

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT  
CARRIBEAN  
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS**

**Snapshots Section**

**Country Name:** British Virgin Islands

**Country Founded in:** 1672

**Population:** 24,491 (2009 est.)

**Government Type:** autonomous territory of the UK

**Geography/location in the world:** in the Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, north of Antigua

**Number of people groups:** 6

**Picture of flag:**



**Religion Snapshot**

**Major Religion and percentage of population:** Protestant Christianity (73.8%)

**All religions and % for each:**

Protestant Christianity (73.8%)

Methodist (33%), Anglican (17%), Pentecostal (8%),  
Seventh-Day Adventist (6%), Baptist (4%)

Catholic (10%)

Spiritist (8.6%)

Baha'i (3.2%)

Hindu (2.1%)

Non-religious/Agnostic (2%)

Judaism (1.6%)

Jehovah's Witnesses (0.8%)

Muslim (0.5%)

Mormon (0.45%)

Other (1.55%)

**Government interaction with religion:** The freedom of religion is provided for by the law and is advocated by the government.

[http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country\\_33\\_2.asp](http://www.thearda.com/internationalData/countries/Country_33_2.asp)

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

<http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/country/?CountryID=88>

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

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127343.htm>

<http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/downloads.asp>

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

**Official Country Name:** British Virgin Islands

#### Demographics:

According to July 2009 estimates, the population of the British Virgin Islands stands at 24,491 persons and is growing at a rate of 1.8% annually. About 40% of the total population lives in a city and 1.7% of the population continues to move to the cities each year. In addition, the growth of the population can also be attributed to the migration rate. For every 1,000 persons in the country, 8 are considered migrants.

There are a little over 14 births for every 1,000 people in the population per year and an average of about 2 children are born to each woman in the country. However, for every 1,000 live births, a little over 14 newborns die each year and significantly more males die than females. Those that survive infancy can expect to live an average of 77.26 years with females outliving the males by 2 years. Overall, there are 4 deaths that occur for every 1,000 people in the population each year.

The average age of persons living in the British Virgin Islands is 32.3 years with males being slightly older than females. A little less than 20% of the total population is under the age of 15. The majority of people living in the British Virgin Islands are between the ages of 15 and 64. Only 5.8% of the total population is over the age of 65. Interestingly, although there are more male deaths at infancy, there are slightly more males born than females in any given year and there are more males than females in all age groups.

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

<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/products.asp?iProd=50&iCat=8&hierarchy=0>

#### Language:

The British Virgin Islands have been a colony of England since the 1672 and English is the official language of the country. English is used in public schools, in politics, and in business. While English is the official language in the British Virgin Islands, most also speak Virgin Islands Creole which is an English based Creole with African influence that was formed during the time of slavery.

[http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Virgin\\_Islands\\_Creole](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Virgin_Islands_Creole)

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

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

#### Society/Culture:

Though the British Virgin Islands are regularly associated with the U.S. Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands has a distinct culture and society that are significantly different from the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands. European, African, and Amerindian people groups have all had

their influence on this nation and it is a place where British reservation is combined with Caribbean hospitality and cheer.

The majority of society lives in rural areas, with about 40% living in the major towns of the British Virgin Islands. Although these towns may have more contemporary buildings made of concrete, architecture and landscaping still keep to the colonial and traditional rural ideal. In fact, the main street of the capital, Road Town, does not have any traffic lights and maintains open land along the road to allow for a view of the sea.

Most people are closely attached to the communities in which they live and this provides and fosters camaraderie among neighbors. However, this same fellowship also proves as a barrier to newcomers who are seen as “non-belongers” and it may take up to a few generations in order to be considered a citizen by society standards.

The last name of a person may be used to identify which part of the Islands they were born in and may also be used to identify their family’s trade. Families are started through marriage or through common unions and the rite of marriage comes with a higher social status. One’s social status in society may also be verified by one’s last name.

