




Norway

<p>Kongeriket Norge Kongeriket Noreg Kingdom of Norway</p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Flag</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Coat of arms</p> </div> </div>	
<p>Motto: Royal: <i>Alt for Norge / Alt for Noreg</i> (All for Norway)</p> <p>1814 Eidsvoll oath: <i>Enige og tro til Dovre faller</i> (United and loyal until the mountains of Dovre crumble)</p> <p>Anthem: <i>Ja, vi elsker dette landet</i> Royal anthem: <i>Kongesangen</i></p>	
 <p>Location of Norway (orange) on the European continent (white)</p>	
Capital (and largest city)	Oslo 59°56'N, 10°41'E
Official languages	Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk) ¹
Demonym	Norwegian
Government	Parliamentary democracy and Constitutional monarchy
 - Monarch	Harald V
 - Prime Minister	Jens Stoltenberg (Ap)
Establishment	
 - Unification	872
 - Constitution	17 May, 1814

 - Independence from union with Sweden	declared 7 June, 1905
Area	
 - Total	385,252 km ² (61st ²) 148,746 sq mi
 - Water (%)	7.0
Population	
 - 2008 estimate	4,752,735 (114th)
 - Density	12/km ² (202nd) 31/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2007 estimate
 - Total	\$257.4 billion ^[1] (40th)
 - Per capita	\$55,600 ^[1] (3rd)
GDP (nominal)	2006 estimate
 - Total	\$335.3 billion ^[2] (25th)
 - Per capita	\$95.460,8 (486.335 NOK) ^[3] (2nd)
Gini (2000)	25.8 (low) (6th)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.968 (high) (2nd)
Currency	Norwegian krone (NOK)
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
 - Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Internet TLD	.no ⁵ , .sj and .bv
Calling code	+47
¹	Northern Sami is used in the municipal administration of six municipalities, Lule Sami in one, and Finnish/Kven in one.
²	Includes Svalbard and Jan Mayen.
³	This percentage is for the mainland and also includes glaciers ^[4]
⁴	Statistics Norway estimation (September 5, 2006) using variant MMMM from Table 10 ^[5]
⁵	Two more TLDs have been assigned, but to date not used: .sj for Svalbard and Jan Mayen; .bv for Bouvet Island.

Norway (Norwegian: *Norge* (bokmål) or *Noreg* (nynorsk)), officially the Kingdom of Norway, is a constitutional monarchy in Northern Europe that occupies the western portion of the Scandinavian Peninsula. It is bordered by Sweden, Finland, and Russia, while the United Kingdom and the Faroe Islands lies to its west across the North Sea. The country's extensive coastline along the North Atlantic Ocean is home to its famous fjords.

The Kingdom of Norway also includes the Arctic island territories of Svalbard and Jan Mayen. Norwegian sovereignty over Svalbard is based upon the Svalbard

Treaty, but that treaty does not apply to Jan Mayen, Bouvet Island in the South Atlantic Ocean and Peter I Island and Queen Maud Land in Antarctica are external dependencies, but those three entities do not form part of the kingdom.

Since World War II, Norway has experienced rapid economic growth, and is now amongst the wealthiest countries in the world,^{[6][7][8]} with a Scandinavian welfare system. Norway is the world's third largest oil exporter after Russia and Saudi Arabia and the petroleum industry accounts for around a quarter of GDP.^[9] It has also rich resources of gas fields, hydropower, fish, forests, and minerals. Norway was the second largest exporter of seafood (in value, after China) in 2006.^[10] Other main industries include food processing, shipbuilding, metals, chemicals, mining, fishing and pulp and paper products. Norway was ranked highest of all countries in human development from 2001 to 2006, and came second in 2007 (to fellow Nordic country Iceland).^[11] It also rated the most peaceful country in the world in a 2007 survey by Global Peace Index.^[12] It is a founding member of NATO.

Name

Norway is officially called Kongeriket Norge in the bokmål written norm, and Kongeriket Noreg in the nynorsk written norm. In other languages spoken in Norway the country is known as

- Northern Sami: *Norga*, or *Norgga gonagasriika*
- Lule Sami: *Vuodna* or *Vuona gånågisrijkka*
- Southern Sami: *Nørje* or *Nørjen gånkarijhke*
- Finnish/Kven: *Norja* or *Norjan kuningaskunta*

