AFCLC

EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE
FIELD GUIDE

Denmark

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy or be assigned to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will

help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of two parts:

Part 1 "Culture General" provides the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment with a focus on the Nordic countries.

Part 2 "Culture Specific" describes unique cultural features of Danish society. It applies culture-general concepts to help

increase your knowledge of your assigned location. This section is designed to complement other pre-deployment/-assignment training.

For further information, contact the AFCLC Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil or visit the AFCLC website at https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic because it represents the premium Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones, where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to

focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems and others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the way a culture defines family and kinship, a US military member operating overseas can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival,

although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more complex market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our most basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different based on our cultural standards. As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Usually, we assume that those in the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

12 Domains of Culture

- Family and Kinship
- Religion and Spirituality
- Sex and Gender
- Political and Social Relations
- Economics and Resources
- Time and Space
- History and Myth
- Technology and Material
- Language and Communication
- Sustenance and Health
- Learning and Knowledge
- Aesthetics and Recreation

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This collective perspective forms our worldview – how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people who you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.


Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system assigns meaning, sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central aspect of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply held beliefs we started developing early in life that have helped shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns

and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.

Core Beliefs

Iceberg Analogy of Culture
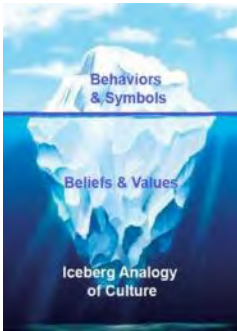
Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts.

The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel through the Nordic countries, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common across the region. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable, or which occurred prior to written language.

The Nordic countries occupy a vast area in Northern Europe and the far North Atlantic, comprising Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Also included are the autonomous Faroe Islands, Greenland (both part of Denmark), and Åland (Finland). Until about 12,000 years ago, ice covered the region, preventing human inhabitation. Archaeological evidence suggests the first humans migrated from the Southwest and East to settle the area as early as 11,700 years ago. The inhabitants used stone tools for millennia and primarily lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers, traveling inland and along the coast by foot or boat.

Around 4000 BC, the inhabitants of the southern portion of the region began raising livestock and farming, practices that slowly spread northward and later benefitted from the introduction of metal tools. Archaeological artifacts provide evidence of increasing trade with the British Isles and in the early centuries AD with the Roman Empire.

Around 763 AD, Vikings from Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) began using their expert seafaring and navigational skills to plunder and found settlements across the region and as distant as present-day Russia and Turkey. In the 10th century, the Vikings established settlements in Greenland. Norse Icelander Leif Erikson was likely the first European to reach the Americas, when he arrived in Newfoundland in present-day Canada, in 1003.

Meanwhile, by the 10th century, kingdoms in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden had emerged, and Christianity began to take hold in the region, which helped unite hitherto separate settlements. In subsequent centuries, the Swedes gradually moved eastward, settling present-day Finland, while the Norwegians took control of the Faroes, Iceland, and Greenland. In 1397, the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish kingdoms merged to create the Kalmar Union, first led by King Erik of Pomerania. While this Nordic kingdom was cohesive in its initial years, its dominance by Denmark and Sweden and the internal strife between its constituent peoples ultimately led to its dissolution in 1523.

During subsequent centuries, the kingdoms fought violent wars for control of the region, though Sweden was often the victor and became a major European power, controlling much of the territory around the Baltic Sea. In 1809, Sweden lost Finland to Russia, though it gained control of Norway from Denmark in 1814. For the average resident, life in the 19th-century Nordic region was characterized by poverty, and many emigrated to the US. However, by the latter half of the century, industrialization had proliferated, with significant growth in mining, heavy industry, and shipbuilding across the region.

Norway, Finland, and Iceland all gained independence in the first half of the 20th century, though the Finns endured a civil war after declaring independence from Russia in 1917. Adjacent to more populous, powerful countries, the Nordics had to balance competing demands during several tumultuous decades. The Nordics remained neutral during World War I, after which democracy became embedded across the region. During World War II, Nazi Germany occupied Denmark and Norway and traversed Sweden, which remained neutral. The Soviet Union attacked Finland, which fought two brutal wars against its neighbor before demanding that previously allied German troops leave the country in 1944. Meanwhile, Iceland, the Faroes, and Greenland were primarily under British and US control. Although

Iceland had achieved sovereignty in 1918, it became a republic after gaining formal independence from Denmark in 1944.

After the war, the Nordics sought greater regional integration and entered a period of sustained economic development, becoming increasingly globalized while balancing shifting geopolitical affairs. Each country joined the United Nations and Nordic Council, as well as a joint labor market and passport union. With their proximity to the Soviet Union, Finland and Sweden remained neutral, while Denmark, Iceland, and Norway joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, a political and military alliance among more than 30 nations that promotes its members' security through collective defense). Meanwhile, labor movements and social-democratic political parties gained increased clout, aiding in the creation of welfare states in which

governments provided their citizens significant social services, such as quality education and medical care.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the Nordics became increasingly prosperous, and their citizens experienced some of the world's highest living standards. The countries are generally advocates for democracy, free trade, and human rights, in part because their economies and societies are deeply integrated in the global order. In recent years, the Nordics have experienced more varied coalition governments and sought closer integration with the West, as Sweden and Finland renounced neutrality in the aftermath of Russia's invasions of Ukraine in 2014 and 2022.

2. Political and Social Relations
Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. All the Nordic countries are stable, well-run democracies. A single-chamber Parliament led by a Prime Minister (PM) is the highest political authority in each country. Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are constitutional monarchies, while Finland and Iceland are republics with directly elected

Presidents. Although the roles of the monarchs in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are largely ceremonial, the Presidents of Finland and Iceland wield some executive power.

After most elections, political parties typically form coalitions to acquire and maintain power. Over the past several decades, Nordic governments have pursued broadly common principles, such as universal social rights, ensuring general welfare, equal opportunities for men and women, and full employment. According to an international corruption perceptions index, the Nordic countries are some of the world's least corrupt.

The Nordic countries are members of influential global and regional organizations. While each belongs to a distinct array of organizations, they are all members of the UN, European Economic Area, and NATO, after Sweden was admitted in early 2024. While Denmark, Finland, and Sweden are part of the European Union (EU), only Finland uses the euro currency. On the global stage, the Nordic countries tend to promote peace, democracy, and humanitarianism, although all but Iceland have exported weapons to nations in armed conflict.

The Nordics rely on NATO, the US, other European countries, and international support to defend against external, state-level threats. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other aggressive acts have heightened regional tensions and consequently dominate the Nordics' security environment. In recent years, the Nordics also have experienced isolated terrorist attacks performed by radical Islamist and far right-wing actors, causing increased calls to strengthen the region's security measures.

The region is one of the world's least diverse, as the vast majority of residents are of Nordic descent. The dominant ethnic group in each country accounts for at least 79% of its total population. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, immigration from other European, Asian, and African nations began to change the region's ethnic makeup, particularly in Sweden and Denmark. In

2014, Sweden began accepting thousands of asylum seekers, many of whom had fled the Syrian Civil War. The protected indigenous Sámi peoples of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and northwestern Russia are also a notable minority group and account for over 65,000 people in the region.

3.   Religion and Spirituality
Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society.

Early residents of the Nordic region practiced indigenous religions, venerating deities, spirits, and gods, who they believed inhabited various realms and the natural world. Norse paganism is perhaps the most well-known early religion, featuring mythical

gods, such as *Thor*, *Odin*, and others. In the early 9th century, the region was exposed to Christianity through trade and pressure from Germanic peoples to the south. By the late 10th century, Christianity had taken root in the region after the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish kings converted to the religion.

During the 11th century, many residents practiced both Christianity and pagan beliefs, often worshipping multiple gods. As the ruling classes adopted Roman Catholicism, the religion became entrenched in much of the region until the early 16th century, when the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe. In every Nordic country, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) became the official state-supported religious institution. Some leaders embraced Lutheranism as a means of capturing property and power from the Roman Catholic Church.

Each national ELC retained its grip on religious power as the official state church during subsequent centuries. In Finland, the ELC gained autonomy from the state in 1869, which increased after independence. While Sweden and Norway demoted the

ELC from official to national church in the early 21st century, the ELC remains the official state church in Denmark and Iceland.

Regardless of its official status, the ELC remains the dominant religion in every Nordic country, with membership as a percentage of the population ranging from about 53% in Sweden to 71% in Denmark. Although the Nordics remain primarily Christian nations, a growing segment of the regional population practices no religion. For example, around 30% of Finns and Swedes do not claim to belong to any religious group. Further, rising levels of non-European immigration in recent years have changed the religious makeup of the region. Today, over 5% of the population in Denmark and 8% in Sweden practice Islam, one of the region's fastest-growing religions.

4.   Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").

Family life and relationships are fundamental elements of Nordic society. Residents tend to maintain deep connections with immediate and some extended family members. Most households are single-person or nuclear (consisting of one or two parents and their children), of whom families usually choose to have just one or two. Relatives tend to live nearby but are not always present in each other's lives, except for major holidays and life events, and more often help with childcare in Iceland than the other countries.

Urbanization has changed family life in recent years, as city dwellers often marry later, cohabit (live in a long-term, unmarried partnership), or become single parents and have fewer children. Consequently, while the traditional family structure remains more common in rural areas, it is often diverse in urban centers. Most Nordic residents live in cities, and urbanization rates vary between about 84% in Norway and 94% in Iceland as of 2023.

While historically marriage was an arranged union between a man and woman, today residents of any gender choose their own partners. Generally, couples spend several years dating, live together, and sometimes have children before choosing to marry. Divorce carries minimal social stigma and is increasingly prevalent among younger generations. Compared to the US, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden had similar divorce rates, while those in Norway and Iceland were slightly lower as of 2022.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles.

The Nordics' historically patriarchal culture privileged men as leaders and providers. Since the mid-19th century, women's status and rights have improved. Today, the Nordic countries are some of the world's most gender equal. Generally, their governments have been global leaders that support gender equality in the public and private realms through extensive laws and guidelines. While a small minority of the region's residents continue to adhere to traditional values – men as breadwinners and heads of household and women as mothers and wives – most inhabitants support equality between the sexes.

Although women hold equal rights under the law, inequalities between the genders remain, particularly regarding economic progress. For example, women earn less than men for similar work, a gap that ranges from around 9% in Iceland to 16% in Finland as of 2022. Moreover, women are underrepresented in managerial roles and take far more parental leave than men, suggesting persistent inequality in household responsibilities.

In the political realm, the Nordic countries have been at the forefront of women's representation. Women were elected to Finland's Parliament in 1907, and in 1980, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir

became the world's first democratically elected female head-of-state as Iceland's President. As of January 2025, women comprise over 44% of each Nordic country's Parliament.

Nordic women face relatively high rates of violence by intimate partners, a phenomenon known as the "Nordic paradox" because of the region's otherwise exemplary gender equality. As of 2014, women in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden experienced higher physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners than the EU average. Further, a recent study reports that Nordic women believe gender-based violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part due to delays in their ability to receive support services. Abortion is available upon request in every country.

Today, same-sex marriage is legal throughout the region. In 1989, Denmark became the world's first country to recognize same-sex relationships. While public opinion in all countries is largely supportive of these initiatives, discrimination still occurs among some segments of local populations.

6. Language and Communication
Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally.

While Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish are North Germanic languages that are part of the Indo-European language family, Finnish and Sámi are Finno-Ugric languages of the Uralic family, and Greenlandic belongs to the Eskimo-Aleut language family. The common ancestor of the North Germanic languages is Old Norse, which is related to Old English and most similar to present-day Icelandic. Finnish and Sámi evolved from an early language that people between the Ural Mountains and Gulf of Finland spoke millennia ago. Greenlandic originates from an early Intuit language native to northern North America.

As Sweden and Denmark were the dominant regional powers for centuries, Swedish and Danish served as much of the region's languages of administration, education, and religion. Meanwhile, many inhabitants spoke their indigenous languages at home and in informal situations.

Today, the standard varieties of the so-called Continental Scandinavian languages – Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish – are mutually intelligible, while the Insular Nordic languages – Faroese and Icelandic – are not. Studies suggest that Norwegians tend to understand other Scandinavians better than Danes or Swedes. Although Finnish has many loanwords from Swedish due to Sweden's centuries-long domination of Finland, the languages are not mutually intelligible. Finnish is more like, though not mutually intelligible with, Estonian, Karelian, and Livonian. In part due to this linguistic divide and the desire to participate in global trade and affairs, English has become an increasingly common *lingua franca*, or shared language, among residents. At least 70% of each country's residents understand English to some extent, a rate that rises to 92% among its youth.

Generally, the region's residents demonstrate respect, privacy, and candor in their communication practices. Across the region, residents usually share personal information only with family or close friends and are reserved when interacting with strangers. They tend to be direct communicators, prefer limited small talk, and take turns speaking, as they consider interruptions rude. Many residents also refrain from raising their voices in public and avoid boasting, as they value modesty. Nordic residents use limited body language and are often comfortable with extended periods of silence during conversation.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health

requirements) or culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

Prior to the 16th century, most formal education in the Nordic countries occurred in religious institutions, where Roman Catholic clergy taught religion and basic literacy. The Church sponsored the region's first universities in Denmark and Sweden in the late 15th century. After the Reformation, national governments gained a larger role in education, though religious institutions remained central to schooling. By the mid-19th century, primary school had become compulsory in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, and was common in Finland's urban areas.

In the 20th century, the Nordic countries generally consolidated centralized, student-centric educational systems that supported societal integration in welfare models that were focused on equality and social justice. Basic and secondary education were compulsory and free across all countries, which exhibited some of the world's best educational outcomes.

Today, the Nordic countries invest heavily in education, often at rates higher than in the US. School enrollment is high, and nearly all residents are literate. In a regular global assessment of student performance in reading, math, and science, Finland has achieved some of the world's highest scores, while Iceland ranked slightly above the average of the nearly 80 countries assessed. Though each country has unique obstacles, common challenges to the region's educational systems include recently worsening student performance, shrinking rural populations and isolation, and disparities in educational attainment between majority groups and linguistic and ethnic minorities.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In most Western cultures,

people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Most Nordic residents value punctuality, especially in business settings. They tend to consider being on time as respectful, trustworthy, and efficiency. While the daily rhythm is often highly structured around tight schedules during the week, it typically slows significantly on the weekends, and especially Sundays, when many shops and supermarkets close.

Though dependent on the individual, Nordic residents tend to keep a little more than an arm's length of personal space. Residents typically do not touch during conversation and avoid most public displays of affection. Although traditionally rare, these social mannerisms have become more common in recent years.

The Nordic countries observe various public holidays. Besides the major Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter, residents typically celebrate New Year's Day and historically important dates like independence. In June, many residents also observe Midsummer, which celebrates the summer solstice.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation
Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill, and style. Nordic countries' art, literature, sport, dance, music, and pastimes reflect their shared and unique histories, northern geographic location, and modern global trends. Since the Viking era, Nordic craftsmen have been recognized for their textiles, ceramics, wooden toys, and other items that often feature bright colors, nature motifs, geometric designs, or mythical symbols.

Apart from some early inscriptions written in the runic alphabet (a set of letters that represent sounds and concepts), Nordic literary traditions began during the Viking era. At that time, residents wrote oral tales, histories, and mythology in Old Norse, particularly in Iceland and Norway. As the region converted to Christianity, literature became primarily religious in nature and

featured Latin instead of local languages. Subsequent influential authors wrote poems and books in various genres, ranging from poetic realism to Romanticism. Many of their works were in local languages, with Swedish and Danish most predominant. Today, Nordic crime fiction, often characterized by social realism, is one of the region's most globally acclaimed literary genres.

Traditional Nordic music and dance typically explore themes like nature and love. Many folk songs use vocals and various fiddles, zithers, the accordion, and other traditional instruments. Common folk or traditional dances are variants of polka, polska, schottische, and waltz, among others. Today, popular musical genres are classical, electronic, indie, metal, alternative and contemporary rock, pop, hip hop, and *joiks* (Sámi chants).

While the most popular sports vary by country, football (soccer) is prevalent across the region. Other common sports are handball, swimming, cycling, track and field, and tennis. Winter sports like skiing, ice hockey, and ice skating are also widespread. Further, the Nordics have a rich array of traditional sports. For example, Finland's national sport is *pesäpallo* (nest ball), which is similar to baseball, and Iceland's is "trouser-grip" *glíma*, a form of wrestling in which each opponent grabs the other's harness to trip and throw him.

10. Sustenance and Health
Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures, and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Cuisine varies across the region based on local products, tastes, and customs, though common staple ingredients are seafood, root vegetables, mushrooms, cabbage, berries, rye bread, oats, cheese, butter, pork, beef, and game, such as elk and reindeer. Traditionally, residents pickled, cured, smoked, or salted many otherwise fresh ingredients to preserve them through the long,

cold winters. Typical flavorings are dill, parsley, horseradish, and caraway. Some common dishes are preserved fish, meatballs, open-faced sandwiches, and hearty stews. In recent years, a culinary movement known as New Nordic Cuisine has combined local, traditional ingredients and recipes with modern techniques, with a focus on purity, freshness, simplicity, and ethics. The Nordic countries consume more coffee per capita than any other region. Popular alcoholic beverages are beer, wine, schnapps, vodka, and aquavit, an herbaceous spirit.

Health in the region has improved in recent decades, as evidenced by rising life expectancies that average at least 81 years and some of the world's lowest infant mortality rates, which have continuously declined. The region's number of physicians per capita has also steadily risen and is generally comparable to the EU average (4.3), though rates range from 4.4 in Denmark, Finland, and Iceland to 7.1 in Sweden as of 2021. The Nordics' healthcare systems are publicly funded, comprehensive, and tend to rank as some of the world's best. As of 2022, healthcare spending as a percent of GDP ranges around 8-11%, well below the US rate of nearly 17%, despite achieving better health outcomes.

