**1.2 Курс лекций по дисциплине «Страноведение США»**

**1 POPULATION OF THE USA**

1. **Patterns of immigration and assimilation**
2. **Demographics of the USA**
3. **Patterns of settlement**
4. **Ethnic minorities**
5. **Immigration patterns and ethnic composition**

The United States has always been a land of immigration. The story of the American people is a story of immigration and diversity. The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country -- more than 50 million in all -- and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. In the past many American writers emphasized the idea of the melting pot, an image that suggested newcomers would discard their old customs and adopt American ways. Typically, for example, the children of immigrants learned English but not their parents' first language. Recently, however, Americans have placed greater value on diversity, ethnic groups have renewed and celebrated their heritage, and the children of immigrants often grow up being bilingual.

The first American immigrants, beginning more than 20,000 years ago, were intercontinental wanderers: hunters and their families following animal herds from Asia to America, across a land bridge where the Bering Strait is today. When Spain's Christopher Columbus "discovered" the New World in 1492, about 1.5 million Native Americans lived in what is now the continental United States, although estimates of the number vary greatly. Mistaking the place where he landed -- San Salvador in the Bahamas -- for the Indies, Columbus called the Native Americans "Indians." It wasn't until the end of the 15th century that Europeans set their eyes on the New World in numbers. The French and Spanish were the first to establish settlements before the English and Dutch, among others, founded their first permanent colonies. On the eve of the American Revolution, the land was already a kaleidoscope of languages and ethnicities

During the next 200 years, people from several European countries followed Columbus across the Atlantic Ocean to explore America and set up trading posts and colonies. Native Americans suffered greatly from the influx of Europeans. The transfer of land from Indian to European -- and later American -- hands was accomplished through treaties, wars, and coercion, with Indians constantly giving way as the newcomers moved west. In the 19th century, the government's preferred solution to the Indian "problem" was to force tribes to inhabit specific plots of land called reservations. Some tribes fought to keep from giving up land they had traditionally used. In many cases the reservation land was of poor quality, and Indians came to depend on government assistance. Poverty and joblessness among Native Americans still exist today.

The territorial wars, along with Old World diseases to which Indians had no built-up immunity, sent their population plummeting, to a low of 350,000 in 1920. Some tribes disappeared altogether; among them were the Mandans of North Dakota, who had helped Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in exploring America's unsettled northwestern wilderness in 1804-06. Other tribes lost their languages and most of their culture. Nonetheless, Native Americans have proved to be resilient. Today they number about two million (0.8 percent of the total U.S. population), and only about one-third of Native Americans still live on reservations.

The English were the dominant ethnic group among early settlers of what became the United States, and English became the prevalent American language. But people of other nationalities were not long in following. In 1776 Thomas Paine, a spokesman for the revolutionary cause in the colonies and himself a native of England, wrote that "Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America." These words described the settlers who came not only from Great Britain, but also from other European countries, including Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, and Sweden. Nonetheless, in 1780 three out of every four Americans were of English or Irish descent.

American immigration history can be viewed in **four epochs**: the colonial period, the mid-19th century, the start of the 20th century, and post-1965. Each period brought distinct national groups, races and ethnicities to the United States. During the **17th century**, approximately 400,000 English people migrated to Colonial America. Over half of all European immigrants to Colonial America during the 17th and 18th centuries arrived as [indentured servants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indentured_servant). The **mid-19th** century saw mainly an influx from northern Europe; the **early 20th-century** mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe; **post-1965** mostly from Latin America and Asia.

Historians estimate that fewer than 1 million immigrants came to the United States from Europe between 1600 and 1799.The [1790 Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalization_Act_of_1790) limited naturalization to "free white persons"; it was expanded to include blacks in the 1860s and Asians in the 1950s. In the early years of the United States, immigration was fewer than 8,000 people a year, including French refugees from the slave revolt in Haiti. After 1820, immigration gradually increased. From 1836 to 1914, over 30 million Europeans migrated to the United States. The death rate on these transatlantic voyages was high, during which one in seven travelers died. In 1875, the nation passed its first immigration law, the [Page Act of 1875](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Page_Act_of_1875).

After an initial wave of immigration from China following the [California Gold Rush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Gold_Rush), Congress passed a series of laws culminating in the [Chinese Exclusion Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Exclusion_Act) of 1882, banning virtually all immigration from China until the law's repeal in 1943. In the late 1800s, [immigration from other Asian countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_immigration_to_the_United_States#First_major_wave_of_Asian_immigration_.281850s-1917.29), especially to the West Coast, became more common.

The peak year of European immigration was in 1907, when 1,285,349 persons entered the country. By 1910, 13.5 million immigrants were living in the United States. In 1921, the Congress passed the [Emergency Quota Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency_Quota_Act), followed by the [Immigration Act of 1924](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_Act_of_1924). The 1924 Act was aimed at further restricting immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, particularly Jews, Italians, and Slavs, who had begun to enter the country in large numbers beginning in the 1890s, and consolidated the prohibition of [Asian immigration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_immigration_to_the_United_States).

Immigration patterns of the 1930s were dominated by the [Great Depression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression). In the final prosperous year, 1929, there were 279,678 immigrants recorded, but in 1933, only 23,068 came to the U.S. In the early 1930s, more people emigrated from the United States than to it. The U.S. government sponsored a [Mexican Repatriation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Repatriation) program which was intended to encourage people to voluntarily move to Mexico, but thousands were deported against their will. Altogether about 400,000 Mexicans were repatriated. Most of the Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis and World War II were barred from coming to the United States. In the post-war era, the Justice Department launched [Operation Wetback](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Wetback), under which 1,075,168 Mexicans were deported in 1954.

Although people nowadays face different challenges, some of the **reasons** why people moved to the New World during colonial times echo some of the reasons that push people to immigrate to the United States today.

**Economic Opportunity.** Going to North America brought the promise of cheap land and freedom of enterprise. Incoming farmers, fishermen, tradesmen, shipbuilders and craftsmen all found work. They set up their own institutions and self-governing bodies with minimal support or interference from the Crown, at least at first. Independence of resources (the colonies produced nearly everything they needed) and trade among the colonies and with the indigenous peoples led to prosperity. **Indentured Servants.** It was expensive for Europeans to cross over to the American Colonies. To obtain passage, many poorer British and Germans worked for a fixed number of years for an employer who purchased an indenture (a sort of contract) from a sea captain who brought young people over. It was beneficial to both the employer who needed labor (to work on the land essentially) and the employee, who did not receive a wage but was provided with food, accommodation, clothing and training. He was then free to work on his own after the "contract" ended. The system was so successful approximately half of the white immigrants in the 17th and 18th centuries were indentured. Not all Indentured Servants were in America of their own free will. Some were kidnapped or forced onto a ship, others had been deceived by recruiting agents back in Europe before boarding. Still, these white slaves were indentured servants, meaning they could eventually obtain their freedom.

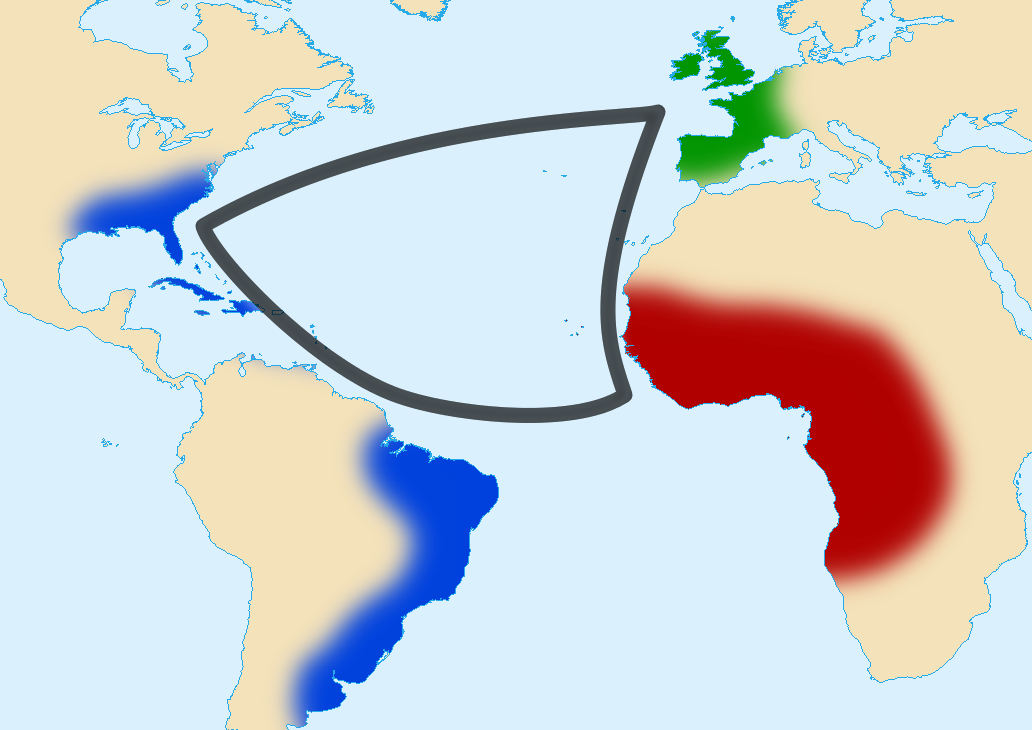
**Religious Freedom .**Whether to oppose persecution or to preserve their religious identity, many groups moved to the New World. The English Pilgrims English Pilgrims

The Pilgrims were the early settlers of the Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts. They were Dissenters (Christians who separated from the Church of England) who fled England for the Netherlands and then North America to preserve their religious autonomy and cultural identity.

, Quakers Quakers

Like the Pilgrims, the Quakers were dissenting Protestant groups who broke away from the Church of England. They came to North America in the 17th century to find a more tolerant environment for their religious beliefs but also for economic reasons.Some communities thrived in the Delaware Valley.

and Protestant sects, wanting to preserve the purity of their views, each set up their own religious settlements. With no state religion or external intervention, these communities were free to lead their lives the way they wanted. The numerous faiths found in the United States today are testament to the religious freedom early immigrants enjoyed.

**Slave Trade.** Landowners experienced constant shortage of labor, despite the use of indentured servants who would gain their liberty after 5 to 7 years. The cheap land meant white immigrants, no longer tied down, would then become landowners themselves. There was therefore a constant need for labor which manifested itself in the form of slavery. The Transatlantic Slave Trade brought many West Africans to the colonies, and the well-established triangular trade routetriangular trade route

The triangular trade route in the Atlantic took place from the 16th to 19th centuries. The first leg of the trade involved the export of goods to Africa from Europe. Kings and merchants in Africa would then provide slaves in exchange for these goods. The second part of the triangular trade was the transport of the slaves to the Caribbean and the Americas. The slaves would work in plantations (cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses) or produce goods (like rum) which would then, and this is the third part, be shipped to Europe. Variations of the Atlantic Triangular Trade made the trade begin in New England instead of Europe.

assured a constant flow of slaves from Africa.  These people did not gain their liberty. Slaves were considered as merchandise and were bought and sold at markets along with other goods and services. The slaves and their offspring were the property of their owners and had no rights. The process of ending slavery began in April 1861 with the outbreak of the American Civil War between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South, 11 of which had left the Union. On January 1, 1863, midway through the war, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in those states that had seceded. Slavery was abolished throughout the United States with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the country's Constitution in 1865.

Even after the end of slavery, however, American blacks were hampered by segregation and inferior education. In search of opportunity, African Americans formed an internal wave of immigration, moving from the rural South to the urban North. But many urban blacks were unable to find work; by law and custom they had to live apart from whites, in run-down neighborhoods called ghettos.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, African Americans, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used boycotts, marches, and other forms of nonviolent protest to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice.

**Industrialization.** Whereas the benefits of industrialization were obvious for tradesmen and landowners, this was not necessarily so for the people. Many farmers were forced to come to cities and live in ever-expanding urban areas. Overcrowded cities, with poor sanitation, difficult working conditions and terrible pollution, often led to the development of diseases and an unhealthy lifestyle which in turn led to social unrest and pushed many to emigrate.

Between 1840 and 1860, the United States received its first great wave of immigrants. In Europe as a whole, famine, poor harvests, rising populations, and political unrest caused an estimated 5 million people to leave their homelands each year. In Ireland, a blight attacked the potato crop, and upwards of 750,000 people starved to death. Many of the survivors emigrated. In one year alone, 1847, the number of Irish immigrants to the United States reached 118,120. Today there are about 39 million Americans of Irish descent.

The failure of the German Confederation's Revolution of 1848-49 led many of its people to emigrate. During the American Civil War (1861-65), the federal government helped fill its roster of troops by encouraging emigration from Europe, especially from the German states. In return for service in the Union army, immigrants were offered grants of land. By 1865, about one in five Union soldiers was a wartime immigrant. Today, 22 percent of Americans have German ancestry.

Jews came to the United States in large numbers beginning about 1880, a decade in which they suffered fierce pogroms in eastern Europe. Over the next 45 years, 2 million Jews moved to the United States; the Jewish-American population is now more than 5 million.

During the late 19th century, so many people were entering the United States that the government operated a special port of entry on Ellis Island in the harbor of New York City. Between 1892, when it opened, and 1954, when it closed, Ellis Island was the doorway to America for 12 million people. It is now preserved as part of Statue of Liberty National Monument.

The Statue of Liberty, which was a gift from France to the people of America in 1886, stands on an island in New York harbor, near Ellis Island. The statue became many immigrants' first sight of their homeland-to-be. These inspiring words by the poet Emma Lazarus are etched on a plaque at Liberty's base: "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Third Wave of Immigration 1880-1930. From 1880, advances in technology facilitated immigration. Steam-powered ocean liners made travel cheaper and easier, thus increasing immigrant mobility. As the Industrial Revolution spread to Eastern Europe, farming improvements created surplus labor. A flood of immigrants arrived. Southern Europeans such as Italians and Greeks, as well as Eastern Europeans speaking Slavic languages like Hungarians, Poles and Russians formed the bulk of the 25 million immigrants between 1880 and 1930.

Fourth Wave of Immigration 1930-1965 .The Immigration Act of 1924 ushered in a new era in immigration history. It curtailed massively the number of European immigrants but opened up the way for people from Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America to come legally - and illegally - to the US. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration essentially closed the country to immigrants - this led a darker agenda.

**Politics and Immigration.** The Statue of Liberty began lighting the way for new arrivals at a time when many native-born Americans began to worry that the country was admitting too many immigrants. Some citizens feared that their culture was being threatened or that they would lose jobs to newcomers willing to accept low wages. The First Steps Into Immigration Control: By 1790, the young nation of the United States was a mixture of people from a diversity of backgrounds. That same year, the first national census was launched to estimate the number of people and where they came from. From a total population of 3,9 million, the majority (65%) were of British descent (including people from England, Wales, Scotland, but also Ireland). A little over 19% of the population came from Africa, while the rest were originally from the Netherlands, France, Sweden or were not attached to a country in particular (for example  immigrants of the Jewish faith). **The Naturalization** Naturalization

Naturalization is the legal act or process by which a non-citizen in a country may acquire citizenship or nationality of that country.

**Act of 1790.** Little over a year after the inauguration of President Washington, 1790 saw the first attempt at setting up control over immigration. Naturalization was limited to immigrants who were free white persons of good moral character who had lived in the United States for two years. This meant that indigenous peoples, free African Americans, indentured servants and slaves were excluded from citizenship.In the mid 1850s, the first anti-immigration movement was born. The Know Nothing movement, where membership was restricted to Protestant men, wanted to "purify" society and politics by increasing restrictions on immigrants. It used the fear of the country being overrun by German and Irish Catholics controlled by the Pope and the loss of Republican values, to gain victories in Congress. The movement did not however have any particular impact on immigration policy.

In California, the Chinese immigrants soon found that they were not always welcome. Ethnic tensions arose as gold grew scarce and the economy slowed down. In 1850, California enacted the Foreign Miners Tax, forcing many Chinese to stop prospecting for gold, while Chinese workers were the targets of violent attacks in the mining camps.

Anti-Coolie Act

It's real name was "An Act to Protect Free White Labor Against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to Discourage The Immigration of the Chinese into the State of California". Coolie comes from the name of the clubs, sort of unions, that were created to represent the interests of the white miners in the west.

Chinese immigrant laborers were cheaper than white laborers. Having made the voyage on credit from China, they had no choice but to accept lower wages to repay their creditors. Therefore landowners prefered cheaper Chinese immigrants. As a result, the State of California passed a bill that sought to calm the rising tension and protect white laborers. It imposed a monthly tax on working Chinese immigrants. From 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited Chinese immigration to the USA. The act was initially intended to last for 10 years, but was renewed in 1892 and made permanent in 1902. It was finally repealed in 1943. **Tougher Immigration Policy.** Following on the Emergency Quota Act of 1921Emergency Quota Act of 1921

The Emergency Quota Act restricts immigration from a given country to 3% of the number of people from that country living in the US in 1910.

and the recommendations of the Dillingham Commission Dillingham Commission

Established in 1907 by Congress to investigate the effects of immigration on the United States, the 42-volume report of the Dillingham Commission warned that the "new" immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe posed a threat to American society and should therefore be reduced.

, the Immigration Act of 1924 introduced restrictions by national origin. Capped annual European immigration from a country  was set at 2% of the number of people from that country that had been living in the United States in 1890. The act targeted Southern and Eastern European nations (which the Dillingham Commission pointed the finger at) as they only had small populations in the US in 1890.  It favoured western-northern Europeans. 3 years later, more legislation capped national immigration at 150,000 per year and barred Asian immigration altogether.

In 1924 Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. For the first time, the United States set limits on how many people from each country it would admit. The number of people allowed to emigrate from a given country each year was based on the number of people from that country already living in the United States. As a result, immigration patterns over the next 40 years reflected the existing immigrant population, mostly Europeans and North Americans.

Prior to 1924, U.S. laws specifically excluded Asian immigrants. People in the American West feared that the Chinese and other Asians would take away jobs, and racial prejudice against people with Asian features was widespread. The law that kept out Chinese immigrants was repealed in 1943, and legislation passed in 1952 allows people of all races to become U.S. citizens.

Today Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the country. About 10 million people of Asian descent live in the United States. Although most of them have arrived here recently, they are among the most successful of all immigrant groups. They have a higher income than many other ethnic groups, and large numbers of their children study at the best American universities.

**Immigration and the Cold War.** As the Cold War slowly dawned on American policy, immigration policy adapted. On the one hand, the gate closed after the start of Korean War in 1950 for foreigners who were communists, while on the other, the nation opened its gates for refugees of Cold War uprisings or conflicts (the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956 

Hungarian Revolution of 1956

From the 23 October to the 10 November 1956, the Hungarian people rose up to revolt against the Hungarian government and its Soviet-imposed policies. Although the uprising failed, it was the first major threat to Soviet control in post-World War II in Eastern Europe and paved the way for the USSR's downfall decades later. On the image you can see the flag of Hungary, with the communist coat of arms cut out.

and Cuban Revolution of 1960 

Cuban Revolution of 1960

The Republic of Cuba became a one-party socialist state after Castro seized power in 1959. Under his Marxist-Leninist leadership, with assistance from the iconic revolutionary Che Guevara, industry and businesses were nationalized, and socialist reforms implemented in all areas of society.

being two examples).

**The Immigration Act of 1952.** 1952 saw the unification of Immigration Policy within one body of text. The immigration provisions of the act were later superseded by the 1965 Immigration Act. This Act shows how divisive the debate on immigration had become and how it touched the fundamental core of American identity. President Truman President Truman

Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) was the 33rd President of the United States. His tenure was marked by the rising tension with the Soviet Union which led to the Cold War and more interventionist policies on the world stage. He also approved the Marshall Plan which helped reconstruct Europe after the war and had a hand in the foundation of the United Nations.

 had this to say on the 1952 Act. His veto was overridden in both the Congress and Senate:

*"Today, we are "protecting" ourselves as we were in 1924, against being flooded by immigrants from Eastern Europe. This is fantastic. ... We do not need to be protected against immigrants from these countries – on the contrary we want to stretch out a helping hand, to save those who have managed to flee into Western Europe, to succor those who are brave enough to escape from barbarism, to welcome and restore them against the day when their countries will, as we hope, be free again....These are only a few examples of the absurdity, the cruelty of carrying over into this year of 1952 the isolationist limitations of our 1924 law. In no other realm of our national life are we so hampered and stultified by the dead hand of the past, as we are in this field of immigration."*

The year 1965 brought a shakeup of the old immigration patterns. The United States began to grant immigrant visas according to who applied first; national quotas were replaced with hemispheric ones. And preference was given to relatives of U.S. citizens and immigrants with job skills in short supply in the United States. In 1978, Congress abandoned hemispheric quotas and established a worldwide ceiling, opening the doors even wider. In 1990, for example, the top 10 points of origin for immigrants were Mexico (57,000), the Philippines (55,000), Vietnam (49,000), the Dominican Republic (32,000), Korea (30,000), China (29,000), India (28,000), the Soviet Union (25,000), Jamaica (19,000), and Iran (18,000). **The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965** broke away from the past. It was no longer a quota system based on race and nationality but a visa system. Visas were set at 170,000 per year, per-country. Were excluded from this immigrants who had American relatives and those with occupations deemed critical by the U.S. Department of Labor. The Act of 1965 changed the demographics of the United States. Unexpectedly, instead of seeing an increase in European migration, the majority of the immigrants now come from Asia and Latin America.

The United States continues to accept more immigrants than any other country; in 1990, its population included nearly 20 million foreign-born persons. The revised **immigration law of 1990** created a flexible cap of 675,000 immigrants each year, with certain categories of people exempted from the limit. That law attempts to attract more skilled workers and professionals to the United States and to draw immigrants from countries that have supplied relatively few Americans in recent years. It does this by providing "diversity" visas. In 1990 about 9,000 people entered the country on diversity visas from such countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Peru, Egypt, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, more than ever, the United States is a mixture of ethnicities, languages, cultures and religions. The reasons for moving to the USA today are similar to what they have always been. Rejoining loved ones, higher wages, economic opportunities, factors in peoples' home countries (overpopulation, oppression, unemployment)... The USA still has a popular appeal that is not ready to fade. Legally, there are a variety of ways to live and work in the United States. For a person who was not born in the USA and who does not have American parents, the process can be rather complicated. There are nonimmigrant visas and immigrant visas, there are temporary and more permanent visas, there are special categories like for Afghan or Iraqis who worked for the US government. To get permanent residence, people can get married to a US citizen, get sponsored by an employer, or go through a naturalization process after 3-5 years of residence (thus to gain American citizenship). There is even a lottery system. Each year 55,000 Green Cards are randomly given to applicants through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, commonly known as the Green Card Lottery, for countries with historically low rates of immigration to the United States.

Many still enter the country illegally. One of the main routes to enter is by crossing the border with Mexico. Measures have been put in place, like a tightening of border control and pressure on cities employers to stop giving work to illegal immigrants. The most visible aspect of this is undoubtedly the Border Wall on the Mexico-USA border. The controversial wall is not only meant to hinder the flow of illegal border crossings but also to stop the thriving drug cartels and the violence they create. It is also seen as a way to control incoming terrorists in the post-9/11 USA. Despite these measures, complacent authorities and the sheer number of people who want to enter the country mean many illegal immigrants still flock in. There are constant calls from the right and left to reform legal immigration and control illegal immigration. It is a complex issue that touches the American identity and many issues remain unresolved (the rights of immigrant homosexuals for example or of sex slaves illegally smuggled into the country). It is an important debate for all to take part in but one in which all must look at the facts with a conscience clear of prejudice.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates that some 12 million people are living in the United States without permission, and the number is growing by about 275,000 a year. Native-born Americans and legal immigrants worry about the problem of illegal immigration. Many believe that illegal immigrants (also called "illegal aliens") take jobs from citizens, especially from young people and members of minority groups. Moreover, illegal aliens can place a heavy burden on tax-supported social services.

In 1986 Congress revised immigration law to deal with illegal aliens. Many of those who had been in the country since 1982 became eligible to apply for legal residency that would eventually permit them to stay in the country permanently. In 1990, nearly 900,000 people took advantage of this law to obtain legal status. The law also provided strong measures to combat further illegal immigration and imposed penalties on businesses that knowingly employ illegal aliens.

The steady stream of people coming to America's shores has had a profound effect on the American character. It takes courage and flexibility to leave your homeland and come to a new country. The American people have been noted for their willingness to take risks and try new things, for their independence and optimism. If Americans whose families have been here longer tend to take their material comfort and political freedoms for granted, immigrants are at hand to remind them how important those privileges are.

Immigrants also enrich American communities by bringing aspects of their native cultures with them. Many black Americans now celebrate both Christmas and Kwanzaa, a festival drawn from African rituals. Hispanic Americans celebrate their traditions with street fairs and other festivities on Cinco de Mayo (May 5). Ethnic restaurants abound in many American cities. President John F. Kennedy, himself the grandson of Irish immigrants, summed up this blend of the old and the new when he called America "a society of immigrants, each of whom had begun life anew, on an equal footing. This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...."

The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country -- more than 50 million in all -- and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. "This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...." -- President John F. Kennedy

**Assimilation theories.** Several assimilation theories have evolved since the mid-nineteenth century as immigration to the United States gained scale. Anglo-conformity dominated much of the second half of the nineteenth century, when the majority of the immigrant stock were from northwestern Europe. **Definition:** Tendency of immigrants to lose much of their native cultural heritage and conform substantially to the core Anglo-Protestant culture of the United States   
Immigration has been an ongoing and important source of growth and development for the United States. Attitudes toward these new arrivals, both legal and illegal, have varied with time and circumstances. One constant concern has been the assimilation of immigrants, who are often required to seek acceptance by means of **Anglo-conformity.** The United States is a relatively young nation. In contrast to the makeup of older nations, its population has been, and continues to be, drawn from all over the world. The country’s colonial era saw a struggle for cultural dominance among English, French, Spanish, and Dutch settlers. Eventually, the English became both the majority and dominant group in what became the United States. For this reason, English language, English laws, and English customs became central to the national culture. Those who shared, or were willing and able to share, this culture were most easily assimilated. Within the United States, Anglo-conformity is said to form the basis of a single unifying culture that is important for any heterogeneous nation.   
During the early formative years of the independent American nation, most new immigrants came from western Europe. Some nationalities were considered questionable in regards to how well they would be able to assimilate into American culture. For example, Germans were regarded as questionable because of their different language and different culture, while English-speaking Irish Protestants were generally acceptable. However, Irish Roman Catholics were regarded as questionable because of their religion and because of the longstanding antagonism between Ireland and England. Eventually, immigrants from both Germany and Ireland constituted a large part of the new anglocentric nation. Assimilation was accomplished through Anglo-conformity.   
 **Melting Pot**. Growing diversity of immigrants and rapid industrialization of the labor force during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave rise to the melting pot theory. Taking reference from a stage play titled *The Melting-Pot* (pr. 1908) by Israel Zangwill that celebrated interracial marriage, the symbolism of the melting pot caught on socially. Proponents of the theory forecast the future of the United States as a melting pot. Immigrants of different cultural backgrounds with varied skin pigmentations dressed in their colorful ancestral costumes would walk through a symbolic melting pot upon arrival in the United States and reappear on the other end as members of a homogeneous culture. The melting pot theory acknowledges the reciprocal contributions of the immigrants to the mainstream. The **melting pot** is a metaphor for a [heterogeneous](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/heterogeneous) society becoming more [homogeneous](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/homogeneous), the different elements "melting together" into a harmonious whole with a common culture. It is particularly used to describe the [assimilation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation) of [immigrants to the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigrants_to_the_United_States). The melting-together metaphor was in use by the 1780s. The exact term "melting pot" came into general usage in the United States after it was used as a metaphor describing a fusion of nationalities, cultures and ethnicities in the 1908 [play of the same name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Melting_Pot_(play)).

## The desirability of assimilation and the melting pot model has been reconsidered by some proponents of [multiculturalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism), who have suggested alternative metaphors to describe the current American society, such as a [*mosaic*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_mosaic), [*salad bowl*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salad_bowl_(cultural_idea)), or [*kaleidoscope*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaleidoscope), in which different cultures mix, but remain distinct in some aspects. Others argue that cultural assimilation is important to the maintenance of national unity, and should be promoted. Cultural pluralism. **Definition:** Concept that individual ethnic groups have a right to exist on their own terms within the larger society while retaining their unique cultural heritages. As a concept cultural pluralism is an alternative to the “melting pot” view that immigrants should assimilate to American culture by abandoning their own cultures, languages, and other traditions. Cultural pluralists insist that different ethnic groups have enriched the American way of life as immigrants and native-born citizens have learned from one another, thereby broadening their views on art, cuisine, education, history, music, and other aspects of life.

Multiculturalism arose in the wake of the Civil Rights movement and the reform of the immigration policy during the 1960’s. Rising presence of cultural diversity and the strengthening voice of immigrants and minorities have propelled social and political transformation. Diversity is perceived with growing appreciation, and multiculturalism highlights cultural diversity as enrichment to the mainstream. Cultural traditions and economic contributions of immigrants are respected, acknowledged, and applauded. Instead of forcing immigrants to be assimilated to any prescribed cultural norm, different cultural groups are encouraged to express themselves in reshaping and redefining what the mainstream culture is. Multiculturalism is in strong contention with earlier assimilation theories in immigrant studies.

**2 Demographics of the USA**

* The population of **the United States** is estimated at **322,583,006** as of July 1 2014.
* United States' population is equivalent to **4.45%** of the [total world population](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/).
* The U.S. ranks number **3** in the list of [countries by population](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/).
* The **population density** in the U.S.A. is **34 people per Km2**.
* **83%** of the population is **urban** (268,084,524 people in 2014).
* The **median age** in the U.S.A. is **37.5 years**.

**Population of the United States (2015 and historical)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Population | Yearly %  Change | Yearly Change | Migrants (net) | Median Age | Fertility Rate | Density (P/Km²) | Urban Pop % | Urban Population | Country's Share of World Pop | World Population | Global Rank |
| 2015 | **325,127,634** | 0.81% | 2,576,104 | 1,000,000 | 37.7 | 1.97 | 34 | 83% | 270,987,380 | 4.44% | 7,324,782,225 | 3 |
| 2014 | **322,583,006** | 0.79% | 2,532,290 | 1,008,835 | 37.5 | 1.99 | 34 | 83% | 268,084,524 | 4.45% | 7,243,784,121 | 3 |
| 2010 | **312,247,116** | 0.93% | 2,816,264 | 1,044,962 | 37.1 | 2.06 | 32 | 82% | 256,489,148 | 4.51% | 6,916,183,482 | 3 |
| 2005 | **298,165,797** | 0.94% | 2,714,280 | 1,064,464 | 36.2 | 2.04 | 31 | 81% | 240,712,230 | 4.58% | 6,514,094,605 | 3 |
| 2000 | **284,594,395** | 1.21% | 3,310,948 | 1,693,869 | 35.3 | 2.00 | 30 | 79% | 225,082,861 | 4.64% | 6,127,700,428 | 3 |
| 1995 | **268,039,654** | 1.04% | 2,706,601 | 890,976 | 34.1 | 2.03 | 28 | 77% | 207,060,633 | 4.67% | 5,741,822,412 | 3 |
| 1990 | **254,506,647** | 1.02% | 2,527,329 | 783,360 | 32.9 | 1.92 | 26 | 75% | 191,643,505 | 4.78% | 5,320,816,667 | 3 |
| 1985 | **241,870,002** | 1.00% | 2,338,728 | 727,212 | 31.5 | 1.80 | 25 | 74% | 180,178,639 | 4.97% | 4,863,601,517 | 3 |
| 1980 | **230,176,361** | 0.96% | 2,147,466 | 774,562 | 30.1 | 1.77 | 24 | 74% | 169,727,445 | 5.17% | 4,449,048,798 | 3 |
| 1975 | **219,439,031** | 0.89% | 1,909,537 | 568,100 | 28.9 | 2.02 | 23 | 74% | 161,623,430 | 5.39% | 4,071,020,434 | 3 |
| 1970 | **209,891,345** | 1.00% | 2,041,032 | 299,033 | 28.2 | 2.58 | 22 | 74% | 154,484,228 | 5.69% | 3,691,172,616 | 3 |
| 1965 | **199,686,185** | 1.39% | 2,664,858 | 191,731 | 28.5 | 3.40 | 21 | 72% | 143,532,433 | 6.00% | 3,329,122,479 | 3 |
| 1960 | **186,361,893** | 1.74% | 3,084,512 | 371,961 | 29.6 | 3.68 | 19 | 70% | 130,445,871 | 6.16% | 3,026,002,942 | 3 |
| 1955 | **170,939,332** | 1.61% | 2,625,258 | 199,360 | 30.1 | 3.33 | 18 | 67% | 114,807,984 | 6.19% | 2,761,650,981 | 3 |

**United States Population Forecast**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Population | Yearly %  Change | Yearly Change | Migrants (net) | Median Age | Fertility Rate | Density (P/Km²) | Urban Pop % | Urban Population | Country's Share of World Pop | World Population | Global Rank |
| 2020 | **337,983,029** | 0.78% | 2,571,079 | 1,000,000 | 38.2 | 1.98 | 35 | 84% | 285,152,902 | 4.38% | 7,716,749,042 | 3 |
| 2025 | **350,625,822** | 0.74% | 2,528,559 | 1,000,000 | 38.9 | 1.98 | 36 | 85% | 298,841,894 | 4.34% | 8,083,412,759 | 3 |
| 2030 | **362,628,830** | 0.68% | 2,400,602 | 1,000,000 | 39.5 | 1.98 | 38 | 86% | 311,958,704 | 4.30% | 8,424,937,474 | 3 |
| 2035 | **373,468,491** | 0.59% | 2,167,932 | 1,000,000 | 40.1 | 1.98 | 39 | 87% | 324,118,365 | 4.27% | 8,743,446,952 | 3 |
| 2040 | **383,165,322** | 0.51% | 1,939,366 | 1,000,000 | 40.4 | 1.99 | 40 | 88% | 335,307,973 | 4.24% | 9,038,687,151 | 3 |
| 2045 | **392,110,787** | 0.46% | 1,789,093 | 1,000,000 | 40.5 | 1.99 | 41 | 88% | 345,841,714 | 4.21% | 9,308,438,178 | 4 |
| 2050 | **400,853,042** | 0.44% | 1,748,451 | 1,000,000 | 40.6 | 1.99 | 42 | 89% | 356,185,988 | 4.20% | 9,550,944,891 | 4 |

As of December 2, 2015, the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) has a **total resident population** of 322,267,564, making it the [third most populous country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population) in the world. It is very urbanized, with 81% residing in cities and suburbs as of 2014 (the worldwide urban rate is 54%). [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California) and [Texas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas) are the most populous states, as the [mean center of U.S. population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mean_center_of_U.S._population) has consistently shifted westward and southward. [New York City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) is the [most populous city in the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_cities_by_population).

The [**total fertility rate**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_fertility_rate) in the United States estimated for 2014 is 1.86 children per woman, which is below the [replacement fertility rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_fertility_rate#Replacement_rates) of approximately 2.1. Compared to other Western countries, in 2012, U.S. fertility rate was lower than that of [France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) (2.01), [Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia) (1.93) and the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) (1.92). However, U.S. [population growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_growth) is among the highest in industrialized countries, because the differences in fertility rates are less than the differences in immigration levels, which are higher in the U.S. The [United States Census Bureau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Census_Bureau) shows a population increase of 0.75% for the twelve-month period ending in July 2012. Though high by industrialized country standards, this is below the world average annual rate of 1.1%.

There were over 158.6 million **women** in the United States in 2009. The number of men was 151.4 million. At age 85 and older, there were more than twice as many women as men. People under 20 years of age made up over a quarter of the U.S. population (27.3%), and people age 65 and over made up one-eighth (12.8%) in 2009. The national **median age** was 36.8 years.

### Ages. Median ages are 37.3 years; males are 36.1 years; females are 38.5 years estimated as of 2012.

As of 2012, people are distributed by age as follows:

* 0–14 years: 19.8% (male 31,639,127/female 30,305,704)
* 15–64 years: 66.8% (male 101,612,000/female 104,577,000)
* 65 years and over: 13.4% (male 18,332,000/female 23,174,000) (2012 est.)

### Birth, growth, and death rates. The growth rate is 0.760% as estimated from 2014-2010 by the US Census.

The birth rate is 12.5 births/1,000 population, estimated as of 2013. This was the lowest since records began. There were 3,957,577 births in 2013.

13.9 births/1,000 population/year (Provisional Data for 2008)

14.3 births/1,000 population/year (Provisional Data for 2007)

In 2009, [*Time* magazine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_magazine) reported that 40% of births were to unmarried women. The following is a breakdown by race for unwed births: 17% Asian, 29% White, 53% Hispanics, 66% Native Americans, and 72% African American.

The drop in the birth rate from 2007 to 2009 is believed to be associated with the [Late-2000s recession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late-2000s_recession).

A study by the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_for_Healthcare_Research_and_Quality) (AHRQ) found that more than half (51 percent) of live hospital births in 2008 and 2011 were male.

### Death rate. As of July 2010, it was estimated that there were 8.18 deaths/1,000 population.

### Sex ratios. at birth: 1.048 male(s)/female

under 15 years: 1.04 male(s)/female

15–64 years: 1 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.75 male(s)/female

total population: 0.97 male(s)/female (2010 est.)

### Infant mortality rate.

total: 6.22 deaths/1,000 live births

male: 6.9 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 5.53 deaths/1,000 live births (2010 est.)

### Life expectancy at birth

total population: 78.11 years

male: 75.65 years

### female: 80.69 years (2010 est.)

### Total fertility rate. 1.86 children born/woman (2014).

The [United States Census Bureau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Census_Bureau) defines **White people** as those "having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East. It includes people who reported "White" or wrote in entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Near Easterner, or Polish." Whites constitute the majority of the U.S. population, with a total of about 245,532,000 or 77.7% of the population as of 2013. There are 62.6% Whites when Hispanics who describe themselves as "white" are taken out of the calculation. Despite major changes due to [illegal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illegal_immigration_to_the_United_States) and legal immigration since the 1960s and the higher birth-rates of nonwhites, the overall current majority of American citizens are still [white](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_people), and [English-speaking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language), though regional differences exist.

The American population almost quadrupled during the 20th century—at a growth rate of about 1.3% a year—from about 76 million in 1900 to 281 million in 2000. It reached the 200 million mark in 1968, and the 300 million mark on October 17, 2006. Population growth is fastest among minorities as a whole, and according to the Census Bureau's estimation for 2012, 50.4% of American children under the age of 1 belonged to [minority groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minorities_in_the_United_States).

**Hispanic and Latino Americans** accounted for 48% of the national [population growth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_growth) of 2.9 million between July 1, 2005, and July 1, 2006.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_the_United_States#cite_note-18) Immigrants and their U.S.-born descendants are expected to provide most of the U.S. population gains in the decades ahead.

The Census Bureau projects a U.S. population of 417 million in 2060, which is a 38% increase from 2007 (301.3 million). However, the [United Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) projects a U.S. population of 402 million in 2050, an increase of 32% from 2007. In an official census report, it was reported that 54.4% (2,150,926 out of 3,953,593) of births in 2010, were non-Hispanic white. This represents an increase of 0.34% compared to the previous year, which was 54.06%.

**The U.S. population's distribution by** [**race and ethnicity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_ethnicity_in_the_United_States_Census) **in 2010:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Race / Ethnicity** | **Number** | **Percentage of U.S. population** |
| **Americans** | **308,745,538** | **100.0 %** |
| [Non-Hispanic White](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Hispanic_Whites) | 196,817,552 | 63.7 % |
| [Non-Hispanic Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black) | 37,685,848 | 12.2 % |
| [Non-Hispanic Asian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American) | 14,465,124 | 4.7 % |
| [Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) | 2,247,098 | 0.7 % |
| [Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_American) | 481,576 | 0.2 % |
| [Non-Hispanic some other race](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mestizo) | 604,265 | 0.2 % |
| [Non-Hispanic two or more races](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial_American) | 5,966,481 | 1.9 % |
| [Hispanic or Latino](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) | 50,477,594 | 16.4 % |
| **Total** | **308,745,538** | **100.0%** |
| [European American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_American) | 223,553,265 | 72.4 % |
| [African Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Americans) | 38,929,319 | 12.6 % |
| [Asian American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American) | 14,674,252 | 4.8 % |
| [Native Americans or Alaska Native](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) | 2,932,248 | 0.9 % |
| [Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_American) | 540,013 | 0.2 % |
| [Some other race](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_(U.S._Census)) | 19,107,368 | 6.2 % |
| [Two or more races](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial_American) | 9,009,073 | 2.9 % |
| **Total** | **308,745,538** | **100.0%** |
| [Not Hispanic nor Latino](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) | 258,267,944 | 83.6 % |
| [White Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) | 26,735,713 | 8.7 % |
| [Black Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) | 1,243,471 | 0.4 % |
| [American Indian or Alaska Native Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) | 685,150 | 0.2 % |
| [Asian Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) | 209,128 | 0.1 % |
| [Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_American) | 58,437 | 0.0 % |
| [Some other race Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mestizo) | 18,503,103 | 6.0 % |
| [Two or more races Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial_American) | 3,042,592 | 1.0 % |
| **Total** | **308,745,538** | **100.0%** |

1. **REGIONAL VARIETY** **and** **REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has written of the "mental click" he feels when arriving in the United States: an adjustment to the enormous landscapes and skylines. The so-called lower 48 states (all but Alaska and Hawaii) sprawl across 4,500 kilometers and four time zones. A car trip from coast to coast typically takes a minimum of five days -- and that's with almost no stops to look around. It is not unusual for the gap between the warmest and coldest high temperatures on a given day in the United States to reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit (about 40 degrees Celsius).

The United States owes much of its national character -- and its wealth -- to its good fortune in having such a large and varied landmass to inhabit and cultivate. Yet the country still exhibits marks of regional identity, and one way Americans cope with the size of their country is to think of themselves as linked geographically by certain traits, such as New England self-reliance, southern hospitality, midwestern wholesomeness, western mellowness.

The six main regions are:

New England, made up of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

The Middle Atlantic, comprising New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.

The South, which runs from Virginia south to Florida and west as far as central Texas. This region also includes West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and parts of Missouri and Oklahoma.

The Midwest, a broad collection of states sweeping westward from Ohio to Nebraska and including Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, parts of Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and eastern Colorado.

The Southwest, made up of western Texas, portions of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and the southern interior part of California.

The West, comprising Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, California, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii.

**NEW ENGLAND**

The smallest region, New England has not been blessed with large expanses of rich farmland or a mild climate. Yet it played a dominant role in American development. From the 17th century until well into the 19th, New England was the country's cultural and economic center.

The earliest European settlers of New England were English Protestants of firm and settled doctrine. Many of them came in search of religious liberty. They gave the region its distinctive political format -- the town meeting (an outgrowth of meetings held by church elders) in which citizens gathered to discuss issues of the day. Only men of property could vote. Nonetheless, town meetings afforded New Englanders an unusually high level of participation in government. Such meetings still function in many New England communities today.

