

Creation and Validation of the Inmate Risk Assessment for Segregation Placement (RASP)

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Restrictive Housing

- Prison administrators are responsible for ensuring safety, security, and order within institutions.
- One strategy used to achieve this goal is RH.
- Estimates indicate 20% of inmates spend time in RH in the previous year (Beck, 2015).
- Reviews consistently conclude this practice yields no meaningful improvements in institutional or post-release outcomes (Morgan et al., 2016; Steiner & Cain, 2016).

Reforming the Use of RH

- Most correctional scholars and policymakers agree that prison authorities should rely on RH less.
- Recently, several jurisdictions have taken steps to reduce the number of inmates and the time spent in RH.
- These initiatives are markers of success, but *much more can and should be done in reforming this correctional policy.*
- A large body of offender rehabilitative literature outlines principles for improving offender behavior.

A Front-End Approach

- Most treatment in prison tends to occur during the back-end of one's stay (e.g., re-entry services).
- If the goal is to reduce the use of RH, reformation efforts should include front-end interventions.
- The success of this preventative strategy, however, hinges on the agency's ability to identify high-risk inmates.
- As such, authorities need a tool to predict which inmates are at high-risk for placement in segregation.

Current Study

- H₁:** Administrative information collected during the intake process can be used to construct a risk assessment scale that predicts placement in segregation.
- H₂:** This segregation risk tool will also predict engagement in institutional misconduct.
- H₃:** This tool will also predict these institutional disorder outcomes for inmates regardless of gender, race, or sentence type.

Method

- Sample is a five-year cohort of inmates admitted into a large Midwestern State DOC ($N = 96,337$).
- Data include inmate demographics, criminal history, and institutional information (e.g., housing, misconduct).
- Inmates are randomly assigned to either a construction or validation sample.

Descriptive Statistics

Characteristic	Construction sample (<i>N</i> = 48,197)	Validation sample (<i>N</i> = 48,140)
Mean age (SD)	32.5 (10.6)	32.5 (10.5)
% female	13.3	13.4
% black	43.8	44.1
% prior incarceration	45.8	45.9
% mentally ill	27.1	27.2
% violent offense	39.8	39.6
% segregation placement	40.1	40.7
% any institutional misconduct	39.7	40.5
<i>Violent</i>	20.7	21.1
<i>Nonviolent</i>	31.7	32.4
<i>Drug</i>	10.6	10.6

Creating the RASP

- DV is placement in segregation.
- IVs include only information available during intake.
- Zero-order correlations; retain variables $p \leq .01$.
- Series of multivariate logistic regression models; eliminate non-significant variables ($p \geq .01$) one at a time.
- Continue process until only significant variables remain.

Final Regression Model (*Construction Sample*)

