

Name of Tool	Violence Risk Scale: Sexual Offenders (VRS:SO)
Category	Sexual Offending (Validated)
Author / Publisher	Wong, Olver. Nicholaichuk and Gordon
Year	2003

Description

- The VRS:SO is a 24-item assessment derived from the original Violence Risk Scale (VRS).
- The VRS:SO is designed to assess risk of sexual recidivism in forensic populations.
- The tool is designed to measure change in the level of risk before and after treatment/intervention. The VRS:SO scores are used to inform case conceptualisation and treatment planning ([Olver et al., 2018b](#)).
- The measure is comprised of 7 static and 17 dynamic items which are empirically, theoretically or conceptually linked to sexual recidivism. It is measured on a 4-point scale from 0-3.
- The measure generates pre and post-treatment composite scores related to therapeutic change and risk change.

Age Appropriateness

18+

Assessor Qualifications

Assessors must possess the relevant training and experience in conducting sexual violence risk assessments. Assessors should also undergo the relevant training for this tool.

Strengths

- The tool is deemed advantageous in regard to assessing risk and identifying an individual's motivation for change based on dynamic risk factors over the course of a period of time or treatment ([Maltais and Sribney, 2018](#)).
- [Olver et al. \(2016\)](#) found that the VRS-SO test scores demonstrated construct validity risk in those who committed sexual offences.
- The sexual deviance, criminality and treatment responsivity factors of the VRS:SO were found to correlate in significantly meaningful ways with the Stable 2000; thus, indicating its psychological constructs relate to risks and needs in terms of sexual offending ([Olver et al., 2018b](#)).
- The CPORT risk tool and CASIC scale ([Seto and Eke, 2015](#)) found that there were moderate positive correlations between the VRS:SO's criminality and sexual deviance scores respectively. This indicates an underlying construct for measuring risk in those who have committed only internet offences ([Maltais and Sribney, 2018](#)).

Empirical Grounding



The Manual states that each of the static and dynamic items found in the tool are grounded in empirical research drawn from risk assessment literature, with theoretical underpinnings from Andrews and Bonta's (2010) Psychology of Criminal Conduct, advances in relapse prevention theory, and the 'Stages of Change' model ([Olver et al., 2014](#); [Prochaska and DiClemente, 1992](#)).

Inter-Rater Reliability	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sowden (2013) reported ICCs of .90 and .86 for pre-treatment and post-treatment total scores in a randomly selected subsample of treated high risk Canadian adult males. • Beggs and Grace (2010) found excellent ICCs of .90 and .92 for the pre- and post-treatment dynamic total scores on the VRS:SO. • Olver et al. (2007) - the VRS:SO also achieved high ICC values for the composite pre and post-treatment scores (.74 and .79 respectively).

Validation History

General Predictive Accuracy	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eher and colleagues (2015) administered a number of risk assessment tools to a sample of paedophilic individuals and carried out ROC and Cox Regression analyses to test predictive accuracy. The VRS:SO significantly predict sexual recidivism, more so than the PCL:R, Stable-2007 and Static-99/Stable-2007 combined score. Moreover, it was found that when this was combined with an exclusive diagnosis of paedophilia incremental validity was added. • Sowden (2013) - pre and post-treatment scores on the VRS:SO were found to have moderate accuracy in predicting sexual (AUCs = .61 and .62, respectively) and violent (AUC = .63 and .66, respectively) recidivism in a sample of high risk Canadian males who had received treatment for their sexual offending. • Olver et al. (2012) - pre and post-treatment scores were found to significantly predict sexual and violent recidivism (AUCs = .65 and .67 for pre and post- respectively across

both outcomes) in a prospective multisite Canadian study of 571 individuals who had committed sexual offences.

- [Beggs and Grace \(2010\)](#) found large AUCs of .78 for pre and .81 for post-treatment scores in relation to sexual recidivism.

- [Olver et al. \(2007\)](#) - the composite pre and post-treatment scores generated AUCs of .71 and .72 respectively.

- [Sowden and Olver \(2017\)](#) assessed a sample of 180 Canadian individuals who had committed sexual offences. VRS: SO scores were found to predict sexual, non-sexual violence, any violence (including sexual) and general recidivism.

- In a sample of 539 individuals convicted of sexual offences in New Zealand and Canada, [Olver et al. \(2014\)](#) found there was moderate to high predictive accuracy for a follow up average of fifteen and a half years.

- [Sowden and Olver \(2017\)](#) administered the VRS:SO to a Canadian sample of individuals who had committed sexual offences (n=180). Significant predictive accuracy was demonstrated for various types of recidivism: sexual, non-sexual violent, any violent and general. A reduction in all types of recidivism was evident in VRS:SO change scores.

- A study by [Olver and colleagues \(2016\)](#) of those who had committed sexual offences (n=668) found the VRS:SO items and total scores predicted sexual, violent and general recidivism for five and ten year follow-up periods.

Validation History

Applicability: Females

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No empirical evidence available.

Validation History

Applicability: Ethnic Minorities

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No empirical evidence available.

Validation History

Applicability: Mental Disorders

No empirical evidence available.

Contribution to Risk Practice

- The VRS:SO can enable assessors to identify static and dynamic factors relevant to the risk of sexual reoffending.
- Many of the factors included in the VRS:SO can be used to identify treatment needs and for treatment planning.
- The tool can contribute towards the measurement of progress or deterioration in factors related to the individual's level of risk.
- The tool can aid assessors in the development of offence analyses and risk management strategies.
- Some VRS:SO items (e.g. community support, release to high risk situations) specifically address risk management responses of the individual in the community.
- [Olver \(2004\)](#) maintained "The use of logistic regression demonstrated a clinically useful and systematic means of combining risk and change information into post-treatment risk appraisals."
- Based on an initial investigation conducted by [Maltais and Sribney \(2018\)](#), there is evidence to suggest that the VRS:SO could be used with those who have only committed internet offences; although caution should be exercised until further research is conducted.

Other Considerations

- The risk categories and recidivism estimates for the VRS:SO were recently updated by [Olver and colleagues \(2018a\)](#).