New Englanders found it difficult to farm the land in large lots, as was common in the South. By 1750, many settlers had turned to other pursuits. The mainstays of the region became shipbuilding, fishing, and trade. In their business dealings, New Englanders gained a reputation for hard work, shrewdness, thrift, and ingenuity.

These traits came in handy as the Industrial Revolution reached America in the first half of the 19th century. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, new factories sprang up to manufacture such goods as clothing, rifles, and clocks. Most of the money to run these businesses came from Boston, which was the financial heart of the nation.

New England also supported a vibrant cultural life. The critic Van Wyck Brooks called the creation of a distinctive American literature in the first half of the 19th century "the flowering of New England." Education is another of the region's strongest legacies. Its cluster of top-ranking universities and colleges -- including Harvard, Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Wellesley, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Williams, Amherst, and Wesleyan -- is unequaled by any other region.

As some of the original New England settlers migrated westward, immigrants from Canada, Ireland, Italy, and eastern Europe moved into the region. Despite a changing population, much of the original spirit of New England remains. It can be seen in the simple, woodframe houses and white church steeples that are features of many small towns, and in the traditional lighthouses that dot the Atlantic coast.

In the 20th century, most of New England's traditional industries have relocated to states or foreign countries where goods can be made more cheaply. In more than a few factory towns, skilled workers have been left without jobs. The gap has been partly filled by the microelectronics and computer industries.

**MIDDLE ATLANTIC**

If New England provided the brains and dollars for 19th-century American expansion, the Middle Atlantic states provided the muscle. The region's largest states, New York and Pennsylvania, became centers of heavy industry (iron, glass, and steel).

The Middle Atlantic region was settled by a wider range of people than New England. Dutch immigrants moved into the lower Hudson River Valley in what is now New York State. Swedes went to Delaware. English Catholics founded Maryland, and an English Protestant sect, the Friends (Quakers), settled Pennsylvania. In time, all these settlements fell under English control, but the region continued to be a magnet for people of diverse nationalities.

Early settlers were mostly farmers and traders, and the region served as a bridge between North and South. Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania, midway between the northern and southern colonies, was home to the Continental Congress, the convention of delegates from the original colonies that organized the American Revolution. The same city was the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

As heavy industry spread throughout the region, rivers such as the Hudson and Delaware were transformed into vital shipping lanes. Cities on waterways -- New York on the Hudson, Philadelphia on the Delaware, Baltimore on Chesapeake Bay -- grew dramatically. New York is still the nation's largest city, its financial hub, and its cultural center.

Like New England, the Middle Atlantic region has seen much of its heavy industry relocate elsewhere. Other industries, such as drug manufacturing and communications, have taken up the slack.

**THE SOUTH**

The South is perhaps the most distinctive and colorful American region. The American Civil War (1861-65) devastated the South socially and economically. Nevertheless, it retained its unmistakable identity.

Like New England, the South was first settled by English Protestants. But whereas New Englanders tended to stress their differences from the old country, Southerners tended to emulate the English. Even so, Southerners were prominent among the leaders of the American Revolution, and four of America's first five presidents were Virginians. After 1800, however, the interests of the manufacturing North and the agrarian South began to diverge.

Especially in coastal areas, southern settlers grew wealthy by raising and selling cotton and tobacco. The most economical way to raise these crops was on large farms, called plantations, which required the work of many laborers. To supply this need, plantation owners relied on slaves brought from Africa, and slavery spread throughout the South.

Slavery was the most contentious issue dividing North and South. To northerners it was immoral; to southerners it was integral to their way of life. In 1860, 11 southern states left the Union intending to form a separate nation, the Confederate States of America. This rupture led to the Civil War, the Confederacy's defeat, and the end of slavery. (For more on the Civil War, see chapter 3.) The scars left by the war took decades to heal. The abolition of slavery failed to provide African Americans with political or economic equality: Southern towns and cities legalized and refined the practice of racial segregation.

It took a long, concerted effort by African Americans and their supporters to end segregation. In the meantime, however, the South could point with pride to a 20th-century regional outpouring of literature by, among others, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, Katherine Anne Porter, Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, and Flannery O'Connor.

As southerners, black and white, shook off the effects of slavery and racial division, a new regional pride expressed itself under the banner of "the New South" and in such events as the annual Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, and the 1996 summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. Today the South has evolved into a manufacturing region, and high-rise buildings crowd the skylines of such cities as Atlanta and Little Rock, Arkansas. Owing to its mild weather, the South has become a mecca for retirees from other U.S. regions and from Canada.

**THE MIDWEST**

The Midwest is a cultural crossroads. Starting in the early 1800s easterners moved there in search of better farmland, and soon Europeans bypassed the East Coast to migrate directly to the interior: Germans to eastern Missouri, Swedes and Norwegians to Wisconsin and Minnesota. The region's fertile soil made it possible for farmers to produce abundant harvests of cereal crops such as wheat, oats, and corn. The region was soon known as the nation's "breadbasket."

Most of the Midwest is flat. The Mississippi River has acted as a regional lifeline, moving settlers to new homes and foodstuffs to market. The river inspired two classic American books, both written by a native Missourian, Samuel Clemens, who took the pseudonym Mark Twain: Life on the Mississippi and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Midwesterners are praised as being open, friendly, and straightforward. Their politics tend to be cautious, but the caution is sometimes peppered with protest. The Midwest gave birth to one of America's two major political parties, the Republican Party, which was formed in the 1850s to oppose the spread of slavery into new states. At the turn of the century, the region also spawned the Progressive Movement, which largely consisted of farmers and merchants intent on making government less corrupt and more receptive to the will of the people. Perhaps because of their geographic location, many midwesterners have been strong adherents of isolationism, the belief that Americans should not concern themselves with foreign wars and problems.

The region's hub is Chicago, Illinois, the nation's third largest city. This major Great Lakes port is a connecting point for rail lines and air traffic to far-flung parts of the nation and the world. At its heart stands the Sears Tower, at 447 meters, the world's tallest building.

**THE SOUTHWEST**

The Southwest differs from the adjoining Midwest in weather (drier), population (less dense), and ethnicity (strong Spanish-American and Native-American components). Outside the cities, the region is a land of open spaces, much of which is desert. The magnificent Grand Canyon is located in this region, as is Monument Valley, the starkly beautiful backdrop for many western movies. Monument Valley is within the Navajo Reservation, home of the most populous American Indian tribe. To the south and east lie dozens of other Indian reservations, including those of the Hopi, Zuni, and Apache tribes.

Parts of the Southwest once belonged to Mexico. The United States obtained this land following the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. Its Mexican heritage continues to exert a strong influence on the region, which is a convenient place to settle for immigrants (legal or illegal) from farther south. The regional population is growing rapidly, with Arizona in particular rivaling the southern states as a destination for retired Americans in search of a warm climate.

Population growth in the hot, arid Southwest has depended on two human artifacts: the dam and the air conditioner. Dams on the Colorado and other rivers and aqueducts such as those of the Central Arizona Project have brought water to once-small towns such as Las Vegas, Nevada; Phoenix, Arizona; and Albuquerque, New Mexico, allowing them to become metropolises. Las Vegas is renowned as one of the world's centers for gambling, while Santa Fe, New Mexico, is famous as a center for the arts, especially painting, sculpture, and opera. Another system of dams and irrigation projects waters the Central Valley of California, which is noted for producing large harvests of fruits and vegetables.

**THE WEST**

Americans have long regarded the West as the last frontier. Yet California has a history of European settlement older than that of most midwestern states. Spanish priests founded missions along the California coast a few years before the outbreak of the American Revolution. In the 19th century, California and Oregon entered the Union ahead of many states to the east.

The West is a region of scenic beauty on a grand scale. All of its 11 states are partly mountainous, and the ranges are the sources of startling contrasts. To the west of the peaks, winds from the Pacific Ocean carry enough moisture to keep the land well-watered. To the east, however, the land is very dry. Parts of western Washington State, for example, receive 20 times the amount of rain that falls on the eastern side of the state's Cascade Range.

In much of the West the population is sparse, and the federal government owns and manages millions of hectares of undeveloped land. Americans use these areas for recreational and commercial activities, such as fishing, camping, hiking, boating, grazing, lumbering, and mining. In recent years some local residents who earn their livelihoods on federal land have come into conflict with the land's managers, who are required to keep land use within environmentally acceptable limits.

Alaska, the northernmost state in the Union, is a vast land of few, but hardy, people and great stretches of wilderness, protected in national parks and wildlife refuges. Hawaii is the only state in the union in which Asian Americans outnumber residents of European stock. Beginning in the 1980s large numbers of Asians have also settled in California, mainly around Los Angeles.

Los Angeles -- and Southern California as a whole -- bears the stamp of its large Mexican-American population. Now the second largest city in the nation, Los Angeles is best known as the home of the Hollywood film industry. Fueled by the growth of Los Angeles and the "Silicon Valley" area near San Jose, California has become the most populous of all the states.

Western cities are known for their tolerance. Perhaps because so many westerners have moved there from other regions to make a new start, as a rule interpersonal relations are marked by a live-and-let-live attitude. The western economy is varied. California, for example, is both an agricultural state and a high-technology manufacturing state.

THE FRONTIER SPIRIT

One final American region deserves mention. It is not a fixed place but a moving zone, as well as a state of mind: the border between settlements and wilderness known as the frontier. Writing in the 1890s, historian Frederick Jackson Turner claimed that the availability of vacant land throughout much of the nation's history has shaped American attitudes and institutions. "This perennial rebirth," he wrote, "this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character." Numerous present-day American values and attitudes can be traced to the frontier past: self-reliance, resourcefulness, comradeship, a strong sense of equality. After the Civil War a large number of black Americans moved west in search of equal opportunities, and many of them gained some fame and fortune as cowboys, miners, and prairie settlers. In 1869 the western territory of Wyoming became the first place that allowed women to vote and to hold elected office.

1. **ETHNIC MINORITIES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | | |
|  | **2015** | **2050** |
| [White Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_American) | 77.4% | 70.8% |
| [*Non-Hispanic Whites*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Hispanic_Whites) | 61.8% | 46.6% |
| [Black Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_American) | 13.2% | 14.4% |
| [Asian Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American) | 5.3% | 7.7% |
| [Multiracial Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial_American)2 | 2.6% | 5.4% |
| [Hispanics/Latinos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) (*of any race*) | 17.8% | 28.0% |

The [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) has a [racially](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_(human_classification)) and [ethnically](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group) [diverse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiethnic_society) population. [The census](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_ethnicity_in_the_United_States_Census) officially recognizes six ethnic and racial categories: White American, Black or African American, Native American and Alaska Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and people of two or more races; a race called "Some other race" is also used in the census and other surveys, but is not official. The United States Census Bureau also classifies Americans as "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino", which identifies [Hispanic and Latino Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans) as a racially diverse [*ethnicity*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_ethnicity_in_the_United_States_Census) that composes the largest minority group in the nation.

[White Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Americans) are the racial majority. [African Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American) are the largest racial minority, amounting to 13.2% of the population. Hispanic and Latino Americans amount to 17.1% of the population, making up the largest ethnic minority. The [White, non-Hispanic or Latino population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Hispanic_whites) make up 62.6% of the nation's total, with the total White population (including White Hispanics and Latinos) being 77.1%.

White Americans are the majority in every region but contribute the highest proportion of the population in the [Midwestern United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwestern_United_States), at 85% per the [Population Estimates Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_Estimates_Program) (PEP), or 83% per the [American Community Survey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Community_Survey) (ACS). Non-Hispanic Whites make up 79% of the Midwest's population, the highest ratio of any region. However, 35% of White Americans (whether all White Americans or non-Hispanic/Latino only) live in [the South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States), the most of any region.

55% of the African American population live in the South. A plurality or majority of the other official groups reside in [the West](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_United_States). This region is home to 42% of Hispanic and Latino Americans, 46% of [Asian Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American), 48% of [American Indians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) and [Alaska Natives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Natives), 68% of [Native Hawaiians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Hawaiians) and [Other Pacific Islanders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_American), 37% of the "two or more races" population ([Multiracial Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial_American)), and 46% of those designated "some other race

In the 2000 Census and subsequent United States Census Bureau surveys, Americans self-described as belonging to these racial groups:

* [**White American, European American, or Middle Eastern American**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_American): those having origins in any of the original peoples of [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe), the [Middle East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East), or [North Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Africa).
* [**Black American or African American**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American): those having origins in any of the original peoples of [Sub-Saharan Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa).
* [**Native American**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas) **or** [**Alaska Native**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Native): those having origins in any of the original peoples of [North](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_America), [Central](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_America) and [South America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_America), irrespective of whether they maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.
* [**Asian American**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American): those having origins in any of the original peoples of the [Far East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_East), [Central Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia), [North Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Asia), [Southeast Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia), and the [Indian subcontinent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_subcontinent).
* [**Native Hawaiians**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Hawaiians) **or** [**Other Pacific Islander**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islander_American): those having origins in any of the original peoples of [Polynesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polynesia), [Melanesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesia), or [Micronesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micronesia)

### Black Americans

About 16.3% of Americans or 53,172,250 people are Black only or Black in combination with another race as of 2014 estimates. Also known as *Black Americans*, the Black or African-American group is the largest *racial* minority, as opposed to Hispanics and Latinos, who are the largest *ethnic* minority. Three major subgroups come under the rubric of Black American. African Americans form the largest subgroup, and many also have European and Native American ancestry. Their [African](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_of_Africa) ancestors were mostly [involuntarily transported](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_the_United_States) as slaves to the U.S. from Africa and the Caribbean from 1619 until the *de jure* end of the slave trade in 1808, or its *de facto* end in the 1830s-40s. In the early years, some Africans came as indentured servants and earned their freedom in the colonies. Due to this history, the origins of most African Americans are usually untraceable to specific African nations; Africa serves as the general geographic origin.

Historically, most African Americans lived in the [Southeastern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeastern_United_States) and [South Central](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Central_United_States) states; at the time of the American Revolution, half the slave population lived in Virginia. But, development of the Deep South for plantations after [Indian Removal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Removal) resulted in a major transfer of population from the Upper South. By the time of the Civil War, most African Americans lived as slaves in [Alabama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama), [Georgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_(U.S._state)), [Louisiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana), [Mississippi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi), and [Texas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas), although populations remained in the Carolinas and the Upper South.

Beginning about [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), millions of black Americans left the rural South in their [Great Migration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Migration_(African_American)) to the industrial [Northeast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeastern_United_States), and [Midwest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwestern_United_States). From World War II until about 1960, they added the West Coast as their destination, drawn to defense jobs. These migrants were concentrated in urban areas. In total, more than 6.5 million blacks left the South through this period, escaping its segregation, [Jim Crow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow) laws. Since the 1980s, with improving economies in some southern cities, this migration [has reversed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Great_Migration), and millions of African Americans, many well-educated, are moving to growing metropolitan areas in that region. Today, a majority of African Americans (56%) live in the Southern U.S.; they still live primarily in urban areas, but are increasingly moving to the suburbs.

Starting in the 1970s, immigrants from [the West Indies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Indian_American), with origins in [Jamaica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica), [Haiti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haiti), [Trinidad and Tobago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago), and [Barbados](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbados), et al. have formed a newer portion of black Americans. This community was 2.5 million strong in 2008. More recently, since the 1990s, there has also been an influx of [Sub-Saharan African immigrants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_immigration_to_the_United_States) to the United States, from nations such as Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya. They are already outnumbered by their U.S.-born descendants. Together, these new African Americans comprised an estimated 2.9 million in 2008.

### Asian Americans

A third significant minority is the [Asian American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_American) population, comprising 13.4 million in 2008, or 4.4% of the U.S. population. [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California) is home to 4.5 million Asian Americans, whereas 495,000 live in [Hawaii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaii), where they compose the plurality, at 38.5% of the islands' people. This is their largest share of any state. Historically first concentrated on Hawaii and the West Coast, Asian Americans now live across the country, living and working in large numbers in [New York City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City), [Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago), [Boston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston), [Houston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houston), and other major urban centers.

Their histories are diverse. As with the new immigration from central and eastern Europe to the East Coast from the mid-19th century on, Asians started immigrating to the United States in large numbers in the 19th century. [Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_American) and [Japanese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_American) men were the first to arrive in sizeable numbers, recruited as laborers; they were willing to come because of economic problems in their countries. The Chinese particularly were integral to construction and completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, among other projects. They also came from the [Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines). The sources of immigrants changed over time, especially after the US changed its immigration laws in the 1960s to make entry easier. In addition, immigration fluctuated according to wars and economic conditions in their countries of origin. Today the largest self-identified Asian sub-groups are immigrants or their descendants from the [Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines), [China](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China), [Pakistan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan), [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Brunei](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunei), [Indonesia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia), [Vietnam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam), [Cambodia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodia), [Taiwan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan), [South Korea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Korea), [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan) and [Thailand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand).

### Two or more races

Self-identified [multiracial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiracial) Americans numbered 7.0 million in 2008, or 2.3% of the population. They have identified as any combination of races (White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, "Some other race") and ethnicities. The U.S. has a growing multiracial identity movement.

While the colonies and southern states protected white fathers by making all children born to slave mothers be classified as slaves, regardless of paternity, they also banned [miscegenation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miscegenation) or [interracial marriage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interracial_marriage), most notably between whites and blacks. This did little to stop interracial relationships, except as legal, consensual unions.

Demographers state that, due to new waves of immigration, the American people through the early 20th century were mostly multi-ethnic descendants of various immigrant nationalities, who maintained cultural distinctiveness until, over time, [assimilation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_assimilation), migration and [integration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_integration) took place. The [African American Civil Rights Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_American_Civil_Rights_Movement) through the 20th century gained passage of important legislation to enforce constitutional rights of minorities.

According to James P. Allen and Eugene Turner from [California State University, Northridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_State_University,_Northridge), by some calculations in the 2000 Census, the multiracial population that is part white (which is the largest percentage of the multiracial population), is as follows:

* white/Native American and Alaskan Native, at 7,015,017,
* white/black at 737,492,
* white/Asian at 727,197, and

white/Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander at 125,628.

### Native Americans and Alaska Natives

[Indigenous peoples of the Americas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_of_the_Americas), particularly [Native Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States), made up 0.8% of the population in 2008, numbering 2.4 million. An additional 2.3 million persons declared part-[American Indian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_in_the_United_States) or [Alaska Native](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_Native) ancestry.

The legal and official designation of who is Native American has aroused controversy by demographers, tribal nations, and government officials for many decades. [Federally recognized tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federally_recognized_tribes) and [state recognized tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_recognized_tribes) set their own membership requirements; tribal enrollment may require residency on a reservation, documented [lineal descent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lineal_descent) from recognized records, such as the [Dawes Rolls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawes_Rolls), and other criteria. Some tribes have adopted the use of blood quantum, requiring members to have a certain percentage. The federal government requires individuals to certify documented blood quantum of ancestry for certain federal programs, such as education benefits, available to members of recognized tribes. But Census takers accept any respondent's identification. [Genetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetics) scientists estimated that more than 15 million other Americans, including African Americans, may have up to one quarter of American Indian ancestry.

Once thought to face extinction as a race or culture, Native Americans of numerous tribes have achieved revival of aspects of their cultures, together with asserting their sovereignty and direction of their own affairs since the mid-20th century. Many have started language programs to revive use of traditional languages; some have established [tribally controlled colleges](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tribally_controlled_colleges&action=edit&redlink=1) and other schools on their reservations, so that education is expressive of their cultures. Since the late 20th century, many tribes have developed [gaming casinos](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gaming_casinos&action=edit&redlink=1) on their sovereign land to raise revenues for economic development, as well as to promote the education and welfare of their people through health care and construction of improved housing.

Today more than 800,000 to one million persons claim [Cherokee descent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherokee_descent) in part or as full-bloods; of these, an estimated 300,000 live in California, 70,000—160,000 in [Oklahoma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oklahoma), and 15,000 in [North Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Carolina) in ancestral homelands.

The second largest tribal group is the [Navajo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navajo_people), who call themselves Diné and live on a 16-million acre (65,000 km²) [Indian reservation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_reservation) covering northeast [Arizona](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arizona), northwest [New Mexico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Mexico), and southeast [Utah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah). It is home to half of the 450,000 [Navajo Nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navajo_Nation) members.The third largest group are the [Lakota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakota_people) ([Sioux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sioux)) Nation, with distinct federally recognized tribes located in the states of [Minnesota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minnesota), [Nebraska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska), [Montana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montana), [Wyoming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wyoming); and [North](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Dakota) and [South Dakota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Dakota).

### Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders

[Native Hawaiians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Hawaiians) and other [Pacific Islanders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Islanders) numbered 427,810 in 2008, or 0.1% of the population. Additionally, nearly as many individuals identify as having partial Native Hawaiian ancestry, for a total of 829,949 people of full or part Native Hawaiian ancestry. This group constitutes the smallest minority in the United States. Some demographers believe that by the year 2025, the last full-blooded Native Hawaiian will die off, leaving a culturally distinct, but racially mixed population. The total number of persons who have identified as Native Hawaiian in 2008 was more than the estimated Hawaiian population when the US annexed the islands in 1898. Native Hawaiians are receiving ancestral land [reparations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reparation_(legal)). Throughout Hawaii, they are working to preserve and assert adaptation of Native Hawaiian customs and [Hawaiian language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_language); they have cultural schools solely for legally Native Hawaiian students.

A report by the [U.S. Census Bureau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Census_Bureau) projects a decrease in the ratio of Whites between 2010 and 2050, from 79.5% to 74.0%. At the same time, [Non-Hispanic Whites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Hispanic_Whites) are projected to no longer make up a majority of the population by 2042, but will remain the largest single ethnic group. In 2050 they will compose 46.3% of the population. Non-Hispanic whites made up 85% of the population in 1960. The report foresees the Hispanic or Latino population rising from 16% today to 30% by 2050, the Black percentage barely rising from 12.9% to 13.1%, and Asian Americans upping their 4.6% share to 7.8%. The United States had a population of 310 million people in October 2010, and is projected to reach 400 million by 2039 and 439 million in 2050. It is further projected that 82% of the increase in population from 2005 to 2050 will be due to [immigrants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_the_United_States) and their children. Of the nation's children in 2050, 62% are expected to be of a minority ethnicity, up from 44% today. Approximately 39% are projected to be Hispanic or Latino (up from 22% in 2008), and 38% are projected to be single-race, non-Hispanic Whites (down from 56% in 2008).

[**Hispanic and Latino Americans**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans)**.** Each of the racial categories includes people who identify their [ethnicity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_ethnicity_in_the_United_States_Census) as [*Hispanic or Latino*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans). U.S. federal law defines Hispanic or Latino as "those who classify themselves in one of the specific Hispanic or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 or [ACS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Community_Survey) questionnaire"—[Mexican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico)", "[Puerto Rican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rican_people)", or "[Cuban](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_American)"—as well as those who indicate that they are "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino." Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. The total population of Hispanic and Latino Americans comprised 50.5 million or 16.3% of the national total in 2010.

In 2008, "[Hispanic or Latino origin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic_and_Latino_Americans)" was the self-identification of 47 million Americans. They chiefly have origins in the Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America. Very few also come from other places, for example: 0.2% of Hispanic and Latino Americans were born in Asia. The group is heterogeneous in race and national ancestry.

The Census Bureau defines "Hispanic or Latino origin" thus:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **“** | People who identify with the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are those who classify themselves in one of the specific Hispanic or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 or ACS questionnaire - "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," or "Cuban" - as well as those who indicate that they are "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino." Origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person, or the person's parents or ancestors, before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race. | **”** |

The leading country-of-origin for Hispanic Americans is Mexico (30.7 million), followed by Puerto Rico (4.2 million) (which actually has a special relationship with the US, of which its people are citizens), and Cuba (1.6 million), as of 2008. However, as of 2010, there were 1,648,968 Salvadorans in the United States, the largest of the U.S-Central American community. Salvadorans are poised to become the third largest Hispanic group by the next census, significantly overtaking and replacing Cubans. Recent estimates already put the Salvadoran population as high as 2 million, as of 2013, the third largest Hispanic-American group.

62.4% of Hispanic and Latino Americans identified as white. 30.5% identified as "Some other race" (other than the ones listed). In the official estimates, Black or African American Hispanics are the second-largest group, with 1.9 million, or 4.0% of the whole group. The remaining Hispanics are accounted as follows: 1.6% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.5% Two or more races, 0.7% Asian, and 0.03% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Per the ACS: 3.9% Two or more races, 1.9% Black or African American, 1.0% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.4% Asian, and 0.05% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. The Hispanic or Latino population is young and fast-growing, due to immigration and higher birth rates. For decades it has contributed significantly to U.S. population increases, and this is expected to continue. The Census Bureau projects that by 2050, one-quarter of the population will be Hispanic or Latino.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

* What are the push-and-pull factors that lead people to come to the United States?
* What are the differences in the ethnic composition of the Old immigration and the New immigration?
* What are the effects of recent waves of immigration on America?
* What is the US government policy with regard to illegal immigration?
* What is the gist of the three most prevalent ideologies of assimilation in the American historical experience?
* What is the US population distribution by race and ethnicity?
* What are the top 10 cities of the USA?
* What are the 3 largest metropolitan areas in the USA in terms of population numbers?

**2 AMERICAN SOCIETY AND VALUES**

**1. The core values and principles of American government**

**2. Status and social class**

**3. American family**

**4. Women and American society**

Americans come from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The first major wave of immigration came in colonial days and was composed of mostly western and northern Europeans. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large numbers of southern and eastern Europeans came to the United States. In recent decades, an increasing number of immigrants have come from Latin America and Asia. While often valuing the old traditions and customs, they fully support the ideals of the American political culture.

**1. American Political Culture: Core Values.** There are three (3) core values of American government that are preserved within the black letter of the United States Constitution. These core values are: liberty, equality and self-government. These values are so precious to the continued existence of American nation that they pass from generation to generation and encompass all forms of religion, gender,  socio-economic background, nationality and heritage.

**Values**

Liberty: The belief that individuals should be free to act and think as they choose, provide they do not infringe unreasonably on the freedom and well-being of others.

Equality: The belief that all individuals are equal and entitled in their moral worth, and are entitled to equal treatment under the law.

Self-Government: The belief that the people are the ultimate source of governing authority and must have a voice in how they are governed.

**Principles**

Individualism: A commitment to personal initiative and self-sufficiency; it asserts that people, if free, pursue their own path and if not unfairly burdened, can attain their full potential.

Unity: The principle that Americans are one people and form an indivisible union.

Diversity: Holds that individual and group differences should be respected and that these differences are themselves a source of strength.

**Liberty.** The word “liberty” is specifically mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It is the only one of the basic core values that is mentioned in all three of these founding documents. Liberty protects the people from unreasonable governmental intrusion. The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression as well as freedom to practice religion of choice and unreasonable search and seizure to name a few. Liberty is the fundamental principle that individuals should be free to act as they wish so long as they do not limit or restrict freedoms guarantees to others.

**Equality.** Although the framers of the Constitution hoped to create a government based upon the tenets of freedom, liberty and equality, maintaining the latter was a controversial issue. The definition of equality was interpreted differently by individuals of diverse backgrounds, economic status and gender. Only white males were truly guaranteed the full faith and credit of the United States Constitution. Until the suffrage movement, only white men were allowed to vote. Minorities, including women, would not participate in the electoral process until after the suffragette movement.

In post-revolutionary America, not all persons were treated equally. Indeed, not all persons who entered the ‘land of the free’  were treated as such. White males brought Africans into the country against their will and indentured them as slaves. African-Americans were bound to the slavery of their white counterparts until 1860.   Before the emancipation of slaves in 1864, slaves were considered property of the individuals who purchased them from the slave trade. Slaves had no rights or claim to freedom unless their owner set them free. Thomas Jefferson, a founding father of American ideals was himself a slave owner on one the largest plantations in the great South and often toyed with the exact definition of equality.

The maintenance of equality continues to be an obstacle for American country and government. It affects all genders, races, religions and socio-economic backgrounds. For example, every new generation of immigrant face issues of equality.

**Self-government.** Self-government is the third and final core value in which America was created. Self-government is the belief that people are the ultimate source of governing authority and must have a voice on how they are governed (Patterson 2004). Again the ideal of self-government is a unique characteristic that is not practiced by most countries across the globe. Self-government is a right that is sacred and must be defended.

Democracy is a form of self-government. Democracy is the type of self- government that America has adopted to create, enact and execute laws that the people must adhere to. A democratic government is one that is chosen and operated by the people through the elections process. The people of the United States have the right and privilege to vote for candidates who also possess the same right to run for an elected lawmaking position.

The three core principles of American government are as follows: **individualism**, **unity** and **diversity**. There is no other country on earth that relies on these three core values to survive and succeed. America is indeed a melting pot. The people of America are diverse yet unified; individuals yet part of the whole (country). The many people of America may look different, practice diverse cultural traditions, however, they all maintain one common goal. Freedom is that common goal. The Latin term “E pluribus unum” translates to “one out of many” is used to explain the American core values.

**Individualism.** Individualism maintains that every person under the color of the law has the opportunity to pursue any and all personal expectations and dreams. The American principle of individualism is not self-interested or narrowly construed. It is a principle that promotes the ideal that all persons are separate and distinct. They are unique within their own characteristics and personalities. Individualism opens the door to creativity and inventions. It is therefore no wonder why the United States, and its citizens, have made so many scientific discoveries and medical breakthroughs. America gives each and every citizen the opportunity to be what they want to be.

**Unity.** Unity is what keeps this country alive and strong. On September 11, 2001, the United States was placed under attack and distress. The citizens of the United States immediately banded together as one nation. The American flag was never so visible or valued. Many American citizens traveled across the country to help search for survivors and come to the aid of victims, while others donated millions of dollars in relief funds. These self-less acts were performed by people of diverse races, religions and backgrounds. Although tragic, 9/11 is an excellent example of American unity.

**Diversity.** Diversity links individualism and unity. The acceptance of diversity within a group is a positive sign that promotes a safe and secure environment. A country comprised of individuals of diverse backgrounds must possess similar goals to maintain unity. The American culture and government is just that; a country created by maintaining common ideals, values and goals.

The **American Dream** is a national [ethos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethos) of the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), the set of ideals (Democracy, Rights, Liberty, Opportunity, and Equality) in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, and an upward [social mobility](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socio-economic_mobility_in_the_United_States) for the family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers. In the definition of the American Dream by [James Truslow Adams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Truslow_Adams) in 1931, "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of [social class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class_in_the_United_States) or circumstances of birth.

The American Dream is rooted in the [Declaration of Independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence), which proclaims that "[all men are created equal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_men_are_created_equal)" with the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness

The meaning of the "American Dream" has changed over the course of history, and includes both personal components (such as home ownership and upward mobility) and a global vision. Historically the Dream originated in the mystique regarding [frontier life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier_Thesis). As the Royal Governor of Virginia noted in 1774, the Americans "for ever imagine the Lands further off are still better than those upon which they are already settled". He added that, "if they attained Paradise, they would move on if they heard of a better place farther west."

The ethos today implies an opportunity for Americans to achieve prosperity through hard work. According to The Dream, this includes the opportunity for one's children to grow up and receive a good education and career without artificial barriers. It is the opportunity to make individual choices without the prior restrictions that limited people according to their class, caste, religion, race, or ethnicity. Immigrants to the United States sponsored ethnic newspapers in their own language; the editors typically promoted the American Dream. For many in both the working class and the middle class, upward mobility has served as the heart and soul of the American Dream, the prospect of "betterment" and to "improve one's lot" for oneself and one's children much of what this country is all about. "Work hard, save a little, send the kids to college so they can do better than you did, and retire happily to a warmer climate".

Historian [James Truslow Adams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Truslow_Adams) popularized the phrase "American Dream" in his 1931 book *Epic of America*: “ But there has been also the *American dream*, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position”. And later he wrote: “ The American dream, that has lured tens of millions of all nations to our shores in the past century has not been a dream of merely material plenty, though that has doubtlessly counted heavily. It has been much more than that. It has been a dream of being able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, unhampered by the barriers which had slowly been erected in the older civilizations, unrepressed by social orders which had developed for the benefit of classes rather than for the simple human being of any and every class”.

According to the so-called “American Dream” the United States is the country of the free and the brave where everyone can achieve his aim for a good life and luck. All men are viewed as equal and therefore have the same chances in life. In fact there is not much left of this dream. This is to some extent due to the fact that in the last couple of years higher education has become a “luxury-priced necessity. Without good education, young people don't have a chance of getting a well-paid job. As there is no standard school system for everyone, but a system of expensive private schools for the economical prosperous and a system of state-financed schools that lack resources and quality teaching, it is obvious that the children of the poorer start out their career with lower chances for a good future.  
The possibilities to climb the internal career ladder within a company once one has a job, are also not as good as they were before: Companies try to keep their costs as low as possible by outsourcing parts of their business, hiring temporary and part-time workers and fighting workers' unions. Parts of the “white-collar” jobs are also moved to China and India, where employees are much cheaper than in the US. A Business Week commentary from 2003 says that more than a quarter of the labor force are trapped in “low-wage, often dead-end jobs”. This makes a number of about 34 million workers with no chances of rising up in their social mobility.  
Recent studies have shown that “only 14 percent of the men born to fathers on the bottom 10 percent of the wage ladder made it to the top 30 percent” and that “only 17 percent of the men born to fathers on the top 10 percent” of the wage ladder “fell to the bottom 30 percent”.  
The loss of upward mobility began in the 1970s when the post-World War II productivity boom was over and got even more serious in the 1980s due to globalisation and technology development.  
The dream of a career “from rags to riches” has clearly become unrealistic in today’s America as it has moved towards a “from riches to riches” reality: Parents who are wealthy can afford better schools and can pay better medical treatment for their kids, which positively adds up to improving their performance in life. The favoritism which often decided whether one gets a certain position in a company or not gives additional advantage to those whose parents have the right connections available. US-President George W. Bush is a great example of this system.  
The notion that “any child can grow up to be president” seems to be not more than a poor joke in our days.

**2. Status and Social Class in the United States** is a controversial issue, having many competing definitions, models, and even disagreements over its very existence. Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the "[rich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affluence_in_the_United_States#Extreme_affluence)", the "[middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_middle_class)", and the "[poor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_the_United_States)". A team of sociologists recently posited that there are six social classes in America. In this model, the upper class (3% of the [population](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/population)) is divided into upper-upper class (1% of the U.S. population, earning hundreds of millions to billions per year) and the lower-upper class (2%, earning millions per year). The middle class (40%) is divided into upper-middle class (14%, earning $76,000 or more per year) and the lower-middle class (26%, earning $46,000 to $75,000 per year). The working class (30%) earns $19,000 to $45,000 per year. The lower class (27%) is divided into working poor (13%, earning $9000 to 18,000 per year) and [underclass](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/underclass) (14%, earning under $9000 per year). This model has gained traction as a tool for thinking about social classes in America, but it does not fully account for variations in status based on non-economic factors, such as education and [occupational](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/occupational-prestige) [prestige](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/prestige). More complex models that have been proposed describe as many as a dozen class levels; while still others deny the very existence, in the European sense, of "social class" in American society. Most definitions of class structure group people according to [wealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth_in_the_United_States), [income](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Income_in_the_United_States), [education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_attainment_in_the_United_States), type of [occupation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employment), and membership in a specific subculture or social network.

**Standard of living in the United States.** The standard of living in the United States is one of the top 20 in the world by the standards economists use as measures of standards of living. Per capita income is high but also less evenly distributed than in most other developed countries; as a result, the United States fares particularly well in measures of average material well being that do not place weight on equality aspects. On comprehensive measures such as the UN Human Development Index the United States is always in the top twenty, currently ranking 3rd. On the Human Poverty Index the United States ranked 17th, one rank below the United Kingdom and one rank above Ireland. On The Economist's quality-of-life index the United States ranked 13th, in between Finland and Canada, scoring 7.6 out of a possible 10. The highest given score of 8.3 was applied to Ireland. This particular index takes into account a variety of socio-economic variables including GDP per capita, life expectancy, political stability, family life, community life, gender equality, and job security. The homeownership rate is relatively high compared to other post-industrial nations. In 2005, 69% of Americans resided in their own homes, roughly the same percentage as in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Israel and Canada. Residents of the United States also enjoy a high access to consumer goods. Americans enjoy more cars and radios per capita than any other nation and more televisions and personal computers per capita than any other nation with more than 200 million people.

The median income is $43,318 per household ($26,000 per household member) with 42% of households having two income earners. Meanwhile, the median income of the average American age 25+ was roughly $32,000 ($39,000 if only counting those employed full-time between the ages of 25 to 64) in 2005. According to the CIA the gini index which measures income inequality (the higher the less equal the income distribution) was clocked at 45.0 in 2005, compared to 32.0 in the European Union and 28.3 in Germany.

The US has... a per capita GDP [PPP] of $42,000... The [recent] onrush of technology largely explains the gradual development of a "two-tier labor market"... Since 1975, practically all the gains in household income have gone to the top 20% of households... The rise in GDP in 2004 and 2005 was undergirded by substantial gains in labor productivity... Long-term problems include inadequate investment in economic infrastructure, rapidly rising medical and pension costs of an aging population, sizable trade and budget deficits, and stagnation of family income in the lower economic groups. The United States has one of the widest rich-poor gaps of any high-income nation today, and that gap continues to grow. In recent times, some prominent economists including Alan Greenspan have warned that the widening rich-poor gap in the U.S. population is a problem that could undermine and destabilize the country's economy and standard of living stating that "The income gap between the rich and the rest of the US population has become so wide, and is growing so fast, that it might eventually threaten the stability of democratic capitalism itself".

Human Development Index: 3rd out of 172

GDP (PPP) per capita - 7th out of 183

GDP (nominal) per capita - 9th out of 183

Quality-of-life Index - 16th out of 111

Human Poverty Index - 17th out of 19

Sociologists [Dennis Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Gilbert), William Thompson, Joseph Hickey, and James Henslin have proposed **class systems** with **six distinct social classes**. These class models feature an [upper or capitalist class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_upper_class) consisting of the [rich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affluence_in_the_United_States#Extreme_affluence) and powerful, an [upper middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Managerial_Class) consisting of highly educated and [affluent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affluence_in_the_United_States) professionals, a [middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_middle_class#middle_class) consisting of college-educated individuals employed in [white-collar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-collar_worker) industries, a lower middle class composed of semi-professionals with typically some college education, a working class constituted by [clerical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerk_(position)) and blue collar workers whose work is highly routinized, and a lower class divided between the working [poor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_in_the_United_States) and the unemployed underclass.

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| Academic class models | | | | | |
| [**Dennis Gilbert**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Gilbert)**, 2002** | | **William Thompson & Joseph Hickey, 2005** | | [**Leonard Beeghley**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Beeghley)**, 2004** | |
| **Class** | **Typical characteristics** | **Class** | **Typical characteristics** | **Class** | **Typical characteristics** |
| **Capitalist class (1%)** | Top-level executives, high-rung politicians, heirs. Ivy League education common. | **Upper class (1%)** | Top-level executives, celebrities, heirs; income of $500,000+ common. Ivy league education common. | **The super-rich (0.9%)** | Multi-millionaires whose incomes commonly exceed $350,000; includes celebrities and powerful executives/politicians. Ivy League education common. |
| **Upper middle class**[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demography_of_the_United_States#endnote_Social_class_in_the_US1) **(15%)** | Highly-educated (often with graduate degrees), most commonly salaried, professionals and middle management with large work autonomy. | **Upper middle class (15%)** | Highly-educated (often with graduate degrees) professionals & managers with household incomes varying from the high 5-figure range to commonly above $100,000. | **The rich (5%)** | Households with net worth of $1 million or more; largely in the form of home equity. Generally have college degrees. |
| **Middle class (plurality/ majority; ca. 46%)** | College-educated workers with considerably higher-than-average incomes and compensation; a man making $57,000 and a woman making $40,000 may be typical. |
| **Lower middle class (30%)** | Semi-professionals and craftsmen with a roughly average standard of living. Most have some college education and are white-collar. | **Lower middle class (32%)** | Semi-professionals and craftsmen with some work autonomy; household incomes commonly range from $35,000 to $75,000. Typically, some college education. |
| **Working class (30%)** | Clerical and most blue-collar workers whose work is highly routinized. Standard of living varies depending on number of income earners, but is commonly just adequate. High school education. |
| **Working class (32%)** | Clerical, pink- and blue-collar workers with often low job security; common household incomes range from $16,000 to $30,000. High school education. | **Working class (ca. 40–45%)** | Blue-collar workers and those whose jobs are highly routinized with low economic security; a man making $40,000 and a woman making $26,000 may be typical. High school education. |
| **Working poor (13%)** | Service, low-rung clerical and some blue-collar workers. High economic insecurity and risk of poverty. Some high school education. |
| **Lower class (ca. 14–20%)** | Those who occupy poorly-paid positions or rely on government transfers. Some high school education. |
| **Underclass (12%)** | Those with limited or no participation in the labor force. Reliant on government transfers. Some high school education. | **The poor (ca. 12%)** | Those living below the poverty line with limited to no participation in the labor force; a household income of $18,000 may be typical. Some high school education. |

**Upper class.** This term is applied to a wide array of elite groups existing in the United States of America. The term commonly includes the so-called "blue bloods" (multi-generational wealth combined with leadership of high society) such as the [Astor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astor_family) or [Roosevelt families](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roosevelt_family). Twentieth century sociologist W. Lloyd Warner divided the upper class into two sections: the "upper-upper class" (or [bourgeoisie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeoisie)) and "lower-upper class" (or "scoobs"). The former includes established upper-class families while the latter includes those with [great wealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billionaire). As there is no defined lower threshold for the upper class it is difficult, if not outright impossible, to determine the exact number or percentage of American households that could be identified as being members of the upper-class(es).

[Income](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household_income_in_the_United_States) and [wealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth_in_the_United_States) statistics may serve as a helpful guideline as they can be measured in a more objective manner. In 2005, approximately one and a half percent (1.5%) of households in the United States had incomes exceeding $250,000 with the top 5% having incomes exceeding $157,000. Furthermore, only 2.6% of households held assets (excluding home equity) of more than one-million dollars. One could therefore fall under the assumption that less than five percent of American society are members of rich households. The richest 1% of the American population owns as much as the combined wealth of the bottom 90%, or perhaps even more.

Members of the upper class control and own significant portions of corporate America and may exercise indirect power through the investment of capital. The high salaries and the potential for amassing great wealth through [stock options](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_options) have greatly increased the power and visibility of the "corporate elite". There is disagreement over whether the "[nouveau riche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nouveau_riche)" should be included as members of the upper class or whether this term should exclusively be used for established families. Many sociologists and commentators make a distinction between the upper class (in the sense of those in the families of inherited wealth) and the corporate elite. By implication, the upper class is held in lower regard (as inheritors of idle wealth) than the self-made millionaires in prestigious occupations. **Inherited wealth.** Yet another important feature of the upper class is that of inherited privilege. While most Americans, including those in the [upper-middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Managerial_Class) need to actively maintain their status, some upper class persons do not need to work in order to maintain their status. Status tends to be passed on from generation to generation without each generation having to re-certify its status. Overall, the upper class is financially the best compensated and one of the most influential socio-economic classes in American society.

