



FLEX

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The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.



ARMENIA

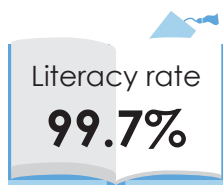
A landlocked, mountainous country with Turkey to the west and Georgia to the north, Armenia has an ancient cultural heritage with a history longer than most other European countries. Situated along the route of the Great Silk Road, it has had a number of cultural influences and empires. It is one of the earliest Christian civilizations with the first churches founded in the fourth century, and many religious sites are located throughout the country. After independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it became a multi-party, democratic nation. Armenian is the official language and Russian is widely spoken. The currency is the dram and some of the main exports are diamonds, machinery and foodstuffs.



Population
3,038,217



10,889 MI²
Slightly smaller than
Maryland

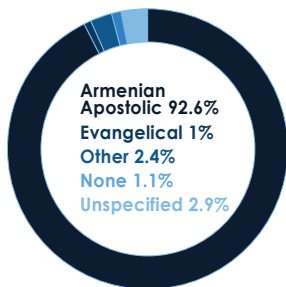


Literacy rate
99.7%

Ethnicities

Armenian 98.1%
Yezidi (Kurd) 1.1%
Other 0.7%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

It is common to have multiple generations living in the same household and it is typical for men to work and women to take care of household chores. Fathers are usually responsible for making family and financial decisions, but this is slowly changing, especially in large cities. Meals are usually eaten together as a family.

The elderly are held in high regard and families emphasize respect for older family members, particularly grandparents, who often live with the family. Generally, conversation between family members is direct if the relationships are close.

In the household, belongings are considered one's own and the etiquette of asking before borrowing depends on each family. It is considered normal for parents to socialize with friends without their children, who may stay at home alone or with extended family. It is considered unusual for someone to spend too much time alone.

Daughters are usually responsible for general cleaning around the house and helping out with meals. Sons may have chores that are outside the home, such as shoveling snow or working in the yard. Brothers may be expected to escort their sisters to school, and sisters may be expected to clean up after their brothers. These traditional gender roles are slowly changing.

Parents sometimes give teenagers a small allowance since it is uncommon for teenagers to have part-time jobs, although some teenagers find summer jobs in cafes, hotels, or shops.

Parents are very involved in the lives of their children and often monitor how much time they spend away from their studies and on the computer. Big decisions, such as choosing a career or attending university, are usually discussed as a family.

Some families have dogs or cats which usually are kept outside. Pets are not usually viewed as members of the family, and often are not given much attention since they are considered unclean.

FRIENDSHIP

It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups and one-on-one with friends of the same gender. One-on-one socialization with friends of the opposite sex is not considered appropriate.

Extended family members and neighbors usually make up the majority of students' closest friends. Class-mates are often very close to each other since they are with the same group throughout all grades. Sharing money and buying gifts for one another is considered a normal part of a friendship, and the money is usually not

expected to be paid back. It is understood that if you invite someone out, you will pay the bill. It is common for boys to collectively pay the bill when out with a group of mixed gender.

The acceptable distance when speaking or standing next to someone is quite close, and making eye contact is considered a sign of respect when speaking to others. It can be common for people to express negative emotions in public, and Armenian people are often quick to forgive without taking things personally.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students are divided into groups in elementary school and remain together as a class until graduation. They usually study 5-7 subjects. Teachers move between rooms and students stay in the same classroom where they are primarily evaluated on homework, class participation, and oral exams. Students have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes and all subjects are studied at the same level of difficulty. There are some students who choose to enter a specialized school in 10th grade where they have the opportunity to take more intensive or specific classes.

Students are expected to dress formally and neatly at school. Students usually eat breakfast at home before school and return home for lunch. It is uncommon to bring food to school.

Plagiarism and cheating, although discouraged, may have less serious repercussions in Armenian schools. Punishments may consist of verbal warnings or being asked to leave during a test, which results in a failed mark. In cases of bullying, class representatives often try to resolve these issues, and teachers and directors are involved to ensure no reoccurrences.

The relationship between teachers and students is very formal. To show appreciation to teachers, students will often give gifts or organize performances for them on the first day of school and on national teacher's day. Classes in school are mixed-gender except for sewing and cooking class for girls and wood-working classes for boys. There are frequent meetings between parents and teachers at school, especially in smaller communities. Students also keep school diaries where their marks are recorded and signed by the teacher.

Extracurricular activities are important to Armenian families and they are not usually available in schools. Parents encourage private lessons and participation in dancing, languages, visual arts, and sports activities, which are available in the community and are usually fee-based.

FOOD

Vegetarianism and vegan diets are not common, but there are those who observe special diets due to food allergies or other medical conditions. Restaurant portion sizes are average in Armenia and it is not common to take uneaten food home.

RELIGION

Some families go to church services on Saturdays, but most attend only on holidays or for family life events. Religious institutions are for worship and are not commonly considered a community center for non-religious activities.

PERSONAL CARE

It is common for Armenians to shower once or twice a day during the summer. People tend to shower less frequently during the winter or when water is scarce, and sometimes only twice a week. In these cases, people use a washcloth to bathe themselves. It is not common to wash hair every day. People change their clothes daily but items like jeans may be worn multiple times. It is normal for every family member to have one bath towel and one wash cloth, and they are usually used more than once before being washed.

AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan is bounded by the Caspian Sea and Caucasus Mountains, and shares borders with Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran. Its capital, Baku, is famed for its medieval walled Inner City. Within the Inner City lies a royal retreat dating to the 15th century and the centuries-old stone Maiden Tower, which dominates the city skyline. This oil-rich country has redefined itself over the past two decades from a struggling, newly independent former Soviet state to a major regional energy player. Deals with international energy producers have allowed the country to use its energy revenues to create a government-run fund involved in international projects, and it is also using its resources to rebuild its army, which is seen as a government priority. Azerbaijani (Azeri) is the state official language and is spoken by more than 90% of the population. The currency is the manat and the main exports are oil and oil products.



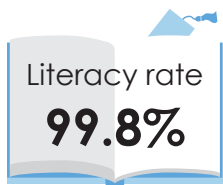
Population

10,046,516



33,436 MI²

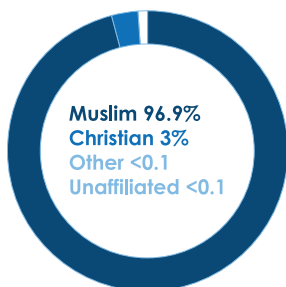
Slightly smaller than Maine



Ethnicities

- Azerbaijani 91.6%
- Lezghin 2%
- Russian 1.3%
- Armenian 1.3%
- Talysh 1.3%
- Other 2.4%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

A typical family consists of two parents and two children. It is common for grandparents to live in the same household and, in some regions, uncles, aunts and their families share the same yard or home. Often, both parents work and are financially responsible for the family. It is also common for the mother to stay at home and take care of household chores. Meals are mostly eaten together as a family.

Most teenagers share a bedroom, but if they do have their own room, it is considered unacceptable to isolate themselves and not socialize with their families for extended periods of time.

Children are often asked to help their parents around the house, but specific chores are not assigned to them in most families. It is not common for boys to wash dishes or do laundry because these tasks are typically done by women. In an effort to teach life skills, many teenagers are responsible for managing their time between school, extracurricular activities, jobs, and social events and are expected to figure out transportation to and from these activities by themselves.

Because parents worry about their children being taken advantage of, they strongly discourage them from sharing personal information with strangers online, and monitor which sites they access and the time spent on the computer. Most parents tend to be involved in all aspects of their children's lives. Parents usually make the final decision about which clubs and courses their children will join. Many teenagers go to music and art schools, join sports clubs and take language courses.

Some families have cats or dogs which are kept inside or outside the house depending on the family. They are not usually considered members of the family.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers make friends through school, extracurricular activities, or family and neighborhood connections. The term "friend" is reserved for very close relationships; peers are considered "classmates" or "acquaintances." Classmates are often very close to each other since they are with the same group throughout all grades.

Teenagers socialize in groups and one-on-one since both are considered appropriate behavior. It is uncommon for boys and girls to socialize together in some regions of Azerbaijan.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students are required to take 15-17 subjects a semester and attend school 5-6 days a week, depending on the school. Students are evaluated daily on tasks including homework, class participation, written tests, and oral reports. If the school is well-equipped, students move between different rooms for classes such as chemistry, physics or biology. In most regional schools, students simply stay in one classroom and the teachers move. Students do not have an opportunity to study subjects at varying levels of difficulty and they must study subjects according to their grade. Students are not allowed to choose any of their courses. Schools do not tolerate fighting, bullying, or sexual harassment, and these are forbidden on school property. If they occur, the police will likely be involved and charges against the student will be filed. The penalties for engaging in these activities are generally not as severe as in the U.S., but can include being expelled or arrested. Cheating is not allowed or tolerated. Students caught cheating will be reprimanded and their parents will be called.

Students are expected to show respect to their teachers by listening and being engaged in class. Students will sometimes have a friendly, informal relationship with their teachers and the teacher may prefer students to call them by a nickname or first name. However, in most cases, students have a more formal relationship with their teachers. Boys and girls study in the same classes and are not seated apart, and all subjects are open to both genders.

While some schools provide an opportunity for students to be involved in extracurricular activities such as sports or art, most do not. It is common for students to participate in different (usually fee-based) activities outside of school which include music, art, dance, and sports.

FOOD

Vegetarianism and vegan diets are not common, but some do observe special diets due to food allergies or other medical conditions. Most people do not eat pork due to religious beliefs.

RELIGION

Most families do not practice any religion, although most people consider themselves Muslim. When a family does practice Islam, they tend to worship together five times a day and fathers sometimes take their families to mosques for Friday prayers. Mosques only serve as places of worship and are not considered as a community center.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers normally shower three times a week, or more often if they are involved in physical activities. It is considered normal for teens to wear the same clothes multiple times in a row and wash them if they look untidy or are unclean. Mothers or daughters typically do the laundry, and boys are not expected to help.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czechia is a landlocked country bordering Germany, Austria, Poland, and Slovakia. Czechia is a member state of the European Union but maintains its own currency, the koruna. It boasts a highly developed, export-oriented economy with advanced industry centered on manufacturing and research. Modern Czechia spans the territory of historical Bohemia. Following the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, Czechia became a part of the Austrian Empire and, after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, became the Republic of Czechoslovakia. While the country remained democratic during the interwar period, the Czech portion fell under German control in World War II, with the Slovak region becoming the Slovak Republic. In the wake of the war, Czechia became part of the Soviet Union and remained occupied until the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Czechia is a popular European tourist destination, with Prague, the capital city, the fifth most-visited in Europe. Czechia is also known for its spa towns, castles, and cathedrals.



Population
10,686,269

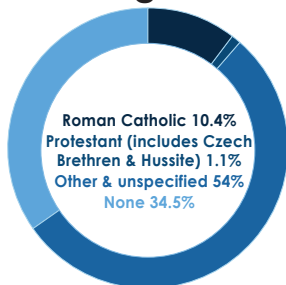
30,451 MI²
Slightly smaller than
South Carolina

Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

A typical household consists of parents and children, two on average. Grandparents and other relatives may live in the same home, but not usually. As the country is relatively small, inter-generational visits may take place often, and grandparents may be involved in childcare. Parents often cook for their children even when they are teenagers. Parent involvement varies by family. Some parents are involved in their children's extracurricular activities and children may have a number of them during the week, but this is not the norm in most families. Other parents may be less actively involved.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves to pursue their own activities, socialize with friends, or to simply relax. Teenagers will often spend time alone in their rooms and expect privacy. Teenagers are expected to do chores at home. Some families assign chores based on gender, while others do not. Girls would be expected to do laundry or wash dishes, while boys would be expected to shovel snow. Girls are more expected to cook than boys. Gender roles are more entrenched in Czech society, especially in small towns and the countryside.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers sometimes socialize in groups, and sometimes one-on-one. Both are considered appropriate. It is perfectly acceptable for teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them one-on-one. Teenagers usually make friends through school and extracurricular activities but some also have their neighbors (with whom they may attend the same school) and cousins (if they happen to live in the same town) as close friends. The term "friend" is usually reserved for very close relationships. Czechs, including teenagers, would not refer to someone whom they know only in passing as a friend.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students typically have 8-10 core subjects and several electives. Classes are usually 45 minutes long. Some subjects meet three times a week, some twice, and some just once. High school students are used to being examined orally in front of their class. They are evaluated on written tests, papers, or other types of projects. Participation in class is not commonly part of their grade. Students are in the same group of roughly 30 pupils throughout their secondary school studies. They have a class teacher assigned to their class and take core subjects together. All subjects are studied at the same level of difficulty. They tend to form close bonds within their group, but they also mix with students from other classes, especially when taking electives. Boys and girls study

together. In general, the public school education system is more centralized than the U.S. school system.

Extracurricular activities are often outside of school. Students may be involved in a sports club outside of school and form friendships there as well as in school.

FOOD

Contemporary Czech cuisine features meat heavily, and a meal consists of two or more courses (soup, main dish, dessert). There are many thick soups and types of sauces, as well as baked meats with gravies.

