

Name of Tool	Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk Version 2 (B-SAFER)
Category	Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking (Validated)
Author / Publisher	Kropp and Hart
Year	2010

Description

- The B-SAFER is a 10-item structured guide for the assessment and management of risk in adult males and females with a history of intimate partner violence (IPV).
- The items contained within the instrument are divided into two main sections: participant’s history of intimate partner violence (Section 1) and the participant’s psychological and social functioning (Section 2). A third domain was added in the Second Version of the tool in 2010 called ‘Victim Vulnerability’ factors containing five risk factors relating to the victim (e.g. unsafe living situation and inadequate access to resources) ([Storey and Strand, 2012](#); [Svalin, 2018](#)).
- The instrument does not apply cut-off scores to determine the nature or degree of risk posed by an individuals. It requires users to consider the risk to intimate partners if no intervention was taken, with risk rated as low, moderate or high ([Kropp and Hart, 2004](#)).
- The instrument is appropriate for use with male and females aged 18 years and older.
- This was developed to help police make risk management decisions. The authors developed this tool in 2005 due to the fact that “the SARA may not be the optimal tool for use by police because it is relatively long and requires specific judgments about mental health, such as personality disorder” ([Kropp and Hart, 2004](#)).

Age Appropriateness

18+

Assessor Qualifications

Assessors should meet the following minimal qualifications:

- Training and experience in individual domestic violence assessments
- Expertise in the area of violence against women in relationships
 - Users should have relevant knowledge, training and experience in individual assessment with perpetrators and victims of spousal assault and intimate partner violence.
 - An assessor is required to make a judgment relating to a psychiatric diagnosis on two occasions: the presence of a mental health disorder and a substance use problem ([Kropp, Hart and Belfrage, 2005](#)).
 - Requires victim interview.

Strengths

• It takes less time to complete making it less resource-intensive. It also has removed some of the technical jargon from SARA relating to mental disorder ([Kropp and Hart, 2004](#); [Storey and Strand, 2012](#)).

Empirical Grounding



This tool was derived from the SARA and is grounded in professional and scientific literature on spousal violence ([Kropp and Hart, 2004](#)).

Inter-Rater Reliability



a) UK Research

None available at present.

b) International Research

- [Slavin et al. \(2017\)](#) tested the second version of the B-SAFER with three police employees conducting 23 pairwise B-SAFER assessments. The lowest level of inter-rater agreement was for intimate relationship problems and mental disorders. It was at its highest level for violations of court orders. Inter-rater reliability was satisfactory for assessments of violent threats and thoughts and fair for item 3 ‘escalation.’ The decision was made not to speak to victims as part of this assessment, suggesting that the information gleaned from victim interviews is pivotal to the B-SAFER risk assessment process. The authors believe that this missing information likely contributed to the lower inter-rater agreement on certain items and the missing values rate.
- [Thijssen and Ruiters \(2011\)](#) - using four of the ten items presented in the original B-SAFER, the authors found poor to moderate inter-rater reliability (ICC), ranging from .21 (‘Mental health Problems’) to .74 (‘General Criminality’). The authors attribute poor reliability to insufficient information contained within the client’s files. The items with good inter-rated reliability were violent acts, general criminality and substance use problems.
- [Au et al. \(2008\)](#) - men with histories of IPV scored significantly higher ratings on the original B-SAFER than men with no history. B-SAFER correctly classified 95% of the sample.
- [Kropp and Hart \(2004\)](#) - Inter-rater reliability in the first version of the B-SAFER was claimed to be ‘excellent.’ As the study utilised qualitative analysis, however, there is no statistical score.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfrage and Strand (2012) found that practice in Stockholm of targeting resources at high risk cases affected predictive results for recidivism.
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Validation History

