

**New!** Sign up for our free **email newsletter**.

## Science News

from research organizations



### Controversial study of African IQ levels is 'deeply flawed'

*Date:* January 21, 2010

*Source:* Universiteit van Amsterdam (UVA)

*Summary:* A controversial study on African IQ levels conducted by psychologist Richard Lynn is deeply flawed. This conclusion is the outcome of studies by researchers in the Netherlands and the United States.

*Share:* [f](#) [🐦](#) [p](#) [in](#) [✉](#)

#### FULL STORY

The controversial study on African IQ levels conducted by psychologist Richard Lynn is deeply flawed. This conclusion is the outcome of studies by Jelte Wicherts, Conor Dolan, Denny Borsboom and Han van der Maas of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and Jerry Carlson of the University of California (Riverside).

Their findings are set to be published in *Intelligence*, *Personality and Individual Differences*, and *Learning and Individual Differences*.

In an oft-quoted literature study conducted in 2006, Lynn concluded that black Africans have an average IQ of less than 70 (compared to an average western IQ of 100). Lynn suggested that these low IQs are indicative of a low

## Breaking

this hour

- > How Ketamine Quickly Lifts Depression
- > Hidden Ancient Life Found in Deep Ocean
- > Satellites Are Exposing Weak Bridges in America
- > Psychedelic Brain Benefits Without ...
- > Hidden Brain Cells Linked to Alzheimer's Tau
- > Scientists Reveal Why Mint Feels Cold
- > Hidden Nuclear Island Found in Balanced Atom
- > Asteroids Throw "Cosmic Snowballs"
- > Fake Research Is Spreading Faster
- > A Stuck Brain Signal Linked to Autism

## Trending Topics

this week

### SCIENCE & SOCIETY

- STEM Education
- Educational Policy
- Scientific Conduct

### BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

- Workplace Health
- Biotechnology and Bioengineering
- Computers and Internet

### EDUCATION & LEARNING

- STEM Education
- Educational Policy
- Language Acquisition

intelligence level, claiming this offered an explanation for the low level of economic development in sub-Saharan countries.

Lynn's study is well known among psychologists, and has been referenced by academics such as Nobel laureate James Watson, and the authors of the controversial book *The Bell Curve -- Intelligence and Class Structure in America* (Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray: Freepress, 1994).

### African IQ scores prove flawed

Wicherts and his colleagues examined over 100 published studies, concluding that there is no evidence to back up Lynn's claims. Amongst other flaws, Lynn used selective data by systematically ignoring Africans with high IQ scores. The researchers also claim that African IQ test scores cannot be interpreted in terms of lower intelligence levels, as these scores have different psychometric characteristics than western IQ test scores. Until now, the incomparability of Western and African IQ scores had never been systematically proven.

The scientists point out that the average African IQ is currently comparable to the average level in the Netherlands around 1950. However, IQ scores in Western countries have risen sharply over the course of the 20th century. In view of this trend, Wicherts and his colleagues claim there are no reasonable grounds to conclude that sub-Saharan countries are poor due to the lower IQ scores of their populations. As it turns out, the average IQ of African adults is seeing a similar rising trend, which is expected to continue if living conditions in Africa improve in future.

## Strange & Offbeat

---

### SCIENCE & SOCIETY

A 4,000-Year-Old Sheep Reveals the Secret of an Ancient Plague

Tiny Clump of Moss Helped Solve a Shocking Cemetery Crime

ChatGPT as a Therapist? New Study Reveals Serious Ethical Risks

### BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

First Operating System for Quantum Networks

Sometimes, When Competitors Collaborate, Everybody Wins

Why Are Most Companies Failing to Benefit from AI? It's About the People Not the Tech

### EDUCATION & LEARNING

A Backwards Bible Map That Changed the World

How Gaslighting Tricks the Brain Into Questioning Reality

Children as Young as Five Can Navigate a 'Tiny Town'

---

#### RELATED TOPICS

Mind & Brain

> Educational Psychology

> Intelligence

> Consumer Behavior

> Nutrition Research

Science & Society

> Poverty and Learning

> Educational Policy

---

#### RELATED TERMS

> Sociobiology

> Automobile safety

> Psychology

> Yoga (alternative medicine)

> Sex education

> Political science

> Fracking

> National Security Agency

- > Public Health
  - > Economics
- 

### Story Source:

Materials provided by **Universiteit van Amsterdam (UVA)**. Note: Content may be edited for style and length.

