

ATLAS

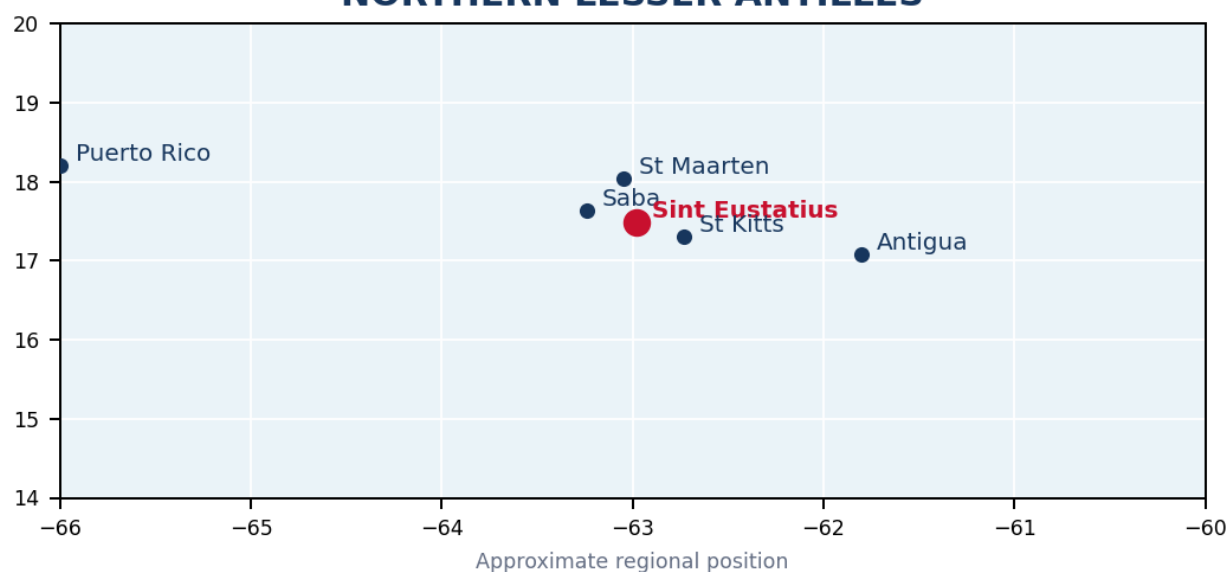
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Sint Eustatius

Type III Territory Profile | Caribbean Netherlands | September 2026

NORTHERN LESSER ANTILLES



Status: Public body of the Netherlands; one of the three Caribbean Netherlands islands. Administrative centre: Oranjestad.

ATLAS judgment: Sint Eustatius has limited independent power but disproportionate strategic relevance because a small population, a major oil-storage terminal, narrow transport links and high exposure to hurricanes and erosion concentrate risk.

Executive Assessment

Sint Eustatius is a 21-square-kilometre volcanic island in the northern Lesser Antilles. Since 10 October 2010 it has been a public body of the Netherlands, governed locally by an island council and executive council while Dutch central government performs national and many province-like functions. The United States dollar is legal tender.

Its strategic profile is defined less by conventional power than by infrastructure concentration. The island depends on a short runway, a small harbour, imported goods, off-island specialist services and external fiscal support. The oil-storage and transshipment complex gives the economy and surrounding maritime space significance beyond the island's size, but also exposes employment, public revenue and environmental security to decisions by a small number of operators and to regional energy-market shifts.

The political system returned to ordinary local administration in September 2024 after a six-year Dutch intervention. That restoration is consequential but not synonymous with durable administrative capacity. The central question for 2026-2031 is whether governance, utilities, transport and environmental management can be strengthened faster than climate, demographic and cost-of-living pressures accumulate.

ATLAS ASSESSMENT: Sint Eustatius is politically stable under Dutch sovereignty, but structurally fragile. External guarantees reduce state-failure risk; they do not remove island-level service, logistics or disaster-recovery risk. **Confidence: High.**

Key Facts

Official name	Public Entity Sint Eustatius
Common name	Sint Eustatius; locally, Statia
Sovereignty	Netherlands
Administrative centre	Oranjestad
Area	Approximately 21 km ²
Population	Just over 3,000 at the start of 2025 (CBS)
Currency	United States dollar
Languages	English widely used; Dutch official; local multilingual environment
Time zone	Atlantic Standard Time, UTC-4
Status since	10 October 2010

Strategic Geography

Sint Eustatius lies between Saba and St Kitts, east of Puerto Rico and south of St Maarten. The island’s position places it beside regional air and sea routes but outside the scale needed to sustain redundant infrastructure. The Quill, a dormant stratovolcano, dominates the southeast; lower terrain and Oranjestad occupy the central and western portions; the northern hills complete a compact but topographically divided landscape.

Geographic Consequences

Maritime position	Access to the northern Lesser Antilles and adjacent Caribbean sea lanes.
Terrain	Volcanic slopes constrain construction, drainage and road redundancy.
Coastline	Limited port access and exposed coastal infrastructure increase storm vulnerability.
Nearest hubs	St Maarten is the principal regional air-services hub; onward access is weather- and schedule-sensitive.
Natural hazards	Hurricanes, extreme rainfall, erosion, coastal impacts, earthquakes and volcanic risk require sustained preparedness.