A high priority is placed on manners in public. It is considered rude to loudly call out a person’s name in public in order to grab their attention. Those who are older are referred to by the title Mr., Mrs., or Miss, depending on their marital status. While this is a tropical destination for tourists, it is considered rude to go around and eat at a restaurant in a bathing suit. Modesty is of high regard in this nation.

In terms of gender roles, men and women share equal responsibilities when it comes to managing the home, though their specific duties vary. For example, the woman may tend to the garden while the man goes fishing or may tend to the farm. In reference to jobs, men tend to hold more public offices while women tend to work in education or through local non-profit organizations such as the church.

Food is definitely one area in which European, African, and Amerindian influences combine to form a cuisine similar but unique to the Caribbean. For example, English influence is found in foods like fish and chips while common American food like Barbeque is present. East Indians introduced curries while Africans introduced vegetables like okra into the local cuisine.

One traditional dish is called fungi which is a corn meal based dish that is made with coconut milk, onions, sweet peppers, and vegetables like okra. Other traditional dishes will include stews made with starchy vegetables, like plantains, cassava, and tannia, and made with meat which may include ox tail, pork, or fish.

Some foods are only prepared for special occasions or holidays. Around Christmas time a drink called guavaberry wine or is served. It is made from a local fruit which is a small berry which grows on trees. Another dish that is saved for a special occasion is known as *dukuna* which is a pudding made from sweet potato and coconut that is steamed in a plantain leaf. This is normally served on Good Friday.

Music and dance on the islands represents a variety of cultures. For example, there are places where American jazz is featured and others where local calypso bands are featured. One music form indigenous to the British Virgin Islands is called *fungi* whose name comes from the local dish of *fungi*. The band includes stringed instruments, wind instruments, drums, and vocals and at times the instruments are hand made by the musician!

While many holidays that are celebrated are religious in nature, including Christmas and Good Friday, many others are associated with political remembrances. For example, the most important cultural holiday is known as Festival and takes place the first few days of August. This holiday is to commemorate the emancipation of the African people from slavery in the British Virgin Islands and festivities include music, dancing, costume parades, and beauty contests.

<http://www.b-v-i.com/Dining/default.htm>

<http://www.definitivecaribbean.com/guide/BritishVirginIslands.aspx?group=4#Food%20&%20Cooking>

<http://www.definitivecaribbean.com/guide/BritishVirginIslands.aspx?group=4#Music>

<http://www.businessbvi.com/articles/fungi-music>

<http://www.b-v-i.com/Culture/default.htm>

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/British-Virgin-Islands.html>

## **Government:**

The British Virgin Islands are a self-governing entity that functions under the authority of the UK. As such, the governmental structure of the nation is based on the structure which is found in England. Like most other nations, the government of the British Virgin Islands is divided into three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial.

### *The Executive*

The executive branch is headed by the office of Chief of State which is currently Queen Elizabeth II and she is represented by the Governor who she appoints. Governor David Pearey has occupied the office of Governor since 2006.

After legislative elections, the Governor usually appoints the leader of the party of the majority to the office of Head of Government in carrying out the duties of the government. This position is currently filled by Premier Ralph T. O'Neal and he has held this position since 2007. The Governor also appoints the members of the Cabinet which will help the Premier from the members of the House of Assembly.

### *The Legislative*

The legislative branch and the legal system as a whole are based on the system of English law. This branch consists of a unicameral House of Assembly which consists of 14 seats. 13 of these are elected seats and persons over the age of 18 are allowed to vote for representation for the filling of these seats. 1 of the seats is a non-voting seat. Each of the members of the House of Assembly is voted into office for a term of four years and the next election is to be held in 2011.

There are two major political parties in the British Virgin Islands: the Virgin Islands Party (VIP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP). The current majority is the VIP and they hold 10 of the 13 voting seats in the House of Assembly. Other parties include the Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) and the United Party (UP).

Environmentalists, the Family Support Network and The Women's Desk all serve as political pressure groups. In addition there are 8 international law firms which are present in the country. All governmental agencies in the country are under the Constitution which was last amended in 1967.

