



## Dimensions of Culture

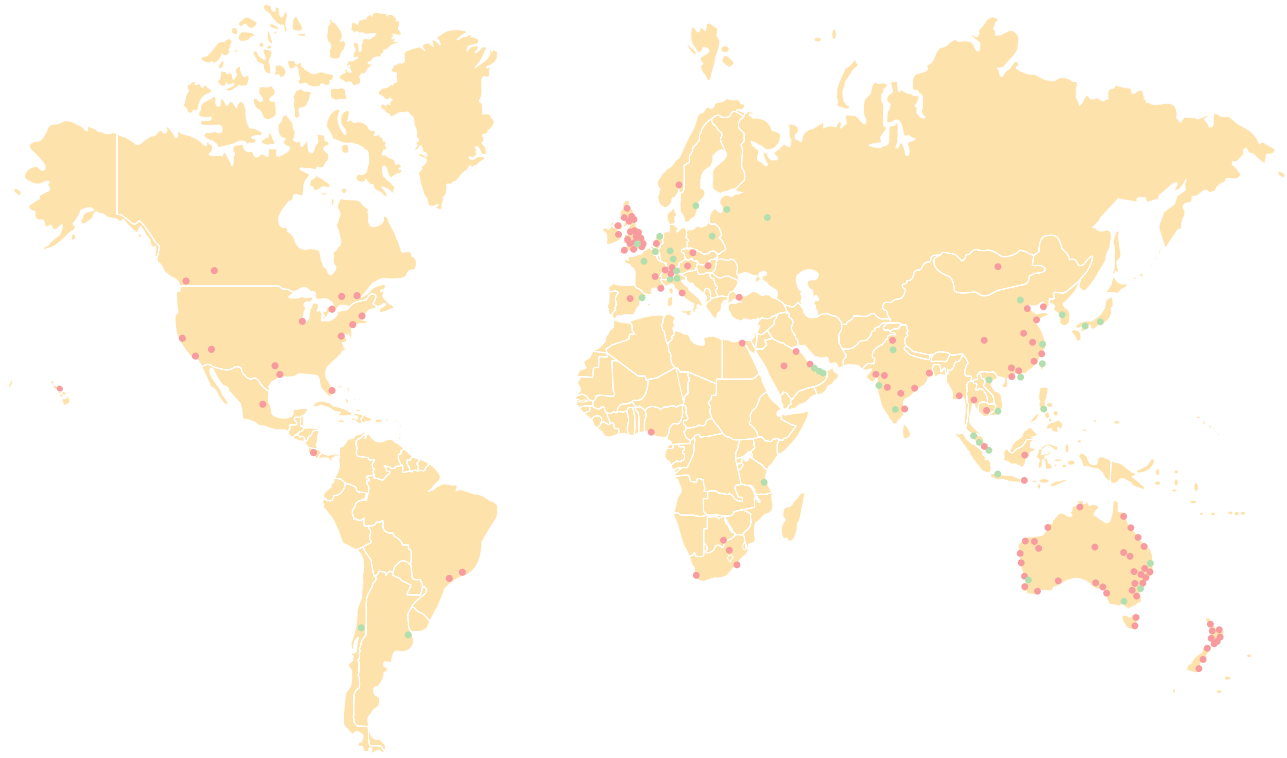
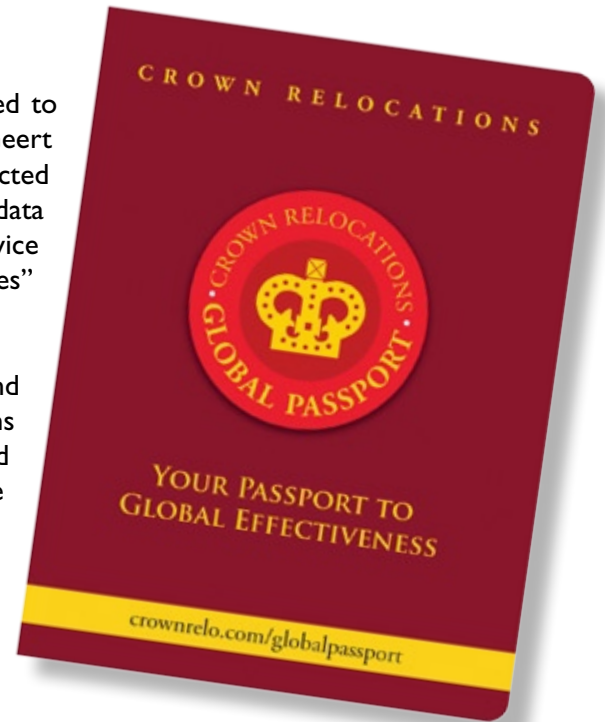
“Dimensions of Culture” is a widely accepted industry tool that is used to measure cultural differences. One of the commonly used dimensions is Geert Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, where cultural data was initially collected from IBM employees from 70 countries, then further enhanced with data from commercial airline pilots and students in 23 countries, civil service managers in 14 countries, “up-market” consumers in 15 countries and “elites” in 19 countries.