Across the region, non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases, like cardiovascular disorder, cancer, diabetes, respiratory and other illnesses, present the most significant healthcare challenges. In addition to unhealthy lifestyles, other healthcare challenges are aging populations and shortages of medical staff, both of which have burdened national medical systems in recent years.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. It details how countries allocate their resources by sector, trade with other countries, give or receive aid, and pay for goods and services within their borders.

In the 19th century, the Nordic countries began to industrialize, followed by a pivot to services in the decades after WWII. The region's economies grew rapidly in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, in part due to surging exports and the increased extraction of raw materials, such as oil, gas, timber, and minerals. Norway has flourished due to its vast oil and gas deposits and has the region's highest GDP per capita.

Today, the region's economies have large public sectors funded by some of the world's highest taxes. They tend to have stable inflation and exchange rates and integrate with other European economies at varying levels. For example, while all the Nordic countries are members of the European Economic Area, meaning they belong to a single market that enables the free movement of people, goods, and services within this zone, Iceland and Norway are not part of the EU customs union.

Denmark has advanced energy, medical, agricultural, shipping, and information technology (IT) subsectors. Forestry, minerals, and IT are Finland's most significant sources of income. Iceland, Åland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland rely primarily on fishing and fishery products, as well as shipping and tourism. Most of Norway's income is from the extraction of oil and gas, as well as shipping, mineral extraction, tourism, and other subsectors that have made it the region's largest economy. Sweden's economy is nearly the same size as Norway's and the region's most complex. In addition to being home to a diverse array of globally recognized firms, the country exports electronics, machines, vehicles, metals, paper, and various other goods and services.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. The Nordic countries have invested in extensive road networks and efficient public transit systems, particularly in urban areas. While nearly all of Denmark's roads are paved, the other countries have vast unpaved roadways, especially in

remote areas. All the countries except Iceland have electrified train networks and capital-city metro systems. Some residents use ferries, which shuttle commuters, service remote islands, and connect the region's major cities and nearby countries. Domestic air travel in Finland, Norway, and Sweden is common to traverse long distances.

The Nordics' energy sources are diverse. Oil provides a large portion of the region's energy supply, except in Iceland, whose shares of geothermal and hydropower are vast. The Nordics have ample hydropower, and Finland and Sweden have large nuclear industries. While Denmark has some oil and gas reserves in the North Sea, as of 2024, Norway is the region's only net energy exporter, given its extensive production of oil and gas.

The Nordics have some of the world's fastest and most reliable Internet connections, and well over 90% of residents are Internet users. Mobile phones are extremely popular, particularly among the younger generations, with at least 111 mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people in every Nordic country.

Media and press in the region have longstanding traditions of being independent and free. In a 2024 index of media freedom, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden ranked among the top 5, while Iceland scored 18 of 180 countries assessed, largely due to threats to its media independence from powerful fishing interests. The region features robust and effective legal protective frameworks and generally has high public trust in public and private media broadcasters.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize Nordic society at large, we will focus on specific features of society in Denmark.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Overview

Situated in Northern Europe between the North Sea and Baltic Sea, Denmark was home to extensive Viking activity from the 8th-11th centuries before becoming a major European power in the Middle Ages. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Denmark competed with the inhabitants of present-day Germany for dominance over North Sea trade. In the following centuries, Denmark lost much of its territory in wars against Sweden and Germany. In the 19th century, Denmark began to democratize, and leaders laid the groundwork for a strong welfare system. Today Denmark is a stable, prosperous democracy and member of the European Union.

Early History

The first humans arrived in present-day Denmark around 12,000 years ago. These early settlers were hunter-gatherers, equipped with stone tools and sustained by fish, reindeer, elk, and berries. By about 3,000 BC, the inhabitants of modern-day Denmark had adopted agriculture and began building stone burial mounds called ***dolmens*** (table stones), which dot the Danish landscape today. Maritime trade routes across the Baltic and North Seas brought bronze to Scandinavia (present-day Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) by approximately 1700 BC, where it was molded into weapons, tools, and ritual artifacts. Norse pagan practices, including sun worship and fertility rituals, also emerged during this period (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Starting in about 500 BC, iron replaced bronze and complex village society developed with local strongmen ruling
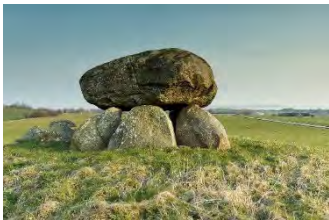
settlements. During the Iron Age, the inhabitants of present-day Denmark established trading connections with Germanic tribes and the Roman Empire.

The Viking Age (800-1050 AD)

This period began around 800 AD as Scandinavians made advances in shipbuilding, particularly with the discovery of the sail, and sought new trading routes to sustain a growing population. The Vikings were distinguished by two groups: Western and Eastern. The Western Vikings were notorious for raiding monasteries and settlements in parts of Europe. Conversely, the Eastern Vikings peacefully traded precious metals, glassware, and textiles in areas as far as Russia and Turkey. Viking leaders used wealth acquired from raiding and trading to create an aristocracy and trading cities like Hedeby, Ribe, Kaupang, and Birka along the Scandinavian coast. Additionally, the Vikings' interaction with Christian kingdoms in Europe inspired them to centralize authority in one appointed ruler (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Distinctions among the kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway began to emerge

as early as the later 9th century.

King Gorm the Old was the first known ruler to create a centralized Danish Kingdom by conquering the smaller entities scattered around present-day Denmark. By his death around 958, Gorm the Old controlled the Jutland Peninsula, which makes up the portion of present-day Denmark attached to the European landmass. Gorm the Old's son and successor, King Harald Bluetooth (see *Technology and Material*), brought Christianity to Denmark and further consolidated the Danish Kingdom, conquering the island of Zealand, where Copenhagen sits today.

North Sea Empire: By 1013, Harald Bluetooth's son Sweyn Forkbeard had expanded Danish rule to England, Norway, southern Sweden, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and parts of Scotland in a kingdom known as the North Sea Empire. Sweyn

Forkbeard's son Canute the Great inherited the thrones of the Empire's territories, notably that of England, and ruled until his death in 1035. In the late Viking Age, feudalism emerged as a new aristocracy demanded labor from the peasantry in exchange for protection. In addition to the rise of feudalism, the spread of Christianity and increased centralization of power ended the Viking Age in the mid-11th century.

Medieval Denmark

Emerging from the Viking Age, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden existed as independent kingdoms with King Sweyn II Estridsen reigning over Denmark. After his death in 1076, a series of Sweyn II's sons inherited the throne and expanded the role of the Catholic Church in Denmark. The Estridsen dynasty created a Danish-controlled Catholic archdiocese in Lund, allowing Danish Kings and Bishops to correspond directly with the Pope for the first time since the adoption of Christianity in the 10th century (see *Religion and Spirituality*). During this period, the Danish Bishop in Lund crowned kings to show their right to rule came from God.

Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries, King Valdemar I and his heirs brought stability to Denmark and competed with the Hanseatic League, a powerful trading confederation of Northern European towns and cities, for dominance over maritime trade. In 1332, Denmark fell to German counts and Danish princes, who occupied the country for 8 years. Beginning in 1340, Danish King Valdemar IV expelled the Germans from Denmark and reestablished the Danish kingdom.

Margrete I and the Formation of the Kalmar Union

Valdemar IV's daughter Margrete I married Håkon VI, King of Norway and Prince of Sweden. This marriage united the ruling families of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, ensuring that Margrete's son Olaf would inherit all three Scandinavian thrones.

After Olaf's premature death in 1387, Margrete won recognition as ruler of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Being a woman, Margrete could not officially rule and was expected to appoint one of her male relatives as King. In 1397, Margrete crowned her great-nephew Erik of Pomerania as King of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. This established the Kalmar Union between the three Scandinavian states. Although Erik was the official head of the Union, Margrete remained the effective ruler until her death in 1412.

The Kalmar Union (1397-1523)

Although each state was supposed to retain some degree of autonomy, the Kalmar Union quickly became an absolute monarchy, with Margrete ruling over all of Scandinavia from Denmark. The Union fought wars against German princes attempting to expand into southern Denmark and battled the more powerful Hanseatic League for access to Baltic Sea trade routes. Despite Denmark benefitting more than Sweden and Norway from these wars, Margrete heavily taxed the aristocracies of all three states. At Margrete's death, the Kalmar Union's heavy-handed rule and preference for Denmark created opposition from Swedish and Norwegian nobles.

In the 1430s, King Erik, now ruling without his great-aunt's influence, faced revolts from aristocrats and peasants in Sweden and Norway because of the heavy taxes and unsuccessful military campaigns against the Hanseatic League. Erik pivoted to strengthen Denmark's commercial position by taxing ships passing through the *Øresund* (Sound), the major strait between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea near Copenhagen. Ships from the Hanseatic League were exempt from this tax, which further undermined Erik's support in the Union. In 1439, Erik was replaced with his nephew King Christopher III, who gave the aristocracy more power in government. In 1448, Christopher's successor Christian I became King of Denmark and Norway but was rejected in Sweden. In 1523, following years of

unsuccessful military campaigns to reclaim Sweden, Christian I's grandson, King Christian II of Denmark and Norway, acknowledged Sweden's independence, which formally ended the Kalmar Union.

Kingdom of Denmark-Norway

The breakdown of the Kalmar Union in 1523 created the two rival kingdoms of Denmark-Norway and Sweden that fought for control of the Baltic Sea for much of the following 2 centuries. Outraged at the decision to let Sweden leave the Union, Danish and Norwegian nobles deposed Christian II, allowing his uncle Frederik I to become King of Denmark-Norway. Additionally, the decline of the Hanseatic League meant Denmark was now the dominant force in the Baltic and could heavily tax ships passing through the *Øresund*.

The Danish Protestant Reformation

Frederik I's rule coincided with the early years of the Protestant Reformation, the religious revolution that resulted in the establishment of Protestantism as a branch of Christianity, independent from the Catholic Church (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Although Denmark was a Catholic country, Frederik I allowed Protestant preachers to enter the country in an attempt to weaken the influence of the Danish Catholic Bishops. When Frederik I died in 1533, members of the ***Rigsråd***, a council that ruled together with the King, refused to appoint King Frederik's eldest son, Christian, because of his desire to spread Protestantism in Denmark. The *Rigsråd* postponed the election and sponsored Christian's Catholic brother, Hans, instead.

In response to the *Rigsråd's* refusal to appoint Christian as King, the peasant and merchant classes revolted against the council with the help of a German mercenary Army. Seeking to quickly end the rebellion, the *Rigsråd* crowned King Christian III despite his Protestant faith. After becoming King in 1536, Christian III imprisoned Denmark's Catholic Bishops, confiscated the Catholic Church's land, and established himself as the head of

the Danish Lutheran Church. With these moves, Christian III increased the power of the monarchy by making the King the supreme authority over both territorial and religious matters in Denmark-Norway. Christian III's religious reforms continue to the present day with the Danish monarch serving as the head of the Danish church.

Protestant Monarchy and Conflict with Sweden

In the century after the Reformation, Christian III and his successors turned Denmark into one of Europe's most powerful Protestant monarchies. Christian III's successor King Frederik II failed to reconquer Sweden in 1563 but strengthened the central government and maintained Danish dominance of the Baltic. Frederik II's son Christian IV expanded Danish commercial power by establishing a colony in India. He also brought Denmark into the Thirty Years' War, a series of conflicts between Catholic and Protestant monarchies fought mainly in Central Europe from 1618-48. Due to the resulting military losses, Christian IV increased taxes on ships passing through the *Øresund* to repay war debts. In 1643, Sweden invaded Denmark in response to the raised *Øresund* tax, gaining territory and exhausting the Danish Navy. By 1660, Sweden had gained one-third of Denmark's territory, including the region of Skåne east of the *Øresund*, which meant Denmark lost the exclusive right to tax passing ships. As a result of these wars, Sweden surpassed Denmark as the leading power in Scandinavia.

Start of Absolutism

In 1660, King Frederik III called a general assembly of Denmark's nobility, clergy, and commoners to discuss the financial burdens caused by these loses and resolve tax disputes. During the assembly, members of the nobility refused to give up their historic tax exemptions. In response to this refusal, the commoners proposed that Denmark's monarchy become hereditary, which would eliminate the nobility's right to appoint the King. Capitalizing on the chance to gain absolute

power for himself and his heirs, Frederik III allied with the commoners and forced the nobles to give up their powers of election. After receiving a written concession from the nobility on October 13, 1660, Frederik III became absolute ruler of Denmark-Norway, controlling all legislative, judicial, and military matters. Denmark was now an absolute monarchy, and the nobility had lost its historical privileges and powers.

Denmark Under Absolutism (1660-1848)

During the Absolutist Age in Denmark, the influence of the aristocracy diminished further as a new class of non-noble landlords became advisers to the King. A bureaucracy with ministries for commerce, foreign affairs, and the military developed, and wealth, not noble birth, determined who could influence the new government. In the mid-18th century, relations with Sweden stabilized and the borders between the two countries became permanent. At the same time, Denmark's economy flourished as agricultural reforms made farming more efficient (see *Sustenance and Health*). Additionally, the abolition of serfdom created a large class of landowners who sold their harvests in international markets. The absolutist Danish Kings also supported merchants who traded products from Denmark and the Danish colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Denmark's policy of neutrality during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), the Seven Years' War (1756-63), and the early stages of the Napoleonic Wars (1801-15) allowed Danish commercial ships to trade without interference from the great powers fighting in wars in Continental Europe. In addition to benefitting from reduced competition in shipping, Denmark also profited from the increased prices of agricultural products during these wars.

Liberal Constitution and Territorial Loss

The Napoleonic Wars ended Denmark's policy of neutrality in the early 19th century. Britain attacked Denmark twice, and in

1807 Britain confiscated the entire Danish Navy to keep it out of Napoleon's hands. In response to this violation, Denmark allied with Napoleon against the British. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814-15, the victorious powers forced Denmark to transfer the Kingdom of Norway to Sweden, which ended the dual monarchy of Denmark-Norway that had existed since 1523.

After the loss of Norway, Denmark's middle class called for a representative government to replace the absolutist regime. In 1848, a general assembly created a two-chambered Parliament

with representatives elected by popular vote. One year later, the 1849 Constitution formally established a more representative government with the King and his cabinet sharing legislative power with the Parliament and independent judiciary. Besides ending 188 years of absolutism, the Constitution also provided freedom of press, religion, and assembly. Then in 1864, Denmark lost the Second Schleswig War and ceded the German-speaking provinces of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia. In addition to significantly reducing Denmark's size, the combined losses of Skåne, Norway, Schleswig, and Holstein left the country with an almost entirely Danish population. Boosted by feelings of national unity, Denmark entered the 20th century as a diminished, yet stable democracy.

Early 20th Century Politics and World War I
In 1865, after the loss of Schleswig and Holstein to Germany, the King appointed a government composed of members of the *Højre* (Right) Party, a conservative political party that represented large landowners. The *Højre* government connected most of Denmark via railroads and introduced economic reforms that promoted the pork, dairy, brewing, and shipbuilding industries (see *Economics and Resources*). Despite these economic advances, farmers and middle-class Danes formed rival political parties which gradually gained seats

in Parliament, particularly the *Forenede Venstre* (United Left) Party and the *Socialdemokratiet* (Social Democratic) Party.

1901 Change of System: In 1901, a breakaway party from the United Left called the *Venstrereformparti* (Left Reform Party), defeated the conservatives in what became known as the *Systemskiftet* (Change of System). For the first time in Denmark's history, a party representing common Danes held power, representation obtained through the people and not by royal appointment. Under the leadership of J.C. Christensen, a former schoolteacher, the Left Reform Party enacted educational reforms based on the ideas of N.F.S Grundtvig (see *Learning and Knowledge*) and passed legislation limiting the King's powers. In the 1953 Constitutional Act of Denmark, the monarchy's power over politics ended, and, to this day, the Danish King is a ceremonial figurehead.

In 1905, a further left political group called the *Radikale Venstre* (literally "Radical Left," but translated as Social Liberal Party) formed a new party representing urban intellectuals and the rural poor who were frustrated with the United Left's catering to the more prosperous farmers. From 1909-10, the Social Liberal Party formed its first government after defeating the United Left Party which had changed its name to *Venstre* (literally "Left," but translated as "Liberal") Party. At the same time, the *Konservative* (Conservative) Party and the Social Democratic Party gained support from segments of the population. By 1910, there were four major Danish political parties that would dominate national politics in the 20th century: *Socialdemokratiet* (Social Democratic)*, Radikale Venstre* (Social Liberal)*, Venstre* (Liberal), and *Konservative* (Conservative, see *Political and Social Relations*).

World War I (WWI)

Denmark was committed to neutrality during WWI (1914-18), a conflict fought between the Allies (the US, Britain, France, and Russia) and the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire). The Social Liberal Party, led by Prime Minister Carl Theodor Zahle, ruled the government during the war and took care not to provoke Germany. In 1914, Germany forced Denmark to lay mines in the Great Belt, a strait between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, to prevent a British naval attack.

Since the British did not attempt to cross the Great Belt, this defensive action did not jeopardize Denmark's neutrality. After Germany's defeat in 1918, Denmark annexed the Danish-speaking parts of Schleswig that had been lost to Germany some 54 years prior, which created the present-day border.