### *The Judicial*

The judicial branch consists of four courts: the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, the Juvenile Court, the Magistrate's Court, and the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is part of the larger Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court which is divided into the High Court and the Court of Appeal. Currently, two of the judges of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court are residents of the British Virgin Islands.

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

<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/default.asp>

[http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community/british\\_virgin\\_islands.jsp?menu=community](http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community/british_virgin_islands.jsp?menu=community)

### **Economy:**

Like its close neighbor, the British Virgin Islands get a good portion of their revenue from the tourism industry which provides for about 45% of the national income. Incorporation fees imposed on companies are also a good source of revenue. In addition, due to close ties with the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands, the U.S. dollar (USD) is used as the form of currency. The following information is given in USD.

In any given year, the British Virgin Islands have the power to purchase about \$853.4 million in goods. On average the government receives about \$204.7 million annually and spends \$180.4 million. Agriculture accounts for 1.8% of this revenue and industry accounts for another 6.2%. The largest contributor to revenue in the country is the services sector which accounts for 92%. At present inflation is at 2% and the national debt is \$36.1 million.

The labor force is composed of 12,770 persons and the average income is \$38,500 per year. About 3.6% of the labor force is currently unemployed. The majority of those who are employed (59.4%) find work in the services sector of the economy and another 40% find work in the industry sector. Overall, less than 1% find their employment in the agricultural sector of the economy.

Every year, about \$25.3 million in goods is exported from the country. These goods would include rum, produce, animals, and sand. Conversely, almost \$187 million is imported into the country annually. Goods that are imported into the country would include automobiles, food, and building materials.

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

### **Literacy:**

Literacy is defined as those who are over the age of 15 who are able to read and write. About 97.8% of the total population is said to be literate. The government of the British Virgin Islands has made education a priority and, on average, a person can be expected to attend school for 17 years which allows for a high literacy rate. About 3.7% of the total revenue that the government makes is spent on education.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vi.html>  
<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/products.asp?iCat=12&hierarchy=0>

### **Land/Geography:**

The nation of the British Virgin Islands is located in the Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and north of Antigua. Like the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands, the country is composed of a chain of 50 islands and cays. Of these, only 16 are inhabited. The main islands include the island of Tortola, Anegada, Virgin Gorda and Jost van Dyke. The capital city, Road Town, is located on the main island of Tortola.

Together, these islands share an area of 59 square miles (sq mi) which, comparatively, is a little smaller than the capital of the United States. Each of the islands has its own terrain, flora, and fauna which make it unique and separates it from the other islands. Overall, the islands consist of dry tropical forests and the terrain varies from lowlands, which are relatively flat, to mountainous regions.

As a good portion of the forests were destroyed during the time of colonization, the British Virgin Islands have made it a point to conserve what is left. There are many protected gardens and national parks. One of these, known as Mount Sage National Park, not only contains the highest point of the nation which rises to 1,716 feet, but also includes over 90 acres of semi-tropical rainforest. The White Cedar, Hibiscus, and the Century Plant, which only blooms every 8 years, are found in the forests throughout the nation.

In terms of animal life, the island nation is mostly known for the diversity in the bird population. The most well known species on the island is the Green-throated Carib which is a type of hummingbird. The island of Anegada is especially known for its flamingoes.

The British Virgin Islands are also known for the amount of reptile life that can be found on any island in the nation. The most well known reptile is the tree frog. There are also a couple of iguanas that are indigenous to the area including the Anegada Rock Iguana.

The climate of the British Virgin Islands is considered sub-tropical which is moderated by trade winds. Temperatures average out at 77 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and above 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. There are not sharp distinctions among seasonal changes. There is a time between the months of July and October where hurricanes and tropical storms are common.

