_____ **Research Report** _____

**The Security Reclassification Scale
(SRSW) for Shorter Review periods
among Federal Women Offenders**

**The Security Reclassification Scale (SRSW) for Shorter
Review Periods among Federal Women Offenders**

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Executive Summary

Key words: *Federal Women Offenders (FWOs), Security Reclassification, SRSW*

Assessing an individual's risk of misconduct, violence, and escape allows for the grouping of people with similar characteristics into similar levels of security (i.e., minimum, medium, and maximum), which increases efficiency and effectiveness of correctional programming and decreases public risk. Security classification occurs at admission and throughout incarceration to cascade offenders through security levels. In conjunction with professional judgement, the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) is an actuarial tool which is used to aid in the security classification of Federal Women offenders after initial placement. Currently, the use of this tool is limited to review periods which cover at least a six month period; however, there are instances in which shorter review periods would be operationally valuable and may allow an offender to move to a lower security level while ensuring public safety. Thus, this study assesses the validity and reliability of using the SRSW in review periods of less than six months.

Findings indicate the majority of women are recommended to medium security, however, Aboriginal women's overall scores tended to be closer than the scores of the non-Aboriginal women to the minimum-medium discretionary range of the scale. Few SRSW scores fell in the scale's discretionary ranges. Among scores falling in the discretionary range, almost half were placed in higher security levels than the SRSW score recommended; a little less than half were placed at lower security levels.

Decisions inconsistent with SRSW recommendations, outside of discretionary ranges and operational policy, are made relatively often and are above traditionally recommended amounts. Reasons for inconsistencies were not always provided, but when rationales were available they often cited current behaviour and attitude. A commonly cited rationale to support override SRSW recommendations to higher security levels was poor institutional behavior.

Generally, the scale proved reliable for use in shorter time periods. Overall, the scale was slightly more reliable among Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women. Some consideration may be made to remove the item considering if a woman was ever unlawfully at large when using the SRSW for shorter review periods; however, this must be weighed carefully against the operational difficulties that may arise from having two scales. In terms of the convergent validity of the scales, among shorter reviews, no association was found between the SRSW recommendation and the rating of risk, need or reintegration potential; however, these associations exist in longer review periods. Regardless of the type of outcome or analyses conducted, findings generally suggest that SRSW recommendations better predict outcomes and tend to better discriminate between differing levels of security in predicting outcomes. Although some of the associations between SRSW and the various outcomes were not always significant among shorter review periods, several non-significant trends in the shorter review periods were always confirmed using reviews of six months or longer. Issues with lack of significance between SRSW recommendations and some of the outcomes may be related to the small number of shorter reviews available for analyses.

Taken as a whole, the evidence suggests that SRSW can be used for review periods of less than six months. Additionally, evidence suggests that the SRSW scale is more reliable and predictive for security reclassification among Aboriginal women then non-Aboriginal women. These differences were not noted in previous reviews; however, these differences are limited among longer reviews. Generally, the findings of this study regarding longer reviews are concordant with previous validations (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)).

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Introduction

Security classification is necessary to manage both institutional and community risks (Farr, 2000; Motiuk, 1997). Assessing individual risk of institutional misconduct, violence, and escape allows those with similar characteristics to be managed within similar levels of security (i.e., minimum, medium, or maximum). This allows for increased efficiency and effectiveness of correctional programming, as well as for measuring progress and post-release outcomes. In the past, offender security classification relied on clinical judgement; however, over the past three decades, this clinical judgement has been paired with the recommendations of actuarial tools, particularly within the Canadian federal correctional system.

Actuarial tools are more equitable and reliable in predicting misconduct and recidivism than clinical judgement alone (Austin, 1983; Austin & Hardyman, 2004; Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Bonta, 2002; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007; Gobeil, 2008). These tools reduce the possibility of misclassification, which can have a negative impact on the rehabilitation process of an offender, as well as on institutional and community safety (Austin, 1983; Bonta & Motiuk, 1990; Brennan, 1998; Brennan, 2007; Buchanan, Whitlow, & Austin, 1986). These tools have been adapted for use with both men and women over the past decade by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). Although actuarial tools contribute a great deal to offender security classification, clinical judgement has remained a significant part of the offender assessment process.

Canadian Context for Security Classification

Security classification in Canadian penitentiaries is legislated by the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA, 1992). This act, under Section 30, requires that all federally sentenced offenders be assigned a security classification of minimum, medium, or maximum, following an assessment of their institutional adjustment, escape risk, and risk to the public in the event of an escape. Additionally, Section 4(b) of the CCRA stipulates that, while assigning a security classification, the Service is to "use the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of the public, staff members, and offenders[1]." Moreover, offenders must be informed,

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[1] Although the focus here is on the CCRA (1992), which was in place at the time of these analyses, as of legal updates in March, 2012, the CCRA is undergoing changes that require security levels "are limited to only what is necessary and proportionate to attain the purposes of the CCRA.

in writing, of the reasons explaining the assignment or alteration of a particular security classification. These legislative guidelines are applied in both initial security classifications and any subsequent security level decisions.

Two types of actuarial tools are used for security classification within Canadian penitentiaries. The Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is used in determining initial security placements[2] for both men and women at admission. Security placement beyond admission for men is assessed using the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS), while classification for women offenders is assessed using the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW). The focus of this paper is security level decisions arising from the use of the SRSW.

Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW)

CCRA indicates that the security classification of an offender must be reviewed at least yearly.[3] This review is meant to facilitate offenders' transition to lower levels of security and eventually reintegrate into the community. Beyond this upper limitation of time, there are other cases in which security classification must be revised. Reviews are required every six months for women offenders classified at maximum security, but not those serving a life sentence for first or second degree murder. Similarly, reviews must take place whenever there is cause to believe that an offender's classification is no longer appropriate, or before making any recommendation for decisions such as transfer, temporary absence, work release, and parole (Commissioner's Directive (CD) 710-06).

Currently, CSC uses the SRSW in reviewing the level of security for women in federal penitentiaries. The SRSW was developed[4] by Blanchette and Taylor (2005) to ensure the use of

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[2] As part of the Offender Intake Assessment, all newly arrived offenders receive an initial security classification (Motiuk, 1997). Generally, the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is used (Solicitor General of Canada, 1987). This actuarial tool is comprised of two subscales measuring mostly static factors relating to institutional adjustment and security risk. The CRS score aligns with a recommendation of an appropriate placement with maximum, medium or minimum levels of security - a higher CRS score indicates a higher security classification. In cases where the recommendation is deemed inappropriate by a correctional professional, the recommended CRS security level can be changed to reflect this judgement providing a proper rationale for the recommended override is present. Although the CRS was developed with men, a number of studies have confirmed its reliable use with both Aboriginal and women populations (Blanchette & Motiuk, 2004; Blanchette, Verbrugge, & Wichmann, 2002; Grant & Luciani, 1998; Luciani, Motiuk, & Nafekh, 1996). Nonetheless, CSC has examined the feasibility of developing a gender-informed initial security classification tool for women.

[3] Certain exceptions include: offenders serving a life sentence for first or second degree murder or convicted of a terrorism offence punishable by life whose security classification is reviewed at least every two years, and offenders incarcerated in minimum institutions who undergo security reviews when events occur.

[4] In 1998, the first Security Reclassification Scale developed and used at CSC for male offenders. This actuarial

gender-informed tools within federal penitentiaries rather than the use of male-centered instruments for women, which has been criticized (see Brennan, 2007; Farr, 2000; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2001; Hardyman & VanVoorhis, 2004; VanVoorhis & Presser, 2001). Since its national implementation in 2005, the scale was revalidated in 2008 to ensure its continued reliability and validity for review periods of at least six months.

The SRSW determines a security level for offenders (i.e., minimum, medium, maximum) through the scaling of nine dynamic factors: 1) placement in involuntary segregation, 2) progress or motivation regarding correctional plan, 3) presence of serious disciplinary offences, 4) number of recorded incidents, 5) number of successful escorted temporary absences, 6) CRS history rating scale, 7) most recent level of pay, 8) ever unlawfully at large (UAL) from temporary absence, work release, or supervision, and 9) family contact. Each variable is optimally weighted through statistical procedures (see Appendix A for items and weighting).

The SRSW score is derived through the use of a computerized application that retrieves portions of data available in the administrative files[5] and assists the caseworker in inputting the remaining required information. The actuarial application uses this information to recommend a security level. Correctional professionals can either use this recommendation or provide an alternative recommendation based on evidence and comprehensive rationale. Professional judgement may also be used when scores fall within two discretionary ranges surrounding the cut-off scores between maximum and medium security and medium and minimum security (see Appendix B). In these cases, caseworkers rely on their own clinical judgement to determine the appropriate level of security. Thus, it is possible that final security placements arising from a security level review may not be concordant with the SRSW's recommended level of security.

Use of the SRSW for Shorter Review Periods

As noted above, the SRSW is considered reliable and valid for reviewing security levels among women for follow-up periods of at least six months (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007; Gobeil, 2008). However, there are instances in which an actuarial tool for

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tool, mostly composed of dynamic variables, assesses three risk domains: institutional adjustment, escape risk and risk to the public in case of an escape. The recommended security level increases as the SRS score is elevated. This score is to be used in provision with professional judgment and where the scale rating and clinical assessment diverge; caseworkers can override the recommendation by providing sufficient rationale.

