

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Offender Complaints and Grievances in Canadian Federal Corrections

Offender complaints and grievances being received have declined across all levels and priority in federal corrections.

Why we are doing this study

As outlined in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* offenders are provided with a means of resolving personal issues through an offender redress process. An 'Audit of Offender Redress' (March 2018) by the internal Audit Sector of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) noted that there was no Service-wide plan in place to improve complaint and grievance resolution capabilities at the lowest level, that is at the front line of corrections. Notwithstanding the audit found that mechanisms were in place to oversee and plan for the remediation of a long-standing grievance backlog at the national level, ongoing performance reporting of the redress process was still required.

What we did

Offenders submit complaints and grievances for a variety of reasons, ranging from staff performance and food services to use of force and discrimination. For fiscal years 2014-15 to 2018-19 data (submissions received) were extracted from the Corporate Reporting System-Modernized (CRS-M) application across all three internal levels of the offender redress process – complaint, institutional and final as well as their relative priority status – high or routine.

What we found

As reflected in the table below, the number of complaints and grievances being received by CSC peaked at 32,496 in 2014-15 and declined to 21,173 in 2018-19. This figure represents a substantial decline of -11,323 or 35% over the last five years. Similarly, offender complaints have declined from 18,688 in 2014-15 to 14,724 in 2018-19; institutional level from 4,211 in 2014-15 to 3,296 in 2018-19 and final level 9,597 in 2014-15 to 3,153 in 2018-19. It would appear that from 2014-15 that the active work load for complaints (-1,964), and institutional (-915) and final level (-6,084) grievances diminished by 21%, 22% and 63% respectively.

With respect to complaint and grievance priority status, those assigned 'high' have declined by 13% [from 3,778 in 2014-15 to 3,275 in 2018-19] and 'routine' by 35% [from 27,718 in 2014-15 to 17,898 in 2018-19].

Offender Complaints and Grievances: Received Submissions by Fiscal Year, Level, and Priority					
Fiscal Year	Level	High Priority	Routine Priority	Total Received	Grand Total
2014-15	Complaint	1,161	17,527	18,688	32,496
	Institutional	1,336	2,875	4,211	
	National	1,281	8,316	9,597	
2015-16	Complaint	1,029	14,833	15,862	24,770
	Institutional	1,538	2,347	3,885	
	National	1,821	3,202	5,023	
2016-17	Complaint	977	14,122	15,099	22,695
	Institutional	1,195	2,387	3,582	
	National	1,317	2,697	4,014	
2017-18	Complaint	1,046	13,999	15,045	22,046
	Institutional	1,195	2,066	3,261	
	National	1,165	2,575	3,740	
2018-19	Complaint	1,071	13,653	14,724	21,173
	Institutional	1,190	2,106	3,296	
	National	1,014	2,139	3,153	

What it means

Offender complaints and grievances across all levels are expected to continue to decline¹. The downward trend with respect to submissions received reflects CSC's concerted efforts to strengthen informal resolution efforts at the lowest level possible. Moreover, the automated reports being provided by the *Grievances* and *Trend Analysis & Performance* modules of the CRS-M across operational sites appear to be yielding some offender redress dividends.

¹ Motiuk, L. & Arnet-Zargarian, A. (2018). *Processing Offender Grievances in Canadian Federal Corrections*. Research in Brief, 18-13, Correctional Service Canada.

For more information

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