

# Canadian Employer Handbook



for a Culturally Diverse Food Processing Workplace



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This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Sectoral Initiatives Program

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ISBN: 888-1-888881-88-8

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# About Us

**Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)** is the food and beverage manufacturing industry's workforce development organization. As a non-profit, located in Ottawa with representatives across Canada, we support food and beverage manufacturing businesses from coast to coast in developing skilled and professional employees and workplace environments.

Our work directly and positively impacts industry talent attraction, workforce retention and employment culture. We care about assisting the industry in finding, training and retaining the very best people for the job. Through our partnerships with industry, associations, educators and all levels of governments in Canada, FPSC has developed valuable resources for the sector including the **Food Skills Library™**, **Canadian Food Processors Institute™**, **FoodCert™** and Labour Market Information Reports.



Canada 

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# Introduction

**Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)** supports the importance of cultural awareness and recognizes that it operates in the most diverse workplaces in Canada. In particular, the food and beverage manufacturing industry which represents Canada's top employer within the Temporary Foreign Worker program, supports landed immigrants from many global regions in the food processing industry, and provides employment for Canadians whose families have lived in Canada for many generations. With a labour force from around the world it is critical that all cultures can work, perform and thrive in their positions within this industry. Given that 1 in 8 Canadians are employed in the food and beverage manufacturing industry, it is essential to maintain a global leadership position through the best skills development and training.

Effective relations among employees and their leadership leads to maximum efficiency, satisfaction, sustainable health and well-being within the workplace. While Canada continues to experience labour market shortages in key sectors, seeking workers from outside of Canada will

continue to grow. As this shift in the employee profile changes for the food processing industry, there will be an increased need to deal effectively and appropriately with diversity in the workplace, whether that be ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural. Doing this as an informed practice will become even more paramount to organizations, and for the continued standing of Canada's food processing industry as a global leader.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a convenient and easily accessible foundation of knowledge of selected cultures which are predominate in Canada's food processing industry across five global regions: East Asia & The Pacific, South Asia, Europe & Central Asia, Latin America & The Caribbean and Middle East & North Africa.

This handbook will provide information to allow you to engage more effectively within your organization. It will also help to find common ground as a community and be aware and responsive to differences.

This resource has been organized for convenient access by selected region and country. An over-arching section on culture shock is provided at the beginning of the handbook, as this applies across cultures and the human condition. Each country description follows with a bulleted



## Benefits to a food processing workplace that is culturally aware includes:

- Increased trust amongst staff members
- Increased productivity
- Increased trust between staff and management
- Increased morale
- Increased communication
- Decreased staff turnover
- Decreased stress and anxiety
- Decreased accidents and mishaps in the workplace

summary of country facts (including food production), a cultural orientation, information on food from within that country, interesting facts, and additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment in Canada.

*Culture*, as defined in this handbook, is the shared traditions, beliefs, customs, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people. Culture is shared by people of the same ethnicity, language, nationality or religion. It is a system of rules that establishes the foundation of our identities and affects how we express ourselves as part of a group and as individuals on a daily basis.

## Approximately 60,000 foreign agricultural, food and fish processing workers coming to Canada each year.



Therefore, being *culturally aware* requires a foundation of knowledge about other cultures. This awareness includes recognizing conscious and unconscious bias, and the diversity of personal cultural attitudes, stereotypes and generalizations of diverse cultures and habits that exist within the food processing industry workplace.

Successful communication is between individuals not cultures. The success of your interactions depends on you and the quality of information provided. To be effective in another culture, people need to be interested in the other culture, be sensitive to cultural differences and then be willing to modify behaviour as an indication of respect or sensitivity.

Historically there has been approximately 50,000 to 60,000 foreign agricultural, food and fish processing workers coming to Canada each year under the *Temporary Foreign Worker Program*. It is therefore of utmost importance for an organization to understand the signs, symptoms and solutions of culture shock. This handbook begins with an overview of culture shock to assist organizations as they welcome and settle new staff into their workplace with as much success as possible, and with the goal of creating a high quality and sustainable workforce for the food processing industry.

*It is important to note that Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC) has attempted to capture current and accurate information about each culture; however, it is by no means an exhaustive list nor does it present or exemplify every person from that culture. As with all cultures there are exceptions to every rule.*

*The handbook provides a broad understanding of norms and behaviours that would be familiar to people of that culture and is not intended to stereotype an individual based on the country of origin. There are also many microcultures within countries that may not be represented and may differ from the broad descriptions provided. Cultures also continue to evolve and with that Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC) will take utmost care to update and revise where required.*

*Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC) has also made every effort to give the most relevant information and advice on how to interact effectively with a culture. This may involve providing social, political and cultural opinions of a particular group in order to offer a better understanding of that culture. Any perceived political opinions described within this handbook do not represent the positions of Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC).*

# Culture Shock

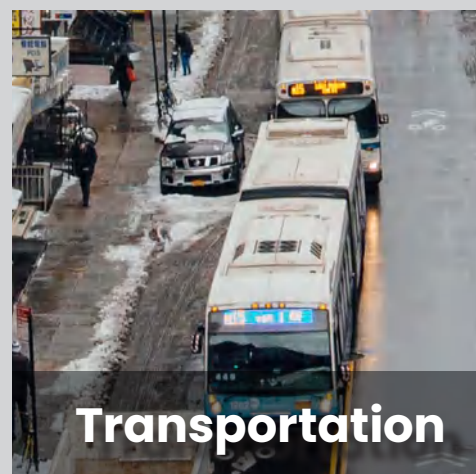
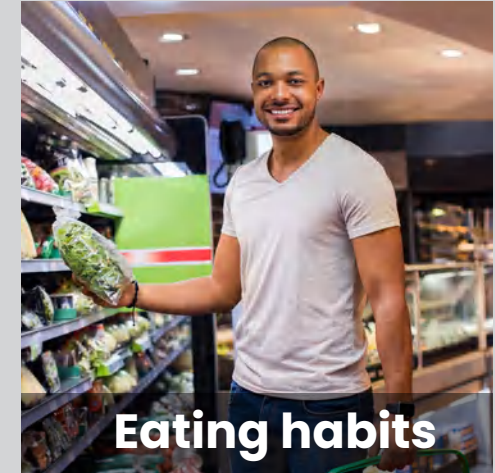
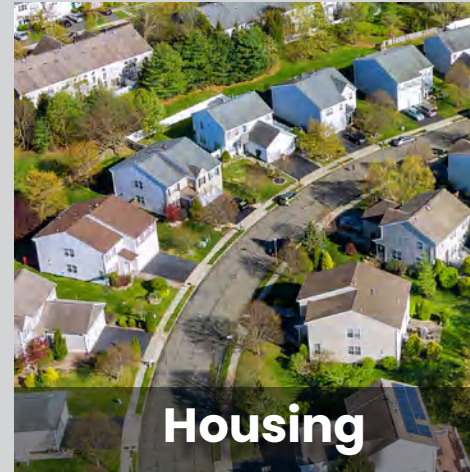
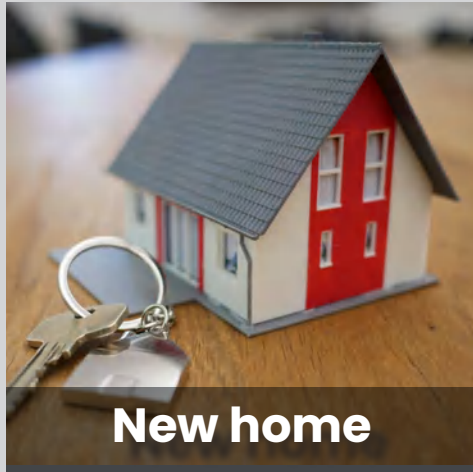
## What is Culture Shock?

Culture shock is a term used to describe the physical, emotional, and mental stress experienced when an individual begins living and working in a new environment. It is a common, and often poorly understood, occupational illness for many employees who have been suddenly transplanted from another global region and are experiencing stress and coping challenges that affect behaviour, performance and cognition (Furnham and Bochner, 1986).



# What are the causes of culture shock?

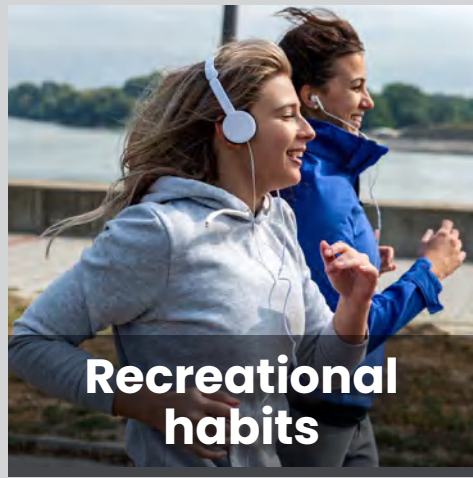
Stress brought on by the following changes:







**Social activities**



**Recreational habits**



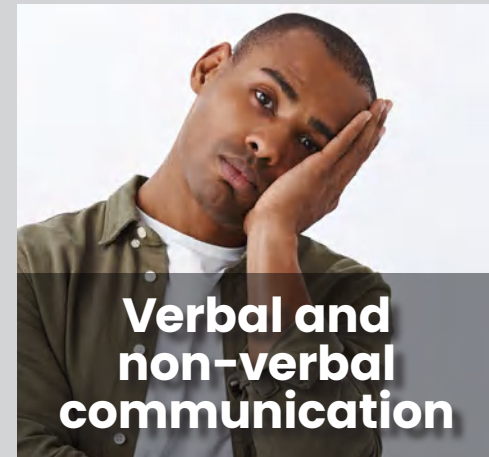
**Religious activities and community**



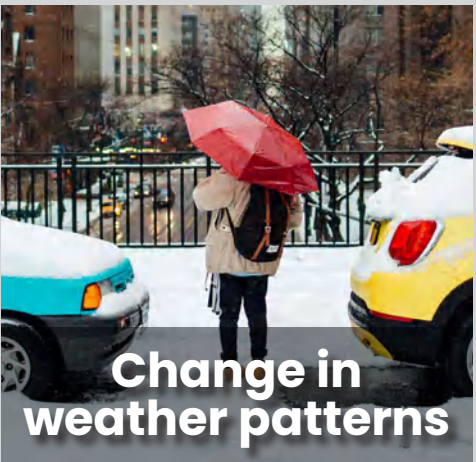
**Missing friends and family**



**Laws, rules, regulations**



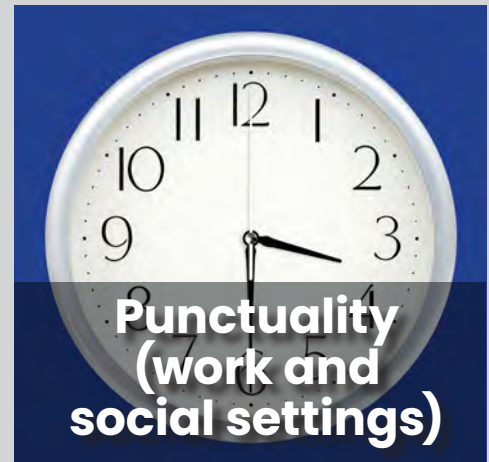
**Verbal and non-verbal communication**



**Change in weather patterns**



**Manager – Employee relations**



**Punctuality (work and social settings)**

# What are the Symptoms?

Most people don't think culture shock will happen to them, and for some it may be very mild, but for others the symptoms will range from mild irritation to extreme trauma. The symptoms may present themselves in your organization by a colleague mentioning the new employee's uncharacteristic behaviours, including but not limited to poor work habits, rudeness, and/or irritability. According to Laroche and Rutherford (2007), below are some common symptoms to watch for in your new recruits:

- **Helplessness:** "This is too much for me"
- **Loneliness:** "Where are my family and friends?"
- **Frustration:** "Why is nothing simple here?"
- **Anger:** "That's the craziest things I've ever heard?"
- **Negative attitude:** "These people are so demanding. They don't care about me."

More specifically, be aware of the following symptoms of culture shock:

- Homesickness
- Withdrawal from others
- Boredom
- Stereotyping of Canadians or other ethnic backgrounds
- Exaggerated cleanliness (e.g. excessive hand washing)
- Excessive fatigue or depression
- Unanticipated hostility towards colleagues or leadership
- Patronizing behaviour
- Change of appetite
- Decrease in work performance
- Physical health or well-being issues
- Irritability

**Excessive fatigue or depression are common symptoms of culture shock.**

# Four Stages of Culture Shock

Every individual will react differently when moving to a new environment; however, the following four stages of culture shock are most commonly experienced (Naeem, Nadeem, Ullah Khan, 2015; Oberg, 1960).

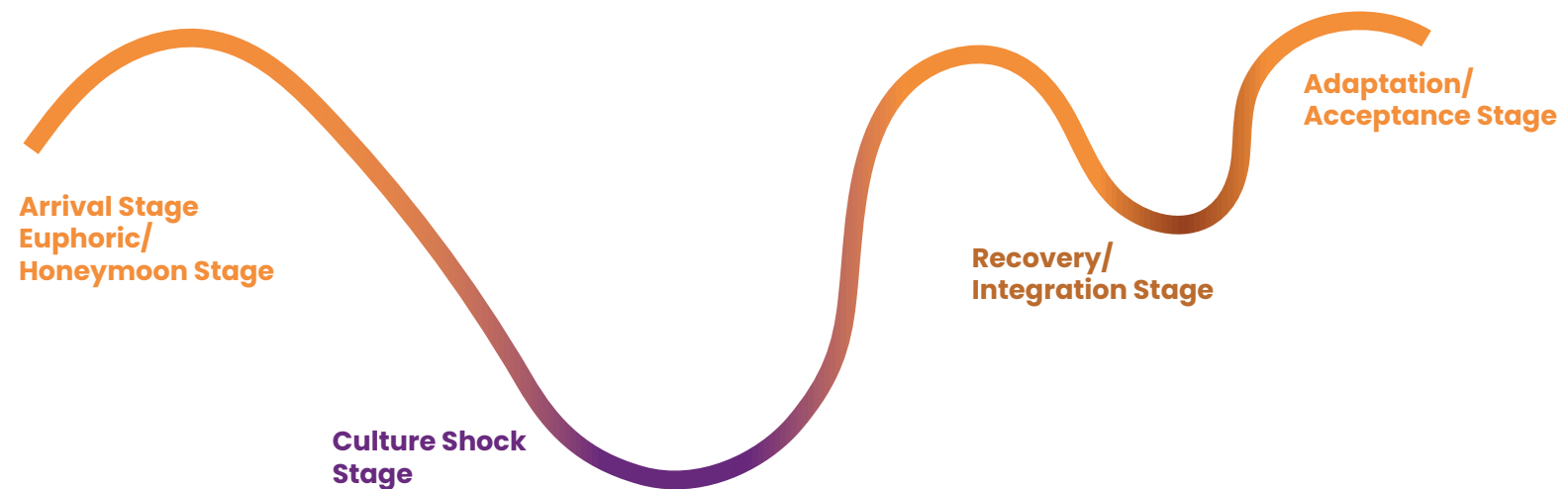
- 1. Arrival Stage Euphoric/Honeymoon Stage:** During this stage new employees are excited about their new lives. Everything is wonderful and they are having a great time learning about their environment.
- 2. Culture Shock Stage:** Crucial stage for awareness by both the person suffering from culture shock and the people in direct contact with them. If they do not come out of this stage the tendency is that they go home. The differences between the new culture and the culture of origin become more apparent. People feel overwhelmed at this stage. There is so much they do not understand about their new surroundings. They are frustrated because they can not communicate and are bombarded with unfamiliar surroundings, unreadable social signals and an unrelenting amount of new sounds. People suffering from culture shock may seem sleepy, irritable, disinterested or depressed. Some may become aggressive and act out their frustrations in this stage.

**3. Recovery/Integration Stage:** New employees start to navigate the differences between the culture of origin and new cultural norms. They learn to integrate their own beliefs with those of the new context. Some new employees will start to replace the familiar values with new ones. Others will begin to find ways to exist within both cultures.

**4. Adaptation/Acceptance Stage:** New employees are now able to enter and prosper in the new culture. They accept both cultures and combine them into their lives. Some will adopt the new culture at work and follow the values of the home culture outside of work.

Some people may stay in a particular stage for a longer/shorter time than another. In addition, culture shock may arise again in a settled new employee due to life situations, weather, holidays, etc. Generally, culture shock is expressed through an S-curve.

## The four stages of culture shock





**Provide opportunities for social and team building activities.**

## What are the Solutions?

- Be aware of culture shock and its stages.
  - Provide a thorough orientation to the new staff on organization, including information on your product and services, how to access the building, supplies, resources, supports, safety and security.
  - Provide an orientation to the job including duties and responsibilities, standards for judging performance, reporting relationships, expected interactions with coworkers, suppliers, clients, wage structure, benefits, incentive pay, anticipated training and development.
  - Translate any orientation documents.
  - Provide culture orientation including factual background to the city, and country, city logistics, cultural values and behaviours, business norms.
  - Provide a settling-in mentor to help with basic questions about navigating around the workplace.
- Prepare and support coworkers and managers of culturally diverse employees so that they can be in a more advantageous position to understand and assist them.
  - Schedule ongoing meetings to discuss cultural integration within the organization.
  - Be flexible in allowing the newcomers time to take care of settling-in activities.
  - Provide opportunities for social and team building activities (Laroche and Rutherford, 2007).
  - Provide a package that connects newcomers to the community which includes information and orientation to life in Canada. The package can include babysitting services, information on banks in the area, emergency contact number (police, hospital, fire department), place to buy furniture and clothes inexpensively (Frenchie's, Salvation Army, etc.), transportation options (contact information for buses, shuttles, taxis, etc.), schools and how to register children, essential public services and programs, YMCA's, gyms, ESL, etc.

# Interesting Facts:

- In some cases, people overcome culture shock over time; however, if left unresolved, the employee may experience decline, and abruptly end the contract and seek employment elsewhere or return home early.
- It is the responsibility of both the employer and new employee to ensure attempts are made to overcome culture shock. Understanding culture shock and its patterns can help employees flourish.
- If both parties are aware of the issue and work together to overcome it, there is most often a smooth transition into the new cultural experiences within Canada.



**I learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.**

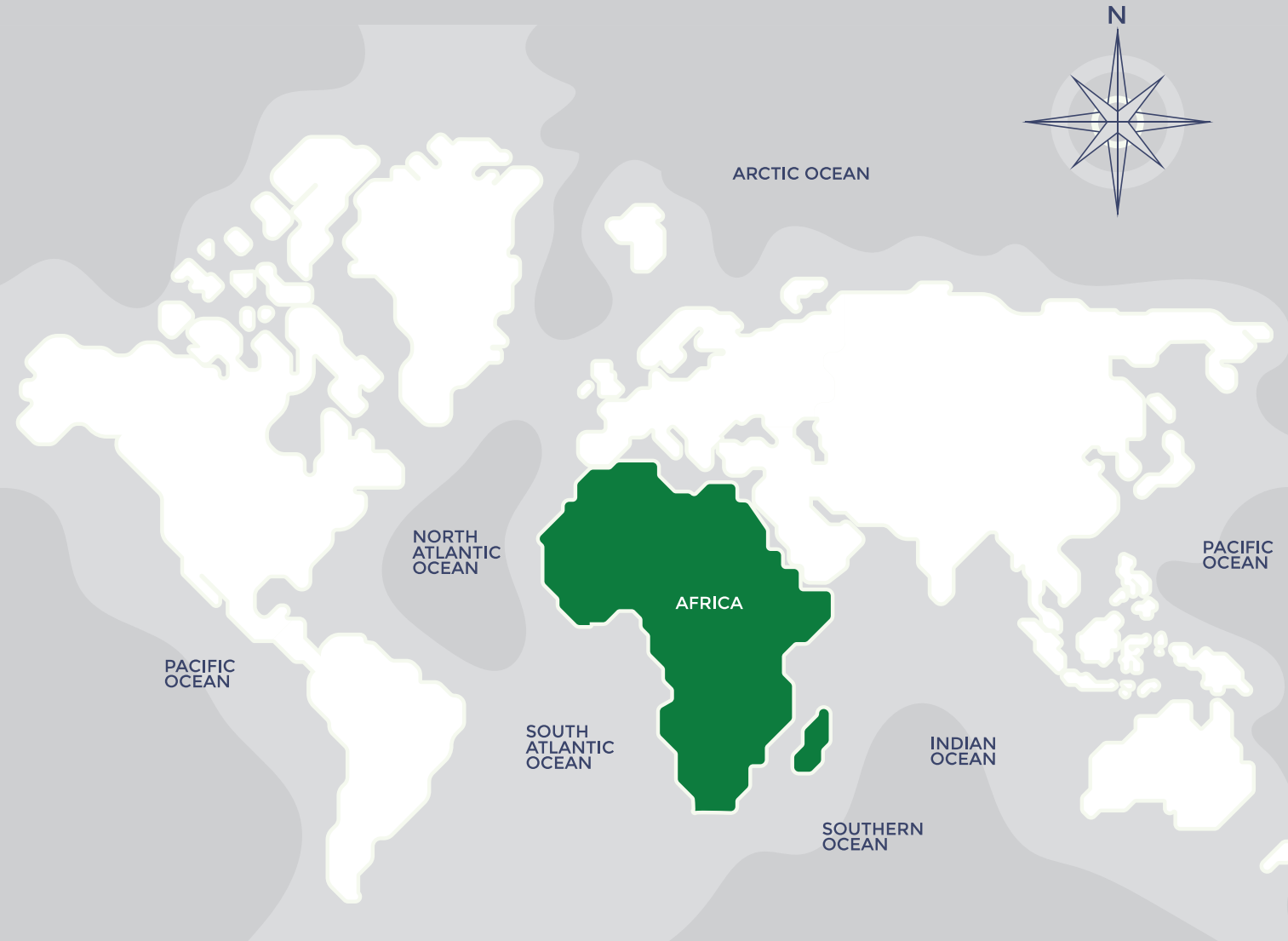


*~ Maya Angelou*

# Africa

Africa, as a continent, has 54 countries of vast diversity.

