

The changing profile of adults in custody, 2006/2007



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by Avani Babooram

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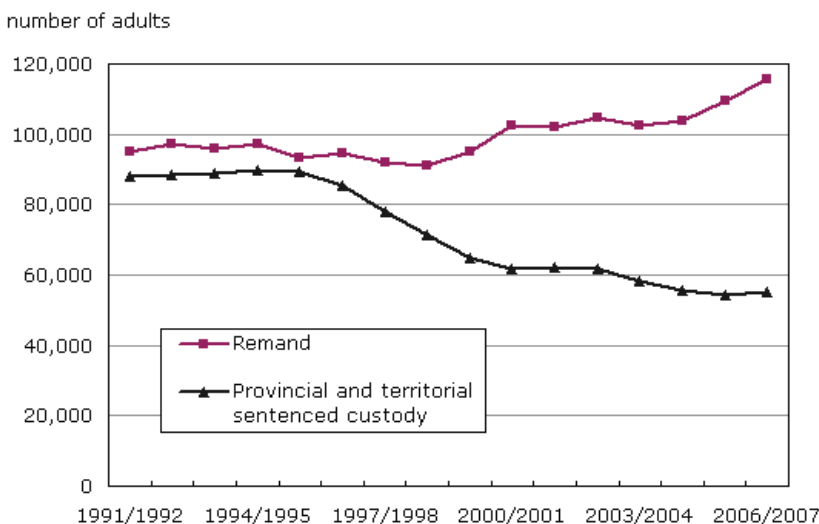
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The profile of [adults](#) entering correctional facilities has changed over the last ten years. More adults are being held in provincial facilities to await trial or sentencing and fewer are entering these facilities to serve a sentence ordered by the court (Chart 1). The number of people admitted to federal prisons, which house persons sentenced to custody for two years or more, has grown steadily over the same period.

As a result of these changes, correctional service facilities are holding more adults in [remand](#), where security risks are higher because of frequent movement in and out of the facility as people are admitted and released, or transported to and from court. Remand is also considered a harsher environment for those being held due to high security, a lack of programming and the unpredictability of length of stay ([Office of the Provincial Ombudsman for Saskatchewan, 2002](#)).

Changes in the characteristics of people entering facilities (Aboriginal identity, gender and age) can also have implications for correctional services in terms of the types of programming needed and the space required to house females and those with special [needs](#).

Chart 1
The number of adults admitted to remand continue to exceed the number admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody, select jurisdictions, 1991/1992 to 2006/2007



Note: Due to missing data for some years, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories and Nunavut have been excluded.

Alberta has also been excluded due to a system change that occurred in 2005/2006 which altered the methodology by which admissions to custody were calculated. Manitoba has been excluded due to a system change that occurred in 1999/2000 which altered the methodology by which data on admissions to custody were collected.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey and Integrated Correctional Services Survey.

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The number of adults admitted to remand continues to grow

At more than 251,500, admissions to provincial and territorial custody in 2006/2007 were up 1% over the previous year. Continuing the trend established over the last decade, the number of adults admitted to remand increased in 2006/2007 and this increase drove the overall growth in admissions to custody. Provincial and territorial facilities saw 3% more adults entering remand than in the previous year ([Table 1](#)), and 26% more than a decade earlier ([Table 2](#)).¹

The number of adults admitted to provincial and territorial [sentenced custody](#) continued its downward trend in 2006/2007, with a 3% decrease over the previous year ([Table 1](#)), and 28% fewer admissions than in 1997/1998 ([Table 2](#)). At the federal level, however, the number of people admitted to custody continued to grow, with admissions up 18% in 2006/2007 compared to a decade earlier. The number of adults admitted to provincial and territorial, and federal community supervision programs, the vast majority of who entered probation, has been stable over the long term ([Table 2](#)).

In total, there were over 260,100 adults admitted to federal, and provincial and territorial custody in 2006/2007, representing a 1% increase over the previous year ([Table 1](#)).

