



Bahamas — Va-PoReg Country Report

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07/26/1718 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy] [Start: 07/26/1718]: Starting in 1629 the English had expressed an interest in the Bahamas. It was not until 1648 that the first English settlers arrived on the islands. Britain made the Bahamas a crown colony in 1718.¹ Woodes Rogers was officially appointed as Captain-General and Governor in Chief over the Bahama Islands by King George I on 02/06/1718, and he arrived at Nassau on 07/26/1718.² The political decolonization of the Bahamas took place with the gradual democratization of electoral law after 1959 and the gradual transfer of powers from the British colonial power to the differentiating system of government.³ It was not until 1953 that the first political parties were founded, starting with the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP). Before that, legislative elections only accounted for a part of the representatives in the local legislative council, while the rest were British appointed. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held. Regarding the political liberties, they were coded as absent for the entire time (LIED).

11/26/1962 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: From 1958 onwards, all men could vote equally in the Bahamas. Bahamian women could vote for the first time on 11/26/1962.⁴ Political liberties were absent for this period (LIED). V-Dem doesn't list The Bahamas. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period.

01/07/1964 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date internal self-governance was granted. Since the features of a democracy were already fulfilled before, Bahamas is classified as a democracy starting from the date of internal self-governance. LIED classifies political liberties as present from 1964 onward. According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held.

07/10/1973 Continuation (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy [as independent country]: On this date, the Bahamas gained independence from the United Kingdom (Nohlen 1993), but remained in the Commonwealth with the British Crown as head of state. Since 1964 the Bahamas are a stable multiparty democracy where political rights and civil liberties are generally respected.⁵ Executive power is held by the cabinet, the British monarch has no effective political power. The government form is parliamentarism and, hence, the prime minister is the head of government. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition, according to LIED, competitive elections were held since the country's independence. In accordance with FH, the country is classified as free between the years 1973 and 1986 with a score ranging from 2 to 4. Our interpretation aligns with this classification as a free country. In the subsequent period from 1987 to 1991, the country is classified as free with a score of 5 and thus falls under the rather free category in our interpretations. From 1992 onwards, the country once again exhibits a score between 2 and 4 and is therefore classified as free. LIED states that political liberties have been present since 1964. The judiciary is independent from political influences. Nonetheless, government corruption remains a problem, most recently in 2022 regulators were accused of colluding in the bankruptcy proceedings of FTX. Additionally, ongoing issues concerning societal

freedoms, such as protection against domestic violence remain a serious problem. Migrants and Haitian-Bahamians face discrimination and their freedom of movement is inhibited by their lack of Bahamian identity documents.⁶ In August 2022 it was announced that the government would seek to amend the Bahamas Nationality Act to increase gender equality for its citizens.⁷ ⁸ V-Dem doesn't list the Bahamas.

(Monarchical) Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Hillebrands/Schwehm 2005b)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bahamas

² <http://www.bahamasnationalarchives.bs/governors.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

⁴ <https://cob-bs.libguides.com/wsb>

⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahamas/freedom-world/2022>

⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahamas/freedom-world/2023>

⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahamas/freedom-world/2023>

⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bahamas/freedom-world/2024>

References

Hillebrands, Bernd/Schwehm, Johannes (2005b): Bahamas, in: Nohlen, Dieter (Hrsg.), Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 73–84.

Nohlen, Dieter (Hrsg.) (1993): Handbuch der Wahldaten Lateinamerikas und der Karibik. Wiesbaden: SV Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.