



HAITI FAQs



Where is Haiti? Haiti is located on the western 1/3 of the island of Hispanola sharing a border with the Dominican Republic. It sits 700 miles off the coast of Miami between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. Haiti is 2/3 mountainous, with the rest of the country consisting of valleys and small plains. Haiti is hot and humid most of the year.

How big is it, what is the population? The total area of Haiti is 10,714 square miles, about the size of the state of Maryland, with a population of a little over 9.9 million. 2.1 million people live in the capital city, Port au Prince.

What language is spoken? While French is the language of government and businesses, many Haitians speak only Creole.

Who governs Haiti? Haiti has been independent since a slave revolt in 1804 freed Haiti from France. Today, Haiti is a republic and its government consists of three branches, Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. The executive branch is made up of Haiti's president, Michel Martelly, its Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, and its' cabinet. The legislative branch consists of a Senate and Chamber of Deputies, the judicial branch is made up of the Supreme Court. Political violence has occurred regularly throughout its history, leading to government instability

What is the main industry? Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. 80% of Haiti's population lives below the international poverty line of \$2 a day. More than 2/3 of Haitians lack formal jobs. Widespread unemployment makes escaping poverty extremely difficult for many Haitians. Haiti does export many goods and services, particularly coffee, oils, cocoa, sugar and the light assembly of goods. The country is primarily dependent on foreign aid.

How does Haiti's environment impact its people? Nearly 70 percent of all Haitians depends on agriculture, which consists of small-scale subsistence farming. Mass deforestation and poor environmental controls have left large areas of the country bare and contributed to large-scale loss of topsoil. Much of the remaining forested land is being cleared and used as fuel leaving only 30% suitable for farming. Haiti lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and subject to severe storms from June to October. In 2010, Haiti experienced a magnitude 7 earthquake.

What is the life expectancy? Haiti has a high birthrate and short life expectancy, 37% of Haitians are younger than age 14, 59% are between 15 and 64 years old, and just 3% are 65 and older. Haiti has the highest rates of infant and under-five mortality in the Western Hemisphere. 7% of the children die before age five, 42% of children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth.

What health care is available? Due to a lack of resources, infrastructure, and workforce attrition, Haiti has a severe shortage of health care providers. There is one doctor for 8,000 inhabitants, one nurse for 6,000 inhabitants, and one midwife for 50,000 inhabitants. Many people rely on health care provided by visiting NGO and church medical teams

What is a typical diet? Haiti is one of the worst countries in the world in daily caloric intake per person. Nutritional deficits are caused not by lack of knowledge but by poverty. Rice and beans is the national dish and the most commonly eaten meal in urban areas. Traditional rural staples are sweet potatoes, yams, corn, rice, pigeon peas, cowpeas and bread.

What are the schools like? The educational system of Haiti is based on the French System. Haiti counts 15,200 primary schools, of which 90% are non-public and managed by religious organizations or NGOs. The enrollment rate for primary school is 67%, and fewer than 30% reach 6th grade. Secondary schools enroll 20% of eligible-age children. Haiti's literacy rate is 52.9%.

What is the most common religion? Roughly 80 percent of Haitians are Roman Catholic, while one in five are Protestant. Roughly 95 percent of Haitians – regardless of religious affiliation – hold at least some Voodoo beliefs or superstitions.