

Explanations of Conformity

Normative Social Influence (NSI)

Informational Social Influence (ISI)

Normative Social Influence

In situations where a majority is present people are most likely to display normative social influence. This means that individuals tend to adopt the behaviours of the majority of a group because they do not want to be left out, ridiculed or ostracised. Individuals do not believe the majority view but instead they simply comply in order to be accepted. A classic everyday example is peer pressure; a teenager dressing in a specific brand of clothing they dislike simply because all their friends wear it, purely to avoid being teased or excluded.

- **Desire for acceptance:** People conform to gain social approval and avoid being teased, disliked, or left out.
- **Public compliance:** Individuals change their outward actions to match the group, but they keep their true personal beliefs unchanged in private.
- **Driven by emotion:** The pressure comes from the fear of social discomfort or rejection rather than a quest for the factual truth.

Informational Social Influence

When a situation is ambiguous/ unclear, people tend to conform to the majority because it acts as a source of information. In other words, if an individual is unsure as to the correct answer or behaviour then they tend to believe the majority opinion and behave accordingly. Individuals internalise the majority opinion because they want to be right. An example might be someone who cannot decide which way to vote in a general election who, after finding out how everyone else in their group is voting, starts to believe the opinion of the group and votes the same way.

- **Desire to be correct:** Conforming because you genuinely want the right information, not just to fit in.
- **Leads to internalisation:** Often leads to permanent change in your private beliefs because you trust that the new information is true.
- **Common in unclear situations:** It happens most when a problem is hard, confusing, or fast-moving.

