**Dominican Republic Facts and Culture**

* [Food and Recipes:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipes.htm) Sancocho is the national dish and is served on special occasions. Tropical fruits are found in abundance. Mamgu is served... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipes.htm)
* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/family.htm) Although influenced by North American values, the Dominican Republic maintains the Spanish tradition of familial solidarity. People look to their... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/fashion.htm) In Dominican society appearance is very important. People are extremely fashion conscious and believe that clothes indicate social standing and... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/visiting.htm) Hosts offer visitors something to drink and invite them to eat if mealtime is near. It is not considered impolite... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/visiting.htm)

**Dominican Republic Facts**

Dominican Republic stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital | Santo Domingo |
| Government Type | democratic republic |
| Currency | DOP |
| Population | 10,219,630 |
| Total Area | 18,791 Square Miles 48,670 Square Kilometers |
| Location | Caribbean, eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Haiti |
| Language | Spanish |

Map of Dominican Republic



**Dominican Republic Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the Island of Hispaniola, the second largest of the Greater Antilles group, after Cuba. The Dominican Republic is bordered on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, on the south by the Caribbean Sea, and on the east by the Mona Passage, which separates Hispaniola from Puerto Rico, 71 miles away. In the west it shares a land border with the Republic of Haiti.

The Dominican Republic has a land area of 18,712 square miles. The country, with its 1,000-mile coastline, extends about 240 miles from east to west and has a maximum north-south width of about 170 miles.

Much of the terrain is rugged. Four nearly parallel mountain ranges transverse the country from northwest to southeast. The Cordillera Central is the largest range and divides the country into almost equal parts. Pico Duarte is the highest mountain in the West Indies at 10,128 feet. The largest and most fertile valley, the Cibao, is in the upper central part of the country and is approximately 150 miles long by 10–30 miles wide.

Dominican rivers vary in flow with the season and are only navigable for short distances at their mouths, if at all. Their main use is for irrigation and hydroelectric power. Major rivers in the Dominican Republic are the Ozama, Yaque del Norte, Yaque del Sur, La Isabela, Higuamo, and Soco.

**Geography - note**

shares island of Hispaniola with Haiti

**Dominican Republic Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location | The Caribbean |
| Total Area | 18,791 Square Miles 48,670 Square Kilometers |
| Land Area | 18,656 Square Miles 48,320 Square Kilometers |
| Water Area | 135 Square Miles 350 Square Kilometers |
| Land Boundaries | 224 Miles 360 Kilometers |
| Irrigated Land | 1,183 Square Miles 3,065 Square Kilometers |
| Border Countries | Haiti 360 km |
| Coastline | 800 Miles 1,288 Kilometers |
| Geographic Coordinates | 19 00 N, 70 40 W |
| Terrain | rugged highlands and mountains with fertile valleys interspersed |
| Highest Point | 3,175 Meters |
| Highest Point Location | Pico Duarte 3,175 m |
| Lowest Point | -46 Meters |
| Lowest Point Location | Lago Enriquillo -46 m |
| Natural Resources | nickel, bauxite, gold, silver |

**Dominican Republic Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

The climate varies little year round. Although the country is in the tropics, constant trade winds keep temperatures from frequently exceeding 90°F. Temperatures in its coastal cities average about 78°F, with seasonal variations of 5-8 degrees.

Rainfall varies regionally with about two-thirds of the annual 57 inches in the capital falling in the rainy season from May to November. Hurricanes are a significant weather threat, particularly from June through October, and have caused serious damage in the past.

**Dominican Republic Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate | The climate varies little year round. Although the country is in the tropics, constant trade winds keep temperatures from frequently exceeding 90°F. Temperatures in its coastal cities average about 78°F, with seasonal variations of 5-8 degrees.  Rainfall varies regionally with about two-thirds of the annual 57 inches in the capital falling in the rainy season from May to November. Hurricanes are a significant weather threat, particularly from June through October, and have caused serious damage in the past. |
| Terrain | rugged highlands and mountains with fertile valleys interspersed |
| Natural Resources | nickel, bauxite, gold, silver |
| Natural Hazards | lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and subject to severe storms from June to October; occasional flooding; periodic droughts |
| Irrigated Land | 1,183 Square Miles 3,065 Square Kilometers |
| Environmental Issues | water shortages; soil eroding into the sea damages coral reefs; deforestation |
| Environment - International Agreements | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands   signed, but not ratified: Law of the Sea |

**Dominican Republic Population Comparison**

[Argentina](http://www.countryreports.org/) [China](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Dominican Republic](http://www.countryreports.org/) [France](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Germany](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Japan](http://www.countryreports.org/) [United Kingdom](http://www.countryreports.org/) [United States of America](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Afghanistan](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Akrotiri](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Albania](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Algeria](http://www.countryreports.org/) [American Samoa](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Andorra](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Angola](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Anguilla](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Antarctica](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Antigua and Barbuda](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Armenia](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Aruba](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Australia](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Austria](http://www.countryreports.org/) 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Bank](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Western Sahara](http://www.countryreports.org/) [World](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Yemen](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Zambia](http://www.countryreports.org/) [Zimbabwe](http://www.countryreports.org/)

PopulationDominican RepublicUnited States of AmericaArgentinaChinaFranceGermanyJapanUnited Kingdom0M500M1,000M1,500MHighcharts.com

**Dominican Republic Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population | 10,219,630 |
| Population Growth Rate | 1.28% |
| Urban Population | 69.7% |
| Population in Major Urban Areas | SANTO DOMINGO (capital) 2.191 million |
| Nationality Noun | Dominican(s) |
| Nationality Adjective | Dominican |
| Ethnic Groups | white 16%, black 11%, mixed 73% |
| Languages | Spanish |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change | 2.03% |

**Dominican Republic Medical Information**

While adequate medical facilities can be found in large cities, particularly in private hospitals, the quality of care can vary greatly outside major population centers. There is an emergency 911 service within Santo Domingo, but its reliability is questionable. Outside the capital, emergency services range from extremely limited to nonexistent. Blood supplies at both public and private hospitals are often limited, and not all facilities have blood on hand even for emergencies. Many medical facilities throughout the country do not have staff members who speak or understand English. A private nationwide ambulance service, ProMed, operates in Santo Domingo, Santiago, Puerto Plata and La Romana; the telephone number is 809-412-5555. ProMed expects full payment at the time of transport.  
  
