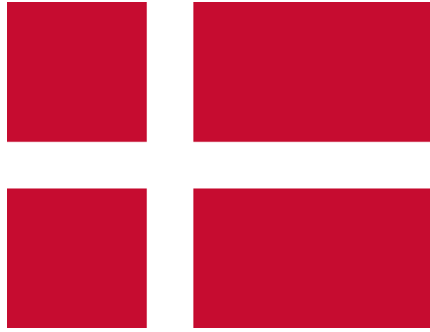# IDENTITIES ABROAD: DENMARK

IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via Diversity Abroad), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Denmark as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Denmark, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

Capital: Copenhagen

Population: 5,894,687

Language(s): Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic (an Inuit dialect), German (small minority); note - English is the predominant second language.

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran (official) 74.7%, Muslim 5.5%, other/none/unspecified (denominations of less than 1% each in descending order of size include Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Serbian Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Buddhist, Mormon, Pentecostal, and nondenominational Christian) 19.8%.

Ethnic groups: Danish (includes Greenlandic (who are predominantly Inuit) and Faroese) 86.3%, Turkish 1.1%, other 12.6% (largest groups are Polish, Syrian, German, Iraqi, and Romanian).

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Denmark is a Northern European country bordering the Baltic and Northern Seas on a peninsula just north of Germany and west of Sweden. Denmark also has several major islands, including Sjælland, Fyn, and Bornholm. The country is slightly less than twice the size of the state of Massachusetts. The capital of Denmark is Copenhagen and the national language is Danish. English is the predominant second language. The climate is temperate; humid and overcast with mild, windy winters and cool summers and the land is low and flat to gently rolling plains. The majority of the population centers tend to be along coastal areas, mainly in Copenhagen and the eastern side of the mainland.

Denmark's economy is very modern and features advanced world-leading firms in the pharmaceutical, maritime shipping, renewable energy, and high-tech agricultural industries. The economy is characterized by extensive government welfare measures as well as an equitable distribution of income. The economy is highly dependent on foreign trade and the government is in support of trade liberalization.

Denmark is known as the home of the Vikings and the Viking Age began in the 9th century. Early modern Denmark was characterized by The Reformation in the early 16th century. It began in the mid-1520s when the Danes wanted access to the Bible in their own language. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the established Catholic Church, many were upset with the tithes and fees assessed by the church to farmers and merchants. Many petitioned to remove all Catholic traditions from the Danish churches and they wanted to instead turn to the teachings of Martin Luther and the Danish Reformation started in the 1520s.

The Dano-Norwegian Kingdom continued to grow and became quite wealthy throughout the 16th century. The kingdom was very powerful at this point and politics at this time mainly revolved around the struggle between Catholic and Protestant forces. Denmark was involved in a few wars with Sweden (the Torstenson War and the Second Northern War) in the 1600s and then again in the Great Northern War in the early 1700s. After this war, Sweden was no longer considered a threat to Denmark, but it did lose a few provinces to Sweden in the process. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the agricultural economy became to change and expanded to meet growing demand for exportation across Europe. As a result, the overall economy did very well.

With the 19th century came the end of peaceful times when the Napoleonic Wars broke out, causing a great deal of damage to Copenhagen and bankrupting the state which could not bear the costs of war in 1813 and the Treaty of Kiel was signed in 1814, dissolving the Dano-Norwegian union. This transferred Heligoland to Great Britain and Norway from the Danish to Swedish crown. At this, Norwegians revolted and declared their own independence. Denmark began to recover from the war and saw industrialization in the second half of the 19th century with the construction of railroads and improved communications and trade overseas.

The 20th century brought more war, and while Denmark remained neutral during World War I, their exporting was extremely limited. Prior to World War II, the country did accept a nonaggression pact from Hitler, but when the war began, Copenhagen again declared neutrality. Although Denmark was occupied by Germany during the war, the Monarchy remained and the country retained its own government which tried to protect its people from Nazi rule. The government held out until 1943 when they finally resigned and Germany assumed complete control until their surrender in 1945. In the 1960s, there was an economic expansion that required more labor than was available in the country, so "guest workers" came into the country and were recruited from mainly Turkey, Yugoslavia and Pakistan and immigration continued to grow steadily throughout the 1980s.

