

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

## QUESTIONS ON CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

### 1. What is the difference between Cultural Intelligence and cultural competence?

Cultural Intelligence (CQ<sup>®</sup>) is the capability to function and relate effectively in culturally diverse situations (both domestic and international contexts). Unlike some measures of cultural competence, CQ is based on a strong theoretical foundation—Sternberg and Detterman's multiple loci theory of intelligence. CQ focuses specifically on learned skills that are critical for functioning effectively in domestic and global situations that are culturally diverse. Skills, unlike values and personality, can be developed and improved through education, training, and experience.

Cultural competence is an umbrella term that has been applied in many different ways. There are more than 300 models of cultural competence and dozens of corresponding inventories. Most of these models are not based on a coherent theoretical model, and as a result, many of them mix together attitudes, personality traits (stable), values, experiences, and capabilities (learned skills).

### 2. Why do you refer to Cultural Intelligence as CQ instead of CI or CIQ?

In keeping with the academic research on other forms of intelligence (e.g., IQ, EQ, SQ, etc.), we use the acronym CQ to show that Cultural Intelligence is another form of research-based intelligence.

### 3. Is CQ based on Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences?

Although Howard Gardner's work offers many valuable insights for the different ways individuals develop and learn, Cultural Intelligence is based on Sternberg and Detterman's multiple loci theory of intelligence. This perspective emphasizes the different loci of intelligence needed to succeed in our 21<sup>st</sup> century environment (e.g., motivational, cognitive, and behavioral capabilities).

### 4. What is the difference between EQ and CQ?

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to detect and regulate one's emotions, and to detect and respond appropriately to the emotions of others. It is a critical capability needed to work effectively with others. However, emotional intelligence is culturally conditioned because the meaning of verbal and nonverbal behaviors varies across cultures. For example, "Yes" does not always mean, "Yes, I agree with you," and a smile can signify happiness or discomfort. Cultural Intelligence picks up where emotional intelligence leaves off and allows you to have the social sensibilities and practical skills to work and relate effectively with people who have different cultural backgrounds.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is the ability to function effectively in multicultural situations. CQ goes beyond EQ and applies across cultures. It includes the social sensibilities and practical skills to work and relate effectively with people who have a variety of cultural backgrounds (not just your home culture). All four CQ capabilities are needed for the highest levels of cultural effectiveness.

You cannot substitute high scores on one CQ capability for low scores on another CQ capability. The four capabilities operate as a system where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

**5. I have not lived overseas, and I work domestically, so what is the relevance of CQ for me?**

Very few people interact only within culturally homogeneous contexts. Cultural diversity exists in most organizations and in many supplier and customer relationships. Thus, CQ is relevant to almost everyone. It can be used to understand and deal with differences in national culture, ethnicity, gender, generations, organizational culture, professional culture, geographic regions, and so forth.

**6. Is CQ relevant to global diversity and domestic diversity?**

CQ is relevant to both global and domestic diversity. Cultural Intelligence research and its practical application occur in cross-border, international contexts (e.g., preparing expatriates for overseas assignments, study abroad programs, helping global teams, etc.), and in domestic contexts (e.g., multicultural teams, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging [DEIB] programs, unconscious bias training, etc.). CQ can also be used to provide insights into how individuals function across other types of cultures such as those based on generational, organizational, or functional differences, and so forth.

Many organizations use CQ as a model for addressing both international and domestic interactions, as well as working across a broad range of cultural differences.

**7. Why are the four capabilities often listed in the following order: Drive, Knowledge, Strategy, and Action?**

One way to develop Cultural Intelligence is to focus first on the motivation to engage with different cultures (CQ Drive). Then, it makes sense to gain an understanding of core cultural differences (CQ Knowledge). Next, you can use your knowledge of how cultures are similar and different to consciously plan for multicultural interactions (CQ Strategy). The final step is to make sure that your behavior is flexibly appropriate for different cultural settings (CQ Action). Thinking of the four capabilities in this order is not the only way to develop CQ, but it provides one way of thinking about how you can enhance your CQ.

