

INFOGRAPHIC

A Survival Guide for Intercultural Communication

Have you ever been in a conversation and felt misunderstood? Don't worry, this is not always due to poor grammar or lack of vocabulary; it is often simply a question of **Intercultural Communication**.

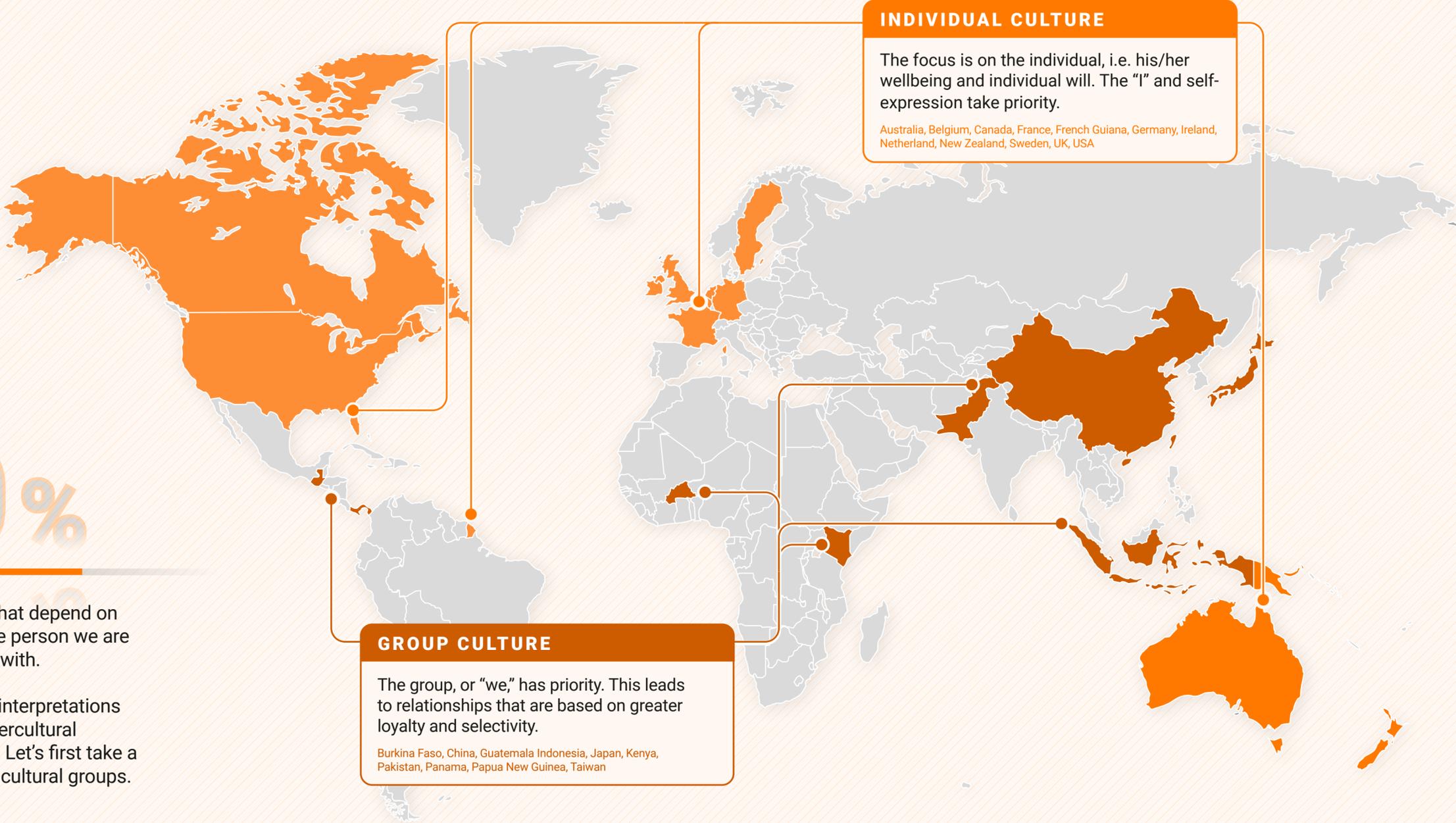
80%

WHAT IS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION?

Intercultural Communication asserts that 80% of human communication is non-verbal, i.e., without words. Our **gestures, intonation, and posture** therefore make up 80% of our communication, while our words only account for 20%. Non-verbal communication is based on

interpretations that depend on the culture of the person we are communicating with.

