

**Stakeholder Report on the Consultations on the Independent
Reviewer's Report on Residence and Belonger Status**



**GOVERNMENT OF THE
VIRGIN ISLANDS**
Ministry of Tourism, Culture
and Sustainable Development

Introduction to the Stakeholder Report

In an endeavor to comprehensively review and reformulate immigration policies in the Virgin Islands, The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development embarked on an extensive stakeholder engagement process. This report presents the synthesis of insights, opinions, and recommendations gathered from a series of meetings, surveys, emails, and focus groups conducted over the months of October and November 2023. Our approach was grounded in the belief that effective policy-making requires the voices of those it impacts the most - our diverse community of Virgin Islanders, residents, and potential immigrants.

The process commenced with a series of public meetings held across different islands, each providing a platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas. These meetings were complemented by targeted focus groups, which allowed for more in-depth discussions on specific issues within smaller, more specialized cohorts. To broaden our reach and include voices that might not be able to attend in-person sessions, we also conducted an online survey, inviting responses from a wider cross-section of the population. Additionally, we maintained an open email channel, which offered an avenue for stakeholders to submit their thoughts and concerns directly and privately.

The culmination of these efforts is a body of data rich in perspectives, capturing the nuances of the community's views on immigration. The report reflects a wide range of opinions, from the deeply personal narratives of Ancestral Virgin Islanders and long-term residents to the strategic inputs of business leaders and the considered opinions of legal experts. It includes the aspirations of young Virgin Islanders, the concerns of expatriates living and working in the islands, and the hopes of those who wish to call the Virgin Islands their future home.

As we present this report, we acknowledge the responsibility of distilling these diverse viewpoints into coherent policies that align with our national values and aspirations. Our goal has been to ensure that every voice was heard and considered, and that the outcome of this process is a set of immigration policies that are fair, progressive, and reflective of the unique character and needs of the Virgin Islands.

This stakeholder report is not just a summary of opinions; it is a testament to our community's commitment to participatory governance and our collective effort to shape a future that honors our heritage while embracing change and progress.

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The Independent Reviewer, Mr. Kedrick Malone was commissioned to undertake a review of the grant of Residence and Belonger Status in keeping with Recommendation B33 of the Commission of Inquiry. Cabinet on 16th August, 2023 received the Independent Reviewer's Report on Recommendation B33 of the Commission of Inquiry's report entitled: Review of Policy and Process for Granting Residency and Belongership. In doing so, Cabinet further decided that the Independent Reviewer's Report be tabled in the House of Assembly.

The report was tabled in the House of Assembly on the 7th September, 2023. The Premier, Dr. the Honourable Natalio D. Wheatley in his capacity as the Minister responsible for the subject of

Immigration advanced a statement in the House of Assembly entitled: *Building a Strong and Inclusive British Virgin Islands through Immigration Reform* (APPENDIX A.1 on page 42). The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development (MTCSD) which has responsibility for the subject of Immigration disseminated the full report to the public on the Government of the Virgin Islands' website and is available at https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/report_of_review_of_residence_belonger_status_final.pdf.


A live streaming session under the umbrella of *Government Business at its Best: Virgin Islands Modern Governance Approach's Table Talk on the topic of Inclusion: Residence and Belonger Status* was held on the 27th September 2023. The programme can be viewed at https://www.facebook.com/BVIGovernment/videos/government-business-at-its-best-table-talk-inclusion-residence-and-belonger-stat/1141577870134671?locale=en_GB. The programme was moderated by Ms. Angela Burns-Piper and the panel was comprised of Mr. Joseph Smith Abbott, Permanent Secretary (Acting) for MTCSD, Mr. Malvern Brathwaite, Deputy Secretary (Acting) for MTCSD and the Chief Immigration Officer, Mr. Ian Penn.

The MTCSD also prepared a survey tool which was released on the 2nd October 2023 and closed on the 25th October 2023 (the results are detailed in this report).

A Press Release was issued on the 6th October 2023 where the Premier invited the public to provide feedback on the Immigration Policy (<https://bvi.gov.vg/media-centre/public-consultations-residence-and-belonger-status>). The Ministry also invited the public to provide any feedback in writing over the same period via email at mtcsd@gov.vg.

Government's Public Eye programme on the Granting of Residence and Belonger Status was held on the 10th October 2023: and the permanent link can be found on https://www.facebook.com/BVIGovernment/videos/1347757525864897/?locale=en_GB). The programme was moderated by the Chief Information Officer, Ms. Desiree Smith and the panel was comprised of Dr. the Hon. Natalio D Wheatley, Premier and Minister responsible for the subject of Immigration, Mr. Joseph Smith-Abbott, Permanent Secretary (Acting), MTCSD and Mr. Ian Penn, Chief Immigration Officer, Department of Immigration,.

A series of public meetings were convened and held on all major islands as outlined in Figure 1 below.



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

**TOWN HALL MEETING
FOR RESIDENCY
BELONGER STATUS**

Schedule

DATE	DAY	PLACE	VENUE	TIME
TORTOLA				
October 11	Wednesday	HLSCC	Eileen Parsons Auditorium	6:30 p.m.
October 12	Thursday	Road Town	ESHS Tent	6:30 p.m.
October 18	Wednesday	West End	Community Centre	6:30 p.m.
SISTER ISLANDS				
October 13	Friday	Jost Van Dyke	Methodist Church	11:00 a.m.
October 15	Sunday	Anegada	Emile E. Dunlop Community Center	2:00 p.m.
October 20	Friday	Virgin Gorda	Flax Administration Building Conference	6:30 p.m.

Figure 1: Schedule of Public Meetings held on Residence and Immigration Status on all major islands

Public meetings were chaired by the Honourable Premier who delivered the context for individual meetings by rendering a statement on the main principles of the emergent policy and direction (Appendix on page 43).

Focal group sessions were convened during the period and consultations with internal Government stakeholders were conducted.

Summary of the Key Points from Public Meetings

Road Town, Tortola

The town hall meeting at the Elmore Stouff High School in Road Town, Tortola, discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised:

1. **Historical Context and Immigration Trends:** The meeting began with an overview of the Virgin Islands' history, emphasizing the evolution of the population and economy, and how these changes have been influenced by immigration.
2. **Challenges of Immigration:** The participants acknowledged the benefits of immigration, such as talent, skills, and economic growth. However, concerns were raised about cultural, social, and national security issues arising from unregulated immigration.
3. **Policies and Proposals:**
 - i) The importance of aligning immigration policies with the territory's unique demographic trends and sustainable development goals was stressed.
 - ii) The discussion included the need for a comprehensive evaluation of individuals' character, contributions, and integration before granting residency or Belonger status.
 - iii) The concept of decoupling work permits from residency and Belonger status was proposed, emphasizing the need for a commitment to the values and society of the Virgin Islands.
 - iv) There were suggestions for a point system for evaluating residency and Belonger status applicants, focusing on integration, financial stability, and knowledge of the Virgin Islands' culture and history.
4. **Specific Issues and Recommendations:**
 - v) The meeting addressed concerns about how children born to work permit holders and the treatment of investors in the territory are managed.
 - vi) There was a call for more intentional integration policies and better communication about the status of applications.
 - vii) The issue of naturalization and the transmission of Belonger status across generations was a significant topic.
 - viii) Concerns were raised about criminal records' impact on status eligibility, especially for minor offenses among youth.
5. **Commitment to Change:**
 - ix) The need for legislative changes and alignment of various immigration policies was acknowledged.
 - x) The officials expressed a commitment to advancing these changes promptly, seeking input from the community to inform policy development.

In summary, the meeting highlighted a range of views and concerns regarding immigration policy in the Virgin Islands. The discussion focused on balancing economic needs with cultural preservation, ensuring community cohesion, and addressing long-standing issues in the immigration system. There was a strong emphasis on creating policies that reflect the territory's values and aspirations while being fair and inclusive.

