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————— **Research Report** —————

**Offenders Serving Life and Indeterminate
Sentences: Snapshot (2009) and Changing
Profile (1998 to 2008)**

Ce rapport est également disponible en français. Pour en obtenir un exemplaire, veuillez vous adresser à la Direction de la recherche, Service correctionnel du Canada, 340, avenue Laurier Ouest, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0P9.

This report is also available in French. Should additional copies be required, they can be obtained from the Research Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, 340 Laurier Ave. West, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P9.

**Offenders Serving Life and Indeterminate Sentences: Snapshot (2009)
And Changing Profile (1998 to 2008)**

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December 2010

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Executive Summary

Keywords: *Life imprisoned offenders, Indeterminate sentencing, Dangerous offenders*

On March 31, 2009 there were 4,774 offenders serving life or indeterminate sentences (hereafter: Lifers) with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC or the Service). This population represented 21.9% of all offenders, and over one-fifth (22%) of the incarcerated offender population.¹ As these offenders are supervised by the Service for the remainder of their lives, they represent a significant challenge in terms of long-term costs as well as the need to develop and refine programs and services that respond to their risk and needs. Ensuring that these needs are met is an important consideration for their safe transition to the community, especially considering that over three-quarters (75.6%) had a sentence that included a homicide offence (e.g., manslaughter, first- or second-degree murder). Of the Lifer population, 3,052 were residing in institutions, while the remaining 1,722 (36%) were living in the community on conditional releases on March 31, 2009.

This report is comprised of two sections: Part 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the Lifer population on March 31, 2009, including those in penitentiary and community populations. Part 2 of the study examined changes in characteristics of the Lifer population between March 31, 1998 and March 31, 2008.

A number of key findings emerged from the initial analyses. First, in terms of demographic characteristics, the Lifer population is overwhelmingly male (96.5%), predominately Caucasian (71.8%), and aging: the average Lifer was 49 years old. Lifers on conditional release tended to be older than in-custody Lifers (55 versus 45 years of age). Second, members of this population typically had high needs. Over two-thirds of Lifers reported a substance abuse problem upon admission, over 60% had not completed high school, over one-quarter (25.7%) had a current or past mental health problem, and more than one in eight offenders sentenced since 1994 self-identified as gang members. Results from the Offender Intake Assessment showed that over three-quarters of all Lifers were assessed as having high needs upon admission, and 81.5% were assessed as being high-risk. Third, Aboriginal Lifers were found to have higher risk as well as high needs in all seven of the dynamic factors assessed at intake, and specifically in the domain of substance abuse, where nine out of ten had some or considerable need. Fourth, the snapshot also revealed that the characteristics of those serving terms of life imprisonment were very different than those sentenced to indeterminate sentences (e.g., dangerous offenders). Whereas most life sentenced offenders have been convicted of a homicide offence, those serving indeterminate terms were much more likely to be sexual offenders. Moreover, indeterminate offenders typically had more prior convictions, and were admitted with higher levels of risk and lower motivation to change.

Part 2 of this report presents the results from an examination of the changes in the Lifer population in the ten years from March 31, 1998 to March 31, 2008. The analyses revealed that

¹ Percentages were based on a total offender population of 21,805 on March 31, 2009 with 13,882 offenders who were in-custody and 7,923 in the community on conditional release (Data retrieved from the CSC Corporate Reporting System: National Capital, Accommodation and Operations Plan.)

the overall number of Lifers in the CSC population grew by approximately one-fifth (20.2%) during that time. One of the challenges of managing the Lifer population is that new life-sentenced offenders are admitted each year, but members of the existing Lifer population are not removed from the count until their death. As a result, this group of offenders is projected to continue growing: in the ten years from 1998 to 2008, for example, an average of 96 Lifers was added each year. If that trend continues, there will be over 5,700 Lifers in the CSC population by April 1, 2019.²

In addition to growth, a number of trends were evident in the Lifer population. In terms of offence specific characteristics, the proportion of offenders with sentences that included a homicide increased from 72% to almost 76%, while the proportion of robbery offenders decreased slightly. Despite the fact that these offenders had been involved in serious offences, more were on conditional release on March 31, 2008 (37%) than in 1998 (32%). The fact that offenders convicted of manslaughter or murder rarely commit another violent offence (including homicide) once returned to the community (National Parole Board, 2009), suggests that the risk that these offenders pose has been carefully managed.

A number of demographic characteristics of the Lifer population changed in the ten years between 1998 and 2008. During this era, the average age of a Lifer increased from 44 to 49 years. The number of Lifers who were 51 years of age or older, for instance, increased by almost 95%, while the proportion of those aged 61 years and over more than doubled, from 353 offenders in 1998 to 880 in 2008 – representing a 149% increase in this age group. These increases may have resource implications for the Service, especially for those who remain in the institutional population and require enhanced health care services.

One unexpected finding was the increase in the number of women Lifers, having grown from 122 offenders in 1998 to 168 on March 31, 2008, representing a 37.7% increase, which was nearly 50% greater than the rate of increase for male Lifers. All women Lifers were serving life sentences: there were no women serving indeterminate sentences. If the rate of growth in the women's Lifer population continues to grow at the same rate as in the prior ten years, there will be over 210 women Lifers by April 1, 2019.

Lifers represent a significant proportion of the CSC population, and this population is growing. These offenders will be supervised by the Service for the rest of their lives. This fact has a number of implications for the delivery of programs, both within institutions and in the community. As the characteristics of this population continue to change, the Service will be required to develop, refine, or extend existing programs, such as LifeLine and the Lifer's Resource Strategy, to support these inmates through their custodial sentences, and in their safe return to the community.

² The male Lifer population more than doubled between 1992 and 2009. Perron and Corriveau (1992) reported that on January 31, 1992, there were 2,281 males sentenced to life and indeterminate sentences (p. 26), while on March 31, 2009 there were 4,607 life and indeterminate males under federal supervision (Perron and Corriveau did not, however, report totals for women Lifers) .

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Introduction

Lifers represented 21.9% of the entire population of offenders under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC or the Service) on March 31, 2009. These long-term offender populations present a unique set of challenges for correctional systems (Flanagan, 1981). Sometimes their initial adjustment to custody is difficult (Zamble, 1992). For example, some offenders may feel as though they have “nothing to lose,” especially in the earlier years of their sentence; making them more apt to act without considering the consequences of their actions (see Hassine, 2008). Further, it is sometimes difficult to motivate a Lifer during the early years of their sentence (Santos, 2003). This is because the possibility of release is so far in the future that it loses its incentive value (Zamble, 1992). Santos (2007) notes that many offenders serving long sentences do not begin thinking about, or preparing for, life after release until well into their sentence. Even when motivated to change, some offenders serving long sentences may have difficulty accessing programs designed to facilitate such change. In institutions where program demand exceeds availability, offenders who are nearing their potential release date may be given priority access to programs; resulting in limited program availability to Lifers during the early part of their sentences.

It can also be difficult for those serving life sentences to maintain personal relationships with family and friends. This may be one reason why Lifers are at greater risk of suicide and homicide while incarcerated (Porporino, 1991). Mumola (2005) for example, found that U.S. state prisoners convicted of a violent offence were almost four times more likely to commit suicide than those convicted of a non-violent offence, and that homicide offenders had the second highest suicide rate (p. 8). Furthermore, Gabor (2007) reported that 32.9% of the deaths due to accidents, homicide, or suicide in federal custody between 2001 and 2005 were of Lifers (p. 8). Thus, this group is overrepresented in these incidents compared to their proportion in the offender population.

Despite the challenges reported above, a growing proportion of Canadian Lifers are eventually returned into the community. Given the average length of time they are incarcerated, community re-entry is challenging for a number of reasons. For example, many Lifers must adapt to a society and culture that has changed in the time they were incarcerated. In some cases, the offender’s family members and other social supports may be scarce. Others may lack the

vocational, social or life skills that they need to make a successful community reintegration. In addition, the long-term impact of prison life may have contributed to some level of institutionalization or prisonization for some offenders.

In order to assist offender reintegration, the CSC in partnership with the National Parole Board (NPB) and non-governmental organizations, has developed services such as the LifeLine program. However, as noted in the Task Force on Long Term Offenders (1998) (hereafter: Task Force), in order to provide programs such as LifeLine it is essential to know the characteristics of the Lifer population. For this reason the Task Force (1998) recommended producing reports detailing the characteristics of the Lifer population on a regular basis (p. vi). This report responds to the need for an updated profile of this population and the changes that have occurred since the last report was produced (see Motiuk & Nafekh, 2000).

Consistent with the recommendations of the 1998 Task Force, the purpose of this report is to provide policy makers and program managers with information about the characteristics of the Lifer population that they require to plan, develop, or refine programs aimed at helping offenders serving lengthy sentences successfully reintegrate into the community. Of special interest are services such as LifeLine, which was developed specifically to respond to the special challenges and needs of the Lifer population.

The analysis is presented in two parts. First, Part 1 presents a snapshot of the characteristics of Lifers in-custody and under conditional release on March 31, 2009. Part 2 examines the changing profile of Lifers by comparing the Lifer population on March 31, 1998 to that of March 31, 2008. In the pages that follow, the sources of data and analytical strategies are described, and this is followed by the results. The report ends with a discussion about the findings, and the implications of those findings for the Service.

An offender serving life and indeterminate sentences will remain under correctional supervision for the rest of his or her life. There are four different types of life sentences: life with no chance of parole for 25 years (imposed on offenders convicted of first-degree murder), life with no chance of parole for ten to 25 years (imposed on those convicted of second-degree murder), life as a maximum sentence (for offenders convicted of such offences as aggravated sexual assault), and indeterminate sentences (see Appendix A for definitions of these terms). Indeterminate sentences are imposed on offenders designated as “Dangerous Offenders” under Section 735 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, and they are typically sentenced on sexual offences

(Axford, 2010; Trevethan, Crutcher, & Moore, 2002). Offenders who receive a life or indeterminate sentence are referred to collectively as Lifers and that term is used throughout this report.

Methodology

Data

To conduct the analyses reported below, information was drawn from the CSC's Offender Management System (OMS). The OMS is a comprehensive source of data on all offenders supervised by the CSC. There are, however, a number of considerations that have to be understood when interpreting these data. First, this database is dynamic, and on any given day, there are admissions, discharges, deportations, or deaths. As a result, data drawn on different days may produce alternative results (e.g., the number of Lifers in the CSC population). Second, some of the offenders in this study were admitted in the 1940s and 1950s, and these older records are often incomplete (e.g., especially information from the offender intake assessment, or OIA, introduced in 1994). Despite these limitations, the OMS is the best source of information about characteristics of offenders admitted to the CSC.

Analytic Strategy

During the first section of the report (the snapshot), descriptive statistics are presented to describe the existing population of Lifers in custody and on conditional release as of March 31, 2009. In the second part of the report, the changing profile of the Lifer population is examined by comparing snapshots from March 31, 1998 and March 31, 2008. To test for statistically significant changes in the populations between these two time periods, chi-square analyses (when examining categorical variables) and one-way analyses of variance (when examining continuous variables) were employed. However, given the very large population sizes used in these analyses, statistical significance was frequently attained even though observed differences were small. Therefore, effect sizes are also listed when inferential statistics were employed; Cramer's Phi (ϕ_c) for chi-square tests and Cohen's d for one-way analyses of variance. For Cohen's d , an effect size of 0.2 to 0.3 is considered "small", 0.5 "medium", and greater than 0.8 is considered "large" (Cohen, 1988). Cramer's Phi is interpreted similarly to a correlation coefficient. Values range from 0 to +1, with coefficients closer to one reflecting a greater association or relationship between variables.

