

## Geert Hofstede's

# “Making Sense of Culture”.

In most cases Americans and Australians are nearly polar opposites of Thai's in Hofstede's data.

This has implications for management, risk management, relationships, working with colleagues and teaching.

The personal comments are from viewing Hofstede's research in terms of **tendencies** as opposed to statements of facts. Sweeney on Hofstede work certainly brings up many relevant facts about research procedures and Hofstedes analysis of his work. But I still think the criticisms miss the point and the intrinsic value of Hofstede's work.

When viewed in terms of tendencies and likelihoods for a behaviour pattern Hofstede has still given us a guide as to things we should consider when working across cultures. After 6 years in other cultures I find more evidence for support of Hofstede's work than criticisms. I state again that when viewed in terms of tendencies the research can shed new light on our interactions with others.

**The data is from**

<http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/long-term-orientation/>

# Individualism

Individualism is the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

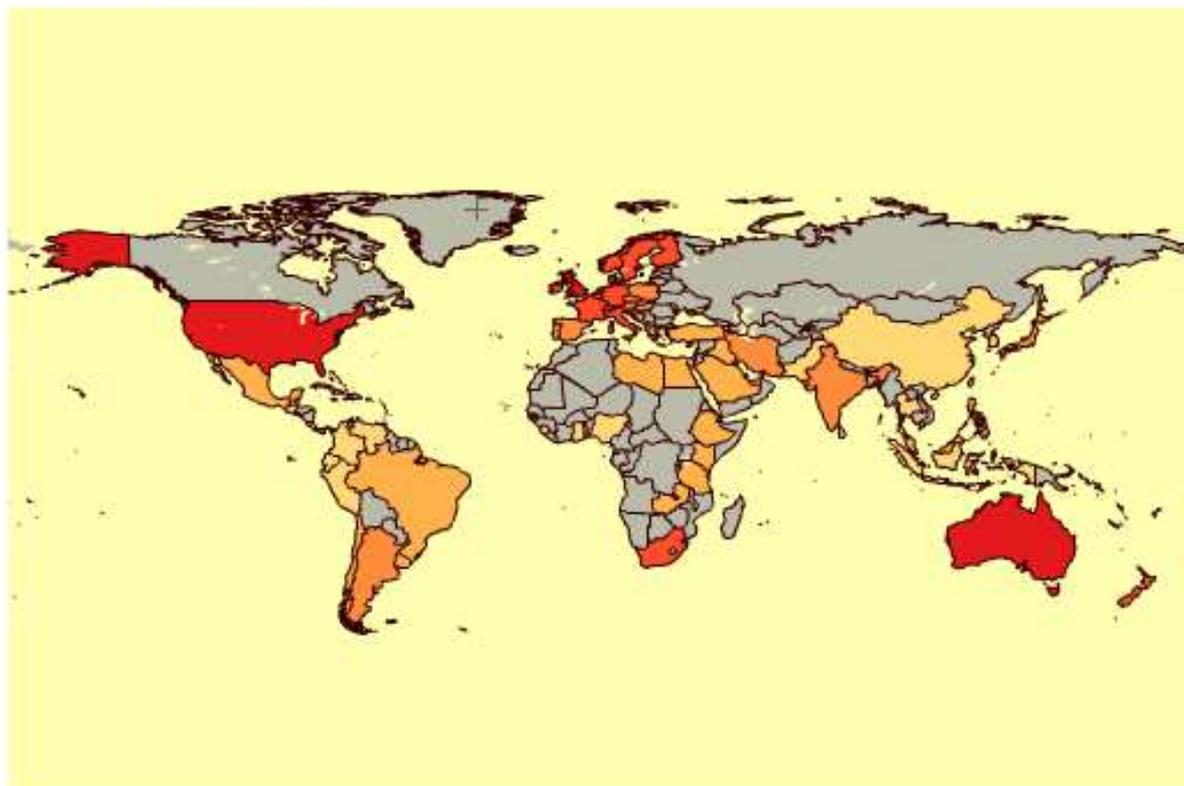
For example, Germany can be considered as individualistic with a relatively high score (67) on the scale of Hofstede compared to a country like Guatemala where they have strong collectivism (6 on the scale).

In Germany people stress on personal achievements and individual rights. Germans expect from each other to fulfil their own needs. Group work is important, but everybody has the right of his own opinion and is expected to reflect those. In an individual country like Germany people tend to have more loose relationships than countries where there is a collectivism where people have large extended families.

The United States can clearly be seen as individualistic (scoring a 91). The “American dream” is clearly a representation of this. This is the Americans’ hope for a better quality of life and a higher standard of living than their parents’. This belief is that anyone, regardless of their status can ‘pull up their boot straps’ and raise themselves from poverty.

