



**Central America and Caribbean :: British Virgin Islands**  
(overseas territory of the UK)

**Introduction :: British Virgin Islands**

**Background:**

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. The economy is closely tied to the larger and more populous US Virgin Islands to the west; the US dollar is the legal currency.

**Geography :: British Virgin Islands**

**Location:**

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

**Geographic coordinates:**

18 30 N, 64 30 W

**Map references:**

Central America and the Caribbean

**Area:**

**total:** 151 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** 220

**land:** 151 sq km

**water:** 0 sq km

**note:** comprised of 16 inhabited and more than 20 uninhabited islands; includes the islands of Tortola, Anegada, Virgin Gorda, Jost van Dyke

**Area - comparative:**

about 0.9 times the size of Washington, DC

**Land boundaries:**

0 km

**Coastline:**

80 km

**Maritime claims:**

**territorial sea:** 3 nm

**exclusive fishing zone:** 200 nm

**Climate:**

subtropical; humid; temperatures moderated by trade winds

**Terrain:**

coral islands relatively flat; volcanic islands steep, hilly

**Elevation extremes:**

**lowest point:** Caribbean Sea 0 m

**highest point:** Mount Sage 521 m

**Natural resources:**

NEGL

**Land use:**

**arable land:** 6.67%

**permanent crops:** 6.67%

**other:** 86.67% (2011)

**Irrigated land:**

NA

**Natural hazards:**

hurricanes and tropical storms (July to October)

**Environment - current issues:**

limited natural freshwater resources except for a few seasonal streams and springs on Tortola; most of the islands' water supply comes from wells and rainwater catchments

**Geography - note:**

strong ties to nearby US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

**People and Society :: British Virgin Islands**

**Nationality:**

**noun:** British Virgin Islander(s)

**adjective:** British Virgin Islander

**Ethnic groups:**

black 82%, white 6.8%, other 11.2% (includes Indian and mixed) (2008)

**Languages:**

English (official)

**Religions:**

Protestant 84% (Methodist 33%, Anglican 17%, Church of God 9%, Seventh-Day Adventist 6%, Baptist 4%, other 15%), Roman Catholic 10%, Jehovah's Witnesses 2%, other 2%, none 2% (1991)

**Population:**

31,912 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 216

**Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 17.4% (male 2,734/female 2,831)

**15-24 years:** 14.8% (male 2,251/female 2,460)

**25-54 years:** 49.9% (male 7,549/female 8,384)

**55-64 years:** 10.3% (male 1,628/female 1,654)

**65 years and over:** 7.6% (male 1,180/female 1,241) (2013 est.)

**Median age:**

**total:** 35.3 years

**male:** 35.3 years

**female:** 35.4 years (2013 est.)

**Population growth rate:**

2.4% (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 34

**Birth rate:**

10.78 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 179

**Death rate:**

4.89 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 190

**Net migration rate:**

18.11 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 4

**Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 41% of total population (2010)

**rate of urbanization:** 1.7% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

**Major urban areas - population:**

ROAD TOWN (capital) 10,000 (2011)

**Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 0.97 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 0.92 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 0.9 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 1 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 0.95 male(s)/female

**total population:** 0.93 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 13.93 deaths/1,000 live births

**country comparison to the world:** 121

**male:** 15.85 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 11.92 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 78.12 years

**country comparison to the world:** 57

**male:** 76.86 years

**female:** 79.45 years (2013 est.)

**Total fertility rate:**

1.24 children born/woman (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 220

**Drinking water source:****improved:**

urban: 98% of population

rural: 98% of population

total: 98% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 2% of population

rural: 2% of population

total: 2% of population (2010 est.)

