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What Haitians want from the next phase of UN and international support

Insights and policy lessons from
a May 2026 nationwide survey
of 1,332 Haitian adults

Christopher Sabatini



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Summary

- If security reform and post-conflict reconstruction of Haitian society are to be ‘Haitian-led’, as is widely (and rightly) advocated, there is a need to determine what Haitians themselves expect of the process, and where their priorities and red lines lie. This paper is an attempt to answer those questions.
- It presents the results of an in-person, nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults, conducted by Q-Q Research Consultants on behalf of Chatham House in May 2026. Based on the survey’s findings, the author proposes a set of actions for the Haitian interim government and its international partners.
- The survey reveals that a narrow majority of Haitians (50.7 per cent) feel their security has improved. At the same time, Haitians are looking to needs in other domains – education, healthcare, elections, formal-sector job creation – to rebuild security in their communities and ensure government accountability. Given slim support for the GSF and Haitians’ recognition of other needs in parallel to security, there is a narrow window of opportunity for the Haitian government and international donors to respond to Haitians’ nuanced policy demands.
- A slight plurality of Haitians (49.5 per cent) supports the presence of the multinational, UN Security Council-approved Gang Suppression Force (GSF). But a majority of respondents (54.2 per cent) are sceptical that the GSF can accomplish its mission of restoring on-the-ground security and reducing gang violence.
- Gang demobilization presents a central dilemma for policymakers. Almost two-thirds of Haitians (64.5 per cent) want gang leaders and gang members to face prison. An even greater share (66.9 per cent) oppose amnesty for gang members (the survey distinguished between leaders and rank-and-file members), even though half of gang members in Haiti are believed to be under the age of 18.
- The lack of popular support among Haitians for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) will complicate efforts to deal with gangs. DDR could strain Haiti’s social fabric, given that the survey indicates vehement public opposition to any measures that might be perceived as offering impunity to the violent criminals responsible for Haiti’s collapse in law and order.
- While 81.3 per cent of Haitians identify security as a priority, other social policies rank nearly as highly. Almost 70 per cent of respondents cite improving the education system as one of the top three priorities for building security in their communities, while 67.4 per cent feel the same way for healthcare.
- Haitians have high expectations that elections need to be held, and most respondents plan to vote. Almost 90 per cent of Haitians believe elections are important to determining the country’s future. But the mechanics of organizing credible, inclusive elections still need work: while 88.8 per cent of adult respondents have the biometric ID card needed to vote, the share is much lower among young people: 41.4 per cent of Haitians aged 18–29 lack voting credentials.

- On the basis of the survey, as well as the author’s own research and consultations with Haitian and international stakeholders, this paper makes the following policy recommendations:
 - **Haitians’ support for bringing gang leaders to justice requires immediate steps to establish independent, efficient courts and humane, safe prisons.** In the case of gang members under the age of 18, the pursuit of a potentially punitive judicial process makes it essential that international norms on the treatment of under-age suspects/criminals are observed, and that carefully calibrated reintegration protocols are followed.
 - **Determining the age of accountability for perpetrators of violent crimes should be a first-order priority, even as security operations are unfolding.** Determining the extent to which rank-and-file gang members – many of them minors – can or should bear criminal responsibility for their involvement in Haiti’s crisis will be critical. There is an accompanying need for public education on the meaning and goals of DDR, to secure a sceptical public’s buy-in for engagement with former combatants. Development of a community support network for the reintegration of gang members should involve broader community social service delivery and the creation of jobs in the formal economy.
 - Declining support globally for development assistance, evidenced among other factors by cuts in foreign aid budgets, creates practical challenges for organizing and funding Haitian security reform and post-conflict reconstruction. To address this, **a coalition of GSF supporters/contributors, bilateral donors, multilateral development banks, businesses, and private philanthropists and philanthropic organizations will need to coordinate on a focused, multidimensional social, development and security programme.**
 - **A coalition of governments and other stakeholders will need to call for and organize a long-overdue donors’ conference before 2027.** This should occur in parallel with the full implementation of the security operations of the GSF and UN missions in Haiti, as well as the process to renew the GSF’s mandate in 2026.
 - **The international community needs to respond to Haitians’ overwhelming demand that elections be held in 2026 or 2027.** The interim government recently announced that the first round of presidential elections will take place on 13 December 2026. Convening this first round of voting (even if postponement is ultimately necessary) will require international support and a detailed plan for rebuilding Haiti’s electoral infrastructure.
 - More broadly, **Haiti and its international partners will need to determine the order in which presidential, parliamentary, departmental and local elections are to be held.** They must ensure security for voters and candidates, and create an environment in which election monitors operate freely and guarantees are available to ensure the transparency and credibility of the voting process and results.

Introduction

It has become almost rote for international diplomats to say that the solution to the Haitian crisis should be ‘Haitian-led.’ But which Haitians do they mean? And what do citizens actually want? There is no elected government, the party system is devastated, the interim government is distrusted and civil society remains weak. Moreover, until the mid-2026 survey presented in this paper, there had been no publicly released, nationwide, in-person opinion polling to determine Haitian citizens’ interests and demands since 2023.

Put another way, for too long discussions intended to shape the stabilization and reconstruction agenda have had to rely on guesswork when it comes to anticipating popular demand for a path forward to resolve the country’s humanitarian, security and political crisis. Oftentimes, that discussion has been mediated via a discredited political class. This research paper aims to fill this gap in the public policy debate. In doing so, it seeks in part to inform deliberations in the run-up to the 30 September 2026 UN Security Council (UNSC) vote on a resolution to renew the mandate of the Gang Suppression Force (GSF), and to feed into wider planning of development assistance and election preparations.

A survey of the sort presented here is not intended to replace formal, institutionalized channels of political participation and citizen representation. Delivering accountability still requires the holding of elections (a key demand of the Haitians surveyed in this study). It requires the interim Haitian authorities and their international interlocutors to consult with communities and civil society, and to develop channels for formal communication and representation that allow for structured political and civic participation.

About the survey

In May 2026 Chatham House and Q-Q Research Consultants, a Florida-based advisory firm, paired with Q-Q’s local partner in Haiti to conduct a national, in-person survey of 1,332 adult Haitians.¹ The survey covered the following topics: Haitians’ perceptions of security; their approval/disapproval of, and expectations for, the GSF; their opinions on the justice system’s potential treatment of gang leaders and gang members; their priorities for social policy and economic growth; their faith in Haiti’s political class; and their support for (and intention of participating in) future elections.

¹ The 2026 Haiti National Opinion Poll was conducted by Q-Q Research Consultants (Q-QRC) on behalf of Chatham House. The poll, collaboratively developed by Q-QRC and Chatham House, aimed to generate reliable and representative data on public perceptions of key social, political, economic and governance issues affecting Haiti. The survey was administered across the country’s 10 departments in Haitian Creole using a computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) method. Data were collected from 1,332 eligible adult respondents (18 years of age or older), who were selected through standardized household and in-the-field interview procedures designed to promote consistency and representativeness. Fieldwork was conducted between 5 May and 21 May 2026, following training, pilot testing and final operational validation by the Q-QRC management team, which included staff from both Q-QRC’s main office in Florida and its Haiti office. Q-QRC’s field team, comprised of 44 Haitian research professionals, conducted data collection across the country in the selected survey district enumeration areas (SDEs) under a centralized coordination and supervision structure.

The survey is intended to provide a national, statistically sound snapshot (with a confidence interval of 95 per cent) to feed into discussions among Haitians and with the international community.²

The results provide an indication of Haitians' opinions and priorities, and their policy preferences within different areas of possible reform. The conclusions and recommendations draw from those responses, and are intended to reflect the expectations and experiences of the public.

While there are many different aspects and nuances to the survey results, a broad policy-specific picture emerges. Haitians recognize the improvements that have occurred in their security recently, and are cautiously in favour of international security intervention, policy support and development assistance.

Haitians want credible, safe elections to take place in 2026 or 2027 so that the country's political class can be replaced with more accountable and civic-minded leaders.

The survey indicates that Haitians expect gang leaders and foot soldiers to be brought to justice (rather than to receive amnesty for their crimes under some kind of political bargain). Haitians demand tangible improvements in public services. They also want credible, safe elections to take place in 2026 or 2027 so that the country's political class can be replaced with more accountable and civic-minded leaders.

There is a narrow window of opportunity in which to act – narrow for the international community, the Haitian government, and civil and political society. Maintaining or increasing the currently slim margin of popular approval for the multilateral mission in Haiti and for future efforts to address the country's multifaceted crisis will require visible improvements in security, improved delivery of public services, preparations for and the holding of credible elections, and the implementation of consensus-focused policies to ensure accountability, justice, job growth, and the reintegration into society of lower-level gang members.

Background

Haiti faces cascading challenges which present conflicting priorities for policymakers. With criminal gangs controlling approximately 90 per cent of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and with more than 1.5 million people displaced by violence, security is the number one priority for Haitians.³ Even though survey respondents feel that security has improved, the institutional, economic

² More details on how the sample was drawn, estimates of the sample's distribution compared to the Haitian national population, the questionnaire, and the weightings of the results to correct for any perceived bias (based on displacement and fieldwork suspended in gang-controlled territories) can be found at Q-Q Research Consultants (2026), *2026 Haiti National Opinion Poll: Methodology White Paper*, https://drive.google.com/file/d/14NkJAxFbGKNDGzeqccFy8_2UZlmBcPZ/view.

³ Dickinson, D. (2026), 'Glimmer of hope' in Haiti amid shifting gang frontlines', UN News, 16 March 2026, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167139>.

and emotional scars of the country's recent violent history remain. Modest (and still fragile) security improvements do not alter the demands of a majority of Haitians for the restoration of justice, the introduction of social programmes, and legal economic opportunities.

The challenges to stability and economic progress span multiple policy domains: rebuilding the state security apparatus alongside the government's capacity to provide basic public goods; rebuilding infrastructure; reviving the economy and creating formal-sector jobs; convening free, safe and sustainable elections (Haiti has gone more than three years without having any elected members at any level of government);⁴ determining the criminal accountability of gang leaders and select gang members, and bringing perpetrators of violent and other crimes to justice; organizing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of designated gang members; and restoring communities and social bonds.

Such a complicated menu of urgent, interlocking needs requires international support and partnership with Haitians and the interim Haitian government. It requires coordinated, targeted funding from the international community of bilateral and multilateral donors, private philanthropists/philanthropic organizations, and business. Even if the GSF and the Haitian National Police (HNP) roll back gangs' grip on much of Haiti and re-establish state control over contested areas, those gains will be short-lived without job creation, economic growth, the restoration of social services and – when the population is ready and the institutional mechanisms are in place – a careful, measured DDR process for a select subset of lower-level gang members (this latter process needs to be accompanied by safeguards to protect the international rights of children recruited by the gangs).

Key findings and implications

Improving security: short-term challenges, long-term issues and the role of the international community

A majority of Haitians (50.7 per cent) believe their security situation is 'better' or 'much better' (see Figure 1). This perception in part likely reflects the arrival of the first wave of GSF personnel in April 2026 – replacing the discredited former Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission.

However, other contextual factors may also have shaped public opinion. Most notably, from December 2025 to February 2026 the Haitian National Police (HNP) intensified its own attacks on gangs and gang leaders, in preparation for the phased deployment of the full set of GSF forces. The HNP's operations – supported by the army and international forces, according to the UN – killed a reported 1,343 gang members,⁵ disrupted gang alliances and fractured one of the main gang coalitions,

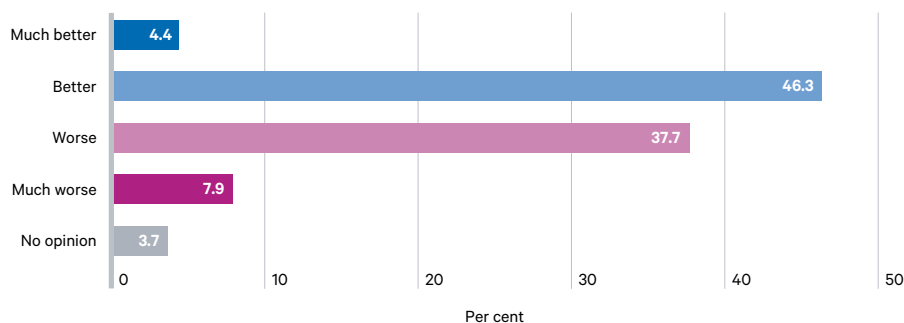
⁴ Taylor, L. (2023), 'Haiti left with no elected government officials as it spirals towards anarchy', *Guardian*, 10 January 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/10/haiti-no-elected-officials-anarchy-failed-state>.

⁵ United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (2026), 'Report of the Secretary-General', S/2026/325, 14 April 2026, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/report/united-nations-integrated-office-in-haiti-report-of-the-secretary-general/8788fc76-904c-49e0-abe6-6bab89bcf2de.pdf>.

Viv Ansanm. These blows to criminal organizations, along with the ‘anticipation effect’ created by the arrival of an advance team of GSF soldiers from Chad, may have contributed to survey respondents’ positive perceptions of security.

Figure 1. Haitians already feel that their security is improving

Question: Would you say safety in your community is improving?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

That sense of security varies, however, and the positive aggregate national perception is not universally replicated at the regional level. Citizens in Haiti’s south – one of the regions hardest hit by gang control and violence – are more likely to report feeling less safe than they did before. Compared to a national aggregate figure of 45.6 per cent of respondents who feel security has deteriorated, no less than 67.7 per cent of residents in the south of the country believe they are less secure now.⁶ (The survey shows no large differences regarding perceptions of security in the community by gender.)

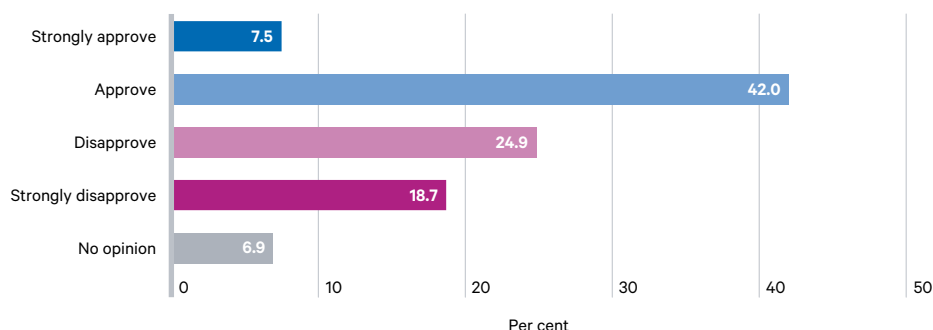
Haitian public opinion towards the GSF is modestly positive. There is a plurality of support (49.5 per cent) for the GSF (see Figure 2), although the difference between this share and the share of respondents who disapprove of the GSF (43.6 per cent) is within the 95 per cent confidence interval.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, people in regions that have suffered the highest levels of violence are more supportive of the GSF’s presence in the country. Nearly 68 per cent of respondents from the south of Haiti approve or strongly approve of the UN/multinational security force. Age-related differentials are also noteworthy: at a national level, when the survey results are disaggregated by age, young people between the ages of 18 and 29 show the most support for the GSF, with 58.4 per cent reporting that they ‘approve’ or ‘strongly approve’ of it.

⁶ Samples were drawn from three broad regions: the North, which includes the North, Northeast and Northwest departments; the Centre, which includes the Artibonite, Centre and West departments; and the South, which includes the Grand Anse, Nippes, Southeast and South departments.

Figure 2. Haitians are split in their approval of the GSF, with citizens in areas affected by the violence more supportive

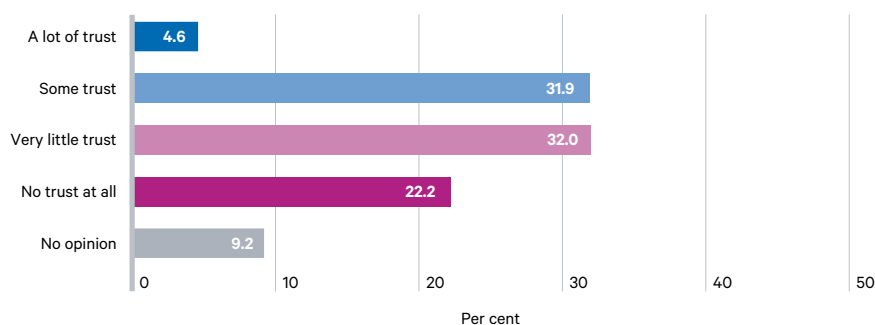
Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the Gang Suppression Force?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Figure 3. Popular confidence in whether the GSF can accomplish its goals is less clear

Question: What is your level of trust that the Gang Suppression Force will accomplish its mission?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Welcoming the presence of the GSF in Haiti is not the same as believing the UN-mandated force will solve the country's security crisis, however. Only a minority of Haitians – 36.5 per cent – have 'some trust' or 'a lot of trust' that the GSF will fulfil its mission (see Figure 3).

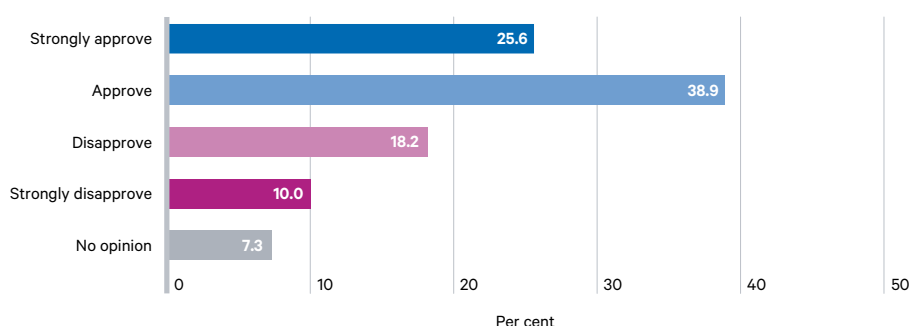
Haitian demands for public policy: beyond hard security

Security remains, by a large margin, the number one priority for Haitians. In the survey, 81.3 per cent of respondents cite security as one of their top three priorities, with 48.3 per cent listing it as their number one. The top three security priorities cited by respondents are dismantling armed groups, protecting the population, and reforming the police and state security apparatus. These reforms will be complicated, however, and must be organized to a clear timeline.⁷

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the steps and priorities for institutional sector reform, please see Maggi, R., Sabatini, C. and Farsari, A. (2026), *A roadmap for security and governance reform in Haiti: How to address multilateral breakdown and state collapse*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2026/01/roadmap-security-and-governance-reform-haiti>.

Issues beyond hard security are important, too. When asked to select their priorities for improving community security from a list of seven options, respondents ranked education (69.1 per cent) and healthcare (67.4 per cent) in the top three.

Figure 4. Haitians want to see gang leaders and members brought to justice
Question: Do you approve or disapprove of enforcing prison time for gang leaders and members?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

One of the most striking findings of the survey is the desire that gang leaders and gang members responsible for the violence and collapse of law and order in Haiti face justice. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.5 per cent) support prison time for gang leaders and members (Figure 4). An unsurprising corollary of this is that very little support exists for potential political deals that could allow gang leaders and their key lieutenants to reintegrate after a negotiated peace. On the idea of granting amnesty to armed group members, 66.9 per cent of respondents are not in favour (see Figure 5). Moreover, when asked, 61 per cent of Haitians either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with permitting gang leaders and members to engage in a process of contrition and reintegration – even though exactly this sort of process has often formed the keystone for the negotiation of peace agreements (both successful and failed) in other countries, such as Colombia.⁸

Respondents are hostile, above all, to the idea that a peace settlement or elite bargain could enable gang members to have a seat at the table politically. There is broad rejection of the idea of government representation for gang leaders and members: 83.4 per cent of Haitians either ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with this as an option. In addition, 73.6 per cent of respondents reject the idea of offering gang leaders or members money to lay down weapons and disband.

Yet in addition to Haitians opposing gang leaders being politically rewarded for their brutal *de facto* control over large parts of the country, there is notable resistance even to the integration of gangs’ rank-and-file ‘foot soldiers’ into civilian life. This is despite the fact that around 50 per cent of this cohort are estimated to

⁸ Farsari, A. and Sabatini, C. (2026), ‘To Fix Haiti, Look to Colombia’, *Foreign Policy*, 5 June 2026, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/06/05/fix-haiti-look-to-colombia>.

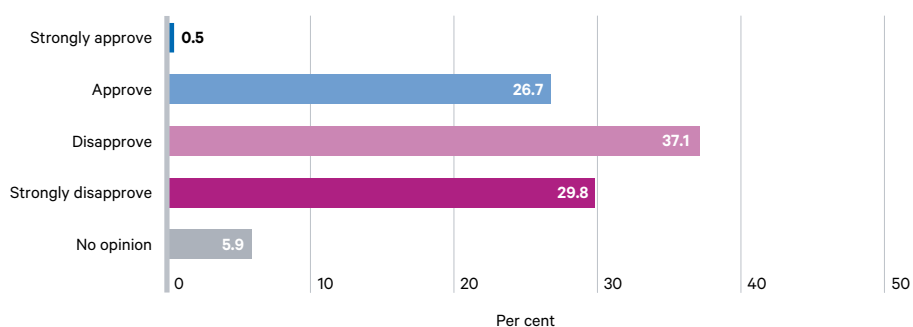
be children.⁹ The age of gang members did not feature in the survey questions; nonetheless, it is well known that children participate in gangs, and respondents would certainly have been aware of this fact.

Respondents are hostile, above all, to the idea that a peace settlement or elite bargain could enable gang members to have a seat at the table politically.

The widespread reported recruitment of minors by gangs presents one of the key transitional justice challenges for policymakers, given the concerns and complexities the issue raises in terms of ensuring the treatment of juvenile criminal suspects complies with international law. The 2007 Paris Principles state that children should be treated ‘primarily as victims of offences against international law’ and that ‘[w]herever possible, alternatives to judicial proceedings must be sought, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards for juvenile justice’.¹⁰ This underscores the need for a carefully calibrated process of consultation and public education around DDR, to ensure that citizens not only understand the critical distinction between minors and adults when it comes to criminal justice, but also that measures to reintegrate rather than punish child gang members are not met with undue community opposition. All this implies a need to create a separate process for juveniles, with its own provisions and guidance around issues of accountability, and with clearly defined protocols for the judicial processing of under-age gang members.

Figure 5. Haitians are not supportive of amnesty for gang members

Question: Do you approve of offering amnesty for armed group members?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Haitians’ ambivalence towards reintegration indicates the need to foster better public understanding of distinctions between ‘amnesty’ and DDR; the latter could and should include some formal process for providing evaluation, education and

⁹ Dickinson (2026), ‘Glimmer of hope’ in Haiti amid shifting gang frontlines’.

¹⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2007), ‘The Paris Principles: Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups’, February 2007, https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/document_new/file_list/paris-principles-2007-eng.pdf.

psychosocial support to gang members who wish to be reintegrated into society, as well as a mechanism for working with communities to ensure reintegration is accepted by local residents.

The mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) includes support for designing DDR methods. These will need to take into account international law, the Paris Principles, and the need for gang-member reintegration to be peaceful, conducive to stability, and responsive to citizens' perceptions and concerns. Lessons from other countries, including in Latin America, Central America and Africa, can potentially be adapted to the Haitian context, and can shed light on the benefits and potential pitfalls of different approaches to DDR.¹¹

Despite suspicion of the political and ethical compromises that can accompany DDR, a large majority of Haitians nonetheless believe that it is important to create jobs for gang members in the formal economy. Just under 60 per cent of respondents 'approve' or 'approve strongly' of the idea of creating formal, legal employment opportunities for former gang members.

These attitudes give hope to the idea that a viable path exists for the social reintegration of gang members who have been caught up in the country's security crisis, especially given that rank-and-file members have often been implicated in criminal activity as a result of indiscriminate, violent recruitment by gangs. The findings also underline popular recognition of the fact that economic development is essential for Haiti's broader security.

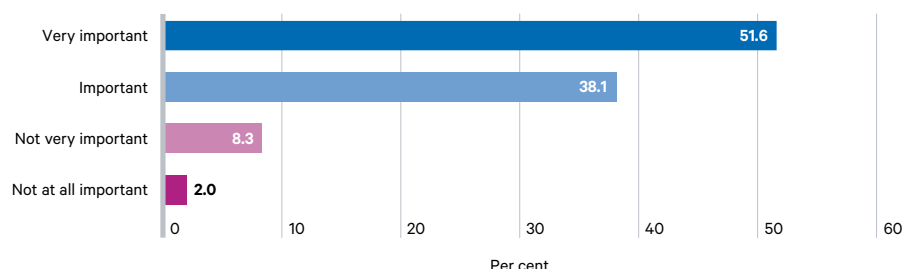
Haitians' attitudes towards elections, voting and their political class

There has not been an election in Haiti for 10 years, and no elected officials have occupied any government position – from local to national – for three years. The international community has pressed for an electoral timetable, despite concerns over security, institutional capacity and political fragmentation – as well as the risk that holding elections too soon could open the way for gang leaders, whether directly (through running their own gang-linked candidates) or indirectly (through coercion or bribery of candidates), to gain government representation. At the same time, Haitians are overwhelmingly supportive of elections and want them soon. The hurdles and risks, though, remain.

¹¹ See, for example, Arnould, V. et al. (2024), 'Pursuing an Integrated Approach to TJ and DDR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', 26 November 2024, Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, <https://egmontinstitute.be/pursuing-an-integrated-approach-to-tj-and-ddr-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>; Lessons Learned Branch, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) (2017), *SOLLIMS Report: Lessons on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)*, [https://nllp.jallc.nato.int/IKS/Sharing%20Public/SOLLIMS_LessonReport_DDR_\(Dec-2017\).pdf](https://nllp.jallc.nato.int/IKS/Sharing%20Public/SOLLIMS_LessonReport_DDR_(Dec-2017).pdf); and Human Rights Watch (2005), 'Problems in the Disarmament Programs in Sierra Leone and Liberia [1998-2005]', chapter in report on West Africa, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/westafrica0405/7.htm>.

Figure 6. After years of unelected government, Haitians believe elections are important

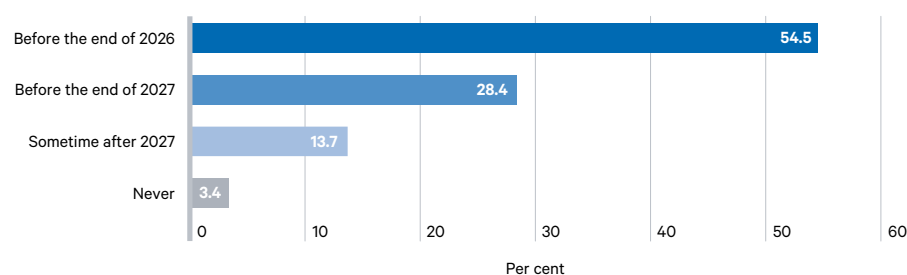
Question: How important would you say elections are to determining Haiti's future?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Figure 7. A majority of Haitians support holding elections before the end of 2026

Question: When do you believe elections should be held in Haiti?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

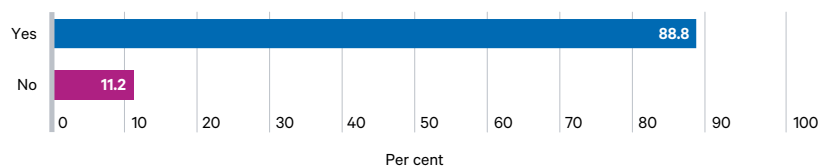
With 82.9 per cent of respondents preferring elections to be held in 2026 or 2027 (see Figure 7), the recent announcement of 13 December 2026 as the date for the first round of the next presidential election is a welcome step. But it may be difficult to accomplish all the tasks required to hold this first round of voting by then.

Although most Haitians have the current documentation needed to vote, there are important generational differences. After years of the country not holding elections, those who lack voter ID largely consist of young people between the ages of 18 and 29. While 88.8 per cent of respondents hold National Identification Office (ONI) cards (Figure 8), just 41.4 per cent of people in the critical 18–29 age segment have them.

Figure 8. Most Haitians already have voter cards, except young people

Question: To vote, you will need your biometric ID card (ONI card).

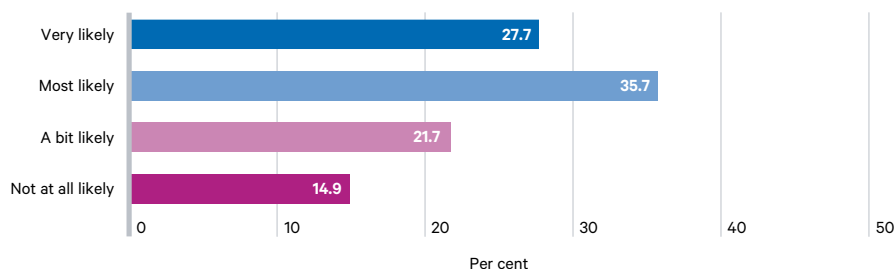
Do you have your ONI card?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Figure 9. A large majority of Haitians claim they will vote in the elections

Question: What is the likelihood that you will vote in our next election?

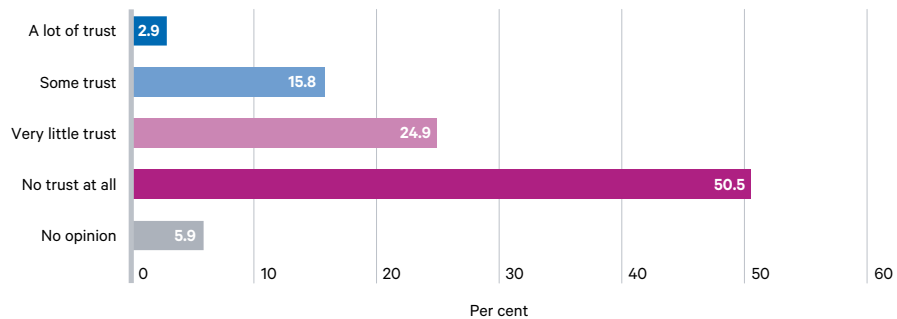


Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

Figure 9 suggests that voter turnout could be high, as 85.1 per cent of respondents describe themselves as ‘a bit likely’, ‘most likely’ or ‘very likely’ to vote. That said, given the low levels of turnout in the past, this combined share is likely to be a ceiling at best; in reality, turnout could be considerably lower, especially if security remains an issue, open political and personal feuds continue among political leaders, and party fragmentation persists. A determining factor could be the extent to which credible measures are in place to ensure the integrity of elections. When asked in an open-ended question what would give them confidence in the democratic process and encourage their participation in potential future elections, a majority of respondents cited the presence of objective, honest election monitors as a key consideration (although responses to this question did not specify whether monitors should be domestic or international).

Figure 10. Trust in Haiti's current political class is low

Question: What is your level of trust that the current Haitian political class is working in Haiti's best interests?



Source: Chatham House/Q-Q Research Consultants nationwide survey of 1,332 Haitian adults conducted in May 2026.

One area that seems largely to unite popular opinion is disgust with many of the politicians perceived as self-interested and as having contributed, or at least as having failed to tackle, Haiti's multidimensional crisis. More than 75 per cent of respondents lack faith to one degree or another in their politicians – either professing to having 'very little trust' or 'no trust at all' in the country's political class (see Figure 10). Only 2.9 per cent have 'a lot of trust' in politicians. Trust varies by age, with young people even more sceptical than the rest of the population: 81.5 per cent of this cohort say they lack confidence in the political class.

This lack of faith is an indication of the need for broader electoral reform. It also serves as warning of potential flashpoints of unrest during the preparations for, holding of and aftermath of future elections.

Conclusion and recommendations

Haitians are seeing advances in security and cautiously support the presence of the UN-backed GSF in their country, but in both cases these views dominate by only a slim margin. Factors unrelated to the phased arrival and anticipated performance of the GSF may explain some of the uptick in confidence in the security situation. Haitians who live in gang-controlled territory support the GSF by larger margins than those who live in relatively gang-free areas. Although opinion on the GSF is mixed (see Figure 2), there are clear pockets of support for international intervention among those most affected by the violence, as well as qualified pockets of optimism that DDR efforts will be worthwhile.

Age differences matter when assessing policy options for Haiti. As mentioned, young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 tend to support the GSF in higher numbers. Young adults, along with the communities more seriously affected by the violence, therefore represent key constituencies for the UN and for international efforts to restore peace and justice. Ensuring that young people's voices are heard is critical to internationally supported stabilization, DDR and security/economic reform.

Haitians' top priority remains security, but other development issues (education, healthcare and jobs) are still deemed to be key to ensuring security and safety in local communities. This implies that, in parallel to hard security interventions, GSF operations and other international assistance will require a new focus on development, economic growth and social policies. Such programmes are likely to have a better chance of success once gang-held territories are retaken and displaced citizens are able to return to their homes. But all of this will require an international focus and a coordinated approach to security, to the eradication of gangs and crime from neighbourhoods, and to community assistance.

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Elections must take place as soon as logistically, institutionally and politically possible. Haitians indicate in the survey that their trust in future elections will hinge in large part on the presence of honest, independent monitors. This is particularly important given Haitians' overwhelming distrust of the current political class. Preparation for elections should focus, in particular, on ensuring voters between the ages of 18 and 29 can register to vote and have access to Haiti's biometric identification system. This is important not just to ensure their participation in any upcoming elections, but also to integrate a new generation into the practice of democracy and to cultivate a sense that young people are served by it.

Recommendations

- Haitians' overwhelming support for administering justice to gang leaders requires immediate steps to establish independent, efficient courts and humane, safe prisons.
- Determining accountability for gang-related crimes and establishing the age of accountability for gang members, especially child members, should be a first-order priority for policymakers, even as security operations are unfolding. This should be accompanied by public education on the meaning and goals of gang-targeted judicial processes and DDR, by the development of a community support network for gang members undergoing DDR, and by a coordinated effort – regulated by international norms – to ensure child gang members are treated fairly and given an opportunity to reintegrate into society.
- Declining support globally for development assistance means that the decades-long practice of government development agencies investing large amounts of their own funds and mobilizing other donors to coordinate in a broad development programme no longer applies. Neither the previous budgets nor the appetite for leadership on development exist, for now. Today, it is up to the coalition of GSF supporters, bilateral donors, multilateral

development banks and private philanthropists/philanthropic organizations to coordinate a focused, multidimensional funding approach to meeting the social and development policy demands of Haitians. This should occur in parallel to the renewal and full implementation of the security operations of the GSF and BINUH missions in Haiti.

- A donors' conference is urgently needed to mobilize international support for Haiti's development and the restoration of basic public goods. External policy advice and financing are needed, in particular, to help shore up the rule of law, restore the education and healthcare systems, and develop the institutional environment and capabilities necessary to attract foreign investment.
- Following the shuttering of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), there is a question as to who can lead such an initiative. However, the entrepreneurial efforts and political commitments of the Canadian government, the Trump administration and the UN system ensured the approval of the GSF by the UNSC last year. A similar undertaking needs to be mounted now both to renew the GSF's mandate on 30 September 2026 and to mobilize donors in partnerships with the Haitian government for the next stage of Haiti's recovery.
- The international community needs to respond to Haitians' overwhelming demand for elections in 2026 or 2027. The holding of elections – whether presidential, parliamentary, departmental or local – will require international support and a detailed plan to rebuild electoral infrastructure, determine the sequencing of different types of elections, organize registration of voters and the allocation of biometric ID cards, and provide monitors and guarantees to ensure the transparency and credibility of the results. That comprehensive effort should start now.
- Electoral support will require a detailed and realistic timeline, with specific recommendations for tackling the risk of unrest in potential trouble spots where voters may face intimidation or violence, or where the results may be susceptible to rigging or generate social unrest. There will be stages in the preparation and organization of elections – negotiations over the sequencing of steps, over party primaries, over the independence and authority of Haiti's electoral commission, and around the conduct of election campaigns – that will become contentious. In those cases, the international community should identify potential flashpoints and be prepared to address them via mediation to maintain the process that will finally allow Haitians to select a functioning government and leaders after years of trauma.
- This new phase in Haiti's international relations will require the interim government to cooperate with a range of external partners. It is crucial that policies developed externally, or by the Haitian interim authorities in coordination with international/multilateral actors, reflect understanding of and respect for Haitians' concerns and demands.
- The institutional means, beyond a public opinion survey, through which Haitians can express their interests and concerns need to be developed and secured. Free and fair elections should be held as soon as is practicable, accompanied by efforts to establish a credible and accountable political class. Haitians need to see democracy in action.

About the author

Dr Christopher Sabatini is the director of the Latin America Programme at Chatham House. He was formerly a lecturer in the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University, and a lecturer of practice at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was also the founder and editor-in-chief (2006–15) of *Americas Quarterly*.

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Cover image: Haitians register to vote in Port-au-Prince, 31 July 2026.

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**The Royal Institute of International Affairs
Chatham House**

10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE

T +44 (0)20 7957 5700

contact@chathamhouse.org | chathamhouse.org

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