



Research at a glance

Security Reclassification of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Male Offenders

KEY WORDS: *male offenders, Aboriginal offenders, security reclassification*

Why we did this study

Security classification has significant implications on an offender's involvement in programs, access to privileges and discretionary release, and it is essential that security classification be conducted in a transparent, valid and consistent manner. Research indicates that slightly greater proportions of Aboriginal offenders than non-Aboriginal offenders are being housed at higher levels of security (maximum security: 15.8% vs. 13.3% respectively).

To investigate whether or not Aboriginal offenders are being overclassified by the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS), the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada completed a study to examine the use of the SRS with this subpopulation of offenders. This study served as a revalidation of the SRS as part of the security reclassification process.

What we did

This issue was examined by analyzing the reclassification recommendations (i.e., minimum, medium, or maximum security) of 32,328 reclassification reviews of male offenders over a four year period. Of these, 6,717 reviews were conducted for Aboriginal offenders. The security reclassification reviews were analyzed separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders.

What we found

Results of this study demonstrated that reclassification recommendations were related to relevant constructs of risk and need for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders. Results suggested that higher SRS recommendations and security placements for Aboriginal offenders were supported by higher levels of risk, need and institutional misconduct.

This study further suggested that Aboriginal offenders' classification recommendations were appropriate and that Aboriginal offenders were not being over-classified by the SRS.

Additionally, in revalidating the scale, reliability tests indicated that the scale was moderately reliable which is

acceptable and commensurate with other correctional assessment instruments.

Furthermore, high SRS scores were found to be associated with higher levels of risk and need, and lower levels of motivation and reintegration potential; thereby suggesting that the scale has strong convergent validity.

The predictive ability of the SRS was strong for institutional misconduct and discretionary releases, which indicate a satisfactory predictive ability in areas related to the purpose of the scale. In all, these results support the continued use of the SRS.

What it means

Ultimately, the study showed no evidence to suggest that the use of the Security Reclassification Scale leads to the over-classification of Aboriginal offenders. Rather, based on current empirical evidence demonstrating the association between institutional behaviours and resulting security levels, Aboriginal offenders are being placed at the appropriate security levels.

Results of this study support the continued use of the Security Reclassification Scale with both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal offenders.

For more information

Gobeil, R. (in press). *Assessing security reclassification with male Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders*. Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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