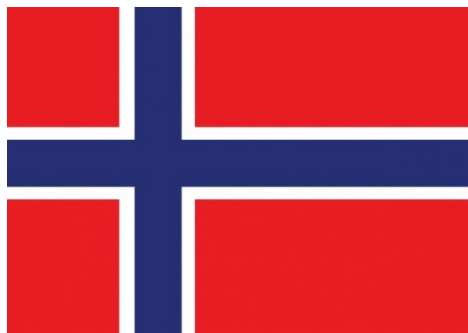


# IDENTITIES ABROAD: NORWAY



## 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 Norway 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 Norway, 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](mailto: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:** Oslo

**Population:** 5,509,591

**Language(s):** Bokmal Norwegian (official), Nynorsk Norwegian (official), small Sami- and Finnish-speaking minorities.

**Religions:** Church of Norway (Evangelical Lutheran - official) 68.1%, Muslim 3.4%, Roman Catholic 3.1%, other Christian 3.8%, other 9.6%, unspecified 15.4%.

**Ethnic groups:** Norwegian 83.2% (includes about 60,000 Sami), other European 8.3%, other 8.5%.



Norway is a Scandinavian European country that shares its eastern border with Sweden and is located directly north of Denmark. The western coast of the country is the North Sea, and the northwestern coast is the Norwegian Sea. There is also a small island directly north of the mainland called Svalbard that is also part of the country and all together it is about double the size of the state of Georgia. The capital of the country is Oslo, and the official languages are Bokmal Norwegian and Nynorsk Norwegian. The climate of the country is temperate along the coast with a colder interior and increased precipitation and cold summers. The west coast is rainy year-round. The country is known for beautiful landscapes, fjords, lakes, the Northern Lights, as well as its Viking history and folklore.

Norway's economy is stable with a vibrant private sector and large state sector. The country opted out of the European Union in November 1994, but still partially participates in the EU's single market and contributes to the EU budget as a member of the European Economic Area. There are a number of natural resources readily available in Norway including oil and gas, minerals, forests, and fish that give way to a great deal of its industry and export business. It is one of the world's leading petroleum exporters.

Norway is known for its Viking history and Norse mythology. It was established as a sovereign state by the king in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and a union between Norway and Denmark was established in the 1390s along with Sweden. Sweden gained independence from Denmark in the 1520s, but Norway and Denmark remained in a union. There were a series of wars between Denmark-Norway and Sweden throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Denmark-Norway joined France in the Napoleonic Wars in 1807, which was a disaster for Norway's economy as exports and food imports were blocked. Sweden invaded Norway the following year, but after many Norwegian victories the fighting came to a conclusion in 1809. At this time, the economy was still in very bad shape and mass emigration to North America began in 1825. This led to a decreased population and in turn, a labor shortage. The government stimulated the start of the industrialization of the country, constructing roads and increasing steamship services to boost the export capabilities again. The dissolution of the union with Denmark was approved in 1905 and the country began to expand resources and worker protection laws.

Norway was neutral in World War I, but supported the British and were classified as The Neutral Ally. The country again maintained neutrality in World War II, and was invaded by Germany in 1940. Germany maintained control until the end of the war and from that position, was able to control access to the North Sea and the Atlantic. Reconstruction after the war in Norway led to it having the highest economic growth in Europe until 1950. Norway entered the Oil Age in the 1960s when Phillips Petroleum found oil in the Ekofisk field and experienced an immigration surplus of individuals with oil expertise throughout the 1970s. By 1990, Norway was the largest oil producer in Europe and became the second-largest oil exporter in the world in 1995.

Review current travel risks for Norway: [U.S Department of State Travel Risks](#)

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 811 students from the United States studied abroad to Norway.

## ETHNIC MINORITIES IN NORWAY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

There are a number of minority groups recognized in Norway, including Sami, the Kvens, the Roma, the Romani, Norwegian Finns and Forest Finns and have immigrant populations from Bosnia Herzegovina, Pakistan, Somalia, and Turkey. By law, Norway officially recognizes the Forest Finns, Jews, Kvens, Roma, Romani and Skogfinn and assumes legal obligation for these groups under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Framework Convention the Protection of National Minorities. Norway has also recognized the Sami as an indigenous population and complied to the ILO Convention 169 on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. All of these groups have special protected status under the law.

