



Central America and Caribbean :: Jamaica

Introduction :: Jamaica

Background:

The island - discovered by Christopher COLUMBUS in 1494 - was settled by the Spanish early in the 16th century. The native Taino, who had inhabited Jamaica for centuries, were gradually exterminated and replaced by African slaves. England seized the island in 1655 and established a plantation economy based on sugar, cocoa, and coffee. The abolition of slavery in 1834 freed a quarter million slaves, many of whom became small farmers. Jamaica gradually increased its independence from Britain. In 1958 it joined other British Caribbean colonies in forming the Federation of the West Indies. Jamaica gained full independence when it withdrew from the Federation in 1962. Deteriorating economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurrent violence as rival gangs affiliated with the major political parties evolved into powerful organized crime networks involved in international drug smuggling and money laundering. Violent crime, drug trafficking, and poverty pose significant challenges to the government today. Nonetheless, many rural and resort areas remain relatively safe and contribute substantially to the economy.

Geography :: Jamaica

Location:

Caribbean, island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba

Geographic coordinates:

18 15 N, 77 30 W

Map references:

Central America and the Caribbean

Area:

total: 10,991 sq km

country comparison to the world: 168

land: 10,831 sq km

water: 160 sq km

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than Connecticut

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

1,022 km

Maritime claims:

measured from claimed archipelagic straight baselines

territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or to edge of the continental margin

Climate:

tropical; hot, humid; temperate interior

Terrain:

mostly mountains, with narrow, discontinuous coastal plain

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Caribbean Sea 0 m

highest point: Blue Mountain Peak 2,256 m

Natural resources:

bauxite, gypsum, limestone

Land use:

arable land: 10.92%

permanent crops: 9.1%

other: 79.98% (2011)

Irrigated land:

252.2 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:

9.4 cu km (2011)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):

total: 0.93 cu km/yr (32%/16%/52%)

per capita: 369.9 cu m/yr (2009)

Natural hazards:

hurricanes (especially July to November)

Environment - current issues:

heavy rates of deforestation; coastal waters polluted by industrial waste, sewage, and oil spills; damage to coral reefs; air pollution in Kingston from vehicle emissions

Environment - international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands

signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements

Geography - note:

strategic location between Cayman Trench and Jamaica Channel, the main sea lanes for the Panama Canal

People and Society :: Jamaica

Nationality:

noun: Jamaican(s)
adjective: Jamaican

Ethnic groups:

black 91.2%, mixed 6.2%, other or unknown 2.6% (2001 census)

Languages:

English, English patois

Religions:

Protestant 62.5% (Seventh-Day Adventist 10.8%, Pentecostal 9.5%, Other Church of God 8.3%, Baptist 7.2%, New Testament Church of God 6.3%, Church of God in Jamaica 4.8%, Church of God of Prophecy 4.3%, Anglican 3.6%, other Christian 7.7%), Roman Catholic 2.6%, other or unspecified 14.2%, none 20.9% (2001 census)

Population:

2,909,714 (July 2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 140

Age structure:

0-14 years: 29% (male 428,643/female 414,348)

15-24 years: 21.8% (male 318,132/female 315,945)

25-54 years: 36% (male 514,172/female 532,094)

55-64 years: 5.5% (male 78,510/female 82,565)

65 years and over: 7.7% (male 100,820/female 124,485) (2013 est.)

Dependency ratios:

total dependency ratio: 54 %

youth dependency ratio: 41.8 %

elderly dependency ratio: 12.2 %

potential support ratio: 8.2 (2013)

Median age:

total: 24.6 years

male: 24.1 years

female: 25.2 years (2013 est.)