General Predictive Accuracy	
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a) UK Research	None available at present.
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b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storey et al. (2014) examined the use of the second version of the tool by Swedish police officers in assessing 249 IPV cases. It was found that police officers' ratings of risk made by the tool predicted recidivism rates. The authors suggested that the B-SAFER may be better-suited to police officers. • A study by Loinaz (2014) found that the original B-SAFER score predicted recidivism with an AUC of .76. ROC analyses found that the tool's predictive validity was 70%. The authors cautioned that there are still some uncertainties with the tool, for there are a high number of false positives in the sample. They surmise that this may be related to the follow-up period of 40 release cases for 15 months. • Au et al. (2008) assessed the original B-SAFER for IPV offending in Hong Kong. It was found that it had good 'concurrent validity,' with scores being able to measure the instances of IPV. The 'construct validity' of the tool in terms of its ability to classify IPV perpetrators from non-perpetrators was also found to be strong. • Gerbrandij et al. (2018) tested the second version of the B-SAFER on a sample of 158 low-risk individuals. Weak, non-significant predictive validity was found for both violent and stalking reoffending when considered in isolation. The B-SAFER item 'violations of course orders' was a consistent predictor for stalking reoffending but not violence. • A doctoral thesis found that item 6 'General Criminality' on the B-SAFER was most strongly correlated with the severity of repeat violence and the likelihood of repeat IPV incidents in the current situation. Item 7 'Intimate Relationship Problems' also strongly correlated with repeated intimate partner violence episodes (Svalin, 2018).
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Validation History	
Applicability: Females	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Authors state that the tool can be used with all adults who have committed IPV “regardless of gender or sexual orientation” (Kropp, Hart and Belfrage, 2005: 71).</p>	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storey and Strand (2012) carried out a study involving police officers’ assessment of 52 women in Sweden and compared and contrasted the use of the original version of the B-SAFER with a previous study (Belfrage and Strand, 2008) that focused on male perpetrators. The results showed that the total B-SAFER scores were higher for men and that females were rated as being higher risk based on fewer risk factors. The authors hypothesise that the police officers may have considered additional risk factors to those on the B-SAFER, given the lower number of risk factors present within female perpetrators. This suggests that the B-SAFER may be insufficient for assessing the risk of IPV in female perpetrators.

Validation History	
Applicability: Ethnic Minorities	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>No evidence available at present.</p>	

Validation History	
Applicability: Mental Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>No evidence available at present.</p>	

Contribution to Risk Practice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Canadian Association of Threat Assessment Professions recommends that in cases where the B-SAFER is used (e.g. due to time constraints), the SARA tool should thereafter be utilised to gain a more in-depth assessment of IPV cases. The inclusion of victim vulnerability factors in addition to those relating to the perpetrator in the second version of the B-SAFER was noteworthy (Kropp and Hart, 2015). • In some European countries, the B-SAFER is known as the Police Version of the SARA (SARA-PV) (Kropp and Hart, 2015). • Storey et al. (2014) maintained that B-SAFER may be better-suited to police usage than other tools such as SARA. 	

- Comparing antisocial (n=341) with family-only (n=316) perpetrators showed that the antisocial ones displayed significantly more risk factors on the B-SAFER. In particular, violent thoughts or threats as well as escalations of violent and threatening behaviour were linked to an increased risk for acute and severe or deadly intimate partner violence ([Pettersson, Strand and Selenius, 2016](#)).

Other Considerations

- The B-SAFER is more focused on marital relationships than other types of intimate partner relationships ([Echeburúa et al., 2009](#)). Intimate relationship problems in the B-SAFER refer to failures to maintain an intimate partner relationship that is stable in nature (i.e. free from conflict and/or separations) ([Pettersson, Strand and Selenius, 2016](#)).
- The tool has shown to be useful in differentiating sub-types of those who have offended (non-pathological and antisocial pathological), classifying 79% of the sample correctly ([Loinaz, 2014](#)).
- [Slavin et al. \(2017\)](#) suggested that the best way to use this tool would be to educate police officers on personality and mental health factors, since psychiatric disorders have been strongly linked to lethal IPV cases.
- Future research should focus on the applicability of the tool to female perpetrators of IPV, including additional risk factors to determine whether this may be more suitable to managing women who have committed IPV ([Storey and Strand, 2012](#)).
- A study by [Nesset et al. \(2017\)](#) looked at use of the tool during emergency visits by the police in potential IPV cases. Six out of the 15 items on the second version of the B-SAFER tool were used as a basis for decision-making about which actions to take: arresting the perpetrator and/or relocating the victim; no further action. It appeared that physical violence and substance abuse problems increased the odds of arrest; whilst mental health problems and the presence of children at the scene made it more likely that victims would be relocated. The authors maintained that the B-SAFER enabled police to gather data and make decisions about how to manage the case in 'real time.' Results from research suggest that the inclusion of a victim interview should strengthen the accuracy of the tool.
- Assessors using the B-SAFER are required to assess the risk of future intimate partner violence looking at different potential scenarios. This scenario is not as well-developed as it is in SARAV³. It is surmised that this is related to a lack of reasoning about the situational aspects in relation to global risk. It is, therefore, recommended that greater weight is ascribed to situational factors in global risk assessments ([Svalin, 2018](#)).

