

Name of Tool	Psychopathy Checklist Revised (PCL-R)
Category	Responsivity Issues (Validated)
Author / Publisher	Hare
Year	2003

Description

- The PCL-R is a 20-item scale for the assessment of psychopathy in research, clinical and forensic settings. It involves a semi-structured interview, file and collateral information.
- The PCL-R produces dimensional scores; it can also be used to classify or diagnose individuals for research and clinical purposes.
- Examiners rate each item on a 3-point scale: 0 (not applicable – the individual does not exhibit the trait or behaviour in question); 1 (applies to a certain extent – a match in some respects but with too many exceptions or doubts); 2 (applies – a reasonably good match in most essential respects).
- The PCL-R has a categorical use, whereby its scores indicate whether an individual meets the criteria of a psychopathy. It also has a dimensional use, relating to interpersonal or affective (Factor 1) or behavioural (Factor 2) features of psychopathy ([DeMatteo and Edens, 2006](#)).

Age Appropriateness

18+

Assessor Qualifications

Clinicians should possess the following qualifications: (1) an advanced degree in the social, medical or behavioural sciences; (2) completed graduate courses in psychopathology, psychometric theory and statistics; (3) knowledge of the clinical and research literature relating to psychopathy; (4) professional credentials with the appropriate regulatory body that regulates the assessment and diagnosis of mental disorders or be legally authorised to conduct psychological assessments; (5) demonstrated experience with forensic or other relevant populations; (6) adequate training and experience in administering the PCL-R.

Training workshops are offered by Professor Hare's Darkstone Research Group, Ltd. (see <http://www.hare.org/training/> for details) amongst other providers There is a web-based training programme offered by the Global Institute of Forensic Research that has been certified by the Darkstone Research Group (see <https://www.gifrinc.com/pcl-r/> for details).

Strengths

- Large research base for the PCL-R. It measures personality traits and behaviours relating to a widely understood concept of psychopathy (e.g. [Berrios, 1996](#); [Cleckley, 1976](#); Pichot, 1978).

- For a measure that is not a risk assessment, it has the ability to predict violent recidivism ([Daffern, 2007](#)).

Empirical Grounding

Since 1980, the PCL-R has been developed and found to be applicable to diverse populations and identifies psychopathy as a risk factor for violence in both mentally and non-mentally disordered individuals.

PCL-R scores have been incorporated into other instruments such as the VRAG and the HCR-20 (Hare, 1991). These are no longer included in the revised version of the VRAG and the third version of the HCR-20.

Inter-Rater Reliability

a) UK Research

- [Logan and Blackburn \(2009\)](#) - large correlation coefficients (rho) observed; between raters ($r = .83$), composite score ($r = .73$), Factor 1 scores ($r = .73$) and Factor 2 scores ($r = .77$).
- [Morrissey et al. \(2007\)](#) - the PCL-R achieved high ICC of .80 within high secure forensic settings.

b) International Research

- [Blais, Forth and Hare \(2017\)](#) carried out an examination of inter-rater reliability across a sample of 280 trained raters. It was found that the cases of individuals with high psychopathy scores showed better reliability than those with moderate to low ones. A public significance statement was released with the article cautioning that whilst the reliability of the PCL-R was good amongst the raters attending the training, it did not meet the recommended standard for criminal cases.
- [Ismail and Looman \(2016\)](#) examined the inter-rater reliability for each of the PCL-R scores using archival data of 178 sexually offending individuals based in a correctional facility in Canada. The ICC range was good to excellent for the individual score items, apart from pathological lying.
- [Rettenberger et al. \(2010\)](#) found an excellent ICC value of .93 for the PCL-R
- [Laurell and Daderman \(2007\)](#) reported an excellent ICC value for the PCL-R (.96)
- Hare (2003) reports ICCs of .86 for North American males who have offended.

Validation History

General Predictive Accuracy




a) UK Research

- [Coid et al. \(2009\)](#) – the PCL-R generated moderate AUCs in the prediction of violence (.64) and general recidivism (.65).
- [Coid et al. \(2007\)](#) –the PCL-R had moderate predictive accuracy for various types of offences: Violence (AUC=.64), Theft (AUC=.66), Drugs (AUC=.60), and Any Offence (AUC=.65).
- [Cooke et al. \(2001\)](#) – the PCL-R generated a moderate AUC score of .65.


