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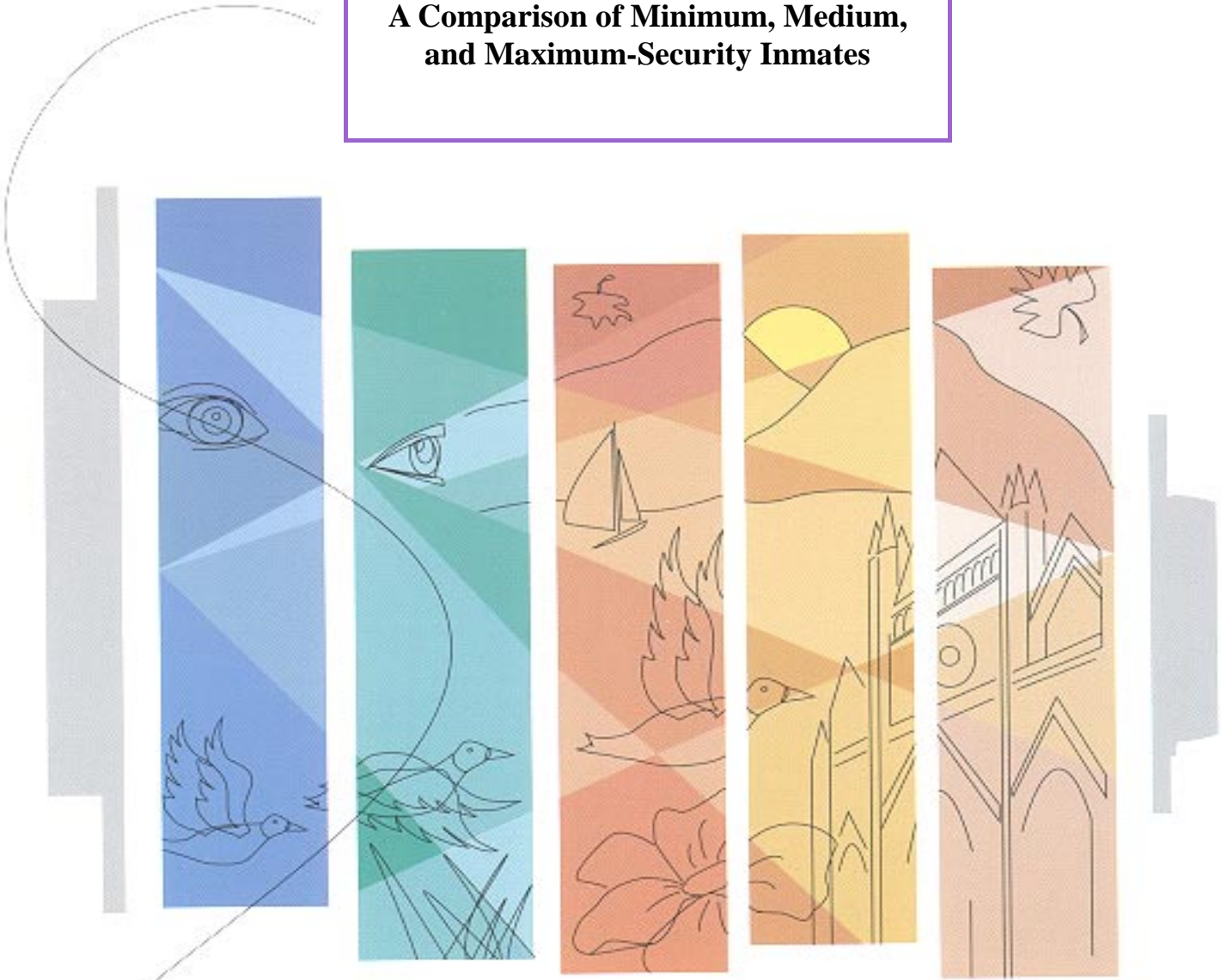Research Branch
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Risk and Need Among Federally-
Sentenced Female Offenders:
A Comparison of Minimum, Medium,
and Maximum-Security Inmates

Canada

**RISK AND NEED AMONG FEDERALLY-SENTENCED FEMALE OFFENDERS:
A COMPARISON OF MINIMUM-, MEDIUM-, AND MAXIMUM-SECURITY INMATES**

by

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Executive Summary

The present investigation compared female offenders by security level (either 'minimum', 'medium', or 'maximum') on a variety of criteria: risk (security and escape), criminogenic need, and suicide potential. For this study, Correctional Service of Canada's automated Offender Management System was used, and all available data for federally-sentenced female offenders was extracted. As of January 14, 1997, data for institutional security level was available for 212 female offenders, and revealed that 34% (72) were designated 'minimum-security', 49% (103) were 'medium-security', and the remaining 17% (37) were 'maximum-security'.

Initial comparisons focused on demographic information (age, race), which was available for the entire sample (72 minimum-, 103 medium- and 37 maximum-security offenders). Statistical analyses revealed that the maximum-security female offenders were significantly younger than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. For the former, ages ranged from 21 to 45 years old, with a mean age of 28.7 years. The age range for those in medium-security was 20 to 63, with a mean age of 34.2. Finally, those in minimum-security ranged in age from 19 to 52, with a mean age of 35.8. Analysis of race distributions revealed that female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to be Aboriginal. While only about 15% of those in medium- or minimum-security were Aboriginal, this was the case for 41% of maximum-security women.

Reliable between-group differences in various criminal history risk criteria were also noted. The majority (62%) of female offenders designated 'maximum-security' were serving sentences for violent assaults or robberies. This was true for less than half (46%) of those designated medium-security, and only 17% of minimum-security female offenders. Generally, few women (7%) designated minimum-security had previous youth court experience, compared with 30% of those in medium-security, and 54% of those in maximum-security. Statistically reliable differences also emerged in terms of adult court experience, where less than half (48%) of those in minimum-security had previous experience, compared with 70% of those in medium-security and almost all (88%) of the women in maximum-security.

Given the nature of their offences and their criminal history backgrounds, it was not surprising to find that female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to have had a previous escape or 'unlawfully at large' on their criminal records. Moreover, compared to their medium- and minimum-security counterparts, they were over twice as likely to have been placed in segregation for disciplinary reasons. Again, analyses rendered statistically reliable findings for these between-group differences.

A review of the minimum-, medium- and maximum-security female offender case need level ratings showed reliable between-group differences in six of seven need domains assessed at intake. Maximum-security women were found to have more difficulties than medium-security women, who, in turn, had more needs than minimum-security women. Consistent and reliable between-group differences were seen in the following need areas: 'employment', 'marital/family', 'associates', 'substance abuse', 'community functioning', and

'attitude'. Only for the 'personal/emotional' domain were no significant differences found, though data showed trends in the same direction.

