

PRE-VALIDATION STUDY OF THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENT CHANGE TOOL (PACT)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Office of Probation and Community Corrections (PCC), as part of the Department's *What Works* Initiative, is instituting a new risk/needs assessment instrument, Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT). The Justice Research Center (JRC) was contracted to pre-validate the PACT using Florida's client data originating from the Department's Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). Specifically, DJJ Screening Risk and Classification Instrument (SRCI) data, drawn from SRCI administrations conducted between January 2002 and October 2002, were used to pre-validate the PACT instrument. This overview presents the findings from the preliminary validation of PACT risk scores using SRCI data to determine whether the scores on the PACT, the resulting risk levels, and subsequent recidivism rates closely match that of initial validation data of the Washington State risk assessment instrument. Recidivism was defined as an 18-month follow-up of juvenile re-offending and six-month follow-up of adult re-offending.¹

Table 1 presents the general descriptive statistics for the sample and corresponding percentages of youth classified as low and moderate risk, using the Washington State risk assessment categorization.² The majority of youth processed through intake with an SRCI in 2002, were low risk (63%). As is evidenced in Table 1, moderate risk youth are more likely than low risk youth to recidivate in general, as well as to be adjudicated for a subsequent juvenile violent, felony, and misdemeanor offense within eighteen months.

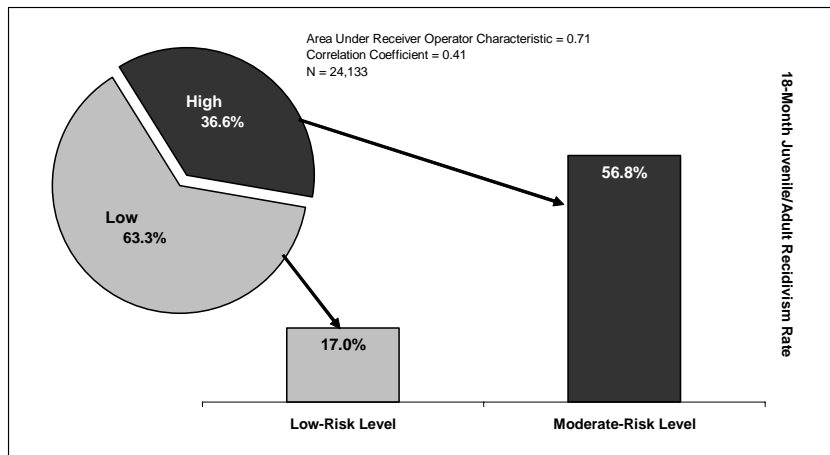
Table 1
Pre-Validation Data Summary

SRCI Pool	Risk Level		Total
	Low	Moderate	
Number of Assessments	15296	8837	24133
Percent of Sample	63.4%	36.6%	100.0%
Juvenile/ Adult Recidivism	17.0%	56.8%	31.6%
Juvenile Violent Felony Recidivism	0.4%	10.3%	4.0%
Juvenile Felony Recidivism	3.7%	28.6%	12.8%
Juvenile Misdemeanor Recidivism	9.6%	19.5%	13.3%
Juvenile Felony/ Misdemeanor Recidivism	13.3%	48.1%	26.1%

¹ For further information see the *Pre-Validation Study of the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) Criminal History Domain Report* (JRC, September 2005).

² Youth will ultimately be classified into risk level categories based upon their PACT scores. However, PACT risk scores will rely on both the criminal history and social history scores. Given that the latter was not available in the SRCI data, only criminal history scores are examined here. Using the Washington State classification scheme, the risk categories are therefore: low (0 to 7 on the criminal history domain) and moderate (scores of 8 to 31).

Figure 1
Risk Level Relationship to Recidivism Rates - SRCI Sample



As depicted in Figure 1, the PACT classification scheme of low and moderate risk appears predictive of subsequent recidivism. More than half of the youth classified as moderate risk re-offended at either the juvenile or adult court level, compared to only 17% of the low-risk youth.