[Power Distance Index](#) | [Individualism](#) | [Masculinity](#) | [Uncertainty Avoidance Index](#) | [Long-Term Orientation](#)

Power Distance Index | **Individualism** | Masculinity | Uncertainty Avoidance Index | Long-Term Orientation



Individuality



## Country PDI IDV MAS UAI LTO

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
United States	40	<b>91</b>	62	46	29
Australia	36	<b>90</b>	61	51	31
United Kingdom	35	<b>89</b>	66	35	25
Netherlands	38	<b>80</b>	14	53	44
New Zealand	22	<b>79</b>	58	49	30
Italy	50	<b>76</b>	70	75	
Belgium	65	<b>75</b>	54	94	
Denmark	18	<b>74</b>	16	23	
France	68	<b>71</b>	43	86	
Sweden	31	<b>71</b>	5	29	33
Ireland	28	<b>70</b>	68	35	
Norway	31	<b>69</b>	8	50	20
Switzerland	34	<b>68</b>	70	58	
Germany	35	<b>67</b>	66	65	31
South Africa	49	<b>65</b>	63	49	
Finland	33	<b>63</b>	26	59	
Poland	68	<b>60</b>	64	93	
Czech Republic	57	<b>58</b>	57	74	
Austria	11	<b>55</b>	79	70	
Hungary	46	<b>55</b>	88	82	
Israel	13	<b>54</b>	47	81	
Spain	57	<b>51</b>	42	86	
India	77	<b>48</b>	56	40	61
Argentina	49	<b>46</b>	56	86	
Japan	54	<b>46</b>	95	92	80
Iran	58	<b>41</b>	43	59	
Jamaica	45	<b>39</b>	68	13	
Brazil	69	<b>38</b>	49	76	65
Egypt	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Iraq	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Kuwait	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Lebanon	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Libya	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Saudi Arabia	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	

## Country PDI IDV MAS UAI LTO

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
United Arab Emirates	80	<b>38</b>	52	68	
Turkey	66	<b>37</b>	45	85	
Uruguay	61	<b>36</b>	38	100	
Greece	60	<b>35</b>	57	112	
Philippines	94	<b>32</b>	64	44	19
Mexico	81	<b>30</b>	69	82	
Ethiopia	64	<b>27</b>	41	52	25
Portugal	64	<b>27</b>	41	52	25
Tanzania	63	<b>27</b>	31	104	
Zambia	64	<b>27</b>	41	52	25
Malaysia	64	<b>27</b>	41	52	25
Hong Kong	104	<b>26</b>	50	36	
Chile	68	<b>25</b>	57	29	96
China	63	<b>23</b>	28	86	
Ghana	80	<b>20</b>	66	40	118
Nigeria	77	<b>20</b>	46	54	16
Sierra Leone	77	<b>20</b>	46	54	16
Singapore	77	<b>20</b>	46	54	16
Thailand	74	<b>20</b>	48	8	48
El Salvador	64	<b>20</b>	34	64	56
South Korea	66	<b>19</b>	40	94	
Taiwan	60	<b>18</b>	39	85	75
Peru	58	<b>17</b>	45	69	87
Costa Rica	64	<b>16</b>	42	87	
Indonesia	35	<b>15</b>	21	86	
Pakistan	78	<b>14</b>	46	48	
Colombia	55	<b>14</b>	50	70	
Venezuela	67	<b>13</b>	64	80	
Panama	81	<b>12</b>	73	76	
Ecuador	95	<b>11</b>	44	86	
Guatemala	78	<b>8</b>	63	67	
	95	<b>6</b>	37	101	

This has implications for how we work with each other across cultures. Individuals will tend to experiment and not accept the status quo that leadership imposes. On the other side of the coin collectivism will accept the status quo even though they may not like it, due to cultural loyalty (a broad term I know). To impose something on an individual without getting shared vision or having the person partake in the organising role can be considered insulting to the individual. Individuals tend to like the 'shared management' concept as opposed to collectivist that will accept the status quo.

