

# SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS



## KEY FACTS

### POPULATION (2020 estimate):

53,000

### AREA (UN 2006):

261 sq km

### CAPITAL:

Basseterre

### CURRENCY:

East Caribbean dollar (XCD)

### HEAD OF STATE:

HM Queen Elizabeth II

### GOVERNOR-GENERAL:

Sir S.W. Tapley Seaton

### HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Timothy Harris

### FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

constitutional monarchy

### PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

unicameral

### STATE STRUCTURE:

federal

### LANGUAGES:

English (official)

### NATIONAL ELECTIONS:

last: Feb 2020, turnout: data unavailable at the time of publication; next: Feb 2025

### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2020):

9%

### NEVIS ISLAND ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS:

last: 2017, turnout: 59%; next: 2022

### WOMEN NEVIS ISLAND ASSEMBLY MEMBERS (2017):

12.5%

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2018:

24.5%

## SUMMARY

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a federal constitutional monarchy with two spheres of government, the federal government and the Nevis Island administration, which is recognised in Chapter X of the constitution. There is no local government on Saint Kitts which is governed by the federal government, but the Nevis Island assembly serves as a local government for that island, has local tax-raising powers, and receives financial disbursements from the federal government proportional to the population of Nevis. Following the 2017 local government elections 12.5% of assembly members were women. The Nevis Island administration is empowered in Nevis by the constitution to pass laws that promote peace, order and good government on the island and, among other responsibilities, is responsible on the island for airports and seaports, education, extraction and processing of minerals, fisheries, health, welfare and labour.

### 1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Saint Kitts and Nevis is a federal constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, based on the Westminster mode.<sup>37.1a</sup> The prime minister is appointed for a term of up to five years by the governor-general from among the elected members of parliament and is usually the person who commands the support of the majority of representatives. The unicameral parliament, known as the National Assembly, comprises 14 or 15 members, depending on circumstances: 11 representatives who are elected to represent single-member constituencies on both islands, and three or four appointed senators – two or three chosen on the advice of the prime minister and one on the advice of the leader of the opposition. Members are elected or appointed for terms of up to five years. Cabinet is appointed by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister. Following the 2020 election, 9% national assembly members were women.<sup>37.1b</sup>

### 2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 2.1 Constitutional provisions

The constitution identifies the island of Saint Kitts and the island of Nevis as a sovereign democratic federal state. Whilst there is no general constitutional provision for local government, the Nevis Island assembly is enshrined in Chapter 10 of the constitution,<sup>37.2</sup> which gives details of the assembly's constitution, powers, finances and functions.

#### 2.2 Main legislative texts

The main legislative text is the Constitution Order 1983.

#### 2.3 Proposed legislative changes

No legislative changes are proposed.

#### 2.4 National urban policy

There is no specific urban policy but a number of government policies are relevant to urban development,

including the Tourism Sector Strategy, the National Social Protection Strategy and Action Plan, and the Making Saint Kitts and Nevis a Great Place to Grow Up and Grow Old strategy.

### 3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### 3.1 Local government within the state

There is no local government on Saint Kitts. There are 14 parishes across the two islands, but these are administrative structures of the national government. Saint Kitts is divided into nine parishes, which serve as administrative units. Nevis has a single island authority<sup>37.3d</sup> with a high degree of autonomy which is a local government within the federation, and it also has five parishes which serve as administrative units.

#### 3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Nevis Island assembly has autonomy from the federal government.

#### 3.3 Council types

3.3.1 The Nevis Island assembly is the unicameral government for the island and is composed of eight members: five directly elected members from single-member constituencies and three members appointed by the governor-general, two on the advice of the premier and one on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The assembly is headed by a premier who is appointed by the governor-general following indirect elections. The premier forms a cabinet consisting of a deputy premier, other elected members and a maximum of two nominated members.

### 4. ELECTIONS

Elections are managed by the Election Commission.<sup>37.4a</sup>

#### 4.1 Recent local elections

The latest Nevis Island assembly elections took place in December 2017, with a turnout of 59%. The previous election was in 2013 with a turnout of 81.1%. The next elections are due in December 2022.



Table 37.1a Distribution of parishes and population

Parish	Population (2011 Census)	Population (2017 estimate)	% rural (2011)
<b>Saint Kitts</b>	<b>34,918</b>	<b>35,968</b>	<b>na</b>
Christ Church Nichola Town	2,626	na	na
Saint Ann Sandy Point	1,922	na	na
Saint George/Baseterre	12,635	na	na
Saint John/Capesterre	2,962	na	na
Saint Mary Cayon	3,435	na	na
Saint Paul/Capesterre	2,432	na	na
Saint Peter/Baseterre	4,670	na	na
Saint Thomas Middle Island	2,535	na	na
Trinity Palmetto Point	1,701	na	na
<b>Nevis</b>	<b>12,277</b>	<b>12,646</b>	<b>na</b>
Saint Paul Charlestown	1,847	na	na
Saint John Figtree	3,827	na	na
Saint George Gingerland	2,496	na	na
Saint Thomas Lowland	2,069	na	na
Saint James Windward	2,038	na	na
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,195</b>	<b>48,614</b>	<b>69.3</b>

