

Philippines (*Pilipinas*)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 106 million

Area: 300,000 square kilometers, slightly larger than Arizona

Capital: Manila (11.5 million)

Languages: Filipino (official, also called Tagalog) and English (official), plus 8 major regional

languages

EDUCATION

A mix of public and private institutions, both following a national standard, administers education in the Philippines. Academic, social studies, sports and health, and the arts are the subjects of the standard curriculum. Standardized testing is also administered and plays a key role in the advancement to higher education. In recent years, basic education has shifted from a 10-year curriculum (6 years of elementary and 4 years of high school) to a K-12 educational system. Along with this shift, the government has articulated a desire to “indigenize” education by adapting to regional conditions such as language to better facilitate instruction. The feasibility of implementation and the increased tuition expenses for parents that the additional two years entail are barriers to its success.



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Children at school in the Philippines..

The Philippines is constituted of some seven thousand islands lying in the Westernmost part of the Pacific Ocean. Located along the Ring of Fire, the Philippines is home to great natural biodiversity. In its early history, the Philippines was part of a vast trading network in maritime Southeast Asia. In the 16th century, a succession of Spanish expeditions arrived in the islands and eventually colonized the land. Manila, now its modern capital, became one of the major trading posts in the region connecting Asia with the Americas through the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade.

RELIGION

The Philippines has a predominantly Christian population, with a great majority of Roman Catholics (about 80%). The southern Philippines is home to many Muslims, which has a long history of Islamic connections with Indonesia and Malaysia. Muslims make up somewhere between 5-9 percent of the population.

ETHNICITY

Philippine ethnicity is characterized by the diversity of its ethno-linguistic groups. Austronesian is a larger, yet uncommon, designation that applies to most Filipinos. A long history of Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian and European migrations also adds to the diversity of present-day Philippine society. On the 2000 census Filipinos identified in the following ways: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon Ilonggo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, other 25.3%

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Family relationships are greatly valued among many Filipinos. Often, households include extended families and children live with their parents until they are married. This encourages strong intergenerational relationships and respect for elders. An example of this trait is shown in the practice of *mano*, where the young people take the hand of their elders and touch it to their forehead as a sign of respect. Some national holidays include the Philippine Independence Day (June 12), Labor Day (May 1), and other special days commemorating local heroes of the Philippine Revolution. Lent and Christmas are also important seasons in the Philippine calendar. Local celebrations or *fiestas* usually related to a particular patron saint are held all year round and include varied practices and traditions. All these festivities have one important thing in common: food. Filipino gatherings almost always have food at its center and various forms of musical entertainment, which in more contemporary settings translates into the ever-present *karaoke* machine.



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CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINES

Indigenous struggles for independence grew into the Philippine Revolution of 1896. As a consequence of the Spanish-American war, however, Spain ceded the Philippines to the U.S. in 1898. Under American colonial administration, the Philippines underwent various stages of governance. The Philippines eventually became a sovereign republic in 1946.

After gaining its full independence in 1946, the Philippine government slowly laid the groundwork for industrial developments and postwar reconstructions. Though administrations sought to promote reforms that favored local industries and businesses, the U.S. still had strong economic ties and privileges in the Philippines, and maintained military bases until 1992. Constant government corruption and social unrest marred the decades following the Second World War. In particular, the long Marcos administration (1965-1986) was characterized by its oppressive Martial Law regime. During these years, a growing number of Filipinos migrated to other developed countries. Although the history of labor migration can also be traced back to U.S. colonial rule when Filipino workers were recruited to agricultural plantations in Hawai'i and later on moved to the western coasts of the mainland.

Agriculture is still one of the main industries in the Philippines, but a lack of infrastructure along with the string of typhoons visiting the country each year present many problems for production. A large percentage of workers in key cities are employed in the service sector; for example in transportation, information services, health care, and entertainment industries. Poverty, however, still remains a part of the social landscape in both urban and rural areas. This low economic stability is an important reason for the increase of local and global migration. The overseas Filipino workers also comprise a significant number of the total population, with a current estimate of 2.2 million. The remittances sent back to the Philippines greatly contributes to the country's GDP.



Coral church in Bohol, The Philippines. Photo by Qaadyin.

FILIPINOS IN THE USA

There are roughly 3.4 Americans of Filipino descent. This makes Filipino Americans (also called Fil-Am or Pinoy), the second largest Asian ancestry group in the US, after Chinese-Americans. Concentrations of Filipino Americans can be found in California, Hawaii, Texas, Illinois and New York.



The three stars represent the three main islands of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The eight rays of the sun stand for the eight provinces in Luzon that began the revolt.



Rice terraces in Ifugao, The Philippines. Photo by Ertomontalban.

NAMES

To some degree, most Filipinos still follow the Spanish naming system in which two names are given and the mother's maiden name is preserved as a middle name alongside the father's surname. However, due to blending with the American naming system, most Filipinos use a single given name and surname, with the other names becoming "middle" names. Spanish surnames were imposed for taxing purposes, but today most people are given English Christian names.

FAMOUS FILIPINOS

A few notable Filipinos include Ferdinand Marcos (former dictator) and his wife Imelda, Jose Rizal (revolutionary activist and writer), and Manny Pacquiao (boxer and politician). Some famous Americans with Filipino backgrounds are Enrique Iglesias and Cristeta Comerford, the white house executive chef.

FILIPINO WORDS

Hi, how are you?..... *Kumusta?*
Bye *Paalam*
Good morning *Magandang umaga*
Yes *Oo*
No *Hindi*
You're welcome *Walang anuman*
Thank you *Salamat*
I do not understand .. *Hindi ko maintindihan*
You can do it! *Kaya mo yan!*
What is your name?.. *Ano ang pangalan mo?*
My name is *Ako si*
Where are you from? *Saan ka nagmula?*
Let's go! *Tara!*

USEFUL LINKS

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