STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Assessment and Validation of Connecticut's Salient Factor Score

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DESCRIPTION OF THE CONNECTICUT STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CENTER

The Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) is a Bureau of Justice Statistics funded collaborative venture between the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division at the Office of Policy and Management and the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Central Connecticut State University. The SAC functions as a clearinghouse for justice related information, serves as a liaison in assisting the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the Justice Research Statistical Association (JRSA) in gathering state data, and conducting policy and evaluation research.

STUDY DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF SALIENT FACTOR SCORES

Study Purpose: The Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center assessed the utility of the Connecticut Board of Parole's Salient Risk Factor Scores for parole eligible[1] inmates released from prison during the 2000 calendar year.

The Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Central Connecticut State University was contracted by the Connecticut Department of Correction to revalidate the Connecticut Board of Parole's Salient Factor Score. These risk scores were created specifically for Connecticut in the 1990s to provide parole board members with additional information to consider when deciding whether an inmate should be granted parole. The purpose of this project was to (1) collect more recent data on parole eligible inmates; (2) assess the usefulness of the existing risk factors; and, (3) provide recommendations to the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles to improve the process of calculating risk scores and increase their validity for measuring parolees' risk of not successfully completing parole.

The Salient Factor Score (SFS) was created in the 1970s by the U.S. Parole Commission as a way of estimating an inmate's likelihood of recidivating following his/her release from prison (Hoffman, 1994). The U.S. Parole Commission's risk scores were based on the offender's: prior criminal convictions, criminal prison commitments for longer than 30 days, age at the time of the offense, length of time between last incarceration period and most recent offense, probation or parole (or escape) status at the time of the most recent offense, and whether the inmate was dependent on heroin.

Each of these items were weighted so that a total salient factor score could be calculated. The higher the total score, the lower likelihood of recidivism. The total score was then aggregated into four categories of risk (very good, good, fair, and poor). The lower the risk score, the more likely the offender will be successful in the community. The primary benefits of using the SFS are that the items are objective, easily scored, few in number, and unable to be manipulated by offenders (Hoffman, 1994).

The Connecticut Board of Parole began using its own SFS in 1998 based on research conducted on a 1991 sample of inmates released from Connecticut's prisons. The findings of this study were used as the foundation for the creation of a prediction instrument based on historical information. In 1999 a fifth factor was added, violence, resulting in the creation of the Connecticut Board of Parole Salient Factor Score (CTSFS99). The current risk assessment consists of:

- Prior Commitments of 60 Days or More
- Age at Commencement of Current Offense
- Recent Commitment Free Period
- Prior Court-Imposed Terms of Imprisonment of More than One Year
- Violence

[1] To be eligible for parole, inmates must have been sentenced to prison for two years or more.

STUDY METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF STUDY GROUP

Summary: Prison and court data were collected and analyzed on 2,539 parole eligible inmates who were released from prison in 2000.

The present study utilized data collected electronically from the Department of Correction and the Connecticut Judicial Branch. Data were collected for the 2,539 inmates who were released from Department of Correction facilities and supervision between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2000. The study group was limited to inmates who were released to parole or who were eligible for parole but were not granted it.

A list of these inmates was obtained from the Department of Correction along with their inmate numbers, SPBI numbers (used by Connecticut State Police to record arrest information), demographical information (age, sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, and number of dependents), DOC needs scores (mental health, alcohol/drug use, and sex offender), offense data, and sentencing data. Court data was obtained by matching the SPBI numbers provided by the Department of Correction to court records.

Study Group Characteristics

Demographical Information		Sentence and Prison Information	
Study Group Number	2,539	Sentence Length	4.50
Average Age at Arrest	28 yrs old	Time Served	3 years
Average Age at Release	32 yrs old	Violent Instant Offense	21%
Percent Male	93%	DOC Need Scores[2]	
Percent African-American	49%	Mental Health	1.49
Percent Unmarried	88%	Drug/Alcohol	2.91
Average Number of Dependents	1.21	Sex offender	1.23

Study Group Time Served in Prison

	Number	Percentage
Less than Two years	920	36%
Two to Five Years	1,348	53%
Five to Ten Years	252	10%
More than Ten Years	19	1%
Total	2,539	100%

The average age at the time of arrest was 28 years old and inmates' average age at release was 32 years old. The majority of inmates were male (93%) and were unmarried (88%). Overall, 49% of the study group was African-American, 29% were Hispanic, and 22% were white. The average sentence length was 4.50 years with inmates serving an average of three years of their sentence. The majority of inmates served two to five years in prison prior to their release (53%). The average DOC need scores were relatively low with the exception of Drug/Alcohol abuse.

[2] DOC needs scores are scaled based on the individual need score with the high score indicating the higher level of need. Mental Health, 1 to 5 scale; Drug/Alcohol abuse, 1 to 4 scale, Sex Offender, 1 to 4 scale.

FINDINGS: VALIDATION OF THE CURRENT SALIENT FACTOR SCORE

Conclusion: The CTSFS99 is a valid but limited measure of offender risk for rearrest and/or reincarceration.

