



Core measurement guidance **Self-Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS)**

**Guidance on the implementation and analysis of the SRDS from the Edinburgh
Study of Youth Transitions and Crime**

1. Background

Why the Youth Endowment Fund has produced this guidance

The aim of the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

While the YEF is committed, where possible, to the long-term follow-up of young people who take part in a YEF funded project using official records of offending, this process will be time consuming and complex. Self-report measures of offending can yield more timely data on offending outcomes. Self-report methods are now the most common outcome measure used in criminological research and have been found to provide both accurate estimates of prevalence and mean frequency of offending (Thornberry & Krohn, 2000). Research has also consistently demonstrated that studies of offending should combine official records and self-report of measures to provide the most reliable measure of offending (Basto-Pereira & Farrington, 2019).

The YEF aims to ensure common measurement of outcomes wherever possible to maximise learning across the fund. To this end, the YEF is encouraging all evaluators to use the Self-Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS) from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC) where appropriate. As there are several methodological choices in using this scale, YEF has produced this guidance document which outlines the background to the ESYTC, introduces the measure and explains which scale version YEF has decided upon, as well as guidance for implementation, scoring, data aggregation and aggregation as well as frequently asked questions.

2. Self-reported delinquency and offending in the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (ESYTC)

What is the ESYTC?

The ESYTC is a longitudinal study of young people who started their first year of secondary school in the City of Edinburgh in August 1998 (approximately 4000 young people).

- The study aims to further understand about criminal behaviour among young people by studying them over a key period of development. A further aim was to explore why some young people become serious, frequent and persistent offenders and why some young people do not.
- It involves a large, single-cohort longitudinal study which incorporates multiple methods of data collection; official criminal records, social work, children's heading, schools, parent report, teacher reports and community surveys.
- Young people in the study completed a questionnaire annually (sweep 1 to 6). The self-reported delinquency and offending scale was part of a larger questionnaire covering many areas (family structure, relationships, moral judgements and bullying etc.). Additional items were added with some amendments to the questionnaire as children got older to ensure that the scale was focused on age appropriate behaviours.

What is the SRDS?

As YEF is working with young people between the age of 10 and 14, we have identified the questionnaire used in sweep 3 (when children were aged 14) as being the most suitable for our projects and evaluations. This version of measure contains 19-items covering a range of both antisocial and offending behaviours. The delinquency measure is section four of the questionnaire- 'things you have might have done' (page 15-24). Please see the Appendix for a full list of items.

The scale has been validated for use with young people in the UK and has been used with those aged between 10 and 17.

It produces two scores:

1. **Variety of delinquency score:** the number of different offending behaviours the respondent reports having been involved in

2. Volume of delinquency score: the estimated minimum total number of offending behaviours committed.

Please see [section 4](#) for further information on score generation.

Measurement properties

The SRDS demonstrates good psychometric properties:

- Reported internal consistency is between .87-.92 with an inter-item correlation of .19 (Fonagy et al., 2018; Humayun et al., 2017).
- The measure correlates with official police arrests (89.5% - 95.2%; McAra & McVie, 2005).
- The measure has been used at baseline, 6-months, 12-months and 28-month intervals for randomised controlled trials of Multi-Systematic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy (Fonagy et al., 2018; Humayun et al., 2017).



3. Implementation of the Self Report Delinquency Scale

Guidance for use

Age

- The SRDS should only be used in 10-17 year olds.

Reference period

- Our recommendation is that the time period for recall at baseline and follow-up should be the same to ensure that the same measurement period is being used. For example, if the follow-up point is at 3-months, then the baseline measure should also ask about behaviour in the last 3-months.
- Please do discuss any queries or concerns with you Evaluation Manager.

Administration

- The scale is self-administrated and completed by the young person themselves.
- Prior to the questionnaire being completed, young people should be informed that the questionnaire is confidential, and it should be made clear that this is not a test of reading or writing ability.
- The whole questionnaire (which includes 15 sections) was designed to be completed in under 30 minutes; the delinquency measure will have a much shorter response time.
- A researcher should be on hand during the data collection for young people to ask for help if needed.

Permissions of use

There is no cost for using the measure, but evaluators should acknowledge the use of the measure and the ESYTC in any publications or reports arising from the work.

4. Scoring the SRDS

For each item, the respondent is given a choice of 'yes' or 'no'. If they answer 'yes', the respondent is asked how many times they took part in this behaviour and whether they got in trouble for doing so. Please see the box below for an example.

Figure 1. Example item from the SRDS (taken from Sweep 3 of the ESYTC)

4.1 During the last year, did you travel on a bus or train without paying enough money or using someone else's pass?

Yes – answer questions in box No – go to question 4.2

i. How many times did you do this during the last year?
(tick ONE box only)

Once Twice 3 times 4 times 5 times

Between 6 and 10 times More than 10 times

ii. Did you get into trouble for doing this? (tick as many boxes as you need to)

Yes, from the police Yes, from an inspector or another adult

Yes, from my parents No

The SDRS provides two scores:

1. The variety of delinquency score;
2. The volume of delinquency score.

Please see the table below for information on how to generate these scores.

