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BURMA/MYANMAR



BURMA (MYANMAR)



PRE-FIELD BRIEFING PACKET

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ABOUT THIS PACKET

This packet has been created to serve as a resource for the BURMA (MYANMAR) Medical/Dental Team.

This packet is information about the country and can be read at your leisure or on the airplane. The final section of this booklet is specific to the areas we will be working near (however, not the actual clinic locations) and contains information you may want to know before the trip.

The contents herein are not for distributional purposes and are intended for the use of the team and their families. Sources of the information all come from public record and documentation. You may access any of the information and more updates directly from the World Wide Web and other public sources.



PHOTO CREDIT: TEAM MEMBER IMR TEAM MYANMAR, 2014

NOTE: The United States does not recognize the name “Myanmar” or the military regime the name represents. You will see Myanmar and Burma used interchangeably while in country. This packet uses the names interchangeably.

BACKGROUND

Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia and is also known as Burma. It is also called the Golden Land. With an area of 676,578 km² the country is almost twice the size of Germany or slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Texas. Myanmar is bordered in north and northeast by China, in east by Laos and Thailand, in south by the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal and in west by Bangladesh and India.

Myanmar has a population of 51.4 million people (2014 census). The largest city, former capital, and the economic center of Myanmar is Yangon. Yangon was the capital of Myanmar until 2005, when the planned city of Naypyidaw became the capital. The majority spoken language is Burmese.

Previously an independent kingdom, Burma was annexed by the British Empire into the colony of India in 1886. The occupation brought social, economic, cultural and administrative changes to the once-feudal society. The Japanese Empire invaded and occupied the country during World War II but it was returned to British control until independence in 1948.

From 1962 to 2011, the country was ruled by a military junta with absolute power. The name of the country was changed in 1989 by the ruling military government and officially recognized by the United Nations. Some national governments, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and much of the Burmese population do not recognize this name change, since they do not recognize the military government. Despite multiparty elections in 1990 that resulted in the main opposition party winning a decisive victory, the military junta refused to hand over power. The junta placed NLD leader (and Nobel Peace Prize recipient) AUNG SAN SUU KYI under house arrest from 1989 to 1995, 2000 to 2002, and from May 2003 to November 2010. In late September 2007, the ruling junta brutally suppressed protests over increased fuel prices led by prodemocracy activists and Buddhist monks, killing at least 13 people and arresting thousands for participating in the demonstrations.

The national legislature convened in January 2011 and selected former Prime Minister THEIN SEIN as president. Although the vast majority of national-level appointees named by THEIN SEIN are former or current military officers, the government initiated a series of political and economic reforms leading to a substantial opening of the long-isolated country. These reforms included releasing hundreds of political prisoners, concluding negotiations on a draft nationwide cease-fire with the country's various ethnic armed groups, pursuing legal reform, and gradually reducing restrictions on freedom of the press, association, and civil society. At least due in part to these reforms, AUNG SAN SUU KYI was elected to the national legislature in April 2012 and became chair of the Committee for Rule of Law and Tranquility. In a flawed but largely credible national legislative election in November 2015 featuring more than 90 political parties, the NLD again won a landslide victory. Burma served as chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2014.

In early May 2008, Burma was struck by Cyclone Nargis, which left over 138,000 dead and tens of thousands injured and homeless.

Read more: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>



Myanmar: WHO statistical profile

Basic statistics

Indicators	Statistics	Year
Population (thousands)	53259	2013
Population aged under 15 (%)	25	2013
Population aged over 60 (%)	8	2013
Median age (years)	29	2013
Population living in urban areas (%)	33	2013
Total fertility rate (per woman)	1.9	2013
Number of live births (thousands)	916.5	2013
Number of deaths (thousands)	444.9	2013
Birth registration coverage (%)	72	2009-2010
Cause-of-death registration coverage (%)	---	
WHO region	South-East Asia	2013
World Bank income classification	Low	2013

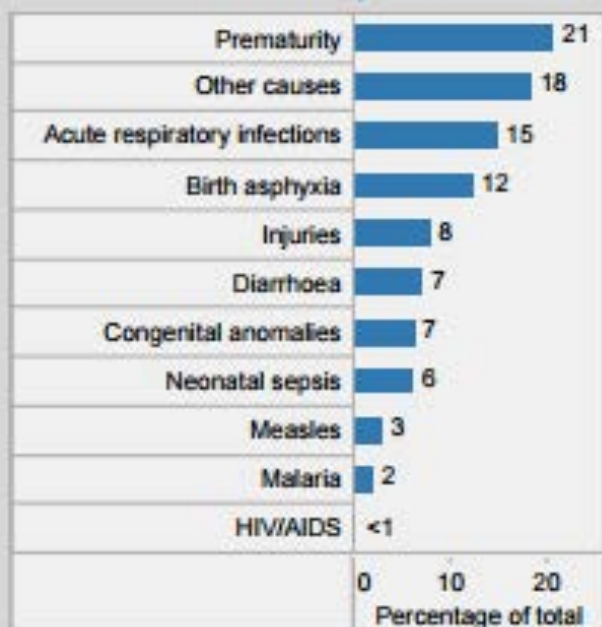
Life expectancy (years), 2012

		Country	WHO region	World Bank income group
Life expectancy	At birth	66	67	62
	At age 60	17	17	17
Healthy life expectancy	At birth	57	59	53

Life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased by 3 year(s) over the period of 2000-2012; the WHO region average increased by 5 year(s) in the same period.

In 2012, healthy expectancy in both sexes was 9 year(s) lower than overall life expectancy at birth. This lost healthy life expectancy represents 9 equivalent year(s) of full health lost through years lived with morbidity and disability.

Distribution of causes of deaths in children under-5, 2013



Country
WHO region

Sou
For mo

Top 10 causes of death

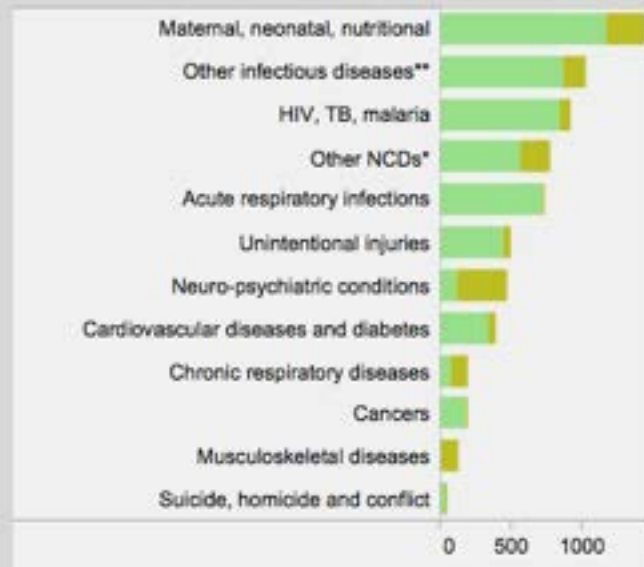
Lower respiratory infections was the leading cause of death, killing 15.8 thousand people in 2012



Burden of disease, 2012

Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are the sum of years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLL) and years of healthy life lost due to disability (YLD).

DALYs, YLL and YLD (thousands) by broad cause group



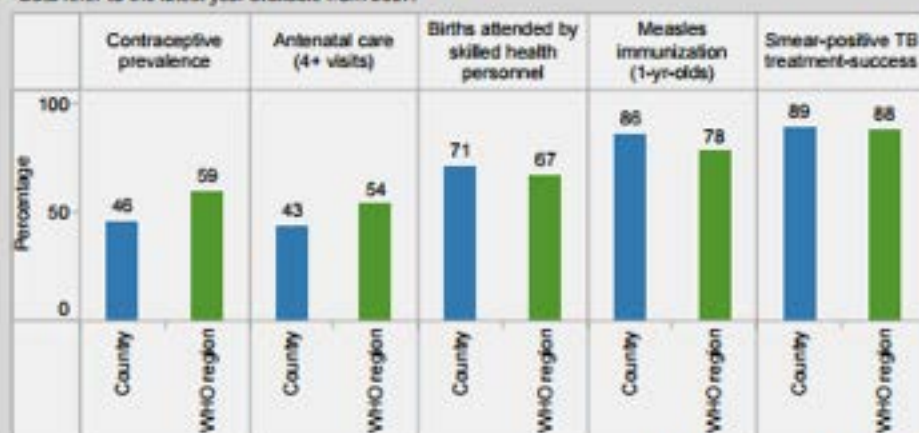
*Other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including non-malignant neoplasms; endocrine, blood and immune disorders; sense organ, digestive, genitourinary, and skin diseases; oral conditions; and congenital anomalies.

** Infectious diseases other than acute respiratory diseases, HIV, TB and malaria.

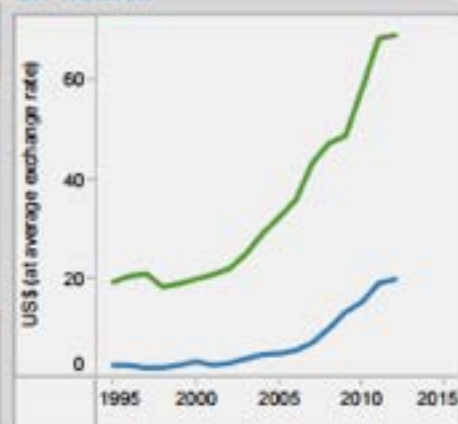
YLL YLD

Utilisation of health services*

*Data refer to the latest year available from 2007.

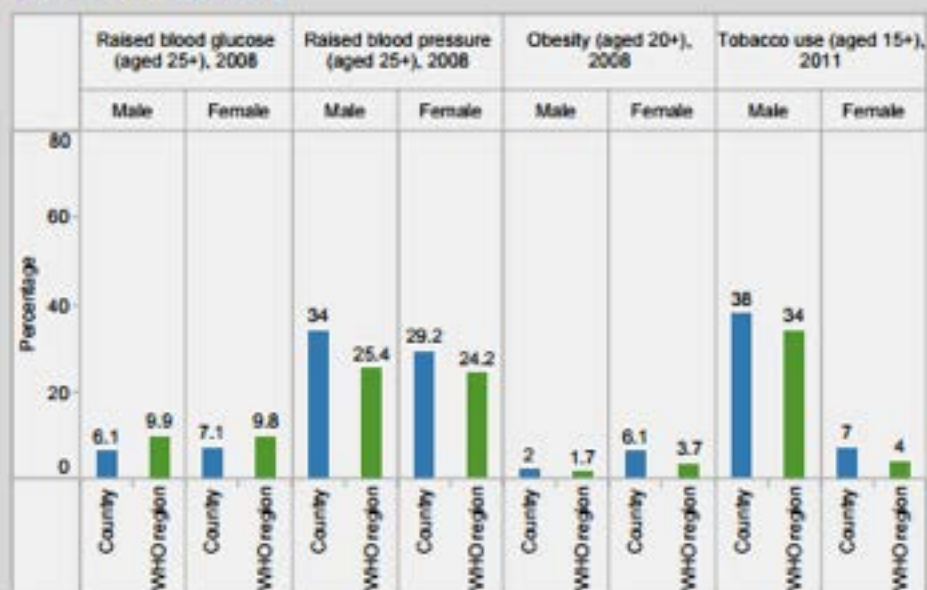


Per capita total expenditure on health

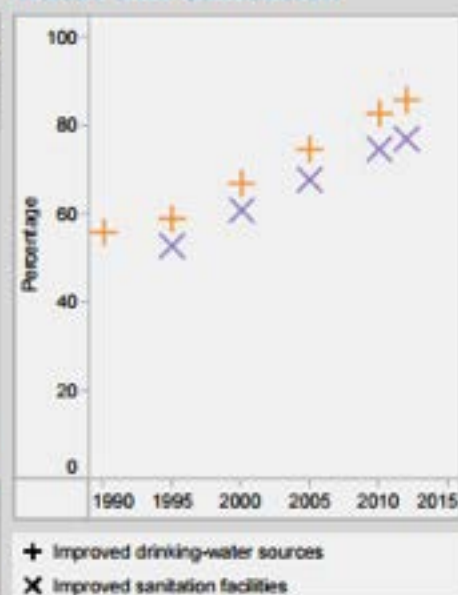


... Data not available or applicable.

