

## Basic Facts

- The Washington D.C. metro area includes the nearby cities of Arlington, Falls Church, Alexandria in Virginia, Silver Spring, Bethesda and College Park in Maryland, all within the 495 Beltway
- 6.1 million population in the metro area
- \$508 billion Gross Metro Product (2016)
- Key sectors, based on employment, are: professional and business services, government, education and health, defense, high technology and biomedical
- Not surprisingly this metro area ranks No. 1 for Access to Talent
- D.C. was voted the [best American city for women entrepreneurs by Inc. magazine](#) in 2014, reporting that 74 of the 692 women-led companies in the Inc. 5000 are located in the D.C. metro area
- The US Small Business Administration, which provides mentoring and counseling for small businesses nationwide, is especially active around its national headquarters and the D.C. Department of Small and Local Business Development and Federal City Council recently launched the [Aspire to Entrepreneurship Pilot Project](#)

## Notable Strengths

- The District of Columbia, seat of the U.S. government, has become an economic powerhouse in its own right
- The continuing large importance of federal defense and homeland-security-related spending will continue to drive the regional economy and enable the city to maintain above-average growth rates in employment and personal income
- With five business schools located inside the Beltway and approximately 45 percent female enrollment in local business schools, the metro area has a large pool of women with business management education and entrepreneurial aspirations, and also a local talent pool from which entrepreneurs can recruit personnel
- The proportion of young, highly educated workers is also greater in D.C. than most US cities. Nearly 60 percent of the total population has an associate's degree or higher (compared to 38.8 percent nationwide)
- The city is also able to retain professionals educated at nearby universities, four of which are classified in the *U.S. News and World Report's* 2017 rankings of the [1000 Best Global Universities](#), and three have [globally top-ranked MBA programs](#)
- Georgetown University, American University, George Mason University, George Washington University and University of Maryland all support young entrepreneurs through entrepreneurship centers and grants. [George Washington University even has a program specifically focused on women entrepreneurs](#)
- The city also hosts a number of entrepreneurship networks and events for women-owned businesses, including [FedTalks](#), an annual conference for tech and government IT; [Vinetta Project](#), aimed at helping women entrepreneurs with investment capital; [Success in the City](#), supporting women-owned business to acquire technology, access capital and mentorship; [Her Corner](#), a peer group of women entrepreneurs; [Sterling Women](#), which showcases women-owned businesses; and the [BEACON initiative](#), which was launched in November 2016 by D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Georgetown Law to develop "the most supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs in the U.S."
- In 2016, D.C. passed one of the most generous paid parental leave laws in the United States: 8 weeks of leave at up to 90 percent of full weekly pay (up to 1.5 times the minimum wage), which helps women entrepreneurs that opt into the program earn income and build savings even during the early weeks of parenthood

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## Areas for Improvement

- D.C.'s relatively high crime rate (including murders and property crimes) and a [recent increase in crimes against women](#) should be addressed to increase women's safety in the city, particularly at night, when many female entrepreneurs attend business networking events
- The D.C. metro area also has [the most expensive infant care in the United States](#), which [will be among the next initiatives](#) addressed by local government for the retention of young women entrepreneurs and their families
- The D.C. public transportation system, Metro/Wmata, is stressed as a result of recent transit disruptions that have decreased reliability and service locations while costs have increased and steady population growth and increases in housing prices
- The D.C. population grows every workday by [80 percent due to commuters](#) and [average commute times](#) can range, depending on mode, from 17 minutes (walkers) to 72 minutes (commuter rail)
- The region has also seen a large increase in the number of commuters working from home (32 percent of commuters report teleworking 1.5 days per week)
- For teleworkers, the cost of technology access could also be a disadvantage to starting a business locally. D.C. has a relatively high average monthly cost of internet (10MB speed), ranking No. 49 among the 2017 WE Cities in Technology costs