Many Czechs will offer drink or food to their guests and will repeat their offer once or twice, but will not force food and drink on guests if they decline. Simple drink and food (coffee, teas, crackers) are offered to someone whose visit was not planned or is meant to be short. The exception could be families living in the villages of southern Moravia, a more traditional, conservative, and rural region in the country's southeast. People there are known for their hospitality and may force food and drink on their guests. They also expect the same kind of hospitality when visiting someone else.

Most teenagers make or buy a snack to eat during one of the morning breaks at school. While teenagers buy chips, such food is seen as junk and some parents disapprove of their children eating it. A warm lunch is typically served at a school cafeteria and usually consists of two courses: soup and the main meal. Dinner is often lighter. Some families may eat a warm dinner while others have a cold dinner such as an open-face sandwich.

RELIGION

Czechs are largely secular. Most are atheist or agnostic and do not attend any church services. Most churches are Catholic, largely traditional, and do not serve as community centers.

Despite the country's largely secular nature, Christmas is the most important family holiday. It is celebrated on Christmas Eve when families have dinner and then open presents under the Christmas tree. In a similar tradition to Austria and Germany, small children believe that their presents are brought by the baby Jesus, not Santa Claus. Christmas dinner usually consists of carp fried in a coating of flour, eggs, and bread crumbs similar to schnitzel, and is served with potato salad. Czechs also bake several types of Christmas cookies and braided sweet bread.

PERSONAL CARE

Most people wear the same clothes twice if they are clean. Many will change their shirts and blouses every day but may wear the same pair of jeans or pants twice. Teenagers shower daily, or more often if they do sports or during the summer. Most people have one towel in the bathroom that is used to dry off after showering. The same towel may be used more than once before it is washed. Teenagers usually do not dress up for school. They wear whatever is fashionable—jeans, shirts, hoodies, and leggings. In some families, clothes like jeans and shirts are ironed by mothers or daughters. High schools usually do not have dress codes, but some schools require students to wear uniforms.

ESTONIA

Estonia borders the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland. Including more than 1,500 islands, its diverse terrain spans rocky beaches, old-growth forest, and many lakes. Formerly part of the Soviet Union, it is dotted with castles, churches, and hilltop fortresses. The capital, Tallinn, is known for its preserved Old Town, museums, and observation tower. Estonia is the northernmost of the three Baltic states and has linguistic ties with Finland. Since regaining its independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Estonia has become one of the most economically successful of the European Union's newer members. The national language is Estonian and the currency is the euro.

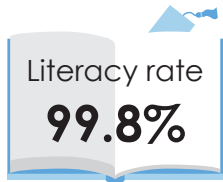


Population
1,251,581



17,463 MI²

Roughly twice the area
of New Jersey

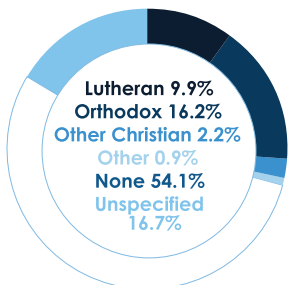


Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Households usually consist of two generations, with grandparents and extended relatives living separately. Generally, both parents work and are considered equal authority figures in the family. Communication between family members is informal and direct.

It is considered normal for family members to both spend time alone and to pursue individual activities. Meals are commonly eaten together, but family members may have meals separately depending on individual schedules. When a family member would like to borrow something, it is generally understood that they must ask first.

Children are often responsible for specific household chores. Sometimes these responsibilities may follow traditional gender roles, such as daughters would be more likely to help out with cooking than sons.

Commonly, both parents exert equal authority in family decisions, but fathers tend to handle financial matters. In an effort to teach life skills, teenagers are expected to manage their own time and schedule. Some families give allowances to their children and teenagers may work part-time. Parents may be involved in monitoring what students do online.

Owning pets is common and they are often kept outside of the house in the countryside. Pets are not usually treated as members of the family.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships in Estonia are often formed in school, on the internet, and during extracurricular activities. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. Estonian teenagers use the term "friend" casually and when referring to acquaintances they may not know very well. Parents often know the friends of their children in the countryside, but this is not common in cities and towns.

Sharing money between friends is normal, but it is always expected to be returned. Teenagers are accustomed to maintaining personal space when interacting with other people. Making eye contact is a normal way of displaying respect in conversation with others. Teenagers are usually direct in conversation but tend to be modest in verbalizing feelings. Negative emotions are usually only shared among close friends.

SCHOOL LIFE

In Estonia, there are both Russian and Estonian high schools. Students are primarily evaluated on homework and periodic written exams. Students study most subjects at the same level of difficulty, but in larger schools classes may separate for more advanced English or math. The core classes are obligatory for all students and each school offers eight different elective courses, such as psychology, religious studies, or foreign languages. Students tend to dress formally to school, but some also wear jeans and sweaters. Schools typically have dining halls where students usually eat lunch.

The severity of consequences for breaking rules varies from school to school. Students will not be expelled for fighting but may be given a bad grade for behavior. A movement against bullying is spreading. The punishments for cheating are not as serious as in the U.S., and a student might be asked to retake the exam or receive a bad grade, but will not be failed.

Nicknames are not used in the classroom between teachers and students. Teachers may allow students to call them by their first name, but only if the teacher approves this beforehand. Communication between parents and teachers is minimal since parents usually monitor their children's academic performance and school behavior through a school web page that includes the student's behavior and grades.

There are clubs available in most schools which may include performing arts and sports. Most students are involved in extracurricular activities outside of school.

FOOD

Religious diets or fasting are not common practices, but dietary concerns such as lactose-intolerance and gluten-free and vegetarian diets are becoming more widespread. Food portions tend to be relatively big in restaurants. It is not common to ask to have something wrapped up to take home, but is becoming more acceptable.

RELIGION

Attending religious services regularly is not common, but devoted families may attend church every Sunday. It is common for only parents and grandparents to attend services, and families often go together on holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Some major holidays include Mart's Day and Kadri's day, which are both similar to Halloween. Another holiday, Jaan's Day, is celebrated with bonfires and a late night of singing and dancing.

PERSONAL CARE

Estonians are used to showering and changing clothes daily, but items like jeans may be worn multiple times. Parents might expect their daughters to do their own laundry, but this would not be a common expectation for sons.

GEORGIA

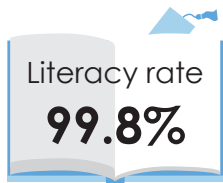
Georgia is a predominantly Christian country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe, it is bounded by the Black Sea, Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. It has a unique and ancient cultural heritage and is famed for its traditions of hospitality and cuisine. It is home to mountain villages and Black Sea beaches. The capital, Tbilisi, is known for the diverse architecture and maze-like, cobblestone streets of its old town. Georgia is famous for its cave monasteries and ancient wine-growing regions. The Georgian language is one of the oldest in the world and is in its own unique language group. Russian is also widely spoken. The currency is the lari.



Population
4,926,087



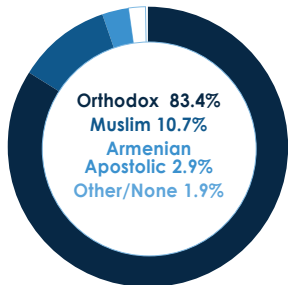
26,911 MI²
Slightly larger than
West Virginia



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

It is common to have multiple generations living in the same household, and eating meals together is an important part of family life. It is normal for family members to spend time in pursuit of individual interests, but it may be considered rude to not spend time with family members daily. Sharing clothes and other items is encouraged in Georgian families and asking permission beforehand, although encouraged, may not be common practice.

In terms of privacy, it is rare for family members to knock on doors before entering, unless it is a parent's room. Knocking may also be considered a formal gesture, so one may not wait for an answer before entering. Children often have a more formal relationship with their father than mother since fathers are seen as the authority figure in the family. Grandparents are held in high regard and are very involved in raising grandchildren. It is not acceptable for young people to call an adult by their first name, and they may thus address close family friends as "uncle" or "aunt."

Mothers are primarily responsible for the housework, and rarely require their children to clean up their rooms or do chores (which, if given, tend to be divided according to traditional gender roles). It is uncommon for teenagers to cook for themselves. In larger cities, both parents may work, in which case grandparents often help watch after younger children.

Usually, fathers are the decision makers in the family, but mothers may have a lot of influence as well. Parents are very involved in the decisions of their children, including what activities they participate in outside of school and the approval of friendships. It is uncommon for teenagers to work while going to school, so purchases are always discussed with parents.

Owning pets is not common. Families may own dogs that are kept outside to protect property. Georgians are accustomed to seeing many stray animals that may be aggressive.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are often formed with classmates and neighbors and commonly last a lifetime. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only for those who are very close. Loyalty in friendship is taken very seriously, and occasionally friends are expected to help one another out by cheating on a test. Friends often spend time together at cafes, but late evening hangouts are only acceptable on special occasions. In terms of mixed-gender friendships, group socialization is preferable to one-on-one interactions.

Teenagers in Georgia are more indirect in their communication style and may rely on behavior and subtle clues to communicate their true feelings. Personal space is much more relaxed and

teenagers tend to sit and stand closer to each other in conversations and personal interactions. This is especially the case with close friends and family members. Georgians have a more relaxed sense of time and it is considered acceptable for someone to run 10-15 minutes late.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students are primarily evaluated on attendance, homework, class participation, and written and verbal exams. Students are divided into sections in elementary school and remain with the same group of students until graduation. Generally, students have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes and study each subject at the same level of difficulty. When attending school, they tend to dress formally, as casual sports clothes are not considered appropriate attire.

Plagiarism and cheating, although discouraged, may have less serious consequences. Teachers often warn students about cheating during a test but are not very strict about punishment if someone is caught cheating. It is often considered a betrayal of friendship if students do not help each other during an examination.

The relationship between teachers and students is very formal. It may be considered disrespectful for a student to express a different opinion on a subject matter than a teacher. There is usually less active classroom participation and discussion.

Student clubs and sports teams are uncommon in schools, but many students participate in activities at youth centers in their cities. Many students enroll in music schools or practice traditional Georgian dance outside of classes. Additional resources from parents are usually required to participate in these types of activities.

FOOD

Lunch is usually the biggest meal of the day and eating healthy, homemade dishes is common in Georgia. A vegetarian or vegan diet is not common. Religious families fast multiple times a year. Fasting in the days leading up to Christmas and Easter is common and usually involves avoiding meat and dairy products.

RELIGION

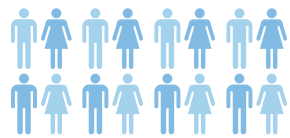
Religious services have more of a spiritual character, and families attend church to worship rather than for social activities. Churches are not seen as community centers. About 80% of the population considers themselves to be religious and attends church at least occasionally.

PERSONAL CARE

People typically shower every other day in the winter and every day in summer. Since utilities are inexpensive, people tend to take longer showers. Teenagers are not expected to change their clothes every day unless they are visibly unclean. Families usually hang their laundry to dry since dryers are uncommon.

GREECE

Greece is a country in southeastern Europe with thousands of islands throughout the Aegean and Ionian seas. Influential in ancient times, it is often called the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, Western literature, political science, major scientific and mathematical principles, Western drama, and the Olympic Games. It is also known for its beaches. Athens, its capital and largest city, retains landmarks including the fifth century B.C. Acropolis citadel, home to the Parthenon temple. Located on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula, Greece shares borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. About 80% of Greece is mountainous, with Mount Olympus being the highest peak at 9,573 feet. The official language is Greek and the currency is the euro.

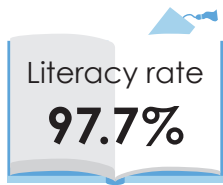


Population
10,761,523



50,949 MI²

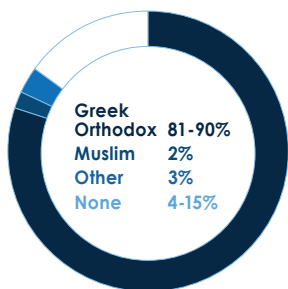
Slightly smaller than Alabama



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

A typical household in Greece consists of parents and an average of two children. Grandparents and other relatives sometimes live in the same home. It is common for both parents to work and share financial responsibility and equal authority, but mothers usually have more authority in making household decisions.

It is more common for women to do household chores, but in some families chores are shared by both men and women. Teenagers are usually responsible for cleaning their room and picking up after themselves. Chores like doing laundry and cleaning the kitchen or bathroom may not be expected of them. They will help with these chores if they are asked.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves to pursue their own activities, socialize with friends, or to simply relax. Teenagers will often spend time alone in their rooms and expect privacy. Most parents are very involved in the lives of their children and monitor time spent on the computer and online activity. Making big decisions, such as choosing a career or attending university, are usually discussed as a family. Parents sometimes give teenagers a small weekly allowance since it is uncommon for teenagers to have part-time jobs. Parents tend to know their children's friends and monitor the time they come home at night.

It is common for families to eat together, especially on weekends. It is not common for teenagers to prepare meals, and most will make quick snacks if they are hungry.

Belongings are considered one's own. Children do share clothing but are expected to ask before using it. It is common to have pets which are treated as proper family members, and adopting them from shelters or individuals is common practice.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers socialize in groups and one-on-one. Both are considered appropriate. It is perfectly acceptable for teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them one-on-one by going to places such as the cinema, coffee shops, malls, and concerts. Teenagers usually make friends through school and extracurricular activities, but some also have friendships with neighbors and relatives of the same age. The term "friend" is usually reserved for very close relationships, and would not be used to refer to someone whom they know only in passing as a friend.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students typically have 9-11 core subjects and several electives. Some classes meet daily while others meet 1-2 times per week, depending on the subject. Electives are usually chosen based on preparation for college entrance exams. Students are evaluated on daily homework, class participation, quizzes, and midterm and final exams. Tests are usually in the form of essay questions and sometimes include multiple choice questions or math/physics exercises.

