

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS



INTRODUCTION

First inhabited by Arawak and later by Carib Indians, the Virgin Islands were settled by the Dutch in 1648 and then annexed by the English in 1672. The islands were part of the British colony of the Leeward Islands from 1872-1960; they were granted autonomy in 1967. They maintain strong ties to the nearby US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

GOVERNMENT

Chief of State

Queen ELIZABETH II
represented by Governor John J. RANKIN

Head of Government

Premier Andrew FAHIE

Government Type

Overseas Territory of the UK with limited self-government; parliamentary democracy

Capital

Road Town

Legislature

unicameral House of Assembly (15 seats)

GEOGRAPHY

Area

Total: 151 sq km
Land: 151 sq km
Water: 0 sq km

Climate

subtropical; humid; temperatures moderated by trade winds

Natural Resources

negligible; pleasant climate, beaches foster tourism

ECONOMY

Economic Overview

US Caribbean island territorial economy; strong tourism and services industries; vulnerable to hurricanes; navigating public debt insolvency since 2008 Crisis; considered a tax haven; high electrification costs; major rum exporter

GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) \$500 million (2017 est.)

GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity) \$34,200 (2017 est.)

Industries - tourism, light industry, construction, rum, concrete block, offshore banking center

Agricultural products - fruits, vegetables, livestock, poultry, fish

Exports \$23 million (2017 est.)

recreational boats, aircraft, diamonds, paintings, precious stones (2019)

partners: Malta 30%, Seychelles 29%, Switzerland 14% (2019)

Imports \$300 million (2017 est.)

recreational boats, aircraft, refined petroleum, cars, furniture (2019)

partners: Germany 32%, US 22%, Italy 9%, France 7%, Seychelles 7% (2019)

PEOPLE & SOCIETY

Population

37,890 (July 2021 est.)

Population Growth

1.96% (2021 est.)

Ethnicity

African/black 76.3%,
Latino 5.5%,
White 5.4%, mixed 5.3%, Indian 2.1%, East Indian 1.6%, other 3%, unspecified 0.8% (2010 est.)

Language

English (official)

Religion

Protestant 70.2%, Roman Catholic 8.9%, Jehovah's Witness 2.5%, Hindu 1.9%, other 6.2%, none 7.9%, unspecified 2.4% (2010 est.)

Urbanization

urban population: 48.9% of total population (2021)
rate of urbanization: 1.73% annual rate of change (2020-25 est.)

