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Jordyn D. Laird, MSc.

Department of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Philip G. Laird, PhD.

Department of Psychology, Trinity Western University, Canada

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Jordyn D. Laird, MSc.

Department of Psychology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Philip G. Laird, PhD.

Department of Psychology, Trinity Western University, Canada

Vice President, Innovation, Global and Academic Partnerships, Trinity Western University

Abstract

The present study considered trends from five Statistics Canada databases on criminality, victimization, custody in correctional services, adult admissions to community services, and general labour force levels in the six years following the release of the December 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report. Although there did not appear to be a general decline in criminality, victimization, or overall custody of Indigenous persons in Canada from 2015 to 2021, minor improvements in the nature of intra-community victimization, admissions to community services to serve sentences, and increased employment among Indigenous persons in Canada were observed. While the TRC report was released in 2015, it appears that policy changes related to the justice system are only now coming into effect within Canada. Discussion focuses on the short- and long-term implications of the TRC report with respect to meaningful impacts on the justice experienced by Indigenous people in Canada.

Keywords: Canada, crime, Indigenous, law, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

An Analysis of Crime, Incarceration, Victimization, and Employment of Indigenous Persons in Canada from 2015 to 2021

Indigenous persons in Canada have experienced many injustices since colonization (Reading and Wien 2009; Monchalin 2016; Blakemore 2018). Among the most significant historic policies that systematized discrimination against Indigenous peoples in Canada was the residential school system (Miller 2020). The legacy of the Canadian residential school system continues to impact Indigenous people, as evidenced by the May 27, 2021 discovery of 215 buried bodies of Indigenous children at the Kamloops residential school (Dickson and Watson 2021). Other similar discoveries have revealed the painful truth about the residential school legacy (Lee and Parkhill 2022). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigated the systematic cultural and social impacts of the residential school system on Indigenous persons (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation 2021). In December 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report concluded that the treatment of Indigenous persons within the residential school system constituted “cultural genocide” (Amir 2018).

Finally closed in 1996, residential schools perpetrated a cycle of violence that will affect Indigenous peoples for generations (Knickerbocker 2015). According to the Indigenous Foundation, which promotes education, identity, and culture for Indigenous people in Canada, the two primary objectives of the residential schools were removal and assimilation (Gomez and Manuel 2020). Specifically, the residential school system was premised on the belief that Indigenous people were “savages” who required the elimination of their culture, beliefs, and practices to become “civilized.” This underlying colonial belief system led to the development of a Canadian government policy of establishing residential schools designed to address “the Indian problem” by destroying Indigenous culture from the ground up—by removing children from their parents, communities, culture, and heritage in order to assimilate them into the community, practices, language, culture, and beliefs of Canadians (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 2010). As cited in Ross *et al.* (2015), the First Nation Centre (2005) found that, of those who attended residential schools, 79.3% experienced verbal and emotional abuse, 78.0% experienced severe discipline, 71.5% witnessed violence, 69.2% were physically abused, 61.5% experienced bullying by other children, and 32.6% experienced sexual abuse. The legacy of this system has left Indigenous people struggling with intergenerational familial conflict, sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, and systemic criminality (Feir 2016). Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2013) examined the intergenerational trauma induced by residential school attendance. Their research concluded that having a parent who attended a residential school results in a 15% increased likelihood of suicide ideation and an increased risk of depression, drug-use, smoking, psychological distress, learning difficulties, and hepatitis C virus infection compared to those without a parental history of residential school attendance (Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman 2013).

Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2013) found that the mechanism of stress proliferation added to the intergenerational trauma associated with residential school attendance, as parents’ stressors indirectly exposed their children to parallel stressors of social disadvantage and poor parental modelling. Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman (2013) suggest that these social learning mechanisms may influence the cycles affecting the Indigenous population, such as lower income, lower socioeconomic status, lower educational achievement, lower employment, and reduced school success among their children. The children of residential school survivors are more likely to rank their Indigenous heritage as being central to their self-concept than are people without a familial history of attendance; however, the children of survivors report more negative health effects and a more negative sense of well-being. The authors suggest that residential school attendance caused greater outgroup rejection, leading to greater ingroup identification, which can be linked to greater levels of perceived discrimination and a greater risk for poor health and social outcomes, such as poverty, crime, addiction, unemployment, and abuse (Bombay, Matheson, and Anisman 2013).