In general, students are in the same group, stay in the same classroom, and follow core classes throughout their secondary school studies. They tend to form close bonds within their group, but they also mix with students from other classes, especially when taking electives. Students cannot study at different levels of difficulty.

Some high schools offer IT/computing, geology, Greek/European cultural studies, and arts as electives. Typical extracurricular activities include sports, theater groups, and choir. Students are often involved in these activities and form friendships there.

Teenagers usually do not dress up for school. They wear whatever is fashionable (jeans, shirts, hoodies and leggings) but are expected to dress in an appropriate way. High schools usually do not have dress codes but there are some schools which require students to wear uniforms. Teens usually take a packed lunch to school or buy lunch there.

Students are expected to be on time for their classes although it is common in everyday life outside of work and school to be 5-10 minutes late for appointments.

FOOD

Contemporary Greek cuisine makes wide use of vegetables, olive oil, grains, fish, wine, and meat. Other important ingredients include olives, pasta, cheese, lemon juice, herbs, bread, and yogurt. Dining out is common and restaurants are affordable for both locals and tourists. It is very common for people to ask the restaurant to wrap up any uneaten food to take home for lunch the next day.

Vegetarianism is becoming more common, and there is a tendency towards healthy eating. Fad diets are not common, especially among teenagers, but food restrictions due to religious beliefs are understood.

Many Greeks will offer drink or food to their guests and will repeat their offer one or two times, but will not force food and drink on guests if they decline.

RELIGION

Religious participation varies by family. Some will attend religious services every Sunday and others live a completely secular life. Most families attend church on Easter and for ceremonies like weddings and baptisms. Churches are not considered as community spaces, but there are some young Christians who are active in their communities and take part in youth activities.

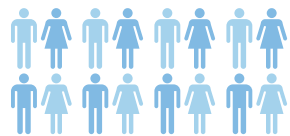
Christmas is celebrated in a similar way to western countries. Easter is considered the biggest celebration, where people go to church the night before. Typically in villages and rural locations, they then gather on Easter day for a big meal traditionally featuring slow-roasted lamb.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers wear the same clothes 2-3 times if they are clean. Many will change their shirts and blouses every day but may wear the same pair of jeans or pants more than once. Teenagers shower daily, or more often if they participate in sports or during the summer, and are expected to keep the bathroom clean after use. Most people have one towel in the bathroom that is used to dry off after a shower/bath and it may be used more than once before it is washed.

HUNGARY

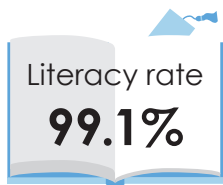
A **landlocked country in Central Europe**, Hungary borders Slovakia, Ukraine, Austria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, and is a member of the European Union. Hungary was inhabited by a succession of semi-nomadic tribes before becoming a part of the Ottoman and then Habsburg Empires beginning in the 16th century. Only after World War I did Hungary emerge as an independent nation. Hungary joined the Axis Powers during World War II and became a Soviet satellite state. Lake Balton, the largest in Central Europe, is located in Hungary, and the country is a popular destination for its spas and hot springs. The official language is Hungarian. Electronics manufacturing, information technology, and food processing are the largest industries in the Hungarian economy, which maintains its own currency, the forint.



Population
9,825,704



35,912 MI²
Slightly smaller than
Virginia

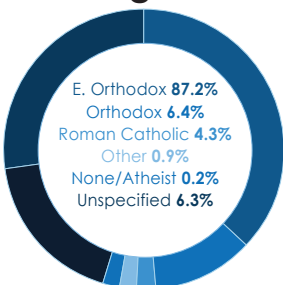


Literacy rate
99.1%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Family plays a large role in the social structure. In the post-communist period, families have become smaller and ties with extended families have decreased, although they may live in close proximity to one another. Grandparents still play a very important role in the lives of their grandchildren, often helping to raise them.

Most households consist of parents and an average of two children. In Hungary, every second marriage ends with divorce, therefore the number of single parents is high. Children typically stay with their mothers after divorce. Typically both parents work, however men are traditionally looked at as the provider. The burden of household management and caring for tasks related to children falls mostly on mothers.

Immediate family members will often provide emotional and financial support to each other. Much of people's free time revolves around being with the family. Food plays a large role, with families passing down cooking traditions as well as sharing home-cooked meals together. Although many Hungarians are moving abroad to find employment opportunities, they continue to maintain strong ties with their immediate family.

FRIENDSHIP

Hungarians enjoy hosting and socializing with friends and family. Food is often a major point of socializing and pride. Teenagers make most of their friends through school or extracurricular activities, and not necessarily from family or neighborhood connections. There is a difference between friends and acquaintances. The word "friend" is reserved for strong, close relationships.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students have around 12-15 mandatory subjects in a school year depending on the type of the school. In addition to these, optional subjects are available if the student is interested in a certain area. Classes meet 3-5 times a week, depending on the subject. A high school student typically has 7-8 classes a day and the length of a class is usually 45 minutes. In addition to classroom education, students may take field trips to the forest, museums, libraries, or exhibitions. Classes are held five days a week (six, in exceptional cases).

High school students are evaluated by oral presentations in front of the class, written tests consisting most typically of short or longer essay questions, and homework. Class participation is

encouraged and taken into account but not as much as written and oral testing. Boys and girls are not separated except in the case of private religious schools.

Teenagers do not dress up for school. They wear jeans and t-shirts, but most of the clothes are ironed.

FOOD

Typical Hungarian food is heavy on dairy, cheese, and meats, and is famous for its high quality and relatively inexpensive salamis and sausages. Paprika, a quintessential spice and pepper, is often associated with Hungary and is used prominently in a handful of dishes. People usually have a large breakfast, consisting of an open-face sandwich with fresh bread or toast, butter, cheese (or different cream cheeses), and cured meats. Fresh tomatoes and green peppers are served with these, seasonally. Eggs may also be part of breakfast.

Being a vegetarian is rare. Recently, there is more awareness about gluten and lactose intolerances. In more religious places in the countryside and small towns, it is more common for people to fast according to religious requirements such as no meat on Fridays or no meat on the day before Christmas, or for the 40 days preceding Easter.

RELIGION

Hungarian society is largely secular and most people attend religious services only on major religious holidays. Some families do go to Sunday mass and engage in youth activities organized by the church, but this is not very common. Recently, the government mandated weekly religious classes at school. The religious class may be substituted with an ethics course for those who are not religious, or for personal reasons.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers are often expected to shower daily; twice if they are involved in physical activities. It is common for a teenager to use a washing machine. Clothes dryers are rare. Most people have one towel per member in the home which is used to dry off after bathing. The same towel may be used more than once before it is washed.

KAZAKHSTAN

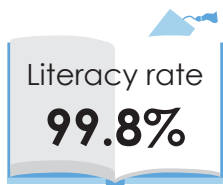
Kazakhstan, a Central Asian country and former Soviet republic, extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Altai Mountains at its eastern border with China and Russia. It also shares borders with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The northern city of Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) became the capital of Kazakhstan in 1997, replacing Almaty, which is the largest metropolis and a long-standing trading hub. It is a huge country the size of Western Europe and has vast mineral resources. Major investment in the oil sector has brought rapid economic growth. The varied landscape stretches from the mountainous, heavily populated regions of the east to the sparsely populated, energy-rich lowlands in the west, and the industrialized north, with its Siberian climate and terrain. Kazakh and Russian are the major languages, and the currency is the tenge.



Population
18,556,698



1,052,090 MI²
Roughly 4 times the area of
Texas

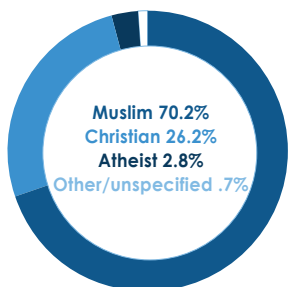


Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Family is one of the most important aspects of culture in Kazakhstan and they tend to be very close and connected in each others' lives. Children usually live at home until they start their own families or move to another city for work or study. Extended family, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins may also live in the same household. If they do not, it is likely they will visit frequently. Usually the father is responsible for financial matters in the household. Spending time together as a family is important and it is considered disrespectful if a child spends too much time with friends or on other activities, especially if it keeps them from helping with household chores.

Some teenagers have their own rooms, but many are accustomed to sharing space with siblings or other family members.

Household responsibilities are usually divided between children and it is common for the youngest daughter, when she is old enough, to help cook, clean, and prepare for guests. Eating habits and practices vary from family to family, but most families regularly have home-cooked meals. In many families, the mother prepares meals, often with the help of her children. Many men and boys know how to cook, but generally it is expected that the females in the house will prepare the meals.

It is not common for teenagers to have a part-time job, and parents usually give a small allowance to their children. Students take responsibility for their school work, extracurricular activities and, in many cases, getting themselves to and from school.

Parents are usually involved in their children's extracurricular activities and often encourage them to take certain classes or join athletic teams. Public transportation is reliable and safe and teenagers are able to get around town to sports and other activities independently.

Many families have house cats, but keeping dogs inside the home is rare. Most families who own dogs keep them outside to protect their property. Stray dogs and cats are common in Kazakhstan, and considered dangerous.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers socialize both in groups and one-on-one. It is common to spend time at cafes and shopping centers and taking walks with friends. Parents are usually not involved in choosing the friends of their children. It is uncommon for friends of opposite genders to spend time together one-on-one. Most teenagers are closest with their classmates from school, since they usually spend most of their time with them. Teenagers also often have close relationships with cousins, family friends, and neighbors.

Teenagers tend to communicate more indirectly. If a teenager is having a problem, parents may need to make extra effort to find out what the problem is. Each family is unique in its methods of communication between members, however. Teenagers usually try not to show negative emotions initially and may not complain or express disappointment outwardly.

SCHOOL LIFE

The state curriculum consists of 12-15 subjects with 5-6 main subjects. Students are evaluated on a daily basis which includes homework, periodic quizzes, and a final exam. Exams are often oral with written exams being less common. Policies concerning fighting, bullying, and sexual harassment vary and are determined by the school management. Usually teachers are not strict about cheating and plagiarism. Although it is discouraged, consequences for cheating are minimal, and a teacher will simply tell the student to stop. Students often believe that helping their friends with homework or tests is a demonstration of good friendship.

Teachers always maintain authority in the classroom. Students call them by their first and patronymic (middle) names, never by their first name alone. Students show respect by listening, keeping quiet in class, sitting properly, and raising their hands to answer a question. Open discussion and active participation is uncommon. Teachers rarely know their students' parents personally, and report cards are given to students to share with their parents.

Students usually join clubs, participate in sport activities, and attend music lessons outside of school, at their own expense.

FOOD

Many people do not eat pork for religious reasons, and fast during the holy month of Ramadan. Eating habits and practices vary from family to family, but most families regularly have home-cooked meals. In many families, the mother prepares meals, often with the help of her children. Vegetarianism is not a common practice.

RELIGION

Even though 70% of the population identifies as Sunni Muslim, only 15-20% practice regularly. Places of worship are rarely used for social gatherings. Kazakhstan is home to a variety of ethnicities who celebrate both Muslim and Christian holidays. There are also a number of secular holidays. New Year's Eve is a very popular holiday that includes inviting friends over and eating a big meal. Kurban Bairam and Eid al-Fitr are celebrated, but not all families observe these holidays.

PERSONAL CARE

It is normal to shower once every day, more frequently if one participates in sports. It is generally acceptable to wear the same clothes several times before washing them as long as they are not dirty. Some teenagers may wash their own clothes but it is usually done by the mother. Clothes dryers are not common. Teenagers are expected to clean up after themselves in the bathroom.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is a rugged Central Asian country along the Silk Road, the ancient trade route between China and the Mediterranean. The Tian Shan mountains, which surround the old caravan route and dominate the country, are home to snow leopards, lynx, and sheep. In the south, the millennia-old city of Osh has a huge, busy bazaar that was once a stop on the Silk Road. It is a landlocked country bordered by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. Kyrgyzstan's recorded history spans over 2,000 years, encompassing a variety of cultures and empires. Although geographically isolated by its highly mountainous terrain, which has helped preserve its ancient culture, Kyrgyzstan has been at the crossroads of several great civilizations and other commercial and cultural routes. Kyrgyzstan became independent with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It has some oil and gas and a developing gold mining sector, but relies on imports for most of its energy needs. The major languages are Kyrgyz and Russian, and the currency is the som.

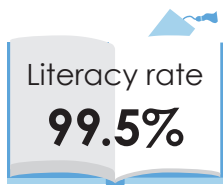


Population
5,849,296



77,202 MI²

Slightly smaller than
South Dakota

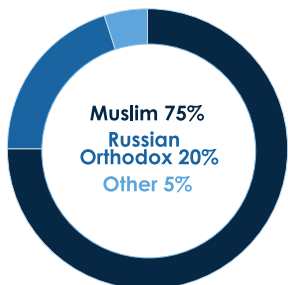


Literacy rate
99.5%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

In Kyrgyzstan, it is common to have multiple generations living in the same household, and relatives may visit for extended or undefined periods of time. In rural areas, families tend to have around 4-6 children and in the cities, 1-2 children. Family meals are usually eaten together.