H. Lavity Stouff Community College

The town hall meeting at the H. Lavity Stouff, Tortola, discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised after a detailed discussion on the current and potential future state of immigration policies in the Virgin Islands. Key topics and opinions expressed during the meeting include:

1. **Historical and Economic Context:** The meeting opened with a reflection on the Virgin Islands' history and how its population and economy have been shaped by immigration. The growth of sectors like tourism and financial services was acknowledged as a driving force behind immigration trends.
2. **Challenges and Benefits of Immigration:** While recognizing the economic and cultural benefits brought by immigrants, concerns were raised about the social, cultural, and national security challenges posed by unregulated immigration.
3. **Policy Development and Proposals:**
 - i) The importance of aligning immigration policies with the territory's demographic and development goals was emphasized.
 - ii) Discussions included the need for comprehensive evaluations of individuals seeking residency or Belonger status, considering their character, contributions, skills, and integration into the community.
 - iii) Suggestions were made for a points-based system to evaluate residency and Belonger status applications and the potential use of quotas to manage population growth and immigration rates.
4. **Integration and Cultural Impact:**
 - iv) The impact of immigration on community cohesion, cultural diversity, and national identity was a significant concern.
 - v) The need for better-integrated systems between labor and immigration to prevent individuals from exploiting legal loopholes was discussed.
5. **Concerns and Suggestions from Participants:**
 - vi) Several attendees raised issues about the current administrative processes in immigration departments, expressing the need for more transparent and consistent information.
 - vii) The idea of establishing a tribunal or independent body to handle appeals and concerns related to immigration decisions was proposed.
 - viii) Concerns were raised about the use of the Virgin Islands as a stepping stone for obtaining citizenship or status in other countries.
6. **Future Directions and Commitments:**
 - ix) Officials expressed a commitment to improving and digitizing immigration processes for efficiency and better enforcement.
 - x) The meeting concluded with a call for ongoing dialogue and input from the community to shape fair, inclusive, and sustainable immigration policies.

Overall, the meeting reflected a broad spectrum of views on how to manage immigration in a way that balances economic needs with cultural preservation, ensures community cohesion, and addresses long-standing issues in the Virgin Islands' immigration system. There was a clear emphasis on creating policies that reflect the values and aspirations of the Virgin Islands while ensuring fairness and inclusivity.

Anegada

The town hall meeting on Anegada discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised after a detailed discussion on the current and potential future state of immigration policies in the Virgin Islands. Key topics and opinions expressed during the meeting include:

1. **Historical Perspective and Immigration Impact:**
 - i) The meeting opened with a reflection on the Virgin Islands' history, focusing on how population and economic changes have been influenced by immigration.
 - ii) Discussions acknowledged the benefits of immigration, such as bringing skills and economic growth, but also raised concerns about cultural, social, and security challenges.
2. **Policy Development and Recommendations:**
 - iii) There was an emphasis on aligning immigration policies with the territory's unique demographic trends and sustainable development goals.

- iv) The meeting highlighted the need for comprehensive evaluations of individuals seeking residency or Belonger status, considering their character, contributions, and integration into the community.
- 3. **Social and Cultural Integration:**
 - v) The impact of immigration on community cohesion and cultural diversity was a significant concern.
 - vi) There were suggestions for a points-based system to evaluate residency and Belonger status applications, focusing on integration, financial stability, and knowledge of the Virgin Islands' culture and history.
- 4. **Specific Concerns and Proposals:**
 - vii) Participants discussed issues related to how children of work permit holders are treated and the treatment of investors in the territory.
 - viii) Concerns were raised about the criminal records' impact on eligibility for status, particularly for minor offenses among youth.
- 5. **Future Directions and Commitments:**
 - ix) Officials expressed a commitment to advancing legislative changes and aligning various immigration policies.
 - x) The meeting concluded with a call for ongoing dialogue and input from the community to shape fair, inclusive, and sustainable immigration policies.

In summary, the meeting at Anegada on Residence and Belonger Status highlighted a broad spectrum of views on managing immigration in a way that balances economic needs with cultural preservation, ensures community cohesion, and addresses long-standing issues in the Virgin Islands' immigration system. There was a clear emphasis on creating policies that reflect the values and aspirations of the Virgin Islands while ensuring fairness and inclusivity.

Virgin Gorda

The town hall meeting on Virgin Gorda discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised after a detailed discussion on the current and potential future state of immigration policies in the Virgin Islands. Key topics and opinions expressed during the meeting include:

1. **Immigration Policy and National Development:** The meeting opened with an acknowledgment of the significant role immigration has played in the BVI's development. The historical context highlighted how the BVI's population growth, primarily through immigration, has been instrumental in its economic expansion.
2. **Challenges of Immigration:** While recognizing the benefits of immigration, such as bringing in diverse skills and aiding economic growth, the speakers also addressed the challenges. These included cultural and social tensions, national security risks, and infrastructural capacity challenges.
3. **Management of Immigration:** There was a consensus on the need for effective immigration management to balance the benefits and potential negative impacts. This includes aligning immigration policies with the unique demographic trends and immigration patterns of the territory.
4. **Residents and Belonger Status:** The Commission of Inquiry's focus on the systems for awarding residents and belonger status was discussed. Recommendations were made for reviewing the length of residence required for belonger status and for developing a new immigration policy.
5. **Public Feedback and Concerns:** Participants raised various concerns, including the lack of fairness in the current system, the need for better execution of laws, and the challenges faced by long-term residents and their children. There was a call for a more transparent and inclusive approach to policy formulation.
6. **Policy Considerations:** Key policy considerations mentioned included economic needs, social and cultural impacts, security concerns, legal frameworks, capacity and resource management, and the impact on international relations.

7. **Proposed Changes and Recommendations:** Suggestions included establishing a comprehensive immigration policy, decoupling the work permit process from belonger status, implementing a stronger point system for processing applications, establishing quotas, and creating labor and population policies.
8. **Children and Integration:** Special attention was given to the status of children born in the BVI to non-belongers and their integration into the community. There was a discussion about potentially adjusting thresholds and criteria for these children to obtain status.
9. **Social Cohesion and Integration:** The importance of social cohesion and integration in the community was emphasized. It was suggested that immigration policies should encourage and evaluate the integration of immigrants into the BVI community.
10. **Long-Term Strategy and Transparency:** Participants expressed the need for a long-term national strategy for immigration, suggesting that policies should be clear, consistent, and transparent to allow residents to plan their lives accordingly.
11. **Future Directions:** The discussion concluded with a call for continued dialogue and collaboration to shape a fair, inclusive, and effective immigration policy that balances economic development with cultural preservation, prioritizes national security, and aligns with international commitments.

Jost Van Dyke

The town hall meeting on Jost Van Dyke discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised after a detailed discussion on the current and potential future state of immigration policies in the Virgin Islands. Key topics and opinions expressed during the meeting include:

1. **Historical Context and Demographic Changes:** The meeting highlighted the historical context of the Virgin Islands, noting significant demographic changes over the decades, with a particular focus on the impact of immigration on society and the economy.
2. **Challenges and Opportunities of Immigration:** Discussions acknowledged the dual nature of immigration, recognizing its benefits in terms of talent, skills, and economic growth, while also addressing the challenges it poses to national security, social and cultural fabric, and infrastructural capacity.
3. **Policy Recommendations:** The meeting focused on the need for effective management of immigration to align with national development objectives. Key recommendations included implementing a points system for evaluating residency or Belonger status applications, setting quotas for annual residency and Belonger status grants, and ensuring policies comply with international human rights standards.
4. **Concerns About Cultural and Social Impacts:** Participants expressed concerns about the cultural and social impacts of unregulated immigration, emphasizing the need for policies that promote community cohesion and cultural diversity.
5. **Addressing Specific Groups within the Community:** The meeting highlighted the need for policies catering to various groups, such as current residents with established roots, persons born in the BVI without official status, and long-term residents without formal status.
6. **Legal and Constitutional Considerations:** The discussion included aspects related to the Constitution and existing laws, underlining the importance of aligning new policies with these frameworks.
7. **Public Engagement and Feedback:** The meeting emphasized the importance of public engagement in shaping immigration policies, encouraging community members to provide feedback and participate in discussions.
8. **Focus on Economic and Social Development:** There was a focus on balancing economic development with cultural preservation, prioritizing national security, and promoting local workforce growth.
9. **Consideration of Capacity and Resources:** Acknowledging the BVI's limited capacity to manage immigration, the discussion highlighted the need for policies that consider resource constraints.

