

Bangladesh

April 2025



Country – capital	People's Republic of Bangladesh – Dhaka. ¹
Population	Total population 168.7 million (est. 2024). Ethnic groups: Bengali at least 99%, other indigenous ethnic groups 1% (2022 est.). ²
Geography	Southern Asia, bordering the Bay of Bengal, between Myanmar and India. ³
Languages	Bangla 98.8% (official, also known as Bengali), other 1.2% (2011 est.). ⁴
Writing system	Persian (from right to left). ⁵
Education and literacy	74.9% of adults is literate, females lower than males (72% and 77.8% resp. -2020). ⁶ The Bangladeshi education system is unusually complex: primary, secondary and higher/ tertiary education are oriented towards general, madrasah (religious) or technical/ vocational preferences. ⁷ Education is free and compulsory from 1 year pre-school until grade 8. ⁸ Primary education is 8 years, then 4 years of secondary school, divided into a lower and a higher level. Higher education has 3 streams: general (pure and applied science, arts, business, social science), madrasah, and technology education (agriculture, engineering, medical, textile, leather technology, and ICT). ⁹ Primary school enrolment starts nearly universal (girls even higher than boys), but in later years more children drop out due to poverty, disabilities and disasters; girls go to child marriage, boys to child labour. ¹⁰ Drop-out rate for primary school decreased from 39.8% (2010) to 13.9% (2021), for secondary school 36% general (41% girls). ¹¹
Religions	Muslim 91%, Hindu 8%, other 1% (2022 est.) ¹²
Conflict history and overview	Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) was created in 1971, when the two parts of Pakistan split after a bitter war with neighbouring India. Bangladesh lived 15 years under military rule and, although democracy was restored in 1990, the political scene is volatile. ¹³ In 1971 one of the poorest countries in the world, it has seen economic growth in the past decades, at an annual average of about 6.25% ¹⁴ , and by 2015 had reached lower-middle income status. ¹⁵ Bangladesh is the sixth-largest migrant sending country in the world, more than 7.4 million migrants (4.4 % of the population). Most migrants pursue regular, temporary and lower-skilled labour in Gulf countries. More recently, irregular migration to Europe has increased, through Libya via the Mediterranean to Italy. The EU considers Bangladesh a safe country. ¹⁶
Humanitarian situation	Life expectancy at birth: 75.2 yrs (2024). ¹⁷ Poverty declined from 12% (2010) to 5% in 2022. Population below poverty line: 18.7% (2022). ¹⁸ In recent years population growth was reduced, health and education improved. ¹⁹ In 2023, cyclones destroyed thousands of houses and displaced over 50,000 people, incl. Rohingya refugees. ²⁰
Human rights situation	The government cracked down on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly ahead of general elections scheduled for January 2024. ²¹ Under the Cyber Security Act 2023, journalists and human rights defenders are targeted and subjected to arbitrary detention and torture. Mass arrests of opposition members with excessive force. ²² There are increasing reports of enforced disappearances, torture in custody, and impunity. ²³ Bangladesh hosts nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar amid rising violence by armed groups and serious donor funding shortages. ²⁴ Refugees suffered from a fire in a camp and a cyclone as well as food insecurity. Bangladesh's delta is extremely vulnerable to impacts of climate change. ²⁵
Situation of women FGM – early marriages	Maternal mortality rate: 123 deaths per 100,000 live births (2020). ²⁶ Child marriages: 51% of girls marry before age 18 and 16% before age 15. ²⁷ In 2017 child marriage for girls under 18 was legalised, without a minimum age. ²⁸ FGM: no evidence. ²⁹
Situation of LGBTI	Consensual same-sex conduct is criminalized, and LGBT people face harassment and violence with little protection from the police. While Bangladesh has taken important steps toward protecting <i>hijras</i> ("third gender"), authorities force them to undergo abusive medical examinations to legally recognize their gender identity. ³⁰
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)/ Asylum/ migration in Malta	IDPs within Bangladesh: 426,000 (2023). ³¹ Number of asylum applications in the EU: 43,236 (2024); 96% was rejected. ³² Malta sea arrivals: 234 (2023), 148 (2024). ³³ Bengali asylum applications in Malta: 188 (2021), 174 (2022), 13 (2023), 11 (2024). ³⁴

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- ¹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ³ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ⁷ <https://www.scholaro.com/db/countries/bangladesh/Education-System>
<http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367/section-24565.html> ; <https://wenr.wes.org/2019/08/education-in-bangladesh>
- ⁹ https://www.studyinbangladesh.com.bd/education_systems
- ¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/education>
- ¹¹ http://shed.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/shed.portal.gov.bd/page/100c3c96_562d_4e72_ba9c_444af8fea5a7/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202022%20%281%29_compressed.pdf p. 48
- ¹² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12650940>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/#introduction>
- ¹⁵ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/cf07cf58f2c345063c972a47209b8c11-0310012023/original/Bangladesh-Development-Update-October-2023.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://mixedmigration.org/bangladesh-complex-migration-landscape/>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12650940>
- ²⁰ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/bangladesh/>
- ²¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/>
- ²² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/bangladesh#e81181>
- ²³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/>
- ²⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/bangladesh#e81181>
- ²⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/>
- ²⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/bangladesh/>
- ²⁷ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/bangladesh/>
- ²⁸ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/03/bangladesh-legalizing-child-marriage-threatens-girls-safety>
- ²⁹ <https://www.fgmcri.org/search/?q=bangladesh>
- ³⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/bangladesh#e81181>
- ³¹ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/bangladesh/>
- ³² <https://euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-annual-analysis> ; <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/bangladeshi-asylum-applications-europe-hit-record-high-2024-96-rejected-1083366>
- ³³ <https://www.unhcr.org/mt/figures-at-a-glance>
- ³⁴ https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download?data_finder%5BdataGroup%5D=displacement&data_finder%5Bdataset%5D=population&data_finder%5BdisplayType%5D=totals&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=REF&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=ASY&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=IDP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OIP&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=STA&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=HST&data_finder%5BpopulationType%5D%5B%5D=OOC&data_finder%5Byear_filterType%5D=range&data_finder%5Byear_rangeFrom%5D=2019&data_finder%5Byear_rangeTo%5D=2024&data_finder%5Bcoo_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoo_country%5D%5B%5D=20&data_finder=on&data_finder%5Bcoa_displayType%5D=custom&data_finder%5Bcoa_country%5D%5B%5D=132&data_finder%5Byear_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoo_%5D=&data_finder%5Bcoa_%5D=&data_finder%5Badvanced_%5D=&data_finder%5Bsubmit%5D=

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This factsheet was compiled for BDE by Adri van den Berg. Adri worked for many years as a Country of Origin Information (COI) researcher, her final post before retiring being with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, now EUAA) in Malta.