

St Kitts and Nevis



KEY FACTS

Joined Commonwealth:	1983
Population:	54,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	1.9% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 72
Official language:	English
Time:	GMT minus 4hr
Currency:	Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$)

Geography

Area:	261.6 sq km
Coastline:	135 km
Capital:	Basseterre

The two-island country of St Kitts and Nevis lies in the northern part of the Leeward Islands group of the Lesser Antilles in the Eastern Caribbean. The two islands are separated by a channel some 3 km in width.

Area: Total land area 261.6 sq km – St Kitts 168.4 sq km and Nevis 93.2 sq km.

Topography: The country consists of two mountainous islands of volcanic origin in the Eastern Caribbean. The larger island, St Kitts, is 37 km long, with a central mountain range broken by ravines and a spacious fertile valley running down to the capital Basseterre. The highest point is Mount Liamuiga (1,156 metres). The beaches

are mostly of black volcanic sand except for the south-eastern peninsula, which has beaches of golden sand. The almost circular island of Nevis to the south-east has beaches of silver sand and coconut groves, and rises to a central peak (Mt Nevis, 985 metres) which is usually capped with white clouds.

Climate: Tropical, cooled by the north-east trade winds. There is no distinct rainy season. The heat is not searing; the highest recorded temperature is 33°C. Hurricanes may occur between June and November.

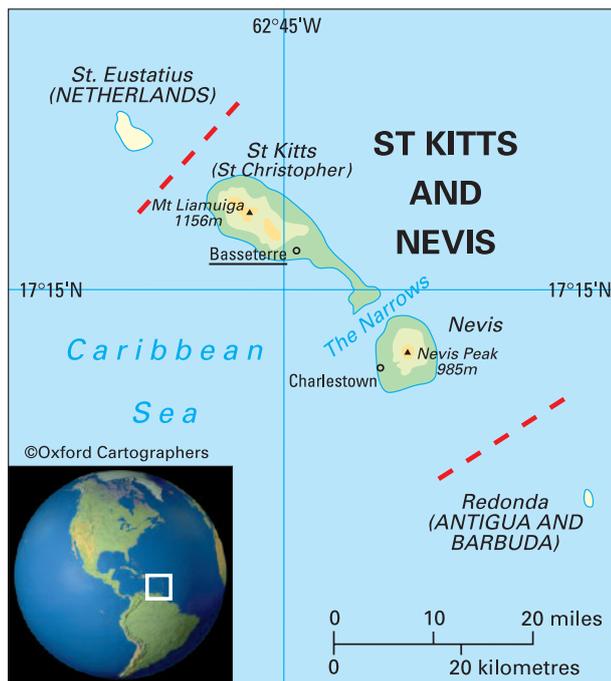
Vegetation: The lower mountain slopes of St Kitts, particularly to the north, are arable and used for growing sugar cane. Uncultivated lowland slopes are covered in tropical woodland and exotic fruits. The higher slopes provide short grass for pasturage. Tropical rainforest or dense bushy cover occurs on the central range; unusually, the forested area is increasing in size. Nevis, where much of the land is cultivated by peasant farmers growing vegetables and coconuts, has a large coconut forest on the west side. Forest covers 42 per cent of the total land area of St Kitts and Nevis and there was no significant loss of forest cover during 1990–2011.

Wildlife: Before the arrival of Europeans the only land-animal life was small rodents and reptiles. The French introduced the green vervet monkey to the islands, and mongooses and deer later followed. Birdlife includes pelicans and frigate birds on the coast, hummingbirds in the forested areas and quail and pigeons in the mountains.

Main towns: Basseterre (capital, pop. 13,400 in 2010), St Paul's (1,300), Sadlers (1,000), Middle Island (900), Tabernacle (840), Mansion (830), Cayon (810) and Sandy Point (790) on St Kitts; Charlestown (2,200) on Nevis.

Transport: There are good road networks on St Kitts and Nevis, 43 per cent paved. A regular passenger ferry service operates between Basseterre and Charlestown, taking 40 minutes. Basseterre has a deep-water port, with berthing facilities for cruiseships and cargo vessels. There is a smaller port at Sandy Point. Nevis has a 126-metres pier at Charlestown. There is also a smaller port at Newcastle.

