EXPEDITIONARY CULTURE FIELD GUIDE



CROATIA

AIR UNIVERSITY
AUTHENTICATED U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION
GPO
U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success (Photo: The Dalmatian coastal town of Primošten, Croatia).



The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1 is the "Culture General" section, which provides the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment with a focus on Southeast Europe.

Part 2 is the "Culture Specific" section, which describes unique cultural features of Croatian society. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location. This section is designed to complement other pre-deployment training (Photo: A display of bread in a fire pit in Dalmatia, Croatia).



For further information, contact the AFCLC Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil or visit the AFCLC website at https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value—freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic because it represents the premium Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity (Photo: Tourists in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina).



Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones, where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing

constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.



We can organize behaviors and systems into categories—what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains–which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems and others (see chart on next page)—as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the way a culture defines family and kinship, a US military member operating overseas can more effectively interact with members of that culture (Photo: Wares on display in Gjirokastër, in southern Albania).

Social Behaviors across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more complex market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

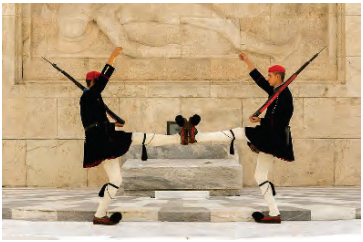
Worldview

One of our most basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different based on our cultural standards. As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Usually, we assume that those in the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.



This collective perspective forms our worldview—how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It

helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner (Photo: Greek soldiers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens).



Cultural Belief System

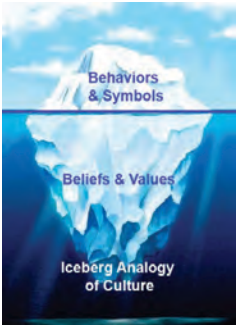
An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system assigns meaning, sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central aspect of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed (Photo: US Air Force and Serbian Armed Forces members visit the Temple of Saint Sava in Belgrade, Serbia).



While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have helped shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).



In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success (Photo: Lake Skadar on the border of Albania and Montenegro).



As you travel through Southeast Europe, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common across the region. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable, or which occurred prior to written language.

Southeast Europe comprises 8 countries on the Balkan Peninsula: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.



Archaeological finds suggest early hunter-gatherers settled in the region over 40,000 years ago. Seminomadic Indo-European tribes moved in as early as 10,000 years ago, eventually forming small farming communities that became the civilizations of the Illyrians, Thracians, and Greeks. In the 4th century BC, Macedonian Alexander the Great briefly united much of the region under his rule. At its height, his kingdom stretched from Southeast Europe to parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Photo: The Acropolis in Athens, Greece).

In 230 BC, Romans began capturing Illyrian and Macedonian settlements, gaining control of most of the region by 100 AD. Beginning in the 6th century, Slavic tribes moved into the region, mixing with other residents over the following centuries. In the 14th century, much of Southeast Europe fell to the Ottoman Empire, based in present-day Turkey, and remained under Ottoman control for the next 4 centuries. Meanwhile, other regions came under the control of the Austrian House of Habsburg – 1 of Europe's most influential royal dynasties – and were later incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As the Ottoman Empire began to disintegrate in the late 19th century, the region became embroiled in territorial disputes, nationalist revolts, and independence movements. Eventually, Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro achieved independence from the Ottomans, while Austria-Hungary annexed BiH. Meanwhile, the 1912-13 Balkan Wars left North Macedonia under Greek and Serbian control, while Serbia absorbed Kosovo (Photo: Greek volunteers in the Balkan Wars).



In 1914, a Serb nationalist assassinated Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo (BiH's present-day capital), prompting Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia and triggering World War I. With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following the war, Serbia (including Kosovo), Montenegro, Croatia, and BiH united (along with Slovenia) as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. Meanwhile, Greece and Albania remained independent states.

World War II brought the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Following a German invasion, part of Croatia became a Nazi puppet state, while other Yugoslav regions were transferred to Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Bulgaria. Greece also was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany, while Albania suffered the same from both Italy and Germany. All 8 states experienced heavy casualties during the war, including the murder or deportation of the region's Jewish and Roma populations and other "undesirables," including those with opposing political views. At the war's end, Yugoslavia was reconstituted as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Independent Albania also adopted communist tenets, becoming the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. By contrast, Greece endured a 5-year civil war before reestablishing its monarchy and democratic governance. Later, Greece experienced a 7-year military dictatorship before democracy was restored again and the monarchy abolished in 1974.

In the late 1980s, economic inequalities supported the growth of nationalist sentiments in Yugoslavia. Skirmishes between Croats and Serbs in 1991 quickly escalated, turning into a series of territorial disputes, civil wars, and episodes of "ethnic cleansing" across Yugoslavia. In 1991, Croatia and BiH declared their independence, and by 1992, Yugoslavia comprised only Serbia (including Kosovo) and Montenegro. In 2006, Yugoslavia finally disintegrated completely when Serbia and Montenegro declared their independence from each other. In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia (Photo: The Presidents of BiH and Croatia sign a peace agreement in 1994).



As peace slowly returned in subsequent years, the former socialist and communist states began to strengthen their democratic institutions and civil societies. They also expanded market capitalism and increased their participation in the international arena, while also seeking to diffuse lingering regional tensions. For example, in early 2019, Greece and North Macedonia resolved a decades-long dispute over the use of the name "Macedonia." In what is perhaps the region's largest source of remaining tension, Serbia continues to refuse to recognize Kosovo's independence as of mid-2019 despite international pressure.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. All 8 Southeast European states are parliamentary republics led by a Prime Minister (PM), President, and legislature. BiH comprises 2 semi-autonomous regions led by a tripartite Presidency (1 central President plus a President from each of the regions). In the other countries, presidential powers are largely ceremonial with executive power vested in the PM, who leads the government together with the support of a Cabinet of Ministers.

After experiencing socialist rule for the last half of 20th century, the former Yugoslav states and Albania emerged in the 1990s-2000s with new political, social, and economic structures. While some states have created successful democracies, others have faced significant challenges to maintaining the democratic process. Today, all 8 states belong to international and regional alliances that advocate economic, military, and political cooperation among member nations. Further, Croatia and Greece are members of the European Union (EU); Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia are candidate countries currently in the accession process; and BiH and Kosovo are considered potential EU candidate countries. Greece, Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro are all members of NATO, while BiH and North Macedonia have declared their intentions to join (Photo: Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serbian youth learn about NATO in Kosovo).



The region exhibits various levels of ethnic diversity, and generally, ethnic diversity in the former Yugoslav states has decreased since the 1990s conflicts. Greece, Croatia, Serbia, and Albania are relatively homogenous, with native Greeks, Croats, Serbs, and Albanians comprising 92%, 90%, 83%, and 83% of their populations, respectively. Further, following Kosovo's independence from Serbia, many Serbs departed Kosovo, leaving a population in Kosovo that is over 90% Kosovar Albanian. By contrast, Montenegrins comprise just 45% of the population of Montenegro; BiH's population is 50% Bosniak, 31% Serb, and 15% Croat; and North Macedonia's is 64% Macedonian, 25% Albanian, and 4% Turkish. Notably, minority Roma ("gypsy") populations suffer significant discrimination and stigmatization across Southeast Europe.

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also

create social unity by defining shared identity, offer individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society.

Early residents of Southeast Europe practiced a variety of religions, recognizing multiple deities and building grand centers for worship. Ancient Greece was the birthplace of a particularly rich and complex belief system comprising a variety of gods and goddesses led by Zeus from his abode on Mount Olympus. The Romans introduced Christianity to the region as early as the 1st century. The Roman Empire's 4th-century adoption of Christianity as its official religion facilitated its rapid spread across Southeast Europe.



In the early 11th century, theological differences between western and eastern branches of the Christian movement forged a permanent divide between the Roman Catholic Church centered in Rome and the Eastern Orthodox tradition of the Byzantine Empire centered in present-day Turkey. Over subsequent centuries, both branches of Christianity flourished in the region. Eastern Orthodoxy eventually split into various self-governing patriarchates such as the Serbian and Greek Orthodox churches (Photo: Orthodox Cathedral in Albania).

The Ottomans brought Islam to the region in the 14th century, and the religion flourished in certain areas during their 400-year presence. Though the Ottomans subjected non-Muslims to political and economic restrictions, they seldom forced Christians, Jews, and other groups to convert, resulting in religious diversity in many areas that continues today.

During the socialist era, the Yugoslav government regulated and restricted religious affairs, reducing the influence of religious institutions. With Yugoslavia's break-up, some regions experienced a religious resurgence. By contrast, communist Albania was officially an atheist state that banned all religious observances. Churches and mosques reopened only in 1990 with the impending collapse of communism.

Today, the region exhibits significant religious diversity, with religious identity correlating with ethnic identity in many regions. For example, most Serbs are Orthodox Christians, most Croats Roman Catholics, and most Bosniaks Muslims. The majority of residents in Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia subscribe to Orthodox Christianity, while Roman Catholicism prevails in Croatia. Muslims are predominant in Kosovo and comprise significant proportions of the population in Albania (57%), BiH (51%) and North Macedonia (33%). All states proclaim freedom of religion and name no official religion, though BiH, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, and North Macedonia grant special privileges to certain predominant faiths.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called “fictive kin”).

Family life and relationships are highly valued throughout Southeast European societies. Residents maintain close connections with both immediate and extended family members, supporting them socially, emotionally, and financially. They also provide physical care for elderly or ailing kin as needed. While most households comprise 2 parents and their children (known as a nuclear family), extended kin on both sides of the family are typically influential in family matters. Children often live with their parents or other relatives well into adulthood, waiting to move out until they finish their education, become financially independent, or marry. Economic changes and urbanization have altered family life in recent decades. Urban inhabitants tend to marry later or cohabit (live in long-term, unmarried partnership) and have fewer children. Generally, the traditional family structure remains common in rural areas, while families in urban centers are more diverse (Photo: A Serbian man receives an honor from the US Air Force).



While historically marriage was often an arranged union, today most Southeast Europeans choose their own partners. Dating customs vary somewhat based on geography and ethnic and religious identity. For example, in some rural families, parents and extended relatives are heavily involved in a young person's selection of a spouse and expect dating to lead to marriage. Casual dating, cohabitation, and children before marriage are all socially unacceptable among some Bosniaks, rural residents, and members of the working class. In some states, divorce is increasingly prevalent among younger generations, while in others, the practice is relatively uncommon.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. The Southeast European states' historically patriarchal culture privileged men as leaders and providers. While some of the region's inhabitants continue to adhere to these traditional or long-held values — men as breadwinners and heads of household and women as mothers and wives — gender roles, ideologies, and responsibilities began to transform in the mid-20th century and continue to change rapidly in some areas today, particularly among younger generations, the middle class, and urban residents (Photo: Greek women in traditional costume).



Although women hold equal rights under the law, they continue to face barriers to their full participation in the political, social, and economic spheres. For example, the region is home to some of Europe's lowest rates of female participation in the labor force. Further, working women face discrimination in the hiring and promotion process, routinely receive lower wages than their male counterparts, and experience sexual harassment in the workplace.

Nevertheless, women enjoy expanding rights and visibility, especially in those countries that have joined or are attempting to join the EU. Further, the number of women in politics has increased. Southeast European women today hold varying proportions of national and sub-national government positions. For example, Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia have significantly higher female participation rates in their national legislatures than the US. By contrast, BiH, Croatia, and Greece have the region's lowest rates.

Notably, the region's women experience high rates of gender-based violence (GBV). Often considered private matters, many incidences of GBV go unreported. Even in cases that are reported, the prosecution of perpetrators is rare. Although homosexuality is legal throughout the region, LGBTQ individuals experience discrimination, stigmatization, and violence. As of mid-2019, same-sex marriage remains unlawful across the region, though some forms of same-sex union are legal in Croatia and Greece.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. Southeast Europe's languages belong to the Indo-European family. Notably, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian are all members of the Slavic branch. Meanwhile, Greek belongs to the Hellenic branch, and Albanian forms its own branch. These languages use a variety of writing systems, namely the Latin alphabet for Croatian and Albanian and the Cyrillic for Macedonian. Montenegrin, Serbian, and Bosnian use both alphabets. Further, Greek has its own unique alphabet, the oldest of any Indo-European language (Photo: Street sign in Serbia in Serbian, Slovak, and Hungarian).



Southeast Europe is also home to speakers of other languages, notably several varieties of Romani (the languages of the Roma), Turkish, Italian, German, Hungarian, and other regional languages. English has become increasingly popular over the past several decades and is spoken widely in business and by young, urban, and educated residents. Generally, the region's residents value respect and directness in their communication practices. In some areas, speakers openly demonstrate emotion and engagement, while in others, speakers typically refrain from displaying emotions in public and are comfortable with silence. Across the region, residents usually share personal information only with family or close friends and tend to be reserved when interacting with strangers.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.



Some of the earliest formal schools appeared in Greece during the 5th century BC. Following the introduction of Christianity, clergymen taught basic literacy and religion. In areas under Ottoman rule, education centered on Islamic religious instruction. Generally, education remained decentralized until the late 19th century, when most states developed public school systems using both religious and secular curricula (Photo: Students at a school in Kosovo renovated by the US Army Corps of Engineers).

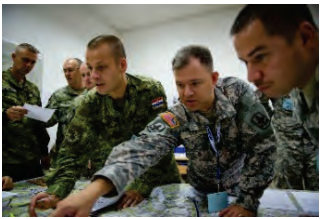
By the beginning of the 20th century, most states offered free and compulsory education. The adoption of socialism and

communism in Yugoslavia and Albania in the mid-20th century led to the promotion of communist or socialist tenets in schools and an emphasis on technical and vocational instruction.

Today, all the Southeast European countries offer free, compulsory, state-sponsored education at the primary level and some offer it at the secondary level. While about 98% of Southeast European residents are literate, schools generally lag in quality as compared to other European countries. Challenges to the education systems include low expenditures on education and rural school closures. Further, linguistic and ethnic minorities tend to experience lower educational attainment than majority groups. Some schools in the region segregate students based on language, religion, or ethnicity.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In most Western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Residents of Southeast Europe mostly adhere to these habits, valuing punctuality, a sense of responsibility, and candid professional interactions. Within their personal lives, most Southeast Europeans invest significant time into establishing and maintaining relationships (Photo: US and Croatian army officers during a joint exercise).



Business tends to move more slowly in the region than in the US, since residents typically prefer to invest time in building relations with their business partners prior to conducting official discussions. Most communication is explicit and direct, with frequent eye contact. Most Southeast Europeans require less personal space when conversing than is common in the US. However, residents of Albania, Croatia, and North Macedonia typically establish about the same personal space as in the US.

Southeast European states recognize a number of public holidays. Besides the major religious holidays of Christmas and

Easter for Christians and Ramadan for Muslims, residents typically celebrate their nation's independence day in addition to other historically-based holidays and unique seasonal festivals.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Most Southeast European forms of artistic expression reflect the region's rural peasant past, history of foreign presence, diverse religious traditions, and modern global trends. Greece enjoys a particularly rich and ancient literary tradition. More recent regional literature often explores themes of nationalism and individual struggle, particularly the hardships experienced during the socialist and communist era.

Traditional clothing depicts a variety of styles, although most tend to feature bright colors, intricate embroidery, and lace. Southeast Europe also has a rich tradition of folk music, which typically explores topics like nature, the seasons, rural life, and love. Songs often feature complex rhythms and a variety of traditional instruments. In recent decades, some musicians have combined traditional folk music with modern electronic and pop music. Common during holidays and special occasions, folk dances tend to be performed in pairs, circles, or lines by dancers of all ages (Photo: Traditional dancers in Serbia).



Southeast Europeans also produce various traditional handicrafts and folk art that reflect the region's agrarian roots. Common handicrafts include pottery, woodcarving, embroidery, leatherwork, and jewelry. While soccer is the region's most widely followed sport, other popular sports include basketball, volleyball, and martial arts. During the winter, residents of mountainous areas also enjoy ice hockey, skiing, and ice skating.

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence

patterns, family structures, and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Southeast European dishes are diverse and extensive, reflecting Central European, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean influences. In some regions, fare tends to be simple and lightly seasoned, while in others, dishes are accented by bold and aromatic spices. Fish features prominently in the diets of coastal communities, while lamb, pork, beef, and chicken are common inland. Popular dishes include vegetables stuffed with minced meat, skewers of roasted meat, hearty stews and soups featuring beans and potatoes, doughy pastries stuffed with various fillings, and sugary sweets (Photo: Grilled minced beef in Montenegro).



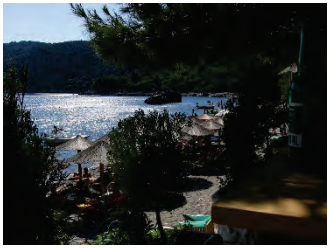
Health in Southeast Europe has improved significantly in recent decades, evidenced by decreased infant and maternal mortality rates and longer life expectancies. Generally, healthcare infrastructure and quality of care vary across the region. Facilities tend to concentrate in cities and underserve rural dwellers, where small clinics are ill-equipped, overcrowded, and understaffed. In some areas, high out-of-pocket expenses force some residents to forgo modern treatments. Some private facilities offer first-rate care but tend to be unaffordable for most Southeast Europeans.

