



Just Facts

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Research and Statistics Division

Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system

Indigenous people are overrepresented in Canada's criminal justice system as both victims and offenders. National data on Indigenous people in the criminal justice system includes data on self-reported victimization, police-reported homicide, and provincial/territorial and federal custody.

Indigenous people overrepresented as crime victims, especially females

In 2014, 28% of Indigenous people (aged 15+) reported being victimized in the previous 12 months, compared to 18% of non-Indigenous people.¹ The rate of violent victimization among Indigenous people was more than double that of non-Indigenous people (163 incidents per 1,000 people vs. 74).

Indigenous females had an overall rate of violent victimization that was double that of Indigenous males and close to triple that of non-Indigenous females.

When controlling for various risk factors, Indigenous males were no more at risk of violent victimization than their non-Indigenous counterparts. In contrast, high victimization rates among Indigenous females could not be fully explained by other risk factors. Even when controlling for various risk factors, Indigenous identity remained a risk factor for violent victimization of Indigenous females.

Indigenous people overrepresented as homicide victims and accused

In 2015, Indigenous people accounted for 25% of homicide victims, at a rate which was about 7 times that of non-Indigenous people (8.77 victims per 100,000 population vs. 1.31).² The homicide rate of Indigenous male victims was about 7 times that of non-Indigenous males (12.85 vs. 1.87). The homicide rate of Indigenous female victims was 6 times that of non-Indigenous females (4.8 vs. 0.77).

In 2015, Indigenous people accounted for 33% of people accused of homicide, at a rate which was 10

¹ Information in this section from Jillian Boyce. 2016. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada.

² Information in this section from Leah Mulligan, Marsha Axford, and André Solecki. Homicide in Canada, 2015. Statistics Canada. Note: Data on homicide accused is based on solved homicides where Indigenous identity was reported.



times that of non-Indigenous people (10.13 persons per 100,000 population vs. 1.01). The rate of Indigenous females accused of homicides was about 31 times that of non-Indigenous females (4.33 vs. 0.14). The rate of Indigenous males accused of homicide was 8 times that of non-Indigenous males (16.09 vs. 1.90).

Indigenous accused implicated in most homicides of Indigenous victims

In 2015, 90% of accused implicated in the homicides of Indigenous victims were Indigenous.³ Two-thirds (67%) of accused implicated in the homicides of Indigenous female victims were Indigenous males, and 71% of accused implicated in the homicides of Indigenous male victims were other Indigenous males.

Indigenous adults and youth overrepresented in custody

In 2014/2015, Indigenous adults accounted for 26% of provincial/territorial custody admissions and 25% of the in-custody federal offender population.⁴ The proportion of Indigenous adults in custody was about 9 times higher than their representation in the adult population (3%). Indigenous adults were overrepresented in custody in most jurisdictions, especially British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

In 2014/2015, Indigenous youth (aged 12-17) accounted for 37% of provincial/territorial custody admissions. The proportion of Indigenous youth in provincial/territorial custody was about 5 times higher than their representation in the youth population (7%). Indigenous youth were overrepresented in custody in most jurisdictions, especially British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario.

Overrepresentation in custody more pronounced for Indigenous females

In 2014/2015, Indigenous men accounted for 24% of adult male provincial/territorial custody admissions and 24% of male offenders in federal custody.⁵ By comparison, Indigenous women accounted for 38% of adult female provincial/territorial custody admissions and 36% of female offenders in federal custody. The proportion of Indigenous adults in custody relative to their proportion in the population was 8 times higher for Indigenous men and 12 times higher for Indigenous women.

In 2014/2015, male Indigenous youth accounted for 34% of male youth provincial/territorial custody admissions, while female Indigenous youth accounted for 49% of female youth provincial/territorial custody admissions. The proportion of Indigenous youth in provincial/territorial custody relative to their proportion in the population was about 5 times higher for Indigenous male youth and 7 times higher for Indigenous female youth.

³ Information in this section from Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey. Special request. Custom tabulation by the Department of Justice Canada. Note: Data on homicide accused is based on solved homicides where Indigenous identity was reported.

⁴ Information in this and next section from Public Safety Canada. 2016. 2015 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview; Statistics Canada. Table 251-0022 - Adult correctional services, custodial admissions to provincial and territorial programs by aboriginal identity, annual (number), CANSIM (database); Table 251-0012 - Youth custody and community services (YCCS), admissions to correctional services, by aboriginal identity and sex, annual (number), CANSIM (database); 2011 National Household Survey. Custom tabulation by the Department of Justice Canada. Note: Provincial/territorial custody data is based on admissions to custody (the same person may be included several times in admission counts), and does not represent all jurisdictions (adult data not available for Alberta; youth data not available for Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Alberta). Provincial/territorial custody data analysis excludes cases where sex and Indigenous identity was unknown.

⁵ Ibid.