Population growth rate:

0.7% (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 142

Birth rate:

18.65 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 103

Death rate:

6.63 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 148

Net migration rate:

-4.99 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 191

Urbanization:

urban population: 52% of total population (2010)

rate of urbanization: 0.6% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

Major urban areas - population:

KINGSTON (capital) 580,000 (2009)

Sex ratio:

at birth: 1.05 male(s)/female

0-14 years: 1.03 male(s)/female

15-24 years: 1.01 male(s)/female

25-54 years: 0.96 male(s)/female

55-64 years: 0.95 male(s)/female

65 years and over: 0.81 male(s)/female

total population: 0.98 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

Mother's mean age at first birth:

21.2

note: Median age at first birth among women 25-29 (2008 est.)

Maternal mortality rate:

110 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)

country comparison to the world: 69

Infant mortality rate:

total: 13.98 deaths/1,000 live births

country comparison to the world: 119

male: 14.55 deaths/1,000 live births

female: 13.38 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 73.44 years

country comparison to the world: 122

male: 71.81 years

female: 75.15 years (2013 est.)

Total fertility rate:

2.09 children born/woman (2013 est.)

country comparison to the world: 114

Contraceptive prevalence rate:

69% (2002/03)

Health expenditures:

4.8% of GDP (2010)

country comparison to the world: 148

Physicians density:

0.85 physicians/1,000 population (2003)

Hospital bed density:

1.9 beds/1,000 population (2010)

Drinking water source:

improved:

urban: 98% of population
rural: 88% of population
total: 93% of population

unimproved:

urban: 2% of population
rural: 12% of population
total: 7% of population (2010 est.)

Sanitation facility access:**improved:**

urban: 78% of population
rural: 82% of population
total: 80% of population

unimproved:

urban: 22% of population
rural: 18% of population
total: 20% of population (2010 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

1.7% (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 33

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:

32,000 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 68

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

1,200 (2009 est.)

country comparison to the world: 63

Obesity - adult prevalence rate:

24.1% (2008)

country comparison to the world: 67

Children under the age of 5 years underweight:

1.9% (2007)

country comparison to the world: 118

Education expenditures:

6.4% of GDP (2010)

country comparison to the world: 31

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over has ever attended school

total population: 87%

male: 82.1%

female: 91.8% (2011 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

total: 12.9 years (2010)

Child labor - children ages 5-14:

total number: 38,516

percentage: 6% (2005 est.)

Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:

total: 30.1%

country comparison to the world: 24

male: 23.9%

female: 37.9% (2011)

Government :: Jamaica**Country name:**

conventional long form: none

conventional short form: Jamaica

Government type:

constitutional parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm

Capital:

name: Kingston

geographic coordinates: 18 00 N, 76 48 W

time difference: UTC-5 (same time as Washington, DC during Standard Time)

Administrative divisions:

14 parishes; Clarendon, Hanover, Kingston, Manchester, Portland, Saint Andrew, Saint Ann, Saint Catherine, Saint Elizabeth, Saint James, Saint Mary, Saint Thomas, Trelawny, Westmoreland

note: for local government purposes, Kingston and Saint Andrew were amalgamated in 1923 into the present single corporate body known as the Kingston and Saint Andrew Corporation

Independence:

6 August 1962 (from the UK)

National holiday:

Independence Day, 6 August (1962)

Constitution:

6 August 1962

Legal system:

common law system based on the English model

International law organization participation:

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:

chief of state: Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by Governor General Dr. Patrick L. ALLEN (since 26 February 2009)

head of government: Prime Minister Portia SIMPSON-MILLER (since 5 January 2012)

cabinet: Cabinet is appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister
(For more information visit the [World Leaders website](#) ☺)

elections: the monarchy is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the prime minister; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition in the House of Representatives is appointed prime minister by the governor general

Legislative branch:

bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (a 21-member body appointed by the governor general on the recommendations of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition; ruling party is allocated 13 seats, and the opposition is allocated 8 seats) and the House of Representatives (63 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

elections: last held on 29 December 2011 (next to be held no later than December 2016)

election results: percent of vote by party - PNP 53.3%, JLP 46.6%; seats by party - PNP 41, JLP 22

