

Philippines

Used with permission. Defense Language Institute (DLI)



Population...73,265,584	Health	
under 15 yrs...40%	Life Expectancy	63/68
Commo	Hospitals	1:780
TV...1:9.5	Doctors	1:1,062
Radio...1:17	IMR	50:1000
Phone...1:55	Avg. Income...\$2,500	
Newspaper...54:1000	Literacy Rate...89%	



[Click on map for larger image](#)

Religious Groups

Background. "Religion holds a central place in the life of most Filipinos, including Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Protestants, and [indigenous belief practice]. It is central not as an abstract belief system, but rather as a host of experiences, rituals, ceremonies, and adjurations that provide continuity in life, cohesion in the community, and moral purpose for existence. Religious associations are part of the system of kinship ties, patron/client bonds, and other linkages outside the nuclear family." (Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from the Library of Congress Country Studies/Area Handbooks--Philippines.)

Indigenous practice. "Christianity and Islam have been superimposed on ancient traditions and acculturated. The unique religious blends that have resulted, when combined with the strong personal faith of Filipinos, have given rise to numerous and diverse revivalist movements. Generally characterized by millenarian goals, anti-modern bias, supernaturalism, and authoritarianism in the person of a charismatic messiah figure, these movements have attracted thousands of Filipinos, especially in areas like Mindanao, which have been subjected to extreme pressure of change over a short period of time. Many have been swept up in these movements, out of a renewed sense of fraternity and community. Like the highly visible examples of flagellation and reenacted crucifixion in the Philippines, these movements may seem to have little in common with organized Christianity or Islam. But in the intensely personalistic Philippine religious context, they have not been aberrations so much as extreme examples of how religion retains its central role in society."

Makeup. "The religious composition of the Philippines remained predominantly Catholic in the late 1980s. In 1989 approximately 82 percent of the population was Roman Catholic; Muslims accounted for only 5 percent. The remaining population was mostly affiliated with other Christian churches, although there were also a small number of Buddhists, Daoists (or Taoists), and tribal [indigenous practice followers].

Christians were to be found throughout the archipelago. Muslims remained largely in the south and were less integrated than other religious minorities into the mainstream of Philippine culture. Although most Chinese were members of Christian churches, a minority of Chinese worshipped in Taoist or in Buddhist temples, the most spectacular of which was an elaborate Taoist temple on the outskirts of Cebu."

Spanish influence. "Spanish colonialism had, from its formal inception in 1565 with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi, as its principal raison d'être the conversion of the inhabitants to Christianity. When Legazpi embarked on his conversion efforts, most Filipinos were still practicing a form of polytheism, although some as far north as Manila had converted to Islam.

For the majority, religion still consisted of sacrifices and incantations to spirits believed to be inhabiting field and sky, home and garden, and other dwelling places both human and natural. Malevolent spirits could bring harm in the form of illness or accident, whereas benevolent spirits, such as those of one's ancestors, could bring prosperity in the form of good weather and bountiful crops. Shamans were called upon to communicate with these spirits on behalf of village and family, and propitiation ceremonies were a common part of village life and ritual. Such beliefs continued to influence the religious practices of many upland tribal groups in the modern period."

Syncretism. "The religious system that conquistadors and priests imported in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was superimposed on this polytheistic base. Filipinos who converted to Catholicism did not shed their earlier beliefs but superimposed the new on the old. Saints took primacy over spirits, the Mass over propitiation ceremonies, and priests over shamans. This mixing of different religious beliefs and practices marked Philippine Catholicism from the start."

Catholic (83%)

Reform. "The Catholic Church made a remarkable comeback in the Philippines in the twentieth century, primarily because the Vatican agreed to divest itself of massive church estates and to encourage Filipinos to join in the clergy. This resurgence was so successful that Protestant mission efforts, led by large numbers of American missionaries during the period of American colonial rule, made little headway. In the early 1990s, the clergy were predominantly Filipino, all of the diocesan hierarchy were Filipino, and the church was supported by an extensive network of parochial schools. Catholicism, as practiced in the Philippines in the 1990s, blended official doctrine with folk observance. In an intensely personal way, God the Father was worshipped as a father figure and Jesus as the loving son who died for the sins of each individual, and the Virgin was venerated as a compassionate mother."

Fiesta. "Perhaps the single event most conducive to community solidarity each year is the fiesta. Celebrated on the special day of the patron saint of a town or barangay, the fiesta is a time for general feasting. Houses are opened to guests, and food is served in abundance. The fiesta always includes a Mass, but its purpose is unabashedly social. The biggest events include a parade, dance, basketball tournament, cockfights, and other contests, and perhaps a carnival, in addition to much visiting and feasting."

