



## Key elements of context:

Across geographies and time, different philosophies have developed a variety of approaches to wellbeing and quality of life which in turn have shaped the way people in these cultures behave, think, write and speak.

To compare quality of life across cultures in simplistic terms with reference to one particular model is to risk missing a key characteristic of cultures and quality of life; their diversity.

## What is the issue?

As human beings we are instinctively drawn to patterns of all sorts, for example in our environments, behaviours and cultures. We derive comfort from 'rules of thumb', short cuts that can help us make sense of the variety and diversity of the circumstances we find ourselves in. On one level, this deeply ingrained habit helps us to make decisions quicker and more easily. However, in intercultural contexts and when dealing with a concept such as 'quality of life', there is a risk that our temptation to go fast leads us to overlook fundamental drivers of the way we think, behave, and therefore interpret others and the world around us.

## What research did the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life do in relation to quality of life around the world?

In 2016, the Institute sponsored a project led by a French expert in intercultural relations who set out to explore the multiple interpretations and components of quality of life across ten countries: South Africa, Namibia, India, the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, Chile and Brazil. She conducted interviews with professors, administrative staff and students of all origins and generations to find out how they perceive quality of life through their own local culture. Through her journey, we take a closer look at the variety of ways in which quality of life is conceived of and experienced across cultures in three sections:

- **our place in the world** (perceptions of time, space, nature, religion and body)
- **our relation to others** (the importance of family, the balance between the individual and the collective, the relation between male and female in society)
- **our work culture** (our attitude towards work, conflict and money)

## What did we learn?

Frameworks that help us understand and track improvements in quality of life through its various dimensions are a useful way to bring structure and coherence. However, we should always question the temptation to devise and apply universal rules. Instead, we should seek to develop a more nuanced perspective developed from deep insight that combines the person, place, community, moment in time, situation and culture. Only then can we truly understand what it means to improve the quality of life of individuals.

Find out more by reading the full report *Quality of Life around the world: an introduction* **here**.

## About the Institute

As an in-house 'think-tank', the Sodexo Institute for Quality of Life is inspired by Sodexo's deeply held conviction that improving Quality of Life leads to the progress of individuals and contributes to the performance of organisations. Its role is to gather and develop insight to help Sodexo understand better what are the levers of Quality of Life.

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