



Boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

BACKGROUND

Land and Climate. The 7,107 islands of the Philippines cover a combined area of 115,830 square miles (300,000 square kilometers), about the size of Arizona, but the islands are spread over a much larger territory. Most of the population lives on 11 main islands, of which Luzon and Mindanao are the largest. Many islands are mountainous, and there is potential for volcanic and earthquake activity throughout the country.

The climate is generally tropical and humid. The Luzon highlands, near Baguio, have a mild climate with low humidity. More than one-fourth of the country's fertile soil is under cultivation. About 25 percent of the land is covered with forests (down from 40 percent a decade ago). The rainy season extends from June to October. Typhoons are likely from June to November, but they may occur during any season because the Philippines is in the typhoon belt.

History. Negritos and Indons were already living on other islands when Malay peoples migrated from Borneo to Panay Island in the 13th century. Malay fiefdoms spread throughout the islands, including Luzon, and were often at war with one another. Muslim missionaries gained a presence in the 14th and 15th centuries among Malays who had spread south to the island of Mindanao.

Magellan, the islands' first Western contact, encountered in 1521 the warring fiefdoms of the north and the Islamic society of the south. He claimed the entire area for Spain. China, Japan, and other countries tried to conquer the Philippines, but Spain maintained control for nearly four hundred years. José Rizal, writer and patriot, helped inspire a revolt against Spain in 1896. Spain lost a war to the United States and turned the Philippines (not a part of the original conflict) over to U.S. control in 1899. Preferring self-rule, the Filipinos, led by

Emilio Aguinaldo, tried to repulse U.S. troops. Internal strife continued until 1901, when U.S. control formally began. Japan invaded the Philippines in 1941 and remained until U.S. forces returned near the end of World War II.

On 4 July 1946, the Philippines became an independent republic, but the United States maintained a military presence until 1992. Through the 1960s, unrest over inequality between landowners and tenant farmers threatened government stability and inspired revolutionary movements that remained active well into the 1990s. In 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law and ruled by decree, effectively controlling all opposition until 1986. During the Marcos regime, corruption increased and the standard of living for the poor did not improve.

The peaceful People's Power Revolution drove Marcos from power in 1986. His elected rival, Corazon Aquino, took office and tried to reform the government and economy. Unable to reach many of her goals, she did not run for reelection in 1992, but elections were peaceful and democratic. Aquino's successor, Fidel V. Ramos, inherited a weak and inefficient system during a time when the country was plagued by natural disasters. However, his success at meeting these challenges allowed candidates loyal to him to win majorities in both houses of Congress in 1995. Ramos negotiated a 1996 peace agreement with the Muslim separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), ending 26 years of conflict; however, fighting with other splinter separatist groups continues.

Elections in 1998 brought Joseph Estrada to the presidency, but charges of corruption forced him to relinquish his position to the vice president, Gloria Arroyo, in January 2001. Arroyo was reelected in May 2004 and withstood the opposition's

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attempt to impeach her on charges of corruption and electoral fraud in 2005. Other challenges that have faced her administration include a lackluster economy, hostage crises, natural disasters, and separatist and religious violence.

THE PEOPLE

Population. The Philippines' population of 91.1 million is growing by 1.8 percent annually. About 60 percent of the population lives in urban areas. More than 10 million people live in Manila. Filipinos are predominantly of Malay and Spanish descent: 91.5 percent are Christian Malay and 4 percent are Muslim Malay (Moros). Chinese comprise 1.5 percent of the population. The remaining 3 percent includes a number of indigenous descendants of pre-Malay peoples. The Aetas live around Mount Pinatubo, while Negritos inhabit the uplands of islands around the Sulu Sea. The Igorot and Ifugao of the Cordillera Mountains in northern Luzon are known for their stunning two-thousand-year-old rice terraces in Banaue.

