

Basic Needs for Safe Reintegration: Financial and Housing Stability

Federal offenders, especially Indigenous women, frequently self-report having experienced monetary and housing needs.

Why we are doing this study

At time of admission to Correctional Service Canada (CSC), a substantial number of offenders present histories of financial instability and unstable accommodation in the community. Understanding the basic needs experienced by federal offenders can help in formulating effective approaches for assisting them with a successful return to the community.

What we did

CSC routinely collects information on offenders under federal jurisdiction (those serving sentences of two years or longer). Data were extracted from the Offender Management System in relation to financial instability (no bank account, no credit) or unstable accommodation (frequent address changes), as reported in the Dynamic Factors Identification and Analysis – Revised component of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process. These year-end 2021 in-custody and 2020-21 admission figures reflect the prevalence of these characteristics.

What we found

In Table 1, statistics show that the number and percentage in-custody and admitted who have experienced financial instability. Overall, women were more likely than men to have experienced monetary problems. Also noteworthy, Indigenous men and women in federal custody display higher percentages of financial instability than their Non-Indigenous counterparts do. The data indicate that the flow into federal corrections with this identified monetary need is continuing.

Table 1: Financial Instability (%)

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Overall
Custody	2,407 / 3,163 (76.1%)	3,698 / 6,218 (59.5%)	5,756 / 9,381 (64.6%)
<i>Men</i>	2,228 / 2,946 (75.6%)	3,528 / 5,960 (59.2%)	5,756 / 8,906 (64.6%)
<i>Women</i>	179 / 217 (82.5%)	170 / 258 (65.9%)	349 / 475 (73.5%)
Admissions	699 / 936 (74.7%)	1,067 / 1,850 (57.7%)	1,766 / 2,786 (63.4%)
<i>Men</i>	616 / 839 (73.4%)	989 / 1,742 (56.8%)	1,605 / 2,581 (62.2%)
<i>Women</i>	83 / 97 (85.6%)	78 / 108 (72.2%)	161 / 205 (78.5%)

Table 2 shows that the number and percentage of federal men and women in-custody and upon admission who have experienced unstable accommodation. One striking observation is that women are much more likely than men in-custody to note issues with precarious accommodation. However, the relatively higher percentage of Indigenous women than Non-Indigenous women in federal custody who have experienced housing needs is profound. Again, the data indicate that there is a steady flow into federal corrections of women with this lived experience.

Table 2: Housing - Unstable Accommodation (%)

	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Overall
Custody	1,759 / 3,157 (55.7%)	2,174 / 6,228 (34.9%)	3,933 / 9,385 (41.9%)
<i>Men</i>	1,607 / 2,938 (54.7%)	2,059 / 5,969 (34.5%)	3,666 / 8,907 (41.2%)
<i>Women</i>	152 / 219 (69.4%)	115 / 259 (44.4%)	267 / 478 (55.6%)
Admissions	495 / 940 (52.7%)	640 / 1,856 (34.5%)	1,135 / 2,796 (40.6%)
<i>Men</i>	427 / 841 (50.8%)	580 / 1,746 (33.2%)	1,007 / 2,587 (38.9%)
<i>Women</i>	68 / 99 (68.7%)	60 / 110 (54.6%)	128 / 209 (61.2%)

What it means

Noticeably, some important differences emerge in both the numbers and percentages of men and women offenders with respect to their lived experience prior to admission with financial instability and unstable accommodation. It is reasonable to anticipate that they will have these same issues upon release from custody and that this will impact their attempts at reintegration. The extent of these basic needs being faced by offenders in general, and particularly by Indigenous women is noteworthy. This result supports the provision of services to offenders in relation to budgetary management and assistance with obtaining suitable living arrangements.

For more information

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