The Robert Llewellyn Bradshaw International Airport at Golden Rock, St Kitts (3 km from Basseterre), receives direct flights from



Did you know?

The two mountainous islands of St Kitts and Nevis are of volcanic origin, with a highest point of 1,156 metres in St Kitts; many beaches in St Kitts are of black volcanic sand, while those in Nevis are silver.

Celebrated author Caryl Phillips, born in St Kitts in March 1958, won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2004 with his book, *A Distant Shore*.

the USA and Canada, while flights to other continents generally go via Antigua. The Nevis airfield is at Newcastle.

Society

KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km:	205
Life expectancy:	75 years (est.)
Net primary enrolment:	81%

Population: 54,000 (2012); some 12,000 on Nevis; 32 per cent of people live in urban areas; growth 1.2 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 14 per 1,000 people (est. 26 in 1970); life expectancy 75 years (est.)

The population is mainly of mixed African and European descent, with a UK-descended minority.

Language: English is the official language; an English-based Creole is widely spoken.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Moravians and others).

Health: Public spending on health was two per cent of GDP in 2011. There are general hospitals at Basseterre in St Kitts and Charlestown in Nevis, and many health clinics. Some 98 per cent of the population uses an improved drinking water source (2011). Infant mortality was seven per 1,000 live births in 2012.

Education: There are 12 years of compulsory education starting at the age of five, offered by state, private and church schools. Primary school comprises seven years and secondary five, with cycles of three and two years. Some 74 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2009). The school year starts in September.

St Kitts and Nevis participates in the regional University of the West Indies, which has its main campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 2.10:1 (2008).

Media: The main political parties publish newspapers. Newspapers include *Sun St Kitts/Nevis* (daily), *The Democrat* (weekly of People's Action Movement), *The Labour Spokesman* (bi-weekly of St Kitts-Nevis Trades and Labour Union), and *St Kitts and Nevis Observer* (weekly).

The government provides national commercial radio and TV services, ZIZ Radio and ZIZ Television; and there are several private radio stations, and private TV channels are available via cable.

Communications: Country code 1 869; internet domain '.kn'. Mobile phone coverage extends over most of both islands. There are internet cafés in the main towns and a general post office on both St Kitts (located in Basseterre) and Nevis (in Charlestown).

There are 373 main telephone lines, 1,568 mobile phone subscriptions and 793 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

History



The islands were originally settled from South America, and had Amerindian populations at the time of the first European landings. St Christopher (St Kitts) was sighted by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. It was colonised by the English under Sir Thomas Warner in 1623 and during the following centuries sugar was grown on plantations worked by enslaved Africans. Already in 1624, however, another part of the island was colonised by the French (who also used slaves on their estates) and the two powers fought over the island during the 17th and 18th century until St Kitts was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Versailles (1783). Nevis was settled by the English in 1628. It, too, was subject to attack, from the French and Spanish, in the 17th and 18th centuries, with less damage, however, to its economy. From 1816 the islands were administered, along with Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands, as a single colony and from 1871 as part of the Leeward Islands Federation.

The two islands, together with Anguilla, assumed the status of association with the UK in 1967, a situation which the Anguillians rejected from the outset, with rebellion beginning in 1967. In 1971, the UK and the other islands agreed that Anguilla would formally separate and remain a UK dependency when the country achieved its independence.

The country, as the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis, had internal self-government from 1976, and achieved independence on 19 September 1983, choosing to remain a constitutional monarchy with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state.

The St Kitts–Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP) held power from 1967 until defeat in 1980 by a coalition of the People's Action Movement (PAM) and Nevis Reformation Party (NRP), and PAM's Dr Kennedy Alphonse Simmonds became Prime Minister. Simmonds was re-elected in 1984, 1989 and 1993, when the

PAM and SKNLP each won four seats, and the PAM formed a governing alliance with the NRP, though the SKNLP had received 54 per cent of the vote and NRP was itself losing support to the other main Nevis party, the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM).

In an early general election in 1995, after 15 years in opposition, the SKNLP was elected to office with an overwhelming majority of seven seats to the PAM's one. The CCM retained its two seats in Nevis and the NRP one. Labour Party leader Dr Denzil Douglas became Prime Minister.