Language. English and Pilipino are official languages. English is the main language of business, government, and higher education; it is also the language of instruction for some schools and for math and science in all schools. Filipinos refer to Pilipino as *Tagalog*, a dialect that originated on Luzon. Many ethnic groups that speak one of more than 70 other languages or dialects were hesitant to adopt Pilipino when it was introduced in the 1960s because it was based on Tagalog. But it is now a primary language for daily communication between speakers of different dialects. In Luzon, even spoken English is heavily laced with Tagalog words in informal conversation. Speaking in a dialect that someone present might not understand is considered rude. However, some groups speak only their own dialect; this is particularly true in the Visayan region, where Cebuano dominates.

Religion. The Philippines is a predominantly Christian nation. About 83 percent of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, 6 percent belongs to the Philippine Independent (or *Aglipayan*) Church, and 3 percent belongs to various other Christian churches. Five percent is Muslim. Muslim Moros live mainly on southern islands, particularly Mindanao. Violent clashes between Christians and Muslims can occur. In remote areas, people are still heavily influenced by traditional beliefs, worshiping a variety of gods. A number of Buddhists also live in the Philippines.

General Attitudes. The influence of Chinese, Malayan, Spanish, and U.S. cultures is evident in Filipino society. Individualism is considered less important than the family. Bringing shame to individuals reflects on their family and is avoided at all costs. Interdependence is more important than independence. Although generally casual and fun loving, Filipinos are sensitive people and consider maintaining smooth social relationships to be more important than expressing personal views or delivering bad or unwanted news. To avoid hurting or displeasing others, Filipinos may use a third party to deliver bad news or might say "maybe" when they mean "no." "Yes" can mean "maybe." Confrontation is usually avoided. Frankness can signify a lack of culture. In general, Filipinos have a relaxed view of time and may not always begin meetings or appointments promptly.

Accepting a favor obliges a Filipino to repay with a greater favor, although never with money. Filipinos often show admiration by imitation. Innovation, change, and competition are sometimes considered risky since they could result in failure. Changing social or religious habits may be regarded as ingrat-

itude to parents. Fatalism is common—success may be attributed to fate rather than ability or effort. The Latin concept of *machismo* (proving one's manliness or superiority) is evident in the Philippines; the ideal man is a macho man. Men often make comments about women passing by on the street, but such comments are ignored.

Personal Appearance. Manual laborers wear shorts and a T-shirt. Others wear denim jeans or Western-style suits. Farmers wear long shirts and long pants to protect themselves from the sun. Office workers wear long pants and a shirt. Some men, mostly professionals, wear the traditional *barong*, a white or pastel-colored embroidered shirt that hangs over the pants. Women (even Muslim women) generally wear Western-style dresses or skirts with blouses; they may also wear jeans and T-shirts. Government employees wear uniforms, although not necessarily every day; the style identifies the agency. Teachers even have a different uniform for each day of the workweek. Rubber sandals are common footwear for casual situations. An active clothing industry produces for export and domestic markets. Filipino formal clothing includes an elaborately embroidered *barong* for men, made of finer fabric than the everyday variety. Women wear a *terno*, a full-length dress with a scoop neckline and flat, oversized "butterfly" sleeves. Ethnic minorities in highland villages and on outlying islands sometimes wear traditional clothing. A fair complexion is considered the sign of someone who does not have to labor in the fields, and is therefore considered more beautiful or desirable than a darker complexion.

CUSTOMS AND COURTESIES

Greetings. Initial greetings are friendly and informal. Handshakes are typical, but verbal greetings are acceptable alone. To show additional respect or enthusiasm, one places the free hand on top of a handshake or uses it to pat the other person's shoulder. Between women or between men and women, a *beso-beso* (kiss to each cheek) is common.

Common informal greetings include *Saan ka pupunta?* (Where are you going?) and *Saan ka galing?* (Where have you been?). A typical response is *Diyan lang* (There, only). *Kumusta ka na?* (How are you doing?) is more formal. *Anong balita?* (What's new?) and *Ayos ba tayo 'dyan?* (Is everything all right?) are used among friends. Just as common are the English *Hi* and *Good morning*.

