

# Comparing Performance on the Oxford COMPetency ASSEssment Tool (COMPASS) to Clinicians' Mental Capacity Judgments

## Introduction

We developed the COMPASS, a new test battery that is specifically aligned to the functional test of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and designed to supplement clinical assessments of **mental capacity** by providing brief cognitive screening for:

- Understanding
- Retention
- Weighing up

This study evaluated the **criterion validity** of the COMPASS by comparing performance on the tool to clinicians' routine mental capacity judgments.

## Participants

Forty-five participants (46.7% female; *M* age = 80 years) who had undergone a clinical capacity assessment at a UK acute complex medicine unit.

## Methods

### The COMPASS

Four short, aphasia-friendly tasks that require participants to understand, retain, and weigh up information.

**Commands:** ability to follow instructions

e.g., “Close your eyes, then nod your head”

**Picture Sequences:** higher-order understanding of situational complexities



**Scene Recall:** immediate recall of contextual information



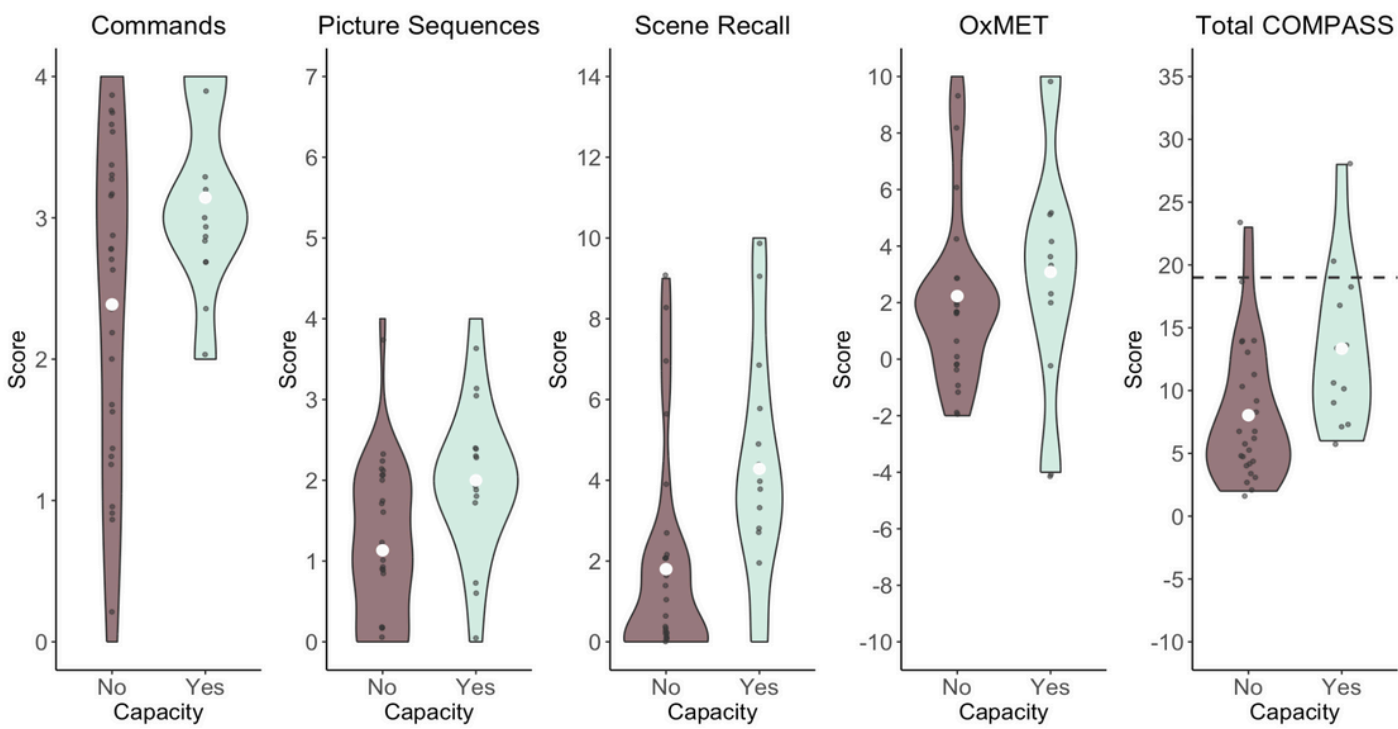
**OxMET:** executive functioning abilities