Table 1. SRDS score generation

Score	Score generation
Variety of delinquency score	Sum the number of items the respondent answers 'yes' to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes = 1 • No = 0 Will produce a score that ranges from 0-19.
Volume of delinquency score ¹	Summing the point values assigned to the answer given in i. Point values are assigned as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once = 1 • Twice = 2 • 3 times = 3 • 4 times = 4 • 5 times = 5 • Between 6 and 10 times = 6 • More than 10 times = 11

¹ The volume of delinquency score generates a minimum estimate of the average number of offending behaviours because the calculations are based on highly conservative assumptions (Smith & McVie, 2003).

5. Aggregating, analysing and archiving the SRDS

The SRDS scores used in primary analyses should be decided upon following consultation with your evaluation manager. To maintain consistency and enable the comparison of results across YEF evaluations both the variety of delinquency and volume of delinquency scores should be transferred to the YEF data archive at the end of the evaluation.

6. FAQs

1. Can evaluators change the wording or the order of the items?

This should be avoided. In the development of the items, the researchers followed a number of process (checking for evidence of systematic response bias) to ensure that the order was most robust and yielded valid results. The wording of the items can also not be changed (unless this refers to Question 14- see below).

2. Where can evaluators find more information?

[The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime website](#) has a list of useful publications as well as access to technical reports about the study. A number of relevant references are included at the end of this document.

3. What if evaluators want to use an earlier version of the questionnaire?

While we recognise that earlier versions of the measure exist, sweep 3 provides the richest scale for data collection as it includes all the items used in the first year of the study (15 items for young people in year 7) which are age appropriate plus an additional four items.

4. Question 4.14 refers to a 'SSPCA'- what is this?

As the study was developed in Scotland this refers to the Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. For studies in England and Wales, this can be amended to the RSPCA.

5. Can I use an electronic version of the scale?

We are still in talks with the developers of the scale about this. We will update you when we know more.

6. Can I change the time period for recall?

Yes, although this will depend on the context of the evaluation and how long the follow-up time period is. If the follow-up period is less than a year, then the baseline measurement should also cover the same time period. This will allow for suitable comparisons pre and post-test.

7. References

Basto-Pereira, M., & Farrington, D. (2019). Lifelong conviction pathways and self-reported offending: Towards a deeper comprehension of criminal career development. *British Journal of Criminology*, 1-18.

Fonagy P, Butler S, Cottrell D, Scott S, Pilling S, Eisler I, Fuggle P, Kraam A, Byford S, Wason J, Ellison R, Simes E, Ganguli P, Allison E, Goodyer IM, Multisystemic therapy versus management as usual in the treatment of adolescent antisocial behaviour (START): a pragmatic, randomised controlled, superiority trial, *Lancet Psychiatry*, 2018 , 5, 2, 119-133, doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(18)30001-4.

Humayun, S., Herlitz, L., Chesnokov, M., Doolna, M., Landau, S., Scott S. (2017). Randomised controlled trial of Functional Family Therapy for offending and antisocial behaviour in UK Youth. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 58(9), 1023-1032.

McAra, L., McVie, S. (2005). The usual suspects? Street-life, young people and the police. *Criminal Justice*, 5(1), 5-36.

Pote, I., Ghiara, V., Cooper, E., Stock, L. & McBride, T. (2020). Measuring parental conflict and its impact on child outcomes. Guidance on selecting and using valid reliable and practical measures to evaluate interventions. <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/measuring-parental-conflict-and-its-impact-on-child-outcomes>

Smith DJ, McVie S. (2003). Theory and method in the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime. *British Journal of Criminology*, 43: 169-95.

Smith, D.J., McVie, S., Woodward, R., & Shute, J. (2001). The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime: Key findings at Ages 12 and 13.

Thornberry, T.P., & Krohn, M.D. (2000). The self-report method for measuring delinquency and crime. *Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice*, 4, 33-83.

Appendix 1 – SRDS items

Below is a list of the behaviours and offences included;

1. Fare-dodging
2. Noisy/cheeky behaviour in public
3. Shoplifting
4. Ride in stolen vehicle
5. Theft from school
6. Carried a knife/weapon
7. Graffiti
8. Robbery
9. Criminal Damage
10. Housebreaking
11. Theft from home
12. Broken into vehicle to steal
13. Fire-setting
14. Harming or injuring animals
15. Assault
16. Bullying behaviour
17. Racial assault or harassment
18. Selling illegal drugs
19. Skipped or skived school



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This document was last updated in **June 2021**.

We reserve the right to modify the guidance at any time, without prior notice.

The Youth Endowment Fund Charitable Trust

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