Super-Recognisers International (SRI) and the Association of Super-Recognisers

Patron: Robert Balchin (Lord Lingfield)
Wikipedia
Super-Recognisers International (SRI)
www.superrecognisersinternational.com
Association of Super-Recognisers
https://a-s-r.org/

SRI is the leading organisation in Human Recognition providing services in recruiting, testing, and training individuals with extraordinarily good facial recognition abilities, as well as providing consultancy services for the public and private sector.

Note: Prof. Josh Davis and his team administer the tests for Super-Recognisers International, and if you suffer any problems with test systems, you should contact the Greenwich team.

However, we cannot engage in e-mail conversations about a third-party organisation (e.g., Super-Recognisers International). Please e-mail SRI at:
gemma.havard@superrecognisersinternational.com

Costs for receiving online test scores.

Please be aware that there are costs involved. The tests for Super-Recognisers International are freely available for anyone to take on the internet anywhere in the world at any time. In order to receive your scores at the end of the online tests, Super-Recognisers International will normally charge a processing fee of £60.

Greenwich Face and Voice Recognition Lab Participant Pool Discount

However, participants who are members of the University of Greenwich Volunteer Participant Pool, and who have received an official e-mail from the University of Greenwich inviting them to take the tests, will be eligible for a discount of £30.

You will be asked to enter your 9-digit anonymous code (e.g., A00000001), as proof of eligibility for this discount.

Additional training course attendance and invigilated tests (and other costs)

There is a 3-day Super-Recognisers International online or face-to-face training that is paid. The examination tests throughout this training are invigilated, live, or remotely during these sessions, while training is provided by ex-police officers and super-recognisers.

Employment

1. We cannot speculate as to whether you have the ability to pass the tests. If we could predict with any accuracy, we would not need these tests.
2. We cannot speculate whether you might secure any type of employment at the end of the process. Some super-recognisers are far more accurate than others. In other words, you may end up being certified as possessing the skills of a super-recogniser, but other super-recognisers may substantially outperform you, and they may be more likely to receive any job offers.
3. The number of super-recognisers employed in full-time specialist work around the world is very small. Most are police. Non-police super-recognition work is mostly part-time and is not normally highly paid.
4. Most people who take the Super-Recognisers International tests are funded by their employer or have a personal interest in taking part. These people are not interested in work in this field.
5. Despite the relative rarity of super-recognisers in the population as a whole, there will likely be super-recognisers in every country in the world. There is no shortage of super-recognisers and therefore, having this skill will NOT enhance opportunities for work in a different country

to your own. Far better would be to lobby your politicians to encourage private and public sector employers to employ super-recognisers.

Super-Recognisers International (SRI) and the Association of Super-Recognisers

Since 2017, via the University of Greenwich, Professor Josh Davis has agreed to a funded research consultancy contract with SRI (https://superrecognisersinternational.com/).
SRI fund administration of the tests used in police projects to members of the public. Those who achieve our super-recogniser criteria across all four components (scores expected by approximately the top 2% of the population), or our super-matcher criteria (scores expected by approximately the top 2% of the population on the simultaneous face matching tests only) can additionally become a licensee of the Association of Super-Recognisers (www.a-s-r.org). This does not guarantee a job.

Certificates are issued for those achieving standards.

A paper describing the results of this collaboration is currently being prepared for publication. It has taken longer than expected as the lab has been exceptionally busy with police projects in 2021 and 2022. It is hoped it will be published in 2023.

History

The Patron of the Association of Super-Recognisers is Robert Balchin, Lord Lingfield, a Member of the House of Lords in the Houses of Parliament. Lord Lingfield has often presented the certificates at the Association ceremonies.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Balchin,_Baron_Lingfield
https://www.professionalsecurity.co.uk/news/case-studies/super-recogniser-skills/

Prof. Josh Davis first started working with the CEO of Super-Recognisers International, in 2011, when he was better known as Chief Inspector Mike Neville of the Metropolitan Police Service. They collaborated on the first research to test the face recognition abilities of those we now know to be police super-recognisers in the world, just before the London Riots of that year. Mike was also the driving force behind the creation of the New Scotland Yard Super-Recogniser's Unit, the first of its kind in the world.

