

THE WORLD WITH COMMANDERS' AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY



CAPSTONE 20-2 Europe Field Study

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Turkey

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MIDDLE EAST :: TURKEY

Introduction :: TURKEY

Background:

Modern Turkey was founded in 1923 from the remnants of the defeated Ottoman Empire by national hero Mustafa KEMAL, who was later honored with the title Atatürk or "Father of the Turks." Under his leadership, the country adopted radical social, legal, and political reforms. After a period of one-party rule, an experiment with multi-party politics led to the 1950 election victory of the opposition Democrat Party and the peaceful transfer of power. Since then, Turkish political parties have multiplied, but democracy has been fractured by periods of instability and military coups (1960, 1971, 1980), which in each case eventually resulted in a return of formal political power to civilians. In 1997, the military again helped engineer the ouster - popularly dubbed a "post-modern coup" - of the then Islamic-oriented government. An unsuccessful coup attempt was made in July 2016 by a faction of the Turkish Armed Forces.

Turkey intervened militarily on Cyprus in 1974 to prevent a Greek takeover of the island and has since acted as patron state to the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," which only Turkey recognizes. A separatist insurgency begun in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a US-designated terrorist organization, has long dominated the attention of Turkish security forces and claimed more than 40,000 lives. In 2013, the Turkish Government and the PKK conducted negotiations aimed at ending the violence, however intense fighting resumed in 2015. Turkey joined the UN in 1945 and in 1952 it became a member of NATO. In 1963, Turkey became an associate member of the European Community; it began accession talks with the EU in 2005. Over the past decade, economic reforms, coupled with some political reforms, have contributed to a growing economy, although economic growth slowed in recent years.

From 2015 and continuing through 2016, Turkey witnessed an uptick in terrorist violence, including major attacks in Ankara, Istanbul, and throughout the predominantly Kurdish southeastern region of Turkey. On 15 July 2016, elements of the Turkish Armed forces attempted a coup that ultimately failed following widespread popular resistance. More than 240 people were killed and over 2,000 injured when Turkish citizens took to the streets en masse to confront the coup forces. The government accused followers of the Fethullah Gulen transnational religious and social movement ("Hizmet") for allegedly instigating the failed coup and designates the movement's followers as terrorists. Since the attempted coup, Turkish Government authorities arrested, suspended, or dismissed more than 130,000 security personnel, journalists, judges, academics, and civil servants due to their alleged connection to Gulen's movement. Following the failed coup, the Turkish Government instituted a State of Emergency from July 2016 to July 2018. The Turkish Government conducted

a referendum on 16 April 2017 in which voters approved constitutional amendments changing Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system. The amendments went into effect fully following the presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2018.

Geography :: TURKEY

Location:

Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia (that portion of Turkey west of the Bosphorus is geographically part of Europe), bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Georgia, and bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, between Greece and Syria

Geographic coordinates:

39 00 N, 35 00 E

Map references:

Middle East

Area:

total: 783,562 sq km

land: 769,632 sq km

water: 13,930 sq km

country comparison to the world: 38

Area - comparative:

slightly larger than Texas

Area comparison map:



Land boundaries:

total: 2,816 km

border countries (8): Armenia 311 km, Azerbaijan 17 km, Bulgaria 223 km, Georgia 273 km, Greece 192 km, Iran 534 km, Iraq 367 km, Syria 899 km

Coastline:

7,200 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 6 nm in the Aegean Sea

exclusive economic zone: in Black Sea only: to the maritime boundary agreed upon with the former USSR

12 nm in Black Sea and in Mediterranean Sea

Climate:

temperate; hot, dry summers with mild, wet winters; harsher in interior

Terrain:

high central plateau (Anatolia); narrow coastal plain; several mountain ranges

Elevation:

mean elevation: 1,132 m

lowest point: Mediterranean Sea 0 m

highest point: Mount Ararat 5,137 m

Natural resources:

coal, iron ore, copper, chromium, antimony, mercury, gold, barite, borate, celestite (strontium), emery, feldspar, limestone, magnesite, marble, perlite, pumice, pyrites (sulfur), clay, arable land, hydropower

Land use:

agricultural land: 49.7% (2011 est.)

arable land: 26.7% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 4% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 19% (2011 est.)

forest: 14.9% (2011 est.)

other: 35.4% (2011 est.)

Irrigated land:

52,150 sq km (2012)

Population distribution:

the most densely populated area is found around the Bosphorus in the northwest where 20% of the population lives in Istanbul; with the exception of Ankara, urban centers remain small and scattered throughout the interior of Anatolia; an overall pattern of peripheral development exists, particularly along the Aegean Sea coast in the west, and the Tigris and Euphrates River systems in the southeast

Natural hazards:

severe earthquakes, especially in northern Turkey, along an arc extending from the Sea of Marmara to Lake Van; landslides; flooding

volcanism: limited volcanic activity; its three historically active volcanoes; Ararat, Nemrut Dagi, and Tendurek Dagi have not erupted since the 19th century or earlier

Environment - current issues:

water pollution from dumping of chemicals and detergents; air pollution, particularly in urban areas; deforestation; land degradation; concern for oil spills from increasing Bosphorus ship traffic; conservation of biodiversity

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Air Pollution, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: Environmental Modification

Geography - note:

strategic location controlling the Turkish Straits (Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara, Dardanelles) that link the Black and Aegean Seas; the 3% of Turkish territory north of the Straits lies in Europe and goes by the names of European Turkey, Eastern Thrace, or Turkish Thrace; the 97% of the country in Asia is referred to as Anatolia; Istanbul, which straddles the Bosphorus, is the only metropolis in the world located on two continents; Mount Ararat, the legendary landing place of Noah's ark, is in the far eastern portion of the country

People and Society :: TURKEY

Population:

81,257,239 (July 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 18

Nationality:

noun: Turk(s)

adjective: Turkish

Ethnic groups:

Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 19%, other minorities 7-12% (2016 est.)

Languages:

Turkish (official), Kurdish, other minority languages

Religions:

Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 24.26% (male 10,085,558 /female 9,627,967)

15-24 years: 15.88% (male 6,589,039 /female 6,311,113)

25-54 years: 43.26% (male 17,798,864 /female 17,349,228)

55-64 years: 8.82% (male 3,557,329 /female 3,606,120)

65 years and over: 7.79% (male 2,825,738 /female 3,506,283) (2018 est.)

population pyramid:



Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 50.1 (2015 est.)

youth dependency ratio: 38.4 (2015 est.)

elderly dependency ratio: 11.7 (2015 est.)

potential support ratio: 8.5 (2015 est.)

Median age:

total: 31.4 years (2018 est.)

male: 30.9 years

female: 31.9 years

country comparison to the world: 110

Population growth rate:

0.49% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 155

Birth rate:

15.4 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 119

Death rate:

6 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 165

Net migration rate:

-4.5 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 189

Population distribution:

the most densely populated area is found around the Bosphorus in the northwest where 20% of the population lives in Istanbul; with the exception of Ankara, urban centers remain small and scattered throughout the interior of Anatolia; an overall pattern of peripheral development exists, particularly along the Aegean Sea coast in the west, and the Tigris and Euphrates River systems in the southeast

Urbanization:

urban population: 75.6% of total population (2019)

rate of urbanization: 2.04% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

14.968 million Istanbul, 5.018 million ANKARA (capital), 2.964 million Izmir, 1.951 million Bursa, 1.75 million Adana, 1.668 million Gaziantep (2019)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 1.04 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 0.99 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.81 male(s)/female

total population: 1.01 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

22.3 years (2010 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

17 deaths/100,000 live births (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 133

Infant mortality rate:

total: 16.9 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

male: 18.1 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 15.7 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: 92

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 75.3 years (2018 est.)

male: 72.9 years

female: 77.7 years

country comparison to the world: 109

Total fertility rate:

2 children born/woman (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 118

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

73.5% (2013)

Drinking water source:

improved:

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population

unimproved:

urban: 0% of population

rural: 0% of population

total: 0% of population (2015 est.)

Current Health Expenditure:

4.3% (2016)

Physicians density:

1.76 physicians/1,000 population (2014)

Hospital bed density:

2.7 beds/1,000 population (2013)

Sanitation facility access:

improved:

urban: 98.3% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 85.5% of population (2015 est.)

total: 94.9% of population (2015 est.)

unimproved:

urban: 1.7% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 14.5% of population (2015 est.)

total: 5.1% of population (2015 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

NA

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

NA

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

NA

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

32.1% (2016)

country comparison to the world: 17

Children under the age of 5 years underweight:

2.3% (2013)

country comparison to the world: 109

Education expenditures:

4.3% of GDP (2015)

country comparison to the world: 91

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 96.2%

male: 98.8%

female: 93.6% (2016)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 18 years

male: 18 years

female: 17 years (2016)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 20.5%

male: 17.7%

female: 25.6% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 67

Government :: TURKEY

Country name:

conventional long form: Republic of Turkey

conventional short form: Turkey

local long form: Turkiye Cumhuriyeti

local short form: Turkiye

etymology: the name means "Land of the Turks"

Government type:

presidential republic

Capital:

name: Ankara

geographic coordinates: 39 56 N, 32 52 E

time difference: UTC+2 (7 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

etymology: Ankara has been linked with a second millennium B.C. Hittite cult center of Ankuwash, although this connection is uncertain; in classical and medieval times, the city was known as Ankyra (meaning "anchor" in Greek and reflecting the city's position as a junction for multiple trade and military routes); by about the 13th century the city began to be referred to as Angora; following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the city's name became Ankara

Administrative divisions:

81 provinces (iller, singular - ili); Adana, Adiyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Agri, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara, Antalya, Ardahan, Artvin, Aydin, Balikesir, Bartin, Batman, Bayburt, Bilecik, Bingol, Bitlis, Bolu, Burdur, Bursa, Canakkale, Cankiri, Corum, Denizli, Diyarbakir, Duzce, Edirne, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Giresun, Gumushane, Hakkari, Hatay, Igdir, Isparta, Istanbul, Izmir (Smyrna), Kahramanmaras, Karabuk, Karaman, Kars, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kilis, Kirikkale, Kirklareli, Kirsehir, Kocaeli, Konya, Kutahya, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Mersin, Mugla, Mus, Nevsehir, Nigde, Ordu, Osmaniye, Rize, Sakarya, Samsun, Sanliurfa, Siirt, Sinop, Sirnak, Sivas, Tekirdag, Tokat, Trabzon (Trebizond), Tunceli, Usak, Van, Yalova, Yozgat, Zonguldak

Independence:

29 October 1923 (republic proclaimed, succeeding the Ottoman Empire)

National holiday:

Republic Day, 29 October (1923)

Constitution:

history: several previous; latest ratified 9 November 1982

amendments: proposed by written consent of at least one third of Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) members; adoption of draft amendments requires two debates in plenary TBMM session and three-fifths majority vote of all GNA members; the president of the republic can request TBMM reconsideration of the amendment and, if readopted by two-thirds majority TBMM vote, the president may submit the amendment to a referendum; passage by referendum requires absolute majority vote; amended several times, last in 2017 (2018)

Legal system:

civil law system based on various European legal systems, notably the Swiss civil code

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCT

Citizenship:

citizenship by birth: no

citizenship by descent only: at least one parent must be a citizen of Turkey

dual citizenship recognized: yes, but requires prior permission from the government

residency requirement for naturalization: 5 years

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN (chief of state since 28 August 2014; head of government since 9 July 2019); Vice President Fuat OKTAY (since 9 July 2018); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government

head of government: President Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN (head of government since 9 July 2019; chief of state since 28 August 2014); note - a 2017 constitutional referendum eliminated the post of prime minister after the 2018 general election

cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president

elections/appointments: president directly elected by absolute majority popular vote in 2 rounds if needed for a 5-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held on 24 June 2018 (next scheduled for June 2023)

election results: Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN reelected president in the first round; Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN (AKP) 52.6%, Muharrem INCE (CHP) 30.6%, Selahattin DEMIRTAS (HDP) 8.4%, Meral AKSENER (IYI) 7.3%, other 1.1%

Legislative branch:

description: unicameral Grand National Assembly of Turkey or *Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi* (600 seats - increased from 550 seats beginning with June 2018 election; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote to serve 5-year terms - increased from 4 to 5 years beginning with June 2018 election)

elections: last held on 24 June 2018 (next to be held in June 2023)

election results: percent of vote by party - People's Alliance 53.7% (AKP 42.6%, MHP 11.1%), Nation Alliance 33.9% (CHP 22.6%, IYI 10%, SP 1.3%), HDP 11.7%, other 0.7%; seats by party - People's Alliance 344 (AKP 295, MHP 49), National Alliance 189 (CHP 146, IYI 43), HDP 67; composition - men 496, women 104, percent of women 17.3%; note - only parties surpassing a 10% threshold can win parliamentary seats

Judicial branch:

highest courts: Constitutional Court or *Anayasa Mahkemesi* (consists of the president, 2 vice presidents, and 12 judges); Court of Cassation (consists of about 390 judges and is organized into civil and penal chambers); Council of State (organized into 15 divisions - 14 judicial and 1 consultative - each with a division head and at least 5 members)

judge selection and term of office: Constitutional Court members - 3 appointed by the Grand National Assembly and 12 by the president of the republic; court president and 2 deputy court presidents appointed from among its members for 4-year terms; judges serve 12-year, nonrenewable terms with mandatory retirement at age 65; Court of Cassation judges appointed by the Board of Judges and Prosecutors, a 13-member body of judicial officials; Court of Cassation judges serve until retirement at age 65; Council of State members appointed by the Board and by the president of the republic; members serve renewable, 4-year terms

subordinate courts: regional appeals courts; basic (first instance) courts; peace courts; aggravated crime courts; specialized courts, including administrative and audit; note - a constitutional amendment in 2017 abolished military courts unless established to investigate military personnel actions during war conditions

Political parties and leaders:

Democrat Party or DP [Gultekin UYSAL]

Democratic Regions Party or DBP [Sebahat TUNCEL, Mehmet ARSLAN]

Felicity Party or SP [Temel KARAMOLLAOGLU]

Free Cause Party or HUDAPAR [Ishak SAGLAM]

Good Party or TYli [Meral AKSENER]

Grand Unity Party or BBP [Mustafa DESTICI]

Justice and Development Party or AKP [Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN]

Nation Alliance (CHP, IYI, SP) (electoral alliance)

Nationalist Movement Party or MHP [Devlet BAHCELI]

People's Alliance (AKP, MHP) (electoral alliance)

Patriotic Party or VP [Dogu PERINCEK]

People's Democratic Party or HDP [Pervin BULDAN, Sezai TEMELLI]
Republican People's Party or CHP [Kemal KILICDAROGLU]

note: as of December 2018, 83 political parties were legally registered

International organization participation:

ADB (nonregional member), Australia Group, BIS, BSEC, CBSS (observer), CD, CE, CERN (observer), CICA, CPLP (associate observer), D-8, EAPC, EBRD, ECO, EU (candidate country), FAO, FATF, G-20, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS (observer), OECD, OIC, OPCW, OSCE, Pacific Alliance (observer), Paris Club (associate), PCA, PIF (partner), SCO (dialogue member), SELEC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

Diplomatic representation in the US:

Ambassador Serdar KILIC (since 21 May 2014)

chancery: 2525 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

telephone: [1] (202) 612-6700

FAX: [1] (202) 612-6744

consulate(s) general: Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador David M. SATTERFIELD (since 28 August 2019)

telephone: [90] (312) 455-5555

embassy: 110 Ataturk Boulevard, Kavaklidere, 06100 Ankara

mailing address: PSC 93, Box 5000, APO AE 09823

FAX: [90] (312) 467-0019

consulate(s) general: Istanbul

consulate(s): Adana

Flag description:

red with a vertical white crescent moon (the closed portion is toward the hoist side) and white five-pointed star centered just outside the crescent opening; the flag colors and designs closely resemble those on the banner of the Ottoman Empire, which preceded modern-day Turkey; the crescent moon and star serve as insignia for Turkic peoples; according to one interpretation, the flag represents the reflection of the moon and a star in a pool of blood of Turkish warriors

National symbol(s):

vertical crescent moon with adjacent five-pointed star; national colors: red, white

National anthem:

name: "Istiklal Marsi" (Independence March)

lyrics/music: Mehmet Akif ERSOY/Zeki UNGOR

note: lyrics adopted 1921, music adopted 1932; the anthem's original music was adopted in 1924; a new composition was agreed upon in 1932

Economy :: TURKEY**Economy - overview:**

Turkey's largely free-market economy is driven by its industry and, increasingly, service sectors, although its traditional agriculture sector still accounts for about 25% of employment. The automotive, petrochemical, and electronics industries have risen in importance and surpassed the traditional textiles and clothing sectors within Turkey's export mix. However, the recent period of political stability and economic dynamism has given way to domestic uncertainty and security concerns, which are generating financial market volatility and weighing on Turkey's economic outlook.

Current government policies emphasize populist spending measures and credit breaks, while implementation of structural economic reforms has slowed. The government is playing a more active role in some strategic sectors and has used economic institutions and regulators to target political opponents, undermining private sector confidence in the judicial system. Between July 2016 and March 2017, three credit ratings agencies downgraded Turkey's sovereign credit ratings, citing concerns about the rule of law and the pace of economic reforms.

Turkey remains highly dependent on imported oil and gas but is pursuing energy relationships with a broader set of international partners and taking steps to increase use of domestic energy sources including renewables, nuclear, and coal. The joint Turkish-Azerbaijani Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline is moving forward to increase transport of Caspian gas to Turkey and Europe, and when completed will help diversify Turkey's sources of imported gas.

After Turkey experienced a severe financial crisis in 2001, Ankara adopted financial and fiscal reforms as part of an IMF program. The reforms strengthened the country's economic fundamentals and ushered in an era of strong growth, averaging more than 6% annually until 2008. An aggressive privatization program also reduced state involvement in basic industry, banking, transport, power generation, and communication. Global economic conditions and tighter fiscal policy caused GDP to contract in 2009, but Turkey's well-regulated financial markets and banking system helped the country weather the global financial crisis, and GDP growth rebounded to around 9% in 2010 and 2011, as exports and investment recovered following the crisis.

The growth of Turkish GDP since 2016 has revealed the persistent underlying imbalances in the Turkish economy. In particular, Turkey's large current account deficit means it must rely on external investment inflows to finance growth, leaving the economy vulnerable to destabilizing shifts in investor confidence. Other troublesome trends include rising unemployment and inflation, which increased in 2017, given the Turkish lira's continuing depreciation against the dollar. Although government debt remains low at about 30% of GDP, bank and corporate borrowing has almost tripled as a percent of GDP during the past decade, outpacing its emerging-market peers and prompting investor concerns about its long-term sustainability.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$2.186 trillion (2017 est.)

\$2.034 trillion (2016 est.)

\$1.972 trillion (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 13

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$851.5 billion (2017 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

7.4% (2017 est.)

3.2% (2016 est.)

6.1% (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$27,000 (2017 est.)

\$25,500 (2016 est.)

\$25,000 (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 77

Gross national saving:

25.5% of GDP (2017 est.)

24.5% of GDP (2016 est.)

24.8% of GDP (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 57

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 59.1% (2017 est.)

government consumption: 14.5% (2017 est.)

investment in fixed capital: 29.8% (2017 est.)

investment in inventories: 1.1% (2017 est.)

exports of goods and services: 24.9% (2017 est.)

imports of goods and services: -29.4% (2017 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 6.8% (2017 est.)

industry: 32.3% (2017 est.)

services: 60.7% (2017 est.)

Agriculture - products:

tobacco, cotton, grain, olives, sugar beets, hazelnuts, pulses, citrus; livestock

Industries:

textiles, food processing, automobiles, electronics, mining (coal, chromate, copper, boron), steel, petroleum, construction, lumber, paper

Industrial production growth rate:

9.1% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 18

Labor force:

31.3 million (2017 est.)

note: this number is for the domestic labor force only; number does not include about 1.2 million Turks working abroad, nor refugees

country comparison to the world: 19

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 18.4%

industry: 26.6%

services: 54.9% (2016)

Unemployment rate:

10.9% (2017 est.)

10.9% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 147

Population below poverty line:

21.9% (2015 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 2.1%

highest 10%: 30.3% (2008)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

40.2 (2010)

43.6 (2003)

country comparison to the world: 65

Budget:

revenues: 172.8 billion (2017 est.)

expenditures: 185.8 billion (2017 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

20.3% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 151

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

-1.5% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 91

Public debt:

28.3% of GDP (2017 est.)

28.3% of GDP (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 169

Fiscal year:

calendar year

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

11.1% (2017 est.)

7.8% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 204

Central bank discount rate:

5.25% (31 December 2011)

15% (22 December 2009)

country comparison to the world: 79

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

15.77% (31 December 2017 est.)

14.74% (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 33

Stock of narrow money:

\$119.4 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$108.7 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 33

Stock of broad money:

\$119.4 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$108.7 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 33

Stock of domestic credit:

\$610.4 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$549.9 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 23

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$188.9 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

\$219.8 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$195.7 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 36

Current account balance:

-\$47.44 billion (2017 est.)

-\$33.14 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 202

Exports:

\$166.2 billion (2017 est.)

\$150.2 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 30

Exports - partners:

Germany 9.6%, UK 6.1%, UAE 5.9%, Iraq 5.8%, US 5.5%, Italy 5.4%, France 4.2%, Spain 4% (2017)

Exports - commodities:

apparel, foodstuffs, textiles, metal manufactures, transport equipment

Imports:

\$225.1 billion (2017 est.)

\$191.1 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 22

Imports - commodities:

machinery, chemicals, semi-finished goods, fuels, transport equipment

Imports - partners:

China 10%, Germany 9.1%, Russia 8.4%, US 5.1%, Italy 4.8% (2017)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$107.7 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$106.1 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 24

Debt - external:

\$452.4 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$404.9 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 26

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:

\$180.3 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$133.2 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 35

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:

\$47.44 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$38.31 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 45

Exchange rates:

Turkish liras (TRY) per US dollar -

3.628 (2017 est.)

3.0201 (2016 est.)

3.0201 (2015 est.)

2.72 (2014 est.)

2.1885 (2013 est.)