The distribution of the sample based on the CTSFS99 scores was slightly different than the original study by Peter Hoffman in 1998 on the development of the SFS. The difference is accounted for by the grouping of the initial scores. The scoring determination of risk categories for Hoffman's Model 99 is as follows: 0-4 is a poor risk, 5-6 is a fair risk, 7-9 is a good risk and 10-11 is a very good risk. Whereas, the recommended scoring for the CTSFS99 is: 0-3 is a poor risk, 4-5 is a fair risk, 6-8 is a good risk and more than a score of 9 is a very good risk. We used the CTSFS99 determination due to its current use by the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Distribution for Entire Sample by Salient Factor Score Category

Salient Factor Score Category	CTSFS99 (Number and Percent)	Hoffman (1998) (Number and Percent)
Very Good Risk	646 (25%)	258 (13%)
Good Risk	1,237 (49%)	765 (38%)
Fair Risk	468 (18%)	530 (26%)
Poor Risk	188 (7%)	266 (13%)
Total	2,539	2,019

To test the ability of the Salient Factor Scores to predict risk of the inmate in the community, we used three different outcomes[3]. The outcome measures range from most serious (a new offense and new prison sentence more than one year) to less serious (a return from a DOC community placement due to a technical violation and no re-release for more than 60 days).

A = Rearrested and resentenced to prison for more than 12 months
B = Rearrested and resentenced to prison for more than 12 months and/or a return to prison from a community placement for more than 60 days
C = A return to prison from a community placement for more than 60 days

Percentage of Released Inmates who were Unsuccessful After Being Released from Prison

Outcome	Percent Not Successful
A	42%
B	56%
C	43%

The different outcome measures produced a variable amount of success and failure. As expected, a high percentage of released inmates (56%) were either rearrested and sentenced to over a year in prison and/or were returned from their community release for more than 60 days.

[3] The outcomes were decided upon after consulting with Dr. Peter Hoffman.

Risk assessment instruments are designed to ultimately predict the likelihood of offenders' recidivating and there are two ways that we assessed the CTSFS99. First, for an assessment instrument to be useful, the percentage of unsuccessful offenders should increase as their levels of risk increases. As can be seen in the table below, the CTSFS99 does this with all three outcome measures.

Number (and percentage) of Cases with Unfavorable Outcome (By Outcome Type) Per Salient Factor Score Category (CTSFS99)

Type of Outcome	Salient Factor Score Category				
	Very Good Risk	Good Risk	Fair Risk	Poor Risk	Total
A	144 (23%)	528 (43%)	270 (58%)	127 (68%)	1,069 (42%)
B	194 (30%)	731 (59%)	334 (71%)	155 (82%)	1,414 (56%)
C	84 (20%)	344 (46%)	158 (57%)	78 (66%)	664 (43%)*

*Out of 1,564 inmates who were released to a community placement

The second way we assessed the CTSFS99 was how well it statistically correlated with each outcome measure. In the table below, the higher the statistic, the better the CTSFS99 predicts the success or failure.[4] We also tested the CTSFS99 with three groups of released inmates. The "Parole" sample used only inmates released to parole, the "Validation" sample were those released inmates who were parole eligible but who were released without parole, and the "Combined" sample was both groups together. For the CTSFS99 to be valid, we would expect similar predictive values across the three samples.

Our findings were similar to Hoffman's when he first validated the CTSFS99. Also, the statistics were similar for each outcome across the three sample groups with the exception of Outcome C (Community return from DOC community placement). This finding was not unexpected given that the majority of the validation sample were released at the end of their sentence without having a community placement. The CTSFS99 was most predictive for Outcome B (rearrested and resentenced to prison for more than 12 months and/or a return to prison from a community placement for more than 60 days). We are encouraged by the similar findings across the three samples and for each outcome. Our sample of inmates released in 2000 produced similar findings to Hoffman's 1991 sample of released inmates.

Predictive Power of CTSFS99 by Outcome Measure (Somer's D)

Sample Type	Outcome A	Outcome B	Outcome C
Combined	.259	.299	.274
Parole	.255	.341	.298
Validation	.256	.259	.074

It is important to point out that the statistics in the above table are relatively low. Somer's D ranges from -1.0 to 1.0, with 1.0 indicating a perfect correlation between the

[4] The Somer's D statistic is the most appropriate measure of association to use with these data. Please see Peter Hoffman's 1994 article for a more detailed discussion on the use of Somer's D.

outcome measures and the CTSFS99. While no risk assessment scale is perfect in predicting human behavior, we consider the CTSFS99's ability to predict risk to be moderately low.

The final set of statistical analyses we conducted looked at which of the individual items in the CTSFS99 were related to each outcome. These analyses would indicate which items were most useful in predicting offenders' risk. For all of the outcomes, the number of prior prison commitments of 60 days or more was the best predictor of risk. For instance, the more prior prison commitments at the time of arrest, the greater likelihood that the offender would be rearrested and reincarcerated for more than 12 months. Age at time of arrest was also a significant predictor of risk for all three outcome measures (the younger the offender the greater risk).

