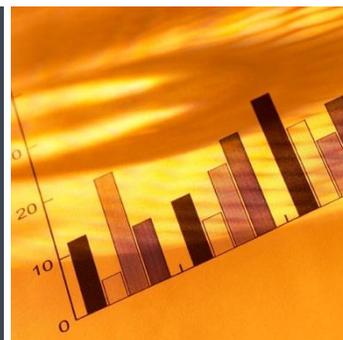


RESEARCH SUMMARY

Economic Outcomes of Canadian Federal Offenders: A Brief Overview



2021–S002

BUILDING A SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA

The economic outcomes of Canadian federal offenders are poor even 14 years after release from federal correctional institutions.

BACKGROUND

In the US, it is estimated that the loss of income due to the underemployment of individuals with criminal records is between 57 to 65 billion annually, an estimate that does not account for the incremental costs of social assistance programs that released offenders may also be utilizing.

In Canada, approximately 1 in 10 adults will have a criminal record. These individuals are at a disadvantage, as they are more likely to be unemployed and, of those who are employed, are more likely to be underemployed (i.e., reporting incomes below the poverty line).

Securing employment after release is fundamental in the successful reintegration of offenders. Research consistently find that employment is associated with lower reoffending rates.

The main purpose of this study was to better understand the economic outcomes of federal offenders across Canada as well as identify important predictors of economic outcomes.

METHOD

The current study consisted of 11,158 federal offenders who had been admitted to Correctional Service of Canada institutions between January 4th, 1999 and December 31st, 2001. Demographic characteristics for the sample were obtained from CSC databases. 52% (5,835) of those offenders filed taxes in 2014.

FINDINGS

Even after an average of 14 years following release from federal correctional institutions, individuals: (1) had a

lower labour participation rate (51% for offenders compared to 69% for the general Canadian population); (2) had a lower income (for offenders, \$0; for the general population, \$33K); and (3) were more likely to receive social assistance payments (41% versus 6% for the general population).

Women offenders were less likely to be employed than men (39% vs. 52%), made about \$5,000 less than men if they were employed, and were more likely to be receiving social assistance than men (54% vs. 40%). Indigenous offenders are also at an additional disadvantage, earning on average just over \$10,000 while non-Indigenous offenders earn on average just under \$15,000.

Being male and non-Indigenous, scoring lower on risk tools designed to predict reoffending, and having a history of sexual offence(s) were all related to higher odds of participation in the labour force, higher employment income, and lower likelihood of receiving social assistance, even after controlling for other variables in the model.

IMPLICATIONS

Canadians with a criminal record are at a disadvantage when seeking post-release financial stability, even 14 years after release from federal institutions. Women and Indigenous individuals with criminal records fare worse than men and non-Indigenous. Employment is associated with lower rates of reoffending. As such, improving the chances of economic stability for offenders after release is key for public safety.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Identify offenders that could benefit from additional support and training to secure employment prior to being released from correctional institutions.
2. Increase employment services for individuals with criminal records in the community.
3. Strengthen employment discrimination laws across Canada to include criminal history when employment does not include vulnerable populations.
4. Reduce wait time for fingerprint verification required when criminal record checks are positive.
5. Facilitate access to record suspensions.
6. Consider the feasibility of banning extraneous criminal record check for employment that do not include vulnerable populations.

Research Summaries are produced for the Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Public Safety Canada. The summary herein reflects interpretations of the report authors' findings and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Public Safety Canada.

SOURCE

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