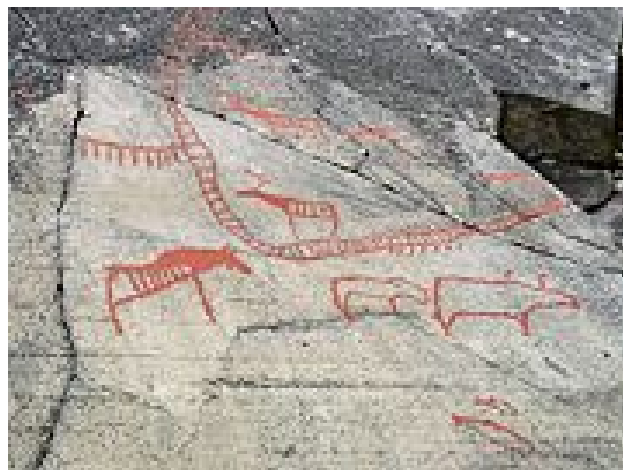
Many etymologists believe the country's name comes from the North Germanic languages and that it means "the northern route" (the way to the north), which in Old Norse would be *nord veg* or **norð vegri*. The Old Norse name for Norway was *Nóregr*, in Anglo-Saxon *Norþ weg*, and in Medieval Latin *Nhorvegia*.

The Old Norse and nynorsk forms are quite similar to an ancient Sami word that means "along the coast" or "along the sea" — realized as *nuorrek* in contemporary Lule Sami. The presence of the archaic prosecutive case marker (sometimes also called *prolative* in Finno-Ugric language research) supports the claim that the Sami word is indigenous and not a borrowing from North Germanic languages.

The earliest known written occurrence of the name "Norway" is in the late 9th century, Old English translation of Orosius' *Seven Books of History Against The Pagans*, written by King Alfred the Great of Wessex, and adapted by him to include an account of the travels of Ohthere of Hålogaland.^[13]

History

Archaeological findings indicate that Norway was inhabited at least since early 10th millennium BC. Most historians agree that the core of the populations colonizing Scandinavia came from the present-day Germany.^[14] In the first centuries AD, Norway consisted of a number of petty kingdoms. According to tradition, Harald Fairhair unified them into one, in 872 AD after the Battle of Håfrsfjord, thus becoming the first king of a united Norway.



Rock carvings at Alta

The Viking age, 8-11th centuries AD, was characterized by expansion and immigration. Many Norwegians left the country to live in Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and parts of Britain and Ireland. The modern-day Irish cities of Limerick, Dublin, and Waterford were founded by Norwegian settlers.^[15] Norse traditions were slowly replaced by Christianity in the 9th and 10th centuries, and this is largely attributed to the missionary kings Olav Trygvasson and St. Olav. Haakon the Good was Norway's first Christian king, in the mid tenth century, though his attempt to introduce the religion was rejected.

In 1349, the Black Death killed between 40% and 50% of the population,^[16] resulting in a period of decline, both socially and economically. Ostensibly, royal politics at the time resulted in several personal unions between the Nordic countries, eventually bringing the thrones of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden under the control of Queen Margrethe I of Denmark when the country entered into the Kalmar Union. Although Sweden broke out of the union in 1523, Norway remained till 1814, a total of 434 years. The National romanticism of the 19th century, the centralization of the kingdom's royal, intellectual, and administrative powers in Copenhagen, Denmark, the dissolution of the archbishopric in Trondheim with the introduction of Protestantism in 1537, as well as the distribution of the church's incomes to the court in Copenhagen meant that Norway lost the steady stream of pilgrims to the relics of St. Olav at the Nidaros

shrine, and with them, much of the contact with cultural and economic life in the rest of Europe. The steady decline was highlighted by the loss of the provinces *Båhuslen*, *Jemtland*, and *Herjedalen* to Sweden, as a result of wars.

After Denmark–Norway was attacked by Great Britain, it entered into an alliance with Napoleon, with the war leading to dire conditions and mass starvation in 1812. As the kingdom found itself on the losing side in 1814 it was forced to cede Norway to the kingdom of Sweden, while the old Norwegian provinces of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands remained with the Danish crown. Norway took this opportunity to declare independence, adopted a constitution based on American and French models, and elected the Danish crown prince Christian Fredrik as king on May 17, 1814. This caused the Norwegian-Swedish War to break out between Sweden and Norway but as Sweden's military was not strong enough to defeat the Norwegian forces outright, Norway agreed to enter a personal union with Sweden. Under this arrangement, Norway kept its liberal constitution and independent institutions, except for the foreign service.



The 1814 constitutional assembly, painted by Oscar Wergeland.

This period also saw the rise of the Norwegian romantic nationalism cultural movement, as Norwegians sought to define and express a distinct national character. The movement covered all branches of culture, including literature (Henrik Wergeland, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, Jørgen Moe, Henrik Ibsen), painting (Hans Gude, Adolph Tidemand), music (Edvard Grieg), and even language policy, where attempts to define a native written language for Norway led to today's two official written forms for Norwegian: Bokmål and Nynorsk.

