



PROFILING ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM – 2010/2011

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Highlights

- This report focuses on the representation of Aboriginal women in federal and provincial/territorial correctional institutions, using data mainly from the Integrated Correctional Services Survey (ICSS) and Adult Correctional Services Survey (ACS).
- In 2010/2011, 27% of adults in provincial and territorial sentenced custody and 20% of those in federal sentenced custody were Aboriginal people, about seven to eight times higher than the proportion of Aboriginal people in the adult population as a whole (4%).
- In the federal correctional system, Aboriginal incarcerated women represented 34% of all federally-incarcerated women and 14% of all women on conditional release in 2011/2012.
- The overall number of federally-incarcerated Aboriginal women nearly doubled between 2002/2003 and 2011/2012 (+97%) compared to a 34% increase among incarcerated Aboriginal men over the same period.
- In the provincial/territorial system, in 2010/2011, 41% of all female admissions (compared to 25% of male admissions) to sentenced custody were Aboriginal. Similarly, one-in-five females (20%) admitted to a provincial/territorial community sentence was an Aboriginal female, higher than the proportion among male admissions (14%).
- Aboriginal female offenders were younger, more likely to be single and less likely to have high levels of educational attainment or be employed at the time of admission compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts.
- Aboriginal women were assessed as having higher levels of criminogenic need compared to non-Aboriginal female offenders in all need areas, including alcohol or drug abuse (substance abuse), criminal peers and companions (social interactions), community functioning, employment, and criminal attitude.
- Two-thirds (65%) of Aboriginal women admitted to federal sentenced custody were admitted for a violent offence compared to one-third (33%) of non-Aboriginal females.
- The most serious offences among women admitted to provincial/territorial correctional services were more varied than in the federal correctional system and were less typically violent in nature. Nearly half of all Aboriginal women (48%) admissions were for Other *Criminal Code* offences, such as mischief, bail violations, disturbing the peace, arson, prostitution and offensive weapons compared to 39% of non-Aboriginal women.



Contents

Highlights	2
1. Introduction	4
2. Data Sources.....	4
3. Results.....	5
3.1 REPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN CORRECTIONAL SERVICES	5
3.2 MOST SERIOUS OFFENCE AT ADMISSION	8
3.3 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ABORIGINAL FEMALE OFFENDERS	9
3.3.1 <i>Age at admission</i>	9
3.3.2 <i>Marital Status</i>	9
3.3.3 <i>Education and Employment</i>	10
3.3.4 <i>Criminogenic Needs</i>	12
4. Conclusion	14
5. References.....	16



1. Introduction

Although the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system has been a long-standing area of concern, much of the attention to this overrepresentation has been focused on Aboriginal people as a whole, without giving appropriate attention to the unique situation of Aboriginal women as offenders. The high rates at which Aboriginal women are overrepresented in federal and provincial correctional institutions warrants a closer examination.

This report focuses on the representation of Aboriginal women in federal and provincial/territorial correctional institutions, serving both custodial and community sentences.

2. Data Sources

Data in this report come from a number of sources. Provincial/territorial correctional system data come from two key surveys from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, that report on adult correctional services in Canada: the Adult Correctional Services Survey (ACS) and the Integrated Correctional Services Survey (ICSS).

Both surveys present caseload characteristics (e.g., number of admissions to correctional facilities and community supervision, age and sex of offenders, offences for which the offender is admitted to a correctional facility and community corrections, sentence length, time served, etc.) from all provinces and territories. All provinces and territories reported to the ACS in 2010/2011.

Data from the ICSS allow for a broader range of analysis including more detailed socio-demographic characteristics and case management information such as criminogenic need assessments. Jurisdictions that reported adult custodial data to the ICSS in 2010/2011 were Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and the Correctional Service Canada. The primary unit of analysis is the 'admission'. An admission is counted each time a person begins any type of custody or community supervision program. The same person can be included several times in the admission counts where the individual moves from one type of legal status to another or re-enters the system in the same year. Offenders who are sentenced for two years or more are the responsibility of the federal correctional system, under the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). All offenders with sentences of less than two years are the responsibility of the provincial/territorial correctional systems.

Data from both the ACS and ICSS in this report are derived from a custom tabulation of data from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) as well as from other publically available sources and publications. See References for more information on these sources.





