

Herrington, V. (2009). Assessing the prevalence of intellectual disability among young male prisoners *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 53(5), 397-410.

Research has not found intellectual functioning or intellectual disability (ID) to predispose an individual to criminality, but there is support that intellectual disadvantage is predictive of offending. Earlier research suggests while many prisoners are intellectually disadvantaged, few have moderate or severe ID, with most falling in the mild or borderline range. This may be because severe ID is more likely to be identified, and thus more likely diverted from offending.

The present study aims to find the prevalence of ID in a prison for young offenders and to compare the characteristics of inmates with ID to those without. A stratified sample of 185 individuals were assessed using The Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (Second Ed.; KBIT) the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Second Ed.; VABS₂), and a semi-structured interview.

Key Findings:

- **Intelligence:** 10.4% ($n = 16$) of 154 individuals scored 69 or below, indicating a significant impairment in cognitive functioning
- **Adaptive behaviour:** None of the 156 individuals had an adaptive behaviour composite score of 69 or less. Therefore no one could be classified as having an ID based on strict diagnostic terms
- 11% ($n = 14$) had borderline levels of functioning in intelligence and adaptive behaviour (**borderline ID**)

Characteristics of offenders with borderline ID: Significantly higher number of offenders with borderline ID had been in temporary accommodation immediately prior to imprisonment, and had received assistance around reading and writing at school.

Conclusion: The findings show a lower incidence of cognitive impairment than might be expected compared to other prison-based IQ-focused studies because of the strict diagnostic criteria for ID. The findings also show that differences do exist between inmates with borderline ID and those without.