

# The Relationship between the Timing of Completion of Correctional Programs and Recidivism Outcomes

*The optimal timing of program completion appears to be just prior to day parole eligibility.*

## Why we did this study

In response to a recommendation included in the recent evaluation report on the Correctional Service of Canada’s reintegration programs, the current study examines the relationship between timely access to programs and recidivism outcomes to inform the optimal timing of program delivery throughout an offender’s sentence.

## What we did

This study included a cohort of offenders with determinate sentences released on their first federal term between April 1, 2010 and March 31, 2020 who completed a main Integrated Correctional Program Model (ICPM) program or Women Offender Correctional Program (WOCP). Offenders were excluded from the final sample if they had a program non-completion on file, as this would affect the timing of their first main program completion. The final sample consisted of 7,367 men and 1,266 women.

## What we found

The findings showed that, for most programs, later completion was associated with decreased revocation rates (see Table 1), with reductions in recidivism plateauing after offenders’ day parole eligibility date.

## What it means

The current findings represent an important contribution to our understanding of how to optimize the efficiency of correctional programs. Offenders who complete correctional programs closer to release likely benefit from the recency of the experience and are better able to apply the skills learned in program to challenging situations faced in the community. Optimal program completion appears to be just prior to day parole eligibility as this balances the need to prepare offenders for their earliest possible release and positive revocation outcomes. Continued efforts to optimize program delivery in advance of earliest possible release would be beneficial.

## For more information

Wardrop, K., & Sheahan, C. (2022). *The relationship between the timing of completion of correctional interventions and recidivism outcomes* (Research Report R-439). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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Table 1. *The association between timing of first main program completion and recidivism outcomes*

	For every 1% increase in the proportion of the sentence passed at the time of program completion:	
	Change in hazard of any revocation	Change in hazard of any new offence
Men’s moderate intensity programs		
ICPM-MT program	▼1%	▼6%
Indigenous-ICPM-MT and Inuit Integrated (non-sex offender) programs	≅	▼3%
Hybrid programs	≅	▼4%
Sex offender programs	▼1%	▼6%
Men’s high intensity programs	▼1%	▼5%
Women’s moderate intensity programs		
WOCP	▼1%	▼6%
Indigenous-WOCP	≅	▼3%

Note. ▲ indicates that the likelihood of a recidivism outcome decreased as proportion of sentence at program completion increased. ≅ denotes no statistically significant change in the likelihood of recidivism outcomes depending on the timing of program completion.