10. **Legal Framework and International Standards:** The necessity of a robust legal framework that adheres to international standards and respects human rights was underscored.
11. **Technology and Process Improvement:** There were suggestions to improve efficiency in handling immigration-related processes, possibly through digitalization and better resource allocation.
12. **Rights and Privileges of Different Statuses:** The meeting also touched upon the different rights and privileges associated with various statuses like residency, Belonger status, and citizenship.

This meeting reflects a community deeply engaged in the complexities of immigration, striving for policies that balance economic needs with social and cultural considerations, while also addressing legal and constitutional requirements.

West End

The town hall meeting on West End, Tortola discusses the Virgin Islands' immigration policy, focusing on residence and Belonger status. The meeting included various government officials and community members. Here are the key points and concerns raised after a detailed discussion on the current and potential future state of immigration policies in the Virgin Islands. Key topics and opinions expressed during the meeting include:

1. **Historical and Economic Context:** The meeting opened with a reflection on the Virgin Islands' history, focusing on demographic changes influenced by immigration and their impact on the economy.
2. **Challenges and Opportunities of Immigration:** While acknowledging the benefits of immigration in terms of skills and economic growth, the meeting also addressed challenges related to cultural and social integration, national security, and infrastructural capacity.
3. **Policy Development and Recommendations:** There was a strong emphasis on the need for effective management of immigration, aligning policies with the territory's demographic trends and sustainable development goals. Recommendations included a points system for evaluating residency or Belonger status applications and setting quotas for annual residency and Belonger status grants.
4. **Social and Cultural Integration:** Concerns were raised about the impact of immigration on community cohesion and cultural diversity. The need for policies promoting community integration and managing the social and cultural impacts of immigration was highlighted.
5. **Addressing Specific Groups:** The meeting discussed the need for policies catering to various groups within the community, including current residents with established roots, persons born in the BVI without official status, and long-term residents without formal status.
6. **Legal and Constitutional Considerations:** The discussion included the importance of aligning new policies with the Constitution and existing laws, as well as complying with international human rights standards.
7. **Public Engagement and Feedback:** The importance of public engagement in shaping immigration policies was emphasized, encouraging community members to provide feedback and participate in discussions.
8. **Economic and Social Development:** The meeting focused on balancing economic development with cultural preservation, prioritizing national security, and promoting local workforce growth.
9. **Capacity and Resource Management:** Acknowledging the BVI's limited capacity to manage immigration, the need for policies considering resource constraints was discussed.
10. **Legal Framework and International Standards:** The necessity of a robust legal framework adhering to international standards and respecting human rights was underscored.
11. **Technology and Process Improvement:** Suggestions were made to improve efficiency in handling immigration-related processes, potentially through digitalization and better resource allocation.
12. **Rights and Privileges of Different Statuses:** The meeting also touched on the different rights and privileges associated with various statuses like residency, Belonger status, and citizenship.

This meeting reflects a community deeply engaged in the complexities of immigration, striving for policies that balance economic needs with social and cultural considerations, while also addressing legal and constitutional requirements.

Online Survey Results

An online survey was administered on the Virgin Islands Government's website: bvi.gov.vg. The survey was active for the period to 12 October 2023 to 25 October, 2023. The total number of respondents was 857.

The survey conducted offers insightful perspectives on various issues related to immigration, demographics, and social matters, as seen through the lens of its respondents. The demographic makeup of the participants indicates a primarily mature audience, with the majority falling within the 35-54 age range. This is complemented by a significant representation of females, suggesting a potential influence on the survey's perspectives regarding social and cultural matters. In terms of relationship status, over half of the respondents are either married or in a domestic relationship, which could point to family considerations impacting their views.

The respondents' employment status shows a large proportion being employed full-time, suggesting economic engagement and stability among them. The annual household income of the respondents varies widely, yet a notable segment reports high earnings, indicating a diverse economic background within the community.

When it comes to nationality and ethnicity, the majority identify as British Virgin Islanders, highlighting the survey's local representation, while also showing a rich cultural diversity with various other nationalities and ethnicities present.

The survey reveals strong opinions on immigration and social issues. There is a clear consensus on the need for a comprehensive immigration policy that aligns with economic growth and addresses labour shortages. Concerns about the social and cultural impacts of migration are prevalent, indicating a community mindful of maintaining social cohesion and cultural identity.

On residency and Belonger status, the survey participants show significant support for establishing quotas, reflecting a desire for a regulated approach to immigration. National security is a top priority for most respondents, emphasizing the importance of thorough screening in immigration processes.

The duration of residency among respondents varies, but a large portion have been living in the Virgin Islands for over 20 years, suggesting their perspectives are deeply rooted in local experiences. The majority are citizens or belongers, with a significant minority on work permits, underscoring the diversity in immigration experiences.

From these findings, several lessons emerge. The community values a balanced approach to immigration, weighing economic needs against the importance of social and cultural preservation. There's a recognition of the role of foreign workers in the economy, balanced by a concern for local job opportunities and social stability. The significance of cultural integration and respect for local customs is also highlighted.

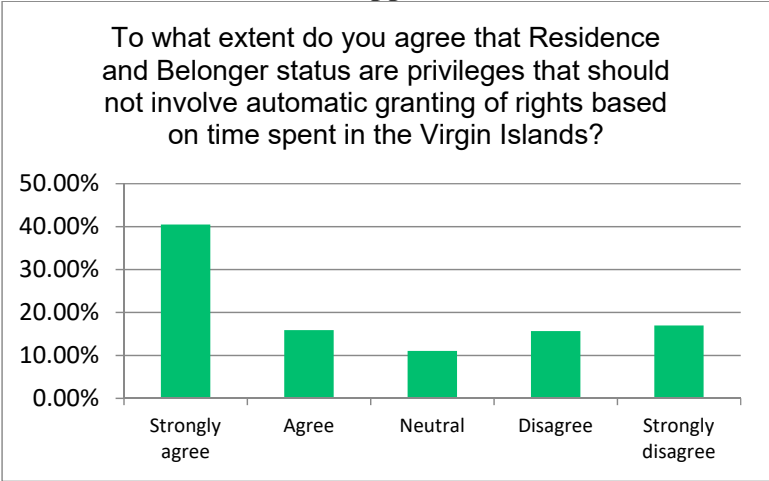
However, the survey's limitations should be noted. The self-reported nature of the data might introduce biases or inaccuracies, and the absence of a scientifically random sample means that the results lack a calculable margin of error, which limits the generalizability of the findings.

In essence, the survey provides a narrative of a community that values controlled immigration, economic growth, and cultural integrity, while also acknowledging the diverse perspectives and experiences of its residents.

The results of the survey are detailed in the following section. A brief summary of the results follow for each question.

