.7	
Moderate risk	10,957	22.6		22.2		4.4		2.7	
High risk	10,071	20.8		20.6		2.5		2.3	
SFA			.513*		.512*		.567*		.532*
Not moderate risk	14,223	20.8		20.5		2.6		2.1	
Moderate risk	10,957	22.6		22.2		4.4		2.7	
DFIA/DFIA-R rating			.485*		.486*		.473*		.492
Low need	3,224	20.0		19.5		3.4		2.2	
Moderate need	9,250	25.2		24.8		5.2		3.5	
High need	14,587	20.9		20.7		3.6		2.8	
DFIA/DFIA-R			.529*		.528*		.547*		.533*
Not moderate need	17,811	20.8		20.4		3.5		2.6	
Moderate need	9,250	25.2		24.8		5.2		3.5	
Reintegration potential			.516*		.514*		.525*		.516
Low	7,214	19.6		19.3		2.9		2.1	
Moderate	7,985	24.1		23.8		5.1		3.8	
High	11,862	22.7		22.2		4.1		2.8	
Motivation level			.572*		.571*		.566*		.564*
Low	3,383	14.6		14.3		2.2		1.7	
Moderate	17,454	20.7		20.4		3.9		2.7	
High	6,224	30.9		30.4		5.8		4.2	

Note. Due to missing information on cell variables, not all sample sizes add up to 27,098. TA = temporary absence; AUC = area under the curve.

* $p < .05$

Table 3

Relationship Between TAs/WRs and Selected Static Risk Factors

Predictor Variable	N	Any TA		Escorted TA		Unescorted TA		Work Release	
		% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC
Previous youth convictions			.460*		.462*		.412*		.438*
No	13,860	24.1		23.6		4.4		2.8	
Yes	11,190	18.6		18.4		2.1		1.7	
15+ previous adult convictions			.499		.500		.489		.496
No	16,649	21.7		21.3		3.5		2.4	
Yes	8,487	21.6		21.3		3.2		2.3	
Prior failure during community supervision^a			.476*		.477*		.478*		.464*
No	9,991	23.7		23.2		3.7		2.8	
Yes	14,975	20.3		20.0		3.1		2.1	
Prior segregation placement for disciplinary infractions^a			.461*		.461*		.461*		.456*
No	17,447	23.6		23.2		3.8		2.6	
Yes	6,714	17.0		16.7		2.5		1.6	
Prior attempted escape, UAL, or escape^a			.491*		.491*		.510		.496
No	19,571	22.0		21.7		3.3		2.4	
Yes	5,470	20.3		20.0		3.7		2.3	
Prior reclassification to higher level of security^a			.488*		.488*		.499		.496
No	20,884	22.2		21.8		3.4		2.4	
Yes	3,855	19.2		18.8		3.4		2.3	
Prior failures on conditional release^a			.485*		.485*		.512		.491
No	14,799	22.5		22.2		3.2		2.4	
Yes	10,179	20.5		20.1		3.6		2.2	
Less than 6 months since last incarceration^a			.470*		.470*		.457*		.484*
No	19,959	22.9		22.5		3.7		2.4	
Yes	5,155	16.7		16.5		2.0		2.0	
No crime free period of 1 or more years^a			.478*		.479*		.458*		.470*
No	21,085	22.5		22.1		3.7		2.5	
Yes	4,024	17.1		16.9		1.7		1.5	
Previous violent offences^a			.490*		.491*		.469*		.473*
No	11,418	22.4		21.9		3.8		2.6	
Yes	13,715	21.0		20.7		3.0		2.1	
Previous sex offences^a			.491*		.491*		.473*		.478*
No	23,086	22.0		21.6		3.6		2.4	
Yes	2,034	17.8		17.6		1.2		1.1	
Three or more previous victims^a			.484*		.485*		.468*		.466*
No	16,480	22.4		22.0		3.7		2.6	
Yes	8,396	20.0		19.8		2.8		1.9	