**Corporate elite.** The high salaries and, especially, the potential wealth through [stock options](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_option), has supported the term *corporate elite* or corporate class. [Top executives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_pay_in_the_United_States), including Chief Executive Officers, are among the financially best compensated occupations in the United States. The [median annual earnings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Median_income) for a CEO in the United States were $140,350 (exceeding the income of more than 90% of United States households). [*The Wall Street Journal*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wall_Street_Journal) reports the median compensation for CEOs of 350 major corporations was $6,000,000 in 2005 with most of the money coming from stock options. In New York City in 2005, the median income (including bonuses) of a corporate "chief operating officer" (the No. 2 job) was $377,000. The total compensation for a "top IT officer" in charge of information technology in New York City was $218,000. Thus even below the CEO level of [top corporations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortune_500), financial compensation will usually be sufficient to propel households with a mere one income earner in the top 1%. In 2005 only 1.5% of American households had incomes above $250,000 with many reaching this level only through having two income earners.

**The upper middle class** consists of highly educated salaried professionals whose work is largely self-directed. Many have advanced graduate degrees and household incomes commonly exceed the high five-figure range. Members of this class commonly value higher education – most holding advanced academic degrees – and are often involved with personal and professional networks including [professional organizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_organization). The upper middle class tends to have great influence over the course of society.

Occupations which require high educational attainment are well compensated and are held in high public esteem. Physicians, lawyers, engineers, scientists and professors are largely considered to be upper middle class. The very well educated are seen as trendsetters; the anti-smoking, pro-fitness, and organic food movements, as well as environmentalism, are largely indigenous to this socio-economic grouping. Education serves as perhaps the most important value and also the most dominant entry barrier of the upper middle class.

Sociologists Dennis Gilbert, Willam Thompson, and Joseph Hickey estimate the upper middle class to constitute roughly 15% of the population (or roughly three in every twenty persons). The hallmark of this class is its high educational attainment.

**The** [**middle class**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_middle_class) is perhaps the most vaguely defined of the social classes. The term can be used either to describe a relative elite of professionals and managers – also called the upper middle class – or it can be used to describe those in-between the extremes of wealth, disregarding considerable differences in income, culture, [educational attainment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_attainment_in_the_United_States), influence, and occupation.

As with all social classes in the United States, there are no definite answers as to what is and what is not middle class. Sociologists such as Dennis Gilbert, James Henslin, William Thompson, and Joseph Hickey have brought forth class models in which the middle class is divided into two sections that combined constitute 47% to 49% of the population. The upper middle or professional class constitutes the upper end of the middle class which consists of highly educated, well-paid professionals with considerable [work autonomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_autonomy). The lower end of the middle class – called either lower middle class or just middle class – consists of semi-professionals, craftsmen, office staff, and sales employees who often have college degrees and are very loosely supervised.

Sociologists William Thompson and Joseph Hickey identify household incomes between $35,000 and $75,000 as typical for the lower middle and $100,000 or more as typical for the upper middle class.Though it needs to be noted that household income distribution neither reflects standard of living nor class status with complete accuracy.

**Traditional middle class.** Many primary and secondary level teachers in the United States are in the [middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_middle_class). Those households more or less at the center of society may be referred to as being part of the American middle or middle-middle class in vernacular language use. In the academic models featured in this article, however, the middle class does not constitute a strong majority of the population. Those in the middle of the socio-economic strata—the proverbial [Average Joe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Average_Joe)—are commonly in the area where the working and lower middle class overlap. The most prominent academic models split the middle class into two sections. Yet, it remains common for the term middle class to be applied for anyone in between either extreme of the socio-economic strata. The middle class is then often sub-divided into an upper-middle, middle-middle, and lower-middle class. In colloquial descriptions of the class system the middle-middle class may be described as consisting of those in the middle of the social strata. Politicians and television personalities such as Lou Dobbs can be seen using the term middle class in this manner, especially when discussing the [middle-class squeeze](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle-class_squeeze). The wide discrepancy between the academic models and public opinions that lump highly educated professionals together in the same class with secretaries may lead to the conclusion that public opinion on the subject has become largely ambiguous.

**The lower middle class** is, as the name implies, generally defined as those less privileged than the middle class. People in this class commonly work in supporting occupations. Sociologists Dennis Gilbert, William Thompson, and Joseph Hickey, however, only divide the middle class into two groups. In their class modes the middle class only consists of an upper and lower middle class. The upper middle class, as described above, constitutes roughly 15% of the population with highly educated white collar professionals who commonly have salaries in the high 5-figure range and household incomes in the low six figure range. Semi-professionals with some college degrees constitute the lower middle class. Their class models show the lower middle class positioned slightly above the middle of the socio-economic strata. Those in [blue-](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue-collar) and [pink-collar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink-collar_worker) as well as [clerical](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/clerical) occupations are referred to as working class in these class models.

The term **working class** applies to those that work at this tier in the social hierarchy. Definitions of this term vary greatly. While Lloyd Warner found the vast majority of the American population to be in either the upper-lower class or lower-lower class in 1949, modern-day experts such as Michael Zweig argue that the working class constitutes most of the population. Dennis Gilbert places 13% of households among the "[working poor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_poor)" with 12% being in the "underclass". Thompson & Hickey place roughly 17% to 20% of households in the lower classes. The lower classes constituting roughly a fifth to a quarter of American society consists mainly of low-rung retail and service workers as well as the frequently unemployed and those not able to work. Overall, 13% of the population fall below the [poverty threshold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_threshold). Hunger and food insecurity were present in the lives of 3.9% of American households, while roughly twenty-five million Americans (ca. 9%) participated in the [food stamp](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supplemental_Nutrition_Assistance_Program) program.

A commonly used model for thinking about social classes in the U.S. attributes the following **general characteristics to each tier**: the upper class has vast accumulated wealth and significant [control](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/control) over [corporations](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/corporations) and political [institutions](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/institution), and their privilege is usually inherited; the [corporate](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/corporate-elite) [elite](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/elite) consists of high-salaried stockholders, such as corporate CEOs, who did not necessarily inherit privilege but have achieved high status through their careers; the upper-middle class consists of highly educated [salaried](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/salaried-professionals) [professionals](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/professional) whose occupations are held in high esteem, such as lawyers, engineers, and professors; the middle class (the most vaguely defined and largest social class) is generally thought to include people in mid-level managerial positions or relatively low status professional positions, such as high school teachers and small business owners; the working class generally refers to those without college degrees who do low level service work, such as working as a sales clerk or housekeeper, and includes most people whose incomes fall below [the](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/the-poverty-line) [poverty line](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/poverty-line). In the above outline of social class, status clearly depends not only on income, but also occupational prestige and educational attainment.

**Social Mobility****.** Regardless of how we measure and define social class, what are the chances of moving up or down within the American class structure. Class systems such as in the United States are thought to be open, meaning that social mobility is relatively high. It is important, then, to determine how much social mobility exists in the United States.

There are two types of vertical social mobility. *Intergenerational mobility* refers to mobility from one generation to the next within the same family. If children from poor parents end up in high-paying jobs, the children have experienced upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, if children of college professors end up hauling trash for a living, these children have experienced downward intergenerational mobility. *Intragenerational mobility* refers to mobility within a person’s own lifetime. If you start out as an administrative assistant in a large corporation and end up as an upper-level manager, you have experienced upward intragenerational mobility. But if you start out from business school as an upper-level manager and get laid off 10 years later because of corporate downsizing, you have experienced downward intragenerational mobility.

Sociologists have conducted research on vertical mobility, much of it involving the movement of males up or down the occupational prestige ladder compared to their fathers. The early research on males found that about half of sons end up in higher-prestige jobs than their fathers had but that the difference between the sons’ jobs and their fathers’ was relatively small. For example, a child of a janitor may end up running a hardware store but is very unlikely to end up as a corporate executive. To reach that lofty position, it helps greatly to have parents in jobs much more prestigious than a janitor’s. Contemporary research also finds much less mobility among African Americans and Latinos than among non-Latino whites with the same education and family backgrounds, suggesting an important negative impact of racial and ethnic discrimination. A college education is a key step toward achieving upward social mobility. However, the payoff of education is often higher for men than for women and for whites than for people of color.

A key vehicle for upward mobility is formal education. Regardless of the socioeconomic status of parents, we are much more likely to end up in a high-paying job if we attain a college degree or, increasingly, a graduate or professional degree. To the extent vertical social mobility exists in the United States, it is higher for men than for women and higher for whites than for people of color.

In 2009, 14.3% of the U.S. population, or almost 44 million Americans, lived in (official) poverty. This percentage represented a decline from the early 1990s but was higher than the rate in the late 1960s. If Americans were winning the war on poverty in the 1960s, since then poverty has fought them to a standstill.

**Who are the poor**? Contrary to popular images, the most typical poor person in the United States is *white*: approximately 44% of poor people are white (non-Latino), 29% are Latino, 23% are black, and 4% are Asian. At the same time, race and ethnicity affect the chances of being poor: while only 9.4% of non-Latino whites are poor, 25.8% of African Americans, 12.5% of Asians, and 25.3% of Latinos (who may be of any race) are poor. Thus African Americans and Latinos are almost three times as likely as non-Latino whites to be poor. Turning to age, almost 21% of children under age 18 are poor (amounting to more than 15 million children), including 35.7% of African American children and 33.1% of Latino children. The poverty rate for U.S. children is the highest in the Western world and 1.5 to 9 times greater than the corresponding rates in Canada and Western Europe. At the other end of the age distribution, 8.9% of people aged 65 or older are poor (amounting to about 3.4 million seniors). Turning around these U.S. figures, about 36% of all poor people in the United States are children, and about 8% of the poor are 65 or older. Thus some 44% of Americans living in poverty are children or the elderly.

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The type of family structure also makes a difference: whereas only 8.5% of children living with married parents live in poverty, 43% of those living with only their mother live in poverty (2007 data). This latter figure is about 32% for Asian children and for non-Latino white children and rises to slightly more than 50% for African American children and Latino children. Families headed by a single woman are much more likely to be poor. Poverty thus has a female face.

**3. Family structure in the United States**

The traditional **family structure in the United States** is considered a family support system involving two married individuals providing care and stability for their biological offspring. However, this two-parent, [nuclear family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_family) has become less prevalent, and alternative family forms have become more common. The family is created at birth and establishes ties across generations. Those generations, the [extended family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_family) of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, can hold significant emotional and economic roles for the nuclear family.

Over time, the traditional structure has had to adapt to very influential changes, including [divorce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce) and the introduction of [single-parent families](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-parent_families), [teenage pregnancy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teenage_pregnancy) and unwed mothers, and [same-sex marriage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_the_United_States), and increased interest in [adoption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoption). [Social movements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_movements) such as the [feminist movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_movement) and the [stay-at-home dad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stay-at-home_dad) have contributed to the creation of alternative family forms, generating new versions of the American family. Rapid changes in American family structure have altered the image of who’s gathering for the holidays. While the old “ideal” involved couples marrying young, then starting a family, and staying married till “death do they part,” the family has become more complex, and less “traditional.”

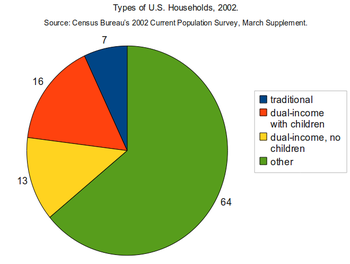
Americans are delaying marriage, and [more may be foregoing the institution](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/) altogether. At the same time, the share of children born outside of marriage [now stands](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/13/birth-rate-for-unmarried-women-declining-for-first-time-in-decades/) at 41%, [up from just 5% in 1960](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/). While debate continues as to whether divorce rates have been [rising](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/03/27/divorce-is-actually-on-the-rise-and-its-the-baby-boomers-fault/) or [falling](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/02/upshot/the-divorce-surge-is-over-but-the-myth-lives-on.html?_r=0) in recent decades, it’s clear that in the longer term, the share of people who have been previously married is rising, as is [remarriage](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/11/14/four-in-ten-couples-are-saying-i-do-again/).

According to our analysis, today 15% of children are living with two parents who are in a remarriage. It is difficult to accurately identify stepchildren in the ACS data, so we don’t know for sure if these kids are from another union, or were born within the remarriage. However, data from another Census source—the 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS)—indicates that 6% of all children are [living with a stepparent](https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2013C.html).

One of the largest shifts in family structure is this: 34% of children today are living with an unmarried parent—up from just 9% in 1960, and 19% in 1980. In most cases, these unmarried parents are single. However, a small share of all children—4%—are living with two cohabiting parents, [according to CPS data](https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2013C.html). Because of [concerns](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/22/census-confirms-more-data-problems-in-sorting-out-the-number-of-u-s-gay-marriages/) about the quality of the new 2013 ACS data on same-sex marriage, we do not separate out the very small number of children whose parents are identified as in this type of union, but instead fold them into this “single parent” category.

The remaining 5% of children are not living with either parent. In [most of these cases](https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2013C.html), they are [living with a grandparent](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/09/04/at-grandmothers-house-we-stay/)—a phenomenon that has become much more prevalent since the recent economic recession.

**The** [**nuclear family**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_family) has been considered the "traditional" family since the communist scare in the cold war of the 1950s. The nuclear family consists of a mother, father, and the children. The two-parent nuclear family has become less prevalent, and pre-American and European family forms have become more common. These include same-sex relationships, single-parent households, adopting individuals, and extended family systems living together. The nuclear family is also choosing to have fewer children than in the past. The percentage of married-couple households with children under 18 has declined to 23.5% of all households in 2000 from 25.6% in 1990, and from 45% in 1960.

**[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Types_of_us_households_2002.png)**

**Single parent.** A [single parent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_parent) (also termed lone parent or sole parent) is a parent who cares for one or more children without the assistance of the other biological parent. Historically, single-parent families often resulted from death of a spouse, for instance in childbirth. Single-parent homes are increasing as married couples divorce, or as unmarried couples have children. Although widely believed to be detrimental to the mental and physical well being of a child, this type of household is tolerated. The percentage of single-parent households has doubled in the last three decades, but that percentage tripled between 1900 and 1950. The sense of marriage as a "permanent" institution has been weakened, allowing individuals to consider leaving marriages more readily than they may have in the past. Increasingly single parent families are due to out of wedlock births, especially those due to [unintended pregnancy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unintended_pregnancy). **Single-parent households.** [Single-parent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-parent) homes in America are starting to become more common in today's society. With more children being born to unmarried couples and to couples whose marriages subsequently dissolve, children increasingly live with only one parent. The proportion of children living with a never-married parent has also grown, from 4% in 1960 to 42% in 2001. Of all one parent families, 83% are mother–child families.

**Stepfamilies** are becoming more familiar in America. Divorce rates are rising and the remarriage rate is rising as well, therefore, bringing two families together making step families. Statistics show that there are 1,300 new stepfamilies forming every day. Over half of American families are remarried, that is 75% of marriages ending in divorce, remarry.

**Extended family.** The [extended family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_family) consists of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. In some circumstances, the extended family comes to live either with or in place of a member of the nuclear family. An example includes elderly parents who move in with their children due to old age. This places large demands on the caregivers, particularly the female relatives who choose to perform these duties for their extended family. Historically, among certain Asian and Native American cultures the family structure consisted of a grandmother and her children, especially daughters, who raised their own children together and shared child care responsibilities. Uncles, brothers, and other male relatives sometimes helped out. Romantic relationships between men and women were formed and dissolved with little impact on the children who remained in the mother's extended family.

[**Cohabitation in the United States**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cohabitation_in_the_United_States)**.** Living as unwed partners is also known as [cohabitation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cohabitation). The number of heterosexual unmarried couples in the United States has increased tenfold, from about 400,000 in 1960 to more than five million in 2005. This number would increase by at least another 594,000 if same-sex partners were included. Of all unmarried couples, about 1 in 9 (11.1% of all unmarried-partner households) are homosexual. The cohabitation lifestyle is becoming more popular in today's generation.It is more convenient for couples not to get married because it can be cheaper and simpler. As divorce rates rise in society, the desire to get married is less attractive for couples uncertain of their long-term plans.

A [**married**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Married) **couple** was defined as a "husband and wife enumerated as members of the same household" by the [U.S. Census Bureau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Census_Bureau), but they will be categorizing same-sex couples as married couples if they are married. Same-sex couples who were married were previously recognized by the Census Bureau as unmarried partners. Although [Cousin marriages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cousin_marriage#United_States_2) are illegal in most states, they are legal in many states, the [District of Columbia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_of_Columbia) and some territories. Some states have some restrictions or exceptions for cousin marriages and/or recognize such marriages performed out-of-state. Since the 1940s, the United States marriage rate has decreased, whereas rates of divorce have increased.

**Roles and relationships.**

**Parents.** Parents can be either the biological mother or biological father, or the [legal guardian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_guardian) for adopted children. Traditionally, mothers were responsible for raising the kids while the father was out providing financially for the family. The age group for parents ranges from teenage parents to grandparents who have decided to raise their grandchildren, with teenage pregnancies fluctuating based on race and culture. Older parents are financially established and generally have fewer problems raising children compared to their teenage counterparts.

**Housewives.** A [housewife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Housewife) is a married woman who does not work outside of the home for income but stays and takes care of the home and children. This includes doing the cooking, washing, cleaning, etc. The roles of women working within the house has changed drastically as more women start to pursue careers. The amount of time women spend doing housework declined from 27 hours per week in 1965 to less than 16 hours in 1995, but it is still substantially more housework than their male partners.

**"Breadwinners”.** A [breadwinner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breadwinner_model) is the main financial provider in the family. Historically the husband has been the breadwinner; that trend is changing as wives start to take advantage of the [women's movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_movement) to gain financial independence for themselves. According to the *New York Times*, "In 2001, wives earned more than their spouses in almost a third of married households where the wife worked." Yet, even within nuclear families in which both spouses are employed outside of the home, many men are still responsible for a substantially smaller share of household duties.

**Male/female role pressures.** The traditional "father" and "mother" roles of the nuclear family have become blurred over time. Because of the [women's movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_movement)'s push for women to engage in traditionally masculine pursuits in society, as women choose to sacrifice their child-bearing years to establish their careers, and as fathers feel increasing pressure to be involved with tending to children, the traditional roles of fathers as the "breadwinners" and mothers as the "caretakers" have come into question.

**Stay-at-home dads.** Stay-at-home dads are fathers that do not participate in the labor market and raise their children—the male equivalent to housewives. Stay-at-home dads are not as popular in American society. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "There are an estimated 105,000 'stay-at-home' dads. These are married fathers with children under 15 who are not in the labor force primarily so they can care for family members while their wives work outside the home. Stay-at-home dads care for 189,000 children."

**Only child families.** An [only child](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Only_child) (single child) is one without any biological or adopted brothers or sisters. Single children are [stereotypically](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypically) portrayed as spoiled, self-centered, and selfish. Single children often excel more in school and in their careers than children with siblings.

**Childfree and Childlessness.** [Childfree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childfree) couples chose to not have children. These include young couples, who intend to have children later, as well as those who do not plan to have any children. Involuntary [childlessness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childlessness) may be caused by infertility, medical problems, death of a child, or other factors.

**Same-sex marriage.** Same-sex parents are gay or lesbian couples that choose to raise children. Nationally, 66% of female same-sex couples and 44% of male same-sex couples live with children under 18 years old. In the 2000 census, there were 594,000 households that claimed to be headed by same-sex couples, with 72% of those having children. In July 2004, the American Psychological Association concluded that "Overall results of research suggests that the development, adjustment, and well-being of children with lesbian and gay parents do not differ markedly from that of children with heterosexual parents."[**Same-sex marriage**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_the_United_States) is legally permitted across the country since June 26, 2015.

**African-American family structure***.* The family structure of African-Americans has long been a matter of national [public policy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_policy) interest. The 1965 report by [Daniel Patrick Moynihan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Patrick_Moynihan), known as *The* [*Moynihan Report*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moynihan_Report), examined the link between [black poverty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_poverty) and family structure. It hypothesized that the destruction of the Black [nuclear family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_family) structure would hinder further progress toward economic and political equality. When Moynihan wrote in 1965 on the coming destruction of the black family, the out-of-wedlock birthrate was 25 percent among blacks. In 1991, 68 percent of black children were born outside of marriage. In 2011, 72% of Black babies were born to unwed mothers.

**4. The role of women in the United States** has changed dramatically over the past few decades. For one, more and more women have taken on new responsibilities outside the home by joining the paid workforce. While women made up only about one-third of the workforce in 1969, women today make up almost half of all workers in the United States. Women are also stepping up to lead the country; a record number of women ran for public office in 2012, and a record-high percentage of women are serving in Congress. In addition to making progress on issues of economics and leadership, women have made progress on health issues, which impact women’s personal well-being, as well as their economic security. Over the past few years, women have been able to end gender discrimination by big insurance companies and gain free contraception coverage because of the Affordable Care Act.

Despite women’s advancements, however, substantial inequalities remain. Although an increasing number of women are either the sole breadwinner for their family or share the role with their partners, women in the United States are paid only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. The pay gap is even larger for women of color. On average, African American women make 64 cents for every dollar that white men make. While 2012 was a watershed year for women in terms of getting elected to public office, women still comprise only 18.1 percent of Congress, despite making up more than half of the U.S. population. They also face challenges on health issues, as 2012 saw continued conservative efforts to erode women’s ability to make their own decisions about their health and well-being.

A deeper examination shows that disparities for women also exist among states. Women in Vermont, for example, make on average close to 85 cents for every dollar a man makes, while women in Wyoming make only 64 cents—more than 25 percent less than women in Vermont. On leadership, 15 states have no female elected leaders in the House of Representatives or the Senate. Lastly, while less than 10 percent of women in Vermont, Wisconsin, Hawaii, and Massachusetts are uninsured, nearly 25 percent of women in Texas do not have health insurance.

* Women are marrying later and have fewer children than in the past.  A greater proportion of both women and men have never married, and women are giving birth to their first child at older ages.
* Although more adult women live in married-couple families than in any other living arrangement, an ever-growing number of women are raising children without a spouse.
* More women are remaining childless, although eight out of ten adult women have children.
* As the baby boom generation ages, a growing share of women – and men – are older. Because women live longer, women continue to outnumber men at older ages.
* Women are more likely to live in poverty than are adult men.  Single-mother families face particularly high poverty rates, often because of the lower wages earned by women in these families.
* Women’s gains in educational attainment have significantly outpaced those of men over the last 40 years.  Today, younger women are more likely to graduate from college than are men and are more likely to hold a graduate school degree.  Higher percentages of women than men have at least a high school education, and higher percentages of women than men participate in adult education.
* Educational gains among women relative to men can be seen across racial and ethnic groups and this trend is also present in other developed countries.
* Despite these gains in graduation rates, differences remain in the relative performance of female and male students at younger ages, with girls scoring higher than boys on reading assessments and lower on math assessments.
* These differences can be seen in the fields that women pursue in college; female students are less well represented than men in science and technology-related fields, which typically lead to higher paying occupations
* The participation of women in the workforce rose dramatically through the mid-1990s, but has been relatively constant since then.
* Workforce participation among men has declined, but women are still less likely to work in the paid labor force than are men.  When women do work, they are much more likely than men to work part-time.
* Women continue to spend more of their time in household activities or caring for other family members; they also do more unpaid volunteer work than men.
* Despite their gains in labor market experience and in education, women still earn less than men.
* In part, this is because women and men work in different occupations, with women still concentrated in lower-paying and traditionally female occupations.

Because women earn less and because two-earner households have higher earnings, families headed by women have far less income than do married-couple families.

**Women’s rights movements.** Many women in the 19th century were involved in reform movements, particularly abolitionism. In 1831, [Maria W. Stewart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_W._Stewart) (who was African-American) began to write essays and make speeches against slavery, promoting educational and economic self-sufficiency for African Americans. The first woman of any color to speak on political issues in public, Stewart gave her last public speech in 1833 before retiring from public speaking to work in women's organizations. Although her career was short, it set the stage for the African-American women speakers who followed; [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Ellen_Watkins_Harper), [Sojourner Truth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sojourner_Truth), and [Harriet Tubman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Tubman), among others. Since more direct participation in the public arena was fraught with difficulties and danger, many women assisted the movement by boycotting slave-produced goods and organizing fairs and food sales to raise money for the cause.

To take one example of the danger, Pennsylvania Hall was the site in 1838 of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, and as 3,000 white and black women gathered to hear prominent abolitionists such as Maria Weston Chapman, the speakers' voices were drowned out by the mob which had gathered outside. When the women emerged, arms linked in solidarity, they were stoned and insulted. The mob returned the following day and burned the hall, which had been inaugurated only three days earlier, to the ground. Furthermore, the [Grimké sisters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimk%C3%A9_sisters) from South Carolina ([Angelina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelina_Grimk%C3%A9) and [Sarah Grimké](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Grimk%C3%A9)), received much abuse and ridicule for their abolitionist activity, which consisted of traveling throughout the North, lecturing about their first-hand experiences with slavery on their family plantation. Even so, many women's anti-slavery societies were active before the Civil War, the first one having been created in 1832 by free black women from Salem, Massachusetts.

**Feminism.** The [first wave of feminism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_feminism#First_wave) began with the [Seneca Falls Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seneca_Falls_Convention), the first women's rights convention, held at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19 and 20, 1848. This Convention was inspired by the fact that in 1840, when [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Cady_Stanton) met [Lucretia Mott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucretia_Mott) at the [World Anti-Slavery Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Anti-Slavery_Convention) in London, the conference refused to seat Mott and other women delegates from America because of their gender. Stanton, the young bride of an antislavery agent, and Mott, a Quaker preacher and veteran of reform, talked then of calling a convention to address the condition of women. An estimated three hundred women and men attended the Convention, including notables Lucretia Mott and Frederick Douglass.At the conclusion, 68 women and 32 men signed the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions". The style and format of the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" was that of the "Declaration of Independence;" for example the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" stated, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men and women are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." The Declaration further stated, "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man towards woman."

The declaration went on to specify female grievances in regard to the laws denying married women ownership of wages, money, and property (all of which they were required to turn over to their husbands; laws requiring this, in effect throughout America, were called coverture laws), women's lack of access to education and professional careers, and the lowly status accorded women in most churches. Furthermore, the Declaration declared that women should have the right to vote.

Two weeks later a [Woman's Rights Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abigail_Bush#Rochester_Woman.27s_Rights_Convention.2C_1848) was held in Rochester, New York on August 2. It was followed by state and local conventions in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. The first [National Woman's Rights Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Woman%27s_Rights_Convention) was held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850. Women's rights conventions were held regularly from 1850 until the start of the Civil War.

[**Second-wave feminism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-wave_feminism)was diverse in its causes and goals. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, parallel with the [counterculture movements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterculture_of_the_1960s), women with more radical ideas about feminist goals began to organize. In her work, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975*, historian [Alice Echols](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Echols) gives a thorough description of the short-lived movement. The radical feminists were after not only the end of female oppression by men but, as Echols notes, “They also fought for safe, effective, accessible contraception; the repeal of all abortion laws; the creation of high-quality, community-controlled child-care centers; and an end to the media’s objectification of women.”

Small protests and signs of a larger support for radical feminism became more cohesive during the [Students for a Democratic Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society) (SDS) June 1967 National Convention in Ann Arbor. The “Women’s Liberation Workshop” denounced sexual inequality and stated, “As we analyze the position of women in capitalist society and especially the United States we find that women are in a colonial relationship to men and we recognize ourselves as part of the Third World. ” Co-written by Jane Addams, one of the most prominent women in SDS, they argued that women’s place within SDS was subordinate and revolution could not succeed without women’s liberation.

While radical feminists agreed that a separate movement for them was needed, how that movement looked and its ultimate goals caused much divide. They questioned whether they should include men within their movement, whether they should focus on issues of war, race and class, and who or what it was they were exactly rallying against. There were also issues concerning African American women within the movement; while the radical feminists felt gender to be the greatest issue, African American women were also very much concerned with racism and many found that to be where oppression was most domineering. Despite being inspired by the black power movement, radical feminists had difficulty figuring out a place for race within their gender-centric movement. They were also divided over the place of lesbianism in the movement.

Notable radical feminist groups included [Redstockings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redstockings), founded in 1969. The group focused on power dynamics in gender and promoted consciousness-raising and distributed movement literature for free. [Cell 16](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cell_16), founded in 1968, was a much more militant group arguing that women were conditioned by their sex-roles. [The Feminists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Feminists), founded by [Ti-Grace Atkinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ti-Grace_Atkinson) in 1968, claimed women were complicit in their oppression and needed to shed conventional gender roles. [New York Radical Feminists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Radical_Feminists), founded in 1969, also found maleness to be the greater issue than power roles. They were interested in building a larger movement through mass numbers in New York City.

Echols describes the movement’s end: “Radical feminism remained the hegemonic tendency within the women’s liberation movement until 1973 when cultural feminism began to cohere and challenge its dominance. After 1975, a year of internecine conflicts between radical and cultural feminists, cultural feminism eclipsed radical feminism as the dominant tendency within the women’s liberation movement, and, as a consequence, liberal feminism became the recognized voice of the women’s movement. ” The end of the counterculture movements and the government’s observation of the movement also contributed to its end. The radical feminist movement demonstrated that Second-wave feminism was diverse in its goals, but also divided within itself. Echols notes, “To many women, liberal feminism’s considerably more modest goal of bringing women into the mainstream seemed more palatable, not to mention more realistic, than the radical feminist project of fundamentally reconstructing private and public life. ” She also states that despite the fact that younger generations don’t often see this movement as relevant, it is because feminist movements during this time actually did make significant changes. One of the most controversial developments in American women's lives has been the **legalization of abortion**. In 1973 in the Supreme Court case [Roe v Wade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roe_v_Wade), the Supreme Court ruled that it is an illegal violation of privacy to outlaw or regulate any aspect of abortion performed during the first trimester of pregnancy, and that government can only enact abortion regulations reasonably related to maternal health in the second and third trimesters, and can enact abortion laws protecting the life of the fetus only in the third trimester. Furthermore, even in the third trimester, an exception has to be made to protect the life of the mother. This ruling has been extremely controversial from the moment it was made. [Linda Coffee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Coffee) and [Sarah Weddington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Weddington) had brought the lawsuit that led to Roe v Wade on behalf of a pregnant woman, Dallas area resident [Norma L. McCorvey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norma_McCorvey) ("Jane Roe"), claiming a Texas law criminalizing most abortions violated Roe's constitutional rights. The Texas law banned all abortions except those necessary to save the life of the mother, and Roe claimed that while her life was not endangered, she could not afford to travel out of state and had a right to terminate her pregnancy in a safe medical environment.

There were a few important legal gains for women in the **mid-1970s**. The [Equal Credit Opportunity Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal_Credit_Opportunity_Act), enacted in 1974, illegalizes credit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or because someone receives public assistance. Due to this Act, creditors may ask you for most of this information in certain situations, but they may not use it when deciding whether to give you credit or when setting the terms of your credit. In the 1975 Supreme Court case [Taylor v Louisiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taylor_v_Louisiana), the Supreme Court ruled that excluding women from the jury pool is illegal because it violates a person's right to a fair trial by a representative segment of the community. In 1978, the [Pregnancy Discrimination Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pregnancy_Discrimination_Act) was passed, making employment discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions illegal.

Another important event around this time was the Vietnam War. Approximately 7,000 American military women served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War (1965–1975), the majority of them as nurses. An Army nurse, Sharon Ann Lane, was the only U.S. military woman to die from enemy fire in Vietnam. An Air Force flight nurse, Capt. Mary Therese Klinker, died when the C-5A Galaxy transport evacuating Vietnamese orphans which she was aboard crashed on takeoff. Six other American military women also died in the line of duty. An important gain for military women occurred when in 1976, the five federal United States Service academies (West Point, Coast Guard Academy, Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Merchant Marines Academy) were required to admit women as a result of Public Law 94-106 signed by President Gerald Ford on Oct 7, 1975.The law passed the House by a vote of 303 to 96 and the Senate by voice vote after divisive argument within Congress, resistance from the Department of Defense and legal action initiated by women to challenge their exclusion. More than 300 women enrolled in the academies in 1976.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What are the traditional values and beliefs that became the common bond of American people?

2. Define the concept of the “American Dream”. What are the components of the American Dream? Has the concept evolved over time?

3. What criteria define social class?

4. What are the typical socio-economic characteristics of the upper class, middle class, working class?

5. How imbalanced is the distribution of wealth in the USA?

6. What tendencies best describe evolution of family structure?

7. What is the women’s rights movement? What gains have women made in recent years?

8. How much progress toward achieving social and economic equality for women has been made in the USA?

**3 THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM**

* 1. **The US Constitution**
  2. **Legislative Branch**
  3. **Executive Branch**

**4. Political parties and elections**

**3.1 The US Constitution**

The early American way of life encouraged democracy. The colonists were inhabiting a land of forest and wilderness. They had to work together to build shelter, provide food, and clear the land for farms and dwellings. This need for cooperation strengthened the belief that, in the New World, people should be on an equal footing, with nobody having special privileges.

The urge for equality affected the original 13 colonies' relations with the mother country, England. The Declaration of Independence in 1776 proclaimed that all men are created equal, that all have the right to "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

The Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution after it, combined America's colonial experience with the political thought of such philosophers as England's John Locke to produce the concept of a democratic republic. The government would draw its power from the people themselves and exercise it through their elected representatives. During the Revolutionary War, the colonies had formed a national congress to present England with a united front. Under an agreement known as the Articles of Confederation, a postwar congress was allowed to handle only problems that were beyond the capabilities of individual states.

**The Constitution**.

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." — Preamble to the Constitution

The Constitution of the United States of America is the supreme law of the United States. Empowered with the sovereign authority of the people by the framers and the consent of the legislatures of the states, it is the source of all government powers, and also provides important limitations on the government that protect the fundamental rights of United States citizens.

The need for the Constitution grew out of problems with **the Articles of Confederation**, which established a "firm league of friendship" between the states, and vested most power in a Congress of the Confederation. This power was, however, extremely limited — the central government conducted diplomacy and made war, set weights and measures, and was the final arbiter of disputes between the states. Crucially, it could not raise any funds itself, and was entirely dependent on the states themselves for the money necessary to operate. Each state sent a delegation of between two and seven members to the Congress, and they voted as a bloc with each state getting one vote. But any decision of consequence required a unanimous vote, which led to a government that was paralyzed and ineffectual.

A movement to reform the Articles began, and invitations to attend a convention in Philadelphia to discuss changes to the Articles were sent to the state legislatures in 1787. In May of that year, delegates from 12 of the 13 states (Rhode Island sent no representatives) convened in Philadelphia to begin the work of redesigning government. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention quickly began work on drafting a new Constitution for the United States.

## The Constitutional Convention. A chief aim of the Constitution as drafted by the Convention was to create a government with enough power to act on a national level, but without so much power that fundamental rights would be at risk. One way that this was accomplished was to separate the power of government into three branches, and then to include checks and balances on those powers to assure that no one branch of government gained supremacy. This concern arose largely out of the experience that the delegates had with the King of England and his powerful Parliament. The powers of each branch are enumerated in the Constitution, with powers not assigned to them reserved to the states.

Much of the debate, which was conducted in secret to ensure that delegates spoke their minds, focused on the form that the new legislature would take. Two plans competed to become the new government: the Virginia Plan, which apportioned representation based on the population of each state, and the New Jersey plan, which gave each state an equal vote in Congress. The Virginia Plan was supported by the larger states, and the New Jersey plan preferred by the smaller. In the end, they settled on the Great Compromise (sometimes called the Connecticut Compromise), in which the House of Representatives would represent the people as apportioned by population; the Senate would represent the states apportioned equally; and the President would be elected by the Electoral College. The plan also called for an independent judiciary.

The founders also took pains to establish the relationship between the states. States are required to give "full faith and credit" to the laws, records, contracts, and judicial proceedings of the other states, although Congress may regulate the manner in which the states share records, and define the scope of this clause. States are barred from discriminating against citizens of other states in any way, and cannot enact tariffs against one another. States must also extradite those accused of crimes to other states for trial.

The founders also specified a process by which the Constitution may be amended, and since its ratification, the Constitution has been amended 27 times. In order to prevent arbitrary changes, the process for making amendments is quite onerous. An amendment may be proposed by a two-thirds vote of both Houses of Congress, or, if two-thirds of the states request one, by a convention called for that purpose. The amendment must then be ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures, or three-fourths of conventions called in each state for ratification. In modern times, amendments have traditionally specified a timeframe in which this must be accomplished, usually a period of several years. Additionally, the Constitution specifies that no amendment can deny a state equal representation in the Senate without that state's consent.

With the details and language of the Constitution decided, the Convention got down to the work of actually setting the Constitution to paper. It is written in the hand of a delegate from Pennsylvania, Gouverneur Morris, whose job allowed him some reign over the actual punctuation of a few clauses in the Constitution. He is also credited with the famous preamble, quoted at the top of this page. On September 17, 1787, 39 of the 55 delegates signed the new document, with many of those who refused to sign objecting to the lack of a bill of rights. At least one delegate refused to sign because the Constitution codified and protected slavery and the slave trade.

## Ratification. The process set out in the Constitution for its ratification provided for much popular debate in the states. The Constitution would take effect once it had been ratified by nine of the thirteen state legislatures -- unanimity was not required. During the debate over the Constitution, two factions emerged: the Federalists, who supported adoption, and the Anti-Federalists, who opposed it.

James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay set out an eloquent defense of the new Constitution in what came to be called the Federalist Papers. Published anonymously in the newspapers The Independent Journal and The New York Packet under the name Publius between October 1787 and August 1788, the 85 articles that comprise the Federalist Papers remain to this day an invaluable resource for understanding some of the framers' intentions for the Constitution. The most famous of the articles are No. 10, which warns of the dangers of factions and advocates a large republic, and No. 51, which explains the structure of the Constitution, its checks and balances, and how it protects the rights of the people.

The states proceeded to begin ratification, with some debating more intensely than others. Delaware was the first state to ratify, on December 7, 1787. After New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify, on June 22, 1788, the Confederation Congress established March 9, 1789, as the date to begin operating under the Constitution. By this time, all the states except North Carolina and Rhode Island had ratified — the Ocean State was the last to ratify on May 29, 1790.

**The Bill of Rights**. The Constitution written in Philadelphia in 1787 could not go into effect until it was ratified by a majority of citizens in at least 9 of the then 13 U.S. states. During this ratification process, misgivings arose. Many citizens felt uneasy because the document failed to explicitly guarantee the rights of individuals. The desired language was added in 10 amendments to the Constitution, collectively known as the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans freedom of speech, of religion, and of the press. They have the right to assemble in public places, to protest government actions, and to demand change. There is a right to own firearms. Because of the Bill of Rights, neither police officers nor soldiers can stop and search a person without good reason. Nor can they search a person's home without permission from a court to do so. The Bill of Rights guarantees a speedy trial to anyone accused of a crime. The trial must be by jury if requested, and the accused person must be allowed representation by a lawyer and to call witnesses to speak for him or her. Cruel and unusual punishment is forbidden. With the addition of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution was ratified by all 13 states and went into effect in 1789.

**The First Amendment** provides that Congress make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. It protects freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**The Second Amendment** gives citizens the right to bear arms.

**The Third Amendment** prohibits the government from quartering troops in private homes, a major grievance during the American Revolution.

**The Fourth Amendment** protects citizens from unreasonable search and seizure. The government may not conduct any searches without a warrant, and such warrants must be issued by a judge and based on probable cause.

**The Fifth Amendment** provides that citizens not be subject to criminal prosecution and punishment without due process. Citizens may not be tried on the same set of facts twice, and are protected from self-incrimination (the right to remain silent). The amendment also establishes the power of eminent domain, ensuring that private property is not seized for public use without just compensation.

**The Sixth Amendment** assures the right to a speedy trial by a jury of one's peers, to be informed of the crimes with which they are charged, and to confront the witnesses brought by the government. The amendment also provides the accused the right to compel testimony from witnesses, and to legal representation.

**The Seventh Amendment** provides that civil cases also be tried by jury.

**The Eighth Amendment** prohibits excessive bail, excessive fines, and cruel and unusual punishments.

**The Ninth Amendment** states that the list of rights enumerated in the Constitution is not exhaustive, and that the people retain all rights not enumerated.

**The Tenth Amendment** assigns all powers not delegated to the United States, or prohibited to the states, to either the states or to the people.

Since then 17 other amendments have been added to the Constitution. Perhaps the most important of these are the Thirteenth and Fourteenth, which outlaw slavery and guarantee all citizens equal protection of the laws, and the Nineteenth, which gives women the right to vote.

The Constitution can be amended in either of two ways. Congress can propose an amendment, provided that two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate vote in favor of it. Or the legislatures of two-thirds of the states can call a convention to propose amendments. (This second method has never been used.) In either case a proposed amendment does not go into effect until ratified by three-fourths of the states.

### Six Foundational Principles

The Constitution is built on six basic principles. These are deeply ingrained in the mindset and landscape of US Government.

[**Popular Sovereignty**](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/g/popular_sovereignty.htm) - This principle states that the source of governmental power lies with the people. This belief stems from the concept of the [social contract](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/g/social_contract.htm) and the idea that government should be for the benefit of its citizens. If the government is not protecting the people, it should be dissolved. Government can exist only with the consent of the governed. The people hold power and the people are sovereign.

**Limited Government** – “*We the People…"*   
 The first and most basic principle of the Constitution—the principle of limited government—begins to emerge in the very first three words of the [*Preamble*](http://www.shmoop.com/constitution/preamble.html). The government of the United States, those three words declare, only exists because *We the People* choose that it should exist.   
Thus the government has no natural or God-given powers; it has only whatever limited powers we choose to give it. The government is not all-powerful. It has no right to try to do more than we've explicitly authorized it to do. It is *limited*.  
The idea of limited government pervades the entire Constitution. Huge sections of the document include long lists of things that the government *cannot* do. The first words of the [First Amendment](http://www.shmoop.com/constitution/first-amendment.html), which guarantees cherished rights to freedom of speech, religion, the press, and assembly: "Congress shall make no law…"  
 The principle of limited government expands upon the idea of popular sovereignty (the idea that legitimate political power must derive from the consent of the governed). If the people are the only real source of the government's authority, then the government naturally should have only whatever limited authority the people want it to have. The Constitution is the place where we state, clearly and explicitly, which powers we choose to give to the government and which powers we refuse to give to it. Since the people give government its power, government itself is limited to the power given to it by them. In other words, the US government does not derive its power from itself. It must follow its own laws and it can only act using powers given to it by the people.