Non-communicable “lifestyle” diseases account for the majority of deaths in the region. The most prominent causes include cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and respiratory and liver diseases. In some states, unhealthy habits like physical inactivity, high consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and unbalanced diets contribute to an elevated prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Across the region, Roma disproportionately lack access to adequate care and suffer shorter life expectancies and higher rates of communicable and non-communicable illnesses.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Prior to the 19th century, the Southeast European states maintained largely agrarian economies. Despite some scattered industrialization in the late 19th century, the region generally remained underdeveloped until World War II. Following the war, socialist Yugoslavia and communist Albania adopted centrally-controlled and planned economic systems. While Albania's isolationist policies largely failed to grow its economy, Yugoslavia eventually liberalized its system, adopting a "self-managed" approach that sustained the economy for a time. Meanwhile, Greece's civil war stalled its post-war economic growth until industrialization in the 1950s.

The end of communism in Albania and Yugoslavia's break-up meant the entire region embraced liberal, free market systems by the 1990s. While this transition initially caused these economies to contract, by the early 2000s, they were growing. The 2008-09 global financial crisis slowed investment in the region, reduced demand for exports, and caused severe economic contraction in every state except Kosovo. The region was slow to respond to the crisis and suffered a prolonged recession. Greece was particularly impacted, experiencing a severe government debt crisis that required a series of international bailouts.



While the region appears poised to maintain relatively stable growth rates in the near future, the states remain among Europe's poorest. Common economic challenges include corruption, aging populations, the emigration of skilled labor, and high unemployment. The EU, Russia, and China all invest heavily in the region, but as EU members, Greece and Croatia benefit from a secure business environment and free movement of goods and services that the others lack (Photo: A Montenegrin beach – tourism is an important source of revenue for the region).

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. The Southeast European states have developed their transportation and communication infrastructure at different rates. As a result, the quality and reach of roads, railways, and modern technology varies but is generally highest in Greece. In recent years, Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have jointly worked with the EU to improve intraregional connectivity and transport networks. China has also invested significantly in the region's transportation infrastructure.

Several states are located along important maritime trade routes, most notably Greece, which is home to several of the region's largest ports. Modern information technology is available in all the Southeast European states. Cell phones are widely used, and about 70% of the region's residents regularly use the Internet. North Macedonia has the region's highest rates of Internet connectivity and usage, especially among the younger generations (Photo: The Rion-Antirion Bridge, 1 of the world's longest cable bridges, crosses the Gulf of Corinth in Greece).



The region relies heavily on coal for its energy needs, though coal-fired power plants tend to be outdated, inefficient, and often discharge harmful chemical compounds. While governments have announced plans to increase the use of renewable resources, these technologies remain largely underdeveloped outside of Greece and Croatia. Most Southeast European states depend on imported natural gas and oil from Russia. Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia experience frequent power outages due to unstable energy supplies.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize Southeast European society at large, we will focus on specific features of society in Croatia.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Overview

Croatia today includes the historical regions of Croatia proper, Slavonia, the Istrian Peninsula, and the Dalmatian coast. While each region has its own unique history, all have experienced centuries of foreign invasion, annexation, and occupation. The end of World War I saw Croatia's inclusion in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Following World War II, Croatia became a republic within socialist Yugoslavia, whose breakup in the early 1990s prompted civil war before peace returned in 1995. On June 25, 1991, Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia and was recognized as an independent nation by the international community in 1992. (Graphic: Croatia's historical regions).



Note: In this guide, the term "Croat" refers to a member of the Croat ethnic group. By contrast, the term "Croatian" refers to any person residing in Croatia, regardless of ethnicity.

Early History

Scientists have discovered extensive evidence of early human activity dating up to 130,000 years ago. Around 4,000 BC, residents established semi-permanent settlements. Between 3,000-2,200 BC, the Vučedol culture emerged in eastern Slavonia near the present-day city of Vukovar then spread throughout the region, producing intricate ceramics and fine metalwork.

Illyrians, Greeks, and Romans

Around 1,000 BC, a group of tribes called the Illyrians settled much of the region. Around the 7th century BC, Greeks

established colonies on several islands. In the 4th century BC, Celtic tribes from the North forced the Illyrians southward toward the Greek colonies. Around 229 BC, the Greeks requested help from the Romans (who had begun building their empire in central Italy around 500 BC) in defeating the Illyrians, beginning a long period of Roman activity in the region. By 9 AD, the Roman Emperor had consolidated control and annexed the region. Over some 400 years, the Romans built new or expanded existing settlements, constructing grand public buildings such as amphitheaters, thermal spas, and temples. Many of these structures are still visible across Croatia today. Dalmatia produced 3 Roman emperors, most notably Diocletian, whose summer palace in Split is a popular tourist attraction today (pictured).



In 285, Emperor Diocletian reorganized the Roman Empire, dividing it into western and eastern halves. In 395, this split became a permanent division between the Eastern (Byzantine) and western Roman empires. Later, that border also marked the division between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches and the extent of Muslim Ottoman control in the region. Located west of that dividing line, Croatia remained oriented to Western Europe and Roman Catholicism in subsequent centuries in contrast to its neighbors whose residents became predominantly Eastern Orthodox (Serbia) and Muslim (Bosnia and Herzegovina or BiH).

Arrival of the Slavs

Meanwhile, Slavic tribes from Central Asia settled north of the Black Sea by around the turn of the millennium. In the 5th century AD, Germanic tribes moved south to invade the western Roman Empire (which eventually collapsed due to those invasions), disrupting the Slavs' Black Sea settlements and prompting many to migrate again. While other Slavic groups migrated northeast and west, the ancestors of the Croats, the South Slavs, spread into the Balkan Peninsula beginning in the 6th century. For the next several centuries, competing groups battled for control of the region.

The Kingdom of Croatia

By the 8th century, a South Slavic group known as the Croat, were settling the region, displacing or absorbing the groups that remained. In the late 9th century, the Pope, who was the leader of the Catholic Church in Rome, recognized Croatia as an independent state, and in 925, Tomislav became its first King. The Kingdom prospered for about a century and its culture blossomed (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*).

The Croatian-Hungarian Kingdom

The Kingdom soon faced several challenges. In 1089, Hungary invaded. Meanwhile, the Byzantine Empire and Venice both claimed the Dalmatian coast. Faced with a succession crisis, the Croat nobility signed an agreement with the Hungarian King in 1102 accepting his rule. For the next 700 years, Croatia proper and Slavonia remained tied to Hungary (often within the Habsburg Austrian Empire), while maintaining some autonomy through their ***Sabor*** (parliament) and ***Ban*** (high-ranking official who acted on behalf of the monarch).



Over the next several centuries, Hungary occasionally tried to claim full control of Croatia proper and Slavonia, while the Byzantine Empire and Venice continued to press their claims for Dalmatia, waging some 20 wars over 300 years. By 1420, Venice had gained the upper hand, taking control of almost the entire Dalmatian coast except the city of Dubrovnik (pictured – see textbox next page).

Hundred Years' Croatian-Ottoman War: Meanwhile, in the late 13th century, a Turkic dynasty in the territory of present-day Turkey founded the Ottoman Empire. By the mid-14th century, the Muslim Ottoman Turks were expanding rapidly. Advancing into the Balkans, they conquered BiH in 1463, though a fortification system halted their progress into Croatia. Still, the Ottomans persisted and in 1493, defeated the Croats at the Battle of Krbava Field. By 1526, the Ottomans had reached Budapest, the capital of Hungary. At the ensuing Battle of

Mohács the Croat-Hungarian forces were defeated and the Croat-Hungarian King was killed. Faced with a continued Ottoman threat, the Croat nobility elected Ferdinand I of the House of Habsburg (1 of Central Europe's most influential royal dynasties based in Vienna, Austria) as their ruler in 1527.

The History of Dubrovnik

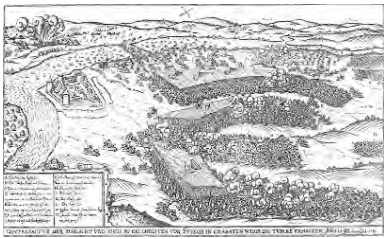
While most of Croatia's Dalmatian coast was held by a series of native and foreign powers over the centuries, the city-state of Dubrovnik (known as Ragusa until the early 19th century) remained largely independent. Founded around 614 by Roman refugees fleeing Slav and Avar attacks, Dubrovnik became a fortified town by the 9th century and soon grew to rival other regional powers. Occasionally it was forced to acknowledge outside control of its foreign affairs by the Venetians, Hungary, and the Ottomans, but retained its autonomy otherwise.

The city-state was an early adopter of the first social services, introducing a medical service in 1301 and hospital in 1377. In 1418, Dubrovnik became the first European territory to abolish slavery. By the 16th century, Dubrovnik was 1 of the region's great mercantile powers, trading with India and the Americas as its arts and literature flourished. It began to decline in the 17th century, especially after a 1667 earthquake destroyed large sections of the city. In 1808, French Emperor Napoleon dissolved the city-state (see "The Illyrian Provinces" below).

The Habsburgs, Ottomans, and Venetians

Skirmishes between the Croats and Ottomans continued through the 16th century, until a combined Croat-Austrian army defeated the Ottomans at the 1593 Battle of Sisak. This victory brought a halt to Ottoman advances to the west, though they continued to occupy parts of Croatia for another century. To ensure the Ottomans' halt was permanent, the Habsburg rulers established the ***Vojna Krajina*** (Military Frontier) along the length

of the border with the Ottoman territories. To guard the Frontier, the Habsburgs granted land to Serbs, Hungarians, Germans, and other recruits in exchange for military service. Gradually, this influx created an ethnic and religious “patchwork” in those border regions (Illustration: 17th-century depiction of the Battle of Sisak).



Besides regular Ottoman attacks, the region’s residents suffered waves of disease and burdensome obligations to their Habsburg rulers. Increasingly resentful of Habsburg policies, Croat nobles from Croatia proper and Slavonia held their first joint *Sabor* in 1558 and chose Zagreb (Croatia’s modern-day capital) as their capital. Meanwhile, the plight of the peasantry gradually deteriorated, resulting in unsuccessful rebellions.

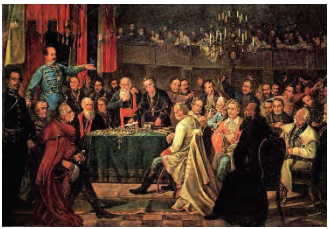
By the late 17th century, the Ottoman Empire was in decline. Following several losses to the Habsburgs, the Ottomans were forced to accept the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz, which transferred Ottoman-held Croat territories to the Habsburgs. Some lands were incorporated into the Military Frontier, while others reverted to Hungarian control under the Habsburg monarch. The 1699 treaty also confirmed Venice’s continuing control over most of Dalmatia and Istria. Throughout the 18th century, the territory of what is modern-day Croatia remained divided this way.

The Illyrian Provinces: In 1809, French Emperor Napoleon invaded and forced the Habsburgs to relinquish significant territory. For the next 5 years, all of modern-day Croatia plus parts of Slovenia, Italy, and Austria were united as the Illyrian Provinces within the French Empire. Although French control was brief, it had significant effects such as the modernization of education, infrastructure, and agriculture and the spread of revolutionary ideals. Following Napoleon’s 1814 defeat, the Illyrian Provinces were awarded to the Habsburg Empire, putting all of modern-day Croatia under Habsburg rule for the first time.

Under Habsburg Rule

Many Croats increasingly resented Habsburg rule, particularly Hungarian domination in regions both Croats and Hungarians historically claimed. Efforts to designate Hungarian as the governmental language in Croatia proper and Slavonia were especially challenging, prompting the Illyrian Movement in the 1830s-40. Activists published political pamphlets, promoted the Croatian language (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*) and called for the unification of Croats with other South Slavs (Bosnians, Serbs, Slovenes, and Montenegrins).

Threatened by this pan-Slavic nationalism and seeking their own independent state, Hungarians revolted against the Habsburgs in 1848. Sensing an opportunity to enhance Croats' status within the Empire, the Croat *Ban* supported Austria against the Hungarians. Nevertheless, hopes for greater autonomy were soon dashed. With Russian assistance, the Austrians suppressed the Hungarian revolt and reasserted their centralized control over all their territories. Within the Croatian region, resentment of Habsburg rule prompted the formation of 2 new political parties, 1 advocating an independent Croatia and the other the creation of a South Slav state within the Habsburg Empire (Illustration: 19th-century painting of the 1848 meeting of the *Sabor*).



Weakened after losing a war with Prussia and seeking to appease the ongoing calls of Hungarian separatists, the Habsburgs restored the Kingdom of Hungary's sovereignty within a dual Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867. The treaty also divided the Croatian region between the 2 kingdoms, assigning Istria, Dalmatia, and the Military Frontier to Austria and Croatia proper and Slavonia to Hungary. Hungary later formally recognized the Croats and the authority of their *Sabor*, though they remained subject to Hungarian control. Subsequently, the *Ban* and *Sabor* initiated several important reforms, notably freedom of the press and the introduction of compulsory education in Croatian (see p. 1-2 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

In 1878, Austria acquired control of neighboring BiH from the Ottoman Empire. With the Military Frontier no longer needed, Austria disbanded it in 1881 and transferred the territory to the Hungarian-ruled region of Croats. With the addition of the Frontier's large Serb population, the region's ethnic composition changed, with Serbs now comprising some 1/4 of the populace. While some tensions between the 2 groups emerged, shared discontent with Austria-Hungary and support for a common Slav state increasingly united Serbs and Croats.

In 1903, Peter I of the Karađorđević dynasty (pictured in 1914) became King of Serbia (Serbia had gained autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century). In 1912, he played a significant role in provoking the Balkan Wars, a series of conflicts that ultimately forced the Ottoman Empire to give up its remaining European territories. These wars also expanded Serbia's territory and enhanced its power and influence in the region.



World War I (WWI)

In 1914, WWI broke out between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) and the Allies (the US, Britain, France, and Russia, among others). Many Croats were conscripted to fight in Austro-Hungarian units, with some 137,000 killed in action. To convince Italy to enter the war on their side, the Allies promised Dalmatian territories at war's end, provoking unease among Croat politicians, who founded the Yugoslav (meaning "South Slav") Committee in 1915 to advocate for self-determination for the region's South Slavs. In 1917, the Committee and the Serbian government-in-exile declared their intent to establish a unified Slav state under the Serbian Karađorđević dynasty at war's end.

Other factions preferred independence. In fall 1918, the Central Powers' impending defeat prompted the *Sabor* to declare independence. Receiving no international recognition, the *Sabor* pivoted, announcing that Croatia would merge with the Kingdom

of Serbia and other territories to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes with a capital in Belgrade (present-day Serbia's capital) and King Peter I its ruler.

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia

The new Kingdom encompassed a large territory: some Croatian regions (Croatia proper, Slavonia, and Dalmatia) plus the modern-day states of BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. (The Kingdom did not include Istria, a small enclave on the Dalmatian coast, or several islands, all of which were held by Italy and would transfer to Yugoslavia in 1947.) The Kingdom was diverse: besides Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and other South Slavs, it included large populations of non-Slavs Albanians, Hungarians, Jews, and Roma ("Gypsies").

Croat political leaders, notably Stjepan Radić (pictured) of the Croatian Peasant Party, sought a federal structure to support Croatian autonomy within the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the Kingdom imposed a highly centralized administration predominantly controlled by Serbs. While land reform improved the lives of many peasants, political and ethnic tensions gradually increased. In 1928, Radić and 4 other Croat politicians were assassinated by a Montenegrin member of a Serbian political party, worsening the political crisis.



In 1929, King Alexander I (who had ascended the throne following the death of his father, Peter I) outlawed political parties and declared a royal dictatorship. He also changed the country's name to the Kingdom to Yugoslavia ("the land of the South Slavs"), while dividing it into new provinces that cut across the historical regions. Despite these efforts to bridge ethnic divides and construct national unity, discontent continued. Further, economic modernization proceeded unevenly, worsening regional disparities.

Political repression contributed to the growth of extremist groups such as the fascist ***Ustaše*** ("insurgents"), a Croat nationalist

group led by Ante Pavelić. The *Ustaše* carried out terrorist acts against the Yugoslav government, while also attempting to incite peasant rebellion. In 1934, the *Ustaše* coordinated with a Macedonian separatist group to assassinate King Alexander I. By contrast, the Croatian Peasant Party advocated a more moderate approach, successfully negotiating increased Croatian autonomy with the new ruler, Prince Paul, in 1939.

World War II (WWII)

When Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, officially beginning WWII, Yugoslavia declared its neutrality. Under increased pressure from Hitler, Prince Paul signed the Tripartite Act in spring 1941, officially granting support to Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan against the Allies (Britain, France, the US, and the USSR or Soviet Union, among others). Some Yugoslav military members objected, forcibly removing and replacing Prince Paul, while annulling the pact with Hitler. Just days later on April 6, 1941, the Germans invaded. Within 10 days, the Yugoslav government surrendered.

Ustaše* Control:** Portraying themselves as liberators, the Nazis exploited Croatian discontent. They collaborated with the *Ustaše* to establish the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*** or NDH) as a Nazi puppet state under the leadership of Pavelić (pictured in the *Sabor* in 1942). The Nazis then gave Dalmatia to Italy and divided the rest of Yugoslavia among Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The *Ustaše* quickly began a campaign to "cleanse" Croatia of all non-Croats by annihilating the region's Serbs, Jews, and Roma either by forced conversion to Roman Catholicism, deportation, or extermination. Scholars estimate the *Ustaše*'s reign of terror ultimately caused the deaths of 350,000-450,000 people, including some 77,000-99,000 murdered at the *Ustaše* concentration camp, Jasenovac (see p. 3-4 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Besides the targeted groups, the *Ustaše* also persecuted political opponents, resistors, Bosnian Muslims, and Yugoslav military members.



