



Just Facts

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Research and Statistics Division

Trends in Adult Federal Custody Populations

This fact sheet is based on data obtained through special requests to Correctional Service Canada (CSC)¹ and Statistics Canada (Census). It examines the number² and rate³ of federal adult offenders in custody over time, and draws comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. Trend analyses were based on data points for the last three census years (2006, 2011 and 2016).

The overall federal incarceration rate of adult Canadians has decreased since 2006; the total number of federal offenders increased from 2005/06 to 2010/11 but has decreased since.

The overall incarceration rate of adult Canadians decreased 4.3% from 2006 to 2016. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 55.6 per 100,000 population. The incarceration rate increased slightly to 57.0 per 100,000 population in 2011, but then decreased to 53.2 per 100,000 population in 2016.

Over the past 10 years, the number of federal adult offenders in custody increased 8.7%. In 2005/06, there were 13,445 federal offenders in custody. This number increased to 14,792 in 2010/11 but then decreased to 14,611 in 2015/16.

Although the incarceration rate of adult Indigenous Canadians has decreased slightly over the past decade, it remains 8 times higher than that of adult non-Indigenous Canadians. The overall number of Indigenous offenders continues to increase while the number of non-Indigenous offenders has decreased slightly.

The incarceration rate of the Indigenous population decreased 2.2% over the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 338.2 per 100,000 Indigenous adults. The incarceration rate increased in 2011

¹ The results and views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of CSC.

² Offender counts are based on yearly snapshots taken for each fiscal year (mid-April).

³ Contrary to offender counts, rates are based on calendar year data points. A rate is defined as a measure of the number of adults in custody per 100,000 adults in the general population. It is important to note that a rate will decrease if the number of adults under federal custody decreases, but it can also decrease if the number of adults in the Canadian population increases while the number of adults under federal custody remains the same.





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(345.3 per 100,000 Indigenous adults), but then decreased to 330.8 per 100,000 Indigenous adults in 2016. It should be highlighted that the slight decrease in the incarceration rate of the Indigenous population is not reflective of a decrease in the Indigenous population in federal custody, but rather an increase of Indigenous adults in the Canadian population.⁴ In fact, the number of Indigenous offenders in federal custody increased 49.1% over the past 10 years. In 2005/06, there were 2,521 Indigenous offenders compared to 3,760 in 2015/16.

The incarceration rate of the non-Indigenous population decreased 11.6% over the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 46.6 per 100,000 non-Indigenous adults. This rate has declined since then to 41.2 per 100,000 non-Indigenous adults in 2016. The number of non-Indigenous offenders in federal custody decreased 0.7% in the past 10 years. In 2005/06, there were 10,924 non-Indigenous offenders compared to 10,851 in 2015/16.

Although the incarceration rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men have decreased over the past decade, the rate of Indigenous men offenders remains 8 times higher than that of non-Indigenous men. The number of Indigenous male offenders continues to increase while the number of non-Indigenous male offenders has decreased slightly.

Trends for incarceration rates and numbers of male offenders mirror the overall offender trends. The incarceration rate of Indigenous men decreased 3.5% in the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 674.8 per 100,000 Indigenous men compared to 651.5 per 100,000 Indigenous men in 2016. Again, this is due to an increase of Indigenous adults in the Canadian population rather than a decrease in the Indigenous population in federal custody. In fact, the number of incarcerated Indigenous men in federal custody increased 47.5% in the past 10 years. In 2005/06, there were 2,381 incarcerated Indigenous men compared to 3,513 in 2015/16.

The incarceration rate of non-Indigenous men decreased 13.3% in the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 93.5 per 100,000 non-Indigenous men compared to 81.1 per 100,000 non-Indigenous men in 2016. The number of incarcerated non-Indigenous men in federal custody decreased 2% in the past 10 years. In 2005/06, there were 10,619 incarcerated non-Indigenous men compared to 10,411 in 2015/16.

The incarceration rates⁵ and total numbers⁶ for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women have increased over the past decade; however, the incarceration rate of Indigenous women continues to be much higher (12.5 times) than that of non-

⁴ Although the incarceration rate of the Indigenous offender population shows a decrease, the representation of Indigenous adults in federal custody has been increasing since 2005/06. More specifically, the proportion of Indigenous offenders in custody increased 7% since 2005/06 (from 19% in 2005/06 to 26% in 2015/16).

⁵ Though the increase in the incarceration rate of non-Indigenous women appears higher compared to Indigenous women, this is due to small numbers for the incarceration rate of non-Indigenous women (rate of 2.5 to 3.3).

⁶ The actual number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous female offenders both increased by over 100 offenders during this time (from 140 to 247 and from 305 to 440, respectively).



Indigenous women.

The incarceration rate of Indigenous women increased 16.0% in the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 35.7 per 100,000 Indigenous women compared to 41.4 per 100,000 Indigenous women in 2016. The number of incarcerated Indigenous women in federal custody increased 76.4% in the past 10 years.⁷ In 2005/06, there were 140 incarcerated Indigenous women compared to 247 in 2015/16.

The incarceration rate of non-Indigenous women increased approximately 32.0% in the past 10 years. In 2006, the incarceration rate was 2.5 per 100,000 non-Indigenous women compared to 3.3 per 100,000 non-Indigenous women in 2016. The number of incarcerated non-Indigenous women in federal custody increased 44.3% in the past 10 years.⁸ In 2005/06, there were 305 incarcerated non-Indigenous women compared to 440 in 2015/16.

Table 1. Federal Offenders in Custody Population, Rates per 100,000 Population, 2006 to 2016.

Federal Offenders in Custody	2006	2011	2016	% Change 2006 to 2016
Indigenous Men	674.8	684.4	651.5	-3.5
Indigenous Women	35.7	40.1	41.4	16.0
Indigenous Total	338.2	345.3	330.8	-2.2
Non-Indigenous Men	93.5	87.2	81.1	-13.3
Non-Indigenous Women	2.5	3.2	3.3	32.0
Non-Indigenous Total	46.6	46.3	41.2	-11.6
Federal Offenders in Custody TOTAL	55.6	57.0	53.2	-4.3

Table 2. Federal Offenders in Custody Population, Numbers, 2005/06 to 2015/16.

Federal Offenders in Custody	2005/06	2010/11	2015/16	% Change 2005/06 to 2015/16
Indigenous Men	2,381	2,991	3,513	47.5
Indigenous Women	140	195	247	76.4
Indigenous Total	2,521	3,186	3,760	49.1
Non-Indigenous Men	10,619	11,215	10,411	-2.0

⁷ Although this percentage increase appears much higher than that of men (see section above), this is partly due to the smaller number of federal female offenders.

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Non-Indigenous Women	305	391	440	44.3
<i>Non-Indigenous Total</i>	<i>10,924</i>	<i>11,606</i>	<i>10,851</i>	<i>-0.7</i>
<i>Federal Offenders in Custody TOTAL</i>	<i>13,445</i>	<i>14,792</i>	<i>14,611</i>	<i>8.7</i>