Comparisons across all indicators of suicide potential suggest that maximum-security women are at higher risk for suicide than their medium-and minimum-security counterparts. Although only between 11% and 13% of each group were tagged at admission as "may be suicidal", about 25% of those designated as maximum-security had expressed suicidal intent. This was true for only one offender in medium-security, few (8.5%) of those in minimum-security. About 35% of the maximum-security group were exhibiting signs of depression at admission, compared to less than 10% of the medium-security group, and under 24% of the minimum-security group. A large proportion (71%) of those in maximum-security had previous attempts at suicide, compared with 42% of those in medium-security, and less than 20% of minimum-security women. Accordingly, 57% of those designated maximum-security had recent psychiatric/ psychological intervention, compared with 29% and 19% of those in medium- and minimum-security, respectively. Again, all of these differences were statistically reliable.

The final set of analyses compared groups on a global risk/need rating that is assessed at admission to federal custody. Results showed that *none* of the maximum-security female offenders were designated 'low' on overall need. A small minority (14%) were assessed as 'medium' need, and the vast majority (86%) were assessed as 'high' need. As a group, medium-security women were assessed as lower need than their maximum-security counterparts. Need levels for this group were: 18% 'low', 39% 'medium', and 43% 'high'. Finally, the minimum-security group were assessed on need as follows: 64% 'low', 26% 'medium', and 10% 'high'.

As with need levels, risk levels were elevated for the maximum-security group. Specifically, the majority (77%) were 'high' risk, and the remainder (23%) were 'medium' risk. Unlike those in maximum-security, some (17%) of the medium-security women were assessed as 'low' risk, most (56%) were assessed as 'medium' risk, and the remainder (27%) were assessed as 'high' risk. As with the medium- and maximum-security female offenders, global need levels for those in minimum-security were commensurate with security designation, where the majority (75%) were assessed as 'low' risk. A further 18% were assessed as 'medium' risk, and only 7% were assessed as 'high' risk. Statistical analyses confirmed that between-group differences in risk/need levels were reliable.

In conclusion, results from the present study demonstrate clear and reliable differences between minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security female offenders. Multiple risk and need variables discriminate between groups, in each case demonstrating more needs and higher risk as security level increases. These findings suggest a heterogeneity of female offender populations by security designation, and imply that the assignment of security/custody levels is proceeding in a manner that is commensurate with risk and need.

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RISK AND NEED AMONG FEDERALLY-SENTENCED FEMALE OFFENDERS: A COMPARISON OF MINIMUM-, MEDIUM-, AND MAXIMUM-SECURITY INMATES

Formerly, there was one Canadian federal prison for female offenders. Some argued that this was inequitable for federally-sentenced women who, unlike their male counterparts, were often incarcerated long distances from their families and social supports. In 1990, a task force report on federally-sentenced women recommended the replacement of the Prison for Women with smaller, purpose-designed and constructed regional facilities (Correctional Service of Canada, 1990). In keeping with this recommendation, five new regional facilities for federal female offenders have been built.

As inmates move to reside in these new facilities, security classification has become paramount. Although the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has implemented a comprehensive intake assessment process, some argue that the 'maximum-security' designation poses unnecessary restrictions on female offenders. More radical assertions posit that women offenders, in general, are low risk and should *all* be maintained in a minimum-security environment.

Offenders who are designated 'maximum-security' are, at least in theory, so-classified because they are assumed or proven to be high risk/ violent. Those in 'medium-security' are assumed to be moderate risk, or reside similarly as a result of being 'cascaded' down from maximum-security in preparation for release. In relation to federal offenders, the 'minimum-security' designation is to be reserved for non-violent, low-risk offenders, or those who have been cascaded down through higher classifications.

In Canada, all offenders admitted to federal custody undergo a structured, comprehensive evaluation called the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA). The OIA involves the collection and analysis of case-specific information pertaining to the individual's criminal, personal, and mental health history, education, substance abuse history, adjustment in the community, attitude, and a number of other factors relevant to determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs. Since its initial implementation in 1994, all completed OIAs have been input into Correctional Service Canada's automated database, resulting in nearly 6,000 completed offender assessments.

The OIA process begins with a collection of all relevant information, from (though not limited to): police reports, court transcripts, crown briefs, judges' comments, presentence reports, criminal records, and victim impact statements. In total, the OIA considers over 200 risk and need indicators in its case-specific offender assessment process. During the admission evaluation, the offender's complete background is considered, including personal characteristics, interpersonal influences, situational determinants and environmental conditions (Motiuk, 1997). This provides a basis for determining each offender's institutional placement and is intended, in part, to elicit appropriate security designations for all offenders.

Methodology

The present report is an addendum to a previous investigation that compared federally-sentenced female offenders across two levels security. While the earlier study compared medium-security women to their maximum-security counterparts, the present study expanded comparisons across all three security designations (minimum-, medium-, and maximum-). Specifically, between-group comparisons focused on a variety of criteria, including: risk (security and escape), criminogenic need, and suicide potential.

For the purposes of this study, all available data for federally-sentenced female offenders was extracted from CSC's automated database (Offender Management System; OMS). As of January 14, 1997, information pertaining to institutional security level was available for 212 female offenders, and revealed that 34% (72) were designated 'minimum' security, 49% (103) were 'medium' security, and the remaining 17% (37) were 'maximum' security. Interestingly, the distribution of security levels/ designations for federal female offenders is significantly lower than that for male offenders (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1997).

The primary source of information was data derived from OIA. As mentioned, the OIA consists of two core components: Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA), and Case Needs Identification and Analysis (CNIA). In addition, a suicide risk potential with nine indicators is included in OIA. More detailed descriptions of these components will provided in a later section of the present report.

Results

A series of statistical analyses focused on comparing federally-sentenced female offenders across three security designations. Specifically, groups were compared on age and race, criminal history and security risk, seven target need domains with multiple indicators, and nine indicators of suicide risk potential. Demographic information was available for all women, risk/need levels were available for the majority (89%) of the sample, and complete OIA data was only available for 67% of the sample (64%, 70%, and 65% for minimum-, medium- and maximum-security female offenders, respectively). Results are presented in the following sections of this report.

Demographic information

The maximum-security female offenders were significantly younger than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. For the former, ages ranged from 21 to 45 years old, with a mean age of 28.7 years. Female offenders in medium-security ranged in age from 20 to 63, with a mean age of 34.2. Finally, women in minimum-security ranged in age from 19 to 52, with a mean age of 35.8. Analysis of race distributions revealed that female offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to be Aboriginal. While only about 15% of those in medium- or minimum-security were Aboriginal, this was the case for 41% of maximum-security women. These differences were reliable at p<.001.