Resistance: Opposition to the *Ustaše* arose immediately and was organized by Josip Broz Tito, the head of the underground Yugoslav Communist Party. The Partisan movement (officially the National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia) supported national self-determination for all of Yugoslavia's ethnic groups. As a result, the Partisans attracted backing from a broad range of residents and eventually included Croatian, Bosnian-Herzegovinian, Slovenian, Serbian, and Montenegrin divisions (Photo: Partisans near Split in 1941).



Meanwhile, a Serb-dominated resistance movement, known as the ***Chetniks***, also emerged. Like the Partisans, the *Chetniks* opposed the Germans, but unlike them, the *Chetniks* maintained allegiance to the Yugoslav monarchy. They also resented the presence of non-Serbs in Serbia, murdering many Muslims and Croats. Concurrently, some Partisans were conducting attacks against Serbs. Soon, the *Chetniks* and Partisans were also battling each other.

Gradually, the Partisans gained the upper hand against the *Chetniks*, the Germans, and the Italians. Their activities focused on Croatia and BiH, and operations included sabotage in addition to combat. By 1943, the Allies recognized Tito as the Partisans' leader and provided official assistance. By 1944, the Partisans had liberated most of Croatia, except for the cities.

Besides defeating the *Ustaše* and expelling the Germans, Tito's aim was to seize power and set up a socialist Yugoslav state. Consequently, the Partisans established socialist-dominated administrations in the territories they liberated. With the war winding down and the Nazi German and *Ustaše* defeat appearing certain in May 1945, many Croats fled north. They included many *Ustaše* and Nazi collaborators but also some opponents of communism or socialism, civilians, and refugees. In Austria, they surrendered to the British Army, which then turned them over to Tito's Partisans, who executed tens of thousands of them. Others died during forced marches back to Croatia.

In all, WWII was devastating to Yugoslavia. Of the 1.7 million Yugoslavs who died, some 1 million were killed by other Yugoslavs. All the regional combatants – the *Ustaše*, the *Chetniks*, and the Partisans – committed atrocities that fueled ethnic mistrust that flared again in the late 20th century.

Post-war Socialist Yugoslavia

In 1946, Yugoslavia was reconstituted as the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (later the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) with Tito as its President. The federation comprised 6 nominally equal republics: BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Tito's government quickly implemented socialist policies such as the nationalization of enterprises and properties and centralized economic planning based on the Soviet model. Further, Tito took steps to eliminate political opposition and build unity among the various ethnic and religious groups by emphasizing a common Yugoslav identity.

Break with the USSR: In 1948, Tito abruptly cut all ties with the USSR, preferring to pursue his own economic and foreign policies. Consequently, Yugoslavia became the only socialist country in Europe to function independently of Soviet influence and authority. In subsequent decades, Tito implemented so-called "self-managed" socialism by returning political authority to regional and local governments and transferring economic decision-making to workers' organizations. These decentralization measures stimulated significant economic growth through the mid-1960s.



Tito pursued friendly relations with a variety of states, notably maintaining an open border policy in stark contrast to other socialist and communist nations. Along with the leaders of India and Egypt, Tito also initiated the Non-Aligned Movement to help developing nations maintain a middle course between the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War (Photo: Tito and his wife, left, visit US President and Mrs. Nixon in 1971).

Despite this openness abroad, Tito maintained a tight hold at home, using state security forces to monitor and suppress political dissidents. Nevertheless, some reformist ideas surfaced. During the 1969-71 "Croatian Spring," Croat dissidents advocated Croatian autonomy and resurrected the Croatian language as a symbol of cultural identity (see p. 1-2 of *Language and Communication*). Fearing civil war, Tito conducted a series of purges of Croatian politicians and intellectuals.

Upon Tito's 1980 death, presidential power began to rotate among the individual republics' leaders. Soon, Yugoslavia faced serious economic challenges (see p. 1-2 of *Economics and Resources*), pitting its wealthier northern and western regions against the poorer South and East. As political and economic instability increased, nationalist tendencies arose. Serb nationalism emerged particularly strongly in the late 1980s under Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević.



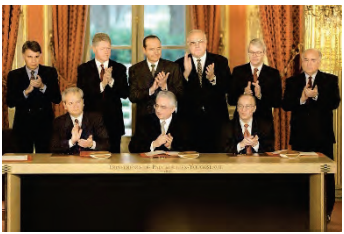
By 1989, communism was crumbling in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Late that year, reform-minded leaders in Croatia and Slovenia agreed to hold free, multiparty elections in their republics. The right-wing nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (***Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*** or HDZ – see p. 5-6 of *Political and Social Relations*) won the 1990 Croatian election. HDZ leader Franjo Tuđman (pictured in 1971) – an ex-Partisan and former Yugoslav Army general and professor, who had been jailed for his dissident activities during the Croatian Spring – took office as Croatia's President within the Yugoslav federation. As many Serbs protested discriminatory actions by the new Croatian government, Serbia's leader Milošević began promoting the idea of a "Greater Serbia," including not only its historic territory but all lands where Serbs currently resided and notably also territories in Croatia. Spurred on by Milošević, the Serbian government equated the rise of Croatian nationalism as advocated by Tuđman with a return to *Ustaše* fascism. Anger and mistrust rose across the region.

Independence and the Homeland War

By spring 1991, Serbs and Croats were skirmishing. Concurrently, Croatian Serbs voted to create an autonomous Serb region comprising the Serb-majority districts in Croatia, primarily within the historical Military Frontier bordering BiH and Serbia. In mid-1991, an overwhelming majority of Croatians supported an independence referendum, though Croatian Serbs largely boycotted the vote. Nevertheless, Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991.

Armed clashes increased. Over the next 6 months, Serbian militias supported by the Yugoslav People's Army battled the Croatian National Guard and Croatian militias, causing the deaths of some 14,000 and displacing hundreds of thousands. While Dubrovnik and other cities experienced shelling, the city of Vukovar on the border with Serbia was particularly hard-hit, enduring an 87-day siege by Serbian forces that destroyed the city. By December 1991, some 30% of Croatia's territory was occupied by Serbian forces.

In early 1992, a United Nations (UN)-brokered ceasefire halted the fighting, with disputed areas placed under UN supervision, and the international community recognized Croatia's independence. Over the next 3 years, an uneasy stalemate held in Croatia, though war flared in neighboring BiH, with Croatia providing some support to Bosnian Croats fighting both Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims there. In 1995, Croatia recaptured most of the Serbian-held Croatian territories in an offensive known as Operation Storm, then expelled some 150,000 Serbs. Under international pressure, Serbian leader Milošević gave up all claims to Croatian territory in 1996, and by 1998, all the occupied territories were reintegrated into Croatia. With the 2002 withdrawal of UN troops, Croatia attained control of its territory (Photo: Serbian President Milošević, Croatian President Tuđman, and BiH President Izetbegović sign the 1995 Dayton Agreement ending the Bosnian War).



Contemporary Croatia

President Tuđman won reelection in 1992 and 1997. While popular for leading Croatia through the Homeland War, Tuđman's autocratic rule reduced his support before his 1999 death. A center-left coalition prevailed in the 2000 election, giving Stjepan Mesić the Presidency. A seasoned politician and critic of Tuđman, Mesić was reelected in 2005. In the early 2000s, Mesić prioritized Croatia's accession to the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), though progress was hampered when international observers criticized Croatia's lack of commitment to minority rights and participation in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), a war crimes trial.

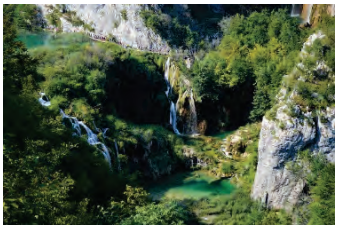
In response, Croatia initiated several measures such as political and economic reforms, anti-corruption measures, and enhanced cooperation with the ICTY to demonstrate its readiness to participate in the international community. In 2009, Croatia joined NATO, though a border dispute with Slovenia (see p. 10 of *Political and Social Relations*) slowed EU negotiations. In 2010, Ivo Josipović, of the Social Democratic Party (SDP – see p. 5-6 of *Political and Social Relations*) was elected President. Meanwhile, corruption scandals plagued the HDZ, causing it to lose its majority in the *Sabor* to the SDP in 2011.



In 2013, Croatia became the EU's 28th member. Discontent with the government's slow response to an economic recession thwarted President Josipović's reelection plans in 2015. Instead, voters chose the HDZ's Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, (pictured with US President Trump in 2019), making her Croatia's first female President. Parliamentary elections held later that year gave no party the majority. After negotiations, a center-right coalition chose a non-partisan pharmaceutical executive as PM before removing him within a few months due to a corruption scandal. In snap parliamentary elections held in September 2016, the HDZ emerged victorious, with party head Andrej Plenković taking office as PM.

Myth Overview

In contrast to history, which is supposed to be an objective record of the past based on verifiable facts, myths embody a culture's values and often explain the origins of humans and the natural world. Myths are important because they provide a sense of unique heritage and identity. For Croatians, myth and folklore often illustrate pre-Christian traditions, while others helped to bolster Croat identity through years of foreign rule. Many tales feature spirits, demons, witches, dragons, fairies, werewolves, and other mythical creatures. In the early 20th century, author and Nobel Prize nominee Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić adapted aspects of Croatian myths and legends in new stories. Her collection, *Croatian Tales of Long Ago*, is still popular among old and young alike (Photo: Plitvice Lakes National Park).



The *Štriga* or Witch: The *štriga* is a common character in Dalmatian and Istrian stories. Usually born on Christmas, Easter, or another Christian holiday, *štrigas* are identifiable by their short tail but are usually harmless until they start to use their sinister powers at age 24. The *štrigas* typically act like normal humans during the day but at dusk or midnight transform into an animal, such as a frog, cat, dog, pig, or ox. *Štrigas* often gather at crossroads, mountain tops, or other special places to plan their evil acts. Common *štriga* activities include taking milk from cows and stealing hearts from oxen, cursing people to make them ill or unable to have children, and breaking up young couples.

***Malik* the Dwarf:** Coastal residents traditionally tell of *malik*, a small creature with a red cap, who is both helpful and mischievous. In some tales, *malik* is a hill, forest, or field spirit, while in others he is the soul of a non-baptized baby who met a violent death. *Malik*'s positive deeds include giving a fisherman a good catch or leading a lost person home. Mischievous acts include stealing cattle, biting people, making children ill, tearing down houses under construction, and keeping people from sleeping.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name
Republic of Croatia
Republika Hrvatska



Political Borders
Slovenia: 373 mi
Hungary: 216 mi
Serbia: 195 mi
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 594 mi
Montenegro: 12 mi
Coastline and islands: 3,626 mi

Capital
Zagreb

Demographics
Croatia's population of about 4.3 million is declining at an annual rate of -0.5%, primarily due to large numbers of Croatians moving abroad in search of education and employment and also a low birthrate (see p. 3 of *Sex and Gender*). About 57% of the population resides in urban areas, with some 25% of the populace living in or near the capital city of Zagreb. Generally, population density is heaviest in the northern half of the country. The central mountain belt and most islands are sparsely populated.



Flag
The Croatian flag consists of 3 equal horizontal red, white, and blue bands, pan-Slavic colors inspired by the 19th century flag of Russia. Centered in the middle of the flag is the Croatian coat of arms, comprising a shield decorated with a checkerboard of 13 red and 12 white fields crowned by 5 smaller shields representing (from left to right) the historical regions of Croatia proper, Dubrovnik, Dalmatia, Istria, and Slavonia.

Geography

Situated in the northwest portion of southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula, Croatia borders Slovenia and Hungary to the north, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to the east, and Montenegro at its extreme southern tip. Croatia's long, rugged western coastline borders the Adriatic Sea. Its total land area to include some 1,000 islands, islets, and rocks is about 21,600 sq mi making it slightly smaller than West Virginia. A narrow coastal corridor belonging to BiH separates a small portion of southern Croatia from the rest of the country.

Despite its relatively small size, Croatia is geographically diverse. A vast flatland interspersed with rolling hills known as the Pannonian plain extends east-west across Croatia's northern interior. Further south, the plains join with the towering Dinaric Alps mountain range, which form a northwest-southeast spine that parallels the Adriatic coast and dominates much of Croatia's central, west, and southern regions. Interweaving the Alps are deep valleys and highland plateaus, some heavily forested by fir, spruce, beech, and oak. Croatia's highest point is Dinara (pictured), which rises to about 6,000 ft near the border with BiH in the South. Craggy mountain slopes and limestone cliffs descend sharply toward the coastline, which meanders as a narrow lowland with numerous natural bays and harbors.



About half of Croatian territory features karst, highly porous limestone and dolomitic rock that has formed numerous underground rivers, chasms, caves, sinkholes, and grottos. Croatia is notably home to some 50 caves deeper than 800 ft, most notably Lukina Jama, which at 4,662 ft, is 1 of the world's deepest caves. Croatia's 3 longest and economically important rivers are the Sava, Drava, and the Danube, the latter is the European Union's (EU's) longest river.

Climate

A Mediterranean climate prevails along the coast, with long, warm, and dry summers and mild, rainy winters. Inland regions experience a continental climate with 4 distinct seasons. Summers tend to be warm and wet, winters are long and cold, and spring and fall are typically short. Temperatures average 72°F in June and 31°F in January. Mountainous areas tend to be cooler, with the highest elevations regularly experiencing freezing temperatures and heavy snowfall.



Natural Hazards

Croatia is vulnerable to earthquakes, floods, and landslides. Located at the junction of 3 tectonic plates, Croatia is prone to destructive earthquakes which tend to be most severe in Dalmatia. While small tremors occur regularly, the most damaging earthquake in recent history occurred in 1996, killing, injuring, and displacing hundreds of residents and causing extensive infrastructure damage near the coastal city of Dubrovnik. Floods from heavy rain or melting snow regularly force large-scale evacuations and emergency humanitarian services. Karst areas (see “Geography” above) are particularly prone to several hazards, including sinkholes and flash floods from overflowing underwater springs. Intermittent droughts cause extensive agricultural losses and occasionally lead to damaging forest fires, while landslides are a problem in mountainous regions (Photo: The coastal city of Split).

Environmental Issues

Croatia has suffered comparatively less environmental degradation than its Central and Eastern European neighbors. Today, national parks, nature reserves, and other protected areas cover some 10% of the country. While agricultural runoff and industrial waste pollute some surface water, particularly in the Danube river basin, the government has taken special measures to protect its waters, particularly its underground reservoirs. Notably, Croatia ranks third in Europe behind Iceland and Norway for its per capita freshwater reserves.

Deforestation from illegal logging and the clearing of land for agricultural use is still a concern in some regions. Moreover, emissions from industrial areas in neighboring countries and domestic coal-fired power plants in larger cities such as Zagreb, Rijeka, and Split contribute to acid rain, which in turn damages forests. Air pollution from vehicle emissions is a persistent concern in Zagreb and other urban areas.

Government

Croatia is a constitutional republic with a parliamentary government. The country divides into 20 counties (***zupanije***) and 1 capital city (***grad***) of Zagreb, each administered by governors and local councils. Adopted in 1990, Croatia's constitution separates power among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and outlines the fundamental rights and freedoms of Croatian citizens.



Executive Branch

The President, who is head-of-state and commander-in-chief of the Croatian Armed Forces, is elected by popular vote and is permitted to serve up to 2 consecutive 5-year terms. Presidential powers are largely ceremonial, and the current President, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, (pictured with NATO troops) took office as Croatia's first female President in 2015. Executive power is vested in the Prime Minister (PM), who is head-of-government. With the support of a Council of Ministers, the PM oversees the country's day-to-day affairs. Named by the President and approved by the Parliament, the PM is traditionally the leader of the political party or coalition that holds the most seats in the Parliament. Croatia's current PM, Andrej Plenković, took office in 2016.

Legislative Branch

Croatia's legislature is a single-chamber Parliament (***Hrvatski Sabor***) composed of 151 members elected to 4-year terms. Some 140 members are elected in multi-seat constituencies through a nationwide vote based on proportional representation,

and 3 members are elected in single constituencies by Croatians living abroad. The remaining 8 seats are allocated to representatives of the 22 recognized minority groups: 3 seats to the Serbs, 1 to the Hungarians, 1 to the Italians, 1 jointly elected by Czechs and Slovaks, and 2 to the remaining minorities jointly. The *Sabor* controls all federal legislative powers such as amending the constitution, appointing positions in government, approving declarations of war, and passing the national budget (Photo: Croatian officials participate in a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery).



Judicial Branch

The judiciary includes a Supreme, Constitutional, Administrative courts in addition to a system of county, municipal, and specialized courts that oversee minor cases. As the highest court, the Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for civil, criminal, and military cases and consists of a court President, vice President, and 41 justices. Nominated by the President and approved by the *Sabor*, the Supreme Court's President serves a single 4-year term. The National Judicial Council appoints the 41 justices to serve until age 70. Allegations of corruption plague the judiciary, though recent reforms have enhanced transparency and accountability.

