

Media Profile of The Bahamas

The Bahamas is an archipelago of 700 islands and cays covering over 100,000 square miles of ocean between Florida and Hispaniola. With a total land area of 5,382 square miles, The Bahamas is about 20 per cent larger than the island of Jamaica.

The country's name derives from the Lucayan Indian word 'ba-ha-ma' (or 'large upper middle land'). After the original Amerindian inhabitants were deported by the Spanish who followed Columbus, the islands were deserted until English settlers from Bermuda established a colony on Eleuthera in the mid-1600's.

Today, 330,000 people live here on 22 inhabited islands. The main population centres are the capital, Nassau, on the island of New Providence (pop: 210,000), and Freeport on the island of Grand Bahama (pop: 50,000).

A British crown colony for over 300 years, the Bahamas became independent on July 10, 1973. The Bahamas has a bicameral parliament with an elected assembly and an appointed senate. The country is governed by a cabinet headed by a prime minister. General elections are held every five years.

The centre-right Free National Movement came to power in the general election of August, 1992, after 25 consecutive years of centre-left Progressive Liberal Party rule. The FNM was re-elected in March, 1997, but lost to the PLP in May, 2002. In May, 2007 the PLP lost to the FNM.

Tourism is the country's biggest earner, with over four million visitors (mostly North Americans) spending a billion and a half dollars a year. Financial services account for about 15 per cent of the \$6 billion GDP. Agriculture and fisheries is a distant third, with about \$70 million in marine products exported annually.

Although the Bahamas has had a lively and relatively free press since the early 1800s, broadcasting was a government monopoly until 1992.

A national radio station was established in the 1930s as a hurricane warning service, using the call letters 'ZNS' (Zephyr Nassau Sunshine). In the 1970s, a statutory corporation was formed to operate ZNS' television and radio channels (TV was introduced in 1978). The Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas is partly funded by advertising, but heavily subsidised by the public treasury.

The political monopoly on broadcasting was broken in 1992 when the new Free National Movement government licensed private radio stations, and again in 1994 when Canadian investors were licensed to develop cable television. There are currently 12 private radio stations on New Providence and five in the Family Islands (on Grand Bahama, Exuma, Abaco and Eleuthera).

Cable Bahamas Ltd (now a majority Bahamian company) began installing an advanced fibre-optic network on New Providence in 1995. Family Island connections began in 1997. Over 90 per cent of Bahamian households now have access to modern cable services.

Cable Bahamas offers a 52-channel basic service plus premium movie channels, a pay-per-view service and digital audio. Cable also carries ZNS TV, the parliamentary channel and local radio stations. It operates a community channel that runs limited local programming and news. CBL's exclusive license for cable television expired in 2009.

Jones Communications, whose principal (Wendall Jones) also operates Love 97 radio and publishes the Bahama Journal, was given a television license in 2006 and introduced JCN-TV in 2007. The station distributes its signal via Cable Bahamas to most Nassau households.

The country's oldest newspaper is the Nassau Guardian, which has published continuously since it was founded in 1844 by an Englishman named Edwin Charles Mosely. Its chief competitor, The Tribune, was founded in 1903 by Leon Dupuch, a Bahamian. A twice-weekly tabloid, the Punch, was established in 1990 by Bahamian journalist Ivan Johnson. The Bahama Journal hit the streets in 1987 as a weekly and is now published daily.

Television

Number of stations – 2

Penetration - 90% of population

ZNS Channel 13

Format: News, current affairs and general programming with some local productions.

Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas

P. O. Box N-1347. Telephone 242-322-4623.

JCN-TV Channel 14

Format: News, current affairs and infomercials.

Jones Communications

P. O. Box N-3909. Telephone 242-356-4960.

Radio

Number of stations – 17

Penetration - 100% of population

Commercial time per hour - average 6-12 minutes

Audience peaks - morning/afternoon drive time, midday talk shows.

ZNS-1 - National.

News, Bahamian music, talk.

ZNS-2 - New Providence.

Religious music and talk.

ZNS-FM - New Providence.

Pop music and news.

ZNS-3 - Grand Bahama.

Pop music and news (local and networked).

Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas
P. O. Box N-1347. Telephone 242-322-4623.

100 JAMZ FM - New Providence.

Pop music and news briefs.

First private radio station.

Tribune Radio
P. O. Box N-3207. Telephone 242-328-4771.

JOY FM - New Providence.

Religious music and talk.

Managed by:
Tribune Radio
P. O. Box N-3207. Telephone 242-328-4771.

COOL 96 FM - New Providence.

Adult contemporary music, news and talk.

Managed by:
Tribune Radio
P. O. Box N-3207. Telephone 242-328-4771.

LOVE 97 FM - New Providence, Grand Bahama.

Oldies, news and talk.