**Nigeria** was one country from the region selected for this employer guide as the predominant country that is contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry.



# NIGERIA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 206 million

**Area:** 923, 768 square km – 11 times smaller than Canada

**Capital:** Abuja

**Currency:** Naira (1 CAN \$ = 250 Naira)

**Climate:** Varies; tropical rainforest in south, semi-arid in north

**Language(s):** English (official), Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and over 500 indigenous languages

**Ethnic groups:** Over 1000 different ethnic groups. 4 largest of these groups are the Hausa and Fulani (29%), the Igbo (17%) and the Yoruba (21%).

**Religion(s):** Muslim (51.6%), Roman Catholic (11.2%), other Christian (35.7%), other (.6%)

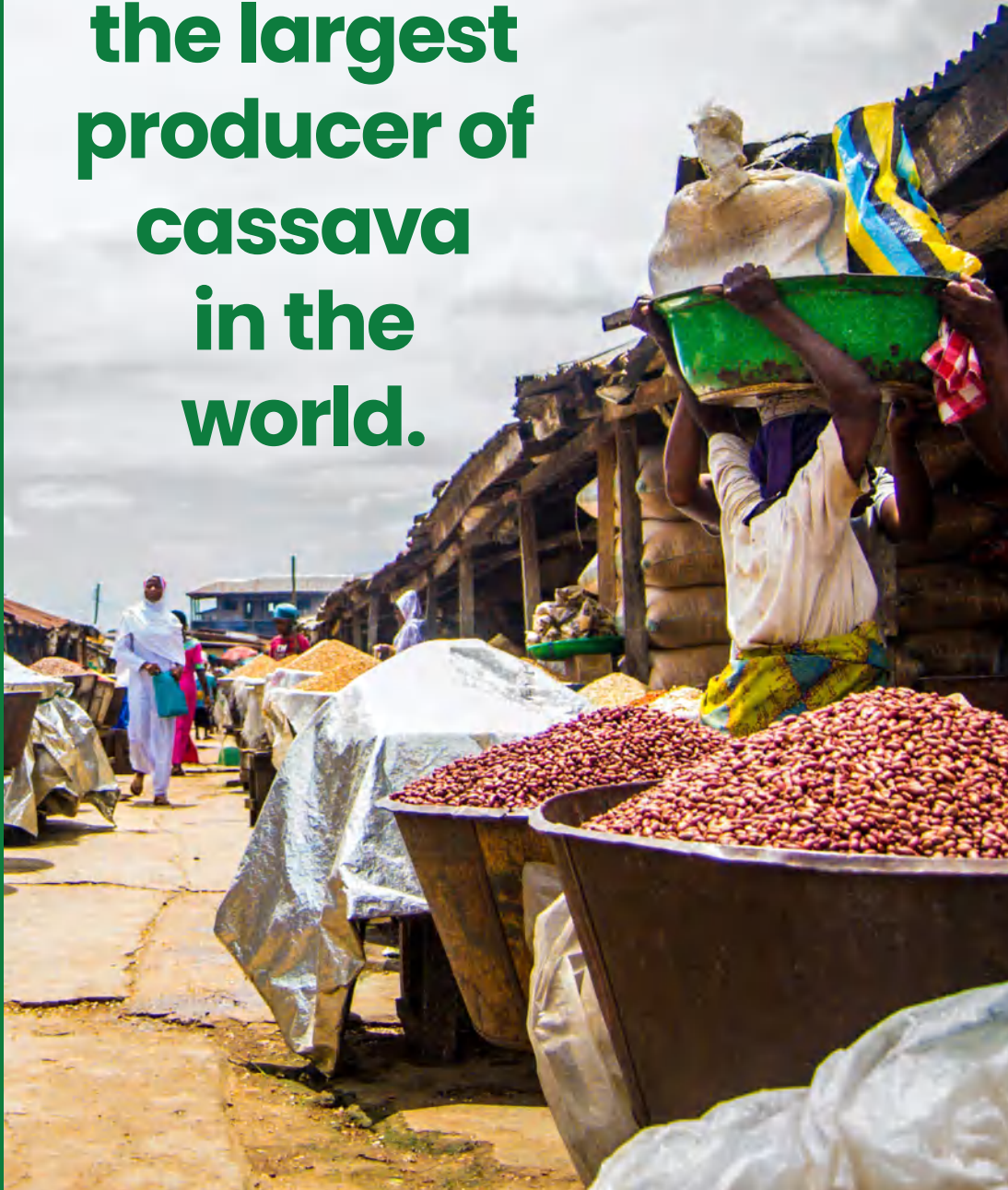
### Public Holidays:

January 1st.....	New Year's Day
April 10 <sup>th</sup> .....	Good Friday
April 13 <sup>th</sup> .....	Easter Sunday
April 23 <sup>rd</sup> –May 23 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Ramadan*
May 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Labour Day
May 23–25 <sup>th</sup> .....	Eid al Fitr*
May 29 .....	Inauguration Day
June 12 <sup>th</sup> .....	Democracy Day
July 30 <sup>th</sup> – Aug 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Eid al Adha*
October 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Nigerian Independence Day
October 28 <sup>th</sup> .....	Prophet's Birthday
December 25 <sup>th</sup> .....	Christmas Day
December 26 <sup>th</sup> .....	Boxing Day

*\*Ramadan, Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha are Muslim celebrations. Each year the date changes due to a lunar calendar.*

*Ramadan is not a public holiday in that practicing Muslims are still required to work.*

# Nigeria is the largest producer of cassava in the world.



## Education:

Literacy rate 62%. Compulsory education from ages 6 to 14. Three different sectors: basic education (ages 6-14), post-basic/senior secondary education (ages 15-17), and post secondary education (four to six years, depending on the program of study).

## Government:

Federal Presidential Republic

Chief of State: President

Head of Government:  
President

**Elections:** Every four years

## Natural Resources:

Natural gas, petroleum (Africa's largest producer and sixth largest in the world), tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, niobium, lead, zinc, arable land, forestry

## Agriculture:

Cocoa, peanuts, cotton, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava, yams, rubber, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and fish

## Food Production:

- Largest consumer and producer of rice in Africa and also the largest importer of rice in the world.
- Largest producer of cassava in the world.
- Capture fish declining but aquaculture is a significant potential. 60% of fish still imported currently.
- Domestic production of livestock products is far below the national demand, resulting in large imports of livestock and livestock products.

## Communications:

50 newspapers, 112 million Internet consumers, 172 million mobile phone consumers, 70 TV stations and 60 radio stations.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$558 billion CAN. Largest economy in Africa.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- People of the south tend to speak more frankly and directly.
- Raised voices may sound agitated but usually just signs of passionate discussion.
- Indirect and may rely on non-verbal cues. Many use gestures and body language when communicating.
- People of the north tend to speak more quietly.
- Nigerians start with the general idea and slowly move into the specific, often using a somewhat indirect route.
- A common beckoning call is a hissing or kissing sound which may be misinterpreted as offensive.

### Non-Verbal:

- Prolonged eye contact from an individual of lower status is considered disrespectful.

Indirect eye contact is used to demonstrate respect for the other person. It is common to gaze at the forehead or shoulders of someone not familiar.

- A smile may be used to mask true feelings, especially when disappointed or confused.
- More relaxed about physical contact but standard distance apart is similar to Canada; about an arm's length.
- Tactile when communicating with same gender. Often touch other's arm or back.
- Physical contact between genders is less common particularly within Muslim culture.

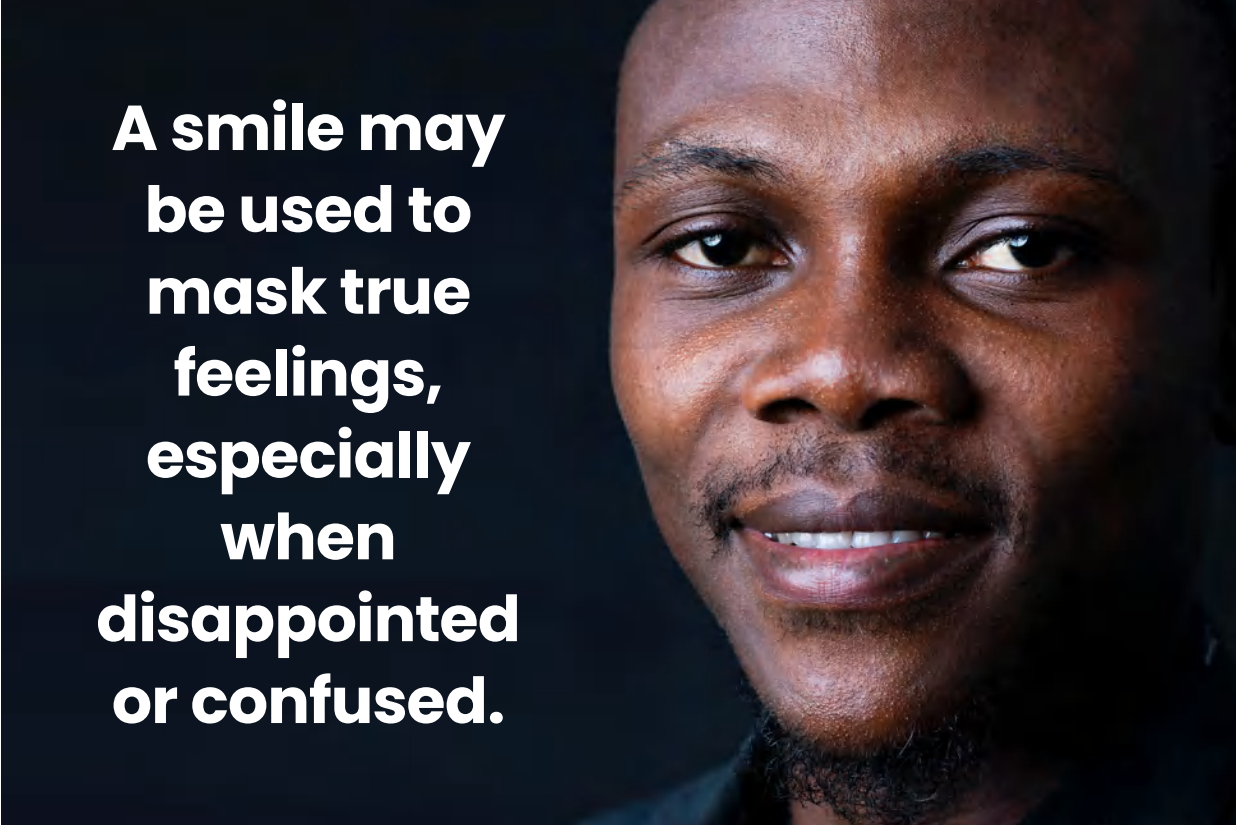
## Value Systems:

- Status is important
- Family relations play a very important role in Nigerian culture. Generally, families in Nigeria have a patriarchal structure.
- Polygamy amongst members of the Muslim community is not uncommon.

- Family bonds help to achieve social status while nepotism is a major issue in Nigeria even though it is illegal.

conditions and achievement are also motivating factors.

- Nigerians have a different orientation to work from that



**A smile may be used to mask true feelings, especially when disappointed or confused.**

## Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Rank is important.
- Employees will remain loyal if they feel the management treats them fairly, pays them regularly and fulfills their obligations.
- Job satisfaction, good working

of Canadians' rigid distinction of work and break periods. It is not uncommon to encounter workers resting or chatting and laughing together if a supervisor has not assigned them work. Supervisors can also require their staff to work long hours in unpaid overtime.

- Nigeria is a multi-religious and multicultural country. Attempts to get to know and understand which religion or culture the people you are working with belong to will assist in maintaining a positive work environment.
- If intimidated to confront a work issue directly, they may withdraw completely or take to gossiping among other colleagues.
- Expect a certain amount of emotion and small to when negotiating. Negotiations reflect a larger attitude on social interactions.
- Bargaining and haggling are common.
- Do not confront Nigerian co-workers in public when there is an issue. Do so directly and openly but in a private setting so as to not undermine their credibility. This may impair the likelihood for a successful solution.

**Employees will remain loyal if they feel the management treats them fairly, pays them regularly and fulfills their obligations.**



# Punctuality

- Punctuality and clock-watching are rare, in part because of the unpredictability of the infrastructure, transportation and communications: travel delays result from frequent mechanical breakdowns, fuel shortages, road accidents, police checkpoints, and traffic jams. Communications are disrupted daily by power outages, public strikes, rioting, etc.; although mobile phone coverage in many places has improved matters.
- Tardiness does not have the same stigma as in Canada.



# Gift Giving

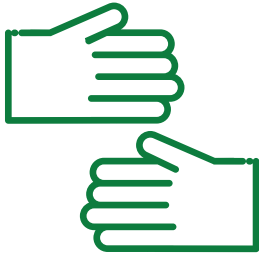
- Fruit, nuts or chocolates are appropriate gifts.
- Gifts should be given using the right hand only or both hands. Never use the left hand, as it is considered unhygienic.
- At Ramadan, it is customary for Muslims to give gifts of food and fruit.
- Gifts from a man to a woman must be said to come from the man's mother, wife, sister, or other female relative, never from the man himself.
- Gifts should be wrapped, although there are no cultural taboos concerning paper colour.
- Muslims consider dogs to be unclean. Do not give gifts with images of dogs.
- Gifts are not always opened when received.



# Greetings

- Standard greeting is a handshake, generally held longer than average Canadian handshake
- Greeting are an important aspect of social interactions. Numerous questions are asked about family and health during a greeting.
- Physical contact when greeting between men and woman is discouraged amongst Muslim Nigerians. Women generally will not initiate a handshake in Muslim cultures.
- Moving swiftly from handshake to business is considered rude.

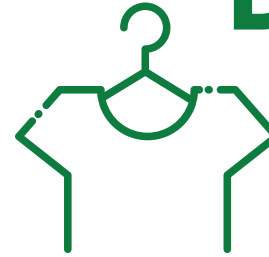
# Gestures



- Bowing to superiors or elders is common.
- Inhaling air through teeth to make “tsk” sounds signifies annoyance.
- Snapping fingers starting from shoulders and motioning downwards with arms signifies exasperation.
- Hands on head signifies frustration.
- Finger pointing to head signifies “use your head”, “think carefully”.

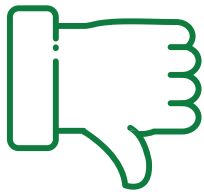


# Dress



- Physical appearance is the first sign of status in society
- Men and women in most urban areas wear standard Western style clothing.
- There remains a rich heritage of traditional dress worn in more casual contexts with women wearing long flowing robes and headscarves in bright colours.
- Traditional style of dress for women is called “*iro and buba*” (pronounced ee-ro boo-bah): *buba* is a top or blouse and *iro* is the wrapper or skirt made of colourful material that wraps around waist and is traditionally ankle length, worn with a head scarf (*gele*)
- Traditional dress for men is an agbada - long loose-fitting shirt or robe (half-way down the thigh) worn with pants. A *fila* is a traditional cap worn by men.

# Taboos



*Nigeria is a multi tribal country with different ethnic nations having very different cultural values. Most cultures have been greatly influenced by foreign religious beliefs (Islam and Christianity) and Westernization. Cultural related taboos in the large cities like Lagos, Abuja, or Port Harcourt are rare but this may not be the case in most rural areas.*

- Whistling.
- Consuming pork for practicing Muslims.

- Impolite to use left hand to give or receive anything as it is considered unhygienic.
- Sale and use of alcohol are prohibited in regions of predominant practicing Muslims.
- Depicting the Prophet Muhammed in art form.
- Dogs are considered unclean in Muslim faith.
- Discussion of Boko Haram, militant group.



# Food

- Food is an important part of Nigerian life. With so many different cultures and regions, food can vary greatly.
- Seafood, beef, poultry, and goat are the primary sources of protein.
- Rice is eaten throughout the country.
- In southern areas a variety of soups containing a base of tomatoes, onions, red pepper, and palm oil are prepared with vegetables such as okra and meat or fish.
- Beans and root vegetables are universal in most areas.
- In northern areas grains such as millet, barley and wheat are a large part of the diet.
- Many dishes are flavoured with onions, palm oil, and chilies.



**Egusi soup**

# Interesting Facts

- The population of Nigeria is expected to grow to 392 million by 2050 which will make it the 4<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world.
- It has the largest population and economy in Africa. Referred to as “The Giant of Africa”.
- Nigerians are very title conscious and the most sought-after title is chief.
- Nigeria was the first African country to host a television station and now has the largest network in the continent.
- World’s largest diversity of butterflies.
- Often confusion between Nigeria and neighbouring country of Niger. Nigeria is an Anglophone and coastal country and Niger is a smaller Francophone, landlocked country (22.5 mil).
- Nigeria sends the most students overseas for post secondary education of any African country.
- Most of the national heroes of Nigeria are no longer alive. They are national heroes because of their struggles for independence and democracy:

- Present day national heroes are influential both in Nigeria and internationally: Prof. Wole Soyinka: Nobel Prize winner for literature; Prof. Gabriel Oyibo: Nobel Prize nominee for Physics; Dr. Philip Emeagwali: Inventor and one of the fathers of the internet; Sade Adu: International Musician and Multiple Grammy winner; Adebayo Ogunlesi: one of the top five bankers in Wall Street; Prof. Rilwanu Lukman: President of OPEC; Cardinal Francis Arinze: likely to be the next and first black Pope of Roman Catholic church; and Mrs. Okonjo Iweala: Vice president World Bank and Hakeem Olajuwon: Formally of Houston Rockets NBA.
- Nigeria and Canada share a lot in common as former British Colonies and countries that operate with federal constitutions. Both countries are members of the Commonwealth of Nations.
- Nigeria recognises the role Canada played in demanding democracy during the days of military dictatorship.
- Many educated Nigerians have fond memories of being taught by one of thousands of Canadian volunteer teachers that were posted throughout the nation from the 1960s into the 1980s, with organisations such as CUSO and WUSC.
- Canada is highly regarded for having led the Commonwealth nations’ condemnation of the previous military regime’s widespread human rights abuses.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:

## Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- |   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| ■ Inquire about family.   | ■ Provide a separate Halal food prep area in lunchroom (i.e. separate microwave for non-pork items). | ■ Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.                         | ■ Provide cultural information to other employees.   |
| ■ Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Nigeria and other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards. | ■ Provide private area for prayer, if required.  | ■ Translate training documents if required.                                   | ■ Provide information to newcomers on African grocery stores or stores which may carry African foods |
|   | ■ Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, sports tournaments.               | ■ Create spaces for socialization during breaks.                              |  |
|   |  | ■ Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture. |  |

# East Asia and Pacific

East Asia and Pacific, as a region, has **37 countries** of vast diversity.

**China**, and the **Philippines** were selected for this employer guide as the predominant countries in the region that are contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry



# CHINA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 1.4 billion

**Area:** 9,596,960 square kilometres. Approximately the same size as Canada

**Capital:** Beijing

**Currency:** Chinese Yuan or renminbi (RMB)  
(1 CAN \$ = 5 Chinese Yuan)

**Climate:** extremely diverse; tropical in south to subarctic in north

**Language(s):** Standard Chinese or Mandarin (official; Putonghua, based on the Beijing dialect), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan, (Hokkien-Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka dialects, minority languages

**Ethnic groups:** Han Chinese (91.6%), Zhuang (1.3%), other (7.1%)

**Religion(s):** Buddhist (18.2%), Christian (5.1%), Muslim (1.8%), folk religion (21.9%), Hindu (0.1%), Jewish (0.1%), other (0.7%), unaffiliated 52.2%

## Public Holidays

January 1st ..... New Year's Day

February 12th ..... Chinese New Year/Spring Festival (2021)

April 4<sup>th</sup> ..... Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping)

May 1<sup>st</sup> ..... Labour Day (May Day)

June 25<sup>th</sup> ..... The Dragon Boat Festival

October 1<sup>st</sup> ..... The Mid-Autumn Festival

October 1<sup>st</sup> ..... National Day





### Education:

Literacy rate 96.8%. Compulsory education from ages 6–14. Three different sectors: primary (ages 6–11), junior middle school, (ages 12–14) senior middle school (ages 15–17), and post secondary education, vocational, and technical.

