

HIVE MIND

HOW YOUR NATION'S IQ MATTERS SO MUCH MORE THAN YOUR OWN

an infographic

At the individual level, test scores aren't a strong predictor of success in life. But national average test scores matter to your well-being in ways too big to ignore.

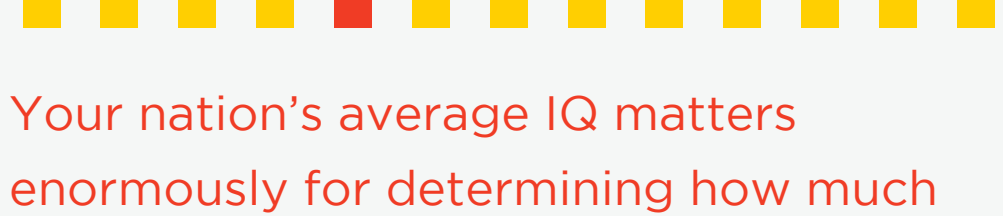


Nations with the highest test scores are about

8x

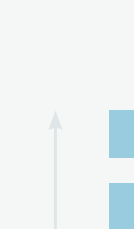
more prosperous

than nations with the lowest scores.

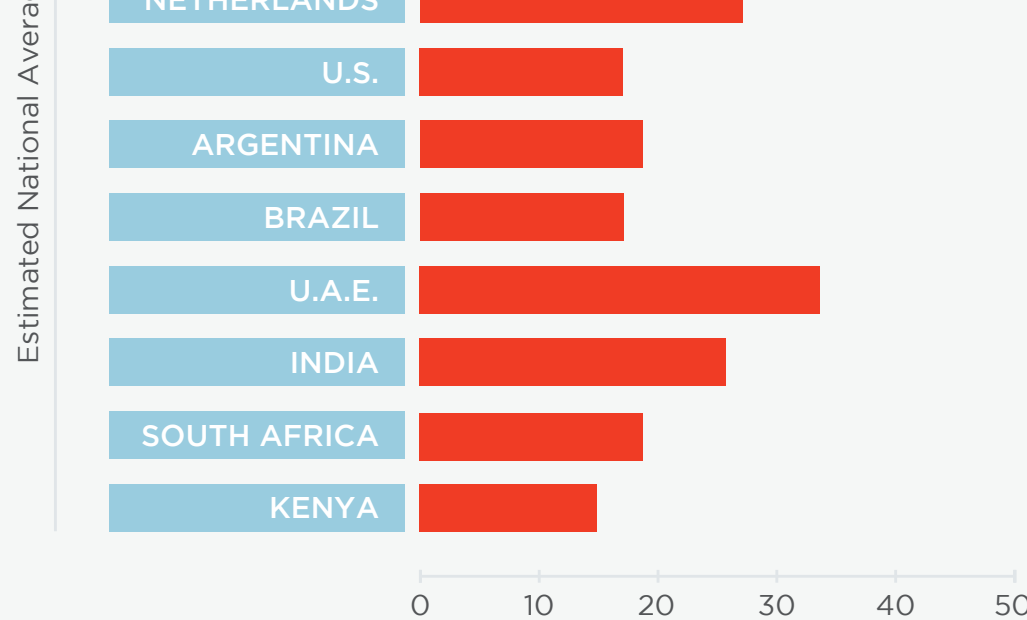


Your nation's average IQ matters enormously for determining how much you earn, how much you produce, and how good your life feels.

WHY IS THIS?



Overall, the global relationship between a nation's average IQ and its national savings rate is moderately positive.



Source: Lynn and Meisenberg, "National IQs Calculated" and IMF World Economic Outlook's Gross National Savings Rate

MORE SAVINGS

IQ typically arrives bundled with patience, and patience causes savings. You may think that high-IQ countries would tend to have higher savings rates. And you'd be right.

High-scoring people tend to save more, and some of those savings stay in their home country. More savings mean more machines, more computers, more technology to work with, which helps make everyone in the nation more productive.

