



United States

The **United States of America** (USA), also known as the **United States** (U.S.) or **America**, is a country primarily located in North America. It is a federal republic of 50 states and a federal capital district, Washington, D.C. The 48 contiguous states border Canada to the north and Mexico to the south, with the semi-exclave of Alaska in the northwest and the archipelago of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. The United States also asserts sovereignty over five major island territories and various uninhabited islands in Oceania and the Caribbean.^[j] It is a megadiverse country, with the world's third-largest land area^[c] and third-largest population, exceeding 340 million.^[k]

Paleo-Indians migrated from North Asia to North America over 12,000 years ago, and formed various civilizations. Spanish colonization established Spanish Florida in 1513, the first European colony in what is now the continental United States. British colonization followed with the 1607 settlement of Virginia, the first of the Thirteen Colonies. Forced migration of enslaved Africans supplied the labor force to sustain the Southern Colonies' plantation economy. Clashes with the British Crown over taxation and lack of parliamentary representation sparked the American Revolution, leading to the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Victory in the 1775–1783 Revolutionary War brought international recognition of U.S. sovereignty and fueled westward expansion, dispossessing native inhabitants. As more states were admitted, a North–South division over slavery led the Confederate States of America to attempt secession and fight the Union in the 1861–1865 American Civil War. With the United States' victory and reunification, slavery was abolished nationally. By 1900, the country had established itself as a great power, a status solidified after its involvement in World War I. Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the U.S. entered World War II. Its aftermath left the U.S. and the Soviet Union as rival superpowers, competing for ideological dominance and international influence.

United States of America



Flag



Coat of arms

Motto: "In God We Trust"^[1]

Other traditional mottos:^[2]

"E pluribus unum" (Latin)

"Out of many, one"

"Annuit cœptis" (Latin)

"Providence favors our undertakings"

"Novus ordo seclorum" (Latin)

"New order of the ages"

Anthem: "The Star-Spangled Banner"^[3]

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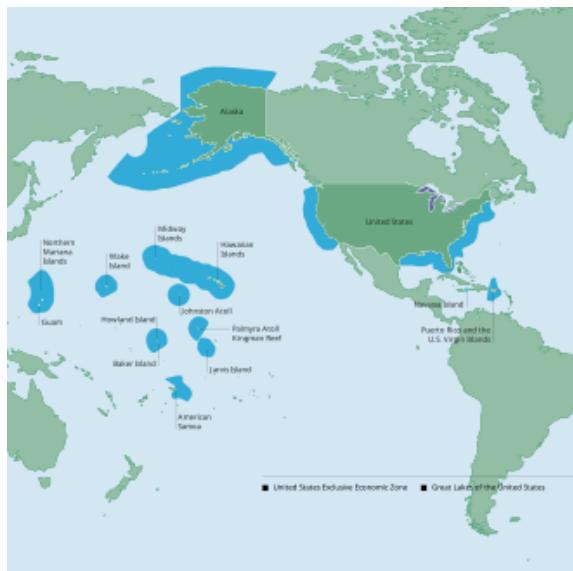
during the Cold War. The Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 ended the Cold War, leaving the U.S. as the world's sole superpower.

The U.S. national government is a presidential constitutional federal republic and representative democracy with three separate branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. It has a bicameral national legislature composed of the House of Representatives (a lower house based on population) and the Senate (an upper house based on equal representation for each state). Federalism grants substantial autonomy to the 50 states. In addition, 574 Native American tribes have sovereignty rights, and there are 326 Native American reservations. Since the 1850s, the Democratic and Republican parties have dominated American politics, while American values are based on a democratic tradition inspired by the American Enlightenment movement.

A developed country, the U.S. ranks high in economic competitiveness, innovation, and higher education. Accounting for over a quarter of nominal global GDP, its economy has been the world's largest since about 1890. It is the wealthiest country, with the highest disposable household income per capita among OECD members, though its wealth inequality is highly pronounced. Shaped by centuries of immigration, the culture of the U.S. is diverse and globally influential. Making up more than a third of global military spending, the country has one of the strongest militaries and is a designated nuclear state. A member of numerous international organizations, the U.S. plays a major role in global political, cultural, economic, and military affairs.

Etymology

Documented use of the phrase "United States of America" dates back to January 2, 1776. On that day, Stephen Moylan, a Continental Army aide to General George Washington, wrote a letter to Joseph Reed, Washington's aide-de-camp, seeking to go "with full and ample powers from the United States of America to Spain" to seek assistance in the Revolutionary War effort.^{[22][23]} The first known public usage is an anonymous essay published in the Williamsburg newspaper *The Virginia Gazette* on April 6, 1776.^[22]



Capital	Washington, D.C. 38°53'N 77°1'W
Largest city	New York City 40°43'N 74°0'W
Official languages	English ^[a]
Ethnic groups (2020) ^{[6][7][8]}	<p><i>By race:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61.6% <u>White</u> 12.4% <u>Black</u> 6% <u>Asian</u> 1.1% <u>Native American</u> 0.2% <u>Pacific Islander</u> 10.2% <u>two or more races</u> 8.4% <u>other</u> <p><i>By origin:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81.3% <u>non-Hispanic or Latino</u> 18.7% <u>Hispanic or Latino</u>
Religion (2023) ^[9]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67% <u>Christianity</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33% <u>Protestantism</u> 22% <u>Catholicism</u> 11% <u>other Christian</u> 1% <u>Mormonism</u> 22% <u>unaffiliated</u> 2% <u>Judaism</u> 6% <u>other religion</u> 3% <u>unanswered</u>
Demonym(s)	<u>American</u> ^{[10][b]}
Government	<p>Federal <u>presidential republic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>President</u>: Donald Trump • <u>Vice President</u>: JD Vance • <u>House Speaker</u>: Mike Johnson

Sometime on or after June 11, 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote "United States of America" in a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence,^[22] which was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.^[24]

The term "United States" and its initialism "U.S.", used as nouns or as adjectives in English, are common short names for the country. The initialism "USA", a noun, is also common.^[25] "United States" and "U.S." are the established terms throughout the U.S. federal government, with prescribed rules.^[1] "The States" is an established colloquial shortening of the name, used particularly from abroad;^[27] "stateside" is the corresponding adjective or adverb.^[28]

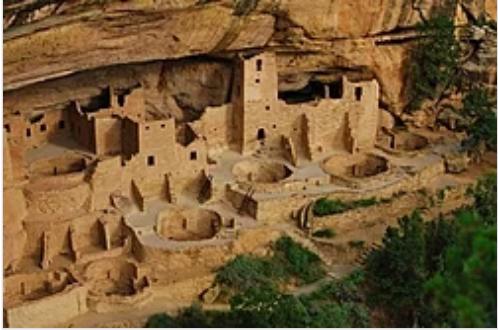
"America" is the feminine form of the first word of *Americus Vesputius*, the Latinized name of Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512);^[m] it was first used as a place name by the German cartographers Martin Waldseemüller and Matthias Ringmann in 1507.^{[29][n]} Vespucci first proposed that the West Indies discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 were part of a previously unknown landmass and not among the Indies at the eastern limit of Asia.^{[30][31][32]} In English, the term "America" usually does not refer to topics unrelated to the United States, despite the usage of "the Americas" to describe the totality of the continents of North and South America.^[33]

History

Indigenous peoples

The first inhabitants of North America migrated from Siberia over 12,000 years ago, either across the Bering land bridge or along the now-submerged Ice Age coastline.^{[35][36]} The Clovis culture, which appeared around 11,000 BC, is believed to be the first widespread culture in the Americas.^{[37][38]} Over time, Indigenous North American cultures grew increasingly sophisticated, and some, such as the Mississippian culture, developed agriculture, architecture, and complex societies.^[39] In the post-archaic period, the Mississippian cultures were located in the midwestern, eastern, and southern regions, and the Algonquian in the

• Chief Justice	John Roberts
Legislature	Congress
• Upper house	Senate
• Lower house	House of Representatives
Independence from Great Britain	
• Declaration	July 4, 1776
• Confederation	March 1, 1781
• Recognition	September 3, 1783
• Constitution	June 21, 1788
Area	
• Total area	3,796,742 sq mi (9,833,520 km ²) ^{[12][c]} (3rd)
• Water (%)	7.0 ^[11] (2010)
• Land area	3,531,905 sq mi (9,147,590 km ²) (3rd)
Population	
• 2024 estimate	▲ 340,110,988 ^[13]
• 2020 census	▲ 331,449,281 ^{[14][d]} (3rd)
• Density	96.3/sq mi (37.2/km ²) (180th)
GDP (PPP)	2025 estimate
• Total	▲ \$30.507 trillion ^{[15][e]} (2nd)
• Per capita	▲ \$89,105 ^[15] (9th)
GDP (nominal)	2025 estimate
• Total	▲ \$30.507 trillion ^[15] (1st)
• Per capita	▲ \$89,105 ^[15] (7th)
Gini (2023)	▼ 41.6 ^{[16][f]} medium inequality
HDI (2023)	▲ 0.938 ^[17] very high (17th)
Currency	U.S. dollar (\$) (USD)
Time zone	UTC-4 to -12, +10, +11
• Summer (DST)	UTC-4 to -10 ^[g]
Date format	mm/dd/yyyy ^[h]
Calling code	+1
ISO 3166 code	US
Internet TLD	.us ^[18]



Cliff Palace, a settlement of ancestors of the Native American Pueblo peoples in present-day Montezuma County, Colorado, built between c. 1200 and 1275^[34]

Christopher Columbus began exploring the Caribbean for Spain in 1492, leading to Spanish-speaking settlements and missions from what are now Puerto Rico and Florida to New Mexico and California. The first Spanish colony in the present-day continental United States was Spanish Florida, chartered in 1513.^{[44][45][46][47]} After several settlements failed there due to hunger and disease, Spain's first permanent town, Saint Augustine, was founded in 1565.^[48]

France established its own settlements in French Florida in 1562, but they were either abandoned (Charlesfort, 1578) or destroyed by Spanish raids (Fort Caroline, 1565). Permanent French settlements were founded much later along the Great Lakes (Fort Detroit, 1701), the Mississippi River (Saint Louis, 1764) and especially the Gulf of Mexico (New Orleans, 1718).^[49] Early European colonies also included the thriving Dutch colony of New Netherland (settled 1626, present-day New York) and the small Swedish colony of New Sweden (settled 1638 in what is now Delaware). British colonization of the East Coast began with the Virginia Colony (1607) and the Plymouth Colony (Massachusetts, 1620).^{[50][51]}

The Mayflower Compact in Massachusetts and the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut established precedents for local representative self-governance and constitutionalism that would develop throughout the American colonies.^{[52][53]} While European settlers in what is now the United States experienced conflicts with Native Americans, they also engaged in trade, exchanging European tools for food and animal pelts.^{[54][55]} Relations ranged from close cooperation to warfare and massacres. The colonial authorities often pursued policies that forced Native Americans to adopt European lifestyles, including conversion to Christianity.^{[58][59]} Along the eastern seaboard, settlers trafficked African slaves through the Atlantic slave trade.^[60]

The original Thirteen Colonies^[p] that would later found the United States were administered as possessions of the British Empire by Crown-appointed governors,^[61] though local governments held elections open to most white male property owners.^{[62][63]} The colonial population grew rapidly from Maine to Georgia, eclipsing Native American populations;^[64] by the 1770s, the natural increase of the population was such

Great Lakes region and along the Eastern Seaboard, while the Hohokam culture and Ancestral Pueblos inhabited the Southwest.^[40] Native population estimates of what is now the United States before the arrival of European immigrants range from around 500,000^{[41][42]} to nearly 10 million.^{[42][43]}

European exploration, colonization and conflict (1513–1765)



The colonial possessions of Britain (the Thirteen Colonies in pink and others in purple), France (in blue), and Spain (in orange) in North America, 1750

that only a small minority of Americans had been born overseas.^[65] The colonies' distance from Britain facilitated the entrenchment of self-governance,^[66] and the First Great Awakening, a series of Christian revivals, fueled colonial interest in guaranteed religious liberty.^[67]

American Revolution and the early republic (1765–1800)

Following their victory in the French and Indian War, Britain began to assert greater control over local colonial affairs, resulting in colonial political resistance; one of the primary colonial grievances was a denial of their rights as Englishmen, particularly the right to representation in the British government that taxed them. To demonstrate their dissatisfaction and resolve, the First Continental Congress met in 1774 and passed the Continental Association, a colonial boycott of British goods enforced by local "committees of safety" that proved effective. The British attempt to then disarm the colonists resulted in the 1775 Battles of Lexington and Concord, igniting the American Revolutionary War. At the Second Continental Congress, the colonies appointed George Washington commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, and created a committee that named Thomas Jefferson to draft the Declaration of Independence. Two days after passing the Lee Resolution to create an independent nation the Declaration was adopted on July 4, 1776.^[68] The political values of the American Revolution included liberty, inalienable individual rights; and the sovereignty of the people;^[69] supporting republicanism and rejecting monarchy, aristocracy, and all hereditary political power; civic virtue; and vilification of political corruption.^[70] The Founding Fathers of the United States, who included Washington, Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, Thomas Paine, and many others, were inspired by Classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment philosophies and ideas.^{[71][72]}



The *Declaration of Independence* portrait depicts the Committee of Five presenting the Declaration to the Continental Congress on June 28, 1776, in Philadelphia.