The Sami are the indigenous inhabitants of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the far north of Russia and have an estimated population of 60,000, concentrated primarily in Finnmark County. Sami participate in the national political process and elect their own parliament, called Samediggi, which exercises administrative and financial powers according to the law. Members of this parliament also represent constituents in international organizations including the United Nations. An issue that the Sami have expressed concern over is access to Sami language education for their children due to a lack of qualified instructors.

The Kvens are another history ethnic group located in the northern part of Norway and descend from Finnish-speaking fishing communities. They have a very close history with the Sami and at some point, were considered to be a part of the Sami, but today they distinguish themselves as a separate community. Their population is between 10,000-15,000 people.

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Norway has experienced high immigration rates, especially of foreign workers, since just after World War II, accelerated by the development of North Sea oil in the 60s. The highest numbers of immigrants come from Asian or Eastern European countries as well as refugees from former Yugoslavia and a significant Somali population. In 2019, Norway received 52,000 immigrants, nearly equal to the number of children born in the country that year (54,500).

Racism in Norway is primarily directed towards Black/People of Color of African descent or Black/People of Color who are asylum seekers or refugees, not Black Americans. There is unfortunately a stigma against asylum seekers and refugees due to the assistance they receive from the government during this process. However, Norwegians have a very high opinion of the United States and Americans in general and may treat Black/People of Color from the US much more positively.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- Reports compiled by NGOs such as the Norwegian Center against Racism have documented complaints of police profiling members of ethnic and racial minority groups, young males in particular. These reports have also documented the continued problem of hate speech on the internet against ethnic minorities and the government has continued to implement a national strategy against hate speech released in 2016.
- Students of color may experience instances of staring, people asking to take pictures of/with them, asking about their hair, etc.
- Students of color may have very different experiences with Norwegians who perceive them to be of African descent or asylum seeking/refugee status versus Norwegians who perceive them to be American.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [World Directory of Indigenous People- Norway](#), Minority Rights Group International
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Norway](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Being a Black American in Norway](#), youtube video
- [For Americans of Color, Is Norway and Racism-Free Utopia?](#) The Root

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN NORWAY

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Homosexuality and same sex-marriage are both legal in Norway and have been since 1972 and 2009, respectively. Changing gender is legal and gender-affirming surgery is not required, although there is not legal recognition for non-binary gender. It is legal for individuals to serve in the military and for same-sex couples to adopt. Laws are in place to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination in employment and housing, these anti-discrimination laws were the first in the world to include protection for discrimination based on sexual orientation when they were enacted in 1981.

Public opinion of the LGBTQ+ community is overwhelmingly positive. In a World Values Survey conducted from 2017-2020, Norway ranked #3 of 79 countries in acceptance of homosexuals as neighbors, #5 out of 79 countries in justifiability of homosexuality, and #4 out of 74 in opinion of same-sex couples as parents.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- Oslo is a very safe, progressive, tolerant city and many LGBTQ+ travelers don't have concerns about public displays of affection. However, as with any other country, more rural areas farther away from the main cities may not be as liberal.
- According to NGOs and research institutes, hate speech on the internet has continued to be a problem in Norway and the LGBTQ+ community has unfortunately been a targeted group. The Institute for Social Research published a study that found 1 in 4 members of the community had experienced some form of hate speech, compared with 1 in 10 percent of the general population.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [LGBT Rights in Norway](#), 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
- [Gay Oslo - The Essential LGBT Travel Guide](#), Queer in the World
- [LGBT Equality: Gay Rights in Norway](#), Life in Norway
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Norway](#) US Department of State

## DISABILITY IN NORWAY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The capital city of Oslo is accessible for travelers with disabilities. Wheelchair users travel for free on public transportation operated by Ruter which includes the bus, tram, ferry, and subway within the city of Oslo. Many of the modern trains in Norway have lifts for wheelchairs as well as accessible toilets and newer buses have ramps. Many taxi drivers in Norway are generally helpful in assisting wheelchair users and it is possible to order a taxi with a wheelchair lift.