Note. Due to missing information on cell variables, not all sample sizes add up to 27,098. ^aThis item was restricted to the offender's adult criminal history. TA = temporary absence; AUC = area under the curve. * $p < .05$

Table 4 presents the analyses for intake ratings on the dynamic factor domains of the original DFIA. Offenders receiving TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs had significantly lower ratings in the employment domain and the associates domain (though the finding for associates and WRs was non-significant). Conversely, however, they had significantly higher ratings in the family/marital domain (except for UTAs, which were associated with lower levels of need in this area). Participating in TAs and ETAs was associated with higher ratings in the domain of substance abuse and personal/emotional, but lower ratings for UTAs (and no relationship to WR). Lower ratings in community functioning and attitudes were associated with TAs and ETAs, but these ratings were not associated with UTAs and WRs. Similar to the findings for static risk factors, relationships were quite small (AUCs between .42 and .55).

Table 5 presents analyses for continuous predictors. Older age was associated with participation in TAs, ETAs, and UTAs, but was not related to WRs. Additionally, offenders participating in all types of TAs/WRs had significantly more previous federal sentences. Higher institutional adjustment ratings on the CRS (reflecting greater problems in this area) were associated with a reduced likelihood of participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Similarly, offenders participating in ETAs, UTAs, and WRs had significantly higher ratings on security risk in the CRS (suggesting greater problems in this domain; the effect was not significant for all TAs). Participation in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs was also associated with significantly longer sentence lengths, with AUCs of .62 and above. This variable, however, excluded offenders with indeterminate offences. Given the previous finding that indeterminate sentences were significantly associated with participating in TAs and WRs, a new variable was created to incorporate indeterminate sentences into a measure of sentence length. The new variable coded all indeterminate sentences as 42 years (given that the next-longest determinate sentence length was 41 years), allowing a continuous variable to reflect the sentence length for all offenders. This variable had moderate to large relationships with TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs (AUCs between .64 and .78). Lastly, higher ratings on the Criminal History subscale of the SFA were associated with fewer TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Offenders receiving TAs and ETAs, however, had higher ratings on offence severity, but those receiving UTAs had lower offence severity ratings. Offence severity was not related to WRs.

Table 4

Relationship Between TAs/WRs and Domains of the DFIA

Predictor Variable	N	Any TA		Escorted TA		Unescorted TA		Work Release	
		% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC	% Received	AUC
DFIA – employment			.475*		.477*		.428*		.457*
Factor seen as asset	694	39.2		38.2		9.5		8.6	
No current difficulty	9,372	23.8		23.3		5.7		3.3	
Some difficulty	12,515	21.5		21.2		3.0		2.6	
Considerable difficulty	2,520	22.5		22.3		4.6		3.3	
DFIA – family/marital			.544*		.546*		.483*		.542*
Factor seen as asset	1,098	23.7		23.1		6.6		4.3	
No current difficulty	14,349	20.2		19.7		4.4		2.5	
Some difficulty	6,114	25.7		25.5		3.8		3.4	
Considerable difficulty	3,529	29.0		28.7		4.5		4.4	
DFIA – associates/social interaction			.457*		.456*		.484*		.489
Factor seen as asset	508	43.1		42.9		10.6		7.7	
No current difficulty	7,307	26.2		25.8		4.3		2.9	
Some difficulty	10,561	21.3		20.8		4.1		3.0	
Considerable difficulty	6,722	20.5		20.2		4.3		3.1	
DFIA – substance abuse			.530*		.532*		.481*		.490
No current difficulty	7,336	21.2		20.7		5.2		3.3	
Some difficulty	5,427	19.9		19.6		3.4		3.0	
Considerable difficulty	12,354	25.3		24.9		4.2		3.0	
DFIA – community functioning			.479*		.480*		.486		.516
Factor seen as asset	670	34.2		33.9		7.3		5.5	
No current difficulty	17,572	23.3		22.9		4.4		2.8	
Some difficulty	5,648	20.8		20.5		3.6		3.3	
Considerable difficulty	1,196	21.6		21.3		6.1		4.8	
DFIA – personal/emotional			.509*		.513*		.476*		.510
No current difficulty	4,509	21.9		21.1		5.7		2.8	
Some difficulty	7,661	22.6		22.1		3.8		3.1	
Considerable difficulty	12,945	23.5		23.3		4.2		3.2	
DFIA – attitude			.424*		.424*		.487		.494
Factor seen as asset	594	36.4		35.7		7.6		5.6	
No current difficulty	8,911	28.4		28.0		4.5		3.0	
Some difficulty	8,238	21.0		20.6		3.8		2.9	
Considerable difficulty	7,360	17.4		17.0		4.4		3.2	

