

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Double-bunking in Canadian Federal Corrections 2018-19 to 2022-23

While the double bunking rate was reduced during the pandemic era, it appears to be returning to pre-pandemic levels.

Why we are doing this study

Projections that the Canadian federal correctional system would be facing a long-term overcrowding crisis and be forced into housing offenders in shared cells (“double-bunking”) had been substantially reversed in an earlier study¹. It appears that this was achieved by sustained and focused efforts directed at improving correctional results (earlier releases and fewer returns) combined with expanded accommodation. Double bunk data was previously drawn for 2012-13 to 2017-18. The following provides an update on the previous with a 5-year trend spanning the pre- and post-pandemic era to 2022-23.

What we did

Shared accommodation (“double-bunking”) rates reflected in the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) were extracted from the automated Corporate Reporting System-Modernized (CRS-M) Capacity module for Double Bunking Rates. Comparative data on double bunked offenders were drawn for five separate fiscal year-ends (2018-19 to 2022-23) for federal in-custody offenders.

What we found

As previously reported, at fiscal year-end of 2012-13, there were more offenders in federal custody than the number of available single cells (15,225 actual count/14,807 rated capacity). This had resulted in capacity shortfalls at some institutions necessitating double-bunking at a national rate of 20.8%. Over the past ten years, however, there has been a significant reduction in the number of double-bunked offenders from 3,050 (or 20.8%) at year-end in 2012-13 to 820 (or 6.5%) in 2022-23; a decline of -2,230 (or -73%) double bunked offenders.

Double-bunked Offenders: 2018-19 to 2022-23

Fiscal Year-end	Double Bunked #	Double Bunk Rates %
2018-19	902	6.6
2019-20	984	7.4
2020-21	566	4.7
2021-22	610	5.1
2022-23	820	6.5

As reflected below in the double-bunking rates table, nationally and all five administrative regions of CSC have observed a post-pandemic return in the number and percentage of offenders being held in a cell designed for one. Also noteworthy, in 2022-23 nearly half of those double-bunked were also held in reception which is temporary.

Regional Distribution of Double-bunked Offenders

Region	Double-bunked Offenders #			Double-Bunk Rates %		
	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23	2018-19	2020-21	2022-23
Atlantic	4	0	2	0.3	0.0	0.3
Quebec	230	122	222	8.2	5.2	8.3
Ontario	376	114	288	10.1	3.5	8.1
Prairies	268	330	308	6.9	9.0	8.5
Pacific	24	0	0	1.1	0.0	0.0
National	902	566	820	6.6	4.7	6.5

¹ Double-bunking in Canadian Federal Corrections: RIB 18-12

What it means

Population management strategies in CSC involves primarily the use of single occupancy and when necessary safe double bunking, the practice of holding two offenders in a cell designed for one as a temporary accommodation measure. Over the past decade the practice of double bunking has been substantially reduced, however, appears to have rebounded back to pre-pandemic levels, a trend that will likely continue into the near future.

For more information

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