

USA

Facts and Statistics

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

Capital: Washington, DC

Climate: mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest.

Population: 301,139,947 (July 2007 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: white 81.7%, black 12.9%, Asian 4.2%, Amerindian and Alaska native 1%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander 0.2% (2003 est.)

Religions: Protestant 52%, Roman Catholic 24%, Mormon 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 1%, other 10%, none 10% (2002 est.)

Government: Constitution-based federal republic

Language in the USA

The United States does not have an official language, but English is spoken by about 82% of the population as a native language. The variety of English spoken in the United States is known as American English; together with Canadian English it makes up the group of dialects known as North American English. Spanish is the second-most common language in the country, spoken by almost 30 million people (or 12% of the population).

American Society and Culture

Diversity

America is ultimately a nation of immigrants and as a result is a cultural mish-mash in every sense of the word. Not only is the country populated by people from foreign countries but all Americans in one way or another trace their ancestry back to another culture, whether Irish, German, Italian or Scottish. Looking around any major city one will notice the 'melting-pot' that it is.

Informal and Friendly

Most people who come to the United States may already know a few things about the people through TV. Although this is of course a skewed reality some of the stereotypes are true, especially American friendliness and informality. People tend to not wait to be introduced, will begin to speak with strangers as they stand in a queue, sit next to each other at an event, etc. Visitors can often be surprised when people are so informal to the point of being very direct or even rude.

Time is Money

The country that coined the phrase obviously lives the phrase. In America, time is a very important commodity. People 'save' time and 'spend' time as if it were money in the bank. Americans ascribe personality characteristics and values based on how people use time. For example, people who are on-time are considered to be good people, reliable people who others can count on.

The Family

The family unit is generally considered the nuclear family, and is typically small (with exceptions among certain ethnic groups). Extended family relatives live in their own homes, often at great distances from their children.

Individualism is prized, and this is reflected in the family unit. People are proud of their individual accomplishments, initiative and success, and may, or may not, share those sources of pride with their elders.

