Preventive detention during the period of statutory release (formerly mandatory supervision) is an option for managing potentially violent offenders serving a federal sentence. The 1986 passage of Bill C-67 provided a legal mandate for controlling the automatic release of potentially dangerous inmates before the expiry of their sentence. Previous research conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative provisions was essentially descriptive and did not deal with the characteristics of post-detention recidivists or the impact of preventive detention on criminal futures. This study explores more fully the issue of post-detention recidivism by introducing two statistical controls: level of risk for reoffending and time at risk in the community.

Historical information was collected from a variety of official sources (National Parole Board, Correctional Service of Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police) on all male federal offenders (807) who had detention orders applied to them before December 31, 1991. A comparison between detention cases and the general penitentiary population over the same time period (57,157) revealed the following:

- the Ontario and Prairie regions had larger proportions of detained inmates relative to general inmates (about 31% versus 25%);
- Aboriginal offenders were overrepresented among detainees (25.6% versus 12.8%);
- detained offenders were more likely than the general inmate population to have been convicted of a major admitting violent offence, particularly sexual offences (48% versus 10%) and assault (16% versus 6%); and
- there was a substantially larger proportion of detained offenders serving sentences between two and four years than the general inmate population (76% versus 39%).

A follow-up sample was assembled of 424 detained offenders who had been released from custody for at least one year. A further extension of the post-detention follow-up period yielded an average of 4.1 years since release (ranging from 2.2 to 7.8 years) for the study sample.

The follow-up sample was divided into three different groups for comparison purposes:

- 148 offenders (35%) who had been detained but then had their detention orders "lifted" before the end of their sentence;
- 114 offenders (27%) who were "fully detained" (held in custody for their entire sentence); and
- 162 offenders (38%) who were detained until the end of their sentence after having their "one chance" statutory release revoked.

Using official records, proxy Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) Scale scores were calculated for the follow-up sample. This study yielded important information on the characteristics of post-detention recidivists and the impact of preventive detention on future criminal behaviour. As an option for managing potentially violent offenders until the end of their sentence, the selection of cases for
detention could be improved by taking into consideration both volume and type of criminal history, as well as previous exposure/response to the criminal justice system. Particular attention to past sex offence history (such as number and variety) can improve the selection of sex offenders for preventive detention.

These results validate previous findings on the predictive value of criminal history and point to the consideration of other case-based variables (such as attitudes, attachments, addictions) which could improve the selection of potentially violent offenders for preventive detention and provide useful targets for intervention.