



Europe :: **Faroe Islands**  
(part of the Kingdom of Denmark)

## Introduction :: Faroe Islands

### Background:

The population of the Faroe Islands is largely descended from Viking settlers who arrived in the 9th century. The islands have been connected politically to Denmark since the 14th century. A high degree of self-government was granted the Faroese in 1948, who have autonomy over most internal affairs while Denmark is responsible for justice, defense, and foreign affairs. The Faroe Islands are not part of the European Union.

## Geography :: Faroe Islands

### Location:

Northern Europe, island group between the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, about half way between Iceland and Norway

### Geographic coordinates:

62 00 N, 7 00 W

### Map references:

Europe

### Area:

**total:** 1,393 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** 183

**land:** 1,393 sq km

**water:** 0 sq km (some lakes and streams)

### Area - comparative:

eight times the size of Washington, DC

### Land boundaries:

0 km

### Coastline:

1,117 km

### Maritime claims:

**territorial sea:** 3 nm

**continental shelf:** 200 nm or agreed boundaries or median line

**exclusive fishing zone:** 200 nm or agreed boundaries or median line

### Climate:

mild winters, cool summers; usually overcast; foggy, windy

### Terrain:

rugged, rocky, some low peaks; cliffs along most of coast

### Elevation extremes:

**lowest point:** Atlantic Ocean 0 m

**highest point:** Slaettaratindur 882 m

**Natural resources:**

fish, whales, hydropower, possible oil and gas

**Land use:**

**arable land:** 2.15%

**permanent crops:** 0%

**other:** 97.85% (2011)

**Irrigated land:**

0 sq km (2011)

**Natural hazards:**

NA

**Environment - current issues:**

NA

**Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Marine Dumping - associate member to the London Convention and Ship Pollution

**Geography - note:**

archipelago of 17 inhabited islands and one uninhabited island, and a few uninhabited islets; strategically located along important sea lanes in northeastern Atlantic; precipitous terrain limits habitation to small coastal lowlands

## People and Society :: Faroe Islands

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**Nationality:**

**noun:** Faroese (singular and plural)

**adjective:** Faroese

**Ethnic groups:**

Scandinavian

**Languages:**

Faroese (derived from Old Norse), Danish

**Religions:**

Evangelical Lutheran 83.8%, other and unspecified 16.2% (2006 census)

**Population:**

49,709 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 211

**Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 20.4% (male 5,269/female 4,882)

**15-24 years:** 15.6% (male 4,003/female 3,738)

**25-54 years:** 36.8% (male 9,892/female 8,414)

**55-64 years:** 11.8% (male 3,018/female 2,832)

**65 years and over:** 15.4% (male 3,712/female 3,949) (2013 est.)

**Median age:**

**total:** 37.6 years

**male:** 37 years

**female:** 38.3 years (2013 est.)

**Population growth rate:**

0.47% (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 154

**Birth rate:**

13.36 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 150

**Death rate:**

8.67 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 76

**Net migration rate:**

0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 86

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 40% of total population (2010)

**rate of urbanization:** 0.9% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.07 male(s)/female  
**0-14 years:** 1.08 male(s)/female  
**15-24 years:** 1.07 male(s)/female  
**25-54 years:** 1.18 male(s)/female  
**55-64 years:** 1.08 male(s)/female  
**65 years and over:** 0.93 male(s)/female  
**total population:** 1.09 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 5.82 deaths/1,000 live births  
**country comparison to the world:** 175  
**male:** 6.08 deaths/1,000 live births  
**female:** 5.55 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 79.98 years  
**country comparison to the world:** 35  
**male:** 77.49 years  
**female:** 82.64 years (2013 est.)

**Total fertility rate:**

2.39 children born/woman (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 87

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

NA

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

NA

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

NA

**Literacy:**

NA; note - probably 99%, the same as Denmark proper

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**

**total:** 9.4%  
**country comparison to the world:** 111  
**male:** 6.9%  
**female:** 12.5% (2005)

**Government :: Faroe Islands**

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**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** none  
**conventional short form:** Faroe Islands  
**local long form:** none  
**local short form:** Foroyar

**Dependency status:**

part of the Kingdom of Denmark; self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark since 1948

**Government type:**

NA

**Capital:**

**name:** Torshavn  
**geographic coordinates:** 62 00 N, 6 46 W  
**time difference:** UTC 0 (5 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)  
**daylight saving time:** +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

**Administrative divisions:**

none (part of the Kingdom of Denmark; self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark); there are no first-order administrative divisions as defined by the US Government, but there are 34 municipalities

**Independence:**

none (part of the Kingdom of Denmark; self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark)

**National holiday:**

Olaifest (Olavsoka), 29 July

**Constitution:**

5 June 1953 (Danish Constitution ), 23 March 1948 (Home Rule Act), and 24 June 2005 (Takeover Act ) serve as the Faroe Islands' constitutional position in the Unity of the Realm

