



Research at a glance

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

KEY WORDS: *federal women offenders (FWOs), security reclassification, security reclassification scale for women (SRSW)*

Why we did this study

The Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) is an actuarial tool which, in conjunction with professional judgment, is used in the security classification of Federal Women Offenders after initial placement. Currently, the use of this tool is limited to review periods that 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 lower security level while ensuring public safety.

What we did

This study was designed to validate the use of the SRSW in review periods of less than six months. A sample of 610 security reviews of 397 women offenders completed from June 27, 2007 to March 31, 2010, for whom a CRS and SRSW were completed relating to the term in which the Offender Security Level decision was made, was examined. Of these, 85 reviews were specific to shorter periods. Analyses were conducted to examine the reliability of the scale through item-total correlations. Additionally, the convergent validity was assessed by examining the relationship between SRSW security level recommendations, final security level decision, and the measures of risk, need, and reintegration potential. Finally, the predictive ability was measured through the examination of several institutional and community outcomes.

What we found

Findings indicate that the majority of SRSW recommendations were to medium security levels. Although few of the scale's scores fell between discretionary ranges (18%), almost half (47%) of these were placed in higher security levels. Final decisions to override SRSW recommendations outside of discretionary ranges occurred relatively often (29%) and the majority was to higher levels (76%). When provided, reasons for inconsistency were mostly related to current behavior and attitude.

Generally, the scale proved reliable for use in shorter time periods and was slightly more reliable among

Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women. The removal of a specific scale item (ever unlawfully at large) increased the scale's reliability.

In regard to validity, although some associations between SRSW and the various outcomes were not always significant for review periods of less than six months, possibly due to small numbers, several non-significant trends identified in shorter reviews were confirmed in longer reviews. Regardless of the type of outcome or analyses conducted, findings suggest that SRSW recommendations better predict outcomes and tend to better discriminate between differing levels of security in predicting outcomes. For instance, women at minimum security level were found to be less likely than those in either medium or maximum to experience a major charge, as predicted by the SRSW.

What it means

Overall, the evidence suggests that it is possible to use the SRSW for review periods of less than six months. The SRSW validity for shorter review periods will be possible when additional cases become available.

For more information

Thompson, J., McConnell, A., & Paquin-Marseille, L. (2013). *The Security Reclassification Scale (SRSW) for Shorter Review Periods among Federal Women Offenders*. Research Report R286. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

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