



# Libya

## Family Life



In most cases, a household consists of the parents and their children. However, if one of the grandparents is too old to live independently, they would stay with the family. Also, in rare instances, some families share a house (for example, if a family has a very large house, they would give their children a section of the house once they are married). Depending on the family, either fathers or mothers are the sole authority figures in the family; other times, fathers and mothers share a joint authority. As most families in Libya cannot afford to hire help, it is mainly the mother's duty to clean and take care of the house and do the cooking for all the members of the family. Depending on the open-mindedness of the husband or family, some women work while others do not. Even if a woman does work, usually they only have certain jobs, such as a secretary or a teacher. Other families do not have a problem with

women in professional careers. Most families in Libya do not eat breakfast together due to different schedules; however, families do gather together for lunch and dinner if possible.

**Teen Life:** In most cases, siblings share everything and usually do not ask for permission to use each other's things first, unless their sibling needs the item. Teenagers are mostly dependent upon their parents' decisions, and while some families would encourage their children to express their opinion, in some others it is disrespectful to disagree with their parents.

**Responsibilities:** Teenagers in Libya are not expected to budget their money and are usually given small allowances on either a daily or weekly basis. As parents pay for their children's clothing, personal shopping, and extracurricular activities, most teens use their allowance for phone credit or fast food. While girls in Libya typically have chores around the house and help their mothers with the cleaning and cooking, boys hardly have any chores around the house, which is due to the cultural notion that boys are superior to girls. This is also why some women in Libya are not permitted to work. In most cases, children never cook, and they are not expected to unless they are the eldest girl amongst their siblings. While the main responsibility of teenagers is to take care of school work, some do need reminders to balance their school and personal lives.

**Parental Involvement:** Traditional families in Libya tend to spend most of their time together. However, it is becoming quite normal for all of the family members to have some time for themselves to do any activities on their own. Parents are not always in direct contact with their children's schools, and some schools do not require parent-teacher meetings. However, the student's report card needs to be signed by their parents to confirm that they have received it. Also, if a student broke the rules or had failing grades, their parents would be officially summoned to meet with the school administration. Most parents of teenagers in Libya are illiterate when it comes to computers and the internet, so most parents are not aware of the dangers and risks of using the internet.

**Pets:** The most common types of pets in Libya are cats and birds; however, it is uncommon for most families to have any pets, especially those living in apartments. Given prayer restrictions, dogs in Libya are never allowed into the house. Many Muslims consider a dog's saliva to be unclean, so if the dog drools in an area of the house, it prevents a person from praying in that area. Therefore, people in Libya do not have dogs inside the house. However, overseas staff always tells incoming YES students that if their host family has a dog, they should simply explain to the family that they need a space for prayer in an area of the house where the dog is not allowed.

## Personal Interactions



**Mixed Gender Socializing:** Normally, teens in Libya do not have friends of the opposite sex, but they could be friends within groups. One-on-one friendships are usually considered a relationship, but this depends on the family and how the children were raised. Some parents still see friendships with the opposite sex as taboo, while others are very open-minded about it.

**Friendships:** Teenagers socialize both in groups and one-on-one, but it is normal to find closer one-on-one friendships within the same group. Both ways are considered appropriate in Libya, and the choice is left up to the individual. In most cases, Libyan teenagers make their friends at school and, on a smaller scale, amongst their neighbors and family. In general, Libyans are generous with their friends. They may buy things or insist on paying and treating their friends, as this practice is considered traditional. While it may be a polite gesture, it is expected that the other party will either pay for themselves through insisting or that they will pay for the other the next time they go out (also after insisting).

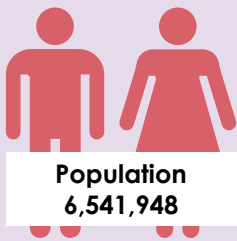
**Communication Styles:** In most cases, teenagers in Libya do not communicate how they feel to their parents because it might be considered disrespectful, especially if it is in disagreement. Students generally feel more comfortable expressing themselves and their negative feelings to their peers, friends, and siblings. However, on rare occasions, a family would have an open line of communication where all members are considered equal and capable of voicing their opinion. Even still, there are certain things that children do not feel comfortable sharing with their family, such as having a boyfriend or girlfriend.

**Eye Contact:** Eye contact is important as it shows respect. However, it is refrained from for religious reasons, especially with members of older generations or more religious people.

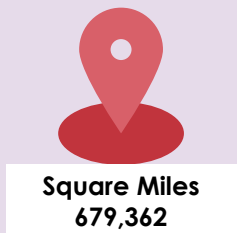
**Cultural Norms:** In Libya, it is normal for people to stand close together without it being awkward. For example, even when talking with someone they do not know, it is not unusual for someone to high five or touch the other person's arm during a conversation. However, it should be noted that while this might be okay for today's teens, it is highly frowned upon by the older generations, which is due in part to religion and in part to culture. For that reason, many people in Libya do not shake hands with the opposite sex. While teenagers would interact informally with their siblings and cousins who are close to them in age, they are supposed to treat and address those older than them with respect.