Note. Due to missing information on cell variables, not all sample sizes add up to 27,098. TA = temporary absence; AUC = area under the curve.

* $p < .05$

Table 5

Relationship Between TAs/WRs and Continuous Predictors

Item	N	Any TAs			Escorted TAs			Unescorted TAs			Work Releases		
		No		AUC	No		AUC	No		AUC	No		AUC
		M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)	
Age at admission	27,098	34.1 (11.0)	35.8 (10.9)	.549*	34.1 (11.0)	35.7 (10.9)	.547*	34.4 (11.0)	36.6 (11.9)	.567*	34.5 (11.0)	34.8 (10.4)	.516
Number of previous federal sentences	27,098	0.5 (0.9)	0.5 (1.0)	.519*	0.5 (0.9)	0.5 (1.0)	.518*	0.5 (0.9)	0.6 (1.0)	.557*	0.5 (0.9)	0.6 (1.0)	.532*
CRS Institutional Adjustment	25,751	47.1 (32.1)	38.8 (27.1)	.428*	47.0 (32.1)	38.9 (27.1)	.430*	45.6 (31.4)	37.0 (25.8)	.423*	45.5 (31.4)	38.7 (25.2)	.444*
CRS Security Risk	25,751	71.3 (23.5)	74.4 (29.5)	.507	71.3 (23.5)	74.5 (29.6)	.509*	71.5 (24.1)	84.4 (39.1)	.569*	71.5 (24.3)	89.2 (39.5)	.613*
Sentence length (years)	26,639	3.3 (2.0)	4.2 (3.0)	.619*	3.3 (2.0)	4.3 (3.0)	.619*	3.4 (2.2)	5.0 (3.6)	.666*	3.4 (2.2)	5.6 (4.2)	.707*
Sentence length (incl. indeterminates)	27,098	3.3 (2.5)	7.0 (10.1)	.645*	3.4 (2.5)	7.0 (10.2)	.646*	3.7 (3.9)	14.4 (16.4)	.746*	3.8 (4.4)	15.1 (16.4)	.777*
CHR total	25,180	14.5 (7.6)	13.2 (7.1)	.454*	14.5 (7.6)	13.3 (7.1)	.456*	14.3 (7.5)	12.5 (6.2)	.433*	14.2 (7.5)	12.6 (6.5)	.437*
OSR total	25,180	14.3 (8.3)	14.8 (7.8)	.523*	14.3 (8.3)	14.9 (7.8)	.525*	14.4 (8.2)	13.4 (7.4)	.464*	14.4 (8.2)	15.0 (7.8)	.520

Note. CRS = Custody Rating Scale; CHR = Criminal History Record; OSR = Offence Severity Record. TA = temporary absence; AUC = area under the curve.

* $p < .05$

Overall, most of the variables predicted which offenders received TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Table 6 summarizes which variables were related to which absences/WRs, and in which direction. Offenders receiving TAs and WRs were generally moderate risk and were more likely to have previous federal sentences, though they had fewer problems in the institutions and on previous community supervision. Interestingly, women offenders were more likely to receive all types of TAs, and Aboriginal offenders were more likely to receive any TA or ETAs. However, most of these relationships were quite small. The single largest predictor was sentence length (including lifers). Only two other variables were significant predictors in all four sets of analyses with effect sizes that consistently met the criteria for a small effect (i.e., AUCs of .44 and below, and AUCs of .56 and above): motivation and the Institutional Adjustment scale of the CRS. The remaining effect sizes were even smaller or more inconsistent.

