

Can neurodivergent people use the EQ-i 2.0 or EQ360?

The short answer to this questions is that yes, neurodivergent individuals can take the EQ-i 2.0 or EQ360, but no, we do not collect information about neurodiversity in the demographics section and the test questions and scoring options cannot be customized to compensate for this population's characteristics. It is important to remember that the EQ-i 2.0 was not intended to capture differences in individuals' mental health or cognitive functioning. However, neurodiversity is a complex topic and so I'd like to explain further why I say neurodivergent individuals can participate in the EQ-i 2.0 experience despite the lack of scoring adjustments.

Neurodiversity is a broad term used to describe people whose brains and thinking styles work in ways that differ from the norm. Common diagnosis of neurodiverse conditions includes dyslexia, autism (including Asperger's), ADHD, or dyspraxia. While there is often a risk of stereotyping these individuals as having cognitive or behavioral deficiencies, it is more appropriate to consider that like all people, these individuals have their own strengths and weaknesses, and the differences that they display is because their brains work differently than the neurotypical majority. Neurotypical people tend to display ways of thinking, communicating, and behaving that fall within socially accepted boundaries for behaviour, and neurodivergent individuals tend to have more distinctive ways of processing information that lead them to excel in certain domains but also be less effective in others.

With this in mind, neurodivergent individuals do not necessarily lack the intelligence or capacity to complete standardized tests such as the EQ-i 2.0, but rather they experience challenges with the testing or recruitment/selection environment that prevents them from fully demonstrating their potential. For example, struggles with attention span, reading comprehension, an inability to move past test items or response options that do not ring true for them, feeling a need to clarify ambiguities, and other social-cognitive barriers could all cost neurodivergent individuals additional time and energy that contributes to their struggle with navigating or finishing a test.

In other words, despite having the capacity to complete standardized tests like the EQ-i 2.0, neurodivergent individuals may get stuck or distracted because they set extremely high standards for the coherency and consistency of the context and details in a test, noticing things that are usually overlooked or ignored by neurotypical individuals.

Because of this, if neurodivergent individuals disclose their condition to test administrators, it is recommended that the administrator work with the individual to set up the conditions needed for them to test comfortably. Neurodivergent people are not all the same, and so there is no "one size fits all" solution to address the accommodations that may be needed by neurodivergent people in standardized testing conditions. Note that because the EQ-i 2.0 and EQ360 can both be administered online, neurodivergent individuals can complete the test at home or in other places and conditions under which they are most comfortable. However, if a set testing location is required, some testing accommodations that may be requested are listed below:

- Test Administrator or Coach: Allow time to meet the candidate before entering the testing session. This may help to alleviate some anxiety and will allow you to better assess needed modifications.

- Routine: Testing involves a significant disruption in the candidate's day. For people on the autism spectrum, such disruptions can be very distressing. Consider meeting with the candidate in advance of the testing session to introduce yourself and to explain the upcoming schedule change. If the candidate uses a schedule, work with them to include the testing session on their daily itinerary.
- Environment: If possible, administer the test in a familiar environment for the candidate and give them their preferred conditions (e.g., lighting, temperature, sounds, etc.). If a private room is not available, it is important to minimize all distractions.
- Time: When possible, allow extra time for the candidate to finish items or take additional breaks.
- Alternative ways to take the test: Ask the candidate if alternative test formats maybe more comfortable for them (e.g., verbally, online, handwritten, etc.).
- Implement adaptive technology: As mentioned before, neurodivergent individuals may be faced with reading comprehension issues, motor issues, cognitive issues, and more when taking standardized tests. To make things easier for them, these candidates often turn to their preferred devices, digital services, or applications. Consider allowing the usage of the following:
 - Headphones
 - Talk-to-text technology/screen readers
 - Recording devices
 - Phonetic dictionaries

If accommodations cannot be made to the testing environment and is preventing the candidate from fully displaying their potential, then consider the following questions:

- What are you looking to assess as part of the psychometric test?
- Are there other ways you could identify and evaluate this skill or competency?
- If not easy or practical to assess in an alternative way, how critical is the assessment to your decision making? Can the test be bypassed?

Lastly, in terms of interpreting test results, keep in mind that a psychometric test is only one part of a holistic selection process. If you do encounter a candidate who might otherwise appear worth progressing but you're concerned about an unusual or anomalous test result, consider taking the time to meet or talk with them during the interview so that you have a better understanding of their strengths and the type of working conditions that they may need to excel in a role.

If using EQ-I results in a development context, rather than focusing on the magnitude of the numerical score or the score ranges achieved, consider looking at the overall score profile and identify instances where scale imbalances may be contributing to daily life challenges.

1. What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a broad term used to describe people whose brains and thinking styles work in ways that differ from the norm. Common diagnosis of neurodiverse conditions includes dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder (including Asperger's), ADHD, or dyspraxia. While there is often a risk of stereotyping these individuals as having cognitive or behavioral deficiencies, it is more appropriate to consider that like all people, these individuals have their own strengths and weaknesses, and the differences that they display is because their brains work differently than the neurotypical majority. Neurotypical people tend to display ways of thinking, communicating, and behaving that fall within socially accepted boundaries for behavior, and neurodivergent individuals tend to have more distinctive ways of processing information that lead them to excel in certain domains but also be less effective in others.

2. How to administer the EQ-i 2.0 to neurodivergent individuals?

Because of the way they process information, neurodivergent people may experience challenges with the testing or recruitment/selection environment that prevents them from fully demonstrating their potential. For example, struggles with attention span, reading comprehension, an inability to move past test items or response options that do not ring true for them, feeling a need to clarify ambiguities, and other social-cognitive barriers could all cost neurodivergent individuals additional time and energy that contributes to their struggle with navigating or finishing a test. Because the EQ-i 2.0 is administered online, it is recommended that neurodivergent individuals complete the test at home or in other places and conditions under which they are most comfortable. However, if a set testing location is required and neurodivergent individuals disclose their condition to test administrators, it is recommended that the administrator work with the individual to set up the conditions needed for them to test comfortably.

3. How to interpret the EQ-i 2.0 scores of neurodivergent individuals?

MHS has not conducted research that examined how neurodivergent people performed on the EQ-i 2.0, and a search of the literature revealed that studies that examined the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and ADHD or autism spectrum disorder used either the EQ-i or EQ-i YV and focused primarily on adolescents or children. Those studies found that neurodivergent individuals tend to score lower than the normative population on the Interpersonal, Stress Management, and Adaptability composite scales (which map onto the Interpersonal, Stress Management, and Decision Making composites in the EQ-i 2.0). Other studies found Stress Management to be uniquely predictive of Hyperactive-Impulsive symptomatology and Adaptability to be uniquely predictive of Cognitive-Inattentive symptomatology in individuals with ADHD.

In terms of interpreting test results, keep in mind that a psychometric test is only one part of a holistic selection process. If you do encounter a candidate who might otherwise appear worth progressing but you're concerned about an unusual or anomalous test result, consider taking the time to meet or talk with them during the interview so that you have a better understanding

of their strengths and the type of working conditions that they may need to excel in a role. If using EQ-i results in a development context, rather than focusing on the magnitude of the numerical score or the score ranges achieved, consider looking at the overall score profile and identify instances where scale imbalances may be contributing to daily life challenges.

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