# Power Distance Index

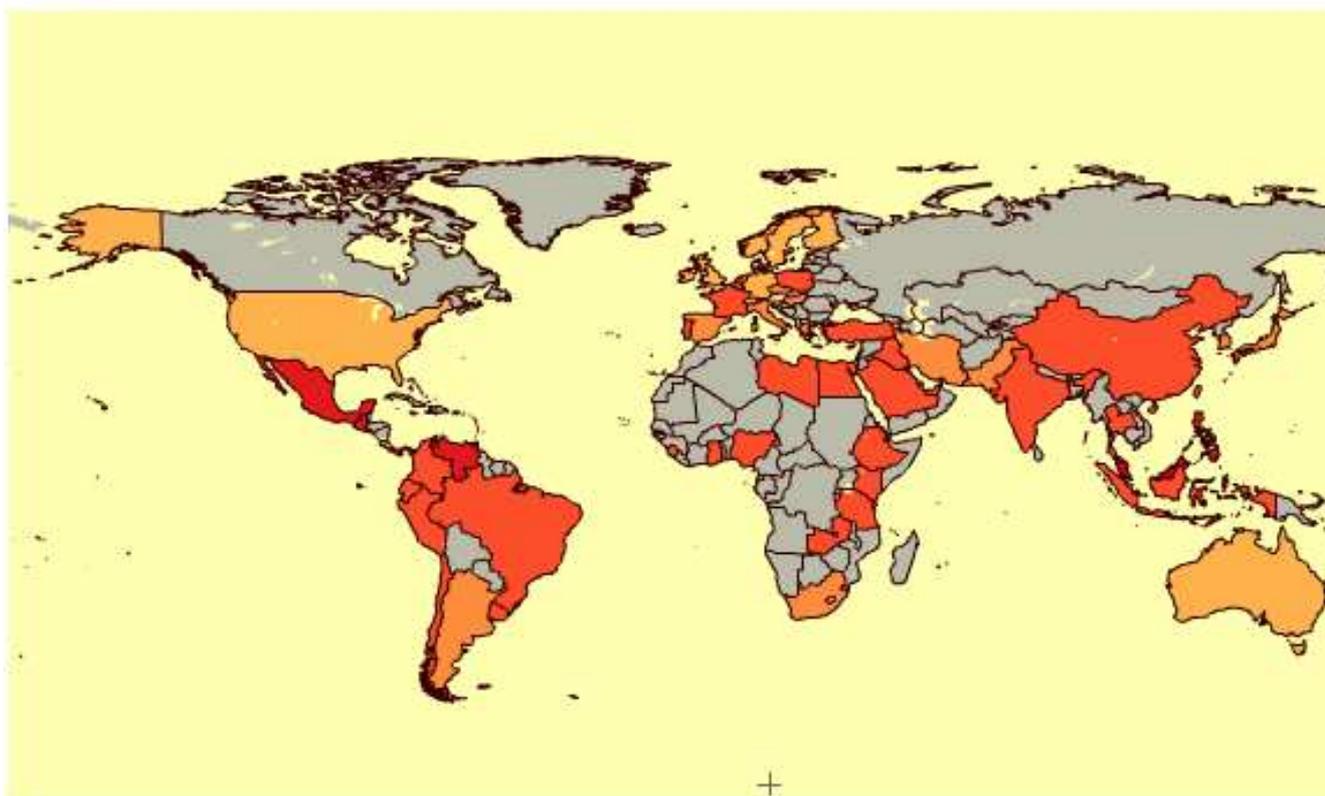
Hofstede's Power distance Index measures the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders.

For example, Germany has a 35 on the cultural scale of Hofstede's analysis. Compared to Arab countries where the power distance is very high (80) and Austria where it very low (11), Germany is somewhat in the middle. Germany does not have a large gap between the wealthy and the poor, but have a strong belief in equality for each citizen. Germans have the opportunity to rise in society.

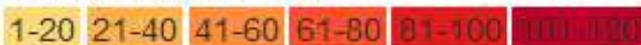
On the other hand, the power distance in the United States scores a 40 on the cultural scale. The United States exhibits a more unequal distribution of wealth compared to German society. As the years go by it seems that the distance between the 'have' and 'have-nots' grows larger and larger.

[Power Distance Index](#) | [Individualism](#) | [Masculinity](#) | [Uncertainty Avoidance Index](#) | [Long-Term Orientation](#)

**Power Distance Index** | Individualism | Masculinity | Uncertainty Avoidance Index | Long-Term Orientation



Power Distance Index



Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Malaysia	104	26	50	36		Chile	63	23	28	86	
Guatemala	95	6	37	101		Portugal	63	27	31	104	
Panama	95	11	44	86		Uruguay	61	36	38	100	
Philippines	94	32	64	44	19	Greece	60	35	57	112	
Mexico	81	30	69	82		South Korea	60	18	39	85	75
Venezuela	81	12	73	76		Iran	58	41	43	59	
China	80	20	66	40	118	Taiwan	58	17	45	69	87
Egypt	80	38	52	68		Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	
Iraq	80	38	52	68		Spain	57	51	42	86	
Kuwait	80	38	52	68		Pakistan	55	14	50	70	
Lebanon	80	38	52	68		Japan	54	46	95	92	80
Libya	80	38	52	68		Italy	50	76	70	75	
Saudi Arabia	80	38	52	68		Argentina	49	46	56	86	
United Arab Emirates	80	38	52	68		South Africa	49	65	63	49	
Ecuador	78	8	63	67		Hungary	46	55	88	82	
Indonesia	78	14	46	48		Jamaica	45	39	68	13	
Ghana	77	20	46	54	16	United States	40	91	62	46	29
India	77	48	56	40	61	Netherlands	38	80	14	53	44
Nigeria	77	20	46	54	16	Australia	36	90	61	51	31
Sierra Leone	77	20	46	54	16	Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	
Singapore	74	20	48	8	48	Germany	35	67	66	65	31
Brazil	69	38	49	76	65	United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	25
France	68	71	43	86		Switzerland	34	68	70	58	
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	96	Finland	33	63	26	59	
Poland	68	60	64	93		Norway	31	69	8	50	20
Colombia	67	13	64	80		Sweden	31	71	5	29	33
El Salvador	66	19	40	94		Ireland	28	70	68	35	
Turkey	66	37	45	85		New Zealand	22	79	58	49	30
Belgium	65	75	54	94		Denmark	18	74	16	23	
Ethiopia	64	27	41	52	25	Israel	13	54	47	81	
Kenya	64	27	41	52	25	Austria	11	55	79	70	
Peru	64	16	42	87							
Tanzania	64	27	41	52	25						
Thailand	64	20	34	64	56						
Zambia	64	27	41	52	25						