Though in practical effect since its drafting in 1777, the Articles of Confederation was ratified in 1781 and formally established a decentralized government that operated until 1789.^[68] After the British surrender at the siege of Yorktown in 1781, American sovereignty was internationally recognized by the Treaty of Paris (1783), through which the U.S. gained territory stretching west to the Mississippi River, north to present-day Canada, and south to Spanish Florida.^[73] The Northwest Ordinance (1787) established the precedent by which the country's territory would expand with the admission of new states, rather than the expansion of existing states.^[74]

The U.S. Constitution was drafted at the 1787 Constitutional Convention to overcome the limitations of the Articles. It went into effect in 1789, creating a federal republic governed by three separate branches that together formed a system of checks and balances.^[75] George Washington was elected the country's first president under the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791 to allay skeptics' concerns about the power of the more centralized government.^[76] His resignation as commander-in-chief after the Revolutionary War and his later refusal to run for a third term as the country's first president established a precedent for the supremacy of civil authority in the United States and the peaceful transfer of power.^[77]

Westward expansion and Civil War (1800–1865)

In the late 18th century, American settlers began to expand westward in larger numbers, many with a sense of manifest destiny.^{[78][79]} The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 from France nearly doubled the territory of the United States.^{[80][81]} Lingering issues with Britain remained, leading to the War of 1812, which was fought to a draw.^[82] Spain ceded Florida and its Gulf Coast territory in 1819.^[83]

The Missouri Compromise of 1820, which admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state, attempted to balance the desire of northern states to prevent the expansion of slavery into new territories with that of southern states to extend it there. Primarily, the compromise prohibited slavery in all other lands of the Louisiana Purchase north of the 36°30' parallel.^[84]

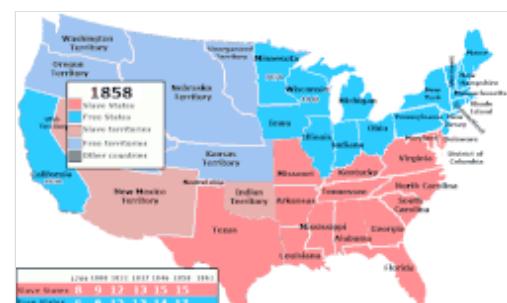
As Americans expanded further into territory inhabited by Native Americans, the federal government implemented policies of Indian removal or assimilation.^{[85][86]} The most significant such legislation was the Indian Removal Act of 1830, a key policy of President Andrew Jackson. It resulted in the Trail of Tears (1830–1850), in which an estimated 60,000 Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River were forcibly removed and displaced to lands far to the west, causing 13,200 to 16,700 deaths along the forced march.^[87] Settler expansion as well as this influx of Indigenous peoples from the East resulted in the American Indian Wars west of the Mississippi.^{[88][89]}

The United States annexed the Republic of Texas in 1845,^[90] and the 1846 Oregon Treaty led to U.S. control of the present-day American Northwest.^[91] Dispute with Mexico over Texas led to the Mexican-American War (1846–1848). After the victory of the U.S., Mexico recognized U.S. sovereignty over Texas, New Mexico, and California in the 1848 Mexican Cession; the cession's lands also included the future states of Nevada, Colorado and Utah.^{[78][92]} The California gold rush of 1848–1849 spurred a huge migration of white settlers to the Pacific coast, leading to even more confrontations with Native populations. One of the most violent, the California genocide of thousands of Native inhabitants, lasted into the mid-1870s.^[93] Additional western territories and states were created.^[94]

During the colonial period, slavery had been legal in the American colonies, becoming the main labor force in the large-scale, agriculture-dependent economies of the Southern Colonies from Maryland to Georgia. The practice began to be significantly questioned during the American Revolution,^[95] and spurred by an active abolitionist movement that had reemerged in the 1830s, states in the North enacted laws to prohibit slavery within their boundaries.^[96] At the same time, support for slavery had strengthened in Southern states, with widespread use of inventions such as the cotton gin (1793) having made slavery immensely profitable for Southern elites.^{[97][98][99]}



Territorial expansion of the United States



Slave states and free states in 1858

Throughout the 1850s, this sectional conflict regarding slavery was further inflamed by national legislation in the U.S. Congress and decisions of the Supreme Court. In Congress, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 mandated the forcible return to their owners in the South of slaves taking refuge in non-slave states, while the Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854 effectively gutted the anti-slavery requirements of the Missouri Compromise.^[100] In its Dred Scott decision of 1857, the Supreme Court ruled against a slave brought into non-slave territory, simultaneously declaring the entire Missouri Compromise to be unconstitutional. These and other events exacerbated tensions between North and South that would culminate in the American Civil War (1861–1865).^{[101][102]}

Beginning with South Carolina, 11 slave-state governments voted to secede from the United States in 1861, joining to create the Confederate States of America. All other state governments remained loyal to the Union.^{[q][103][104]} War broke out in April 1861 after the Confederacy bombarded Fort Sumter.^{[105][106]} Following the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, many freed slaves joined the Union army.^[107] The war began to turn in the Union's favor following the 1863 Siege of Vicksburg and Battle of Gettysburg, and the Confederates surrendered in 1865 after the Union's victory in the Battle of Appomattox Court House.^[108]

Reconstruction, Gilded Age, and Progressive Era (1863–1917)

Efforts toward reconstruction in the secessionist South had begun as early as 1862,^[111] but it was only after President Lincoln's assassination that the three Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution were ratified to protect civil rights. The amendments codified nationally the abolition of slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for crimes, promised equal protection under the law for all persons, and prohibited discrimination on the basis of race or previous enslavement.^{[112][113][114]} As a result, African Americans took an active political role in ex-Confederate states in the decade following the Civil War.^{[115][116]} The former Confederate states were readmitted to the Union, beginning with Tennessee in 1866 and ending with Georgia in 1870.^{[117][118]}

National infrastructure, including transcontinental telegraph and railroads, spurred growth in the American frontier. This was accelerated by the Homestead Acts, through which nearly 10 percent of the total land area of the United States was given away free to some 1.6 million homesteaders.^{[119][120]} From 1865 through 1917, an unprecedented stream of immigrants arrived in the United States, including 24.4 million from Europe.^[121] Most came through the Port of New York, and New York City and other large cities on the East Coast became home to large Jewish, Irish, and Italian populations. Many Northern Europeans as well as significant numbers of Germans and other Central Europeans moved to the Midwest. At the same time, about one million French Canadians migrated from Quebec to New England.^[122] During the Great Migration, millions of African Americans left the rural South for urban areas in the North.^[123] Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867.^[124]

The Compromise of 1877 is generally considered the end of the Reconstruction era, as it resolved the electoral crisis following the 1876 presidential election and led President Rutherford B. Hayes to reduce the role of federal troops in the South.^[125] Immediately, the Redeemers began evicting the Carpetbaggers and



An Edison Studios film showing immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in New York Harbor, a major point of entry for European immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.^{[109][110]}

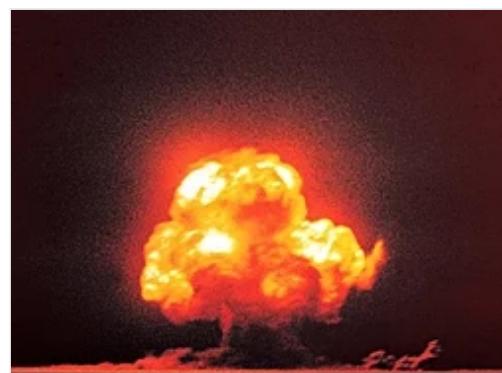
quickly regained local control of Southern politics in the name of white supremacy.^{[126][127]} African Americans endured a period of heightened, overt racism following Reconstruction, a time often called the nadir of American race relations.^{[128][129]} A series of Supreme Court decisions, including *Plessy v. Ferguson*, emptied the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of their force, allowing Jim Crow laws in the South to remain unchecked, sundown towns in the Midwest, and segregation in communities across the country, which would be reinforced by the policy of redlining later adopted by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation.^[130]

An explosion of technological advancement accompanied by the exploitation of cheap immigrant labor^[131] led to rapid economic expansion during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, allowing the United States to outpace the economies of England, France, and Germany combined.^{[132][133]} This fostered the amassing of power by a few prominent industrialists, largely by their formation of trusts and monopolies to prevent competition.^[134] Tycoons led the nation's expansion in the railroad, petroleum, and steel industries. The United States emerged as a pioneer of the automotive industry.^[135] These changes resulted in significant increases in economic inequality, slum conditions, and social unrest, creating the environment for labor unions and socialist movements to begin to flourish.^{[136][137][138]} This period eventually ended with the advent of the Progressive Era, which was characterized by significant reforms.^{[139][140]}

Pro-American elements in Hawaii overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy; the islands were annexed in 1898. That same year, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam were ceded to the U.S. by Spain after the latter's defeat in the Spanish–American War. (The Philippines was granted full independence from the U.S. on July 4, 1946, following World War II. Puerto Rico and Guam have remained U.S. territories.)^[141] American Samoa was acquired by the United States in 1900 after the Second Samoan Civil War.^[142] The U.S. Virgin Islands were purchased from Denmark in 1917.^[143]

World War I, Great Depression, and World War II (1917–1945)

The United States entered World War I alongside the Allies in 1917 helping to turn the tide against the Central Powers.^[144] In 1920, a constitutional amendment granted nationwide women's suffrage.^[145] During the 1920s and 1930s, radio for mass communication and early television transformed communications nationwide.^[146] The Wall Street Crash of 1929 triggered the Great Depression, to which President Franklin D. Roosevelt responded with the New Deal plan of "reform, recovery and relief", a series of unprecedented and sweeping recovery programs and employment relief projects combined with financial reforms and regulations.^{[147][148]}



The 1945 American Trinity test, the first-ever detonation of a nuclear weapon

Initially neutral during World War II, the U.S. began supplying war materiel to the Allies of World War II in March 1941 and entered the war in December after the Empire of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.^[149] The U.S. developed the first nuclear weapons and used them against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, ending the war.^{[150][151]} The United States was one of the "Four Policemen" who met to plan the post-war world, alongside the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and China.^{[152][153]} The U.S. emerged relatively unscathed from the war, with even greater economic power and international political influence.^[154]

Cold War and social revolution (1945–1991)

The end of World War II in 1945 left the U.S. and the Soviet Union as superpowers, each with its own political, military, and economic sphere of influence. Geopolitical tensions between the two superpowers soon led to the Cold War.^{[155][156][157]} The U.S. utilized the policy of containment to limit the USSR's sphere of influence, engaged in regime change against governments perceived to be aligned with Moscow, and prevailed in the Space Race, which culminated with the first crewed Moon landing in 1969.^{[158][159]}

Domestically, the U.S. experienced economic growth, urbanization, and population growth following World War II.^[160] The civil rights movement emerged, with Martin Luther King Jr. becoming a prominent leader in the early 1960s.^[161] The Great Society plan of President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration resulted in groundbreaking and broad-reaching laws, policies and a constitutional amendment to counteract some of the worst effects of lingering institutional racism.^[162]

The counterculture movement in the U.S. brought significant social changes, including the liberalization of attitudes toward recreational drug use and sexuality.^{[163][164]} It also encouraged open defiance of the military draft (leading to the end of conscription in 1973)^[165] and wide opposition to U.S. intervention in Vietnam, with the U.S. totally withdrawing in 1975.^[166] A societal shift in the roles of women was significantly responsible for the large increase in female paid labor participation during the 1970s, and by 1985 the majority of American women aged 16 and older were employed.^[167]

The Fall of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991 marked the end of the Cold War and left the United States as the world's sole superpower.^{[168][169][170][171]} This cemented the United States' global influence, reinforcing the concept of the "American Century" as the U.S. dominated international political, cultural, economic, and military affairs.^{[172][173]}

Contemporary (1991–present)

The 1990s saw the longest recorded economic expansion in American history, a dramatic decline in U.S. crime rates, and advances in technology. Throughout this decade, technological innovations such as the World Wide Web, the evolution of the Pentium microprocessor in accordance with Moore's law, rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, the first gene therapy trial, and cloning either emerged in the U.S. or were improved upon there. The Human Genome Project was formally launched in 1990, while Nasdaq became the first stock market in the United States to trade online in 1998.^[174]

In the Gulf War of 1991, an American-led international coalition of states expelled an Iraqi invasion force that had occupied neighboring Kuwait.^[175] The September 11 attacks on the United States in 2001 by the pan-Islamist militant organization al-Qaeda led to the war on terror and subsequent military interventions in Afghanistan and in Iraq.^{[176][177]}



Civil rights activists during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, D.C. in August 1963



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty at the White House in 1987.