### Government:

Government Type: Communist party-led state

Chief of State: President

Head of Government: Premier

### Elections:

Every 5 years by indirect election for unlimited terms

### Natural Resources:

coal, iron ore, petroleum, natural gas, mercury, tin, tungsten, antimony, manganese, molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, rare earth elements, uranium,

hydropower potential (world's largest), arable land.

### Agriculture:

rice, wheat, potatoes, corn, tobacco, peanuts, tea, apples, cotton, pork, mutton, eggs, fish and shrimp.

### Food Production:

- Produces one fourth of world's grain and provides one fifth of world's population with less than 10 percent of world's arable land.
- China ranks first in the world in terms of the production of cereals, cotton, fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, eggs and fishery products.
- First and largest exporter of tea in the world.
- Leading producer of mushrooms in the world.

- China produces more than 100 million tons of 5 food commodities.
- 130 million farm households will benefit from industrialized organization in agriculture. Large dairy farms of 100 plus standing animals will account for 38% of all farms; 50% of swine farms will be large with slaughter population of over 500.
- China's growing urban class has created a change from traditionally grain-oriented diets to the largest consumers of meat in the world.
- Corn is the most produced food commodity in China followed by rice and fresh vegetables.
- Pork is the most produced animal protein followed by beef and chicken.

- In response to changing needs, the central government has encouraged intensive agricultural production.

### Communications:

Approximately 1871 newspapers, 731 million Internet consumers (Largest Internet market in the world), 1.6 billion mobile phone consumers (Largest 5G market in the world). All broadcast media owned, or affiliated with, communist party of China. No privately owned television or radio stations. State run television has over 2000 channels. People increasingly accessing online and satellite television.

### Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$19 trillion CAN.

# China is the first and largest exporter of tea in the world.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- The Chinese language is the oldest and most complex languages in the world.
- There are many dialects of Chinese but only three are spoken widely throughout the country.
- The official dialect is Mandarin and is the language taught in most schools, used on TV and in the media.
- Cantonese is the second most common language and is used widely in Hong Kong.
- The language is so complex and vastly different than many other languages that translation and interpretation proves extremely difficult.
- Speech is often ambiguous in order to maintain harmony or loss of face.

- Seldom give a direct “no” or negative response even if they don’t agree.
- Men generally speak louder than women.

### Non-Verbal:

- Although the verbal languages cannot be understood by all Chinese, the written language can be understood by all who comprehend Chinese.
- The alphabet is made of over 40,000 characters.
- Most importance is placed on the eyes when expressing or recognizing emotions.
- Direct eye contact is favoured as non-verbal cues are communicated through their eyes.
- Common to display happiness but to keep anger, criticism and sadness inside and share only with family or close friends.
- A smile or laugh is not uncommon when relaying bad news to diffuse uncomfortable situations.

- Most comfortable standing just over an arms' length from each other. Meeting strangers the distance will be farther.
- Silence signifies politeness and respect. Pausing before giving a response indicates thought and consideration.

### Value Systems:

- Core value is harmony.
- Age is most respected.
- Respect and honour is relied heavily upon.
- Family is very important. Obedience to parents is integral to a sense of security and stability.
- Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are the three main practicing belief systems.
- Due to the vast ethnicities in China people hold many other religious beliefs.
- Luck is a widespread belief.
- Faith in the Communist government is subsiding with some Chinese looking for other ideologies.

- Group takes priority over the individual.
- High uncertainty avoidance meaning that following rules and norm is best as less risk of failure, more predictable outcomes.
- Leadership is very important; personal qualities of a supervisor are important but not as important as leadership abilities.
- Money is the most important motivator of job performance.
- Hard work and productivity are valued.
- Failure is owned by the individual. If you fail, you are to blame.
- Class hierarchies in China exist and are dependent on education, occupation, and most significantly financial.
- Women have equal status in name and government is striving for gender equality, but it is still a male dominated society.
- Personal relationships are extremely important but take time to foster.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Staff are used to having guidance from supervisor so important to clearly explain importance of independent work.

underlying meaning is to check for clarification several times.

- Chinese term for negotiation, *tan pan*, means to discuss/to judge. Seen as a method for building trust and harmony.

## Be discrete and indirect when discussing a workplace problem.

- Very different learning style and work approach. Leaders there to motivate workers so when leader is not present tardiness and absenteeism may occur.
- Avoid directly criticizing or pointing out mistakes.
- Be discrete and indirect when discussing a workplace problem.
- Rushing a conversation may result in uneasiness and lack of information exchange.
- Best way to navigate both ambiguity and get to the
- Allow time to communicate, avoid filling in silence, or interrupting.
- Nodding may not mean agreement. May just mean understanding.
- Government plays a significant role in daily activities and the general expectation of widespread surveillance and fear of being watched may carry over in Canada. Action may reflect this in conversation—hesitation to express opinion, speak negatively about issues in China or Canada or in the workplace.



## Taboos

- Whistling.
- Writing in red pen.
- Conversations about sensitive China/Taiwan relations, air pollution, family planning, mental health problems.
- Do not draw similarities between China and Japan as East Asian countries are distinct and comparisons may appear insulting or ignorant.
- Criticizing the government or society.
- Casual posture as a leader, e.g. sitting on a table or slouching in a meeting.
- Public displays of emotion.

**Public displays of emotion are taboo.**



## Dress

- Neutral colours
- Conservative and formal in workplaces.
- Casual wear still somewhat conservative but jeans are acceptable.



## Gift Giving

- Tea, wine, gourmet food items or high-end liquors, high quality pens are examples of appropriate gift items; although food is not brought to a dinner party—implies host cannot provide enough.
- Gifts are not opened in the presence of the giver and often declined three times to not appear greedy.
- Gift of white, black or blue are considered bad luck.
- At Chinese New Year it is tradition to give a gift of money in a red envelope to children.
- Gifts are given and received with two hands.



# Punctuality

- Punctuality is very important for both work and social functions. Cancellation or lateness is a serious insult.
- Time is something that should NOT be wasted.
- Chinese write the date differently than in Canada. Year first, then month, then the day: August 29, 2020 would be 2020/08/29.

**Cancelation  
or lateness  
is a serious  
insult.**



# Greetings

- Nodding or bowing slightly is the standard greeting but a light handshake is also common for both male and women.
- Eye contact is important in greetings.
- Traditionally there is no close contact in public and touching kept to a minimum.
- Introductions tend to be more formal than familiar.
- Names are listed in a different order than Western names: Surname, given name, given name. Surname usually one syllable, and given names often joined. E.g. Li Jintao (Li=Surname Jin=given name Tao=given name)
- Address each other by full name. Respectful to address someone by surname and title. Disrespect and uncommon to address someone by given name only. A supervisor may address subordinate with given names.
- Highly regard status and titles and will not be comfortable calling a supervisor by first name.
- Westernized names may be adopted upon arrival to Canada for ease of pronunciation, e.g. Tony Li
- 270 million people have 1 of 3 popular surnames Li, Wang, Zhang.
- Visitors to factories or schools are often greeted with applause.



# Food

- The concept of Chinese food in Canada is very different from the cuisine typically eaten in China.
- Rice and noodles are the major staple food eaten daily.
- All animal meat is consumed; pork is most popular.
- Foods rarely seen in Western cultures but consumed in China are snake, frogs, chicken feet, pig ears, intestines, dog meat, scorpions, bamboo shoots, tree fungi and lotus pods.
- Alcohol is consumed; mostly spirits or beer.
- Scallions, green onions, bean sprouts, cabbage, and ginger also staple foods.
- Communal eating is the norm with shared dishes placed on table.
- Bite sized pieces so no knife or fork required. Chop sticks used.
- No removal of bones in meat or fish.
- Tea is had at most meals.
- Dessert is generally sliced fruit.



**Bite sized pieces so no knife or fork required.**

# Interesting Facts

- China is the oldest civilization (approx. 6000 BC).
- World's longest used written language.
- Largest population in the world (over 1.4 billion people).
- Third largest country in the world. Canada is the second.
- The Great Wall of China is the largest man-made structure in the world, extending 8,850 km.
- Fortune cookies are not actually a traditional Chinese custom. They were invented by an employee in the Hong Kong Noodle Company in San Francisco.
- China has been the source of many inventions and innovations: compass, gunpowder, papermaking and paper money, printing, mechanical clock, earthquake monitor, silk, acupuncture, iron smelting, row crop farming, movable type printing.
- China has only one time zone.
- Vast discoveries in math and science have been made by the Chinese.
- In China, every year is represented by one of 12 animals: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig.
- Since 1957 there have been 13 Nobel prize winners from China.
- Many historians think that soccer began in China around 1000 BC.
- Ping-pong was not invented in China, even though it is one of China's most popular games.
- Stamp collecting is the number one hobby in China.
- Instead of black, white is the Chinese color for grieving and funerals.
- Famous Chinese and Chinese American actors include Jackie Chan, Lucy Liu, Bruce Lee, Chow Yun, Jet Li, and Zhang Ziyi, pop singer Cui Jian.
- The celebration of the Chinese New Year lasts 15 days.
- Chinese mathematics have made early contributions to the field, including a place value system.
- The thirteenth floor is usually left out from hotels, buildings, and vehicle licence plates, and the number four is not used in phone numbers due to bad luck associated with these numbers.
- Karaoke is a very popular pastime.
- Most popular sports of interest are badminton, soccer, ping pong, basketball and baseball.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family.
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in China or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, ping pong tournaments, karaoke parties.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities to do during breaks, e.g. ping pong, chess, mahjong, playing cards, etc. and attempt to source these items.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers in Mandarin to place in the break room.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide information to newcomers on Chinese grocery stores or stores which may carry Chinese foods.

# PHILIPPINES



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 109 million

**Area:** 300,000 square kilometres 33 times smaller than Canada. An archipelago made up of 7107 islands

**Capital:** Manila

**Currency:** Philippine pesos (PHP)  
(1 CAN \$ = 36 Philippine peso)

**Climate:** Tropical marine; northeast monsoon (November to April); southwest monsoon (May to October)

**Language(s):** Filipino (based on Tagalog) and English; eight major dialects – Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinan

**Ethnic groups:** Tagalog (28%), Cebuano (13%), Ilocana/Ilokana (9%), Visaya/Bisaya (7.6%), Hiligaynon (7.5%), Bicol (6%), Waray (3.4%), Chinese Filipino (2.5%), Other (22%)

**Religion(s):** Roman Catholic (80.6%), Protestant (8.2%) Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (2.7%), National Council of Churches in the Philippines (1.2%), other Protestant (4.3%), Muslim (5.6%), tribal religions (.2%), other (1.9%), none (.1%)

### Public Holidays

January 1st	.....New Year's Day
February 12 <sup>th</sup>	.....Chinese New Year (2021)
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	.....Maundy Thursday
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	.....Good Friday
April 13 <sup>th</sup>	.....Easter Sunday
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	.....Labour Day
June 12 <sup>th</sup>	.....Independence Day (from Spain in 1898 and July 4 <sup>th</sup> , 1946 from US)
August 21	.....Ninay Aquina Day
August 31 <sup>st</sup>	.....National Heroes Day
November 1s	.....All Saints Day
November 2 <sup>nd</sup>	.....All Souls Day
December 25 <sup>th</sup>	.....Christmas Day
December 26 <sup>th</sup>	.....Boxing Day



## Education:

Literacy rate 98%. Compulsory education from ages 7 to 12. Three different sectors: primary (ages 7-12 years), junior high school (ages 12-16) senior high school (ages 16-18), and post secondary education; university, technical/vocational.

## Government:

Federal Presidential Republic

Chief of State: President

Head of Government: President

## Elections:

Every six years

## Natural Resources:

Oil, natural gas, coal, fertile land, geothermal energy and hydroelectricity, copper, timber, nickel, silver, gold, cobalt and salt

## Agriculture:

Rice, fish, live-stock, poultry, bananas, coconut, corn, sugarcane, mangoes, pineapple, cassava

## Food Production:

- 9<sup>th</sup> largest producer of rice in the world
- One of the largest coconut producers in the world.

- Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for 25-30% of the labour force.
- Farming and fishing industries face high levels of food insecurity as a result of natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes and floods.
- Decades of conflict has intensified poverty and food insecurity in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, the country's poorest region.
- The food production accounts for almost 50% of the entire output of the manufacturing industry in the Philippines.

- The food manufacturing industry has been recognized as a priority industry for attracting foreign investments.

## Communications:

Over 100 newspapers, 56 million Internet consumers, 134 million mobile phone consumers, 400 TV stations, 1500 cable TV providers and 2 million subscribers and 1400 radio stations.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$441 billion CAN.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Love to converse but speak in quiet gentle tones.
- Revere harmony; likely loud if excited and happy.
- Ask personal questions, e.g. age, marriage, children, salary, how much you've paid for something (out of concern you might have been cheated).
- Open to ideas and information but attitude may not change readily.
- Eager to please so likely to say "yes" to various offers. Don't want to offend with a "no" so "yes" could mean several things "maybe", "I agree", or "no".

- To ensure a yes, confirm in writing.
- The cell phone is the number one means of communication.

### Non-Verbal:

- Fond of non-verbal communication.
- Hand gestures, pursed lips, raised eyebrows or eyes are used to communicate.
- Less dependent on spoken words.
- Have an intuitive sense called *pakiramdam* for what is implied and not stated.
- Smile constantly; however, not indicative of pleasure or amusement. May laugh or smile in situations that may be considered inappropriate. Smiles hide embarrassment, nervousness or feelings of insecurity.

- Smile may indicate non commitment to answer a question.
- Signs of resentment are through non-verbal communications; reduced interaction, absence in work related social gatherings.

### Value Systems:

- Family is the main source of support and stability. A whole family could be shamed by the action of one member.
- Adherence to tradition provides stability, particularly rituals that maintain relationships.
- Matriarchal society. Women hold high positions in society, politics, academics and professional world.
- Level of education is highly regarded.

- Deeply religious, large majority Roman Catholic. Sunday is a day for religion and family. Disrespectful to ask someone to work on this day.
- Favour democracy, individual freedom, education and freedom of the press.
- Status conscious; however, everyone is deemed worthy of respect. The more important the person the more modest and generous the expectation.
- Class system is categorized as upper, middle and low. Upper class are made of a small percentage of population but own or earn majority of wealth.
- Social contacts are more important than business ones.
- Privileges and favouritism are expected among Filipinos

**Filipinos smile constantly; however, not indicative of pleasure or amusement.**

but not among non-Filipinos. Established from values and beliefs of *bayanihan* (cooperation) and *pakikisama* (one with the group). Also, *utang na loob* (a deep sense of gratitude) to show appreciation or return a favour to someone and *padrino* (godfather); using a person of influence or position to get things done faster.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Defined by work. Important to motivate by recognizing work well done. Criticism of work may be taken as a personal failure.
- People who lose temper are not respected. Shameful to show anger in public.
- Reprimand calmly and privately.
- Provide feedback confidentially and constructively for areas of improvement.
- Individuals act in the context of a group with family being the most important group.
- High value on consensus. Group must be sought for decisions or problem solving.

- Low uncertainty avoidance; behavior exhibits flexibility and adaptability. Letter of the law not strictly adhered to and there are not regulations that cover every situation; however, companies do adopt extensive in-house regulations for their employees.
- Tendency to become personally involved in problems rather than using rules and laws to solve them.
- Most truth comes from direct feelings.
- Display a unique sense of humour. Able to laugh or make jokes in good or bad times. Can laugh at their own mistakes.
- Generally cautious and not risk takers.
- Not comfortable giving feedback for fear of hurting a person's feelings.
- Value work and look up to their superior to provide guidance. Ability as a manager to provide guidance and feedback without being critical is appreciated.
- Prefer to save face than feel shame (*hiya*) and may not speak with manager about difficulty had in workplace.

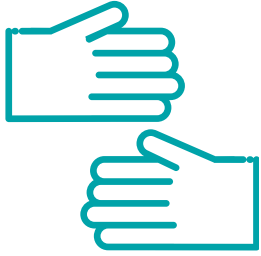
- Team members may often be living away from family and friends and forge strong bonds with their work mates. Important for a manager to understand this dynamic and foster a supportive work environment.
- To minimize dissention, it is important to engage with

staff, build trust, foster strong relationships. More likely staff will speak openly about problems within the work environment if trust is built.

- Be firm, transparent of expectations, operational procedures and standards and praise good work.



## Gestures



- Filipinos grow up in extended families and are rarely alone; therefore, solitude may make them uncomfortable. The gesture of joining someone sitting alone at work, on a bus, at the cinema is common.
- Most North American gestures are recognized by Filipinos.
- Indicating “two” is done by holding up the ring and little finger.
- Beckoning someone with the index finger and palm up can be considered rude. Palm down and make a scratching motion is used.
- Pointing is considered insulting. Indicating with a glance, slight nod or pursing lips towards an object or a direction is used.
- Standing with hands on hips can be interpreted as aggressive.
- Touching someone’s elbow lightly is used to attract attention. Not tapping on the shoulder.



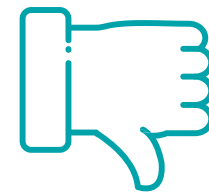
## Gift Giving

- Gift giving is an important part of society.
- Flowers and food are the most common gifts.
- The custom of not opening gifts in the presence of the gift giver.

## Dress



- Daily wear in the workplace is often informal and casual due to heat and humidity of the country. In places without uniforms, dark trousers and a white, short-sleeved shirt for men; without a tie and white, long-sleeved blouses for women and skirts or trousers for women. Despite the simplicity, clothes are neat, clean and fashionable.
- Very style conscious in social gatherings.



## Taboos

- Public displays of anger or other outbursts of emotion are not acceptable.
- Being direct and straightforward.
- Questioning elders and authorities.
- Addressing authorities and elders on first name basis.
- Criticizing anything related to the country, people and culture.



# Punctuality

- Punctuality is practiced in the workplace. Social gatherings tend to have less stringent rules for punctuality.
- May have difficulty saying “No” to work assignments. Assess capability first and clarify deadlines, expectations and progress along the way.

**May have difficulty saying “No” to work assignments.**



# Greetings

- Standard greeting is a handshake, acceptable for male and women except for Muslim women.
- Traditionally there is no physical contact between men and woman in public. Men should wait for a Filipino woman to offer her hand.
- Close female friends hug and kiss upon greeting and close male friends may exhibit extended physical contact of their male friends such as holding hands or leaving an arm around friend’s shoulder.
- May greet each other by making eye contact followed by raising and lowering eyebrows.
- Most Filipinos have nicknames which they use in the workplace and may invite others to address them as such.





# Food

- Food is very important and strongly influenced by region.
- The standard Filipino greeting “Kumain ka na ba” translates to mean “Have you eaten?”.
- Rice is the most important source of food along with seafood and pork.
- *Adobo* is one of the most famous dishes in the Philippines. Adobo means “marinade” in Spanish. Chicken or pork marinated in a mixture of soya sauce and vinegar.
- *Sinigang* is a tamarind-based soup with fish, shrimp or pork.
- Alcohol is consumed at social events although public drunkenness is considered shameful.
- Mangoes and Lanzones are both popular fruits.
- Desserts are very common at both lunch and dinner. *Halo*
- *Halo* is layered dessert made of shaved ice, candied fruits and beans, purple yam ice cream and evaporated milk.
- *Pork lechon* is a popular dish during fiestas or social gatherings.



**Pork lechon**

# Interesting Facts

- Philippines is the English name for the country, while – Filipinas is both the Spanish and Filipino name for the Philippines. The people are called Filipinos in English, Spanish and Filipino, but many Filipinos still prefer to call themselves Pilipino and their country Pilipines.
- Third largest English-speaking country in the world.
- Chinese, Spanish, Arabic and American historical influences.
- 15-20 typhoons per year between July-October.
- 11 languages and eighty – seven dialects spoken.
- The Philippine’s national hero is Dr. Jose Rizal, a highly educated surgeon and novelist who could speak more than 20 languages. A central figure in the reform movement to gain independence against the Spanish.
- Filipinos have the longest Christmas celebrations. As early as August, Christmas songs are played in malls and restaurants in the Philippines. Celebrations last until January.
- Music is the foundation of Filipino culture. Live music, dancing and karaoke are extremely popular.
- Basketball is an extremely popular sport. The Philippines Basketball Association (PBS) is the second oldest in the world after only the NBA.
- Boxing is also very popular with one of the most famous boxers being Manny Pacquiao.
- One of the largest populations to work abroad- approximately 11 million Filipinos work abroad in over 100 countries.
- Manila, the Philippine capital, is the world’s most densely populated city in the world.
- Approximately 400 million text messages are sent amongst Filipinos every day, adding up to about 142 billion texts per year, earning them the title “the texting capital of the world”.
- The Philippines is home to three of the largest shopping malls in the world.
- There are over 1000 Filipino associations in Canada.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:

### Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide information on Filipino grocery stores or stores which may carry foods and spices from the Philippines.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, basketball tournaments, karaoke parties.
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in the Philippines, or other parts of the world e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks.