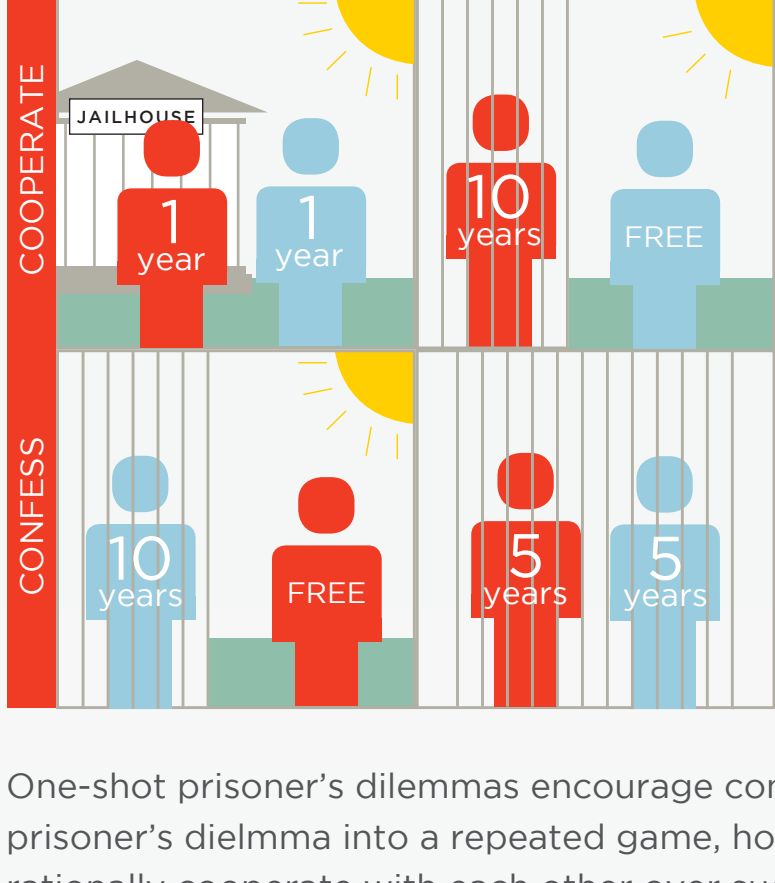
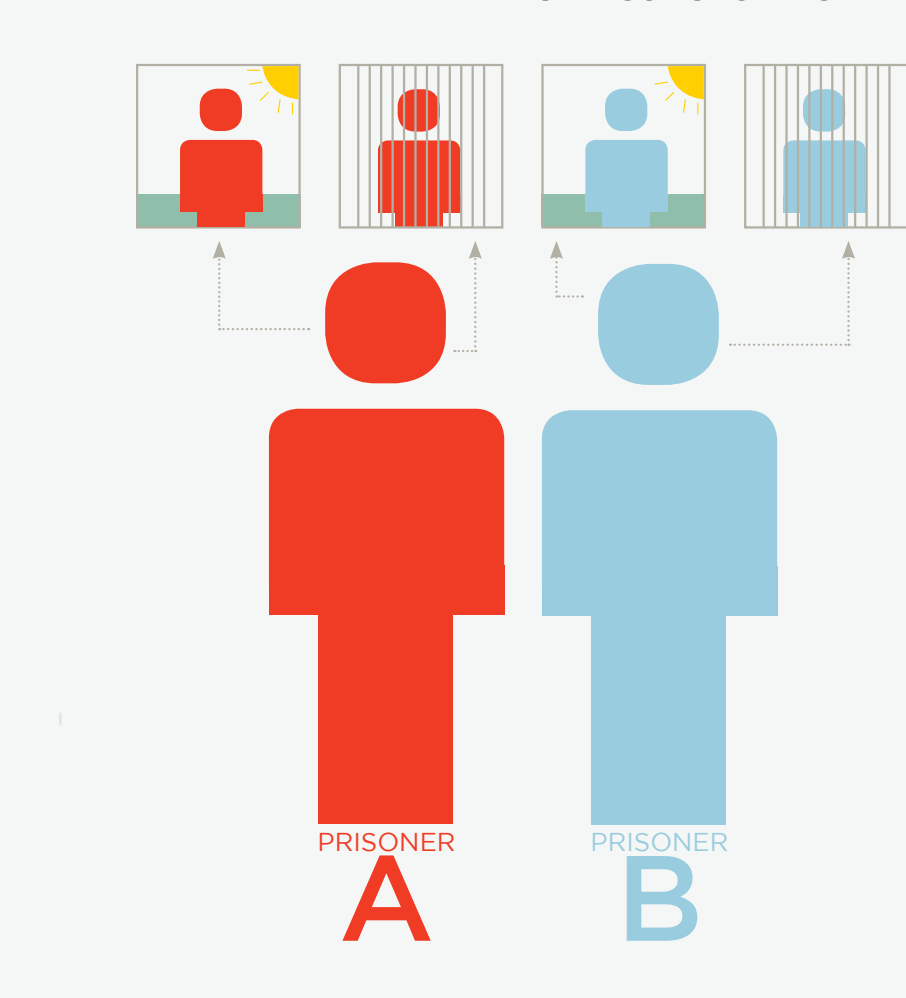
GREATER COOPERATION