Results

Part 1: Snapshot of Federal Lifers

Data retrieved from the Correctional Service of Canada's OMS from March 31, 2009 revealed that there were 4,774 Lifers under federal jurisdiction or 21.9% of the total offender population³. Of these offenders, 4,345 (19.7%) were serving life sentences and 429 (2.0%) were serving indeterminate sentences. On March 31, 2009, almost two-thirds of all Lifers (3,052 offenders or 63.9% of the Lifer population) were housed in institutions, representing 22% of the overall CSC incarcerated offender population. The remaining 1,722 Lifers (36.1%) were on conditional release, and they represented slightly over one-fifth (21.7%) of the community offender population.⁴ Table 1 lists the various sentences that comprise the life and indeterminate sentence categories as well as the number of offenders in each category on March 31, 2009.

Table 1

*Distribution of Lifers and Indeterminate-Sentenced Offenders by Sentence Type, March 31, 2009.*⁵

Sentence	Lifers	
	Life sentence	Indeterminate
Life Commuted	48	
Life Maximum	195	
Life Minimum	4,101	
Dangerous Offender		385
Dangerous Sex Offender		36
Habitual Criminal		6
Lieutenant-Governor Warrant		1
Previous detention order		1
Total	4,344	429

Note: Sentence type data on one case was missing.

³ Based on a total offender population of 21,805 on March 31, 2009 (13,822 incarcerated and 7,923 on conditional release).

⁴ Offenders who were deceased or deported are not included in these analyses.

⁵ See Appendix A for complete definitions of sentence types.

Table 2 lists the breakdown of sentence types among the institutional population and those on conditional release by CSC region in which the offender was serving their sentence on March 31, 2009. The greatest number of offenders serving life sentences was in the Ontario region, and this is consistent with the fact that it has the largest offender population. Life sentenced offenders were, however, under-represented, in the Atlantic and Prairie regions. In terms of offenders serving indeterminate sentences, the greatest populations were in the Ontario and Pacific regions.

Table 2
Distribution of Lifers and Indeterminate-Sentenced Offenders by Region, March 31, 2009

Population	Lifers	
	Life sentence	Indeterminate
Institutional	2,660	392
<i>Atlantic</i>	7.7	6.6
<i>Quebec</i>	25.0	16.5
<i>Ontario</i>	31.2	35.5
<i>Prairie</i>	16.4	17.9
<i>Pacific</i>	19.7	24.5
Conditional Release	1,691	38
<i>Atlantic</i>	6.3	2.6
<i>Quebec</i>	27.4	18.4
<i>Ontario</i>	25.8	21.1
<i>Prairie</i>	17.9	7.9
<i>Pacific</i>	22.6	50.0
Total	4,351	430

In order to determine the proportion of Lifers incarcerated compared to those in the community, the ratio of institutional to conditionally released offenders was also calculated. Higher ratios indicate a greater number of incarcerated offenders relative to those under community supervision. Table 3 indicates the ratio of institutional to conditionally released Lifers in the five CSC regions. Among those receiving life sentences, the region with the highest

ratio was Ontario, where there were almost two offenders housed in institutions for everyone in the community. The lowest ratio, by contrast, was found in the Pacific region, where there were over three offenders in-custody for every two in the community. Among those receiving indeterminate sentences, the ratios are, as expected, large – with a very large proportion of offenders in-custody. Similar to those receiving life sentences, lower ratios were again found in the Quebec and Pacific regions, indicating a greater proportion of indeterminate sentenced offenders serving their time in the community than in the other regions.

The ratio of offenders in custody compared to the community population may reflect a number of factors, including the characteristics of offenders, offences, interprovincial variation in sentencing, or internal CSC practices (e.g., some offenders may be transferred to a specific region or location in order to access specialized services). Without further information, however, any further interpretation would be speculative. As a result, future investigators might find the examination of these ratios fruitful.

Table 3

Institutional to Conditionally Released Ratio by Sentence Type and CSC Region

Population	Lifers		Total
	Life sentence	Indeterminate	
<i>Atlantic</i>	1.91:1	26.00:1	2.19: 1
<i>Quebec</i>	1.44:1	8.71:1	1.63: 1
<i>Ontario</i>	1.92:1	19.86:1	2.07: 1
<i>Prairie</i>	1.44:1	23.33:1	1.80: 1
<i>Pacific</i>	1.37:1	5.05:1	1.58: 1
Total	1.58:1	10.59:1	1.80: 1

Gender

Among Lifers, the overwhelming majority were male (4,607 or 96.5%). As such, they are slightly over-represented compared to the CSC male population of 95.1% in March, 2009. Among male Lifers, 90.7% (4,178) were serving life sentences, and the remaining 9.3% (429) had indeterminate sentences. There were 167 women Lifers under federal jurisdiction on March 31, 2009 and all were serving life sentences: no women offenders were serving an indeterminate

sentence. While women represent a very small proportion of the overall number of Lifers, they do represent a significant percentage of all women offenders. On March 25, 2009, there were 1,072 women offenders under supervision of the CSC, meaning that Lifers represented approximately 16% of the women's offender population.

Ethnocultural Characteristics of the Lifer Population

On March 31, 2009, Caucasians made up almost three-quarters (3,429 or 71.8%) of the total community and institutional Lifer population. Of the remaining 28.2%, 17.4% (832) were Aboriginal, 4.9% (236) were Black, and 1.7% (83) were Asian. The remaining 4.1% (194) were Arab/West Asian, South Asian, Latin American/Hispanic, or Other/Unknown. Caucasians made up 66.7% of the total CSC population in April, 2009 (CSC, 2009), suggesting that they are over-represented as Lifers compared to the overall CSC population. The Aboriginal population represented 17.2% of the CSC population in April 2009, which suggests that they are only slightly over-represented compared to their share of the CSC population – but greatly over-represented compared to their presence in the general population (The 2006 Census revealed that Aboriginals represented approximately 4% of the Canadian population – see Statistics Canada, 2008).

Table 4 presents the Lifer population by ethnocultural status and release status (including both institutional and community populations). In terms of Lifers supervised in the community on conditional releases, Caucasians are again over-represented (79.2%), while Aboriginal offenders are under-represented, with 10.2% of the conditionally released Lifer population. The third largest group of Lifers in the community was Black offenders, and they represented 1.6% of the total conditionally released population. One possible explanation for the over-representation of Caucasian Lifers in the community is that these offenders tend to be on average, about a decade older than their Aboriginal or Black counterparts (see Table 5) and they have served a greater proportion of their sentence.

Table 4

Distribution of Lifers by Ethnocultural Background and Correctional Status on March 31, 2009
(e.g., *Incarcerated versus Conditional Release*)

Population	Lifers	
	Life Sentence	Indeterminate
Institutional	2,660	392
	%	
<i>Caucasian</i>	67.3	70.4
<i>Aboriginal</i>	18.5	23.2
<i>Black</i>	7.2	4.1
<i>Asian</i>	2.3	1.0
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	4.7	1.3
Conditional Release	1,685	37
	%	
<i>Caucasian</i>	79.2	78.4
<i>Aboriginal</i>	14.4	18.9
<i>Black</i>	1.7	0.0
<i>Asian</i>	1.0	0.0
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	3.7	2.7

Age

On March 31, 2009, the population of Lifers ranged from 19 to 97 years of age ($M = 48.63$, $SD = 12.64$). There were no statistically significant differences in age between men and women offenders and both groups tended to be sentenced in their early thirties ($M = 33.32$, $SD = 10.85$, and $M = 34.55$, $SD = 11.65$ respectively), and on average, had served over a decade of their sentence by March 31, 2009 ($M = 48.65$, $SD = 12.58$, and $M = 48.10$, $SD = 14.37$ respectively). Lifers on conditional release ($M = 55.11$, $SD = 11.42$), however, were about a decade older than those in custody ($M = 44.97$, $SD = 11.80$). As mentioned above, that finding is a function of the time that these offenders served in the institutions prior to their first release to the community.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the ages between Lifers of different ethnocultural backgrounds, and that Caucasians were older ($M = 50.36$, $SD = 12.20$) than Aboriginal ($M = 44.74$, $SD = 11.71$), Black ($M = 40.12$, $SD = 12.14$), Asian ($M = 43.11$, $SD = 12.64$), or Other Lifers ($M = 47.49$, $SD = 15.80$), $F(4, 4768) = 70.80$, $p < .001$. There were, however, no statistically significant differences in age at sentencing by ethnocultural status. Neither were there any statistically significant gender differences in age at sentencing. Those on conditional release, however, tended to be slightly younger at sentencing ($M = 31.27$, $SD = 10.83$) than those in custody ($M = 34.43$, $SD = 10.74$), and analysis of variance tests showed that these differences were statistically significant, $F(1, 4281) = 82.36$, $p < .001$. Table 5 lists age by gender, status, and ethnocultural background for life sentenced and indeterminate sentenced offenders. Of special note is the much greater average age (at sentencing) of offenders with indeterminate sentences.

Table 5

Lifer's Age on March 31, 2009, and Age at Sentencing by Gender, Correctional Status, and Ethnocultural Background

Population	Life Sentence		Indeterminate	
	Age (2009) <i>M (SD)</i>	Sentencing Age <i>M (SD)</i>	Age (2009) <i>M (SD)</i>	Sentencing Age <i>M (SD)</i>
Gender				
<i>Male</i>	47.9 (12.9)	32.8 (10.9)	49.6 (10.9)	38.3 (9.3)
<i>Women</i>	48.3 (14.8)	34.6 (11.7)	n/a	n/a
Status				
<i>Institutional</i>	43.8 (11.8)	33.8 (10.8)	48.8 (10.5)	38.7 (9.2)
<i>Conditional Release</i>	55.1 (11.7)	31.2 (10.8)	61.7 (10.6)	33 (10.5)
Ethnocultural background				
<i>Caucasian</i>	49.8 (12.5)	33.6 (11.2)	52.2 (10.8)	39.1(9.4)
<i>Aboriginal</i>	43.8 (12)	30.4 (9.7)	46.3 (10.4)	37 (9.2)
<i>Black</i>	39.5 (12.1)	31 (9.8)	41.2 (9.1)	34.1 (8.3)
<i>Asian</i>	43 (12.8)	32.7 (10.7)	42 (5.7)	31.3 (6)
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	47.3 (16.1)	32.4 (10.6)	51.6 (9.3)	38.2 (4.5)

Among the Lifers under federal jurisdiction the majority (3,903 or 91.1%) were between the ages of 18 and 50 years at the time of sentencing. Of the remaining 8.9%, 7.5% (322) were older than 50 years of age and a total of 1.4% (58) offenders were less than 18 years of age when their sentences were imposed (four were 15 years old, 19 were 16 years of age, and the remaining youth were 17 years old). Under the *Juvenile Delinquents Act*, Courts could impose adult sentences, including life sentences and the death penalty, on youthful offenders depending on the nature of the offence and the circumstances of the youth.⁶ Boe (1995) observed that after the introduction of the *Young Offenders Act* in 1984, the numbers of youths admitted to the Service decreased. As a result of the 1995 amendments to this act, the maximum sentence

⁶ In her book *The Trial of Steven Truscott*, LeBourdais (1966) illustrates the case of 14 year-old Steven Truscott, who was sentenced to death in 1959. That sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1960.

impossible on a youth was reduced to ten years. This maximum continues to apply in the current *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Of these 58 youthful offenders sentenced to terms of life minimum sentences pursuant to the *Juvenile Delinquents Act*, 48 (or 82.3%) were convicted of a homicide offence. While the population of offenders sentenced as juveniles is very small relative to the entire Lifer population, there may be considerable challenges with the management of these offenders in the initial years of their sentences given their immaturity and vulnerability.

The results regarding age at sentencing reported above should be interpreted with some caution as there were 409 cases where offenders were missing the sentencing date. As offenders with missing data tended to be admitted prior to the 1990s, it is possible that the true differences in age for those on conditional release may be somewhat greater than are reported in these analyses.

