

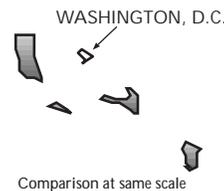
# US in the WORLD

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES TO ENSURE A HEALTHY PLANET

## Washington, D.C.



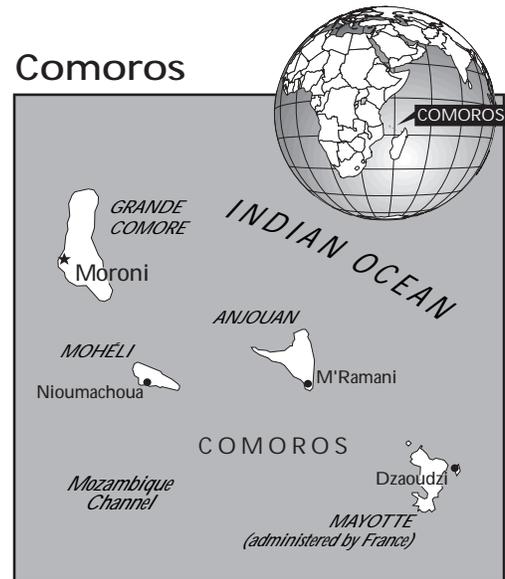
Not divided into cities.



Washington, D.C.  
Area: 69 sq. miles  
Population: 0.5 million

Comoros  
Area: 719 sq. miles  
Population: 0.6 million

## Comoros



Largest urban area by population (1995):  
Moroni (36,000)

The District of Columbia, center of the most powerful nation in the world, and the Comoros Islands, a tiny archipelago halfway between Mozambique and Madagascar, share a similar number of inhabitants and a history of external political and economic intervention.

Covering an area of 719 square miles, the Comoros are home to slightly more than one-half million people of Arab, African, Malagasay, and European descent who live on four main islands—Grand Comore, Anjouan, Mohéli, and Mayotte—and several islets. In 1975, the first three islands voted in favor of independence from France. Separatists on Anjouan seceded from Comoros in 1997 and, after failing to obtain their reintegration into France, opted along with Mohéli residents for independence as separate nations.

Though much smaller in area, the District of Columbia is also a territory whose status is open to controversy. Created at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers to house the U.S. federal government, it originally covered 100 square miles, but the portion south of the Potomac was given back to Virginia in 1846. Reduced to 69 square miles, the District boasts the highest population density of any state or federal district: 8,672 persons per square mile (13 times the density in Comoros). A series of laws aimed at giving the District more independence culminated in the devolution of powers to a locally elected mayor. In a controversial move, however, Congress recently resumed its control over budgetary issues.

Despite the relatively poor volcanic soil, agriculture employs more than 80 percent of the Comorian population and accounts for 40 percent of the

gross domestic product (GDP). By comparison, 1 percent of the District's residents are employed in agriculture and 96 percent are employed in services. Comoros is the foremost world producer of ylang-ylang (a perfume essence) and the second biggest producer of vanilla. Following a 1996 drop in the value of these two commodities, export earnings significantly declined. Subsistence fishing is complemented by the sale of coelacanth, a fish thought to be extinct for 70 million years, to museums and research centers. Both the District and Comoros reap revenues from tourism, but Comorian tourism suffers from the isolation of the archipelago and recurrent outbreaks of cholera. Comoros' GDP per capita of \$650 remains among the world's lowest; the \$31,000 median household income for the District is just below the U.S. average.

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# WASHINGTON, D.C.

## Demographic and Health Trends

- The District of Columbia's population has fallen by one-third, from 802,000 in 1950 to 529,000 in 1997. Fewer people live in the nation's capital than at any time since the 1930s.
- In the 1990s, the District has continued to lose people to other states—suffering an estimated net loss of 127,000 persons. The District has gained 24,000 people through net immigration from abroad, however.
- Like Hawaii, the District of Columbia has a minority group—in this case, blacks—comprising the majority of its population. African Ameri-

cans made up 63 percent of the District's population in 1996.

- Since 1993, unsafe levels of lead concentrations and bacteria have been detected in D.C.'s drinking water. As a result, the city has issued periodic public alerts and replaced some of the lead service pipes connecting water mains with private property. High lead levels in the blood of D.C.'s inner-city children are still a problem, however, due to the presence of lead-based paint in 75 percent of housing units that were built before the 1978 law prohibiting lead-based paint.

## Natural Resources and Wildlife Issues

- Improvements in the District's Blue Plains wastewater treatment facility have led in part to the dramatic improvement of the Potomac River's water quality since the 1960s. Runoff from sewer and rain overflows remains a problem for the Potomac, although not to the same degree as for the shallower Anacostia River. Although both rivers support aquatic

life and fishing activities, District officials advise against eating certain fish, such as carp or catfish.

- The District of Columbia provides a habitat for three endangered and threatened species: the bald eagle, the peregrine falcon, and Hay's spring amphipod (a type of crustacean).