The other item that was useful was the recent commitment free period prior to most recent arrest. For two of the outcomes (A and B), the less time the offender was in the community the less likely he/she will be successful. The presence of a conviction for a violent offense was important for predicting a greater likelihood of being rearrested and reincarcerated for 12 months or more (Outcome A) as well as predicting a return from a community placement (Outcome C). Prior terms of imprisonment of more than one year was not predictive of any of the outcome measures.

Statistically Significant Factors on CTSFS99 Related to Recidivism

Measure	Outcomes		
	A	B	C
Item 1	***More***	***More***	***More***
Item 2	***Younger***	***Younger***	***Younger***
Item 3	***Shorter***	***Shorter***	None
Item 4	None	None	None
Item 5	***Yes***	None	***Yes***

Item 1 = Number of Prior Commitment(s) of 60 days or more
Item 2 = Age at Arrest of Current Offense
Item 3 = Recent Commitment Free Period (Time in community)
Item 4 = Prior Terms of Imprisonment of More than One Year
Item 5 = Instant offense was violent or had prior convictions for violent offenses

These analyses suggest that the CTSFS99 is a useful instrument for predicting recidivism. However, we believe that it's usefulness is limited given that it consists of only five items (four of which were predictive of recidivism). The Board of Pardons and Paroles should consider the inclusion of other factors in its' risk instrument (Hoffman also mentioned this in his earlier reports).

This finding supports our earlier conclusion that the CTSFS99 is predictive of recidivism but is limited. We recommend scoring changes to the CTSFS99 and also strongly recommend that the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles look at more recent trends in risk assessment instruments in order to have an instrument that better suits its needs.

RECOMMENDED SCORING CHANGES TO CURRENT SALIENT RISK FACTORS

Conclusion: The current scoring system of the CTSFS99 is limited and confusing, thereby decreasing its usefulness.

The CTSFS99 is limited to five factors: prior commitments of 60 days of more, age at commencement of current offense, recent commitment free period, prior court imposed terms of imprisonment of more than one year, and violence. When calculating the risk score, two items are disproportionately given more weight: prior commitments of 60 days of more and age at commencement of current offense. With the highest possible score being 13, offenders could potentially receive nine points from these two factors alone. Additionally, analysis reveals that recent commitment free period and prior court imposed terms of imprisonment of more than one year are also highly correlated with prior commitments of 60 days of more, thus limiting their individual contribution as predictive factors within the instrument.

To begin, we are concerned with the use of a violent conviction as an item. First, it can artificially inflate an offender's risk score. In the CTSFS99 an offender who does not have a current violent or past violent offense can add a point to their overall group score. For example, an offender could potentially move from a fair to a good risk based on violence related to an offense. Second, legislation requiring the use of mandatory minimum sentencing requirements became law after the inclusion of the violent score. The mandatory minimums require that violent offenders serve 85% of their sentence before prison release. This requirement basically renders the violence score moot. We recommend removal of this item from the CTSFS99.

An evaluation of numerous risk instruments found that a major predictor of risk was prior criminal record (Gendreau, Goggin & Little, 1996). The CTSFS99 contains this factor but does not assist parole board members in distinguishing future criminal behavior from future rule breaking. Prior criminal history can be used to predict a commission of new crime but institutional misconduct, which is used to predict future rule breaking is not included in the instrument. The CTSFS99 does not measure technical violations while on parole or institutional misconduct. The Board of Pardons and Paroles does examine offender files prior to parole decision making which include institutional misconduct and technical violations which, in turn, makes the availability of this type of information accessible to be included as part of the overall risk score.

The current scoring method is also a little confusing. This scoring system is counterintuitive, the higher the score an offender receives, the lower the risk and vice-a- versa. A modification of raw scores and level of risk would assist in the interpretation of the final score. Another issue regarding scoring is that the final score is a combination of the points from each item, this aggregate score makes it problematic to differentiate the items on which they offender may require the most need. For example, an individual scoring low on violence may need additional help in that area to decrease the chances of recidivism. In addition, the scoring process is cumbersome for the Board of Pardons and Paroles staff as there are complicated scoring instructions for each item on the instrument.

CURRENT TRENDS IN PAROLE RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Conclusion: More recent risk assessment instruments are more dynamic and attempt to address offender needs as well as predict risk of recidivism[5].

Risk assessment instruments have become an integral part of the parole process. Parole boards use risk instruments to help make decisions on the likelihood of an individual committing future crimes upon release from prison. The majority of risk instruments provide guidelines with recommendations about the specific amount of time to be served prior to release. These guidelines are contingent on the offenders risk score. Generally, the offenders who fall into the higher risk categories receive longer prison sentences prior to parole. When assessing offenders risk level, two main factors are generally given particular attention: the gravity of the offense and characteristics of the offender (Hoffman).