The Rise of Social Democracy and the Welfare State

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, a post-war depression brought high unemployment, decreased personal income, and widespread bank failures to Denmark. In 1924, the Social Democrats won elections and promised to improve living conditions. In 1933, the Social Democrats, Social Liberals, and the Liberals formed a coalition government led by Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning and established the Danish welfare state (which merges free markets and a generous public welfare system) via the Kanslergade Agreement. The Danish tax-funded welfare system initially included old age and disability pensions along with unemployment, accident, and health insurance. Welfare services have expanded since the Kanslergade Agreement and continue to cover all Danish citizens regardless of work status. Because of the success of the social welfare system, Stauning served as Prime Minister until his death in 1942 and many Danes consider him to be the father of the nation.

World War II (WWII) Occupation and Resistance

By the late 1930s, the Danish economy had recovered from the post-war depression, but the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany complicated the country's foreign relations. Nazi Germany's expansionist agenda and refusal to recognize Denmark's ownership of Northern Schleswig led the Danish government to accept a non-aggression pact from Hitler in 1939. Denmark declared neutrality upon the outbreak of WWII (1939-45), a conflict fought between the Allies (the US, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) and the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan).

In April 1940, the German Army invaded Denmark, violating the country's neutrality, and occupied it until 1945. While Denmark initially retained its sovereignty, the Danish wartime government cooperated with German demands, particularly by sending Danish troops to the Eastern Front and banning the Danish Communist Party. Despite the German occupation, Danish society rejected Nazi ideology and organized armed resistance movements as early as 1940. In late 1943, Danish leaders abandoned the policy of cooperation and began defying the German occupiers. Germany responded by assuming direct control of the country. By the end of the war in 1945, some 50,000 Danes were members of armed resistance groups which engaged in frequent acts of sabotage against the Germans. One of the most successful acts of resistance occurred in 1943, when resisters helped around 7,000 Danish Jews escape to neutral Sweden to avoid being sent to concentration camps. The German occupation increased national unity in Denmark, and King Christian X, often seen riding his horse through Copenhagen, became a symbol of Danish resistance and independence.

Postwar Reform

Denmark's experience under German occupation during WWII led Danish politicians to abandon the country's policy of

neutrality in the postwar period and seek integration into international organizations to avert future conflicts. Denmark joined the United Nations in 1945 and the Nordic Council (a forum for cooperation between Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland) in 1952. Defense became a top priority during the postwar period with Parliament passing legislation to strengthen the military. In 1949, Denmark joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, a military alliance among more than 30 nations that promotes its members' security through collective defense), and later received American weapons and defense systems.

In addition to making changes in foreign affairs and military policy, the Danish government also implemented significant

political reforms in the postwar period. The 1953 Constitutional Act of Denmark (see "1901 Change of System" above) also legalized female succession to the throne, which allowed Margrethe II to become Queen in 1972. The new Constitution also created a single-chambered Parliament with members elected based on proportional representation. Greenland acquired two seats in the new Parliament, which changed its status from a Danish colony to becoming part of the Danish Commonwealth (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Expansion of the Welfare State

The Social Democratic Party dominated Danish politics from the 1950s until the 1970s, during which time it dramatically expanded the state welfare system. From 1950-70, the number of civil servants, especially state healthcare workers, more than doubled, leading to significant tax increases. Despite complaints from the population about one of the world's highest tax burdens, Denmark's all-encompassing social welfare system has never been seriously challenged by politicians and remains a point of pride for most Danes.

European Union (EU) Membership

In 1973, Denmark joined the European Economic Community (EEC), an economic partnership between European states which later became the EU. Danish membership in the EEC promised access to a vast export market and greater foreign direct investment. Despite concerns that EEC membership would threaten Denmark's welfare system, a 1972 referendum showed 63% of Danish voters approved of an EEC membership. Denmark officially became a member in 1973. In 1992; however, the Danish public rejected the Maastricht Treaty which would transform the solely economic EEC into a political bloc called the EU. After negotiating exemptions for some provisions that threatened Denmark's autonomy, the country joined the EU in 1993. In 2000, Denmark voted against adopting the euro for its currency and still uses the Danish krone.

Late 20th Century Politics

Economic decline in the 1970s, especially with the 1973 oil crisis, increased discontent with the ruling Social Democrats. Several weak coalition governments ruled in the 1970s as parties struggled to come to consensus. In 1982, the Conservative Party, led by Prime Minister Poul Schlüter, formed a government, which was the first time this party led the government since 1901 (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Denmark in the 21st Century

Debates about immigration, taxation, and European integration have defined 21st century Danish politics. In 2001, a center-right coalition replaced the Social Democratic and Social Liberal coalition that ruled for most of the 1990s. During this time, Liberal Party Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen won popular support by restricting immigration and maintaining the social welfare system without raising taxes.

In 2005, a Danish newspaper published cartoon images of Muhammad, the founder of Islam, which sparked international outrage, attacks on Danish embassies, and violent protests by Muslims worldwide. This event made it clear that Denmark was an increasingly multicultural society and part of a globalized world. In 2011, the Social Democrats regained power under Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Denmark's first female Prime Minister.

In 2015, an Islamic extremist committed two shootings in Copenhagen which sparked debate about migration and the integration of immigrants. The 2015 election reflected the Danish

population's discontent with the country's immigration policies as the new Danish People's Party won the second most votes in Parliament after promising to enact stricter immigration controls. When the Social Democrats returned to power in 2019, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen embraced more restrictive immigration policies, reversing the party's traditional stance on the issue. As of 2024, the Social Democratic Party remains the leading force in Parliament, although Prime Minister Frederiksen has included politicians from the right in her government, particularly those from the new Moderate Party (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Myth Overview
In contrast to history, which is supposed to be an objective record of the past based on verifiable facts, myths are usually an unverifiable story which embody a culture's values and explain the origins of humans and the natural world. Myths are important because they provide a sense of local heritage and identity. Ancient Nordic folklore has a system of religious beliefs that evolved over centuries (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Mostly associated with Viking beliefs, Nordic cosmology integrates elements from a range of Northern European belief systems, with particularly evident ties to Germanic mythology.

Viking Gods: The complex mythology of early medieval Danes remains culturally relevant today. Its pantheon of deities appears throughout contemporary literature and film. *Odin* is the supreme Norse god and ruler of *Valhalla*, the hall of slain Vikings (see *Religion and Spirituality*). *Odin'*s brother **Loki** is a trickster god, while *Odin'*s son *Thor* is the god of war and fertility. These gods appear in various myths throughout Scandinavia.

One tale outlines the origin of the cosmos. It begins with an empty realm of fire called *Muspelheim* and a realm of ice called *Niflheim*. As the two realms slowly converged, a giant named *Ymir* (Screamer) and a cow named *Audhumla* emerged from the melted ice. One day, as the cow licked the ice, it uncovered a god named *Buri* (Progenitor). *Buri'*s son *Borr* married the daughter of *Bolthorn*, a giant who sprang forth from *Ymir*. Their half-god, half-giant sons *Odin*, *Vili*, and *Ve*, slayed *Ymir* and fashioned the earth from his corpse, the oceans from his blood, and rocks from his teeth.

Nisser: In Danish folklore, *nisser* are small gnome-like creatures with long beards, red hats, and farm clothing. Since the 17th century, Danes have told stories of *nisser* secretly living in homes and barns, helping with chores and protecting families from misfortune. In return for their work during the year, *nisser* require a bowl of porridge every Christmas Eve and will play tricks on families who do not provide this payment. *Nisser* can be mischievous and short-tempered. They may steal items, braid the hair of horses, or even tie cats together by their tails if they perceive disrespect from humans. In Denmark, it is

customary to shout a warning to the *nisser* of the house if something spills on the floor. Stuffed *nisse* dolls are common Christmas decorations in Denmark.

Official Name
Kingdom of Denmark
Kongeriget   Danmark
(Danish)

Political Borders
Canada: 0.8 mi
Germany: 87 mi
Coastline: 4,545 mi

Capital
Copenhagen

Demographics
Denmark's population of around 6 million is growing at an annual rate of approximately 0.44%. Some 70% of the population lives in urban areas, with around 2 million people residing in Denmark's major cities of Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, and Aalborg. Generally, the population concentrates in coastal areas and the Eastern part of Denmark's mainland.

Flag
Denmark's national flag, the ***Dannebrog*** (cloth of the Danes)*,* is red with a left-centered white cross that extends to the edges of the flag. The flag has served as a national symbol for Denmark since the mid-14th century and was officially designated as the national flag in the late 19th century. As one of the world's oldest national flags, its exact origins are disputed.

Geography
Denmark is the smallest and Southernmost Nordic country, located to the north of Germany, west of Sweden, and south of Norway. Denmark consists of the Peninsula of ***Jylland*** (Jutland) and an archipelago of over 400 islands, of which more than 70 are inhabited. *Jylland*, Denmark's largest landmass, comprises

some two-thirds of the total area and shares a slim southern border with Germany (see "Foreign Relations" and "Ethnic Groups" below). The largest island is *Sjælland* (Zealand), home to the capital, Copenhagen. Other significant islands include *Fyn* (Funen), Lolland, Falster, and Bornholm. Around twice the size of Massachusetts, Denmark's total land area is 16,384 sq mi, not accounting for Greenland or the Faroe Islands.

The Danish Kingdom includes these two North Atlantic self-governing regions (see "Ethnic Groups" below). The Faroe Islands is an archipelago located midway between Norway and Iceland, with a total area of some 540 sq mi. The Faroe Islands have a rugged and rocky terrain, as well as several fjords (long, narrow sea inlets with steep walls of rock on either side). Greenland is the world's largest island, with a total land area of some 836,330 sq mi. With more than two-thirds of the island located in the Arctic Circle, around three-quarters of Greenland is covered by ice. Greenland has a vast tundra and large glaciers.

Denmark itself is mostly flat, with gently rolling hills and lowlands. Soil types differ by island; Bornholm is rocky, while northern and western *Jylland* are sandy. Møllehøj (561 ft) and Ejer Bavnehøj (559 ft), located in the Ejerbjerge hills in eastern *Jylland*, are some of Denmark's highest points. There are about 120,000 lakes in Denmark, and some of the largest are Arresø, Esrum sø, and Stadil Fjord, which is a freshwater lake despite its name. Denmark has around 40,390 mi of rivers. The Gudenåe (98 mi), which flows across the central portion of *Jylland*, is the longest river.

Climate
Despite its high latitude, Denmark has a temperate maritime climate, with cold winters and warm, mild summers. Climatic differences throughout the country are minimal due to its small size and flat terrain (see "Geography" above). In February, the coldest month, the average temperature is 34°F. In July, the warmest month, the average temperature is 64°F. Clouds,

humidity, and precipitation are common in Denmark year-round, with July and August being especially rainy. Annual rainfall is some 24 inches, with Copenhagen having an average of 170 rainy days. Denmark has an average of 20-25 days of snow per year, with it primarily occurring November-early April.
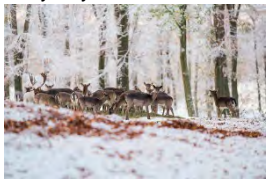
Natural Hazards
Denmark is vulnerable to flooding, severe storms, and storm surges. The country's proximity to the sea causes volatile weather patterns and heightens the risk of storm damage, particularly along coastlines. In June 2011, a storm in Copenhagen caused nearly US $1 billion in damage after dropping around 6 inches of rain in under 2 hours. In 2023, southeastern Denmark experienced repeated storms over a few months, flooding many houses.

Environmental Issues
According to a 2023 report by the International Energy Agency, since the 1870s, Denmark's average temperature has risen by some 1.5°C, while annual participation has increased by roughly 20%. The same report indicates the water level in Denmark has risen approximately 0.079 inches per year since 1900 and is predicted to be around 1-1.6 feet higher than during 1981-2010 by the end of the 21st century. According to a 2024 report by the Danish Technical University, the annual cost of rain and storm surges could rise from some US $986 million to US $4 billion. In a 2024 environmental performance index, Denmark ranked 10th of 180 countries, lower than Sweden (6) and higher than the US (35).

Government
Denmark is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy that divides into 5 regions, which subdivide into 98 municipalities. Regions are governed by a Regional Council consisting of 41 members, a President, and Executive Committee. A Municipal Council of varying size and a Mayor govern municipalities. Residents vote for Regional and Municipal Councilors in a general election every 4 years. First passed in 1849 (see *History and Myth*), Denmark's Constitution outlines the organization of the

democracy, citizens' rights and duties, as well as the tripartition of power into executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Executive Branch

Denmark's current King, Frederik X, ascended the throne in January 2024, following the abdication of Queen Margrethe II (see *History and Myth*). Denmark boasts one of the oldest monarchies globally, with King Frederik X's lineage traceable back over a millennium to a Monarch born around 900 AD. The duties of the Monarch as head-of state are largely ceremonial. Those responsibilities include commander-in-chief of the armed forces, approving laws, ceremonially approving new Danish citizens, and officially declaring a new government after an election. Since the amendment of the Act of Succession in 2009, the line of succession for the Monarch begins with the oldest child in each Monarch's family regardless of gender.

The current Prime Minister (PM), Mette Frederiksen of *Socialdemokraterne* (Social Democrat Party), has been the head-of-government since 2019 and was reappointed in 2022 (see "Political Climate" below). The PM is the chief executive power in Denmark and governs with a group of Ministers, each overseeing a policy area. Citizens vote in a parliamentary election at least every 4 years (see "Legislative Branch" below), and representatives from each political party in the elected legislature advise the Monarch on who should be the PM. The Monarch either appoints the PM or an individual to lead negotiations on selecting the PM. The appointed PM selects their Ministers, PM Frederiksen currently has 22. Once the PM and Ministers have been appointed, the Monarch officially declares the new government.

Legislative Branch

Located in Copenhagen, the *Folketing* (Parliament) is a 179-seat single-chamber legislature, in which Greenland and the Faroe Islands have two seats each. All members are directly elected by open party-list proportional representation, through which parties receive the number of seats in the *Folketing* according to the number of votes they receive nationally. A

political party must win at least 2% of the vote to secure a seat in the *Folketing*. Members serve for 4 years without limits, though the PM can call an election at any time. In October 2022, PM Mette Frederiksen called for an early general election. The *Folketing* controls legislative and decision-making powers, including passing laws, approving Denmark's annual budget, and monitoring the government's activities.

Judicial Branch
The judiciary includes the *Højesteret* (Supreme Court), 2 High Courts (Eastern High Court and Western High Court), 24 District Courts, and 2 Special Courts (The Maritime and Commercial High Court and the Land Registration Court). The Faroe Islands and Greenland have their own judicial systems, although decisions from the High Courts of the Faroe Islands and Greenland can be appealed to the Danish High Courts and Supreme Court. The *Højesteret* is the highest power for criminal and civil cases. While not explicitly provided for in the Constitution, the *Højesteret* has established the practice of reviewing laws to ensure their compliance with the Constitution.

Political Climate
Denmark's political structure ranks as one of the world's fairest. It received a score of 97 of 100 in a 2024 global freedom index that rates people's access to political and civil rights. Denmark has a robust democracy, with trustworthy elections and party competition. In a 2023 corruption perceptions index, Denmark ranked the least corrupt of 180 countries, ahead of Finland (2) and the US (69). Denmark has universal suffrage for citizens 18 and older.

Denmark's political system is based on consensus, whereby political parties combine to form a ruling coalition. Today, 16 parties are represented in the *Folketing*. As of December 2022, Denmark's *Folketing* is led by a center-left leaning majority coalition of the **Socialdemokraterne** (the Social Democrats, center-left), **Venstre** (the Liberal Party, center-right), and **Moderaterne** (the Moderates, centrist and formed in June

2022). This is the first time the *Socialdemokraterne* and *Venstre* have formed the majority since 1978. Partisanship among Denmark's traditional parties (see *History and Myth*) are being replaced with more populist ones, as Danish citizens grow dissatisfied with the existing approaches to immigration and the economy.

Under the current government, PM Frederiksen and her Ministers maintain a traditional center-left focus on improving the welfare state and tightening immigration requirements (see "Ethnic Groups" below). Migration policy has been a priority of Danish governments since the 2015 "migration crisis," where a sharp increase in arrivals strained Denmark's public services and welfare state.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Denmark's foreign policy has centered on supporting Ukraine and other countries affected by Russian interference (see "Foreign Relations" below). In 2022, Denmark created the Danish National Ukraine Fund and has since provided approximately US $7.6 billion in military support and US $733 million in other contributions.

Defense
Forsvaret (the Danish Armed Forces) are a unified military force consisting of ground, maritime, and air branches, with a joint strength of 17,800 active-duty troops and 44,200 reserves. Military operations focus on territorial defense and responding to a changing security environment in mainland Europe and the Arctic (see "Security Issues" below). In 2023, Denmark repledged to meet the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, a political and miliary alliance among more than 30 nations that promotes its members' security through collective defense) target of 2% of GDP for defense expenditures. All Danish men who are over the age of 18 and determined physically fit at *Forsvarets Dag* (Defense Day where written tests and physical tests are administered) are eligible for compulsory military service for 4-12 months. A lottery system determines conscription, although 99% of conscripts are volunteers. Signed in June 2023, the Danish Defense

Agreement 2024-33 will extend compulsory conscription to Danish women and increase the service period to 11 months.
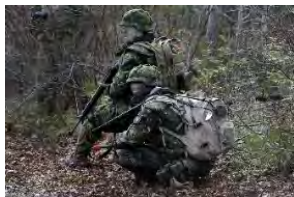
Army: As the largest branch, the Royal Danish Army (RDA) consists of some 10,000 active-duty troops organized into one command headquarters. There are 2 mechanized maneuver brigades and 11 battalions (1 self-propelled artillery, 1 logistics, 1 combat engineer, 1 signals, 3 mechanized, 1 tank, 1 light, and 2 reconnaissance). The RDA also includes the following battalions: 6 combat support (engineer, signals, military police, and military intelligence) and 3 combat service support (logistics, engineering support, and support).