[**Separation of Powers**](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/g/sep_of_powers.htm) - the [US Government](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/rightsandfreedoms/a/studyhub.htm) is divided into three branches so that no one branch has all the power. Each branch has its own purpose: to make the laws, execute the laws, and interpret the laws. No one component of the government holds too much power. Powers are distributed among 3 different branches. The Framers of the Constitution wanted to create a government that was powerful enough to take care of business, but not so powerful that it could threaten tyranny. One key idea in designing such a powerful, but limited, government was the doctrine of separation of powers. Thus when they designed the Constitution of the United States, the Framers insisted upon the separation of powers. Only the [legislative branch](http://www.shmoop.com/legislative-branch/) (Congress) has the power to make law; only the [executive branch](http://www.shmoop.com/executive-branch/), (the President) has the power to enforce and administer the law; only the [judicial branch](http://www.shmoop.com/judicial-branch/) (the Supreme Court) has the power to judge and interpret the law.

[**Checks and Balances**](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/a/checks_balances.htm) - The Framers believed their most important action in preventing the rise of tyranny in America was to divide the key powers of government among the three branches. In order to further protect the citizens, the constitution set up a [system of checks and balances.](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/usconstitution/a/sepofpowers.htm) Basically, each branch of government has a certain number of checks it can use to ensure the other branches do not become too powerful. The core idea of the system of checks and balances was that no one branch of government should be able to get too far out of control without being put in check by the others. If a president starts trying to act like a despotic king, he can be impeached by Congress. If Congress starts trying to pass a series of laws that are unconstitutional, those laws can be overturned by the Supreme Court. The most important result is that getting anything important done within the American system of government typically requires the cooperation (or at least the acquiescence) of more than one branch of government.

For example, the president is named by the Constitution as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, giving him an incredibly powerful position in times of war. The Framers worried that the president's wartime role was too powerful, in fact, and thus gave Congress a powerful set of checks and balances on the president's war powers. Only Congress, not the president, has the power to declare war. For example, the president can veto legislation, the Supreme Court can declare acts of Congress unconstitutional, and the Senate must approve treaties and [presidential appointments](http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/thepresidentandcabinet/a/recessappts.htm). And a third example: the Supreme Court has the power of judicial review, meaning it can overturn laws it rules to be unconstitutional. Neither the president nor Congress has any power to override a Supreme Court decision, but the executive and legislative branches still do have important levers to check and balance the judiciary, mainly by influencing who gets to serve on the Court in the first place. Every Supreme Court justice has to be selected by the president, and the Senate also has to approve of the nomination; the idea of this system is to give the other branches a chance to prevent judicial tyrants from making it onto the bench in the first place. But more often, the system instead encourages compromise. Executive officers, lawmakers, and judges typically try to avoid confrontations by moderating their own policies before reaching a breaking point. Often the mere threat of a presidential veto is enough to get Congress to alter a bill to make it acceptable to the president. Or the mere threat of Congress refusing to fund a military endeavor is enough to force the president to build up widespread public support before launching armed interventions abroad. Or the mere threat of Senate disapproval may be enough to prevent the president from nominating a controversial justice to the Supreme Court.

[**Judicial Review**](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/judicialbranch/g/judicial_review.htm) - This is a power that allows the Supreme Court to decide whether acts and laws are constitutional and unconstitutional. This was established with [*Marbury v. Madison*](http://americanhistory.about.com/od/judicialbranch/p/marbury.htm) in 1803.

**Federalism** - last key element of America's system of limited government is the principle of federalism. This is the idea that the central government does not control all the power in the nation. States also have powers reserved to them. Power is shared between the central/national government and the states. Some key powers are held by a centralized national government while others are reserved for the various states’ governments.   
American federalism existed even before the Constitution. At the time of the Constitutional Convention, there were already 13 states that had grown used to wielding a great deal of power in managing their affairs. Those 13 states weren't likely to choose to go out of business in order to transfer all their powers to one national government—especially considering the important cultural, economic, and social differences (slavery foremost among them) that divided them.   
Furthermore, the American Revolution had been, in essence, a revolt against a distant and powerful centralized government. Why would the Framers want to recreate such a potentially tyrannical structure?   
Still, by 1787 most of the Framers had come to believe that the state governments created after the Revolutionary War, and the Articles of Confederation which tied them loosely together, were maybe a little bit too democratic and decentralized. The United States needed a more powerful central government in order to effectively deal with the greatest challenges facing the young nation. But the Framers remained wary of making that central government too powerful.   
Federalism helped to solve the problem. The division of powers between the states and the national government was a kind of compromise, ensuring that states would continue to exercise a great deal of local control even while the new national government would take on more and more responsibilities. Federalism would also provide another kind of check and balance, as the state governments and federal government would both have certain ways to limit and influence each other. When the government was formed in 1787, the Constitution delegated limited or enumerated powers to the national government. Some of these enumerated powers granted included the right to coin money, conduct foreign relations and declare war. The Necessary and Proper clause also reserved any additional "implied powers  that the national government may deem necessary to carry out its enumerated powers. Four years later when the bill of rights was ratified, all remaining powers were granted to the states. Such state responsibilities include police power, managing budgets and enforcing laws in policy areas (Marshall 2). Other powers, such as taxation, establishing courts and chartering banks and corporations are powers shared by both powers. Ultimately, due to the way that the Framers designed the government, both the state and national powers are directly accountable to the people.

1. **LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

**Congress of the United States** established by Article I of the Constitution and is separated structurally from the executive and judicial branches of government. It consists of [two houses](http://www.britannica.com/topic/bicameral-system): the [Senate](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Senate-United-States-government), in which each state, regardless of its size, is represented by two senators, and the House of Representatives, to which members are elected on the basis of population. The Constitution grants Congress the sole authority to enact legislation and declare war, the right to confirm or reject many Presidential appointments, and substantial investigative powers Among the express powers of Congress as defined in the [Constitution](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Constitution-of-the-United-States-of-America) are the power to lay and collect taxes, borrow money on the credit of the United States, regulate commerce, coin money, declare war, raise and support armies, and make all laws necessary for the execution of its powers.

United States Congress has an upper chamber called the Senate and a lower chamber called the House of Representatives (or “House” for short) which share the responsibilities of the legislative process to create federal statutory law.

# The U.S. Senate

“*The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each state, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote*”.**—** The Constitution, Article 1, Section 3 (as amended)

In the [United States Senate](http://www.senate.gov/) all states are represented equally. Regardless of size or population, each state has two senators, who serve six-year terms. A senator represents between 1 and 37 million people, depending on their state’s population.

Unlike the House of Representatives, where all members must stand for election every two years, only one-third of the Senate’s seats are filled with each general election. Longer, overlapping Senate terms provide Congress with stability and continuity, and lessen the immediate pressure of public opinion on members of the Senate. Until the 1913 ratification of the Constitution’s 17th Amendment, Senators were elected by the legislatures of their respective states.

The Senate shares full legislative power with the House of Representatives. In addition, the Senate has exclusive authority to approve–or reject–presidential nominations to executive and judicial offices, and to provide–or withhold–its “advice and consent” to treaties negotiated by the executive. The Senate also has the sole power to try impeachments.

*Criteria for Being a Senator*

* Must be a minimum of 30 years of age
* Must be a citizen for 9 years
* Must be a resident of the state represented at the time of election

The day-to-day activities of the Senate are controlled largely by the political party holding the most seats, called the “majority party”.

The Vice President of the United States serves as President of the Senate and may cast the decisive vote in the event of a tie in the Senate.

The Senate has the sole power to confirm those of the President's appointments that require consent, and to ratify treaties. There are, however, two exceptions to this rule: the House must also approve appointments to the Vice Presidency and any treaty that involves foreign trade. The Senate also tries impeachment cases for federal officials referred to it by the House.

# The U.S. House of Representatives

*The U.S. House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.***—**The Constitution, Article 1, Section 2

James Madison, a key architect of the Constitution, described the U.S. House of Representatives as a legislative body with “an immediate dependence on, and intimate sympathy with, the people.” From the House’s inception, Representatives have been elected directly by the people. Further, the constitutional requirement that Representatives must stand for election every two years has defined the House as an institution that is responsive to the will of the people and that serves as a forum for their political priorities.

The House is the larger of Congress’s two legislative bodies. Its membership is based on the population of each individual state. The states are also divided into 435 congressional districts with a population of about 710,000 each. Each district elects a representative to the House of Representatives for a 2-year term.

By law, its current membership is set at 435 Representatives, plus nonvoting delegates from the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. The House possesses the sole authority to impeach federal officials and, in the case of indecisive Electoral College results, to elect a president. While revenue and spending bills traditionally originate in the House, the Senate may amend them as with any other piece of legislation.

*Criteria for Being a Representative*

* Must be a minimum of 25 years of age
* Must be a citizen for 7 years
* Must be a resident of the state represented at the time of election

As in the Senate, the day-to-day activities of the House are controlled by the “majority party”.

In addition, there are 6 non-voting members, representing the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and four other territories of the United States. The presiding officer of the chamber is the Speaker of the House, elected by the Representatives. He or she is third in the line of succession to the Presidency.

The House has several powers assigned exclusively to it, including the power to initiate revenue bills, impeach federal officials, and elect the President in the case of an electoral college tie.

In order to pass legislation and send it to the President for his signature, both the House and the Senate must pass the same bill by majority vote. If the President vetoes a bill, they may override his veto by passing the bill again in each chamber with at least two-thirds of each body voting in favor.

## The Legislative Process

The **first step** in the legislative process is the introduction of a bill to Congress. Anyone can write it, but only members of Congress can introduce legislation. Some important bills are traditionally introduced at the request of the President, such as the annual federal budget. During the legislative process, however, the initial bill can undergo drastic changes.

After being introduced, a bill is referred to the appropriate **committee** for review. There are 17 Senate committees, with 70 subcommittees, and 23 House committees, with 104 subcommittees. The committees are not set in stone, but change in number and form with each new Congress as required for the efficient consideration of legislation. Each committee oversees a specific policy area, and the subcommittees take on more specialized policy areas. For example, the House Committee on Ways and Means includes subcommittees on Social Security and Trade. A bill is first considered in a subcommittee, where it may be accepted, amended, or rejected entirely. If the members of the subcommittee agree to move a bill forward, it is reported to the full committee, where the process is repeated again. Throughout this stage of the process, the committees and subcommittees call hearings to investigate the merits and flaws of the bill. They invite experts, advocates, and opponents to appear before the committee and provide testimony, and can compel people to appear using subpoena power if necessary.

If the full committee votes to approve the bill, it is reported to the floor of the House or Senate, and the majority party leadership decides when to place the bill on the calendar for consideration. If a bill is particularly pressing, it may be considered right away. Others may wait for months or never be scheduled at all.

When the bill comes up for consideration, the House has a very structured debate process. Each member who wishes to speak only has a few minutes, and the number and kind of amendments are usually limited. In the Senate, debate on most bills is unlimited — Senators may speak to issues other than the bill under consideration during their speeches, and any amendment can be introduced. Senators can use this to filibuster bills under consideration, a procedure by which a Senator delays a vote on a bill — and by extension its passage — by refusing to stand down. A supermajority of 60 Senators can break a filibuster by invoking cloture, or the cession of debate on the bill, and forcing a vote. Once debate is over, the votes of a simple majority passes the bill.

A bill must pass both houses of Congress before it goes to the President for consideration. Though the Constitution requires that the two bills have the exact same wording, this rarely happens in practice. To bring the bills into alignment, a Conference Committee is convened, consisting of members from both chambers. The members of the committee produce a conference report, intended as the final version of the bill. Each chamber then votes again to approve the conference report. Depending on where the bill originated, the final text is then enrolled by either the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, and presented to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate for their signatures. The bill is then sent to the President.

When receiving a bill from Congress, the President has several options. If the President agrees substantially with the bill, he or she may sign it into law, and the bill is then printed in the Statutes at Large. If the President believes the law to be bad policy, he may veto it and send it back to Congress. Congress may override the veto with a two-thirds vote of each chamber, at which point the bill becomes law and is printed.

There are two other options that the President may exercise. If Congress is in session and the President takes no action within 10 days, the bill becomes law. If Congress adjourns before 10 days are up and the President takes no action, then the bill dies and Congress may not vote to override. This is called a pocket veto, and if Congress still wants to pass the legislation, they must begin the entire process anew.

*To sum up:*

* A member of Congress introduces a bill into his or her legislative chamber.
* The presiding officer of that chamber refers the proposed legislation to one or more committees, depending on its subject.
* Committee members review the bill and decide whether to hold public hearings, to combine it with related draft legislation, to propose amendments, to recommend that the chamber in which it was introduced consider it favorably, or to set it aside for possible later review.
* If the committee, or committees, return the bill to the chamber of the body in which it was introduced, members debate the measure and may consider further amendments.
* The bill is then considered by the full chamber. If it passes, the measure is referred to the other chamber, where this process begins anew.
* When a majority in the House, and in the Senate, agree the bill should become law, it is signed and sent to the president.
* The president may sign the act of Congress into law, or he may veto it.
* Congress can then override the president's veto by a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate thereby making the vetoed act a law.

## Powers of Congress

Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government that represents the American people and makes the nation's laws. It shares power with the executive branch, led by the president, and the judicial branch, whose highest body is the Supreme Court of the United States. Of the three branches of government, Congress is the only one elected directly by the people.

Article I—the longest article of the Constitution—describes congressional powers. Congress has the power to:

* Make laws
* Declare war
* Raise and provide public money and oversee its proper expenditure
* Impeach and try federal officers
* Approve presidential appointments
* Approve treaties negotiated by the executive branch
* Oversight and investigations

Congress, as one of the three coequal branches of government, is ascribed **significant powers** by the Constitution. All legislative power in the government is vested in Congress, meaning that it is the only part of the government that can make new laws or change existing laws. Executive Branch agencies issue regulations with the full force of law, but these are only under the authority of laws enacted by Congress. The President may veto bills Congress passes, but Congress may also override a veto by a two-thirds vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Article I of the Constitution enumerates the powers of Congress and the specific areas in which it may legislate. Congress is also empowered to enact laws deemed "necessary and proper" for the execution of the powers given to any part of the government under the Constitution.

Part of Congress's exercise of legislative authority is the establishment of an annual budget for the government. To this end, Congress levies taxes and tariffs to provide funding for essential government services. If enough money cannot be raised to fund the government, then Congress may also authorize borrowing to make up the difference. Congress can also mandate spending on specific items: legislatively directed spending, commonly known as "earmarks," specifies funds for a particular project, rather than for a government agency.

Both chambers of Congress have extensive investigative powers, and may compel the production of evidence or testimony toward whatever end they deem necessary. Members of Congress spend much of their time holding hearings and investigations in committee. Refusal to cooperate with a Congressional subpoena can result in charges of contempt of Congress, which could result in a prison term.

The Senate maintains several powers to itself: It ratifies treaties by a two-thirds supermajority vote and confirms the appointments of the President by a majority vote. The consent of the House of Representatives is also necessary for the ratification of trade agreements and the confirmation of the Vice President.

Congress also holds the sole power to declare war.

Oversight of the executive branch is an important Congressional check on the President's power and a balance against his discretion in implementing laws and making regulations.

A major way that Congress conducts oversight is through hearings. The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs are both devoted to overseeing and reforming government operations, and each committee conducts oversight in its policy area.

Congress also maintains an investigative organization, the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Founded in 1921 as the General Accounting Office, its original mission was to audit the budgets and financial statements sent to Congress by the Secretary of the Treasury and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Today, the GAO audits and generates reports on every aspect of the government, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent with the effectiveness and efficiency that the American people deserve.

1. **EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

The power of the Executive Branch is vested in the President of the United States, who also acts as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and, to that end, appoints the heads of the federal agencies, including the Cabinet. The Vice President is also part of the Executive Branch, ready to assume the Presidency should the need arise.

The Cabinet and independent federal agencies are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws. These departments and agencies have missions and responsibilities as widely divergent as those of the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency, the Social Security Administration and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Including members of the armed forces, the Executive Branch employs more than 4 million Americans.

The **chief executive of the United States is the president**, who together with the vice president is elected to a four-year term. As a result of a constitutional amendment that went into effect in 1951, a president may be elected to only two terms. Other than succeeding a president who dies or is disabled, **the vice president's** only official duty is presiding over the Senate. The vice president may vote in the Senate only to break a tie. **The President** is both the head of state and head of government of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The **president's powers** are formidable but not unlimited. As the chief formulator of national policy, the president proposes legislation to Congress. As mentioned previously, the president may veto any bill passed by Congress. The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president has the authority to appoint federal judges as vacancies occur, including justices of the Supreme Court. As head of his political party, with ready access to the news media, the president can easily influence public opinion. Under Article II of the Constitution, the President is responsible for the execution and enforcement of the laws created by Congress. Fifteen executive departments — each led by an appointed member of the President's Cabinet — carry out the day-to-day administration of the federal government. They are joined in this by other executive agencies such as the CIA and Environmental Protection Agency, the heads of which are not part of the Cabinet, but who are under the full authority of the President. The President also appoints the heads of more than 50 independent federal commissions, such as the Federal Reserve Board or the Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as federal judges, ambassadors, and other federal offices. The Executive Office of the President (EOP) consists of the immediate staff to the President, along with entities such as the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

The President has the power either to sign legislation into law or to veto bills enacted by Congress, although Congress may override a veto with a two-thirds vote of both houses. The Executive Branch conducts diplomacy with other nations, and the President has the power to negotiate and sign treaties, which also must be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate. The President can issue executive orders, which direct executive officers or clarify and further existing laws. The President also has unlimited power to extend pardons and clemencies for federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment.

With these powers come several **responsibilities,** among them a constitutional requirement to "from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Although the President may fulfill this requirement in any way he or she chooses, Presidents have traditionally given a State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress each January (except in inaugural years) outlining their agenda for the coming year.

The Constitution lists only three **qualifications for the Presidency** — the President must be 35 years of age, be a natural born citizen, and must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years. And though millions of Americans vote in a presidential election every four years, the President is not, in fact, directly elected by the people. Instead, on the first Tuesday in November of every fourth year, the people elect the members of the Electoral College. Apportioned by population to the 50 states — one for each member of their congressional delegation (with the District of Columbia receiving 3 votes) — these Electors then cast the votes for President. There are currently 538 electors in the Electoral College.

By tradition, the President and the First Family live in the White House in Washington, D.C., also the location of the President's Oval Office and the offices of the his senior staff. When the President travels by plane, his aircraft is designated Air Force One; he may also use a Marine Corps helicopter, known as Marine One while the President is on board. For ground travel, the President uses an armored Presidential limousine.

The primary responsibility of **the Vice President** of the United States is to be ready at a moment's notice to assume the Presidency if the President is unable to perform his duties. This can be because of the President's death, resignation, or temporary incapacitation, or if the Vice President and a majority of the Cabinet judge that the President is no longer able to discharge the duties of the presidency.

The Vice President is elected along with the President by the Electoral College — each elector casts one vote for President and another for Vice President. Before the ratification of the 12th Amendment in 1804, electors only voted for President, and the person who received the second greatest number of votes became Vice President.

The Vice President also serves as the President of the United States Senate, where he or she casts the deciding vote in the case of a tie. Except in the case of tiebreaking votes, the Vice President rarely actually presides over the Senate. Instead, the Senate selects one of their own members, usually junior members of the majority party, to preside over the Senate each day.

Of the 45 previous Vice Presidents, nine have succeeded to the Presidency, and four have been elected to the Presidency in their own right. The duties of the Vice President, outside of those enumerated in the Constitution, are at the discretion of the current President. Each Vice President approaches the role differently — some take on a specific policy portfolio, others serve simply as a top adviser to the President.

The Vice President has an office in the West Wing of the White House, as well as in the nearby Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Like the President, he also maintains an official residence, at the United States Naval Observatory in Northwest Washington, D.C. This peaceful mansion, has been the official home of the Vice President since 1974 — previously, Vice Presidents had lived in their own private residences. The Vice President also has his own limousine, operated by the United States Secret Service, and flies on the same aircraft the President uses — but when the Vice President is aboard, the craft are referred to as Air Force Two and Marine Two.

**Executive Office of the President**

Every day, the President of the United States is faced with scores of decisions, each with important consequences for America's future. To provide the President with the support that he or she needs to govern effectively, **the Executive Office of the President (EOP)** was created in 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The EOP has responsibility for tasks ranging from communicating the President's message to the American people to promoting our trade interests abroad.

The EOP, overseen by the White House Chief of Staff, has traditionally been home to many of the President's closest advisers. While Senate confirmation is required for some advisers, such as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, most are appointed with full Presidential discretion. The individual offices that these advisors oversee have grown in size and number since the EOP was created. Some were formed by Congress, others as the President has needed them — they are constantly shifting as each President identifies his needs and priorities, with the current EOP employing over 1,800 people.

Perhaps the most visible parts of the EOP are the **White House Communications Office and Press Secretary's Office.** The Press Secretary provides daily briefings for the media on the President's activities and agenda. Less visible to most Americans is the National Security Council, which advises the President on foreign policy, intelligence, and national security.

There are also a number of offices responsible for the practicalities of maintaining the White House and providing logistical support for the President. These include the White House Military Office, which is responsible for services ranging from Air Force One to the dining facilities, and the Office of Presidential Advance, which prepares sites remote from the White House for the President's arrival.

Many senior advisors in the EOP work near the President in the West Wing of the White House. However, the majority of the staff is housed in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, just a few steps away and part of the White House compound.

**The Cabinet** is an advisory body made up of the heads of the 15 executive departments. Appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, the members of the Cabinet are often the President's closest confidants. In addition to running major federal agencies, they play an important role in the Presidential line of succession — after the Vice President, Speaker of the House, and Senate President pro tempore, the line of succession continues with the Cabinet offices in the order in which the departments were created. All the members of the Cabinet take the title Secretary, excepting the head of the Justice Department, who is styled Attorney General.

The U.S. **Department of Agriculture** (USDA) develops and executes policy on farming, agriculture, and food. Its aims include meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers, promoting agricultural trade and production, assuring food safety, protecting natural resources, fostering rural communities, and ending hunger in America and abroad.

The **Department of Commerce** is the government agency tasked with improving living standards for all Americans by promoting economic development and technological innovation.

The department supports U.S. business and industry through a number of services, including gathering economic and demographic data, issuing patents and trademarks, improving understanding of the environment and oceanic life, and ensuring the effective use of scientific and technical resources. The agency also formulates telecommunications and technology policy, and promotes U.S. exports by assisting and enforcing international trade agreements.

The Secretary of Commerce oversees a $6.5 billion budget and approximately 38,000 employees.

The mission of **the Department of Defense (DOD)** is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country. The department's headquarters is at the Pentagon.

The DOD consists of the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as many agencies, offices, and commands, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The DOD occupies the vast majority of the Pentagon building in Arlington, VA.

The Department of Defense is the largest government agency, with more than 1.3 million men and women on active duty, nearly 700,000 civilian personnel, and 1.1 million citizens who serve in the National Guard and Reserve forces. Together, the military and civilian arms of DOD protect national interests through war-fighting, providing humanitarian aid, and performing peacekeeping and disaster relief services.

The mission of the **Department of Education** is to promote student achievement and preparation for competition in a global economy by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access to educational opportunity.

The Department administers federal financial aid for education, collects data on America's schools to guide improvements in education quality, and works to complement the efforts of state and local governments, parents, and students.

The U.S. Secretary of Education oversees the Department's 4,200 employees and $68.6 billion budget.

The mission of the **Department of Energy (DOE**) is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States.

The DOE promotes America's energy security by encouraging the development of reliable, clean, and affordable energy. It administers federal funding for scientific research to further the goal of discovery and innovation — ensuring American economic competitiveness and improving the quality of life for Americans.

The United States Secretary of Energy oversees a budget of approximately $23 billion and more than 100,000 federal and contract employees.

The **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** is the United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. Agencies of HHS conduct health and social science research, work to prevent disease outbreaks, assure food and drug safety, and provide health insurance.

In addition to administering Medicare and Medicaid, which together provide health insurance to one in four Americans, HHS also oversees the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services oversees a budget of approximately $700 billion and approximately 65,000 employees. The Department's programs are administered by 11 operating divisions, including 8 agencies in the U.S. Public Health Service and 3 human services agencies.

The missions of the **Department of Homeland Security** are to prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks; protect the American people, our critical infrastructure, and key resources; and respond to and recover from incidents that do occur. The third largest Cabinet department, DHS was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, largely in response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The new department consolidated 22 executive branch agencies, including the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Secret Service, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

DHS employs 216,000 people in its mission to patrol borders, protect travelers and our transportation infrastructure, enforce immigration laws, and respond to disasters and emergencies. The agency also promotes preparedness and emergency prevention among citizens. Policy is coordinated by the Homeland Security Council at the White House, in cooperation with other defense and intelligence agencies, and led by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security.

The **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** is the federal agency responsible for national policies and programs that address America's housing needs, that improve and develop the nation's communities, and that enforce fair housing laws. The Department plays a major role in supporting homeownership for lower- and moderate-income families through its mortgage insurance and rent subsidy programs.

The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development oversees approximately 9,000 employees on a budget of approximately $40 billion.

**The Department of the Interior (DOI)** is the nation's principal conservation agency. Its mission is to protect America's natural resources, offer recreation opportunities, conduct scientific research, conserve and protect fish and wildlife, and honor our trust responsibilities to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and our responsibilities to island communities.

The Secretary of the Interior oversees about 70,000 employees and 200,000 volunteers on a budget of approximately $16 billion. Every year it raises billions in revenue from energy, mineral, grazing, and timber leases, as well as recreational permits and land sales.

The mission of the **Department of Justice (DOJ)** is to enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

With a budget of approximately $25 billion, the DOJ is the world's largest law office and the central agency for the enforcement of federal laws.

The **Department of Labor** oversees federal programs for ensuring a strong American workforce. These programs address job training, safe working conditions, minimum hourly wage and overtime pay, employment discrimination, and unemployment insurance.

The Department of Labor's mission is to foster and promote the welfare of the job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States by improving their working conditions, advancing their opportunities for profitable employment, protecting their retirement and health care benefits, helping employers find workers, strengthening free collective bargaining, and tracking changes in employment, prices, and other national economic measurements.

The Secretary of Labor oversees 15,000 employees on a budget of approximately $50 billion.

The **Department of State** plays the lead role in developing and implementing the President's foreign policy. Major responsibilities include United States representation abroad, foreign assistance, foreign military training programs, countering international crime, and a wide assortment of services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals seeking entrance to the U.S.

The U.S. maintains diplomatic relations with approximately 180 countries — each posted by civilian U.S. Foreign Service employees — as well as with international organizations. At home, more than 5,000 civil employees carry out the mission of the Department.

The Secretary of State serves as the President's top foreign policy adviser, and oversees 30,000 employees and a budget of approximately $35 billion.

The mission of the **Department of Transportation** (DOT) is to ensure a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people.

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation oversees approximately 55,000 employees and a budget of approximately $70 billion.

The **Department of the Treasury** is responsible for promoting economic prosperity and ensuring the soundness and security of the U.S. and international financial systems.

The Department operates and maintains systems that are critical to the nation's financial infrastructure, such as the production of coin and currency, the disbursement of payments to the American public, the collection of taxes, and the borrowing of funds necessary to run the federal government. The Department works with other federal agencies, foreign governments, and international financial institutions to encourage global economic growth, raise standards of living, and, to the extent possible, predict and prevent economic and financial crises. The Secretary of the Treasury oversees a budget of approximately $13 billion and a staff of more than 100,000 employees.

The **Department of Veterans Affairs** is responsible for administering benefit programs for veterans, their families, and their survivors. These benefits include pension, education, disability compensation, home loans, life insurance, vocational rehabilitation, survivor support, medical care, and burial benefits. Veterans Affairs became a cabinet-level department in 1989.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs oversees a budget of approximately $90 billion and a staff of approximately 235,000 employees.

The **election of the President and Vice President of the United States** is an [indirect vote](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indirect_election) in which citizens cast ballots for a set of members of the [U.S. Electoral College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_College_(United_States)). These electors then cast direct votes for the [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) and [Vice President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_President_of_the_United_States). If both votes result in an absolute majority, the election is over. If a majority of electors do not vote for President, the House of Representatives chooses the President; if a majority of electors do not vote for Vice President, the Senate votes. [Presidential elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_election) occur [quadrennially](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quadrennial) on [Election Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election_Day_(United_States)), which since 1845 has been the Tuesday after the first Monday in November coinciding with the general elections of various other federal, state, and local races.

The process is regulated by a combination of both [federal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States) and [state laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_law_(United_States)). Each state is allocated a number of Electoral College electors equal to the number of its [Senators](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate) and [Representatives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_House_of_Representatives) in the [U.S. Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress). Additionally, [Washington, D.C.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.) is given a number of electors equal to the number held by the least populous state. [U.S. territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territories_of_the_United_States) are not represented in the Electoral College.

Under the [U.S. Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution), each [state legislature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_legislature_(United_States)) is allowed to designate a way of choosing electors. Thus, the popular vote on Election Day is conducted by the various states and not directly by the federal government. In other words, it is really an amalgamation of separate elections held in each state and Washington, D.C. instead of a single national election. Once chosen, the electors can vote for anyone, but – with rare exceptions like an [unpledged elector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unpledged_elector) or [faithless elector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faithless_elector) – they vote for their designated candidates and their votes are certified by [Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress), who is the final judge of electors, in early January. The presidential term then officially begins on [Inauguration Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inauguration_Day), January 20 (although the formal inaugural ceremony traditionally takes place on the 21st if the 20th is a Sunday).

**The nomination process**, consisting of the [primary elections and caucuses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_primary) and the [nominating conventions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_nominating_convention), was never specified in the Constitution, and was instead developed over time by the states and the [political parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party). The primary elections are staggered generally between January and June before the general election in November, while the nominating conventions are held in the summer. This too is also an indirect election process, where voters cast ballots for a slate of delegates to a political party's nominating convention, who then in turn elect their party's presidential nominee. Each party's presidential nominee then chooses a vice presidential [running mate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Running_mate) to join with him or her on the same ticket, and this choice is rubber-stamped by the convention. Because of changes to national campaign finance laws since the 1970s regarding the disclosure of contributions for federal campaigns, presidential candidates from the major political parties usually declare their intentions to run as early as the spring of the previous calendar year before the election.Thus, the entire modern presidential campaign and election process usually takes almost two years.

### Eligibility requirements. [Article Two](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_Two_of_the_United_States_Constitution#Clause_5:_Qualifications_for_office) of the [United States Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) stipulates that for a person to serve as President, the individual must be a [natural-born citizen of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural-born-citizen_clause), at least 35 years old, and a resident of the United States for a period of no less than 14 years. A candidate may start running his or her campaign early before turning 35 years old or completing 14 years of residency, but must meet the age and residency requirements by [Inauguration Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inauguration_Day). The [Twenty-second Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-second_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) to the Constitution also sets a [term limit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Term_limit): a President cannot be elected to more than two terms.

In addition, the [Twelfth Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) establishes that the Vice-President must meet all of the qualifications of being a President.

The modern **nominating process of U.S. presidential elections** currently consists of two major parts: a series of [presidential primary elections and caucuses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_primary) held in each state, and the [presidential nominating conventions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_nominating_convention) held by each [political party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party). This process was never included in the [United States Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution), and thus evolved over time by the political parties to clear the field of candidates.

The [**primary elections**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_election)are run by state and local governments, while the [caucuses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucus) are organized directly by the political parties. Some states hold only primary elections, some hold only caucuses, and others use a combination of both. These primaries and caucuses are staggered generally between January and June before the federal election, with [Iowa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iowa) and [New Hampshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Hampshire) traditionally holding the first presidential state caucus and primary, respectively.

Like the general election, presidential caucuses or primaries are indirect elections. The major political parties officially vote for their presidential candidate at their respective nominating conventions, usually all held in the summer before the federal election. Depending on each state's law and state's political party rules, when voters cast ballots for a candidate in a presidential caucus or primary, they may be voting to award delegates "bound" to vote for a candidate at the presidential nominating conventions, or they may simply be expressing an opinion that the state party is not bound to follow in selecting delegates to their respective national convention.

Unlike the general election, voters in the [U.S. territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territories_of_the_United_States) can also elect delegates to the **national conventions**. Furthermore, each political party can determine how many delegates to allocate to each state and territory. In 2012 for example, the [Democratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_(United_States)) and [Republican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_(United_States)) party conventions each used two different formulas to allocate delegates. The Democrats based theirs on two main factors: (1) the proportion of votes each state gave to the Democratic candidate in the previous three presidential elections, and (2) the number of electoral votes each state had in the Electoral College. In contrast, the Republicans assigned to each state 10 delegates, plus 3 delegates per congressional district. Both parties then gave fixed amounts of delegates to each territory, and finally bonus delegates to states and territories that passed certain criteria.

Along with delegates chosen during primaries and caucuses, state and U.S. territory delegations to both the Democratic and Republican party conventions also include "unpledged" delegates that have a vote. For Republicans, they consist of the three top party officials from each state and territory. Democrats have a more expansive group of unpledged delegates called "[*superdelegates*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superdelegate)", who are party leaders and elected officials.

Each party's presidential candidate also chooses a vice presidential nominee to run with him or her on the same [ticket](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ticket_(election)), and this choice is rubber-stamped by the convention.

Under the United States Constitution, the manner of **choosing electors** for the Electoral College is determined by each state's legislature. Although each state currently designates electors by popular vote, other methods are allowed. For instance, a number of states formerly chose presidential electors by a vote of the state legislature itself. However, federal law does specify that all electors must be selected on the same day, which is "the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November," i.e. a Tuesday no earlier than November 2 and no later than November 8.Today, the states and the [District of Columbia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington,_D.C.) each conduct their own popular elections on [Election Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election_Day_(United_States)) to help determine their respective slate of electors. Thus, the presidential election is really an amalgamation of separate and simultaneous state elections instead of a single national election run by the federal government.

Like any other election in the United States, the eligibility of an individual for voting is set out in the Constitution and regulated at state level. The Constitution states that suffrage cannot be denied on grounds of [race or color](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution), [sex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) or [age for citizens eighteen years or older](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-sixth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution). Beyond these basic qualifications, it is the responsibility of state legislatures to regulate voter eligibility.

Generally, voters are required to vote on a ballot where they select the candidate of their choice. The presidential ballot is a vote "for the electors of a candidate" meaning that the voter is not voting for the candidate, but endorsing a slate of electors pledged to vote for a specific presidential and vice presidential candidate.

Many voting ballots allow a voter to “blanket vote” for all candidates in a particular [political party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_the_United_States) or to select individual candidates on a line by line voting system. Which candidates appear on the voting ticket is determined through a legal process known as [ballot access](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballot_access). Usually, the size of the candidate's political party and the results of the major nomination conventions determine who is pre-listed on the presidential ballot. Thus, the presidential election ticket will not list every candidate running for President, but only those who have secured a major party nomination or whose size of their political party warrants having been formally listed. Laws are in effect to have other candidates pre-listed on a ticket, provided that enough voters have endorsed the candidate, usually through a signature list.

The final way to be elected for president is to have one's name written in at the time of election as a [write-in candidate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Write-in_candidate). This is used for candidates who did not fulfill the legal requirements to be pre-listed on the voting ticket. It is also used by voters to express a distaste for the listed candidates, by writing in an alternative candidate for president such as [Mickey Mouse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Mouse) or comedian [Stephen Colbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Colbert) (whose application was voted down by the South Carolina Democratic Party). In any event, a write-in candidate has never won an election for President of the United States.

Because [U.S. territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territories_of_the_United_States) are not represented in the Electoral College, U.S. citizens in those areas do not vote in the general election for President. [Guam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guam) has held [straw polls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw_poll) for president since the 1980 election to draw attention to this fact.

### Electoral college. Most state laws establish a winner-take-all system, wherein the ticket that wins a [plurality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plurality_voting_system) of votes wins all of that state's allocated electoral votes, and thus has their slate of electors chosen to vote in the Electoral College. [Maine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maine) and [Nebraska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nebraska) do not use this method, opting instead to give two electoral votes to the statewide winner and one electoral vote to the winner of each Congressional district.

Each state's winning slate of electors then meets at their respective state's capital on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December to cast their electoral votes on separate ballots for President and Vice President. Although Electoral College members can technically vote for anyone under the U.S. Constitution, 24 states have laws to punish [faithless electors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faithless_elector),[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election#cite_note-20) those who do not cast their electoral votes for the person whom they have pledged to elect.

In early January, the total Electoral College vote count is opened by the sitting Vice President, acting in his capacity as [President of the Senate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_Senate#United_States), and read aloud to a [joint session](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_session_of_the_United_States_Congress) of the incoming Congress, which was elected at the same time as the President.

If no candidate receives a majority of the electoral vote (currently at least 270), the President is determined by the rules outlined by the [12th Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution). Specifically, the selection of President would then be decided by a ballot of the [House of Representatives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_House_of_Representatives). For the purposes of electing the President, each state has only one vote. A ballot of the [Senate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate) is held to choose the Vice President. In this ballot, each senator has one vote. The House of Representatives has chosen the victor of the presidential race only twice, in [1800](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1800) and [1824](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1824); the Senate has chosen the victor of the vice-presidential race only once, in [1836](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1836).

If the President is not chosen by Inauguration Day, the Vice President-elect acts as President. If neither are chosen by then, Congress by law determines who shall act as President, pursuant to the [20th Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twentieth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution).

Unless there are faithless electors, disputes, or other controversies, the events in December and January mentioned above are largely a formality since the winner can be determined based on the state-by-state popular vote results. Between the general election and [Inauguration Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inauguration_Day), this apparent winner is referred to as the "[President-elect](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President-elect_of_the_United_States)" (unless it is a sitting President that has won re-election).

**JUDICIAL BRANCH**

The judicial branch is headed by the U.S. Supreme Court, which is the only court specifically created by the Constitution. In addition, Congress has established 13 federal courts of appeals and, below them, about 95 federal district courts. The Supreme Court meets in Washington, D.C., and the other federal courts are located in cities throughout the United States. Federal judges are appointed for life or until they retire voluntarily; they can be removed from office only via a laborious process of impeachment and trial in the Congress.

Where the Executive and Legislative branches are elected by the people, members of the Judicial Branch are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Article III of the Constitution, which establishes the Judicial Branch, leaves Congress significant discretion to determine the shape and structure of the federal judiciary. Even the number of Supreme Court Justices is left to Congress — at times there have been as few as six, while the current number (nine, with one Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices) has only been in place since 1869. The Constitution also grants Congress the power to establish courts inferior to the Supreme Court, and to that end Congress has established the United States district courts, which try most federal cases, and 13 United States courts of appeals, which review appealed district court cases.

Federal judges can only be removed through impeachment by the House of Representatives and conviction in the Senate. Judges and justices serve no fixed term — they serve until their death, retirement, or conviction by the Senate. By design, this insulates them from the temporary passions of the public, and allows them to apply the law with only justice in mind, and not electoral or political concerns.

Generally, Congress determines the jurisdiction of the federal courts. In some cases, however — such as in the example of a dispute between two or more U.S. states — the Constitution grants the Supreme Court original jurisdiction, an authority that cannot be stripped by Congress.

The courts only try actual cases and controversies — a party must show that it has been harmed in order to bring suit in court. This means that the courts do not issue advisory opinions on the constitutionality of laws or the legality of actions if the ruling would have no practical effect. Cases brought before the judiciary typically proceed from district court to appellate court and may even end at the Supreme Court, although the Supreme Court hears comparatively few cases each year.

Federal courts enjoy the sole power to interpret the law, determine the constitutionality of the law, and apply it to individual cases. The courts, like Congress, can compel the production of evidence and testimony through the use of a subpoena. The inferior courts are constrained by the decisions of the Supreme Court — once the Supreme Court interprets a law, inferior courts must apply the Supreme Court's interpretation to the facts of a particular case.

1. **POLITICAL PARTIES**

Americans regularly exercise their democratic rights by voting in elections and by participating in political parties and election campaigns. Today, there are **two major political parties in the United States, the Democratic and the Republican**. The Democratic Party evolved from the party of Thomas Jefferson, formed before 1800. The Republican Party was established in the 1850s by Abraham Lincoln and others who opposed the expansion of slavery into new states then being admitted to the Union.

The Democratic Party is considered to be the more liberal party, and the Republican, the more conservative. Democrats generally believe that government has an obligation to provide social and economic programs for those who need them. Republicans are not necessarily opposed to such programs but believe they are too costly to taxpayers. Republicans put more emphasis on encouraging private enterprise in the belief that a strong private sector makes citizens less dependent on government.

Both major parties have supporters among a wide variety of Americans and embrace a wide range of political views. Members, and even elected officials, of one party do not necessarily agree with each other on every issue. Americans do not have to join a political party to vote or to be a candidate for public office, but running for office without the money and campaign workers a party can provide is difficult.

Minor political parties -- generally referred to as "third parties" -- occasionally form in the United States, but their candidates are rarely elected to office. Minor parties often serve, however, to call attention to an issue that is of concern to voters, but has been neglected in the political dialogue. When this happens, one or both of the major parties may address the matter, and the third party disappears.

At the national level, elections are held every two years, in even-numbered years, on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November. State and local elections often coincide with national elections, but they also are held in other years and can take place at other times of year.

Americans are free to determine how much or how little they become involved in the political process. Many citizens actively participate by working as volunteers for a candidate, by promoting a particular cause, or by running for office themselves. Others restrict their participation to voting on election day, quietly letting their democratic system work, confident that their freedoms are protected.

Throughout most of its history, American politics have been dominated by a [two-party system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-party_system). However, the [United States Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) has always been silent on the issue of political parties; at the time it was signed in 1787, there were no parties in the nation. Indeed, no nation in the world had voter-based political parties. The need to win popular support in a [republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republicanism_in_the_United_States) led to the American invention of voter-based political parties in the 1790s. Political scientists and historians have divided the development of America's two-party system into five eras. The modern two-party system consists of the [Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Democratic_Party_(United_States)) and the [Republican Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Republican_Party_(United_States)). Several [third parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_party_(United_States)) also operate in the U.S., and from time to time elect someone to local office. The largest third party since the 1980s is the [Libertarian Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_Party_(United_States))

The modern political party system in the U.S. is a [two-party system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-party_system) dominated by the [Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_(United_States)) and the [Republican Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_(United_States)). These two parties have won every [United States presidential election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election) since 1852 and have controlled the [United States Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) to some extent [since at least 1856](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Presidents_and_control_of_Congress).

### Democratic Party

The Democratic Party is one of two major political parties in the U.S. Founded in 1828 by [Andrew Jackson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson), it is the oldest extant voter-based political party in the world. Since 1854, American politics has largely been the story of the battle of the Democrats versus their closely matched adversary, [the Republican Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_United_States_Republican_Party).

The Democratic Party at its founding supported a different set of issues than it presently supports. From its founding until the New Deal Era, the Democratic Party was generally a [classically liberal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_liberalism) or [libertarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian) party; it favored small government and states' rights. From its founding until the mid-20th century, the Democratic Party was the dominant party among white Southerners, and as such, was then the party most associated with the defense of slavery. However, following FDR & later the [Great Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society) under [Lyndon B. Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_B._Johnson), the Democratic Party became the more progressive party on issues of social justice, while conceding dominance in the Southern states to the Republicans.