The impacts of colonization on Indigenous people are not unique to the Canadian context. There are many examples of atrocities committed by colonial powers throughout history. A consideration of the impacts of colonization on the Indigenous people of Australia, for example, has yielded negative outcomes similar to those observed in Canada

(Dale *et al.* 2019). Focusing on “Aboriginalism,” a concept developed to understand the embodiment of discourse and practices relating to race and welfare colonialism, Broadhurst (2002) found that the Indigenous people of Australia are 16 times more likely to be victims of homicide, nine times more likely to be arrested, 24 times more likely to be imprisoned as adults, and 48 times more likely to be imprisoned as juveniles compared to non-Indigenous Australians (Broadhurst 2002). Broadhurst (2002) discovered an interaction between crime and unemployment indicating the presence of strain theory, whereby higher unemployment, poor education, poor health, and higher levels of crime in the Indigenous population contribute to a poverty cycle, which perpetuates a positive feedback loop fuelling the overrepresentation of Indigenous people within Australia’s judicial system. Broadhurst (2002) further suggests that crime is a form of resistance to the White-majority system and that social deprivation shown through poverty, alienation, anxiety, intergenerational stressors, and powerlessness creates a potentially dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuated by the dynamic described by strain theory (Broadhurst 2002). Whether caused individually by a social–familial feedback loop, by cultural genocide, or by the effects described by strain theory, the impact of colonization on Indigenous people is easily identified through a statistical analysis of demographic trends in criminality, poverty, and victimization.

Although residential schools constitute the most identifiable historic system of cultural genocide, there is also evidence of ongoing racism in the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada. Using data from the Canadian National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), Hansen and Dim (2019) explored a more inclusive perspective on the root problems faced by Indigenous people in Canada. According to Hansen and Dim (2019), there is a direct connection between the victimization of Indigenous women and a lack of police effort applied to their cases. Due to the historic police involvement in residential schools, there is an unhealthy relationship between the police and Indigenous people in Canada, as indicated by the relatively low likelihood of an Indigenous person reporting being the victim of a crime (Hansen and Dim 2019). The 2010/2011 data indicate that although indigenous youth comprise only 7% of the total Canadian youth population (Toombs, Kowatch, and Mushquash 2016), they are overrepresented in the youth criminal justice system--female Indigenous youth made up nearly 34% of all female youth in custody and male Indigenous youth made up 24% of all male youth in custody. Additionally, in 2009, 12% of Indigenous people in Canada reported being a victim of a violent crime other than spousal violence, whereas this was reported by only 5% of non-Indigenous Canadians (Hansen and Dim 2019). In 2015, non-Indigenous female homicide victims had an 84% chance of having their case solved, whereas Indigenous female homicide victims had about a 50% chance.

Impact of Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indigenous Persons in Canada: 2015-2021

Released in December 2015, the TRC report sought to support Indigenous people affected by residential schools and renew relationships on a foundational basis of mutual under-

standing and respect (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2021). The aims of the TRC are to promote awareness of residential schools, increase research that can act as a resource for all Canadians, support communities to meet unique needs, and support a commemoration initiative that would provide funding for activities that honour former residential school students (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2021). The TRC went beyond simply recording the injustices committed through the residential school system. The TRC published 94 “Calls to Action,” which range from apologies to recommendations for policy changes concerning the treatment of Indigenous people. Actions 25 to 42 recommend changes to the policing, criminal justice, and victim services systems. Of particular relevance to the present study are the following Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2021):

30. We call upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade, and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so;

31. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending;

32. We call upon the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to allow trial judges, upon giving reasons, to depart from mandatory minimum sentences and restrictions on the use of conditional sentences;

36. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused;

37. We call upon the federal government to provide more supports for Aboriginal programming in halfway houses and parole services.

42. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal justice systems in a manner consistent with the Treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples, the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, endorsed by Canada in November 2012.

Although the TRC report is expected to yield long-term impacts on Indigenous people in Canada, the above Calls to Action suggest that most of the policy changes and resultant impacts on the condition of Indigenous people were anticipated by the authors to occur within a decade. Assuming that this timeline is reasonable and that appropriate

policy, financial, and structural action has been taken, one would expect some evidence of an impact—even a small impact—on the conditions of Indigenous people in Canada in the years immediately following the release of the report. This paper investigates whether there is evidence of national statistical improvement in the well-being of Indigenous people six years following the release of the TRC report (from 2015 to 2021). Although the study is descriptive in nature, its general hypothesis is that there is evidence of improving conditions for Indigenous persons in Canada. Specifically, we hypothesize that positive trends are observed between 2016 and 2021 relative to 2015 levels as evidenced by lower criminality, less victimization, less punitive sentences, fewer custodial admissions, higher employment, and lower unemployment.

Method

This study is descriptive and archival in nature. The study uses national statistical databases to investigate specific country-wide patterns over the six years following the release of the TRC report in late 2015. Statistics Canada is an open, transparent, and confidential set of databases. As a “big data” warehouse, Statistics Canada provides population-level data across a wide variety of important issues. This study used five Statistics Canada datasets to analyze crime and employment trends from 2015 to 2021: (a) homicide victims and perpetrators (Statistics Canada 2021; Table 35-10-0060-01); (b) persons accused of homicide (Statistics Canada 2021; Table 35-10-0060-01); (c) solved homicides by relationship between victim and accused (Statistics Canada 2021; Table 35-10-0119-01); adult custody admissions to correctional services (Statistics Canada 2021; Table 35-10-0016-01); adult custody admissions to secure and community admissions (Statistics Canada 2021; Table 35-10-0016-01); and (e) national employment data. Not all years under analysis were available in the Statistics Canada databases employed in this study. The data were used where available.