3. Results

3.1 Representation of Aboriginal women in correctional services

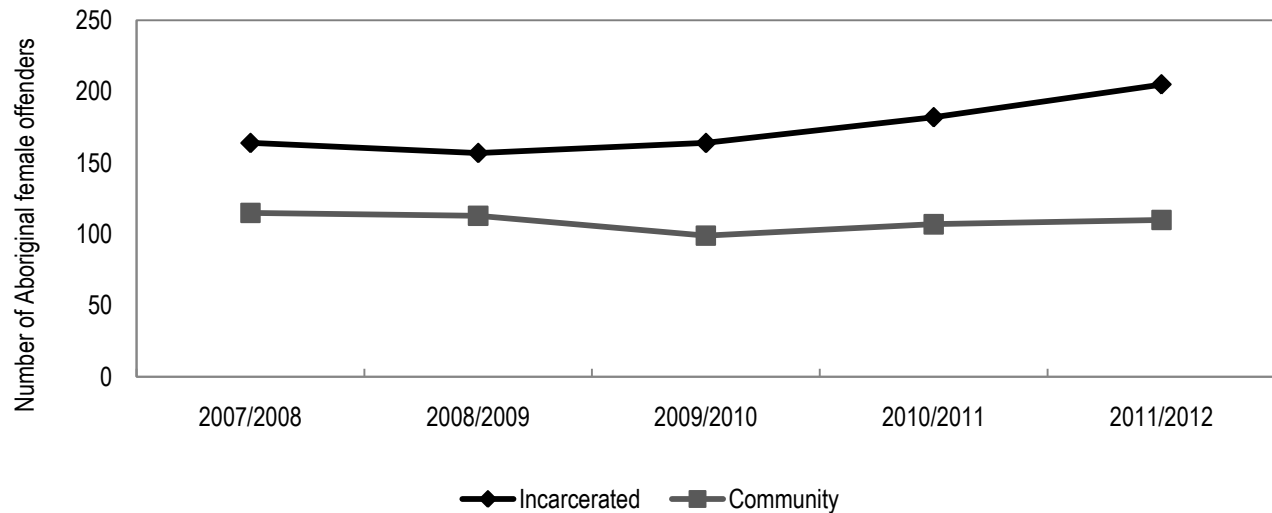
Aboriginal people are disproportionally represented among the correctional population in Canada. According to data from the National Household Survey (NHS), 1,400,685 people reported having an Aboriginal identity in 2011 (North American Indian [First Nations people], Métis and Inuit), representing 4% of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2013). In contrast however, in 2010/2011, 27% of adults admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody and 20% of those admitted to federal sentenced custody involved Aboriginal people, about seven to eight times higher than the proportion of Aboriginal people in the adult population as a whole (Dauvergne, 2012)

While females represented a minority of all persons involved in adult correctional services (11% of provincial/territorial sentenced admissions and 6% of federal admissions), the number of female admissions to federal custody has increased. In the last ten years, between 2002/2003 and 2011/2012, the number of women admitted to the federal correctional system increased by 70%, more than four times the increase found for men over the same period (+17%). Over this time period, female offenders accounted for a larger share of all federally-sentenced Warrant of Committal admissions to sentenced custody (from 5% to 7% of all federally-sentenced offenders).¹ In contrast, the number and share of female offenders in the provincial/territorial correctional system has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade (Public Safety Canada, 2013).

In the five years prior to 2011/2012, the Aboriginal population under federal jurisdiction increased by 17%, or from 3,810 to 4,465 Aboriginal offenders. As a result, Aboriginal people represented a 2% larger share of all federal offenders in 2011/2012 compared to five years prior, from 17% to 19% of all federal offenders. Similarly, the representation of Aboriginal people among provincial/territorial sentenced custody admissions also increased by three percentage points in the past five years since 2006/2007, from 24% to 27% of all provincial/territorial sentenced admissions (Public Safety Canada, 2013).

The representation of Aboriginal women among all women in correctional services in Canada is particularly high. For example, Aboriginal incarcerated women represented 34% of all federally-incarcerated women and 21% of all women on federal conditional release in 2011/2012. In contrast, Aboriginal incarcerated men represented 22% of all federally-incarcerated men and accounted for 14% of men on federal conditional release. The overall number of federally incarcerated Aboriginal women nearly doubled between 2002/2003 and 2011/2012 (+ 97%) while there was a 34% increase among federally incarcerated Aboriginal men over the same period (Public Safety Canada, 2013). The number of Aboriginal women under federal supervision for a community sentence has fluctuated but remains relatively stable over the same time period. See Figure 1.

