

# Corrections in Nova Scotia: Key Indicators

APRIL 2019

Correctional Services is one of the core business areas of the Nova Scotia Department of Justice. The division's head office is part of the Department of Justice headquarters in Halifax. Legislation governing the operation of the Correctional Services Division is the *Correctional Services Act*.

Correctional Services is responsible for the administration and operation of community and custody-based programs and services for adult and young persons. Within the Correctional Services core business area there are two programs: Community Corrections and Correctional Facilities.<sup>1</sup> Each of these program areas is broken down into closely related activities that have a specific impact on the program's target group.

This document contains information on a number of key indicators relating to Correctional Services in Nova Scotia. Generally, data is provided for the most current five fiscal years<sup>2</sup> so that the reader can examine changes over time. Sources for the statistics include the Nova Scotia Department of Justice and Statistics Canada.

## Community Corrections

Correctional Services operates 22 community corrections offices across the province. Supervision of both adult and young persons serving community-based sentences of the Court are provided by probation officers. The sentences include probation, conditional sentence, custody and supervision, conditional supervision, and intensive rehabilitative custody and supervision (IRCS). Probation officers also supervise persons released from custody on conditional releases (also known as temporary absences and reintegration leaves) and they prepare pre-sentence investigations to assist the courts in the sentencing process.

## Correctional Facilities

Correctional Services operates 4 adult and one youth correctional facility across the province. Located in Dartmouth, Priestville, Gardiner Mines, Yarmouth and Waterville (youth). Correctional Facilities provide for safe and secure custody, care and control of persons incarcerated in provincial correctional facilities and to provide comprehensive, collaborative, and culturally responsive programming and services by assessing risk, needs, and strengths; intervening using programs/services and supervision to reduce recidivism; and promoting the successful reintegration of persons from custody to community.

## Cost of Corrections

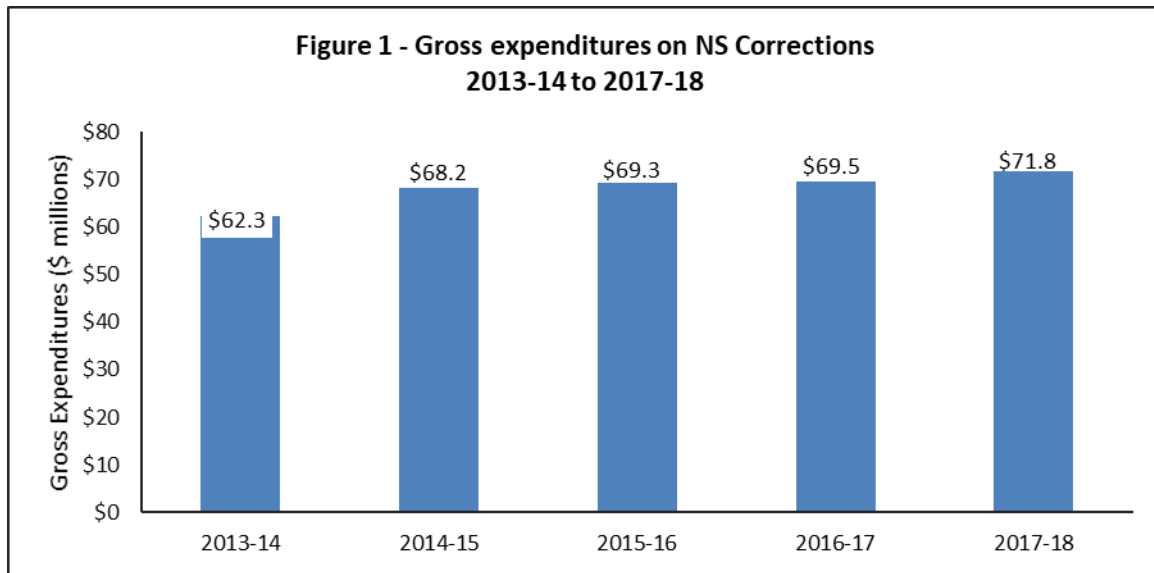
The cost of Correctional Services is an indicator of the resources required to administer custodial and community-based sentences in the province. Fluctuations in the cost of corrections may be driven by several factors, including but not limited to: the level of crime, legislative and policy responses to crime, sentencing practices, and administrative changes relating to organizational structure and the delivery of services, as well as changes in salaries and benefits for staff.

---

<sup>1</sup> A map illustrating the location of community corrections offices and correctional facilities in Nova Scotia can be found at: [http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/\\_docs/Provincial\\_Map.pdf](http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/_docs/Provincial_Map.pdf)

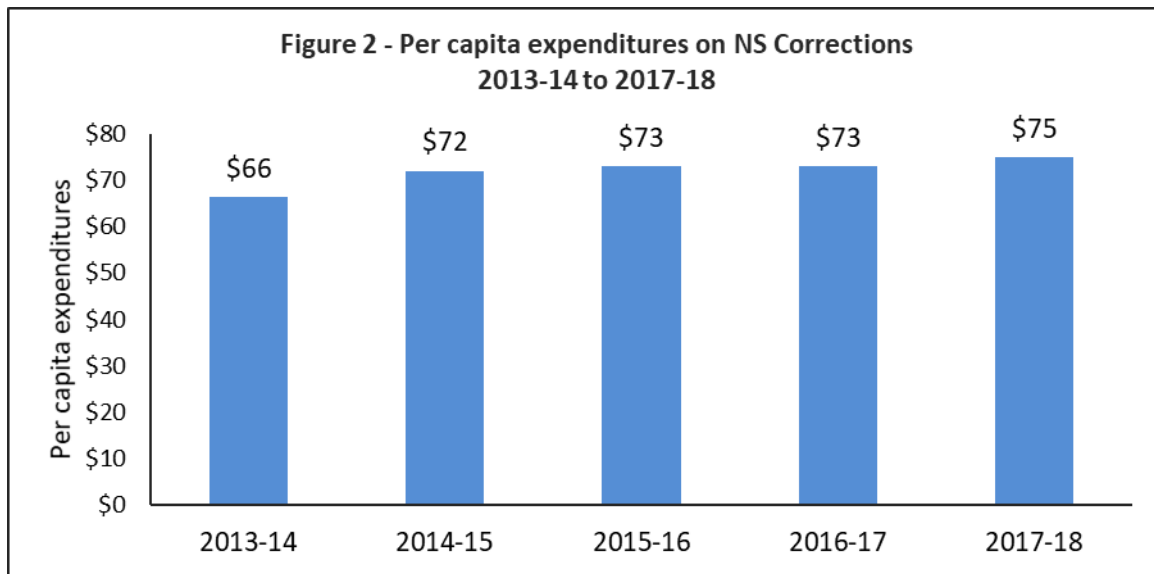
<sup>2</sup> Each fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31<sup>st</sup> of the following calendar year. So, for example, fiscal year 2017-18 runs from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

Figure 1 provides the gross operational expenditures for Correctional Services for the period 2013-14 to 2017-18. In 2017-18, gross expenditures increased by 3% from the prior year; part of a general increasing trend over time.<sup>3</sup> Over the five-year period, gross expenditures increased by approximately \$9.5 million or 15%.



Source: Nova Scotia Department of Justice, Financial Services.

The per capita expenditures for Correctional Services was \$75 in 2017-18 which was 3% higher than the prior year (Figure 2).<sup>4</sup> Over the period 2013-14 to 2017-18, per capita expenditures increased by \$9 (or 14%).