# South Asia



South Asia, as a region, has 8 countries of vast diversity.

**India** was selected for this employer guide as the predominant country in the region that is contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry





# INDIA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 1.4 billion

**Area:** 3,287,263 square kilometres. Approximately three times smaller than Canada

**Capital:** New Delhi

**Currency:** Indian Rupee (INR) (1 CAN \$ = 54 Indian rupees)

**Climate:** varies from tropical monsoon in south to temperate in north

**Language(s):** Hindi (43.6%), Bengali (8%), Marathi (6.9%), Telugu (6.7%), Tamil (5.7%), Gujarati (4.6%), Urdu (4.2%), Kannada (3.6%), Odia (3.1%), Malayalam (2.9%), Punjabi (2.7%), Assamese (1.3%), Maithili (1.1%), other (5.6%)

Hindi is the official language. English is the secondary official language used in political and business communication.

**Ethnic groups:** Indo-Aryan (72%), Dravidian (25%), Mongoloid and other (3%)

**Religion(s):** Hindu (79.8%), Muslim (14.2%), Christian (2.3%), Sikh (1.7%), other and unspecified (2%). No official religion.

**Public Holidays:** India is an extremely culturally diverse society which celebrates many holidays and festivals; however, there are only three national holidays:

January 26<sup>th</sup> .....Republic Day

August 15<sup>th</sup> .....Independence Day

October 2<sup>nd</sup> .....Ghandi Jayanti

**Popular Celebrations:** Each culture has many festivals. Below are the most popular amongst each:

*Hindu:* .....Diwali (\*lunar holiday-celebrated by Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains)

*Muslim:* ..... Ramadan, Eid ul Fitr, Eid ul Adha (lunar holidays\*)

*Buddhist:* ..... Buddah Purnima (lunar holiday \*)

*Jain:* ..... Paryushana Parva (August/September)

*Sikh:* ..... Vaisakhi (April 13/14)

*Christian:* ..... Easter, Christmas

\* Lunar holidays are based on the cycles of the moon – dates change annually.

**Education:**

Literacy rate 74.4%. Compulsory education from ages 6–14. Primary (ages 6–10), middle school, (ages 11–14) secondary (ages 14–16), senior secondary (ages 16–18), and post secondary education – universities, colleges, technical institutes.

**Government:**

Government Type: Federal parliamentary republic

Chief of State: President

Head of Government: Prime Minister

**Elections:**

Every 5 years for unlimited terms

**Natural Resources:**

coal, antimony, iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, rare earth elements, titanium ore, chromite, natural gas, diamonds, petroleum, limestone, arable land

**Agriculture:**

rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, lentils, onions, potatoes, dairy products, sheep, goats, poultry, fish.

**Food Production:**

- World's largest producer of milk, pulses and jute.
- World's second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, groundnut, vegetables, fruit and cotton.
- The population in India is increasing faster than the capacity to produce rice and wheat.
- World's second largest cattle population (199 million).
- World's second largest producer of fruit and vegetables.
- One of the leading producers of spices, fish, poultry, livestock and plantation crops.
- Second largest producer of silk and first largest consumer.
- Employs 60% of the population with only 2.4% of the world's land area.

**Communications:**

Approximately 100,000 newspapers and periodicals (largest in the world), 100 million sold per day. 251 million Internet

consumers, 1.2 billion mobile phone consumers. 230 million homes access cable and satellite TV. Government controls AM radio stations but FM stations are privately owned and becoming increasingly popular.

**Economy:**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$3.7 trillion CAN.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Hindi is the official language of India. English is the second most widely spoken official language in India.
- Polite and indirect.
- Talkative and people oriented.
- Speak calmly to those they are not close to in order to avoid conflict or confrontation.

**Speak calmly to those they are not close to in order to avoid conflict or confrontation.**

- Direct communication is reserved for relationships with a high level of trust or crucial situations.
- Negotiation is often used to communicate a point rather than arguing that one's own perspective is definitively correct. This may come across as ambiguous.
- Silent sometimes preferred rather than a direct "no". Has harsh implications. "I'll try" or "I'll do my best" is sometimes used as an indirect refusal. Pay attention to what is not said. The absence of agreement may be a sign of disagreement.

### Non-Verbal:

- Very expressive non-verbally
- Direct eye contact is generally appropriate if gaze is diverted every so often.
- Head tilt/wobble known as *accha* which can mean "yes", "no", "good" or "I understand". People may tilt their head to the side or move it to both sides (ear touching shoulder motion) to indicate agreement and understanding although it may appear noncommittal.
- Nod to acknowledge what is said out of politeness. Does not always mean understanding or agreement.

### Value Systems:

- Family is very important with the social structure focused on extended family. It is not uncommon to have several generations of family living in one home.
- Religion plays a significant role in the daily lives of most.

*Hindu:* ■ Majority of people are Hindu

*Islam:* ■ Belief in Allah as the prophet  
■ Muslims are people who believe in Islam  
■ Majority Shiite Muslims  
■ Pork and alcohol prohibited

*Sikh:* ■ Combines tenants of both Hinduism and Islam  
■ Belief in reincarnation  
■ No caste system

■ Caste system is very dominant in all aspects of life and determines the occupation and

status of all Hindus. 4 traditional castes divided into thousands of subcastes. This system has existed in India for thousands of years and although the government has outlawed discrimination based on caste, they remain a large part of politics and business. Very rigid structure of inequality.

- Status is determined by age, university degrees, caste and profession.
- Traditional male privilege is strong, and women do not have equal privileges in all castes.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Harmony, saving face, and avoidance of conflict are important. Avoiding conflict may be valued more than clarity of meaning. A 'no' may indicate that they wish to end the relationship.
- Check for clarification several times using open-ended questions.
- Confront privately but directly. May avoid the issue or

disregard the impact to prevent confrontation.

- Non-verbal communication when confronted may appear as disrespectful (no eye contact, looking at floor) however most often it is acknowledgement for fault and respect for age/ authority.
- Seniority, education and experience are highly valued in the workplace.
- Monetary remuneration and recognition are motivating factors.
- Establishing trust and confidence is critical for a positive working relationship and will go far to avoid conflict in the workplace.
- Often difficult to know if a colleague has a problem. Indirect mention of issue in conversation may occur. Listen carefully and watch for non-verbal signs.
- may be misinterpreted as dislike.
- Separation of professional and personal life in Canada could be misinterpreted as dislike.
- The culture of efficiency and the bottom line in Canada and its effect on quality of social



interaction in the workplace could be misinterpreted as dislike.

- May be difficult to practice Canada's management styles of inclusiveness and teamwork. India has top down work environments are rarely asked for input in decision making. Training and time will be required.
- All matters of disagreement or conflict should be dealt with in the most diplomatic manner possible.
- Tea is part of both formal and informal meetings.
- Be aware of tensions among Hindus and Muslims (historic ethnic conflicts in Kashmir-border between India and Pakistan)
- Bargaining and negotiating are part of the Indian lifestyle.
- *Baksheesh* is a term to describe an exchange of money often used as a show of gratitude, but also to solve problems, open doors, bribe or tip to speed up services.



# Punctuality

- Appreciate punctuality but may not practice it themselves.
- A less hurried attitude towards time. The concept of “time is money” is not something familiar.
- Strong sense that events are determined by fate, so time is not a major source of concern. Passivity is a virtue.
- Deadlines are not as rigid as in Canada.

# Names

- Most North Indians:** ..... Given Name - Father’s Name - Surname (Father’s)
- Married North Indian Women:** ..... Given Name - Husband’s Name - Surname (Husband’s)
- South Indians** ..... Name of ancestral village/town - Fathers Name - Given Name. The first two components are often very long and are simply initialized. E.g. E.V. Ramasamy
- South Indians:** ..... Name of Father/Husband - Given Name.
- Muslim men:** ..... Given name plus *bin* (son of) plus father’s name
- Muslim women:** ..... Given name plus *binti* (daughter of) plus father’s name. Some married women will attach their husband’s name after their father’s.
- Sikhs:** ..... Singh as the middle name for all males. Sikhs also use “Kaur” as the middle name for all women.

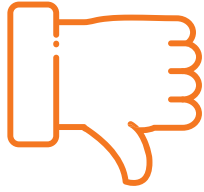
*Some people have started using more “westernized” naming conventions by taking a surname/family-name that carries over from generation to generation.*



# Greetings

- Common for people to greet with the traditional Hindu greeting of “*Namaste*” (‘I greet the divine within you’), pressing palms together, below chin, near heart and gently nod or bow slightly.
- Namaste is useful where a handshake may not be acceptable.
- Prefer not to touch people when it can be avoided but may touch someone’s arm or hand when speaking so long as the person is the same gender. Personal contact between the genders is kept minimal throughout most of India. Hugging, kissing and holding hands are not customary.
- Questions asked upon first meeting might seem to be quite forward or frank by Canadian expectations (e.g. ‘How much do you earn?’). However, these kinds of questions are commonplace in India.
- Males speak more conservatively to females.
- Appropriate for men and women to shake hands; however, advisable to wait for a woman to extend her hand first. Some Muslim or Hindu men and women may not wish to touch a person of the opposite gender.

# Taboos



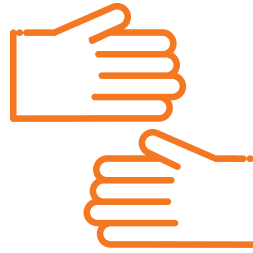
- Whistling or winking. Both actions are considered sexually suggestive in India.
- Pointing beckoning. Pointing the index finger towards someone is considered accusatory. Use whole palm facing down fingers curled under to beckon.
- Standing with hands on hips suggests that anger or ready to argue.
- Touching someone on the top of the head is deemed to be insensitive and offensive. The head is considered the holiest part of the body.
- Displaying the soles of one's feet or touching people with one's feet is considered rude. Feet are thought to be the dirtiest part of the body.
- Drawing parallels between India and other countries such as Pakistan or Bangladesh cause offense.
- Discussing tensions between Pakistan and India. Sensitive topic for some Indians and can evoke a strong emotional response.



# Gift Giving

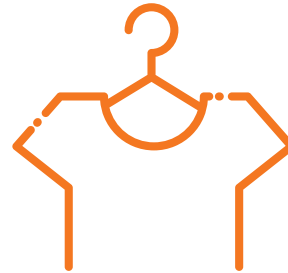
- Chocolates or flowers are most appropriate gifts – frangipani flowers are associated funerals.
- Muslims consider dogs unclean. Do not give gifts with images of dogs to Indian Muslims.
- No gifts made of leather are exchanged due to respect for the cow.
- Black or white are unlucky colours.
- Gifts are not opened in the presence of the gift giver.

# Gestures



- To beckon someone, palm down a scooping motion is used. Palm up with one finger motioning at a person is rude.
- Whole hand or chin is used to signal to something. Never pointing
- Grasping earlobes expresses remorse or honesty.
- An apology can be given by tapping someone's shoulder and then tapping own forehead.
- Standing with hands on hips may be interpreted as angry and aggressive.
- Head tilt/wobble may mean *yes, no, maybe, or I don't understand*.

# Dress



- Men wear dress shirts and dress pants. No shorts. Social or festive occasions a kurta pajama is acceptable.
- Women must keep upper arms, chest, back and legs covered. Long sleeve blouse and long

- pants at a workplace. Social or festive occasions a salwar kameez (long shirt, baggy pants and scarf) or sari is worn.
- Hindus do not wear leather of any kind as cows are sacred—shoes, belts, briefcases, handbags.



# Food

- Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork. Most dishes use vegetables, chicken and lamb.
- Food is eaten with the right hand only as the left hand was traditionally used for hygienic purposes and considered unclean.
- Washing hands (and mouths for Hindus) before and after a meal is important.

## Most popular traditional dishes:

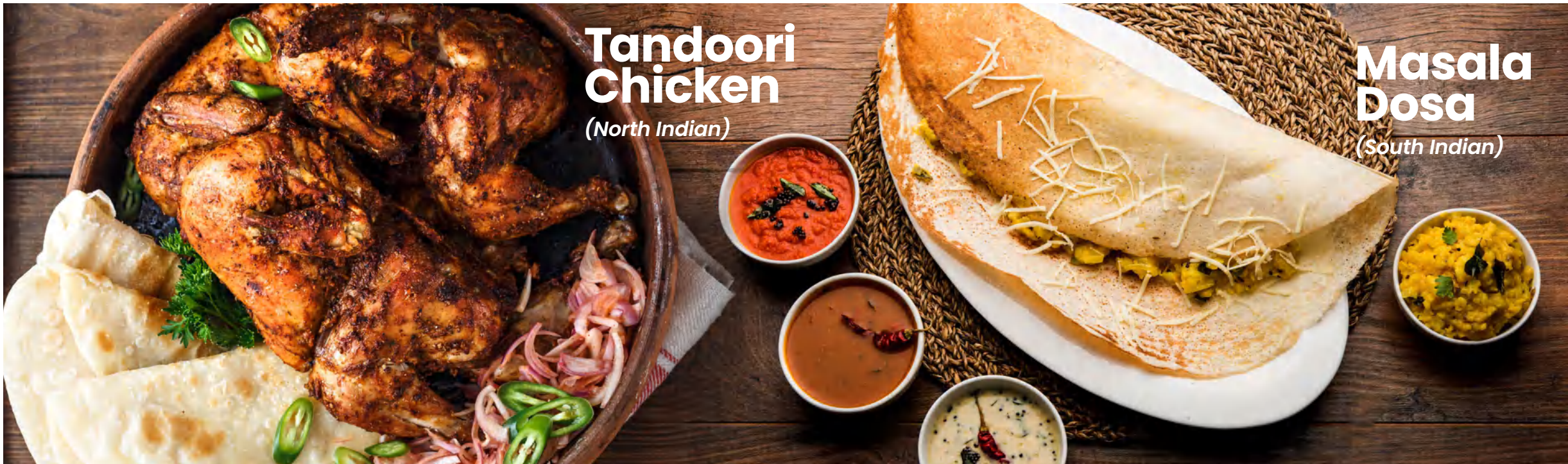
### **North Indian:**

Bendi Baji (okra), palak paneer (spinach with cottage cheese), dhal makni (lentils in creamy sauce), tandoori chicken, butter chicken, lamb or mutton kurma (curries), Bombay duck or pomfrits and Goan coconut fish curries, prawn curry from Kerala; fried rice or saffron rice and nan or tandoori roti and North Indian breads.

### **South Indian:**

Vegetarian rice and lentil preparations: masala dosa (thin crepes stuffed with mashed potato and onion) idlis (steamed filled rice cakes), vadas (savory donuts); uttapams (pizza pancakes), Kerala style beef, milk based deserts and kaapi (filter coffee)

- It is common to be offered a cup of chai (spiced tea) when visiting someone's home or workplace.
- Expectation that the guest will accept what is offered (especially chai).
- Many abstain from alcohol for religious reasons.



**Tandoori Chicken**  
(North Indian)

**Masala Dosa**  
(South Indian)

# Interesting Facts

- Hinduism and Buddhism were born in India.
- After British rule of India ended in 1947, British India was divided into primarily Hindu India and mostly Muslim Pakistan. Centuries old resentment between Hindus and Muslims has caused warfare between both countries and continues in present day.
- Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most heroic figures in Indian's history for his non-violent independence movements against British rule and in South Africa advocated for civil rights of Indians. Considered the *Father of India*. Inspired future world leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr.
- India is the largest producer of films in the world. The term "Bollywood" was derived from Bombay (former name for Mumbai) and Hollywood.
- Shah Rukh Khan is the most successful film star in the world. India's own Tom Cruise.
- India has emerged as one of the fastest growing IT sectors in the world.
- The value of "pi" used in mathematics was first calculated by the Indian mathematician Budhayana in 6th century.
- Snakes and Ladders originated in India. Earlier known as Moksha Patamu, the game was initially invented as a moral lesson about *karma* to be taught to children.
- Yoga was invented in India, approximately 26,000 years ago.
- Cricket is India's national sport. Soccer, Kabaddi (traditional Indian team sport) wrestling, badminton, field hockey, tennis are also very popular.
- Authors from India that may be familiar in Canada: Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdi, V.S. Naipaul.
- Deepa Mehta is an Indo-Canadian film maker best known for her Elements Trilogy: *Fire, Earth and Water*. Three films which present controversial issues of social reform.
- India is the world's second-largest English-speaking country.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:

### Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in India or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide food prep areas, microwaves, fridges that are separate from any meat items.
- Provide a private area to pray for Muslim staff; if required.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers in Hindi to place in the break room.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Provide information to newcomers on Indian grocery stores or stores which may carry Indian foods.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide locations of Indian movie theatres (larger Canadian cities have these).



# Europe and Central Asia

Europe and Central Asia, as a region, has **58 countries** of vast diversity.

**Russia** and **Ukraine** were selected for this employer guide as the predominant countries in the region that are contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry.



# UKRAINE



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 44 million

**Area:** 603,550 square kilometres.  
Approximately 17 times smaller than Canada.

**Capital:** Kiev

**Currency:** Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH)  
(1 CAN \$ = 19 Ukrainian hryvnia)

**Climate:** Temperate continental; Mediterranean on Crimean coast, winters vary from cool along Black Sea to cold inland; warm summers, hot in south.

**Language(s):** Ukrainian (official) 67.5%, Russian (29.6%), other (2.9%)

**Ethnic groups:** Ukrainian (77.8%), Russian (17.3%), other (4.9%)

**Religion(s):** Ukraine Orthodox (75%), Catholicism, (23%), Others (2% Protestant, Muslim, Jewish)

### Public Holidays:

January 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	New Year's Day
January 7 <sup>th</sup> .....	Russian Orthodox Christmas Day
January 25 <sup>th</sup> .....	Tatiana Day ( <i>Unofficial holiday</i> )
February 23 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Defender of the Fatherland Day
March 8 <sup>th</sup> .....	International Women's Day
April 12 <sup>th</sup> .....	Easter
May 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Labour Day
May 9 <sup>th</sup> .....	Victory Day
June 7 <sup>th</sup> .....	Orthodox Pentecost
June 28 <sup>th</sup> .....	Constitution Day
August 24 <sup>th</sup> .....	Independence Day
October 14 <sup>th</sup> .....	Day of the Defenders of Ukraine
December 25 <sup>th</sup> .....	Catholic Christmas
December 31 <sup>st</sup> .....	New Year's Eve

*Week before Lent (Christian period 46 days before Easter of fasting and abstinence) a celebration of Maslenita occurs. Unofficial holiday. Russian equivalent of Mardi Gras.*

## Education:

Literacy rate 99%. Compulsory education from ages 6-18. Elementary (ages 6-10), Basic Secondary (ages 11-15), General Upper Secondary (ages 16-18). Post secondary programs include universities and technical/vocational institutes.

## Government:

Government Type: semi-presidential republic

Chief of State: President

Head of Government: Premier

## Elections:

Every 5 years (eligible for a second term)

## Natural Resources:

iron ore, coal, manganese, natural gas, oil, salt, sulfur, graphite, magnesium, titanium, kaolin, nickel, mercury, timber, arable land

## Agriculture:

grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, vegetables, beef, dairy

## Food Production:

- Ukraine has a rich and favourable climate which makes crop production highly developed. 56% of its total land area is arable so Ukrainian producers can grow and rear a huge variety of cereal crops, fruits, vegetables, and livestock.
- Ukraine has developed into one of Central Europe's food production and processing powerhouses.
- Outputs of grain and potatoes are one of the highest in Europe.
- One of the world's largest producers of sugar beets and sunflower oil.
- Livestock output lower than crops but larger than most other European countries.
- Ukraine's total processed food and drink output totalled \$15 billion (2016).

- Vegetable/animal oils and confectionery are the two main product sectors which dominate the industry.
- Poultry meat is another rapidly expanding area, due to exposure to overseas markets such as China.

## Communications:

Approximately 25 newspapers. News outlets are predominantly owned by *oligarchs* (business magnates who control enough resources to influence national politics). Print media remains the main source to gather news;

# Poultry meat is another rapidly expanding area, due to exposure to overseas markets.

- Ukraine is moving its food safety laws in line with EU standards and is also progressing to full implementation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP).
- Investment levels in the sector are increasing, creating some opportunities for production, processing, and packaging equipment and machinery manufacturers.

however, social media has become a crucial component of information dissemination. 23 million Internet consumers approximately, 53 million mobile phone consumers. Satellite television is available.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$183 billion CAN.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian however until recently Russian was the language used and taught in school. People may switch from Ukrainian to Russian with ease and often within the same sentence.
- Men generally communicate in a direct and matter of fact manner.
- Women tend to be more non-verbal and indirect
- Language is expressive. Tone of voice may sometimes seem loud even in pleasant conversation.
- Tone may soften when speaking of sensitive topics; usually to the point and keep words concise. This can give the impression of bluntness when not intended.

