



# Research Snippet

## What factors are related to disengagement in offenders?

**KEY WORDS:** *offender engagement, motivation, responsivity, incentives*

### What it means

The majority of offenders are engaged (i.e., they demonstrate responsibility and take accountability for their offences and rehabilitation). The current research found that disengaged offenders are more likely to be male, older at admission, have a gang affiliation, and have committed a violent offence. Incentive programs designed to increase offender responsibility and accountability should target these offenders as they could most benefit from such programs.

### What we found

In total, 7,163 (22%) offenders were identified as being disengaged while 24,921 (78%) offenders were engaged. Results indicated that, after controlling for other factors, the characteristics with the strongest relationship to disengagement were being male (93% of disengaged offenders), having committed a violent offence (61% of disengaged offenders), aged 40 years or more admission (32% of disengaged offenders), and having a gang affiliation (14% of disengaged offenders). A breakdown of these factors by security level is provided in the Table.

Overall, maximum security offenders were significantly more likely to be disengaged, followed by medium security and minimum security. Disengaged offenders spent more days in segregation, on average, than engaged offenders (113 days vs. 42 days). Of the 995 disengaged gang members and associates, affiliation with street gangs was the most common (45%), followed by Aboriginal gangs (16%), and motorcycle gangs (9%).

### Why we did this study

The *Safe Streets and Communities Act* emphasizes increasing offender responsibility and accountability. To contribute to this goal, incentives and other strategies could be used to encourage desirable behaviour, including program participation. Examples of incentives used in other jurisdictions include additional access to private visits and time out of cell. The most efficient use of incentives would involve targeting offenders who could benefit the most (i.e.,

disengaged offenders). To design effective incentives that are appropriately targeted, more information is needed on which offenders are disengaged and how they differ from engaged offenders.

*Factors Significantly Associated with Disengagement*

	<i>Min</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>Max</i>
Male	✓	✓	✓
Over 40 years old at admission	✓	✓	✓
Marital Status			
Single	✓	✓	✓
Common-law	x	x	✓
Gang affiliation	✓	✓	✓
Most serious offence type			
Sexual	✓	✓	✓
Robbery	x	✓	x
Other violent <sup>a</sup>	✓	✓	x
Other non-violent <sup>b</sup>	x	x	✓
Sentence length	x	x	✓
Previous federal sentence	✓	✓	✓
Any self-injury	✓	✓	✓

*Note.* ✓ signifies the indicator was associated with disengagement. x signifies the indicator was not associated with disengagement. <sup>a</sup>Excludes homicide. <sup>b</sup>Excludes property and drug offences.

### What we did

This study included all 32,084 offenders who had a completed engagement rating between September 28, 2009 and December 8, 2012. An offender was assessed as engaged if he or she had a “medium” or “high” rating on both the motivation and accountability flags. For offenders with multiple engagement ratings, the first (intake) score was used.

### For more information

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.

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