

Oman



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Muscat
Population: 2,967,717
Area, sq. mi.: 119,498
Real GDP per capita: 25,000
Adult literacy rate: 87% (male); 74% (female)
Ethnic make-up: Arab, Baluchi, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi), African
Religion: Ibadhi Muslim 75%, other (includes Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Hindu) 25%

School Classes

Students in Oman are evaluated on several aspects: attendance, efficiency in class, participation in class, preparation for upcoming classes and homework. It is their end of year results that decide if the student is ready to move on to the next grade or not. Some students need extra help with their studies, and usually in Oman a private tutor is employed. Attendance to Omani students means coming to school in general, but being 5-10 minutes late to class is not considered an offense. Students remain in one classroom throughout the day while teachers rotate.

In public schools, after the 4th grade, boys and girls are separated into different schools. In private schools however, boys and girls go to the same school but cannot sit next to each other in class and are divided into different rows.

School Relationships

Respect is a very important virtue for Omanis and is embedded in a child's personality from an early age. A student shows a teacher the same respect as they would a parent. Teachers are never just called by their first name, but students often use "Miss XX" or "Mr. XX" or just "Teacher."

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities may not be the most common in a student's life; however they are considered a part of the school day and in some schools may get graded on. These activities include boys and girls Scouts, home making classes and cooking for girls, some schools even form football, volleyball and basketball teams which enter competitions against other schools in the Sultanate. Art, music and community service activities are imbedded in some public schools' curriculum as a graded subject.

School Rules

Cell phones in school are not allowed and usually results in disciplinary action including confiscation of the phone. All schools in Oman have a uniform for both males and females. The boys dress in a long white robe or, dishdasha, with a hat called a kum'ma, while the girls wear a long navy blue dress with a long sleeve white collar shirt and white pants to go underneath.

Family Life

Omani households usually consist of both parents, some have divorced or separated parents and the student lives with one or the other. Occasionally the household will also include extended family members like grandparents, cousins or uncles and aunts. Omani families consider lunch to be the main meal and family gathers and eats together. For breakfast and dinner, families may dine together or have separate plans.

Nowadays, both parents in Oman often work, but traditionally the mother is a housewife while the father is the main financial contributor. Generally in Oman, each parent maintains authority over different areas of family life. In some more traditional families, often from the interior regions of Oman, the father has the final say over all family decisions. People in Oman do have time to pursue their own interests, but group activities and time together are much more common. Being on one's own is not typically characteristic in Omani society.

Teen Life

Siblings share things like clothes, toys and games, but not personal items. They are taught to ask permission before taking things and are also taught to apologize if permission was not given and the item was used.

Responsibilities

Most Omani households may have a housekeeper, a gardener, a cook or a nanny, and some may employ all of those roles. Students are typically in charge of their own room, making their beds, picking up after themselves and perhaps looking after their younger siblings. Omani teenagers are often given an allowance on either a weekly or monthly basis. The amount given varies from family to family and it is expected to cover the teenager's outings with friends, as well as all social expenses like the cinema, dinner, bowling or the arcade. It might be relatively common for teenagers to have more house chore responsibilities if they're living in a single parent household. However, for families that consist of both parents, it might be more of "helping out" than taking charge of preparing a full meal, for example.

Parental Involvement

Most Omani households have WiFi at home, however parental monitoring and surveillance is limited since students often have personal laptops and phones with internet access. Parents in Oman have a generally high interest in their student's academic performance and stay in touch with the school. Schools host Parent Teacher Associations and periodically send reports to the parents to keep them posted of their child's academic performance.

Pets

Having pets in an Omani household is not common. Families might be inclined to have birds or fish, maybe hamsters as pets. Some families do keep house cats however they don't stay indoors and aren't entirely domesticated. It is very rare to find Omani families that keep dogs as pets, and if they do, then they wouldn't keep the dog indoors or allow it inside.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

If the Omani teenagers are from a private school, which is co-ed, then having friends of the opposite sex is an accepted idea, but their relationship would not go on outside of school. It is uncommon to socialize one-on-one with friends of the opposite sex, but it is acceptable to go to mixed parties. If a student is from a government school, which is not co-ed, it is uncommon to socialize with teenagers of the opposite sex, unless they're related (cousins) – and even that might not be common either.

