



# Macedonia

## Family Life



It is common for Macedonian families to include parents, their children, and sometimes grandparents. Usually, both parents work and have the same monetary responsibilities for the family. The authority figure in “more modern families” could be either parent or both, but there are families where the father remains the lead authority and his opinion is the most respected. Most activities are pursued together as a family. Some individual time is considered fine, but when a family member spends too much time alone (staying in their room, for example), it can lead the family to think that something is wrong.

**Teen Life:** Siblings in Macedonia tend to share most things, like clothing, accessories, books, and electronics. They usually do not ask first before using these items, unless they think the other might need it. Macedonia students get a small amount of money every day to purchase food at school. It is very rare for Macedonian teens to have a job.

**Responsibilities:** Macedonian teenagers are expected by their parents to do well in school and get good grades. Typical Macedonian parents would expect their child to be responsible, and behave properly and respectfully towards others. It is uncommon for children to do chores or have tasks that help out around the house. It is also uncommon for Macedonian families to have a housekeeper or hired help. Usually the mother does most of the domestic labor like laundry, cooking, etc. Female teenagers sometimes help, and are probably able to prepare meals by themselves, unlike male teenagers, who are generally not taught to cook.

**Parental Involvement:** The most common way parents are involved in their children’s school activities are through parent-teacher meetings. These meetings occur four times per year (two per semester). Very interested parents can go to the school in between these meetings and ask about their student’s progress.

Some families in Macedonia may have a household rule that limits how long a child can stay on the internet at home. However, most Macedonian teens tend to be more knowledgeable about the usage of internet than their parents, and most families do not have such strict rules.

**Pets:** A lot of Macedonian families do own pets, although usually these pets (cats and dogs) stay outside. Some families do keep pets indoors, though this is less common.

## Personal Interactions



Teenagers in Macedonia do not tend to make independent decisions but instead rely on their parents to make important decisions for them. Macedonian teenagers have a very direct style of communication, especially with their parents and other family members. They usually verbalize their feelings and opinions.

**Mixed Gender Socializing:** As in the U.S., Macedonian teenagers sometimes socialize in groups, and sometimes one-on-one. It is perfectly acceptable for Macedonian teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them one-on-one.

**Friendships:** Friendship in Macedonia is seen as a very close relationship with select few people that last for a lifetime. Macedonians take pride in having close friends and having strong friendships is an important part of a typical teenager’s life. Most teenagers make most of their friends through common activities, and not necessarily from family/neighborhood connections. Their closest friends might not be their cousins or neighbors but rather classmates or teammates. Macedonian teenagers tend to be generous and may buy or insist on paying for a coffee or a meal for their friends. This is a typical gesture, and friends tend to pay for one another when they go out together. Lending money to friends is also common.

**Communication Styles:** Students in Macedonia are similar to students in the U.S. in the way they communicate, but may be a slightly more formal with parents and grandparents. In Macedonia, teenagers are very direct when it comes to showing their feelings. However, showing negative emotions can be viewed as somewhat culturally inappropriate, particularly in public or in front of people one does not know well. The American concept of personal space is not common. People are very friendly in Macedonia, and may sometimes show emotions physically (like by hugging and kissing on the cheeks).

**Eye contact:** Maintaining eye contact is a sign of respect in Macedonia.

Skopje

# School



**Classes:** An average day in a Macedonian high school lasts five to seven hours, and teaching is organized in 45 minute blocks. Students not only stay with the same classmates for all four years of high school, but they also stay in the same classroom all day while teachers rotate. Depending on the school, some class groups stay in the same room for all four years of high school.

Macedonian students have 13-15 classes per year, and all of them are obligatory. Usually students can choose if they want to take an extra class, but there are few options. Examples of extra classes include Latin or computer. Students have tests and oral exams throughout the year, or whenever the teacher feels an oral test is necessary. The tests are not prescheduled, but most fall at the end of each quarter. A different grading system than the U.S. consisting of a five point scale, is used in Macedonia, where 1 is the lowest grade and 5 is the highest.

**School Relationships:** In Macedonia, students see their teachers only during class, and the teacher/student relationship is professional and formal. Outside of class, the teacher does not provide or oversee extracurricular activities nor are teachers friendly with students. The students address teachers formally as 'teacher' or Mr./Ms. Macedonian classrooms are not separated by gender and sharing spaces with the opposite gender is culturally acceptable.

**Extracurricular Activities:** While some private schools do offer after school activities for students, most public high schools in Macedonia do not. However, some special clubs or "sections" can be found in a few schools such as an English club, theater group, etc. Most students, if they are interested in playing music or sports, go to private institutions or join sport teams in their neighborhoods or sport clubs, or simply play sports with friends in neighborhood parks and stadiums recreationally. There are no sports or clubs that are sponsored by the school. Students often participate in these sorts of private, afterschool activities.

**School Rules and Attire:** In Macedonia, policies regarding cell phone usage or fighting do not exist. Students can use their cell phones at any time, even during class. U.S. schools' rules on cell phone use will be new for students from Macedonia.

Generally, teenagers in Macedonia dress similarly to American teenagers. In public high schools, students don't wear uniforms, though there are often dress codes. In private schools, students do wear uniforms.

**Returning from Exchange:** After completing the YES program, students come back to Macedonia and have to go to the Ministry of Education (MoE) to submit documents. This review allows their YES year in the U.S. count towards the student's institutional requirements with no need to repeat a school year at home. The most important document students must submit to the MoE is the transcript from their year in the U.S. with an "apostille stamp" (golden dry stamp). Without this stamp, the Ministry will not recognize the student's U.S. academic year.

# Food and Culture



In Macedonia, meals may be eaten all together as a family or separately, depending on family members' schedules. Other than food allergies or medical conditions, dietary restrictions are not very common. Some Macedonian families follow the Muslim religion's prohibition of not eating pork.

**Religion:** Some families in Macedonia are religious, and go to either a mosque or a church, while others are secular. Elderly people attend services more often, like on holidays or every Sunday. Among Macedonian youth, attending services at either a church or mosque is not typical, even for holiday services

**Holidays:** Muslim families celebrate Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, which include fasting from sunrise to sunset; these families will usually invite guests to eat together in the evenings when they break their fasts. Many non-Muslim families celebrate Christmas and Easter. Eid al-Fitr, Christmas and Easter are recognized as national holidays.

# Personal Hygiene



Cleanliness is very important for Macedonian teenagers, who typically shower daily. It is generally thought to be unclean to wear the same clothes two days in a row, although is not uncommon to wear one's jeans two days in a row for example if they are not visibly dirty. Usually in Macedonia, mothers tend to do laundry for the entire family and this is not a teenager's responsibility.

Population  
2,069,000

Square Miles  
9,779

Currency  
Macedonian  
Denar

Literacy rate  
46.6%

Literacy rate  
69.7%

Macedonians 64%  
Albanians 25%  
Turks 3.8%  
Romani 2.7%  
Other 4.5%

Christian 59%  
Muslim 39%  
Unaffiliated 1.4%