Anyone who has taken the three-test link (Cambridge Face Memory Test, Glasgow Face Matching Test, and Short-Term Memory Test 30-60), will likely have seen information about SRI on completion of the tests since the end of 2017.

What differs between the tests we use in our research and the Super-Recognisers International battery?

Four tests, measuring two key skills are currently used to define participants as super-recognisers in most of our research projects (these are being updated, please respond to invites).

Short-Term Face Memory
Cambridge Face Memory Test: Extended (Russell et al., 2009)
Short-Term Face Memory Test 30-60 (unpublished)

Simultaneous Face Matching
Glasgow Face Matching Test (Burton et al., 2010) (currently being phased out)
Kent Face Matching Test (Fysh & Bindemann, 2018)

The faces included in these tests have a White-British or Western European heritage

SRI and Police Projects

With SRI and police projects, we use additional tests with different designs that contain faces of a range of ethnicities and ages. We believe that to be offered employment drawing on these skills, super-recognisers need to be able to generate exceptional scores on a wide range of different tests.

Not all tests have equal proportions of same and different trials in matching tasks, or old/new trials in memory tasks. Expect the unexpected.

The tests we use measure four components. These are short-term face memory (as also measured using the CFMT+ and STFMT3060), simultaneous face matching (as also measured using the GFMT and KFMT), and spotting faces in a crowd (see Davis et al., 2018 (https://ef7ac492-0255-46b7-9653-75e8356be6c1.filesusr.com/ugd/9bb3fa_3d5dbebbcad641b3b77de3eff0b2292f.pdf?index=true for a description of an early version of this test).

All research papers can be found here: https://www.superrecognisers.com/publications

Superior Long-Term Face Memory: The Hallmark of Super-Recognition

The fourth component, however, long-term face memory ability, may best represent how super-recognition is perceived in the minds of super-recognisers themselves. Definitions of super-recognition in the media and in research articles often refer to super-recogniser's superior ability to reliably recognise other people, sometimes spontaneously, in unexpected contexts and after time intervals of months, years, or even decades. In that time the appearance of these people may have substantially changed.

On this basis, it would be hard to argue that an accurate definition of super-recognition should be that "super-recognisers are individuals who possess extraordinarily accurate perceptual and long-term face identity processing skills".

However, we have found that some people who score exceptionally highly at short-term memory tests are not able to sustain this level over longer periods of time (Davis et al., 2020. https://20d7c5dd-c656-4265-875b-28d6ce23f32d.usrfiles.com/ugd/20d7c5_961b612c0cc34898a7f1007a82f7f94f.pdf).

This paper demonstrates the need for the inclusion of such a test in any super-recognition battery (although test intervals of years are impractical).

Note – we cannot predict what you might achieve on the SRI tests based on your previous scores. Why? The faces in the tests you will have taken are mainly young adults from a British-Western European heritage. This may be advantageous for those from the same ethnic background. That advantage may not transfer to multi-ethnic face tests.

Super-Recognisers International Tests

Phase 1: Online

These are online tests, somewhat similar to those you have taken before. And indeed, some, you will have taken before. They measure short-term memory and simultaneous face matching. The tests end with the first part of a Long-Term Face Memory Test.

One week later you will receive an e-mailed invite to the second part of the Long-Term Face Memory Test. Please make sure that you will be available to receive this e-mail, as longer delays impair scores. Part 2 takes less than 10 minutes. There is more information about this when you take the tests.

Monitoring the tests for Super-Recognisers International can be intensive work for my research team as we find that many participants are so keen on taking them, that they do not follow instructions about needing a very good broadband connection, no distractions, a good laptop/PC, and a system that does not send our e-mails to junk mail.