Energy :: TURKEY

Electricity access:

electrification - total population: 100% (2016)

Electricity - production:

261.9 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

Electricity - consumption:

231.1 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 18

Electricity - exports:

1.442 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 49

Electricity - imports:

6.33 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 31

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

78.5 million kW (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 15

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

53% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 144

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 199

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

33% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 64

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

14% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 64

Crude oil - production:

55,000 bbl/day (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 51

Crude oil - exports:

0 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 208

Crude oil - imports:

521,500 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

Crude oil - proved reserves:

341.6 million bbl (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 51

Refined petroleum products - production:

657,900 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 27

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

989,900 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 21

Refined petroleum products - exports:

141,600 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 37

Refined petroleum products - imports:

560,000 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

Natural gas - production:

368.1 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 75

Natural gas - consumption:

53.6 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 15

Natural gas - exports:

622.9 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 42

Natural gas - imports:

55.13 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Natural gas - proved reserves:

5.097 billion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 92

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:

379.5 million Mt (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

Communications :: TURKEY

Telephones - fixed lines:

total subscriptions: 11,308,444

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 14 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

Telephones - mobile cellular:

total subscriptions: 77,800,170

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 96 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 21

Telephone system:

general assessment: comprehensive telecommunications network undergoing rapid modernization and expansion, especially in mobile-cellular services; rise in subscribers and increase in bundled packages; DSL has largest share of fixed broadband technologies, but fibre-optic is growing with significant investment; 4G LTE networks well incorporated in Turkey, 87% coverage of the population; 5G trials (2018)

domestic: additional digital exchanges are permitting a rapid increase in subscribers; the construction of a network of technologically advanced intercity trunk lines, using both fiber-optic cable and digital microwave radio relay, is facilitating communication between urban centers; remote areas are reached by a domestic satellite system; fixed-line 14 per 100 and mobile-cellular teledensity is 96 telephones per 100 persons (2018)

international: country code - 90; landing points for the SeaMeWe-3 & -5, MedNautilus Submarine System, Turcyos-1 & -2 submarine cables providing connectivity to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Southeast Asia and Australia ; satellite earth stations - 12 Intelsat; mobile satellite terminals - 328 in the Inmarsat and Eutelsat systems (2020)

Broadcast media:

Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) operates multiple TV and radio networks and stations; multiple privately owned national television stations and 567 private regional and local television stations; multi-channel cable TV subscriptions available; 1,007 private radio broadcast stations

(2019)

Internet country code:

.tr

Internet users:

total: 46,838,412

percent of population: 58.3% (July 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

Broadband - fixed subscriptions:

total: 11,924,905

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 15 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 15

Military and Security :: TURKEY

Military expenditures:

1.89% of GDP (2019 est.)

1.85% of GDP (2018)

1.52% of GDP (2017)

1.46% of GDP (2016)

1.39% of GDP (2015)

country comparison to the world: 58

Military and security forces:

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK): Turkish Land Forces (Turk Kara Kuvvetleri), Turkish Naval Forces (Turk Deniz Kuvvetleri; includes naval air and naval infantry), Turkish Air Forces (Turk Hava Kuvvetleri); Ministry of Interior: Gendarmerie of the Turkish Republic, Turkish Coast Guard Command (2019)

Military service age and obligation:

President Erdoğan on 25 June 2019 signed a new law cutting the men's mandatory military service period in half, as well as making paid military service permanent; with the new system, the period of conscription was reduced from 12 months to six months for private and non-commissioned soldiers (the service term for reserve officers chosen among university or college graduates will remain 12 months); after completing six months of service, if a conscripted soldier wants to and is suitable for extending his military service, he may do so for an additional six months in return for a monthly salary; under the new law, all male Turkish citizens over the age of 20 will be required to undergo a one month military training period, but they can obtain an exemption from the remaining five months of their mandatory service by paying 31,000 Turkish Liras

(2019)

Military - note:

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has actively pursued the goal of asserting civilian control over the military since first taking power in 2002; the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) role in internal security has been significantly reduced; the TSK leadership continues to be an influential institution within Turkey, but plays a much smaller role in politics; the Turkish military remains focused on the threats emanating from the Syrian civil war, Russia's actions in Ukraine, and the PKK insurgency; primary domestic threats are listed as fundamentalism (with the definition in some dispute with the civilian government), separatism (Kurdish discontent), and the extreme left wing; Ankara strongly opposed establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq; an overhaul of the Turkish Land Forces Command (TLFC) taking place under the "Force 2014" program is to produce 20-30% smaller, more highly trained forces characterized by greater mobility and firepower and capable of joint and combined operations; the TLFC has taken on increasing international peacekeeping responsibilities including in Afghanistan; the Turkish Navy is a regional naval power that wants to develop the capability to project power beyond Turkey's coastal waters; the Navy is heavily involved in NATO, multinational, and UN operations; its roles include control of territorial waters and security for sea lines of communications; the Turkish Air Force adopted an "Aerospace and Missile Defense Concept" in 2002 and has initiated project work on an integrated missile defense system; in a controversial move, it recently (July 2019) purchased the Russian S-400 air defense system for an estimated \$2.5 billion; Air Force priorities include attaining a modern deployable, survivable, and sustainable force structure, and establishing a sustainable command and control system; Turkey is a NATO ally and hosts NATO's Land Forces Command in Izmir, as well as the AN/TPY-2 radar as part of NATO Missile Defense (2019)

Transportation :: TURKEY

National air transport system:

number of registered air carriers: 15 (2015)

inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers: 531 (2015)

annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers: 96,604,665 (2015)

annual freight traffic on registered air carriers: 2,882,162,000 mt-km (2015)

Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:

TC (2016)

Airports:

98 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 58

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 91 (2013)

over 3,047 m: 16 (2013)

2,438 to 3,047 m: 38 (2013)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 17 (2013)

914 to 1,523 m: 16 (2013)

under 914 m: 4 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 7 (2013)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (2013)

914 to 1,523 m: 4 (2013)

under 914 m: 2 (2013)

Heliports:

20 (2013)

Pipelines:

14,666 km gas, 3,293 km oil (2017)

Railways:

total: 12,710 km (2018)

standard gauge: 11,497 km 1.435-m gauge (1.435 km high speed train) (2018)

country comparison to the world: 21

Roadways:

total: 67,333 km (2018)

paved: 24,082 km (includes 2,159 km of expressways) (2018)

unpaved: 43,251 km (2018)

country comparison to the world: 72

Waterways:

1,200 km (2010)

country comparison to the world: 60

Merchant marine:

total: 1,277

by type: bulk carrier 61, container ship 70, general cargo 305, oil tanker 139, other 702 (2018)

country comparison to the world: 22

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Aliaga, Ambarli, Diliskelesi, Eregli, Izmir, Kocaeli (Izmit), Mersin (Icel), Limani, Yarimca

container port(s) (TEUs): Ambarli (3,131,621), Mersin (Icel) (1,592,000) (2017)

LNG terminal(s) (import): Izmir Aliaga, Marmara Ereglisi

Terrorism :: TURKEY

Terrorist groups - home based:

Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) networks in Turkey: aim(s): replace the Turkish Government with an Islamic state and implement ISIS's strict interpretation of sharia

area(s) of operation: moves fighters and supplies across the Turkey-Syria border; has periodically conducted attacks against civilian and government security targets (2018)

Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C): aim(s): install a Marxist-Leninist government in Turkey

area(s) of operation: membership centered in Turkey, leadership primarily spread throughout Europe; in recent years has revived its attacks against Turkish Government elements, primarily in Istanbul; outlawed in Turkey (2018)

Terrorist groups - foreign based:

al-Nusrah Front: aim(s): overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-ASAD's regime, absorb like-minded Syrian rebel groups, and ultimately, establish a regional Islamic caliphate

area(s) of operation: some facilitation networks (2018)

al-Qa'ida (AQ): aim(s): radicalize the Turkish populace and eventually overthrow the Turkish Government as part of a long-term plan to establish a pan-Islamic caliphate under a strict Salafi Muslim interpretation of sharia

area(s) of operation: maintains facilitation networks (2018)

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK): aim(s): advance Kurdish autonomy, political, and cultural rights in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria

area(s) of operation: operational predominantly in the southeast; the group's primary targets include government, military, and security personnel and facilities; majority of members inside Turkey are Turkish Kurds, along with Kurds from Iran, Iraq, and Syria; the group is outlawed in Turkey (2018)

Transnational Issues :: TURKEY

Disputes - international:

complex maritime, air, and territorial disputes with Greece in the Aegean Sea; status of north Cyprus question remains; Turkey has expressed concern over the status of Kurds in Iraq; in 2009, Swiss mediators facilitated an accord reestablishing diplomatic ties between Armenia and Turkey, but neither side has ratified the agreement and the rapprochement effort has faltered; Turkish authorities have complained that blasting from quarries in Armenia might be damaging the medieval ruins of Ani, on the other side of the Arpacay valley

Refugees and internally displaced persons:

refugees (country of origin): 170,000 (Afghanistan), 142,000 (Iraq), 39,000 (Iran), 5,700 (Somalia) (2019); 3,576,659 (Syria) (2020)

IDPs: 1.097 million (displaced from 1984-2005 because of fighting between the Kurdish PKK and Turkish military; most IDPs are Kurds from eastern and southeastern provinces; no information available on persons displaced by development projects) (2018)

stateless persons: 117 (2018)

Illicit drugs:

key transit route for Southwest Asian heroin to Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, the US - via air, land, and sea routes; major Turkish and other international trafficking organizations operate out of Istanbul; laboratories to convert imported morphine base into heroin exist in remote regions of Turkey and near Istanbul; government maintains strict controls over areas of legal opium poppy cultivation and over output of poppy straw concentrate; lax enforcement of money-laundering controls



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Turkey is just larger than the U.S. state of Texas and more than twice the size of Japan. Turkey holds a key location at the juncture of Europe and Asia; the northwestern portion is called Thrace (Trakya), while the remaining area is known as Anatolia (Anadolu) or Asia Minor. These two sections span the strategic Turkish Straits (including the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles), which link the Black and Aegean seas. Two-thirds of Anatolia is a plateau that becomes more mountainous to the east; the plateau's elevation ranges from 5,000 to 6,500 feet (1,524 to 1,981 meters). The eastern mountains are very high: Mount Ararat (Ağrı), the nation's tallest peak, stands at 16,940 feet (5,165 meters) at its highest point. Mountains and forests are also found along the Black Sea, limiting coastal peoples' contact with the interior. Both the Euphrates and Tigris rivers originate in Turkey. The low coastal regions support much of the country's agriculture.

Winters can be very cold in some portions of the country, although they are mild along the coasts. Summers are pleasant but can be hot in some areas. Turkey is one of the world's most earthquake-prone regions.

History

Anatolia and the Turkish Empire

Modern Turkey is the most recent in a series of important states and empires that have inhabited the Anatolian peninsula for thousands of years. The oldest known site of human urban habitation is located in central Turkey at Çatalhöyük (6500

BC). The great Hittite Empire (1750–1200 BC), which dominated much of the Middle East, was centered east of Ankara. Ancient Troy, the scene of much of Homer's *Iliad*, was located near the Dardanelles. Alexander the Great captured Anatolia in the fourth century BC, and the Romans followed three centuries later, establishing important cities, such as Ephesus (Efes) and Antioch (Antakya), as major provincial capitals.

In AD 330, Emperor Constantine of Rome founded the city of Constantinople (now Istanbul), which later became the center of the Byzantine Empire. This powerful state dominated eastern Europe for a thousand years. The Muslim Seljuk Turks entered Asia Minor in the 11th century and began the long process of Islamization and Turkization. In 1453, the successors of the Seljuks, the Ottoman Turks, captured Constantinople and went on to create a vast empire, stretching beyond the bounds of the Byzantine Empire into the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire survived until World War I, when it allied itself with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria). With the defeat of the Central Powers, the empire was dismembered.

Atatürk and Westernization

In 1923, out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, General Mustafa Kemal (known as Atatürk) fashioned the Republic of Turkey. Under Atatürk, the nation was reformed from an empire to a secular republic with an Islamic majority. The nation also adopted a Western civil law code, the Gregorian calendar, a Latin-based alphabet, and Western dress. Although most of Turkey is in Asia, it has long had important European ties. In 1952, Turkey joined the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO) and provided land for a U.S. military base.

Political Turmoil

Over the next three decades, the country went through various cycles of political turmoil. Economic and political upheaval in the 1970s led the military to seize control in 1980. The military restored stability, called for elections in 1983, and withdrew from power. The military commander responsible for these actions, Kenan Evren, was elected president. His prime minister, Turgut Özal, became the dominant political figure in the 1980s, and in 1989, Özal was elected president.

Elections in 1991 brought Özal's rival, Süleyman Demirel, to power as prime minister. Demirel had been prime minister before and was twice (1971, 1980) ousted in coups. When Özal died suddenly in 1993, Demirel was elected by Parliament as the new president. Tansu Çiller took Demirel's vacated position, becoming Turkey's first female prime minister. Her government faced economic challenges and the insurgency of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group seeking a Kurdish homeland. Tens of thousands were killed in Turkey's struggle with the PKK. The Kurds' continuing desire for autonomy is one obstacle that faces Turkey as it seeks to join the European Union (EU).

Islamist Government and the PKK

The landslide election victory of the new, Islamist-based Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 and the election of Abdullah Gül, a politician with Islamist roots, as president in 2007 sparked protests and concern about maintaining Turkey's secular status. In 2009, Turkey agreed to establish diplomatic ties and open its shared border with Armenia, although disagreement continues over whether Turkey's killing of Armenians under the Ottoman Empire constitutes genocide. In 2011, the Islamist-based ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a victory in the general election, though it did not obtain a majority in Parliament.

Violence between PKK rebels and Turkish forces escalated in 2012, including attacks by Turkish forces on rebels in Iraq and Syria. More than seven hundred died in the 2012 conflict, the highest number of casualties in over a decade. The prime minister revealed in late December 2012 that Turkish intelligence was in peace talks with the jailed PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan. In January 2013, three female leaders in the PKK were assassinated in Paris; their murders are thought to be linked to fighting within the PKK about the peace talks. In March 2013, Öcalan announced a cease-fire, calling for a truce between the PKK and Turkey. In May, PKK troops began leaving Turkey in accordance with the cease-fire but later suspended their retreat, as they accused the government of not doing enough to improve the Kurds' political situation.

In May and June 2013, the government cracked down on groups across Turkey who were protesting plans to redevelop Gezi Park and other increasingly authoritarian moves from the government. Protestors in Istanbul were met with tear gas and water cannons from the police, and in July 2013, dozens of journalists were fired or forced to resign for covering the protests. International concern about the government's response to the protests delayed Turkey's EU membership

talks.

In September 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced reforms intended to benefit the Kurdish population by recognizing Kurdish city names, allowing the Kurdish language in private schools, and no longer requiring students to recite a nationalistic oath in school. In 2015, tensions reignited between the Turkish government and the PKK as violent attacks between the two sides increased, stopping the peace process. Erdoğan's prime minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, resigned in May 2016 following disagreements over the conflict with the PKK; he also disapproved of Erdoğan's actions to turn Turkey's government into an executive presidential system.

Recent Events and Trends

• **Failed coup:** In July 2016, a faction of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) attempted to overthrow the government of President Erdoğan, with a goal of reinstating "constitutional order, human rights, and freedom." Nearly three hundred people were killed in the attempt and more than two thousand wounded, with the coup ultimately defeated by supporters of President Erdoğan in the TAF. Erdoğan purged the state, detaining over 10,000 members of the armed forces, firing 9,000 members of the police force, and suspending more than 20,000 teachers and education officials accused of involvement in the coup. President Erdoğan has been criticized in Turkey and in the international community for overstepping the constitution and building up the powers of the president, as well as limiting academic and press freedoms and intimidating opposition in the judiciary. The government's crackdown following the coup is one of the largest in modern history.

• **Historic referendum:** In April 2017, 51 percent of Turkish voters approved a constitutional referendum that granted sweeping new powers to the president, such as the ability to appoint ministers to parliament and judges to Turkey's highest court as well as to dismiss parliament. Turkey's main opposition contested the results, given the slim margin of victory and reports of voting irregularities. Some Turks are concerned the country is headed toward more authoritarian rule, while President Erdoğan argues the change will allow government to respond more quickly to domestic and international security threats.

• **Presidential and parliamentary elections:** In June 2018, Erdoğan was elected Turkey's first executive president, officially taking on the new powers granted that position by the constitution in 2017. His coalition bloc, led by his Justice and Development Party (AKP), also won a parliamentary majority. About 87 percent of Turkish voters participated in the election.

THE PEOPLE

Population

About 70 to 75 percent of the population of Turkey is Turkish, 19 percent is Kurdish, and 7 to 12 percent belongs to a variety of smaller groups. Ankara, the capital, is home to more than 4 million people. İzmir has roughly 3 million. Istanbul is still the industrial, commercial, and intellectual

center of the country, and its metropolitan municipality is home to more than 14 million people. People in rural areas tend to be more ethnically segregated than in other areas. Kurds live mostly in the southeastern cities. A few million Turkish workers live abroad, mostly in Europe and Saudi Arabia.

Language

Turkish, the official language, is a Turkic language related to other languages spoken across Central Asia. Arabic is also spoken. Arabic script was used during the Ottoman Empire period, but a Latin-based alphabet has been used since 1928. Most of the Kurdish minority speaks Kurdish, which until 2002 was banned from broadcast and education. English is the most popular foreign language and a required course in secondary schools. In some high schools and universities, English is the language of instruction.

Religion

Although 99 percent of Turkey's population is Muslim, Islam's status as the state religion was abolished in 1923. Turkey is a secular state with freedom of religion, but Islam maintains an important influence on society. Muslims in Turkey are mostly Sunni, but a large minority belongs to the Alevi community, a religious tradition that combines Islam with elements of Turkish culture. Muslims believe in one God, *Allah*, and that his will was revealed to the prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. These revelations were recorded in the *Qur'an*, the holy book of Islam. Muslims accept many Judeo-Christian prophets but proclaim that Muhammad was the last prophet. Muslims strive to live the Five Pillars of Islam: professing *Allah's* name and Muhammad's role as prophet, fasting during the holy month of *Ramadan*, giving aid to the poor, making a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and praying five times daily.

General Attitudes

Turkey is often described as a bridge between East and West. Because they have interacted with Europe and Asia for centuries, Turks have incorporated features from both areas into their culture.

Most Turks are proud of the achievements of their modern state as well as the accomplishments of their ancestors, who ruled great empires. Turks are generally patriotic, and most consider their society to be progressive, Europe-leaning, and strongly influential in the region. They often feel misunderstood by European and other Western nations; many wish their country to be seen as modern, ethnically diverse, tolerant, and democratic.

Individually, Turks often prize a good sense of humor, which is considered a sign of intelligence. Group orientation is generally valued over personal assertiveness or aggression, and honesty and intelligence are admired qualities. People also value a good education, secure employment, wealth, social status, and an honorable heritage. Bravery and loyalty are respected personal traits.

Personal Appearance

Most Turks wear Western-style clothing. European fashions

are popular among young people. Muslim women, especially in rural areas, may wear a scarf to cover their hair. In the 1920s, as Turkey became more secularized, the headscarf was forbidden in state-run institutions, government offices, and public schools. The ban made it difficult for many Muslim women to join the public workforce. However, in October 2013, the government lifted the ban on wearing Islamic headscarves in state institutions such as schools and the civil service, although women in judiciary and military jobs still may not wear headscarves.

Some traditional costumes are still worn in rural areas or for special occasions, such as traditional weddings or folk dancing. The design of a costume's headdress and the type of material used indicate a person's social status; a wealthy rural woman might wear a long, red silk headscarf to her wedding, while a less wealthy woman is more likely to wear a shorter veil of satin or cotton.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

When greeting friends or strangers, one shakes hands and says *Nasılsınız?* (How are you?) or *Merhaba* (Hello). A typical response to *Nasılsınız* is *İyiyim, teşekkür ederim* (Fine, thank you). Greetings among friends are followed by polite inquiries about one's health, family, and work. Unless they are conservative Muslims, close friends of the same (and sometimes the opposite) gender clasp hands and kiss on both cheeks when greeting. The hands of an older person may be kissed and touched to the greeter's forehead to show respect. Young people often greet each other with *Selam* (Salute). When parting, people say *Hoşçakal* (Stay well), *Görüşürüz* (See you later), *Kendine iyi bak* (Take care), or even *Bye-bye*.

Upon joining a small group, one greets each person individually. When addressing others formally, one uses professional titles. Otherwise, the title *Hanım* is used for women and *Bey* for men among peers or with younger persons. These follow the given name: *Leyla Hanım* or *İsmail Bey*. In informal situations, one addresses older people with *Abla* for women (*Fatma Abla*) or *Abi* for men (*Ahmet Abi*). These terms mean “big sister” and “big brother” respectively. When greeting someone much older, one uses *Teyze* (Aunt) and *Amca* (Uncle) after the first name. Urban people generally do not greet strangers they pass on the street.

Gestures

Turkish people generally use their hands a great deal during conversation, forming gestures that add meaning and emphasis. “No” can be expressed by either shaking the head or lifting it upward quickly. Social courtesies are valued in Turkey. One does not put one's feet on a desk or table, point the sole of the foot toward another person, smoke without asking permission, or cross the legs while in the presence of an older or superior person. In rural areas it is considered improper for adults to eat on the street. Public displays of affection between men and women are not acceptable in rural areas.

Visiting

Turks typically enjoy visiting one another in their homes, and hospitality is an integral part of the culture. Friends, relatives, and neighbors visit often. In large cities, people call ahead, but unexpected visits occur more frequently in smaller villages. Guests always are invited in and offered refreshments. This usually involves something to drink (such as tea, coffee, or soda) and may also include something to eat (such as crackers or cookies). It is considered impolite to decline these refreshments. Many Turks remove their shoes when entering a home and replace them with slippers; guests are expected to do the same at homes where this custom is followed. Visitors are expected to save bad news or accounts of problems for other occasions. It is considered impolite to ask a host personal questions. Visitors to a home may bring a small gift, such as candy, fruit, or flowers. Turks strive to make their guests feel comfortable. For example, even if the hosts do not think smoking is appropriate, they may allow visitors to smoke in their home.

Eating

Breakfast usually is eaten around 7 a.m., or earlier in rural areas. Lunch is at midday and dinner is around 7 p.m. Dinner is the main meal, and the family generally expects to sit down together for this meal.

Eating habits vary with the region and the food being eaten. Turks generally observe the continental style of eating—the fork stays in the left hand and the knife remains in the right. Some foods are eaten with the hands. In rural areas, people may sit on the floor around a low table. To begin or end a meal, one might say *Afiyet Olsun* (May what you eat bring you well-being). One may compliment the cook on the meal by saying *Elinize sağlık* (roughly, “Bless your hand”). Meals can be lavish, and Turks are generally proud of their rich cuisine. Restaurant specialties range from fast food to international cuisine; Turkish kebab restaurants are especially common. Some restaurants include a service charge in the bill (about 10 percent), in which case a 5 percent tip is customary. If no service charge is included, a 10 percent tip should be given.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Structure

The family is the primary social unit in Turkey. A traditional Turkish household often consists of a mother and father, any unmarried children, and in some cases, married sons with their families. The married sons remain with their parents until they are financially independent. The family may live together in one house, sometimes with each floor belonging to a different family member's family. Every important event is celebrated with extended family members.

In urban areas, nuclear families are standard. Urban families typically have two children; rural families generally have as many as five or six children. It is uncommon for a person to live alone, mostly for economic reasons. Throughout the country, grandmothers or other family

members play a large part in raising children. Wealthy families have started to employ nannies from Turkey or from other countries; English-speaking nannies are sometimes employed in an attempt to expose children to English.

Parents and Children

Children in rural areas begin working at home around age seven; daughters help their mothers and sons help their fathers with daily responsibilities. In urban areas, children rarely have regular chores to do; however, daughters are expected to serve refreshments to guests. While some young adults leave home to live with friends or to study in a different city, others stay at home in order to save money. Married children are expected to visit their parents often. When family members travel far to visit each other, the visitors are expected to visit each of the family members living close by. As parents grow older, children care for them physically and financially; nursing homes are rare.

Gender Roles

Gender roles may vary depending on whether a family lives in an urban or rural area, but in general, women take care of the household, cook, clean, shop, and raise children. Men are expected to maintain the home and provide financial support for the family. There are many urban women who work outside the home. In rural areas, women usually work in their gardens, while men work in town.