The contributions from all this research data validated earlier findings and helped Hofstede to develop a model that identifies four primary “Dimensions of Culture” to assist in differentiating cultures. A fifth dimension was added after conducting an additional international study developed with Chinese employees and managers, and was applied to 23 countries.

1. Power Distance - PDI
2. Individualism - IDV
3. Masculinity - MAS
4. Uncertainty Avoidance - UAI
5. Long-Term Orientation - LTO

While these dimensions, particularly the first three, are widely accepted in the intercultural training industry, it’s important to remember...

- Dimensions show tendencies of the country’s culture as a whole and do not consider regional subcultures e.g., differences between East & West Coasts in the U.S. or Northern & Southern France, which may have substantial differences.
- Dimensions are to be used as a guide in understanding the difference in culture between countries and are not “set in stone.” As always, there are exceptions to the rule.



Below are more detailed descriptions of their intents.

### Power Distance–PDI

PDI refers to the degree of inequality that exists—and is accepted—especially by the less powerful members of a group, organization, institution or society.

- **High PDI** - society accepts an unequal distribution of power and people understand “their place” in the system; concern is more for hierarchy and a reluctance or fear to speak up.

In a high PDI workplace, employees perceive managers as less approachable, communication flows downward and respect upward.

- **Low PDI** - power is shared and well dispersed and people view themselves as equals.

In a low PDI workplace, employees perceive managers as peers and are more willing to share ideas.

### Individualism–IDV

IDV refers to the strength of the ties people have to others within the community.

- **High IDV** - loose connection with people, little sharing or responsibility. Tendency to use the “I” form more frequently, sometimes perceived as arrogant, self-centered.

In a high IDV workplace, employees feel empowered to make their own decisions.

- **Low IDV** - strong group cohesion, harmony is “key.” Tendency to use the “WE” form more frequently, sometimes perceived as indecisive, weak will, not assertive, not aggressive, hierarchical.

In a low IDV workplace, employees tend to refer decisions back to their managers.

### Masculinity–MAS

MAS refers to an indication of the esteem in which the traditional masculine work role model of achievement, control and power is held.

- **High MAS** - In a MAS workplace, there is a high level of male dominance and less gender equality.
- **Low MAS** - In a low MAS workplace, there is greater equality between males and females and an appreciation of feminine values such as compromise, etc.

### Uncertainty Avoidance Index–UAI

UAI refers to the culture’s tolerance for ambiguity, unstructured situations and unplanned events.

- **High UAI** - people with high UAI work well within a structured environment, under strict laws, rules and guidelines.

In a high UAI workplace, employees perform at their best with clear directives and follow standards and procedures.

- **Low UAI** - people with low UAI can tolerate uncertainty and welcome freedom of opinions, try to have as few rules as possible.

In a low UAI workplace, employees tend to “go with the flow,” are more flexible and do not require instructions and rules to perform well.

### Long-Term Orientation–LTO

LTO refers to the degree to which the society upholds traditional values. High or low dimensions predispose countries to resist or accept change.

- **High LTO** - In a high LTO workplace, the society is entrenched in traditions of yore, which often means that long term commitments and hard work as a plan for future rewards outweigh the need for rapid change.
- **Low LTO** - In a low LTO workplace, a society change can occur faster since long term traditions do not impede them.