

Drug Treatment Court Funding Program Recidivism Study



About the Study

As part of the 2021 Evaluation of the Drug Treatment Court Funding Program (DTCFP), the Evaluation Branch contracted Statistics Canada to conduct a statistical analysis of DTCs' impact on recidivism.¹ The primary purpose was to evaluate the criminal justice outcomes of individuals who were released from a federally-funded DTC program, relative to a group of justice-involved non-participants. More specifically, the study was designed to determine if participation in DTCs reduces the likelihood of recidivism, relative to a comparison group of justice-involved non-participants.

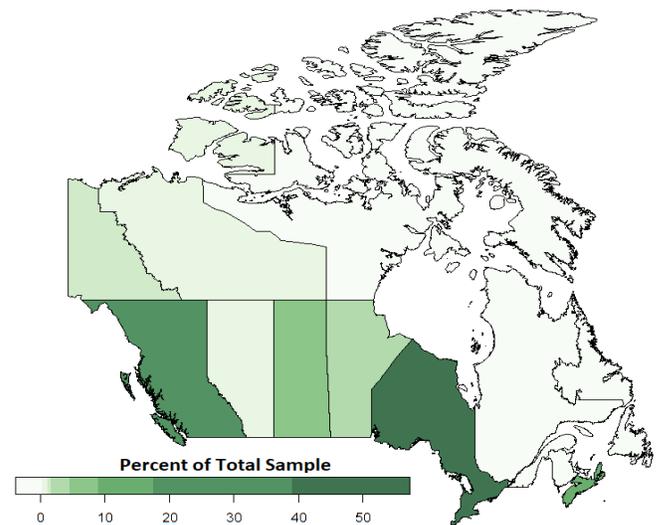
About the DTCFP

The DTCFP aims to reduce crime committed as a result of a substance use disorder through court-monitored treatment and community service support for non-violent offenders. At the time of the study, the DTCFP had established funding agreements with eight provinces and two territories to fund 13 DTCs. DTCs provide an alternative to incarceration by offering the offender an opportunity to participate in a court-monitored, community-based drug treatment process. In Canada, the DTC model has continued to evolve to address local community contexts and populations needs. DTCs are provincial and territorial courts that target adult, non-violent offenders who have been charged under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) or the *Criminal Code of Canada*, in cases where their substance use disorder was a factor in the offence. Rather than incarceration, DTC participants may receive a non-custodial sentence² upon completion of the program.

Methodology

Statistical methods were used to compare outcomes for DTC participants vs. non-participants. DTC participants released from a federally-funded DTC program between April 1st, 2015, and March 31st, 2018 were identified in the Drug Treatment Court Information System (DTCIS) and selected for the study. Statistics Canada used this information to identify a matched comparison group of non-participants³ from their corrections data holdings (n = 2,430) (i.e., quasi-experimental design). Individuals were monitored for a minimum of two years from their DTC start date or the beginning of their community supervision period. This is considered their time at risk of re-offending. Different regression models were used to compare the likelihood of recidivism between DTC participants and non-participants, including sub-analyses for completers and non-completers; and, to identify predictors of program completion.⁴

Total Sample Density



Note: Non-participants group was limited to ON, BC, NS, SK.

¹ Recidivism is defined as any new criminal charge for a new offence following DTC program commencement or the beginning of a non-participant's community supervision period.

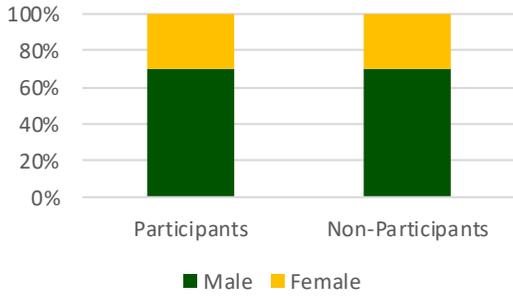
² A non-custodial sentence is a sentence that does not require time in jail (e.g., a suspended sentence along with a period of probation to be recommended by the DTC team).

