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Web Exclusives

## Sensation seeking scale

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### Curbing aggressive driving

WSU graduate students Yu-Sheng Lin and Mark Mulder, and assistant professor of marketing Jeffrey Joireman are looking at effects of impulsivity and thrill-seeking on dangerous driving. Using a scale like the one below, they surveyed Washington State University students to examine whether those drivers considered future consequences when making their choices on the road. The researchers collaborate with Washington State Patrol on educating drivers with high sensation-seeking behaviors on how their driving is affected and when it becomes dangerous.

[Read the full article here.](#)

You can take the survey below to get a general idea of your level of sensation-seeking or thrill-seeking inclination.

### Interest and Preference Test

#### *Sensation Seeking Scale Form V*

**Directions:** Each of the items below contains two choices, A and B. Please indicate (circle) on your answer sheet which of the choices most describes your likes or the way you feel. In some cases you may find items in which both choices describe your likes or feelings. Please choose the one which better describes your likes or feelings.

In some cases you may find items in which you do not like either choice. In these cases mark the choice you dislike least. Please try to answer each item.

It is important you respond to all items with only one choice, A or B. We are interested only in your likes or feeling, not in how others feel about these things or how one is supposed to feel. There are no right or wrong answers as in other kinds of tests. Be frank and give your honest appraisal of yourself.

1. A. I like "wild" uninhibited parties

- B. I prefer quiet parties with good conversation
2. A. There are some movies I enjoy seeing a second or even a third time
- B. I can't stand watching a movie that I've seen before
3. A. I often wish I could be a mountain climber
- B. I can't understand people who risk their necks climbing mountains
4. A. I dislike all body odors
- B. I like some for the earthly body smells
5. A. I get bored seeing the same old faces
- B. I like to comfortable familiarity of everyday friends
6. A. I like to explore a strange city or section of town by myself, even if it means getting lost
- B. I prefer a guide when I am in a place I don't know well
7. A. I dislike people who do or say things just to shock or upset others
- B. When you can predict almost everything a person will do and say he or she must be a bore
8. A. I usually don't enjoy a movie or play where I can predict what will happen in advance
- B. I don't mind watching a movie or a play where I can predict what will happen in advance
9. A. I have tried marijuana or would like to
- B. I would never smoke marijuana

10. A. I would not like to try any drug which might produce strange and dangerous effects on me
- B. I would like to try some of the new drugs that produce hallucinations
11. A. A sensible person avoids activities that are dangerous
- B. I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening
12. A. I dislike “swingers” (people who are uninhibited and free about sex)
- B. I enjoy the company of real “swingers”
13. A. I find that stimulants make me uncomfortable
- B. I often like to get high (drinking liquor or smoking marijuana)
14. A. I like to try new foods that I have never tasted before
- B. I order the dishes with which I am familiar, so as to avoid disappointment and unpleasantness
15. A. I enjoy looking at home movies or travel slides
- B. Looking at someone’s home movies or travel slides bores me tremendously
16. A. I would like to take up the sport of water skiing
- B. I would not like to take up water skiing
17. A. I would like to try surf boarding
- B. I would not like to try surf boarding
18. A. I would like to take off on a trip with no preplanned or definite routes, or timetable

B. When I go on a trip I like to plan my route and timetable fairly carefully

19. A. I prefer the “down to earth” kinds of people as friends

B. I would like to make friends in some of the “far out” groups like artists or “punks”

20. A. I would not like to learn to fly an airplane

B. I would like to learn to fly an airplane

21. A. I prefer the surface of the water to the depths

B. I would like to go scuba diving

22. A. I would like to meet some persons who are homosexual (men or women)

B. I stay away from anyone I suspect of being “gay or lesbian”

23. A. I would like to try parachute jumping

B. I would never want to try jumping out of a plane with or without a parachute

24. A. I prefer friends who are excitingly unpredictable

B. I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable

25. A. I am not interested in experience for its own sake

B. I like to have new and exciting experiences and sensations even if they are a little frightening, unconventional, or illegal

