

Case Characteristics of Federal Offenders Unlawfully at Large (UAL): Pre- and Post-Sentence Expiry Date (SED)

Characteristics of federal offenders who are UAL vary depending on whether or not their sentence has expired.

Why we are doing this study

On any given day, roughly 500 offenders who were conditionally released from federal custody are deemed to be unlawfully at large (UAL). This number has remained relatively constant for decades as the turnover rate of those going UAL and those being re-apprehended appears to be stable. Not surprisingly, the number of those who remain UAL long after their sentence has expired appears to be consistent as well. While recent studies have examined the general profile of all UAL offenders, the purpose of this study is to explore differences between those who are UAL whereupon their sentence has not yet expired with those who are still UAL and reached a sentence expiration date.

What we did

All federal offenders who were UAL were drawn from Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) Offender Management System on December 25, 2022. On that date, there were 477 offenders UAL. Overall, 440 (92%) were men and 37 (8%) were women. Regionally, the largest proportion were located in the Prairies (38%), followed by Ontario (24%), Quebec (20%), Pacific (12%) and Atlantic (6%). In accordance with their Warrant of Committal, a sentence expiry date was established and two groups were formed. Those who were UAL and still under sentence (pre-SED) and those for whom their sentence had expired while UAL (post-SED). A total of 205 out of 477 (or 43%) were deemed to be UAL whereupon their sentence had not yet expired. The remainder were the majority, that is 272 (57%) were past their sentence expiration date. The two groups of UAL offender were examined for selected characteristics: age, sentence length, major offence, supervision type, static and dynamic risk (ratings at intake).

What we found

Offenders UAL pre-SED versus those post-SED were found to be:

- 1) younger;
- 2) mostly Indigenous;
- 3) serving shorter sentences;
- 4) convicted for a violent offence;
- 5) on statutory release; and
- 6) rated higher risk and needs.

Table 1. UALs: Pre- and Post-Sentence Expiry Date

Characteristic	Pre-SED (N=205) % (n)	Post-SED (N=272) % (n)
Age		
<35	48% (99)	14% (40)
35 to 64	45% (93)	51% (139)
65+	6% (13)	34% (93)
Race		
Indigenous	53% (109)	20% (54)
Black	7% (14)	14% (39)
White	33% (67)	45% (123)
Other	7% (15)	21% (56)
Sentence Length		
<4 years	53% (109)	49% (132)
4 years+	38% (78)	51% (140)
Indeterminate	9% (18)	N/A
Major Offence		
Violent	73% (149)	44% (119)
Drug	15% (32)	30% (83)
Non-Violent	12% (24)	26% (70)
Supervision Type		
Day Parole	15% (31)	20% (54)
Full Parole	10% (21)	33% (91)
Statutory Release	75% (153)	47% (127)
Static Risk		
High	52% (107)	19% (52)
Medium	39% (80)	22% (60)
Low	7% (15)	25% (69)
Missing	2% (3)	34% (91)
Dynamic Needs		
High	71% (146)	26% (72)
Medium	19% (40)	22% (59)
Low	8% (16)	18% (50)
Missing	2% (3)	34% (91)

What it means

Non-compliance with conditions of release is a criminal offence. Unlawfully being at large is taken seriously by correctional systems because it reflects an unwillingness to face the consequences of one's criminal action. The higher risk/needs profile of UAL offenders, particularly those still within their sentence expiration, suggests periodic reminders be offered of the repercussions for absconding while serving a sentence.

For more information

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