¹ A warrant of committal is a new custodial admission to the federal jurisdiction from the courts.

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN UNDER FEDERAL JURISDICTION HAS INCREASED

Source: Public Safety Canada, 2013.

A similar picture emerges in the provincial/territorial correctional systems. The disproportionate number of Aboriginal people among provincial/territorial custody and community admissions was particularly true among female offenders. In 2010/2011, 41% of all female admissions (compared to 25% of male admissions) to provincial/territorial sentenced custody were Aboriginal. Similarly, in 2010/2011, one-in five females (20%) admitted to a provincial/territorial community sentence was an Aboriginal female, higher than the proportion among male admissions (13.6%). Between 2004/2005 and 2008/2009, the representation of Aboriginal women among female admissions to provincial/territorial sentenced custody has increased by 6 percentage points, while the representation among remand admissions has increased by 2 percentage points.

In 2010/2011, as was the case for Aboriginal men, Aboriginal women accounted for the largest proportions of female admissions in the Western provinces. For example, roughly close to 8 in 10 female sentenced custody admissions were Aboriginal in Saskatchewan (79%), Manitoba (83%) and the Yukon (83%), while more than half of all sentenced custody admission in Alberta were Aboriginal (54%).

The degree to which Aboriginal women were overrepresented among provincial/territorial sentenced custody admissions relative to their representation in the general population varied across the country. For example, data from Alberta show that Aboriginal females accounted for roughly twelve times the number of admissions to sentenced custody than would be expected given the population of Aboriginal people in that province. Similarly, in the provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan, Aboriginal women accounted for high proportions of admissions to sentenced custody compared to their population in that province (nine times and six times the population, respectively).

Similarly, compared to their representation in the adult population, Aboriginal women accounted for a greater proportion of all female admissions to remand in Nova Scotia (six times), Ontario (nine times), and Alberta (eleven times). In the Northwest Territories, where the discrepancy

between the share of the population and the provincial/territorial sentence admission population was the smallest, Aboriginal women accounted for roughly twice their share in the population. See Table 1 for a summary of the representation of Aboriginal women among admissions to correctional services.

A comparable picture also emerges with respect to the over-representation of Aboriginal women serving community sentences in the provinces and territories, although to a lesser degree compared to the over-representation among custodial admissions. As Table 1 illustrates, Aboriginal women are highly represented among community sentences relative to their population. Specifically, relative to their population, in 2010/2011, Aboriginal women accounted for particularly high proportions of admissions to both probation and conditional sentences in Saskatchewan and Ontario. Additionally, Aboriginal women accounted for more than one-in-five (22%) admissions to probation in Newfoundland and Labrador, substantially higher than the adult Aboriginal female representation in the population in Newfoundland and Labrador (6%).

TABLE 1: ADULT FEMALE ABORIGINAL ADMISSIONS TO PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL AND FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, WITH ADULT POPULATION OF FEMALES, BY JURISDICTION, 2010/2011

Jurisdiction	Sentenced Custody	Remand	Probation	Conditional Sentence	Aboriginal females (20 years and over) in the total female population (%)
Newfoundland and Labrador	13%	6%	22%	6%	6%
Prince Edward Island	6%	0%	..	..	2%
Nova Scotia	12%	20%	7%	7%	3%
New Brunswick	14%	17%	11%	13%	3%
Quebec	6%	6%	..	..	2%
Ontario	18%	18%	13%	15%	2%
Manitoba	87%	82%	..	..	14%
Saskatchewan	90%	90%	76%	82%	12%
Alberta	62%	56%	..	..	5%
British Columbia	..	..	..	..	5%
Yukon	87%	90%	..	..	22%
Northwest Territories	96%	94%	..	..	48%
Nunavut	..	..	..	..	81%
Total Provincial/territorial	41%	33%	18%	26%	4%
Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)¹	27%	...	...	...
Total	41%	...	...	...

Note: Excludes admissions to custody in which Aboriginal identity was unknown. Excludes British Columbia and Nunavut due to the unavailability of data. Population estimates based on custom tabulation using 2001 National Health Survey data.

