

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

A Comprehensive Study of Recidivism Rates among Canadian Federal Offenders

Several measures of recidivism point to a trend towards a reduction in reoffending among released federal offenders.

Why we did this study

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) routinely reports on corporate results based on returns to federal custody. There is a need, however, to provide a comprehensive measure of reoffending that would include both returns to federal custody for an offence as well as reoffending that results in provincial or territorial sanctions. The combined sources would ultimately contribute to developing a standardized measure of recidivism.

What we did

The current study provided an estimate of recidivism rates based on reconvictions that resulted in returns to federal custody or provincial or territorial sanctions. Using records from the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database combined with data from the Offender Management System (OMS), the study examined the rates of reoffending of any kind and reoffending with a violent offence based on various time periods post-release disaggregated by Indigenous ancestry and gender. A five-year annual first term release cohort from 2007/2008 through 2011/2012 was identified (N = 22,685). CPIC records were coded for offenders released in 2007/2008 and 2011/2012 (N = 8,441). Additional analyses examined the rates of recidivism by region, index offence, reoffence type, age, race and Canadian or non-Canadian citizenship.

What we found

The recidivism statistic most commonly reported across jurisdictions worldwide is based on reconviction rates within 2 years of release. Using combined OMS and CPIC data, the two-year post-release reoffending rate for the entire 2011-2012 cohort was 23.4%; the rate for men was 24.2% and for women was 12%. Rates of recidivism for Indigenous offenders were higher, 37.7% for Indigenous men and 19.7% for Indigenous women (Figure 1). The violent reoffending rate for all offenders within two years of release was 12%. These rates were substantially lower than for the 2007-2008 cohort and both cohorts had lower rates than those quoted in the previous report on federal offenders who were released in 1996-1997 (Bonta et al., 2003) which found a two-year reconviction rate of 40.6% for all offenders and 16% for women. Results based on OMS data indicated that revocation and reconviction rates steadily declined each year from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012, the exception being the rate of violent reoffending where we see a slight uptick for the 2011-2012 cohort (Figure 2). Comparison of the crime severity on the index offence to the post release reoffence while offenders were under federal warrant demonstrated that over 60% of recidivists' new offences were of lesser severity.

Figure 1. Two-year reconviction rates: 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 cohorts

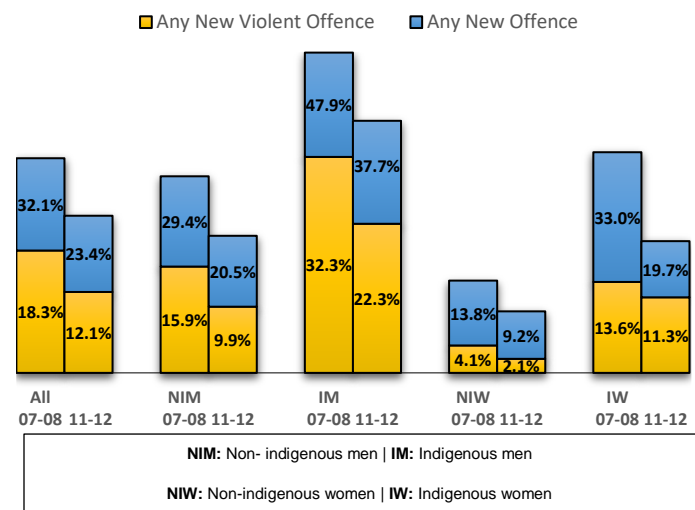
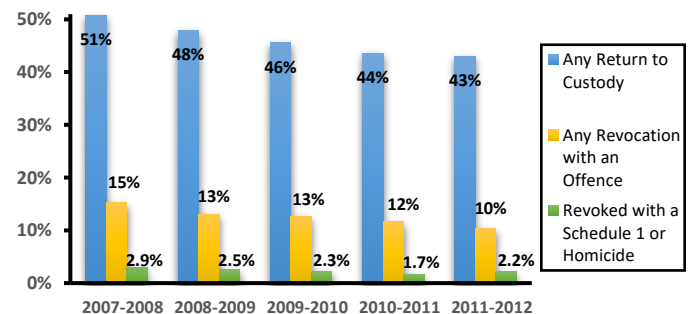


Figure 2. Revocation rates by fiscal year of release.



What it means

A standardized measure of recidivism provides a benchmark by which to evaluate an agency's effectiveness in facilitating crime reduction over time. These latest results provide multiple lines of evidence pointing to a reduction in recidivism among federal offenders over the last ten years.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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