Tripoli



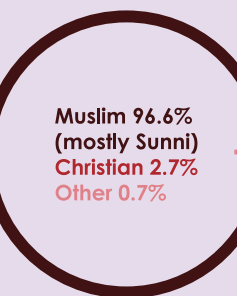
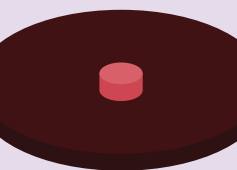
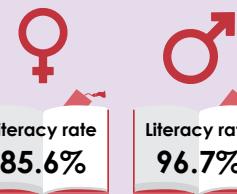
Population  
6,541,948



Square Miles  
679,362



Currency  
Libyan Dinar



## School



All public schools in Libya are separated by gender, so they are either all-boy or all-girl schools. International and private schools are normally co-ed, but boys and girls do not sit next to each other.

**Classes:** Libyan students are evaluated on their written and oral exams, behavior and class conduct, attendance, and homework; however, most of the grade is based on written exam scores.

In Libya, each class of students is assigned a room, and the teachers are the ones that rotate between classrooms. Students are required to take a fixed set of subjects each year in order to matriculate to the next grade. In a very limited number of international schools, students are able to take subjects at different levels of difficulty.

**School Relationships:** Students in Libya address their teachers by "teacher + name" or simply "teacher." They never call teachers by their first name only.

**Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular activities in Libya are not offered at school, but rather at private institutions and businesses. For this reason, only wealthy families can afford these types of opportunities.

**School Rules and Attire:** Cell phone usage is prohibited at schools in Libya; however, it is not well controlled, especially at boys' schools, so most students use their cell phones in class. The punishment for such behavior is usually taking the phone away from the student until their parents come to the school. As for fighting, social workers or the administration at the school will break up a fight, sometimes with the help of school guards, and the students would be suspended.

Most schools require a uniform, though boys' public schools are less strict in that regard as long as the student is wearing the required school colors. At all girls' public schools, girls are required to wear a grey suit with a white scarf for the uniform. International schools do not require a uniform, while some private schools do.

**Returning from Exchange:** Given frequent changes in Libya's Ministry of Education, the situation for returning YES students also changes from year to year. If students are able to get their American transcripts stamped by the Libyan Embassy in Washington, DC, they can submit their transcripts to the Ministry of Education for review upon their return to Libya. The Ministry of Education decides whether or not the year spent in the U.S. counts towards the student's graduation. If the Ministry of Education decides that the transcript from the U.S. is not valid, the student will be required to repeat the year.

## Food and Culture



**Religion:** In Libya, there is a religious service that is held once a week on Friday for Muslims, and men and boys have to attend that on a weekly basis. Other than that, Muslims in Libya would choose whether to perform their prayers at home or at a mosque during the rest of the week. Some Muslims also go to mosque on a daily basis during the month of Ramadan. Many girls wear the hijab (headscarf) as a part of their religion, and they are not supposed to uncover their hair in front of men who are not their fathers, uncles, nephews, or brothers.

**Holidays:** Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan, during which they fast from dawn to sunset; the purpose of Ramadan is for Muslims to understand how those in need feel when they do not have enough to eat or drink. During Ramadan, families sometimes invite their families and friends to eat together. People will also help the poor and orphans during this time. Eid al-Fitr occurs for three days after the 30 days of fasting for Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr begins with prayers, and then the family gathers for lunch and to visit relatives and friends. Eid al-Adha falls three months and ten days after Eid al-Fitr and lasts for four days. During Eid al-Adha, each family is supposed to slaughter a sheep, if they are financially capable, and donate a fourth of it to the poor. Another important holiday is the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, Mawlid an-Nabi. This holiday is usually celebrated with a traditional dish called "Aseeda" for breakfast, and fireworks at night.

**Guest Culture:** It is considered rude for a guest to decline eating or drinking at a host's home in Libya, and a guest should accept at least one thing offered by the hosts. It is also customary for hosts to offer food to their guests more than once. In general, the host has to show the guest that they are happy to have them and show their generosity, otherwise it is considered rude. Even if the guest has a reason for declining (perhaps because they are fasting or cannot chew for example), they should accept the offering anyways, rather than saying anything, because then the host would feel pressured to offer something that the guest likes.

**Lunch and Diets:** As Libya is a Muslim country, the main food restrictions are mainly alcohol and pork. Additionally, Muslims keep a halal diet, which means that the meat (sheep, cow, camel) has been slaughtered in the Islamic way. It is also common in Libya for a family to eat from the same bowl. Some traditional dishes are only eaten by hand rather than with utensils. For lunch, students either bring their own food from home or buy lunch with money from their parents depending on personal preference or financial ability.

## Personal Hygiene



Teenagers in Libya generally take a quick shower once a day and sometimes twice if they are involved in physical activities. Teenagers will also perform a ritual ablution before each prayer (five times a day). It is generally thought to be unclean to wear the same clothes two days in a row; however, if the clothes are still clean, students will wear them twice, but not two days in a row.

Also, Libyan teenagers are never expected to do their own laundry, hence they do not know how to use the washing machine or the dryer; usually their mothers or older sisters would take care of laundry. Teenagers have one towel in their bathroom. Girls also have a separate towel for their hair and face. They may use the same towel more than once before washing it. It is also customary for teenagers to change their clothes upon returning home into something more comfortable.