



# Research in Brief

## Youth Histories of Federally Sentenced Homicide, Sex, Robbery, and Drug Offenders

*Across major offence categories federal offenders with youth histories have higher rates of re-offending.*

### Why we did this study

The predictive validity of prior criminal record with regards to recidivism has been widely researched and is well-established in the penological literature.

Notwithstanding the important contribution that criminal history makes to the prediction of criminal behavior, it remains to be demonstrated whether these same historically set items as youth (<18 years) continue to be efficient predictors of re-offending for federal offenders.

Upon arrival to federal corrections, the criminal history of every offender is assessed for prior youth and/or adult court involvements. Systematically, indicators recorded for each new admission include: number of convictions, type of convictions, court dispositions (community supervision, custody) and outcomes (failures on community supervision, disciplinary reports, attempt escapes and escapes).

### What we did

Previous youth histories reflected in the Correctional Service of Canada's Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process were extracted from the Offender Management System. The OIA process standardizes the recording of youth history indicators in the Criminal History Record section. One such metric is the percentage of federal offenders who had previous offences as a youth. Data were drawn for six consecutive fiscal years of releases (2006-07 to 2011-12) for federally sentenced homicide (1,677), sex (3,814), robbery (7,344) and drug (8,718) offenders. Post-release outcomes (re-offence within a three year follow-up) were gathered for the study population.

### What we found

OMS-recorded data show that federally sentenced robbery offenders as a group have more previous youth court involvements histories than homicide, sex, and drug offenders (57% versus 42%, 28% and 44% respectively) and higher rates of return to federal custody for a new offence (32.5% versus

22.8%, 15.5% and 27.9% respectively). While results reflect that across all major offence categories federal offenders with youth histories were more likely to return with an offence than those with no previous youth court involvements, the greater prevalence of youth history and higher rates of re-offending among federal robbery offenders statistically distinguishes them from the other major offence categories and those with no previous youth history.

**Table: Youth History and Return (R) with an Offence**

Youth History	Homicide	R%	Sex	R%	Robbery	R%	Drug	R%
Yes	705 (42%)	22.8	1,054 (28%)	15.5	4,148 (57%)	32.8	3,796 (44%)	27.9
No	972 (58%)	13.2	2,760 (72%)	5.6	3,176 (43%)	19.8	4,922 (56%)	13.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,677</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>3,814</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7,324</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>8,718</b>	<b>19.9</b>

### What it means

While criminal history as a youth among federal offenders appears to be related to re-offending, more intensive intervention efforts and increased supervision are required for those offenders who became involved with the criminal justice system at a young age.

### For more information

Please e-mail the Research Branch [research@csc-scc.gc.ca](mailto:research@csc-scc.gc.ca) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

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