

Zensitively Neurodivergence Inventory (ZNI): Technical Documentation

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SUMMARY

The Zensitively Neurodivergence Inventory (ZNI; German: Zensitively Neurodivergenz-Inventar) is a psychometric self-report instrument with 60 statements answered on a five-point scale. It describes how a person, by their own account, perceives, focuses and reacts, and what this currently costs them in everyday life. It is not intended to detect, monitor or predict disease, or to prepare or support a diagnosis (intended purpose, Section 1.1). Seven scales form its measurement core: High Sensitivity, Monotropism, Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style, Alexithymia, Emotional Overwhelm (associated with rejection sensitive dysphoria, RSD), Camouflaging and Self-Criticism.

The figures come from a norm sample of 9,270 German-language first completions between 16 July and 16 September 2026, drawn from a full data set of 155,609 completed administrations. Internal consistencies of the seven scales range from Cronbach's alpha .74 to .91 (McDonald's omega .74 to .91). Stability over two weeks to three months is $r = .67$ to $.79$ as observed and $.72$ to $.85$ after correction for shared user IDs. Convergent validity: five of the seven scales reach 90 to 95 percent of the correlation that the respective established instrument (HSPS, Monotropism Questionnaire, CAARS, TAS-20, CAT-Q) shows with itself over the same interval; Emotional Overwhelm reaches 83 percent against a clinical screening checklist; Self-Criticism has no validation instrument of its own. Factor structure: a strong general factor with seven specific scales; model fit falls below the strict conventions (Section 7.1).

Not examined and not claimed: criterion validity against clinical diagnoses, sensitivity, specificity, cut-off scores. The item key and the computation of the total score are not published.

Keywords: neurodivergence · self-report instrument · high sensitivity · monotropism · alexithymia · camouflaging · reliability · test–retest stability · convergent validity · norms

1. Conception and Development

1.1 Intended purpose

The ZNI serves self-description and orientation. It is not intended to detect, prevent, monitor, predict or prognos-

ticate disease, to prepare or support a diagnosis, to screen, or to inform treatment decisions.

1.2 The seven scales

Scale	Content	Associated concept	Items
High Sensitivity	Rich inner life, fine-grained perception, sensitivity to stimuli and moods	High sensitivity (sensory processing sensitivity) as described by Aron	9
Monotropism	Deep, sustained concentration on few interests; difficulty switching focus on demand	Monotropism (Murray, Lesser & Lawson)	10
Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style	Engagement that depends on interest and stimulation; difficulty getting started; urge to move	Attention patterns as described in ADHD	8
Alexithymia	Difficulty perceiving, sorting and naming one's own feelings	Alexithymia (Toronto Alexithymia Scale)	10
Emotional Overwhelm	Intense, physically felt emotional reactions and shame about them	Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD)	6
Camouflaging	Concealing one's own reactions and characteristics in social situations, withdrawal for fear of rejection	Camouflaging and masking	13
Self-Criticism	Excessive self-criticism	Two-item indicator; no established instrument assigned	2

Two items belong to none of the seven scales. The scale labels are construct names. The column "Associated concept" names the concept in the literature to which the

scale is closest in content. It does not mean that the scale indicates the presence of a diagnosis.

1.3 Development

The ZNI was developed by the publisher on the basis of established constructs and instruments: high sensitivity as described by Aron (Highly Sensitive Person Scale, Aron & Aron 1997), monotropism (Monotropism Questionnaire, Garau et al. 2023), attention patterns in adult ADHD (Conners' Adult ADHD Rating Scales, Conners, Erhardt & Sparrow 1999; German adaptation Christiansen et al. 2014), alexithymia (Toronto Alexithymia Scale, Bagby, Parker & Taylor 1994), camouflaging (Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire, Hull et al. 2019) and rejection sensitive dysphoria (the self-check list published by William Dodson in ADDitude, which is a clinical screening aid and not a psychometrically validated instrument). These instruments serve as validation measures in Section 7.2. The 60 statements are the publisher's own wording. The seven scales were derived from the factor structure of the full data set (Section 7.1).

1.4 Neurodivergence Score and further representations

The results report shows a total score, the Neurodivergence Score (0 to 100), and further representations computed from the same 60 answers. In the ZNI, neurodivergence is not understood as the degree to which a person is different, but as the degree to which a person's experience is discriminated against by neuronormativity. The score measures this degree from self-report: what a person, by their own account, pays for their way of experiencing. Its computation is not published; its stability and its distribution in the norm sample are reported (Tables 3 and 7). The further representations are displays derived from the answers, not measurement scales in their own right; they are not reported individually in this documentation.