<http://www.b-v-i.com/Nature/MtSage.htm>  
<http://www.definitivecaribbean.com/guide/BritishVirginIslands.aspx?group=4#Flora%20&%20Gardens>  
<http://www.definitivecaribbean.com/guide/BritishVirginIslands.aspx?group=5#Nature>  
<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/caribb/vg.htm>  
<http://tourism.virginislandsdailynews.com/florabvi.html>  
<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/products.asp?iCat=11&hierarchy=0>  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vi.html>

## History

The first inhabitants of the British Virgin Islands arrived sometime during the Stone Age from South America and were known as the *Ciboney* Amerindian group. This people group was later displaced by the Arawak Amerindian people group around 100 B.C. These people, in turn, were displaced by the Carib Amerindian people group about one thousand years later. Both of these groups originated from the northern part of South America.

European discovery of the islands occurred in 1493 when Christopher Columbus was accomplishing his second journey to the New World. He named the chain of islands “Las Once Mil Virgenes” in order to commemorate the Catholic Saint Ursula and her 11,000 virgin companions who were lost at sea as legend holds. It was at this time, the largest of the islands was named Virgin Gorda, which literally means the fat virgin, as Columbus thought the island looked like an overweight woman reclining when viewed from the ship.

The Carib Amerindians they met were fierce, warlike, cannibals who raised some opposition to European attempts at settlement. So in 1550, King Carlos V of Spain ordered them all exterminated as they were viewed as enemies. After this time, the Spaniards thought little of the Virgin Islands as they believed them too small to colonize even though Spain had started to mine for copper. The islands would remain uninhabited or scarcely inhabited (mostly by pirates) for the next 100 years.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Q1cTAAAYAAJ&pg=PA17&sig=K3NXIggao2PsjzOFVItToAJN1Pc&hl=en#v=onepage&q=&f=false>  
<http://www.caribbeanchoice.com/bvi/culture.asp>  
[http://history-world.org/stone\\_age.htm](http://history-world.org/stone_age.htm)

The first settlers on in the British Virgin Islands were the Dutch and they started a small settlement on the island of Tortola. Their claim on the island did not last long. The territory was claimed by the British in 1628 and has, for the most part, remained in British control since this time.

By 1666 the British had taken over all other European settlements on the islands of Tortola, Anegada, Virgin Gorda and Jost van Dyke. However, this incurred some anger on the part of other European powers and a number of raids were conducted against the British. The lands were returned to the British at the signing of the Treaty of Breda in 1672. It was at this time that the British Virgin Islands became a part of the Leeward Islands colony of England.

By this time, sugar production made possible through slavery, had been established on the island. The Dutch were the first nation to bring slaves before 1665 and the British continued the practice



once they had control of the islands in the late 1600s. The slavery industry picked up once there was a more stable political presence in the early 1700s.

The treatment of slaves was largely regulated by their owners until 1774 when the British Virgin Islands established the first Legislative office known as the House of Commons. By 1798 this legislative office provided standards which were to be kept for the health and protection of the slaves on the islands. These were enforced to the point that the island of Tortola is the location where the only British plantation owner in history was hanged for the murder of a slave!

Regardless, insurrections and rebellions by slaves against their owners were common. The most significant rebellion in the Caribbean occurred in 1831 in Haiti when the slaves freed themselves and made their own Republic.

News spread quickly and uprisings started appearing more frequently and strongly than before. The slaves were finally emancipated on August 1, 1834 and since then the first three days of August have been celebrated by the people of the British Virgin Islands as a holiday or Festival.

