

British Virgin Islands

(dependent territory of the UK)

Geography

Location: Caribbean, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of Puerto Rico

Map references: Central America and the Caribbean

Area:

total area: 150 sq km

land area: 150 sq km

comparative area: about 0.8 times the size of Washington, DC

note: includes the island of Anegada

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 80 km

Maritime claims:

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 3 nm

Climate: subtropical; humid; temperatures moderated by trade winds

Terrain: coral islands relatively flat; volcanic islands steep, hilly

Natural resources: negligible

Land use:

arable land: 20%

permanent crops: 7%

meadows and pastures: 33%

forest and woodland: 7%

other: 33%

Irrigated land: NA sq km

Environment:

current issues: limited natural fresh water resources (except for a few seasonal streams and springs on Tortola, most of the island's water supply comes from wells and rainwater catchment)

natural hazards: hurricanes and tropical storms (July to October)

Note: strong ties to nearby US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

People

Population: 13,027 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: NA

15-64 years: NA

65 years and over: NA

Population growth rate: 1.27% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 20.25 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 6.07 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -1.5 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 19.33 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 72.73 years

male: 70.88 years

female: 74.7 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.27 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: British Virgin Islander(s)

adjective: British Virgin Islander

Ethnic divisions: black 90%, white, Asian

Religions: Protestant 86% (Methodist 45%, Anglican 21%, Church of God 7%, Seventh-Day Adventist 5%, Baptist 4%, Jehovah's Witnesses 2%, other 2%), Roman Catholic 6%, none 2%, other 6% (1981)

Languages: English (official)

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1970)

total population: 98%

male: 98%

female: 98%

Labour force: 4,911 (1980)

by occupation: NA

Government

Names:

conventional long form: none

conventional short form: British Virgin Islands

Type: dependent territory of the UK

Capital: Road Town

Administrative divisions: none (dependent territory of the UK)

Independence: none (dependent territory of the UK)

National holiday: Territory Day, 1 July

Constitution: 1 June 1977

Legal system: English law

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: blue with the flag of the UK in the upper hoist-side quadrant and the Virgin Islander coat of arms centered in the outer half of the flag; the coat of arms depicts a woman flanked on either side by a

vertical column of six oil lamps above a scroll bearing the Latin word VIGILATE (Be Watchful)

Economy

Overview: The economy, one of the most prosperous in the Caribbean area, is highly dependent on the tourist industry, which generates about 21% of the national income. In 1985 the government offered offshore registration to companies wishing to incorporate in the islands, and, in consequence, incorporation fees generate millions each year. Livestock raising is the most significant agricultural activity. The islands' crops, limited by poor soils, are unable to meet food requirements.

Industries: tourism, light industry, construction, rum, concrete block, offshore financial center

Agriculture: livestock (including poultry), fish, fruit, vegetables

Transportation

Railroads: 0 km

Highways:

total: 106 km (1983)

Ports: Road Town

Airports:

total: 3