26. A. The essence of good art is in its clarity, symmetry of form and harmony of colors

B. I often find beauty in the “clashing” colors and irregular forms of modern paintings

27. A. I enjoy spending time in the familiar surroundings of home

B. I get very restless if I have to stay around home for any length of time

28. A. I like to dive off the high board

B. I don't like the feeling I get standing on the high board (or I don't go near it at all)

29. A. I like to date members of the opposite sex who are physically exciting

B. I like to date members of the opposite sex who share my values

30. A. Heavy drinking usually ruins a party because some people get loud and boisterous

B. Keeping the drinks full is the key to a good party

31. A. The worst social sin is to be rude

B. The worst social sin is to be a bore

32. A. A person should have considerable sexual experience before marriage

B. It's better if two married persons begin their sexual experience with each other

33. A. Even if I had the money I would not care to associate with flight rich persons like those in the "jet set"

B. I could conceive of myself seeking pleasures around the world with the "jet set"

34. A. I like people who are sharp and witty even if they do sometimes insult others

B. I dislike people who have their fun at the expense of hurting the feelings of others

35. A. There is altogether too much portrayal of sex in movies

B. I enjoy watching many of the “sexy” scenes in movies

36. A. I feel best after taking a couple of drinks

B. Something is wrong with people who need liquor to feel good

37. A. People should dress according to some standard of taste, neatness, and style

B. People should dress in individual ways even if the effects are sometimes strange

38. A. Sailing long distances in small sailing crafts is foolhardy

B. I would like to sail a long distance in a small but seaworthy sailing craft

39. A. I have no patience with dull or boring persons

B. I find something interesting in almost every person I talk to

40. A. Skiing down a high mountain slope is a good way to end up on crutches

B. I think I would enjoy the sensations of skiing very fast down a high mountain slope

## SCORING

Add 1 point for each "High" sensation seeking behavior. The higher your score (with 40 as the maximum), the more likely you are to seek out novel and intense sensations.

Item number	Response showing "high" sensation seeking behavior	Add 1 point if your answer is the "high" sensation seeking behavior (left)
1	A	
2	B	
3	A	

4	B	
5	A	
6	A	
7	B	
8	A	
9	A	
10	B	
11	B	
12	B	
13	B	
14	A	
15	B	
16	A	
17	A	
18	A	
19	B	
20	B	
21	B	
22	A	
23	A	
24	A	
25	B	
26	B	
27	B	
28	A	
29	A	
30	B	
31	B	
32	A	
33	B	
34	A	
35	B	
36	A	
37	B	
38	B	
39	A	
40	B	

<b>TOTAL</b>			
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## Scoring for the Four Subscales

\* ss1 = sensation seeking item 1.

\* Items in normal font are scored such that A = high, B = low. **Bolded items** are scored such that A = low, B = high.

*Boredom Susceptibility* = Items **ss2**, ss5, **ss7**, ss8, **ss15**, ss24, **ss27**, **ss31**, ss34, ss39.

*Disinhibition* = Items ss1, **ss12**, **ss13**, **ss25**, ss29, **ss30**, ss32, **ss33**, **ss35**, ss36.

*Experience Seeking* = Items **ss4**, ss6, ss9, **ss10**, ss14, ss18, **ss19**, ss22, **ss26**, **ss37**.

*Thrill and Adventure Seeking* = ss3, **ss11**, ss16, ss17, **ss20**, **ss21**, ss23, ss28, **ss38**, **ss40**.

## Sensation Seeking: Brief Overview

Zuckerman (1994) defines sensation seeking as "...a trait defined by the seeking of varied, novel, complex, and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical, social, legal, and financial risks for the sake of such experiences." (p. 27). Originally developed as an individual difference measure which might predict differential response to sensory deprivation (Zuckerman, 1979), the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) evolved into a multi-dimensional measure, consisting of four interrelated subscales. The subscales, each comprised of ten forced-choice items, include boredom susceptibility (BS; an aversion to repetitive and/or boring tasks and/or people), disinhibition (DIS; seeking release and/or disinhibited social behavior via alcohol, partying, sex etc.), experience seeking (ES; pursuit of an unconventional lifestyle via unplanned activities and/or hallucinatory drugs), and thrill and adventure seeking (TAS; seeking unusual sensations via exciting and risky sporting activities). A Total SSS score is also frequently employed in studies of sensation seeking. Many studies have linked sensation seeking with risky behavior (Zuckerman, 2007), including risky driving.

## References

Zuckerman, M. (1979). *Sensation seeking: Beyond the optimal level of arousal*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Zuckerman, M. (1994). Behavioral expressions and biosocial bases of sensation seeking. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zuckerman, M. (2007). *Sensation seeking and risky behavior*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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