

# Performance of Children and Struggling Adult Readers on Silent Word Reading Fluency

## What was the goal of the study?

The researchers wanted to determine whether the Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF), a reading fluency test designed for individuals between the ages of 6 and 18, functions appropriately for adult learners.

## Why was the study conducted?

The study was conducted to determine whether TOSWRF is an appropriate test for measuring how fluently adult learners read single words in English.

## What did the study find?

The results showed that reliability was high for both adults and children, which suggests that for both groups the test items appear to measure a singular skill. Item discrimination (which indicates how well an item differentiates between individuals with lower and higher abilities) indicated that most items (except for these beyond item 20) showed sufficient discrimination for both adults and children. However, earlier items (such as items 1 to 9) had lower discrimination for adults, while later items (such as items 10 to 20) had higher discrimination for adults. Finally, findings indicated that the beginning items (1-6) were slightly biased against adults with lower ability levels. Further research is needed to evaluate the practical impact of the potential bias.

## Who participated in the study?

The participants in this study were 544 adult learners in the Atlanta and Toronto metro areas and 300 children in the fifth grade. Approximately 72% of adults and 56% of children were native English speakers.

## How was the study conducted?

The researchers analyzed the internal consistency reliability of the test (i.e., gauged how well the test is measuring what it is supposed to measure) for both groups. The researchers then analyzed item discrimination, which indicates how well an item differs between individuals with lower and higher abilities. Finally, the researchers conducted a differential item functioning (DIF) analysis, which is a common analysis used to determine whether assessments are fair and unbiased.

## How can people use the results?

Practitioners should exercise caution when using the TOSWRF for assessing adult learners.