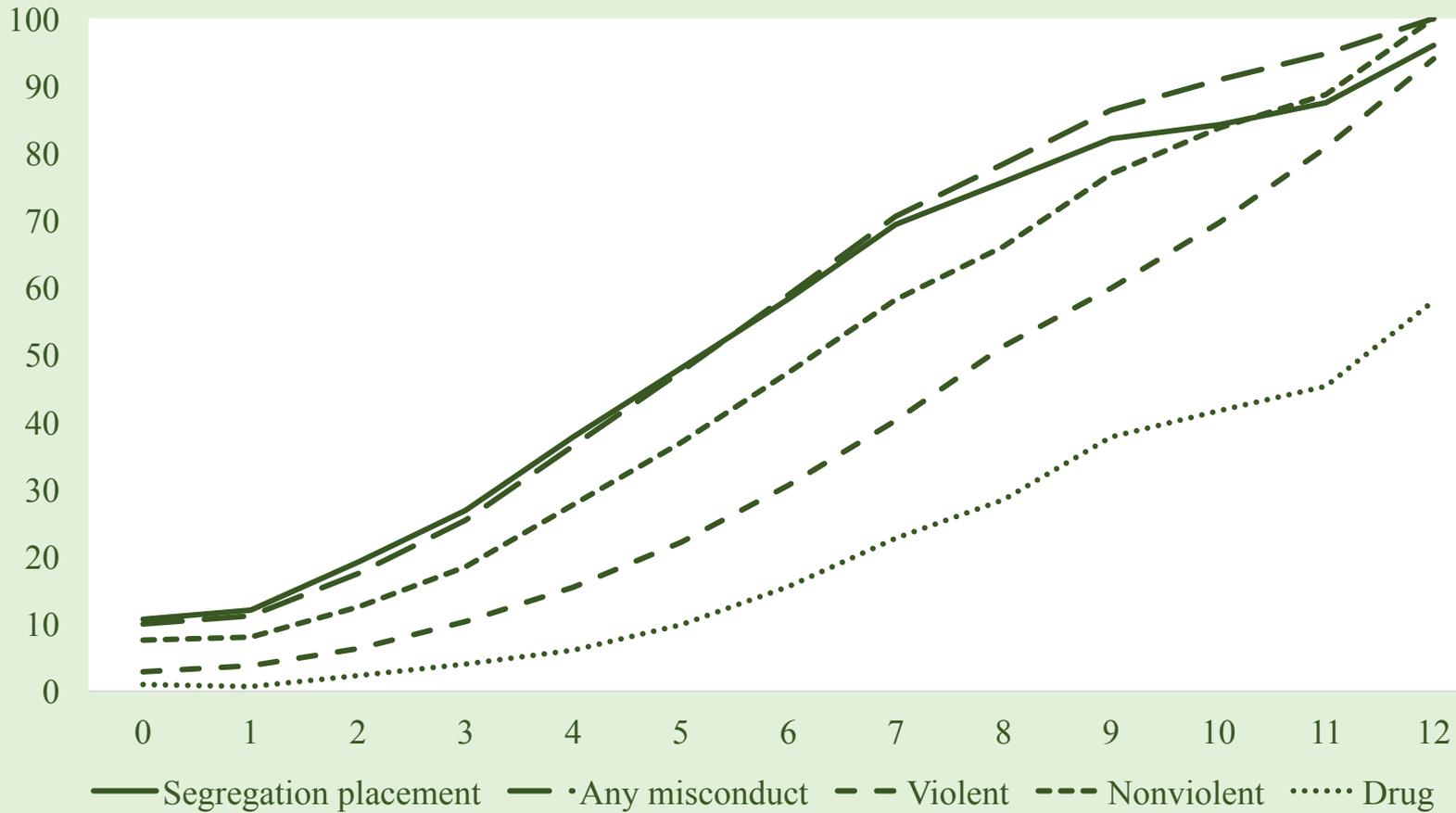
Item	<i>b</i>	S.E. _(<i>b</i>)	Odds Ratio
Age	-.044*	.001	.957
Sentence length	.457*	.010	1.579
Violent offense	.189*	.023	1.208
Gang affiliation	.645*	.031	1.907
Mental illness	.455*	.023	1.577
Custody rating	.381*	.019	1.463
Constant	-.801*	.045	.449
Model Chi-Square (<i>df</i>)	9,657.97 (6)		
-2 Log Likelihood	55,266.43		
Nagelkerke <i>R</i> ²	.25*		

Note: * $p \leq .001$.

Risk Assessment for Segregation Placement (RASP)

Item	Risk factor	Codes	Points
1	Age	≥ 46 years	0
		36 – 45.99 years	1
		26 – 35.99 years	2
		22 – 25.99 years	3
		≤ 21 years	4
2	Sentence length	≥ 48 months	0
		36 – 47 months	1
		24 – 35 months	2
		≤ 23 months	3
3	Violent offense	No	0
		Yes	1
4	Gang affiliation	No	0
		Yes	1
5	Mental illness	No	0
		Yes	1
6	Custody rating	Minimum	0
		Medium	1
		Maximum (or higher)	2