Adult risk factors



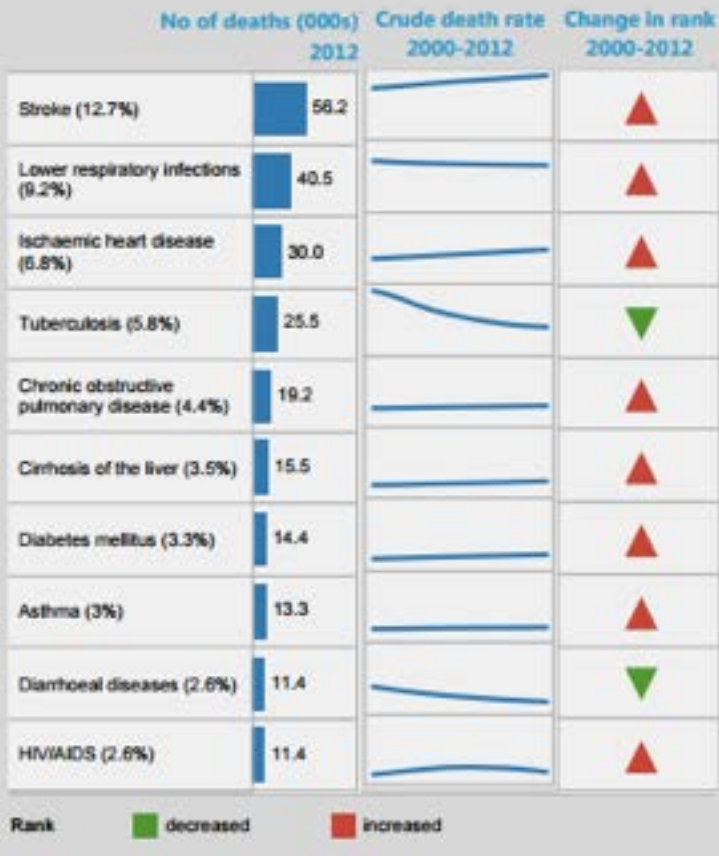
Population using improved water and sanitation



+ Improved drinking-water sources
X Improved sanitation facilities

Top 10 causes of death

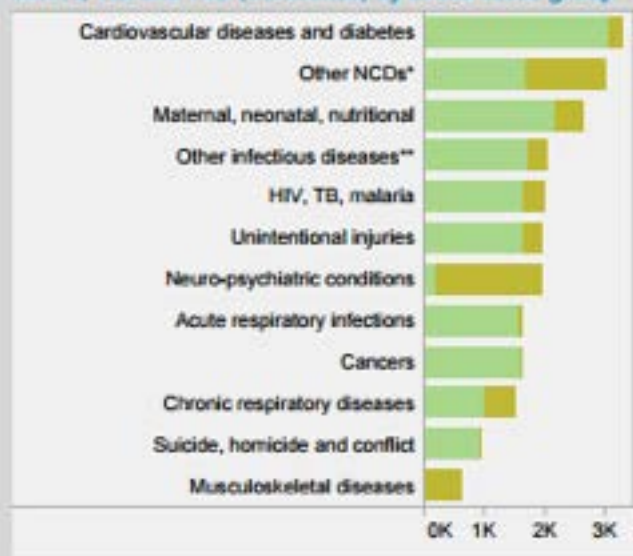
Stroke was the leading cause of death, killing 56.2 thousand people in 2012



Burden of disease, 2012

Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are the sum of years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLL) and years of healthy life lost due to disability (YLD).

DALYs, YLL and YLD (thousands) by broad cause group



*Other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including non-malignant neoplasms; endocrine, blood and immune disorders; sense organ, digestive, genitourinary, and skin diseases; oral conditions; and congenital anomalies.

** Infectious diseases other than acute respiratory diseases, HIV, TB and malaria.

■ YLL ■ YLD

CLINIC REGION

NOTE: The United States does not recognize the name “Yangon” or the military regime the name represents. You will see Yangon and Rangoon used interchangeably while in country. This packet uses the names interchangeably.

RANGOON / YANGON

Yangon (Burmese: ရန်ကုန်, MLCTS rankun mrui, pronounced: [jàngòʊɴ mjṵ]; also known as Rangoon, literally: "End of Strife") is a former capital of Myanmar (Burma) and the capital of Yangon Region. It also served as the Capital in Exile of Azad Hind. Yangon is the country's largest city with a population of over five million, and is the most important commercial centre, although the military government officially relocated the capital to Naypyidaw in March 2006.

Although Yangon's infrastructure is undeveloped compared to those of other major cities in south-east Asia, it has the largest number of colonial buildings in the region today. While many high-rise residential and commercial buildings have been constructed or renovated throughout downtown and Greater Yangon in the past two decades, most satellite towns that ring the city continue to be deeply impoverished.

Yangon (ရန်ကုန်) is a combination of the two words yan (ရန်) and koun (ကုန်), which mean "enemies" and "run out of" respectively. It is also translated as "End of Strife". "Rangoon" most likely comes from the British imitation of the pronunciation of "Yangon" in the Arakanese language, which is [ròŋɡóʊn].

History

Early history

Yangon was founded as Dagon in the early 11th century (c. 1028-1043) by the Mon, who dominated Lower Burma at that time. Dagon was a small fishing village centred about the Shwedagon Pagoda. In 1755, King Alaungpaya conquered Dagon, renamed it "Yangon", and added settlements around Dagon. The British captured Yangon during the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26), but returned it to Burmese administration after the war. The city was destroyed by a fire in 1841.

The British seized Yangon and all of Lower Burma in the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, and subsequently transformed Yangon into the commercial and political hub of British Burma. Yangon is also the place where the British sent Bahadur Shah II, the last Mughal emperor, to live after the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Yangon became the capital of all British Burma after the British had captured Upper Burma in the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885. By the 1890s Yangon's increasing population and commerce gave birth to prosperous residential suburbs to the north of Royal Lake (Kandawgyi) and Inya Lake. The British also established hospitals and colleges.

Colonial Yangon, with its spacious parks and lakes and mix of modern buildings and traditional wooden architecture, was known as "the garden city of the East." By the early 20th century, Yangon had public services and infrastructure on par with London. Before World War II, about 55% of Yangon's population of 500,000 was Indian or South Asian, and only about a third was Bamar (Burman). Karens, the Chinese, the Anglo-Burmese and others made up the rest.

After World War I, Yangon became the epicenter of Burmese independence movement, with leftist Rangoon University students leading the way. Three nationwide strikes against the British Empire in 1920, 1936 and 1938

all began in Yangon. Yangon was under Japanese occupation (1942-45), and incurred heavy damage during World War II. The city was retaken by the Allies in May 1945.

Rangoon (Yangon) became the capital of Union of Burma on 4 January 1948 when the country regained independence from the British Empire. Soon after Burma's independence in 1948, many colonial names of streets and parks were changed to more nationalistic Burmese names. In 1989, the current military junta changed the city's English name to "Yangon", along with many other changes in English transliteration of Burmese names. (The changes have not been accepted by many Burmese who consider the junta unfit to make such changes, nor by many publications, news bureaux including, most notably, the BBC and foreign nations including the United Kingdom and United States.)

Since independence, Yangon has expanded outwards. Successive governments have built satellite towns such as Thaketa, North Okkalapa and South Okkalapa in the 1950s to Hlaingthaya, Shwepyitha and South Dagon in the 1980s. Today, Greater Yangon encompasses an area covering nearly 600 square kilometers (230 sq mi).

Since the 1960's, Yangon's infrastructure deteriorated through poor maintenance and did not keep up with its increasing population. In the 1990s, the current military government's more open market policies attracted domestic and foreign investment, bringing a modicum of modernity to the city's infrastructure. Some inner city residents were forcibly relocated to new satellite towns. Many colonial-period buildings were demolished to make way for high-rise hotels, office buildings, and shopping malls, leading the city government to place about 200 notable colonial-period buildings under the Yangon City Heritage List in 1996. Major building programs have resulted in six new bridges and five new highways linking the city to its industrial back country. Still, much of Yangon remains without basic municipal services such as 24-hour electricity and regular garbage collection.



Yangon has become much more indigenous Burmese in its ethnic make-up since independence. After independence, many South Asians and Anglo-Burmese left. Many more South Asians were forced to leave during the 1960s by Ne Win's xenophobic government. Nevertheless, sizable South Asian and Chinese communities still exist in Yangon. The Anglo-Burmese have effectively disappeared, having left the country or intermarried with other Burmese groups.

DOWNTOWN YANGON, C. 2010

Yangon was the centre of major anti-government protests in 1974, 1988 and 2007. The 1988 People Power Uprising resulted in the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands of Burmese civilians, including many in Yangon where hundreds of thousands of people flooded into the streets of the then capital city. The Saffron Revolution saw mass shootings and the use of crematoria in Yangon by the Burmese government to erase evidence of their crimes against monks, unarmed protesters, journalists and students. The city's streets saw bloodshed each time as protesters were gunned down by the government.

Thousands of junta military and police forces poured into Yangon to try to control the situation, which rapidly deteriorated. A curfew was imposed and on 25 September troops surrounded Sule Pagoda. The protest continued to grow with regular citizens joining to support and defend the Buddhists. Overnight, junta forces

invaded all the kyaungs in the country and imprisoned thousands of monks. It was reported that Nobel prize winning human rights activist and Buddhist Aung San Suu Kyi was removed from her home where she languished under house arrest and moved to the infamous Insein Prison. Mass protests erupted over this and junta troops began firing on monks, civilians, and demonstrators in the largest clash since 1988, which left thousands injured and hundreds dead. Images of the brutality were aired worldwide.

Leaders around the world condemned the junta's actions and many nations imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar in protest. The President of the United States, George W. Bush, addressed the United Nations, stating, "Every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand up for people suffering under a brutal military regime like the one that has ruled Burma for so long." The Burmese junta responded by trying to control media coverage, curtail travel, censor news stories, and shut down access to the Internet.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Myanmar



In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Yangon. While the city had few human casualties, three quarters of Yangon's industrial infrastructure was destroyed or damaged, with losses estimated at US\$800 million. In November 2005, the military government designated Naypyidaw, 320 kilometres (199 mi) north of Yangon, as the new administrative capital, and subsequently moved much of the government to the newly developed city. At any rate, Yangon remains the largest city, and the most important commercial centre of Myanmar.

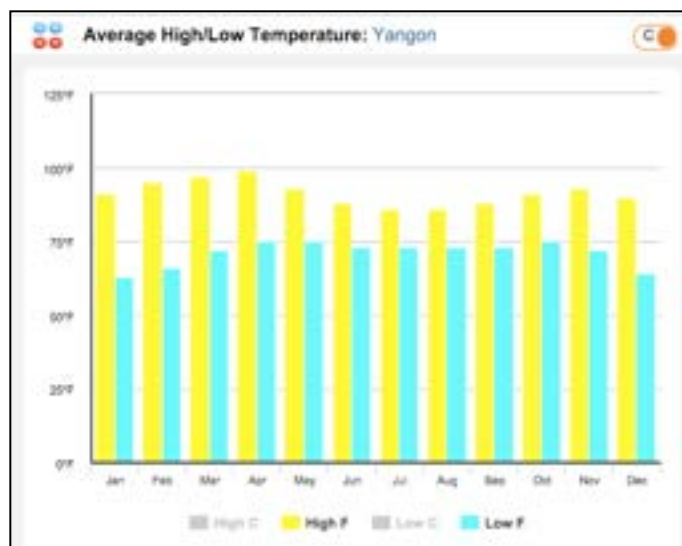
A HOUSE DESTROYED CYCLONE NARGIS

Geography and Weather

Yangon metropolitan area

Yangon is located in Lower Burma (Myanmar) at the convergence of the Yangon and Bago Rivers about 30 km (19 mi) away from the Gulf of Martaban at 16°48' North, 96°09' East (16.8, 96.15). Its standard time zone is UTC/GMT +6:30 hours. Climate

Yangon has a tropical monsoon climate under the Köppen climate classification system.[19] The city features a lengthy rainy season from May through October where a substantial amount of rainfall is received; and a dry season from November through April, where little rainfall is seen. It is primarily due to the heavy precipitation received during the rainy season that Yangon falls under the tropical monsoon climate category. During the course of the year, average temperatures show little variance, with average highs ranging from 29 to 36 °C (84 to 97 °F) and average lows ranging from 18 to 25 °C (64 to 77 °F).



Until the mid-1990s, Yangon remained largely constrained to its traditional peninsula setting between the Bago, Yangon and Hlaing rivers. People moved in, but little of the city moved out. Maps from 1944 show little development north of Inya Lake and areas that are now layered in cement and stacked with houses were then virtual backwaters. Since the late 1980s, however, the city began a rapid spread north to where Yangon International airport now stands. But the result is a stretching tail on the city, with the downtown area well removed from its geographic centre. The city's area has steadily increased from 72.52 square kilometers (28.00 sq mi) in 1901 to 86.2 square kilometers (33.3 sq mi) in 1940 to 208.51 square kilometers (80.51 sq mi) in 1974, to 346.13 square kilometers (133.64 sq mi) in 1985, and to 598.75 square kilometers (231.18 sq mi) in 2008.

Architecture

Downtown Yangon is known for its leafy avenues and fin-de-siècle architecture. The former British colonial capital has the highest number of colonial period buildings in south-east Asia. Downtown Yangon is still mainly made up of decaying colonial buildings. The former High Court, the former Secretariat buildings, the former St. Paul's English High School and the Strand Hotel are excellent examples of the bygone era. Most downtown buildings from this era are four-story mix-use (residential and commercial) buildings with 14-foot (4.3 m)

ceilings, allowing for the construction of mezzanines. Despite their less-than-perfect conditions, the buildings remain highly sought after and most expensive in the city's property market. The Yangon Heritage Trust, an NGO started by Thant Myint-U, aims to create heritage areas in Downtown, and attract investors to renovate buildings for commercial use.

A latter day hallmark of Yangon is the eight-story apartment building. (In Yangon parlance, a building with no elevators (lifts) is called an apartment building and one with elevators is called a condominium. Condos which have to invest in a local power generator to ensure 24-hour electricity for the elevators are beyond the reach of most Yangonites. Found throughout the city in various forms, eight-story apartment buildings provide relatively inexpensive housing. The apartments are usually eight stories high (including the ground floor) mainly because city regulations, until February 2008, required that all buildings higher than 75 feet (23 m) or eight stories install elevators. Although most apartment buildings were built only within the last 20 years, they look much older and rundown due to shoddy construction and lack of proper maintenance.



Unlike other major Asian cities, Yangon does not have any skyscrapers. Aside from a few high-rise hotels and office towers downtown, most high-rise buildings (usually 10 stories and up) are "condos" scattered across prosperous neighborhoods north of downtown such as Bahan, Dagon, Kamayut and Mayangon. The tallest building in Yangon, Pyay Gardens, is a 25-story condo in the city's north.

Older satellite towns such as Thaketa, North Okkalapa and South Okkalapa are lined mostly with one to two story detached houses with access to the city's electricity grid. Newer satellite towns such as North Dagon and South Dagon are still essentially slums in a grid layout. The satellite towns—old or new—receive little or no municipal services.

