

About the Implicit Association Test

Do you have hidden biases?

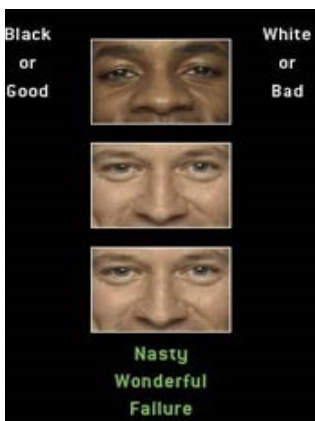
The IAT is a test to measure unconscious bias, developed by psychologists at Harvard, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington. Unlike explicit bias (which reflects the attitudes or beliefs that you endorse at a conscious level), implicit bias is the bias in judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes that often operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control. The IAT provides a useful window into the unconscious biases in your mind. The IAT allows you to be a subject in your own experiment. In this 10-minute test, you will be presented with words or images and asked to respond as quickly as possible. At the end, your responses will be tallied so that you can see how your score compares to others and to your expectations.



Take the IAT

If you would like to learn more about your own implicit associations, you can take a free online test, hosted by Harvard University:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>



The IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy). The main idea is that making a response is easier when closely related items share the same response key. The IAT is especially thought provoking when it shows you have an implicit attitude that you did not know about. For example, you may believe that women and men should be equally associated with science, but your automatic associations could show that you (like many others) associate men with science more than women.

Facts about IAT results:

1. The IAT has been used in research all over the world, revealing the pervasiveness of phenomena of implicit attitudes and stereotypes.
2. Because of the frequent deviation of IAT measures from parallel explicit (self-report) measures, IAT results sometimes surprise a person - revealing information that was not consciously available.
3. Implicit bias is observed even in children as young as four years of age.
4. Implicit biases have been observed to vary as a function of one's own group membership and life experiences.
5. IAT measures have effectively predicted behavior such as friendliness, giving resources, and other preferential decisions about members of different groups. That is, those people who show stronger IAT-measured biases against a target social group are also more likely to discriminate against that target group and its members.
6. A variety of factors could influence IAT results, but outcomes show stability across time.

History of IAT

Psychologists have long suspected the existence of thoughts and feelings that are not accessible by simply asking a person to report them. Beginning in the 1980s, efficient alternatives to self-report measures were invented to study implicit or unconscious forms of thoughts and feelings. The IAT was introduced in scientific literature in 1998 by Anthony Greenwald, Debbie McGhee, and Jordan Schwartz. After establishing the IAT, Greenwald (Professor of Psychology at University of Washington), along with Mahzarin Banaji (Professor of Psychology at Harvard University) and Brian Nosek (Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia) co-founded Project Implicit, a virtual laboratory and educational outreach organization that facilitates research on implicit cognition. The IAT, while still controversial, is now widely used in social psychology research and is used to some extent in clinical, cognitive, and developmental psychology research.

“For socially sensitive topics, the predictive power of self-report measures was remarkably low and the incremental validity of IAT measures was relatively high” (Greenwald, Poehlman, et al., 2009, p. 32).

Some Selected Categories

Race: Requires the ability to distinguish faces of European and African origin. It indicates that most Americans have an automatic preference for white over black.

Skin-Tone: Requires the ability to recognize light and dark-skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.

Gender-Career: Often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

Sexuality: Requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

Gender-Science: Often reveals a relative link between liberal arts and females and between science and males.

Age: Requires the ability to distinguish old from young faces. This test often indicates that Americans have automatic preference for young over old.

Additional Readings About the IAT

- Greenwald, A. G., Nosek, B. A., & Banaji, M. R. (2003). Understanding and using the Implicit Association Test: I. An improved scoring algorithm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 197-216.
- Greenwald, A. G., Poehlman, T. A., Uhlmann, E. L., & Banaji, M. R. (2009). Understanding and using the Implicit Association Test: III. Meta-analysis of predictive validity. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 97(1), 17.
- Nosek, B. A., Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R. (2005). Understanding and using the Implicit Association Test: II. Method Variables and Construct Validity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31, 166-180.
- Oswald, F. L., Mitchell, G., Blanton, H., Jaccard, J., & Tetlock, P. E. (2013). Predicting ethnic and racial discrimination: A meta-analysis of IAT criterion studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105(2), 171.
- Vedantam, S. (2006). The Bias Test. You may be more prejudiced than you think. *The Washington Post Magazine*.