

# Psychopathy in Jail Settings October 2020

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# Overview

This training focuses on understanding the construct and presenting characteristics of psychopathy and the differences between psychopathy, antisocial personality disorder, and other personality disorders. Additionally, the prevalence of psychopathy and treatment challenges will be discussed.

# Learning Objectives

- Understand the construct and presenting characteristics of psychopathy
- Understand the differences between psychopathy, antisocial personality disorder, and other personality disorders
- Understand the prevalence of psychopathy in the general population and specific subgroups
- Recognize the treatment and case management challenges associated with psychopathy

# Psychopathy

- Constellation of personality traits and behavior leading to characteristic personality style
- *Intraspecies predators who charm, manipulate and ruthlessly plough through life, lacking conscience and feeling for others, taking what they please, violating social norms and expectations without guilt or regret*

(Hare, 1993)

# Terms that are not interchangeable

- Antisocial Personality Disorder
  - DSM-V
- Dissocial Personality Disorder
  - ICD-10
- Sociopath
- Psychopath

# Defining Personality Disorder

- Consistent patterns of perceiving, thinking about, reacting to environment and oneself
- Inflexible, maladaptive traits and behaviours, evident across broad range of personal and social situations
- Stable and enduring; evident by adolescence or early adulthood
- Impair functioning or cause personal distress
- Not due to direct effects of substance or medical condition (e.g., head trauma, tumor)

# DSM-V Personality Disorders

Cluster A: odd, eccentric

- Paranoid
- Schizoid
- Schizotypal

# DSM-V Personality Disorders

Cluster B: dramatic, emotional

- Antisocial
- Borderline
- Histrionic
- Narcissistic



# DSM-V Personality Disorders

## Cluster C: anxious, fearful

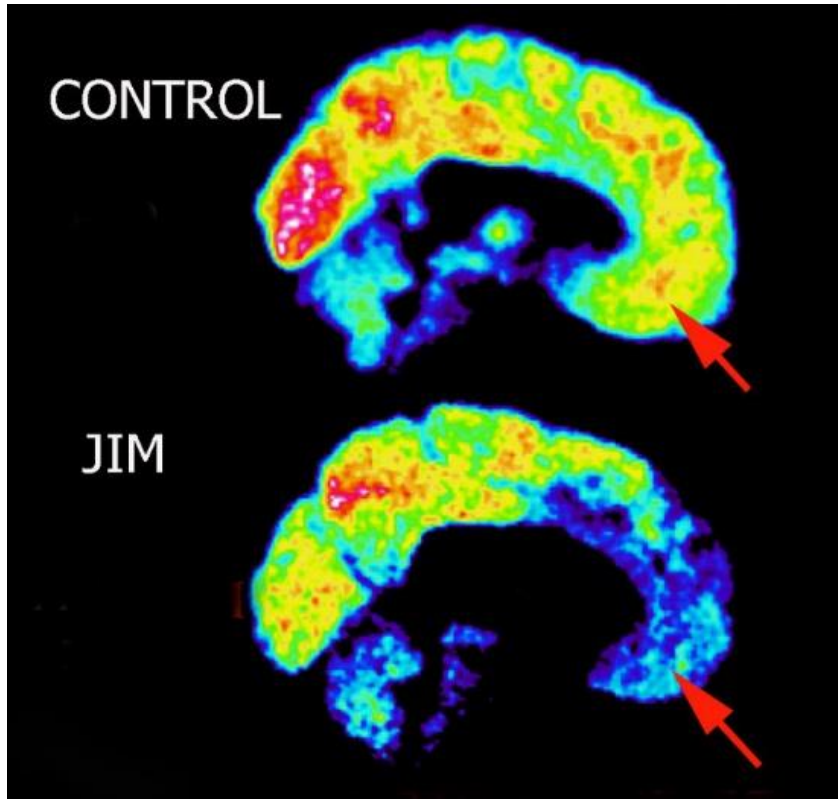
- Avoidant
- Dependent
- Obsessive-Compulsive

# Psychopathy

- Based on work of Robert Hare; derived from conceptualization of Cleckley
- More emphasis on affective and interpersonal features
- Most (but not all) psychopaths will be antisocial personality disorders, but not all ASPDs will be psychopaths
- Most inmates will be ASPD, but only 25% or less will be psychopaths