The Salient Factor Scores (SFS) are an example of a second generation risk assessment. The SFS is primarily composed of criminal (e.g. number of convictions) type variables with only one sociodemographic variable (age at time of current offense). These types of risk assessments can be useful for classification purposes but have very limited availability in assisting in effective treatment planning and ongoing evaluation of offenders (Simourd, 2004).

Until recently the main goal of risk instruments was simply to assess an offender's likelihood to recidivate. Now, instruments have been developed to look not only at risk but also at the needs of the offender. Some of the issues that are examined help to determine which offenders receive treatment, what types of treatment are appropriate and what intermediate goals are set (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). There have been different methods used to assess offenders. The first method of assessment used is structured clinical judgment, which is based on professional judgments about an offender's likelihood to reoffend. The second type utilizes an empirically based risk instrument, such as the Salient Factor Score, that look mainly at static factors. There are also methods of evaluation that are empirically based risk instruments that also include dynamic risk factors. The Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) is an example of this type of assessment and is the most widely used measure of recidivism (Hanson, 2005). While static factors are useful for predicting recidivism, the assessment of dynamic risk factors is necessary to know where to intervene (Hanson). More recently assessments, such as the Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI), are being used to direct and track service and supervision from the early stages of incarceration all the way through case closure. These types of assessments aim to facilitate effective treatment and clinical supervision that will result in a reduction of recidivism. However, these services are more effective in reducing recidivism in offenders that are a higher risk than they are for offenders that are a lower risk (Andrews, et al., 2006). The predictive validity of actuarial evaluations of the main risk and/or need factors surpasses the validity of clinical judgments (Andrews, et al., 2006).

[5] See Appendix B for a more detailed review of research on parole risk assessments.

RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS USED BY OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Conclusion: Parole Boards in jurisdictions across the United States and Canada use various types of risk assessments.

Jurisdiction	Use a Risk Instrument?	Description of Instrument	Materials in Appendix B
Alabama	Yes	A 12 item instrument that consists of eleven static factors and one dynamic factor.	Risk and Needs Assessment
Alaska	No		
Arizona	No		
Arkansas	Yes	A 14 item instrument that examines four categories of predictors; all items are static.	Parole Board Risk Assessment
California	No		
Colorado	Yes	An eight item instrument that consists of one dynamic factor and seven static factors.	Colorado Actuarial Risk Assessment Scale
Connecticut	Yes	A five item instrument consisting of static factors.	Salient Factor Score (SFS 99)
Delaware	No		
Florida	No Response		
Georgia	Yes	There are ten risk factors examined, six static factors and four dynamic factors.	*Executive Summary: Automated Parole Risk Assessments*
Hawaii	No		
Idaho	No Response		
Illinois	No		
Indiana	No Response		
Iowa	No Response		
Kansas	No Response		
Kentucky	Yes	A nine item instrument that consists of five static items and four dynamic items.	Parole Guidelines Risk Assessment Form and Scoring Guidelines
Louisiana	No		
Maine	No Response		
Maryland	Yes	A nine item risk instrument that has five static risk factors and four dynamic risk factors.	Maryland Risk Assessment Worksheet
Massachusetts	No		
Michigan	Yes	This instrument consists of 34 items with a combination of static and dynamic factors.	Parole Guideline Score Sheet
Minnesota	Yes		LSI-R
Mississippi	No		
Missouri	No Response		
Montana	Yes	A seven item instrument which consists of six static factors and one dynamic factor.	Risk Assessment Scale
Nebraska	Yes	A nine item instrument which consists of eight static factors and one dynamic factor.	CHA Instrument
Nevada	No		
New Hampshire	No		
New Jersey	Yes	A 54 item instrument which contains both static and dynamic factors.	LSI-R
New Mexico	No		Reasons for Denial
New York	Yes	A 17 item instrument that consists of static factors.	COMPAS Risk and Needs Assessment and Offender Questionnaire
North Carolina	No		
North Dakota	No Response		

Jurisdiction	Use a Risk Instrument?	Description of Instrument	Materials in Appendix B
Ohio	Yes	A six item instrument that consists of static factors.	Criminal History/Risk Score
Oklahoma	No Response		
Oregon	No		
Pennsylvania	Yes	A 54 item instrument which contains both static and dynamic factors.	LSI-R
Rhode Island	No Response		
South Carolina	Yes	A ten item instrument which consists of seven static factors and three dynamic factors.	Parole Risk Assessment and Recommendations
South Dakota	Yes	The instrument contains six items on static factors for the risk assessment and three items for the needs assessment.	Initial Community Risk/Needs Assessment
Tennessee	Yes	A ten item instrument consisting of static risk factors.	Offender Risk Assessment Needs Assessment
Texas	Yes	An instrument consists of static factors, used for sex offender risk assessment.	STATIC-99
Utah	Yes	A seven item instrument that consists of static risk factor.	Criminal History Assessment
Vermont	Yes	A 13 item instrument which consists of seven static risk factor and six dynamic risk factors.	Vermont Parole Board Risk Assessment
Virginia	No		
Washington	Yes	A 54 item instrument which contains both static and dynamic factors.	LSI-R
West Virginia	Yes	A ten item instrument which contains five static factors and five dynamic factors.	Parole Board Risk Instrument
Wisconsin	No		
Wyoming	No		
U.S. Parole Commission	Yes	A six item instrument that consists of static factors.	Salient Factor Score (SFS 98)
National Parole Board - Canada	Yes	A combination of instruments are used.	

