

Individualism versus Collectivism

	Individualism	Collectivism
<i>Definition</i>	An outlook that emphasizes the role and importance of the individual as opposed to those of the group	An outlook that emphasizes the role and importance of the group (the "collective") as opposed to those of the individual
<i>Human nature</i>	Individual. A person's identity is unique and separate, rather than determined by others or the individual's relationship with them; humans by nature are in competition with each other for resources; distinctions among humans are natural and cannot be eliminated and have large effects on outcomes	Collective. A person's identity is determined by the groups s/he interacts with (i.e., it consists essentially of relationships with others); humans by nature are cooperative, working together for the common good; distinctions among humans are unimportant or artificial and should be downplayed and eliminated because of their effect on equity and outcomes and their fomenting of conflicts among humans
<i>Nature of the group</i>	Non-anthropomorphic: Any group consists of nothing more than discrete individuals	Anthropomorphic: The collective has its own identity (and even a consciousness, e.g. a hive mind) separate from that of its members
<i>Origin and nature of rights</i>	Rights originate from some source higher than, and not subject to veto or control by, human beings or human agencies (e.g., nature, God); only individuals possess rights; the protection of the individual's rights (e.g., life, liberty, and property) are the primary purpose for the existence of the group; society is a device to serve the ends of the individual; the individual and his/her rights and interests are protected from interference by, exploitation by, or sacrifice for the group	Rights, if they exist, are limited to those that the collective chooses to grant; collectives may possess rights or special legal advantages; the interests and welfare of the collective are of greater importance than the rights of any individual; the individual is a means to serve the ends of society/the group/the collective; the interests of the individual, and even the life of the individual, may be sacrificed in the name of the needs of the collective
<i>Source of wealth/progress</i>	Individual initiative, effort, and intelligence create wealth and economic growth; this individual effort entitles the individual to ownership/possession of the resulting wealth	The collective creates wealth/economic growth, or at least the conditions that permit such growth to happen; this gives the collective the rights to ownership and redistribution of the wealth produced by any individual
<i>Centralization</i>	The individual retains considerable freedom of action, independent of central social or government control, to direct his own legal, social, moral, and economic affairs and behavior	The collective establishes systems of central control (e.g., big government or elaborate systems of moral/social control) to regulate law, behavior, the economy, the arts, and other fields for the good of the collective
<i>Liberty/freedom of individual action</i>	Favorable view; the individual accepts risk of failure/loss in exchange for being entitled to the rewards if the risk pays off; the individual takes the credit/rewards for his/her success and bears the blame/burdens for his/her failure	Unfavorable view; the collective is risk-averse and reduces individual risk by redistributing individual wealth/resources among all members of the collective; allocates credit and blame equally among all members of the collective
<i>Equality</i>	Equality of opportunity: Each individual has the same legal, economic, or social opportunities, with the ultimate outcome being based on individual ability (or lack thereof); inequality/differences among individuals results from their freedom of action and the fact that individuals naturally have unequal talents and abilities	Equality of condition or outcome: Regardless of individual talents or abilities (or lack thereof), each individual receives the same end status or resources as other individuals through government/collective redistribution/reallocation of individuals' wealth/resources; inequality/differences among individuals exist because the individuals who control the centralized systems are often privileged in fact despite the collective's devotion to the idea of equality of condition