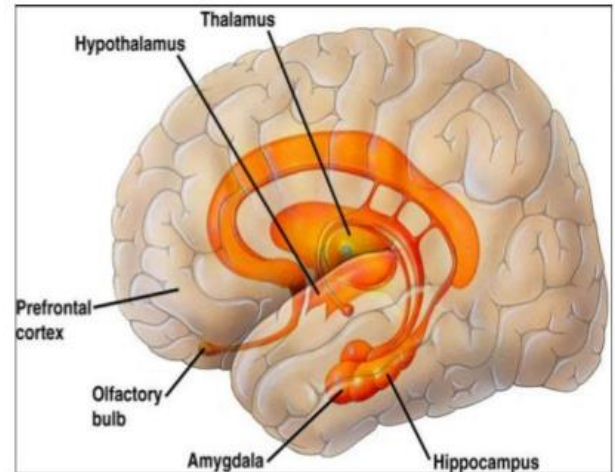
# Psychopathy vs. Antisocial Personality Disorder

- ASPD criteria mostly based on criminal behavior
- ASPD largely ignores motivations for criminal behavior
- ASPD does not emphasize interpersonal and affective traits
- Psychopathy is more specific
- Psychopathy is the more useful construct



## 2. Limbic Dysfunctions:

- Amygdala
- Hippocampus



# Assessment Problems

Cannot rely on patients to report accurately their symptoms

- May lack insight into their impact on others
- Symptoms may include deficits in ability to experience and communicate about emotions
- Symptoms may include deceitfulness
- Consistency and accuracy of self-reports are questionable in forensic contexts

# 20 Characteristics of Psychopaths

1. Glib/superficial charm
2. Grandiose self worth
3. Need for stimulation/proneness to boredom
4. Pathological lying
5. Conning/manipulative
6. Lack of guilt or remorse
7. Shallow affect
8. Callous/lack of empathy
9. Parasitic lifestyle
10. Poor behavioral controls
11. Promiscuous sexual behavior
12. Early behavioral problems
13. Lack of realistic long-term goals
14. Impulsivity
15. Irresponsibility
16. Failure to take responsibility for own actions
17. Many short-term marital Relationships
18. Juvenile delinquency
19. Revocation of conditional release
20. Criminal versatility

# PCL-R Items

- Factor 1
  - Glibness/superficial charm
  - Grandiose sense of self worth
  - Pathological lying
  - Conning/manipulative
  - Lack of remorse/guilt
  - Shallow affect
  - Callous/lack of empathy
  - Failure to accept responsibility
- Factor 2
  - Need for stimulation/sense of boredom
  - Parasitic lifestyle
  - Poor behavioral controls
  - Early behavioral problems
  - Lack of realistic L/T goals
  - Impulsivity
  - Irresponsibility
  - Juvenile delinquency
  - Revocation conditional release
  - Criminal versatility

# Facets

- Facet 1 Interpersonal: Glibness/superficial charm; grandiose sense self worth; Pathological lying; conning/manipulative
- Facet 2 Affective: Lack of remorse or guilt; shallow affect; callous/lack of remorse; failure to accept responsibility

