

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT  
CARRIBEAN  
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**Snapshots Section**

**Country Name:** United States Virgin Islands/ Virgin Islands

**Country Founded in:** 1917

**Population:** 109,825 (est. 2009)

**Government Type:** territory of the United States, under the jurisdiction of the Office of Insular Affairs/Department of the Interior

**Geography/location in the world:** in the Caribbean Sea, south of the British Virgin Islands and East of Puerto Rico

**Number of people groups:** 10

**Picture of flag:**



**Religion Snapshot**

**Major Religion and percentage of population:** Baptist (42%)

**All religions and % for each:**

Protestant Christianity (66.2%)  
    Baptist (42%), Episcopalian (7.6%), Seventh-Day Adventist (7.2%),  
    Pentecostal (3.3%), Methodist (2.3%), Lutheran (1.5%), Moravian (2.3%)  
Catholic (27.6%)  
Non-religious (2.2%)  
Spiritist (1.7%)  
Baha'i (0.6%)  
Jehovah's Witness (0.5%)  
Jewish (0.3%)  
Islam (0.3%)

Hindu (0.2%)

Other (0.4%)

**Government interaction with religion:** As the nation is a territory of the United States of America, the Virgin Islands function under the constitution of the United States of America which allows and advocates the freedom of religion and its practice.

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dstth.html>

<http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/country/?CountryID=4>

[http://www.usvitourism.vi/culture\\_history](http://www.usvitourism.vi/culture_history)

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

<http://www.legvi.org/LEGVI2008/history.htm>

<http://pluralism.org/news/view/16704>

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_240\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_240_2.asp)

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

**Official Country Name:** United States Virgin Islands/ Virgin Islands

#### Demographics:

Also known as Virgin Islanders, the population for the United States Virgin Islands (US Virgin Islands) is estimated to be 109,825 people. This population is shrinking at a rate of 0.029% annually. Average age on the islands is 39 years of age.

Each woman on the islands can be expected to have 1.85 children. There are 11.95 births for every 1,000 persons in the population per year. There are slightly more males born than females in any given year.

Those that are born can expect to live about 79 years with females outliving males by 6 years. Overall, about 6.75 people die for every 1,000 persons in the population per year. In addition, 7.56 newborns die for every 1,000 births each year with more males dying than females.

Those who are under the age of 15 make up about 20.4% of the total population and there are slightly more males than females in this group. Individuals who are aged 15 years old through 64 years of age make up about 65.9% of the total population and those who are over 65 years of age make up 13.6% of the population. In all, there are more females than males over the age of 15.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

#### Language:

When the United States bought the Danish West Indies from Denmark in 1917 and renamed the country the United States Virgin Islands, the official language of the nation became American Standard English. English is the language which is used for political affairs, business transactions, public speaking, and for teaching in schools. While English is the official language, a good portion of the country also speaks an English based Creole known as Virgin Islands Creole English.

[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=VI](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=VI)  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

#### Society/Culture:

The society and culture of the US Virgin Islands is a unique and diverse blend of European, African, Amerindian, Caribbean, and American heritage. This is a land where Caribbean tradition meets the American dream and where the cultures of continents combine to form a society unlike any other.

The majority of persons living in the US Virgin Islands live in cities which makes this culture a very urban one. Architecture reflects their rich past as yellow brick from Europe is topped off with red roofs and framed by porches and verandas which echo an African heritage. In fact, many of the buildings found in the cities of the former Danish West Indies are from the colonial era.

The use of standard American English is a marker of high status in society. Education is free and mandatory in the country. However, due to the rising cost of living and the global economic crises, tensions have been rising among all classes and ethnic backgrounds.

The participation of women in this society is on the rise especially in economic and political arenas. A good portion of the families living in the US Virgin Islands are single parent homes where an unmarried female is the head of the household. Marriage is an option to all and customs vary from church ceremonies to more traditional ceremonies like “jumping the broom.” The rearing of children is seen as the responsibility of the mother.

African and Caribbean overtones are found throughout US Virgin Island’s cuisine as it incorporates many starchy vegetables. These would include the cassava and the sweet potato. A variety of seafood is also found in daily cuisine. Fish is also used in a dish called *killaloo*. This is a stew which includes okra and fish and is served along side a cornmeal based dish called *fungi*.

