



Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., formally the **District of Columbia** and commonly known as **Washington** or **D.C.**, is the capital city and federal district of the United States. The city is on the Potomac River, across from Virginia, and shares land borders with Maryland to its north and east. It was named after George Washington, the first president of the United States. The district is named for Columbia, the female personification of the nation.

The U.S. Constitution in 1789 called for the creation of a federal district under exclusive jurisdiction of the U.S. Congress. As such, Washington, D.C., is not part of any state, and is not one itself. The Residence Act, adopted on July 16, 1790, approved the creation of the capital district along the Potomac River. The city was founded in 1791, and the 6th Congress held the first session in the unfinished Capitol Building in 1800 after the capital moved from Philadelphia. In 1801, the District of Columbia, formerly part of Maryland and Virginia and including the existing settlements of Georgetown and Alexandria, was officially recognized as the federal district; initially, the city was a separate settlement within the larger district. In 1846, Congress reduced the size of the district when it returned the land originally ceded by Virginia, including the city of Alexandria. In 1871, it created a single municipality for the district. There have been several unsuccessful efforts to make the district into a state since the 1880s; a statehood bill passed the House of Representatives in 2021 but was not adopted by the U.S. Senate. To become law, it would have to be passed by the Senate and signed by the president; it would have renamed the city Washington, Douglass Commonwealth and shrunk the Federal District to about the size of the National Mall.

Designed in 1791 by Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the city is divided into quadrants, which are centered on the Capitol Building and include 131 neighborhoods. As of the 2020 census, the city had a population of 689,545.^[3] Commuters from the city's Maryland and Virginia suburbs raise the city's daytime population to more than one million during the

Washington, D.C.	
Federal capital city and district	District of Columbia
 	
	
	
	
<i>From top, left to right: The U.S. Capitol, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall, Washington National Cathedral, Washington Metro, storefronts in Adams Morgan, Air and Space Museum, White House</i>	

workweek.^[12] The Washington metropolitan area, which includes parts of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, is the country's seventh-largest metropolitan area, with a 2023 population of 6.3 million residents.^[6] A locally elected mayor and 13-member council have governed the district since 1973, though Congress retains the power to overturn local laws. Washington, D.C., residents do not have voting representation in Congress, but elect a single non-voting congressional delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives. The city's voters choose three presidential electors in accordance with the Twenty-third Amendment, passed in 1961.

Washington, D.C., anchors the southern end of the Northeast megalopolis. As the seat of the U.S. federal government, the city is an important world political capital.^[13] The city hosts buildings that house federal government headquarters, including the White House, U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court Building, and multiple federal departments and agencies. The city is home to many national monuments and museums, located most prominently on or around the National Mall, including the Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, and Washington Monument. It hosts 177 foreign embassies and the global headquarters of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Organization of American States, and other international organizations. Home to many of the nation's largest industry associations, non-profit organizations, and think tanks, the city is known as a lobbying hub, which is centered on and around K Street.^[14] It is also among the country's top tourist destinations; in 2022, it drew an estimated 20.7 million domestic^[15] and 1.2 million international visitors, seventh-most among U.S. cities.^[16]

History

The Algonquian-speaking Piscataway people inhabited present-day Washington, D.C. and lands around the Potomac River when Europeans first arrived and colonized the region in the early 17th century. The Nacotchtank, also called the Nacostines by Catholic missionaries, maintained settlements around the Anacostia River in present-day Washington, D.C. Conflicts with European colonists and neighboring tribes



Flag



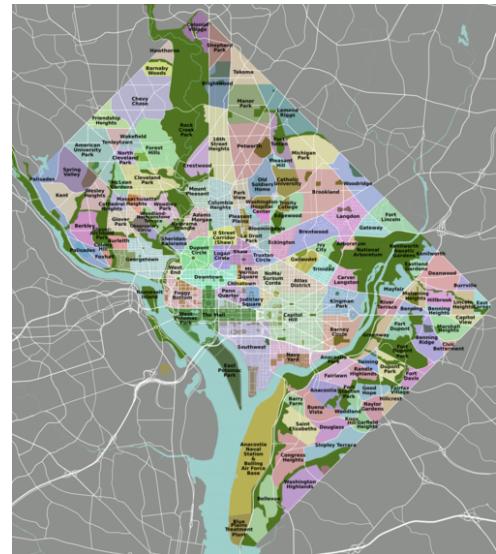
Seal

Nickname(s): D.C., The District

Motto(s): *Justitia Omnibus*
(English: Justice for All)Anthem: "Washington"^[1]

Wikimedia | © OpenStreetMap

Interactive map of Washington, D.C.



Neighborhoods of Washington, D.C.

ultimately displaced the Piscataway people, some of whom established a new settlement in 1699 near [Point of Rocks, Maryland](#).^[17]

Founding



In 1800, the [United States Congress](#) began assembling in the new [United States Capitol](#) after the nation's capital

was moved from [Philadelphia](#), which served as the capital during the [American Revolution](#) and again from 1790 to 1800.

During the [American Revolution](#) and [Revolutionary War](#), [Nine cities served as capitals to the Continental Congress](#) and under the [Articles of Confederation](#). Following independence, [New York City](#) served briefly as the first capital following adoption of the [Constitution](#) before the capital returned to [Philadelphia](#), where it remained from 1790 to 1800.^[18]

On October 6, 1783, after the [Pennsylvania Mutiny of 1783](#) forced the capital to move briefly from Philadelphia to present-day [Princeton University](#) in [Princeton, New Jersey](#), Congress resolved to consider a new location for it.^[19] The following day, [Elbridge Gerry](#) of Massachusetts moved "that buildings for the use of Congress be erected on the banks of the [Delaware](#) near [Trenton](#), or of the [Potomac](#), near [Georgetown](#), provided a suitable district can be procured on one of the rivers as aforesaid, for a federal town".^[20]

In [Federalist No. 43](#), published January 23, 1788, [James Madison](#) argued that the new [federal government](#) would need authority over a national capital to provide for its own



Show map of the United States

Show map of North America

Show all

Coordinates: 38°54'17"N 77°00'59"W

Country	 United States
Residence Act	July 16, 1790
Organized	February 27, 1801
Consolidated	February 21, 1871
Home Rule Act	December 24, 1973
Named after	George Washington · Columbia
Government	
• Type	Mayor–council
• Mayor	Muriel Bowser (D)
• D.C. Council	
List	
▪ Phil Mendelson (D) , Chair	
▪ Anita Bonds (D) , At-large	
▪ Christina Henderson (I) , At-large	
▪ Robert White (D) , At-large	
▪ Kenyan McDuffie (I) , At-large	
▪ Brianne Nadeau (D) , Ward 1	
▪ Brooke Pinto (D) , Ward 2	
▪ Matthew Frumin (D) , Ward 3	
▪ Janeese Lewis George (D) , Ward 4	
▪ Zachary Parker (D) , Ward 5	
▪ Charles Allen (D) , Ward 6	
▪ Wendell Felder (D) , Ward 7	

maintenance and safety.^[21] The Pennsylvania Mutiny of 1783 emphasized the need for the national government to not rely on any state for its own security.^[22]

Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution permits the establishment of a "District (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular states, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States".^[23] The constitution, however, does not specify a location for the capital. In the Compromise of 1790, Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson agreed that the federal government would pay each state's remaining Revolutionary War debts in exchange for establishing the new national capital in the Southern United States.^{[24][a]}

On July 9, 1790, Congress passed the Residence Act, which approved creating a national capital on the Potomac River. Under the Residence Act, the exact location was to be selected by President George Washington, who signed the bill into law on July 16, 1790. Formed from land donated by Maryland and Virginia, the initial shape of the federal district was a square measuring 10 miles (16 km) on each side and totaling 100 square miles (259 km²).^{[25][b]}

Two pre-existing settlements were included in the territory, the port of Georgetown, founded in 1751,^[26] and the port city of Alexandria, Virginia, founded in 1749.^[27] In 1791 and 1792, a team led by Andrew Ellicott, including Ellicott's brothers Joseph and Benjamin and African American astronomer Benjamin Banneker, whose parents had been enslaved, surveyed the borders of the federal district and placed boundary stones at every mile point; many of these stones are still standing.^{[28][29]} Both Maryland and Virginia were slave states, and slavery existed in the District from its founding. The building of Washington likely relied in significant part on slave labor, and slave receipts have been found for the White House, Capitol Building, and establishment of Georgetown University. The city became an important slave market and a center of the nation's internal slave trade.^{[30][31]}

After its survey, the new federal city was constructed on the north bank of the Potomac River, east of Georgetown and centered on Capitol Hill. On September 9, 1791, three commissioners overseeing the capital's construction named the city in honor of President Washington. The same day, the

	▪ <u>vacant</u> , Ward 8 ^[2]
• <u>U.S. House</u>	Eleanor Holmes Norton (D), Delegate (At-large)
Area	
• <u>Federal capital city and district</u>	68.35 sq mi (177.0 km ²)
• <u>Land</u>	61.126 sq mi (158.32 km ²)
• <u>Water</u>	7.224 sq mi (18.71 km ²)
Highest elevation	409 ft (125 m)
Lowest elevation	0 ft (0 m)
Population (2020)^[3]	
• <u>Federal capital city and district</u>	689,545
• <u>Estimate (2024)^[4]</u>	702,250
• <u>Rank</u>	67th in North America 23rd in the United States
• <u>Density</u>	11,280.71/sq mi (4,355.39/km ²)
• <u>Urban^[5]</u>	5,174,759 (US: 8th)
• <u>Urban density</u>	3,997.5/sq mi (1,543.4/km ²)
• <u>Metro^[6]</u>	6,304,975 (US: 7th)
Demonym	Washingtonian ^[7]
GDP^{[8][9]}	
• <u>Federal capital city and district</u>	\$176.502 billion (2023)
• <u>Metro</u>	\$714.685 billion (2023)
Time zone	UTC-05:00 (EST)
• <u>Summer (DST)</u>	UTC-04:00 (EDT)
ZIP Codes	20001–20098, 20201–20599, 56901–56999
Area code(s)	202 and 771 ^{[10][11]}
ISO 3166 code	US-DC
Airports	<u>Full list</u> Dulles International Reagan National Baltimore/Washington
Railroads	<u>Full list</u> Washington Metro MARC Train Virginia Railway Express

federal district was named Columbia, a feminine form of Columbus, which was a poetic name for the United States commonly used at the time.^{[32][33]} Congress held its first session there on November 17, 1800.^[34]

[Website](#)dc.gov (<https://dc.gov/>)

Congress passed the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801, which officially organized the district and placed the entire territory under the exclusive control of the federal government. The area within the district was organized into two counties, the County of Washington to the east and north of the Potomac River and the County of Alexandria to the west and south.^[35] After the Act's passage, citizens in the district were no longer considered residents of Maryland or Virginia, and their representation in Congress ended.^[36]

Burning during War of 1812



After their victory at the Battle of Bladensburg in 1814, the British Army burned the White House and other buildings during a one-day occupation of Washington, D.C.