RESILIENCE JUDGMENT: The island’s compactness simplifies local coordination but turns single-point failures in aviation, port, power, water and communications into territory-wide disruptions. **Confidence:** High.

Historical and Constitutional Context

Known in the eighteenth century as the “Golden Rock,” Sint Eustatius became a major free port linking European, North American and Caribbean commerce. Its prosperity attracted repeated conflict and occupation. The island later formed part of the Netherlands Antilles. Following the dissolution of that federation in 2010, Sint Eustatius entered the Netherlands directly as a Caribbean public body rather than becoming a constituent country within the Kingdom.

In February 2018 the Netherlands replaced the local governing authorities after finding serious administrative dysfunction. Democratic and administrative powers were restored in stages: an island council returned in 2020; local authority expanded in 2022 and 2023; Alida Francis became island governor in April 2024; and the restoration law ceased on 1 September 2024.

People and Society

The population is slightly above 3,000 and has recently shown weak or declining growth. Small scale shapes nearly every policy domain: personal and institutional networks overlap; recruitment pools are narrow; specialist health, technical and higher-education services often require travel; and a few employers can materially affect employment data.

Population trend	CBS reported a little over 3,000 residents at the start of 2025; the island was not sharing Bonaire's stronger growth.
Settlement	Oranjestad is the sole principal settlement.
Education	Local primary and secondary provision; tertiary study generally requires departure.
Healthcare	Basic local care with reliance on referrals and regional or European support for specialist treatment.
Social pressure	High prices, housing constraints and utility costs weigh more heavily on lower-income households.
Community strength	Dense networks, local identity and direct civic access support crisis response, but can also intensify political personalization.

ATLAS JUDGMENT: Human-capital scarcity is the island's most persistent constraint. Capital projects can be funded from abroad; qualified operators, maintainers, regulators and administrators are harder to sustain locally. **Confidence: High.**

Government and Public Administration

The island council is the representative assembly. The executive council manages day-to-day administration under an island governor. Dutch ministries and the National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands perform central-government functions. Unlike European Dutch municipalities, the island is not part of a province, leaving many intermediate responsibilities to be divided between local and national authorities.

The end of statutory intervention in 2024 restored normal governance, but institutional recovery should be measured through audited financial management, staffing continuity, procurement performance, project completion and public-service reliability—not solely through the return of elected authority.

GOVERNANCE OUTLOOK: Improvement is likely to continue, but progress will remain uneven because project volume and statutory obligations can exceed the absorptive capacity of a very small administration. **Confidence: Moderate.**

Economy and Trade

Sint Eustatius uses the US dollar and operates as a small, import-dependent economy. Public administration, construction, utilities, tourism and oil-storage-related activity are major influences. CBS reported that real GDP contracted by 0.5 percent in 2023 after a longer decline associated with Hurricane Irma, regional oil-market developments and reduced demand for storage. Real output in 2022 remained about 35 percent below 2017 levels, measured in 2017 prices.

Economic base	Public services; oil storage and transshipment; construction; utilities; small-scale tourism and local services.
External dependence	Food, fuel, equipment, skilled labour and many professional services are imported.
Currency effect	Dollar use simplifies regional transactions but removes local monetary adjustment.
Business environment	Small market, transport costs and limited labour depth constrain scale; Dutch legal and fiscal backing lowers sovereign risk.
Tourism	Niche heritage, diving, hiking and nature tourism; capacity is deliberately modest.
Primary exposure	Concentration in public spending and energy-terminal activity creates volatility.

ATLAS ASSESSMENT: The economy is not diversified enough to absorb a major terminal, transport or fiscal shock without outside support. Economic resilience therefore depends on Dutch backing and infrastructure continuity more than on market depth. **Confidence: High.**

Energy, Water and Critical Infrastructure

The island's energy system is isolated. Electricity generation, fuel supply, drinking-water production and distribution require imported inputs and continuous technical support. Renewable generation can reduce fuel dependence, but storage, grid control, maintenance and storm hardening determine whether installed capacity becomes sustained resilience.

The oil terminal is both an economic asset and a concentrated industrial and environmental risk. Fire, spill, hurricane or operator disruption would demand support beyond ordinary island capacity.

Transport and Communications

Air	F. D. Roosevelt Airport provides the essential passenger and light-cargo link, primarily through regional connections. Runway and schedule limits constrain redundancy.
Sea	Charles A. Woodley Pier supports cargo and passenger movements; industrial marine facilities serve the terminal.
Roads	Short network with limited alternative routing; erosion, drainage and construction quality directly affect continuity.
Telecommunications	Modern connectivity is available, but subsea and local infrastructure remain potential single points of failure.
Emergency logistics	Heavy equipment, specialist teams and relief supplies depend on sea or air access and favourable operating conditions.