Music in the US Virgin Islands carries a Caribbean flavor and includes calypso, soca, and reggae. All of these mix African rhythms with European elements which make this a musically Creole culture. American jazz music alongside Latin music, like merengue and salsa, are also enjoyed by those who live in the US Virgin Islands.

Music festivals and performances are most common around Carnival on November 15. Other holidays celebrated include Transfer Day which is the 31<sup>st</sup> of March to commemorate the day that the United States bought the territory from Denmark. Religious Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter are also celebrated.

<http://www.usvitourism.vi>

<http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-States-Virgin-Islands.html>

<http://virginislands-guide.info/past.and.present/culture>

<http://www.vinow.com/about>

## **Government:**

As an unincorporated territory of the United States of America, the US Virgin Islands are under the authority of the US Department of the Interior. That being the case, the government of the US Virgin Islands mainly functions at the local level. There is a second order administrative district in St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. The government is composed of three branches: the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches.

### *Executive*

The executive branch is headed by the Chief of State which is also the President of the United States. Currently, this position is held by President Barack H. Obama. The President is assisted in his duties by the Vice President and the head of government. The office of Vice President is currently being held by Vice President Joseph R. Biden.

Residents of the US Virgin Islands are restricted from voting for the United States Presidency, but are able to vote for representation by voting for the head of government. The head of government serves as the head of the local government. The person appointed to this office is elected by popular vote to a four year term. Currently, Governor John DeJongh, of the Democratic Party, serves as the elected governor of the US Virgin Islands.

### *Legislative*

The legislative system is based on United States law and, as such, all persons over the age of 18 have the right to vote. The Constitution that is currently in place functions under the Revised Organic Act of 22 July 1954.

The legislative branch consists of a unicameral Senate that is composed of 15 seats. All are elected by popular vote to a term of two years. In addition, the US Virgin Islands may elect one non-voting representative to the US House of Representatives.

There are three major political parties on the island which include the Democratic Party, the Independent Citizens' Movement (ICM), and the Republican Party. The Democratic Party is led by Arturo Watlington, the ICM is led by Usie Richards, and the Republican Party is led by Gary Sprauve.

### *Judicial*

The Judicial branch of the US Virgin Islands is a part of the larger United States Judicial system and functions as a district court known as the District Court of the Virgin Islands. The highest Court on the islands is known as the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands. All judges are appointed by the elected governor for a period of ten years.

<http://ltg.gov.vi/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

### **Economy:**

The economy of the US Virgin Islands is fueled by the tourism sector of the economy which accounts for almost 80% of the country's revenue. As the US Virgin Islands are a territory of the United States, the form of currency used is the United States Dollar (USD). All of the following information will be given in the form of USD.

The US Virgin Islands has the power to purchase \$1.577 billion in goods each year. The inflation rate is at 2.2%; the economy is growing at a rate of 2% each year. Annually, the country receives about \$837 million in revenue and expends the same amount.

The labor force is currently made up of 49,820 persons. The average annual earnings are around \$14,500. About 28.9% of the total population lies below the poverty line and 6.2% of the total population is unemployed.

In all, about 80% of those who are employed find their employment in the services sector which is mostly in the tourism industry. Another 19% find work in the industry sector which may include petroleum refining, textile, or pharmaceuticals. Only 1% of the total population finds their employment in the agricultural sector of the economy.

Each year about \$4.234 billion in goods is exported out of the country and \$4.609 billion is imported into the country. Refined petroleum products tend to be the commodities that are exported and food, crude oil, and building materials compose the commodities that are imported to the US Virgin Islands.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

### **Literacy:**

When literacy is defined as those who are over the age of 15 and have the ability to read and write, about 90-95% of the total population of the US Virgin Islands is said to be literate. In addition, there are literacy programs in place, such as the St. Croix literacy center which advocates and supports literacy in communities. There are also public libraries located on St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

<http://www.virginislandspace.org/Division%20of%20Libraries/stcroixliteracycenter.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

### **Land/Geography:**

The United States Virgin Islands are located in the Caribbean, southwest of the British Virgin Islands and east of Puerto Rico. The nation is composed of four main islands: St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, and Water Island. The capital of Charlotte Amalie is located on the island of St. Thomas and the largest island is St. Croix.

Overall, the US Virgin Islands encompass over 50 islands and cays. This has given the nation one of the best and natural deep water harbors in the Caribbean. In addition, each island in the chain has its own unique geological characteristics.