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Provincial and territorial facilities admitted more offenders to serve sentences for property and violent crimes

Although fewer adults were admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody in recent years, the number of adults admitted to sentenced custody for violent crimes (such as murder or assault) or property offences (such as theft) increased steadily between 2003/2004 and 2006/2007 ([Table 3](#)).^{2, 3} Over this period, the number of adults admitted for property crimes increased by 6% and the number admitted for violent crimes was up by 5%.

Despite these increases in the number of offenders admitted to sentenced custody for property and violent crimes, these offenders continued to account for about the same proportion of all admissions in 2006/2007 as they did four years earlier — 22% for violent crimes and 26% for property crimes. This is because these increases were offset by increases in the number of admissions for drug offences (such as possession or trafficking) and 'other federal statute' violations (such as the *Customs Act*).

In 2006/2007, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories had the highest shares of adults admitted for violent crimes, representing 59% and 66% of their total admissions to sentenced custody, respectively. At 11%, Quebec had the lowest proportion of adults admitted for crimes of violence in 2006/2007.

There was less variation in the proportion of offenders admitted to sentenced custody for property crimes in the provinces and territories — at 29% Alberta had the highest proportion, followed by Ontario and British Columbia at 28% while Nunavut, with 13%, had the lowest.

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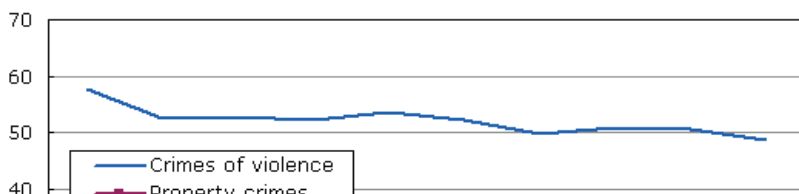
Federal institutions admitted a larger proportion of adults for property crimes and 'other *Criminal Code*' offences

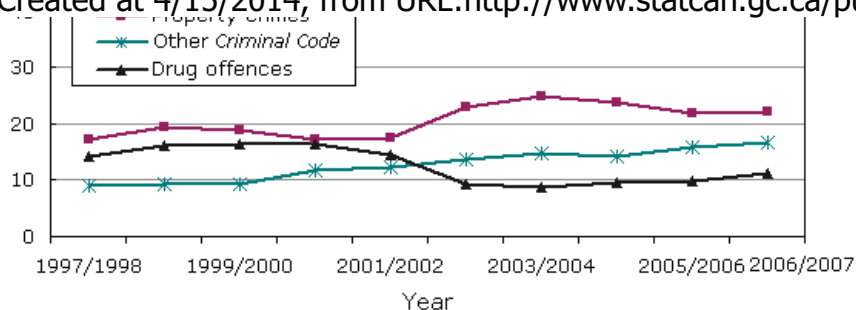
Among adults admitted to federal custody, the mix of offences has changed since 1997/1998, the longest time period for which data are available (Chart 2). While offenders convicted of violent offences continue to represent the largest proportion of offenders admitted to federal custody, this proportion decreased from 58% in 1997/1998 to 49% in 2006/2007. This change occurred because the number of adults admitted for property crimes and '[other *Criminal Code*' offences](#)⁴ grew, while the number of adults admitted for violent crimes remained relatively unchanged ([Table 4](#)).

Chart 2

The proportion of admissions to federal custody due to crimes of violence has decreased, 1997/1998 to 2006/2007

percentage of admissions to custody





Note: The methodology for grouping offences changed in 2002/2003. Accordingly, comparisons to data from previous years should be made with caution.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Correctional Services Survey.

Offenders convicted of property crimes accounted for the second largest share of adults admitted to federal custody in 2006/2007. Twenty-two percent of adults were admitted to custody for property crimes in 2006/2007, compared to 17% in 1997/1998.