1. Offenders who are sentenced for two years or more are the responsibility of the federal correctional system, under the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). All offenders with sentences of less than two years are the responsibility of the provincial/territorial correctional systems.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Integrated Correctional Services Survey (ICSS) and Adult Correctional Services Survey (ACS). Custom tabulation for the Department of Justice.



3.2 Most Serious Offence at Admission

In 2010/2011, two-thirds (65%) of Aboriginal women admitted to federal sentenced custody were admitted for a violent offence compared to one-third (33%) of non-Aboriginal women. Following admission for violent offences, Aboriginal women were also commonly admitted to federal custody for drug offences (14%). However, a much large proportion of non-Aboriginal women were admitted to federal custody with drug offences as their most serious offence (33%). Non-Aboriginal women were more likely to have been admitted for property offences compared to Aboriginal women (22% versus 11%). See Table 2.

The most serious offences among women admitted to provincial/territorial correctional services were more varied than in the federal correctional system and were less typically violent in nature. As Table 2 illustrates, 18% of Aboriginal women and 12% of non-Aboriginal women were admitted to provincial/territorial sentenced custody for violent offences as their most serious offence, in 2010/2011. Nearly half (48%) of all Aboriginal women admissions were for Other *Criminal Code* offences, such as mischief, bail violations, disturbing the peace, arson, prostitution and offensive weapons. This proportion was smaller for non-Aboriginal women (39%).² As was the case in the federal system, Aboriginal women were less likely to have been admitted to provincial/territorial correctional services for drug or property offences as their most serious offence compared to non-Aboriginal women.

TABLE 2: MOST SERIOUS OFFENCE OF ADULT FEMALE ADMISSIONS, BY ABORIGINAL IDENTITY, PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL AND FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, 2010/2011

Most Serious Offence (MSO)	Provincial/Territorial Sentenced Custody		Provincial/Territorial Community Sentences		Federal Sentence Custody	
	Aboriginal Women	Non-Aboriginal Women	Aboriginal Women	Non-Aboriginal Women	Aboriginal Women	Non-Aboriginal Women
Violent offences ¹	18%	12%	32%	25%	65%	33%
Property offences ²	23%	32%	30%	40%	11%	22%
Other <i>Criminal Code</i> offences ³	48%	39%	26%	21%	8%	9%
Impaired driving	5%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%
Drug offences	5%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%
Other federal	3%	8%	6%	8%	14%	33%
Other offences	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%

1. Includes, for example, assault, uttering threats, robbery, sexual assault, criminal harassment, forcible confinement and homicide.

2. Includes, for example, theft, break and enter, possession of stolen goods, fraud, mischief, theft of a motor vehicle and arson.

3. Includes, for example, incidents involve the remaining *Criminal Code* offences that are not classified as violent or property offences (excluding traffic offences) such as mischief, bail violations, disturbing the peace, arson, prostitution and offensive weapons.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Integrated Correctional Services Survey. Custom tabulation for the Department of Justice.

² This finding is consistent with other research that shows high representation of administration of justice offences among offences committed by women (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11416-eng.htm>) as well as research that shows a high prevalence of administration of justice offences among Aboriginal offenders (<http://justice.alberta.ca/publications/Documents/AJO-REPORT-FINALAug2012.pdf>; <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2006007-eng.pdf>)

3.3 Socio-demographic characteristics of Aboriginal female offenders

Data collected from the Integrated Correctional Services Survey (ICSS) include information on various socio-demographic characteristics of offenders admitted to both federal custody and provincial/territorial custody and community services. Jurisdictions that reported adult custodial and community data to the ICSS in 2010/2011 were Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Correctional Service Canada. The following section of the report provides information on the socio-demographic characteristics of adult offenders in these select jurisdictions, unless otherwise stated, and therefore do not represent all of Canada. See Table 3 for all available data.

3.3.1 Age at admission

The median age of Aboriginal women admitted to provincial sentenced custody, federal sentenced custody and provincial/territorial community sentences was approximately 30 years. This was lower than the median age for non-Aboriginal women of approximately 34 years and comparable to that for Aboriginal men (approximately 30 years), for all types of correctional service admissions (See Table 3). The younger Aboriginal correctional population mirrors the trend found in the general Canadian population where the Aboriginal population is younger than non-Aboriginal people.