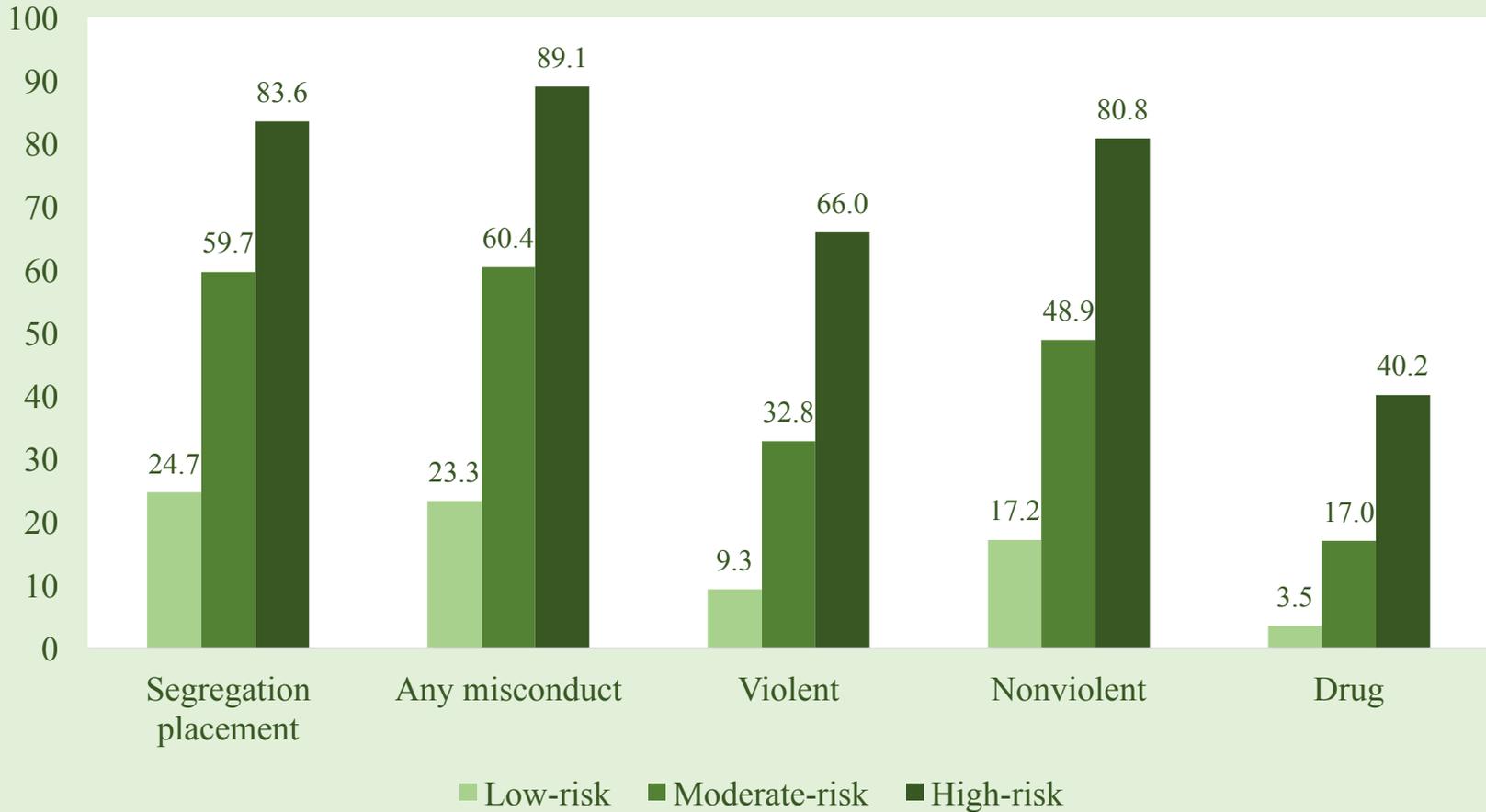
Adverse Outcomes by RASP Score (Validation Sample)



RASP Nominal Risk Categories

Total score	Risk category	% of validation sample
0 – 4	Low-risk	58.6
5 – 8	Moderate-risk	35.1
9 – 12	High-risk	6.3

Adverse Outcomes by RASP Category



AUCs of RASP Scores on Adverse Outcomes

	Construction sample	Validation sample
Total RASP risk score		
Segregation placement	.750	.757
Institutional misconduct	.774	.775
<i>Violent</i>	.780	.776
<i>Nonviolent</i>	.768	.767
<i>Drug</i>	.786	.789
RASP risk category score		
Segregation placement	.701	.705
Institutional misconduct	.721	.722
<i>Violent</i>	.734	.730
<i>Nonviolent</i>	.720	.719
<i>Drug</i>	.743	.745

AUCs for RASP Scores on Adverse Outcomes by Subgroup

	Male (N = 41,708)	Female (N = 6,432)	White (N = 26,925)	Black (N = 21,215)	First time (N = 26,058)	Recidivist (N = 22,082)
Total RASP risk score						
Segregation placement	.757	.726	.749	.764	.770	.748
Institutional misconduct	.777	.727	.763	.786	.787	.767
<i>Violent</i>	.776	.737	.757	.790	.791	.759
<i>Nonviolent</i>	.767	.738	.760	.770	.781	.754
<i>Drug</i>	.784	.704	.779	.803	.793	.793
RASP category score						
Segregation placement	.706	.662	.693	.715	.721	.690
Institutional misconduct	.725	.659	.705	.736	.734	.710
<i>Violent</i>	.731	.679	.709	.745	.746	.710
<i>Nonviolent</i>	.720	.671	.707	.726	.733	.704
<i>Drug</i>	.741	.647	.732	.763	.753	.743

Discussion

- Results of this study support its three hypotheses.
- We created the RASP using only information collected during the intake process.
- This study finds the RASP is a valid predictor of placement in segregation and institutional misconduct.
- It also finds the RASP is a valid predictor of these outcomes across the gender, race, and sentence type inmate subgroups.

Policy Implications

- Corrections officials could administer the RASP during admission to identify high-risk inmates.
- Authorities could then proactively target this group with early rehabilitative services.
- This front-end approach is not meant to be the sole source of treatment in prison.
- Advantage of starting interventions early is that it may help ease the transition from the community to the prison.
- It may also help link high-risk inmates to other prison services (e.g., education, employment, CBT programs).

Closing Remarks

- Administrators must often select the best solution for a problem given the limited resources available.
- The RASP is a smart choice:
 - Six items – easy to score, requires minimal staff time
 - Nonproprietary
 - Identifies high-risk inmates
 - High-risk group is a manageable size (6%) to triage short-term treatment intervention at the front-end of prison stay
- This strategy holds great promise for reducing the need for RH and decreasing misconduct in prison.

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