



JAMAICA

SUMMARY

Jamaica is a constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government, national and local. Local government was entrenched in the constitution by the passing of the Constitution (Amendment) (Local Government) Act in July 2015. The main governing legislation for local authorities comprises the Local Governance Act 2016, the Local Government (Financing and Financial Management) Act 2016, and the Local Government (Unified Service and Employment) Act 2016. The Ministry of Local Government and Community Development provides oversight for the 14 local authorities. The current configuration of local authorities in Jamaica consists of 13 municipal corporations and a second-tier municipal council, Portmore Municipal Council (PMC), which falls within the parish of St Catherine. Following the 2016 Local election 19% of councillors were women and in 2016/17 local government expenditure was 12.5% of total government expenditure. Local authorities are empowered to raise revenue via own sources including user fees, by-law penalties, trade licences and property taxes. They also benefit from transfers from central government for councillors' emoluments and poor relief. Local government is responsible for local planning and strategic direction including: local sustainable development planning and development control; municipal enforcement and regulation including in the areas of health, commercial services and civic order; and parish infrastructure. It also shares responsibility with central government for a range of services including water supply, environmental health and local development.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Jamaica is a unitary constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament.^{18.1a} The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II represented by a governor-general. The legislature is based in the capital Kingston and comprises a house of representatives and a senate. The house of representatives is made up of 60 members elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage for terms of up to five years. The senate is composed of 21 members appointed by the governor-general: 13 are appointed on the advice of the prime minister and eight on the advice of the leader of the opposition. Following the 2016 national election, 17.5% (11/63) of elected representatives and 23.8% (5/21) of senators were women.^{18.1b} The head of government is the prime minister, who appoints a cabinet from the members of both houses.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

Local government was entrenched in the constitution^{18.2a} by the passing of the Constitution (Amendment) (Local Government) Act in July 2015.

2.2 Main legislative texts

The main pieces of legislation pertaining to local government are as follows:

- Local Governance Act 2016^{18.2b}
- Local Government (Financing and Financial Management) Act 2016
- Local Government (Unified Service and Employment) Act 2016.

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

A National Building Bill is currently being debated in parliament.

2.4 National Urban Policy

There is no single overarching national urban policy in Jamaica, but there are urban policies embedded in parish development plans and parish development orders, as well as other related policies that inform the decision-making process. These policies address issues including traffic, housing, solid waste collection and disposal, settlement location, population growth and migration, and employment. With respect to the UN's New Urban Agenda, launched at the Habitat III conference, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development recognises the increased and important role anticipated for local governments. The Local Governance Act 2016 is therefore positioned, through Section 21 of the Act, to ensure sustainable urban policies and a governance framework (including urban renewal) that supports sustainable livelihoods and high-quality living standards etc in urban centres.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

Jamaica has had a formal system of local government since 1663 when a vestry system, which mirrored the local government existing in England at that time, was established. The vestry system lasted for 200 years and was abolished in 1865. It was replaced by a system of parochial boards (later renamed parish councils) with the passage of the Parish Councils Act 1887. The number of parishes (local government jurisdictions) was reduced from the 22 which existed under the vestries to 14 in 1923. The parishes of Kingston, the capital city, and St Andrew were amalgamated to form a single municipality called the Kingston and St Andrew Corporation (KASC).



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2016 estimate):
2,730,894

AREA (UN 2006):
10,991 sq km

CAPITAL:
Kingston

CURRENCY:
Jamaican dollar (JMS)

HEAD OF STATE:
HM Queen Elizabeth II

GOVERNOR-GENERAL:
Sir Patrick Allen

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Andrew Holness

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
bicameral

STATE STRUCTURE:
unitary

LANGUAGES:
English (official), Jamaican patois (recognised)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2016, turnout: 47.8%; next: 2021

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2016) members:
17.5%, senators: 23.8%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: 2016, turnout: 30%; next: 2020

WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2016):
19.3%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2016/17: 12.5%

