

# Case characteristics of segregated offenders in federal corrections (R-57, 1997)

*Larry L. Motiuk, and Kelley Blanchette*

This investigation yielded comprehensive information pertaining to the federal segregated offender population. While the findings of this study may be limited only to federally sentenced offenders in segregation, it was learned that this group of offenders could be characterized by the presence of “static” risk factors (such as previous exposure to the criminal justice system) and the presence of a wide array of “dynamic” risk factors (such as poor education, skills deficits, family dysfunction, antisocial attachments and isolation, chemical dependencies, a host of thinking problems and procriminal attitudes).

The abundance of case-specific factors which set segregated offenders apart from non-segregated offenders points to a need for a screening protocol to identify them at the earliest possible moment in their sentence as “at-risk”. Such a tool would increase the ability to target those who are likely to experience adjustment difficulties while serving their sentence. In keeping with case management practice, regular reflection on the outputs of ongoing offender risk/need assessments could provide a useful means of monitoring changes among “at-risk” offenders. This would provide the opportunity for proactive interventions related to a unique set of behaviours, attitudes and circumstances that appear to be clearly related to eventual placement in administrative segregation.

Case-specific information was available from the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process for 678 segregated offenders. The OIA process collects comprehensive information on each offender’s criminal and mental health history, social situation, education and other factors relevant to determining criminal risk and identifying offender needs. Additional information was obtained from available Statistical Information on Recidivism (SIR) scales (used to assess risk of re-offence) and Custody Rating Scales (which assesses for initial security level placement). While this information provides a basis for determining the offender’s institutional placement and for establishing a correctional plan, it can also be used to produce detailed profiles of various segments of the offender population.

The design of the study also involved random selection of a comparison group of non-segregated offenders in Correctional Service of Canada’s institutions. These groups were used to make comparisons on a wide variety of case-specific variables. After comparisons were made between “segregated” and “non-segregated” offender groups, the researchers tested for significant differences between “voluntary” and “involuntary” segregated offenders. ■