Navy: Composed of around 2,250 active-duty personnel, the Royal Danish Navy consists of the Navy Command and 3 squadrons. The National Maritime Operations Center falls up under the Navy Command.

Air Force: Composed of around 3,000 active-duty personnel, the Royal Danish Air Force (RDAF) comprises the following squadrons: 2 fighter/ground attack, 1 transport, 1 training, 1 anti-submarine warfare helicopter, and 2 search & rescue helicopters. It also has 1 training unit. In 2023, the RDAF began receiving the first deliveries of their F-35 stealth fighters.

Special Forces (SF) and Other: SF consists of 2 special-forces units, the Danish Army SF, and the Danish Navy SF. SF also includes the Sirius Dog Sled Patrol, an elite unit patrolling remote parts of north-east Greenland to maintain Danish sovereignty in the region.

Security Issues

Foreign Threats: Denmark considers actions like unlawful intelligence activities, influence operations, and cyberattacks conducted by foreign powers as posing a high threat to its national security. Foreign governments are interested in Denmark because of its prominent role in international relations,

DENMARK
Royal Danish Air Force

General

Lieutenant
General

Major
General

Brigadier

Colonel

Lieutenant
Colonel

Major

Captain

1st Lieutenant

Flying
Officer

2nd Lieutenant
Pilot Officer

Corporal

Lance
Corporal
Technician

Junior
Technician

Aircraftman
Technician

Lance
Corporal
Administration

Junior
Technician
Administration

Aircraftman
Administration

Lance
Corporal
Operation

Junior
Technician
Operation

Aircraftman
Operation

Aircraftman
Trainee

Aircraftman
Trainee
Private

(see "Foreign Relations" below), security position in the Arctic, and leadership in technology. According to *Politiets Efterretningstjeneste* (Danish Security and Intelligence Service, or PET) the threat comes primarily from Russia, Iran, and China. In 2024, Denmark's *Center for Cybersikkerhed* (Center for Cybersecurity, or CFCS) raised the threat level for destructive attacks from LOW to MEDIUM, based on Russia's increased willingness to use hybrid tactics against European NATO members.

Arctic Security: Denmark is concerned regarding the changing geopolitical situation in the region. Countries like China, Russia, and the US (see "Foreign Relations" below), have shown greater interest in

Greenland for its natural resources and strategic location. Denmark continuously competes with Chinese investment in Greenland, blocking a Hong Kong company's 2016 attempt to take over former navy base Grønnedal and ongoing Chinese financing for new airports in Greenland.

Denmark increased its military budget for the region, with an "Arctic Capacity Package" of approximately US $235 million to enhance security primarily through satellites, drones, and radars. From 2025-27, Denmark will chair the Arctic Council (intergovernmental forum made up of the eight Arctic states to promote cooperation, inhabitants, and Indigenous communities in the region) and host their bi-yearly ministerial meeting. The eight Arctic states in the council are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the US.

Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Denmark has faced an increasing threat of terrorist activity and violent extremism (see *History and Myth*). According to Denmark's *Center for Terroranalyse* (Center for Terror Analysis, or CTA), the primary terrorist threat is simple attacks by radicalized members of the Islamic community. There is a secondary threat from right- and left-wing extremists willing to commit illegal acts to change social conditions. As of March 2020, at least 159 Danish citizens voluntarily fought alongside extremist groups in Iraq or Syria.

Denmark participates in domestic and international counter-terrorism efforts. It is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the Global Counterterrorism Forum, in addition to funding stabilization and conflict prevention initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Denmark has implemented anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation, such as travel bans for Danish nationals and the repeal of residence permits for foreigners who pose a risk to the country (see "Ethnic Groups" below).

Organized Crime: Generally, Denmark is considered to have a low level of crime. However, its location between mainland Europe and Scandinavia makes Denmark a source and transit country for criminal activity such as drug trade, human trafficking, and arms smuggling. Denmark's criminal landscape features foreign actors such as "migrant gangs," Russian cybercrime groups, and Danish-Swedish gang rivalries. In 2023, *Politiet* (the Danish Police) recorded 21 cases of gang related shootings and four deaths.

Foreign Relations
Denmark is a member of international organizations including the United Nations (UN), NATO, World Trade Organization, Arctic Council (see "Security Issues" above), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Bank. In 2025 and 2026, Denmark will serve as an elected member of the UN Security Council. Over 60,000 Danish service-members

have served in some capacity in UN and NATO missions, or other international defense coalitions.

Since World War II, Denmark has pursued international cooperation, advocating for human rights and a rule-based world order. Denmark has ratified human rights treaties, leads the Convention Against Torture Initiative, and contributes to global development assistance (see *Economics and Resources*).

Regional Relations: Denmark is a member of political and economic regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), European Economic Area, and Organization for Security

Cooperation in Europe. As a smaller, Denmark values cooperation with allies as a cornerstone of its political and economic security. Though Denmark has been in the EU since 1972 (see *History and Myth*), it is has opted out of elements of EU integration, particularly the single currency and defense.

Sharing a common history dating back millennia, Denmark maintains close relations with its Nordic neighbors (Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Åland). They are also a part of the Nordic Council, an official body for regional cooperation. "Our Vision 2030" is a cooperative goal for the Nordics to become the world's most sustainable and integrated region by 2030. In 2024, Denmark and Greenland disagreed over Greenland's bid for full membership instead of partial membership in the Nordic Council. In the same year, the Faroe Islands were denied the possibility of full membership, by the Minister representing Sweden at the council in this case.

Relations with the US: Since establishing formal diplomatic relations in 1801, Denmark and the US have been close allies. The US and Denmark collaborate on global and regional issues, such as Ukraine, hybrid threats, climate challenges, sustainable development, and countering terrorism. The US and Denmark have a mutually beneficial economic relationship, trading goods between each other, such as LEGOs, medicine, and aircraft. Danish investment in the US is increasing, mostly in wind energy and pharmaceuticals. According to the Danish government, their investments supported around 79,000 US jobs in 2019.

The US and Denmark are key security and defense allies. Pituffik Space Base, previously Thule Air Base, in northwest Greenland is the Northernmost US base and important strategically for the US and NATO. In 2023, the US and Denmark signed a defense cooperation agreement for US rotational troop deployments and equipment in Denmark. In August 2019 and again starting in December 2024, diplomatic tension between

Denmark and the US escalated following President Donald Trump's expression of interest in purchasing Greenland.

Relations with Russia: Economic and political relations between present-day Denmark and Russia date back to at least the 15th century. Formal diplomatic relations between Russia and Denmark were established on June 18th, 1924. Currently, diplomatic relations between the two countries are strained, primarily due to Russia's 2022 military invasion of Ukraine. Denmark has expressed concern over the threat of Russian aggression to state sovereignty and the world order.

Recently, the two countries have taken punitive action against each other. In April 2022, Denmark expelled 15 Russian employees from the Russian embassy in Copenhagen, declaring them to be Russian intelligence agents. In response, Russia took similar action of declaring seven employees from the Danish embassy in Moscow "persona non grata," which is Latin for "unwelcomed person," in May 2022. Later that year, Russia added Denmark to its "unfriendly nations" list.

Relations with Germany: Denmark and Germany have a complicated history of conflicts and alliances (see *History and Myth*). The border between the German state of Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark's southern *Jylland* region, often referred to as the "gateway to Scandinavia," has been a point of contention historically due to competing claims by both nations. In the 1864 Second Schleswig War (see *History and Myth*), Prussia's and Austria's defeat of Denmark resulted in its loss of southern *Jylland*/northern Schleswig. In a 1920 referendum after the 1919 Versailles Treaty, Schleswig was divided, and north Schleswig was restored to Denmark, resulting in minority language communities on both sides of the Danish-German border (see "Ethnic Groups" below).

Since World War II (see *History and Myth*), Germany and Denmark have become members of international organizations and share minority language populations. Denmark exports

industrial products, machinery, agricultural, as well as medical and pharmaceutical products. Denmark imports machinery, motor vehicles, chemicals, and consumer goods from Germany. In 2020, the nations commemorated a century of cultural friendship. In 2021, the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Denmark initiated a joint Danish-German friendship declaration.

Ethnic Groups

Based on country of birth, the population of Denmark is currently around 84% Danish (including Greenlandic and Faroese), 1% Turkish, and 15% other groups, such as Polish, Romanian, Syrian, Ukrainian, German, and Iraqi. There are also Asian and African populations, as well as a Jewish community of some 6,500-8,000 people (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Since 2019, Denmark's elected government has pursued more restrictive immigration policies, targeting public concern of non-Western foreigner influence on the demographics.

Generally, Denmark remains an ethnically homogenous country. Ethnic Danes descend from North Germanic people and are most closely related to populations in Norway, Sweden, Germany, and a few other groups in Northern and Central Europe. The only official national minority in Denmark is the German community of southern and western *Jylland* (see "Foreign Relations" above). The German minority accounts for some 7% of the population in this area, totaling around 10-15,000 people. The German minority runs their own schools and receives funding from both German and Danish governments.

The Faroe Islands and Greenland have their own ethnic groups, though they are considered Danish citizens. Approximately 50,000 Faroese inhabit the Faroe Islands. Some 50,000 Inuit, indigenous to Greenland, inhabit Greenland, making up the majority of their 57,000 population. There are three linguistic groups within the Inuit: *Kalaallit* along the West coast, *Inughuit* in the North, and *Iit* on the East coast (see *Language and Communication).*

Until the 20th century, immigrants to Denmark were primarily from other Nordic or European countries. Between the late 19th century and World War I, Polish, German, and Swedish laborers migrated to Denmark. In the 1960s, Denmark faced a labor shortage, leading to the migration of ***gæstearbejdere*** (guest workers) from Turkey (Türkiye), former Yugoslavia, and Pakistan. In the 1980s, Denmark offered settlement to refugees from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America.
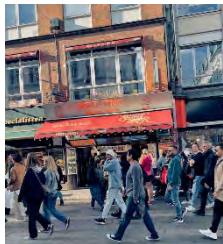
Immigration has changed Denmark's demographics, contributing to population growth and decreasing ethnic homogeneity. Between 1990-2016, net population for the Nordic countries grew by 15%, with immigration accounting for around two-thirds of the growth. The African and Asian migrant population in Denmark increased from 1% of the total population in 1980 to approximately 6% in the mid-2000s. In 2022, immigration to Denmark increased by 36%, primarily because of Ukrainian refugees. As of 2024, 15.9% of Denmark's population is immigrants or their descendants.

Social Relations

Although Denmark had a hierarchal class-based system early in its history (see *History and Myth*), its contemporary society is much more equal. Today, egalitarian values (beliefs that all people are equally important and should have the same rights) define Danish society, such as medical benefits, access to education, and other social safety nets. Despite this, some inequalities persist in Denmark with social divisions along rich-poor, rural-urban, and ethnic-group lines.

Socioeconomic and political relations (see "Political Climate" above) in Denmark are generally stable. In 2023, Denmark's Gini score (an inequality index where a lower value indicates a more equitable society) was 30.6, slightly worse than Norway (27.7 in 2019) but better than the US (41.3 in 2022). Compared to urban areas where the majority of the population resides (see "Demographics" above), rural areas have lower employment, population, and income levels. The Danish welfare system

transfers funds from higher-income to lower-income areas, which helps reduce socioeconomic disparities. Denmark promotes gender equality and has made considerable progress in recent decades, even though men still retain certain advantages (see *Sex and Gender*).

While Denmark is an advocate for human rights and equality (see "Foreign Relations" above), religious and ethnic minorities face discrimination. A 2023 survey by the Danish Institute for Human Rights indicated that more than 8 out of 10 minority-ethnic persons stated that they experienced discrimination in the past year. In 2018, the *Folketing* passed a law that bans public wearing of face coverings, like the **niqab** (face veil) and **burqa** (full face mask and body covering).

In the same year, the *Folketing* adopted a law that required the swearing-in ceremony for new Danish citizens to include a handshake, which violates some religious prohibitions against touching a stranger of the opposite sex. In December 2023 after multiple public burnings of the Qur'an (the Islamic holy book), Denmark adopted an amendment to the penal code criminalizing the inappropriate treatment of religious texts.

Danish immigration policies (see "Ethnic Groups" above) have been criticized for violating migrants' human rights and discriminating against specific ethno-religious groups. Refugees and asylum seekers face lengthy wait times for family reunification and poor living conditions. Since 2018, Denmark has had a "parallel societies" initiative that seeks to rehabilitate areas it deems "ghettos" based on criteria of high unemployment, crime rates, and proportion of residents with "non-western" backgrounds by 2030.

Plans for improvement include increasing police, improving education, and limiting publicly funded housing to 40% of total housing. The initiative has sparked controversy and is currently under review by the Court of Justice for the European Union. It reportedly has resulted in the loss of homes and forced evictions for numerous families.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Overview

Denmark's population is predominantly Christian. As of 2024, around 71% of residents belong to the Protestant Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark, known as the *Folkekirke* (People's Church). Approximately 4% are Muslim. The remaining 24% are either non-religious (including those who identify as atheist and agnostic) or follow other religious traditions such as Roman Catholicism, Jehovah's Witness, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

Denmark's Constitution (see *Political and Social Relations*) guarantees freedom of worship and prohibits religious discrimination while recognizing the *Folkekirke* of Denmark as the "people's church," which retains certain privileges. Denmark's *Folketing* (Parliament, see *Political and Social Relations*) does not mandate a separation of church and state and requires the King to be a member of the *Folkekirke*.

Early Spiritual Landscape

The territory comprising present-day Denmark was first settled by nomadic tribes and clans (see *History and Myth*) who shared many similar spiritual beliefs. While sources are limited, accounts and texts describe a rich mythology of spirits and deities, who many early residents believed governed the natural world and various aspects of life.

Danish Vikings practiced Norse paganism and believed the universe was divided into nine realms within *Yggdrasil* (the Norse tree of life). All humans, gods, giants, and other beings inhabited *Yggdrasil* in realms such as *Asgard* (the realm of the gods), *Midgard* (the human world), and *Niflhel* (the kingdom of the dead). *Bifröst* (a rainbow bridge) connected the realms and

allowed the gods to travel between them to protect and interact with the human world. The Vikings recognized gods like *Odin* (the god of war), *Thor* (the god of thunder), and *Heimdallr* (the guardian of *Bifröst*) as warrior deities and protectors of the cosmos. Vikings also prayed for blessings like bountiful harvests and health from *Frigg* (the goddess of marriage and fertility and the wife of *Odin*) and *Freyr* (the god of peace and fertility).

To ensure divine favor, early Danes held rituals such as *blót* (a communal ritual of slaughtering and offering animals to the gods, then eating the animal, collecting its blood, and splattering it on participants, walls, and altars). During *blót,* pagans believed they were dining with the gods and that covering themselves in the animal's blood preserved the magic and protection of the ritual. Danes held *blót* four times a year during the winter and summer solstices as well as the spring and autumn equinoxes. Likewise, they held *blóts* during times of crisis, famine, and other instances that required help from the gods.

Introduction of Christianity
By the 8th century, Danish pagans had been exposed to Christianity through pillages, raids, and trade with Germanic and Anglo-Saxon Christians (see *History and Myth*). In the 10th century, German missionaries established Catholic churches in Denmark under the Archdiocese of Hamburg-Bremen and began converting Danes.

According to legend, around 965, King Harald Bluetooth (958-86, see *History and Myth*) witnessed a miracle when a Frisian monk held a fire-heated piece of iron to his hand without burning himself. The miracle inspired Bluetooth to convert and was the catalyst for the country's conversion from paganism to Christianity. His conversion also prevented neighboring Christian countries from invading Denmark under the justification of evangelization (the act of sharing one's religious beliefs with the goal of converting others to that faith).

During the 11th century, King Canute IV (1080-86) paid for the construction of numerous Catholic churches and encouraged papal preaching throughout Denmark. After imposing a tax on the rural aristocracy, a revolt broke out and Canute was assassinated on an altar in a church in Odense. Reports of miracles at Canute's tomb resulted in his canonization as a Catholic saint in 1101.

Today, he is the patron saint of Denmark. In 1103, Pope Paschal II (leader of the Roman Catholic Church) established Lund (a city in present-day Sweden, then part of Denmark) as the seat of the Nordic archbishop, which freed Denmark from the ecclesial authority of German bishops and emperors. Throughout the 13th century, construction of church buildings continued, and by the end of the century, Denmark was home to some 3,000 churches.

The Protestant Reformation
The Protestant Reformation began in 1517, when German priest Martin Luther criticized the Catholic Church's teachings and corruption, particularly its allowance of the indulgence system that granted pardons for sins to those who bought certificates. Lutheranism encouraged an individual relationship with God, separate from the control of the Catholic Church, its priests, and the Pope.

During the 1520s, Danish Kings allowed the emergence of independent Protestant movements. These rapidly gained popularity among Denmark's peasant population, many of whom worked in serfdom (an exploitative system of peasant tenant farming, see *Economics and Resources*). In 1533, disputes between Protestants and Catholics regarding the royal succession resulted in a civil war (see *History and Myth*), which concluded with the establishment of Danish Lutheranism as the country's dominant religion.

In 1536, Christian III ascended the throne and forcefully began converting the country to Lutheranism (see *History and Myth*). Transferring the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church to the State, he confiscated Church property, declared himself Head of Church, and stripped Catholic bishops of their titles before arresting them. Likewise, he had the Bible translated into Danish and mandated church services be conducted in Danish (see *Language and Communication*), granting many Danes access to their faith in their native language.