On August 24, 1814, during the War of 1812, British forces invaded and occupied the city after defeating an American force in the war's Battle of Bladensburg. In retaliation for acts of destruction by American troops in the Canadas, British troops set fire to government buildings in the city, gutting the U.S. Capitol, the Treasury Building, and White House in what became known as the burning of Washington. The damage of the city's burning could have been more extensive, but a storm forced the British to evacuate the city after just 24 hours.^[37] Most government buildings were repaired quickly, but the Capitol, which was then still under construction, was not completed in its current form until 1868.^[38]

Retrocession and the Civil War

In the 1830s, the district's southern territory of Alexandria declined economically, due in part to its neglect by Congress.^[39] Alexandria was a major market in the domestic slave trade and pro-slavery residents feared that abolitionists in Congress would end slavery in the district. Alexandria's citizens petitioned Virginia to retake the land it had donated to form the district, a process known as retrocession.^[40]

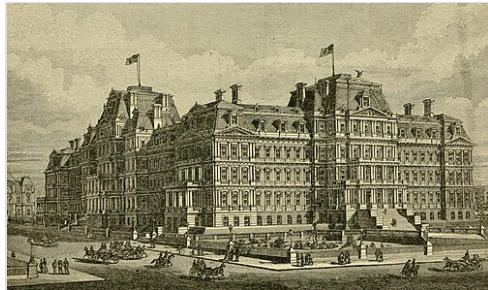


The U.S. Capitol dome was under construction during Lincoln's first inauguration on March 4, 1861, five weeks before the start of the American Civil War.

The Virginia General Assembly voted in February 1846, to accept the return of Alexandria. On July 9, 1846, Congress went further, agreeing to return all territory that Virginia had ceded to the district during its formation. This left the district's area consisting only of the portion originally donated by Maryland.^[39] Confirming the fears of pro-slavery Alexandrians, the Compromise of 1850 outlawed the slave trade in the district, although not slavery itself.^[41]

The outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 led to the expansion of the federal government and notable growth in the city's population, including a large influx of freed slaves.^[42] President Abraham Lincoln signed the Compensated Emancipation Act in 1862, which ended slavery in the district, freeing about 3,100 slaves in the district nine months before the Emancipation Proclamation.^[43] In 1868, Congress granted the district's African American male residents the right to vote in municipal elections.^[42]

Growth and redevelopment



The Eisenhower Executive Office Building, built between 1871 and 1888, was the world's largest office building until 1943, when it was surpassed by The Pentagon.

By 1870, the district's population had grown 75% in a decade to nearly 132,000 people,^[44] yet the city still lacked paved roads and basic sanitation. Some members of Congress suggested moving the capital farther west, but President Ulysses S. Grant refused to consider the proposal.^[45]

In the Organic Act of 1871, Congress repealed the individual charters of the cities of Washington and Georgetown, abolished Washington County, and created a new territorial government for the whole District of Columbia.^[46] These steps made "the city of Washington...legally indistinguishable from the District of Columbia."^[47]

In 1873, President Grant appointed Alexander Robey Shepherd as Governor of the District of Columbia. Shepherd authorized large projects that modernized the city but bankrupted its government. In 1874, Congress replaced the territorial government with an appointed three-member board of commissioners.^[48]

In 1888, the city's first motorized streetcars began service. Their introduction generated growth in areas of the district beyond the City of Washington's original boundaries, leading to an expansion of the district over the next few decades.^[49] Georgetown's street grid and other administrative details were formally merged with those of the City of Washington in 1895.^[50] However, the city had poor housing and strained public works, leading it to become the first city in the nation to undergo urban renewal projects as part of the City Beautiful movement in the early 20th century.^[51]

The City Beautiful movement built heavily upon the already-implemented L'Enfant Plan, with the new McMillan Plan leading urban development in the city throughout the movement. Much of the old Victorian Mall was replaced with modern Neoclassical and Beaux-Arts architecture; these designs are still prevalent in the city's governmental buildings today.

Increased federal spending under the New Deal in the 1930s led to the construction of new government buildings, memorials, and museums in the district,^[52] though the chairman of the House Subcommittee on District Appropriations, Ross A. Collins of Mississippi, justified cuts to funds for welfare and education for local residents by saying that "my constituents wouldn't stand for spending money on niggers."^[53]

World War II led to an expansion of federal employees in the city;^[54] by 1950, the district's population reached its peak of 802,178 residents.^[44]

Civil rights and home rule era

The Twenty-third Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified in 1961, granting the district three votes in the Electoral College for the election of president and vice president, but still not affording the city's residents representation in Congress.^[55]

After the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, riots broke out in the city, primarily in the U Street, 14th Street, 7th Street, and H Street corridors, which were predominantly black residential and commercial areas. The riots raged for three days until more than 13,600 federal troops and Washington, D.C., Army National Guardsmen stopped the violence. Many stores and other buildings were burned, and rebuilding from the riots was not completed until the late 1990s.^[56]

In 1973, Congress enacted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act providing for an elected mayor and 13-member council for the district.^[57] In 1975, Walter Washington became the district's first elected and first black mayor.^[58]



The March on Washington at the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool on August 28, 1963

Statehood movement

Since the 1980s, the D.C. statehood movement has grown in prominence. In 2016, a referendum on D.C. statehood resulted in an 85% support among Washington, D.C., voters for it to become the nation's 51st state. In March 2017, the city's congressional delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton introduced a bill for statehood. Reintroduced in 2019 and 2021 as the Washington, D.C., Admission Act, the U.S. House of Representatives passed it in April 2021. After not progressing in the Senate, the statehood bill was introduced again in January 2023.^[59] The bill would have made D.C. into a state with one representative and two senators, with the name Washington, Douglass Commonwealth (thus keeping the same abbreviation Washington, D.C.).^[60] The legalities, reasons, and impact of statehood have been heavily debated in the 2020s.^[61]

Geography

Washington, D.C., is located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. East Coast. The city has a total area of 68.34 square miles (177 km²), of which 61.05 square miles (158.1 km²) is land and 7.29 square miles (18.9 km²) (10.67%) is water.^[62] The district is bordered by Montgomery County, Maryland, to the northwest; Prince George's County, Maryland, to the east; Arlington County, Virginia, to the west; and Alexandria, Virginia, to the south.

The south bank of the Potomac River forms the district's border with Virginia and has two major tributaries, the Anacostia River and Rock Creek.^[63] Tiber Creek, a natural watercourse that once passed through the National Mall, was fully enclosed underground during the 1870s.^[64] The creek also formed a portion of the now-filled Washington City Canal, which allowed passage through the city to the Anacostia River from 1815

until the 1850s.^[65] The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal starts in Georgetown and was used during the 19th century to bypass the Little Falls of the Potomac River, located at the northwest edge of the city at the Atlantic Seaboard fall line.^[66]

The highest natural elevation in the district is 409 feet (125 m) above sea level at Fort Reno Park in upper northwest Washington, D.C.^[67] The lowest point is sea level at the Potomac River.^[68] The geographic center of Washington is near the intersection of 4th and L streets NW.^[69]^[70]^[71]



The Washington Monument viewed from the Tidal Basin during the National Cherry Blossom Festival in April 2018

Parks

There are many parks, gardens, squares, and circles throughout Washington. The city has 683 parks and greenspaces, comprising 7,464 acres (30.21 km²), about 20% of its land area. Consequently, 99% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. According to the nonprofit Trust for Public Land, in 2023 Washington ranked first among the 100 largest U.S. cities for its public parks, based on indicators such as accessibility, the share of land reserved for parks, and the amount invested in green spaces.^[72]^[73]^[74]

The National Park Service manages most of the 9,122 acres (36.92 km²) of city land owned by the U.S. government.^[75] Rock Creek Park, located in Northwest D.C., is the largest park in the city, with 1,754 acres (7.10 km²) of urban forest extending 9.3 miles (15.0 km) through a stream valley that bisects the city. Established in 1890, it is the country's fourth-oldest national park and is home to a variety of plant and animal species, including raccoon, deer, owls, and coyotes.^[76] Other National Park Service properties include the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, the National Mall and Memorial Parks, Fort Dupont Park, Meridian Hill Park, Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, and Anacostia Park.^[77] The District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation maintains the city's 900 acres (3.6 km²) of athletic fields and playgrounds, 40 swimming pools, and 68 recreation centers.^[78] The U.S. Department of Agriculture operates the 446-acre (1.80 km²) United States National Arboretum, a dense arboretum in Northeast D.C. filled with gardens and trails. Its most notable landmark is the National Capitol Columns monument.^[79]^[80]



Washington, D.C. is located on the north side of the Potomac River. It is bordered on three sides by Maryland and by Northern Virginia to its southwest.



Rock Creek Park, the city's largest park, stretches across Northwest.

There are several river islands in Washington, D.C., including Theodore Roosevelt Island in the Potomac River, which hosts the Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial and a number of trails.^[81] Columbia Island, also in the Potomac, is home to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove, the Navy – Merchant Marine Memorial, and a marina. Kingman Island, in the Anacostia River, is home to Langston Golf Course and a public park with trails.^[82]

West Potomac Park includes the parkland that extends south of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, from the Lincoln Memorial to the grounds of the Washington Monument.^[83] Located on the northern side of the White House, Lafayette Square is a historic public square. It has been the site of many protests, marches, and speeches. The houses bordering Lafayette Square have served as the home to many notable figures.^[84] Other parks, gardens, and squares include Dumbarton Oaks, Meridian Hill Park, the Yards, Lincoln Park, Franklin Square, McPherson Square, and Farragut Square.^[85] There are a large number of traffic circles and circle parks in Washington, D.C., including Dupont Circle, Logan Circle, and Thomas Circle.^[86]



Climate

Washington's climate is temperate humid subtropical (Köppen: *Cfa*).^{[87][88]} Winters are cool to cold with some snow of varying intensity, while summers are hot and humid. The district is in plant hardiness zone 8a near downtown, and zone 7b elsewhere in the city.^{[89][90]}

Summers are hot and humid with a July daily average of 79.8 °F (26.6 °C) and average daily relative humidity around 66%, which can cause moderate personal discomfort. Heat indices regularly approach 100 °F (38 °C) at the height of summer.^[91] The combination of heat and humidity in the summer brings very frequent thunderstorms, some of which occasionally produce tornadoes in the area.^[92]

Blizzards affect Washington once every four to six years on average. The most violent storms, known as nor'easters, often impact large regions of the East Coast.^[93] From January 27 to 28, 1922, the city officially received 28 inches (71 cm) of snowfall, the largest snowstorm since official measurements began in 1885.^[94] According to notes kept at the time, the city received between 30 and 36 inches (76 and 91 cm) from a snowstorm in January 1772.^[95]

The Cascading Waterfall at Meridian Hill Park in Meridian Hill



The U.S. Capitol during the February 5–6, 2010 North American blizzard

Hurricanes or their remnants occasionally impact the area in late summer and early fall. However, they usually are weak by the time they reach Washington, partly due to the city's inland location.^[96] Flooding of the Potomac River, however, caused by a combination of high tide, storm surge, and runoff, has been known to cause extensive property damage in the Georgetown neighborhood of the city.^[97] Precipitation occurs throughout the year.^[98]

The highest recorded temperature was 106 °F (41 °C) on August 6, 1918, and on July 20, 1930.^[99] The lowest recorded temperature was −15 °F (−26 °C) on February 11, 1899, right before the Great Blizzard of 1899.^[93] During a typical year, the city averages about 37 days at or above 90 °F (32 °C) and 64 nights at or below the freezing mark (32 °F or 0 °C).^[100] On average, the first day with a minimum at or below freezing is November 18 and the last day is March 27.^{[101][102]}