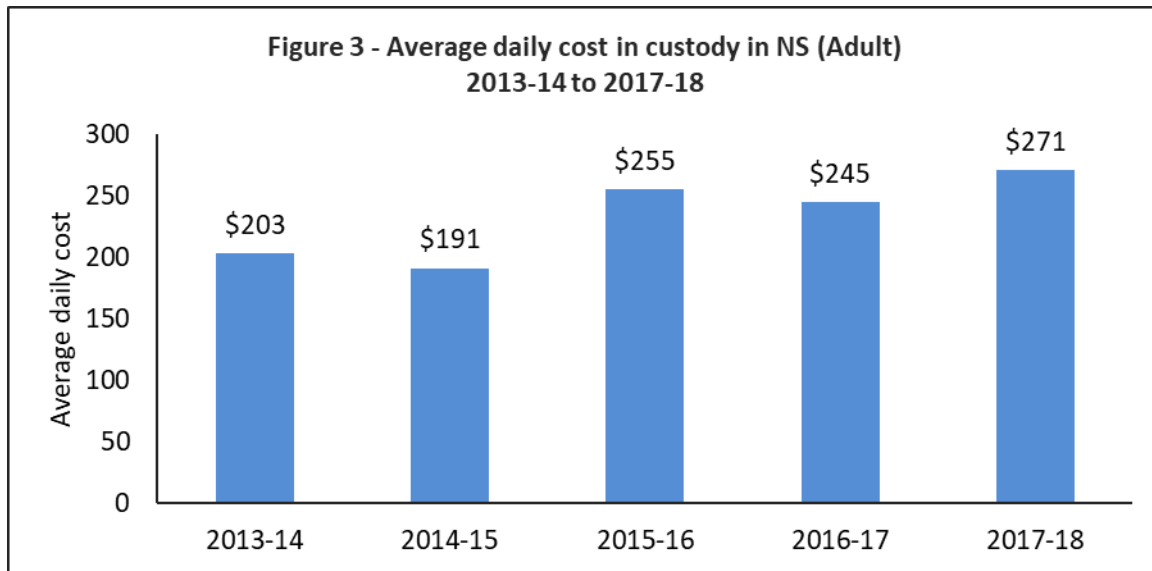


Source(s): Nova Scotia Department of Justice, Financial Services.  
 Statistics Canada. 17-10-0009-01 Population estimates, quarterly.

<sup>3</sup> Note that expenditure data can be subject to revision over time including changes in what types of expense data is reported (i.e., gross vs. net) as well as issues such as structural changes in the Correctional Services Division. Gross expenditures refer to total expenditures before any adjustments are made for revenues/recoveries.

<sup>4</sup> The per capita figures presented in Figure 2 were calculated by dividing the gross expenditures on Correctional Services by the total NS population.

Figure 3 provides the average daily cost per adult in custody, based on actual expenditures by adults in custody for the period 2013-14 to 2017-18. The average daily cost per adult in custody was \$271 in 2017-18, which was \$26 or 11% higher than 2016-17 and \$68 (or 33%) higher than 2013-14.



Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

## Court sentences – Adults

Figure 4 provides the number of guilty cases<sup>5</sup> in adult criminal court in Nova Scotia which had a custody sentence<sup>6</sup> (federal and provincial), probation, or a conditional sentence ordered by the court.<sup>7</sup> These statistics provide an indicator of the types of sentence involving adults which subsequently led to involvement with the adult correctional system. It should be noted that the sentences are not mutually exclusive; a case may have more than one type of penalty (e.g., the person may be given a period of custody as well as a period of probation).

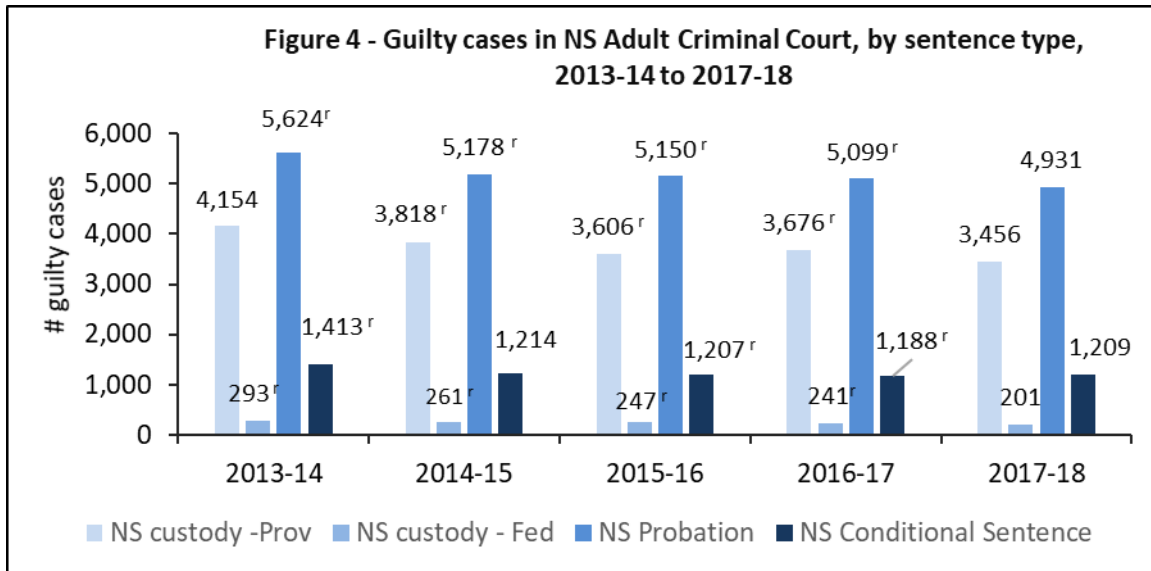
In 2017-18, cases that were sentenced to provincial custody decreased by 6% compared to the prior year while cases sentenced to federal custody decreased by 17%. Cases with a sentence of probation decreased by 3% while conditional sentences increased by 2%.

Generally, there was a declining trend in the number of cases sentenced to provincial custody, federal custody and probation over the 5-year period while the number of cases with conditional sentences has fluctuated. Overall, adult criminal court case volumes decreased by 9% over this time period.

<sup>5</sup> In 2017, the Department of Justice adopted a new case definition for analyzing criminal court case volumes and processing times. Under the new definition, a case is one or more charges filed against the same person on the same Information or Summary Offence Ticket (SOT). As a result of this change in methodology, the data appearing in Figure 4 are not comparable to those in previous reports nor are they comparable with Statistics Canada reporting.

<sup>6</sup> Total cases with a custody sentence can be calculated by adding together the number of cases where provincial custody was ordered, and the number of cases where federal custody was ordered.