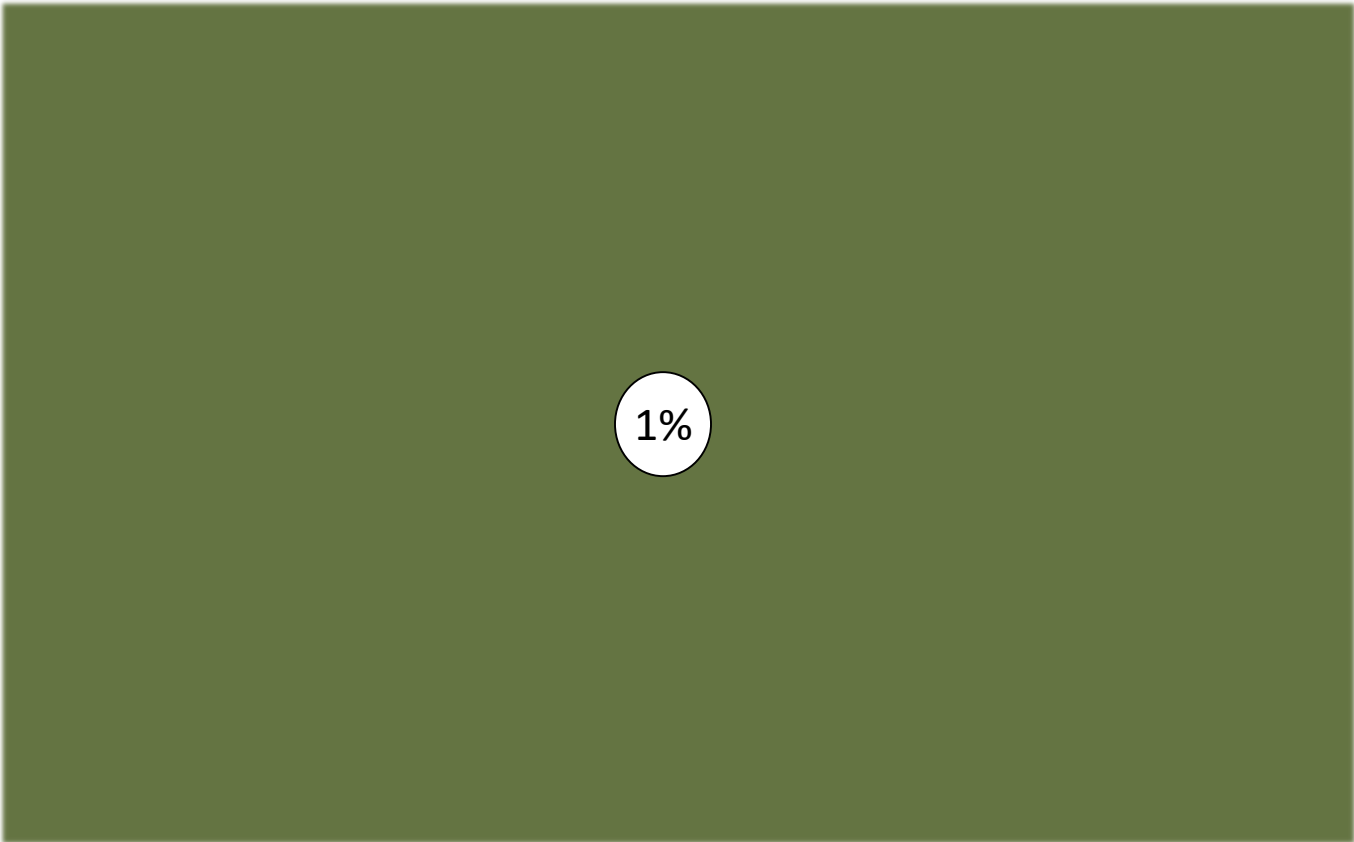


# Facets

- Facet 3 Lifestyle: Need for stimulation/ proneness to boredom; parasitic lifestyle; lack of realistic long term plans; impulsivity; irresponsibility
- Facet 4 Antisocial: Poor behaviour controls; early behavioural problems; juvenile delinquency; revocation of conditional release; criminal versatility