3.3.2 Marital Status

Half (50%) of all Aboriginal women admitted to federal sentenced custody in 2010/2011 were single (never married) and 35% were in a common-law relationship. Only 6% of Aboriginal women were legally married compared to 10% of non-Aboriginal women. Among provincial sentenced custody admissions, two-thirds (68%) of Aboriginal females admissions were single while only 4% were legally married. Similarly, nearly two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal females admitted to provincial community sentences were single. As Table 3 illustrates, among all types of correctional admissions, Aboriginal women were more typically involved in a common-law relationship compared to non-Aboriginal women. In contrast, non-Aboriginal female admissions were more likely to be legally-married or separated/divorced/widowed, compared to Aboriginal females, for all types of admissions to correctional services. Similar differences in the marital status of offenders were also found for Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal men. A much larger proportion of Aboriginal men (26%) were in a common-law relationship at the time of admission compared to non-Aboriginal men (14%), Aboriginal women (20%) and non-Aboriginal women (16%).



TABLE 3: ADULT FEMALE ADMISSION CHARACTERISTICS, SELECT PROVINCES AND FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, 2010/2011

Socio-demographic Characteristic	Provincial sentenced custody		Provincial community sentences		Federal sentenced custody ¹	
	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal
	number (%)					
Total admissions	1,122	2,947	2,078	8,526	88	240
Age at admission date						
18 to 19	7%	4%	9%	6%	10%	1%
20 to 24	23%	15%	25%	20%	17%	15%
25 to 29	21%	18%	21%	16%	22%	20%
30 to 34	18%	16%	16%	13%	19%	16%
35 to 39	13%	15%	11%	11%	15%	12%
40 to 44	9%	14%	8%	12%	8%	15%
45 to 49	7%	10%	6%	11%	7%	10%
50 and over	3%	8%	4%	11%	2%	12%
Median age	30	34	30	34	30	34
Marital status						
Single (never married)	68%	62%	63%	56%	50%	43%
Married	4%	6%	6%	11%	6%	10%
Common-law	20%	16%	22%	14%	35%	27%
Separated/divorced/widowed	9%	17%	9%	18%	9%	20%
Education completed for age 25 and over ¹						
Less than secondary	75%	20%	64%	24%	..	..
Completed secondary	20%	58%	26%	50%	..	..
Some post-secondary	2%	6%	4%	5%	..	..
Completed post-secondary	3%	17%	6%	21%	..	..
Employment status at admission ¹						
Unemployed (but able to work)	64%	68%	54%	54%	..	..
Employed (part-time, full-time)	15%	23%	19%	34%	..	..
Not in the Labour Force	21%	9%	26%	12%	..	..

1. Includes data from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Integrated Correctional Services Survey. Custom tabulation for the Department of Justice.

3.3.3 Education and Employment

Data from select provincial jurisdictions show that all Aboriginal offenders admitted to provincial sentenced custody had significantly lower levels of educational attainment than non-



Aboriginal offenders.³ More specifically, for two-thirds (69%) of all Aboriginal offenders (male and female), the highest level of educational attainment was less than secondary school (high school). In contrast, only 26% of all non-Aboriginal offenders had less than secondary school as their highest education level obtained. Twice the proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders completed secondary school compared to Aboriginal offenders (60% versus 26%) and three times the proportion of non-Aboriginal offenders completed a post-secondary degree or diploma compared to Aboriginal offenders (11% versus 4%).

While low levels of educational attainment were present among Aboriginal male admissions, Aboriginal females had particularly low levels of educational attainment. Three-quarters (75%) of Aboriginal females admitted to provincial/territorial sentenced custody failed to complete secondary school. This proportion is in sharp contrast to that for non-Aboriginal females where only one-in-five (20%) had less than secondary school as their highest level of educational attainment. Further, nearly three times the proportion of non-Aboriginal females admitted to provincial sentenced custody had completed secondary school compared to Aboriginal females (58% versus 20%). Similarly, while only 5% of Aboriginal females had completed some post-secondary or completed a post-secondary degree or diploma, nearly one-quarter of non-Aboriginal females had obtained this level of education (23%). As Table 3 suggests, a similar picture emerges with respect the highest level of educational attainment among provincial/territorial community sentence admissions.