Nearly a third of adult women work outside the home. Maternity leave usually lasts 16 weeks; it almost always includes at least partially paid leave with job security upon return.

Women gained the right to vote in 1927 and the right to divorce in 1934, when civil marriage contracts were introduced. However, the divorce rate remains very low. Women have had legal equality with men since 2002, but women are often blamed for provoking men to commit crimes such as domestic abuse, and men are rarely punished for these crimes.

Housing

Urban

Most urban Turks live in apartments made from concrete and steel. However, among the upper class, there has recently been a move away from congested cities toward suburban developments, where single-family houses and town houses are more common. Most homes have four or five rooms, usually a kitchen, a sitting room, a bathroom, and one or more bedrooms. Dining rooms and living rooms are increasingly common. Modern furniture and appliances are also widespread.

Rural

In rural areas, homes tend to be made from concrete and brick, or in poor villages, of mud bricks. Most homes consist of one or two rooms, a kitchen and a living room, which is used as the sleeping area for the entire family at night. Rooms are typically decorated with flowers, art, paintings, and traditional ceramics and carpets; they often feature washing machines, dishwashers, and a large television.

Exteriors

Building exteriors are usually colorful. Wealthier families have landscaped gardens with flowers, trees, and shrubs. In

rural areas, outside areas are not as heavily landscaped, but they are frequently used for sitting, drinking tea, and chatting with family members or guests. Many rural homes feature solar panels and a satellite dish.

Ownership

The cost of renting housing is high, and renting is often viewed as a waste of money because renters cannot pass a home down to their children. Home ownership is considered a sign of success in Turkey. Families who can afford to do so also purchase a home for each child in the family as an inheritance or investment. When a young couple gets married, families of the bride and groom traditionally share the costs of finding and furnishing a new home. The better off the family, the more elaborate the interior design.

Dating and Marriage

Dating and Courtship

Except at universities or in large urban areas, dating in the Western sense is not common. Young people associate more in groups than in couples. Parents often arrange for their children to meet and socialize outside of school, beginning at around age 12 or 13. Young people like to gather together to chat, listen to music, drink tea, and eat *pide* (pita bread). They enjoy meeting with friends at tea gardens, coffee shops, restaurants, cinemas, shopping malls, and parks. They also gather at school functions such as folk dances or sporting events.

Dating is seen as a serious commitment; once dating becomes official, the couple and their families usually see marriage as the next step, particularly in rural areas. In rural areas, chaperones are common. When young people do pair off, they often date in secret or make sure that no one they know will see them together in public. Public displays of affection are frowned upon. Courtship—from dating to marriage—rarely lasts more than two years.

Engagement

When a couple decides to marry, the groom's family arranges a meeting with the bride's family at her home. The two families eat and drink together, and traditional customs, such as giving money to the bride's younger brother in exchange for opening the door to her house, are common. In rural areas, a bride-price, called *başlık parası*, is paid to the bride's family in exchange for the promise of marriage. Engagements typically last about six months.

Marriage in Society

It is against the law for men or women to marry before age 18. Many people wait to marry until they have completed their education and the mandatory military service for men. Hence, the average age for marriage is 24 for women and 27 for men. Most Turks expect to marry and have children. Rural families are heavily involved in deciding whom a person will marry, while the choice is generally left to the couple in urban areas. It is taboo for a couple to live together before marriage. Polygamy, as permitted by Islamic law, was abolished in 1930. Same-sex marriage is illegal, and homosexuality is largely taboo in Turkish society.

Weddings

Traditional three-day wedding celebrations are still practiced in some rural areas. Festivities begin with the *Kına Gecesi*

(henna evening), an event for women only. Female relatives decorate the hands and fingers of the bride with henna leaf dye and dance and sing. On the second day, both sets of parents serve lunch and dinner to their guests. On the third day, dancers (either professional groups or the best dancers from the extended family) often perform traditional folk dances. Once the performance is over, family and friends stand and join in the dancing; most dances are performed in one or more circles, where everyone does the same thing at the same time. Guests attach money or gold to the bride's dress and the groom's lapel.

In modern wedding celebrations, the groom often meets the bride at her house, and the couple proceeds to the wedding ceremony together in a car decorated with ribbons and messages for the occasion. The couple is married in a civil ceremony before they enter the reception venue and walk down the aisle, which completes the wedding. The couple usually has a first dance, cuts their wedding cake, and joins the guests in dancing and singing into the night. Food is served throughout the day, and guests drink soft drinks, tea and coffee, or alcohol. Urban weddings are more likely to serve lamb; rural celebrations usually serve mutton. Black-and-white color schemes are popular. Common gifts include gold, given in the form of a bracelet or nugget, and items for the married couple's new household. The wedding is usually paid for by the groom's family.

In most rural areas, wedding festivities take place in the village square, where a long head table seats the female relatives of the bride and groom on one side of the couple and the male relatives on the other. Before the wedding, the groom's female family members collect the bride from her parents' home to take her to the square, where the groom is waiting. At the end of the celebration, the male relatives of both the bride and the groom take first the bride and then the groom to their new home.

Divorce

Divorce is not common. In rural areas, the stigma of divorce affects the woman more than the man, who can more easily marry again without facing disapproval from the community.

Life Cycle

Birth

After a birth, friends and family gather at the hospital to celebrate, bringing gold or useful products as gifts for the baby. One of the oldest and respected family members, usually the baby's grandfather, whispers the baby's name into his or her ear. Family names are popular; for example, the first daughter in a family may receive her grandmother's name, and the first son may be named for his grandfather. Religious families often give their children religious names. The baby's grandmothers come to help care for the baby for a few weeks after birth. In rural areas, the umbilical cord may be ceremonially buried.

Milestones

Boys are circumcised between ages five and eight. The ceremony is elaborate, and the boy usually dresses in a white satin suit, a cape trimmed with marabou feathers, and a high crowned hat. A party is thrown at which he receives gifts from family and friends. In rural areas, the entire village

typically joins the festivities.

Turks are considered adults at 18, though many cannot afford to move out of their parents' house at that time. Military service is required for men at this age; it can last from six months (for a man with a university degree) to twelve months. Other milestones include completing an education, finding a job, and getting married.

Death

After someone dies, a prayer ceremony is held in the local mosque. The body is cleansed and wrapped in a white sheet before being placed in a coffin, which is then wrapped with a green sheet with a prayer written on it. If the deceased was a member of the military or a government worker, the coffin may be wrapped with a Turkish flag. The men of the family carry the casket to the graveyard for burial. Cremation is not practiced in Turkey. Burial is followed by a memorial service, which takes place in the home. The family of the deceased does not prepare food on the day of the burial. Friends and family members bring food to the home of the deceased's family; *helva*, a dessert traditionally served on special occasions, is often dedicated to the deceased. The men then gather to pray, and the women mourn. Forty days after death, another memorial service is held, this one presided over by an *imam* (Muslim religious leader).

Diet

Turkish cuisine is famous for the *meze*, a tray or table of hors d'oeuvres, including stuffed grape leaves, salads, shrimp, and a variety of other items. Turkey is also known for several unique soups, including *yayla* soup (yogurt soup) and *tarhana* soup (made of cracked wheat, yogurt, and fermented vegetables). Other favorite dishes are shish kebabs (chunks of lamb on a skewer) and vegetables prepared in olive oil. A seasoned rice dish called *pilav* is common. Turkey is known for its sweet desserts, including *baklava* (syrup-dipped pastry) and *muhallebi* (milk pudding). *Kahve* (Turkish coffee), a thick brew served in very small cups, is drunk at nearly every meal.

Breakfast is usually light, consisting of tea, white cheese, bread, butter, marmalade or honey, and olives. The main meal of the day is eaten in the evening and may consist of several courses. Lamb and rice are served with many meals. Seafood is more abundant along the coast.

Recreation

Sports

The most popular sport to watch and play is soccer, which was introduced by the British in the 19th century. Many Turks are passionate about supporting their favorite soccer teams. Beşiktaş, Galatasaray, and Fenerbahçe, three teams which originate in Istanbul, are the most commonly supported.

Basketball, cycling, swimming, volleyball, and a variety of other sports are also enjoyed. Golf is becoming more popular. In urban areas on Turkey's coasts, water sports such as kite surfing, windsurfing, and paragliding are available. Snow skiing in northwestern Turkey is also popular. Traditional sports include grease wrestling (sometimes called Turkey's national sport), camel wrestling, and *cirit*, a traditional

equestrian sport in which players attempt to hit each other with sticks. These traditional sports are increasingly less common but are still practiced in some regions.

Male and female students usually play soccer, volleyball, badminton, handball, or table tennis at school, though soccer is mostly played by males. Recreational resources are available and affordable in most areas. However, children often create balls and goal posts out of found materials such as wood, cans, and bags.

Leisure

During their leisure time, urban residents may watch television, dine out, visit friends, or attend movies. Rural women often visit one another in their homes, knit, or watch television. Men in rural areas may gather at teahouses (like cafés) to socialize. When at home, they also watch television. Folk dancing and other cultural arts are popular. Picnics are common family activities. Games play a large role in socializing; backgammon is a popular game at outings with family and friends, and good backgammon players are respected. Chess, checkers, and card games such as "3, 5, 8" (similar to bridge) are also played, though mostly by men.

Vacation

August, when most schools are out for the summer, is typically the month for vacations. Wealthy families often vacation in Turkish coastal cities such as Bodrum, Antalya, Çeşme, and Marmaris, or smaller resort towns like Kaş and Olympos. Travel outside of Turkey is also becoming more popular, though the difficulty of securing a visa prevents some people from traveling abroad. England, France, Spain, Italy, and Germany are favorite foreign destinations. Young people often travel together, without their families. Vacations are not common for low-income families, who usually only travel if they are visiting family members in other areas of the country.

The Arts

Theater, both contemporary and traditional, is a popular Turkish pastime in urban areas. *Karagöz* (a shadow play) is created by casting shadows of puppets on a curtain. Other types of theater are village shows and *ortaoyunu*, a type of comedy. Turkish music varies widely by ethnic group and region. The most common folk instrument is the *saz*, a kind of long-necked lute, but many varieties of instruments exist, from bagpipes to fiddles and drums. Dance often accompanies music at festivals and important events ranging from weddings to circumcisions. Pop and rock music, from both Turkey and the West, are popular. Among the Kurds, music is an integral part of passing on traditions. The music relies heavily on vocals and follows traditional rhythms; it includes instruments such as the *oud* (similar to the lute) and various reeded flutes.

Turkey is recognized for handicrafts, especially carpets, which are renowned worldwide. Other crafts include weaving, metalwork (especially copper and brass), woodwork, musical instruments, glassware, stonework, and jewelry.

Holidays

Official holidays include New Year's Day (1 January),

National Sovereignty Day and Children's Day (23 April), Commemoration of Atatürk/Youth and Sports Day (19 May), Victory Day (30 August), Republic Day (29 October), and Anniversary of Atatürk's Death (10 November). Nationwide holidays in Turkey are called *bayram*.

State Holidays

Turkey's parliament was founded by Atatürk on 23 April; he also dedicated 23 April to the children of Turkey. On this holiday, one child (typically a successful student from the countryside) is selected to be the prime minister; all of the child's orders must be followed for one day. Shops are closed and the streets are full of people, military parades, music, and candy. Children play games at school, in parks, or at other scheduled venues to celebrate Children's Day.

Republic Day is a public holiday that marks the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish Republic. Urban areas hold military ceremonies and parades, usually followed by a live concert of patriotic music in a park or outdoor concert venue; friends and families gather to celebrate, eat, and play games.

The celebration on 10 November commemorates the death of Atatürk, who remains a symbol of modern Turkey. At 9:05 a.m., sirens sound and everything stops as the entire country remains silent for two minutes. Students attend a ceremony in school to pay tribute to the deceased leader. Most of Turkey's leaders gather at the mausoleum in Ankara where Atatürk is buried to pay their respects; the remembrance ceremony is aired on television.

Religious Holidays

During *Ramadan*, the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar, practicing Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. People celebrate the end of *Ramadan* by eating sweets during the three days of *Şeker Bayramı* (also known as *Eid al-Fitr*). Families gather during this holiday to feast, sing, play music, and dance. Children usually wear new clothes and receive money as gifts.

Another Muslim holiday is *Kurban Bayramı* (also known as *Eid al-Adha*), which is held at the end of the season of pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Usually an animal is sacrificed, and the meat is divided into three equal portions: one portion is given to the poor, one portion is given to the extended family, and one is kept for the family to eat themselves.

SOCIETY

Government

Turkey is a presidential republic with a multiparty parliament. The president serves as head of state and head of government. The Grand National Assembly (parliament) has 600 members. The president and members of parliament serve five-year terms.

The military plays a constitutionally mandated role in protecting the secular state, directly influencing government policies and actions. Turkey has made judicial reforms and increased individual freedoms and social rights in an effort to make Turkey more compatible with the European Union. The

voting age in Turkey is 18.

Economy

Agriculture was the traditional backbone of the economy. Once providing the bulk of all exports, it now employs about one-fourth of the labor force but accounts for a much smaller percentage of the gross domestic product. Chief agricultural products include cotton, tobacco, citrus fruits, olives, cereals, nuts, livestock, and opium for medicine.

The economy is increasingly driven by industries and services. Industries include textiles, food processing, auto manufacturing, steel, petroleum, construction, lumber, and paper. Mining (coal, copper, boron) and tourism are also important sources of revenue. The tourist industry's infrastructure has grown substantially in the last decade. Oil pipelines began bringing oil from the Caspian Sea into Turkey in 2006.

The national debt has decreased substantially in recent years. Inflation has increased due to the depreciation of the country's currency, the Turkish *lira* (TRY). Income distribution is unequal: urban residents enjoy far higher incomes than rural people or migrants.

Transportation and Communications

Around major urban areas, the roads are paved and in good condition. In rural areas, infrastructure is generally adequate but not always well maintained. Taxis, buses, streetcars, and *dolmuşes* (shared taxis) provide public transportation. Light rails, trams, and metros are also available in urban settings. Trains and planes are used for travel between cities. In October 2013, the underwater Marmaray tunnel, the first to connect two continents, was opened in Istanbul.

Several television and radio stations broadcast nationally; about three hundred private television stations and over one thousand private radio stations broadcast alongside state-owned stations. The press is relatively active and free; however, journalists often practice self-censorship by avoiding sensitive issues such as Kurdish separatism, political Islam, and the military. Additionally, watchdog groups have accused the Turkish government of imprisoning dozens of mostly Kurdish journalists. Telephone service is best in urban areas. Cellular phones far outnumber landlines, and internet use is common. Some web sites have been blocked by the government, but most people still find ways to access banned content.

Education

Structure and Access

Education begins at age five and is required for twelve years. Elementary education, which lasts four years, is public and free. Students then attend middle school for four years, followed by four years of high school. Students take an exam before applying to their high schools of choice—the schools with the best reputations are the hardest to get into. Public high schools are free, but some private schools are not.

Nearly all students complete primary education, and most complete high school. Attendance is higher in urban than in rural areas, and some girls in rural areas leave school to help their families at home. Other than the stipends the

government provides for families who enroll a child in school, there is no consistent attendance enforcement.

Families must provide books for their high school-aged students and uniforms, which are worn in most schools, for children attending primary or high school. These expenses and other school fees sometimes prevent low-income families from sending their children to school. Students from wealthier families take courses on the weekends or after school to prepare for university entrance exams.

School Life

Turkish grammar, history, literature, social sciences, math, and science are typically taught in all schools. Art, music, religion, and physical education are also provided. A foreign language course is required; English, German, and French courses are commonly offered. Girls and boys have equal access to these subjects. All classes are taught in Turkish, which can pose a problem for Kurdish students who speak only Kurdish at home.

Students address their teacher as *hoca* (teacher). Teaching is lecture-based and learning focuses on memorization. Quizzes and tests are frequently given. Group work and analytical thinking becomes more common as students enter high school.

Sporting events, folk dances, and field trips to local historical landmarks and sacred sites are common at all levels of education. Parents are usually involved in these events, and most support their children in their studies. Many parents also save money to be able to pay for their children's university education.

Higher Education

There are more than 160 universities in Turkey, the oldest of which was founded in Istanbul in 1453. The state runs most universities. Major cities contain the biggest and most prominent universities: in Istanbul, Boğazici University and Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University; in Ankara, Middle East Technical University; in Eskisehir, Eskisehir Anadolu University; and in İzmir, Doküz Eylül University. A number of specialized colleges and institutions offer vocational and other training. Many universities require their students to complete general studies and English classes during their first year; subsequent years focus on a specific major.

Health

Basic health care is provided by the government but is not sufficient to meet the country's needs. Urban facilities are generally modern and adequate, but rural facilities are not as well equipped. Institutions such as military and state-owned enterprises provide additional care to their personnel. Turkey's infant mortality rate is attributed to poor education about child care and a lack of family planning. The government seeks to reduce the figure through improved child immunizations, prenatal care, and other programs.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

Embassy of Turkey, 2525 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; phone (202) 612-6700; web site

<http://vasington.be.mfa.gov.tr>. Turkish Tourist Office, phone (212) 687-2169; web site www.goturkeytourism.com.

Country and Development Data

Capital	_____	Ankara
Population	_____	81,257,239 (rank=18)
Area (sq. mi.)	_____	302,535 (rank=36)
Area (sq. km.)	_____	783,562
Human Development Index	_____	59 of 189 countries
Gender Inequality Index	_____	66 of 162 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	_____	\$27,000
Adult Literacy	_____	99% (male); 94% (female)
Infant Mortality	_____	17 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	_____	74 (male); 80 (female)
Currency	_____	Turkish Lira

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Norway

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EUROPE :: NORWAY

Introduction :: NORWAY

Background:

Two centuries of Viking raids into Europe tapered off following the adoption of Christianity by King Olav TRYGGVASON in 994; conversion of the Norwegian kingdom occurred over the next several decades. In 1397, Norway was absorbed into a union with Denmark that lasted more than four centuries. In 1814, Norwegians resisted the cession of their country to Sweden and adopted a new constitution. Sweden then invaded Norway but agreed to let Norway keep its constitution in return for accepting the union under a Swedish king. Rising nationalism throughout the 19th century led to a 1905 referendum granting Norway independence. Although Norway remained neutral in World War I, it suffered heavy losses to its shipping. Norway proclaimed its neutrality at the outset of World War II, but was nonetheless occupied for five years by Nazi Germany (1940-45). In 1949, Norway abandoned neutrality and became a member of NATO. Discovery of oil and gas in adjacent waters in the late 1960s boosted Norway's economic fortunes. In referenda held in 1972 and 1994, Norway rejected joining the EU. Key domestic issues include immigration and integration of ethnic minorities, maintaining the country's extensive social safety net with an aging population, and preserving economic competitiveness.

Geography :: NORWAY

Location:

Northern Europe, bordering the North Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Sweden

Geographic coordinates:

62 00 N, 10 00 E

Map references:

Europe

Area:

total: 323,802 sq km

land: 304,282 sq km

water: 19,520 sq km

country comparison to the world: 69

Area - comparative:

slightly larger than twice the size of Georgia; slightly larger than New Mexico

Area comparison map:



Land boundaries:

total: 2,566 km

border countries (3): Finland 709 km, Sweden 1666 km, Russia 191 km

Coastline:

25,148 km (includes mainland 2,650 km, as well as long fjords, numerous small islands, and minor indentations 22,498 km; length of island coastlines 58,133 km)

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 12 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

contiguous zone: 10 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm

Climate:

temperate along coast, modified by North Atlantic Current; colder interior with increased precipitation and colder summers; rainy year-round on west coast

Terrain:

glaciated; mostly high plateaus and rugged mountains broken by fertile valleys; small, scattered plains; coastline deeply indented by fjords; arctic tundra in north

Elevation:

mean elevation: 460 m

lowest point: Norwegian Sea 0 m

highest point: Galdhopiggen 2,469 m

Natural resources:

petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, titanium, pyrites, nickel, fish, timber, hydropower

Land use:

agricultural land: 2.7% (2011 est.)

arable land: 2.2% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 0% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 0.5% (2011 est.)

forest: 27.8% (2011 est.)

other: 69.5% (2011 est.)

Irrigated land:

900 sq km (2012)

Population distribution:

most Norwegians live in the south where the climate is milder and there is better connectivity to mainland Europe; population clusters are found all along the North Sea coast in the southwest, and Skaggeak in the southeast; the interior areas of the north remain sparsely populated

Natural hazards:

rockslides, avalanches

volcanism: Beerenberg (2,227 m) on Jan Mayen Island in the Norwegian Sea is the country's only active volcano

Environment - current issues:

water pollution; acid rain damaging forests and adversely affecting lakes, threatening fish stocks; air pollution from vehicle emissions

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Air Pollution, Air Pollution-Nitrogen Oxides, Air Pollution-Persistent Organic Pollutants, Air Pollution-Sulfur 85, Air Pollution-Sulfur 94, Air Pollution-Volatile Organic Compounds, Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Seals, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

about two-thirds mountains; some 50,000 islands off its much-indented coastline; strategic location adjacent to sea lanes and air routes in North Atlantic; one of the most rugged and longest coastlines in the world

People and Society :: NORWAY

Population:

5,372,191 (July 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 120

Nationality:

noun: Norwegian(s)

adjective: Norwegian

Ethnic groups:

Norwegian 83.2% (includes about 60,000 Sami), other European 8.3%, other 8.5% (2017 est.)

Languages:

Bokmal Norwegian (official), Nynorsk Norwegian (official), small Sami- and Finnish-speaking minorities

note: Sami has three dialects: Lule, North Sami, and South Sami; Sami is an official language in nine municipalities in Norway's three northernmost counties: Finnmark, Nordland, and Troms

Religions:

Church of Norway (Evangelical Lutheran - official) 70.6%, Muslim 3.2%, Roman Catholic 3%, other Christian 3.7%, other 2.5%, unspecified 17% (2016 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 17.99% (male 495,403 /female 471,014)

15-24 years: 12.37% (male 340,672 /female 324,088)

25-54 years: 40.98% (male 1,136,373 /female 1,065,138)

55-64 years: 11.72% (male 318,898 /female 310,668)

65 years and over: 16.94% (male 420,178 /female 489,759) (2018 est.)

population pyramid: 

Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 52.1 (2015 est.)

youth dependency ratio: 27.3 (2015 est.)

elderly dependency ratio: 24.8 (2015 est.)

potential support ratio: 4 (2015 est.)

note: data include Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands

Median age:

total: 39.3 years (2018 est.)

male: 38.6 years

female: 40 years

country comparison to the world: 55

Population growth rate:

0.94% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 117

Birth rate:

12.2 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 160

Death rate:

8 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 90

Net migration rate:

5.3 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 24

Population distribution:

most Norwegians live in the south where the climate is milder and there is better connectivity to mainland Europe; population clusters are found all along the North Sea coast in the southwest, and Skaggeak in the southeast; the interior areas of the north remain sparsely populated

Urbanization:

urban population: 82.6% of total population (2019)

rate of urbanization: 1.4% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

note: data include Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands

Major urban areas - population:

1.027 million OSLO (capital) (2019)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 1.07 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.86 male(s)/female

total population: 1.02 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

28.9 years (2015 est.)

note: data is calculated based on actual age at first births

Maternal mortality rate:

2 deaths/100,000 live births (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 183

Infant mortality rate:

total: 2.5 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

male: 2.8 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 2.2 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: 219

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 82 years (2018 est.)

male: 79.9 years

female: 84.1 years

country comparison to the world: 22

Total fertility rate:

1.85 children born/woman (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 143

Drinking water source:

improved:

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population

unimproved:

urban: 0% of population

rural: 0% of population

total: 0% of population (2015 est.)

