



# Research at a glance

## Low-Risk Offenders and Waivers, Postponements, and Withdrawals of Parole Reviews

*Parole delays and cancellations are most frequently due to program non-completion, lack of case management team endorsement, wanting to avoid a negative parole decision, and wanting to demonstrate further credibility and stability.*

### Why we did this study

Offenders' gradual and supervised return to the community contributes to public safety. Conditional release provides a mechanism for this gradual release, and although virtually all offenders are eligible for consideration for release after serving a portion of their sentence, some choose not to be considered – that is, they waive, postpone, or withdraw their review.

This issue is especially pertinent for low-risk offenders. Given that these offenders are more likely to be granted parole and to complete their sentence in the community without re-offence, decreasing the delays and cancellations for this group is likely to increase the number of positive parole decisions.

### What we did

To identify the reasons for parole review delays and cancellations, the 5,549 day parole and 10,358 full parole reviews scheduled for 2013-14 were examined. Additional analyses focused on the 2,276 day parole and 4,267 full parole reviews scheduled for offenders who were assessed, at their most recent review, as minimum security – these offenders comprised the low-risk offender group.

### What we found

About a third of day parole and over half of full parole reviews were delayed or canceled. Among low-risk offenders, this rate was lower but still considerable (26% and 36% for day and full parole respectively).

Parole delays and cancellations were most frequently due to a desire to avoid a negative decision, program non-completion, and unspecified reasons. More detailed examinations focused on low-risk offenders also identified three additional reasons: lack of case management team endorsement, a desire to build credibility or demonstrate stability via other activities (such as temporary absences) prior to parole consideration, and a desire to be considered for only

day parole despite being eligible for both day and full parole. Many offenders considered multiple reasons.

In addition, about one-third of low-risk offenders who cited program non-completion as their reason for postponing, waiving, or withdrawing their parole review were not, in fact, eligible for correctional programs. It seems that these offenders believed they should complete these programs – or would be expected by the Parole Board of Canada to complete these programs – despite their non-eligibility.

### What it means

A number of possible avenues for improvement were identified, including improved data collection, improved information-sharing (e.g., on program eligibility), and continued implementation of initiatives focused on increasing efficiencies. A number of current initiatives, such as those relating to the Structured Assessment and Intervention Framework, seem likely to contribute to offenders being prepared for parole earlier in their sentence; these may reduce future parole delays and cancellations.

Moving forward in these areas may increase the proportion of low-risk offenders whose cases are reviewed for conditional release, and, hopefully, released to the community to complete their sentences under supervision.

### For more information

Keown, L.-A., Farrell MacDonald, S., & Gobeil, R. (2015). *Low-risk offenders and waivers, postponements, and withdrawals of parole reviews*. (Research Report R-365). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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