[5] All information pertinent to offender sentences to federal facilities is retained in the Offender Management System (OMS) at CSC. This information is used to inform many of the decisions regarding offenders within the federal correctional system.

shorter security review periods would be operationally valuable and aid in the use of the least restrictive measures while ensuring public safety. Furthermore, the validation of an actuarial tool for shorter time periods may ensure that over-classification is not relied upon due to cautiousness on the part of the caseworker, and that under-classification does not occur because of incorrect estimations of risk due to shorter follow-up periods (CD 710-6).

The present study will assess the reliability and validity of the use of the SRSW for review periods of less than six months. This study will validate the SRSW in a method similar to past validations (see Blanchette & Taylor, 2005; Gobeil & Blanchette, 2007). It is expected that the SRSW will continue to be valid for shorter time periods, although care will be taken to examine how the shorter periods of follow-up may affect the validity of the scale's recommendations regarding security level.

<center>**Method**</center>

Sample

The final sample consisted of 610 security reviews for adult women offenders completed from June 27, 2007 until March 31, 2010 for whom a CRS and a SRSW assessment were completed relating to the term in which the Offender Security Level (OSL) decision was made[6]. The reviews were divided by length of review: shorter reviews of less than six months (n=85) and longer reviews of at least six months (n=525).

Data Source

The data used for this study was extracted from the offender records through the Correctional Service of Canada and Parole Board of Canada data warehouse. In particular, this study used the annual snapshot of the Offender Management System for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. This snapshot of administrative data contains all computerized information pertinent to federal sentences served on and before April 25, 2010. The data extracted contain information related to the demographics and incarceration characteristics of the women in the sample, security classification information and outcomes.

Measures

Demographics

Several demographic characteristics are examined while validating the SRSW and are included to examine the representativeness of the sample.

Age at time of decision. This was derived by subtracting the offender's date of birth from the date of their OSL decision. Other age variables are derived in a similar manner.

Ethnicity. This was collapsed into three groups – Caucasian, Aboriginal (Innu, Inuit, Métis, North American Indian), and Other/Unknown (Arabic or Western Asian, Black, East Indian, Hispanic, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, South East Asian, Other and

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[6] When querying the administrative data source - between the dates of June 28, 2007 and April 25, 2010, 685 OSL decision were identified, which were informed using a SRSW. Further limitations were placed on the data query to ensure that the SRSW could be validated. Several cases were eliminated as the OSL decision date occurred between custodial periods and it is not possible to validate the scale without institutional outcomes (n=35). Another limitation is the requirement that CRS be present on or within 100 days of the term in which the SRSW was conducted as the CRS incident history informs the SRSW scale. This removed an additional 40 cases. The final sample in this case was 610 final OSL decisions arising from the completion of a SRSW scale.

<center>5</center>

Unknown) and in some cases only two categories were used: Aboriginal (Innu, Inuit, Métis and North American Indian) and non-Aboriginal (all other groups)

Region. This is separated according to CSC regional divisions - Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, and Pacific.

Incarceration Characteristics

Several incarceration characteristics are included to examine the representativeness of the sample and whether these factors are associated with SRSW security level recommendations.

Aggregate sentence length. This is the years to be served for the current sentence; not available for those serving life or indeterminate sentences.

Categorical aggregate sentence length. This is divided into three categories - three years or less, more than three years, and life sentence.

Most serious offence on the sentence. This is the most serious offence on the sentence as ranked by the criminal code of Canada is categorized into several categories – Homicide and related offences, attempted murder, robbery, sexual assault, sexual abuse, kidnapping, break and enter, trafficking and the importation of drugs, fraud, major assault, common assault, theft, possession of stolen property, arson, moral-sexual offence, public order offence, criminal code traffic offence, offence to administration of justice, impaired driving and other criminal code offence. For our purposes, three larger groupings of these offence categories are used to highlight differences in the criminal nature of certain offence types. These larger groupings include homicide, assault, and violent offences and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. *Homicide* has two categories – homicide (homicide and related offences) and non-homicide (all other offence types). *Assault* has two categories – assault (sexual, major, and common assault) and non-assault (all other offence types). Finally, offences were categorized as *Violent* (i.e., offences of homicide and related offences, attempted murder, robbery, sexual assault, sexual abuse, kidnapping, abduction, weapon and explosives, major assault, common assault, and arson) and non-violent (all other offence types).

SRSW Measures and Offender Security Level Decision

Several variables pertaining to the various components, scores, and recommendations of the SRSW are included to examine the reliability and validity of the use of the scale with federal women offenders. We also compare SRSW recommendations and final security level decisions

to assess their rates of concordance.

SRSW score. This is derived using nine weighted items (see Appendix A) and has an approximate 32-point range [-10.10 to 22.40]. Higher scores are associated with a higher assessed risk and security level recommendation. All scores that fall within the discretionary range of -2.35 to -2.90 or 7.80 and 9.55 can be placed in either minimum or medium security or medium or maximum respectively (see Appendix B). Scores falling in these ranges are flagged.

SRSW security level recommendation. This is derived from the SRSW score and indicates a minimum (-2.65 to -10.10), medium (-2.64 to 8.65), or maximum (8.66 to 22.40) security level.

Professional judgement recommendation. This is a recommendation of minimum, medium or maximum security is generally provided with each completed SRSW and may be inconsistent with the SRSW recommendation.

Final security level decision. This is the security level -minimum, medium, maximum- in which offender is placed.

Reasons for professional recommendation when inconsistent with the recommendations of the SRSW. This is categorized using the caseworkers' rationale in recommending a different security level than that of the SRSW recommendation. Eight themes were developed from the qualitative coding of the provided rationale. *Current institutional behaviour or attitude* includes rationales such as poor attitude or institutional behaviour, positive and stable institutional behaviour, involvement with drugs and alcohol, positive attitude; whereas, the category of *Behavioural or attitudinal history* contains two subcategories: poor behaviour prior to incarceration and history of poor institutional behaviour. The category of *Progress or dynamic factors* encompasses rationales citing insufficient or no programming completion, interested in and responsive to programming, withdrawing from programs, interventions or employment, no opportunity to participate in programming, and not responsive to programming. *Woman requires structure or support* includes rationales such as requiring the greater structure of the secure unit, the structure or opportunities of the Structure Living Environment (SLE), gradual integration into general population, and more support or assistance. The theme of *Risk* contains rationales such as risk to public safety, self, institutional security, or escape. *Community support* includes any rationales indicating positive or negative community supports. Any rationales that did not provide sufficient information such as review period calculated incorrectly by the program, refers to short review period, scale does not apply, and wrong scale calculation was categorized

as *Insufficient.* Finally, other rationales including mental health concerns, management protocol designation prevents security reduction, negatives associates, and deportation were classified as *Other.*

Measures Used to Assess Convergent Validity

Three measures are used to examine the convergent validity of the security level recommended by the SRSW scale.

Level of Static Risk. The static factors included in these analyses are obtained from the assessment completed closest to the date of the final security decision, which could have been included in a correctional progress report, intake assessment, correctional plan, or a static factors assessment. This item assesses static risk factors such as criminal history and the nature and severity of their offences. It is comprised of three categories – low, medium and high – and it is expected that higher risk will be associated with higher recommended security levels.

*Level of Dynamic Risk (criminogenic need).*The dynamic factors is obtained from the assessment completed closest to the date of the final security decision, which could have been included in a correctional progress report, intake assessment, correctional plan, or a revised dynamic factors assessment. This item assesses dynamic risk factors such as changes to marital or family contexts or changes in employment. It is comprised of three categories – low, medium and high – and it is expected that higher needs will be associated with higher recommended security levels.

Potential for Reintegration. This item is obtained from the assessment completed closest to the date of the final security decision, which could have been included in a correctional progress report or a correctional plan. This item assesses the probability of an offender successfully reintegrating in the community and is derived using a combination of overall static risk, overall dynamic risk, and their Custody Rating Scale security level designation. It is comprised of three categories – low, medium and high – and it is expected that lower reintegration potential will be associated with higher recommended security levels.

Measures Used to Assess Predictive Validity

Several institutional and some community outcomes are used to assess the validity of the SRSW recommendations. Not only is the occurrence of certain types of events such as release and escape examined, the number of days to these events are also considered.

Institutional Outcomes

Only one type of institutional outcome is presented in this report: institutional misconduct[7] (i.e., an event that merits documentation and may result in the laying of institutional charges).

Institutional misconduct. This is only considered for those who were instigators or associates to the incident. It was classified as to whether the incident was minor, major or an "other" type of incident. Minor incidents include theft, being under the influence, minor disturbances, fire, damaging government or personal property, disciplinary problems, having unauthorized items or an information technology incident. Major incidents include murder, hostage-taking, major disturbance, inmate fights, physical assault, the possession or transporting of contraband, any type of escape or attempt of escape, any type of sexual assault and making threats. Finally, "other" incidents included suicide or death, self-inflicted harm, hunger-strike, security breaches or intelligence, requiring protective custody, cell extractions, medical emergency, exceptional searches, accidents, interruption of overdose and other. It is expected that those with recommendations for higher security levels will be more likely to be involved in all types of institutional misconducts.

