

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

COVID-19 and the Federal Custody Population in 2020

Substantial COVID-19 period declines in the custody population are the result of fewer admissions and safe releases.

Why we are doing this study

Over the course of past five fiscal years, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has seen a noteworthy decline (-992 or 6.7%) in the federal in-custody population from 14,712 at year-end in 2015-16 to **13,720** in 2019-20. On the other hand, there has been a substantial rise (+1,037 or 12.4%) in the conditional release supervision population from 8,345 at year-end in 2015-16 to **9,382** in 2019-20.

During a nine-month period from April 1 to December 31, 2020, marked by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects, there also has been a substantial decline (-1,162 or 8.5%) in the federal in-custody population from April 1, 2020 to **12,558** by the end of December. As well, there has been a small rise (+26) in the conditional release supervision population from 9,382 on March 31 to **9,408** by the end of December 2020.

What we did

Historical federal institutional and community counts are recorded as standardized reports in CSC's Corporate Reporting System-Modernized (CRS-M). Similarly, counts of admissions and releases are also recorded in CRS-M. Data was extracted (August 15, 2020) to establish a five-year trend (2015-16 to 2019-20) and a nine month (April to December 2020) of the flows in and out of federal custody.

What we found

Overall, admissions to federal custody have dropped from **7,448** in 2015-16 to **6,946** in 2019-20; a substantial difference of **-502** (or -6.7%). When unpacking this decline by type of federal admission, it is notable that returns to federal custody through conditional release revocations had dropped substantially from **2,476** in 2015-16 to **2,285** in 2019-20, a difference of **-191** (or -7.7%). From April to December, 2020 there was a substantial drop in monthly admissions including revocations during the pandemic period. 2020-21 year-end projections estimate there will be roughly 5,108 admissions, including 1,965 on a revocation.

Total releases from federal custody also declined from **7,919** in 2015-16 to **7,285** in 2019-20. Looking at releases by type it is noteworthy that there has been a considerable rise in day parole releases from **2,130** in 2015-16 to **2,542**

in 2019-20; a difference of **+412** (or +19.3%). From April to December, 2020 there was an overall drop in monthly releases. Notably, there had been an initial rise in day parole releases peaking in June during the pandemic period. A 2020-21 year-end estimate shows there will be 6,909 releases, including 2,499 on day parole.

Table 1: National Population Flows

Fiscal Years	Total Admissions	Admissions (Revocation)	Total Releases	Releases (Day Parole)
2015-16	7,448	2,476	7,919	2,130
2016-17	7,152	2,146	7,843	2,527
2017-18	7,191	2,131	7,510	2,622
2018-19	7,346	2,255	7,300	2,683
2019-20	6,946	2,285	7,284	2,542
Change	-6.7%	-7.7%	-8.0%	+19.3%
2020				
April	305	160	570	213
May	381	190	600	229
June	374	121	653	272
July	452	138	627	235
August	384	140	557	229
Sept.	498	186	596	220
Oct.	546	218	561	195
Nov.	507	180	493	148
Dec.	386	143	523	134
Estimated 2020-21	5,108	1,965	6,909	2,499
Change	-26.5%	-14.0%	-5.1%	-1.7%

Source: CRS-M; Estimates are calculated by forward moving averages.

What it means

Notwithstanding that before and during the COVID-19 period there had been and continues to be downward trend in the federal custody population, it appears that the significant reductions in federal admissions, ongoing efforts at case preparation for safe release, and effective case management has resulted in a pronounced reduction in the number of inmates during the pandemic period.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975. You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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