Table 2
Strength of Association Between Risk Level and Recidivism

SRCI Pool	Type of Recidivism			
	Violent	Felony	Misdemeanor	Felony and Misdemeanor
Test Statistic				
Correlation Coefficient	0.36*	0.46*	0.25*	0.42*
Area Under Receiver Operator Characteristic	0.85	0.79	0.65	0.72

* $p < 0.001$

Risk level is significantly correlated with all forms of recidivism (violent, felony, misdemeanor, and felony/misdemeanor), as shown in Table 2. The largest correlation, 0.46, is found between risk level and subsequent felony re-offending. This indicates that there is a moderate to strong association between increasing offender risk and likelihood to be adjudicated/convicted for a subsequent felony offense.

The strength of the relationship between criminal history scores (risk) and re-offending is further exhibited in Figure 2 below. As depicted, there is generally a linear relationship between prior offending scores and recidivism. The only exception to this trend being the final categorization of those youth with criminal history scores of 20 or higher. This result is due in large part to a declining sample size of youth with extreme scores (only 2.7% of the SRCI sample).

Figure 2
Relationship Between Criminal History Scores and Recidivism Pool

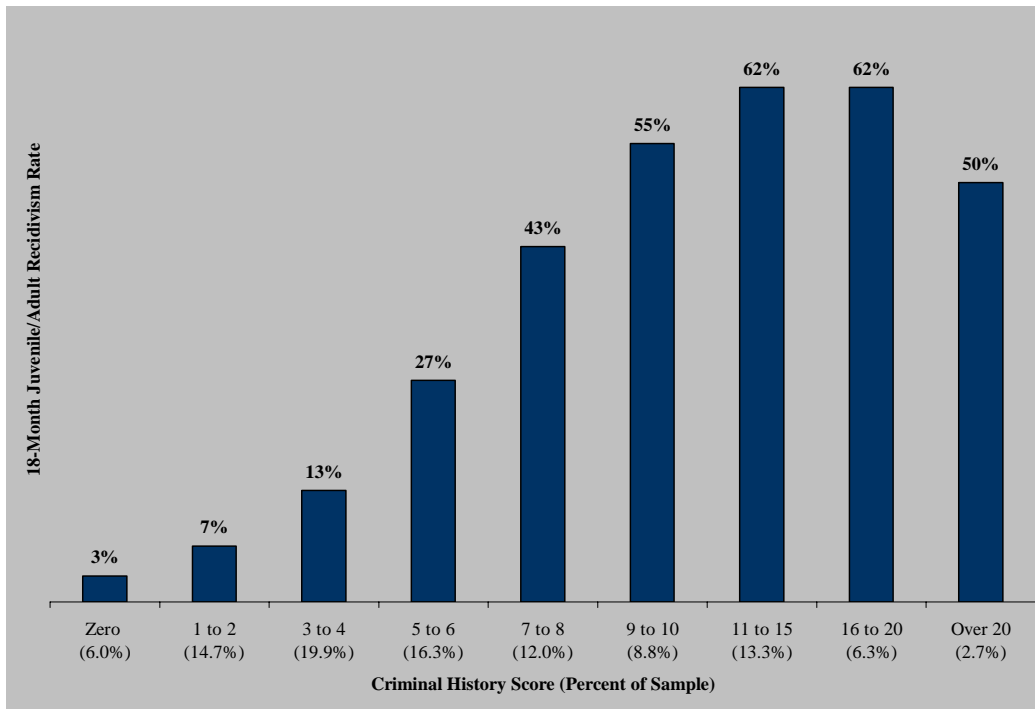
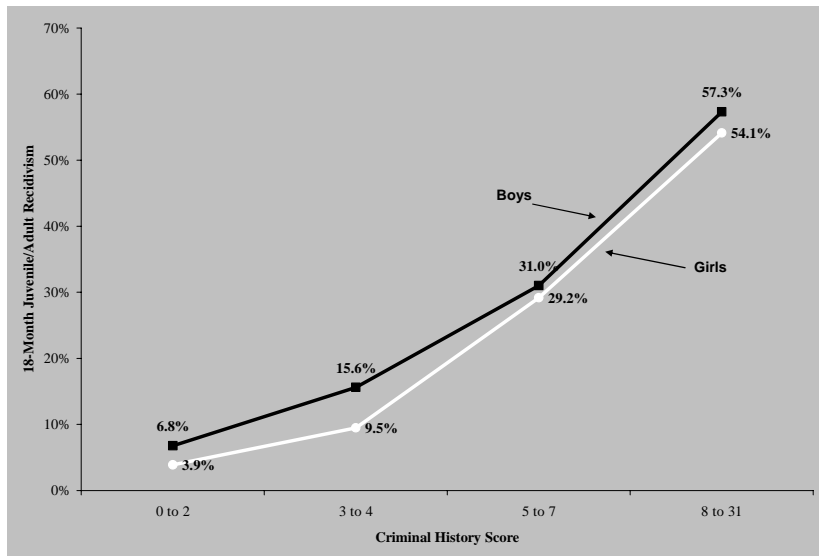