The U.S. housing bubble culminated in 2007 with the Great Recession, the largest economic contraction since the Great Depression.^[178] In the 2010s and early 2020s, the United States has experienced increased political polarization and democratic backsliding.^{[179][180][181][182]} The country's polarization was violently reflected in the January 2021 Capitol attack,^[183] when a mob of insurrectionists^[184] entered the U.S. Capitol and sought to prevent the peaceful transfer of power^[185] in an attempted self-coup d'état.^[186]



The Twin Towers in New York City during the September 11 attacks in 2001

Geography

The United States is the world's third-largest country by total area behind Russia and Canada.^[c] The 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia have a combined area of 3,119,885 square miles (8,080,470 km²).^{[12][187]} In 2021, the United States had 8% of the Earth's permanent meadows and pastures and 10% of its cropland.^[188]

Starting in the east, the coastal plain of the Atlantic seaboard gives way to inland forests and rolling hills in the Piedmont plateau region.^[189] The Appalachian Mountains and the Adirondack Massif separate the East Coast from the Great Lakes and the grasslands of the Midwest.^[190] The Mississippi River System, the world's fourth-longest river system, runs predominantly north-south through the center of the country. The flat and fertile prairie of the Great Plains stretches to the west, interrupted by a highland region in the southeast.^[190]

The Rocky Mountains, west of the Great Plains, extend north to south across the country, peaking at over 14,000 feet (4,300 m) in Colorado.^[191] The supervolcano underlying Yellowstone National Park in the Rocky Mountains, the Yellowstone Caldera, is the continent's largest volcanic feature.^[192] Farther west are the rocky Great Basin and the Chihuahuan, Sonoran, and Mojave deserts.^[193] In the northwest corner of Arizona, carved by the Colorado River, is the Grand Canyon, a steep-sided canyon and popular tourist destination^[194] known for its overwhelming visual size and intricate, colorful landscape. The Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges run close to the Pacific coast. The lowest and highest points in the contiguous United States are in the State of California,^[195] about 84 miles (135 km) apart.^[196]

At an elevation of 20,310 feet (6,190.5 m), Alaska's Denali (also called Mount McKinley) is the highest peak in the country and on the continent.^[197] Active volcanoes in the U.S.



Supporters of then-President Trump attempting to stop the counting of electoral votes on January 6, 2021



A topographic map of the United States



The Grand Canyon in Arizona

are common throughout Alaska's Alexander and Aleutian Islands. Located entirely outside North America, the archipelago of Hawaii consists of volcanic islands, physiographically and ethnologically part of the Polynesian subregion of Oceania.^[198]

In addition to its total land area, the United States has one of the world's largest marine exclusive economic zones spanning approximately 4.5 million square miles (11.7 million km²) of ocean.^{[199][200]}

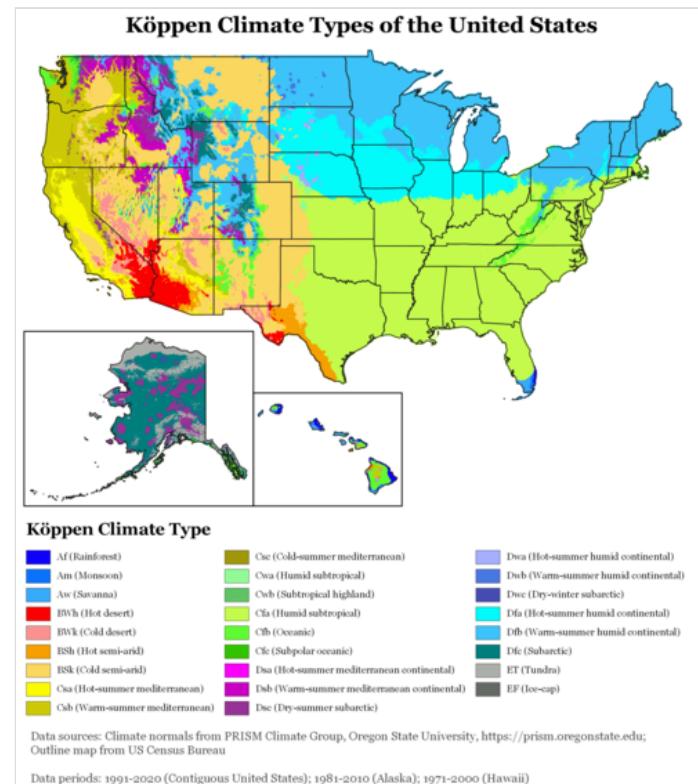
Climate

With its large size and geographic variety, the United States includes most climate types. East of the 100th meridian, the climate ranges from humid continental in the north to humid subtropical in the south.^[201] The western Great Plains are semi-arid.^[202] Many mountainous areas of the American West have an alpine climate. The climate is arid in the Southwest, Mediterranean in coastal California, and oceanic in coastal Oregon, Washington, and southern Alaska. Most of Alaska is subarctic or polar. Hawaii, the southern tip of Florida and U.S. territories in the Caribbean and Pacific are tropical.^[203]

The United States receives more high-impact extreme weather incidents than any other country.^{[204][205]}

States bordering the Gulf of Mexico are prone to hurricanes, and most of the world's tornadoes occur in the country, mainly in Tornado Alley.^[206] Due to climate change in the country, extreme weather has become more

frequent in the U.S. in the 21st century, with three times the number of reported heat waves compared to the 1960s.^{[207][208][209]} Since the 1990s, droughts in the American Southwest have become more persistent and more severe.^[210] The regions considered as the most attractive to the population are the most vulnerable.^[211]



The Köppen climate types of the United States

Biodiversity and conservation

The U.S. is one of 17 megadiverse countries containing large numbers of endemic species: about 17,000 species of vascular plants occur in the contiguous United States and Alaska, and over 1,800 species of flowering plants are found in Hawaii, few of which occur on the mainland.^[213] The United States is home to 428 mammal species, 784 birds, 311 reptiles, 295 amphibians,^[214] and around 91,000 insect species.^[215]

There are 63 national parks, and hundreds of other federally managed monuments, forests, and wilderness areas, administered by the National Park Service and other agencies.^[216] About 28% of the country's land is publicly owned and federally managed,^[217] primarily in the Western States.^[218] Most of this land is

protected, though some is leased for commercial use, and less than one percent is used for military purposes.^{[219][220]}

Environmental issues in the United States include debates on non-renewable resources and nuclear energy, air and water pollution, biodiversity, logging and deforestation,^{[221][222]} and climate change.^{[223][224]} The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the federal agency charged with addressing most environmental-related issues.^[225] The idea of wilderness has shaped the management of public lands since 1964, with the Wilderness Act.^[226] The Endangered Species Act of 1973 provides a way to protect threatened and endangered species and their habitats. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service implements and enforces the Act.^[227] In 2024, the U.S. ranked 35th among 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index.^[228]



The bald eagle, the national emblem of the United States since 1782 and officially declared the national bird in 2024^[212]

Government and politics

The United States is a federal republic of 50 states and a federal capital district, Washington, D.C. The U.S. asserts sovereignty over five unincorporated territories and several uninhabited island possessions.^{[19][229]} It is the world's oldest surviving federation,^[230] and its presidential system of national government has been adopted, in whole or in part, by many newly independent states worldwide following their decolonization.^[231] The Constitution of the United States serves as the country's supreme legal document.^[232] Most scholars describe the United States as a liberal democracy.^{[233][r]}

National government

Composed of three branches, all headquartered in Washington, D.C., the federal government is the national government of the United States. The U.S. Constitution establishes a separation of powers intended to provide a system of checks and balances to prevent any of the three branches from becoming supreme.^[245]

- The U.S. Congress is a bicameral legislature made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has 100 members—two residents from each state and elected by that state's voters for a six-year term. The House of Representatives has 435 members, elected for a two-year term by the constituency of the congressional district where they reside. A state's legislature decides the district boundaries, which are contiguous within the state. Every U.S. congressional district is of equivalent population and sends one representative to Congress.^[246] Election years for senators are staggered so that only one-third of them will be up for election every two years.^[247] U.S. representatives are all up for election at the same time every two years. The



The Capitol Building, seat of legislative government, houses both chambers of Congress.



The White House, residence and workplace of the president, includes offices for the executive staff.



The Supreme Court Building houses the nation's highest court.

U.S. Congress makes federal law, declares war, approves treaties, has the power of the purse,^[248] and has the power of impeachment.^[249] One of its foremost non-legislative functions is the power to investigate and oversee the executive branch.^[250] Congressional oversight is usually delegated to committees and is facilitated by Congress's power to issue subpoenas.^[251] Much of the work of Congress is performed by a collection of committees, each appointed for a specific purpose or function. Committee membership is by tradition and statute bipartisan.

- The U.S. president is the head of state, commander-in-chief of the military, chief executive of the federal government, and has the ability to veto legislative bills from the U.S. Congress before they become law. However, presidential vetoes can be overridden by a two-thirds supermajority vote in both chambers of Congress. The president appoints the members of the Cabinet, subject to Senate approval, and names other officials who administer and enforce federal law and policy through their respective agencies.^[252] The president also has clemency power for federal crimes and can issue pardons. Finally, the president has the authority to issue expansive "executive orders", subject to judicial review, in a number of policy areas. Candidates for president campaign with a vice-presidential running mate. Both candidates are elected together, or defeated together, in a presidential election. Unlike other votes in American politics, this is technically an indirect election in which the winner will be determined by the U.S. Electoral College. There, votes are officially cast by individual electors selected by their state legislature.^[253] In practice, however, each of the 50 states chooses a group of presidential electors who are required by state law to confirm the winner of their state's popular vote. Each state is allocated two electors plus one additional elector for each congressional district in the state, which in effect combines to equal the number of elected officials that state sends to Congress. The District of Columbia, with no representatives or senators, is allocated three electoral votes. Both the president and the vice president serve a four-year term, and the president may be reelected to the office only once, for one additional four-year term.^[s]

- The U.S. federal judiciary, whose judges are all appointed for life by the president with Senate approval, consists primarily of the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. courts of appeals, and the U.S. district courts. The lowest level in the federal judiciary is the federal district court, which decides all cases considered to be under "original jurisdiction", such as federal statutes, constitutional law, or international treaties. After a federal district court has decided a case, its decision may be contested and sent to a higher court, a federal court of appeals. The U.S. judicial system's 12 federal circuits divide the country into separate administrative regions for appeals decisions. The next and highest court in the system is the Supreme Court of the United States.^[254] The U.S. Supreme Court interprets laws and overturns those it finds unconstitutional.^[254] On average, the Supreme Court receives about 7,000 appeals petitions for writs of certiorari each year, but only grants about 80.^[255] Consisting of nine members led by the Chief Justice of the United States, the court judges each case before it by majority decision. As with all other federal judges, the members are appointed for life by the sitting president with Senate approval when a vacancy becomes available.^[256]

The three-branch system is known as the presidential system, in contrast to the parliamentary system where the executive is part of the legislative body. Many countries around the world adopted this aspect of the 1789 Constitution of the United States, especially in the postcolonial Americas.^[257]