Christian Michelsen, a Norwegian shipping magnate and statesman, Prime Minister of Norway from 1905 to 1907 played a central role in the peaceful separation of Norway from Sweden on June 7, 1905. After a national referendum confirmed the people's preference for a monarchy over a republic, the Norwegian government

offered the throne of Norway to the Danish Prince Carl and Parliament unanimously elected him king. He took the name of Haakon VII, after the medieval kings of independent Norway. In 1898, all men were granted universal suffrage, followed by all women in 1913.

During both World wars Norway claimed neutrality but during World War II it was invaded by German forces on April 9, 1940 while the allies also had plans in mind for an invasion of the country. In April 1940, the British fleet mined Norwegian territorial waters. Norway was unprepared for the German surprise attack, but military resistance continued for two months. During the Norwegian Campaign, the Kriegsmarine lost many ships including the cruiser *Blücher*. The battles of Vinjesvingen and Hegra eventually became the last strongholds of Norwegian resistance in southern Norway in May, while the armed forces in the north launched an offensive against the German forces in the Battles of Narvik, until they were forced to surrender on June 10. On the day of the invasion, the collaborative leader of the small National-Socialist party Nasjonal Samling — Vidkun Quisling — tried to seize power, but was forced by the German occupiers to step aside. Real power was wielded by the leader of the German occupation authority, Reichskommissar Josef Terboven. Quisling, as *minister president*, later formed a collaborationist government under German control.^[17] At the time of the invasion, Norway had the fourth largest merchant marine in the world led by the shipping company Nortraship, which under the Allies took part in every war operation from the evacuation of Dunkirk to the Normandy landings.

Following the war, the Social Democrats came to power and ruled the country for much of the cold war. Norway joined NATO in 1949, and became a close ally of the United States. Two plebiscites to join the European Union failed by narrow margins in 1972 and 1994. Large reserves of petroleum and natural gas were discovered in the 1960s, which led to a continuing boom in the economy.

Geography, climate and environment

Norway comprises the western part of Scandinavia in Northern Europe. The rugged coastline, broken by huge fjords and thousands of islands, stretches over 2,500 km as the crow flies and over 83,000 km including the fjords and islands. Norway shares a 2,542 km land border with Sweden, Finland, and Russia to the east. To the west and south, Norway is bordered by the Norwegian Sea, the North Sea, and Skagerak. The Barents Sea washes on Norway's northern coasts.

At 385,252 km² (including Jan Mayen, Svalbard), Norway is slightly larger than Germany, but much of the country is dominated by mountainous or high terrain,



Satellite image of continental Norway in winter

with a great variety of natural features caused by prehistoric glaciers and varied topography. The most noticeable of these are the fjords: deep grooves cut into the land flooded by the sea following the end of the Ice Age. The longest is Sognefjorden. Norway also contains many glaciers and waterfalls.



Typical Western Norwegian landscape with village (Geiranger)

The land is mostly made of hard granite and gneiss rock, but slate, sandstone and limestone are also common, and the lowest elevations have marine deposits. Due to the Gulf Stream and prevailing westerlies, Norway experiences warmer temperatures and more precipitation than expected at such northern latitudes, especially along the coast. The mainland experiences four distinct seasons, with colder winters and less precipitation inland. The northernmost part has a mostly

maritime Subarctic climate, while Svalbard has an Arctic tundra climate.

Due to Norway's high latitude, there are large seasonal variations in daylight. From late May to late July, the sun never completely descends beneath the horizon in areas north of the Arctic Circle (hence Norway's description as the "Land of the Midnight Sun") and the rest of the country experiences up to 20 hours of daylight per day. Conversely, from late November to late January, the sun never rises above the horizon in the north, and daylight hours are very short in the rest of the country.

Politics

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. The Royal House is a branch of the princely family of Glücksburg, originally from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany. As it stands, the functions of the King, Harald V, are mainly ceremonial, but he has influence as the symbol of national unity. Although the constitution of 1814 grants important executive powers to the King, these are always exercised by the Council of State in the name of the King (King's Council or cabinet). The reserve powers vested in the Monarch by the constitution have in the 20th century in reality been symbolic, but has on a few occasions been important such as in World War II, when the Monarch said he would step down if the government should accept the German demand. The Council of State consists of a Prime Minister and other ministers, formally appointed by the King. Parliamentarism has evolved since 1884 and entails that the cabinet must not have the parliament against it, and that the appointment by the King is a formality when there is a clear majority in Parliament for a party or a coalition of parties. But after elections resulting in no clear majority to any party or coalition, the leader of the party most likely to be able to form a government is appointed Prime Minister by the King. Norway has often been ruled by minority governments. The King has government meetings every Friday at the Royal Palace (Council of State), but the government decisions are decided in advance in government conferences, headed by the Prime Minister, every Tuesday and Thursday. The King opens the Parliament every October, he receives ambassadors to the Norwegian court, and he is the symbolic Supreme Commander of the Norwegian Defence Force and the Head of the Church of Norway.