Climate data for Washington, D.C. (Reagan National Airport), 1991–2020 normals, ^[c] extremes 1872–present ^[d]													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °F (°C)	80 (27)	84 (29)	93 (34)	95 (35)	99 (37)	104 (40)	106 (41)	106 (41)	104 (40)	98 (37)	86 (30)	79 (26)	106 (41)
Mean maximum °F (°C)	66.7 (19.3)	68.1 (20.1)	77.3 (25.2)	86.4 (30.2)	91.0 (32.8)	95.7 (35.4)	98.1 (36.7)	96.5 (35.8)	91.9 (33.3)	84.5 (29.2)	74.8 (23.8)	67.1 (19.5)	99.1 (37.3)
Mean daily maximum °F (°C)	44.8 (7.1)	48.3 (9.1)	56.5 (13.6)	68.0 (20.0)	76.5 (24.7)	85.1 (29.5)	89.6 (32.0)	87.8 (31.0)	80.7 (27.1)	69.4 (20.8)	58.2 (14.6)	48.8 (9.3)	67.8 (19.9)
Daily mean °F (°C)	37.5 (3.1)	40.0 (4.4)	47.6 (8.7)	58.2 (14.6)	67.2 (19.6)	76.3 (24.6)	81.0 (27.2)	79.4 (26.3)	72.4 (22.4)	60.8 (16.0)	49.9 (9.9)	41.7 (5.4)	59.3 (15.2)
Mean daily minimum °F (°C)	30.1 (−1.1)	31.8 (−0.1)	38.6 (3.7)	48.4 (9.1)	58.0 (14.4)	67.5 (19.7)	72.4 (22.4)	71.0 (21.7)	64.1 (17.8)	52.2 (11.2)	41.6 (5.3)	34.5 (1.4)	50.9 (10.5)
Mean minimum °F (°C)	14.3 (−9.8)	16.9 (−8.4)	23.4 (−4.8)	34.9 (1.6)	45.5 (7.5)	55.7 (13.2)	63.8 (17.7)	62.1 (16.7)	51.3 (10.7)	38.7 (3.7)	28.8 (−1.8)	21.3 (−5.9)	12.3 (−10.9)
Record low °F (°C)	−14 (−26)	−15 (−26)	4 (−16)	15 (−9)	33 (1)	43 (6)	52 (11)	49 (9)	36 (2)	26 (−3)	11 (−12)	−13 (−25)	−15 (−26)
Average precipitation inches (mm)	2.86 (73)	2.62 (67)	3.50 (89)	3.21 (82)	3.94 (100)	4.20 (107)	4.33 (110)	3.25 (83)	3.93 (100)	3.66 (93)	2.91 (74)	3.41 (87)	41.82 (1,062)
Average snowfall inches (cm)	4.9 (12)	5.0 (13)	2.0 (5.1)	0.0 (0.0)	0.1 (0.25)	1.7 (4.3)	13.7 (35)						
Average precipitation days (≥ 0.01 in)	9.7	9.3	11.0	10.8	11.6	10.6	10.5	8.7	8.7	8.3	8.4	10.1	117.7
Average snowy days (≥ 0.1 in)	2.8	2.7	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.3	8.0
Average relative humidity (%)	62.1	60.5	58.6	58.0	64.5	65.8	66.9	69.3	69.7	67.4	64.7	64.1	64.3
Average dew point °F (°C)	21.7 (−5.7)	23.5 (−4.7)	31.3 (−0.4)	39.7 (4.3)	52.3 (11.3)	61.5 (16.4)	66.0 (18.9)	65.8 (18.8)	59.5 (15.3)	47.5 (8.6)	37.0 (2.8)	27.1 (−2.7)	44.4 (6.9)
Mean monthly sunshine hours	144.6	151.8	204.0	228.2	260.5	283.2	280.5	263.1	225.0	203.6	150.2	133.0	2,527.7
Percentage possible	48	50	55	57	59	64	62	62	60	59	50	45	57

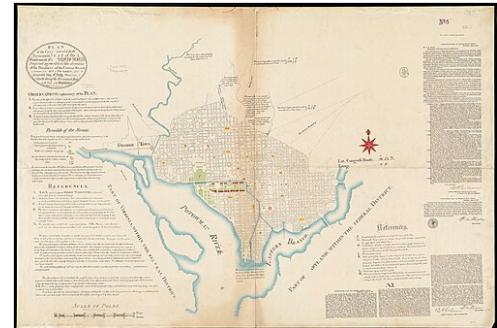
<u>sunshine</u>													
<u>Average ultraviolet index</u>	2	3	5	7	8	9	9	8	7	4	3	2	6
Source 1: NOAA (relative humidity, dew point and sun 1961–1990) ^{[98][100][104]}													
Source 2: Weather Atlas (UV) ^[105]													

Cityscape

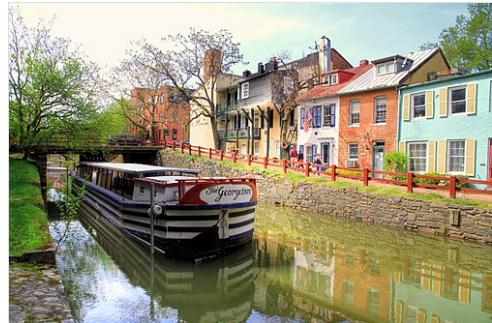
Washington, D.C., was a planned city, and many of the city's street grids were developed in that initial plan. In 1791, President George Washington commissioned Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French-born military engineer and artist, to design the new capital. He enlisted the help of Isaac Roberdeau, Étienne Sulpice Hallet and Scottish surveyor Alexander Ralston to help lay out the city plan.^[106] The L'Enfant Plan featured broad streets and avenues radiating out from rectangles, providing room for open space and landscaping.^[107]

L'Enfant was also provided a roll of maps by Thomas Jefferson depicting Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, Paris, Orleans, Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Turin, and Milan.^[108] L'Enfant's design also envisioned a garden-lined grand avenue about 1 mile (1.6 km) long and 400 feet (120 m) wide in an area that is now the National Mall inspired by the grounds at Versailles and Tuileries Gardens.^[109] In March 1792, President Washington dismissed L'Enfant due to conflicts with the three commissioners appointed to supervise the capital's construction. Andrew Ellicott, who worked with L'Enfant in surveying the city, was then tasked with completing its design. Though Ellicott revised the original L'Enfant plans, including changing some street patterns, L'Enfant is still credited with the city's overall design.^[110]

By the early 20th century, however, L'Enfant's vision of a grand national capital was marred by slums and randomly placed buildings in the city, including a railroad station on National Mall. Congress formed a special committee charged with beautifying Washington's ceremonial core.^[51] What became known as the McMillan Plan was finalized in 1901 and included landscaping the Capitol grounds and National Mall, clearing slums, and establishing a new citywide park system. The plan is thought to have largely preserved L'Enfant's intended design for the city.^[107]



The L'Enfant Plan for the city, developed in 1791 by Pierre Charles L'Enfant



In 1830, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was extended to Georgetown.



An aerial view of Northwest Washington, D.C. in June 2018

By law, the city's skyline is low and sprawling. The federal [Height of Buildings Act of 1910](#) limits building height based on the width of the adjacent street, with maxima of 90 feet (27 m) on residential streets and 130 feet (40 m) on commercial ones.^{[111][112]} Despite popular belief, no law has ever limited buildings to the height of the United States Capitol or the 555-foot (169 m) [Washington Monument](#),^[71] which remains the district's tallest structure. City leaders have cited the height restriction as a primary reason that the district has limited affordable housing and its metro area has suburban sprawl and traffic problems.^[111]

Washington, D.C., is divided into [four quadrants](#) of unequal area: [Northwest \(NW\)](#), [Northeast \(NE\)](#), [Southeast \(SE\)](#), and [Southwest \(SW\)](#). The axes bounding the quadrants radiate from the U.S. Capitol.^[113] All road names include the quadrant abbreviation to indicate their location. House numbers generally correspond with the number of blocks away from the Capitol. Most streets are set out in a grid pattern with east–west streets named with letters (e.g., C Street SW), north–south streets with numbers (e.g., 4th Street NW), and diagonal avenues, many of which are [named after states](#).^[113]

The City of Washington was bordered on the north by Boundary Street (renamed [Florida Avenue](#) in 1890), [Rock Creek](#) to the west, and the [Anacostia River](#) to the east.^{[49][107]} Washington, D.C.'s street grid was extended, where possible, throughout the district starting in 1888.^[114] Georgetown's streets were renamed in 1895.^[50] Some streets are particularly noteworthy, including [Pennsylvania Avenue](#), which connects the [White House](#) to the Capitol; and K Street, which houses the offices of many lobbying groups.^[115] [Constitution Avenue](#) and [Independence Avenue](#), located on the north and south sides of National Mall, respectively, are home to many of Washington's iconic museums, including many [Smithsonian Institution](#) buildings and the [National Archives Building](#). Washington hosts 177 [foreign embassies](#); these maintain nearly 300 buildings and more than 1,600 residential properties, many of which are on a section of [Massachusetts Avenue](#) informally known as [Embassy Row](#).^[116]

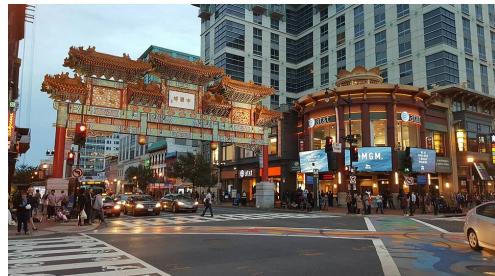
Selection of neighborhoods in Washington, D.C.



Anacostia



Bloomingdale

Capitol HillChinatownColumbia HeightsDupont CircleEdgewoodLogan CircleNavy Yard

Architecture

The architecture of Washington, D.C., varies greatly and is generally popular among tourists and locals. In 2007, six of the top ten buildings in the [American Institute of Architects' ranking of America's Favorite Architecture](#) were in the city:^[117] the [White House](#), [Washington National Cathedral](#), the [Jefferson Memorial](#), the [United States Capitol](#), the [Lincoln Memorial](#), and the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#). The neoclassical, Georgian, Gothic, and Modern styles are reflected among these six structures and many other prominent edifices in the city.

Many government buildings, monuments, and museums along the [National Mall](#) and surrounding areas are heavily inspired by [classical Roman](#) and [Greek](#) architecture. The designs of the White House, the U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court Building, [Washington Monument](#), [National Gallery of Art](#), Lincoln Memorial, and Jefferson

Memorial are all heavily drawn from these classical architectural movements and feature large pediments, domes, columns in classical order, and heavy stone walls. Notable exceptions to the city's classical-style architecture include buildings constructed in the French Second Empire style, including the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and the modernist Watergate complex.^[118] The Thomas Jefferson Building, the main Library of Congress building, and the historic Willard Hotel are built in Beaux-Arts style, popular throughout the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.^{[119][120]} Meridian Hill Park contains a cascading waterfall with Italian Renaissance-style architecture.^[121]



The Jefferson Memorial and many of the city's other major monuments are built in the Neoclassical style.