Indigenous Christian Churches Iglesia Filipina Independiente. "The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (Independent Philippine Church), founded by Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940), received the support of revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo during the revolt against Spain and subsequent conflicts with American forces. It rode the tide of anti-friar nationalism in absorbing Filipino Roman Catholic clergy and forcibly seizing church property at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1938 the church formally split. The faction opposing Aglipay later won a court decision giving it the right to both the name and property of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. Followers of Aglipay, however, continued to argue that they represented true Aglipayanism. In the early 1990s, those Aglipayans who rejected the Unitarian stance and adhered to the concept of the Trinity were associated with the Protestant Episcopal church of the United States."

Iglesia ni Kristo. "In the 1990s, all over Luzon, the Visayan Islands, and even northern Mindanao, unmistakable Iglesia ni Kristo (Church of Christ) places of worship, all similar in design and architecture, were being constructed for a rapidly growing membership. Founded by Felix Manalo Ysagun in 1914, the Iglesia ni Kristo did not attract much notice until after World War II, when its highly authoritarian organization and evangelical style

began to fill a need for urban and rural families displaced by rapid changes in Philippine society.

The church, led by clergy with little formal education, requires attendance at twice-weekly services conducted in local Philippine languages, where guards take attendance and forbid entrance to nonmembers. Membership dues, based on ability to pay, are mandatory. Members are expected to be "disciplined, clean, and God-fearing." Gamblers and drunks face the possibility of being expelled. The church forbids (on penalty of expulsion) marriage to someone of another faith and membership in a labor union. The Iglesia ni Kristo also tells its members how to vote and is even respected for its ability to get out the vote for candidates of its choice. The message is always simple and straightforward-- listeners are told that the Iglesia ni Kristo is the mystical body of Christ, outside of which there can be no salvation.

Roman Catholicism and Protestant churches are denounced--only through membership in the Iglesia ni Kristo can there be hope for redemption. The church gave neither a count nor an estimate of its membership, but the rapid construction of elaborate buildings, including a campus for an Iglesia ni Kristo college adjacent to the University of the Philippines, would indicate that it was expanding."

Protestants (9%)

Schisms. "From the start, Protestant churches in the Philippines were plagued by disunity and schisms. At one point after World War II, there were more than 200 denominations representing less than 3 percent of the populace. Successful mergers of some denominations into the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the formation of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCCP) brought a degree of order. In the 1990s, there remained a deep gulf and considerable antagonism, however, between middleclass-oriented NCCP churches and the scores of more evangelical denominations sprinkled throughout the islands."

U.S. identity. "Protestantism has always been associated with United States influence in the Philippines. All major denominations in the United States, and some minor ones, sent missions to the Philippines, where they found the most fertile ground for conversions among some of the upland tribes not yet reached by Catholic priests and among the urban middle class."

Missions. "Protestant missionaries made major contributions in the fields of education and medicine. Throughout the islands, Protestant churches set up clinics and hospitals."

Muslim (5%)

Pre-Islamic influence. "Islam in the Philippines has absorbed indigenous elements, much as has Catholicism. Moros thus make offerings to spirits (diwatas), malevolent or benign, believing that such spirits can and will have an effect on one's health, family, and crops. They also include pre-Islamic customs in ceremonies marking rites of passage--birth, marriage, and death. Moros share the essentials of Islam, but specific practices vary from one Moro group to another. Although Muslim Filipino women are required to stay at the back of the mosque for prayers (out of the sight of men), they are much freer in daily life than are women in many other Islamic societies. Because of the world resurgence of Islam since World War II, Muslims in the Philippines have a stronger sense of their unity as a religious community than they had in the past."

Muslims, who comprise about 5 percent of the population and reside principally in Mindanao and nearby islands, constitute the largest minority group in the country. Philippine culture, with its emphasis on familial, tribal, and regional loyalties, creates informal barriers whereby access to jobs or resources is provided first to those of one's own family or group. Many Muslims claim that they continue to be underrepresented in

senior civilian and military positions." (Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996--Philippines, U.S. Department of State)

Ethnic/Racial Groups

Lowland Christian population (91.5%). "In 1990 lowland Christians, also known as Christian Malays, made up 91.5 percent of the population and were divided into several regional groups. Because of their regional base in Metro Manila and adjacent provinces to the north, east, and south, Tagalogs tended to be more visible than other groups."