Donald Trump



JD Vance

President of the United States

Vice President of the United States

Subdivisions

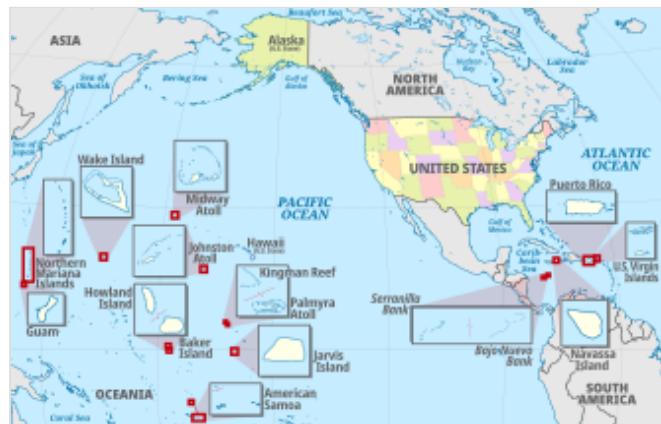
In the U.S. federal system, sovereign powers are shared between three levels of government specified in the Constitution: the national government, the states, and Indian tribes.^{[258][259]}

The U.S. also asserts sovereignty over five permanently inhabited territories: American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.^[19]

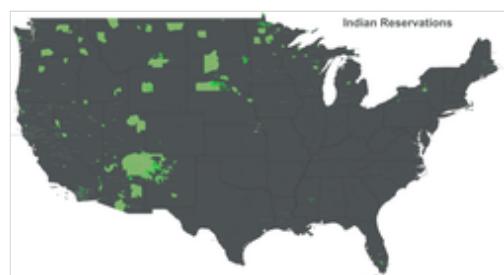
Residents of the 50 states are governed by their elected state government, under state constitutions compatible with the national constitution, and by elected local governments that are administrative divisions of a state.^[260] States are subdivided into counties or county equivalents, and (except for Hawaii) further divided into municipalities, each administered by elected representatives. The District of Columbia is a federal district containing the U.S. capital, Washington, D.C.^[261] The federal district is an administrative division of the federal government.^[262]

Indian country is made up of 574 federally recognized tribes and 326 Indian reservations. They hold a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. federal government in Washington and are legally defined as domestic dependent nations with inherent tribal sovereignty rights.^{[259][258][263][264]}

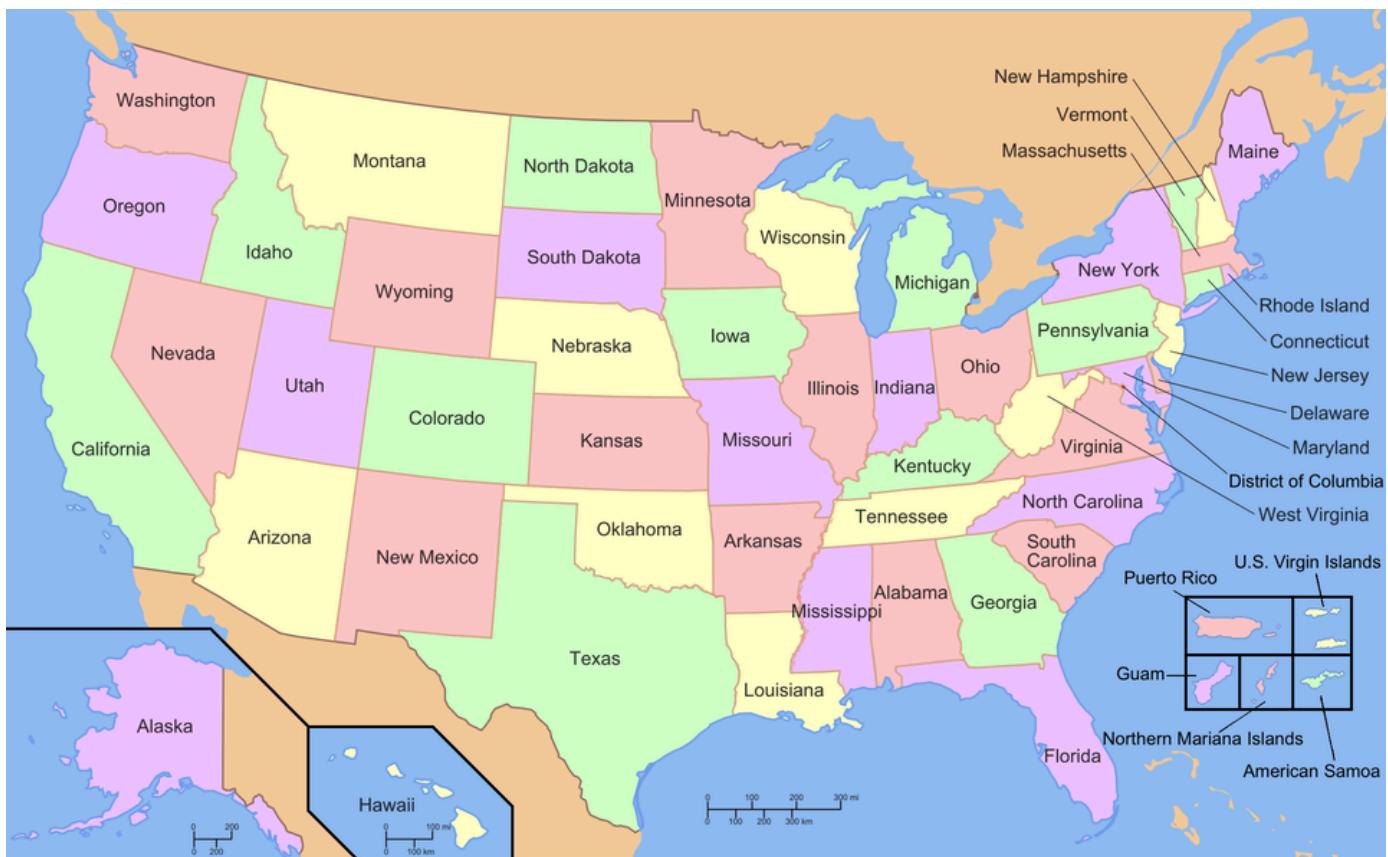
In addition to the five major territories, the U.S. also asserts sovereignty over the United States Minor Outlying Islands in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean.^[19] The seven undisputed islands without permanent populations are Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Atoll, and Palmyra Atoll. U.S. sovereignty over the unpopulated Bajo Nuevo Bank, Navassa Island, Serranilla Bank, and Wake Island is disputed.^[19]



Territories of the United States include American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

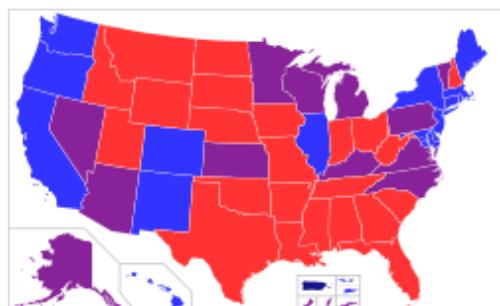


Map of 326 Indian reservations in the United States; 231 recognized Alaska Native tribes are not shown.



Political parties

The Constitution is silent on political parties. However, they developed independently in the 18th century with the Federalist and Anti-Federalist parties.^[265] Since then, the United States has operated as a *de facto* two-party system, though the parties have changed over time.^[266] Since the mid-19th century, the two main national parties have been the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. The former is perceived as relatively liberal in its political platform while the latter is perceived as relatively conservative in its platform.^[267]



States and territories by partisan control, as of February 2025:

- █ Democratic Party
- █ Republican Party
- █ New Progressive Party
- █ Divided partisan control

Foreign relations

The United States has an established structure of foreign relations, with the world's second-largest diplomatic corps as of 2024. It is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council^[268] and home to the United Nations headquarters.^[269] The United States is a member of the G7,^[270] G20,^[271] and OECD intergovernmental organizations.^[272] Almost all countries have embassies and many have consulates (official representatives) in the country. Likewise, nearly all countries host formal diplomatic missions with the United States, except Iran,^[273] North Korea,^[274] and Bhutan.^[275] Though Taiwan does not have formal diplomatic relations with the U.S., it maintains close unofficial relations.^[276] The United States regularly supplies Taiwan with military equipment to deter potential Chinese aggression.^[277] Its geopolitical attention also turned to the Indo-Pacific when the United States joined the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with Australia, India, and Japan.^[278]

The United States has a "Special Relationship" with the United Kingdom^[279] and strong ties with Canada,^[280] Australia,^[281] New Zealand,^[282] the Philippines,^[283] Japan,^[284] South Korea,^[285] Israel,^[286] and several European Union countries such as France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Poland.^[287] The U.S. works closely with its NATO allies on military and national security issues, and with countries in the Americas through the Organization of American States and the United States–Mexico–Canada Free Trade Agreement. In South America, Colombia is traditionally considered to be the closest ally of the United States.^[288] The U.S. exercises full international defense authority and responsibility for Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau through the Compact of Free Association.^[254] It has increasingly conducted strategic cooperation with India,^[289] while its ties with China have steadily deteriorated.^{[290][291]}



The United Nations headquarters has been situated along the East River in Midtown Manhattan since 1952; in 1945, the United States was a founding member of the UN.

Beginning in 2014, the U.S. had become a key ally of Ukraine.^{[292][293]} After Donald Trump was elected U.S. president in 2024, he sought to negotiate an end to the Russo-Ukrainian War. He paused all military aid to Ukraine in March 2025,^[294] although the aid resumed later.^[295] Trump also ended U.S. intelligence sharing with the country,^[296] but this too was eventually restored.^[297]

Military

The president is the commander-in-chief of the United States Armed Forces and appoints its leaders, the secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Department of Defense, which is headquartered at the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., administers five of the six service branches, which are made up of the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force.^[298] The Coast Guard is administered by the Department of Homeland Security in peacetime and can be transferred to the Department of the Navy in wartime.^[299]



The Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense in Arlington County, Virginia, is one of the world's largest office buildings with over 6.5 million square feet (600,000 m²) of floor space.

The United States spent \$997 billion on its military in 2024, which is by far the largest amount of any country, making up 37% of global military spending and accounting for 3.4% of the country's GDP.^[300] The U.S. possesses 42% of the world's nuclear weapons—the second-largest stockpile after that of Russia.^[301] The U.S. military is widely regarded as the most powerful and advanced in the world.^{[302][303]}

The United States has the third-largest combined armed forces in the world, behind the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Indian Armed Forces.^[304] The U.S. military operates about 800 bases and facilities abroad,^[305] and maintains deployments greater than 100 active duty personnel in 25 foreign countries.^[306] The United States has engaged in over 400 military interventions since its founding in 1776, with over half of these occurring between 1950 and 2019 and 25% occurring in the post-Cold War era.^[307]

State defense forces (SDFs) are military units that operate under the sole authority of a state government. SDFs are authorized by state and federal law but are under the command of the state's governor.^{[308][309][310]} By contrast, a state's National Guard units are under the dual control of state and federal governments; such units can also become federalized entities, but SDFs cannot be federalized.^[311] A state's National Guard personnel can be federalized by the president under the National Defense Act Amendments of 1933, which created the Guard and provides for the integration of Army National Guard & Air National Guard units and personnel into the U.S. Army and (since 1947) the U.S. Air Force.^[312]

Law enforcement and criminal justice

There are about 18,000 U.S. police agencies from local to national level in the United States.^[313] Law in the United States is mainly enforced by local police departments and sheriff departments in their municipal or county jurisdictions. The state police departments have authority in their respective state, and federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Marshals Service have national jurisdiction and specialized duties, such as protecting civil rights, national security, enforcing U.S. federal courts' rulings and federal laws, and interstate criminal activity.^[314] State courts conduct almost all civil and criminal trials,^[315] while federal courts adjudicate the much smaller number of civil and criminal cases that relate to federal law.^[316]



J. Edgar Hoover Building, the headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in Washington, D.C.^[317]

There is no unified "criminal justice system" in the United States. The American prison system is largely heterogeneous, with thousands of relatively independent systems operating across federal, state, local, and tribal levels. In 2025, "these systems hold nearly 2 million people in 1,566 state prisons, 98 federal prisons, 3,116 local jails, 1,277 juvenile correctional facilities, 133 immigration detention facilities, and 80 Indian country jails, as well as in military prisons, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories."^[317]

Despite disparate systems of confinement, four main institutions dominate: federal prisons, state prisons, local jails, and juvenile correctional facilities.^[318] Federal prisons are run by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and hold pretrial detainees as well as people who have been convicted of federal crimes.^[318] State prisons, run by the department of corrections of each state, hold people sentenced and serving prison time (usually longer than one year) for felony offenses.^[318] Local jails are county or municipal facilities that incarcerate defendants prior to trial; they also hold those serving short sentences (typically under a year).^[318] Juvenile correctional facilities are operated by local or state governments and serve as longer-term placements for any minor adjudicated as delinquent and ordered by a judge to be confined.^[319]