In the elections in March 2000 the SKNLP won all eight St Kitts seats, while in Nevis the CCM retained two and the NRP one.

Nevis

On Nevis, discontent with the federation grew through the latter 1980s, with increasing calls for separation, and strikes among sugar and other agricultural workers. Elections in Nevis in 1992 then ousted the NRP, replacing it with the CCM.

At the Nevis Island Assembly elections in February 1997, three seats were won by the CCM and two by the NRP, CCM leader Vance Amory retaining the premiership. In October 1997, the five members of the Nevis Assembly voted to secede from the federation, triggering a referendum on Nevis which was held in August 1998. Only 62 per cent of the voters of Nevis backed secession, which fell short of the required two-thirds majority. Prime Minister Denzil Douglas promised to work for greater autonomy for Nevis.

In the September 2001 Nevis Island Assembly elections, the CCM won four seats and the NRP one, and Amory was returned as Premier. An unsuccessful attempt at triggering a referendum on Nevis was initiated in June 2003.

Public holidays: New Year/Carnival (two/three days), Labour Day (first Monday in May), August Monday (first Monday in August), August Tuesday (first Tuesday in August), National Heroes' Day (16 September), Independence Day (19 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Carnival begins on 24 December and ends on 2 January.

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

Economy

KEY FACTS 2012

GNI:	US\$729m
GNI p.c.:	US\$13,610
GDP growth:	0.8% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	3.2% p.a. 2008–12

St Kitts and Nevis was virtually a sugar monocrop economy until the late 1970s, when the government backed a drive into small-scale industrialisation. Tourism has become the largest source of foreign exchange. From 1984 a small offshore sector on Nevis grew rapidly, with around 18,000 companies registered by 1999, and in 2005 St Kitts initiated a registry of ships and yachts; by the end of the decade it had registered some 1,000 vessels. The Ross University

School of Veterinary Medicine of the USA has an offshore campus on St Kitts, and Berne University – a US postgraduate distance-learning organisation, with administrative offices in Pennsylvania, USA – has had a campus on Nevis since 1992.

Despite the challenges of industrial diversification at such small scale, electronics assembly, food-processing, and beverages and clothing production were developed. By 2000 sugar production only accounted for some 20 per cent of GDP and by 2005 it had ceased altogether.

Foreign debt rose rapidly from the mid-1990s, in large measure due to the consequences of five hurricanes in five years. After strong growth in 2000, the economy hardly grew in 2001–03, reflecting the downturn in the USA and consequent fall in tourism, but there was investment in new tourist resorts and golf courses, and the economy picked up in 2004. It then maintained growth of 5.0 per cent p.a. over 2004–08, slowing from 2008 with the onset of the world economic downturn in that year, and shrinking by 6.9 per cent in 2009 and 2.4 per cent in 2010, before returning to steady growth in 2011–14.

Constitution

Status:	Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth II
Legislature:	National Assembly of St Kitts and Nevis
Independence:	19 September 1983

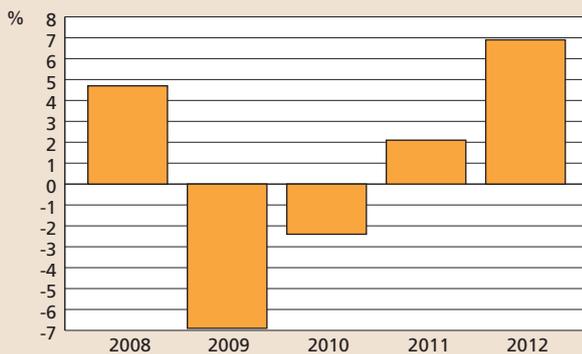
St Kitts and Nevis is a constitutional monarchy, recognising Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. She is represented by a Governor-General who takes advice from the Prime Minister and cabinet. The country is a sovereign democratic federal state, with a unicameral National Assembly of 14 members (plus the Attorney-General if he or she is not an elected member). Eleven Assembly members are elected for a term of no longer than five years by universal adult suffrage in eight constituencies in St Kitts and three in Nevis, and three are nominated 'senators', two on the advice of the Prime Minister and one on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. The cabinet comprises the Prime Minister (who must be able to command the support of the majority of members of the National Assembly), five ministers and the Attorney-General.