Road Layout

- Downtown Yangon's road layout follows a grid pattern, based on four types of roads:
- Broad 160-foot (49-m) wide roads running west to east
- Broad 100-foot (30-m) wide roads running south to north
- Two narrow 30-foot (9.1-m) wide streets running south to north

Mid-size 50-foot (15-m) wide streets running south to north

The pattern of south to north roads is as follows: one broad 100-foot (30 m) wide broad road, two narrow streets, one mid-size street, two more narrow streets, and then another 100-foot (30 m) wide broad road. This order is repeated from west to east. The narrow streets are numbered; the medium and broad roads are named.

Parks and gardens

The largest and best maintained parks in Yangon are located around Shwedagon Pagoda. To the south-east of the gilded stupa is the most popular recreational area in the city - Kandawgyi Lake. The 150-acre (61-ha) lake is surrounded by the 110-acre (45-ha) Kandawgyi Nature Park,[31] and the 69.25-acre (28-ha) Yangon Zoological Gardens, which consists of a zoo, an aquarium and an amusement park. West of the pagoda towards the former Hluttaw (Parliament) complex is the 130-acre (53-ha) People's Square and Park, (the former parading ground on important national days when Yangon was the capital.) A few miles north of the pagoda lies the 37-acre (15-ha) Inya Lake Park - a favorite hangout place of Yangon University students, and a well-known place of romance in Burmese popular culture. Hlawga National Park and Allied War Memorial at the outskirts of the city are popular day-trip destinations with the well-to-do and tourists.

Administration

Yangon is administered by the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC). YCDC also coordinates urban planning. The city is divided into four districts. The districts combined have a total of 33 townships. The current mayor of Yangon is Hla Myint. Each township is administered by a committee of township leaders, who make decisions regarding city beautification and infrastructure. Myo-thit (lit. "New Towns", or satellite towns) are not within such jurisdictions. Yangon is a member of Asian Network of Major Cities 21.

Transport

Yangon is Burma's main domestic and international hub for air, rail, and ground transportation.

Air

Yangon International Airport, located 12 miles (19 km) from downtown, is the country's main gateway for domestic and international air travel. It has direct flights to regional cities in Asia. Although domestic airlines offer service to about twenty domestic locations, most flights are to tourist destinations such as Bagan, Mandalay, Heho and Ngapali, and to the capital Naypyidaw.

Railways

Yangon Central Railway Station is the main terminus of Myanmar Railways' 5,403-kilometre (3,357 mi) rail network whose reach covers Upper Myanmar, upcountry, Shan hills, and the Taninthayi coast.

Yangon Circular Railway runs a 45.9-kilometre (28.5 mi) 39-station commuter rail network that connects Yangon's satellite towns. The system is heavily utilized by the local populace, selling about 150,000 tickets daily. The popularity of the commuter line has jumped since the government reduced petrol subsidies in August 2007.

Buses and cars

Yangon has a 4,456-kilometre (2,769 mi) road network of all types (tar, concrete and dirt) in March 2011. Many of the roads are in poor condition and not wide enough to accommodate an increasing number of cars. The vast majority of Yangonites cannot afford a car and rely on an extensive network of buses to get around. Over 300 public and private bus lines operate about 6,300 crowded buses around the city, carrying over 4.4 million passengers a day. All buses and 80% of the taxis in Yangon run on compressed natural gas (CNG), following the 2005 government decree to save money on imported petroleum. Highway buses to other cities depart from Dagon Ayeyar Highway Bus Terminal for Irrawaddy delta region and Aung Mingala Highway Bus Terminal for other parts of the country.

Motor transportation in Yangon is highly expensive for most of its citizens. As the government allows only a few thousand cars to be imported each year in a country with over 50 million people, car prices in Yangon (and in Burma) are among the highest in the world. A sports utility vehicle, imported for the equivalent of around US \$50,000, goes for US\$250,000. Illegally imported unregistered cars are cheaper - typically about half the price of registered cars. Nonetheless, car usage in Yangon is on the rise, a sign of rising incomes for some, and already causes much traffic congestion in highway-less Yangon's streets. In 2011, Yangon had about 300,000 registered motor vehicles in addition to an unknown number of unregistered ones.

Since 1970, cars have been driven on the right side of the road in Burma, as part of a military decree. However, as the government has not required left hand drive (LHD) cars to accompany the right side road rules, many cars on the road are still right hand drive (RHD) made for driving on the left side. Japanese used cars, which make up most of the country's imports, still arrive with RHD and are never converted to LHD. As a result, Burmese drivers have to rely on their passengers when passing other cars.

Within Yangon city limits, it is illegal to drive trishaws, bicycles, and motorcycles. In May 2003, a ban on using car horns was implemented in six townships of Downtown Yangon to reduce noise pollution. In April 2004, the car horn ban was expanded to cover the entire city.

River

Yangon's four main passenger jetties, all located on or near downtown waterfront, mainly serve local ferries across the river to Dala and Thanlyin, and regional ferries to the Irrawaddy delta. The 22-mile (35 km) Twante Canal was the quickest route from Yangon to the Irrawaddy delta until the 1990s when roads between Yangon and the Irrawaddy Division became usable year round. While passenger ferries to the delta are still used, those to Upper Burma via the Irrawaddy river are now limited mostly to tourist river cruises.

Population

Yangon is the most populous city by far in Burma although estimates of the size of its population vary widely. (All population figures are estimates since no official census has been conducted in Burma since 1983. A UN estimate puts the population as 4.35 million in 2010 but a 2009 U.S. State Department estimate puts it at 5.5 million. The U.S. State Department's estimate is probably closer to the real number since the UN number is a straight-line projection, and does not appear to take the expansion of city limits in the past two decades into account. The city's population grew sharply after 1948 as many people (mainly, the indigenous Burmese) from other parts of the country moved into the newly built satellite towns of North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa, and Thaketa in the 1950s and East Dagon, North Dagon and South Dagon in the 1990s. Immigrants have founded many regional associations in Yangon for networking purposes. The government's decision to move the nation's administrative capital to Naypyidaw has drained an unknown number of civil servants away from Yangon.

Yangon is the most ethnically diverse city in the country. While Indians formed the slight majority prior to World War II, today, the majority of the population is of Bamar (Burman) descent. Large communities of Indians/South Asian Burmese and the Chinese Burmese exist especially in the traditional downtown neighborhoods. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups—especially between the Bamar and the Chinese, and the Bamar and other indigenous Burmese—is common. A large number of Rakhine and Karen live in the city.

Burmese is the principal language of the city. English is by far the preferred second language of the educated class. In recent years, however, the prospect of overseas job opportunities has enticed some to study other languages: Mandarin Chinese is most popular, followed by Japanese, and French.

Religions

The primary religions practiced in Yangon are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. Shwedagon Pagoda is a famous religious landmark in the city.

Media

Yangon is the country's hub for the movie, music, advertising, newspaper and book publishing industries. All media is heavily regulated by the military government. Television broadcasting is off limits to the private sector. All media content must first be approved by the government's media censor board, Press Scrutiny and Registration Division.

Most television channels in the country are broadcast from Yangon. TV Myanmar and Myawaddy TV are the two main channels, providing Burmese-language programming in news and entertainment. Other special interest channels are MWD-1 and MWD-2, MRTV-3, the English-language channel that targets overseas audiences via satellite and via Internet, MRTV-4 and Channel 7 are with a focus on non-formal education programs and movies, and Movie 5, a pay-TV channel specializing in broadcasting foreign movies.

Yangon has three radio stations and nearly all print media and industries are based out of Yangon. All three national newspapers - two Burmese language dailies Myanma Alin (မြန်မာ့အလင်း) and Kyemon (ကြေးမုံ), and the English language The New Light of Myanmar - are published by the government. The Myanmar Times weekly, published in Burmese and in English, is mainly geared for Yangon's expatriate community. Over twenty special interest journals and magazines covering sports, fashion, finance, crime, literature (but never politics) vie for the readership of the general populace.

Access to foreign media is extremely difficult. Satellite television in Yangon (and in Burma) is highly expensive as the government imposes an annual registration fee of one million kyats. Certain foreign newspapers and periodicals such as the International Herald Tribune and the Straits Times can be found only in a few (mostly downtown) bookstores. Internet access in Yangon, which has the best telecommunication infrastructure in the country, is slow and erratic at best, and the Burmese government implements one of the world's most restrictive regimes of Internet control. International text messaging and voice messaging was permitted only in August 2008.

Communication

Common facilities taken for granted elsewhere are luxury prized items in Yangon (and Burma). The price of a GSM mobile phone was about K1.1 million in August 2008. In 2007, the country of 55 million had only 775,000 phone lines (including 275,000 mobile phones), and 400,000 computers. Even in Yangon, which has the best infrastructure, the estimated telephone penetration rate was only 6% at the end of 2004, and the official waiting time for a telephone line was 3.6 years. Most people cannot afford a computer and have to use the city's numerous Internet cafes to access a heavily restricted Internet, and a heavily censored local intranet.

According to official statistics, in July 2010, the country had over 400,000 Internet users, with the vast majority hailing from just two cities, Yangon and Mandalay. Although Internet access was available in 42 cities across the country, the number of users outside the two main cities was just over 10,000.

Lifestyle

Yangon's property market is the most expensive in the country and beyond the reach of most Yangonites. Most rent outside downtown and few can afford to rent downtown area apartments. (In 2008, rents for a typical 650-to-750-square-foot (60 to 70 m2) apartments in downtown and vicinity range between K70,000 and K150,000 and those for high end condos between K200,000 and K500,000.)

Most men of all ages (and some women) spend their time at ubiquitous tea-shops, found in any corner or street of the city. Watching European football matches while sipping tea is a popular pastime among many Yangonites, rich and poor alike. The average person stays close to his or her neighborhood haunts. The well-to-do tend to visit shopping malls and parks on weekends. Some leave the city on weekends for Chaungtha and Ngwesaung beach resorts in Ayeyarwady Division.

Yangon is also home to many pagoda festivals (paya pwe), held during dry-season months (November - March). The most famous of all, the Shwedagon Pagoda Festival in March, attracts thousands of pilgrims from around the country.

Yangon's museums are the domain of tourists and rarely visited by the locals.

Most of Yangon's larger hotels offer some kind of nightlife entertainment, geared towards tourists and the well-to-do Burmese. Some hotels offer traditional Burmese performing arts shows complete with a traditional Burmese orchestra. The pub scene in larger hotels is more or less the same as elsewhere in Asia. Other options include karaoke bars and pub restaurants in Yangon Chinatown.

Due to the problems of high inflation, the lack of high denomination notes, and the fact that many of the population do not have access to checks, or credit or debit cards, it is common to see citizens carrying a considerable amount of cash. Credit cards are only rarely used in the city, chiefly in the more lavish hotels.

Sports

As the city has the best sporting facilities in the country, most national-level annual sporting tournaments such as track and field, football, volleyball, tennis and swimming are held in Yangon. The 40,000-seat Aung San Stadium and the 32,000-seat Thuwunna Stadium are the main venues for the highly popular annual State and Division football tournament. Most Yangonites prefer watching European football on satellite TV.

Yangon is also home to annual the Myanmar Open golf tournament, and the Myanmar Open tennis tournament. The city hosted the 1961 and 1969 South East Asian Games. During colonial times, cricket was played mostly by British officials in the city but popularity diminished quickly following independence.

Yangon has a growing population of skateboarders, as documented in the films *Altered Focus: Burma* and *Youth of Yangon*. German non-profit organization Make Life Skate Life has received permission from the Yangon City Development Committee to construct a concrete skatepark at Thakin Mya park in downtown, and plans to complete the park in November 2015.

Economy

Yangon is the country's main center for trade, industry, real estate, media, entertainment and tourism. The city alone represents about one fifth of the national economy. According to official statistics for FY 2010-2011, the size of the economy of Yangon Region was 8.93 trillion kyats, or 23% of the national GDP.

The city is Lower Burma's main trading hub for all kinds of merchandise - from basic food stuffs to used cars although commerce continues to be hampered by the city's severely underdeveloped banking industry and communication infrastructure. Bayinnaung Market is the largest wholesale centre in the country for rice, beans and pulses, and other agricultural commodities. There is also a great deal of informal trade, especially in street markets that exist alongside street platforms of Downtown Yangon's townships. However, on 17 June 2011, the YCDC announced that street vendors, who had previously been allowed to legally open shop at 3 pm, would be prohibited from selling on the streets, and permitted to sell only in their townships of residence,

presumably to clean up the city's image. Since 1 December 2009, high-density polyethylene plastic bags have also been banned by city authorities.

Manufacturing accounts for a sizable share of employment. Chronic power shortages limit the factories' operating hours between 8 am and 6 pm. Construction is also a major source of employment. The construction industry has been negatively affected by the move of state apparatus and civil servants to Naypyidaw, new regulations introduced in August 2009 requiring builders to provide at least 12 parking spaces in every new high-rise building, and the general poor business climate.

Tourism represents a major source of foreign currency for the city although by south-east Asian standards the actual number of foreign visitors to Yangon has always been quite low—about 250,000 before the Saffron Revolution in September 2007. The number of visitors dipped even further following the Saffron Revolution and Cyclone Nargis. The recent improvement in the country's political climate has attracted an increasing number of businessmen and tourists. Between 300,000 to 400,000 visitors went through Yangon International in 2011. However, after years of underinvestment, Yangon's modest hotel infrastructure—only 3000 of the total 8000 hotel rooms in Yangon are "suitable for tourists"—is already bursting at the seams.

Education

Yangon has the best educational facilities and the highest number of qualified teachers in Burma where state spending on education is among the lowest in the world.

The disparity in educational opportunities and achievement between rich and poor schools is quite stark even within the city. With little or no state support forthcoming, schools have to rely on forced "donations" and various fees from parents for nearly everything - school maintenance to teachers' salaries, [80] forcing many poor students to drop out.