Judicial branch:

highest court(s): Court of Appeal (consists of president of the court and a minimum of 4 judges; Supreme Court (40 judges organized in specialized divisions)

note - appeals beyond Jamaica's highest courts are submitted to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (in London) rather than to the Caribbean Court of Justice (the appellate court implemented for member states of the Caribbean Community)

judge selection and term of office: chief justice of the Supreme Court and president of the Court of Appeal appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister; other judges of both courts appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission; judges of both courts serve till age 70

subordinate courts: resident magistrate courts, district courts, and petty sessions courts

Political parties and leaders:

Jamaica Labor Party or JLP [Andrew HOLNESS]

People's National Party or PNP [Portia SIMPSON-MILLER]

National Democratic Movement or NDM [Michael WILLIAMS]

Political pressure groups and leaders:

New Beginnings Movement or NBM

Rastafarians (black religious/racial cultists, pan-Africanists)

International organization participation:

ACP, AOSIS, C, Caricom, CDB, CELAC, FAO, G-15, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAES, MIGA, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, Petrocaribe, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Stephen VASCIANNIE

chancery: 1520 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036

telephone: [1] (202) 452-0660

FAX: [1] (202) 452-0081

consulate(s) general: Miami, New York

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador Pamela E. BRIDGEWATER

embassy: 142 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6

mailing address: P.O. Box 541, Kingston 5

telephone: [1] (876) 702-6000

FAX: [1] (876) 702-6001

Flag description:

diagonal yellow cross divides the flag into four triangles - green (top and bottom) and black (hoist side and outer side); green represents hope, vegetation, and agriculture, black reflects hardships overcome and to be faced, and yellow recalls golden sunshine and the island's natural resources

National symbol(s):

green-and-black streamertail (bird)

National anthem:

name: "Jamaica, Land We Love"

▶ [PLAY ANTHEM](#)

lyrics/music: Hugh Braham SHERLOCK/Robert Charles LIGHTBOURNE

note: adopted 1962

Economy :: Jamaica**Economy - overview:**

The Jamaican economy is heavily dependent on services, which accounted for more than 60% of GDP at the end of 2011. The country continues to derive most of its foreign exchange from tourism, remittances, and bauxite/alumina. Remittances account for nearly 15% of GDP and exports of bauxite and alumina make up roughly 5%. The bauxite/alumina sector was most affected by the global downturn while the tourism industry was resilient. Tourism revenues account for roughly 5% of GDP in 2011. Jamaica's economy faces many challenges to growth: high crime and corruption, large-scale unemployment and underemployment, and a debt-to-GDP ratio of nearly 130%. Jamaica's onerous public debt burden is the result of government bailouts to ailing sectors of the economy, most notably to the financial sector. In early 2010, the Jamaican Government created the Jamaica Debt Exchange in order to retire high-priced domestic bonds and significantly reduce annual debt servicing. Despite the improvement, debt servicing costs still hinder the government's ability to spend on infrastructure and social programs, particularly as job losses rise in a shrinking economy. Jamaica was hard hit by the effects of the global economic crisis, experiencing economic contractions from 2008-10 and growth remains low. The SIMPSON-MILLER administration faces the difficult prospect of having to achieve fiscal discipline in order to maintain debt payments, while simultaneously attacking a serious crime problem that is hampering economic growth. High unemployment exacerbates the crime problem, including gang violence that is fueled by the drug trade. As of late 2012, the SIMPSON-MILLER government was working to negotiate a new IMF Stand-by agreement to gain access to additional funds.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$25.62 billion (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 122

\$25.6 billion (2011 est.)

\$25.22 billion (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

GDP (official exchange rate):

\$15.25 billion (2012 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:

0.1% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 179

1.5% (2011 est.)

-1.4% (2010 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):

\$9,300 (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 123

\$9,300 (2011 est.)