We then receive e-mails, as participants struggle to achieve the performances on tests, they believe they are capable of, and they ask for another attempt. However, if something goes wrong when taking the tests, we normally suggest participants wait at least 3 months.

Why? Everyone improves with practice, and if someone takes the same test twice in quick succession, they will have an advantage over those who have not done so. Even 3 months may not be long enough for super-recognisers.

Phase 2: Examination-administered invigilated tests

These tests are normally incorporated into 3–4-day online or live training courses that provide a wider insight into legal and technical issues associated with jobs in which superior face recognition skills are important. The same courses are arranged for police. The tests measure Spotting Faces in a Crowd, as well as Short-Term Face Memory and Simultaneous Face Matching skills. Some licensees have secured jobs based on their test results, and therefore all involved must be assured that high scores have been achieved in reliable conditions. There are, however, substantial costs involved in administering tests that are partly conducted in examination conditions with someone either present in the room or remotely monitoring progress.

How do we calculate whether someone is a super-recogniser or not?

All of our tests were piloted by at least 100 super-recognisers (defined as such by performances in the top 2% of the estimated population on three previous tests.

We calculated the super-recogniser's mean score (and standard deviation) on each test added to the battery. We then standardised these scores (see Davis, 2019). (https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/9bb3fa_9aa91d57b0ab430486ab9c8686a4b4fe.pdf)

https://www.simplypsychology.org/z-score.html

From this process, we can calculate a z-score (number of standard deviations above or below the mean of the super-recognisers' z-scores) for each person who subsequently takes that test.

A z-score of 0 is equal to the pilot super-recogniser group mean score on any test. If you score above the mean, you will be provided with a positive z-score on that test. A score below the mean will generate a negative z-score. We then calculate the z-scores on all the tests, in order to produce the overall mean z-score on the four categories.

Short-term face memory
Simultaneous face matching
Long-term Face Memory
Spotting faces in a crowd

If your overall z-scores are above zero you will be achieving scores above the 2% super-recogniser standard.

First attempts: Importantly, z-scores were calculated based on the pilot super-recogniser's first attempts on each test. If someone takes the tests multiple times, it will be easier to attain the standard for super-recognition. This does not make them a real super-recogniser, however, which is why we include the examination tests. Large differences between performances on the online tests, for which anyone can assume multiple identities, and the examination tests, will invite scrutiny.

(We need to be careful here. When applying for a job, one highly motivated participant took one of our 10-minute tests, 65 times before achieving a score high enough to qualify for the next phase. This comprised three more tests – they failed. This might seem extreme, but plenty of others took the same test 20 times or more.)

On the other hand, here may be many reasons for poor performance on any face recognition test that bear no relationship with true ability (e.g., distractions, illness, lack of sleep, internet disruptions). These factors may have a greater impact as the gap between learning and test phases widens. We do understand this, and we do have methods to remedy some issues.

However, we cannot help, if you are over-tired or ill, or choose to take the tests when your internet service is poor. Always e-mail if something went wrong – we can normally help.

Super-Matchers

There is normally a moderate positive correlation between scores on short-term face memory and simultaneous matching tests, so high scores on our full battery above are predictive of high simultaneous face matching scores alone. However, a small proportion of participants seem to consistently generate highly superior scores on face matching tests, while achieving relatively mundane short-term face memory scores. Others show an exact opposite pattern, which might be suggestive of a dissociation in these skills, or even simply that a participant needs new glasses, as matching tasks tend to require a higher level of skill at distinguishing the finest details in faces.

Some roles only require superior face comparison/matching skills, such as those involved in identity verification. In these job roles, memory for faces is not required, and instead, often, a series of rapid, confident decisions are required about unfamiliar people and their photo-ID in live security settings and in photos. For these roles, we can collect data of decision response times and confidence. The ages of same person shown in the images can vary.

