CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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The Adjustment of the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW): Elimination of Administrative Segregation

The SRSW remains reliable and valid for use with Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

Why we did this study

In the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), security classification occurs at admission to federal custody and throughout incarceration to ensure that offenders are placed at security levels that are appropriate to manage their risk of institutional misconduct, including violence and threat to public safety in the event of an escape. The elimination of the use of segregation with the passage of Bill C-83 will affect one particular item in the Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) pertaining to the offender having a history of segregation placements. The goal of this research study was to examine how the psychometric proprieties of the SRSW would be affected by the elimination of this item and whether the continued use of the tool is advisable.

What we did

This study used data from a recent validation study on the SRSW, which comprised 645 SRSW reviews finalized between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2017 for 499 women. Reliability and validity (convergent and predictive) were assessed and compared for the original SRSW and the revised SRSW (omitting the segregation-related item). Where possible, analyses were conducted separately by Indigenous identity.

What we found

Results showed that the SRSW remains reliable and valid for use with Indigenous and non-Indigenous women despite the removal of the segregation-related item (an item where only 8.4% of women received the full weighting).

Also encouraging, using the revised SRSW, the proportions of women recommended for minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security placements were similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. These proportions were similar to those resulting from the original version of the SRSW.

The revised SRSW had acceptable internal consistency and was moderately associated with measures of risk and reintegration potential.

Ratings on the revised SRSW were highly correlated with the security level recommendations provided by the caseworker and the final offender security level placement.

Results also showed that as security level recommendations increased to maximum, there was a corresponding increase in the proportion of women committing institutional offences (minor and serious), a decrease in discretionary releases, and an increase in returns to federal custody.

What it means

Overall, the results of the current research indicate that, with the revision to the SRSW tool eliminating the segregation item, the measure remains reliable and valid. It is recommended that the adjusted SRSW cut-offs identified in this study be integrated into the Offender Management System algorithm for security reclassification for women. Additional factors such as Aboriginal Social History, institutional adjustment, escape risk, and risk to public safety will continue to be taken into consideration by CSC staff prior to the final security placement decision being made.

For more information

Wardrop, K. (2019). *The adjustment of the Security Reclassification Scale for Women: Elimination of administrative segregation* (Research Report R-431). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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