The islands have a total land mass area of 1,186.8 square miles which is roughly twice the size of the United States capital. Combined, the islands share 116.8 miles of coastline. The islands are hilly and mountainous. The tallest point is found in St. Thomas at Crown Mountain which reaches a height of 1,556 feet at its peak.

A subtropical climate, with relatively constant temperatures around 80 degrees Fahrenheit allows for the flora and fauna found on the islands. The rainy season commences in September and ends in November. Tropical forests cover the mountains of the US Virgin Islands alongside beautiful

flowers. These would include the double hibiscus, the flamboyant, the oleander, and the yellow cedar which is the nation's national flower.

Animals commonly found on the islands would include iguanas, hermit crabs, pelicans, lizards, frogs, and deer. The diversity of life on the land is found in the biodiversity that is in the marine life which surrounds the islands. Barracudas, dolphins, starfish, conchs, turtles, and whales all teem around the coral found around the islands.

The past years have brought with it several hurricanes, droughts, and floods which threaten this biodiversity of the US Virgin Islands. In addition, there have been earthquakes that occur every once in a while.

There is a need for more natural freshwater resources in the US Virgin Islands. The islands are taking steps in order to help conserve the plants and animals which are found on the islands. In fact, about two-thirds of the island of St. John has been set aside for the purpose of conservation through the National Park Service.

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/caribb/vi.htm>

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/geography](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/geography)

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/flora\\_fauna/flora.php](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/flora_fauna/flora.php)

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/flora\\_fauna](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/flora_fauna)

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/flora\\_fauna/marine.php](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/flora_fauna/marine.php)

## History

The first people to inhabit the US Virgin Islands were the *Ciboney* Amerindian people as early as 300 B.C. These were a hunter and gathering society which were heavily dependent on the sea.

The Ciboney people were replaced by the Arawak Amerindian people who made this land their home around 200 A.D. and introduced agriculture to the area. The Arawak were then forced out of the islands by the Amerindian people group known as Caribs who were known as fierce warriors and cannibals.

European discovery of these islands occurred when Christopher Columbus stumbled upon them while looking for a route to India in 1493. It was he who first named the islands "The Virgins." He so named them in order to reverence the Catholic, St. Ursula, who was known for her beauty and her 11,000 companions who were virgins when they became lost at sea in an attempt to abstain from marriage. The Amerindians living on the isles were forced off the island by Spain in 1550.

<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Sr-Z/Virgin-Islander-Americans.html>

[http://coris.noaa.gov/about/eco\\_essays/virgin\\_islands/history.html](http://coris.noaa.gov/about/eco_essays/virgin_islands/history.html)

[http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi\\_hist.asp](http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi_hist.asp)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15225d.htm>

In the early 1600s, other European nations began to hold interest in the islands. The British, French, Spanish from Puerto Rico, and Hollanders all began their respective colonies on the

island. The first Danish colonization occurred in 1625 when, alongside the English, the island of St. Croix was jointly colonized.

The Danes would attempt their first permanent colony on the island of St. Thomas in 1665 which failed, then revived in 1672. Agriculture was the support of the economy and in 1672 the Danes began the slave trade on the island of St. Thomas. Meanwhile, St. John was being settled by the English and St. Croix had been sold to the French.

Danish attempts to settle the neighboring island of St. John started in the 1680s, but no attempt was successful until 1718 due to English resistance. In a gesture to calm rising tensions between the Danes and the English, the English signed off and gave the island of St. John to the Danes under the Eight Articles of Agreement which helped with their diplomatic relations.

St. Croix was bought from the French in 1733 due to agricultural troubles on the islands of St. John and St. Thomas. The three islands of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas were known as the Danish West Indies by 1735. Slavery continued to fuel the economy until 1847 when the Danish king, King Christian VIII, emancipated the slaves.

Plantation owners were slow to accept and implement the change. Slaves in St. Croix heard news of the emancipation and freedom of slaves on neighboring French colonies. In 1848, a slave uprising, which occurred on St. Croix, became the mechanism for abolishing slavery in the Danish West Indies. The slaves on St. Croix freed themselves which prompted leadership to abolish slavery on the neighboring islands which composed the Danish West Indies.

Due to the fact that the economy of the Danish West Indies was fueled by the plantations on the island, emancipation brought about economic downturn which forced many plantation owners back to Europe. Others stayed and contracted labor among those who had stayed and others who were contracted labor from East India.

Talks then began between the United States and the Danes in order to sell the island to the United States. However, another labor revolt occurred in St. Croix in 1878 due to poor working conditions. Also, World War I broke out which slowed the process of the talks.

