

Adult and youth correctional population in Canada declined in 2018/2019

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While balancing public safety concerns, reducing the number of persons held in correctional institutions is seen as a preventive measure to reducing public health risk associated with COVID-19 transmission. In the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an unprecedented decline in the number of adults in a correctional institution.

Some of the steps taken by the Canadian courts and correctional systems to reduce the size of the population living in correctional institutions since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic include: temporary or early release of persons in custody who are considered low-risk to re-offend; extended periods for parole appeals deadlines and access to medical leave privileges; and alternatives to custody while awaiting trials, sentencing and bail hearings. As a result, the average daily count of adults in custody in June 2020 stood 20% below the custodial population in June 2019 (for more information, see note to readers).

Although unparalleled, this recent trend has followed a more general decline, over a longer time period, in the number of people in correctional institutions.

A new *Juristat* article released today, "[Adult and youth correctional statistics in Canada, 2018/2019](#)," provides detailed information about long term trends in the adult and youth correctional populations. This detailed analysis of Canada's correctional population also includes information about the characteristics of people admitted to correctional services, including those admitted to custody and those under community supervision.

Adult and youth incarceration rates continued to decline in 2018/2019

Incarceration rates for both adults (aged 18 years and older) and youth (aged 12 to 17 years) in Canada have been on a downward trend over the last seven years. In 2018/2019, the national incarceration rate (the rate of adults in provincial/territorial and federal custody) was 127 adults per 100,000 population, down 4% from the previous year and down 9% from five years earlier.

There were 37,854 adults on average in provincial/territorial or federal custody per day in Canada in 2018/2019, down 2% from a year earlier. Most adults (23,783) were in provincial/territorial custody serving sentences of less than two years, while 14,071 were in federal custody serving sentences of two years or more.

There were 716 youth in provincial/territorial custody in the 12 reporting jurisdictions (data exclude Quebec) on average in 2018/2019. This represented a rate of 4 youth per 10,000 population, down 10% from the previous year and down 32% from five years earlier.

Most adults and youth are under community supervision

Individuals may serve all or part of their sentence in the community. In 2018/2019, adults under community supervision, such as probation, conditional sentences and provincial parole, accounted for the majority (80%) of the provincial/territorial correctional population on a typical day. In federal correctional services, most adults serve part of their sentences in institutions and the rest of their time is served under community supervision, such as day parole, full parole and statutory release. In 2018/2019, 2 in 5 adults (40%) in the federal correctional population were under community supervision on a typical day.

In 2018/2019, there were, on average, 89,838 adults under provincial/territorial community supervision in the 10 reporting provinces and territories (data exclude Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) per day. In addition, there were, on average, 9,278 adults under federal community supervision per day.

In provincial/territorial correctional services, the rate of adults under community supervision declined in 2018/2019, while it increased slightly in federal correctional services. There were 321 adults per 100,000 population under provincial/territorial community supervision in 2018/2019, a rate 6% lower than the previous year. The rate of adults under federal community supervision rose 1% from a year earlier to 31 adults per 100,000 population.



Most youth serve their sentence in the community. Youth under community supervision accounted for 89% of the youth correctional population in 2018/2019. On average, there were 5,713 youth aged 12 to 17 under community supervision in the 10 reporting provinces and territories (data exclude Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec). This represented a rate of 32 youth per 10,000 population, down 10% from the previous year.

More adults continue to be in remand than in sentenced custody

There are a number of factors—such as judicial interim release decision-making, criminal court case processing delays, and crime trends—that may contribute to changes in the remand population (those in custody awaiting trial or sentencing) in Canada. Since 2004/2005, the average number of adults in remand in provincial/territorial correctional services has grown to substantially exceed the number of adults in sentenced custody. In 2018/2019, there were on average almost twice as many adults in remand (14,778) than in sentenced custody (8,708) per day.

The rate of adults in remand (49 adults per 100,000 population) declined 2% from the previous year, while the rate of adults in sentenced custody (29 adults per 100,000 population) decreased by 10%.

Indigenous adults and youth are overrepresented in admissions to custody

An admission to correctional services is counted each time an individual begins any type of custodial or community supervision program. In 2018/2019, Indigenous adults accounted for almost one-third of adult admissions to provincial/territorial (31%) and federal (29%) custody, while representing approximately 4% of the Canadian adult population. Admissions of Indigenous (-6%) and non-Indigenous (-7%) adults to custody were both lower compared with the previous year.

Indigenous youth accounted for almost half (47%) of youth admissions to custody in the 11 reporting jurisdictions (data exclude Quebec and Alberta), while representing about 9% of the Canadian youth population. Admissions of Indigenous (-20%) and non-Indigenous (-18%) youth to custody both declined from the previous year.

Operating expenditures for adult correctional services decline slightly

Operating expenditures for adult correctional services in Canada edged down 1% from a year earlier to \$5 billion in 2018/2019 (after adjusting for inflation). Operating expenditures increased 4% for provincial/territorial adult corrections and declined 6% for federal correctional services (after adjusting for inflation).

Note to readers

To provide insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the custodial populations in Canada, average daily counts of adults in federal and provincial/territorial custody in Canada are being collected more frequently. For further information, see the following reports in The Daily:

- ["Changes in federal and provincial/territorial custodial populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2019 to April 2020"](#)
- ["After three months of unprecedented declines, monthly decreases in the adult custodial population in Canada slowed in June"](#)

The provincial/territorial correctional system supervises adults serving custodial sentences of less than two years, as well as those being held in pre-trial custody (remand) or serving community sentences such as probation. The federal correctional system supervises adults serving custodial sentences of two years or more, and those on conditional release in the community including parole. Corrections officials typically perform daily counts of persons in their facilities and monthly counts of persons under community supervision. These data are used to calculate the annual average daily custody and community counts as well as incarceration rates.

Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are unable at this time to provide average daily counts to the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics (CCJCSS) for adults under community supervision, therefore these jurisdictions are excluded from the total community and total correctional services figures for adults and year over year comparisons. CCJCSS is working with these provinces to collect this information.

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are unable at this time to provide average daily counts for youth under community supervision, and Quebec is unable to provide community or custody youth counts, therefore these jurisdictions are excluded from the total community and total correctional services figures for youth and year over year comparisons. CCJCSS is working with these provinces to collect this information.

Admissions are counted each time a person begins any period of supervision in a correctional institution or in the community. These data describe and measure the number of times a person moves from one type of correctional supervision to another. The same person may be included several times in the admission counts when moving from one correctional program to another (for example, from remand to sentenced custody) or re-entering the system later in the same year.

Quebec and Alberta are unable at this time to provide admissions counts for youth, therefore these jurisdictions are excluded from the total youth admissions figures and year over year comparisons. CCJCSS is working with these provinces to collect this information.

Available tables: [35-10-0003-01](#) to [35-10-0009-01](#) , [35-10-0012-01](#) to [35-10-0024-01](#) , [35-10-0118-01](#), [35-10-0154-01](#) and [35-10-0155-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3306](#), [3313](#), [3323](#) and [5251](#).

The article "[Adult and youth correctional statistics in Canada, 2018/2019](#)" is now available as part of the publication *Juristat* ([85-002-X](#)). Updated data can also be found in the [Correctional services statistics: Interactive dashboard](#) ([71-607-X](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).