Consult closely with your medical practitioner in the United States regarding any locally available treatments or therapies before traveling to the Dominican Republic for procedures which are not licensed and approved in the United States. Experimental procedures carry certain risks as the quality of treatment varies from U.S. standards.  
  
The U.S. Embassy maintains a non-comprehensive list of medical providers in the Dominican Republic. The availability of prescription drugs varies depending upon location. Also, specific brand name drugs may not be available in the Dominican Republic. There have been some instances of counterfeit drugs infiltrating the Dominican market. You are advised to make sure you are traveling with an adequate supply of prescription drugs to meet your needs while in the Dominican Republic.  
  
Tap water is unsafe to drink and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are considered safe.  
  
Dengue: Dengue is endemic to the Dominican Republic. To reduce the risk of contracting dengue, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends wearing clothing that exposes as little skin as possible and applying a repellent containing the insecticide DEET (concentration 30 to 35 percent) or Picaridin (concentration 20 percent or greater for tropical travelers). Because of the increased risk of dengue fever and the ongoing risk of malaria in the Dominican Republic (see below), practicing preventative measures is recommended by the CDC. Forfurther information on dengue fever, please visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website.  
  
Cholera: According to the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Health, more than 15,000 suspected cases of cholera and 262 related deaths have been reported throughout the country from November 2010 to early 2013. Several cases have been reported in travelers returning from Punta Cana resorts. Cholera vaccine, available in many countries, but not in the U.S., is recommended for aid and refugee workers only. Extreme care in hygiene and food habits for travel to risk areas, including resort areas, is advised. Carry oral rehydration salts in case of severe watery diarrhea. Azithromycin is recommended for diarrhea self-treatment; the epidemic strain of Vibrio cholerae has reduced susceptibility to ciprofloxacin and other quinolones.  
  
Malaria: There are occasional reports of cases of malaria in areas frequented by U.S. and European tourists including La Altagracia Province, the easternmost province in which many beach resorts are located. Malaria risk is significantly higher for travelers who go on some of the excursions to the countryside offered by many resorts. Prior to visiting the Dominican Republic, travelers should consult the CDC web site for more information on malaria.  
  
Sexually Transmitted Diseases: Be aware that sexually transmitted diseases are common in the Dominican Republic. Please take appropriate precautions to help stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.  
  
Cosmetic Surgery: The U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo and the CDC are aware of several cases in which U.S. citizens experienced serious complications or died following elective cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic. The CDC's Website contains a report on patients who suffered postoperative infections following cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic. Patients considering travel to the Dominican Republic for cosmetic surgery may also wish to contact the Dominican Society of Plastic Surgeons (tel. 809-688-8451) to verify the training, qualifications, and reputation of specific doctors. Note that some plastic surgeons continue to practice after patients have died during or after cosmetic surgery procedures, so the U.S. Embassy urges strong caution when considering cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic. Please note there is no regulatory authority governing claims that some doctors or clinics make on their websites.

**Dominican Republic Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP) | 5.4% |
| Death Rate/1,000 population | 4.46 |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate | 21.2% |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population | 1.7 |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population | 1.88 |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population | 20.44 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population | 18.41 |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population | 22.39 |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years | 3.4% |
| Total Fertility Rate | 2.39 |
| Age of Mother's First Birth | 20.3 |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49) | 72.9% |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births | 150 |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate | 0.9% |
| HIV Aids Deaths | 1,900 |
| HIV Aids People Living With | 57,000 |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved | 19.1% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved | 77.2% |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved | 82.5% |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved | 18% |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved | 85.5% |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved | 73.8% |
| Major Infectious Diseases - degree of risk | high |
| Food or Waterborne Disease (s) | bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever |
| Vectorborne Disease (s) | dengue fever |

**Dominican Republic Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime continues to be a problem throughout the Dominican Republic. Street crime and petty theft involving U.S. tourists does occur, and you should take precautions to avoid becoming a target. While pick pocketing and mugging are the most common crimes against tourists, reports of violence against both foreigners and locals are growing. Valuables left unattended in parked automobiles, on beaches, and in other public places are vulnerable to theft, and car theft remains a problem.  
  
Travelers to the Dominican Republic should strongly consider leaving valuable property at home. We recommend bringing no item on your trip that cannot be easily replaced, and to make contingency plans in case of theft. These precautions include: making photocopies of all credit cards and licenses which include the numbers to call in order to report theft; photocopies of passports and birth certificates; and leaving emergency funds with someone at home in case it is necessary for money to be sent on short notice.  
  
Carry cellular telephones in a pocket rather than on a belt or in a purse. Avoid wearing headphones, which make the bearer more vulnerable and readily advertise the presence of a valuable item. Limit or avoid display of jewelry; it attracts attention and could prompt a robbery attempt. Limit cash and credit cards carried on your person. Be sure to store valuables, wallet items, and passports in a safe place.  
  
There are continuing reports of thefts that target tourists en route from the airport to their hotel or home. Some U.S. citizens have been victimized in taxis. In a typical case, a taxi with rolled-down windows stops at a traffic light, and a motorcyclist reaches in and steals a purse or other valuables. You are advised to utilize the taxi service authorized by the airport if you did not make arrangements before arrival. Even when using such an authorized taxi service, you should always be aware of the potential for a criminal to stalk travelers leaving the airport parking area. Motorcyclists have also been known to steal purses or jewelry of pedestrians. U.S. citizens in privately owned vehicles have also been targeted, and you should always keep doors and windows locked and be aware of your surroundings to deter criminals. Some travelers returning to local residences in privately owned vehicles have been followed, assaulted, and robbed upon arrival at their home. Several U.S. citizens have also been targeted and robbed at bus stations, possibly as a result of gang activity. Take measures to safeguard your personal security at all times.  
  