While many students in poor districts fail to reach high school, a handful of Yangon high schools in wealthier districts provide the majority of students admitted to the most selective universities in the country, highlighting the extreme shallowness of talent pool in the country. The wealthy bypass the state education system altogether, sending their children to private English language instruction schools such as YIEC, or abroad (typically Singapore or Australia) for university education. In 2008, international schools in Yangon cost at least US\$8,000 a year.[83]



Yangon is home to over 20 universities and colleges. Following the 1988 nationwide uprising, the military government has repeatedly shut down universities, and has dispersed most of undergraduate student population to new universities in the suburbs. Nonetheless many of the country's most selective universities are still in Yangon. Students from around the country still have to come to study in Yangon as some subjects are offered only at its universities. T

Health care

The general state of health care in Yangon is poor. According to a 2007 estimate, the military government spends 0.4% of the national budget on health care, and 40% to 60% on defense. By the government's own figures, it spends 849 kyats (US\$0.85) per person. Although health care is nominally free, in reality, patients have to pay for medicine and treatment, even in public clinics and hospitals. Public hospitals including the flagship Yangon General Hospital lack many of the basic facilities and equipment.

Wealthier Yangonites still have access to country's best medical facilities and internationally qualified doctors. Only Yangon and Mandalay have any sizable number of doctors left as many Burmese doctors have emigrated. The well-to-do go to private clinics or hospitals like Pun Hlaing International Hospital and Bahosi Medical Clinic.

Still, medical malpractice is widespread even in private clinics and hospitals that serve the well-to-do. In 2009 and 2010, a spate of high profile deaths brought out the severity of the problem, even for the relatively well off Yangonites. The wealthy do not rely on domestic hospitals and travel abroad (usually Bangkok or Singapore) for treatment.

www.wikipedia.com

COUNTRY OVERVIEW



Overview

- National name: **Pyidaungsu Myanmar Naingngandau**
- Current government officials:
 - President: Lt. Gen. Thein Sein (2011)
 - Vice President Sai Mouk Kham (2011)
- Capital and largest city (2011 est.): **Rangoon, 4.457 million**
- Other large cities: Mandalay, 1.063 million; Nay Pyi Taw 1.06 million
- Languages: Burmese, minority languages
- Ethnicity/race: Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Mon 2%, Indian 2%, other 5%
- Religions: Buddhist 89%, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Islam 4%, Animist 1%, other 2%
- Literacy rate: 92.7% (2011 est.)

History

The ethnic origins of modern Myanmar (known historically as Burma) are a mixture of Indo-Aryans, who began pushing into the area around 700 B.C. , and the Mongolian invaders under Kublai Khan who penetrated the region in the 13th century. Anawrahta (1044-1077) was the first great unifier of Myanmar.

In 1612, the British East India Company sent agents to Burma, but the Burmese doggedly resisted efforts of British, Dutch, and Portuguese traders to establish posts along the Bay of Bengal. Through the Anglo-Burmese War in 1824-1826 and two subsequent wars, the British East India Company expanded to the whole of Burma. By 1886, Burma was annexed to India, then became a separate colony in 1937.

During World War II, Burma was a key battleground; the 800-mile Burma Road was the Allies' vital supply line to China. The Japanese invaded the country in Dec. 1941, and by May 1942, had occupied most of it, cutting off the Burma Road. After one of the most difficult campaigns of the war, Allied forces liberated most of Burma prior to the Japanese surrender in Aug. 1945.

Burma became independent on Jan. 4, 1948. In 1962, left-wing general Ne Win staged a coup, banned political opposition, suspended the constitution, and introduced the "Burmese way of socialism." After 25 years of economic hardship and repression, the Burmese people held massive demonstrations in 1987 and 1988. These were brutally quashed by the State Law and Order Council (SLORC). In 1989, the military government officially

changed the name of the country to Myanmar. (The U.S. State Department does not recognize the name Myanmar or the military regime that represents it.)



In May 1990 elections, the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) won in a landslide. But the military, or SLORC, refused to recognize the election results. The leader of the opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, which focused world attention on SLORC's repressive policies. Daughter of the assassinated general Aung San, who was revered as the father of Burmese independence, Suu Kyi remained under house arrest from 1989 until 1995. Suu Kyi continued to protest against the government, but almost every move she made was answered with a counterblow from SLORC.

Although the ruling junta has maintained a tight grip on Myanmar since 1988, it has not been able to subdue an insurgency in the country's south that has gone on for decades. The ethnic Karen movement has sought an independent homeland along Myanmar's southern border with Thailand. In Jan. 2004, the military government and the insurgents from the Karen National Union agreed to end the fighting, but they stopped short of signing a cease-fire.

The economy has been in a state of collapse except for the junta-controlled heroin trade, the universities have remained closed, and the AIDS epidemic, unrecognized by the junta, has gripped the country.

From 2000 to 2002, Suu Kyi was again placed under house arrest. In spring 2003, the government cracked down once again on the democracy movement, detaining Suu Kyi and shuttering NLD headquarters. The regime opened a constitutional convention in May 2004, but many observers doubted its legitimacy.

In Oct. 2004, the government arrested Prime Minister Gen. Khin Nyunt and charged him with corruption. He had angered the leadership of the junta with his recent experiments on reform, first by freeing Suu Kyi from house arrest and later for proposing a seven-step “road map to democracy.”

A series of coordinated bomb attacks in May 2005 killed about a dozen people and wounded more than 100 in Rangoon. The military junta blamed the Karen National Union and the Shan State Army. The ethnic rebel groups, however, denied any involvement.

On Nov. 13, 2005, the military junta—in a massive and secretive move—relocated the seat of government from the capital Rangoon to a mountain compound called Pyinmanaa in Naypyidaw. The move perplexed many, and the junta was vague in its explanation, saying, “Due to changed circumstances, where Myanmar is trying to develop a modern nation, a more centrally located government seat has become a necessity.”

More than 1,000 delegates gathered in December to begin drafting a constitution, which the junta said was a step toward democracy. The convention adjourned in late Jan. 2006 with little progress. In Sept. 2007, representatives to the convention, which has met on and off since 1993, released a draft constitution that ensures that the military will continue to control the ministries and legislature and have the right to declare a state of emergency. The document also limits the rights of political parties. Opposition parties were excluded from the convention.

In a stunning show of defiance, widespread pro-democracy protests, prompted by a sharp increase in fuel prices, erupted throughout the country in Aug. 2007. Participation in the peaceful protests ballooned over several weeks, and Buddhist monks joined the throngs of protesters when government troops used force against demonstrators in early September. The monks emerged as the leaders of the protest movement and gained international sympathy and support. On Sept. 26, the military cracked down on the protesters, firing into crowds, raiding pagodas, and arresting monks. At least nine people were killed. The protests were by far the largest in the country in 20 years, with as many as 100,000 people marching. In a statement, the United Nations Security Council condemned the crackdown, saying it “strongly deplores” the violence unleashed on the protesters.

On May 3, 2008, Cyclone Nargis ravaged the Irrawaddy Delta and Yangon, killing 22,500 people and leaving up to a million homeless. Another 41,000 people were reported missing and feared dead. Most of the death and destruction were caused by a 12-foot high tidal wave that formed during the storm. The isolated military junta accepted international aid, a tacit acknowledgement that it is ill-equipped to handle a disaster of such enormous scope. But once the aid began to arrive, the government limited distribution of the supplies, accepting only about 10% of what was needed. In addition, it denied entry visas to relief workers, leaving the country crippled and vulnerable to widespread disease. The junta faced further criticism when it went ahead with a constitutional referendum on May 10 intended to cement its grip on power.

In September, the military government released just over 9,000 prisoners, including the longest-serving political prisoner, Win Tin. Most of those released, however, were not political prisoners. By most estimates, as many as 2,000 political prisoners remain in detention. These releases were followed in November by the

sentencing of 30 activists to up to 65 years in jail. The activists include veterans of the 1988 students' movement and other democracy advocates who participated in the thwarted monk-led protests in Aug. and Sept. 2007.

Days after elections in Oct. 2010-the country's first elections in 20 years-opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was freed after nearly 20 years in detention. Thousands of supporters gathered outside her home, where she gave a speech calling for a "peaceful revolution." The elections, which the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party won in a landslide, were widely criticized as rigged and an attempt to further empower the military government. Nevertheless, the junta presented the elections as evidence that the country had completed the transition from military government to a democracy. Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy, boycotted the elections, thus further diminishing the legitimacy of the results.

The country's first Parliament in 20 years convened in Jan. 2011 and elected Prime Minister Thein Sein as president. The military junta officially disbanded in March 2011. However, Parliament is civilian largely in name only. The military won about 60% of the seats in October 2010 elections, and another 25% are reserved for members of the military. In addition, the cabinet is largely comprised of former members of the junta. The National League for Democracy dismissed the transition to a civilian government, calling it a futile gesture that will introduce no real change in power.

The NLD's predictions proved false, however. In his first year as president, Thein Sein initiated stunning changes in political and economic philosophy that saw a loosening of the tight grip the authoritarian junta held on the country. He initiated talks with opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; allowed her and her party, the NLD, to run in upcoming parliamentary elections; freed about more than 800 political prisoners; signed a cease-fire with ethnic Karen rebels, who for 60 years have sought an independent homeland along Myanmar's southern border with Thailand; and suspended work on the controversial \$3.6 billion Myitsone Dam on the Irrawaddy River. In response, the U.S. took dramatic steps to normalize relations with the formerly isolated and repressive regime. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the country in December 2011—it was the first visit of a senior U.S. official in about 50 years. In Jan. 2012 the U.S. restored full diplomatic relations with Myanmar. That was followed by an easing of sanctions that allowed U.S. companies to "responsibly do business" in Myanmar.

In April 2012 parliamentary elections, the National League of Democracy prevailed in 43 out of 45 districts that held races, including the capital, Naypyidaw. Suu Kyi, who in October 2010 was released after spending nearly 20 years under house arrest, won a seat in parliament and took office in May. It was a stunning victory for the opposition—and an equally symbolic defeat for the military. Observers speculated that the opposition's victory would either prompt military rulers to respond to the will of the people and enact change or view the victory as a threat to its power. The U.S. rewarded Myanmar for its progress with a thaw in relations, easing a number of sanctions and allowing nongovernmental organizations to resume operations in the country. "The results of the April 1 parliamentary by-elections represent a dramatic demonstration of popular will that brings a new generation of reformers into government," U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton said.

Ethnic violence broke out between Buddhists and Muslims in the western state of Rakhine after the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by a Muslim man. Revenge attacks followed, prompting Prime Minister Thein Sein to declare a state of emergency in June. Dozens were killed, hundreds of homes were burned, and about 100,000 people were displaced. Tension between the Buddhist majority and Muslim minority, called Rohingyas, in Rakhine has been high for years. The government considers the Rohingyas illegal immigrants, discrimination against them is rampant, and they live in horrible conditions. On Aug. 1, 2012, the international organization Human Rights Watch published a 56-page report "The Government Could Have Stopped This" based on eyewitness reports of the acts of violence committed in Myanmar.

In Aug. 2012 Myanmar's government did away with the country's censorship of private publications. While laws enabling the imprisonment of journalists for printing items that the government deems harmful are still in effect, the final two topics (religion and politics) were removed from the pre-publication censorship list on Aug. 20. Prime Minister Thein Sein continued his shift in political philosophy in September, announcing in a speech to the UN that the changes in Myanmar are "irreversible." In response to the progress, President Barack Obama visited Myanmar in November—the first U.S. president to enter the country. He praised the drift from isolation as a "remarkable journey."

In answer to two years' worth of social, political, and economic reform, the European Union lifted the last of its trade, economic and individual sanctions against Myanmar. President Obama lifted the 1996 ban on entry visas to the former Burma's military rulers, their business partners, and immediate families on May 2, 2013. At the same time, however, the Obama administration approved another year of the National Emergencies Act, which prohibits business transactions with anyone in Myanmar involved in repression of the democracy movement. This give-one, take-one approach was meant to encourage the democratization of Myanmar while simultaneously registering censure of the sectarian violence that erupted in March and has caused more than 40 deaths and has displaced an estimated 13,000. Radical Buddhist monks have been indicted in these attacks between Buddhists and minority (5% of population) Muslims.

While Myanmar has taken steps toward political and social reform in its slow transition to democracy, little has been done to reach a cease-fire with its many ethnic groups—a promise made by Thein Sein when he took office as president in 2011. Indeed, in March and November 2014, dozens of fighters from the Kachin Independence Army were killed in fighting with government troops. The battles in November followed a visit to Myanmar by President Barack Obama. Suu Kyi complained in November 2014 that the reforms had stalled, noting that the military government is blocking her from running for president in 2015's elections.

In 2015, the date for the general election was set for Nov. 8. During the summer of 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi announced that her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), would take part in the election after boycotting the previous one in 2010, which was condemned for irregularities by international organizations.

The leader of NLD, the main opposition party, and Myanmar's most popular politician, Aung San Suu Kyi released a video in early September as campaigning began. In the video, she said, "For the first time in decades, our people will have a real chance of bringing about real change. This is a chance that we cannot afford to let slip. We hope that the whole world understands how important it is for us to have free and fair elections, and to make sure that the results of such elections are respected by all concerned. Please help us by observing what happens before the elections, during the elections, and, crucially, after the elections."

Her NLD party, widely expected to win, has won before, only to have the election outcome ignored. In the 1990 general election, NLD won in a landslide, taking 392 out of 492 seats. However, the military refused to cede power.

In August 2015, the country's electoral commission announced that candidates and political parties were forbidden from criticizing the military during their state media campaign speeches. Also, the 2015 election would still take place under a constitution that was written by the military, a constitution that many, including NLD view as fraudulent.

