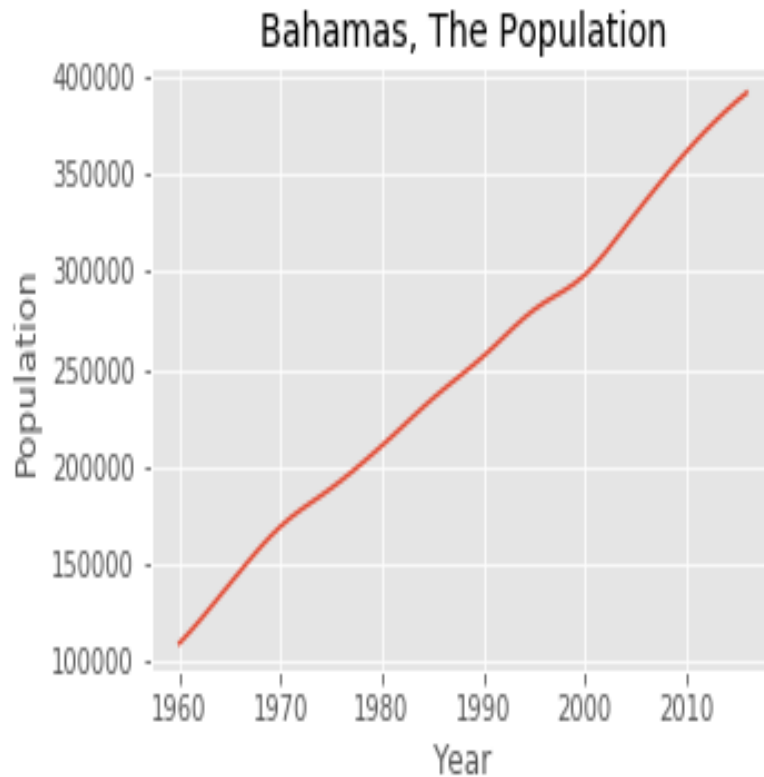


Bahamas, The



Coordinates: 24°15′N 76°00′W﻿ / ﻿24.250°N 76.000°W﻿ / 24.250; -76.000The Bahamas (/bəˈhæmz/ (listen)), known officially as the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, is an archipelagic state within the Lucayan Archipelago. It consists of more than 700 islands, cays, and islets in the Atlantic Ocean, and is located north of Cuba and Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), northwest of the Turks and Caicos Islands, southeast of the United States state of Florida, and east of the Florida Keys. The capital is Nassau on the island of New Providence. The designation of "the Bahamas" can refer either to the country or to the larger island chain that it shares with the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Royal Bahamas Defence Force describes the Bahamas territory as encompassing 470,000 km² (180,000 sq mi) of ocean space. The Bahamas is the site of Columbus' first landfall in the New World in 1492. At that time, the islands were inhabited by the Lucayan, a branch of the Arawakan-speaking Taino people. Although the Spanish never colonised The Bahamas, they shipped the native Lucayans to slavery in Hispaniola. The islands were mostly deserted from 1513 until 1648, when English colonists from Bermuda settled on the island of Eleuthera.