The dangers present in the Dominican Republic are similar to those of many major U.S. cities. Criminals can be dangerous -- many have weapons and are likely to use them if they meet resistance. Visitors walking the streets should always be aware of their surroundings. Be wary of strangers, especially those who seek you out at celebrations or nightspots. Travel with a partner or in a group if possible.  
  
Many public transportation vehicles are unsafe, especially the route taxis or “carros publicos” in urban areas. These are privately owned cars that run along certain routes, can take up to six or more passengers, and are inexpensive. Passengers in “carros publicos” are frequently the victims of pick pocketing, and passengers have on occasion been robbed by “carro publico” drivers. Urban buses (“guaguas”) are only marginally better. We are also aware of at least one incident in which the driver of a “motoconcho” (motorcycle taxi) robbed a U.S. citizen passenger. The U.S. Embassy cautions its staff not to use these modes of transportation. As an alternative, some scheduled interurban bus services use modern buses and run on reliable timetables. These are generally the safest means of intercity travel. With respect to taxis, visitors to the Dominican Republic are strongly advised to take only hotel taxis or taxis operated by services whose cabs are arranged in advance by phone and can subsequently be identified and tracked. Drivers should exercise extreme caution when driving at night and use major highways when possible. There was a case of a U.S. citizen riding her moped who was stopped and robbed on a rural road near Samana. Although kidnappings are not common in the Dominican Republic, U.S. citizens have been kidnapped and held for ransom in the past.   
  
The U.S. Embassy calls attention to certain criminal techniques that have surprised U.S. citizens and other victims in recent years:  
  
Several individuals reported robberies perpetrated by criminals on mopeds (often coasting with the engine turned off so as not to draw attention). The driver approaches a pedestrian, grabs his or her cell phone, purse or backpack, and then speeds away. This type of robbery is particularly dangerous because the motorcyclist reaches the intended victim at 15–20 miles per hour and often knocks the victim to the ground.  
The Embassy has received reports of crime involving apparent police collaboration. A seemingly-friendly stranger shakes hands with a tourist, who then finds that the stranger has placed a small baggie of cocaine or other substance into the tourist’s hand. The tourist is then immediately apprehended by a police officer, and pays a “fine” to the police to be set free.  
U.S. citizens have been victimized at the airports in Santo Domingo and Punta Cana as they checked in their luggage and prepared to leave the country. Smugglers obtained an authentic airline baggage tag in a U.S. citizen’s name and placed it on baggage that contained drugs, presumably to be retrieved by an accomplice at the other end of the flight.  
Criminals may also misrepresent themselves in an effort to gain access to your residence or hotel room. In one case, Dominican police arrested a building’s maintenance man and an accomplice for a violent crime against a U.S. citizen. There have been instances when U.S. citizens were robbed of large amounts of cash immediately prior to a scheduled financial transaction by thieves with apparent inside knowledge of the transaction. In one case, a U.S. citizen was robbed just outside his attorney’s office, and in another case a U.S. citizen reported he was victimized by two police officers.  
  
U.S. citizens residing in private homes have been the victims of robberies, sometimes resulting in fatal violence. In one case, an elderly couple in San Pedro de Macoris was violently assaulted in their home and the husband murdered. In another case, a home in Puerto Plata was broken into and the visiting U.S. citizen occupants assaulted, tied up, and robbed. In still another case, two elderly U.S. citizens in Santiago were robbed and attacked in their home with a machete. One died and the other was hospitalized with critical injuries.  
  
The U.S. Embassy continues to receive reports from U.S. citizens who have been stopped while driving and asked for “donations” by someone who may appear to be a police officer before they are allowed to continue on their way. Usually, the person(s) stopping the U.S. citizen drivers had approached from behind on a motorcycle; several of these motorcyclists pulled up alongside the driver's window and indicated that they were carrying a firearm. In some cases, the perpetrators were dressed in the light green uniform of “AMET,” the Dominican traffic police; however, they often seemed too young to be police officers or wore ill-fitting uniforms that might have been stolen. In another incident, individuals dressed in military fatigues told the victim they were police and requested the victim to follow them to the police station prior to robbing him. Such incidents should be reported to the police and to the Consular Section. If Dominican police stop you for a traffic violation, you should request a traffic ticket rather than paying an on-the-spot fine. You also have the right to ask police for identification. Regulations require police to wear a nametag with their last name. While everyone driving in the Dominican Republic should abide by traffic laws and the instructions of legitimate authorities, U.S. citizens finding themselves in the aforementioned scenarios should exercise caution. In general, you should keep your doorslocked and windows closed at all times and leave yourself an escape route when stopping in traffic in the event of an accident or other threat. Incidents involving police may be reported to the Internal Affairs Department of the National Police at 809-688-0777.  
  
You should use credit cards judiciously while in the Dominican Republic. Credit card fraud is common, and recent reports indicate that its incidence has increased significantly in Santo Domingo as well as in the resort areas of the country.  
  
If you elect to use your credit or debit cards, you should never let the cards leave your sight. You should also pay close attention to credit card bills following time spent in the Dominican Republic. There have been reports of fraudulent charges appearing months after card usage in the Dominican Republic. Victims of credit card fraud should contact the bank that issued the credit card immediately.  
  
Minimize the use of automated teller machines (ATMs), which are present throughout Santo Domingo and other major cities. One local ATM fraud scheme involves sticking photographic film or pieces of paper in the card feeder of the ATM so that an inserted card becomes jammed. Once the card owner has concluded the card is irretrievable, the thieves extract both the jamming material and the card, which they then use. There are other more sophisticated ATM scams as well, including operations that involve “insiders” who can access and manipulate electronic data entered by legitimate card holders at properly functioning ATMs. Exercise caution and be aware of your surroundings when using an ATM card.  
  
The overall level of crime tends to rise during the Christmas season, and you should take extra precautions when visiting the Dominican Republic between November and January.  
  