In January 2023, the United States had the sixth-highest per capita incarceration rate in the world—531 people per 100,000 inhabitants—and the largest prison and jail population in the world, with more than 1.9 million people incarcerated.^{[317][320][321]} An analysis of the World Health Organization Mortality Database from 2010 showed U.S. homicide rates "were 7 times higher than in other high-income countries, driven by a gun homicide rate that was 25 times higher".^[322]

Economy

The U.S. has a highly developed mixed economy^[323] that has been the world's largest nominally since about 1890.^[324] Its 2024 gross domestic product (GDP)^[e] of more than \$29 trillion^[325] constituted over 25% of nominal global economic output, or 15% at purchasing power parity (PPP). From 1983 to 2008, U.S. real compounded annual GDP growth was 3.3%, compared to a 2.3% weighted average for the rest of the G7.^[326] The country ranks first in the world by nominal GDP,^[327] second when adjusted for purchasing power parities (PPP),^[15] and ninth by PPP-adjusted GDP per capita.^[15] In February 2024, the total U.S. federal government debt was \$34.4 trillion.^[328]

Of the world's 500 largest companies by revenue, 136 were headquartered in the U.S. in 2023,^[329] which is the highest number of any country.^[330] The U.S. dollar is the currency most used in international transactions and the world's foremost reserve currency, backed by the country's dominant economy, its military, the petrodollar system, its large U.S. treasuries market, and its linked eurodollar.^[331] Several countries use it as their official currency, and in others it is the *de facto* currency.^{[332][333]} The U.S. has free trade agreements with several countries, including the USMCA.^[334] Although the United States has reached a post-industrial level of economic development^[335] and is often described as having a service economy,^{[335][336]} it remains a major industrial power;^[337] in 2021, the U.S. manufacturing sector was the world's second-largest after China's.^[338]

New York City is the world's principal financial center,^{[340][341]} and its metropolitan area is the world's largest metropolitan economy.^[342] The New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq, both located in New York City, are the world's two largest stock exchanges by market capitalization and trade volume.^{[343][344]} The United States is at the forefront of technological advancement and innovation in many economic fields, especially in artificial intelligence; electronics and computers; pharmaceuticals; and medical, aerospace and military equipment.^[345] The country's economy is fueled by abundant natural resources, a well-developed infrastructure, and high productivity.^[346] The largest trading partners of the United States are the European Union, Mexico, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, India, and Taiwan.^[347] The United States is the world's largest importer and second-largest exporter.^[t] It is by far the world's largest exporter of services.^[350]



The U.S. dollar is the most-used currency in international transactions and the world's foremost reserve currency.



New York City is the world's principal financial center, and its metropolitan area is the world's largest metropolitan economy.



The New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street, the world's largest stock exchange by market capitalization^[339]

Americans have the highest average household^[351] and employee income among OECD member states, and the fourth-highest median household income in 2023,^[352] up from sixth-highest in 2013.^[353] With personal consumption expenditures of over \$18.5 trillion in 2023,^[354] the U.S. has a heavily consumer-driven economy and is the world's largest consumer market.^[355] The U.S. ranked first in the number of dollar billionaires and millionaires in 2023, with 735 billionaires and nearly 22 million millionaires.^[356]

Wealth in the United States is highly concentrated; in 2011, the richest 10% of the adult population owned 72% of the country's household wealth, while the bottom 50% owned just 2%.^[357] U.S. wealth inequality increased substantially since the late 1980s,^[358] and income inequality in the U.S. reached a record high in 2019.^[359] In 2024, the country had some of the highest wealth and income inequality levels among OECD countries.^[360] Since the 1970s, there has been a decoupling of U.S. wage gains from worker productivity.^[361] In 2016, the top fifth of earners took home more than half of all income,^[362] giving the U.S. one of the widest income distributions among OECD countries.^{[363][361]} There were about 771,480 homeless persons in the U.S. in 2024.^[364] In 2022, 6.4 million children experienced food insecurity.^[365] Feeding America estimates that around one in five, or approximately 13 million, children experience hunger in the U.S. and do not know where or when they will get their next meal.^[366] Also in 2022, about 37.9 million people, or 11.5% of the U.S. population, were living in poverty.^[367]

The United States has a smaller welfare state and redistributes less income through government action than most other high-income countries.^{[368][369]} It is the only advanced economy that does not guarantee its workers paid vacation nationally^[370] and one of a few countries in the world without federal paid family leave as a legal right.^[371] The United States has a higher percentage of low-income workers than almost any other developed country, largely because of a weak collective bargaining system and lack of government support for at-risk workers.^[372]

Science and technology

The United States has been a leader in technological innovation since the late 19th century and scientific research since the mid-20th century.^[373] Methods for producing interchangeable parts and the establishment of a machine tool industry enabled the large-scale manufacturing of U.S. consumer products in the late 19th century.^[374] By the early 20th century, factory electrification, the introduction of the assembly line, and other labor-saving techniques created the system of mass production.^[375]

In the 21st century, the United States continues to be one of the world's foremost scientific powers,^[378] though China has emerged as a major competitor in many fields.^[379] The U.S. has the highest research and development expenditures of any country^[380] and ranks ninth as a percentage of GDP.^[381] In 2022, the United States was (after China) the country with the second-highest number of published scientific papers.^[382] In 2021, the U.S. ranked second (also after China) by the number of patent applications, and third by trademark and industrial design applications (after China and Germany), according to World Intellectual Property Indicators.^[383] In 2023^[384] and 2024,^[385] the United States ranked third (after Switzerland and Sweden) in the Global Innovation Index. The United States is

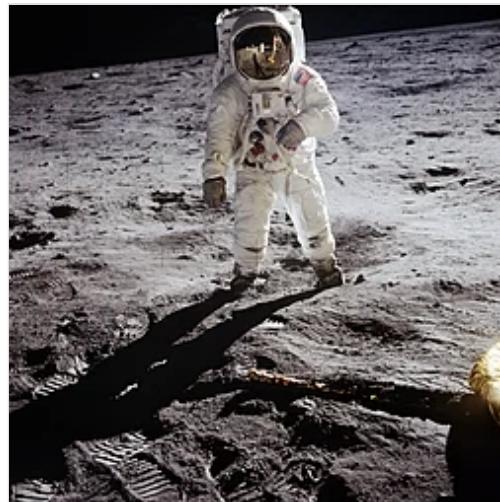


California's Silicon Valley is the largest and foremost technology and innovation hub in the world.^{[376][377]}

considered to be the leading country in the development of artificial intelligence technology.^[386] In 2023, the United States was ranked the second most technologically advanced country in the world (after South Korea) by *Global Finance* magazine.^[387]

Spaceflight

The United States has maintained a space program since the late 1950s, beginning with the establishment of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1958.^{[388][389]} NASA's Apollo program (1961–1972) achieved the first crewed Moon landing with the 1969 Apollo 11 mission; it remains one of the agency's most significant milestones.^{[390][391]} Other major endeavors by NASA include the Space Shuttle program (1981–2011),^[392] the Voyager program (1972–present), the Hubble and James Webb space telescopes (launched in 1990 and 2021, respectively),^{[393][394]} and the multi-mission Mars Exploration Program (Spirit and Opportunity, Curiosity, and Perseverance).^[395] NASA is one of five agencies collaborating on the International Space Station (ISS);^[396] U.S. contributions to the ISS include several modules, including Destiny (2001), Harmony (2007), and Tranquility (2010), as well as ongoing logistical and operational support.^[397]



Astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong (seen in visor reflection) during the 1969 Apollo 11 mission, the first crewed Moon landing. The United States is the only country to have landed humans on the Moon.

The United States private sector dominates the global commercial spaceflight industry.^[398] Prominent American spaceflight contractors include Blue Origin, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and SpaceX. NASA programs such as the Commercial Crew Program, Commercial Resupply Services, Commercial Lunar Payload Services, and NextSTEP have facilitated growing private-sector involvement in American spaceflight.^[399]

Energy

In 2023, the United States received approximately 84% of its energy from fossil fuel, and its largest source of energy was petroleum (38%), followed by natural gas (36%), renewable sources (9%), coal (9%), and nuclear power (9%).^{[400][401]} In 2022, the United States constituted about 4% of the world's population, but consumed around 16% of the world's energy.^[402] The U.S. ranks as the second-highest emitter of greenhouse gases behind China.^[403]

The U.S. is the world's largest producer of nuclear power, generating around 30% of the world's nuclear electricity.^[404] It also has the highest number of nuclear power reactors of any country.^[405] From 2024, the U.S. plans to triple its nuclear power capacity by 2050.^[406]

Transportation

The United States' 4 million miles (6.4 million kilometers) of road network, owned almost entirely by state and local governments, is the longest in the world.^{[407][408]} The extensive Interstate Highway System that connects all major U.S. cities is funded mostly by the federal government but maintained by state

departments of transportation. The system is further extended by state highways and some private toll roads.

The U.S. is among the top ten countries with the highest vehicle ownership per capita (850 vehicles per 1,000 people) in 2022. A 2022 study found that 76% of U.S. commuters drive alone and 14% ride a bicycle, including bike owners and users of bike-sharing networks. About 11% use some form of public transportation.^{[409][410]}

Public transportation in the United States is well developed in the largest urban areas, notably New York City, Washington, D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco; otherwise, coverage is generally less extensive than in most other developed countries. The U.S. also has many relatively car-dependent localities.^[411]

Long-distance intercity travel is provided primarily by airlines, but travel by rail is more common along the Northeast Corridor, the only high-speed rail in the U.S. that meets international standards. Amtrak, the country's government-sponsored national passenger rail company, has a relatively sparse network compared to that of Western European countries. Service is concentrated in the Northeast, California, the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, and Virginia/Southeast.

The United States has an extensive air transportation network. U.S. civilian airlines are all privately owned. The three largest airlines in the world, by total number of passengers carried, are U.S.-based; American Airlines became the global leader after its 2013 merger with US Airways.^[414] Of the 50 busiest airports in the world, 16 are in the United States, as well as five of the top 10.^[415] The world's busiest airport by passenger volume is Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International in Atlanta, Georgia.^{[412][415]} In 2022, most of the 19,969 U.S. airports^[416] were owned and operated by local government authorities, and there are also some private airports. Some 5,193 are designated as "public use", including for general aviation. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has provided security at most major airports since 2001.

The country's rail transport network, the longest in the world at 182,412.3 mi (293,564.2 km),^[417] handles mostly freight^{[418][419]} (in contrast to more passenger-centered rail in Europe^[420]). Because they are often privately owned operations, U.S. railroads lag behind those of the rest of the world in terms of electrification.^[421]

The country's inland waterways are the world's fifth-longest, totaling 25,482 mi (41,009 km).^[422] They are used extensively for freight, recreation, and a small amount of passenger traffic. Of the world's 50 busiest container ports, four are located in the United States, with the busiest in the U.S. being the Port of Los Angeles.^[423]



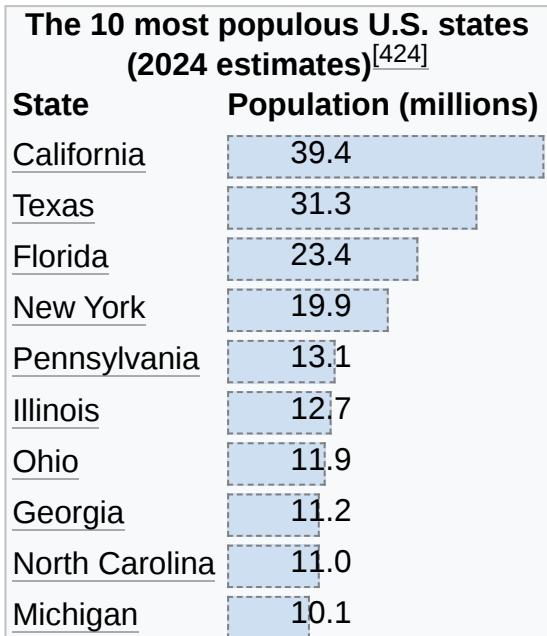
Interchange between Interstate 10 and Interstate 45 in Houston, Texas



Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport, serving the Atlanta metropolitan area, is the world's busiest airport by passenger traffic with over 75 million passengers as of 2021.^{[412][413]}

Demographics

Population



The U.S. Census Bureau reported 331,449,281 residents on April 1, 2020,^{[u][425]} making the United States the third-most-populous country in the world, after China and India.^[345] The Census Bureau's official 2024 population estimate was 340,110,988, an increase of 2.6% since the 2020 census.^[13] According to the Bureau's U.S. Population Clock, on July 1, 2024, the U.S. population had a net gain of one person every 16 seconds, or about 5400 people per day.^[426] In 2023, 51% of Americans age 15 and over were married, 6% were widowed, 10% were divorced, and 34% had never been married.^[427] In 2023, the total fertility rate for the U.S. stood at 1.6 children per woman,^[428] and, at 23%, it had the world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households in 2019.^[429]

