



Research in Brief

Youth Histories of Federal Indigenous and Non-indigenous Offenders

Federal Indigenous and Non-indigenous offenders with youth histories have higher rates of return with an offence.

Why we did this study

The assessment of offender risk serves to structure many of the correctional decisions made regarding custody or security designations, correctional plans and programming, temporary and conditional release, and supervision requirements. The cornerstone of any effective risk management program is making decisions after all available information has been considered.

Upon admission to federal corrections, the criminal history record of every offender is assessed for prior youth (<18) and/or adult offences. Indicators systematically gathered include: number of convictions, type of convictions, court dispositions (community supervision, custody) and outcomes (failures on community supervision, disciplinary reports, attempt escapes and escapes). Given that criminal history is a well-established correlate and predictor of both institutional misconduct and recidivism, it is not surprising to find these variables contained in objective assessment procedures for classifying criminal offenders throughout the world.

What we did

Criminal history records reflected in Correctional Service of Canada's Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process were extracted from the Offender Management System (OMS). The OIA process standardizes the recording of 15 youth history indicators in the Criminal History Record section. One such metric is the percentage of federal offenders who had previous offences as a youth. Data were drawn for six consecutive fiscal years of releases (2006-07 to 2011-12) for both Indigenous (5,292) and Non-indigenous (20,906) offenders. Subsequent outcomes (re-offence within a three year follow-up) were gathered for the study population.

What we found

OMS-reported data show that federal Indigenous offenders have higher rates of previous youth histories than non-Indigenous (61% versus 41%) and return to federal custody for a new offence (29% versus 18%). While OMS results show that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders with youth histories were more likely to return to federal custody, the greater prevalence of all youth history indicators among federal Indigenous offenders statistically distinguishes them from the non-Indigenous.

Table: Youth History and Return with an Offence

Youth History Record Indicator	I (5,292)	Re-offence	Non-I (20,906)	Re-offence
Previous Offences-Youth	61%	35%	41%	27%
Number of Convictions				
One conviction?	60%	35%	40%	28%
Two to four convictions?	53%	37%	32%	30%
Five to nine convictions?	39%	41%	19%	33%
Ten to fourteen convictions?	24%	44%	10%	34%
Fifteen or more?	15%	46%	6%	37%
Type of Convictions				
Scheduled convictions?	31%	37%	18%	28%
Youth Court Dispositions				
Community supervision?	55%	36%	35%	28%
Open custody?	37%	38%	22%	31%
Secure custody?	37%	39%	23%	32%
Disposition Outcomes				
Failure during community-based supervision?	43%	40%	23%	31%
Disciplinary transfers from open to secure?	9%	43%	4%	35%
Disciplinary reports while in secure custody?	12%	40%	5%	37%
Attempt escape/UAL/escape from secure custody?	11%	43%	5%	37%
Transfer from secure custody to adult facility?	3%	37%	1%	33%

Notes: I = Indigenous, Non-I = Non-Indigenous, all p's<.0001

What it means

While the disproportionate representation of Indigenous people in federal custody may, in part, be attributed to proportional disparity of new admissions with criminal history and youth records, sustained efforts are still required to improve reintegration results. More criminal justice and community development work is needed to effectively moderate previous exposure and response to the criminal justice system.

For more information

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

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