



Trinidad and Tobago

KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1962
Population:	1,341,000 (2010)
GNI p.c.:	US\$15,380 (2010)
UN HDI 2011:	world ranking 62

Geography

Area:	5,128 sq km
Coastline:	362km
Capital:	Port of Spain

The country, the most southerly of the West Indian island states, situated 11.2km off the Venezuelan coast, consists of two islands: Trinidad and Tobago.

Constitution

Status:	Republic
Elections organisation:	Elections and Boundaries Commission
Legislature:	Parliament

Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary republic with a representative government and a degree of regional autonomy. The head of state is a non-executive president elected by an electoral college comprising all the members of parliament. The executive is led by the prime minister who heads a cabinet chosen by him or her and responsible to parliament.

The legislature consists of the bicameral Parliament, with a directly elected 41-member House of Representatives and a 31-member Senate. Senators are appointed by the president, 16 on the advice of the prime minister, six on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and nine of the president's own choice. Elections are held every five years.

Tobago has a regional house of assembly, set up in 1980, with certain local powers over finances and other delegated responsibilities. It has 12 elected members and several members appointed by the political parties. Constitutional amendments have granted Tobago greater control over urban and rural development, health, education and housing, though its assembly has no legislative powers.



Judicial system

Supreme court:	Supreme Court of Judicature
Ministry:	Legal Affairs

The justice system is based on English Common Law. The Supreme Court of Judicature comprises the High Court of Justice and the Court of Appeal and has establishments in Port of Spain, San Fernando and Tobago. The Court of Appeal is presided over by the chief justice and hears appeals from the High Court and magistrates' courts. In some circumstances appeals may be made to the UK's Privy Council.

The courts of summary jurisdiction and petty civil courts are presided over by magistrates. The courts of summary jurisdiction deal with criminal cases, and the petty civil courts with the less serious civil cases.

The chief justice and judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the president, consulting the prime minister and leader of the opposition in respect of the chief justice, and the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, in respect of the other judges.

Government and politics

Last elections:	May 2010 (national)
Next elections:	2015 (national)
Head of state:	President Professor George Maxwell Richards (2003–)
Head of government:	Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar
Ruling party:	People's Partnership coalition

Following the tied December 2001 general election – when the People's National Movement (PNM) and the United National Congress (UNC) each secured 18 seats in the House of Representatives (and the National Alliance for Reconstruction none) – a fresh election was called in October 2002 when the PNM secured a majority, with 20 seats with 50.7% of the votes, while the UNC took 16 with 46.5%. PNM leader Patrick Manning – whom the president had chosen to be prime minister and form a government after the tied election – resumed as prime minister.

In the elections in November 2007 (with the number of contested seats increased from 36 to 41), on a platform that highlighted its strong economic management and proposed introduction of an executive presidency, the ruling PNM won with 26 seats and 45.9% of votes. The main opposition UNC took 15 seats and 29.7% of votes and the newly established Congress of the People gained 22.6% of votes but no seats. PNM's majority was a few seats short of the two-thirds required to amend the constitution.

Following a threatened vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Manning in April 2010, he dissolved parliament. In the general election which followed in May 2010, a new five-party coalition, the People's Partnership, led by UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar and including the Congress of the People, won 29 of the 41 seats in the lower house and 42.9% of the votes cast, soundly defeating the incumbent PNM (12 seats and 39.6%). Persad-Bissessar became prime minister, the first woman in the country's history to assume the role.

Local government

Ministry:	Local Government (Trinidad) and Office of the Prime Minister (Tobago)
Association:	Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities

Local government is provided for by the Municipal Corporations Act 1990 and the Tobago House of Assembly Act 1996; and the Tobago House of Assembly is enshrined in the constitution. The Ministry of Local Government is responsible for local government in Trinidad, and the Office of the Prime Minister in Tobago. Local government comprises two city corporations, three borough corporations and nine regional corporations in Trinidad; and

the House of Assembly in Tobago. Local elections are held every three years in Trinidad and every four years in Tobago.

The city and borough corporations have revenue-raising powers, and all local authorities receive transfers from national government. The local authorities are responsible for a broad range of public services, notably primary health care; education; and internal security.

National development plan

Trinidad and Tobago's long-term aspiration to become a developed country by 2020 is expressed in the Vision 2020 development plan.

The Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development is responsible for the National Framework for Sustainable Development, and for economic planning and monitoring. The Ministry is engaged in implementing a new economic strategy that incorporates the National Innovation System which aims at economic diversification.

This Ministry has oversight of the Economic Development Board and the Council for Competitiveness and Innovation which were established in 2011 to play both an advisory and an implementation role in the strategic management of the economy. They are mandated to foster a culture of research and innovation, particularly in the non-energy and

Governance institutions

Elections and Boundaries Commission:	www.ebctt.com
Parliament:	www.ttparliament.org
Judiciary:	www.ttlawcourts.org
Ombudsman:	www.ombudsman.gov.tt
Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago:	www.integritycommission.org.tt
Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development:	pesrga.gov.tt
Office of the Prime Minister:	www.opm.gov.tt
Ministry of Legal Affairs:	www.legalaffairs.gov.tt
Ministry of Local Government:	www.localgov.gov.tt
Ministry of Finance and the Economy:	www.finance.gov.tt
Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment:	www.tradeind.gov.tt
Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago:	www.centralbank.org.tt
Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange:	www.stockex.co.tt
Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards:	www.ttbs.org.tt
Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago:	www.tatt.org.tt
Regulated Industries Commission:	www.ric.org.tt

services sector aiming to increase research and development spending to at least 3% of GDP over a ten-year period.

Policy

The five strategic pillars of Vision 2020 are:

- developing innovative people
- governing effectively
- enabling competitive business
- nurturing a caring society
- investing in sound infrastructure and environment.

Governance

The National Transformation Unit of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development is responsible for capacity-building in assessment and evaluation; co-ordinating implementation of the national policy and strategic plans; and for monitoring and evaluation of government policies, projects and programmes, and of national strategic plans.

Further information

Government of Trinidad and Tobago: www.gov.tt

Commonwealth Secretariat:
www.thecommonwealth.org

Commonwealth Governance:
www.commonwealthgovernance.org