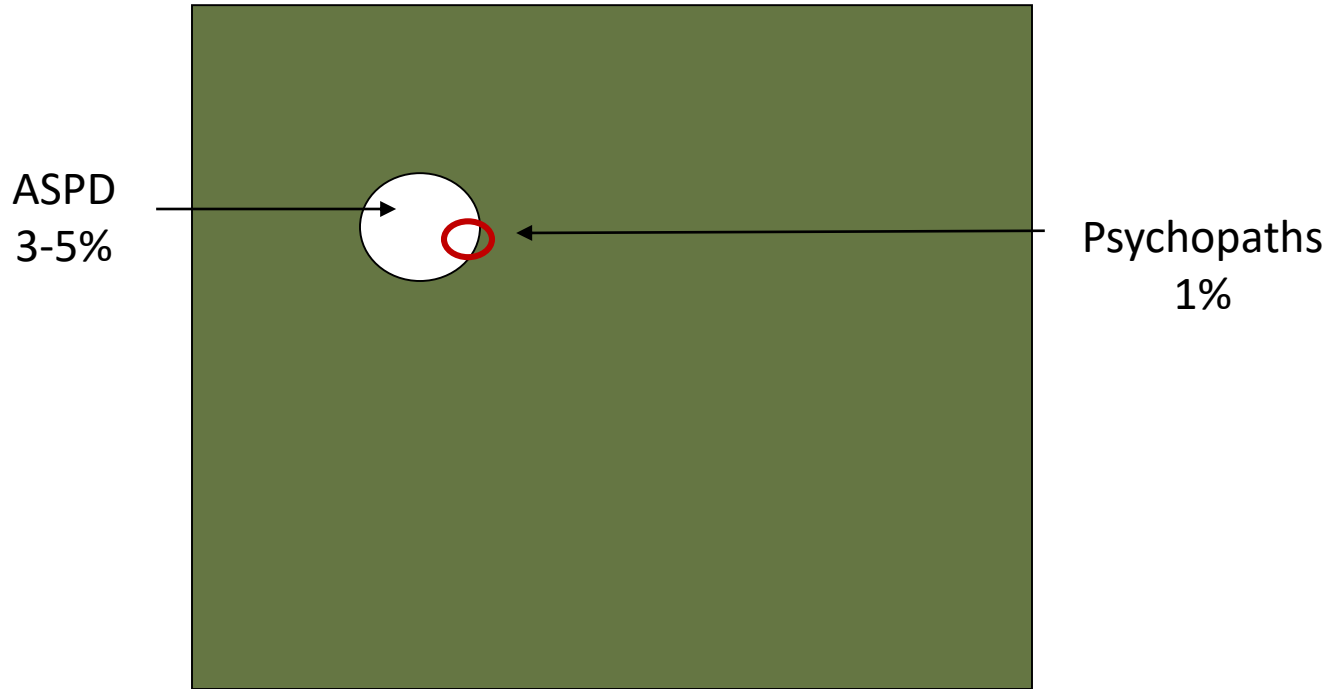
# Reliability and Validity

- Score range 0-40; items scored 0, 1, 2
- Diagnosis  $\geq 30$
- Test re-test range .85- .94
- Standard error of measurement = 3.00
- Strong relationship with age of onset
- Measures density and variety (versatility) of offending:
  - General
  - Violence
  - Sexual



