

A profile of offenders serving time in the community

Shelley Trevethan and Christopher J. Rastin¹
Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada

According to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), the purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by the courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of offenders, and by assisting in the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and the community². Offenders can serve time in the community through day parole, full parole or statutory release. To better understand their programming needs, this article provides a profile of offenders serving time in the community, and examines differences among those on different forms of release.

Currently, on any given day, approximately 9,200 offenders are serving time in the community on some form of release from a federal correctional facility³. About one-half of the offenders serving time in the community are currently on full parole (51%), one-third (36%) are on statutory release and 13% are on day parole.

Socio-demographic characteristics

About 500 of the federal offenders (5%) serving time in the community are women. This proportion is larger than the proportion of women currently incarcerated in federal correctional facilities (2.5%). As illustrated in Table 1, larger proportions of those on day parole and full parole are women (7% each), as compared to those on statutory release (2%).

Similar to those who are incarcerated in federal correctional facilities, about three-quarters of offenders who are serving time in the community are Caucasian (72%). However, a smaller proportion is Aboriginal (12% versus 18%) and a larger proportion is Asian (4% versus 2%). As seen in Table 1, larger proportions of those on statutory release are Aboriginal (17%), compared to those on day or full parole (14% and 9%, respectively).

At the time of admission to the federal correctional system for the current sentence, the average age for those serving time in the

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics				
	Day Parole	Full Parole	Statutory Release	P
Women	7%	7%	2%	***
Aboriginal	14%	9%	17%	***
Single at admission	44%	38%	47%	***
< Grade 8 at admission	15%	15%	20%	***
Unemployed at arrest	59%	47%	69%	***

***p<.001

community was 35, which is older than those currently incarcerated in federal correctional facilities (average 33). At the time of release to the community, the average age was 38. Those released on full parole were older at the time of release (average 40 years of age) than those released on day parole (average 38 years of age) and statutory release (average 36 years of age).

At the time of admission, 42% of offenders serving time in the community were single, which is less than those currently incarcerated (49%). Similar proportions of those serving time in the community and in correctional facilities had less than a grade 8 education upon admission (17% and 18%, respectively). A smaller proportion of those serving time in the community were unemployed at the time of arrest (58% versus 68%).

As shown in Table 1, larger proportions of those on statutory release were single, had less than a grade 8 education and were unemployed at arrest, as compared to those on day and full parole.

Offences

Larger proportions of those serving time in the community are currently incarcerated for drug-related (20% versus 5%) and property offences (11% versus 8%) as their most serious offence, as compared to those who are currently incarcerated.

As illustrated in Table 2, for those on day or full parole, the largest proportion are currently serving their sentence for homicide / attempted murder (24% and 33%, respectively) as their most serious offence. The largest proportion of those on statutory release are currently serving their sentence for robbery as their most serious offence (31%).

Table 2

Most serious current offence				
	Day Parole	Full Parole	Statutory Release	P
Homicide/Attempted Murder	24%	33%	7%	***
Assault	5%	2%	13%	***
Sexual Assault	6%	6%	16%	***
Robbery	20%	9%	31%	***
Other Violent	1%	1%	2%	*
Property	15%	9%	19%	***
Impaired Driving	1%	1%	1%	NS
Drugs	18%	28%	8%	***
Other <i>Criminal Code</i> / Federal Statute	7%	9%	3%	***

NS = not significant; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The average aggregate sentence length for federal offenders serving time in the community (excluding those serving life sentences) is approximately 6.0 years, which is similar to those who are currently incarcerated in federal correctional facilities (6.2 years). The average aggregate sentence length for those on full parole (6.7 years) is longer than those on day parole and statutory release (5.5 and 5.3 years, respectively).

Criminal history

Those who are currently incarcerated in federal correctional facilities tend to have more extensive criminal histories than those serving time in the community. For instance, larger proportions of those currently incarcerated had prior youth and adult court convictions, had served previous sentences, and had failed on various sanctions while involved in the correctional process.