Beaches and Resorts: The Embassy regularly receives reports of individuals and families who have become victims of crime while within the boundaries of their resort hotel. A growing number of these crimes involve the burglary of the room and even the removal of the room safe. In general, the criminals do not commit their crime in the presence of the guest, but it is not unheard of for guests to be victimized in their own room, caught off guard in their sleep. We strongly recommend vigilance. Hotels generally will not assume responsibility for valuables left in a room.  
  
The Embassy has become increasingly aware of overly aggressive and dishonest merchants along the beaches in front of resort hotels. The Dominican Government has been trying to improve oversight of these merchants, but has not made visible progress to date.  
  
The Embassy has received numerous reports of instances of sexual assault at the resorts, particularly while at the beach. Some hotel employees have ingratiated themselves with guests as a ruse to ultimately isolate and force the victim into compromising circumstances. Many hotels have policies that discourage employee fraternization with guests. Please report any unwanted attention you receive to hotel management. Be aware of cultural differences and stay in the company of your traveling companions. It has also been reported that some predators will use date rape drugs, or take advantage of alcohol consumption, to render their victims unaware. Be cautious of accepting any drink or food from a stranger, as it may have been tampered with. Again, the Embassy strongly encourages vigilance. “All-inclusive” resorts are well known for serving abundant quantities of alcohol and there are no laws in the Dominican Republic against serving alcohol to intoxicated persons. Drink responsibly. Remember that excessive alcohol consumption may decrease your awareness of your surroundings, making you an easy target for crime.  
  
If you become a victim of sexual assault and another violent crime, we urge you to report the incident immediately to the Embassy’s American Citizen Services Unit during working hours, or to the U.S. Embassy’s duty officer after hours. You should also report the incident to local authorities for a police report. It is essential that sexual assault victims insist on an immediate examination by an authorized police medical examiner (medica legista) to ensure that a documented report is available for any future prosecution of the case.   
  
Please be aware that crime can happen anywhere and that everyone must take personal responsibility to stay alert of their surroundings at all times. Read the U.S. Embassy’s security tips for more information.  
  
The Embassy also receives reports of individuals who have suffered accidents or medical crisis at resorts. Check your insurance coverage prior to going overseas or consider travelers’ insurance. Hospitalization in the Dominican Republic can be extremely expensive and patients are expected to pay for services immediately. For additional information, see the section below on medical insurance.  
  
Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.  
  
Tourist Police: The Dominican Republic has police that are specially trained to assist tourists who require assistance. This public institution is called Politur and represents a cooperative effort between the National Police, Secretary of the Armed Forces, and the Secretary of Tourism. Politur typically has personnel in tourist areas to provide first responder type assistance to tourists. If you are the victim of a crime, Politur can help you get to a police station so that you may file a police report and seek further assistance. Politur is located at the corner of 30 de Marzo and Mexico, Bloque D, Governmental Building, Santo Domingo. The general phone number is 809-221-8697.

**Dominican Republic Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in the Dominican Republic, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own. In some places you may be questioned if you don’t have your passport with you. In some places driving under the influence could land you immediately in jail. These criminal penalties will vary from country to country. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States, and you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods.Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States as well as the Dominican Republic. If you break local laws in the Dominican Republic, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what’s legal and what’s not where you are going.  
  
Persons violating laws of the Dominican Republic, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Dominican Republic are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.  
  
Arrest notifications in host country: Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements with certain countries, and customary international law, if you are arrested in the Dominican Republic, you have the option to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the nearest U.S. Embassy of your arrest, and to have communications from you forwarded to the U.S. Embassy.

**Dominican Republic Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth | 77 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female | 79 Years |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male | 75 Years |
| Median Age (female) | 26 Years |
| Median Age (male) | 26 Years |
| Median Age | 26 Years |

**Dominican Republic Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language | Spanish |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and write |
| Literacy Female | 84.8% |
| Literacy Male | 84.6% |
| Literacy Total | 87% |

**Dominican Republic Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP | 2.2% |
| Literacy - female | 84.8% |
| Literacy - male | 84.6% |
| Literacy - total population | 87% |
| Literacy Definition | age 15 and over can read and w |

**Dominican Republic Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name | Santo Domingo |
| Local - Long | Republica Dominicana |
| Full Country Name | Dominican Republic |
| Government Type | democratic republic |
| Capital - geographic coordinate | 18 28 N, 69 54 W |
| National Holiday | Independence Day, 27 February (1844) |
| Constitution | 28 November 1966; amended 25 July 2002 and January 2010 |
| Legal System | civil law system based on the French civil code; Criminal Procedures Code modified in 2004 to include important elements of an accusatory system |
| Suffrage | 18 years of age, universal and compulsory; married persons regardless of age can vote; note - members of the armed forces and national police cannot vote by law |