Political Climate

Croatia's political landscape is characterized by a multi-party system in which parties or coalitions of parties compete for power. Generally, those groups which hold the majority of seats in the *Sabor* also hold the bulk of government leadership positions and retain considerable political control. Coalitions tend to dissolve frequently, resulting in a shifting political landscape characterized by conflict. Croatia's 2 most influential political parties are the conservative, center-right Croatian Democratic Union (***Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*** or HDZ, led by PM Plenković) and the center-left Social Democratic Party of Croatia (***Socialna Demokratska Partija Hrvatske*** or SDP).

HDZ dominated the political arena during the 1990s but began to lose some influence following SDP's rise to power in the early 2000s. Most recently, HDZ emerged victorious in a snap 2016 election (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*), gaining the legislative majority after forming a coalition with the centrist and reformist newcomer Bridge of Independent Lists (***Most Nezavisnih Lista*** or MOST). HDZ was once again victorious after breaking with MOST, forming the liberal Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats (***Hrvatska Narodna Stranka – Liberalni Demokrati*** or HNS-LD).

Traditionally, HDZ's platform was nationalist, conservative, and influenced by Catholic doctrine. Under some pressure from the EU, it has embraced a more moderate political agenda emphasizing integration with the EU, economic reform, and cooperative, regional diplomacy in recent years. While SDP shares HDZ's foreign policy goals, SDP subscribes to a more liberal fiscal and social agenda, which includes reduced involvement by the Catholic Church within the political sphere and greater support to social programs, infrastructure, schools, parks, and other public goods (Photo: Croatian Chief of Defense Gen Lovrić and US Army Gen Dempsey at a ceremony in Croatia).



Although peaceful, free, and fair elections have strengthened political and social stability since the 1990s, the government still faces challenges to maintaining the democratic process. Despite efforts to purge corruption, it continues to permeate all levels of government. In a recent study, some 94% of respondents ranked corrupt practices as the third most critical problem facing Croatia, after unemployment and government efficacy. Although a federal anti-corruption body prosecutes high-level corruption, notably resulting in the arrests of a former PM, Zagreb's mayor, and numerous other government officials, verdicts are rarely enforced. Ongoing corruption and political scandals provoke skepticism of the political process and distrust of public officials. As a result, election turnout tends to be relatively low.

Defense

The Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) are a unified military force consisting of ground forces with smaller maritime and air branches. With a joint strength of 15,650 active duty troops supplemented by 3,000 paramilitary personnel, the CAF are charged with protecting Croatia's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, supporting disaster relief and humanitarian assistance and participating in international peacekeeping missions. The CAF receives considerable military support from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Economic constraints have curtailed recent modernization efforts, with aging Soviet-era equipment continuing to undermine the CAF's capabilities (Photo: Croatian service members during a US-led tactical field training exercise in Slunj).



Army: A well-trained force of 11,250 active-duty troops, the Army consists of 3 maneuver brigades and regiments (including armored, light, and other), 7 combat support regiments and battalions, a combat service support regiment, and an air defense regiment (Photo: Croatian service members during a US-led tactical field training exercise in Slunj).

Navy: Consisting of 1,300 active-duty personnel, including 2 Marine companies and 2 coast guard divisions, the Navy is equipped with 9 patrol and coastal combatants, a mine warfare and countermeasures vessel, 5 amphibious and landing craft, 4 logistics and support vessels, and 3 coastal defense vessels.

Air Force: Consisting of 1,250 active-duty personnel, the Air Force divides into a fighter and ground attack, a transport, 2 training, and 2 transport helicopter squadrons.

Joint and Paramilitary: The CAF include 1,850 general staff, including 1 Special Forces unit. The Croatian Paramilitary force consists of 3,000 police members.

Croatia Republic Air Force Rank Insignia


Airman


Airman


Lance Corporal


Corporal


Sergeant


Staff Sergeant


Master Sergeant


Sergeant Major


Second Lieutenant


First Lieutenant


Captain


Major


Lieutenant Colonel


Colonel


Corporal


Sergeant


Sergeant First Class


Warrant Officer


Chief Warrent Officer

Foreign Relations

After emerging from the violence that engulfed the region following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), Croatia sought to strengthen its fledgling democracy, battle crime and corruption, and build relations with Western Europe. Although Croatia initially experienced some setbacks in improving its international standing – notably political volatility, economic disruptions, and ineffective anti-corruption measures – successful reforms in the 2000s made Croatia eligible to join NATO in 2009 and the EU in 2013.



Today, Croatia continues to follow a pro-EU agenda and is politically, economically, and socially integrated with the West. Even though Croatia has had a tumultuous history of relationships with its neighbors, it has largely repaired regional partnerships over the past decades. Croatia's unresolved boundary disputes with neighboring Montenegro, Serbia, BiH, and Slovenia continue to cloud relations. Even so, economic ties and shared security interests tend to keep regional tensions low (Photo: Croatian, US, Montenegrin, and Slovenian personnel participate in a multilateral exercise).

International Cooperation: As a NATO member, Croatia regularly engages in multinational military exercises and supports shared security interests by contributing to NATO-led military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Kosovo. Croatia has participated in UN humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Cyprus, Pakistan, and India, among other places. Furthermore, Croatia is a member of global organizations such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, among others.

Relations with the EU: Croatia shares trade relations with this political and economic partnership among 28 nations located in

Europe. Croatia relies on the EU to provide a political and military buffer against internal and external security threats. Croatia's failure to resolve territorial disputes with Slovenia (see below) and recent controversies surrounding migrants and asylum-seekers (see "Security Issues" below) have somewhat strained relations with the EU. Nevertheless, most Croatians consider the EU as positively influencing the nation's democratic institutions, civil society, and economic landscape. In 2020, Croatia will hold the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, a body that determines and steers the EU's political direction and priorities.

Relations with Slovenia: After Yugoslavia's breakup, Croatia and Slovenia became embroiled in territorial disputes that significantly soured bilateral relations. Tensions flared intermittently, escalating in 2008 when Slovenia (already an EU member) blocked Croatia's accession to the EU. Since then, the 2 nations have attempted to settle the disputes through EU-led arbitration. However, Croatia has rejected the most recent plan that grants Slovenia shipping access to the Adriatic, straining relations again. Despite the ongoing disputes, the 2 nations share close economic and military ties (Photo: US, Slovakian, and Croatian service members train in Croatia).



Relations with BiH: Croatia's continued reluctance to acknowledge its role in the 1990s Bosnian War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*) has caused significant tension with BiH. Despite the discord between the 2 nations, they have succeeded in normalizing diplomatic ties in recent years in the interest of mutual security and economic stability. In 2016, Croatia pledged to support BiH in its bid to join the EU, helping BiH's government implement various economic and political reforms required for its eventual EU entry. While some BiH leaders criticize Croatia's involvement in BiH internal affairs as meddlesome, most accept the support as important to BiH's economic and political stability.

Relations with Serbia: Croatia's lingering animosity from the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), particularly over the mistreatment and oppression of ethnic Serb and Croat minorities by the Croatian and Serbian governments, respectively, initially slowed reconciliation efforts with Serbia. Tensions increased in 2008, when Croatia formally recognized Kosovo, a former autonomous region of Serbia that declared independence. In recent years, friction has subsided considerably, as leaders of both nations have publicly apologized for war crimes committed by their militaries. Most recently, both governments have sought to deepen economic cooperation, particularly in the energy, transportation, and infrastructure sectors.

Relations with the US: The US and Croatia first established diplomatic ties immediately following Croatia's 1991 separation from Yugoslavia (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*). In the 1990s, tensions occasionally flared over Croatia's role in the region's conflicts, initial reluctance to participate in a post-war criminal tribunal, and treatment of Croatian Serbs. Nevertheless, the US consistently supported the growth of Croatian democratic institutions, civil society, and a free market economy, delivering some $320 million in aid from 1992-2006. In the mid-2000s, Croatia emerged as a regional advocate for the US, promoting stability, democracy, and pro-Western policies in the Balkan region (Photo: US Secretary of State Pompeo greets Croatian Foreign Minister Marija Pejčinović Burić in 2018).



Today, the 2 nations cooperate on a range of issues such as protection of human rights, environmental conservation, nonproliferation, energy security, and transnational crime. The US also provides Croatia substantial defense assistance in the form of military-to-military training and the provision of equipment to bolster its military capacity, interoperablity with US and NATO forces, and border control mechanisms. Croatia has participated in US and NATO-led operations in Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

In addition to deep political and military connections, the US and Croatia share lucrative trade ties, notably also a bilateral investment agreement that allows some goods, services, and capital to move more freely between the 2 nations

Security Issues

A recent influx of migrants from Africa and the Middle East and Russian aggression in Eastern Europe dominate Croatia's security environment.

Migration: Political unrest in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas of the Middle East and North Africa has caused thousands of refugees and migrants to flee to Europe. Seeking to alleviate pressure on Greece and Italy, 2 nations disproportionately affected by the crisis, the EU adopted a mandatory relocation and resettlement plan in 2015, requiring EU member states to absorb a portion of the asylum-seekers. For Croatia, the plan mandated acceptance of some 1,600 refugees, yet by late 2018, Croatia had accepted fewer than 10% of its portion.

Seeking to decrease illegal cross-border movement outside of the EU relocation plan, Croatia has tightened security along its western and southern borders with Serbia and BiH. There, international observers have accused Croatian police and other security personnel of engaging in violence against asylum seekers, committing acts such as physical assault, robbery, intimidation, and the unlawful expulsion of refugees, primarily to BiH (Photo: Croatian military pilots with their MiG-21 in Zagreb).



Relations with Russia: Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, ongoing support to separatists in eastern Ukraine, and bolstering of its military capacity in the Black Sea have sparked significant regional tensions and strained otherwise calm relations between Russia and Croatia. As the EU's newest member, Croatia has voiced its concern that Russia's activities are destabilizing to the entire region and, to a lesser extent, a national security risk.

Some observers believe the Russian government seeks to strengthen its influence in Europe by eroding Croatia's and other Balkan states' social and political alignment with Western Europe. Experts assert that Russia is waging information warfare to weaken public faith in the EU and US, while simultaneously improving Balkan residents' views of Russia.

Nevertheless, Croatia has remained a staunch ally of the West, leading efforts to orient the Balkan states away from Russian influence. In 2017, Croatia, Albania, and Montenegro created the Adriatic Trilateral Initiative to promote security cooperation and prevent Russian incursions into the region. Further, Croatia has advised Ukraine on strategies to regain Crimea, reintegrate detached provinces, and promote Ukraine's economic integration with Western and Central Europe, all of which have strained Croatia-Russia relations.



Ethnic Groups

Croatia today is ethnically homogenous, with some 90% of the population identifying as Croat as of 2011. Comprising as much as 10% of the population before the Homeland War and aftermath (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), Serbs make up some 4.4% of the population. The eastern country of Vukovar-Srijem has Croatia's highest concentration of Serbs, some 15.5% of the population. Comprising 0.47% of the population, Bosnian Muslims (also known as Bosniaks) are the next largest group (Photo: A US serviceman poses with Croatian children).

Other groups comprising less than 0.45% of the population each include Albanians, Czechs, Hungarians Italians, Roma ("Gypsies"), Macedonians, Montenegrins, Slovaks, and Slovenes. Smaller groups include Austrians, Bulgarians, Germans, and Jews (see p. 3-4 and 6 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Of note, observers believe that the actual number of Roma may be 3 or 4 times larger than officially reported, potentially making them Croatia's second largest ethnic minority behind Serbs.

Istria is Croatia's most diverse county, and at 68%, has the country's lowest proportion of Croats. Other groups residing in Istria include Italians (6%), Serbs (3%), Bosniaks (3%), and Albanians (1%). Unique in Croatia, some 12% of Istrians claim a regional identity ("Istrian"), likely due to Istria's long and unique history of alignment to and association with a variety of regional powers system (Photo: Croatians townspeople and soldiers observe a traditional folk dance in the local town of Račinovci).



Croatian law recognizes 22 ethnic minorities. This official designation grants certain language rights (see p. 2-3 of *Language and Communication*), along with the right to practice their own religions (see p. 5-6 of *Religion and Spirituality*) and be represented in political bodies at the national and local levels (see "Legislative Branch" above).

Social Relations

Historically, Croatians relied on family and social networks, such as those of the Catholic Church (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*), to meet many of their physical and spiritual needs. Although urbanization and industrialization brought some socio-economic changes, traditional relationships and the influence of the Catholic Church retained their importance during the nearly 5 decades of socialist rule (see p. 4-5 of *Religion and Spirituality*). Catholicism remains an important component of Croatian identity today (Photo: A Zagreb street).



Contemporary Croatian society tends to divide along rural-urban, male-female, and rich-poor lines. Generally, urban

dwellers, males, and the wealthy enjoy greater access to educational and economic opportunities and hold the most social prestige. Some women experience domestic violence and discrimination in the workplace (see p. 2-3 of *Sex and Gender*). Croatian society is also marked by generational divides. Some older generations remain cautious towards the government and skeptical of the free market economic system. By contrast, younger generations have generally embraced a more optimistic outlook and are more open to change.

While most minorities are well-integrated and largely accepted in society, some Croatians display anti-Serb attitudes and behavior such as hate speech and graffiti against Serbs, vandalism of Serb monuments, and protests and threats during Serb events. Some discrimination against Serbs occurs in the judicial system (Photo: Croatian girls in traditional costumes prepare to deliver a traditional folk dance).



Further, anti-Roma prejudices and negative social stereotypes are widespread. This hostility supports systemic harassment and discrimination that affects the Roma's access to education, housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Many Roma live in impoverished communities isolated from mainstream Croatian society. In 2018, some 44% of Roma were unemployed despite Croatia's recent overall positive economic climate (see p. 2-3 of *Economics and Resources*). Although Roma children attend early grades at similar rates to non-Roma children, they often experience less educational success than other Croatians (see p. 4 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

Under EU pressure, the Croatian government has developed programs to integrate the Roma, improve their health and welfare, and promote Roma language and culture. Nonetheless, uneven implementation means that poverty and unemployment remain serious problems within the Roma community.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Overview

According to a 2011 Croatian census, about 86% of the population is Roman Catholic, 4% Serbian Orthodox, another 4% non-religious or atheist, and 1.5% Muslim. Other groups include various Protestant denominations and Jews (Photo: The Assumption Cathedral in Dubrovnik).



Croatia's constitution protects freedom of religion and allows Croatians to worship the faith of their choice and prohibits religious discrimination. The law names no official religion and separates church and state, yet it grants the Roman Catholic Church special privileges. For example, the Catholic Church is exempt from the registration process, which all other religious groups must complete in order to receive government funding and tax exemptions, erect places of worship, and establish schools.

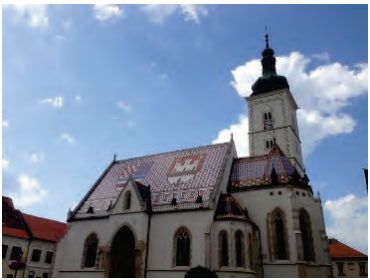
Besides the Roman Catholic Church, Croatia presently recognizes 53 registered religious groups, most notably the Serbian Orthodox Church, Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Macedonian Orthodox Church, Union of Baptist Churches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Islamic Community of Croatia, among others.

Croatia's Early Spiritual Landscape

Many of Croatia's early inhabitants practiced a variety of indigenous religions that included worship of multiple deities and objects such as the sun, moon, and mountains. Other groups practiced animism, the belief that the spirit of life or consciousness resides in all natural animate and inanimate objects such as trees, rocks, hills, fields, and animals.

The Arrival and Spread of Christianity

Christianity arrived in the region around the 6th or 7th century. By the 9th century, the religion was spreading rapidly, with the earliest Croatian Kings declaring their allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. In turn, the Pope (the leader of western Christianity) recognized Croatia as an independent state (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*).



During this period, the Christian world was rocked by a dispute over the use of icons in worship. In subsequent years, philosophical and theological differences between western and eastern branches of the Christian movement resulted in further ruptures. In the Schism of 1054, the leaders of the 2 branches, the Pope in Rome and the Patriarch in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), excommunicated each other. This event resulted in a permanent division between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox tradition (Photo: Zagreb's Church of St. Mark dates to the 13th century).

Through the subsequent centuries, the Croats remained aligned with the Roman Catholic Church. Further, the foreign powers that controlled Croatia over the years (see p. 4-7 of *History and Myth*) were also loyal to the Catholic Church. By contrast, the region's Serbs sided with the Orthodox tradition, founding their own Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in the 13th century.

Religion during the 20th Century

In the early 20th-century Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia – see p. 8 of *History and Myth*), the Catholic Church of Croatia competed with the SOC for power and influence. With their political dominance, the Serbs recognized the Orthodox Church as the state church, creating some tensions with Croat Catholics.

Jewish Life in Croatia

The first Jews began arriving in the region around Zagreb in the 1790s. By contrast, the Jews of the independent city-state of Dubrovnik (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*) arrived much earlier. In 1407, the city granted Jews legal status, allowing them to perform religious rites in a 1352-founded synagogue that is still used today. After their 1492 expulsion from Spain, many Jews settled in Dubrovnik and helped it to become a vibrant mercantile power in the 16th-17th centuries (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*), though they were subject to persecution under Venetian law. Dubrovnik's Jews achieved legal equality under French rule (see p. 5 of *History and Myth*), only to lose it again after Dubrovnik's 1814 annexation by Austria. In 1873, Austria-Hungary granted Jews across all the Croatian territories full citizenship rights. In subsequent decades, the Jewish population in Croatia grew significantly, reaching 20,000 by 1900.