Rates of institutional major, minor, or other incident will also be examined. The rate will be measured in terms of number of days elapsed before involvement in each of the type of incident. It is expected that those women with recommendations for higher levels of security will have higher rates of institutional incidents especially those considered major. Furthermore, it is expected that rate of institutional misconduct is better predicted by SRSW recommendations than final placement.

Community Outcomes

Type of release. This is divided into two categories- discretionary (full or day parole) and non-discretionary release (end of sentence or statutory release[8]). It is expected that recommendations of lower security levels is positively associated with discretionary release. It is expected that security level recommendations from the SRSW will better discriminate between

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[7] Institutional offences were also examined; however, given similarities in findings only institutional misconducts are presented in this report. Escape history was also examined; however, there were too few incidents of this type to study.

[8] Statutory release is granted after an offender has served two-thirds of their sentence or is required to be released into the community.

types of release than final security level decision.

   Return to Custody. Offenders who are released are categorized as to whether they returned to custody or not, regardless of type of admission. It is expected that higher SRSW security level recommendations are related to higher proportions of returns. Furthermore, is expected that the recommendations of the SRSW are more predictive than those made by the final security level decision.

   The amount of time until return is also examined. It is expected that those with SRSW recommendations of higher levels of security will return at faster rates than those with recommendations of lower levels of security. It is also expected that SRSW recommendations will better predict rates of return to custody than final security level decision.

Analyses

   The SRSW was validated for review periods of six months (shorter reviews) or less as well as for six months or longer (longer reviews). These review periods were selected to assess the use of the SRSW in periods of less than six months and to maintain adequate case numbers.

   Comparisons of demographic and incarceration characteristics were made between the federal women offender population and women who had a SRSW completed between June 27, 2007 and March 31, 2010. The relationship between demographic and incarceration characteristics and SRSW security recommendations were analyzed. Next, an examination of the relationship and the inconsistencies between SRSW security level recommendations, the recommended security level used in the decision (this is considered the caseworker recommendation), and final security level decision. Moreover, in cases where caseworkers overrode the SRSW recommendations not within discretionary ranges, a qualitative examination of the available[9] rationales was undertaken.

   The remainder of the analyses focussed on assessing the reliability and validity of the SRSW security level recommendations as well as the final security level decisions. The SRSW's internal consistency was examined with item-total correlations presented for each of the scales items. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the scale. The relationship between SRSW security level recommendation, final security level decision and the measures of risk, need, and reintegration potential were compared to assess convergent validity. Several analyses were

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[9] Many cases did not provide rationales.

conducted using institutional misconducts, discretionary release, and return to custody to examine the predictive validity of the SRSW recommended security level. In some cases, follow-up periods were standardized to three months to assess comparable rates of incidents and to calculate Receiver Operating Curves (ROC) curves for the SRSW recommended and final decision security levels. Chi-square was used to assess whether an association was present between the outcomes of interest and the security levels of the SRSW recommendations or final decisions. These curves are used to assess how well a particular recommendation or decision is in predicting the outcome of interest regardless of base rates (i.e., a measurement of classification success) (Bewick, Cheek, & Ball, 2004a).The Area Under the Curve (AUC) ranges from 0.50 to 1.00 (Bewick, Cheek, & Ball, 2004a), with 0.70 to 0.90 being considered an acceptable rate of successful prediction (Swets, 1988)[10].

In general, all associations were assessed using F-tests, t-tests, and chi-square. In the case of chi-square, when 20% or more of the expected cell counts were less than 5, the Fisher exact probabilities were used to assess significance rather than the Pearson chi-square. Only analyses for all women are presented, although all analyses were examined for differences by Aboriginal self-identification. Any practically significant differences by Aboriginal self-identification will be discussed within the text. All analyses were conducted using SAS 9.2.

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[10] Analyses were also conducted to assess the rate at which various security levels experienced the event of interest (i.e., time to failure) using Kaplan-Meier method survival analysis. This technique takes into account the time to event of interest and the fact that some individuals do not experience an event with the observed period or censoring. In taking these issues into account, the technique assesses whether different groups experience an outcome at differential rates (i.e., individuals either recommend to or placed in varying levels of security) (Bewick, Cheek & Ball, 2004b). All cases are included. The follow-up period for each case was calculated using the date of the final security level decision and the date of the next security review, offender's release, or April 25, 2010, whichever came first. The number of days between these dates was the follow-up period. Given the findings are very similar to those presented in the ROC analyses, these survival analyses are not presented for reasons of brevity.

Results

Descriptive/Offence Information for Sample

This section juxtaposes the demographic and incarceration information of 397 women who had a total of 610 security reviews completed between June 28, 2007 to March 31, 2010 with all women incarcerated in a penitentiary within the same time period (N=1,473) in order to examine how the sample may differ from the population.

Overall, the women in the sample were predominantly Caucasian, single, and incarcerated in the Prairie or Quebec region (see Table 1). On average, at the mid-point of the study period, they were 34 years old. Notably, Aboriginal women were on average younger than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (32 vs. 35 years, $t(396) = -3.14$, $p < 0.01$). Aboriginal women were also more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be incarcerated in the Prairie region (63% vs. 23%, χ^2 (2, n=397) 2, 78.57, $p < 0.001$). Regarding length of sentence, 40% were serving sentences for three years or less, 47% were serving sentences more than three years, and 14% were serving life sentences. Additionally, 75%, 26%, and 20% of the women had their most serious offence on their sentence classified as violent[11], homicide-related, or assault-related respectively. Compared to non-Aboriginal women, a higher proportion of Aboriginal women's most serious offence on their sentence was violent (53% vs. 82%, χ^2 (2, $n = 397$) = 8.00, $p <$ 0.05) and homicide-related (22% vs. 34%, χ^2 (2, $n = 397$) = 7.93, $p < 0.05$). Finally, the majority of the women were classified as medium security with Aboriginal women less likely than non-Aboriginal women to be classified as minimum security (5% vs. 12%, χ^2 (2, $n = 397$) = 6.16, $p <$ 0.05).

Due to the directives under which the SRSW is conducted (i.e., offenders in maximum security must be reviewed at least every six months and all others in custody must be reviewed annually), it is expected that the SRSW sample will be different from the general population of women offenders in terms of level of security and length and type of sentence. In examining the population of women inmates and the SRSW sample, there are several notable differences.

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[11] Violent offence included homicide and related offences, as well as any other offences classified as Schedule 1 in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (1992, c.20).

Table 1

Demographic and incarceration characteristics of all federal women offenders and the SRSW sample

	All Women Offenders[a] % (n) or M (SD)	SRSW Sample[b] % (n) or M (SD)
Demographic Characteristics		
Ethnicity		
Aboriginal	29(427)	39 (153)
Caucasian	57 (834)	51 (201)
Other or Unknown	14 (212)	11 (43)
Age[c]	35 (10.3)	34 (9.5)
Marital Status		
Has Partner	34 (497)	38 (151)
Single	66 (967)	61 (242)
Unknown	< 1 (9)	1 (4)
Region		
Atlantic	13 (191)	15 (58)
Quebec	15 (220)	22 (88)
Ontario	28 (416)	12 (48)
Prairies	33 (488)	38 (152)
Pacific	11 (158)	13 (51)
Incarceration Characteristics		
Length of Aggregate Sentence (Years)	3 (1.9)	4 (2.4)
Length of Aggregate Sentence		
3 Years or Less	56 (826)	40 (156)
More Than 3 Years	37 (542)	47 (186)
Life Sentence	7 (105)	14 (55)
Type of Offence		
Violent	47 (699)	75 (296)
Non-Violent	46 (677)	21 (85)
Other[d]/Unknown	7 (97)	4 (16)
Homicide	14 (212)	26 (105)
Non-Homicide	79 (1164)	70 (276)
Other[d]/Unknown	7 (97)	4 (16)
Assault	12 (178)	20 (81)
Non-Assault	81 (1198)	76 (300)
Other[d]/Unknown	7 (97)	4 (16)
Security Level		
Minimum	44 (641)	9 (36)
Medium	44 (655)	75 (299)
Maximum	8 (118)	16 (62)
Not available	4 (59)	-

Note. Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. *M*=mean; *SD*= standard deviation.
[a]*N* =1, 473; [b] *n* =397; [c] Calculated using the mid-point of the study period (November 13, 2008); [d]Other includes criminal offences such as committing or conspiring to commitment and indictable offence or intimidation of participation of the criminal justice system.

1) There is a higher proportion of Aboriginal women in the SRSW sample than in the women inmate population as a whole (39% vs. 29%). On average, women in the SRSW sample are slightly younger than in the population (34 vs. 35 years). Like the SRSW sample, Aboriginal women in the population were, on average, younger than non-Aboriginal women (33 vs. 36 years, $t(1472) = -7.20, p < 0.001$).