Results

Indigenous Persons in Canada Homicide Victim Rates: 2015–2021

Indigenous murder rates for 2015–2021 indicate little change in the number of homicides against Indigenous persons in Canada as a proportion of overall homicide rates in Canada (see figure 1). In 2015, 24.55% of all homicide victims were Indigenous. Six years later, in 2021, 24.11% of all homicide victims were Indigenous (see figure 2). These data indicate that homicide victimization rates against Indigenous persons in Canada have not declined in the years immediately following the release of the TRC report.

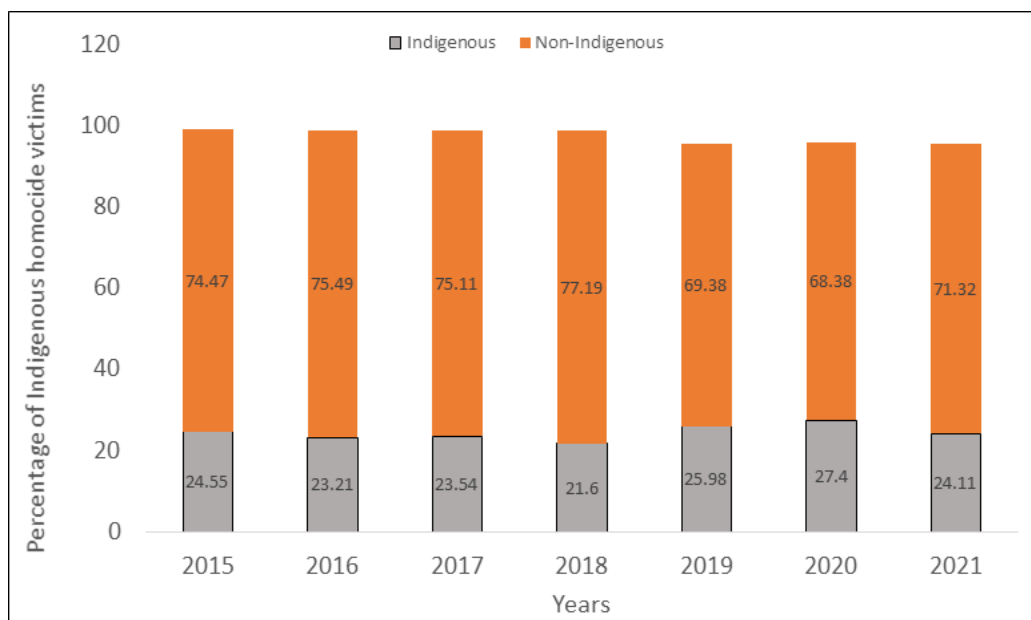


Figure 1: Percentage of Indigenous homicide victims in Canada for 2015–2021.

Note. Between 1 and 5% of annual homicide victims' Indigenous identity is unknown.

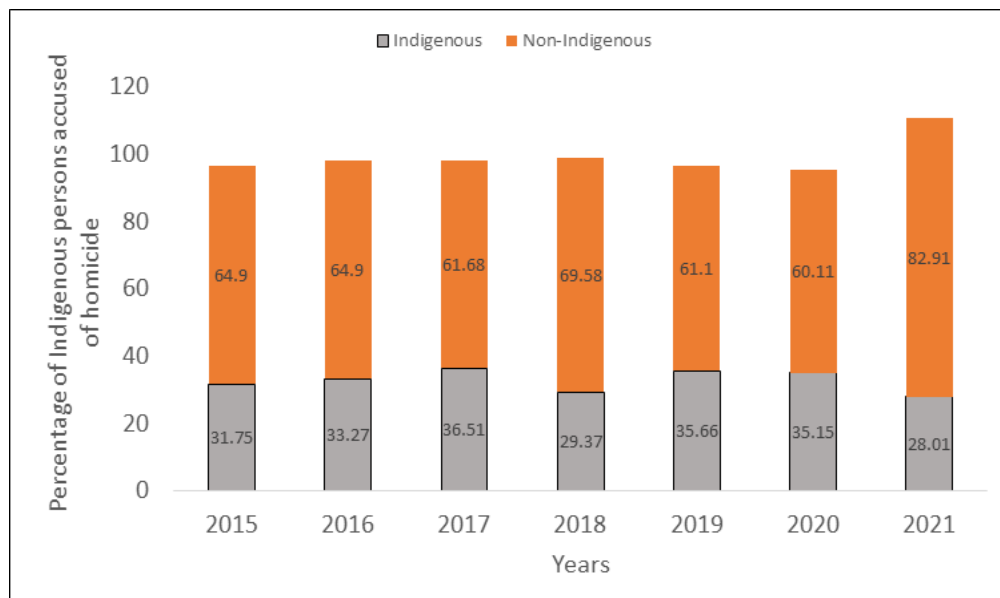


Figure 2: Percentage of Indigenous versus Non-Indigenous persons accused of homicide in Canada for 2015–2021.

Note. The indigenous identity of between 0 and 5% of annual persons accused of homicide is unknown.

