

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

CHANGING LIVES. PROTECTING CANADIANS.

## Examining Time to Security Reclassification for Black Offenders

*White men had a greater probability of a security reduction at a faster rate; however, these decisions still met the timelines set out in CSC policy.*

**Why we did this study**

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has a responsibility to ensure that offenders are classified at an appropriate security level while using the least restrictive measures that are consistent with the protection of society, staff members, and offenders. The 2020-21 Office of the Correctional Investigator (OCI) Annual Report included an investigation into security classification among federally incarcerated Black individuals and found that Black persons were overrepresented in maximum security and underrepresented in minimum security compared to those identifying as White.<sup>1</sup> This study was undertaken to provide additional context to these data and to examine time spent by Black individuals before reclassification and cascading to lower levels of security.

**What we did**

The sample for this study consisted of a cohort of federal men offenders admitted to federal custody between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2020. Follow-up data was collected until April 1, 2023. In total, 13,364 federal men offenders were included in the study cohort: 14.3% ( $n = 1,907$ ) Black men and 85.7% ( $n = 11,727$ ) White men. Offender Security Level decisions on the first term were extracted, with the first decrease in security classification being identified.<sup>2</sup>

**What we found**

In general, Black men admitted to federal custody tended to be younger, less likely to be single, to be serving longer sentences, to have committed a violent offence, and to have a Security Threat Group affiliation when compared to White men. At admission, a similar proportion of both groups were assessed as medium security (White men: 55%, Black men: 60%); although White men were more likely to be assessed as minimum security (White men: 38%, Black men: 25%) and Black men were more likely to be assessed as maximum security (White men: 7%, Black men: 15%). While more White men had a security reduction overall, a significantly larger proportion of Black men had a decrease from maximum to medium security (49%,  $n = 154$ ) compared to White men (32%,  $n =$

460); however, White men were more likely to receive a security decrease from medium to minimum (68%,  $n = 974$ ) relative to Black men (51%,  $n = 161$ ).

In terms of timing of reclassification decisions, on average, Black men had their first security reclassification decision made about a month after those made for White men (515 days versus 486 days, respectively). Further analyses were conducted to control for the potential impact of other factors on security level reduction (e.g., static and dynamic risk, institutional behaviour). Results showed that White men had a greater probability of a security reduction at a faster rate, which became observable at about 7 months post-initial security classification.

**What it means**

Overall, this study contextualized recent data reported by the OCI that found that Black men were overrepresented in maximum security. Despite differences in the timing of reclassification decisions between Black men and White men, these decisions still met the timelines set out in CSC policy (i.e., at least once every two years for offenders classified as medium or maximum security). However, more research is needed to examine security placement changes for Black individuals during their incarceration and the potential impact this may have on their reintegration upon release.

**For more information**

Smeth, A., Farrell MacDonald, S., & Derkzen, D. (2024). *Examining Time to Security Reclassification for Black Offenders* (Research Report R-479). Ottawa, Ontario: Correctional Service of Canada.

To obtain a PDF version of the full report, or for other inquiries, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Correctional Investigator. (2021). Office of the correctional investigator annual report 2020-2021. *Annual Report*.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical modelling was used in lieu of a matched comparison group.