Years Spent Under Federal Jurisdiction

On March 31, 2009, the mean time since sentencing for Lifer offenders was 14.9 years (see Table 6). Predictably, more than twice as many years since sentencing had passed among those on conditional release than among those in-custody. Table 6 also lists the average number of years since sentencing among in-custody offenders and those under conditional release by sentence type. Among Lifers on conditional release, 1,445 were released on full parole and 277 on day parole. The number of years since release ranged from 0 to 51.5 ($M = 24.2$, $SD = 10.3$).

Table 6

Range and Mean Number of Years Served Under Federal Jurisdiction by Correctional Status and Sentence Type on March 31, 2009

Population	Lifers		Total
	Life Sentence	Indeterminate	
	0 to 65	0 to 48	0 to 65
	15.2 (11.1)	11.5 (9.6)	14.9 (11.1)
	N = 4,802	N = 417	N = 4,499
Institutional	0 to 42	0 to 48	0 to 48
	10.5 (8.3)	10.4 (8.2)	10.5 (8.3)
	N = 2,660	N = 392	N = 3,052
Conditional Release	1 to 65	4 to 47	1 to 65
	24.1 (10.2)	28.9 (12.6)	24.2 (10.3)
	N = 1,422	N = 25	N = 1,447

Note: Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data

Initial Custody Rating Score

Upon admission to the CSC, each offender is administered the custody rating scale to determine their initial custody rating. The majority of Lifers with custody rating scores⁷ (68.7% or 2,256) were initially classified as maximum security. The remaining Lifers were classified as medium (31.0% or 1,018) and minimum (0.3% or 9) security. Among those classified with a minimum security rating, over one-half were initially admitted to a maximum security institution (see Table 7). Current practice with offenders convicted of first- and second-degree murder is that they are placed in maximum security for the first two years of their incarceration, at which time their security reclassification is completed (Commissioner's Directive [CD] 705-7). While placement of first- and second-degree murderers in a lower classification is possible in their first two years, these movements must be approved by the Assistant Commissioner, Correctional Operations and Programs (see CD 705-7).

⁷ The CRS was first introduced in 1988, and as a result there were 1,491 Lifers (or 31.2% of the population) for whom there were no initial custody rating scores.

On March 31, 2009, among Lifers in-custody, almost one-half (1,518 or 49.7%) were housed in medium security institutions. Of the remaining offenders, 669 (21.9%) were in maximum security, 529 (17.3%) in minimum security, while 301 (9.9%) resided in multi-level facilities.

Table 7

Initial Custody Rating of Lifers (n = 3,167) by Security Level of Admitting Institution^a

Security level of admitting institution	Initial custody rating score		
	Minimum	Medium	Maximum
		%	
Minimum	0.0	7.4	3.7
Medium	50	25.5	24.2
Maximum	50	53.9	56.2
Multilevel	0.0	13.1	15.9
Total	8	983	2,176

^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Offence Characteristics

Among Lifers, over three-quarters (75.6%, or 3,284 of the 4,345 offenders for which data were available) were serving sentences that included the offence of homicide (e.g., first- and second-degree murder, and manslaughter). Among those serving indeterminate sentences, by contrast, almost three-quarters (303 or 70.6%) had been convicted of committing a sexual offence. Table 8 lists the breakdown of offence types by Life and indeterminate sentences.

Table 8

Distribution of Lifers by Release Status, Sentence Type, and Offence on March 31, 2009

Population	Lifers		Total
	Life Sentence	Indeterminate	
Institutional (total)	2,660	392	3052
		%	
<i>Homicide</i>	84.8	2.6	87.4
<i>Sexual Offence</i>	4.6	71.9	76.5
<i>Robbery</i>	7.9	11.2	19.1
<i>Assault or other violent offence</i>	16.2	49.2	65.4
<i>Drug Offence</i>	4.2	1.5	5.7
<i>Organized Crime</i>	0.3	0.0	0.3
<i>Other offence</i>	23.8	32.4	56.2
Conditional Release (total)	1,685	37	1,722
<i>Homicide</i>	60.9	0.0	60.9
<i>Sexual Offence</i>	1.8	56.8	58.6
<i>Robbery</i>	4.4	0.0	4.4
<i>Assault or other violent offence</i>	7.3	16.2	23.5
<i>Drug Offence</i>	4.2	0.0	4.2
<i>Organized Crime</i>	0.1	0.0	0.1
<i>Other offence</i>	18.9	13.5	32.4

Note: Offenders convicted for more than one category of offence are counted in each category. Therefore, summing percentages results in a total greater than 100.

History of Violence

To determine the degree to which Lifers had a history of violence, the number of prior convictions for a violent offence was calculated. A violent offence was defined as a conviction for a Schedule I offence (e.g., manslaughter, attempted murder, or assault with a deadly weapon) as listed in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)*. Among the population of Lifers, 15.6% (or 716) had been convicted of a prior violent offence. The majority of those with

a history of violence had one prior conviction (13.7% or 654). The mean number of violent prior convictions for the population of Lifers was 0.18 per person ($SD = 0.53$).

Lifers in-custody had a significantly greater number of violent prior convictions ($M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.62$) than those on conditional release ($M = 0.08$, $SD = 0.32$), $F(1, 4,597) = 102.72$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.34$. Offenders serving indeterminate sentences had a significantly greater number of violent prior convictions ($M = 0.43$, $SD = 0.62$) than those serving life sentences ($M = 0.16$, $SD = 0.52$), $F(1, 4597) = 94.18$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.48$. Men had a significantly greater number of violent prior convictions ($M = 0.19$, $SD = 0.54$) than women offenders ($M = 0.06$, $SD = 0.24$), $F(1, 4597) = 8.76$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.31$ and Aboriginal Lifers had a significantly greater number of violent prior convictions ($M = 0.27$, $SD = 0.52$) than Non-Aboriginal Lifers ($M = 0.17$, $SD = 0.54$), $F(1, 4585) = 24.48$, $p < .001$ $d = 0.21$.

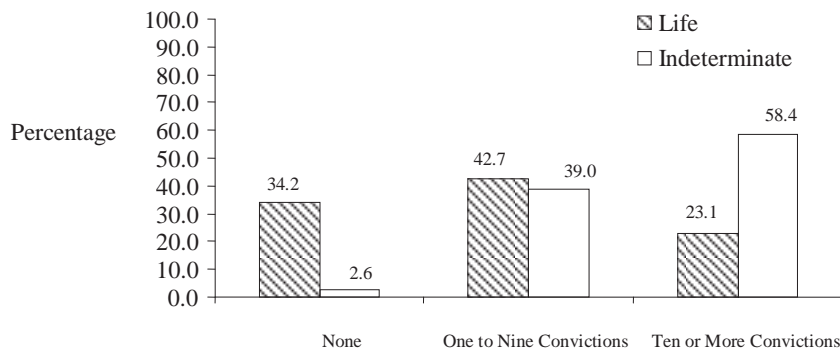
Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) Information

The remaining analyses for the March 31, 2009 snapshot examined the criminal histories, gang affiliation, educational success, mental health status, risk, motivation, and criminogenic needs of the CSC Lifer population. The data used for these analyses were drawn from the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA). The OIA was implemented Service-wide in November, 1994. As a result, approximately three-quarters (72%) of those sentenced before 1994 are missing some OIA information. In 1996, an effort was made to update assessments for offenders sentenced prior to 1994, however, only dynamic factors (employment/education, marital/family, associates, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional, and attitude) were updated. As a result of this effort, approximately two-thirds of Lifers sentenced before 1994 (67%) have dynamic factor data. In addition to missing data for those sentenced before 1994, a small proportion of those sentenced after 1994 have incomplete OIAs. In order to provide the most accurate snapshot, each of the subsequent analyses is conducted with the most complete data set available. Thus sample size changes from analysis to analysis. To help better understand these analyses, the percentages of missing data are indicated for each sample.

Criminal History

Among Lifers, 30.1% had not been convicted of a previous offence as an adult.⁸ Of the remaining offenders, 42.2% had between one and nine prior convictions, while 27.6% had ten or more convictions. In terms of criminal history by gender, 70.9% of male offenders had been convicted of a criminal offence as an adult. The proportion was smaller among women Lifers (47.3%). However, about one-quarter of both men and women Lifers had ten or more adult convictions (25.5% and 26.9%, respectively). Figures 1 through 3 present the percentages of offenders with prior adult criminal convictions, the proportion by gender, as well as Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal status. An examination of gender and sentence type (e.g., life or indeterminate sentences) was omitted as there were no women offenders serving indeterminate sentences. With regards to Aboriginal status, 79.6% of Aboriginal Lifers had been convicted of a criminal offence as an adult, in comparison to 67.4% of Non-Aboriginal Lifers (Figure 3).

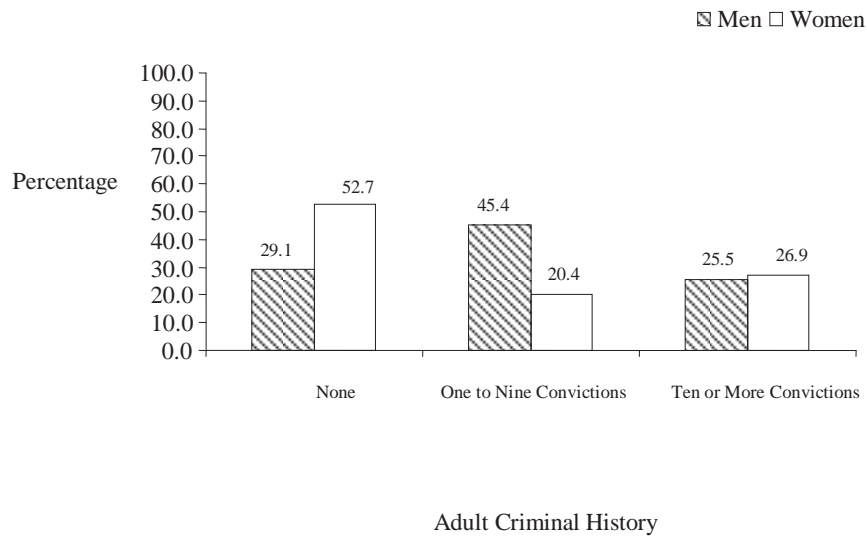
Figure 1. Proportion of Prior Adult Criminal Convictions Among Life Sentenced (n = 1,803) and Indeterminate Sentenced Offenders (n = 267)^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

⁸ These analyses were conducted on an OIA item that is a record of the offender's number of adult convictions, provincial and federal. Over one-half of Lifers (56.6% or 2,704 offenders) were missing adult criminal history data and were therefore not included in this analysis. Of those offenders missing data, 1,991 (73.6%) were sentenced before 1994 – that is, prior to the implementation of the OIA.

Figure 2. Proportion of Prior Adult Criminal Convictions by Gender (Men = 1,977 and Women = 93)^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 3. Proportion of Prior Adult Criminal Convictions by Aboriginal (n = 417) and Non-Aboriginal (n = 1,645) Status^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Education at Admission

Approximately one-quarter of the Lifer population (367 or 25.1%), for whom educational data was available, had less than a grade 8 education upon admission to the CSC.⁹ The majority (887 or 60.6%) of Lifers had not completed high school. Chi-square analyses revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the proportion of Aboriginal Lifers (29.4%) who had less than a grade 8 education upon sentencing, and all other Lifers (23.9%), $X^2(1) = 3.88, p < .05, \phi_c = .05$. There were also statistically significant differences in the proportion of Lifers serving life and indeterminate sentences by level of education upon admission $X^2(1) = 18.00, p < .001, \phi_c = .11$. Over one-third (37.2% or 74) of those serving indeterminate sentences had less than a grade 8 education, compared to approximately one-quarter (23.2% or 293) of offenders serving life sentences. A greater proportion of Lifers who were men (25.3% or 353) had less than a grade 8 education upon admission compared to women Lifers (20.3% or 14). There was also a greater proportion of Lifers in institutions with less than a grade 8 education (25.7% or 338) compared to the percentage of Lifers on conditional release (19.6% or 29), although these differences were not statistically significant.