Friendships

Teenagers in Oman are very friendly, and depending on their personality they commonly have many friends. The environment in Oman is very close knit, almost everyone knows everyone here and it is very safe in Oman. They usually have to ask for permission from their parents to go out and would have to let them know where they are at all times. The most typical way an Omani teenager makes friends is through school and family or neighborhood connections because extracurricular activities are not common. Omani teenagers do socialize in groups or with certain selected friends one-on-one. It is also common for male and female teenagers to make house visits to their friends of the same gender if there are activities like video gaming or watching a movie in the friend's home. It is very common to share money and pay for others in outings amongst friends in Oman. Sometimes students take turns and pay on behalf of others while at other times students pay for themselves.

Communication Styles

Indirect communication is most common in Omani households, but some students may have been raised in a more direct household. Respect for family members is important in Oman, whether between children and their parents or between siblings. It is an informal relationship all the time, but there are certain lines that cannot be crossed between parents and their children; arguing and discussion might not be welcome.

Eye Contact

Omanis are shy, especially the girls. Traditionally, as young ladies they are not encouraged to look straight at men when being spoken to, looking at them straight in the eye is considered challenging them. However it is becoming more and more common to look at a person's face (not eyes) when speaking to them.

Independence

Students have some independence in Oman, but in many situations they will depend on their parents and older family members to drive them to events. Parents often dictate what their child does and how he or she should act and permission is required for most anything.

Cultural Norms

The concept of personal space varies across Omani culture depending on how the student was raised, as well as the environment. For a student coming from a more conservative background, spending time with family and in a group will be most common and he or she will spend little time alone.

Personal Hygiene

In Oman a student usually showers in the morning before school, and when they return after school. If they are involved in physical activities they would shower after the sport as well. Many households have housekeepers and there is usually always someone to maintain the cleanliness of the bathroom. However students are still expected to clean after themselves. Most Omani students have one towel to dry their body and a smaller towel for their hair and face. They would also use these same towels when they perform (Ablution) which is the act of washing up before praying. When it comes to ablution and showering, if the student leaves a lot of water in the bathroom, they need to be told how to dry the floor after they're done with the bathroom.

It is very rare to find a student from Oman wearing the same clothes twice in a row without it being washed and often will change clothes two or three times a day. Teenagers might wear something once without dirtying it and wear it again another time, but not two times in a row.

Religion

Friday is the day of religious observance in Oman. Boys go to the mosque with their fathers and uncles while the girls stay home and pray with the ladies. It also has a social aspect to it, and there are a few youth groups that are formed through the mosque.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar which lasts up to 30 days. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating and drinking from dawn until sunset. Fasting is intended to teach Muslims about patience, humility, and spirituality. During Ramadan, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from doing evil acts, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds.

Eid al-Fitr is a three-day Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan. Eid is an Arabic word meaning “festival”, while Fitr means “conclusion of the fast”; and so the holiday celebrates the conclusion of the thirty days of dawn-to-sunset fasting during the month of Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr is particularly important to Muslims in general and Omanis in particular because it is a time when the entire family gathers and celebrates and family obligations come first. Eid breathes the spirit of community and togetherness into people.

Holidays

The Islamic New Year is the day that marks the beginning of a new Islamic calendar year, and is the day on which the year count is incremented. Since the Islamic year, which is based on a lunar calendar, is 11 to 12 days shorter than the Gregorian year, the Islamic New Year does not come on the same day of the Gregorian calendar every year.

Eid al-Adha is the “Festival of Sacrifice” or “Greater Eid” is an important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide. Meat is divided into three parts to be distributed to others. The family retains one third of the share, another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors, and the other third is given to the poor and needy.

Mawled al-Nabawi is the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad which is observed in the third month in the Islamic calendar. In 2012 this is in early February. This is a public holiday in Oman, but is not as large of a celebration like the Eid holidays. It involves more prayers and Islamic lectures and readings in the mosque.

The Prophet’s Ascension is in Arabic, the Isra’ and Mi’raj which are the two parts of a Night Journey that the Prophet Muhammad took during his lifetime according to Islamic tradition. It has been described as both a physical and spiritual journey. Some Muslims celebrate this event by offering optional prayers during this night. The celebrations around this day tend to focus on children and the young when they are told the story of the Prophet’s Ascension and food and treats are served after prayers.

Omani Renaissance Day (July 23,) is the day the Sultan Qaboos took power in Oman in 1970.

Omani National Day (November 18,) is the Country’s National Day and Sultan Qaboos’s birthday.