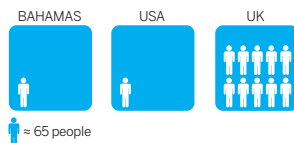




## population per sq mile



# The Bahamas Today

## Economic Ups & Downs

The Bahamas' tourism-based economy took a hard hit with the global recession of 2009. The slowdown continued in 2010, with hotels closing and construction projects halting. Grand Bahama, which had still been recovering from the hurricanes of 2004, was especially wounded. In Nassau, the crisis has not stopped the \$2.6 billion Baha Mar project, however, which aims to turn Cable Beach into an Atlantis-style mega-resort. Despite controversies over the use of Chinese workers, Baha Mar was slated to break ground in early 2011.

The offshore banking industry, another economic mainstay, has slowed down too following government cleanups in the early 2000s.

## The Prime Minister & the Blonde

In the 2007 election, Bahamians ousted the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP; a populist leftist party), who had ruled since their landslide victory in 2002. Why the change of heart? Shortly before the election, Prime Minister Perry Christie came under fire for allegedly fast-tracking the residency visa of the late Playboy bunny Anna Nicole Smith. Smith had been hiding out in the Bahamas to avoid paternity testing of her infant daughter. Immigration Minister Shane Gibson, who approved the permit, was forced to resign after pictures surfaced of him and Smith locked in a romantic embrace.

The new Prime Minister, Hubert Ingraham, of the Free National Movement party (FNM; which is moderately conservative), was also an old Prime Minister – he had previously governed from 1992 to 2002.

» Population: 310,400 (2010)

» GDP: \$8.9 billion

» GDP per capita \$28,600

» Unemployment: 7.6%

## Etiquette

- » Greet everyone you see – bus drivers, pedestrians, clerks – with 'hello' or 'good afternoon'
- » Make eye contact; looking away is considered rude
- » Keep swimwear on the beach; Bahamians are generally modest (unless going out dancing!)

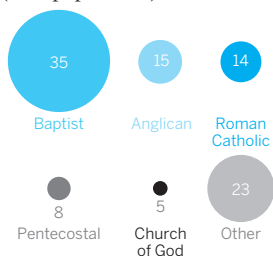
- » Use honorifics – Mr, Mrs, Professor – until a first name is explicitly offered
- » Arrive on time when invited to dinner or a party, but don't be surprised if Bahamians keep 'Bahamian time'

## Top Books

- » *Wind from the Carolinas*, Robert Wilder; historical fiction
- » *Bahamas: In a White Coming On*, Dennis Ryan; poetry
- » *The Story of the Bahamas*, Paul Albury; history
- » *Bush Medicine in the Bahamas*, Leslie Higgs

## belief systems

(% of population)



## if The Bahamas were 100 people



85 would be black  
12 would be white  
3 would be Asian or Hispanic

## Crime Conundrums

'Murder Rates at All-Time High' screamed newspaper headlines in 2010 and 2011. Though violent crime is still relatively rare in the Bahamas – and extremely rare for tourists – it's hard to ignore the regular gun deaths, most of which take place in Nassau's working-class Over-the-Hill neighborhood. Most of these murders are motivated by drugs and desperation, the latter a rising concern in an uncertain economy.

The continuing involvement of Bahamians in the cocaine trade between South America and the US also worries many. A 2009 report from the US Drug Enforcement Agency revealed that there are 12 to 15 drug-trafficking organizations currently operating in the Bahamas.

## A Growing Environment Conscience

Though the Bahamas have never been on the cutting edge of the environmentalist movement, the country is increasingly savvy about saving its precious resources. Sea turtles, a traditional delicacy, were pulled from menus in 2009 following a nationwide ban on the hunting, selling and consumption of turtles or turtle parts. And due to concerns over overfishing, the Bahamas has regulated its conch industry in recent decades, with populations currently considered stable.

Another hot-button environmental issue has been the development of the Bimini Bay Resort & Marina (see p99), which threatens the island's rich mangrove swamps. Environmentalists have been locked in a battle with developers for years, and the situation continues to unfold.

There are few genuine ecolodges in the country, though resorts are beginning to respond to consumer demand. Consider letting hotel management know how important recycling and energy conservation are to you – the tourism dollar speaks!

- » Miles of coastline: 2201
- » Number of islands: 29
- » Number of cays: 661
- » Airports: 62
- » National flower: yellow elder

## Musicians

**The Baha Men** Modern Junkanoo music, most famous for 'Who Let the Dogs Out?'  
**Ronnie Butler** Popular calypso and rake 'n' scrape artist  
**Andre Toussaint** A founder of Bahamian calypso  
**Brettina Robinson** LA-based Bahamian jazz singer

## Bahamians

**Sidney Poitier** Movie star; from Cat Island  
**Kimbo Slice** Huge mixed martial arts star; born in Nassau  
**Rick Fox** LA Lakers and Boston Celtics basketballer; from Nassau  
**Roxie Roker** TV actress and mother of Lenny Kravitz; born to Bahamian immigrants

## Filmed Locally

**Never Say Never Again** Underwater scenes off New Providence  
**Thunderball** Paradise Island's original Cafe Martinique  
**The Silence of the Lambs** Final scene in North Bimini  
**Pirates of the Caribbean II and III** Grand Bahama