In the household, belongings are not always considered one's own, but rather communal. Siblings may borrow each others' items without asking. There is little consideration of privacy and people tend to prefer to spend time with others rather than alone. Much of the communication in the family is not necessarily direct, but through subtle, nonverbal communication.

Typically both sons and daughters help out with chores, which are usually divided according to traditional gender roles. Normally, the mother and daughters are responsible for cooking and household cleaning.

Parents are actively involved in the lives of their children and are the ultimate decision makers regarding their extracurricular activities, future aspirations, and sometimes marriage. Typically, the father is the main financial provider and is seen as the authority figure in the family. He will usually set the family rules with strong influence from the mother in decision making. There are a growing number of single mother families as well.

Most teenagers in the city do not work and parents may give them money for various small expenses. It is common for teenagers in villages to work to support their families on farms or in family businesses. Typically, there is a limited focus on teaching teenagers monetary budgeting.

Many households own dogs that live outside for security purposes. Cats are common pets and small dogs have become more fashionable in large cities. Pets typically are not viewed as members of the family.

FRIENDSHIP

It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups and one-on-one with friends of the same gender. It is uncommon to have friends of the opposite sex, and one-on-one socialization is not considered appropriate. Friendships are often formed with classmates and neighbors, and commonly last a lifetime. Extended family members and neighbors usually make up the majority of one's closest friends.

There is a strong respect for hierarchy and it is expected that teenagers be respectful and deferential to all adults. This may include not making eye contact with adults, as looking down demonstrates one's respect and deference. It is common between friends to borrow money without returning it,

or returning it much later. Personal space is quite small, and friends may show affection through physical contact.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally have 5-6 classes per day and study more than a dozen subjects per quarter. They are evaluated on class participation and homework, and tested with both written and oral examinations. Students have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes, but may have the opportunity to choose some additional classes if they attend specialized high schools. Subjects are studied at the same level of difficulty by every student. Middle and high school students change classrooms for their different classes. Students commonly eat lunch in the school cafeteria and dress formally and neatly for school. Many schools have a school uniform with a white top and black skirt or pants.

In the classroom, group discussion and individual input is not commonly accepted. Fighting, bullying, and cheating may not have severe consequences in many schools. Helping friends during examinations is considered normal, and although discouraged by teachers, it is often overlooked by them. It is also not uncommon for teachers to be physical when disciplining students.

The relationship between teachers and students is very formal. Students rarely disagree or talk back to their teachers. Students are expected to stand when an adult comes into the classroom, to show their respect. Although genders are not separated in the classroom setting, students tend to self-segregate by gender.

Few parents are in close contact with their children's teachers, but they are made aware of any behavioral or academic problems. Sometimes, parents are asked by the school director and class teacher to discuss these issues on an individual basis. Most schools hold monthly parent meetings, but do not discuss the behavioral issues of individual students during these events.

Most students take part in extracurricular activities outside of school on a paid basis. Some schools may offer a limited variety of clubs, the most common being debate, student government, and language clubs.

FOOD

Most people maintain a halal diet by not eating pork, and meals are normally served with a side of bread and tea. Portions in restaurants range from regular to large sizes, and it is acceptable to ask for a bag to take leftovers home. During Ramadan, Kurban Ait, and Orozo Ait, devout Kyrgyz participate in fasting and break the fast together with friends and family. Vegetarianism is becoming more popular among younger women.

RELIGION

Religious institutions are generally only for worship and are not commonly considered a community center for non-religious activities. Mosques are frequently attended only by adult men, but sometimes teenage boys may also attend, particularly during holidays.

PERSONAL CARE

It is common for people to shower daily if they live in the city. In the villages, one may shower once a week depending on the availability of hot water. It is common to wear clothes for several days at a time before washing them. In maintaining general cleanliness of a bathroom, girls will typically clean up after themselves, but boys are unlikely to. Daughters may be responsible for doing their own laundry, but this does not extend to sons. Dryers are uncommon, so families hang their clothes to dry.

LATVIA

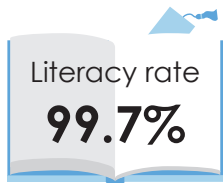
Situated in northeastern Europe with a coastline along the Baltic Sea, Latvia shares borders with Estonia, Russia, Belarus, and Lithuania. It also has a maritime border with Sweden to the west. It has linguistic links with Lithuania and historical and religious ties with Estonia. The country has a temperate seasonal climate and its landscape is marked by wide beaches as well as dense, sprawling forests. For centuries, Latvia was primarily an agricultural country with seafaring, fishing, and forestry as other important factors in its economy. Like its Baltic neighbors, in the decade after independence, Latvia made a rapid transformation to embrace the free market. Latvia was welcomed as a European Union member in May 2004. Latvia's capital is Riga, home to notable wooden and art nouveau architecture, a vast central market, and a medieval old town. Although Latvian is the national language, more than a quarter of the population is Russian-speaking, and their rights have been a thorny issue since independence. The currency is the euro.



Population
1,923,559



24,938 MI²
Slightly larger than
West Virginia

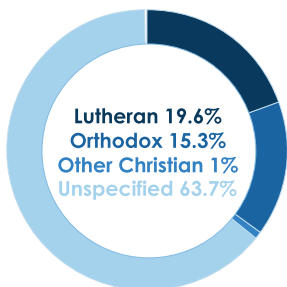


Literacy rate
99.7%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Latvian households traditionally include two parents with 1-2 children. There are an increasing number of single parent households, and in some cases grandparents live in the home as well. Both parents often work and share financial responsibility for the family. Families generally eat meals together. Teenagers interact informally with all of their family members. Siblings usually ask before borrowing personal items, but it is common to share especially when they are the same gender.

Teenagers have chores at home which include washing dishes, cleaning their room/bathroom, doing laundry, picking up after themselves, and generally contributing to the cleanliness of the house. Chores are usually assigned according to traditional gender roles. It is common for teenagers of both genders to cook, but it is more typical that the parents prepare a meal in advance or prepare food that students can heat up later.

Parents monitor the time their children spend online. It is common for family members to spend time pursuing their own individual interests, and parents encourage students to start planning and using their free time independently by joining clubs or activities, or spending time with friends. Parents may give their children a modest allowance depending on their financial situation. Teenagers usually do not work while they are in school. Parents expect their children to make decisions independently, with some supervision, and future career and personal plans are often discussed together. Decisions that require financial contributions are always discussed with parents.

It is common to have pets both in city and rural areas, and many adopt pets from shelters. If the family owns a second house outside of the city, pets may live outside and sometimes be let inside. Latvians also love to buy toys, special food, and sometimes even clothes for their pets.

FRIENDSHIP

In Latvia, teenagers often go to the movies, cafes, coffee shops, parks, or malls with their friends. It is common for them to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize one-on-one. Friends may borrow small amounts of money from each another, but it is always expected to be paid back.

People tend to reserve the term "friend" for very close relationships. People usually have several close friends, and one or two "best friends." It is common for teenagers to make eye contact when speaking with adults.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students have the same classmates through all 12 school years beginning in first grade. Students are evaluated on a variety of tasks including daily homework, class participation, reports, and periodic (usually written) exams. Students do not have the option to study subjects at different levels of difficulty in their schools. If a student cannot keep up with their classmates, they usually take supplemental private lessons outside of school. There typically are no strict policies for fighting, bullying, or sexual harassment in schools, and sexual harassment is a topic that is not commonly discussed. A common consequence for fighting or bullying is calling the parents in to talk to the principal. It is rare for students to bring a lunch to school since most schools do not allow students to eat outside of the cafeteria or to have food in the classrooms.

Respect for teachers in Latvia is shown by listening and being engaged in class. Students often have friendly and informal relationships with their teachers, but there are some teachers who require more formal communication and interaction. Boys and girls are separated in physical education classes, but all other subjects mixed.

Students usually participate in extracurricular activities outside of school since they are generally not offered in the school setting.

FOOD

Food allergies are becoming more common, and people are aware of and may adhere to many types of dietary restrictions. There are many small specialty shops or markets where those with special dietary needs usually buy their food. Vegetarianism is also becoming more popular.

RELIGION

Most families are not very religious, and holidays like Christmas and Easter are mostly celebrated at home with close family or visiting grandparents and relatives. Churches do not serve as community centers, and are solely places of worship.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers are expected to take a quick shower daily but may shower twice a day if they are involved in physical activities. It is considered normal to wear some clothes several days in a row, and it is not common to wash clothes after each use, with the exception of underwear. Teenagers usually do not do their own laundry.

LITHUANIA

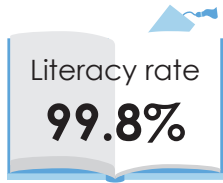
Lithuania is the largest and most southerly of the three Baltic republics. Lithuania's history stretches back to 1253, when it first appeared on the maps, and proudly bears the honor of having the first constitution in Europe, dated May 1791. From the 13th century to 1795, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a single European state encompassing parts of Belarus, Poland, the Russian Empire, and Ukraine. At its height, it was the largest state in Europe. It is situated along the Baltic Sea and bordered by Latvia, Belarus, Poland, and Kaliningrad (a Russian exclave). Its capital, Vilnius, is known for its medieval old town. It also has Gothic, Renaissance and baroque architecture, and an 18th-century cathedral built on a pagan temple site. Lithuania was welcomed as a NATO member in March 2004 and joined the European Union in May 2004. Lithuanian is the official language and Russian, Polish and Belarusian are also spoken. The currency is the euro.



Population
2,823,859



25,212 Mi²
Slightly larger than
West Virginia

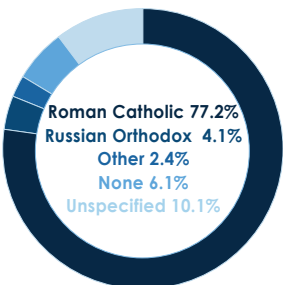


Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities

- Lithuanian 84.1%
- Polish 6.6%
- Russian 5.8%
- Belarusian 1.2%
- Other 1.1%
- Unspecified 1.2%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

In Lithuania, the traditional household consists of two parents and 1-2 children. There are single parent families, though this is not very common. Usually both parents work and are financially responsible for the family, with the exception of rural areas where fathers are typically responsible for financially supporting the family.

Siblings will usually ask before borrowing personal items, but it is common to share items when they are of the same gender. It is common for family members to have alone time. Many parents encourage their children to start planning and using their free time independently by joining activities, clubs, or spending time with friends. Students seek support from their parents for general questions about their future and career plans.

Household chores are often assigned based on gender. Girls might be responsible for cleaning or cooking and boys for fixing anything around the house. Families eat meals together depending on family schedules. Sometimes children will cook smaller meals for themselves, and it is common for parents to prepare food in advance that children can heat up or finish cooking. Students in Lithuania are responsible for their own transportation to and from school and it is common for parents to allow teenagers to travel alone between towns or even abroad for short trips.

Parents usually do not monitor their children's behavior online. They may follow their social network profiles but will usually not check personal messages, emails, or browsing history.

It is common to have pets both in urban and rural areas, and to adopt pets from shelters. If the family owns a detached house, dogs may be kept outside, but some families keep dogs and cats inside as well.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers enjoy socializing both in groups and one-on-one. They often go to cafes, coffee shops, parks, or malls with their friends and also socialize online. It is normal for boys and girls to socialize with each other in groups or one-on-one.

Eye contact is considered a sign of respect and shows that one is engaged and listening. Teenagers may not be good at verbalizing their feelings and in many cases will discuss personal matters like relationships with their friends rather than their parents.

SCHOOL LIFE

Most high school students have 6-7 lessons each day during a five-day school week. Students are evaluated on class participation, homework, papers, and exams. Some schools allow students in 11th and 12th grades to choose certain electives or take courses at different levels of difficulty. Most schools have very strict rules regarding fighting, bullying, and sexual harassment, although punishments vary. Cheating is not permitted, but it is common practice for students to cheat. Consequences for cheating may result in failing exams or contacting parents if it occurs repeatedly. Students generally buy a hot lunch at school. It is very rare to take food for lunch to schools.

The relationships between students and teachers are generally formal both in and out of the classroom. Students greet their teachers by standing up when the teacher walks into the class. While teachers sometimes allow students to call them only by their name, it is more common for students to address them as “teacher” or “Mr./Mrs.” with their last name.

There are some options to participate in sports, art, or other clubs provided by schools, but it is also very common for students to participate in sports clubs, dance classes, or art studios outside of school. Students usually pay to participate in these extracurricular activities.

Students generally buy a hot lunch at school. It is very rare to take food for lunch to schools.

FOOD

In larger towns, people have a wide variety of food diets. In some cases, the entire family might be vegetarian or vegan, but it is also common for some family members to follow a specific diet while others do not.

RELIGION

Most families are not very religious. Those that are tend to follow rules and traditions at home, and occasionally visit church for religious holidays. Most places of worship do not serve as community centers and are seen as sacred places with strict behavior rules.