Muslim Filipinos (5%) Moros (mohr-ohs). "Muslims, about 5 percent of the total population, were the most significant minority in the Philippines. Although undifferentiated racially from other Filipinos, in the 1990s they remained outside the mainstream of national life, set apart by their religion and way of life. In the 1970s, in reaction to consolidation of central government power under martial law, which began in 1972, the Muslim Filipino, or Moro (Spanish word for Moor; name given by the Spanish to Muslim Filipinos and still used) population increasingly identified with the worldwide Islamic community, particularly in Malaysia, Indonesia, Libya, and Middle Eastern countries. Longstanding economic grievances stemming from years of governmental neglect and from resentment of popular prejudice against them contributed to the roots of Muslim insurgency. Moros were confined almost entirely to the southern part of the country--southern and western Mindanao, southern Palawan, and the Sulu Archipelago.

Muslim Filipinos traditionally have not been a closely knit or even allied group. They were fiercely proud of their separate identities, and conflict between them was endemic for centuries. In addition to being divided by different languages and political structures, the separate groups also differed in their degree of Islamic orthodoxy."

Moro social structure. "The traditional structure of Moro society focused on a sultan who was both a secular and a religious leader and whose authority was sanctioned by the Quran. The datu (dah-too) were communal leaders who measured power not by their holdings in landed wealth but by the numbers of their followers. In return for tribute and labor, the datu provided aid in emergencies and advocacy in disputes with followers of another chief. Thus, through his agama (court--actually an informal dispute-settling session), a datu became basic to the smooth function of Moro society. He was a powerful authority figure who might have as many as four wives and who might enslave other Muslims in raids on their villages or in debt bondage. He might also demand revenge (maratabat) for the death of a follower or upon injury to his pride or honor."

Datu (dah-too). "The datu continued to play a central role in Moro society in the 1980s. In many parts of Muslim Mindanao, they still administered the sharia (sacred Islamic law) through the agama. They could no longer expand their circle of followers by raiding other villages, but they achieved the same end by accumulating wealth and then using it to provide aid, employment, and protection for less fortunate neighbors. Datu support was essential for government programs in a Muslim barangay. Although a datu in modern times rarely had more than one wife, polygamy was permitted so long as his wealth was sufficient to provide for more than one.

Moro society was still basically hierarchical and familial, at least in rural areas. A significant break from past practice was the 1990 establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which gave Muslims in the region control over some aspects of government, but not over national security and foreign affairs. There were social factors in the early 1990s that militated against the cultural autonomy sought by Muslim leaders. Industrial development and increased migration outside the region brought new educational demands and new roles for women. These changes in turn led to greater assimilation and, in some cases, even intermarriage. Nevertheless, Muslims and Christians generally remained distinct societies often at odds with one another."

Upland Tribal Groups (3%). "Another minority, the more than 100 upland tribal groups, in 1990 constituted approximately 3 percent of the population. As lowland Filipinos, both

Muslim and Christian, grew in numbers and expanded into the interiors of Luzon, Mindoro, Mindanao, and other islands, they isolated upland tribal communities in pockets. Over the centuries, these isolated tribes developed their own special identities. The folk art of these groups was, in a sense, the last remnant of an indigenous tradition that flourished everywhere before Islamic and Spanish contact."

The Chinese. "In 1990 the approximately 600,000 ethnic Chinese made up less than 1 percent of the population."

Women

Domestic violence. "Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is a serious problem. Women's advocates cite the lack of laws on domestic violence, double standards of morality, and a traditional societal reluctance to discuss private family affairs as some of the reasons for domestic violence. The absence of divorce under the law and the lack of job opportunities combine to limit the ability of both poor and wealthy women to escape destructive relationships. Nonetheless, women's rights advocates describe the greater willingness of women to speak out, despite a sense of shame, fear, and a desire to preserve 'family honor,' as a positive movement toward gender equality." (Report for Human Rights Practices for 1996, Philippines, U.S. Department of State.)

Prostitution. "Women and girls in the lower economic strata seek economic improvement through employment overseas. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by unethical recruiters who promise jobs abroad or, in some cases, arrange marriages with foreign men. Some find work only as prostitutes or suffer abuse at the hands of their foreign employers or husbands. Those recruited to work as maids, entertainers, or models may, while overseas, be forced to participate in public shows or dances where nudity and the prospect of sex is the principal attraction. Others knowingly accept questionable jobs to support parents, children, or siblings with their remittances. To curb such abuses, the Government campaigned to end illegal recruiting and, by raising age, educational, and professional standards for young women seeking jobs abroad, tried to discourage employment migration.