Lutheran Orthodoxy and Pietism

Throughout the 17th century, Danish absolutism (when the monarch's power was unrestrained by other institutions) dictated religious life during a period known as Lutheran Orthodoxy. ***Kongeloven*** (the King's Law) of 1665 guaranteed the King's control over the Lutheran Church and prevented other religious beliefs from spreading. The statute mandated citizens adhere to the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (a document containing articles that outline the core beliefs of the Lutheran Church) as an authoritative declaration of faith. Likewise, the Ten Commandments dictated criminal law, and offenders received punishments aligned with examples from the Bible. The few exceptions to the decree included a small settlement of Jews and foreign embassies holding Catholic services.

In the 18th century, Pietism, which placed personal faith over the authoritative doctrine of the Church, became the dominant religious creed within evangelical Lutheranism. In 1736, to strengthen the relationship between the Church and State, the government made confirmation (the rite of affirming one's Christian belief and admission as a full member of the Lutheran Church) a mandatory rite of passage for all young adults. By the late 18th century, Enlightenment ideas such as separation of powers, religious tolerance, and individual freedoms challenged the authority of the Lutheran Church and the Monarchy.

Religion in the 19th Century

During this period, Denmark experienced a rise in religious movements, or revivalism. Revivalism appealed to Danes because it allowed more personal choices in the practice of their faith and interpretations of the Bible, which the Lutheran Church had restricted. Grundtvigianism, founded by Danish clergyman Nikolai Frederik Severin (N.F.S.) Grundtvig, emphasized the importance of democracy, religious freedom, and education (see *Learning and Knowledge*).

Grundtvigianism encouraged the living word of Christ over the authority and principles of the Bible. The movement inspired religious freedom and Danish nationalism by highlighting democracy in society among the Danish Lutheran population.

In 1849, Denmark became a constitutional monarchy, which limited the King's power, introduced democracy, and no longer mandated citizens to be Lutheran. Denmark's first democratic Constitution (see *History and Myth*) removed many of the strict clauses of *Kongeloven* and granted Danes fundamental rights such as freedom of assembly, speech, and religion. While the Lutheran Church remained dominant, many new religions emerged with the stipulation that they did not cause public disorder or go against moral society. At the end of the century, Buddhism reached Denmark as one of the first Eastern religions, along with Hinduism, introduced in the West.

Religion in the 20th Century

The scientific and technological growth during this time brought increased trade, providing the working-class population with more economic opportunities. Many Jewish immigrants fleeing antisemitism in Eastern Europe found refuge in Denmark. Although, during World War II, the country fell under Nazi German occupation (see *History and Myth*). While Germany dictated Danish foreign policy, it allowed the government to retain autonomy. This exempted Danish Jews from having to register their property or identify themselves with the Star of

David (two overlaid equilateral triangles forming a six-pointed star), a common symbol of the Jewish faith. A resistance movement emerged, successfully evacuating most of the country's Jewish population.

In the latter half of the century, nationalist attitudes and the decline of the Danish economy (see *Economics and Resources*) resulted in the limitation of immigration, especially for those from Muslim countries. In 1992, government policy changes provided temporary, rather than permanent, residency permits for refugees and slowed the asylum application processes (see *History and Myth*). While the *Folkekirke* did not actively protest the reforms, it was vocally critical of them and advocated for inclusiveness and protection with regard to refugees.

Religion Today

Although over 71% of Danes identify as members of the *Folkekirke*, most do not regularly attend church services or actively practice the faith. While many Danes pride themselves on their tolerance and acceptance of different religions, recent reports have indicated an increase in religious discrimination. Some Danish laws, such as the 2014 prohibition of religious slaughter of animals without first anesthetizing the animal, have been viewed by many Jewish and Muslim communities as unjust. Followers of both faiths are only able to eat meat that is prepared in accordance with their respective holy texts, which due to the law is no longer possible in the country. Likewise, there is an ongoing debate over whether or not male circumcision (see *Sex and Gender*) should be allowed, as these faiths view the procedure as an important religious ritual and symbol of their devotion. Those supporting the ban on circumcision see it as mutilation of healthy male children, the *Folketing* has yet to pass the measure.

The *Folkekirke*: With nearly 4.2 million members, the *Folkekirke* is the largest Christian denomination in the country. Despite membership continuously declining in recent years, the Church

continues to play a significant role in Denmark's culture. For example, many traditional rituals and ceremonies, such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals, take place in the *Folkekirke* (see *Family and Kinship*). The Danish Monarch is required to be a member of the *Folkekirke* and is recognized as the official head of State and Church. While the national government maintains the position of minister for ecclesiastical affairs and oversees church operations, its involvement in church activity is limited. The *Folkekirke* is the only religious body that receives state subsidies, and members contribute financially through a church tax. While the Church remains traditional in its religious practices, it allows women into priesthood and performs same-sex marriages.

Islam: During the mid-late 20th century, immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and Europe established a diverse Muslim population in Denmark, which is the country's second largest religion after Christianity. As of 2024, experts estimate the country is home to about 240,000 Muslims. Several hundred local congregations comprise different branches of Islam, primarily in major cities like the capital city of Copenhagen. Due to the increase in religious diversity, the country has experienced significant religious hate crime towards Muslims, hampering their ability to integrate into society.

Some critics have cited public demonstrations, political rhetoric, and government policies as part of anti-Islamic sentiment in Denmark. Instances include the 2005 Muhammad cartoons crisis (see *History and Myth*), Qur'an burnings, and the 2018 "Ghetto Package" (see *Political and Social Relations*). The package included 20 laws that sought to alter the demographic makeup of neighborhoods deemed unfit and "non-western." However, since 2024, the government has sought to revise the plan and combat Islamophobia, most notably by banning Qur'an burnings.

Other Christian Churches: Roman Catholicism is the second most common Christian denomination in Denmark. While the Danish government does not collect data on religious affiliations outside of the *Folkekirke*, experts estimate that about 50,000 registered Catholics live in Denmark. The Diocese of Copenhagen oversees the entire country, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland, making it one of the geographically largest Catholic dioceses in the world.

Copenhagen is also home to a few foreign churches like the Norwegian King Haakon's Church, English St. Alban's Church, and St. Aleksander Nevsky Russian Orthodox Church.

Denmark is home to some Protestant *frikirker* (free churches), including Evangelical, Pentecostal, Methodist, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Baptist denominations that account for less than 1% of the population. Many of these churches emerged in Denmark during the 19th century, among the earliest *frikirker* were the Baptists (1839), Latter-day Saints (1850), and Methodists (1859).

Other Religions: Other religious minorities also live in Denmark. Experts estimate Denmark is home to about 6,500-8000 Jews, many of whom live in Copenhagen or other communities such as Odense and Aarhus. In 2022, the government enacted an action plan to counter antisemitism.

The plan's initiatives included education of the Holocaust, the protection of Jews and Jewish places of worship, and increased monitoring of online hate speech. Nevertheless, in 2023, the Chairman of the Jewish Community in Denmark reported increased antisemitism, primarily due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Less than 1% of the population practices Hinduism, Buddhism, and various other faiths.

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview

The family is important to Danish society, with members relying on each other for emotional, economic, and social support. Families are typically small and close-knit. Positivity and equality are central to their family and social life.

Residence

Starting in the 19th century, Denmark began to urbanize, and as of 2023, some 88% of Danes live in cities. Most homes have electricity and safe sanitation services. Rather than burning wood, oil, or other materials, many Danes heat their homes through district heating. This method is especially common in residences built since the 1990s and involves extracting geothermal energy through pumps deep in the ground. In recent years, construction of new homes has aligned with energy conservation standards, such as the use of recycled building materials and limitations on CO_2 emissions.

Due to the country's cold climate (see *Political and Social Relations*), insulation is important for Danish homes. Windows often have multiple layers of glazing with small gaps in between them to trap heat. Natural elements are often incorporated into the design and style of homes, with raw materials such as wood and stone used in many interiors. Many homes have features that enhance the concept of *hygge* ("coziness," see *Aesthetics and Recreation*) that create a comfortable and warm setting for winter months. Many exterior spaces also include *hygge* elements, such as aesthetic shrubs, evergreens, and large gardens containing fruit trees, vegetables, and flowers.

Urban: Families in cities tend to reside in apartments, townhouses, and detached single-family homes. Many urban homes are constructed from natural materials like brick, stone, and wood, though concrete or mixed materials are also common. Most homes have 2-3 bedrooms and incorporate

simple designs and furniture. Apartment buildings vary in size, and most have access to an outdoor space or balcony. Many Danes have access to a *sommerhus* (summer cottage), which

is often near the coastline or an inland body of water and serves as an escape from the fast-paced lifestyle of urban areas.

Rural: Most rural residents live in single-story wooden houses, many of which are former farmhouses. Some rural homes feature a thatched roof made from

a traditional method of twisting dried seaweed into thick ropes and weaving them through the rafters.

Family Structure
Danish families tend to value gender equality. Parents usually share domestic tasks and financial responsibilities (see *Sex and Gender*). Families are typically close-knit, with one or two children living at home until age 18 or beginning their university studies. Extended families usually do not share the same household but often live nearby, and many Danes frequently hold family gatherings with extended family members. Due to the country's universal access to home-based care funded through taxes, many elderly citizens remain at home.

Children
While Danish families historically had many children, they have fewer today (see *Sex and Gender*). Both parents typically work, and children often spend time in government-subsidized daycare starting at the age of 9 months (see *Learning and Knowledge).* While children are typically independent and granted a significant amount of freedom, parents expect older children to help with household chores and prepare meals. After school, many children attend a *skolefritidsordning* (after-school program), which offers activities like sports, games, and crafts, with an emphasis on outdoor play.

Birth: Expectant mothers receive regular checkups through the tax-funded universal healthcare system. Services include prenatal, maternity, and postnatal care, along with guidance from a midwife. Danes typically hold a baptism for the newborn

soon after birth, where they announce the godparents and receive gifts from family and friends. Gifts such as baby blankets and jewelry are common.

Rites of Passage

Many Danish members of the Lutheran Church (see *Religion and Spirituality*) participate in the rite of confirmation around age 15, which establishes their adult commitment to the faith. Some Danes prepare for confirmation by attending a class where the Christian faith, ethics, and hymns are taught. The ceremony usually occurs at a church and is followed by a large celebration with family and friends. With only 66% of youth choosing confirmation in 2020, an increasing number are opting for "nonfirmation" as a secular option while maintaining the social ritual of celebrating the transition into adulthood.

Dating and Courtship: Danes typically begin dating in their mid-teens. They value friendship and often socialize in large groups or at parties before dating. Young adults frequently engage in casual dating and often choose to finish school and travel instead of committing to marriage. Those who do marry typically do so later in life, as the average age for Danish men marrying is 36 and women 33.9 in 2024.

Weddings: Pre-wedding celebrations typically occur a couple of weeks before the wedding. Many Danes have a *polterabend*, similar to bachelor and bachelorette

parties in the US. The night before the wedding, friends and family of the couple often build an *Æresport* (Gate of Honor), a large archway of flowers, greenery, and ribbons placed at the entrance of the wedding reception location. Some *Æresports* are placed at the entrance of the couple's home to celebrate their entry into marriage.

A priest, judge, or other officiant unites the couple typically in a church ceremony or in city hall. After the newlyweds exchange vows, guests usually throw rice as the couple exit to represent prosperity and fertility in the marriage. After the ceremony, a

toastmaster typically guides guests through the reception that comprises toasts, speeches, a ***brudevals*** (bridal waltz), and cake cutting. Festivities usually incorporate Danish traditions such as the groomsmen cutting the groom's socks off as a symbol of his entrance into married life with "clipped heels." Another tradition is if the bride or groom leaves the room, guests may kiss the newlywed who remains. Customarily, the groom gives his bride a ***morgengave*** (morning gift) the day after the wedding. Today, it is more common for both partners to exchange a gift, usually a piece of jewelry, handwritten poem, or a planned trip.

Divorce
It is a relatively common practice in Denmark. As of 2024, the rate was 1.2 per 1,000 inhabitants, lower than neighboring Sweden (2) and the US (2.5). If both spouses agree to divorce, they can apply immediately through the ***Familieretshus*** (Agency of Family Law). However, if one spouse disagrees to divorce, a 6-month separation period is required before applying.

Death
Following a death, Danes traditionally open the windows of the deceased's home to allow the soul to depart from the physical world. A funeral typically is held 8 days later. Christian funerals are common, even if the deceased did not regularly attend church. Most ceremonies begin with a spiritual leader talking about the deceased and reading from the Bible. Attendees bring flowers to place on the casket and join together to sing hymns. Family members often carry the casket to the grave and scatter dirt on top of it as a final goodbye, unless the deceased is cremated.

Secular funerals are usually conducted in a similar pattern, though without scripture. Family members typically conduct eulogies and sing songs rather than hymns. Due to limited burial space, cremations have become popular. After the funeral, some families hold a dinner or go to a restaurant to share a ***gravøl*** (grave beer) and celebrate the deceased's life.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

Traditionally, the Danish social system was patriarchal, meaning men held most power and authority. Today, Denmark is committed to securing gender equality. In 2022, it ranked 1 of 144 countries in a gender equality index, higher than Sweden (2), Norway (3), and the US (44).

Gender Roles and Work

Domestic Work: Many parents share household responsibilities, while also working outside aged 20+ spend some 15.6% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 11.3% for men. This rate is similar to the European and Northern American percentages of 16% for women and 9.1% for men.

Labor Force: In 2024, approximately 60% of Danish women worked outside the home, lower than Sweden (64%) and Norway (63%), but higher than the US (57%). Women constitute the majority of the public sector workforce, around 66% of employees in 2021, working primarily in healthcare and social services. In 2022, women occupied roughly 31% of senior and middle management positions, lower than Sweden (42%) and the US (43%). In 2021, men made up some 68% of employees in the private sector.

Gender and the Law

The Act on Gender Equality, introduced in 2000, is Denmark's fundamental law on gender equality. The Act promotes equality between men and woman, prohibits discrimination based on gender, and requires gender mainstreaming (integrating gender equality in all planning and administration) for public authorities. Despite legal protections for gender equality, discrimination and a gender pay gap persist. As of 2024, women's average earnings are nearly 87% of men's.

Danish law also guarantees parental leave and other benefits. Amended in 2022, the Act on Parental Leave entitles both parents to 24 weeks each of parental leave, with the mother getting an additional 4 weeks prior to birth, totaling 52 weeks of leave. Since 2024, solo parents can transfer some of their parental leave to their siblings, parents, or close relatives (see *Time and Space*).

The minimum age of marriage is 18. Persons under 18 must receive permission to marry from a guardian and Denmark's Marriage Office.

Gender and Politics

In 1915, Denmark granted women and non-land-owning men universal suffrage, and in 1918, Danish women voted for the first time in a parliamentary election. Denmark appointed one of the world's first female governmental ministers, Nina Bang, as Minister of Education in 1924. It also has had two female heads-of-state, including Helle Thorning-Schmidt (2011-15) and current Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen since 2019 (see *Political and Social Relations*). As of 2025, Danish women hold some 35% of ministerial positions and 44% of seats in Parliament. Denmark's percentage of women in Parliament is similar to Norway (44%), lower than Sweden (45%), and higher than the US (28%).

In addition to an explicit policy priority, Denmark considers gender equality fundamental to Danish social values and welfare state (see *Political and Social Relations*). It has a governmental body, ***Ligestillingsafdelingen*** (the Department of Gender Equality), and a parliamentary committee, ***Ligestillingsudvalge*** (Gender Equality Committee), dedicated to these efforts. Since 2002, Denmark has published an annual "Perspective and Action Plan" on gender equality.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

As of 2023, around 32% of Danish women had experienced GBV in their lifetime. In 2022, some 107 per 100,000 inhabitants

reported sexual violence in Denmark, the fourth highest rate in Europe and only lower than France (126), Iceland (165), and Sweden (200). Denmark has a low femicide (murder of a woman based on her gender) rate by global standards, at 0.5 per 100,000 females in 2022, on par with Norway (0.5) but lower than Finland (0.8), and the US (2.8).

Denmark participates in efforts to combat GBV through hotlines, counseling centers, and shelters for female survivors. In 2020, Denmark changed the penal code to criminalize all sexual acts without explicit consent, becoming the 12th country in Europe to adopt a consent-based framework. With the standard raised to consent, the number of rape cases increased in 2021 by roughly 40% since 2020, with 2,126 reports.

Sex and Procreation
Between 1960-2024, Denmark's birthrate declined from 2.9 births per women to 1.8, similar to the US rate (1.8). Denmark's adolescent fertility rate was 1 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 in 2023, significantly lower than the US rate (13).

Denmark has mandatory sexual education and laws preventing child marriage. Today in Denmark, abortions through the 12th week of pregnancy are available to women over the age of 18. As self-governing and autonomous territories, Greenland and the Faroe Islands have differing legislation on abortion.

Homosexuality in Denmark
In 1989, Denmark was the world's first country to legally recognize same-sex couples by introducing registered partnerships. In 2012, Denmark amended the Marriage Act to allow same-sex couples to marry on equal terms with heterosexual couples. At this time, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has a Status of Forces Agreement in place for Denmark. Service members are subject to the Uniformed Code of Military Justice for homosexual acts.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview
The official language of Denmark is Danish, which is used in business, government, media, and society. In addition, Denmark recognizes three minority languages – Faroese, Greenlandic, and German. English and Swedish are other languages spoken in Denmark.

Danish
Dansk (Danish) belongs to the North Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family and similar to Norwegian and Swedish. The written forms of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are mutually intelligible, although differences in pronunciation and vocabulary make the spoken forms less compatible.

Danish evolved from Old Norse, a language spoken across Scandinavia (present-day Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) during the Iron Age (see *History and Myth*). Artifacts from 200-800 AD show that early Danes wrote Old Norse with runic inscriptions (set of letters that represent sounds and concepts). The spread of Christianity in the Middle Ages (1050-1536, see *History and Myth*) introduced the Latin alphabet to Denmark. Simultaneously, German words entered Danish vocabulary through trade and migration.