The Norwegian parliament, *Stortinget*, currently has 169 members (increased from 165, effective from the elections of 12 September, 2005). The members are elected from the nineteen counties for four-year terms according to a system of proportional representation. In addition, 19 seats, the so-called "levelling seats" are allocated on a nationwide basis to make the representation in parliament correspond better with the popular vote.



Stortinget, Oslo.

There is a 4% **election threshold** to gain levelling seats. When voting on legislation, the *Storting* – until the 2009 election – divides itself into two chambers, the *Odelsting* and the *Lagting*. Laws are in most cases proposed by the government through a Member of the Council of State, or in some cases by a member of the *Odelsting* in case of repeated disagreement in the joint *Storting*. Nowadays, however, the *Lagting* rarely disagrees, effectively rubber-stamping the *Odelsting*'s decisions. A constitutional amendment of **February 20, 2007** will repeal the division after the 2009 general election.

Impeachment cases are very rare (the last being in 1927, when Prime Minister **Abraham Berge** was acquitted) and may be brought against Members of the Council of State, of the Supreme Court (*Høyesterett*), or of the *Storting* for criminal offenses which they may have committed in their official capacity.

Prior to an amendment to the Norwegian Constitution on **February 20, 2007** indictments were raised by the *Odelsting* and judged by the *Lagting* and the Supreme Court justices as part of the High Court of the Realm. In the new system impeachment cases will be heard by the five highest ranking Supreme Court justices and six lay members in one of the Supreme Court courtrooms (previously cases were heard in the *Lagting* chamber). *Storting* representatives may not perform as lay judges. Indictments will be raised by the *Storting* in a plenary session.

The *Storting* otherwise functions as a unicameral parliament and after the 2009 general election the division into *Odelsting* and *Lagting* for passing legislation will be abolished. Legislation will then have to go through two – three in case of dissent – readings before being passed and sent to the King for assent.

The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court (eighteen permanent judges and a chief justice), courts of appeal, city and district courts, and conciliation councils. Judges attached to regular courts are appointed by the King in council.

In order to form a government, more than half the membership of the Council of State is required to belong to the Church of Norway. Currently, this means at least ten out of nineteen members. After the negotiations of

looser ties between the church and the state, it was decided that this requirement will be abolished in the near future.

In December each year, Norway gives a Christmas tree to the United Kingdom, in thanks for the UK's assistance during World War II. A ceremony takes place to erect the tree in Trafalgar Square.^[18]

In its 2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Norway at a shared 1st place (with Iceland) out of 169 countries.^[19]

Corporal punishment of children has been illegal in Norway since 1983.

Foreign relations



Please help improve this section by expanding it.

Further information might be found on the talk page or at requests for expansion.



Map of Norway

Norway maintains embassies in 86 countries around the world.^[20] Norway has diplomatic relations with many countries without maintaining an embassy in the country. 60 countries maintain an embassy in Norway, all of them in the capital, Oslo.^[21]

Norway was a founding member of the United Nations, NATO, the Council of Europe, the European Free Trade Association, the OECD and the OSCE, and maintains membership in several other international organisations. Norway has twice rejected proposed membership of the European Union although Norway has access to the European single market through membership in the European Economic Area.

Norway has also assisted in international negotiations, such as in facilitating the Oslo Accords.

- Møre og Romsdal
- Rogaland
- Vest-Agder
- Vestfold

Cities and municipalities



A geopolitical map of Norway, exhibiting its nineteen first-level administrative divisions (*fylker* or "counties")

Norway is divided into nineteen first-level administrative regions known as *fylker* ("counties", singular *fylke*) and 430^[22] second-level *kommuner* ("municipalities", singular *kommune*). The *fylke* is the intermediate administration between state and municipality. The King is represented in every county by a Fylkesmann.

There is ongoing debate as to whether the nineteen "fylker" should be replaced with five to nine larger regions. Some expect this to happen by 2010, whereas others expect the intermediate administration to disappear entirely. Another option would probably require consolidating the municipalities into larger entities and delegating greater responsibility to them.