Contemporary architecture at CityCenterDC in Downtown

Modern, Postmodern, contemporary, and other non-classical architectural styles are also seen in the city. The National Museum of African American History and Culture deeply contrasts the stone-based neoclassical buildings on the National Mall with a design that combines modern engineering with heavy inspiration from African art.^[122] The interior of the Washington Metro stations and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden are designed with strong influence from the 20th-century Brutalism movement.^[123] The Smithsonian Institution Building is built of Seneca red sandstone in the Norman Revival style.^[124] The Old Post Office building, located on Pennsylvania Avenue and completed in 1899, was the first building in the city to have a steel frame structure and the first to use electrical wiring in its design.^[125]

Notable contemporary residential buildings, restaurants, shops, and office buildings in the city include the Wharf on the Southwest Waterfront, Navy Yard along the Anacostia River, and CityCenterDC in Downtown. The Wharf has seen the construction of several high-rise office and residential buildings overlooking the Potomac River. Additionally, restaurants, bars, and shops have been opened at street level. Many of these buildings have a modern glass exterior and heavy curvature.^{[126][127]} CityCenterDC is home to Palmer Alley, a pedestrian-only walkway, and houses several apartment buildings, restaurants, and luxury-brand storefronts with streamlined glass and metal facades.^[128]

Outside Downtown D.C., architectural styles are more varied. Historic buildings are designed primarily in the Queen Anne, Châteauesque, Richardsonian Romanesque, Georgian Revival, Beaux-Arts, and a variety of Victorian styles. Rowhouses are prominent in areas developed after the Civil War and typically follow Federal and late Victorian designs.^[129] Georgetown's Old Stone House, built in 1765, is the oldest-standing building in the city.^[130] Founded in 1789, Georgetown University features a mix of Romanesque and Gothic Revival architecture.^[118] The Ronald Reagan Building is the largest building in the district with a total area of about 3.1 million



Victorian houses in Dupont Circle

square feet (288,000 m²).^[131] Washington Union Station is designed in a combination of architectural styles. Its Great Hall has elaborate gold leaf designs along the ceilings and the hall includes several decorative classical-style statues.^[132]

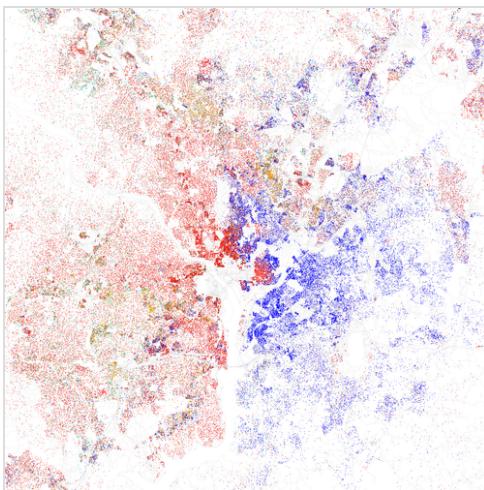
Demographics

Historical population		
Census	Pop.	%±
1800	8,144	—
1810	15,471	90.0%
1820	23,336	50.8%
1830	30,261	29.7%
1840	33,745	11.5%
1850	51,687	53.2%
1860	75,080	45.3%
1870	131,700	75.4%
1880	177,624	34.9%
1890	230,392	29.7%
1900	278,718	21.0%
1910	331,069	18.8%
1920	437,571	32.2%
1930	486,869	11.3%
1940	663,091	36.2%
1950	802,178	21.0%
1960	763,956	-4.8%
1970	756,510	-1.0%
1980	638,333	-15.6%
1990	606,900	-4.9%
2000	572,059	-5.7%
2010	601,723	5.2%
2020	689,545	14.6%
2024 (est.)	702,250 ^[4]	1.8%

Source:^{[44][133][134][e]} Note:^[f]
2010–2020^[3]

Demographic profile	2020 ^[136]	2010 ^[137]	1990 ^[138]	1970 ^[138]	1940 ^[138]
White	39.6%	38.5%	29.6%	27.7%	71.5%
—Non-Hispanic whites	38.0%	34.8%	27.4%	26.5% ^[g]	71.4%
Black or African American	41.4%	50.7%	65.8%	71.1%	28.2%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11.3%	9.1%	5.4%	2.1% ^[g]	0.1%
Asian	4.8%	3.5%	1.8%	0.6%	0.2%

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the district's population was 705,749 as of July 2019, up more than 100,000 people since the 2010 United States Census. When measured decade-over-decade, this shows growth since 2000, following a half-century of population decline.^[139] Washington was the 24th-most populous place in the United States as of 2010.^[140] According to data from 2010, commuters from the suburbs boost the district's daytime population past one million.^[141] If the district were a state, it would rank 49th in population, ahead of Vermont and Wyoming.^[142]



Map of racial distribution in the Washington metropolitan area, according to the 2010 U.S. census; each dot represents 25 people: **White**, **Black**, **Asian**, **Hispanic** or **Other** (yellow)

The Washington metropolitan area, which includes the district and surrounding suburbs, is the sixth-largest metropolitan area in the U.S., with an estimated six million residents as of 2016.^[143] When the Washington area is included with Baltimore and its suburbs, it forms the vast Washington–Baltimore combined statistical area. With a population exceeding 9.8 million residents in 2020, it is the third-largest combined statistical area in the country.^[144]

According to Department of Housing and Development's Annual Homeless Assessment Report in 2022, there were an estimated 4,410 homeless people in Washington, D.C.^{[145][146]} The city passed a law in 2013 that requires shelter to be provided to everyone in need when the temperature drops below freezing.^[147] Since D.C. does not have enough shelter units available, every winter it books hotel rooms in the suburbs with an average cost of around \$100 for a night. According to the D.C. Department of Human Services, during the winter of 2012 the city spent \$2,544,454 on putting homeless families in hotels,^[148] and budgeted \$3.2 million on hotel beds in 2013.^[149]

According to 2020 Census Bureau data, the population of Washington, D.C., was 41.4% Black or African American, 39.6% White (37.9% non-Hispanic White), 4.9% Asian, 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 5.4% Some Other Race. Individuals from two or more races made up 8.1% of the population. Hispanics of any race made up 11.3% of the district's population.^[133]

Washington, D.C. has had a relatively large African American population since the city's foundation.^[150] African American residents composed about 30% of the district's total population between 1800 and 1940.^[44] The black population reached a peak of 70% by 1970 and has since declined as African Americans moved to the surrounding suburbs. Partly as a result of gentrification, there was a 31.4% increase in the non-Hispanic white population and an 11.5% decrease in the black population between 2000 and 2010.^[151] According to a study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, the city has experienced more gentrification than any other U.S. city, with 40% of neighborhoods gentrified.^[152]



The city's African American population has declined since the 1968 riots.

As of 2010, about 17% of Washington, D.C. residents were age 18 or younger, which is lower than the U.S. average of 24%. However, at 34 years old, the district had the lowest median age compared to the 50 states as of 2010.^[153] As of 2010, there were an estimated 81,734 immigrants living in Washington, D.C.^[154] Major

sources of immigration include [El Salvador](#), [Ethiopia](#), [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), and [China](#), with a concentration of Salvadorans in the [Mount Pleasant](#) neighborhood.^[155]

As of 2010, there were 4,822 same-sex couples in the city, about 2% of total households, according to [Williams Institute](#).^[156] Legislation authorizing same-sex marriage passed in 2009, and the district began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in March 2010.^[157]

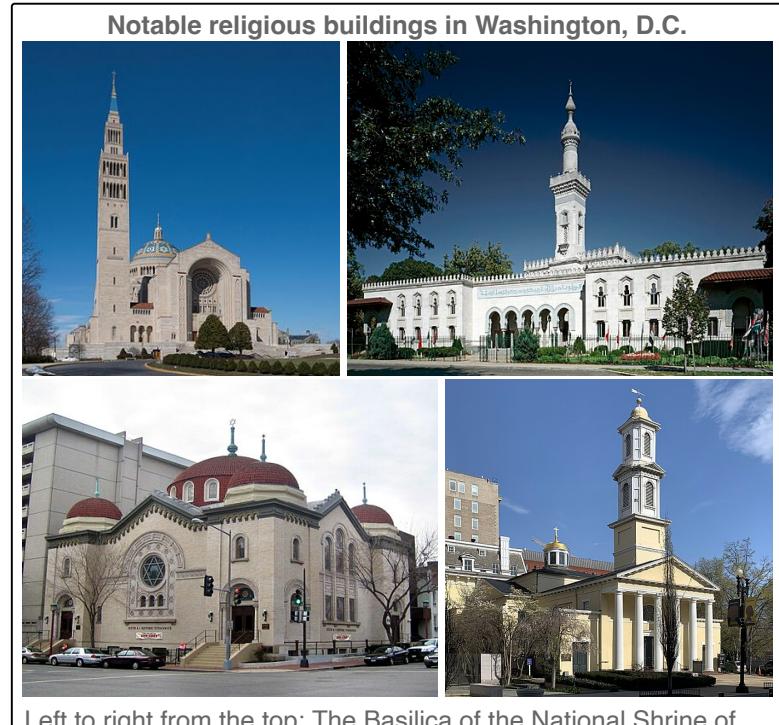
As of 2007, about one-third of Washington, D.C., residents were functionally illiterate, greater than the national rate of about one-fifth. The city's relatively high illiteracy rate is attributed partly to immigrants who are not proficient in [English](#).^[158]

As of 2011, 85% of D.C. residents age 5 and older spoke English at home as a primary language.^[159]

Half of residents had at least a four-year college degree in 2006.^[154] In 2017, the median household income in D.C. was \$77,649;^[160] also in 2017, D.C. residents had a [personal income per capita](#) of \$50,832 (higher than any of the 50 states).^{[160][161]} However, 19% of residents were below the poverty level in 2005, higher than any state except Mississippi. In 2019, the poverty rate stood at 14.7%.^{[162][h][164]}

As of 2010, more than 90% of Washington, D.C., residents had health insurance coverage, the second-highest rate in the nation. This is due in part to city programs that help provide insurance to low-income individuals who do not qualify for other types of coverage.^[165] A 2009 report found that at least three percent of Washington, D.C., residents have [HIV](#) or [AIDS](#), which the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) characterizes as a "generalized and severe" epidemic.^[166]

As of 2020, according to the [Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies](#), 56% of the city's residents were adherents^[i] of a religious body. The largest tradition represented was [Evangelical Protestantism](#) (15% of total population), followed by [Catholicism](#) (12%), [Black Protestantism](#) (10%), [Mainline Protestantism](#) (10%), [Judaism](#) (3%), [Orthodox Christianity](#) (2%), [Buddhism](#) (1%), and [Islam](#) (1%), with several other groups numbering less than 1%. Mainline Protestants were the largest group in 2010, Catholics in 2000, and Black Protestants in 1990.^[167] The city is populated with many religious buildings, including [Washington National Cathedral](#), [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#), which comprises the [largest Catholic church building](#) in the United States, and the [Islamic Center of Washington](#), which was the [largest mosque](#) in the Western Hemisphere when it opened in 1957. [St. John's Episcopal Church](#), located off [Lafayette Square](#), has held services for every [U.S. president](#) since [James Madison](#). The [Sixth & I Historic Synagogue](#), built in 1908, is a [synagogue](#) located in the [Chinatown](#) section of the city. The



Left to right from the top: The [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#); [Islamic Center of Washington](#); [Sixth & I Historic Synagogue](#); and [St. John's Episcopal Church](#)

Washington D.C. Temple is a Latter-day Saint temple located just outside the city in Kensington, Maryland. Viewable from the Capital Beltway, the temple is the tallest temple of the church in existence, and is the third-largest by square footage.^{[168][169]}

Economy



The Eccles Building on Constitution Avenue, home of the Federal Reserve, the central bank of the United States

As of 2011, the Washington metropolitan area, including the District of Columbia as well as parts of Virginia, Maryland, and West Virginia, was the nation's eighth-largest metropolitan economy. Its growing and diversified economy has an increasing percentage of professional and business service jobs in addition to more traditional jobs rooted in tourism, entertainment, and government.^[170]

Between 2009 and 2016, gross domestic product per capita in Washington, D.C., consistently ranked at the very top among U.S. states.^[171] In 2016, at \$160,472, its GDP per capita was almost three times greater than that of Massachusetts, which was ranked second in the nation (see List of U.S. states and territories by GDP).^[171] As of 2022, the metropolitan statistical area's unemployment rate was 3.1%, ranking 171 out of the 389 metropolitan areas as defined by the

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.^[172] The District of Columbia itself had an unemployment rate of 4.6% during the same time period.^[173] In 2019, Washington, D.C., had the highest median household income in the U.S. at \$92,266.^[174]

According to the District's comprehensive annual financial reports, the top employers by number of employees in 2022 included Georgetown University, Children's National Medical Center, Washington Hospital Center, George Washington University, American University, Georgetown University Hospital, Booz Allen & Hamilton, Insperity PEO Services, Universal Protection Service, Howard University, Medstar Medical Group, George Washington University Hospital, Catholic University of America, and Sibley Memorial Hospital.^[175]

Federal government

As of July 2022, 25% of people employed in Washington, D.C., were employed by the federal government.^[176] Many of the region's residents are employed by companies and organizations that do work for the federal government, seek to influence federal policy, or are otherwise related to its work, including law firms, defense contractors, civilian contractors, nonprofit organizations, lobbying firms, trade unions, industry trade groups, and professional associations, many of which have their headquarters in or near the city for proximity to the federal government.



