

A Profile of Federal Community Corrections

In terms of the sheer numbers of offenders under community supervision, community corrections represents a major component of the mandate of the Correctional Service of Canada. At any one time, approximately 43% of all offenders under federal jurisdiction are in the community on some form of conditional release. Numbering close to 9,000, these offenders remain under the supervision of community case management officers until their sentences have expired.

There are other factors that point to the importance of community corrections. The primary goal of reintegrating offenders into the community, which is expressed in the Correctional Service of Canada Mission, has drawn increasing attention to the significant role our community programs must play. The corporate objectives for 1990-1993 highlight the strengthening of community corrections as one of three main areas of "strategic opportunity." The success of this more determined community focus will hinge on our ability to channel our energies and creativity toward enhancing the use of community supervision as a major correctional intervention.

This article provides some basic information on the scope and nature of our community operations - a picture of the foundation on which we need to build. In future volumes of the magazine, we will examine conditional release and supervision issues in more detail, through statistics and profiles of recent research.

Our community operations include several functions. One activity is to monitor the behaviour of released offenders in order to protect the safety of our main client group - the public. Hence, offenders are required to report regularly to community case management officers, who are vigilant of signals of an offender's potential reinvolvement in criminal behaviour. A second function is to assist offenders in their attempts to adjust to community life and become productive members of society. Finally, a large number of community case management officers or parole officers are involved in case preparation activities: they gather information required by the National Parole Board in assessing the suitability of individual offenders for early conditional release.

There are 454 community case management officers employed in the five regions of the Correctional Service of Canada. An additional 113 are supervisors of case management officers. Ten percent of community case management officers work in Community Correctional Centres (CCCs). The work of 56 community case management officers is devoted to case preparation on a full-time basis. An additional 186 combine the activities of case supervision and case preparation.

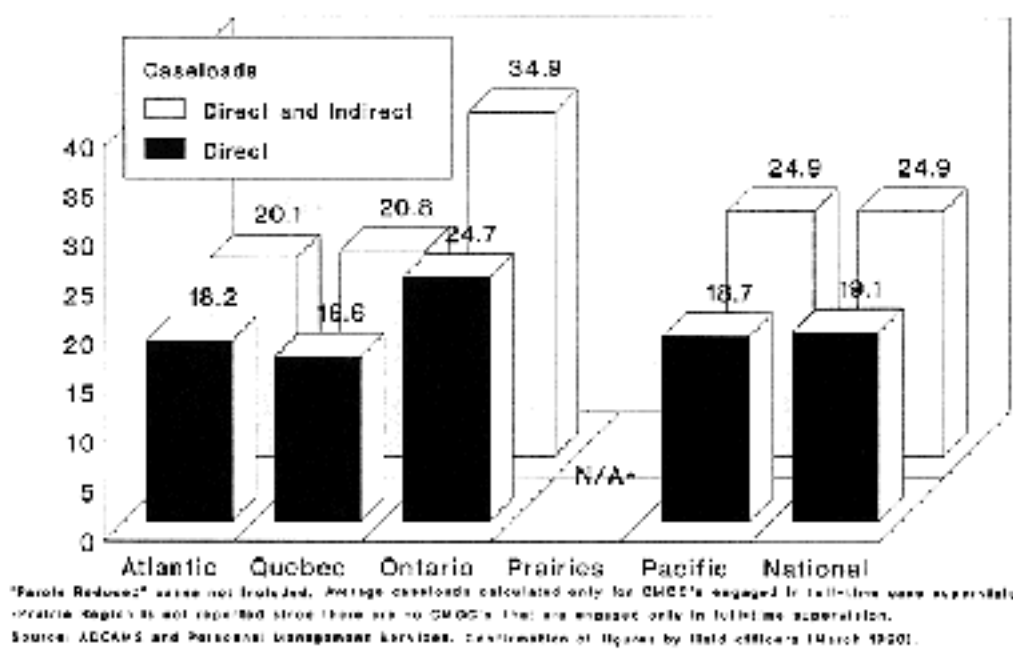
The majority of community case management officers are aged 35 years or older and 38% of these officers are women. However, female officers tend to be younger than their male counterparts - about 50% of female officers are under the age of 35. On average, case management supervisors tend to be somewhat older than those they supervise, and fewer are women (18%). **(See Profile of Community Case Management Officers in Research in Brief.)**

There are 74 parole offices with full-time staff in the five Correctional Service of Canada regions. While caseload sizes vary by office and region (see **Figure 1**), the average national supervision caseload on

March 30, 1990, was 25 offenders per parole officer.⁽¹⁾ This figure includes cases involving both direct and indirect supervision. When only direct supervision cases are singled out, the average caseload for case management officers doing full-time case supervision is 19 offenders. Indirect cases, which account for about 23% of caseloads, are supervised mostly by external agencies on contract with the Correctional Service of Canada. Parole officers monitor the supervision progress of these offenders through contacts with the external agencies responsible for the cases. The Correctional Service of Canada will spend a maximum of \$6.5 million on supervision contracts with external agencies in the 1990-1991 fiscal year.