1. To what extent do you agree that Residence and Belonger status are privileges that should not involve automatic granting of rights based on time spent in the Virgin Islands?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	40.48%	334
Agree	15.88%	131
Neutral	11.03%	91
Disagree	15.64%	129
Strongly disagree	16.97%	140
	Answered	825
	Skipped	32

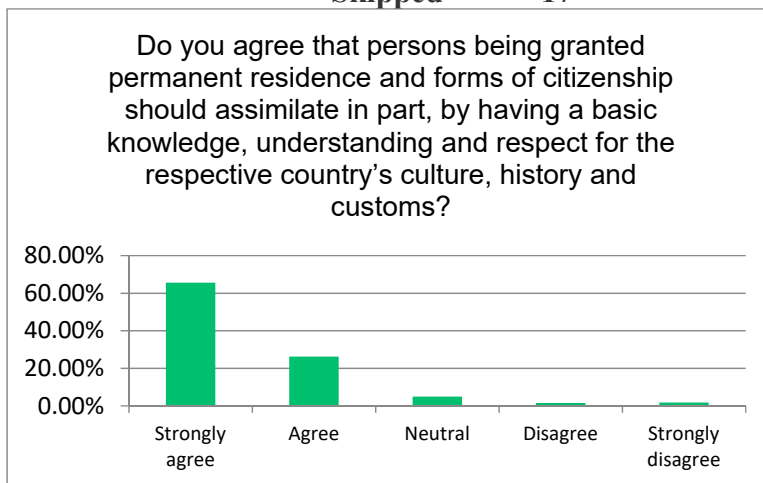


- a. A majority of respondents (56.36% - 465 out of 825) lean towards agreement (either agree or strongly agree) with the statement that Residence and Belonger status should not automatically confer rights based on duration of stay in the Virgin Islands.
- b. A significant minority (32.61% - 269 out of 825) express disagreement (either disagree or strongly disagree) with the statement.
- c. A smaller portion (11.03%) remains neutral on the issue.

d. The total number of participants who answered this question is 825, with an additional 32 participants opting not to respond.

2. Do you agree that persons being granted permanent residence and forms of citizenship should assimilate in part, by having a basic knowledge, understanding and respect for the respective country's culture, history and customs?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	65.60%	551
Agree	26.19%	220
Neutral	4.88%	41
Disagree	1.55%	13
Strongly disagree	1.79%	15
Answered		840
Skipped		17



e. A significant majority of respondents (91.79% - 771 out of 840) are in favor (either agree or strongly agree) of the notion that individuals granted permanent residence or citizenship should partially assimilate by understanding and respecting the country's culture, history, and customs.

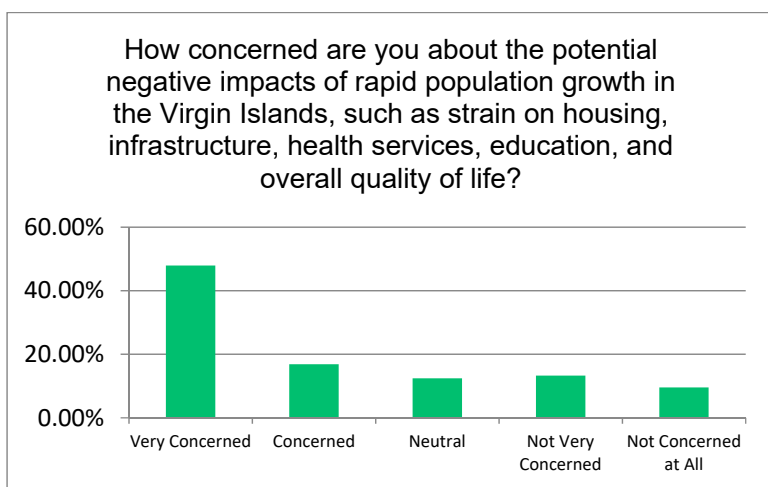
f. Only a small proportion (3.34% - 28 out of 840) disagree with this idea (either disagree or strongly disagree).

g. A minor segment of respondents (4.88%) remains neutral on the issue.

h. The total number of participants who answered this question is 840, with 17 participants choosing not to respond.

3. How concerned are you about the potential negative impacts of rapid population growth in the Virgin Islands, such as strain on housing, infrastructure, health services, education, and overall quality of life?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Concerned	47.91%	401
Concerned	16.85%	141
Neutral	12.43%	104
Not Very Concerned	13.26%	111
Not Concerned at All	9.56%	80
	Answered	837
	Skipped	20

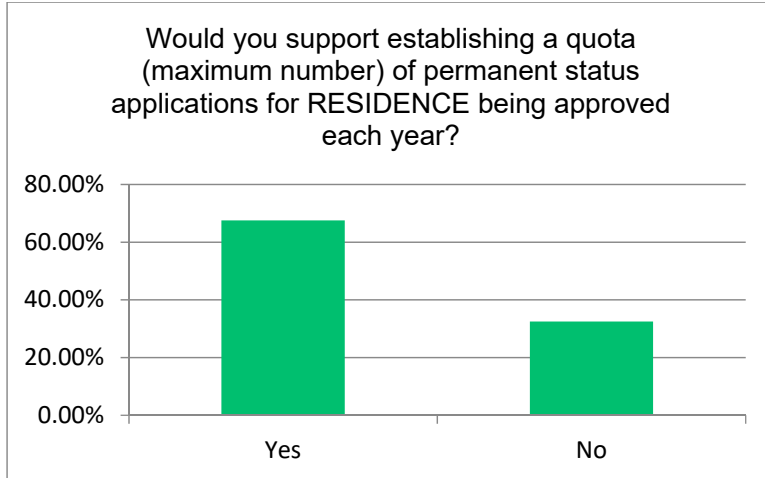


- i. A majority of respondents express concern about the negative impacts of rapid population growth in the Virgin Islands, with 47.91% being very concerned and 16.85% concerned, totaling 64.76% (542 out of 837).
- j. A smaller portion of respondents are less worried, with 13.26% not very concerned and 9.56% not concerned at all, totaling 22.82% (191 out of 837).
- k. 12.43% of respondents remain neutral on the issue.
- l. The total number of participants who answered this question is 837, with 20 participants opting not to respond.

4. Would you support establishing a quota (maximum number) of permanent status applications for RESIDENCE being approved each year?

Answer Choices	Responses
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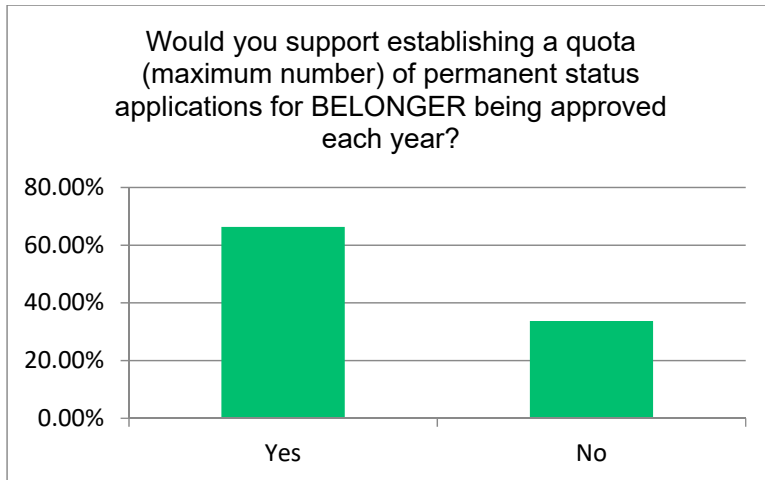
Yes	67.51%	563
No	32.49%	271
Answered		834
Skipped		23



- m. A significant majority, 67.51% of the respondents (563 out of 834), support the idea of establishing a yearly quota for approving permanent residence applications.
- n. Conversely, 32.49% (271 out of 834) of the respondents do not support this idea.
- o. The total number of participants who answered this question is 834, with an additional 23 participants choosing not to respond.

5. Would you support establishing a quota (maximum number) of permanent status applications for BELONGER being approved each year?