The Federal Triangle, a historic hub of executive departments of the U.S. federal government

Research and non-profit organizations

Washington, D.C., is a leading center for national and international research organizations, especially think tanks engaged in public policy.^[177] As of 2020, 8% of the country's think tanks are based in the city, including many of the largest and most widely cited,^[178] including the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Peterson Institute for International Economics, The Heritage Foundation, and Urban Institute.^[179]



A panel discussion at the American Enterprise Institute, one of the city's many think tanks

Washington, D.C. is home to many non-profit organizations that engage with issues of domestic and global importance by conducting advanced research, running programs, or public advocacy. Among these organizations are the UN Foundation, Human Rights Campaign, Amnesty International, and the National Endowment for Democracy.^[180] Major medical research institutions include the MedStar Washington Hospital Center and the Children's National Medical Center.^[181]

The city is the country's primary location for international development firms, many of which contract with the D.C.-based United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. federal government's aid agency. The American Red Cross, a humanitarian agency focused on emergency relief, is also based in the city.^[182]

Private sector

According to statistics compiled in 2011, four of the largest 500 companies in the country were based in Washington, D.C.^[183] In the 2023 Global Financial Centres Index, Washington was ranked as having the 8th most competitive financial center in the world, and fourth most competitive in the United States (after New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles).^[184] Among the largest companies based in Washington, D.C., are Fannie Mae, Amtrak, Danaher Corporation, FTI Consulting, and Hogan Lovells.^[185]

Tourism

Tourism is the city's second-largest industry, after the federal government. In 2012, some 18.9 million visitors contributed an estimated \$4.8 billion to the local economy.^[186] In 2019, the city saw 24.6 million tourists, including 1.8 million from foreign countries, who collectively spent \$8.15 billion during their stay.^[187] Tourism helps many of the region's other industries, such as lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, shopping, and transportation.^[187]

The city and the larger Washington metropolitan area have an array of attractions for tourists, including monuments, memorials, museums, sports events, and trails. Within the city, the National Mall serves as the center of the tourism industry. It is there that many of the city's museums and monuments are located. Adjacent to the mall sits the Tidal Basin, where several major national memorials and monuments are located, including the popular Jefferson Memorial. Washington Union Station is a popular tourist spot with its multitude of restaurants and shops.

Culture

Arts

Washington, D.C., is a national center for the arts, home to several concert halls and theaters. The [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#) is home to [National Symphony Orchestra](#), [Washington National Opera](#), and the [Washington Ballet](#). The [Kennedy Center Honors](#) are awarded each year to those in the performing arts who have contributed greatly to the cultural life of the United States. This ceremony is often attended by the sitting [U.S. president](#) and other dignitaries and celebrities.^[189] The Kennedy Center also awards the annual [Mark Twain Prize for American Humor](#).^[190]

The historic Ford's Theatre, the site of the [assassination of President Abraham Lincoln](#) on April 14, 1865, continues to function as a theatre and as a museum.^[191]

The [Marine Barracks](#) near [Capitol Hill](#) houses the [United States Marine Band](#); founded in 1798, it is the country's oldest professional musical organization.^[192] American march composer and Washington-native [John Philip Sousa](#) led the Marine Band from 1880 until 1892.^[193] Founded in 1925, the [United States Navy Band](#) has its headquarters at the [Washington Navy Yard](#) and performs at official events and public concerts around the city.^[194]

Founded in 1950, [Arena Stage](#) achieved national attention and spurred growth in the city's independent theater movement, which now includes the [Shakespeare Theatre Company](#), [Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company](#), and [Studio Theatre](#).^[195] Arena Stage reopened after a renovation and expansion in the city's emerging [Southwest waterfront area](#) in 2010.^[196] The [GALA Hispanic Theatre](#), now housed in the historic [Tivoli Theatre](#) in [Columbia Heights](#), was founded in 1976 and is a National Center for the Latino Performing Arts.^[197]

Other performing arts spaces in the city include the [Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium](#) in [Federal Triangle](#), the [Atlas Performing Arts Center](#) on [H Street](#), the [Carter Barron Amphitheater](#) in [Rock Creek Park](#), [Constitution Hall](#) in [Downtown](#), the [Keegan Theatre](#) in [Dupont Circle](#), the [Lisner Auditorium](#) in [Foggy Bottom](#), the [Sylvan Theater](#) on the [National Mall](#), and the



The [World War II Memorial](#), one of many popular tourist sites located on the [National Mall](#)

Symbols of District of Columbia

Slogan	Federal City
Bird	Living insignia Wood Thrush
Crustacean	Hay's Spring amphipod
Fish	American shad
Flower	American Beauty rose
Mammal	Little brown bat
Tree	Scarlet Oak
Inanimate insignia	
Beverage	Rickey ^[188]
Dance	Hand dancing
Dinosaur	<i>Capitalsaurus</i>
Food	Cherry
Rock	Potomac bluestone
Route marker	
	
State quarter	
	
Released in 2009	

Warner Theatre in Penn Quarter. National Theatre in Downtown, which opened in 1835, is the second-longest continuously operating theater in the nation after Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, which opened in 1808.^[198]

U Street Corridor in Northwest is home to Howard Theatre and Lincoln Theatre, which hosted music legends such as Washington, D.C. natives Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, and Miles Davis.^[199] Just east of U Street is Shaw, which also served as a major cultural center during the jazz age. Intersecting with U Street is Fourteenth Street, which was an extension of the U Street cultural corridor during the 1920s through the 1960s. The collection of Fourteenth Street, U Street, and Shaw was the location of the Black Renaissance in D.C., which was part of the larger Harlem Renaissance. The area starting at Fourteenth Street downtown going north through U Street and east to Shaw boasts a high concentration of bars, restaurants, and theaters, and is among the city's most notable cultural and artistic areas.

The Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association (WAFCA), a group of more than 65 film critics, holds an annual awards ceremony.^[200]

Music



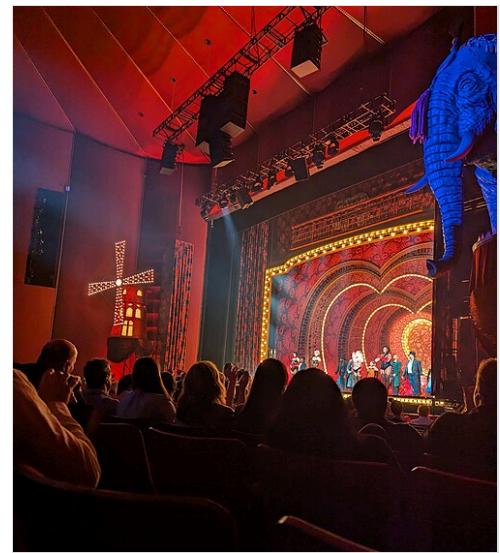
Chuck Brown performing go-go music

Columbia Records, a major music record label in the US, was founded in Washington, D.C. in 1889.^{[201]:105}

The city grew into being one of America's most important music cities in the early jazz age. Duke Ellington, among the most prominent jazz composers and musicians of his time, was born and raised in Washington, and began his music career in the city. The center of the city's jazz scene during those years was U street and Shaw. Among the city's major jazz locations were the Lincoln Theatre and the Howard Theatre.^[202]

Washington has its own native music genre called go-go; a post-funk, percussion-driven flavor of rhythm and blues that was popularized in the late 1970s by D.C. band leader Chuck Brown.^[203]

The district is an important center for indie culture and music in the United States. The DC-based label Dischord Records, formed by Ian MacKaye, frontman of Fugazi, was one of the most crucial independent labels in the genesis of 1980s punk and eventually indie rock in the 1990s.^[204] Modern alternative and indie music venues like The Black Cat and the 9:30 Club bring popular acts to the U Street area.^[205] The hardcore punk scene in the city, known as D.C. hardcore, is an important genre of D.C.'s contemporary music scene. Starting in the 1970s and flourishing in the Adams Morgan neighborhood, it is considered to be one of the most influential punk music movements in the country.^[206]



A performance of *Moulin Rouge!* at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Cuisine

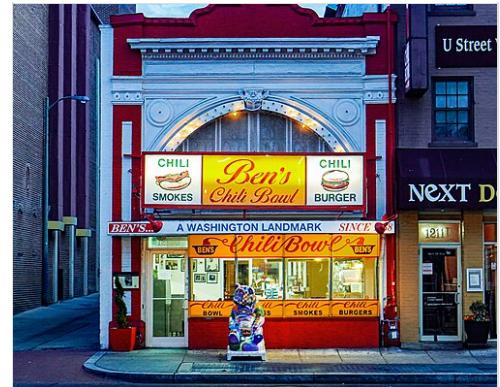
Washington, D.C., is rich in fine and casual dining; some consider it among the country's best cities for dining.^[207] The city has a diverse range of restaurants, including a wide variety of international cuisines. The city's Chinatown, for example, has more than a dozen Chinese-style restaurants. The city also has many Middle Eastern, European, African, Asian, and Latin American cuisine options. D.C. is known as one of the best cities in the world for Ethiopian cuisine, due largely to Ethiopian immigrants who arrived in the 20th century.^[208] A part of the Shaw neighborhood in central D.C. is known as "Little Ethiopia" and has a high concentration of Ethiopian restaurants and shops.^[209] The diversity of cuisine is also reflected in the city's many food trucks, which are particularly heavily concentrated along the National Mall, which has few other dining options.