Individuals with training and skill **tend** to consider themselves at the same level as management in that they do not see management as being anything special. If management tends to dominate without consultation and censor information given to individuals they have a **tendency** to be insulted. With collectivism people **tend** to accept the positional hierarchy without question whether they like it or not. Thai's tend to accept the positional status of persons within the organisation where Aus and Americans will not. Americans and Australians feel they are employed for their skills and therefore that skill should be part of the organisational planning of the organisation.

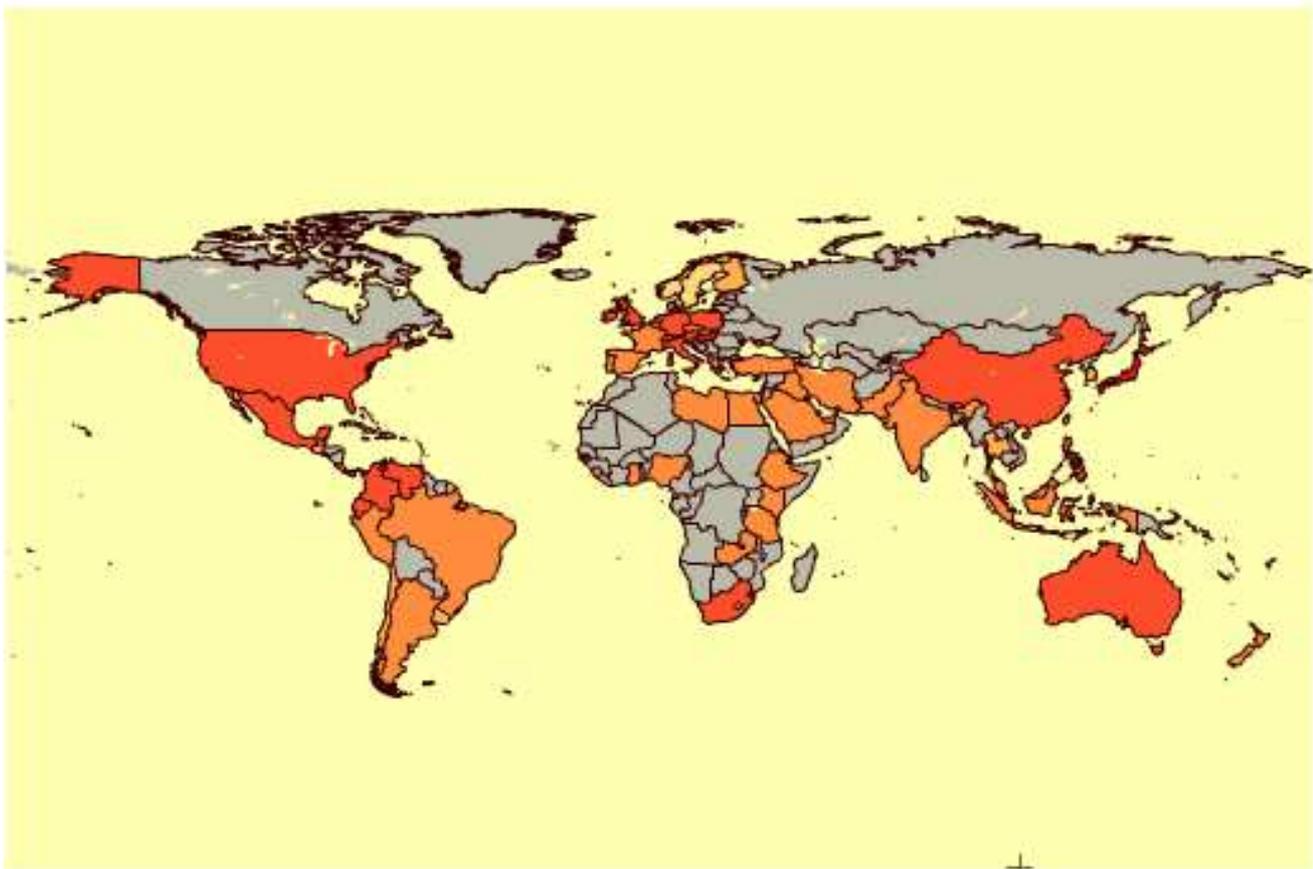
# Masculinity

Masculinity versus its opposite, femininity refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'.