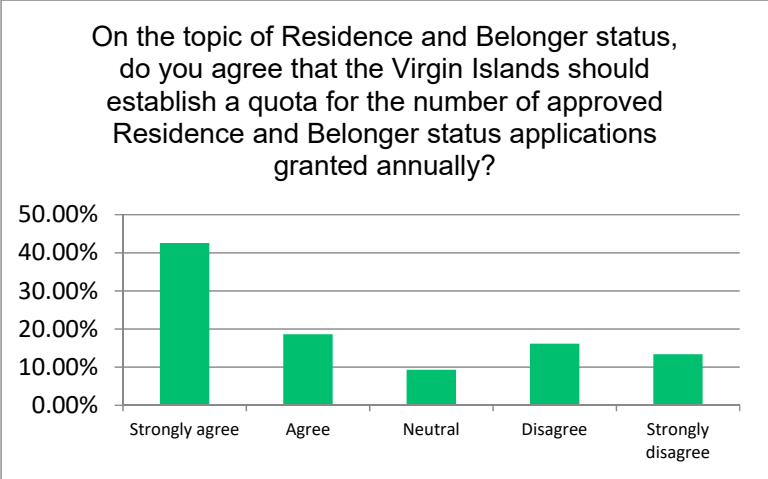
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	66.31%	553
No	33.69%	281
Answered		834
Skipped		23



- p. A significant majority, 66.31% of the respondents (553 out of 834), are in favor of establishing a yearly quota for approving Belonger status applications.
- q. On the other hand, 33.69% (281 out of 834) of the respondents oppose this idea.
- r. The total number of participants who answered this question is 834, with 23 participants opting not to respond.

6. On the topic of Residence and Belonger status, do you agree that the Virgin Islands should establish a quota for the number of approved Residence and Belonger status applications granted annually?

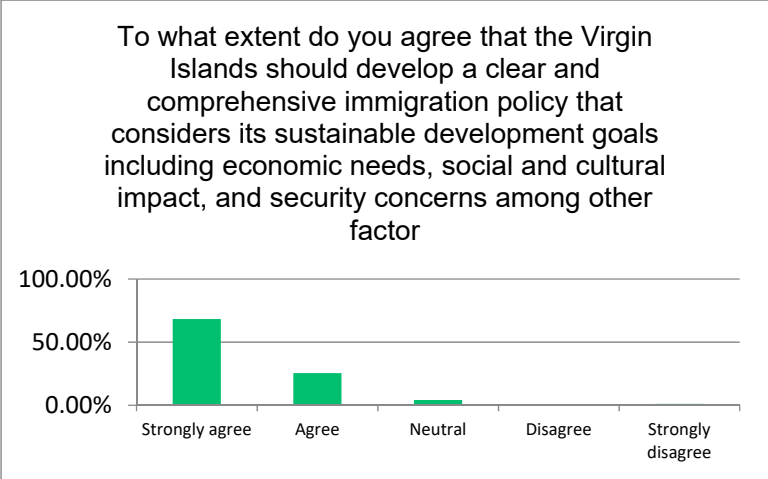
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	42.53%	356
Agree	18.64%	156
Neutral	9.32%	78
Disagree	16.13%	135
Strongly disagree	13.38%	112
	Answered	837
	Skipped	20



- s. A majority of respondents, 61.17% (512 out of 837), support the idea of establishing a quota (combining those who strongly agree and agree).
- t. A minority of respondents, 29.51% (247 out of 837), express opposition to the idea (combining those who disagree and strongly disagree).
- u. A smaller segment, 9.32% (78 out of 837), remains neutral on the issue.
- v. The total number of participants who answered this question is 837, with an additional 20 participants opting not to respond.

7. To what extent do you agree that the Virgin Islands should develop a clear and comprehensive immigration policy that considers its sustainable development goals including economic needs, social and cultural impact, and security concerns among other factors?

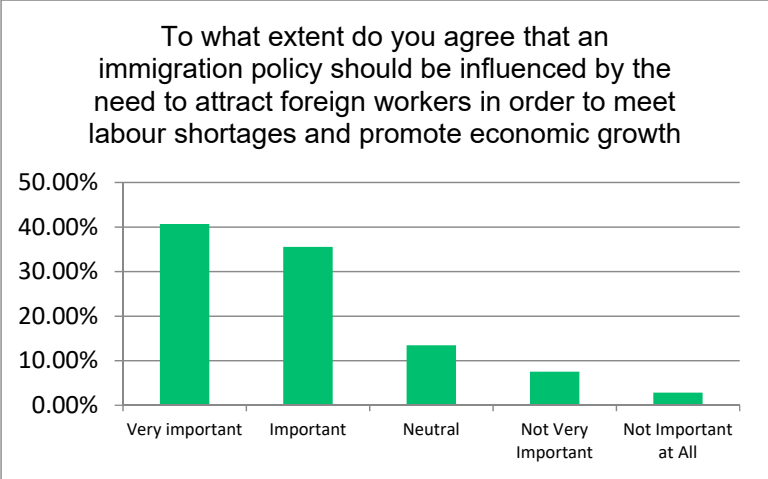
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	68.29%	506
Agree	25.51%	189
Neutral	4.18%	31
Disagree	0.94%	7
Strongly disagree	1.08%	8
	Answered	741
	Skipped	116



- w. A substantial majority of respondents, 93.80% (695 out of 741), express support for the development of a clear and comprehensive immigration policy in the Virgin Islands (sum of those who strongly agree and agree).
- x. A very small proportion, 2.02% (15 out of 741), oppose this idea (sum of those who disagree and strongly disagree).
- y. A minority of respondents, 4.18% (31 out of 741), remain neutral on the issue.
- z. The total number of participants who answered this question is 741, with a notably higher number of participants, 116, choosing not to respond.

8. To what extent do you agree that an immigration policy should be influenced by the need to attract foreign workers in order to meet labour shortages and promote economic growth

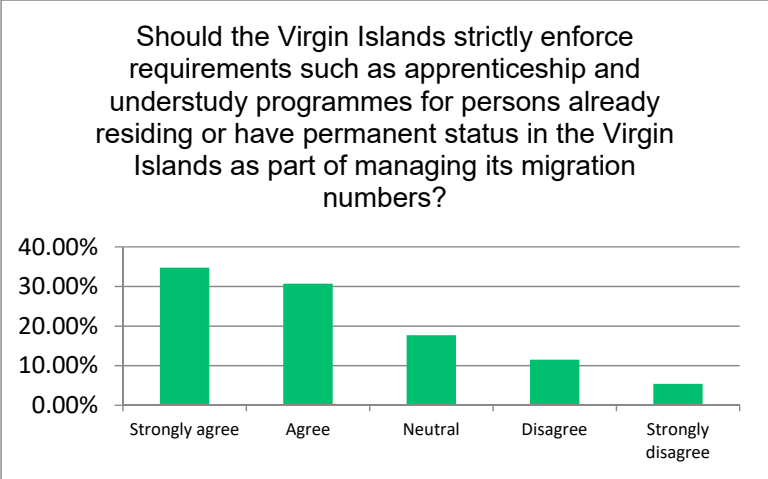
Answer Choices	Responses
Very important	40.65% 302
Important	35.53% 264
Neutral	13.46% 100
Not Very Important	7.54% 56
Not Important at All	2.83% 21
Answered	743
Skipped	114



- aa. A significant majority of respondents, 76.18% (566 out of 743), view the influence of the need to attract foreign workers on immigration policy as important or very important.
- bb. A smaller segment of respondents, 10.37% (77 out of 743), considers this influence as not very important or not important at all.
- cc. 13.46% of respondents (100 out of 743) remain neutral on this issue.
- dd. The total number of participants who answered this question is 743, with a relatively high number of participants, 114, opting not to respond.

9. Should the Virgin Islands strictly enforce requirements such as apprenticeship and understudy programmes for persons already residing or have permanent status in the Virgin Islands as part of managing its migration numbers?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	34.73%	257
Agree	30.68%	227
Neutral	17.70%	131
Disagree	11.49%	85
Strongly disagree	5.41%	40
	Answered	740
	Skipped	117



ee. A majority of respondents, 65.41% (484 out of 740), support the idea of strictly enforcing requirements such as apprenticeship and understudy programs for residents or those with permanent status in the Virgin Islands (combined percentage of those who strongly agree and agree).

