



Barbados

KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth: 1966

Population: 285,000 (2013)

GDP p.c. growth: 0.9% p.a. 1990–2013

UN HDI 2014: World ranking 59

Official language: English

Time: GMT minus 4 hrs

Currency: Barbados dollar (Bds\$)

Geography

Area: 431 sq km

Coastline: 97 km

Capital: Bridgetown

Barbados, the most easterly of the Caribbean islands, lies south of Saint Lucia, east of St Vincent and the Grenadines, and north of Trinidad and Tobago.

Topography: Barbados is a comparatively flat island, rising in a series of terraced tablelands to Mount Hillaby at 336 metres. The north-east (Scotland area) is broken, eroded and rocky. The rest of the island is coral limestone crossed with deep river-bed gullies which fill with water during heavy rain. There are no permanent rivers. On the east coast, much of the shoreline is rocky, pounded by a strong surf; elsewhere, natural coral reefs surround turquoise seas and beaches of white sand.

Climate: Mild subtropical. In the December–June dry season cooling north-east trade winds blow steadily; the wet season is humid and hotter, but the climate is generally pleasant even then, thanks to sea-breezes. The island is on the southern edge of the West Indian hurricane zone.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are pollution of coastal waters from waste disposal by ships; soil erosion; and the threatened contamination of the underground water supply by illegal disposal of solid waste.

Vegetation: Vestiges of indigenous forest cover 19 per cent of the land area and there was no significant loss of forest cover during 1990–2011. Sugar cane and food crops predominate in rural areas. There is a rich diversity of tropical flowers and flowering trees.

Wildlife: Natural wildlife has largely been displaced by sugar cane but the Barbados

Wildlife Reserve was established in 1985 in the Scotland district, its 1.6 hectares of mature mahogany trees being the home of the Barbados green monkey and the red-footed Barbados tortoise.

Main towns: Bridgetown (capital and only seaport, pop. 94,200 in 2010), Speightstown (2,400), Bathsheba (1,600), Holetown (1,500) and Oistins (1,500); extensive spread of hotels and apartments along the coast.

Transport: A good road network of 1,600 km (virtually all paved) covers the entire island, with a trans-insular highway from Bridgetown to the east coast.

Bridgetown is a deep-water port with a cruise ship terminal and yacht harbour.

Grantley Adams International Airport is 13 km south-east of Bridgetown.

Society

KEY FACTS 2013

Population per sq km: 661

Life expectancy: 75 years

Net primary enrolment: 97% (2011)

Population: 285,000 (2013); 32 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 0.4 per cent p.a. 1990–2013; birth rate 13 per 1,000 people (22 in 1970); life expectancy 75 years (69 in 1970).

The population is 93 per cent of African descent, three per cent of European descent, and the rest of Asian or mixed descent (2000 census).

Language: English is the official and first language. An English-based Creole is also widely spoken.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Anglicans 24 per cent, Pentecostals 19 per cent, Adventists six per cent, Methodists four per cent), with small Hindu, Muslim and Jewish communities (2010 census).

Health: Public spending on health was four per cent of GDP in 2012. Barbados has a national health service and the general health profile and life expectancy of a developed country. Infant mortality was 13 per 1,000 live births in 2013 (74 in 1960). In 2013, 0.9 per cent of people aged 15–49 were HIV positive.

Education: Public spending on education was 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2012. There are 11 years of compulsory education starting at



the age of five. Primary school comprises six years and secondary five. Computers are widely available to schools. Some 93 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2010). The school year starts in September.

The University of the West Indies has a campus at Cave Hill, Barbados, as well as in Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. A UNESCO Chair in Educational Technologies was established in 1999 at the Barbados campus of the University of the West Indies. Other tertiary institutions include the Barbados Community College, with its Hospitality Institute; Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic; and Erdiston College (offering teacher education). The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 2.50:1 (2011). There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

In 1990 Barbados hosted the 11th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Bridgetown. Commonwealth Education Ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Media: Newspapers are privately owned and include *The Barbados Advocate/Sunday Advocate*, *The Nation* and *Broad Street Journal* (business weekly).

