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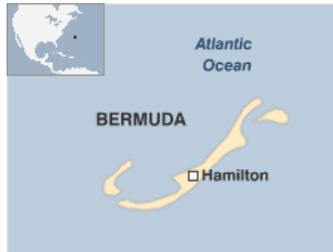
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Regions and territories: Bermuda

Bermuda, a densely-populated British overseas territory in the western Atlantic Ocean, has one of the world's most prosperous economies.



This wealth is largely down to the islands' offshore finance industry; more than 13,000 international companies have made the self-governing territory their nominal base.

OVERVIEW

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The arrival of some half a million visitors each year, most of them from the US, further fuels the economy. But it also makes Bermuda susceptible to the ups and downs of the tourist industry. Visitors are attracted to the beaches, golf courses, colonial buildings and subtropical climate.

The discovery of the archipelago of seven main islands and more than 170 islets has been attributed to a 16th century Spanish sea captain, Juan de Bermudez.



Pastel-painted buildings in the capital, Hamilton

Bermuda came under English control in the late 17th century. Slaves, most of them brought from Africa, came to outnumber the colonists. Today, three-fifths of the population are of African descent.

The remainder are of mostly-European extraction, as well as the descendants of migrants from Portuguese-settled Atlantic islands, including the Azores and the Cape Verde islands.

Internal self-government was guaranteed by the 1968 constitution. Bermuda saw political and racial tensions in the 1970s, culminating in the assassination of the colony's governor and rioting. British troops were despatched to restore order.

Independence from Britain is a recurring theme. In a 1995 referendum nearly three quarters of voters rejected the idea, but the issue was revived in 2004 when the colony's premier called for a debate on independence. More recent polls show a large majority remain opposed to independence.



Timeline: Bermuda
A chronology of key events

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The authorities are cooperating with a global OECD initiative aimed at ending "harmful" practices that have plagued the offshore financial industry and given the territory its reputation as a tax haven. In November 2008, in the wake of the global financial crisis, the British government announced a review into offshore financial centres including Bermuda.

FACTS

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- **Territory:** Bermuda
- **Status:** British overseas territory
- **Population:** 64,700 (UN, 2011)
- **Capital and largest city:** Hamilton
- **Area:** 53 sq km (20.6 sq miles)
- **Major languages:** English, Portuguese
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Life expectancy:** 75 years (men), 80 years (women)
- **Monetary unit:** Bermudian dollar
- **Main industries:** Insurance, re-insurance, international finance, tourism, light manufacturing
- **GNI per capita:** US \$37,000 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Internet domain:** .bm
- **International dialling code:** +1441

LEADERS

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Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a governor

Premier: Paula Cox

Paula Cox became premier by winning a leadership election within the ruling Progressive Labour Party (PLP) in October 2010. The contest was called when her predecessor, Ewart Brown, stepped down after four years in power.

In addition to taking over as PM, Ms Cox continued in her previous post as finance minister.

Her main challenges are seen as crime and the economy. She pledged to make savings of at least US\$150m in her first year by tightening financial discipline in government.

Ms Cox is the fourth PLP premier to hold office since the party swept to power in 1998, ending 30 years of rule by the United Bermuda Party.

The party won an emphatic victory and a third straight term in office in December 2007, gaining 22 seats in the 36-seat parliament. The UBP won 14 seats.

Ms Cox entered parliament as an opposition MP in 1996. In government, she served as labour and home affairs minister and then as education minister, before succeeding her father, Eugene Cox, as finance minister upon his death in 2004.

Her predecessor, Ewart Brown, was elected in October 2006 at the age of 60 after ousting three-year incumbent Alex Scott in a PLP leadership challenge. He was credited with bringing new flights and the promise of new hotel development to the territory.

Bermuda's governor, who is advised by the cabinet, controls foreign affairs, defence and security.

The territory is believed to have one of the oldest parliaments in the world; a representative assembly was established in 1620.

MEDIA

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The islands' broadcasting scene is dominated by two players, the Bermuda Broadcasting Company and VSB.

As well as home-grown broadcast media, most homes and hotel rooms have access to the multichannel, international offerings of cable and satellite TV services.

There were 54,000 internet users by March 2011 (via Internetworldstats.com).

The press

- [The Royal Gazette](#) - daily
- [Bermuda Sun](#) - bi-weekly

Television

- [Bermuda Broadcasting Company \(BBC\)](#) - private, operates ZFB TV (Channel 7), ZBM TV (Channel 9)
- [VSB](#) - private, operates VSB TV (Channel 11)

Radio

- [Bermuda Broadcasting Company \(BBC\)](#) - operates ZBM AM, Bermuda Spirit, FM 89, Power 95
- [VSB](#) - operates Mix 106, 1450 Gold, BBN

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