

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Pandemic Era Impacts on the Federal Custody Population Profile: Black Men

There were substantial pandemic era shifts among Black men in the federal custody population.

Why we are doing this study

Over the course of two fiscal years, marked by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) experienced a substantial decline (-168 or 14.5 %) in the federal Black men in-custody population from 1,169 at mid-year in 2019-20 to 1,001 at year-end in 2021-22. It is noteworthy that the majority (75%) of decline in men was in the first year of the pandemic, sustained and dropped further in year two.

What we did

Federal institutional population counts and individualized case characteristics are recorded as standardized reports in CSC's Offender Management System (OMS). Data were extracted (April 14, 2022) to establish a three-year trend (Mid-year 2019-20 to Year-end 2021-22) of the in-custody counts for federally sentenced (two years or more) Black men and for selected characteristics: age, sentence length, major offence, criminal risk (index), and dynamic factors (rating at intake).

What we found

Consequently, due to the decline, the Black men federal custody population profile has shifted (see Table 1) to be:

- 1) slightly older;
- 2) the proportion of Black men who are serving indeterminate sentences has increased from 29.1% to 35.0% and this has been accompanied by a decline in those serving sentences of less than 4 years from 25.6% to 20.9%;
- 3) serving a sentence for Murder (I or II) has increased from 24.6% to 29.1%;
- 4) there has been minimal upward shift in criminal risk with only a slight shift between low and medium risk; and
- 5) the proportion of Black men who are rated high on dynamic need has grown from 72.6% to 80.2%.

Table 1. Federal Custody Population: Black Men

Characteristic	2019-20 N=1,169 % (n)	2020-21 N=1,043 % (n)	2021-22 N=1,001 % (n)
Age			
< 35	55.9 (653)	54.7 (571)	52.7 (528)
35 to 64	43.0 (503)	43.7 (455)	45.5 (455)
65+	1.1 (13)	1.6 (17)	1.8 (18)
Sentence Length			
< 4 years	25.6 (299)	22.5 (235)	20.9 (209)
4 years+	45.3 (530)	43.8 (456)	44.1 (442)
Indeterminate	29.1 (340)	33.7 (352)	35.0 (350)
Major Offence			
Murder (I or II)	24.6 (287)	28.3 (295)	29.1 (291)
Violent (Schedule I)	52.1 (609)	51.7 (540)	50.9 (510)
Drug (Schedule II)	15.7 (183)	14.3 (149)	13.2 (132)
Non-Violent (Others)	7.7 (90)	5.7 (59)	6.8 (68)
Criminal Risk Index			
Very Good (1-7)	23.3 (255)	20.6 (212)	20.9 (199)
Good (8-13)	24.9 (273)	26.1 (268)	25.3 (240)
Fair (14-17)	18.1 (198)	18.7 (192)	17.9 (170)
Poor (18-21)	14.2 (156)	15.1 (155)	15.9 (151)
Very Poor (22+)	19.5 (214)	19.5 (200)	20.0 (190)
Dynamic Factors Rating			
Low	3.5 (39)	1.3 (13)	1.3 (12)
Moderate	23.9 (268)	21.0 (207)	18.5 (177)
High	72.6 (814)	77.7 (767)	80.2 (766)

What it means

In summary, there has been a sustained shift in the number and custody profile of Black men over the pandemic era into a longer serving population coupled with increased potential for violent behaviour. This will have long-term impacts on correctional programming and likely disproportionately influence medium and maximum-security institutions into the near future.

For more information

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