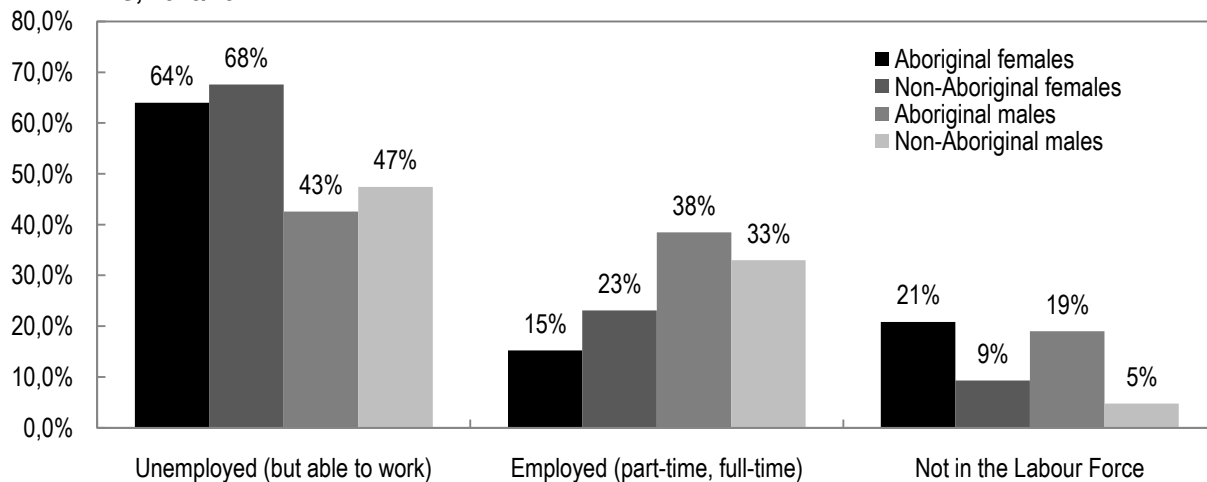
In 2010/2011, all females (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) admitted to provincial sentenced custody had significantly lower levels of employment than males.⁴ More specifically, two-thirds of females admitted (66%) to provincial/territorial sentenced custody were unemployed at the time of admission compared to less than half (46%) of all males. In contrast, less than one-in-five females admitted to provincial sentenced custody (19%) was employed (part-time or full-time) compared to 43% of all males during the same time period.

Aboriginal women had the lowest levels of employment among all offenders, male or female, admitted to provincial sentenced custody. Aboriginal women (15%) were less likely to have been employed at the time of admission, either part-time or full-time, compared to non-Aboriginal females (23%). On the other hand, one-in-five (21%) Aboriginal women were not in the labour force at the time of admission compared to 9% of non-Aboriginal women. The status of not being in the labour force includes retired adults, students, not employed due to disability or medical reason or not employed as a result of not looking for work.⁵ There was very little difference in the proportions of female admissions that were unemployed between Aboriginal females (64%) and non-Aboriginal females (68%). See Figure 2.

³ Education attainment data are provided for adults, aged 25 years or over at the time of admission to correctional services in 2010/2011, from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan.

⁴ Education attainment data are provided for adults from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan only.

⁵ Not looking for work may also include adults who are unable to look for work due to seasonal (un)availability of work in some regions, particularly in some remote Aboriginal communities.

FIGURE 2: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ABORIGINAL MALE AND FEMALE PROVINCIAL SENTENCED OFFENDERS, 2010/2011

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Integrated Correctional Services Survey. Custom tabulation for the Department of Justice.