Current Health Expenditure:

10.5% (2016)

Physicians density:

4.63 physicians/1,000 population (2017)

Hospital bed density:

3.8 beds/1,000 population (2015)

Sanitation facility access:

improved:

urban: 98% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 98.3% of population (2015 est.)

total: 98.1% of population (2015 est.)

unimproved:

urban: 2% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 1.7% of population (2015 est.)

total: 1.9% of population (2015 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

0.1% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 130

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

5,800 (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 117

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

<100 (2018 est.)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

23.1% (2016)

country comparison to the world: 68

Education expenditures:

8% of GDP (2016)

country comparison to the world: 5

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 18 years

male: 17 years

female: 19 years (2016)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 10.4%

male: 11.7%

female: 9% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 127

Government :: NORWAY

Country name:

conventional long form: Kingdom of Norway

conventional short form: Norway

local long form: Kongeriket Norge

local short form: Norge

etymology: derives from the Old Norse words "nordr" and "vegr" meaning "northern way" and refers to the long coastline of western Norway

Government type:

parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Capital:

name: Oslo

geographic coordinates: 59 55 N, 10 45 E

time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

etymology: the medieval name was spelt "Aslo"; the "as" component referred either to the Ekeberg ridge southeast of the town ("as" in modern Norwegian), or to the Aesir (Norse gods); "lo" referred to "meadow," so the most likely interpretations would have been either "the meadow beneath the ridge" or "the meadow of the gods"; both explanations are considered equally plausible

Administrative divisions:

18 counties (fylker, singular - fylke); Akershus, Aust-Agder, Buskerud, Finnmark, Hedmark, Hordaland, More og Romsdal, Nordland, Oppland, Oslo, Ostfold, Rogaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Telemark, Troms, Trondelag, Vest-Agder, Vestfold

Dependent areas:

Bouvet Island, Jan Mayen, Svalbard

Independence:

7 June 1905 (declared the union with Sweden dissolved); 26 October 1905 (Sweden agreed to the repeal of the union); notable earlier dates: ca. 872 (traditional unification of petty Norwegian kingdoms by HARALD

Fairhair); 1397 (Kalmar Union of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden); 1524 (Denmark-Norway); 17 May 1814 (Norwegian constitution adopted); 4 November 1814 (Sweden-Norway union confirmed)

National holiday:

Constitution Day, 17 May (1814)

Constitution:

history: drafted spring 1814, adopted 16 May 1814, signed by Constituent Assembly 17 May 1814

amendments: proposals submitted by members of Parliament or by the government within the first three years of Parliament's four-year term; passage requires two-thirds majority vote of a two-thirds quorum in the next elected Parliament; amended over 400 times, last in 2018 (2018)

Legal system:

mixed legal system of civil, common, and customary law; Supreme Court can advise on legislative acts

International law organization participation:

accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; accepts ICtJ jurisdiction

Citizenship:

citizenship by birth: no

citizenship by descent only: at least one parent must be a citizen of Norway

dual citizenship recognized: no

residency requirement for naturalization: 7 years

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: King HARALD V (since 17 January 1991); Heir Apparent Crown Prince HAAKON MAGNUS (son of the monarch, born 20 July 1973)

head of government: Prime Minister Erna SOLBERG (since 16 October 2013)

cabinet: Council of State appointed by the monarch, approved by Parliament

elections/appointments: the monarchy is hereditary; following parliamentary elections, the leader of the majority party or majority coalition usually appointed prime minister by the monarch with the approval of the parliament

Legislative branch:

description: unicameral Parliament or Storting (169 seats; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote; members serve 4-year terms)

elections: last held on 11 September 2017 (next to be held in September 2021)

election results: percent of vote by party - Ap 27.4%, H 25%, FrP 15.2%, SP 10.3%, SV 6%, V 4.4%, KrF 4.2%, MDG 3.2%, R 2.4%, other/invalid 1.9%; seats by party - Ap 49, H 45, FrP 27, SP 19, SV 11, V 8, KrF 8, MDG 1, R 1; composition - men 99, women 70, percent of women 41.4%

Judicial branch:

highest courts: Supreme Court or Høyesterett (consists of the chief justice and 18 associate justices)

judge selection and term of office: justices appointed by the monarch (King in Council) upon the recommendation of the Judicial Appointments Board; justices can serve until mandatory retirement at age 70

subordinate courts: Courts of Appeal or Lagmennsrett; regional and district courts; Conciliation Boards; ordinary and special courts; note - in addition to professionally trained judges, elected lay judges sit on the bench with professional judges in the Courts of Appeal and district courts

Political parties and leaders:

Center Party or Sp [Trygve Slagsvold VEDUM]
Christian Democratic Party or KrF [Kjell Ingolf ROPSTADT]
Conservative Party or H [Erna SOLBERG]
Green Party or MDG [Rasmus HANSSON and Une Aina BASTHOLM]
Labor Party or Ap [Jonas Gahr STORE]
Liberal Party or V [Trine SKEI GRANDE]
Progress Party or FrP [Siv JENSEN]
Red Party or R [Bionar MOXNES]
Socialist Left Party or SV [Audun LYSSBAKKEN]

International organization participation:

ADB (nonregional member), AfDB (nonregional member), Arctic Council, Australia Group, BIS, CBSS, CD, CE, CERN, EAPC, EBRD, EFTA, EITI (implementing country), ESA, FAO, FATF, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICCT, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IGAD (partners), IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, MINUSMA, NATO, NC, NEA, NIB, NSG, OAS (observer), OECD, OPCW, OSCE, Paris Club, PCA, Schengen Convention, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNMISS, UNRWA, UNTSO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

Diplomatic representation in the US:

Ambassador Kare Reidar AAS (since 17 September 2013)

chancery: 2720 34th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008

telephone: [1] (202) 333-6000

FAX: [1] (202) 469-3990

consulate(s) general: Houston, New York, San Francisco

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Kenneth BRAITHWAITE (since 8 February 2018)

telephone: [47] 21-30-85-40

embassy: Morgedalsvegen 36, 0378 Oslo

mailing address: PO Box 4075 AMB 0244 Oslo

FAX: [47] 22-44-33-63, 22-56-27-51

Flag description:

red with a blue cross outlined in white that extends to the edges of the flag; the vertical part of the cross is shifted to the hoist side in the style of the Dannebrog (Danish flag); the colors recall Norway's past political unions with Denmark (red and white) and Sweden (blue)

National symbol(s):

lion; national colors: red, white, blue

National anthem:

name: "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" (Yes, We Love This Country)

lyrics/music: Lyrics/music: Bjornstjerne BJORNSON/Rikard NORDRAAK

note: adopted 1864; in addition to the national anthem, "Kongesangen" (Song of the King), which uses the tune of "God Save the Queen," serves as the royal anthem

Economy :: NORWAY

Economy - overview:

Norway has a stable economy with a vibrant private sector, a large state sector, and an extensive social safety net. Norway opted out of the EU during a referendum in November 1994. However, as a member of the European Economic Area, Norway partially participates in the EU's single market and contributes sizably to the EU budget.

The country is richly endowed with natural resources such as oil and gas, fish, forests, and minerals. Norway is a leading producer and the world's second largest exporter of seafood, after China. The government manages the country's petroleum resources through extensive regulation. The petroleum sector provides about 9% of jobs, 12% of GDP, 13% of the state's revenue, and 37% of exports, according to official national estimates. Norway is one of the world's leading petroleum exporters, although oil production is close to 50% below its peak in 2000. Gas production, conversely, has more than doubled since 2000. Although oil production is historically low, it rose in 2016 for the third consecutive year due to the higher production of existing oil fields and to new fields coming on stream. Norway's domestic electricity production relies almost entirely on hydropower.

In anticipation of eventual declines in oil and gas production, Norway saves state revenue from petroleum sector activities in the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, valued at over \$1 trillion at the end of 2017. To help balance the federal budget each year, the government follows a "fiscal rule," which states that spending of revenues from petroleum and fund investments shall correspond to the expected real rate of return on the fund, an amount it estimates is sustainable over time. In February 2017, the government revised the expected rate of return for the fund downward from 4% to 3%.

After solid GDP growth in the 2004-07 period, the economy slowed in 2008, and contracted in 2009, before returning to modest, positive growth from 2010 to 2017. The Norwegian economy has been adjusting to lower energy prices, as demonstrated by growth in labor force participation and employment in 2017. GDP growth was about 1.5% in 2017, driven largely by domestic demand, which has been boosted by the rebound in the labor market and supportive fiscal policies. Economic growth is expected to remain constant or improve slightly in the next few years.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$381.2 billion (2017 est.)

\$374 billion (2016 est.)

\$370 billion (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 48

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$398.8 billion (2017 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

1.9% (2017 est.)

1.1% (2016 est.)

2% (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 156

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$72,100 (2017 est.)

\$71,200 (2016 est.)

\$71,100 (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 11

Gross national saving:

34.3% of GDP (2017 est.)

33.1% of GDP (2016 est.)

35.5% of GDP (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 18

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 44.8% (2017 est.)

government consumption: 24% (2017 est.)

investment in fixed capital: 24.1% (2017 est.)

investment in inventories: 4.8% (2017 est.)

exports of goods and services: 35.5% (2017 est.)

imports of goods and services: -33.2% (2017 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 2.3% (2017 est.)

industry: 33.7% (2017 est.)

services: 64% (2017 est.)

Agriculture - products:

barley, wheat, potatoes; pork, beef, veal, milk; fish

Industries:

petroleum and gas, shipping, fishing, aquaculture, food processing, shipbuilding, pulp and paper products, metals, chemicals, timber, mining, textiles

Industrial production growth rate:

1.5% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 143

Labor force:

2.797 million (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 108

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 2.1%

industry: 19.3%

services: 78.6% (2016 est.)

Unemployment rate:

4.2% (2017 est.)

4.7% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 56

Population below poverty line:

NA

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 3.8%

highest 10%: 21.2% (2014)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

26.8 (2010)

25.8 (1995)

country comparison to the world: 147

Budget:

revenues: 217.1 billion (2017 est.)

expenditures: 199.5 billion (2017 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

54.4% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 9

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

4.4% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 8

Public debt:

36.5% of GDP (2017 est.)

36.4% of GDP (2016 est.)

note: data cover general government debt and include debt instruments issued (or owned) by government entities other than the treasury; the data exclude treasury debt held by foreign entities; the data exclude debt issued by subnational entities, as well as intragovernmental debt; intragovernmental debt consists of treasury borrowings from surpluses in the social funds, such as for retirement, medical care, and unemployment; debt instruments for the social funds are not sold at public auctions

country comparison to the world: 146

Fiscal year:

calendar year

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

1.9% (2017 est.)

3.6% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 99

Central bank discount rate:

6.25% (31 December 2010)

1.75% (31 December 2009)

country comparison to the world: 67

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

2.89% (31 December 2017 est.)

2.96% (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 175

Stock of narrow money:

\$237.7 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$214 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 23

Stock of broad money:

\$237.7 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$214 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 23

Stock of domestic credit:

\$640.4 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$571.4 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 22

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$193.9 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

\$219.4 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$265.4 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 34

Current account balance:

\$22.01 billion (2017 est.)

\$14.09 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

Exports:

\$102.8 billion (2017 est.)

\$88.88 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 36

Exports - partners:

UK 21.1%, Germany 15.5%, Netherlands 9.9%, Sweden 6.6%, France 6.4%, Belgium 4.8%, Denmark 4.7%, US 4.6% (2017)

Exports - commodities:

petroleum and petroleum products, machinery and equipment, metals, chemicals, ships, fish

Imports:

\$95.06 billion (2017 est.)

\$74.94 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 36

Imports - commodities:

machinery and equipment, chemicals, metals, foodstuffs

Imports - partners:

Sweden 11.4%, Germany 11%, China 9.8%, US 6.8%, South Korea 6.7%, Denmark 5.4%, UK 4.7% (2017)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$65.92 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$57.46 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 34

Debt - external:

\$642.3 billion (31 March 2016 est.)

\$640.1 billion (31 March 2015 est.)

note: Norway is a net external creditor

country comparison to the world: 17

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:

\$236.5 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$219.1 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 27

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:

\$196.3 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$191.7 billion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 28

Exchange rates:

Norwegian kroner (NOK) per US dollar -

8.308 (2017 est.)

8.3978 (2016 est.)

8.3978 (2015 est.)

8.0646 (2014 est.)

6.3021 (2013 est.)

Energy :: NORWAY

Electricity access:

electrification - total population: 100% (2016)

Electricity - production:

147.7 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 29

Electricity - consumption:

122.2 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 29

Electricity - exports:

15.53 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 12

Electricity - imports:

5.741 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 34

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

33.86 million kW (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 30

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

3% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 208

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 159

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

93% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 8

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

4% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 115

Crude oil - production:

1.517 million bbl/day (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 15

Crude oil - exports:

1.383 million bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 10

Crude oil - imports:

36,550 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 58

Crude oil - proved reserves:

6.376 billion bbl (1 January 2018)

country comparison to the world: 20

Refined petroleum products - production:

371,600 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 38

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

205,300 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 57

Refined petroleum products - exports:

432,800 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 20

Refined petroleum products - imports:

135,300 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 43

Natural gas - production:

123.9 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 7

Natural gas - consumption:

4.049 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 65

Natural gas - exports:

120.2 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

Natural gas - imports:

5.663 million cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 77

Natural gas - proved reserves:

1.782 trillion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 20

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:

39.8 million Mt (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 65

Communications :: NORWAY

Telephones - fixed lines:

total subscriptions: 745,182

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 14 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 84

Telephones - mobile cellular:

total subscriptions: 5,721,255

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 108 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 117

Telephone system:

general assessment: modern in all respects; one of the most advanced telecommunications networks in Europe; forward leaning in LTE-A developments; looking to close 3G and 2G networks by 2025 and preparing for 5G; broadband penetration rate is among the best in Europe (2018)

domestic: Norway has a domestic satellite system; the prevalence of rural areas encourages the wide use of mobile-cellular systems; fixed-line 14 per 100 and mobile-cellular 108 per 100 (2018)

international: country code - 47; landing points for the Svalbard Undersea Cable System, Polar Circle Cable, Bodo-Rost Cable, NOR5KE Viking, Celtic Norse, Tempnet Offshore FOC Network, England Cable, Denmark-Norway6, Havfrue/AEC-2, Skagerrak 4, and the Skagenfiber West & East submarine cables providing links to other Nordic countries, Europe and the US; satellite earth stations - NA Eutelsat, NA Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean), and 1 Inmarsat (Atlantic and Indian Ocean regions); note - Norway shares the Inmarsat earth station with the other Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden) (2019)

Broadcast media:

state-owned public radio-TV broadcaster operates 3 nationwide TV stations, 3 nationwide radio stations, and 16 regional radio stations; roughly a dozen privately owned TV stations broadcast nationally and roughly another 25 local TV stations broadcasting; nearly 75% of households have access to multi-channel cable or satellite TV; 2 privately owned radio stations broadcast nationwide and another 240 stations operate locally; Norway is the first country in the world to phase out FM radio in favor of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), a process scheduled for completion in late 2017 (2019)

Internet country code:

.no

Internet users:

total: 5,122,904

percent of population: 97.3% (July 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 75

Broadband - fixed subscriptions:

total: 2,134,105

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 40 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 51

Military and Security :: NORWAY

Military expenditures:

1.8% of GDP (2019 est.)

1.73% of GDP (2018)

1.71% of GDP (2017)

1.73% of GDP (2016)

1.59% of GDP (2015)

country comparison to the world: 63

Military and security forces:

Norwegian Armed Forces: Norwegian Army (Haeren), Royal Norwegian Navy (Kongelige Norske Sjoeforsvaret; includes Coastal Rangers and Coast Guard (Kystvakt)), Royal Norwegian Air Force (Kongelige Norske Luftforsvaret), Home Guard (Heimevernet, HV) (2019)

Military service age and obligation:

19-35 years of age for male and female selective compulsory military service; 17 years of age for male volunteers (16 in wartime); 18 years of age for women; 19-month service obligation; conscripts first serve 12 months from 19-28, and then up to 4-5 refresher training periods until age 35, 44, 55, or 60 depending on rank and function. (2019)

Transportation :: NORWAY

National air transport system:

number of registered air carriers: 3 (2015)

inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers: 106 (2015)

annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers: 12,277,220 (2015)

annual freight traffic on registered air carriers: 0 mt-km (2015)

Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:

LN (2016)

Airports:

95 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 61

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 67 (2017)

2,438 to 3,047 m: 14 (2017)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 10 (2017)

914 to 1,523 m: 22 (2017)

under 914 m: 21 (2017)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 28 (2013)

914 to 1,523 m: 6 (2013)

under 914 m: 22 (2013)

Heliports:

1 (2013)

Pipelines:

8520 km gas, 1304 km oil/condensate (2017)

Railways:

total: 4,200 km (2019)

standard gauge: 4,200 km 1.435-m gauge (2,480 km electrified) (2019)

country comparison to the world: 45

Roadways:

total: 94,902 km (includes 455 km of expressways) (2018)

country comparison to the world: 52

Waterways:

1,577 km (2010)

country comparison to the world: 51

Merchant marine:

total: 1,581

by type: bulk carrier 102, general cargo 249, oil tanker 81, other 1149 (2018)

country comparison to the world: 17

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Bergen, Haugesund, Maaloy, Mongstad, Narvik, Sture

LNG terminal(s) (export): Kamoy, Kollsnes, Melkoya Island

LNG terminal(s) (import): Fredrikstad, Mosjoen

Transnational Issues :: NORWAY

Disputes - international:

Norway asserts a territorial claim in Antarctica (Queen Maud Land and its continental shelf); Denmark (Greenland) and Norway have made submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) and Russia is collecting additional data to augment its 2001 CLCS submission; Norway and Russia signed a comprehensive maritime boundary agreement in 2010

Refugees and internally displaced persons:

refugees (country of origin): 15,246 (Eritrea), 13,914 (Syria), 7,183 (Somalia), 6,065 (Afghanistan) (2018)

stateless persons: 2,809 (2018)



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Norway, one of the “three fingers” of Scandinavia, is slightly larger than the U.S. state of New Mexico. *Norway* means “the northern way.” In fact, the Arctic Circle crosses the country almost in its middle.

Its coastline, indented with beautiful fjords, stretches more than 15,600 miles (over 25,000 kilometers), from the North Sea to the Arctic Ocean. Along the fjords on the western coast are numerous small islands. Norway is generally mountainous and glaciated. Only about 2 percent of Norway is suitable for cultivation. Norway has many natural resources, including crude oil (in the North Sea), copper, nickel, zinc, lead, and timber. About one-third of the land is forested. Waterfalls are a source of clean, inexpensive electric power.

The North Atlantic Drift, a warm ocean current, moderates the otherwise cold climate and allows for ice-free harbors and mild summers. Rain is abundant on the west coast. In the interior, winters are colder and summers are warmer than on the coast. In the north, average high temperatures in the summer range from around 55 to 60°F (13 to 16°C), with winter highs dropping down to between 24 and 29°F (-4 to -2°C). In Oslo, located in the southeast, summer highs average around 69°F (21°C), with average winter highs around 32°F (0°C). Above the Arctic Circle, the sun shines

day and night for part of the summer and does not rise above the horizon for part of the winter. In the absence of the sun, the aurora borealis (northern lights) is often visible.

History

Vikings and Danish and Swedish Rule

During the Age of the Vikings (AD 800–1050), Vikings conquered many areas in Scandinavia and Europe and made exploratory voyages as far west as North America. Records indicate that Leifur Eiriksson (Leif Eriksson) landed in present-day Canada, preparing the way for later settlements on the continent.

In Norway, Viking leader Harald the Fairhead became the first supreme ruler of a unified kingdom around 872. Christianity spread throughout the area by 1030. The country came under Danish domination from 1381 to 1814. It was then given to Sweden as a peace-treaty provision after Denmark's alliance with Napoleon during the Napoleonic Wars.

Thereafter, Norway declared its independence and drafted a constitution, although it still accepted the Swedish king as its monarch. A referendum in 1905 dissolved the union with Sweden, and a Danish prince, later called Haakon VII, was chosen as the constitutional monarch of an independent Kingdom of Norway.

The World Wars and the European Union

Norway was neutral in World War I, but Germany attacked in World War II (April 1940) and held the country until May 1945. During that time, the monarch was out of the country, supporting the Allied effort against the Germans. The son of Haakon VII, Olav V, was king of Norway from 1957 to 1991. Upon his death, his son, Harald V, took the throne. Norway's postwar period was marked by political stability, economic progress, and development.

Norway is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Area (EEA), but it is not a member of the European Union (EU). The issue of joining the EU has been sensitive in Norway ever since voters rejected membership in 1972. In 1990, prime minister Jan Syse resigned over the debate. His successor, Gro Harlem Brundtland, risked her considerable popularity in 1994 to apply for membership in the EU and then to campaign to have voters approve the measure. In a 1994 referendum, held after neighbors Sweden and Finland voted in favor of joining the EU, voters rejected entry into the EU. Many expressed concern that some autonomy would have to be sacrificed to EU leaders.

Norwegians continue to have enough confidence in their country's resources and economy remaining strong without membership in the expanding EU. There is evidence that public opinion about joining the EU may be changing gradually, but it is unlikely that Norway will pursue membership in the near future.

International Politics

Norway's Nobel Committee has been awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to individuals and organizations who have promoted peace between nations since the early 1900s, but in recent decades, Norway has become a stronger force in international politics. For example, the country has played a role in more than one United Nations peacekeeping operation and has aided NATO missions in Afghanistan and Libya. The country has refereed talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil separatists. Additionally, Norway has put some of its wealth toward funding environmental causes around the world.

Domestic Issues

In 2011, a killer motivated by xenophobia and radical nationalism killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting spree. He was later sentenced to a minimum of 21 years in prison. The country was deeply affected by these events, and the government recommitted to the protection of Norway's open and democratic society.

Taxes and immigration are controversial issues in Norwegian society, especially given the recent influx of refugees from Africa and the Middle East to Europe. Oil exploration and extraction in northern Norway, in addition to other environmental issues, are also subjects of debate.

Recent Events and Trends

- **Refugee quota:** In April 2016, Norway ruled out increasing the number of refugees it would accept from the EU. The country decreased the number of asylum seekers it accepts after having received over 31,000 in 2015. Norway has hardened its policies toward refugees by cutting benefits, increasing the wait for permanent residency, and sending

those from countries with improving situations back home.

- **Digital radio:** In December 2017, Norway became the first nation in the world to switch off its FM radio network in favor of digital radio technology, which has more channels and greater diversity of content. Despite these benefits, the switch has been met with some criticism due to technical problems and consumer concerns about the cost of buying new receivers. Smaller local radio stations may continue to broadcast on FM until the end of 2021.