\$9,200 (2010 est.)

note: data are in 2012 US dollars

Gross national saving:

8.4% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 132

7% of GDP (2011 est.)

13.1% of GDP (2010 est.)

GDP - composition, by end use:

household consumption: 86.2%
government consumption: 15.9%
investment in fixed capital: 20.7%
investment in inventories: 0.5%
exports of goods and services: 33.3%
imports of goods and services: -56.5%
(2012 est.)

GDP - composition, by sector of origin:

agriculture: 6.4%

industry: 29.1%

services: 64.5% (2012 est.)

Agriculture - products:

sugarcane, bananas, coffee, citrus, yams, ackees, vegetables; poultry, goats, milk; shellfish

Industries:

tourism, bauxite/alumina, agro-processing, light manufactures, rum, cement, metal, paper, chemical products, telecommunications

Industrial production growth rate:

-2.4% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 154

Labor force:

1.255 million (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 137

Labor force - by occupation:

agriculture: 17%

industry: 19%

services: 64% (2006)

Unemployment rate:

14.3% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 139

14.1% (2011 est.)

Population below poverty line:

16.5% (2009 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:

lowest 10%: 2.1%

highest 10%: 35.8% (2004)

Distribution of family income - Gini index:

45.5 (2004)

country comparison to the world: 38

37.9 (2000)

Budget:

revenues: \$3.884 billion

expenditures: \$4.499 billion (2012 est.)

Taxes and other revenues:

25.5% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 124

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

-4% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 144

Public debt:

134.2% of GDP (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 5

131.6% of GDP (2011 est.)

Fiscal year:

1 April - 31 March

Inflation rate (consumer prices):

6.9% (2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 176

7.5% (2011 est.)

Central bank discount rate:

2% (31 December 2010 est.)

NA% (31 December 2009 est.)

Commercial bank prime lending rate:

17.63% (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 17

19.51% (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of narrow money:

\$1.723 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 129

\$1.962 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Stock of broad money:

\$7.309 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

country comparison to the world: 116

\$7.012 billion (31 December 2010 est.)

Stock of domestic credit:

\$7.351 billion (31 December 2012 est.)

country comparison to the world: 108

\$7.131 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Market value of publicly traded shares:

\$7.223 billion (31 December 2011)

country comparison to the world: 79

\$6.626 billion (31 December 2010)

\$6.201 billion (31 December 2009)

Current account balance:

-\$1.523 billion (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 129
-\$1.723 billion (2011 est.)

Exports:

\$1.747 billion (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 145
\$1.666 billion (2011 est.)

Exports - commodities:

alumina, bauxite, sugar, rum, coffee, yams, beverages, chemicals, wearing apparel, mineral fuels

Exports - partners:

US 38.7%, Russia 8.1%, Canada 7.8%, Slovenia 5.6% (2012)

Imports:

\$5.905 billion (2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 122
\$5.881 billion (2011 est.)

Imports - commodities:

food and other consumer goods, industrial supplies, fuel, parts and accessories of capital goods, machinery and transport equipment, construction materials

Imports - partners:

US 30.1%, Venezuela 14.8%, Trinidad and Tobago 14.4%, China 11.9% (2012)

Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:

\$1.981 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 122
\$2.282 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Debt - external:

\$14 billion (31 December 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 89
\$14.35 billion (31 December 2011 est.)

Exchange rates:

Jamaican dollars (JMD) per US dollar -
88.751 (2012 est.)
85.893 (2011 est.)
87.196 (2010 est.)
87.89 (2009)
72.236 (2008)

Energy :: Jamaica

Electricity - production:

5.208 billion kWh (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 117

Electricity - consumption:

4.801 billion kWh (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 113

Electricity - exports:

0 kWh (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 211

Electricity - imports:

0 kWh (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 202

Electricity - installed generating capacity:

1.198 million kW (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 118

Electricity - from fossil fuels:

93.5% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 71

Electricity - from nuclear fuels:

