

Do People Cheat on Psych

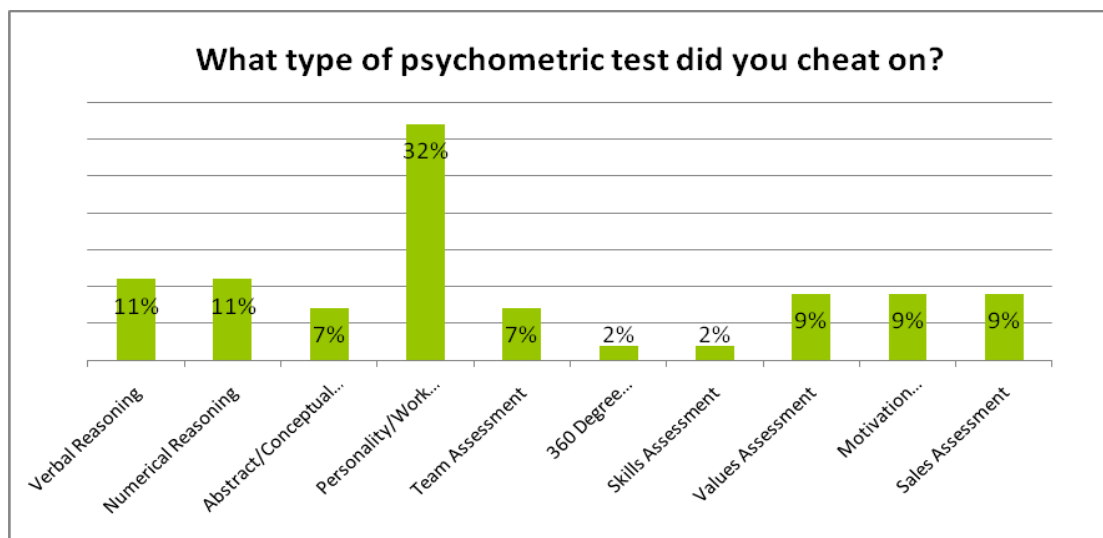
Tests?

Online psychometric testing is becoming more frequently used by organisations as part of their selection and development processes for potential and current employees (CIPD, 2010). Nonetheless, despite the high prevalence of such assessments, debate still rages over whether candidates will cheat when completing unsupervised online psychometric assessments. How do you know that the person that is supposed to be doing the test is really the person who completed the test? Do candidates try to “fake” personality assessments to create a favourable impression? And if so, how can we decrease the instances of such occurrences? Researchers are yet to investigate the attitudes of non-graduate candidates towards assessments, other than abilities tests, at a global level. Therefore, Psylutions has surveyed candidates directly on attitudes towards all psychometric assessments, including their thoughts on cheating and its prevalence.

Psylutions' survey was completed from March through to June 2011. Participation was voluntary and anonymous in nature. With an even gender split (52% female, 48% male), most participants had an undergraduate (42%) or postgraduate (40%) degree and were employed full time (60%). Whilst the majority of participants were from Australia (74%), a number of individuals from other countries (including the UK, America, Malaysia, Lesotho, United Arab Emirates, Russia and South Africa) also completed the survey (26%). Of those that had completed a psychometric assessment, 36% had never completed an assessment whilst being supervised, suggesting that there is a trend towards online, unsupervised assessments.

Do Candidates Cheat on Unsupervised Psychometric Assessments?