The United States has a diverse population; 37 ancestry groups have more than one million members.^[430] White Americans with ancestry from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa form the largest racial and ethnic group at 57.8% of the United States population.^{[431][432]} Hispanic and Latino Americans form the second-largest group and are 18.7% of the United States population. African Americans constitute the country's third-largest ancestry group and are 12.1% of the total U.S. population.^[430] Asian Americans are the country's fourth-largest group, composing 5.9% of the United States population. The country's 3.7 million Native Americans account for about 1%,^[430] and some 574 native tribes are recognized by the federal government.^[433] In 2024, the median age of the United States population was 39.1 years.^[434]

Language

While many languages are spoken in the United States, English is by far the most commonly spoken and written.^[435] In 2025, Executive Order 14224 declared English the official language of the U.S., and federal agencies recognize English as the official language under the order.^[4] However, the U.S. has never had a *de jure* official language, as Congress has never passed a law to designate English as official for all three federal branches. Some laws, such as U.S. naturalization requirements, nonetheless standardize English. Twenty-eight states and the United States Virgin Islands have laws that designate English as the sole

official language; 19 states and the District of Columbia have no official language.^[436] Three states and four U.S. territories have recognized local or indigenous languages in addition to English: Hawaii (Hawaiian),^[437] Alaska (twenty Native languages),^{[v][438]} South Dakota (Sioux),^[439] American Samoa (Samoan), Puerto Rico (Spanish), Guam (Chamorro), and the Northern Mariana Islands (Carolinian and Chamorro). In total, 169 Native American languages are spoken in the United States.^[440] In Puerto Rico, Spanish is more widely spoken than English.^[441]

According to the American Community Survey (2020),^[442] some 245.4 million people in the U.S. age five and older spoke only English at home. About 41.2 million spoke Spanish at home, making it the second most commonly used language.

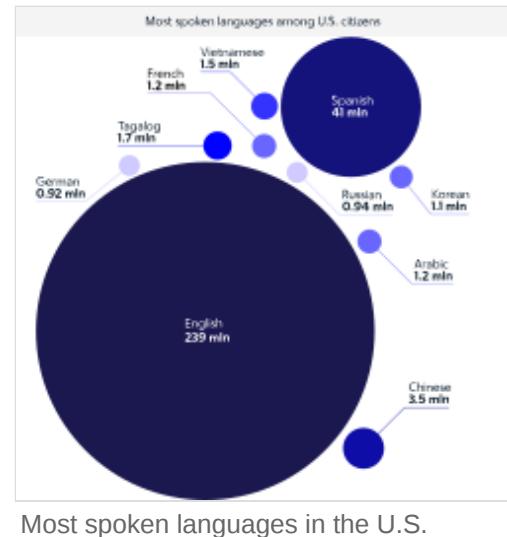
Other languages spoken at home by one million people or more include Chinese (3.40 million), Tagalog (1.71 million), Vietnamese (1.52 million), Arabic (1.39 million), French (1.18 million), Korean (1.07 million), and Russian (1.04 million). German, spoken by 1 million people at home in 2010, fell to 857,000 total speakers in 2020.^[443]

Immigration

America's immigrant population is by far the world's largest in absolute terms.^{[444][445]} In 2022, there were 87.7 million immigrants and U.S.-born children of immigrants in the United States, accounting for nearly 27% of the overall U.S. population.^[446] In 2017, out of the U.S. foreign-born population, some 45% (20.7 million) were naturalized citizens, 27% (12.3 million) were lawful permanent residents, 6% (2.2 million) were temporary lawful residents, and 23% (10.5 million) were unauthorized immigrants.^[447] In 2019, the top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (24% of immigrants), India (6%), China (5%), the Philippines (4.5%), and El Salvador (3%).^[448] In fiscal year 2022, over one million immigrants (most of whom entered through family reunification) were granted legal residence.^[449] In fiscal year 2024 alone, according to the Migration Policy Institute, the United States resettled 100,034 refugees, which "re-cements the United States' role as the top global resettlement destination, far surpassing other major resettlement countries in Europe and Canada".^[450]

Religion

The First Amendment guarantees the free exercise of religion in the country and forbids Congress from passing laws respecting its establishment.^{[451][452]} Religious practice is widespread, among the most diverse in the world,^[453] and profoundly vibrant.



Most spoken languages in the U.S.

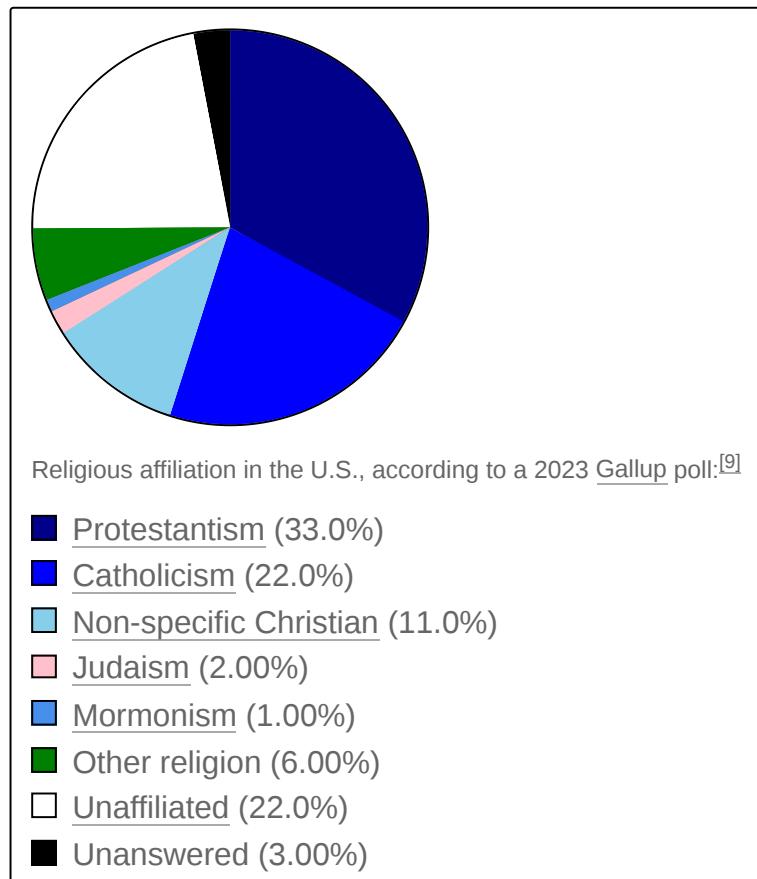


The Mexico–United States border wall between San Diego (left) and Tijuana (right)

The First Amendment guarantees the free exercise of religion in the country and forbids Congress from passing laws respecting its establishment.^{[451][452]} Religious practice is widespread, among the most diverse in the world,^[453] and profoundly vibrant.

[454] The country has the world's largest Christian population, which includes the fourth-largest population of Catholics.^[455] Other notable faiths include Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, New Age, and Native American religions.^[456] Religious practice varies significantly by region.^[457] "Ceremonial deism" is common in American culture.^[458]

The overwhelming majority of Americans believe in a higher power or spiritual force, engage in spiritual practices such as prayer, and consider themselves religious or spiritual.^{[459][460]} In the Southern United States' "Bible Belt", evangelical Protestantism plays a significant role culturally; New England and the Western United States tend to be more secular.^{[457][461]} Mormonism, a Restorationist movement founded in the U.S. in 1847,^[462] is the predominant religion in Utah and a major religion in Idaho.



Urbanization

About 82% of Americans live in urban areas, including suburbs;^[345] about half of those reside in cities with populations over 50,000.^[463] In 2022, 333 incorporated municipalities had populations over 100,000, nine cities had more than one million residents, and four cities—New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston—had populations exceeding two million.^[464] Many U.S. metropolitan populations are growing rapidly, particularly in the South and West.^[465]



The majority of the U.S. population lives in the suburbs, such as Nassau County, on Long Island in the New York metropolitan area.

Largest metropolitan areas in the United States

2024 MSA population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau^[466]

Rank	Name	Region	Pop.	Rank	Name	Region	Pop.
1	New York	Northeast	19,940,274	11	Boston	Northeast	5,025,517
2	Los Angeles	West	12,927,614	12	Riverside–San Bernardino	West	4,744,214
3	Chicago	Midwest	9,408,576	13	San Francisco	West	4,648,486
4	Dallas–Fort Worth	South	8,344,032	14	Detroit	Midwest	4,400,578
5	Houston	South	7,796,182	15	Seattle	West	4,145,494
6	Miami	South	6,457,988	16	Minneapolis–Saint Paul	Midwest	3,757,952

7	Washington, D.C.	South	6,436,489	17	Tampa-St. Petersburg	South	3,424,560
8	Atlanta	South	6,411,149	18	San Diego	West	3,298,799
9	Philadelphia	Northeast	6,330,422	19	Denver	West	3,052,498
10	Phoenix	West	5,186,958	20	Orlando	South	2,940,513

Health

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), average American life expectancy at birth was 78.4 years in 2023 (75.8 years for men and 81.1 years for women). This was a gain of 0.9 year from 77.5 years in 2022, and the CDC noted that the new average was largely driven by "decreases in mortality due to COVID-19, heart disease, unintentional injuries, cancer and diabetes".^[470] Starting in 1998, life expectancy in the U.S. fell [behind that of other wealthy industrialized countries](#), and Americans' "health disadvantage" gap has been increasing ever since.^[471]

The Commonwealth Fund reported in 2020 that the U.S. had the [highest suicide rate among high-income countries](#).^[472]

Approximately one-third of the U.S. adult population is obese and another third is overweight.^[473] The U.S. healthcare

system far [outspends that of any other country](#), measured both in per capita spending and as a percentage of GDP, but attains worse healthcare outcomes when compared to peer countries for reasons that are debated.^[474] The United States is the only developed country [without a system of universal healthcare](#), and a significant proportion of the population that does not carry health insurance.^[475] Government-funded healthcare coverage for the poor ([Medicaid](#)) and for those age 65 and older ([Medicare](#)) is available to Americans who meet the programs' income or age qualifications. In 2010, then-President Obama passed the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#).^{[w][476]} [Abortion in the United States](#) is not federally protected, and is illegal or restricted in 17 states.^[477]



The [Texas Medical Center](#) in [Houston](#) is the largest medical complex in the world.^{[467][468]} In 2018, it employed 120,000 people and treated 10 million patients.^[469]

Education

American primary and secondary education, known in the U.S. as [K–12](#) ("kindergarten through 12th grade"), is decentralized. School systems are operated by state, territorial, and sometimes municipal governments and regulated by the [U.S. Department of Education](#). In general, children are required to attend school or [an approved homeschool](#) from the age of five or six ([kindergarten](#) or [first grade](#)) until they are 18 years old. This often brings students through the [12th grade](#), the final year of a U.S. high school, but some states and territories allow them to leave school earlier, at age 16 or 17.^[479] The U.S. spends more on education per student than any other country,^[480] an average of \$18,614 per year per public elementary and secondary school student in 2020–2021.^[481] Among Americans age 25



Some 77% of American college students attend public institutions^[478] such as the [University of Virginia](#), founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819.

and older, 92.2% graduated from high school, 62.7% attended some college, 37.7% earned a bachelor's degree, and 14.2% earned a graduate degree.^[482] The U.S. literacy rate is near-universal.^{[345][483]} The U.S. has produced the most Nobel Prize winners of any country, with 411 (having won 413 awards).^{[484][485]}

U.S. tertiary or higher education has earned a global reputation. Many of the world's top universities, as listed by various ranking organizations, are in the United States, including 19 of the top 25.^{[486][487]} American higher education is dominated by state university systems, although the country's many private universities and colleges enroll about 20% of all American students. Local community colleges generally offer open admissions, lower tuition, and coursework leading to a two-year associate degree or a non-degree certificate.^[488]

As for public expenditures on higher education, the U.S. spends more per student than the OECD average, and Americans spend more than all nations in combined public and private spending.^[489] Colleges and universities directly funded by the federal government do not charge tuition and are limited to military personnel and government employees, including: the U.S. service academies, the Naval Postgraduate School, and military staff colleges. Despite some student loan forgiveness programs in place,^[490] student loan debt increased by 102% between 2010 and 2020,^[491] and exceeded \$1.7 trillion in 2022.^[492]

Culture and society

The United States is home to a wide variety of ethnic groups, traditions, and values.^{[494][495]} The country has been described as having the values of individualism and personal autonomy,^{[496][497]} as well as a strong work ethic^[498] and competitiveness.^[499] Voluntary altruism towards others also plays a major role;^{[500][501][502]} according to a 2016 study by the Charities Aid Foundation, Americans donated 1.44% of total GDP to charity—the highest rate in the world by a large margin.^[503] Americans have traditionally been characterized by a unifying political belief in an "American Creed" emphasizing consent of the governed, liberty, equality under the law, democracy, social equality, property rights, and a preference for limited government.^{[504][505]} The U.S. has acquired significant hard and soft power through its diplomatic influence, economic power, military alliances, and cultural exports such as American movies, music, video games, sports, and food.^{[506][507]} The influence that the United States exerts on other countries through soft power is referred to as Americanization.^[508]

Nearly all present Americans or their ancestors came from Europe, Africa, or Asia (the "Old World") within the past five centuries.^[509] Mainstream American culture is a Western culture largely derived from the traditions of European immigrants with influences from many other sources, such as traditions brought by slaves from Africa.^[510] More recent immigration from Asia and especially Latin America has added to a cultural mix that has been described as a homogenizing melting pot, and a heterogeneous salad bowl, with immigrants contributing to, and often assimilating into, mainstream American culture.