Among those serving time in the community, those on statutory release tend to have the most extensive criminal history, followed by those on day parole. Those on full parole have the least extensive criminal history (Table 3).

Table 3

Criminal history				
	Day Parole	Full Parole	Statutory Release	P
Prior youth court	36%	21%	51%	***
Prior adult court	77%	64%	87%	***
Previous community supervision	65%	47%	77%	***
Previous provincial term	59%	42%	76%	***
Previous federal term	18%	9%	32%	***
Failure on community-based sanctions	44%	26%	63%	***
Failure on conditional release	25%	15%	45%	***
Reclassified to higher custody level	8%	3%	19%	***
Segregation for disciplinary infraction	15%	6%	34%	***
Escape/unlawfully at large	15%	8%	30%	***
< 6 months since last incarceration	14%	7%	27%	***

*** $p < .001$

Static and dynamic factors

In addition to information on each federal offender's background, social situation and education, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)'s Offender Intake Assessment also collects information on factors relevant to determining criminal risk (such as number, variety of convictions and previous exposure, response to youth and adult corrections), and factors relevant to identifying offender dynamic needs (such as employment history, family background, criminal associations, addictions, attitudes). The results help determine institutional placement and correctional plans.

At the time of admission for the current offence, more than one-third (35%) of offenders serving time in the community were rated as high risk to re-offend. Larger proportions of those serving time in custody were initially rated as high risk to re-offend (60%). As illustrated in Table 4, of

Table 4

Static and dynamic factors				
	Day Parole	Full Parole	Statutory Release	P
High risk to re-offend	33%	22%	50%	***
Low reintegration potential	5%	2%	32%	***
High need (overall)	43%	26%	60%	***
Employment (some/considerable)	48%	45%	56%	***
Marital/family (some/considerable)	38%	31%	47%	***
Social interaction/associates (some/considerable)	64%	60%	62%	*
Substance abuse (some/considerable)	63%	48%	74%	***
Community functioning (some/considerable)	33%	30%	38%	***
Personal/emotional orientation (some/considerable)	83%	73%	90%	***
Attitude (some/considerable)	49%	43%	56%	***

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

those in the community, larger proportions of those on statutory release were rated as high risk to re-offend at the time of admission (50%), compared to those on day or full parole (33% and 22%, respectively).

A larger proportion of offenders who are currently incarcerated were rated as having low reintegration potential at the time of intake to the correctional facilities, as compared to those serving time in the community (25% versus 14%). Of those in the community, larger proportions of those on statutory release were rated as having low reintegration

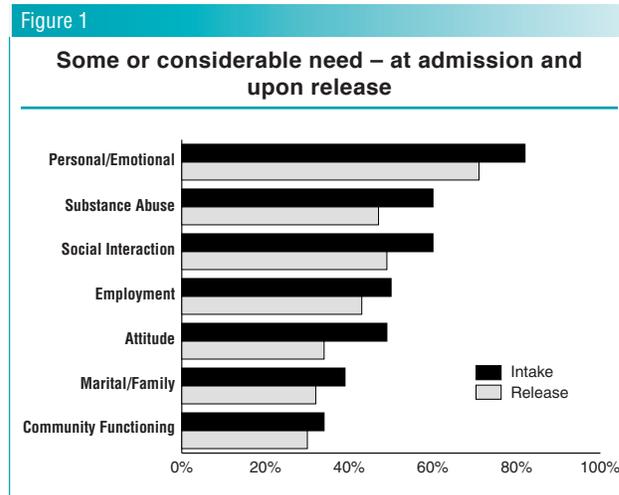
potential at intake (32%), as compared to those on day or full parole (5% and 2%, respectively).

At the time of intake into the federal correctional facility for the current conviction, 42% of those serving time in the community were assessed as having high need for programming. The largest proportions were rated as having “some” or “considerable” need in the areas of personal/emotional orientation, social interaction/associates, and substance abuse. Larger proportions of incarcerated offenders were assessed as high need for programming at the time of intake (64%).