PERSONAL CARE

Usually teenagers shower every day or every other day. It is considered normal to wear some clothes for several days in a row without washing. It is not common to wash clothes after just one use, with the exception of underclothing.

MOLDOVA

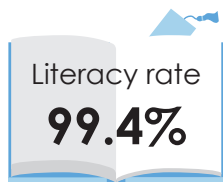
Moldova emerged as an independent republic following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is a landlocked country with varied terrain including forests, rocky hills, and vineyards. It is bordered by Romania and Ukraine. Its economy relies heavily on agriculture. It is known for its wine regions and is home to some of the world's largest wine cellars. Its capital, Chişinău, has Soviet-style architecture. Its National Museum of History exhibits art and ethnographic collections that reflect cultural links with neighboring Romania. Two-thirds of Moldovans are of Romanian descent. The languages are virtually identical and the two countries share a common cultural heritage. The disputed industrialized territory to the east of the Dniester River, known as Transnistria, was formally an autonomous area within Ukraine. Transnistria's independence has never been recognized, and the region exists in a state of limbo. This area is mainly inhabited by Russian and Ukrainian speakers. The currency used throughout Moldova is the leu.



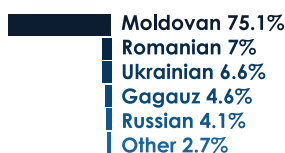
Population
3,437,720



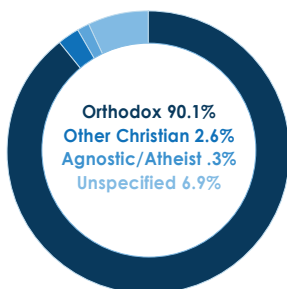
13,070 MI²
Slightly larger than
Maryland



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Households usually consist of 2-3 generations, and extended family often lives nearby. It is common for both parents to work and often both parents are seen as financially responsible for the family. In some families, mothers are considered more of the authority figure and decision maker. The wife might make the financial decisions, while the husband is expected to bring in the income.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves and to pursue their own individual activities. Siblings of the same gender commonly share rooms. It is not common for siblings to share personal items, and asking permission before borrowing is expected. Meals are commonly eaten together, and sometimes separately, depending on schedules.

It is common for children to help out with household chores according to traditional gender roles. Mothers usually cook for the family and daughters may be expected to help out. Teenagers are expected to show respect to their family members by being polite, sincere, and obedient. Other responsibilities include arriving on time to school and managing homework and extracurricular activities. Parents usually give their children pocket money for daily transportation and lunch expenses, and sometimes for social activities or buying personal items. It is common for students to work during the summer and part time during the school year.

Parents may be involved in monitoring their child's online and computer activity. They are not usually involved in the extracurricular activities of their children, but may support them financially in these endeavors. Large decisions are usually discussed as a family, yet parents encourage their children to be independent and make their own decisions.

Owning pets is common in Moldova. In an apartment, families tend to own small animals such as cats, dogs, and hamsters. In larger houses, families may own more animals that are kept outside. Usually pets are not treated as family members.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are commonly formed in school and extracurricular activities, and with relatives and neighbors. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships.

Communication between family members and friends is informal and direct. It is considered normal to express an opinion or feelings about a situation openly. It is acceptable for teenagers to share negative emotions and disappointment with close friends and family members but not with others.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 12-14 subjects, but each subject doesn't necessarily meet every day. Students have the option when they enter high school to specialize either in humanities (history, literature, and foreign languages) or sciences (physics, biology, and mathematics). Their class schedule will vary depending on which they choose, and they will also have less-intensive classes in the other sphere. Grades are based on class participation, homework, written and oral tests, and mid and final semester examinations. Classes are mixed gender and students remain with the same group of students throughout high school, and rotate classrooms. Students study each subject at the same level of difficulty.

Schools have a zero tolerance policy regarding fighting and bullying. Parents are told immediately if this occurs, and students may be suspended and sometimes expelled. Cheating is also prohibited in schools and, if caught, a student might receive a warning or fail the given exam. Students are not usually expelled for cheating and in general it is tolerated. Students usually dress formally for school and some schools have uniforms. For lunch, students usually bring food from home or buy something at the school cafeteria or a nearby market.

The relationship between students and teachers is very formal. Students show respect to teachers by being engaged learners, listening, and completing assignments. Using nicknames between teachers and students is not common. Parents are permitted to come to the schools any time to ask teachers about their children's academic performance. There are also at least two parent-teacher meetings a year. Report cards are distributed at the end of the semester.

Schools theoretically offer a variety of extracurricular activities, yet in reality, options are very limited and based on funding availability. Students participate in activities based on their interest and ability to pay for them.

FOOD

When hosting guests, Moldovan families cook a lot of food. Refusing the food they offer may be viewed as impolite. It is normal to ask restaurants to wrap uneaten food to take home. Vegetarianism is becoming more common, especially among the younger generation.

RELIGION

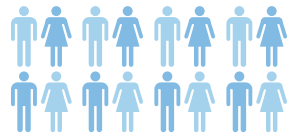
Religious families may go to church regularly, but most families only attend religious services on holidays like Christmas and Easter. Children are not expected to attend church with their parents if they would rather not. Churches are not viewed as community centers, but as places of worship. Some families choose to fast once or twice a year leading up to Christmas or Easter. Easter is a very important holiday during which families usually go to church, decorate eggs, and eat traditional cake.

PERSONAL CARE

Moldovans usually shower once a day. It is considered unclean to wear the same clothes more than twice in a row. Parents usually do the laundry for the family but sometimes teenagers help out as well. Teenagers are expected to clean up after themselves, but this depends on the family. Family members have both a bath towel and hand towel in the bathroom.

MONGOLIA

Mongolia, a landlocked nation bordered by China and Russia, is known for vast, rugged expanses and nomadic culture. Its capital, Ulaanbaatar, centers around Genghis Khan Square, named for the notorious founder of the 13th- and 14th-century Mongol Empire. It is home to about 40% of the country's population. Mongolia is the 18th largest country in the world by land mass and the world's second-largest landlocked country after Kazakhstan. It contains very little arable land, and much of its area is covered by grassy steppe, with mountains to the north and west and the Gobi Desert to the south. Horse culture is still an integral part of Mongolia, where around 40% of the country's workforce is nomadic, herding livestock in the extensive pasture lands. Vast quantities of untapped mineral wealth have made Mongolia a target for foreign investors which is transforming the country's tiny but fast-growing economy. Mongolian is the national language, and the national currency is the togrog.

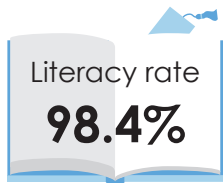


Population
3,103,428



603,909 MI²

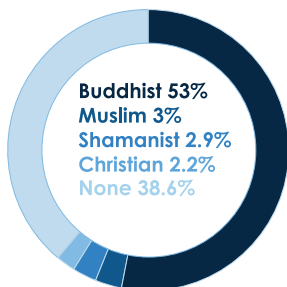
Slightly smaller than Alaska



Ethnicities

Khalkh	81.9%
Kazakh	3.8%
Dorvod	2.7%
Bayad	2.1%
Other	9.5%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

A typical family is comprised of two parents and 2-4 children. Sometimes a grandparent may live in the same house, if the spouse has passed away. Relatives might or might not live in the same town, and most families have relatives living in the countryside. There is no social norm when it comes to eating meals together. Some families eat their meals separately and others try to eat together.

Belongings are considered one's own, but siblings do share some things, such as clothes and school supplies, and are expected to ask for permission first. There is little consideration of privacy, and people tend to prefer to spend time with others rather than alone.

Each member of the family is responsible for specific chores. In some homes, daughters clean the house, do laundry, but most teenage boys are also assigned household chores. Most teenagers are responsible for washing the dishes and tidying the house, and helping their parents when needed.

Parents are actively involved in their children's lives and are the ultimate decision makers regarding academic, extracurricular, and personal activities. Both parents usually work and often both are financially responsible for the family. In modern families, both parents tend to exert equal authority in household decisions, and discuss together how to raise their children and resolve any problems. In some households fathers are primarily responsible for financial matters or serious discipline issues.

Most teenagers receive a small amount of money from their parents for daily or weekly expenses at school or for snacks. Teenagers very rarely work. Whenever teenagers need money for school or social activities or to buy personal items, they ask their parents.

In the capital city, many families have a variety of pets including dogs, cats, turtles, hamsters, birds, and fish. In such families, pets are usually allowed anywhere inside the house. In the countryside, most families have dogs which are kept outside.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers mostly socialize in groups. It is acceptable for teenagers to have friends of the opposite sex and to meet either in a group or one-on-one. Teenagers make most of their friends through school, extracurricular activities, or in their neighborhood. Students outside the capital usually participate in activities together and socialize at school, whereas city students will attend different clubs together, go to the mall and watch movies, or spend time in coffee shops. Parents do not usually get involved in their children's social activities unless their children are spending too much time outside the home and not doing homework or chores.

Teenagers are expected to make eye contact when adults are speaking, to indicate they are listening, and to respect and obey their elders at all times. Direct communication about feelings or opinions is not

commonly practiced. Teenagers may keep quiet as a sign of respect, but if it is important and something they need to communicate, they will do so in a respectful manner. In general, people are not accustomed to having personal space when interacting with others. It is common to hold hands, sit or stand close together while talking, or show affection through physical contact. It is common for teenagers to lend and borrow money from each other and borrowed money is always expected to be paid back.

SCHOOL LIFE

High school students take 17 subjects throughout the school year. Math, Mongolian language, and foreign language classes usually meet every day and classes such as literature, history, technology, art, physical education, and others meet twice a week. Students move in groups with their classmates from class to class. Students are graded on exams, daily homework, class participation, and attendance. To maintain good grades, students must attend each class, turn in homework, and do well on oral, written, and multiple choice tests. All students study the same subjects in their respective grade and at the same level of difficulty. All students wear uniforms from Monday to Thursday, and on Fridays wear casual clothes that meet school dress code.

Teenagers are not responsible for packing their own lunch for school. There are often two shifts in schools. The morning shift classes end around 1pm and afternoon classes begin around 1:30 or 2, so students normally eat lunch after they return from school or before they go. Students usually receive snack money from their parents.

Fighting and bullying are not tolerated on school property and may have severe consequences. The perpetrator will be sent to the school director, parents and police will be involved, and the student may be expelled. Cheating is not allowed and students who are caught will be punished (usually by giving a failing grade) and their parents called.

The relationship between teachers and students is formal. Students are expected to show respect for teachers at all times. Boys and girls study together in the same classroom with the exception of technology classes, where boys are taught industrial arts and girls are taught home economics.

Few parents are in close contact with teachers, but are made aware of any behavioral or academic problems with their children. Each semester, there is a parent-teacher meeting at all schools where parents learn about their children's academic progress. Some parents speak with the class teacher more frequently to check on their children.

Most students take part in extracurricular, fee-based activities outside of school since public schools do not offer clubs. Most private schools offer different clubs, including science, drama, debate and others.

FOOD

In general, Mongolians love to eat meat (mutton and beef are most common), which is considered essential to survive the harsh winters. There are no dietary or religious restrictions, and fad diets are not popular. There are an increasing number of vegetarians, though their numbers are quite small. People who live in the countryside rarely eat vegetables on a daily basis, but when they do it tends to be carrots, potatoes, cabbage, and onions. People in the city are increasingly trying to include more vegetables in their meals.

RELIGION

More than half of the population practices Buddhism, and a third consider themselves non-religious. Buddhists usually visit their temple 2-3 times a year, and families do not always go together. Places of worship do not serve as community centers, and attending weekly religious services is rare.

PERSONAL CARE

It is common for teenagers in cities to shower every 1-2 days. In the countryside, where water must be heated, teenagers shower twice a week. If clothing looks clean, teenagers will wear the same clothes more than twice. In some families the mother or female children are responsible for doing the laundry and cleaning the bathroom; in others, every member is responsible for these chores. Most teenagers know how to use washing machines. All laundry is hung out to dry. Everyone has their own towels which are kept in the bathroom and used for two weeks on average. Teenagers iron their clothes. They usually change their clothes when they get home and wear sweatpants and sweatshirts around the house.

MONTENEGRO

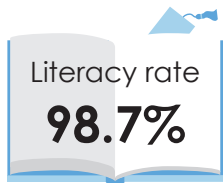
Montenegro boasts rugged mountains, medieval villages and a narrow strip of beaches along its Adriatic coastline. It is bordered by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. About half of Montenegro, which means “Black Mountain,” is covered in thick forest. The Bay of Kotor, resembling a fjord, is dotted with coastal churches and fortified towns. Durmitor National Park is home to bears and wolves and encompasses limestone peaks, glacial lakes and the 4,200 feet-deep Tara River Canyon, the deepest and longest in Europe. Montenegro emerged as a sovereign state after just over 55% of the population opted for independence in a 2006 referendum. The vote heralded the end of the former Union of Serbia and Montenegro— itself created only three years earlier out of the remnants of the former Yugoslavia. The major languages spoken are Serbian and Montenegrin, and the currency is the euro.



