

# Difference Between Ethnic group and Tribe

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## Key Difference - Ethnic group vs Tribe

Ethnic groups and tribes belong to factors of [social stratification](#). [Ethnicity](#) covers a wider range of community while tribe can be comparatively a small set of people who follow their historically adopted customs and traditions, living under one accepted leader. Various ethnic groups can also be described as the historical [evolution](#) of tribal groups. **The key difference between ethnic group and tribe is that people belonging to one ethnic group share similar religious, linguistic and cultural identity but they can live in different places, whereas tribes comprise of a set of related families having similar tastes, ideology, religious and dialectic identity, most frequently living together in one place.**

## What Does Ethnic group Mean?

Ethnic group is a social group or category of people belonging to one common [national](#) or [cultural](#) identity. Hence they possess a common [ancestry](#) or a historical background. As stated by [Anthropologist](#) and consultant by Dr. Whitney Azoy, ethnic group is “the largest traditional cultural unit” to which a person belongs to.

As further explained in Oxford dictionary, an ethnic group is “a [community](#) or population made up of people who share a common [cultural](#) background or descent.” With birth, the ethnicity of a person is determined. In one geographical location, there can be several ethnicities living together. The United States of America, for example, is a homeland to many ethnic groups like [African](#) Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, [Australian](#) American, Canadian American, Spanish American, English Americans, etc. Their ethnicity is a manifestation of their ancestral origin.



**Fig 1. Spanish Americans**

Those belonging to one specific ethnic group share common similarities in religious, traditional, linguistic and racial identity. However, there can be diversities among them as well. For example, there may be those who follow different religious ideologies or use different language [dialects](#) even though they all belong to the wide term of their ethnic identity as 'English Americans,' according to their geographical ancestry.

## **What Does Tribe Mean?**

Tribe is a collection of families, clans or generations that share common ideologies, interests, religion, linguistic and cultural practices. The significance of a tribe is that it is a set of people primarily having blood ties, living together in one specific area under one accepted leader to guide them. Anthropologist and consultant Dr. Whitney Azoy gives a clear definition of what basically a tribe means,

“Tribe refers- to an ethnic sub-set within which all or most human activities are organized on the basis of kinship. Tribal people interact with each other primarily in term of family relationships, both by descent and by marriage”.

Hence, the diversity of the members of one tribe is very low unlike that of those belonging to one ethnic group. Some well-known tribes in the world are The New Guinea Tribe, The Brazilian Tribes, The Surma tribe, The Sentinels tribe, The Korowai Tribe, The Vietnamese Ruc tribe, etc.



**Fig 2. The Surma tribe**

Usually, tribes prefer not to live in towns or cities, rather they prefer to live secluded as one group in the remote areas. However, it is considered as strongly associated with the colonial attitude to look upon tribes as primitive and under-developed people living in remote, underdeveloped areas.

## What is the Difference Between Ethnic group and Tribe?

<b>Ethnic group vs Tribe</b>	
Ethnic group is a set of social group having a common national or cultural tradition.	Tribe is a social division consisting of families or communities linked by blood ties with a common culture and dialect, having a recognized leader.
<b>Habitat</b>	
People belonging to one ethnic group can live in several geographical locations.	People belonging to a tribe usually live together.
<b>Community</b>	

Ethnic group can consist of individual who share several differences among themselves.

Since tribe consist of people having blood lineage the differences among the members are very rare.

## Summary

Ethnic groups and tribes contribute to create social diversity in the society. An ethnic group is a wider community when compared with a tribe. There can also be situations where several tribes are included within one ethnic group. Nevertheless, the key difference between ethnic group and tribe is that the people belonging to one ethnic group may share various diversities since they are not directly linked in blood to those in a tribe.

### References

1. "Difference between "Ethnic Group" and "Tribe"." LDESP, 9 May 2012, [ldesp.wordpress.com/ask-an-expert/difference-between-ethnic-group-and-tribe/](http://ldesp.wordpress.com/ask-an-expert/difference-between-ethnic-group-and-tribe/). Accessed 28 Sept. 2017.
2. Fearon, James.D. "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country." *Journal of Economic Growth*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Jun., 2003), pp. 195-222. [jstor](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2891111). 28 September 2017. [Available here](#)

### Image Courtesy

1. Spanish children from the Heliopolis in Hawaii, 1907 By Hawaiian Gazette - digitized photo from a 1907 newspaper article, (Public Domain), via [Commons Wikimedia](#)
2. Surma Boy, Ethiopia by Rod Waddington ([CC BY-SA 2.0](#)) via [flickr](#)

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