2) In the sample, there is a larger proportion of women incarcerated in Quebec (22% vs. 15%) and Prairies (38% vs. 33%) than in the population. Conversely, there are proportionally fewer women incarcerated in Ontario in the sample than in the population (12% vs. 28%). Like the sample, Aboriginal women were also more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be incarcerated in the Prairie region (64% vs. 20%, χ^2 (4, $n = 1,473$) = 295.65, $p < 0.001$).

3) Proportionally more women in the sample have sentences three years or longer (47% vs. 37%) or life sentences (14% vs. 7%) than in the population.

4) There is a higher proportion of women in the sample whose most serious offence on their sentence is violent (75% vs. 47%), homicide-related (26% vs. 14%) and assault-related (20% vs. 12%) compared to the population. Similarly, Aboriginal women in the inmate population were more likely than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to have a violent (65% vs. 40%, χ^2 (3, $n = 1,473$) = 76.59, $p < 0.001$), homicide-related (23% vs. 11%, χ^2 (3, $n = 1,473$) = 44.78 $p < 0.01$) or an assault-related offence (18% vs. 10%, χ^2 (3, $n = 1,473$) = 29.82, $p < 0.001$) as their most serious charge on their sentence.

5) Higher proportions of women in the sample are in medium (75% vs. 44%) and maximum security (16% vs. 8%) than in the population. Similar to the SRSW sample, Aboriginal women were less likely than non-Aboriginal women to be in minimum security (23% vs. 54%, χ^2 (2, $n = 1,473$) = 111.99, $p < 0.001$)[12].

Many of the differences between the sample and the population do in fact appear to be influenced by the timeframes in which the SRSW must be completed for the various levels of security. For example, higher proportions of Aboriginal women are found in maximum security than non-Aboriginal women as a result of higher rates of conviction for violent, homicide-related and assault-related offences, and as such their security reviews are conducted more frequently, which may account for the over-representation of Aboriginal women in sample.

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[12] In some cases, the smaller number of Aboriginal women in minimum security has an impact on the ability to assess the validity of the scale for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups separately. All analyses for differences in scale validity in these two groups; however, at times small samples did not allow for these comparisons.

SRSW Descriptive Information

The focus of this report is to validate the use of the SRSW in shorter review periods in order to efficiently cascade women to lower security levels without decreasing institutional or community safety. Due to small numbers and issues with precision, findings relating to longer review periods are discussed in the text (see Appendix C).

SRSW Scores

Although the range of scores for SRSW is -10.10 to 22.40, the SRSW scores from our sample ranged from -9.55 to 15.80 (see Appendix B, Figure 1 for SRSW scale thresholds). The mean score was 3.30 with a standard deviation of 6.26, the median score was 4.25 with a first quartile score of -1.10, and a third quartile score of 8.05. The majority of these scores, with the exception of the first quartile score, correspond to medium security. These scores did not differ greatly with those with longer reviews (see Appendix C, Table 1).

Among the reviews of less than six months, scores did vary slightly by Aboriginal self-identification. On average, SRSW scores for Aboriginal women were lower than those for non-Aboriginal women (1.07 vs. 4.25, t (84) = -2.12). Both sets of scores fell within medium security and this difference was not observed in longer reviews periods.

SRSW Security Recommendations

Some demographic characteristics were associated with the SRSW recommended security level (see Table 2). SRSW recommendations did vary significantly by age. Among shorter reviews, women recommended to maximum security were younger on average compared to those recommended to medium security (28 vs. 34 years, F (2, 82) = 3.51, $p < 0.05$). This was also the case in longer reviews; however, these differences extend to minimum security as well (see Appendix C, Table 2). A greater proportion of women were classified in medium security for each region, with the exception of Pacific and Ontario regions, although small numbers do merit caution. Among longer reviews, most women are classified as medium security and no regional differences are present. No differences between SRSW security level recommendations and Aboriginal self-identification were noted regardless of length of review.

In total, 61% of the reviews recommended a change in security classification (e.g., 52 inconsistent reviews out of 85 reviews, 61%) with 56% of the reviews recommending a lower security level (e.g., 29 reviews to lower security levels out of 52 discordant reviews, 56%). In

contrast, a greater proportion of the longer reviews recommended lower levels of security. Overall, 54% reviews recommended a change in security, with 74% being recommended to a lower level of security.

Table 2
Association between demographic and incarceration characteristics and security levels recommendations of the SRSW for all decisions for review periods of less than six months

| | SRSW Security Level Recommendation | | | Association Between Variables |
| | Minimum | Medium | Maximum | |
	% (n) or M (SD)	% (n) or M (SD)	% (n) or M (SD)	Fisher's Exact or F (df1, df2)
Demographic Characteristics				
Age at Review	31 (8.1)	34 (8.3)[a]	28 (6.1)[a]	3.51^* (2, 82)
Ethnicity				
Aboriginal	35 (8)	52 (12)	13 (3)	$p=0.08$
Non-Aboriginal	13 (8)	66 (41)	21 (13)	
Region				
Atlantic	7 (1)	73 (11)	20 (3)	$p=0.0004$
Quebec	5 (1)	85 (17)	10 (2)	
Ontario	0 (0)	44 (4)	56 (5)	
Prairies	36 (13)	56 (20)	8 (3)	
Pacific	20 (1)	20 (1)	60 (3)	
Incarceration Characteristics				
Previous Security Level				
Minimum	8 (1)	83 (11)	8 (1)	$p=0.11$
Medium	26 (14)	53 (28)	21 (11)	
Maximum	5 (1)	74 (14)	21 (4)	
Length of Aggregate Sentence[b]	2 (0.3)[c]	3 (1.5)[c]	3 (1.6)	3.23^* (2, 82)
Length of Aggregate Sentence				
3 Years or Less	30 (14)	53 (25)	17 (8)	$p=0.0014$
More Than 3 Years	0 (0)	807 (28)	20 (7)	
Life Sentence	67 (2)	0 (0)	33 (1)	
Offence Type				
Violent	19 (9)	55 (26)	25 (12)	3.35(2)
Non-Violent (includes other)	18 (7)	71 (27)	11 (4)	
Assault	33 (5)	60 (9)	7 (1)	$p=0.19$
Non-Assault (includes other)	16 (11)	63 (44)	21 (15)	
Homicide	29 (2)	29 (2)	43 (3)	$p=0.12$
Non-Homicide (includes other)	18 (14)	65 (51)	17 (13)	

*Note. n = 85; SD =standard deviation; M=mean. Row totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Means with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < 0.05$ according to Tukey's HSD criterion for pair-wise comparisons. [b] Excludes indeterminate sentences and is measured in years.
* $p < 0.05$*

Due to small numbers it is not possible to assess the relationship between life sentence and SRSW recommendations for shorter reviews; however, among longer reviews, women serving life sentences are less likely than women not serving life sentences to be recommended to maximum security by the SRSW (see Appendix C, Table 2). As expected, for women not sentenced to life, length of sentence was positively associated with recommended security level.

Lastly, the association between SRSW recommendations and offence were examined. Among shorter review periods, no association was observed (see Table 2). This was also the case for violent and assault offences among longer SRSW reviews. Those sentenced with a homicide offence were more likely than those with non-homicide offences to be recommended to minimum security (37% vs. 28%, x^2 (2, $n = 525$) $= 9.52$, $p < 0.01$).

Discretionary Ranges

SRSW scores that fall within 10% of the threshold score for maximum security (7.80 to 9.55) and medium security (-2.35 to -2.90) are considered to be in the discretionary range of the scale (see Figure 1, Appendix B). Reviews with scores falling in these ranges can without further justification be placed in a higher or lower level of security than recommended by the SRSW. Among shorter reviews, 18% of the scores fell within the discretionary ranges. Of these scores, 47% of the resulting final security level decisions were to higher levels of security than the SRSW recommended, 7% were placed in lower levels than recommended, and the remainder was placed at the same level as recommended.

The pattern of security placement was different for longer reviews. Only 11% fell within the discretionary ranges. Among those in the range, 20% resulted in final security level decision that was higher and 29% were placed in a lower security level than the SRSW recommendation. The remaining 53% were placed at the same level of security as recommended by the SRSW. No differences by Aboriginal self-identification were present regardless of the length of review.

Inconsistencies in Security Reclassification

Inconsistencies in security level recommendations can occur at two points in the decision process. First, an inconsistency can exist between the SRSW security level recommendation and that recommended by the caseworker. At this point, the caseworker can recommend a security level different than the SRSW based on a comprehensive and evident rationale; rationales must be provided when the SRSW score is outside discretionary ranges. Secondly, an inconsistency

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with the SRSW recommendation can occur when the warden or Kikawinaw[13] makes the final security level decision. Certain instances will not be considered inconsistent with the SRSW classification for the purposes of this study: the decision to recommend or place women in a higher or lower level of security when their SRSW score falls within a discretionary range or when the woman has not yet served the minimum of two years for a homicide-related offence. These women must serve the first two years of their sentence in maximum security, before they are eligible to be moved to lower levels of security.

Rates of Inconsistency

Generally, the rates of inconsistency between the SRSW security level recommendation, the security level recommended by the caseworker at the time of SRSW completion, and the final security level placement were limited (see Table 3). Among shorter reviews, 38% of the SRSW and caseworker recommendations were discordant, compared with 29% of the SRSW recommendations and final decisions. Comparatively, caseworker recommendations and final decisions were less discordant (15%). Lower rates of discordance were noted among longer reviews: 28% between SRSW and caseworker recommendations, 27% between SRSW recommendation and final decision, and 8% between caseworker recommendations and final decision (see Appendix C, Table 3).