**Table 18.1a Distribution of councils and population**

Local authority	Second-tier authority	Population (2011 Census)	Population 2016 estimate	% rural 2011
Clarendon Parish	0	245,103	na	69.7
Hanover Parish	0	69,533	na	90.7
Kingston and St Andrew Corporation	0	662,426	na	11.2
Manchester Parish	0	189,797	na	66.5
Portland Parish	0	81,744	na	76.5
St Ann Parish	0	172,363	na	73.2
St Catherine Parish	Portmore	516,218	na	26.2
St Elizabeth Parish	0	150,205	na	85.6
St James Parish	0	183,205	na	44.9
St Mary Parish	0	183,811	na	79.2
St Thomas Parish	0	93,902	na	71.8
Trelawny Parish	0	75,164	na	80.4
Westmoreland Parish	0	144,103	na	74.3
Total	13	2,697,983	2,730,894	48.0

Source: *Census of Population and Housing 2011*^{18.3a} and *population projection*^{18.3b}

The Municipalities Act 2003 facilitated the creation of Portmore Municipal Council, which is a second-tier jurisdiction within an existing local authority, the St Catherine Parish Council. The Local Governance Act 2016 repealed the Municipalities Act 2003, incorporated the provisions of that legislation into the new Act and created 13 municipal corporations from the former parish councils. There have been significant recent legislative changes with strategic legislation being promulgated and which will have significant impact on the operations of municipal corporations. First, a process of constitutional amendment resulted in the inclusion of a democratic system of local government for Jamaica in the constitution. Subsequently, the passage of the Local Governance Act, Local Government (Financing and Financial Management) Act and Local Government (Unified Service and Employment) Act added to the legislative objectives that had been in process for several years. Several local authorities have also participated in a local economic development initiative focused on improving their capacity and building local networks aimed at increasing local economic activity. Three municipal corporations now have full-time local economic development officers and others have assigned local economic development portfolios to specific officers. The new legislation prescribes local sustainable development planning as a function of local government and four municipal corporations have completed such plans, while others are at various stages of preparation.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The local government portfolio falls under the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD)⁵. The Minister of Local Government and Community Development heads the ministry and provides oversight for the laws governing the organisation, structure, powers, administration and financing of local authorities. The ministry also plays a coordinating role for all local and related central government programmes to ensure the achievement of objectives and common standards, and also provides technical advice and guidance on local-government-related issues and activities. The ministry has five agencies which assist local governments in discharging their various responsibilities. These are: the Jamaica Fire Brigade (fire prevention and control); the National Solid Waste Management Authority (solid waste collection and disposal); the Board of Supervision (poor relief/welfare services); the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management; and the Social Development Commission.

3.3 Council types

Jamaica has 14 local authorities, made up of 13 municipal corporations and Portmore Municipal Council (a second-tier jurisdiction within the parish of St Catherine). There are a total of 228 councillors serving the 14 councils, each of which is headed by a mayor who acts as the chairperson of the council.

3.3.1 Local authorities undertake their mandated responsibilities through a committee system. They are required by law to have two standing committees (the first covering finance and local public accounts, and the second covering poor relief). They have discretionary powers to establish other committees, including public health, planning development and environment, infrastructure and traffic management. The standing committees hold delegated decision-making powers while other committees have powers to recommend. Ad-hoc committees may also be formed to address a particular matter. Some authorities also establish executive committees to assist the leadership of the council.

3.3.2 The Kingston and St Andrew Municipal Corporation is the largest local authority and has 40 councillors and an indirectly elected mayor.

3.3.3 The Portmore Municipal Council comprises 13 elected representatives: 12 councillors and a directly elected mayor who presides over the council.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

The latest local government elections took place in 2016. Voter turnout was 30%^{18.4}, down from a turnout of 34.7% in 2012.

4.2 Voting system

All councillors are elected using the first-past-the-post system with universal adult suffrage, for a four-year term. The Local Governance Act 2016 provides for mayors of second-tier jurisdictions to be directly elected. The other 13 mayors are elected by their peers for the term of the council.

4.3 Elected representation

The eligibility for election as a councillor includes a minimum age of 18, and not holding membership in the house of representatives or a public office pursuant to the Civil Service Establishment Act. Councillors are political representatives in charge of a local area, referred to as a division. Divisions cumulatively make up a larger area called a constituency for which a member of parliament is the parliamentary representative.