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the\\_founding\\_of\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_founding_of_the_danish_west_indies)  
[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the\\_emancipation\\_of\\_the\\_virgin\\_islands\\_in\\_1848](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_emancipation_of_the_virgin_islands_in_1848)  
[http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi\\_hist.asp](http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi_hist.asp)  
[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the\\_st\\_croix\\_labor\\_revolt\\_of\\_1878](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_st_croix_labor_revolt_of_1878)  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=XxT8qxBjwoUC&pg=PA120&lpg=PA120&dq=Danish+West+Indies+indenture&source=bl&ots=DN9IDdlqCv&sig=sJsAKWHW7xPtQbNTVF66S8uQ110&hl=en&ei=nrcFS6n1Ao\\_nAeXqsy4Cw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CCIO6AEwCO#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=XxT8qxBjwoUC&pg=PA120&lpg=PA120&dq=Danish+West+Indies+indenture&source=bl&ots=DN9IDdlqCv&sig=sJsAKWHW7xPtQbNTVF66S8uQ110&hl=en&ei=nrcFS6n1Ao_nAeXqsy4Cw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CCIO6AEwCO#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

Afraid that the Germans would get control of the islands of the Danish West Indies, the Danes sold the islands to the United States in 1917 for \$25 million in gold. It was at this time that the Danish West Indies became known as the US Virgin Islands.

However, residents of the islands were not given citizenship until 1936 when the US Virgin Islands officially became a territory under the United States government which is run by an



elected governor. Another island known as Water Island was added as the fourth Virgin Island in 1996 and is located south in the Charlotte Amalie harbor of St. Thomas.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Middle-America-Caribbean/Virgin-Islanders.html>

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/history](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/history)

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/hispanic/vi/resources/vi-history.html>

## **Christian History**

The first church to have some amount of influence in the former Danish West Indies was the Dutch Reformed Church which began its ministry in 1672. Another church of some import was the Lutheran Church which was given the freedom to minister by the Dutch Reformed Church. Neither was formally established until 1716 when the Reformed Church was recognized as the state church by the Danish government.

Unlike other Caribbean colonies, religious tolerance was practiced in the area from the colony's inception. For example, the Anglicans were allowed to minister to their respective congregations in the early 1700s and Catholics and Jews have had religious freedom since 1685. Moravians, Methodists, and Baptists were soon to follow.

Reflective of its religiously tolerant past and importance placed on the freedom of religion, the US Virgin Islands continues to be a place where many religions and denominations can feel free to minister to the people. While memberships for different sects have fluctuated, the country of the US Virgin Islands continues to be a Protestant nation. The largest denomination in the country at this point is the Baptist denomination which ministers to 42% of the total population.

<http://www.prolades.com/historical/lee-chron.pdf>

<http://virginislands-guide.info/past.and.present/culture>

<http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/caribe/wind-chron.htm>

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant\\_roots\\_in\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant_roots_in_the_danish_west_indies)

## **Religion**

### **Non Christian**

#### *Judaism*

While there is evidence of the Jewish Diaspora present in the US Virgin Islands since 1655, they were not granted their religious freedom until 1685 alongside the Catholics. The first synagogue was built in 1796. Currently, about 0.3% of the total population continues to practice Judaism which accounts for 330 people.

<http://www.usvi.net/usvi/synagogue.html>

[http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/290919/jewish/About-Us.htm](http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/290919/jewish/About-Us.htm)

[http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm](http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm)

#### *Islam*

It is unknown when Islam was first introduced to the nation of the Virgin Islands; however, the religion has started to grow in the last 30 years. There is much racial diversity in this religious group and there are at least 300 persons who practice Islam in the country.

The majority who practice Islam live in St. Croix and are businessmen from Palestine. This accounts for about 0.3% of the total population which is served by at least one mosque.

<http://blackstarnews.com/?c=122&a=3420>

### *Hinduism*

Like Islam, it is unknown as to when Hinduism was introduced to the country; however it is possible that it was introduced during a period of indentured labor in the late 1800s. Currently, there is one Hindu temple on the island of St. Croix. About 0.2% of the total population practices Hinduism which would account for about 220 persons.

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_240\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_240_2.asp)  
<http://tamilelibrary.org/teli/templeus6.html>

### *Baha'i*

Those of the Baha'i faith have been present in the US Virgin Islands for at the last 38 years. Currently, about 0.6% of the total population is a member of these congregations which would account for a little more than 650 persons.