Criminal Risk Assessment

The Criminal Risk Assessment (CRA) component of OIA provides specific information pertaining to past and current offences. The CRA is based primarily on the criminal history record and provides specific information pertaining to past and current offences. Moreover, the criminal profile report may also include additional case-specific information regarding any other pertinent details pertaining to individual risk factors. Based on these data, the OIA provides an overall global risk rating for each offender at admission to federal custody.

Global risk levels were elevated for the maximum-security group, where the vast majority were assessed as 'high' risk. Accordingly, most of those in medium-security were assessed as 'medium' risk, and minimum-security women were most likely to have overall ratings of 'low' risk.

It was not surprising to find that maximum-security female offenders were also more likely than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts to be serving sentences for violent offences. While 75% of the maximum-security inmates were serving time for violent offences, this was true of only 46% and 17% of the medium- and minimum-security women, respectively. A majority (71%) of the maximum-security female offenders had used a weapon in the commission of their offence(s), compared with just 30% of those in medium-security, and 13% of those in minimum-security. These differences were statistically significant at p<.001.

Analyses also revealed reliable between-group differences in various criminal history risk criteria. Generally, those women designated maximum-

security started their criminal careers at an earlier age, with over half (54%) of them having experience in youth court. Less than one-third (30%) of those designated 'medium' security, and only 7% of those in minimum-security had similar exposure. Between-group differences were also noted in adult court experience, where again the maximum-security women had the most exposure, followed by the medium-security women. Percentage distributions for selected criminal history background indicators are located in Table 1.

Table 1

Selected Criminal History Background Indicators of Minimum-, Medium- and Maximum-security Female Offenders

	Minimum (n=46)	Medium (n=72)	Maximum (n=24)
Previous Youth Court ***	*7%*	*30%*	*54%*
Community Supervision ***	2%	16%	41%
Open Custody ***	4%	15%	39%
Secure Custody ***	2%	15%	39%
Previous Adult Court *	*48%*	*62%*	*79%*
Community Supervision *	35%	48%	71%
Provincial Terms **	24%	45%	67%
Federal Terms *	7%	20%	29%
Total (Youth and/or Adult) *	*48%*	*70%*	*88%*
Previous:			
Segregation (disciplinary) ***	4%	24%	48%
Escape/UAL ***	0%	12%	29%
Failure on Conditional Release *	9%	25%	38%
< 6 Mo. Since Last Incarceration	2%	15%	17%

Note1: Chi-square tests of significance; *$p< .05$; **$p<.01$; ***$p<.001$
Note2: UAL = unlawfully at large.

It is noteworthy that offenders designated maximum-security were significantly more likely to have previously been placed in segregation for disciplinary reasons, and had proportionately more previous escapes/ UAL than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts.

Case Need Identification and Analysis

As a major component of OIA, the Case Need Identification and Analysis (CNIA) involves the identification of the offender's criminogenic needs. More specifically, it considers a wide assortment of case-specific aspects of the offender's personality and life circumstances, and data are clustered into seven target domains, with multiple indicators for each: employment (35 indicators), marital/family (31 indicators), associates/ social interaction (11 indicators), substance abuse (29 indicators), community functioning (21 indicators), personal/emotional orientation (46 indicators), and attitude (24 indicators). For a complete listing of all indicators for each target need, see Appendix A.

Using the CNIA, offenders are rated on each target domain along a four-point continuum. Ratings are commensurate with the assessment of need, ranging from "asset to community adjustment" (not applicable to substance abuse and personal/emotional orientation), to "no need for improvement", to "some need for improvement", to "significant need for improvement". After careful consideration of all indicators in each need domain, case management officers provide an estimate of overall need level. This is provided for each of the seven target areas. It is important to note, however, that there is room for discretion on behalf of the assessor. Moreover, information derived from CNIA indicators is complemented by psychological evaluations, behavioural observations, and supplementary assessments.

Domain need levels, ranked along the 4-point continuum, were available for 61 minimum-, 94 medium-, and all (37) maximum-security women offenders. For the present investigation, scores in each of the seven need domains were dichotomized to indicate presence or absence of need for each offender. Specifically, where data showed either "some need for improvement", or "significant need for improvement", offenders were classified as having an identified need in that target domain. Alternatively, where data showed either "no need for improvement", or "asset to community adjustment", offenders were not classified as having needs within the target domain. Percentage distributions, by security level, are reported in Table 2. Pictorial representation (histogram) of percentage distributions, by security level, is located in Appendix B.

Table 2

**Identified Needs of Minimum-, Medium- and Maximum-security
Female Offenders at Admission**

Type of Need	Minimum (n = 61)	Medium (n = 94)	Maximum (n = 37)
Employment **	67.2%	72.3%	97.2%
Marital/Family **	63.9%	78.7%	94.4%
Associates *	65.6%	81.9%	86.1%
Substance Abuse ***	21.3%	67.0%	86.1%
Community Functioning ***	59.0%	75.5%	94.4%
Personal/Emotional	83.6%	92.6%	97.2%
Attitude ***	3.3%	23.4%	75.0%

Note: Chi-square test of significance; *p< .05; **p<.01; ***p< .001

As indicated in Table 2, most federally-sentenced women, regardless of security level, have difficulties in multiple need areas. However, statistically reliable between-groups differences emerged in six of the seven target domains. Moreover, in each case, the maximum-security women evidenced more need than their medium-security counterparts. In turn, those in medium-security had more problems than those in minimum-security. Differences were especially marked in the attitude and substance abuse domains.

Comparisons across all individual indicators were also performed to provide a more precise analysis of the exact nature of the between-group differences within each domain. As mentioned, data for individual need domain indicators was not available for the whole sample. Rather, comparisons are based on a sample of 142, with 46, 72, and 24 minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security female offenders, respectively.

Of nearly 200 pairwise comparisons on need indicators, approximately half yielded statistically reliable results. More importantly, in every case but one, the maximum-security women were more likely to have a negative rating on indicator items. Notably, substance abuse and attitude indicators were most robust in their ability to discriminate between groups.

In the employment domain, 12 of the 35 comparisons rendered statistically significant results. Maximum-security female offenders were much more likely to have poor education, compared to their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. Most of those in maximum-security were also assessed as having difficulties learning and as having concentration problems. This was generally not

true of female offenders in lower levels of security. Indicators tapping vocational needs showed similar trends, with maximum-security women having the most needs, followed by those in medium-security, followed by those in minimum-security. A breakdown of statistically reliable employment indicators is located in Table 3.

