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IN FOCUS

Types of Coins Produced by the U.S. Mint

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American coins are produced by the U.S. Mint. The U.S. Mint was established by the Coinage Act of 1792 (1 Stat. 246) to produce coins. This In Focus discusses types of coins produced by the U.S. Mint, a bureau of the Department of the Treasury. These include circulating coins, bullion coins, and numismatic coins.

Circulating Coins

The U.S. Mint strikes *circulating coins*—coins produced for everyday transactions. Most design aspects of circulating coins are required by law. Pursuant to statute (31 U.S.C. §5112), Congress instructs the Secretary of the Treasury, through the U.S. Mint, to issue specific denominations of circulating coins and specifies the coins' size, weight, and metallic content. For example, the U.S. Mint may issue "a quarter dollar that is 0.955 inch in diameter and weights 5.67 grams" and that is made of a copper and nickel alloy (31 U.S.C. §5112(a)(3) and (b)).

In addition to specific denominations, size, and metallic content, Congress also requires that specified design elements be present on certain coinage. For example, this includes the inscriptions "In God We Trust" and "Liberty" on a coin's obverse, and "United States of America" and "E Pluribus Unum" on a coin's reverse ((31 U.S.C. §5112(d)(1)). Additionally, for some coins, the law specifies the obverse's image—for example, Thomas Jefferson on the nickel's obverse.

For other aspects of coin design not specified by Congress, the Secretary of the Treasury is authorized to change the design or die of a coin only once within 25 years of the first adoption of the design features for that coin (31 U.S.C. §5112(d)(2)). **Figure 1** shows the 2025 circulating nickel, dime, and quarter coins.

Figure 1. 2025 Circulating Nickel, Dime, and Quarter



Source: U.S. Mint, "Image Library."
Note: For 2022 to 2025, the reverse of the quarter featured five different American women each year.

For more information on circulating coins, see CRS In Focus IF10533, *Congressional Involvement in the Design of Circulating Coins*; CRS In Focus IF12293, *Penny: History and Current Status*; CRS In Focus IF12593, *Nickels and Dimes: History and Current Status*; CRS In Focus IF11394, *Quarter and Half Dollar Coins: History and Current Status*; and CRS In Focus IF11190, *U.S. Dollar Coins: History and Current Status*.

Bullion Coins

The U.S. Mint produces *bullion coins* as "investment-grade" products purchased by "investors seeking a simple and tangible means to own and invest in the gold, silver, platinum, and palladium markets." Bullion coins are not sold directly to the public. The U.S. Mint sells bullion coins to a "network of official distributors called 'authorized purchasers,'" who sell the bullion coins to the public.

Bullion coins can be struck in gold, silver, platinum, and palladium. Recent bullion coins all include an eagle on the reverse. On the obverse, the 2026 gold and silver bullion coins feature an image of Liberty. In 2025, the U.S. Mint produced platinum and palladium coins. The 2025 platinum coin featured the First Amendment's "Right to Petition," with an image of an oak tree on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse. The palladium coin featured Liberty on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse. **Figure 2** shows recent designs of bullion coins.

Figure 2. 2025 and 2026 Bullion Coins



Source: U.S. Mint, "American Eagle."

Numismatic Coins

The U.S. Mint also produces *numismatic coins* designed for collectors. Numismatic coins are sometimes minted to commemorate a historical occurrence or event and are sometimes made of precious metals.

Numismatic Coins Specifically Authorized by Congress

Numismatic coins specifically authorized by Congress generally include two types of coins: commemorative coins and other congressionally authorized coins.

Commemorative Coins

Congress authorizes *commemorative coins* to celebrate and honor American people, places, events, and institutions. Considered legal tender, commemorative coins are not minted for general circulation. Instead, they are designed to be collected and to assist groups designated by statute ("statutorily designated groups") raise money to support the group's activities through authorized surcharges added to the coin's cost.

Commemorative coin authorization legislation generally specifies certain aspects of the coins, which have included requirements for inscriptions, metallic content, and design. For example, the 2026 commemorative coins for the FIFA World Cup were required to list the year (2026) and "inscriptions of the words 'Liberty,' 'In God We Trust,' 'United States of America,' and 'E Pluribus Unum.'" **Figure 3** shows the 2026 FIFA World Cup commemorative coins.

Figure 3. 2026 FIFA World Cup Commemorative Coins



Source: U.S. Mint, "2026 Commemorative Coin Program."

For more information on commemorative coins, see CRS In Focus IF10262, *Commemorative Coins: An Overview*, by Jacob R. Straus, and CRS Report R44623, *Commemorative Coins: Background, Legislative Process, and Issues for Congress*, by Jacob R. Straus.

Other Numismatic Coins

In addition to commemorative coins, Congress has directly authorized other numismatic coins. These include authorizations for specific coins (the Buffalo $50 coin (31 U.S.C. §5112(q)) and the reissuance of the Morgan Dollar and Peace Dollar coins (P.L. 116-286)); and the authorization to redesign a coin, but without specific design instructions (the semiquincentennial $1 coin for 2026 that featured President Donald J. Trump on the obverse (31 U.S.C. §5112(y)(1)(C)).

Additionally, Congress has also authorized the Mint to issue silver versions of circulating coins (31 U.S.C. §5132(a)(2)).

Numismatic Precious Metal Coins for Which Congress Has Not Directly Specified a Design

The U.S. Mint also produces numismatic precious metal coins for which Congress has not directly specified a design. For example, in 2020, the U.S. Mint issued gold $10 coins to honor the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. 2020 Mayflower 400th Anniversary Gold Coin



Source: U.S. Mint, "Mayflower 400th Anniversary Program."

For 2026, the U.S. Mint issued several numismatic coins. These include a nonround "Freedom Ringing" Liberty Bell gold coin (and accompanying silver medal). The U.S. Mint also issued a "Best of the Mint" series that honors five historic coins with gold coins that feature each of the five coins' original design (accompanied by silver medals that feature a modernized version inspired by the original design). For more information on the semiquincentennial coins, see CRS In Focus IF13165, *Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence: Coins and Medals*, by Jacob R. Straus.

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