Prostitution remains illegal, but widespread, and a fact of life for many poorer Filipinos with otherwise limited economic and job opportunities. While penalties for prostitution are light, detained prostitutes are subjected to administrative indignities. Public pressure mounted for legal action to be directed not only against prostitutes but also against their employers and clients seeking their services."

Legal rights. "In law but not in practice, women have most of the rights and protections accorded men. Church opposition to divorce in this overwhelmingly Catholic nation is strong. Changes in the Legal Code have made marriage annulment fairly easy, and the practice has become more frequent. The legal cost, however, precludes this option for many women. The practice of "unofficial divorce" (permanent separation) is common among lower income families; in these cases the wife is usually left with the children, and the husband provides little or no financial support. Except for government service and jobs in Government-owned or controlled corporations, women face discrimination in employment. Sexual harassment is also a problem. A recent survey by the Institute of Labor Studies found workplace sexual harassment to be widespread, yet underreported due to victims' reticence and fear of losing their jobs." (Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996, Philippines, U.S. Department of State.)

Conflicts

International disputes. "Involved in a complex dispute over the Spratley Islands with China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam and possibly Brunei; claims Malaysian state of Sabah." (CIA Factbook)

Internal conflicts. "The Philippine Government scored a major triumph when it concluded a peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front, the largest Muslim rebel group, ending its 24-year insurgency. Negotiation with the second-largest group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), proceeded slowly, however, and clashes continued between MILF and government forces in the southern Philippines. The MILF and the smaller, extremist Abu Sayyaf Group are both fighting for a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines." (Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996, Asia Overview, U.S. State Department.)

Holidays/Observances

(The following material, adapted from Holidays, Festivals and Celebrations of the World Dictionary, compiled by Sue Thompson and Barbara Carlson, [Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1994], is instructive.)

Bataan Day (9 April)

- Commemorates fall of Bataan in 1942 and 37,000 U.S. and Filipino soldiers captured. Thousands died in the infamous "death march."

Feast of Exaltation of the Cross (14 Sep)

- Nine day pageants remembering the discovery of the cross by St. Helena Flores de Mayo (FLOHR-ehs day MI-oh, 31 May)
- Festival, celebrated in some cities as the grandest of the year, where floral offerings are brought to the churches

Misa de Gallo (mee-sah day gahl-yoh, 16-24 Dec)

- Start of the Christmas season, blending Christian and ancient harvest thanksgiving rites
- Dawn of 16 Dec (cock's crow), church bells ring, parades begin, and people awaken for the Cock's Mass
- After midnight Mass on 24 Dec., people celebrate with rice cakes and ginger tea/cocoa

Rizal Day (RHEE-zahl. 30 Dec).

- A National holiday remembering execution of national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, killed in 1896
- Dr. Rizal denounced corrupt leadership of Spanish friars, founding a nonviolent reform movement in 1892
- Deported to Mindanao, he established a school and hospital. Eventually executed by a firing squad.

Other holidays

New Year's Day
Labor Day (1 May)
National Heroes Day (6 May)
All Saints' Day (1 Nov)
Bonifacio Day (30 Nov)

Gestures

- **Eyebrows.** A quick lifting of the eyebrows ("eyebrow flash") may be sole greeting given
- **Rudeness.** Loud, boisterous behavior is considered rude, as is becoming drunk. Carries negative connotations
- **Laughter.** Connotes both pleasure and as a mask for awkward setting/embarrassment.
- **Photos.** Request permission before taking photographs.

- **Stern demeanor.** "Hands on the hips" indicates a defiant gesture, meaning anger or challenge

Cultural Literacy Concepts/Terms

(The following terms, adapted from The Dictionary of Global Culture, [edited by Kwame Appiah and Henry Gates, Jr., NY: Alfred Knopf, 1997], apply. Go to this excellent dictionary for further information.)

Aguinaldo, Emilio (ah-GHEE-nahl-doh ehm-eel-yoh, 1869-1964)

- Revolutionary, nationalist leader
- Led freedom movement against Spain in 1896 becoming president after independence in 1898
- Held prisoner by the United States during WW II for conspiring with the Japanese
- Spent the latter life promoting democracy Aquino, Corazon (ah-KEE-noh, 1933-)
- After 1984 assassination of her husband, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Corazon Aquino opposed her husband's rival, President Ferdinand Marcos
- With election to the presidency in 1986 (-1992), Aquino successfully restored democracy

Bonifacio, Andres (bohn-ee-FAH-shoh, 1863-1897)

- Filipino nationalist and founder of the secret society, Katipunan
- Dedicated to freeing the Philippine Islands from the Spanish who had ruled since 1594
- Once Spanish ousted, Bonifacio challenged Emilio Aguinaldo's election eventually resulting in his own execution.

