

AMERICA 1976 - 2026

How the Country has Changed Over the Past 50 Years

	Bicentennial 1976	Semiquincentennial 2026
Total Population	218 million	341 million
Median Age	28.8 Years	39.1 Years
Life Expectancy	72.9	78.4
Where Americans Live	Urban (31%) Suburban (37%) Rural (32%)	Urban (31%) Suburban (51%) Rural (18%)
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15%	38%
Only Married Once	73%	54%
Homeownership Rate	65%	65.7%
Median Household Income (adjusted for inflation)	~ \$57,000 (adjusted for inflation)	\$83,700
Federal Debt	\$631 Billion	\$39 Trillion
Share Employed in Manufacturing	22% of nonfarm workers	8% of nonfarm workers
Share Employed in Private Services	58% of nonfarm workers	71% of nonfarm workers
Labor Force Participation Rates	61.6%	62.5%
Daily Television Viewing	~ 3 Hours	~ 3 Hours
Total Daily Screen Time (All Devices)	N/A	7+ Hours

prepared by Ripon Society staff

Note: Figures for 2026 reflect the most recent data available, generally 2023–2025, from the U.S. Census Bureau, CDC, and Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Where Americans Live" uses a county-based classification of urban, suburban, and rural populations rather than the Census Bureau's standard urban/rural definition, under which roughly 80% of Americans are counted as urban.