

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

Initial Custody Placements of Federally Sentenced Women: 2010 to 2020

Federally sentenced Indigenous women account for 33% of all initial custody placements over the past decade.

Why we are doing this study

The initial security level (maximum, medium or minimum) of every federally sentenced woman is based on the combined results of a research-based Custody Rating Scale (CRS) designation along with professional appraisals of three separate risk factors: institutional adjustment, escape risk and risk to public safety and where required psychological risk assessments. The CRS results are incorporated into the overall assessment provided to a decision-maker but they do not solely define the final Offender Security Level (OSL) decision.

What we did

The Correctional Service of Canada's Performance Direct (PD) Reporting System standardizes the historical reporting of a wide variety of metrics at the national and regional levels. Module 1 – Initial Assessment and Placement records the congruence between CRS designations and OSL. Comparative data were drawn for 10 separate fiscal years (2010-11 to 2019-2020) for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders.

What we found

As reflected in Table 1, PD-reported data over the past 10 fiscal years show that Indigenous women have increased both numerically and proportionally. It appears that about 9% have been initially placed at maximum security and this amount has been relatively constant over the last decade.

Table 1: Initial Security Level Placement

Year	All Women	Indigenous # (%)	Indigenous Maximum	Indigenous Medium	Indigenous Minimum
10-11	343	107 (31.2%)	12	62	33
11-12	355	98 (27.6%)	13	65	20
12-13	295	88 (29.8%)	8	56	24
13-14	315	99 (31.4%)	15	59	25
14-15	346	109 (31.5%)	7	80	22
15-16	380	128 (33.7%)	14	80	34
16-17	422	138 (32.7%)	7	83	48
17-18	379	130 (34.3%)	10	79	41
18-19	409	156 (38.1%)	12	86	58
19-20	359	124 (34.5%)	11	86	27
Total	3,603	1,177 (32.7%)	109 (9.3%)	736 (62.5%)	332 (28.2%)

Source: Performance Direct Reporting System Module 1

Table 2 presents CRS and OSL concordance rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women of 67.6% and 68.8%, respectively. The CRS-OSL under-ride rates were nearly the same (14.9% and 15.5%, respectively) and there were, slightly higher over-ride rates of CRS-OSL for Indigenous women at 17.5% and 15.6%, respectively.

Table 2: Congruence between the CRS and OSL

Indigenous				
CRS-OSL	Max	Medium	Minimum	Total
No Change	83	490	223	796 (67.6%)
OSL Lower=Under	0	66	109	175 (14.9%)
OSL Higher=Over	26	180	0	206 (17.5%)
				1,177

Non-Indigenous				
CRS-OSL	Max	Medium	Minimum	Total
No Change	80	542	1,048	1,670 (68.8%)
OSL Lower=Under	0	23	354	377 (15.5%)
OSL Higher=Over	24	355	0	379 (15.6%)
				2,426

Source: Performance Direct Reporting System Module 1

What it means

The disproportionate representation of Indigenous women in federal custody is influenced by increasing numbers and proportions of new admissions to federal custody. The observation that Indigenous women reflect an annual average of 33% initial assessments and placement necessarily raises broader upstream concerns in the criminal justice system.

The slightly greater over-ride rate of the CRS by final OSL decisions for Indigenous women suggests that other factors might be operating in the classification decision-making process. Initiatives to develop culturally informed initial security assessment processes may yield more appropriate custody placements for Indigenous women.

For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975. You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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