



# Research in Brief

## Utility of the Items of the Static Factors Assessment (SFA) with Aboriginal Male Offenders

**KEY WORDS:** *risk assessment, Static Factors Assessment, returns to custody, Aboriginal offenders*

### Why we did this study

The Static Factors Assessment (SFA) component of the Offender Intake Assessment (OIA) process is based on the criminal history and offence severity for every offender. Related research with the same population as the current study found that the overall SFA risk rating is working as intended for Aboriginal offenders, but not quite as well as it did for non-Aboriginal offenders. This prompted further exploration to compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders on how they score on these indicators and how the indicators are related to community outcomes.

### What we did

We examined all federal offenders who were granted their first release between April 1, 2006, and March 21, 2008, who had commenced their sentence in 1997 or later, and had a SFA assessment completed. This population included 1,500 Aboriginal offenders and 6,684 non-Aboriginal offenders.

Indicators of the Criminal History Record (CHR) and Offence Severity Record (OSR) subcomponents of the SFA were examined. Outcomes included revocations without a new offence within 8 months of release (to ensure adequate sample size with follow-up data while on community supervision;  $n = 1,400$  Aboriginal and 6,423 non-Aboriginal offenders), as well as returns to custody with any new offence and returns with a new violent offence within 5 years of release.

Sometimes, a series of yes/no SFA items assessed a single construct (e.g., current sentence length). These were combined into a single indicator for analyses, summing the score from the included indicators. This means the total number of indicators used in analyses were smaller than the total number of yes/no indicators in the SFA.

### What we found

Aboriginal offenders scored higher than non-Aboriginal offenders on 25 of the 26 CHR indicators and 50 of the 61 OSR indicators. The vast majority of CHR indicators were related to community outcomes (revocations, readmission with any offence, readmission with violent offence), whereas a minority of the OSR indicators were positively related to the outcomes. Within the OSR

indicators that were related to outcomes for Aboriginal offenders, previous offence indicators were more linked to revocations, whereas current offence indicators were more linked to readmissions with a violent offence.

Despite the overall good performance of the CHR indicators, 10 of the 26 indicators had meaningfully smaller relationships to revocations for Aboriginal offenders than for non-Aboriginal offenders. Similarly, for Aboriginal offenders, 8 and 14 CHR indicators had smaller relationships to readmission for any offence and for any violent offence, respectively. Depending on the outcome, between 11 and 15 of the 61 OSR indicators had smaller relationships to outcomes for Aboriginal offenders.

### What it means

Aboriginal offenders have more static risk indicators on the SFA than non-Aboriginal offenders. The indicators of the CHR subcomponent of the SFA appear to function well for Aboriginal offenders, whereas the majority of the items from the OSR subcomponent are not related to community outcomes. This latter result is not surprising since the OSR is not intended to be predictive of outcomes (it is primarily intended to assess range of offences and harm to victims). Additionally, several of the CHR indicators are not as strongly related to outcomes for Aboriginal offenders as they are for non-Aboriginal offenders. Greater understanding of these findings would benefit from contextualizing them within the unique cultural and social background of Aboriginal offenders.

### For more information

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