Figure 1

Figure 1
Average Community Case Management
Officer Caseloads



Regardless of the direct or indirect status of cases, average caseloads in the Correctional Service of Canada are low in comparison to the caseloads reported in other countries. In Japan, for example, the average caseload is approximately 200 cases per probation or parole officer. Although Japanese officers are aided by volunteers, the administrative work required of them still makes caseloads in Japan seem very high by our standards (see International Overview: Parole in Japan) In the United States, caseloads of less than 100 are rare. In fact, in California and Florida, caseloads of 400, or even 500, parolees or probationers are not unusual.

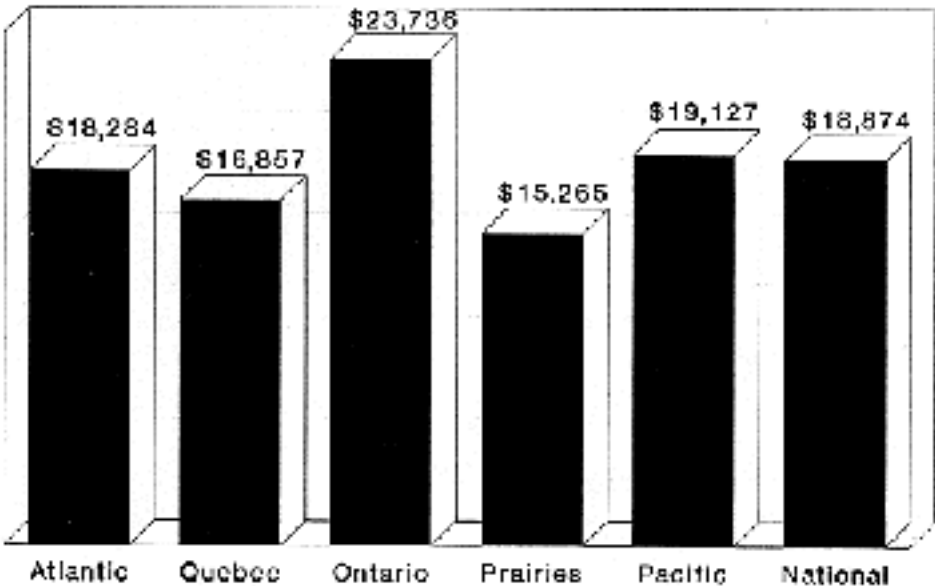
Low caseloads constitute a major strength of the community correctional operations of the Correctional Service of Canada. Unlike jurisdictions with high caseloads, we are able to extend a quality of service that goes beyond the traditional imperative of effective surveillance of offenders. Our average caseloads allow us to offer not only quality supervision, but also the quality "contact time" between parole officers and offenders that is essential to the rehabilitative function of community corrections.

Community residential facilities also form an important component of the community corrections operations of the Correctional Service of Canada. For the most part, these beds are utilized by promising candidates for early release on Day Parole. Thirteen Community Correctional Centres are maintained by the Service and provide beds for 370 offenders. However, from time to time, offenders released on Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision also make use of the facilities if it is believed that they will benefit from a halfway house setting.

Additional residential facilities are contracted by the Correctional Service of Canada through a number of non-governmental agencies. For example, this fiscal year, contracts with 162 residential facilities will make available a total of 1,360 beds to conditionally released offenders. In previous years, the average utilization rate of these beds was about 76%. A maximum of approximately \$29 million will be devoted to providing community residential services through contracts with halfway houses during the current fiscal year (see **Figure 2 for a regional comparison of costs per offender for halfway houses**).

Figure 2

Figure 2
Actual Cost per CRC Bed Utilized
1988 - 1989



Source: Automated Data Collections Analysis Modelling System and Public Accounts. Excludes Springboard and Exedes Link (Ontario Region).