Among shorter reviews, caseworker recommendations and final decisions were generally to higher levels of security than those recommended by the SRSW. Notably, 84% of the SRSW and caseworker inconsistencies were due to the caseworker recommendations to higher security levels and 76% of the inconsistencies between the SRSW recommendations and final security decisions resulted in higher levels of security. Of the inconsistencies between caseworker recommendations and final decision, only 15% were placed at higher security levels. Among longer reviews, similar proportions of inconsistencies were suggested to higher security levels by caseworkers or final decision than by the SRSW. Notably, 31% of the inconsistent reviews between caseworker recommendations and final decisions were placed at higher security levels.

Differences by Aboriginal self-identification were examined among longer reviews due to small sample sizes among shorter reviews. There were some differences in the inconsistencies among the different security levels of the various measures. For example, caseworkers were

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[13] Institutional Head at the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge

more likely to recommend a higher level of security than the SRSW for Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women (93% vs. 73%), although the proportion of suggested overrides is similar for each of the groups (33% vs. 29% respectively). Similarly, inconsistencies were present between caseworker recommendation and final placement, but in the opposing direction of the first set of inconsistencies. Specifically, there is a higher percentage of inconsistencies among Aboriginal women than non-Aboriginal women (11% vs. 5%), with only 25% of Aboriginal women being placed in higher security levels compared to 40% of non-Aboriginal women. These opposing findings actually result in few differences between the SRSW recommendations and final decision security levels by Aboriginal self-identification. These two measures were inconsistent in 30% of Aboriginal and 25% of non-Aboriginal women's reviews with 79% of Aboriginal and 80% of non-Aboriginal women being placed at a higher level of security than recommended by the SRSW.

Table 3
Associations between security level recommended by the SRSW, security level recommended by the caseworker and final security level placement for review periods of less than six months

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Fisher's Exact Test
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	
	% (n)	*% (n)*	*% (n)*	
Security Level Recommended by Caseworker[a]				
Minimum	33 (5)	6 (3)	0 (0)	*p* < 0.0001
Medium	67 (10)	59 (29)	10 (2)	
Maximum	0 (0)	35 (17)	90 (19)	
Final Security Placement				
Minimum	47 (7)	8 (4)	0 (0)	*p* < 0.0001
Medium	53 (8)	69 (34)	10 (2)	
Maximum	0 (0)	22 (11)	90 (19)	
	Caseworker Security Level Recommendation			
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	
	% (n)	*% (n)*	*% (n)*	
Final Security Placement				
Minimum	88 (7)	10 (4)	0 (0)	*p* < 0.0001
Medium	13 (1)	88 (36)	19 (7)	
Maximum	0 (0)	2 (1)	81 (29)	

Note. Column totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. $N = 85$.[a]In every offender security level review, a recommended decision is provided by the caseworker and may not concord with the SRSW recommendation. Wardens are also not required to take the recommendation of the caseworker.

Reasons for Inconsistencies

Fifteen of 30 (50%) overrides had an accompanying rationale for an inconsistent caseworker recommendation not falling within the discretionary ranges. Due to small numbers, it was not possible to examine differences by Aboriginal self-identification among the shorter reviews. Comparatively, of those overrides not associated with a discretionary range, only 38% had included a rationale among longer reviews (52 of 138, 38%). Slightly more of the longer security reviews for Aboriginal women had a rationale provided compared to non-Aboriginal women (40% vs. 35%). None of the caseworkers selected the standard drop-down menu options that are available but rather they opted for the use of "other," which must have justification of their recommendation present. These rationales were reviewed and eight major themes emerged.[14]

Current behaviour and attitude was the most common rationale for both shorter and longer reviews (see Table 4 and Appendix C, Table 4). Among shorter reviews, the second most common responses included progress on programming and/or dynamic factors, the need for higher levels of structure or support, level of risk that the individual poses to others or themselves, and insufficient information to categorize the rationale. For longer reviews, the second and third most common theme of the override rationales were programming and/or dynamic factors and level of risk that the individual poses to others or themselves.

Among overrides that focussed on current behaviour or attitude, the rationale most commonly cited was poor institutional behaviour. One caseworker commented, "[Offender's] recent institutional behaviour reveals an escalation in violence." Another wrote, "[Offender] continues to struggle with her anger and aggression towards others." These types of rationales were often provided for recommending a security classification above that of the SRSW.

Other common reasons for assigning a higher security classification than recommended by the SRSW cited risk to others or self as well as the woman requiring the greater structure of the secure unit. For example, a caseworker stated, "concerns lie mainly with the risk that [the offender] presents to herself." Another caseworker expressed, "[The offender] would be unmanageable in a less structured and supervised environment."

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[14] Current behaviour or attitude, behavioural or attitudinal history, progress on programming and or dynamic factors, the need for higher levels of structure or support, level of risk that the individual poses to others or themselves, type of support in the community, insufficient information to categorize the rationale, and 'other' rationales, which is different from the option to choose 'other' as a rationale in OMS.

Another rationale cited was progress on programming and/or dynamic factors and was often noted in cases where a lower security level was recommended by the caseworker. In these cases, all caseworkers justified their recommendation by citing that the woman was interested in and responsive to programming. For example, one caseworker noted an offender's growth when stating that, "she is actively participating in WOSAP II with progress gains noted." Another caseworker indicated that, "[the offender] has been very motivated to complete all programming opportunities as well as work and school opportunities."

Finally, several of the rationales did not provide adequate context to classify the decision to override the SRSW recommendations. For example, one caseworker stated, "SIO [Security Intelligent Office] information" as a reason while another caseworker explained, "[The offender] was convicted of an extremely violent crime of manslaughter." No additional information was provided with these rationales and as such the recommendations could not contextualize the override recommendation.

Table 4

Reasons for inconsistency between the SRSW and caseworker security recommendations for review periods of less than six months

	% (n)
Current Behaviour or Attitude	67 (10)
Poor Institutional Behaviour	70 (7)
Positive Attitude	10 (1)
Both Poor Behaviour and Attitude	20 (2)
Behavioural or Attitudinal History	7 (1)
History of Poor Institutional Behaviour	100 (1)
Progress on Programming and/or Dynamic Factors	20 (3)
Interested in and Responsive to Programming	100 (3)
Requires Structure or the Support of a higher level of security	20 (3)
Requires the Greater Structure of the Secure Unit	67 (2)
Requires the Structure or Opportunities of the SLE	33 (1)
Risk to other or self	20 (3)
Escape Risk	33 (1)
Risk to Self	33 (1)
Risk to Institutional Security	33 (1)
Community Support	0 (0)
Insufficient Information Provided to Categorize	20 (3)
Insufficient Information	33 (1)
Review Period Calculated Incorrectly by Program	33(1)
Refers to Short Review Period	33(1)
Other	0 (0)

Note. N =15; Themes are not mutually exclusive; SLE=structured living environment.

Reliability of SRSW Scale

The standardized SRSW item-to-total correlations were calculated and most items were weakly to moderately associated with the total score (see Table 5). Among shorter reviews, Cronbach's alpha was computed for all women ($\alpha = 0.53$) and then separately by Aboriginal self-identification. The Cronbach's alpha was significantly higher among Aboriginal women than non-Aboriginal women, $\alpha = 0.65$ and $\alpha = 0.45$ respectively. Increases to the Cronbach's alpha occurred with the removal of the item measuring whether a woman was ever lawfully-at-large ($\alpha = 0.62$). Stronger findings were observed among longer reviews ($\alpha = 0.64$). Slight variations in the homogeneity of the scale was observed by Aboriginal self-identification (Aboriginal $\alpha = 0.64$; non-Aboriginal $\alpha = 0.62$) (see Appendix C, Table 5 for item-to-total correlations, item means and standard deviations). Again, the removal of the item being unlawfully-at-large increased the scale's homogeneity ($\alpha = 0.68$). Overall, the lower alpha coefficients, regardless of length of review period, could be reflective of many issues such as a small number of cases and/or items, the presence of sub-domains within the scale itself, or the non-normality of items included in the scale (Cronbach's alpha tends to be downwardly biased when using ordinal variables (Zumbo, Gadermann, & Zeisser, 2007)).

Table 5
Standardized SRSW item-to-total correlations and descriptive statistic for reviews periods of less than six months

Item	r	M (SD)
Correctional Plan progress/motivation	0.43	0.30 (2.15)
Family contact during review	0.26	0.40 (0.65)
Serious disciplinary offences during review	0.12	-0.51 (1.33)
Recorded incidents	0.20	0.40 (1.94)
Pay Level- at review end	0.36	-0.18 (0.65)
Involuntary segregation during review	0.48	1.73 (2.34)
Successful escorted temporary absences during review	0.25	0.61 (0.75)
Unlawfully at large – ever	-0.16	0.02 (0.57)
Custody rating scale incident history score	0.27	0.61 (1.25)

Note. r = correlation of item with total; *M*= mean score of item; *SD* = standard deviation of item.