In 1872 the British Virgin Islands were granted the title of a colony within the Leeward Islands and in 1956 the British Virgin Islands became its own stand alone colony functioning outside the Leeward Islands. A new constitution was ratified in 1967 which is the constitution under which the British Virgin Islands presently functions.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=s8wCAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA255&sig=XwXr5bNzUQoYARJ9DM3z7\\_yanQY&hl=en#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=s8wCAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA255&sig=XwXr5bNzUQoYARJ9DM3z7_yanQY&hl=en#v=onepage&q=&f=false)  
<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g147353-s203/British-Virgin-Islands:Caribbean:History.html>  
[http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Slavery\\_in\\_the\\_British\\_Virgin\\_Islands](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Slavery_in_the_British_Virgin_Islands)  
<http://www.ultimatebvi.com/information/history>  
[http://www.google.com/search?q=British+Virgin+Islands+History&hl=en&safe=active&rls=com.microsoft:\\*:IE-SearchBox&rlz=117GGLG\\_en&tbs=tl:1&tbo=u&ei=E0EqS\\_vKBoz\\_nAfF8tXrCA&sa=X&oi=timeline\\_result&ct=title&resnum=11&ved=0CDEQ5wIwCg](http://www.google.com/search?q=British+Virgin+Islands+History&hl=en&safe=active&rls=com.microsoft:*:IE-SearchBox&rlz=117GGLG_en&tbs=tl:1&tbo=u&ei=E0EqS_vKBoz_nAfF8tXrCA&sa=X&oi=timeline_result&ct=title&resnum=11&ved=0CDEQ5wIwCg)  
<http://www.country-studies.com/caribbean-islands/british-virgin-islands,-anguilla-and-montserrat.html>

## **Christian History**

Unlike many of the other nations in the Caribbean, the Catholic Church was not the first to start ministering to those living on the islands. The first church to minister on the islands was the Methodist Church which received its start when missionaries Dr. Thomas Coke and William Hammet started a small congregation in Tortola. Following this, the Anglican Church established their Diocese in 1824.

Though both have lost members to other denominations that have come in, these two main denominations continue to be the predominant denominations of preference today. The next major religion to come into the area after the Anglicans was the Catholics who started their ministry in the 1950s. They were followed by the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Baptists, and the Pentecostals. Regardless, the government continues to foster a culture of religious freedom and tolerance.

<http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/caribe/wind-chron.htm>  
[http://bvibeacon.com/main/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=416&Itemid=166](http://bvibeacon.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=416&Itemid=166)

## Religion

### Non Christian

#### *Judaism*

Those of Jewish descent have been known to live in the British Virgin Islands for as long as the nation has been a colony of England. As Jews were granted full citizenship and freedom of religion, with trade and business restrictions, the British Virgin Islands became a haven for many. Presently, about 1.6% of the total population practices Judaism which accounts for almost 400 persons.

<http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/011/jewcar.html>

#### *Islam*

It is unknown as to the exact date when Islam was introduced into British Virgin Island society and there are undertones which suggest that this religion is not generally favored in this society. About 0.5% of the total population, accounting for 122 persons, practices Islam. These members are served by one of three Islamic centers that are found on the islands.

[http://www.islamicfinder.org/cityPrayerNew.php?country=British\\_Virgin\\_Islands](http://www.islamicfinder.org/cityPrayerNew.php?country=British_Virgin_Islands)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jlbushjr19/4039956922>  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=Islam&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=Islam&f=false)

#### *Hinduism*

Hinduism was introduced to the British Virgin Islands in the 1960s when East Indian Immigrants from Guyana immigrated to the Islands for work. However, it was not until 1985 when another influx of immigrants came that one was instituted as the local pandit/religious leader. While there is no local temple on the islands, about 2.1% of the total population participates in this religious belief system. This accounts for a little over 500 Hindus living in the British Virgin Islands.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA107&dq=British+Virgin+Islands+Hinduism&cd=1#v=onepage&q=British%20Virgin%20Islands%20Hinduism&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA107&dq=British+Virgin+Islands+Hinduism&cd=1#v=onepage&q=British%20Virgin%20Islands%20Hinduism&f=false)

#### *Baha'i*

It is unknown when the Baha'i tradition made its introduction to the British Virgin Islands, but in 2000 there were two full time ministers on the island of Tortola. Currently, about 3.2% of the total population, accounting for 780 persons, is a member of the Baha'i faith background.