**Legal system:**

the laws of Denmark, where applicable, apply

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** Queen MARGRETHE II of Denmark (since 14 January 1972), represented by High Commissioner Dan Michael KNUDSEN, chief administrative officer (since 2008)

**head of government:** Prime Minister Kaj Leo JOHANNESSEN (since 26 September 2008)

**cabinet:** Landsstyri appointed by the prime minister  
(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** 🌐)

**elections:** the monarchy is hereditary; high commissioner appointed by the monarch; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition is usually elected prime minister by the Faroese Parliament; election last held on 14 November 2011 (next to be held no later than November 2015)

**election results:** Kaj Leo JOHANNESSEN reelected prime minister in 2011

**Legislative branch:**

unicameral Faroese Parliament or Løgting (33 seats; members elected by popular vote on a proportional basis from the seven constituencies to serve four-year terms)

**elections:** last held on 29 October 2011 (next to be held no later than October 2015)

**election results:** percent of vote by party - Union Party 24.7%, People's Party 22.5%, Republican Party 18.3%, Social Democratic Party 17.7%, Progressive Party 6.3%, Center Party 6.2%, Independence Party 4.2%, other 0.1%; seats by party - Union Party 8, People's Party 8, Republican Party 6, Social Democratic Party 6, Progressive Party 2, Center Party 2, Independence Party 1

**note:** election of two seats to the Danish Parliament was last held on 15 September 2011 (next to be held no later than September 2015); results - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Social Democratic Party 1, Union Party 1

**Judicial branch:**

the Faroese Court or Raett (Rett - Danish) decides both civil and criminal cases; the Court is part of the Danish legal system

**Political parties and leaders:**

Center Party (Midflokkurin) [Jenis av RANA]

Independence Party (Sjálvstýrisflokkurin) [Kari P. HOJGAARD]

People's Party (Folkaflokkurin) [Jorgen NICLASSEN]

Progressive Party (Framsokn) [Poul MICHELSEN]

Republican Party (Tjóðveldi) [Hogni HOYDAL]

Social Democratic Party (Javnaðarflokkurin) [Aksel JOHANNESSEN]

Union Party (Sambandsflokkurin) [Kaj Leo JOHANNESSEN]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

conservationists

**International organization participation:**

Arctic Council, IMO (associate), NC, NIB, UNESCO (associate), UPU

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

none (self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark)

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

none (self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark)

**Flag description:**

white with a red cross outlined in blue extending to the edges of the flag; the vertical part of the cross is shifted toward the hoist side in the style of the Dannebrog (Danish flag); referred to as Merkid, meaning "the banner" or "the mark," the flag resembles those of neighboring Iceland and Norway, and uses the same three colors - but in a different sequence; white represents the clear Faroese sky as well as the foam of the waves; red and blue are traditional Faroese colors

**National symbol(s):**

ram

**National anthem:**

**name:** "Mitt alfagra land" (My Fairest Land)

**lyrics/music:** Simun av SKAROI/Peter ALBERG

**note:** adopted 1948; the anthem is also known as "Tu alfagra land mitt" (Thou Fairest Land of Mine); as an autonomous overseas division of Denmark, the Faroe Islands are permitted their own national anthem

## Economy :: Faroe Islands

### Economy - overview:

The Faroese economy is dependent on fishing, which makes the economy vulnerable to price fluctuations. The sector normally accounts for about 95% of exports and nearly half of GDP. In early 2008 the Faroese economy began to slow as a result of smaller catches and historically high oil prices. The slowdown in the Faroese economy followed a strong performance since the mid-1990s with annual growth rates averaging close to 6%, mostly a result of increased fish landings and salmon farming, and high export prices. Unemployment reached its lowest level in June 2008 at 1.1%. The Faroese Home Rule Government produced increasing budget surpluses in that period, which helped to reduce the large public debt, most of it to Denmark. However, total dependence on fishing and salmon farming make the Faroese economy vulnerable to fluctuations in world demand. Initial discoveries of oil in the Faroese area give hope for eventual oil production, which may provide a foundation for a more diversified economy and less dependence on Danish economic assistance. Aided by an annual subsidy from Denmark amounting to about 3% of Faroese GDP, the Faroese have a standard of living almost equal to that of Denmark and Greenland. The Faroese Government ran relatively large deficits from 2008 to 2010 and budget deficits are forecast for several years ahead. At year-end 2010 the gross debt had reached approximately US\$900 million.

### GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$1.471 billion (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 197

\$1.389 billion (2008 est.)

### GDP (official exchange rate):

\$2.32 billion (2010 est.)

### GDP - real growth rate:

2.9% (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 114

0.5% (2008 est.)

### GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$30,500 (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 44

### GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

**agriculture:** 16%

**industry:** 29%

**services:** 55% (2007 est.)

### Agriculture - products:

milk, potatoes, vegetables; sheep; salmon, other fish

### Industries:

fishing, fish processing, small ship repair and refurbishment, handicrafts

### Industrial production growth rate:

3.4% (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 82

### Labor force:

34,710 (November 2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 203

### Labor force - by occupation:

**agriculture:** 10.7%

**industry:** 18.9%

**services:** 70.3% (November 2010)

### Unemployment rate:

6.8% (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 72

5.7% (2010)

### Population below poverty line:

NA%

### Household income or consumption by percentage share:

**lowest 10%:** NA%

**highest 10%:** NA%

### Budget:

**revenues:** \$1.025 billion

**expenditures:** \$1.301 billion

**note:** Denmark supplies the Faroe Islands with almost one-third of their public funds (2010)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

44.2% of GDP (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 26

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-11.9% of GDP (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

**Fiscal year:**

calendar year

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

2.3% (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 54

0.4% (2010)

**Exports:**

\$824 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 164

\$767 million (2009)

**Exports - commodities:**

fish and fish products 94%, stamps, ships

**Exports - partners:**

Denmark 23.4%, UK 21%, Nigeria 13.4%, US 8.9%, Netherlands 8.4%, Russia 7%, China 4.4% (2012)

**Imports:**

\$776 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 186

\$786 million (2009)

**Imports - commodities:**

goods for household consumption 24%, machinery and transport equipment 23.5%, fuels 21.4%, raw materials and semi-manufactures, salt

**Imports - partners:**

Denmark 42%, Norway 32%, Germany 8.7%, Iceland 5.3% (2012)

**Debt - external:**

\$888.8 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 164

\$68.1 million (2006)

**Exchange rates:**

Danish kroner (DKK) per US dollar -

5.79 (2011)

5.62 (2011 est.)

5.62 (2010 est.)

5.36 (2009)

5.02 (2008)

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**Energy :: Faroe Islands**

**Electricity - production:**

261 million kWh (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 178

**Electricity - consumption:**

249 million kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 182

**Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 197

**Electricity - imports:**

0 kWh (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 188

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

100,100 kW (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 171

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

64.9% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 122

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 88

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

31% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 76

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

4.1% of total installed capacity (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 49

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 170

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 114

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 186

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 132

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 176

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

4,871 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 170

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 175

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

4,661 bbl/day (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 158

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 132

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 144

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 101

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 193

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 139

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**  
785,300 Mt (2011 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 170

## Communications :: Faroe Islands

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**Telephones - main lines in use:**  
24,000 (2012)  
**country comparison to the world:** 182

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**  
61,000 (2012)  
**country comparison to the world:** 199

**Telephone system:**  
**general assessment:** good international communications; good domestic facilities  
**domestic:** conversion to digital system completed in 1998; both NMT (analog) and GSM (digital) mobile telephone systems are installed  
**international:** country code - 298; satellite earth stations - 1 Orion; 1 fiber-optic submarine cable to the Shetland Islands, linking the Faroe Islands with Denmark and Iceland; fiber-optic submarine cable connection to Canada-Europe cable (2011)

**Broadcast media:**  
1 publicly owned TV station; the Faroese telecommunications company distributes local and international channels through its digital terrestrial network; publicly owned radio station supplemented by 2 privately owned stations broadcasting over multiple frequencies (2008)

**Internet country code:**  
.fo

**Internet hosts:**  
7,575 (2012)  
**country comparison to the world:** 140

**Internet users:**  
37,500 (2009)  
**country comparison to the world:** 176

## Transportation :: Faroe Islands

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**Airports:**  
1 (2013)  
**country comparison to the world:** 215

**Airports - with paved runways:**  
**total:** 1  
**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 1 (2013)

**Roadways:**  
**total:** 463 km (2006)  
**country comparison to the world:** 196

**Merchant marine:**  
**total:** 37  
**country comparison to the world:** 79  
**by type:** cargo 20, chemical tanker 7, container 2, passenger/cargo 3, refrigerated cargo 3, roll on/roll off 2  
**foreign-owned:** 28 (Iceland 4, Norway 13, Sweden 11) (2010)

**Ports and terminals:**  
**major seaport(s):** Fuglafjordur, Torshavn, Vagur

## Military :: Faroe Islands

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**Military branches:**  
no regular military forces (2012)

**Manpower available for military service:**  
**males age 16-49:** 11,831 (2010 est.)

**Manpower fit for military service:**  
**males age 16-49:** 9,827  
**females age 16-49:** 8,418 (2010 est.)



**Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:**

**male:** 372

**female:** 373 (2010 est.)

**Military expenditures:**

NA

**Military - note:**

defense is the responsibility of Denmark

## **Transnational Issues :: Faroe Islands**

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**Disputes - international:**

because anticipated offshore hydrocarbon resources have not been realized, earlier Faroese proposals for full independence have been deferred; Iceland, the UK, and Ireland dispute Denmark's claim that the Faroe Islands' continental shelf extends beyond 200 nm