For example, Germany has a masculine culture with a 66 on the scale of Hofstede (Netherlands 14). Masculine traits include assertiveness, materialism/material success, self-centeredness, power, strength, and individual achievements. The United States scored a 62 on Hofstede's scale. So these two cultures share, in terms of masculinity, similar values.

[Power Distance Index](#) | [Individualism](#) | [Masculinity](#) | [Uncertainty Avoidance Index](#) | [Long-Term Orientation](#)

Power Distance Index | Individualism | **Masculinity** | Uncertainty Avoidance Index | Long-Term Orientation



Masculinity



Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO	Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Japan	54	46	<b>95</b>	92	80	Malaysia	104	26	<b>50</b>	36	
Hungary	46	55	<b>88</b>	82		Pakistan	55	14	<b>50</b>	70	
Austria	11	55	<b>79</b>	70		Brazil	69	38	<b>49</b>	76	65
Venezuela	81	12	<b>73</b>	76		Singapore	74	20	<b>48</b>	8	48
Italy	50	76	<b>70</b>	75		Israel	13	54	<b>47</b>	81	
Switzerland	34	68	<b>70</b>	58		Ghana	77	20	<b>46</b>	54	16
Mexico	81	30	<b>69</b>	82		Indonesia	78	14	<b>46</b>	48	
Ireland	28	70	<b>68</b>	35		Nigeria	77	20	<b>46</b>	54	16
Jamaica	45	39	<b>68</b>	13		Sierra Leone	77	20	<b>46</b>	54	16
China	80	20	<b>66</b>	40	118	Taiwan	58	17	<b>45</b>	69	87
Germany	35	67	<b>66</b>	65	31	Turkey	66	37	<b>45</b>	85	
United Kingdom	35	89	<b>66</b>	35	25	Panama	95	11	<b>44</b>	86	
Colombia	67	13	<b>64</b>	80		France	68	71	<b>43</b>	86	
Philippines	94	32	<b>64</b>	44	19	Iran	58	41	<b>43</b>	59	
Poland	68	60	<b>64</b>	93		Peru	64	16	<b>42</b>	87	
Ecuador	78	8	<b>63</b>	67		Spain	57	51	<b>42</b>	86	
South Africa	49	65	<b>63</b>	49		Ethiopia	64	27	<b>41</b>	52	25
United States	40	91	<b>62</b>	46	29	Kenya	64	27	<b>41</b>	52	25
Australia	36	90	<b>61</b>	51	31	Tanzania	64	27	<b>41</b>	52	25
New Zealand	22	79	<b>58</b>	49	30	Zambia	64	27	<b>41</b>	52	25
Czech Republic	57	58	<b>57</b>	74		El Salvador	66	19	<b>40</b>	94	
Greece	60	35	<b>57</b>	112		South Korea	60	18	<b>39</b>	85	75
Hong Kong	68	25	<b>57</b>	29	96	Uruguay	61	36	<b>38</b>	100	
Argentina	49	46	<b>56</b>	86		Guatemala	95	6	<b>37</b>	101	
India	77	48	<b>56</b>	40	61	Thailand	64	20	<b>34</b>	64	56
Belgium	65	75	<b>54</b>	94		Portugal	63	27	<b>31</b>	104	
Egypt	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Chile	63	23	<b>28</b>	86	
Iraq	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Finland	33	63	<b>26</b>	59	
Kuwait	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Costa Rica	35	15	<b>21</b>	86	
Lebanon	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Denmark	18	74	<b>16</b>	23	
Libya	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Netherlands	38	80	<b>14</b>	53	44
Saudi Arabia	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Norway	31	69	<b>8</b>	50	20
United Arab Emirates	80	38	<b>52</b>	68		Sweden	31	71	<b>5</b>	29	33

Power and strength (not always physical) are the desired attributes as opposed to slender group collectivism.

Assertiveness (sometimes inappropriately) is a reasonably strong trait in Aus and Americans. In a collectivist society this would be considered inappropriate especially if it shows emotion. When Aus and Americans have their say squashed or ignored it tends to install high stress levels and will often lead to resignations or anger in the workplace (it does not foster teamwork). A collectivist society will tend to accept the status quo and will be assertive in a position where they feel they are the elder or in the superior position.