**8. Do people from some places have higher CQ than others?**

No. There are no meaningful differences in CQ scores based on country or part of the world. Instead, there are people who have low, moderate, and high CQ scores throughout the world. Although people sometimes expect that those who live in highly diverse cities or places where multiple languages are spoken will automatically have higher CQ than those living in more homogeneous areas, this is not accurate. Furthermore, being part of an underrepresented group does not automatically give someone higher CQ. Living in a culturally diverse setting as a minority generally provides more opportunities for intercultural interaction and adaptation but does not necessarily lead to higher CQ capabilities. In sum, even though hands-on experiences are one of the best ways to improve Cultural Intelligence, experience does not automatically lead to high CQ. It depends on how people approach these opportunities, the extent to which they genuinely engage with people who have different backgrounds, and how they react to and reflect on those experiences.

## QUESTIONS ON CQ ASSESSMENTS

### 9. How reliable and valid are the results of the CQ assessment?

More than 1,000 peer-reviewed articles including studies from more than 150 countries, published in over 600 scholarly journals, demonstrate that the CQ assessment is a reliable and useful way to predict effectiveness in culturally diverse settings.

### 10. How was the CQ assessment validated?

The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) has been validated in many different culturally diverse samples, including executives, expatriates, independent professionals, employees in multicultural teams, and students. Academic studies demonstrate that CQ predicts a wide variety of cultural effectiveness outcomes, including well-being, adjustment, psychological safety, cultural decision-making, intercultural negotiation effectiveness, trust, idea sharing within multicultural teams, high-quality interactions, low conflict, global potential, plus leader and team performance in culturally diverse settings.

### 11. What are the differences in the CQ self-assessment compared to the CQ 360 Assessment?

Research demonstrates the reliability and validity of both the self-rated and observer-rated versions of the scale (i.e., the *CQ 360 Assessment*) as well as the expanded version of the scale with sub-dimensions for each of the four capabilities (E-CQS).

The *CQ 360 Assessment* is the most effective way to assess Cultural Intelligence because it allows comparisons of self-ratings with observer ratings. The CQ self-assessment, however, is also a valid way of measuring CQ. Research demonstrates the predictive validity of the self-report scale, even after controlling for demographic characteristics, personality traits, prior cultural experience, and social desirability. Thus, it is not easy to “game” the assessment.

### 12. Are self-ratings or observer ratings more important?

Both self- and observer ratings are important. They show two different perspectives on CQ capabilities. Self-scores reflect the way you present yourself to the world, and observer scores reflect your reputation—how you are seen by others.

Our large database (more than 250,000 assessments) shows convergence in self- and observer ratings in most groups. Sophisticated statistical analysis demonstrates the practical equivalence of average self-scores and average observer scores.

In addition, it is not unusual to see self-rated scores that are slightly lower than observer-rated scores. Self-rated scores are often more nuanced than observer-rated scores because most people have more detailed knowledge of their own capabilities than observers. In sum, both approaches to the assessment are valuable and reliable.

### 13. Does social desirability influence self-rated scores?

Research proves that CQ predicts important cultural effectiveness outcomes above and beyond social desirability. You do not need to worry that self-scores are inflated.

#### **14. What is the relationship between demographics (e.g., gender, age, etc.) and CQ?**

Although some samples show differences in CQ scores based on demographic characteristics, other samples show no differences. There are no stable relationships between demographic characteristics and CQ.

#### **15. Is it "bad" if my CQ scores go down if I complete the assessment a second time?**

No, the scores are information. You need to reflect on this information and make sense of it.

If you are exposed to a new culture or a novel cultural experience, this could increase your understanding of the challenges of multicultural interactions. It could help you understand what you don't know about culture, how you sometimes don't plan ahead, or how difficult it is to exhibit culturally appropriate flexibility. Likewise, if you get promoted into a higher level role and your new peers are more experienced and knowledgeable, you might rate yourself as lower in CQ because your situation has changed.

