

Vulnerability to Abuse Screening Scale, VASS, in the ALSWH Data

David Fitzgerald, November 2018

The Vulnerability to Abuse Screening Scale, VASS, question items have been asked in many ALSWH surveys but the four derived sub-scales have not been included in any ALSWH datasets.

It was noted in the December 2006 ALSWH Technical report that not all the four sub-scales may be useful as screening measures. In particular, the dependence and dejection sub-scales are not directly representative of abuse. This conclusion was reached after earlier work by Schofield et al (2002) and Schofield et al (2003). Consequently, the sub-scales have not been included in the ALSWH datasets.

VASS Items

There are 12 VASS items each with a Yes or No response.

- Are you sad or lonely often?
- Do you feel uncomfortable with anyone in your family?
- Can you take your own medication and get around by yourself?
- Do you feel that nobody wants you around?
- Does someone in your family make you stay in bed or tell you you're sick when you know you are not?
- Has anyone forced you to do things you didn't want to do?
- Has anyone taken things that belong to you without your OK?
- Do you trust most of the people in your family?
- Do you have enough privacy at home?
- Has anyone close to you tried to hurt you or harm you recently?
- Has anyone close to you called you names or put you down or made you feel bad recently?
- Are you afraid of anyone in your family?

The responses in the ALSWH data were coded as either Yes 1, No 0 or Yes 1, No 2 depending on the survey

VASS items in the ALSWH surveys

The table shows each of the 12 VASS items and where they have been used in the ALSWH surveys. Some surveys did not use all 12 of the VASS items but a sample of them. Two other non-VASS abuse questions are included in this table below the VASS items.

	Questions	1921-26	1946-51	1973-78
VASS_1	Are you sad or lonely often?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3
VASS_2	Do you feel uncomfortable with anyone in your family?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	
VASS_3	Can you take your own medication and get around by yourself?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	

VASS_4	Do you feel that nobody wants you around?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3
VASS_5	Does someone in your family make you stay in bed or tell you you're sick when you know you're not?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	
VASS_6	Has anyone forced you to do things you didn't want to do?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	
VASS_7	Has anyone taken things that belong to you without your OK?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	
VASS_8	Do you trust most of the people in your family?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	
VASS_9	Do you have enough privacy at home?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3
VASS_10	Has anyone close to you tried to hurt you or harm you recently?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3
VASS_11	Has anyone close to you called you names or put you down or made you feel bad recently?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3
VASS_12	Are you afraid of anyone in your family?	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3
	Have you ever been in a violent relationship with a partner/spouse?	1	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
	Does anyone in your family drink a lot of alcohol?	1	1, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3

The following is from the 2006 Technical section written by Anne Russell and Jenny Powers:

Scores

The VASS sub-scale scores are calculated as the weighted sum of coded responses, where weights are the scoring coefficients from factor analysis. Below is the SAS code that can be used to calculate the sub-scales for Survey 3 of the 1921-26 cohort.

The SAS code defining the vulnerability to abuse subscales at Survey 3 is:

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/*****
*** Elder Abuse subscales using factor score          ***
*** coefficients estimated by PROC FACTOR             ***
*** o3vlnrbl = personal vulnerability/fear           ***
*** o3contrl = personal control                      ***

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*** o3dstrss = psychological neglect/distress          ***
*** o3extrnl = unwanted external control              ***
*****/
vass1=o3q63a; vass2=o3q63b; vass3=o3q63c; vass4=o3q63d;
vass5=o3q63e; vass6=o3q63f; vass7=o3q63g; vass8=o3q63h;
vass9=o3q63i; vass10=o3q63j; vass11=o3q63k; vass12=o3q63l;

o3vlrbl =
(- .14906*vass1 + .06198*vass2 - .05228*vass3 - .07518*vass4
- .08877*vass5 + .00214*vass6 - .06690*vass7 - .02065*vass8
+ .01816*vass9 + .48341*vass10 + .39275*vass11 + .51920*vass12) ;

o3contrl =
(- .08230*vass1 + .01342*vass2 + .38245*vass3 + .02198*vass4
- .00840*vass5 - .06186*vass6 + .04167*vass7 + .48682*vass8
+ .48876*vass9 + .05317*vass10 - .07881*vass11 - .04952*vass12) ;

o3dstrss =
( .60833*vass1 + .37006*vass2 - .03939*vass3 + .42249*vass4
- .17395*vass5 - .01340*vass6 + .09290*vass7 + .01172*vass8
- .01743*vass9 - .11672*vass10 + .10538*vass11 - .12273*vass12) ;

o3extrnl =
(- .11138*vass1 - .06285*vass2 - .00331*vass3 + .04604*vass4
+ .59639*vass5 + .50937*vass6 + .40477*vass7 - .01741*vass8
- .01126*vass9 - .07179*vass10 - .05860*vass11 - .01734*vass12) ;

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References

ALSWH Technical Report, Derived variables not included in datasets, Dec 2006

Schofield MJ, Reynolds R, Mishra GD, Powers JR, Dobson AJ. Screening for vulnerability to abuse among older women: Women's Health Australia Study. *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 2002;21(2):24-39

Schofield M, Mishra GD. Validity of self-report screening scale for elder abuse: Women's Health Australia Study. *The Gerontologist* 2003;43(1):110