b) International Research

- [Krstic et al. \(2017\)](#) administered structural equation modelling and found that the PCL-R factors provided a basis for allocating those who have committed sexual offences into four distinct sub-types.
- [Rettenberger et al. \(2010\)](#) found the PCL-R generated high AUC values for sexual recidivism (.73), general violent recidivism (.75), and general criminal recidivism (.80) in a sub-group of sexual offending individuals.
- [Farrington, Jolliffe and Johnstone \(2008\)](#) - In a meta-analytic study, the PCL-R generated a moderate AUC value of .69.
- [Olver and Wong \(2006\)](#) - Composite PCL-R score obtained moderate predictive accuracy in relation to re-offending rates for non-sexual and sexual offending (AUCS= .61 - .73)
- [Olver et al. \(2013\)](#) examined the PCL-R in large samples of Canadian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals. Analyses of predictive accuracy found that medium effects were found in predicting violent, non-violent and general criminal recidivism for both groups.
- [Abbiati and colleagues \(2018\)](#) applied the PCL-R to 52 individuals with violent offences in a Swiss prison to evaluate its predictive validity for different types of misconduct. Fair predictive validity was shown for physically violent misconduct with an AUC of 0.78; poor predictive validity was shown for any misconduct and other misconduct (AUCs of 0.65 and 0.66 respectively).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeMatteo et al. (2014) carried out a review of the PCL-R in 214 cases of sexually violent predator offending in the U.S. There were multiple scores in 29 of the cases and an ICC of only .58, suggesting that the PCL-R may not be a suitable tool for these types of cases. • Hawes, Boccaccini and Murrie (2013) carried out a meta-analysis looking at the relation between sexual recidivism (combined sample size of 5239) and PCL-R scores. The total score effect was $d=0.40$, which is at the upper end of confidence intervals. These effects were stronger against for Factor 4 ($d=0.40$) and Factor 2 ($d=0.44$). Moreover, effect sizes tended to be stronger for scores calculated for research purposes ($d=0.44$) not clinical use ($d=0.28$). • A study examined 108 clinicians' scoring of the PCL-R using case materials and a seven-point scale to provide a rating of an individual's risk of committing a new sexual offence. Results showed that their judgments were more strongly associated with assigned Factor 1 scores than Factor 2. This is in spite of the fact that Factor 1 traits not necessarily being the most predictive of future risk; although they are the most prototypical of psychopathy (Gardner, Boccaccini and Murrie, 2018).
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Validation History	
Applicability: Females	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gray and Snowden (2016) examined psychopathy in female psychiatric patients in the UK and the US using the PCL:SV. Based on their findings and other studies, the authors surmised that the PCL-R and the PCL:SV are predictive of antisocial outcomes in women and that there is very little difference when compared to findings involving male patients. • Schaap, Lammers and de Vogel (2009) found above-chance AUC values for violent recidivism (.57) and moderate AUC for general recidivism (.60). • Vitale et al. (2002) found small to large Pearson correlations between the PCL: R composite score and violent and non-violent offending which ranged from .18 to .44.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Weizmann-Henelius et al. (2010) study, raters used forensic examination reports to use the PCL-R to retrospectively rate Finish females who have offended. A robust association was found between psychopathy and borderline personality disorder. It was also discovered that the impulsive and unstable features of psychopathy have a greater presence in females with the disorder, suggesting psychopathy may be expressed differently in men and women. • In a sample of 78 female forensic patients, the PCL-R demonstrated good predictive accuracy for all recidivism within a 3 year follow-up period (AUC=.710); over a longer period of time the AUC for all recidivism dropped to .60. Violent recidivism generated low predictive accuracy with an AUC of .457. the authors postulate this may be attributed to female psychopaths engaging in subtle, manipulative rather than violent behaviour (de Vogel, Bruggeman and Lancel, 2019).
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Validation History	
Applicability: Ethnic Minorities	
a) UK Research	None available at present.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sullivan et al. (2006) - moderate correlations observed between the composite PCL: R scores of ethnic minority individuals and violent and non-violent behaviours. • Skeem et al. (2004) - meta-analysis suggested no strong evidence of differences in the core psychopathic traits in White and Black participants. • Tsang, Piquero and Cauffman (2014) applied the PCL:YV to male adolescents of Caucasian, African American and Hispanic ethnicities. It was found that there was substantial, differential item functioning in 15 of the 20 items across the ethnic groups. • Olver et al. (2018) carried out a study on Canadian indigenous and nonindigenous males. Findings indicated that indigenous men scored higher on most components of the PCL-R and had higher rates of recidivism than nonindigenous males.

Validation History

Applicability: Mental Disorders	
a) UK Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morrisey et al. (2010) examined the use with Intellectually Disabled individuals finding a preference for using the instrument for clinical purposes as opposed to focusing on total scores. • Logan and Blackburn (2009) - moderate correlations observed for non-violent convictions and factor 1 ($r = -.29$) and factor 2 ($r = .27$) scores in high secure settings.
b) International Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McDermott et al. (2008) - composite PCL:R scores did not significantly predict inpatient violence (AUC= .58). Factor 2 scores obtained moderate predictive accuracy in 'Aggression towards Staff' (AUC=.66) and 'Aggression towards Patients' (AUC=.65).