Cultural Intelligence is not static and can change depending upon your circumstances.

This means that we all have ongoing opportunities to learn from others and enhance our CQ.

#### **16. CQ Action focuses on different kinds of behavioral flexibility. Are some people less able to flex than others?**

Although some neurodivergent individuals may have a hard time demonstrating flexibility, while others may have a hard time following the same procedures every time, everyone can try to be flexible to the extent of their abilities, especially in multicultural situations where people have different behavioral preferences.

Flexibility is more important in some roles than others. For example, it is often extremely important to follow procedures in safety and/or security contexts. In other roles, it is often extremely important to be flexible, multitask, and shift your focus in order to respond to customer inquiries.

#### **17. Why does the assessment include questions about my background, and how is that relevant to my CQ scores?**

The questions you answered on your background (e.g., age, number of languages spoken, places you have lived, etc.) do not influence your CQ scores. Instead, this is background information we use to describe the characteristics of each group that completes the assessment.

#### **18. What if I disagree with the results of my CQ assessment?**

While the assessment is a valid way to quantify your Cultural Intelligence and predict your intercultural effectiveness, subjective factors (such as your state of mind, level of fatigue when you completed the questionnaire, or a recent vivid experience) can influence your results. Nevertheless, people need to refrain from dismissing the feedback too quickly. Instead, you should use the feedback as an opportunity for reflection and discussion with others, as well as a chance to enhance your intercultural capabilities.

## 19. What is the value of assessing CQ at multiple points in time?

Many organizations conduct Time 1—Time 2 (pre/post) CQ programs. This works well for study abroad programs (before and after assessments). It also works well before and after cultural training interventions, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives, educational programs, intensive time spent in different cultural contexts, etc. Comparisons of T1 and T2 CQ scores provide information on the effectiveness of the intervention.

## QUESTIONS ON THE WORLDWIDE NORMS

### 20. What are the worldwide norms and why do they matter?

The worldwide norms are based on the median scores of everyone throughout the world who has completed the CQ assessment. To date, the norms include more than 250,000 individuals, from over 150 countries, and from every major industry and region of the world.

- **A low score** means you rated yourself toward the bottom of the scale.  
Very low scores are in the 1<sup>st</sup>—20<sup>th</sup> percentile (light gray band).  
Low scores are in the 11<sup>th</sup>—30<sup>th</sup> percentile (somewhat darker gray band).  
You perceive yourself as having a lot of opportunity to grow this CQ capability.
- **A moderate score** means you rated yourself in the middle of the scale.  
Moderate scores are in the 31<sup>st</sup>—70<sup>th</sup> percentile (the dark gray band).  
40% of all who have completed the CQ assessment fall in the moderate range.  
You perceive yourself as equivalent to the norm on this CQ capability.
- **A high score** means you rated yourself toward the top of the scale.  
High scores are in the 71<sup>st</sup>—90<sup>th</sup> percentile (light orange band).  
Very high scores are in the 91<sup>st</sup>—100<sup>th</sup> percentile (dark orange band).  
You perceive this CQ capability as one of your strengths.

Please note that the Development Plan section in your CQ Report identifies your top two CQ capabilities and your bottom two CQ capabilities. Sometimes a person can score the same for two CQ capabilities. When this happens, ties will be resolved in the following priority order for the top two CQ capabilities and the bottom two CQ capabilities:

TOP TWO CQ CAPABILITIES	BOTTOM TWO CQ CAPABILITIES
1. CQ DRIVE	1. CQ ACTION
2. CQ KNOWLEDGE	2. CQ STRATEGY
3. CQ STRATEGY	3. CQ KNOWLEDGE
4. CQ ACTION	4. CQ DRIVE

Comparing your scores with the worldwide norms allows you to put your feedback in perspective. It is more important to pay attention to your scores relative to worldwide norms (low, moderate, or high) than to focus on the absolute percentiles (the numerical values). We encourage participants to think of how they can use the feedback to become even more effective in intercultural interactions and settings.

