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## False Positive

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### Definition

A false positive occurs when an examinee's performance on a test incorrectly identifies the examinee as having the condition of interest (COI) being evaluated when in fact the examinee does not actually have the COI. The false-positive rate for a test may vary for different populations of interest when the same cutoff score is used to determine the presence of a COI. For example, using the standard, recommended cutoff score on a performance validity test (PVT) for determining credible versus non-credible levels of performance is more likely to result in a higher false-positive identification rate for individuals who have either an intellectual disability or dementia (e.g., Dean et al. 2008, 2009) compared to a

neurocognitively intact sample. A false positive is also more likely to occur when a test uses a relatively lower cutoff score for identifying an individual as having the COI versus a higher cutoff score. A relatively lower cutoff score maximizes sensitivity for detecting the COI, but increases the rate of false-positive identification (i.e., decreases a test's specificity).

### Cross-References

- ▶ [Cut Off Scores, Cutting Scores](#)
- ▶ [Error, Sources of](#)
- ▶ [Specificity](#)

### References

- Dean, A. C., Victor, T. L., Boone, K. B., & Arnold, G. (2008). The relationship of IQ to effort test performance. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 22(4), 705–722. doi:[10.1080/13854040701440493](https://doi.org/10.1080/13854040701440493).
- Dean, A. C., Victor, T. L., Boone, K. B., Philpott, L. M., & Hess, R. A. (2009). Dementia and effort test performance. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 23(1), 133–152. doi:[10.1080/13854040701819050s](https://doi.org/10.1080/13854040701819050s).