The supervision of offenders through our parole offices and community residential facilities provides opportunities for parole officers to assist offenders in the process of adjusting to the community and support their efforts to maintain crime-free lifestyles. The community case management officer provides counselling and referral services, and generally performs the role of advocate-broker in helping offenders gain access to community resources. However, there are also a number of programs funded by the Correctional Service of Canada that are designed to meet particular needs of conditionally released offenders. These include employment and skill training programs, liaison programs for native offenders,

specialized psychological services for sex offenders, alcohol and drug abuse programming, and a wide variety of programs aimed at helping offenders acquire life skills (see **Special Inserts**). The majority of these programs are made available through contracts with community agencies that have expertise in addressing the specific needs and problems faced by offenders in the community.

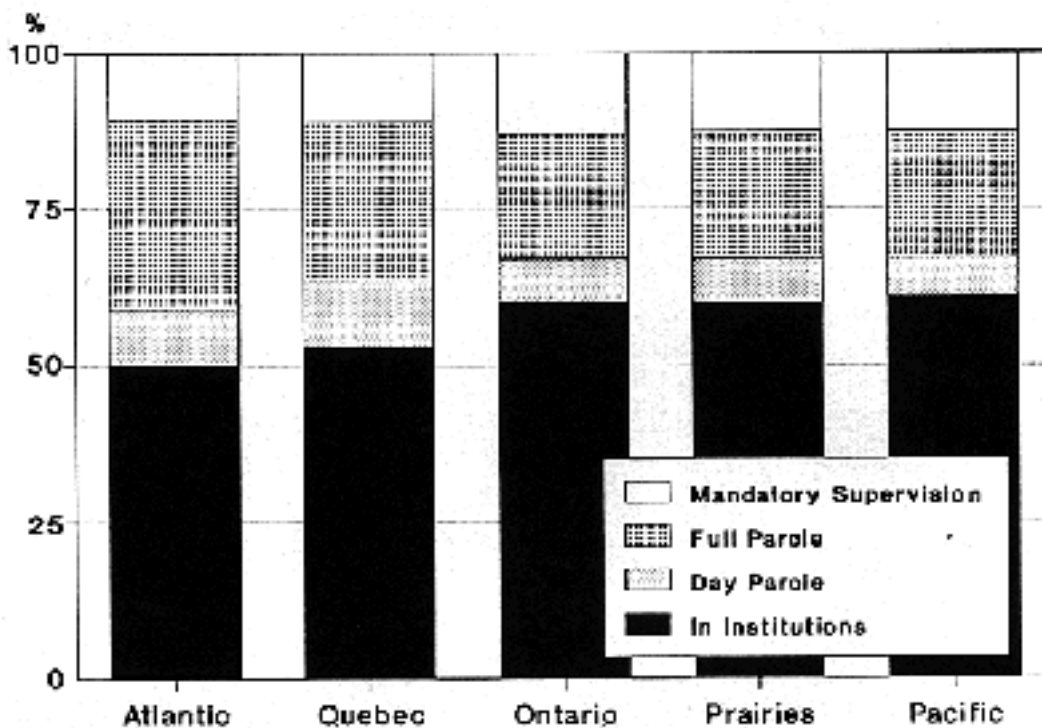
A "Snapshot" of Offenders in the Community

The offenders released into the community under our conditional release programs are a varied group. A "snapshot" of these offenders on a typical day in the winter of 1990 showed a total of 8,901 offenders. About 6.5% of this total were offenders under provincial jurisdiction who were being supervised on contract by the Correctional Service of Canada.

In terms of release type, 19% (1,709) of the total number of offenders were on Day Parole, 53% (4,711) were on Full Parole, and 28% (2,481) were on Mandatory Supervision. Figure 3 shows that a larger proportion of offenders were on Full Parole in the Atlantic and Quebec regions. Generally, these regions had a smaller proportion of offenders in institutions than did the other regions.

Figure 3

**Figure 3
Offenders Under Federal Supervision**

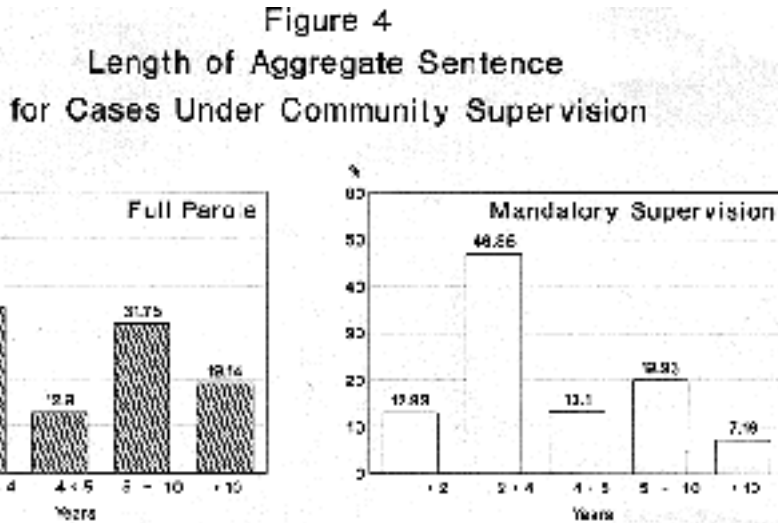


Based on the total number of offenders in institutions and the community on 23 February 1990.

