

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Pandemic Era Impacts on the Federal Custody Population Profile: Men

There were substantial pandemic era shifts among men in the federal custody residual 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 (-1,521 or 11.5 %) in the federal men in-custody population from 13,261 at mid-year in 2019-20 to 11,740 at year-end in 2021-22. It is noteworthy that the majority (98%) 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) men and for selected characteristics: age, diversity, sentence length, major offence, criminal risk (index), dynamic factors (rating at intake).

What we found

As a result of the decline, the residual men in custody population (see Table 1) has become the following;

- 1) slightly older;
- 2) more diverse with White men moving below 50%, Black men staying stable, and the percentage of those who are Indigenous increasing;
- 3) sentence length continues to increase with those serving under 4 years declining in proportion while longer sentences and indeterminate sentences increase;
- 4) more serving sentences for murder or Schedule I offences than before the pandemic (75.7% vs 79.7%);
- 5) slight upward shift in criminal risk (less than 1%) towards those with a poor (high risk) rating rather than a medium risk rating while those with low risk have remained stable in proportion; and
- 6) an increase in offenders with higher criminogenic needs is very pronounced growing to over 81% of the current in-custody population.

Table 1. Federal Custody Population: Men

Characteristic	2019-20 N=13,261 % (n)	2020-21 N=11,778 % (n)	2021-22 N=11,740 % (n)
Age			
< 35	40.3 (5,350)	38.6 (4,544)	37.5 (4,403)
35 to 64	54.5 (7,230)	55.8 (6,574)	56.3 (6,615)
65+	5.1 (681)	5.6 (660)	6.1 (722)
Diversity			
White	50.4 (6,688)	47.3 (5,575)	47.2 (5,542)
Indigenous	29.2 (3,866)	31.0 (3,646)	31.8 (3,737)
Black	8.8 (1,169)	8.9 (1,043)	8.5 (1,001)
Other	11.6 (1,538)	12.8 (1,514)	12.5 (1,460)
Sentence Length			
< 4 years	35.7 (4,728)	32.0 (3,764)	31.2 (3,659)
4 years+	37.6 (4,980)	38.9 (4,582)	39.4 (4,629)
Indeterminate	26.8 (3,553)	29.1 (3,432)	29.4 (3,452)
Major Offence			
Murder (I or II)	21.6 (2,859)	23.3 (2,741)	23.4 (2,753)
Violent (Schedule I)	54.1 (7,178)	55.6 (6,546)	56.3 (6,613)
Drug (Schedule II)	13.2 (1,757)	12.0 (1,417)	11.5 (1,345)
Non-Violent (Others)	11.1 (1,467)	9.1 (1,074)	8.8 (1,029)
Criminal Risk			
Very Good (1-7)	22.0 (2,601)	21.4 (2,394)	21.9 (2,312)
Good (8-13)	21.5 (2,542)	21.3 (2,376)	21.4 (2,255)
Fair (14-17)	18.0 (2,128)	17.5 (1,963)	17.6 (1,852)
Poor (18-21)	14.4 (1,704)	14.5 (1,611)	14.0 (1,480)
Very Poor (22+)	24.2 (2,865)	25.3 (2,818)	25.1 (2,641)
Dynamic Factors			
Low	2.2 (274)	1.5 (164)	1.7 (183)
Moderate	20.5 (2,585)	17.7 (1,960)	17.0 (1,866)
High	77.3 (9,737)	80.8 (8,936)	81.3 (8,945)

What it means

It is clear there has been a sustained shift in the custody profile of men over the pandemic era into a longer serving population with increased potential for violent behaviour. This will have long-term impacts on program delivery and will likely disproportionately influence medium and maximum-security institutions into the near future.

For more information

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