

Hare Psychopathy Checklist (PCL-R)

Reference

Checklist · 36 items · 8 sections

Reference list of the 20 traits Robert D. Hare uses in the PCL-R, organized by Factor 1 (interpersonal/affective) and Factor 2 (lifestyle/antisocial). This is NOT a self-test. The PCL-R requires 2+ hours of trained-clinician interview plus collateral records, and is used in forensic risk assessment. The term psychopathy carries real stigma, traits exist on a spectrum, and full clinical psychopathy is rare.

Open the editable version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/hare-psychopathy-checklist>

ABOUT THE PCL-R

- The PCL-R (Psychopathy Checklist-Revised) is a 20-item clinical assessment developed by Robert D. Hare, first published 1991, revised 2003

HIGH

- Only trained clinicians administer it: requires a 2-3 hour semi-structured interview plus collateral records (criminal history, institutional files, third-party informants)

HIGH

- This is NOT a self-test

HIGH

Self-administration is not valid and Hare himself has repeatedly cautioned against casual or online use.

- Each item is scored 0 (does not apply), 1 (somewhat applies), or 2 (definitely applies); total score: 0-40

HIGH

- Research cutoff for 'psychopathy': typically 30+ in North American samples; 25+ sometimes used in UK/Europe forensic settings

HIGH

- The 20 items load onto two correlated higher-order factors, each split into two facets

FACTOR 1, FACET 1, INTERPERSONAL

- Item 1: Glibness / superficial charm
- Item 2: Grandiose sense of self-worth
- Item 4: Pathological lying
- Item 5: Cunning / manipulative

FACTOR 1, FACET 2, AFFECTIVE

- Item 6: Lack of remorse or guilt
- Item 7: Shallow affect (limited emotional range)
- Item 8: Callousness / lack of empathy
- Item 16: Failure to accept responsibility for own actions

FACTOR 2, FACET 3, LIFESTYLE

- Item 3: Need for stimulation / proneness to boredom
- Item 9: Parasitic lifestyle
- Item 13: Lack of realistic, long-term goals
- Item 14: Impulsivity
- Item 15: Irresponsibility

FACTOR 2, FACET 4, ANTISOCIAL

- Item 10: Poor behavioral controls
- Item 12: Early behavior problems
- Item 18: Juvenile delinquency
- Item 19: Revocation of conditional release
- Item 20: Criminal versatility

ITEMS NOT LOADING ON FACTORS

- Item 11: Promiscuous sexual behavior
- Item 17: Many short-term marital relationships

HOW TRAINED CLINICIANS USE THIS

- Used primarily in forensic and correctional settings: violence and recidivism risk assessment, parole/sentencing input, mental health court

HIGH

- Valid scoring requires both the interview and verifiable records

HIGH

Self-report alone is unreliable for traits like deceitfulness and lack of remorse.

- Formal scoring training is required; results are sensitive to rater drift and adversarial allegiance effects in legal contexts
- The full PCL-R is copyrighted and distributed by Multi-Health Systems

Only trait names and factor structure are public; not the scoring manual or interview prompts.

CAUTIONS

- Do NOT self-administer or use this list to diagnose another person

HIGH

Leads to confirmation bias, mislabeling, and real harm to relationships.

- 'Psychopath' is not a DSM-5 diagnosis

HIGH

The closest formal diagnosis is Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), which has overlapping but different criteria.

- Many people show one or two PCL-R traits without being psychopathic

HIGH

Traits exist on a continuum. Full clinical psychopathy is rare, estimated at ~1% of the general population.

- The PCL-R has been criticized for circular reasoning and for over-weighting Factor 2 antisocial behavior in incarcerated samples

- Alternative models are gaining traction: Cooke & Michie 3-factor model, and the Triarchic Model (Boldness, Meanness, Disinhibition) by Christopher Patrick

- The label carries serious stigma and real-world consequences (sentencing, custody, employment)

Should never be applied lightly or by untrained observers.