The Statue of Liberty (*Liberty Enlightening the World*) on Liberty Island in New York Harbor was an 1866 gift from France that has become an iconic symbol of the American Dream.^[493]

Under the First Amendment to the Constitution, the United States is considered to have the strongest protections of free speech of any country.^[511] Flag desecration, hate speech, blasphemy, and lese majesty are all forms of protected expression.^{[512][513][514]} A 2016 Pew Research Center poll found that Americans were the most supportive of free expression of any polity measured.^[515] Additionally, they are the "most supportive of freedom of the press and the right to use the Internet without government censorship".^[516] The U.S. is a socially progressive country^[517] with permissive attitudes surrounding human sexuality.^[518] LGBT rights in the United States are among the most advanced by global standards.^{[518][519][520]}

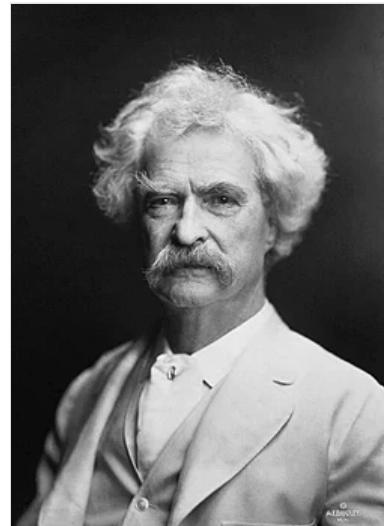
The American Dream, or the perception that Americans enjoy high levels of social mobility, plays a key role in attracting immigrants.^{[521][522]} Whether this perception is accurate has been a topic of debate.^{[523][524][525]} While mainstream culture holds that the United States is a classless society,^[526] scholars identify significant differences between the country's social classes, affecting socialization, language, and values.^{[527][528]} Americans tend to greatly value socioeconomic achievement, but being ordinary or average is promoted by some as a noble condition as well.^[529]

The National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities is an agency of the United States federal government that was established in 1965 with the purpose to "develop and promote a broadly conceived national policy of support for the humanities and the arts in the United States, and for institutions which preserve the cultural heritage of the United States."^[530] It is composed of four sub-agencies:

- National Endowment for the Arts
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities

Literature

Colonial American authors were influenced by John Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers.^{[532][533]} The American Revolutionary Period (1765–1783) is notable for the political writings of Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson. Shortly before and after the Revolutionary War, the newspaper rose to prominence, filling a demand for anti-British national literature.^{[534][535]} An early novel is William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy*, published in 1791. Writer and critic John Neal in the early- to mid-19th century helped advance America toward a unique literature and culture by criticizing predecessors such as Washington Irving for imitating their British counterparts, and by influencing writers such as Edgar Allan Poe,^[536] who took American poetry and short fiction in new directions. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller pioneered the influential Transcendentalism movement;^{[537][538]} Henry David Thoreau, author of Walden, was influenced by this movement.



Mark Twain, whom William Faulkner called "the father of American literature"^[531]

The conflict surrounding abolitionism inspired writers, like Harriet Beecher Stowe, and authors of slave narratives, such as Frederick Douglass. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) explored the dark side of American history, as did Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). Major American poets of the 19th century American Renaissance include Walt Whitman, Melville, and Emily Dickinson.^{[539][540]} Mark Twain was the first

major American writer to be born in the West. Henry James achieved international recognition with novels like *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). As literacy rates rose, periodicals published more stories centered around industrial workers, women, and the rural poor.^{[541][542]} Naturalism, regionalism, and realism were the major literary movements of the period.^{[543][544]}

While modernism generally took on an international character, modernist authors working within the United States more often rooted their work in specific regions, peoples, and cultures.^[545] Following the Great Migration to northern cities, African-American and black West Indian authors of the Harlem Renaissance developed an independent tradition of literature that rebuked a history of inequality and celebrated black culture. An important cultural export during the Jazz Age, these writings were a key influence on *Négritude*, a philosophy emerging in the 1930s among francophone writers of the African diaspora.^{[546][547]} In the 1950s, an ideal of homogeneity led many authors to attempt to write the Great American Novel,^[548] while the Beat Generation rejected this conformity, using styles that elevated the impact of the spoken word over mechanics to describe drug use, sexuality, and the failings of society.^{[549][550]} Contemporary literature is more pluralistic than in previous eras, with the closest thing to a unifying feature being a trend toward self-conscious experiments with language.^[551] Twelve American laureates have won the Nobel Prize in Literature.^[552]

Mass media

Media in the United States is broadly uncensored, with the First Amendment providing significant protections, as reiterated in *New York Times Co. v. United States*.^[511] The four major broadcasters in the U.S. are the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), American Broadcasting Company (ABC), and Fox Broadcasting Company (FOX). The four major broadcast television networks are all commercial entities. The U.S. cable television system offers hundreds of channels catering to a variety of niches.^[553] In 2021, about 83% of Americans over age 12 listened to broadcast radio, while about 40% listened to podcasts.^[554] In the prior year, there were 15,460 licensed full-power radio stations in the U.S. according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).^[555] Much of the public radio broadcasting is supplied by NPR, incorporated in February 1970 under the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967.^[556]

U.S. newspapers with a global reach and reputation include *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*.^[557] About 800 publications are produced in Spanish.^{[558][559]} With few exceptions, newspapers are privately owned, either by large chains such as Gannett or McClatchy, which own dozens or even hundreds of newspapers; by small chains that own a handful of papers; or, in an increasingly rare situation, by individuals or families. Major cities often have alternative newspapers to complement the mainstream daily papers, such as *The Village Voice* in New York City and *LA Weekly* in Los Angeles. The five most popular websites used in the U.S. are Google, YouTube, Facebook, Amazon, and Reddit—all of them American-owned.^[560]



Comcast Center in Philadelphia, headquarters of Comcast, one of the world's largest telecommunications companies and media conglomerates

In 2022, the video game market of the United States was the world's largest by revenue.^[561] In 2015, the U.S. video game industry consisted of 2,457 companies that employed around 220,000 jobs and generated \$30.4 billion in revenue.^[562] There are 444 publishers, developers, and hardware companies in California alone.^[563] According to the Game Developers Conference (GDC), the U.S. is the top location for video game development, with 58% of game developers based in the country in 2025.^[564]

Theater

The United States is well known for its theater. Mainstream theater in the United States derives from the old European theatrical tradition and has been heavily influenced by the British theater.^[565] By the middle of the 19th century, America had created new distinct dramatic forms in the Tom Shows, the showboat theater and the minstrel show.^[566] The central hub of the American theater scene is the Theater District in Manhattan, with its divisions of Broadway, off-Broadway, and off-off-Broadway.^[567]

Many movie and television celebrities have gotten their big break working in New York productions. Outside New York City, many cities have professional regional or resident theater companies that produce their own seasons. The biggest-budget theatrical productions are musicals. U.S. theater has an active community theater culture.^[568]

The Tony Awards recognizes excellence in live Broadway theater and are presented at an annual ceremony in Manhattan. The awards are given for Broadway productions and performances. One is also given for regional theater. Several discretionary non-competitive awards are given as well, including a Special Tony Award, the Tony Honors for Excellence in Theatre, and the Isabelle Stevenson Award.^[569]

Visual arts

Folk art in colonial America grew out of artisanal craftsmanship in communities that allowed commonly trained people to individually express themselves. It was distinct from Europe's tradition of high art, which was less accessible and generally less relevant to early American settlers.^[571] Cultural movements in art and craftsmanship in colonial America generally lagged behind those of Western Europe. For example, the prevailing medieval style of woodworking and primitive sculpture became integral to early American folk art, despite the emergence of Renaissance styles in England in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The new English styles would have been early enough to make a considerable impact on American folk art, but American styles and forms had already been firmly adopted. Not only did styles change slowly in early America, but there was a tendency for rural artisans there to continue their traditional forms longer than their urban counterparts did—and far longer than those in Western Europe.^[511]



Broadway theaters in Theater District, Manhattan



American Gothic (1930) by Grant Wood is one of the most famous American paintings and is widely parodied.^[570]

The Hudson River School was a mid-19th-century movement in the visual arts tradition of European naturalism. The 1913 Armory Show in New York City, an exhibition of European modernist art, shocked the public and transformed the U.S. art scene.^[572]

American Realism and American Regionalism sought to reflect and give America new ways of looking at itself. Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, and others experimented with new and individualistic styles, which would become known as American modernism. Major artistic movements such as the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning and the pop art of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein developed largely in the United States. Major photographers include Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Dorothea Lange, Edward Weston, James Van Der Zee, Ansel Adams, and Gordon Parks.^[573]

The tide of modernism and then postmodernism has brought global fame to American architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson, and Frank Gehry.^[574] The Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan is the largest art museum in the United States^[575] and the fourth-largest in the world.^[576]

Music

American folk music encompasses numerous music genres, variously known as traditional music, traditional folk music, contemporary folk music, or roots music. Many traditional songs have been sung within the same family or folk group for generations, and sometimes trace back to such origins as the British Isles, mainland Europe, or Africa.^[577] The rhythmic and lyrical styles of African-American music in particular have influenced American music.^[578] Banjos were brought to America through the slave trade. Minstrel shows incorporating the instrument into their acts led to its increased popularity and widespread production in the 19th century.^{[579][580]} The electric guitar, first invented in the 1930s, and mass-produced by the 1940s, had an enormous influence on popular music, in particular due to the development of rock and roll.^[581] The synthesizer, turntablism, and electronic music were also largely developed in the U.S.



The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, Tennessee

Elements from folk idioms such as the blues and old-time music were adopted and transformed into popular genres with global audiences. Jazz grew from blues and ragtime in the early 20th century, developing from the innovations and recordings of composers such as W.C. Handy and Jelly Roll Morton. Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington increased its popularity early in the 20th century.^[582] Country music developed in the 1920s,^[583] bluegrass^[584] and rhythm and blues in the 1940s,^[585] and rock and roll in the 1950s.^[581] In the 1960s, Bob Dylan emerged from the folk revival to become one of the country's most celebrated songwriters.^[586] The musical forms of punk and hip hop both originated in the United States in the 1970s.^[587]

The United States has the world's largest music market, with a total retail value of \$15.9 billion in 2022.^[588] Most of the world's major record companies are based in the U.S.; they are represented by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).^[589] Mid-20th-century American pop stars, such as Frank Sinatra^[590] and Elvis Presley,^[591] became global celebrities and best-selling music artists,^[582] as have artists of the late 20th century, such as Michael Jackson,^[592] Madonna,^[593] Whitney Houston,^[594] and Mariah Carey,^[595] and of the early 21st century, such as Eminem,^[596] Britney Spears,^[597] Lady Gaga,^[597] Katy Perry,^[597] Taylor Swift and Beyoncé.^[598]

Fashion

The United States has the world's largest apparel market by revenue.^[599] Apart from professional business attire, American fashion is eclectic and predominantly informal. Americans' diverse cultural roots are reflected in their clothing; however, sneakers, jeans, T-shirts, and baseball caps are emblematic of American styles.^[600] New York, with its Fashion Week, is considered to be one of the "Big Four" global fashion capitals, along with Paris, Milan, and London. A study demonstrated that general proximity to Manhattan's Garment District has been synonymous with American fashion since its inception in the early 20th century.^[601]



Haute couture fashion models on the catwalk during New York Fashion Week

A number of well-known designer labels, among them Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, Tom Ford and Calvin Klein, are headquartered in Manhattan.^{[602][603]} Labels cater to niche markets, such as preteens. New York Fashion Week is one of the most influential fashion shows in the world, and is held twice each year in Manhattan;^[604] the annual Met Gala, also in Manhattan, has been called the fashion world's "biggest night".^{[605][606]}

Cinema

The U.S. film industry has a worldwide influence and following. Hollywood, a district in northern Los Angeles, the nation's second-most populous city, is also metonymous for the American filmmaking industry.^{[607][608][609]} The major film studios of the United States are the primary source of the most commercially successful movies selling the most tickets in the world.^{[610][611]}



The Hollywood Sign in the Hollywood Hills, often regarded as the symbol of the American film industry

Largely centered in the New York City region from its beginnings in the late 19th century through the first decades of the 20th century,^{[612][613][614][615]} the U.S. film industry has since been primarily based in and around Hollywood.