The translation of the Bible into Danish in 1550 marked the first step towards standardizing the language. By the 17th century, Danish was the language of government, and in the 18th and 19th centuries, educational reforms further standardized Danish (see *Learning and Knowledge*). The 19th-century Danish writers, notably the fairy tale author Hans Christian Andersen and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, legitimized the use of Danish in literature and philosophy. Since the mid-20th century,

the Danish language has adopted several American English words, particularly those related to technology, entertainment, business, and science. As of 2023, around 94% of people in Denmark speak Danish as their first language. Despite this high rate, some Danes are concerned about the prominence of English in higher education, science, and European Union politics.

Danish uses a similar grammatical system and alphabet to English with three additional vowels: "æ" (pronounced like the "a" in ale), "ø" (like the "u" in turn), and "å" (like the "o" in old). Denmark is home to three major regional Danish dialects: Jutlandic in Jutland (see *History and Myth*), Insular Danish on the islands of Zealand, Funen, Møn, and Lolland-Falster, and East Danish on the island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. While these dialects produce recognizable differences in accent, they are mutually intelligible.

English
English is the foreign language spoken the most in Denmark. As of 2023, about 87% of Danes speak English as a second language, with some 48% using it daily. Danish law mandates that citizens start learning English as a second language in their first year of primary school (see *Learning and Knowledge)*, and residents in Denmark tend to have constant exposure to English-language media. Many Danish companies use English as their corporate language, and universities typically offer courses in English.

Other Languages
The most common languages after English are German (spoken by 49% of the population), Swedish (14%), and French (11%). Immigration since the late 20th century has brought other languages to Denmark, particularly Turkish, Polish, Romanian, and Arabic (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Recognized Minority Languages

Denmark has around 75,000 Faroese speakers, with about 54,000 in the Faroe Islands and 21,000 on the Danish mainland.

Likewise, Denmark has approximately 57,000 Greenlandic (a grouping of several Inuit languages spoken in Greenland) speakers, with around 50,000 in Greenland and 7,000 on the mainland.

The 1955 Copenhagen-Bonn Declarations established minority rights for Denmark's ethnic Germans. As of 2024, about 15,000 Danish citizens of German ethnicity live near the border with Germany.

Communication Overview

Communicating competently in Denmark requires some knowledge of Danish and the ability to interact effectively using language.

This notion of competence includes paralanguage (rate of speech, volume, and intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, and gestures), and interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). These forms of communication ensure statements are interpreted as intended by the speaker.

Communication Style

Danes tend to be direct and straightforward, traits which some foreign nationals consider impolite. Danes typically avoid small talk and aim for efficient conversations to respect each other's time. They value open debate and typically offer their opinions if asked.

Danish people are usually forgiving in social interactions and strive to resolve conflicts cooperatively. Danes are comfortable with long pauses and do not rush to fill periods of silence in conversation. They consider interrupting a speaker rude.

Greetings

Danes consider greetings a sign of respect and generally present themselves instead of waiting for an introduction. Although standard greetings vary by region and context, a short handshake with direct eye contact is acceptable in most situations. In business contexts, handshakes are especially firm but usually longer and softer in personal settings. Close friends and family tend to hug when greeting each other. In Denmark, it is customary to shake hands with everyone when entering or leaving a social gathering.

Danish greetings are accompanied by the phrase ***hej*** ("hi"), ***goddag*** ("good day")***, godmorgen*** ("good morning"), or ***godaften*** ("good evening"). The phrase ***hej hej*** ("goodbye") is an informal way of saying goodbye, while ***farvel*** ("goodbye") more formal. Danes do not typically ask how someone is doing, unless they know the person well and want to initiate a longer conversation.

Names

In Denmark, they generally consist of one or two given names followed by a surname. Parents tend to name their children after relatives or historical figures. Traditionally, Danes formed surnames by adding "***sen***" ("son") to the end of their father's first name. Consequently, some of the most common last names today are Nielsen, Jensen, and Hansen. While most Danes still receive their father's surname, hyphenated surnames that combine the last names of both parents have become more common in recent decades.

Forms of Address

Danes prefer informal communication and only use titles like ***Herr*** ("Mr."), ***Fru*** ("Mrs."), or ***Frøken*** ("Miss") in formal settings. Danes almost always address people by their first name, even elders and those of higher authority. For example, Danish

students typically address their teachers by their first names. Today, Danes rarely use professional and academic titles, as equality is an important principle in Denmark.

Conversational Topics
Danes typically keep conversation informal and direct. Common topics are the weather, travel, sports, and hobbies. To avoid offense, foreign nationals should not make small talk, ask personal questions, or bring up social status, income, politics, and religion. Once a relationship has developed, few subjects are taboo, and friends often discuss their problems with one another. Most Danes follow *janteloven* (the Law of Jante), an unofficial social code that discourages individuals from believing that they are superior to others. Consequently, Danes value modesty and consider bragging about one's wealth or success inappropriate.

Gestures
Danes tend to consider body language, particularly hand gestures, as distracting during conversation. They do use some gestures to emphasize certain words and often point with their fingers. Danes understand, but rarely use, common American gestures like high fives and thumbs up. Danes use eye contact to convey respect, a sign of the value they place on social equality (see *Political and Social Relations*). Danes value personal space and usually

maintain an arm's length of separation while talking. Touching, such as a hand on the arm, among strangers during conversation is uncommon in Denmark and should be avoided.

Language Training Resources
Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

Useful Words and Phrases

English	Danish
Hello	Hej
Yes	Ja
No	Nej
Thank you	Tak
Please	Vær så venlig
You're welcome	Selv tak / Det var så lidt
Excuse me	Undskyld
Sorry	Jeg er ked af det / Undskyld
I do not understand	Jeg forstår ikke
What's your name?	Hvad hedder du?
My name is ___	Jeg hedder ___
Where are you from?	Hvor kommer du fra??
How are you?	Hvordan går det?
I am from the United States	Jeg kommer fra USA
Goodbye	Hej Hej (informal) / Farvel (formal)
Good morning	Godmorgen
Good day	Goddag
Good evening	Godaften
Good night	Godnat
How do you say ___ in Danish?	Hvordan siger man ___ på dansk?
I'm looking for ___	Jeg leder efter ___
How much does it cost?	Hvor meget koster det?
Do you speak English?	Taler du engelsk?
Help!	Hjælp!
What time is it?	Hvad er klokken?
Yesterday	I går
Today	I dag
Tomorrow	I morgen
Where is ___?	Hvor er ___?
Who?	Hvem?
What?	Hvad?
When?	Hvornår?
Where?	Hvor?
Why?	Hvorfor?
Car	Bil
Plane	Fly
Bus	Bus
Train	Tog

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy
- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 99%
- Literacy rate is the same for both genders

Early Education
Before the introduction of formal education that accompanied the arrival and spread of Christianity in Denmark (see *History and Myth*), early Danes informally transmitted values, skills, beliefs, and historical knowledge to younger generations. Danish Vikings (see *History and Myth*) taught their children by demonstrating everyday tasks essential for survival. Fathers often taught boys hunting, fishing, and trading; while mothers taught girls household skills, knitting, and cooking. Both boys and girls learned to read, sing, and recite poetry and sagas.

Likewise, some children learned to read and cut runes in stone (the ancient Viking alphabet, see *Language and Communication*) to commemorate people and places.

In the 10th century, Roman Catholicism began to spread in Denmark, where monasteries established educational institutions (see *Religion and Spirituality*). During the 13th century, Danes established cathedral schools to prepare boys to serve in the Catholic Church. In 1479, Pope Sixtus IV (the leader of the Roman Catholic Church) authorized the opening of Denmark's first post-secondary school, the University of Copenhagen.

The university offered courses in theology, law, and philosophy to prepare sons of noble families for the priesthood. The Catholic Church remained the organizer of education until the 16th century, when Denmark embraced Protestantism (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

During this period, Denmark transferred the responsibility for education from the Catholic Church to the State. Lutheran

clergyman and private tutors educated middle- and upper-class boys to prepare them to become Lutheran priests. Instruction included learning how to read and write in Danish (see *Language and Communication*), arithmetic, and Christian doctrines. In 1539, the Church Law (see *Religion and Spirituality)* mandated the construction of a school building in each provincial borough across Denmark. However, instruction tended to remain limited due to the shortage of qualified teachers and the high cost of building materials.

During the 18th century, the church sought to expand literacy to enable working-class Danes to read and interpret scripture on their own. In 1736, a law required every child to learn basic knowledge of Lutheranism and pass confirmation, which involved reciting scripture (see *Religion and Spirituality*). In 1739, the government sought to establish the first nationwide school system by ensuring a permanent school building in every community.

Instruction at these schools often only offered children religious education, and many children still were not taught to write. During the 1780s-90s, the government endorsed educational reforms to promote nationalism and form a Danish identity, encouraging the rise of an independent, educated farmer class.

Education In the 19th Century
During this period, Denmark began implementing a legal framework for compulsory early education to raise literacy among rural Danes. In 1814, King Frederik VI passed five school acts which mandated 7 years of education starting at age 7. These acts also required the building of schoolhouses, improved teacher training, and expanded education for girls. Nevertheless, members of the country's large peasant population were often too poor to pay for school and lived in remote areas far from schools, while middle- and upper-class citizens typically continued hiring private tutors.

In the mid-1800s, a free school movement emerged from the ideas of clergyman and philosopher Nikolai Frederik Severin (N.F.S.) Grundtvig (see *History and Myth*). He criticized the exclusive and rigid organization of grammar schools, calling for an institution that promoted the development of basic skills in trades. In the 1850s, Danish teacher Christen Kold founded the country's first **folkehøjskoler** (folk high schools). *Folkehøjskoler* did not require students to take entrance or exit exams and extended subjects to include history, literature, math, science, and physical education. By 1870, Denmark was home to some 50 *folkehøjskole*r. In 1894, an education act formalized the government-funded primary school system, which became **folkeskole** (elementary school).

Education in the 20th Century
Denmark's economic growth in the early 20th century (see *Economics and Resources*) expanded the middle-class and caused many Danes to demand a better, more equable educational system (see *Political and Social Relations*). In 1903, Denmark introduced **realskole** (middle school) and **gymnasium** (high school) as a continuation of *folkeskole*. The availability of secondary education allowed many Danes access to higher education for the first time.

Between 1940-60, educational reforms focused on creating more equal educational opportunities regardless of social status, location, and gender. In 1972, these reforms standardized school hours and extended compulsory education from 7 years of schooling to 9 as a means of increasing enrollment. In the 1990s, the government reorganized the administration of the school system, creating a school board and allowing parental involvement in educational development.

Modern Education System
Today, education in Denmark is tax-financed and compulsory for all citizens, with a mandated minimum of 10 years of schooling starting at age 6. Most students attend government-run schools,

although some enroll in private, often religious, schools. In 2022, about 18% of primary-age students attended private, fee-based schools, significantly higher than in neighboring Finland (2%) and Norway (4%). In a 2022 assessment of student performance in reading, math, and science across 81 countries, Denmark (17) ranked above neighboring Norway (32) and Germany (24). It had similar scores to Sweden (19) the US (18).

The State and local municipalities manage school funding. The Ministry of Children and Education oversees all school accreditation and is tasked with assuring that educators meet national benchmarks. The contents of courses outlined in the national curriculum are finalized by teachers who work closely with their pupils. Likewise, some institutions are independent and self-governing. In 2021, Denmark spent about 7% of its GDP on education, lower than Sweden (7.6%) but higher than Finland (6.5%) and the US (5.4%). Spending on education declined significantly after 2021 based on projected job market needs (see *Economics and Resources*), aiming to avoid an overproduction of graduates in specific fields.

Most schools run from mid-August until late June. The school day typically runs from around 8 am to between 2-3 pm, although younger students typically get out earlier, around 12 pm. Physical play is important in Danish culture (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*), and elementary age children often receive 10-minute recess breaks every hour to encourage health, social skills, and overall well-being. While English is a compulsory second language starting in the first grade, instruction is primarily in Danish. Some private institutions offer international students education in their native language.

Pre-Primary: Children ages 1-5 may attend government subsidized *vuggestue* (nursery school), though some attend fee-based private day-care centers. Many Danes enroll their children in *vuggestue* to encourage the development of social-

cognitive skills through play-based learning, which is often outdoors. In 2021, about 97% of children of the appropriate age were enrolled in early education programs.

Børnehaveklasse (kindergarten class) is compulsory for 6 year olds. This level of education prepares children for *folkeskole* by improving their learning abilities. Rather than receiving structured lessons, children are encouraged to learn through play-based activities such as games, singing, and drawing. Some 95% of children of the appropriate age attended pre-primary programs in 2023.

Basic Education: *Folkeskole* begins at age 7 and comprises grades 1-9. Most schools follow the national curriculum, which consists of history, geography, arts, math, natural sciences, religion, English, and physical education. Students are often taught by the same teacher and remain with the same class of students for the entirety of *folkeskole.*

Students are graded on a 7-point scale and must earn a 2 (equivalent to a C grade in the US) to receive a passing grade. While students may repeat a grade, it is not common as teachers have the autonomy to adjust within the curriculum to suit different children's needs. During their 9th year, students may take the optional *afgangsprøve* (final exam) or *udvidede afgangsprøve* (extended leaving exam). Some 99% of children of the appropriate age attended primary school in 2023.

Secondary Education: After *folkeskole,* students may complete optional *gymnasium*. To determine admission, each institution administers its own entrance exam, and students must have received passing grades on their *afgangsprøve* and *udvidede afgangsprøve.* Upper-secondary school offers four educational programs: *studentereksamen* (general program), *højere handelseksamen* (commercial program), *højere teknisk eksamen* (technical program), and *højere forberedelseseksamen* (preparatory program). Each program

is designed to prepare students for higher education and typically takes 2-3 years to complete. Upon completion of *gymnasium*, students receive a ***studentereksamen*** (upper leaving certificate), equivalent to a high school diploma in the US. Some 91% of children of the appropriate age attended secondary school in 2023.

Vocational Education: Many Danes choose not to attend *gymnasium* and instead study in a vocational education and training program. Most vocational education programs require students to complete *folkeskole* and to receive a passing grade on the *afgangsprøve*. One of the most popular programs is ***erhvervsgrunduddannelse*** (basic vocational training), which takes 3-4 years to complete and focuses on practical skills for the workplace.

Erhvervsuddannelse for voksne (adult vocational training) is a program for students aged 25 or older and provides courses to become a skilled worker. Vocational programs offer instruction in topics like health, technology, construction, transportation, art, or agriculture.

Post-Secondary School: Denmark has a large network of public universities that offer tax-financed tuition for Danes. Though admission is centrally managed at the national level, some institutions require a separate entrance exam for certain students and international applicants. Most students who complete *gymnasium* are eligible for enrollment. Higher education in Denmark divides into three cycles, the 3-year ***bachelorgrad*** (bachelor's), 2-year ***mastergrad*** (master's), and Ph.D., which typically takes 3-4 years.

The University of Copenhagen is one of the country's best and largest universities, offering some 117 international master's programs in multiple languages, which allow foreign students to study abroad in Denmark. Other notable universities include the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, the Technical University of Denmark in Lyngby, and Aarhus University.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Overview
Danes tend to value punctuality, flexibility, and direct communication in the workplace. They typically have a relaxed work culture and limit physical touch outside family or close friends.

Time and Work
The workweek in Denmark generally runs Monday-Friday, with most business occurring between 8am-4pm. Though hours vary by store size and location, most shops are open weekdays from 10am-6pm, Saturdays from 10am-2pm, and closed on Sundays. Major shopping centers and grocery stores have longer hours, usually remaining open from 8am-9pm, 7 days a week. Many banks are open Monday-Friday from 10am-4pm, with some open until 5:30pm on Thursdays. Post office hours vary by location, but service is typically available between 10am-6pm on weekdays and 10am-1pm on Saturdays. Government offices are usually open from 9am-4pm on weekdays. In general, Danish professionals closely adhere to established working hours, and large stores typically close on public holidays. Danes also value work-life balance as they plan summer vacations typically in July for several weeks, closing or reducing hours for many smaller businesses.

Working Conditions: Denmark adheres to the European Union's Working Time Directive, which mandates a workweek does not exceed 48 hours. Most workplaces have standard 37-hour workweeks based on collective agreements between employees and employers. These agreements also provide workers with a range of protections and benefits such as paid leave, overtime pay, and pensions. The State allows mothers to take 4 weeks of leave before giving birth, and each parent gets 24 weeks of leave after the birth (see *Sex and Gender*). Denmark also provides a public pension to everyone, regardless of employment status. While there are no state

unemployment benefits, workers can contribute to a private unemployment insurance fund known as an *a-kasse*. Approximately 67% of Danes are members of unions.

Time Zone: Denmark adheres to Central European Time (CET), which is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Denmark observes Daylight Saving Time between March and October.

Date Notation: Like the US, Denmark uses the Western (Gregorian) Calendar. Unlike Americans, Danes typically write the day first, followed by the month and year.

National Holidays

- January 1: New Year's Day
- February/March: Fastelavn
- March/April: Maundy Thursday
- March/April: Good Friday
- March/April: Easter Sunday
- March/April: Easter Monday
- April/June: Ascension Day
- June 5: Constitution Day
- May/June: Pentecost
- May/June: Whit Monday
- December 25: Christmas
- December 26: Boxing Day

The dates listed with 2 months are contingent on when Easter Sunday occurs, which is the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox.