³ Non-participants were selected if they met DTC eligibility criteria (e.g., substance use need score of medium or higher) and were released from custody or started their community sentence between April 1, 2015 and March 31st, 2018. They were further matched based on a series of demographic and criminal risk variables.

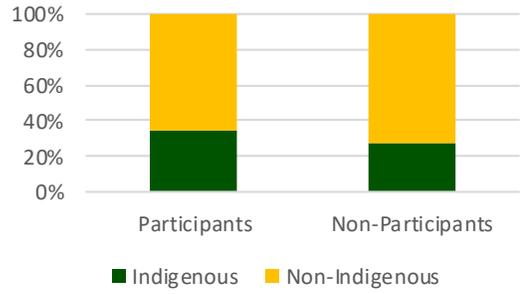
⁴ Completers are those who successfully completed the program; and, non-completers are those who participated but did not successfully complete the program.

Sample Characteristics⁵

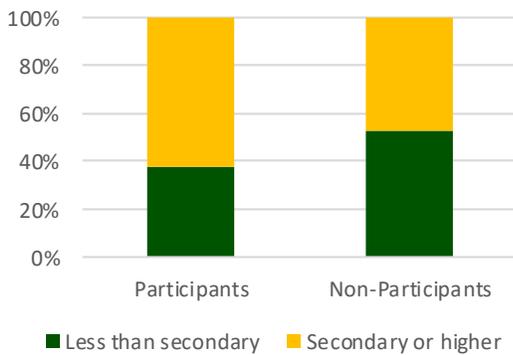
Gender



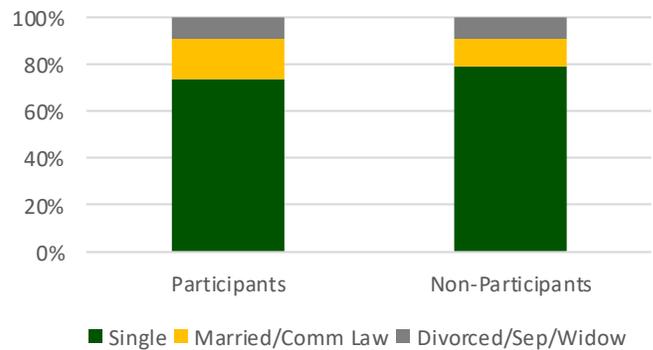
Indigenous Status



