

Haiti Details

1. How many people live in Haiti?

9,035,536

2. How many people live in Port Au Prince?

704,766 at the 2003 census but all estimates have it at over 2 million in the metro area

3. How many people roughly have died in the quake thus far?

- Estimated Number of Deaths: At least 65,000 people
- Estimated Number Displaced: 200,000
- Estimated Affected Population: Approximately 3 million people
(*Jan 19, 2010 USAID Fact Sheet*)

4. How many aftershocks have there been?

In total, Haiti has suffered 49 aftershocks of magnitude 4.5 or greater since the devastating 7.0 quake in Port-au-Prince. U.S. Geological Survey geophysicist Bruce Pressgrave said it's unknown if a still-stronger aftershock is possible. "Aftershocks sometimes die out very quickly," he said. "In other cases they can go on for weeks, or if we're really unlucky it could go on for months" as the earth adjusts to the new stresses caused by the initial quake. The aftershock that occurred Wednesday has complicated ongoing rescue efforts, said Dr. Yi Ting Tsai, a member of a Taiwanese search-and-rescue crew. "The problem is the rain and the new quake this morning has made the debris more compact," he said.

5. What is the political, social, economic, and environmental history of Haiti?

BACKGROUND: The native Taino Amerindians—who inhabited the island of Hispaniola when it was discovered by Columbus in 1492—were virtually annihilated by Spanish settlers within 25 years. In the early 17th century, the French established a presence on Hispaniola. In 1697, Spain ceded to the French the western third of the island, which later became Haiti. The French colony, based on forestry and sugar-related industries, became one of the wealthiest in the Caribbean but only through the heavy importation of African slaves and considerable environmental degradation. In the late 18th century, Haiti's nearly half million slaves revolted under Toussaint L'Ouverture. After a prolonged struggle, Haiti became the first black republic to declare independence in 1804. The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti has been plagued by political violence for most of its history. After an armed rebellion led to the forced resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, an interim government took office to organize new elections under the auspices of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Continued violence and technical delays prompted repeated postponements, but Haiti finally did inaugurate a democratically elected president and parliament in May of 2006.

ECONOMY: Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 80% of the population living under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty. Two-thirds of all Haitians depend on the agricultural sector, mainly small-scale subsistence farming, and remain vulnerable to damage from frequent natural disasters, exacerbated by the country's widespread

deforestation. While the economy has recovered in recent years, registering positive growth since 2005, four tropical storms in 2008 severely damaged the transportation infrastructure and agricultural sector. US economic engagement under the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act, passed in December 2006, has boosted apparel exports and investment by providing tariff-free access to the US. HOPE II, passed in October 2008, has further improved the export environment for the apparel sector by extending preferences to 2018; the apparel sector accounts for two-thirds of Haitian exports and nearly one-tenth of GDP. Remittances are the primary source of foreign exchange, equaling nearly a quarter of GDP and more than twice the earnings from exports. Haiti suffers from high inflation, a lack of investment because of insecurity and limited infrastructure, and a severe trade deficit. In 2005, Haiti paid its arrears to the World Bank, paving the way for reengagement with the Bank. Haiti is expected to receive debt forgiveness for about \$525 million of its debt through the Highly-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative by mid-2009. The government relies on formal international economic assistance for fiscal sustainability.

MILITARY: No regular military forces - small Coast Guard; the regular Haitian Armed Forces (FAdH) - Army, Navy, and Air Force - have been demobilized but still exist on paper until or unless they are constitutionally abolished (2009)

See more below.

6. What is the situation with drug trafficking and human trafficking in Haiti?

Caribbean transshipment point for cocaine en route to the US and Europe; substantial bulk cash smuggling activity; Colombian narcotics traffickers favor Haiti for illicit financial transactions; pervasive corruption; significant consumer of cannabis.

Haiti is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. Haitian women, men, and children are trafficked into the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, the United States, Europe, Canada, and Jamaica for exploitation in domestic service, agriculture, and construction.

Haiti is a country of origin and destination for trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Trafficking occurs for the most part between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haitian children are trafficked into the Dominican Republic and along the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and Dominican women have been found in brothels in Haiti.¹ Haitian women have also been trafficked to and through Canada and to the United States.

Haiti is considered the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.² The malnutrition rate stands at 56 percent, the illiteracy rate at 50 percent, and the school enrollment rate at 52 percent.³

¹ David E. Guinn and Elissa Steglich, eds., *In Modern Bondage: Sex Trafficking in the Americas—National and Regional Overview of the Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2002).