The Democratic Party since 1912 has positioned itself as the liberal party on domestic issues. The economic philosophy of [Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt), which has strongly influenced [modern American liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_liberalism_in_the_United_States), has shaped much of the party's agenda since 1932. Roosevelt's [New Deal coalition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal_coalition) controlled the White House until 1968 with the exception of Eisenhower 1953–1961. Since the mid-20th century, Democrats have generally been in the [center-left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Center-left) and currently support [social justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice), [social liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_liberalism), a [mixed economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_economy), and the [welfare state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_state). Democrats are currently strongest on the [East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Coast_of_the_United_States) and [West Coasts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Coast_of_the_United_States) and in major American urban centers. African-Americans and Latinos tend to be disproportionately Democratic, as do [trade unions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union).

In 2004, it was the largest political party, with 72 million registered voters (42.6% of 169 million registered) claiming affiliation.

### Republican Party

The Republican Party is one of the two major contemporary political parties in the United States of America. Since the 1880s it has been nicknamed (by the media) the "Grand Old Party" or GOP, although it is younger than the Democratic Party.

Founded in 1854 by Northern anti-slavery activists and modernizers, the Republican Party rose to prominence in 1860 with the election of [Abraham Lincoln](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln), who used the party machinery to support victory in the [American Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War). The GOP dominated national politics during the [Third Party System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Party_System), from 1854 to 1896, and the [Fourth Party System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Party_System) from 1896 to 1932.

Since its founding, the Republican Party has been the more corporatist of the two American political parties, often favoring policies that aid American interests. As a party whose power was once based on the voting clout of Union Army veterans, this party has traditionally supported more aggressive defense measures and more lavish veteran's benefits. Though initially founded to oppose slavery, following Richard Nixon's "[Southern Strategy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Strategy)" in 1968, the Republican Party has become the less progressive party in areas of racial and social justice. Today, the Republican Party supports an [American conservative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatism_in_the_United_States) platform, with further foundations in [economic liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_liberalism), [fiscal conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiscal_conservatism), and [social conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_conservatism). The Republican Party tends to be strongest in the [Southern United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States) and the "[flyover states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flyover_states)", as well as suburban and rural areas in other states. One significant base of support for the Republican Party are [Evangelical Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_Christian), who have wielded significant clout in the party since the early 1970s.

### Major third parties

In the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), the **Green Party** has been active as a [third party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_party_(United_States)) since the 1980s. The party first gained widespread public attention during [Ralph Nader](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Nader)'s second presidential run in [2000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidential_election,_2000). Currently, the primary national Green Party organization in the U.S. is the Green Party of the United States, which has eclipsed the earlier [Greens/Green Party USA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greens/Green_Party_USA).

The Green Party in the United States has won elected office mostly at the [local](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government) level; most winners of public office in the United States who are considered Greens have won [nonpartisan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonpartisan)-ballot elections (that is, elections in which the candidates' party affiliations were not printed on the [ballot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballot)). In 2005, the Party had 305,000 registered members in the District of Columbia and 20 states that allow party registration. During the 2006 elections the party had [ballot access](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballot_access) in 31 states. Greens emphasize [environmentalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmentalism), non-[hierarchical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchy) [participatory democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy), [social justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice), respect for [diversity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity_(politics)), [peace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace) and [nonviolence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolence).

The **Libertarian Party** was founded on December 11, 1971. It is one of the largest continuing [third parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_party_(United_States)) in the United States, claiming more than 331,000 registered voters. They currently have about 144 elected officials, more than any of the other minor parties.

The 2012 Libertarian Party nominee for United States President was former New Mexico governor, [Gary Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Johnson). He achieved ballot access in every [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) except for [Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan) (only as a write-in candidate) and [Oklahoma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oklahoma). He received over one million votes in the election, the highest for any candidate since the founding of the party in 1971.

The Libertarian Party's core mission is to reduce the size, influence and expenditures of all levels of government. To this effect, the party supports minimally regulated markets, a less powerful [federal government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government), strong [civil liberties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties), [drug liberalization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_liberalization), [separation of church and state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state), [open immigration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_immigration), [non-interventionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-interventionism) and [neutrality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neutrality_(international_relations)) in diplomatic relations, [free trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_trade) and [free movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_movement) to all foreign countries, and a more representative republic.

The **Constitution Party** is a national political party in the United States. It was founded as the U.S. Taxpayers Party in 1992. The party's official name was changed to the *Constitution Party* in 1999; however, some state affiliate parties are known under different names.

The Constitution Party advocates a platform that they believe reflects the [Founding Fathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States)' [original intent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Originalism) of the [U.S. Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution), principles found in the [U.S. Declaration of Independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Declaration_of_Independence), and morals taken from the [Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible).

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. When and where was the American Constitution framed?

2. What are the 6 basic principles of the American constitutional system?

3. What are the 3 great branches of the national government, and what basic powers does each possess?

4. Why does each branch possess powers with which it can restrain the others?

5. How many amendments have been added to the Constitution?

6. What is the structure and composition of the Congress? What does each house of Congress represent?

7. What are the qualifications for membership in the House of Representatives? the Senate?

8. What are the functions of the Congress?

9. What are the formal constitutional qualifications for the Presidency?

10. How is the presidential election campaign organized?

11. What are the weaknesses of the Electoral College system?

12. What agencies compose the Executive Office of the President?

13. Why are the two major political parties not sharply different from one another?

**4 SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN THE USA**

**1. Principles and generals goals of education. Administration of education.**

**2. Structure and organization of primary and secondary education.**

**3. Standardised testing**

**4. Higher education**

[**Education**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education) **in the** [**United States**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) is provided by [public schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_school) and [private schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_school).

[Public education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_school) is universally required at the [K–12](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%E2%80%9312) level, and is available at state colleges and universities for all students. K–12 public school curricula, budgets, and policies are set through locally elected [school boards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Board_of_education), who have jurisdiction over individual [school districts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_district). State governments set overall educational standards, often mandate [standardized tests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standardized_testing) for K–12 public school systems, and supervise, usually through a board of regents, state colleges and universities. Funding comes from the [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_law_(United_States)), [local](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_in_the_United_States), and [federal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States) government.

Private schools are generally free to determine their own curriculum and staffing policies, with voluntary accreditation available through independent regional accreditation authorities. About 87% of school-age children attend public schools, about 10% attend private schools, and roughly 3% are home-schooled. Education is [compulsory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compulsory_education) over an age range starting between five and eight and ending somewhere between ages sixteen and eighteen, depending on the state. This requirement can be satisfied in [public schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_school), state-certified [private schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_school), or an approved [home school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling) program. In most schools, education is divided into three levels: [elementary school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_education_in_the_United_States), [middle or junior high school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_school), and [high school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_education_in_the_United_States). Children are usually divided by age groups into [grades](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_stage), ranging from [kindergarten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindergarten) and [first grade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_grade) for the youngest children, up to [twelfth grade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_grade) as the final year of [high school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_school).

There are also a large number and wide variety of publicly and privately administered institutions of [higher education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_education) throughout the country. [Post-secondary education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_education_in_the_United_States), divided into [college](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College), as the first tertiary degree, and [graduate school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduate_school), is described in a separate section below.

The United States spends more per student on education than any other country. In 2014, the Pearson/[Economist Intelligence Unit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economist_Intelligence_Unit) rated US education as 14th best in the world, just behind Russia. According to [a report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_News_and_World_Report_Best_Global_University_Ranking) published by the [U.S. News & World Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._News_%26_World_Report), of the top ten colleges and universities in the world, eight are American. (The other two are [Oxford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford) and [Cambridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Cambridge), in the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom).)

## 1. Principles and general objectives of education. Administration of education.

One of the primary aims of public education in the United States is to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all boys and girls, including minority groups and the disabled. Moreover, U.S. public schools have a long tradition of coeducation.

Education in the United States generally reflects the values and priorities of the society. These include a dedication to democratic ideals, a commitment to individual freedom, and a respect for the diversity of the population. In broad terms, the U.S. education system has as its goal the establishment of a quality education that will enable all children to achieve their highest potential as individuals, serve effectively as citizens of a free society, and successfully compete in a changing global marketplace.

The education system in the United States is highly decentralized. According to the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States.” In accordance with this Amendment, the federal government has no authority to establish a national education system, nor do federal agencies ordinarily prescribe policy or curriculum for local schools. Such decisions are made at the state or district level. Because of this decentralization, laws governing the structure and content of education programmes may vary greatly from state to state, district to district. Some of these laws are very prescriptive; others are broad enough to allow local school districts considerable flexibility in the way they operate their schools.

On the other hand, despite this opportunity for experimentation and diversity, the educational programmes of the 50 states are remarkably similar, undoubtedly as the result of such common factors as the social and economic needs of the nation, the frequent transfer of students and teachers from one part of the country to another, and the role of national accrediting agencies in shaping educational practice.

## Current educational priorities and concerns

The first federal call for the reform of American education came in 1981, when Secretary of Education T.H. Bell created a National Commission on Excellence in Educationto “report on the quality of education in America.” That report, *A Nation at Risk*, was published in 1983 and called for widespread, systemic reform and made four major recommendations: a strengthening of graduation requirements, more rigorous and measurable standards, more time in school, and significant improvement of teaching. With this report, the nation as a whole was alerted to the plight of U.S. education and the need for a comprehensive revitalization of the school system. However, for the next two or three years reform was chiefly confined to state and local initiatives.

In 1989, shortly after he took office, President G. Bush invited the Nation’s fifty governors to attend an Education Summit to discuss the current condition of education and what course of action might be adopted to reverse the trend toward mediocrity. At this Summit, a remarkable consensus emerged on the nature of current educational problems and the broad strategies necessary to solve these problems. The Governors, in co-operation with the White House and the education community, focused the attention of the public on seeking solutions by establishing six National Education Goals and insisting that they be achieved by the year 2000: “(1) All children in America will start school ready to learn; (2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (3) American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, art, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation’s modern economy; (4) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement; (5) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (6) Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.”

The identification and articulation of goals, however, constituted no more than a first step in the direction of education reform. Reform initiatives had sprung up in all parts of the country, many of them innovative and effective; but there was no evidence that the nation as a whole had the ability or the inclination to adopt a single plan of action leading to the achievement of the National Goals by the year 2000. In the first place, given the widespread diversity of regions, states, and cultures in the United States, it would be difficult to devise a broad systemic approach that would work in every part of the country for every group. In the second place, the political system of the United States is not structured for national solutions in the field of education. Except in very special circumstances, the **U.S. Department of Education is forbidden by law to involve itself in curricular decisions at the state and local level**, and in only one or two specific areas (for example, civil rights enforcement) is the federal government empowered to take certain actions in the management of local schools.

For these reasons, public policy leaders recognized from the outset that any federal role in achieving the National Education Goals would have to gain its authority through persuasion rather than coercion. The White House and the Department of Education could propose solutions; the states and local school districts could accept or reject federal proposals.

Yet many leaders felt that some federal leadership was necessary if the nation as a whole was to improve its schools and achieve the National Education Goals by the year 2000. There were several things the Department of Education could do (indeed was already doing) to contribute to the development of a plan to meet the Goals.

In the first place, the Department (through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement–OERI) was funding and conducting research to analyze the problems faced by educators and those strategies and solutions that seemed most successful. In the second place, the Department, through its Educational Resources Information Centers (ERIC) and other databases and networks, was disseminating a wide range of pertinent information on educational programmes to the educational community. For this reason, many reformers concluded that the Department could use these legitimate functions to provide national leadership in achieving the six National Education Goals.

In order to monitor the progress of the Nation in meeting the Goals and to provide a national focus for their implementation, the **National Goals Panel** was created in July of 1990. In its 1992 report, the National Goals Panel recognized the need for the development of “new, clear, and ambitious standards for the educational achievement of all students.” A few months later Congress established the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, a bipartisan committee that recommended the creation of voluntary national standards and a voluntary national system of student assessments.

Given the nature of the education system in the United States, it followed that National Education Standards could not be mandated by the federal government but had to be accepted voluntarily by each of the 50 states. One of the first initiatives of NESAC was to ask professional organizations to develop voluntary national standards in their own fields. For example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics prepared mathematical standards; and literally thousands of teachers and scholars nationwide worked together to create standards in science, history, the arts, civics, geography, and English.

In order to assist organizations in the preparation of these standards, the U.S. Department of Education gave grants to major professional and scholarly organizations to develop voluntary national standards in different subjects.  Department officials made it clear, however, that ‘national standards  did not mean ‘Federal standards  nor did ‘national testing  mean ‘Federal testing.  The standards and testing would be developed by NESAC in co-operation with professional organizations, and the States would be free to adopt or reject them. NESAC completed its initial task in 1992 and was disbanded. The National Goals Panel continued to monitor the development of national standards and testing.

In 1991, the Bush Administration announced the establishment of *AMERICA 2000,* a strategy to implement the six goals. By the end of 1992, 48 states and over 2,000 communities had committed themselves to the achievement of the National Education Goals and had become a part of *AMERICA 2000*.

In 1992, President Clinton was elected. The new Administration maintained some of the initiatives contained in *AMERICA 2000*, but rejected several key measures (for example, the encouragement of a choice initiative that included private schools).

In order to distinguish its efforts from *AMERICA 2000*, the Clinton Administration called its set of initiatives *GOALS 2000* and offered a legislative package of five proposed laws to support its platform for educational reform throughout the nation. The proposed laws offered a systemic, integrated policy and procedure for bringing about reform in education for the first time in the history of this nation. Title I of *Goals 2000* codified into law the six original National Education Goals, and added additional goals on parental involvement and professional development. The establishment of the goals recognized that learning begins at birth and continues through life. The goals provided a framework for a new, reformed education system for the twenty-first century.

The new laws were designed to encourage comprehensive education reform throughout the United States. The federal funds to be appropriated under these laws were intended to serve as a catalyst to the states to join voluntarily (the legislation is not compulsory) in the reform movement. The legislation called for total systemic reform, i.e. improved early childhood education, parent involvement, high academic and skill standards, curricular reform to meet those standards, a focus on the disadvantaged, opportunities for all to learn and achieve, formative and summative assessment, professional development of teachers and administrators, school-based management and accountability, systemic programmes of school-to-work transition, safer schools, and educational research to support these provisions. Never before has the United States Department of Education offered such a comprehensive package for reform in accordance with its mission “to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.”

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* is a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. President George W. Bush describes this law as the “cornerstone of my administration.” Under the NCLB, each state must measure every public school student’s progress in reading and mathematics in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12. By school year 2007/08, assessments (or testing) in science will be underway. These assessments must be aligned with state academic content and achievement standards. They will provide parents with objective data on where their child stands academically.

The NCLB requires states and school districts to give parents easy-to-read, detailed report cards on schools and districts, telling them which ones are succeeding and why. Included in the report cards are student achievement data broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status; as well as important information about the professional qualifications of teachers. With these provisions, the NCLB ensures that parents have important, timely information about the schools their children attend. Furthermore, the NCLB defines the qualifications needed by teachers and paraprofessionals who work on any facet of classroom instruction. It requires that states develop plans to achieve the goal that all teachers of core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005/06 school year. States must include in their plans annual, measurable objectives that each local school district and school must meet in moving toward the goal; they must report on their progress in the annual report cards. As part of the accountability provisions set forth in the law, the NCLB has set the goal of having every child achieving proficiency according to state-defined educational standards by the end of the 2013/14 school year. To reach that goal, every state has developed benchmarks to measure progress and make sure every child is learning.

In exchange for the strong accountability, the NCLB gives states and local education agencies more flexibility in the use of their federal education funding. As a result, principals and administrators will have more freedom to implement innovations and allocate resources as policy-makers at the state and local levels see fit, thereby giving local people a greater opportunity to affect decisions regarding their schools’ programmes. The NCLB puts a special emphasis on implementing educational programmes and practices that have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding will be targeted to support such programmes.

Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act first passed Congress in 1965, the federal government has spent more than $242 billion through 2003 to help educate disadvantaged children. Yet, the achievement gap between rich and poor and white and minority students remains wide. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on reading in 2000, only 32% of fourth-graders can read at a proficient level and thereby demonstrate solid academic achievement; and while scores for the highest-performing students have improved over time, those of America's lowest-performing students have declined.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education.

**Each state is responsible for its own education system**, and over the years state legislatures have enacted laws to govern the organization and operation of public instruction. **The role of the Federal Government in education** has been one of broad leadership without undue control. It is the legal responsibility of federal authorities to safeguard the right of every citizen to gain equal access to free public institutions and equal opportunity in the pursuit of learning. While fulfilling this responsibility, the Federal Government also attempts to improve the quality of education through the funding of research, direct aid to students, and the dissemination of knowledge about teaching and learning.

To achieve these ends, the Congress over the years has enacted legislation establishing a variety of funded programmes, most, though not all, administered by the U.S. Department of Education through the issuance of regulations and the monitoring of Federally funded educational activities.

The following are **major federal laws affecting education** that were passed during the recent years.

The **National Literacy Act** of 1991 (Public Law 102-73) established new literacy programmes, provided higher authorization levels for some existing adult literacy programmes, and restored eligibility for various programmes to the freely associated states (i.e., the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia). The purpose of the Act was “to enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programmes.”

The **Education Council Act** of 1991 (Public Law 102-62) established the National Education Commission on Time and Learning and the National Council on Education Standards and Testing. The National Education Commission on Time and Learning was to review the relationship between time and learning in the Nation’s schools and make a report on its findings by April 1994. The National Council on Education Standards and Testing was to provide advice on the desirability and feasibility of developing national standards and conducting national testing of school children.

The **Goals 2000: Educate America Act** of 1994 (Public Law 103-227) established a new federal partnership through a system of grants to states and local communities to reform the nation’s education system. This legislation formalized the six National Education Goals and their objectives, added two new goals, and established in law the National Education Goals Panel. The Act also created a National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) to provide voluntary national certification of state and local education standards and assessments to spur increased educational opportunity while creating greater accountability and responsibility for students and schools. The Act also established the National Skills Standards Boardto encourage, promote, and assist industry, labour, and education in the voluntary identification, development, and adoption of high standards needed in each work area and the matching of those needs to curricula, work experience, training, and training material..

The previous **six National Education Goals**, along with **two additional** Goals provided by the Clinton administration, were enacted into law in 1994 as follows: “By the Year 2000: (1) All children in America will start school ready to learn; (2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (3) All students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging  subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, art, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation’s modern economy; (4) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement; (5) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (6) Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a  disciplined environment conducive to learning; (7) The Nation’s teaching force will have access to programmes for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century; (8) Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.”

The **School-to-Work** **Opportunities Act** of 1994 (Public Law 103-239) established a national framework within which states and communities can develop ‘School-to-Work Opportunities  programmes to prepare young people for first jobs and continuing education. It will facilitate the development of a system of rigorous academic and occupational preparation for students. The legislation provided seed money to states and communities to develop a system of programmes that include work-based learning, school-based learning, and connecting activities. School-to-Work programmes will provide students with a high school diploma (or its equivalent), a nationally recognized skill certificate, an associate degree (if appropriate), and may lead to a first job or to further education.

The **Improving America’s Schools Act** of 1994 (Public Law 103-382) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, with some significant changes. The legislation includes Title I, the federal government’s largest programme providing educational assistance to disadvantaged children; professional development and technical assistance programmes; safe and drug-free schools and communities provision; and a provision promoting school equity by focusing federal funds for high poverty areas. It also requires states to develop high-quality content and performance standards and assessments in order to qualify for certain kinds of federal funding; emphasizes local control and flexibility in exchange for accountability; shifts the focus away from remedial programmes and emphasizes overall school performance.

With passage of the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** **Act** of 2001, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the principal federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. In amending ESEA, the new law represents a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education in the United States. It is built on four common-sense pillars: accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility.

In all fifty states, as well as in the six territories, education is compulsory–usually from the age of 6 or 7 to the age of 16 years. Public schools in the United States are free, at least through completion of secondary school (Grade XII). In all states and territories, private schools are permitted to operate. They are subject to state licensing and accrediting regulations. A few of these institutions may receive limited federal aid for specialized purposes, but the great majority are funded by sources other than the government.

## Administration and management of the education system

Because of the Tenth Amendment and the consequent evolution of a decentralized education system, the **states and local districts assume a primary role in the organization and operation of U.S. schools**. As far as public elementary and secondary education is concerned, in most states policies and requirements are determined by a **State Board of Education** and carried out under the leadership of a **Chief State School Officer** (the title varies with the state) and a staff of professional educators in a **State Department of Education**. Currently, the [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_governments_of_the_United_States) and [national](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States) governments share power over public education, with the states exercising most of the control. The [U.S. federal government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._federal_government) exercises its control through the [U.S. Department of Education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Education). Education is not mentioned in the [constitution of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution), but the federal government uses the threat of decreased funding to enforce laws pertaining to education.

Different states have different laws and traditions governing the membership of State boards of education. In most states, members are appointed by the Governor; in some they are elected directly by the people; and in still other cases a member serves *ex officio*–that is, by virtue of holding another office (e.g. the Governorship).

The **Chief State School Officer** (the head of the State Department of education) is usually appointed by the Governor or by the State board of education though in a few States the office is elective. The duties of the chief State school officer normally include such functions as: distributing State funds to local education authorities (almost 50% of all funds spent on public elementary and secondary schools in the United States come from State sources); interpreting and administering State school laws; supervising the certification of teachers; helping to improve educational standards through in-service training programmes; and providing advisory services to local superintendents and school boards.

Typically, **State regulations for public schools** cover the following areas: length of the school day and school year; graduation requirements; and standards for teacher certification, school transportation, health services, and fire protection. For private schools, about one half of the states have some sort of mandatory approval process that results in a license, accreditation, or registration. A few states require that all private school teachers be certified by the State before they can teach in a private school. However, requirements vary from state to state, as does the manner in which such requirements are enforced.

State boards of education and their chief State school officers, supported by organizations like the **National Association of State Boards of Education** and the **Council of Chief State School Officers**, provide strong voices on the national scene and influence the direction of federal legislation and policy.

With the exception of Hawaii, each state is divided into local administrative districts with extensive authority and responsibility to establish and regulate public schools, both at the elementary and secondary levels. Generally, **local school districts** are governed by a board of education, usually composed of five to seven members, who have either been appointed by other governmental officials or elected by citizens who live within the district. Consistent with State law and official policy, the local board operates the public school system through the superintendent and the district staff.

The **district school board** and the **superintendent of schools** have a broad range of duties and responsibilities. The board and the superintendent are jointly responsible for preparing the school budget. They usually have considerable latitude within broad State guidelines to determine curriculum. They are responsible for hiring teachers and other personnel; for providing and maintaining school buildings; for purchasing school equipment and supplies; and, in most cases, for providing transportation for pupils who live beyond a reasonable walking distance from the school.

Their duties also include enacting regulations to govern the operation of schools. Such regulations must conform to State law. Indeed, the limitations on the actions of school boards are those established by the State legislature, or by the State education agencies, which in most cases prescribe minimum standards for all local school districts.

Districts vary in size from rural systems, with one school building that houses all grades, to those in heavily populated urban areas, with hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers.  Some states have **regional (county) service districts** or centres. These handle regulatory functions as well as advise local school systems and collect and provide statistical information.

Post-secondary institutions, both public and private, derive their authority to function and grant degrees from the state in which they are located. This authority is established in the State constitution or in laws passed by the legislature.

States may fund and operate a number of institutions of higher learning. Many larger states, such as California and New York, have highly developed statewide systems of higher education. Most states have some system of policy planning and co-ordination to guide the development of public higher education within the state, usually through **coordinating boards** and **consolidated governing boards**. However, in most statewide systems, individual campuses have a high degree of institutional autonomy, subject to the overall policies and plans established by State and/or institutional boards.

**Boards of trustees** (sometimes called ‘boards of regents’) make most major decisions affecting colleges and universities in the United States. In most instances the procedures for choosing board members are stated in the institution’s founding charter, and, in accordance with the provisions of that charter, members may serve either specified terms or may be appointed for life. Public institutions such as State universities may have trustees who are elected or who are appointed by the State’s Governor. Religious institutions usually have representatives of the institution’s founding body serving as trustees. In recent years, many boards of trustees, both public and private, have attempted to broaden their membership to ensure a wider representation of the diverse constituencies that make up the institution’s academic and social environment.

The Federal Government exercises no direct control over the establishment of post-secondary institutions or over the standards they maintain, except for some academies that prepare persons as career officers for the military. However, in a few areas, such as the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act as it relates to higher education programmes, the Federal Government has specific legal responsibilities.

The Federal Government requests advice on administering some federal education programmes from citizen councils and committees established for that purpose by legislation. The members are usually appointed by the President, the Secretary of the Department, or other agency head. The largest number of Federal advisory groups on education are associated with programmes administered by the **U.S.** **Department of Education**.

“The Department of Education was established in 1867. It later became a small bureau within the Department of the Interior. It remained there until it was made an office of the Federal Security Agency in 1939. The Office of Education later came to form part of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In 1979, the Department of Education was re-established and its Secretary became a member of the President’s Cabinet.

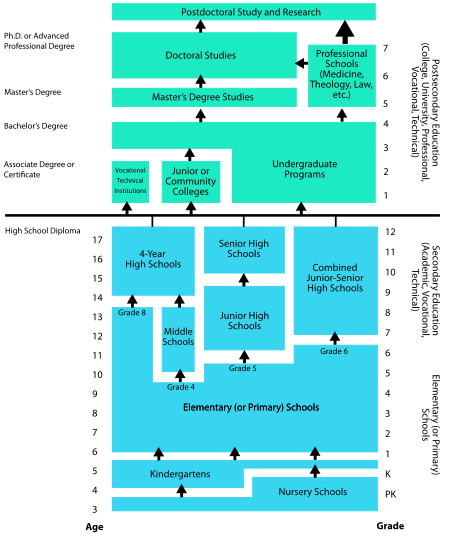
## 2. Structure and organization of primary and secondary education

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Education in the United States is organized on three principal levels: the elementary (including pre-school and primary), the secondary, and the post-secondary. Vocational training is available at the secondary and post-secondary levels. In addition, formal and informal programmes of adult education and continuing education are offered widely to U.S. citizens in virtually any part of the country and throughout their lives.

Education is compulsory, beginning at age 5 in seven states, at age 6 in twenty-one states, at age 7 in eighteen states, and at age 8 in two states (data refer to 2000; for two states information was not available). Usually a person is required to attend school until age 16. Since 1989 there is a trend toward more states with mandatory school until age 18. In the year 2000, students were required to be enrolled in school to age 16 in twenty-eight states (thirty-five states in 1989), to age 17 in seven states, and to age 18 in thirteen states. Schooling is free, through completion of secondary school (Grade XII) for those who attend public schools.

***United States of America: structure of the education system***

**[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Education_in_the_United_States.svg)**

For early childhood education, the stages shown are the following:

– Nursery School (ages 3-4): 1-2 years duration.

– Kindergartens (ages 4-5): 1-2 years duration.

For elementary and secondary education (grades 1 through 12), there are four traditional paths.  The path taken by a given individual will depend on the state, school district, or school in which that individual is studying.  The stage variations are the following:

Variation 1:

– Elementary (or Primary) School (ages 6-13): 8 years duration.

– 4-Year High School (ages 14-18): 4 years duration.

Variation 2:

– Elementary (or Primary) School (ages 6-9): 4 years duration.

– Middle School (ages 10-13): 4 years duration.

– 4-Year High School (ages 14-18): 4 years duration.

Variation 3:

– Elementary (or Primary) School (ages 6-11): 5 years duration.

– Junior High School (12-14): 3 years duration.

– Senior High School (15-18): 3 years duration.

Variation 4:

– Elementary (or Primary) School (ages 6-11): 6 years duration.

– Combined Junior/Senior School (ages 12-18): 6 years duration.

For postsecondary education, the stages are more generally represented in the following order:

– Vocational Technical Institutions; and Junior/Community Colleges.

– Undergraduate Programmes (Bachelor’s Degree).

– Master’s Degree Study.

– Doctor’s Degree Study (Ph.D.); and Professional Schools (Medicine, Theology, Law, etc.).

– Postdoctoral Study and Research.

**Pre-primary education**

Elementary education includes one or two years of pre-school and one year of kindergarten. Most public school systems provide half-day kindergarten classes for children aged 5, and some provide pre-school classes for younger children, though most pre-school programmes are offered privately. An important feature of the increasing participation of young children in pre-primary schools is the increasing proportion in full-day programmes. Kindergarten classrooms can be structured with specific areas for children to spend time in certain activities. These can include areas for writing, mathematics, science, computers, and play (i.e. solving puzzles and working with blocks). Nearly all kindergarten classrooms have reading, mathematics, and play areas. Almost 90% of kindergarten classrooms have a writing area, and about 67% have a science area. Public school kindergarten classrooms are more likely to have writing and mathematics areas than are private schools.

The reading instructional activities of full- and half-day public school kindergarten classes seem alike in some ways and different in others. Both types of classes spend about the same percentage of time on whole-class, small group, and individual activities. Both types of classes spend time each day on reading. The most commonly taught skills in both types of classes are recognizing the letters of the alphabet and matching letters to sounds. However, full-day classes are more likely to spend time each day on certain skills, including letter recognition, matching letters to sounds, the conventions of print, and vocabulary

### Primary education

### Although primary education may consist of six or eight grades, the six-grade school is most common. The main purpose of primary school is the general development of children from 6 to 12 or 14 years of age (depending on whether the school is a six- or eight-year elementary school). The elementary education programme has as its goal to help students acquire basic skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes toward learning. Elementary schools emphasize the growth of the individual child and the relation of the child’s progress to individual needs and abilities. Traditional subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics provide tools for learning.

### During the 1960s, the *middle school* gained widespread acceptance in U.S. education. A refinement of the junior high school, which was designed to improve the transition from elementary to secondary education, the middle school usually includes grades five or six through eight, provides team teaching and other innovative instructional methods, and emphasizes curricular exploration and growing independence for students. Its purpose is to serve the educational needs of students in the early adolescent period, those between 10 and 14 years of age.

**Secondary education**. Secondary school consists of two programs: the first is “middle school” or “junior high school” and the second program is “high school.” A diploma or certificate is awarded upon graduation from high school. After graduating high school (12th grade), U.S. students may go on to college or university. College or university study is known as “higher education.”

Secondary education begins at Grade VII or Grade IX, depending on whether elementary education in the system extends through Grade VI or Grade VIII. In some systems, junior high school follows elementary school, and includes Grades VII and VIII or VII-IX, followed by high school, which can include Grades IX-XII or X-XII. At this level of education, students normally complete Grade XII by age 17 or 18. Secondary education is often divided into two phases, [middle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_school) or junior high school and high school. Students are usually given more independence, moving to different classrooms for different subjects, and being allowed to choose some of their class subjects (electives).

"**Middle school**" usually includes sixth, seventh and eighth grade (and occasionally fifth grade as well); "Junior high" may include any range from sixth through ninth grades. The range defined by either is often based on demographic factors, such as an increase or decrease in the relative numbers of younger or older students, with the aim of maintaining stable school populations.

**High school** (occasionally senior high school) usually runs from 9th or 10th through 12th grades. Students in these grades are commonly referred to as freshmen (grade 9), sophomores (grade 10), juniors (grade 11) and seniors (grade 12). Generally, at the [high school](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_school) level, students take a broad variety of classes without special emphasis in any particular subject. Students are required to take a certain mandatory subjects, but may choose additional subjects ("electives") to fill out their required hours of learning. High school grades normally are included in a student's official transcript, e.g. for college admission.

Each state sets minimum requirements for how many years of various **mandatory subjects** are required; these requirements vary widely, but generally include 2–4 years of each of: Science, Mathematics, English, Social sciences, Physical education; some years of a foreign language and some form of art education are often also required, as is a health curriculum in which students learn about [anatomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatomy), [nutrition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nutrition), [first aid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_aid), [sexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_sexuality), [drug awareness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_awareness), and [birth control](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birth_control). In many cases, however, options are provided for students to "test out" of this requirement or complete independent study to meet it.

### By the end of Grade X, most students have decided whether they will follow a primarily academic programme leading to further education at the college level, a vocational training programme leading to employment or specialized post-secondary training, or a general programme combining elements of both the academic and the vocational programmes.

Though each state establishes its own public school **curriculum**, mandated requirements for high school graduation generally include: two years of mathematics, two years of science, four years of English, and three years of social studies. Students may elect the other courses they take, usually with the assistance of a guidance counsellor. Electives might include such subjects as art, music, foreign languages, and computers. Individual students may elect a programme of studies that exceeds the requirements, and many do. The number of hours in any given subject required for graduation varies from state to state.

The American high school is highly flexible, both in its academic offerings and in its vocational programmes. In a growing number of schools, academically gifted students can take several additional hours per week of advanced science or mathematics during their last two years of high school. In many instances, pupils taking advanced courses receive college or university credit. Most secondary schools offer some foreign language courses, most commonly Spanish and French.

After the ninth year, students usually select their own programmes, which must include a number of required subjects for all students. Then they choose a number of elective subjects from a range which varies according to the institution. The subjects elected are often chosen with a view to the admissions requirements of selective colleges and universities to which they wish to apply and the college level subjects that the student may wish to study. Candidates must accumulate a number of units or credits, each one of which consists of five forty-five-minute classes per week throughout the academic year, as well as a corresponding number of hours devoted to individual work. Candidates usually select for their last three years a major option consisting of three units and a minor option consisting of two units.

Performance during the academic year and the assessments of teachers are taken into consideration. Candidates obtain the high school graduation when they have accumulated the required number of units (usually fifteen to twenty). In certain states, state institutions of higher education are obliged to accept all holders of the secondary-school-leaving certificates. The secondary school-leaving certificate is awarded after twelve years of primary and secondary education. Patterns vary according to the region, but the most common ones are: eight years of primary followed by four years of secondary education; six years of primary followed by six years of secondary education; six years of primary followed by two three-year phases of secondary education; or six years of primary followed by two phases (two and four years) of secondary education.

At the secondary school level, some states have well-developed vocational education programmes with apprenticeships or work-based learning opportunities. Most public high school students in vocational education programs work in part-time situations jointly supervised by teachers and employers during their senior year (grade 12) of high school. These work experiences may be provided by the school or obtained independently by the student. Different types of work-based learning experiences can be offered, including internships, apprenticeships and mentoring. U.S. child labor laws limit the level and intensity of vocational instruction that can be provided to students under 18 years of age. As a consequence, most vocational and technical education or training—especially for licensed occupations—occurs at the postsecondary level.

All secondary programmes lead to the high school diploma and in most school districts are offered in the same comprehensive institution. A comprehensive institution offers a combined curriculum like the general programme, allows students to transfer easily from one programme to another, and provides flexibility for students to develop individual schedules to meet their own personal goals. It is not unusual for a medium-sized comprehensive high school to offer 200 or more separate courses. A comprehensive high school also provides the opportunity for young people with different career interests, as well as diverse social and economic backgrounds to have regular contact with each other. However, in recent years many school districts have introduced *magnet schools*, which are designed to attract students from all over the school district with a special interest in a particular area of study, such as science, the arts or languages. Thus magnet schools, while retaining economic and cultural diversity, deliberately sacrifice some curricular variety in order to achieve a more concentrated academic focus.

Vocational education typically begins at the secondary level and continues through the second year of the post-secondary level. Vocational programmes are also designed to retrain and upgrade the skills of adult workers in order to keep them current with the changing needs of the marketplace. These programmes are usually grouped under the seven traditional headings of vocational education: agriculture, marketing and distribution, health occupations, occupational home economics, business and office occupations, technical education, and trade and industrial education.

All states and school districts have set the secondary school graduation level as the completion of 12th grade, and the common name for the secondary graduation qualification is the **High School Diploma**. This diploma name covers a variety of awards for different curricula and standards. There are Honors/Regents, academic/college preparatory, vocational, and general/basic high school diploma tracks. There are a statewide minimum course requirement and other graduation requirements in each State which usually correspond to the general/basic track. Vocational and academic/college preparatory or honors/Regents diplomas usually have additional set curricular requirements and/or standards which aspiring graduates must meet or exceed. In addition, many US secondary school districts and private schools allow students to participate in the Advanced Placement (AP) programme of the College Board. This programme allows qualified students to take college level introductory courses in selected subjects taught by certified faculty. Examinations are offered in each AP subject at the end of an academic year; a score of 3 or higher generally results in universities awarding advanced standing in that subject - exempting the student from distribution requirements. There are currently over 35 AP subjects with more being planned. A growing number of public and private secondary schools also offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an optional track; completion of IB requirements usually requires an additional summer or semester of study beyond the 12th year. The contents of an individual student's programme at any grade level or upon obtaining a diploma or an online RN to BSN degree are contained in the record of studies called a Transcript. Transcripts are official documents authenticated with the seal of the school or institution and signed by the registrar.

At the primary and secondary levels**, the academic year** usually begins in September and continues through the first or second week in June, though some school districts prefer to begin and end the school year earlier. In 2002, thirty-four states require a school year of 180 days, and eight states require between 175 and 179 days. In the same year, thirty states require five or more hours per day from elementary through high school. In Grades I-VI, thirty states require at least five hours per day, while those same hours are required in thirty-six states for Grades VII and VIII, and in thirty-four states for Grades IX-XII. All high school hours range from four to seven hours per day, with the exception of Missouri's policy which is three to seven hours per day and West Virginia’s policy of 3.75 hours (see: CCSSO, 2002). In most instances, and particularly at the secondary level, students are given assignments to complete in the afternoon or evening, after the official school day has ended. Most classes are taught in English. However, in schools where there is a high concentration of students whose first language is not English, courses are sometimes taught in a foreign language until students are sufficiently conversant in English to enter regular classes.

## The educational process

Though federal law prescribes **no standardized curriculum**, the education programmes throughout the States generally include: English grammar; reading; writing; mathematics; science and the scientific method; U.S. history and government; art, music, health and nutrition; practical arts; physical education; geography; and foreign languages. Many schools are also beginning to teach the history, culture, and traditions of other nations and peoples. Some students also receive an introduction to the world of work, through programmes that promote career awareness.

State and local education authorities are responsible for determining and developing **public school curricula.** The Federal Government is expressly forbidden by statute from intrusion into curricular decisions. There is no national public curriculum at any level of education. In fact, the U.S. Congress carefully monitors federal assistance for curriculum development to assure that State and local control is maintained. However, the Congress has mandated that every school receiving federal funds must provide a programme designed to teach students that drug use is wrong and harmful. Also, the federal government sometimes funds curricular research and develops model curricula that State and local authorities may choose to utilize. In this way, the Federal Government exercises leadership without directly intervening in the affairs of the public school system.

Generally, states exercise their responsibility for public school curricula in five major ways: by establishing the graduation requirements for students within the state; by selecting the texts to be used in classrooms; by developing minimum-competency tests; by issuing state curriculum guides; and by providing technical assistance. For example, most states require that students take one or more social studies courses in the area of American history or the history of their particular state. Local school districts may add curriculum requirements of their own, such as local history or sex education.

Minimum-competency testing is a means by which the states may influence local curricula. This practice originated in the middle 1970s, and some form of minimum competency testing now exists in at least forty states. Initially, many states mandated that students meet a minimum standard of competency before receiving a high school diploma. Gradually, testing has been extended to the lower grades to monitor early progress. Now, states conduct minimum-competency testing at two or three stages of a student’s education to pinpoint problems and to institute remedial help. Reading, writing, and mathematics are the three subject areas most commonly targeted for minimum-competency testing, typically in Grades III or IV; VI, VIII, or IX; and XI or XII.

States also influence local curricula by providing technical assistance, which is delivered primarily by State curriculum specialists in the various fields (e.g. the sciences). Among other activities, these specialists work with local district personnel individually, conduct regional and statewide workshops for groups, and organize the development of State curriculum guides (materials suggested but not mandated).

Despite the decentralized nature of American education, a certain pragmatic standardization of curriculum exists. First, the textbook is probably the greatest single determinant of curriculum, and many publishers have successfully established large markets among the nation’s schools. Second, college and university entrance requirements strongly affect curricular decisions at the secondary level because local school authorities want their graduates to be readily admitted to institutions of higher education. In some cases, a high school’s curriculum may be designed wholly or in large part to prepare students to enter college, even though the college-bound population may be only about 50% or 60% of the high school’s student body. Third, national achievement and aptitude tests developed by private, non-profit organizations influence secondary school curricula.

By 2001, almost all states, plus the District of Columbia, had developed and put in place ***academic standards*** that described what students should know and be able to do in mathematics, language arts, science and social studies. Most states also now have *content standards* that describe the body of knowledge that all students should know, and *performance standards* that describe what level of performance is considered basic, proficient and advanced (the exact terms used vary by school system.) Despite significant progress in setting academic standards, debate often takes place over whether standards are too high, too low, clear enough or sufficiently relevant.

The United States has **no official examination system** to assess competency as a requirement for the high school diploma. Decisions concerning promotion of students from one grade to the next are made according to a variety of policies at the local school district level. There are a variety of private examination companies that administer tests that aid some colleges and universities in the selection of high school graduates for admission. However, not all institutions rely on such examinations to the same degree, and some not rely on them at all.Many students who leave school before high school graduation return to take a General Educational Development (GED) test, a comprehensive examination of basic skills and knowledge taught in elementary school and high school. A certificate of success on the GED is often accepted as the equivalent of a high school diploma. In many cases high schools offer special short-term courses designed to prepare students to pass the GED test.

The percentage of high school graduates enrolling immediately after high school has increased, from 49% in 1972 to 62% in 1994 (67% in 2004). Access to college has increased for high school graduates from families at all income levels, but enrolment rates still vary with income. In 2004, 49.6% of high school graduates from low income families went directly to college, compared to 79.3% of high school graduates from high income families.

**3. Assessing learning achievement nation-wide. Standardised testing.**

“The United States has had a highly developed system for measuring student achievement, and this system has been used extensively in school systems, at state levels and at the national level for a variety of purposes.

The norms of national achievement and aptitude tests tend to become accepted norms for achievement locally; and, consciously or unconsciously, teachers may begin to teach solely in preparation for these tests. Three tests are particularly influential.

One is the **National Assessment of Educational Progress** (NAEP), a periodic measurement of the skills and knowledge of representative samples of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds in reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and other subjects.

Two other tests that have proven highly influential on curriculum are the **Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT, now the Scholastic Assessment Test)** and the **American College Testing Programme (ACT)**. The SAT is a test of vocabulary and reasoning skills that is taken by about 1.1 million students each year. The ACT is similar to the SAT but covers social studies and the natural sciences in addition to math and English. About 800,000 students take this test each year.

**The NAEP** has assessed students’ knowledge in reading, writing, science, mathematics, and other subjects for more than twenty years. NAEP analyzes both short- and long-term trends.

Participation in the **SAT** examination has increased significantly. In 1995, 42% of high school seniors took the SAT, up from 32% in 1976. The SAT (formerly known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test) was not designed as an indicator of student achievement, but rather to help predict how well students will do in college. Between 1984/85 and 1994/95, mathematics SAT scores increased by seven points, while verbal scores fell by three points. Although considerable differences exist among students from different racial/ethnic groups, these differences narrowed between 1984/85 and 1994/95. Combined mathematics and verbal scores for white students rose by only seven points compared with an increase of 22 points for black students and 34 points for Asian American students.