Mental Health

Among Lifers under federal jurisdiction on March 31, 2009, over one-quarter (506 or 25.7%) had current or past diagnosed mental health issues.¹⁰ The proportion with past or present mental health issues was significantly greater among those Lifers serving indeterminate sentences (55.9% or 126) than among life sentenced offenders (21.1% or 362), $X^2(1) = 143.89, p < .001, \phi_c = .27$. A greater proportion of female (35.3% or 30) than male Lifers (25.3% or 478) had past or current mental health issues identified upon admission, and chi square analyses revealed that this difference was also statistically significant, $X^2(1) = 4.27, p < .05, \phi_c = .05$. Though a greater proportion of Aboriginal Lifers (26.5% or 105) had past or current mental health issues identified upon admission than Non-Aboriginal Lifers (25.5% or 401), this difference was not statistically significant. The proportion of Lifers with a mental health

⁹ Note that 3,310 (69.3%) of Lifers were missing education data and were therefore not included in this analysis. Of those missing data, 2,008 offenders (or 60.7%) were sentenced before 1994.

¹⁰ Note that 2,798 (or 58.6%) of Lifers were missing mental health data and were therefore not included in this analysis. Most of those offenders (1,995 or 71.3%) were sentenced before 1994.

problem corresponds very closely to the rate of self-reported mental illness in the general offender population.

Gang Affiliation

As part of the intake assessment offenders are asked if they had been or were affiliated with a gang.¹¹ Two-hundred and eight-four (14.3%) indicated that they were part of a gang or had been gang-affiliated. Among these offenders, 267 were in custody and 17 were on conditional release on March 31, 2009. A significantly greater proportion of life sentenced (15.1% or 265) than indeterminate sentenced offenders (7.3% or 19) self identified as gang members, $X^2(1) = 11.44, p < .01, \phi_c = .08$. In addition, a significantly greater proportion of Aboriginal Lifers indicated gang affiliation (19.5% or 80) than Non-Aboriginal Lifers (12.8% or 204), $X^2(1) = 11.79, p < .001, \phi_c = .08$. Finally, a greater proportion of male (14.4% or 277) than female (7.7% or 7) offenders indicated that they were members of a gang. However this difference was not statistically significant.

Again, the proportion of Lifers who were gang-involved corresponds very closely to the rate of gang membership in the general offender population of around 16%. One limitation in our knowledge, however, is that we don't know when these Lifers actually become affiliated with a gang, and whether they come to the CSC as gang members, or join a gang after their admission.

Risk

As part of the offender intake assessment, institutional parole officers assign a risk level to offenders when they are admitted (low, medium, high). Most lifers (81.5% or 3,155)¹² were considered high risk upon admission. Of the remaining 18.5%, 14.2% (551) were assessed as medium and 3.5% (165) as low risk. Figures 4 through 7 show the levels of risk for different components of the Lifer population. A significantly greater proportion of in-custody than conditionally released Lifers were classified as high risk upon admission, $X^2(1) = 88.19, p < .001, \phi_c = .15$ (see Figure 5). Offenders serving indeterminate sentences were more likely to

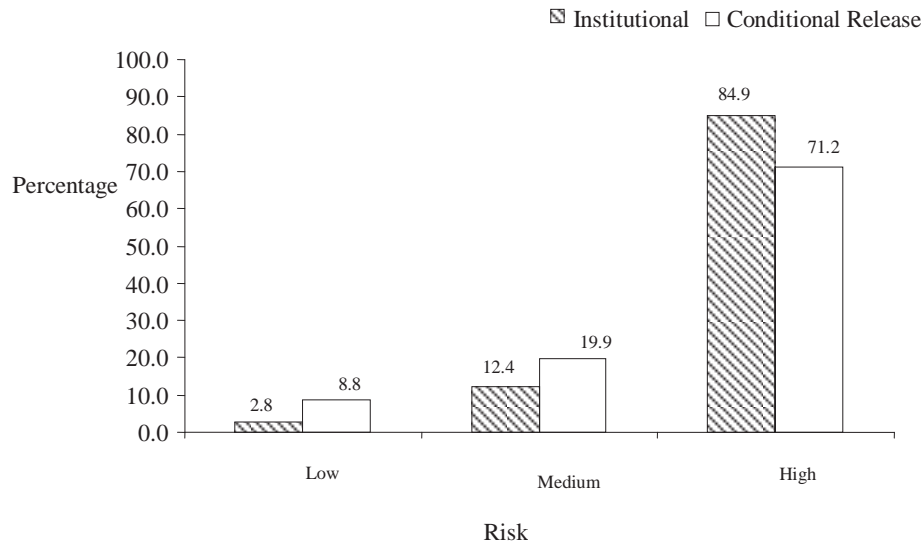
¹¹ Note that over one-half (58.4% or 2,790 offenders) of cases were missing gang affiliation data and therefore were not included in this analysis. Most of those offenders (1,993 or 71.4%) were sentenced before 1994.

¹² Note that 18.9% (or 903) cases were missing risk data and therefore were not included in this analysis. Most of those offenders (73.8% or 666) were sentenced prior to 1994.

be higher risk than those serving life sentences, $X^2(1) = 75.72, p < .001, \phi_c = .14$ (see Figure 6), men were more likely to be assessed as high risk than women, $X^2(1) = 102.49, p < .001, \phi_c = .16$ (see Figure 6), and Aboriginal Lifers were more likely to be considered high risk upon admission than Non-Aboriginals, $X^2(1) = 7.72, p < .01, \phi_c = .05$ (see Figure 7).

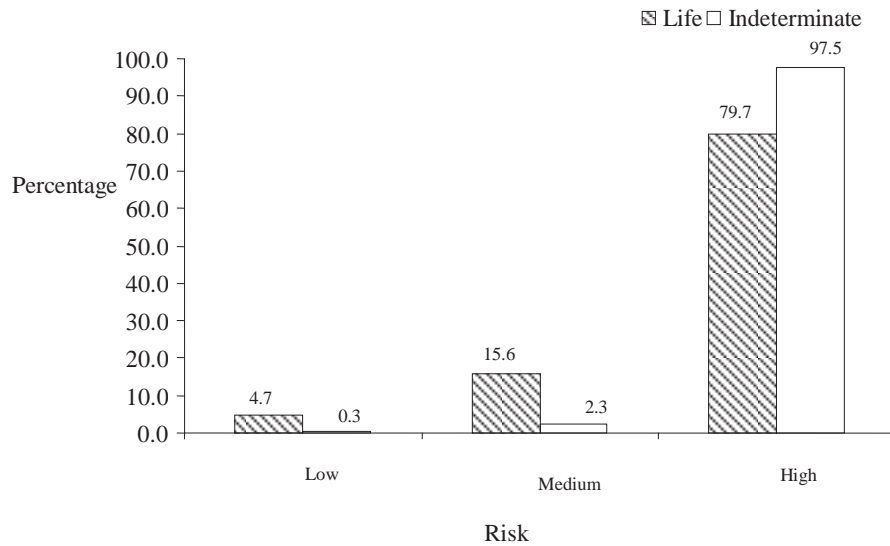
Fewer offenders in the general population, by contrast, were assessed as being high risk upon admission. For institutionalized offenders serving determinate sentences of less than eight years on April 1, 2009, for instance, slightly more than one-half (56.8%) were assessed as being high risk.

Figure 4. Assessed Risk of Institutional (n = 2,918) and Conditionally Released (n = 953) Lifers^a



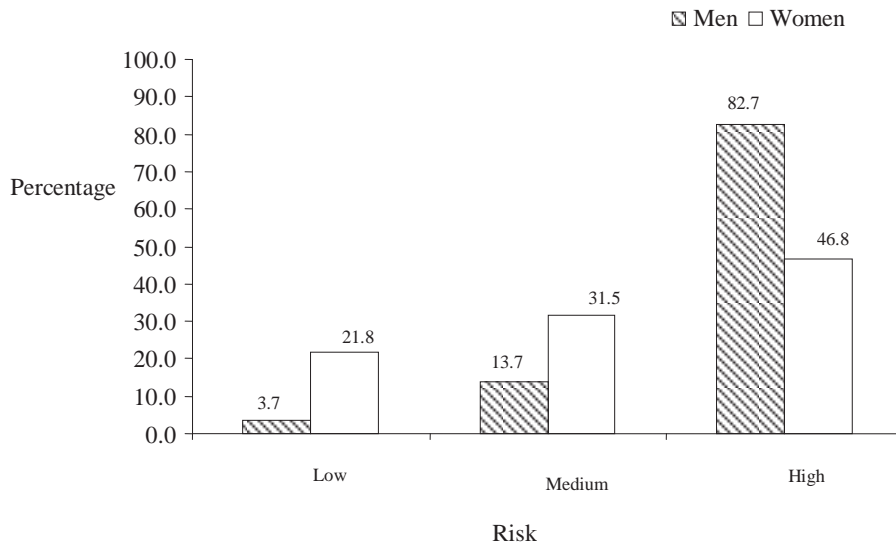
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 5. Assessed Risk of Offenders Serving Life (n = 3,471) and Indeterminate Sentences (n = 400).^a



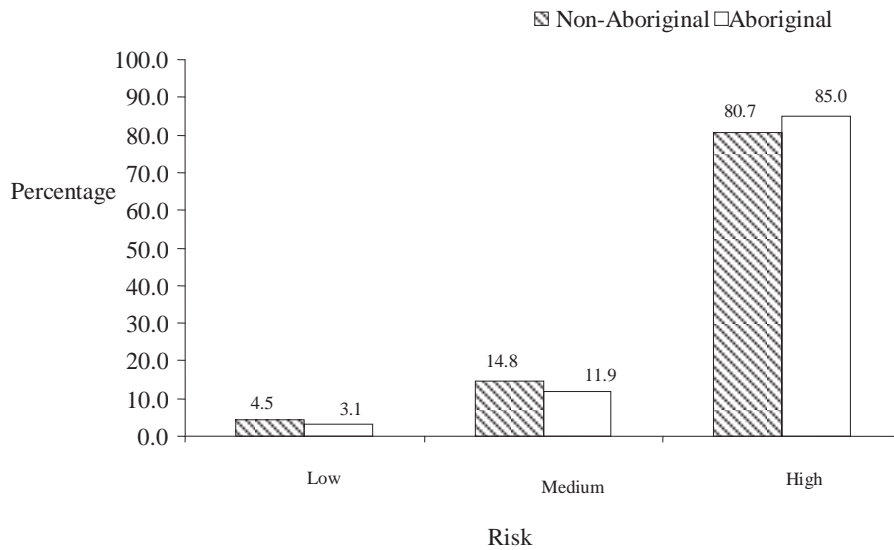
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 6. Assessed Risk of Men (n = 3,747) and Women (n = 124) Lifers^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 7. Assessed Risk of Aboriginal (n = 749) and Non-Aboriginal (n = 3,112) Lifers^a

