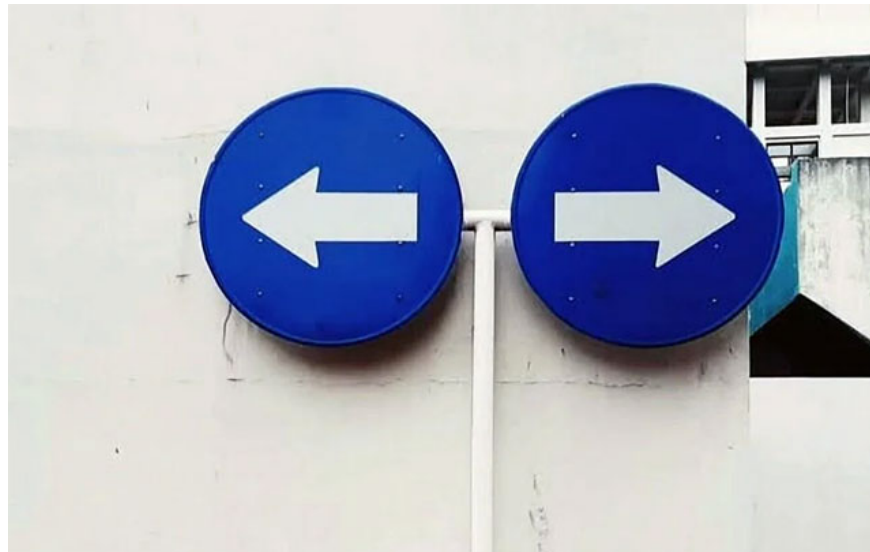


# Science explains why we often make big decisions on our own instead of listening to advice.

Research across 12 countries shows that people in all cultures tend to think for themselves and make decisions independently, rather than seeking advice from others.

A large-scale international study across 12 countries found that when faced with complex choices, people tend to trust their own judgment rather than seek advice from others.

This research was conducted by scientists at the University of Waterloo (Canada), with over 3,500 participants. The survey subjects ranged from residents of large cities to members of small indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforest. According to the research team, this is the most comprehensive intercultural survey to date on decision-making styles.



## Autonomy in all cultures

The results show that even in societies that value close relationships and interdependence, most people still prefer to make decisions independently, regardless of outside opinions. Recognizing this common tendency can help reduce misunderstandings between cultures and demonstrates that people everywhere grapple with similar internal questions before making a final choice.

Dr. Igor Grossmann, a psychology professor at Waterloo and lead author of the study, said that understanding our instinct to 'handle things ourselves' helps explain why many people often ignore helpful advice, from healthcare to financial planning, even though there is ample evidence that such advice could lead to wiser decisions. He added that this awareness could also help organizations design more effective teamwork by allowing individuals time to think for themselves before sharing their opinions, rather than forcing them to accept advice they might react negatively to.

### **Challenging outdated notions of independence.**

The new findings also challenge the long-held notion that Westerners tend to make more independent decisions, while other cultures rely more on the collective. In fact, in all the countries surveyed, respondents prioritized intuition and personal reflection over consulting friends or the majority. However, the degree of this preference varied depending on how much independence or interdependence was valued within each culture.

According to Grossmann, the most important message of the study is that we all tend to look inward first. However, the wisest decisions may emerge when individual thought processes are shared and discussed with others. Culture, he argues, is like a volume control: in societies that value independence, the 'inner voice' is amplified, while in societies that value connection, that volume is somewhat reduced.

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