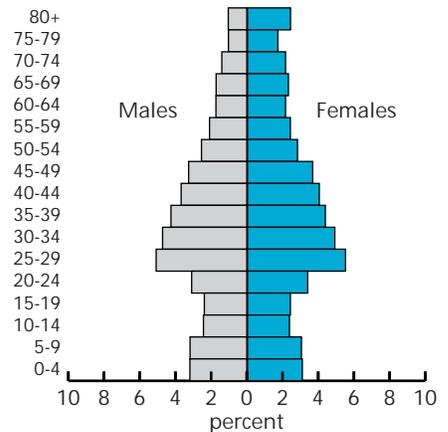
## Socioeconomic Factors

- The District of Columbia ranks at or near the bottom on many social and economic indicators. Life expectancy at birth, for example, is lower in the District than in any of the 50 states. A male child born in the District can expect to live, on average, about 62 years under current mortality conditions—lower than in a number of developing countries.
- Infant mortality in the District has fallen 30 percent since 1988—to 16.2 infant deaths per 1,000 births in 1995. Still, the current figure is more

than twice the national rate of 7.6 infant deaths per 1,000 births.

- Median household income in the District was \$31,835 between 1994 and 1996, nearly 9 percent lower than the national average. According to the Greater Washington Consumer Survey, 30 percent of District households had incomes of at least \$50,000 in 1996, with 9 percent having incomes of \$100,000 or more. By contrast, 15 percent of households in the District had incomes under \$15,000.

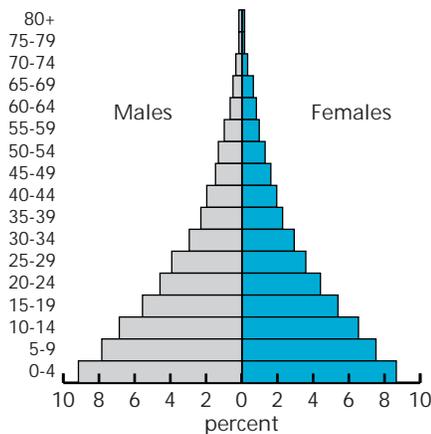
## POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX



## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FACTS

Population, 1997: 529,000
Projected population, 2025: 655,000
Annual growth rate: -1.9%
Doubling time (at current rate): n.a.
Average number of children per woman: 2.1
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births: 16.2
Life expectancy: 62 (male), 74 (female)
Persons per square mile: 8,672
Percent urban: 100
Endangered/threatened animals: 3 species
Endangered/threatened plants: 0 species
Percent of land protected: 0
Wetlands loss, 1780-1980: n.a.
Daily water use per capita: 18 gallons
Water use for domestic purposes: 0%
Water use for agriculture: 0%
Water use for industry: 5%
Water use for energy production: 95%
Cropland per capita: 0.0 acres
Energy use per capita: 55.2 barrels of oil equiv.
Persons per motor vehicle: 2.3
Adults who are high school graduates: 79%
Elected officials who are women: n.a.
Labor force in agriculture: 1%
Labor force in industry: 3%
Labor force in services: 96%
Gross State Product, 1994: \$84,553 per capita

## POPULATION BY AGE AND SEX



## COMOROS FACTS

Population, 1997: 590,000
Projected population, 2025: 1.4 million
Annual growth rate: 3.5%
Doubling time (at current rate): 20 years
Average number of children per woman: 6.8
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births: 80
Life expectancy: 56 (male), 60 (female)
Persons per square mile: 686
Percent urban: 29
Threatened animals: 16 species
Threatened plants: 3 species
Percent of land protected: n.a.
Wetlands loss, through 1980s: n.a.
Percent with access to safe water: 48
Percent with adequate sanitation: 83
Daily water use per capita: 13 gallons
Water use for domestic purposes: n.a.
Water use for agriculture: n.a.
Water use for industry: n.a.
Potential cropland per capita: .45 acres
Energy use per capita: 25.8 barrels of oil equiv.
Persons per motor vehicle: 41.9
Percent of girls in secondary school: 17
Percent of boys in secondary school: 21
Women as % of national legislature: 0
Labor force in agriculture: 83%
Labor force in industry: 6%
Labor force in services: 11%
GDP per capita, 1995: US\$650

## Demographic and Health Trends

- Families are large in Comoros—women have nearly seven children on average. Almost one-half of the country's population is under age 15. This very large proportion of youth will translate into continued high population growth as the young become parents themselves.
- The life expectancy of 58 for Comorians is 10 years higher than for eastern Africa as a whole—the region with the world's lowest life

expectancy. Although infant mortality in the islands is 18 percent lower than the rate for eastern Africa, it is 25 percent higher than the rate for developing countries overall.

- Population density is 686 people per square mile. The proportion of the population living in urban areas has increased nine-fold since 1950. Still, the country is largely rural with fewer than one-third of the population living in urban areas.

