

## Economic and Social Profile

### South Caicos

#### History and Geography

At 8.5 square miles South Caicos is the fourth smallest of the nine major cays and islands that make up the Turks and Caicos Islands. For much of the past 100 years its main industry was salt mining. Since the mid –1960's with the decline of salt mining operations in the TCI, fishing has become the dominant industry on the Island. Local affairs in South Caicos are administered by a District Commissioner, assisted by an advisory panel of community residents. Several Church Groups are active in community welfare in South Caicos and so also is the Soroptomist Service Club.

#### Population

The population of South Caicos according to the TCI 2001 Population Census was 1063 persons living in 377 households. The population was split almost equally between males and females with people residing in one main settlement, Cold Harbour, and seven neighborhoods viz:

	Male	Female	Total
Old North, The Flats and Airport	226	249	475
Town Area	285	262	546
The Salinas, Highlands, Highpoint	20	21	42
<b>Total South Caicos</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>1063</b>

The District Commissioner believes that there has being a slight decrease in the population since the 2001 Census, by about 50 persons caused by persons moving to Providenciales and other places in search of work. The permanence of such moves are difficult to determine at this stage. Another significant demographic feature, is that Belongers number 763 persons, or approximately 70% of the population, while other nationalities accounted for the remaining 30% of the population, with Haitians numbering 184 persons. From a planning standpoint the numbers in the relevant age cohorts are as follows and as projected:

	2001	2014
Infants (1 < 4 years)	105	220
Primary schoolers (4 < 11years)	127	267
Secondary schoolers	118	245
Tertiary students (20 – 24)	69	156
Working adults	577	1221
Retirees	67	156
<b>Total</b>	<b>1063</b>	<b>2220</b>

The projections are based on a doubling of the South Caicos population over the next 10 years and assuming the same relative proportions of the age cohorts. At a time when the population is stagnant, any projected increase might seem far-fetched. But recalling the experience of Providenciales, economies and populations can explode overnight, so it is useful to bear these modest projections in mind and the demands they might impose for expanded school spaces and other infrastructure.

#### Economy and Employment

According to the 2001 Census, the Labour Force, 15 years and over in South Caicos, (going by the standard definition of that index) was 778 persons. Of this number, 519 or 67% of the labour force reported that they had a job during survey week, and 81 persons or 10% were unemployed.

Employed persons worked in the following areas:

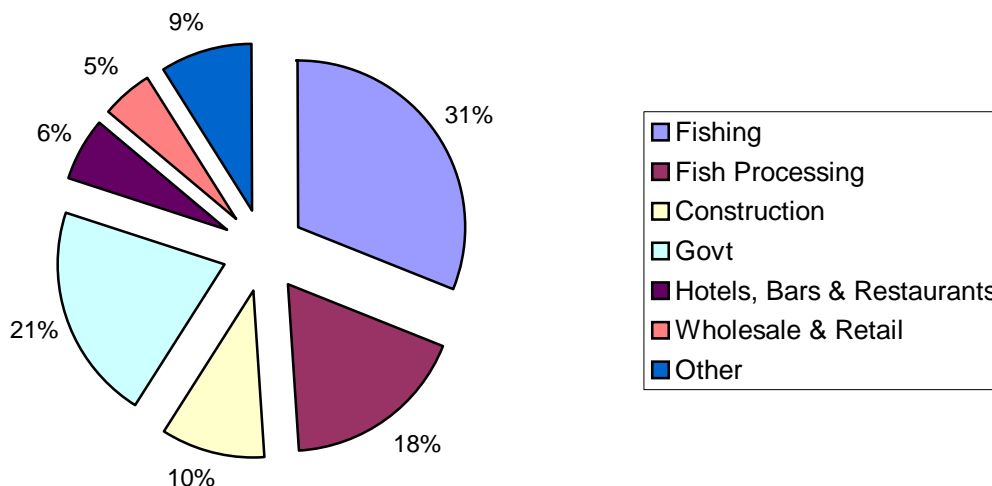
■ Fishing	158
■ Fish processing	90
■ Construction	50
■ Government	105
■ Retail & Wholesale	30
■ Hotels, Bars, Restaurants	30
■ Other	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>

Unlike many other communities in TCI, tourism on South Caicos was a fairly insignificant employer of labour, employing less than 10 persons, though there has been a large hotel project under construction since 1987. In addition, there were about 20 persons employed in bars and restaurants. Retailing and wholesale generated employment for about 30 persons. Belongers were mainly employed in fishing, diving and in the public service. East Indian nationals and Haitians comprised the bulk of the labour force in construction, and it was mainly Haitian women who were employed in fish-processing.

### Gross Domestic Product.

It is possible to obtain a rough approximation of gross domestic product for South Caicos by calculating the per worker output for each sector within the TCI and then multiplying those figures by the numbers of workers in those sectors in South Caicos. By this method the GDP of South Caicos was estimated at \$7.9 million in 2001 with the contribution of its main sectors shown in the pie-chart below.