The share of adults admitted for 'other *Criminal Code*' offences increased from 9% to 17% over the same period ([Table 4](#)). This increase is being driven by increases in breach of probation. In 2006/2007, 7,963 adults were sentenced to custody for breach of probation, up from 3,847 in 1997/1998.⁵



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About 2 out of every 10 adults admitted to custody were Aboriginal

According to the 2006 Census, approximately 4% of the Canadian population identified themselves as Aboriginal. However, in 2006/2007, 18% of adults admitted to remand were Aboriginal⁶, as were 20% of adults admitted to provincial or territorial sentenced custody and 18% of adults admitted to federal custody ([Table 5](#) and [Table 6](#)).⁷

Over the 2001/2002 to 2006/2007 period, data from nine jurisdictions indicate that growth in the number of Aboriginal adults admitted to remand outpaced the overall growth in admissions to remand. Over this period, the number of Aboriginal people admitted to remand increased by 23% compared to a 14% increase in the total number of adults admitted to remand. In 2006/2007, Aboriginal adults represented 18% of those admitted to remand, up from 15% in 2001/2002.

In contrast to the decline in the overall number of adults admitted to sentenced custody between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007 (-9%), the number of Aboriginal offenders admitted increased by 4% in these nine jurisdictions ([Table 6](#)). While Aboriginal adults represented 16% of adults admitted to sentenced custody in 2001/2002, this figure rose to 20% in 2006/2007.

Aboriginal offenders represented 18% of adults admitted to federal custody in 2001/2002 and 2006/2007.



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Violent offences more common, drug offences less common among Aboriginal offenders

Changes in the number of Aboriginal adults in custody can have implications for program requirements within correctional facilities as research suggests that in addition to a need for culturally-sensitive programming, Aboriginal offenders may have different program needs than non-Aboriginal offenders. For instance, compared to non-Aboriginal offenders, Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be classified as having a higher risk of re-offending and as having higher needs for rehabilitation ([Rugge, 2006](#)).

According to the six jurisdictions for which data are available,⁸ the types of offences for which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults were admitted to custody were similar. However, a higher proportion of Aboriginal adults than non-Aboriginal adults were admitted to provincial custody for violent offences (31% compared to 26%), while admissions for drug violations were less common among Aboriginal than among non-Aboriginal adults (3% compared to 9%) ([Table 7](#)). A similar pattern was observed at federal institutions, where 56% of Aboriginal offenders were admitted for violent crimes compared to 42% of non-Aboriginal offenders, and 5% of Aboriginal offenders were admitted for drug offences compared to 11% of non-Aboriginal offenders ([Table 8](#)).

Information from the same six jurisdictions indicates that at the time of admission to provincial custody in 2006/2007, greater proportions of non-Aboriginal adults were employed and had achieved higher levels of education than Aboriginal adults.⁹ For instance, 44% of non-Aboriginal adults were employed on either a part-time or a full-time basis, compared to 29% of Aboriginal adults. In addition, four in ten non-Aboriginal adults had completed high school, compared to just over two in ten Aboriginal adults ([Table 7](#)).

Risk and needs assessment tools are often used to guide the treatment of offenders under correctional supervision, as well as to assess their risk of re-offending. Although data on the treatment needs of incarcerated adults are limited to Saskatchewan and federal correctional facilities, Aboriginal adults in these jurisdictions were assessed as having a greater number of treatment needs than non-Aboriginal adults ([Table 7](#) and [Table 8](#)).

Almost half of Aboriginal adults entering provincial correctional institutions in Saskatchewan in 2006/2007 were assessed as having five or more treatment needs compared to 35% of non-Aboriginal adults, while this was the case for 65% of Aboriginal offenders and 41% of non-Aboriginal offenders entering federal custody.



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More females admitted to both remand and sentenced custody

Female offenders are considered to have different programming needs than male offenders¹⁰ and need to be housed separately from males. While women continue to represent a relatively small proportion of the custodial population, over the past five years the number of adult females admitted to both remand and provincial and territorial sentenced custody has increased ([Table 9](#) and [Table 10](#)).