- **Increased fossil-fuel production:** In January 2018, Norway's offshore gas systems operator, Gassco, released preliminary data reporting that Norwegian gas exports to Europe in 2017 hit a record high, exceeding the previous year by almost 7 percent. Despite having pledged to lower carbon emissions as part of the Paris Climate Agreement, Norway continues to be one of Europe's largest oil and gas producers. Norway argues that its gas is cleaner than the coal burned in places like Germany and the United Kingdom and so helps the overall carbon reduction goal.

THE PEOPLE

Population

Norway has a total population of more than 5 million people. Most Norwegians live in the south, which includes along the coast and areas in the southeast. About 1 million people live in Oslo and the urban regions adjacent to it. Areas in the north are sparsely populated.

About 83 percent of the population is of Nordic (Scandinavian) descent. Although Norway strictly limits immigration, the number of immigrant workers increased following the discovery of oil in the North Sea. Recently, asylum seekers have also come to Norway from Somalia, Syria, Iraq, the Philippines, and Eritrea. About 8 percent of the population comes from other European countries. A small minority (about 60,000) of native *Sami* live mostly in the north. Also called Laplanders, their ancestors were the original inhabitants of northern Norway.

Language

Norway has two official languages: Norsk (Norwegian), spoken by most Norwegians, and *Sami* (official in the northernmost regions, where the majority of *Sami* reside).

Norwegian has two written forms: Bokmål (book language) and Nynorsk (New Norwegian). *Bokmål* is used in most written works and by more than 80 percent of the people. It is also the main language of instruction and broadcasting, although laws require that *Nynorsk* be used in a certain percentage of schools and broadcast media. *Nynorsk* was created in the 1800s using a combination of various rural dialects. Because *Bokmål* has a larger reach, it has influenced those who write *Nynorsk*. *Nynorsk* is more similar to *Bokmål* today than it was in the past. All government agencies support both written forms, but *Nynorsk* is seen by some as an extra burden for students and government agencies.

There is no officially sanctioned standard of spoken Norwegian. Norwegians speak many different dialects. These dialects are commonly divided into four main groups: *N*

ordnorsk (Northern Norwegian), *Trøndersk* (Central Norwegian), *Vestlandsk* (Western Norwegian), and *Østnorsk* (Eastern Norwegian). The dialects are largely mutually intelligible but vary in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Norwegian is a pitch accent language, which means people use rising or falling tones to distinguish two-syllable words with the same pronunciation. This gives Norwegian a unique sing-song quality. The Norwegian alphabet has three more vowels than the English: æ, ø and å.

The *Sami* learn Norwegian in school as a second language. Schoolchildren begin learning English at age six or seven; it is spoken widely as a second language.

Common Norwegian Phrases

English	Norwegian
Please	Vær så snill
Thank you	Takk
Yes	Ja
No	Nei
Excuse me	Unnskyld
I'm sorry	Beklager
I love you	Jeg elsker deg
Happy Birthday	Gratulerer med dagen
Numbers 1–10	En, to, tre, fire, fem, seks, sju, åtte, ni, ti

Religion

About 71 percent of the population belongs to the Church of Norway, which is Evangelical Lutheran. Freedom of religion is guaranteed, and many other Christian churches are active in the country. Among them are Roman Catholics (3 percent) and various Protestant groups (almost 4 percent). The Muslim population (a little more than 3 percent) is growing through immigration.

Although religion is important to some Norwegians, less than half the population practices religion on a daily basis. Religion and church attendance are becoming less important to younger generations. Most people attend church services only on special occasions or holidays.

General Attitudes

Tolerance, honesty, kindness, and equality are important Norwegian ideals. These values are based on the concept of *janteloven*, a set of social norms deeply engrained in Scandinavian culture. *Janteloven* places importance on egalitarianism and putting society ahead of the individual. Many feel Norway has developed a superior social system with high standards. Indeed, social equality and a good standard of living are important values that have shaped post-World War II politics. Norway's interest in peace and

progress is reflected in its longtime sponsorship of the Nobel Peace Prize. Norway is also one of the world's leaders in the percentage of gross national product (GNP) provided in aid to the world's poorest countries.

A person's behavior is considered to be just as important to their social status as their occupation. Intelligence, loyalty, self-restraint, and friendliness are valuable traits. Reliability in business and private matters is also valued. Cheating is frowned upon. Once trust is lost, it is difficult to regain. Although Norway is rich and has many natural resources, Norwegians tend to be modest about their personal wealth. Bragging is considered inappropriate. Norwegians are also known for loving the outdoors and promoting measures to protect their environment.

Sincerity in friendship is important, but most people show reserve in the expression of personal feelings. Norwegians do, however, tend to be open and chatty with their close friends and family. Norwegians make a point to not disturb others around them; city-dwellers are rarely close friends with their neighbors and do not often greet passersby on the street. This changes when Norwegians visit their summerhouses and when they are out in nature. There people greet each other freely, engage in frequent conversation, and invite each other over for visits.

Norwegians in urban areas tend to settle down and have children later in life and generally earn more money than those in rural areas. Norwegians from the northern counties are known for being very outspoken and using colorful language; they sometimes tell jokes that people from other parts of the country find inappropriate. Norwegians from the south tend to be more traditional and religious than other Norwegians.

There is a strong sense of a national community and a high level of civic participation. A large majority of Norwegians report being satisfied with their life. Criticism of other people or systems is considered inappropriate, although distrust of foreigners is common, especially among older generations, and attitudes toward immigrants can be critical.

Personal Appearance

Dress generally follows conservative European fashions and is influenced by the necessity to keep warm in the cold climate. Cleanliness and dressing well are important; an unkempt appearance in public is considered inappropriate.

Norwegians tend to dress up for social gatherings and dress down for work. A shirt and tie, casual pants, and a sweater or pullover are appropriate professional attire for men; women wear skirts or pants and blouses, often accompanied by a scarf. Suits are worn for business meetings. A dinner party with colleagues (especially at Christmas) is an occasion to dress up. Most young people are fashion conscious and tend to buy brand-name clothing. Their clothing choices are often influenced by trends on social media.

Bunad (traditional costumes), which are specific to each region, are worn on special occasions such as weddings and national and local holidays. Everybody who owns a *bunad* wears it on Constitution Day. The costumes are often hand sewn and have elaborate embroidery. For women, they

usually consist of a white blouse (often embroidered), a jumper-type skirt, an apron, and a headdress. Men's traditional costumes include knee pants, shirts, and vests. The traditional attire of the *Sami* people is similar and includes shoes made of animal skin.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

Norwegians generally do not wait to be introduced by others. They often take the initiative in meeting new colleagues or neighbors. Natural courtesy is important to good relations. Shaking hands is appropriate in both formal and informal contexts. In formal contexts, businesslike handshakes are firm and short. In personal contexts, handshakes are longer and warmer. Close friends may hug each other while touching opposite cheeks during or after a handshake.

Everyday acquaintances greet each other with a casual *Hei!* (Hi) or *God morgen* (Good morning). A slightly more formal greeting is *God dag* (Good day). People greeting others for the first time since a shared social event often say *Takk for sist* (Thanks for the last time), a phrase that recognizes the closer social bond between them. Another common greeting is *Nei så hyggelig* (Oh, how nice!) It basically means "It has been a long time! I'm glad I ran into you."

Traditionally, only close friends addressed each other by first names, but now most people tend to use first names once they have been introduced by first and last name. Even schoolchildren may call teachers by their first name.

Common Norwegian Greetings

English	Norwegian
Hello	Hallo
Good-bye	Farvel
Good morning	God morgen
Good afternoon	God dag
Good evening	God kveld
Goodnight	God natt
How are you?	Hvordan går det?
I don't understand	Jeg forstår ikke
Nice to meet you	Hyggelig å møte deg
My name is . . .	Mitt navn er . . .

Gestures

Norwegians keep hand gestures to a minimum during conversation. However, people may wave the index finger in the air when warning others or expressing anger. Chewing gum is inappropriate in public and business settings. On

public transportation, people usually offer their seats to pregnant women, the elderly, or people with disabilities. Courtesy and good behavior are important in all cases.

Visiting

Most Norwegians socialize at home. Friends visit each other regularly, either to maintain friendships or just to socialize. In the past, people visited unannounced, but now a call in advance is appreciated. Guests usually are offered coffee, tea, lemonade, or soda water and cakes or cookies. It is considered impolite for invited guests to refuse any refreshments the hosts offer.

When visiting a home for the first time, one customarily brings a gift of flowers or sweets or another small token of appreciation to the hosts. Traditionally, guests wait to be invited in by the host, who helps them remove their coats as a gesture of hospitality. Guests may also wait to sit down until they are invited to do so. Personal privacy is valued; topics such as income and social status are avoided in casual conversation. Punctuality is important. It is considered poor taste to leave directly after dinner is over.

Eating

In the past, Norwegian families ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner together. Today, most families usually meet together for dinner and sometimes breakfast. Many also enjoy a light evening snack.

Norwegians eat in the continental style, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right. It is impolite to leave food on the plate. It is polite to pardon oneself before leaving the table or to stay at the table until everybody is finished eating. At the end of a meal, whether in casual or formal situations, diners thank the person who prepared or is responsible for the meal. Indeed, children are taught to say *Takk for maten* (Thank you for the food) before leaving the table. Hands are kept above the table during the meal.

Norwegian affluence has increased the popularity of eating out. Formal restaurants, coffee bars, and informal cafés, which serve sausages, hamburgers, french fries, and other types of fast food, are popular. In a restaurant, a patron summons the server with a raised hand. The bill usually includes a service fee and some people leave an additional tip, though doing so is not expected, as wages are good.

LIFESTYLE

Family Structure

The typical Norwegian family unit is small, consisting of a mother, father, and two children. Families from Muslim immigrant communities usually have more than two children. Norwegians typically become parents in their late 20s. Extended families rarely live together in the same house but often live in the same city or region.

Parents and Children

Children usually take part in simple tasks such as setting the table for a meal, cleaning up after a meal, and cooking. Children typically receive a small allowance (*ukelønn*, or

weekly wage) in exchange for doing their chores.

Parents are expected to be responsible for their children's well-being. Mothers and fathers typically have similar parental roles. After children reach 18, they are considered adults, and parents have no legal obligation to support them. Parents are still expected to help their older children when necessary. Children are also expected to help their parents for the rest of their lives. The majority of elderly Norwegians who cannot care for themselves move to non-profit nursing homes, which are typically paid for by the residents' pensions.

Gender Roles

Traditionally, women have handled most of the household tasks, and men have been responsible for financial matters. This is changing, especially among the younger generation, and more couples now share equally in all household chores. Most husbands and wives consider each other equal in authority as well. Both parents typically work outside the home, and 60 percent of women are formally employed. The influence of women in the workforce has helped Norway develop strong childcare, educational, and family programs.

Each set of parents can take up to a combined 49 weeks of fully paid leave (or 59 weeks at 80 percent of their usual pay) before their child's third birthday. Mothers generally take 3 weeks of leave before the due date and 6 weeks after the birth. Fathers can take a total of 10 weeks. Parents then may split the remainder as they wish.

Partly due to gender-related quotas, women have a strong presence in politics and hold slightly more than 40 percent of the seats in Parliament and 41 percent of the cabinet posts. Women comprise 60 percent of the labor participation rate, which speaks to the key role they play in businesses and corporations.

Housing

Traditional and Modern

Most Norwegians live in traditional-style homes, though modern-style homes are becoming more popular among young Norwegians.

In some neighborhoods, functional houses date back more than one hundred years. It is not uncommon to restore old houses instead of buying or building new ones, and new-home building has dropped recently. Many people have childhood dreams about how their houses will look when they one day build their own.

Apartments and townhouses are common in urban areas; however, most metropolitan areas include residential areas with single-family wood houses. The typical house has two or three bedrooms, one to two bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, a basement, and an attic.

Most Norwegians own their houses. Even some students buy an apartment, as doing so is seen as a valuable investment that should be made as soon as possible.

Exteriors and Interiors

Wood is the most common building material, but brick houses are not unusual. Traditional houses are typically built of wood with a concrete foundation. The roofs are pitched at a steep angle so rain and snow slide to the ground. Modern homes may be built of wood and a combination of nonconventional materials, such as steel. Modern homes make more use of

glass and have larger windows.

Norwegians generally fix up and decorate their homes themselves. Many are highly design conscious and spend a lot of time and money making their homes more attractive. This tendency may be related to the fact that Norwegians spend a lot of time in their homes during the long winter season. In decorating, Norwegians have generally conservative tastes, preferring furnishings made from wood, leather, or wool. Scandinavian and Danish design is very popular.

Dating and Marriage

Dating and Courtship

Teenagers both socialize in groups and date seriously in pairs. Teenagers typically spend time together after school. Expensive activities such as eating at restaurants, going to the cinema, and buying gifts for significant others are increasingly common. Some people, young and old, meet through online dating. Casual sexual relationships are widespread and socially accepted.

Relationships usually form between people with similar social backgrounds, ages, and education levels. The phrase *Like barn leker best* (Birds of a feather flock together) is typically used in reference to friendships and romantic relationships to indicate that people with shared values and life experiences will make the best matches.

Marriage in Society

Most Norwegians expect to marry eventually; parents hope that their children will marry, even if it is later in life. On average, men marry at age 39, and women at age 34. However, most Norwegian couples live together before marrying and, among younger generations, sometimes instead of it. Same-sex marriage has been legal since 2009. About 40 percent of marriages end in divorce, and divorce is largely accepted by society.

Common-law marriage does not exist in Norway. However, unmarried couples who live together may choose to sign a cohabitation contract, which legally regulates certain aspects of their relationship, such as the ownership or division of property. Unmarried couples who have children together do have some legal rights and responsibilities. Both parents have an obligation to provide for the children. Both parents also have the right to spend time with the children and have a say in health procedures and whether the children move out of the country.

Weddings

The majority of weddings, even for non-religious Norwegians, take place in churches. Some weddings take place before a judge at a public office, but civil ceremonies are not required for church weddings. Newlyweds often leave the church in a car that has something similar to "Just married" written on it. They often have wedding pictures taken by a professional photographer.

Large parties for families and friends include dinner and speeches followed by refreshments and dancing. The newlyweds perform a bridal waltz. Foods served at weddings vary; cold dishes like salads, dried and salted meat, breads, and desserts are common. Many Norwegians go on a honeymoon but may have to wait until after they have saved enough money to do so.

Life Cycle

Norwegian life-cycle rituals are influenced by the Lutheran church. Almost everyone in Norway observes the traditional religious ceremonies associated with birth, marriage, and death. In recent years, the growth of the Norwegian Humanist Association has provided Norwegians with the opportunity to have secular versions of the traditional religious ceremonies.

Birth

Most Norwegians baptize their newborn babies and name godparents for them. This ceremony involves close relatives and friends. A celebration following the baptism includes dinner and dessert in the parents' home and gifts for the newborn.

Milestones

Confirmation, which takes place around age 15 and marks the admission of young people into the Lutheran church, is another important religious ceremony. Christian (and some non-Christian) teenagers take a class in which they learn about and discuss values, moral codes, and social skills. On the day of the confirmation, all the participants take part in a large ceremony in a church or a concert arena, where they perform speeches, songs, and dances. At the end of the ceremony, the participants receive diplomas and then celebrate with their friends and relatives. Most of the participants receive money as gifts.

The *Russefeiring* is a celebration of high school graduation and a rite of passage into adulthood that lasts more than two weeks. It centers around party vans or buses, painted red, blue, or black depending on the students' school. The buses are further personalized with names or themes and usually have elaborate sound systems and lighting, all of which are judged in competitions and enjoyed in parades. Many parties, featuring lots of drinking, take place in and around the buses, and drivers are hired to shuttle the teens to various festivals. Participants, or *russ*, are identified by their *russebukse* (russ pants)—overalls which are to be worn for the entire celebration without being washed. Students also have *russkort* (russ cards) printed, featuring their name, their photograph, and a short slogan. They swap these cards with other *russ*, and children collect them. The celebration ends on Constitution Day (17 May).

Norwegians are considered legal adults at age 18. Teenagers usually leave their parents' home at this age. A period of military service is technically mandatory at age 19 for men and, since 2015, for women; however, Norway has room in its military to conscript only a small portion of young adults. Young people may also work and travel for a year before attending university or another form of higher education.

Death

Most funerals take place in churches, where a priest speaks to honor the deceased. After family members say their last farewells, the coffin is brought outside to be buried in a cemetery. Cremation is not common.

The Norwegian Humanist Association now performs non-religious burials, but these are not as common as burials with traditional religious rituals. Most cemeteries are located on grounds belonging to the church, and in the past, burial

there was denied to people who had not been baptized and confirmed; however, this is not the case today.

Diet

Frokost (breakfast) and *lunsj* (lunch) usually consist of open-faced cheese or ham sandwiches and milk or coffee. Meat or fish, potatoes, vegetables, and a soup or dessert are generally prepared for *middag* (dinner), the main meal. In more rural areas, people have *middag* around 3 or 4 p.m. and *kveldsmat* (evening food) later in the evening. Typical *kveldsmat* includes bread with cheese, jam, or ham. Ready-made or frozen foods are popular, particularly for evening snacks. Delis usually sell ready-made fried fish, fish cakes, fish pudding, and meatballs. A common meal is meatballs with potatoes and brown gravy, served with vegetables. Pasta, pizza, and sushi are also popular.

Other ethnic foods, such as Indian, Chinese, and Thai, are gaining in popularity, although these are often prepared with a unique Norwegian twist. Tacos are the most popular dinner on Fridays, when it is common to invite friends over to help make them. Younger Norwegians have coined the term *fredagstaco* (Friday taco) to describe this new cultural phenomenon.

Norwegian traditional specialties include fish balls served in a milk sauce, smoked salmon, lutefisk (cod or coalfish soaked in potash lye), *fårikål* (cabbage and mutton), *smalahode* (sheep's head), and a variety of other dishes. Drinking alcohol is common, especially on the weekends. Ice cream and puddings with various toppings are popular desserts.

Recreation

Sports

Most Norwegians are physically active. Many enjoy skiing (cross-country skiing is especially popular), and children learn at a very young age. "Norwegians are born with skis on their feet" is a common saying. *Randonee* skiing, also known as Alpine Touring, is increasingly popular. It involves using special bindings and skins that allow the skis to be used for walking uphill. The skins are then removed so that skiers can make their way down the mountain. Roller skiing, originally used by cross-country skiers to train during the summer, is also a popular skiing activity. Snowboarding is popular among teenagers. Norway is one of the world's centers for ice-skating and skiing, both Alpine (downhill) and Nordic (cross-country). The city of Lillehammer was the site of the 1994 Winter Olympics.

Soccer is the most popular sport in Norway for both men and women; it is among the first sports most children learn. During winter, some professional and amateur teams practice in indoor stadiums with artificial grass. Handball is also popular; the Norwegian women's national handball team has won several titles in recent years.

Schools do not organize their own sports teams, but each community has sports clubs for individual and team competition. Most families are actively involved in these clubs. Participation is emphasized more than winning, and young children are taught to treat everyone equally in sports. Soccer teams, for example, are unlikely to play only their best

players in important matches; not letting everyone participate is considered unfair.

Leisure

Most Norwegians love to be outdoors. Walkways and bicycle lanes make it easy to travel by bike. Families often go for a walk in the woods or in their neighborhoods on Sunday afternoons. Dances, outdoor activities, and movies are favorite pastimes for youth. Fishing is excellent and popular; trout, pike, and salmon abound in Norwegian waters. People enjoy swimming and hiking during the summer months. Barbecuing is a common pastime in the summer. Many people like to go boating when the frozen lakes and fjords thaw.

Vacation

Most employees have 25 paid vacation days per year, and they often spend this time vacationing during the summer, when students have time off school. The end of July and the beginning of August are known as *fellesferien*, which translates as “the general staff holiday,” because most Norwegian companies shut down for summer holidays. Norwegians love to spend this time sunbathing, swimming, playing sports, and doing other outdoor activities while spending time with friends and relatives.

Wealthy Norwegians often own vacation homes, usually a *fjellhytte* (mountain cottage) or a *sjøhytte* (sea cottage) located close enough to home to make travel there easy. Many Norwegians also travel abroad during the summer months. Spain, Turkey, and Greece are favorite destinations, but Italy, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark, and Sweden are also popular. Families vacationing in these countries usually enjoy spending time relaxing by the sea.

The Arts

Many families participate in the performing arts, either by performing themselves or by attending theater, concerts, and other cultural events. Theater is particularly valued. The Norwegian Opera, the Norwegian National Ballet, and numerous orchestras add to the lively arts scene.

Traditional arts are important to Norwegians. Folk musicians are popular, and festivals feature many types of folk music. The best-known folk dance is the *hallingdans*, in which dancers perform challenging kicks and leaps. Norwegian folktales are also popular. They often portray animals or mythical creatures such as trolls, pixies, and ocean monsters. Examples of ancient craft and architecture include rock carvings, Viking ships, and thousand-year-old churches made out of wooden slats. Contemporary arts include furniture, jewelry, textiles, and painting. Mural painting is especially renowned.

Holidays

Official holidays include New Year's Day, Easter (Thursday–Monday), Labor Day (1 May), Constitution Day (17 May), and Christmas (24–26 December). Nearly all businesses close on these days. The Norwegian flag is a prominent feature of all holidays; it is even used to decorate Christmas trees.

Easter

Easter in Norway is a long, welcomed holiday marking the

arrival of spring. Traditionally, Norwegian shops and work places close the Thursday before Easter, and reopen the following Tuesday. Schools are typically closed for the entire week before Easter, so many parents take this time off as well.

Families often take skiing vacations or stay in vacation homes on the coast during the Easter holiday. Camping and hiking are also popular. Traditional foods eaten on Easter include lamb, turkey, eggs, and candies such as chocolate and marzipan. Large, hollow decorated eggs filled with various kinds of candy are given to children. Some Norwegians, especially the elderly, decorate their homes with yellow and purple Easter decorations.

One Easter tradition is uniquely Norwegian: *Påskekrim* (Easter crime). During the Easter holiday, television stations, book publishers, and magazines release crime-related media, as well as mystery puzzles to solve. Even milk cartons have mysteries printed on them. Many believe this tradition began with influential advertisements for crime novels that were run during the Easter season at the beginning of the 20th century.

Constitution Day

Constitution Day is celebrated much like the Fourth of July in the United States, with parades, flags, and family gatherings. Schools in each city or town typically hold a *barnetoget* (children's parade), in which all the students march with their classes. Many people also dress up in *bunad* (traditional Norwegian costumes) to celebrate.

In Oslo, the royal family watches the children's parade from the balcony of the Oslo castle. Afterward, the

borgertog

(citizen's parade) takes place; it is open to anyone who wants to participate and includes labor unions, sports teams, and other organizations. These parades do not include floats but do include many marching bands, both school bands and

Christmas

Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year. As in many other countries, preparations for Christmas begin weeks before the holiday begins. At 5 p.m. on *Julaften* (Christmas Eve), bells ring and the holiday officially begins. Norwegians decorate with Christmas trees, candles, lights, and red and green decorations. Families gather to share a big meal and exchange gifts, which are stored under the Christmas tree. Stories about *Julenisse* (Father Christmas or Santa Claus) are popular among children. Parties are common on Christmas Day and thereafter until the new year begins.