Beyaynetu served at Das Ethiopian Cuisine on 28th Street Northwest, one of the city's Ethiopian cuisine restaurants

Among the most notable Washington, D.C.-born foods is the half-smoke, a half-beef, half-pork sausage placed in a hotdog-style bun and topped with onion, chili, and cheese.^[210] The city is also the birthplace of mumbo sauce, a condiment similar to barbecue sauce but sweeter in flavor, often used on meat and french fries.^[211]
^[212] Washington, D.C. is known for popularizing the jumbo slice pizza, a large New York-style pizza^{[213][214]}
^[215] with roots in the Adams Morgan neighborhood.^[216]

Among the city's signature restaurants is Ben's Chili Bowl, located on U Street since its founding in 1958. The restaurant rose to prominence as a peaceful escape during the violent 1968 race riots in the city. Famous for its chili dogs and half-smokes, it has been visited by numerous presidents and celebrities over the years.^[217] The Georgetown Cupcake bakery became famous through its appearance on the reality T.V. show DC Cupcakes. Another culinary hotspot is Union Market in Northeast D.C., a former farmer's market and wholesale that now houses a large, gourmet food hall.^[218]



Ben's Chili Bowl on U Street, known for its half-smoke, a historic staple of the city's cuisine

As of 2024, 25 restaurants^[j] have received stars in the D.C. Michelin Guide.^[219] This represents the most starred restaurants *per capita* for any U.S. city, and the third-most in the world.^[220] Several celebrity chefs have opened restaurants in the city, including José Andrés,^[221] Kwame Onwuachi,^[222] Gordon Ramsay,^{[223][224]} and previously Michel Richard.^[225]

Museums

Washington, D.C. is home to several of the country's and world's most visited museums. In 2022, the National Museum of Natural History and the National Gallery of Art were the two most visited museums in the country. Overall, Washington had eight of the 28 most visited museums in the U.S. in 2022. The same year, the National Museum of Natural History was the fifth-most-visited museum in the world and the National Gallery of Art was the eleventh.^[226]

Smithsonian museums

The Smithsonian Institution, an educational foundation chartered by Congress in 1846 and the world's largest research and museum complex, is responsible for maintaining most of the city's official museums and galleries.^[227] The U.S. government partially funds the Smithsonian, and its collections are open to the public free of charge.^[228] The Smithsonian's locations had a combined total of 30 million visits in 2013. The most visited museum is the National Museum of Natural History on National Mall.^[229] Other Smithsonian Institution museums and galleries on the Mall include the National Air and Space Museum; the National Museum of African Art; the National Museum of American History; the National Museum of the American Indian; the Sackler and Freer galleries, which focus on Asian art and culture; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; the Arts and Industries Building; the S. Dillon Ripley Center; and the Smithsonian Institution Building, which serves as the institution's headquarters.^[230]



The National Museum of Natural History, the third-most visited museum in the U.S. in 2023, with 4.4 million visitors

The Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery are housed in the Old Patent Office Building near Washington's Chinatown.^[231] Renwick Gallery is part of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and is located in a separate building near the White House. Other Smithsonian museums and galleries include Anacostia Community Museum in Southeast Washington, the National Postal Museum near Washington Union Station, and the National Zoo in Woodley Park.^[230]

Other museums

The National Gallery of Art is on the National Mall near the Capitol and features American and European artworks. The U.S. government owns the gallery and its collections. However, they are not a part of the Smithsonian Institution.^[232] The National Building Museum, which occupies the former Pension Building near Judiciary Square, was chartered by Congress and hosts exhibits on architecture, urban planning, and design.^[233] The Botanic Garden is a botanical garden and museum operated by the U.S. Congress that is open to the public.^[234]



The National Gallery of Art, the fourth-most visited art museum in the United States in 2023 with nearly four million visitors

There are several private art museums in Washington, D.C., that house major collections and exhibits open to the public, such as the National Museum of Women in the Arts and The Phillips Collection in Dupont Circle, the first museum of modern art in the United States.^[235] Other private museums in Washington include the O Street



The National Building Museum

Museum, the International Spy Museum, the National Geographic Society Museum, and the Museum of the Bible. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum near the National Mall maintains exhibits, documentation, and artifacts related to the Holocaust.^[236]

Landmarks

National Mall and Tidal Basin



National Mall, a landscaped park extending from the Lincoln Memorial to the United States Capitol

each Independence Day. Both concerts are broadcast across the country on PBS. In the evening on the Fourth of July, the park hosts a large fireworks show.^[237]

The Washington Monument and the Jefferson Pier are near the center of the mall, south of the White House. Directly northwest of the Washington Monument is Constitution Gardens, which includes a garden, park, pond, and a memorial to the signers of the United States Declaration of Independence.^[238] Just north of Constitution Gardens is the Lockkeeper's House, which is the second-oldest building on the mall after the White House. The house is operated by the National Park Service (NPS) and is open to the public. Also on the mall is the National World War II Memorial at the east end of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool; the Korean War Veterans Memorial; and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.^[239]

South of the mall is the Tidal Basin, a human-made reservoir surrounded by pedestrian paths lined by Japanese cherry trees. Every spring, millions of cherry blossoms bloom, attracting visitors from across the world as part of the annual National Cherry Blossom Festival.^[240] The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, George Mason Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, and the District of Columbia War Memorial are around the Tidal Basin.^[239]

Other landmarks

Numerous historic landmarks are located outside the National Mall. Among these are the Old Post Office,^[241] the Treasury Building,^[242] Old Patent Office Building,^[243] the Washington National Cathedral,^[244] the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception,^[245] the National World War I Memorial,^[246]



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a two-acre (8,100 m²) site featuring two black granite walls engraved with the names of those service members who died or remain missing in the Vietnam War designed by Maya Lin, was initially controversial for its lack of heroic iconography, a departure from earlier memorial designs.

the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site,^[247] Lincoln's Cottage,^[248] the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, and the United States Navy Memorial.^[249] The Octagon House, which was the building that President James Madison and his administration moved into following the burning of the White House during the War of 1812, is now a historic museum and popular tourist destination.^[250]

The National Archives is headquartered in a building just north of the National Mall and houses thousands of documents important to American history, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.^[251] Located in three buildings on Capitol Hill, the Library of Congress is the largest library complex in the world with a collection of more than 147 million books, manuscripts, and other materials.^[252] The United States Supreme Court is located immediately north of the Library of Congress. The United States Supreme Court Building was completed in 1935; before then, the court held sessions in the Old Senate Chamber of the Capitol.^[253]

Chinatown, located just north of the National Mall, houses Capital One Arena, which serves as the home arena to the Washington Capitals of the National Hockey League and the Washington Wizards of the National Basketball Association, and serves as the city's primary indoor entertainment arena. Chinatown includes several Chinese restaurants and shops. The Friendship Archway is one of the largest Chinese ceremonial archways outside of China and bears the Chinese characters for "Chinatown" below its roof.^[254]

The Southwest Waterfront along the Potomac River has been redeveloped in recent years and now serves as a popular cultural center. The Wharf, as it is called, contains the city's historic Maine Avenue Fish Market. This is the oldest fish market currently in operation in the entire United States.^[255] The Wharf also has many hotels, residential buildings, restaurants, shops, parks, piers, docks and marinas, and live music venues.^[256]
^[257]



Protesters in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Building in June 2022

Sports

Washington, D.C. has four major professional men's sports teams and two major professional women's teams. The Washington Nationals of Major League Baseball are the most popular sports team in the District, as of 2019.^[257] They play at Nationals Park, which opened in 2008. The Washington Commanders (previously Redskins) of the National Football League play at Northwest Stadium in nearby Landover, Maryland. The Washington Wizards (previously Bullets) of the National Basketball Association and the Washington Capitals of the National Hockey League play at Capital One Arena. The Washington Mystics of the Women's National Basketball Association play at CareFirst Arena. D.C. United of Major League Soccer and the Washington Spirit of the National Women's Soccer League play at Audi Field.

The city's teams have won a combined 14 professional league championships over their respective histories. The Washington Commanders have won two NFL Championships and three Super Bowls;[258] D.C. United has won four;[259] and the Washington Wizards, Washington Capitals, Washington Mystics, Washington Nationals, and Washington Spirit have each won a single championship.[260][261]

Other professional and semi-professional teams in Washington, D.C. include DC Defenders of the XFL, Old Glory DC of Major League Rugby, the Washington Kastles of World TeamTennis, and the D.C. Divas of the Independent Women's Football League. The William H.G. FitzGerald Tennis Center in Rock Creek Park hosts the Washington Open, a joint men's ATP Tour 500- and women's WTA Tour 500-level tennis tournament, every summer in late July and early August. Washington, D.C. has two major annual marathon races, the Marine Corps Marathon, held every autumn, and the Rock 'n' Roll USA Marathon, held each spring. The Marine Corps Marathon began in 1976 and is sometimes called "The People's Marathon" because it is the largest marathon that does not offer prize money to participants.[262]

The district's four NCAA Division I teams are the American Eagles of American University, George Washington Revolutionaries of George Washington University, the Georgetown Hoyas of Georgetown University, and the Howard Bison and Lady Bison of Howard University. The Georgetown men's basketball team is the most notable and also plays at Capital One Arena. Washington, D.C. area's regional sports television network is Monumental Sports Network. [263]



Capital One Arena in the city's Chinatown section hosts the Washington Capitals, an NHL team (pictured), and the Washington Wizards, an NBA team



With over 30,000 participants as of 2024, the annual Marine Corps Marathon, held annually in October in Washington, D.C. and Arlington County, is the largest non-prize money marathon in the country.[256]

City government

Politics

Article One, Section Eight of the United States Constitution grants the United States Congress exclusive jurisdiction over the city. The district did not have an elected local government until passage of the 1973 Home Rule Act, which devolved certain Congressional powers to an elected mayor and a 13-member Council of the District of Columbia. However, Congress retains the right to review and overturn laws created by the council and intervene in local affairs.[264] Washington, D.C., is overwhelmingly Democratic, having voted for Democratic presidential candidates consistently since it was granted electoral votes in the 1964 presidential election.[265]

Each of the city's eight wards elects a single member of the council and residents elect four at-large members to represent the district as a whole. The council chair is also elected at-large.^[266] There are 37 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) elected by small neighborhood districts. ANC^s can issue recommendations on all issues that affect residents; government agencies take their advice under careful consideration.^[267] The attorney general of the District of Columbia is elected to a four-year term.^[268]

Washington, D.C., observes all federal holidays and also celebrates Emancipation Day on April 16, which commemorates the end of slavery in the district.^[43] The flag of Washington, D.C., was adopted in 1938 and is a variation on George Washington's family coat of arms.^[269]



Washington, D.C., has been a member state of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) since 2015.^[270]

The idiom "Inside the Beltway" is a reference used to describe discussions of national political issues inside of Washington, D.C., by way of geographically demarcating the region inside the Capital's Beltway, the city's highway loop constructed in 1964. The phrase is used as a title for a number of political columns and news items by publications, including *The Washington Times*.^[271]

The John A. Wilson Building on Pennsylvania Avenue, headquarters for much of the Government of the District of Columbia, including the offices of the mayor and D.C. Council

Budgetary issues

The mayor and council set local taxes and a budget, which Congress must approve. The Government Accountability Office and other analysts have estimated that the city's high percentage of tax-exempt property and the Congressional prohibition of commuter taxes create a structural deficit in the district's local budget of anywhere between \$470 million and over \$1 billion per year. Congress typically provides additional grants for federal programs such as Medicaid and the operation of the local justice system; however, analysts claim that the payments do not fully resolve the imbalance.^{[272][273]}



The city's local government, particularly during the mayoralty of Marion Barry, has been criticized for mismanagement and waste.^[274] During Barry's term as mayor, *Washington Monthly* magazine labeled the city "the worst city government in America" in 1989.^[275] In 1995, at the start of Barry's fourth term, Congress created the District of Columbia Financial Control Board to oversee all municipal spending.^[276] Mayor Anthony Williams won election in 1998 and oversaw a period of urban renewal and budget surpluses.

