

Description and Scoring Instructions: MOS Social Support Survey

The MOS Social Support Survey measures the availability of support, if needed, in several domains. It is a 19-item multidimensional, self-administered instrument developed for patients in the Medical Outcomes Study (MOS), a two-year study conducted at RAND of the process and outcomes of health care for patients with prevalent and treatable chronic conditions.

Scoring Instructions

The 19-items comprise four subscales and one overall summary index. The item numbers correspond to those in the survey that is attached to this file (survey items appear in the order in which they were administered in the original Medical Outcomes Study). Note that one item (item 13) is not included in any subscale, but is included in the summary index.

NOTE: Item numbers are identical in the Spanish MOS Social Support Survey.

Scale (# of items)	Definition	Item numbers
<i>Subscales</i>		
Emotional/informational support (8)	Someone to confide in, to listen to you, and to provide advice and information	2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16, 18
Tangible support (4)	Some to help with daily chores, prepare meals, or drive you if needed	1, 4, 11, 14
Affectionate support (3)	Someone to show you love and affection, hug you, and make you feel wanted	5, 9, 19
Positive social interaction (3)	Someone to have a good time, do enjoyable things with, get together with for relaxation	6, 10, 17
<i>Summary score</i>		
Overall social support (19)	Availability of people to provide support if needed such as emotional support and tangible help	1-19

There are two general ways to calculate scale and index scores: by averaging non-missing items and by transforming the resulting scores to 0-100 scales.

Respondent-Specific Item Score Averages: The most common way of scoring these scales is to obtain the mean item response for each scale. This approach results in scale scores that range from 1-5 and interpretation of particular scale values is aided by comparison to the labels for the original 5 response options.

- No items need to be reversed (all items are phrased so that a higher item score reflects a higher level of social support).
- For each of the four subscales, calculate respondent-specific mean scores of the items in the subscale; for each respondent, ignore items with missing values. This allows respondents with at least one valid response on any subscale to receive a score on that subscale. We suggest allowing a final score if at least one item is answered (assuming that any estimate of a score is preferable to having the score missing).
- For the overall index, calculate the mean of all 19 items.
- Of course, if multiple imputation is to be used, then investigators may choose to impute missing values prior to calculating scale scores.

Transform Scores to 0-100: In the original publication (Sherbourne and Stewart, 1991), scores were transformed to have a possible range of 0-100, with higher scores indicating more support. This transformation was the method used for all of the Medical Outcomes Study measures of functioning and well-being. These scores can thus be compared to those in the original paper. Scale scores can be transformed to a 0-100 scale using the following formula:

$$100 \times \frac{(\text{observed score} - \text{minimum possible score})}{(\text{maximum possible score} - \text{minimum possible score})}$$

OR, if respondent-specific means scores (as described above) are the starting point for this calculation, then for the Social Support Survey:

$$100 \times \frac{(\text{mean subscale score} - 1)}{(5 - 1 = 4)}$$

Citation

This paper describes the development and evaluation of the survey.

- *Citation*: Sherbourne CD and Stewart AL. The MOS Social Support Survey. *Soc Sci Med*, 1991;32(6):705-714. [PMID:2035047](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2035047/)

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The MOS Social Support Survey was part of the Medical Outcomes Study (MOS) conducted at RAND, and is available free of charge. This information can also be obtained on the RAND website: https://www.rand.org/health-care/surveys_tools/mos/social-support/survey-instrument.html

All of the other Medical Outcomes Study measures are also available on the RAND website. <https://www.rand.org/search.html?query=Medical+Outcomes+Study>

Contact

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MOS SOCIAL SUPPORT SURVEY

People sometimes look to others for companionship, assistance, or other types of support. How often is each of the following kinds of support available to you if you need it? Choose one number from each line.

	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. Someone to help you if you were confined to bed	1	2	3	4	5
2. Someone you can count on to listen to you when you need to talk	1	2	3	4	5
3. Someone to give you good advice about a crisis	1	2	3	4	5
4. Someone to take you to the doctor if you needed it	1	2	3	4	5
5. Someone who shows you love and affection	1	2	3	4	5
6. Someone to have a good time with	1	2	3	4	5
7. Someone to give you information to help you understand a situation	1	2	3	4	5
8. Someone to confide in or talk to about yourself or your problems	1	2	3	4	5
9. Someone who hugs you	1	2	3	4	5
10. Someone to get together with for relaxation	1	2	3	4	5
11. Someone to prepare your meals if you were unable to do it yourself	1	2	3	4	5
12. Someone whose advice you really want	1	2	3	4	5
13. Someone to do things with to help you get your mind off things	1	2	3	4	5
14. Someone to help with daily chores if you were sick	1	2	3	4	5
15. Someone to share your most private worries and fears with	1	2	3	4	5
16. Someone to turn to for suggestions about how to deal with a personal problem	1	2	3	4	5
17. Someone to do something enjoyable with	1	2	3	4	5
18. Someone who understands your problems	1	2	3	4	5
19. Someone to love and make you feel wanted	1	2	3	4	5