Religion during World War II (WWII): By the time Nazi Germany invaded and dismantled the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1941 (see p. 9 of *History and Myth*), some Jewish residents had immigrated, leaving a population in Croatia of around 32,000. The Nazi-supported leaders of the Independent State of Croatia, the ***Ustaše*** ("insurgents" – see p. 9 of *History and Myth*) tried to "cleanse" Croatia of non-Croats, notably with the support of certain Catholic clergy, such as the Archbishop of Zagreb, Alojzije Stepinac. While the Catholic clergy often denounced the violence committed by the *Ustaše*, including massacres and deportations, they largely supported the forced conversions of the region's non-Catholic populations to Catholicism.

Besides outright murdering some 330,000 Croatian and Bosnian Serbs over the course of their 4-year rule, the *Ustaše* also opened numerous concentration camps, the largest of which was the Jasenovac complex some 60 mi south of Zagreb. Between 1941-45, the *Ustaše* killed some 45,000-52,000

Croatian Serbs; 12,000-20,000 Croatian Jews; 15,000-20,000 Roma ("Gypsies"); and 5,000-12,000 Croats and Bosnian Muslims. The *Ustaše* also allowed the Germans to transfer some 7,000 Croatian Jews to death camps in Nazi-occupied Poland where most perished (Photo: Catholic Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac with *Ustaše* leader Ante Pavelić in 1941).



Some Croatian Jews, including a few thousand living in Italian-occupied regions, evaded murder or deportation, and some served in the Partisan resistance (see p. 10 of *History and Myth*). Nevertheless, WWII was devastating to Yugoslavia's Jewish population. Of the 67,000 Jews who lived in Yugoslavia before the war, only about 14,000 remained at war's end.

Religion during the Socialist Period: At the conclusion of WWII, Croatia became a republic within socialist Yugoslavia (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*). The socialists' atheistic worldview, or the disbelief in deities and the rejection of religion, brought significant changes to Yugoslavia's religious landscape. Yugoslavia's President Tito (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*) sought to lessen the country's ethnic and religious rivalries by restricting religious practice and instruction and weakening the power of religious institutions. The state nationalized church-owned property and converted some of it for alternative uses. Moreover, the state restricted religious literature, excluded religion from educational policy and curriculum, and dissolved seminaries, monasteries, and convent. It also oversaw the activities of clergy, who were forced to carry out some religious rituals in private. Further, more than half of Yugoslavia's remaining Jews fled by 1950, primarily to Israel. This departure left a population of just 6,500 Jews in Yugoslavia, with 5,000 of them in Croatia.

The Yugoslav government also charged many Catholic clergy (some falsely) of wartime collaboration with the *Ustaše*,

imprisoning many and executing others. In a 1946 trial denounced by the Catholic Church and various international observers, Archbishop Stepinac was convicted of treason and sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment, eventually dying in 1960 while under house arrest. In 1998, Pope John Paull II declared Stepinac a martyr and honored him in a ceremony in Zagreb. In a controversial 2016 decision, a local Zagreb court overturned his conviction, provoking significant protest from *Ustaše* victims' families.

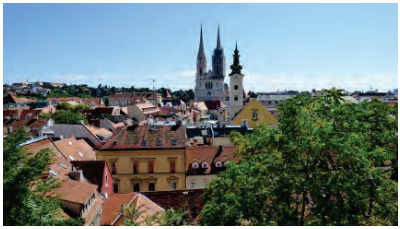
In the 1970s-80s, the Yugoslav government reduced some of its religious repression, allowing the Catholic Church in Croatia to hold large-scale holiday celebrations. These served to strengthen Croats' religious beliefs, confirm the connection between Catholicism and Croat identity, and support national Croat unity. As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in 1990, the Catholic Church in Croatia saw a surge of popularity. It championed the newly-founded nationalist HDZ (***Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*** or Croatian Democratic Union – see p. 12 of *History and Myth* and p. 5-6 of *Social and Political Relations*), which adopted the Church's social teachings as official party doctrine. Lingering religious tensions between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs were a contributing factor in the subsequent Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*) (Photo: Church of St. Elijah in Metković).



Religion Today

Croatians' religious affiliations continue to divide along ethnic lines today. Most Croats are Roman Catholics, while Croatian Serbs (see p. 13 of *Political and Social Relations*) predominantly belong to the SOC. Roman Catholicism remains central to Croat identity, with the Catholic Church exerting significant influence in society. Catholic institutions offer numerous social services, and public school curricula include optional Catholic religious instruction. Despite a constitutionally-mandated separation of church and state, the Catholic Church remains highly active in

the political sphere, triggering significant public debate over a range of social issues.



While Croatia generally has a tolerant society free of religious violence, some conservative, right-wing groups espouse anti-Semitic and anti-Orthodox sentiment, causing tension among religious groups, notably between Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. While violence is rare, SOC members have reported harassment and intimidation as well as vandalism of their churches. Discrimination against other religious minorities has grown amidst the region's migrant crisis (see p. 12 of *Political and Social Relations*) and the emergence of radical nationalist groups promoting anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views (Photo: The skyline of Zagreb featuring the spires of Zagreb Cathedral and the Church of St. Mark).



Judaism: Steady emigration, primarily to Israel and the US, reduced Croatia's Jewish population since 1950. Today, Croatia is home to some 2,000 Jews organized into 9 communities, primarily in Zagreb. Coatian Jewish life is active, with Jewish museums, libraries, and other institutions serving as educational centers on Jewish history, art, and culture. Some tensions exist between the Croatian government and the Jewish community, primarily stemming from the compensation process for property lost during or after WWII and the government's tendency to minimize crimes committed by the *Ustaše* (Photo: The Zagreb Synagogue was constructed in 1867 and destroyed by *Ustaše* authorities in 1941).

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview
Croatians typically have a high regard for family and community. While the 1990s Homeland War displaced and disrupted some families, it also strengthened kinship solidarity.

Residence
During the socialist era (see p. 11-12 of *History and Myth*), the government offered state-owned, collectively maintained housing to most residents. After the Homeland War of 1991-95 (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), the government reprivatized property, resulting today in a homeownership rate of 90%, higher than the EU average (70%). In recent years, foreign investment, especially along the Adriatic coast, has caused property prices to rise, creating a lack of affordable housing in some areas. As of 2018, some 57% of people live in urban areas (Photo: Red tile-roofed homes in Dubrovnik).



Urban: Croatia's urban areas feature a range of architectural styles, with some buildings dating to the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Homes tend to be tall and narrow, with white or pastel stucco exteriors and red-tile roofs, particularly along the coast. City outskirts tend to feature both larger single-family homes and large, concrete apartment blocks built during the socialist era.

Rural: Free-standing farmhouses dot the countryside, while villages typically feature single-story homes arranged in rows along a main road. Building materials vary by region, with stone common along the coast and wood or brick customarily used in inland regions. Some homes in areas prone to flooding are built on stilts.

Family Structure

Even if both parents work outside the home (see p. 1 of *Sex and Gender*), the father is traditionally the head of the household and primary breadwinner, while the mother remains responsible for most household chores and childcare. Most Croatians live as nuclear families (2 parents and their children). Just 5% of families are single-parent, compared to the EU average of 20%, though Croatia's rate has increased in recent decades. Some households include grandparents, especially in rural areas, who help with childcare. Generally, Croatians feel a strong sense of loyalty to their elders, often providing physical and financial care for their aging parents. Nursing homes traditionally house only elderly who are without close kin or have serious medical conditions.



Children

Today, most Croatian families have just 1-2 children (see p. 3 of *Sex and Gender*), though rural families tend to be larger. Children typically are granted significant autonomy and are taught to be respectful and polite, while exhibiting good discipline and manners, especially in public. Children typically perform chores around the house, and most live at home until they finish their education, establish financial security, or marry, often well into their 30s (Photo: US Airmen with Croatian children at an elementary school in Ogulin).

Birth: After a birth, friends and family typically visit the new mother bearing gifts, traditionally made of gold. Meanwhile, the new father gathers with male friends to toast the child. Catholic Croatians typically baptize their babies when they are a few months old, identifying godparents, who provide the children emotional, spiritual, and financial support throughout their lives. Some parents name their children after grandparents or the Catholic saint associated with the child's birthdate. Traditionally, some Catholics celebrate this "name day" in addition to or instead of the actual birthdate.

Childhood Milestones: Croatians also recognize significant milestones associated with Roman Catholic religious sacraments such as first communion and confirmation, typically celebrated at ages 9 and 14 respectively. Both events involve formal attire, special church services, and meals shared with extended family (Photo: Croatians visiting a park in Vođinci).



Dating and Marriage

Boys and girls socialize in school before beginning to date in groups around the age of 13. Popular activities include meeting at cafes, evening walks, shopping, or spending time in town squares. Older couples enjoy visiting bars and nightclubs, attending movies, or eating out. The legal marriage age is 18, though 16-year-olds are allowed to marry with a judge's permission. Nevertheless, most Croatians marry significantly later in life, with the average age 31 for men and 28 for women. While some couples prefer cohabitation without marriage, having children out of wedlock remains stigmatized, with only 19% of births outside marriage in 2016. For comparison, rates in neighboring Slovenia and Italy are 58% and 28% respectively and 40% in the US. Early or forced marriage occurs in some Roma communities (see p. 13-15 of *Political and Social Relations*).

Weddings: By law, Croatians must marry in a civil ceremony at a local government registry or town hall or in a religious ceremony, and many couples hold both. Traditionally, couples arrive at the wedding separately, with the bride riding in a rented car or horse-drawn carriage decorated with flowers and ribbons. During the ceremony, couples exchange vows but typically wait until they are outside the church or registry before exchanging a kiss. The wedding procession traditionally involves a ***barjaktar*** (banner holder), who leads the group to their next stop, often while waving a Croatian flag. Receptions are commonly held at the groom's home, a restaurant, or hotel banquet hall and often last until the next morning.

Croatians traditionally observe a variety of wedding customs. For example, before the wedding ceremony, the bride's family tries to trick the groom with a "false bride," often a doll or male relative dressed in a wedding gown, then "bargain" for the real bride by demanding a song or drink as payment. Sometimes brides present a small branch of rosemary in exchange for wedding gifts. Before entering their home for the first time as a married couple, the bride traditionally throws an apple over the roof for good luck.

Divorce: At 1.7 per 1,000 people in 2016, Croatia's divorce rate is similar to Italy's (1.6) but lower than the EU average (1.9) and the US rate (3.2).

Death



Following a loved one's death, mourners gather for a casket viewing at the deceased family's home, a church, or funeral parlor. Family members take turns sitting with the deceased, even overnight, reciting prayers, singing hymns, and receiving condolences. During the wake, the family may observe certain traditional practices such as hanging a black flag or scarf outside to signify the death, opening the windows of the home to allow the soul to escape to heaven, or stopping the home's clocks at the time of the person's death (Photo: Grave of Croatian basketball player Dražen Petrović).

Next, mourners gather at a church or a cemetery chapel for a funeral service and burial. Traditionally, family members wear black for the funeral and several subsequent days or even months to honor the deceased. After the service, a procession accompanies the casket to the gravesite. In villages, bystanders typically kneel as the procession passes and church bells ring. After the funeral, family and friends gather for a reception and meal at the deceased's home. Some families mark the anniversary of the death with a special mass, and on ***Dan svih svetih*** (All Saints' Day), Croatians gather to light candles and leave flowers at the gravesites of deceased loved ones.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

As in most societies, Croatia historically has had distinct gender roles. While Croatian women and men have equal rights before the law, women continue to face workplace inequalities and gender-based violence.

Gender Roles and Work

Domestic Work: Even if they work outside the home, women remain responsible for maintaining the home and childcare. In 2017, some 83% of women carried out domestic tasks daily compared to just 5% of men.

Labor Force: As of 2018, 46% of Croatian women worked outside the home, lower than rates in the US (56) and neighboring Slovenia (53), but higher than that in neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina (36). While Croatian women earned an average of 10% less than men with similar qualifications in 2015, this gap was smaller than the EU average of 16%. Women hold 23% of corporate board seats, on par with the EU average. However, Croatian women experience higher unemployment rates than men and are more likely to perform unpaid work, such as in family businesses. A lack of childcare resources forces many mothers to seek part time work or drop out of the labor force entirely, slowing their progress towards promotion and reducing their earning potential. Some working grandmothers take early retirement to care for their grandchildren, reducing their retirement benefits (Photo: A Croatian Air Force pilot).



Gender and the Law

Croatia's constitution and other laws guarantee equal rights for all citizens and prohibit discrimination based on gender. Croatian law also prohibits employers from inquiring about pregnancy or family plans and guarantees women the right to return to their job after maternity leave. Croatian women are entitled to 14

weeks of paid maternity leave, with both parents eligible for additional paid leave. Nevertheless, gender disparities and unequal treatment persist, and laws are not always enforced. For example, new mothers routinely face barriers when returning to work such as having their positions eliminated or being demoted. Although illegal, discrimination and sexual harassment are widespread, and women sometimes face retaliation for filing complaints.

Gender and Politics

Rates of female participation in politics are generally low. To encourage female candidates, laws require parties to offer gender-balanced candidate lists and mandate monetary fines for parties failing to comply. Nevertheless, parties regularly ignore this requirement with no fines imposed. As of 2016, women occupy 19% of seats in the ***Sabor*** (parliament), significantly lower than the EU average (28% in 2019) and the US rate (24% in 2018). At the local level, women hold 9% of mayoral positions and 27% of local assembly seats. Several women have held prominent national roles such as current President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (pictured with NATO leaders in 2018) and former Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor.



Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Some 20% of Croatian women report experiencing physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes, lower than EU averages. However, experts suggest that this rate is not an accurate representation of actual incidents. Many victims fail to report GBV due to widespread mistrust of the authorities. Even if victims do report crimes, the police often consider domestic violence a private affair and fail to intervene, or they arrest and charge both the perpetrator and victim for other crimes such as disturbing the peace. Further, judges sometimes disregard victims' statements, assume the victims "provoked" GBV, or question their motives in reporting crimes. In an attempt to reduce GBV, Croatia has ratified several international conventions, strengthened anti-GBV laws, and created

specialized police units to work with victims. Some activists denounce the efforts as endangering traditional family values. Government efforts to compensate victims of sexual assault during the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*) have been largely ineffective, with just 185 of some 2,200 victims receiving recognition as of 2017.

Sex and Procreation

At 1.4 children per woman in 2018, Croatia's birthrate is below both the rate required to maintain the population and the EU average of 1.6. To reverse this trend, the government has offered incentives such as increasing child allowances paid to parents and improving access to childcare. Abortion is available on request within the first 10 weeks of a pregnancy and thereafter with medical approval in cases of sexual misconduct, potential birth defects, or risk to the mother's health. A legal clause allowing conscientious objection by providers has limited the availability of abortions, with more than half of Croatian doctors refusing to carry out the procedure. While there are no legal restrictions on the right to obtain contraceptives, doctors and pharmacists sometimes refuse to dispense them based on religious objections (Photo: Croatians in traditional Slavonian folk costumes during a ribbon cutting ceremony commemorating rebuilding of the community center in Račinovci, Croatia).



Homosexuality

Although discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are illegal, LGBTQ individuals often experience discrimination and harassment. In a 2013 referendum, 65% of voters backed a resolution restricting marriage only between a man and a woman, though the *Sabor* legalized same-sex unions (not marriages) a year later. Under the law, registered homosexual couples receive almost all the same rights as heterosexual married couples. Residents of larger cities tend to be more accepting of LGBTQ individuals than in rural areas, and Zagreb's annual Pride Parade regularly attracts some 10,000 participants.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview

Croatia's official language is Croatian. It is spoken as a native language by over 95% of the population.



Croatian

Modern Croatian traces its roots to the 9th century, when Christian missionaries from the Byzantine Empire created the Glagolitic script to translate parts of the Bible and convert Slavs to Christianity. Used to write a language called Old Church Slavonic, the script remained popular until it was replaced with the Latin alphabet in the 14th century. Around the same time, spoken Croatian began to develop from Old Church Slavonic, with some influences from Latin and German. Over centuries of foreign rule (see p. 4-7 of *History and Myth*), the Croat nobility often used additional languages, such as German, Hungarian, and Italian, while rural peasants spoke a variety of Croatian dialects (Photo: The Glagolitic script on the Baška tablet from around 1100).

To promote Croatian nationalism in the 1830s-40s, leaders of the Illyrian movement (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*) unified the Croatian dialects to create a common spelling system and cultivate Croatian as a literary language. In 1847, Croatian replaced Latin as the official language of the Croatian ***Sabor*** (parliament – see p. 6 of *History and Myth*). The Croatian language lost its status during Croatia's incorporation in Yugoslavia (1918-91), whose official languages were Serbo-Croatian (see "The Serbo-Croatian Language" below), Slovenian, and Macedonian.

Linguists typically group Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, and Montenegrin together as "Serbo-Croatian" within the western subgroup (which also includes Slovenian) of the South Slavic branch of the Slavic family of languages. Croatian has 3 main

dialects, Čakavian (spoken along the Adriatic coast), Kajkavian (spoken in Zagreb), and Štokavian, named for their different forms of the word "what" ("***ca***," "***kaj***," and "***što***"). Standard Croatian today is based on the Štokavian dialect. Modern written Croatian utilizes a 30-letter Latin alphabet. Many of the letters rely on diacritics, symbols placed above the letter to indicate a pronunciation change. For example, the Croatian "c" is pronounced "ts," but "ć" sounds like "ch".