Muriel Bowser, the city's mayor since 2015

The district regained control over its finances in 2001 and the oversight board's operations were suspended. [277]

The district has a federally funded "Emergency Planning and Security Fund" to cover security related to visits by foreign leaders and diplomats, presidential inaugurations, protests, and terrorism concerns. During the Trump administration, the fund has run with a deficit. Trump's January 2017 inauguration cost the city \$27 million; of that, \$7 million was never repaid to the fund. Trump's 2019 Independence Day event, "A Salute to America", cost six times more than Independence Day events in past years. [278]

International relations

As the national capital, Washington, D.C. hosts about 185 foreign missions, including embassies, ambassador's residences, and international cultural centers. [279] Many are concentrated along a stretch of Massachusetts Avenue known informally as Embassy Row. [280] Washington, D.C., hosts a number of internationally themed festivals and events, often in collaboration with foreign missions or delegations. The city government maintains an Office of International Affairs to liaise with the diplomatic community and foreign delegations. [281] D.C. has 15 official sister city agreements or protocols of friendship. [k]



The French ambassador's residence in the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District

Federal voting rights

Congress controlled the Federal District from its establishment, and did not make a provision for federal representation of the people living there. That changed in 1961, when the 23rd amendment was ratified by the states, and Washington, D.C. was granted three electoral college votes in each presidential election. In 1978 another amendment was passed but not ratified by the states to grant D.C. congressional representation. In 2021, a bill to make D.C. a state passed the House of Representatives but not Senate. Congress has the power to add a state, but an amendment must be ratified by the states.

Washington, D.C. is not a state and therefore has no federal voting representation in Congress. The city's residents elect a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives (D.C. at-large), who may sit on committees, participate in debate, and introduce legislation, but cannot vote on the House floor. The district has no official representation in the United States Senate. Neither chamber seats the district's elected "shadow" representative or senators. Unlike residents of U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico or Guam, which also have non-voting delegates, D.C. residents are subject to all federal taxes. [283] In the financial year 2012, D.C. residents and businesses paid \$20.7 billion in federal taxes, more than the taxes collected from 19 states and the highest federal taxes per capita. [284]



The city's license plate, which calls for an end to taxation without representation

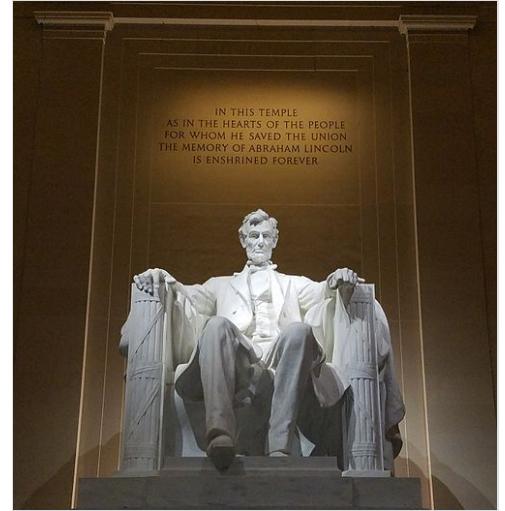
A 2005 poll found that 78% of Americans did not know residents of Washington, D.C., have less representation in Congress than residents of the 50 states.^[285] Efforts to raise awareness about the issue have included campaigns by grassroots organizations and featuring the city's unofficial motto, "End Taxation Without Representation", on D.C. vehicle license plates.^[286] There is evidence of nationwide approval for D.C. voting rights; various polls indicate that 61 to 82% of Americans believe D.C. should have voting representation in Congress.^{[285][287]}



The Washington Monument (forefront)

Opponents to federal voting rights for Washington, D.C., propose that the Founding Fathers never intended for district residents to have a vote in Congress since the Constitution makes clear that representation must come from the states. Those opposed to making the District of Columbia a state say such a move would destroy the notion of a separate national capital and that statehood would unfairly grant Senate representation to a single city.^[288]

and White House (center) in September 2003. Since 1961, the city's residents can vote for the U.S. president and vice president, who also serves as President of the Senate.



The Abraham Lincoln Statue at the Lincoln Memorial in September 2016

The District was granted presidential voting rights by the 23rd Amendment in 1961.^[289] The 23rd Amendment was ratified which granted the people of the Washington, D.C., the right to vote for the president. This was done by giving them electoral college votes they would get if they were a state, but it must be no more than the least a state has; this works out to three electoral college votes. The amendment reads, "... A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State".^[290] The 23rd Amendment could complicate statehood, because it would apply even if the federal district was shrunk, and undoing the amendment requires another amendment.^[61] Congress must operate from a district it controls, but it can be no larger than ten miles on a side; the 2021 statehood bill got around this by proposing the federal district be shrunk to an area roughly the size of the national mall.^[61]

In 1978, the District of Columbia Voting Rights Amendment was passed, which would have granted D.C. Congressional representation, but it expired in 1986 without being ratified into law.^[291] In 2021, a bill was introduced to congress for retroceding the district to Maryland.^[292] The idea was that by returning the area to Maryland, the residents would have normal State representation.^[293]

Education

District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the sole public school district in the city,^[294] operates the city's 123 public schools.^[295] The number of students in DCPS steadily decreased for 39 years until 2009. In the 2010–11 school year, 46,191 students were enrolled in the public school system.^[296] DCPS has one of the highest-cost, yet lowest-performing school systems in the country, in terms of both infrastructure and student achievement.^[297] Mayor Adrian Fenty's administration made sweeping changes to the system by closing schools, replacing teachers, firing principals, and using private education firms to aid curriculum development.^[298]



Duke Ellington School of the Arts, a public magnet school in the city

The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board monitors the 52 public charter schools in the city.^[299] Due to the perceived problems with the traditional public school system, enrollment in public charter schools had by 2007 steadily increased.^[300] As of 2010, D.C., charter schools had a total enrollment of about 32,000, a 9% increase from the prior year.^[296] The district is also home to 92 private schools, which enrolled approximately 18,000 students in 2008.^[301]

Higher education

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) is a public land-grant university providing undergraduate and graduate education.^[302] Federally chartered universities include American University (AU), Gallaudet University, George Washington University (GWU), Georgetown University (GU), and Howard University (HU). Other private universities include the Catholic University of America (CUA), the Johns Hopkins University Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and Trinity Washington University. The Corcoran College of Art and Design, the oldest art school in the capital, was absorbed into the George Washington University in 2014, now serving as its college of arts.^[303]



Georgetown University, founded in 1789,

The city's medical research institutions include Washington Hospital Center and Children's National Medical Center. The city is home to three medical schools and associated teaching hospitals: George Washington, Georgetown, and Howard universities.^[304]

the city's oldest university

Libraries

Washington, D.C., has dozens of public and private libraries and library systems, including the District of Columbia Public Library system. Folger Shakespeare Library, a research library and museum located on Capitol Hill, houses the world's largest collection of material related to William Shakespeare.^[305]

The Library of Congress is the research library that officially serves the United States Congress and is the *de facto* national library of the United States. It is a complex of three buildings: Thomas Jefferson Building, John Adams Building and James Madison Memorial Building, all located in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The Jefferson Building houses the library's reading room, a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, Thomas Jefferson's original library, and several museum exhibits.



The District of Columbia Public Library operates 26 neighborhood locations including the landmark Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library.^[307]

The Library of Congress, the world's largest library, has more than 173 million items.^[311]

Media

Washington, D.C., is a prominent center for national and international media. *The Washington Post*, founded in 1877, is the city's most-read local daily newspaper and one of the preeminent newspapers in the United States.^[308] It had the sixth-highest readership of all news dailies in the country in 2011.^[309] The *Post* previously also published the Spanish-language newspaper *El Tiempo Latino*, which it sold to El Planeta Media in 2016.^[310] The city is served by two local NPR affiliates, WAMU and WETA.^[311]



One Franklin Square in Downtown houses the headquarters of *The Washington Post*, the nation's third-largest newspaper by circulation as of 2023

The Washington Times is a general interest daily newspaper and popular among conservatives.^[312] The alternative weekly *Washington City Paper*, with a circulation of 47,000, is also based in the city and has a substantial readership in the Washington area.^{[313][314]} *The Atlantic* magazine, which has covered politics, international affairs, and cultural issues since 1857, was previously headquartered at the Watergate complex but is now headquartered in a building at the Wharf in Washington.^[315] The headquarters of *Voice of America*, the U.S. government's international news service, is near the Capitol in Southwest Washington, D.C.^[316]

Several community and specialty papers focus on neighborhood and cultural issues, including the weekly *Washington Blade* and *Metro Weekly*, which focus on LGBT issues; the *Washington Informer* and *The Washington Afro American*, which highlight topics of interest to the black community; and neighborhood newspapers published by The Current Newspapers. *Congressional Quarterly*, *The Hill*, *Politico*, and *Roll Call* newspapers focus exclusively on issues related to Congress and the federal government. Other publications based in Washington include the *National Geographic* magazine and political publications such as *The Washington Examiner*, *The New Republic*, and *Washington Monthly*.^[317]

The Washington metropolitan area is the ninth-largest television media market in the nation, with two million homes, representing approximately 2% of the country's television market.^[318] Several media companies and cable television channels have their headquarters in the area, including *USA Today*, the largest newspaper in the country as measured by circulation.^{[319][320]}



Infrastructure

Transportation

Streets and highways

There are 1,500 miles (2,400 km) of streets, parkways, and avenues in the district.^[321] Due to the freeway revolts of the 1960s, much of the proposed interstate highway system through the middle of Washington was never built. Interstate 95 (I-95), the nation's major east coast highway, therefore bends around the district to form the eastern portion of the Capital Beltway. A portion of the proposed highway funding was directed to the region's public transportation infrastructure instead.^[322] The interstate highways that continue into Washington, including I-66 and I-395, both terminate shortly after entering the city.^[323]

According to a 2010 study, Washington-area commuters spent 70 hours a year in traffic delays, which tied with Chicago for having the nation's worst road congestion.^[324] However, 37% of Washington-area commuters take public transportation to work, the second-highest rate in the country.^[325] An additional 12% of D.C. commuters walked to work, 6% carpooled, and 3% traveled by bicycle in 2010.^[326]

CNN reporting from the city during the 2016 U.S. presidential election



Pennsylvania Avenue, one of the city's most prominent streets, connects the U.S. Capitol and White House.

