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# Research at a glance

## Aboriginal Women: Profile and Changing Population

**KEY WORDS:** *Aboriginal women offenders, profile, population changes over time*

### What it means

Examinations over a ten-year period demonstrate that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women differ on many indicators of correctional outcomes and that First Nations and Métis women also exhibit differences between groups. These patterns are being used as a starting point for a broader examination of First Nations and Métis women's social histories and correctional experiences.

Findings from this study can assist the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) policy and practices specific to Aboriginal women. That said, the patterns revealed in this study also reflect women's lives prior to incarceration. As such, a comprehensive approach involving both government and community stakeholders would likely be most effective in contributing to closing the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women that are present at admission.

### What we found

Overall, Aboriginal women's profiles were more criminogenic, meaning they presented with more factors related to crime, than non-Aboriginal women's profiles, with relatively few significant changes over time. Differences between First Nations and Métis women were less consistent, although First Nations women tended to have more criminogenic backgrounds.

Aboriginal women tended to be younger and to have lower levels of education at admission than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Over the study period, First Nations women were more likely than Métis or non-Aboriginal women to be serving an indeterminate sentence and to be convicted of a violent offence. The levels of risk and need of First Nations and Métis women were similar; the static risk and criminogenic need of these two groups were assessed as higher than that of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Both First Nations and Métis women were found to present particularly high levels of criminogenic need relating to substance abuse, employment, and the personal/emotional domain.

When considering release, Aboriginal women's rates of discretionary release (that is, day or full parole) were lower than those of non-Aboriginal women. While Métis women's rates of discretionary release were similar to those of non-Aboriginal women in 2003-05, these rates decreased to join those of First Nations women by the end of the study period.

### Why we did this study

Aboriginal offenders are over-represented in the Canadian federal correctional system, with Aboriginal women in particular representing the fastest growing group of offenders. The purpose of the study was to support future policy initiatives and decision-making by contributing a more complete understanding of Aboriginal women offenders' characteristics, as well as changing patterns over time. The findings will guide a larger body of research being conducted on Aboriginal women under federal jurisdiction.

### What we did

A series of five consecutive two-year admission cohorts of women offenders, running from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2013, were used in analyses. Data were collected from CSC's electronic databases for both institutional and release cohorts. Women were grouped according to ethnicity, and each group's patterns of change over time were examined and contrasted.

### For more information

Beaudette, J., Cheverie, M., & Gobeil, R. (2014). *Aboriginal women: Profile and changing population* (Research Report R-341). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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