Early results indicate that Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party won Myanmar's landmark national elections by a landslide. The first official results had the opposition party winning the majority of seats in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city. The country's ruling military-backed party conceded the election. If the results are honored by the military and ruling party, it would be the first time in over fifty years that Myanmar voters were able to freely pick their leaders through an election. <http://www.infoplease.com/country/myanmar.html?pageno=11>

Flag and State Seal



Myanmar's new flag was adopted on October 21, 2010. The flag is a horizontal tricolor with yellow, green and red stripes; a large, white, five-pointed star is in the middle of the flag. The proportions of the flag are 6:9 (height to width).

In the flag, the color yellow symbolizes solidarity; the color green symbolizes peace, tranquility and vegetation; the color red symbolizes valor and decisiveness; and the white star represents the union of the country.

The coat of arms has two chinthe (mythical lions) facing opposite one another, and at its centre is a map of Burma. The coat of arms is surrounded by traditional Burmese flower designs and a star at its top. The new State Seal, as stipulated by Chapter XIII of the 2008 Constitution, was adopted in the 2008 Burmese constitutional referendum. The original coat of arms contained the Burmese text ပြည်ထောင်စုမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော် on the banner, which translates "Union of Burma", as well as three chinthe (the chinthe at the top was replaced by a star). Additionally, the cogwheel was a circle surrounded by Verse 194 of the Buddhavagga in the Dhammapada in Pali: သမဂ္ဂါနိ တပေါ သုခေါ (samagganam tapo sukho), which translates to "happiness through harmony" or "well-being through unity."

However, during Ne Win's Socialist rule, the 1974 Constitution adopted a new state seal with the following changes: the coat of arms was modified to accommodate Socialist symbols: a cogwheel, a star at the top, and dual olive wreaths.[1] The words on the banner were also changed to ပြည်ထောင်စု ဆိုရှယ်လစ်သမ္မတ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်, which translates "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma." In 1988, when the State Law and Order Restoration Council staged a coup, the words ဆိုရှယ်လစ်သမ္မတ ("Socialist Republic") were removed.



Arts and Crafts

Background History of Traditional Arts and Crafts

When King Anawrahta of Bagan brought the relics of Buddha and Buddhist scriptures to Bagan from the Mon capital Suvunna Boumi, various gold and silver artifacts were included. Popular copper items include Buddha images, gongs, bells, and round cattle bells. Monasteries and pagodas are decorated with intricate patterns of stucco works. The artisans produced wood products using the turner's lathe. This craft also owed much to Mons of Suvunna Boumi.

Panpu

Myanmar's woodcarving emerged before the Bagan period and subsequently improved in the middle of the Bagan era. The temples and palaces of the old were magnificently decorated with carved wooden gables and eaves, and other fabulous ornamentation comprised of the most creative and intricate woodcarvings. It is a

pity that many examples of the true genius of Myanmar wood carvers have suffered in the course of time but, fortunately, some of the most exquisite woodcarvings still survive in monasteries and pagodas.

The Shwezigone Pagoda in Bagan, Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Shwenandaw Monastery in Mandalay contain ornamentation of filigree-like woodcarving with scrolls, flowers, animals and supernatural-beings arranged in intricate patterns. Carvings of nats, or mythical traditional spirits, marionettes, and figures of animals still flourishes today.



Panput

The craft of turnery started to develop in the Bagan period around the 8th century A.D. The artisans produced wood products using the turner's lathe. This craft also owed much to Mons of Suvunna Boumi. The turner produced items of diverse shapes such as boxes, bowls, containers, beads, and kitchen utensils. Now this craft thrives mostly because of the tourism industry.

Pandain

Precious metalwork is one of the oldest Myanmar crafts, dating back to pre-Bagan times. Artistic Pyu silver ware was discovered in the mounds of the old shrines of Srikshestra. When King Anawrahta of Bagan brought the relics of Buddha and Buddhist scriptures to Bagan from the Mon capital Suvunna Boumi, various gold and silver artifacts were included.

In antiquity, royals, nobles and the wealthy used gold and silver utensils as status symbols. Silver items such as vases, trays, silver Buddha statuettes were also used for religious purposes. The art of making gold leaf is a renowned Myanmar craft. Gold leaf is popularly used by Buddhist devotees and is pasted on Buddha images as part of their offerings. The process of pounding gold nuggets between layers of leather to get paper-thin gold foils is an intricate art, which is most prevalent in Mandalay.



Panchi

The history of Myanmar's painting can be traced back to pre-historic times. Stone age paintings have been discovered in Padalin cave, in the Shan State. Nine wall paintings, and brown-colored sketches were found there. The 11th century Bagan mural paintings have strong Indian influence and floral patterns are the main elements of the paintings. The Bagan period artists excelled in line drawing, and popular techniques included fresco, oil painting and tempera painting. Most of the paintings depict the 550 Jatakas (Buddha stories).



Inwa paintings began depicting the social life of the people, and only red and green paints were mainly used in the murals.

In early Konebaung era (17th century), the paintings marked the transition from Myanmar traditional flat painting to western styles of perspective and tones. Blue color was generously used and the paintings recorded the lifestyles, entertainment and scene of that era. In the Yadanabone era western style painting began to penetrate, but traditional line sketches remained intact.

During the colonial era western styles and modern techniques were introduced and became popular. Contemporary art also flourished in the 20th century, and now Myanmar contemporary art is mainly impressionistic. In ancient times palm leaf painting and parchment painting flourished. Some of these paintings can be found intact in some pagodas and monasteries and at the National Museum of Myanmar.

Panyan

Myanmar's masonry is of high standard and dates back to Pyu era. Archeological findings at the old sites of Beikthano, Hanlin and Srikshetra have unearthed high standard Myanmar masonry work.

Masonry attained its zenith during the Bagan dynasty, and Southern Indian culture and Mon culture contributed much to the Bagan architecture. During that era, many religious edifices were built by the kings and lay people alike. The masonry works are remarkable for their strength, grandeur, beauty of designs, ornamentation, lighting and ventilation which hold spectators in awe.



Bagan became the wonder and the pride of Myanmar, and set the example for later endeavors.

<http://www.myanmar.cm/arts-literature/traditional-arts-crafts.html>

PRESENT DAY

Myanmar's relative isolation and deeply traditional culture have contributed to a thriving arts and crafts industry. Whereas other countries in the region have begun to lose touch with their roots, Myanmar (Burma) continues to practice and celebrate its ancient customs through a range of creative outlets. Heavily influenced by Buddhism, many of the crafts produced in Myanmar play a practical role in everyday life.

LACQUERWARE

Myanmar's foremost craft, lacquerware, is created using sap, which is applied to items such as vases, bowls and boxes. The sap turns black when it is dried and can then be polished and decorated with intricate designs. Myanmar lacquerware traditionally depicts stories of Buddha's life, using intricate designs etched in gold leaf and pigment of various colors. It is a long, slow, and highly skilled process. Bagan is especially well known for its lacquerware production.



POTTERY

Pottery-making is perhaps the most functional of Myanmar's craft industries, though the results are no less beautiful than any other's. The items produced by pottery makers (vessels for cooking and storing water, for example) are still very much part of everyday life. Thick clay is mixed with silt from local rivers; the resulting material is then left to dry before being ground into a powder, sieved, and soaked again in water until it becomes a smooth substance that can be manipulated and shaped. There are several areas of Myanmar that are particularly associated with pottery-making: These include the villages of Bago and Twante near Yangon.

STONE-CARVING

Another craft that draws heavily on Buddhist tradition, stone carving is a source of great pride and honor for the people of Myanmar. Workshops can be found throughout the country, but the highest concentration is to be found in Mandalay, where the area near Mahamuni Paya is a hub of stone-carving activity. Here you can see the process from its very beginning to the finished article, and marvel at the skill involved in this deeply traditional craft.

BRONZE-CASTING

Another craft representing ancient spiritual practices and serving everyday practical needs is bronze casting, which has its modern-day base in Mandalay. Here, exquisite articles are produced for temples throughout the country. Bells, gongs, cymbals, pots, bowls, Buddhas and other items bearing unmistakable Myanmar design are crafted using traditional casting techniques. The smaller examples of bronze casting are popular as souvenirs.

**WOVEN TEXTILES**

Myanmar's textile heritage is long and rich, and although it has been influenced by neighboring Southeast Asian countries, it carries its own distinctive traditions within its designs. Mandalay and Amarapura are centers for the production of silk and cotton sarongs, which are worn by men and women alike in Myanmar (Burma). Men tend to wear simple designs, whereas women favor

sarongs that are intricate and bright, often carrying traditional colors and patterns.

MARIONETTES

The practice of depicting ancient stories in the form of puppet theater might have died out completely had it not been for the

Mandalay Marionette Theatre, whose nightly performances have prompted a surge in popularity for this unique Myanmar tradition. The stories often center around Buddha's life, but may also depict local legend. It is possible to buy traditionally-crafted puppets throughout the country; these are popular as tourist souvenirs.

WHACKIN' WHITE CHEROOTS

Made famous in Rudyard Kipling's Road to Mandalay, cheroots are cylindrical cigars that are still extremely popular with the people of Myanmar. They're typically produced in factories around Shan and Bago, and these days tend to be green and slender, although large white cheroots are still widely available. Cheroots are traditional to Myanmar and India; they last longer than regular cigarettes and produce a powerful aroma.

<http://www.myanmarburma.com/attraction/253/myanmar-arts-and-crafts-reflect-a-rich-culture>



BUDDHISM

Buddhism in Myanmar is predominantly of the Theravada tradition, practiced by 89% of the country's population. It is the most religious Buddhist country in terms of the proportion of monks in the population and proportion of income spent on religion. Adherents are most likely found among the dominant Bamar people, Shan, Rakhine, Mon, Karen, Zo, and Chinese who are well integrated into Burmese society. Monks, collectively known as the sangha, are venerated members of Burmese society. Among many ethnic groups in Myanmar, including the Bamar and Shan, Theravada Buddhism is practiced in conjunction with nat worship, which involves the placation of spirits who can intercede in worldly affairs.

With regard to the daily routines of Buddhists in Myanmar, there are two most popular practices: merit-making and vipassanā. The weizza path is the least popular; it is an esoteric form somewhat linked to Buddhist aspiration that involves the occult. Merit-making is the most common path undertaken by Burmese Buddhists. This path involves the observance of the Five Precepts and accumulation of good merit through charity and good deeds (dana) to obtain a favourable rebirth. The vipassana path, which has gained ground since the early 1900s, is a form of insight meditation believed to lead to enlightenment. The weizza path, is an esoteric system of occult practices (such as recitation of spells, samatha and alchemy) and believed to lead to life as a weizza (also spelt weikza), a semi-immortal and supernatural being who awaits the appearance of the future Buddha, Maitreya (Arimeitaya).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Myanmar

There are two main schools of Buddhism, Theravada, practiced chiefly in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; and Mahayana, practiced in China, Tibet, Japan and Korea. Theravada, which means the Way of the Elders, was the original school and Mahayana, which emerged later, differs in many aspects.

Throughout the 1st century A.D. to the 10th century A.D., the land of present day Myanmar was inhabited by the Pyus and the Mons. In 1044, King Anawrahta of Bagan unified the land and the First Myanmar Dynasty was founded. Under the spiritual guidance of Shin Arahan, a distinguished Mon monk from Thaton, he introduced Theravada Buddhism into his empire, which stretched from the Indian border in the west to part of Thailand in the south.

In recent years, Myanmar has attained special eminence as the host for the Sixth Buddhist Council, held in Yangon from 1954 to 1956. It is also known as the source of major systems of Vipassana meditation that have spread throughout the world. The propagation of Buddha Sasana (teachings) is carried out through scriptural

learning and the practice of Vipassana meditation especially by the 400,000 Myanmar Buddhist monks 400,000 and thousands of monasteries, hundreds of meditation centers and some Buddhist universities.

Myanmar is known as "the land of pagodas" thanks to a series of devout Myanmar kings and their citizens who built countless religious monuments and shrines throughout the ages, and out of Buddhist belief that acquiring good kamma (karma) or merits will make one attain Nibbana (Nirvana), the final deliverance.

<http://www.myanmar.cm/religion/theravada-buddhism-in-myanmar.html>

A Burmese monk or bhikkhu - which means a mendicant - on the daily alms-round. The practice of collecting alms food is a discipline practice by the ordained Sangha, that is monks and nuns in all Theravadin countries. The daily alms-round was practiced by the Buddha and is continued to this day as a means of making merit, by developing generosity, by lay Buddhist and for the material support of the Sangha. The monks set out each



day at first light with their alms-bowls and wander silently through the village or town collecting the food for the day. On returning to the monastery they will share the food and usually eat communally finishing their meal - for some monks their only meal - before midday.

Along with Sri Lanka and Thailand, Burma, recently renamed Myanmar, is a major stronghold of Theravada Buddhism. The earliest written evidence of Theravada in the country is some inscriptions in Pali dating from about the 5th century AD. In later centuries though, Mahayana and Tantra became popular, although the scandalous behaviour of the Aris, the Tantric priesthood, eventually led to the discrediting and finally the disappearance of Tantric Buddhism. In the 11th century AD King Anawrahta (1044-77), converted to Theravada and within two centuries this form of Buddhism became predominant. This conversion of the whole country was helped to a great degree by the flood of monks and books from Sri Lanka.



The British annexed lower Burma in the 1820s and finally took over the whole country in 1885 although intense opposition to them, meant that Christian missionaries were unable to make much headway. At independence in 1948 Buddhism once again began to receive state support and today about 89% of all Burmese are Buddhists. In the late 19th century there was a great religious revival in the country, and in this century the teachings of two Burmese masters, Mahasi Sayadaw and U Ba Khin, a layman, have become very influential in the West.

