



## ARCHIVED - Archiving Content

### Archived Content

Information identified as archived is provided for reference, research or recordkeeping purposes. It is not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards and has not been altered or updated since it was archived. Please contact us to request a format other than those available.

## ARCHIVÉE - Contenu archivé

### Contenu archivé

L'information dont il est indiqué qu'elle est archivée est fournie à des fins de référence, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Elle n'est pas assujettie aux normes Web du gouvernement du Canada et elle n'a pas été modifiée ou mise à jour depuis son archivage. Pour obtenir cette information dans un autre format, veuillez communiquer avec nous.

This document is archival in nature and is intended for those who wish to consult archival documents made available from the collection of Public Safety Canada.

Some of these documents are available in only one official language. Translation, to be provided by Public Safety Canada, is available upon request.

Le présent document a une valeur archivistique et fait partie des documents d'archives rendus disponibles par Sécurité publique Canada à ceux qui souhaitent consulter ces documents issus de sa collection.

Certains de ces documents ne sont disponibles que dans une langue officielle. Sécurité publique Canada fournira une traduction sur demande.



# Research Review

## Do offenders lie? The impact of socially desirable responding on risk assessment

**KEY WORDS:** *self-report, offenders, socially desirable responding*

### What it means

Offenders who may be most likely to be suspected of dishonest responding (e.g., antisocial, criminally oriented) were most likely to respond truthfully on self-report measures. Additionally, even when dishonesty was present, it did not significantly affect the accuracy of tools based on self-report. Therefore, within a forensic setting, the issue of socially desirable responding is not of great concern.

Much of the offender information gathered and used within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), such as intake assessments, risk assessments, and research data, is based at least in part on self-report. Research demonstrates that concerns regarding the impacts of such dishonesty are largely unfounded and supports CSC's continued use of this efficient method of information collection.

### What we found

Several studies conducted with federal men offenders in Canada found that socially desirable responding does not affect the validity of self-report scales (Kroner, Mills, & Morgan, 2006; Mills & Kroner 2005, 2006; Mills, Loza, & Kroner, 2003). In other words, the predictive capacity of risk assessment measures, such as those used to predict success on release, was not significantly different for those who scored high on measures of socially desirable responding compared to those who scored low on such measures.

Offenders were no more likely to be dishonest on a self-report measure at intake compared to pre-release, or when told the results would be used for research compared to making decisions about their release into the community (Loza, Loza-Fanous, & Heseltine, 2007). The more criminally oriented or antisocial the offender, the less likely they were to employ impression management (e.g., the more honest they were) during self-report (Mills & Kroner, 2005, 2006).

### What we looked at

Many risk assessment instruments rely at least in part on information provided by offenders, yet the accuracy of that information is often difficult to confirm. We examined research with federally-sentenced men offenders in Canada on the presence of socially desirable responding and its relationship to the validity of tools that are based on self-reported information.

### References

- Kroner, D. G., Mills, J. F., & Morgan, R. D. (2006). Social desirable responding and the measurement of violent and criminal risk: Self-report validity. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice, 6*(4), 27-42.
- Loza, W., Loza-Fanous, A., & Heseltine, K. (2007). The myth of offenders' deception on self-report measure predicting recidivism : Example form the Self-Appraisal Questionnaire (SAQ). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22*, 671-683.
- Mills, J. F., & Kroner, D. G. (2005). An investigation into the relationship between socially desirable responding and offender self-report. *Psychological Services, 2*(1), 70-80.
- Mills, J. F., & Kroner, D. G. (2006). Impression management and self-report among violent offenders. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21*(2), 178-192.
- Mills, J. F., Loza, W., & Kroner, D. G. (2003). Predictive validity despite social desirability: Evidence for the robustness of self-report among offenders. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health, 13*, 140-150.

### For more information

Please e-mail the [Research Branch](#) or contact us by phone at (613) 995-3975.

You can also visit the website for a full list of research publications.

**Prepared by:** Jenelle Power and Mary B. Ritchie