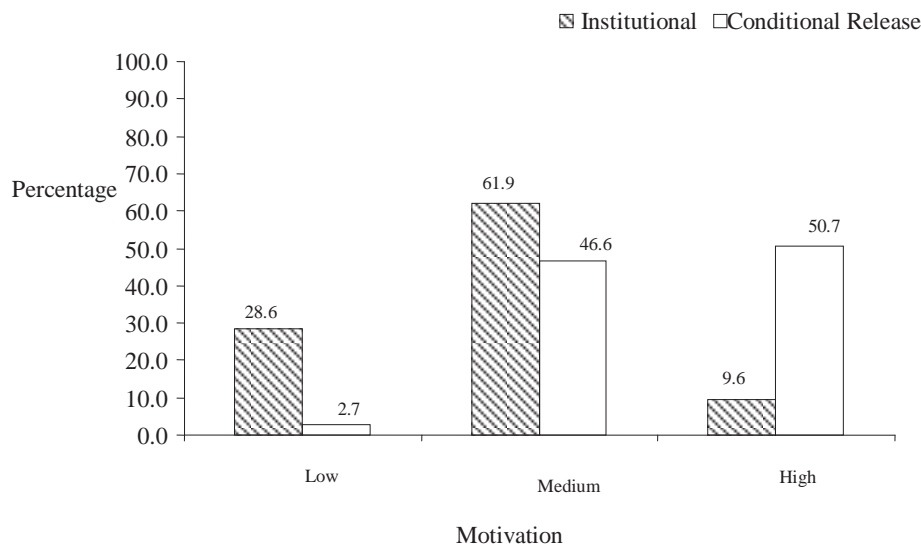


^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Motivation Level

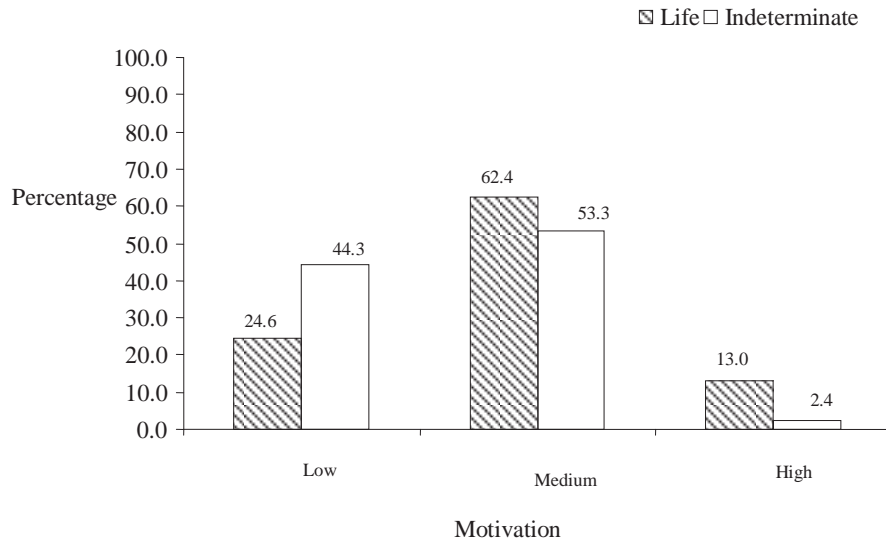
In addition to evaluating risk, needs, and security levels during the intake assessment, a Lifer's motivation is evaluated and the institutional parole officer categorizes the offender as having low, medium, or high motivation. Most (61.1% or 933) Lifers were assessed as having a medium motivation level upon admission. A lesser proportion (27.3% or 417) of offenders were assessed with low motivation, while the smallest group (11.5% or 176) were ranked as having high motivation for change. Figures 8 through 11 show the motivation levels of Lifers by population type in terms of the proportion of those assessed with high motivation at intake, the most striking difference is between Lifers in-custody compared to those on conditional release. Among those on conditional release over one-half were assessed as highly motivated upon admission (compared to less than 10% of those in custody), $X^2(1) = 115.18, p < .001, \phi_c = .28$ (see Figure 9). Life sentenced offenders were more likely to be assessed as highly motivated compared to offenders sentenced to indeterminate terms $X^2(1) = 19.99, p < .01, \phi_c = .11$ and women were more likely to be highly motivated than men $X^2(1) = 23.82, p < .01, \phi_c = .13$. There were no statistically significant differences in motivation between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Lifers.

Figure 8. Motivation of Institutional (n = 1,453) and Conditionally Released (n = 73) Lifers^a



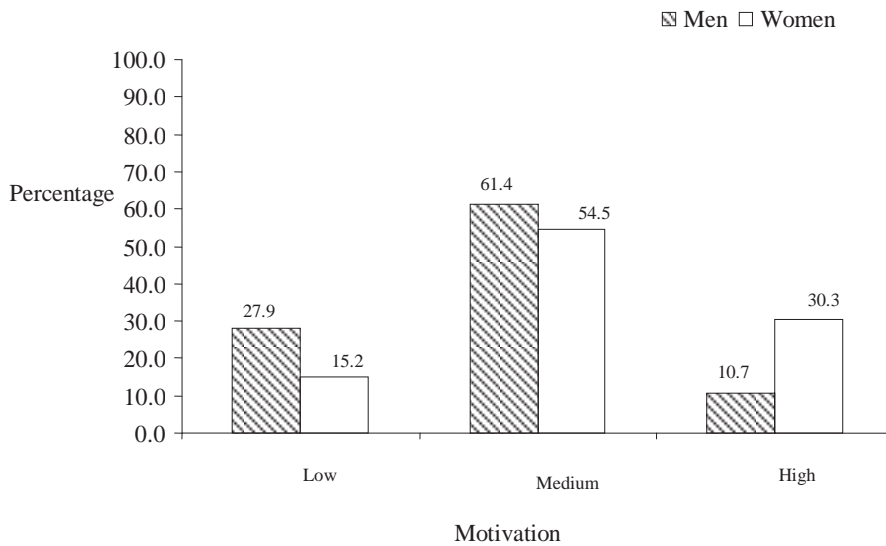
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 9. Motivation of Offenders Serving Life (n = 1,316) and Indeterminate Sentences (n = 210)^a



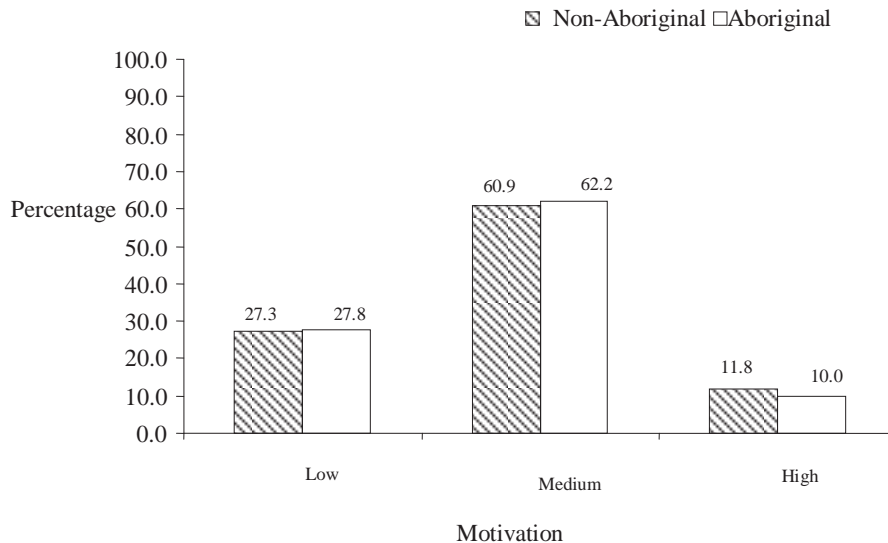
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 10. Motivation of Men (n = 1,460) and Women (n = 66) Lifers^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 11. Motivation of Aboriginal (n = 299) and Non-Aboriginal (n = 1,221) Lifers^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

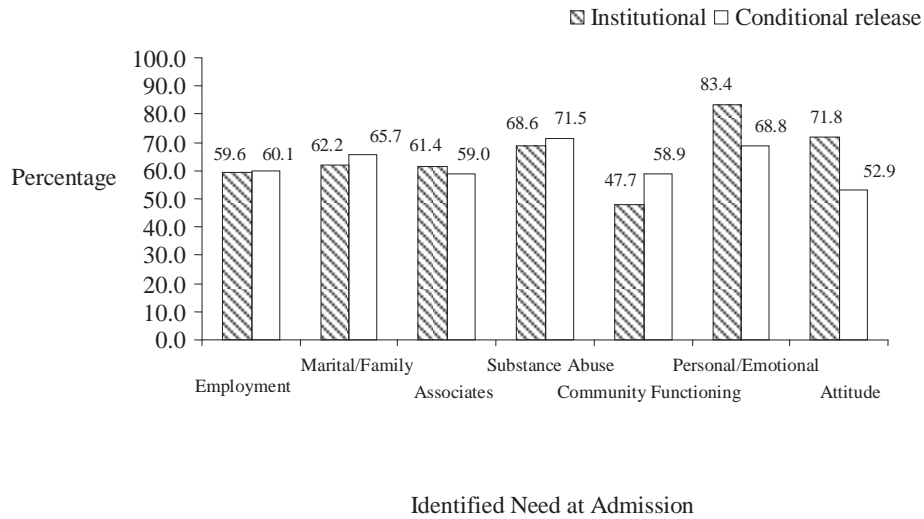
Criminogenic Needs

Offender needs are assessed upon admission by institutional parole officers. Needs are assessed across seven dynamic factors: employment, marital/family, associates, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional, and attitude. Offenders are assessed on each factor and given a score of 1 (Factor seen as an asset), 2 (No current need), 3 (Some need for improvement), or 4 (Considerable need for improvement): higher scores indicate a higher need in that domain.

Figure 12 shows the seven domains (some and considerable needs) for both the institutional and conditionally released Lifer populations. Information from the OIA shows that both populations have similar needs in the employment, marital/family, associates, and substance abuse domains. However, the institutional Lifer population had greater needs in the personal/emotional and attitude domains. Community functioning was the only domain in which the conditionally released population had a greater need than Lifers in institutions. Depicted in Figure 13 is the proportion of life and indeterminate sentenced offenders who were assessed as having some or considerable need across the seven domains. Offenders who were serving indeterminate sentences were assessed as having greater needs across five of the seven

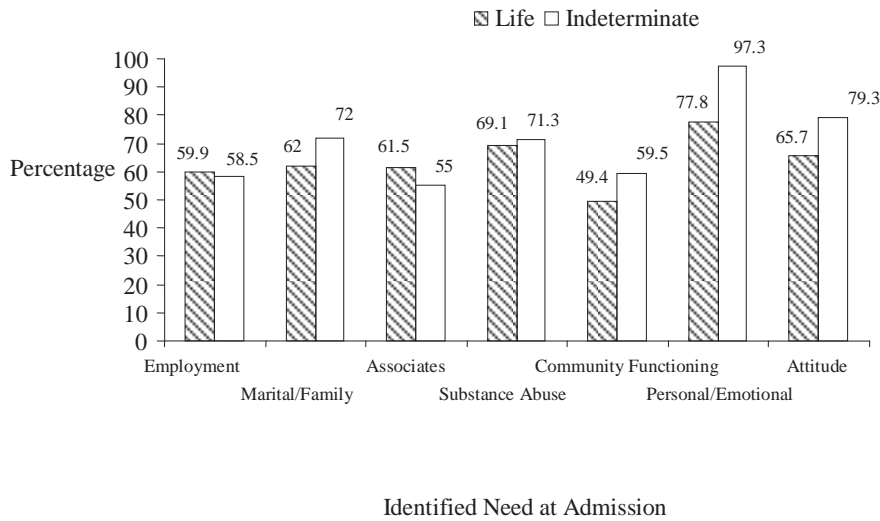
domains. Only in the associates and employment domains was there a higher proportion of life sentenced offenders who were assessed as having greater needs.