Young people show respect to adults by addressing them with a proper title. If a professional title (doctor, manager, chief) is not appropriate, then *Sir*, *Ma'am*, or a familial title based on the age difference and relationship of the speakers is used. Young adults commonly address older adult strangers as *tita* (auntie) or *tito* (uncle). The elderly might be called *lola* (grandmother) or *lolo* (grandfather). Similar titles exist in most dialects. Those equal in age and status address each other by first name or nickname. If individuals have a professional title, however, even peers may address them by that title to acknowledge their achievement or status.

Gestures. Hand movement is not excessive in conversation, but Filipinos do use various hand and body gestures to communicate. Raising the eyebrows can mean "hello" or "yes." To beckon, one waves all fingers with the palm facing down. A quick head nod can mean "I don't know." Filipinos often point by puckering the lips. A shoulder shrug with open palms facing up means *Bahala na*, a common expression meaning, "Accept what comes and bear it with hope and patience." A widely opened mouth means "I don't understand."

Men offer bus seats to women. Younger people kiss the hand of older relatives or place that hand on their forehead to show respect. Women commonly walk arm in arm or hand in hand, and men may put an arm around each other's shoulders, but displays of affection between men and women are considered inappropriate.

Visiting. Filipinos, especially those in the *barrios* (small villages or suburbs), enjoy visiting as often as possible. Rural visits are often unannounced, but urban visits are less frequent and more planned. Social visits last longer than those with a specific purpose. Guests do not typically take gifts, since the visit itself is considered a gift. However, a guest who has been away for a long time is expected to bring a small, inexpensive gift (*pasalubong*) to the family.

Guests are treated with great hospitality and offered the host's best amenities. They are always offered something to drink. Men prefer beer or sugarcane gin, while women may have soft drinks or coffee. Food is also typically served, except during very short visits. Guests can decline refreshments, but hosts insist until the guests decline three times. The woman of the house is referred to as *Maybahay* or *Mrs.* If she is unmarried, then *Aling-* is used as a prefix to her given name.

Although socializing in the home is the most popular leisure activity, Filipinos also enjoy meeting in public places, where drinking is often a primary activity. Urban neighborhoods often have a central park where people can socialize. Youth like to socialize in malls or clubs. Villages nearly always have a plaza where political events, dances, meetings, and socializing occur and basketball can be played nearby.

Eating. Filipinos usually eat three meals a day, with at least two snack periods (*merienda*) between meals. Rural Filipino families usually eat all meals together. Urban families eat weekday breakfast and dinner, as well as most weekend meals, together. Spoons and forks are the most common utensils. Typically, one pushes food onto the spoon with the back of the fork. Diners may use their hands in large rural gatherings when utensils are in short supply. Guests are seated nearest the head of the home and are always served first. No one eats until after the guest has had a bite or two. Guests show their appreciation by eating heartily. Refusing any offers is impolite, except for health reasons. In restaurants, leaving a 15 percent tip is customary, unless the bill includes a service charge, in which case one should still leave a small tip.

LIFESTYLE

Family. The extended family is the basic social unit, and more than one generation often live together in the same household. The average rural family has four children; urban families are smaller. Family ties are strong; adult children often support their parents and any needy siblings. Many Filipinos work overseas to earn money for the extended family at home. Recipients of such aid are expected to return help when possible or necessary. Individual family members may sacrifice much to help provide others (especially children) a better life. Or they may work to help find employment or opportunities for relatives within the country.

Filipino women generally enjoy equality with men, holding government, business, and industry positions. Rural women work alongside men in the rice fields. Women also manage the household and family finances and care for the children. A mother's advice to her child is taken very seriously.

Housing. Typical rural housing is the *nipa*, a bamboo hut that consists of one main room and one or two bedrooms. Rural

families may rely on outhouses and outdoor kitchens, but they usually have electricity and a water supply. In urban areas, homes are built of wood and have concrete foundations. The *sala* (living room) is the home's focal point, where the family spends most of its time. Other rooms are the *cucina* (kitchen), bathroom, and two or three bedrooms. To maximize space, family members may sleep on bunk beds or sleeping mats on the floor. Most urban families have a television, radio, stove, telephone, and refrigerator. These appliances are often considered status symbols, an indication that the family has achieved prosperity. Urbanites usually build homes on their own properties, although the government offers subsidized housing for the poor, and there is a growing trend in rent-to-own townhouses and condominiums for the emerging middle class.