The percentage of Indigenous versus Non-Indigenous persons in Canada accused of homicide for 2015–2021 is shown in figure 2. These data indicate a slight downward change in the number of Indigenous persons in Canada accused of homicide (see figure 2). Whereas 31.75% of persons accused of homicide were Indigenous in 2015, this percentage dropped slightly to 28.01% by 2021. Although these data suggest that the rates of homicide accusations against Indigenous persons in Canada have not substantively declined since the release of the TRC report in 2015, there does appear to be some indication that the overall trend is downward. It should be noted that approximately 5% of Canadians are Indigenous. The disproportionate number of homicide accusations among Indigenous persons in Canada (averaging roughly 33% of all Canadian homicides from 2015 to 2021) is six times what one would expect from the population data. This overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Canadian criminal justice system shows little sign of decreasing in the six years following the release of the TRC.

Indigenous to Non-Indigenous Persons in Canada Solved Homicides: 2015–2020

The percentages of solved homicides involving Indigenous and Non-Indigenous victims for 2015–2020 are shown in figure 3. These data indicate a slight decline in the solved homicide rates for Indigenous persons in Canada from 2015 to 2020 (Statistics Canada 2022; Table 35-10-0119-01). In 2015, 91% of homicides involving Indigenous victims were solved; by 2020, this percentage had decreased to 76%. Although this result might seem to suggest a precipitous decline in the rates at which crimes against Indigenous persons in Canada have been solved in the years following the TRC report’s release, it should be noted that homicides can take years to solve, and later crimes are thus more often designated as “solved.” However, the rates at which homicides involving non-Indigenous people have been solved over the same timeframe show both a similar decline in the percentages of solved homicides and a lower level of solved homicides involving non-Indigenous victims. As shown in figure 6, in 2015, 77% of homicides involving non-Indigenous victims were solved; in 2016, 68% of homicides involving non-Indigenous victims were solved; in 2017, 70% of homicides involving non-Indigenous persons in Canada were solved; in 2018, 68% of homicides involving non-Indigenous persons in Canada were solved; in 2019, 69% of homicides involving non-indigenous victims were solved; and, in 2020, 67% of homicides involving non-Indigenous victims were solved (see figure 6). These data seem to indicate that there was a spike in solved homicides involving Indigenous persons in Canada in the years immediately following the release of the TRC report (91% in 2015, 88% in 2016, and 86% in 2017), and then the rates declined to more normative levels in the following years. In general, homicides involving Indigenous persons in Canada appear to be solved at higher rates than homicides involving non-Indigenous victims.

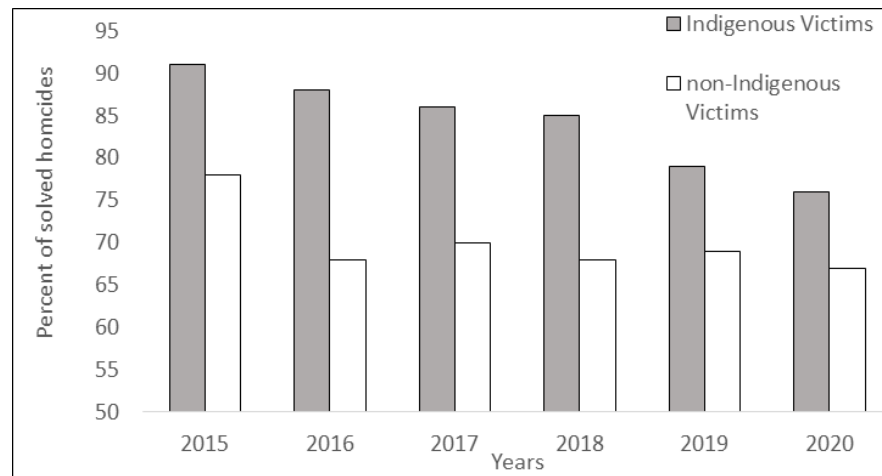


Figure 3: Percent of solved homicides involving Indigenous victims to solved homicides involving Non-Indigenous victims in Canada for 2015–2020.

Homicide of Indigenous Persons in Canada by Relationship with Accused: 2015–2020

Figure 4 shows the number of solved homicides organized by the type of relationship between the victim and the accused (Statistics Canada 2022; Table 35-10-0119-01). We considered four types of victim–accused relationship: family, intimate, acquaintance, and stranger/criminal. The figure indicates that, in the years following the TRC commission report, there was a general overall decline in the number of victimizations committed against Indigenous persons in Canada within a family relationship, from 57 in 2015 to 45 in 2021. This represents a substantial decline in intra-familial murders within Indigenous communities of 21% in the seven years following the release of the TRC report. By comparison, victimizations caused by strangers and persons in a criminal relationship to the victim increased from a combined total of 18 in 2015 to 22 in 2021. This represents an overall increase in this category of victimizations of 23% over the six years following the TRC report's release. Although small in overall number, it appears from these data that the type of homicides being committed within Indigenous communities changed in the years following the TRC report, from mainly intra-familial to mainly extra-familial (see figure 4). One notable exception to this pattern is observed in 2020, where intra-familial and acquaintance homicides spiked to an unusual level. This spike is likely due to the lockdown measures imposed across Canada due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, increased stresses on families and resultant increases in intra-familial violence and domestic assault were observed nationally.

