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Real Help for Addicted Offenders: Further Evidence from the Calgary Drug Treatment Court (II)

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Calgary Drug Treatment Court Recidivism Outcomes

Summary Highlights

The Calgary Drug Treatment Court (CDTC) opened in 2007, providing a community alternative to incarceration for individuals facing significant time in custody for criminal charges associated with a drug addiction. CDTC provides an evidence-informed program that integrates court intervention and treatment services to assist participants to end the cycle of active addiction, crime, and incarceration in their lives, and return to family, work, and community.

The study provides a comparison of pre and post program convictions among a cohort of 152 graduates who completed the program during the 14+ year period between January 1, 2010, and April 30, 2024. An analysis of related cost savings and cost avoidance is included. A comparison of recidivism outcomes with a group of 36 early non-completers is also provided.

CDTC Recidivism Outcomes

The analysis compares graduates' pre and post program convictions, including data gathered during average period of 6.5 years following program completion.

76% had no new substantive convictions after graduation

Data on criminal convictions for these graduates showed:

- 69.1% had no convictions for any new offences since graduation. When those with only non-substantive convictions are excluded (i.e. administration of justice offence convictions¹, single convictions for simple drug possession or impaired driving) are excluded, 75.7% had no new criminal convictions since graduation.

Total convictions decreased by 78.0% during equivalent pre-post time period

- Graduates had a total of 4,508 convictions prior to program admission and 562 convictions following graduation.
- When comparing only those convictions incurred during the equivalent period of time prior to admission as the time elapsed following graduation, these graduates had a total of 2556 pre-program convictions compared to 562 post-program convictions. This equivalent pre/post comparison shows a decrease of 78.0% in convictions at an average 6.5 years post-graduation.²

70% were free from any new convictions at 6 years following graduation

- When graduates are grouped by the number of years since they graduated to understand the length of time free from convictions, nearly 70% who graduated 6 years before the study end date had no new convictions.

¹ Administration of justice convictions include failing to comply with a term of probation and failing to comply with a term of a Judicial Interim Release (Bail) Order.

² The percentage decrease in convictions is calculated by determining the period of time between graduation and the end of the data collection period (June 30, 2019) for each graduate and comparing any convictions during that period with convictions incurred during the same period of time prior to program admission.

**Population Served
Aligns with Greatest
Need & Community
Impact**

**92% were assessed
as high-risk to
reoffend**

CDTC primarily serves individuals who are at high risk to reoffend and have high needs. Prior to program admission:

- 68% were unstably housed - in shelter, transitional housing, couch-surfing, or on the street
- 80% were unemployed - 82% earned less than \$15,000 per year
- 94% obtained most of their money for drugs through crime – primarily theft, fraud and drug-trafficking
- 92% were assessed at high risk to reoffend and 78% were assessed as having high needs (i.e. homelessness, unemployment, lack of pro-social supports)
- Graduates were age 14 on average at the onset of drug use
- 66% were youth (age 13-24) at the time of their first conviction
- 77% identified a physical health issue at program entry
- 64% reported having an existing mental health issue/diagnosis³

The majority of pre-admission offences committed by program graduates are labour-intensive for police and legal systems to investigate and prosecute. The Calgary Police Service Annual Report (2023) of officer contacts show that a high percentage of police contacts are for purposes commonly associated with the CDTC population: disorder (50.15%); vulnerable persons⁴ (49.48%); drugs (12.62%), property crime (4.79%).⁵⁶

Almost 70% of incarcerated federal offenders are assessed as having a substance abuse problem that requires intervention.⁷

³ Hoffart, Irene. (2025). [Calgary Drug Treatment Court 2025 Evaluation Report](#).

⁴ Vulnerable persons are defined as Individuals who may be a person at risk; homeless; involved in prostitution; substance users (alcohol / drugs); or who may have mental health issues.

⁵ Calgary Police Service – Info Post. Officer Contact Statistical Report. (2023-01-01 to 2023-12-31).

⁶ This data reports on Officer Contacts submitted during the reporting period (2023). Percentages will total higher than 100% - as there can be multiple subjects on each Officer Contact.