Time and Business
Denmark's business culture prioritizes punctuality, directness, informality, and flexibility. Danes generally consider lateness unprofessional and prefer to follow meeting agendas. Workers are typically direct in their communication and bring relevant

data to meetings. The flat hierarchical structure of most organizations encourages contributions from all employees. Work culture is informal, with a relaxed dress code and first-name usage among employees and bosses (see *Language and Communication*). Danes value the separation of work and personal lives. Consequently, they tend to socialize less than Americans in the office. Danes regard verbal contracts as binding and generally deliver on promises.

Public and Personal Space
As in most societies, personal space in Denmark depends on the nature of the relationship. Danes generally value their personal space, especially among strangers, and stand at a greater distance during conversation than Americans.

Touch: Danes greet with a firm handshake in professional and personal settings. Touching during conversation is rare (see *Language and Communication*).

Eye Contact: Danes maintain direct eye contact during conversation to demonstrate attentiveness, interest, and respect (see *Language and Communication*).

Photographs
Some government buildings, churches, museums, and military installations limit photography. Visitors should ask permission when photographing Danes, especially children.

Driving
Denmark has well-maintained roads and bridges that connect most of the islands, while some are accessible only by ferry (see *Political and Social Relations*). Winter brings snow and icy conditions, and public authorities recommend using winter tires. The use of headlights is always mandatory. Denmark has a significant number of cyclists, and drivers are required to yield to them. Like Americans, Danes drive on the right side of the road. In 2023, Denmark had 2.7 road fatalities per 100,000 people, slightly higher than the Scandinavian average (2.3) but much lower than the US average (12.2, see *Technology and Material*).

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview
Danish clothing, arts, and recreation reflect the country's rich history and natural elements.

Dress and Appearance

Traditional: Some Danes wear a *folkedragt* (national costume) for holidays and special events. Garments vary by region, and headdresses are regarded as symbols of specific regions, ethnic groups, and status. For example, women's bonnets are typically darkly colored, practical garments made of wool in the northern regions, while *guldnakke* (golden neck) embroidery is common in areas around Sjælland in the East. Women working outdoors on the southwestern island of Fanø generally wore a *strude* ("ostrich," a two-piece face covering with holes for the eyes).

The men's version of the *folkedragt* typically consists of a white shirt, a vest or waistcoat with silver buttons, knee-length *bukser* (trousers), and a hat. The women's *folkedragt* comprises a white cotton blouse, long dress, *sjal* (shawl) or scarf, and *forklæde* (apron). Men and women often wear wooden *træsko* (clogs).

Modern: Most Danes follow European fashion trends that tend to be more conservative than flashy. High-quality garments made from natural fabrics such as wool, linen, and cotton are common. Men typically wear dark jeans or trousers, a shirt, and well-kept shoes. Women often wear jeans or pants with a blouse or T-shirt. In business settings, Danes typically prefer conservative styles such as dark suits or dresses/pantsuits.

Recreation and Leisure
Danes often spend their leisure time with family and friends. Typical summer activities are biking, gardening, hiking, and going to the beach, farmers' markets, and festivals. During the winter, they participate in outdoor activities such as ice skating, skiing, and *vinterbadning* (winter bathing). The latter involves swimming outdoors in freezing temperatures that is believed to

have health benefits. Danes like to create a comfortable atmosphere through *hygge* (coziness), which involves friends and family gathering to enjoy simple pleasures. These include eating a large meal lasting most of the evening, playing board games, watching movies, and curling up by the fireplace.

Holidays: Danes hold a variety of festivals and community celebrations, many reflecting the country's Lutheran beliefs (see *Religion and Spirituality*), pagan traditions, or historical events. *Sankt Hans Dag* (St. Hans Day), or Saint John's Day, is a celebration held in late June that originates from the pagan celebration of the summer solstice and the Christian feast day of Saint John the Baptist. Celebrations include bonfires to burn effigies of witches, speeches, singing, dancing, and drinking. Danes often travel to their rural cottages (see *Family and Kinship*) to experience nature and the longest days of sunlight.

Many Danish children participate in *Fastelavn* (Mardi Gras, see *Time and Space*), which coincides with the days before Lent (a 40-day period of prayer and spiritual reflection observed prior to Easter). To celebrate, children dress up in costumes and go door-to-door asking for candy – similar to trick-or-treating on Halloween in the US. A popular tradition is *slå katten af tønden* (knock the cat off the barrel), whereby participants strike a wooden barrel held up by a string until candy or fruits spill out. The person who releases the contents is crowned the *kattekonge* (king of cats). The barrel typically has a cat painted on it as a symbol of an evil spirit, which is chased away by the stick.

Sports
Danes participate in a wide variety of sports such as badminton, boating, cycling, handball, ice hockey, skiing, and soccer. Denmark competes in numerous international events to include the Olympic Games, Sailing World Championship, World Badminton Championship, and World Handball Championship. In the latter, the Danish men's team won three gold medals in 2019, 2021, and 2023. Denmark has won hundreds of medals

at the Olympic Games as well. Danish yachtsman Paul Elvstrøm is one of only three Olympians to win the same individual event four times consecutively, having won gold medals for sailing 1948-60. Other notable athletes are Lis Hartel, an equestrian who was the first female to win an Olympic medal in individual dressage (a form of horse riding that develops balance and flexibility in the horse's movements) in 1952. Another is runner Niels Holst-Sørensen, who won a gold medal at the 1946 European Championships in the 400-meter dash.

Soccer: Commonly known as football, soccer is Denmark's most popular sport. Many youths learn to play it through pick-up games at school and amateur leagues. *Superliga* is the country's 12-team professional league, of which *F.C. København* is the oldest and most popular team. Denmark's national team has qualified for six World Cups and won the 1992 UEFA Champions League, an annual competition among Europe's best soccer clubs. Peter Schmeichel is one of the country's best players and considered one of the greatest goalkeepers of all time.

Dance

Traditional folk dances were performed in large groups or in pairs and often designed to be a simple and inclusive social activity at gatherings. Basic steps typically involve the polka, waltz, *chassé* (two-step), minuet, and *hopsa* (a fast waltz). Most dances repeat the same steps in 8- or 16-bar sequences. *Sønderhoning* (Danish honing) and *fannik* (fan kick) are traditional dances from the island of Fanø. The dances involve couples walking forward to dance in small circles. In 1901, university students established *Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme* (the Association for the Promotion of Folk Dance) in an effort to preserve and promote traditional Danish dance and dress.

Danish ballet originated when dancers performed comedies and pantomimes in front of the royal court. A ballet tradition became popular in the 1700s, when the Royal Danish Ballet was founded in Copenhagen. Between 1829-77, August Bournonville held the position of choreographer and ballet master, shaping the

balanced, classic, and highly technical style of Danish ballet. In the mid-20th century, ballet experienced a revival under the direction of Harald Lander as the company produced internationally acclaimed dancers such as Erik Bruhn, Henning Kronstam, and Elna Ørnberg.

Music

Traditional folk music features a variety of instruments, like the *lyre* (similar to a harp), pipes, *lur* (long blowing horn), accordion, *nøgleharpe* (key harp), and drums. In the 17th and 18th centuries, European influences introduced faster-paced rhythms and sounds such as the fiddle and guitar. *Spillemænd* ("gamblers," or Danish musicians) performed *spillemandsmusik* (fiddler's music), telling stories of the country's history in 3/4 rhythm.

In the 19th century, Denmark experienced a Golden Age in classical music. Composer and instrumentalist Niels Wilhelm Gade, along with his father-in-law and composer Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann, developed nationalist romanticism. Denmark's folk traditions, history, and people influenced this artistic movement.

Between 1890-1925, composer and symphonist Carl Nielsen composed six orchestral symphonies inspired by romanticism. However, Nielsen lacked formal training and produced original, often unexpected harmonies with bold tones such as *Symphony No. 2 (The Four Temperaments)* and *Symphony No. 3 (Sinfonia Espansiva)*. He is a national icon and is widely regarded as Denmark's greatest composer.

Other Musical Genres: Danes listen to an array of musical types such as pop, rock, classical, electronic, and jazz. Lars Ulrich, a drummer and founder of the rock band Metallica, has received international recognition. In 2009, he became the first Dane inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Denmark is home to the Roskilde Festival, one of the largest music festivals in Europe. It is hosted in late June and holds over 130,000 guests, who can watch performances on 8 stages.

Literature

With roots in oral traditions, Denmark has a rich literary history. The earliest forms of written literature were runic alphabet inscriptions carved into stone, wood, or metal (see *Language and Communication*). These inscriptions were raised in memory of important figures and their accomplishments. In the 12th century, the introduction of Christianity (see *Religion and Spirituality)* resulted in the emergence of works in the Latin language. ***Gesta Danorum*** (Deeds of the Danes), by historian Saxo Grammaticus, chronicles Danish history from prehistory through the 13th century.

In the 16th century, Lutheran reformist Christiern Pedersen translated the Bible into Danish, which expanded reading and writing in the Danish language. Authors like Bishop Thomas Kingo helped develop Danish baroque poetry and hymns. His ***Den Forordnede Nye Kirke-Psalme-Bog*** (The Prescribed New Church Hymnal) explored themes of God's power and sovereignty. Likewise, Hans Adolf Brorson and Ambrosius Stub wrote hymns expressing personal sorrow, religiosity, and morals.

In the late 18th century, emotional poetry that promoted themes of nationalism and Danish identity developed. Johannes Ewald's ***Kong Christian Stod ved Højen Mast*** (King Christian Stood by the Lofty Mast) described Danish and Norwegian sailors' victories during the wars against Sweden (see *History and Myth*). Along with ***Der er et Yndigt Land*** (There Is a Lovely Land) by Adam Oehlenschläger and Hans Ernst Krøyer, it is the national anthem of Denmark.

During the 19th century, there was renewed interest in religious hymns. Bishop and poet Nikolai Frederik Severin (N.F.S.) Grundtvig called for a revival of Christian values through education and personal growth. In 1838, he published ***Skolen for Livet*** (School for Life), which promoted society's participation in Danish history, culture, and faith. Grundtvig's works became the foundation of self-governing folk high schools (see *Learning and Knowledge*). While some authors explored

themes of realism and reason in the mid-to-late century, Hans Christian Andersen wrote fairy tales that dealt with universal themes such as love, friendship, and identity. Regarded as the "father of modern fairy tales," his most famous stories are ***Den Lille Havfrue*** (The Little Mermaid), ***Den Grimme Ælling*** (The Ugly Duckling), and ***Tommelise*** (Thumbelina). Andersen's fairy tales have been translated into over 125 languages, adapted to film and TV, and are considered national treasures.

In 1917, two Danish authors, Karl Adolph Gjellerup and Henrik Pontoppidan, shared the Nobel Prize in Literature. Gjellerup won for his rich and diverse poetry, while Pontoppidan for his novels' descriptions of early 20th-century life in Denmark. In 1901, Johannes V. Jensen published ***Kongens Fald*** (The Fall of the King), a historical fiction novel centering around themes of existentialism and identity during wartime under the reign of King Christian II (see *History and Myth*).

In 1944, Jensen won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Another notable 20th-century work is Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa,* originally published in English under the pseudonym Isak Dinesen. The novel is a memoir describing Blixen's life in Kenya on a coffee plantation. It depicts African colonial life during the final years of the British Empire and was adapted into a 1985 film, winning 7 Academy Awards.

In recent years, "Nordic noir," a crime fiction genre that originated in Scandinavia, has dominated Danish literature. Some of Jussi Adler-Olsen's books, such as ***Kvinden i buret***

(The Woman in the Cage) and ***Fasandræberne*** (The Pheasant Killers), have been adapted to film and TV.

Folk Arts and Handicrafts
Denmark also has a rich history of arts and crafts, such as ceramics, paintings, jewelry, pottery, and woodcarvings. During the 19th century, the country experienced a renaissance of romantic-nationalistic painters. Artists such as Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, Christen Købke, and Martinus Rørbye painted scenic landscapes and depictions of everyday life that emphasized Danish identity.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Sustenance Overview
Meals are often important social events in Denmark. Danish cuisine reflects the country's agricultural traditions and international influences.

Dining Customs
Generally, Danes eat three meals per day. *Morgenmad* (breakfast) is usually light and followed by a *frokost* (lunch) at 12pm. While breakfast and lunch are generally cold meals, *aftensmad* (dinner) is heavy and served hot. Danes typically eat dinner between 5-7pm.

Although Danes tend to value privacy, they often host dinner parties in their homes for friends and family. Gathering to eat a meal inside a person's home embodies *hygge* ("coziness"), an important concept in Danish culture that encompasses comfort, warmth, and togetherness (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*). When invited to a Danish home, guests typically bring wine, flowers, or chocolates as a gift. Generally, Danes value punctuality (see *Time and Space*) and expect guests to arrive on time. Guests typically remove their shoes before entering a home and often bring a pair of slippers to wear while dining. Guests typically take their seats promptly, as the meal often begins upon their arrival. Danes use utensils to eat most foods and hold the knife in the right or dominant hand and fork in the other. Danes signal they are done eating by placing their utensils on the plate with the handles pointing to the right. Danes tend to finish everything on their plates and consider wasting food impolite. After the meal, guests usually linger for conversation, coffee, and dessert.

Diet
Generally, meals are simple, highlighting fish, meat, grains, root vegetables, breads, and cheeses. Danes usually regard *stegt flæsk* (crispy pork belly served with potatoes and parsley sauce) as their national dish.

Pork, herring (a small, oily fish), salmon, cod, and legumes are common protein sources in Denmark. Additionally, wild berries, potatoes, and seasonal produce like cabbage and beets are featured in many dishes. Danes eat bread with most meals, often a wholegrain variety like *rugbrød* ("rye bread," a dense, seeded rye bread) or *knækbrød* ("crispbread," a dry, seeded cracker). They tend to garnish dishes with herbs like dill, thyme, and oregano. Dried seasonings, particularly cinnamon, cardamom, and caraway, also appear in dishes.

The Danish diet typically limits processed foods, focusing instead on local ingredients. Due to the country's cold climate (see *Political and Social Relations*), preservation methods like drying, salting, and pickling have shaped Danish cuisine. Additionally, foraging is a common leisure activity, whereby

Danes gather and consume berries, mushrooms, nuts, and herbs found in nature.

Meals and Popular Dishes
Breakfast in Denmark is typically quick and nutritious. Popular options include *grød* (porridge), cereal, yoghurt, and fruit. For heavier breakfasts, some Danes eat *rundstykker* (small bread rolls) with meat and cheese, or open-faced rye bread sandwiches with fried eggs. For special breakfast occasions, Danes typically eat pastries such as *spandauer* (circular pastries with jam or cream filling called "Danishes" in the US) and *kanelsnegle* ("cinnamon snails," spiral pastries filled with cinnamon and cardamom).

Most Danes, adults and children, bring a *madpakke* (packed lunch) to work or school. A *madpakke* usually contains open-faced sandwiches on rye bread called *smørrebrød* ("buttered bread"). Danes make *smørrebrød* by taking a piece of buttered rye bread and adding *pålæg* (toppings or spreads). Popular *pålæg* options are fish, sliced meat, cheese, shrimp, boiled eggs, potatoes, and *leverpostej* (liver pâté). Although going out for lunch is uncommon in Denmark, many companies have cafeterias that provide food to employees.

Generally, dinner consists of meat or fish with potatoes, vegetables, and salad. Common options are *frikadeller* ("meatballs," pan-fried pork and beef meatballs), *fiskefrikadeller* ("fish meatballs," pan-fried cod balls), and *forloren hare* ("mock hare," veal and pork meatloaf wrapped in bacon). Potatoes, root vegetables, and *rødkål* (braised red cabbage) are typical side dishes. Foreign dishes like pizza, pasta, burgers, and sushi are also popular. For special occasions like Christmas, feasts often consist of *flæskesteg* (roast pork with a crisp rind), *andesteg* (roast duck), *brunede kartofler* (caramelized/browned potatoes), and an array of sides and sweets.

Cold desserts like *koldskål* ("cold bowl," a sweet vanilla buttermilk yoghurt) are popular during Denmark's summer months. A common warm dessert is *æbleskiver* ("apple slices"), which are sweet pancake balls that do not contain apple. Another typical Danish dessert is *æblekage* ("apple cake") which is not a cake but a crumble made from apples and vanilla. Danes also eat pastries made of *wienerbrød* ("Vienna bread," a style of puff pastry dough brought to Denmark by Austrian bakers in the 19th century).

Beverages
Kaffe (coffee) is a popular drink in Denmark, and most Danes drink at least one cup per day. Denmark consistently ranks among the top five countries for coffee consumption per capita. Milk, juice, and soft drinks, particularly *Tuborg Squash* (an orange-flavored soda), are common non-alcoholic beverages.

Øl (beer) is Denmark's most popular alcoholic beverage. Besides the large brands of Carlsberg and Tuborg, Denmark has over 230 microbreweries that produce beer of all varieties. *Snaps* ("schnapps," a strong alcohol flavored with fruits or herbs) is the most common spirit. *Akvavit* ("aquavit," a caraway or dill flavored liquor) is Denmark's most traditional type of *snaps*. Wine is another common alcoholic beverage often served with dinner. Before taking a sip of alcohol, Danes

raise their glass and say "**skål**" (cheers) while making eye contact with everyone.

Eating Out
Restaurants in Denmark range from upscale establishments specializing in international and Nordic cuisine to casual restaurants serving affordable food. There are over 30 Michelin-starred (top-rated) restaurants in Denmark, and **Noma** in Copenhagen has been named the world's best restaurant five times. Food halls are common in cities and sell a variety of fresh local produce, meat, seafood, bread, pastries, and flowers. Street carts sell cheap, quick food, notably **rød pølse** (hot dogs). Tipping is welcome but not expected, and many Danes round up their bill to the nearest whole number for friendly service.