**Dominican Republic Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch | chief of state: President Danilo MEDINA Sanchez (since 16 August 2012); Vice President Margarita CEDENO DE FERNANDEZ (since 16 August 2012); note - the president is both chief of state and head of government   head of government: President Danilo MEDINA Sanchez (since 16 August 2012); Vice President Margarita CEDENO DE FERNANDEZ (since 16 August 2012)   cabinet: Cabinet nominated by the president   elections: president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for four-year terms; election last held on 20 May 2012 (next to be held in 2016)   election results: Danilo MEDINA Sanchez elected president; percent of vote - Danilo MEDINA Sanchez 51.2%, Hipolito MEJIA 47%, other 1.8%; Margarita CEDENO DE FERNANDEZ elected vice president |
| Legislative Branch | bicameral National Congress or Congreso Nacional consists of the Senate or Senado (32 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms) and the House of Representatives or Camara de Diputados (183 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)  elections: Senate - last held on 16 May 2010 (next to be held in May 2016); House of Representatives - last held on 16 May 2010 (next to be held in May 2016); in order to synchronize presidential, legislative, and local elections for 2016, those members elected in 2010 will actually serve terms of six years  election results: Senate - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PLD 31, PRD 1; House of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - PLD 105, PRD 75, PRSC 3 |
| Judicial Branch | Supreme Court or Corte Suprema (judges are appointed by the National Judicial Council comprised of the president, the leaders of both chambers of congress, the president of the Supreme Court, and an additional non-governing party congressional representative) |
| Regions or States | 31 provinces (provincias, singular - provincia) and 1 district\* (distrito); Azua, Bahoruco, Barahona, Dajabon, Distrito Nacional\*, Duarte, El Seibo, Elias Pina, Espaillat, Hato Mayor, Independencia, La Altagracia, La Romana, La Vega, Maria Trinidad Sanchez, Monsenor Nouel, Monte Cristi, Monte Plata, Pedernales, Peravia, Puerto Plata, Salcedo, Samana, San Cristobal, San Jose de Ocoa, San Juan, San Pedro de Macoris, Sanchez Ramirez, Santiago, Santiago Rodriguez, Santo Domingo, Valverde |
| Political Parties and Leaders | Dominican Liberation Party or PLD [Leonel FERNANDEZ Reyna]; Dominican Revolutionary Party or PRD [Ramon ALBURQUERQUE]; National Progressive Front [Vincent CASTILLO, Pelegrin CASTILLO]; Social Christian Reformist Party or PRSC [Enrique ANTUN] |
| International Organization Participation | ACP, AOSIS, BCIE, Caricom (observer), CELAC, FAO, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAES, LAIA (observer), MIGA, NAM, OAS, OIF (observer), OPANAL, OPCW, PCA, Petrocaribe, SICA (associated member), UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, Union Latina, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders | Citizen Participation Group (Participacion Ciudadania); Collective of Popular Organizations or COP; Foundation for Institution-Building and Justice (FINJUS) |

**Dominican Republic Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product | $101,000,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - official exchange rate | $59,270,000,000 (USD) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 2% |
| GDP Per Capita | $9,700.00 (USD) |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture | 6% |
| GDP by Sector- Industry | 29.1% |
| GDP by Sector- services | 64.9% |
| Population Below Poverty Line | 42.2% |
| Inflation Rate | 6.3% |
| Labor Force | 4,498,000 |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture | 14.6% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry | 22.3% |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services | 63.1% |
| Unemployment Rate | 14.2% |
| Fiscal Year | calendar year |
| Annual Budget | $7,110,000,000 (USD) |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP | -3% |
| Public Debt (% of GDP) | 51.4% |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP | 15.2% |
| Major Industries | tourism, sugar processing, ferronickel and gold mining, textiles, cement, tobacco |
| Industrial Growth Rate | 1.5% |
| Agriculture Products | sugarcane, coffee, cotton, cocoa, tobacco, rice, beans, potatoes, corn, bananas; cattle, pigs, dairy products, beef, eggs |
| Currency Code | Dominican peso (DOP) |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14 | 10% |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14 | 180,423 |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate | 13.6% |

**Dominican Republic Economy**

**Economic Overview**

The Dominican Republic is a Caribbean representative democracy which enjoyed GDP growth of more than 7% in 1998-2000. Growth subsequently plummeted as part of the global economic slowdown. Although the country has long been viewed primarily as an exporter of sugar, coffee, and tobacco, in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer, due to growth in tourism and free trade zones. The country suffers from marked income inequality; the poorest half of the population receives less than one-fifth of GNP, while the richest 10% enjoys nearly 40% of national income. Growth turned negative in 2003 with reduced tourism, a major bank fraud, and limited growth in the US economy, the source of 87% of export revenues. Resumption of a badly needed IMF loan was slowed due to government repurchase of electrical power plants.

**Dominican Republic Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports | $6,161,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Exports | ferronickel, sugar, gold, silver, coffee, cocoa, tobacco, meats, consumer goods |
| Top Export Partners | US 85.3%, Canada 1.6%, UK 1.6% |

**Dominican Republic Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports | $14,530,000,000 (USD) |
| Major Imports | foodstuffs, petroleum, cotton and fabrics, chemicals and pharmaceuticals |
| Top Import Partners | US 51.1%, Venezuela 9.1%, Mexico 4.8% |

**Dominican Republic Flag**

The cross stands for the Catholic faith, blue is for liberty, and red is for blood.

**Dominican Republic Flag Description**

a centered white cross that extends to the edges divides the flag into four rectangles - the top ones are blue (hoist side) and red, and the bottom ones are red (hoist side) and blue; a small coat of arms featuring a shield supported by an olive branch (left) and a palm branch (right) is at the center of the cross; above the shield a blue ribbon displays the motto, DIOS, PATRIA, LIBERTAD (God, Fatherland, Liberty), and below the shield, REPUBLICA DOMINICANA appears on a red ribbon

Dominican Republic flag



|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem Lyrics English | Isle of beauty, isle of splendour, Isle to all so sweet and fair, All must surely gaze in wonder At thy gifts so rich and rare. Rivers, valleys, hills and mountains, All these gifts we do extol. Healthy land, so like all fountains,  Giving cheer that warms the soul.   Dominica, God hath blest thee With a clime benign and bright, Pastures green and flowers of beauty  Filling all with pure delight, And a people strong and healthy, Full of godly, rev'rent fear. May we ever seek to praise Thee For these gifts so rich and rare. Come ye forward, sons and daughters  Of this gem beyond compare. Strive for honor, sons and daughters, Do the right, be firm, be fair. Toil with hearts and hands and voices. We must prosper! Sound the call, In which ev'ry one rejoices,  "All for Each and Each for All." |

