



Need for a Standardized Background Self-Report

There is clearly a need to collect background self-report information during the personnel selection process for police officers, since almost all departments collect this type of information. Because individual departments use locally developed forms, and because wording differs even when questions ask about the same topics, there is no good way to compare one department's candidates with candidates nationwide. Often the background self-report forms developed locally contain some unclear questions and overlook some important information. In addition, the current background self-report forms are not computer-scored and are typically cumbersome to use. The PCBS was developed to address these shortcomings and, in particular, to provide a background self-report measure which is both reliable and easily used.

Development of the PCBS

In developing the PCBS, two fundamental issues were addressed: (1) determining typical content of background investigation forms through use of a survey, and (2) developing self-report questions. The development and testing of questions is described below.

Visit policecbs.info/about/National_Survey.pdf for more information about the national survey.

Developing Self-Report Questions

Several principles were followed in developing the self-report questions. The questions were clearly worded to minimize misinterpretation. Multiple questions were written for any one area in order to improve reliability of measurement.

For each PCBS subject area and scale self-report questions were included only if they bore a manifest relationship to the job, provided basic identification or historical information which would be of use to background investigators, or provided for internal checks on the responses being given (such as two questions asking for the same information).

Review, Piloting, and Revision of Self Report Questions

At several points during its development the PCBS was reviewed by multiple subject matter experts (SMEs, police chiefs, police psychologists, and police background investigators) from diverse departments (state and municipal). Candidate feedback was also collected on early forms by use of a free-form question asking the candidates to provide explanatory information for questions where needed. Revisions were made when necessary.

Scoring

Scale scores for the PCBS are calculated from the candidate's responses to questions. Some questions reflect more serious problems, and these receive more weight and therefore contribute more to the scale scores. **A score of zero is the ideal score on every scale.**