

Description of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) is a personality assessment questionnaire that was constructed specifically to describe behavior when one is interacting with people from different cultures. The MPQ may be used to predict how easily people are likely to adjust to other cultures and come to feel at home with them.

Here is a short description of each of the five personality factors assessed by the MPQ:

1. Cultural empathy

This scale assesses the capacity to identify with the feelings, thoughts and behavior of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. To function effectively with people of other cultures, it is important to acquire some understanding of those cultures, and cultural empathy seems important to "reading" other cultures. People who score high on cultural empathy are able to identify with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of people and groups who are part of different cultures. People with a low score have difficulties in identifying with the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of people and groups with different cultural backgrounds.

2. Open-mindedness

This scale assesses people's capacity to be open and unprejudiced when encountering people outside of their own cultural group and who may have different values and norms. This ability, just like cultural empathy, seems vital to understanding the rules and values of other cultures and to coping with them in an effective manner.

People who score high on open-mindedness have an open and unprejudiced attitude towards other groups, cultural values and norms and are open to new ideas.

People who score low are characterized by a predisposed attitude and a tendency to judge and stereotype other groups.

3. Social Initiative

Social initiative denotes people's tendency to approach social situations actively and to take initiative. This determines the degree to which they interact easily with people from different cultures and make friends within other cultures.

People who score high on this scale have a tendency to be active in social situations and to take initiative. They will tend to be out-going when in another culture. People who score low on this scale are less inclined to take initiative. They will be rather reserved and stay in the background.

4. Emotional stability

This scale assesses the degree to which people tend to remain calm in stressful situations. When working in another culture it is important to be able to cope well with psychological and emotional discomfort. A variety of factors (political system, procedures, lack of means and resources, impediments) may cause things in different cultures not to work in the same way as they do in one's own culture. When things do not go the way they do in one's own culture, this may lead to frustration, tension, fear, social detachment, financial problems and interpersonal conflicts.

People who score high on this scale tend to remain calm in stressful situations.

People who score low on this scale exhibit strong emotional reactions to stress.

5. Flexibility

This scale is associated with people's ability to adjust their behavior to new and unknown situations. When working in another culture it is important to be able to change strategies because customary and trusted ways of doing things do not always work in a new cultural environment.

People who score high on flexibility perceive new and unknown situations as a challenge. They are able to change behavioral patterns in response to unexpected or constrained circumstances within another culture. People who score low are quicker to see new and unknown situations as a threat. In addition they tend to stick to trusted behavioral patterns. Consequently they are less able to adjust their behavioral pattern in reaction to unexpected or constrained circumstances in another culture.

For more information please see:

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: A Multidimensional Instrument of Multicultural Effectiveness

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The following pages are from actual reports showing responses for users with high, mid-range and low MPQ scores.

High Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cultural Empathy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A person with this score knows how to approximate very effectively what goes on in other people's minds. He will actively exhibit real interest in the feelings and needs of others. He is quick to grasp which feelings, thoughts and behaviors play an important role in the “blueprint” of the cultures with which he is confronted.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Open-mindedness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A person with this score has a strong open and unprejudiced attitude in relation to unknown situations. She has an interest for the ways in which others deal with daily problems. She enjoys exploring other cultures and will quickly acquire a lot of relevant information about the culture through study and contact with people from different backgrounds.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Social Initiative	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A person with this score is very active and full of initiative and is usually the instigator of plans and activities. He takes pleasure in public speaking and feels at home nearly everywhere. He is also quick to make friends within new groups and within other cultures.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional Stability	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A person with this score exhibits a calm and self-confident reaction to stressful situations. Setbacks, opposition and conflicts have no influence on her own state of mind. She continues to display peace of mind and is focused on solutions when confronted with pressure or uncertainty.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Flexibility	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

A person with this score actively seeks out changes and adventurous situations. He sees each change and unusual experience as a challenge. This person is quick to naturally adjust behavioral patterns in response to cultural settings and practical constraints. He shuns regularity and routine.

Mid-Range Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cultural Empathy	■	■	■	■	■					

A person with this score is reasonably able to identify with the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. She exhibits some interest in what goes on in others, but this interest is more functional than a result of personal commitment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Open-mindedness	■	■	■	■	■	■				

A person with this score values known methods, ways of working and the existing situation, but when necessary opens himself to unusual and new approaches. He is sufficiently able to place his own culture in perspective to be open to other cultures and to not be bothered by unusual elements within it.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Social Initiative	■	■	■	■	■	■				

A person with this score will either take initiative within a new group or hang back depending on the degree to which she feels comfortable. From a social perspective, she has some ability to succeed in groups with people of other cultural backgrounds.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional Stability	■	■	■	■	■					

A person with this score is reasonably effective in coping with discomfort and stress. His temper may fluctuate and some fear or tension may be experienced in high-pressure situations or when there is a lack of social support.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Flexibility	■	■	■	■	■					

A person with this score will react with a reasonable degree of flexibility to new challenges. When the cultural situation demands it, she is able to change behavioral patterns to some degree. She does need some clarity and predictability, but is also able to appreciate variation and adventure.

Low Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cultural Empathy										

This score signifies that the person in question has relatively little interest in the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of others. He senses to a limited degree, which issues matter more to people of other cultural backgrounds than to his own.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Open-mindedness										

This score characterizes a person who is attached to customary norms, values and ways of doing things. She closes herself off to people from different cultural backgrounds by putting her own culture in a central position. This person may be prone to bias and stereotyping toward other groups and cultures.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Social Initiative										

This score signifies that someone likes to stay in the background as opposed to the foreground. He needs some time to get used to a new social environment, especially when this environment includes people from another cultural background. He depends on the initiatives of others for the building of a social network in a new environment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotional Stability										

This score typifies a person who may react poorly to pressure. She may be debilitated in uncertain or stressful situations. Setbacks, animosity, conflict or criticism affect her state of mind.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Flexibility										

This score indicates that this person functions best in a well-known environment. Working without fixed rules and patterns is experienced as unpleasant. He tends to stick to trusted behavioral patterns and as a result is unable to react to changes in an adaptive or flexible manner. He does not quickly become at ease in another culture.