- Ukrainian humour is very sarcastic, dry and quite direct. Often self deprecating and a lot of anecdotes.

### Non-Verbal:

- Not common to smile or make eye contact with strangers.
- With friends, colleagues, loved ones, eye contact is normal and a sign of respect, trust and intimacy.
- Personal space is somewhat closer than in Canada but mostly between friends and loved ones.
- Strong physical affection is generally only seen between couples of opposite genders.
- Physical gestures and animated while speaking or making a presentation.
- Making a fist with the thumb protruding between middle finger and index finger is an obscenity as is the symbol for 'Okay' (with the forefinger and the top of the thumb meeting to form a circle, with the other fingers stretched out).

## Value Systems:

- Ukraine is in transition from being a closed to open society with its values and norms changing along with it.
- Respect strength and patience.
- High value on homeland and family, including extended family and friends.
- Very status conscious. Two classes: rich and poor.
- The demise of Communism abolished structures many people depended on for stability. This stability is now being sought in religious, social groups and family.
- Ukrainians are deeply religious but not fundamentalist.
- The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the religion of Ukraine.
- Idealistic and confront reality with emotion yet also be theoretical and practical in decision making.
- Strong moral courage, desire for harmony and inclination to compromise and tolerate differences.

- Women not regarded as equal to men and usually hold lower level jobs to men, yet they have been carrying the heaviest load of society, working several jobs, taking care of children and often some farming. More female business leaders are slowly emerging and older women, particularly *babushkas* (grandmothers), are revered and willingly obeyed by all.
- Strong feelings about Russia. Love-hate relationship.
- Same sex relationships are not fully accepted and can still attract negative reaction.

## Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Presence of a strong, predictable leader/supervisor in the workplace reduces anxiety in many Ukrainians.
- Being outspoken was not valued or encourage historically thus it may be difficult to find out if there is a workplace issue due to fear of reprimand. Not comfortable giving feedback particularly if negative.

- Initiative has been repressed historically so unquestioning obedience is the norm.
- Building trust and personal relationship may encourage more interaction.

- Be clear and concise in communication. Do not try to be subtle and make recommendations for fear of interpersonal conflict. Use facts and technical detail.

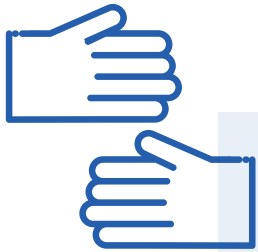
# Building trust and personal relationship may encourage more interaction.

- Tend to avoid talking or complaining to supervisor.
- Important to ask the same questions in different ways at different times.
- Tendency to do everything at the last minute may impact deadlines and quality of work.
- Important to address workplace issue privately and directly. Some may appear gruff and unsmiling it is important to remain calm and reinforce points in a strong voice, when appropriate.

- May still see the traditional dictatorial management style from the past being used which may involve public berating of staff.
- Decision making processes are one of the major areas of change in Ukrainian organizations. There is a more democratic, Western style of management emerging thus decisions being made and ideas developed through levels of supervision. Although still top down, more collaboration is being seen.

## Very inventive in problem solving. Historically faced with shortages and funds and have learned to be creative and improvise.

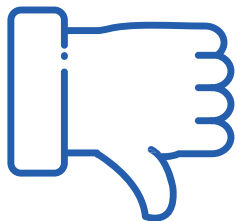
- Getting feedback from supervisor is acceptable.
- Extensive performance evaluations and yearly reviews are not common.
- Issues of sexual harassment, as it is understood in Canada, is not understood or accepted in Ukraine. Some gestures considered inappropriate between work colleagues may be commonplace in Ukraine, even if unwelcome.
- Job satisfaction, money, loyalty, good working conditions and fear of failure, are all strong motivators for Ukrainians.
- Very inventive in problem solving. Historically faced with shortages and funds and have learned to be creative and improvise.
- Very social at work, often celebrating personal milestones such as anniversaries, birthdays, child's birthday. Often most important conversation take place in break room or in smoking areas.
- Very little is done without using *blat*. Similar to *wasta* in Middle Eastern cultures, *blat* is the term for connections or influence. An exchange of favours. Gifts, monetary or others are part of the exchange. Although used as a form of corruption in high levels of business and government, the expectation may carry over into the workplace. The practice isn't openly accepted or condoned but also not condemned and may be subtly implied; more so in professions as Medicine, Dentistry, Public Service- gifts to ensure medical treatment, promotions, higher grades.
- Although many Ukrainians speak Russian in everyday life it is respectful to have any training manuals translated into Ukraine.



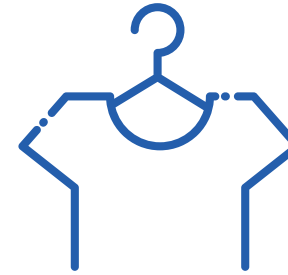
## Gestures

- Making a fist with the thumb protruding between middle finger and index finger is a rude gesture.
- Making the symbol for 'Okay' (with the forefinger and the top of the thumb meeting to form a circle, with the other fingers stretched out) is considered very rude.
- The action of pulling a front tooth indicates making a promise.
- Talking to someone with hands in pocket is considered rude.
- Hitting one's chest expresses loyalty or telling the truth.
- A flick on one's own throat is an invite to drink.

## Taboos



- Referring to Ukraine as *The Ukraine*. Reminder of Soviet era and communist rule. Since 1991 it has been its own country and therefore just Ukraine.
- Ukrainians may criticize aspects of life in Ukraine; it is considered rude for non-Ukrainians to do so.
- Wearing a coat when entering a building, particularly a restaurant or theatre. Ukrainians do not sit on their coats.
- Whistling indoors is rude and bad luck.



## Dress

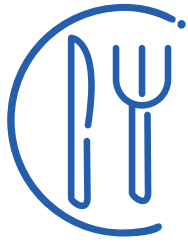
- Very similar to Canada with Western styles and trends.
- Attention to appearance is valued. Status is often shown through clothing and accessories.
- Similar cold winters as Canada so most know how to dress for the weather.



## Gift Giving

- Chocolates, sweets, baked goods or flowers.

- Making Ukraine and Russia comparisons. Ukraine is independent from Russia, yet Russia has a paternalistic view of Ukraine. Russians may see themselves as superior to Ukraine.
- Sitting on floor, ground or stairs is considered bad manners.
- Standing with hands in pockets when talking to someone.
- Gesturing with index finger is rude.



# Food

- *Borscht* – beet soup with vegetables, beef and dollops of sour cream.
- *Holubtsi* – cabbage roles with rice and meat.
- *Piroshki* (Perogy) –dough dumplings stuffed with a combination of cheeses, fish, meats, mushrooms and potatoes.
- *Deruny*- potato pancakes.
- *Kielbasa* – any type of meat sausage. Wording is Polish and sometimes *kubasa* is used to describe sausage.
- *Sour cream*- used as a condiment like North Americans use ketchup; used on everything from cucumber salads to hearty meat dishes.
- *Chicken Kiev*- was known as a gourmet treat, chicken stuffed with garlic and herb butter.
- *Rye Bread* – can serve as a meal on its own. Eaten with butter or topped with fish, eggs, cheese or meats.
- *Salad Olivier* – potatoes, vegetables, onions, hard-boiled eggs and mayonnaise with chicken, carrots, peas and apples often added.
- *Salo* – smoked pork fat.
- *Smalets*- pig lard with bacon bits, onion, garlic.
- *Syrniki*- sweet dumplings.
- *Horilka* – vodka made with herbs, berries and roots in strong alcohol, purest alcoholic beverage in the world.
- *Kvass* – a traditional cold non-alcoholic drink made from rye bread and malt.
- Most food in Ukraine is without GMO's.





# Interesting Facts

- There are 1.4 million Ukrainian people in Canada. 3<sup>rd</sup> largest population of Ukrainians behind Ukraine itself and Russia.
- Canada and Ukraine signed the Canada Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) in 2016 which removed 99% of tariffs between the two countries.
- 7 UNESCO World Heritage sites (6 cultural and 1 natural)
- Canada and Ukraine celebrated 125 years of Ukrainian immigration to Canada in 2016.
- Canada was the first Western country to recognize independence of Ukraine.
- One of the highest literacy rates in the world.
- Nominated a well-known comedian for president in 2019.
- The worst nuclear power plant disaster in the world took place in Chernobyl in 1986.
- Referred to as “the breadbasket of Europe” due to its ideal crop growing conditions.
- Pop culture musicians include Okean Elzy and Jamala.
- Ivan Franko, a famous poet is considered a hero.
- Intricately painted Ukrainian Easter eggs known as *Pysanka* are world renowned. Designs are written with beeswax, not painted.
- Soccer is the most popular sport with Andriy Shevchenko being the most well-known player.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Ukraine or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, movies, sporting activities.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required. Ensure translation is in Ukrainian not Russian although most speak both.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities they like to do during breaks. Attempt to source these items.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers from Ukraine or in Ukrainian to place in the break room.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide locations of churches if available and required.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide information to newcomers on Ukrainian stores which may carry Ukrainian foods or ingredients.
- Provide information of any cultural events organized by or for Ukrainian newcomers to Canada.

# RUSSIA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 144 million

**Area:** 17.1 Million square kilometres.  
Approximately twice the size of Canada.

**Capital:** Moscow

**Currency:** Russian rouble (RUB)  
(1 CAN \$ = 52 Russian roubles)

**Climate:** Winters cool along Black Sea coast to frigid in Siberia; summers vary from warm in the grasslands to cool along Arctic coast

**Language(s):** Russian (official) 85.7%, Tatar (3.2%), Chechen (1%), other (10%).

**Ethnic groups:** Russian (78%), Tatar (3.7%), Ukrainian (1.4%), Bashkir (1.1%), Chuvash (1%), Chechen (1%), other (10%), unspecified (3.9%).

**Religion(s):** Russian Orthodox (15–20%), Muslim (10–15%), Other Christian (2%).

### Public Holidays:

January 1st ..... New Year's Day

January 14th ..... Old-New Year Day

January 7th ..... Russian Orthodox Christmas Day

January 25th ..... Tatiana Day (Unofficial holiday)

January 7th ..... Russian Orthodox Christmas Day

February 23rd ..... Defender of the Motherland Fatherland Day

March 9th ..... International Women's Day

April 12th ..... Easter

May 1st ..... Labour Day

May 9th ..... Victory Day

June 12th ..... Russia Day

November 4th ..... United Day

December 31st ..... New Year's Eve

*Week before Lent (Christian period 46 days before Easter of fasting and abstinence) a celebration of Maslenita occurs. Unofficial holiday. Russian equivalent of Mardi Gras.*

## Education:

Literacy rate 98%.

Compulsory education from ages 6-15.

Elementary (ages 6-10),

Lower Secondary (ages 11-15),

General Upper Secondary (ages 16-18).

Other types of schools include Lyceums (specializing in math, science, and law; affiliated with universities) Gymnasiums (specialising in humanities and schools for gifted and talented; specializing in fine arts). Post secondary programs include universities and technical/vocational institutes.

## Government:

Government Type: semi-presidential federation

Chief of State: President

Head of Government: Premier

## Elections:

Every 6 years (President eligible for 2 consecutive terms)

## Natural Resources:

oil, natural gas, coal, strategic minerals, bauxite (main source of aluminum), rare earth elements, timber

## Agriculture:

grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, vegetables, fruit, beef, dairy

## Food Production:

- Largest exporter of wheat in the world (35 million tons in 2018)
- Fish exports also one of the largest sectors.

- Organic farming production standards have been created to meet the market demands.
- \$6 billion of foreign investment in the food, drink and tobacco industries.
- Exports in the food industry has surged in the past decade.
- Currently self sufficient in food production for the country.

## Communications:

Approximately 400 daily newspapers. 108 million Internet consumers, 229 million mobile phone consumers. State run television but also access to satellite and cable, 2400 public radio stations, 1 state owned.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$2.2 trillion CAN.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Direct and matter of fact.
- Language is very rich and expressive. Tone of voice may sometimes seem loud even in pleasant conversation.
- Tone may soften when speaking of sensitive topics, words are kept concise and too the point. This may give the impression of bluntness when that is not intended.
- May not hesitate to correct people and can deliver criticism rather honestly.
- Russian humour is very sarcastic, dry and quite direct. Often self-deprecating.

### Non-Verbal:

- Generally introverted. Not common to smile or make eye contact with strangers.
- With friends, colleagues, loved ones, eye contact is normal and a sign of respect, trust and intimacy.
- Personal space is somewhat closer than in Canada but mostly between friends and loved ones.
- Strong physical affection is generally only seen between couples of opposite genders.
- Making a fist with the thumb protruding between middle finger and index finger is an obscenity as is the symbol for 'Okay' (with the forefinger and the top of the thumb meeting to form a circle, with the other fingers stretched out) Also obscene gesture to place your wrist or arm on the

inside of your opposite elbow and then bend the elbow with a hand closing in a fist.

### Value Systems:

*The Russian Federation is vast, containing many ethnic and religious groups. The following information applies to predominant culture of Russia, mostly ethnic Russians.*

- Russians respect strength and patience.
- High value on homeland and family, including extended family and friends.
- The demise of Communism abolished structures many people depended on for stability. This stability is now being sought in religious, social groups and family.
- Vast difference between the older and younger generations. Older Russians recall food

shortages, and endless lines to gather goods. The range of modern consumer goods now astounds them. The younger people have grown up in this consumer culture.

- Dissatisfaction among the younger population; high unemployment, poverty and drug and alcohol addiction are current issues.
- Women are not regarded as equal to men and usually hold lower level jobs to men. More female business leaders are emerging and older women, particularly *babushkas* (grandmothers), are revered and willingly obeyed by all.
- The Russian Orthodox Church is becoming the religion of Russia; however, not all are involved. Other faiths (Jewish, Islamic, Buddhists, Catholics) are shunned or ignored.

**The Russian Federation is vast, containing many ethnic and religious groups.**

- Class used to equal power; now it is being overtaken by money (*New Russians* were a newly rich business class who made their fortune in the 1990's in post-Soviet Russia. *New Russian* is now perceived as stereotypical caricature as it is thought that the wealth gained was through corrupt means).
- Intolerance and racism still exist mostly towards people of darker skinned complexion in Russia and those from southern republics such as Kazakhstan, Georgia; non-Slavic cultures.
- Free speech is inhibited in Russia as the current government is known to harshly punish any activist, journalist or anyone in opposition to the government.
- Same sex relationships are not fully accepted and can still attract negative reaction.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Presence of a strong a predictable leader/supervisor in the workplace reduces anxiety in many Russians.

- Being outspoken was not valued or encourage historically thus it may be difficult to find out if there is a workplace issue due to fear of reprimand. Not comfortable giving feedback particularly if negative.
- Building trust and personal relationship may encourage more interaction.
- Employees tend to avoid talking or complaining to supervisor.
- Important to ask the same questions in different ways at different times.
- Address workplace issue privately and directly. While some may appear gruff and unsmiling it is important to remain calm and reinforce points in a strong voice, when appropriate.
- Be clear and concise in communication. Do not try to be subtle and make recommendations for fear of interpersonal conflict. Use facts and technical detail.
- Decision making processes are one of the major areas of change in Russian organizations. Less

bureaucracies, with small to medium business emerging. Decisions being made and ideas developed through levels of supervision. Although still top down, more collaboration is being seen.

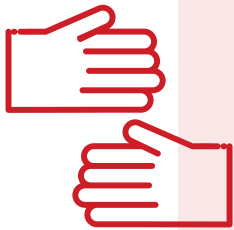
- Very inventive in problem solving. Historically faced with shortages and funds, have learned to be creative and improvise.
- Very little is done without using *blat*. Similar to *wasta* in Middle

## Job satisfaction, money, loyalty, good working conditions and fear of failure, are all strong motivators.

- May still see the traditional dictatorial management style from the past being used which may involve public berating of staff.
- Getting feedback from supervisor is acceptable.
- Job satisfaction, money, loyalty, good working conditions and fear of failure, are all strong motivators; opportunity for advancement and learning are strong motivating factors amongst the younger generation.

Eastern cultures, *blat* is the term for connections or influence. An exchange of favours. Gifts, monetary or others are part of the exchange. Although used as a form of corruption in high levels of business and government, the expectation may carry over into the workplace. The practice isn't openly accepted or condoned but also not condemned and may be subtly implied; more so in professions as Medicine, Dentistry, Public Service – gifts to ensure medical treatment, promotions, higher grades.

# Gestures

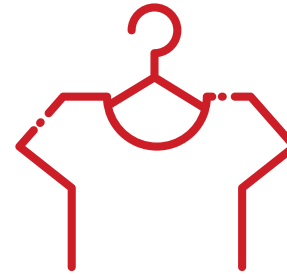


- Making a fist with the thumb protruding between middle finger and index finger is a rude gesture.
- Making the symbol for 'Okay' (with the forefinger and the top of the thumb meeting to form a circle, with the other fingers stretched out) is also a rude gesture.
- Placing wrist or arm on the inside of opposite elbow and then bend the elbow with a hand closing in a fist is considered obscene.
- The action of pulling a front tooth indicates making a promise.
- Talking to someone with hands in pocket is considered rude.
- Hitting one's chest expresses loyalty or telling the truth.
- Flicking own throat is an invite to drink.



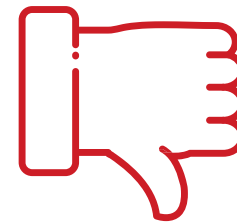
## Gift Giving

- Chocolates, sweets, baked goods or flowers



# Dress

- Similar to Canada with Western styles and trends.
- Similar cold winters so most know how to dress for the weather.



# Taboos

- The term *nyekulturny* means uncultured or bad mannered, for example:
- Wearing a coat when entering a building, particularly a restaurant or theatre. Russians do not sit on their coats.
- Whistling indoors.
- Standing with hands in pockets when talking to someone.
- Wearing business clothes that are too bright.
- Speaking or laughing too loudly in public.
- The number 13 is considered unlucky in Russian culture. Celebrations may be organised so that they do not coincide with the number.



# Punctuality

- Patience, not punctuality, was historically considered a virtue.
- Punctuality, timekeeping and work ethic are major areas of change in Russia. Fast becoming similar to Western standards.
- The Russian Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar, not the Gregorian calendar as the Western world follows. Julian calendar is approximately 12-13 days behind the Gregorian.
- The date is written differently in Russia with day, month year. 06-12-21 is December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 not June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Punctuality, timekeeping and work ethic are major areas of change in Russia.**



# Greetings

- A firm handshake with direct eye contact is a common greeting.
- Gloves are removed to shake hands.
- Greeting across a threshold of a doorstep is considered impolite and gives the impression a person is not allowed to enter.
- Women generally kiss people who they are familiar three times on alternating cheeks starting on the left.
- Male friends may hug or give a pat on the back.
- Russian names are ordered the same as Western names except the Russian middle name is a patronymic (name derived from the first name of the father). E.g. Ivan *Mihajlovich Medvedev*. *Ivan* is the “son of Mihajlo” (*vich* is one of many suffixes added to the father’s name).
- Address a person using their first name and patronymic (middle) name if they are older or of higher status.

**A firm handshake with direct eye contact is a common greeting.**



# Food

- *Borscht* - beet soup with vegetables, beef and dollops of sour cream, most popular and famous dish.
- *Bliny* - pancakes traditionally made from buckwheat flour topped with a range of items such as butter and sour cream to pickled fish and caviar.
- *Sour cream* - used as a condiment like North Americans use ketchup. Used on everything from cucumber salads to meat dishes.
- *Herring* - baked, dried, fried, pickled or salted. Favorite fish and frequently served in small bites like Spanish tapas.
- *Pickles* - also preserving beets, mushrooms and other fruits are common to prepare for the winter.
- *Beef Stroganoff* - dish of beef, mushrooms and sour cream.
- *Salad Olivier* (Russian Salad) - Potatoes, vegetables, onions, hard-boiled eggs and mayonnaise with chicken, carrots, peas and apples often added.
- *Piroshki* (Perogy) - dough dumplings stuffed with a combination of cheeses, fish, meats, mushrooms and potatoes.
- *Medovuha* - honey based sweet alcohol
- *Rye Bread* - eaten with butter or topped with fish, eggs, cheese or meats.
- *Vodka* - climate is too cold to grow grapes and the raw materials for vodka are readily available thus making it an economical choice in the past. There are now Russian vodka brands worth thousands of dollars per bottle.