Other Holidays

On New Year's Eve, most people celebrate with their friends by lighting fireworks and drinking alcohol. Turkey, salted and diced mutton (known as *pinnekjøtt*), and pork ribs are the most common dishes for New Year's Eve celebrations.

***Sankt Hans*, also known as *Jonsok*, *Sankthansaften*, or *St. John's Eve*, celebrates the summer solstice. On 23 June, Norwegians light bonfires to scare away evil spirits, stay up late to watch the sunrise, and eat hot dogs with ketchup.**

SOCIETY

Government

Structure

Norway is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, with the monarch serving as head of state. The monarch has limited authority, except as head of the military and as a symbol of continuity and stability. A 1990 change to Norway's constitution allows a monarch's firstborn child to inherit the throne regardless of gender.

The leader of the majority party in *Stortinget* (Parliament) serves as prime minister and exercises executive power as head of government. Parliament has one house, with 169 seats. Members of Parliament are elected by proportional representation every four years.

In Norway's judiciary, the highest court is the Supreme Court, or *Høyesterett*. There are also courts of appeal for civil and criminal cases, as well as conciliation courts for civil suits. Norway has 18 fylker (counties), which are further subdivided into rural and urban municipalities.

Political Landscape

Several parties are active in Norway and hold seats in the legislature. A number of political parties have adopted gender quotas for their candidates. Immigration is a sensitive political issue. Other major political issues include Norway's relationship with the European Union, the country's response to future declines in the oil industry, and power sharing between the national government and the country's counties and municipalities.

Government and the People

The constitution guarantees many freedoms, including freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and the press. The government even subsidizes a number of private, politically partisan, and small local newspapers in order to ensure that as many different viewpoints as possible can be voiced. Levels of corruption in Norway are among the lowest in the world. Elections are transparent, as well as free and fair. Since 2001, voter turnout has remained between 75 and 85 percent. All citizens may begin voting at age 18.

Economy

Norway enjoys a strong economy and has one of the highest standards of living in the world. In general, wealth is evenly distributed. Highly developed social institutions are able to provide for general economic prosperity but also result in heavy tax burdens.

Inflation and unemployment are relatively low. The decision to remain outside the European Union (EU), after a referendum in 1994 rejected the option, has not weakened the economy. Norway remains closely tied to Europe through its membership in the European Economic Area (EEA), which allows for the free movement of labor, capital, goods, and services between the EU and non-EU European countries. Norway's labor force employs many immigrants; the country recruits professionals with special skills, such as doctors, nurses, and construction workers, from the EU.

Norway has a rich supply of natural resources; it is one of the world's largest oil exporters, but the government is working to diversify the economy and reduce its dependence on oil. The government uses state revenue from the oil industry to help fund public expenses. Norway is also a major metals producer. Other important natural resources include natural gas and fish, while manufactured items include ships and textiles. Oil drilling, commercial shipping, paper products, textiles, chemicals, and food processing are among the key industries. The industrial sector employs almost 34 percent of the workforce, while the services sector accounts for 64 percent, and agriculture and fishing about 2 percent. The currency is the Norwegian kroner (NOK).

Transportation and Communications

Norwegians depend on cars for personal transportation, particularly because of the country's length and its sparse population. Trains, buses, and airplanes also connect many cities and towns. Public transportation for getting around cities includes buses, trains, subways, and trams, depending on local services. Before cars and airplanes became readily available, steamboats were the main form of transportation for people along the coast. Steamers still transport goods and are popular among tourists. Norway has one of the largest fleets of commercial ships in the world. Ferries, which provide service across many fjords, are vital to infrastructure in western parts of the country.

The country's communications system is highly developed and fully modern. There are more cellular phones than people. Norwegians enjoy newspapers; local, district, and national papers are widely read. Most of the press is privately owned and partisan. Freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected. Multiple television and radio stations broadcast throughout the country.

Education

Structure and Access

Schooling is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of six and sixteen. Private schools, which are state supported but still expensive, include Christian schools and schools for students who need extra help in their studies. The first seven years constitute primary school, while the last three are lower secondary school. Upper secondary school provides either vocational training or preparation for higher education. More than 80 percent of Norwegian adults ages 25 to 64 have completed upper secondary school.

School Life

Norway's educational system is known for being one of the best of the world. Norwegians place emphasis on giving all students equal amounts of attention, and teachers encourage their students to do well in school. Students who struggle in a certain subject are sometimes given extra tutoring outside of school.

Norwegian (both Bokmål and Nynorsk), English, physical education, history, religion, mathematics, and science are all taught through primary and secondary

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school. Study of additional foreign languages is not required, but most students choose to take classes in French, German, or Spanish. The amount of time the students spend in school and the amount of homework increase as they get older; secondary students generally spend up to two hours on homework nightly.

Higher Education

After secondary school, many Norwegians begin working. Others are admitted to a university or college, and a small number attend folk colleges, liberal-arts boarding schools that focus on personal enrichment without giving credit toward a degree. Popular activities at folk colleges include music, sports, outdoor recreation, and traveling. Good education is seen as essential for high social status.

Students must receive high grades in secondary school in order to be admitted to a university program; more popular and more difficult programs of study require higher grades for admission. More women than men study at the university level. Universities are located in all major cities, and many have campuses in smaller cities as well.

Instruction is readily available to most citizens and basically free at all levels, including higher education at public schools. Space is limited at universities, and many students travel to other countries for their college education. The government offers generous loans to students who seek education abroad; Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Poland, and the United States are popular choices.

Health

Norwegians enjoy a high standard of health and a higher life expectancy than do people in many high-income countries. In keeping with its commitment to social welfare, the government has an extensive system that provides nearly free, high-quality healthcare services to all. Health clinics and regional hospitals provide service on a local level, but district and national hospitals are also available. Socialized medicine pays for all hospital charges, although small fees are charged for medicine, doctor consultations, and some procedures. Costs are shared between the central and local governments. Private doctors, clinics, and hospitals are limited.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

Royal Norwegian Embassy, 2900 K St. N.W., Ste. 500, Washington, DC 20007; phone (202) 333-6000; web site <https://www.norway.no/en/usa/>. Visit Norway, web site www.visitnorway.com.

Norway

Country and Development Data

Capital	Oslo
Population	5,372,191 (rank=118)
Area (sq. mi.)	125,021 (rank=67)
Area (sq. km.)	323,902
Human Development Index	1 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	5 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$72,100
Adult Literacy	100% (male); 100% (female)
Infant Mortality	3 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	81 (male); 84 (female)
Currency	Norwegian Krone

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Germany

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EUROPE :: GERMANY

Introduction :: GERMANY

Background:

As Europe's largest economy and second most populous nation (after Russia), Germany is a key member of the continent's economic, political, and defense organizations. European power struggles immersed Germany in two devastating world wars in the first half of the 20th century and left the country occupied by the victorious Allied powers of the US, UK, France, and the Soviet Union in 1945. With the advent of the Cold War, two German states were formed in 1949: the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR). The democratic FRG embedded itself in key western economic and security organizations, the EC (now the EU) and NATO, while the communist GDR was on the front line of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The decline of the USSR and the end of the Cold War allowed for German reunification in 1990. Since then, Germany has expended considerable funds to bring eastern productivity and wages up to western standards. In January 1999, Germany and 10 other EU countries introduced a common European exchange currency, the euro.

Geography :: GERMANY

Location:

Central Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, between the Netherlands and Poland, south of Denmark

Geographic coordinates:

51 00 N, 9 00 E

Map references:

Europe

Area:

total: 357,022 sq km

land: 348,672 sq km

water: 8,350 sq km

country comparison to the world: 64

Area - comparative:

three times the size of Pennsylvania; slightly smaller than Montana

Area comparison map:



Land boundaries:

total: 3,714 km

border countries (9): Austria 801 km, Belgium 133 km, Czech Republic 704 km, Denmark 140 km, France 418 km, Luxembourg 128 km, Netherlands 575 km, Poland 467 km, Switzerland 348 km

Coastline:

2,389 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 12 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

Climate:

temperate and marine; cool, cloudy, wet winters and summers; occasional warm mountain (foehn) wind

Terrain:

lowlands in north, uplands in center, Bavarian Alps in south

Elevation:

mean elevation: 263 m

lowest point: Neuendorf bei Wilster -3.5 m

highest point: Zugspitze 2,963 m

Natural resources:

coal, lignite, natural gas, iron ore, copper, nickel, uranium, potash, salt, construction materials, timber, arable land

Land use:

agricultural land: 48% (2011 est.)

arable land: 34.1% (2011 est.) / permanent crops: 0.6% (2011 est.) / permanent pasture: 13.3% (2011 est.)

forest: 31.8% (2011 est.)

other: 20.2% (2011 est.)

Irrigated land:

6,500 sq km (2012)

Population distribution:

most populous country in Europe; a fairly even distribution throughout most of the country, with urban areas attracting larger and denser populations, particularly in the far western part of the industrial state of North Rhine-Westphalia

Natural hazards:

flooding

Environment - current issues:

emissions from coal-burning utilities and industries contribute to air pollution; acid rain, resulting from sulfur dioxide emissions, is damaging forests; pollution in the Baltic Sea from raw sewage and industrial effluents from rivers in eastern Germany; hazardous waste disposal; government established a mechanism for ending the use of nuclear power by 2022; government working to meet EU commitment to identify nature preservation areas in line with the EU's Flora, Fauna, and Habitat directive

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Air Pollution, Air Pollution-Nitrogen Oxides, Air Pollution-Persistent Organic Pollutants, Air Pollution-Sulfur 85, Air Pollution-Sulfur 94, Air Pollution-Volatile Organic Compounds, Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Seals, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

strategic location on North European Plain and along the entrance to the Baltic Sea; most major rivers in Germany - the Rhine, Weser, Oder, Elbe - flow northward; the Danube, which originates in the Black Forest, flows eastward

People and Society :: GERMANY

Population:

80,457,737 (July 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 19

Nationality:

noun: German(s)

adjective: German

Ethnic groups:

German 87.2%, Turkish 1.8%, Polish 1%, Syrian 1%, other 9% (2017 est.)

note: data represent population by nationality

Languages:

German (official)

note: Danish, Frisian, Sorbian, and Romani are official minority languages; Low German, Danish, North Frisian, Sater Frisian, Lower Sorbian, Upper Sorbian, and Romani are recognized as regional languages under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Religions:

Roman Catholic 27.7%, Protestant 25.5%, Muslim 5.1%, Orthodox 1.9%, other Christian 1.1%, other .9%, none 37.8% (2018 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 12.83% (male 5,299,798 /female 5,024,184)

15-24 years: 9.98% (male 4,092,901 /female 3,933,997)

25-54 years: 39.87% (male 16,181,931 /female 15,896,528)

55-64 years: 14.96% (male 5,989,111 /female 6,047,449)

65 years and over: 22.36% (male 7,930,590 /female 10,061,248) (2018 est.)

population pyramid:



Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 52.1 (2015 est.)

youth dependency ratio: 19.9 (2015 est.)

elderly dependency ratio: 32.1 (2015 est.)

potential support ratio: 3.1 (2015 est.)

Median age:

total: 47.4 years (2018 est.)

male: 46.2 years

female: 48.5 years

country comparison to the world: 3

Population growth rate:

-0.17% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 208

Birth rate:

8.6 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 213

Death rate:

11.8 deaths/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 19

Net migration rate:

1.5 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 56

Population distribution:

most populous country in Europe; a fairly even distribution throughout most of the country, with urban areas attracting larger and denser populations, particularly in the far western part of the industrial state of North Rhine-Westphalia

Urbanization:

urban population: 77.4% of total population (2019)

rate of urbanization: 0.27% annual rate of change (2015-20 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

3.557 million BERLIN (capital), 1.791 million Hamburg, 1.521 million Munich, 1.108 million Cologne (2019)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.05 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 1.04 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 1.02 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 0.99 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.79 male(s)/female

total population: 0.96 male(s)/female (2018 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

29.4 years (2015 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

7 deaths/100,000 live births (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 154

Infant mortality rate:

total: 3.4 deaths/1,000 live births (2018 est.)

male: 3.7 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 3.1 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: 202

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 80.9 years (2018 est.)

male: 78.6 years

female: 83.4 years

country comparison to the world: 37

Total fertility rate:

1.46 children born/woman (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 204

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

80.3% (2011)

note: percent of women aged 18-49

Drinking water source:

improved:

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population

unimproved:

urban: 0% of population

rural: 0% of population

total: 0% of population (2015 est.)

Current Health Expenditure:

11.1% (2016)

Physicians density:

4.21 physicians/1,000 population (2016)

Hospital bed density:

8.3 beds/1,000 population (2013)

Sanitation facility access:

improved:

urban: 99.3% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 99% of population (2015 est.)

total: 99.2% of population (2015 est.)

unimproved:

urban: 0.7% of population (2015 est.)

rural: 1% of population (2015 est.)

total: 0.8% of population (2015 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

0.1% (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 123

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

87,000 (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 46

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

<500 (2018 est.)

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

22.3% (2016)

country comparison to the world: 79

Education expenditures:

4.8% of GDP (2016)

country comparison to the world: 72

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 17 years

male: 17 years

female: 17 years (2016)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 6.8%

male: 7.6%

female: 5.8% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 158

Government :: GERMANY

Country name:

conventional long form: Federal Republic of Germany

conventional short form: Germany

local long form: Bundesrepublik Deutschland

local short form: Deutschland

former: German Reich

etymology: the Gauls (Celts) of Western Europe may have referred to the newly arriving Germanic tribes who settled in neighboring areas east of the Rhine during the first centuries B.C. as "Germani," a term the Romans adopted as "Germania"; the native designation "Deutsch" comes from the Old High German "diutisc" meaning "of the people"

Government type:

federal parliamentary republic

Capital:

name: Berlin

geographic coordinates: 52 31 N, 13 24 E

time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

etymology: the origin of the name is unclear but may be related to the old West Slavic (Polabian) word "berl" or "birl," meaning "swamp"

Administrative divisions:

16 states (Laender, singular - Land); Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bayern (Bavaria), Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hessen (Hesse), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony), Nordrhein-Westfalen (North Rhine-Westphalia), Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate), Saarland, Sachsen (Saxony), Sachsen-Anhalt (Saxony-Anhalt), Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringen (Thuringia); note - Bayern, Sachsen, and Thuringen refer to themselves as free states (Freistaaten, singular - Freistaat), while Bremen calls itself a Free Hanseatic City (Freie Hansestadt) and Hamburg considers itself a Free and Hanseatic City (Freie und Hansestadt)

Independence:

18 January 1871 (establishment of the German Empire); divided into four zones of occupation (UK, US, USSR, and France) in 1945 following World War II; Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) proclaimed on 23 May 1949 and included the former UK, US, and French zones; German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) proclaimed on 7 October 1949 and included the former USSR zone; West Germany and East Germany unified on 3 October 1990; all four powers formally relinquished rights on 15 March 1991; notable earlier dates: 10 August 843 (Eastern Francia established from the division of the Carolingian Empire); 2 February 962 (crowning of OTTO I, recognized as the first Holy Roman Emperor)

National holiday:

German Unity Day, 3 October (1990)

Constitution:

history: previous 1919 (Weimar Constitution); latest drafted 10-23 August 1948, approved 12 May 1949, promulgated 23 May 1949, entered into force 24 May 1949

amendments: proposed by Parliament; passage and enactment into law require two-thirds majority vote by both the Bundesrat (upper house) and the Bundestag (lower house) of Parliament; articles including those on basic human rights and freedoms cannot be amended; amended many times, last in 2017 (2018)

Legal system:

civil law system

International law organization participation:

accepts compulsory ICJ jurisdiction with reservations; accepts ICCt jurisdiction

Citizenship:

citizenship by birth: no

citizenship by descent only: at least one parent must be a German citizen or a resident alien who has lived in Germany at least 8 years

dual citizenship recognized: yes, but requires prior permission from government

residency requirement for naturalization: 8 years

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal; age 16 for some state and municipal elections

Executive branch:

chief of state: President Frank-Walter STEINMEIER (since 19 March 2017)

head of government: Chancellor Angela MERKEL (since 22 November 2005)

cabinet: Cabinet or Bundesminister (Federal Ministers) recommended by the chancellor, appointed by the president

elections/appointments: president indirectly elected by a Federal Convention consisting of all members of the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) and an equivalent number of delegates indirectly elected by the state parliaments; president serves a 5-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held on 12 February 2017 (next to be held in February 2022); following the most recent Federal Parliament election, the party or coalition with the most representatives usually elects the chancellor (Angela Merkel since 2005) and appointed by the president to serve a renewable 4-year term; Federal Parliament vote for chancellor last held on 14 March 2018 (next to be held after the Bundestag elections in 2021)

election results: Frank-Walter STEINMEIER elected president; Federal Convention vote count - Frank-Walter STEINMEIER (SPD) 931, Christopher BUTTERWEGGE (The Left) 128, Albrecht GLASER (Alternative for

Germany AfD) 42, Alexander HOLD (BVB/FW) 25, Engelbert SONNEBORN (Pirates) 10; Angela MERKEL (CDU) reelected chancellor; Federal Parliament vote - 364 to 315

Legislative branch:

description: bicameral Parliament or Parliament consists of:

Federal Council or Bundesrat (69 seats; members appointed by each of the 16 state governments)

Federal Diet or Bundestag (709 seats - total seats can vary each electoral term; approximately one-half of members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote and approximately one-half directly elected in single-seat constituencies by simple majority vote; members serve 4-year terms)

elections:

Bundesrat - none; composition is determined by the composition of the state-level governments; the composition of the Bundesrat has the potential to change any time one of the 16 states holds an election
Bundestag - last held on 24 September 2017 (next to be held in 2021 at the latest); most postwar German governments have been coalitions

election results:

Bundesrat - composition - men 50, women 19, percent of women 27.5%

Bundestag - percent of vote by party - CDU/CSU 33%, SPD 20.5%, AfD 12.6%, FDP 10.7%, The Left 9.2%, Alliance '90/Greens 8.9%, other 5%; seats by party - CDU/CSU 246, SPD 152, AfD 91, FDP 80, The Left 69, Alliance '90/Greens 67; composition - men 490, women 219, percent of women 30.5%; note - total Parliament percent of women 30.5%

Judicial branch:

highest courts: Federal Court of Justice (court consists of 127 judges, including the court president, vice presidents, presiding judges, other judges and organized into 25 Senates subdivided into 12 civil panels, 5 criminal panels, and 8 special panels); Federal Constitutional Court or Bundesverfassungsgericht (consists of 2 Senates each subdivided into 3 chambers, each with a chairman and 8 members)

judge selection and term of office: Federal Court of Justice judges selected by the Judges Election Committee, which consists of the Secretaries of Justice from each of the 16 federated states and 16 members appointed by the Federal Parliament; judges appointed by the president; judges serve until mandatory retirement at age 65; Federal Constitutional Court judges - one-half elected by the House of Representatives and one-half by the Senate; judges appointed for 12-year terms with mandatory retirement at age 68

subordinate courts: Federal Administrative Court; Federal Finance Court; Federal Labor Court; Federal Social Court; each of the 16 federated states or Land has its own constitutional court and a hierarchy of ordinary (civil, criminal, family) and specialized (administrative, finance, labor, social) courts

Political parties and leaders:

Alliance '90/Greens [Annalena BAERBOCK and Robert HABECK]

Alternative for Germany or AfD [Alexander GAULAND and Joerg MEUTHEN]

Christian Democratic Union or CDU [Annegret KRAMP-KARRENBAUER]

Christian Social Union or CSU [Markus SOEDER]

Free Democratic Party or FDP [Christian LINDNER]

The Left or Die Linke [Katja KIPPING and Bernd RIEXINGER]

Social Democratic Party or SPD [Andrea NAHLES]

International organization participation:

ADB (nonregional member), AfDB (nonregional member), Arctic Council (observer), Australia Group, BIS, BSEC (observer), CBSS, CD, CDB, CE, CERN, EAPC, EBRD, ECB, EIB, EITI (implementing country), EMU, ESA, EU, FAO, FATF, G-5, G-7, G-8, G-10, G-20, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICCT, ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, IGAD (partners), IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC (NGOs), MIGA, MINURSO, MINUSMA, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS (observer), OECD, OPCW, OSCE, Pacific Alliance (observer), Paris Club, PCA, Schengen Convention, SELEC (observer), SICA (observer), UN, UNAMID, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIFIL, UNMISS, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

Diplomatic representation in the US:

Ambassador Emily Margarethe HABER (since 22 June 2018)

chancery: 4645 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007

telephone: [1] (202) 298-4000

FAX: [1] (202) 298-4249

consulate(s) general: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Richard GRENELL (since 8 May 2018)

telephone: [49] (30) 8305-0

embassy: Clayallee 170, 14191 Berlin

mailing address: Clayallee 170, 14191 Berlin

FAX: [49] (30) 8305-1215

consulate(s) general: Dusseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Leipzig, Munich

Flag description:

three equal horizontal bands of black (top), red, and gold; these colors have played an important role in German history and can be traced back to the medieval banner of the Holy Roman Emperor - a black eagle with red claws and beak on a gold field

National symbol(s):

eagle; national colors: black, red, yellow

National anthem:

name: "Das Lied der Deutschen" (Song of the Germans)

lyrics/music: August Heinrich HOFFMANN VON FALLERSLEBEN/Franz Joseph HAYDN

note: adopted 1922; the anthem, also known as "Deutschlandlied" (Song of Germany), was originally adopted for its connection to the March 1848 liberal revolution; following appropriation by the Nazis of the first verse, specifically the phrase, "Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles" (Germany, Germany above all) to promote nationalism, it was banned after 1945; in 1952, its third verse was adopted by West Germany as its national anthem; in 1990, it became the national anthem for the reunited Germany

Economy :: GERMANY

Economy - overview:

The German economy - the fifth largest economy in the world in PPP terms and Europe's largest - is a leading exporter of machinery, vehicles, chemicals, and household equipment. Germany benefits from a highly skilled labor force, but, like its Western European neighbors, faces significant demographic challenges to sustained long-term growth. Low fertility rates and a large increase in net immigration are increasing pressure on the country's social welfare system and necessitate structural reforms.

Reforms launched by the government of Chancellor Gerhard SCHROEDER (1998-2005), deemed necessary to address chronically high unemployment and low average growth, contributed to strong economic growth and

falling unemployment. These advances, as well as a government subsidized, reduced working hour scheme, help explain the relatively modest increase in unemployment during the 2008-09 recession - the deepest since World War II. The German Government introduced a minimum wage in 2015 that increased to \$9.79 (8.84 euros) in January 2017.

Stimulus and stabilization efforts initiated in 2008 and 2009 and tax cuts introduced in Chancellor Angela MERKEL's second term increased Germany's total budget deficit - including federal, state, and municipal - to 4.1% in 2010, but slower spending and higher tax revenues reduced the deficit to 0.8% in 2011 and in 2017 Germany reached a budget surplus of 0.7%. A constitutional amendment approved in 2009 limits the federal government to structural deficits of no more than 0.35% of GDP per annum as of 2016, though the target was already reached in 2012.

