

Pandemic Era Impacts on Federal Custody Turnover Rates

Men, women and Indigenous in federal custody are turning over at increasingly higher rates.

Why we are doing this study

Along with recent declines in the federal custody population, it appeared that relatively high turnover rates were maintained throughout the first year of COVID-19 pandemic period.¹ Custodial turnover rates are reflective of the results of focused efforts being made by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to prepare, safely release and deliver successful reintegration outcomes. The correctional expectation is that by delivering evidence-based interventions and services to diverse groups while in custody will lead to improved public safety.

What we did

Three fiscal years (2019-20 to 2021-22) of release and count data reflected in CSC’s Corporate Reporting System-Modernized were disaggregated for men and women federal inmates and within groups, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous. Although there are various other methods to calculate a turnover rate, the approach used in human resources was chosen. The federal custody turnover rate refers to the percentage of all those released (*Releases*) during a period over the average number of inmates (*Average*) calculated by dividing by two the number of inmates at the beginning and the end of the fiscal year. Consequently, the turnover percentage is $[(R) / (A) \times 100]$.

What we found

In Table 1, statistics show for men that while there has been a decline in the custody population during the two years of COVID-19 pandemic period, the overall turnover rate has increased (50.0% in 2019-20 and 52.0% in 2021-22). However, it is also noteworthy that recently Indigenous men have seen an increasing and higher turnover rate than Non-Indigenous, 55.5% and 50.4% respectively.

Table 1: Federal Releases / Average Custody - Men

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Overall
2019-20	1,990 / 3,866 (51.5%)	4,709 / 9,374 (50.2%)	6,699 / 13,235 (50.0%)
2020-21	1,931 / 3,751 (51.5%)	4,318 / 8,655 (49.9%)	6,249 / 12,405 (50.4%)
2021-22	2,048 / 3,692 (55.5%)	4,070 / 8,068 (50.4%)	6,118 / 11,759 (52.0%)

Table 2 statistics show that for women while substantially higher turnover rates than men, for women there has been a return to pre-pandemic rates over the past three years from 78.9% to 81.4%. It is also observed that Indigenous and Non-Indigenous women had equivalent population turnover rates over the pandemic era.

Table 2: Federal Releases / Average Custody - Women

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Overall
2019-20	230 / 285 (80.7%)	317 / 408 (77.7%)	547 / 693 (78.9%)
2020-21	201 / 273 (73.6%)	278 / 379 (73.4%)	479 / 652 (73.5%)
2021-22	227 / 279 (81.4%)	264 / 324 (81.4%)	491 / 603 (81.4%)

What it means

Albeit there have been recent declines in the federal custody population during the pandemic, it appears that relatively high turnover rates have been maintained throughout the two years of the period. Noteworthy is the higher federal custody turnover rate observed for women relative to men. While it now appears that Indigenous men are turning over more quickly than Non-Indigenous, it may be indicating a compositional change of men inmates. This later finding calls for further exploration.

For more information

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