



Research at a glance

Patterns of Suspension Warrants

About half of suspension warrants result in the revocation of community supervision. Distinct patterns across fiscal years, by region, gender, and Aboriginal ancestry were evident.

Why we did this study

The successful reintegration of offenders into the community and public safety remain top priorities for correctional staff, researchers, and policy makers alike. Currently, there is a large amount of research that has focused on the identification of offender characteristics related to success or failure within the community. Little research has examined the temporary suspension of community supervision. The present study aims to contribute to an improved understanding of the reasons behind suspensions, as well as their final outcomes.

What we did

This study included all supervision suspension warrants for federal offenders that occurred between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2014. In total, 29,388 suspension warrants were identified, representing 16,032 distinct offenders. Most suspension warrants were issued for men while one-quarter were issued for Aboriginal offenders. The overall suspension rate during the study period was 755 suspensions per 1,000 supervised offenders.

All data were obtained from the Offender Management System. The final outcome of the suspension, the reasons for issuing the suspension warrant, the frequency of contact between the offender and the community parole officer at the time of the suspension, and the types of parole conditions in place at the time of the suspension were explored. In addition, patterns were examined across fiscal years, by region, by gender, and by Aboriginal ancestry.

What we found

Almost half (48%) of suspension warrants resulted in a revocation of the offender's release, while 29% were cancelled by the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and 22% were cancelled by the Parole Board of Canada.¹ On average, suspension

warrants were resolved in 68 days, although there was variation by outcome (18 days to 97 days).

Overall, almost two-thirds (59%) of warrants were issued due to the breach of the terms of the offender's supervision period; about half were due to a breach of specific release conditions (26%) or failing to report (23%).

Examination of suspension patterns from FY2009-10 to FY2013-14, showed that fewer suspensions were being cancelled by CSC in the most recent year (from 30% to 26%) and that more were being revoked (from 47% to 51%) and that warrants were being resolved more quickly (74 days to 60 days). Distinct patterns by region, gender and Aboriginal ancestry were evident.

What it means

The current study provides an examination of the patterns and outcomes of supervision period suspensions among federal offenders. A better understanding of the current patterns of suspension warrants may inform case management and community planning strategies as well as inform population management initiatives both in custody and in the community.

Future research could examine the characteristics of offenders and behavioural indicators that lead to suspensions and the various suspension outcomes. As well, future research examining the use of alternatives to suspensions would be beneficial.

For more information

Farrell MacDonald, S., Curno, J., Biro, S.M., & Gobeil, R. (2015). *Patterns of suspension warrants* (Research Report R-368). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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¹ The remaining 1% did not have a final outcome, had an unknown cancellation authority, or the offender had been deported, died, or reached the end of their sentence.