Following the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, Chancellor Angela MERKEL announced in May 2011 that eight of the country's 17 nuclear reactors would be shut down immediately and the remaining plants would close by 2022. Germany plans to replace nuclear power largely with renewable energy, which accounted for 29.5% of gross electricity consumption in 2016, up from 9% in 2000. Before the shutdown of the eight reactors, Germany relied on nuclear power for 23% of its electricity generating capacity and 46% of its base-load electricity production.

The German economy suffers from low levels of investment, and a government plan to invest 15 billion euros during 2016-18, largely in infrastructure, is intended to spur needed private investment. Domestic consumption, investment, and exports are likely to drive German GDP growth in 2018, and the country's budget and trade surpluses are likely to remain high.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$4.199 trillion (2017 est.)

\$4.099 trillion (2016 est.)

\$4.012 trillion (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 5

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$3.701 trillion (2017 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

2.5% (2017 est.)

2.2% (2016 est.)

1.5% (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 128

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$50,800 (2017 est.)

\$49,800 (2016 est.)

\$49,100 (2015 est.)

note: data are in 2017 dollars

country comparison to the world: 27

Gross national saving:

28% of GDP (2017 est.)

28.2% of GDP (2016 est.)

28.1% of GDP (2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 40

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 53.1% (2017 est.)

government consumption: 19.5% (2017 est.)

investment in fixed capital: 20.4% (2017 est.)

investment in inventories: -0.5% (2017 est.)

exports of goods and services: 47.3% (2017 est.)

imports of goods and services: -39.7% (2017 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 0.7% (2017 est.)

industry: 30.7% (2017 est.)

services: 68.6% (2017 est.)

Agriculture - products:

potatoes, wheat, barley, sugar beets, fruit, cabbages; milk products; cattle, pigs, poultry

Industries:

among the world's largest and most technologically advanced producers of iron, steel, coal, cement, chemicals, machinery, vehicles, machine tools, electronics, automobiles, food and beverages, shipbuilding, textiles

Industrial production growth rate:

3.3% (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 95

Labor force:

45.9 million (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 14

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 1.4%

industry: 24.2%

services: 74.3% (2016)

Unemployment rate:

3.8% (2017 est.)

4.2% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 46

Population below poverty line:

16.7% (2015 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 3.6%

highest 10%: 24% (2000)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

27 (2006)

30 (1994)

country comparison to the world: 145

Budget:

revenues: 1.665 trillion (2017 est.)

expenditures: 1.619 trillion (2017 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

45% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 22

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

1.3% (of GDP) (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 25

Public debt:

63.9% of GDP (2017 est.)

67.9% of GDP (2016 est.)

note: general government gross debt is defined in the Maastricht Treaty as consolidated general government gross debt at nominal value, outstanding at the end of the year in the following categories of government liabilities (as defined in ESA95): currency and deposits (AF.2), securities other than shares excluding financial derivatives (AF.3, excluding AF.34), and loans (AF.4); the general government sector comprises the sub-sectors of central government, state government, local government and social security funds; the series are presented as a percentage of GDP and in millions of euros; GDP used as a denominator is the gross domestic product at current market prices; data expressed in national currency are converted into euro using end-of-year exchange rates provided by the European Central Bank

country comparison to the world: 61

Fiscal year:

calendar year

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

1.7% (2017 est.)

0.4% (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 92

Central bank discount rate:

0% (31 December 2017)

0% (31 December 2010)

note: this is the European Central Bank's rate on the marginal lending facility, which offers overnight credit to banks in the euro area

country comparison to the world: 154

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

1.67% (31 December 2017 est.)

1.78% (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 187

Stock of narrow money:

\$2.453 trillion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$2.016 trillion (31 December 2016 est.)

note: see entry for the European Union for money supply for the entire euro area; the European Central Bank (ECB) controls monetary policy for the 18 members of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU); individual members of the EMU do not control the quantity of money circulating within their own borders

country comparison to the world: 4

Stock of broad money:

\$2.453 trillion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$2.016 trillion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Stock of domestic credit:

\$5.033 trillion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$4.433 trillion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$1.716 trillion (31 December 2015 est.)

\$1.739 trillion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$1.936 trillion (31 December 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Current account balance:

\$291 billion (2017 est.)

\$297.5 billion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 1

Exports:

\$1.434 trillion (2017 est.)

\$1.322 trillion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

Exports - partners:

US 8.8%, France 8.2%, China 6.8%, Netherlands 6.7%, UK 6.6%, Italy 5.1%, Austria 4.9%, Poland 4.7%, Switzerland 4.2% (2017)

Exports - commodities:

motor vehicles, machinery, chemicals, computer and electronic products, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, metals, transport equipment, foodstuffs, textiles, rubber and plastic products

Imports:

\$1.135 trillion (2017 est.)

\$1.022 trillion (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

Imports - commodities:

machinery, data processing equipment, vehicles, chemicals, oil and gas, metals, electric equipment, pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, agricultural products

Imports - partners:

Netherlands 13.8%, China 7%, France 6.6%, Belgium 5.9%, Italy 5.4%, Poland 5.4%, Czechia 4.8%, US 4.5%, Austria 4.3%, Switzerland 4.2% (2017)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$200.1 billion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$173.7 billion (31 December 2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 13

Debt - external:

\$5.326 trillion (31 March 2016 est.)

\$5.21 trillion (31 March 2015 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:

\$1.653 trillion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$1.391 trillion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 5

Stock of direct foreign investment - abroad:

\$2.298 trillion (31 December 2017 est.)

\$1.981 trillion (31 December 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 3

Exchange rates:

euros (EUR) per US dollar -

0.885 (2017 est.)

0.903 (2016 est.)

0.9214 (2015 est.)

0.885 (2014 est.)

0.7634 (2013 est.)

Energy :: GERMANY

Electricity access:

electrification - total population: 100% (2016)

Electricity - production:

612.8 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 7

Electricity - consumption:

536.5 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Electricity - exports:

78.86 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 1

Electricity - imports:

28.34 billion kWh (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 5

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

208.5 million kW (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

41% of total installed capacity (2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 166

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

5% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 21

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

2% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 137

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

52% of total installed capacity (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Crude oil - production:

41,000 bbl/day (2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 56

Crude oil - exports:

6,569 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 63

Crude oil - imports:

1.836 million bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Crude oil - proved reserves:

129.6 million bbl (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 65

Refined petroleum products - production:

2.158 million bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 9

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

2.46 million bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 9

Refined petroleum products - exports:

494,000 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

Refined petroleum products - imports:

883,800 bbl/day (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 9

Natural gas - production:

7.9 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 45

Natural gas - consumption:

93.36 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 8

Natural gas - exports:

34.61 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 11

Natural gas - imports:

119.5 billion cu m (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 1

Natural gas - proved reserves:

39.5 billion cu m (1 January 2018 est.)

country comparison to the world: 64

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:

847.6 million Mt (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 6

Communications :: GERMANY

Telephones - fixed lines:

total subscriptions: 44.4 million

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 55 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Telephones - mobile cellular:

total subscriptions: 106 million

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 132 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 16

Telephone system:

general assessment: one of the world's most technologically advanced telecommunications systems; as a result of intensive capital expenditures since reunification, the formerly backward system of the eastern part of the country, dating back to World War II, has been modernized and integrated with that of the western part; universal 3G available infrastructure and LTE networks; penetration in broadband and mobile sectors average for region (2018)

domestic: extensive system of automatic telephone exchanges connected by modern networks of fiber-optic cable, coaxial cable, microwave radio relay, and a domestic satellite system; cellular telephone service is widely available, expanding rapidly, and includes roaming service to many foreign countries; 55 per 100 for fixed-line and 132 per 100 for mobile-cellular (2018)

international: country code - 49; landing points for SeaMeWe-3, TAT-14, AC-1, CONTACT-3, Fehmarn Balt, C-Lion1, GC1, GlobalConnect-KPN, and Germany-Denmark 2 & 3 - submarine cables to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Southeast Asia and Australia; as well as earth stations in the Inmarsat, Intelsat, Eutelsat, and Intersputnik satellite systems (2019)

Broadcast media:

a mixture of publicly operated and privately owned TV and radio stations; 70 national and regional public broadcasters compete with nearly 400 privately owned national and regional TV stations; more than 90% of households have cable or satellite TV; hundreds of radio stations including multiple national radio networks, regional radio networks, and a large number of local radio stations

Internet country code:

.de

Internet users:

total: 72,365,643

percent of population: 89.6% (July 2016 est.)

country comparison to the world: 8

Broadband - fixed subscriptions:

total: 33.217 million

subscriptions per 100 inhabitants: 41 (2017 est.)

country comparison to the world: 4

Military and Security :: GERMANY

Military expenditures:

1.38% of GDP (2019 est.)

1.24% of GDP (2018)

1.23% of GDP (2017)

1.19% of GDP (2016)

1.18% of GDP (2015)

country comparison to the world: 84

Military and security forces:

Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr): Army (Heer), Navy (Deutsche Marine, includes naval air arm), Air Force (Luftwaffe, includes air defense), Joint Support Service (Streitkraeftebasis, SKB), Central Medical Service (Zentraler Sanitaetsdienst, ZSanDstBw), Cyber and Information Space Command (Kommando Cyber- und Informationsraum, Kdo CIR) (2019)

Military service age and obligation:

17-23 years of age for male and female voluntary military service; conscription ended 1 July 2011; service obligation 8-23 months or 12 years; women have been eligible for voluntary service in all military branches and positions since 2001 (2013)

Transportation :: GERMANY

National air transport system:

number of registered air carriers: 20 (2015)

inventory of registered aircraft operated by air carriers: 1,113 (2015)

annual passenger traffic on registered air carriers: 115,540,886 (2015)

annual freight traffic on registered air carriers: 6,985,007,915 mt-km (2015)

Civil aircraft registration country code prefix:

D (2016)

Airports:

539 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 12

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 318 (2017)

over 3,047 m: 14 (2017)

2,438 to 3,047 m: 49 (2017)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 60 (2017)

914 to 1,523 m: 70 (2017)

under 914 m: 125 (2017)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 221 (2013)

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (2013)

914 to 1,523 m: 35 (2013)

under 914 m: 185 (2013)

Heliports:

23 (2013)

Pipelines:

37 km condensate, 26985 km gas, 2400 km oil, 4479 km refined products, 8 km water (2013)

Railways:

total: 33,590 km (2017)

standard gauge: 33,331 km 1.435-m gauge (19,973 km electrified) (2015)

narrow gauge: 220 km 1.000-m gauge (79 km electrified)

15 km 0.900-m gauge, 24 km 0.750-m gauge (2015)

country comparison to the world: 7

Roadways:

total: 625,000 km (2017)

paved: 625,000 km (includes 12,996 km of expressways) (2017)

note: includes local roads

country comparison to the world: 12

Waterways:

7,467 km (Rhine River carries most goods; Main-Danube Canal links North Sea and Black Sea) (2012)

country comparison to the world: 18

Merchant marine:

total: 629

by type: bulk carrier 1, container ship 107, general cargo 92, oil tanker 36, other 393 (2018)

country comparison to the world: 33

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Baltic Sea - Rostock

oil terminal(s): Brunsbuttel Canal terminals

container port(s) (TEUs): Bremen/Bremerhaven (5,510,000), Hamburg (8,860,000) (2017)

LNG terminal(s) (import): Hamburg

river port(s): Bremen (Weser)

North Sea - Wilhelmshaven Bremerhaven (Geeste) Duisburg, Karlsruhe, Neuss-Dusseldorf (Rhine)
Brunsbuttel, Hamburg (Elbe) Lubeck (Wakenitz)

Transnational Issues :: GERMANY

Disputes - international:

none

Refugees and internally displaced persons:

refugees (country of origin): 532,065 (Syria), 136,463 (Iraq), 126,018 (Afghanistan), 55,334 (Eritrea), 41,150 (Iran), 24,036 (Turkey), 23,581 (Somalia), 9,155 (Serbia and Kosovo), 8,119 (Russia), 7,454 (Pakistan), 6,453 (Nigeria) (2018)

stateless persons: 14,779 (2018)

Illicit drugs:

source of precursor chemicals for South American cocaine processors; transshipment point for and consumer of Southwest Asian heroin, Latin American cocaine, and European-produced synthetic drugs; major financial center



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate

Germany is slightly smaller than Japan. It is close in size to the U.S. state of Montana but has more than 80 times as many people. There are four main geographic regions: the broad lowlands, in the north; the central uplands, which include various small mountain ranges; the wide valley and gorge of the Rhine River, in the southwest; and the forested mountains and plateaus of the south. The Rhine, Danube, and Elbe rivers flow through Germany, as do the Weser and Oder, all of which are important trade and transportation routes. About one-third of Germany is forested. Germany's tallest mountain is the Zugspitze, at 9,721 feet (2,963 meters).

The climate is generally temperate, with mild summers and wet winters. In the winter, average temperatures range between 35°F (2°C) in the lowland areas and 21°F (-6°C) in the mountains. In July, average temperatures are between 64°F (18°C) in low-lying regions and 68°F (20°C) in the southern valleys. Rain amounts are heavier in the north, although snowfall is greater in the south.

History

Unification

Prior to becoming part of the Holy Roman Empire, Germany was a patchwork of small, separate principalities. Although officially a nation-state in 1871, Germany passed through three wars (1864–70) before Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck finally united the country into a powerful, industrialized nation.

World Wars

In 1914, Germany allied with Austria and Turkey in World War I after the assassination of an Austrian official. In 1917, the United States joined Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Japan to defeat Germany and its allies. Germany was made to pay huge reparations, admit guilt for the war, and cede about one-tenth of its territory. A democratic state, known as the Weimar Republic, was established in 1918.

The country's humiliation was worsened by the economic depression of the 1920s. In addition, the newly elected legislature proved to be fragmented and ineffective, leading many Germans to believe that democracy was an inefficient way to organize society. Germany's distress gave rise to Austrian-born Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) Party. In 1933, President Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor after the Nazi Party dominated the elections. In 1934, the day after Hindenburg died, the posts of president and chancellor were combined, and Hitler declared himself *Führer* (leader) of the Third Reich.

Hitler soon embroiled Germany and the world in World War II. Before being defeated by the Allied forces in 1945, the Nazis occupied much of the continent, killing huge numbers of people, including six million Jews and many gypsies, homosexuals, and mentally disabled people, whom they considered unworthy to live.

Western and Eastern Germany

After the war, Germany was split into occupation zones to facilitate disarmament and organize a democracy. Berlin, which was in the zone occupied by the Soviet Union, was

also divided into four separate areas controlled by France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Eventually, the zones occupied by the Western Allies became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), a democratic nation. However, the Soviets created the German Democratic Republic (GDR) out of the eastern zone. The GDR followed the Soviet model of development and created its own communist party.

Because they were so close to West Germany, citizens of the GDR could easily observe life without communist rule and see that communist claims of superiority were not so clear cut. The GDR clearly lagged behind the FRG economically, as well as in individual freedoms. Many East Germans worked as informers for the *Stasi* (short for *Staatssicherheit*, or state security), spying on and denouncing colleagues, friends, and family. East Germans could be turned in for any criticism of the communist government, even in the form of jokes. Because of this experience, Germans continue to this day to be extremely sensitive about government monitoring and privacy.

Because of the difficult living conditions in East Germany, thousands of people fled to the west. Many crossed from the Soviet-controlled part of Berlin to West Berlin; from there, they could find ways to sneak through the rest of East Germany into West Germany. In 1961, the GDR built the Berlin Wall to shut off access to West Berlin. The wall remained a symbol of the Cold War until late 1989, when it was opened to traffic on both sides. The wall was eventually torn down, and the two nations became the reunified Federal Republic of Germany on 3 October 1990. Although Berlin regained its status as the country's capital, the actual transition from Bonn (West Germany's capital) lasted nearly a decade.

International Relations

In 1957, West Germany was a founding member of the European Community, which is now known as the European Union (EU). It had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1955, but the German constitution restricted the military to German soil. In 1993, policy changes allowed troops to participate in UN peacekeeping and relief operations in Somalia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia.

Political and Policy Transitions

Helmut Kohl, who was a driving force behind German reunification, failed to be reelected in 1998 after serving as chancellor for 16 years, the longest term of any democratically elected German leader. A year later, a party finance scandal involving him became public, damaging both his and his party's reputation. Angela Merkel was elected to be the first female chancellor in 2005 and became one of the most dominant leaders in Europe.

As the largest economic power in Europe, Germany became a leader during the eurozone crisis of 2011. Although the country now cooperates with struggling economies like those of Greece and Spain, bailing out other European economies was initially an unpopular strategy within Germany. Germany has pushed for greater European integration, which would allow closer

monitoring of the eurozone, though Germany has been wary of giving up more power to the European Union.

Germany has prioritized reforming immigration policy and defining the country's relationship with the West and Europe. In 2015, the government granted protections to and quickened the asylum process for Syrian refugees, who were arriving to Germany in record numbers. Chancellor Merkel called on other European countries to accept refugees as well. After her interior minister threatened to dismantle the country's coalition government in mid-2018, Merkel agreed to establish border camps for asylum seekers and tighten Germany's border with Austria. In 2019, responding to growing concerns around immigration, Germany passed a package of bills that made drastic changes to immigration and asylum policies. The package included the "Orderly Return Law," which aims to increase the number of successful deportations and to simultaneously improve labor market access for migrants, who may avoid deportation if they have a job and speak German.

In December 2018, Chancellor Merkel stepped down as chairwoman of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) political party. Although Merkel plans to serve out the remainder of her term as chancellor, which runs through 2021, political tensions within her party and with other coalition parties may prevent her from doing so as Germany shifts further to the right.

THE PEOPLE

Population

Germany's population is primarily ethnic German (87 percent). Minority groups include those from Turkey, Syria, Poland, and a number of others nations. The country is highly urbanized.

In recent years, immigration has sharply increased. Immigrants, especially noncitizen guest workers, comprise a significant percentage of some metropolitan populations. Children of legal guest workers are granted German citizenship if one parent has legally lived in Germany for at least eight years prior to the child's birth and has a permanent resident permit. In western states, numerous political refugees from the Middle East, India, Africa, and Asia receive room and board until their applications for asylum are processed. Also, many ethnic Germans have emigrated from eastern European nations in search of work. However, the government has been looking into ways of stemming the flow of "economic" refugees. New laws restrict the definition of a valid asylum seeker and limit other forms of immigration. Though there have been incidents of violence against immigrant groups, these events reflect the feelings of only a small minority of Germans.

Language

German is the official language, but the German taught in school and used in the media may differ slightly from the language used in daily conversation if dialects are spoken.

Regional dialects vary greatly: the dialect from Bonn or Hannover is distinct from that of Munich (München), where Bavarian is spoken, or Halle, where Saxon is spoken. However, most people do not speak in pure dialect very often; instead, their dialects may color their accents. Dialects are mostly oral and are part of folk literature and music. In all dialects of the written language, all nouns are capitalized.

English, widely understood, is a required school subject, and many employees continue taking extra English classes after being hired by a company. Many people in eastern regions understand and speak Russian.

Religion

More than a quarter of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, while about another quarter is Protestant (mostly Lutheran). Historically, entire towns and regions belonged to one faith, according to the local ruler's choice. These divisions are still visible today, as Catholics reside mostly in the south and west and Protestants in the north and east.

Today, a number of other Christian denominations are also active, and 5 percent of German residents are Muslim. Although most Germans are Christian, society is highly secular, and about 37 percent of the people claim no religious affiliation.

General Attitudes

Germans tend to be industrious, honest, thrifty, and orderly. They appreciate traits such as punctuality, privacy, intelligence, and skill. They often have a strong sense of regional pride, a fact the federal system of government recognizes and accommodates. World War II broke down class distinctions because most people lost their possessions and had to start over again. Germany emerged as a land of freedom and opportunity after the war.

Germans appreciate intelligent conversation but may be wary of unfamiliar or different ideas. Many are prone to skepticism. A typical German attitude is reflected in the phrases *Das geht mich nichts an* (That's not my business) or *Ich will meine Ruhe* (I want my peace of mind), both of which suggest an aloofness that some non-Germans might find confusing.

Most Germans have a strong classical education because of the nation's rich heritage in music, history, science, and art, and they expect others to appreciate that background. Former East Germans have also nurtured their cultural heritage, but after four decades of life under communism, it is not surprising that they have somewhat different attitudes toward daily life and work.

During the 1990s, tensions existed between people in the west and east over matters relating to reunification. Some easterners felt they were treated as second-class citizens, receiving lower salaries, getting blamed for tax hikes, and being ridiculed by their western counterparts. Some easterners said that they were better off under communism. Westerners resented the economic burden of rebuilding the east; some believed easterners were less

capable and unrefined. Such tensions have largely waned today, though unemployment in the east remains a problem.

Personal Appearance

Germans follow European fashion trends and take care to be well dressed in public. Sloppy or overly casual attire is inappropriate. Shorts and sandals are common leisure wear in summer but are considered to be quite casual. Women, particularly older women, wear cosmetics sparingly.

Hints of traditional culture may be part of one's modern daily wardrobe. In southern Germany (mostly southern Bavaria), some people wear full traditional attire during festivals and celebrations. Traditional costumes include *Lederhosen* (leather pants), *Dirndlkleider* (dresses with gathered waists and full skirts, worn with an apron), Bavarian suits, and alpine hats.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings

The most common form of greeting is a handshake. A man waits for a woman to extend her hand before shaking it; in mixed company he shakes a woman's hand before a man's. In groups, several people do not shake hands at once; crossing someone else's handshake is inappropriate.

Germans generally do not greet strangers on the street, although sincere smiles are appreciated. The most common verbal greeting is *Guten Tag* (Good day). Some may use a simple *Hallo* (Hello). Southern Germans may use *Griß Gott* ("Greetings," or literally, "Greet God").

By tradition, only family members and close friends address each other by first name. Others use titles and surnames. However, this is changing among the younger generation. When Germans address a stranger, acquaintance, or colleague, one combines *Herr* (Mr.), *Frau* (Mrs. or Miss), or other titles with the person's professional title and last name. These titles can also be used without the name. For example, a male professor is addressed as *Herr Professor*; a female head of a department in business or government could be addressed as *Frau Direktor*.

Gestures

Chewing gum while speaking with someone else is considered impolite, and it is unusual for adults older than around age thirty to chew gum in public. Talking with one's hands in the pockets is disrespectful. People cross the legs with one knee over the other and do not place feet on furniture. Pointing the index finger to one's own head is an insult indicating the other person is crazy. To wish luck, Germans "squeeze the thumb" instead of crossing fingers. That is, they fold the thumb in and close the fingers on it.

Visiting

Germans appreciate punctuality, but hosts are not

insulted if guests arrive a few minutes late. Dinner guests often bring an odd number of flowers, avoiding roses (symbolizing romantic love). They unwrap flowers before giving them to the hostess.

Guests usually stand when the host enters the room and remain standing until offered a seat again. It is also courteous to stand when a woman enters the room. Not everyone adheres to these rules of etiquette, but it is polite to do so.

Hosts almost always serve refreshments to guests, even during short visits. Spontaneous visits, even between neighbors, are not very common, but this is changing among young people. Because arrangements generally are made in advance, unannounced visitors are sometimes not invited to come in but talk standing at the door, which is sometimes considered ill-mannered by non-Germans.