When people interact with you cross-culturally, judgments are made about your CQ capabilities compared to other people they know—not compared to an arbitrary number. Therefore, viewing your ratings relative to the worldwide norms (low, moderate, or high) is the most insightful way to think about the feedback.

In most groups, CQ scores range from low to high. Some participants score low, others moderate, and others high. Your objective should be to set goals and work to enhance all four of your CQ capabilities so that you can improve your cultural effectiveness. The primary purpose of the feedback is to help you reflect on your CQ strengths, as well as your CQ capabilities that need improvement, and then decide what action steps you will take based on the feedback.

### **21. Why do the feedback reports include percentile scores instead of raw scores?**

Based on feedback from Certified Facilitators and customers, we now report percentile scores on a scale of 1–100 because this makes it easy to identify CQ strengths (highest percentiles) and weaker capabilities that need attention (lower percentiles). This simplifies the reporting and interpretation of scores. It also avoids having to compare raw scores to the worldwide norms to determine the highest and lowest CQ capabilities.

### **22. Are the worldwide norms skewed toward people already interested in cross-cultural work?**

Those who choose to sign up for our certification programs may have higher than average CQ scores, but most CQ programs are not voluntary. Most people take the CQ assessment as part of a required course or organizational program. Therefore, the worldwide norms include people with a wide range of interests and are not based on those who already believe in the value of CQ.

### **23. Is there a difference in CQ scores of students compared to working adults?**

Our database shows no statistically significant differences in the average scores of college students compared to working adults. In some samples, students could score higher and in other samples working adults could score higher. It depends on people's interest in culture, knowledge of cultural differences, strategic thinking about culture, and behavioral flexibility.

## **QUESTIONS ON OBSERVER RATINGS**

### **24. How should participants select observers for the *CQ 360 Assessment*?**

It works best to focus on a specific domain when selecting observers. If participants are interested in how they are viewed at work, they can select a supervisor, several peers, and several subordinates. Generally, it is not a good idea to mix people from different domains (such as work, school, friends, family, etc.).

## **25. How accurate are my observer ratings?**

There is extensive research on the reliability and validity of both the self- and observer versions of the CQ assessment. You can be confident that observer ratings accurately reflect other's perceptions of a person's intercultural capabilities. Although their perceptions may not be accurate, it is important to know how people are perceived by others.

## **26. How do you account for the variability in how certain personality types or cultures rate others?**

The self- and observer-rated scales were validated using many culturally diverse samples. As a result, the research accounted for variability in how people rate themselves and others. Therefore, the observer ratings are an accurate indication of the perceptions of others, regardless of their personality or cultural background.

## **27. What if my observers do not have high CQ themselves?**

The CQ of observers has little to do with their judgment of the CQ of others. Their ratings are a valid indication of their perceptions.

## **28. Why doesn't my feedback report include observer scores?**

A minimum of three observers must complete the assessment on you in order to average their scores and provide you with observer feedback. We provide average observer ratings so that the ratings from specific observers remain confidential. If a report does not include observer feedback, you can encourage observers to complete the assessment and when at least three observers have completed assessments on you, your report will automatically be updated to include observer feedback.

## **29. Would my observer ratings change if I selected different observers?**

That is possible. Different people have different perspectives and see you in different situations. So you need to reflect on who the people you selected as observers are, the types of situations where they have observed you, and how well they know you. Then consider the importance you place on their perceptions of your CQ.

## **30. Does it matter if I have a "significant gap" between my self-ratings and the observer ratings?**

If your self-rated and observer-rated scores differ by 15 points or more, this difference approximates the average standard deviation in CQ scores. Consistent with bell curve distributions, differences of 15 or more points are meaningful. Differences of less than 15 points can be considered practically equivalent.