Life is a never-ending series of prisoner's dilemmas, where people are constantly choosing between self-interested short-run gain and cooperative long-term success. People with higher IQs tend to possess traits that lead them to bank on cooperative outcomes, rather than purely selfish ones.

Cooperation, in turn, is a key ingredient for building higher-quality governments and more productive businesses.

Higher-IQ people are more likely to be patient, pleasant and perceptive, and thus, more cooperative.

The Prisoner's Dilemma



Two criminals—A and B—are imprisoned for colluding in a crime. They're separated and interrogated by the police who offer the accomplices three choices: (1) if both confess to the charges, both will be jailed for 5 years, (2) if only one confesses, he will be freed but the non-confessor will be jailed for 10 years, or (3) if neither confesses, both will be tried for a minor offense and will be jailed for 1 year. If both take the collective interest into consideration, neither will confess; if either think only of their self-interest, however, they may confess in hopes of serving no jail time, but run the risk of serving 5 years should their accomplice also confess.

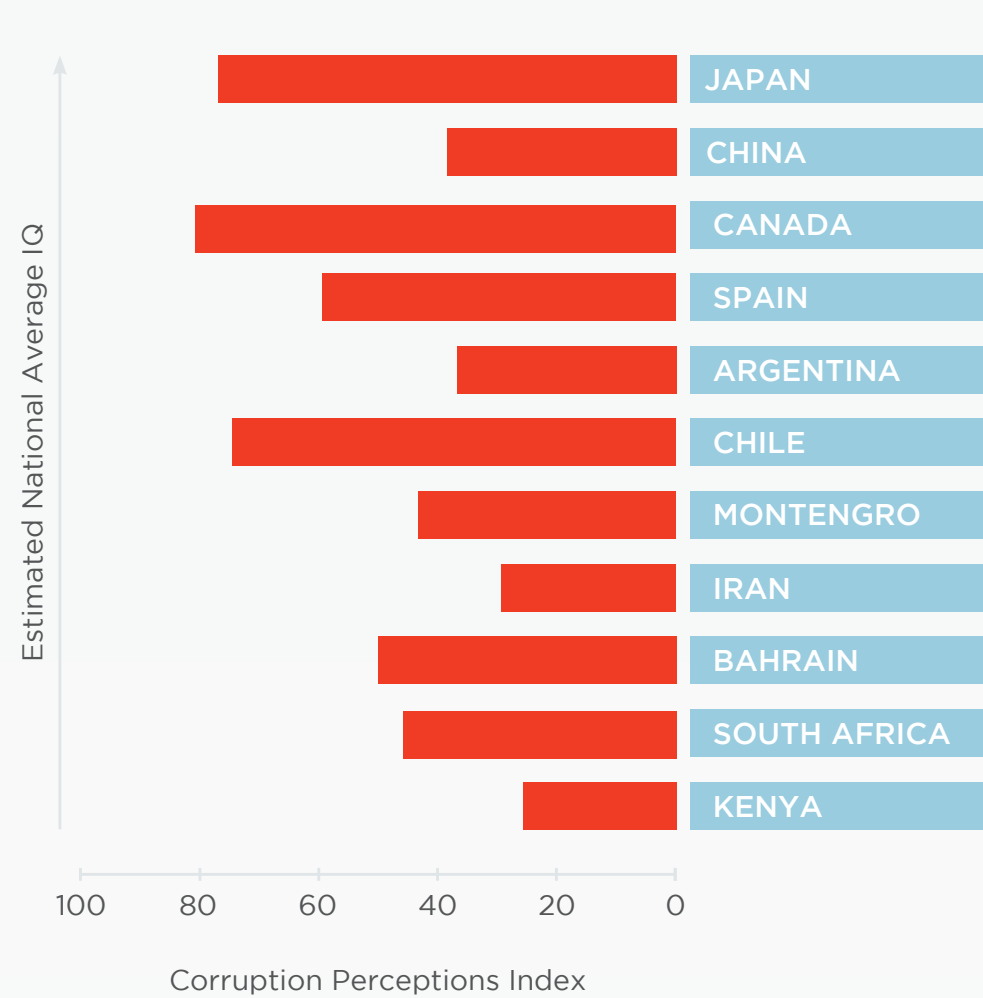
One-shot prisoner's dilemmas encourage confession. Once you turn a one-shot prisoner's dilemma into a repeated game, however, it's possible for selfish players to rationally cooperate with each other over successive games, making compromises in pursuit of the best outcome for the collective interest. Political scientist Robert Axelrod devised some key principles for encouraging cooperation in repeated prisoner's dilemmas, including these three:

- Be patient**: Focus on the long-term benefits of finding a way to cooperate. Don't just focus on the short-run. Axelrod calls this "extending the shadow of the future."
- Be pleasant**: Start off nice—make sure those bared teeth are part of a smile. Take a chance on cooperating every now and then, even when things have gone south for a while.
- Be perceptive**: Figure out what game you're playing. Know the rules, know the players, and weigh the benefits and costs of cooperation.

High IQs predict all 3 types of behavior: high-scoring individuals not only tend to be more patient, but they also exhibit more generous—or "nice"—behavior in addition to being shrewd decision-makers.



Average IQ predicts lower corruption across countries.



Source: Lynn and Meisenberg, "National IQs Calculated" and 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index

BETTER-INFORMED CITIZENRY

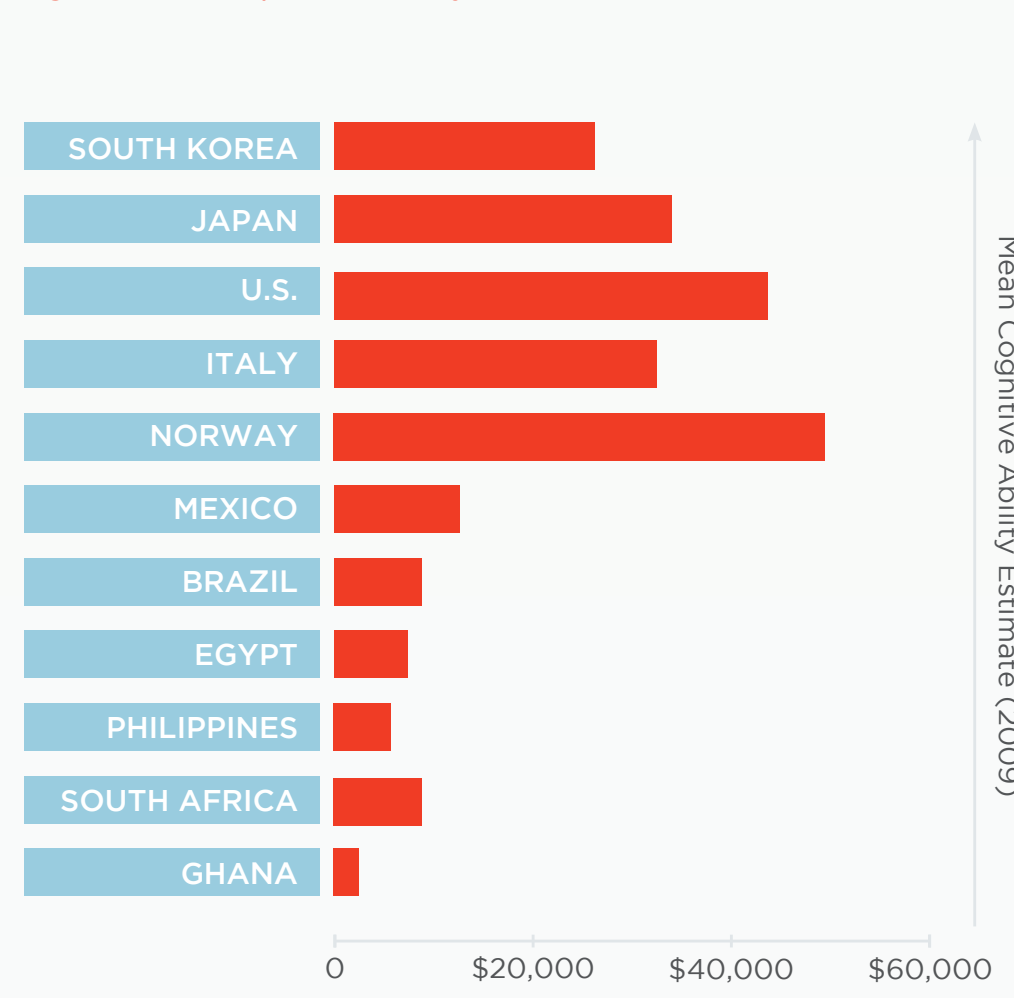
High-scoring groups are more likely to support market-oriented policies, a key to national prosperity. People who do well on standardized tests also tend to be better at retaining and recalling information, and informed voters are an important ingredient for good government.

