

20 Facts the Average American is Likely Unaware Of

1. America's oldest constitution is still in use.

While many think of the U.S. Constitution as the oldest written national constitution, the Massachusetts state constitution, written by John Adams in 1780, predates it and is still in use today. This remarkable document laid the foundation for the structure of the U.S. federal government, and many ideas enshrined in it were later adopted in the U.S. Constitution (Massachusetts Constitution, 1780).

2. Earthquakes in the U.S. are most frequent in Alaska, not California.

California's notoriety for earthquakes overshadows the fact that Alaska is actually the most seismically active state in the U.S. Alaska experiences about 3,000 earthquakes each year, many of which are powerful but occur in remote areas far from urban centers. The strongest earthquake ever recorded in the U.S. was the 1964 Great Alaskan earthquake, which had a magnitude of 9.2 (Alaska Earthquake Center, 2021).

3. Only two states have official languages.

While the U.S. is known for its linguistic diversity, only Hawaii and Alaska have official languages. Hawaii recognizes both English and Hawaiian, while Alaska has recognized 20 Native Alaskan languages as official. This starkly contrasts with other nations where an official language is often declared at the federal level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

4. The U.S. is home to one of the world's smallest deserts.

The Carcross Desert in Alaska, at only 44 acres, is often referred to as one of the world's smallest deserts. Although

the desert is small, it offers visitors a unique landscape with sand dunes and sparse vegetation, often juxtaposed against snowy peaks (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, 2019).

5. Americans send over 2 million letters to the White House annually.

Despite the prevalence of digital communication, many Americans still write traditional letters to the White House. The Office of Presidential Correspondence receives over 2 million letters each year from people of all ages and backgrounds, often expressing personal opinions, concerns, or stories they wish to share with the President (White House Historical Association, 2023).

6. The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world.

The Library of Congress houses over 170 million items, including books, recordings, photographs, maps, and manuscripts. Its vast collection spans multiple languages and subjects and continues to grow as new materials are added each year. The library's mission is to serve Congress and the American public by providing access to this rich knowledge repository (Library of Congress, 2023).

7. New York City is the most linguistically diverse city in the world.

New York City is home to more than 800 languages, making it the most linguistically diverse city on the planet. Many of these languages are spoken by immigrant communities and include endangered languages rarely heard outside their native countries. This diversity reflects New York's status as a global hub of culture and immigration (Endangered Language Alliance, 2020).

8. The U.S. has more museums than McDonald's.

There are over 35,000 museums across the United States, covering topics ranging from art and history to science and technology. This number far surpasses the approximately 13,000 McDonald's restaurants in the country. Museums provide important educational and cultural experiences, preserving history and fostering curiosity in people of all ages (American Alliance of Museums, 2020).

9. Only two U.S. states have never recorded a temperature over 100°F.

While most states in the U.S. have experienced temperatures exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit, Alaska and Hawaii are the exceptions. Hawaii's highest recorded temperature was 98°F, while Alaska's was 100°F, recorded in Fort Yukon in 1915. Both states' unique geographic locations contribute to their relatively mild temperature extremes (NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, 2023).

10. The Great Lakes hold 84% of North America's fresh surface water.

The five Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario—contain more than 20% of the world's fresh surface water and 84% of North America's. This massive freshwater system is vital for the U.S. and Canada's drinking water, agriculture, industry, and transportation (Great Lakes Commission, 2020).

11. The U.S. Postal Service predates the Constitution.

The U.S. Postal Service was established in 1775 by the Second Continental Congress, over a decade before the U.S. Constitution was written. Benjamin Franklin was appointed the first Postmaster General, and the postal

system has since evolved into one of the world's largest and most efficient mail distribution networks (United States Postal Service, 2023).

12. Americans spend more time commuting than on vacation.

The average American spends approximately 225 hours commuting to work each year, more time than they typically spend on vacation. This time spent in transit can significantly impact mental and physical health, increasing stress and reducing personal time (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

13. Wind energy powers over 39 million American homes.

The U.S. is a world leader in wind energy production, which now powers more than 39 million homes. Wind power has proliferated over the past two decades, driven by technological advancements and a push for cleaner, renewable energy sources to combat climate change (American Wind Energy Association, 2022).

14. The U.S. was the first country to reach the Moon.

In 1969, NASA's Apollo 11 mission marked a significant milestone in human history when American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the Moon. The success of Apollo 11 established the U.S. as a leader in space exploration and technology (NASA, 2023).

15. California's economy is larger than the UK's.

California's economy, driven by its tech sector, entertainment industry, and agriculture, is so large that if it were a country, it would have the fifth-largest economy in the world, surpassing the United Kingdom. California's

GDP is around \$3.5 trillion, reflecting the state's global economic influence (World Bank, 2022).

16. The U.S. consumes more energy than any other country.

Despite its population being smaller than some countries, the U.S. consumes more energy than any other nation.

Approximately 16% of the world's energy consumption occurs in the U.S., which is driven by its industrial sectors, transportation, and high standard of living (International Energy Agency, 2023).

17. Alaska is the only state whose name can be typed on one row of a keyboard.

On a QWERTY keyboard, "Alaska" is the only U.S. state that can be typed entirely using the middle row of letters.

This quirky fact is a fun tidbit for anyone interested in typing or state trivia (Smithsonian Magazine, 2022).

18. Most tornadoes in the world occur in the U.S.

The U.S. experiences more tornadoes than any other country, with approximately 1,200 tornadoes touching down each year. Many of these tornadoes occur in "Tornado Alley," which includes parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. Tornadoes are a significant weather hazard in these areas and can cause devastating damage (NOAA National Weather Service, 2023).

19. Yellowstone was the world's first national park.

Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872, was the first national park in the world. Its creation marked the beginning of the national park movement, which aimed to preserve natural landscapes for public enjoyment and conservation. Today, the U.S. has 63 national parks, and

the concept has spread worldwide (National Park Service, 2023).

20. **The U.S. has more billionaires than any other country.**

As of 2023, the U.S. has 735 billionaires, the highest number in the world. American billionaires are influential in various industries, from technology to finance, and their wealth significantly impacts national and global economies (Forbes, 2023).

References (available upon request)