The unusually large effect size for sentence length compared to the other variables raised the question of whether it was difficult to disentangle the other findings from the sentence length effect (e.g., findings for other variables may be driven by their inter-correlation with sentence length). These analyses were re-run using two alternate approaches to take into account the impact of sentence length on receiving TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Firstly, variables were calculated to examine the rate of receiving TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs (defined as the total number received divided by the number of years served in prison before release). The rate therefore reflected the average number of TAs or WRs the offender received per year of incarceration. For all predictor variables examined in Tables 1 through 5, we computed correlations with the rate of TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. In a second set of analyses, logistic regression was used to examine how each variable predicted receiving TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs, after controlling for sentence length (including lifers). These two sets of analyses did not produce meaningful differences from the results of the AUCs presented in Tables 1 through 5.

Table 6

Summary of Significant Predictors of TAs and WRs

	Any TA	Any ETA	Any UTA	Any WR
Past federal sentence	+	+	+	+
Current violent offence	+	+	+	+
Current sex offence		+	-	-
Aboriginal	+	+		-
Woman	+	+	+	
Indeterminate Sentence	+	+	+	+
Static Factors Assessment (SFA)			-	
SFA dichotomous (moderate risk)	+	+	+	+
DFIA/DFIA-R Rating	-	-	-	
DFIA/DFIA-R dichotomous (moderate risk)	+	+	+	+
Reintegration Potential	+	+	+	
Motivation level	+	+	+	+
Previous youth convictions	-	-	-	-
15+ previous adult convictions				
Prior failure during community supervision	-	-	-	-
Prior segregation placement for disciplinary infractions	-	-	-	-
Prior attempted escape, UAL, or escape	-	-		
Prior reclassification to higher level of security	-	-		
Prior failures on conditional release	-	-		
Less than 6 months since last incarceration	-	-	-	-
No crime free period of 1 or more years	-	-	-	-
Previous violent offences	-	-	-	-
Previous sex offences	-	-	-	-
Three or more previous victims	-	-	-	-
DFIA – Employment	-	-	-	-
DFIA – Family	+	+	-	+
DFIA – Associates	-	-	-	
DFIA – Substance Abuse	+	+	-	
DFIA – Community Functioning	-	-		
DFIA – Personal/Emotional	+	+	-	
DFIA – Attitudes	-	-		
Age at admission	+	+	+	
Number of previous federal sentences	+	+	+	+
CRS Institutional Adjustment	-	-	-	-
CRS Security Risk		+	+	+
Sentence length (years)	+	+	+	+
Sentence length (including indeterminate)	+	+	+	+
CHR total	-	-	-	-
OSR total	+	+	-	

Note. TA = temporary absence; ETA = escorted temporary absence; UTA = unescorted temporary absence; WR = work release; + = offenders scoring higher on this factor were more likely to participate in a TA/ETA/UTA/WR; - = offenders scoring higher on this factor were less likely to participate in a TA/ETA/UTA/WR.

Discussion

This study examined who gets temporary absences/work releases. Most factors predicted participation in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs. Overwhelmingly, the biggest predictor of who received TAs and WRs was sentence length: offenders with longer sentences (including lifers) were more likely to eventually participate. Additionally, offenders participating in TAs, ETAs, UTAs, and WRs generally had higher motivation ratings and lower scores on the Institutional Adjustment scale of the CRS. Most of the remaining variables were also significant predictors, but the effects were quite small compared to sentence length, motivation, and institutional adjustment. Generally, offenders participating in TAs/WRs were moderate risk, were more likely to have had a previous federal sentence and a current violent offence, and they generally had fewer problems in institutions and on previous periods of community supervision. Some factors predicted ETAs in the opposite direction compared to UTAs and/or WRs. For example, offenders with higher levels of need in the substance abuse and personal/emotional domain and with higher scores on offence severity were more likely to receive ETAs but less likely to receive UTAs. Additionally, offenders with a current sex offence and with higher levels of need in the family/marital domain were more likely to receive ETAs but less likely to receive UTAs and WRs. These would be examples where offenders were deemed good candidates for supervised access to the community, but poor candidates for unsupervised access.

