

Bahamas

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is made up of over 300 islands with a total population of just under 400,000. The Bahamas became a British crown colony in 1718, gained internal autonomy in the British Commonwealth in 1964, and became independent in 1973.

The 1996 Local Government Act created two-tiered subnational governance consisting of thirty-two districts, of which thirteen are intermediate encompassing several townships and nineteen are unitary. The average population of a district is 3,400 inhabitants. The largest island of New Providence, which also contains the capital of Nassau and houses two-thirds of the population, is under direct central government control and was excluded from the district system created in 1996. Local governance is not a constitutionally embedded framework, but is managed by the executive branch.

The 1996 law also applied to the City of Freeport, a free trade zone on the island of Grand Bahama, which had been founded by a private corporation, the Grand Bahama Port Authority, under the Hawksbill Creek Agreement of 1955 (amended in 1960 and extended in 2016). The covenant allowed the Grand Bahama Port Authority to issue business licenses in exchange for providing infrastructure, health, and education to the inhabitants at a level not below that in other parts of the Bahamas (Art. 1.5). With the 1996 Local Government Act (Art. 14.3), a unitary district council took over most responsibilities in economic development, town planning, health, and education (Commonwealth Local Government Forum 2011: 20–1).

There is no metro governance in the Bahamas.

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