STRONGER WORKFORCE

Dozens of studies have shown that higher-average-IQ teams are more productive than lower-average-IQ teams.

Furthermore, high-scoring groups will tend to be more successful at using highly productive team-based technology—which is particularly crucial for industries in which one mistake can substantially depreciate the value of the final product. Most developed economies are rife with such industries—think of computer chip manufacturing, film-making, or corporate mega-mergers.

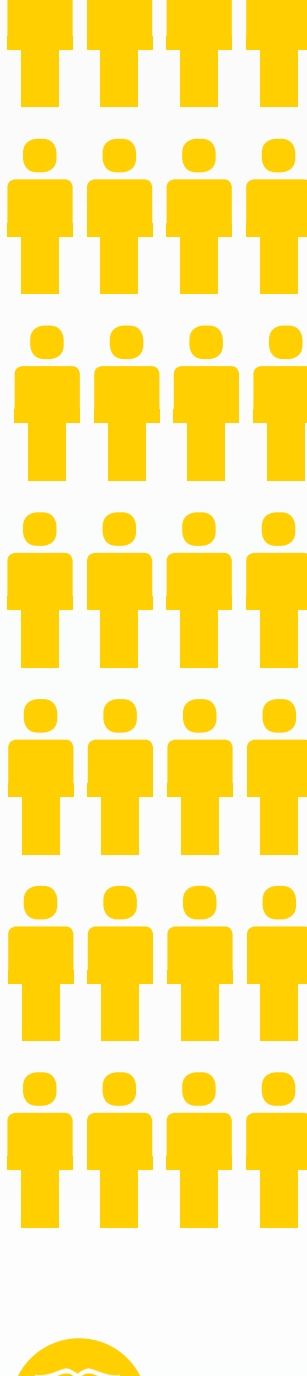
Higher average cognitive ability correlates with higher overall productivity for most countries.