# Uncertainty Avoidance

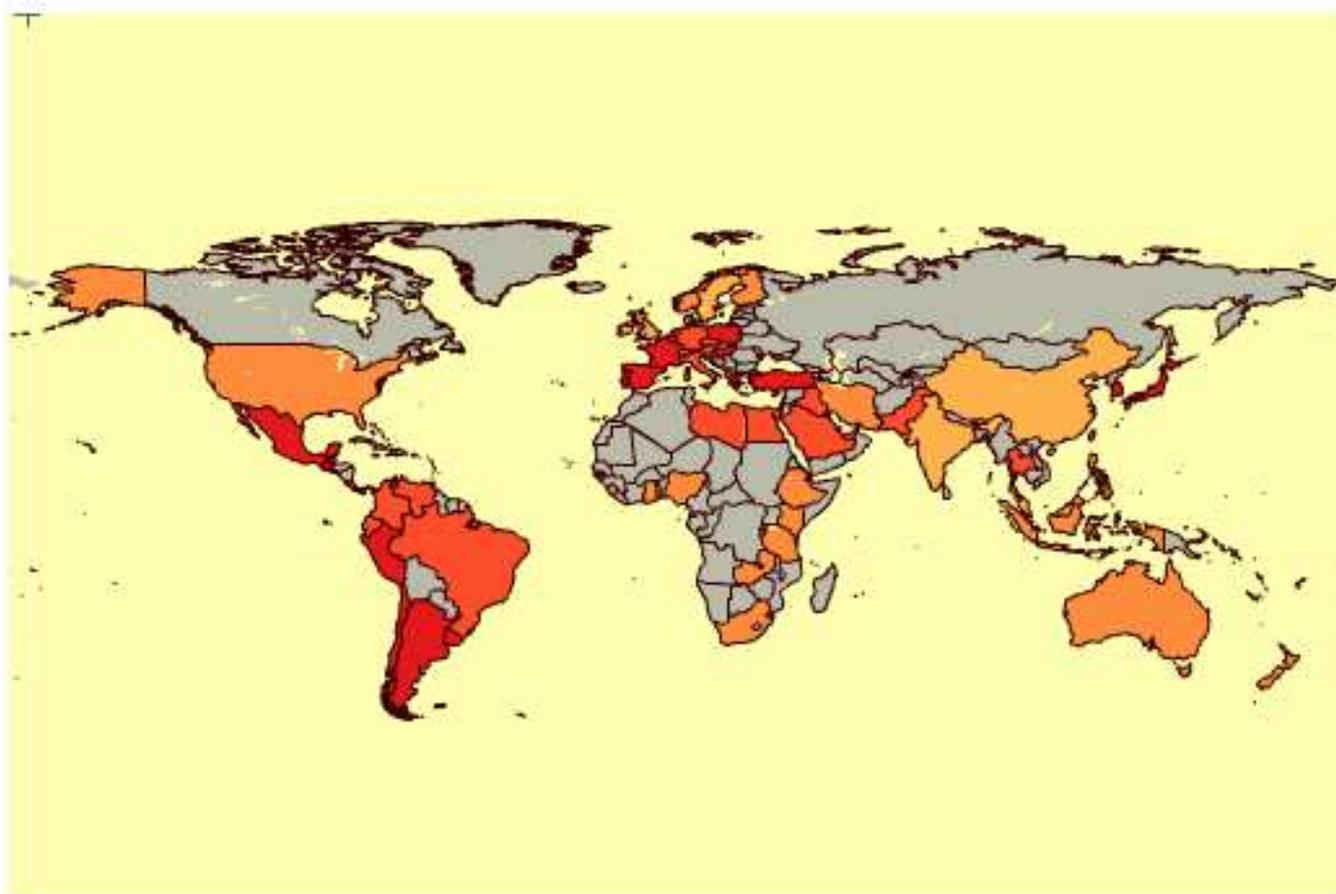
Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'.

For example, in Germany there is a reasonable high uncertainty avoidance (65) compared to countries as Singapore (8) and neighbouring country Denmark (23). Germans are not keen on uncertainty, by planning everything carefully they try to avoid the uncertainty. In Germany there is a society that relies on rules, laws and regulations. Germany wants to reduce its risks to the minimum and proceed with changes step by step.

The United States scores a 46 compared to the 65 of the German culture. Uncertainty avoidance in the US is relatively low, which can clearly be viewed through the national cultures.

[Power Distance Index](#) | [Individualism](#) | [Masculinity](#) | [Uncertainty Avoidance Index](#) | [Long-Term Orientation](#)

Power Distance Index | Individualism | Masculinity | **Uncertainty Avoidance Index** | Long-Term Orientation



