

Custodial populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, February to December 2020

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The Canadian courts and correctional systems have taken steps to reduce the size of the correctional institution population during the COVID-19 pandemic, while balancing public safety concerns. Measures include the temporary or early release of people in custody who are considered at low risk to reoffend; extended periods for parole appeal deadlines and access to medical leave privileges; and alternatives to custody while awaiting trials, sentencing and bail hearings.

In February 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Yukon's average daily count of population in the adult correctional institution was 56. The average went down to 39 in June, and then increased to close to the pre-pandemic daily average in September through November before declining to 41 in December.

Comparing December 2020 to February 2020, the average daily count of population in Yukon's adult correctional institution decreased by 26.8%; nationally, the average daily count decreased by 15.8% over the same time period.

Average daily counts of adults in custody, by jurisdiction, February to December 2020

| | February 2020 (pre-pandemic level) | June 2020 (three months into pandemic) | September 2020 (six months into pandemic) | October 2020 | November 2020 | December 2020 |
|---|--|--|---|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total custody | 37,976 | 30,709 | 31,684 | 32,259 | 32,525 | 31,981 |
| Total federal custody | 13,891 | 13,141 | 12,761 | 12,652 | 12,664 | 12,592 |
| Total provincial and territorial custody | 24,085 | 17,568 | 18,923 | 19,607 | 19,861 | 19,389 |
| Average daily counts | | | | | | |
| Newfoundland and Lab. | 310 | 187 | 332 | 346 | 337 | 350 |
| Prince Edward Island | 114 | 94 | 115 | 118 | 122 | 123 |
| Nova Scotia | 440 | 268 | 325 | 344 | 341 | 318 |
| New Brunswick | 450 | 358 | 417 | 412 | 425 | 405 |
| Quebec | 4,381 | 3,512 | 3,504 | 3,617 | 3,670 | 3,627 |
| Ontario | 8,269 | 5,811 | 6,315 | 6,591 | 6,731 | 6,724 |
| Manitoba | 2,238 | 1,688 | 1,804 | 1,797 | 1,732 | 1,619 |
| Saskatchewan | 1,984 | 1,537 | 1,771 | 1,812 | 1,835 | 1,672 |
| Alberta | 3,384 | 2,370 | 2,582 | 2,750 | 2,831 | 2,787 |
| British Columbia | 2,193 | 1,474 | 1,445 | 1,507 | 1,543 | 1,485 |
| Yukon | 56 | 39 | 55 | 57 | 53 | 41 |
| Northwest Territories | 143 | 112 | 107 | 105 | 98 | 94 |
| Nunavut | 122 | 118 | 151 | 151 | 143 | 144 |

Note: Statistics Canada's Adult Corrections Key Indicator Report (KIR) collects data from all adult correctional service programs in Canada that provide an average daily count of people in federal, provincial and territorial custody, for each month of the year. To do this, correctional services generally take a count of people in custody every day, and it is averaged over the number of days in that month.

At the federal level, the monthly numbers represent the counts at the mid-point of each month as reported by Correctional Service Canada (CSC) and include people in custody on temporary absence. Given that the federal March counts were taken mid-month, they do not reflect the full impact of COVID-19, as measures to address the pandemic began to be implemented in the second half of the month.

There may be differences in jurisdictional operations, custodial populations and implementation of measures to address COVID-19 among correctional service programs, resulting in differences in the relative decreases in custodial populations. Caution should be used in making any jurisdictional comparisons.