Table 3

A Breakdown of Reliable Employment Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

Employment indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Has less than grade 8 *	19.6%	13.7%	41.7%
Has less than grade 10 **	32.6%	35.6%	70.8%
Finds learning difficult ***	17.4%	15.5%	58.3%
Has concentration problems **	19.6%	21.1%	50.0%
No skill area/trade/profession **	47.8%	67.1%	83.3%
Dissatisfied with skill area/trade/profession **	41.3%	55.6%	83.3%
Unemployed at time of arrest *	65.2%	78.1%	95.8%
Unemployed 90% or more ***	28.9%	42.5%	79.2%
Unemployed 50% or more **	48.9%	65.8%	91.7%
Unstable job history ***	34.8%	64.4%	83.3%
No employment history **	6.5%	24.7%	41.7%
Low initiative *	2.2%	6.9%	20.8%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

In the area of marital/family relations, seven of the 31 between-groups comparisons of indicators yielded reliable differences. In each case, the maximum-security offenders evidenced the most need. The most robust between-groups discriminator was an item tapping negative family relations (excluding parents, siblings) during childhood. Moreover, the minimum-security female offenders were significantly more likely to have dependents (80%) than those in medium-security (47%) and those in maximum-security (46%).

Percentage distributions of reliable marital/family indicators are presented in

Table 4.

Table 4

A Breakdown of Reliable Marital /Family Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

Marital/Family indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Unattached to family relationships *	10.9%	23.6%	37.5%
Maternal relationship poor *	15.6%	36.1%	37.5%
Paternal relationship poor *	31.1%	56.9%	58.3%
Sibling relationships poor *	8.7%	21.7%	34.8%
Other relative(s) relations negative during childhood ***	13.0%	23.2%	54.6%
Family members involved in crime *	30.4%	51.4%	62.5%
No dependents ***	20.0%	52.8%	54.2%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

While the attitude domain contains eleven indicators, between-group

comparisons showed only three of those to be reliably discriminate by security

level. Again for those, a linear relationship was observed between security

designation and level of need. Specifically, the maximum-security female

offenders had the most negative ratings, followed by their medium-security

counterparts. For instance, those in maximum-security were over twice as likely

as those in medium-security to have mostly criminal friends. In turn, those in

medium-security were over twice as likely as those in minimum-security to have

mostly criminal friends. Trends were similar for items tapping associates with

substance abuse problems, and for residing in a criminogenic area. A breakdown

of statistically significant indicators is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

A Breakdown of Reliable Associates/ Social Interaction Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

Associates/ Social Interaction indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Associates with substance abusers ***	37.8%	64.8%	87.0%
Mostly criminal friends ***	11.1%	28.6%	60.9%
Resides in a criminogenic area **	17.4%	30.0%	55.0%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

All but two (27 of 29) of the indicators in the substance abuse domain reliably discriminated between groups. Moreover, the majority of the indicators in this need area were extremely robust in their discriminatory ability. Once again, a linear pattern emerged, showing a strong association between security level and negative endorsement. Specifically, as security level increased, need ratings increased accordingly. This pattern was evidenced in indicators of both alcohol and drug abuse.

The majority of maximum-security female offenders (between 60% and 70%, approximately) were assessed as having drug problems that significantly interfered with various aspects of their lives, including: employment, marital/ family relations, social relations, health, and legal status. This was true for fewer (between 35% and 45%, approximately) medium-security women, and even fewer (10% to 20%) of those in minimum-security. Similar profiles emerged for items tapping alcohol abuse, though need levels were slightly lowered for medium- and maximum-security women.

A breakdown of reliable substance abuse indicators is presented in Table 6. To further illustrate the linear relationship between security designation and

percent with problems, a histogram with a breakdown of statistically reliable drug

abuse indicators is located in Appendix C.

Table 6

**A Breakdown of Reliable Substance Abuse Need Indicators as Assessed by the
Offender Intake Assessment Process**

Substance Abuse indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Abuses alcohol ***	19.6%	49.3%	70.8%
Began drinking at an early age ***	13.0%	38.4%	66.7%
Drinks on a regular basis ***	6.7%	28.6%	52.2%
Has a history of drinking binges ***	15.2%	36.6%	66.7%
Has combined the use of alcohol and drugs ***	13.0%	37.5%	62.5%
Drinks to excess during leisure time ***	8.9%	33.8%	60.9%
Drinks to excess in social situations ***	15.2%	31.9%	60.9%
Drinks to relieve stress ***	11.1%	41.7%	65.2%
Drinking interferes with employment *	13.0%	19.7%	41.7%
Drinking interferes with marital / family relations ***	15.2%	31.0%	60.9%
Drinking interferes with social relations ***	6.5%	26.8%	52.2%
Drinking interferes with health *	15.2%	20.8%	43.5%
Drinking has resulted in law violations ***	13.0%	41.7%	62.5%
Abuses drugs ***	30.4%	64.4%	83.3%
Began using drugs at an early age ***	10.9%	39.7%	75.0%
Used drugs on a regular basis ***	8.7%	36.1%	66.7%
Has gone on drug-taking sprees ***	17.4%	38.4%	75.0%
Has combined the use of different drugs ***	10.9%	38.9%	62.5%
Uses drugs during leisure time ***	13.0%	43.8%	70.8%
Uses drugs in social situations ***	15.2%	45.2%	73.9%
Uses drugs to relieve stress ***	21.7%	50.7%	79.2%
Drug use interferes with employment ***	11.1%	22.2%	58.3%
Drug use interferes with marital /family relations **	19.6%	44.4%	69.6%
Drug use interferes with social relations ***	15.2%	40.3%	65.2%
Drug use interferes with health ***	15.2%	33.3%	60.9%
Drug use has resulted in law violations ***	19.6%	51.4%	70.8%
Has participated in substance abuse treatment **	21.7%	42.5%	60.9%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Overall in terms of community functioning, those in maximum-security had the most needs. Between-group differences were most apparent in the area of housing, where about 71% of those in maximum-security were assessed as having unstable accommodation, compared with about half of those in medium-security, and less than one-third of those in minimum-security. Also, 35% of female offenders in the highest security designation were assessed as having poorly-maintained residence. This was true for few of those in medium-security, and only one offender in minimum-security. A breakdown of reliable community functioning indicators is located in Table 7 below.