<http://www.bahaindex.com/en/news/1-general-news/3454-bahais-hold-national-convention-celebrate-ridvan>

### *Jehovah's Witness*

The congregations of the Jehovah's Witness faith have had a history in the US Virgin Islands since the 1950s. At present, about 0.5% of the total population is a member of one of the 9 congregations which are found on the islands. This means that about 550 persons are members of a Jehovah's Witness congregation.

[http://www.google.com/search?q=Jehovah's+Witness+history+US+Virgin+Islands&hl=en&safe=active&rls=com.microsoft:\\*:IE-SearchBox&rlz=1I7GGLG\\_en&tbs=tl:1&tbo=u&ei=XrwFS8qxAcONnQeXjaHBCw&sa=X&oi=timeline\\_result&ct=title&resnum=11&ved=0CCIQ5wIwCg](http://www.google.com/search?q=Jehovah's+Witness+history+US+Virgin+Islands&hl=en&safe=active&rls=com.microsoft:*:IE-SearchBox&rlz=1I7GGLG_en&tbs=tl:1&tbo=u&ei=XrwFS8qxAcONnQeXjaHBCw&sa=X&oi=timeline_result&ct=title&resnum=11&ved=0CCIQ5wIwCg)  
[http://www.watchtower.org/e/statistics/worldwide\\_report.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/e/statistics/worldwide_report.htm)

### *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS/Mormons)*

The earliest work done by the LDS church in the Virgin Islands started in 1969. Since then two congregations have formed, however, it is unknown how many people in the population are members of the LDS church in the US Virgin Islands.

<http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/virgin-islands>

### *Spiritist/Animistic*

It is unknown as to the exact date that Spiritism was introduced to the Virgin Islands, but it is considered an ethnic religion. It involves the worshiping of ancestors, spirits, and magic; it incorporates many aspects of ancient African beliefs. Currently, about 1.7% of the total population participates as a Spiritist or in Animistic practices which accounts for 1,867 people.

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_240\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_240_2.asp)

### *Non-religious*

About 2.2% of the total population, accounting for a little over 2,400 persons, considers themselves to be non-religious. About 0.8% of the total population considers themselves agnostic which accounts for 880 persons.

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_240\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_240_2.asp)

### *Catholic/Orthodox*

The Catholic Church had its beginnings in the US Virgin Islands in the mid-1600s and its members gained their religious freedom in 1685. This church mainly ministered to the Puerto Rican and African population. Currently, about 27.6% of the total population is a part of the Roman Catholic Church which accounts for 30,310 members. These members are served within 8 administrative districts called parishes.

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant\\_roots\\_in\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant_roots_in_the_danish_west_indies)

<http://www.catholicvi.com/catviweb/files1/vilink1.html>

[http://www.catholicvi.com/catviweb/cathvidir/index\\_files/contents.html](http://www.catholicvi.com/catviweb/cathvidir/index_files/contents.html)

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dstth.html>

[http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm](http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm)

## **Christian/Evangelical**

### *Methodists*

The Methodist Church was introduced to the US Virgin Islands at the turn of the nineteenth century. Currently, Methodist churches on the islands minister to about 2.3% of the total population which accounts for 2,525 persons. The churches are organized into two circuits: one on the island of St. Croix and another which encompasses the islands of St. Thomas and St. John. These are part of the larger Leeward Islands District which is a part of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas.

<http://www.mcca-lid.org>

[http://www.mcca-](http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=20&MMN_position=38:3)

[lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE\\_user\\_op=view\\_page&PAGE\\_id=20&MMN\\_position=38:3](http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=20&MMN_position=38:3)

[http://www.mcca-](http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=15&MMN_position=33:3)

[lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE\\_user\\_op=view\\_page&PAGE\\_id=15&MMN\\_position=33:3](http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=15&MMN_position=33:3)

### *Seventh Day Adventists (SDA)*

It is unknown as to the exact year in which the Seventh Day Adventist Church began its ministry in the US Virgin Islands, but the current organization of the Church in this part of the Caribbean came into being in 1975. As of right now, this church ministers to at least 7.2% of the total population which accounts for 7,907 persons which attend their churches.