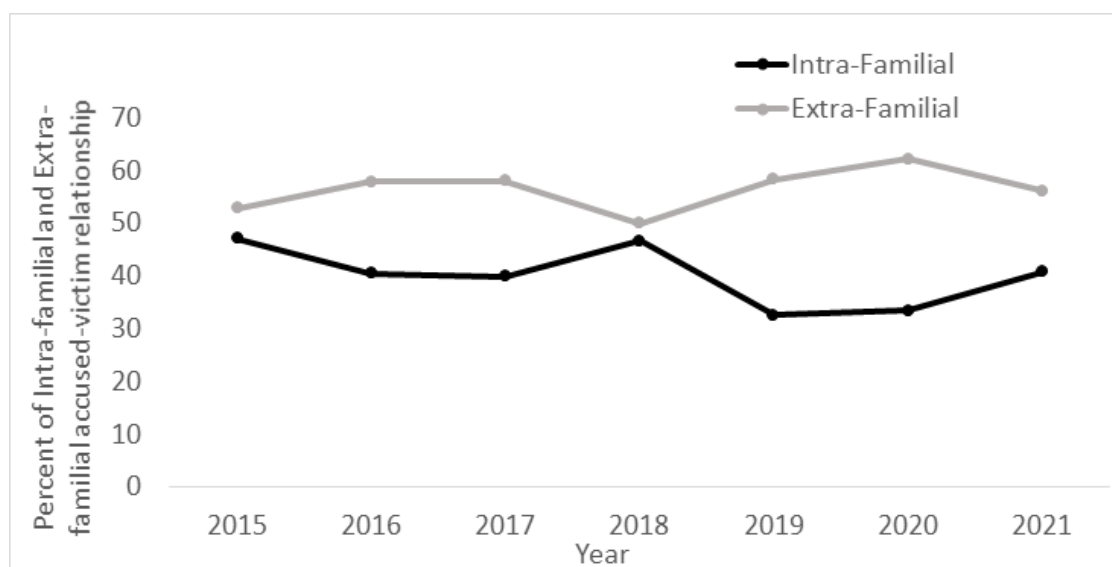


Figure 4: Percent of intra-familial and extra-familial accused–victim relationships involved in solved homicides by Indigenous identity in Canada for 2015–2021.

Indigenous Persons in Canada Adult Custody Admissions: 2015/16–2020/21

The percentage of Indigenous persons in Canada in adult custody admissions from 2015/16 to 2020/21 are shown in figure 5 (Statistics Canada 2022; Table 35-10-0016-01). These data indicate that there was an increase in the rate of Indigenous persons in Canada sentenced or remanded to adult custody from 2015/16 to 2020/21. It is interesting to note that the percentage of remanded and sentenced persons who identified as Indigenous increased compared to the percentage of remanded and sentenced offenders who identified as non-Indigenous in the years following the release of the TRC. In 2015/6, 25.37% of remanded persons were Indigenous. By 2020/21, the percentage of overall remanded persons who were Indigenous had grown to 32.22%. Differences in the sentencing data are even more dramatic. Whereas only 26.96% of sentenced offenders were Indigenous in 2015/16, 34.49% of sentenced offenders were Indigenous by 2020/21. This represents a roughly 28% increase in the relative number of sentenced offenders who were Indigenous from 2015/16 to 2020/21 (see figure 5).

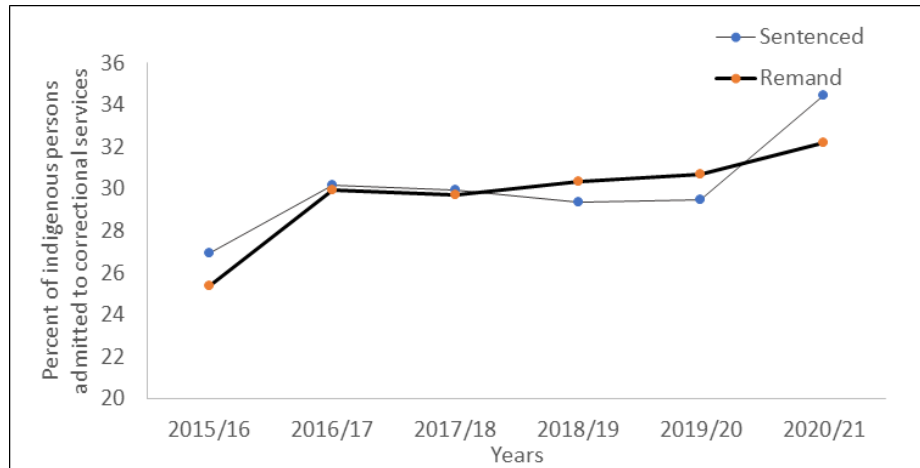


Figure 5: Percent of Indigenous persons admitted to custody as sentenced or remanded in Canada for 2015–2019.