⁷ McVie, Fraser. Drugs in federal corrections: The issues and challenges. FORUM on Corrections Research. Correctional Service of Canada. (March 5, 2015). <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/forum/e133/e133c-eng.shtml>

**Cost Avoidance and
Cost Savings**

***CDTC saves society
almost \$20 million
per year in the cost of
stolen goods alone***

Analysis of the cost avoidance and cost savings related to recidivism for graduates of the CDTC (See details on pages 17-18 of this report) shows:

- Savings of \$117 million in the estimated cost of stolen goods over a period of 6 years
- Avoidance of \$25 million in the cost of incarceration for the average 1.6 years in custody graduates did not serve as a result of successfully completing the program

***Early non-completers
were more than 3
times as likely to
reoffend***

The analysis compared post-program convictions of 88 program graduates with a group of 36 early non-completers (who both entered and exited the program within 30 days). Results showed:

- 69.3% of graduates incurred no new substantive post-program convictions while only 16.6% of non-completers remained from substantive post program convictions.
- 92.3% of non-completers were sentenced at an average 4.5 months following program discharge and 79.4% received significant custodial sentences ranging from 6 months to 4.5 years.
- Early non-completers accumulated substantially greater new post-program convictions than graduates, despite reduced time in the community following program exit.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report examines recidivism outcomes among 152 individuals who successfully completed the CDTC program during the period January 1, 2010, to April 30, 2024. Using longitudinal criminal history data obtained from the Justice Online Information Network (JOIN), the analysis focuses on patterns of criminal involvement before and after program participation, including the volume, type, and timing of convictions, as well as the length of time graduates remain free from new convictions while living in the community.

The analysis draws on information related to age, gender, and age at first conviction to contextualize findings where relevant. The primary focus, however, is on changes in criminal involvement following program completion, with particular emphasis on time free from convictions as an indicator of sustained post-program change. Additional information on the CDTC program model and broader outcomes is available in the CDTC Evaluation Report (2025)⁸.

The report also examines the economic implications of post-program outcomes through a cost analysis and contextualizes graduate recidivism outcomes using a comparison group of individuals who exited the program prior to completion. These components are intended to complement the pre/post analysis of graduate outcomes and to support interpretation of the findings, while recognizing the methodological constraints associated with non-randomized comparisons.

2. STUDY OF GRADUATES' PRE AND POST PROGRAM CONVICTIONS

2.1 Demographic Factors

This section of the report discusses the age, gender, age at admission, and age at first conviction of the 152 individuals in the sample.

2.1.1 Age and Gender of the CDTC Graduates

The demographic composition of the sample was examined with particular attention to age and gender, as both are well-established correlates of criminal behavior and recidivism. According to the literature recidivism strongly interacts with age, with younger individuals consistently demonstrating higher rates of reoffending and a decline in offending with increasing age. Gender differences in recidivism are also substantial, with men typically

⁸ Hoffart, Irene. (2025). [Calgary Drug Treatment Court 2025 Evaluation Report](#).

exhibiting higher rates compared to women. Reporting these characteristics is therefore essential for situating the study’s recidivism outcomes within the existing literature and for enabling meaningful interpretation of observed rates.

2.1.2 Gender

Of the total sample (n=152), 79.6% are male and 20.4% are female. This likely reflects the fact that men typically reoffend at a significantly higher rate than women. Pathways into crime, risk factors and recovery processes also differ by gender.

Table 1: Gender

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|------------|---------------|
| Male | 121 | 79.6% |
| Female | 31 | 20.4% |
| Total | 152 | 100.0% |

2.1.3 Age at Admission

The majority of graduates were in the 25-34 and 35-44 age ranges at the time of their admission to the program. Age is one of the strongest correlates of offending and reoffending. According to the literature, younger individuals generally have higher recidivism rates and recidivism declines with age.

On average, females entered the program at a younger age (30.9 years) than males (35.7). While most female graduates entered the program in the 25-34 age range, there is a notable drop off in females entering the program in the 34-45 age range, which is the most common age range for admission of male graduates.

