

## White Paper:

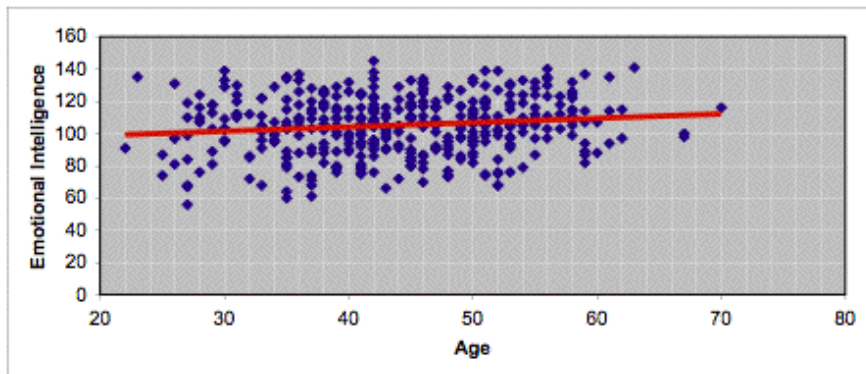
# Emotional Intelligence and Age

Lorenzo Fariselli, Massimiliano Ghini, Joshua Freedman

*There are many assumptions about emotional intelligence and age. Popular literature and "common sense" asset that older people are more aware, wise, and restrained. Is it true? Existing research indicates a slight relationship between emotional intelligence and age<sup>[1]</sup>. How strong is this effect, and which areas of emotional intelligence are most affected by age? Are older people more self aware, better at self management, and/or do they make more principled decisions?*

Using the Six Seconds' Emotional Intelligence Assessment (SEI)<sup>[2]</sup>, a study of 405 American people shows that emotional intelligence (EQ) increases slightly with age. The relationship is  $r = .13$  ( $p < .01$ ) -- slight but significant.

The graph below shows the relationship between the two factors. EQ on the left (measured on a scale from 50-150) and age across the bottom. As the graph shows, there are many young people with high EQ, and many older people with lower EQ -- however, as indicated by the red line, there is a slight upward trend.



## SAMPLE

The sample in this analysis is composed of 405 American people, mainly female, between 22 and 70 years old.

Download the PDF format of: [White Paper: Age and Emotional Intelligence](#)

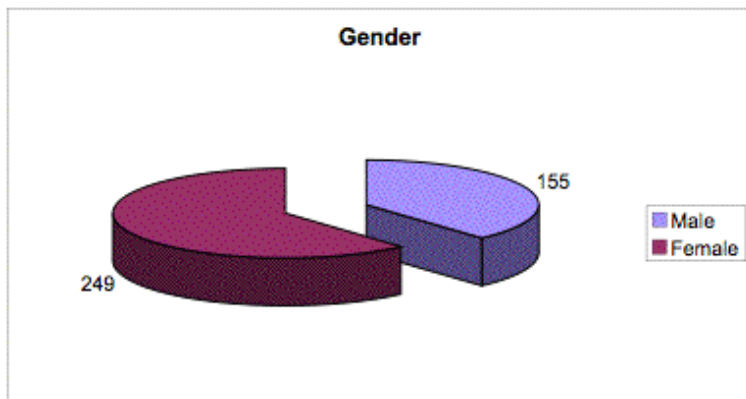
### SEI Information



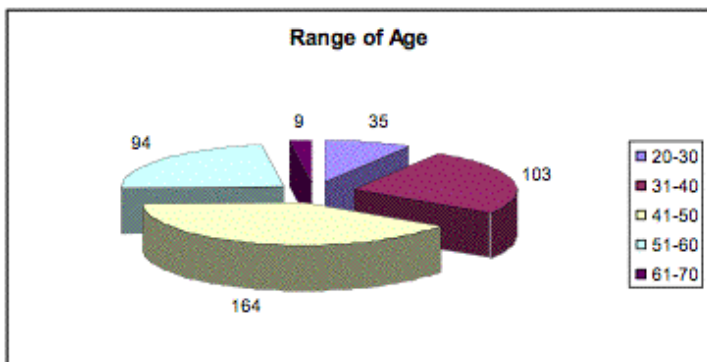
- [SEI Main](#)
  - [SEI Details](#)
  - [SEI Strengths Report](#)
  - [SEI Leadership Report](#)
- [Order the SEI Online](#)
- [Get EQ Coaching with the SEI](#)
- [White Paper: EQ and Success](#). SEI predicts 54.79% of critical success factors
- [White Paper: Optimism for Performance](#): Optimism on SEI predicts 17.9% of performance scores in high-tech company
- [White Paper: EQ and Age](#). Age is slightly predictive of some aspects of emotional intelligence.
- [SEI Certification](#) -- license to use this effective tool

Download:

- [SEI Technical Manual](#) (PDF, 14.7 MB)
- [Description of the Group Report](#) (PDF, 740k)
- [Sample Report excerpt](#)



The sample is primarily ages 31 to 60 years:



## ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed through a statistical method called Linear Regression to discover if Age predicts Emotional Intelligence. In this analysis we have Age as the independent variable (IV = Age) and Emotional Intelligence as the dependent variable (DV = Emotional Intelligence). The test checks if the IV "predicts" or "influences" the DV, and assesses the significance of the relationship.

### Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	93.319	4.333		21.538	.000
	AGE	.265	.097	.135	2.741	.006

Dependent Variable: EM.INT

The significance (Sig) of .006 is less than .01 affirming that the IV (Age) significantly influences the DV (EQ), with a possible error in less than 1% of the cases ( $p < .01$ ). We also have to consider that the correlation between the two variables is very low (Beta = .135). This means there is a positive, significant, but weak relationship between the two variables. Looking at the table below, we can see the age explains 1.6% of the Emotional Intelligence variance. It means there are other more decisive factors that explain variation in Emotional Intelligence.

- SEI brochure

### The SEI team includes:

Massimiliano Ghini, MBA, President of Six Seconds Italia and Professor of Human Resources Management at Profingest Business School of Bologna.

Joshua Freedman, Director of Six Seconds Institute for Organizational Performance ([www.EQperformance.com](http://www.EQperformance.com)).

Anabel Jensen, Ph.D., President of Six Seconds and Professor of Education at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California.

Lorenzo Fariselli, Researcher, Six Seconds Italia ([www.6seconds.it](http://www.6seconds.it)).

Carina Fiedeldey-Van Dijk, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, Six Seconds Institute for Organizational Performance and President of ePsy Consultancy.

**Model Summary**

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
Model					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.135	.018	<b>.016</b>	17.44196	.018	7.514	1	403	.006

Predictors: (Constant), AGE

## Components of EQ

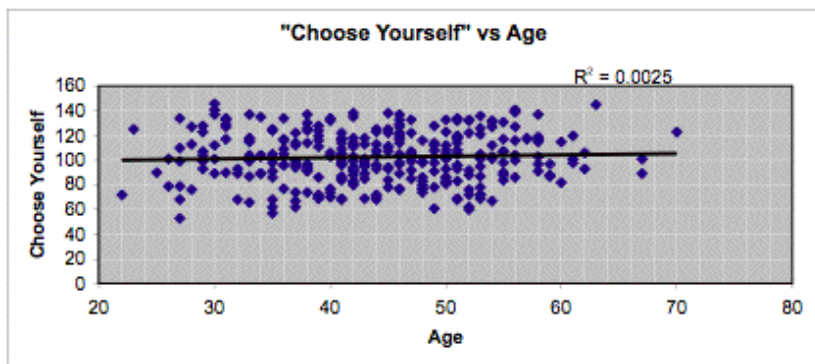
In the same research we focused on the three macro areas comprising Six Seconds' model of emotional intelligence:

- Know Yourself (self-awareness).
- Choose Yourself (self-management).
- Give Yourself (self-direction).

Age is slightly predictive of self-awareness (2.8%):



There is not a significant relationship between age and Choose Yourself:



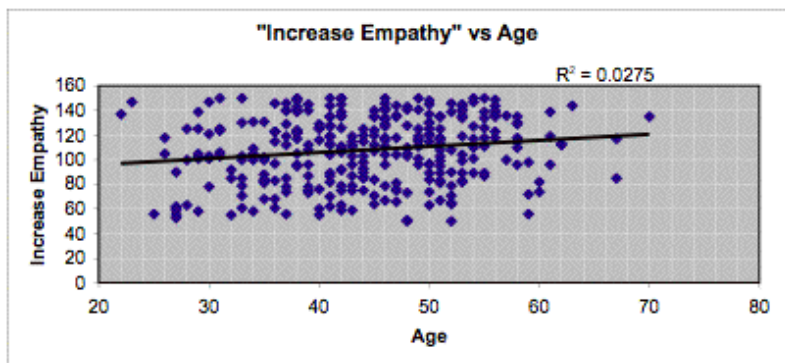
About 3.9% of the variation in self-direction is predicted by Age:



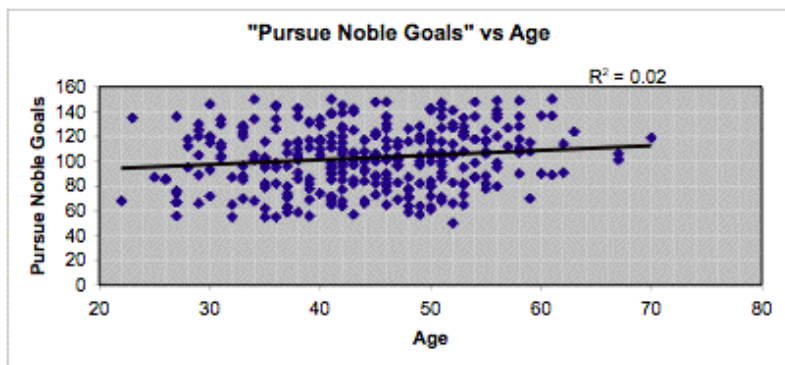
As the relationship between "Give Yourself" and Age is strongest, we explored this further. There are two competencies within the area of "Give Yourself":

- Increase Empathy (recognize and appropriately respond to others' feelings).
- Pursue Noble Goals (align behavior with principles and vision).