2. Administration, Scoring, Interpretation

2.1 Administration

The ZNI is completed online. The 60 statements are presented one at a time in a fixed order and answered on a five-point scale from "does not apply at all" to "applies fully". In the norm sample, completion takes a median of 6.3 minutes (quartiles 5.2 and 8.0 minutes). There is no time limit and no omission; every statement must be answered. The instructions are standardized.

2.2 Scoring

Each answer is converted to a value of 0, 25, 50, 75 or 100; three statements are reverse-keyed. Scale scores are

unweighted means of the respective items on the 0-to-100 scale. Scoring is fully automated. The norm values in use are computed from the norm sample of this documentation (Section 3.2) and stored as a fixed constant set with the data status of this version; they are not recomputed on an ongoing basis, and any change to the constant set requires a new version of this documentation (constant-set identifier in the version log, Section 10).

2.3 Interpretation

All scores are read as descriptions, not as judgements. There are no cut-off scores above which a value would count as "elevated", and no probability statements about diagnoses. Comparison values refer to the norm sample (Section 3.2), which consists of people who sought out the ZNI on their own initiative.

Measurement error: A scale score is to be read together with the scale's standard error of measurement (Table 2). For a scale with a standard error of 7 points, the true score lies within ± 7 points with 68 percent probability and within ± 14 points with 95 percent probability. Differences between two scale scores of the same person that are smaller than the critical difference ($1.96 \times \sqrt{SEM_1^2 + SEM_2^2}$; about 19 points for two scales with a SEM of 7 points each, about 30 points at 11 points) cannot be interpreted; the standard error derived from alpha (Table 2) is the relevant one. Which of the seven scales is a person's highest (standardized against the norm sample) is the same on repetition after two weeks to three months in only 47 percent of cases (chance expectation 15 percent); characterizing a person by their highest scale is therefore not robust.

State and trait: The seven scales are expected to be stable over weeks and months; their test-retest values (Table 3) quantify how much change is typical within two weeks to three months. A change is interpretable only once it exceeds the critical difference.

3. Samples

3.1 Full data set

By 16 September 2026, 155,609 complete administrations were available, 129,800 of them in German. Participation is voluntary and self-initiated; most participants reach the ZNI through web searches on topics of neurodivergence. The samples are therefore self-selected and not representative of the population. All figures are to be read with this caveat.

3.2 Norm sample

Step	n
German-language administrations submitted between 16 July and 16 September 2026	9,712
of which the first administration under the respective user ID	9,283
of which with a completion time of at least 120 seconds	9,273
of which without a response pattern whose raw answers (1 to 5) have a standard deviation below 0.5	9,270

All reliability and norm values in this documentation refer to these 9,270 persons (hereafter: norm sample). Varying the selection rules (no time filter, 180 seconds, earlier time windows; analysis of 15 September 2026) changes the reliabilities by at most .02 and the means by a few points; there is no selection that noticeably improves the figures.

Description of the norm sample: The ZNI collects no demographic data; age, gender, education and country of residence of the participants are unknown. What is known is the language (German; Germany, Austria and Switzerland cannot be distinguished), the completion time (Section 2.1) and the predominant use of smartphones. The absence of demographic data is a limitation of these norms (Section 9).

3.3 Stability sample

Two administrations under the same user ID in German: 1,795 pairs with an interval of 14 to 90 days and 2,692 pairs with an interval of 91 to 365 days. A share of these pairs does not come from the same person, because a user ID is occasionally passed on to relatives; this share was estimated (Section 6.2), and the stability values are reported both as observed and as corrected.

3.4 Validation sample

445 persons who completed the established instruments (Section 1.3) and the ZNI, with a median interval of 160 days between the two assessments.

3.5 Language samples

Table 1. Language versions: sample size and internal consistency of the seven scales (alpha, range across scales).

Language	n	Alpha of the seven scales
Spanish	2,978	.77 to .89
French	2,979	.71 to .88
Portuguese	2,985	.73 to .90
Turkish	2,024	.74 to .89
Italian	692	.72 to .90
English	2,965	.64 to .90

4. Objectivity

Administration, scoring and the rules for presenting results are fully standardized and automated. There is no discretion in the computation of scores. The interpretive texts are fixed building blocks selected from the scores

according to fixed rules. Objectivity of administration, scoring and interpretation is therefore given to the extent that a self-report instrument can provide it.