Dating and Marriage. Urban dating begins in the early teens. Dancing, moviegoing, and karaoke are popular activities. In rural areas, habits vary according to religion and tradition. Most Filipinos marry before they are 30 years old. In keeping with *pamanhikan*, an engagement tradition, the suitor and his family visit the family of his prospective bride. Bringing gifts and food, they persuade the girl's family to accept the suitor. The families plan the wedding together, but the groom's side pays for the ceremony and reception. Grooms often wear a *barong* made of pineapple fiber. Brides usually do not see their gown until the day they marry. Common-law marriages may be acceptable if the family cannot afford a wedding.

Life Cycle. At birth, the father traditionally buries the placenta to ward off evil spirits, and the mother preserves the umbilical cord, believing that doing so will keep her children close and obedient to her. The legal and voting age is 18. No formal rite of passage exists for boys, but parents throw a debutante party for their 18-year-old daughters to mark the transition to adulthood. The party includes 18 waltzes. For each dance, the young woman has a different partner. The father is first, followed by brothers and cousins, and ending with male friends.

Following a death, a wake is held at the deceased's house for about a week. Prayer services are held each night. The body is never left alone; family members take turns holding overnight vigils. After the burial in a cemetery, a small fire is started, and those in attendance cross over it to protect themselves from evil spirits. Additional prayer services are held over the next 40 days. On All Souls' Day (2 Nov.) and anniversaries of the death, families visit the cemetery and leave the person's favorite dish or drink as an offering on the grave site.

Diet. Rice, the main staple food, is prepared in a variety of ways and is often included in desserts. Fish, the primary source of protein, is accompanied by vegetables and tropical fruits. A typical meal might consist of boiled rice, fried fish, a vegetable, and fruit for dessert. Fruit is also often eaten for breakfast. Pork, beef, chicken, goat, and (in rural areas) dog are favorite meats. Garlic is a common spice. *Adobo* is a stew of chicken and pork in garlic, soy sauce, and vinegar. Meats are often roasted and served on skewers. *Kare-kare* is a stew of meats and vegetables served in a peanut sauce. Street vendors sell *balot*, a fertilized duck egg with an embryo. A favorite snack is the *halo-halo*, a drink made from sweetened beans, milk, and fruits served in colorful layers with crushed ice. Seafood is common at restaurants and resorts. Popular for large celebrations is the *lechon*, a stuffed pig roasted over a charcoal fire.

Recreation. Filipinos spend leisure time socializing, going to movies, or watching videos. They prefer U.S. action films or locally produced movies. Families enjoy picnics at the beach. Sports generally are played on Sunday. Boys favor basketball.

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Girls play sports mostly in school. Volleyball and track are popular. Other recreational activities include gambling, attending horse races or cockfights, and playing *mahjong*, a Chinese table game played with tiles.

The Arts. Government patronage revived interest in traditional Filipino arts in recent years. Concerts featuring modern, classical, and folk music are well attended. Native instruments include drums, gongs, woodwinds (such as the flute), and the *kutyapi* (a two-stringed lute). Western cultures, especially Spanish and U.S., have also greatly influenced Filipino music.

Folk dances vary according to region. The *Tinikling* is the national dance. While dancing between bamboo poles, performers mimic the quick actions of *tikling birds* (herons). Dances share the stories of the Spanish conquest, festivals, harvest, and courtship.

Filipino crafts include wood carvings, marble sculpture, pottery, and weaving. Folklore, myths, and legends are still passed down orally in the more remote regions. While they vary by religion and region, they generally focus on nature, Filipino history, and daily life.