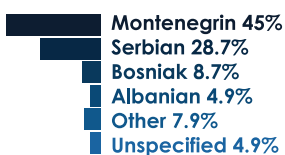
Population
614,249



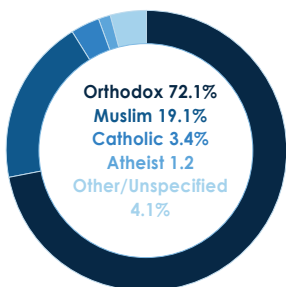
5,333 MI²
slightly smaller than
Connecticut



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Households usually consist of 2-3 generations and families generally have from 1-4 children. Extended relatives commonly live nearby. It is becoming more common for family members to work abroad and for youth to stay in the capital city after finishing university. It is common for both parents to work and often both are financially responsible for the family. There are generous maternity and paternity leave benefits offered for up to one year for either parent. Communication between family members is usually informal.

It is considered normal for family members to take time for themselves and pursue their own individual activities. Meals are commonly eaten together, but sometimes separately depending on schedules. When a family member would like to borrow something, it is generally understood they must ask first. Siblings of both genders often share rooms.

Children usually help in keeping their rooms clean and tidying up after themselves. Girls may help out with cooking if they are interested in learning, and boys may be expected to help out their fathers with physical chores around the household. Children rarely help with the laundry. Teenagers are responsible for their own transportation to school if it is not within walking distance.

Parental responsibility and decision making is usually shared between the mother and father and important decisions are made with the consensus of both. Parents are usually involved in assisting their children with scheduling and transportation for extracurricular activities. Parents generally do not monitor what their children do online, but usually limit time spent on the computer. Some parents will provide their children with an allowance since teenagers rarely work, but the general teaching of money management skills is limited.

Owning pets is uncommon, but adopting animals is becoming more popular.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are often formed through school, extracurricular activities, and with neighbors. Cousins are commonly referred to as brothers and sisters, and are often very close. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. They prefer to have many acquaintances and just a few friends. The term “friend” is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships. Friends spend time together by going for walks, sitting and talking in cafes and going out to clubs on weekends. Friends often buy items for each other, but borrowed money is expected to be returned. Parents set curfews for their children and the behavior of teenagers is generally monitored by those in the community, and brought to the attention of the parents as necessary.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 14-15 subjects which don't all meet every day. Students are evaluated through written and oral tests, homework, and participation. Student input in the classroom is not always appreciated or encouraged. Students study with the same group of students in one classroom, and the teachers rotate, with the exception of specific subjects such as physics and computer science. Students have little flexibility in choosing their courses and study each subject at the same level of difficulty.

Bullying and fighting are common issues and schools vary in how seriously they treat these issues. Behavioral assessments are made on each student's official school transcript. Cheating is discouraged in the classroom but it is tolerated as an accepted practice. If a student is caught cheating, they will usually fail the test or assignment. Schools do not teach students how to cite references or give credit to other sources in writing. Students usually dress informally for school. Bringing a lunch to school is not a common practice and food for lunch is usually purchased at small stores near the school.

The relationship between students and teachers is very formal. Students show respect to teachers by being engaged learners in class and often stand up when teachers enter a classroom. Sometimes students have a less formal relationship with younger teachers. Parents monitor academic performance through the homeroom teacher, who acts as a mediator between other teachers and the parents. Parents occasionally come to school to check on their child's grades and academic progress.

Common extracurricular activities at school include clubs focused on languages, journalism, performing arts, and volunteering. Sports are not usually offered in schools, but rather by organizations in the community, which are usually fee-based.

FOOD

Montenegrin cuisine includes a lot of meat, cheese, and potatoes. Pork is not eaten in Muslim areas of the country. Vegetarianism is uncommon, but is becoming more popular among the younger population.

RELIGION

Families rarely attend religious services on a regular basis, but will usually attend on Saint days and religious holidays. Churches that serve as community centers are more common in the Catholic religion, but other churches also have choirs and humanitarian service activities. People may be less open to learning about different religions since they were seen as a political tool in the history of former Yugoslavia, and were often used as a way to divide rather than unite people.

PERSONAL CARE

Montenegrins usually shower daily or every other day. It is not common to wash hair more than two times per week. Clothes are not generally washed after every use. Mothers commonly do the laundry for the household and often iron clothes after washing. Teenagers are responsible for tidying up the bathroom after use. Often times, bathrooms have both hand towels and shower towels, which are washed after one use.

POLAND

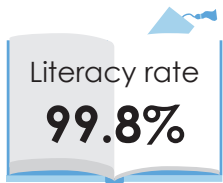
Poland is located on the Baltic Sea and is known for its medieval architecture and Jewish heritage. It is located at a geographic crossroads that links the forested lands of northwestern Europe to the sea lanes of the Atlantic Ocean and the fertile plains of the Eurasian frontier. It shares borders with Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and the Russian exclave, Kaliningrad. Poland has a proud cultural heritage and traces its roots back over 1,000 years. There have been periods of independence as well as periods of domination by other countries. Poland became a member of the European Union in May 2004, five years after joining NATO and 15 years after the end of communist rule. Warsaw, the country's capital, combines modern buildings with historic architecture, most of which were heavily damaged during World War II but have since been faithfully restored in one of the most thorough reconstruction efforts in European history. Polish is the official language and the currency is the zloty.



Population
38,476,269



120,728 MI²
Slightly smaller than
New Mexico

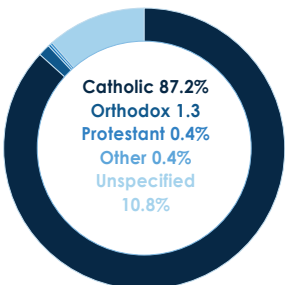


Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities

Polish 96.9%
Silesian 1.1%
Other 2%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

In Poland, it is common for 2-3 generations to live in the same household. Generally, both parents work and are considered equal authority figures and responsible for financial matters in the family. Meals are commonly eaten together, but family members may have meals separately depending on schedules.

Teenagers often spend time alone in their rooms and it is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves. Belongings are considered to be one's own and not the shared property of siblings. When siblings want to borrow something from each other, it is generally understood that they must ask first.

Children are responsible for specific household chores, which often do not follow traditional gender roles. Chores for both genders may include doing one's own laundry, cleaning the bathroom, and cooking. Although parents generally do the grocery shopping, children are expected to prepare their own lunch for school.

Teenagers are responsible for managing their own time, transportation, and commitments. It is not uncommon for teenagers to have part-time jobs or to receive allowance from their parents. Teenagers are expected to take an active role in decision making concerning their commitments, with the assistance of their parents. Communication between children and parents is usually direct, but it still may be considered rude to openly disagree with adults.

Owning pets is common. Families in apartments tend to own cats and small dogs and in private houses and in the country, larger dogs are used for security and are kept outside. Usually, pets are not treated as family members.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are often formed in schools and during extracurricular activities. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. Teenagers prefer to have many acquaintances and just a few friends. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships.

Sharing money between friends is normal, but it is always expected to be returned. Teenagers are accustomed to maintaining personal space when interacting with other people. They do not stand or sit extremely close to each other while talking, but rather maintain a distance equivalent to an arm's length.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 7-10 subjects at a time and are primarily evaluated on homework, class participation and periodic exams. It is common for students to remain in the same classroom while teachers rotate to different rooms. Students have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes and study each subject at the same level of difficulty. Few schools have uniforms and most students tend to dress informally to school, wearing jeans, t-shirts, and even sweatpants. It is common for students to dress up on the first and last day of school and during final exams. Despite severe consequences, cheating is still common in some Polish schools. Being suspended or expelled are common consequences for fighting or for the use of drugs or alcohol.

Students and teachers maintain a very formal relationship in the classroom. Most Polish parents are in frequent and direct contact with their children's teachers and pay close attention to their academic progress via report cards and teacher meetings throughout the school year.

Students are often very involved in school-based extracurricular activities, and these activities are where most students develop their friendships. Participation in clubs or sports activities outside of school are also common and usually involve a fee.

FOOD

Portion sizes tend to be smaller in Poland. Most people prefer to finish all of the food they have been served and it is not common to take food home from restaurants. Vegetarianism and special diets are becoming more common in Poland.

RELIGION

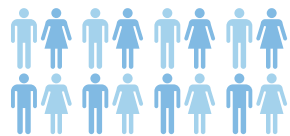
Some Poles attend religious services regularly and there are many who attend only during holidays. Most people consider themselves Roman Catholic but there are a growing number of those who are atheist or agnostic. Churches do not serve as community centers.

PERSONAL CARE

Polish teenagers shower and change clothes daily and are expected to help out with general cleanliness in the shared areas of the house.

ROMANIA

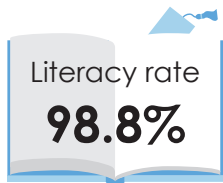
Romania has dramatic mountain scenery, a coastline on the Black Sea and is known for the forested region of Transylvania, which are ringed by the Carpathian Mountains. It has preserved medieval towns and there are many fortified churches and castles, notably the cliff-top Bran Castle, long associated with the Dracula legend. It has seen numerous empires come and go from the Roman and Ottoman to the Austro-Hungarian. Bucharest, the country's capital, is the site of the gigantic, Communist-era Palatul Parlamentului government building. Romania borders Bulgaria, Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, and Moldova. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and is the seventh most populous member state of the European Union, which it joined in January 2007. The national language is Romanian and the currency is the leu.



Population
21,457,116



92,043 Mi²
Slightly smaller than Oregon

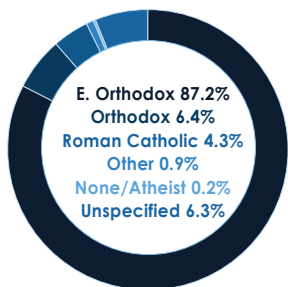


Literacy rate
98.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Romanian families usually have 1-2 children and grandparents and extended family often live nearby. It is common for both parents to work in families that live in larger cities, but mothers will often stay at home in families that live in the country. Romania is known as a matriarchal society where women tend to set the rules and make financial decisions, especially in rural areas. Communication between family members is usually informal, but may be more formal among extended relatives. Increasingly, parents are encouraging their children to be more direct and open in their communication style.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves and to pursue individual activities. At least one daily meal is usually eaten together as a family, but other meals may be eaten separately depending on schedules. It is generally understood that a family member should ask first before borrowing something.

Teenagers usually have chores that follow traditional gender roles and will help keep their rooms clean and are responsible for cleaning up after themselves in the house. Children receive a small monthly stipend from the government and parents may also give their children money for daily expenses since it is not common for teenagers to work part time.

The level of parental involvement differs from family to family. Some parents may empower their children to make their own decisions while others choose the activities their children will participate in outside of school. Parents usually drive their children to school if public transportation is not available. They usually enforce rules such as limiting time spent on the computer if the student isn't doing well in school. Teenagers usually decide for themselves how they spend their leisure time.

Owning pets is common for families who live in houses and less common for those in apartments. The most common pets are cats and dogs and they are not usually treated as family members.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships in Romania are often formed through school and extracurricular activities, but seldom with relatives. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships.

Teenagers interact with each other through social media, at school, or while participating in activities offered in the community. It is common to borrow small amounts of money between friends and is always expected to be paid back in full.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 8-10 subjects per semester and grades are based on homework, oral and written examinations and participation in additional academic activities which include Olympiads. Students choose high schools specializing in mathematics, foreign language or information technology beginning in the 9th grade and continue with that curriculum until graduation. Students stay with the same group of students for all four years of high school. Classes are usually mixed genders with the exception of religious schools which may be segregated by gender. Students have the option of choosing 1-2 subjects a semester which must be approved by the school administration. Cafeterias and a designated lunch hour are not common in Romanian schools, so students usually bring lunch from home.

Cheating is not allowed, but consequences vary. Some teachers fail students while others may just give a warning. Students are not expelled for cheating and parents are not usually called. Cheating during a national exam might result in a student needing to repeat a school year or simply having to re-take the exam. Wearing uniforms is becoming more common in Romanian high schools.

There is one teacher designated for each group of students who organizes parent meetings during the year. There are no report cards in Romanian schools and each student is given a record book which has the grades signed by each teacher instead. Students show their appreciation to their teachers by thanking them and buying them gifts for different holidays.

There are some schools that support extracurricular activities, but mostly there are many clubs and activities outside of school which are available in the community, and are usually fee-based. Students in the city usually have more opportunities for after school clubs and sports than those in rural areas.

FOOD

Romanian cuisine usually contains large portions of meat and, although uncommon, vegetarianism is becoming more popular among younger people. Restaurant portion sizes vary and it is common to ask to take food home.

RELIGION

Martisor is a holiday to celebrate the beginning of spring during which boys (and girls in some regions) give red and white bracelets or ornaments, called martisoare, to teachers, family, and friends. Orthodox and Catholic Christianity are the two main religions in Romania. Orthodox churches do not serve as community centers; Catholic churches may provide activities for children. Families do not go to church often but attend services during major holidays. Some people do not eat meat, eggs, or dairy for 40 days before the Christmas and Easter holidays. During Easter, Romanians paint eggs and eat lamb and a traditional pastry called pască. They also may go to church to retrieve a candle known as a “holy light” to bring home in celebration of the holiday. During Christmas, families usually get a tree and sing carols and in some parts of the country, children go from door to door with a decorated star that announces the birth of Jesus. On December 31, children also go door to door to give best wishes for the New Year and receive sweets and money.

