

Collectivism drives efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19

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Research from the University of Kent has found that people who adopt a collectivist mindset are more likely to comply with social distancing and hygiene practices to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

People who are more individualist are less likely to engage, partly due to beliefs in COVID-19 [conspiracy theories](#), and feelings of powerlessness surrounding the pandemic.

This study suggests the need for the UK Government and other [world leaders](#) to consider promoting collectivism amongst the [general public](#), and to combat the spread of conspiracy theories and other types of misinformation. Doing so may increase levels of engagement in practices to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The research was led by Mikey Biddlestone alongside Ricky Green and Professor Karen Douglas at the University of Kent's School of Psychology. A total of 724 participants completed an online questionnaire addressing their actions relating to [social distancing](#) and hygiene measures, their individualist-collectivist mindset, feelings of powerlessness surrounding the pandemic, and their beliefs in COVID-19 conspiracy theories such as the idea that COVID-19 was made in a Chinese laboratory.

Mikey Biddlestone said: 'Interventions that focus on collective empowerment and champion a 'we are in this together' mentality could encourage people to comply with guidelines that will reduce the spread of COVID-19. Promoting collectivism could make a positive difference to future public health crises too, as leaders look to improve response strategies. A collectivist mindset might also make people less susceptible to conspiracy theories and misinformation that can negatively affect their behavior.'

More information: Mikey Biddlestone et al, Cultural orientation, power, belief in conspiracy theories, and intentions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/bjso.12397](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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