**Sectoral Contribution to South Caicos GDP**

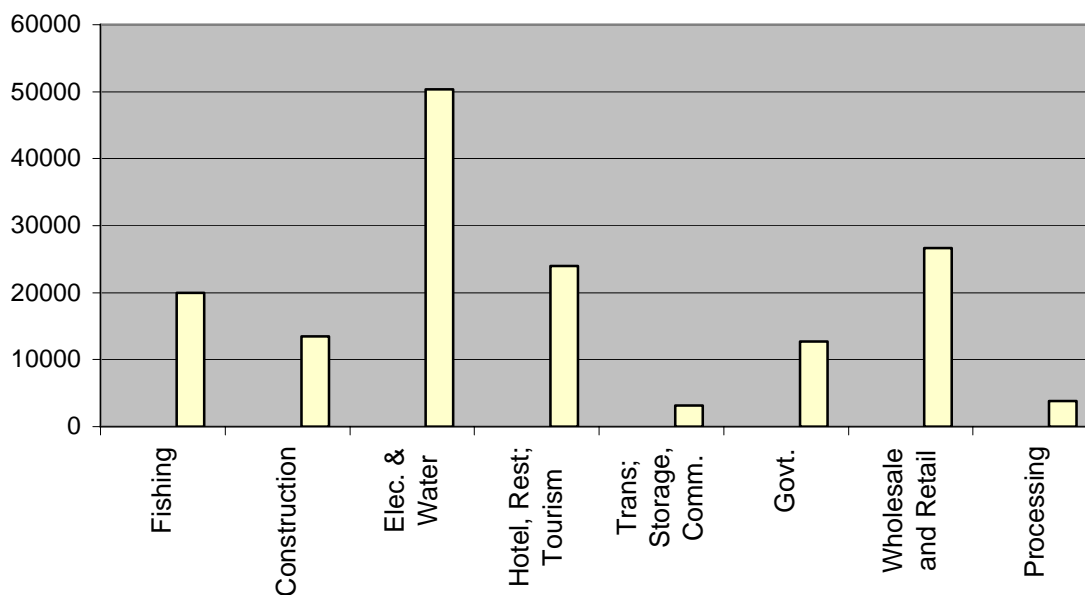


### Income Levels and Poverty

With its GDP of \$8 million and population of 1000, South Caicos per capita GDP would be about \$8000 or 20% lower than the nation-wide TCI per capita of \$10,100. This might seem questionable since only 20% of individuals in

South Caicos work in activities – fish-processing, and transportation, storage and communication that falls below the mean per capita line.

**Chart 2: Sector Per Capita**



It is well known however, that per capita income levels often mask a lot of regional and occupational disparities and incongruities. This is no less so in South Caicos. For instance, about half (50) of the public sector workers in South Caicos are “non-establishment” cleaners and labourers earning between \$8,300 and \$9,000 per annum. Many providers of services such as mechanics, hairdressers, and retailers probably earn less than their sectoral mean because of the smaller customer base in South Caicos. Fishermen, who provide a high value product likely earn their sectoral mean and probably well above the country’s per capita. But because fishing is perceived as a low status and high risk occupation it has not attracted too many aspirants to the sector. Considering the numbers in fish processing, “non-establishment” government employment and constraints of small customer base, a reasonable assumption is that at least 50% of workers in South Caicos earn less than the TCI per capita. However, nearly all full-time workers seem to earn above the indigence income of \$2,424, though the task work method of paying by the pound in fish processing could result in wages that are less than the minimum wage.

The conclusion of an absence of widespread indigence is borne out by the fact that only forty-three (43) persons or 0.05% of the population are presently on the community’s welfare roll. These include:

- 4 children, including two orphans;
- 11 mentally ill persons;
- 6 widows; and,
- 23 persons experiencing temporary unemployment or difficulties.

Overall, the demographic and economic facts suggest that people in South Caicos earn just below the TCI per capita and face somewhat stagnant job opportunities, while the Island overall has been experiencing declining population.

## **Housing**

The 377 households in South Caicos consists of 321 separate houses, 20 apartments and 26 duplexes. Roughly 39% of the housing stock is made of block and steel, 40% of wood, and 12% combine both materials. Another six percent (6%) are made of stone. The bulk of the older wood and stone houses are in and around the Town area, while the newer houses were on “The Flats” or nearer the Airport. Fully 41% of the houses in South Caicos utilize pit latrines, and the Chief Public Health officer reports that many of the older houses are structurally precarious and unfit for human habitation. Some two hundred houses or 53% of dwellings have cisterns to collect rainwater. There is no public piped-in water in South Caicos.