CBC Radio, CBC TV (the only terrestrial television channel) and MCTV (a multichannel pay-TV service) are operated by the public Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. There are several private commercial and faith radio stations.

There are 158 personal computers per 1,000 people (2005).

Communications: Country code 1 246; internet domain '.bb'. Mobile phone coverage is good on the island.

For every 1,000 people there are 523 landlines, 1,081 mobile phone subscriptions and 750 internet users (2013).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Errol Barrow Day (21 January), National Heroes' Day (28 April), Labour Day (early May), Emancipation Day (1 August), Kadooment Day (early August), Independence Day (30 November), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday and Whit Monday.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2013

GDP: US\$4.2bn

GDP p.c.: US\$15,172

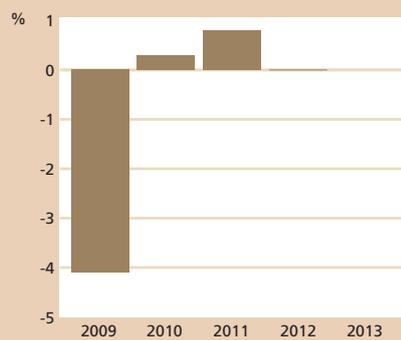
GDP growth: 0.80% p.a. 2009–12

Inflation: 5.0% p.a. 2009–13

Barbados has an exceptionally high 'quality of life' rating for a developing country. The economy, formerly a sugar monoculture, was developed over three decades to achieve a balance of growth and social development, and diversified into three main sectors: services, light industry and sugar. An offshore financial services sector, launched in 1985, has become the country's second biggest source of foreign exchange after tourism.

Despite its economic success, Barbados experienced little growth in the 1980s and a recession in the early 1990s, when sugar and tourism earnings slumped. It had to call on the IMF for economic adjustment support and the government introduced economic austerity measures. By 1993 the economy was recovering and it continued to grow well throughout the 1990s, driven by tourism and

Real growth in GDP



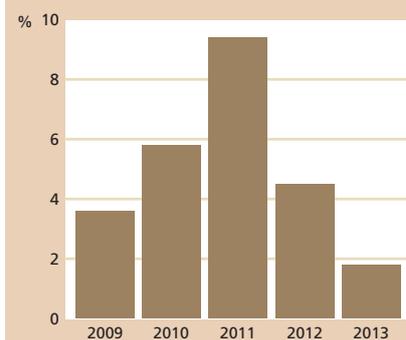
construction. Action against drug-trafficking since the 1990s has made security and defence a significant item of expenditure.

With a small and open economy Barbados lacks scope for further diversification and remains vulnerable to economic downturn in its trade partners. After 2000 the economy went into recession due to the downturn in the USA and Europe and resulting falls in tourist numbers. It picked up in 2003 and grew steadily until 2008 when the world economic downturn again caused a sharp fall in tourism and pushed the economy into reverse. After a sharp recession in 2009 when GDP fell by 4.1 per cent, the economy hardly grew at all in 2010–14.

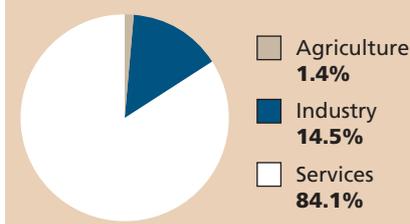
History

Prehistoric Barbados is believed to have been inhabited by cave-dwellers of the Siboney culture, from Florida. At an unknown later time, Arawaks arrived from South America. The latter were agriculturists, and excellent weavers and potters. They survived invasions and raids by the warlike Caribs (also from South America), which took place before the 1490s. By the early 1500s, Spanish and Portuguese sailors had sighted the island. It was invaded in 1518 by Spanish colonists from Hispaniola. No Spanish settlement was

Inflation



GDP by sector (2013)



made, as there appeared to be no mineral resources, but the island acquired a Spanish name – *Barbados* (or 'bearded'), apparently a reference to local fig trees. By 1536 the island was deserted, either because the slavers had depopulated it or because the remaining inhabitants had fled.