---

### Journal References:

1. Jelte M. Wicherts, Denny Borsboom and Conor V. Dolan. **Why national IQs do not support evolutionary theories of intelligence.** *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2010; 48 (2): 91 DOI: [10.1016/j.paid.2009.05.028](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.05.028)
  2. Jelte M. Wicherts, Denny Borsboom, Conor V. Dolan. **Evolution, brain size, and the national IQ of peoples around 3000 years B.C.** *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2010; 48 (2): 104 DOI: [10.1016/j.paid.2009.08.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.08.020)
  3. Jelte M. Wicherts, Conor V. Dolan and Han L.J. van der Maas. **A systematic literature review of the average IQ of sub-Saharan Africans.** *Intelligence*, 2010; 38 (1): 1 DOI: [10.1016/j.intell.2009.05.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2009.05.002)
  4. Jelte M. Wicherts, Conor V. Dolan and Han L.J. van der Maas. **The dangers of unsystematic selection methods and the representativeness of 46 samples of African test-takers.** *Intelligence*, 2010; 38 (1): 30 DOI: [10.1016/j.intell.2009.11.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2009.11.003)
  5. Jelte M. Wicherts, Conor V. Dolan, Jerry S. Carlson, and Han L.J. van der Maas. **Raven's test performance of sub-Saharan Africans: Average performance, psychometric properties, and the Flynn Effect.** *Learning and Individual Differences*, 2009; DOI: [10.1016/j.lindif.2009.12.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2009.12.001)
- 

### Cite This Page:

MLA

APA

Chicago

---

Universiteit van Amsterdam (UVA). "Controversial study of African IQ levels is 'deeply flawed'." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 21 January 2010. <[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100121155220.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/01/100121155220.htm)>.

### Explore More

from ScienceDaily

---

### **Artificial Oxygen Supply in Coastal Waters: A Hope With Risks**

May 5, 2025 □ Could the artificial introduction of oxygen revitalise dying coastal waters? While oxygenation approaches have already been proven successful in lakes, their potential side effects must be carefully ...

### **Scratching Through the Negative Emotions**

Feb. 7, 2025 □ 'We feel sorry because we cry,' wrote philosopher and psychologist William James, 'angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble,' suggesting that emotional bodily responses ...

### **Physics Confirms That the Enemy of Your Enemy Is, Indeed, Your Friend**

May 3, 2024 □ The famous axiom 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' is part of Austrian psychologist Fritz Heider's social balance theory, introduced in the 1940s. Previous studies have tried to ...

### **Study Shows Testimonials Can Open Acceptance to Differing Opinions on Controversial Topics**

Oct. 11, 2023 □ Researchers led a study in which they surveyed people on their views about a controversial topic, in this case, physician-assisted suicide. Participants then randomly read either a personal ...

### **COVID-19 Took Serious Toll on Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Mental and Physical Health**

Sep. 19, 2022 □ Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, or NH/PIs, comprising more than 20 ethnic groups hailing from Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia, are understudied despite being the third fastest growing racial ...

### **Machine Translation Could Make English-Only Science Accessible to All**

Aug. 16, 2022 □ UC Berkeley scientists and students looked at current artificial intelligence translation systems and found that, though flawed, they have become good enough for researchers to broadly translate ...

---

TRENDING AT SCITECHDAILY.com

---

Is the Universe Infinite? The Surprising Truth About Cosmic Geometry

The Moon Was Hit Again: NASA Scientists Discover a  
Newly Formed Crater

Weight Loss Drugs Like Ozempic and Wegovy Show  
Surprising Heart Health Benefits

Scientists Just Made Light Do Something Once Thought  
Impossible

## Free Subscriptions

---

Stay informed with ScienceDaily's free email newsletter, updated daily and weekly. Or view our many newsfeeds in your RSS reader:

 [Email Newsletter](#)


 [RSS Feeds](#)

## Follow Us

---

Keep up to date with the latest news from ScienceDaily via social networks:

 [Facebook](#)

 [X / Twitter](#)

## Have Feedback?

---

Tell us what you think of ScienceDaily -- we welcome both positive and negative comments. Have any problems using the site? Questions?

 [Leave Feedback](#)

 [Contact Us](#)

[About This Site](#) | [Staff](#) | [Contribute](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Editorial Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Copyright 1995-2026 ScienceDaily or by other parties, where indicated. All rights controlled by their respective owners. Content on this website is for information only. It is not intended to provide medical or other professional advice. Views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of ScienceDaily, contributors or partners. Financial support for ScienceDaily comes from advertisements and referral programs.