<http://www.bahai.org.uk/journal/main/j900/j900c.htm>

### *Jehovah's Witness*

Like the Baha'i faith, it is unknown when the Jehovah's Witnesses first began to establish their religion in the British Virgin Islands. Presently, there are three congregations on the islands which serve about 214 persons which accounts for 0.8% of the total population.

[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 LDS Church has had a presence in the British Virgin Islands since 1985 when their first member was converted to this religion. The first congregation was organized in 1999 and since then another congregation has been formed. At present, 111 persons are confirmed members of this church which accounts for 0.45% of the total population.

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

### *Spiritist*

It is unknown when Spiritism first made its entrance into the British Virgin Islands; however, as it has strong African ethnic religion roots, one could say that this form of religion has been around since the days of slavery in the 1600s. Currently, about 8.6% of the total population participates in these types of religions which accounts for over 2,100 persons.

[http://www.journeymart.com/DExplorer/CACaribbean/BritishVirginIsland/default.asp?SubLink=DExplorer%2FCACaribbean%2FBritishVirginIsland%2FciPeople\\_Inc.htm](http://www.journeymart.com/DExplorer/CACaribbean/BritishVirginIsland/default.asp?SubLink=DExplorer%2FCACaribbean%2FBritishVirginIsland%2FciPeople_Inc.htm)

### *Non-religious/Other*

In all, about 1.55% of the population practices other forms of religions not mentioned in the above section or below. This would include religions like Rastafarianism. Those in these religious groups account for 380 persons. Another 2% of the population professes to be Agnostic and non-religious which accounts for 490 people.

### *Catholic/Orthodox*

In 1971 this small parish became a larger part of the Diocese of St. John's-Basseterre which includes the nations of Antigua, Montserrat, Anguilla and St. Kitts and Nevis and the first resident priest came to the nation in 1972. Currently, about 10% of the total population, accounting for 2,450 persons, is Catholic. These members are served by three churches located on different islands in the country.

<http://www.bvicatholicparish.org>

## **Christian/Evangelical**

### *Methodists*

At present, this denomination represents the largest religious following in the country and about 33% of the total population attends the churches of this denomination regularly. These 8,082 members are served by two ordained ministers and a number of deacons that make up a unit called a circuit. This circuit is part of the larger district of the Leeward Islands which is part of the larger Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas.

[http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE\\_user\\_op=view\\_page&PAGE\\_id=8&MMN\\_position=26:3](http://www.mcca-lid.org/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=8&MMN_position=26:3)

### *Anglican*

The Anglican Church first started to minister in the area of the Leeward Islands in 1824. In 1963 the Anglican Church and the Episcopalian church combined to form one Diocese encompassing both the United States Virgin Islands and the British Virgin Islands. As of right now, about 17% of the total population, accounting for 4,163 persons, is a member of one of the churches in this Diocese known as the Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

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

### *Seventh-Day Adventist*

It is not known when the Seventh-Day Adventist Church began to minister to the British Virgin Islands, but the members of this church are part of the larger North Caribbean Conference which was established in 1975. Currently, about 6% of the total population, accounting for 1,470 persons, is ministered to by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. There is one church which is located in Road Town on the island of Tortola.

<http://www.adventistdirectory.org/SearchResults.aspx?CtryCode=VG>  
<http://www.northcaribbeanconference.org>

### *Baptists*

There is evidence of a Baptist presence on the British Virgin Islands since the 1970s. Overall, this church ministers to about 4% of the total population which accounts for 980 people. These members are served by 5 churches with half of these being located on the island of Tortola.

<http://www.b-v-i.com/Culture/churches.htm>  
<http://books.google.com/books?id=u2cRPScugBwC&pg=PA512&dq=Baptists+in+British+Virgin+Islands&cd=3#v=onepage&q=Baptists%20in%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false>

### *Pentecostals*

Though it is not known as to when members of the Pentecostal church began to minister in the British Virgin Islands, these members belong to a number of churches including the Church of God, the Assemblies of God, and the Church of Christ. Together, at least 11 churches in the British Virgin Islands fit this description and they minister to about 8% of the total population accounting for 1,960 people.