PERSONAL CARE

Romanians usually shower daily and it is common for them to wear clothes more than once. Mothers often do the laundry for the household and iron clothes. Teenagers are responsible for tidying up the bathroom after they use it. It is common to use a bath towel more than once, and each family member usually has both a bath towel and a washcloth in the bathroom.

SERBIA

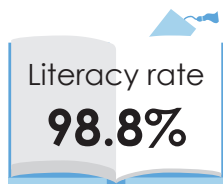
Serbia is a landlocked country with northern plateaus and ski resorts to the south. It borders Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, and claims a border with Albania through the disputed territory of Kosovo. The capital city of Belgrade is home to Communist-era architecture and the site of the Belgrade Fortress, held successively by the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires. Stari Grad, the old city, is home to 19th century mansions, as well as the opera and ballet. Serbia became a sovereign republic in 2006 after Montenegro voted in a referendum for independence from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The end of this union marked the closing chapter in the history of the separation of the six republics of the old Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. The official language is Serbian and the currency is the dinar.



Population
7,078,110



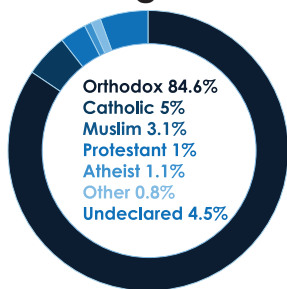
29,913 MI²
Slightly smaller than
South Carolina



Ethnicities

- Serb 83.3%
- Hungarian 3.5%
- Romani 2.1%
- Bosniak 2%
- Other 5.7%
- Undeclared or Unknown 3.4%

Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Households in Serbia usually consist of 2-3 generations, and families have an average of two children in most parts of the country. It is common for both parents to work and often both parents are financially responsible for the family. Communication between family members is informal and direct.

It is considered normal for family members to spend time alone and pursue their own individual activities and, even though meals are commonly eaten together, family members may have meals separately depending on schedules. It is not common for family members to share personal items, so asking permission when borrowing is expected.

It is common for children to help out with household chores which typically follow traditional gender roles. Family and gender dynamics are slowly changing as single parent households are becoming more common.

Parents strongly encourage teenagers to learn independence and responsibility, and they thus often take a back seat approach to encourage this growth. Because of privacy laws, parents are not permitted to monitor their children's online activity once they reach 16 years of age, but parents will limit time spent on the computer.

Owning pets is not common for Serbian families.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships in Serbia are often formed through school, extracurricular activities and extended networks of relatives. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships. Friends often spend time together at shopping malls, parks, or cafes. Serbian teenagers prefer to have many acquaintances and just a few friends. Sharing money between friends is normal in Serbia, but it is always expected to be returned.

SCHOOL LIFE

In Serbia, students generally take 13-15 subjects which do not all meet every day. Students are evaluated through both written and oral exams, and class participation is slowly becoming more important in grading. Students generally study in the same group and move between classrooms

for different subjects. They study each subject at the same level of difficulty, but teachers employ different strategies to work effectively in a class with various ability levels. Students choose different types of gymnasiums or vocational schools depending on their study preferences, including computer programming, languages, fine arts, industrial arts, and others. There are no additional electives from which the students can choose, but this is slowly changing.

Students usually dress informally for school and uniforms are not common. Parents often provide their children with money or an allowance for buying lunch at school, since it is not common for teenagers to work. Students may also have lunch at home or bring food to school with them.

Bullying and fighting are common issues in schools. There is an anti-bullying movement developing across the country due to some more serious incidents; it mostly addresses physical violence, rather than name calling or other forms of harassment. Cheating is against school policy but it is a common practice among students. Many teachers overlook incidents of cheating, but students can be expelled if caught.

The relationship between students and teachers is very formal. Students show respect to teachers by being engaged learners in class, but they do not usually have close relationships with their teachers. Sometimes students have a less formal relationship with younger teachers, but most teachers are older. Schools are not allowed to comment on a student's behavioral or academic performance to parents without the student being present. Parents do not get report cards unless they request it, and students need to be informed before these report cards are shared. Parents stay in touch with teachers by attending teacher meetings. There is a class teacher for each group of students and this teacher acts as a mediator between a student's other teachers and their parents.

It is uncommon for schools to offer extracurricular activities. Opportunities to participate in music classes, foreign languages clubs or sports activities are commonly available in the community for a fee.

FOOD

Meat plays a large role in Serbian cuisine and pork is not eaten in areas of the country with large Muslim populations. Vegetarianism is uncommon, but is increasing in popularity among younger people. Physical fitness is important and people try to maintain a healthy diet and avoid gaining excess weight.

RELIGION

Serbians are mostly secular and do not attend religious services regularly. Attending religious services is more common in areas of the country with high Muslim populations. Religious centers are seen as places of worship rather than community centers, and religious doctrine is not commonly embraced by younger people. Christmas decorations, presents, and carols are not common in celebrating Christmas. Most holidays are celebrated privately with close friends and family. Gifts are commonly given on birthdays or for the New Year.

PERSONAL CARE

Serbians usually shower daily and change clothes after one use. Teenagers are expected to clean up after themselves but this depends on the family.

SLOVAKIA

Slovakia is a mountainous, landlocked country in Central Europe bordered by Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine. Located in the heart of Europe, Slovakia is known for its dramatic natural landscapes with castles dating as far back as the medieval 12th century. The capital city, Bratislava, lies near the Austrian border and Danube River, and features a pedestrian-friendly Old Town with an active cafe culture. Slovakia was once a part of the Kingdom of Hungary and formed its first independent state and political program in 1939. The end of World War II led to the restoration of Czechoslovakia, and soon after the communist party seized power, until the democratic revolution took hold in 1989. In 1993 the Slovak Republic reclaimed its independent sovereign statehood, and became a member of the European Union in 2004. Its currency is the euro.

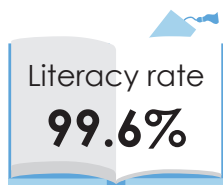


Population
5,445,040



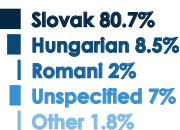
18,933 MI²

About twice the size of
New Hampshire

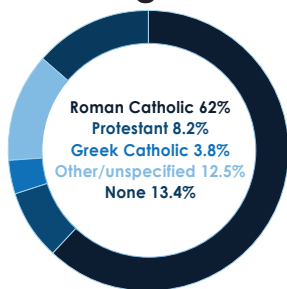


Literacy rate
99.6%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

In a typical Slovak household there are, on average, two children. In recent years families are becoming smaller and grandparents usually live close by, but not in the same house. In general both parents work and are financially responsible for providing income. In most cases, parents have equal authority, but it is not uncommon for the man of the house to have the final word, particularly in rural communities.

Children are expected to contribute to the cleanliness of the home. If a family lives in an apartment, chores are not typically assigned to children with respect to gender, but this is not the case in houses, where girls will help clean the house and boys will help with maintaining outdoor tasks. Parents are usually responsible for cooking. If children do offer to help or are integrated in the process, it is usually the daughter who is involved.

Internet is not strictly monitored or restricted by parents. Parents highly discourage children from sharing personal information online. Technology is commonly shared in the home among members, but items like clothing are not usually shared property. It is also common for teenagers to receive pocket money from their parents and it is their responsibility to manage the money. Some teenagers work part-time as well.

Some parents are actively involved in their child's activities, while others are not. Parents are also not usually involved in transporting their children. Children are expected to figure out public transportation to their social activities.

Teenagers are encouraged to think about their future career and the final decision is up to them, not their parents. However, it is not uncommon for parents to try to influence this decision.

Pets are not common in Slovakia, and families in general do not let their pets enter the home.

FRIENDSHIP

It is acceptable for teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them one-on-one. Teenagers make most of their friends at school and through extracurricular activities, but they often have close friendships with their neighbors. It is not common for teenagers to share money with each other, and if teenagers borrow money from a friend, they're expected to pay it back. The term "friend" is *not* reserved for very close friendship, but Slovak teenagers also would not call someone they only know in passing a friend.

Eye contact is considered important and a sign of respect when you are speaking to someone. Teenagers feel comfortable showing negative emotions quite freely amongst their peers and family.

They may complain, express disappointment or offense, or express dislike of something. Teenagers also maintain physical space between each other. Teenagers are taught to show respect to older generations. It is not common for teenagers to call adult neighbors or parents of friends by their first name. People are also very punctual and are expected to arrive on time, or five minutes early.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students are generally enrolled in 10 courses at a time and classes are 45 minutes long. Students have some subjects every day (i.e. Slovak literature, English or mathematics), and other subjects only 2-3 times per week. Students are also evaluated on a variety of tasks: daily homework, tests (mostly open-ended questions), and participation in class. Students are also often examined orally in front of their classmates. Some schools recently started implementing a similar system to the United States, where students will change classrooms and teachers through the day, but in most schools, students stay in one class during the day. One class has 20-30 students and they take all their lessons in the same classroom. Students are expected to be polite and show respect to their teacher. In some schools, they all have to stand up when the teacher enters the room.

Teenagers wear jeans and t-shirts to school and most of their clothes are ironed by their mothers. High schools also have rules about what clothes are acceptable for students to wear to school.

Teachers often call students by their first name, but the relationship remains formal. Informal relationship between students and teachers are uncommon. Students often find activities outside of schools, such as sports clubs or learning an instrument.

Schools do have harassment and bullying policies, and students can be expelled for harassment.

Parent-teacher meetings happen every few months, but aside from this, parents do not typically have direct contact with their children's teachers throughout the year.

FOOD

People will often offer guests food or drink, but it is not considered rude for a guest to politely decline. Portions are typically large, especially when served in restaurants. It is common for people to ask the restaurant to wrap up any uneaten food to take home. In most families, mothers prepare a bag lunch for their children to take to school. It is also common for teenagers to receive pocket money from their parents to buy their own lunch. People are aware of food allergies or medical conditions that necessitate specific diets. Vegetarianism is not common.

RELIGION

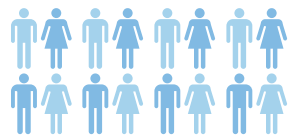
Most families do not attend church. Religious families generally attend a church once a week, but the church doesn't play a "civic" role and does not serve as community centers. For major holidays like Christmas or birthdays, teenagers are expected to give gifts to family members and close friends. The most important holiday is Christmas. Families often come together and everyone enjoys the holiday spirit. Christmas dinner is served on December 24, and families will open presents together under the Christmas tree. The next day families visit other relatives. New Years is also an important event that teenagers often celebrate with their friends.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers are often expected to shower daily, and twice a day if they're involved in physical activities. Teenagers don't usually wash their clothes after one use. It is more common to wash shirts after one use, and to wear pants more than once before washing them. Teenagers are not expected to wash their own clothes and most would not know how to use American style washing and drying machines. Teenagers are expected to keep the bathroom clean. Most people have one towel per member in the home which may be used more than once before it is washed.

TAJIKISTAN

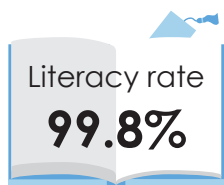
Tajikistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia surrounded by Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. It is known for rugged mountains, and is a popular for hiking and climbing. The Fann Mountains, near the capital Dushanbe, have snow-capped peaks that rise over 16,400 feet. The range encompasses a notable bird habitat named for Iskanderkul, a turquoise lake formed by glaciers. The traditional homelands of the Tajik people included present-day Tajikistan, as well as Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Battered by a five-year civil war at the onset of its independence from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Tajikistan struggles with poverty and instability, and in some ways remains dependent on Russia, both for its economy and to help counter security problems. Tajikistan is also expanding its ties with China. Beijing has extended credits and has helped to build roads, tunnels and power infrastructure. Chinese firms are investing in oil and gas exploration and in gold mining. Tajik is the official language with Uzbek and Russian also used, along with various dialects. The currency is the somoni.



Population
8,604,882



55,637 MI²
Slightly smaller than
Wisconsin

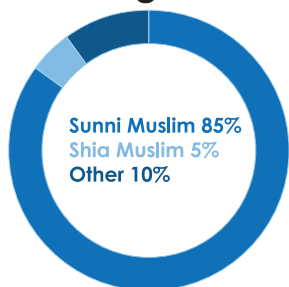


Literacy rate
99.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Fathers usually have more authority than mothers in Tajik families, but the grandmother may also be the authority figure in a household since age is highly respected. Traditional families are multi-generational and women commonly move into their husband's family home after getting married, and so children often grow up with their parents and paternal grandparents. Tajikistan also has a high level of labor migration, so it is common for one or both parents to work abroad while children stay with their grandparents or other relatives. Women often work in the capital city but the majority of women outside Dushanbe are homemakers, and men are considered financially responsible for the family. Many people do not like spending time alone, and even if they do, homes are often too small for each family member to be alone. When teenagers want time away from their family, they may go for a walk, more often with friends than alone.

Siblings in Tajikistan often share everything without asking for permission. There is little understanding of privacy or personal possessions, but teenagers will usually ask before taking a family possession that is valuable or may be needed by someone.

There are many chores in Tajik households due to a lack of modern conveniences, and all children are expected to help out. Jobs generally follow traditional gender roles, but in homes where there are either no sons or no daughters, there is no distinction. Children often feel a strong sense of responsibility to help their families, and girls in particular have a significant role in taking care of younger children. In rural areas, children are expected to contribute to agricultural work alongside their parents.