Review current travel risks for Denmark:

- U.S Department of State Travel Risks

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) Open Doors Report 2019, 4,846 students from the United States studied abroad to Denmark.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN DENMARK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Denmark is characterized as majority homogenous with about 14% of the population who identify as foreign background, either as a recent immigrant or descendant of an immigrant. The most common countries of origin amongst immigrants in Denmark are Turkey, Poland, Germany, Iraq, Romania, Syria, Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Yugoslavia. There is a small population (approximate 15,000) that belong to a German minority referred to as "hjemmetyskere" which means "domestic Germans" in Danish. These individuals hold Danish citizenship, and self-identify as German and speak German. There are about 23,000 individuals who are ethnic Faroese and

19,000 Greenlanders who reside permanently in Denmark and many use the Faroese and Greenlandic languages respectively. There are also small populations of Danish Jews (around 6,000) and Romani people (10,000) living in Denmark.

Racism has traditionally been considered a "taboo" subject in Denmark, some believe it to be a very "colorblind" society, but an increasing number of Danes say that they can see and feel racism in their country. A poll completed in June 2021 shows that 42% of those surveyed see "racial discrimination as a widespread problem in Denmark", this figure is up from 32% last year. The Prime Minister has defended one of the EU's toughest stances on foreigners and there have been reported acts of aggression and violence towards people of color in Denmark and attacks against people that "look" foreign. In 2019, the government passed a controversial "burqa ban", preventing women from wearing veils and other facial covering garments. Although there are certainly instances of violence in Denmark, these instances occur much less frequently in comparison to many parts of the United States. Denmark also has much stricter gun laws and there tends to be more trust in the police force.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- Denmark is characterized as majority homogenous. Race is not a topic that comes up often and some believe that the country functions as a colorblind society, ignoring racism. Students of color may feel othered and may unfortunately experience discrimination.
- Recently, there have been anti-immigrant sentiments in Denmark, and even public xenophobic comments made by politicians. In 2019, the government passed a burqa ban and laws requiring parents in neighborhoods designated as "ghettos" to send their children for additional education to learn "Danish values".
- Like many other countries, the main cities will be the most diverse areas and as you travel further out into the country, the more likely you may be to encounter stares, etc.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- World Directory of Indigenous People- Denmark, Minority Rights Group International
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Denmark (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- History of Denmark, Wikipedia
- Travel Guide – Denmark, Diversity Abroad
- Being Black in Denmark, Youtube
- And Island for "Unwanted" Migrants is Denmark's Latest Aggressive Anti-Immigrant Policy, Time.com
- We need to talk about systemic racism in Denmark ENAR-EU.org
- Racism is Seen as a Growing Threat in Denmark, Poll Shows, Bloomberg
- "I definitely feel safer in Denmark", The Black Expat
- "Now It's a Sign of Protest" Women in Denmark Defy the Face Veil Ban, Time

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN DENMARK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Denmark prides itself on being one of the world's most LGBTQ+ friendly destinations. Homosexuality has been considered legal in Denmark since 1933 and same-sex married was legalized in 2012. There is no censorship regarding the discussion or promotion of LGBTQ+ topics. Individuals have had the legal right to change gender since 2014 without requiring surgery and the country was the first in the world to stop defining being transgender as a mental illness in 2016. There are laws preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation in the employment, as well as preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing in Denmark. Same-sex adoption is legal in Denmark as well as LGBTQ+ individuals serving in the military.

When it comes to public opinion of the LGBTQ+ community, Denmark is ranked as extremely accepting. Out of 79 countries surveyed, Denmark ranked #1 in acceptance of homosexual neighbors, #2 in justifiability of homosexuality, and #6 out of 76 countries in opinion of same-sex couples as parents. Within the European Union, Denmark ranked #3 of 28 countries surveyed in acceptance of same-sex relationships and #4 in support for transgender people changing their legal gender.

