

The Bahamas

Geography

Location: Caribbean, chain of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Florida.

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean - see filename:

Area:

total area: 13,940 sq km.

land area: 10,070 sq km.

Land boundaries: 0 km.

Coastline: 3,542 km.

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation.

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm.

territorial sea: 3 nm.

International disputes: none

Climate: tropical marine; moderated by warm waters of Gulf Stream.

Terrain: long, flat coral formations with some low rounded hills.

Natural resources: salt, aragonite, timber.

Land use:

arable land: 1%.

permanent crops: 0%.

meadows and pastures: 0%.

forest and woodland: 32%.

other: 67%.

Environment:

current issues: coral reef decay.

natural hazards: hurricanes and other tropical storms that cause extensive flood and wind damage.

international agreements: party to - Biodiversity, Climate Change, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution.

Note: strategic location adjacent to US and Cuba; extensive island chain.

People

Population: 256,616 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 28% (female 35,924; male 36,504).

15-64 years: 66% (female 87,868; male 82,780).

65 years and over: 6% (female 8,247; male 5,293).

Population growth rate: 1.09%

Birth rate: 19.23 births/1,000 population (est.)

Death rate: 5.79 deaths/1,000 population (est.)

Net migration rate: -2.56 migrant(s)/1,000 population (est.)

Infant mortality rate: 24.3 deaths/1,000 live births (est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 72.12 years.

male: 67.37 years.

female: 76.97 years.

Total fertility rate: 2.01 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Bahamian(s).

adjective: Bahamian.

Ethnic divisions: black 85%, white 15%.

Religions: Baptist 32%, Anglican 20%, Roman Catholic 19%,
Methodist 6%, Church of God 6%, other Protestant 12%, none or
unknown 3%, other 2%.

Languages: English, Creole (among Haitian immigrants).

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write but definition of literary
not available (1963 est.).

total population: 90%.

male: 90%.

female: 89%.

Names:

conventional long form: Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

conventional short form: The Bahamas.

Capital: Nassau

Administrative divisions: 21 districts; Acklins and Crooked Islands, Bimini, Cat Island, Exuma, Freeport, Fresh Creek, Governor's Harbour, Green Turtle Cay, Harbour Island, High Rock, Inagua, Kemps Bay, Long Island, Marsh Harbour, Mayaguana, New Providence, Nicholls Town and Berry Islands, Ragged Island, Rock Sound, Sandy Point, San Salvador and Rum Cay.

Independence: 10 July 1973 (from UK).

National holiday: National Day, 10 July.

Constitution: 10 July 1973.

Legal system: based on English common law.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

Flag: three equal horizontal bands of aquamarine (top), gold, and aquamarine with a black equilateral triangle based on the hoist side

Economy

Overview: The Bahamas is a stable, developing nation whose economy is based primarily on tourism and offshore banking. Tourism alone provides about 50% of GDP and directly or indirectly employs about 50,000 people or 40% of the local work force. The economy has slackened in recent years, as the annual increase in the number of tourists slowed. Nonetheless, per capita GDP is one of the highest in the region.

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km.

Highways:

total: 2,400 km.

paved: 1,350 km.

unpaved: gravel 1,050 km.

Ports: Freeport, Matthew Town, Nassau.

Defence Forces

Branches: Royal Bahamas Defense Force (Coast Guard only),
Royal Bahamas Police Force.