Indigenous Admissions to Community Services: 2015–2019

The numbers of Indigenous persons in Canada admitted to community service for 2015–2019 are shown in figure 6 (Statistics Canada 2022; Table 35-10-0020-01). We considered two areas of correctional services: probation and conditional admissions. Provincial and territorial data were combined to form national numbers for comparison purposes and to maintain consistency across database usage (Statistics Canada 2022). These data indicate a general increase in the number of Indigenous persons in Canada admitted to community services from 2015 to 2019 (see figure 6). In 2015/16, 14,400 Indigenous persons were admitted to probation; this increased to 17,000 by 2019/20. This represents a 15% increase in probations over five years. Although conditional sentences remained relatively static from 2015/16 to 2019/20 (3,100 Indigenous persons were given conditional sentences in 2015 compared to 3,200 in 2019), admissions to community-based sentences increased from 27,300 in 2015 to a high of 36,900 in 2019. This represents a 26% overall increase in the number of community-based sentences given to Indigenous offenders during this timeframe.

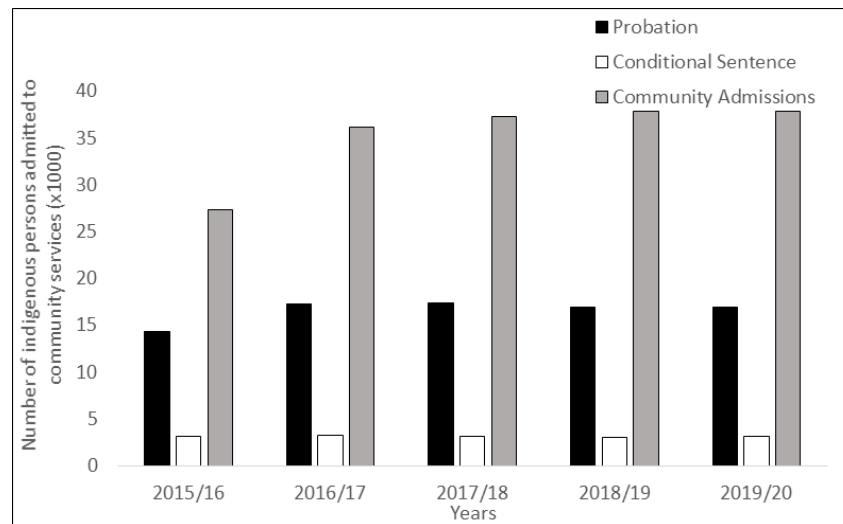


Figure 6: Number of Indigenous persons admitted to community services as probation and conditional sentences in Canada from 2015/16 to 2019/20 (in thousands).

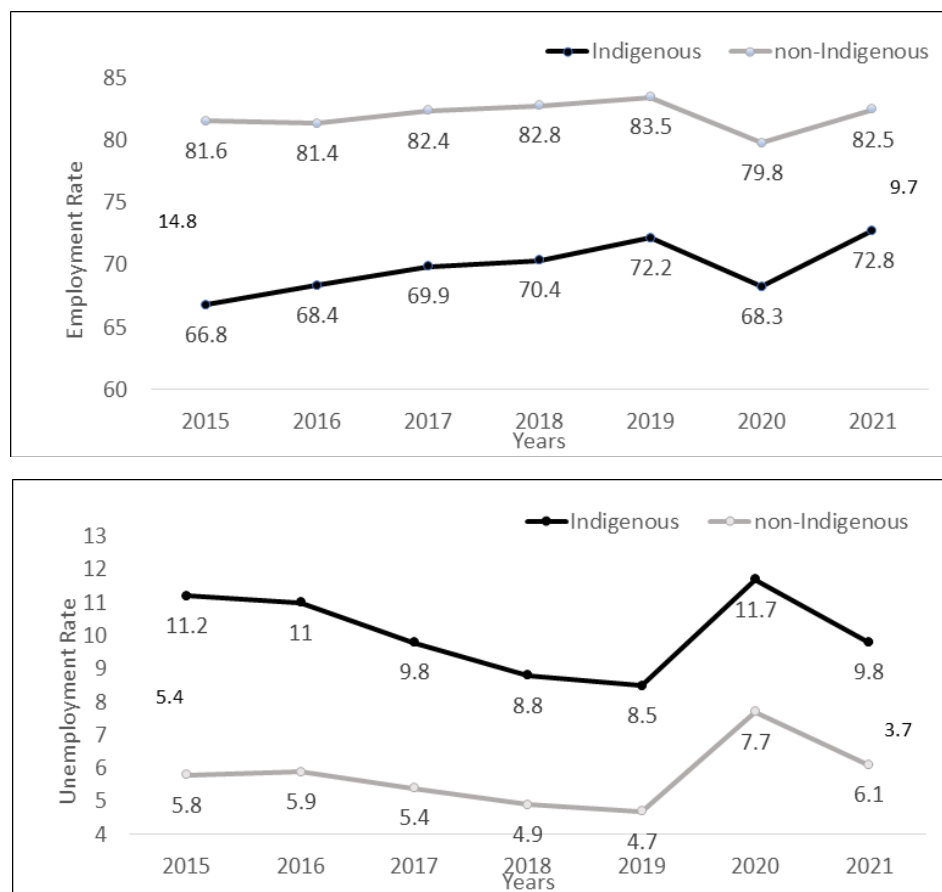


Figure 7: Employment and unemployment rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons in Canada for 2015–2021.