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONNECTICUT

Conclusion: The CTSFS99 is a limited yet valid measure of risk. It is a useful tool in parole granting decisions and should be used in conjunction with other measures of needs and risks.

The CTSFS99 is designed to assist in improving consistency and fairness in the parole decision making process without removing the ability for parole board members to consider individual case characteristics. Additionally, the CTSFS99 also places individuals into one of four categories of risk for recidivism for a new arrest or technical violation after being released on parole. Calculation of the risk categories is based on four items that have been shown to be predictive of criminal behavior (prior prison commitments of 60 days or more, age at current offense, time in community prior to arrest, and prior court-imposed terms of imprisonment more than one year). A fifth item, violence, was added to the salient factor score even though its' predictability is limited.

As a predictor of parole success or failure, the CTSFS99 is a valid measure. The findings of our study, in accordance with previous research (Hoffman, 1974, 1976, 1980, 1994; Hoffman & Beck, 1980, 1985) re-validate the predictive accuracy of the Salient Factor Score. Given that the CTSFS99 is a *static* prediction instrument (measuring information at the time the defendant is sentenced) efforts were made by the researchers for this study to add dynamic factors to the CTSFS99 as well as to rescore the existing items in an attempt to increase its predictive power for parole success. With the current data available to us to conduct this study, we were unable to improve upon the simplicity of the risk factors or the scoring distribution of the Salient Factor Score.

We make the following recommendations to the Board of Pardons and Paroles:

1. the CTSFS99 should be used in parole granting decisions;
2. other measures of risk and needs should also be considered by the Board of Parole in parole granting decisions (i.e., the Department of Correction risk and need scores, the Level of Service Inventory risk scores that are collected by the Judicial Branches Court Support Services Division for inmates who were on probation prior to being sentenced to prison);
3. the BOPP should explore the adoption of a more detailed assessment instrument that can also be easily integrated into the Department of Correction's management information system.

We also must express our concern over the lack of information technology available to the Board of Pardons and Paroles. The CTSFS99 is hand scored by parole officers and is a very time-consuming task. On average, it takes parole staff 45 minutes to 1 hour per inmate to hand score the five salient factor scores. The total time dedicated to scoring the CTSFS99 is the equivalent to 1.5 or 2 full-time parole staff per year. Regardless of whether the BOPP uses the CTSFS99 or adopts another assessment instrument, serious consideration must be given to upgrading BOPP's database management systems and technologies in order to decrease the significant amount of staff time required to implement inmate risk assessments.

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APPENDIX A: CONNECTICUT'S CURRENT SALIENT RISK FACTOR INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX B: REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON PAROLE RISK ASSESSMENTS

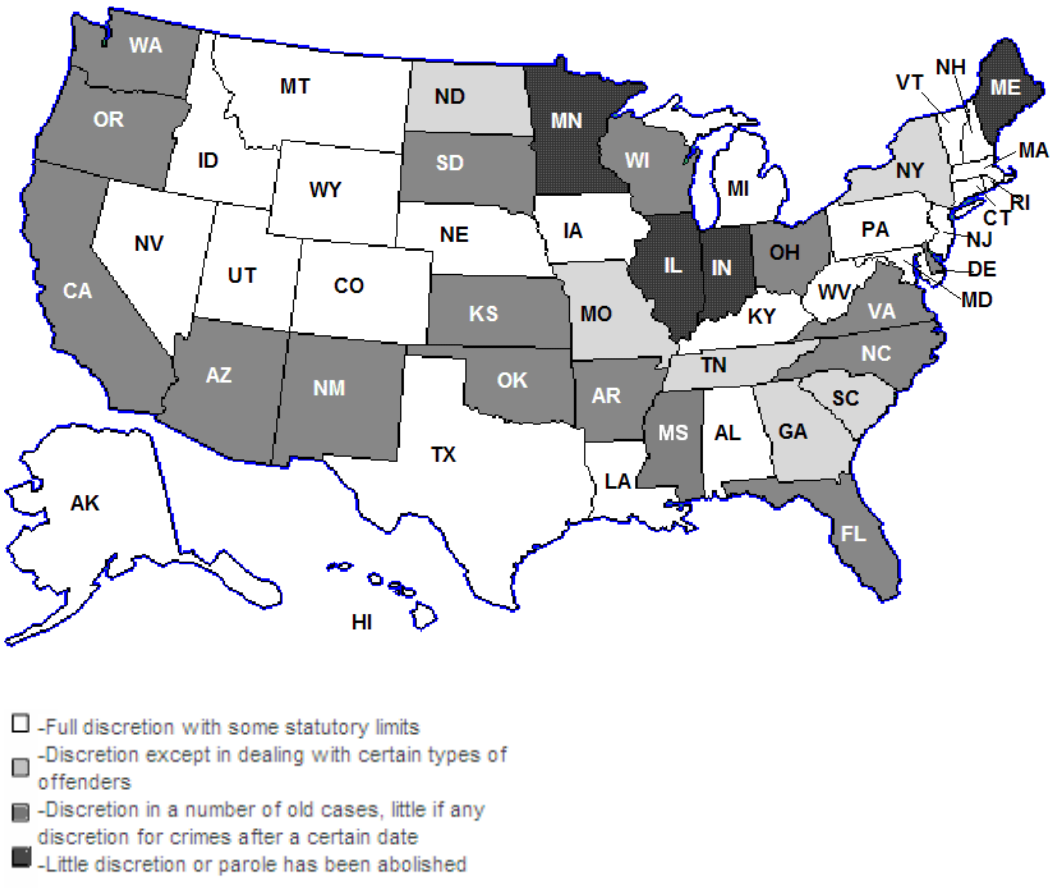
Risk assessment instruments have become an integral part of the parole process. Parole boards use risk instruments to help make decisions on the likelihood of an individual committing future crimes upon release from prison. The majority of risk instruments provide guidelines with recommendations about the specific amount of time to be served prior to release. These guidelines are contingent on the offenders risk score. Generally, the offenders who fall into the higher risk categories receive longer prison sentences prior to parole. When assessing offenders risk level, two main factors are generally given particular attention: the gravity of the offense and characteristics of the offender (Hoffman).

