

# Distinguishing between individual and collective forms of efficacy and outcome expectations for risk mitigation in large-scale collective problems

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## Abstract:

Unsustainable behaviours at individual and collective scales are leading to changes in the conditions of the Earth, including climate change. Despite the acknowledged need for immediate action, and the importance of individual behaviour in meeting collective aims, the UK public currently demonstrates very low engagement with mitigating actions (IPCC 2007; Ockwell, Whitmarsh et al. 2009)). Evidence reveals that efficacy beliefs\* function as important determinants of human motivation and action (Bandura 1995). We argue that in problems requiring collective action, efficacy can act at both the individual and collective levels, with respect to both tasks and outcome expectations. We therefore clarify the conceptual distinctions individual and collective efficacy in the context of both individual tasks and outcome expectations. Through an application to recommended individual behaviours, we demonstrate how these distinctions can support us in managing climate change risk by allowing us to identify the specific forms of efficacy that should be targeted in research, science communication and policy.

\* Efficacy beliefs refer to an individual's belief that s/he has the ability to carry out a specified action or to achieve a specified goal (e.g. if I believe that I am able to pass an examination, I have high efficacy with respect to this examination).

	Individual	Collective
Task	Individual Efficacy "Can I do it?"	Collective Efficacy "Can we do it?"
Outcome expectations	Individual Outcome Expectations "Can my task contribute to the collective goal?"	Collective Outcome Expectations "Can we achieve the collective goal by doing this?"

**Figure 1** The two-by-two matrix of forms of efficacy and outcome expectations that may be high or low in social dilemmas and/or large-scale collective problems.

## References:

- Bandura, A. (1995). *Self-efficacy in changing societies*, Cambridge Univ Pr.
- IPCC (2007). *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Ockwell, D., L. Whitmarsh, et al. (2009). *Reorienting climate change communication for effective mitigation*. Science Communication, Vol 30, No 3., pp. 305-327.