Convergent Validity

      The association between the SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions and the measures of need, risk and potential of reintegration were examined to assess convergent validity. Among shorter reviews, no association existed between the level of security recommended by the SRSW risk, need and reintegration potential, although the direction of association was as expected. A moderate association was present between SRSW recommendations and risk, need and reintegration potential among longer reviews (see Table 6 and Appendix C, Table 6). The lack of association in the shorter reviews may be related to the small number of reviews available for analyses. Differences in the association of these variables by Aboriginal self-identification were noted among longer reviews. Specifically, the association between need and SRSW security level recommendations was only significant among non-Aboriginal women, although it remained significant when all women were considered.

      Final security level decisions were moderately to strongly associated with the risk, need and reintegration potential of offenders regardless of length of review (see Table 6 and Appendix C, Table 6). No differences were observed by Aboriginal self-identification.

Table 6

Associations between SRSW security level recommendation, final security level decision and risk, need, and reintegration potential ratings for reviews of less than six months

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Fisher's Exact Test
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	**γ (ASE)**
	% (n)	*% (n)*	*% (n)*	
Risk				
Low	18 (3)	65 (11)	18 (3)	*p*=1.00
Medium	20 (9)	61 (27)	18 (8)	0.05 (0.17)
High	17 (4)	63 (15)	21 (5)	
Need				
Low	0 (0)	100 (1)	0 (0)	*p*=0.15
Medium	31 (10)	47 (15)	22 (7)	0.20 (0.19)
High	12 (6)	71 (37)	17 (9)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	5 (1)	77 (17)	18 (4)	*p*=0.13
Medium	18 (7)	63 (25)	20 (8)	-0.28 (0.16)
High	35 (8)	48 (11)	17 (4)	
	Final Security Level Decision			**Fisher's Exact Test**
				γ (ASE)
Risk				
Low	41 (7)	41 (7)	18 (3)	*p*=0.004
Medium	5 (2)	55 (24)	41 (18)	0.31 (0.16)
High	8 (2)	54 (13)	38 (9)	
Need				
Low	100 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	*p*=0.02
Medium	22 (7)	50 (16)	28 (9)	0.39 (0.17)
High	6 (3)	54 (28)	40 (21)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	5 (1)	55 (12)	41 (9)	*p*=0.005
Medium	5 (2)	53 (21)	43 (17)	-0.40 (0.14)
High	35 (8)	48 (11)	17 (4)	

Note. Row totals may not add to 100% due to rounding; ASE = asymptotic standard error. *N* = number of cases.

Predictive Validity

Institutional Misconducts

Three-month follow-up. In assessing the predictive ability of the SRSW security level recommendations and final security level decisions, institutional misconducts were examined for three months following a final security level decision. In total, 50 of 85 shorter reviews had complete data for the time period. A similar proportion of longer reviews had complete data for this period (356/525). Three types of misconduct are examined: major, minor, and other. Among the shorter reviews, 4%, 18%, and 16% were associated with at least one of the types of incident respectively. Experiences of misconduct were higher in longer reviews, of the reviews, 15%

were associated with major misconducts, 18% with minor misconducts and 21% with other misconducts.

Table 7

Rates of Misconduct by security levels for review periods of less than six months

SRSW Security Level Recommendation		Minor % (n)	Major % (n)	Other % (n)
Minimum		0 (0/7)	14 (1/7)	0 (0/7)
Medium		15 (5/34)	3 (1/34)	15 (5/34)
Maximum		44 (4/9)	0 (0/9)	33 (3/9)
	Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.05	*p*=0.29	*p*=0.19
	AUC (95% CI)	0.71 (0.55-0.87)	0.73 (0.33-1.00)	0.67 (0.50-0.83)
Final Security Level Decision				
Minimum		0 (0/5)	0 (0/5)	0 (0/5)
Medium		11 (3/27)	7 (2/27)	7 (2/27)
Maximum		33 (6/18)	0 (0/18)	33 (6/18)
	Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.12	*p*=0.60	*p*=0.05
	AUC (95% CI)	0.71 (0.54-0.87)	0.74 (0.67-0.81)	0.75 (0.59-0.91)

Note. N = 50 (cases with complete data); AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve; *n* = number of cases; CI = confidence interval.

Among shorter reviews, only SRSW recommendations are associated with minor offences (see Table 7). Women recommended to maximum security were more likely than women in other security levels to engage in misconduct. The overall lack of significant associations may be related to the small sample size; however, a trend is present, proportionally more of the women recommended to or placed in higher security levels experience misconducts compared to women at lower levels. No differences in Aboriginal self-identification were noted. Among longer reviews, the proportion of cases of misconducts increased significantly from minimum to maximum security levels for both recommended security levels and final security level decisions (see Appendix C, Table 7). Further examinations indicate that these relationships were only significant among Aboriginal women and not non-Aboriginal women, although significant for all women when combined.

Generally, among longer reviews, the SRSW recommendations tended to be more sensitive in detecting differences in the occurrence of an incident (minor, major, or other) by security level than final security level decision. However, in predicting other misconducts, final security level decisions discriminated better between maximum and medium security than the SRSW recommendation.

ROC curves were used to assess predictive ability of both the SRSW and final decision

security level through the estimation of AUCs. For shorter reviews, the SRSW security level recommendation and final security level decision were similar and acceptably predictive of misconducts. These relationships were only significant when examining a review period of six months or longer; however, predictive ability decreases among longer reviews and is considered lower than desirable. Neither measure out performs the other significantly. No differences in AUCs were detected by Aboriginal self-identification regardless of length of review.

Discretionary Release (day or full parole)

Three-month follow-up. Among shorter reviews, 41% had a release after their security review. Of these releases, 31% were discretionary. These proportions for release and discretionary release were similar among longer reviews, 39% and 31% respectively. No associations were found between final decision or SRSW recommendation security levels and discretionary release among shorter reviews (see Table 8) even when Aboriginal self-identification was considered. These associations were significant among longer reviews (see Appendix C, Table 8). Lower levels of security were related to a higher likelihood of discretionary release. SRSW recommendations better discriminated between security levels than final security decisions.

The ROC curves provided similar evidence regarding the predictive ability of the SRSW (see Table 8). Among shorter reviews, the predictive ability of the SRSW security level recommendation was higher than that of final security decisions, although not significantly so (AUC: 0.72 vs. 0.64). Among longer reviews, the predictive ability of the security recommendation and the final decision were similar (AUC: 0.75 vs. 0.78). No differences by Aboriginal self-identification were observed.

Return to Custody

Three-month follow-up. In total, 46% and 48% of shorter and longer reviews respectively had a return to custody within three months of release. No associations between SRSW recommended security levels and final security level decision and return to custody of those released were noted in the three month follow-up period (see Table 9) regardless of length of review period (see Appendix C, Table 9). Due to the lack of association between these factors, ROC curve outcomes will not be discussed. No differences in these findings were observed by Aboriginal self-identification.

Table 8

Rate of discretionary release by security level for review periods of less than six months

SRSW Recommendation	% (*n*/N)
Minimum	20 (2/10)
Medium	47 (9/19)
Maximum	0 (0/6)
Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.06
AUC (95% CI)	0.72 (0.58-0.87)
Final Security Level Decision	
Minimum	43 (3/7)
Medium	36 (8/22)
Maximum	0 (0/6)
Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.22
AUC (95% CI)	0.64 (0.49-0.80)

Note. AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve. CI=confidence interval

Table 9

Rate of return to custody by security level for reviews of less than six months

SRSW Security Level Recommendation	% (*n*/N)
Minimum	40 (4/10)
Medium	53 (10/19)
Maximum	33 (2/6)
Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.72
AUC (95% CI)	0.58 (0.41-0.76)
Final Security Level Decision	
Minimum	57 (4/6)
Medium	36 (8/22)
Maximum	67 (4/6)
Fisher's Exact Test	*p*=0.39
AUC (95% CI)	0.63 (0.46-0.79)

Note. AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve; CI=confidence interval

Discussion

Overall, the SRSW scores associated with short and long review periods were similar to previous validations (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)). The majority of women were recommended to medium security. In general, Aboriginal women's SRSW scores tended to be lower than non-Aboriginal women's scores (i.e., closer to the medium-minimum discretionary range). This difference would not have been previously observed because former validations did not include review period shorter than six months. Slight variations in the SRSW security level recommendations were noted by demographic characteristics in shorter reviews. These variations tended to be minimal and the differences were not generally present in longer review periods. Additionally, most of the variations related to sentence length or offence type were in the expected direction. For example, it was expected that those with long, determinate sentences would be more likely than those serving shorter sentences to be recommended to higher security levels. Previous security level was also related to SRSW recommended. At least half of the reviews recommended a change in security classification with the majority being recommended to a lower security level, but there were fewer recommended to a lower security level was less for shorter reviews. Similar findings were noted in previous validations (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)). Some differences were apparent among shorter reviews, which have not been examined in the past.