<sup>7</sup> Excluded are cases with a fine, restitution, or some 'other' sentence.



r - revised

Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

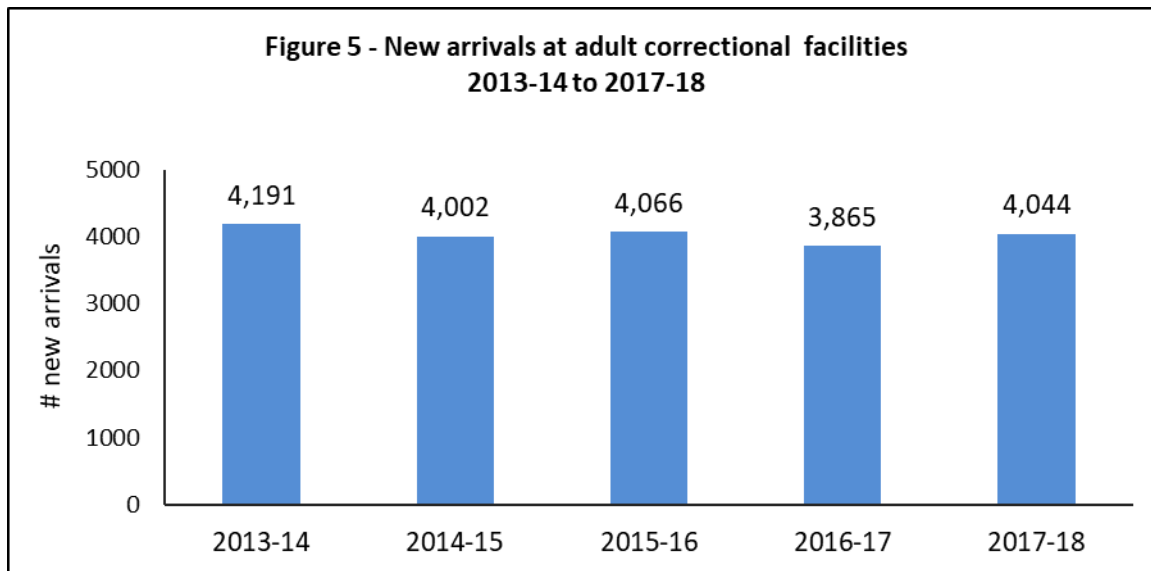
## New arrivals at adult correctional facilities

Figure 5 provides data on the number of new arrivals in adult correctional facilities for the years 2013-14 to 2017-18. New arrivals in adult correctional facilities are counted as intakes only (e.g., from non-custody status to custody; transfer from another jurisdiction; or conditional sentence to custody). An individual could have more than one new arrival at a correctional facility during a fiscal year. New arrivals do not include the transfer of individuals between correctional facilities within the province.

A person may be admitted to a correctional facility as follows: sentenced to provincial custody; remanded to provincial custody; or, other reason (e.g., parole suspension; federal inmate in custody at provincial institution in advance of court hearing; breach of a court order, etc.).

There were six (6) adult correctional facilities in Nova Scotia operating during all, or part of the five-year period between 2013-14 to 2017-18. Three correctional facilities (e.g., Central Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and Southwest) were operating through the whole five-year time period. In contrast, Antigonish and Cumberland Correctional Facilities were in operation until their decommissioning in January 2015; with the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility commencing operation in February 2015. Of the adult facilities, the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility is the largest and accounted for the greatest number of new arrivals.

In 2017-18, there were 4,044 new arrivals at adult correctional facilities in the province which was 5% higher than 2016-17, but 4% lower than 2013-14.



*Source: Justice Enterprise Information Network (JEIN), Correctional Services Division, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.*

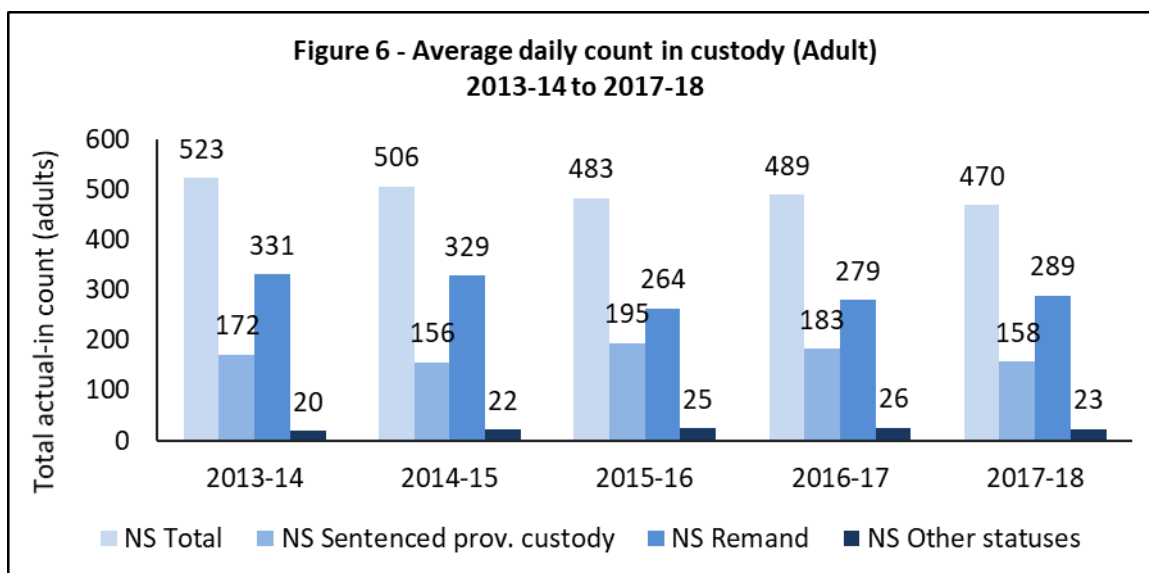
### Average daily count – Adults

The average daily count of adults in custody reflects the number of adults physically in a provincial correctional facility at the time of the daily count. Daily counts are useful for describing the make-up of the custodial population in terms of custody status: sentenced custody (i.e., person in a correctional facility as a result of a court-ordered sentence), remand (i.e., temporary detention in a facility pending trial or sentencing), and other forms of detention (e.g., immigration holds, federal inmates, etc.). These statistics are helpful in looking at specific policy issues relating to custodial populations as well as operational issues relating to correctional facility capacity.<sup>8</sup>

In 2017-18, there was an average of 470 adults in custody on any given day, which was a 4% (19 inmates) decrease compared to the prior year (Figure 6). There was an average of 158 adults in provincial sentenced custody which was a 14% (25 inmates) decrease compared to the prior year. For remand, there was an average of 289 adults on an average day which was a 3% increase (10 inmates) compared to the previous year.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Adult correctional facilities vary in size, with the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility having the largest capacity (300 inmates) and Southwest Nova Scotia Correctional Facility having the smallest (38 inmates).

<sup>9</sup> While the average daily count figures reported above are rounded to the nearest whole number for simplicity of presentation, calculations use the average daily count figure rounded to one decimal place which can slightly affect the percentages reported.



Over the five-year period, the total average daily count in Nova Scotia decreased by 10%. Individuals in provincial sentenced custody decreased by 8% and those in remand decreased by 13%.

Table 1. Proportion of average daily counts in Nova Scotia, by custody type (Adult)	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
% Sentenced provincial custody <sup>10</sup>	33%	31%	40%	38%	34%
% Remand	63%	65%	55%	57%	62%
% Other statuses	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%

Source(s): Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0154-01 - Average counts of individuals in provincial and territorial programs.