Exploring these interpretations is the goal of intercultural communication. Let's first take a look at different cultural groups.



Sources: "Interethnic communication" John Gumperz, "Cultures and organizations: Software of the Mind" Hofstede, Various works by Edward T. Hall <https://www.acc.com/sites/default/files/2021-08/Presentation%20The%20culture%20map-%20Breaking%20through%20the%20invisible%20boundaries%20of%20global%20business%20.pdf>.

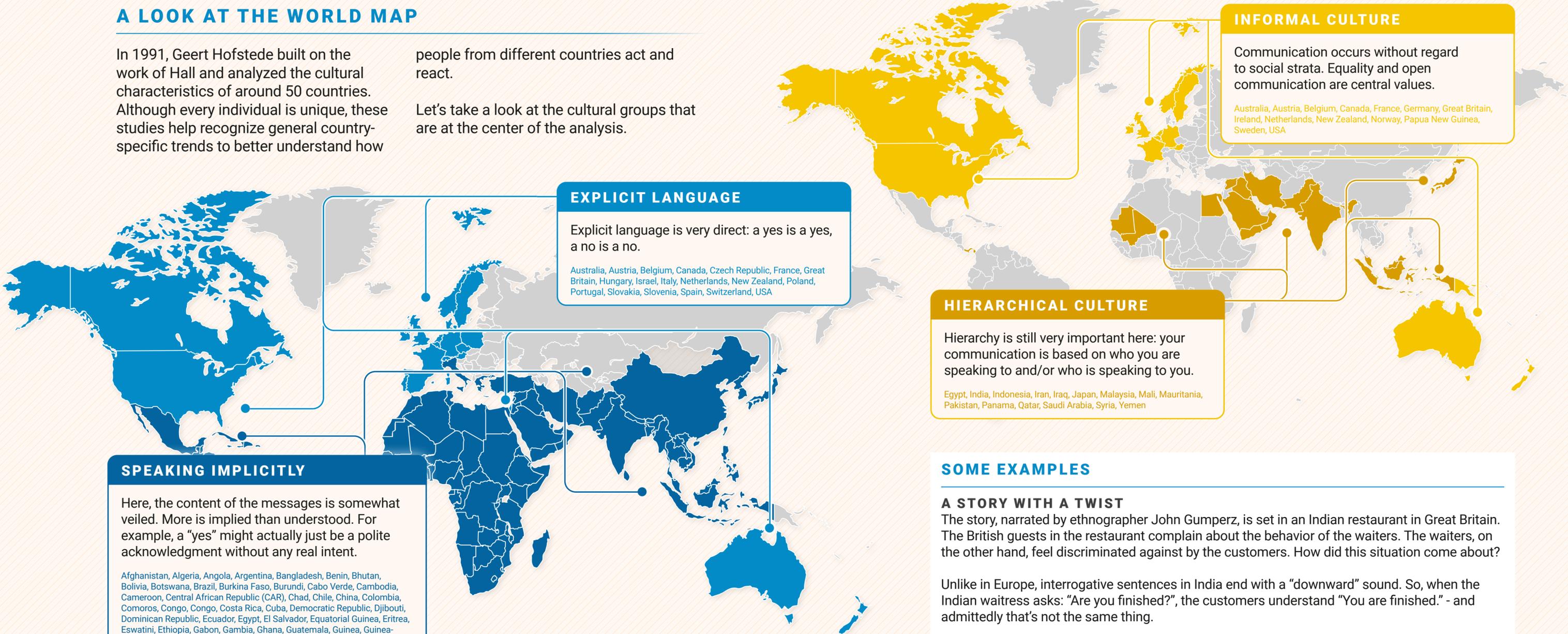


A LOOK AT THE WORLD MAP

In 1991, Geert Hofstede built on the work of Hall and analyzed the cultural characteristics of around 50 countries. Although every individual is unique, these studies help recognize general country-specific trends to better understand how

people from different countries act and react.

Let's take a look at the cultural groups that are at the center of the analysis.