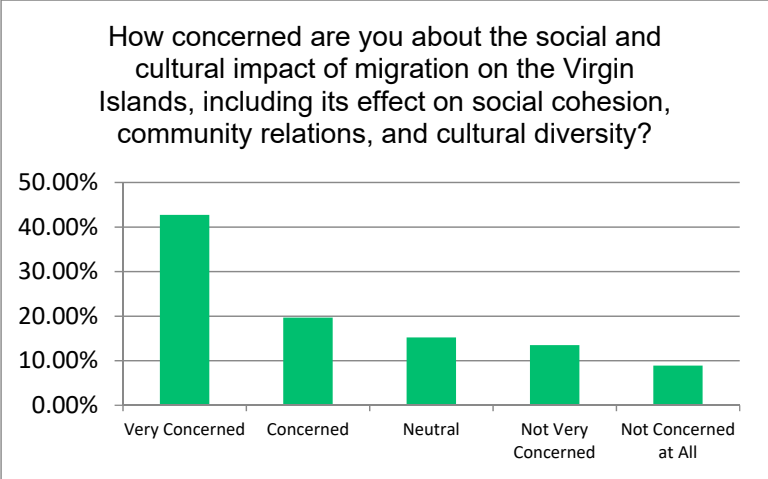
ff. A smaller segment, 16.90% (125 out of 740), is against this idea (combined percentage of those who disagree and strongly disagree).

gg. 17.70% of respondents (131 out of 740) remain neutral on the issue.

hh. The total number of participants who answered this question is 740, with a notable number of 117 participants opting not to respond.

10. How concerned are you about the social and cultural impact of migration on the Virgin Islands, including its effect on social cohesion, community relations, and cultural diversity?

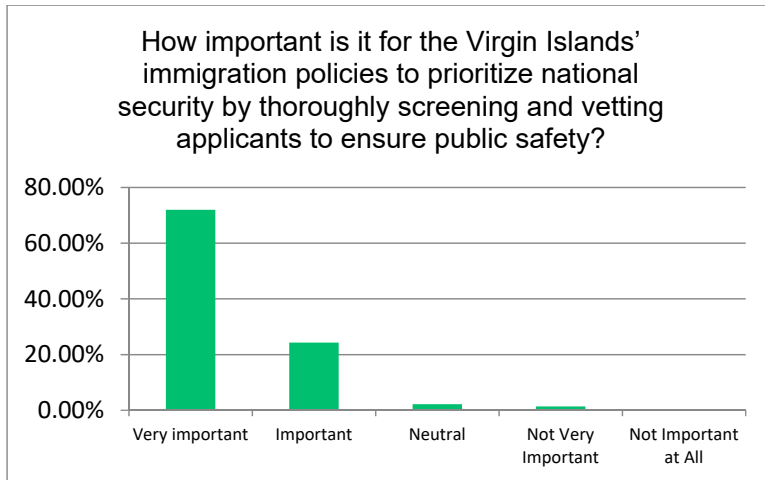
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Concerned	42.72%	317
Concerned	19.68%	146
Neutral	15.23%	113
Not Very Concerned	13.48%	100
Not Concerned at All	8.89%	66
	Answered	742
	Skipped	115



- ii. A majority of respondents, 62.40% (463 out of 742), express concern about the social and cultural impact of migration on the Virgin Islands (sum of those who are very concerned and concerned).
- jj. A smaller proportion of respondents, 22.37% (166 out of 742), are less worried or not worried at all about these impacts (sum of those who are not very concerned and not concerned at all).
- kk. 15.23% of respondents (113 out of 742) remain neutral on this issue.
- ll. The total number of participants who answered this question is 742, with 115 participants choosing not to respond.

11. How important is it for the Virgin Islands’ immigration policies to prioritize national security by thoroughly screening and vetting applicants to ensure public safety?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very important	71.95%	536
Important	24.30%	181
Neutral	2.15%	16
Not Very Important	1.34%	10
Not Important at All	0.27%	2
	Answered	745
	Skipped	112



mm. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 96.25% (717 out of 745), consider it important or very important for the Virgin Islands' immigration policies to prioritize national security through thorough screening and vetting of applicants (combined percentage of those who think it's very important and important).

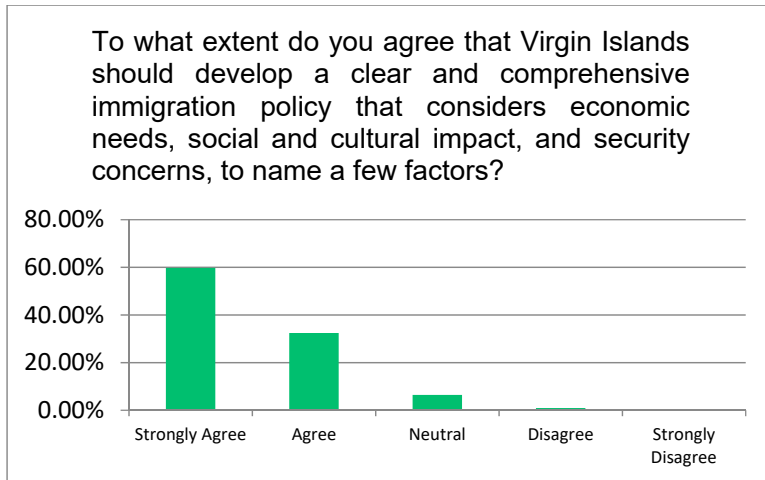
nn. A very small percentage, 1.61% (12 out of 745), deem it not very important or not important at all.

oo. Only 2.15% of respondents (16 out of 745) remain neutral on this issue.

pp. The total number of participants who answered this question is 745, with an additional 112 participants choosing not to respond.

12. To what extent do you agree that Virgin Islands should develop a clear and comprehensive immigration policy that considers economic needs, social and cultural impact, and security concerns, to name a few factors?

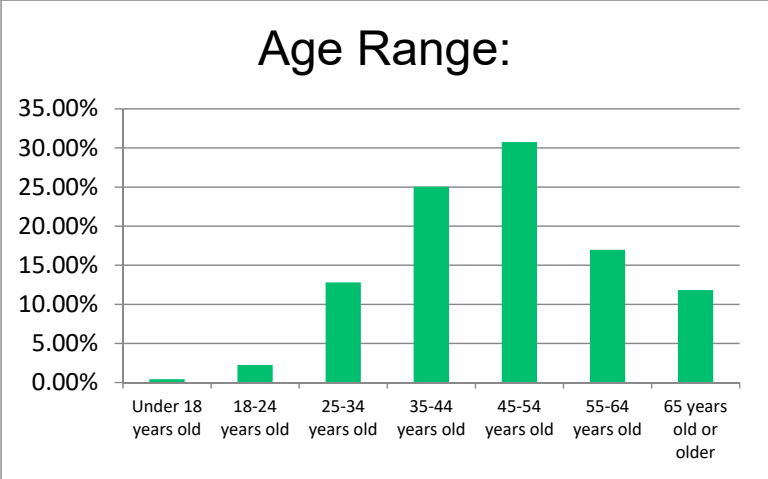
Answer Choices	Responses
Strongly Agree	59.73% 448
Agree	32.40% 243
Neutral	6.40% 48
Disagree	0.93% 7
Strongly Disagree	0.53% 4
	Answered 750
	Skipped 107



- qq. A substantial majority, 92.13% (691 out of 750), express agreement (either strongly agree or agree) with the idea of developing a clear and comprehensive immigration policy in the Virgin Islands.
- rr. A very small proportion, 1.46% (11 out of 750), disagrees with this notion (sum of those who disagree and strongly disagree).
- ss. 6.40% of respondents (48 out of 750) remain neutral on the issue.
- tt. The total number of participants who answered this question is 750, with an additional 107 participants opting not to respond.

