

DVRAG: Domestic Violence Risk Appraisal Guide

The DVRAG is a tool for assessing the risk of intimate partner violence recidivism. It was developed from actuarial research to improve over a first-stage risk assessment when more time and information are available. The DVRAG combines items from the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) and a psychological assessment – the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R).

By N. Zoe Hilton PH.D.

What does it do?

The DVRAG identifies the risk that a man who assaulted his partner will do so again, and how his risk compares with others. It aids risk management decisions like correctional treatment and conditional release.

What does it involve?

13 items from the ODARA plus an item that uses the PCL-R score (or the PCL-R Facet 4 score). Item scores range from -1 to +8. The DVRAG is an in-depth tool needing more time than the ODARA.

Who should use it?

Professionals who are qualified and trained to score the PCL-R, or who can access an already completed PCL-R assessment. The DVRAG is especially useful in threat analysis, correctional, and forensic settings.

When should it be used?

Usually after the ODARA has been scored and when the necessary resources are available, later on in the criminal justice process. The DVRAG can optimize risk assessment in relatively high risk cases.

How does it work?

The DVRAG is a tool to aid decision-making, so that higher risk cases can be prioritized for the most intensive criminal justice intervention, offender treatment, or victim support.

Is training needed?

Training is available online through ODARA 101 (about 4-6 hours) or live, customizable training by arrangement. Using the full scoring instructions is strongly advised*. The PCL-R training and manual are also needed**.

Can it be used with diverse communities and relationship types?

The DVRAG is a valid assessment of risk of IPV recidivism by adult men who have assaulted their female partners. The DVRAG has been validated in studies in Canada, the U.S., and Austria. There are no validation studies yet in women who use IPV or same-sex relationships, so it is not yet recommended for use in these groups.

*<https://www.apa.org/pubs/books/domestic-violence-risk-assessment-second-edition> (disclosure: Dr. Hilton receives royalties from the sale of this book) **<http://www.hare.org/scales/pclr.html>. This project was supported by Grant No. 2020-TA-AX-K029 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.