

The Climate Indicators and Profiling System (CIPS)

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The Report of the Task Force on Security (Correctional Service of Canada, 2000), recommended the following, “that the Correctional Service of Canada’s Research Branch, with the assistance of knowledgeable staff, [shall] develop an instrument whereby the stability and vulnerability of operational units can be assessed systematically.” This article presents the design, development and delivery of such an instrument to foster safe and secure institutional and community settings.

Background

As a result of the Security Task Force² recommendation, the Research Branch of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) undertook (in the Spring of 2000) the task of developing an Institutional Threat-Risk Assessment (ITRA) system whereby the: “systematic assessment of the stability and vulnerability of operational units” might be facilitated. The author was assigned as the project leader for this research-based initiative.

Before development began on the ITRA system, the Research Branch conducted a number of background studies. First, research staff met extensively with members of the Security Task Force, Wardens, and with institutional security personnel to identify the kind of information that operational managers and security intelligence officers would find useful. This exercise yielded an extensive list of potential threat-risk indicators.

From this initial list of threat-risk indicators, a second project evolved to test the feasibility of using them as predictors of institutional incidents. Using historical incident data, a subset of indicators were identified from the extant CSC historical databases and tested with statistical modelling techniques. This subset of threat-risk indicators was found to account for about 60% of the variance in incidents for maximum-security institutions.

In parallel with the second step, a third project was initiated. A more detailed analysis on the changing nature of the federal inmate population was undertaken in an extensive study of profile changes in the federal offender population between 1997 and 2002. Results of this analysis were published as: *The Changing Profile of the Federal Inmate Population: 1997 and 2002*.³

In November 1994, the Service had implemented a national Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process. For the Service, the assessment of offender risk and needs serves to structure many of the decisions we make regarding custody or security designations, temporary and conditional release, supervision requirements and program placement. The cornerstone of any effective risk management program is making decisions after all available information has been considered.⁴ The implementation of OIA provided the missing bookend that completed CSC’s overall offender assessment process, begun in 1990 with the national implementation of a Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (CRNMS).⁵ It was natural, therefore, that when the Research Branch began to think about ways to systematically assess the stability and vulnerability of operational units, profiles of the composition of the offender population obtained from the Services’ OIA and CRNMS systems could provide a key component for assessing the level of risk in any institution.

The fourth project initiated by the Research Branch during development involved the application of potential threat-risk indicators that had been identified during consultations with members of the Security Task Force. However, these indicators were not being collected in any standard or national format by the Service. From consultations with field staff, it was suggested that the threat-risk assessment system includes some method for capturing these indicators directly from the security officers in the institutions. Thus, provisional screens were developed to capture daily threat-risk indicators not otherwise available from existing data sources.

Once these preliminary projects were completed, a prototype institutional threat-risk assessment system was assembled, hence the creation of Climate Indicator and Profile System (CIPS).

CIPS goals

It was recognized early on in the process that actually predicting institutional incidents was not the main — or even a particularly realistic — goal for the proposed new CIPS system. Rather, CIPS was seen as a threat-risk assessment tool that could assist operational managers through raising awareness of

the social climate of their operational environment. CIPS was to have multiple domains (offenders, staff, incidents) information about each of which adds something unique to the overall risk appraisal of the operational units;

- One goal is to provide managers with information on incident trends over time, so that they know when, how rapidly, and in what direction, the operational climate may be changing. This information should also provide managers with comparative benchmarks — for example, comparing trends with similar institutions elsewhere;
- Comprehensive information is also presented to allow institutions to track how their population profiles are changing, so that they can more readily identify those compositional factors that are most likely associated with institutional climate risk and make strategic changes;
- There is also a recognized need to collect and track supplementary daily climate indicators of immediate institutional vulnerability, apart from longer term trends, in order to facilitate more immediate population management strategies.

CIPS structure and components

For CSC institutions and community, the CIPS prototype application consists of two main components: *Climate Indicators* and *Population Profiles*.

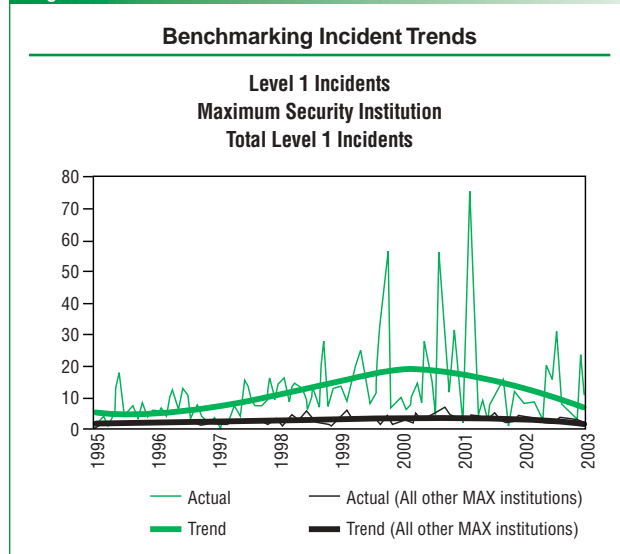
Climate Indicators:

Standard charts showing trends in Level 1 and Level 2 incidents, inmate grievances and inmate complaints.⁶ In the CIPS prototype, each charts contain historical trend information from 1995 to the most recent data, the data have been standardized to reflect “rates per 100 inmates”, and the trend for every institution is also benchmarked against all other similar institutions, (as shown in Figure 1) or to the historical average for that institution.