## Incarceration rate - Adults

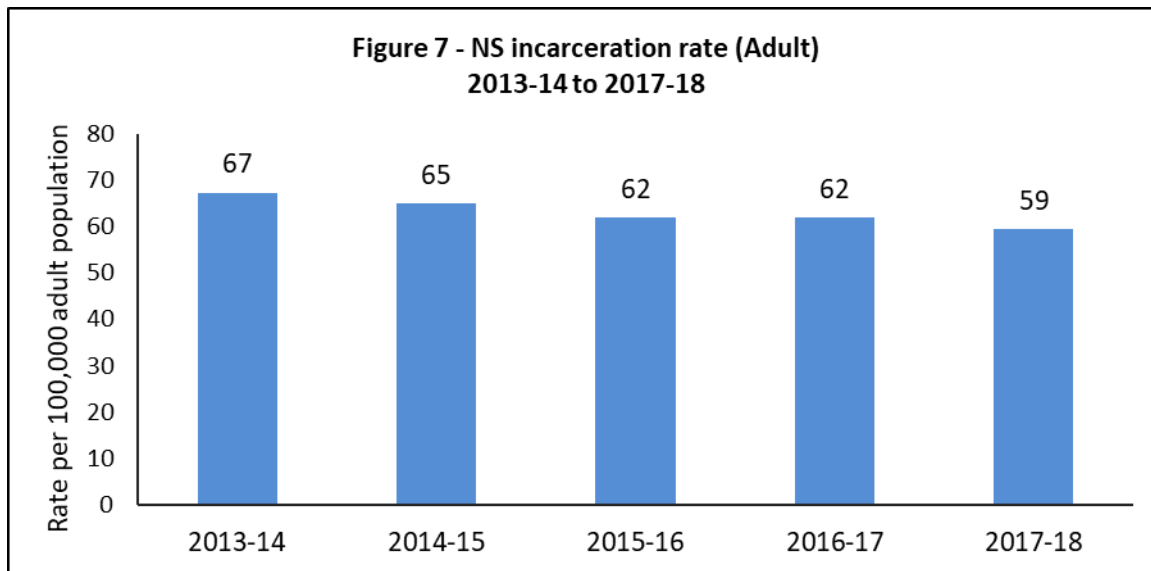
In 2017-18, the adult incarceration rate in Nova Scotia was 4% lower than in 2016-17 and 12% lower than in 2013-14 (Figure 7).<sup>11</sup> Generally, over the 5-year period, there was a decreasing trend in the rate.<sup>12</sup>

In 2016-17, the most current year for which national level statistics are available, Nova Scotia had one of the lowest adult incarceration rates in the country. Nova Scotia's rate has been either the lowest or one of the lowest in the country over the past 10 years.

<sup>10</sup> Due to rounding, some percentages may not total to 100%.

<sup>11</sup> The incarceration rate for adults is calculated as the total average daily count figure divided by the size of the adult population and standardized per 100,000 population. The provincial incarceration rate is an indicator of the proportion of Nova Scotia residents, in a given year, who are in custody (sentenced custody, remand, "other status") in provincial institutions. It excludes federal institutions, but includes federally sentenced offenders in provincial institutions.

<sup>12</sup> While the incarceration rate figures reported above are rounded to the nearest whole number, the calculations used the incarceration rate figure rounded to one decimal place which can slightly affect the percentages reported.



*Source(s): Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.  
Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0154-01 - Average counts of offenders in provincial and territorial programs. Statistics Canada. 17-10-0009-01 Population estimates, quarterly.*

## Length of stay in provincial sentenced custody - Adults

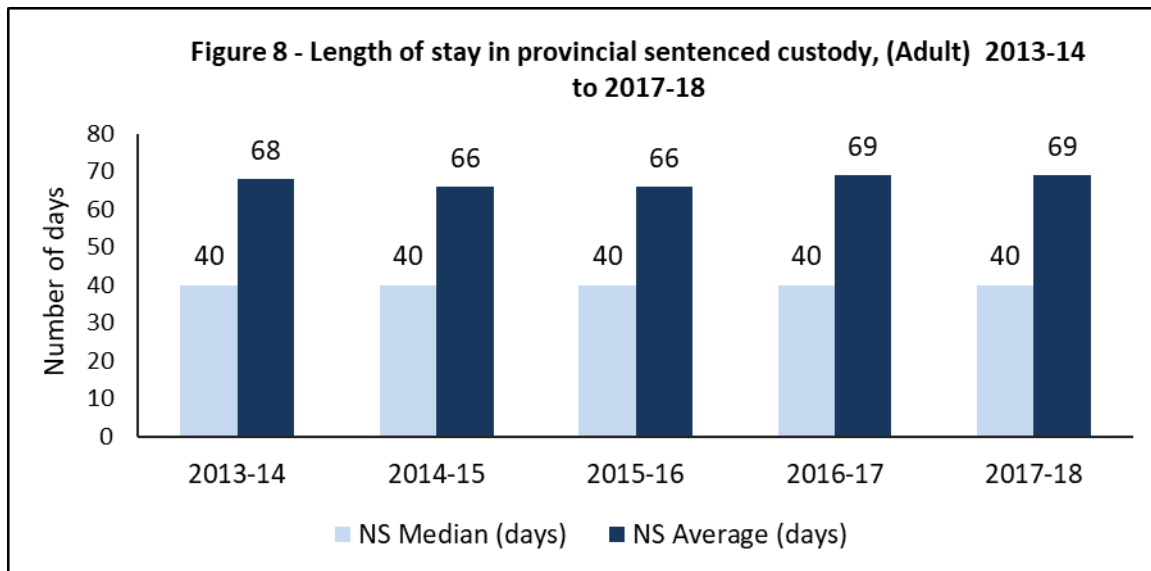
Statistics on length of stay in custody provide information on the amount of time individuals spend in a facility prior to release. This information is useful for administrative planning in specific areas such as programming. It should be noted that the length of time spent in a facility may not equal the length of time ordered by the court due to earned remission (i.e., reduced time in custody due to good behaviour).

Figure 8 provides the average and median length of stay in provincial sentenced custody in adult correctional facilities in Nova Scotia for the period of 2013-14 to 2017-18.<sup>13</sup>

The median length of sentenced custody in 2017-18 was 40 days and was unchanged over the five-year time period.<sup>14</sup> The average time spent in sentenced custody for 2017-18 was 69 days, which was unchanged from the previous year and only 1 day higher compared to 2013-14. The average length of stay in sentenced custody varied from a high of 69 days to a low of 66 days.

<sup>13</sup> The average (mean) and median length of stay in provincial sentenced custody is an estimate calculated based on two-thirds of the aggregate sentence length (days). This assumes that inmates have earned one-third remission for their sentences.

<sup>14</sup> The median length of stay is the midpoint of the sorted data for length of custody (days), where exactly half the data are above and half below the midpoint. While average case processing times can be affected by a small number of unusually long or short cases (i.e., outliers), the median case processing time is not affected by such cases.



Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

## Sentence length for probation - Adults

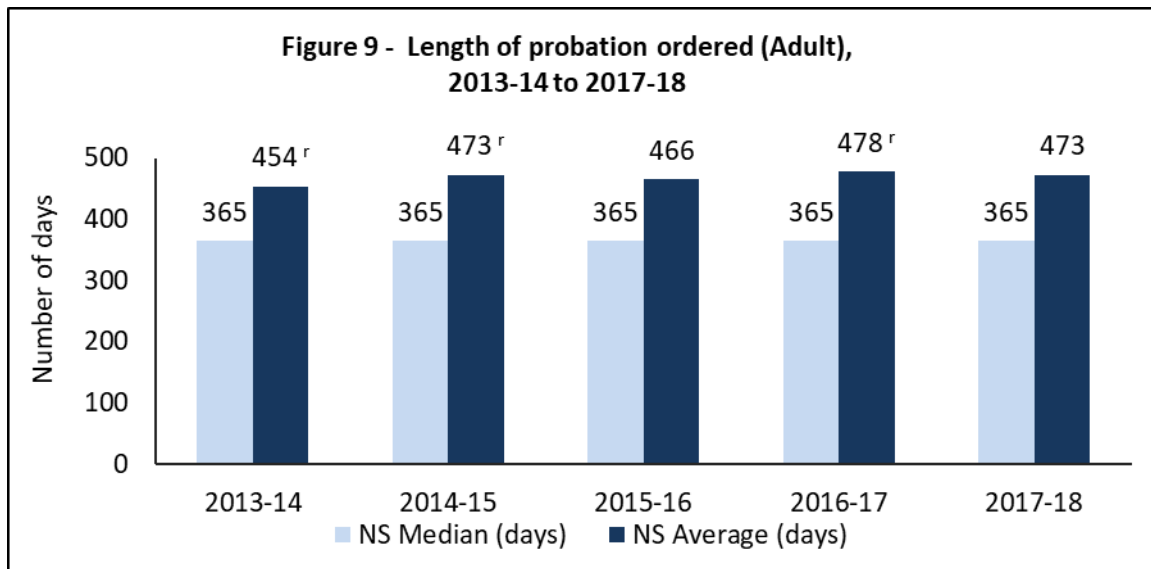
Statistics on sentence length for probation provide information on the amount of time that adults are subject to probation conditions imposed by the courts on a probation order.

Figure 9 provides the average and median length of probation ordered by adult criminal courts in Nova Scotia for the period of 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The median length of probation ordered in 2017-18 was 365 days, which has been constant in the past five years. The average length of probation ordered, on the other hand, showed greater variability ranging from 454 days to 478 days.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In 2017, the Department of Justice adopted a new case definition for analyzing criminal court case volumes and processing times. Under the new definition, a case is one or more charges filed against the same person on the same Information or Summary Offence Ticket (SOT). As a result of this change in methodology, the data appearing in Figure 9 are not comparable to those in previous reports nor are they comparable with Statistics Canada reporting.





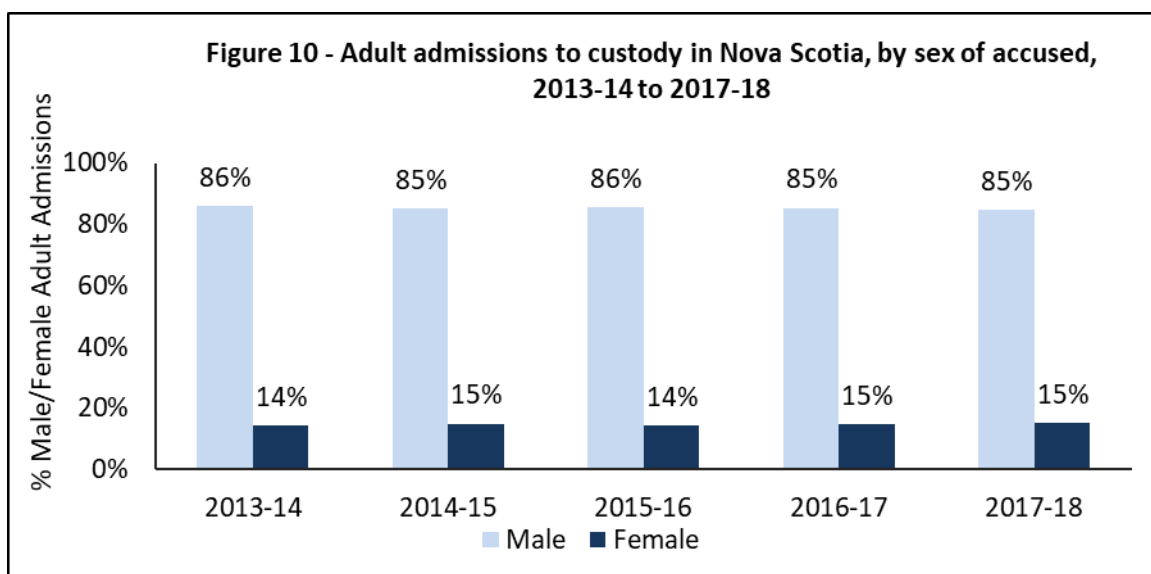
r - revised

Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

## Admissions to adult correctional facilities – by gender

Whenever a person enters into custody, they have an opportunity to self-identify various attributes such as their gender, ethnicity, and religious background during in-take admission. Self-identification informs the facilities, and the Department, of particular programming needs specific to a group of persons in custody.

Figure 10 shows the proportion of admissions to an adult correctional facility in Nova Scotia, which were male or female. The majority of admissions were male, with the proportion being stable at 85% to 86% between 2013-14 and 2017-18.



Source: Policy, Planning & Research, NS Department of Justice.

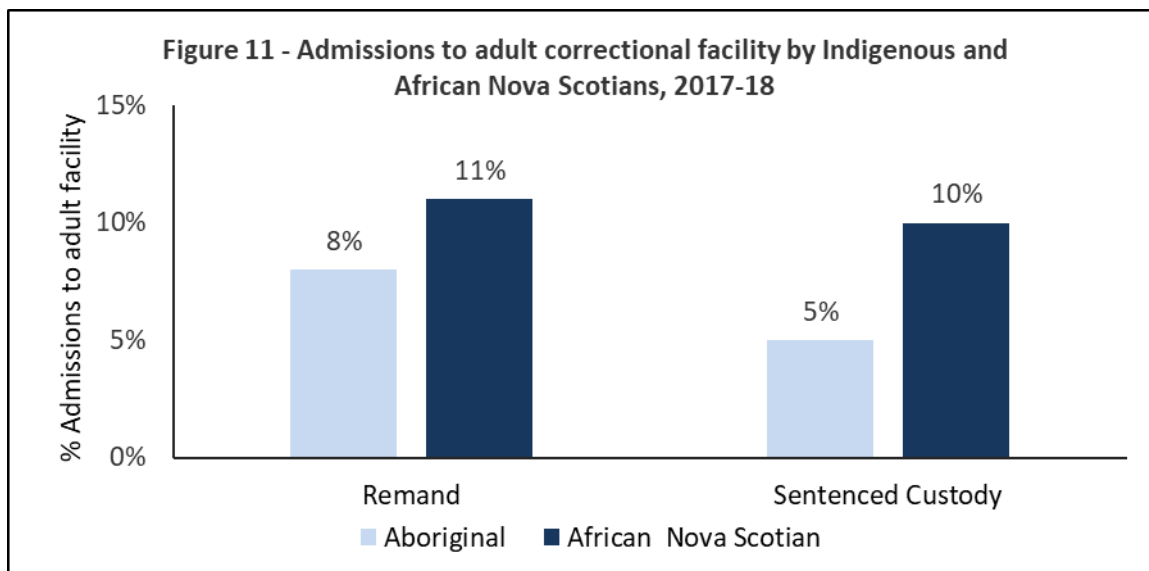
## Admissions to adult correctional facilities – by ethnicity

Indigenous persons and African Nova Scotians make up a greater proportion of people in correctional facilities than in the general population.