Nevis has its own legislature, Premier and administration. The Nevis legislature, the Nevis Island Assembly, has five members elected by universal adult suffrage and three nominated members. The central government legislates for Nevis in matters concerning overall policy formation. Under the constitution, provision is made for the secession of Nevis at six months' notice, after a two-thirds majority in favour in the Nevis Assembly and a referendum, also with at least two-thirds in favour.

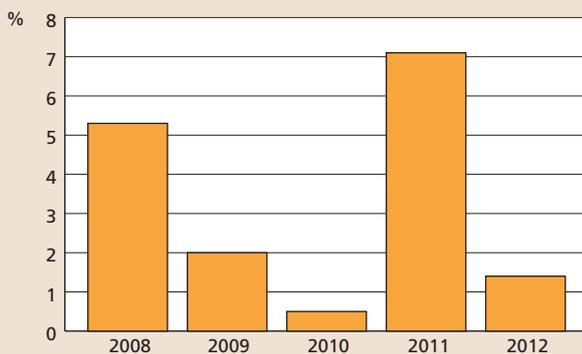
Politics

Last elections:	25 January 2010
Next elections:	2015
Head of state:	Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Governor-General, Sir Edmund Lawrence (2013–)
Head of government:	Prime Minister Dr Denzil Llewellyn Douglas
Ruling party:	St Kitts–Nevis Labour Party
Women MPs:	7%

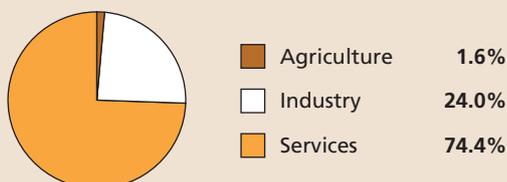
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2012)



Dr Denzil Douglas and the St Kitts–Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP) were returned to power in the general election of October 2004, which was observed by a Commonwealth expert team. The ruling party took seven of the St Kitts seats, and the People's Action Movement (PAM) one. The Nevis seats were again divided between the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM; two seats) and the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP; one).

In January 2010 the SKNLP won its fourth consecutive general election, taking six seats in St Kitts and 47 per cent of the national vote; and Douglas was returned as Prime Minister. The remaining seats were again divided between PAM (two in St Kitts; 32 per cent), CCM (two in Nevis; 11 per cent) and NRP (one in Nevis; ten per cent). Turnout was 84 per cent. The election was observed by a Commonwealth expert team.

Governor-General Sir Cuthbert Sebastian retired on 1 January 2013, from the office he had held since 1996, and was succeeded by Sir Edmund Lawrence on 2 January 2013.

Nevis

The CCM's long run of power was interrupted in the July 2006 Nevis Island Assembly elections, when NRP gained three seats and the CCM two. NRP leader Joseph Parry became Premier.

In closely fought Nevis Island Assembly elections, in July 2011, the NRP (with three seats and 50.2 per cent of the vote) defeated the CCM (two seats and 49.8 per cent) and Parry continued as Premier.

The CCM (with three seats) won the January 2013 Nevis Island Assembly elections and Vance Amory was sworn in as Premier. The NRP took the remaining two seats.

International relations

St Kitts and Nevis is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, Association of Caribbean States, Caribbean Community, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Organization of American States, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Click here to find out more about the
2014 Commonwealth Yearbook



Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. A driving licence must be purchased before visitors can drive on the islands; available at car hire firms and police stations, on production of a foreign driving licence.

There are regular passenger ferries between St Kitts and Nevis, journey time about 40 minutes. The bus network provides a regular but unscheduled service. Taxis have set rates.

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

There were 102,000 tourist arrivals in 2012.

Further information

Government of St Christopher and Nevis: www.cuopm.com

Eastern Caribbean Central Bank: www.eccb-centralbank.org

St Kitts Tourism Authority: www.stkittstourism.kn

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

Commonwealth of Nations:

www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/St_Kitts_and_Nevis

Media

St Kitts and Nevis Observer: www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com

The Labour Spokesman: www.labourspokesman.com

Voice of Nevis: www.vonradio.com

Winn FM: www.winnfm.com

ZIZ Radio and Television: www.zizonline.com

SKNList: www.sknlst.com

Click here to find out more about
St Kitts and Nevis