The growth in the number of women admitted to remand has been greater than the overall growth in remand. The number of adult females admitted to remand rose by 36% between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007 while the total number of adults admitted to remand was up 14%. In 2001/2002, females represented 10% of adults admitted to remand, and this rose to 12% in 2006/2007.

During the same five-year period, the number of adults admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody decreased by 9% but the number of females admitted increased by 11% ([Table 10](#)). The share of female offenders admitted to sentenced custody rose from 9% to 11% between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007.

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The number of females admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody for 'other *Criminal Code* offences' has increased

Along with the increase in females admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody, the number of women admitted for almost each type of offence increased between 2003/2004 and 2006/2007. The exceptions were for provincial statutes and municipal by-laws, where the number of females admitted for these crimes decreased by 77% and 55% respectively, over this period.

'Other *Criminal Code*' offences were the most common offences for which females were admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody between 2003/2004 and 2006/2007. The number of females admitted for these offences grew by 33% over this period, from 1,898 to 2,525 ([Table 11](#)). At the same time, the number of females sentenced to custody for breach of probation increased by 44%, from 1,189 to 1,713.¹¹ This increase is driving the overall change observed for females admitted due to 'other *Criminal Code*' offences.

There were also increases in the number of women sentenced to custody for property and violent crimes, the two most common offences after 'other *Criminal Code*' offences. The number of females admitted to sentenced custody for property crimes rose by 24% (322 females) and the number admitted for violent crimes rose by 13% (97 females) between 2003/2004 and 2006/2007.

Manitoba and the Northwest Territories were the jurisdictions with the largest proportion of females admitted to sentenced custody for violent crimes. In Manitoba, these females represented 46% of all females admitted in 2006/2007, and in the Northwest Territories, they accounted for 64% of female admissions ([Table 11](#)).

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A higher proportion of females admitted to federal custody for violent offences

The number of females who entered federal penitentiaries for a violent crime grew from 145 in 2001/2002 to 225 in 2006/2007. This, along with a small decrease in the number of women admitted for drug offences (from 117 to 107), resulted in violent offenders accounting for a larger portion of female offenders admitted to federal custody in 2006/2007 than they did five years earlier (34% versus 28% in 2001/2002).

This increase in females admitted for violent offences is primarily due to cases of robbery. The share of females admitted for robbery rose from 16% in 2001/2002 to 23% in 2006/2007.

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Larger proportions of females assessed as having program needs for employment and family/marital relationships

A larger number of females in correctional facilities can have implications on a number of operational fronts. Research shows that females have different program requirements from the larger male population in terms of treatment, rehabilitation and successful integration ([Laishes, 2002](#)).

For instance, in 2006/2007 a larger proportion of females than males entering custody in Saskatchewan were assessed as having treatment needs for five of the six need categories. The largest differences between the needs assessed for men and women were for [family/marital relationships](#), [employment](#) and [personal/emotional challenges](#). There was also a disparity between men and women with respect to the number of needs indicated: in Saskatchewan 62% of females admitted to custody were assessed as having five or more treatment needs, compared to 43% of males.

Females admitted to federal custody in 2006/2007 were also assessed as having different treatment needs than their male counterparts. While similar proportions of both sexes were assessed as having substance abuse treatment needs (the need most often indicated by females), a higher proportion of females than males were assessed as having program needs with respect to employment and family or marital

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relationships. However, both sexes were assessed as having similar numbers of needs, with 44% of females and 46% of males admitted to federal custody assessed with five or more treatment needs.



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Median age at admission to remand has increased

Older offenders (over the age of 50) tend to have needs that set them apart from the rest of the inmate population. These include needs for medical care, accessibility and mobility, adjustment to imprisonment, peer relationships, family relationships, and [conditional release](#) ([Correctional Service of Canada, 2008](#)).

