

How Stable are the Recidivism Rates for Static-99 and Static-2002?

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Actuarial risk assessment instruments are commonly used with sex offenders to estimate the likelihood of sexual, violent, or any recidivism. Typically a risk assessment score is reported along with a corresponding recidivism estimate derived from some normative sample. The samples from which these norms were derived, however, may differ in jurisdiction, setting, and outcome criteria (e.g., charges vs. convictions) from the sample to which the risk assessment instrument is being applied. Additionally, many of the normative samples contain offenders released prior to the 1980s. Given changes over the last few decades in offender treatment, management, and supervision, as well as larger changes in the criminal justice system (e.g., crime policies & crime rates) and societal changes (e.g., greater supervision of children & higher levels of obesity), it is important to re-evaluate the norms used to derive recidivism estimates. Using the Static-99 and the Static-2002, this symposium will examine the stability of recidivism estimates across samples, particularly with regard to variables such as jurisdiction, time period, outcome criteria, setting, and treatment status. The symposium will conclude with a discussion of the implications of these findings for evaluators wishing to use Static-99 or Static-2002 to make decisions about the expected recidivism rates of specific offenders.

The Stability of Recidivism for Static-2002 Risk Categories

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The Static-2002 is an actuarial risk assessment instrument designed to assess the recidivism risk of adult male sexual offenders based on commonly available criminal history information. Previous research has demonstrated that it has good inter-rater reliability and moderate accuracy in ranking the relative risk for sexual, violent and general recidivism. This study examined the stability of the recidivism rates per risk category across eight samples from four countries (total $N = 3,034$).

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We found that the recidivism rates in the low risk and high risk categories were not significantly different across samples. There was, however, significant variability in recidivism rates across samples in the mid-level risk categories. Implications for using the Static-2002 to predict absolute recidivism rates is discussed.

Are New Norms Needed for Static-99?

Andrew J. R. Harris
Leslie Helmus
R. Karl Hanson
David Thornton

The Static-99 is an actuarial risk tool designed to assess the probability of recidivism among adult male sexual offenders. It is the most commonly used and commonly researched risk assessment instrument for sexual offenders. Over 50 Static-99 cross-validations have been conducted with a variety of samples. Previous research and meta-analyses have demonstrated that it has good inter-rater reliability and moderate accuracy in ranking relative risk of offenders for sexual recidivism. The predictive accuracy across samples, however, has shown more variability than would be expected by chance. Furthermore, there has been little research assessing the stability of the Static-99 recidivism norms. Doren (2004) combined multiple Static-99 datasets and found moderate stability in the Static-99 risk percentages. In this study, a larger pool of Static-99 samples ($N > 4,000$) was obtained to assess the stability of Static-99 recidivism norms. The recidivism rates across samples were examined for stability across different time periods, jurisdictions, settings, outcome criteria (charges vs. convictions) and other methodological variables. This presentation will conclude with proposals as to the appropriate norms to use when reporting recidivism estimates of offenders assessed with Static-99.

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What do the New Actuarial Findings mean for “Real-Life” Risk Assessments?

Dennis M. Doren

Research on the Static-99 and Static-2002 is of importance largely because of the practical utility of these instruments in assessing sexual and violent recidivism risk for convicted sexual offenders in a variety of applied settings. This presentation will concentrate on interpreting what the new findings tell risk assessment practitioners. Three aspects of these findings will serve as focus for interpretation: (a) the degree to which the findings document change in recidivism rates compared to previous norms, (b) the degree to which interventions appear to matter in assessing recidivism risk by these instruments (these interventions ranging from treatment participation to community supervision), and (c) what practical limitations remain in applying the new findings.