



Polygraph Validity Research

The American Polygraph Association believes that scientific evidence supports the high validity of polygraph examinations. Thus, such examinations have great probative value and utility for various uses in the criminal justice system. However, a valid examination requires a combination of a properly trained examiner, a polygraph instrument that records as a minimum cardiovascular, respiratory, and electro dermal activity, and the proper administration of an accepted testing procedure and scoring system.

The American Polygraph Association has a compendium of research studies available on the validity and reliability of polygraph testing. The 80 research projects listed, published since 1980, involved 6,380 polygraph examinations or sets of charts from examinations.

Researchers conducted 12 studies of the validity of field examinations, following 2, 174 field examinations, providing an average accuracy of 98%. Researchers conducted 11 studies involving the reliability of independent analyses of 1,609 sets of charts from field examinations confirmed by independent evidence, providing an average accuracy of 92%. Researchers conducted 41 studies involving the accuracy of 1,787 laboratory simulations of polygraph examinations, producing an average accuracy of 80%.

Researchers conducted 16 studies involving the reliability of independent analyses of 810 sets of charts from laboratory simulations producing an average accuracy of 81%. Tables list the authors and years of the research projects, which are identified fully in the References Cited.

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