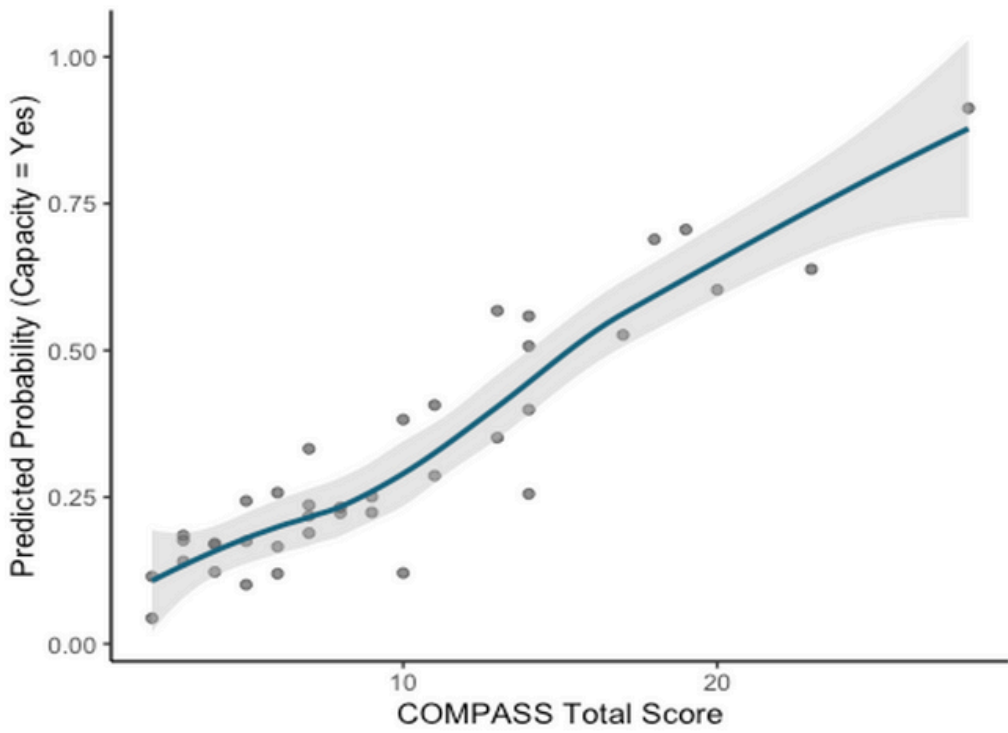
Information on capacity outcomes and decision types was extracted from medical notes. We examined the relationship between COMPASS performance and binary capacity outcome using **logistic regression modeling**.

## Results

### Distributions of COMPASS Scores by Capacity Outcome



### Association between COMPASS Performance and Model-Predicted Probability for Capacity



Analyses revealed a **significant association** between COMPASS performance and binary decisions on capacity derived from clinical interviews ( $OR = 1.19$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ , 95% CI [1.04, 1.41],  $p = 0.02$ ). Using a suggested **cut-off score of <5**, sensitivity of the COMPASS to capacity status was limited (42.3%), but specificity was perfect (100%).

## Conclusion

We offer initial evidence for the criterion validity of the COMPASS as an MCA-aligned cognitive screening tool.

By providing **bookends** to clinical assessments, COMPASS results could improve the **consistency, documentation, and objectivity** of current mental capacity decisions.

**Further research in larger and more diverse clinical samples is needed to confirm the tool's validity and clinical utility.**

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