In 1625 it was formally claimed for King James I of England. In 1627 English immigrants settled there and King Charles I granted a Barbados patent to Lord Carlisle; after 1660, this patent was surrendered to the Crown and a 4.5 per cent duty on exports levied, which, bitterly resented, was levied until 1838. Between 1627 and 1640, the island was settled by British colonists, who brought with them indentured labour from Britain and some enslaved Africans, to produce tobacco, cotton and indigo. The introduction of sugar in the 1650s had led to the development of large plantations, and by 1685 the population was around 50,000, consisting mainly of African slaves.

By the end of the 18th century, Barbados had 745 plantations worked by more than 80,000 African and African-descended slaves. Harsh working conditions led to slave revolts in 1702 and 1816. Slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833–34.

Barbados had a house of assembly since 1639 but, due to the property qualifications for the franchise, this was dominated by plantation owners until the franchise began to be widened in 1944. Universal adult suffrage followed in 1951, a full ministerial system in 1954, and cabinet government in 1958.

The Barbados Labour Party (BLP), which developed out of the trade unions, was set

Further information

Barbados Integrated Government Portal:
Barbados Government Information Service:
Electoral and Boundaries Commission:
Barbados Parliament:
Barbados Statistical Service:
Central Bank of Barbados:
Barbados Tourism Authority:
Commonwealth Secretariat:
Commonwealth of Nations:

www.gov.bb
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www.barbadosparliament.com
www.barstats.gov.bb
www.centralbank.org.bb
www.visitbarbados.org
www.thecommonwealth.org
[www.commonwealthofnations.org/
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Media

The Barbados Advocate:
The Nation:
Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation:
Caribbean News Agency:

www.barbadosadvocate.com
www.nationnews.com
www.cbc.bb
www.cananews.net

up under the leadership of Grantley Adams, and began working for economic improvement and the extension of political rights. The BLP, led first by Adams, and after 1958 by Dr Hugh Cummins, gained a majority in the House of Assembly between 1944 and 1961. In 1955 a split in the BLP led to the formation of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), led by Errol Barrow, who won the 1962 elections.

Thus, by 1957, Barbados had virtual self-government under a democratic system, a status formally recognised in 1961. Barbados had been a member of the Federation of the West Indies, set up in 1958. When the Federation was dissolved in 1962, the Barbados government announced its intention to seek independence separately. Arrangements were agreed at a constitutional conference in London, and Barbados became an independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth on 30 November 1966.

The DLP was in power from 1966 to 1976, and the BLP from 1976 to 1986, led by Tom Adams, Sir Grantley Adams's son. In 1986 the DLP, still led by Errol Barrow, won a decisive election victory, maintaining its majority in the 1991 elections. This was despite a breakaway movement by DLP dissidents who formed a new National Democratic Party (NDP) but failed to win any seats in the 1991 elections. Erskine Sandiford became Prime Minister in June 1987 after the death of Barrow. Sandiford and the DLP were ousted in September 1994 by the BLP led by Owen Arthur. The BLP won 19 seats (48.3 per cent of the vote), the DLP eight and NDP one.

Constitution

Status: Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth II

Legislature: Barbados Parliament

Independence: 30 November 1966

Barbados is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy, recognising Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. She is represented by a Governor-General appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. There is a bicameral legislature and party system, based on universal adult suffrage.

The Senate has 21 members appointed by the Governor-General, 12 on the advice of the Prime Minister, two on that of the Leader of the Opposition, and the remaining seven at the Governor-General's discretion.

The House of Assembly has 30 directly elected members. Leaders of each house (President and Deputy President of the Senate and Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly) are elected by the members of the respective houses.