Respectively, only 18% and 11% of SRSW scores of shorter and of longer reviews fell within discretionary ranges of the scale. Among shorter reviews with scores falling in the discretionary range, 47% of the resulting final security level decisions were to higher security levels than the SRSW recommended and 7% were placed in lower levels than recommended. Comparatively, of those scores in the discretionary ranges of longer reviews, only 20% resulted in final security level decisions that were higher than the SRSW recommendation while 29% were placed in a security level lower than recommended. It appears shorter review periods result in proportionally more of final placements to higher security levels than longer reviews.

Decisions to override SRSW recommendations are made relatively often even when discretionary ranges and operational policy restrictions on security placements are considered. Traditionally, it has been suggested that a tool can be considered good when no more than 20% of its recommendations are changed (Brennan & Austin, 1997). Among shorter reviews, the

greatest inconsistencies occurred between SRSW and caseworker recommendations (38%), then SRSW recommendations and final decisions (29%), and the least inconsistent were caseworker recommendations and final decisions (15%). Although higher than the rates of inconsistency among longer reviews, the rank order of the discord is similar. Generally, caseworker recommendations and final decisions resulted in higher levels of security than the SRSW recommendations as noted in previous validations of the SRSW in longer review periods (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)). Unlike previous validations, some differences by Aboriginal self-identification were noted in the inconsistencies of longer reviews. These differences could be related to changes in the offender population since the previous validations rather than indicating operational changes in the use of the SRSW and clinical judgment in security reclassification. Reasons for inconsistencies were not always provided, but when they were they often indicated current behaviour and attitude as a reason for the recommended override. Within this reason, overrides to higher security were often noted poor institutional behavior.

Generally, the scale proved reliable for use in shorter time periods, given the previously mentioned limitations with its use with ordinal variables (see Zumbo, Gadermann & Zeisser, 2007). These findings are consistent with previous validations of the use of the scale in review periods of at least six months (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)). Overall, the scale was slightly more reliable among Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women. Some consideration may be made to remove the item regarding whether a woman was *ever unlawfully at large* for use of this scale in shorter periods given the improvement in the reliability of the scale, especially among non-Aboriginal women. However, operationally having two reclassification scales may not be practical and could create confusion leading to errors.

In terms of the convergent validity of the scale for use in shorter review periods, no associations were noted between the SRSW recommendation and the rating of risk, need or reintegration potential; however, these associations were significant when considering the final security level decision. Final security level decisions appear more convergent with risk, need, and reintegration potential rating than SRSW, which may suggest that when clinical judgment is applied for overrides those factors being considered are mandated by Commissioner's Directive 710-6. It is not possible to verify the convergent validity for the use of the SRSW in shorter time

periods, although its' convergent validity is verified for longer review periods in this study and previous validations (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)).

The predictive ability of the SRSW was assessed using both institutional and community outcomes several types of analyses. Regardless of type outcome or analyses conducted, findings generally suggest that SRSW recommendations better predict outcomes and tend to better discriminate between differing levels of security in predicting outcomes as well. Put differently, there are more significant differences between levels of security associated with SRSW recommendations than final security level decisions. Notably, some of the associations between SRSW and the various outcomes were not always significant among shorter reviews. The SRSW recommendations were predictive of minor institutional misconducts in the three-month follow-up. Several non-significant trends in the shorter review periods were always confirmed using reviews of six months or longer. For example, in examining the distribution of major charges in the three month follow-up period by SRSW recommendations, a trend is apparent. Women at successively higher levels of security are more likely than those at lower levels of security to have a major charge, although not significant; however, this same association is highly significant among longer reviews. These significant findings are concordant with previous validations (see Blanchette & Taylor (2005); Gobeil & Blanchette (2007)).

Some issues regarding the present research should be noted. First, most of the expected results are not conclusive among shorter reviews. These trends were often only found significant among longer reviews. This issue may be related to the small number of short reviews that have been conducted. Second, evidence suggests the SRSW has a more reliable performance and is more predictive of outcomes for Aboriginal women; however, these differences are limited among longer reviews and have not been observed in previous validations.

Although limited by number of reviews based on shorter periods, the evidence suggests that it may be possible to use the SRSW for reviews of less than six months. There is no evidence that suggests the SRSW cannot be used for shorter reviews periods; if appropriately tracked for outcomes, the application of the SRSW to shorter review periods could be further assessed later. If more cases become available it would be possible to precisely examine the validity of the SRSW for use in shorter periods.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1

Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) Items and Weights (Blanchette & Taylor, 2005)

Item	Weight
1. Involuntary segregation (CCRA Section 31 (3-A))	6.45
2. Correctional plan progress/ motivation	5.60
3. Serious disciplinary offences	5.50
4. Number of recorded incidents	5.00
5. Number of successful escorted temporary absences	2.55
6. Custody Rating Scale incident history	2.55
7. Pay level - most recent	2.10
8. Ever unlawfully at large from temporary absence, work release, or supervision	1.45
9. Family contact	1.30

Appendix B

Figure 1. Range of possible SRSW scores, including cut-offs for each security recommendation and their respective discretionary ranges
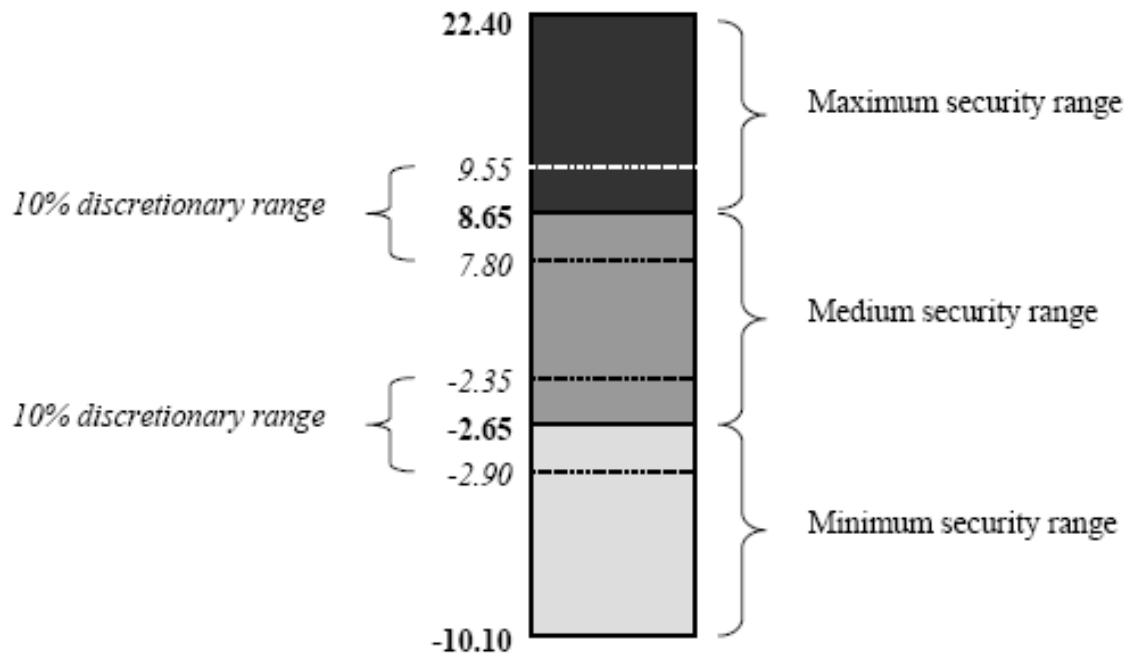
Table 1

SRSW scores – range, mean, standard deviation, first, second (median), and third quartile by length of review period

Statistic	Less than six months	Six months or more
Range	-9.55 to 15.80	-10.10 to 20.20
Mean	3.30	2.20
Standard Deviation	6.26	7.34
First Quartile	4.25	1.6
Second Quartile (Median)	1.10	-3.90
Third Quartile	8.05	8.20

Note. For security level thresholds of the SRSW see Appendix B, Figure 1.

Table 2

*Association between demographic and incarceration characteristics and security levels
recommendations of the SRSW for all decisions for review periods of six months or longer*

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Association Between Variables
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	
	% (n) or M (SD)	**% (n) or M (SD**	**% (n) or M (SD)**	**χ^2 (df) or F (df1, df2)**
Demographic Characteristics				
Age at Review	35 (9.7)[a]	34 (9.6)[b]	30 (7.9)[a,b]	11.00*** (2, 522)
Ethnicity				
Aboriginal	29 (67)	47 (109)	23 (54)	0.5065 (2)
Non-Aboriginal	32 (93)	47 (139)	21 (63)	
Region				
Atlantic	25 (20)	48 (38)	28 (22)	11.13 (8)
Quebec	24 (28)	49 (56)	27 (31)	
Ontario	42 (23)	47 (26)	11 (6)	
Prairies	34 (67)	45 (90)	21 (41)	
Pacific	29 (22)	49 (38)	22 (17)	
Incarceration Characteristics				
Previous Security Level				
Minimum	53 (18)	44 (15)	3 (1)	78.48*** (4)
Medium	37 (133)	47 (166)	16 (56)	
Maximum	7 (9)	49 (67)	44 (60)	
Length of Aggregate Sentence[e]	4(2.2)[c]	4 (2.6)[d]	5(4.5)[c,d]	4.90* (2, 442)
Length of Aggregate Sentence				
3 Years or Less	35 (55)	43 (67)	22 (35)	
More Than 3 Years	26 (75)	49 (141)	25 (72)	9.61* (4)
Life Sentence	38 (30)	50 (40)	13 (10)	
Offence Type				
Violent	30 (126)	48 (205)	22 (93)	1.12 (2)
Non-Violent (includes other)	34 (34)	46 (43)	24 (24)	
Assault	25 (27)	50 (55)	26 (28)	2.46 (2)
Non-Assault (includes other)	32 (133)	47 (193)	21 (89)	
Homicide	37 (62)	49 (82)	15 (25)	9.52** (2)
Non-Homicide (includes other)	28 (98)	47 (166)	26 (92)	