² United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, “The Relationship between Child Domestic Servitude and the Sexual Exploitation of Children,” Anti-Slavery International, London, 27–31 May 2002, <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2002-childlabour.htm>.

Poverty and underdevelopment are clearly the main factors that push women and children to turn to prostitution as a means of survival. Marginalization, lack of birth certificates, and inadequate health care affect children in Haiti.⁴

Corruption on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has also been noted as a factor in the prevalence of trafficking between the two countries. Reports indicate that Dominican border officials are being bribed in exchange for allowing traffickers to bring Haitian children into the Dominican Republic.⁵

Women are trafficked to Haiti to work in brothels in Haitian cities.⁶ Haitian children who are trafficked to the Dominican Republic are forced to beg in the streets, to perform manual labor, or to work as farmhands and construction workers.⁷

Haiti has a form of child slavery known as the *restavek* system, which is Creole for “stay with.” An estimated 300,000 children are enslaved under the *restavek* system. According to one estimate, about 1 in 10 children in 2002 were *restaveks*.⁸ Since the early 19th century, thousands of children each year have been sent by their poor families to stay with wealthier families, who force them into domestic servitude. Normally, a well-to-do family will ask a poor family for a child. Ideally, the child will perform domestic work for the richer family in exchange for food and some sort of education, in the hope of eventually raising his or her family out of poverty. Yet, in reality, most children become slaves, and their parents have no way of finding out their fate. Often, when the *restaveks*, especially the boys, reach the age of 16 or 17, they rebel and run away. Their masters usually do not go after them; instead they find a younger child from another village.⁹ The *restaveks* are also referred to as *la poussa*, or “there for that,” and are commonly used as sexual outlets for the male family members.¹⁰

Several NGOs noted a sharp increase in the number of Haitian children trafficked for sex and labor to the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas during 2008. The majority of trafficking cases are found among the estimated 90,000 to 300,000 *restaveks* in Haiti, and the 3,000 additional *restaveks* who are trafficked to the Dominican Republic. Poor, mostly rural families send their children to cities to live with relatively wealthier “host” families, whom they expect to provide

³ International Organization for Migration, “Comprehensive Approach to Counter Trafficking in the Caribbean,” presented at the Workshop of Anti-trafficking Initiatives in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., 18 June 2003.

⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Summary Record of the 694th Meeting: Dominican Republic,” held in Geneva, 24 January 2001, Summary Record CRC/C/SR.694, <http://www.unhchr.ch>.

⁵ “Traffickers Target Haitian Children,” *BBC News*, 11 August 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2187241.stm>.

⁶ David E. Guinn and Elissa Steglich, eds., *In Modern Bondage: Sex Trafficking in the Americas—National and Regional Overview of the Central America and the Caribbean* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2002).

⁷ “Traffickers Target Haitian Children,” *BBC News*, 11 August 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2187241.stm>.

⁸ “Pembroke Pines Couple Indicted for Keeping Haitian Girl as Slave,” *Associated Press*, 23 March 2004.

⁹ Aysha Upchurch, “Given Away: An Interview with Jean-Robert Cadet,” resource paper, Youth Advocate Program International, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰ United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, “The Relationship between Child Domestic Servitude and the Sexual Exploitation of Children,” Anti-Slavery International, London, 27–31 May 2002, <http://www.antislavery.org/archive/submission/submission2002-childlabour.htm>.

the children with food, shelter, and an education in exchange for domestic work. While some restaveks are cared for and sent to school, most of these children are subjected to involuntary domestic servitude. These restaveks, 65 percent of whom are girls between the ages of six and 14, work excessive hours, receive no schooling or payment and are often physically and sexually abused. Haitian labor laws require employers to pay domestic workers over the age of 15, so many host families dismiss restaveks before they reach that age. Dismissed and runaway restaveks make up a significant proportion of the large population of street children, who frequently are forced to work in prostitution or street crime by violent criminal gangs. Women and girls from the Dominican Republic are trafficked into Haiti for commercial sexual exploitation. Some of the Haitians who voluntarily migrate to the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, the United States, and other Caribbean nations subsequently face conditions of forced labor on sugar-cane plantations, and in agriculture and construction.

After years of maltreatment and abuse, many of these children will eventually be abandoned to the streets, weak and ineligible to live any normal life.

In 2000, the Institute for Social Well-Being and Research, a governmental body under the control of the Ministry of Social Affairs, created a program called SOS Timoun. The program was created in response to the increasing number of cases of children subjected to violence and domestic service as well as cases of street children.¹¹

See this [2-minute video on trafficking and disasters](#)

7. What are some aspects of the pagan voodoo in Haiti?

Roughly half of the population practices voodoo.