The Governor-General appoints as Prime Minister the parliamentarian who commands – in the Governor-General's opinion – the largest support within the House of Assembly, and the Prime Minister heads the cabinet. Other ministers are appointed from either house by the Governor-General as advised by the Prime Minister. The Governor-General appoints the Leader of the Opposition – the MP who, in his/her judgement, leads the party commanding the support of the largest number of MPs in opposition to the government. The normal life of Parliament is five years.

The constitution may be amended by act of Parliament passed by both houses, except for entrenched clauses which require two-thirds majorities in both houses. These clauses relate to citizenship, rights and freedoms, the governor-generalship, composition of Parliament and its sessions, prorogation and dissolution, general elections, senatorial appointments, executive authority, judicature, civil service and finance.

Politics

Last elections: 21 February 2013

Next elections: 2018

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Governor-General, Sir Elliot Belgrave (2011–)

Head of government: Prime Minister Freundel Stuart

Ruling party: Democratic Labour Party

Women MPs: 17%

Sir Henry Forde's Constitutional Commission's much-delayed report was published in December 1998. Its main proposals were to

introduce more checks and balances on the government, to create the institutional structures to ensure politicians behave with greater probity, and to replace the British monarch as the head of state by a ceremonial President.

In the general election of January 1999, the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) had a strong endorsement of their management of the economy and a mandate for their proposals for constitutional change. They gained 26 seats, with 65 per cent of the votes, while the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) took only two. Owen Arthur began his second term of office as Prime Minister.

During 1999 and 2000 the new government pressed on with the proposed changes to the constitution, adding further issues to the agenda for public debate, for example limiting the number of terms a Prime Minister may serve, equal rights for women, and the independence of the judiciary. However, the debate proceeded slowly.

In 2001, David Thompson, DLP leader in the 1994 and 1999 general elections, was succeeded by Clyde Mascoll.

Arthur and the BLP were once again given a strong endorsement in the May 2003 elections, though with 23 seats to the DLP's seven, not as strong as in 1999. The BLP still had the two-thirds majority needed to enact constitutional amendments, although constitutional issues, such as replacing the British monarch as the head of state with a ceremonial President, had not been prominent in the election campaign. But in 2005 the UK Privy Council was replaced as the final court of appeal by the Trinidad and Tobago-based Caribbean Court of Justice.

Thompson returned to head the DLP in 2006 following the defection of Mascoll to the BLP. The DLP went on to win the general election in January 2008 ending the BLP's 13 years in government; the DLP taking 20 of the 30 contested seats and the BLP ten. Thompson was sworn in as Prime Minister.

Prime Minister David Thompson died on 23 October 2010. He was succeeded by Deputy PM and Attorney-General Freundel Stuart.

In the February 2013 election Freundel Stuart and the DLP were returned to power by a narrow margin. The DLP won 16 of the 30 elective House of Assembly seats with 51.3 per cent of votes cast and the BLP – led by former PM Owen Arthur – 14 seats with 48.3 per cent.

International relations

Barbados is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Community, Non-Aligned Movement,

Barbados on the international stage

Sir Garfield Sobers, born in Bridgetown in July 1936, was the Wisden Leading Cricketer in the World in 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1968 and 1970, achieving 8,032 runs and 235 wickets in 93 Test matches. In 1998 Andrea Blackett, born in 1976, won the Women's 400 Metres Hurdles at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Austin Ardinel Chesterfield Clarke, born in St James, Barbados, in July 1934, won the 2003 Commonwealth Writers' Prize with his tenth published novel, *The Polished Hoe*. On the entertainment front, singer Rihanna was born in St Michael in 1988 and has gone on to win eight Grammy Awards.

Organization of American States, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid at least until the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include some food.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left and car hire is available with a local driving permit. These can be purchased from car hire firms, the Ministry of Transport or local police stations on production of a foreign driving licence.

Taxis are widely available; fares are government controlled. Bus services connect

all major points on the island. Minibuses ply similar routes but without schedules and they can be flagged down anywhere on the island.

Travel health: Prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended include dengue fever, diphtheria and hepatitis B.

There were 508,000 tourist arrivals in 2013.



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