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> " Jamaica is already a latecomer in the IT race."
>
> ***—CEO of Jamaican company***

> " Jamaica has tremendous untapped talent in its young people...and their educational and technical programs provide us with a wealth of quality candidates for careers in electronic publishing."
>
> ***—Electronic book publisher, Jamaica***

In the bottom third of the overall Readiness Index with a ranking of fifty-six, Jamaica is on the trailing edge of advanced Networked Readiness globally. Late but undaunted, the country is beginning to address ICT on its national agenda (Ranking in ICT as Government Priority: 22).

Jamaica has set in motion liberalization of its telecommunications sector, currently monopolized by Cable and Wireless, to be completed in 2002. It is hoped that increased competition will drive down the currently high costs of local and international long-distance telephony, as well as Internet provision, all of which are prohibitive for both individuals and businesses (Ranking in Effect of Telecommunications Competition: 49). The city of Kingston, along with the export processing zones, is fitted with a fiber-optic cable backbone, enabling better service quality there than in most other places on the island, which is generally poor (Ranking in Information Infrastructure micro-index: 67). Some ICT-oriented businesses are already using VSAT for international data and voice communications, while rural service is supplied in many cases with fixed wireless voice-only infrastructure.

Education and training of an ICT workforce is one of the highest priorities in both the national and ICT agendas. The Information Technology (INTEC) project, a private-public center for national ICT strategy, established a goal to create 40,000 new jobs by 2003 by developing ICT in industry, and there is a strong effort to increase educational capacity to meet the expected demand[1] (Ranking in Quality of IT Education: 40). The existing educational system provides a strong base from which to extend capabilities, responsible for an 86 percent literate, English-speaking populace.[2] Jamaica 2000, a private-public partnership in education, has established computer labs in 170 of 250 high schools and is expected to have all high schools wired by 2002[3] (Ranking in Internet Access in Schools: 51).

Higher education has taken a step forward with establishment of the Caribbean Institute of Technology in Montego Bay. The Institute offers courses in engineering, computer science, and software design, focused on preparing students to enter the ICT workforce. The University of Technology and the University of the West Indies have also improved their existing technical programs, taking advantage of government surtax relief to import hardware and software for classroom use.

To date, Jamaica's primary successes in commercial use of ICT have been limited to customer service call centers and ICT Training. Seeking to follow the example of Singapore and Malaysia, INTEC would like to leverage the nation's other assets, the existing FDI and manufacturing industry, and move into higher-value ICT production in hardware and software. Hoping to speed up industry growth, Jamaica has removed import tariffs on telecommunications equipment, allowing new companies to build competitive networks faster and more cheaply in all areas of telecommunications. However, a complete strategy to shift industry to using ICT has yet to materialize, and a shortage of local and international bandwidth continues to stifle private-sector ICT growth. Recent turmoil and violence in Jamaica in 2001 have also deterred foreign direct investment (Ranking in Business and Economic Environment micro-index: 46).

With a GDP per capita of US$3,560 in Jamaica, PCs and in-home connectivity will continue to be inaccessible for most Jamaicans. Recognizing this, the Government of Jamaica is sponsoring an initiative through INTEC to bring Internet connectivity to all Jamaicans. Post offices, including those in rural areas, are being networked as community access points, and post office employees are being trained as network administrators and teachers (Ranking in Public Access to the Internet: 66).

# Jamaica

## Key Facts

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 2,576,085 |
| Rural population (% of total population) 1999 | 44.38 % |
| GDP per capita (PPP) | US$3,657 |
| Global Competitiveness Index Ranking, 2001–2002 | 52 |
| UNDP Human Development Index Ranking, 2001 (adjusted to GITR sample) | 54 |
| Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants | 19.86 |
| Telephone faults per 100 main telephone lines | 79.20 |
| Internet hosts per 10,000 inhabitants | 5.71 |
| Personal computers per 100 inhabitants | 4.27 |
| Piracy rate | NA |
| Percent of PCs connected to Internet | 0.33 % |
| Internet users per host | 163.49 |
| Internet users per 100 inhabitants | 2.34 |
| Cell phone subscribers per 100 inhabitants | 14.24 |
| Average monthly cost for 20 hours of Internet access | US$23.74 |

| | RANK |
|---|---|
| **Networked Readiness Index** | **56** |
| **Network Use component index** | **64** |
| **Enabling Factors component index** | **50** |
| **Network Access** | **61** |
| Information Infrastructure | 67 |
| Hardware, Software, and Support | 55 |
| **Network Policy** | **45** |
| Business and Economic Environment | 46 |
| ICT Policy | 44 |
| **Networked Society** | **50** |
| Networked Learning | 50 |
| ICT Opportunities | 56 |
| Social Capital | 43 |
| **Networked Economy** | **48** |
| e-Commerce | 61 |
| e-Government | 47 |
| General Infrastructure | 37 |