

## **Bajans third most talkative**

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ACCORDING TO the World Bank, the Cayman Islands, Grenada and Barbados in that order, have three of the world's highest individual rates of international telephone traffic

Each Barbadian, on average, made at least ten hours of overseas telephone calls in 2005, the latest year for which the international financial institution in Washington had data.

In 2000, the overseas calls amounted to 425 minutes for every man, woman and child in the country, skyrocketing to 611 minutes five years later.

It's not difficult to figure out why Barbadians spend so many hours on the phone. For one thing, they have a reputation for being gossipers. For another, half of the population, 500 out of every 1 000, have access to telephone mainlines while 765 out of every 1 000 residents have cellphones. In essence, there are more phones in Barbados than there are people.

The entire population of about 280 000 people has access to mobile phones, if they wish to have them.

In the Cayman Islands, the international voice traffic was measured at 1 630 minutes per person, making it the world leader.

An explanation for the exceedingly high volume can be traced to the fact that the Cayman Islands is a major international banking centre. In addition, the population of 45 000 is considered very small by any standards and the ratio of minutes for every resident would tend to be high.

Grenadians too are among the world's most talkative telephone users.

In its data book on information and communications technology (ICT), the World Bank said the average Grenadian spends 638 minutes calling overseas in a year.

That's more than double the 279 minutes per person in international voice traffic recorded by the 296 million Americans in 2005 and the 233 minutes the per person made by the 2.7 million Jamaicans; the 236 minutes per person by the Italians; and the 293 by Austrians.

Bahamians too have an ongoing love affair with the overseas telephone, each talking for 587 minutes, down from 624 minutes recorded at the turn of the 21st century. The Bahamas was among the few countries that recorded a decline in international voice traffic between 2000 and 2005. No explanation was given for the drop.

Reasons abound for the amount of time spent on the phone in the region. For one, in almost every household there is a close relative living in the United States, Canada, Britain, France, the Netherlands or in other Caribbean territories.

For another, telephones saturate the islands. Then there is the prevalence of calling cards.

At least 65 per cent of the people in Grenada have mobile phones while 309 out of every 1 000 have telephone mainlines.

### **More than one cell**

In Jamaica, international voice traffic skyrocketed from 155 minutes per person in the year 2000 to 233 five years later. Like Barbados there were more mobile phones there than people in 2005, indicating that many Jamaicans have more than one cell.

The astounding presence of cells in Jamaica is understandable. Only 129 mainlines were in operation for every 1 000 people three years. They now cover 95 per cent of the population.

Trinidadians may live in CARICOM's richest nation, but they don't enjoy that kind of extensive coverage. Slightly more than 25 per cent, 248 per 1 000 had mainlines while for every 1 000 citizens there were 613 cell phones.

The average Trini makes about 381 minutes in overseas calls in a year.

The ICT picture in the Caribbean looks like this:

- ❖ Bermuda, Barbados, the Bahamas and Antigua are the leaders in connectivity to the worldwide web;
- ❖ more than half of the population of Bermuda and Barbados has access to computers;
- ❖ both Internet and telephone penetration and computer usage in the Caribbean are higher than in Africa, Asia and Latin America;
- ❖ more than 90 per cent of the households in the English-speaking Caribbean have television sets, with the Bahamas and Antigua topping the list with 97 per cent of the households covered.

Courtesy Barbados Nation: <http://www.nationnews.com/story/340265411317040.php>