

# Culture clash

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Some societies, such as America and Australia, for example, are mobile and very open. People here change jobs and move house quite frequently. As a result they have a lot of relationships that often last only a short time, and they need to get to know people quickly . so it's normal to have friendly conversations with people that they have just met, and you can talk about things that other cultures would regard as private.

At the other extreme are more crowded and less mobile societies where long-term relationships are more important. A Malaysian or Mexican businessperson, for example, will want to get to know you very well before he or she feels happy to start business. But when you do get know each other, the relationship becomes much deeper than it would in a mobile society.

To Americans, both Europeans and Asians seem cool and formal at first. On the other hand, as a passenger from a less mobile society put it, it's no fun spending several hours next to a stranger who wants to tell you all about his or her life and asks you all sorts of embarrassing questions that you don't want to answer.

Cross-cultural differences aren't just a problem for travelers, but also for the airlines that carry them. All airlines want to provide the best service, but ideas about good service vary from place to place. This can be seen most clearly in the way that problems are dealt with.