Name of Tool	Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide Version 3 (SARA ^{v3})
Category	Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking (Validated)
Author / Publisher	Kropp and Colleagues
Year	2015

Description

- The SARA is a 24-item structured guide for spousal risk evaluations in individuals who are suspected of, or who are being treated for, spousal abuse. Eight items describe the nature of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in terms of the diversity, chronicity and escalation of behaviours as well as supervision violations. Ten items are coded on the perpetrator's issues with social, interpersonal and psychological adjustments. Six items describe vulnerabilities that could interfere with a victim's ability, opportunity or motivation to engage in self-protective behaviour (Kropp and Hart, 2015).
- The SARA helps characterise the risk an individual poses to his spouse, children, another family member, or any other person involved in terms of likelihood, imminence and severity. The instrument does not use actuarial or statistical methods to support decision-making about risk; it is a structural professional judgment method offering guidelines for collecting relevant information and making decisions ([Messing and Thaller, 2015](#)).
- Access to clinical records (if applicable) and criminal justice case files are required. It is also necessary for the perpetrator and victim to take part in interviews ([Messing and Thaller, 2015](#)).
- In Step 1, evaluators gather and document basic case information. In the second step, they identify the presence of 24 factors across the three domains (nature of IPV, perpetrator factors and victim vulnerabilities). In Step 3, evaluators assess the relevance of factors in relation to the perpetration or prevention of future IPV. In the fourth step, evaluators describe the most likely scenarios of future IPV. In Step 5, evaluators recommend ways to manage IPV risk considering the factors and scenarios identified. In the sixth and final step, evaluators document their judgment regarding the overall level of risk (Kropp and Hart, 2015).

Age Appropriateness

18+

Kropp and Hart (2015) suggest that the SARA^{v3} may be of assistance for evaluating adolescents aged between 15 to 18 years; however, research relating to its effectiveness with this age group is limited.

Assessor Qualifications

Assessors are intended to have advanced training ([Messing and Thaller, 2013](#)) and experience with the victims or perpetrators of IPV (Kropp and Hart, 2015). Assessors should also keep abreast with updates in research relating to IPV (Kropp and Hart, 2015).

Strengths

- A discretionary clinical over-ride is available for situations that are not captured by the risk factors found in the tool.
- Can be used with males and females, regardless of sexual orientation or culture (Kropp and Hart, 2015), as well as mentally disordered individuals (Wong and Gordon, 1999).
- The SARA has been used internationally in Australia, the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Hong Kong and Singapore ([Messing and Thaller, 2013](#)).
- A third version of the tool was developed to include updates to the empirical literature on IPV risk assessment. Version 3 of the SARA has addressed problems from the earlier version raised in feedback from users of the tool: the critical item ratings have been eliminated; three items referring to the supervision violations have been combined into one risk factor; clearer and more consistent definitions of past and recent are used. Vulnerability factors reflecting barriers to a victim’s ability, opportunity or motivation to engage in self-protective behaviour have been included to help develop safety plans (Kropp and Hart, 2015).

Empirical Grounding



- The original version of the SARA is based on empirical and clinical literatures. Also covers static and dynamic factors drawn partly from the HCR-20. Developments in the literature since the original SARA was published have been included in the third version of the tool.
- The Spousal Assault Risk Assessment is a set of guidelines based on the structured professional judgement approach to risk assessment and it is designed to ensure that appropriate risk assessment is conducted for domestic violence. It consists of 20 items that have been identified from the literature as being of relevance to the likelihood of future domestic violence offending. Version 3 of the tool reflects advancements in IPV risk assessment technology and risk factors, particularly the importance of victim vulnerability (Kropp and Hart, 2015).
- A broad definition of IPV is used, extending to violence in any intimate (i.e. sexual, romantic) relationship regardless of legal status or the gender of people involved. Violence in this context refers to actual, attempted or threatened physical harm (Kropp and Hart, 2015).

Inter-Rater Reliability



a) UK Research

None available at present.

b) International Research


All of the research at present relates to previous versions of the SARA. Research on SARA^{v3} will be added as it becomes available.

- [Belfrage et al. \(2012\)](#) found low to moderate reliability of the ratings between the first and second contact with police for three of the items within the SARA ranging from .56 to .68.