**Salad Olivier**

**Pickles**



# Interesting Facts

- World's largest country by area.
- Borders 14 countries and has 11 time zones.
- Longest railway in the world. Trans-Siberian Railway is 9200 km and would take 152 hours to complete.
- Home to a vast number of notable scientists, artists, writers, performers.
- Moscow has more billionaires than any other city after New York and Hong Kong.
- St. Petersburg (formally known as Petrograd and Leningrad), a port city in Russia has over 100 concert organizations, 80 theatres, 62 movie theatres, 42 art galleries, 221 museums, 80 night clubs and 2000 libraries.
- Oymyakon is the coldest inhabited place on earth with a temperature once getting to -67.8C
- Home to the world's most famous ballet companies – Bolshoi and Kirov.
- There are approximately 11 million more women than men in Russia.
- Situated in both Europe and Asia.
- Sputnik was the world's first satellite launched by the Russian space program.
- 1800 skiers and snowboarders once skied the hills of Sheregesh wearing bikinis in a bid to break a Guinness World Record.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:

### Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Russia or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, movies, sporting activities.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Provide locations of churches if available and required.
- Provide information of any cultural events organized by or for Russian newcomers to Canada.
- Provide information to newcomers on Russian grocery stores or stores which may carry Russian foods or ingredients.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities they like to do during breaks. Attempt to source these items.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers from Russia or in Russian to place in the break room.

# Latin America and Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean, as a region, has 33 countries of vast diversity. **Mexico** and **COLOMBIA** were selected for this employer guide as the predominant countries in the region that are contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry.



# COLOMBIA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** Over 50 million people

**Area:** 1 138 910 square kilometres  
– 9 times smaller than Canada

**Capital:** Bogota

**Currency:** Peso (1 CAN\$ = 2800 Colombian Pesos  
– Annual average)

**Climate:** Tropical along coast and eastern plains; cooler  
in highlands

**Language(s):** Spanish (99%) and Indigenous languages (1%)

**Ethnic groups:** Predominantly “mestizo”, a mix of European  
and Indian descent

**Religion(s):** Roman Catholic (79%), Protestant (14%),  
Unspecified (5%), Other (2%)

### Public Holidays:

January 1<sup>st</sup> ..... Epiphany Day

March 23<sup>rd</sup> ..... Saint Joseph’s Day

April 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> ..... Semana Santa – Holy Week

May 1<sup>st</sup> ..... Labour Day – May Day

July 20<sup>th</sup> ..... Independence Day – National Day

October 12<sup>th</sup> ..... Columbus Day

November 2<sup>nd</sup> ..... Dias de los Santos – All Saints Day

December 7<sup>th</sup> ..... Noche de las Velitas

December 8<sup>th</sup> ..... Feast of Immaculate Conception

December 25<sup>th</sup> ..... Christmas Day

*Week before Lent (Christian period 46 days before Easter of fasting and abstinence) a celebration of Maslenita occurs. Unofficial holiday. Russian equivalent of Mardi Gras.*

**Education:**

Literacy rate 95%. Compulsory education from ages 5-16. Elementary (Ages 5-10), lower secondary (Ages 11-14), upper secondary (ages 15-16). Post secondary education includes, universities, technical colleges and distance education. Location and household income affect the enrollment rates of postsecondary education – 61% of high income/urban and 25% low income/rural.

**Government:**

Federal Presidential Republic  
 Chief of State: President  
 Head of Government:  
 President

**Elections:**

Every four years

**Natural Resources:**

petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron, ore, nickel, gold, copper, emeralds, hydropower

**Agriculture:**

coffee, cut flowers, bananas, rice, tobacco, corn, sugar cane, cocoa bean, oilseed, vegetables, shrimp, forestry. The complex pattern of climate, soil, and topography has produced an extraordinary range of plants and plant communities that vary through both vertical and horizontal zones.

**Food Production:**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest producer of coffee.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest fresh cut flower exporter in the world after Netherlands
- Export crops include bananas, plantains, sugarcane, wheat,

barley, potatoes, coffee and corn

- Largest producer of coca derivatives. Produces 90% of the world's cocaine. Government intervention is attempting to eradicate the illegal cultivation of coca.
- Marine fisheries are undeveloped despite having large coastlines – shrimp processing is one growth area.
- Colombia implemented GMP in the cattle raising, dairy and agricultural sector and HACCP standards.
- The Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection has issued a Technical Regulation to establish the safety of ceramic and glass materials and articles that come into contact with food and beverage products.

- Export fish and seafood, flours, coffee, and poultry .
- Colombian beef exports reached 15 destinations around the world.
- In Colombia, the annual exportable poultry supply is represented in 1.4 million tons of chicken and 12,143 million egg units.

**Communications:**

24 newspapers, 95 million Internet consumers, 85 million mobile phone consumers, state owned and privately owned broadcast media. 500 radio stations and many national and regional television stations. Satellite television is available.

**Economy:**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$441 billion CAN per year.

**COLOMBIA is the 2nd largest producer of coffee in the world.**

# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles

### Verbal:

- Expressive when making their point heard.
- Silence tends to be an evaluation of words that have been said.
- Colombians deliver negative or sensitive information in a respectfully and concisely manner.
- Colombians say what they are thinking. Their forthright manner can be mistaken for rudeness. Humour is often introduced in a dignified and formal manner.

### Non-Verbal:

- Eye contact is important.
- Direct style of communication is favoured over indirect.
- Personal distance is closer than it is for Canadians.
- Colombians tend not to touch each other much

during causal conversation. Good friends may hug, but people are generally not tactile with those they are not close. Pointing is considered disrespectful. Pursing lips (as if to kiss) may be used to gesture towards someone.

- Colombians are reserved; tending to keep their feelings or thoughts private, rather than showing them.
- Tendancy to gesticulate very much during conversation and also making hand gestures.



### Value Systems:

- The role of family is central to all decisions and an absolute priority.
- Familiarity is required before doing business.
- Interpersonal and group belonging are valued higher than expertise although knowledge is respected.
- Machismo, or strong masculine pride, is a stereotype for Colombian males that exists due to the traditional belief that it is a man's responsibility to provide, protect and defend family.
- Authority figures are highly suspect in Colombia; politicians and police are often seen as corrupt and self-serving.

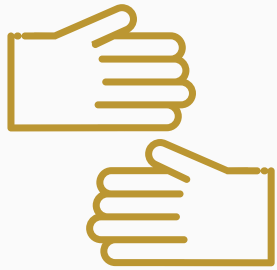
### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Rank is important.
- Decisions in Colombia are made at top levels. Employees generally accustomed to and tolerant of a more autocratic form of leadership.

- Very powerful informal decision-making groups of upper class are called *roscas* control most change in society.
- Not as clear a line between business and interpersonal relations and relationships.
- Kinship plays a major role in one's business associations and a strong need for consensus in a group is important.
- Look to those above for guidance and decision making. Very aware of how each individual fits into hierarchy—family, friends or work. Considered disrespectful to break the chain of hierarchy.
- Society is very class conscious and is organized by skin colour and class membership with limited vertical mobility.
- Confront workplace issues privately and directly.
- Money and fear of failure are the main workplace motivators as well as self-accomplishment and sense of belonging.
- More pro-active and hands on management would be most effective for motivating employees.
- Vital for a company to acknowledge and respect the centrally significant role that family plays in the overall well-being of an employee.

**Deadlines may be deemed flexible when there is a good reason.**





## Gestures

- Coastal Colombians are more animated and expressive with gestures than Inland Colombians. More reserved.
- Considered rude to yawn in public.
- Considered rude to point or beckon someone with index finger. It is considered demeaning to beckon someone with your index finger. Instead, beckon with your palm down, waving your fingers or your whole hand.
- A thumb up is a Colombian “okay” gesture.
- Tapping bottom of elbow indicates person being spoken of is cheap.

**Standing with hands on hips signifies anger.**



## Dress

- More formal for work than Canadians although the work environment will dictate the formality.
- Care and attention to physical appearance. Very fashionable.



## Gift Giving

- Flowers, food, wine or chocolates. Avoid marigolds and lilies; used for funerals.



## Taboos

- Making the “ok” sign is considered rude.
- Standing with hands on hips signifies anger.
- Standing with hands in pockets is considered rude.
- Engaging in conversation related to narcotics trafficking in Colombia.



## Punctuality

- Punctuality, although admired, is not strictly adhered to in daily life.
- Time is viewed as relative to the situation.
- Deadlines may be deemed flexible when there is a good reason.
- Workplaces in Colombia may allow at least a 15-20 minute clock-in tolerance. Arriving to a meeting 15 minutes late is not frowned upon.

**Punctuality, although admired, is not strictly adhered to in daily life.**



## Greetings

- Standard greeting is a handshake.
- Among close friends, kiss each other on one cheek. Men embrace and slap each other's back.
- Known for long greeting rituals, this conveys respect for the other person. Numerous questions are asked about family and health during a greeting.
- Personal distance is close but less physical contact during conversation and less gesturing than other South Americans.
- More reserved than other South American cultures.





# Food

- Colombian cuisine is extremely diverse and is a product of various influences—Indigenous, Spanish, African, and Arabic. Each town and each region have its own culinary traditions.
- *Bandeja Paisa*: is a representative dish for one of the regions (Andean), and not the national dish of

Colombia. A huge mixture of food on a platter consisting of grilled steak, fried pork rind, chorizo sausages, on a bed of rice and red beans with a fried egg and a side of sliced avocado and sweet banana (sweet fried banana).

- *Arepas*: is a dough and is thicker than tortillas. Similar to a thin pancake, they

serve as a basic side to any Colombian meal.

- *Aguardiente*: national drink of Colombia, made from sugarcane and very powerful.
- *Arroz con Coco*: is a side dish for Fish food. Colombian cuisine has another dish called *Arroz con leche de Coco* (Coconut Rice

pudding) which is served as a dessert. Made with cinnamon and raisins. Food is not spiced as other South American counterparts may be.

- *Manjar Blanco*: similar to dulce de leche, a creamy dessert made by warming sugar and milk.
- Hot chocolate is also a very popular drink.



# Interesting Facts

- Colombia is commonly misspelled as COLQMBIA.
- The illegal cultivation of coca, the base ingredient for cocaine, is widespread in Colombia. Attempts are being made to eradicate coca cultivation, including the provision of subsidies to farmers who shifted to growing legal crops.
- Colombia is one of the top 3 countries in the world with the most public holidays.
- It is mandatory for radio and public television in Colombia to play the national anthem every day at 6 am and 6 pm.
- Although Colombia is named after Christopher Columbus, the explorer, he never set foot on Colombian soil.
- Colombia is the leading producer of emeralds.
- Bullfighting is not as popular in Colombia as it once was.
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez is the only Colombian to win a Nobel Peace Prize for literature.
- Other famous Colombians include pop singer Shakira, soccer players Radamel Falcao and “El Pibe Valderrama”, actor Sofía Vergara, and race car driver Juan Pablo Montoya, and bicycle champions “Cochise” Lucho Herrera and Fabio Parra.
- Cumbia is the native Colombian dance.
- Colombia loves anything and everything that has something to do with Futbol (soccer).
- Colombia hosts the world’s largest theater festival, the Iberoamericana.
- La Quinceañera is a very important celebration for every girl when she turns 15.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family.
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Colombia and other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, sports tournaments.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide information to newcomers on Latin grocery stores or stores which may carry Latin foods.

# MEXICO



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 124.738 million

**Area:** 1 964 375 square kilometres.  
5 times smaller than Canada

**Capital:** Mexico City

**Currency:** Peso (1 CAN\$ = 15 Pesos)

**Climate:** Varies from humid tropical to arid desert

**Language(s):** Spanish (92%) and Indigenous languages (5%)

**Religion(s):** Roman Catholic (83%), Evangelical (5%), None (5%), Pentecostal (2%), Unspecified (3%), Jehovah's Witness (1%)

**Ethnic groups:** Mexican Mestizo [Amerindian-European] (62%), Native Americans (21%), Other/White [European] Mexicans (10%), Amerindians (7%).

### Public Holidays:

January 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	New Year's Day
February 3 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Constitution Day
March 16 <sup>th</sup> .....	Birthday Benito Juarez
April 9 <sup>th</sup> .....	Maundy Thursday
April 5 <sup>th</sup> - 11 <sup>th</sup> .....	Semana Santa – Holy Week
May 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Labour Day
May 5 <sup>th</sup> .....	Cinco de Mayo
September 16 <sup>th</sup> .....	Independence Day – National Day
November 2 <sup>nd</sup> .....	Dias de los Muertos – Day of the Dead
November 16 <sup>th</sup> .....	Revolution Day
December 12 <sup>th</sup> .....	Feast of our Lady Guadalupe
December 25 <sup>th</sup> .....	Christmas Day

**Education:**

Literacy rate 95%. Compulsory education from ages 7-17. Primary school (ages 7-11) junior high school (12-14), high school (ages 15-17) Post secondary education – private/public technical, polytechnical, universities, teacher training colleges and distance education.

**Government:**

Federal Presidential Republic  
Head of State: President  
Head of Government: President

**Elections:**

Every six years

**Natural Resources**

petroleum, silvers, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber

**Agriculture:**

corn, wheat, soybean, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes, beef, poultry, dairy, forestry

**Food Production:**

- Export crops include avocados, tomatoes,

corn, coffee, sugarcane, strawberries, lemon.

- Export beverages include beer and tequila.
- 12th in food production worldwide.
- 8th in processed food production worldwide.
- 13th in agricultural crops production worldwide.
- 11th in primary livestock farming production worldwide.
- 17th in fishing and aquaculture production worldwide.

**Communications:**

100 newspapers, 95 million Internet consumers, 85 million mobile phone consumers, 821 television stations, 1745 radio stations, most privately owned. Satellite is available.

**Economy:**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$1.6 trillion CAN



**Mexico is 11th in primary livestock farming production worldwide.**

# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles

### Verbal:

- Eye contact is important.
- Soft spoken in formal settings.
- Silence tends to be an evaluation of words that have been said.
- A raised voice is thought to indicate anger, staying calm is a respected virtue.
- Saying “no” directly is often avoided. A “no” may be disguised as a “maybe” or “we’ll see”.

### Non-Verbal:

- Personal distance is closer than for Canadians.
- Pointing is considered disrespectful.
- Reticence to express opinion or share issues publicly due to concern for real or perceived confrontation.
- Not as clear a line between

business and interpersonal relations and relationships.

- Indirect style of communication is favoured over direct.
- Nodding may mean nothing more than respect for the person speaking. May seem to agree when they do not.

### Value Systems:

- The role of family is central to all decisions and an absolute priority.
- Familiarity is required before doing business.
- Interpersonal and group belonging are valued higher than expertise although knowledge is respected.
- Machismo, or strong masculine pride, is a stereotype for Mexican males that exists due to the traditional belief that it is a man’s responsibility to provide, protect and defend family.
- Authority figures are highly suspect in Mexico; politicians and police are often seen as corrupt and self-serving.



## Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Rank is important.
- Decisions in Mexico are made at top levels and an employee is generally more accustomed to and tolerant of a more autocratic form of leadership.
- People look to those above them for guidance and decision making. They are very aware of how each individual fit into hierarchy-family, friends or work. Considered disrespectful to break the chain of hierarchy.
- More pro-active and hands on management would be most effective for motivating employees.
- Tendency to become personally involved in problem solving and look at particulars instead of using a rule or a law. It may be difficult to separate work issues from those that are personal.



**Tendency to become personally involved in problem solving and look at particulars instead of using a rule or a law.**

# Punctuality



- Punctuality, although admired, is not strictly adhered to in daily life.
- Time is viewed as relative to the situation.
- Deadlines may be flexible and fluid.
- Workplaces in Mexico may allow at least a ten-minute clock-in tolerance. Arriving to a meeting 10 minutes late is not frowned upon.

# Greetings



- Men will shake hands in an initial meeting and women will often pat each other on the right forearm or shoulder instead of shaking hands.
- For strangers, a handshake that is held longer than in Canada is customary of both men and women. If they are close, they may hug or kiss on either cheek.
- Personal distance is close.

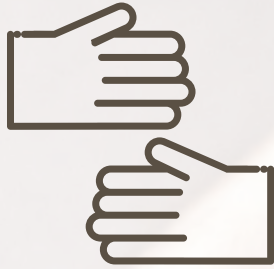


# Gift Giving

- White flowers, food, wine or chocolates. Avoid marigolds and any yellow or red flowers; used for funerals.

**For strangers, a handshake that is held longer than in Canada is customary of both men and women.**

# Gestures



- People may seem to agree when they really do not; nodding may mean nothing more than respect or aversion to confrontation.
- Conversations take place at a much closer physical distance than what may be considered comfortable in Canada.
- A “psst” sound may be used to catch someone’s attention. This is not considered rude.
- Indicating height is always use of the index finger. Only the height of an animal is measured by using the whole hand.

# Taboos



- Making the “ok” sign is considered rude.
- Standing with hands on hips signifies anger.
- Standing with hands in pockets is considered rude.

# Dress



- Dress more formal for work than Canadians although the work environment will dictate the formality. Office environment will see more formality.
- Physical appearance is valued and care is taken in dress and accessories.

**Physical appearance is valued and care is taken in dress and accessories.**





# Food

- Mexican cuisine is extremely diverse and is a product of various influences—Indigenous, European, African, and Asian. Each town and each region have its own culinary traditions.
- The most common items across Mexican cuisine come from the Indigenous tradition: tortilla and other corn byproducts, pepper, tomatoes, and beans.
- Chocolate, avocado, and pumpkin, which are common and popular worldwide, originated in Mexico and Central America.
- *Tacos, tostadas, atole, tamales, and mole*, are also popular.
- Mexican cuisine was recently named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

**Mexican cuisine was recently named an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.**



**Tacos**

# Interesting Facts

- Mexico has the largest population of Spanish speakers in the world.
- Mexico City is one of the most populous metropolitan areas in the world with over 25 million residents.
- Mexico is the world's leading producer of silver and salt.
- Tequila, a liquor for which Mexico is famous, is made from the native blue agave plant and named after the city where it originated.
- Mexico is the second largest producer of horse meat.
- Famous Mexicans: Frida Kahlo and Deigo Rivera (artists), Salma Hayek (actor), Oscar De La Hoya (boxer), Carlos Santana (musician), Caesar Millan (dog behaviourist), Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez Balcazar (soccer), Vincente Fox (former president).
- The Mexico City Arena is one of the largest bullfighting arenas in the world and seats 50,000.
- Soccer is the favorite sport of much of the population.
- Winning the Copa Libertadores, the Latin American equivalent of the European Cup, is an honor that motivates both players and fans alike.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Mexico or other places in the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, sports tournaments.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide information to newcomers on Latin grocery stores or stores which may carry Latin foods.

# Middle East and North Africa

Middle East and North Africa, as a region, has 19 countries of vast diversity.

**Iran, Lebanon** and **Syria** were selected for this employer guide as the predominant countries in the region that are contributing to the work force in Canada's food processing industry.



# IRAN



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 84.9 million

**Area:** 1,648,195 square kilometres. Approximately 6 times smaller than Canada.

**Capital:** Tehran

**Currency:** Iranian rial (IRR) (1 CAN \$ = 30037 Iranian rial) As of May 2020 the currency will be changed to the Iranian toman (1 toman =10,000 rials) Since 2018 the value of Iranian currency has fallen 60%.

**Climate:** mostly arid, semi arid, subtropical along the Caspian Sea and cold, snow in mountain regions

**Language(s):** Persian Farsi (official) 50%, Turkic (18%), Kurdish (10%), Gilaki and Mazandarani (7%), Luri (6%), Arabic (2%) and Balochi (2%).

**Ethnic groups:** Persians, Azeri, Karkuk, Baloch, Arab, Turkmen, Turkic tribes.

**Religion(s):** Muslim 99.4% (includes Shi'a 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%), other including Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian, Baha'i.

### Public Holidays:

- February 11<sup>th</sup> .....Revolution Day
- March 19<sup>th</sup> .....Oil Nationalisation Day
- March 31<sup>st</sup> .....Islamic Republic Day
- April 1<sup>st</sup> .....Sizdah Be Dar (Nature Day)
- April 12<sup>th</sup> .....Ramadan (1 month)
- May 6<sup>th</sup> .....Martyrs' Day
- May 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> .....Eid al Fitr (2021) \*
- June 4<sup>th</sup> .....Anniversary of Khomeini's death
- June 5<sup>th</sup> .....Revolt of Khordad
- July 20<sup>th</sup>23<sup>rd</sup>.....Eid al Adha (2021) \*
- August 9<sup>th</sup> .....Islamic New Year (2021) \*

\* Lunar holidays are based on the cycles of the moon – dates change annually.

### **Education:**

Literacy rate 93%.

Compulsory education from ages 6-12. All schools single sex.

Primary (ages 6-12), high school (ages 12-18), pre-university year (university prep), university, teacher training colleges, technical institutes and higher education institutes.

### **Government:**

Government Type: theocratic republic

Chief of State:  
Supreme Leader  
Ali Hoseini Khamenei  
(appointed 1989)

Head of Government:  
President

### **Elections:**

Every 4 years for president – able to serve 2 terms. Supreme leader is appointed for life.

### **Natural Resources:**

petroleum, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc, sulphur.

### **Agriculture:**

wheat, rice, other grains, sugar beets, sugar cane, fruits, nuts, cotton, dairy, wool, caviar.