5. Reliability

5.1 The seven scales

Table 2. Internal consistency of the seven scales, norm sample ($n = 9,270$). Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach 1951) with 95 % confidence interval (Feldt, Woodruff & Salih 1987); McDonald's omega (1999) from a one-factor model; item discrimination as corrected item–total correlation; standard error of measurement (SEM) from alpha and from the test–retest correlation of Table 3 (14 to 90 days).

Scale	k	Alpha	95 %	Omega	Item–total r min / mean	Items below .30	SEM (alpha)	SEM (retest)
High Sensitivity	9	.805	.799 .811	to .82	.27 / .51	1	7.3	8.6
Monotropism	10	.846	.842 .851	to .85	.18 / .55	1	7.7	10.2
Kinetic-Cognitive Style	Learning 8	.813	.807 .819	to .82	.41 / .53	0	8.5	10.2
Alexithymia	10	.902	.899 .905	to .91	.44 / .66	0	7.7	11.7
Emotional Overwhelm	6	.738	.729 .746	to .75	.29 / .48	1	11.3	11.6
Camouflaging	13	.911	.908 .913	to .91	.55 / .63	0	6.6	10.1
Self-Criticism	2	.821	.813 .828	to n/a	.70	0	9.2	12.5

Three items fall below the conventional item-discrimination threshold of .30: one each in High Sensitivity (item–total correlation .27; alpha without this item .821 instead of .805), Monotropism (.18; .861 instead of .846) and Emotional Overwhelm (.29; .751 instead of .738). Excluding them would raise internal consistency by .01 to .02. They are retained because each covers an aspect of content that no other item of the scale carries, and because without them the scales could no longer be tested for convergent validity against the established instruments (Section 7.2) in the same composition. Self-

Criticism consists of two nearly identical items and is carried as an indicator, not as a scale.

5.2 Neurodivergence Score

No internal consistency is reported for the total score, because its computation is not published. Its precision is governed by the test–retest correlation (Table 3); the standard error of measurement derived from the test–retest correlation is 7.0 points.

6. Stability

6.1 Test–retest correlations

Table 3. Test–retest correlations with 95 % confidence intervals (Fisher) for pairs under the same user ID in German. Corrected values: observed correlation divided by the estimated share of genuine repetitions (.931; range .91 to .94, Section 6.2). The approximation assumes that pairs from shared user IDs are uncorrelated at scale level and that both subgroups have equal variances.

Measure	14 to 90 days (n = 1,795)	corrected	91 to 365 days (n = 2,692)	corrected
High Sensitivity	.73 (.71 to .75)	.78	.72 (.70 to .74)	.77
Monotropism	.73 (.71 to .76)	.78	.68 (.66 to .70)	.73
Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style	.73 (.71 to .75)	.78	.72 (.70 to .73)	.77
Alexithymia	.77 (.75 to .79)	.83	.72 (.71 to .74)	.77
Emotional Overwhelm	.72 (.70 to .74)	.77	.71 (.69 to .73)	.76
Camouflaging	.79 (.77 to .81)	.85	.74 (.73 to .76)	.79
Self-Criticism	.67 (.64 to .69)	.72	.60 (.58 to .62)	.64
Neurodivergence Score	.75 (.72 to .77)	.81	.73 (.71 to .74)	.78

The total score lies at the same level as the scales; the two-item indicator Self-Criticism lies below it.

6.2 Shared user IDs

Repetitions under the same user ID do not in every case come from the same person. To estimate the share, the 60 answers at both points in time were compared as vectors (all German-language pairs with an interval of at least 14 days, $n = 4,915$; 2 pairs with a constant response vector were excluded). Within pairs, the vectors correlate

at a median of .60 (5th percentile .25); randomly paired strangers correlate at a median of .17 (95th percentile .45). Only 3.3 percent of pairs fall below the strangers' median. The share of pairs from shared user IDs is estimated from the lower tail: the proportion of pairs whose profile correlation falls below a quantile of the stranger-pair distribution, divided by that quantile. At the 10th, 25th, 50th and 75th quantiles of the stranger pairs, the resulting shares of genuine repetitions are .94, .94, .94 and .91, that is, about one pair in fifteen is another per-

son. The corrected values in Table 3 use the mean of these four estimates, .931; with the smallest estimate they would be up to .02 higher, with the largest .01 lower. Pairs were not selected by similarity; such a selection would inflate stability artificially and is not done.

