

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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A Profile of Older Offenders in Federal Custody: Aged 65 and Over

Offenders aged 65 and up account for 5% of the in-custody population; they tend to be high risk, medium/high need and serving indeterminate sentences.

Why we did this study

The proportion of offenders over the age of 50 (Baidawi et al., 2011) in federal custody has significantly increased since 2006 (Beaudette & Stewart, 2014). Previous research indicates that older offenders have unique needs compared to younger offenders (e.g., Aday & Krabill, 2012; Uzoaba, 1998). However, this group of offenders is not homogenous and it is important to examine the different subsets within this group.

What we did

An in-custody snapshot taken on January 20th, 2019 indicated there were 13,955 federal offenders in custody; 5% (688) were aged 65 or over. Characteristics of this group were analyzed to better understand the needs and characteristics of this sub-set of older offenders.

What we found

Of those aged 65 and over, 49% were between the ages of 65 and 69, and 15% identified as Indigenous. Indigenous representation was highest in the Prairie region (30%) and lowest in the Quebec region (8%).

The majority of those aged 65 and over were serving an indeterminate sentence (59%), often for a schedule I offence (violent; 47%) or for second degree murder (30%). Many had either served a relatively short amount of time on their sentence (i.e., less than five years; 40%) or a lengthy amount of time (i.e., 20 years or more; 29%).

Almost three-quarters (72%) of offenders aged 65 and over had passed their eligibility dates for day parole and over half (60%) had passed their eligibility dates for full parole. Of those who had passed their day parole eligibility dates, 31% had passed it within the past two years.

The majority of offenders aged 65 and over were classified as medium (49%) or maximum (42%) security and two-thirds (66%) were considered to be high risk. In overall need, offenders tended to be high (47%) or medium (44%), while on the reintegration potential, they tended to be rated medium (41%) or low (39%). However, 61% were engaged in their correctional plan and almost half (49%) were rated medium on motivation level.

Offenders Aged 65 and Over, by Region.

Region	Indigenous Status	
	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous
Atlantic	90% (52)	10% (6)
Quebec	92% (179)	8% (16)
Ontario	90% (197)	11% (23)
Prairies	71% (62)	30% (26)
Pacific	76% (96)	24% (31)

Note. These numbers are accurate as of January 20th, 2019.

What it means

Although offenders aged 65 and up account for only 5% of the in-custody population, they tend to have complex needs that will need to be considered (e.g., high risk, medium/high need) especially as this group continues to grow. More thorough research is necessary so that CSC can effectively manage and support these offenders through age-responsive interventions and services.

References

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For more information

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