**Dominican Republic Interesting Facts**

* On Ash Wednesday some Dominicans celebrate a festival called Ga Ga. Others observe this day as part of Holy Week, just before Easter. Ga Ga originated with Haiti sugarcane cutters and is a festival restricted to sugarcane villages.
* Casabe, a flat and round cassava bread, is a Taino food that is still common in the Dominican diet. Casabe can be bought in almost all grocery stores and supermarkets.
* Divorce laws are so lax that people come from other countries to obtain a divorce in the Dominican Republic.
* In the late 1930s, many German Jews immigrated to the Dominican Republic and settled in Sosua. There is still a small Jewish community and a synagogue in the town.
* Tennis player Mary Joe Fernandez was born in the Dominican Republic. She won the Grand Slam in 1986 at the age of 14.
* Fashion designer Oscar de la Renta was born in 1936 in Santo Domingo. He maintains a home on the island.
* Pineapples are native to Hispaniola. Called yayama by the Tainos, the pineapple was taken by Columbus to Europe, and spread throughout the world thereafter.
* Sammy Sosa's charity foundation donated over $3 million (USD) to open the first free preventive medicine and immunization clinic for children in his hometown of San Pedro de Macoris. Tony Fernandez, formerly of the Toronto Blue Jays, has also formed a charity to help the poor of the Dominican Republic.
* Santo Domingo is the site of the first cathedral in the Americas. It was built in 1523.
* Taino means “good” or “noble.” It is believed that the Tainos used this name to distinguish themselves from the warlike Caribs.
* When a child loses a tooth they throw the tooth on the rood of their house so a mouse can come take it away and bring a better one. Sometimes they get money.
* The aboriginal name for the Dominican Republic is Quisqueya, which means in the Taino language, “Mother of all lands.”
* In Spanish, ahora means “now”. Dominican Spanish includes several variations on this word, such as ahorita (soon), ahortita (sometime) and ahora mismo (right now).
* Dominicans enjoy flying colorful kites called chichiguas.
* The compadrazgo relationship is considered so important that Rafael Trujillo used it to his advantage. He conducted mass baptisms at which he became the godfather of thousands of peasants' children.
* A disease known as dengue is becoming increasingly widespread in many Caribbean nations, including the Dominican Republic. It is spread by mosquitoes. At present, there is no known vaccine or treatment.
* The expansion of tourism has caused environmental problems. The use of pesticides to kill mosquitoes in coastal lagoons, inadequate sewage treatment in resort areas and the clearance of forests for golf courses are issues that the government is beginning to address.
* Many foreign students go to the Dominican Republic for their university education, particularly to study medicine, because the tuition fees are very low.
* The northern coast of the rocky shelf on which Hispaniola sits, provides an excellent breeding ground for humpback whales. During the first few months of the year, humpback whales can be seen off the northern coast of the Dominican Republic near Puerto Plata.
* There are two main types of merengue. In ballroom merengue (merengue de salón), the dancers hold each other in latin dance position and never separate. In figure merengue (merengue de figura), the dancers make turns individually while holding hands.
* Many people maintain two jobs in order to make ends meet. A graphic artist may moonlight as a special education teacher, or a psychologist as a hairdresser.

**Dominican Republic Lost Tooth Traditions**

The tooth is thrown on the roof of their house so a mouse can come take it away and bring a better one. Sometimes they find money afterwords.

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**History of Dominican Republic**

*Sketch of the landing at Hispaniola, reputedly drawn by Christopher Columbus*

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC EXPERIENCED many setbacks on the road to the democratic system under which it functioned in the late 1980s. The nation did not enjoy full independence until 1844, when it emerged from twenty-two years of occupation by Haiti; this liberation came later than that of most Latin American countries. Reacceptance of Spanish rule from 1861 to 1865 demonstrated the republic’s insecurity and dependence on larger powers to protect it and to define its status. Dominican vulnerability to intervention from abroad was also made evident by the United States military occupation of 1916-24 and by a more limited action by United States forces during a brief civil war in 1965.

Politically, Dominican history has been defined by an almost continuous competition for supremacy among caudillos of authoritarian ideological convictions. Political and regional competition overlapped to a great extent because mainly conservative leaders from the south and the east pitted themselves against generally more liberal figures from the northern part of the Valle del Cibao (the Cibao Valley, commonly called the Cibao). Traditions of personalism, militarism, and social and economic elitism locked the country into decades of debilitating wars, conspiracies, and despotism that drained its resources and undermined its efforts to establish liberal constitutional rule.

In the late 1980s, the republic was still struggling to emerge from the shadow of the ultimate Dominican caudillo, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina (1930-61), who emerged from the military and held nearly absolute power throughout his rule. The apparent establishment of a democratic process in 1978 was a promising development; however, the survival of democracy appeared to be closely linked to the country’s economic fortunes, which had declined steadily since the mid-1970s. As it had throughout its history, the republic continued to struggle with the nature of its domestic politics and with the definition of its economic and political role in the wider world.

**Dominican Republic History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dominican Republic Year in History | Dominican Republic Timeline |
| 1492 | **Christopher Columbus visits the island.** He names it Hispaniola, or "Little Spain." |
| 1496 | **Santo Domingo** Bartholomew Columbus, brother of Christopher Columbus, founds the city. It is the oldest European city in the New World. |
| 1510 | **First slaves brought to the New World.** |
| 1515 | **Taino Indians** They had engaged in continuous clashes and rebellion against the Spanish. |
| 1586 | **Francis Drake** He forces the governor to pay a large ransom. |
| 1697 | **Treaty of Ryswick.** France gains Haiti, Spain gains the present-day Dominican Republic. |
| 1793 | **The first British soldiers come ashore at St. Domingo.** |
| 1795 | **Hispaniola island** |
| 1801 | **A new constitution goes into effect.** Drafted by a committee appointed by Toussaint L’Ouverture, it declares the independence of Hispaniola. The constitution makes him governor general for life with near absolute powers. |
| 1821 | **Spanish rule** The uprising is followed by a brief period of independence. |
| 1822 | **Haitian Republic is born.** Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer marches his troops into Santo Domingo and annexes it. |
| 1844 | **Gaina independence** The Dominican Republic gained its independence from Haiti. |
| 1861 | **Annexed by Spain.** The Dominican Republic was annexed by Spain. |
| 1865 | **The second Dominican Republic proclaimed.** |
| 1916 | **The US began a period of occupation.** Lasting eight years, the occupation attempts to resolve the financial crisis and reclaim debts. |
| 1924 | **Constitutional government assumes control.** US forces withdraw. |
| 1930 | **Santo Domingo suffers severe hurricane damage** Trujillo embarks on a significant rebuilding program. |
| 1962 | **First free elections for nearly four decades are held.** |
| 1979 | **Hurricanes devestate the country** Two hurricanes leave more than 200,0000 people homeless and cause damage worth $1 billion as the economy continues to deteriorate due to high fuel prices and low sugar prices. |
| 2002 | **Former president Joaquin Balaguer dies.** Thousands pay their last respects to a man who had dominated politics for more than 50 years. |
| 2004 | **President Leonel Fernandez** Former president Leonel Fernandez defeats incumbent Hipolito Mejia. |
| 2008 | **President re-elected** President Leonel Fernandez is re-elected. |
| 2010 | **Border tightened** Dominican Republic tightens border to prevent cholera spreading from Haiti. |
| 2012 | **Danilo Medina** Governing Dominican Liberation Party candidate Danilo Medina wins close presidential election. |