Figure 3
Relationship Between Criminal History Scores and Recidivism by Gender

The positive linear relationship between criminal history scores and recidivism appears to remain regardless of youth gender, as depicted in Figure 3. While boys exhibit slightly higher recidivism rates in general, increasing gradations in offender risk are associated with increasing re-offending for both delinquent girls and boys.



Determination of appropriate risk classifications is a primary objective of the initial pre-validation of the PACT with SRCI data. Based upon the preliminary results, which warrant caution as only criminal history scores (domain 1) and gender scores (domain 2) are available for classification, initial categorization was set similar to Washington with low risk equivalent to scores ranging from 0 to 6, moderate risk ranging from 7 to 10, and high risk representing youth whose scores were 11 or higher. As can be seen in Figure 4, roughly half of the SRCI pool (51%) fall into the low risk category, while 23% were moderate risk and 26% were high risk. Comparisons of Washington State assessment instrument classifications and population percentages are presented as well.

Figure 4
Recidivism by Criminal History Scores and Gender Score
(Three risk categories)

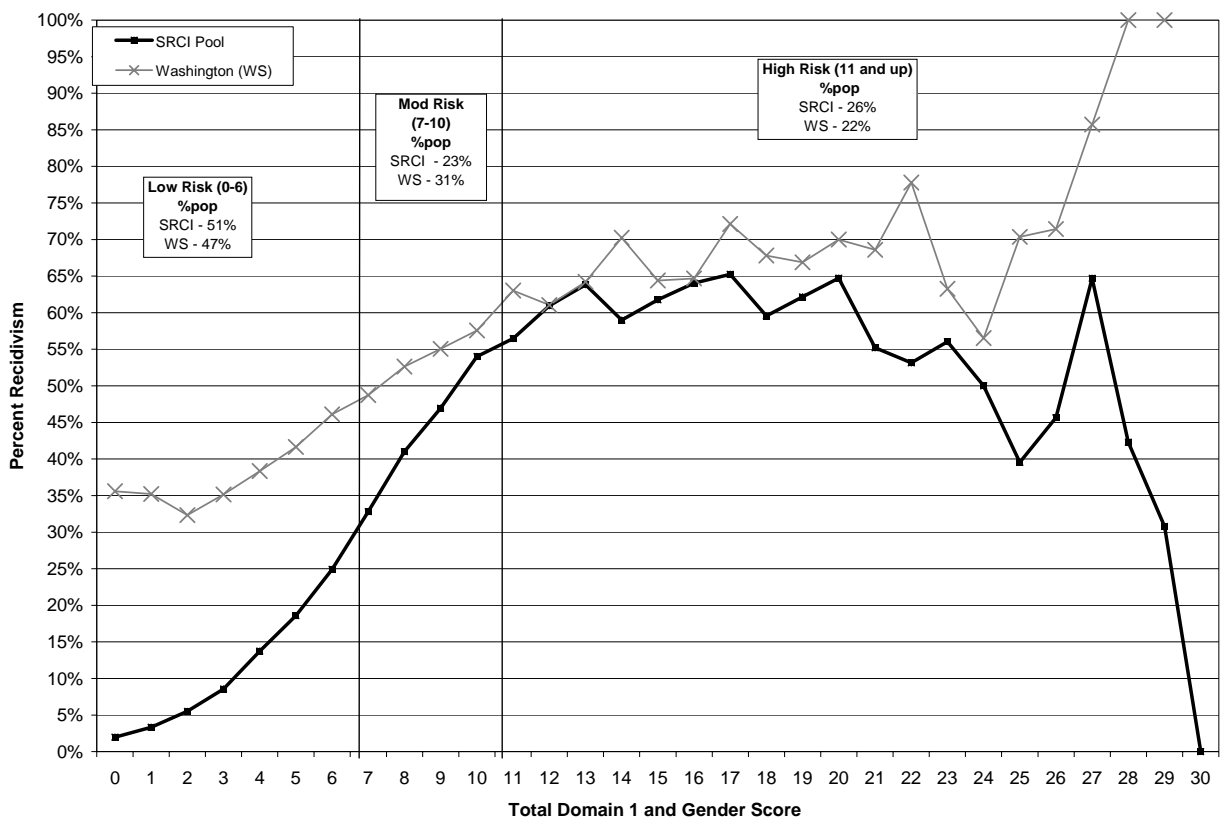
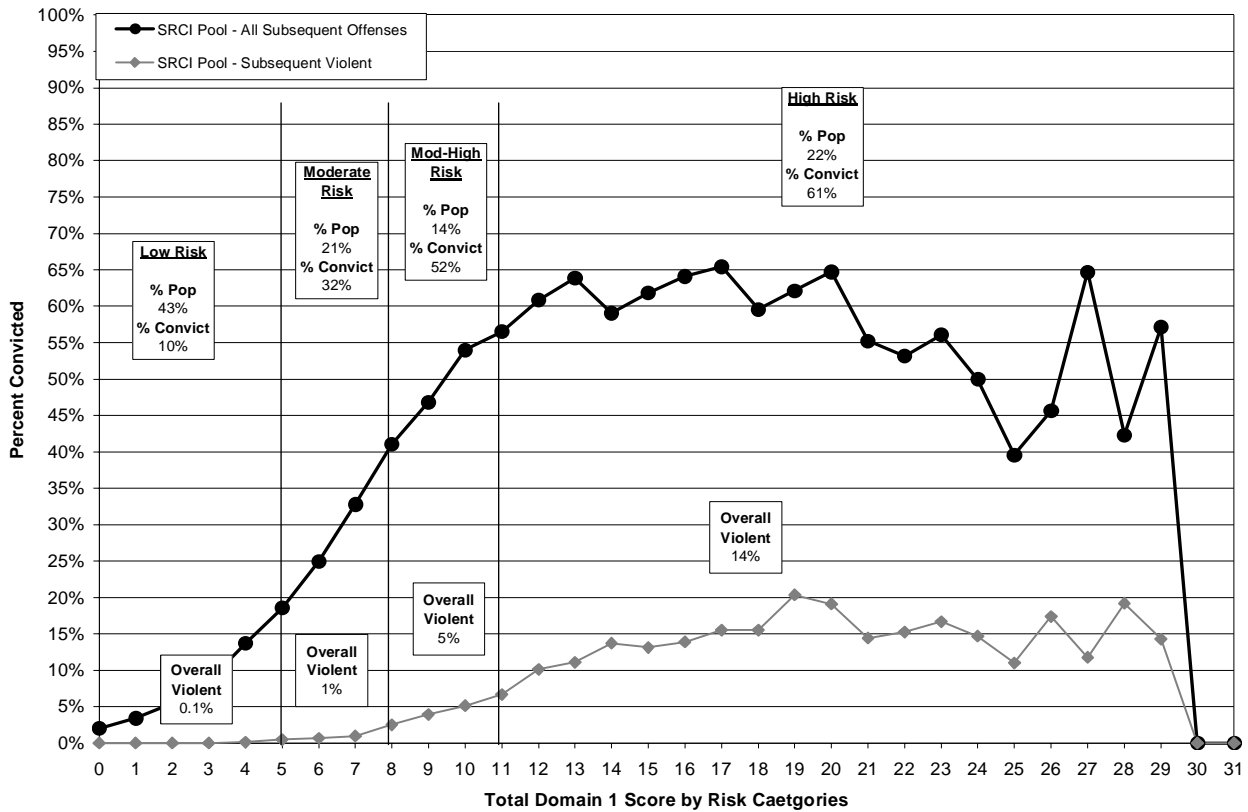


