

# Who are Afghans?

## They are "Afghans"

"Afghani" is the term used for money. Use the term "Afghan" not "Afghani" when describing people and things from Afghanistan.

## Haram Quick List:

### • Pork Products

For most Afghans, this includes pork flavoring and any product that is made in a factory or restaurant that serves pork.

- Alcohol
- Gelatin

## Women

Women are valued as homemakers, and don't often leave the house alone without a male escort, and -- per the Taliban's rules -- they are to wear a burqa when in a public place. Women are not permitted to drive, though some in villages do.

Some more progressive families promote education for their daughters, and many women work outside the home.

Under the Taliban regime, the famous blue burqa is required for all women outside the home.

## Children

Children are often the center of Afghan parents' lives. They have a more relaxed parenting style as they are used to parenting in groups.

## Gender Separation

Genders are always separated in social and public settings. Sometimes this is enforced legally as well. Afghans will naturally separate by gender while socializing outside the home.

## Dogs

Most Afghans are very afraid of dogs. Additionally, dogs are seen as unclean. If an Afghan touches a dog, they will want to wash their hands.

## Prayer Schedule

- Prayer 1 - right before sunrise
- Prayer 2 - noon
- Prayer 3 - late afternoon
- Prayer 4 - just after sunset
- Prayer 5 - between sunset and midnight

## Cooking + Eating

The floor of the kitchen is a place for scraps. While cooking, many women will throw food scraps on the floor. Many Afghans eat on the floor in the living area. Therefore, they do not wear shoes in the house, and keep the living room floor very clean.

## Halal + Haram

"Halal" is a general term that describes behaviors, foods and actions that are permissible and clean according to Islamic law. What is and isn't Halal varies depending on cultural and family background. Halal originally referred to the specific way an animal was slaughtered, but is now used more generally to describe what is "permissible."

"Haram" is a term that describes behaviors, foods and actions that are not permissible, and unclean under Islamic law.

## Hijab



"Hijab" refers to the head covering that muslim women wear when they are in front of any male outside their immediate family. When women are alone, they will often take off their hijabs if they know no men will see. Afghan women are famous for wearing them loosely, sometimes just draping fabric around their face.

## Men

Men view themselves as the providers and protectors of their families, often providing for parents and in-laws as well. Afghan men are deeply driven by reputation and honor in their family and community.

## A Generation of Conflict

Most Afghans have lived their whole lives with a "wartime" mentality. It is common for there to be gaps in schooling, low literacy rates and trauma responses to everyday experiences.

## Prayer

Muslims must pray 5 times a day. Most will wait to eat lunch and dinner until after noon and after sunset respectively.

Muslims pray facing east in the direction of Mecca. They will use a special mat as they pray on the ground.

## Sleeping

Most Afghans sleep on the floor and in one room as a family. However, many families have adopted western sleeping styles.

*Salaam alaikum  
(right hand on heart + gentle nod)*



## Language

Dari + Pashtu are the national languages. However, Afghanistan is a landlocked country that has many neighboring languages that influence its multi-lingual citizens.

## Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan

The Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Most speak Pashto. Pashtuns have long held the majority in government. Values such as honor, loyalty, hospitality and protection of female relatives remain important principles of social responsibility throughout Afghanistan.

The Tajiks have Persian heritage and are not tribal and do not organise themselves by tribal association. Instead, their loyalty revolves around their family and village. The Tajiks tend to be more urbanized than many other ethnicities and are relatively less rigid in their religious beliefs.

The Hazara people are widely understood to be one of the most socially and politically marginalised ethnic groups in Afghanistan. They speak a dialect of Dari known as 'Hazaragi' and make up the largest Shi'a Muslim population in the country. Most Hazaras live in the central mountain region (called the Hazarajat) and in certain districts of Kabul.

## Food and Drink

Food varies from region to region, but some traditional staples that can be found in the Afghan diet are:

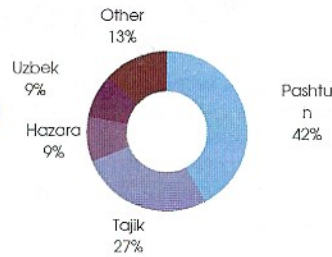
- Vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, cilantro and potatoes.
- Fruits like lemons, oranges, figs and grapes.
- Chicken and Beef
- Full fat Yogurt
- Dates, Nuts, Dried Fruit
- Long grain rice

## Treasures of Afghanistan

- Saffron grows in abundance
- Poetry is revered
- Rugs are famously hand woven
- Intricate gold jewelry is often worn for weddings and significant occasions.