You should definitely reflect on significant gaps because they suggest that you and your observers have different perspectives on your CQ capabilities. This is an opportunity for you to reflect on why the scores might differ. Is the self-rated or observer-rated score higher? What might explain this difference? Perhaps you underestimate this CQ capability. Perhaps you have very high standards for yourself. Perhaps observers are not aware of this CQ capability. Remember, observers can see your behavior (CQ Action), but they cannot see your motivation (CQ Drive), understanding (CQ Knowledge), or planning and checking (CQ Strategy). What can you do to make observers more aware of your capabilities? For example, you could talk about your interest in other cultures, new

things you have learned about a particular cultural group, or the planning you did for a particular meeting. It is also important to pay attention to the CQ capabilities where you and your observers agree because congruence suggests greater understanding and awareness from both perspectives.

### **31. Is it better to have high self-ratings or high observer ratings?**

It depends. If you rated yourself significantly higher than your observers, it may suggest that you have an inflated view of your capabilities. Or, it could mean that you could do a better job of demonstrating your capabilities to these observers. For example, you may be highly motivated to learn about different cultures (high CQ Drive), but you may not show this in ways that are apparent to others.

If you rated yourself significantly lower than your observers, it may suggest that you do not recognize this capability. The most important point is to spend time thinking about why you and your observers might have different perceptions and to work on ways to close the gap.

## **QUESTIONS ON BEHAVIORAL PREFERENCES (INDIVIDUAL CULTURAL VALUES)**

### **32. Where do the behavioral preferences questions come from?**

The *Behavioral Preferences Profile* includes items that assess your personal preferences on ten individual behavioral preferences (cultural value orientations). The items were compiled by the Cultural Intelligence Center and informed by the extensive research published by Hofstede, Trompenaars, Edward Hall, the GLOBE leadership study, Schwartz, and others.

### **33. What is the best profile of behavioral preferences?**

There is no best profile of behavioral preferences. Behavioral preferences are relatively stable and are generally established when we are relatively young. Behavioral preferences must be interpreted relative to the context.

### **34. Why did I score so high in Collectivism?**

There are many different conceptualizations of Individualism and Collectivism. Some apply primarily to personal and family, or in-group, relationships, and others are more relevant to organizational contexts. The questions included focus on your preference for working in groups versus working on your own. In addition, the current emphasis on teamwork in many schools and work settings results in relatively high scores for many on this Collectivism scale.

Finally, your ratings could be partially influenced by the reference point you may have had in your mind (e.g., comparing your preference for working autonomously to that of other colleagues with whom you work).

### **35. Do individual behavioral preferences change over time?**

For the most part, behavioral preferences (cultural value orientations) are stable over time. They represent your beliefs and preferences based on early childhood socialization. It is not "better" to be



on the left or right side of the continuum. The position in the range has no evaluative meaning. Thus, there is no need to try to change your behavioral preferences. Instead, you should be aware of your own preferences and learn how to recognize similarities and differences in your preferences compared to others. Most importantly, you need to develop ways to interact effectively with people who have different behavioral preferences. In general, it is important for those with high CQ to adapt their behavior to fit the preferences of others when it will enhance the quality of the relationship.

### **36. How do gender, age, personality, or functional background influence behavioral preferences?**

National culture and early socialization are the primary sources of your individual behavioral preferences. This means that there is usually no relationship between demographic characteristics or functional background and individual behavioral preferences. Instead, your behavioral preferences may influence your career choices and personal interests.

Regardless of behavioral preferences, people with high CQ often choose to flex their behavior to fit the cultural context in order to enhance the quality of a specific interaction.

### **37. What is the relationship between Cultural Intelligence and behavioral preferences?**

Although some samples show relationships between Cultural Intelligence and individual behavioral preferences (cultural value orientations), other samples show no relationships. There are no stable relationships between Cultural Intelligence and behavioral preferences.

### **38. Is it good when people in a group have similar behavioral preferences?**

Not necessarily. Similarities in behavioral preferences can cause groupthink and low creativity/innovation. Differences in behavioral preferences can cause conflict, ambiguity, and tension. But, when differences in behavioral preferences are combined with high CQ, creativity and innovation tend to be high.