

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Pandemic Era Impacts on Federal Releases

Pandemic era declines in releases from federal custody were observed except for Indigenous men who increased slightly.

Why we are doing this study

Over the course of five fiscal years, marked by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21 and 2021-22, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) experienced decline during 2020-21 (-521 or 7.2%) in federal releases from 7,246 in 2019-20 down to 6,726 in 2020-21. However, in year two there was a further decrease (-111 or 1.7 %) of federal releases to 6,615 in 2021-22. Similarly, the number of Indigenous releases declined in year one 2020-21 (-84 or 3.8%) from 2,230 in 2019-20 to 2,146 in 2020-21. On the other hand, in year two there was an increase in Indigenous releases (+128 or 6.0%) in 2021-22.

What we did

Historical federal releases counts are recorded as standardized reports in CSC's Corporate Reporting System-Modernized (CRS-M). Data were extracted (May 6, 2022) to establish a five-year trend (2017-18 to 2021-22) of the releases from custody for federally sentenced (two years or more) men, women and whether they were Indigenous.

What we found

Overall, official counts of the federal release population dropped during the two years of the pandemic era. Men release declined by 545 inmates or 8% from 6,699 in 2019-20 to 6,124 in 2021-22. Federal women releases declined by 56 inmates or 10% from 547 in 2019-20 to 491 in 2021-22.

As reflected in Table 1, when unpacking the custodial release by Indigenous and gender representation, it is notable that Indigenous men release increased slightly by 48 inmates or 2.4% from 1,999 in 2019-20 to 2,047 in 2021-22. In 2021-22, Indigenous men represented 33.4% of men released from federal custody up from 28.1% in 2017-18.

Indigenous women releases had declined very slightly by four inmates or 2% from 231 in 2019-20 to 227 in 2021-22. In 2021-22 Indigenous women represented 46.2% of women released from federal custody up from 37.4% in 2017-18.

Table 1: Federal Releases

	All	Indigenous	All Men	Indigenous Men	All Women	Indigenous Women
17-18	7,454	2,150	6,885	1,937	569	213
18-19	7,267	2,096	6,713	1,876	554	220
19-20	7,246	2,230	6,699	1,999	547	231
20-21	6,726	2,146	6,247	1,954	479	201
21-22	6,615	2,274	6,124	2,047	491	227

Source: CRS-M

Notes: All releases include day parole, full parole, statutory release, and sentence expired.

What it means

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, it is clear that there had been an overall downward trend in federal releases with a more pronounced trend break in year one of the pandemic (2020-21). However, the decline was less experienced among Indigenous releases, particularly men who had actually increased in year two.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#).

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