

Incarceration of Aboriginal people in adult correctional services

In 2007/2008, Aboriginal adults accounted for 22% of admissions to sentenced custody, while representing 3% of the Canadian population.

Age, level of education, and employment status can only partially explain the representation of Aboriginal adults incarcerated in Canadian prisons, according to a new study that used data from the Integrated Correctional Service Survey and the 2006 Census to analyze factors that could be contributing to the representation of Aboriginal adults in custody.

The provincial incarceration rate for Aboriginal adults in the jurisdictions studied was higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal adults. The gap in the incarceration rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults narrowed when age was considered, but Aboriginal adults continued to have consistently higher rates across all age groupings.

Analysis based on available data for Saskatchewan and Alberta showed that young adults without a high school diploma and without a job had the highest rates of incarceration.

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people aged 20 to 34, incarceration rates declined as the education and employment situation improved. However, the decreases were greater for non-Aboriginal young adults.

When comparing persons of similar employment status and education level, the ratio between incarceration rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young adults in Saskatchewan and Alberta decreased by about half.

The analysis suggests that other factors, such as income, housing and rehabilitative needs, may be involved in the representation of Aboriginal offenders in custody.

Note: Rates of incarceration were calculated as of May 16, 2006, the day the census was taken. The rate represents the number of persons in remand, sentenced custody or other temporary detention that day for every 1,000 persons in the general population. Jurisdictions included in the analysis are: Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Correctional Service of Canada.

 Table: Aboriginal people as a proportion of admissions to adult provincial/territorial sentenced custody, and as a proportion of the general population, 2007/2008

Province and territory	Provincial and territorial sentenced custody ¹	Adult general population (18 years and older) ²
	% of admissions	% of population
Newfoundland and Labrador	21	4
Prince Edward Island	1	1
Nova Scotia	7	2
New Brunswick	8	2
Quebec	2	1
Ontario	9	2
Manitoba	69	12
Saskatchewan	81	11
Alberta	35	5
British Columbia	21	4
Yukon	76	22
Northwest Territories	86	45
Nunavut	..	78
All jurisdictions	22	3

- .. not available for a specific reference period
 1. Includes intermittent sentences.
 2. Proportion is based on data from the 2006 Census.

 Table: Incarceration rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons aged 20 to 34, by employment and education status, selected jurisdictions, on May 16, 2006

Employment and education status	Aboriginal incarceration rate(1)	Non-Aboriginal incarceration rate(1)	Ratio between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal incarceration rates
New Brunswick and Nova Scotia(2)			
Overall population aged 20 to 34	4.8	1.8	2.7
Without a diploma	6.0	3.4	1.8

With a diploma	4.4	1.5	2.9
Without employment	8.6	4.9	1.8
With employment	2.2	0.7	3.0
Saskatchewan			
Overall population			
aged 20 to 34	22.1	1.0	22.2
Without a diploma,			
without employment	48.8	9.9	4.9
Without a diploma,			
with employment	41.4	2.7	15.1
With a diploma,			
without employment	9.9	1.4	7.3
With a diploma, with			
employment	4.3	0.3	13.0
Alberta			
Overall population			
aged 20 to 34	15.5	1.7	9.3
Without a diploma,			
without employment	46.1	14.1	3.3
Without a diploma,			
with employment	25.0	5.2	4.8
With a diploma,			
without employment	8.3	1.6	5.1
With a diploma, with			
employment	2.4	0.6	4.1

1. Incarceration rate per 1,000 population.

2. Due to small numbers for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, education and employment status were not analyzed in combination with one another. This table includes jurisdictions for which data were available.

Note: "Without employment" refers to all persons who did not have employment, including those who are unemployed, inactive and on disability. "Diploma" refers to a high school diploma or higher.