### **Food Production:**

- The agriculture industry has struggled for due to small farms, water scarcity, poor soil and seed quality and antiquated farming techniques; however, government efforts and incentives during the

1990s, improved agricultural productivity marginally, helping Iran toward re-establishing national self-sufficiency in food production.

- The wide range of temperature fluctuation in different parts of the country and the different climates make it possible to cultivate a diverse variety of crops, including cereals (wheat, barley, rice, and corn/maize), fruits (dates, figs, pomegranates, melons, and grapes), vegetables, cotton, sugar beets and sugarcane, nuts, olives, spices, tea, tobacco, and medicinal herbs.
- The fishing industry is also important, for domestic consumption and for export. Sturgeon (yielding its roe

for caviar), bream, whitefish, salmon, mullet, carp, catfish, perch, and roach are caught in the Caspian Sea, Iran's most important fishery. 150 species of edible fish are found in the Persian Gulf, including shrimps and prawns.

### **Economy:**

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$632 billion CAN.

### **Communications:**

Approximately 4 news agencies and 30-40 newspapers. 67.6 million Internet consumers (approximately 82% of population), 89 million mobile phone consumers. State run TV and radio stations, no private broadcast companies and no access to satellite. Internet freedom is highly restricted. Censorship issues are an ongoing matter.

# Iran has 89 million mobile phone consumers.



# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Indirect communication. A concept is generally reached in a roundabout way to avoid embarrassment or offence. Shows a sign of respect to the other person.
- To appear polite, answers to questions that require a yes or no will be answered with “yes” whether it is true or not. A “no” can indicate that you want to end the relationship. The polite way to say no is to say, “I’ll see what I can do”, no matter how impossible the task may be. After the person has been asked several times regarding their success, an answer such as, “I’m still checking” or something similar signifies “no”.
- Open-ended questions and allowing time to reach answer without interrupting will assist in communication.

- Traditional verbal and nonverbal system of politeness – *taarof*. Strive to make other person in the interaction feel as appreciated and welcomed as possible. Commonly done by making one’s self appear secondary in comparison to the other person and insisting to put them first. “You first, please” followed by “No, after you” are common phrases. This may continue for a prolonged time as each person adheres to *taarof*. It is expected that the other protest equally and do not accept the grand gesture.
- Commonly protest compliments and criticize their own accomplishments to appear humble.

### Non-Verbal

- There are public and private rules regarding non-verbal communication in Iran. When in public, people generally have to behave more formally and keep a distinct distance from those of the opposite gender. These customs loosen significantly when people are in private and surrounded by their close friends.

- People tend to smile less while in public, which may be ingrained even when in Canada. To smile casually while passing a stranger of the opposite gender on the street could easily be interpreted as provocative.
- The 'serious' demeanour is not necessarily a reflection on situation, but the social expectation.
- Eye contact is important. Devout Muslims may lower their gaze when speaking with someone from the opposite gender.
- Personal space is closer than in Canada and generally comfortable touching others of the same gender during conversation.
- More reserved in body language and gesture much less than other Middle Eastern cultures.

### **Value Systems:**

- Iranian society is very diverse, and attitude and values vary depending on social class, education and family background.

- Family plays a significant role; reputation, status and honour of a family define its members.
- Family size is smaller than many Middle Eastern families. Generally, 1-2 children per family.
- Iran has a history of practising quite a modern form of Islam:
- Belief in Allah as the prophet
- Muslims are people who believe in Islam
- Majority Shi'a Muslims in Iran
- Pork and alcohol prohibited
- Before the establishment of the Islamic Republic (1979), Iranians had a choice as to whether to practice religious or not. The vast majority had a deep faith, though it was not essential to publicly exhibit devotion, and people were not necessarily judged for liberal behaviours. Women were allowed go without the hijab if they preferred and some people chose not to pray.
- Religion has now become highly politicized as the government ensures the private, public, legal and

## **Iranians who do hold strong religious beliefs restrict their observance to their homes.**



economic aspects of Iranians' lives operate in accordance to Islamic principles. Many rules restrict citizens' behaviour, requiring them to abide by conservative interpretations of the Qur'an.

- Most Iranians believe in Allah (God) and the tenets of Islam however due to the current political domination of religion, not all Iranians are strictly obedient to Islamic code. Religious observance is very low and only an estimated 2% of the population attend Friday congregational prayers. Those

who are devout Muslims often belong to the older generation.

- Some of the new generation are following more Western philosophical schools of thought and/or atheism; however, they rarely make this public knowledge. Iranians who do hold strong religious beliefs restrict their observance to their homes.
- Class conscious. Persian Iranians are very proud of their heritage and make a very clear distinction between themselves and Arab culture.

- The family dynamic is patriarchal; the father or oldest male has the most authority in the household and is expected to be financially responsible for the family.
- Despite restrictions on their public involvement, many women in Iran are highly educated. They commonly obtain a university degree and have entered professions of business, engineering, law, medicine, and politics.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Harmony, saving face, and avoidance of conflict are important.

- Diplomatic and polite.
- May be difficult to practice Canada's management styles of inclusiveness and teamwork. Iran has top down work environments are rarely asked for input in decision making. Reluctant to change and may continue to do things at work the way they have always been done to avoid making mistakes or criticism. Modernization in management practices in Iran are occurring. Training and time will be required.

- Hard workers, very entrepreneurial but also leave time for family.

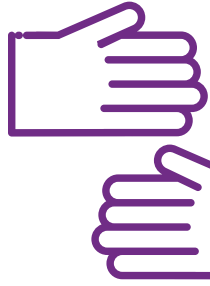
- If not happy or satisfied with a task, the task may simply be either ignored or carried out slower – passive resistance.
- Confront any workplace issues privately and diplomatically. Allude to the problem and make suggestions for improvement.
- Check for clarification several times using open-ended questions. A “yes” may mean “no” or “maybe”. In the Middle East, a flat ‘no’ can indicate that you want to end the relationship.
- Likely that an Iranian person in Canada is very educated and technically trained.

May hold one or multiple university degrees.

- Interpersonal skills of a supervisor are valued. It is important to show interest and concern for the personal lives of staff.
- Establishing trust and confidence is the foundation of a close working relationship and will go far to avoid conflict in the workplace.
- Knowledge, leadership and experience are highly regarded in supervisors.

**Iranians are hard workers, very entrepreneurial but also leave time for family.**





# Gestures

- Iranians gesture much less than their Arab neighbours.
- Moving chin back and making a clicking noise with tongue means “no”.
- Leaning head back with chin and eyebrows raised also means “no”.

**Leaning head back with chin and eyebrows raised also means “no”.**



- Tilting head to the side with a smile usually means “yes”.
- Quickly raising eyebrows up and down with a serious face means something is not satisfactory.
- Flicking hand outward away from body means something (or someone) is not worth worrying about, they’ve done something wrong.
- A polite way to gesture “okay” is to cover one eye with four fingers.



# Gift Giving

- Chocolates, sweets or baked goods.
- Gift should be wrapped; however, recipient may not open gift in front of you.
- Muslims consider dogs unclean. Do not give gifts with dog images.



## Taboos

- Discussing politics.
- Thumb up is an indecent gesture.
- Pointing at someone in conversation is considered rude.
- Crossing leg so sole of shoe is facing another person is considered rude.
- The left hand should never be extended to greet someone or receive a gift.
- Public displays of affection or partial nudity.
- Do not confuse Persians with Arabs. This is a quick way to annoy Iranians and indicates one is poorly informed about the Middle East.
- Iranian people recognise the current Islamic political culture to be different from their own interpretations of the religion and due to negative impressions of their country may choose to use the term *Persian* to describe themselves rather than *Iranian*. As the region of Iran was once called Persia, *Iranian* is often assumed to be synonymous with *Persian*. The two can usually be used interchangeably.
- Do not assume Shi'a Muslims are associated with fanaticism, Islamic politics or orthodox practices.
- Avoid mentioning divisive topics such as women's rights, civil liberties.
- Avoid giving the impression that the West is superior to Iran.



## Dress

- More conservative or older Iranian Muslim women wear a '*chador*' to cover hair and figure from the public eye. Most women have discarded the custom and wear mostly Western clothing and only a hijab often due to government regulation.
- A *hijab* (or *shayla*) is a headscarf worn over the head which covers the head and the hair. With a hijab, the face is seen. No other body part is covered. A *chador* is a loose dress that covers the whole body from the head to the foot.
- Women must cover body with loose clothing, usually by wearing a *manteau*, (like an overcoat) and can be very stylish even with restrictions. Young women may push the limits by wearing thigh length coats and scarves which don't completely cover the hair.
- Men generally wear trousers and shirts.
- Men wishing to show Islamic support often have a full beard or some facial hair. It may appear scruffy but personal hygiene is of utmost importance.
- No shorts or sleeveless shirts for men and tie is not common.

**More conservative or older Iranian Muslim women wear a 'chador' to cover hair and figure.**



# Punctuality

**Punctuality is important in Iranian society.**



# Greetings

- Greetings are usually prolonged and include questions about each others' well-being and family.
- Eye contact is important.
- In formal settings, greetings involve a handshake.
- Shaking a female's hand is not appropriate unless she outstretches her hand first. Many Iranian men greet women by placing their hand on their chest and saying hello.
- Informal greetings between people of the same gender may involve a hug, or two to three kisses on each cheek between the same gender.





# Food

- Islam forbids the consumption of pork and other meats must be specially prepared in a method called *halal* (Islamic form of slaughtering).
- Food is eaten with the right hand only as the left hand was traditionally used for hygienic purposes and considered unclean.
- Washing hands before and after a meal is important.
- Stews are very popular in Iran, e.g. *Khoresht e Fesenjan* – Pomegranate Walnut Stew, *Gormeh Sabzi* Green Herb Stew
- *Tahchin*: rice cake filled with chicken, eggplant, or yogurt.
- Plain yogurt is very popular at lunch and dinner. Considered a miracle food by many, thought to treat ulcers, relieve sunburns and prolong life.
- *Kebabs* of chicken, lamb or beef
- Eggplant caviar
- Barberries are used to a favoured sour taste over rice
- *Ash-e Reshteh*: noodle soup
- Many kinds of rice are very popular
- Generally, meals are eaten on the floor with cushions. No tables or chairs.
- Sweet tea or coffee (*qahwa*) is very popular and commonly served to guests in workplaces and homes.
- Refusal of coffee, tea or food is considered rude. There is an expectation that the guest will accept what is offered.
- Muslims abstain from alcohol for religious reasons.



**Baghali Ghatogh**

# Interesting Facts

- One of the oldest civilizations in the world.
- 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites.
- Baha'i, a religion founded in Iran, is the largest non-Muslim faith existing in Iran today.
- Largest Jewish population outside Israel in the Middle East live in Iran.
- Traditional system of athletics used to train Persian warriors
- is still in use today, combining martial arts, strength training, music and calisthenics is UNESCO's World's longest form of training.
- Soccer is the most popular sport although freestyle wrestling is the national sport.
- 70% of the population are under 30 years old.
- Unemployment rate for women is double that of men.
- Many famous scholars, scientists, politicians, musicians and artists have come from Iran.
- Poetry is very popular in Iran, with poets such as Rumi, being world renowned.
- Iran has produced some world class filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami (*Taste of Cherry* -first Iranian film to win the Palme d'Or - a very prestigious award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997).
- Muhammed al-Khwarazmi, from Iran was the founding father of Algebra
- Earliest form of the guitar was created in Iran.
- The game of chess was developed in Iran.
- Iran constructed the earliest windmills.
- The Persian cat is one of the oldest breeds of cats in the world.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES:

### Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Iran or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, movies, sporting activities
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays (awareness of current of lunar holidays such as Ramadan and both Eid celebrations as they change each year)
- Acknowledge Ramadan with *Ramadan mubarek* and inform other staff of being respectful of daily fasting. Eating for others in same break room is acceptable.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities they like to do during breaks. Attempt to source these.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers in Farsi to place in the break room.
- Provide a private area to pray for Muslim staff; if required.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide locations of mosques, if available and required.
- Provide information of any cultural events organized by or for Iranian newcomers to Canada.
- Provide food prep areas, microwaves, fridges that are separate from any pork items.

# LEBANON



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 5.4 million

**Area:** 10, 452 square kilometres. Approximately 960 times smaller than Canada.

**Capital:** Beirut

**Currency:** Lebanese pound (LBD) (1 CAN \$ = 1082 Lebanese pounds)

**Climate:** Mediterranean, mild to cool, wet winters, hot dry summers and cold, snow in mountain regions

**Language(s):** Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian

**Ethnic groups:** Arab (95%), Armenian (4%), Other (1%). Many Christian Lebanese do not identify as *Arab* prefer *Phoenician*.

**Religion(s):** Muslim (61% Sunni 30%, Shi'a 30%, rest Alawite or Ismailis), Christian (34%), Druze (5.2%) small % of Jewish, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu. Data does not include the large Syrian and Palestinian refugee populations.

## Public Holidays:

January 6 <sup>th</sup>	Armenian Orthodox Christmas Day
February 9 <sup>th</sup>	St. Maroun Day
February 14 <sup>th</sup>	Rafik Hariri Day
March 25 <sup>th</sup>	Fest of Annunciata Day
April 12 <sup>th</sup>	Ramadan (1 month)
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday
April 12 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Sunday
April 13 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Monday
April 19 <sup>th</sup>	Orthodox Easter
April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Orthodox Easter Monday
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Labour Day
May 13 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup>	Eid al Fitr (2021) *
May 25 <sup>th</sup>	Resistance Day
July 20 <sup>th</sup> -23 <sup>rd</sup>	Eid al Adha (2021) *
August 9 <sup>th</sup>	Islamic New Year (2021) *
August 20 <sup>th</sup>	Awal Muharran (Islamic New Year)
October 9 <sup>th</sup>	Prophet Muhamed's Birthday
November 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Independence Day
December 25 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Day

\* Lunar holidays are based on the cycles of the moon – dates change annually.

## Education:

Literacy rate 95%.  
Compulsory education from ages 6–12. Elementary (ages 6–12), Intermediate (ages 12–15), Secondary (ages 15–18) university, teacher training colleges and technical/vocational institutes.

## Government:

Government Type: parliamentary republic

Chief of State: President

Head of Government:  
Prime Minister

## Elections:

Every 6 years – President eligible for non-consecutive terms.  
Appoints the Prime Minister.

## Natural Resources:

limestone, iron ore, salt,  
arable land

## Agriculture:

citrus, grapes, tomatoes,  
apples, potatoes, olives,  
tobacco, sheep, goats.

## Food Production:

- Agriculture is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most productive sector in Lebanon.
- Agro-Industrial sector is the largest employer of all industries.
- The five most produced foods are cereals, fruits, vegetables, olives, and industrial crops (sugar and tobacco)
- Potatoes are ranked as one of the top vegetables produced in Lebanon.
- Livestock production is not produced for export.

- Avocados are an exotic crop.
- Cannabis is also grown for medical use.
- Aquaculture produces majority rainbow trout and some tilapia via fish farming techniques.
- Viticulture has become a thriving industry with approximately 40 wineries producing \$57 million CAN.
- The crisis in Syria has a significant impact on Lebanon's agriculture and food sectors. Lebanon is currently (2020) hosting over 1 million Syrian refugees in addition to Palestinian refugees. Hosts the largest number of refugees than any other country in the world.

Exports have decreased and animal disease has increased due to the collapse of the animal health system in Syria.

## Communications:

Approximately 13–20 newspapers.  
4.7 million Internet consumers  
approximately, 4.4 million mobile phone consumers.  
1 state run TV, access to satellite and cable, 30 radio stations, 1 state owned.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$79 billion CAN.

**Viticulture has become a thriving industry with approximately 40 wineries producing \$57 million CAN.**

# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Indirect communication. A point is usually reached in a long, roundabout way to avoid embarrassment or offence and shows a sign of respect the other person in the conversation.
- To appear polite, answers to questions that require a yes or no will be answered with “yes” whether it is true or not. A “no” can indicate that you want to end the relationship. The polite way to say no is to say, “I’ll see what I can do”, no matter how impossible the task may be. After the person has been asked several times regarding their success, an answer such as, “I’m still checking” or something similar signifies “no”.
- Open-ended questions and allowing time to reach answers without interrupting will assist in communication.

- Attempts often made to interrelate subjects and merge discussions.
- If a brief answer is required, then direct questions are appropriate.
- Impassioned voice not always a sign of anger.
- Theatrics and mannerism are sometimes used to distract from the topic being discussed.
- Silence is an indication of anger or distress.

### Non-Verbal

- Eye contact is important. Devout Muslims may lower their gaze when speaking with someone from the opposite gender.
- Personal space is closer than in Canada and are generally comfortable touching others of the same gender during conversation.
- Left hand not used for actions such as waving, eating, offering items.
- Tilting head back, lifting chin, and raising eyebrows indicates “No”. Often accompanied with a “tsk” sound. Not intended to be rude.



- Beckoning someone is done with palm down, fingers curl back towards self.
- Often use animated gestures or expressions.
- Pride is taken in hospitality and generosity. Invites to homes are extended very quickly after meeting.
- Women hold almost all the same rights as men and hold positions of power in political, corporate and civil defense areas.
- With 43% Muslim and 34% Catholic there is now equal representation of both religions in the government.
- In religiously observant homes women are expected to do most of the domestic chores and not work outside the home; however, with the ongoing difficult economic situation almost every Lebanese household requires two incomes.

### Value Systems:

- Lebanon is the most religiously diverse country in the Middle East.
- Family and the solidarity of the family unit is of utmost importance.
- Actions of one family member impact the reputation of all.
- Integrity and dignity are important virtues; therefore, hospitality and charity are extremely common practices.



- The average family is slightly larger than Canadian families and tend to have very large extended families with cousins as close as siblings.
- Relationships built through asking questions. Questions may appear quite personal initially. Be patient, reciprocate questions. Greatly appreciate colleagues showing interest in personal lives.
- Homosexuality was declared legal in Lebanon in 2018 however LGBTQ+ people may still be subject to harassment by authorities.

### Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:

- Lebanese are hard workers and aim to please. The proverb “Work until you’re exhausted rather than be humiliated” stems from their work ethic.
- Check for clarification several times using open-ended questions. A “yes” may mean “no” or “maybe”. This is because in the Middle East, a flat ‘no’ can indicate that you want to end the relationship.
- Establishing trust and confidence is the precursor of

a close working relationship and will go far to avoid conflict in the workplace.

- Image and reputation are very important in the workplace.
- Personal relationships are important in work and prefer to work with those they know.
- Build relationships through asking questions. May appear quite personal initially. Be patient, reciprocate questions. Greatly appreciate colleagues showing interest in personal lives.
- Credibility is based on personal qualities rather than financial capacity.
- Confront any workplace issues privately and diplomatically. Coming straight to the point may appear cold and uncaring.
- May be difficult to practice Canada’s management styles of inclusiveness and teamwork. Lebanon has top down work environments and staff rarely asked for input in decision making. Reluctant to change and may continue to do things at work the way they have always been done to avoid

making mistakes or criticism. Training and time will be required.

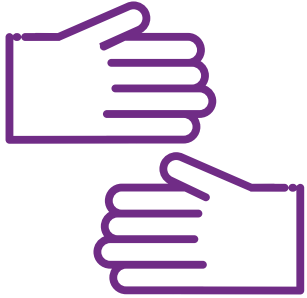
- Gender, class, religion and ethnicity are sensitive subjects and disrespect in the workplace in Lebanon is not tolerated.
- Knowledge, leadership and experience are highly regarded in supervisors.
- Respect intelligence if evidence of a higher education is shown. Lebanon has a highly respected education system. It is likely that a Lebanese person arriving in Canada is very educated and technically trained. Many hold one or multiple university degrees.
- The term “inshallah” is used often within the Middle East. It means “God willing” and can

be used to say yes without commitment, e.g. “I’ll try to meet this deadline, inshallah.”. Means in the end its God’s will to make it happen or not. It is just part of the vernacular and belief system, not to sound flippant.

## Image and reputation are very important in the workplace.

- The term *wasta* is another term used within the Middle East which means clout, one’s connections or influence to get things done; for example, to speed up government transactions, waving off traffic fines, being hired or promoted for a job. Someone with *wasta* may be asked to do favours for others.
- *Wasta* is generally related to the concept of clientelism, which is defined as the exchange of goods and services for political support.

# Gestures



- Very animate gestures when speaking.
- Moving chin back and making a clicking noise with tongue means “no”.
- Leaning head back with chin and eyebrows raised also means “no”.
- Tilting head side to side means “I don’t understand”.
- Pointing with one finger is acceptable or wagging one finger to make a point or scold.
- Shaking an upturned hand with all fingers touching thumb is commonly used to make a point.

# Taboos



- Refusing to accept favours of kindness. Graciously accept then return favour later.
- Crossing leg so sole of shoe is facing another person is considered rude. The foot is considered dirty.
- Public displays of affection or partial nudity.
- Beckoning with the index finger is considered rude.