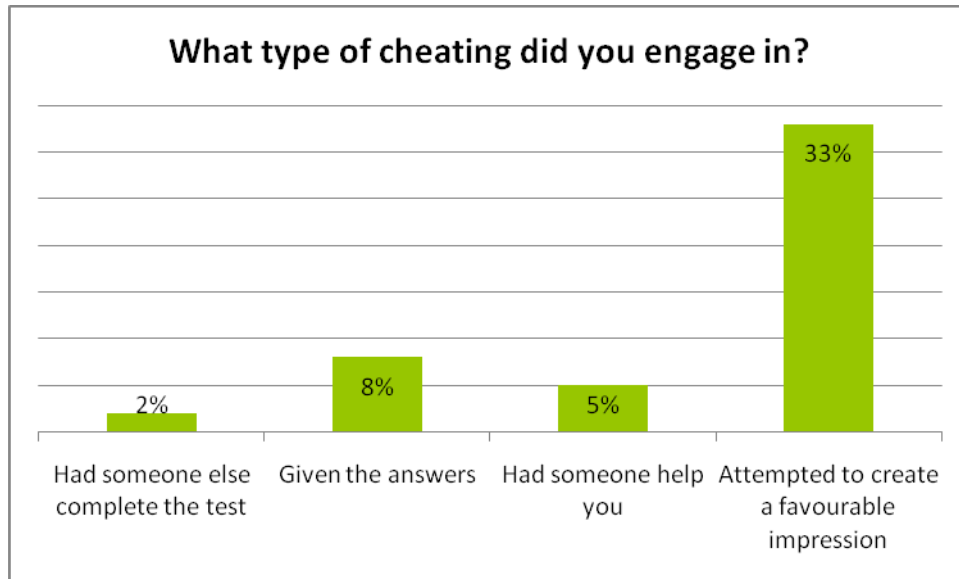
For the purposes of this survey, we defined cheating as; 'lying or deceiving to create an unfair advantage, usually in one's own interests'. This could include misrepresenting yourself (i.e. “faking good”), having someone else complete tests that you are required to complete on your behalf, having someone help you complete tests that you are required to complete on your own, or being given the answers to a test. Previous research (Hughes & Cubiks, 2007) has indicated that approximately 12% of candidates cheat when completing an online psychometric assessment. Our research returned similar results, as whilst 31% of respondents reported to have considered cheating, only 10% indicated that they had actually cheated, suggesting that attitudes do not always affect behaviour. Interestingly, 69% had never even considered cheating on a psychometric test. Of those that indicated they had cheated, as shown in the graph below, the majority reported to have cheated on a personality/work style preferences assessment (32%).



Given that previous research, and most organisations, seem to be more concerned with people cheating on unsupervised abilities assessments, our results suggest that more attention needs to be focused on personality assessments and how we can minimise people's tendency to try to create a favourable impression, by emphasising the importance of responding honestly, and using assessments with validity scales that tap into a person's test taking style and give an indication of whether they may have attempted to 'fake good'.

How Are People Cheating?

As indicated in the graph below, our research indicates that when people cheat, they are far more likely to attempt to create a favourable impression on an assessment, as opposed to being given the answers or having someone else complete the assessment for them. Given that many employers are worried about whether the person completing the assessment is the person who is supposed to, our research suggests that there is only a very small percentage that are willing to hand over the responsibility for their assessments to someone else, and organisations should be more concerned about candidates trying to create a favourable impression on personality/work style preferences assessments.



It is often argued that people who cheat on psychometric tests are only cheating themselves, and that they either end up being eliminated from the selection process for various reasons, or they will not last very long in the job as a result of not being a good fit for the role. Our survey results supported this, indicating that of those respondents who did cheat, 42% either were not offered the job or did not accept the job, an additional 21% left within a year, and 14% left after a year. Given that 77% either did not end up in the role or ended up leaving, this suggests that when people do cheat on a psychometric assessment, they often end up not being a good fit for the role.

When it comes to respondents' perceptions of whether other people cheat on psychometric tests, 95% indicated that they thought that other people are likely to cheat. However, only 31% reported that they actually knew someone who had cheated on a psychometric test, being a personality/work style preferences assessment (20%). These results indicate that whilst there is a general perception that people cheat on psychometric tests, there are actually less people who cheat than what is generally believed. Perhaps this is a result of the controversial nature of this topic and the perception that people will cheat that is often promoted in the industry.

Implications for Employers

Cheating on psych tests is an issue that is likely to remain a concern in the industry, however our results suggest that the incidence of cheating appears to be less prevalent than the perception. Utilising personality assessments with validity scales will go a long way to help identify people who have tried to 'fake good'. The good news for employers is that our survey has found, for those who do cheat, many are not deemed to be a good fit for the role or the organisation suggesting cheating does not necessarily benefit their employment chances.