Figure 5 presents population distributions when the risk categories are adjusted down slightly, thereby increasing the percentage of youth in the moderate and high risk groups (and correspondingly increasing the number of youth who will ultimately receive full-PACT assessments).

Figure 5
Recidivism by Criminal History Scores and Gender Score
(Four risk categories)

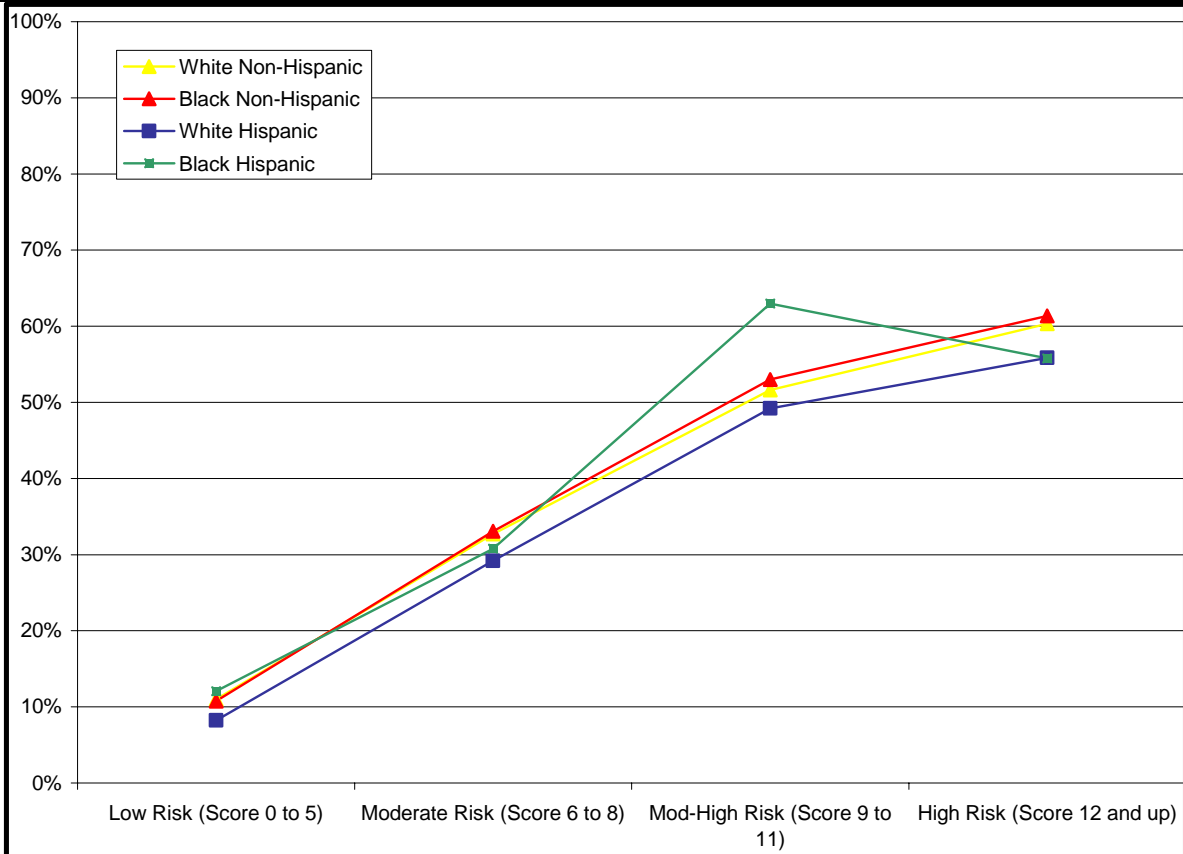


Categorizing risk into four groups (low, moderate, moderate-high, and high)³, the percent of youth falling in the low risk group is slightly lower at 43% of the SRCI pool. Moderate risk and moderate-high risk account for a total of 35% of the sample (21% and 14%, respectively), while high risk youth still comprise nearly one-quarter of the youth in the SRCI pool (22%). Overall recidivism rates rise incrementally as risk intensifies. In addition, the percentage of youth subsequently re-adjudicated or re-convicted for a violent offense likewise increases as offender risk categories increase (low risk, 0.1%; moderate risk, 1%; moderate-high, 5%; and high, 14%).

³ Low Risk (Score 0 to 5); Moderate Risk (Score 6 to 8); Moderate-High Risk (Score 9 to 11); High Risk (Score 12 and up).

Figure 6
Recidivism by Criminal History Scores and Race/Ethnicity
(Four risk categories)

		% Sub. Adj.	% Not Sub. Adj.
White Non-Hispanic	Low Risk (Score 0 to 5)	11%	89%
	Moderate Risk (Score 6 to 8)	33%	67%
	Mod-High Risk (Score 9 to 11)	52%	48%
	High Risk (Score 12 and up)	60%	40%
	Total	28%	72%
Black Non-Hispanic	Low Risk (Score 0 to 5)	11%	89%
	Moderate Risk (Score 6 to 8)	33%	67%
	Mod-High Risk (Score 9 to 11)	53%	47%
	High Risk (Score 12 and up)	61%	39%
	Total	38%	62%
White Hispanic	Low Risk (Score 0 to 5)	8%	92%
	Moderate Risk (Score 6 to 8)	29%	71%
	Mod-High Risk (Score 9 to 11)	49%	51%
	High Risk (Score 12 and up)	56%	44%
	Total	26%	74%