Parole risk instruments allow parole boards to place offenders into groups based on their likelihood to re-offend. These risk instruments allow for a systematic collection of a standard set of information about the offender, assigning a numerical value to the information and then evaluating whether the information is predictive of criminal behavior. Historically, the types of factors that tend to be examined when assessing an offender's risk level have been static factors. Static factors are those that are associated with the offender's prior criminal record that do not change over time, such as age of first conviction, prior incarcerations, number and severity of previous arrests or convictions, and supervision failures.

In general, objective risk assessments that have been validated have been found to outperform subjective, non-structured assessments which rely solely on professional judgment (Gottfredson, 1987). The use of parole risk instruments that impartially assess factors that are known to be related to recidivism has created more uniformity as well helping to reduce disparity in parole decisions. Parole risk instruments assist parole boards with making rational, consistent and unbiased decisions. Parole boards still have the discretion to consider mitigating or aggravating factors that may not be accounted for by the risk instruments themselves; however risk instruments provide an objective assessment as a starting point.

Parole Board Discretion

Individual state parole boards in the United States vary in the amount of discretion to release inmates. Twenty-four states have parole boards that have nearly full discretion with some statutory limits. Six states have discretion except in regard to certain types of offenders, such as offenders that have committed certain violent offenses. Sixteen states have either abolished parole boards or have parole boards that have discretion in a small number of cases that occurred before a certain date, but have very limited discretion with individuals that committed a crime after a specific date. Four states have either completely abolished parole or have very limited discretion. A number of the boards that have limited or no discretion have responsibilities regarding other aspects of release such as setting parole conditions, parole supervision, and revocation of parole.



Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles

The Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles was established in 2004 by combining what had formerly been the Board of Pardons and the Board of Paroles. The Board of Pardons and Paroles consists of thirteen members who are appointed by the Governor with the approval of the Senate. The Governor also appoints the chair. Five of the members serve to consider pardon applications, seven serve to make parole decisions and the chair serves on both boards. All of the members, with the exception of the chair, are part time and paid on a per diem basis.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles is independent from the Department of Corrections in setting policy that grants or denies parole or pardon, establishing conditions of parole, and revoking parole. The Board of Pardons and Paroles uses an administrative parole process to review an eligible individual's case. The chair or his designee and two board members sit on each parole hearing and at least two board members must approve the recommendation for parole.

Individuals that are serving sentences for crimes committed on or after July 1, 1981 and have been sentenced to two years or longer, become eligible for parole after completing one-half of their total sentence, with the exception of certain parole ineligible crimes and cases that involved "the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force", in which case, the individual is eligible for parole after completing 85% of the sentence. Individuals serving sentences for crimes committed prior to July 1, 1981 are subject to minimum and maximum sentences and are eligible for parole upon the completion of the minimum.

Predicting Criminality and Defining Recidivism

Predicting future criminality is a daunting and controversial task. Risk instruments do not propose to be a hundred percent accurate and it may be the case that an individual classified as a poor risk may never re-offend. Moreover, some critics contend that it is unfair to punish an offender in terms of their current offense based on their future criminality. In an effort to address these and other concerns the SFS is limited to measuring prior and current criminal activity. Although found to be statistically relevant, many personal or status items such as race, sex, employment, education and marital status are not included (Hoffman, 1994). Additionally, the SFS is calculated only to assist as a standardized component in an otherwise largely intuitive and sometimes personal decision making process.