The [median age](#) of adults admitted to provincial and territorial facilities has increased with the median age of the Canadian population. The median age of the Canadian population rose from 33 to 39¹² between 1991 and 2006, while the median age of adults remanded into custody increased from the late 20s to the early 30s between 1991/1992 and 2006/2007 for all jurisdictions except Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The median age of offenders admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody also increased for the majority of jurisdictions. However, the median age of persons admitted to federal custody changed little since 1998/1999 (earliest available data) ([Table 12](#)).¹³



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More older offenders admitted to remand and federal custody

The number of adults aged 50 or over admitted to remand doubled between 1991/1992 and 2006/2007. Over the same period, the number of older offenders admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody remained unchanged despite a 9% decrease in the number of adults admitted to this type of custody. The number of older offenders admitted to federal custody also increased, rising from 329 in 2001/2002 to 521 in 2006/2007.



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Summary

There are aspects of the corrections system in Canada that are changing. There continues to be growth in the number of adults admitted to remand in provincial and territorial facilities across Canada, while the number of offenders admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody continues to fall.

Despite the decrease in the number of offenders admitted to provincial and territorial facilities to serve a sentence, the number of offenders admitted for committing property or violent crimes increased. However, 'other *Criminal Code*' offences were still the most common crimes committed by adults admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody.

The number of Aboriginal and female adults in both remand and provincial and territorial sentenced custody continued to grow. The growth of both Aboriginal and female adults admitted to remand outpaced the overall growth in admissions to remand. The number of adults in these two groups admitted to provincial and territorial sentenced custody also continued to grow, despite a decrease in overall admissions to sentenced custody. In addition, over the last 15 years, in most jurisdictions, median age at admission to provincial or territorial facilities increased along with the median age of the Canadian population.

The number of adults admitted to federal custody also increased. The majority of offenders were still admitted to federal custody for committing violent crimes, but the number of offenders admitted for property crimes and 'other *Criminal Code*' offences rose.

Aboriginal offenders continued to represent the same share of admissions to federal facilities in 2006/2007 as they did in 2001/2002. However, admissions of female offenders increased slightly over the same period. Meanwhile, median age on admission to federal custody remained unchanged.



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[Table 13 Characteristics of adult offenders admitted to correctional services, 2006/2007](#)

[Table 14 Admissions to conditional sentence by most serious offence and sentence length, select jurisdictions, 2006/2007](#)



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Notes

- Due** to missing data, comparisons of admissions to remand and sentenced custody between 1997/1998 and 2006/2007 exclude Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Alberta, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.
- Due** to missing data for some years, Prince Edward Island and Nunavut have been excluded. Alberta has also been excluded due to a system change that occurred in 2005/2006 which altered the methodology by which admissions to custody were calculated. Data do not include intermittent sentences.
- In** 2003/2004, the methodology by which admissions to custody were calculated for Ontario when analyzing characteristics of the adults being admitted changed to exclude intermittent sentences. Therefore, comparisons to years prior to 2003/2004 could not be made.
- 'Other Criminal Code'** offences is a broad category that includes several non-property, non-violent offences such as breach of probation and failure to attend court.
- Statistics** Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Criminal Courts Survey. Excludes New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- Refers** to North American Indians, Métis, Inuit; treaty and non-treaty Indians; status and non-status Indians
- According** to the 2006 Census, more individuals are willing to identify themselves as an Aboriginal person, but it is not known how large a factor this is in changes in the number of Aboriginal adults admitted to custody (Statistics Canada, 2008).
- Includes** Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Correctional Services Canada. Excludes intermittent sentences.
- Includes** Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan. Excludes intermittent sentences.
- Diagnosed** mental illness is more prevalent among females than it is among males, and there are also gender differences in the expression of these illnesses (Laishes, 2002).
- Statistics** Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Adult Criminal Courts Survey. Excludes Manitoba, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

12. **CANSIM**, table 051-0001.

13. **While** the median age of offenders at admission to federal custody has not changed, it is worth noting that the Correctional Service of Canada indicates that the average age of federal offenders in custody on any given day is increasing (Correctional Service Canada, 2008). Currently, data on the average age of offenders in custody on any given day is not available from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics.

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