The counties of Norway are:

- | | | |
|--------------|------------------|--------------------|
| • Akershus | • Nordland | • Sogn og Fjordane |
| • Aust-Agder | • Nord-Trøndelag | • Sør-Trøndelag |
| • Buskerud | • Oppland | • Telemark |
| • Finnmark | • Oslo | • Troms |
| • Hedmark | • Østfold | |
| • Hordaland | | |

Economy

Norwegians enjoy the second highest GDP per-capita (after Luxembourg) and third highest GDP (PPP) per-capita in the world, and has maintained first place in the world in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) for six consecutive years (2001-2006). However, in 2007 Iceland very narrowly beat Norway as the #1 place according to the Human Development Index.

Cost of living is about 30% higher in Norway than in the United States and 25% higher than the United Kingdom. The standard of living in Norway is very high, and the continuing increase in oil prices ensure that Norway will remain one of the richest countries in the world over the foreseeable future.

The Norwegian economy is an example of mixed economy, featuring a combination of free market activity and large government ownership. The government controls key areas, such as the strategic petroleum sector (StatoilHydro), hydroelectric energy production (Statkraft), aluminium production (Norsk Hydro), the largest Norwegian bank (DnB NOR) and telecommunication provider (Telenor). The government controls 31.6% of publicly listed companies. When non-listed companies are included the state has even higher share in ownership (mainly from direct oil license ownership).

The control mechanisms over petroleum resources are a combination of state ownership in major operators in the Norwegian fields (StatoilHydro approx. 62% in 2007) and the fully state owned Petoro (market value of about twice Statoil) and SDFI. Finally the government controls licensing of exploration and production of fields.

The country is richly endowed with natural resources including petroleum, hydropower, fish, forests, and minerals. Norway has obtained one of the highest standards of living in the world in part by having a large amount of natural resources compared to the size of the population. The income from natural resources include a significant contribution from petroleum production and the substantial and well-managed income related to this sector. Norway also has a very low unemployment rate, currently below 2% (June 2007). The hourly productivity levels, as well as average hourly wages in Norway are among the highest in the world. The egalitarian values of the Norwegian society ensure that the wage difference between the lowest paid worker and the CEO of most companies is much smaller than in comparable western economies. This is also evident in Norway's low Gini coefficient.

Export revenues from oil and gas have risen to 45% of total exports and constitute more than 20% of the

GDP^[23]. Only Russia and OPEC member Saudi Arabia export more oil than Norway, which is not an OPEC member. To reduce over-heating from oil money and the uncertainty from the oil income volatility, and to save money for an aging population, the Norwegian state started in 1995 to save petroleum income (taxes, dividends, licensing, sales) in a sovereign wealth fund ("Government Pension Fund – Global"). This also reduces the boom and bust cycle associated with raw material production and the marginalization of non-oil industry (see also *Dutch Disease*).

The fund invests in developed financial markets outside Norway. The budgetary rule ("Handlingsregelen") is to spend no more than 4% of the fund each year (assumed to be the normal yield from the fund). By January 2006, the pension fund had reached a value of USD 200 billion. During the first half of 2007, the pension fund became the largest fund in Europe, with assets totalling about USD 300 billion, equivalent to over USD 62,000 per capita. As such, the Norwegian state has savings equal to 100% of the Norwegian GDP. Norway has the largest capital reserve per capita of any nation (April 2007). Projections indicate that the Norwegian pension fund may become the largest capital fund in the world. It is the second largest state-owned sovereign wealth fund in the world, second only to the sovereign wealth fund of Abu-Dhabi. Conservative estimates tell that the fund may reach USD 800-900 billion by 2017. Other natural resource-based economies in countries like Russia and Chile are trying to learn from Norway by establishing similar funds. The investment choices of the Norwegian fund are guided by ethical guidelines. For example, the fund is not allowed to invest in companies that produce parts for nuclear weapons. The openness about the investment choices is lauded by the international community.

The future size of the fund is of course closely linked to the oil price and the developments in international financial market. At an average oil price of USD 100 per barrel, the trade surplus for 2008 is expected to reach USD 80 billion. At present oil prices (June 2008) the trade surplus for 2008 is expected to reach USD 90 billion.

Norway is also the world's largest exporter of fish. In light of the rising energy and food prices, Norway's economic prospects are better than perhaps any other country in the world. Investing in research and development is an important priority for the Norwegian government, as it is important to have something to fall back on when the oil becomes a smaller part of the economy.

Referendums in 1972 and 1994 indicated that the Norwegian people wished to remain outside the European Union (EU). However, Norway, together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, participates in the European Union's single market via the *European Economic Area* (EEA) agreement. The EEA Treaty between the European Union countries and the EFTA countries – transposed

into Norwegian law via "EØS-loven"^[24] – describes the procedures for implementing European Union rules in Norway and the other EFTA countries. This makes Norway a highly integrated member of most sectors of the EU internal market. However, some sectors, such as agriculture, oil and fish, are not wholly covered by the EEA Treaty. Norway has also acceded to the Schengen Agreement and several other intergovernmental agreements between the EU member states.