Note. Row totals may not add to 100%; *n* = 525; *M* = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *df* = degrees of freedom; Means with different superscripts are significantly different t *p* < 0.05 according to Tukey's HSD criterion for pair-wise comparisons. [e]Excludes indeterminate sentences and is measured in years.
*p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p< 0.001.*

Table 3

The associations between security level recommended by the SRSW, security level recommended by the caseworker and final security level decisions for review periods of six months or longer

| | SRSW Security Level Recommendation | | | Association Between Variable |
	Minimum % (*n*)	Medium % (*n*)	Maximum % (*n*)	χ^2 (*df*)
Security Level Recommended by Caseworker[a]				
Minimum	55 (81)	5 (11)	0 (0)	381.06*** (4)
Medium	44 (64)	73 (172)	10 (11)	
Maximum	1 (2)	23 (54)	90 (100)	
Final Security Level Decision				
Minimum	58 (93)	6 (14)	0 (0)	423.22*** (4)
Medium	41 (65)	76 (190)	12 (14)	
Maximum	1 (2)	18 (46)	88 (101)	
Caseworker Security Level Recommendation				
Final Security Level Decision				
Minimum	91 (84)	5 (13)	0 (0)	762.85*** (4)
Medium	9 (8)	93 (230)	9 (14)	
Maximum	0 (0)	2 (4)	91 (142)	

Note. $N = 495$. Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding. [a]30 missing cases had no recommendation for decision available.
***p< 0.001.

Table 4

Reasons for inconsistency between the SRSW and caseworker security recommendations for review periods of six months or longer

	% (*n*)
Current Behaviour or Attitude	56 (29)
Poor Attitude (e.g. confrontational, lack of insight)	14 (4)
Poor Institutional Behaviour	52 (15)
Positive and Stable Institutional Behaviour	10 (5)
Involvement with drugs and or alcohol	3 (1)
Both Poor Behaviour and Attitude	14 (4)
Behavioural or Attitudinal History	8 (4)
Poor Behaviour Prior to Incarceration	50 (2)
History of Poor Institutional Behaviour	50 (2)
Progress on Programming and/or Dynamic Factors	42 (22)
Insufficient/No Programming Completed (e.g. failure to address dynamic needs)	50 (11)
Interested in and Responsive to Programming	36 (8)
Withdrawing from programs/interventions/employment	9 (1)
No Opportunity to Participate in Programming	9 (1)
Not Responsive to Programming	9 (1)
Requires Structure or the Support of a higher level of security	12(6)
Requires the Greater Structure of the Secure Unit	50 (3)
Requires Gradual Integration into General Population	17 (1)
Requires More Support/Assistance	33 (2)
Risk to other or self	15 (8)
Risk to Public Safety	38 (3)
Risk to Self	25 (2)
Risk to Institutional Security	25 (2)
Risk to Self and Institutional Safety	13 (1)
Community Support	2 (1)
Positive Community Supports	100 (1)
Insufficient Information Provided to Categorize	13 (7)
Insufficient Information	14 (1)
Review Period Calculated Incorrectly by Program	29 (2)
Refers to Short Review Period	14 (1)
Scale Does Not Apply	14 (1)
Wrong Scale Calculation	29 (2)
Other	27 (4)
Mental Health Concerns	25 (1)
Management Protocol Designation Prevents Security Reduction	25 (1)
Negative Associates	25 (1)
Deportation	25 (1)

Note. Themes are not mutually exclusive. *N* = 52.

Table 5

Standardized SRSW item-to-total correlations and descriptive statistics for reviews of six months or longer

Item	r	M (SD)
Correctional Plan progress/motivation	0.47	0.03 (2.11)
Family contact during review	0.27	0.18 (0.63)
Serious disciplinary offences during review	0.38	0.32 (1.95)
Recorded incidents	0.35	0.99 (2.04)
Pay Level- at review end	0.34	-0.68 (0.54)
Involuntary segregation during review	0.61	1.20 (2.45)
Successful escorted temporary absences during review	0.10	-0.09 (1.00)
Unlawfully at large – ever	0.03	-0.07 (0.48)
Custody rating scale incident history score	0.35	0.33 (1.28)

Note. r = correlation of item with total; M = mean score of item; SD = standard deviation of item.

Table 6

Associations between SRSW security level recommendations, final security level decision, and risk, need and reintegration potential ratings for reviews of six months or longer

	SRSW Security Level Recommendation			Association Between Variables
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	**χ^2 (*df*) or Fisher's Exact test**
	% (*n*)	**% (*n*)**	**% (*n*)**	**γ (ASE)**
Risk				
Low	45 (23)	47 (24)	8 (4)	17.89** (4)
Medium	35 (75)	47 (101)	19 (41)	0.27 (0.06)
High	24 (62)	48 (123)	28 (72)	
Need				
Low	82 (9)	18 (2)	0 (0)	p=0.0001***
Medium	41 (56)	46 (62)	13 (17)	0.40 (0.07)
High	25 (95)	49 (184)	26 (100)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	14 (30)	52 (109)	34 (72)	78.00*** (4)
Medium	34 (82)	49 (117)	17 (40)	-0.52 (0.05)
High	64 (48)	29 (22)	7 (5)	
	Final Security Level Decision			**Association Between Variables**
	Minimum	**Medium**	**Maximum**	**χ^2 (*df*)or Fisher's Exact test**
	% (*n*)	**% (*n*)**	**% (*n*)**	**γ (ASE)**
Risk				
Low	37 (19)	51 (26)	12 (6)	42.48*** (4)
Medium	29 (62)	49 (107)	22 (48)	0.41 (0.06)
High	10 (26)	53 (136)	37 (95)	
Need				
Low	6 (6)	45 (48)	50 (53)	p=0.0001***
Medium	2 (5)	25 (67)	73 (197)	0.50 (0.07)
High	0 (0)	13 (20)	87 (129)	
Reintegration Potential				
Low	5 (5)	59 (63)	36 (39)	110.47*** (4)
Medium	42 (114)	46 (123)	12 (32)	-0.62 (0.04)
High	62 (92)	36 (53)	3 (4)	

Note. Row totals may not add to 100%; *p* = probability of Fisher's Exact test; *df* = degrees of freedom; ASE = asymptotic standard error; *n*=number of cases.

**p< 0.01. ***p< 0.001.

Table 7

Rates of misconduct by security levels for review periods of six months or longer

SRSW Security Level Recommendation	Minor % (n)	Major % (n)	Other % (n)
Minimum	14 (15/107)	5 (5/107)	10 (11/107)
Medium	16 (28/173)	15 (26/173)	23 (40/173)
Maximum	32 (24/76)	28 (21/76)	33 (25/76)
χ^2 (*df*)	10.50** (2)	18.83*** (2)	14.16** (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.60 (0.50-0.67)	0.67 (0.60-0.74)	0.63 (0.57-0.69)
Final Security Level Decision			
Minimum	8 (5/61)	5 (3/61)	18 (11)
Medium	18 (34/189)	12 (20)	15 (29/189)
Maximum	26 (28/106)	27(29/106)	34 (36/106)
χ^2 (*df*)	8.59* (2)	20.86*** (2)	14.50** (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.60 (0.54- 0.67)	0.67 (0.60-0.74)	0.62 (0.55-0.69)

Note. *df* = degrees of freedom; AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve.

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.0001$.*

Table 8

Rate of discretionary release for review periods of six months or longer

SRSW Security Level Recommendation	Discretionary Release % (*n*/N)
Minimum	54 (44/82)
Medium	21 (18/87)
Maximum	3 (1/36)
χ^2 *(df)*	38.13*** (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.75 (0.69-0.81)
Final Security Level Decision	
Minimum	59 (41/70)
Medium	24 (22/93)
Maximum	0 (0/43)
χ^2 *(df)*	46.87*** (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.78 (0.72-0.83)

Note. df = degrees of freedom; AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve; CI=confidence interval.

Table 9

Return to custody by security classification for reviews of six months or longer

SRSW Security Level Recommendation	% (*n*)
Minimum	51 (42/82)
Medium	43 (37/87)
Maximum	51 (19/37)
χ^2 *(df)*	1.54 (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.54 (0.47-0.62)
Final Security Level Decision	
Minimum	50 (35/70)
Medium	45 (42/93)
Maximum	49 (21/43)
χ^2 *(df)*	0.41 (2)
AUC (95% CI)	0.52 (0.45-0.60)

Note. df=degrees of freedom; AUC = Area under the Receiver Operating Characteristics (ROC) curve; CI=confidence interval.

****p < 0.001.*