<http://www.b-v-i.com/Culture/churches.htm>

General:

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

[http://bvibeacon.com/main/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=416&Itemid=166](http://bvibeacon.com/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=416&Itemid=166)

## People Groups

### 000000

#### Americans (700)

It is unknown as to the exact date when Americans from the United States ( U.S.) first started to settle in the British Virgin Islands. However, since the U.S. Virgin Islands have been close neighbors to the British Virgin Islands since 1917, immigration to the British Virgin Islands may have been possible.

Americans from the U.S. primarily speak English and members of this people group are very diverse as this people group is defined by the combination of many ethnicities. The majority practices a Protestant form of Christianity and 35% of the American population living in the British Virgin Islands is known to be evangelical Christian. The Bible, the *Jesus* film and other gospel recordings are available to this people group in their primary language.

### 16213

#### Arab/Syro-Lebanese (25)

It is unknown when those of Arab descent first started to immigrate to the British Virgin Islands. Most are not property owners and some have immigrated here in hopes of returning to the Middle East after tensions have subsided.

They primarily speak Standard Arabic and the majority practices a Sunni Islam. There are a few which hold Catholic membership. Few if any among this people group are known to be evangelical Christians. However, the Bible, the *Jesus* film and other gospel recordings are available for ministry use in their primary language.

[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dq=Arabs+in+British+Virgin+Islands&source=bl&ots=NpAmRa\\_5Z0&sig=GA7ZatfgvftLziF5c--dCSO\\_PTI&hl=en&ei=H6gWS-v8HsyTnOfKk5zbBg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAjkK#v=onepage&q=Arabs%20in%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dq=Arabs+in+British+Virgin+Islands&source=bl&ots=NpAmRa_5Z0&sig=GA7ZatfgvftLziF5c--dCSO_PTI&hl=en&ei=H6gWS-v8HsyTnOfKk5zbBg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAjkK#v=onepage&q=Arabs%20in%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false)

### 16211

#### British (975)

The British are the descendants of those who originally came from England in order to colonize the island in the early and mid-1600s. They primarily speak English and about 61% of this population is a member of an Anglican Church. About 8% of this total population is considered to be evangelical Christian. The Bible, the *Jesus* film, and other gospel recordings are available to this people in their primary language.

<http://www.ultimatebvi.com/information/history>

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### **Indo-Pakistani (800)**

Unlike other Caribbean nations which imported labor from India to make up for lost labor after the emancipation of slavery, the British Virgin Islands did not contract labor from India. Those of Indo-Pakistani descent currently living in the British Virgin Islands are the descendants of those who came from Guyana in the 1960s and from Indo-Pakistani countries in the late 1900s.

The majority of the Indo-Pakistani people living in the British Virgin Islands practice Hinduism and primarily speak Hindi. About 5% of this population is evangelical Christian and there is at least one church which is reaching out to this people group. The Bible, the *Jesus* film, and other gospel recordings are available in their primary language for ministry use.

<http://www.caribbeanedu.com/odyssey/Timeliner/timeliner05.asp>

[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=indenture%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=indenture%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false)

**16212**

### **Portuguese (62)**

There is evidence of the Portuguese living in the British Virgin Islands since the 1600s as they settled alongside the British. Currently, they primarily practice Roman Catholicism and speak Portuguese. About 3% of this population is considered to be evangelical Christian and there is a church that is reaching out to this people group. The Bible, the *Jesus* film, and other gospel recordings are available for ministry use in Portuguese.

<http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/011/jewcar.html>

**16214**

### **Virgin Islander (21,929)**

Virgin Islanders are those who were born in the British Virgin Islands or have parentage in the British Virgin Islands. Thus, this group has a mixed African, European, and Amerindian heritage. One important note is that this people group is socially divided between the “belonger” and the “non-belonger.” The “belongers” are those who have British Virgin Islands parentage from both parents and are born in the nation.