Table 7

A Breakdown of Reliable Community Functioning Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

Community Functioning indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Has unstable accommodation ***	31.9%	45.8%	70.8%
Residence is poorly maintained ***	2.3%	12.7%	35.0%
Has debts **	46.7%	20.3%	19.1%
Has no bank account *	27.3%	53.9%	81.0%
Has no collateral *	62.2%	68.6%	90.9%
Prior assessment for community functioning **	2.3%	8.8%	27.3%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

It is interesting to note that, compared with medium- and maximum-security female offenders, those in minimum-security were most likely to have debts. These results are divergent from all other between-group comparisons on indicators, where those in minimum-security have the lowest negative endorsement. While the reasons for this finding remain unclear, it is suggested that it is mediated by findings that those in minimum-security are also more likely

to have a bank account, and to have collateral. Specifically, a higher standard of living involves property ownership (collateral), which requires a bank account, and, often, debt.

Indicators within the personal/emotional orientation domain again revealed that the maximum-security female offenders have more needs than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. Several between-group differences emerged in items tapping cognition problems, where many maximum-security women had difficulties solving interpersonal problems, unrealistic goal setting, disregard for others, and problems with impulsivity. Effective coping skills were similarly lacking for this group, as evidenced in a greater tendency to cope poorly with stress, to have poor conflict resolution skills, and to manage time inadequately. Moreover, there was a positive linear relationship between security level and being assessed as: aggressive, inflexible, hostile, manipulative, thrill-seeking, and non-reflective. Those in maximum-security also had proportionately more sexual problems, ranging from performance, to attitudes, to preferences. Finally, mental health problems and interventions were also more prevalent amongst those in higher levels of security. Female offenders in maximum-security were significantly more likely to have been diagnosed disordered (past and current), to have had prior assessments for personal or emotional problems, to have been prescribed psychiatric medications (past and current), to have been hospitalized for psychiatric reasons, and to have received outpatient services for mental health problems. Although those in medium-security had less negative endorsement of these indicators, the clearest difference was between those in

minimum-security and those in higher security levels. Percentage distributions of

reliable personal/ emotional need indicators, by security level, are provided in

Table 8.

Table 8

**A Breakdown of Reliable Personal/Emotional Orientation Need Indicators as
Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process**

Personal /Emotional Orientation indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Has difficulties solving interpersonal problems ***	26.1%	54.2%	87.5%
Goal setting is unrealistic ***	2.2%	12.7%	37.5%
Has disregard for others ***	2.2%	18.3%	50.0%
Impulsive ***	47.8%	69.4%	91.7%
Inflexible *	6.5%	18.3%	34.8%
Aggressive ***	6.5%	35.2%	70.8%
Copes with stress poorly ***	45.7%	65.3%	91.7%
Poor conflict resolution ***	33.3%	66.7%	91.7%
Manages time poorly ***	4.4%	9.9%	40.9%
Has low frustration tolerance ***	8.7%	42.3%	66.7%
Hostile ***	8.9%	27.8%	58.3%
Worries unreasonably **	6.5%	16.9%	36.4%
Thrill-seeking ***	8.9%	22.9%	50.0%
Non-refelctive ***	8.7%	37.5%	47.8%
Not conscientious ***	0.0%	11.4%	29.2%
Manipulative **	10.9%	27.1%	50.0%
Problems with sexual performance *	2.3%	4.6%	18.2%
Sexual preference inappropriate *	0.0%	1.4%	9.1%
Sexual attitudes are problematic **	2.2%	4.4%	22.7%
Mental Deficiencies *	0.0%	1.4%	9.1%
Diagnosed disordered in the past **	11.1%	26.5%	47.8%
Diagnosed disordered currently *	6.7%	15.3%	31.8%
Prior assessments for personal/emotional probs. ***	22.7%	49.3%	72.7%
Prescribed medication in the past ***	28.3%	62.0%	73.9%
Prescribed medication currently **	17.4%	41.7%	47.8%
Past psych. hospitalization ***	13.0%	34.3%	54.6%
Has received outpatient services in the past *	19.6%	40.9%	50.0%
Past program participation **	18.2%	29.6%	58.3%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Finally, multiple between-group comparisons were performed to examine differences in indicators in the attitude need domain. In terms of antisocial attitudes, for 14 of 24 comparisons, clear and reliable differences emerged between groups. As with other need domains, indicators showed that those in maximum-security were assessed as having the most problems. A linear trend emerged again, with the medium-security women showing a moderate degree of need, and minimum-security women having few needs in terms of attitude. Table 9 provides a breakdown of reliable need indicators in this domain.

Table 9

A Breakdown of Reliable Attitude Need Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

Attitude indicators	Min. (n=46)	Med. (n=72)	Max. (n=24)
Negative towards the law ***	0.0%	14.1%	54.2%
Negative towards the police ***	4.4%	11.8%	45.8%
Negative towards the courts ***	6.7%	19.1%	45.8%
Negative towards corrections ***	0.0%	12.9%	56.5%
Negative towards community supervision ***	2.3%	6.0%	41.7%
Negative towards rehabilitation ***	0.0%	1.4%	33.3%
Employment has no value **	2.2%	5.6%	26.1%
Values substance abuse ***	8.7%	18.3%	54.2%
Basic life skills have no value **	2.2%	4.2%	20.8%
Disrespectful of personal belongings **	0.0%	5.6%	20.8%
Disrespectful of public property **	2.2%	9.7%	25.0%
Supportive of instrumental violence ***	0.0%	10.0%	37.5%
Lacks direction **	15.9%	36.6%	70.8%
Non-conforming ***	15.2%	28.2%	70.8%

Note: Chi-square tests of significance; * p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

As reported in Table 9, about half of the female offenders in maximum-security had negative attitudes towards: the law, police, courts, corrections, community supervision, and rehabilitation. Moreover, most of those in maximum-security were also assessed as valuing substance abuse. As with previous domain indicator comparisons, negative endorsement was strongly associated with security designation, where maximum-, medium-, and minimum-security women showed high, moderate, and minimal need, respectively.

Suicide Risk Potential

Offender Intake Assessment considers nine specific indicators of suicide potential in its admission evaluation. Inclusively, they verify whether the offender: 1) is under the influence of alcohol or drugs <u>or</u> showing signs of withdrawal, 2) showing signs of depression, 3) has expressed suicide intent, 4) has plans for suicide, 5) may be suicidal, 6) has previous attempts at suicide, 7) has had recent psychiatric/psychological intervention, 8) has had recent loss of relationship or death of close relative, and/or 9) is excessively worried about legal problems.

Data pertaining to suicide potential was available for 47, 70, and 24 minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security offenders, respectively. Results of comparisons across all indicators of suicide potential suggest that maximum-security women are at higher risk for suicide than their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. Of nine comparisons, four yielded statistically significant between-group differences.

