

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## Revalidation of the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS)

*The Security Reclassification Scale continues to be a reliable and valid tool for offender security reclassification.*

### Why we did this study

Classification and re-classification systems play an integral role in correctional environments both at the institutional and offender level. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) uses the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS) instrument in the security reclassification process for all men offenders. To ensure these tools are effective and adequately meeting the needs of the offender population, research must continue to test their reliability and validity.

### What we did

Using data from the Offender Management System, 6,281 SRS assessments (28% for Indigenous offenders) were examined for the study period from April 2014 to March 2016. These assessments represented 5,433 federal men offenders (27% Indigenous); 26% of men offenders had multiple assessments during the study period. Analyses were disaggregated by Indigenous ancestry.

### What we found

Similar proportions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders were assessed at the various security levels, with almost two-thirds identified as medium security and about one-quarter assessed as minimum. On average, SRS assessments were completed within two years of the completion of the Custody Rating Scale or after admission to federal custody, which met the timelines set out in CSC policy. Timing of SRS administration was the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders.

Over one-quarter of offenders had scores that fell in the discretionary ranges (i.e., a score where the offender was able to be classified in one of two security levels), but for almost two-thirds of these assessments, staff did not employ the discretionary range; less than one-quarter were to a higher security level and 14% to a lower level.

Inconsistencies occurred when the SRS assessed level and either the caseworker recommendation or the actual security placement did not align. About 15% of assessments were identified as discordant, which is within the 5% to 20% range of inconsistencies identified in the assessment literature, with over two-thirds to a lower security classification. Manual coding of the reasons for the inconsistencies showed that offenders' current behaviour,

attitude, and identified needs were the typical rationales for these inconsistencies. Aboriginal Social History factors were considered for Indigenous men for all inconsistency files coded. Examination of the use of discretionary ranges on the SRS and inconsistencies across the review process demonstrated comparable results for Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders.

The SRS was a reliable tool for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders. Over half of the items in the assessment had a moderate correlation to the total score and had an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders.

Validity analyses demonstrated that the SRS and the actual security placement are associated with other measures of offender risk and need as well as offender institutional and post-release behaviour. These findings were comparable for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders and were consistent with previous research.

### What it means

The SRS continues to be a reliable and valid tool in the offender security reclassification process for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men. Aboriginal Social History informs security decisions for Indigenous offenders. Additional factors such as institutional adjustment, escape risk, and risk to public safety are also taken into consideration before a final security placement decision is made. Future research could explore the inclusion or exclusion of other items in the SRS. However, the on-going use of the SRS for the reclassification of federal men offenders is warranted.

### For more information

Farrell MacDonald, S., Beauchamp, T., Conley, C., Cociu, L., & Scott, T. (2018). *Revalidation of the Security Reclassification Scale (SRS)* (Research Report R-414). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

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