Above two Burmese female devotees pour water over an image of the Buddha at the Shwedagon pagoda in Rangoon. This custom is seen as another way of paying respect to the person of the Buddha himself.

As Buddhism is a religion without a God, it might be asked who do Buddhist pray to? Or do they pray at all? The answer is that most Buddhist pray, but they are praying to the Buddha within themselves. They believe that the enlightened nature of the Buddha is their own real nature which they have not yet been able to reach. So when they pray, it is to that deepest part of themselves. In all Buddhist countries the temples are always open, and many people go in during the day. They bring flowers for the Buddha statue or light a candle to show their love and respect. Usually they bow to show gratitude for the Buddha's teachings. Sometime they offer rice or light an incense stick. These are ways of honoring the Buddha.

Climate and Weather

Myanmar has a monsoon climate with three main seasons. The hottest period is between February and May, when there is little or no rain and temperatures can rise above 40°C (104°F). The rainy season is generally from May to October, giving way to dry, cooler weather from October to February. The coast and the mountains see significantly more rainfall than the arid central plains, which include Mandalay and Bagan, and roads can become impassable during the rainy season in those areas.

Overall, the best months to visit are from November to February. The only notable downside (other than the fact that places are busy with other tourists) is that river travel can be slow as water levels are low, meaning that boats have to travel more slowly; this is particularly notable on long journeys as ferries cannot travel overnight for fear of being grounded on sandbanks.

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/myanmar/weather-climate-geography>

Demographics

Population: 51.5 Million (July 2014 est.)

<http://www.networkmyanmar.org/index.php/politics/myanmar-census-2014>

How has the population of Myanmar changed between 1973, 1983 and 2014?



2014 51.5 million



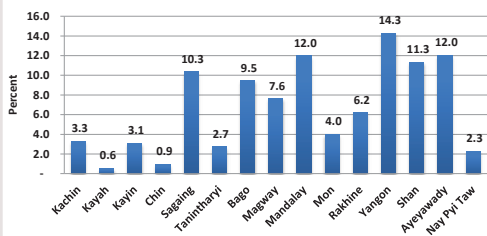
1983 35.3 million



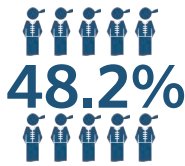
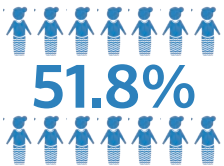
1973 28.9 million



Proportion of the total population by State/Region 2014

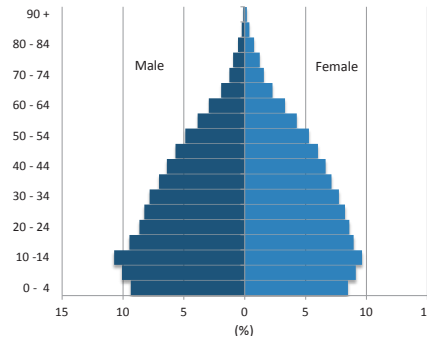


Population composition



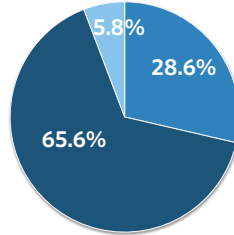
51.8% of the population are female and 48.2% are male.

Population Pyramid of Myanmar, 2014



The "pot shape" of the pyramid indicates that birth rates are declining in Myanmar while the young working age population has been steadily increasing. It shows changing population dynamics.

Proportion of broad age groups in the total population



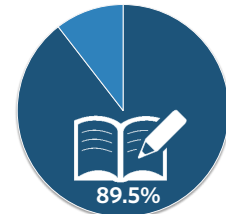
The population can be divided into three broad age groups, those less than 15 years (Child population), 15-64 years (Productive age) and 65 years and over (Aged population).

Under 15 years
15-64 years
65 years and over



Dependency Ratio

In Myanmar the Total Dependency Ratio was 52.5 in 2014. The dependency ratio measures the pressure on the productive population.



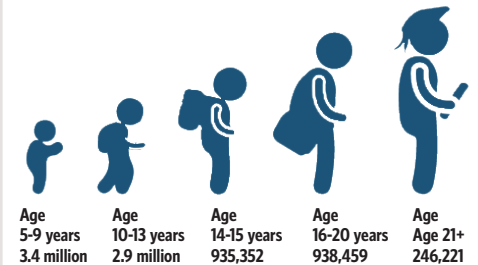
Literacy

Out of 33.9 million people aged fifteen years and over, 30.37 million reported that they were able to read and write. The literacy rate for Myanmar is 89.5%. Literacy rates are higher for males (92.6%) than females (86.9%).



School attendance by age group

Out of a population of 43,517,147 persons aged 5 years and over living in conventional households, 8,461,477 are currently attending school.




Labour force participation rate

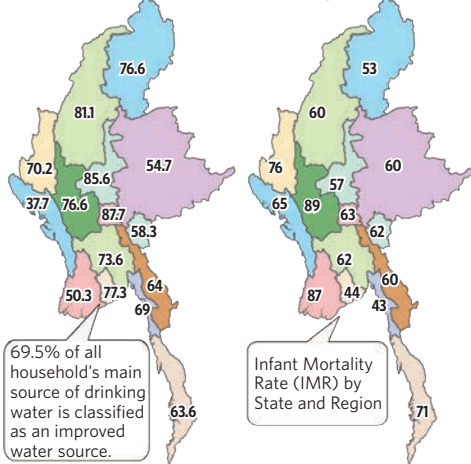
67% of all people who are of working age (15-64) were in the labour force. The proportion of males in the labour force is much higher (85.2%) than that of females (50.5%).




Housing conditions

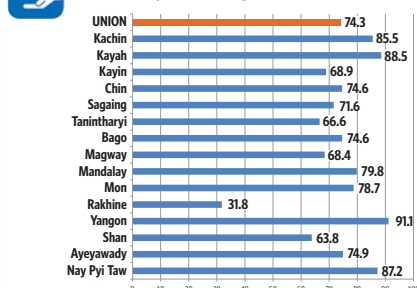
85.5% of households in Myanmar own their house.


 Proportion of households with access to improved sources of drinking water, by State and Region





 A person in Myanmar lives on average until the age of 66.8 years. Women live to an older age, approximately 69.9 years, than men at 63.9 years.

 Proportion of households with improved sanitation facilities by State/Region



 Sanitation
74.3% of all households have toilets that are classified as improved sanitation facilities.

 Housing amenities
32.4% of households use electricity as their main source of energy for lighting (although disparities between urban and rural areas are striking).

 69.2% of the households use firewood as their main source of energy for cooking.

 Myanmar Map with States/Regions



2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census

A Changing Population: Union Figures at a Glance

May 2015



Union Figures at a Glance

Population (March 2014)	
Total	51,486,253 ¹
Male	24,824,586 (48.2%)
Female	26,661,667 (51.8%)
Sex ratio	93 males per 100 females
Urban	14,877,943 (30%)
Rural	35,401,957 (70%)

Population Density 76.1 persons per Km²

¹ The total population figures include both the enumerated population and the estimated population (1,206,353) that was not counted during the Census.



The Main Census Results
can be downloaded at:
www.dop.gov.mm

or <http://myanmar.unfpa.org/census>



Department of Population,
Ministry of Immigration and Population
with technical support from UNFPA

Economy

Since the transition to a civilian government in 2011, Burma has begun an economic overhaul aimed at attracting foreign investment and reintegrating into the global economy. Economic reforms have included establishing a managed float of the Burmese kyat in 2012, re-writing the Foreign Investment Law in 2012 to allow more foreign investment participation, granting the Central Bank operational independence in July 2013, enacting a new Anti-corruption Law in September 2013, and authorizing a small number of foreign banks to open branch offices for limited operations beginning in 2015.

The government's commitment to reform, and the subsequent easing of most Western sanctions, has begun to pay dividends as growth accelerated in 2013 and 2014. In 2015 growth slowed because of political uncertainty in an election year, summer floods, and external factors, including China's slowdown and lower commodity prices. Burma's abundant natural resources, young labor force, and proximity to Asia's dynamic economies have attracted foreign investment in the energy sector, garment industry, information technology, and food and beverages. Pledged foreign direct investment grew from \$1.4 billion in FY 2012 to \$4.1 billion in FY 2013.

Despite these improvements, living standards have not improved for the majority of the people residing in rural areas. Burma remains one of the poorest countries in Asia - nearly one-third of the country's 51 million people live in poverty. The previous government's isolationist policies and economic mismanagement have left Burma with poor infrastructure, endemic corruption, underdeveloped human resources, and inadequate access to capital, which will require a major commitment to reverse. The Burmese government has been slow to address impediments to economic development such as insecure land rights, a restrictive trade licensing system, an opaque revenue collection system, and an antiquated banking system. The newly elected government, led by AUNG SAN SUU KYI will likely focus on modernizing and opening the financial sector, increasing budget allocations for social services, and accelerating agricultural and land reforms.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

Education

In the past, Burma was admired for the widespread literacy of its people and high-quality education standards. As a British colony, Burma further developed its educational standards, and upon gaining independence in 1948, and boasting one of the highest literacy rates in Asia in the late 1940s and 1950s, it was expected to become one of the fastest developing Asian Tigers of the region. However, despite its good track record, Burma's education system is now in an abysmal state. According to data compiled by the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, Burma ranks 164th, out of 168 countries, for public expenditure on education, spending just 1.3% of its GDP on education (UNESCO, 2001). Consequently, the education system has disintegrated and students now spend very little time in school, with few making it to university. Those who do make it to university will not only have to pay high fees, but will not be allowed to choose their area of study. The government assigns their courses based on the scores of their matriculation exam, regardless of whether or not they have any interest in the subject, and despite the fact that there are almost no jobs in certain fields students continue to be assigned to subjects like physics and zoology (Fink, *Living Silence in Burma*, 197).

Education in Burma is only compulsory for five years, and the majority of students drop out after this short period; according to UNESCO, only 50% of Burma's children are enrolled in secondary education. This is in stark contrast with international standards. To compare, in the United Kingdom around 96% of children attend secondary school. Moreover, due to lack of financing, schools are poorly equipped and academic resources and materials are often outdated. Parents are asked to pay an annual fee, said to contribute to "building maintenance, school furniture and school books," says Aung Myo Min, director of the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), even though Burma has laws stipulating that primary school education is free. The fee in primary schools amounts to about US\$100 - half of a mid-ranking civil servant's monthly salary in Burma - and is even higher in secondary schools. The problem primarily affects families in poor, rural areas. For those living outside of the cities (a vast majority of the population in Burma), educating children often means not only paying the fee, but also paying for transport to school. While both genders are negatively affected by these costs, girls often pay a heavier price. As Lway Aye Nang, secretary-general of Women's League of Burma (WLB), told IPS News, "In both the cities and in rural areas, there is a greater likelihood that parents may keep their boys in school and take the girls out. Family members do not support daughters going to school if there is limited funding." Consequently, the faulty educational system leads to the deepening of differences between genders, consolidating inequality within the society.

The education system in Burma is discriminatory not only with respect to gender and income level, but also when it comes to ethnicity. Curricula in Burma are controlled by the government and written in the spirit of the "unifying of the nation" programme, endorsed by the SPDC and stemming from the long-standing conflict between the Burmese military and ethnic rebels. As a result, the ethnic diversity of Burmese society is

overlooked, aggravating ethnic conflicts. Community-based schools (which are not only adjusted to local traditions, but also cheaper) are often shut down, which leaves the state-controlled schools as the only

alternative. Consequently, some of the ethnic minorities find it difficult to preserve their cultures and retain their languages.

One of the main reasons for the poor state of education in Burma is political. Historically, students were one of the groups that actively and adamantly opposed the regime. After the military coup in 1962, students started organising peaceful demonstrations and protests to express their dissatisfaction with the military government. The protests were violently suppressed and in 1988, in response to the students' persistent demands for justice and human rights, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) - the name for the government at the time - closed down all the universities. In 1990 they reopened, now with a new, government-controlled curriculum. However, in 1996 they were closed yet again - this time for three years. Currently, there are 156 universities in Burma, scattered across different regions so as to make access difficult, and the curriculum is still strictly controlled by the government.

Internationally, education is regarded as an indispensable human right. In Burma, however, it is marginalised and inaccessible to most citizens. The ruling elite understands that education is dangerous to their maintenance of power and control: when people are educated they question the government and demand their rights. Young people from Burma often move to Thailand or other neighbouring countries to attend school and university so that they can challenge the oppression and injustice of the government and help bring democracy, human rights and development to Burma. Many international NGOs and charities specialising in education are based along the Thai-Burmese border, teaching English and human rights to these young Burmese students. However, living on the border is risky - refugees risk being arrested and deported back to Burma, where many are in danger of becoming political prisoners and being subjected to torture.

Representatives of the government insist that the education standards in Burma conform with those set out by the UN as part of the Millennium Development Goals. However, considering the meagre part of the budget that is spent on education, as well as the history of violence against students and restricted freedom of speech, international observers have some serious doubts about whether this is really the case. The fact that so many young Burmese see leaving the country as the only way to educate themselves speaks for itself.

Diversity and Religion and Ethnic Diversity:

<http://www.myanmarjourneys.com/travel-guide/main-religions-in-myanmar.html>

Myanmar is worldwide known as a peaceful land created by the various traits and customs of its people that come from many states and divisions; hence, religions diversity is available in the country. With their early appearance in Burmese history, religions have a strong influence in the spiritual life of Burmese. Considered as the main religion, Buddhism (mostly Theravada Buddhism) makes up mo

PreviousNext

On the other hand, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and others are also practiced in Myanmar - respectively account for four percent, four percent, two percent and one percent in the population. The main spirit of these religions is to respect individuals' freedom and to help stabilize peace as well as the development of the country.

