

Name of Tool	Violent Extremist Risk Assessment 2 Revised (VERA-2R)
Category	Violence Risk (Awaiting Validation)
Author / Publisher	Pressman, Rinne, Duits, and Flockton
Year	2016

Description

- The VERA-2R is a structured professional judgment (SPJ) tool that aims to assess the risk of violent extremism in those with histories of extremist violence or convictions for terrorism-related offences. It includes 34 indicators related to violent extremism and protective factors, and an additional 11 evidence-based indicators such as mental disorders and non-violent criminal history ([Pressman et al., 2018](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#)). The latest update to the tool regarding the evidence base for risk factors was in 2018 ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- The VERA-2R focuses on terrorism motivated by extremist ideologies of all types, carried out alone or within a group ([Hart et al., 2017](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#)). The items of the tool are divided into six domains: (1) beliefs, attitudes, and ideology; (2) social context and intention; (3) history, action, and capacity; (4) commitment and motivation; (5) protective or risk-mitigating items; (6) Additional factors. Items are rated low, medium, or high, with protective and risk-mitigating indicators being scored in reverse with low indicating no change, moderate indicating some positive change and high indicating a significant positive change. The final output uses risk banding as well as a narrative formulation based on a weighting of all of the available evidence, including the findings from the risk and protective indicators ([Pressman et al., 2018](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- Assessors integrate all known information from available sources including case file and background reports, interviews, intelligence and security assessments, and court records to determine individual item evaluative ratings. The totality of this information is considered in generating a final judgment relating to the risk of extremist violence ([van der Heide et al., 2019](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- The tool is available in English, Dutch, French, and German. Finnish and Swedish versions will follow in the near future ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- The VERA-2R is used in both pre-crime and post-crime situations, and can inform risk assessment, risk management, and intervention decisions ([Pressman & Flockton, 2014](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#); [van der Heide et al., 2019](#)).
- Writing about the VERA-2 (2012), the developers note the tool should be used alongside, and not in place of, other applicable assessments, which may include general violence risk, intellectual functioning, and personality assessments. The developers express caution when using the tool for individuals under surveillance who do not have a history of convictions for violent extremism ([Pressman & Flockton, 2012](#); [Pressman & Flockton, 2014](#)).

Age Appropriateness

Youths and adults ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).

Assessor Qualifications

- Intended for use by a range of professionals trained in a variety of disciplines (security and intelligence analysts, forensic social workers, police, psychologists, and psychiatrists) in any judicial setting (forensic mental health, court, police, intelligence, prison, prosecution or any other relevant setting). It is preferred that assessors have experience in undertaking individual assessments or are professionally authorised to conduct risk assessments (Pressman et al, 2019).
- Assessors must complete standardised VERA-2R training and demonstrate an understanding of the radicalisation process, violent extremism and terrorism. A follow-up training day every year afterwards is recommended ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).

Tool Development

- Items on the VERA (2009) were developed based on the literature related to violent extremism. A revised and updated version, the VERA-2, was developed in 2010 following consultation with and feedback from stakeholders ([Pressman & Flockton, 2012](#); [Pressman & Flockton 2014](#)). The VERA-2 was further updated and revised in 2016 into the VERA-2R. The current VERA-2R was most recently updated in 2018 ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- The structure of the VERA-2R is based on empirically validated SPJ tools designed to assess violence risk in adults and adolescents, including the HCR-20 (Webster et al., 1997) and SAVRY (Borum et al., 2006) ([Pressman & Flockton 2014](#); [Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- [Beardsley & Beech \(2013\)](#) applied the VERA (2009) to five case studies of high-profile terrorists, using publically available information through an online search engine. The authors found that the VERA risk factors were easily applied to the case studies, across a range of ideologies and regardless of whether the individual acted alone or in a group. VERA items were relevant, thus supporting their inclusion in the tool. The inter-rater reliability between two raters in the study was good, with kappa values >0.76. The authors note that a risk formulation exploring an individual's pathway to violent extremism is necessary for proper weighting of the indicators.
- [Herzog-Evans \(2018\)](#) notes that the protective factors are the inverse of six of the tool's risk factors, and questions why the inverse of the remaining risk factors are not included as protective factors as well.
- [Herzog-Evans \(2018\)](#), examining VERA-2R in a French context, notes that the tool appears not to be suitable for low-level extremists, those who have not yet committed an act of violent extremism, or those who law enforcement are vaguely concerned about but for whom they lack credible evidence of extremism. Therefore the tool's definition of violent extremist or terrorist may have a higher threshold than the definition used in some countries.

General Notes

- VERA-2R is in use in Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia ([Pressman et al., 2019](#)).
- A group of experts summarised the strengths and limitations of the VERA-2R. Strengths included:
 - the inclusion of protective factors;
 - the tool's applicability to all ideological types;
 - well-described criteria; and
 - that the tool provides a rich source of information for risk assessment and risk management.

Limitations included:

- the time and resources required;

- potential lack of access to classified information for some users; and
- the need for more empirical studies to support claims of content and deductive validity ([Lloyd, 2019](#)).
- [Pressman \(2016\)](#) states that the VERA-2R demonstrates deductive validity (measures factors relevant to a given conviction) when used within a legal system that uses risk factor definitions in line with those used in the tool.
- [Pressman \(2016\)](#) states the tool has high consumer validity, in that experts reported that it assists and supports them in their assessments and professional judgements, and good face validity, in that the tool appeared relevant to users.
- [Pressman & Flockton \(2014\)](#) state that the tool demonstrated good construct validity in an unpublished study in a high-security correctional facility in Australia.
- [van der Heide et al., \(2019\)](#) reported on a study by Van der Heide and Schuurman (2018) that found a Dutch probation service had implemented the VERA-2R but scarcely used it, citing limited practical utility due to capacity issues and lack of information. Similarly, an initiative to adapt and implement the tool in Indonesia was not successful, in part due to the resources required ([Sumpter, 2020](#)).
- There is cyber-version of the VERA (CYBERA), adapted from the VERA-2 and meant to function alongside it as a complimentary tool ([Gilpérez-López et al., 2017](#)).
- The VERA-2R is a restricted-access tool only able to be purchased by individual professionals and multidisciplinary teams carrying out threat assessments, and who have undertaken the standardised training ([Hart et al., 2017](#)).
- Within Europe, the trademark and copyright for the VERA-2R is held by the NIFP, Dutch Custodial Services. Outside of Europe, copyright and trademark are held by D.E. Pressman.