Indigenous persons were over-represented in admissions to remand in 2017-18. While they make up 6% of the population of Nova Scotia they accounted for 8% of admissions to remand in the province. Indigenous females are overrepresented in remand admissions to a greater extent than their male counterparts. In 2017-18, Indigenous females represented 15% of female admissions to remand while male Indigenous persons represented 7% of male admissions.

Indigenous persons were not over-represented in admissions to sentenced custody in 2017-18, accounting for 5% of admissions.

African Nova Scotians make up about 2 percent of the Nova Scotian population, but represented 11 percent and 10 percent of admissions to remand and sentenced custody, respectively (Figure 11).<sup>16</sup> African Nova Scotians were over-represented both in admissions to remand and in admissions to sentenced custody in 2017-18.



Source: Policy, Planning & Research, NS Department of Justice.  
Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile – Nova Scotia [Province] and Canada.

<sup>16</sup> Percentage calculations reported in Figure 11 exclude admissions where ethnicity was unknown. Due to small numbers, percentages for youth are not reported.

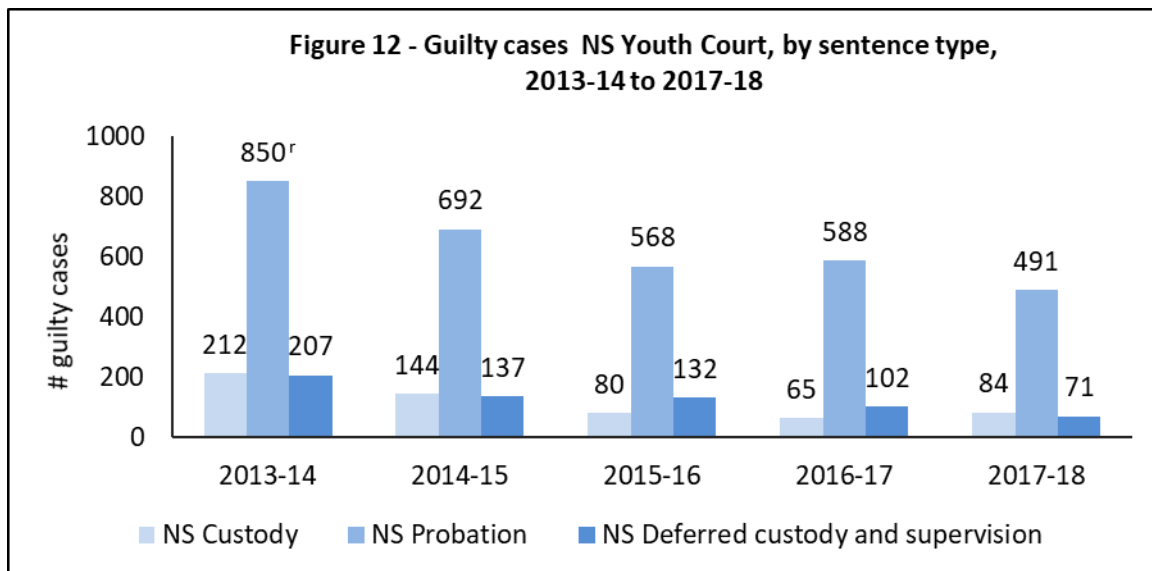
## Court sentences – Youth

Figure 12 provides the number of guilty cases in youth court in Nova Scotia which had sentences of custody, sentenced in the community (i.e, deferred custody and supervisions) and community supervision (probation).<sup>17</sup> These statistics provide an indicator of the types of sentence involving youth which subsequently led to involvement with the youth correctional system. It should be noted that the sentences are not mutually exclusive and a case may have more than one type of penalty (e.g., the youth may be given a period of custody as well as a period of probation).

In 2017-18, there was an increase in the number of youth cases with custody sentences (29%) but a decrease in probation (-16%) and deferred custody and supervision sentences (-30%), as compared to the prior year.

While cases with a sentence of probation and deferred custody and supervision continued on a declining trend, the pattern for custody sentences changed in 2017-18 with an increase.

The number of cases with probation consistently outnumbered the other sentence types over the five-year period.



r - revised

Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

## New arrivals at youth correctional facilities

The statistics presented in Figure 13 indicate the number of new arrivals at youth correctional facilities in Nova Scotia between 2013-14 to 2017-18. New arrivals in youth facilities are counted as intakes only (e.g., from non-custody status to custody, transfer from another jurisdiction, or deferred custody to custody). New

<sup>17</sup> In 2017, the Department of Justice adopted a new case definition for analyzing criminal court case volumes and processing times. Under the new definition, a case is one or more charges filed against the same person on the same Information or Summary Offence Ticket (SOT). As a result of this change in methodology, the data appearing in Figure 12 are not comparable to those in previous reports nor are they comparable with Statistics Canada reporting.

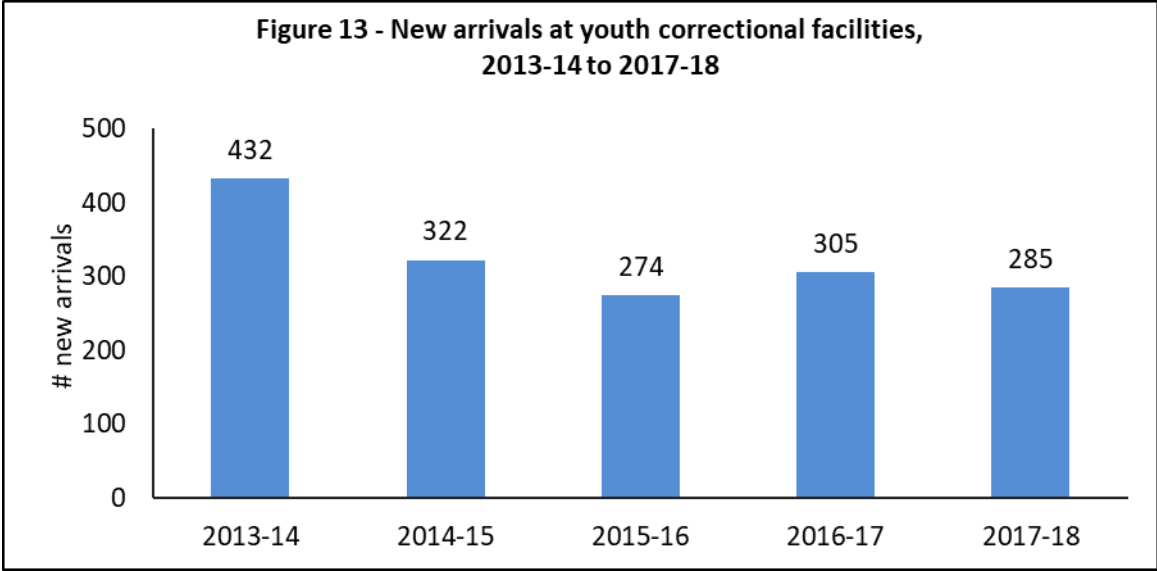
Note that in Figure 12 when the 2017-18 figures were included that there was no revision to the figures for prior years as the level of variation was generally quite small (1% or less) between the most current figures and those reported in last year's fact sheet.

arrivals do not include the transfer of individuals between correctional facilities within the province. An individual could have more than one new arrival at a correctional facility during a fiscal year.

Youth may be held in a facility for a number of reasons including: being sentenced to open, open/secure or secure custody; being remanded to custody; or, breach of a court order.

