

United States

Geography

Location: North America, bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico

Area:

total area: 9,372,610 sq km

land area: 9,166,600 sq km

Land boundaries: total 12,248 km, Canada 8,893 km (including 2,477 km with Alaska), Cuba 29 km (US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay), Mexico 3,326 km

Coastline: 19,924 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 12 nm

continental shelf: not specified

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm
territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida and arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest; low winter temperatures in the northwest are ameliorated occasionally in January and February by warm chinook winds from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains

Terrain: vast central plain, mountains in west, hills and low mountains in east; rugged mountains and broad river valleys in Alaska; rugged, volcanic topography in Hawaii

Natural resources: coal, copper, lead, molybdenum, phosphates, uranium, bauxite, gold, iron, mercury, nickel, potash, silver, tungsten, zinc, petroleum, natural gas, timber

Land use:

arable land: 20%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 26%

forest and woodland: 29%

other: 25%

Irrigated land: 181,020 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: air pollution resulting in acid rain in both the US and Canada; the US is the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels; water pollution from runoff of pesticides and fertilizers; very limited natural fresh water resources in much of the western part of the country require careful management; desertification

natural hazards: tsunamis, volcanoes, and earthquake activity around Pacific Basin; hurricanes along the Atlantic coast; tornadoes in the midwest; mudslides in California; forest fires in the west; flooding; permafrost in northern Alaska is a major impediment to development

Note: world's fourth-largest country (after Russia, Canada, and China)

People

Population: 263,814,032 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 22% (female 28,391,451; male 29,845,630)

15-64 years: 65% (female 86,454,415; male 85,474,002)

65 years and over: 13% (female 19,949,978; male 13,698,559)
(July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.02% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 15.25 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 8.38 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 3.34 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 7.88 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 75.99 years

male: 72.8 years

female: 79.7 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.08 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: American(s)
adjective: American

Ethnic divisions: white 83.4%, black 12.4%, Asian 3.3%, Native American 0.8% (1992)

Religions: Protestant 56%, Roman Catholic 28%, Jewish 2%, other 4%, none 10% (1989)

Languages: English, Spanish (spoken by a sizable minority)

Literacy:
total population: 97%
male: 97%
female: 97%

Labor force: 131.056 million (includes unemployed) (1994)
by occupation: managerial and professional 27.5%, technical, sales and administrative support 30.3%, services 13.7%, manufacturing, mining, transportation, and crafts 25.5%, farming, forestry, and fishing 2.9%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: United States of America

conventional short form: United States

Type: federal republic; strong democratic tradition

Capital: Washington, DC

Flag: thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white; there is a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner bearing 50 small white five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars; the 50 stars represent the 50 states, the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies; known as Old Glory; the design and colors have been the basis for a number of other flags including Chile, Liberia, Malaysia, and Puerto Rico

Economy

Overview: The US has the most powerful, diverse, and technologically advanced economy in the world. The economy is market oriented with most decisions made by private individuals and business firms and with government purchases of goods and services made predominantly in the marketplace.

Industries: leading industrial power in the world, highly diversified and technologically advanced; petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics, food processing, consumer goods, lumber, mining

Agriculture: accounts for 2% of GDP and 2.9% of labor force; favorable climate and soils support a wide variety of crops and livestock production; world's second largest producer and number one exporter of grain; surplus food producer; fish catch of 4.4 million metric tons (1990)

Illicit drugs: illicit producer of cannabis for domestic consumption with 1987 production estimated at 3,500 metric tons or about 25% of the available marijuana; ongoing eradication program aimed at small plots and greenhouses has not reduced production

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 240,000 km mainline routes (nongovernment owned)

Highways:

total: 6,243,163 km

Inland waterways: 41,009 km of navigable inland channels,
exclusive of the Great Lakes (est.)

Pipelines: petroleum 276,000 km; natural gas 331,000 km (1991)

Ports: Anchorage, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Chicago, Duluth,
Hampton Roads, Honolulu, Houston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles,
New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Port Canaveral, Portland
(Oregon), Prudhoe Bay, San Francisco, Savannah, Seattle, Tampa,
Toledo

Airports:

total: 15,032

Defence Forces

Branches: Department of the Army, Department of the Navy
(includes Marine Corps), Department of the Air Force