



Saint Martin



Background Christopher COLUMBUS claimed Saint Martin for Spain in 1493, naming it after the feast day of St. Martin of Tours, but it was the Dutch who occupied the island in 1631 to exploit its salt deposits. The Spanish retook Saint Martin in 1633, but the Dutch continued to assert their claims. The Spanish finally relinquished the island to the French and Dutch, who divided it between themselves in 1648. The border frequently fluctuated over the next 200 years because of friction between the two countries, with the French eventually holding the greater portion of the island (about 61%).

The cultivation of sugarcane introduced African slavery to the island in the late 18th century; the practice was not abolished until 1848. The island became a free port in 1939, and the tourism industry was dramatically expanded during the 1970s and 1980s. In 2003, the populace of Saint Martin voted to secede from Guadeloupe, and in 2007, the northern portion of the island became a French overseas collectivity. In 2010, the southern Dutch portion of the island became the independent nation of Sint Maarten within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 2017, Hurricane Irma passed over the island of Saint Martin, causing extensive damage to roads, communications, electrical power, and housing; the UN estimated that 90% of the buildings were damaged or destroyed.

Capital name: Marigot

Government type parliamentary democracy (Territorial Council); overseas collectivity of France

Area total : 50 sq km

land: 50 sq km

water: negligible

Climate temperature averages 27-29 degrees Celsius all year long; low humidity, gentle trade winds, brief, intense rain showers; hurricane season stretches from July to November

Natural resources salt

Population total: 32,996

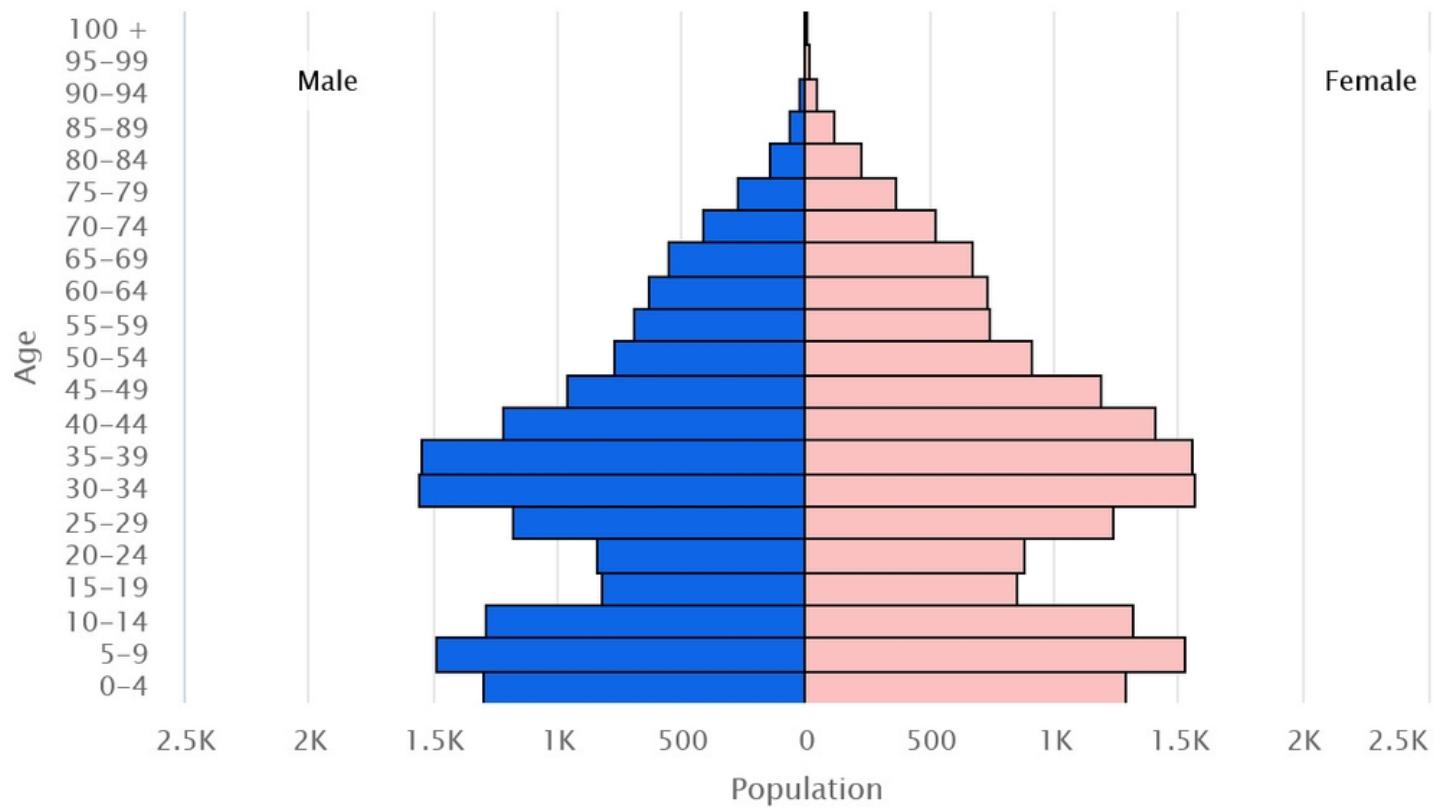
Population growth rate 0.3% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups Creole (Mulatto), Black, Guadeloupe Mestizo (French-East Asian), White, East Indian, other

Religions Roman Catholic, Jehovah's Witness, Protestant, Hindu

Languages French (official), Dutch, English, Guadeloupean Creole, Haitian Creole, Italian, Martiniquan Creole, Papiamento (dialect of Netherlands Antilles), Spanish

Executive branch	chief of state: President Emmanuel MACRON (since 14 May 2017); represented by Prefect Vincent BERTON (since 28 March 2022)
Legislative branch	head of government: President of Territorial Council Louis MUSSINGTON (since 3 April 2022)
Diplomatic representation from the US	legislature name: Territorial Council
Economic overview	embassy: none (overseas collectivity of France)
Exports - partners	high-income French Caribbean territorial economy; extremely reliant on tourism, with severe COVID-19 impacts; near-total destruction from Hurricane Irma in 2017; some offshore banking; import-dependent; duty-free commerce; yachting destination
Exports - commodities	United States 35%, Netherlands 26%, Antigua and Barbuda 21%, France 10% (2019)
Imports - partners	gold, special use vessels, furniture, scrap aluminum, rum (2019)
Imports - commodities	United States 76%, Netherlands 7%, France 7% (2019)
	jewelry, diamonds, pearls, recreational boats, cars (2019)

Population Pyramid

U.S. Census Bureau, International Database