

Major Offence and Sentences of Federal Offenders in Custody: 2020

Indigenous men and women are serving more sentences in federal custody for violent offences than non-Indigenous.

Why we are doing this study

The warrant of committal of every offender admitted to federal custody is systematically recorded at time of admission for major offence (the offence that received the longest amount of time to serve) and length of sentence. These variables are an integral part of sentence administration that also serve as part of the overall correctional planning and case management framework.

What we did

Sentence administration and demographic information on offenders under federal jurisdiction (those serving sentences of two years or longer) is routinely collected by the Correctional Service of Canada. Data was gathered on the federal custody population in relation to a set of major offence categories as well as various sentence lengths. These 2019-20 year end results reflect the prevalence of offenders who have these types of crimes and sentences.

What we found

Descriptive statistics show that Indigenous men in federal custody have similar rates of homicide-related offences as their non-Indigenous counterparts (27.6% and 27.1%, respectively). While Indigenous men have higher rates of major assault and robbery than non-Indigenous men do, non-Indigenous men are more likely to be serving sentences for drug and sex offences. Overall, Indigenous men are serving relatively shorter sentences.

Major Offence and Sentence Lengths: Men (%)

	Indigenous (3,855)	Non-Indigenous (9,177)
Major Offence:		
<i>Homicide</i>	27.6	27.1
<i>Sex</i>	14.4	17.9
<i>Major Assault</i>	16.2	9.4
<i>Robbery</i>	14.1	10.6
<i>Drug</i>	7.8	15.0
<i>Other</i>	20.0	20.0
Sentence Length:		
<i>Less than 4 years</i>	37.9	34.1
<i>4 years to less than 10 years</i>	30.6	30.5
<i>10 years or more</i>	7.1	7.3
<i>Indeterminate</i>	24.5	28.1

Indigenous women in federal custody have higher rates of violent offences (homicide, major assault, robbery) than their non-Indigenous counterparts. On the other hand, non-Indigenous women are more likely to be serving sentences for drug and sex offences. By and large, Indigenous women are serving relatively shorter sentences.

Major Offence and Sentence Lengths: Women (%)

	Indigenous (279)	Non-Indigenous (406)
Major Offence:		
<i>Homicide</i>	29.0	25.4
<i>Sex</i>	2.2	5.2
<i>Major Assault</i>	11.5	6.7
<i>Robbery</i>	16.5	8.9
<i>Drug</i>	15.1	30.8
<i>Other</i>	25.8	23.2
Sentence Length:		
<i>Less than 4 years</i>	53.0	49.0
<i>4 years to less than 10 years</i>	28.7	26.4
<i>10 years or more</i>	1.8	3.2
<i>Indeterminate</i>	16.5	21.4

What it means

There are some differences in the Major Offence groupings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. These findings could be relevant to sustained efforts to deliver culturally sensitive interventions and supportive community development to improve safe reintegration results.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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