The Serbo-Croatian Language

Linguists began to standardize Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, and Montenegrin into 1 language as early as the mid-19th century, when the first notions of a unified South Slavic state arose (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*). Serbo-Croatian served as the official language of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the early 20th century (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*) and as 1 of the official languages in socialist Yugoslavia (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*).

Following Yugoslavia's dissolution, defining a unique language was an important part of nationalist identity for groups across the region. Today, the 4 mutually intelligible varieties exist as separate languages. Besides vocabulary and grammar differences, they use different alphabets. Croatia uses just the Latin alphabet, but Bosnian, Serbian, and Montenegrin use both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts, depending on local preferences. Language remains a sensitive topic in the region, and many Croatians consider the term "Serbo-Croatian" offensive.

Other Languages

Croatian law recognizes 22 national minorities (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*) and grants their associated minority languages official status in local administration, while giving speakers the right to receive some schooling in their native languages. As of 2011, about 1.2% of the population speaks Serbian as a first language. It is most prevalent in the

East, where up to 21% of residents speak Serbia as a first language. Serbian-speakers' use of the Cyrillic alphabet prompted protests by Croats in 2013, even though the law gives minority language speakers the right to use their preferred script (Photo: Seal of Croatian Armed Forces).



As of 2011, some 618,000 Croatians speak Italian as a first or second language, many in Istria, where 14% of residents speak Italian as a native language (see p. 14 of *Political and Social Relations*). Other recognized minority languages include Bosnian (17,000 speakers), Albanian (17,000), 2 varieties of Romani (the languages of the Roma or "Gypsies" – 14,000), and Hungarian (10,000). Other minority languages have fewer than 10,000 speakers each.

English: About 60% of Croatians have some English abilities. Generally, urban youth are more likely to speak English than older or rural residents. In 2015, some 84% of primary school students were enrolled in English courses (see p. 5 of *Learning and Knowledge*).

Communication Overview

Effective communication in Croatia requires not only knowledge of Croatian but also the ability to interact effectively using language. This broad notion of competence includes paralanguage (rate of speech, volume, intonation), nonverbal communication (personal space, touch, gestures), and interaction management (conversation initiation, turn-taking, and termination). When used properly, these forms of communication help to ensure that statements are interpreted as the speaker intends.

Communication Style

Often talkative, Croatians tend to communicate in a direct and straightforward manner, though they remain somewhat formal in business settings. Loud conversations, especially among men,

are common, as Croatians tend to regard quiet speech as a sign of insecurity or lack of confidence.

Greetings

These vary depending on age, gender, and social situation. Adult acquaintances typically exchange handshakes, while holding continuous eye contact. By contrast, friends and relatives tend to embrace and exchange 2 cheek kisses. Common oral greetings include a simple ***bok*** ("hello") or ***dobar dan*** *("*good day*")*, ***dobro jutro*** ("good morning"), and ***dobra večer*** ("good evening") (Photo: US Air Force Col Havener greets Croatian Defense Minister Krističevic in 2019).



Names

Croatian names comprise a first (given) name and a last (family) name. Many last names end with ***-ić***, often ***-ević*** or ***-ović*** (such as the common family names Kovačević and Babić). Women traditionally take their husbands' last names upon marriage or add it to their own to make a hyphenated name.



Forms of Address

Croatians use different forms of address to demonstrate respect and the nature of the relationship. For example, they typically address elders, superiors, and acquaintances with ***Gospodin*** (Mr.), ***Gospođa*** (Mrs.), and ***Gospođica*** (Miss) followed by the last name. Close friends and family members typically address each other by first name, and colleagues and acquaintances maintain formal forms of address until they mutually agree to use first names (Photo: Croatian military members demonstrate their MiG-21 to visiting US Airmen).

Croatian has distinct “you” pronouns that reflect different levels of formality and respect. They usually use the formal “you” or ***vi*** when meeting for the first time or with business associates, elders, or authority figures. They tend to reserve the informal ***ti*** for friends, relatives, and close colleagues. Foreign nationals should use formal forms of address unless directed otherwise.

Conversational Topics

Among acquaintances and in business settings, conversation tends to be quite formal and focused on basic information such as occupation, family, interests, and hobbies. In less formal situations, Croatians tend to speak more freely, making jokes and discussing current events. While some Croatians are comfortable discussing politics, religion, and the economy, foreign nationals should avoid these and other potentially sensitive topics, such as Croatia’s history, the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), and comparisons between the former Yugoslav republics (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*).



Gestures

Croatians tend to use various gestures during conversation. As in the US, pointing with the middle finger is considered obscene, while the thumbs up and the “A-OK” signs indicate agreement. Croatians consider pointing with the index finger impolite, preferring to indicate direction with the entire hand (pictured). Foreign nationals should avoid raising the thumb, index finger, and middle finger at once as the gesture is used in the region to symbolize Serbian nationalism.

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on “Resources” for access to language training and other resources.

Useful Words and Phrases

English	Croatian
Hello	Dobar dan
How are you?	Kako ste?
My name is…	Zovem se ...
Fine, thanks	Dobro, hvala
Yes	Da
No	Ne
Maybe	Možda
Please	Molim
Thank you	Hvala
You are welcome	Nema na čemu
Cheers!	Živjeli!
Goodbye	Doviđenja
I understand	Razumijem
I don't understand	Ne razumijem
Please speak more slowly	Možete li pričati sporije
Sorry/ Excuse me	Oprostite
How do you say…?	Kako se kaže…
Do you speak English?	Govorite li engleski?
I am from…	Ja sam iz…
Help!	Upomoć!
How much?	Koliko?
Who?	Tko?
When?	Kada?
Which?	Koji?
Why?	Zašto?
Where?	Gdje?
What?	Što?
Today	Danas
Tomorrow	Sutra
What time is it?	Koliko je sati?

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 99.3%
- Male: 99.7%
- Female: 98.9% (2015 estimate)

Early History of Education

Before the arrival of formal education along with the introduction and spread of Christianity (see p. 2 of *Religion and Spirituality*), regional inhabitants informally transmitted values, skills, beliefs, and historical knowledge to younger generations. In the 10th century, King Tomislav (see p. 3 of *History and Myth*) encouraged Bible and other religious lessons to deepen his people's ties to the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, formal education was slow to develop in subsequent centuries.



In 1396, the Dominicans (a Catholic religious order) opened the ***Universitas Iadertina***, known today as the University of Zadar. Focused on training clergymen, the institution offered courses in philosophy and theology. During the 17th-18th centuries, the Jesuits (another Catholic order) established networks of academic institutions called "gymnasiums." The first gymnasium opened in 1607 in Zagreb, with 260 students across 6 levels, and still exists today (Photo: Memorial plaque of the 1874 opening of the Royal University of Franz Joseph I).

Under Austrian rule in the 18th century (see p. 4-5 of *History and Myth*), new schools and universities opened, greatly expanding educational opportunities. In 1774, Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa reformed the education system, opening schools in each parish district and making education compulsory for children aged 7-12.

By the 1830s, public elementary education was available throughout the country, though the education system was not fully regulated until 1874. That year, the Croatian Education Act

mandated 5-year standardized general education in the Croatian language instead of German. The curriculum included religion, Croatian, arithmetic, geography, history, physics and natural history, calligraphy, geometrical drawing, singing, gymnastics, and practical training in business/trade in addition to needlework and householding for girls.

Early 20th Century Education

Following World War I (see p. 8 of *History and Myth*), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia) faced the challenge of unifying different regions with varying levels of educational development. The historical regions of Croatia proper and Slavonia had the most developed education systems, with over 1,600 primary schools and 30 secondary schools. Under Yugoslav law, 8 years of schooling were free and compulsory, though the law was not strictly enforced. Required subjects included religion with moral education, national language, geography, history, arithmetic, penmanship, practical science, singing, and gymnastics. The 8 years of compulsory education were available in Serbo-Croatian (see p. 2 of *Language and Communication*), Slovenian, Czech, Russian, and other languages to cater to the diverse Yugoslav population. By contrast, higher education was limited to Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian (Photo: Croatian girls in traditional costumes prepare to deliver a traditional folk dance).



Between 1918-36, enrollment at elementary and general secondary schools more than doubled. By the 1930s, Croatia proper and Slavonia had a literacy rate of almost 72%, which was the Yugoslav provinces' third highest rate. Further, opportunities for higher education expanded with some 30 institutions across Yugoslavia offering post-secondary programs. With some 5,000 students in 1936, most studying philosophy or law, the University of Zagreb became Croatia's largest post-secondary institution.

World War II brought notable changes to education. Starting in 1941, the ***Ustaše*** ("insurgents" – see p. 9 of *History and Myth*) leaders of Croatia removed all Yugoslav textbooks and curricula from schools, replacing them with materials adapted from the Austro-Hungarian period. Further, the *Ustaše* used schools to spread nationalist sentiment, while denying access to education to non-Croats (see p. 9 of *History and Myth*). Further, educational infrastructure suffered significant damages during the fighting.

Education under Socialism

The postwar establishment of socialist Yugoslavia (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*) transformed the education system. Reforms revised educational offerings to serve the needs of the economy, notably expanding technical and vocation offerings to develop skilled workers for industry. Many observers criticized this system for its focus on workforce preparation and lack of emphasis on academics.



Nevertheless, between 1945-81, elementary school enrollment rose from 40% to almost 99% for children aged 7-10. Around the same time, the number of students in secondary and post-secondary institutions increased 6-fold. Nevertheless, by the early 1980s, economic hardships (see p. 2-3 of *Economics and Resources*) began to adversely impact education. Between 1977-84, spending on education dropped from 6% to 3.5% of national income, reducing both the quantity and quality of educational offerings (Photo: US Navy sailors with students in Rijeka).

Modern Education

Following Croatia's independence (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), the new government pursued education reforms, creating a new Ministry of Education while re-introducing subjects such as philosophy and sociology to the curriculum. New laws centralized control of primary and secondary schools, recognized the educational rights of national minorities (see p.

13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*), and enlarged pre-primary education. Further reforms at the beginning of the 21st century standardized and modernized the education system.

Today, a comprehensive network of public primary and secondary schools offers free, compulsory education to students aged 6-15. Course content is set by the National Curriculum Framework, which determines the purpose, values, and goals of the education system. On average, Croatians complete 11.3 years of school. In 2017, education accounted for 4.8% of GDP, similar to the EU average of 4.7% (Photo: US Navy sailor reads with Croatian elementary school students in Kostrena).



While Croatia has the EU's lowest dropout rate, the educational system has its challenges. Students score below average on international exams, and observers criticize the system's focus on memorization over analytical skills and creativity. Further, school infrastructure tends to be outdated, and some minority students experience unequal access. For example, Croatia's Roma population (see p. 13-14 of *Political and Social Relations*) exhibits significantly lower educational achievement than Croatians of other ethnicities. According to a 2010 study, over 97% of Roma children failed to complete primary school, and only 2% entered secondary school. This educational underperformance is linked to high poverty rates, systemic societal discrimination (see p. 15 of *Political and Social Relations*), and lack of access to educational opportunities.

Facing major protests in 2016-17 due to stalled reforms, the government implemented measures to modernize the education system. For the 2018 school year, 74 pilot schools participated in the School for Life initiative, which funded school equipment upgrades. Other initiatives are intended to expand access to higher education for disadvantaged students and reform vocational education and training curricula.

Pre-Primary: Public and private preschools provide optional education for children aged 6 months – 5 years and mandatory education for 6-year-olds. While every child is legally entitled to a pre-primary education, enrollment still lags. In 2017, 75% of children aged 4-5 were enrolled in pre-primary programs, lower than the EU average of 95%.

Primary: Lasting 8 years and starting at age 7, primary school is compulsory. The curriculum for the lower grades (1-4) includes Croatian, mathematics, visual art, nature and society, physical education, music education, and at least 1 foreign language. In the upper grades (5-8) students are also taught history, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, information technology, and usually a second foreign language. Religion and ethics courses are optional. As of 2016, some 88% of children of the appropriate age were enrolled in primary school (Photo: US Navy sailor interacts with Croatian students at an elementary school in Rijeka).



Secondary: Non-compulsory secondary education encompasses 3 tracks: general (gymnasium), vocational, and artistic. In 2016, about 91% of students of the appropriate age were enrolled in secondary school. Comprising grades 9-12 (around ages 15-18), general secondary school is designed to allow students to deepen their knowledge of basic school subjects and prepare them for post-secondary studies. General secondary school graduates must pass an exam called the ***matura*** to advance to post-secondary education. In 2016, 31% of secondary students attended a gymnasium.

Secondary vocational and art education programs last between 1-5 years. Vocational school graduates have the option to take the *matura* in order to continue their studies or choose to enter the labor market directly. In 2016, some 66% of secondary school students were enrolled in a vocational program, among

the EU's highest rates. The secondary art school curriculum includes music, dance, and visual arts. Like vocational students, art students can choose to take the *matura* to advance to post-secondary education or enter the labor market directly upon graduation. In 2016, just 3% of students attended secondary art school (Photo: Medical school in Split).



Post-Secondary Education

Croatia has a long and rich history of higher education. Founded in 1669, the University of Zagreb is 1 of Croatia's foremost universities, serving over 72,000 students today. Other prominent institutions include J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, the University of Dubrovnik, the University of Rijeka, and the University of Split. In all, some 135 public and private institutions offer both university and professional studies to almost 160,000 students. Universities typically award a bachelor's degree after 3-4 years of study and a master's degree after an additional 1-2 years. Doctoral degrees typically require 3 additional years.



As of 2017, some 29% of Croatians aged 30-34 had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, which is lower than the EU average of 40%. Women represent 60% of higher education students, though they enroll in traditionally "female" fields of study such as education and social welfare at higher rates than in science and technology fields such as computer science and engineering (Photo: The University of Zadar).

8. TIME AND SPACE

Overview
Croatians consider interpersonal relationships as the foundation of successful business dealings. They typically have a strong work ethic, while also prioritizing a positive working environment.

Time and Work
Croatia's work week runs Monday-Friday, typically from 8:30am-4:30pm, though some people start as early as 7:30am. Small shops and markets usually open Monday-Friday from 8am-8pm and Saturday from 8am-2pm. Shopping centers and supermarkets open the same hours Monday-Friday but usually have longer hours on Saturday. In the summer, many businesses along the coast take an afternoon break from 12pm-4pm and consequently stay open later in the evening. Most Sunday shopping is banned, except during the tourist season (Photo: Restaurants and shops in downtown Split).



Most banks open Monday-Friday from 8am-7pm and Saturday from 8am-12pm. Larger post offices are typically open Monday-Friday from 7am-7pm and Saturday from 7am-1pm, while smaller ones close at 11am. Generally, restaurants are open from 12pm-10pm daily, though establishments on the coast may remain open later. Museums are usually closed on Monday and may only open other days during the tourist season.

Working Environment: Croatia's legal work week is 40 hours, with paid overtime limited to 10 hours per week and 180 hours annually unless an alternative arrangement exists through collective agreement. In addition to 4 weeks of paid time off, workers receive 13 paid public holidays and paid sick leave.

Time Zone: Croatia adheres to Central European Time (CET), which is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Croatia observes daylight savings time.

Date Notation: Like the US, Croatia uses the Western (Gregorian) calendar. Unlike Americans, Croatians typically write the day first, followed by the month and year.

National Holidays

- January 1: New Year's Day
- January 6: Epiphany
- March/April: Easter
- May 1: Labor Day
- May/June: Corpus Christi
- June 22: Anti-Fascist Struggle Day
- June 25: Statehood Day (marks the 1991 declaration of independence)
- August 5: Victory Day (marks the official end of the Homeland War)
- August 15: Assumption of Mary
- October 8: Independence Day
- November 1: All Saints' Day
- December 25: Christmas Day
- December 26: St. Stephen's Day

Time and Business

Croatian business interactions tend to be somewhat formal, although personal relationships are essential to effective business dealings. Consequently, business partners typically devote time to get to know each another and develop mutual trust by engaging in small talk (see p. 5 of *Language and Communication*). Most business discussions occur during scheduled office meetings, although lunch and dinner gatherings are commonly used to help cement relationships. While meetings usually have a set agenda, discussions often deviate from the main talking points. Croatians typically value punctuality and expect meeting participants to arrive on time.

Personal Space

As in most societies, personal space in Croatia depends on the nature of the relationship. Generally, Croatians maintain about

an arm's length of distance when interacting with acquaintances and strangers. This distance diminishes with familiarity.

Touch: Conversational touching depends largely on the level of familiarity. In formal settings, Croatians rarely engage in touch beyond handshakes (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*). Among friends and acquaintances, hugs and pats on the shoulder are customary. Public displays of affection among youth, such as kissing and hand holding, are common.

Eye Contact: Croatians consider direct eye contact during greetings (see p. 4 of *Language and Communication*) and business discussions as an indication of honesty and openness.

Photographs
Museums, public beaches, military installations and similar areas may prohibit photography. Foreign nationals should always acquire a Croatian's permission before taking his photo.



Driving
Some Croatian drivers have aggressive habits, violating traffic rules and passing other vehicles in dangerous areas, such as on narrow mountain and coastal roads. In urban and tourist areas, heavy traffic on winding and narrow streets can make driving difficult. Road conditions vary across the region. City streets and highways between major cities are typically well maintained. By contrast, rural roads may lack proper illumination, road markings, and signage. Off-road driving in remote areas may be hazardous due to unmarked mines and unexploded ordinance left over from the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*).