<http://www.northcaribbeanconference.org/about-us/conference-history>

### *Baptists*

The Baptist International Missions started to minister to those in the US Virgin Islands in 1963. Since then the Baptist denomination has ballooned to become the largest denominational following in the nation. Currently, about 42% of the total population, accounting for around 46,125 persons, is a member of a local Baptist church on the islands. Within the Baptist denomination, there are further divisions between conventions which include the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=u2cRPScugBwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=evangelical+saga#v=onepage&q=Virgin%20Islands&f=false>

<http://www.gracevi.com>

<http://www.nbca-inc.com/resources/VirginIslandFieldReport.html>

### *Episcopalian (formerly Anglican)*

The Anglican Church has ministered in the US Virgin Islands since the early 1700s. In 1917, United States bought these islands from the Danish and the Episcopalian church presided over the Anglican Church that was already present starting in 1949. The two were considered separate entities until 1963 when the Episcopalian Church and the Anglican Church in the US Virgin Islands combined to form one diocese. Presently, about 7.6% of the total population, accounting for 8,346 persons, is a member of an Episcopalian Church.

<http://www.franciscan-anglican.com/explanation.htm>

<http://www.episcopalvi.org/churches.html>

<http://www.episcopalvi.org/history.html>

### *Pentecostals*

It is unknown as to the date when Pentecostal Assemblies, such as the Church of God or the Assemblies of God, was first introduced to the US Virgin Islands. Currently, about 3.3% of the total population, accounting for about 3,625 people, is a part of a Pentecostal church.

### *Lutheran*

The Lutheran church first started ministering to those in the US Virgin Islands in the mid-1600s and their ministry mainly focused on the slaves in the country. The oldest physical church on the island of St. Thomas is a Lutheran Church. As of right now, the Lutheran Church ministers to about 1.5% of the total population which accounts for 1,647 people.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=Jnn44QjrJFEC&pg=PA39&dq=U.S.+virgin+islands&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=religion&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=Jnn44QjrJFEC&pg=PA39&dq=U.S.+virgin+islands&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=religion&f=false)

### *Moravian*

Members of the Moravian Church first began their ministry to the US Virgin Islands in 1732 and focused on ministering to the slaves on the island of St. Thomas. The mission to St. John began in 1754 and the mission to St. Croix began in 1755. This church fostered and ran the first school that was meant for the education of slaves on the islands and did much for the literacy of slaves. Currently, this church ministers to about 2.3% of the total population which accounts for 2,525 members.

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant\\_roots\\_in\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant_roots_in_the_danish_west_indies)

### General:

<http://www.prolades.com/historical/lee-chron.pdf>

<http://virginislands-guide.info/past.and.present/culture>

<http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/caribe/wind-chron.htm>

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant\\_roots\\_in\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/protestant_roots_in_the_danish_west_indies)

[http://www.lat-long.com/ListLocations-1-Virgin\\_Islands-Church.html](http://www.lat-long.com/ListLocations-1-Virgin_Islands-Church.html)

## People Groups

### **000000**

#### **American (19,000)**

An American presence has been on the islands since the early 1900s, especially after the United States bought the Virgin Islands from the Danes in 1917. Americans are composed of different types of ethnicities, but all Americans living in the US Virgin Islands came from the United States at some point in their ethnic history.

They primarily speak English and it is estimated that over 10% of this population is evangelical Christian. There are many churches which minister to this people group. Gospel resources that are available in their primary language include the Bible, the *Jesus* film, and recordings alongside worship music.

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/history/](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/history/)

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#### **Antillean Creole (200)**

Also known as the *Papiamentu*, those who are Antillean Creole are the descendants of a combined heritage of African, Portuguese, Danish, and Spanish. As such, their history on the island extends to over 300 years!

Their primary language is a Portuguese-based Creole known as Papiamentu, but there is evidence that the use of this language is decreasing. Most are Roman Catholic. It is estimated

that 6% of this population is evangelical Christian. The Bible, the *Jesus* film, and gospel recordings are available in their primary language.

[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=pap](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=pap)

<http://www.alsintl.com/resources/languages/Papiamentu>

[http://books.google.com/books?id=CPX2xgmVe9IC&pg=PA135&dq=Papiamentu+people+US+Virgin+Islands&lr=&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=CPX2xgmVe9IC&pg=PA135&dq=Papiamentu+people+US+Virgin+Islands&lr=&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/researchandstudents/news.cfm?story=25837>

<http://www.geographia.com/bonaire/bonpap01.htm>

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### **British (50)**

Those who are British are the descendants of those who emigrated to the US Virgin Islands from England. The British have been on the island of St. Croix since the 1620s; however, England stopped the colonization process in order to maintain diplomacy with the Danish.