4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2016 local election, 19.3% (44/228) of councillors were women, the same as in 2012 and up slightly from 18.0% (41/228) in 2007 and 16.7% (38/227) in 2003. However, it is down from a high of 27.0% (58/215) in 1998. The number of female mayors being elected reduced from four in 2012 to none in 2016.



Table 18.1b Women councillors and mayors following 1998–2016 elections

Election	1998		2003		2007		2012		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Councillors										
Female councillors	58	27.0	38	16.7	41	18.0	44	19.3	44	19.3
Male councillors	157	73.0	189	83.3	187	82.0	184	80.7	184	80.7
Total councillors	215	100.0	227	100.0	228	100.0	228	100.0	228	100.0
Mayor										
Female mayors	1	7.7	1	7.1	1	7.1	4	28.6	0	0
Male mayors	12	92.3	13	92.9	13	92.9	10	71.4	14	100
Total mayors	13	100.0	14	100.0	14	100.0	14	100.0	14	100.0

Source: MLGCD correspondence with CLGF

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement

Parish development committees are set out in the Local Governance Act 2016 as a key mechanism for community involvement.

5.2 Implementation

PDCs – which represent civil society, community-based organisations and the private sector, and also include local and central government agencies – have been established in all local government jurisdictions.

The role of these committees is to facilitate the participation of local stakeholders in the management of local affairs and to guide local development through the preparation and implementation of parish development plans. A National Association of Parish Development Committees (NAPDC) has been established to support the PDCs and monitor their progress.

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

In 2012 the Government of Jamaica authored an 'E-Powering Jamaica' master plan and elements of that plan are included in the ICT strategic plan of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. There is an ongoing programme to install computerised financial management and accounting information systems within councils. These are intended to introduce modern accounting practices consistent with national and international accounting standards, as well as to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the execution of accounting functions. The websites of all 14 municipal corporations are used to disseminate information to the electorate/citizens, and each municipality publishes its activities, projects, plans and decisions on its website to improve the transparency of its operations. Additionally, most municipal corporations broadcast their public council meetings monthly on local

cable TV stations to further engage their constituents and citizens. A few have gone further, and have live-streamed these meetings online. Another medium of engagement with local government is extensive use of social media platforms to connect with constituents, promote activities and disseminate information.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.1 National local government association

The Association of Local Government Authorities of Jamaica^{18,6} (ALGJ) is the representative organisation responsible for the interests and welfare of local government authorities. It also seeks to advance local government in general. Its membership is drawn from councillors and the mayors of all 14 local authorities. It comprises six committees, namely: international relations; ethics, standards and discipline; economics and development; policy and reform; membership and training; and infrastructure and physical development.

6.2 Other local government associations

The Jamaica Association of Local Government Officers (JALGO) is a public-sector union which operates in Jamaica. The association was formed in November 1940 and represents several categories of workers in local and central government, statutory bodies and quasi-governmental agencies. Its members include firefighters, officers and sub-officers, civilian staff of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, employees in the pre-supervisory and supervisory units of the National Water Commission, hospital and health service workers and school and parish council staff.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The minister holds regular meetings with all mayors. The Local Government Reform Unit, through its international initiatives, is working to promote and facilitate improved collaboration between the ministry and international development partners and their respective governments.

ALGJ is also consulted in relation to policy development and implementation, including legislative amendments.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

The auditor general's department conducts independent audits of local authority finances and performance which may lead to local authorities being required to appear before the Public Accounts Committee of parliament. The department also conducts routine audits, including the annual audit of poor relief operations in all local authorities by the Board of Supervision for Poor Relief. The Office of the Contractor General monitors and investigates the awarding and implementation of contracts, licences, permits and concessions, as well as overseeing any divestment of local government assets. Additionally, there are local public accounts committees (LPACs) that are established in accordance with relevant provisions of the Local Governance Acts and the operations and procedures, by-laws, or standing orders of each council. LPACs are charged with ongoing oversight and in-depth, rigorous examination of the financial activities, transactions, management and performance of local authorities, and also their performance in carrying out statutory responsibilities, as well as meeting established performance standards in delivering services and carrying out regulatory responsibilities.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

A large proportion of local authorities' income in 2016-17 came from property taxes (64.5%), and the rest either from other locally raised revenue such as licences and fees (16.1%) or transfers from national government (19.4%). Almost three-quarters (72.0%) goes on services, such as roads (40.5%), water (6.1%) and other services (25.4%), with the rest covering staff costs (18.1%) and other administrative costs (9.9%).

