

Republic of Haiti



Discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and under colonial rule for over 300 years, the territory which now comprises Haiti was first controlled by the Spanish. The French gained control of the colony in 1697. Haiti generated great wealth for the French through its thriving sugar industry. Sugar production, however, required the import of a great amount of African slave labor. Late in the 19th century, African slaves under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture rebelled against their colonial masters to begin the Haitian Revolution. Ending in 1804, the thirteen year conflict resulted in Haiti's independence and set several precedents. Haiti was the first of the Latin American and Caribbean colonies to gain independence and became the first post-colonial state to be led by non-whites.

Located in the Caribbean Ocean on the island of Hispaniola, Haiti has the distinction of being the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Its history post-revolution has been fraught with turmoil. Forms of government and regimes have changed many times. Most recently, a 2004 coup forced then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile. The United Nations Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) was established in that year to help maintain order in the country and remains there to this day. In addition to the tumultuous political climate, Haiti has been hit by many natural disasters. An earthquake registering 7.0 on the Richter scale wreaked wide-scale destruction on the country in 2010; some sources estimate the death toll to have exceeded 300,000. Haiti still hasn't recovered from this disaster. The island nation has

also been pummeled by many tropical storms and hurricanes, most recently by Hurricane Matthew, which made landfall on October 4, 2016 as a Category 4 storm, killing 546 people and displacing 175,000 others.

Geography

Official name: Republic of Haiti

Conventional Short Form: Haiti

Region: Central America and Caribbean

Area: 27,750 sq km

Bordering Countries: Dominican Republic

Physical Features: Mostly rugged and mountainous; 30% of Haiti is covered with forests. The highest point is at Chaîne de la Selle (2,680 m). Located on the island of Hispaniola, Haiti has a coastline of 1,771 km.

Climate: Tropical or semi-arid depending on which region

Natural Hazards: Hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, drought

People and Society

Population: 10,485,800 (89th in the world)

Ethnic Groups: Black (95%), Mulatto and white (5%)

Official Language: French, Haitian Creole

Other Languages Spoken: N/A

Religions: Roman Catholic (54.7%), Protestant (28.5%), Voodoo (2.1%), Other (4.6%), None (10.2%)

Capital city: Port-au-Prince

Other major cities: Carrefour, Delmas, Pétionville

Median Age (*half the people are younger than this age and half are older*)

Male: 22.4

Female: 22.8

Total population: 22.6 (2016 est.)

Literacy Rate (*percentage of the population 15 and older who can read and write*)

Male: 64.3%

Female: 57.3%

Total population: 61%

Life Expectancy at Birth (*average number of years to be lived by those born in the same year*)

Male: 61.2

Female: 66.4

Total population: 66.3 (2016 est.)

Government

Country Founded: January 1, 1804 (independence from France)

Type of Government: Unitary semi-presidential republic

Country Leaders

President: Jovenel Moïse

Prime Minister: Jack Guy Lafontant

Allies: The United States, France, Germany, Canada

Enemies: None

Economic Geography

Currency: Haitian gourde

GDP: \$8.259 billion (2016 est.)

Natural Resources: Bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble, hydropower, arable land

Unemployment Rate: 40.6% (2010 est.)

Population Below Poverty Line: 58.5% (2012 est.)

Major export and imports

Exports: Apparel, manufactures, oils, cocoa, mangoes, coffee

Imports: Food, manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment, fuels, raw materials

Biggest trading partners

Exports: United States

Imports: Dominican Republic, United States, Netherlands Antilles, China

More information can be found at:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>