Daily institutional security assessments, as input by institution security staff each morning via a “Daily Climate Indicator Entry” screen. The Daily Climate Indicator Entry screen captures more than two dozen individual indicators, grouped under three broad headings: 1. Overall Institutional Climate? 2. Unusual Activity? 3. Staff/Inmate Interaction?

There is also a reporting function, which provides weekly summaries of the Daily indicator report data, as well as charts for each indicator covering the last 30 days of entry.

Figure 1



Population profiles

Profiles are available in two scenarios — “On any given day” and “In a given year” (the first compares March 31 snapshots for 1997 and 2003; the second compares admissions for years 1996–97 vs. 2002–03).

Profiles are available by Region, Institution or Area Office; for men, women and Aboriginal men, and for both the Institution and Community populations.

There are a set of standard tables and charts for the institutional population (the tables for the community population are similar but fewer in number), covering the 16 broad risk domains (see Figure 2) that were selected for inclusion in the prototype, each of which may contain several individual indicators.

Figure 2

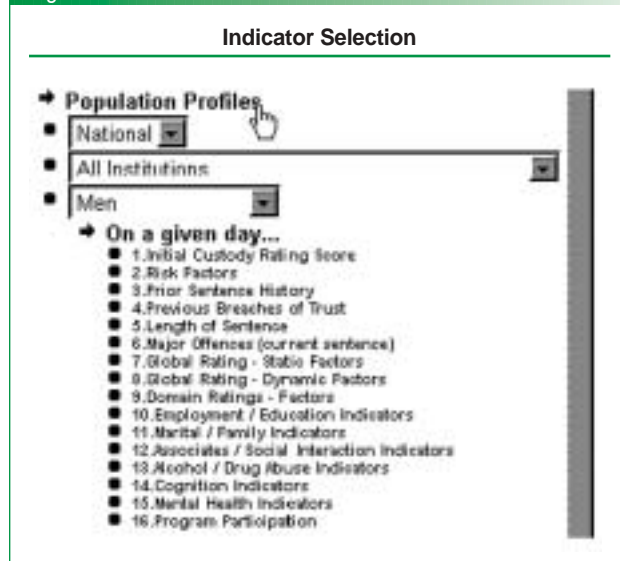


Table 1 (below) illustrates a report concerning “2. Risk Factors” for the national population of men admitted in FY 2002–03 as compared with those admitted in FY 1996–97.

CIPS prototype — The field trial

Both the CIPS Population Profiles” and “Climate Indicator” components have been incorporated as separate modules into a single CSC Infonet application that can be accessed by operational and management staff, with proper authorization, from a desktop computer. The CIPS application has been developed using standard corporate-supported Internet software and programming tools, to facilitate the eventual integration of CIPS onto the corporate desktop.

The CIPS application prototype was distributed to maximum-security test sites during the latter weeks of July 2003, and field trials commenced once the testers had been set up and received initial training. The initial period of field trials, conducted both in maximum-security institutions as well as with selected managers from regional and national headquarters, was initially scheduled to run until the end of October 2003, but has now been extended to March 2004. This provides a period to test the data capture engine that the Research Branch has developed, to ensure user-entered information can

be seamlessly captured and processed, and to test the security features of the database and application. As well, the daily entry data that has been captured during this test period will be assessed for its contribution to defining the institutional climate. Feedback and evaluations on the overall usability of the CIPS prototype is being collected from testers, and the results of the preliminary trial with the prototype CIPS application will be reviewed in March 2004 followed by a recommended plan for further steps to be taken. ■

- 1 340 Laurier Avenue West, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P9
- 2 Recommendation #39, *Report of the Task Force on Security*, Correctional Service of Canada, 2000. Ottawa, ON.
- 3 Boe, R; Nafekh, M; Vuong, B; Sinclair, R and Cousineau, C. (2003). *The changing profile of the Federal Inmate Population: 1997 to 2002*. Research Report R-132. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
- 4 Motiuk, L. (1993). Where Are We in our Ability to Assess Risk? *Forum on Corrections Research*, 5(2).
- 5 Motiuk, L. L; and Porporino, Frank J. (1989) *Field Test of the Community Risk/Needs Management Scale: A Study of Offenders on Caseload*. Research Report R-06. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.
- 6 Total Level 1 Indicators include; 2. Murder; 3. Assault on Staff; 4. Assault on Inmates; 5. Hostage Taking; 6. Inmate Fight; 7. Major Disturbance; 8. Minor Disturbance. Total Level 2 incidents include: 2. Under the Influence; 3. Property Damage; 4. Disciplinary Problems; 5. Fire Setting; 6. Intelligence; 7. Unauthorized Item; 8. Theft; 9. Protective Custody Request; 10. Other Incident.

WOC Admissions National (Flow Population) Risk Factors				
Men	FY 2003		FY 1997	
	Number	%	Number	%
Inmates under age 30	1,446	41	1,926	43
SIR-R1* score — high risk	754	28	746	21
CRS** — high institutional adjustment risk	340	10	214	6
CRS** — high security risk	736	22	819	19
Low reintegration potential	1,185	36	1,086	26
Low motivation level	349	13	464	11
Gang affiliation	437	13	464	11

Low motivation levels are as of March 1999

* SIR-R1 — *Statistical Information on Recidivism — Revised 1*

** CRS — *Custody Rating Scale*