Holidays. Filipinos celebrate several national holidays and dozens of local *fiestas*, which are events for recreation and visiting family. Public holidays include New Year's Day, Easter (Thursday–Sunday), Bataan Day (9 Apr.), Labor Day (1 May), National Heroes Day (6 May), Independence Day (12 June), All Saints' Day (1 Nov.), Bonifacio Day (30 Nov.), Christmas, and Rizal Day (30 Dec.). Christmas is the most celebrated holiday; decorating begins as early as September. Children in many areas go door-to-door singing carols and receiving money and sweets. On Christmas Eve, urban families gather to exchange gifts and enjoy a large feast of special dishes. Rural people also enjoy a large meal, but exchanging gifts is less common. The Christmas season extends through 6 January (Three Kings Day) and is a time of family reunions and great merriment. On Christmas and New Year's Eve, people light fireworks to celebrate the season and banish the old year's evil spirits. Windows, doors, and drawers are opened to let out the bad spirits and welcome the good. For luck, people hang thirteen ripe, round fruits at their doorway, wear clothes with circular prints, and carry money in their pockets.

SOCIETY

Government. The Philippines is a democratic republic. Its 81 provinces are divided into municipalities made of *barangays* (similar to counties) or *barrios*. The national government is led by a president (currently Gloria Arroyo), who serves as chief of state and head of government. A vice president is elected on a separate ballot. Congress consists of a 237-seat House of Representatives and a 24-seat Senate. The president and vice president are elected to six-year terms, senators to six-year terms, and representatives to three-year terms. Most government offices are in Quezon City, the former capital named for the country's first president, Manuel Quezon. The voting age is 15 for local elections and 18 for national elections.

Economy. The Philippine economy is based on agriculture, which employs 40 percent of the labor force and accounts for about 20 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Cycles of drought and flooding can seriously hamper production. Important crops include rice, corn, coconut, sugarcane, abaca, and tobacco. In addition to agricultural products, the

POPULATION & AREA

Population	91,077,287 (rank=12)
Area, sq. mi.	115,830 (rank=71)
Area, sq. km.	300,000

DEVELOPMENT DATA

Human Dev. Index* rank	90 of 177 countries
Adjusted for women	76 of 156 countries
Real GDP per capita	\$5,137
Adult literacy rate	92% (male); 94% (female)
Infant mortality rate	25 per 1,000 births
Life expectancy	69 (male); 73 (female)

country exports electronics, clothing, minerals, chemicals, and furniture. The United States, Japan, and Singapore are the nation's top trading partners. Income distribution is fairly unequal; one-third of the population lives below the poverty line. Economic growth has been hindered by government policies and the emigration of highly skilled and educated Filipinos. Remittances from overseas workers provide vital support. The currency is the Philippine *peso* (PHP).

Transportation and Communications. Many Filipinos in the middle class own cars, but others rely on public transportation. Metro Manila has numerous buses, taxis, and *jeepneys*. A *jeepney* is an elaborately decorated minibus built on the frame of an old U.S. military jeep. They travel on relatively fixed routes and stop when waved at from the sidewalk. They carry 10 to 20 passengers for a low fare; passengers tap or pound on the roof when they want to stop. Traffic is heavy and driving habits aggressive. Rural transportation is less developed, often employing animals, bicycles, motorcycles, or *motorelas* (a motorcycle version of the *jeepney*). In addition to a domestic airline, ferries and *banca* (local outrigger) boats provide inter-island transportation. Although the communications system generally is good, service is not extensive in rural regions and between islands. Middle-class homes have phones if service is available in the area. Mobile phones are increasingly popular.

Education. Education is highly valued in the Philippines. Young children can attend kindergarten at age five and preschool before that. Nearly all children begin six years of elementary school (June–March) at age six or seven. More than three-fourths of Filipino children advance to four years of high school. The high school curriculum includes one year of military training. Graduation is at age 16 or 17. Many go on to vocational training or a four-year college. Women enjoy the same access to education as men.

Health. Overall, medical service in Manila is good. Rural areas usually have a health unit, but it may lack supplies. A universal health insurance program is paid for mostly through taxes and other government funds. The government also sponsors free vaccinations for children. Poverty, poor sanitation, and superstition still contribute to a high infant mortality rate. Pollution and conditions in slums, especially in Manila, are serious health hazards.

AT A GLANCE

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