

The Association of Age and Recidivism

Recent research in CSC confirms the well-established finding of a linear decline in recidivism with age

Why we are doing this study

Previous research has shown that the recidivism rates vary based on key offender profile variables such as age and gender. Population analysis shows that the mean age of federal offenders in Canada has been increasing with possible implications for case management. This analysis, part of a larger recidivism study, summarizes recent findings associating various age bands with measures of recidivism.

What we are doing

A release cohort from 2007 to 2012 of 27,066 federal offenders was selected. Revocation and revocation with an offence outcomes following the first release on their sentences were examined for the men (N = 21,915) and women (N = 1,748).

What we have found so far

Table 1 presents the results for all federal offenders. A clear linear relationship between age and returns to custody and returns with an offence is evident. Although the numbers are small the pattern also applies to violent reoffending. Women's rates of reoffending are lower, but in general, a similar pattern is evident (Table 2). Further disaggregation by Indigenous identity also demonstrated a pattern of younger offenders doing more poorly than older offenders.

Table 1. Release outcomes by age group at release (N = 21,915) for the 2007-2012 cohort

Age at Release	Any Return to Custody %	Any Revocation with Offence %	Revocation with Schedule 1 or Homicide Offence %	Revocation with a Schedule 1 Sexual Offence %
Under 25	57.8	19.2	3.6	-
25 to 30	52.1	15.1	2.5	0.1
30 to 35	48.5	13.1	2.4	0.2
35 to 40	47.8	12.7	2.6	0.2
40 to 45	45.9	10.6	1.9	-
45 to 50	40.3	9.3	1.6	-
50 to 55	32.8	7.1	1.3	-
> 55	17.9	3.4	1.0	-

Note. Results with a frequency of less than 5 are suppressed. Results are for the period offenders are under a federal warrant.

Table 2. Release outcomes by age group at release for the 2007-2012 cohort (N = 1,748): Federally sentenced women

Age Group at Release	Any Return to Custody %	Any Revocation with Offence %
Less than 25	47.2	14.0
25 to 30	46.3	11.9
30 to 35	38.8	9.5
35 to 40	38.7	7.1
40 to 45	38.5	11.2
45 to 50	35.1	6.6
50 to 55	24.4	8.1
55 and older	12.1	1.7

The results are most striking when comparing the results for offenders in the youngest and oldest age bands. Federal offenders under 25 are almost 6 times more likely to return to custody with a new offence than those over 55 while they are under warrant. When we examined the rates of recidivism using a fixed 6-month follow-up the relationship of age and recidivism for both the general population and for women was even stronger.

What it means

The age-offending curve is a well-established finding in criminology. This research confirms the pattern in CSC. The average age of offenders in CSC have been gradually increasing and is now 40 years. This suggests that an older population is likely to produce lower recidivism rates and better corporate results compared to previous years.

For more information

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