## Religion

Afghanistan is 99.7% Sunni muslim.



Tea is a social centerpiece of Afghan culture. Tea is often served with nuts or cookies in the afternoon or after a meal. The host will brew and pour the tea for each person. Spices like cardamom, saffron and nutmeg are also popular.



## Central Asian Culture

Afghans do not usually identify as Middle Eastern in ethnicity or culture. In fact, they share many cultural traits of their Chinese, Tajik, Uzbek and Iranian neighbors. They are likely to subscribe to Eastern medicine practices. Many Afghans view their country as a culture and lifestyle all its own.

## What can we learn from Afghans?

Afghans are a hospitable, hardworking, kind and loyal people. They treasure and honor family relationships, and they take care of their families and their community.

Despite the sadness that they carry in their hearts, and the trauma they have endured, they are proud to be Afghan. Their homeland is full of beautiful mountains, lush gardens and rich cultural history. Afghans value beauty and creativity in art and music. Above all, Afghans are resilient, strong and brave to the core. May we honor their bravery and welcome them well.

## Do Serve Them Tea

Even if there is a language barrier, they will feel welcomed if you sit with them over a cup of tea.

## Do Ask Questions

Everyone's background and experiences are different. Even if you use a translation app, most Afghans will be happy to tell you about the country that they love so much.

\*Do be sensitive to the experiences that Afghans have endured. Anxiety, Depression and PTSD are very very common among this generation.

## Do Give Them Privacy

If possible, give them a space in your home where they can have complete privacy. This gives women freedom to take off their hijabs, and a space for private family time.

## Do Play With Their Kids

Generally, kids are not held to the same gender rules until they are older. Most women delight in letting you hold and love their baby, regardless of gender.

## Do Invite Them Along

America is their home for the foreseeable future. To the extent that they are willing, invite them to experience your errands with you. Learning how to get gas, buy food, and shop for clothes are all helpful skills to share!

## Do Dress Sensitively

This can be the most disorienting initial culture shock for Afghans. Of course, soon they will understand American clothing norms. However, upon arrival, it can be a trust and comfort barrier if a host family member is dressed immodestly. *pants + long sleeves*

## Do Offer Many Times

In Afghan culture, it's polite to decline a few times when offered something. If they say no, it might not really mean no. Feel free to offer a few times before accepting no as an answer.

## Do Refer to Your Guests as Family

Afghans have a beautiful community-based culture. Men of the same age will often refer to each other as "brother", and women as "sister". Afghan children will call close friends of their parents' age "auntie" or "uncle."

## Don't Cross Genders

It can be upsetting for a muslim man to accidentally brush hands or bump into a woman that isn't his wife. No need to feel awkward, just be aware as you serve food, pass items, etc. You will notice that they often hold items from one end, so that the other end can be taken with no physical contact.

## Don't Serve Pork

If possible, remove all pork products from your home. If that is not possible, communicate to them that their food has not been in contact with pork products.

## Show Christ's Love Without Proselytizing

Islam is THE fabric of their family, culture, diet, experiences, etc. In their time of distress, it's important to communicate safety, love and welcome. Above all, they are humans who have basic needs. After those needs are met, trust and friendship is a place where hope can be shared.

## Don't Force Holidays

Continue to celebrate and decorate as usual, but do not require your Afghan friends to do the same. Most Afghans have never celebrated Western holidays, and some believe it is sin. However, many modern families celebrate birthdays.

## Don't Share Information Publicly

Always ask before taking a picture of an Afghan, especially if they are a woman. Above all, do not share any pictures or defining characteristics of your guests online.

## Don't Push Immigration or Work Status

At this time, most incoming Afghans do not have permission to work or a viable path to citizenship. There will be ways to assist with that in the coming months. For right now, work and citizenship is not available to them legally.

*make eye contact*