

What is ethnocentrism?

Ethnocentrism is using one's own culture as the benchmark to judge other cultures, creating bias. Ethnocentrism occurs when one has the belief that their own cultural group is superior to others.

Individuals who are ethnocentric will believe that their culture's beliefs, ideas, values, and practices are correct, and they use the standards in their own culture to assess other cultural groups.

They will tend to have negative attitudes towards other cultures and believe their beliefs, ideas, values, and practices are wrong or strange.

A popular example of ethnocentrism is to think of the utensils different cultures prefer to use. Some cultures prefer to use forks, spoons, and knives to eat, and may have the belief that it is weird or incorrect that some cultures traditionally use chopsticks to eat.

Ethnocentrism can occur for anyone across most cultures and societies and is not limited to one culture.

It is thought to occur largely because people have the greatest understanding of their own culture which leads them to believe that the norms and standards of their own culture are universally adopted.

So, if they notice anything that deviates from their cultural norms, this can lead to ethnocentric attitudes.

Some researchers believe that ethnocentrism comprises in-group favoritism and vilification of out-groups, thus people have a high opinion of their own group and think negatively about out-groups.

This becomes racism when other cultures are denigrated or their traditions regarded as irrelevant etc.

What are the disadvantages of ethnocentrism?

While it is not necessarily a bad thing to believe your culture is good, or to be patriotic, ethnocentrism is the belief that your culture is superior, and this comes with downfalls.

Ethnocentrism can lead to people being more close-minded to how other people live, almost as if they are living in a bubble of their own culture. This can reinforce the in-group/out-group mentality.

Believing that one's own culture is correct can spread misinformation about other cultures, which can lead to negative consequences.

If a group upholds the belief that other groups are inferior to them, this could result in groups discriminating against each other. On an extreme scale, ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice or racism.

Upholding the sanctity of one's own culture may hinder societal progress and may prevent cooperation between cultures.

Cultural groups may be less likely to help each other in times of need and may only seek to preserve the people in their own group whom they consider more important.

What are some examples of ethnocentric behavior?

- Judging other culture's food and speciality dishes.
- Judging people's cultural outfits.
- Expecting others to speak your language and criticizing them if they can't.
- Historical colonialism.
- Judging someone who chooses to live on their own when it is traditional to always live with family in your culture.

Source: <https://simplypsychology.org/ethnocentrism.html>, adapted by Brooks Eagles