Figure 12. Proportion of Institutional (n = 2,917) and Conditionally Released (n = 953), Lifers Assessed as Having Some or Considerable Need for Improvement Upon Admission^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 13. Proportion of Life (n = 3,470) and Indeterminate Sentenced (n = 400) Lifers Assessed as Having Some or Considerable Need for Improvement Upon Admission^a

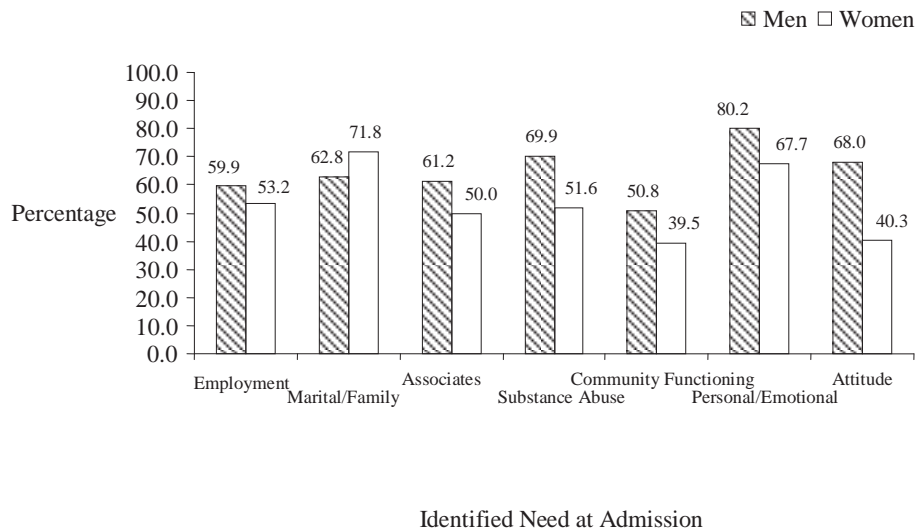


^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Gender

With the exception of the marital/family domain, a greater proportion of male Lifers were assessed as requiring some or considerable need for improvement upon admission across all domains, particularly in the domains of substance abuse and attitude (see Figure 14). This finding might have implications for correctional programming for women offenders, especially given that they receive services in fewer institutions.

Figure 14. Proportion of Men (n = 3,746) and Women (n = 124) Lifers Assessed as Having Some or Considerable Need for Improvement Upon Admission^a

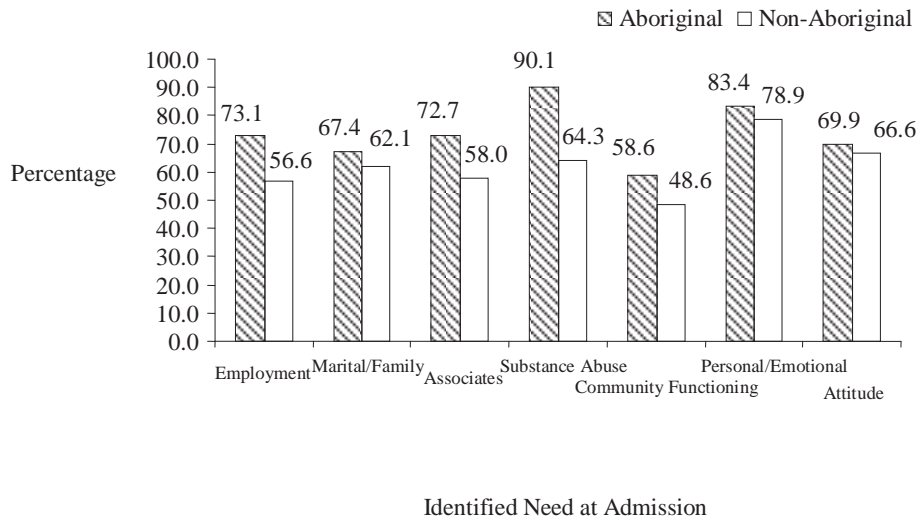


^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Aboriginal Lifers

In general the proportion of Aboriginal Lifers assessed as having some or considerable needs was greater than the Non-Aboriginal population across all seven domains. The most striking difference between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Lifers was in the domain of substance abuse. Among Aboriginal Lifers more than nine out of ten (or 674 out of 748) were identified as having some or considerable needs related to substance abuse problems compared to less than seven out of ten (or 2,001 out of 3,112) among Non-Aboriginal Lifers. The next largest difference was in the domain of employment/education (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Proportion of Aboriginal (n = 748) and Non-Aboriginal (n = 3,112) Lifers Assessed as Having Some or Considerable Need for Improvement Upon Admission^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Overall Need

Based on needs across the seven indicators, offenders are categorized as either ‘Low’, ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ need. Over three-quarters (76.1% or 2,947)¹³ of Lifers were assessed as high need upon admission. Of the remaining offenders, 20.4% (789) were assessed as medium and 3.5% (80) were assessed as low need. Figures 16 through 19 show the overall need by different population types, including institutional and community populations, life and indeterminate sentenced offenders, men and women, as well as Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal offenders.

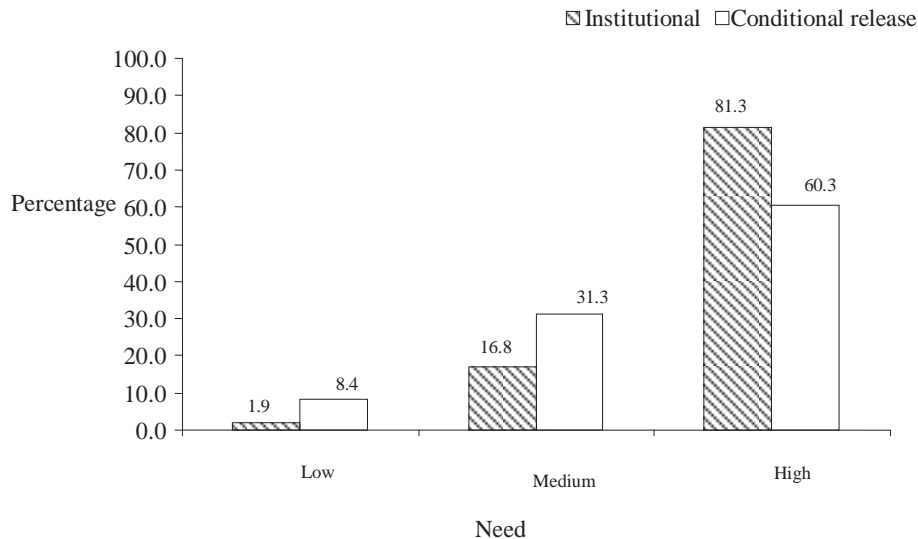
A significantly greater proportion of in-custody Lifers were assessed as high need compared to those on conditional release, $X^2(1) = 173.55, p < .001, \phi_c = .21$ (see Figure 16). Similarly, indeterminate Lifers were more likely to be assessed as high need compared to life sentenced offenders $X^2(1) = 101.86, p < .001, \phi_c = .16$ (see Figure 17). In addition, a significantly

¹³ 18.9% (or 903 offenders) of cases were missing a need evaluation and therefore were not included in this analysis. Most of those offenders (73.8% or 666) were sentenced before 1994.

greater proportion of men (than women) Lifers were assessed as having higher needs, $X^2(1) = 45.21, p < .001, \phi_c = .11$ (see Figure 18), and a significantly greater proportion of Aboriginal (than Non-Aboriginal) Lifers were assessed as having higher needs, $X^2(1) = 26.44, p < .001, \phi_c = .08$ (Figure 19).

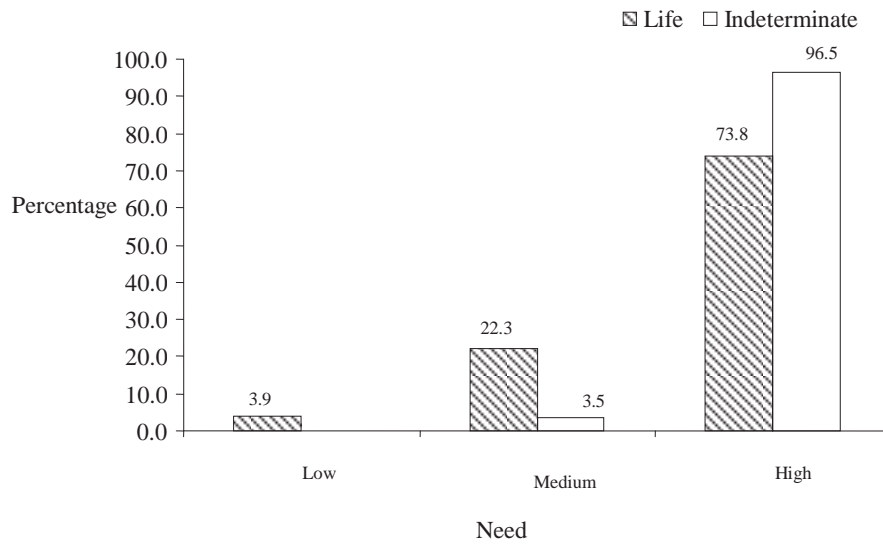
Fewer offenders in the general population, by contrast, were assessed as being high overall need upon admission. For institutionalized offenders serving determinate sentences of less than eight years on April 1, 2009, for instance, less than two-thirds (64.3%) were assessed as having high need.

Figure 16. Assessed Need of Institutional (n = 2,918) and Conditionally Released (n = 953) Lifers^a



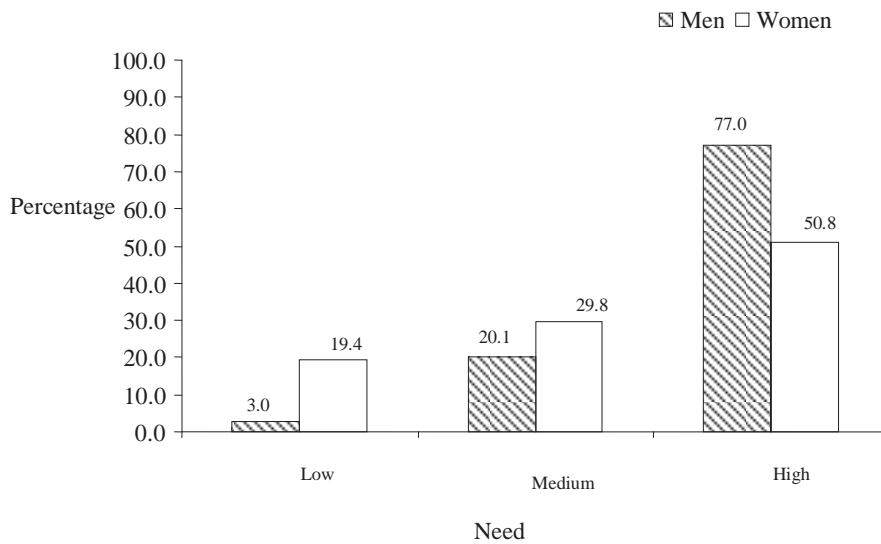
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 17. Assessed Need of Offenders Serving Life (n = 3,471) and Indeterminate Sentences (n = 400)^a



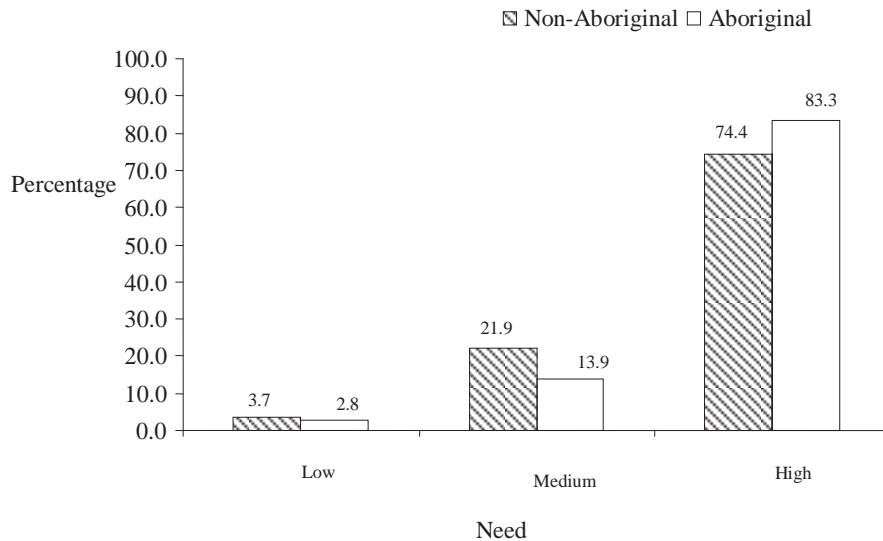
^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 18. Assessed Need of Men (n = 3,747) and Women (n = 124) Lifers^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Figure 19. Assessed Need of Aboriginal (n = 749) and Non-Aboriginal (n = 3,112) Lifers^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

Summary – March 31, 2009 Snapshot

Results of the snapshot indicate that over one in five offenders (21.9%) under federal jurisdiction was a Lifer, and they represented 22% of the institutional population. In terms of demographic factors, the overwhelming majority of Lifers were male, over two-thirds were Caucasian, and almost one in five (17.4%) were Aboriginal. One unexpected finding was the relatively high number of women offenders who were Lifers. While women Lifers represent a relatively small number of offenders of the entire CSC population (167 in total, all of whom were sentenced to terms of life imprisonment), since the entire CSC population of women supervised by the CSC was 1,072 on March 25, 2009, Lifers represented almost 16% of that population (CSC, 2009).

