

# Guatemala



## Introduction

With a population of 10 Million, Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America (excluding Mexico, which is considered part of North America). The ethnic composition consists of 45 percent Ladina (mestizo, which is Indian and European mixed), 45 percent Indian, 5 percent white, 2 percent black, with the remaining 3 percent to include a substantial Chinese population. The Republic of Guatemala has a unicameral legislative house, called the Congress of the Republic. The president is both chief of state and head of the government. Voting is compulsory for all literate persons over the age of eighteen. The economy is primarily agricultural with main crops (which are exported) are sugarcane, corn, bananas, coffee, beans, and livestock.

Spanish is the official language. Over 40 percent of the population speaks one of 23 Indian dialects used in the country's interior. English is understood in tourist places. There is no official religion. Around 75% of Guatemalans are Roman Catholic, with 25% Protestant. Televangelists have become popular.

## Fun Fact

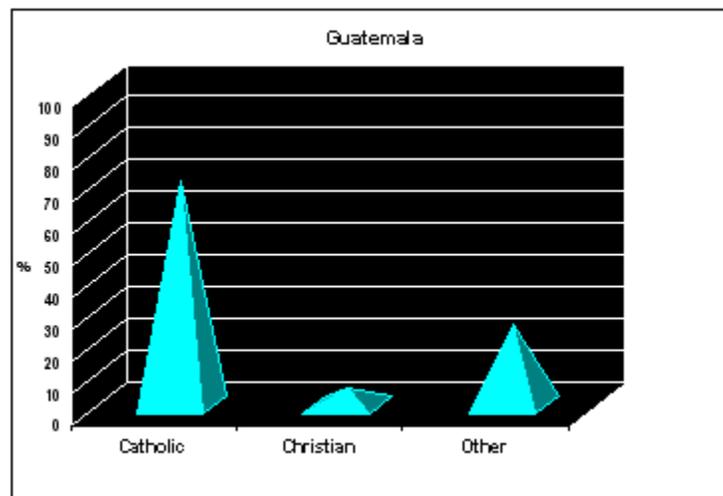
Expect Guatemalan business people to believe in the "prosperity theology" of some Neopentecostal sects. These sects preach that God wants people to be wealthy, and that peasants are poor because they lack faith. The majority of Guatemalan *maquiladoras* (manufacturing plants) are Asian-owned, which are primarily owned and managed by South Koreans.

## Geert Hofstede Analysis Guatemala

[Click Here for Geert Hofstede country scores](#)

The Hofstede analysis for Guatemala is similar to its Latin American neighbors. Uncertainty avoidance ranks highest which indicates a high concern for rules, regulations, controls and issues with career security – typically, a society that does not readily accept change and is risk adverse. Guatemala also has a high power distance ranking which indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within society. Individualism ranks extremely low which signifies a society of a more collectivist nature and strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. [More Details](#)

### Religion in Guatemala



\* WORLD FACTBOOK 2002

## Appearance

- For business, a lightweight suit is appropriate for men; women should wear a dress or skirt and blouse. Military clothing is illegal; it can neither be worn nor brought into the country
- Guatemalans wave good-bye using a gesture that looks like someone fanning themselves: hand raised, palm toward the body, and a wave of the fingers back and forth, with the fingers together as if encased in a mitten
- The "fig" gesture (thumb-tip protruding from between the fingers of a closed fist) and the "O.K." sign (thumb and forefinger forming a circle) are both considered obscene

## Behavior

- Business people usually punctual
- Male guests sit to the right of the host; women to the left
- Business breakfasts or lunches are preferred to dinners
- The main meal of the day is taken at noon, and will probably include black beans, tortillas or meat, and fruit and vegetables
- Gifts are given in a business setting, but not necessarily on the initial visit. Easily breakable gifts may not be the best choice; Guatemala is in a tectonically active zone, with frequent earthquakes and occasional volcanoes
- Don't give white flowers; they are reserved for funerals

## Communications

- Shaking hands and saying "mucho gusto" is very proper
- Handshake may seem limp, which is customary
- Close friends embrace and pat each other's back
- Titles, especially among the elderly, are very important. Address a person directly by using his or her title only. A Ph.D or a physician is called *Doctor*. Teachers prefer the title *Profesor*, engineers go by *Ingeniero*, architects are *Arquitecto*, and lawyers are *Abogado*. Persons who do not have professional titles should be addressed as Mr., Mrs., or Miss, plus their surnames.

In Spanish these are:

- Mr. = *Senor*
- Mrs. = *Senora*
- Miss = *Senorita*

• Most Hispanics have two surnames: one from their father, which is listed first, followed by one from their mother. Only the father's surname is used when addressing someone

• Speaking softly considered the polite thing to do

• Social conversation before business is the custom

• Good conversation topics: Guatemalan geography, history, culture

• Bad conversation topics: politics or "the violence" since 1978