Parents do not usually monitor their children's online activities or restrict them from sharing information online. In rural areas, parents may have little understanding of the internet. Children may also access the internet from internet cafés where there are few restrictions. Parents make many decisions for teenagers, which often include planning details of their day. Adult children also find it valuable to ask their parents for advice since they have more experience. Tajik students have little independence and often have significant responsibilities taking care of their family and home.

Pets are not popular and when families do have them, they rarely live indoors. Pets are not considered to be a part of the family and are often seen as dirty or dangerous.

FRIENDSHIP

Students generally study together in one group from first grade through high school graduation, and so they develop close bonds with each other. Teenagers also often develop close friendships

with their neighbors and extended family. Boys and girls typically do not socialize with one another, especially one-on-one. Teenagers in rural areas rarely have friends of the opposite gender and if they want to socialize, they often take walks around town and visit parks. In cities, boys and girls may be friends at school, but do not socialize one-on-one. A group of Tajik teenagers will typically split into groups according to gender when they are together.

Age is very important in Tajik culture, and everyone shows respect to their elders. Young people even look up to relatives who are only a few years older. Teenagers usually have a formal relationship with their parents, and a close, less formal relationship with their grandparents. There is significant deference to elders, and teenagers may look down when speaking with adults. Girls may also avoid making eye contact with boys. It is more common for both boys and girls to be emotionally close to their mothers and speak openly about their problems, and to have a difficult time directly confronting people who are older.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students in Tajikistan study 5-7 subjects every day and receive daily homework that gets checked by their teachers. Teachers randomly ask students to go to the blackboard or to orally answer questions, and they are evaluated mostly through oral exams and sometimes written. There are no elective classes. Bullying and fighting are common problems, and teachers or administrators may or may not intervene. Students are not expelled for fighting, but their parents may be called to speak with the principal. Parents are held responsible for their children's behavior and can be forced to pay fines if they misbehave. Cheating is widespread and not considered to be a significant problem. Tajik students often think it is positive to help their classmates, and do not see the difference between cheating and helping others succeed.

Tajik students usually move from room to room as a class but might stay in one room in rural areas where schools are smaller and there are fewer resources. Relationships between students and teachers are very formal, and students are often intimidated by their teachers. Most classes are not separated by gender, but military preparation classes are split where boys participate in army exercises and girls learn first-aid. Boys and girls usually choose to sit and socialize separately when they have classes together.

Extracurricular activities are not provided by schools and students who want to participate in arts, sports, or other activities can join clubs or take private lessons in the community which usually involve a fee. Schools organize formal academic competitions called Olympiads and top students may be required to participate. Since opportunities for making friends with similar interests through extracurricular activities are limited, teenagers commonly become friends with their cousins, classmates, and neighbors.

FOOD

Most people are Muslim and follow a halal diet. Families usually eat traditional food and are not accustomed to trying new dishes. Meals are often quite formal. The whole family may eat together, or men and women may eat separately. Vegetarianism is nearly unheard of.

RELIGION

Only men attend mosque, and boys under age 18 are forbidden by law from attending. Women and children learn about religion through word of mouth, and superstition is widespread. The government is very secular and tries to limit the risk of radical extremism by downplaying the role of religion in society.

PERSONAL CARE

It is common for people to shower once every 3-4 days, since Tajiks often believe that showering often or leaving the house with wet hair will make you sick. Each family member may have their own towel, or there may be one shared among several people. Teenage girls are used to doing their own laundry and that of other family members, but may not know how to use modern washers and dryers. It is uncommon for boys to do laundry.

TURKMENISTAN

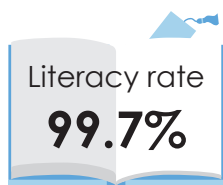
Turkmenistan is a country in Central Asia bordered by the Caspian Sea and largely covered by the Karakum Desert. It shares borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. It is known for archaeological ruins that were once major stops along the ancient Silk Road trade route. Ashgabat, the capital, was rebuilt in the Soviet style in the mid-20th century and is filled with grand monuments honoring former political leaders. Turkmenistan has been at the crossroads of civilizations for centuries. Known for its large gas reserves, Turkmenistan also has a reputation as an island of stability in restive Central Asia. Despite its gas wealth, much of Turkmenistan's population is still impoverished. After independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country entered a period of isolation that has only recently begun to end. Turkmenistan produces roughly 70 billion cubic meters of natural gas each year and about two-thirds of its exports go to Russia's gas monopoly. The government has sought out gas deals with several other countries, including China and neighboring Iran, to reduce its dependency on Russia. The official language is Turkmen, with Russian widely-spoken, and the currency is the manat.



Population
5,411,012



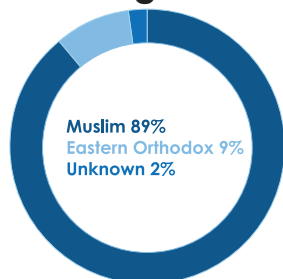
187,684 MI²
Slightly larger than
California



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Turkmen families generally consist of parents, children, and grandparents. The average number of children is 2-3, and more in rural areas. In cities, both parents usually work and are financially responsible for the family, while in rural areas, families generally have a single income provided by the father. Usually the father is seen as the head of the family and decision-maker. Families usually eat meals together.

It is common for siblings to share clothing, shoes, and electronics, and they do not always ask for permission. Parents give teenagers spending money, since teenagers usually do not work. Teenagers often interact informally with family members and are responsible for focusing on their studies and managing their own free time. Personal space is not a common concept, especially within the family.

Some families assign duties to individual members of the family. Men usually do not do family chores, and, while members of the family have time to spend on personal interests, free time for women is limited since they are expected to be busy with housework. Cooking is mainly done by the females of the family. Punctuality is respected in Turkmenistan, but being a few minutes late is common in informal situations.

Parents usually limit their children's use of the internet. Some parents are actively involved in supporting or helping to arrange their children's extracurricular activities, and most parents are in contact with their children's school and are kept aware of their academic progress. Generally teenagers are not very independent and rely on their parents in most aspects of life. They usually share their plans with their parents and take their parents' opinion into account when making decisions.

It is uncommon to have pets, and they would usually not be allowed in the home.

FRIENDSHIP

Many teenagers have peer groups and friends and use social media to interact with each other. Teens from cities tend to be open to mixed gender socializing, while teenagers from rural areas are more segregated. Turkmen teenagers interact with their friends at school, in the neighborhood, or through common activities. While they may have many friends, they spend most of their time with one or two close friends. They may share or borrow from each other, but paying back borrowed money is expected.

Eye contact is important when socializing and talking to others, but in some traditional families, teenagers do not make direct eye-contact with adults as a sign of respect. It is common for Turkmen teenagers to show negative emotions to their peers, but not to display them to others. Older people are highly respected and children are taught to listen to and obey them.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students take 15 to 17 subjects at a time which do not meet every day and they study the same subjects as a group. Students are evaluated on homework, special assignments, and periodic exams. To maintain good grades, students must turn in daily homework, participate verbally in class, and perform well on exams. Most Turkmen students are required to wear a school uniform. Cheating is not allowed but is a common practice where students try to help each other. Fighting and bullying are also prohibited at schools, and can result in warnings and parent notification.

Parents have parent-teacher meetings to discuss their child's progress once every 2-3 months. If any misbehavior or absence occurs, schools contact the parents directly.

Turkmen students study with the same students in all lessons and do not change classrooms. Subjects are not offered at varied levels of difficulty and students are not able to choose which courses they take. Students are expected to show respect to their teachers and usually have a formal relationship with them. They must raise their hand to make or argue their points.

Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities are not commonly offered by schools. Students may have private music, sport or other activities through clubs or other organizations in the community for a fee.

FOOD

Most people in Turkmenistan are Muslim and follow a halal diet. Families typically eat traditional foods and do not try new dishes. Vegetarianism and other special diets are very uncommon.

RELIGION

The population is predominantly Muslim and the practice of religion is an individual or family event, and is solely for worship rather than for a sense of community.

PERSONAL CARE

Teenagers may shower once or more a day, especially in the summer. Teenagers often change their clothes daily and it is acceptable to wear the same clothes two or more days before washing. Students are not used to washing their own clothes and are unfamiliar with washers and dryers. Bathrooms are shared by all family members, and teenagers are expected to keep the bathrooms clean after use. Each family member has their own towel that is usually replaced every other day.

UKRAINE

Ukraine is known for its Orthodox churches, Black Sea coastline, and forested mountains. Europe's second largest country, it is a land of wide, fertile, agricultural plains, with large pockets of heavy industry in the east. Its capital, Kyiv, features the gold-domed St. Sophia's Cathedral, with 11th-century mosaics and frescoes. Ukraine is bordered by Russia, Belarus, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova, the Black Sea, and the Sea of Azov. Ukraine gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and has since veered between seeking closer integration with Western Europe and being drawn into the orbit of Russia, which sees its interests as threatened by a Western-leaning Ukraine. While Ukraine and Russia share common historical origins, the west of the country has closer ties with its European neighbors, particularly Poland, and nationalist sentiment is strongest there. Ukrainian is the official language but a significant minority of the population uses Russian as its first language, particularly in the cities and the industrialized east. The currency is the hryvnya.

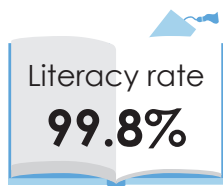


Population
43,952,299



233,032 MI²

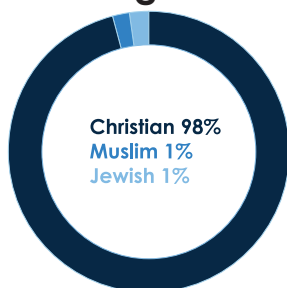
Slightly smaller than Texas



Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

It is common for multiple generations to live in the same household. Extended relatives do not usually live together, but often live in the same area. Families tend to be small with an average of two children. Typically, fathers are responsible for the financial state of the family and work outside the home, and mothers take care of the household. This is changing in larger cities where women often work.

Typically both sons and daughters help out with chores, which are usually divided according to traditional gender roles. Women are normally responsible for cooking and providing the meals for the family, and daughters may be expected to help out. It is not typical for parents to give allowances to their children and teenagers do not usually work. Parents usually keep track of financing their children's social and extracurricular activities, and teenagers may not be used to managing and budgeting money.

Parents are actively involved in arranging extracurricular activities for their young children and are less involved when students reach middle and high school. Fathers are seen as the authority and disciplinary figures and will usually decide on any punishment, with the support of the mother.

Many Ukrainian households own cats or dogs and they may be treated as members of the family, but would commonly not be allowed inside the house.

FRIENDSHIP

Teenagers usually socialize in groups or one-on-one with closer friendships. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only when referring to very close relationships. Spending time with friends of the opposite gender is considered more appropriate in groups. It is common for teenagers to make friends in elementary school and still remain close with them.

Eye contact is very important in Ukrainian culture and is considered a sign of respect. Showing respect to those who are older is expected, and it is uncommon for a teenager to call an adult by their first name. Borrowing money between close friends is common with the expectation that it will be paid back. Personal space is smaller in Ukraine, and sitting or standing close to someone is considered normal. Teenagers feel quite comfortable showing negative emotions amongst their peers and family, but may complain or express disappointment in an indirect way.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally have 6-7 classes per day and have little flexibility in choosing their academic classes. They may have an opportunity to choose a specialization after 9th grade. Students are divided into sections in elementary school and remain with the same group of students until graduation. They change classrooms for different subjects which are studied at the same level of difficulty for every student. Most students dress formally to school, and some schools require uniforms.

Bullying and fighting are taken seriously and may lead to being expelled from schools. Cheating among peers is common in high schools, and carries less serious consequences since it is viewed as helping a friend succeed.

The relationship between teachers and students is very formal. Students are expected to stand up when a teacher enters the classroom, to show respect. Many parents stay in frequent and direct contact with the teachers of their children, specifically the class teacher who mentors each class section. Parents are kept up to date weekly on the progress on their children through an academic book that shows their current marks.

Extracurricular activities are not usually offered in high schools. Teenagers typically take part in sports, music and other activities outside of school which usually require a fee to participate.

FOOD

Teenagers do not usually bring their lunch with them to school, and will instead buy something at the school cafeteria. Sometimes they bring snacks to eat between classes. Vegetarianism and food allergies are uncommon. Usually Ukrainians have a large lunch which includes a hot soup, and they tend to eat vegetables and fruits that are in season. Children are used to their parents preparing everything for them, and may not be comfortable making food for themselves. It is typical for mothers to constantly offer food to their children. Restaurant portion sizes are medium, and it is uncommon to take uneaten food home.

RELIGION

Religious institutions are generally only for worship and are not considered as community centers for non-religious activities. Families usually go to church together on Christmas and Easter and spend time with relatives. Most families consider themselves Orthodox Christians, but many do not attend church regularly. In religious families, Christmas Eve is celebrated with a Holy Dinner with 12 dishes and by singing carols. The New Year's holiday is usually celebrated by spending time with one's family, sharing large meals and giving presents. Small gifts are commonly given on Christmas and Easter, but it is even more common to give a present on New Year's Day.

PERSONAL CARE

It is common for people to shower daily. Sometimes people wear clothes more than once before washing. Teenagers do not usually wash their own clothes since mothers usually do this for them, and they may not be familiar with washers and dryers.