The snapshot also revealed that Lifers have a considerable number of challenges to overcome: most (75.6%) had been convicted of a homicide offence, 69.9% had been convicted of a previous offence as an adult, and 14.1% were gang-affiliated. In addition to overcoming these offence-related factors, many Lifers had poor educational histories (e.g., 25.1% did not have grade 8 and over 60% had not finished high school), and one-quarter (25.7%) had current or prior diagnosed mental health issues. Furthermore, the analyses revealed that levels of risk and need were often high, especially for Aboriginal offenders.

The snapshot also revealed that the characteristics of those serving terms of life imprisonment were very different than those sentenced to indeterminate sentences (e.g., dangerous offenders). Whereas most life sentenced offenders have been convicted of a homicide offence, those serving indeterminate terms were much more likely to be sexual offenders. Moreover, indeterminate offenders typically had more prior convictions, and were admitted with higher levels of risk and lower motivation to change. Last, life-sentenced offenders tended to be younger upon admission than their indeterminate counterparts.

Contrasted against the general institutionalized offender population, Lifers had higher levels of risk and need, although levels of mental health problems and gang affiliation were roughly consistent with the CSC general population. The implications of these findings are presented at greater length in the discussion that follows Part 2.

Part 2: The Changing Profile of the Lifer Population

While it is important to understand the characteristics of the current Lifer population, it is also essential to understand how this population has changed over time. Employing the analytic strategy of Boe, Nafekh, Voung, Sinclair and Cousineau (2003) trends in static background factors (e.g., gender, race) and dynamic factors such as offender needs were examined at two time points (March 31, 1998 and March 31, 2008)¹⁴ using in-custody snapshots. As noted in Part 1, Lifers sentenced before 1994 often lack a complete set of OIA data. When attempting to compare snapshots from 1998 to 2008, missing data placed limits on the variables that could be examined. In 1998, for example, over 85% of Lifers were missing OIA data. By 2008, in contrast, approximately 60% were missing this information. Given that missing data is related to sentence year (e.g., those sentenced prior to the 1990s are less likely to have OIA data), a comparison between 1998 and 2008 populations employing any of the variables collected in the OIA (e.g., questions about Lifers' education level, mental health, or whether they self-identify as a member of a gang), might be misleading. Therefore the following comparisons examine variables in which there is less missing data.

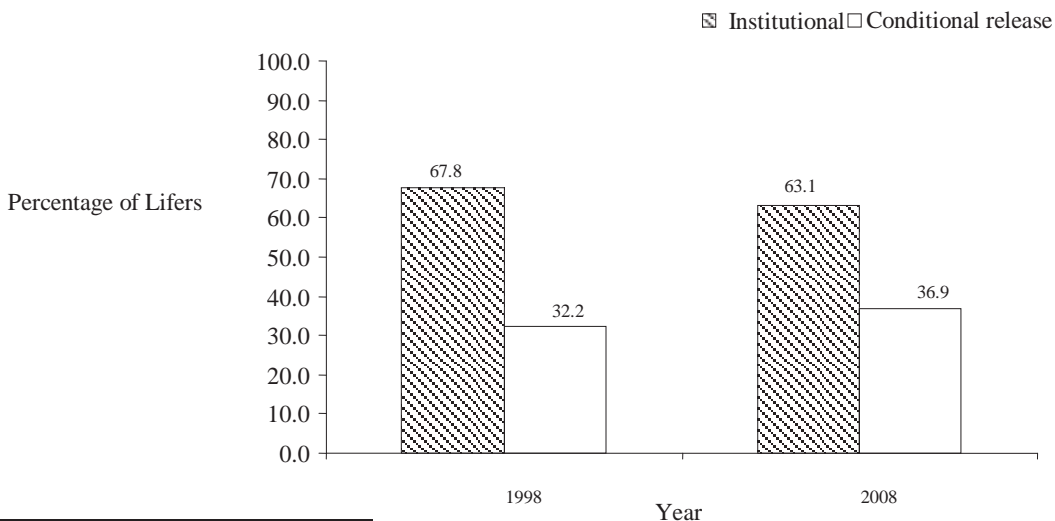
¹⁴ These dates were chosen because the last profile (snapshot) of long-term offenders was December 1999 (see Motiuk & Nafekh, 2000). Therefore it was thought that this ten year period was most appropriate to ensure continuity.

On March 31, 1998 there were 3,793 Lifers under federal jurisdiction, representing 17.6% of the total CSC population.¹⁵ By March 31, 2008 this population had increased to 4,755 Lifers, representing 21.9% of the total offender population.¹⁶ Figure 20 illustrates the proportion of institutional Lifers and those under conditional release in 1998 and in 2008. Chi square analyses revealed that the 4.7% growth in the proportion of Lifers on conditional release was statistically significant, from 32.2% (or 1,223) in 1998 to 36.9% (or 1,756) in 2008, $X^2(1) = 20.41, p < .001, \phi_c = .05$. This change is also reflected in the ratio of institutional to conditionally released Lifers, decreasing from 2.1: 1 in 1998 to 1.7: 1 in 2008.

Population of Institutional and Conditionally Released Lifers by Gender

The proportion of women Lifers increased from 122 in 1998 to 168 in 2008. While this change was not statistically significant, the change was meaningful, and represented a 37.7% growth in ten years. Such growth has implications for housing, programming, and community reintegration, especially given the relatively small total number of women offenders and institutions. If, for example, the women Lifers population continues to grow at the same rate in the next ten years, there will be over 210 women Lifers by April 1, 2019 (although there was one fewer woman Lifer on March 31, 2009 compared to March 31, 2008). Table 9 shows the proportions of men and women offenders by release status.

Figure 20. Proportions of Institutional and Conditionally Released Lifers, 1998 and 2008



¹⁵ Calculated based on a total federal population of 21,520 on March 31, 1998 (population data retrieved from the CSC – National Capital, Accommodation and Operations Plan).

¹⁶ Calculated based on a total offender population of 21,929 on March 25, 2008 (population data retrieved from the CSC – National Capital, Accommodation and Operations Plan).

Table 9

The Distribution of Men and Women Lifers by Release Status, 1998 and 2008

Population	1998	2008
Institutional	2,570	2,999
<i>Men</i>	97.4%	97.4%
<i>Women</i>	2.6%	2.6%
Conditional Release	1,223	1,756
<i>Men</i>	95.6%	94.9%
<i>Women</i>	4.4%	5.1%
Total	3,793	4,755

Ethnocultural Characteristics

In the ten year period from March 1998 to March 2008 the ethnocultural profile of Lifers also changed. For ethnocultural groups of at least 100 offenders, there was a statistically significant decrease (-5.1%) in the proportion of Caucasian Lifers ($\phi_c = .06$). By contrast, there were statistically significant increases in the proportion of Aboriginal (+ 2.1%; $\phi_c = .03$), and Black Lifers (+ 2.2%; $\phi_c = .06$). Compared to the general CSC population, Caucasians were over-represented in the Lifer population in 2008, while both Aboriginal and Black Lifers were slightly under-represented.

Table 10

Ethnocultural Background of Lifers, 1998 and 2008: Lifers compared to the General CSC Population

Population	1998	2008	2008
	%	%	General CSC
			Population
			%
<i>Caucasian</i> ***	77.6	72.5	67.3
<i>Aboriginal</i> **	14.8	16.9	17.4
<i>Black</i> ***	2.6	4.8	6.8

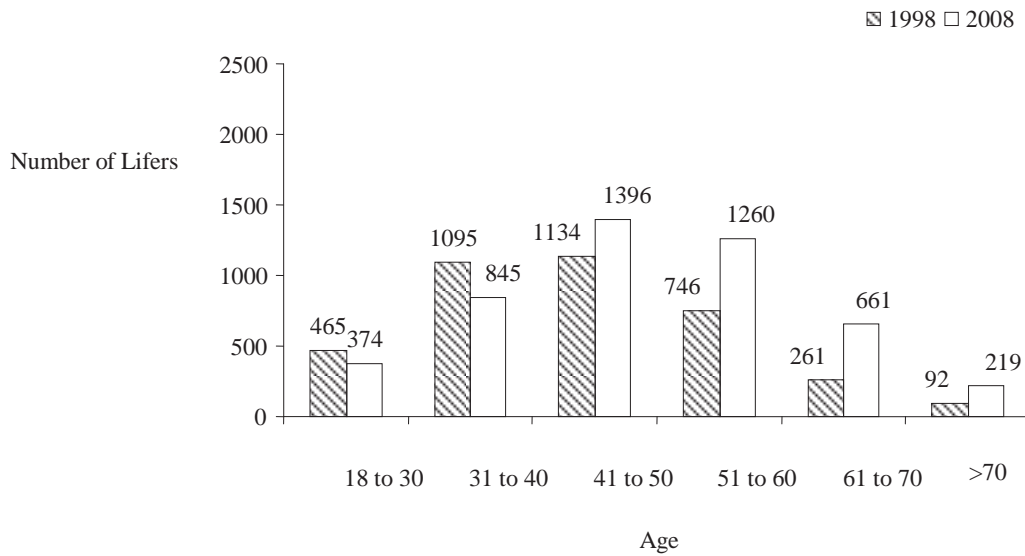
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Age

In the ten year period from March 31, 1998 to March 31, 2008, the average age of the Lifer population increased from 44 years ($SD = 12.00$) to 49 years ($SD = 12.50$). Analysis of variance revealed that these changes were statistically significant $F(1, 8\,546) = 316.98, p < .001, d = 0.39$. This aging population is consistent with trends in the general Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2008), and has implications for the Service as aging and elderly prisoners typically require more extensive health interventions, and may be more vulnerable to abuse from other inmates (Aday, 2003). Figure 21 shows the distribution of Lifers by age groups for 1998 and 2008.

There were also some trends within the larger pattern of offender aging. The number of Lifers under 40 years of age dropped from 1,560 to 1,319 offenders (or about 15%) in the ten year period. The number of Lifers who were 51 years of age or older, by contrast, increased by almost 95%, while the proportion of those aged 61 years and over more than doubled, from 353 offenders in 1998 to 880 in 2008, representing a 149% increase in the size of this age group. These increases may have resource implications for the Service, especially for those who remain in the in-custody population, and require enhanced health care services.

Figure 21. Number of Lifers in 1998 (n = 3,793) and 2008 (n = 4,755) by Age Group



Offence

There was a statistically significant increase (+2.9%) in the proportion of Lifers serving sentences that included the offence of homicide (e.g., first- or second-degree murder, and manslaughter) from 1998 to 2008 ($\phi_c = 0.32$). Conversely, during the same time period there were significant decreases (-2.1%) in the proportion of Lifers serving sentences that included a conviction for robbery ($\phi_c = .03$). There were no statistically significant differences in the proportion of Lifers serving sentences for sexual assault, assault or other violent offences (see Table 11).