**Dominican Republic Holidays and Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Display Date | Title |
| February 27th | **Independence Day** |

**Dominican Republic Meals and Food**

Recipes from Dominican Republic

* [Asopao de Mariscos - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/asopao-de-mariscos.htm)
* [Flan (Custard) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/flan-%28custard%29.htm)
* [La Bandera](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/la-bandera.htm)
* [Mamgu (Mashed Green Plantains) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/mamgu-%28mashed-green-plantains%29.htm)
* [Milk and Papaya Drink - Beverage](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/milk-and-papaya-drink.htm)
* [Moro de Habichuelas Rojas (Red Beans and Rice) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/moro-de-habichuelas-rojas-%28red-beans-and-rice%29.htm)
* [Sancocho (Rice, Vegetable and Meat Stew) - Side Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/DominicanRepublic/recipe/sancocho-%28rice-vegetable-and-meat-stew%29.htm)

**Dominican Republic Recipes and Diet**

Dominican Republic food and meal customs

**Diet**

When Dominicans have finished eating, they place their knife and fork across their plate with the prongs facing down and the handles facing to the right.

Dominican cuisine uses seafood, meat and vegetables, although poorer people in the rural areas cannot afford to eat meat regularly. The most common dish is la bandera, which consists of white rice, beans, vegetables and frito verdes (fried green plantain), served with savory chicken, beef or goat. Goat meat is particularly popular. Beef is common only in the Cibao region.

Another typical dish is sancochos, a version of the Spanish cocido (stew). Each region has its own unique way of preparing sancochos. Sancochos is a hearty mixture of seven meats, that may include goat, pork, tripe, oxtails, chicken, rabbit or pigeon. Sancochos may be served with avocado, wild rice, cassava or plantains.

El desayuno, or breakfast, is the first meal in the morning. Mangu, a puree made from cassava, is often served for breakfast, particularly in poorer areas. In cities, el desayuno may consist of bread, jam and coffee. Most people try to go home at midday for the largest and most elaborate meal of the day, el almuerzo. It usually consists of rice and beans with meat. After lunch, some Dominicans take a nap for a couple of hours before they go to work again. Supper, la cena, is served late, when all family members have returned from school and work.

Evening is the time for desserts. A favorite dessert is hibichela con dulce, a sweet porridge made with beans, coconut milk, sweet potatoes, raisins, cassava and cinnamon. Other traditional desserts include arroz con dulce, a sweet rice pudding, and majarete, a corn pudding. Flans with caramel custard are also popular, such as quesillo de leche y pina, a flan made with pineapple and milk.

**Meals**

Sancocho is the national dish and is served on special occasions. Tropical fruits are found in abundance. Mamgu is served for breakfast in many areas.

Eating style is Continental, a fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand. Meals are generally served family style or buffet style. If there are visitors the host says "buen provecho" ("enjoy" or "have a good meal") as an invitation to start eating. Dominicans keep there hands visible when eating, and do not rest elbows on the table. When Dominicans have finished eating, they often times place their knife and fork across their plate with the prongs facing down and the handles facing to the right.

**Dominican Republic Languages**

**Languages**

Spanish

**Language Translations:**

**Greetings in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Do you speak English? | Habla usted ingles? |
| Do you speak Spanish? | Habla usted espanol? |
| Excuse me | Dispenseme |
| Fine / Good | Bien |
| Good afternoon | Buenas tardes |
| Good evening | Buenas tardes |
| Good morning | Buenos diás |
| Good night | Buenas noches |
| Goodbye | Adios |
| Happy New Year! | ¡Felíz año nuevo! |
| Hello | ¡Hóla! |
| How are you? | Como esta usted? |
| I'm pleased to meet you | Encantado de conocerle |
| Merry Christmas | Feliz Navidad |
| Please | Por favor |
| See you later | Hasta luego |
| Thank you | Gracias |
| Welcome | Bienvenido |
| What is your name? | Como se llama? / Deme su nombre |
| Yes / No | Si / No |

**Days in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sunday | Domingo |
| Monday | Lunes |
| Tuesday | Martes |
| Wednesday | Miercoles |
| Thursday | Jueves |
| Friday | Viernes |
| Saturday | Sabado |

**Months in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| January | Enero |
| February | Febrero |
| March | marzo |
| April | Abril |
| May | Mayo |
| June | Junio |
| July | Julio |
| August | Agosto |
| September | Septiembre |
| October | Octubre |
| November | Noviembre |
| December | Diciembre |

**Colors in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Black | Negro |
| Blue | Azul |
| Green | Verde |
| Orange | Anaranjado |
| Pink | Rosado |
| Red | Rojo |
| White | Blanco |
| Yellow | Amarillo |

**Numbers in Spanish**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One | Uno |
| Two | Dos |
| Three | Tres |
| Four | Cuatro |
| Five | Cinco |
| Six | Seis |
| Seven | Siete |
| Eight | Ocho |
| Nine | Nueve |
| Ten | Diez |
| Fifty | Cincuenta |
| one Hundred | Cien |
| One Thousand | mil |

**Dominican Republic Clothing and Fashion**

In Dominican society appearance is very important. People are extremely fashion conscious and believe that clothes indicate social standing and success. They take great pride in wearing good fabrics and clothes of the best standard they can afford. Designer labels, particularly those from the United States, are looked upon favorably.

