



Research in Brief

Temporary Absences Reduce Returns to Custody for Aboriginal Offenders

KEY WORDS: *temporary absences, Aboriginal offenders, community reintegration, dosage effects, returns to custody.*

What it means

Among Aboriginal offenders, participating in temporary absences (TAs) contributes positively to community reintegration. Those who participated in at least one TA were less likely to return to custody for a new offence. Furthermore, the more TAs the offender participated in, the lower their chances of returning to custody without a new offence.

What we found

Roughly one third of Aboriginal offenders received a TA during their sentence (34%). Controlling for risk-relevant differences, participating in a TA significantly reduced the odds of returning to custody for a new offence within two years of release by 18%. For returns without an offence, the odds were reduced by 12%, but this was not statistically significant. However, the *number* of TAs the offender participated in was significantly related to returns without a new offence; the more TAs the offender received, the lower their odds of returning to custody. For returns to custody with a new offence, the dosage effect was non-significant.

Why we did this study

TAs allow offenders to leave the institution for short periods of time, allowing gradual and conditional access to the community. It is important to determine if TAs meaningfully contribute to reintegration efforts.

What we did

We examined the impact of participating in TAs (excluding medical and administrative TAs) on returns to custody for 4,150 Aboriginal offenders released to the community between April 1, 2005 and March, 31 2011. Using variables that predicted TA participation among Aboriginal offenders, a propensity score was calculated to create one value summarizing differences in who received a TA and who did not (Table 1).

Outcomes included returns to custody with and without a new offence. For returns without a new offence, analyses were restricted to one year after the offender's first release from their sentence, and only for those who had community supervision for

that follow-up period (restricting the sample size to 2,488 offenders). Returns with a new offence used a two-year follow-up for the entire sample and included revocations with a new offence, as well as new convictions resulting in a new federal sentence.

Analyses of the effectiveness of TA participation used logistic regression and controlled for the propensity score. Analyses of dosage effects examining the impact of the number of temporary absences the offender participated in, after controlling for the dichotomous effect of any TA participation, and propensity scores.

Table 1: Variables used to create propensity score

-Age at admission	-Gender	-Past federal sentence
-Current sex offence	-Static Factors rating	-Dynamic Factors risk assessment
-Reintegration Potential Rating	-Motivation rating	-Previous youth offences
-Previous failure on community supervision	-Previous segregation for disciplinary infractions	-Previous reclassification to higher levels of security
-Previous failures on conditional release	-Less than six months since last incarceration	-No crime free period of one year or more
-Employment needs rating	-Prior sex offence	-Three or more prior victims
-Substance abuse needs rating	-Family/marital needs rating	-Associates needs rating
-Attitude needs rating	-Community functioning needs rating	-Personal/emotional needs rating
-Number of prior federal sentences	-Criminal History subscale score on the Static Factors Assessment	-Sentence length ¹
-Security risk score on the Custody Rating Scale	-Institutional adjustment score on the Custody Rating Scale	-Offence Severity subscale score on the Static Factors Assessment
		-Prior violent offence

¹ Lifers were scored as having a sentence length of 31 years as the longest determinate sentence length was 30 years.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch research@csc-scc.gc.ca](mailto:research@csc-scc.gc.ca) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

Prepared by: Leslie Helmus