13. Age Range:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18 years old	0.42%	3
18-24 years old	2.23%	16
25-34 years old	12.80%	92
35-44 years old	25.03%	180
45-54 years old	30.74%	221
55-64 years old	16.97%	122
65 years old or older	11.82%	85
	Answered	719
	Skipped	138



uu. The majority of respondents fall within the age ranges of 35-44 years (25.03%) and 45-54 years (30.74%).

vv. The age groups of 55-64 years and 65 years or older are also notably represented, with 16.97% and 11.82% respectively.

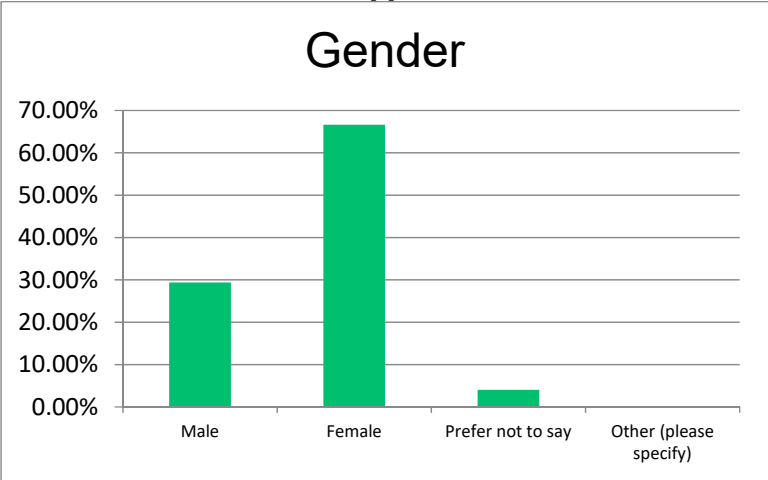
ww. Younger age groups (under 18 and 18-24 years) constitute a smaller fraction of the respondents, totaling only 2.65% combined.

xx. The age group of 25-34 years accounts for 12.80% of the responses.

yy. The total number of participants who responded to the age range question is 719, with a significant number of participants, 138, choosing not to respond.

14. Gender

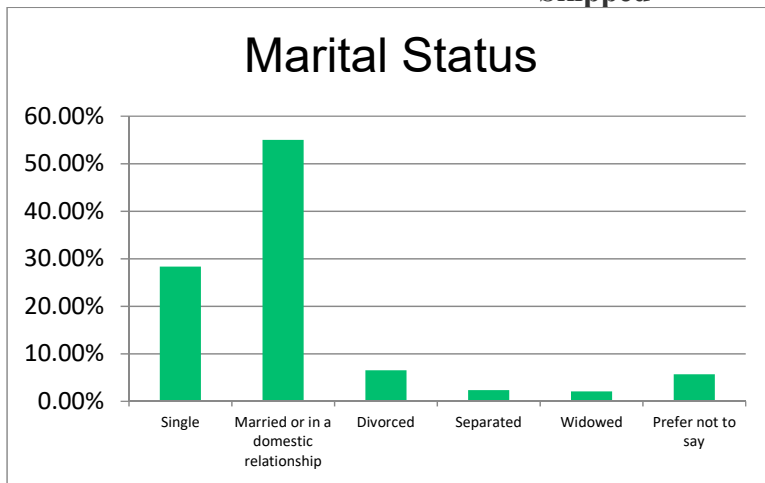
Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	29.36%	212
Female	66.62%	481
Prefer not to say	4.02%	29
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Answered		722
Skipped		135



- zz. The majority of respondents identify as female, accounting for 66.62% (481 out of 722) of the responses.
- aaa. Males represent 29.36% (212 out of 722) of the respondents.
- bbb. A small percentage, 4.02% (29 out of 722), prefer not to disclose their gender.
- ccc. No respondents chose the Other category.
- ddd. The total number of participants who answered the gender question is 722, with 135 participants opting not to respond.

15. Marital Status

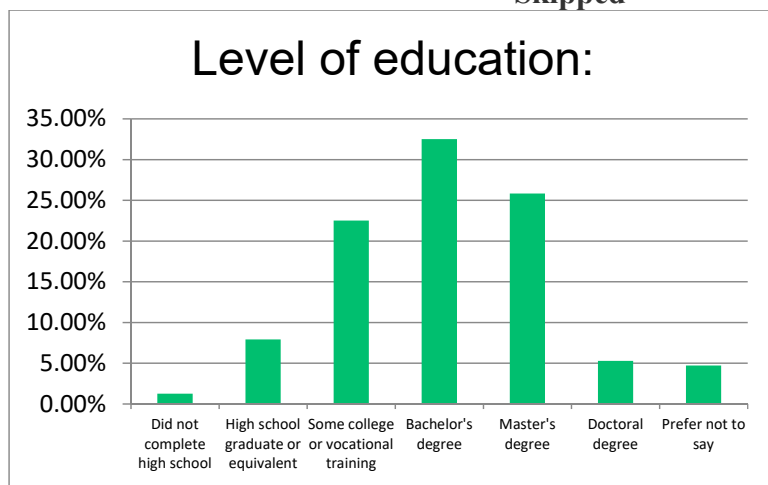
Answer Choices	Responses	
Single	28.33%	204
Married or in a domestic relationship	55.00%	396
Divorced	6.53%	47
Separated	2.36%	17
Widowed	2.08%	15
Prefer not to say	5.69%	41
	Answered	720
	Skipped	137



- eee. The majority of respondents, 55.00% (396 out of 720), are married or in a domestic relationship.
- fff. Those who are single represent 28.33% (204 out of 720) of the respondents.
- ggg. Divorced individuals account for 6.53% (47 out of 720) of the responses.
- hhh. Smaller percentages are seen in those who are separated (2.36%) and widowed (2.08%).
- iii. A portion of respondents, 5.69% (41 out of 720), prefer not to disclose their marital status.
- jjj. The total number of participants who responded to the marital status question is 720, with 137 participants opting not to respond.

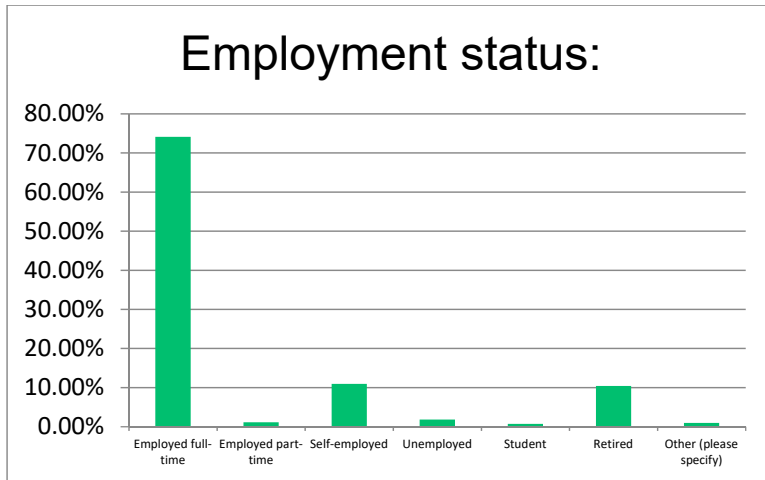
16. Level of education:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Did not complete high school	1.25%	9
High school graduate or equivalent	7.92%	57
Some college or vocational training	22.50%	162
Bachelor's degree	32.50%	234
Master's degree	25.83%	186
Doctoral degree	5.28%	38
Prefer not to say	4.72%	34
	Answered	720
	Skipped	137