The percentage of graduating seniors who took the ACT has risen, from **32%** in 1991 to 37% in 1995.

**Admission to a University**. Although admission policies vary from one university to the next, most determine admission based on several criteria, including a student's high school course of study, high school Grade Point Average (GPA), participation in extracurricular activities, SAT or ACT exam scores, a written essay, and possibly a personal interview.

The university admissions office considers whether a student has taken courses in high school that have prepared him/her for more difficult coursework. A student's high school GPA is also considered. A GPA is a quantitative figure representing a student's accumulated grades. Each letter grade is assigned a number of points: A = 4 points, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1 and F = 0 points. A GPA is calculated by adding all of the points earned for each course grade and dividing the total points by the total number of courses taken. For example, a GPA of 3.0 is a "B" average for all of the courses taken.

University admissions officers like to see applications from high school students who have participated in extracurricular activities, such as scholastic clubs, athletic teams, student government, and philanthropic clubs. Voluntary participation in these kinds of activities is an indication that students have learned valuable life lessons, such as teamwork, leadership, or civic responsibility.

Most students in the United States take the SAT Reasoning Text or the ACT during their final year of high school. Each university sets a minimum SAT or ACT score that a student must achieve in order to gain admission. These are standardized quantitative examinations. The SAT tests critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills. The ACT tests English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning, and includes an optional writing test.

Universities often require students to write an essay as part of the application process. Each admissions office determines the length and content of the essay. The applicant also may be required to have a personal interview with a representative from the admissions office.

## Higher education

Higher education in the U.S. is also called postsecondary education, but the latter term also refers to all formal education beyond secondary school, whether higher education (defined as degree-granting education) or not. Postsecondary education is broadly divided into two different sectors: postsecondary vocational education and training, which is non-degree but can produce some transferable credits under certain circumstances; and higher education, which includes studies undertaken in degree-granting institutions for academic credit. However, the U.S. higher education system is not legally organized into separate university and non-university sub-systems as are some other national systems, but is comprehensive. It is a diverse and autonomous community of publicly and privalely supported institutions. Current data indicate that there are 6,479 postsecondary institutions, including 4,182 non-degree institutions. Of the degree-granting higher education institutions, some 1,732 award only the associate degree plus sub-bachelor's certificates and diplomas; 702 award only the bachelor's degree; 1,094 award degrees and certificates beyond the bachelor's degree but not the research doctorate; and 654 institutions award the research doctorate. The U.S. higher education system is characterized by accessibility, diversity, and autonomy and is known for both its size and quality. The federal government has no jurisdiction or authority over the recognition of educational institutions, members of the academic professions, programmes or curricula, or degrees or other qualifications. Nearly all U.S. postsecondary institutions are licensed, or chartered, by a state or municipal government to operate under the ownership of either a government (if public) or a private corporation (if independent), and may be for-profit or not-for-profit enterprises. Religious institutions are considered independent, or private. Post-secondary education in America is widespread and diverse. There are literally thousands of degree-granting universities, four-year colleges and two-year colleges. Some of these are funded by State or local governments, while others are funded by religious denominations or are privately endowed.  In addition to these degree-granting institutions, there are also proprietary schools that offer specific vocational training.  These proprietary schools are generally operated as businesses for profit.

Post-secondary institutions, both public and private, derive their authority to function and grant degrees from the state in which they are located. This authority is established in the State constitution or in laws passed by the legislature.

Nearly all institutions of higher education receive some form of financial support, either direct or indirect, from both State and Federal governments, though public institutions generally receive a substantially higher proportion of their budget from government funding. Other sources of income for both public and private institutions include: student tuition and fees, endowment earnings, and contributions from philanthropic organizations and individuals. Many public community colleges, particularly those drawing students from several school districts, receive the bulk of their public funds from separate community college districts established for this purpose. In a growing number of states, public community colleges receive more than half their funding from the State government.

Generally speaking, there are **three main types of degree-granting higher-education institutions in the United States:** *the two-year community or junior college; the four-year undergraduate college; and the university*. The university normally includes undergraduate as well as graduate and professional education. Each category has both public and private institutions. Two-year institutions offer terminal degrees (associate degrees) for two years of study or preparation for moving into the last two years of undergraduate study at a four-year college. Four-year colleges usually award undergraduate degrees for four years of study.  However, a growing number of four-year institutions offer the last two years of undergraduate study and two years of graduate work for a graduate degree, awarding both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Universities usually offer four years of undergraduate study and two to four years of graduate study, awarding undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees. [*Community college*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_colleges_in_the_United_States) or [junior college](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junior_college) typically offer two-year associate degrees, although some community colleges offer a limited number of bachelor's degrees. Some community college students choose to [transfer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transfer_student) to a four-year institution to pursue a bachelor's degree. Community colleges are generally publicly funded (usually by local cities or counties) and offer career certifications and part-time programs.

*Four-year institutions* may be [public](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_university) or [private](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_university) colleges or universities.

Some [counties and cities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_governments_in_the_United_States) have established and funded four-year institutions. Some of these institutions, such as the [City University of New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_University_of_New_York), [City Colleges of Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Colleges_of_Chicago), and [San Francisco City College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_City_College), are still operated by local governments. Others such as the [University of Louisville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Louisville) and [Wichita State University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wichita_State_University) are now operated as state universities.

Private institutions are privately funded and there is a wide variety in size, focus, and operation. Some private institutions are large research universities, while others are small [liberal arts colleges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_arts_colleges_in_the_United_States) that concentrate on undergraduate education. Some private universities are [nonsectarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonsectarian) and [secular](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular), while others are religiously-affiliated. While most private institutions are non-profit, a growing number in the past decade have been established as [for-profit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For-profit_higher_education_in_the_United_States).

Curriculum varies widely depending on the institution. Typically, an undergraduate student will be able to select an [academic "*major*" or concentration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_major), which comprises the main or special subjects, and students may change their major one or more times.

Some students, typically those with a bachelor's degree, may choose to continue on to [*graduate*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graduate_school) *or* [*professional school*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_school), sometimes attached to a university. Graduate degrees may be either [master's degrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master%27s_degree) (e.g., [M.A.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Arts), [M.S.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Science), [M.B.A.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Business_Administration), [M.S.W.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Social_Work)) or a [doctorates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctorate) (e.g., [Ph.D.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Philosophy), [J.D.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juris_Doctor), ("Doctor of Law"), [M.D.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Medicine), [D.O.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D.O.)). Programs range from full-time, evening and executive which allows for flexibility with students' schedules. [Academia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academia)-focused graduate school typically includes some combination of coursework and research (often requiring a [thesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thesis) or [dissertation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissertation) to be written), while professional graduate-level schools grants a [first professional degree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_professional_degree). These include [medical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_school), [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_school_in_the_United_States), [business](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_school), [education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_of_education), [divinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divinity_school), [art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_school), [journalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism_school), [social work](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_on_Social_Work_Education), [architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_school), and [engineering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engineering_school) schools.

Most [schools in the USA](http://www.educations.com/united_states_of_america____34_.html) have *a two-semester system*, each semester lasting for roughly 15-17 weeks. The fall semester usually starts in late-August or September, and finishes just before or after Christmas. The spring semester begins in early- to mid-January and runs until May or sometimes June.

Some schools in the United States use a semester system called the quarter system, each quarter lasting for about 10 weeks. There are also schools which schedule three-semester academic years, where each semester is 10-12 weeks.

The 'years' at American higher educational institutions are as follows:

* Freshman: 1st year
* Sophomore: 2nd year
* Junior: 3rd year
* Senior: 4th year

Higher education institutions may be classified according to the total number of degrees they conferred and the field in which the degrees were awarded. This classification divides such institutions into doctoral, comprehensive, general baccalaureate, and specialized institutions. Doctoral institutions are characterized by a significant level of commitment to doctoral programmes and considerable activity in them. Comprehensive institutions have a strong post-baccalaureate programme but do not engage in significant doctoral-level education. General baccalaureate institutions focus primarily on undergraduate baccalaureate education. The category of specialized includes professional and other highly-focused institutions.

**The associate of arts (A.A.) or the associate of science (A.S.) degree** is usually earned at a community or junior college upon completion of two years of study. In many instances, this degree represents the same level of educational achievement as completion of the first two years of a four-year college or university, and some students who have earned the associate’s degree transfer to four-year institutions. Other students, especially those who have completed vocational training for a particular job, normally enter the work force as mid-level technicians.

**The bachelor’s degree** normally requires four years of academic study beyond the high school diploma. In recent years, accelerated learning plans, credit by examination, or practical work experience, year-round study plans, and other innovations have enabled some students to complete the programme in fewer than four years. The two most common bachelor’s degrees are the bachelor of arts (B.A.) and the bachelor of science (B.S.). The former normally requires more courses in the arts and humanities, whereas the latter usually places greater emphasis on the sciences. Other common bachelor degrees include the B. Ed. (bachelor of education), the B.F.A. (bachelor of fine arts), the B. Mus. (bachelor of music) and the B.B.A. (bachelor of business administration). The B. Arch. (bachelor of architecture) is often a five-year programme.  The B.D. (bachelor of divinity) and LL.B. (bachelor of law) are professional degrees, usually requiring three years of study beyond a B.A. or B.S.

**Master’s degree** programmes vary considerably among the institutions that award them.  Masters degrees are awarded in many academic fields, but most are called master of arts (M.A.) or master of science (M.S.) degrees, or are professional degrees such as master of nursing (M.Nurs.) or master of social work (M.S.W.). Programmes leading to this degree usually require one to two years of advanced study in graduate-level courses and seminars.  Frequently a thesis is required and/or a final oral or written examination. Requirements may differ not only from institution to institution but also from department to department within an institution.

The **doctorate** is considered the highest academic degree conferred in the United States. It attests to the ability of its holder to conduct original research of a high order. The most frequently awarded doctorate is the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.). Others include the doctor of education (D.Ed.) and the doctor of divinity (D.D.). Since work at the doctoral level is often individualized, the specific requirements may vary widely. In general, however, the degree requires a minimum of two years of course work beyond the master’s degree level, success in a qualifying examination, proficiency in one or two foreign languages, and/or in an equivalent research resource (such as statistics) considered appropriate to a particular field of specialization, and completion of a doctoral dissertation that is normally intended to represent an original contribution to knowledge in the candidate’s chosen field.

Included among first professional degrees are dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), law (LL.B. or J.D.), medicine (M.D.), theology (B.D. or M. Div., or Rabbi), veterinary medicine (D.M.V.), podiatry (Pod.D. or D.P.) or podiatric medicine (D.C. or D.C.M.)  and pharmacy (D.Phar.). The education prerequisite and length of study required for these degrees vary with the field of study. For example, in medicine most students, after receiving a bachelor’s degree, complete four years of medical studies before receiving the M.D. degree. Subsequently, they often enter into three years of residency training in a specialty

University students pursuing a Bachelor's degree are called "undergraduates," whereas students pursuing a Master's or Doctoral degree are called "graduate students." American undergraduate students will say they are "going to school" or "going to college," which means they are attending university. A common question one student asks another is, "What is your major?" This means, "What is your major field of study?"

Most universities give undergraduate students a liberal education, which means students are required to take courses across several disciplines before they specialize in a major field of study. Graduate and professional (such as medicine or law) programs are specialized.

At the university level, most *courses* are only one semester long. Each course is assigned a number of credit hours*. Credit hours* are usually based on how much time is spent in class each week. Most courses are 3 credits. However, some courses may be 1, 2, 4 or 5 credits. All degree programs require students to complete a minimum number of credit hours before graduation. Most Bachelor's degree programs in the United States do not require students to write a final thesis.

Selection for *admission to a graduate program* is based on several criteria. These include completion of a Bachelor's degree, the student's undergraduate coursework, and their GPA. Students are also expected to write an essay as part of their application or submit a writing sample. Most Master's programs require students to have a minimum score on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), which tests verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills.

Students continue to take courses at the graduate level. A final thesis is required for most Master's programs. *Doctoral* students take courses until they have earned enough credit hours to attempt their qualifying examinations, which are usually taken over several days and often include both a written and oral component. After doctoral students pass their qualifying exams, they are advanced to candidacy and can begin writing their dissertation.

### State governments do not exercise direct influence on the *curriculum* of private or public post-secondary academic institutions. Curricular decisions are made most often within academic departments, and individual professors are responsible for the content of their courses. The institutions usually require that a student earn a given number of credits, often prescribing specific courses or areas of study as prerequisites for graduation. Credit System: Each course you take at a [university in the USA](http://www.educations.com/united_states_of_america____34_.html) is counted as a certain number of credits, also called hours or units. You normally need between 130 and 180 credits to graduate. One credit is equal to 50 minutes of class time per week; completing a class that meets 3 times every week is equal to earning 3 credits. Full-time students usually earn 15 credits every semester. Students are assigned an academic advisor at the school who helps plan their credits and courses. Many institutions also require a student to take a specified number of courses in a major field of study before conferring a degree.

However, states can exercise indirect control over post-secondary academic institutions, both public and private,  through their licensing authority. For example, through power delegated to professional licensing boards, states can require that professionals such as doctors, attorneys, engineers, and teachers complete a minimum number of courses from a specified list of academic or professional subjects to qualify for a license to practice.

During the 2004/05 academic year, 4,216 accredited institutions (public and private) offered degrees at the associate degree level or above. These included 2,533 four-year colleges and universities, and 1,683 two-year colleges. Institutions awarding various degrees in 1999-2000 numbered 2,546 for associate degrees, 1,995 for bachelor’s degrees, 1,499 for master’s degrees, and 535 for doctoral degrees.

Despite the sizeable numbers of small colleges, most students attend the larger colleges and universities. In fall 1999, 40% of institutions had fewer than 1,000 students; however, these campuses enrolled only 4% of college students. While 10% of the campuses enrolled 10,000 or more students, they accounted for 50% of total college enrolment.

For the 2003/04 academic year, annual undergraduate charges for tuition, room and board were estimated to be US$9,249 at public colleges and US$24,636 at private colleges.

More people are completing college. Of the 1,399,500 bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2003/04, the largest numbers of degrees were conferred in the fields of business (307,100), social sciences and history (150,400), and education (106,300). At the master’s degree level (558,940 degrees conferred in 2003/04), the largest fields were education (162,345) and business (139,347). The largest fields at the doctoral degree level (48,378 degrees conferred) were education (7,088), engineering (5,923), biological and biomedical sciences (5,242), and psychology (4,827).

[**Educational attainment in the United States**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_attainment_in_the_United_States)**,** Age 25 and over (2009)

**Education Percentage**

High school graduate 86.68%

Some college 55.60%

Associate and/or bachelor's degree 38.54%

Bachelor's degree 29.0%

Master's degree 7.62%

Doctorate or professional degree 2.94%

### The status ladder

In the [*Times Higher Education World University Rankings*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Times_Higher_Education_World_University_Rankings), 27 of the top 50 universities, and 72 institutions of the top 200, are located within the United States. The US has thereby more than twice as many universities represented in the top 200 as does the country with the next highest number, the United Kingdom, which has 29. Included among the top 20 institutions identified by [ARWU](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_Ranking_of_World_Universities) in 2009 are six of the eight schools in the [Ivy League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivy_League); 4 of the 10 schools in the [University of California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_California) system (Berkeley, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco); the private Universities of [Stanford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_University), [Chicago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Chicago), and [Johns Hopkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johns_Hopkins_University); the public Universities of [Washington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Washington) and [Wisconsin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Wisconsin-Madison); and the [Massachusetts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_Institute_of_Technology) and [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_Institute_of_Technology) Institutes of Technology.

Also renowned within the United States are the so-called [Little Ivies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Ivies) and a number of prestigious [liberal arts colleges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_arts_college). Certain public universities (sometimes referred to as [Public Ivies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Ivies)) are also recognized for their outstanding record in scholarship. Some of these institutions currently place among the elite in certain measurements of graduate education and research, especially among engineering and medical schools.

Each state in the United States maintains its own [public university](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_university) system, which is always non-profit. The [State University of New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_University_of_New_York) and the [California State University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California_State_University) are the largest public higher education systems in the United States; SUNY is the largest system that includes community colleges, while CSU is the largest without. Most areas also have [private institutions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_university), which may be for-profit or non-profit. Unlike many other nations, there are no public universities at the national level outside of the [military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Armed_Forces) [service academies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_academies).

Prospective students applying to attend four of the five [military academies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_academies) require, with limited exceptions, nomination by a member of [Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress). Like acceptance to "top tier" universities, competition for these limited nominations is intense and must be accompanied by superior scholastic achievement and evidence of "leadership potential."

Aside from these aforementioned schools, academic reputations vary widely among the 'middle-tier' of American schools, (and even among academic departments within each of these schools.) Most public and private institutions fall into this 'middle' range. Some institutions feature honors colleges or other rigorous programs that challenge academically exceptional students, who might otherwise attend a 'top-tier' college. Aware of the status attached to the perception of the college that they attend, students often apply to a range of schools. Some apply to a relatively prestigious school with a low acceptance rate, gambling on the chance of acceptance but, as a backup, also apply to a [safety school](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Safety_school).

Lower status institutions include [community colleges](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_college). These are primarily two-year public institutions, which individual states usually require to accept all local residents who seek admission, and offer [associate's degrees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associate%27s_degree) or vocational certificate programs. Many community colleges have relationships with four-year state universities and colleges or even private universities that enable their students to transfer to these universities for a four-year degree after completing a two-year program at the community college.

Regardless of perceived prestige, many institutions feature at least one distinguished academic department, and most post-secondary American students attend one of the 2,400 four-year colleges and universities or 1,700 two-year colleges not included among the twenty-five or so 'top-tier' institutions.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

* + 1. What are the major goals and methods of American education?
    2. Is there a national system of education in the USA?
    3. What is the structure of elementary and secondary education?
    4. Is there any uniformity in the organization and curricula of American schools?
    5. Is there a national curriculum? What is the core of required subjects? What are the electives?
    6. What is the difference between the SAT and the ACT? How do students benefit from taking standardized tests?
    7. What is the structure of the higher education? What categories of institutions does the system of higher education comprise?
    8. What are the most prestigious institutions of higher education?
    9. What are the requirements for earning a university or college degree? What is a major/ minor, electives?
    10. How are colleges and universities funded?

**5 SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN THE USA**

**1. History of American welfare**

**2. Health and medical care**

**3. Medicaid and Medicare**

**4. Social Security as social welfare**

**1. History of American Welfare**

Welfare is the provision of a minimal level of [well-being](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellbeing) and [social support](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_support) for all citizens, sometimes referred to as *public aid*. In most developed countries welfare is largely provided by the government, and to a lesser extent, [charities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charitable_organization), informal social groups, religious groups, and inter-governmental organizations.

The [*welfare state*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_state) expands on this concept to include services such as [universal healthcare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_healthcare) and [unemployment insurance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unemployment_insurance).

The following is a short **timeline of welfare** in the United States:

1880s–1890s: Attempts were made to move poor people from work yards to [poor houses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_houses) if they were in search of relief funds.

1893–1894: Attempts were made at the first unemployment payments, but were unsuccessful due to the 1893–1894 [recession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recession).

1932: The Great Depression had gotten worse and the first attempts to fund relief failed. The "Emergency Relief Act", which gave local governments $300 million, was passed into law.

1933: In March 1933, [President](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States) [Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt) pushed Congress to establish the [Civilian Conservation Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Conservation_Corps).

1935: The [Social Security Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Security_Act) was passed on June 17, 1935. The bill included direct relief (cash, food stamps, etc.) and changes for unemployment insurance.

1940: Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) was established.

1964: [Johnson's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyndon_Johnson) [War on Poverty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Poverty) is underway, and the [Economic Opportunity Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Opportunity_Act) was passed. Commonly known as "the [Great Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Society)"

1996: Passed under Clinton, the "[Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_Responsibility_and_Work_Opportunity_Reconciliation_Act) of 1996" becomes law.

2013: [Affordable Care Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affordable_Care_Act) goes into effect with large increases in Medicaid and subsidized medical insurance premiums go into effect.

Unlike in Europe, [Christian democratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_democratic) and [social democratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_democratic) theories have not played a major role in shaping welfare policy in the United States. Entitlement programs in the U.S. were virtually non-existent until the administration of [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Delano_Roosevelt) and the implementation of the [New Deal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal) programs in response to the [Great Depression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression_in_the_United_States). Between 1932 and 1981, [modern American liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Liberalism_in_the_United_States) dominated U.S. economic policy and the entitlements grew along with [American middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_middle_class) wealth.

Eligibility for welfare benefits depends on a variety of factors, including gross and net income, family size, pregnancy, [homelessness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeless), unemployment, and serious medical conditions like blindness, kidney failure or AIDS.

**Federal welfare programs.** Colonial legislatures and later State governments adopted legislation patterned after the English ["poor" laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Act_for_the_Relief_of_the_Poor_1601). Aid to veterans, often free grants of land, and pensions for widows and handicapped veterans, have been offered in all U.S. wars. Following World War I, provisions were made for a full-scale system of hospital and medical care benefits for veterans. By 1929, workers' compensation laws were in effect in all but four States. These state laws made industry and businesses responsible for the costs of compensating workers or their survivors when the worker was injured or killed in connection with his or her job. Retirement programs for mainly State and local government paid teachers, police officers, and fire fighters—date back to the 19th century. All these social programs were far from universal and varied considerably from one state to another.

Prior to the [Great Depression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression) the United States had social programs that mostly centered around individual efforts, family efforts, church charities, business workers compensation, life insurance and sick leave programs along with some state tax supported social programs. The misery and poverty of the great depression threatened to overwhelm all these programs. The severe Depression of the 1930s made Federal action almost a necessity, as neither the States and the local communities, businesses and industries, nor private charities had the financial resources to cope with the growing need among the American people. Beginning in 1932, the Federal Government first made loans, then grants, to States to pay for direct relief and work relief. After that, special Federal emergency relief like the [Civilian Conservation Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Conservation_Corps) and other public works programs were started. In 1935, President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt)'s administration proposed to Congress federal social relief programs and a federally sponsored retirement program. Congress followed by the passage of the 37 page Social Security Act, signed into law August 14, 1935 and "effective" by 1939—just as [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) began. This program was expanded several times over the years.

**Welfare reform (1990s)** Before the [Welfare Reform Act of 1996](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_Reform_Act_of_1996), welfare assistance was "once considered an open-ended right," but [welfare reform](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_reform) converted it "into a finite program built to provide short-term cash assistance and steer people quickly into jobs." Prior to reform, states were given "limitless” money by the federal government, increasing per family on welfare, under the 60-year-old [Aid to Families with Dependent Children](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aid_to_Families_with_Dependent_Children) (AFDC) program. This gave states no incentive to direct welfare funds to the neediest recipients or to encourage individuals to go off welfare benefits (the state lost federal money when someone left the system). Nationwide, one child in seven received AFDC funds, which mostly went to single mothers.

In 1996, under the [Bill Clinton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Clinton) [administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinton_administration), [Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress) passed the [Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_Responsibility_and_Work_Opportunity_Reconciliation_Act), which gave more control of the welfare system to the states though there are basic requirements the states need to meet with regards to welfare services. Still, most states offer basic assistance, such as health care, food assistance, child care assistance, unemployment, cash aid, and housing assistance. After reforms, which President Clinton said would "end welfare as we know it," amounts from the federal government were given out in a [flat rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_rate) per state based on [population](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population).

Each state must meet certain criteria to ensure recipients are being encouraged to work themselves out of welfare. The new program is called [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temporary_Assistance_for_Needy_Families) (TANF). It encourages states to require some sort of employment search in exchange for providing funds to individuals, and imposes a five-year lifetime limit on cash assistance. The bill restricts welfare from most legal [immigrants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigrant) and increased financial assistance for child care. The federal government also maintains a contingency $2 billion TANF fund (TANF CF) to assist states that may have rising unemployment. The new TANF program expired on September 30, 2010, on schedule with states drawing down the entire original emergency fund of $5 billion and the contingency fund of $2 billion allocated by ARRA. Reauthorization of TANF was not accomplished in 2011, but TANF block grants were extended as part of the [Claims Resolution Act of 2010](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claims_Resolution_Act_of_2010) .

Following these changes, millions of people left the welfare rolls (a 60% drop overall), employment rose, and the child poverty rate was reduced. A 2007 [Congressional Budget Office](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congressional_Budget_Office) study found that incomes in affected families rose by 35%. The reforms were "widely applauded" after "bitter protest." Critics of the reforms sometimes point out that the massive decrease of people on the welfare rolls during the 1990s wasn't due to a rise in actual gainful employment in this population, but rather, was due almost exclusively to their offloading into [workfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workfare), giving them a different classification than classic welfare recipient. The late 1990s were also considered an unusually strong economic time, and critics voiced their concern about what would happen in an economic downturn.

**2**. **Health care in the United States**

**Health care in the United States** is provided by many distinct organizations. [Health care](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care) facilities are largely owned and operated by [private sector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_sector) businesses. 58% of US community hospitals are [non-profit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-profit_hospital), 21% are government owned, and 21% are [for-profit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For-profit_hospital). According to the [World Health Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization) (WHO), the United States spent more on [health care per capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_total_health_expenditure_(PPP)_per_capita) ($8,608), and more on health care as percentage of its [GDP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_domestic_product) (17.2%), than any other nation in 2011.

60–65% of healthcare provision and spending comes from programs such as [Medicare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicare_(United_States)), [Medicaid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicaid), the [Children's Health Insurance Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_Health_Insurance_Program), and the [Veterans Health Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Health_Administration). Most of the population under 67 is insured by their or a family member's employer, some buy health insurance on their own, and the remainder are uninsured. [Health insurance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance_in_the_United_States) for [public sector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_sector) employees is primarily provided by the government.

The United States life expectancy of 78.4 years at birth, up from 75.2 years in 1990, ranks it 50th among 221 nations, and 27th out of the 34 industrialized [OECD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OECD) countries, down from 20th in 1990. Of 17 high-income countries studied by the [National Institutes of Health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institutes_of_Health) in 2013, the United States had the highest or near-highest prevalence of obesity, car accidents, [infant mortality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_mortality), heart and lung disease, sexually transmitted infections, adolescent pregnancies, injuries, and homicides. On average, a U.S. male can be expected to live almost four fewer years than those in the top-ranked country, though notably Americans aged 75 live longer than those who reach that age in other developed nations.

A comprehensive 2007 study by European doctors found the five-year [cancer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cancer) survival rate was significantly higher in the U.S. than in all 21 European nations studied, 66.3% for men versus the European mean of 47.3% and 62.9% versus 52.8% for women. Americans undergo cancer screenings at significantly higher rates than people in other developed countries, and access [MRI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magnetic_resonance_imaging) and [CT scans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-ray_computed_tomography) at the highest rate of any OECD nation. People in the U.S. diagnosed with [high cholesterol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypercholesterolemia) or [hypertension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypertension) access pharmaceutical treatments at higher rates than those diagnosed in other developed nations, and are more likely to successfully control the conditions. [Diabetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diabetes_mellitus) are more likely to receive treatment and meet treatment targets in the U.S. than in Canada, England, or Scotland. A study showed that the U.S., Japan, and France recorded the highest survival rates among 31 nations for four types of cancer.

America is a global leader in medical innovation. The US solely developed or contributed significantly to 9 of the top 10 most important medical innovations since 1975 as ranked by a 2001 poll of physicians, while the EU and Switzerland together contributed to five. Since 1966, Americans have received more [Nobel Prizes in Medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nobel_laureates_in_Physiology_or_Medicine) than the rest of the world combined. From 1989 to 2002, four times more money was invested in private biotechnology companies in America than in Europe. The United States also has the most advanced hospitals in the world.

[Gallup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallup_(company)) recorded that the uninsured rate among U.S. adults was 11.9% for the first quarter of 2015, continuing the decline of the uninsured rate outset by the Affordable Care Act. A 2004 [Institute of Medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_Medicine) (IOM) report said: "The United States is among the few industrialized nations in the world that *does not guarantee access* to health care for its population." A 2004 [OECD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) report said: "With the exception of Mexico, Turkey, and the United States, all [OECD countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development#Member_countries) had achieved universal or near-universal (at least 98.4% insured) coverage of their populations by 1990." Recent evidence demonstrates that lack of health insurance causes some 45,000 to 48,000 unnecessary deaths every year in the United States. In 2007, 62.1% of filers for bankruptcies claimed high medical expenses. A 2013 study found that about 25% of all senior citizens declare bankruptcy due to medical expenses, and 43% are forced to mortgage or sell their primary residence.

On March 23, 2010, the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patient_Protection_and_Affordable_Care_Act) (PPACA) became law, providing for [major changes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patient_Protection_and_Affordable_Care_Act#Overview_of_provisions) in health insurance. The medical system will be forced to change normal procedures. They will be required to prepare for upcoming programs to meet federal regulations. The constitutionality of the law, as well as its impact on insurance coverage, insurance quality, insurance premiums, medical quality, and the economy are subjects of ongoing debate.

[Health care](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care) facilities are largely owned and operated by [private sector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_sector) businesses. [Health insurance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance_in_the_United_States) for [public sector](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_sector) employees is primarily provided by the government. 60–65% of healthcare provision and spending comes from programs such as [Medicare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicare_(United_States)), [Medicaid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicaid), [TRICARE](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRICARE), the [Children's Health Insurance Program](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_Health_Insurance_Program), and the [Veterans Health Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Health_Administration). Most of the population under 65 is insured by their, or a family member's employer. Some buy health insurance on their own, and the remainder are uninsured.

Of 17 high-income countries studied by the [National Institutes of Health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institutes_of_Health) in 2013, the United States was at or near the top in [infant mortality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_mortality), heart and lung disease, sexually transmitted infections, adolescent pregnancies, injuries, homicides, and rates of disability. Together, such issues place the U.S. at the bottom of the list for life expectancy. On average, a U.S. male can be expected to live almost four fewer years than those in the top-ranked country.

A study by the [National Institutes of Health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institutes_of_Health) reported that the lifetime per capita expenditure at birth, using year 2000 dollars, showed a large difference between health care costs of females ($361,192) and males ($268,679). A large portion of this cost difference is in the shorter lifespan of men, but even after adjustment for age (assume men live as long as women), there still is a 20% difference in lifetime health care expenditures.

[*Medical centers in the United States*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_centers_in_the_United_States). In the U.S., ownership of the health care system is mainly in private hands, though federal, state, county, and city governments also own certain facilities.

The [non-profit hospitals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-profit_hospital) share of total hospital capacity has remained relatively stable (about 70%) for decades. There are also [privately owned for-profit hospitals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For-profit_hospital) as well as [government hospitals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_hospital) in some locations, mainly owned by county and city governments. The [Hill-Burton Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill-Burton_Act) was passed in 1946, which provided federal funding for hospitals in exchange for treating poor patients.

There is no nationwide system of government-owned medical facilities open to the general public but there are local government-owned medical facilities open to the general public. The [U.S. Department of Defense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) operates field hospitals as well as permanent hospitals via the [Military Health System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Health_System) to provide military-funded care to active military personnel.

The federal [Veterans Health Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Health_Administration) operates [VA hospitals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Veterans_Affairs_medical_facilities) open only to veterans, though veterans who seek medical care for conditions they did not receive while serving in the military are charged for services. The [Indian Health Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Health_Service) (IHS) operates facilities open only to Native Americans from recognized tribes. These facilities, plus tribal facilities and privately contracted services funded by IHS to increase system capacity and capabilities, provide medical care to tribespeople beyond what can be paid for by any private insurance or other government programs.

[Hospitals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospital) provide some outpatient care in their emergency rooms and specialty clinics, but primarily exist to provide inpatient care. Hospital [emergency departments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergency_department) and [urgent care](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urgent_care) centers are sources of sporadic problem-focused care. [Surgicenters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surgicenter) are examples of specialty clinics. [Hospice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospice) services for the terminally ill who are expected to live six months or less are most commonly subsidized by charities and government. Prenatal, [family planning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_planning), and [dysplasia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysplasia) clinics are government-funded [obstetric](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obstetric) and [gynecologic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gynecologic) specialty clinics respectively, and are usually staffed by nurse practitioners.

Physicians in the U.S. include those trained by the [U.S. medical education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_education_in_the_United_States) system, and those that are [international medical graduates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_medical_graduate) who have progressed through the necessary steps to acquire a [medical license](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_license) to practice in a state.

The [American College of Physicians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_College_of_Physicians), uses the term *physician* to describe all medical practitioners holding a professional [medical degree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_degree). In the U.S., however, most physicians have either a [Doctor of Medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Medicine) (M.D.) or a [Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Osteopathic_Medicine) (D.O.) degree. The [American Medical Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Medical_Association) as well as the [American Osteopathic Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Osteopathic_Association) both currently use the term *physician* to describe members.

The US does not have a government medical plan or health care service that covers the whole population, like the NHS in the UK. Instead, **obtaining health insurance is the individual’s responsibility**. Most people receive care from private doctors and hospitals and have private health insurance to help cover the cost of doctor and hospital visits.

Around 84.7% of Americans have some form of [**health insurance**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance_in_the_United_States)**;** either through their employer or the employer of their spouse or parent (59.3%), purchased individually (8.9%), or provided by government programs (27.8%; there is some overlap in these figures). All government health care programs have restricted eligibility, and there is no government health insurance company which covers all Americans. Americans without health insurance coverage in 2007 totaled 15.3% of the population, or 45.7 million people.

Among those whose employer pays for health insurance, the employee may be required to contribute part of the cost of this insurance, while the employer usually chooses the insurance company and, for large groups, negotiates with the insurance company. Government programs directly cover 27.8% of the population (83 million), including the elderly, disabled, children, veterans, and some of the poor, and federal law mandates public access to emergency services regardless of ability to pay. Public spending accounts for between 45% and 56.1% of U.S. health care spending.

Some Americans do not qualify for government-provided health insurance, are not provided health insurance by an employer, and are unable to afford, cannot qualify for, or choose not to purchase, private health insurance. When charity or "uncompensated" care is not available, they sometimes simply go without needed medical treatment. This problem has become a source of considerable political controversy on a national level.

**Involved organizations and institutions.** Healthcare is subject to extensive regulation at both the [federal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_government_of_the_United_States) and the [state level](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state). Under this system, the federal government cedes primary responsibility to the states under the [McCarran-Ferguson Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarran-Ferguson_Act). Essential regulation includes the [licensure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licensure) of [health care providers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care_provider) at the state level and the testing and approval of [pharmaceuticals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmaceutical) and [medical devices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_device) by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_and_Drug_Administration_(United_States)) (FDA), and laboratory testing. These regulations are designed to protect consumers from ineffective or fraudulent healthcare. Additionally, states regulate the health insurance market and they often have laws which require that health insurance companies cover certain procedures, although state mandates generally do not apply to the [self-funded health care](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-funded_health_care) plans offered by large employers, which exempt from state laws under preemption clause of the [Employee Retirement Income Security Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Employee_Retirement_Income_Security_Act). In 2010, the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patient_Protection_and_Affordable_Care_Act) (PPACA) was passed by President [Barack Obama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama) and includes various new regulations, with one of the most notable being a [health insurance mandate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_insurance_mandate) which requires all citizens to purchase health insurance. While not regulation per se, the federal government also has a major influence on the healthcare market through its payments to providers under Medicare and Medicaid, which in some cases are used as a reference point in the negotiations between medical providers and insurance companies.

At the federal level, [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Health_and_Human_Services) oversees the various federal agencies involved in health care. The health agencies are a part of the [U.S. Public Health Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Public_Health_Service), and include the Food and Drug Administration, which certifies the safety of food, effectiveness of drugs and medical products, the Centers for Disease Prevention, which prevents disease, premature death, and disability, the Agency of Health Care Research and Quality, the Agency Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which regulates hazardous spills of toxic substances, and the [National Institutes of Health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Institutes_of_Health), which conducts [medical research](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_research).

[State governments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_governments_of_the_United_States) maintain [state health departments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_health_department), and [local governments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_in_the_United_States) ([counties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_(United_States)) and [municipalities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipality)) often have their own health departments, usually branches of the state health department. Regulations of a state board may have executive and police strength to enforce state health laws. In some states, all members of state boards must be health care professionals. Members of state boards may be assigned by the governor or elected by the state committee. Members of local boards may be elected by the mayor council. The McCarran–Ferguson Act, which cedes regulation to the states, does not itself regulate insurance, nor does it mandate that states regulate insurance. "Acts of Congress" that do not expressly purport to regulate the "business of insurance" will not preempt state laws or regulations that regulate the "business of insurance." The Act also provides that federal anti-trust laws will not apply to the "business of insurance" as long as the state regulates in that area, but federal anti-trust laws will apply in cases of boycott, coercion, and intimidation. By contrast, most other federal laws will not apply to insurance whether the states regulate in that area or not.

**Access to care: Cost, affordability, coverage.** The US health system does not provide health care to the country's entire population. Individuals acquire health insurance to offset health care spending. However, lack of adequate health insurance persists and is a known barrier to accessing the healthcare system and receiving appropriate and timely care. Measures of accessibility and affordability tracked by national health surveys include: having a usual source of medical care, visiting the dentist yearly, rates of preventable hospitalizations, reported difficulty seeing a specialist, delaying care due to cost, and rates of health insurance coverage.

As a country, rising health care costs have raised concerns among the public and private sector alike. Between 2000 and 2011, health care expenditures nearly doubled, growing from $1.2 trillion to $2.3 trillion [CDC Health, United States, 2013]. Evidence suggests the rate of growth has slowed in recent years. Other measures of cost captured by national surveys include: health insurance premiums, high out of pocket costs (e.g., deductibles, copayments), and national health expenditures including individual, employer, and government expenditures.

**Population health: Quality, prevention, vulnerable populations.**  The health of the population is also viewed as a measure of the overall effectiveness of the healthcare system. The extent to which the population lives longer healthier lives signals an effective system.

1. While life expectancy is one measure, [HHS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DHHS) uses a **composite health measure** that estimates not only the average length of life, but also, the part of life expectancy that is expected to be "in good or better health, as well as free of activity limitations." Between 1997 and 2010, the number of expected high quality life years increased from 61.1 to 63.2 years for newborns.
2. The underutilization of preventative measures, rates of preventable illness and prevalence of chronic disease suggest that the US healthcare system does not sufficiently promote wellness. Over the past decade rates of teen pregnancy and low birth rates have come down significantly, but not disappeared. Rates of obesity, heart disease (high blood pressure, controlled high cholesterol), and diabetes are areas of major concern. While chronic disease and multiple co-morbidities became increasingly common among a population of elderly Americans who were living longer, the public health system has also found itself fending off a rise of chronically ill younger generation. According to the US Surgeon General "The prevalence of obesity in the U.S. more than doubled (from 15% to 34%) among adults and more than tripled (from 5% to 17%) among children and adolescents from 1980 to 2008."
3. A concern for the health system is that the health gains do not accrue equally to the entire population. In the United States, disparities in health care and health outcomes are widespread. Minorities are more likely to suffer from serious illnesses (e.g., diabetes, heart disease and colon cancer) and less likely to have access to quality health care, including preventative services. Efforts are underway to close the gap and to provide a more equitable system of care.

*Health outcomes:*

* The U.S. has a higher infant mortality rate and lower life expectancy than comparable countries. (WHO 2007, Commonwealth Fund 2007)
* The U.S. has the highest rate of maternal mortality among high-income countries (13 in 100,000), and also the highest rate of C-Sections (32%, as opposed to a WHO recommended 5-15%)
* 45,000 people die each year simply because they have no health insurance (American Journal of Public Health 2009)

*Barriers to care:*

* Around 50 million people do not have health insurance. Over half of them are African Americans. (Center for American Progress 2009)
* Of those who are insured, at least 25 million are underinsured. They often forgo care because of high deductibles and co-pays. (Commonwealth Fund 2008)
* 700,000 families go bankrupt each year just by trying to pay for their health care – even though three quarters of them are insured. (Health Affairs 2006). In comparison, the five largest insurance companies made a combined profit of around $12 billion in 2009. (Department of Health and Human Services 2010)
* U.S. has fewer doctors and nurses than other high-income countries. (WHO 2007)
* Hospitals and doctors are disproportionately located in wealthier areas. Public hospitals are closing in areas where they are most needed.
* The U.S. ranks lowest among high-income countries in its primary care infrastructure. There is a projected shortage of 44,000 primary care doctors within the next 15 years. (WHO, Health Affairs 2008)

*Disparities in access to care:*  
  
The U.S. has a highly stratified system with separate tiers for different categories of people receiving different levels of care.

* The rights of people of color are violated: e.g., the 10-year survival rate for Black people of people with cancer is 60% for Whites and 48% for African Americans. (SEER cancer statistics, also Office of Minority Health)
* The quality of care given to people of color is generally lower, including in the treatment of cancer, heart failure, and pneumonia. (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2009)
* While immigrants are generally healthier than the average citizen upon arrival in the United States, their health tends to deteriorate the longer they remain in the country. (“Unhealthy assimilation", Demography, May 2006)
* Women are more likely than men to forgo needed health care due to cost-related access barriers. (Commonwealth Fund 2007)
* Women’s right to non-discrimination is violated through increasingly restricting those services only women use, reproductive health care.

**3. Medicaid and Medicare**

Medicaid and Medicare are two governmental programs that provide medical and health-related services to specific groups of people in the United States. Although the two programs are very different, they are both managed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Medicare** is a social insurance program that serves more than 44 million enrollees (as of 2008). The program costs about $432 billion, or 3.2% of GDP, in 2007. **Medicaid** is a social welfare (or social protection) program that serves about 40 million people (as of 2007) and costs about $330 billion, or 2.4% of GDP, in 2007. Together, Medicare and Medicaid represent 21% of the FY 2007 U.S. federal government.

Both Medicaid and Medicare were created when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed amendments to the Social Security Act on July 30, 1965.

**Medicaid** is a means-tested health and medical services program for certain individuals and families with low incomes and few resources. Primary oversight of the program is handled at the federal level, but each state:

Establishes its own eligibility standards,

Determines the type, amount, duration, and scope of services,

Sets the rate of payment for services, and

Administers its own Medicaid program.

What **services are provided with Medicaid**? Although the States are the final deciders of what their Medicaid plans provide, there are some mandatory federal requirements that must be met by the States in order to receive federal matching funds. Required services include:

* Inpatient hospital services
* Outpatient hospital services
* Prenatal care
* Vaccines for children
* Physician services
* Nursing facility services for persons aged 21 or older
* Family planning services and supplies
* Rural health clinic services
* Home health care for persons eligible for skilled-nursing services
* Laboratory and x-ray services
* Pediatric and family nurse practitioner services
* Nurse-midwife services
* Federally qualified health-center (FQHC) services and ambulatory services
* Early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment (EPSDT) services for children under age 21

States may also provide optional services and still receive Federal matching funds. The most common of the 34 approved optional Medicaid services are:

* Diagnostic services
* Clinic services
* Intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded (ICFs/MR)
* Prescribed drugs and prosthetic devices
* Optometrist services and eyeglasses
* Nursing facility services for children under age 21
* Transportation services
* Rehabilitation and physical therapy services
* Home and community-based care to certain persons with chronic impairments

**Who is eligible for Medicaid?**

Each state sets its own Medicaid eligibility guidelines. The program is geared towards *people with low incomes, but eligibility also depends on meeting other requirements based on age, pregnancy status, disability status, other assets, and citizenship*.