Uncertainty Avoidance Index

1-20 21-40 41-60 61-80 81-100 101-120

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Greece	60	35	57	<b>112</b>	
Portugal	63	27	31	<b>104</b>	
Guatemala	95	6	37	<b>101</b>	
Uruguay	61	36	38	<b>100</b>	
Belgium	65	75	54	<b>94</b>	
El Salvador	66	19	40	<b>94</b>	
Poland	68	60	64	<b>93</b>	
Japan	54	46	95	<b>92</b>	80
Peru	64	16	42	<b>87</b>	
Argentina	49	46	56	<b>86</b>	
Chile	63	23	28	<b>86</b>	
Costa Rica	35	15	21	<b>86</b>	
France	68	71	43	<b>86</b>	
Panama	95	11	44	<b>86</b>	
Spain	57	51	42	<b>86</b>	
South Korea	60	18	39	<b>85</b>	75
Turkey	66	37	45	<b>85</b>	
Hungary	46	55	88	<b>82</b>	
Mexico	81	30	69	<b>82</b>	
Israel	13	54	47	<b>81</b>	
Colombia	67	13	64	<b>80</b>	
Brazil	69	38	49	<b>76</b>	65
Venezuela	81	12	73	<b>76</b>	
Italy	50	76	70	<b>75</b>	
Czech Republic	57	58	57	<b>74</b>	
Austria	11	55	79	<b>70</b>	
Pakistan	55	14	50	<b>70</b>	
Taiwan	58	17	45	<b>69</b>	87
Egypt	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Iraq	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Kuwait	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Lebanon	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Libya	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Saudi Arabia	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
United Arab Emirates	80	38	52	<b>68</b>	
Ecuador	78	8	63	<b>67</b>	
Germany	35	67	66	<b>65</b>	31

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Thailand	64	20	34	<b>64</b>	56
Finland	33	63	26	<b>59</b>	
Iran	58	41	43	<b>59</b>	
Switzerland	34	68	70	<b>58</b>	
Ghana	77	20	46	<b>54</b>	16
Nigeria	77	20	46	<b>54</b>	16
Sierra Leone	77	20	46	<b>54</b>	16
Netherlands	38	80	14	<b>53</b>	44
Ethiopia	64	27	41	<b>52</b>	25
Kenya	64	27	41	<b>52</b>	25
Tanzania	64	27	41	<b>52</b>	25
Zambia	64	27	41	<b>52</b>	25
Australia	36	90	61	<b>51</b>	31
Norway	31	69	8	<b>50</b>	20
New Zealand	22	79	58	<b>49</b>	30
South Africa	49	65	63	<b>49</b>	
Indonesia	78	14	46	<b>48</b>	
United States	40	91	62	<b>46</b>	29
Philippines	94	32	64	<b>44</b>	19
China	80	20	66	<b>40</b>	118
India	77	48	56	<b>40</b>	61
Malaysia	104	26	50	<b>36</b>	
Ireland	28	70	68	<b>35</b>	
United Kingdom	35	89	66	<b>35</b>	25
Hong Kong	68	25	57	<b>29</b>	96
Sweden	31	71	5	<b>29</b>	33
Denmark	18	74	16	<b>23</b>	
Jamaica	45	39	68	<b>13</b>	
Singapore	74	20	48	<b>8</b>	48

I find it interesting that Thai's don't like uncertainty very similar to Germans and Australians and Americans do not try to avoid uncertainty. Is uncertainty the same as predictability? This needs a lot more reflection.

# Long-Term Orientation

Long-Term Orientation is the fifth dimension of Hofstede which was added after the original four to try to distinguish the difference in thinking between the East and West. From the original IBM studies, this difference was something that could not be deduced. Therefore, Hofstede created a Chinese value survey which was distributed across 23 countries. From these results, and with an understanding of the influence of the teaching of Confucius on the East, long term vs. short term orientation became the fifth cultural dimension.

Below are some characteristics of the two opposing sides of this dimension:

Long term orientation

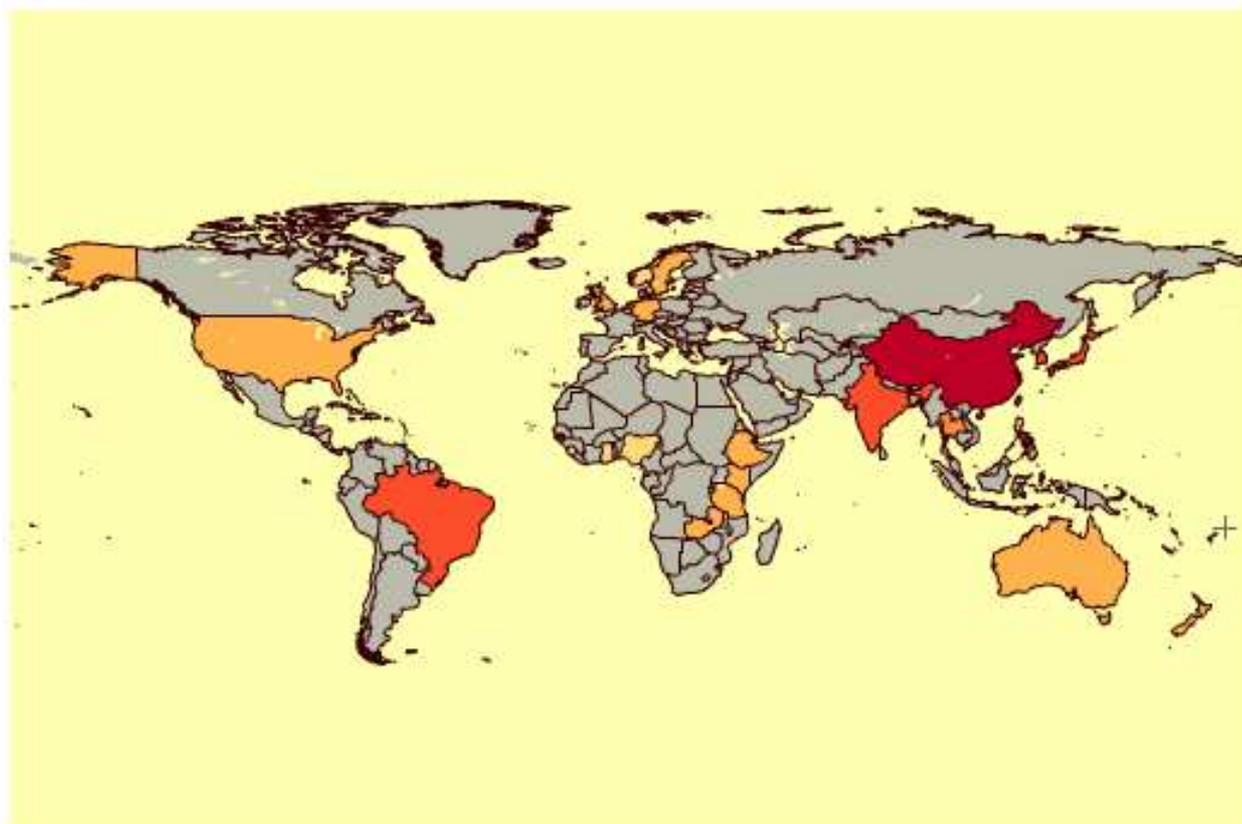
- persistence
- ordering relationships by status and observing this order
- thrift
- having a sense of shame

Short term orientation

- personal steadiness and stability
- protecting your 'face'
- respect or tradition
- reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts

[Power Distance Index](#) | [Individualism](#) | [Masculinity](#) | [Uncertainty Avoidance Index](#) | [Long-Term Orientation](#)

Power Distance Index | Individualism | Masculinity | Uncertainty Avoidance Index | **Long-Term Orientation**



Long term Orientation



Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
China	80	20	66	40	<b>118</b>
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	<b>96</b>
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	<b>87</b>
Japan	54	46	95	92	<b>80</b>
South Korea	60	18	39	85	<b>75</b>
Brazil	69	38	49	76	<b>65</b>
India	77	48	56	40	<b>61</b>
Thailand	64	20	34	64	<b>56</b>
Singapore	74	20	48	8	<b>48</b>
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	<b>44</b>
Sweden	31	71	5	29	<b>33</b>
Australia	36	90	61	51	<b>31</b>
Germany	35	67	66	65	<b>31</b>
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	<b>30</b>
United States	40	91	62	46	<b>29</b>
Ethiopia	64	27	41	52	<b>25</b>
Kenya	64	27	41	52	<b>25</b>
Tanzania	64	27	41	52	<b>25</b>
United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	<b>25</b>
Zambia	64	27	41	52	<b>25</b>
Norway	31	69	8	50	<b>20</b>
Philippines	94	32	64	44	<b>19</b>
Ghana	77	20	46	54	<b>16</b>
Nigeria	77	20	46	54	<b>16</b>
Sierra Leone	77	20	46	54	<b>16</b>
Argentina	49	46	56	86	
Austria	11	55	79	70	
Belgium	65	75	54	94	
Chile	63	23	28	86	
Colombia	67	13	64	80	
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	
Denmark	18	74	16	23	
Ecuador	78	8	63	67	
Egypt	80	38	52	68	

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	
Finland	33	63	26	59	
France	68	71	43	86	
Greece	60	35	57	112	
Guatemala	95	6	37	101	
Hungary	46	55	88	82	
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	
Iran	58	41	43	59	
Iraq	80	38	52	68	
Ireland	28	70	68	35	
Israel	13	54	47	81	
Italy	50	76	70	75	
Jamaica	45	39	68	13	
Kuwait	80	38	52	68	
Lebanon	80	38	52	68	
Libya	80	38	52	68	
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	
Mexico	81	30	69	82	
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	
Panama	95	11	44	86	
Peru	64	16	42	87	
Poland	68	60	64	93	
Portugal	63	27	31	104	
Saudi Arabia	80	38	52	68	
South Africa	49	65	63	49	
Spain	57	51	42	86	
Switzerland	34	68	70	58	
Turkey	66	37	45	85	
United Arab Emirates	80	38	52	68	
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	

This is interesting in that we are all bunched together all preferring the long term orientation.