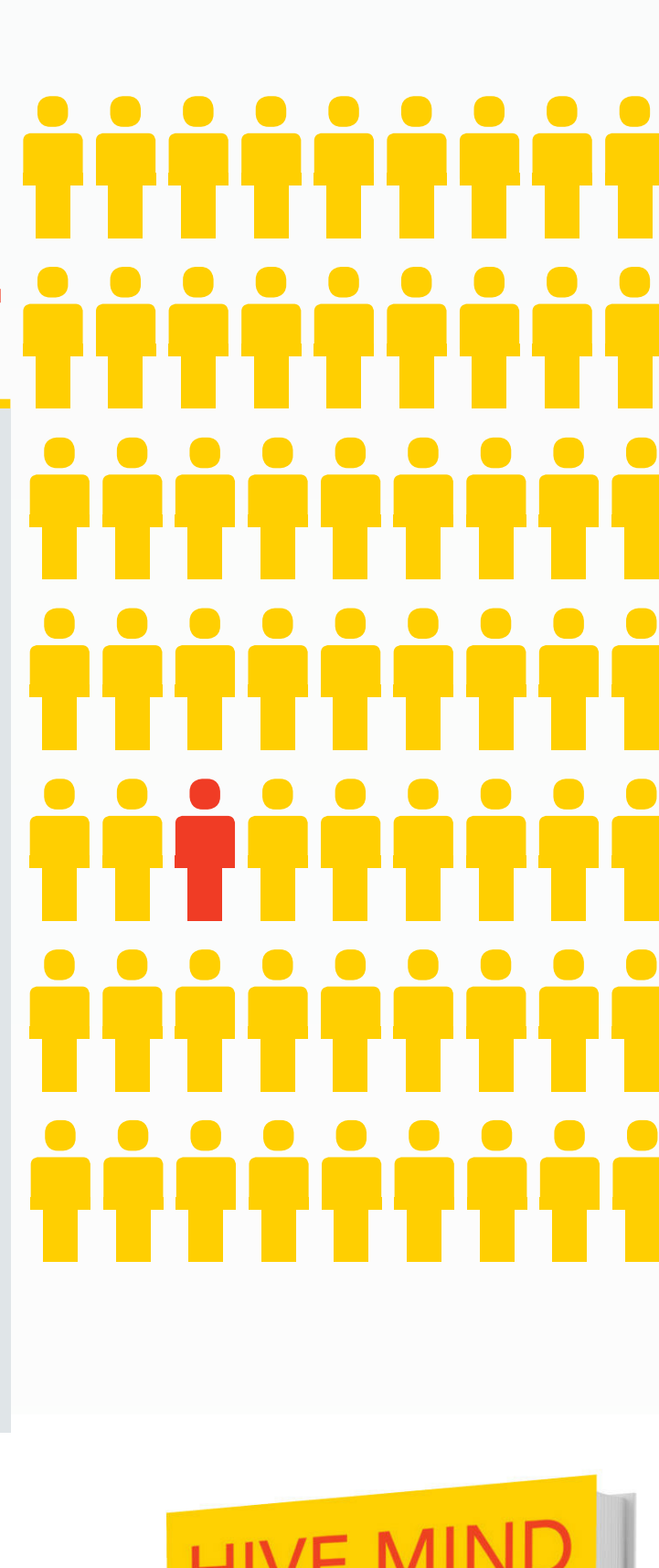
Average cognitive ability estimated in 2009 from earlier PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS international exams and estimated 2005 GDP per person. Sources: Rinderman, Sailer, and Thompson, "The Impact of Smart Fractions," and Penn World Tables 7.1.

In all these ways national average IQ proves a more significant indicator of individual success than individual IQ. And all of these factors—being part of a society that saves more, readily cooperates, is better-informed, and undergirded by a strong workforce—are compounded by

THE PEER EFFECT



The human tendency to conform, at least a fifth channel that multiplies the effect of the other four: the imitation channel, the peer effect channel. Even a small tendency to conform, to act like those around us, to try to fit in, tends to quietly shape our behavior. If you have cooperative, well-informed neighbors, that probably makes you a bit more cooperative, patient, and well-informed too.

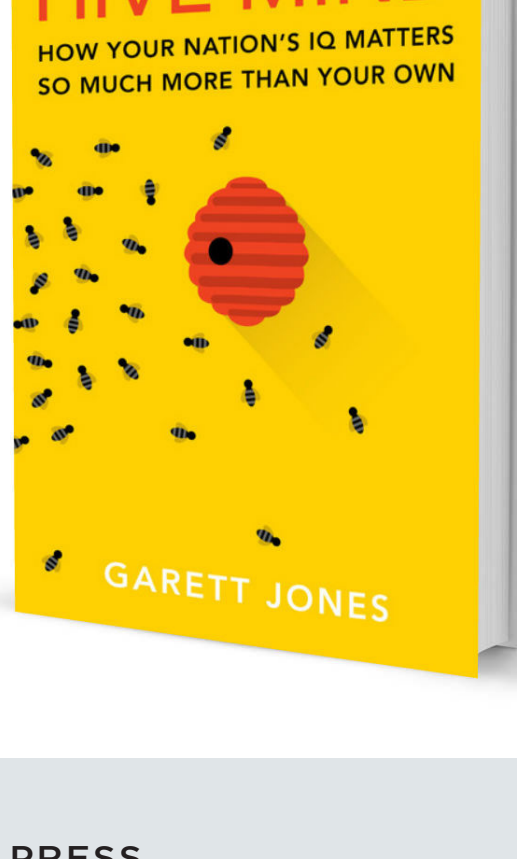


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by GARETT JONES

Garett Jones is Associate Professor of Economics at the Center for Study of Public Choice, George Mason University.



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