States must provide Medicaid services for individuals who fall under certain categories of need in order for the state to receive federal matching funds. For example, it is required to provide coverage to certain individuals who receive federally assisted income-maintenance payments and similar groups who do not receive cash payments. Other groups that the federal government considers "categorically needy" and who must be eligible for Medicaid include:

* Individuals who meet the requirements for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program that were in effect in their state on July 16, 1996
* Children under age 6 whose family income is at or below 133% of the Federal poverty level (FPL)
* Pregnant women with family income below 133% of the FPL
* Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients
* Recipients of adoption or foster care assistance under Title IV of the Social Security Act
* Special protected groups such as individuals who lose cash assistance due to earnings from work or from increased Social Security benefits
* Children born after September 30, 1983 who are under age 19 and in families with incomes at or below the FPL
* Certain Medicare beneficiaries

States may also choose to provide Medicaid coverage to other similar groups that share some characteristics with the ones stated above but are more broadly defined. These include:

* Infants up to age 1 and pregnant women whose family income is not more than a state-determined percentage of the FPL
* Certain low-income and low-resource children under the age of 21
* Low-income institutionalized individuals
* Certain aged, blind, or disabled adults with incomes below the FPL
* Certain working-and-disabled persons with family income less than 250 percent of the FPL
* Some individuals infected with tuberculosis
* Certain uninsured or low-income women who are screened for breast or cervical cancer
* Certain "medically needy" persons, which allow States to extend Medicaid eligibility to persons who would be eligible for Medicaid under one of the mandatory or optional groups, except that their income and/or resources are above the eligibility level set by their State.

Medicaid does not provide medical assistance for all poor persons. In fact, it is estimated that about 60% of America's poor are not covered by the program.

**Who pays for services provided by Medicaid?**

Medicaid does not pay money to individuals, but operates in a program that sends payments to the health care providers. States make these payments based on a fee-for-service agreement or through prepayment arrangements such as health maintenance organizations (HMOs).

Each State is then reimbursed for a share of their Medicaid expenditures from the Federal Government. This Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) is determined each year and depends on the State's average per capita income level. Richer states receive a smaller share than poorer states, but by law the FMAP must be between 50% and 83%.

States may impose nominal deductibles, coinsurance, or copayments on some Medicaid beneficiaries for certain services. However, the following Medicaid beneficiaries must be excluded from cost sharing:

* Pregnant women,
* Children under age 18, and
* Hospital or nursing home patients who are expected to contribute most of their income to institutional care.
* All Medicaid beneficiaries must be exempt from copayments for emergency services and family planning services.

What is Medicare? **Medicare i**s a Federal health insurance program that pays for hospital and medical care for elderly and certain disabled Americans.

The program consists of two main parts for hospital and medical insurance (Part A and Part B) and two additional parts that provide flexibility and prescription drugs (Part C and Part D).

**Medicare Part A**, or Hospital Insurance (HI), helps pay for hospital stays, which includes meals, supplies, testing, and a semi-private room. This part also pays for home health care such as physical, occupational, and speech therapy that is provided on a part-time basis and deemed medically necessary. Care in a skilled nursing facility as well as certain medical equipment for the aged and disabled such as walkers and wheelchairs are also covered by Part A. Part A is generally available without having to pay a monthly premium since payroll taxes are used to cover these costs.

**Medicare Part B** is also called Supplementary Medical Insurance (SMI). It helps pay for medically necessary physician visits, outpatient hospital visits, home health care costs, and other services for the aged and disabled. For example, Part B covers:

* Durable medical equipment (canes, walkers, scooters, wheelchairs, etc.)
* Physician and nursing services
* X-rays, laboratory and diagnostic tests
* Certain vaccinations
* Blood transfusions
* Renal dialysis
* Outpatient hospital procedures
* Some ambulance transportation
* Immunosuppressive drugs after organ transplants
* Chemotherapy
* Certain hormonal treatments
* Prosthetic devices and eyeglasses.

Part B requires a monthly premium ($96.40 per month in 2009), and patients must meet an annual deductible ($135.00 in 2009) before coverage actually begins. Enrollment in Part B is voluntary.

**Medicare Advantage Plans (sometimes known as Medicare Part C,** or Medicare + Choice) allow users to design a custom plan that can be more closely aligned with their medical needs. These plans enlist private insurance companies to provide some of the coverage, but details vary based on the program and eligibility of the patient. Some Advantage Plans team up with health maintenance organizations (HMOs) or preferred provider organizations (PPOs) to provide preventive health care or specialist services. Others focus on patients with special needs such as diabetes.

In 2006, Medicare expanded to include a prescription drug plan known as Medicare Part D. Part D is administered by one of several private insurance companies, each offering a plan with different costs and lists of drugs that are covered. Participation in Part D requires payment of a premium and a deductible. Pricing is designed so that 75% of prescription drug costs are covered by Medicare if you spend between $250 and $2,250 in a year. The next $2,850 spent on drugs is not covered, but then Medicare covers 95% of what is spent past $3,600.

What about **services that are not provided through Medicare**?

* Supplemental coverage for medical expenses and services that are not covered by Medicare are offered through MediGap plans. MediGap consists of 12 plans that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have authorized private companies to sell and administer. Since the availability of Medicare Part D, MediGap plans are no longer able to include drug coverage.

**To be eligible for Medicare**, an individual must either be at least 65 years old, under 65 and disabled, or any age with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure that requires dialysis or a transplant.)

In addition, eligibility for Medicare requires that an individual is a U.S. citizen or permanent legal resident for 5 continuous years and is eligible for Social Security benefits with at least ten years of payments contributed into the system.

**Who pays for services provided by Medicare?** Payroll taxes collected through FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) and the Self-Employment Contributions Act are a primary component of Medicare funding. The tax is 2.9% of wages, usually half paid by the employee and half paid by the employer. Moneys are set aside in a trust fund that the government uses to reimburse doctors, hospitals, and private insurance companies. Additional funding for Medicare services comes from premiums, deductibles, coinsurance, and copays.

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**4. Social Security as Social Welfare**

In the United States, the term "social security" is used to cover a large portion of the field of social welfare. This term first came into general use in the United States in 1935, during the Great Depression, when the Social Security Act was passed. It quickly achieved world-wide usage. It was included in the Atlantic Charter, signed by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain on August 14, 1941. It has been included in the constitution of many of the new nations which came into existence after World War II as a major responsibility and objective.

The term "social security" has sometimes been used synonymously with "social welfare" in its widest sense. It is also used in a more restricted sense to mean a government program designed to prevent destitution by providing protection against major personal economic hazards such as unemployment, sickness, invalidity, old age, and the death of the breadwinner. In this sense, social security is primarily an income maintenance program which, in addition to providing cash benefits, may be accompanied by constructive social services to prevent or mitigate the effect of these hazards.

It is in this more restricted sense that the term "social security" is properly used in the United States. Most workers here use it to mean the program of *Federal Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI)* which covers more than 9 out of every 10 workers and their families and is administered nation-wide by the U.S. Social Security Administration. "Social security" and OASDI have become synonymous because, for one thing, the U.S. worker contributes directly from his regular earnings to pay for his protection under this program, and, for another, its history of nearly a quarter of century uninterrupted benefit payments and regular improvements to meet changing needs for protection have brought him to depend on the program as the basic protection for himself and his family in the event of lost income because of retirement, death, or invalidity.

"Social security," as used with reference to the Social Security Act in the United States also encompasses some of what we call "welfare" or "needs" or **"assistance" programs**. These are programs of grants to States for aid and services to needy families with children, maternal and child welfare, aid to the blind, aid to the permanently and totally disabled, and medical assistance to the aged. The term also encompasses programs of unemployment benefits to be administered by the States, and unemployment benefits for Federal employees and ex-servicemen. In addition, the term is frequently used in referring to programs not encompassed by the Social Security Act such as Workmen's Compensation (Employment Accident Insurance) administered by every State and at the Federal level for Federal employees, maritime workers and workers in interstate commerce, as well as programs of temporary cash sickness benefits in four States.

Other Government Programs as Social Welfare

Besides the government programs contained in the Social Security Act itself and the other Federal and State government programs in the United States which are properly classified as social security programs, there are many other government programs in the United States that fall within the broader field of social welfare. Certainly veterans' benefits, public health and medical programs, child welfare services, school lunches, food stamps, surplus food distribution, slum clearance and public housing should be included.

*Private Efforts as Social Welfare*. Besides all the government programs in the field of social welfare, there are many non-governmental programs. The two most important kinds of non-governmental welfare programs are those supported by private philanthropy and those which grow out of the employer-employee relationship (which are usually referred to as "fringe benefits").

Probably the best way to measure the magnitude, character and growth of ***public expenditures for social welfare*** in the United States is to relate these expenditures to the gross national product. As late as 1929, the total public expenditures for social welfare, exclusive of veterans' programs and education, were less than 1 % of the gross national product. If we include public education, we find that now the Federal, State and local governments in the United States are spending about 12% for social welfare.

**Eligibility Requirements for State Welfare Program.** Eligibility for a Welfare program depends on numerous factors. Eligibility is determined using gross and net income, size of the family, and any crisis situation such as medical emergencies, pregnancy, homelessness or unemployment. A case worker is assigned to those applying for aid. They will gather all the necessary information to determine the amount and type of benefits that an individual is eligible for.

The **six programs** most commonly associated with the “social safety net” include: **(1) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), (2) the Food Stamp Program (FSP), (3) Supplemental Security Income (SSI), (4) Medicaid, (5)** [**housing**](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Housing.html) **assistance, and (6) the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).** The federal government is the primary funder of all six, although TANF and Medicaid each require a 25–50 percent state funding match. The first five programs are administered locally (by the states, counties, or local federal agencies), whereas EITC operates as part of the regular federal tax system. Outside the six major programs are many smaller government-assistance programs (e.g., Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children [WIC]; general assistance [GA]; school-based food programs; and Low-Income Home [Energy](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Energy.html) Assistance Program [LIHEAP]), which have extensive numbers of participants but pay quite modest benefits.

The Federal government provides **assistance** through ***TANF******(Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)***. TANF is a grant given to each state to run their own welfare program. To help overcome the former problem of unemployment due to reliance on the welfare system, the TANF grant requires that all recipients of welfare aid must find work within two years of receiving aid, including single parents who are required to work at least 30 hours per week opposed to 35 or 55 required by two parent families. Failure to comply with work requirements could result in loss of benefits. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families pays cash assistance to single-parent or unemployed two-parent families for a limited term. The program also significantly funds job training and child care as a means to discourage welfare dependency and encourage work.

The origins of TANF are in the [Social Security](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/SocialSecurity.html) Act of 1935, which established the Aid to Dependent Children (ADP) program. ADP enabled state governments to help single mothers who were widowed or abandoned by their husbands. It was originally designed to allow mothers to stay at home and take care of their children, providing cash benefits for the basic requirements of food, shelter, and clothing. The program was expanded in the 1950s and 1960s to provide cash assistance to needy children and families regardless of the reason for parental absence. This expansion coincided with renaming the program Aid to Families with Dependent Children. While AFDC was principally a federal program managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, it was administered through state-run welfare offices. Indeed, states were responsible for organizing the program, determining benefits, establishing income and resource limits, and setting actual benefit payments. With relatively little flexibility, an AFDC program in New York City looked a lot like its counterpart in Reno, Nevada, apart from differences in the maximum amount each state paid to a family for assistance. Funding for AFDC was shared between the federal and state governments, with the feds covering a higher portion of AFDC benefit costs in states with lower-than-average per capita income. As with many other welfare programs, AFDC’s costs were not capped because the program was an “entitlement”—meaning that qualified families could not be refused cash assistance.

By the early 1990s, many policymakers were seeking alternatives to AFDC. Although the average monthly benefit in 1995 was only $376.70 per family and $132.64 per recipient, 40 percent of applicants remained on welfare for two years or longer. In response to this dependency, in 1996, Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which replaced AFDC with TANF. Under the new program, the federal government eliminated the entitlement to cash welfare, placed limits on the length of time families could collect benefits, and introduced work requirements. By law, a family cannot receive TANF benefits for more than a lifetime limit of five years, cumulative across welfare spells. Regarding work requirements, TANF mandated that at least 50 percent of recipients participate in “work” activities by 2002, with activities including employment, on-the-job training, vocational [education](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Education.html), job search, and community service. Together, these activities must account for thirty hours per week for a single parent. Recipients who refuse to participate in work activities must be sanctioned, resulting in a loss of cash benefits. Enforcement of sanctions could include immediately suspending all cash payments, stopping support only after multiple episodes of noncompliance, or only partially reducing grants to families who fail to cooperate. States could, and in fact did, introduce more stringent requirements for families to work or participate in educational activities to qualify for cash payments. TANF cemented the primary emphasis on getting welfare recipients into jobs.

***The Food Stamp Program***, authorized as a permanent program in 1964, provides benefits to low-income households to buy nutritional, low-cost food. After 1974, Congress required all states to offer the program. Recipients use coupons and electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards to purchase food at authorized retail stores. There are limitations on what items can be purchased with food stamps (e.g., they cannot be used to purchase cigarettes or alcohol). Recipients pay no tax on items purchased with food stamps. The federal government is entirely responsible for the rules and the complete funding of FSP benefits under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State governments, through local welfare offices, have primary responsibility for administering the Food Stamp Program. They determine eligibility, calculate benefits, and issue food stamp allotments.

Welfare reform imposed work requirements on recipients and allowed states to streamline administrative procedures for determining eligibility and benefits. Childless recipients between the ages of eighteen and fifty became ineligible for food stamps if they received benefits for more than three months while not working.

***Supplemental Security Income***, authorized by the Social Security Act in 1974, pays monthly cash benefits to needy individuals whose ability to work is restricted by blindness or disability. Families can also receive payments to support disabled children. Survivor's benefits for children are authorized under Title II of the Social Security Act, not Title XVI, and are, therefore, not part of the SSI program. Although one cannot receive SSI payments and TANF payments concurrently, one can receive SSI and Social Security simultaneously. (In 2003, 35 percent of all SSI recipients also received Social Security benefits, and 57 percent of aged SSI recipients were Social Security beneficiaries.) The average SSI recipient received almost $5,000 in annual payments in 2003, with the average monthly federal payment being $417, and many state governments supplemented the basic SSI benefits with their own funds.

Welfare reforms and related [immigration](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Immigration.html) legislation in 1996–1997 sought to address three areas of perceived abuse in the SSI program. First, the legislation set up procedures to help ensure that SSI payments are not made to prison inmates. Second, the legislation eliminated benefits to less-disabled children, particularly children with behavioral problems rather than physical disorders. Finally, new immigrants were deemed ineligible for benefits prior to becoming citizens.

***Medicaid*** became law in 1965, under the Social Security Act, to assist state governments in providing medical care to eligible needy persons. Medicaid provides health-care services to more than 49.7 million low-income individuals who are in one or more of the following categories: aged, blind, disabled, members of families with dependent children, or certain other children and pregnant women. Medicaid is the largest government program providing medical and health-related services to the nation’s poorest people and the largest single funding source for nursing homes and institutions for mentally retarded people.

Within federal guidelines, each state government is responsible for designing and administering its own program. Individual states determine persons covered, types and scope of benefits offered, and amounts of payments for services. Federal law requires that a single state agency be responsible for the administration of the Medicaid program; generally it is the state welfare or health agency. The federal government shares costs with states by means of an annually adjusted variable matching formula.

The Medicaid program has more participants than any other major welfare program. More than 17 percent of the population received Medicaid benefits in 2002, up from about 10 percent in the 1970s and 1980s. Spending on Medicaid has risen steadily as a fraction of the federal budget, increasing from approximately 2 percent in 1975 to 13 percent in 2002. Total outlays for the Medicaid program in 2002 (federal and state) were $259 billion, and per capita expenditures on Medicaid beneficiaries averaged $4,291.

***Housing assistance*** covers a broad range of efforts by federal and state governments to improve housing quality and to reduce housing costs for lower-income households. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) administer most federal housing programs. Under current programs, each resident pays approximately 30 percent of his or her income for rent.

In terms of welfare policy, there are two principal types of housing assistance for low-income families: subsidized rent and public housing. The federal government has provided rental subsidies since the mid-1930s and today funds the HUD Section 8 voucher program. Local governments commonly provide for subsidized housing through their building authority in that they require a portion of new construction to be made available to low-income families at below-market rents. Public housing (the actual provision of dwellings) is almost exclusively a federal program administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs), not private owner-managers. In contrast to the mid-1960s, public housing now accounts for a small fraction of overall housing assistance.

***Earned Income Tax Credit***, enacted in 1975, pays a refundable tax credit for working Americans with low earnings. The tax credit increases family income by supplementing earnings up to a fixed level. The program was initially designed to offset the impact of Social Security taxes on low-income individuals and to encourage individuals to seek employment rather than rely on welfare benefits. Because EITC is part of the regular federal income tax system, receiving benefits is private, unremarkable, and without stigma. In 2004, the EITC paid out $33.1 billion to approximately 18.6 million claimants—several billion dollars more than the amounts projected to be spent on other primary programs such as TANF and food stamps. EITC is one of the few programs that effectively reach the eligible population. Analysis of EITC claims in 1999 shows that 86 percent of eligible families with children received the credit. (In contrast, only 66 percent of eligible households with children received food stamp benefits in 1999.) Although the EITC is generally paid all at once as an annual refund, it can also be included with an employee’s weekly, biweekly, or monthly paycheck.

**Types of Welfare Available.** The type and amount of aid available to individuals and dependent children varies from state to state. When the Federal Government gave control back to the states there was no longer one source and one set of requirements. Most states offer basic aid such as health care, food stamps, child care assistance, unemployment, cash aid, and housing assistance. *How much do the above safety-net programs pay in benefits?* The benefit levels provided to a qualifying family assume that the family includes a father, a mother, and two children below the age of eighteen. For a family that earns $8,000 a year, this family would be eligible to receive $5,498 from TANF, $4,550 from food stamps, $6,170 from SSI, $8,000 in housing benefits and $3,200 from EITC, for a total of $27,418 in government assistance. Moreover, this family would qualify for Medicaid’s Medically Needy Program (MNP), wherein all family members would receive zero-price [health care](http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/HealthCare.html). On reaching $16,000 in earnings, the family would qualify for Medicaid’s Children Ages 6 to 19 Program (Child 6–19), which provides zero-price health care to all children in the family; and at $20,000 in earnings, the family would qualify for Medicaid’s Children Ages 1 to 6 Program (Child 1–6), which offers zero-price health care to all children ages six and below.

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

* + - 1. What are the aims of the public welfare?
      2. When were the first federal welfare programs adopted in the USA?
      3. What are the different ways in which healthcare is financed in the USA?
      4. What are the different kinds of health insurance coverage?
      5. What proportion of population is covered by government programs of health insurance?
      6. What are the largest social security programs?
      7. What are the major causes of criticism of certain aspects of the American welfare system?

**6 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE USA**

**1 Religious history of the USA**

**2 Religious preferences in the USA**

**3 Religious denominations founded in the USA**

**4 Non-Christian religious communities in the USA**

**1. Religious history of the USA**. From early colonial days, when some English and German settlers came in search of religious freedom, America has been profoundly influenced by religion. That influence continues in American culture, social life, and politics. Several of the original [Thirteen Colonies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Colonies) were established by settlers who wished to practice their own religion within a community of like-minded people: the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established by English [Puritans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puritan) (Congregationalists), Pennsylvania by British [Quakers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Society_of_Friends), Maryland by English [Catholics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_the_United_Kingdom), and Virginia by English [Anglicans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicans). Despite these, and as a result of intervening religious strife and preference in England the [Plantation Act 1740](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plantation_Act_1740) would set official policy for new immigrants coming to [British America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_America) until the [American Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution).

### The religious history of the United States began with the first *Pilgrim settlers* who came on the [*Mayflower*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayflower) in the year 1620. Their Protestant faith motivated their movement as a community to the New World from Europe where they could practice in peace. *Puritans* were English Protestants who wished to reform and purify the Church of England of what they considered to be unacceptable residues of Roman Catholicism. Their position was opposed by the ruling class by the 1620s, which insisted that the Puritans conform to Anglican religious practices. Puritans in England were threatened as England verged on civil war. Beginning in 1630, as many as 20,000 Puritans emigrated to America from England. Most settled in New England, but some went as far as the West Indies. Theologically, the Puritans were "non-separating [Congregationalists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church)." Unlike the Pilgrims, who came to Massachusetts in 1620, the Puritans believed that the Church of England was a true church, though in need of major reforms. Every New England Congregational church was considered an independent entity, beholden to no hierarchy. There were no bishops. The membership was composed, at least initially, of men and women who had undergone a conversion experience and could prove it to other members.

Although they were victims of religious persecution in Europe, the Puritans supported the theory that sanctioned it: the need for uniformity of religion in the state.

Once in control in New England, they sought to break "the very neck of Schism and vile opinions." The "business" of the first settlers, a Puritan minister recalled in 1681, "was not Toleration, but [they] were professed enemies of it." Puritans expelled dissenters from their colonies, a fate that in 1636 befell Roger Williams and in 1638 [Anne Hutchinson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Hutchinson), America's first major female religious leader.

Those who defied the Puritans by persistently returning to their jurisdictions risked [capital punishment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment), a penalty imposed on the [Boston martyrs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_martyrs), four [*Quakers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaker)*,* between 1659 and 1661. Reflecting on the 17th century's intolerance, Thomas Jefferson was unwilling to concede to Virginians any moral superiority to the Puritans. Beginning in 1659, Virginia enacted anti-Quaker laws, including the death penalty for refractory Quakers. Jefferson surmised that "if no capital execution took place here, as did in New England, it was not owing to the moderation of the church, or the spirit of the legislature."

The Spanish set up a famous network of *Catholi*c missions in California, but they had all closed long before 1848 when California became part of the U.S. There were a few French Catholic churches and institutions in Louisiana, especially New Orleans.

Most of the settlers came from Protestant backgrounds in Britain and the Continent, with a small proportion of Catholics (chiefly in Maryland) and a few Jews in port cities. The English and the [German Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Americans) brought along multiple Protestant denominations. Several colonies had an "established" church, which meant that local tax money went to the established denomination. [Freedom of religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_freedom) became a basic American principle, and numerous new movements emerged, many of which became established denominations in their own right.

### Jewish refuge in America. A shipload of twenty-three Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in [Dutch Brazil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_Brazil) arrived in [New Amsterdam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Amsterdam) (soon to become New York City) in 1654. By the next year, this small community had established religious services in the city. By 1658, Jews had arrived in [Newport, Rhode Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newport,_Rhode_Island), also seeking religious liberty. Small numbers of Jews continued to come to the British North American colonies, settling mainly in the seaport towns. By the late 18th century, Jewish settlers had established several [synagogues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue).

### Quakers*.* The [Religious Society of Friends](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Society_of_Friends) formed in England in 1652 around leader [George Fox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Fox).

Many scholars today consider Quakers as radical Puritans because the Quakers carried to extremes many Puritan convictions. They stretched the sober deportment of the Puritans into a glorification of "plainness." Theologically, they expanded the Puritan concept of a church of individuals regenerated by the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit) to the idea of the indwelling of the Spirit or the "Light of Christ" in every person. Such teaching struck many of the Quakers' contemporaries as dangerous [heresy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heresy). Quakers were severely persecuted in England for daring to deviate so far from orthodox Christianity. By 1680, 10,000 Quakers had been imprisoned in England and 243 had died of torture and mistreatment in jail. This reign of terror impelled Friends to seek refuge in Rhode Island in the 1670s, where they soon became well entrenched. In 1681, when Quaker leader [William Penn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Penn) parlayed a debt owed by [Charles II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_II_of_England) to his father into a charter for the province of [Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania), many more Quakers were prepared to grasp the opportunity to live in a land where they might worship freely. By 1685, as many as 8,000 Quakers had come to Pennsylvania from England, Wales, and Ireland. Although the Quakers may have resembled the Puritans in some religious beliefs and practices, they differed with them over the necessity of compelling [religious uniformity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_uniformity) in society.

### Pennsylvania Germans. During the main years of German emigration to Pennsylvania in the mid-18th century, most of the emigrants were *Lutherans,* Reformed, or members of small sects—Mennonites, [Dunkers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Baptist), [Schwenkfelders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schwenkfelders), [Moravians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moravian_Church), and some German [Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist) groups. The great majority became farmers.

The colony was owned by [William Penn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Penn), a leading Quaker, and his agents encouraged German emigration to Pennsylvania by circulating promotional literature touting the economic advantages of Pennsylvania as well as the religious liberty available there. The appearance in Pennsylvania of so many religious groups made the province resemble "an asylum for banished sects."

Roman Catholics in Maryland. For their political opposition, Catholics were harassed and had largely been stripped of their civil rights since the reign of [Elizabeth I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_I). Driven by "the sacred duty of finding a refuge for his Roman Catholic brethren," [George Calvert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Calvert) obtained a charter from Charles I in 1632 for the territory between Pennsylvania and Virginia. This Maryland charter offered no guidelines on religion, although it was assumed that Catholics would not be molested in the new colony. His son [Lord Baltimore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecilius_Calvert,_2nd_Baron_Baltimore), was a Catholic who inherited the grant for Maryland from his father and was in charge 1630-45. In 1634, Lord Baltimore's two ships, the *Ark* and the *Dove*, with the first 200 settlers to Maryland. They included two Catholic priests. Lord Baltimore assumed that religion was a private matter. He rejected the need for an established church, guaranteed liberty of conscience to all Christians, and embraced pluralism. Catholic fortunes fluctuated in Maryland during the rest of the 17th century, as they became an increasingly smaller minority of the population. After the [Glorious Revolution of 1689](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glorious_Revolution_of_1689) in England, the Church of England was legally established in the colony and English penal laws, which deprived Catholics of the right to vote, hold office, or worship publicly, were enforced. Maryland's first state constitution in 1776 restored the freedom of religion. . Beginning in the 16th century, the Spanish (and later the French and English) introduced Catholicism. From the 19th century to the present, Catholics came to the US in large numbers due to immigration of [Italians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_American), Hispanics, [Portuguese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_American), [French](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_American), [Polish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_American), [Irish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Americans), Highland Scots, Dutch, Flemish, [Hungarians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_people), [Germans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Americans), [Lebanese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanese_American) ([Maronite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maronite)), and other ethnic groups.

[Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_American), [Ukrainian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian_American), [Russian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_American), [Armenians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_American), Central and Eastern European, [Middle Eastern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_Middle_East), Ethiopian, and South Indian immigrants brought [*Eastern Orthodoxy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodoxy) *and* [*Oriental Orthodoxy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_Orthodoxy) to the United States. These branches of Christianity have since spread beyond the boundaries of eth Several Christian groups were founded in America during the [**Great Awakenings**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Awakening)**.** Interdenominational [evangelicalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) and [Pentecostalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism) emerged; new Protestant denominations such as [Adventism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventism); non-denominational movements such as the [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) (which over time separated into the [Churches of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ), the [Christian churches and churches of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_churches_and_churches_of_Christ), and the [Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_(Disciples_of_Christ))); [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) (called "Bible Students" in the latter part of the 19th century); and [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) ([Mormonism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormonism)).

Virginia and the Church of England.Virginia was the largest, most populous and most important colony. *The Church of England* was legally established; the bishop of London made it a favorite missionary target and sent in 22 clergymen by 1624. In practice, establishment meant that local taxes were funneled through the local parish to handle the needs of local government, such as roads and poor relief, in addition to the salary of the minister. There was never a bishop in colonial Virginia, and in practice the local vestry consisted of laymen who controlled the parish and handled local taxes, roads and poor relief. When the elected assembly, the [House of Burgesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Burgesses), was established in 1619, it enacted religious laws that made Virginia a bastion of Anglicanism. It passed a law in 1632 requiring that there be a "uniformitie throughout this colony both in substance and circumstance to the cannons and constitution of the Church of England." The colonists were typically inattentive, uninterested, and bored during church services according to the ministers, who complained that the people were sleeping, whispering, ogling the fashionably dressed women, walking about and coming and going, or at best looking out the windows or staring blankly into space. The lack of towns meant the church had to serve scattered settlements, while the acute shortage of trained ministers meant that piety was hard to practice outside the home. Some ministers solved their problems by encouraging parishioners to become devout at home, using the *Book of Common Prayer* for private prayer and devotion (rather than the Bible). This allowed devout Anglicans to lead an active and sincere religious life apart from the unsatisfactory formal church services. However, the stress on private devotion weakened the need for a bishop or a large institutional church of the sort Blair wanted. The stress on personal piety opened the way for the [First Great Awakening](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening), which pulled people away from the established church. Historians debate how influential Christianity was in the era of the American Revolution. Many of the founding fathers were active in a local church; some of them, such as Jefferson, Franklin, and Washington had [Deist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism) sentiments.

The [*First Great Awakening*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening)*,* the nation's first major religious revival in the middle of the 18th century injected new vigor into Christian faith. Religion in the period of the [*Second Great Awakening*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Great_Awakening)became increasingly involved in social reform movements, such as anti-slavery. Most of the denominations set up colleges to train new generations of leaders and nearly all were originally founded as Christian institutions. Later the Roman Catholics also set up colleges and a separate parochial school system to avoid the Protestant tone of the public schools.

**Freedom of religion.** The United States federal government was the first national government to have no official state-endorsed religion. However, some states had established religions in some form until the 1830s. The text of the [First Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) to the country's [Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." It **guarantees the** [**free exercise**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Exercise_Clause_of_the_First_Amendment) **of religion** while also preventing the government from establishing a [state religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_religion). However the states were not bound by the provision and as late as the 1830s Massachusetts provided tax money to local Congregational churches. The [Supreme Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_United_States) since the 1940s has interpreted the [Fourteenth Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) as applying the First Amendment to the state and local governments.

President John Adams and a unanimous Senate endorsed the [Treaty of Tripoli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Tripoli) in 1797 that stated: ""the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." Several Christian groups were founded in America during the [Great Awakenings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Awakening). Interdenominational [evangelicalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) and [Pentecostalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism) emerged; new Protestant denominations such as [Adventism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventism); non-denominational movements such as the [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) (which over time separated into the [Churches of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ), the [Christian churches and churches of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_churches_and_churches_of_Christ), and the [Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_(Disciples_of_Christ))); [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) (called "Bible Students" in the latter part of the 19th century); and [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) ([Mormonism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormonism)).

The strength of various sects varies greatly in different regions of the country, with rural parts of the South having many evangelicals but very few Catholics (except [Louisiana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana) and the [Gulf Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_Coast), and the [Hispanic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispanic) community, which both consist mainly of Catholics), while urbanized areas of the north Atlantic states and [Great Lakes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Lakes), as well as many industrial and mining towns, are heavily Catholic, though still quite mixed, especially due to the heavily Protestant African-American communities. In 1990, nearly 72% of the population of [Utah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah) was Mormon, as well as 26% of neighboring [Idaho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idaho). Lutheranism is most prominent in the [Upper Midwest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Midwest), with [North Dakota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Dakota) having the highest percentage of Lutherans (35% according to a 2001 survey).

The largest religion, Christianity, has proportionately diminished since 1990. While the absolute number of Christians rose from 1990 to 2008, the percentage of Christians dropped from 86% to 76%. A nationwide telephone interview of 1,002 adults conducted by [The Barna Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Barna_Group) found that 70% of American adults believe that God is "the all-powerful, all-knowing creator of the universe who still rules it today", and that 9% of all American adults and 0.5% [young adults](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_Generation) hold to what the survey defined as a "biblical worldview".

Episcopalian, Presbyterian, [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) and [United Church of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ) members have the highest number of [graduate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree) and [post-graduate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-graduate) degrees per capita of all [Christian denominations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_denomination) in the United States, as well as the most [high-income earners](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_upper_class)

According to a 2002 survey by the Pew forum, nearly 6 in 10 Americans said that religion plays an important role in their lives, compared to 33% in Great Britain, 27% in Italy, 21% in Germany, 12% in Japan and 11% in France. The survey report stated that the results showed America having a greater similarity to developing nations (where higher percentages say that religion plays an important role) than to other wealthy nations, where religion plays a minor role.

In 1963, 90% of Americans claimed to be Christians while only 2% professed no religious identity. In 2014, the percentage of Christians was closer to 70% with close to 23% claiming no religious identity.

**2. Religious preferences in the USA**

**Religion in the United States** is characterized by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Various religious faiths have flourished in the United States. A majority of Americans report that religion plays a very important role in their lives, a proportion unique among [developed countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country).

**Major religious movements founded in the United States:**

**Christian**

* [*Pentecostalism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism) – movement which emphasizes the role of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit), finds its historic roots in the [Azusa Street Revival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azusa_Street_Revival) in [Los Angeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles) from 1904 to 1906, sparked by [Charles Parham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Fox_Parham). It is estimated to have over 279 million followers worldwide, many in Africa and South America.
* [*Adventism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventism) – began as an inter-denominational movement. Its most vocal leader was [William Miller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Miller_(preacher)), who in the 1830s in [New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York) became convinced of an imminent [Second Coming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) of Jesus. The most prominent modern group to emerge from this is the [Seventh-day Adventists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventists).
* *The* [*Latter Day Saint movement*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latter_Day_Saint_movement) founded in 1830 by [Joseph Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith) in upstate New York. Multiple [Latter Day Saint denomination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sects_in_the_Latter_Day_Saint_movement) can be found throughout the United States. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) (LDS Church), the largest denomination, is headquartered in [Salt Lake City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_Lake_City), [Utah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah), and has members in many countries. The [Community of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_Christ), the second-largest denomination, is headquartered in [Independence, Missouri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence,_Missouri). Worldwide they claim about 15 million members.
* [*Jehovah's Witnesses*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) – originated with the religious movement known as [Bible Students](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement), which was founded in [Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania) in the late 1870s by [Charles Taze Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell). Loosely connected in its early years with Adventism, with which it shares some similarities. They claim about 7.69 million active members worldwide.
* [*Christian Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Science)– founded by [Mary Baker Eddy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy) in the late 19th century. The church claims some 400,000 members worldwide.
* [*Churches of Christ*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ)*/*[*Disciples of Christ*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciples_of_Christ) – a restoration movement with no governing body. The [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) solidified as a historical phenomenon in 1832 when [restorationists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorationism) from two major movements championed by [Barton W. Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barton_W._Stone) and [Alexander Campbell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Campbell_(clergyman)) merged. It has an estimated 3 million followers worldwide.
* [*Metropolitan Community Church*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Community_Church) – founded by [Troy Perry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troy_Perry) in Los Angeles, 1968.

**Other**

* [*New Thought Movement*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Thought)– two of the early proponents of New Thought beliefs during the mid to late 19th century were [Phineas Parkhurst Quimby](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phineas_Parkhurst_Quimby) and the Mother of New Thought, [Emma Curtis Hopkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Curtis_Hopkins). The three major branches are [Religious Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Science), [Unity Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity_Church) and [Divine Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Science).
* [*Scientology*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Scientology) – founded by [L. Ron Hubbard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Ron_Hubbard) in 1954. Numbers estimated from a few tens of thousands to 15 million (latter is the religion's estimation in 2004).
* [*Reconstructionist Judaism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism)– founded by [Mordecai Kaplan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordecai_Kaplan) and started in the 1920s.
* [*Native American Church*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_Church) – founded by [Quanah Parker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quanah_Parker) beginning in the 1890s and incorporating in 1918. An estimated 250,000 followers.
* [*Nation of Islam*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam) – a sect of Islam, created and followed predominantly by [African-Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-Americans).

The majority of Americans identify themselves as [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christians), while close to a quarter claim [no religious affiliation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irreligion). According to a 2014 study by the [Pew Research Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pew_Research_Center), 70.6% of the American population identified themselves as Christians, with 46.5% professing attendance at a variety of churches that could be considered [Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant), and 20.8% professing [Roman Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic) beliefs. The same study says that other religions (including [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism), [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), and [Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism)) collectively make up about 6% of the population. According to a 2012 survey by the Pew forum, 36 percent of Americans state that they attend services nearly every week or more. According to the 2013 Gallup poll, [Mississippi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi) with 61% of its population described as very religious (say that religion is important to them and attend religious services almost every week) is the [most religious state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_Religious_US_states) in the country, while [Vermont](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vermont) with only 22% as very religious is the least religious state.

**Religion in the United States** (2014 survey - Pew Forum)

[Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant)[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_United_States#cite_note-5)(46.5%)

[Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic) (20.8%)

[Mormon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon) (1.6%)

  Other Christian (1.7%)

[Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) (1.9%)

[Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) (0.9%)

[Hinduism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) (0.7%)

[Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) (0.7%)

  Other religions (1.8%)

[Unaffiliated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irreligion) (22.8%)

  Not stated (0.6%)

The largest religion in the US is [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), claimed by the majority of the population (71% in 2014). From those queried, roughly 46.5% of Americans are [Protestants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestants), 25.4% are [Catholics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholicism), 2% are [Mormons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints_membership_statistics_(United_States)) (the name commonly used to refer to members of [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints)), and 1% have affiliations with various other Christian denominations. C According to the 2011 [*Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yearbook_of_American_and_Canadian_Churches), from which members in the United States are combined with Canadian members and of the [National Council of Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_of_Churches), the five largest denominations are:

* The [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church), 68,503,456 members
* The [Southern Baptist Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Baptist_Convention), 16,160,088 members
* The [United Methodist Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church), 7,774,931 members
* [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints), 6,321,416 members
* The [Church of God in Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_God_in_Christ), 5,499,875 members

The Southern Baptist Convention, with over 16 million adherents, is the largest of more than 200 distinctly named Protestant denominations. In 2007, members of [evangelical churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) comprised 26% of the American population, while another 18% belonged to [mainline Protestant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainline_Protestant) churches, and 7% belonged to historically [black churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_church).

Members of mainline Protestant denominations have played leadership roles in many aspects of American life, including politics, business, science, the arts, and education. They founded most of the country's leading institutes of higher education. Mainline Protestants such as [Episcopalians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_Church_(United_States)) and [Presbyterians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterians) tend to be considerably wealthier and better educated than most other religious groups in the United States.

Some of the first colleges and universities in America, including [Harvard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard_University), [Yale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale_University), [Princeton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_University), [Columbia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_University), [Dartmouth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dartmouth_College), [Williams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Williams_College), [Bowdoin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowdoin_College), [Middlebury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middlebury_College), and [Amherst](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amherst_College), all were founded by mainline Protestant denominations, as were later [Carleton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carleton_College), [Duke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_University), [Oberlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oberlin_College), [Beloit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beloit_College), [Pomona](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomona_College), [Rollins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rollins_College) and [Colorado College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorado_College).

Christianity was introduced during the period of [European colonization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_colonization_of_the_Americas). The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing, according to an extensive new survey by the Pew Research Center. Moreover, these changes are taking place across the religious landscape, affecting all regions of the country and many demographic groups. While the drop in Christian affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults, it is occurring among Americans of all ages. The same trends are seen among whites, blacks and Latinos; among both college graduates and adults with only a high school education; and among women as well as men. To be sure, the United States remains home to more Christians than any other country in the world, and a large majority of Americans – roughly seven-in-ten – continue to identify with some branch of the Christian faith. But the major new survey of more than 35,000 Americans by the Pew Research Center finds that the percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in an equally massive Pew Research survey in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014. Over the same period, the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated – describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – has jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%. And the share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths also has inched up, rising 1.2 percentage points, from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014. Growth has been especially great among Muslims and Hindus, albeit from a very low base. The drop in the Christian share of the population has been driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. Each of those large religious traditions has shrunk by approximately three percentage points since 2007. The evangelical Protestant share of the U.S. population also has dipped, but at a slower rate, falling by about one percentage point since 2007. Even as their numbers decline, American Christians – like the U.S. population as a whole – are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Non-Hispanic whites now account for smaller shares of evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics than they did seven years earlier, while Hispanics have grown as a share of all three religious groups. Racial and ethnic minorities now make up 41% of Catholics (up from 35% in 2007), 24% of evangelical Protestants (up from 19%) and 14% of mainline Protestants (up from 9%).

***Church or synagogue attendance*** ***by state***

A 2013 survey reported that 31% Americans attend [religious services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_of_worship) at least weekly. It was conducted by the [Public Religion Research Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Religion_Research_Institute) with a [margin of error](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margin_of_error) of 2.5. In 2006, an online [Harris Poll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harris_Poll) (they stated that the magnitude of errors cannot be estimated due to [sampling errors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sampling_error), [non-response](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-response_bias), etc.; 2,010 U.S. adults were surveyed) found that 26% of those surveyed attended religious services "every week or more often", 9% went "once or twice a month", 21% went "a few times a year", 3% went "once a year", 22% went "less than once a year", and 18% never attend religious services. In a 2009 [Gallup International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallup_(company)) survey, 41.6% of American citizens said that they attended church or synagogue once a week or almost every week. This percentage is higher than other surveyed Western countries. [Church attendance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_attendance) varies considerably by state and region. The figures, updated to 2014, ranged from 51% in [Utah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah) to 17% in Vermont.

Various polls have been conducted to determine ***Americans' actual beliefs regarding a god:***

* A 2006 CBS News poll of 899 U.S. adults found that 76% of those surveyed believed in a god, while 9% believed in "some other universal spirit or higher power", 8% believed in neither, and 1% were unsure.
* A 2007 [Gallup Poll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallup_Poll) found that 86% of Americans believe in a god, with 8% saying they are not sure, and 6% saying they don't believe in a god.
* According to a 2008 ARIS survey, belief in God varies considerably by region. The lowest rate is in the West with 59% reporting a belief in God, and the highest rate is in the South at 86%.
* Mark Chaves, a [Duke University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_University) professor of sociology, religion and divinity, found that 92% of Americans believed in God in 2008, but that significantly fewer Americans have great confidence in their religious leaders than a generation ago.
* A 2008 survey of 1,000 people concluded that, based on their stated beliefs rather than their religious identification, 69.5% of Americans believe in a personal God, roughly 12.3% of Americans are [atheist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheist) or [agnostic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnostic), and another 12.1% are deistic (believing in a higher power/non-personal God, but no personal God).
* A late 2009 online Harris poll of 2,303 U.S. adults (18 and older) found that "82% of adult Americans believe in God", the same number as in two earlier polls in 2005 and 2007. Another 9% said they did not believe in God, and 9% said that they were not sure. It further concluded, "Large majorities also believe in miracles (76%), heaven (75%), that Jesus is God or the Son of God (73%), in angels (72%), the survival of the soul after death (71%), and in the resurrection of Jesus (70%). Less than half (45%) of adults believe in Darwin's theory of [evolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evolution) but this is more than the 40% who believe in [creationism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creationism)..... Many people consider themselves Christians without necessarily believing in some of the key beliefs of Christianity. However, this is not true of [born-again Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born-again_Christian). In addition to their religious beliefs, large minorities of adults, including many Christians, have "[pagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagan)" or pre-Christian beliefs such as a belief in ghosts, [astrology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology), witches and [reincarnation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation).... Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated."
* A 2010 Gallup poll found 80% of Americans believe in a god, 12% believe in a universal spirit, 6% don't believe in either, 1% chose "other", and 1% had no opinion. 80% is a decrease from the 1940s, when Gallup first asked this question.
* A 2011 Gallup poll found 92% of Americans said yes to the basic question "Do you believe in God?", while 7% said no and 1% had no opinion.
* A 2012 Pew Research Center survey found that doubts about the existence of a god had grown among younger Americans, with 68% telling Pew they never doubt God's existence, a 15-point drop in five years. In 2007, 83% of American millennials said they never doubted God's existence.
* A 2012 WIN-Gallup International poll showed that 5% of Americans considered themselves "convinced" atheists, which was a fivefold increase from the last time the survey was taken in 2005, and 5% said they did not know or else did not respond.
  1. **Major religious movements founded in the United States**

Against a prevailing view that 18th century Americans had not perpetuated the first settlers' passionate commitment to their faith, scholars now identify a *high level of religious energy* in colonies after 1700. According to one expert, [Judeo-Christian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian) faith was in the "ascension rather than the declension"; another sees a "rising vitality in religious life" from 1700 onward; a third finds religion in many parts of the colonies in a state of "*feverish growth*." Figures on church attendance and church formation support these opinions. Between 1700 and 1740, an estimated 75-80% of the population attended churches, which were being built at a headlong pace.