Nonetheless, American film companies have been subject to the forces of globalization in the 21st century, and an increasing number of films are made elsewhere.^[616] The Academy Awards, popularly known as "the Oscars", have been held annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences since 1929,^[617] and the Golden Globe Awards have been held annually since January 1944.^[618]

The industry peaked in what is commonly referred to as the "Golden Age of Hollywood", from the early sound period until the early 1960s,^[619] with screen actors such as John Wayne and Marilyn Monroe becoming iconic figures.^{[620][621]} In the 1970s, "New Hollywood", or the "Hollywood Renaissance",^[622] was defined by grittier films influenced by French and Italian realist pictures of the post-war period.^[623] The 21st century has been marked by the rise of American streaming platforms, which came to rival traditional cinema.^{[624][625]}

Cuisine

Early settlers were introduced by Native Americans to foods such as turkey, sweet potatoes, corn, squash, and maple syrup. Of the most enduring and pervasive examples are variations of the native dish called succotash. Early settlers and later immigrants combined these with foods they were familiar with, such as wheat flour,^[626] beef, and milk, to create a distinctive American cuisine.^{[627][628]} New World crops, especially pumpkin, corn, potatoes, and turkey as the main course are part of a shared national menu on Thanksgiving, when many Americans prepare or purchase traditional dishes to celebrate the occasion.^[629]

Characteristic American dishes such as apple pie, fried chicken, doughnuts, french fries, macaroni and cheese, ice cream, hamburgers, hot dogs, and American pizza derive from the recipes of various immigrant groups.^{[630][631][632][633]} Mexican

dishes such as burritos and tacos preexisted the United States in areas later annexed from Mexico, and adaptations of Chinese cuisine as well as pasta dishes freely adapted from Italian sources are all widely consumed.^[634]

American chefs have had a significant impact on society both domestically and internationally. In 1946, the Culinary Institute of America was founded by Katharine Angell and Frances Roth. This would become the United States' most prestigious culinary school, where many of the most talented American chefs would study prior to successful careers.^{[635][636]} The United States restaurant industry was projected at \$899 billion in sales for 2020,^{[637][638]} and employed more than 15 million people, representing 10% of the nation's workforce directly.^[637] It is the country's second-largest private employer and the third-largest employer overall.^{[639][640]} The United States is home to over 220 Michelin star-rated restaurants, 70 of which are in New York City alone.^[641]

Wine has been produced in what is now the United States since the 1500s, with the first widespread production beginning in what is now New Mexico in 1628.^{[642][643][644]} In the modern U.S., wine production is undertaken in all fifty states, with California producing 84 percent of all U.S. wine. With more than 1,100,000 acres (4,500 km²) under vine, the United States is the fourth-largest wine-producing country in the world, after Italy, Spain, and France.^{[645][646]}

The classic American diner, a casual restaurant type originally intended for the working class, emerged during the 19th century from converted railroad dining cars made stationary. The diner soon evolved into purpose-built structures whose number expanded greatly in the 20th century.^[647] The American fast-food industry developed alongside the nation's car culture.^[648] American restaurants developed the drive-in format in the 1920s, which they began to replace with the drive-through format by the 1940s.^{[649][650]} American fast-food restaurant chains, such as McDonald's, Burger King, Chick-fil-A, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Dunkin' Donuts and many others, have numerous outlets around the world.^[651]



A Thanksgiving dinner with roast turkey, mashed potatoes, pickles, corn, candied yams, cranberry jelly, shrimps, stuffing, green peas, deviled eggs, green salad, and apple sauce

Sports

The most popular spectator sports in the U.S. are American football, basketball, baseball, soccer, and ice hockey.^[652] While most major U.S. sports such as baseball and American football have evolved out of European practices, basketball, volleyball, skateboarding, and snowboarding are American inventions, many of which have become popular worldwide.^[653] Lacrosse and surfing arose from Native American and Native Hawaiian activities that predate European contact.^[654] The market for professional sports in the United States was approximately \$69 billion in July 2013, roughly 50% larger than that of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa combined.^[655]



American football is the most popular sport in the United States; in this 2009 National Football League game, Carolina Panthers quarterback Jake Delhomme (number 17) throws a forward pass against the Dallas Cowboys.

American football is by several measures the most popular spectator sport in the United States;^[656] the National Football League has the highest average attendance of any sports league in the world, and the Super Bowl is watched by tens of millions globally.^[657] However, baseball has been regarded as the U.S. "national sport" since the late 19th century. After American football, the next four most popular professional team sports are basketball, baseball, soccer, and ice hockey. Their premier leagues are, respectively, the National Basketball Association,^[658] Major League Baseball,^[659] Major League Soccer,^[660] and the National Hockey League.^[661] The most-watched individual sports in the U.S. are golf and auto racing, particularly NASCAR and IndyCar.^{[662][663]}

On the collegiate level, earnings for the member institutions exceed \$1 billion annually,^[664] and college football and basketball attract large audiences, as the NCAA March Madness tournament and the College Football Playoff are some of the most watched national sporting events.^[665] In the U.S., the intercollegiate sports level serves as the main feeder system for professional and Olympic sports, with significant exceptions such as Minor League Baseball. This differs greatly from practices in nearly all other countries, where publicly and privately funded sports organizations serve this function.^[666]

Eight Olympic Games have taken place in the United States. The 1904 Summer Olympics in St. Louis, Missouri, were the first-ever Olympic Games held outside of Europe.^[667] The Olympic Games will be held in the U.S. for a ninth time when Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Summer Olympics. U.S. athletes have won a total of 2,968 medals (1,179 gold) at the Olympic Games, the most of any country.^{[668][669][670]}

In other international competition, the United States is the home of a number of prestigious events, including the Americas Cup, World Baseball Classic, the U.S. Open, and the Masters Tournament. The U.S. men's national soccer team has qualified for eleven World Cups, while the women's national team has won the FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympic soccer tournament four times each.^[671] The United States hosted the 1994 FIFA World Cup and will co-host, along with Canada and Mexico, the 2026 FIFA World Cup.^[672] The 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup was also hosted by the United States. Its final match was attended by 90,185, setting the world record for largest women's sporting event crowd at the time.^[673]

See also

- Lists of U.S. state topics

- [Outline of the United States](#)
- [List of online encyclopedias of U.S. states](#), typically maintained by state historical societies, universities, or humanities councils

Notes

- a. Per [Executive Order 14224](#).^{[4][5]} States and territories variously recognize English only, English plus one or more local languages, or no language at all. See § [Language](#).
- b. The historical and informal demonym [Yankee](#) has been applied to Americans, New Englanders, and northerners since the 18th century.
- c. At 3,531,900 sq mi (9,147,590 km²), the United States is the third-largest country in the world by land area, behind [Russia](#) and [China](#). By total area (land and water), it is the third-largest, behind [Russia](#) and [Canada](#), if its coastal and territorial water areas are included. However, if only its internal waters are included (bays, sounds, rivers, lakes, and the [Great Lakes](#)), the U.S. is the fourth-largest, after [Russia](#), [Canada](#), and [China](#).
Coastal/territorial waters included: 3,796,742 sq mi (9,833,517 km²)^[20]
Only internal waters included: 3,696,100 sq mi (9,572,900 km²)^[21]
- d. This figure excludes [Puerto Rico](#) and the other [unincorporated islands](#) because they are counted separately in U.S. census statistics.
- e. U.S. nominal and PPP-adjusted GDP are the same as the U.S. is the reference country for PPP calculations.
- f. After adjustment for taxes and transfers
- g. See [Time in the United States](#) for details about laws governing time zones in the United States.
- h. See [Date and time notation in the United States](#).
- i. The [U.S. Virgin Islands](#) use left-hand traffic.
- j. The five major territories outside the union of states are [American Samoa](#), [Guam](#), the [Northern Mariana Islands](#), [Puerto Rico](#), and the [U.S. Virgin Islands](#). The seven undisputed island areas without permanent populations are [Baker Island](#), [Howland Island](#), [Jarvis Island](#), [Johnston Atoll](#), [Kingman Reef](#), [Midway Atoll](#), and [Palmyra Atoll](#). U.S. sovereignty over the unpopulated [Bajo Nuevo Bank](#), [Navassa Island](#), [Serranilla Bank](#), and [Wake Island](#) is disputed.^[19]
- k. The [U.S. Census Bureau](#)'s latest official population estimate of 340,110,988 residents (2024) is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia; it excludes the 3.6 million residents of the five major [U.S. territories](#) and outlying islands. The Census Bureau also provides a continuously updated but unofficial population clock: www.census.gov/popclock (<https://www.census.gov/popclock/>)
- l. The official [U.S. Government Publishing Office Style Manual](#) has prescribed specific usages for "U.S." and "United States" as part of official names. In "formal writing (treaties, Executive orders, proclamations, etc.); congressional bills; legal citations and courtwork; and covers and title pages",^[26] "United States" is always used. In a sentence containing the name of another country, "United States" must be used. Otherwise, "U.S." is used preceding a government organization or as an adjective, but "United States" is used as an adjective preceding non-governmental organizations (e.g. [United States Steel Corporation](#)).^[26]
- m. "Americus" is derived from the Old High German first name "[Emmerich](#)".
- n. [Americus](#) comes from the [Medieval Latin](#) name *Emericus* (for [Saint Emeric of Hungary](#)), itself derived from the Old High German name [Emmerich](#).

- o. From the late 15th century, the Columbian exchange had been catastrophic for native populations throughout the Americas. It is estimated that up to 95 percent of the Indigenous populations, especially in the Caribbean, perished from infectious diseases during the years following European colonization;^[55] remaining populations were often displaced by European expansion.^{[56][57]}
- p. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia
- q. The Confederate States of America was formed by the following states, each state government of which formally declared its secession from the United States: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.
- r. Some scholars have used descriptions such as oligarchy or plutocracy instead.^{[234][235][236][237][238][239][240][241][242][243][244]}
- s. Per the U.S. Constitution, Amendment Twenty-three, proposed by the U.S. Congress on June 16, 1960, and ratified by the States on March 29, 1961
- t. A country's total exports are usually understood to be goods and services. Based on this, the U.S. is the world's second-largest exporter, after China.^[348] However, if primary income is included, the U.S. is the world's largest exporter.^[349]
- u. This figure, like most official data for the United States as a whole, excludes the five unincorporated territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands) and minor island possessions.
- v. Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup'ik, Alutiiq, Unanga (Aleut), Dena'ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich'in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian
- w. Also known less formally as Obamacare

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- [House](https://www.house.gov) (<https://www.house.gov>) – official website of the United States House of Representatives
- [Senate](https://www.senate.gov) (<https://www.senate.gov>) – official website of the United States Senate
- [White House](https://www.whitehouse.gov) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov>) – official website of the president of the United States
- [Supreme Court](https://www.supremecourt.gov) (<https://www.supremecourt.gov>) – official website of the Supreme Court of the United States

History

- "Historical Documents" (<https://nationalcenter.org/historical-documents/>) – website from the [National Center for Public Policy Research](#)
- "Historical Statistics" (<https://www.historicalstatistics.org/index2.html>) – links to U.S. historical data

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- "National Atlas of the United States" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091021182322/https://www.nationalatlas.gov/>) – official maps from the U.S. Department of the Interior
 -  [Wikimedia Atlas of the United States](#)
 -  Geographic data related to [United States](#) (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/148838>) at [OpenStreetMap](#)
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