

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

United States Virgin Islands (USVI)

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Flag

Description: A white field bearing a simplified gold U.S. eagle holding an olive branch and arrows, flanked by the blue letters "V" and "I," representing the Virgin Islands.



Map



Location: Caribbean Sea, approximately 65 km (40 mi) east of Puerto Rico and west of the British Virgin Islands.



Background

The United States Virgin Islands consist of the main islands of **Saint Thomas, Saint John, and Saint Croix**, along with about 50 smaller islands and cays. Formerly the **Danish West Indies**, the islands were purchased by the United States from Denmark in **1917** for **US\$25 million**, primarily to strengthen Caribbean defense during World War I.

Today, the USVI is an **unincorporated organized territory of the United States**. Residents are U.S. citizens but do not vote in U.S. presidential elections unless residing in one of the states. Tourism is the territory's principal industry.

Key Facts

Category	Information
Official Name	United States Virgin Islands
Status	Unincorporated organized territory of the United States
Capital	Charlotte Amalie (Saint Thomas)
Largest Island	Saint Croix
Area	346 sq km
Population	~87,000
Official Language	English
Other Languages	Virgin Islands Creole, Spanish, French Creole
Currency	U.S. Dollar (USD)
Time Zone	Atlantic Standard Time (UTC-4)
Internet TLD	.vi

Geography

- Tropical Caribbean climate moderated by trade winds.
- Mostly volcanic terrain on Saint Thomas and Saint John.

- Saint Croix features broader coastal plains suitable for agriculture.
- Highest point:
 - Crown Mountain (Saint Thomas): **474 m (1,555 ft)**

Natural hazards include:

- Hurricanes (June–November)
- Coastal erosion
- Coral reef degradation
- Drought periods

Government

Category	Information
Sovereign State	United States
Governor	Elected every four years
Legislature	Unicameral Legislature (15 senators)
Representation in U.S. Congress	One non-voting Delegate to the House
Presidential Voting	No electoral votes

Administrative Divisions

The territory consists primarily of three districts:

- Saint Croix
- Saint Thomas
- Saint John

Demographics

Category	Estimate
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Population	~87,000
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Urbanization	Approximately 95%
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Life Expectancy	~80 years
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Literacy	Very high
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Population has gradually declined over the past decade because of migration to the U.S. mainland and hurricane-related displacement.

Economy

Indicator	Estimate
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GDP	Approximately US\$4.5 billion
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GDP per Capita	~US\$50,000
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Primary Industries	Tourism, government services, retail, construction
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Main Exports	Rum, watches, pharmaceuticals, refined petroleum products (limited)
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Tourism accounts for the overwhelming share of economic activity.

Major sectors include:

- Cruise tourism
- Luxury resorts
- Marine recreation
- Financial services
- Public administration

Infrastructure

Airports

- Cyril E. King Airport (Saint Thomas)

- Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (Saint Croix)

Ports

- Charlotte Amalie (major Caribbean cruise destination)
- Frederiksted
- Christiansted

Roads drive on the **left**, a legacy of Danish and British Caribbean influence, although most vehicles are left-hand drive imports from the United States.

Energy

- Petroleum products remain the primary energy source.
 - Solar generation continues to expand.
 - Hurricane resilience projects have strengthened portions of the electrical grid following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
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Communications

- Modern telecommunications network.
 - High mobile phone penetration.
 - Fiber broadband available in populated areas.
 - U.S. postal system and telecommunications standards.
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Defense

Defense and external security are the responsibility of the **United States**.

Security assets include:

- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- Virgin Islands Police Department
- National Guard units

The territory occupies a strategically important position near major Caribbean shipping lanes.

International Relations

As a U.S. territory, foreign affairs are conducted by the United States.

Regional cooperation includes:

- Caribbean disaster response
 - Maritime security
 - Counter-narcotics operations
 - Environmental protection initiatives
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Environmental Issues

Major concerns include:

- Coral reef degradation
- Coastal development
- Plastic pollution
- Hurricane damage
- Invasive species
- Freshwater availability

The territory contains numerous protected marine and terrestrial parks.

Strategic Assessment

The United States Virgin Islands possess **high strategic importance disproportionate to their size**. Their location near the eastern Caribbean sea lanes makes them valuable for maritime surveillance, disaster response, customs enforcement, and regional security operations.

Economically, the islands remain highly dependent on tourism, making them sensitive to global economic conditions, hurricanes, and fluctuations in cruise travel. Continued investment in resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, and environmental protection is expected to strengthen long-term stability.

Intelligence Assessment

Category	Rating
Political Stability	High
Economic Stability	Moderate–High
Security Risk	Low
Natural Disaster Risk	High
Strategic Importance	Moderate
Overall Outlook	Stable