Note. Percent of employed (top) and unemployed (bottom) Canadians by Indigenous and non-Indigenous identity from 2015 to 2021.

Employment Rates of Indigenous Persons in Canada: 2015–2021

Employment is one of the most important protective factors for reducing crime and victimization. Employment is an indication of one's ability to contribute to society; support oneself and one's family; and reduce the cycles of poverty, addiction, and crime. National employment statistics provide the largest regularized database of information useful for understanding the impact of the TRC on Indigenous people in Canada. For the purposes of our analysis, the age parameters were set between 25–54 years, a reasonable benchmark to use when examining how social policies and systems impact systemic employment. Specifically, ages below 25 were deemed to be disproportionately impacted by educational trends given that increased participation in higher education would indicate a positive trend for Indigenous persons in Canada but would work counter to the employment trend. In addition, Canadians 55 or older were excluded because this is the age at which Canadians start to retire and may experience increasing health challenges that impact their employability. It was determined that these factors may differentially impact Indigenous persons in Canada (who might experience greater health challenges later in life) and non-Indigenous persons in Canada (who might be able to retire at an earlier age). Thus, “core” employment was determined to be between the ages of 25 and 54. Figure 7 shows employment and unemployment rates for Indigenous persons in Canada for 2015–2021 (Statistics Canada 2022; Table 14-10-0359-01). These trends are clearly in a positive direction in the years following the release of the TRC report. In 2015, there was a 66.8% employment rate among Indigenous persons in Canada. Remarkably, that rate had increased to 72.8% by 2021. Although there was a general trend toward greater employment across the Canadian landscape, from 81.6% in 2015 to 82.5% in 2021 (an increase of 0.9%), the 6% increase in employment among Indigenous persons in Canada from 2015 to 2021 is roughly six times the national average growth rate.

Similar trends are seen in the relative unemployment rates of Indigenous persons in Canada. Unemployment among Indigenous persons improved markedly, from 11.2% in 2015 to 9.8% in 2021. Notwithstanding the spike in unemployment across Canada and around the world throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (which affected both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people), the downward unemployment trends for Indigenous people are steeper than are those for non-Indigenous Canadians. The relative unemployment rates of Indigenous persons in Canada to non-Indigenous persons went from 5.8% in 2015 to 6.1% in 2021 (a rise in unemployment by 0.3%), while the unemployment rates for Indigenous persons in Canada over the same timeframe declined by 1.4%, more than triple the national average decline, despite the effects of COVID-19 (see figure 7). These results indicate that employment conditions for Indigenous persons in Canada have improved significantly in the years following the release of the TRC report.

Discussion

The systematic cultural genocide inflicted on the Indigenous people of Canada through the residential school system exacerbated existing inequalities evidenced in abuse, poverty,

illness, substance abuse, and violence perpetrated against Indigenous people and communities. Utilizing national databases from Statistics Canada, this study provided descriptive data on crime, incarceration, and secondary social outcomes from 2015 to 2021. Although much of the data on criminality and victimization among Indigenous people in Canada failed to reveal improved conditions from 2015 to 2021, there are indications of positive changes in the lives and wellbeing of Indigenous persons, especially in terms of intra-community victimization, sentencing to community admission, and employment.

The focus of the TRC was to bring awareness and education regarding the long-lasting effects of residential schools on Indigenous people (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015). The main outcome of the TRC report is the 94 Calls to Action. These represent various ways in which agencies and individuals within Canadian society should take specific steps toward the amelioration of the disadvantages faced by Indigenous people in Canada. Most of these Calls to Action set a timeframe of one decade for substantive structural and policy changes. Although we expected to observe a decline in homicide and victimization rates for Indigenous persons, they continued to be high from 2015 to 2021. On the surface, this seems to indicate that the TRC has had a minimal impact on the criminality and victimization rates of Indigenous people. However, a deeper analysis of these trends shows a shift in the type of victim–accused relationship in homicides. Although the change is small, the homicides being committed within Indigenous communities have shifted from the intra-familial to the extra-familial type, indicating a reduction of in-family homicides. This does not relate broadly to in-family abuse or other types of victimization; however, the solved homicide rates show that the offender is now more likely to be outside the family unit—a stranger or criminal connection. It is plausible to infer that this trend is indicative of improving conditions within Indigenous families and may suggest that the awareness and healing brought by the TRC report has helped some to seek help for the trauma they have experienced. Further research is needed to investigate this possibility.