Although only about 12% of each group were tagged at admission as "may be suicidal", the majority of those designated as maximum-security had previous suicide attempts. This was not true for offenders in medium- and minimum-security. A percentage distribution of all indicators of suicide risk potential is provided in Table 10.

Table 10

Percentage Distribution of Indicators of Suicide Risk Potential for Women Offenders

Suicide Risk Indicators	Minimum (n=47)	Medium (n=70)	Maximum (n=24)
May be suicidal	10.6%	11.4%	12.5%
Has had previous suicide attempts ***	19.6%	42.0%	70.8%
Has expressed intention to commit suicide ***	8.5%	1.4%	25.0%
Shows signs of depression **	23.9%	8.6%	34.8%
Under the influence of alcohol/drugs; signs of withdrawal	8.7%	5.7%	13.6%
Has plan for suicide	0.0%	1.4%	4.2%
Has had recent psychological/psychiatric intervention **	19.2%	29.4%	56.5%
Recent loss of relationship/ death of close relative	12.8%	18.6%	20.8%
Excessively worried about legal problems	8.7%	13.4%	25.0%

* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$; Indicator numbers may vary slightly

Between-groups comparisons again revealed that the maximum-security female offenders have the most problems relative to their medium- and minimum-security counterparts. It is noteworthy that for three indicators ('showing signs of depression', 'expressed intention to commit suicide', and 'under the influence of alcohol/drugs' or 'showing signs of withdrawal'), the minimum-security women evidenced more suicide risk potential than those in medium-security.

Risk/Need Levels

At admission, global ratings of case needs (either 'low', 'medium', or 'high') are obtained for each offender. As with the criminal risk assessment (global risk level), results showed that none of the maximum-security women were designated as 'low' on overall need. A minority were designated as 'medium' need, and most (86%) were designated 'high' need.

Medium-security female offenders were assessed predominately as 'medium', or 'high' need. However, unlike their maximum-security counterparts, a few were also assessed as 'low' on overall need. Risk levels for medium-security female offenders clustered mainly in the moderate risk category, though some were also assessed as 'low', or as 'high' risk.

As with their medium- and maximum-security counterparts, female offenders in minimum-security were predominately assessed as having risk and need levels commensurate with their security designation. Specifically, about three-quarters were classified as 'low' risk, and about two-thirds were assessed as 'low' need.

Analyses revealed that between-group differences in risk/need levels are highly reliable. A percentage distribution of global risk/need levels, as assessed at admission, is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Percentage Distribution of Risk/Need Levels by Security Designation

RISK/NEED LEVEL:	Minimum (60)	%	Medium (93)	%	Maximum (35)	%
Low-risk/Low-need	32	53.3%	11	11.8%	0	0.0%
Low-risk/Medium-need	11	18.3%	5	5.4%	0	0.0%
Low-risk/High-need	2	3.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Sub-total	*45*	*74.9%*	*16*	*17.2%*	*0*	*0.0%*
Medium-risk/Low-need	5	8.3%	5	5.4%	0	0.0%
Medium-risk/Medium-need	4	6.7%	23	24.7%	4	11.4%
Medium-risk/High-need	2	3.3%	24	25.8%	4	11.4%
Sub-total	*11*	*18.3%*	*52*	*55.9%*	*8*	*22.8%*
High-risk/Low-need	1	1.7%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
High-risk/Medium-need	1	1.7%	8	8.6%	1	2.9%
High-risk/High-need	2	3.3%	16	17.2%	26	74.3%
Sub-total	*5*	*6.7%*	*25*	*26.9%*	27	*77.2%*

Note: p< .001

Conclusions

The present investigation supplements a previous study comparing maximum-security female offenders to their medium-security counterparts (Blanchette, 1997). Results of those comparisons revealed many reliable between-group differences on various components of risk, need, and suicide potential. Specifically, relative to medium-security female offenders, those with a maximum-security designation were higher risk, more needy, and evidenced greater suicide potential. Those findings consequently generated interest in whether a clear linear relationship exists between all three security designations and risk/need variables assessed at admission.

Results of the present investigation demonstrate that as security level increases, there is a corresponding increase in multiple parameters of risk and need as assessed at admission to federal custody. Moreover, federally-sentenced women in maximum-security clearly show the greatest suicide risk potential, relative to their lower-security counterparts. Results from medium-to-minimum-security comparisons on suicide risk potential were less robust, though data showed trends in the same direction. Notwithstanding that, the fact that maximum-security women are assessed as at higher risk for suicide may have important practical implications. For women offenders in particular, self-injury has been associated with recidivism (Bonta, Pang, & Wallace-Capretta, 1995), and with violent recidivism (Blanchette & Motiuk, 1995).

Comparisons of overall needs assessments conveyed statistically significant between-group differences in: employment, marital/family relations,

associates, substance abuse, community functioning, and attitude. Distinct linear relationships were noted, where need levels increased with increasing security designations. While no reliable differences were found in overall need in the 'personal/emotional' target domain, results of statistics showed a trend in the same direction. Moreover, it is very probable that statistical reliability was not achieved in this domain due to the high need profiles of *all* groups. Taken together, these data underscore the heterogeneity of female offender groups by custody level.

Micro-level analyses of need indicators revealed particularly large between-group differences in the 'substance abuse' and 'attitude' domains. A pictorial representation (Appendix C) provides a good illustration of the linear relationship between various drug abuse indicators and security level. The higher prevalence of substance abuse problems amongst those in maximum-security is noteworthy: substance abuse has been associated with poor halfway house adjustment (Mocyzydlowski, 1980) and with recidivism (Lambert & Madden, 1975). Thus, the necessity for structured, intensive substance abuse programming is emphasized, especially for female offenders with high security designations.

In terms of antisocial attitude, about half of those women designated maximum-security had negative attitudes towards: the law, police, the courts, corrections, community supervision, and rehabilitation. Conversely, this was true for very few of those in medium-security, and virtually none of those in minimum-security. The importance of this finding is noted in past research where antisocial

attitudes are strongly associated with criminal behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 1994).

As mentioned, approximately half of the (~200) between-groups comparisons of domain indicators yielded reliable results. However, it is worth imparting that, even where no statistically significant findings were noted, data showed trends in the same direction. Specifically, regardless of statistical reliability, data showed that those in maximum-security are most needy, followed by those in medium-security, followed by those in minimum-security.

The results of this investigation serve to elucidate some basic differences between those women offenders designated 'maximum-security', those designated 'medium-security', and those designated 'minimum-security'. Analyses in the present study have demonstrated diversity between groups, with results suggesting higher risk/needs profiles for those in maximum security.