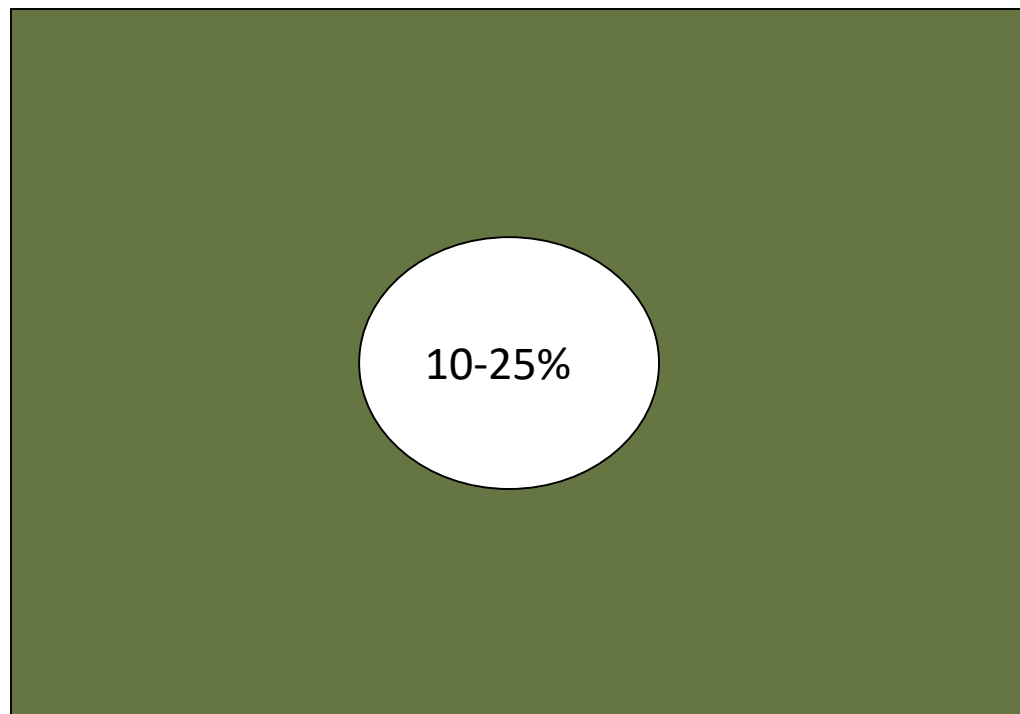
Psychopaths in general population

Hare, 2001



Psychopathy and ASPD in general population

Hare, 2001



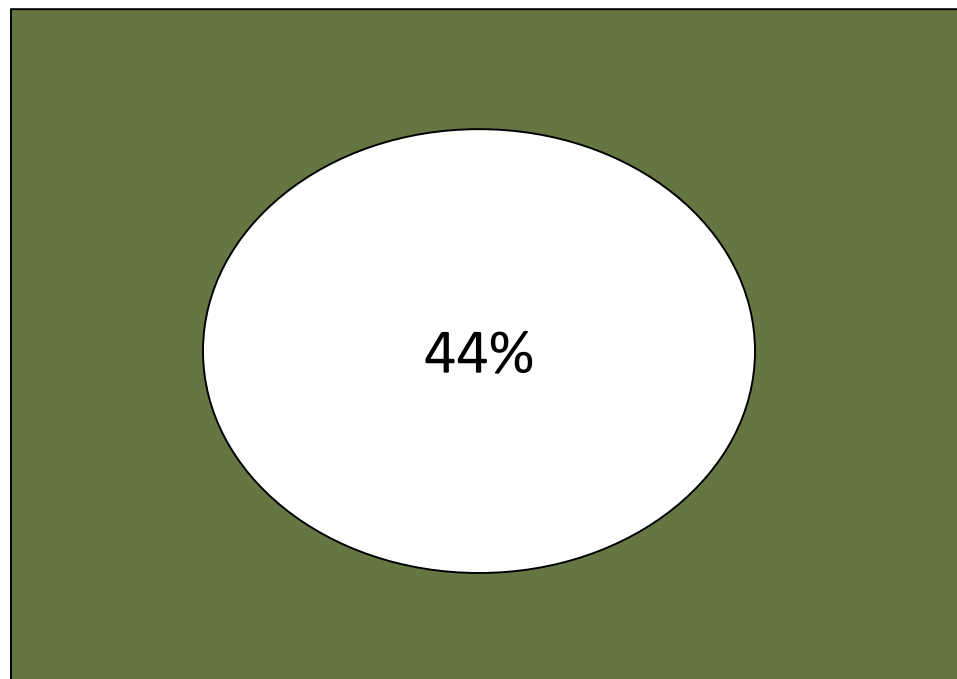
Psychopaths in prison populations

Hare, 2001



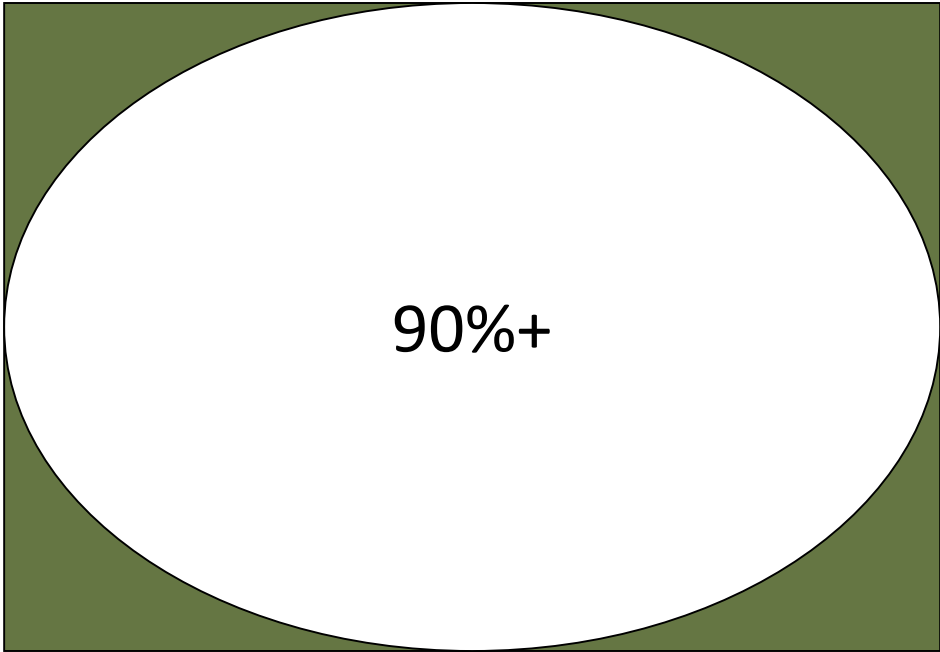
## Psychopathy and ASPD in offender populations

Hare, 2003



Psychopaths as killers of law enforcement officers

Hare, 2001



Psychopaths as serial killers

Hare, 2001



## Psychopathy vs. ASPD in Correctional Settings

- 40% to 80% of inmates qualify for ASPD
- 7% to 30% of inmates are psychopaths
- In prison populations, almost all psychopaths are ASPD, but not all ASPD are psychopaths.

