



# Emerging Research Results

## The Effects of Institutional Design on Offender Behaviour

**KEY WORDS:** *design, unit designation, housing type, offender behaviour*

### Why we are doing this study

Given that CSC's institutions were not constructed simultaneously, and that approaches to penitentiary design have changed over time, differences exist in the design of individual institutions and units. CSC's Facilities Branch was interested in determining whether the design type of an institution or unit is associated with offenders' behaviour.

### What we are doing

We have undertaken a study to examine this question as it relates to medium security institutions. CSC categorizes these institutions into four designations, numbered T-2 through T-5, with greater security and supervision associated with those of higher number. The designations differ in terms of the living unit style (apartment style or cell block), the extent to which offenders' movement can be viewed and controlled, and the location and type of control post.

Analyses include a total of 5,336 male offenders who were housed in the same institution (or unit therein for those including multiple unit types) from April 1 to June 1, 2011. So far, these offenders have been compared on a number of behavioural indicators according to the designation of the unit in which they resided.

### What we have found so far

As can be seen in the table, units with lower designations tended to have lower percentages of

offenders found guilty of institutional charges or placed in involuntary segregation, and a greater proportion of transfers to a lower security institution (rather than to a similar or higher security institution).

Preliminary follow-up analyses demonstrated that, even when considering offender-level variables such as criminal history risk, unit designation continued to be associated with all of the behavioural outcomes except minor charges. The next step in analyses will be multi-level modeling to fully understand the magnitude of unit designation's contribution.

### What it means

Though results to date do not tell us the strength of the association between institutional designation and offender behaviour or establish that the association is due to a cause-and-effect relationship, they do indicate that a link exists. Further analyses are underway.

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### For more information

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*Percentage of Offenders Exhibiting Each Behavioural Indicator, by Unit Designation*

Designation	Institutional Charges			Involuntary Segregation	% of Transfers to Minimum
	Minor	Serious	Any		
T-2 (n = 522)	4.6	1.2	5.6	0.4	79.6
T-3 (n = 450)	8.2	4.4	11.3	2.2	53.1
T-4 (n = 1,307)	8.3	8.1	14.5	2.8	36.8
T-5 (n = 3,057)	10.0	5.6	14.5	3.2	39.2

*Note.* Charges and segregation were assessed during the three-month study period, except transfers, which were examined in the eight months following June 1, 2011. For each behavioural indicator, overall differences between designations were significant at at least  $p < .01$ .