



# Aboriginal Offenders

## Research Results

### QUICK FACTS

**A** boriginal offenders continue to be disproportionately represented at all levels of the Canadian criminal justice system. In 2012-2013, Aboriginal offenders represented 20.5 per cent of the total federal population. Across Canada, Aboriginal adults make up approximately three per cent of the overall adult population.<sup>1</sup>

#### OFFENDER PROFILE

- From 2002 to 2012, the population of incarcerated Aboriginal men under federal jurisdiction increased by 34 per cent, from 2,209 to 2,966, while the number of incarcerated Aboriginal women rose by 97 per cent, from 104 to 205 offenders.<sup>2</sup>
- Overall, Aboriginal offenders tend to:
  - be younger;
  - be more likely to have served previous youth and/or adult sentences;
  - be incarcerated more often for a violent offence;
  - have higher risk and need ratings; and,
  - be more inclined to have gang affiliations.<sup>3</sup>

#### IN CUSTODY

- Aboriginal male offenders were most likely to be assessed as high overall risk and need, were the group with the highest rate of gang membership, and were most likely to be perpetrators or associates involved in major incidents.<sup>4</sup>
- Aboriginal women were more likely to be assessed as high risk and need, be convicted of violent offences, be gang-affiliated and be involved in institutional incidents.<sup>4</sup>

- As of April 2013, three out of four (72%) Aboriginal women offenders were serving time for a violent offence.<sup>1</sup>
- There is no evidence that Aboriginal offenders are inappropriately over-classified for security ratings in CSC's institutions. Higher classification of Aboriginal offenders reflects the appropriate management of risk and lower offender adjustment levels, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>5,6</sup>
- Aboriginal offenders were less likely to have multiple delays or cancellations for parole reviews but higher rates of waivers and postponements.<sup>7</sup>

#### HEALTH CARE

- The rate of sexually transmitted infection was 1.6 times greater in Aboriginal offenders than non-Aboriginal offenders. Aboriginal men were 4.4 times more likely than non-Aboriginal men to report at least one episode of Chlamydia.<sup>8</sup>
- Though 80 per cent of women were tested by CSC for HIV and HCV, Aboriginal women were less likely to report being tested. The rates of HIV and HCV infections for women offenders were greater than the general Canadian population, and were especially high among Aboriginal women.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Safety Canada (2014) [Corrections and conditional release statistical overview: Annual report 2013](#)

<sup>2</sup> Public Safety Canada (2012) [Corrections and conditional release statistical overview: Annual report 2012](#)

<sup>3</sup> Offender Management System (April 14, 2013)

<sup>4</sup> Gottschall (2012), [Ethnic Diversity in Canadian Offender Admissions](#). Research Report R-263, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>5</sup> Gobeil (2008), [Assessing Security Reclassification with Male Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Offenders](#). Research Report R-203, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>6</sup> Barnum & Gobeil (2012). [Revalidation of the Custody Rating Scale for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Women Offenders](#). Research Report R-273, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>7</sup> Cabana & Ruddell (2010). [Waivers, Postponements, and Withdrawals of Parole Reviews: Examining the Characteristics of High Volume Users](#). Research Report R-224, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>8</sup> Zakaria, Thompson & Borgatta (2010). [Rates of Reported Sexually Transmitted Infections since Admission to Canadian Federal Prison and Associated Incarceration Characteristics and Sexual Risk-Behaviours](#). Research Report R-196, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, Zakaria & Grant (2011). [Summary of the 2007 National Inmate Infectious Diseases and Risk-Behaviours Survey for Women](#). Research Report R-238, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada





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## Research Results

### QUICK FACTS

- Aboriginal women have higher rates of alcohol, marijuana, amphetamine and sedative dependence than non-Aboriginal women.<sup>10</sup>
- In a study that compared offenders with (1) a concurrent substance abuse and mental disorder, (2) a substance abuse disorder only, (3) a mental disorder only, and (4) neither a substance abuse nor a mental health disorder, Aboriginal offenders with 1, 2 and 4 had similar rates of reconviction. Aboriginal offenders with a mental disorder, however, were less likely to reoffend than other groups.<sup>11</sup>
- While non-Aboriginal offenders with a mental disorder did significantly more poorly on release, this pattern did not hold for Aboriginal offenders with a mental disorder.<sup>12</sup>
- Both participants and facilitators indicate that the Spirit of a Warrior Program, a high-intensity violence prevention program, generated positive results for participants. This included an increase in self-esteem levels and decrease in anger type and anger intensity levels.<sup>15</sup>
- Most women who participated in the Circles of Change program, a moderate-intensity program that addresses the criminogenic needs of Aboriginal women offenders, reported being very satisfied with the program, and that they had positive group interactions and facilitator experiences.<sup>16</sup>
- Aboriginal offenders displayed significant treatment gain after completing a correctional program.<sup>17</sup>

### REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

- The Tupiq program, a culturally specific high-intensity program for moderate- to high-risk Inuit sex offenders, was found to have very high rates of program completion and lower rates of general recidivism and violent recidivism among participants.<sup>13</sup>
- Offenders who participated in the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP) -- High intensity returned to custody at a lower rate during a follow-up period.<sup>14</sup>
- Aboriginal offenders who participated in correctional programming had odds of success that were 1.45 times greater than Aboriginal offenders who did not.<sup>18</sup>
- One in three (34%) Aboriginal women offenders felt staff would benefit from culturally specific training.<sup>19</sup>
- Access to programs specifically for Aboriginal women has improved in the last two decades.<sup>19</sup>
- Two out of five (43%) women offenders wanted more contact with Aboriginal or spiritual leaders and advocacy groups.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Derkzen, Booth, McConnell & Taylor (2012). [Mental Health Needs of Federal Women Offenders](#). Research Report R-267, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>11</sup> Wilton & Stewart (2012). [Outcomes for Offenders with Concurrent Substance Abuse and Mental Health Disorders](#). Research Report R-277, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>12</sup> Stewart, Wilton & Cousineau (2012). [Federally Sentenced Offenders with Mental Disorders: Offender Outcomes and Correctional Response](#). Research Report R-268, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, Hamilton, Wilson, Cousineau & Varette (2009). [An Examination of the Effectiveness of Tupiq: A Culturally Specific Program for Inuit Sex Offenders](#). Research Report R-213, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>14</sup> Kunic & Varis (2009). [The Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program \(AOSAP\): Examining the Effects of Successful Completion on Post-release Outcomes](#). Research Report R-217, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>15</sup> Bell & Flight (2006). [An Evaluation of the Spirit of the Warrior Program for Women Offenders](#). Research Report R-180, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>16</sup> Thompson (2010). [An Examination of the Circles of Change Program](#). Research Snippet RS 10-1, Ottawa, ON: CSC

<sup>17</sup> Usher & Stewart (2011). [Validation of the Generic Program Performance Measure \(GPPM\)](#). Research Report R-255, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>18</sup> Usher & Stewart (2011). [The Effectiveness of Correctional Programs with Diverse Offenders: A Meta-Analytic Study](#). Research Report R-246, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada

<sup>19</sup> Barrett, Allenby & Taylor (2010). [Twenty years later: Revisiting the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women](#). Research Report R-222, Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada