



**Capital:** Havana  
**Languages:** Spanish  
**Religion:** mostly Roman Catholic  
**Population:** 11,477,459  
**Refugees:** 7549  
**Internally Displaced Person (IDPs):** 0

Cuba is an island nation in the Caribbean whose neighbors include the United States, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas. It is the most populous country in the Caribbean with

eleven million people and has a terrain of rolling plains, rugged hills and some mountains.

For centuries Cuba was a possession of Spain until independence was achieved at the beginning of the twentieth century. Political instability marked most of Cuba's history until 1959 when a revolution led by Fidel Castro installed a Communist regime that has endured to the present day. Modeled after the former Soviet Union's style of Communist government, political and social oppression was common place. The Cuban population has suffered unjust imprisonment, torture and numerous other forms of human rights violations.

Cuban immigrants have a long history of arriving in the United States. A huge influx of refugees began after the Communist takeover in the early 1960's. Subsequent waves of people fleeing Cuban oppression have occurred in the last several decades and arrivals continue to be resettled.

Education is emphasized in Cuban society and school attendance is mandatory. Cuba boasts a literacy rate of 99.8%. Cuban students entering the United States public school system will have a distinct advantage over other refugee populations because of their education requirements and readily available access to schools and supplies. Since they have experience in a formalized school setting, attention to ESL will be the main priority as well as other elements of acculturation.