Jones Communications
P. O. Box N-3909. Telephone 242-356-4960.

MORE FM - New Providence.

Pop music and news.

P. O. Box N-1347. Telephone 242-322-4623.

ISLAND FM - New Providence.

Caribbean and world music, news and talk.

P. O. Box N-1807. Telephone 242-322-8826.

GEMS Radio 105.9 FM - New Providence.

Talk and inspirational.

Bartlett McWeeney Communications
51 Montrose Avenue, Nassau, Bahamas

STAR 106 FM

Oldies, news and talk.

Nassau Guardian 1844 Ltd
P. O. Box N-3011. Telephone 242-323-5654.

COOL 96 FM - Grand Bahama.

Adult contemporary music, news and talk.

P. O. Box F-40773. Telephone 242-352-7440.

RADIO ABACO FM - Abaco.

Island music, local news and talk.

P. O. Box AB20418. Telephone 242-367-4935.

SPLASH FM - Eleuthera.

Island music, local news and talk.

P. O. Box EL27495. Telephone 242-333-4638

BREEZE 98.3 FM - Exuma.

Top 40 hits, eighties and Bahamian music.

ThaneMedia Group Ltd. Telephone 242-358-7201 - Fax: 242-358-7203
info@thanemediagroup.com • www.thebreezefmexuma.com.

Newspapers

Nassau Guardian (broadsheet)

Circulation - 6-17,000 daily

Colour - Spot & process

Format - National news/features/syndicated material.

Owned by Bahamian shareholders.

P. O. Box N-3011. Telephone 242-323-5654.

The Tribune (broadsheet)

Circulation - 11-17,000 daily

Colour - Spot & process

Format - National news/features/syndicated material.

Family-owned.

P. O. Box N-3207. Telephone 242-322-2768.

The Punch (tabloid)

Circulation - 20,000-plus twice a week

Colour - Spot & process

Format - National news/gossip/syndicated material.

Owned by Bahamian shareholders.

P. O. Box N-4081. Telephone 242-322-7112.

Bahama Journal (broadsheet)

Circulation - 2,000 daily (estimate)

Colour - Spot & process

Format - News, political analysis and commentary.

Owned by Bahamian shareholders.

P. O. Box N-8610. Telephone 242-325-3082.

Freeport News (broadsheet)

Circulation - 3,000 daily

Colour - Spot

Format - National/local news/syndicated material.

Owned by the Nassau Guardian 1844 Ltd.

P. O. Box F-7, Freeport, Grand Bahama. Telephone 242-352-8321.

The Abaconian (tabloid)

Circulation - 7,000 bi-monthly, distributed free

Colour - spot and process

Format - Local news.

Owned by Dave & Kathy Ralph.

P O Box AB 20551

Marsh Harbour, Abaco. Telephone 242-367-3677.

Magazines

Bahamas Naturalist & Journal of Science (back issues available)

Circulation - out of print

Format - articles of scientific interest relating to The Bahamas

Publisher - Media Enterprises Ltd, P.O. Box N-9240, Nassau, Bahamas

Financial Digest

Circulation - 3,000 monthly, distributed free

Format - regurgitated economic/political news

Publisher - Symonette Marketing, P.O. Box N-4271, Nassau, Bahamas

Bahamas Investor

Circulation - unknown, distributed free

Format - offshore banking news and views

Publisher - Etienne Dupuch Jr. Publications Ltd. P.O. Box N-7513, Nassau, Bahamas

Destination Magazine

Circulation - 50,000 twice yearly, distributed free

Format - Tourism-oriented news and features.

Publisher - Bahamas Hotel Association, P.O. Box N-4846, Nassau, Bahamas

The Internet

Telecommunications services are being deregulated in the Bahamas, but it is still unclear when the state-owned phone utility (BTC) will be privatized. Systems Resource Group became the first private company to offer fixed voice services in the Bahamas in late 2004, operating under the brand name IndiGo.

The total Bahamas market is about 90,000 households. Cable Bahamas provides television and pay-per-view services to 90% of these households over its fibre-optic network. The Bahamas Telecommunications Company also has a nationwide fibre network.

Cable Bahamas launched broadband Internet service in early 2000 and later installed a fibre cable between Florida and the Bahamas to upgrade connection speeds. It has over 40,000 cable modem subscribers.

The government-owned Bahamas Telecommunications Company has 15,000 DSL subscribers. Bahamas Online - the country's first private Internet provider (originally owned by the Tribune) - was acquired by Cable Bahamas in 2004.

Cable Bahamas:

P. O. Box CB-13050, Nassau, Bahamas.

E-mail: info@coralwave.com.

Telephone 242-356-2200

BaTelNet:

P. O. Box N-3048, Nassau, Bahamas.

E-mail: info@batelnet.bs.

Telephone 242-328-0990.