Age predicts about 2.7% of the variation in Empathy:



Age predicts 2 % of the variation in Pursue Noble Goals:



## INTERPRETATION

The research shows that older people are slightly more likely to be higher in emotional intelligence. The finding suggests emotional intelligence is a developing ability; it is likely that accumulated life experiences contribute to EQ.

### Age and Know Yourself

We hypothesize that as people grow they have more opportunity to learn about emotions

and the gradations of emotions, increase emotional vocabulary, and experience more and more varied life situations. Perhaps they accumulate more feedback and integrate this into greater self-awareness. Again, age is only mildly predictive of this dimension, so there are many younger people with a highly developed self-awareness and many older people who have not developed these competencies.

## Age and Choose Yourself

The data show that the experience isn't a predictive factor to explain this area. This suggests the competencies in this part of the model (Navigate Emotions, Exercise Optimism, Engage Intrinsic Motivation and Apply Consequential Thinking) need specific training<sup>[3]</sup>. In other words, it is less likely that these will "automatically" develop through life experience.

## Age and Give Yourself

For many people, adulthood and aging introduce increased needs and opportunities to connect with others -- for example in understanding children and relating to other parents. This might explain the link between age and empathy. Similarly, parents and grandparents, and more senior people in organizations, have the responsibility and opportunity to understand and solve community problems and be a positive example for the other people. This requires a more clearly defined set of values and principles, which would enhance the Pursue Noble Goals competence. Again, the link between age and Give Yourself is modest -- so age is no guarantee for vision and wisdom.

## CONCLUSION

A next step to increase the reliability of the results is repeat the research study using a larger sample. In a future study we will check how different demographic categories (such as job role and education level) combine with age to affect emotional intelligence in different ways. For example, high academic level is correlated with higher IQ<sup>[4]</sup>, so does increased education likewise affect EQ?

The significance of these current findings are two fold. First, we can affirm that there is a developmental component of emotional intelligence -- most people will improve in these competencies simply through life experience. This reinforces our claim that emotional intelligence is learnable.

Second, we can see that many popular beliefs about "with age comes wisdom" are overstated. The relationship between EQ and age is very slight -- meaning there while a slight majority of older people are higher in EQ, there are many young people with higher EQ scores than their older counterparts. So many of our social, educational, and business systems discount the contributions of young people: if emotional intelligence is a critical competence in the current world context, then leaders need to take note of their younger people as an important source of human capital.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> According to Dr. Stein, "There was a consistent and significant age effect. The total EQ score, measured with BarOn EQ-i, increased significantly with age, peaking in the late forties or early fifties". (*Multi-Health Systems Inc*)

<sup>[2]</sup> The only tool based on Six Seconds' model, the SEI is focused on developing key capacities for living and leading with emotional intelligence. ([www.6seconds.org](http://www.6seconds.org))

<sup>[3]</sup> In other research we have seen these competencies can develop through training. The analysis, on 34 information team leaders of an Italian company called Svim Service, showed a significant difference ( $t = -2.040$  with  $p < 0.05$ ) between the Emotional Intelligence measured before and after the EQ training.

<sup>[4]</sup> "We know from studies of normal learning that plasticity depends on repetition and attention. Focused attention stimulates release of neurotransmitters that encourage plasticity and learning" (*Bridging Brain, Mind,*

and Behavior Research Award, James S. McDonnell Foundation)

---

Download the PDF format of: [White Paper: Age and Emotional Intelligence](#)

[Main: Home](#) | [Articles](#) | [Emotional Intelligence Certification Training](#) | [Speakers/Experts](#)

Emotional Intelligence for: [Business](#) | [Healthcare](#) | [Education](#) | [Getting Started](#)

[Tools: EQ Event Calendar](#) | [Great Newsletters](#) | [Free Account](#) | [Downloads](#)

[Shop](#) | [Guarantee](#) | [Store Policies](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Safe & Secure](#) | [Shopping Cart](#)

[About Six Seconds](#) | [Credits](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Global: [Singapore](#) | [Italia](#) | [Australia](#) | [France](#) | [International Emotional Intelligence Network](#)

**All contents copyright © 1997-2007 Six Seconds. All rights reserved.**

This internet site provides information of a general nature and is designed for educational purposes only. You should always consult with a healthcare professional for serious concerns.

Your use of the site indicates your agreement to be bound by the [Terms of Use](#).