Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire, Adult version (A-RSQ)

Rejection sensitivity (RS) is a cognitive-affective processing disposition to anxiously expect rejection, shaped by cognitive-social learning history and triggered in situations when either rejection or acceptance is possible. The RS-Adult questionnaire (A-RSQ) is an adaptation of the RSQ (Downey & Feldman, 1996) for assessing RS in adults.

This measure is available to the public. You are welcome to use, reprint, translate, and modify the measure in whatever ways best suit your research, and you do not need to ask permission. Please be sure to read the scoring instructions and relevant literature.

For information on the development of the measure, and psychometric properties including convergent and discriminant validity, see Study 2 of the following paper:
> Berenson, K. R., Gyurak A., Ayduk, O., Downey G., Garner, M. J., Mogg, K. Bradley, B. P., & Pine, D. S. (2009). Rejection sensitivity and disruption of attention by social threat cues. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43, 1064-1072.

For information on the original RSQ, see the following paper:
> Downey, G., & Feldman, S. I. (1996). Implications of rejection sensitivity for intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70*(6), 1327-1343.

How to Score:

1. Calculate a rejection sensitivity score for each situation by **multiplying** the level of **rejection concern** *(the response to question a)* by the level of **rejection expectancy** *(the reverse of the level of acceptance expectancy reported in response to question b)*. Here are the formulas for each situation:

> **rejection expectancy = 7-acceptance expectancy**
>
> **rejection sensitivity = (rejection concern) * (rejection expectancy)**

> **For example,** if someone responded to the first situation with a 5 and a 2, as shown below, their rejection concern score is a 5, and their rejection expectancy score is (7-2) or 5. So their RS score for this situation would be 5 x 5 or 25. Note that every score will be between 1 and 36.

1. You ask your parents or another family member for a loan to help you through a difficult financial time.

How concerned or anxious would you be over whether or not your family would want to help you?
very unconcerned   very concerned
1   2   3   4   (5)   6

I would expect that they would agree to help as much as they can.
very unlikely   very likely
1   (2)   3   4   5   6

2. The total rejection sensitivity score is the **mean** of the rejection sensitivity scores for the 9 situations. The total score will also be between 1 and 36.

Sample SPSS code

You can use the following commands to compute ARSQ scores in an SPSS dataset where the ARSQ variables are named: arsq1a, arsq1b, arsq2a, arsq2b, arsq3a, arsq3b, arsq4a, arsq4b, arsq5a, arsq5b, arsq6a, arsq6b, arsq7a, arsq7b, arsq8a, arsq8b, arsq9a, arsq9b.


```
*computing RS scores for each situation.
compute arsq1= arsq1a * (7-arsq1b).
compute arsq2= arsq2a * (7-arsq2b).
compute arsq3= arsq3a * (7-arsq3b).
compute arsq4= arsq4a * (7-arsq4b).
compute arsq5= arsq5a * (7-arsq5b).
compute arsq6= arsq6a * (7-arsq6b).
compute arsq7= arsq7a * (7-arsq7b).
compute arsq8= arsq8a * (7-arsq8b).
compute arsq9= arsq9a * (7-arsq9b).
EXECUTE.
*calculating total ARSQ score.
compute arsq_tot= mean(arsq1, arsq2, arsq3, arsq4, arsq5, arsq6, arsq7, arsq8, arsq9).
EXECUTE.
```
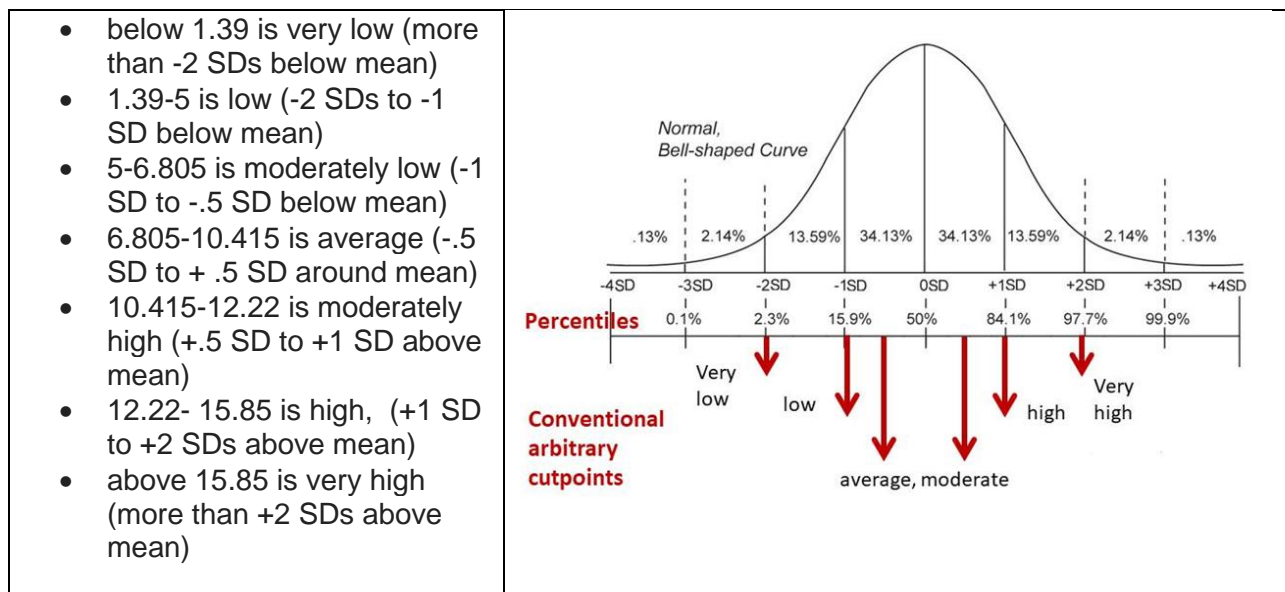
How to interpret A-RSQ scores:

It is best to keep personality scales continuous in research, rather than divide people into high versus low categories based on arbitrary cutoffs.

But if you need to create categories, you can do so using the descriptive statistics (mean and SD, or percentiles) for your sample, or for similar samples from previous research. Typically, +1/-1 SD around the mean define the cutoffs for high and low, respectively. You can also use +.5/-.5 SDs to define cutoffs for moderately high/low, if you would like. +2/-2 SDs can optionally define cutoffs for very high/low.

For example, in the research we did to develop this measure (as reported in Berenson et al., 2009, Study 2), the measure had the following characteristics in a sample of 685 adults who completed it over the internet: Mean (SD) = 8.61 (3.61), Range = 1.00 - 24.22.

So in that sample, or in similar samples (e.g., of adults who complete studies on the internet),

- below 1.39 is very low (more than -2 SDs below mean)
- 1.39-5 is low (-2 SDs to -1 SD below mean)
- 5-6.805 is moderately low (-1 SD to -.5 SD below mean)
- 6.805-10.415 is average (-.5 SD to + .5 SD around mean)
- 10.415-12.22 is moderately high (+.5 SD to +1 SD above mean)
- 12.22- 15.85 is high, (+1 SD to +2 SDs above mean)
- above 15.85 is very high (more than +2 SDs above mean)

Normal, Bell-shaped Curve

.13%   2.14%   13.59%   34.13%   34.13%   13.59%   2.14%   .13%

-4SD   -3SD   -2SD   -1SD   0SD   +1SD   +2SD   +3SD   +4SD

Percentiles   0.1%   2.3%   15.9%   50%   84.1%   97.7%   99.9%

Very low   low   high   Very high

Conventional arbitrary cutpoints   average, moderate

Of course for your study you might want fewer categories, so you can select cutpoints for defining high and low respectively (e.g., using the +1/-1 or +.5/-.5 cutpoints), and say that everyone in between is average or not far from average. Some people just use the median as a cutpoint to define people as high or low, but people right at the median (or close) are hard to accurately classify that way.

Psychometric properties in previous research

In 685 adults who completed the measure over the internet, the measure had the following characteristics (as reported in Berenson et al., 2009, Study 2):
- Mean (SD) = 8.61 (3.61), Range = 1.00 - 24.22
- Reference: Berenson, K. R., Gyurak A., Ayduk, O., Downey G., Garner, M. J., Mogg, K. Bradley, B. P., & Pine, D. S. (2009). Rejection sensitivity and disruption of attention by social threat cues. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43, 1064-1072.

As reported in Berenson, Downey, Rafaeli, Coifman & Paquin (2011), 85 adults completed the A-RSQ twice, an average of 6.9 weeks apart:
- Internal consistency (alpha) = .89 (for each administration)
- Test–retest reliability (Spearman–Brown coefficient) = .91
- Reference: Berenson, Downey, Rafaeli, Coifman & Paquin (2011). The rejection-rage contingency in borderline personality disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 120,* 681-690.

As reported in Berenson et al., (2016), 104 adults (including 35 who met DSM-IV-TR criteria for borderline personality disorder, 24 who met criteria for avoidant personality disorder and 45 healthy participants) completed the A-RSQ:
- Internal consistency (alpha) = .91
- Scores were significantly higher in the borderline personality disorder group M = 15.84, SD = 6.74 and the avoidant personality disorder group M = 17.35, SD = 7.25, than in the healthy comparison group M = 6.47, SD = 2.77. (Scores in the borderline and avoidant groups did not differ from one another.)
- Reference: Berenson, K.R., Gregory, W.E., Glaser, E., Romirowsky, A., Rafaeli, E. Yang, X., Downey, G., (2016). Impulsivity, rejection sensitivity, and reactions to stressors in borderline personality disorder. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 40, 510-521.*

For questions, contact:

Kathy R. Berenson, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Gettysburg College
Website: www.berenson.sites.gettysburg.edu
email: kberenso@gettysburg.edu

.