Table 18.2a Income and expenditure for local government 2016/17

Income	2016/17 JM\$m	Expenditure	2016/17 JM\$m
Centre-local transfers		Administration	
Restricted	2,107.1	Staff	1,361.6
Unrestricted	0.0	Other administrative costs	745.5
Locally raised revenue		Services	
Property taxes	7,018.0	Water	459.2
Licences and fees	1,753.0	Road maintenance	3,043.6
Other income	0.0	Other	1,907.2
TOTAL INCOME	10,878.1	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	7,517.1

Source: MLGCD correspondence with CLGF

9.1 Local Government expenditure

In the 2016/17 fiscal year, local government expenditure was 12.5% of total government expenditure. See table 18.2b

9.2 Locally raised revenue

Local authorities are empowered to raise revenue via user fees, fines and penalties, trade licences and property taxes. These include development approval applications, barbers' and hairdressers' licences, motor vehicle licence fees, trading permits, market and cemetery fees, charges for transportation centres, car parks and permit parking, and fines for breaches of parking regulations.

9.3 Transfers

Local authorities receive specific grants from central government which are provided for welfare-related expenses.

9.4 Loans

Local authorities do have the power to raise loans under specific conditions, but this power has so far never been used.

9.5 Local authority staff

Local government personnel are recruited by a central body, the Local Government Services Commission (LGSC). The commission is responsible for the recruitment, promotion, discipline and dismissal of staff on the recommendation of individual local authority staff. Staff secondments from central government to local government and vice versa may occasionally take place; these are considered an important feature of personnel development.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

Local government is responsible for parish infrastructure including roads, drains, street lights, infirmaries, parking facilities, markets, transportation centres, parks, cemeteries, pounds and slaughterhouses.

Local authorities are also responsible for poor relief and share responsibility with central government for a number of areas including water supply, public health and development control. Local government is currently focusing its attention on local economic development (LED), which prioritises a 'bottom-up' approach to stimulating sustainable local economic development. This process encompasses the strengthening of community-based micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and the simultaneous empowerment of local authorities to assume a facilitating role in LED.

10.1 ICT use in service delivery

A number of initiatives in this area are under way. In the planning arena, local government is implementing software (known as AMANDA) which enables development and building applications submitted by clients and citizens to be reviewed and tracked online. The aim is to improve efficiency of operations, as well as transparency and accountability in the development application process. Clients are able to track applications submitted to the municipal corporations and view their status and milestones within the application process. Service delivery is being further improved through the use of GIS/spatial data and maps of the different jurisdictions or localities. Access to these allows clients to plan their developments more effectively. More generally, local service delivery is being improved with the utilisation of national government standard 'gov.jm' email addresses. Most municipal corporations are working towards

migration from personal email platforms to a standardised government platform. This will enhance clients' confidence in doing business with the organisations of government. Some municipal corporations have issued elected officials with computer tablets, to ensure they have ready access to information wherever they are. Email is also used to circulate correspondence and minutes of meetings to elected officials, which promotes effective planning and prompt decision-making.

10.2 The role of local government towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

National thematic working groups have been established, of which the MLGCD has active membership. For example, the preparation of local sustainable development plans by municipal corporations is an expected outcome that is recognised by Jamaica's National Development Plan as a critical instrument to achieve sustainable development. This activity is mainstreamed in workplans at various levels and, given the interrelated nature of sustainable development, the national planning framework facilitates collaboration or leadership on issues such as natural disaster management, the environment, land management, poverty alleviation, protected areas and beaches. The MLGCD is thus an active member of various committees at the national level, including the Forward Planning Committee, Beaches Committee and Squatter Management Committee. Activities related to local sustainable development planning address issues such as climate change, risk reduction, local economic development, employment and environment through a participatory approach. Local government is feeding into national reporting mechanisms through the national thematic working groups and national committees as mentioned above. At the international level there is active dialogue with UN Habitat, the Caribbean Urban Forum, the United Nations Development Programme, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Convention 'Focal Points' secretariat, the World Bank and various international partners for support, and capacity enhancement to implement projects and initiatives. Additionally, some municipalities have twinned with cities in other countries.

