



Jamaica



Background Europeans first saw Jamaica when Christopher COLUMBUS arrived in 1494, and the Spanish settled the island early in the 16th century. The Native Taino, who had inhabited Jamaica for centuries, were gradually exterminated and replaced with 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 withdrew from the Federation in 1961 and gained full independence in 1962. Deteriorating economic conditions during the 1970s led to recurring 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, corruption, and poverty pose significant challenges to the government today. Nonetheless, many rural and resort areas remain relatively safe and contribute substantially to the economy.

Capital name: Kingston

Government type parliamentary democracy (Parliament) under a constitutional monarchy; a Commonwealth realm

Area
total : 10,991 sq km
land: 10,831 sq km
water: 160 sq km

Climate tropical; hot, humid; temperate interior

Natural resources bauxite, alumina, gypsum, limestone

Population total: 2,823,713 (2024 est.)

Population growth rate 0.1% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups Black 92.1%, mixed 6.1%, East Indian 0.8%, other 0.4%, unspecified 0.7% (2011 est.)

Religions Protestant 64.8% (includes Seventh Day Adventist 12.0%, Pentecostal 11.0%, Other Church of God 9.2%, New Testament Church of God 7.2%, Baptist 6.7%, Church of God in Jamaica 4.8%, Church of God of Prophecy 4.5%, Anglican 2.8%, United Church 2.1%, Methodist 1.6%, Revived 1.4%, Brethren 0.9%, and Moravian 0.7%), Roman Catholic 2.2%, Jehovah's Witness 1.9%, Rastafarian 1.1%, other 6.5%, none 21.3%, unspecified 2.3% (2011 est.)

Languages English, Jamaican patois

Executive branch chief of state: King CHARLES III (since 8 September 2022); represented by Governor General Sir Patrick L. ALLEN (since 26 February 2009)
head of government: Prime Minister Andrew HOLNESS (since 3 March 2016)

Legislative branch legislature name: Parliament

Diplomatic representation in the US chief of mission: Ambassador Antony B. ANDERSON (since 24 July 2025)

Diplomatic representation from the US chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Scott RENNER (since 13 August 2025)

Economic overview upper-middle-income Caribbean island economy; key agriculture and tourism sectors; high crime, youth unemployment, and poverty; susceptible to natural disasters and global commodity price shocks; progress in reducing public debt and moderating inflation within target range

Real GDP (purchasing power parity) \$29.13 billion (2024 est.)
\$29.341 billion (2023 est.)
\$28.596 billion (2022 est.)

Real GDP per capita \$10,300 (2024 est.)
\$10,300 (2023 est.)
\$10,100 (2022 est.)

Exports	\$7.124 billion (2024 est.) \$7.275 billion (2023 est.) \$6.424 billion (2022 est.)
Exports - partners	USA 37%, Russia 7%, Latvia 7%, Iceland 7%, UK 5% (2023)
Exports - commodities	aluminum oxide, refined petroleum, natural gas, liquor, processed fruits and nuts (2023)
Imports	\$9.524 billion (2024 est.) \$9.866 billion (2023 est.) \$9.726 billion (2022 est.)
Imports - partners	USA 39%, China 11%, Brazil 4%, Colombia 4%, Japan 4% (2023)
Imports - commodities	refined petroleum, natural gas, cars, crude petroleum, plastic products (2023)

Population Pyramid