Cycling

In May 2022, the city celebrated the expansion of its bike lane network to 104 miles (167 km), a 60 percent increase from 2015. Of those miles, 24 miles (39 km) were protected bike lanes. It also boasted 62 miles (100 km) of bike trails.^[327] As of March 2023, the city has 108 miles (174 km) of bike lanes, with 30 miles (48 km) of them protected bike lanes.^[328]

D.C. is part of the regional Capital Bikeshare program. Started in 2010, it is one of the largest bicycle sharing systems in the country. As of February 2024, the program had 6,372 bicycles and 395 stations.^[329] A preceding SmartBike DC pilot program had begun in 2008.^[330]

Walkability

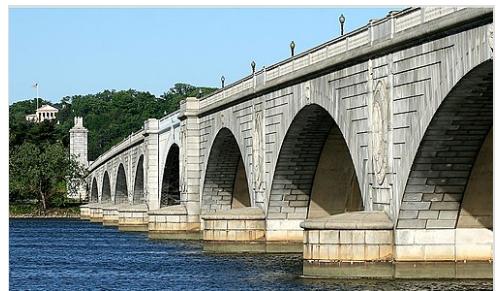
A 2021 study by Walk Score ranked Washington, D.C. the fifth-most walkable city in the country. According to the study, the most walkable neighborhoods are U Street, Dupont Circle, and Mount Vernon Square.^[331] In 2013, the Washington Metropolitan Area had the eighth lowest percentage of workers who commuted by private automobile (75.7 percent), with 8 percent of area workers traveling via rail transit.^[332]



A Capital Bikeshare rental station near McPherson Square

River crossings

Bridges that cross the Potomac and Anacostia rivers include Arlington Memorial Bridge, 14th Street Bridges, Francis Scott Key Bridge, Theodore Roosevelt Bridge, Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and Frederick Douglass Bridge.^[333]



Memorial Bridge, connecting the city across the Potomac River with Arlington County

Rail

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates Washington Metro, the city's rapid transit rail system, which serves Washington, D.C. and its Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs. Metro opened on March 27, 1976, and consists of six lines, 98 stations, and 129 miles (208 km) of track.^[334] Metro is the second-busiest rapid transit system in the country and fifth-busiest in North America.^[335] It operates mostly as a deep-level subway in more densely populated areas, while most of the suburban tracks are at surface level or elevated. Metro is known for its iconic brutalist-style vaulted ceilings in the interior stations. The longest single-tier escalator in the Western Hemisphere, spanning 230 feet (70 m), is located at Metro's Wheaton station in Maryland.^[336]



Washington Metro, the second-busiest rapid rail system in the U.S. based on average weekday ridership, is known for its iconic vaulted ceilings

Washington Union Station, the city's main train station, serves approximately 70,000 passengers daily and is Amtrak's second-busiest station with 4.6 million passengers annually and the southern terminus for the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak's Northeast Regional provides service northbound transportation to Baltimore Penn Station, New York Penn Station in Manhattan, 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, South Station in Boston, and other stops. Maryland's MARC and Virginia's VRE commuter trains and the Metrorail Red Line also provide service into Union Station.^[337] As of 2023, Union Station is the ninth-busiest rail station in the nation and tenth-busiest in North America.

Washington, D.C.'s streetcars, which were a prominent form of 19th and early transportation, were dismantled in the 1960s. In 2016, however, the city brought back a streetcar line, DC Streetcar, which is a single line system in Northeast Washington, D.C., along H Street and Benning Road, known as the H Street/Benning Road Line.^[338]

Bus

Two main public bus systems operate in Washington, D.C. Metrobus, operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), is the primary public bus system in Washington, D.C. Serving more than 400,000 riders each weekday, it is one of the nation's largest bus systems by annual ridership.^[339] The city also operates its own DC Circulator bus system, which connects commercial and touristic areas within central Washington.^[340] The DC Circulator costs only \$1 to ride and is composed of six distinct routes that cover central D.C. and suburban Rosslyn, Virginia. The DC Circulator is run via a public-private partnership between the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, WMATA, and DC Surface Transit, Inc. (DCST). The bus system services each stop approximately every 10 minutes.^[341]



Metrobus, operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

There are also numerous commuter buses that residents of the wider Washington region take to commute into the city for work or other events, such as the Loudoun County Transit Commuter Bus and the Maryland Transit Administration Commuter Bus.^[342] The city also has several bus lines used by tourists and others visiting the city, including Big Bus Tours, Old Town Trolley Tours, and DC Trails. Many tourists also arrive via charter buses. Following renovations in 2011, Union Station became Washington's primary intercity bus transit center.^[343]

Air

Three major airports serve the district, though none are within the city's borders. Two of these major airports are located in suburban Northern Virginia and one in suburban Maryland. The closest is Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, which is located in Arlington County, Virginia, just across the Potomac River about 5 miles (8 km) from downtown Washington, D.C. This airport provides primarily domestic flights and has the lowest number of passengers of the three airports in the region. The busiest by number of total passengers is Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI), located in Anne Arundel County, Maryland about 30 miles (48 km) northeast of the city.^[344] The busiest by international flights and the largest by land size and amount of facilities is Washington Dulles International Airport, located in Dulles, Virginia, about 24 miles (39 km) west of the city.^[345] Dulles has the most international passenger traffic of any airport in the Mid-Atlantic outside the New York metropolitan area, including approximately 90% of the international passenger traffic in the Washington-Baltimore region.^[346] Each of these three airports also serves as a hub for a major American airline: Reagan National Airport is a hub for American Airlines,^[347] Dulles is a major hub for United Airlines and Star Alliance partners,^[348] and BWI is an operating base for Southwest Airlines.^[349] In 2018, the Washington, D.C. area was the 18th-busiest airport system in the world by passenger traffic, accumulating over 74 million passengers between its three main commercial airports; by 2022 it had climbed to 13th-busiest for passenger traffic, even though passenger numbers decreased to less than 69 million.



Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia is the closest airport to the city among the three major Washington metropolitan area airports.

The President of the United States does not use any of these airports for travel. Instead, the U.S. president typically travels by Marine One from the South Lawn of the White House to Joint Base Andrews in suburban Maryland. From there, he takes Air Force One to his destination.^[350]

Utilities

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority, also known as WASA or D.C. Water, is an independent authority of the Washington, D.C., government that provides drinking water and wastewater collection in the city. WASA purchases water from the historic Washington Aqueduct, which is operated by the Army Corps of Engineers. The water, sourced from the Potomac River, is treated and stored in the city's Dalecarlia, Georgetown, and McMillan reservoirs. The aqueduct provides drinking water for a total of 1.1 million people in the district and Virginia, including Arlington, Falls Church, and a portion of Fairfax County.^[352]



The Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant in D.C. is the largest advanced wastewater treatment facility in the world.^[351]

Pepco is the city's electric utility and services 793,000 customers in the district and suburban Maryland.^[353] An 1889 law prohibits overhead wires within much of the historic City of Washington. As a result, all power lines and telecommunication cables are located underground in downtown Washington, and traffic signals are placed at the edge of the street.^[354] The D.C. Public Service Commission approved a seven-year, \$500 million plan in 2017 to bury more lines underground; construction started in 2019.^{[355][356]}

Washington Gas is the city's natural gas utility and serves more than a million customers in the district and its suburbs.^[357]

Crime and police

Washington has historically endured high crime, particularly violent offences. The city was once described as the "murder capital" of the United States during the early 1990s.^[358] The number of murders peaked in 1991 at 479, but then began to decline,^[359] reaching a historic low of 88 in 2012, the lowest total since 1961.^[360] In 2016, the district's Metropolitan Police Department tallied 135 homicides, a 53% increase from 2012 but a 17% decrease from 2015.^[361] By 2019, citywide reports of both property and violent crimes declined from their most recent highs in the mid-1990s.^[362] However, both 2021 and 2022 saw over 200 homicides each, reflecting an upward trends from prior decades.^[363] In 2023, D.C. recorded 274 homicides, a 20-year high and the fifth-highest murder rate among the nation's largest cities.^[364]



Washington, D.C., police on Harley-Davidson motorcycles escorting the March for Life protest on Constitution Avenue in January 2018

Many D.C. residents began to press the city government for refusing to prosecute nearly 70% of arrested offenders in 2022. After months of criticism, the rate of unprosecuted cases dropped to 56% by October 2023—albeit still higher than nine of the past 10 years and almost twice what it was in 2013.^[365] In February 2024, the Council of the District of Columbia passed a major bill meant to reduce crime in the city by introducing harsher penalties for arrested offenders.^[366] Rising crime and gang activities contributed to some local businesses leaving the city.^{[367][368]}

According to a 2018 report, 67,000 residents, or about 10% of the population, are ex-convicts.^[369] An estimated 2,000–2,500 offenders return to the city from prison every year.^[370]

On June 26, 2008, the Supreme Court of the United States held in *District of Columbia v. Heller* that the city's 1976 handgun ban violated the right to keep and bear arms as protected under the Second Amendment.^[371] However, a number of gun control measures remain in place, including those requiring firearm registration and banning assault weapons.^[372]

In addition to the Metropolitan Police Department, several federal law enforcement agencies have jurisdiction in the city, including the U.S. Park Police, founded in 1791.^[373] Because the D.C. National Guard serves a federal district, the president of the United States—and not city officials—has power to deploy it. The president also has the power to take over the police force in emergency situations.^[374]

See also

- [Index of Washington, D.C.–related articles](#)
- [List of people from Washington, D.C.](#)
- [Outline of Washington, D.C.](#)
- [USS *District of Columbia*](#)

Explanatory notes

- a. By 1790, the Southern states had largely repaid their overseas debts from the Revolutionary War. The Northern states had not and wanted the federal government to take over their outstanding liabilities. Southern Congressmen agreed to the plan in return for establishing the new national capital at their preferred site on the Potomac River.^[24]
- b. The Residence Act allowed the President to select a location within Maryland as far east as the Anacostia River. However, Washington shifted the federal territory's borders to the southeast and rotated them to include Alexandria at the district's southern tip. In 1791, Congress amended the Residence Act to approve the new site, including territory ceded by Virginia.^[25]
- c. Mean monthly maxima and minima (i.e. the expected highest and lowest temperature readings at any point during the year or given month) calculated based on data at said location from 1991 to 2020.
- d. Official records for Washington, D.C. were kept at 24th and M Streets NW from January 1872 to June 1945, and at Reagan National Airport since July 1945.^[103]
- e. Apportionment totals are collected by combining Resident and Overseas population. (For D.C., this is 689545 residents and 1988 overseas population.)
- f. Until 1890, the Census Bureau counted the City of Washington, Georgetown, and unincorporated portions of Washington County as three separate areas. The data provided in this article from before 1890 are

- calculated as if the District of Columbia were a single municipality as it is today. Population data for each city prior to 1890 are available.^[135]
- g. Estimated using a 15% sub-sample
 - h. The territories of the United States have the highest poverty rates in the United States.^[163]
 - i. Defined as "members, children who are not members, and others who are not members but are considered participants in the congregation"^[167]
 - j. Including one restaurant in Virginia, The Inn at Little Washington
 - k. Listed in the order each agreement was first established, D.C.'s sister cities are Bangkok, Thailand; Dakar, Senegal; Beijing, China; Brussels, Belgium; Athens, Greece; Paris, France; Pretoria, South Africa; Seoul, South Korea; Accra, Ghana; Sunderland, United Kingdom; Rome, Italy; Ankara, Turkey; Brasília, Brazil; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and San Salvador, El Salvador. Each of the listed cities is a national capital except for Sunderland, which includes the town of Washington, the ancestral home of George Washington's family.^[282]
 - l. The collection includes: 25 million catalogued books, 15.5 million other print items, 4.2 million recordings, 74.5 million manuscripts, 5.6 million maps, and 8.2 million sheet music pieces.^[306]

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External links

- Official website (<https://dc.gov/>)
-  Geographic data related to Washington, D.C. (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/162069>) at OpenStreetMap
- U.S. Geological Survey Geographic Names Information System: District of Columbia (civil) (<https://edits.nationalmap.gov/apps/gaz-domestic/public/search/names/1702382>)
- Guide to Washington, D.C. (<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/states/dc/home.html>) from the Library of Congress

External videos

-  1960s Washington DC, 4K from 35 mm Kinolibrary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYbfGcAIWTA>)

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