Contribution to Risk Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychopathy, as measured by the PCL-R and its screening version PCL:SV, is part of other risk assessment tools: VRAG, SORAG, DVRAG and SVR-20. The HCR-20 includes information drawn from PCL-R assessments (Douglas and Reeves, 2010; Hare, 2003; Hare and Neumann, 2009). • Assessments using the PCL-R have been used in a variety of criminal justice settings throughout Western society: civil commitment proceedings in the U.S.; dangerous offender hearings in Canada; severe dangerous personality disorders in the UK. In the Netherlands, it is also a requirement that the PCL-R is administered to all forensic psychiatric inpatients. • The PCL-R has been designed to assess the presence of psychopathic traits rather than the risk of recidivism (albeit that the presence of psychopathy has been shown in prior investigations to be a risk and responsivity factor for recidivism and response to treatment/intervention respectively). • The PCL-R is a four-factor model identifying the traits related to the construct of psychopathy: interpersonal/affective features (e.g. callousness and superficial charm); lifestyle (e.g. irresponsibility and impulsivity); antisocial (e.g. poor behavioural controls and early behavioural problems). • Although not designed primarily to identify factors associated with further offending, it reviews factors that are established as general risk factors, and others that would be relevant to risk management planning. • The PCL-R can aid assessors in identifying risk and responsivity factors specific to the individual, such as a lack of remorse or guilt and failure to accept responsibility for own actions. • Some PCL-R items can be targets for change. • While in some contexts a categorical conclusion about psychopathy is required, the cut off score is primarily used to facilitate comparative research. • The manual notes that for clinical assessments a dimensional approach to interpreting the findings of a PCL-R is often preferred. In this approach an assessor may use the PCL-R to identify the presence of psychopathic traits; to consider their relevance to risk management; compare an individual's total and factor scores against percentiles. • Where an assessor is required to offer a categorical conclusion and report a cut off score, it is important that s/he is aware of the relevant research and uses the most appropriate normative data for the population. There is evidence to suggest cross-cultural validity (Hare, 1998) and variability and accuracy of cross-cultural cut-off scores (Cooke and Michie, 1999). This is particularly

relevant within a forensic population where it's suggested that a cut-off of 25 is more accurate for England and Scotland ([Cooke and Michie, 1999](#)).

- Based on empirical research carried out, [Morrissey \(2013\)](#) has produced a set of guidelines to be used as a supplement to the PCL-R and the PCL:SV manuals with males with intellectual disabilities. For instance, it is documented that interview evidence may be less reliable in individuals with IDs and to assist this process there should be increased time for interviewing and the standard questions should be adapted. It is also recommended that the PCL-R should not be used in individuals with IDs under 21 years old, due to developmental differences.

Other Considerations

- There is the absence of a clear-cut cut-off score for diagnosing an individual as a 'psychopath.' Generally, groupings around the possible presence of the disorder are informed by the following scores: low for a total of below 20; medium for scorings between 20-30; scores of 30 and more as high.

- Items should be omitted only when absolutely necessary (i.e. there is insufficient information to correctly score an item). The omission of too many items will deplete the reliability of the PCL-R. Also, there are no provisions in place to allow the user to modify or veto an item score. The authors, therefore, advise that the PCL-R is used strictly as designed or not at all.

- PCL-R items are rated on the basis of lifetime functioning. Socio-demographic factors like race and class may influence the meanings of items as well as the practical implications of an assigned score.

- [De Matteo, Edens and Hart \(2010\)](#) recommended that the PCL-R should be used as part of a comprehensive risk assessment investigation; rather than it being the sole measure.

- Psychopathy as a construct is relatively stable, therefore it cannot account for fluctuations in mental states or behavioural change ([Daffern, 2007](#)). Psychopathy can encompass traits from other personality disorders: anti-social, narcissistic, histrionic and paranoid ([NHS England and National Offender Management Service, 2015: 141](#)).

- Assessing 269 young males who committed violence offences, [González and colleagues \(2019\)](#) found that there was a positive association between psychopathic traits and aggressive antisocial behaviours, with the strongest correlations between the Lifestyle and Antisocial facets of the PCL-R. Additionally, there was no association between the verbal dimensions of intelligence and PCL-R facets, suggesting that even though persons with psychopathic traits may seem to demonstrate an above-average intelligence level this may be misleading.

- Acknowledging the differences of original and local validation samples assessors should ensure they rate each item carefully and then examine the cultural and social context in which the assessment was made in order to determine and understand differences. (e.g. differences between U.K. and North American subjects in the interpersonal style items, particularly grandiose sense of self-worth and glib/superficial charm ([Cooke et al., 2005](#)).

- Assessors should note that this tool has been normed on forensic mental health samples, however, in certain sub-groups of mentally disordered individuals (e.g. learning disabilities) its accuracy in predicting recidivism lessens.

- Some research suggests that a diagnosis of psychopathy could be regarded as a negative label with negative consequences on sentencing, treatment and clinical judgement ([Lloyd, Clark and Forth, 2010](#)). Other investigations suggest that a defendant's prior criminal history holds more influence over sentencing than a diagnosis of psychopathy ([Cox et al., 2010](#)).

- For more information, please visit the following website: www.hare.org