At almost 9 per 100,000 people in 2016, Croatia's rate of traffic-related deaths is higher than neighboring Slovenia (6) yet on par with the European average (9) and lower than in the US (12). Like Americans, Croatians drive on the right side of the road. Croatian law mandates the use of seatbelts and grants the right of way to pedestrians in crosswalks (Photo: A busy intersection in Dubrovnik).

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

Croatia's traditional dress, recreation, music, and arts reflect the country's rural customs, religious influences, history of foreign occupation, and modern global trends.



Dress and Appearance

Traditional: Traditional costumes are often featured in performances, folk festivals, and holiday celebrations. While styles and fabrics tend to vary by region, women's attire typically consists of a blouse and skirt worn beneath a red, black, or blue vest or apron paired with a fringed shawl. Garments often feature embroidery or lace along the sleeves and neckline, typically in geometric or floral designs. Women often complete the outfit with bead, coral, or gold/silver coin necklaces. Unmarried youth typically wear a broad red cap (***lička kapa***), while married women cover their heads with a white scarf (Photo: Croatians perform a dance in traditional clothing).

Men's traditional wear consists of ankle- or knee-length trousers, a loose white shirt worn beneath a leather vest and belt, woolen socks, leather shoes or boots, and a dome hat (***škrlak***), typically featuring a red or blue band. In regions with significant Ottoman influence (see p. 4-5 of *History and Myth*), men's costumes sometimes include ceremonial pistols or swords. Croatia is credited with the invention of the necktie (***kravata***), which originally was a scarf featured in 17th-century military attire. The term K*ravata* is closely related to the label ***Hrvat*** or "Croat."

Modern: For everyday wear, Croatians typically portray a neat, fashionable appearance. The latest European fashion trends are popular, as are business casual outfits such as skirts or dresses for women and dress shirts with dark jeans or trousers for men. Along the coast, styles are more informal, although most adults

wear shorts only when exercising. Some older women, particularly in rural areas, wear head scarves and aprons.

Recreation and Leisure

Croatians tend to spend their leisure time with family and close friends. On weekends, they often gather to share a meal or picnic lunch, visit a movie theater, or watch sports. Many families own or rent a vacation property, which they visit during the summer for an extended period to relax, tend to small gardens, and enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking and cycling in the mountains or swimming, fishing, and sailing along the coast. In urban areas, shopping at malls and visiting boutique stores are popular pastimes. Nightclubs and bars are popular among younger Croatians, while socializing at outdoor cafes and attending outdoor theater performances during the summer months are enjoyed by members of all ages. During the cooler months, Croatians engage winter sports such as skiing or visit museums and attend operas or concerts (Photo: Sailboats along the Croatian coast).



Holidays and Festivals: As a predominantly Catholic nation (see p. 1 of *Religion and Spirituality*), Croatia's primary holidays are Christmas and Easter, though celebrations often incorporate folk traditions as well. The Christmas season begins on December 6, when St. Nicholas and his devil companion Krampus reward or punish children based on their behavior during the year. On December 13, families traditionally plant wheat sprouts in a shallow dish then light candles next to them on Christmas Eve, symbolizing their hope for a successful harvest and other blessings in the coming year. On Christmas Eve, families traditionally gather for a modest meal of ***bakalar*** (dried cod) and ***fritule*** (a fried dough pastry) before attending a midnight mass.

Easter (***Uskrs***) traditionally consists of a series of observances beginning weeks prior to the official holiday. First, Croatians celebrate the week-long Carnival with elaborate costume

parties, feasting, and drinking. The largest festivities occur along the Adriatic coast, where residents crown Carnival princes and princesses who reign over elaborate parades. A unique Carnival custom occurs in Kastav, where ***zvončari*** (bell ringers) dressed in sheepskins and animal masks roam the streets to scare away the winter spirits and welcome spring.

Next, some Croatians observe 40 days of Lent, a period of solemn reflection and temperance. The Easter holiday itself is celebrated over the course of several days called "Holy Week," notably Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, and Easter Monday. Observances typically include attendance at church services and shared meals, but some communities host processions or special events such as bonfires. Croatians also decorate and exchange Easter eggs (***pisanice*** – pictured) symbolizing the cycle of life and return of spring.



Many communities have their own local festivals. For example, some coastal towns host annual fishermen's festivals during which a Catholic priest blesses the sea and fishing boats. During the summer, many communities host outdoor concerts and theatrical events. The Pula Film Festival notably screens its films in a Roman amphitheater, while the Dubrovnik Summer Festival presents a series of operas, classical music concerts, dance performances, and plays. The Zagreb Folk Festival, among others, showcases traditional folk music, dances, and attire.

Sports and Games

Sports: Soccer is Croatia's most popular sport. The men's national soccer team has achieved significant international success, placing third and second during the 1998 and 2018 World Cups respectively. Most large cities and towns have club teams that produce intense regional rivalries.

Other popular sports include basketball, tennis, skiing, and handball, while sailing, sport fishing, swimming, and other water

sports are common along the coast. Since Croatia competed for the first time as an independent nation in 1992, its athletes have performed well in the Olympics, medaling in basketball, downhill skiing, handball, sailing, tennis, track and field, rowing, and water polo among other sports. Some 40% of Croatia is forested and suitable for both small and big game hunting.

Traditional Sports and Games: Croatians participate in a variety of traditional sports. For example, ***balote*** is a bowling game similar to the Italian bocce. ***Picigin***, a game played in shallow waters along the coast, involves players swatting at a ball to prevent it from touching the water.



Music

Traditional: Styles of folk music vary by region but often feature similar instruments and serve to accompany singers and dancers. The ***tamburica*** (a long-neck lute) has become a symbol of Croatian folk music and is often a featured instrument in ***bećarac***, a form of humorous folk song that originated in Slavonia. The ***guslar*** is a singer who relates historical epics, while playing the ***gusle***, a 2-stringed instrument held vertically and played with a bow. Other featured instruments include ***mih*** (a type of bagpipe – pictured) and ***sopila*** (a wooden flute), violin, zither, hammered dulcimer (a stringed instrument), flute, and brass instruments.

Some Croatian musical styles focus on the voice. With roots in the Dalmatian hinterlands, ***ojkanje*** singing features a unique voice shaking technique with lyrics exploring love, local issues, or politics. Also from Dalmatia, ***klapa*** is a type of *a cappella* performance that traces its root to church singing. Its traditional subjects are love, wine, the homeland, and the sea.

In the 1700s, Croatians composed symphonies and operas, largely borrowing from German Baroque and Classical traditions. During the 19th-century Romance era, the operas of internationally acclaimed composers such as Vatroslav Lisinski and Ivan Zajc focused on events in Croatian history depicted by traditional folk music rhythms and sounds. During the 20th

century, composers embraced modern and non-European influences. Former President Ivo Josipović (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*) is a renowned composer, who has looked to Brazilian rhythms and Hindu scripture, among other varied sources, for inspiration.

Modern: Yugoslavia's openness during the 1960s-70s (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*) allowed new modern styles such as rock, jazz, new wave, and punk scenes to flourish, with some bands using music to mock socialist rule. In the 1990s Croatian pop musicians looked for inspiration in Dalmatian folk traditions. Today, Croatians enjoy the full range of international pop, electronic, rock, hip-hop, Croatian folk-pop, and other styles. Concurrently, classical music remains popular, with renowned groups like the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra and the Croatian Radio and Television Symphonic Orchestra featured in concert halls, opera houses, and at outdoor summer venues.

Dance

Croatians typically watch and perform a wide range of folk dances. Often featured at weddings, community celebrations, and folk festivals, the ***kolo*** ("wheel") is traditionally a courtship dance that requires dancers to lock arms in a large, rotating circle. By contrast, the ***drmeš*** is usually performed by couples who rotate, while performing a series of small bounces. Other folk dances involve the use of costumes and props such as swords to depict royal weddings (the ***kraljice***) and mock combat (the ***moreška –*** as performed on the island of Korčula).



Theater and Cinema

Religiously-inspired plays have been performed in the region since the 12th century. In the 1800s, the theater scene developed rapidly with the opening of several prominent theaters and opera houses. German touring companies eventually were replaced by Croatian troupes that emphasized Slavic history and themes. These troupes often featured brave folk heroes to bolster a sense of national identity during the mid-19th century Illyrian Movement (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*). In the 20th

century, Croatian playwright, screenwriter, and author Ivo Brešan produced a range of satirical works mocking socialist ideology and criticizing totalitarianism.

Yugoslavia's film industry gained prominence in the 1950s, with many Croatian filmmakers embracing modernist styles. During the socialist era, Croatia hosted festivals open to both international and domestic filmmakers, and Zagreb boasted an extensive network of film clubs. During the 1960s-70s, the state-sponsored film industry produced many acclaimed works such as *The Ninth Circle*, nominated for an Oscar in 1960, and Nikola Tanhofer's *H8*, depicting a tragic bus accident.

Meanwhile, the Zagreb School of Animated Film produced many acclaimed shorts including *The Substitute*, the first foreign film to win an Oscar in 1962. Since Croatia's 1991 break from Yugoslavia, the film industry has diminished, due primarily to the loss of state funding. Today, Croatia's film industry produces some 10 films annually, with several typically nominated for awards and screened at international film festivals. Several historical sites in Dubrovnik (pictured) were featured in the US TV series *Game of Thrones*.



Literature

Croatian literature traces to the 9th-century invention of the Glagolitic script (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*). Originally used to write a predecessor of modern Croatian, the script was widely used during the 17th century, mainly for a variety of religious-associated texts. The birth of Croatian literature is usually traced to the 16th-century publication of the first Croatian-language poem that served as inspiration for Croats struggling against Ottoman Turk invaders (see p. 3-5 of *History and Myth*). Writers in 17th-century Dubrovnik (see p. 4 of *History and Myth*) combined Croatian stories and current events with Italian literary forms to produce new Croatian literature. For example, Ivan Gundulić's poem *Osman* championed Dubrovnik's and the Slavs' autonomy in the face of foreign oppressors like the Ottomans.

A focus of the mid-19th century Illyrian Movement (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*) was the standardization of Croatian and its cultivation as a literary language (see p. 1 of *Language and Communication*). Movement supporters established the first Croatian-language newspaper and published poems, satirical works, and short stories, many with romantic, realist, and patriotic themes. During this period, August Šenoa, "father of the Croatian novel," focused his work on working class struggles. Many writers in the early 20th century incorporated existentialist philosophy into their works, while criticizing the region's subjugation to Austria-Hungary and supporting pan-Slavic nationalism (see p. 6 of *History and Myth*).

During the socialist era, the Yugoslav government promoted "Socialist Realism," an artistic tradition intended to glorify the industrial worker and farmer. Nevertheless, writers enjoyed relative creative freedom. Considered the most important Croatian writer of the 20th century, Miroslav Krleža critiqued both Socialist Realism and the elite's exploitation of the common person. Many writers since the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*) have linked the personal with the political to criticize nationalism and conflict, while exploring post-socialist Croatian society.



Folk Arts and Crafts

Croatia's folk arts reflect the country's history, diverse cultural influences, and rural life. Traditional handicrafts include decorated gourds, coral and beaded jewelry, wheel-thrown pottery, embroidered kerchiefs, wooden toys and furniture, and traditional musical instruments. Croatia is also known for colorful, heart-shaped gingerbread art (***licitar***), traditionally made by artisans who often also specialize in honey and beeswax candles. Lace featuring intricate, geometric patterns serves as a home decoration and component in traditional costumes (Photo: A super-sized Easter egg features a painting of a gingerbread heart).

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Sustenance Overview

Croatians enjoy socializing with family and friends, gathering often for leisurely meals at home or in cafes and restaurants. Meals typically include lightly seasoned, hearty dishes prepared from seasonal, local ingredients.

Dining Customs

Croatians typically supplement 3 daily meals with a light mid-afternoon snack. While lunch traditionally has been the largest meal, dinner may also be substantial, particularly in urban areas. Most visits to the home are arranged in advance, though close friends and relatives may drop by unannounced. Visitors typically arrive a few minutes late and bring small gifts such as flowers or sweets for the hostess and a bottle of alcohol for the host.

In many families, women take great pride in preparing the meal, shopping frequently at large markets (***tržnica***) for fresh produce, herbs, and other ingredients. On weekends and special occasions, meals often consist of multiple courses served at an unhurried pace and consequently last several hours.



While dining, Croatians keep their hands above the table rather than in their laps, though in formal settings, they avoid placing their elbows on the table. After guests finish their initial portions, hosts usually offer additional smaller helpings, sometimes repeatedly. While guests typically accept an additional serving to avoid offending the host, it is acceptable to decline additional offers. Alcoholic beverages feature prominently during most mid-day and evening meals. Diners typically toast often, generally maintaining eye contact when clinking glasses and dedicating several rounds of toasts to the hosts (Photo: Outdoor café in Rovinj).

Diet

Croatian cuisine reflects the nation's unique geography, fertile soil, varied climate, and history of foreign influence (see p. 3-7 of *History and Myth*). Often featuring elements of various European and Turkish culinary traditions, dishes tend to vary by region yet generally include rich, locally harvested ingredients. On the Istrian peninsula and along the Dalmatian coast, Italian influences prevail. For example, ***risotto*** (a northern Italian dish of rice slow-cooked in a sauce until it reaches a creamy consistency) and various pasta dishes are popular lunch and dinner items. These dishes are usually seasoned with olive oil, lemons, crushed garlic, salt, and pepper, though rosemary, lavender, and sage are also popular additions (Photo: Homemade jams).



Croatia's historical regions (see p. 1 of *History and Myth*) tend to have their own culinary traditions. Seafood features prominently in the diets of residents on the Dalmatian coast and Istria, where open air markets offer fresh seafood like Adriatic salmon, tuna, seabass, anchovies, squid, octopus, and various shellfish, among others. Fish is often grilled outdoors or broiled, fried, smoked, or salted and served alongside rice, pasta, and vegetables. Some islands have their own traditions. For example, Pag is famed for its firm, yellow, salty cheese, while Lastavo specializes in eel stew.

By contrast, cuisine in Croatia's interior often showcases German, Hungarian, Austrian, and Turkish traditions. With meat as the primary ingredient, dishes are typically hearty and often vibrantly spiced with paprika, chives, and cumin, among others. Pork, beef, chicken, and lamb are the most popular proteins, typically served grilled, roasted, or stewed. In addition to bread, common staples include potatoes, barley, and wheat flour made into crepes, dumplings, and noodles, such as ***mlinci***, a flat baked noodle popular in the North.

Dairy products such as yogurt, fresh cheese, milk, and sour cream also feature prominently in many dishes. Croatians consume a variety of native vegetables such as cabbage, olives, asparagus, beets, corn, beans, mushrooms, peppers, green onions, and carrots. Popular fruits include apples, pears, plums, sour and sweet cherries, apricots, and peaches, among others.

Meals and Popular Dishes

Breakfast (***marenda*** on the coast and ***dorucak*** inland) is usually a light meal consisting of cheese, cured ham (***pršut***), bread, yogurt, or a pastry with coffee or tea. Both lunch and dinner typically consist of a thick stew or soup followed by a main course of meat or fish paired with a starch such as rice or potatoes and vegetables. Alternatively, dinner may be a light, simple meal of cold cuts, cheese, bread, and eggs. On weekends and special occasions, meals tend to incorporate multiple courses and typically consist of several appetizers, salads, or soups served alongside meat or fish with multiple side dishes.

Popular dishes include ***jota*** (a thick soup of pork, beans, sauerkraut, and potatoes spiced with garlic, parsley, and bay leaves); ***pljeskavica*** (a minced meat patty – pictured, sometimes served in a pocket of flat bread); ***kulen*** (a paprika-spiced sausage served alone as a snack or with cottage cheese, peppers, pickled vegetables, and bread as an evening meal); ***brodet*** (a hearty seafood and vegetable stew that varies widely in preparation by region); ***ćevapčići*** (seasoned, grilled pork or beef meatballs); and ***sarma*** (sour cabbage rolls).



Feasts featuring whole roast pig are popular at Christmas and other holidays, particularly in rural areas. Popular desserts include fresh fruit or various cakes and pastries such as ***orahnjača*** (sugared rolls filled with crushed walnuts and poppy seeds), ***štrukli*** (baked pastry filled with cheese and fruit), and ***palacinka*** (thin pancakes filled with jam, chocolate, or stewed fruit).

Beverages

Croatians drink coffee, typically strong and black, throughout the day. Alcohol is inexpensive, widely available, and accompanies many meals. In addition to locally produced beer and wine, popular varieties include ***šljivovica*** (plum brandy), cognac, and other spirits (***rakija***) distilled from grain or potatoes and often flavored with fruits, herbs, and spices (Photo: Homemade Croatian oils and spirits).



Eating Out

Croatians are fond of socializing and celebrating special occasions at restaurants and bars, particularly in urban areas. Restaurants range from upscale establishments to small, casual eateries and pubs (***gostionica*** or ***konoba***) that offer inexpensive and hearty meals. Street vendors in urban areas sell a variety of snacks such as fresh fruit, ***ražnjići*** (skewers of grilled meat), and ***burek*** (thick pastries stuffed with cheese, meat, or spinach). Waitstaff typically expect a 5-10% tip for good service.