INFORMAL CULTURE
 Communication occurs without regard to social strata. Equality and open communication are central values.
 Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Sweden, USA

EXPLICIT LANGUAGE
 Explicit language is very direct: a yes is a yes, a no is a no.
 Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, USA

HIERARCHICAL CULTURE
 Hierarchy is still very important here: your communication is based on who you are speaking to and/or who is speaking to you.
 Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Pakistan, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen

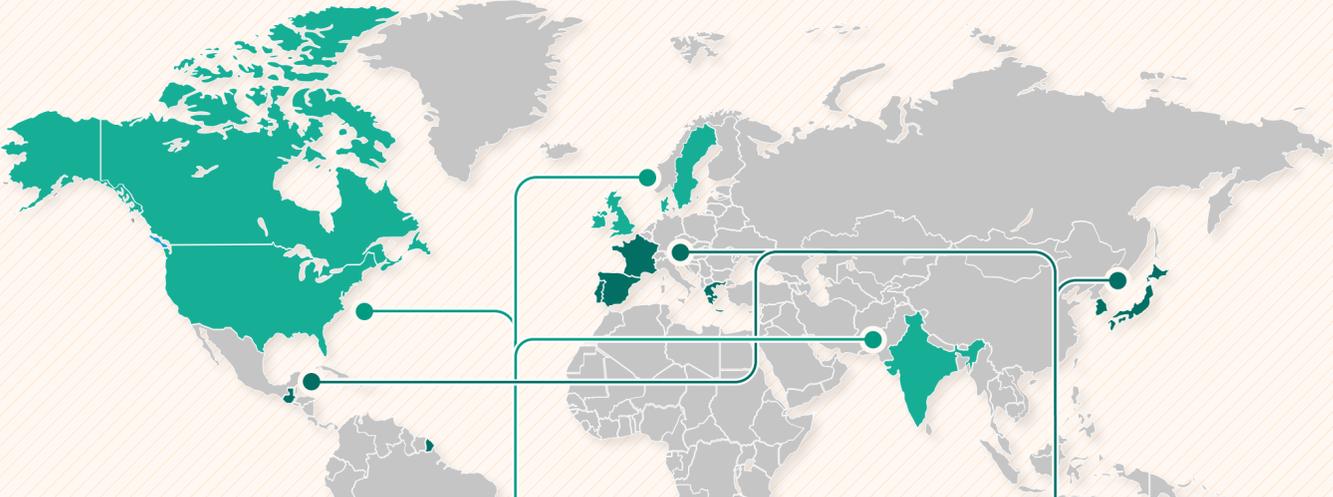
SPEAKING IMPLICITLY
 Here, the content of the messages is somewhat veiled. More is implied than understood. For example, a "yes" might actually just be a polite acknowledgment without any real intent.
 Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Laos, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Republic of, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, Sudan, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay, Venezuela

SOME EXAMPLES

A STORY WITH A TWIST
 The story, narrated by ethnographer John Gumperz, is set in an Indian restaurant in Great Britain. The British guests in the restaurant complain about the behavior of the waiters. The waiters, on the other hand, feel discriminated against by the customers. How did this situation come about?
 Unlike in Europe, interrogative sentences in India end with a "downward" sound. So, when the Indian waitress asks: "Are you finished?", the customers understand "You are finished." - and admittedly that's not the same thing.

A GERMAN-FRENCH ENCOUNTER
 Studies have shown that Germans tend to focus on the content of a conversation, while the French place more emphasis on the interpersonal aspect. This means that Germans can sometimes come across as too direct and the French as too charming.





CULTURE OF UNCERTAINTY

People accept the unknown and changes more calmly. The rules are less strict.

Canada, Denmark, French Guiana, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, USA

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Changes in general can pose a threat. To counteract this, strict rules are established, making people more motivated.

Australia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Japan, Portugal, South Korea, Spain

Everyone calls what does not benefit him, "barbarism."

Michel de Montaigne



FOCUS ON TASKS

This goes hand in hand with a polychronic culture. What counts here is that the task is completed, the timeframe is less important, even if it means delays or waiting longer.

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, China, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Republic of Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, South Korea, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

FOCUS ON TIME

Culture is monochronic. We tend to prioritize a specific timeframe.

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, USA

SOME EXAMPLES

A GUIDE TO LUNCHTIME ETIQUETTE
During a business lunch, Americans like to talk about their work, while the French prefer to wait until the end of the meal to talk about business.

BELGIAN BUNS (OR GUNS?!)
In France, everyone knows what a gun is. But in French-speaking Belgium, people also talk about a gun when they mean a sandwich. So don't (always) raise your hands when you are offered a pistol in Brussels!