Of those on release, larger proportions of those on statutory release were rated as having high need (60%), as compared to those on day and full parole (43% and 26%, respectively).

Needs at intake and upon release

It is also possible to examine whether the needs of offenders at intake into the correctional facility differ from their needs at the time of release to the community. As illustrated in Figure 1, for all need domains, fewer offenders were assessed as having “some” or “considerable” need at the time of release than at the time of admission⁴. This indicates that needs are being addressed through programming or services while the offenders are incarcerated.



As illustrated in Table 5, for those on all types of release, the proportion of offenders rated as high need overall was lower at release than at intake to the federal correctional facility. Similarly, for those on day and full parole, the proportion of offenders rated as having “some” or “considerable” need for each need domain was substantially lower at release than at intake.

For those on statutory release, the proportion rated as having “some” or “considerable” need was lower for social interaction/associates (39% versus 62%), substance abuse (67% versus 74%), and attitude (51% versus 56%). However, on personal/emotional orientation, employment and marital/family issues, similar proportions of those on release and intake were rated as having “some” or “considerable” need. The proportion with “some” or “considerable” need for community functioning increased slightly (from 38% to 40%).

Table 5

	Dynamic factors - at admission and upon release					
	Day Parole		Full Parole		Statutory Release	
	Intake	Release	Intake	Release	Intake	Release
High need (overall)	43%	24%	26%	8%	60%	48%
“Some” or “Considerable” Need:						
Employment	48%	39%	45%	28%	56%	55%
Marital/family	38%	30%	31%	20%	47%	45%
Social interaction/associates	64%	29%	60%	9%	62%	39%
Substance abuse	63%	54%	48%	22%	74%	67%
Community functioning	33%	30%	30%	19%	38%	40%
Personal/emotional orientation	83%	78%	73%	51%	90%	87%
Attitude	49%	38%	43%	17%	56%	51%

Summary

This profile indicates the differences between offenders serving time in the community and those incarcerated in federal facilities. Generally, the two groups are fairly similar in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, except that there are larger proportions of women, and fewer Aboriginal offenders, among those serving time in the community. However, those serving time in the community are more often incarcerated for drug and property-related offences, have less extensive criminal histories, are lower risk to re-offend and lower need at time of intake to the federal correctional facility, as compared to those currently incarcerated. Perhaps more importantly, although offenders serving time in the community are assessed as having “some” or “considerable” need for certain types of programming at the time of release, the extent of their needs are less at the time of release to the community than at the time of intake. Programs and services utilized during incarceration may be responsible for these changes.

The highest need areas for offenders at the time of release were personal/emotional orientation, social interaction/associates, and substance abuse. This points to the importance of programs to address these issues in the community.

The profile identifies differences between those on day parole, full parole and statutory release. Generally, smaller proportions of those on statutory release than on day or full parole are women, larger proportions are Aboriginal, and larger proportions are uneducated and unemployed at the time of admission. Furthermore, those serving time in the community have different offence profiles.

Those on statutory release have more extensive criminal histories, are higher risk to re-offend and have higher needs, than those on day or full parole. ■

¹ 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0P9.

² *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, RSC, C-20, 1992.

³ The data are based on a one-day snapshot of offenders incarcerated in federal facilities or serving time in the community in November 2002.

⁴ Significance is calculated based on means, using a 4-point scale, with 1 indicating an asset, 2 indicating no need, 3 indicating some need, and 4 indicating considerable need. The substance abuse and personal/emotional orientation domains utilize 3-point scales (no need, some need, considerable need).

Are you looking for FORUM?

Please contact the Research Branch if your address label is incorrect, if you would like to be added to the FORUM mailing list, if you need more copies of a FORUM issue or if you would like to cancel a subscription. Just fill out the form on the inside of this issue's mailing cover (or write a letter) and send it to the following address:

RESEARCH BRANCH
*Correctional Service of Canada
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9*

*You can also reach the Research Branch by phone at (613) 995-3975 or by fax at (613) 941-8477.
E-mail: reslib@magi.com*