At least 10% of this population is estimated to be evangelical Christian and their primary language is English. As such, a variety of resources are available to this people group which include the Scriptures, the *Jesus* film, and gospel recordings alongside worship music.

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/history/](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/history/)

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### **Deaf (unknown)**

It is not known as to the exact number of Deaf living in the US Virgin Islands, but some estimate that there are a few hundred. It is important to note that those who are deaf share a dual people group status as they are also members of other people groups. The deaf who live in the US Virgin Islands primarily use American Sign Language (ASL) for the purposes of communication.

<http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=8603>

[http://www.uvi.edu/sites/uvi/Pages/VIUCEDD-American\\_Sign\\_Language.aspx?s=CO](http://www.uvi.edu/sites/uvi/Pages/VIUCEDD-American_Sign_Language.aspx?s=CO)

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### **East Indian (900)**

East Indians first made their way to the US Virgin Islands when it was formerly known as the Danish West Indies, after the abolishment of slavery in the mid-1800s. They were contracted by the Danish to work on the plantations in order to lessen the economic situation that ensued from lack of slave labor.

Also known as the Tamil, East Indians in the US Virgin Islands are mostly Sindhis and primarily practice Hinduism. It is estimated that less than 5% of this population is evangelical Christian. There is at least one church which is actively reaching out to this people group and a variety of tools are available in their primary language of Hindi. These would include the Bible, the *Jesus* film, and gospel recordings.

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/culture/people.php](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/culture/people.php)  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/7036249/Indo-Caribbean-Genealogy>  
<http://www.indocaribbeanheritage.com/content/view/21/42>

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### **French (800)**

The French first came to the US Virgin Islands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when France decided to claim St. Croix as a colony of France. This island continued to be a colony of France until 1733 when the Danes bought the colony from France.

At least 5% of this population is known to be evangelical Christian and at least one church is actively reaching out to the French population. They primarily speak French and Gospel tools, which include the Bible and the *Jesus* film, are available for use in French.

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/history/](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/history/)

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### **Jew (800)**

Jews have been in the US Virgin Islands since the beginning of its colonization in 1655. In fact, one of the first governors of the colony was Jewish. During the time of the opening of the Panama Canal, however, many emigrated out of the country. Since then this population has rebounded and is stable with about 800 persons.

Currently, about half of the Jewish population practices Judaism. Less than 2% are known to be evangelical Christian. There is a church which is reaching out to this population and Gospel tools like the Bible and the *Jesus* film are available to them in their primary language of English.

[http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco\\_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm](http://www.jewishvirginislands.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/291284/jewish/Jewish-History-on-Island.htm)

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### **Portuguese (50)**

It is unknown as to the exact date when those of Portuguese descent made a home in the US Virgin Islands. There is evidence that the Portuguese did help the Danish with the slave trade and a number of them are also Jews which implies that the Portuguese have had a long history in the US Virgin Islands.

The Portuguese living in the US Virgin Islands primarily speak Portuguese. A little over 5% are known to be evangelical Christian. Churches are working to produce a church movement among this people. Gospel tools like the Bible and the *Jesus* film alongside gospel recordings are available to them in their primary language.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=2tkvAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA137&lpg=PA137&dq=discovery+of+Danish+West+Indies&source=bl&ots=m4tDrLKwhY&sig=9fX6irhcZPp5s\\_OARw20b\\_n5qLY&hl=en&ei=iAkMS9mUCI\\_knAfWp4DQAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CCYQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=discovery%20of%20Danish%20West%20Indies&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=2tkvAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA137&lpg=PA137&dq=discovery+of+Danish+West+Indies&source=bl&ots=m4tDrLKwhY&sig=9fX6irhcZPp5s_OARw20b_n5qLY&hl=en&ei=iAkMS9mUCI_knAfWp4DQAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CCYQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=discovery%20of%20Danish%20West%20Indies&f=false)

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**Puerto Rican (15,000)**

There is evidence of the Spanish and the Puerto Rican influence in the US Virgin Islands since the early 1600s when people from Puerto Rico came and attempted to colonize the islands. Another wave of persons from Puerto Rico came in the 1900s as people sought to work in the agricultural sector of the US Virgin Islands.