In 2000, the government sold one-third of the then 100% state-owned oil company Statoil in an IPO. The next year, the main telecom supplier, Telenor, was listed on Oslo Stock Exchange. The state also owns significant shares of Norway's largest bank, DnB NOR and the airline SAS. Since 2000, economic growth has been rapid, pushing unemployment down to levels not seen since the early 1980s. (unemployment: 1.3%)

Demography



Borgund stave church

As of 2007, Norway's population numbered 4.7 million. Most Norwegians are ethnic Norwegians, a North

Germanic people. The Sami people traditionally inhabit central and northern parts of Norway and Sweden, as well as in northern Finland and in Russia on the Kola Peninsula. Another national minority are the Kven people who are the descended of Finnish speaking people that moved to northern Norway in the 18th up to 20th century. Both the Sami and the Kven were subjected to a strong assimilation policy by the Norwegian government from the 19th century up to the 1970s.^[25] Because of this "Norwegianisation process", many families of Sami or Kven ancestry now self-identify as ethnic Norwegian.^[26] This, combined with a long history of cohabitation of the Sami and North Germanic peoples on the Scandinavian peninsula, makes claims about ethnic population statistics less straightforward than is often suggested – particularly in central and northern Norway. Other groups recognized as national minorities of Norway are Jews, Forest Finns, Roma/Gypsies and Romani people/Travellers.

In recent years, immigration has accounted for more than half of Norway's population growth. According to Statistics Norway (SSB), record 61,200 immigrants arrived in the country in 2007 – 35% higher than 2006. At the beginning of 2008, there were 459,600 persons in Norway with an immigrant background (i.e. immigrants, or born of immigrant parents), comprising 9.7% of the total population. 350,000 of these were from a non-Western background, which includes the formerly Communist countries according to the definition used by Statistics Norway. The largest immigrant groups by country of origin, in order of size, are Poles, Pakistanis, Swedish, Iraqis, Somalis, Vietnamese, Danes, and Germans.^[27] The Iraqi immigrant population has shown a large increase in recent years. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, there has also been an influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. The largest increase in 2007 was of immigrants from Poland, Germany, Sweden and Lithuania.^[28]

Religion

In common with other Scandinavian countries, the Norse followed a form of native Germanic paganism known as Norse paganism. By the end of the eleventh century, when Norway had been Christianized, the indigenous Norse religion and practices were prohibited. Anti-heathenry laws, however, were removed early in the twentieth century. Many remnants of the native religion and beliefs of Norway exist today, including names, referential names of cities and locations, the days of the week, and other parts of the everyday language.

Parts of the Sami minority retained their shamanistic religion well into the 18th century when they were converted to Christianity by Dano-Norwegian missionaries.

Nearly 83% of Norwegians are members of the state Church of Norway, to which they are registered at birth. Many remain in the state church to be able to use services such as baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial, rites which have strong cultural standing in Norway. Up to 40% of the membership attends church or religious meetings during a year^[29], with fewer attending regularly.

According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll 2005, 32% of Norwegian citizens responded that "they believe there is a god," whereas 47% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" and 17% that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force."^[30]

Other Christian denominations total about 4.5% of the population. These include the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal congregations, the Methodist Church, Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Jehovah's Witnesses and others. Among non-Christian religions, Islam is the largest, representing about 1.5% of the population: It is practiced mainly by the Somalian, Arab, Albanian, Pakistani and Turkish communities. Other religions comprise less than 1% each, including Judaism (see Jews in Norway). Indian immigrants introduced Hinduism to Norway, but account for less than 5,000 people, or 1% of non-Lutheran Norwegians^[31]. There are eleven Buddhist organizations, grouped under the Buddhistforbundet organisation, which make up 0.42% of the population. Around 1.5% of Norwegians adhere to the secular Norwegian Humanist Association. About 5% of the population is unaffiliated.^[31]

Languages



Reine, Lofoten.

The North Germanic Norwegian language has two official written forms, *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*. They have officially equal status, i.e. they are both used in public administration, in schools, churches, radio and television, but Bokmål is used by the vast majority, about 85-90%. Around 95% of the population speak Norwegian as their native tongue, although many speak dialects that may differ significantly from the written language. In general

Norwegian dialects are inter-intelligible, though some may require significant effort. Several Finno-Ugric Sami languages are spoken and written throughout the country, especially in the north, by the *Sami people*. The state recognises these languages as official, and speakers have a right to get education in Sami language no matter where they are living, and receive communications from government in various Sami languages. The Kven minority speak the Finno-Ugric Kven language/Finnish.