Virgin Islands Creole English is their primary language and most practice the Protestant faith. About 29% of this population is considered to be evangelical Christian and there is a well established church which is ministering to the needs of this people group. There are no ministerial tools available in their primary language, but the Bible, the *Jesus* film, and other gospel tools are available to them in the official language of the country, English.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/British-Virgin-Islands.html>

General:

[www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php](http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php)  
<http://www.imb.org/globalresearch/downloads.asp>

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize that while the Protestant influence is strong in these islands, many people still need Christ. The churches should support training for evangelism and church starting in these regions.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should help the local Christians teach the truth of brotherhood in Christ. Even though this is a multi-ethnic and diverse society, there are still major barriers between persons when it comes to parentage. It may take several generations of one family living on the islands to be considered true Virgin Islanders by society standards. Please pray that Christians living in these isles continue to push past this societal barrier and reach those who are immigrating to the British Virgin Islands. In the intense multicultural nation, seeking unity and acceptance between groups can prove a decided benefit. Training local believers in methods of accepting and ministering minorities would prove effective. Outreach to the “non-belongers” would be a proper direction for the Christians and churches.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should help local believers develop plans for evangelizing among the Spiritists in the islands. The unbiblical teachings of these groups should be confronted with the truths of Christianity.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to aid the medical needs of these peoples in this island nation. In the last 10 years, mental disorders and alcoholism has been the leading cause of hospitalization in the country. Training counselors in terms of drug/alcohol abuse would be helpful for those who are abusing substances. Also training pastors, lay men, and counselors as to how to minister to the families of those who are abusing substances would be a rich ministry which would bless the nation.

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1079.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1079.html)  
<http://www.paho.org/english/sha/prflvik.htm>  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as\\_brr=3#v=onepage&q=indenture%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA103&dq=indenture+British+Virgin+Islands&as_brr=3#v=onepage&q=indenture%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false)

### **Pictures**

<http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&source=hp&q=British+Virgin+Islands&gbv=2&aq=f&oq=&aqi=g4g-m6>  
<http://images.google.com/images?gbv=2&hl=en&safe=active&sa=1&q=British+Virgin+Islands+people&aq=f&oq=&aqi=&start=0>  
[http://www.bareboatsbvi.com/british\\_virgin\\_islands.html](http://www.bareboatsbvi.com/british_virgin_islands.html)  
[http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Europe/United\\_Kingdom/Other/British\\_Virgin\\_Islands](http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Europe/United_Kingdom/Other/British_Virgin_Islands)  
<http://www.caribbeanlandscapes.com>

### **Links**

[http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8\\_vEgC&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dq=Arabs+in+British+Virgin+Islands&source=bl&ots=NpAmRa\\_5Z0&sig=GA7ZatfgvftLziF5c--dCSO\\_PTI&hl=en&ei=H6gWS-](http://books.google.com/books?id=YRmuhb8_vEgC&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157&dq=Arabs+in+British+Virgin+Islands&source=bl&ots=NpAmRa_5Z0&sig=GA7ZatfgvftLziF5c--dCSO_PTI&hl=en&ei=H6gWS-)

[v8HsyTnQfKk5zbBg&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAjkK#v=onepage&q=Ara bs%20in%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false](https://www.google.com/search?q=British+Virgin+Islands&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEQ6AEwAjkK#v=onepage&q=Ara bs%20in%20British%20Virgin%20Islands&f=false)  
<http://www.prolades.com>  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vi.html>  
<http://tourism.virginislandsdailynews.com/florabvi.html>  
<http://www.b-v-i.com/Culture/overview.htm>  
[http://www.archaeolink.com/british\\_virgin\\_islands\\_history\\_c.htm](http://www.archaeolink.com/british_virgin_islands_history_c.htm)  
<http://www.ultimatebvi.com/information/facts>  
<http://www.here.vi/BVI/bvi.html>