Bulosan, Carlos (boo-loh-sahn, 1913-1956)

- Filipino immigrant to the United States who worked his way from a cannery in Alaska to becoming a respected author
- Best known works are the Voice of Bataan (1943), The Laughter of My Father (1944), and America is in the Heart (1946)
- Helped to create a better image for Asian immigrants in post WW II America Gonzalez, N[ester] V[icente] M[adali] (GOHN-zahl-ehs, 1915-)
- Writer of shortstories, novels, and poetry concentrating on peasants and rural community
- Short stories include Seven Hills Away (1947) and Children of the Ash Covered Loam (1954); novels--A Season of Grace (1956) and The Bamboo Dancers (1959)
- Published his memoirs in 1990 under the title Kalutang: A Filipino in the World Manila galleons
- Enormous trading vessels employed by the Spanish for commerce from Manila to Acapulco beginning in 1565
- Trade using galleons continued until banned by Ferdinand III in 1813

Marcos, Ferdinand [Edralin] (ed-rahi-LEEN, 1917-1989)

- President of the Philippines from 1965-1986
- Administration held in power by military destruction of opposition. Moro (mohr-oh)
- Term brought by Spaniards to describe Filipino Muslims
- Refers also to a political group in southern islands where Muslim majority has periodically rallied for succession

Rizal, Jose (RHEE-zahl, 1861-1896)

- Physician, novelist, poet, patriot
- Nationalist hero who encouraged the Spaniards to realize errors of colonial rule and willingly grant Philippine independence
- First and most celebrated novel, Noli Me Tangere (1886; The Social Cancer) satirizes Spanish rule
- Spent his life in and out of exile while promoting rights of freedom and openly denouncing revolution · Spanish government felt that his death would aid in quenching rebellion
- Executed by firing squad

Santos, Bienvenido (BEE-yen-vahy-KNEE-doh, 1911-)

- Filipino teacher who served as cultural attaché to the Philippine Embassy in Washington after WW II
- Lived his life between both countries, teaching at the university level and writing
- Best known books are Brother My Brother (1960) and Villa Magdalena (1965).

Vocabulary

Run the mouse next to the vocabulary word to see its definition.

Aguinaldo, Emilio (ah-GHEE-nahl-doh ehm-eel-yoh). Revolutionary, nationalist leader. Led freedom movement against Spain in 1896 becoming president after independence in 1898. Retired after failure to withstand United States concession of the Philippines.

Aquino, Corazon (ah-KEE-noh, 1933-). After 1984 assassination of her husband, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Corazon Aquino opposed her husband's rival, President Ferdinand Marcos. With election to the presidency in 1986 (-1992), Aquino successfully restored democracy.

Bataan Day. Commemorates fall of Bataan in 1942 and 37,000 U.S. and Filipino soldiers captured. Thousands died in the infamous "death march."

Bonifacio, Andres (bohn-ee-FAH-shoh, 1863-1897). Filipino nationalist and founder of the secret society, Katipunan. Dedicated to freeing the Philippine Islands from the Spanish who had ruled since 1594. Once Spanish ousted, Bonifacio challenged Emilio Aguinaldo's election eventually resulting in his own execution.

Datu (dah-too). Moro communal leaders who measured power not by their holdings in landed wealth but by the numbers of their followers. In return for tribute and labor, the datu provided aid in emergencies and advocacy in disputes with followers of another chief.

Marcos, Ferdinand [Edralin] (ed-rahi-LEEN, 1917-1989). President of the Philippines from 1965-1986. Administration held in power by military destruction of opposition. Marcos justified his rule due to the insurgence of a Communist threat.

Misa de Gallo (mee-sah day gahl-yoh). Start of the Philippine Christmas season, blending Christian and ancient harvest thanksgiving rites. Dawn of 16 Dec (cock's crow), church bells ring, parades begin, and people awaken for the Cock's Mass. After midnight Mass on 24 Dec., people celebrate with rice cakes and ginger tea/cocoa.

Moros (mohr-ohs). Philippine Muslims, about 5 percent of the total population. Undifferentiated racially from other Filipinos yet remain outside the mainstream of national life, set apart by their religion and way of life.

Rizal Day (RHEE-zahl). National Philippine holiday remembering execution of national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, killed in 1896. Dr. Rizal denounced corrupt leadership of Spanish friars, founding a nonviolent reform movement in 1892. Sultan Secular and a religious leader of Moros whose authority was sanctioned by the Quran.