Norwegian is highly similar to the other languages in Scandinavia, Swedish and Danish. All three languages are mutually intelligible and can be, and commonly are, employed in communication between inhabitants of the Scandinavian countries. As a result of the cooperation within the Nordic Council, inhabitants of all Nordic countries, including Iceland and Finland, have the right to communicate with the Norwegian authorities in their own language.

Any Norwegian student who is a child of immigrant parents is encouraged to learn the Norwegian language. The Norwegian government offers language instructional courses for immigrants wishing to obtain Norwegian citizenship. Somali is the largest non-western language spoken in Norway, as Somalis are the third largest population of non-western immigrants in Norway, after Pakistani and Iraqi people.

The main foreign languages taught in Norwegian elementary school are English, German and French. Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Italian are available in some schools, mostly in the cities.

Individual human rights



Scouts holding Norwegian flags lead a parade on the 17 May, Norway's Constitution Day

Norway is currently the second most highly ranked nation in the UN Human Development Index, an index made up by literacy rate, education level and per capita income, though it had been the highest on the list for the six years between 2001 and 2006.

Freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 1 of the Constitution of Norway. Freedom of religion is

enshrined in Article 2 of the Constitution, which also establishes the state religion as "Evangelical Lutheran". The press is not censored. Editors adhere to self-imposed commandments of caution, in order to protect people's privacy and other civic rights.(Vær Varsomplakaten- Norwegian Wikipedia in Bokmål, see [1] for an English translation).

Public radio and TV broadcast without interference from the government, although permission to broadcast depends on the program spectrum. Broadcast advertisement is regulated, with particular restrictions on paid political messages and advertising directed at children.

The constitution forbids retroactive laws, punishment not based on laws and court decisions, and the use of torture. Capital punishment for high crime during wartime was abolished in 1979.^[32]

In 1999, the Human Rights conventions of the United Nations and the Council of Europe were constituted as law in Norway (*menneskerettsloven*) and given superiority to all laws after the constitution.^[33] Norwegian lawyers have joined the Council of Europe's Committee Against Torture to express their concern about the long-term detention of criminal defendants and the use of solitary confinement in Norway, deeming it to be torture.^[34] Long processing times for asylum seekers and the treatment of those arriving without identity papers has also been under discussion.

An issue of much debate and public interest in Norway is the phenomenon of criminals and suspected terrorists being granted asylum, on the grounds that they may be persecuted in their native countries. Examples are Najmuddin Faraj Ahmad (a.k.a. Mullah Krekar), the Aeroflot hijackers of 1993, and several suspected war criminals, for example suspected collaborators in the Rwandan Genocide. Successive governments have often been criticised for deporting sick people, orphans, and well-integrated children.

In 2005, the international conventions against discrimination of women and race discrimination were incorporated into (but not made superior to) Norwegian law. Amnesty International has recently focused on violence against women in Norway and a shortage of public services to victims of violence.^[35]

Norway has compulsory military service for men. Conscripts are drafted at age 18 for initial service (*førstegangstjeneste*) of between six to twelve months (Service may begin at age 17 with parental consent). After completion of the initial service period, personnel serving in the home guard are transferred to reserve units, which may be called up for periodic training (*repetisjonstjeneste*) until age 44. Conscientious objectors serve twelve months in alternative civilian national service. If a candidate refuses to attend the assessment of fitness (*sesjon*), where any objections to future military service are to be stated, they are liable to prosecution. A person who is deemed fit for service and who is not a

Organization	Survey	Ranking
International Monetary Fund	GDP per capita	2nd out of 232 (2006)
United Nations Development Programme	Human Development Index	2nd out of 177 (2007) (1st, 2001-2006)
A.T. Kearney / Foreign Policy	Globalization Index 2005	14th out of 111
Heritage Foundation / <i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Index of Economic Freedom 2006	30th out of 155
Reporters Without Borders	Worldwide press freedom index	1st out of 168 (1st 2002-2005)
Save the Children	State of the World's Mothers 2004 (Children)	1st out of 119
Save the Children	State of the World's Mothers 2004 (Women)	6th out of 119
Save the Children	State of the World's Mothers 2004 (Mothers)	6th out of 119
UNICEF	Child Well-being league table	7th out of 21 industrial countries
Transparency International	Corruption Perceptions Index 2004	8th out of 145
World Economic Forum	Global Competitiveness Report 2005-2006	9th out of 117
Nationmaster	Labour Strikes	5th out of 27
The Economist Intelligence Unit	Worldwide quality-of-life index, 2005	3rd out of 111
Yale University/Columbia University	Environmental Sustainability Index, 2005 (pdf)	2nd out of 146
The Fund for Peace	Failed States Index, 2007	177th out of 177 (the most desirable result)
The Economist	Global Peace Index	3rd out of 140 (2008)
The Economist	Democracy Index	4th out of 167
Privacy International	Leading Surveillance Societies Around the World, 2007	21-23rd out of 30 European states (Systemic failure to uphold safeguards)