# Features of Psychopathy

- Responsible of large proportion of crime
- Commit a wide range of crimes
- More violent crimes
- Offend later into life
- Higher rates of recidivism
- More likely to use instrumental than reactive aggression (less often crimes of passion)
- Can be politicians, CEOs, rather than criminal justice offenders
- *May get worse with treatment*

# Criminal offending in psychopaths

- Most individual offenses committed by psychopaths are not exceptionally serious  
However in their careers:
  - They commit a wider range of offenses (versatility)
  - They commit a greater number of offenses (volume)
  - They commit more violent offenses

# Psychopathy and Violence

The correlation between the PCL and violence averages about .35

In studies with follow-ups of up to 10 years

- In general offenders, sex offenders, forensic psychiatric patients, civil psychiatric patients
- Regardless of age, sex, or co-existing mental disorder
- Association is with traits (stronger traits = higher risk)

# Rates of Violence

Among psychopaths released from Canadian prisons, the 5-year violent re-offense rate is about 70%

- Versus about 30% in low group ( $\leq 20$ ) and 50% in medium group (21-29)
- Versus low group, psychopaths are at very high risk for re-offense (odds ratio = 5x to 10x)

# Types of Violence

- Psychopaths not only commit more violence, they commit different kinds of violence
- The violence of psychopaths often has unusual or atypical motivations
  - Instrumentality/gain
  - Impulsivity/opportunism
  - Sadism

# Psychopathy and Type of Offense

- Psychopaths more likely to commit
  - Armed robbery
  - Assault
  - Possession and use of a weapon
- Psychopaths less likely to commit murder
  - Difference may be motivation

# Distinctive Psychopathic Violence

## Marked quantitative differences

- More likely to be predatory
- Motivated by readily identifiable goals
- Instrumental rather than reactive
- Carried out in a callous, calculated manner, without the emotional context that usually characterizes the violence of other offenders
- Victims more likely to be strangers