If cases under provincial jurisdiction and those on Day Parole programs are excluded, the majority (60%) of Mandatory Supervision and Parole cases were serving aggregate sentences of less than five years before their release. This includes a small proportion, about 6% who were serving less than two years

before their current release.⁽²⁾ Only 14% of the offenders were serving sentences of longer than 10 years. As Figure 4 shows, there were differences in the lengths of aggregate sentences for the two release types. Most notably, Full Parole cases were serving longer sentences before release. Half of the Full Parole cases were serving sentences of five years or more, whereas only 27% of the Mandatory Supervision group fell into this category.

Figure 4



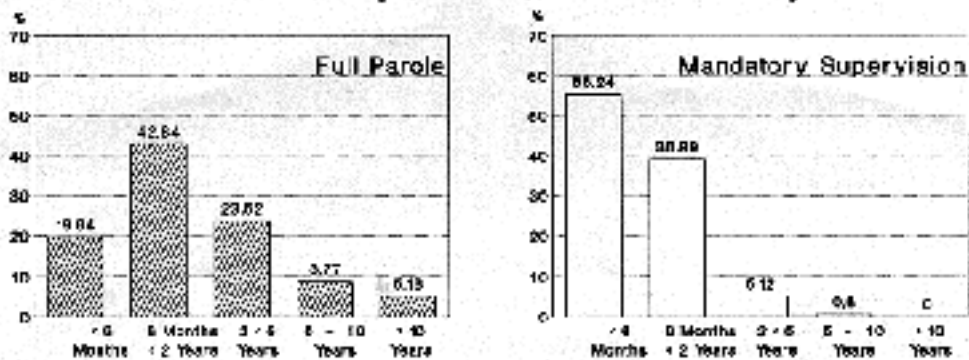
In terms of the progression of their sentences, roughly one third of the Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision offenders who were included in our snapshot had spent less than six months in the community following release. The largest proportion of offenders had been in the community for between six months and two years. Only about 3% had been in the community for more than 10 years and were still under federal supervision. Of course, this figure includes many offenders who had been serving life sentences. If offenders on Day Parole are included in the conditional release population, there were 938 offenders - 11% of all offenders in the community - who had received indeterminate sentences.

Our snapshot revealed interesting differences in the progression of the sentences of the Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision groups. Figure 5 profiles the time served and time left to serve for the two groups. We see that most of the Mandatory Supervision cases had been released less than six months before our snapshot. However, the majority of the Full Parole cases had been in the community for six months or more. Similar patterns were observed in a comparison of the times left to serve before sentence expiry for the cases with fixed sentence lengths (excluding offenders with indeterminate sentences). Close to 60% of Mandatory Supervision cases had less than six months to serve before their sentences expired, whereas nearly 80% of the Full Parole cases had six months or more left to serve. In fact, about 30% had three years or more remaining on their sentences.

Figure 5

Figure 5

Time Already Served in the Community



Time Left to Serve in the Community



There were other differences between the Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision cases. For example, the Mandatory Supervision group was younger than the Full Parole group. The average age of offenders on Mandatory Supervision was 32, compared to 38 for the Full Parole group. About half of the offenders who were released on Mandatory Supervision had been serving sentences for offences scheduled under Bill C-67. Only 38% of the Full Parole cases, however, were scheduled offenders.

As a group, therefore, offenders on Mandatory Supervision tend to have more violent criminal histories. Not surprisingly, offenders who were granted Full Parole were more likely than Mandatory Supervision cases to have been serving their first federal sentence when they were released. Seventy-six percent of Full Parole cases, compared to only 51% of Mandatory Supervision cases, had served no previous time in federal institutions.

Readmissions of Released Offenders

Readmission of offenders to federal institutions is only one indicator of recidivism. However, it is an important measure of the offender's successful post-release adjustment to the community. A study recently completed by the Research Branch sheds some light on readmission trends for offenders released on Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision. The research focused on questions concerning the number of offenders who return to federal institutions, the differences in readmission patterns of offenders on Full Parole and Mandatory Supervision, and changes in the rates of readmission over time.