Another area of concern for the TRC is the over-incarceration of Indigenous persons in Canada (Jacobs 2012). This study shows that custodial admissions have remained fairly consistent post-TRC although there has been a general increase in community admissions for Indigenous persons. Although crime rates within the Indigenous population did not decrease from 2015 to 2020, research suggests that recidivism rates are generally lower for those sentenced to community admissions than for those sentenced to secure custody (Yukhenko et al. 2019). An increase in community admissions provides consistent community connections for offenders serving sentences. This model of punishment provides a more integrated cultural approach to addressing wrongdoing and provides a greater opportunity for community healing and offender reconciliation (Department of Justice 2021). This general trend away from custodial admissions and toward community admissions among Indigenous persons in Canada appears to reveal a systematic change in the treatment of Indigenous offenders within Canada. Given the improved recidivism rates associated with community admissions, one could speculate that there will be long-term reductions in Indigenous criminality across Canada and improvements in the

disproportionate incarceration rates and criminality of Indigenous people over the next decade. Future research should continue to monitor these trends.

The study presented three improving trends since 2015: the number of solved homicides involving Indigenous victims, the employment rate, and the unemployment rate. Although the data did not consider missing Indigenous persons in Canada specifically, the results were nonetheless surprising. Proportionately fewer non-Indigenous homicides were solved than Indigenous homicides. Although this appears to indicate that increased attention has been paid to solving Indigenous homicides, it is also possible that Indigenous homicides are generally easier to solve or that police forces and the RCMP close files faster when the victim is Indigenous than when the victim is non-Indigenous. The data fail to show why more Indigenous cases are solved, so it is difficult to draw strong conclusions.

Probably the greatest universal impact on poverty, independence, and empowerment for Indigenous people of Canada is their relative employment. Considerable research has shown that social, employment, and system-induced strains contribute to criminality and deviance (Agnew 1985). This research shows that material success is a significant factor in the reduction in strain experienced by people and a parallel reduction in criminality (Agnew 1985, 2013; Baron 2006). The data indicate that the employment and unemployment rates among Indigenous persons in Canada improved considerably between 2015 and 2021. The employment rate among Indigenous persons in Canada increased nearly three times the national average, and the unemployment rate declined at double the pace of the national average. The goal of the TRC was not only to educate the non-Indigenous population of Canada about the historic and current circumstances of Indigenous people but also to increase awareness and education among the Indigenous population, in order to yield improved conditions. Among the most immediate impacts post-2015 are the generally improved employment conditions for Indigenous people in Canada. If this employment trend continues, one would expect a reduction in the general strain experienced by Indigenous people and thus significant improvements in their circumstances given the systemic effects of poverty and unemployment on criminality, depression, and suicide.

Six years after the TRC offered its Calls to Action, the question arises as to whether the TRC has actually made a meaningful impact on the lives and well-being of Indigenous people. The Government of Canada has developed a website that tracks progress toward the 94 TRC Calls to Action (Government of Canada 2022). A perusal of the justice-related Calls to Action shows significant funding initiatives and research reports. Only recently has the Government of Canada begun to make necessary policy changes related to the treatment and conditions of Indigenous people within the Canadian criminal justice system. For example, the Government of Canada's response to Call to Action 42 is as follows:

On May 10, 2016, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs announced that the Government of Canada is a full supporter, without qualification, of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. The announcement also reaffirmed Canada's commitment to adopt and implement the declaration in accordance with the Canadian Constitution.

Justice Canada has been participating in the Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination discussions tables led by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to enable a discussion with several Indigenous communities on administration of justice arrangements.

In addition, the Government of Canada continues to negotiate administration of justice elements within comprehensive self-government agreements.

In December 2020, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-15, *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, setting out a framework for federal implementation of the declaration. The bill was passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. The declaration provides a roadmap for the federal government and Indigenous peoples to work together to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Since the TRC Calls to Action in 2015, policy changes with the potential to make a meaningful difference in the treatment of Indigenous people within the Canadian justice system took six years to be legislated. In setting “the next decade” as the timeframe for witnessing meaningful change across the 94 Calls to Action, the report authors may have been overly optimistic. Government moves slowly. Policies take time to develop and require stakeholder consultation and processing in order to come into force. As this research has shown, little has changed in the treatment of Indigenous people within the criminal justice system in the six-year period since the release of the TRC report. The small improvements that have been identified may be the tip of the iceberg as legislation comes into force and Canadian society changes.

It is clear that ongoing research in this area is necessary to hold the government accountable for the national implementation of the TRC recommendations. Future research should focus on other trend data concerning the conditions of Indigenous people in Canada. Moreover, gathering data from different sources, such as the Ministry of Family and Child Development or the Department of Justice, and cross-referencing them with Statistics Canada data may prove beneficial. Finally, this research forms the foundation for ongoing longitudinal research every seven years intended to map the long-term impacts of the TRC recommendations on the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada within the Canadian justice system. Holding government accountable is more than a policy-by-policy or issue-by-issue battle. Broad-based long-term impacts need to be monitored and documented for a more equitable present and a more just Canada for all people.

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