Source: 2011 Census of Population and Housing<sup>34,3a, b, c</sup>

Table 37.1b Women Nevis Island ministers following the last four local elections

Election	2006		2011		2013		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Nevis Island (NI) ministers								
Female NI ministers	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	12.5
Male NI ministers	8	100.0	8	100.0	7	87.5	7	87.5
<b>Total NI ministers</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Nevis Island Assembly correspondence with CLGF

Table 37.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2020 (estimate)

Income	XCDm	Expenditure	XC\$m
<b>Centre-local transfers</b>		<b>Administration</b>	
Total grants	36.50	Staff	89.56
Unrestricted	na	Property	57.34
		Other	na
<b>Locally raised revenue</b>		<b>Services</b>	
Property taxes	3.55	Goods and services	41.19
Licences and fees	38.55	Road maintenance	na
Other	135.54	Other	na
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>220.10</b>	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>177.64</b>

Source: Nevis Island Administration budget estimates and National budget estimates

## 4.2 Voting system

The five elected members of the Nevis Island assembly are elected using the first-past-the-post system.

## 4.3 Elected representatives

The assembly is headed by an indirectly elected premier who, along with the elected members and appointed senators from their party form a cabinet known as the Nevis Island Assembly.

## 4.4 Women's representation

Following the 2017 and 2013 elections 12.5% (1/8) of members of the Nevis Island assembly were women; up from zero (0/8) women in the assembly in 2011 and 2006.<sup>37,4b</sup>

## 5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### 5.1 Legal requirement

There is no legal requirement for community involvement except in the case of the separation of Nevis from the federation, when a bill of separation would have to be supported by a two-thirds majority in a referendum on Nevis.

### 5.2 implementation

The Nevis Island assembly organises a monthly radio press conference to keep citizens informed and to answer questions from the press. There are also regular town hall meetings that are open to the public.

### 5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

Nevis Island assembly uses social media to reach out and engage younger citizens.<sup>37,5</sup>

## 6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are no organisations of local government.

## 7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The premier and the prime minister are in direct contact on any issues of national significance and on those functions not devolved to the assembly, such as policing, public safety, and law and order. Any disputes between the Nevis Island administration and the federal government would be arbitrated by the High Court.

## 8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

No details are available.

## 9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

### 9.1 Local government expenditure

In line with constitutional provisions, 2020 expenditure by the Nevis Island administration was 25.9% of total government expenditure.<sup>37,9</sup>



Table 37.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013-19

	2013 actual	2014 actual	2015 actual	2016 actual	2017 esti.	2018 budget	2019 budget
Total government expenditure	702.99	748.67	805.66	739.60	859.65	878.77	na
Total local government expenditure	124.20	148.34	149.43	171.56	204.04	214.49	na
<b>Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure</b>	<b>17.7%</b>	<b>19.8%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>

Source: Nevis Island Assembly communication with CLGF

## 9.2 Locally raised revenue

All revenues raised by the Nevis Island administration are paid into the Nevis Island Consolidated Fund.

## 9.3 Transfers

All taxes raised by the federal government are split proportionally between the federal government and the Nevis Island administration and the share allocated to Nevis is determined by reference to the population of Nevis as a proportion of the whole country according to the latest available official national census.

## 9.4 Loans

The Nevis Island administration is empowered to take loans, however it must consult with the federal government if it is receiving an external loan and the loaning agency requires a guarantor.

## 9.5 Local authority staff

The number of staff of the administration is determined by the premier and they are under the supervision of the permanent secretary of human resources stationed on the island of Nevis, who is in direct communication with the chairman of the Public Service Commission.

## 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

### 10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

The Nevis Island administration is responsible for the following functions: airports and seaports; education; extraction and processing of minerals; fisheries; agriculture, healthcare and welfare; labour; infrastructure development, government land and buildings; and licensing of imports and exports.

### 10.2 ICT use in service delivery

The Nevis Island administration has its own website<sup>37.10a</sup> provides a citizens' portal from both assembly proceedings and services such as information on rates, property tax and VAT. Proceedings from the Nevis Island assembly are recorded and broadcast monthly on Nevis Television and online.<sup>37.10b</sup>

## 10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The prime minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis reaffirmed his government's commitment to the SDGs at a speech to the UN General Assembly in 2015, with a specific focus on healthcare and education.<sup>37.10c</sup> In March 2017, the Nevis administration's Ministry of Social Development organised an inaugural sub-regional conference for women and girls, with participants from across the Caribbean. The aim was to underscore the Nevis Island administration's commitment to women's empowerment, within the context of the SDGs.<sup>37.10d</sup> Furthermore, in November 2017, parliament agreed a new youth policy which will help achieve SDGs relating to the youth of Saint Kitts and Nevis.<sup>37.10e</sup> The Nevis Island administration recently hosted a biennial three-day regional forum focused on achieving the SDGs, and has been working with the national government especially on the issue of intergenerational engagement between the youth and elderly.<sup>37.10f</sup>

### REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 37.1a National portal [www.gov.kn](http://www.gov.kn)
- 37.1b Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in national parliaments' [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)
- 37.2 Constitution of Saint Kitts & Nevis <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Kitts/kitts83.html>
- 37.3a 2011 Census of Population and Housing, cited by Caricom (2014) [www.caribank.org/uploads/2014/12/CGA-St-Kitts-Nevis\\_Vol-I\\_JULY2014\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.caribank.org/uploads/2014/12/CGA-St-Kitts-Nevis_Vol-I_JULY2014_FINAL.pdf)
- 37.3b Nevis statistical digest 2016 [www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/download-s/documents/statistics-department/nevis-statistical-review/143-nevis-statistical-digest-2016/file](http://www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/download-s/documents/statistics-department/nevis-statistical-review/143-nevis-statistical-digest-2016/file)
- 37.3c Population estimate UNDESCA <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery>
- 37.3d Nevis Island Assembly [www.nia.gov.kn](http://www.nia.gov.kn)
- 37.3e Office of the Prime Minister [www.gov.kn](http://www.gov.kn)
- 37.4a Elections Commission [www.gov.kn](http://www.gov.kn)
- 37.4b Nevis' sole female minister urges women to enter the political arena [www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/news-4/news-articles-3/2618-nevis-sole-female-minister-hon-brandy-williams-urges-women-to-enter-the-political-arena](http://www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/news-4/news-articles-3/2618-nevis-sole-female-minister-hon-brandy-williams-urges-women-to-enter-the-political-arena)
- 37.5 [www.facebook.com/PressSecretaryToThePremierNevis](http://www.facebook.com/PressSecretaryToThePremierNevis)
- 37.6 No reference for this section
- 37.7 No reference for this section
- 37.8 No reference for this section
- 37.9 Data provided by Saint Kitts High Commission, London.
- 37.10a Nevis Island Administration <https://nia.gov.kn/>
- 37.10b Nevis television [www.nevistvonline.com](http://www.nevistvonline.com)
- 37.10c 'Government of St Kitts and Nevis fully committed to Sustainable Development Goals' <http://news.caribseek.com/17897-government-national-unity-fully-committed-sustainable-development-goals-saint-kitts-and-nevis>
- 37.10d 'Sub-regional conference for women and girls hosted in Nevis' [www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/news-4/news-articles-3/2993-participation-in-nevis-sub-regional-women-s-forum-overwhelming-says-junior-minister-brandy-williams](http://www.nia.gov.kn/index.php/news-4/news-articles-3/2993-participation-in-nevis-sub-regional-women-s-forum-overwhelming-says-junior-minister-brandy-williams)
- 37.10e 'Landmark St Kitts and Nevis youth policy' <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/press-release/landmark-st-kitts-and-nevis-youth-policy-swing-open-doors-opportunity>
- 37.10f Opening speech of SDGs forum <https://nia.gov.kn/remarks-by-minister-of-social-development-hon-eric-evelyn-on-sustainable-development-goals/>
- 37.11a World Population Prospects 2019 [https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019\\_DataBooklet.pdf](https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2019_DataBooklet.pdf)
- 37.11b UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 37.11c Commonwealth Local Government knowledge hub [www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub](http://www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub)
- 37.11d UNDP HDR Saint Kitts and Nevis profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KNA>



## Annex 37a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Saint Kitts and Nevis

Services	Delivering authority		Remarks Where marked, Nevis Island assembly holds sole responsibility on the island
	National government	Nevis Island assembly	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>			
Police	■		
Fire protection	■		
Civil protection	■		
Criminal justice	■		
Civil status register	■	■	
Statistical office	■	■	
Electoral register	■		
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)	■	■	
Primary	■	■	
Secondary	■	■	
Vocational and technical	■	■	
Higher education	■		
Adult education	■	■	
<b>SOCIAL WELFARE</b>			
Family welfare services	■		
Welfare homes	■	■	
Social security	■		
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH</b>			
Primary care	■	■	
Hospitals	■	■	
Health protection	■	■	
<b>HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING</b>			
Housing	■	■	
Town planning	■	■	
Regional planning	■	■	
<b>TRANSPORT</b>			
Roads	■	■	
Transport	■	■	
Urban roads	■	■	
Urban rail			
Ports	■	■	
Airports	■	■	
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION</b>			
Water and sanitation	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal	■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria	■	■	
Slaughterhouses			
Environmental protection	■	■	
Consumer protection	■		
<b>CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS</b>			
Theatre and concerts	■	■	
Museums and libraries	■	■	
Parks and open spaces	■	■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	
Religious facilities			
<b>UTILITIES</b>			
Gas services	■	■	
District heating			
Water supply	■	■	
Electricity	■	■	
<b>ECONOMIC</b>			
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■	■	
Local economic development/promotion	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■	
Tourism	■	■	

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service