3.3.4 Criminogenic Needs

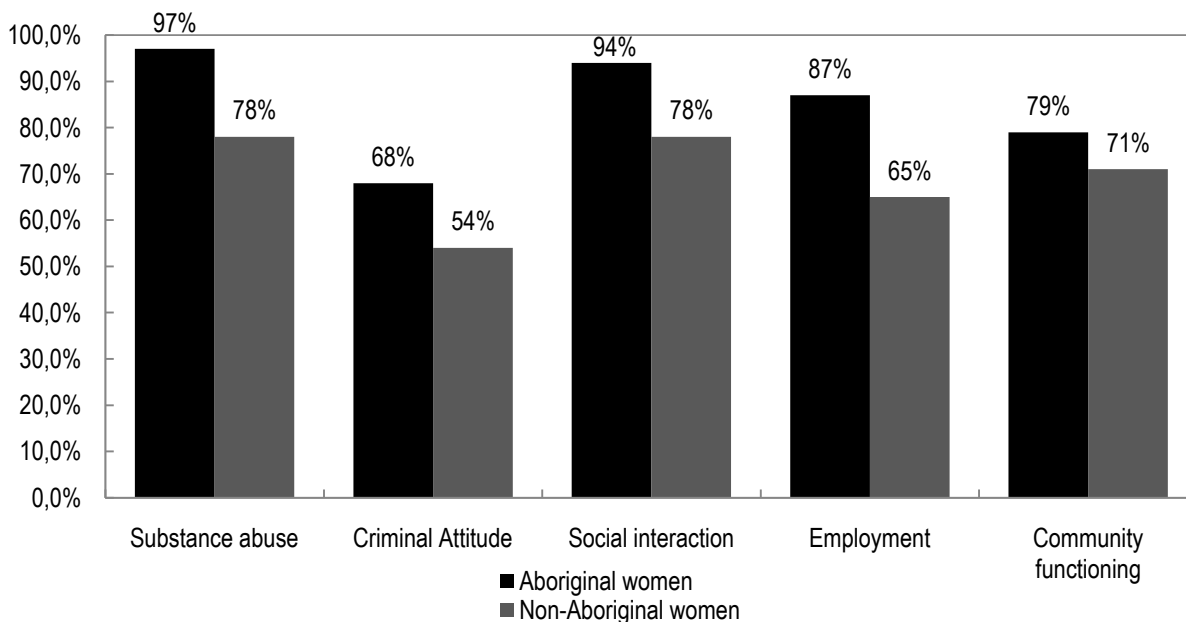
When an offender is admitted to a correctional sentence, such as sentenced custody or a community sentence, a number of formal assessment tools and discretionary judgements are made by the probation or intake officer at the time of admission. One of these intake assessment tools is an assessment of dynamic and criminogenic need areas for offenders. In Saskatchewan, the only province where criminogenic needs information is available, information gathered from needs assessments focuses on six domains: alcohol or drug abuse (substance abuse); criminal peers and companions (social interactions); community functioning; employment; family or marital issues; and criminal attitude. A level of need is identified for each domain and is used to determine appropriate correctional planning and where the offender should aim to make improvements to reduce his/her chances of re-offending. An individual is considered to have a particular need when the level of need is assessed as being medium or high.

In 2010/2011, information gathered from needs assessments in Saskatchewan shows that Aboriginal women who were admitted to provincial sentenced custody had a large number of criminogenic needs. Specifically, Aboriginal women had a median of 5 needs at the time of admission to provincial sentenced custody, higher than the median number of needs for non-Aboriginal women (3 needs) and for all male offenders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (4 needs). Although information on the needs of federal female offenders were not available in the current data tabulation, previous research on the criminogenic needs of federal offenders found that all Aboriginal offenders were assessed as having higher average number of criminogenic needs compared to non-Aboriginal offenders (5 versus 4 needs) (Perreault 2009).

Nearly all Aboriginal women reported having a need in the area of substance abuse (97%) at the time of admission to sentenced custody in Saskatchewan. This rate of need was comparable to Aboriginal men (95%) but was substantially higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal women (78%) and non-Aboriginal men (82%). A substantial proportion of Aboriginal women also displayed needs in the areas of social interaction (94%) and employment (87%). Among all those

admitted to sentence custody, Aboriginal women were assessed as having higher levels of need compared to non-Aboriginal female offenders in all need areas. See Figure 3 for information on the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal female offenders.⁶

FIGURE 3: CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS OF WOMEN ADMITTED TO PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL SENTENCED CUSTODY, 2010/2011



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Integrated Correctional Services Survey. Custom tabulation for the Department of Justice.

Although not specific to Aboriginal female offenders, previous research on the criminogenic needs of all federal offenders found that Aboriginal offenders had a higher level of criminogenic need than non-Aboriginal offenders (Perreault 2009). Specifically, three-quarters (73%) of Aboriginal offenders admitted to federal custody had an employment need compared to half (49%) of all non-Aboriginal federal offenders. Compared to non-Aboriginal offenders, a larger proportion of Aboriginal offenders were also assessed as having a criminogenic need in the area of substance abuse (82% versus 67%), personal/emotional needs (82% versus 72%), family/marital relationships (51% versus 32%) and need related to social interaction (72% versus 61%).