Two youth correctional facilities were operating in Nova Scotia during this time period: the Nova Scotia Youth Centre (NSYC); and the Cape Breton Youth Detention Facility (CBYDF).<sup>18</sup> Of the two youth facilities, the Nova Scotia Youth Centre is the largest and accounts for the greatest number of new arrivals (84%).

In 2017-18, there were 285 new arrivals at youth correctional facilities, which was 7% lower than 2016-17 but 34% lower than 2013-14.



Source: Justice Enterprise Information Network (JEIN), Correctional Services, Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

### Average daily count – Youth

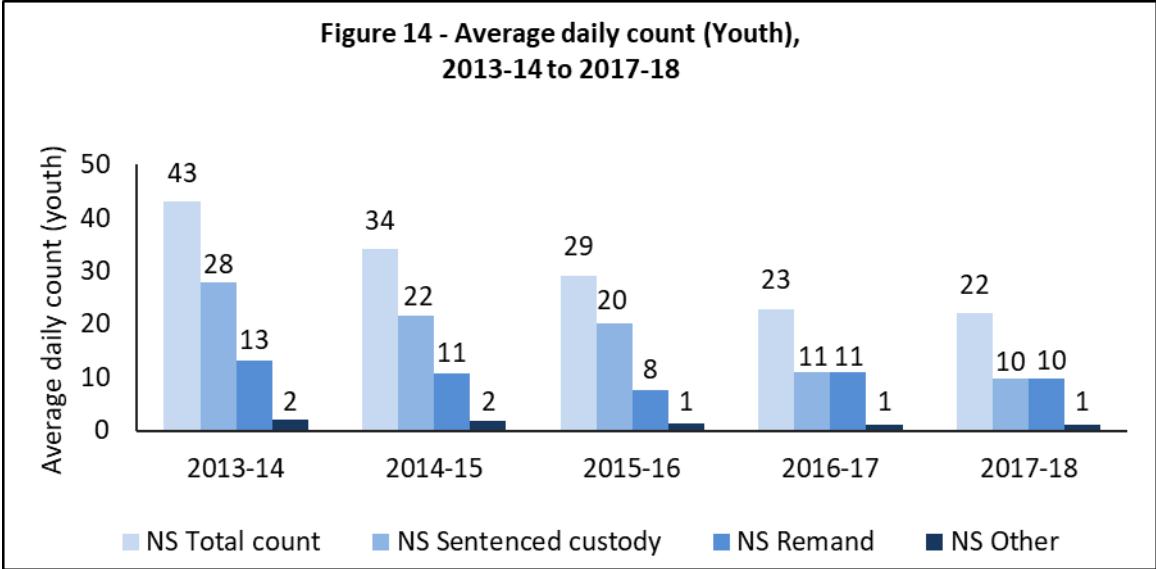
The average daily count of youth in custody reflects the number of youth physically located in a correctional facility at the time of the daily count (at midnight of each day). Average daily counts are useful for describing the make-up of the youth custodial population in terms of custody status: sentenced custody, remand (also sometimes referred to as pre-trial detention), and other forms of detention (e.g., Provincial Director remand, etc.).<sup>19</sup> These statistics can be helpful in looking at specific policy issues relating to different types of custodial populations as well as operational issues relating to correctional facility capacity.

<sup>18</sup> The Cape Breton Youth Detention Facility is designed as a short-term term detention facility.

<sup>19</sup> A Provincial Director remand occurs when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a youth has breached a condition associated with supervision in the community. When this occurs, the designated Provincial Director orders the youth to be held in custody until such time that a review can be conducted.

In 2017-18, there was an average of 22 youth in custody on any given day including 10 in sentenced custody, 10 in remand, and 1 on 'other' statuses (Figure 14). The total count of youth in custody decreased by 4% from 2016-17 to 2017-18.<sup>20</sup> Over the past 5 years, it has been steadily declining and decreased by 49% in total.

Unlike the adult custodial population, the average daily count of youth in sentenced custody was consistently higher than the number on remand during the period 2013-14 to 2015-16. However, this pattern changed in 2016-17 when the average daily count for youth in sentenced and remand custody was the same, a pattern which continued on into 2017-18.



	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
% NS Sentenced custody	65%	63%	69%	47%	48%
% NS Remand	30%	31%	26%	47%	47%
% NS Other	5%	6%	4%	5%	5%

Source(s): Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice. Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0003-01 Average counts of young persons in provincial and territorial correctional services.

### Incarceration rate – Youth

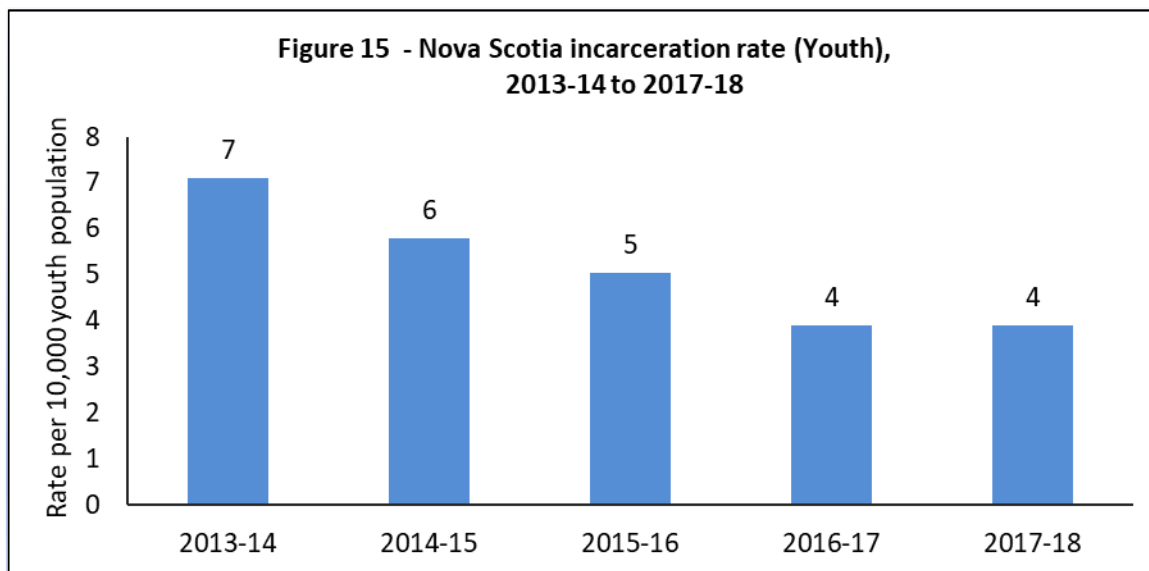
In 2017-18, the youth incarceration rate in Nova Scotia was 4 youth per 10,000 youth population (Figure 15), unchanged from the previous year.

Over the five-year period, the rate declined steadily so that in 2017-18 the rate was 45% lower than in 2013-14.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> While the average daily count figures reported above are rounded to the nearest whole number, calculations use the average daily count figure rounded to one decimal place which can slightly affect the percentages reported.

<sup>21</sup> The youth incarceration rate is an indicator of the proportion of Nova Scotia youth who are in custody (sentenced custody, remand, "other status") in a provincial youth facility. It is calculated as the total daily count figure divided by the size of the population 12 to 17 years of age and standardized per 10,000 youth population.

