

Mali



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Bamako

Population: 13,796,354

Area, sq. mi.: 478,841

Real GDP per capita: 1,200

Adult literacy rate: 54% (male);
40% (female)

Ethnic make-up: Mande 50%
(Bambara, Malinke, Soninke), Peul
17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%,
Tuareg and Moor 10%, other 5%

Religion: Muslim 90%, Christian
1%, indigenous beliefs 9%

School Classes

In Mali, students generally have weekly tests, but each teacher also has the ability to test any student at any time to assess his or her level and to provide opportunities to advance independently. Students stay in the same classroom and teachers move from class to class. Boys and girls study in the same classes in Mali and are not seated apart in class. There are however, special Catholic schools for girls only and the merdersa (also known as 'madrasa' or school) for Arabic language learning students where boys and girls are separated.

School Relationships

Students show respect by addressing their teachers as "Sir" or "Mrs."

Extracurricular Activities

Most of the time, students participate in extracurricular activities through the community. Extracurricular activities can also be found at school, though typically only through private Catholic schools.

School Rules

Schools prohibit the use of cell phones and fighting is not allowed. Most private schools have a uniform.

Family Life

In Mali, most households have parents, grandparents, children, aunts, uncles or cousins living in the same house. Most of the time, men are financially responsible for the family, but women contribute whenever necessary. From the outside it may be perceived as though it is the father who has the authority to make decisions, however, the mother is also behind all the important decisions in the family.

In the urban areas of Mali where many students are from, meals may be eaten all together as a family, or separately depending on family members' schedules. In the rural areas, families eat together during all the three meals of the day. In Mali, it is considered respectful to allow family members to spend time by themselves, to pursue their own activities, to socialize with friends or to simply relax.

Teen Life

Most of the time, siblings and friends share clothes, shoes, and games. Depending on the relationship, they may or not ask permission to use other items. Teenagers are generally dependent upon their parents.

Responsibilities

Students are responsible for keeping track of extracurricular activities, keeping up with academics, taking care of the family courtyard, and his or her bedroom. Financially, they are expected to budget their money for social activities and for buying personal items. In the capital city of Mali, most families have housekeepers. Girls help mothers with household activities and boys help fathers with the outdoor activities and chores. In rural areas women do most of the work and the men are responsible financially and for ensuring there is enough food. Generally, students obtain money from parents or relatives, but some do work or sell small items to get extra money. Boys generally don't cook nor do they do their own laundry.

Parental Involvement

Malian parents do not get involved with their students extracurricular activities. Many Malian parents are in direct contact with their children's school and are kept aware of their academic progress. Generally in Mali, children know more about new technology than parents, but parents do their best to protect their children. Most students don't have a computer at home. It may be possible that if Malian students are put in an environment where they have easy access to a computer, they may be tempted to use computer privileges to an excess.

Pets

Pets do not go inside the bedroom in Mali.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

In most Malian families, it is not acceptable for girls and boys to socialize with the opposite sex. However, there are families who accept it.

Friendships

Malian teenagers sometimes socialize in groups, and sometimes one-on-one. Both ways are considered appropriate and the choice is left up to the individual. Malian teenagers make most of their friends through common activities, and not necessarily from family or neighborhood connections. The concept of sharing money depends on the relationship; close friends share money or borrow from each other. Friendship means mutual support, sharing the same interests, hanging out together, etc.

Eye Contact

In Mali, eye contact with an elder is considered disrespectful.

Personal Hygiene

It is typical for Malian teens to shower two to three times per day. It is acceptable to wear the same clothes two days in a row and to wear the same clothes twice before washing.

The U.S. concept of bathroom hygiene is completely different than that in Mali. Leaving the bathroom floor or walls wet is commonplace in Mali, and occurs when Muslims do ablutions before prayer. Some students face challenges adapting to the cleanliness of the bathroom in the U.S. Most Malian teenagers have one towel in their bathroom to use. Malians typically change clothes upon entering the house after work or school.

Religion

Amongst most families in Mali, going to the mosque is an individual activity. However, you will find families who consider it a family activity. Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, are celebrated with family. It is considered very important to be with family during celebrations. Many Malians return to family villages to celebrate important holidays.

Holidays

In Mali they celebrate Christmas, New Year and all the important holidays linked to African history and at international level such as Labor Day which is May 1st and African Day is May 25th.