Black Hispanic	Low Risk (Score 0 to 5)	12%	88%
	Moderate Risk (Score 6 to 8)	31%	69%
	Mod-High Risk (Score 9 to 11)	63%	37%
	High Risk (Score 12 and up)	56%	44%
	Total	37%	63%



Examining criminal history scores and subsequent recidivism relative to offender race/ethnicity reveals a positive linear relationship, regardless of race/ethnicity. Among moderate-high risk youth, a slightly greater proportion of black, Hispanic youth re-offended within 18 months of release than youth of other race/ethnicity categories; this difference was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level however. It should be noted that when classified into the three risk categories (low, 0-6; moderate, 7-10; high, 11 and higher), there was very little difference in recidivism by race/ethnicity.⁴ In addition, black Hispanic youth comprise a relatively small proportion of all youth in the sample (n=189; <1%), so caution should be taken in drawing any inferences from the data.

Overall, the analyses presented here support the conclusion that the PACT criminal history score calculations and risk categorizations appear to positively predict recidivism among Florida's youths, using SRCI assessment data. The positive linear relationship between criminal history scores and subsequent juvenile and adult re-offending over an 18-month follow-up period appears to remain regardless of youth gender or race/ethnicity. Risk classifications are dependent upon both analytical outcomes as well as policy considerations, and as such, conclusions must be drawn accordingly.

⁴ White non-Hispanic recidivism: Low-Risk (13%), Moderate-Risk (43%), High-Risk (59%).
Black non-Hispanic recidivism: Low-Risk (13%), Moderate-Risk (43%), High-Risk (61%).
White Hispanic recidivism: Low-Risk (10%), Moderate-Risk (43%), High-Risk (56%).
Black Hispanic recidivism: Low-Risk (14%), Moderate-Risk (42%), High-Risk (58%).