The OIA is a comprehensive, structured process that considers a large variety of factors for tailored case management, including security placement. The fact that global risk/needs measures are based on composites, rather than single-variable scores, has some important implications. First, offenders with few criminogenic needs, or with several problems within a specific domain will not be classified as 'high' on global need. Similarly, global risk ratings tap into *various* components, including (though not limited to): youth and adult history, criminal versatility and offence severity, escape, and institutional disciplinary/ adjustment problems. Again, this implies that offenders with high negative endorsement on

one specific indicator (or a distinct group of indicators) will not necessarily be categorized as 'high risk'.

Notwithstanding that, analyses with percentage distributions of global risk/need ratings show between-group divergence in a linear relationship with security level. These data cast serious doubt on the claim that all female offenders are low risk and should be housed accordingly. Moreover, these results negate the argument that the 'maximum-security' classification poses unnecessary restrictions on women offenders.

As previously stated, the present investigation used *all* available data for federally-sentenced women. This adds confidence to the results achieved in statistical analyses. In conclusion, it appears that the goal of assigning security classification is being met in an equitable manner, while appropriately managing risk.

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Appendix A

Listing of Education / Employment Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

1) Has less than grade 8
2) Has less than grade 10
3) Has no high school diploma
4) Finds learning difficult
5) Has learning disabilities
6) Has physical problems which interfere with learning
7) Has memory problems
8) Has concentration problems
9) Has problems with reading
10) Has problems writing
11) Has problems with numeracy
12) Has difficulty comprehending instructions
13) Lacks a skill area/trade/profession
14) Dissatisfied with skill area/trade/profession
15) Has physical problems that interfere with work
16) Unemployed at time of arrest
17) Unemployed 90% or more
18) Unemployed 50% or more
19) Has an unstable job history
20) Often shows up late for work
21) Has poor attendance record
22) No employment history
23) Has difficulty meeting workload requirements
24) Lacks initiative
25) Has quit a job without another
26) Has been laid off from work
27) Has been fired from a job
28) Salary has been insufficient
29) Lacks employment benefits
30) Jobs lack security
31) Has difficulty with co-workers
32) Has difficulty with supervisors
33) Prior vocational assessment(s)
34) Has participated in employment programs
35) Completed an occupational development program

Listing of Marital / Family Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Childhood lacked family ties
2) Mother absent during childhood
3) Maternal relations negative as a child
4) Father absent during childhood
5) Paternal relations negative as a child
6) Parents relationship dysfunctional during childhood
7) Spousal abuse during childhood
8) Sibling relations negative during childhood
9) Other relative(s) relations negative during childhood
10) Family members involved in crime
11) Currently single
12) Has been married/common law in the past
13) Dissatisfied with current relationship
14) Money problems affect relationship(s) past/present
15) Sexual problems affect relationship(s) past/present
16) Communication problems affects the relationship(s)
17) Has been a victim of spousal abuse
18) Has been a perpetrator of spousal abuse
19) Has no parenting responsibilities
20) Unable to handle parenting responsibilities
21) Unable to control the child's behaviour appropriately
22) Perceives self as unable to control the child's behaviour
23) Supervises child improperly
24) Does not participate in activities with the child
25) Lacks an understanding of child development
26) Family is unable to get along as a unit
27) Has been arrested for child abuse
28) Has been arrested for incest
29) Prior marital/family assessment(s)
30) Has participated in marital/family therapy
31) Has completed a marital/family intervention program

Listing of Associates / Social Interaction Indicators as Assessed by the Offender
Intake Assessment Process

1) Socially Isolated
2) Associates with substance abusers
3) Many criminal acquaintances
4) Mostly criminal friends
5) Has been affiliated with a gang
6) Resides in a criminogenic area
7) Unattached to any community groups
8) Relations are described as predatory
9) Often victimized in social relations
10) Easily influenced by others
11) Has difficulty communicating with others

Listing of Substance Abuse Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Abuses alcohol
2) Began drinking at an early age
3) Drinks on a regular basis
4) Has a history of drinking binges
5) Has combined the use of alcohol and drugs
6) Drinks to excess during leisure time
7) Drinks to excess in social situations
8) Drinks to relieve stress
9) Drinking interferes with employment
10) Drinking interferes with marital / family relations
11) Drinking interferes with social relations
12) Drinking has resulted in law violations
13) Drinking interferes with health
14) Abuses drugs
15) Began using drugs at an early age
16) Used drugs on a regular basis
17) Has gone on drug-taking sprees
18) Has combined the use of different drugs
19) Uses drugs during leisure time
20) Uses drugs in social situations
21) Uses drugs to relieve stress
22) Drug use interferes with employment
23) Drug use interferes with marital / family relations
24) Drug use interferes with social relations
25) Drug use has resulted in law violations
26) Drug use interferes with health
27) Prior substance abuse assessments
28) Has participated in substance abuse treatment
29) Has completed substance abuse treatment

Listing of Community Functioning Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake Assessment Process

1) Has unstable accommodation
2) Residence is poorly maintained
3) Has poor self-presentation
4) Has poor hygiene
5) Has physical problems
6) Had dental problems
7) Has dietary problems
8) Difficulty meeting bill payments
9) Has outstanding debts
10) Has no bank account
11) Has no credit
12) Has no collateral
13) Has problems writing
14) Unable to express self verbally
15) Has no hobbies
16) Does not participate in organized activities
17) Unaware of social services
18) Has used social assistance
19) Prior assessment for community functioning
20) Has participated in a community skills program
21) Has completed a community skills program

Listing of Personal / Emotional Orientation Indicators as Assessed by the
Offender Intake Assessment Process