# Gift Giving

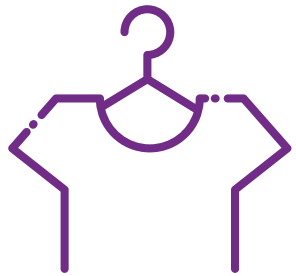
- Chocolates, sweets, baked goods or flowers.
- Gift should be wrapped; however, recipient may not open gift in front of person.
- Muslims consider dogs unclean. Do not give gifts with dog images.
- Gifts should be a modest cost as anything overly priced may be thought of as a bribe.

- The left hand should never be extended to greet someone, receive a gift or used to eat with.
- It is considered rude or bad manners to give someone an object to hold (for example, while you do something else). As it is still interpreted as inappropriate or lazy. Somewhat like declaring the other person a servant.



## Punctuality

- Punctuality is not a valued commodity in social situations; however, in the workplace it is dependent on the company, but workplaces tend to be more formal with the need to meet deadlines.
- Some may be wary of long-term deadlines. Due to the instability in their home country planning long term is not common.
- Image and reputation are very important in the workplace.



## Dress

- Although Lebanon is predominantly an Arab culture, lifestyles are more commonly described as Mediterranean.
- Not a strict adherence to conservative dress.
- It is common to see women wearing hijab (traditional Arabic head covering), and other women in modern European fashion.
- Well known for their style and elegance.
- Women are usually fully made-up and wear accessories.
- Men are generally well dressed in European style clothing.
- Being well-groomed is appreciated.
- Business casual is becoming more acceptable in many industries.
- Jeans and shorts are not usually acceptable in business situations.



## Greetings

- A smile and a handshake, appropriate for greeting colleagues.
- Eye contact is important.
- Shaking a female's hand is not appropriate unless she outstretches her hand first. Many men greet women by placing their hand on their chest and saying hello.
- Informal greetings between people of the same gender may involve a hug, or two to three kisses on each cheek between the same gender.
- The term *habibi* meaning "my love" in Arabic is often used casually to address one another (friends or family).

**Shaking a female's hand is not appropriate unless she outstretches her hand first.**



# Food

- *Arak*: clear anise flavoured spirit made from fermented grapes.
- *Kibbeh*: national dish meaning *form in a ball*, soaked bulgar, wheat, lamb served raw, deep fried, baked, stuffed.
- *Manakish*: round flat bread topped with olive oil and zaatar (sesame seed, thyme and sumac).
- *Fattoush*: simple salad with pita bread as the base then filled with vegetables and olive oil.
- *Halloumi*: cheese made from full fat sheep or goat's milk.
- *Tabbouleh*: national dish, salad made of parsley, bulgar wheat, mint leaves, and olive oil.
- *Shawarma*: marinated spit roasted meat.
- *Hummus*: spread made from chickpeas and tahini sesame paste.
- Sweet tea or coffee is very popular and commonly served to guests in workplaces and homes.
- *Falafel*: chickpea fritters.
- *Ma'amoul*: dome shaped cookie filled with fruit and nuts.
- Socialising around meals for extended periods of time is very common.
- Refusal of coffee, tea or food is considered rude. There is an expectation that the guest will accept what is offered.
- Islam forbids the consumption of pork and other meats must be specially prepared in a method called *halal* (Islamic form of slaughtering).
- Food is eaten with the right hand only as the left hand was traditionally used for hygienic purposes and considered unclean.
- Washing hands before and after a meal is important.
- Muslims abstain from alcohol for religious reasons.



**Fattoush**

# Interesting Facts

- Almost every family in Lebanon has a relative who has immigrated to Canada.
- Gibran Khalil Gibran is a well renowned author.
- Many think Lebanon is a Muslim country when in fact it is made up of both Muslim and Christian thus laws and lifestyles are much different than most Middle Eastern countries.
- Very popular music is by Fairouz and Rahbani group, also Wadih Alsafi and Nasri Shamseldine who are deceased, but their music remains popular.
- The Lebanese president is always a Maronite Christian, while its prime minister is always a Sunni Muslim.
- Rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world for cigarette consumption.
- The Law school in Beirut was the 1<sup>st</sup> law school in the world.
- Beirut has been destroyed and rebuilt 7 times.
- A large Lebanese diaspora lives outside the country, mostly in Brazil, USA, Europe, Canada, Africa and Australia. More people live outside of Lebanon than in the country itself.
- Several UNESCO World Heritage sites in Lebanon.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Lebanon or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide food prep areas, microwaves, fridges that are separate from any pork items.
- Provide a private area to pray for Muslim staff; if required.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, movies, sporting activities
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays (awareness of current of lunar holidays such as Ramadan and both Eid celebrations as they change each year)
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Acknowledge Ramadan with *Ramadan mubarek* and inform other staff of being respectful of daily fasting. Eating for others in same break room is acceptable.
- Provide locations of mosques and churches if available and required.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities they like to do during breaks. Attempt to source these items.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers from Lebanon or in Arabic, or French to place in the break room.
- Provide information to newcomers on Lebanese grocery stores or stores which may carry Lebanese foods or ingredients.
- Provide information of any cultural events organized by or for Lebanese newcomers to Canada.

# SYRIA



## Country Facts

**Population (2020):** 17.4 million

**Area:** 187,437 square kilometres. Approximately 53 times smaller than Canada.

**Capital:** Damascus

**Currency:** Syrian pound (SYP) (1 CAN \$ = 369 Syrian pounds)

**Climate:** mostly desert, hot, dry, sunny summers, mild rainy winters along coast, cold weather, snow periodically in Damascus.

**Language(s):** Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Circassia, French and English

**Ethnic groups:** Arab (90%), Kurds, Armenians, others (10%)

**Religion(s):** Muslim 87% (includes Sunni 74%, Alawi, Ismaili and Shi'a 13%), Christians 10%, Druze 3% and Jewish (few remaining).

### Public Holidays:

January 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	New Years Day
March 8 <sup>th</sup> .....	Revolution Day
April 4 <sup>th</sup> .....	Easter Sunday
April 14 <sup>th</sup> .....	Independence Day
May 1 <sup>st</sup> .....	Labour Day
May 2 <sup>nd</sup> .....	Orthodox Easter Sunday
May 6 <sup>th</sup> .....	Martyrs' Day
April 12 <sup>th</sup> .....	Ramadan (1 month)
May 13 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> .....	Eid al Fitr (2021) *
July 20 <sup>th</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup> .....	Eid al Adha (2021) *
August 9 <sup>th</sup> .....	Islamic New Year (2021) *

*\*Lunar holidays are based on the cycles of the moon – dates change annually.*

## Education:

Literacy rate 86%. Compulsory education from ages 6-14. Basic education (ages 6-10 and 11-14), secondary (ages 15-17) and post secondary education- technical institutes, universities and higher institutes (centres for excellence).

*In 2014, there were approximately 2,553,000 students enrolled in basic education and 2,875,000 enrolled in secondary education. Prior to the start of the ongoing conflict, basic education enrollment was close to 93 percent. In 2015, an estimated 2 million Syrian children were out of school and approximately 5,000 schools could not be used because they had either been destroyed or damaged by the war.*

*The war has displaced university-age Syrians (18-22 years old) in significant numbers as well. In 2015, the Institute of International Education (IIE) estimated that approximately 450,000 university age Syrians had become refugees. (World Education News, 2016).*

## Government:

Government Type:

Presidential republic,  
highly authoritarian

Chief of State: President

Head of Government:  
Prime Minister

## Elections:

Every 4 years

## Natural Resources:

petroleum, phosphates, chrome, manganese ore, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower.

## Agriculture:

wheat, barley, cotton, lentils, chickpeas, olives, sugar beets, poultry, beef, mutton and eggs.

## Food Production:

- Despite nine years of civil unrest in the country agriculture remains a key part of the economy; however, food production is critically low with approximately half of the remaining population unable to meet daily food needs.
- Beekeeping, which used to be a productive traditional



industry, has suffered during the crisis and concerns exist of bee mortality resulting from the misuse of pesticides, and a lack of marketing channels for honey and bee products.

- Farmers in rural areas are still facing many challenges, including a lack of access to seeds and fertilizers, high transport costs, the existence of unexploded weaponry in some fields, and limited marketing opportunities.

## Communications:

Approximately 20 newspapers, 5.5 million Internet consumers, 17 million mobile phone consumers. State run TV and radio stations, satellite access has allowed some to acquire a broader range of Arabic and European programming.

## Economy:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$73 billion CAN

# Cultural Orientation

## Communication Styles:

### Verbal:

- Indirect communication. A point is usually reached in a long, roundabout way to avoid embarrassment or offence and shows a sign of respect the other person in the conversation.
- To appear polite, answers to questions that require a yes or no will be answered with “yes” whether it is true or not. A “no” can indicate that you want to end the relationship. The polite way to say no is to say, “I’ll see what I can do”, no

- matter how impossible the task may be. After the person has been asked several times regarding their success, an answer such as, “I’m still checking” or something similar signifies “no”.
- Open-ended questions and allowing time to reach answer without interrupting will assist in communication.
  - Syrians commonly joke and banter during conversation. The humour is likely to be different to what a Canadian is familiar with, however somewhat easy to engage with.
  - Raising one’s voice is not immediately interpreted as aggressive in Syria. Speaking loudly and with passion shows sincerity in a topic. Genuine expression often gives effect

in discussions and is not necessarily a sign of anger or offence.

### Non-Verbal:

- Many large hand and head gestures are used when speaking. Very expressive.
- Eye contact is important. Devout Muslims may lower their gaze when speaking with someone from the opposite gender.
- Personal space is closer than in Canada; generally comfortable touching others of the same gender during conversation.
- Display of affection between friends of the same gender or family members is more common in public than that between a husband and wife.

- Tilting head back while raising eyebrows can indicate “no”.

### Value Systems:

- Religion and family play a significant role in the daily lives of most.
  - Islam: Belief in Allah as the prophet
  - Muslims are people who believe in Islam
  - Majority Sunni Muslims
  - Pork and alcohol prohibited
- Syrians believe in religious freedom. Although predominantly Muslim other religions are respected. Both Muslim and Christian holidays are followed.
- Reputation, status and honour of a family are the most important values.

**Many large hand and head gestures are used when speaking.**



- Society is not tightly organised and schedules are not closely followed. Daily activity functions at a relaxed pace and more time is devoted to personal interactions. Syrians living outside the country often miss this chaotic freedom of their culture. In Syria, they often know their community intimately and visit friends and family every day. The people-focused lifestyle gives individuals a sense of belonging and support.
- The family dynamic is patriarchal; the father or oldest male has the most authority in the household and is expected to be financially responsible for the family.
- Female participation in the workforce has changed as the harshness of living conditions in Syria demands their involvement. It can still be considered shameful for a man to earn less than his wife, but female employment is now very valuable to families.
- The mother's role is largely to fulfil domestic duties and

care for the children. Though gender roles are changing and women's rights to education and equal pay are recognised in the law, women still do not have as much power as men.

- Homosexuality remains illegal in Syria.

### **Workplace Strategies/ Problem Solving:**

- Harmony, saving face, and avoidance of conflict are important.
- Check for clarification several times using open-ended questions. A "yes" may mean "no" or "maybe". In the Middle East, a flat 'no' can indicate that you want to end the relationship.
- Motivated by supervisors who are firm, kind, knowledgeable, and understand Syrian culture.
- Interpersonal skills of a supervisor are valued. It is important to show interest and concern for the personal lives of staff.
- Establishing trust and confidence is the foundation of a close working relationship

and will go far to avoid conflict in the workplace.

- Knowledge and leadership are highly regarded in supervisors.
- May be difficult to practice Canada's management styles of inclusiveness and teamwork. Syria has top down work environments are rarely asked for input in decision making. Training and time will be required.
- Conflicts may develop if attention has not been paid to the fact that religion, social class, ethnicity or gender

factors may not be compatible in the workplace. May be challenging as there may not be an admittance to these issues.

- Tea is part of both formal and informal meetings.
- Confront any workplace issues privately and diplomatically. Allude to the problem and make suggestions for improvement. Syrians may avoid the issue or disregard the impact to prevent confrontation.

## **Tea is part of both formal and informal meetings.**





## Punctuality

- Society is not tightly organised and schedules are not closely followed. Instead, daily activity is approached at a relaxed pace and more time is devoted to personal interactions.
- A sense of urgency is different than in Canada and a project planned far in advance may cause suspicion as many things could happen to render the project obsolete.
- Tend not to offer an apology for tardiness as it is part of the culture; however, they are aware how important punctuality is in Canada.



## Gift Giving

- **Chocolates, sweets or baked goods.**
- **Gift should be wrapped; however, recipient may not open gift in front of you.**
- **Muslims consider dogs unclean. Do not give gifts with dog images.**



## Greetings

- Prolonged and include questions about each others' well-being.
- Eye contact is important.
- In formal settings, greetings involve a handshake with the right hand only. Arab men may shake hands very gently.
- Shaking a female's hand is not appropriate unless she outstretches her hand first. Many Syrian men greet women by placing their hand on their chest and saying hello.
- Informal greetings between people of the same gender may involve a hug, or two kisses on each cheek between males.
- To kiss one's forehead or right hand denotes extreme respect, but it is not acceptable for a male to kiss a female in this manner if they are not related.
- Avoid talking about social or professional success. In Syrian these are linked to the political regimes in power.

## Greetings - Names

- Muslim men: (personal name) plus (father's personal name) plus (grandfather's personal name)
- Muslim women: (personal name) plus (father's personal name) plus (grandfather's personal name). Generally, don't take the husband's name in marriage. Some married women might attach their husband's name after their father's.
- Sometimes a family name replaces the grandfather's name with either El or Al added to it, e.g. El Noury or El Abed.



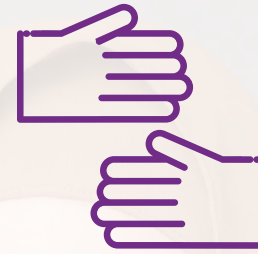
## Dress

- Dress for women range from Western clothing to full burqa or hijab.
- A *hijab* is a headscarf worn over the head which covers the head and the hair. With a hijab, the face is seen. No other body part is covered. The hijab is now widely preferred by modern Muslim women. A *burqa* is a loose dress that covers the whole body from the head to the foot.
- Men generally wear trousers and shirts.
- Jeans and shorts are rare.



## Taboos

- Discussing politics.
- Crossing leg so sole of shoe is facing another person is considered rude.
- The left hand should never be extended to greet someone or receive a gift.
- Public displays of affection or partial nudity.



## Gestures

- Moving chin back and making a clicking noise with tongue means “no”.
- Leaning head back with chin and eyebrows raised also means “no”.
- Tilting head to the side with a smile usually means “yes”.
- Quickly raising eyebrows up and down with a serious face means something is not satisfactory.
- Flicking hand outward away from body means something (or someone) is not worth worrying about.
- Holding hand outwards with the palm down and then suddenly twisting it upwards means “why” or “how”.
- Similarly, the use of *Inshallah*, commonly used by Muslims and Arabic speakers means “If Allah wills for it to happen” or “God willing” referring to events in the future. It isn’t up to them to decide.

**Pointing finger upwards  
towards the sky usually  
means it is up to God  
to decide on fate.**



# Food

- Islam forbids the consumption of pork and other meats must be specially prepared in a method called *halal* (Islamic form of slaughtering).
- Food is eaten with the right hand only as the left hand was traditionally used for hygienic purposes and considered unclean.
- Washing hands before and after a meal is important.
- Stews are very popular in Iran, e.g. *Khoresht e Fesenjan* – Pomegranate Walnut Stew, *Gormeh Sabzi* Green Herb Stew
- *Tahchin*: rice cake filled with chicken, eggplant, or yogurt.
- Plain yogurt is very popular at lunch and dinner. Considered a miracle food by many, thought to treat ulcers, relieve sunburns and prolong life.
- *Kebabs* of chicken, lamb or beef
- Eggplant caviar
- Barberries are used to a favoured sour taste over rice
- *Ash-e Reshteh*: noodle soup
- Many kinds of rice are very popular
- Generally, meals are eaten on the floor with cushions. No tables or chairs.
- Sweet tea or coffee (*qahwa*) is very popular and commonly served to guests in workplaces and homes.
- Refusal of coffee, tea or food is considered rude. There is an expectation that the guest will accept what is offered.
- Muslims abstain from alcohol for religious reasons.



**Tahchin**

# Interesting Facts

- Damascus is the one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.
- The Shouting Valley is the meeting point of four countries: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. It is an “echo point,” and people often use it to communicate with their relatives on the other side.
- Syria was once a tourist destination for its religious and historical wonders. The war has caused a 75% decline in the tourism industry.
- Although Damascus is the capital, Aleppo was the most populous city in Syria prior to the civil war.
- *Damascus* is famous for its steel worldwide.
- Several Syria’s archaeological and historic features have been recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage sites.
- The Umayyad Mosque is the most famous mosque in Syria and is one of the oldest mosques in the world. Considered by many Muslims to be the 4th holiest place in the world,
- Salah al Din is a Syrian hero; a Kurdish born commander
- As of 2016, Syrians are the largest refugee population in the world.
- The Citadel of Aleppo is a large medieval fortified palace in the centre of the old city of Aleppo, northern Syria. It is one of the oldest and largest castles in the world.
- Durayd Lahham’s comic figure Ghawwar, a sort of “wise fool,” enjoys a popular following throughout the Arab world.
- Renowned Syrian musical artists include singer and *‘ūd*-player Farid al-Atrash and his sister Amal, known as Asmahan, who was a popular singer and actor.
- After surviving ISIS and a civil war, a group of Syrian women built a female-only village. Named “Jinwar” (women’s land), the village welcomes women and children regardless of religion, ethnicity, and political views.
- Since the crisis started in March 2011, over 250,000 people have died in Syria. Over 130 people killed every day, of every week, for the past 5 years.
- This is the worst exodus since the Rwandan genocide 20 years ago. More than half of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 18.

**Damascus is the one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.**

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES: Additional strategies to promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment

- Inquire about family.
- Provide opportunities to maintain contact with family in Syria or other parts of the world, e.g. use company Wi-Fi to communicate, provide discounted calling cards.
- Provide food prep areas, microwaves, fridges that are separate from any pork items.
- Provide a private area to pray for Muslim staff.
- Provide off hour activities and include family: potluck picnics, movies,
- Acknowledge national/religious holidays, birthdays (awareness of current of lunar holidays such as Ramadan and both Eid celebrations as they change each year)
- Acknowledge Ramadan with *Ramadan mubarek* and inform other staff of being respectful of daily fasting. Eating for others in same break room is acceptable.
- Translate training documents if required.
- Source books, magazines, newspapers in Arabic to place in the break room.
- Create spaces for socialization during breaks or inquire as to any activities they like to do during breaks. Attempt to source these items.
- Provide mentorship program – match newcomer to employee of similar culture.
- Provide information to newcomers on Arabic grocery stores or stores which may carry Arabic foods.
- Provide information of any cultural events organized by or for Syrian newcomers to Canada.
- Provide cultural information to other employees.
- Provide locations of mosques, if available.
- Be empathetic that most Syrian-born people will have a familiarity with war, violence, oppression and/or harsh authority. Considering these things, be sensitive to the reality that the person you are engaging with may have experienced or witnessed the atrocities of the Syrian civil war.

**Provide a private area to pray for Muslim staff and create spaces for socialization during breaks.**

# Ramadan

**For Muslims,** Ramadan is a month long period of introspection, communal prayer in the mosque, and reading of the Qur'ān.

It is a time to practice self-restraint, in keeping with *ṣawm* (Arabic: “to refrain”), one of the pillars of Islam (the five basic tenets of the Muslim religion). Although *ṣawm* is understood as the obligation to fast during Ramadan, it is more broadly interpreted as the obligation to refrain, between dawn and dusk from food, drink, and all forms of immoral behaviour, including impure or unkind thoughts.

After the sunset prayer, Muslims gather in their homes or mosques to break their fast with a meal called *iftār* that is often shared with friends and extended family. The *iftār* usually begins with dates, as was the custom of Muhammad, or apricots and water or sweetened milk. A large feast is followed.

There are additional prayers offered at night called the *tawarīh* prayers, preferably performed at the mosque. During these prayers, the entire Qur'ān may be recited over the course of the month of Ramadan.

Able-bodied adults and older children fast during the daylight hours from dawn to dusk. Pregnant or nursing women, children, the old, the weak, and the mentally ill are all exempt from the requirement of fasting.



The end of the Ramadan fast is celebrated as Eid al-Fitr, the “Feast of Fast-Breaking,” which is one of the two major religious holidays of the Muslim calendar (the other, Eid al-Adha, marks the end of the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) that all Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lives if they are financially and physically able).

Eid al-Fitr is very celebratory: children wear new clothes, special pastries are baked, gifts are exchanged, the graves of relatives are visited, and people gather for family meals and to pray in mosques.

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