

# Risk and need among federally-sentenced female offenders: A comparison of minimum, medium, and maximum-security inmates (R-58, 1997)

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This study compared women offenders by security level (either “minimum”, “medium”, or “maximum”) on a variety of criteria: risk (security and escape), criminogenic need, and suicide potential. For this study, Correctional Service of Canada’s automated Offender Management System was used, and all available data for federally sentenced women offenders was extracted. As of January 14, 1997, data for institutional security level was available for 212 women offenders, and revealed that 34% (72) were designated “minimum-security”, 49% (103) were “medium-security”, and the remaining 17% (37) were “maximum-security.”

Initial comparisons focused on demographic information (age, race), that was available for the entire sample (72 minimum-, 103 medium- and 37 maximum-security offenders). Statistical analyses revealed that the maximum-security women offenders were significantly younger than their medium — and minimum-security counterparts. For the former, ages ranged from 21 to 45 years old, with a mean age of 28.7 years. The age range for those in medium-security was 20 to 63, with a mean age of 34.2. Finally, those in minimum-security ranged in age from 19 to 52, with a mean age of 35.8. Analysis of race distributions revealed that women offenders in maximum-security were also more likely to be Aboriginal. While about 15% of those in medium- or minimum-security were Aboriginal, this was the case for 41% of maximum-security women.

This report is an addendum to a previous investigation that compared federally sentenced women offenders across two level securities. While the earlier study compared medium-security women to their maximum-security counterparts, the present study expanded comparisons across all three-security designations.

Results from this study demonstrate that as security level increases, there is a corresponding increase in multiple parameters of risk and need as assessed at admission to federal custody. Moreover, federally-sentenced women in maximum-security clearly show the greatest suicide risk potential, relative to their lower-security counterparts.

Furthermore, this study served to elucidate some basic differences between those women offenders designated “maximum-security”, those designated “medium-security”, and those designated “minimum-security.” Analyses in the present study have demonstrated diversity between groups, with results suggesting higher risk/needs profiles for those in maximum security. ■