**Dating, Family and Children Dominican Republic**

**Family and Children**

Although influenced by North American values, the Dominican Republic maintains the Spanish tradition of familial solidarity. People look to their family and relatives for support and help. In addition to blood relationships, people may have relationships of compadrazgo or "co-parentage." Com-padres are godparents who play an important role in their god children's life. Godparents are chosen before the child's birth and are expected to assist with the child's education, career and even finances.

Many poor couples do not have a religious or civil wedding ceremony because of the high cost. They live together in common-law relationships

**Dominican Republic Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

Maintaining eye contact is crucial as it indicates interest. When shaking hands, use the appropriate greeting for the time of day "buenos dias", "buenas noches", or "buenas tardes". If invited to dinner at a Dominican's home bring a gift such as chocolates or pastries. Avoid gifts that are black or purple. They are considered mourning colors. Gifts are opened when received.

**Gestures**

To hail a taxi, one wags a finger or fingers (depending on the number of passengers) in the directions one is going. At a restaurant, one will clap to request the check. A handshake, with direct eye contact and a welcoming smile is standard when meeting someone.

**Visiting**

Hosts offer visitors something to drink and invite them to eat if mealtime is near. It is not considered impolite to refuse such an offer.

Dominicans work long hours and have little time for recreation and socializing. In small towns, the focus of social life is the central park or plaza, where people go to stroll and chat with friends. In rural areas, men get together in stores, bars or pool rooms, to talk and play pool or dominoes. Farm families go to town on Sundays to shop and attend mass. Women and children generally return home first, to prepare Sunday dinner, while the men stay to enjoy an afternoon cockfight or a game of baseball or basketball.

Dominicans pride themselves on their hospitality. When someone visits, Dominicans go out of their way to make guests feel welcome and comfortable House guests are treated royally and Dominicans attempt to cater to their every desire.

**Cultural Attributes**

Dominicans adhere to very traditional gender roles. Men and boys are expected to demonstrate "machismo", or maleness, and "personalismo" which means "putting one's dignity and honor above abstract political and collective ideologies". Women are expected to be submissive and to stay at home. However, many women must work outside the home to earn money.

**Dominican Republic Church and Religion**

The Dominican constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Roman Catholicism was established as the official state religion in 1954 by President Trujillo.  
  
Religious processions called â€œrosariosâ€ are organized so that people can pray for heavenly intercessions to solve a common problem, such as a lack of rain. During rosarios, a person carrying a rosary heads the procession, followed by an image of a saint or madonna. Other people sing and play musical instruments.  
  
The santos cults merge the characteristics of Christian saints with those of African deities. This is a legacy from the period of slavery, when Africans were converted to Christianity. They made sense of Christianity by equating their traditional beliefs in many different spirits with the Catholic practice of venerating many different saints. Many households have shrines to certain saints in their homes. The most popular saints are St. Anthony and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Worshipers are expected to perform a promesa (promise or obligation). This is an act of devotion performed by the worshiper in return for favors granted by the saint.  
  
Some Dominicans consult brujos or brujas, male or female priests who have the ability to cast spells and to drive out evil spirits infecting the soul. BrujerÃ­a is a form of magic that incorporates notions of love, fear and respect. Dominicans may ask the brujo or bruja to provide advice on lottery numbers or personal problems or to cast an â€œevil eyeâ€, which is often believed to be the cause of a strange and sudden illness. A well-known brujo or bruja in a rural area may be regularly visited by clients from the city.  
  
In the late 1930s, many German Jews immigrated to the Dominican Republic and settled in Sosua.   
  
The largest religious denomination was the Roman Catholic Church. Traditional Protestants, evangelical Christians (particularly Assemblies of God, Church of God, Baptists, and Pentecostals), Seventh-day Adventists, members of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) had a much smaller but generally growing presence. The population was nominally 64.4 percent Catholic and 11.4 percent Protestant, 22.5 percent of the sample said they had no religion. Anecdotal evidence suggested that individuals who identified themselves as Protestants and evangelicals were significantly more likely to be religiously observant than Catholics.   
  
There were a small number Jews in the country, most lived in Santo Domingo, which had a synagogue and a community leader but no ordained rabbi. There was a synagogue for the small Jewish community in Sosua, descended from the resettlement of more than 600 European Jewish refugees before the Second World War. Both synagogues were led by the same individual. There was an active Sunni mosque in Santo Domingo. A few adherents practiced Buddhism and Hinduism. Many Catholics practiced a combination of Catholicism and Afro-Caribbean beliefs (santerÃ­a) or witchcraft (brujerÃ­a).   
  
Organized foreign missionary groups working in the country included Mormons, Mennonites, Episcopalians, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Other missionaries were nondenominational or affiliated with independent churches.   
  
The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors.   
  
The constitution specifies that there is no state religion. The Government signed a concordat in 1954 with the Vatican, making Catholicism the official religion of the country and extending to the Catholic Church special privileges not granted to other religious groups. These include the use of public funds to underwrite some church expenses, such as rehabilitation of church facilities, and a complete exoneration from customs duties.   
  
Religious groups are required to register with the Government. Religious groups other than the Catholic Church may request exonerations from customs duties from the Office of the Presidency. Evangelical Protestant leaders have regularly urged the Government to provide their churches privileges equivalent to those granted to the Catholic Church. Catholic weddings are the only religious wedding ceremonies that the Government recognizes.   
  
The law requires that the Bible be read in public schools, but it was not enforced. Private schools are not obliged to include Bible reading among their weekly activities.

**Dominican Republic Sport and Recreation**

Dominicans are passionate fans of baseball, or pelota, as they call it. Before baseball became popular, cockfights were the national passion. These fights are legal, and are still popular among men in small towns and rural areas, although the authorities disapprove of them. Each town and village has its own "gallera", or cockfight pit.

On Saturdays and Sundays, men and boys bring their favorite roosters to compete in the "gallera". Others come to watch the match and bet on the outcome. During cockfights, music is played and rum is served, and police officers supervise. In Santo Domingo, the sport is considered an upper-class activity.