



Report Summary:

U.S. Virgin Islands' Ocean Economy Data

The six business sectors that depend on the ocean for their existence make up what is known as the ocean economy. An economic report funded by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management describes this information in detail for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. This handout summarizes information for the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Understandably, the report found that the Virgin Islands is more reliant on ocean-related activity than most U.S. states. National employment statistics show that ocean industries support about 7 percent of the total employment, three times more than the average of 2 percent for ocean and Great Lakes states.

Ocean Sectors	Establishments	Employment	Total wages (\$)
Living Resources	1	ND	ND
Marine Construction	2	ND	ND
Marine Transportation	22	214	\$11,030,080
Offshore Mineral Resources	5	ND	ND
Ship and Boat Building	1	ND	ND
Tourism and Recreation	373	6,524	\$161,751,217
Ocean Economy	404	6,738	\$172,781,297
Total Economy	3,472	36,215	\$1,393,000,000
Ocean Economy Share	12%	19%	12%

Note: "ND" represents data that are "non-disclosed" for privacy purposes for industries below a certain size.

However, these figures do not capture the true level of ocean dependence here because many business activities are not captured in the national employment statistics, including self-employed workers, ocean activities not registered under traditional ocean sectors, and the partially ocean-dependent activities such as retail shops. By adding these activities to the total using locally obtained data, ocean job figures for the Virgin Islands increase from 6,700 to nearly 11,000.

Ocean Employment	National Statistics	Incorporating Additional Information	Percent Difference
Living Resources	ND	361	N/A
Marine Construction	ND	63	N/A
Marine Transportation	214	417	+95%
Offshore Mineral Resources	ND	0	N/A
Ship and Boat Building	ND	140	N/A
Tourism and Recreation	6,524	9,757	+50%
Ocean Economy	6,738	10,738	+59%

Note: "ND" represents data that are "non-disclosed" for privacy purposes for industries below a certain size.

Details for each sector are provided on next page.

Living Resources Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **1** seafood market in St. Thomas

Local sources show more businesses and jobs in this sector:

- **3** government-operated seafood markets – 2 in St. Thomas, 1 in St. Croix
- **7+** nongovernmental informal seafood markets, at least 4 in St. Thomas – 2 in St. Croix, and 1 in St. John
- **~280** registered fishermen – about 120 in St. Thomas, 150 in St. Croix, and 10 in St. John
- **1** or more helpers for each fisherman to operate fishing boat
- **810,000** pounds of fish caught in the U.S. Virgin Islands
- **\$4.26** million gross revenues and **\$2.48** million net revenues for fishermen

Some of the following programs also provide fisheries-related services:

- **9** government conservation programs, supporting **97** employees and **\$6.1 million** in wages – 2 in St. Thomas, 5 in St. Croix, and 2 in St. John
- Nonprofit conservation organizations, e.g., Nature Conservancy and Friends of Virgin Islands National Park
- Marine and environmental science program at University of the Virgin Islands

Marine Construction Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **2** marine construction businesses in St. Thomas

Government agencies that manage contracts and permits for marine construction activities:

- Virgin Islands Port Authority
- Department of Planning and Natural Resources' Coastal Zone Management Division

Some of the following businesses also perform marine construction services:

- **9** surveying and mapping businesses, supporting **26** employees and **\$745,000** in wages – 3 in St. Thomas, 1 in St. John, and 5 in St. Croix
- **19** engineering services businesses, supporting **37** employees and **\$3.0 million** in wages – 7 in St. Thomas and 12 in St. Croix

Marine Transportation Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **10** deep-sea freight businesses, supporting **173** employees, **\$9.4 million** in wages – 4 in St. Thomas, 3 in St. Croix, and 3 in St. John
- **9** marine passenger transportation businesses, supporting **46** employees and **\$1.4 million** in wages – 5 in St. Thomas, 3 in St. Croix, and 1 in St. John
- **7** marine transportation services businesses, supporting **41** employees and **\$1.7 million** in wages – 5 in St. Thomas, 2 in St. Croix

Many other contributors in both public and private realms are also predominantly ocean-dependent:

- **13** seaports and **80** employees, supported by the Virgin Islands Port Authority – 5 in St. Thomas, 5 in St. Croix, and 3 in St. John
- Terminals operated by the Water and Power Authority for fuel imports
- **15** freight arrangement businesses, supporting **115+** employees – 6 in St. John, 9 in St. Croix
- **4** inland water transportation businesses, supporting **46** employees and **\$1.4 million** in wages – 2 in St. Thomas and 2 in St. John
- **2** water taxis that commute passengers between islands
- Local operations of the large cargo companies, which are headquartered in Florida

Offshore Mineral Resources Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **4** businesses that support oil and gas operations in St. Croix

Local sources confirm that there is very little activity within this sector:

- Oil refining and storage at HOVENSA facility are not ocean-dependent and have ceased operation
- Offshore mineral extraction is prohibited in the U.S. Virgin Islands
- Most mineral resources are imported from other locations in the Caribbean

Ship and Boat Building Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **1** ship building establishment in St. Croix

Local sources show more businesses than revealed in the employment statistics:

- **~45** employees and **\$1.8 million** in total annual payroll supported by the Gold Coast Yachts company
- **4** more boat building businesses identified
- **2** large ship and boat repair operations, each with **50+** employees, and **~18** small repair shops
- Informal boat maintenance done by local labor, such as boat washing and repair

Tourism and Recreation Sector

Bureau of Labor Statistics reports:

- **44** hotels and lodging places, supporting **3,510** employees and **\$109 million** in wages – 22 in St. Thomas, 17 in St. Croix, and 5 in St. John
- **240** eating and drinking places, supporting **2,463** employees and **\$38.9 million** in wages – 129 in St. Thomas, 77 in St. Croix, and 34 in St. John
- **89** businesses, **551** employees, and **\$13.7 million** in wages supported by marinas, scenic tours, boat dealers, zoos and aquaria, RV parks and campgrounds, and other amusement and recreation services

Local sources identify many more hotels and lodging services:

- **63** hotels registered under Hotel and Tourism Association
- **~2,000** Airbnb and Vacation Rental by Owner
- **103** lessors of residential buildings, offices of real estate agents and brokers, residential property managers, and all other traveler accommodations businesses
- **570,000** overnight visitors

Local sources show a greater number of ocean-related recreational activities:

- **150+** charter yachts and additional charters
- **12+** recreational fishing charter businesses on St. Thomas alone
- **168+** vendors permitted by National Park Service on St. John alone

Many other economic activities depend heavily on ocean tourism:

- **56** air transportation, taxi, passenger car rental, and travel agencies – 17 in St. Thomas
- **7** tour operator businesses, supporting **36** employees and **\$1.19 million** in wages
- **35** gift, novelty, and souvenir stores, supporting **207** employees and **\$5.2 million** in wages - 30 in St. Thomas, 3 in St. Croix, and 2 in St. John
- **2.1 million** people arrived on cruise ships or via air excursions
- **\$851 million** and **\$381 million** spent by tourists and cruise ship passengers respectively
- **~60% (\$3.79 billion)** of the U.S. Virgin Islands' gross domestic product is supported by tourism