Education Level

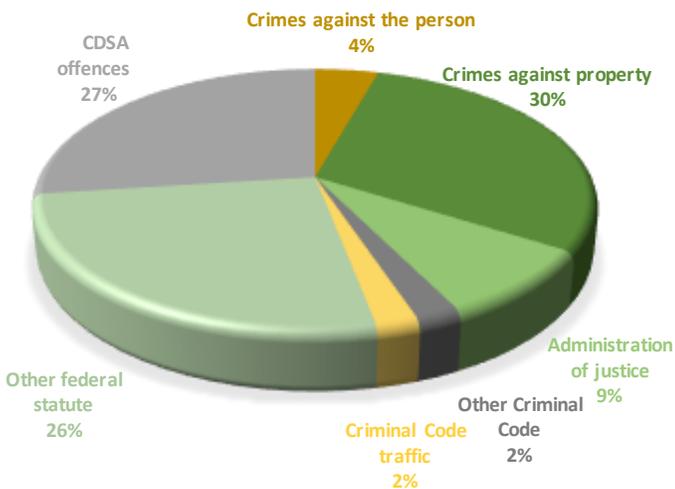


Marital Status

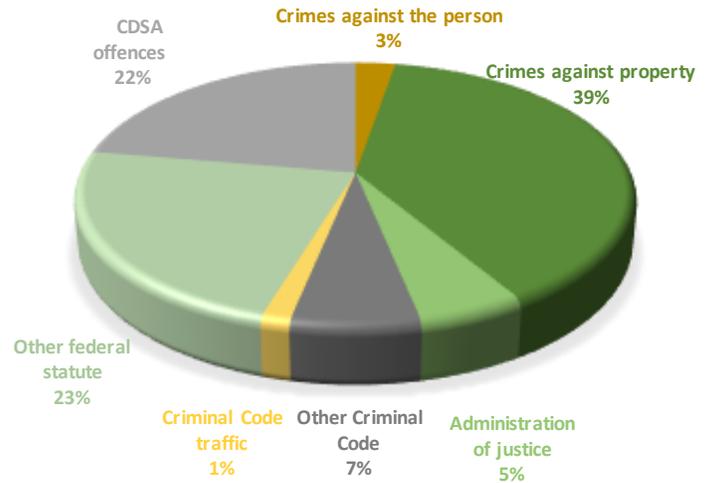


Index Offence⁶

Participants



Non-Participants

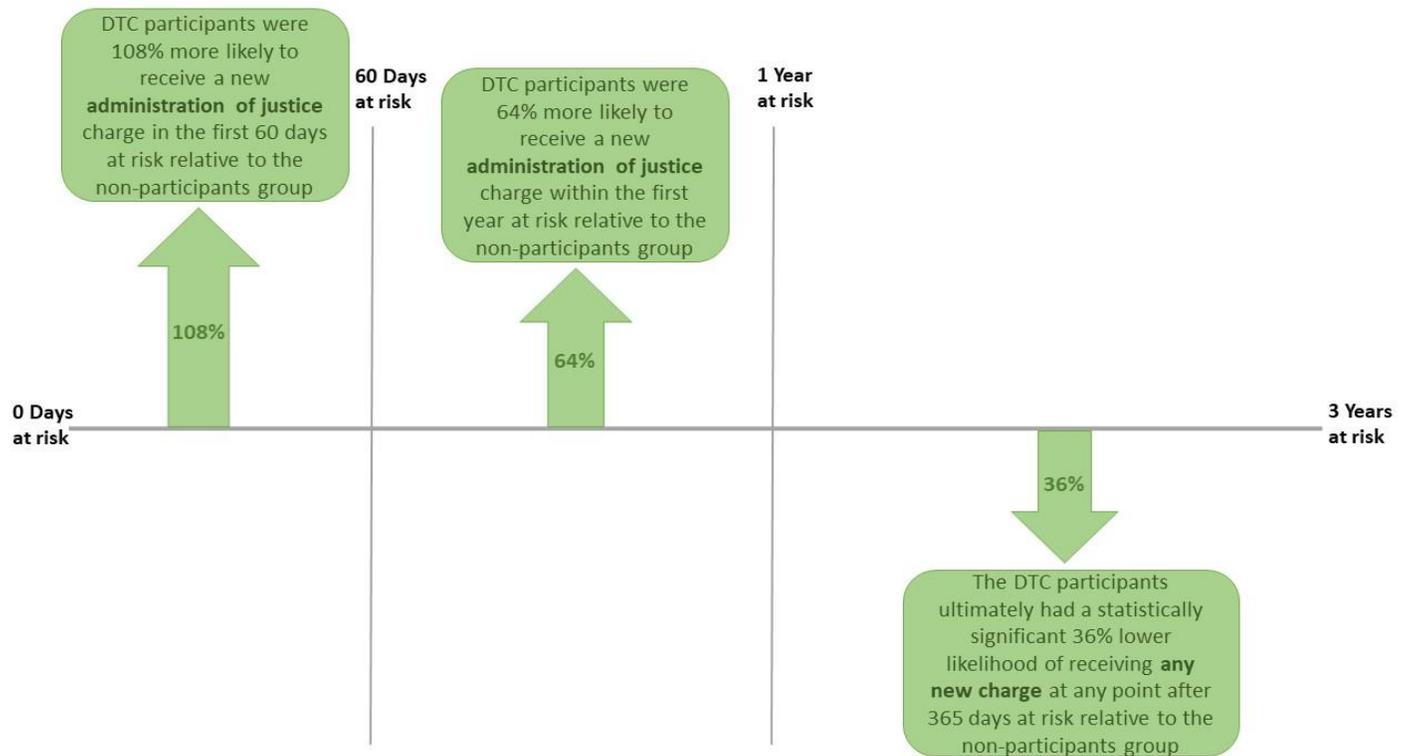


⁵ Non-participants were matched and/or statistically balanced on a number of variables, including: gender, age, Indigenous and visible minority group, criminal history, static risk (LSI-R), as well as economic and mental health indicators. Marital status, education level and multiple deprivation indicators remained significantly different between participants and non-participants; however, they did not appear to have a significant impact on re-offending.