Theravada Buddhism

From the 11th century, in Bagan - one of Myanmar's old capital, Theravada Buddhism or Hinayana Buddhism was spread and widely promoted by King Anawrahta (1044 - 1077 AD) who found the first Myanmar Dynasty. From then on, it has been played an important role in Burma's life, art, architecture and society as well as has

been reflected on all the Buddhist temples and pagodas all over the country. Nowadays, most Burmese are Buddhist and the Buddhism is considered as the national religion of country.

Christians

With about four percent in Myanmar's population, Christians was introduced from the 18th century and developed until now in a small number of Burmese. Being a part of Myanmar religions, Christians divided into two arms, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

Muslims

Muslims followers are also about four percent of Myanmar's population and almost all believe the Sunni set. A small part of ethnic minorities of Indians, Indo-Burmese and the Chinese Hui people in Myanmar follow Muslim Culture

Food

Myanmar Traditional Foods

Because Myanmar has diverse geographical features, favorable seasonal conditions and is naturally endowed with fertile soil and water resources, it boasts an abundant supply of food in a great variety all year around.

The Burmese enjoy rice as their main food and it comprises about 75% of the diet. Rice is served with meat or fish, soup, salad and vegetables all cooked in their own ways, and some relishes to complement the meal.

During meals, all the dishes are laid out on the dining table and served together so that diners can make their own choices and combinations. Although the dishes are prepared in a variety of ways, the most common method is to cook meat or fish in oil, seasoned with pounded onion, garlic, ginger, turmeric, chili and spices, and simmer until all or most of the water evaporates.

The essential and most popular condiment is a kind of relish made from preserved fish or prawn, served with chili powder.

Most traditional snacks, which are rich in variety and taste, are generally made with rice or glutinous rice.

Mohinga , or rice noodle served with fish soup, is the favourite Myanmar dish mostly enjoyed at breakfast or on special occasions. Laphet or pickled tea leaves with a dash of oil and served with sesame seeds, fried garlic and roasted peanuts, is another popular snack typical of Myanmar.



The Burmese people have a long tradition of preparing food in their own way and the history of traditional food may be as old as the culture and arts of its people. Myanmar is an agrarian country with rice as the principal crop. Myanmar used to be the world's biggest rice exporter.

Myanmar lies between two great and very different cultures which have influenced not only religion, culture and arts, but also the preparation of food. During the colonial period, the influx of Chinese and Indians also had an impact on Myanmar traditional food, introducing new items. With the advent of globalization and trade liberalization, most famous foods from around the world are available in the cities, yet the majority of Myanmar people still cherish their own food, ensuring that its essence and uniqueness remains unchanged.

Soups and Salads

Most Burmese people regard soup as an indispensable component of a meal, possibly because they do not normally drink wine, or even a glass of water at meals, to allow the smooth swallowing of solid food. Good spicy soups not only facilitate the dining process but also stimulate the appetite of diners. Sometimes, when soup is not available at the meal and the dishes are too dry, a hot cup of green tea is served instead.

There are many different styles of soup. There are sweet broths that are clear and bland and contain meat or fish and certain vegetables. There are bitter soups that are also clear but peppery and spicy, usually to go with salads as a fast food combination. Some soups are rather sour and made so with the aid of tamarind pulp or tomato. They mostly contain vegetables to lessen the richness of a meal. Finally, there are bean soups of various kinds that are thick and tasty and usually splashed over rice as a dampener. Salads in traditional food are different than western counterparts. Myanmar salads are a combination of raw, boiled or preserved vegetables, cooked meat or fish, slices of onion, tamarind juice, chili powder, fish sauce, fried shredded garlic in cooked oil, and pounded dried prawn, all mixed thoroughly by hand. Because of the variety of ingredients, the taste is wonderful and salads can either make an appetizing dish at meals or can be served singly as fast food complemented by a bowl of hot, spicy soup.

Snacks

Snacks are usually made of rice or glutinous rice, milk or grated shreds of coconut, and sugar or jaggery as sweeteners. Snacks are often served as breakfast items, as fast food, or at tea-times. Although there are a number of traditional snacks, the most popular is Mohinga or rice noodle served with fish gravy. The other famous item is Ohnnoh Khauk Swe or noodle served with rich coconut soup flavored with chicken. Kyarsan Chet or vermicelli in spicy chicken soup is another favorite snack. Also popular are Khauk Swe Thoke or noodle salad, Ah Kyaw or assorted fries, Bein Mont or rice pancake, Mont Sein Paung or steamed rice cake, Mont Lone Gyi or rice dumpling with coconut filling, Kauk Nyin Paung or steamed glutinous rice, and Shwe Yin Aye or coconut cream sherbet.

Main Dishes

Main dishes in a typical Myanmar meal can be classified as meat or fish, vegetables or salads, and some kind of soup. In the meat or fish category, dishes such as chicken, duck, pork, mutton, fish and prawns, and eggs cooked in water, oil and other spices are frequently served. Beef is usually not served. Vegetables are cut and cooked in various ways, usually with a small amount of oil and dried prawn to enhance the taste. Salads are mostly made of raw, cooked or preserved vegetables, or sometimes meat, fish or prawn, added with a number of ingredients to enrich the flavor. There are four main types of soups: sweet broth, hot and spicy, sour, and bean soup.

Dessert

Dessert is not always served during normal meals at home, but it is customary when entertaining a guest or giving a charity feast. Apart from fruits of various kinds, the most common dessert is laphet or pickled tea leaves salad served with roasted sesame seeds and peanuts, fried beans and garlic, and a small amount of dried prawn. Shwe Kyi or rich semolina, is another popular dessert served at feasts and on special occasions. Kyauk Kyaw or seaweed jelly, mostly with a coconut milk layer on top, is also a common dessert. Thagu or Thagu Byin, which may have acquired its name from the Malay origin, is sago or tapioca pudding sweetened with jaggery and enriched with coconut. Finally, the humblest of Myanmar traditional desserts is jaggery, a

complimentary dessert provided in Myanmar meal shops and the only dessert popular with rural families, especially in Upper Myanmar.

A Traditional Serving

In a traditional serving, there are no appetizers or wines. A typical Myanmar meal includes a plate filled with rice, dishes filled with different curries, soup in a main bowl, and green or boiled vegetables with fish sauce. A bowl of extra rice for second helpings is also provided at the table. Dishes are served simultaneously rather than course by course as in western dinners. A folded napkin is for wiping the lips and fingers after the meal but not for protecting clothing. A fork and spoon may be provided or available on request.

Diners serve curry and rice onto their plates. They can ask for a second helping or they can self serve if there are no attendants. After the meal is finished, dessert including fresh fruits and snacks is served.

<http://www.myanmar.cm/lifestyle/traditional-foods.html>

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Not only is poverty widespread, there is marked inequality. Essentially, the society is divided into a tiny elite, a fairly small middle class, and a large number of very poor people. While there are traditional elites within most of the ethnic groups and new elites in some groups whose wealth comes from smuggling, the national elite is overwhelmingly Burmese. In recent years income from the narcotics trade has been an important source of wealth for members of the elite. Although some segments of the middle class have prospered from the economic reforms of the late 1980s, most have not done well and remain poor.

Political Life

Government. The military has ruled the country since 1962. In the face of growing opposition to the government and its socialist policies, Ne Win and President San Yu resigned in July 1988, and widespread civil unrest followed. General Saw Muang formed a new military regime known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and abolished much of the socialist system. Elections were held for the 485-member People's Assembly in 1990. The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) won 396 seats, while the military-backed party won only 10. The People's Assembly was never convened, and many of its leaders were arrested or forced into exile. The military began drafting a new constitution in 1992, but this task has not been completed. The regime changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997. The council includes a chairman and twenty other members. The government formed by the council consists of a prime minister, two deputy prime ministers, and thirty-seven ministers.

Leadership and Political Officials. Political leadership revolves around political intrigues and struggles for power within the military. From 1962 until 1988, General Ne Win was the dominant political figure, with other officers and their associates jockeying for positions underneath him. General Than Swe's hold on power since 1988 has been far less absolute. The officers holding positions in SLORC/SPDC tend to be roughly the same age and have roughly similar backgrounds and values.

The National League for Democracy is led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the assassinated independence leader Aung San. She is currently under house arrest in Rangoon. The majority of the small inner circle around Aung San Suu Kyi are former military officers and associates or followers of Aung San. Both the regime and its leading opponents therefore form a small political elite.

There is an ethnic dimension to political office holding and leadership. The 1948 and 1962 governments were predominantly Burmese in composition and pursued pro-Burmese policies. Those policies sparked ethnic insurgencies led by ethnic elites, and the situation deteriorated when the regime passed a law in 1983 that created three tiers of citizenship rights based largely on ethnicity. At the bottom was a category of "other

racess" that included naturalized immigrants, mainly from India and China, whose ancestors arrived during the colonial period. Those assigned to this tier cannot run for political office or hold senior government posts. The

1988 regime signed peace accords with most of the insurgent groups, but national leadership has remained in the hands of the Burmese.

Social Problems and Control. The authoritarian military regime has been harsh in its treatment of ethnic minorities and rules by decree, without a constitution or legislature. The regime systematically violates human rights and suppresses all forms of opposition. The judiciary is not independent of the military regime, which appoints justices to the supreme court. These justices then appoint lower court judges with the approval of the regime. Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. The regime reinforces its rule with a pervasive security apparatus led by a military intelligence organization known as the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI). The regime engages in surveillance of government employees and private citizens, harassment of political activists, intimidation, arrest, detention, and physical abuse. The movements and communications of citizens are monitored, homes are searched without warrants, and people are forcibly relocated without compensation. There is no provision for judicial determination of the legality of detention. Before being charged, detainees rarely have access to legal counsel or their families. Political detainees have no opportunity to obtain bail, and some are held incommunicado for long periods. After being charged, detainees rarely have counsel. In ethnic minority areas, human rights abuses are widespread, including extrajudicial killings and rape. The regime justifies its actions as being necessary to maintain order and national unity.

Although the regime officially recognizes the NLD, political rights are limited. There is virtually no right of assembly or association. Intimidation of NLD supporters forced the party to close its offices throughout the country. Opponents of the regime have disappeared and been arrested. Detainees often face torture, beatings, and other forms of abuse. There is little academic or religious freedom. Under the 1974 constitution, the regime required religious organizations to register with it. Religious meetings are monitored, and religious publications are subject to censorship and control. Buddhist monastic orders are under the authority of the state-sponsored State Clergy Coordination Committee. The regime has attempted to promote Buddhism and suppress other religions in ethnic minority areas. Workers' rights are restricted, unions are banned, and forced labor for public works and to produce food and other goods and perform other services for the military is common. Military personnel routinely confiscate livestock, fuel, food supplies, alcoholic drinks, and money from civilians.

Military Activity. Since 1962, the military (the Tatmadaw) has been the dominant political and economic force, with a large proportion of the population serving in the armed forces since the 1960s. In 1985, there were an estimated 186,000 men and women in the military; another 73,000 were in the People's Police Force and 35,000 served in the People's Militia. Reflecting the country's poverty and international isolation, the military is poorly armed and trained. Direct spending on the military declined from about 33 percent in the early 1970s to about 21 percent in 1987, representing less than 4 percent of the gross domestic product. This decline in personnel and expenditure was reversed in 1988. By 1997, the military had grown to over 350,000 and military spending had increased greatly. At present, military spending by the government is greater than nonmilitary spending. Military officers and their families play an important role in economic affairs outside the formal activities of the military. This is true both in the formal economy through government economic entities and in the black market, especially narcotics smuggling. The military's formal role includes intimidation of the population and waging war against ethnic insurgents.

Read more: <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Burma.html#ixzz41f6dhKZg>

ETIQUETTE

Table Maners

The most commonly used tables in Myanmar are round and low and the diners have to sit on the floor or perhaps mat during meals. Even when the table is of the international shape and height mostly used among urban families and in restaurants, it should be small enough for the diners to reach all the dishes on the table. All dishes including rice are served simultaneously rather than course by course. There are no appetizers or hors d'oeuvre, and no wine or spirits served at the meal. All you can expect is drinking water, a juice or a cup of green tea.

When everything is served, people can start eating, taking small portions of dishes they like. Normally, Myanmar people eat with their fingers, but dishes are provided with serving spoons to be handles with the clean left hand. Soup is usually served in a single bowl for all the diners and is shared.

Forks and spoons, but not knives, are permitted and have become popular. The elderly and the guests are given priority by letting them take the curry first. Hosts can initiate meals by serving a spoonful of curry on guest's plates after confirming if they would like the dish.

Diners intending on having another helping of rice, should leave some unfinished rice as a signal more is wanted. Rice and curry are to be eaten together rather than separately and soup can be taken at intervals. At the conclusion of the meal, deserts such as laphet, fruit or jaggery may be served along with water, green tea or juice.

Understanding the Culture - Do's and Don'ts

Myanmar has only recently opened its doors to foreign travelers; after years of relative insulation from the outside world, the Burmese now have to contend with droves of foreigners with no idea how the locals work and live.

But the country isn't completely opaque as far as customs and traditions go. As Myanmar is a culturally Mahayana Buddhist country, like its neighbors Cambodia and Thailand, its citizens follow norms and traditions closely associated with the local religion.

Follow these simple rules, and you can make your way through Myanmar without offending the locals.

- Learn a few words from the local language; use them when you can. The Burmese people are a generally open and friendly people, much more so when you can talk to them (however haltingly) in their own tongue.
 - These two words go a long way in fostering goodwill as you travel in Myanmar:
 - Mengalaba (pronounced as Meng- Gah- Lah- Bar)= Hello
 - Chesube (pronounced as Tseh-Soo- Beh)= Thank you
- Go local. The Burmese appreciate the effort of your trying to observe their way of living. Try wearing Burmese clothes, like the Longyi (for women) and Pasu (for men). These are worn in place of pants or skirts, as they have plenty of ventilation compared to their Western counterparts.

