

Accelerated parole review: Were the objectives met? (R-68, 1998)

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As part of the five year review of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA), a study was conducted to determine if the Accelerated Parole Review (APR) provisions of the Act were effective in selecting low risk non-violent offenders for release on parole and to determine the impact of the change on the National Parole Board (NPB) and the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC).

The study used information for all offenders released from January 1, 1990 to March 31, 1996. Offenders were divided first into pre- and post-CCRA groups based on the date of their parole hearing, and then they were divided into four groups based on their eligibility and ineligibility for APR.

- *APR eligible*
- *APR ineligible-offence*; first time federal admission but non-eligible offence
- *APR ineligible-admission*; multiple federal admissions but APR eligible offence
- *APR ineligible-both*; multiple federal admissions and non-eligible offence.

The study was designed to provide answers to seven questions related to APR:

1. *Are APR cases properly identified and referred as per the CCRA?*
2. *Are those who are eligible for APR being released at their parole eligibility date?*
3. *Has APR reduced the length of incarceration for non-violent first time federal offenders?*
4. *At what rate do those released following accelerated parole review recidivate as compared with other offenders?*
5. *Are the more focused criteria for APR (parole directed if there is no evidence for violent offending) resulting in the release of offenders who may have a high risk of reoffending, but a low risk of reoffending violently?*
6. *Has APR resulted in a decrease in the use of institutional program resources by low risk non-violent offenders?*
7. *Has APR changed the workload of CSC and the Board in reviewing low risk cases?*

The study also investigated the criteria used to select offenders for APR. Selecting offenders on the basis of first federal sentence appears to result in the selection of offenders less likely to have committed previous violent offences and less likely to commit new offences after release. In addition, the criteria of a non-violent admitting offence also resulted in the selection of offenders less likely to be readmitted, and to commit a new violent offence.

Comparisons between offenders directed for parole release and not directed for parole release indicate offenders not directed for parole release were more likely to be readmitted, to commit a new offence and to commit a new violent offence after their release than offenders directed for parole release. These results indicate that the NPB is making appropriate decisions in not directing parole release. ■