Also known as Boricuas, the Puerto Rican people primarily speak Spanish. At least 10% of this population is known to be evangelical Christian. There are churches which are reaching out to this population. A variety of Gospel tools, including the Bible, the *Jesus* film, and worship music, is available to this people group in their primary language.

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/culture/people.php](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/culture/people.php)

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**Virgin Islander (64,000)**

Those who are considered Virgin Islander come from a shared heritage which has a strong African base combined with European and American ethnicities. These differences in ethnicities can be found in the different accents. A differentiation is made between newcomers and old families who have lived on the islands for centuries.

About 42,000 Virgin Islanders primarily speak Virgin Islands Creole English and 24,000 primarily speak English. More than 5% of the population that primarily speaks English is known to be evangelical Christian. There are churches that are ministering to this population and tools like the Bible and the *Jesus* film are available to this people in their primary language of English.

About 29% of those who primarily speak Virgin Islands Creole English are known to be evangelical Christian. There are churches which are actively reaching out to this people group and are attempting to reproduce a church movement. While there are no tools available to this group in their primary language of Virgin Islands Creole English, the Bible and the *Jesus* film are available to them in the country's official language of English.

<http://virginislands-guide.info/past.and.present/culture>

General:

[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=VI](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=VI)

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/history/](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/history/)

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php>

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/culture/people.php](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/culture/people.php)

**Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to aid local believers in efforts to evangelize and start churches for the Virgin Island Creole speaking peoples who are less



evangelized than other groups. The evangelism should be done in Creole and churches encouraged to use the Creole language.

2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to provide evangelistic resources such as the *Jesus* film and evangelistic tracts in the Virgin Island Creole language. Any possible aid that Evangelicals can give toward the reaching of the Creole speaking peoples on these islands would be a move forward.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to strengthen families in the societies of the U.S. Virgin Islands. The unit of the family and the value of marriage have been attacked in this society to the point that one in three homes in the country is headed by a single female parent. Pray for uplifting the family unit and for the men of these families to take proper responsibility. Having seminars or training pastors in helping single women who are heading households in terms of finance and dealing with social and emotional trials would be helpful. Training pastors to reach out and minister to the men in the community in terms of their role in the family and discipling them would also be of help. In addition, help in training the spiritual leaders of children in order to uphold the family would also be an encouragement in the situation.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek means to help the economy in the islands. Almost 30% of the country lives below the poverty line. Missions who help meet basic needs like basic healthcare, clothing, food, and training in obtaining a job would also be a great ministry. Stewardship training might also be of use in teaching and training others to manage well what they already have.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should be alert to supply aid and support during times of disasters. The US Virgin Islands are hit by hurricanes on a fairly normal basis. As such, relief missions would be of importance to those living on the islands. Sending supplies which churches need to help reach out to the community during times of distress would also help to reach out to those who are in need both materially and spiritually. Needs in specific areas may vary so one might have to contact specific churches.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should look for ways to evangelize the Americans who live on the islands. If 10% of the 19,000 are Evangelicals, that leaves over 17,000 persons who need the genuine gospel of Jesus Christ.

<http://www.everyculture.com/To-Z/United-States-Virgin-Islands.html>

## Pictures

<http://honeymoons.about.com/od/usvipictures/ig/USVI--Scenic-Pictures/>

<http://kimbriggs.com/photos/us-virgin-islands-usvi/>

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/geography](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/geography)

[http://www.villadawn.com/st\\_croix/pictures/st\\_croix\\_pictures.htm](http://www.villadawn.com/st_croix/pictures/st_croix_pictures.htm)

<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&source=hp&q=USVI&gbv=2&aq=f&oq=&aqi=g3>

<http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?p=USVI&toggle=1&cop=mss&ei=UTF-8&fr=yfp-t-701>

## Links

<http://www.usvitourism.vi>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

<http://www.legvi.org/LEGVI2008/history.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vq.html>

<http://virginislands-guide.info/past.and.present/culture>

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/caribb/vi.htm>

[http://www.vinow.com/general\\_usvi/geography](http://www.vinow.com/general_usvi/geography)

[http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi\\_hist.asp](http://www.virgin-islands-history.dk/eng/vi_hist.asp)

[http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the\\_founding\\_of\\_the\\_danish\\_west\\_indies](http://scandinavian-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_founding_of_the_danish_west_indies)

<http://www.prolades.com/historical/lee-chron.pdf>

<http://www.usvi.net/usvi/syngogue.html>