**Sanitation facility access:****improved:**

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population (2010 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

NA

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

NA

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

NA

**Education expenditures:**

4.3% of GDP (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 98

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write

**total population:** 97.8%

**male:** NA

**female:** NA (1991 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**

**total:** 15 years

**male:** 15 years

**female:** 16 years (2009)

Government: **British Virgin Islands**

**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** none

**conventional short form:** British Virgin Islands

**abbreviation:** BVI

**Dependency status:**

overseas territory of the UK; internal self-governing

**Government type:**

NA

**Capital:**

**name:** Road Town

**geographic coordinates:** 18 25 N, 64 37 W

**time difference:** UTC-4 (1 hour ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

**Administrative divisions:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**Independence:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**National holiday:**

Territory Day, 1 July (1956)

**Constitution:**

13 June 2007

**Legal system:**

English common law

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by Governor Boyd MCCLEARY (since 20 August 2010)

**head of government:** Premier Orlando SMITH (since 9 November 2011)

**cabinet:** Executive Council appointed by the governor from members of the House of Assembly

(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** <sup>(en)</sup>)

**elections:** the monarchy is hereditary; governor appointed by the monarch; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition usually appointed premier by the governor

**Legislative branch:**

unicameral House of Assembly (13 elected seats, a speaker elected by the 13 members of the House of Assembly, and 1 non-voting ex officio member in the attorney general; members are elected by direct popular vote, 1 member from each of nine electoral districts, 4 at-large members; members serve four-year terms)

**elections:** last held on 7 November 2011 (next to be held in 2015)

**election results:** percent of vote by party - NDP 49.4%, VIP 42%, other 8.6%; seats by party - NDP 9, VIP 4

**Judicial branch:**

**highest court(s):** the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (ECSC) is the itinerant superior court of record for the 9-member Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to include the British Virgin Islands; the ECSC - with its headquarters on St. Lucia - is headed by the chief justice and is comprised of the Court of Appeal with 3 justices and the High Court with 16 judges; sittings of the Court of Appeal and High Court rotate among the 9 member states; 3 High Court judges reside in member states; 3 High Court judges reside on the British Virgin Islands

**judge selection and term of office:** Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court chief justice appointed by Her Majesty, Queen ELIZABETH II; other justices and judges appointed by the Judicial and Legal Services Commission; Court of Appeal justices appointed for life with mandatory retirement at age 65; High Court judges appointed for life with mandatory retirement at age 62

**subordinate courts:** Magistrates' Courts

**Political parties and leaders:**

Concerned Citizens Movement or CCM [Ethlyn SMITH]; National Democratic Party or NDP [Orlando SMITH]; United Party or UP [Gregory MADURO]; Virgin Islands Party or VIP [Ralph T. O'NEAL]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

The Family Support Network; The Women's Desk

**other:** environmentalists

**International organization participation:**

Caricom (associate), CDB, Interpol (subbureau), IOC, OECS, UNESCO (associate), UPU

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

none (overseas territory of the UK)

**Flag description:**

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); the islands were named by COLUMBUS in 1493 in honor of Saint Ursula and her 11 virgin followers (some sources say 11,000) who reputedly were martyred by the Huns in the 4th or 5th century; the figure on the banner holding a lamp represents the saint, the other lamps symbolize her followers

**National anthem:**

**note:** as a territory of the United Kingdom, "God Save the Queen" is official (see United Kingdom)

 **PLAY ANTHEM**

Economy :: **British Virgin Islands**

**Economy - overview:**

The economy, one of the most stable and prosperous in the Caribbean, is highly dependent on tourism generating an estimated 45% of the national income. More than 934,000 tourists, mainly from the US, visited the islands in 2008. In the mid-1980s, the government began offering offshore registration to companies wishing to incorporate in the islands, and incorporation fees now generate substantial revenues. Roughly 400,000 companies were on the offshore registry by yearend 2000. The adoption of a comprehensive insurance law in late 1994, which provides a blanket of confidentiality with regulated statutory gateways for investigation of criminal offenses, made the British Virgin Islands even more attractive to international business. Livestock raising is the most important agricultural activity; poor soils limit the islands' ability to meet domestic food requirements. Because of traditionally close links with the US Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands has used the US dollar as its currency since 1959.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$500 million (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 215

**GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$1.095 billion (2008)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

1.3% (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 152

-0.6% (2008 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$42,300 (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 25

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

**household consumption:** 34.3%

**government consumption:** 8.4%

**investment in fixed capital:** 23.5%

**investment in inventories:** -0.4%

**exports of goods and services:** 109.7%

**imports of goods and services:** -75.5%

(2012 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 1%

**industry:** 11.7%

**services:** 87.3% (2012 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

fruits, vegetables; livestock, poultry; fish

**Industries:**

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

**Industrial production growth rate:**

NA%

**Labor force:**

12,770 (2004)

**country comparison to the world:** 214

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 0.6%

**industry:** 40%

**services:** 59.4% (2005)

**Unemployment rate:**

8.7% (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 100

**Population below poverty line:**

NA%

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** NA%

**highest 10%:** NA%

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$300 million

**expenditures:** \$300 million (2012 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

27.4% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 109

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

0% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 47

**Fiscal year:**

1 April - 31 March

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

2.2% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 48

2.5% (2011 est.)

**Current account balance:**

\$362.6 million (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 48

\$279.8 million (2010 est.)

**Exports:**

\$26 million (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 202

\$25 million (2011 est.)

**Exports - commodities:**

rum, fresh fish, fruits, animals; gravel, sand

**Imports:**

\$310 million (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 199

\$320 million (2011 est.)

**Imports - commodities:**

building materials, automobiles, foodstuffs, machinery

**Debt - external:**

\$36.1 million (1997)

**country comparison to the world:** 194

**Exchange rates:**

the US dollar is used

**Energy: British Virgin Islands****Electricity - production:**

50 million kWh (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

**Electricity - consumption:**

46.5 million kWh (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

**Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 144

**Electricity - imports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 146

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

10,000 kW (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

100% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 42

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 198

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 204

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 200

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 137

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 200

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 141

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

1,000 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 202

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 141

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

783 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 197

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 204

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 204

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 144

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 202

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

147,800 Mt (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 200

---

**Communications:: British Virgin Islands**

**Telephones - main lines in use:**

26,800 (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 182

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

46,800 (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** good overall telephone service

**domestic:** fixed line connections exceed 80 per 100 persons and mobile cellular subscribership is roughly 150 per 100 persons

**international:** country code - 1-284; connected via submarine cable to Bermuda; the East Caribbean Fiber System (ECFS) submarine cable provides connectivity to 13 other islands in the eastern Caribbean (2011)

**Broadcast media:**

1 private TV station; multi-channel TV is available from cable and satellite subscription services; about a half dozen private radio stations (2007)

**Internet country code:**

.vg

**Internet hosts:**

505 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 182

**Internet users:**

4,000 (2002)

**country comparison to the world:** 207

---

**Transportation:: British Virgin Islands**

**Airports:**

4 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** 190

**Airports - with paved runways:**

**total:** 2

**914 to 1,523 m:** 1

**under 914 m:** 1 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**

**total:** 2

**914 to 1,523 m:** 2 (2013)

**Roadways:**

**total:** 200 km

**country comparison to the world:** 208

**paved:** 200 km (2007)

**Ports and terminals:**

**seaport(s):** Road Harbor

---

**Military :: British Virgin Islands**

**Manpower available for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 7,266 (2010 est.)

**Manpower fit for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 6,057

**females age 16-49:** 5,805 (2010 est.)

**Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:**

**male:** 168

**female:** 162 (2010 est.)

**Military - note:**

defense is the responsibility of the UK

---

**Transnational Issues :: British Virgin Islands**

**Disputes - international:**

none

**Illicit drugs:**

transshipment point for South American narcotics destined for the US and Europe; large offshore financial center makes it vulnerable to money laundering