⁶ Index offence refers to the original offence for which the participant was referred to a DTC; non-participants were matched and balanced to reflect similar offences.

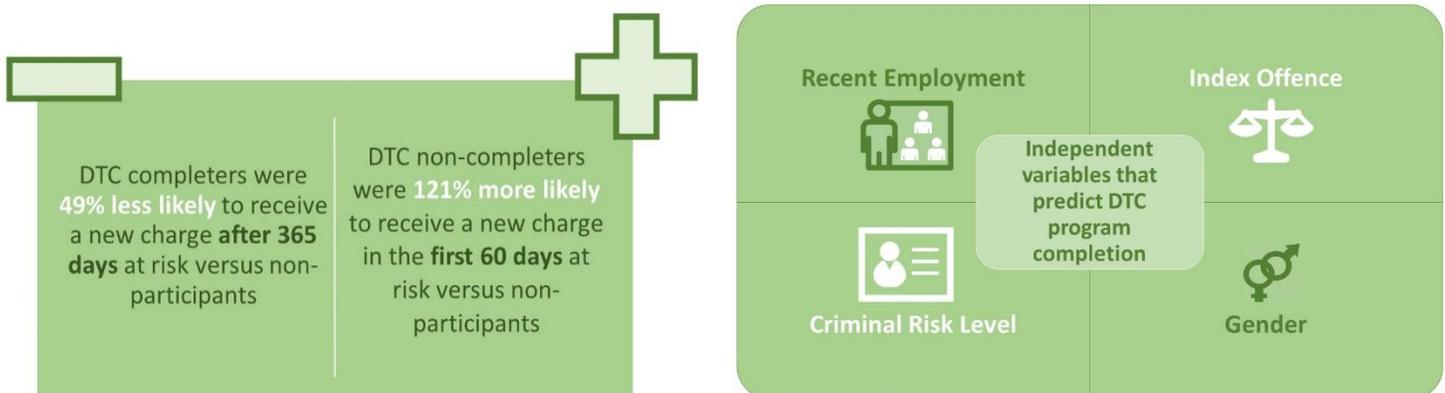
Findings

Participation in DTCs was seen to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. During the first 60-365 days of follow up, DTC participants were significantly more likely to be charged than the non-participants; often for administration of justice offences.⁷ However, after the first year, and up to three years at risk, DTC participants were significantly less likely to receive any new charges.



Note: Administration of justice offences are a specific type of violation of the law, mostly committed when pre-trial conditions or sentences from a previous conviction are disobeyed (e.g., unlawfully at large, breach of community supervision).

DTC completers were less likely to be charged after one year at risk compared to non-participants. DTC non-completers were more likely to be charged in the first 60 days at risk compared to non-participants.⁸ For every additional day spent in the program, the odds of the participant completing increased by almost 1%. The following four variables were found to be predictors of DTC program completion.



⁷ Qualitative evidence collected as part of the broader evaluation of DTCFP suggests that this may be attributable to the rigours of the program, as participants who are not ready or motivated to comply with DTC requirements may accumulate more charges (particularly administrative charges) when DTC related judicial conditions are breached, such as failure to appear in court and/or being caught breaching curfew or boundaries restrictions.

⁸ Caution should be exercised when interpreting data related to DTC completers and non-completers, as there was no statistical matching or balancing possible as the population size was too small. Research has consistently shown important differences between program completers and non-completers that may better explain differences in outcomes (e.g., motivation level). Moreover, it is likely that DTC non-completers did not complete the program because they re-offended.