Table 2: Age at Program Admission

| Age Range | # (%) Males | # (%) Females | # (%) of Total Sample |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-24 | 16 (10.5%) | 7 (4.6%) | 23 (15.1%) |
| 25-34 | 38 (25.0%) | 15 (9.9%) | 53 (34.9%) |
| 35-44 | 48 (31.6%) | 8 (5.3%) | 56 (36.9%) |
| 45-54 | 18 (11.8%) | 0 (0%) | 18 (11.8%) |
| 55-64 | 1 (0.65%) | 1 (0.65%) | 2 (1.3%) |
| Total | 121 (79.1%) | 31 (20.9%) | 152 00.0% |

2.1.4 Age at First Conviction

Age at first conviction assists in understanding the extent of needs of the population served. Outcomes are generally expected to be poorer for those who struggle with crime and addiction as youth.

The majority of graduates in the study (66.4%) were youth aged 13 to 24 at the time of their first conviction. On average, these graduates were convicted on their first criminal charges at the age of 22.

Table 3: Age at first conviction

| Age Range | # (%) of Total Sample |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 13 – 15 | 19 (12.5%) |
| 16 – 18 | 33 (21.7%) |
| 19 - 24 | 49 (32.2%) |
| 25 - 30 | 27 (17.8%) |
| 31 - 57 | 24 (15.8%) |
| | 152 00.0% |

2.2 Pre and Post Program Convictions of Graduates

The following section presents a detailed comparison of pre-program and post-program convictions among CDTC graduates. This comparative approach allows for an assessment of changes in criminal activity over time, highlighting not only the prevalence and duration of offending prior to program participation but also any trends in recidivism following program completion. Through this analysis, the aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program’s effectiveness in reducing criminal behaviour among its graduates.

2.2.1 Pre-program Convictions

Information was gathered regarding graduates’ convictions prior to participating in the program. Charges at entry to the Calgary Drug Treatment Court are included in this section on pre-program convictions, as participants plead guilty to these charges incurred prior to admission and are sentenced for them at discharge.

The CDTC program provides two separate streams of service (a regular stream and an early intervention stream), allowing the program to work with a lower risk and needs population separate from those who are more criminally entrenched. These streams attend separate therapeutic court sessions and are provided with individual and group interventions separately. This evidence-informed approach prevents exposure of those with limited criminal involvement to a more criminogenic population. While some graduates were facing their first charges at program entry, all participants of the program are screened to ensure they meet criteria for a substance disorder and are facing 1 to 5 years in custody on substantive criminal charges that they plead guilty to at time of admission. Of the total graduates in the sample, 21 (13.8%) entered this lower risk stream.

Information regarding pre-program convictions assists in understanding the length and extent of criminal activity prior to program entry. This is important in understanding the significance of changes in recidivism, as those with more convictions and longer-term criminal involvement are more likely to reoffend and to reoffend more often.

Program graduates included in the study (n=152⁹) had a total of 4,508 convictions that were incurred prior to program involvement. The number of pre-program convictions by each graduate range from 1 to 126 and average 29.7. The period of time over which graduates incurred pre-program convictions ranges from 0 to 41 years, and averages 12.2 years.

The extent of criminal history varies greatly for graduates in the sample, with 27 (17.8%) entering CDTC on their first criminal charges, and 40 (26.3%) incurring an average of 51 criminal convictions over a period of between 21 and 41 years prior to admission.

The significant number of graduates with a criminal history of more than 21 years is an indication of the importance of having an early intervention stream (described in this section, under 2.2.1 above) for individuals facing significant time in custody, and at risk of becoming increasingly entrenched in a criminal lifestyle.

Table 4: Length of Conviction History

| Time between 1st conviction and entry to CDTC | # of graduates | % of graduates |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 days | 27 | 17.8% |
| 1 day – 10 years | 46 | 30.3% |
| 11 – 20 years | 39 | 25.6% |
| 21 – 41 years | 40 | 26.3% |
| Total | 152 | 100.0% |

The majority of offences committed by graduates prior to entering the program were:

- a) Property Offences (n= 1955 or 43.1%),
- b) Administration of Justice Offences¹⁰ (n= 1522 or 33.8%), and
- c) Drug Offences (n=565 or 12.5%).

⁹ Three graduates who died less than a year following graduation were not included in the study. These three graduates had no new convictions following graduation, at the time of their death.

¹⁰ Administration of Justice offences include failing to comply with a term of probation or failing to comply with a term of a Judicial Interim Release (Bail) Order.

2.2.2 Post-Program Convictions

Of the 152 graduates, 37 (24.3%) incurred 537 substantive post-program convictions, 10 (6.6%) incurred 25 non-substantive convictions, and the remaining 105 (69.1%) did not incur any.