Health Overview

Croatians' overall health has improved significantly in recent years. Between 1990-2015, maternal mortality reduced from 10 to 8 deaths per 100,000 live births, the same as the EU average and significantly lower than the US rate (14). Moreover, infant mortality (the proportion of infants who die before age 1) dropped from 11 to about 4 deaths per 1,000 live births, also equal to the EU average and lower than the US rate (6). Life expectancy at birth increased from 72 to 78 years, just below the US and EU averages of 79 and 81 years respectively.

Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine consists of the knowledge, practices, and skills that are derived from a native population's beliefs, experiences, and theories. Traditional Croatian medicine centers on the use of home remedies, notably herbal and other natural non-surgical methods, to identify and treat illnesses.

Many Croatians supplement modern medicines with traditional therapies to treat ailments from cardiovascular disorders, skin diseases, and common colds to gastrointestinal ailments. Besides herbal remedies, popular therapies include hydrotherapy (bathing in or drinking mineral-rich water from thermal springs), acupuncture (a process whereby a practitioner inserts very thin needles into a patient's skin), and homeopathy (a form of alternative medicine developed in 18th-century Germany whereby a patient ingests diluted plant, mineral, and animal substances to trigger the body's natural system of healing), among numerous others.

Modern Healthcare System

The Ministry of Health oversees and regulates Croatia's healthcare system, which provides free universal healthcare to all Croatians in public facilities. Croatia's national health insurance scheme, the Croatian Health Insurance Fund (CHIF), covers preventive care, prenatal and maternal care, long-term treatment associated with serious, chronic illnesses, and emergency services, among others.

Vulnerable groups such as the poor, unemployed, and disabled are exempt from contributing to the CHIF yet still receive all associated benefits. Moreover, out-of-pocket payments for services not covered by the CHIF are low and generally affordable (Photo: US, Croatian, and Portuguese medical personnel participate in a military training exercise).



Nevertheless, the Croatian healthcare system has its challenges. Public hospitals, which concentrate in urban areas, tend to be outdated, understaffed, and overcrowded. While private facilities offer higher quality care, only the wealthy can afford them. Quality of care further diminishes in rural areas and on islands, where small, ill-equipped clinics offer limited medical procedures and are largely unprepared to meet residents' needs. Moreover, Croatia's primary care infrastructure is relatively

underdeveloped, with practitioners putting little emphasis on prevention.

Croatia is also experiencing a signifcant shortage of medical personnel, particularly primary care providers in rural areas and on the islands. Low public-sector wages and the ease of intra-Europe travel following Croatia's accession to the EU (see p. 9-10 of *Political and Social Relations*) compel many Croatian physicians to seek opportunities in the private sector or elsewhere in Europe. Finally, Croatia's aging population and rising proportion of retirees is likely to add substantial strain to the healthcare system in the future.

Health Challenges

As in most developed countries with aging populations, non-communicable "lifestyle" diseases account for the majority (about 92%) of deaths. These include cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, cancer, diabetes, and liver disease. Preventable "external causes" such as accidents, suicides, and drug use result in about 5% of all deaths. Communicable diseases like tuberculosis and hepatitis cause about 2% of all deaths (Photo: Hospital in Vukovar).



Smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, and poor diet combined with ineffective healthcare delivery and inability to detect disease early result in rising rates of heart disease and diabetes, among other health issues. In 2016, Croatians' mortality rate from cardiovascular disease was almost twice the EU average, while deaths from lung, breast, and colon cancer were among the EU's highest.

At 23%, the rate of smoking among Croatian 15-year-olds is the EU's second highest rate after Bulgaria, while the adult alcohol consumption rate is the EU's fourth highest. According to experts, up to 20% of Croatia's Roma community (see p. 13-15 of *Political and Social Relations*) lack access to modern healthcare. Generally, Roma exhibit higher rates of chronic disease and shorter life expectancies than other Croatians.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Overview

For centuries, many Croatians subsisted as peasants in an agrarian-based economy, while others worked in the region's coal mines or as traders. Under Habsburg rule (see p. 4-7 of *History and Myth*), the Croatian regions experienced some industrialization and urbanization, though they remained primarily agricultural through the end of World War II. As a republic in socialist Yugoslavia following the war (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*), Croatia pursued economic policies prioritizing industrialization and agricultural collectivization modeled on the centrally planned Soviet system (Photo: The city of Split in the 1950s featuring a narrow-gauge railroad).



In 1948, Yugoslav President Tito's abrupt break with the Soviet Union (see p. 11 of *History and Myth*) compelled the USSR to implement an economic blockade. As a result, Yugoslavia's trade with socialist countries, which had accounted for 50% of its exports and imports, ended completely, shocking the economy. In response, the government implemented a series of reforms aimed at liberalizing and decentralizing the economy, notably a "self-management" system which relegated decision-making to the workers.

Gradually, the economy expanded and living conditions improved. From 1953-65, Yugoslavia's economic output grew by 12% annually, double the rate of other regional socialist countries. Within Yugoslavia, heavily-industrialized Croatia was the second most economically developed republic, outperformed only by Slovenia, and accounted for over 1/4 of Yugoslavia's GDP. In the 1980s, Yugoslavia ranked third in the world for shipbuilding, with major shipyards in the Croatian towns of Pula, Rijeka, and Split.

As oil prices rose in the 1980s-90s, Yugoslavia's economy began to suffer. Unemployment rates reached 17% by 1986, the highest in Europe, as inflation soared from 150% annually in 1987 to 1,950% in 1989. As the economy collapsed, foreign debt skyrocketed and living standards across Yugoslavia declined. Nevertheless, as 1 of Yugoslavia's more developed regions, Croatia remained less affected by the crisis than other republics (Illustration: 1978 Yugoslav stamp featuring workers leaving a factory).



After declaring independence in 1991 (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*), Croatia began the transition to a free-market system. However, this process was delayed by the events of the Homeland War (see p. 13 of *History and Myth*). The conflict had significant negative economic impacts, with inflation rates ballooning to 1,500% in 1993, GDP decreasing by 1/3, and unemployment reaching 20% by the late 1990s. Overall, the war cost Croatia an estimated $37 billion.

Nevertheless, with aid from the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Monetary Fund, the economy began to recover slowly. By the early 2000s, GDP had returned to prewar levels, with GDP growth averaging over 4.5% annually from 2001-07. However, the 2008-09 global financial crisis sent Croatia into a 6-year recession, during which GDP dropped by 13% and unemployment rates doubled. Yet with increased tourism, rising private consumption, and accession to the European Union (EU) (see p. 14 of *History and Myth*), the economy began growing again at the end of 2014.

Today, Croatia's economy is among the strongest of the former Yugoslav republics, though it has yet to fully recover from the 2008-09 crisis. GDP grew by 2.8% in 2017, and experts predict that growth will remain between 2.6%-2.8% through 2020. Between 2014-18, the unemployment rate halved, while the

poverty rate continued to decline, reaching 4.6% in 2017 and down from 7.3% in 2013. In 2017, the government experienced a budget surplus for the first time since independence.

Despite this progress, Croatia faces serious economic challenges. Its growth rate is low, primarily due to low productivity and inefficient utilization of human capital. With low birth rates and high emigration rates (see p. 1 of *Political and Social Relations*), Croatia struggles to attract and retain labor and has the EU's second lowest labor participation rate. In recent years, Croatia has seen a significant increase in youth unemployment, from 25% in 2009 to almost 50% in 2014.

With its economy dependent on tourism, Croatia remains highly vulnerable to global economic shocks. Experts predict that Croatia will struggle to increase growth in the long term without significant reform. *Agrokor*, a Croatian food retailer that accounts for 15% of GDP, faced bankruptcy in 2017 and was placed under state control to avoid a potential devastating effect on the economy.

Services

Accounting for about 70% of GDP and 71% of employment, the services sector is the largest and most important segment of the Croatian economy. Key components include retail, tourism, and financial services.



Tourism: This sub-component accounts for some 20% of GDP. In 2017, around 17.4 million tourists visited Croatia, with some 80% arriving between May-September, bringing in some $9.5 billion. Foreign tourists – predominantly Germans, Austrians, Slovenians, and Italians – typically visit a variety of cultural and historical attractions. These include the old city of Dubrovnik, the Roman amphitheater in Pula (pictured), and Diocletian's Palace in Split; nature areas such as Plitvice Lakes National Park; and resorts and beaches along the Adriatic coast.

Industry
Even as industry has declined in importance since the socialist era, it remains the second largest economic sector, accounting for about 26% of GDP and employing 27% of the labor force.

Manufacturing: Manufacturing makes up some 18% of GDP and accounts for almost 90% of total exports. Important industries include food processing, wine-making, and producing and refining petroleum. Croatia is also a major manufacturer of chemicals, construction materials, metal products, wood products, machines, electronics, textiles, and ships.

Shipbuilding: Croatia's shipyards have been a significant part of the nation's economy since the 18th century, when the Kraljevica Shipyard was first established. While it is significantly diminished today, the industry is still important, directly employing over 4,000 people and contributing about 1% of total GDP in 2016.

Construction: In 2017, the construction sector added about $3.5 billion to the economy and employed some 169,000 people. While this sector has recently faced difficulties, large infrastructure projects aim to revitalize it. For example, the Ministry of Tourism plans to invest about $2.7 billion in the construction of tourist facilities by 2020.



Agriculture
Historically the main component of the economy, agriculture today makes up just 3.7% of GDP and employs almost 2% of the labor force (Photo: Fields near the Neretva river).

Farming: Just 16% of Croatia's land is arable, with permanent crops and pastures making up 1.5% and 6.2% of land respectively. Important crops include wheat, corn, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, olives, fruit, soybeans, and potatoes. Large commercial farms in Slavonia employ modern agricultural techniques to produce commodities for export and domestic

consumption, while family-owned farms in central Croatia as well as Istria and Dalmatia engage in smaller operations, mainly harvesting fruits and vegetables.

Forestry: With around 46% of its territory covered in woodlands, Croatia has a robust forestry industry. Forestry accounts for some 1.5% of GDP and 9% of exports, while employing over 20,000 people. Croatia is an important wood-products exporter, mainly shipping raw wood material to Italy, Germany, Slovenia, and Austria. The state-owned *Hrvatske Šume* employs over 90% of workers in the industry and generates over 83% of total revenues.

Fishing: Croatia's fishing fleet consists of 7,723 vessels harvesting some 70,000 tons of bluefin tuna, sardines, European seabass, and gilt-head seabream. In 2017, seafood exports totaled $1.95 million, with tuna accounting for over half. In 2015, fresh fish accounted for 7.6% of agricultural exports.

Currency

Although Croatia is treaty bound to adopt the Euro, the EU's common currency, there is no fixed date for that occurrence. Presently, Croatia's currency (pictured) is the ***kuna*** (kn), issued in 8 banknote values (5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000) and 3 coins (1, 2, 5). The *kuna* subdivides into 100 ***lipa***, which are issued in 6 coin values (1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50). Between 2013-18, $1 was worth between 5.5kn-7.3kn. In the first few months of 2019, $1 averaged 6.5kn.



Foreign Trade

Totaling $13.15 billion in 2017, Croatia's exports primarily consisted of transport equipment, machinery, textiles, chemicals, foodstuffs, and fuels to Italy (13.4%), Germany (12.2%), Slovenia (10.6%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (9.8%), Austria (6.2%), and Serbia (4.8%). In the same year, imports totaled $22.34 billion and comprised machinery, transport and electrical equipment, chemicals, fuels and lubricants, and foodstuffs from Germany (15.7%), Italy (12.9%), Slovenia (10.7%), Hungary (7.5%), and Austria (7.5%).

The EU

Croatia joined the EU in 2013 during a 6-year recessionary period, and the common market provided substantial support for the country's recovery. Besides a more secure business environment, EU membership (see p. 9-10 of *Political and Social Relations*) provides easier access to investment and development funds. In 2016, some 66% of Croatia's exports were destined for the EU, while 77% of imports originated in the EU. Some Croatians are skeptical of certain EU directives and policies. In a 2017 survey, just 31% of Croatian respondents viewed the EU positively, compared with the EU average of 40%. Some political parties have adopted an anti-EU platform and oppose Croatia's eventual adoption of the Euro (Photo: Croatian National Bank).



Foreign Aid

For the period 2014-20, Croatia is a beneficiary of some €10.74 billion or $12 billion in EU aid. Some 40% of funds are earmarked for regional development, while 24% are allocated to the reduction of economic and social disparities and the promotion of sustainable development. The remainder is allotted to a variety of projects, notably agricultural development, social inclusion, and good governance. In 2017, Croatia provided some $50 million in official development assistance, mainly to other Southeast European countries. Current development plans aim to significantly increase aid commitments by 2030, tripling the 2015 level (Photo: Market in Croatia).



12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview

Croatia has a modern physical infrastructure, with well-maintained roads and efficient public transportation systems. Croatians enjoy free speech and unrestricted Internet access, yet some practices somewhat restrict press freedoms.



Transportation

While many Croatians use privately-owned vehicles, travel by bus, train, tram, taxi, bicycle, or foot is also common. All of Croatia's major cities have efficient and reliable mass transit systems utilizing buses and trams. While no trains run along the coast, express inter-city trains and slower local trains offer service between large inland cities and connect Zagreb to coastal cities. Buses and trains also link Croatia to international destinations. Ferries provide access to Croatia's islands and ports in other Mediterranean countries, such as Greece and Italy (Photo: Tram in Zagreb).

Croatia's central location in Europe and its ports on the Adriatic Sea make it an important hub for regional trade and transport. Nevertheless, some transportation infrastructure outside of major cities is outdated. Consequently, the European Union (EU) and the Croatian government have invested heavily in upgrading rail, road, air, and sea transport, planning to spend some $2.25 billion from 2017-30.

Roadways: Croatia has some 16,750 mi of roads, of which over 90% are paved. Croatia's roads are well used, carrying over 75% of transport demand. The primary highways are the A1 connecting Zagreb with Dubrovnik through Split and the A3 connecting Zagreb with Lipovac. The Adriatic Highway, or ***Jadranska Magistrala*** (D8), passes through towns on the Adriatic coast. Slated for completion in 2021, the Pelješac Bridge

in the far South will provide a bypass around a narrow coastal corridor belonging to Bosnia and Herzegovina that separates a small portion Croatia from the rest of the country.

Railways: Croatia has almost 1,700 mi of freight and passenger railways that connect its cities and towns with the rest of Europe. The state-owned ***Hrvatske željeznice*** (Croatian Railways) operates most of Croatia's trains. Long-distance service includes high-speed rail from Zagreb to Split and Rijeka as well as direct international connections to the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, and Switzerland.

Ports and Waterways: Croatia has some 490 mi of navigable waterways and some 350 ports and docks. Its largest Adriatic Sea ports are Rijeka, Ploče, Zadar, Šibenik, Split, and Dubrovnik. Important inland waterways include the Danube, the Drava, and the Sava. Regular ferry services, operated primarily by the state-owned ***Jadrolinija***, connect Croatia's larger islands to the mainland.



Airways: Croatia has 69 airports, 24 with paved runways. The largest, Franjo Tuđman Airport in Zagreb (see p. 12 of *History and Myth*), served some 3.3 million passengers in 2018. Croatia's national carrier, Croatia Airlines, offers flights to Zagreb, Pula, Rijeka, Split, Zadar, and Dubrovnik from a variety of European cities. Several global carriers connect to many international destinations (Photo: Croatia Airlines plane).

Energy

Fossil fuels account for about 45% of electricity generation with hydroelectric plants producing around 40% and other renewable sources around 15%. With limited sources of its own, Croatia must import 50% of its required energy. The state-owned energy firm ***Hrvatska elektroprivreda*** (Croatian Electricity Company), which controls 85% of the electricity market, aims to increase renewable energy generation from 35% to 50% by 2030.

Media

Croatia's constitution protects freedom of expression, which the government generally supports. However, the law criminalizes hate speech based on race, religion, class, ethnicity, or nationality and the use of Nazi and ***Ustaše*** ("insurgents" – see p. 9 of *History and Myth*) symbols and slogans, though the government occasionally fails to enforce the law. Journalists sometimes self-censor due to threats from readers who object to their reporting, which the government sometimes fails to investigate. Recently, the government has moved to exert greater control over the press such as pressuring public broadcaster *Hrvatska radiotelevizija* (HRT) to demote or dismiss certain journalists over their coverage of the 2016 parliamentary elections. In early 2019, hundreds of journalists gathered in Zagreb to protest this threat to media freedoms.

Print Media: The Croatian press consists of a variety of local and national periodicals. The country's largest dailies include *Večernji list*, *Jutarnji list*, and popular tabloid *24 Sata.*

TV and Radio: The public *HRT* broadcasts many of Croatia's most popular programs, with 3 national radio stations, 7 regional radio stations, and 3 television channels. Foreign-owned national TV stations *Nova TV* and *RTL* are also popular. Croatia has some 130 private radio stations, including *Otvoreni Radio* and *Narodni Radio* (Photo: Croatian media interviews the US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission in Zagreb).



Telecommunications

Croatia has a modern telecommunications network. In 2017, Croatia had about 33 landline and 101 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people.

Internet: Croatia has a modern Internet infrastructure. Around 73% of Croatians regularly used the Internet in 2016, while the country had about 23 fixed broadband subscriptions and 80 mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people in 2017. Croatians have unrestricted access to the Internet.

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