## **Education**

There is one primary and a secondary school in South Caicos with about 100 students each. The teacher/student ratio is 1:5 at the secondary school, and 1:14 at the primary school. The student teacher ratio in the primary school is approaching the optimizing teacher/ student threshold where researchers note that the management of classes become a major preoccupation of the teachers and student achievement tends to fall. Both the primary and secondary schools have being refurbished in the in the past two years, but the principal at the secondary school expressed a need for several additional improvements to plant and staffing. Among them:

- An auditorium that could accommodate 800 persons and which could double as a civic center for community events;
- Paving the driveway to the school’s entrance from which several sharp stones protruded and which could injure persons or puncture vehicles;
- Re-starting a school feeding program to assist about 20 students – (one fifth of the student population) at an estimated cost of \$14,000 per year;
- Establish a playing field with a three hundred meter track for student sporting events, which now takes place at a community facility;
- Hiring a music/ dance/drama teacher and starting a music program currently available in most other secondary schools throughout the TCI.

The principal reported that the Majorie Basden High School has had the highest percentage of students obtaining 4 or more passes at the CXC among TCI schools over the past six years. Unfortunately very few of these bright young people remain in South Caicos or return after obtaining higher qualification. Considering the synergies between tourism and entertainment, instituting a music program at the school would seem worthwhile, as well as re-starting the school- feeding program.

## **Health Care**

Life expectancy of 77 years and infant mortality rates are about the same as elsewhere in the Turks and Caicos. The main complaint from health care providers was that the clinic in which they worked was cramped for space. Medical examinations had to be carried out in an area in which other administrative functions were being performed; and only a thin wooden wall separated the delivery room from the general waiting area. The Public Health Officer highlights the need for more and better secured (from animals) garbage containers along the roadways; the need for a chlorination and filtration system at the public catchment; and better disposal of human effluent from septic tanks – possibly, the installation of a sewage treatment plant.

## **Physical Infrastructure**

There is a major commercial and fishing port in South Caicos and an airport that can facilitate small air-craft. There is also a smaller pier at Regatta Village. Most of the major infrastructure on the island however is in need of upgrading. The main road leading from the airport into town is barely adequate and needs maintenance. Nearly all subdivision roads are unpaved. Many private owners of residences maintain only the small front entrances of their yards, leaving their backyards unfenced and overgrown with scrub, which often intrude on the public

roadways. The commercial seaport is cluttered with a number of unsalvageable wrecks abandoned by the owners, giving the port a scruffy appearance; and the ocean has started to become polluted from the run-off from the fish processing factories. Fortunately, there are plans to address some of these problems as noted in the project summary below:

### **Some projects completed in the past three years:**

Though in some instances the improvements are themselves to be upgraded, Budget appropriations reveal that about **\$707,168** has been spent on infrastructure and community projects in South Caicos over the past three years. These include:

- Upgrading of airfield and PAPI lighting, begun in 2001/02 and completed in 2002/03 at a cost of \$360,302;
- Construction of the community beachfront recreational facility – Regatta Village in 2001;
- Establishment and furnishing of Community library - BNTF
- Renovation of the National Center For Disabled Persons – BNTF
- Renovation of the Welfare Office – BNTF
- Fencing of Marjorie Basden High School – BNTF
- Establishment of morgue – Soroptomist Club

### **Ongoing projects amounting to \$514,661 include;**

■ Some \$319,828 provided in the 2003/04 Budget for South Caicos Community Development Projects of which \$77,172 was spent last fiscal year and \$320,000 carried over in the 2004/05.

- Upgrading of the drainage system at a cost of \$35,000; and,
- The purchase of X-ray machinery for the dental clinic and further furnishings for the Disabled Center a combined cost \$50,000.

### **Proposed Projects,**

In addition to the above expenditures, close **to \$6 million** is earmarked for projects over the next three years including:

- \$5 million to be spent on re-constructing the Airport terminal and resurfacing the runway;
- \$600,000 in constructing a bigger and improved clinic;
- \$65,000 on the purchase of a refuse collection vehicle;
- Close to \$200,000 for improvement projects at Majorie Basden High School

The 2004/05 Budget provisions and expenditures planned for the next three years do seem to be responding to some of the concerns of residents. From approximately \$600 per person over the previous three years, Government per capita infrastructural expenditures in South Caicos will increase to \$2,000 per person per year by 2006/07.

### **Conclusion**

Like the other islands of the Turks and Caicos archipelago, South Caicos remains basically unspoilt with pristine white sand beaches and extensive fisheries and aquaculture potential. The reconstruction of the Airport and other major infra-structural developments to commence in 2005/06 should also give a boost to three long stalled hotel developments on that Island possibly adding 500 rooms in the next three years. Yet if these infra-structural and other developments are to result in a steady stream of private investments, residents must be urged, if not enjoined, to better maintain their properties to keep the island attractive to investors.

