

## B2.7 Culture and Society

### You can learn:

- How to talk about national customs and attitudes.
- How to discuss cultural differences.
- How to negotiate a course of action with your partner.

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**Discuss the questions in the box, which are all related to the topic of cultural differences, with your partner.**

- Have you ever experienced culture shock?
- Do you think your country's culture is very different to British culture? In what ways?
- What cultural values do your country and the U.K. share? What do we have in common?
- What do you feel most proud of in your country's culture? Is it the food, the music, the politics...?
- If you could, what would you change about the predominant culture in your country?
- In what ways do the U.S.A.'s and Britain's cultures differ?
- Would you consider living abroad? Why/why not?
- What would you most miss about your culture?
- What have been the biggest cultural changes in the last ten/fifty/hundred years in your country?

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**Decide with your partner if the statements in the box about British culture are true or false.**

### British Culture: True or false?

1. When you go to somebody's house for dinner you should try to arrive ten minutes early.
2. It is usual to give tips to taxi-drivers, waiters and barbers. Also, to maids if you stay at a hotel (for cleaning the room during your stay).
3. The British are a religious people with a high percentage of the population attending church every Sunday.
4. It is considered impolite to ask personal questions e.g. "How much do you earn?", "Why aren't you married?", "What's your weight?" etc.
5. At dinner, try to leave a third of the food on your plate. This shows that you are not a greedy person and have a suitably moderate appetite.
6. In formal situations, you can greet somebody by saying, "How do you do?" To which the other person replies by also saying "How do you do?"
7. Always bring a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates, or flowers if invited as a dinner guest.

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**Discuss the questions in the box below, which all relate to the topic of society and social problems.**

- What social problems are there in your country?
- Is there a problem with: (youth) unemployment, homelessness, alcoholism, drug addiction, criminal gangs? What can be done to help?
- At what age do young people normally leave home? Is it easy for them to do so?
- Who cares for the elderly in your country?
- Is there a strong sense of social cohesion? Are people good neighbours to each other?
- Are there minority groups in your country? Do they suffer from discrimination?
- Would you describe your country and culture as socially progressive? What is the main religion?
- Is there gender equality? Do women have the same opportunities as men? Do they receive equal pay?
- Is there military service? Have you done it?
- What are the biggest economic pressures and problems? Is globalisation a force for good?

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**4**  Now imagine that you work for the local council with your partner. Together you must decide which of the community projects below should receive funding of £10,000 for the coming year. Without this money, and in a difficult economic climate, the other projects may be forced to close down. You cannot divide the sum of money: all must go to only one project.

**'Help the Old Folk'** This project arranges for day visits and group outings to places like parks and garden centres for very elderly senior citizens. Many of those helped are housebound and suffer from forms of disability caused by their advanced years.

**'Teens in Trouble'** This project provides counselling and support for teenagers with drink and drug problems. All the teenagers have been identified as coming from deprived social backgrounds and live in social housing on run-down estates.

**'Feed the Homeless'** This organisation provide nutritional meals to those sleeping rough on the streets of major cities. Many of those helped are ex-soldiers, who have been involved in violent foreign conflicts and now experience problems as a result.

**'Easier Learning'** These volunteers work with mentally handicapped children with severe learning difficulties. The funds could help to purchase interactive learning tools and computer programs to assist the volunteers in teaching basic life skills.

**'Refuge for Women'** This is a housing project that provides secure accommodation and counselling for women who have suffered domestic abuse, often including extreme violence and rape, at the hands of abusive boyfriends and husbands.

**5**  Now write seven rules for people coming to live and work in your country and culture to follow.

*1.) It is important always to be punctual and well-prepared for business meetings. If you are late...*

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**Notes:**

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*"Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures."  
Cesar Chavez*