Health Overview
While Danes tend to live long and healthy lives, cancer and circulatory disease are common causes of death. Between 2000-24, life expectancy at birth in Denmark increased from about 77 to 82 years, nearly the same as in the European Union (EU, 81) and the US (81), but below Norway (83). During the same period, infant mortality (the proportion of infants who die before age 1) decreased from about 5 deaths per 1,000 live births to 3, the same as the EU (3) but lower than the US (5).

Traditional Medicine
This treatment method consists of the knowledge, practices, and skills that are derived from a native population's beliefs, experiences, and theories. In Denmark, traditional medicine is usually referred to as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) which includes herbal remedies, massage, homeopathy, and acupuncture. Some Danes use CAM to treat minor ailments that do not warrant a doctor's visit. Common plant medicines are oregano, thyme, heather, St. John's wort, and other wildflowers that are processed into essential oils. Since 1992, the Danish Medicines Agency has regulated the

country's herbal medicine industry. Although private clinics provide most CAM services, some state hospitals perform acupuncture. Danes must pay out-of-pocket for CAM treatments performed in private clinics.

Healthcare System

Denmark's public healthcare system reflects a long history of public welfare and government-provided services (see *History and Myth*). Legislation in the 1970s established Denmark's universal healthcare system, which provides free and equal access to healthcare for all legal residents. The Danish Health Act of 2019 states their healthcare system is to provide high-quality, equitable healthcare for the population. ***Sundhedsministeriet*** (the Ministry of Health) is the national agency in charge of Denmark's healthcare system.

The Danish healthcare system is decentralized, operating at the national, regional, and municipal levels. At the national level, *Sundhedsministeriet* is responsible for planning, regulating, funding, and supervising the Danish healthcare system. The national government does not provide healthcare services. Instead, councils from five regions oversee the provision of care by operating hospitals and managing doctors and other healthcare professionals. Public healthcare covers most health services like annual physicals, hospital visits, specialist appointments, and emergency care. There are no co-payments for most services.

The government primarily uses taxes to fund Denmark's universal public healthcare system, which is accessible to all registered residents, regardless of nationality and employment status. EU residents can also access health services in Denmark. While undocumented immigrants do not have formal access to Denmark's healthcare system, they can receive emergency care.

Although public healthcare is accessible, private health insurance is common in Denmark. Around 42% of the population has "voluntary complementary health insurance" which pays for services not covered by the state system. Additionally, approximately 32% of the population has "supplementary private insurance" which allows access to private healthcare providers, who offer high quality services and shorter wait times.

While pharmaceuticals are not free, they are affordable. Depending on the type of prescription, the government covers a portion of the cost, and the patient pays a co-payment. As of 2024, the government caps an individual's annual out-of-pocket medicine costs at DKK 4,575 (about US \$639). About 12.4% of healthcare costs are paid out-of-pocket in Denmark.

As of 2023, Denmark spent around 8.2% of GDP on healthcare, lower than the US (17.6%) and EU (7.3%), but higher than Norway (8%). Despite its comparatively low expenditure, Denmark's rates of preventable and treatable diseases continue to decline. As of 2024, only about 4% of Denmark's population reported unmet medical care needs due to cost, distance, or waiting times, higher than the EU average (2%).

Healthcare Challenges
The leading cause of death in Denmark is cancer, which accounted for about 27% of deaths in 2022. Circulatory disease was the next leading cause in 2022 (20%), followed by respiratory disease (11%). While many experts rank the Danish population's overall health as high, behavioral risk factors, like poor diet, tobacco use, and alcohol consumption contributed to around 40% of deaths in 2019. As of late 2025, the Danish government confirmed some 3.4 million cases of COVID-19, resulting in nearly 9,000 deaths. As of 2023, approximately 82% of the population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Overview

Denmark's early economy was primarily agrarian, with communities farming and keeping livestock for personal consumption. Around 1500 BC, Denmark joined European trade networks. During the Viking Age from the 8th-11th centuries AD (see *History and Myth*), Danish Vikings began to raid and trade extensively in the North Sea and Eastern European river system, simultaneously expanding trade and establishing early commercial centers.

In the 13th century, Danes started to trade with merchants from the Hanseatic League, a powerful trading confederation of Northern European towns and cities (see *History and Myth*). Through **kontors** (trade outposts), the Hanseatic League held considerable influence in Scandinavia, that eventually decreased due to conflicts with medieval kingdoms. By the end of the 13th century, the Danish Monarchy and Church (see *Religion and Spirituality*) controlled most land in Denmark, obtaining income from the land and tithes on grain production.

During the 16th century, Denmark was undergoing the Protestant Reformation (see *Religion and Spirituality*), an expansion of the Monarchy (see *History and Myth*) and extensive conflict with neighbors. At the onset of the Reformation, the Crown received extensive land from the Catholic Church. The Monarchy later sold large portions of the land to Danish nobility to fund war efforts in the 1500s and a financial crisis during the 1650s.

In the 18th century, land reforms and new technology increased agricultural productivity. Population growth in Denmark allowed a transition to landless labor, with laborers no longer bound to their estate. In the 1780s, to encourage productivity and utilize the tax base of the new labor class, the Monarchy and private

landlords sold their land, increasing peasant land ownership. Two-thirds of all Danish farmers became owner-occupiers, compared to only 10% earlier in the 18th century. In 1759, enclosures made of permanent fence, hedges, or stone walls were first added around farms. In 1769, the Royal Danish Agricultural Society was founded to encourage and spread agricultural innovations.

The early 19th-century Napoleonic Wars (see *History & Myth*), strained Denmark's financial resources and halted international trade. To finance the wars, the Crown increased money printing, causing high inflation and a loss of confidence in the financial system. In 1813, prices rose by more than 300%, and the country formally declared bankruptcy. In response, the government established *Denmarks Nationalbank* in 1818, which was independent from the government and had a monopoly on issuing bank notes.

In the latter half of the 19th century, increases in agricultural output and industrialization stimulated the Danish economy. Decreases in international grain prices in the 1860s facilitated a profitable transition to dairy products and meat. Modest industrial production also began in the 1870s in Copenhagen and other major towns, creating a large new working class and increasing the percentage of the population living in urban areas.

Denmark imported coal, iron, and other materials to fuel its growing industry. These conditions gave rise to **Andelsbevægelsen** (the Cooperative Movement), whereby farmers organized to share resources in the spirit of cooperation espoused by N.F.S. Grundtvig, and this practice continues today (see *History and Myth*).

At the turn of the century, Denmark's small open economy was one of the fastest growing in Europe. However, World War I from 1914-18 (see *History and Myth*) disrupted economic progress for most, leading to a contraction of the economy. Policies to

mitigate the recession made matters worse, causing deflation, accompanied by industrial stagnation and unemployment. The Great Depression and Britain's establishment of preferential trade tariffs disrupted trade, further worsening Denmark's financial situation. In response, the government implemented import restrictions and exchange controls, stimulating production for domestic consumption. By the end of the interwar period, Denmark's trade rebounded.

When Germany occupied Denmark during World War II from 1940-45 (see *History and Myth*), Denmark retained some of its independence but lost its primary trading partner, Britain. After the war, the country faced inflation, strict monetary policies, and credit restrictions. With the help of the Marshall Plan, a US initiative to aid Europe's post- World War II recovery, Denmark was able to quickly restore its economic capacity.

Seeking to integrate into the increasingly globalized economy, Denmark joined the Bretton Woods System, Organization of European Economic Cooperation, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank in the late 1940s.

During the 1950s-60s, the Danish government significantly expanded its welfare provisions, transforming the economy in line with the "Nordic Model," which merges free markets and a generous public welfare system. The State introduced a retirement pension for all and expanded public daycare facilities. At the same time, the industrial and public sectors were expanding, driven by an increase of married women in the labor force (see *Sex and Gender*).

By the 21st century, Denmark had become one of the world's wealthiest countries. From 1970-2023, Denmark ranked in the top 10 richest Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries above the EU average of 1.8%.

Despite experiencing a 2% decline in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, government spending and a quick recovery in 2021 mitigated the economic effect. Today, Denmark has the Nordic region's third highest GDP, totaling some US \$410 billion as of 2023, behind Sweden (US \$585 billion) and Norway (US \$485 billion). Denmark also experienced moderate positive GDP growth, despite inflation and increasing energy prices. Experts predict the economy will continue to grow, with forecasts for GDP to increase by around 2.5% in 2025.

Services
Accounting for around 64% of GDP and employing some 79%

of the labor force in 2023, the services sector is Denmark's largest. Major subsectors include tourism, banking, and shipping.

Tourism: In 2023, Demark had approximately 63 million overnight visits. That same year, tourism contributed to about 6.5% of GDP and 7.3% of the workforce. Denmark's tourist attractions range from the colorful Nyhavn Harbor and Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen to natural attractions like the ***Møns Klint*** (Chalk Cliffs on the island of Møn).

Banking: Denmark's banking subsector is highly concentrated and dominated by domestic banks, which in 2020 held over 85% of total assets. The three largest institutions – Danske Bank, Nykredit Realkredit, and Realkredit Danmark – comprised more than 50% of total banking assets.

Shipping: Denmark is a major maritime power, with a fleet of some 755 ships in 2023. Shipping is the country's largest export industry, which in 2023 exported goods worth around 340 billion Danish Krone (DKK, also kr, plural kroner) and accounted for no less than 18% of total Danish exports. A.P. Moller–Maersk based in Aarhus, Denmark is one of the world's largest container shipping companies. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry experienced record highs due to increased freight rates.

Industry

The industrial sector accounts for some 24% of GDP and employs 19% of the workforce as of 2023. Its largest subsectors include pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, wind turbine production, and shipbuilding. The international toy production group, LEGO, began in Denmark and still maintains its corporate headquarters in Billund, Denmark.

Life Sciences Industry: Denmark's life sciences sector, known as "Medicon Valley," includes universities, research facilities, and skilled professionals. They lead in European drug development, with expertise in diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular, nervous system, and inflammatory diseases and allergies. Denmark's Novo Nordisk, a pharmaceutical company known for its weight loss drugs Wegovy and Ozempic, is Europe's most valuable company, with a market capitalization of over US $384 billion. According to *Danmarks Statistik* (Statistics Denmark), the pharmaceutical industry was the driving force behind Denmark's 2023 GDP growth of around 1.8%, which they had previously predicted to fall.
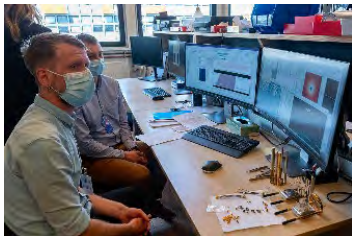
Agriculture

This sector accounts for about 1% of GDP and 2% of the workforce. Denmark is the only country in the Nordic-Baltic region that is a net exporter of agricultural products. The country produces enough food to feed around 17 million people, almost 3 times its population of some 6 million. Pork, fish, dairy, and small grain (mostly barley and wheat) production predominate. About 60% of Denmark's land area is arable. Danish farms are typically sole proprietorships (83%) and large, with an average size of 83 hectares (roughly two American football fields side by side).

Livestock Production: Nearly 90% of Denmark's agricultural revenue comes from livestock production. Specifically, the country is known for its production of pigs and pork meat. In 2023, total production in Denmark was some 30 million pigs.

Currency

In 1875, Denmark adopted the krone, issued in six coins (0.50, 1, 2, 5, 10, and 20) and five banknotes (50, 100, 200, 500, and 1,000). The 1,000 kroner banknote will be phased out after 31

May 2025. A krone divides into 100 øre. From 2019-24, US $1 was worth between 6.03-7.75 kr.

Foreign Trade

Exports, which totaled some US $277 billion in 2023, consisted of packaged medicine, garments, fish, vaccines, and refined petroleum sold to Germany (13%), US (10%), and Sweden (9%), among others. Imports totaled about US $243 billion and consisted of natural gas, cars, garments, packaged medicine, and refined petroleum from Germany (18%), Sweden (11%), and Norway (10%), among others.

European Union (EU)

Denmark has grappled with European integration since the end of World War II (see *History and Myth*). In 1973, Denmark joined the European Economic Community, an economic partnership among European states. In 1992, Denmark rejected the Maastricht treaty, which would transform the European Communities into the EU. After negotiations, Denmark joined the EU in 1993 under the Edinburgh Agreement that exempted the country from the EU's economic and monetary union; common security and defense policy; justice and domestic affairs; and citizenship. In 2000, Denmark voted against adopting a single European currency, maintaining their use of the Danish krone (see "Currency" above).

Foreign Aid

Denmark provides substantial official development assistance, contributing some US $2.8 billion or over 0.7% of gross national income in 2022. The country also channels aid through ***Danida,*** Denmark's development cooperation. In early 2023, Denmark's ***Folketing*** (Parliament) established a Danish National Ukraine Fund and has since allocated nearly US $8 billion in civilian and military assistance to Ukraine (see *Political and Social Relations*).

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview
Denmark's physical and telecommunications infrastructures are well-developed. The country has a highly digitalized society, where most financial transactions and government services are done online. Denmark's media landscape is diverse and free.

Transportation
Travel by car is a common method of transportation in Denmark, especially outside of urban areas. In 2022, Denmark had 546 cars per 1,000 people, similar to Sweden (542) but lower than Norway (665) and Iceland (779). As of September 2024, 57% of new cars purchased are electric, outselling petrol, diesel, and hybrid vehicles combined, a move to garner tax credits to offset the up to 150% vehicle registration tax on non-electric vehicles.

The Denmark public transit system is well-developed with bus, rail, tram, ferries, and taxis available in much of the country. Trains are the most popular form of public transport (see "Railways" below), while buses are widely used particularly in smaller towns. Bicycling is also a common means of transport, with over 4,600 mi of bike paths in the country.

Roadways: Denmark has a nearly 46,000-mi roadway network, not including Greenland or the Faroe Islands, and consists of some 842 mi of motorways. Bridges accompany Denmark's road infrastructure, linking its many islands. Prominent bridges include Great Belt Bridge (11 mi) that connects *Sjælland* (Zealand) and *Fyn* (Funen) and Øresund Bridge (10 mi) that connects Amager and Malmö in Sweden. Greenland does not have an extensive road network, with no two major towns connected by road (*see Political and Social Relations*). Instead, a combination of snowmobiles, airplanes, and boats are used for transportation. The Faroe Islands' almost 600 mi-long road infrastructure consists of bridges and underwater tunnels connecting 6 of its 18 isles. In a 2019 global assessment,

Denmark ranked 36th of 141 countries in road connectivity and 14th in road quality.

Railways: Denmark's more than 1,600-mi railway network connects all the medium and large cities. *Banedanmark* (Rail Net Denmark), a governmental body under the Ministry of Transport, manages over 80% of the country's rail network. *Danske Statsbaner* (Danish State Railways, or DSB) is the official Danish national rail operator, which carries more than 195 million passengers annually.

Ports and Waterways: As a kingdom made up of islands (see *Political and Social Relations*), Denmark has over 4,500 mi of coastline and nearly 250 mi of inland waterways. Three straits (sea channels) – *Øresund* (the Sound), *Storebælt* (Great Belt), and *Lillebælt* (Little Belt) – surround Denmark and are renown for international trade. These straits connect the Baltic Sea to the North Sea. Denmark has some 130 commercial ports that service the country's robust maritime shipping sector (see *Economics and Resources*).

Airways: Denmark has 99 airports, 28 of which were paved as of 2023. Copenhagen Airport (CPH) in Kastrup is the country's primary airport, which serviced more than 30 million passengers in 2018. Scandinavia Airlines (SAS) – the flag carrier of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden – is the largest airline. In 2024, SAS had around 30% of all departure seats. Norwegian Air Shuttle and Ryanair are Denmark's popular, low-cost carriers.

Energy
Denmark was a net exporter of oil and gas from 1997-2018. Despite currently being a net importer of gas, Denmark is expected to become a net exporter again with their Tyra refinement facility coming back fully online in 2025. In 2023, oil made up about 45% of Denmark's total energy supply, followed by wind (25%), other renewables (10%), gas (8%), solar (5%), and coal (4%). Wind power is Denmark's most prominent renewable energy source, meeting 58% of the country's electricity needs. Denmark's Kriegers Flak is Scandinavia's largest offshore wind farm, with 72 offshore wind turbines.

Media

In 2024, Denmark ranked second of 180 countries assessed in a world press freedom index, behind Norway (1). The country's media sector consists of private companies mostly in the print and online media, while public-funded companies dominate television and radio. Press freedom is robust, supported by constitutional protections for speech, press, and censorship.

Print Media: Denmark has over 100 newspapers with a combined daily circulation over 1 million. *Politiken*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Berlingske*, *Ekstrabladet,* and *BT* (a spin-off of *Berlingske Tidende – BT* is not an acronym) are popular national newspapers. The *Danmarks Radio* (Danish Broadcasting Corporation, or DR) and TV 2 websites are also leading online news destinations. *The Copenhagen Post* is the country's primary English-language newspaper.

TV and Radio: DR, a public service radio and television broadcaster, is the oldest and largest broadcast enterprise in Denmark. DR operates six television and eight radio channels. The corporation comprises some 75% of the radio market share and almost 30% of the television market share. TV 2, a government-owned national commercial broadcaster, has the largest television market share at 52%.

Telecommunications

In 2022, Denmark had about 12 landline and 127 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. Denmark ranks first for connectivity in the European Union (EU), with 95% of households covered by very-high-capacity networks and 98% of populated areas covered by 5G. The popular personal area network technology, Bluetooth, is named after the 10th-century Danish Viking King Harald Bluetooth, famous for uniting Scandinavia (see *History and Myth*).

Internet: In 2023, about 99% of Danes were regular Internet users. While many Danes access the Internet through mobile devices, Denmark had about 45 fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2022.

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