For those with one or more post-program convictions, the number of convictions ranges from 1 to 68 and averages 14.5. (See Section 3.0 below for a detailed discussion of the time that elapsed before new post-program convictions). On average these convictions occurred over a period of 6.5 years – the average time between graduation and the end of the study period (December 31, 2024).

The majority of offences committed by graduates following completion of the program were:

- a) Property Offences (n = 233 or 43.4%)
- b) Administration of Justice Offences¹¹ (n=221 or 41.2%)
- c) Drug Offences (n=59 or 11.0%¹²), with more than half of the drug-related charges (54.2%) being for simple possession.

There were ten graduates who incurred a total of 25 non-substantive convictions over an average period of 9.4 years following graduation. This includes five graduates with only administration of justice offences (733.1(1) – Failure to Comply with Probation), two with a single conviction for impaired driving, one with a prostitution conviction, and two with a conviction for simple possession – one of which also had administration of justice convictions. For these ten graduates the types and patterns of post-program convictions are more reflective of a period of relapse than a return to criminal activity or a criminal lifestyle.

2.2.3 Comparison of Pre and Post Program Convictions

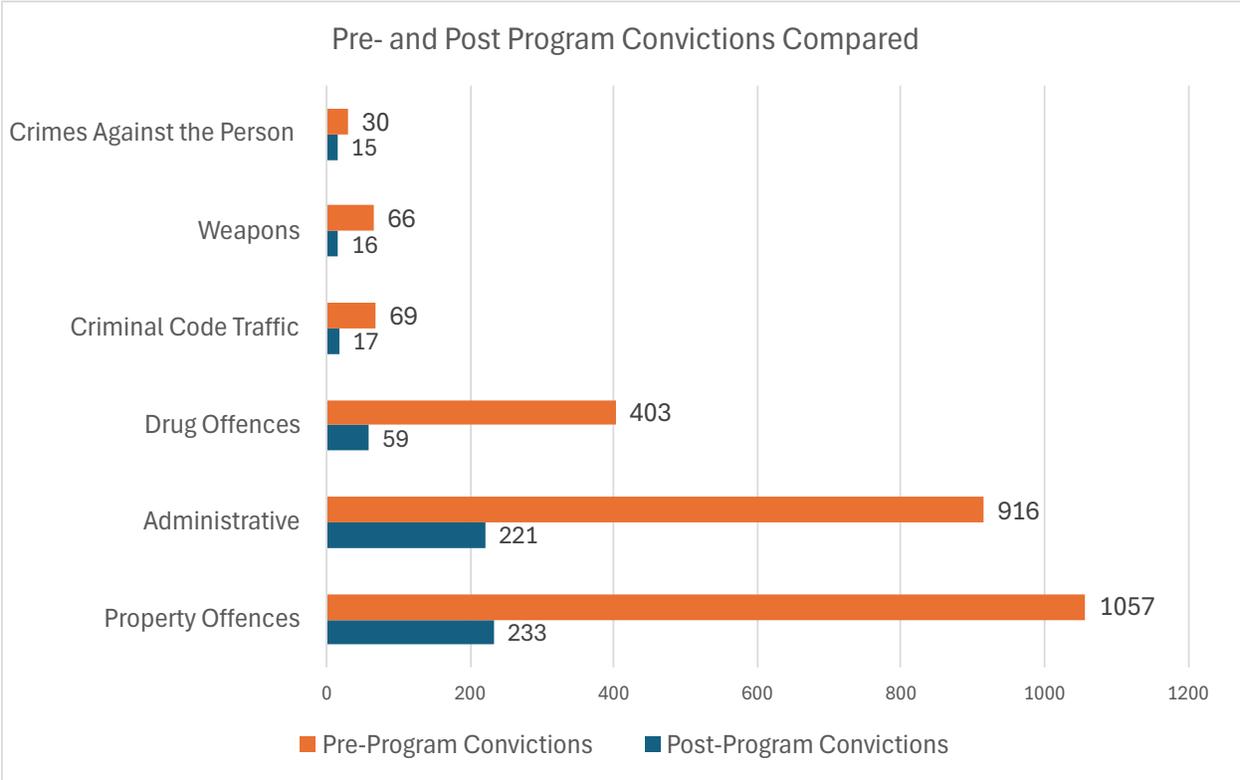
When we consider only those convictions incurred during the equivalent time period prior to admission as the time period elapsed following graduation for each graduate, there are a total of 2556 pre-program convictions, and 562 post-program convictions. The number of pre-program convictions during this period range from 1 to 63 and average 16.8 while post-graduation convictions range from 0 to 67 and average 1.7. This equivalent pre-post time period comparison shows a decrease of 78.0% in convictions.¹³