In 2019, the Antidiscrimination Tribunal reported that 108 of the 300 (36%) complaints received were based on disability. That year, the government released a 10-year plan that aims to reduce discrimination, increase access to housing, transportation, employment, and health care as well as opportunities for participation in cultural and social activities.

### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Students with disabilities may find traveling in Norway difficult between December and March due to heavy snow and ice and poor road/sidewalk conditions.
- Fewer than half of the restaurants in Norway are wheelchair accessible, many have a restroom located up or down a flight of stairs.
- Some more modern public structures (including shopping centers) have including moving walkways or ramps instead of elevators, which wheelchair users may find difficult to use safely.
- Assistance is available to help passengers get on and off trains when necessary and does not require advance booking, but it is still recommended to contact the customer center at the train station prior to traveling to arrange this.

### 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 Norway](#) (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
- [Norway International Travel Info](#), travel.state.gov
- [Accessibility in Oslo](#), visitoslo.com
- [Traveling with Disabilities in Norway](#), visitnorway.com

## RELIGION IN NORWAY

### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The official religion of Norway has been Evangelical Lutheran since 1814, but the country's constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Other religious groups represented in the country are Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, Methodists, and more recently, Muslims. In a 2019 survey, 68.7% of the population considered themselves to be members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, down from 96% in the 1960s. Approximately 18.3% are not members of any religious communities and 13% are members of other religions or philosophical communities. However, a survey conducted in 2005 showed that Norway was the least religious country

in Western Europe when 29% of those surveyed said they believed in a church or deity, 26% said they were atheist, and 45% said they were not certain.

Although many of the dominant religious groups are Christian, there are also populations of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, followers of the Baha'i Faith, and followers of Norse religion throughout the country. Islam is the largest minority religion in the country, as of 2020 an estimated 182,000 Muslims live in Norway. The majority of Muslims in Norway are Sunni with a significant Shia minority and many live in the counties of Oslo and Akershus. Many are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Pakistan.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- There is an extremely small population of Jewish people in Norway.
- According to NGOs, research institutions and the Jewish community, hate speech online against ethnic minorities and religious groups is a continuing problem in Norway. The hate speech was mainly anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim.
- In 2017, there were 120 religiously motivated hate crimes reported by the police, up 24% from the previous year.

#### ADDITIONAL LINKS:

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

## WOMEN IN NORWAY

#### SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Norway is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world. The crime rate is very low, and society overall has a very feminist outlook. In fact, it's pretty common to hitchhike in Norway, especially in more rural areas where public transportation is not reliable, and taxis are not readily available. Many women in Norway also find that men are much less aggressive than in the United States and other parts of the world. It's not common to hear any catcalling or comments made about women in public. It is also very common for Norwegians to go out alone to bars and restaurants. The most common crimes are pickpocketing and petty theft.

Norway has the lowest income inequality in the world and is ranked the number one most inclusive advanced economy. The ratio of women to men in employment is 0.95, although the ratio of female to male earned income is 0.79. Norway has a gender quota, imposed in 2003, which obligates companies to have boards composed of at least 40% female members. Several political parties follow this quota in establishing committee membership as well. According to the United Nations Development Program's Gender-Related Development Index, which measures achievements in life expectancy, educational attainment, and income equality in men and women, Norway ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 146 countries.

#### POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Although Norway is considered very safe for female students to travel, it is recommended that women are always aware of their surroundings and keeping an eye on personal belongings to avoid pickpocketing as well as drinks while out in public.

#### 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](#)

- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Norway](#) (see Section 6 on Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons, subheading for Women)
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Why Solo Women Should Travel to Norway](#), Pink Pangea
- [Countries and Their Cultures: Norway](#) (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 Norway](#)

**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.**