Table 11

The Proportion of Lifers Under Federal Jurisdiction in 1998 (n = 3,793) and 2008 (n = 4,755) by Offence

Population	1998	2008
<i>Homicide</i> **	71.9%	74.8%
<i>Sexual Offence</i>	9.8%	10.3%
<i>Robbery</i> ***	11.1%	9.0%
<i>Assault or other violent offence</i>	17.2%	17.7%
<i>Drug Offence</i>	5.4%	4.8%
<i>Organized Crime</i> *	0.0%	0.2%

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Note: Column totals sum to more than 100% as some offenders are counted in more than one offence category.

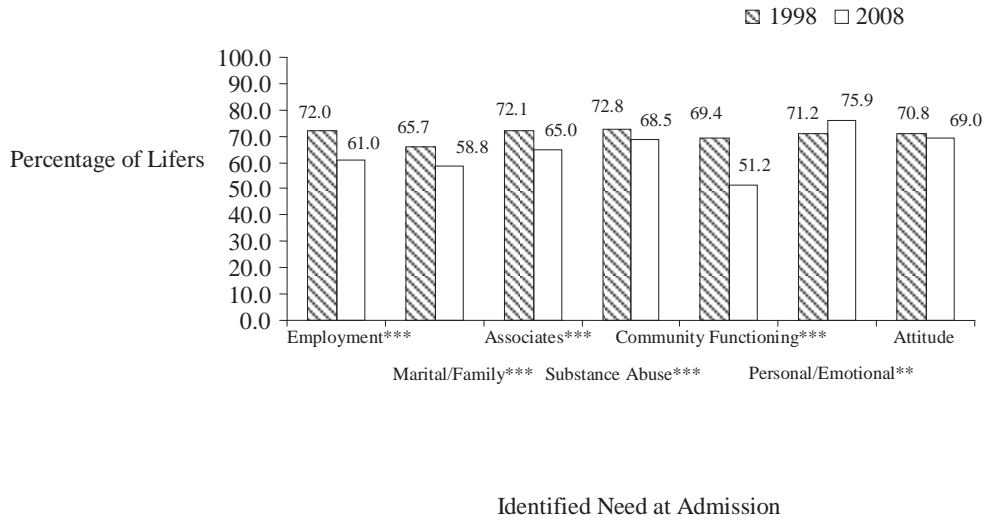
History of Violence

A significantly greater proportion of Lifers in 2008 (15.7% or 745) had been convicted of a prior violent (Schedule I) offence than the 1998 Lifer population (13.8% or 523), $X^2(1) = 5.90, p < .05, \phi_c = .03$. In addition, the mean number of violent prior convictions per offenders in the 2008 population was significantly greater ($M = 0.18, SD = 0.53$) than the 1998 population ($M = 0.16, SD = 0.50$), $F(1, 8546) = 4.80, p < .05, d = 0.04$. Again, some caution should be taken with this comparison as higher numbers of offenders admitted prior to the 1990s had missing or incomplete data.

Needs

Overall, the proportion of Lifers identified as having some or considerable need for improvement upon admission in the seven domains decreased, and most of these changes were statistically significant (Figure 22). The largest reductions were in the domains of employment/education, decreasing 6.8% from 1998 to 2008 ($\phi_c = .70$), and community functioning; decreasing by 14.4% from 1998 to 2008 ($\phi_c = .14$). While needs assessed in the other domains also decreased significantly ($p < .01$), the exceptions were the domains of personal/emotional and attitude, where the differences were smaller and non-significant ($.03 < \phi_c < .06$).

Figure 22. Proportion of Lifers in 1998 (n = 2,619) and 2008 (n = 3,747) Indicating Some or Considerable Need for Improvement Upon Admission^a



^a Totals differ from that noted elsewhere in the report due to missing data.

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

Results of the snapshot indicate that as of March 31, 2009, over one in five offenders (21.9%) under federal jurisdiction was a Lifer. In terms of demographic factors, the overwhelming majority of Lifers were male, over two-thirds were Caucasian, and almost one in five (17.4%) were Aboriginal. One unexpected finding was the growing number of women offenders who were Lifers. While women Lifers represent a relatively small number of all Lifers (167 in total on March 31, 2009 – none of whom were sentenced to indeterminate terms), since the entire CSC population of women supervised by the CSC was 1,072 on March 25, 2009, these individuals represented almost 16% of the total women offenders population (CSC, 2009).

When admitted to custody, many Lifers have a number of significant barriers to overcome. Most of these offenders are serving sentences that included a conviction for homicide and more than two-thirds had been convicted of a previous offence as an adult (although the actual proportion may be higher due to missing data from offenders admitted prior to 1994). More than one in eight offenders sentenced after 1994 indicated that they were part of a gang: male and Aboriginal offenders were more likely to self-identify as a gang member.

Results of the snapshot also indicate that over two-thirds have substance abuse problems upon admission, over 60% had not completed high-school, and over one-quarter (25.7%) have a current or past diagnosed mental health issue. These findings suggest that Lifers would benefit from better access to educational programming, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment. Among the Aboriginal Lifer population there was an even greater set of identified needs than in the general Lifer population. The most striking finding was that among Aboriginal Lifers over nine out of ten were identified as having some or considerable need with respect to substance abuse.

The analyses also revealed that the characteristics of those serving terms of life imprisonment were admitted to the CSC with very different characteristics compared to those sentenced to indeterminate sentences. Whereas most life sentenced offenders have been convicted of a homicide offence, a majority of the dangerous offenders were sexual offenders. Moreover, indeterminate offenders typically had more prior convictions (as well as more prior convictions for violent offences), and were admitted with higher levels of risk and lower motivation to change.

Despite the fact that most Lifers are admitted to the CSC with a number of significant challenges many ultimately return to the community. While over three-fifths of Lifers were in-custody, the remainder (36%) were on conditional release on March 31, 2009. There are some distinctions between these populations. Lifers on conditional release, for instance, are more likely than those in custody to be Caucasian and aging (the majority were aged 55 years or older). They have also been under federal supervision for almost twice as long (approximately 24 years). Taken together, this means that the average Lifer released in the community has lived almost one-half of his or her life under federal supervision. The age of the Lifer population may be an important factor to consider when planning interventions to help prepare this group for the transition to the community. The reintegration needs of a 60 year-old who has spent the past two decades in prison is quite different from those of a 30 year-old released after a five year sentence. For example, employment options are more limited for the older offender, his or her health may have deteriorated, and family and community supports may be scattered or non-existent. Furthermore, prior scholarship has chronicled the psychological effects of long-term imprisonment on the individual (see Zamble, 1992).

Though most of the Lifer population examined in this report were sentenced to a prison term between the ages of 18 and 50 years, there were also 58 Lifers who were less than 18 years of age at the time of sentencing to terms of life minimum (all prior to the implementation of the *Young Offenders Act* in 1984). The characteristics of this group of offenders have yet to be examined, and although they represent a very small percentage of the Lifer population, their outcomes are important to understand from a historical and public policy perspective.

In terms of regional distribution, the greatest number of Lifers resided in the Quebec and Ontario regions, which is consistent with the larger number of offenders sentenced in these regions. However, this was not the case for those serving indeterminate sentences. Among offenders serving indeterminate sentences, the greatest numbers were located in the Ontario and Pacific regions. Investigators in the future might find it fruitful to examine this issue to better understand the source of this variation.

Understanding offender characteristics and the criminogenic needs of the Lifer population may enable the Service to design, develop, refine, and/or deliver correctional programs that respond to the changing needs of this group. Although the snapshot of the offender

population on March 31, 2009 provides an important first step in that process, it is also important to better understand changes in the Lifer population over time.

To examine the changing Lifer profile, snapshots of the population from March 31, 1998 were compared to March 31, 2008. These results showed that the overall number of Lifers increased by approximately one-quarter, with an average of 96 offenders added to the Lifer population each year. The analyses also indicated that this population was aging: during this ten year era, the average age increased from 44 to 49 years. The number of Lifers who were 51 years of age or older increased by almost 95%, while the proportion of those aged 61 years and over more than doubled, from 353 offenders in 1998 to 880 in 2008, representing a 149% increase in this age group. These increases may have resource implications for the Service, especially for those who remain in the in-custody population, and require enhanced health care services.

Another significant change was the greater number of Lifers residing in the community. More were supervised on conditional releases on March 31, 2008 (37%), compared to 1998 (32%), although that total decreased to 36% by March 31, 2009. One of the biggest challenges facing correctional systems is the safe re-entry of violent offenders back to the community, and there is considerable public concern about homicide offenders who are conditionally released. Yet, Canadian offenders convicted of manslaughter or murder rarely are convicted of another homicide or violent crime once returned to the community (National Parole Board, 2009), and that fact suggests that these offenders are well-prepared for re-entry and that the risk that these offenders pose has been carefully managed.

Altogether, the changing offence and demographic characteristics of the Lifer population will require that programmatic interventions and services for this group be re-evaluated, and when appropriate re-designed to meet their changing needs. It is possible that the changing profile of the Lifer population will require the development of new interventions, especially as it relates to a growing number of elderly and women Lifers, as well as the differential needs of those sentenced to life and indeterminate sentences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions of Sentence types

Except when otherwise noted, the following definitions were extracted from the Correctional Service of Canada's (2001) *Sentence Management Manual*.

Life Sentences

Life Commuted. Refers to sentences that were death sentences. When death penalty was abolished by the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* in 1976, these sentences were commuted to Life imprisonment.

Life Minimum. Refers to sentences imposed for offenders where the minimum punishment allowable by the *Criminal Code of Canada* is Life imprisonment. In other words, no lesser penalty can be imposed

Life Maximum. Refers to all other offences that the *Criminal Code of Canada* or *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* allows a maximum penalty of life imprisonment but where a lesser definite sentence may also be imposed. Examples of these offences include Manslaughter, Aggravated Sexual Assault, Robbery, or Traffic in Schedule I/II Substance (*Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*).

Indeterminate Sentences

Prior to October 15, 1977, sentences of preventive detention could be imposed if an offender was found to either be a habitual criminal, criminal sexual psychopath or a dangerous sexual offender.

Habitual Criminal. Individuals who, since attaining the age of 18 years, had, on at least three separate occasions, been convicted of an indictable offence for which s/he was liable to imprisonment for five years or more and was leading a persistently criminal life (repealed on October 15, 1977).

Dangerous Sex Offender. Persons who, by their conduct in any sexual matter, have shown a failure to control their sexual impulses and, who are likely to cause injury, pain or other evil to

any person, through failure in the future to control their sexual impulses. This classification was repealed on October 15, 1977.

Lieutenant-Governor Warrant. Lieutenant-Governor's warrants were issued to detain persons who were thought to be "dangerously insane." These warrants were issued by a justice and the individual remained in custody until "His Majesty's pleasure." These warrants were officially abolished in 1992 (see Bloom, Webster, Hucker, & De Freitas, 2005).

Long Term Offender. The long term offender (LTO) designation was created in 1997, primarily for the management of sexual offenders. The legislation was developed in response to concerns that many sexual and violent offenders required specific attention, even though they did not meet the criteria for a dangerous offender designation. The LTO designation is given to individuals convicted of a "serious personal injury offence" who, on the evidence, are likely to re-offend. Offenders who can be managed through a regular sentence, along with a specific period of federal supervision in the community, can be designated a long term offender that can result in a term of supervision after release of up to ten years after an offender's release.

Dangerous Offender. Part XXIV of the *Criminal Code of Canada* sets out the procedure to have an offender declared a dangerous offender and sentenced to an indeterminate sentence. For offenders sentenced after August 1, 1997, this determination is subject to a parole review after the dangerous offender has served seven years of custody and every two years thereafter. Under the *Criminal Code*, this sentence is available only for certain offences (serious personal injury offences) and only where it has been shown by evidence, that the offender constitutes a continuing danger to other persons "through failure in the future to restrain his (or her) behaviour." The NPB (2008) decides whether, and under what conditions, the offender will ever be released.