¹¹ Administration of Justice offences include failing to comply with a term of probation or failing to comply with a term of a Judicial Interim Release (Bail) Order.

¹³ The percentage decrease in convictions is calculated by determining the period of time between graduation and the end of the data collection period for each graduate and comparing any convictions during that period with convictions incurred during the same length of time prior to program admission.

Figures 1 below provides a comparison of the number of convictions by type. As can be seen from the figures, there was a significant decrease in all types of offences. The percentage of property offences remained the same while drug offences decreased and administration of justice offences increased. The percentage of other types of offences remained similar. This data shows a significant reduction in all types of criminal convictions following successful completion of the program. It also shows that graduates are less likely to incur drug offences following graduation and more likely to incur the less serious category of Administration of Justice offences.

Figure 1: Comparison of Graduates’ Pre and Post Program Convictions



2.3 Time Free from Convictions by Years Following Graduation

Information regarding post program convictions were analysed to assist in understanding the time free from criminal activity following graduation from the program.

Of the 152 graduates in the study, 115 (75.7%) were free from substantive post-graduation convictions at the end of the reporting period (December 31, 2024). To better understand the longer-term impact of the CDTC program intervention and change in recidivism outcomes over time, graduates included in the study were grouped by the length of time

since their graduation from the program. This analysis shows the rate of reduction in post-graduation convictions by year following graduation.

As shown in Table 5, 96% of graduates had no new convictions within the first year following graduation. Although, as expected with a high-risk, drug-driven, criminally involved population, the proportion of graduates without convictions decreases over time, outcomes remain positive over several years. Notably, nearly 70% of graduates had incurred no post-graduation convictions at six years following graduation, indicating sustained periods of crime-free behavior over an extended duration of time.

These findings build upon the positive recidivism outcomes reported in the previous CDTC Recidivism Study (2020), which found that 68% of graduates remained conviction-free four years following program completion. With a longer follow-up period and a 43% larger sample, the current analysis demonstrates that nearly 70% of CDTC graduates have maintained a conviction-free lifestyle for a minimum of six years following graduation.

Table 5: Time free from convictions by year following graduation

| Years following graduation | Number in Sample by Year | Number with no new convictions | Percentage without post-grad convictions |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1.0 | 144 | 138 | 95.8% |
| 2.0 | 131 | 116 | 88.5% |
| 3.0 | 117 | 95 | 81.2% |
| 4.0 | 106 | 81 | 76.4% |
| 5.0 | 92 | 65 | 70.7% |
| 6.0 | 78 | 54 | 69.2% |

3. COST ANALYSES

Included as Appendix A is analyses of savings in the cost of stolen goods, and incarceration costs avoided, based on the reduction in criminal activity and time free from new convictions shown above in the analysis of graduates' pre-post program convictions.

The cost analysis is supported by information from the CDTC 2025 Program Evaluation. This evaluation confirms that the vast majority of participants are unemployed at the time of program admission (80%), and almost all obtained most of the money they spend on drugs through crime¹⁴, primarily including property offences (theft, fraud) and drug

¹⁴ Ibid.

trafficking. Anecdotal evidence shows that participants commit crime on a daily to weekly basis to obtain money for drugs. In addition, the 2025 CDTC Program Evaluation shows that program participants¹⁵ who entered the program since 2007 self-report a typical cost to purchase drugs prior to program admission at an average \$1,722 per week.¹⁶

The process for determining costs saved and avoided is detailed in Appendix A. The analysis uses a conservative approach to calculate cost outcomes in two key areas as a result of graduates' success in the program. The results show over \$117 million saved in the cost of stolen goods over a 6-year period alone, and almost \$25 million avoided in the cost of incarceration.

