

People in the U.S. Think They Are Better Than They Actually Are. People in Asia Don't

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How competent are you, compared with your colleagues? When psychologists approach teams of coworkers with variations of this question, an interesting pattern emerges. If people have a truly realistic perspective of their abilities, then their self-assessments should generally fall around the middle. Instead psychologists have repeatedly found that people's self-assessments are inflated. In fact, superstars and underperformers alike tend to think they are better than they truly are.

This effect is one example of a [positive illusion](#): a cognitive bias that makes you feel more competent, more blessed, more fortunate and better than you are. Positive illusions seem intuitive and reasonable to many people. Some scholars argue that these illusions are fundamental to our species' survival. To get by in life, they reason, you must remain optimistic, work hard, succeed, live long and leave offspring behind.

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