In an effort to predict whether a convicted offender will commit another offense when released to the community (recidivism) it is imperative that we define what constitutes a re-offense. There is no single standard definition of recidivism and the calculation of rates depends on what behaviors are included. For example, should one count arrests, parole violations, convictions or incarcerations. Additionally, the severity and classification of the act are also important in determining eligibility. Lastly, the broader the definition of re-offending and the longer the follow-up period the more likely the offender will recidivate.

Development of the Salient Factor Score

The Salient Factor Score (SFS) is a risk assessment tool developed by the U.S. Parole Commission that is statistically based on an objective scale through empirically validated research. The SFS and parole guidelines were first used by the U.S. Parole Commission in 1972 in a pilot project. While other recidivism prediction instruments were in existence prior to this, they did not appear to have a strong effect on parole decisions. The U.S. Parole Commission was the first paroling agency to employ the use of a risk instrument in a way that clearly affected decisions regarding parole (Hoffman, 1994).

The U.S. Parole Commission's version of the SFS contains six items. The factors that the SFS looks at are the offender's prior convictions, previous commitments for more than 30 days, the offender's age at the time of the current offense, the length of time without commitments prior to current offense, and if the offender was on probation, parole, or escape status at the time of the current offense. The SFS has been revised several times since its inception. Most of these revisions have resulted in a reduction in the number of factors (the original 1972 SFS was composed of eleven items) that are considered. Items regarding non-criminal history, heroin dependency, and status have been deleted from updated versions of the SFS. In 1998 the Parole Commission revised the SFS by increasing the weight given to prior commitments and age at offense and deleted the drug-use item. The revised SFS was designated as SFS 98. The reasoning behind this trend of decreasing the number of items on the instrument is based on a rationale that since the SFS directly influences the length of the prison term, a small number of items should be included that are objective, easily scored, and are not subject to falsification by the offender (Hoffman, 1994).

Components of the Connecticut Salient Factor Score

An offender's risk level is assessed while serving his or her sentence using the SFS to aid parole boards in making parole recommendations. The SFS looks at several different factors to assess the offender's risk of recidivism. The present study examines the five items on the Connecticut Board of Parole Salient Factor Score updated in 1999 (CTSFS99).

The first component that the SFS examines is the frequency of prior offending. Offenders can receive between zero and four points on this item, depending on the number of previous offenses. The SFS looks at a range of commitments from zero (score of 4) to five or more (score of 0). Convictions that are from at least ten years before the current offense are not counted in the assessment as long the offender has not been incarcerated during that ten year time period. In addition, not all offenses are included. Minor traffic offenses and juvenile status offenses are among the types of offenses that are excluded from the assessment. The SFS also excludes misdemeanors and minor offenses that resulted in a sentence of less than 30 days incarceration or less than one year on probation. Only commitments of sixty days or more are included

The second component of the SFS examines the offender's age at the commencement of the current offense. This offender's age is also examined in conjunction with the number of previous commitments. An individual with five or more prior commitments of 60 days or more has one point subtracted from his score on this component. The reasoning being, an older offender with fewer previous periods of incarceration has a lower likelihood to recidivate, whereas a young offender with previous commitments has a higher risk of recidivism. Scores range from zero for offenders who were 19 or younger at the time of the offense to a score of five for offenders who were 37 or older at the time of the offense. An individual can never have a score of less than zero.

Another risk component that the SFS examines is the period of time that the offender has not been incarcerated. Scores on this component range from zero to two. Specifically, the SFS looks to see if the offender has had another offense that resulted in a period of incarceration of more than 60 days within the three years prior to the current offense. Offenders that have had a period of incarceration of 60 days or longer and committed the current offense within twelve months of that prior commitment are at a higher risk of recidivism and receive a score of zero. The offender receives a score of one if the current offense was committed at least twelve months but less than 36 months prior to the commencement of the current offense. A score of two is given to individuals who have no prior commitment of 60 days or more more were released to the community from the last such commitment at least 36 months prior to the commencement of the current offense.

The fourth component of the SFS examines the number of previous periods of incarceration that were longer than one year. The scores range from zero to two for this component. Individuals with five or more previous imprisonments of more than a year receive a score of zero, a score of one for three to four previous imprisonments and a score of two for two or fewer imprisonments.

When assessing the offender, the SFS considers violence as the fifth and last component .The scores range from zero to one for this item. An individual is given a score of zero if the instant offense was violent or has two or more prior convictions of violent offenses or has a prior conviction for a violent offense within 24 months of the current offense. A score of one is given if none of these conditions apply. The components of the CTSFS99 are summarized below.

Elements in the Salient Factor Score

Elements	CTSFS99 (Connecticut Board of Parole)
Frequency of Prior Offending	Count of prior commitments of 60 days or more
Seriousness of Prior Offending	Count of prior commitments of more than one year
Recency of Prior Offending	Three years since last release from 60 days or more commitment
Age	Age at commencement of current offense
Violence History	Instant offense violent or two or more priors or one prior conviction committed within 24 months before or after current offense

The original SFS was scored on a scale from zero to ten, with a score of ten being the lowest risk of recidivism and a score of zero being the highest risk. The SFS and the seriousness of the current offense were then examined on grid with a guideline range of total time to be served. This grid and its guidelines were only provided as proximities, thus enabling the Commission to vary its suggestions based on possible aggravating or mitigating factors (Hoffman, 1994).