1) Feels especially self-important
2) Physical prowess problematic
3) Family ties are problematic
4) Ethnicity is problematic
5) Religion is problematic
6) Gang member
7) Unable to recognize problem areas
8) Has difficulties solving interpersonal problems
9) Unable to generate choices
10) Unaware of consequences
11) Goal setting is unrealistic
12) Has disregard for others
13) Socially unaware
14) Impulsive
15) Incapable of understanding the feelings of others
16) Narrow and rigid thinking
17) Aggressive
18) Assertion problem
19) Copes with stress poorly
20) Poor conflict resolution
21) Manages time poorly
22) Gambling is problematic
23) Has low frustration tolerance
24) Hostile
25) Worries unreasonably
26) Takes risks inappropriately
27) Thrill-seeking
28) Non-reflective
29) Not conscientious
30) Manipulative
31) Has difficulty performing sexually
32) Sexual identity problem
33) Inappropriate sexual preference(s)
34) Sexual attitudes are problematic
35) Low mental functioning
36) Diagnosed as disordered in the past
37) Diagnosed as disordered currently
38) Prior personal / emotional assessments
39) Prescribed medication in the past
40) Prescribed medication currently
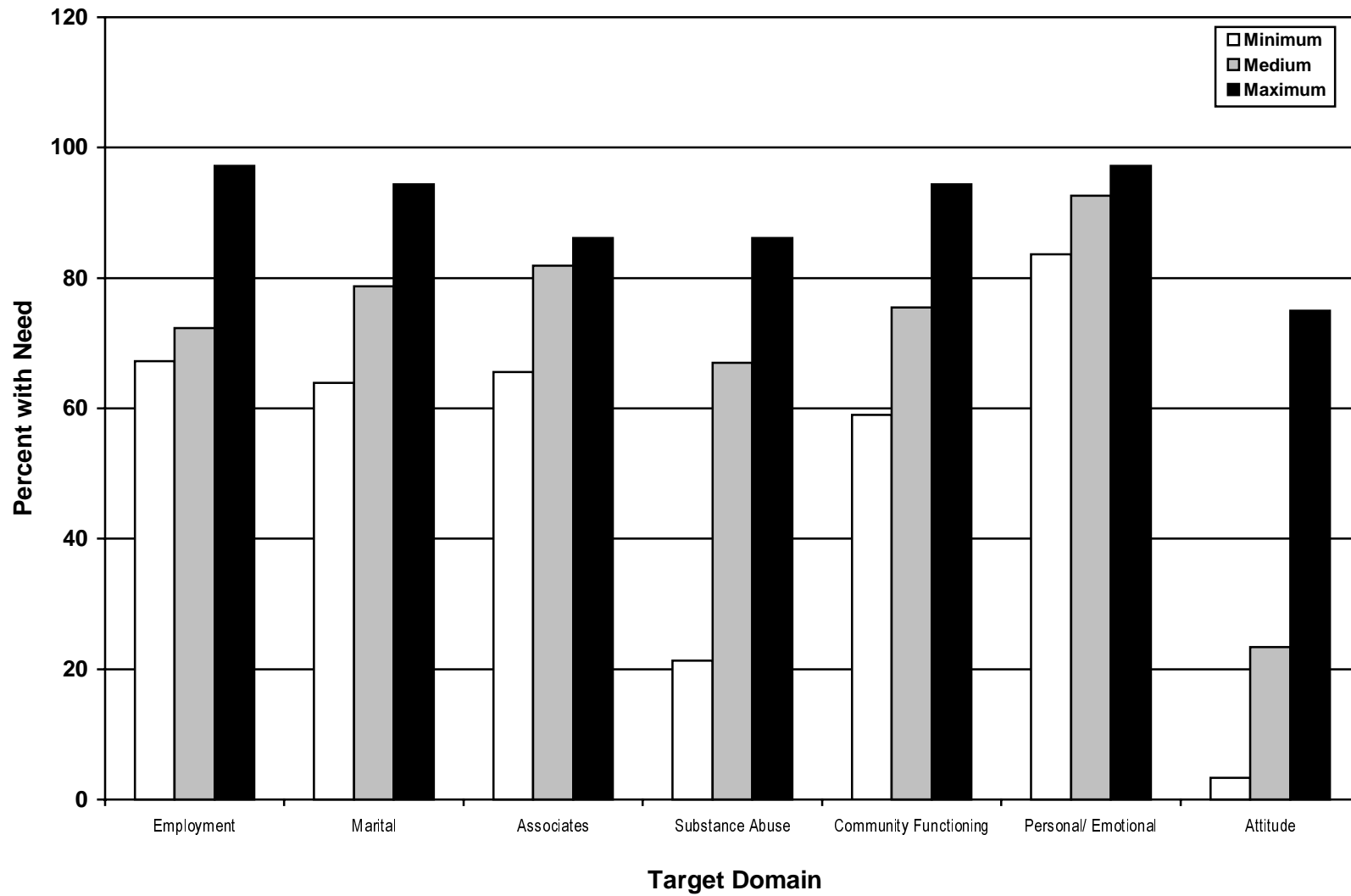
41) Past hospitalization
42) Current hospitalization
43) Received outpatient services in the past
44) Received outpatient services prior to admission
45) Past program participation
46) Current program participation

Listing of Attitude Indicators as Assessed by the Offender Intake
Assessment Process

1) Negative towards the law
2) Negative towards the police
3) Negative towards the courts
4) Negative towards corrections
5) Negative towards community supervision
6) Negative towards rehabilitation
7) Employment has no value
8) Marital / family relations have no value
9) Interpersonal relations have no value
10) Values substance abuse
11) Basic life skills have no value
12) Personal / emotional stability has no value
13) Elderly have no value
14) Women / men roles are unequal
15) Ethnically intolerant
16) Intolerant of other religions
17) Intolerant of disabled persons
18) Disrespectful of personal belongings
19) Disrespectful of public property
20) Disrespectful of commercial property
21) Supportive of domestic violence
22) Supportive of instrumental violence
23) Lacks direction
24) Non-conforming

Appendix B

Identified Needs of Federally-sentenced Female Offenders by Security Level

A grouped bar chart titled "Identified Needs of Federally-sentenced Female Offenders by Security Level." The vertical axis is labeled "Percent with Need" ranging from 0 to 120. The horizontal axis is labeled "Target Domain." Each target domain has three bars representing Minimum (white), Medium (gray), and Maximum (black) security levels.

- Employment: Minimum ≈ 67, Medium ≈ 72, Maximum ≈ 97
- Marital: Minimum ≈ 64, Medium ≈ 79, Maximum ≈ 94
- Associates: Minimum ≈ 66, Medium ≈ 82, Maximum ≈ 86
- Substance Abuse: Minimum ≈ 21, Medium ≈ 67, Maximum ≈ 86
- Community Functioning: Minimum ≈ 59, Medium ≈ 75, Maximum ≈ 94
- Personal/ Emotional: Minimum ≈ 83, Medium ≈ 92, Maximum ≈ 97
- Attitude: Minimum ≈ 3, Medium ≈ 23, Maximum ≈ 75

Appendix C

A Breakdown of Selected Drug Abuse Indicators by Security Level

Legend: Minimum, Medium, Maximum

Y-axis: Percent with Problem (0 to 90)

X-axis (Indicator): Abuses drugs, Early drug use, Regular drug use, Drug taking sprees, Combine drugs, Uses in leisure time, Uses in social situations, Uses to relieve stress, Interferes employment, Interferes Marital, Interferes social, Interferes health, Law violations, Treatment