There is growing consensus that there may be an underlying cognitive mechanism driving ability at visual comparison judgments of all types (e.g., fingerprints), including the simultaneous matching of human faces. Some have suggested this mechanism might drive individual differences in face identity processing ability and therefore, will partly explain super-recognition. However, it cannot be the only explanation, given the poor results of some at longer-term face memory. Rather than describing participants exceptionally good at face comparison and matching tasks as super-recognisers, we prefer to suggest that someone scoring in the top percentiles of the population on a battery of tests measuring this skill might best be described as a "super-matcher".

Super-Recognisers International will charge for this service.

Why? The University of Greenwich charges Super-Recognisers International for the annual contract. It costs a substantial amount of effort to create, pilot test, and edit a new face recognition test (we expect the entire process to take about a year), and to place them on an online platform. The email communications between participants, research assistants at the University of Greenwich, and Super-Recognisers International alone can take up a large amount of time.

Although we use some tests created by others for research purposes in the battery, our own tests are created by research assistants, and they obviously expect to receive payment. Any surplus from contracts we generate with police and businesses allow us to work on test creation and other research (my staff help here as well).

Because of the costs, we recommend that participants are confident that they do possess superior skills before taking these tests. Those whose scores are consistently in the extreme highest range will be the most likely to achieve the required standards.

A small number of jobs have been created for super-recognisers around the world (1000?). Approximately 600 were already employed by their organisation. The numbers who will receive this e-mail is more than double that number. Please be realistic about the likelihood of opportunities – they are extremely few and far between. Most employers of super-recognisers do not publicise that they employ them, to avoid media interest and e-mails from people desperate for a job.

One of the reasons Prof. Josh Davis collaborates with SRI, is from a genuine belief that many organisations will not be performing at their best when it comes to roles requiring the recognition of faces. This includes jobs in which face recognition technology may be used. Research and some field studies by identity verification and security businesses has shown that accuracy is higher when super-recognisers operate systems and review the decisions made by face recognition technology. SRI have consistently tried to market the skills of their super-recogniser teams. However, progress at persuading other organisations has been slow.

It cannot be guaranteed that even the highest scorers on the tests available to the public will pass the final examination phase. Indeed, about 10% of those who take the examinations fail to achieve criteria, even though their scores will be higher than the vast majority of the population (we always

offer one opportunity to resit the exams after 3 months), while another 10%-20% achieve the status of super-matcher. The University of Greenwich is unable to provide predictions as to how anybody will perform in future tests based on their past performances.

Finally, no exam, test, or interview is perfectly predictive of how anyone will perform in any job role. However, when examining the results of police super-recognisers who have identified thousands of suspects, it is clear that virtually all of them have scored in the highest range on our tests. This is a correlation not a causation though.

Direct link to the Super-Recognisers International test battery
https://greenwichuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_erJMtrXG9mrgWLc

Prof. Davis is an employee of the University of Greenwich. Prof. Davis is not financially rewarded by his consultancy work with the university and has no private consultancy work. This ensures no conflict of interests with his research. Quotes are based on full economic costs – designed to cover all overheads. All procedures have been approved by the University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee and follow ethical guidelines established by the British Psychological Society. The University of Greenwich [1] and Qualtrics [2] the online survey system used by the University are both GDPR compliant.

Scores on the online tests

The University of Greenwich send the scores of all participants to Super-Recognisers International once a week. Within another week, Super-Recognisers International normally contact participants with an invoice in order to receive their scores. The University of Greenwich cannot discuss scores with participants at any time unless there is a system problem.

Communications

Finally, if anyone decides to take the tests and wants more information, in the first place, please communicate with Super-Recognisers International, not the University of Greenwich. We administer the tests and check participant progression only. We are not responsible for payment, or information about your performances. You should contact us only if you have a problem with the tests. Our e-mail inbox can be full most of the time already.