Religious stats:

- 80% are Roman Catholic
- 16% are Protestant
 - Baptist 10%
 - Pentecostal 4%
 - Adventist 1%
 - Other 1%
- 4% are other

8. Other basic facts about Haiti

This information is from the CIA's "[World Fact Book](#)"

¹¹ Hugo Merveille, "Haiti: Violence—A Bad Legacy Bequeathed to Kids," Panos Institute, Washington, D.C., November 2002, <http://www.panosinst.org/productions/haitibriefings/h-07-e.php>. The Ministry's Institute of Welfare and Research works with the Service de la Protection de Mineurs to remove the children from abusive situations.

Location and Size

Caribbean, western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the Dominican Republic (which is two-thirds of the eastern side of Hispaniola). The terrain is mostly rough and mountainous.

17,243 sq miles (slightly smaller than Maryland).

Natural resources

bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble, hydropower

Natural hazards

lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and subject to severe storms from June to October; occasional flooding and earthquakes; periodic droughts

Age structure

0-14 years: 38.1% (male 1,735,917/female 1,704,383)
15-64 years: 58.5% (male 2,621,059/female 2,665,447)
65 years and over: 3.4% (male 120,040/female 188,690) (2009 est.)

Urbanization

urban population: 47% of total population (2008)
rate of urbanization: 4.5% annual rate of change (2005-10 est.)

Infant Mortality

total: 59.69 deaths/1,000 live births
country comparison to the world: 37
male: 66.18 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 53.01 deaths/1,000 live births (2009 est.)

Life Expectancy

total population: 60.78 years
country comparison to the world: 181
male: 59.13 years
female: 62.48 years (2009 est.)

Total Fertility

3.81 children born/woman (2009 est.)

HIV/AIDS-adult prevalence rate

2.2% (country comparison to the world: 28)

Living with AIDS

120,000 (2007 estimates)

HIV/AIDS deaths/year

7,200

Major Infectious Diseases

degree of risk: high food or waterborne diseases: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A and E, and typhoid fever vectorborne diseases: dengue fever and malaria
water contact disease: leptospirosis (2009)

Ethnic group

95% black, 5% mulatto and white

Literacy

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 52.9%
male: 54.8%
female: 51.2% (2003 est.)

Government

Type: Republic
Port-au-Prince (capitol)
Independence from French in Jan 1, 1804
Their constitution was approved March 1987

Note: Suspended June 1988 with most articles reinstated March 1989;
constitutional government ousted in a military coup in September 1991, although
in October 1991 military government claimed to be observing the constitution;
returned to constitutional rule in October 1994; constitution, while technically in
force between 2004-2006, was not enforced; returned to constitutional rule in
May 2006

Executive Branch

chief of state: President Rene PREVAL (since 14 May 2006)
head of government: Prime Minister Jean-Max BELLERIVE (since 7 November 2009)
cabinet: Cabinet chosen by the prime minister in consultation with the president
elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (may not serve
consecutive terms); election last held 7 February 2006 (next to be held in 2011); prime
minister appointed by the president, ratified by the National Assembly
election results: Rene PREVAL elected president; percent of vote - Rene PREVAL 51%

Legislative branch

bicameral National Assembly or Assemblée Nationale consists of the Senate (30 seats;
members elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms; one-third elected every two
years) and the Chamber of Deputies (99 seats; members are elected by popular vote to
serve four-year terms); note - in reestablishing the Senate, the candidate in each
department receiving the most votes in the last election serves six years, the candidate
with the second most votes serves four years, and the candidate with the third most votes
serves two years

elections: Senate - last held 21 April 2006 with run-off elections on 3 December 2006 (next regular election, for one third of seats, to be held in 2008); Chamber of Deputies - last held 21 April 2006 with run-off elections on 3 December 2006 and 29 April 2007 (next regular election to be held in 2010)

Judicial Branch

Supreme Court or Cour de Cassation

Labor force

agriculture: 66%

industry: 9%

services: 25% (1995)

shortage of skilled laborers, abundance of unskilled laborers

widespread unemployment and underemployment; more than two-thirds of the labor force do not have formal jobs

80% of the population is below the poverty line

Agriculture products

coffee, mangoes, sugarcane, rice, corn, sorghum; wood

Industries

sugar refining, flour milling, textiles, cement, light assembly based on imported parts