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- Although the country has overall very position views towards the LGBTQ+ community, the more urban hubs and cities will tend to be even more liberal and have more of an open LGBTQ scene than in rural areas of the country.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Travel Guide – Denmark](#), Diversity Abroad
- [LGBT Rights in Denmark](#), Equaldex
- [LGBT Travel Information,](#) U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World (December 2019), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association](#)
- [Tips for Gay and Lesbian Travelers](#), Frommers.com

DISABILITY IN DENMARK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Denmark ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009. Danish law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and transportation, access to health care and other government services. The law also mandates access by individuals with disabilities to government buildings, education, information and communication.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- It should be noted that Denmark is improving access to public buildings, transportation, forestry and beaches, but accessibility is still not omnipresent.
- Transportation in Copenhagen is fairly accessible, the underground has an elevator at each station and the train entrance is the same level as the platform.
- While modern buildings in Denmark are reasonably accessible, more historic sites and landmarks such as castles and churches may not be accessible to individuals who use wheelchairs.
- Restaurants in the city are sometimes located up or down a set of stairs, but many do offer outdoor dining.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA,](#) Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad,](#) U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016,](#) (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Denmark](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications,](#) Transportation Security Administration
- [Copenhagen: is it as accessible as it is beautiful and cultured?](#) Disability Horizons
- [Guide to wheelchair-friendly Copenhagen](#), Wonderful Copenhagen
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#), Lonely Planet

RELIGION IN DENMARK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

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The prominent religion in Denmark is Christianity and the state religion is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark. There is a very strong link between church and state with a Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, and at birth all Danes are considered to belong to the church and have an obligation to pay church taxes which are included with their income taxes. But there are also small groups of other major faiths amongst the population including Catholicism, Baptism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Baha'i Faith. Surveys show that only about 3% of the population regularly attend Sunday services and only 19% consider religion to be an important part of their life.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- Islam is the largest minority religion in Denmark with over 250,000 people self-identifying as Muslim in a January 2020 survey. Many arrived from Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, and the former Yugoslavia in the 1970s to work and in the 80s and 90s, many Muslim arrivals were refugees from Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia.
- Christmas is a major holiday in Denmark and many traditions are observed throughout the month of December.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Denmark](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), Every Culture
- [Religion in Denmark](#), Wikipedia
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Denmark Buddhist Directory](#)
- [List of Mosques in Europe](#), Islam in Europe
- [Denmark](#), World Jewish Congress
- [2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Denmark](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Denmark](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Denmark](#), IslamicFinder.org

WOMEN IN DENMARK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Denmark is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world and women in Denmark experience fewer instances of harassment in public compared to women in the United States. The crime rate in Copenhagen is very low with a rate of 0.3 homicides for every 100,000 residents. There are some instances of pickpocketing and petty theft at tourist attractions, shopping streets, and train stations, but these are not especially common. Danes are very friendly and most know and speak a basic level of English and are usually willing to help or give directions to travelers. Traveling outside of Copenhagen is even safer, but services that are common in the city are more limited and it may be more difficult to find someone who speaks English.

Denmark has the highest percentage of women in the labor market across Europe and has had a public policy of equality of men and women regarding wages and working conditions since the 1980s. Representation of women in politics has grown significantly and over 55% of the priests in the state church are women. Despite this, there are still persistent beliefs that associate women with family and men with work, and men are more likely to sit in top positions and earn higher wages than women.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Female students should be vigilant if they plan to go out at night alone. A report in 2020 showed that the use of date-rape drugs in Denmark has increased, so try to plan to only go out with people you know and keep an eye on your drink at all times.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Section 6 subheading for Women) U.S. Department of State.
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#)

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- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Denmark](#) (see Section 6 on Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons, subheading for Women)
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Is it Safe to Travel to Denmark?](#) Tripsavvy.com
- [Countries and Their Cultures: Denmark](#) (see section on Gender Roles and Statuses), Every Culture

REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in October 2021
[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Denmark](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in October 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.