conscientious objector, but still refuses military service is also liable to prosecution. Changes to the structure of the armed forces has resulted in a lower demand for conscripts, and the number of males needing to serve is decreasing.

Homosexuality was officially decriminalized in 1972 and same sex civil partnerships were instituted in 1993. According to Statistics Norway (SSB), 192 same sex civil partnerships were recorded in 2004. Since 2002, it has become possible for same sex couples to adopt each other's children from previous relationships, although joint adoption is not allowed. The Norwegian government introduced a gender neutral marriage law in June 2008, allowing same-sex marriages, granting homosexuals the same rights and obligations as heterosexuals.^[36]

International rankings

Literature

The history of Norwegian literature starts with the pagan Eddaic poems and skaldic verse of the 9th and 10th centuries with poets such as Bragi Boddason and Eyvindr Skáldaspillir. The arrival of Christianity around the year 1000 brought Norway into contact with European medieval learning, hagiography and history writing. Merged with native oral tradition and Icelandic influence this was to flower into an active period of literature production in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Major works of that period include *Historia Norvegie*, *Thidreks saga* and *Konungs skuggsjá*.

Little Norwegian literature came out of the period of the Scandinavian Union and the subsequent Dano-Norwegian union (1387–1814), with some notable exceptions such as Petter Dass and Ludvig Holberg. In his play *Peer Gynt*, Ibsen characterized this period as "Twice two

hundred years of darkness/brooded o'er the race of monkeys", although the latter line is not as frequently quoted as the former. During the union with Denmark, written Norwegian was replaced by Danish.

Two major events precipitated a major resurgence in Norwegian literature. In 1811 a Norwegian university was established in Christiania Seized by the spirit of revolution following the American and French Revolutions, the Norwegians signed their first constitution in 1814. Soon, the cultural backwater that was Norway brought forth a series of strong authors recognized first in Scandinavia, and then worldwide; among them were Henrik Wergeland, Peter Asbjørnsen, Jørgen Moe and Camilla Collett.

By the late 19th century, in the Golden Age of Norwegian literature, the so-called *Great Four* emerged: Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Alexander Kielland, and Jonas Lie. Bjørnson's "peasant novels", such as "En glad gutt" (A Happy Boy) and "Synnøve Solbakken" are typical of the national romanticism of their day, whereas Kielland's novels and short stories are mostly realistic. Although an important contributor to early Norwegian romanticism (especially the ironic Peer Gynt), Henrik Ibsen's fame rests primarily on his pioneering realistic dramas such *The Wild Duck* and *A Doll's House*, many of which caused moral uproar because of their candid portrayals of the middle classes.

In the twentieth century three Norwegian novelists were awarded the Nobel prize in literature: Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in 1903, Knut Hamsun for the book "Markens grøde" ("Growth of the Soil") in 1920, and Sigrid Undset in 1928. In the 20th century writers like Dag Solstad, Jostein Gaarder, Erik Fosnes Hansen, Jens Bjørneboe, Kjartan Fløgstad, Lars Saabye Christensen, Johan Borgen, Herbjørg Wassmo, Jan Erik Vold, Rolf Jacobsen, Olaf Bull, Jan Kjærstad, Georg Johannesen, Tarjei Vesaas, Sigurd Hoel, Arnulf Øverland and Johan Falkberget have made important contributions to Norwegian literature.

See also

- Economy of Norway
- Foreign relations of Norway
- Military of Norway
- Music of Norway
- Norway and the European Union
- Norwegian language
- Norwegian literature
- Public holidays in Norway
- Regions of Norway
- Tourism in Norway
- Whaling in Norway

Culture, education and sports

- Architecture

- Culture of Norway
- Cuisine
- Football (soccer)
 - National team
 - Premier League
- Lusekofte
- Photography
- State Educational Loan Fund

Infrastructure

- Car numberplates
- Communications
- Power supply
- Transportation
- Road signs

Lists

- Cities
- Companies
- Newspapers
- National parks
- Norwegian monarchs
- Norwegian people
- Norwegian-language radio
- People on stamps
- Schools
- TV channels

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- Norway travel guide from Wikitravel

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