4. COMPARISON GROUP ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section of the report compares recidivism outcomes between a group of 88 program graduates (a subset of the 152 graduates studied in Section 3 above, who graduated prior to December 31, 2020) and a comparison group of 36 individuals who entered and exited the CDTC program within a period of 30 days (early non-completers) – prior to December 31st, 2020. Information is provided to describe the two groups, the rationale and limitations to the use of this comparison group are discussed, recidivism outcomes are compared, and learnings regarding factors impacting participants' success are described.

In recidivism studies, a control or comparison group is used to assess whether post-program outcomes can reasonably be attributed to an intervention rather than to background trends, individual characteristics, or system-level influences. Because reoffending is shaped by factors such as age, criminal history, substance use severity, supervision conditions, and exposure to custody, a comparison group must be broadly comparable in risk profile and, critically, in time at risk in the community in order to support meaningful conclusions.

Differences in incarceration following program exit can substantially influence recidivism independent of behavioral change. While CDTC program graduates received a sentence of probation following completion and remained in community, comparison group participants were sentenced on the charges they plead guilty to at time of program admission and in many cases spent extended periods in custody following graduation. As such, lower or delayed reoffending among the comparison group may reflect a period of

¹⁵ Based on information from all CDTC participants who provided this information (n=130).

¹⁶ Hoffart, Irene. (July 2020) Calgary Drug Treatment Court 2019 Evaluation Report.

incarceration, rather than rehabilitation. Such factors must be considered in order to enable a fair and interpretable assessment of program impact.

4.2 Rationale and Limitations to Use of the Comparison Group

The comparison group of early non-completers was selected because all individuals were fully screened and met CDTC eligibility criteria, making them comparable to graduates at program entry. Their limited time in the program indicates minimal exposure to the CDTC intervention, reducing the likelihood that observed outcomes reflect treatment effects. In addition, both groups entered the program through the same judicial referral process, faced equivalent sentencing exposure, and were subject to the same court supervision and legal expectations at intake, further strengthening comparability. Within this context, ethical constraints and data access limitations precluded the use of an external or randomly selected control group matched on criminal history, risk, needs, and substance use severity, making early non-completers the most appropriate comparison group available.

This comparison is subject to important limitations. Participants were not randomly assigned to graduate and non-completer groups, limiting causal inference. It was also not possible to construct a matched comparison group based on key predictors of recidivism. Despite these limitations, post-hoc analyses indicate that graduates and early non-completers are similar across key characteristics, as discussed in Section 5.3 below.

Although differences in motivation at program entry are often cited as a potential explanation for early program exit, low or externally driven motivation at entry is common among CDTC participants, including those who ultimately graduate. Evidence from the CDTC's 2025 external evaluation and program experience indicates that motivation often evolves over time as participants achieve early stability and success. Early-stage engagement is strongly influenced by situational and contextual factors—such as unmet basic needs, exposure to drug-using peers, or acute life stressors—rather than stable individual differences. As such, motivation at entry is unlikely to differ systematically between graduates and early non-completers in a way that would meaningfully explain long-term outcome differences.

In conclusion, while it is acknowledged that the comparison group has methodological limitations, it represents the most appropriate and feasible option available given ethical, legal, and data-access constraints. Because all study participants met program eligibility criteria and early non-completers had minimal exposure to the intervention, this comparison provides a pragmatic and interpretable basis for examining post-program recidivism outcomes, provided findings are interpreted with appropriate caution.

4.3 Comparative Profile of Graduate and Early Non-Completer Groups

The graduate group completed the CDTC program between January 1, 2010 and April 30, 2024. The comparison group consisted of individuals who exited the CDTC program during the same period but remained in the program for fewer than 30 days. Participants were excluded if they were deceased within five years of program exit or had multiple program admissions exceeding 30 days.

All participants in both groups were screened using the same eligibility criteria and entered the program facing comparable legal and clinical circumstances, including non-violent, addiction-related charges associated with a Schedule 1 substance and willingness to participate in mandatory treatment components. Analysis of available demographic and background data¹⁷ indicates that the two groups are broadly comparable on key characteristics known to influence recidivism, including age at program entry, gender, employment status, age at first conviction, and overall demographic composition.