These results differ from previous research, which found that TAs were more likely to be granted to less serious (Grant & Belcourt, 1992) and low risk offenders (Grant & Millson, 1998). This change should be considered a positive shift. According to the risk principle of effective correctional interventions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), moderate and higher risk offenders stand to benefit most from TAs/WRs; providing them to low risk offenders may be unnecessary. Prioritizing moderate and higher risk offenders for TAs/WRs, however, must be balanced by considerations of public safety. Consistent with this, high risk offenders were less likely to participate than moderate risk offenders. Additionally, the exceptionally low failure rates of TAs (approximately 1%) and WRs (approximately 4%; Forrester & Grant, 2013; Ternes et al., 2014) supports that the risk to public safety for TAs/WRs is minimal, even with more moderate risk offenders receiving them.

This study also contradicts earlier research which found that Aboriginal offenders were

less likely to receive TAs or WRs (Grant & Beal, 1998; Grant & Belcourt, 1992; Grant & Millson, 1998; Grant & Porporino, 1992). In this study, they were more likely to receive TAs and ETAs, and were no different from non-Aboriginal offenders in their rates of receiving UTAs and WRs. This is an encouraging trend amidst the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal offenders in the criminal justice system (Public Safety Canada, 2013). Additionally, Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be placed in maximum security institutions (Public Safety Canada, 2013) and to be rated as high risk on the Static Factors Assessment, even controlling for the number of static risk factors present (Helmus & Forrester, 2014a). Prioritizing Aboriginal offenders for participation in TAs and WRs is consistent with CSC's priorities to encourage the safe transition and management of eligible offenders in the community, and to enhance capacities to provide effective interventions for Aboriginal offenders (CSC, 2014). This is important given that TAs have also been found to significantly reduce unemployment and returns to custody both with and without new offences for Aboriginal offenders (Helmus, 2014).

Similarly, departing from earlier research suggesting that women were less likely to receive WRs and no different in their likelihood of receiving TAs (Grant & Belcourt, 1992), this study found that women offenders were equally likely to receive WRs, and were more likely to receive any TA (ETAs or UTAs). The higher rates of receiving TAs may be reflective of women having higher need levels in the family/marital and associates/social interaction domains compared to men (analyses not reported), which could suggest a greater need for establishing and maintaining support in the community through temporary absences.

One limitation of this study is that data on the predictors of receiving temporary absences and work release were largely scored by staff in the course of their regular duties, and it is difficult to assess the quality of these assessments. Another limitation is that this study was restricted to assessments at intake for most of the variables. Particularly for offenders serving long sentences before their release, their intake assessment may not be the most accurate reflection of their characteristics at release. Intake assessments were used, however, because they are more consistently available for offenders. Additionally, research supporting the added value of assessments of change over initial assessments is currently limited (e.g., Serin, Lloyd, Helmus, Derkzen, & Luong, 2013).

Conclusions

This study found that temporary absences and work releases were more likely to be

granted for offenders who have been serving longer sentences, are moderate risk, have higher motivation ratings, and who have demonstrated fewer problems with institutional behaviour and on community supervision in the past. This appears to balance the risk principle of effective correctional practice (i.e., not investing valuable resources on the lowest risk offenders) without undue risk to public safety (i.e., by selecting offenders with better institutional and community behaviour and who displayed higher motivation ratings).

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 indicates that appropriate offenders are being selected for these opportunities. Analyses to examine the impact of participating in TAs and WRs on community outcomes (e.g., employment, returns to custody) is currently underway and will further our understanding of the important role of TAs and WRs in sentence management.

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