

# Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

## Description

The RSES measures self-esteem using ten items answered on a four-point Likert-type scale -- from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The RSES is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem (Sinclair et al., 2010). Self-esteem is not a unitary construct and has been divided equally to measure two 5-item facets; self-competence and self-liking.

- Self-competence (SC) is understood as one's instrumental value. Schmitt and Allik (2005) defined self-competence as "feeling you are confident, capable and efficacious"(p. 625).

- Self-liking (SL) is defined as one's sense of intrinsic self value (Sinclair et al., 2010). Schmitt and Allik (2005) defined self-liking as "feeling you are good and socially relevant" (p. 625).

A central assumption in psychology has been that high self-esteem is beneficial and low self-esteem is detrimental (Crocker & Park, 2004). However, a more nuanced view of self-esteem is emerging, suggesting the benefits of high trait self-esteem are restricted to enhanced initiative and happiness (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Crocker and Park (2004) point out that self-esteem is associated with self-focus interpersonal and achievement goals, and high self-esteem can produce costs in terms of loss of relatedness, increased competitiveness and lower concern for group wellbeing. These researchers argue psychologists should be less concerned in fostering the amount of self-esteem and more concerned with the processes by which individuals pursue it.

## Validity

The scale has good predictive validity, as well as internal consistency and test–retest reliability (Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Torrey, Mueser, McHugo, & Drake, 2000). Cronbach coefficient has been shown to be high ( $M = 0.81$ ) supporting the internal coherence of the scale. Sinclair et al. (2010) suggest that self-esteem scores are highly dependent on temporal affect, and therefore the scale may not capture trait based self-esteem adequately. Despite this, test-retest reliability over a period of 2 weeks reveals correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. The RSES demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

## Interpretation

The minimum total score is 0 and the maximum is 30, with higher scores representing higher self-esteem. Results consist of four raw scores and four percentiles: Total self-esteem, self-competence (sum of first five items), self-liking (sum of second five items) and self-competence minus self liking (SC-SL). Percentiles indicate how the client's self-esteem compares to Sinclair's adult sample.

Sinclair et al. (2010) found that among a sample of 503 adults ( $M = 44.7$  years,  $SD = 16.3$ ) the average self-esteem score was 22.62 ( $SD = 5.8$ ). The self-competence subscale had a mean of 12.01 ( $SD=2.82$ ). The mean for self-liking was 10.62 ( $SD = 3.35$ ). Additionally, when the raw self-liking score was taken away from the raw self-competence score (SC-SL), the average difference was 1.39 ( $SD=2.15$ ).

Despite higher self-esteem not always being more adaptive, evidence shows that self-esteem is negatively and linearly related to disorders of mood and anxiety (Greenberg et al., 1992; Lightsey et al., 2006; Neustadt et al., 2006; Torrey et al., 2000), so higher self-esteem has been shown to be protective against some mental disorders.

## Developer

Rosenberg, M. (1965). Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Measures Package, 61.

## References

Sinclair SJ; Blais MA; Gansler DA; Sandberg E; Bistis K; LoCicero A. Psychometric properties of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: overall and across demographic groups living within the United States. *Eval Health Prof*;33(1):56-80, 2010

Schmitt, D. P., & Allik, J. (2005). Simultaneous administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 53 nations: exploring the universal and culture-specific features of global self-esteem. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 89(4), 623.

Crocker, J., & Park, L. E. (2004). The costly pursuit of self-esteem. *Psychological Bulletin*; Psychological Bulletin, 130(3), 392.

Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Does high self-esteem cause better performance, interpersonal success, happiness, or healthier lifestyles? *Psychological science in the public interest*, 4(1), 1-44.

### Instructions to Client

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. There are four possible answers for each of the 10 questions, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Tap the box to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.