The study examined readmissions among 26,520 offenders released between 1974 and 1980. Each of the offenders in the massive sample was followed up for a period of six years. During this period, 8,751

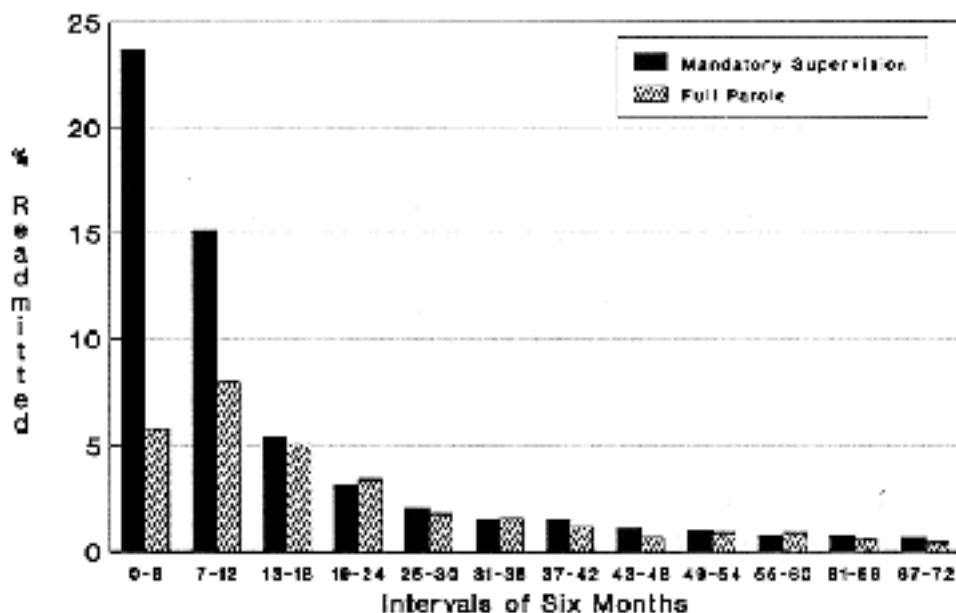
offenders were released on Full Parole and 17,769 on Mandatory Supervision.⁽³⁾

A total of 48%, or 12,767, of the released offenders were readmitted within six years after release. As expected, readmission rates for Mandatory Supervision cases were notably higher than for Full Parole cases. While 30% of the Full Parole group were readmitted within six years, 58% of the Mandatory Supervision group were readmitted. The majority (63%) of offenders who returned to federal institutions during the six-year follow-up period did so within 12 months of their release. Eighty-one percent of all offenders who went back to federal institutions were readmitted within two years of release. After the two-year follow-up point, the number of offenders returning to federal institutions dropped to 2% and gradually tapered off each subsequent year. At the six-year follow-up point, fewer than 1% of offenders were readmitted.

The trends in readmission rates for the six-year follow-up period are displayed in Figure 6. Separate readmission rates for Mandatory Supervision and Full Parole cases are given for each six-month interval of the six-year follow-up study.⁽⁴⁾ The figure clearly shows that readmissions for both types of offenders are most concentrated in the first year of follow-up, but that Mandatory Supervision cases recidivate sooner than Full Parole cases.

Figure 6

Figure 6
Readmission Rates Over a Six-Year Period
for Cases Released on Mandatory Supervision and Full Parole



The critical readmission period for Mandatory Supervision cases occurs in the six months following release. For Full Parole cases, there appears to be a delay in the critical period: offenders who recidivate remain in the community longer before they are readmitted. While some Full Parole cases are readmitted in the first six months, the second six-month period is more critical. The figure also shows that initial discrepancies in the readmission rates of the two groups disappear after the first year of follow-up.

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- (1) *Average caseloads do not include "parole reduced" cases (e.g., full parolees with life sentences who are required to report on an infrequent basis only). "Parole reduced" cases account for about 5% of the total number of offenders under federal jurisdiction in the community.*
- (2) *This group consisted of currently released offenders who had been released previously, had been subsequently readmitted on a revocation, and had less than two years left to serve on their original sentences when they were readmitted.*
- (3) *Released offenders who had been serving life sentences or other indeterminate sentences were not included in the study.*
- (4) *For each six-month interval the proportion readmitted is calculated on the basis of the total number of offenders who remained in the community up to that point. Offenders readmitted in a given six-month interval are excluded from the calculations for subsequent periods.*