Some differences between the groups were observed and may help to contextualize program outcomes. Graduates were more likely to have young children at the time of entry, a factor that may reflect differing social responsibilities or sources of motivation. Both groups were predominantly assessed as high risk and high need, although a small proportion of graduates were assessed as having lower needs, a classification not observed among early non-completers.¹⁸

Differences in criminal history were modest. Early non-completers had a slightly higher proportion of prior property offences, while graduates had a greater proportion of Controlled Drugs and Substances Act offences than the graduate group. For both groups, the majority of historical offences at program entry were property related. Graduates were more likely to be entering the justice system for the first time at the point of CDTC admission.

Educational attainment differed between groups, with early non-completers more likely to have completed high school. Rates of post-secondary education and limited educational attainment were otherwise similar. Housing instability was common in both groups at the time of arrest or admission, with comparable overall rates of homelessness or unstable housing, although the form of housing support differed slightly between groups.

¹⁷ Data was included when available. In some cases, data was not collected on all participants.

¹⁸ Level of Risk and Needs are assessed using a standardized tool which determines the personal traits and circumstances that indicate the individual's level of risk for continuing to commit crime without significant intervention, and their level of criminogenic needs such as anti-social attitudes, ant-social associates, education/employment, family relationships.

Overall, while some differences between graduates and early non-completers were observed, the two groups are sufficiently similar across key eligibility, demographic, and criminogenic characteristics to support their use in comparative analyses, with observed differences providing useful context rather than undermining comparability.

4.4 Post-Program Outcomes: Graduates Compared to Early Non-Completers

4.4.1 Outcome Summary

Clear differences in post-program recidivism outcomes were observed between CDTC graduates and early non-completers. Of the 88 graduates included in the analysis, 61 (69.3%) incurred no new substantive convictions following program completion. In contrast, only 5 of the 36 individuals in the comparison group (16.6%) remained free from new substantive convictions following discharge from the program.

At a minimum of five years following program exit, CDTC graduates were more than three times as likely to remain conviction-free compared to early non-completers. In addition to higher rates of conviction-free outcomes, those graduates who did incur new convictions incurred substantially fewer post-program convictions overall, with 35% fewer total convictions than those in the comparison group with new convictions.

Among the graduates with substantive new post-program convictions (n = 27), a total of 398 convictions were recorded, with the largest proportion being property offences (38.7%), followed by administration of justice offences (37.2%) and Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) offences (13.1%). In contrast, among the 31 individuals in the comparison group with new post-program convictions, there were 607 convictions recorded, the majority of which were administration of justice offences (43.4%), followed by property offences (35.4%) and CDSA offences (10.2%).

Taken together, these findings indicate that CDTC graduates not only reoffended at substantially lower rates than early non-completers but also had fewer total post-program convictions, suggesting more sustained reductions in criminal justice involvement following program completion.

4.4.2 Time to New Convictions

Comparisons of time to new convictions between CDTC graduates and early non-completers are not methodologically straightforward due to substantial differences in post-discharge exposure to the risk of reoffending. Graduates are sentenced to a 12-month period of probation at graduation and remain in the community under court supervision during this time, whereas individuals who exit prior to graduation are sentenced on their original charges and are likely to enter custody in the weeks or months following discharge.

Data shows that 92.3% of the early non-completers were sentenced at an average 136 days (4.47 months) following program discharge, with 79.4% receiving custodial sentences indicating that most spent a significant portion of time post-discharge in custody. Among early non-completers, determining the time to new convictions is complicated by factors not available in the data, including periods of absconding, and whether pre-sentence custody was served before or after program discharge. Half of the non-completers received credit on their post-discharge sentence for pre-sentence custody.

As a result, comparing differences in the time to new convictions between the two groups is significantly impacted by differences in sentencing outcomes, making a direct comparison unreliable. Notably, early non-completers accumulated substantially more post-program convictions despite reduced time in the community following program discharge.

4.4.3 Factors Impacting Participant Success

Differences between CDTC graduates and early non-completers highlight several factors associated with successful program completion. Graduates were more likely to have young children at program entry, suggesting that family responsibilities may strengthen motivation and commitment to change.

Program success also varied somewhat by offence profile. The graduate group had somewhat greater CDSA-related index¹⁹ offences and greater CDSA offences historically than the non-completers. However, the majority of offences for both groups is property offences and a significant number of participants in both groups have a history of both property and drug-related offences. Property offenders remain a critical population to serve, given the volume of property crime committed, and the substantial economic benefits associated with successful outcomes for this group.