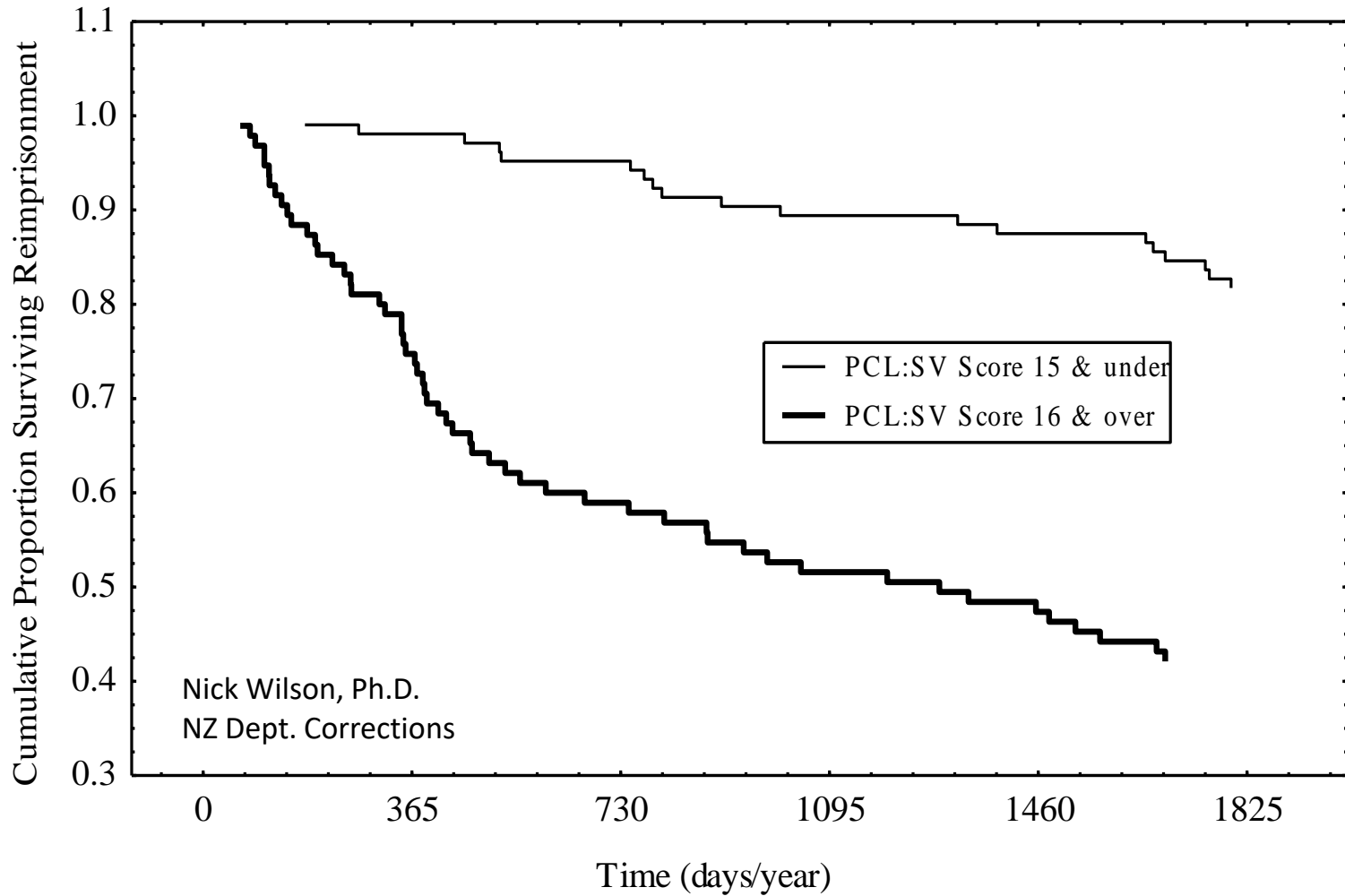


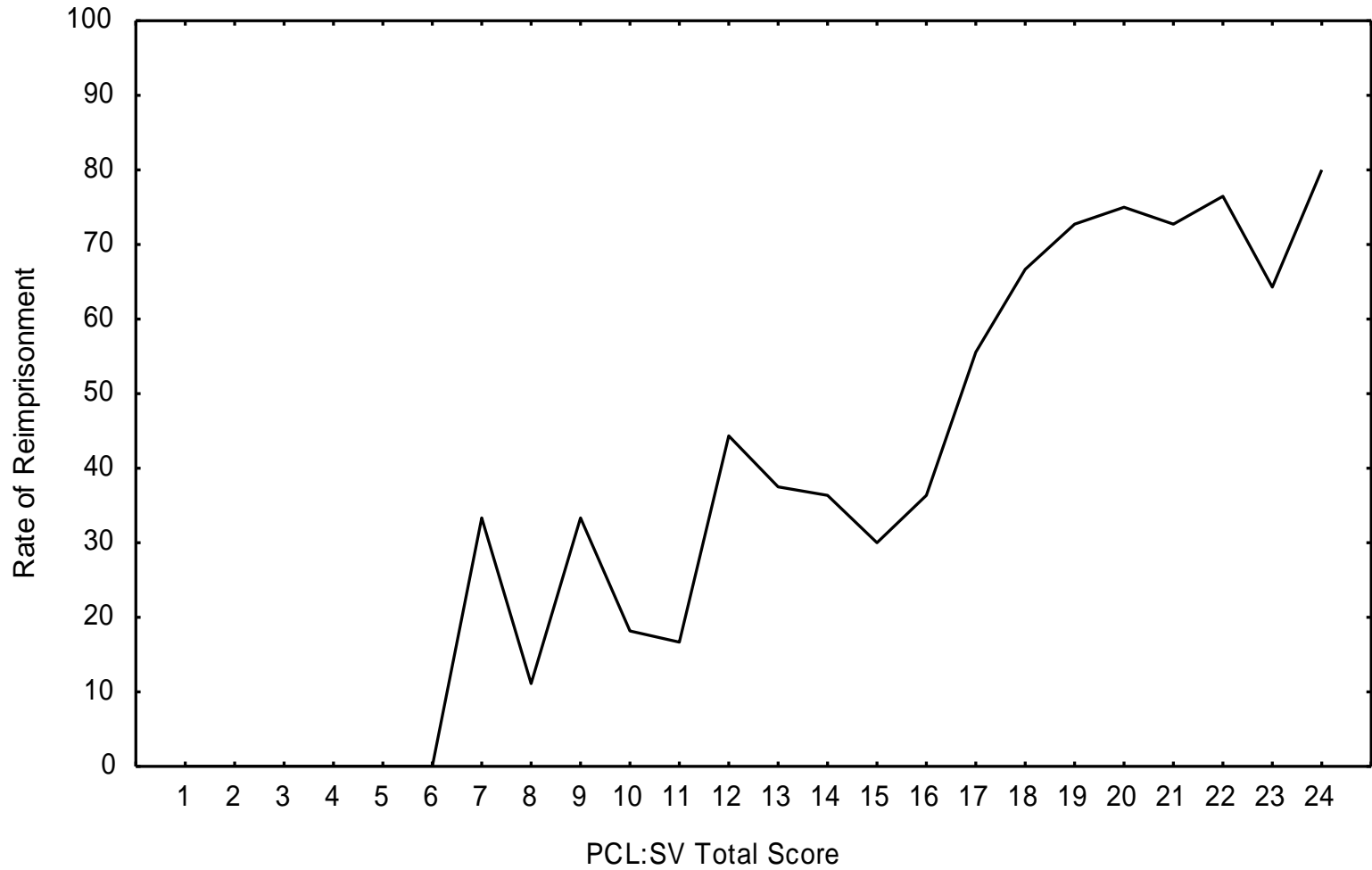
# Institutional Misconduct

- Psychopathy found to predict disciplinary offenses in sample of sex offenders
- PCL:SV predicted violent infractions among institutionalized male juvenile offenders
- Psychopathy indicated higher rates of negative behavior within a prison therapeutic community
- Psychopathy predictive of institutional misconduct, weapons making, staff involvement, and escape attempts

# Study of NZ Offenders

- Psychopaths committed more misconducts than non-psychopaths
- Psychopaths committed more **violent** misconducts than non-psychopaths
- The rate of institutional offending was more stable over time for psychopaths
- The function of the misconducts incurred by psychopaths primarily anti-authoritarian and status seeking
- Institution sanction less effective for high PCL group





# Treatment of Criminal Psychopaths

- Difficult, at best
- Much of the literature is hampered by:
  - Poor diagnostic procedures
  - Poor specification of treatment
  - Impoverished outcome measures
  - Poor methodological / statistical controls

*(Blackburn, 1994; Dolan & Coid, 1993; Wong & Hare, in press)*

# Treatment of Criminal Psychopaths continued

- Recent studies indicate that traditional prison treatment programs do little good for psychopaths, and may even make them worse
  - One treatment does not fit all offenders
  - Need programs designed specifically for psychopaths
  - One such program: Wong & Hare (in press)

# Why is treatment not effective?

- Psychopaths are unlike other offenders:
  - Suffer little personal distress
  - See little wrong with behavior
  - Only remain in treatment when contingencies such as probation and parole are outcome of compliance
  - Do not respond to programs aimed at empathy, conscience and interpersonal skills

# Sub-criminal psychopaths

- Attracted to jobs where they can quickly obtain financial success and power
- Thrive in corporate environment by playing staff against each other, ruthless self promotion, lying about credentials, etc.
- Some corporate environments select (directly or indirectly) for psychopathic traits (see Enron)



# Stability and Change

Given the genetic basis of personality traits and empirical evidence of stability, major changes to traits are unlikely.

Basic principle: The goal of treatment is to help individuals to adapt to their basic personality traits and express them more constructively, rather than to change the trait structure of personality.

-Livesley, 2003

# Conclusions

- Psychopathy is strongly associated with crime, especially violent crime
- Psychopathy must be assessed as part of comprehensive violence risk assessments
- The presence of psychopathy compels a conclusion of high risk
- Psychopathy must be assessed by trained professionals using adequate procedures
- Treatment of psychopaths requires further study

# Thank you!

## What questions do you have?

For additional assistance or training  
on this process, please email us at:

[jailassistance@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:jailassistance@dshs.wa.gov)