

Egypt



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Cairo

Population: 82,079,636

Area, sq. mi.: 625,906

Real GDP per capita: 5,900

Adult literacy rate: 83%
(male); 59% (female)

Ethnic make-up: Egyptian
99.6%, other 0.4%

Religion: Muslim (mostly
Sunni) 90%, Coptic 9%,
other Christian 1%

School Classes

In Egypt, some schools are single-sex and some are co-ed. In co-ed schools, boys sit beside boys, and girls sit beside girls. Students remain in one classroom composed of between 35-50 students, and teachers rotate classrooms. In the national school system the number of subjects studied each term varies according to grade level. In grade 10, for example, there are 16-18 subjects offered, divided between two semesters. For grades 11 and 12, there are seven to eight subjects offered per year. There is a different daily schedule. Egyptian students are used to long hours of studying and memorization for their rote system of learning. Typically, students are evaluated on monthly tests and final exams; class participation only counts for 5% of the final grade and homework is not compulsory.

School Relationships

The relationship between teachers and students is formal in Egypt. Upon the teacher's entrance to the classroom, the students stand up and greet him or her. A student may only call his or her teacher by a title followed by the first name, for example, Miss Sara.

Extracurricular Activities

Students mostly practice sports or personal hobbies in private sports clubs or specialized institutes outside of school.

School Rules

Most schools have a zero tolerance policy for cell phone usage in school and against fighting.

Family Life

In Egypt, grandparents may live in the home with the parents and children, and in many cases, extended families live in one building but separate apartments. In Egypt, the main meal is lunch, not dinner. Meals may be eaten together or separately, but on weekends or holidays most families gather for a meal, often including the extended family. It is common in Egypt for both parents to work; mothers give extra care to the kids. Fathers are the authority figures, especially when it comes to major decisions and they are treated formally and with respect. Mothers are responsible for household and everyday matters and are equally respected, but may be spoken to more informally.

It is common in Egypt for family members to have their own interests, but not keep to themselves for a long time as that behavior could be thought of as inconsiderate. Personal space is not a common concept for Egyptians in general, especially within the family. Family members and close friends are expected to know nearly everything about each other, even very personal information. Also, Egyptians do not keep a distance while talking to someone; the distance between two people talking together is normally tight, especially if they are of the same gender.

Teen Life

Siblings share almost everything in Egypt, like clothes, mobile phones and toiletries, and they do not necessarily ask for permission. In the U.S., Egyptian students may unintentionally invade the privacy or individual time of their host family based on the assumption that everything in the home is communal. Teenagers in Egypt usually share their plans with their parents and take their parents' opinion into account when making decisions. Generally, Egyptian teens are not very independent and they rely on their parents in most aspects of life. Students may initially seek guidance from their host family when planning their schedules and making daily decisions.

Responsibilities

The responsibility given to a teenager differs from one family to the other. In Egypt, students do not work and parents are responsible for paying for their children's clothes and personal items, as well as for extracurricular activities or hobbies. Children receive allowances for their snacks and their social activities.

Many families in Egypt hire help, at least for cleaning. Gender differences play a role in household chores in Egypt. Women and girls take care of the household while men and boys normally take care of the errands outside the house. Most teenagers, regardless of their gender, are generally responsible for tidying up their room and taking care of their personal things.

Parental Involvement

Parents supervise younger children's internet use, limiting the time spent on the internet, but with a lot of flexibility. Egyptian students may find it difficult to limit their use of the internet in the U.S. Many Egyptian parents are in direct contact with their children's school and are kept aware of their academic progress.

Pets

Pets are not common in Egypt and few families have cats or dogs. Muslims do not like having dogs in the place of prayer and animals are not allowed in the house.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

It is generally considered socially unacceptable for Egyptian teens to have friends of the opposite sex, especially when it comes to close relationships or one-on-one time. It can be acceptable for boys and girls to gather in large mixed groups.

Friendships

Egyptian teenagers sometimes socialize in groups and sometimes one-on-one. Egyptian teens think of peers as friends, the concept of friends is “people you know” and usually teens have from two to five very close friends. Teens make the most of their school or family connections when making friends; they also form friends through common activities. Sometimes Egyptian teenagers share money with each other. Borrowing money from friends is not a sensitive issue and the time allowed to repay the debt can be quite lengthy.

Communication Styles

Egyptians tend to communicate indirectly and are generally not comfortable expressing negative emotions to others. Being direct is considered rude and students tend to express their discomfort in an indirect way. Students may feel offended when people express their negative emotions towards them directly. If it is observed that the student is uncomfortable or is alienating themselves, this might mean that he or she has a problem that they are not talking about.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is not important in Egyptian culture. An Egyptian may or may not make eye contact when speaking with another; either is okay and neither is considered rude.

Cultural Norms

In Egypt, greeting someone you see every day is expected. Girls kiss cheeks, boys shake hands or kiss cheeks. Punctuality is not very important in Egypt. It is acceptable to be late for a meeting. Meetings generally start 10-15 minutes after the stated start time. Being late is not considered rude; 15-30 minutes late is acceptable and usually people won't apologize for being even 30 minutes late.

Personal Hygiene

In Egypt, boys take showers daily and girls believe that it is not healthy for their hair to wash it daily, so they might take showers every other day. The showers usually last between 15 to 30 minutes. Teenagers in Egypt leave their bathrooms clean but not necessarily dry. Teens hang up their towels, however they're used to leaving their hygiene products in the bathroom. It is common for Egyptian teenagers to wear the same clothes for two consecutive days and it is not considered unclean. It is common for Egyptian teenagers to wear the same clothes twice without washing them.

Food and Culture

Diet

The meat in Egypt is always halal and most families prepare food from scratch, however some families get packaged meals.

Gifts

Egyptian teenagers do not usually give gifts to family members during Christmas or any Egyptian holidays rather they receive gifts from their parents and adult family members. However, on birthdays, teens usually give gifts to their parents and their close friends, or they might organize a little celebration for them.

Religion

Attending religious services is not usually a social event for Egyptian Muslims, the focus is on prayer and only in Ramadan and Eid is there a social aspect when family gatherings take place. For Egyptian Christians, the social aspect of religion is important, especially when going to church on weekends and for religious celebrations.

Usually Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are occasions that are celebrated nationwide, both religiously and socially. A lot of family gatherings take place and Egyptian teenagers usually see their extended families several times, or get invited for Iftar by friends. Eid and Iftar are important for Egyptian teenagers as they are considered the highlights of the year. Schools in Egypt close earlier during Ramadan so students get the chance to take a nap.

Holidays

Other major holidays in Egypt include Eid al-Adha, it is a four day holiday where we have a specific dish and adult family members give the teenagers money. Sham El Nessim is an ancient Egyptian holiday where specific dishes are eaten and people color eggs and usually families have contests for who has the most creative egg.