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# Research at a glance

## Construct Validity of the Static Factors Assessment in the Offender Intake Assessment Process

**KEY WORDS:** *risk assessment, Static Factors Assessment, construct validity, Aboriginal offenders, women offenders*

### What it means

The current research study demonstrated that the Static Factors Assessment (SFA), a component of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA), including its Criminal History and Offence Severity subscales, are being used as intended. The items and subscales are influencing the overall risk evaluations, and the assessments are related to other measures of risk for recidivism.

Future research is underway to examine the relationship between the SFA and outcomes, such as release decisions and reoffending. Together with findings from the current report, this study will help determine whether it is possible to reduce the number of items in the scale (reducing staff workload) without losing the utility of the scale.

### What we found

Using the SFA, approximately 16% of offenders are rated low risk, 42% are rated moderate risk, and 42% are rated high risk. Serious violent offenders<sup>1</sup>, sex offenders, Aboriginal offenders, and men are all more likely to be rated higher risk.

Although the study could not examine the reliability and quality of the SFA assessments or directly test whether evaluators' final judgements are based on the item ratings, the results generally supported the Criminal History and Offence Severity subscales. Ratings on the items from these subscales are related to overall risk ratings (with few exceptions), and the subscales and summary risk ratings are related to other risk measures. These findings held true for Aboriginal and women offenders, although findings tended to be not as strong for Aboriginal men.

### Why we did this study

Given the importance of risk assessment in decisions throughout sentence management, assessment practices should be periodically evaluated and

updated to reflect advances in knowledge and to ensure continual utility with changing offender populations.

The goal of the current study was to examine the construct validity of the SFA, which was developed as part of the Offender Intake Assessment and consists of 137 items grouped into three subscales: Criminal History Record, Offence Severity Record, and Sex Offence History Checklist (given the latter scale only applies to a subset of offenders, it was not examined in this report, leaving 109 items for examination). All items are rated as present or absent. A summary risk judgement (low, moderate, or high risk) is formed based upon some or all of these items and subscales.

### What we did

Using 64,605 intake SFA assessments from 1997 to 2012, this study examined whether the SFA subscale and summary ratings are related to other measures utilized by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to assess risk of reoffence, security classification, and criminogenic needs. The study also examined whether the SFA item scores are related to the summary risk judgment. Analyses were conducted for all offenders as well as several offender subgroups (e.g., violent, sexual, women, and Aboriginal offenders).

### For more information

Helmus, L. M., & Forrester, T. (2014). *Construct Validity of the Static Factors Assessment in the Offender Intake Assessment Process* (Research Report, R-309). Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

<sup>1</sup> Defined as offenders with a homicide or major assault in their current offences.