7. Validity

7.1 Factor structure

The eigenvalues of the correlation matrix of the 60 items in the norm sample are 15.1, 3.7, 3.4, 2.3, 2.2, 1.9, 1.4 and 1.3. The first factor accounts for 25 percent of the item

variance. A principal-components parallel analysis (Horn 1965; comparison with the mean of ten random data sets) indicates eight factors. In an eight-factor promax solution of the 58 scale items (eigenvalues and parallel analysis: all 60 items), seven factors correspond to the seven scales; the thirteen items of the Camouflaging scale, including the three withdrawal items, load on one common factor; three items reach a loading of .30 on no factor, and the eighth factor binds no item with a loading of .30 or more. The structure is thus a strong general factor with specific factors beneath it.

Table 4. Fit of confirmatory models, norm sample, maximum likelihood on Pearson correlations.

Model	Items	Chi²	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Seven correlated factors (the scales of this documentation)	58	43,919	1,574	.822	.813	.054	.059
Bifactor model: general factor and seven specific factors, orthogonal	58	37,566	1,537	.848	.837	.050	.053

Both models contain the 58 items of the seven scales; the bifactor model is not nested within the seven-factor model. Bifactor models reach structurally better fit values. The specific factor Self-Criticism has only two indicators; the bifactor model was estimated without an additional equality constraint on these two loadings and is only weakly identified for this factor (an estimation with equal loadings did not converge); its figures are to be read with this limitation. RMSEA and SRMR lie below .06 and .08, respectively, for both models; CFI and TLI lie below the conventional .90 (Hu & Bentler 1999). The reason is the general factor: items correlate across scale boundaries, which penalizes a model with simple loadings only. In

this version, the models were estimated on Pearson correlations only (Section 9).

From the bifactor model: hierarchical omega of the general factor .82; explained common variance (ECV) of the general factor .47. Specific omega of the scales (share of scale-score variance attributable to the specific factor): High Sensitivity .35, Monotropism .49, Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style .40, Alexithymia .47, Emotional Overwhelm .23, Camouflaging .49, Self-Criticism .60. The scale scores thus carry information of their own beyond the general factor, least so for Emotional Overwhelm. An exploratory structural equation model (ESEM) will be added in a later version. The seven scales intercorrelate at .25 to .54 (Table 5).

Table 5. Intercorrelations of the seven scales, norm sample.

	HS	MO	KC	AL	EO	CA	SC
High Sensitivity (HS)	1	.41	.40	.32	.50	.42	.34
Monotropism (MO)		1	.51	.46	.42	.39	.25
Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style (KC)			1	.47	.49	.42	.25
Alexithymia (AL)				1	.42	.54	.27
Emotional Overwhelm (EO)					1	.47	.36
Camouflaging (CA)						1	.42
Self-Criticism (SC)							1

7.2 Convergent and discriminant validity against the established instruments

The validation sample (Section 3.4) completed the established instruments (Section 1.3) at the first point in time and the ZNI scales at the second. The correlation between the two is attenuated by the time interval. The reference quantity is therefore the correlation of each instrument with itself over the same distribution of intervals ($n =$

2,713, weighted to the intervals of the validation pairs). The share in the penultimate column is the ratio of the validation correlation to this test–retest correlation; it is not a correction for attenuation in Spearman's sense, but states how much of the agreement attainable at all over this interval the ZNI scale reaches. Numerator and denominator are attenuated alike by shared user IDs, which largely cancels out in the ratio.

Table 6. Convergent validity of the ZNI scales against the established instruments, $n = 445$, median interval 160 days, 95 % confidence intervals (Fisher); shares computed from unrounded correlations.

ZNI scale	Established instrument	r	95 %	Test-retest of the instrument	Share	Highest correlation with another instrument
High Sensitivity	HSPS	.70	.65 to .74	.73	95 %	.39
Monotropism	Monotropism Questionnaire	.67	.62 to .72	.75	90 %	.41
Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style	CAARS	.69	.64 to .74	.72	95 %	.30
Alexithymia	TAS-20	.71	.66 to .75	.76	94 %	.41
Emotional Overwhelm	Dodson's RSD checklist (clinical screening)	.60	.54 to .66	.73	83 %	.41
Camouflaging	CAT-Q	.69	.64 to .74	.72	95 %	.57 (Dodson checklist)
Self-Criticism	no validation instrument of its own					.40

Five scales reach 90 to 95 percent of this reference quantity; their highest correlation with another instrument lies between .30 and .41, for Camouflaging at .57 with the Dodson checklist, because both capture withdrawal for fear of rejection. The Emotional Overwhelm row is the convergence with a clinical screening checklist and not with a validated instrument; it is carried as supporting information. Self-Criticism has no validation instrument of its own; the table lists only its highest correlation with one of the instruments. The design is time-lagged; a concurrent assessment is planned (Section 9).