Germans enjoy gathering for conversation and social events, although Germans in the south tend to be more reserved than those in the north. While dinner parties may last well into the night, daytime visits are usually short, except in the case of afternoon teatime, called *Kaffee-trinken*, where tea or coffee and cakes or cookies are served.

Eating

Germans eat in the continental style, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right. Eating with one's hands is permissible for some dry foods. They keep their hands above the table, with wrists resting on the edge. Traditionally, when potatoes and fish were served, Germans did not cut them with a knife because this indicated to the cook that they were not fully cooked. However, most Germans no longer follow this practice. Leaving food on the plate is considered wasteful.

Most Germans prefer beer, wine, or mineral water with their meals; they rarely drink tap water. Soft drinks and fruit juices are also popular. Germans prefer drinks without ice. Because of the tradition of bottled water, drinking fountains are extremely rare in Germany.

In restaurants, the bill usually includes a service charge and is paid at the table. Customers often round up the total, giving the server the difference as an extra tip (*Trinkgeld*). When friends eat out together, it is acceptable for each one to pay for his or her own meal.

LIFESTYLE

Family

Structure

Large families are uncommon, even in rural areas. The average family typically has only one or two children. In many cases, younger couples are choosing not to start a family due to the cost of time and money that having children requires, even though the government provides monthly payments to those with children.

Order, responsibility, and achievement are traditional family values. People today, especially in the west, practice a greater variety of lifestyles than in the past.

Most young adults prefer to live away from home once they become wage earners or go on to a university.

Because of the emancipation of German women, there are a large number of single mothers in the country. There are two main reasons for this: When a divorce occurs, women usually obtain custody of any children. And German society is tolerant of children born to single women, so single women who get pregnant are becoming more likely to keep the child rather than have an abortion.

Parents and Children

Because in many German families both parents work, time for their children is often scarce. It is not uncommon for children to go to and from school by themselves starting at the age of six or seven. As most German households are equipped with microwave ovens, working mothers often prepare lunch for their children before leaving the house. Children can then easily heat up the meal and feed themselves.

Children of working parents often go to tutoring centers, where they receive help in doing their homework. These centers are relatively affordable and are used by many middle- and working-class families. Children from wealthier families usually get help from nannies or private tutors if they need help with school or daily life.

Gender Roles

Traditionally, the father is head of the family. Both parents often work, more so in the east than in the west. The role of wives has changed significantly in the past few decades. Nevertheless, in the case where both partners work, the woman has traditionally taken the lead in managing the household, making sure the cleaning, washing, and cooking are done. This imbalance is the subject of much public debate, and many couples work hard to find a fairer division of labor. In recent years, German women and men have begun to spend time more evenly on household work.

Expectant mothers can take 14 weeks of fully paid maternal leave: 6 weeks before the birth and 8 weeks after. After the birth, the parents share up to 14 months of partially paid parental leave, which they can divide between themselves as they wish. These parental leave policies are intended in part to encourage Germans to have more children, though they do not seem to have had much of an effect. They have seen more success in creating greater gender equality in the rearing of children.

German women are considered very emancipated. They enjoy the same rights as men. Almost equal numbers of girls and boys attend schools and universities in both east and west Germany, which provides both sexes with an equal chance to educate themselves in a chosen field and pursue a professional career.

Housing

Urban

Most people, whether single or part of a family, live in apartments, especially in larger cities. The size of these apartments ranges from very small studio (single room)

apartments to larger units with several rooms. Single-family homes are by no means rare, but tend to be very expensive.

In urban areas, people often own or rent small garden plots (*Schrebergärten*) located in or near the city. In the countryside and in more expensive neighborhoods, private gardens are more numerous.

Although cars, office buildings, and some trains have air-conditioning, it is rare for houses to have air-conditioning due to Germany's moderate climate and cultural emphasis on not wasting energy. Additionally, most buildings use thick insulation to regulate inside temperatures.

Rural

Houses in smaller cities or rural areas tend to have pointed, tiled roofs. Traditional thatched-roof houses can still be found in the northern part of Germany. Cement, bricks, and (in the south) wood are common construction materials. Except in northern Germany, where the water table is much higher, most German homes contain a cellar. Air-conditioning is also rare in rural homes.

Ownership

Germany has one of the lowest home-ownership rates in Europe. Nearly half of the population does not own their home; renting is particularly common in big cities. However, home ownership is becoming more popular, in part because of low mortgage rates and rising rent costs. The rate of home ownership is lower in the east than in the west.

Dating and Marriage

Dating and Courtship

Young men and women tend to socialize on a very casual basis. Groups of friends meet in clubs, restaurants, and pubs for conversation, eating, and drinking. Online dating services are becoming more popular among those whose schedules make traditional socializing difficult.

If a person wants to go out with someone in particular, either sex can suggest a *Verabredung* (appointment). They each pay for their own food and entertainment (unless one offers to pay for a special occasion). Germans prefer substantive conversations about current events, philosophy, or politics, rather than superficial "small talk" when they meet someone. They usually try to make respectful, honest comments, rather than avoiding disagreement.

German society is fairly open about sexuality, and it is not uncommon for German teenagers to engage in sexual activity as early as 15 or 16. Girls generally begin seeing a gynecologist as early as 12 or 13.

Engagement

The tradition of the man asking a woman's father for his approval of the marriage is still practiced among some Germans. Engagements generally last one to two years. The family of the bride—particularly among conservative, wealthy, or rural Germans—pays for the cost of the wedding.

Marriage in Society

Couples usually marry in their late twenties, but they

often wait until they have some financial security. Although many Germans see marriage as a desirable option, it is increasingly common for young people to live together before or instead of marrying. The government offers tax advantages to couples who are legally married. Legal marriages are performed at the city hall; religious ceremonies are optional. Divorce is common. Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2017.

Life Cycle

Birth

Prenatal care is taken very seriously in Germany. Pregnant women and their partners are encouraged to attend courses to prepare them for the birth of the child. It is common to keep a pregnancy to oneself until the third month, when it is less likely to lose the child. Most babies are born in hospitals.

When a child is born, parents usually send out a photograph of the newborn to close friends and family, who in return congratulate the couple with a greeting card. Sometimes money and gifts are included. Once the mother and baby return home and have had time to adjust, family and friends come to visit and take photographs of the baby.

Traditionally, children were named after parents or grandparents, but this practice is fading. Today, children may be given traditional German names, Norse or Latin names, or names from the Bible. In Christian families, babies are baptized when they are a few weeks old. Godparents are chosen and given the responsibility to raise the child should something happen to the parents. After the baptism, families gather for a meal.

Milestones

When Catholic children turn nine, they have their First Communion. Protestant children are confirmed at age 15. Both events are marked by large gifts of money.

The 18th birthday brings formal adulthood, including a driver's license and the right to drink alcohol and gamble. The 30th birthday is also considered an important milestone because it marks when a young adult has reached the age of full maturity and responsibility.

Married couples celebrate 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries with family and close friends. These gatherings are usually held in a restaurant or in the home of the couple. Gifts are often presented to the couple but are not always necessary. Birthdays beyond the 50th are also celebrated quite elaborately, often bringing the entire extended family together.

Death

When a person dies, funeral cards containing a picture of the deceased, the birth and death dates, and a saying or proverb are distributed. At the funeral, people dress in black and shake hands with the deceased's family.

After the funeral, attendees often share a meal and tell friendly and humorous stories about the deceased; however, if the person died as a child or experienced an unexpectedly sudden death, there is generally no meal served. Friends and relatives send cards with money to the family of the deceased to defray the cost of the funeral and

graveside decorations.

Throughout Germany, it is common for people to plant flowers in addition to placing other plants at the grave sites of their loved ones. If they can afford it, they may hire gardeners to maintain the graves. Relatives and close friends visit the grave regularly.

Diet

While regional dishes vary, potatoes, noodles, dumplings, sauces, vegetables, and pastries are common in Germany. Pork is popular, as are beef and chicken. Pork is prepared according to regional tradition; it may be boiled with cabbage in Frankfurt, roasted with dumplings in Munich (München), or prepared as ham in Westphalia. Lamb is widely available in the north. Fish is popular in North Sea areas such as Hamburg but also in Bavaria, where trout is plentiful. In the southwest, a couple of specialty items—*Maultaschen* (dough filled with meat or vegetables) and *Käsespätzle* (noodles with cheese)—are very popular. Every region has its own type of *Wurst* (sausage). Sweets, chocolate, and cakes are enjoyed throughout the country.

Breakfast consists of rolls and various combinations of jam, honey, meat, cheese, and hard-boiled eggs served with coffee, tea, or milk. Hot and cold cereals are increasingly popular. The principal meal, traditionally served at midday, includes soup, a main dish, and dessert. For the lighter evening meal (*Abendbrot*), open-faced sandwiches (cheese, meats, and spreads) are common, although full meals are the norm in restaurants. Two-income families rarely have a big midday meal, saving the main meal for evening.

Germans buy groceries often and prefer fresh foods for cooking. Ethnic dishes (especially Italian, Greek, Chinese, and Turkish) and fast foods are popular. Germans are known for their beer making and drinking. They also enjoy domestic and imported wines. However, the younger generation of Germans consumes less alcohol overall than the older generation.

Recreation

Sports

Germans enjoy hiking, skiing, swimming, cycling, and playing tennis, among other things. Wealthy Germans enjoy playing golf, and numerous business deals are made on golf courses. Participation in organized sports has changed as a result of reunification, emphasizing a uniform club system.

Soccer (*Fußball*) is the most popular sport, and millions of Germans have become devoted, lifelong fans to their favorite soccer club. Soccer stadiums are full on weekends, as millions of spectators flock to see their favorite teams play. Bayern München is an especially popular team. Germany's team traditionally participates in World Cup competitions, which it hosted in 2006.

Leisure

People enjoy watching television or getting together with friends. Germans, especially younger Germans, also enjoy movies. New films are released on Thursdays, and many people go to the movie theaters after work. Young

Germans often congregate at movie theaters to meet each other. Dancing is also gaining in popularity among youth. Recently, young people have taken up learning dances from other regions, such as South America and India. Internationally-themed dance schools have opened in many areas, and during the summer these schools put on programs featuring dancing and food from different countries.

Garden plots and public grilling places offer space for barbecues and relaxation on summer evenings. Because meat is a part of many of Germany's popular dishes, grilling is a popular recreational activity. For those who are vegetarian, there are also vegetarian sausages that can be grilled. Beer usually accompanies these activities. Grilling equipment is sold even in gas stations during the summertime because most supermarkets are closed on Sundays.

Spending time with pets is another popular German pastime. Most families have a dog or a cat, and many have rabbits or guinea pigs. Pet shops abound, and Germans spend many thousands of dollars registering and providing health care for their animals. Data chips are inserted under a dog's skin so that the owner's name and address can be located if the animal escapes or gets lost.

Vacation

Germans consider themselves *Weltmeisters* (world champions) at taking vacations. Schools are closed for a total of 13 weeks every year, and employees get at least 24 days of paid leave each year. However, most companies give employees six weeks of leave and several public holidays off during the year. Germans in the west have long relished travel. Favorite travel destinations are typically warmer spots, such as the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Greece, Spain, and Turkey. Those in the east have been able to travel since 1989, when communist travel restrictions were lifted.

The Arts

Cultural arts, especially music and theater, are well supported in Germany. Numerous world-renowned composers, artists, philosophers, and writers are German, including the artist Albrecht Dürer, the composer Ludwig van Beethoven, and the philosopher Karl Marx. Private support and government subsidies allow even the smallest cities to have professional orchestras, opera companies, and at least one museum. Expressionism continues to be a hallmark of German fine art. Festivals and performances draw large audiences throughout the country. Local arts might include weaving, wood carving, and wood-block printing.

Holidays

Public holidays vary from state to state in Germany, but the main holidays include New Year's Day (1 January), Labor Day or May Day (1 May), and German Unification Day (3 October) Various religious holidays (Catholic and Protestant) are celebrated, such as Easter (March or April), Ascension (39 days after Easter), Pentecost (50 days after Easter), All Saints' Day (1 November),

Christmas (25 December), and Boxing Day (26 December).

Sylvester

New Year's celebrations begin on Sylvester (31 December) with midnight fireworks and parties, which are followed by a public holiday on 1 January. *Sylvester* is often celebrated by traveling abroad; popular destinations are Switzerland, Austria, and France. Germans like to go skiing and hiking in the snow during this season.

At the end of the year, people reflect on the past months and analyze their vices. They often express a desire to change their lives for the coming year. Some of the more common changes are to stop smoking, get more exercise, and drink less alcohol, all of which reflect a German trend toward a healthier lifestyle.

Fasching

Another important holiday in Germany is *Fasching* (Carnival), which officially starts on 11 November but is mainly celebrated in late January or early February and lasts until the end of February or the beginning of March, depending on when Easter falls. Celebrations begin at the 11th minute of the 11th hour and are meant to mark a farewell to winter and a welcoming of spring. Carnival is often called the “fifth season.” Schools close for a week, and both children and adults dress up in costumes. Parades with music and dancing are especially common in central and southern Germany.

Easter

Easter is celebrated with Sunday worship services and Monday family gatherings. On Easter Sunday, parents hide little gifts around the house or outside in the yard for their children to find. The Easter Bunny is said to have left these gifts. Children search for the gifts and then show them to the adults once they have found them. Easter gifts are typically smaller than Christmas gifts and often include sweets, such as chocolate Easter bunnies.

Christmas

Beginning in early December, outdoor Christmas markets attract large crowds of shoppers, who enjoy drinking *Glühwein* (spiced red wine) and perusing the handicrafts, art, and food on sale. Although Christmas is widely celebrated in Germany, its religious roots are becoming less obvious. Older, more traditional Germans usually visit a church on Christmas Eve (*Heiliger Abend*). Christmas Eve is also when people exchange gifts, which are said to be brought by the *Christkind* (Christ child).

Families relax on Christmas Day. On 25 or 26 December, a goose (*Weihnachtsgans*) is cooked or grilled. Sweet cookies, such as gingerbread or almond biscuits, often flavored with cinnamon, are a popular treat during the Christmas season. Germans enjoy visiting on 26 December, also a legal holiday. Most families put up a traditional *Weihnachtsbaum* (Christmas tree) in their homes. These are typically decorated with glass balls and candles. Traditional colors of red and gold are often used, but modern decorations are available in many colors.

Young couples often find it difficult to choose which family they will spend Christmas with. They often compromise by commuting between both households.

Once they have children, young couples tend to celebrate Christmas Eve in their own homes.

SOCIETY

Government

Structure

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic. The country has 16 states (*Länder*), each of which has its own legislature and autonomy over issues that are not specifically reserved for the federal government in the constitution. The country's president is elected as head of state by members of the federal and state legislatures to serve for up to two five-year terms. The president's duties are mostly ceremonial.

The chancellor is the head of government and is elected by a majority of the lower house of Parliament, or the Federal Diet (*Bundestag*), to a four-year term. The upper house is called the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*). State governments select the 69 members of the *Bundesrat*. The 709 members of the *Bundestag* are elected two ways, half through majoritarian systems and half through proportional representation. Members of Parliament serve four-year terms.

Political Landscape

Some major political parties include the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Free Democratic Party (FDP), the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Green Party, and the left-wing *Die Linke* (The Left). Power generally alternates between a center-left coalition (usually the SPD and the Green Party) and a center-right coalition (usually the CDU and the FDP). However, sometimes the two largest political parties will unite to form a grand coalition that combines opposing political ideologies and governs together.

Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer is chairperson of the CDU, which leads Germany's current ruling grand coalition of the CDU and SPD parties. Germany's major political parties have adopted candidate quotas to ensure that women are appropriately represented in politics. In order to limit the influence of extremist parties, there is a minimum threshold of 5 percent of the national vote or three directly elected seats to be represented in the *Bundestag*.

Major political issues facing Germany include reforming immigration policy and defining the country's relationship with the West and Europe. The CDU traditionally favors greater European integration, though many Germans are wary of giving up more power to the European Union (EU), especially following the eurozone crisis of 2011. Anti-EU as well as anti-immigration parties have gained more representation in regional and national parliaments during recent years.

Government and the People

Germany's constitution secures for its citizens a wide variety of rights, which are generally respected. The freedoms of groups associated with Nazism are sometimes

limited. Corruption is very low in Germany. In addition to being transparent, elections are also free and fair. The voting age is 18. Voter turnout in Germany regularly exceeds 70 percent for federal elections.

Economy

Germany is one of the top economic powers in the world and provides leadership and generous financial support to the European Union (EU). As a whole, the country has a high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita; however, the east's economy is far weaker than the west's. East German prices typically are as high as those in the west, but salaries, rents, and overall living conditions remain lower.

The east has made substantial progress in its shift toward a market economy; however, the region still relies heavily on subsidies (around US\$85 billion a year) from the economically powerful western states. The government has undertaken huge projects to retrain workers and rebuild roads, railways, public transportation, and communications facilities. More private investment is required to revitalize eastern industries and relieve the west of heavy tax burdens.

Inflation is low. Generous social benefits, rigid work rules, and high labor costs have been obstacles to reviving the economy and reestablishing the country's global competitiveness. Germany fell into recession in 2008 after responding to the global financial crisis with a US\$675 billion rescue package and a guarantee on personal bank deposits. The economy began growing again in 2010 as manufacturing exports rebounded, primarily exports for countries outside of the EU. However, Germany continues to carry much of the financial burden for the eurozone, and many Germans are critical of the EU's bailout policy, particularly with regard to Greece. Nevertheless, because Germany has profited in the long term from its role in the EU, many Germans continue to support the union or remain neutral about EU membership.

Germany is traditionally one of the world's largest exporters. Main exports include cars, electrical machinery, and metals. Construction, manufacturing, and service industries are important components of the domestic economy. In 2002, the euro replaced the *Deutsche Mark* as Germany's currency.

Transportation and Communications

Most German families have cars; owning one is more important to Germans than to many other Europeans. They especially favor cars for touring or traveling long distances. Drivers carefully obey traffic rules. One must attend expensive and rigorous driver-training classes and pass exams to qualify for a driver's license. Public transportation and bike riding are more efficient for daily travel in major cities because of the heavy traffic and limited parking. Subways and above-ground commuter rail, buses, streetcars, and trains form the main transportation network. Trains connect nearly every town and city.

The communications system is modern and fully

developed. Telephone and postal services have been privatized since the mid-1990s and are efficient. There are more cellular phones in use than landlines. About 90 percent of German households have a television with cable or satellite. Many Germans own computers, and most have access to the internet.

Because Holocaust denial and promotion of neo-Nazi propaganda are illegal in Germany, related offensive remarks are censored from all media and violators may be imprisoned. In 2012, the social networking site Twitter enacted a local censorship policy for the first time, blocking German access to a neo-Nazi account. German authorities work with domestic and international web hosts to shut down German websites containing content related to Nazis.

Education

Structure and Access

Education is a source of pride, especially in the areas of technology and craftsmanship. The states administer public education. A few boarding schools are available, but the cost to attend is prohibitive for most families. Voluntary kindergarten begins around age 3 and lasts until age 5. Full-time schooling is mandatory for students between ages 6 and 10, and part- or full-time schooling continues on a chosen track until age 18 or 19.

Grundschule (primary school) begins at age six and lasts four years in most states. After *Grundschule*, children are divided into three groups according to their academic performance: students may study to enter a university, train for specific professional careers, or enter a job-training program, depending on their achievement. Those with the highest grades go on to an academic high school called a *Gymnasium*, which lasts nine years (until grade 13). Those in the middle group attend a high school known as *Realschule*, which lasts six years and leads to an apprenticeship in a company afterward. The third group goes to a high school called *Hauptschule*, which lasts a total of five or six years. Graduates of this program usually proceed to apprenticeships in the manual or technical fields. Children with learning difficulties or language barriers can go to special institutions called *Sonderschule*, where they learn German, among other things.

Nearly every occupation, from mechanic to waiter to accountant, has a school or program designed specifically for it. For example, waiters and waitresses might attend school for up to three years before certifying as servers. Because of this training, their salaries are much higher than one might expect in other countries.

School Life

In primary school, students study German, math, geography, music, sports, age-appropriate sexual education, and religion. Many primary schools also teach English or French starting around age eight. In secondary school, subjects include German, English, French, history, religion, ethics, economics, sports, biology, chemistry, physics, sexual education, and art. Some schools teach additional foreign languages.

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Because of their association with the Nazi era and elitism, uniforms are very rare at public schools, and they are referred to as a “school garment” rather than a uniform. Uniforms are more common at private schools but not required at all such institutions.

In general, the student-teacher relationship is fairly relaxed. Still, at most schools, students are expected to stand when their teacher enters the room, to address the teacher by his or her last name, and to use German's formal form of “you” when speaking to teachers. Some teachers may invite students into their homes or host barbecues.

Most school days begin at 8 a.m. and end around 1 p.m. Extracurricular activities, such as sports and chess clubs, are not organized by schools but by parents and community groups. Other community organizations, like political parties, religious groups, and fire brigades, have youth groups that children and teenagers can join. However, Germans feel that children's time outside of school should not be too structured with extracurricular activities. Many Germans believe that free time to play with minimal adult intervention allows children to develop important values like respect and empathy. Allowing children to spend time with family and friends is another important value.

Higher Education

Institutions of higher education are highly subsidized, but entrance to universities is difficult. Access to public universities is determined by a student's score on the *Abitur* exam (taken at the end of *Gymnasium*), grade point average, and time since graduation from *Gymnasium*. Those who have been waiting longer for university entrance are given priority. Private schools and medical schools require additional testing.

In the first decades of the 21st century, the number of students enrolled in private universities has grown, though the vast majority still attend public universities. Some private universities offer a very rigorous level of education, but tuition is often quite expensive. Many German medical students study in Austria because admission requirements there are less restrictive than in Germany.

Lifelong learning is important in Germany. Adult education centers (*Volkshochschule*) offer a variety of courses that can be taken in the evening. The subjects offered include languages, cooking, business, computers, culture, and many more. These courses are generally affordable and accessible to nearly everyone. Recently, online courses have evolved in Germany. Languages and other subjects can be studied at home, while course materials are provided via e-mail. Tests can be taken at various regional offices throughout the country. These courses are most popular with those under the age of 40.

Health

Germany has a good healthcare system. The government controls fees, but some co-payments are required, and for the past several years, most dental and visual care has been paid for out of pocket. In addition, fees on

Germany

prescriptions have risen recently, and elective treatments are often delayed. Private doctors also practice, but most people have access to care in hospitals and clinics. Both government and private health insurance are available, and immediate family members are covered under an employee's insurance. When workers become ill, they receive up to six weeks of full pay while they recover and can receive partial pay for even longer. People in eastern states suffer more often from illnesses related to pollution.

AT A GLANCE

Contact Information

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 4645 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007; phone (202) 298-4000; web site <https://www.germany.info/us-en/embassy-consulates/embassy-washington>. German National Tourist Board, web site www.germany.travel.

Country and Development Data

Capital	Berlin
Population	80,457,737 (rank=19)
Area (sq. mi.)	137,847 (rank=62)
Area (sq. km.)	357,022
Human Development Index	4 of 188 countries
Gender Inequality Index	14 of 188 countries
GDP (PPP) per capita	\$50,800
Adult Literacy	99%
Infant Mortality	3 per 1,000 births
Life Expectancy	79 (male); 84 (female)
Currency	Euro

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