- Try some of the local customs, too, like wearing thanaka makeup and chewing Kun-ya, or betel nut.
 - Thanaka is a paste made from thanaka tree bark, and is painted on the cheeks and nose. The Burmese say thanaka is an effective sunblock.
 - Kun-ya is more of an acquired taste; the Burmese wrap areca nuts and dried herbs in betel leaves, then chew the wad; this is what stains and distorts their teeth.
- Participate in local festivals. So long as they do not disrespect the proceedings, tourists are allowed to participate in any traditional celebrations going on at the time of their visit. For an example of a traveler-friendly festival, read about celebrating Thingyan Festival in Myanmar.
- Respecting Personal Space in Myanmar
 - Watch where you point that camera. Stupas and landscapes are fair game for tourist photographers; people aren't.
 - Always ask permission before taking a shot of locals. Just because women are bathing out in the open doesn't make it OK to snap a picture; quite the opposite.
 - Taking pictures of meditating monks is considered very disrespectful. Certain far-flung tribes in Myanmar also frown on tourists taking pictures of pregnant women.
- Respect the local religious customs. Most Burmese are devout Buddhists, and while they will not impose their beliefs on visitors, they will expect you to pay due respect to their traditional practices. Wear appropriate clothes when visiting religious sites, and don't violate their space: avoid touching a monk's robes, and don't disturb praying or meditating people in temples.
 - What not to wear: For appropriate clothing in temples and other important tips, read about Do's and Don'ts for Buddhist Temples.
- Mind your body language. The Burmese, like their religious compatriots around Southeast Asia, have strong feelings about the head and feet. The head is considered holy, while the feet are considered impure.
 - So keep your hands off people's heads; touching other people's heads is considered the height of disrespect, something to avoid doing even to children.
 - Watch what you do with your feet, too: you shouldn't point to or touch objects with them, and you should tuck them under yourself when sitting on the ground or floor. Don't sit with your feet pointing away from your body - or worse - pointing at a person or a pagoda.
- Don't show affection in public. Myanmar is still a conservative country, and the locals may be offended by public displays of affection. So when traveling with a loved one, no hugs and kisses in public, please!
- Following the Law in Myanmar
 - Don't disrespect the Buddha. Images of the Buddha may be used in a lighthearted way in the rest of the world, but Myanmar marches to the beat of a different drum. Articles 295 and 295(a) of the Myanmar Penal Code prescribe up to four years' imprisonment for "insulting religion" and "hurting religious feelings", and the authorities will not hesitate to use them against foreigners they believe are using the image of the Buddha in a disrespectful fashion.
- Shop responsibly. When visiting Myanmar's markets and shops, make sure you're not plundering the country's precious natural and cultural resources in the process.
 - Avoid purchasing questionable wildlife products, like items made from ivory or animal skin. The government is fighting a tough battle against Chinese demand in these illegal products; help them by not supporting this kind of trade.

- Take care when buying arts and crafts, particularly antiques. Authorized antique stores provide certificates of authenticity with every purchase, protecting you from counterfeit items. Remember that antiques of a religious nature cannot be taken out of Myanmar.
- Change your money at authorized money changers, not the black market. Black market moneychangers can be found all over local markets, but don't bother. You'll get better rates at authorized changers: local banks, some hotels, and at Yangon airport.
- Don't visit restricted areas. There are still a lot of places in Myanmar that are closed to tourists. The reasons vary: some are protected tribal areas, others have terrain impassable to ordinary tourist traffic, and others are hotspots for ongoing religious conflicts.



LANGUAGE

English	ဗမာစကား (Burmese)
Welcome	ကြိုဆိုပါတယ် (kyaosopartaal)
Hello (General greeting)	မင်္ဂလာပူ (min-ga-la-ba)
Hello (on phone)	ဟဲလို? (hello)
How are you?	ခင်္တမ်းနေကာလေးလား (k'amyà ne-kaùn-là?) ရှင်ခင်္တမ်းနေကာလေးလား။ (shin ne-kaùn-yéh-là?)
Reply to 'How are you?'	နေကောင်းပါတယ်။ ဘယ်လိုလဲ? (ne-kaùn-ba-deh, bhaalllell?)
Long time no see	ma twe tah kya bi
What's your name?	ခင်္တမ်းနာမည်ယှိခေလဲ။ (k'amyà ne-meh beh-lo k'aw-lèh?) ရှင်နာမည်ဘယ်လိုခေါ်သလဲ။ (shin ne-meh beh-lo k'aw-dhălèh?) >f
My name is ...	ကျွန်တော့် ... လို့ခေါ်ပါတယ်။ (cănáw ... ló k'aw-ba-deh) m ကျွန်မ ... လို့ခေါ်ပါတယ်။ (cămá ... ló k'aw-ba-deh) f
Where are you from?	သင်ဘယ်ကလဲ? (sain bhaalkalell?)
I'm fromကပါ။ (k-par)
Pleased to meet you	တွေ့ရတာဝမ်းသာပါတယ်။ (twé-yá-da wùn-tha-ba-deh)
Good morning (Morning greeting)	မင်္ဂလာပူ (min-ga-la-ba)
Good afternoon (Afternoon greeting)	မင်္ဂလာပူ (min-ga-la-ba)
Good evening (Evening greeting)	မင်္ဂလာပူ (min-ga-la-ba)
Good night	
Goodbye (Parting phrases)	ဘိုင်း။ (bhine) ဘိုင်းဘိုင်း။ (bhinebhine)
Good luck	ကံကောင်းပါစေ! (kan-kaung-ba-zay)

I understand	ကျွန်တော်နားလည်ပါတယ် (kyawantaw narrlaipartaal)
I don't understand	နားမလည်ဘူး။ (nà-măleh-ba-bù)
Yes	အင်း၊ (aainn)
I don't know	မသိပါဘူး။ (ma thi par bhuu)
Please speak more slowly	pyay pyay pyaw ba
Please say that again	ပြန်ပြောပါအုံး။ (pyan-pyàw-ba-oùn)
Please write it down	yay pya ba
Do you speak English?	သင် အင်္ဂလိပ်လို ပြောသလား? (shin aaingaliutlo pyaw lar?)
Do you speak Burmese?	ဗမာစကား ပြောတတ်သလား။ (bamazaga pyaw daq lar?)
Yes, a little (reply to 'Do you speak ...?')	နဲ့နဲ့ပြောတတ်ပါတယ်။ (nèh-nèh pyàw-daq-ba-deh)
How do you say ... in Burmese?	bama lo ... go balo pyaw leh?
Excuse me	ခွင့်တောင်း (ka mya?) m / shin? (f)
How much is this?	diha balao leh?
Sorry	ဝမ်းနည်းပါတယ်။ (wùn-nèh-ba-deh)
Thank you	တောင်းခံတင်ကြား။ (cè-zù tin-ba-deh)
Reply to thank you	ရပါတယ်။ (ya-ba-deh)
Where's the toilet?	ain-ta beh ma leh?
This gentleman will pay for everything	di ka lu gyi min pasan akong shin meh di ka meih swe pasan akong shin meh
This lady will pay for everything	
Would you like to dance with me?	
I love you	cha-nor kin-mya go chit-teh (m) cha-ma shin go chit-teh (f)
Get well soon	
Leave me alone!	
Help!	ကယ်ပါ။ (keh-ba)
Fire!	mee laun neih bi!
Stop!	ရပ်။ (yaq)
Call the police!	ye' kor like
Christmas and New Year greetings	ခရစ္စမတ်နေ့မှာ မြူးမျော်ပါ (Christmas nay hma mue pyaw pa) နှစ်ဘစ်ကူး မင်္ဂလာပါ။ (Hnit thit ku mingalar pa)
Birthday greetings	ဝေပံတမ္ဘာ့ရာဇကောဇာသော ဝေမြဲနေ့ ပါ။ (pyaw-sa'ya-kaung:-thaw: mway:-nay. pa)

SAFETY

Political situation

Burma held parliamentary elections on 8 November 2015. The National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, won a majority of seats and will form a government in March 2016. Transition discussions are underway between the outgoing and incoming governments. Burma's military retains 25% of seats in parliament as well as various other political offices.

Since the appointment of the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in March 2011, headed by President Thein Sein, a number of political reforms have taken place, culminating in the November 2015 elections. Several hundred political prisoners have been released, though many still remain in jail.

Burma has suffered from prolonged internal conflicts, involving a number of non-state armed groups from Burma's ethnic States. In October 2015 the government signed a National Ceasefire Agreement with 8 (roughly half) of the armed groups. Many others have bilateral ceasefire agreements with the government. There is no formal ceasefire as yet in Kachin State. The possibility of violent clashes remains in ethnic States including Shan, Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Karen, and Mon.

Burma has also suffered from periodic bursts of inter-communal tension and violence. This has particularly hit Rakhine State but has also occurred in central Burman areas including Meiktila.

Censorship has been significantly eased. New legislation passed by Parliament offers greater freedoms of assembly and movement, and the right to form trade unions.

However, the political situation remains potentially unsettled. Restrictions on freedom of speech, movement, religion, and political activity remain, and foreign nationals have been arrested, imprisoned and deported in the past for criticising the government in public. Avoid all demonstrations and large gatherings. Don't take photographs or videos of the police, any demonstrations, military installations or military personnel.

In the past, there have been acts of politically motivated violence around public holidays like Armed Forces Day (27 March) and Martyrs Day (19 July). On other anniversaries, like the 8 August 1988 uprising against the government and the September 2007 protests, you can expect to see an increase in security forces in Rangoon and elsewhere in Burma.

Crime

There are no accurate crime statistics, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there have been occasional instances of violent crime against foreigners, including muggings, burglaries and petty thefts. Homes occupied by foreigners and hotels have been targeted in the past. You should take extra care of your belongings and take sensible security precautions at all times.

CURRENCY



Currency information:

Burmese Kyat

Can not be purchased outside of Burma/Myanmar

Current exchange rate (3/1/16): \$1 USD = 1240 M Kyat

Banks and ATMs

Over the last few years, ATMs that take international cards have started appearing throughout Myanmar, meaning that travellers no longer have to carry hundreds or thousands of US dollars in cash around with them. You can find ATMs even in relatively remote destinations like Hsipaw and Mrauk U. KBZ and CB Bank have the most reliable ATMs - they accept both Visa and Mastercard, and charge a fee of 5000 kyat (around US\$4) per transaction. It's now also possible to receive international cash transfers via Western Union.

Currency and cash

Myanmar is trying to encourage both locals and visitors to use the local currency - kyat - rather than US dollars, which was the preferred currency until 2012. As of the end of November 2015, only banks and official moneychangers are able to change dollars, although how rigidly that will be enforced remains to be seen.

Despite that, and the presence of ATMs, it's still worth bringing some US dollars with you, preferably in smaller notes, as they can be useful if you're stranded without access to an ATM. Make sure your US bills are immaculate and printed no earlier than 2006, or you may not be able to exchange them. It's also easy to change Thai baht in Yangon and Mandalay.

Credit cards

Credit cards are accepted mostly only in top-end hotels. Some travel agents in Yangon and Mandalay also take them, usually charging a small fee, for purchasing flights.

Keeping in touch

It's easy and cheap to buy a SIM card in Yangon and Mandalay that will enable you to make calls and access the internet.

Online access has improved, with wi-fi becoming the norm - most hotels, guesthouses and cafes have it for free - and the internet is now spreading to more remote locations. But tightly squeezed bandwidth and power outages can make using the internet a frustrating exercise.

PERSONAL FUNDS

- If you want to purchase gifts to take back to the United States, please bring currency newer than 2006.
- New bills are preferred by the international banks, as are \$20 and \$100 bills.
- All banks and many stores will not take bills that are defaced, torn, or old.
- Your team leader will not be able to change money for you.
- Credit cards may not be accepted outside of major cities, hotels, and large restaurants.
- There are many places to trade currency in the United States or in the country you are in.
- To determine if the currency of the countries you are going to are traded in the United States, please visit www.travelex.com.
- Travelex has offices in all major airports and cities and you may change money before the trip for a small fee.
- If the currency is not traded in the United States, you will usually be able to trade in the airport upon arrival or the team leader will arrange to change money for the team once during the trip.
- Bring the amount of money you are comfortable spending on gifts and other remembrances of your trip.
- IMR does not pay for alcohol or small, personal snacks. Please be prepared to pay for these items in the currency of the country.

TIME IN MYANMAR

Eastern (EDT) - Rangoon: +11.5 hours

Central (CDT) - Rangoon: +12.5 hours

Mountain (MDT) - Rangoon: +13.5 hours

West (WDT) - Rangoon: +14.5 hours

Myanmar Time - is abbreviated as MMT

Myanmar is GMT/UTC + 6:30h during Standard Time

Myanmar does not utilize daylight saving time.

UTC is Coordinated Universal Time, GMT is Greenwich Mean Time

EMBASSY INFORMATION

NOTE: For your safety, this information is also available on the back of your IMR badge.

The Embassy of the United States, Rangoon, Burma

110 University Ave,
Kamayut Township,
Rangoon, Burma.

Office hours : 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM (MON-FRI) except for Embassy Holidays

Telephone : (95)-(1) 536-509, 535-756, 538-038

Fax : (95)-(1)-511-069

Consular Services

110 University Ave
Kamayut Township,
Rangoon, Burma.

Office hours : 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM (MON-FRI) except for Embassy Holidays

Telephone : (95)-(1)-536-509 and then will hit 1 to get to the Consular section

Fax : (95)-(1)-650-480

E-mail : consularrangoon@state.gov

The American Center

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Rangoon, Burma.

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