By 1780 the percentage of adult colonists who adhered to a church was between 10-30%, not counting slaves or Native Americans. North Carolina had the lowest percentage at about 4%, while New Hampshire and South Carolina were tied for the highest, at about 16%.

Church buildings in 18th-century America varied greatly, from the plain, modest buildings in newly settled rural areas to elegant edifices in the prosperous cities on the eastern seaboard. Churches reflected the customs and traditions as well as the wealth and social status of the denominations that built them. German churches contained features unknown in English ones.

### Great Awakening: emergence of evangelicalism. In the American colonies the [*First Great Awakening*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening)was a wave of religious enthusiasm among Protestants that swept the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s, leaving a permanent impact on American Christianity. It resulted from powerful preaching that deeply affected listeners (already church members) with a deep sense of personal guilt and salvation by Christ. Pulling away from ritual and ceremony, the Great Awakening made relationship with God intensely personal to the average person by creating a deep sense of spiritual guilt, forgiveness, redemption and peace. Historian Sydney E. Ahlstrom sees it as part of a "great international Protestant upheaval" that also created [Pietism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pietism) in Germany, the [Evangelical Revival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) and [Methodism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism) in England. It brought Christianity to the slaves and was an apocalyptic event in [New England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England) that challenged established church authority. It resulted in division between the new revivalists and the old traditionalists who insisted on ritual and doctrine. The new style of sermons and the way people practiced their faith breathed new life into Christian faith in America. People became passionately and emotionally involved in their relationship with God, rather than passively listening to intellectual discourse in a detached manner. Ministers who used this new style of preaching were generally called "new lights", while the preachers of old were called "old lights". People began to study the [Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible) at home, which effectively decentralized the means of informing the public on religious manners and was akin to the individualistic trends present in Europe during the [Protestant Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation).

The fundamental premise of ***evangelicalism is the conversion of individuals from a state of sin to a "***[***new birth***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_again_Christianity)***" through preaching of the Bible*** leading to [faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation_by_faith). The First Great Awakening led to changes in American colonial society. In New England, the Great Awakening was influential among many [Congregationalists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church). In the Middle and Southern colonies, especially in the "Backcountry" regions, the Awakening was influential among [Presbyterians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism). In the South [Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist) and [Methodist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodist) preachers converted both whites and enslaved blacks.

During the first decades of the 18th century, in the [Connecticut River Valley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connecticut_River_Valley), a series of local "awakenings" began in the Congregational church with ministers including [Jonathan Edwards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Edwards_(theologian)). The first new Congregational Church in the Massachusetts Colony during the great awakening period, was in 1731 at [Uxbridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uxbridge,_MA) and called the Rev. [Nathan Webb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_Webb) as its Pastor. By the 1730s, they had spread into what was interpreted as a general outpouring of the [Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)) that bathed the American colonies, England, Wales, and Scotland.

In mass open-air revivals powerful preachers like [George Whitefield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield) brought thousands of souls to the [new birth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Born_again_(Christianity)). The Great Awakening, which had spent its force in New England by the mid-1740s, split the Congregational and Presbyterian churches into supporters—called "[New Lights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Lights)" and "[New Side](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Old_Side-New_Side_Controversy)"—and opponents—the "Old Lights" and "Old Side." Many New England New Lights became [Separate Baptists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separate_Baptists). Largely through the efforts of a charismatic preacher from New England named [Shubal Stearns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shubal_Stearns) and paralleled by the New Side Presbyterians (who were eventually reunited on their own terms with the Old Side), they carried the Great Awakening into the southern colonies, igniting a series of the revivals that lasted well into the 19th century.

The supporters of the Awakening and its evangelical thrust—[Presbyterians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian), Baptists and [Methodists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodist)—became the largest American Protestant denominations by the first decades of the 19th century. Opponents of the Awakening or those split by it—Anglicans, Quakers, and Congregationalists—were left behind.

Unlike the [*Second Great Awakening*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Great_Awakening)that began about 1800 and which reached out to the unchurched, the *First Great Awakening* focused on people who were already church members. It changed their rituals, their piety, and their self-awareness.

### Evangelicals in the South. The South had originally been settled and controlled by Anglicans, who dominated the ranks of rich planters but whose ritualistic high church established religion had little appeal to ordinary men and women, both white and black.

### Baptists. Energized by numerous itinerant [missionaries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_missionary), by the 1760s [Baptist churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptists_in_the_United_States) started drawing Southerners, especially poor white farmers, into a new, much more democratic religion.[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_religion_in_the_United_States#cite_note-33) They welcomed slaves to their services, and many slaves became Baptists at this time. Baptist services emphasized emotion; the only ritual, baptism, involved immersion (not sprinkling as in the Anglican tradition) of adults only. Opposed to the low moral standards prevalent around them, the Baptists strictly enforced their own high standards of personal morality, and especially opposed sexual misconduct, heavy drinking, frivolous spending, missing services, cursing, and revelry. Church trials took place frequently, and Baptist churches expelled members who did not submit to discipline.

Many historians have debated the implications of the religious rivalries for the coming of the [American Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) of 1765-1783. The Baptist farmers did introduce a new egalitarian ethic that largely displaced the semi-aristocratic ethic of the Anglican planters. However, both groups supported the Revolution. There was a sharp contrast between the austerity of the plain-living Baptists and the opulence of the Anglican planters, who controlled local government. Baptist church discipline, mistaken by the gentry for radicalism, served to ameliorate disorder. The struggle for religious toleration erupted and played out during the [American Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution), as the Baptists worked to disestablish the Anglican church. Baptists, [German Lutherans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_American) and Presbyterians funded their own ministers, and favored disestablishment of the Anglican church.

#### Methodists. Methodist missionaries were also active in the late colonial period. From 1776 to 1815 Methodist Bishop [Francis Asbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Asbury) made 42 trips into the western parts to visit Methodist congregations. In the 1780s itinerant Methodist preachers carried copies of an anti-slavery petition in their saddlebags throughout the state, calling for an end to slavery. At the same time, counter-petitions were circulated. The petitions were presented to the Assembly; they were debated, but no legislative action was taken, and after 1800 there was less and less religious opposition to slavery.

Especially in the Southern back country, most families had no religious affiliation whatsoever and their low moral standards were shocking to proper Englishmen. The Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and other evangelicals directly challenged these lax moral standards and refused to tolerate them in their ranks. The evangelicals identified as sinful the traditional standards of masculinity which revolved around gambling, drinking, and brawling, and arbitrary control over women, children, and slaves. The religious communities enforced new standards, creating a new male leadership role that followed Christian principles and became dominant in the 19th century.

Religion played a major role in the [American Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) by offering a moral sanction for opposition to the British—an assurance to the average American that revolution was justified in the sight of God. As a recent scholar has observed, "by turning colonial resistance into a righteous cause, and by crying the message to all ranks in all parts of the colonies, ministers did the work of secular radicalism and did it better."

Ministers served the American cause in many capacities during the Revolution: as [military chaplains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_chaplain), as scribes for [committees of correspondence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committees_of_correspondence), and as members of [state legislatures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_legislature_(United_States)), constitutional conventions and the [Continental Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Congress). Some even took up arms, leading [Continental Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_Army) troops in battle.

The Revolution split some denominations, notably the Church of England, whose ministers were bound by oath to support the king, and the Quakers, who were traditionally [pacifists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacifism). Religious practice suffered in certain places because of the absence of ministers and the destruction of churches, but in other areas, religion flourished.

The Revolution strengthened [millennialist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennialism) strains in American theology. At the beginning of the war some ministers were persuaded that, with God's help, America might become "the principal Seat of the glorious Kingdom which Christ shall erect upon Earth in the latter Days." Victory over the British was taken as a sign of God's partiality for America and stimulated an outpouring of millennialist expectations—the conviction that Christ would rule on earth for 1,000 years. This attitude combined with a groundswell of secular optimism about the future of America helped to create the buoyant mood of the new nation that became so evident after Jefferson assumed the presidency in 1801.

The American Revolution inflicted deeper wounds on the [Church of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England) in America than on any other denomination because the [English monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_monarch) was the head of the church. Church of England priests, at their ordination, swore allegiance to the [British crown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_crown).

The [Book of Common Prayer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Common_Prayer) offered prayers for the monarch, beseeching God "to be his defender and keeper, giving him victory over all his enemies," who in 1776 were American soldiers as well as friends and neighbors of American parishioners of the Church of England. Loyalty to the church and to its head could be construed as treason to the American cause.

Patriotic American members of the Church of England, loathing to discard so fundamental a component of their faith as The Book of Common Prayer, revised it to conform to the political realities. After the [Treaty of Paris (1783)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1783)) documenting British recognition of American independence, the church split and the [Anglican Communion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion) created, allowing a separated [Episcopal Church of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_Church_of_the_United_States) to replace, in the United States, and be in communion with the Church of England.

The Constitution ratified in 1788 makes no mention of religion except that no religious test is allowed for office holders. However, the [First Amendment to the United States Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution), adopted in 1791, has played a central role in defining the relationship of the federal government to the free exercise of religion, and to the prohibition establishment of an official church. Its policies were extended to cover state governments in the 1940s. The government is not allowed to hinder the free exercise of religion, and is not allowed to sponsor any particular religion through taxation of favors.

The [Treaty of Tripoli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Tripoli) was a treaty concluded between the U.S. and [Tripolitania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Tripolitania) submitted to the Senate by President [John Adams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams), receiving [ratification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratification) unanimously from the U.S. Senate on June 7, 1797, and signed by Adams, taking effect as the law of the land on June 10, 1797. The treaty was a routine diplomatic agreement but has attracted later attention because the English version included a clause about religion in the United States.

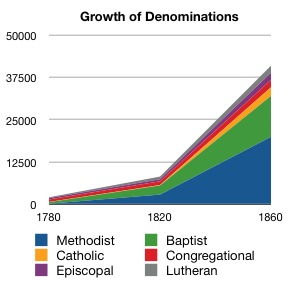
As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility, of Mussulmen [[Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslims)],—and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan [[Mohammedan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammedan)] nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

According to [Frank Lambert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_T._Lambert), Professor of History at [Purdue University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purdue_University), the assurances in Article 11 were "intended to allay the fears of the Muslim state by insisting that religion would not govern how the treaty was interpreted and enforced. John Adams and the Senate made clear that the pact was between two sovereign states, not between two religious powers." Lambert writes,

"By their actions, the Founding Fathers made clear that their primary concern was religious freedom, not the advancement of a state religion. Individuals, not the government, would define religious faith and practice in the United States. Thus the Founders ensured that in no official sense would America be a Christian Republic. Ten years after the Constitutional Convention ended its work, the country assured the world that the United States was a secular state, and that its negotiations would adhere to the rule of law, not the dictates of the Christian faith. The assurances were contained in the Treaty of Tripoli of 1797 and were intended to allay the fears of the Muslim state by insisting that religion would not govern how the treaty was interpreted and enforced. John Adams and the Senate made clear that the pact was between two sovereign states, not between two religious powers.”

Notwithstanding the clear separation of government and religion, the predominant cultural and social nature of the nation did become strongly Christian. In an 1892 employment case [Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Trinity_v._United_States) the U.S. Supreme Court stated, "These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation."

Great Awakenings and Evangelicalism

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Growth_of_Denominations_in_America_1780_to_1860.jpg)

During the Second Great Awakening, the number of local churches rose sharply; total membership in the denominations also grew.

***The "great Awakenings" were large-scale revivals that came in spurts, and moved large numbers of people from unchurched to churched***. The Methodists and Baptists were the most active at sponsoring revivals. The number of Methodist church members grew from 58,000 to 258,000 in 1820 and 1,661,000 in 1860. Over 70 years Methodist membership grew by a factor of 28.6 times when the total national population grew by a factor of 8 times.

It made [*Evangelicalism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism) one of the dominant forces in American religion. Balmer explains that:

"Evangelicalism itself, I believe, is quintessentially North American phenomenon, deriving as it did from the confluence of Pietism, Presbyterianism, and the vestiges of Puritanism. Evangelicalism picked up the peculiar characteristics from each strain – warmhearted spirituality from the Pietists (for instance), doctrinal precisionism from the Presbyterians, and individualistic introspection from the Puritans – even as the North American context itself has profoundly shaped the various manifestations of evangelicalism.: fundamentalism, neo-evangelicalism, the holiness movement, Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, and various forms of African-American and Hispanic evangelicalism."

### Second Great Awakening *.*In 1800, major revivals began that spread across the nation: the decorous [*Second Great Awakening*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Great_Awakening) in New England and the exuberant [Great Revival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Revival) in [Cane Ridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cane_Ridge,_Kentucky), [Kentucky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kentucky). The principal religious innovation produced by the Kentucky revivals was the [camp meeting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_meeting).

The revivals at first were organized by Presbyterian ministers who modeled them after the extended outdoor [communion seasons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communion_seasons), used by the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, which frequently produced emotional, demonstrative displays of religious conviction. In Kentucky, the pioneers loaded their families and provisions into their wagons and drove to the Presbyterian meetings, where they pitched tents and settled in for several days.

When assembled in a field or at the edge of a forest for a prolonged religious meeting, the participants transformed the site into a camp meeting. The religious revivals that swept the Kentucky camp meetings were so intense and created such gusts of emotion that their original sponsors, the Presbyterians, as well the Baptists, soon repudiated them. The Methodists, however, adopted and eventually domesticated camp meetings and introduced them into the eastern states, where for decades they were one of the evangelical signatures of the denomination.

The Second Great Awakening (1800–1830s), unlike the first, focused on the unchurched and sought to instill in them a deep sense of personal salvation as experienced in revival meetings. The great revival quickly spread throughout Kentucky, Tennessee and southern Ohio. Each denomination had assets that allowed it to thrive on the frontier. The Methodists had an efficient organization that depended on ministers known as [circuit riders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circuit_rider_(religious)), who sought out people in remote frontier locations. The circuit riders came from among the common people, which helped them establish rapport with the frontier families they hoped to convert.

The Second Great Awakening exercised a profound impact on American religious history. By 1860 evangelicalism emerged as a kind of national church or national religion and was the grand absorbing theme of American religious life. The greatest gains were made by the very well organized Methodists. [Francis Asbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Asbury) (1745–1816) led the [American Methodist movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Methodist_Church) as one of the most prominent religious leaders of the young republic. Traveling throughout the eastern seaboard, [Methodism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism) grew quickly under Asbury's leadership into the nation's largest and most widespread denomination. The numerical strength of the Baptists and Methodists rose relative to that of the denominations dominant in the colonial period—the [Anglicans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicans), Presbyterians, [Congregationalists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church), and [Reformed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_churches). Efforts to apply Christian teaching to the resolution of social problems presaged the [Social Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Gospel) of the late 19th century. It also sparked the beginnings of groups such as the [Mormons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormons), the [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) and the [Holiness movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiness_movement).

The ***Third Great Awakening*** was a period of religious activism in American history from the late 1850s to the 20th century. It affected pietistic Protestant denominations and had a strong sense of social activism. It gathered strength from the [postmillennial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmillennial) theology that the [Second Coming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) of Christ would come after mankind had reformed the entire earth. The [Social Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Gospel) Movement gained its force from the Awakening, as did the worldwide missionary movement. New groupings emerged, such as the [Holiness movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiness_movement) and [Nazarene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Nazarene) movements, and [Christian Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Science).

The Protestant mainline churches were growing rapidly in numbers, wealth and educational levels, throwing off their frontier beginnings and become centered in towns and cities. Intellectuals and writers such as [Josiah Strong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah_Strong) advocated a muscular Christianity with systematic outreach to the unchurched in America and around the globe. Others built colleges and universities to train the next generation. Each denomination supported active missionary societies, and made the role of missionary one of high prestige. The great majority of pietistic mainline Protestants (in the North) supported the [Republican Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Republican_Party_(United_States)), and urged it to endorse prohibition and social reforms.

The awakening in numerous cities in 1858 was interrupted by the [American Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War). In the South, on the other hand, the Civil War stimulated revivals and strengthened the Baptists, especially. After the war, [Dwight L. Moody](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dwight_L._Moody) made revivalism the centerpiece of his activities in Chicago by founding the [Moody Bible Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moody_Bible_Institute). The hymns of [Ira Sankey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ira_Sankey) were especially influential.

Across the nation the [Woman's Christian Temperance Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman%27s_Christian_Temperance_Union) mobilized Protestant women for social crusades against liquor, pornography and prostitution, and sparked the demand for woman suffrage.

The [Gilded Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilded_Age) plutocracy came under harsh attack from the [Social Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Gospel) preachers and with reformers in the [Progressive Era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Era) who became involved with issues of [child labor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labor), compulsory elementary education and the protection of women from exploitation in factories.

All the major denominations sponsored growing missionary activities inside the United States and around the world.

Colleges associated with churches rapidly expanded in number, size and quality of curriculum. The promotion of "muscular Christianity" became popular among young men on campus and in urban [YMCA's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YMCA), as well as such denominational youth groups such as the [Epworth League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epworth_League) for Methodists and the [Walther League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walther_League) for Lutherans.

## Emergence of African American churches. Scholars disagree about the extent of the native African content of Black Christianity as it emerged in 18th-century America, but there is no dispute that the Christianity of the Black population was grounded in evangelicalism.

The [Second Great Awakening](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Great_Awakening) has been called the "central and defining event in the development of Afro-Christianity." During these revivals Baptists and Methodists converted large numbers of blacks. However, many were disappointed at the treatment they received from their fellow believers and at the backsliding in the commitment to abolish slavery that many white Baptists and Methodists had advocated immediately after the American Revolution.

When their discontent could not be contained, forceful black leaders followed what was becoming an American habit—they formed new denominations. In 1787, [Richard Allen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Allen_(reverend)) and his colleagues in Philadelphia broke away from the Methodist Church and in 1815 founded the [African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Methodist_Episcopal_Church), which, along with independent black Baptist congregations, flourished as the century progressed. By 1846, the AME Church, which began with 8 clergy and 5 churches, had grown to 176 clergy, 296 churches, and 17,375 members.

After the Civil War, Black Baptists desiring to practice Christianity away from racial discrimination, rapidly set up several separate state Baptist conventions. In 1866, black Baptists of the South and West combined to form the Consolidated American Baptist Convention. This Convention eventually collapsed but three national conventions formed in response. In 1895 the three conventions merged to create the [National Baptist Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Baptist_Convention,_USA,_Inc.). It is now the largest African-American religious organization in the United States.

## Interfaith development. After the *awakenings* an interfaith project began with the [Parliament of the World's Religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_World%27s_Religions) beginning in 1893, which was an attempt to create a global dialogue of Faiths. The event was celebrated by another conference on its centenary in 1993 and a new series of meetings begun.

In 1893 the city of Chicago hosted the [World Columbian Exposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Columbian_Exposition), an early [world's fair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World%27s_fair). So many people were coming to Chicago from all over the world that many smaller conferences, called Congresses and Parliaments, were scheduled to take advantage of this unprecedented gathering. A number of congresses were held in conjunction with the exposition. One of these was the *World's Parliament of Religions,* an initiative of the [Swedenborgian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedenborgianism) layman (and judge) [Charles C. Bonney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_C._Bonney). The Parliament of Religions was by far the largest of the congresses held in conjunction with the Exposition. [John Henry Barrows](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Henry_Barrows), a Christian clergyman, was appointed as the first chairman of the General Committee of the 1893 Parliament by [Charles Carroll Bonney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Carroll_Bonney). Barrows was president of one of the colleges studying [comparative religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparative_religion) less than a decade later at the University of Chicago, and it gained an endowed lectureship based on the enthusiasm of the Parliament of Religions. Outside the university, lecture series began in the midwest and New England at least. The 1893 Parliament marked the first organized gathering of representatives of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions. Today it is recognized as the occasion of the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide though it faced censure or lack of enthusiasm in some quarters and after a gap of some years various institutions began similar work, notably the [International Association for Religious Freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Association_for_Religious_Freedom) (established in 1900), the [World Congress of Faiths](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=World_Congress_of_Faiths&action=edit&redlink=1) (established in 1936), and the [World Council of Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Council_of_Churches) (incorporation voted in 1937, formally established in 1948).

*Restorationism* refers to the belief that a purer form of Christianity should be restored using the [early church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity) as a model. In many cases, restorationist groups believed that contemporary Christianity, in all its forms, had deviated from the true, original Christianity, which they then attempted to "Reconstruct", often using the [Book of Acts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles) as a "guidebook" of sorts. Restorationists do not usually describe themselves as "reforming" a Christian church continuously existing from the time of Jesus, but as *restoring* the Church that they believe was lost at some point. "Restorationism" is often used to describe the Stone-Campbell [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement). The term "Restorationist" is also used to describe the [Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) (Mormons) and the [Jehovah's Witness Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses).

### Mormonism *.*The origins of another distinctive religious group, the [Latter Day Saint movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latter_Day_Saint_movement)—also widely known as [Mormonism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormonism)—arose in the early 19th century in an intensely religious area of western New York called the [burned-over district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burned-over_district), because it had been "scorched" by so many revivals. Smith said he had a series of visions, [revelations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revelation_(Latter_Day_Saints)) from God and visitations from [angelic messengers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel#Latter-day_Saint_beliefs), providing him with ongoing instructions as [prophet, seer, and revelator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet,_seer,_and_revelator) and a [restorer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_(Latter_Day_Saints)) of the original and primary doctrines of [early Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity). After publishing the [Book of Mormon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Mormon)—which he said he translated by divine power from a record of ancient American prophets recorded on [golden plates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_plates)—Smith organized the "[his new Mormon church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints)" in 1830. He set up a [theocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theocracy) at Nauvoo Illinois, and ran for president of the United States in 1844. His top aide [Brigham Young](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham_Young) campaigned for Smith saying, "He it is that God of Heaven designs to save this nation from destruction and preserve the Constitution."

Mormon beliefs in theocracy and polygamy bitterly alienated many; violent attacks were common and the Mormons were driven out of state after state. [Smith was assassinated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Joseph_Smith) in 1844 and [Brigham Young](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigham_Young) led the [Mormon Exodus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon_Exodus) from the United States to Mexican territory in Utah in 1847. They settled the [Mormon Corridor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon_Corridor). The United States acquired permanent control of this area in 1848 and rejected the Mormons' 1849 [*State of Deseret*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Deseret) proposal for self-governance, and instead established the [Utah Territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah_Territory) in 1850. Conflicts between Mormons and territorial federal appointees flared, included the [Runaway Officials of 1851](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runaway_Officials_of_1851); this eventually led to the small-scale [Utah War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah_War) of 1857-1858, after which Utah remained occupied by Federal troops until 1861.

Congress passed the [Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morrill_Anti-Bigamy_Act) of 1862 to curb the Mormon practice of [polygamy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polygamy) in the territory, but President [Abraham Lincoln](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln) did not enforce this law; instead Lincoln gave Brigham Young [tacit](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tacit) permission to ignore the act in exchange for not becoming involved with the [American Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War). Additionally, in 1863, President Lincoln appointed [James Duane Doty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Duane_Doty) as territorial governor, and Doty was able to temporarily repair the relationship between the Federal government and the Mormons.

Postwar efforts to enforce polygamy restrictions were limited until the 1882 [Edmunds Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmunds_Act), which allowed for convictions of unlawful cohabitation, which was much easier to prosecute. This law also revoked polygamists' right to vote, made them ineligible for jury service, and prohibited them from holding political office. The subsequent 1887 [Edmunds–Tucker Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmunds%E2%80%93Tucker_Act) disincorporated the LDS Church and confiscated church assets. It also: required an anti-polygamy oath for prospective voters, jurors and public officials; mandated civil marriage licenses; disallowed [spousal privilege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spousal_privilege) to not testify in polygamy cases; disenfranchised women; replaced local judges with federally appointed judges; and removed local control of schools. After a [1890 Supreme Court ruling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Corporation_of_the_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-Day_Saints_v._United_States) found the Edmunds–Tucker Act constitutional, and with most church leadership either in hiding or imprisoned, the church released the [1890 Manifesto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1890_Manifesto) which advised church members against entering legally prohibited marriages. Dissenters moved to Canada or [Mormon colonies in Mexico](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon_colonies_in_Mexico), or into hiding in remote areas. With the polygamy issue resolved, church leaders were pardoned or had their sentences reduced, assets were restored to the church, and Utah was eventually granted statehood in 1896. After the [Reed Smoot hearings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reed_Smoot_hearings) began in 1904, a [Second Manifesto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Manifesto) was issued which specified that anyone entering into or solemnizing polygamous marriages would be excommunicated, and clarified that polygamy restrictions applied everywhere, and not just in the United States. Thanks to worldwide [missionary work](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary_(LDS_Church)), the church grew from 7.7 million members worldwide in 1989 to 14 million in 2010.

### Jehovah's Witnesses *.* [Jehovah's Witnesses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses) comprise a fast-growing denomination that has kept itself separate from other Christian denominations. It began in 1872 with [Charles Taze Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell), but experienced a major schism in 1917 as [Joseph Franklin Rutherford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Franklin_Rutherford) began his presidency. Rutherford gave new direction to the movement and renamed the movement "Jehovah's witnesses" in 1931. The period from 1925 to 1933 saw many significant changes in doctrine. Attendance at their yearly [Memorial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses_practices#Memorial_of_Christ.27s_death) dropped from a high of 90,434 in 1925 to 63,146 in 1935. Since 1950 growth has been very rapid.

During the World War II, Jehovah's Witnesses experienced mob attacks in America and were temporarily banned in Canada and Australia because of their lack of support for the war effort. They won significant Supreme Court victories involving the rights of [free speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech) and [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_religion) that have had a great impact on legal interpretation of these rights for others. In 1943, the United States Supreme Court ruled in [West Virginia State Board of Education vs. Barnette](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Virginia_State_Board_of_Education_vs._Barnette) that school children of Jehovah's Witnesses could not be compelled to salute the flag.

*The Church of Christ, Scientist* was founded in 1879, in Boston by [Mary Baker Eddy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy), the author of its central book, [Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_and_Health_with_Key_to_the_Scriptures), which offers a unique interpretation of Christian faith. [Christian Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Science) teaches that the reality of God denies the reality of sin, sickness, death and the material world. Accounts of miraculous healing are common within the church, and adherents often refuse traditional medical treatments. Legal troubles sometimes result when they forbid medical treatment of their children.

The Church is unique among American denominations in several ways. It is highly centralized, with all the local churches merely branches of the mother church in Boston. There are no ministers, but there are practitioners who are integral to the movement. The practitioners operate local businesses that help members heal their illnesses by the power of the mind. They depend for their clientele on the approval of the Church. Starting in the late 19th century the Church has rapidly lost membership, although it does not publish statistics. Its flagship newspaper *Christian Science Monitor* lost most of its subscribers and dropped its paper version to become an online source.

### Other denominations founded in U.S.

* [***Adventism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventism) - began as an inter-denominational movement. Its most vocal leader was [William Miller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Miller_(preacher)), who in the 1830s in New York became convinced of an imminent [Second Coming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) of Jesus.
* [***Churches of Christ***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ)***/***[***Disciples of Christ***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciples_of_Christ) - a restoration movement with no governing body. The [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) solidified as a historical phenomenon in 1832 when [restorationists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorationism_(Christian_primitivism)) from two major movements championed by [Barton W. Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barton_W._Stone) and [Alexander Campbell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Campbell_(clergyman)) merged (referred to as the "[Stone-Campbell Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stone-Campbell_Movement)").
* [***Episcopal Church***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_Church_(United_States))- founded as an offshoot of the [Church of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England); now the United States branch of the Anglican Communion
* [***Jehovah's Witnesses***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses)- originated with the religious movement known as [Bible Students](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement), which was founded in Pennsylvania in the late 1870s by [Charles Taze Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell).
* [***National Baptist Convention***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Baptist_Convention,_USA,_Inc.) - the largest African American religious organization in the United States and the second largest Baptist denomination in the world.
* [***Pentecostalism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism) - movement that emphasizes the role of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit), finds its historic roots in the [Azusa Street Revival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azusa_Street_Revival) in Los Angeles, California, from 1904 to 1906, sparked by Charles Parham
* [***Reconstructionist Judaism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism)
* [***Scientology***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology) - founded by [L. Ron Hubbard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Ron_Hubbard)
* [***Southern Baptist Convention***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Baptist_Convention), the largest Baptist group in the world and the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. In 1995, it renounced its 1845 origins in the defense of slavery and racial superiority.
* [***Unitarian Universalism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarian_Universalism) - a theologically liberal religious movement founded in 1961 from the union of the well established [Unitarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarianism) and [Universalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universalist) churches.
* [***United Church of Christ***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Church_of_Christ) - descended from Congregationalist churches of New England; formed in 1957 as a [united and uniting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_and_uniting_churches) church from a union of the [Congregational Christian Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_Christian_Church) and [Evangelical and Reformed Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelical_and_Reformed_Church)
* [***Cumberland Presbyterian Church***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cumberland_Presbyterian_Church)- founded in 1810 in [Dickson County, Tennessee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickson_County,_Tennessee) by [Samuel McAdow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_McAdow), [Finis Ewing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finis_Ewing), and [Samuel King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_King_(minister)).

**Christian**

* [***Pentecostalism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecostalism) – movement which emphasizes the role of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit), finds its historic roots in the [Azusa Street Revival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azusa_Street_Revival) in [Los Angeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles) from 1904 to 1906, sparked by [Charles Parham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Fox_Parham). It is estimated to have over 279 million followers worldwide, many in Africa and South America.
* [***Adventism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventism) – began as an inter-denominational movement. Its most vocal leader was [William Miller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Miller_(preacher)), who in the 1830s in [New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York) became convinced of an imminent [Second Coming](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming) of Jesus. The most prominent modern group to emerge from this is the [Seventh-day Adventists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventists).
* ***The*** [***Latter Day Saint movement***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latter_Day_Saint_movement) founded in 1830 by [Joseph Smith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Smith) in upstate New York. Multiple [Latter Day Saint denomination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sects_in_the_Latter_Day_Saint_movement) can be found throughout the United States. [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) (LDS Church), the largest denomination, is headquartered in [Salt Lake City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_Lake_City), [Utah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utah), and has members in many countries. The [Community of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_Christ), the second-largest denomination, is headquartered in [Independence, Missouri](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence,_Missouri). Worldwide they claim about 15 million members.
* [***Jehovah's Witnesses***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses)– originated with the religious movement known as [Bible Students](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_Student_movement), which was founded in [Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pennsylvania) in the late 1870s by [Charles Taze Russell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taze_Russell). Loosely connected in its early years with Adventism, with which it shares some similarities. They claim about 7.69 million active members worldwide.
* [**Christian Science**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Science) – founded by [Mary Baker Eddy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy) in the late 19th century. The church claims some 400,000 members worldwide.
* [**Churches of Christ**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_of_Christ)**/**[**Disciples of Christ**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciples_of_Christ) – a restoration movement with no governing body. The [Restoration Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement) solidified as a historical phenomenon in 1832 when [restorationists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorationism) from two major movements championed by [Barton W. Stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barton_W._Stone) and [Alexander Campbell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Campbell_(clergyman)) merged. It has an estimated 3 million followers worldwide.
* [***Metropolitan Community Church***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Community_Church) – founded by [Troy Perry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troy_Perry) in Los Angeles, 1968.

**Other**

* [***New Thought Movement***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Thought) – two of the early proponents of New Thought beliefs during the mid to late 19th century were [Phineas Parkhurst Quimby](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phineas_Parkhurst_Quimby) and the Mother of New Thought, [Emma Curtis Hopkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Curtis_Hopkins). The three major branches are [Religious Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Science), [Unity Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity_Church) and [Divine Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Science).
* [**Scientology**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Scientology) – founded by [L. Ron Hubbard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Ron_Hubbard) in 1954. Numbers estimated from a few tens of thousands to 15 million (latter is the religion's estimation in 2004).
* [***Reconstructionist Judaism***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism) – founded by [Mordecai Kaplan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordecai_Kaplan) and started in the 1920s.
* [***Native American Church***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_American_Church) – founded by [Quanah Parker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quanah_Parker) beginning in the 1890s and incorporating in 1918. An estimated 250,000 followers.
* [***Nation of Islam***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam) – a sect of Islam, created and followed predominantly by [African-Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-Americans).– founded by [Anton LaVey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_LaVey) in [San Francisco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco), 1966.

**4. Non-Christian religious communities in the USA**

After Christianity, **Judaism** is the next largest religious affiliation in the US, though this identification is not necessarily indicative of religious beliefs or practices. There are between 5.3 and 6.6 million Jews. A significant number of people identify themselves as [American Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Jews) on ethnic and cultural grounds, rather than religious ones. For example, 19% of self-identified American Jews do not believe God exists. The 2001 ARIS study projected from its sample that there are about 5.3 million adults in the American Jewish population: 2.83 million adults (1.4% of the U.S. adult population) are estimated to be adherents of Judaism; 1.08 million are estimated to be adherents of no religion; and 1.36 million are estimated to be adherents of a religion other than Judaism. ARIS 2008 estimated about 2.68 million adults (1.2%) in the country identify Judaism as their faith.

Jews have been present in what is now the US since the 17th century, and specifically allowed since the British colonial [Plantation Act 1740](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plantation_Act_1740). Although small Western European communities initially developed and grew, large-scale immigration did not take place until the late 19th century, largely as a result of persecutions in parts of [Eastern Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe). The Jewish community in the United States is composed predominantly of [Ashkenazi Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_Jews) whose ancestors emigrated from [Central](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Europe) and [Eastern Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe). There are, however, small numbers of older (and some recently arrived) communities of [Sephardi Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews) with roots tracing back to 15th century [Iberia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iberian_Peninsula) (Spain, Portugal, and North Africa). There are also [Mizrahi Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mizrahi_Jews) (from the Middle East, [Caucasia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus) and [Central Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia)), as well as much smaller numbers of [Ethiopian Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian_Jews), [Indian Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Jews), [Kaifeng Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaifeng_Jews) and others from various smaller [Jewish ethnic divisions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethnic_divisions). Approximately 25% of the Jewish American population lives in New York City.

According to a 2014 survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public life, 1.7% of adults in the U.S. identify Judaism as their religion. Among those surveyed, 44% said they were [Reform Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism), 22% said they were [Conservative Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism), and 14% said they were [Orthodox Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism). According to the 1990 [National Jewish Population Survey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Jewish_Population_Survey), 38% of Jews were affiliated with the Reform tradition, 35% were Conservative, 6% were Orthodox, 1% were Reconstructionists, 10% linked themselves to some other tradition, and 10% said they are "just Jewish

The Pew Research Center report on American Judaism released in October 2013 revealed that 22% of Jewish Americans say they have "no religion" and the majority of respondents do not see religion as the primary constituent of Jewish identity. 62% believe Jewish identity is based primarily in ancestry and culture, only 15% in religion. Among Jews who gave Judaism as their religion, 55% based Jewish identity on ancestry and culture, and 66% did not view belief in God as essential to Judaism. A 2009 study estimated the Jewish population (including both those who define themselves as Jewish by religion and those who define themselves as Jewish in cultural or ethnic terms) to be between 6.0 and 6.4 million. According to a study done in 2000 there were an estimated 6.14 million Jewish people in the country, about 2% of the population.

According to the 2001 [National Jewish Population Survey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Jewish_Population_Survey), 4.3 million [American Jewish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Jewish) adults have some sort of strong connection to the Jewish community, whether religious or cultural. Jewishness is generally considered an [ethnic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic) identity as well as a [religious](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious) one. Among the 4.3 million American Jews described as "strongly connected" to Judaism, over 80% have some sort of active engagement with Judaism, ranging from attendance at daily prayer services on one end of the spectrum to attending [Passover Seders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passover_Seder) or lighting [Hanukkah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanukkah) candles on the other. The survey also discovered that Jews in the [Northeast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeastern_United_States) and [Midwest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midwest) are generally more observant than Jews in the [South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States) or [West](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_United_States). Reflecting a trend also observed among other religious groups, Jews in the [Northwestern United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwestern_United_States) are typically the least observant of tradition.

The Jewish American community has higher household incomes than average, and is one of the best educated religious communities in the United States.

**Islam** is the third largest faith in the United States, after Christianity and Judaism, representing 0.9% of the population. Islam in America effectively began with the arrival of African slaves. It is estimated that about 10% of African slaves transported to the United States were Muslim. Most, however, became Christians, and the United States did not have a significant Muslim population until the arrival of immigrants from Arab and East Asian Muslim areas. According to some experts, Islam later gained a higher profile through the [Nation of Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam), a religious group that appealed to black Americans after the 1940s; its prominent converts included [Malcolm X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malcolm_X) and [Muhammad Ali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Ali). The first Muslim elected in Congress was [Keith Ellison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_Ellison) in 2006, followed by [André Carson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andr%C3%A9_Carson) in 2008Research indicates that Muslims in the United States are generally more assimilated and prosperous than their counterparts in Europe. Like other subcultural and religious communities, the Islamic community has generated its own political organizations and charity organizations

[**Buddhism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) entered the US during the 19th century with the arrival of the first immigrants from [East Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia). The first Buddhist temple was established in [San Francisco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco) in 1853 by [Chinese Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Americans).

During the late 19th century Buddhist missionaries from [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan) came to the US. During the same time period, US intellectuals started to take interest in Buddhism.

The early 20th century was characterized by a continuation of tendencies that had their roots in the 19th century. The second half, by contrast, saw the emergence of new approaches, and the move of Buddhism into the mainstream and making itself a mass and social religious phenomenon.

Many foreign associations and teachers—such as [Soka Gakkai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soka_Gakkai) and [Tenzin Gyatso](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenzin_Gyatso) (the 14th [Dalai Lama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalai_Lama) for [Tibetan Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan_Buddhism))—started to organize missionary activities, while US converts established the first Western-based Buddhist institutions, temples and worship groups.

Estimates of the number of Buddhists in the United States vary between 0.5% and 0.9%, with 0.7% reported by both the CIA and Pew.

The first time [**Hinduism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hinduism) entered the U.S. is not clearly identifiable. However, large groups of Hindus have immigrated from India and other Asian countries since the enactment of the [Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_and_Nationality_Act_of_1965). During the 1960s and 1970s Hinduism exercised fascination contributing to the development of [New Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Age) thought. During the same decades the [International Society for Krishna Consciousness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Society_for_Krishna_Consciousness) (a [Vaishnavite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishnavite) [Hindu reform](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_reform) organization) was founded in the US. In 2001, there were an estimated 400,000 Hindus in the US, about 0.2% of the total population. In 2004 the [Hindu American Foundation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_American_Foundation)—a national institution protecting rights of the Hindu community of U.S.—was founded.

American Hindus have one of the highest rates of educational attainment and household income among all religious communities, and tend to have lower divorce rates

**Native American** religions historically exhibited much diversity, and are often characterized by [animism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animism) or [panentheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panentheism). The membership of Native American religions in the 21st century comprises about 9,000 people.

**Neopaganism**in the United States is represented by widely different [movements and organizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Neopagan_movements). The largest Neopagan religion is [Wicca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicca), followed by [Neo-Druidism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Druidism). Other neopagan movements include [Germanic Neopaganism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germanic_Neopaganism), [Celtic Reconstructionist Paganism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_Reconstructionist_Paganism), [Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenic_Polytheistic_Reconstructionism), and [Semitic neopaganism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semitic_neopaganism).

*Druidry.* According to the [American Religious Identification Survey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_for_the_Study_of_Secularism_in_Society_and_Culture#American_Religious_Identification_Survey_.28ARIS.29) (ARIS), there are approximately 30,000 [druids](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Druid) in the United States. Modern Druidism came to North America first in the form of fraternal Druidic organizations in the nineteenth century, and orders such as the Ancient Order of Druids in America were founded as distinct American groups as early as 1912. In 1963, the [Reformed Druids of North America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_Druids_of_North_America) (RDNA) was founded by students at [Carleton College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carleton_College), [Northfield, Minnesota](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northfield,_Minnesota). They adopted elements of Neopaganism into their practices, for instance celebrating the festivals of the [Wheel of the Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheel_of_the_Year).

*Wicca* advanced in North America in the 1960s by [Raymond Buckland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Buckland), an expatriate Briton who visited Gardner's Isle of Man coven to gain initiation. [Universal Eclectic Wicca](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Eclectic_Wicca) was popularized in 1969 for a diverse membership drawing from both [Dianic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dianic_Wicca) and [British Traditional](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Traditional_Wicca) Wiccan backgrounds.

*New Thought Movement*. A group of churches which started in the 1830s in the United States is known under the banner of "[New Thought](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Thought)". These churches share a [spiritual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality), [metaphysical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics) and [mystical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism) predisposition and understanding of the [Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible) and were strongly influenced by the [Transcendentalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalist) movement, particularly the work of [Ralph Waldo Emerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson). Another antecedent of this movement was [Swedenborgianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedenborgianism), founded on the writings of [Emanuel Swedenborg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emanuel_Swedenborg) in 1787. The New Thought concept was named by [Emma Curtis Hopkins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Curtis_Hopkins) ("teacher of teachers") after Hopkins broke off from [Mary Baker Eddy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy)'s [Church of Christ, Scientist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Christ,_Scientist). The movement had been previously known as the Mental Sciences or the Christian Sciences. The three major branches are [Religious Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Science), [Unity Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity_Church) and [Divine Science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Science).

**STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. What are the statistics of religious affiliations of American population?

2. What are the major Christian denominations in the USA?

3. What were the “Great Awakenings” in the history of American Christian church? What new churches were established in their process?

4. What are the largest non-Christian communities in the USA? Is there a tradition of religious tolerance in the USA?