As expected, participants assessed with lower or moderate criminogenic needs were more likely to complete the program, however, the majority of both groups were assessed as high risk and high need. This underscores that CDTC primarily serves individuals with complex and entrenched challenges, while also demonstrating that meaningful success is achievable within this population.

Other contextual factors appear to influence success. Motivation at entry is a dynamic and situational factor across all sub-populations entering the CDTC program. Many graduates report low initial motivation that evolved as stability and early success were achieved²⁰. Housing instability and unmet basic needs were common at entry for both groups,

¹⁹ Index offences are the offences participants plead guilty to at the time of their admission to the program.

²⁰ ²⁰ Hoffart, Irene. (2025). [Calgary Drug Treatment Court 2025 Evaluation Report](#).

suggesting that early engagement and retention are likely shaped by immediate life circumstances as much as individual readiness for change.

Overall, these findings suggest that participant success reflects an interaction of life-course factors, offence characteristics, risk and need levels, and dynamic contextual conditions, reinforcing the importance of a comprehensive and flexible intervention model.

Appendix A - Cost Savings and Cost Avoidance Analysis

Savings in the Cost of Stolen Goods

Data and Assumptions:

- Average cost to purchase drugs prior to admission = \$1,722 per week.²¹
- Applying the estimated 1/5th street value of stolen goods, the value of stolen goods required to purchase \$1,722 in drugs per week is \$8,610.
- Of the graduates in this study, 76 committed property crimes as a primary means of obtaining money for drugs, and 95.8% (n=73) had no new convictions at the end of year 1.

$$73 \text{ graduates} \times \$8,610/\text{week} = \$628,530 \times 52 \text{ weeks/year} = \$32,683,560/\text{year}$$

Applying a reduction of 30% to account for other factors influencing this outcome (i.e. income from other sources being used to purchase drugs, factors other than the Calgary Drug Treatment Court Program impacting graduates' success) the cost savings per year are estimated at \$22,878,492. Applying a further reduction in subsequent years (Year 2 = 7.3%; Year 3 = 7.3%; Year 4 = 4.8%; Year 5 = 5.7% Year 6 = 1.5%) to account for the drop off rate (rate at which graduates incurred new convictions following graduation, as shown in this study) the estimated cost savings resulting from the reduction in stolen goods for 73 graduates of the Calgary Drug Treatment Court is as follows.

| Yr 1 Saving | Yr 2 Saving | Yr 3 Saving | Yr 4 Saving | Yr 5 Saving | Yr 6 Saving |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| \$22,878,492 | \$21,208,362 | \$19,660,151 | \$18,716,464 | \$17,649,626 | \$17,384,882 |
| Total Savings over 6 yrs = \$117, 406,977 | | | | | |

Avoidance of Incarceration Costs

Data and Assumptions:

- On average, participants face 32 months in custody on the charges they plead guilty to at admission to Calgary Drug Treatment Court.²²
- Half of the custodial sentence would have been served had they not graduated from CDTC.
- Once credit is applied for pre-sentence custody, 50% would have served their custodial sentence in provincial jail.
- The average cost of incarceration in provincial jail in Alberta is \$70,445/year.²³

²¹ Hoffart, Irene. (2025). [Calgary Drug Treatment Court 2025 Evaluation Report](#).

²² Calgary Drug Treatment Court Quarterly Report to Government of Alberta. (April 1, 2020 - December 31, 2025). Early Case Resolution Offers identified prior to program admission.

²³ Statistics Canada. (2022-2023).

- The average cost of incarceration in federal prison ranges from \$120,000 to \$150,000 /year, for men, and is higher for women.²⁴

76 graduates (facing provincial custody) x \$70,445/year x 1.6 years = \$8,566,112

76 graduates (facing federal custody) x \$135,000/year x 1.6 years = \$16,416,000

Total Incarceration Costs Avoided = \$24,982,112

At December 31st, 2025, graduates' participation in CDTC had resulted in avoidance of \$24,982,112 in the cost of incarceration alone, for the 1.6 years of time in custody (average) that graduates did not serve because they successfully completed the program.

²⁴ Statistics Canada. (2020-2021).