## Natural Resources and Wildlife Issues

- Soil erosion results from heavy rainfall and crop cultivation on steep slopes without adequate terracing. Coral reefs are being damaged by the resulting sedimentation. This damage, in turn, harms fisheries.
- The need for additional agricultural land and energy have resulted in widespread deforestation. Wood burning provides about three-quarters of the country's energy—the remainder is supplied by oil-fired power plants. Wood fuel is the primary fuel used for cooking.

- The pollution of groundwater and of the nearby sea are a particular problem around Moroni (the capital on the island of Grande Comore) due to poor waste management.

- Threatened species in the Comoros include the Livingstone's flying fox, Madagascar heron, Comoro olive-pigeon, Grand Comoro scops-owl, Mohéli brush-warbler, mongoose lemur, and hawksbill turtle.

## Socioeconomic Factors

- Agriculture is the islands' dominant industry, but the potential for agricultural development is very limited given the shortage of cultivable land, poor crop yields, and lack of storage facilities. The country must import foodstuffs including meat, vegetables, and most of the rice islanders consume. Food imports constitute 37 percent of merchandise imports.

with the rest of the world has hindered economic development in the Comoros.

- The lack of adequate transportation on land, between islands, and

- The Comoros depends heavily on external trade and assistance. U.S. appropriations for the Comoros were \$118,000 in fiscal year 1996 and \$75,000 in fiscal year 1997, the president's budget request was for 1998 was \$75,000. These funds were for military, education, and training assistance.

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Given its current 3.5 percent growth rate, the Comorian population is expected to reach 1.4 million by 2025. Though the District's population has been decreasing since the 1950s, its suburban areas have experienced explosive growth in recent years. One out of every 13 Comorian infants dies, and only half the population is literate. The District's demographic profile likewise remains relatively poor. One in every 62 infants dies, and average life expectancy is 68 years. While higher than in the Comoros (58 years), this life expectancy is the lowest in the United States.

In the Comoros, deforestation results from high levels of subsistence agriculture, the use of forest materials for construction, population growth, and problems of land tenure legislation. From 1971 to 1986, Anjouan lost 73 percent of its natural forest cover. Only 25 of the 45 permanent rivers found on the island in 1925 remained in 1992. In the dry season, some areas have to rely on water brought by tankers.

The District faces somewhat different environmental challenges. Several of its rivers are badly polluted, and it ranks second in the nation, after Los Angeles, for traffic congestion. Since the passage of the 1970 Clean Air Act, however, air pollution has been on the

decline. The most recent EPA data show that air quality in the nation's capital has low levels of carbon monoxide but still has unacceptably high levels of smog.

## Responding to Challenges

In 1990, the Anacostia Watershed

Restoration Committee established the Small Habitat Improvement Program (SHIP) as a pilot program to package small-scale environmental restoration projects for citizens and volunteers in the District of Columbia. SHIP monitors various education, outreach, and restoration projects. Their stream valley restoration projects include the improvement of river drainage through the stenciling of messages on storm drains to avoid illegal dumping, the removal of trash, and the planting of local species of trees.

Action Comores is a conservation organization working with several international groups such as Fauna and Flora International, Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, local governments,

and nongovernmental organizations to help alleviate environmental problems through scientific research, conservation efforts, and education. The flagship species of its programs is the Livingstone's flying fox, an endangered fruit bat. Action Comores hopes to protect and expand the current bat

**P**eople in Washington, D.C., and Comoros, along with all other living creatures, need clean and healthy air, water, and land, and a stable climate. But as people strive to meet these fundamental needs and improve their lives, they make demands on Earth's resources—and leave footprints. No species demands as much and leaves as many footprints as humans do. The number of people on the planet has a direct impact on the environment and how resources are used. But the level of consumption and the ways in which natural resources are used also directly affect the health of the planet—locally, regionally, globally.

No matter where one lives, the activities of *all* humans will ultimately determine the well-being of *all* humans.

population through the establishment of forest reserves, the assessment and monitoring of populations, the introduction of controls on logging, educational programs, and the establishment of captive breeding colonies. There were 71 Peace Corps volunteers in the Comoros from 1988 to 1995. ■

**DEFINITIONS:** Doubling Time: The number of years it will take for a population to double, assuming a *constant* rate of natural increase. Average Number of Children Per Woman: Known as the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) or the average number of children a woman would have in her lifetime, assuming that birth rates remained constant throughout her childbearing years. Endangered Species: Any species in danger of extinction throughout all, or a significant portion of its habitat. Threatened Species: Any species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all, or a significant portion of its habitat. Gross Domestic Product (GDP): The value of all goods and services produced within a nation in a given year. Gross State Product (GSP): The value of all goods and services produced within a state. It is the state counterpart of the nation's GDP.

**SOURCES:** Major sources are International Labour Organization; National Center for Health Statistics; UNICEF; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Geological Survey; The World Conservation Union (IUCN); and World Resources Institute. For a complete list of sources, contact PRB.

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