

# CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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## A Profile of Black Individuals Serving Indeterminate Sentences in Canada

**Research Highlight:** Relative to other indeterminately-sentenced groups, Black individuals serving an indeterminate sentence tend to be younger and in earlier sentence stages. They are more likely to be classified as maximum security and have somewhat greater profile complexity.

### Why we are doing this study

Black Canadians are overrepresented in the Canadian criminal justice system (Department of Justice, 2022). Prior research indicates that Black individuals in the federal correctional system have unique profile characteristics and outcomes; for example, relative to White men, Black men admitted to federal custody tend to be younger, have longer sentences, are more likely to have a Security Threat Group (STG) affiliation, and are more likely to be classified as maximum security (Smeth, Farrell MacDonald & Derkzen, 2024). The current analysis examines the specific characteristics of Black individuals serving an indeterminate sentence<sup>1</sup>. This work is intended to inform organizational priorities surrounding [Canada's Black Justice Strategy](#) and the Black Offender Strategy within the Correctional Service Canada (CSC).

### What we did

Information pertaining to all individuals under federal jurisdiction on October 26th, 2025 was drawn from CSC's Corporate Reporting System – Modernized (CRSM). Comparison data were also extracted for fiscal year (FY) end snapshots for the previous four years. Analysis was undertaken to explore Black representation in the federal correctional population overall and within the indeterminately-sentenced population, as well as the profile characteristics of incarcerated Black persons relative to indeterminately-sentenced individuals in all other racial groups. For a description of assessment measures, see: [Commissioner's Directive 705-6](#).

### What we found

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Black individuals accounted for 11% of the federal in-custody population overall, and 12% of the indeterminately-sentenced population. Black representation has slightly increased in the past five years, and the total number of indeterminately-sentenced Black individuals increased from 389 to 458. The vast majority of the indeterminately-sentenced Black population was located within men's federal institutions (98%), with concentration in the Ontario region (45%; particularly at Collins Bay Institution, Beaver Creek Institution, and Warkworth Institution). Another 25% of the population was located in the Quebec region (particularly at Cowansville Institution and Donnacona Institution).

Regarding profile characteristics, incarcerated indeterminately-sentenced Black individuals ( $N = 458$ ), as compared to indeterminately-sentenced individuals in all other racial groups ( $N = 3,264$ ), were:

- younger overall (77% were under the age of 50, compared to 50%)
- often at earlier sentence stages (32% had served less than five years, compared to 22%)
- less likely to have reached Day Parole eligibility (45%, compared to 59%)
- more often classified as maximum security (28%, compared to 18%, though a majority were classified as medium security)
- more likely to have a Murder I (first degree murder) flag (38%, compared to 26%)
- somewhat more likely to have profile complexity, as evidenced by high Static Risk (94%, compared to 87%), high Dynamic Need (77%, compared to 72%), low Reintegration Potential (75%, compared to 65%), and low motivation (25%, compared to 19%)

From FY 2021 to 2022 to FY 2025 to 2026 (year to date<sup>2</sup>), Black representation in the federal correctional system slightly increased from 9% to 11% in the overall in-custody population and from 11% to 12% among those indeterminately-sentenced,

<sup>1</sup> This group includes individuals who have received a life sentence for murder and as well as those serving an indeterminate sentence tied to a Dangerous Offender (DO) designation.

<sup>2</sup> As of October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.



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while community representation increased from 8% to 9% overall and from 4% to 5% for the indeterminately-sentenced population. Relative to the in-custody population, there were fewer life-sentenced Black individuals in the community under federal supervision; i.e., 112 individuals, accounting for 5% of the indeterminately-sentenced community population. Regional representation was similar to that of the in-custody lifer population, with 45% in the Ontario region and 24% in the Quebec region.

**What it means**

The Black indeterminately-sentenced population within federal custody is somewhat unique relative to other indeterminately-sentenced racial groups. Most notably, the majority of the population falls below the age of 50 and many are within the earlier phases of long sentence management, i.e., adaptation and integration within the institutional environment, which precede the later phases of preparation for release and community reintegration (see: [Commissioner's Directive 705-6](#)). Security level and risk profiles are also somewhat different for indeterminately-sentenced Black individuals, which may be tied to their closer proximity to sentence commencement. Overall, the current sentence and case management needs of this group are somewhat distinct from other racial groups within the indeterminately-sentenced population.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Indeterminately-Sentenced Population in Federal Custody, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

Characteristic or Measure	Indeterminately-sentenced Black Individuals (N = 458)	Indeterminately-sentenced individuals in all other racial groups (N = 3,264)
Average Age	41	50
Security Level		
Maximum	28%	18%
Medium	57%	61%
Minimum	13%	20%
Not determined	2%	2%
High Dynamic Need	77%	72%
High Static Risk	94%	87%
Low Reintegration Potential	75%	65%
Low Motivation	25%	19%
Time Served (average years)	10.4	15.5
Time Served (grouped)		
Less than 5 years	32%	22%
Over 5 years to 15 years	41%	36%
More than 15 years	27%	43%
Day Parole Eligibility Date reached	45%	59%

Note: Percentages may not sum exactly to 100 due to rounding.

**For more information**

Please email the Research Branch at [research@csc-scc.gc.ca](mailto:research@csc-scc.gc.ca). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

**References**

- Department of Justice (2022). [Overrepresentation of Black People in the Canadian Criminal Justice System](#). Ottawa, Ontario: Department of Justice.
- Smeth, A., Farrell MacDonald, S., & Derksen, D. (2024). Examining Time to Security Reclassification for Black Offenders (Research Report R-479). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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