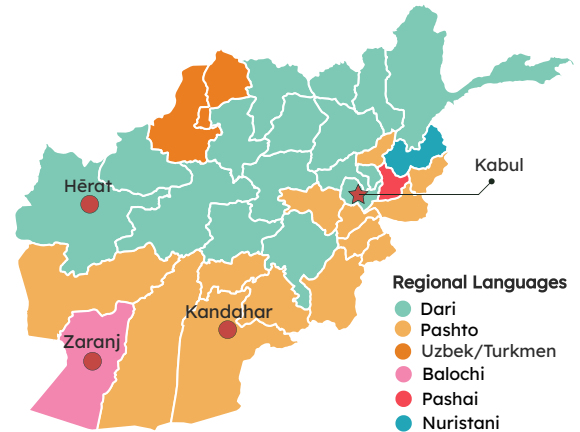


Afghanistan

A mountainous, landlocked country in southern Central Asia, connecting the Middle East with Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. It borders China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Language

- Two official languages: **Dari** and **Pashto**
- **Dari** has been the lingua franca (common language) used in government offices, publications, radio, and television.
- There has been an increase in the use of **Pashto** in official communication by the Taliban (since 2021).
- Schools in majority **Pashto**-speaking areas teach in **Pashto** and those in majority **Dari**-speaking areas teach in **Dari**; in either case, the other language is taught as a second language.
- In most Afghan universities, lessons are taught in **Dari**.



Education

- Most Afghan students begin school at age 7 (Grade 1). Students learn sound-symbol correspondence and simple word reading along the lines of what students learn in Kindergarten in the US.

	MADRASA (ISLAMIC SCHOOL)	COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS
Type & Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public or private • Usually free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes in homes or mosques in remote areas where schools may be inaccessible • Usually free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government-funded • Free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private institutions • Tuition
Subjects Taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading, writing, & math; rarely additional subjects or extracurriculars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows the national curriculum: Math, science, religious studies, Pashto or Dari as a second language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public school subjects & additional subjects like English, or Technology • May have extracurriculars like sports
Classroom Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious texts • No access to technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable access to textbooks and educational materials • Variable access to technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government-issued textbooks • Usually limited access to technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks and additional materials • Access to the internet and computers
Length of School Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All day - meals provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours • Possibly longer with additional subjects
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes are segregated by sex • Post 2021, this may be the only form of schooling available for girls to officially enroll 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear regarding segregation by sex • Post 2021, this may be a likely informal context for girls to receive an education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes are segregated by sex • Post 2021, girls unable to enroll 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes are segregated by sex • Post 2021, unclear if girls are able to enroll

Socio-Cultural Notes



- Between the years 2001 and 2021, there was no Taliban rule. 60% of boys and 40% of girls were in school. In 2017 the adult literacy rate was 38%. Newcomers were likely schooled during this era, and their parents may not be literate.
- In 2021, the Taliban took political control. Girls have since been banned from secondary school and are less likely to attend primary school. Access to schools and educational resources, in general, has decreased.
- **Gender**
 - Girls may be homeschooled due to safety concerns.
 - Girls may marry as teenagers and drop out of secondary school.
 - Girls typically do not go to school when menstruating.
 - All students may be unable to go to school due to financial hardships. Boys, and potentially girls, may be pulled out of school to work.
- **School Norms**
 - Schools may have multi-aged classes.
 - Teachers usually write on blackboards or lecture students while students take notes.
 - Schools typically do not have recess.

Tips for Educators

- Dari and Pashto speakers may have good relationships with each other, or there may be tension between groups. Do not assume speakers of either language will be able to communicate with each other.
- Students coming from Afghanistan may have experienced or observed violence and emotional or physical abuse and may be struggling with trauma.
- Be cautious with classroom activities that force students to provide autobiographical information or describe experiences from their past.
- Students from Afghanistan may not be comfortable during recess or when playing games with other children. Students in Afghanistan don't usually experience unstructured free time during school. Additionally, the language barrier makes it harder to interact with other students. Try to provide extra support during such activities.
- When planning interactive activities, consider cultural sensibilities. Afghan students may not be initially comfortable in co-ed classrooms. Keep in mind other customs about physical boundaries and modesty.
- Be aware that many Muslim students may require time to pray during the school day. If possible, provide a safe and quiet space and allow students time to use it.*

Additional Resources

- Community-building, safety, and security in classrooms: tinyurl.com/4z6eeb75
- Infographic on Newcomers from Afghanistan: tinyurl.com/mvprcypb
- Infographic on Afghanistan and Afghan culture: tinyurl.com/2mm7jep7
- * If providing prayer space in school:
 - Religious Practices of Muslim Students in Public Schools: tinyurl.com/5esjmz4a
 - Child-directed explanation of prayer: islam4kids.org/salat-beginner
 - App for finding the direction of Mecca: g.co/qiblafinder

Sources: Consultations with cultural experts | (2023). *The Cultural Atlas*, Borchgrevink, Kaja & Kristian Berg Harpviken | (2010) *Teaching Religion, Taming Rebellion: Religious Education Reform in Afghanistan*, PRIO Policy Brief, 7. Oslo: PRIO. | The National: UAE | Sherani, K. S. (2014). *Public and Private Schools in Afghanistan: Comparing some aspects of public and private schools in Kabul city* (Dissertation). | Ali, M., Dupree, Nancy Hatch, Dupree, Louis, Allchin, Frank Raymond, Petrov, Victor P. and Weinbaum, Marvin G. (2023, April 28). Afghanistan. Encyclopedia Britannica.