⁶ Data for the marital/family domain are not presented due to small numbers.



4. Conclusion

Aboriginal people are highly represented among all offenders in the Canadian correctional system. Much of this overrepresentation is driven by the vast overrepresentation of Aboriginal women among all female offenders in Canada. In both the federal and provincial/territorial systems, Aboriginal women account for substantial proportions of female offenders. Although only representing approximately 3% of the adult population in Canada, 41% of all female provincial/territorial sentenced custody offenders were Aboriginal (compared to 25% of male admissions) in 2010/2011 and 27% of all women admitted to federal custody were Aboriginal. The number of Aboriginal women in the federal system doubled in the past decade (+97%). Aboriginal women accounted for an increasing share of female offenders in the provincial/territorial system in 2010/2011 than five years previously, up 6 percentage points over this time period.

Relative to what was expected given the population of Aboriginal people in the province, overrepresentation of Aboriginal women among sentenced custody admissions varied across Canada, ranging from a high of thirteen times the population in Alberta to a low of two times the population in the Northwest Territories. Similar patterns of overrepresentation across the country emerged for admissions to remand and provincial/territorial community sentences.

The Integrated Correctional Services Survey (ICSS) collects detailed data on various socio-demographic indicators for a select number of provinces and territories, and for the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Data from these select provinces/territories found that while most provincial/territorial sentenced offenders were single at the time of admission, Aboriginal females were the most likely among all offenders to be single. In contrast, only 4% of all Aboriginal female offenders were legally married, compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men were younger on average (approximately 30 years old) than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (approximately 34 years old). Similar differences were also noted among federally-sentenced offenders.

Being an Aboriginal person resulted in substantially low levels of education among all offenders, regardless of sex. Specifically, three-quarters of all Aboriginal women admitted to provincial sentenced custody failed to complete secondary school (high school), higher than the proportion for Aboriginal males (69%), and significantly higher than the proportion for non-Aboriginal females (20%) and non-Aboriginal males (27%).

The driving factor in the unemployment and employment status of the offender was the sex of the offender. Data from a select number of provinces showed that all women were significantly less likely to be employed compared to male offenders, regardless of their Aboriginal identity. Aboriginal women were substantially less likely than non-Aboriginal women to be employed, however, and were the most likely among all offenders to be out of the labour market altogether.

Aboriginal women were substantially more likely than non-Aboriginal women to have been admitted to custody for a violent offence. In the federal system, the proportion of Aboriginal women admitted for violent offences was double the proportion of non-Aboriginal women (65% versus 33%). In contrast, Aboriginal women were less likely to have been admitted to federal





custody for drug offences compared to non-Aboriginal women (14% versus 33%). Similar results were found among provincial/territorial admissions, although to a lesser degree, as 18% of Aboriginal women and 12% of non-Aboriginal women were admitted for a violent offence as their most serious offence.

Data on the criminogenic needs of sentenced custody offenders in Saskatchewan show that Aboriginal women offenders were assessed at intake as having more needs to address compared to non-Aboriginal women offenders (median of 5 versus 3 needs). In contrast, there were no differences found regarding the median number of needs between male offenders (median of 4 needs). All Aboriginal offenders were assessed as having higher levels of need in all domain areas compared to non-Aboriginal offenders, for both male and female offenders. Nearly all Aboriginal female offenders were identified with a median or high level of need in the area of substance abuse (97%) and social interaction (94%), higher than the proportions for non-Aboriginal women in the same areas (78% and 78%, respectively). Large proportions of Aboriginal women were also identified as having high levels of need in the area of employment (87%), community functioning (79%) and criminal attitude (68%).

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian criminal justice system has been acknowledged as one of the most challenging aspects facing the justice system today. The disproportionate number of Aboriginal offenders has increased significantly in recent years. However, much of the attention to this overrepresentation has been focused on Aboriginal people as a whole, without giving appropriate attention to the unique situation of Aboriginal women as offenders. As this report has demonstrated, Aboriginal women are particularly overrepresented as offenders in female institutions and correctional services. This representation has been growing in recent years and at a faster rate than Aboriginal male offenders. Understanding this trend, as well as the characteristics of Aboriginal women offenders, may help to better understand the problem of overrepresentation with the goal of moving forward with solutions to mitigate the experiences of Aboriginal women offenders in the Canadian criminal justice system.





5. References

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