INFRASTRUCTURE JUDGMENT: Sint Eustatius needs redundancy by agreement—prearranged lift, stocks, crews and regional support—because full physical redundancy is economically unrealistic. **Confidence: High.**

Security and Intelligence

Defence is a Kingdom responsibility exercised by the Netherlands. The Royal Netherlands Navy, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard support territorial defence, border integrity, maritime surveillance, counter-narcotics activity, disaster response and law enforcement. Local police and emergency services handle routine requirements, backed when necessary by wider Dutch and regional capabilities.

The principal security problems are transnational rather than military: narcotics trafficking, illicit maritime movement, cyber disruption, environmental incidents and the exploitation of limited inspection capacity. The island's facilities are not assessed as a major independent military target, but energy and communications infrastructure could be affected by regional crisis or sabotage.

THREAT JUDGMENT: Direct armed attack is unlikely. The more credible security risks are criminal transit, infrastructure disruption, cyber compromise and a disaster occurring while regional response assets are committed elsewhere. **Confidence: Moderate.**

Strengths and Vulnerabilities

STRENGTHS	VULNERABILITIES
Dutch constitutional, fiscal and security backing	Single-point failures in transport, utilities and communications
Compact territory and strong local identity	Narrow labour pool and limited administrative depth
Strategic maritime position and industrial infrastructure	Economic concentration around public spending and oil storage
High-value natural and historical assets	Hurricane, erosion, coastal and volcanic exposure
Potential for renewable-energy gains	High import dependence and elevated cost of living

Structural Risk Ratings

Political stability	LOW Stable sovereignty; governance capacity still consolidating.
Economic concentration	HIGH Small base and exposure to a few employers and public transfers.
Critical infrastructure	HIGH Limited redundancy and external maintenance dependence.
Natural hazards	HIGH Hurricane, erosion, coastal, seismic and volcanic exposure.
Crime and border security	MODERATE Regional trafficking environment; limited local scale.
External military threat	LOW Protected within the Kingdom; low target value.
Climate adaptation	HIGH and rising Long-lived infrastructure decisions now shape future exposure.

Strategic Outlook 2026 to 2031

The most likely trajectory is gradual administrative and infrastructure improvement under sustained Dutch support, interrupted by project delays and periodic external shocks. The strongest positive scenario combines disciplined capital investment, utility resilience, terminal safety, transport reliability and a practical human-capital strategy. The negative scenario is not political collapse; it is cumulative service degradation after a storm, industrial incident or prolonged transport interruption exposes weak maintenance and limited staffing.

Indicators to Watch

- Population retention, especially among technical, health, education and administrative personnel.
- Audited financial performance, procurement timeliness and completion of Dutch-funded projects.
- Ownership, throughput, employment and environmental compliance at the oil-storage terminal.
- Airport and port reliability, including emergency operating capacity after severe weather.
- Electricity cost, renewable share, storage capacity, water reliability and maintenance staffing.
- Erosion control, grazing-animal management, coastal protection and hurricane-recovery readiness.
- Housing availability, poverty measures, food prices and access to specialist healthcare.
- Maritime interdiction activity and evidence of criminal adaptation around the northern Lesser Antilles.

ATLAS Bottom Line

Sint Eustatius is secure in sovereignty but exposed in function. Dutch guarantees sharply limit geopolitical and fiscal tail risk, while geography and scale keep everyday resilience fragile. The decisive measure of progress is whether funded projects become installed, qualified and sustained capability: working utilities, maintained transport links, competent administration, safe industrial operations and rehearsed regional support.

OVERALL CONFIDENCE: High on constitutional status, geography and structural dependencies; moderate on forward economic and terminal-specific judgments because commercial conditions can change quickly.
Confidence: High.

Sources and Methodology

This profile distinguishes verified facts from ATLAS analytical judgments. Statistical dates are stated where material. Current as of 13 September 2026.

Statistics Netherlands (CBS)	The Dutch Caribbean 15 years after dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, 10 October 2025; Caribbean Netherlands GDP table, updated 25 September 2025; economy of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba, 25 September 2025.
Government of the Netherlands	Governance of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba; restoration of ordinary administration effective 1 September 2024; 2026-2030 coalition agreement.
Public Entity Sint Eustatius	Official government information, governance, services, planning and public notices.
Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute Caribbean Netherlands	Hurricane-season guidance and KNMI climate scenarios for Sint Eustatius and Saba.
Netherlands Ministry of Defence	Caribbean tasks and support to the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard.
ATLAS methodology	Territory-profile adaptation of the approved United Kingdom Type I master: status clarity, domain assessments, confidence language, five-year outlook, indicators and explicit separation of facts from judgments.

Selected Source Links

- <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/longread/diversen/2025/the-dutch-caribbean-15-years-after-the-dissolution-of-the-netherlands-antilles?onepage=true>
- <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/figures/detail/84789ENG>
- <https://www.government.nl/themes/government-and-democracy/caribbean-parts-of-the-kingdom/governance-of-bonaire-st-eustatius-and-saba>
- <https://www.statiagovernment.com/>
- <https://www.knmidc.org/weather/saba/>
- <https://english.defensie.nl/>

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