

## Why IQ tests still matter

[A]re IQ tests valid, unbiased measures of general intelligence? They certainly didn't start out that way, says Stefan C. Dombrowski, a psychologist at Rider University in New Jersey. [IQ tests have a dark history](#) of being used to discriminate against racial and ethnic groups, he explains, and ultimately led to the forced sterilization of thousands of people during the eugenics movement.

So, have IQ tests progressed beyond their harrowed past to become a sound measure of intelligence today?

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One of the biggest problems, [researcher Steven] Piantadosi says, is that someone's IQ score can change based on the context. "IQ tests are known to be sensitive to things like motivation and coaching. This makes a lot of sense — if you try less, you're not going to score as high. Or, if you don't know strategies that people do, you won't score as highly as them," he says. "I think it's a mistake to say that your true ability can be summarized by how much you're willing to put into a test."

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Although improvements are needed... IQ tests can still be useful as one part of an overall assessment of the whole person. But the user ultimately determines whether the tests are interpreted correctly and used for good.

"IQ tests are a tool, and they can be used to promote human well-being, or to contribute to human misery," says Dombrowski.

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