

What is a Metro Area?

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) – A Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA or metro area) is a geographic area containing an urban core of 50,000 or more people (typically a city) that is socially and economically linked to its surrounding areas (counties) as measured by commuting patterns. Metro areas are defined based on standards developed by the federal government during each decennial census. The result is a set of nationally consistent definitions of metro regions, or markets, that can be easily compared for statistical purposes.

Combined Statistical Area (CSA) – A Combined Statistical Area (CSA) is established by the federal government in cases where two or more neighboring metro areas have ‘grown’ together (increased commuting interaction) to the point where they increasingly represent one unified economic entity. Examples of CSAs include San Francisco-San Jose, Boston-Manchester, Raleigh-Durham and Washington-Baltimore. Federal data are often produced using both MSA and CSA designations.

The Washington-Baltimore Region



■ Baltimore MSA ■ Maryland DC Suburbs ■ Northern Virginia ■ DC

Baltimore MSA ■

With a 2007 population of 2.67 million, the Baltimore MSA ranks 20th in size among all US MSAs. It is comprised of Baltimore City and the surrounding counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard and Queen Anne’s. Cecil County is a partner in the Economic Alliance; however, it is not included in official metro area data for Greater Baltimore. MSAs that are comparable in size to Greater Baltimore include San Diego, St. Louis, Tampa, Pittsburgh and Denver.

Washington-Baltimore Area (CSA) ■ ■ ■ ■

With a 2007 population of 8.24 million, the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia CSA ranks 4th in size among all US CSAs. The CSA region is comprised of the Washington MSA, the Baltimore MSA, the Winchester, VA MSA, and the Culpepper, VA and Lexington, MD Micropolitan Statistical Areas (smaller versions of MSAs).