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 114

Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:

1.8% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 137

Electricity - from other renewable sources:

4.7% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 39

Crude oil - production:

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: 148

Crude oil - exports:

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 131

Crude oil - imports:

23,780 bbl/day (2009 est.)
country comparison to the world: 68

Crude oil - proved reserves:

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 147

Refined petroleum products - production:

22,790 bbl/day (2008 est.)
country comparison to the world: 94

Refined petroleum products - consumption:

78,520 bbl/day (2011 est.)
country comparison to the world: 88

Refined petroleum products - exports:
9,145 bbl/day (2008 est.)
country comparison to the world: 86

Refined petroleum products - imports:
68,410 bbl/day (2008 est.)
country comparison to the world: 57

Natural gas - production:
0 cu m (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 145

Natural gas - consumption:
0 cu m (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 156

Natural gas - exports:
0 cu m (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 122

Natural gas - imports:
0 cu m (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 210

Natural gas - proved reserves:
0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)
country comparison to the world: 150

Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:
9.217 million Mt (2010 est.)
country comparison to the world: 102

Communications :: Jamaica

Telephones - main lines in use:
272,100 (2011)
country comparison to the world: 123

Telephones - mobile cellular:
2.975 million (2011)
country comparison to the world: 128

Telephone system:
general assessment: fully automatic domestic telephone network
domestic: the 1999 agreement to open the market for telecommunications services resulted in rapid growth in mobile-cellular telephone usage while the number of fixed-lines in use has declined; combined mobile-cellular teledensity exceeded 110 per 100 persons in 2011
international: country code - 1-876; the Fibralink submarine cable network provides enhanced delivery of business and broadband traffic and is linked to the Americas Region Caribbean Ring System (ARCOS-1) submarine cable in the Dominican Republic; the link to ARCOS-1 provides seamless connectivity to US, parts of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America; satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) (2010)

Broadcast media:
privately owned Radio Jamaica Limited and its subsidiaries operate multiple TV stations, subscription cable services, and radio stations; 2 other privately owned television stations; roughly 70 radio stations (2007)

Internet country code:
.jm

Internet hosts:
3,906 (2012)
country comparison to the world: 149

Internet users:
1.581 million (2009)
country comparison to the world: 80

Transportation :: Jamaica

Airports:
28 (2013)
country comparison to the world: 123

Airports - with paved runways:
total: 11
2,438 to 3,047 m: 2
914 to 1,523 m: 4
under 914 m: 5 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:
total: 17
914 to 1,523 m: 1
under 914 m:
16 (2013)

Roadways:
total: 22,121 km (includes 44 km of expressways) (2005)
country comparison to the world: 103

Merchant marine:
total: 14
country comparison to the world: 102

by type: bulk carrier 4, cargo 5, container 4, roll on/roll off 1
foreign-owned: 14 (Denmark 1, Germany 10, Greece 3) (2010)

Ports and terminals:
Discovery Bay (Port Rhoades), Kingston, Montego Bay, Port Antonio, Port Esquivel, Port Kaiser, Rocky Point

Military :: Jamaica

Military branches:
Jamaica Defense Force: Ground Forces, Coast Guard, Air Wing (2010)

Military service age and obligation:
17 1/2 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; no conscription (2012)

Manpower available for military service:

males age 16-49: 726,263
females age 16-49: 742,958 (2010 est.)

Manpower fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 590,673
females age 16-49: 596,414 (2010 est.)

Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:

male: 33,369
female: 32,702 (2010 est.)

Military expenditures:

0.9% of GDP (2012)
country comparison to the world: 130

Transnational Issues :: Jamaica

Disputes - international:

none

Illicit drugs:

transshipment point for cocaine from South America to North America and Europe; illicit cultivation and consumption of cannabis; government has an active manual cannabis eradication program; corruption is a major concern; substantial money-laundering activity; Colombian narcotics traffickers favor Jamaica for illicit financial transactions