7.3 Comparability across six language versions

For Spanish, French, Portuguese, Turkish, Italian and English, the scales were analysed in the same way (Table 1). Seven-factor promax solutions were compared after target rotation to the German solution; Tucker congruence coefficients of .95 and above count as equal, values of .85 to .94 as similar (Lorenzo-Seva & ten Berge 2006). The mean congruences are .96 (Portuguese), .93 (French), .92 (Turkish), .90 (Spanish), .83 (Italian, $n = 692$) and .82 (English); the lowest congruence of a single factor is .78 (Spanish), .80 (French), .93 (Portuguese), .83 (Turkish), .28 (Italian) and .53 (English). In Spanish, French, Portuguese, Turkish and Italian, the deviations concern the separation of Camouflaging and Self-

Criticism, which does not replicate stably in smaller samples. Measurement invariance at the level of loadings and thresholds was not tested; norms are reported for the German version only.

7.4 What was not examined

Criterion validity against clinical diagnoses was not investigated. The ZNI claims no sensitivity or specificity for any diagnosis and contains no cut-off scores. The labels "associated with" in Section 1.2 describe conceptual proximity, not prediction.

8. Norms

8.1 Reference group

The reference group is the norm sample (Section 3.2): 9,270 German-speaking persons who completed the ZNI for the first time between July and September 2026, having sought it out themselves. It is not a population sample, and its demographic composition is unknown. All percentile ranks state where a person stands relative to people who seek out such a test on their own initiative. For use in the instrument, the norm values are computed from this group and then frozen; a renorming appears as a new version.

8.2 Percentile ranks

Table 7. Distribution of the seven scales and the total score, norm sample: mean, standard deviation and scale scores at the percentiles.

Measure	M	SD	P5	P10	P25	P50	P75	P90	P95
High Sensitivity	75.6	16.6	44	53	67	78	89	94	100
Monotropism	63.0	19.7	28	35	50	65	78	88	92
Kinetic-Cognitive Learning Style	62.2	19.6	28	34	50	62	78	88	91
Alexithymia	52.1	24.5	10	18	35	52	70	85	90
Emotional Overwhelm	61.5	22.0	21	29	46	62	79	92	96
Camouflaging	60.3	22.0	19	29	46	63	77	87	92
Self-Criticism	84.7	21.7	38	50	75	100	100	100	100
Neurodivergence Score	75.7	13.9	50	57	67	77	86	92	95

Self-Criticism shows a ceiling effect: half of the reference group reaches the maximum score, and the percentile ranks in the upper range are correspondingly coarse.

9. Fairness and Limitations

- Self-report: All scores rest on self-report and are subject to its known biases.
- Self-selection and missing demographics: The reference group consists of people who sought out a test on neurodivergence; age, gender, education and country of residence were not collected. Percentile ranks apply relative to this group. Population norms are not available.
- Fairness: Differences between genders and age groups, and differential item functioning, were not examined in this version because these characteristics are not collected.
- No criterion validity: No data on clinical diagnoses are available. The ZNI says nothing about the presence of a diagnosis.
- Time-lagged validation design: The established instruments were completed months before the ZNI scales, not concurrently.
- Screening checklist as reference: For Emotional Overwhelm, the reference is a clinical screening checklist, not a validated instrument.
- Short measure: Self-Criticism (two items) is an indicator with limited internal consistency and a ceiling effect.
- Shared user IDs: An estimated one in fifteen repetition pairs comes from another person; stability values are therefore reported both as observed and as corrected.
- Estimation method: The confirmatory models were estimated with maximum likelihood on Pearson correlations, not with an estimator for ordinal data; estimation on polychoric correlations is planned for a later version.
- Languages: Norms for German only; measurement invariance not tested; the Italian sample is too small for a seven-factor solution.

Planned extensions: a test–retest study with explicit consent to repeat; a concurrent assessment of the ZNI scales

with the established instruments; an ESEM model and estimation on polychoric correlations for the seven-factor models; a test of measurement invariance across languages; the collection of age and gender for fairness analyses.

10. Data Availability, Versioning, Contact

Participants' answers are treated confidentially, are not passed on, and were analysed for this documentation in aggregate form only. Further aggregate figures are available to professionals from Zensitively on request. Item texts, the scoring key and the computation of the total score are not published.

Version log: Version 1.0, September 2026, first publication; constant set ZNI-1.0-2026-09-16, computed from the norm sample of Section 3.2.

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