Guidelines for Decsionmaking Grid (SFS 1981): Customary Total Time to be Served before Release (Including Jail Time)

Offense Characteristics	Offender Characteristics: Parole Prognosis (SFS 1981)			
Severity of Offense Behavior	Very Good (10-8)	Good (7-6)	Fair (5-4)	Poor (3-0)
	Guideline Range			
Category Five	24-36 Months	36-48 Months	48-60 Months	60-72 Months

The CTSFS99 is scored on a scale of zero to thirteen. The scores are than collapsed from raw to group scores. Individuals with totals of 0-3 are given a score of zero, 4-5 a score of one, 6-8 a score of two and 9 or more a score of three. Additionally, a score of one is added to the group score if the individual qualifies under the violence component. Thus, the guideline score for the CTSFS99 can range from zero to four. Table 3 provided the guideline for time to be served before release.

Total Time to be Served before Release (Including Jail Time) CTSFS99

Score	Service Proportion	
	Minimum	Maximum
0	85%	100%
1	70%	85%
2	60%	70%
3	50%	60%
4	50%	60%

Research on the SFS

A study by Hoffman and Beck (1983) examining the effectiveness of the SFS on Federal prisoners using the definition of recidivism as any new commitment of 60 days or more including a return to prison for parole violation within a two year follow up period found that prisoners with a high SFS of 10 had a recidivism rate of 6 percent compared to offenders with a SFS of 0 who had a recidivism rate of 59 percent (Hoffman, 1983). The lower the score the higher the risk. The complete distribution is presented below.

Salient Factor Score Category	Recidivism Rate
Category A (scores of 10-8)	12 percent
Category B (scores of 7-6)	25 percent
Category C (scores of 5-4)	39 percent
Category D (scores of 3-0)	49 percent

A study by Hoffman (1998) conducted in Connecticut examined a random sample of offenders serving sentences of more than two years who were released in 1991. The total sample of 2019 was divided into a construction sample (N=1,019) and a comparison sample (N=1,000). Each case had a three year follow up period from date of release.

Unfavorable outcomes were classified as: (1) any new court commitment to a term of imprisonment of more than one year, or (2) any return to confinement for more than one year by administrative action of the Department of Corrections or Parole Board. The findings from the stuffy further supported the predictive power of the SFS.

Predicting Recidivism

Until recently the main goal of risk instruments was simply to assess an offender's likelihood to recidivate. Now instruments have been developed to look not only at risk but also at the needs of the offender. Some of the issues that are examined help to determine which offenders receive treatment, what types of treatment are appropriate and what intermediate goals are set (Andrews, Bonta, & Woemith, 2006). There have been different methods used to assess offenders. The first method of assessment used is structured clinical judgment, which is based on professional judgments about an offender's likelihood to reoffend. The second type of assessment utilizes an empirically based risk instrument, such as the Salient Factor Score, that look mainly at static factors. There are also methods of evaluation that are empirically based risk instruments that also include dynamic risk factors. The Level of Service Inventory – Revised (LSI-R) is an example of this type of assessment and is the most widely used measure of recidivism (Hanson, 2005). While static factors are useful for predicting recidivism, the assessment of dynamic risk factors is necessary to know where to intervene (Hanson). More recent assessments, such as the Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI), are being used to direct and track service and supervision from the early stages of incarceration all the way through case closure. These types of assessments aim to facilitate effective treatment and clinical supervision that will result in a reduction of recidivism. However, these services are more effective in reducing recidivism for offenders that are a higher risk than they are for offenders that are a lower risk (Andrews, et al., 2006). The predictive validity of actuarial evaluations of the main risk and/or need factors surpasses the validity of clinical judgments (Andrews, et al., 2006).

Future Guidelines for Risk Assessment

Bonta (2002) offers a number of suggestions regarding risk assessment tools that could result in a more effective measure of an offender's risk level than some of the instruments that are currently being used. While progress has been made in the development of assessment instruments used to evaluate offender risk, there is still room for improvement. Bonta suggests the following 10 guidelines:

1. Assessment of offender risk should be based on actuarial measures of risk
2. Risk instruments should be validated on their ability to predict criminal behavior
3. Risk instruments should be directly related to criminal behavior
4. Select instruments that are based on a relevant theory
5. Sample a number of factors related to criminal behavior
6. Assess criminogenic need factors
7. Limit general personality and cognitive tests to the assessment of responsivity
8. Use different methods to assess risk and needs
9. Exercise professional responsibility
10. Adhere to the principle of the least restrictive alternative

APPENDIX C: RISK INSTRUMENTS AND SCORING MANUALS FROM OTHER JURISIDICTIONS