Table 18.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2016-2017

	2016/17 actual JM\$m
Total government expenditure	60,034
Total local government expenditure	7,517
Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure	12.5%

Source: MLGCD correspondence with CLGF



REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 18.1a Jamaica Government
www.cabinet.gov.jm
- 18.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union
www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 18.2a Constitution of Jamaica <http://moj.gov.jm/sites/default/files/laws/Ja%20%28Constitution%29%20Order%20in%20Council%201962.pdf>
- 18.2b Local Government Act 2016 and other legislation <http://localgovjamaica.gov.jm/actsofparl.aspx>
- 18.3a Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Census of Population and Housing 2011 \ <http://statinja.gov.jm/Census/PopCensus/Popcensus2011Index.aspx>
- 18.3b Population projections http://statinja.gov.jm/Demo_SocialStats/PopulationStats.aspx
- 18.3c Ministry of Local Government and Community Development
www.localgovjamaica.gov.jm
- 18.4 Electoral Commission of Jamaica
www.eoj.com.jm
- 18.5 No reference for this section
- 18.6 Association of Local Government Authorities of Jamaica
www.calga.org/algaj
- 18.7 No reference for this section
- 18.8 No reference for this section
- 18.9 Based on figure of JM\$7,517.1 million for total local government expenditure for 2016/17 provided by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (see Table 2) and the total estimated expenditure figure of JM\$60,034 million from page one of the approved estimates of the central government budget 2016/17 <http://mof.gov.jm/budgets/estimates-of-revenue-expenditure/file/1204-estimates-of-revenue-and-expenditure-for-the-year-ending-march-2017.html>
- 18.10 No reference for this section
- 18.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 18.11b Commonwealth Local Government knowledge hub
www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub
- 18.11c UNDP HDR Jamaica country profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/JAM>



Annex 18a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Jamaica

Services	Delivering authority		Remarks
	Central government	Local authorities	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION			
Police	■		
Fire protection	■		
Civil protection	■	■	Civil society supports national and local mechanisms for civil protection
Criminal justice	■		
Civil status register		■	Births, deaths, marriages, deeds and other documents are recorded by the local district registrar
Statistical office	■		
Electoral register	■		
EDUCATION			
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)	■		
Primary	■		Pre-school provision is shared with private organisations
Secondary	■		
Vocational and technical	■		A number of private entities provide college and university education services
Higher education	■		
Adult education	■		
SOCIAL WELFARE			
Family welfare services	■		
Welfare homes (infirmaries)	■		Infirmaries are operated by local authorities via central government grants
Social security	■	■	Local authorities are responsible for poor relief
PUBLIC HEALTH			
Primary care	■		
Hospitals	■		Local authorities are responsible for public health
Health protection	■	■	
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING			
Housing	■	■	
Town planning	■	■	Local authorities are jointly responsible with central government for development control
Regional planning	■		
TRANSPORT			
Roads	■	■	
Transport	■	■	Parish roads are the responsibility of local authorities.
Urban roads	■		Main roads are the responsibility of central government
Urban rail	■		
Ports	■		
Airports	■		
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION			
Water and sanitation	■	■	Local authorities provide communal water to various communities island-wide.
Refuse collection and disposal	■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria		■	Solid waste management centrally managed but funded by local authorities
Slaughter-houses		■	Local authorities are jointly responsible with central government for development control
Environmental protection	■	■	
Consumer protection			
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS			
Theatre and concerts			
Museums and libraries	■		
Parks and open spaces	■	■	Local authorities have responsibility for parks and recreation spaces in communities
Sports and leisure	■		
Religious facilities			
UTILITIES			
Gas services			
District heating	N/A		
Water supply	■	■	Electricity mostly provided by private suppliers
Electricity	■		
ECONOMIC			
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■		
Local economic development/ promotion	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■	Trade licences issued by local authorities
Tourism	■		

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service