- [Grann and Wedin \(2002\)](#) found an excellent ICC value for the original SARA of .85 in a sample of 18 cases. Inter-rater reliability was lower for part 1 (‘assessing general

	<p>violence) scores and part 2 ('assessing spousal support') scores (.74 and .88 respectively).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicholls et al (2013): "The [original] SARA research reports nine AUCs ranging from 0.52-0.65. The interrater reliability (IRR) for the SARA was excellent for total scores, good for the summary risk ratings, and poor for the critical items."
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Validation History

General Predictive Accuracy	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<p>All of the research at present relates to previous versions of the SARA. Research on SARA^{v3} will be added as it becomes available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llor-Esteban et al. (2016) used the factors from the original version of the SARA as used in a Spanish population to classify men sentenced for IPV into groups ranked by high, medium and low risk. • Belfrage et al. (2012) - in an 18-month follow-up, the SARA^{v2} had moderate predictive accuracy (AUC = .63). Higher numerical scores on the SARA were associated with recidivism. • Helmus and Bourgon (2011) - previous studies relating to the original SARA found low to high accuracy between composite scores and intimate partner violence (IPV) recidivism (AUC = .59 - .77) and violent recidivism (AUC = .58 - .64). Similar predictive accuracy was found for the summary risk ratings and IPV (AUC = .56 - .87) and violent recidivism (AUC = .55 - .66). • Grann and Wedin (2002) - findings suggest marginal predictive ability for recidivism in the original SARA with AUCs ranging between .49 to .52 at the 6 month follow-up period. • Olver and Jung (2017) found that SARA scores showed incremental validity and the psychological adjustment domain of SARA contributed to the prediction of IPV. • Jung and Buro (2017) tested a modified version of the SARA (consisting of 14 items) on 246 male perpetrators charged for IPV offences. Moderate predictive accuracy

	<p>was shown for predicting IPV behaviours: post-index IPV charges and IPV convictions generated AUCs of .68 and .74 respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messing and Thaller (2013) reported an AUC of .628 and a K-score of 6 in the original SARA.
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Validation History											
Applicability: Females	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> </tr> </table>										
a) UK Research	None available at present.										
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a study that included 43 females who had offended, the instrument was found to work equally well across genders. A correlation level of .37 (significant at the .005 level) was found with females using the SARA. It was found to have a greater ability to predict risk than other risk assessment tools (e.g. Domestic Violence Screening Inventory) (Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation Office of Planning, Policy and Evaluation, 2011). 										

Validation History											
Applicability: Ethnic Minorities	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> </tr> </table>										
No evidence available at present.											

Validation History											
Applicability: Mental Disorders	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 20px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%;"></td> </tr> </table>										
No empirical evidence available at present.											
SARAV ³ contains a question about the presence of major mental disorders.											

Contribution to Risk Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SARA has the ability to create an awareness of risk factors pertinent to the individual’s risk of reoffending. • The SARA can aid assessors in identifying risks and responsivity factors specific to the individual (e.g. criminal lifestyle, presence of mental health problems). • The dynamic factors included in the SARA can contribute to the determination of the level of monitoring / rehabilitative efforts required.

- The SARA can aid assessors in developing risk formulations and risk management strategies.
- The original SARA and the Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER) are consistently cited in the literature ([Campbell et al., 2003](#); [Vitacco et al., 2012](#); [Williams and Houghton, 2004](#)) as credible tools for assessing risk of violence and establishing a prevention plan. While no instrument or process can perfectly predict the risk for intimate partner violence, these instruments provide a systematic way to assess risk for violence and re-offense ([Wilson and Goss, 2013](#)).
- Since the SARA was said to be more ‘user-friendly’ and ‘adaptable’ than other risk assessment tools, it was adapted for use in South Africa ([Londt, 2014](#)).
- Consideration should be given as to whether to use other SPJ tools in conjunction with the SARA. If there is a history of physical assault outside of intimate relationships, the evaluator should consider using the Historical Clinical Risk-20 Version 3 (HCR-20^{v3}). For IPV cases involving sexual assault where the perpetrator has a history of sexual violence outside of intimate relationships, using the Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol (RSVP) should be considered. In cases where there is long-term targeting of a victim following the end of a relationship, the evaluator should consider using the Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM) (Kropp and Hart, 2015).

Other Considerations

- SARA’s validity is dependent on well-trained professionals who possess the assessment skills needed to classify and identify individuals who have committed intimate partner offences that have apparent and known DV-risk factors.
- The SARA does not assess relationship status.
- Observed fluctuation in inter-rater reliabilities could be due to the fact that the SARA is not an actuarial measure. Moreover, the previous studies may have used incomplete records to score the SARA.
- The developers of the SARA caution that if no information is available about a particular factor then this should be left uncoded (i.e. omitted from the assessment). When items are omitted, evaluators should take note of this and qualify their judgments accordingly, considering how their opinions may have changed if those item(s) had been completed (Kropp and Hart, 2015).
- To address the time constraints of SARA, [Kropp, Hart and Belfrage \(2005\)](#) developed a shortened version of the SARA, the Brief Spousal Assault Form for the Evaluation of Risk (B-SAFER). Much of the new literature about IPV risk assessment has been incorporated into the B-SAFER (Kropp and Hart, 2015). There is a separate RATED entry for this tool.