



Research at a Glance

Profile of offenders in administrative segregation: A review of the literature

KEY WORDS: *administrative segregation, voluntary segregation, involuntary segregation*

What we looked at

Administrative segregation is a means of confining offenders who pose a threat to the institution or who feel at risk in the general population. It can be used voluntarily or involuntarily.

Concerns have been raised surrounding the overuse of segregation in managing offenders. In particular, it appears that offenders who are voluntarily segregated are remaining in segregation longer than those who are involuntarily segregated.

The goal of the following literature review was to identify (a) the characteristics of offenders in segregation (voluntary vs. involuntary) and (b) the impacts that segregation has on offenders.

What we found

Little previous research on administrative segregation exists. Most offenders are in segregation involuntarily because they pose a threat to staff, inmates or the institution. Often, those who are voluntarily segregated fear that their safety is at risk in the general population.

Segregated male offenders are more likely than inmates in the general population to have more violent convictions, higher security classifications and higher levels of risk and need. These characteristics were similar for males who were both voluntarily and involuntarily segregated.

In contrast we found that characteristics were different between those women who were voluntarily and involuntarily segregated. Specifically, women placed in involuntary segregation were more likely to be Aboriginal, have more extensive criminal histories and exhibit greater difficulty adjusting to the institution.

We found that administrative segregation had potential to have negative consequences for offenders. These consequences may include reduced access to programming, decreased ability to move to

lower security level classifications and influenced decisions regarding early release. Specifically, offenders who have been segregated are lower likelihood of being granted discretionary release

What it means

This updated profile helps us understand the differences between segregated offenders and the general population, as well as between those in voluntary and involuntary segregation.

While no differences were found between involuntarily and voluntarily segregated male offenders, there was a difference for women offenders. Future research focusing on the impacts of segregation and on predicting who will be segregated is necessary.

For more information

Bottos, S. (in press). *Profile of offenders in administrative segregation: A review of the literature*. Ottawa: Correctional Service of Canada

<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/briefs/b39/b39-eng.shtml>

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