In 2016-17, the most current year for which national level statistics are available, Nova Scotia's youth incarceration rate was lower than the national rate (5 youth per 10,000 youth population) and has also had a general declining trend.



Source(s): Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice. Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0003-01 Average counts of young persons in provincial and territorial correctional services. Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0009-01 Population estimates, quarterly.

## Length of stay in provincial sentenced custody – Youth

Statistics on length of stay of youth in custody provide information on the relative amount of time youth spend in a facility. This information is useful for administrative planning in specific areas such as programming. Average length of stay for youth in provincial sentenced custody is an estimate using the custody portion of youth custody and supervisions sentences.

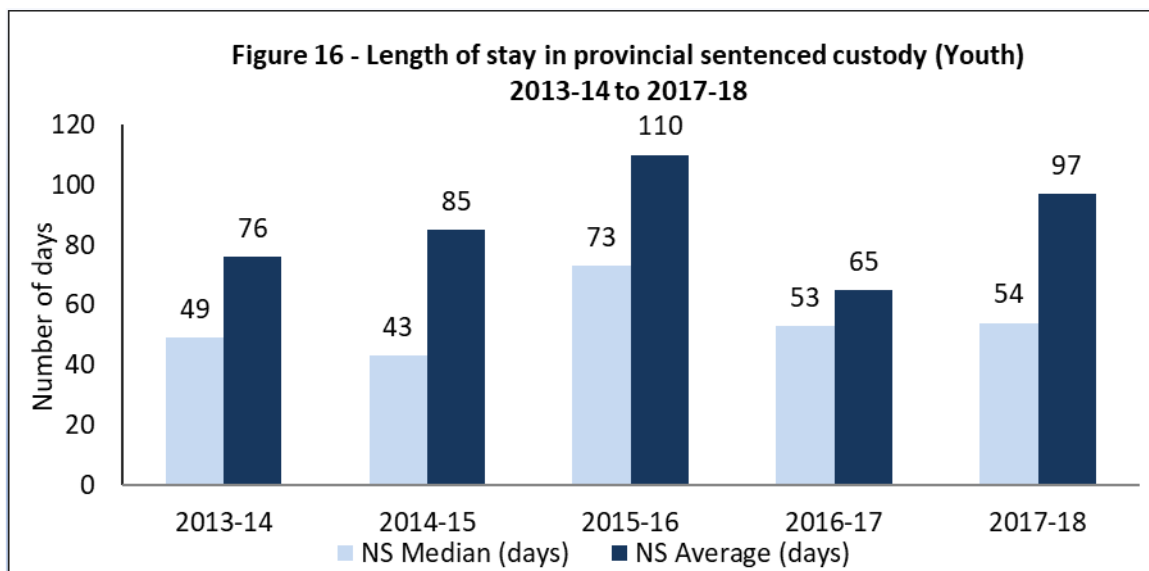
The median length of stay for youth in sentenced custody in 2017-18 was 54 days (Figure 16), an increase of 1 day (or 2%) from 2016-17 and 5 days (or 10%) higher than in 2013-14.<sup>22</sup> The average length of stay in sentenced custody for 2017-18 was 97 days, an increase of 32 days (or 49%) compared to the previous year, and 21 days (or 28%) higher than in 2013-14.

The median length of stay of youth in provincial sentenced custody in Nova Scotia varied over time from a high of 73 days to a low of 43 days. The average stay over this time period varied from a high of 110 days to a low of 65 days. Note that as the number of youth in provincial sentenced custody has been decreasing and smaller numbers can result in greater variability for length of stay figures.

---

While the incarceration rate figures reported above are rounded to the nearest whole number, the calculations used the incarceration rate figure rounded to one decimal place which can slightly affect the percentages reported.

<sup>22</sup> The median length of stay is the midpoint of the sorted data for length of custody (days), where exactly half the data are above and half below the midpoint. While average case processing times can be affected by a small number of unusually long or short cases (i.e., outliers), the median case processing time is not affected by such cases.



Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice

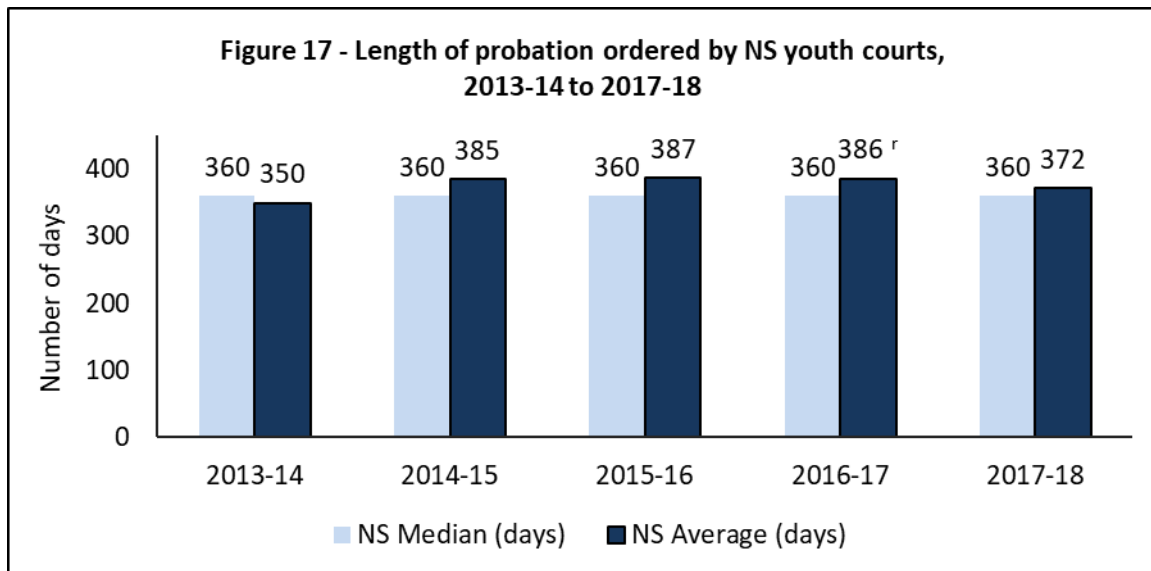
## Sentence length for probation – Youth

Statistics on sentence length for youth on probation provide information on the amount of time that young persons are subject to probation conditions imposed by the courts on a probation order while in the community.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 17 provides information on the length of probation ordered by youth courts in Nova Scotia between 2013-14 to 2017-18. The median length of probation ordered was 360 days in 2017-18 and was stable compared to prior years. The average length of probation ordered for 2017-18 was 372 days, which was 14 days (-4%) less than in the year prior.

The average length of probation ordered by Nova Scotia youth courts was relatively stable between 2014-15 and 2016-17 but then decreased in 2017-18.

<sup>23</sup> In 2017, the Department of Justice adopted a new case definition for analyzing criminal court case volumes and processing times. Under the new definition, a case is one or more charges filed against the same person on the same Information or Summary Offence Ticket (SOT). As a result of this change in methodology, the data appearing in Figure 17 are not comparable to those in previous reports nor are they comparable with Statistics Canada reporting.



r – revised

Source: Policy, Planning and Research, Nova Scotia Department of Justice

If you have any questions relating to the content of this document please contact:

**The Office of the Executive Director**

Correctional Services Division

Nova Scotia Department of Justice

PO Box 7

Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2L6

902-424-7460