17. Employment status:

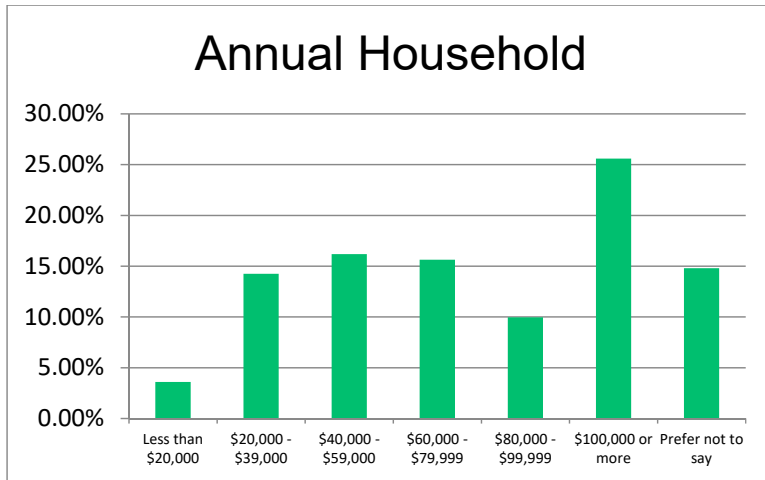
Answer Choices	Responses	
Employed full-time	74.10%	535
Employed part-time	1.11%	8
Self-employed	10.94%	79
Unemployed	1.80%	13
Student	0.69%	5
Retired	10.39%	75
Other (please specify)	0.97%	7
	Answered	722
	Skipped	135



- kkk. A significant majority of the respondents, 74.10% (535 out of 722), are employed full-time.
- lll. The self-employed category comprises 10.94% (79 out of 722) of the respondents.
- mmm. A notable proportion, 10.39% (75 out of 722), are retired.
- nnn. Other categories, such as part-time employment, unemployment, and student status, represent smaller percentages (1.11%, 1.80%, and 0.69% respectively).
- ooo. A small number, 0.97% (7 out of 722), fall into the 'Other' category.
- ppp. The total number of participants who answered the employment status question is 722, with 135 participants choosing not to respond.

18. Annual Household

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than \$20,000	3.60%	26
\$20,000 - \$39,000	14.25%	103
\$40,000 - \$59,000	16.18%	117
\$60,000 - \$79,999	15.63%	113
\$80,000 - \$99,999	9.96%	72
\$100,000 or more	25.59%	185
Prefer not to say	14.80%	107
	Answered	723
	Skipped	134



- qqq. The highest income bracket, \$100,000 or more, represents the largest single group with 25.59% (185 out of 723) of responses.
- rrr. The other income brackets show a relatively even distribution, with \$40,000 - \$59,000 and \$60,000 - \$79,999 having similar response rates of 16.18% and 15.63%, respectively.
- sss. The \$20,000 - \$39,000 bracket accounts for 14.25% of responses.
- ttt. A smaller percentage, 9.96%, falls in the \$80,000 - \$99,999 bracket.
- uuu. Only 3.60% report an income of less than \$20,000.
- vvv. A notable 14.80% of respondents prefer not to disclose their household income.
- www. The total number of participants who answered the annual household income question is 723, with 134 participants opting not to respond.

19. Nationality

Answer Choices	Responses	
British Virgin Islander	63.33%	430
American	8.54%	58
English	7.66%	52
Guyanese	2.50%	17
Canadian	2.21%	15
Jamaican	1.77%	12
Dominican	1.62%	11
Vincentian	1.03%	7
South African	0.88%	6
Citizen of the Dominican Republic	0.74%	5
Kittitian	0.74%	5
Trinidadian	0.74%	5
Citizen of Antigua and Barbuda	0.59%	4
Brazilian British	0.59%	4
Barbadian	0.44%	3
Filipino	0.44%	3

Irish	0.44%	3
Scottish	0.44%	3
Welsh	0.44%	3
Armenian	0.29%	2
Danish	0.29%	2
Dutch	0.29%	2
German	0.29%	2
St Lucian	0.29%	2
Afghan	0.15%	1
Albanian	0.15%	1
Angolan	0.15%	1
Argentine	0.15%	1
Australian	0.15%	1
Burkinan	0.15%	1
Cambodian	0.15%	1
Cayman Islander	0.15%	1
Colombian	0.15%	1
French	0.15%	1
Ghanaian	0.15%	1
Guinean	0.15%	1
Indian	0.15%	1
Malaysian	0.15%	1
Montserratian	0.15%	1
Panamanian	0.15%	1
Spanish	0.15%	1
Swiss	0.15%	1
Thai	0.15%	1
Uruguayan	0.15%	1
Uzbek	0.15%	1
Venezuelan	0.15%	1
Zimbabwean	0.15%	1
Other		34
	Answered	679
	Skipped	178

xxx. A clear majority of respondents identify as British Virgin Islanders, making up 63.33% (430 out of 679) of the responses.

yyy. American and English nationals are also notably represented, with 8.54% and 7.66% respectively.

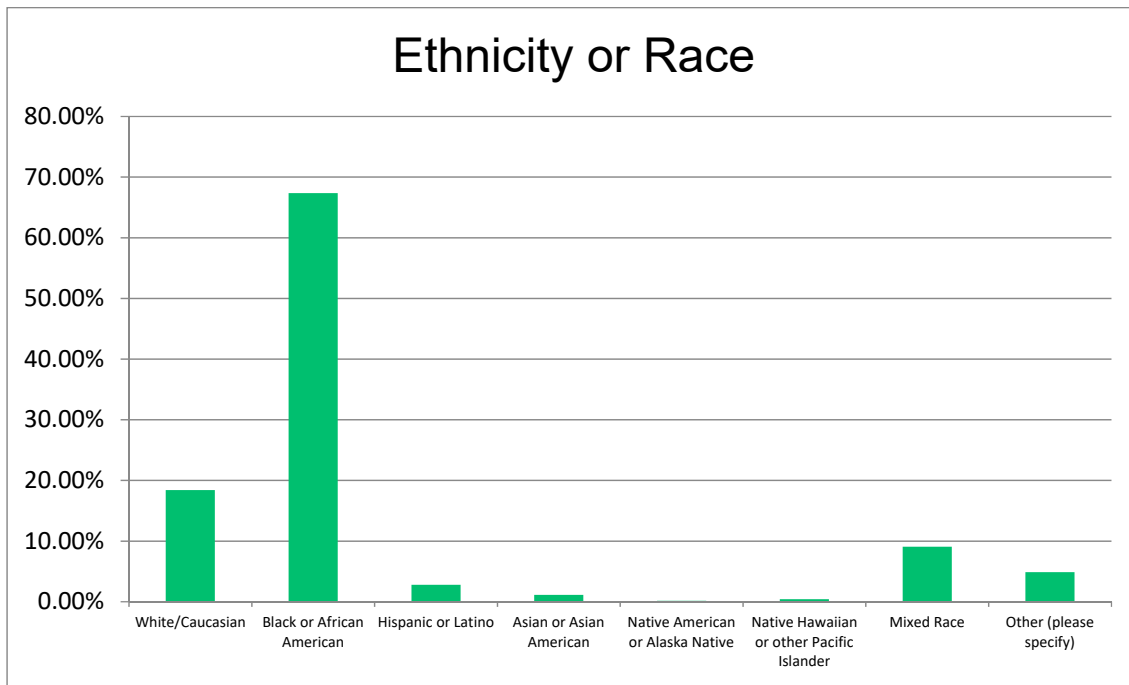
zzz. Other nationalities, including Guyanese, Canadian, Jamaican, and Dominican, make up smaller percentages of the survey population.

aaaa. A considerable number of respondents, listed as Other, represent various nationalities, indicating a diverse mix in the remaining portion of the survey population.

bbbb. The total number of participants who responded to the nationality question is 679, with a significant number of participants, 178, opting not to respond.

20. Ethnicity or race (Select all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses	
White/Caucasian	18.41%	132
Black or African American	67.36%	483
Hispanic or Latino	2.79%	20
Asian or Asian American	1.12%	8
Native American or Alaska Native	0.14%	1
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.42%	3
Mixed Race	9.07%	65
Other (please specify)	4.88%	35
	Answered	717
	Skipped	140



cccc. The largest group of respondents identifies as Black or African American, accounting for 67.36% (483 out of 717) of the responses.

dddd. A significant number, 18.41% (132 out of 717), identify as White/Caucasian.

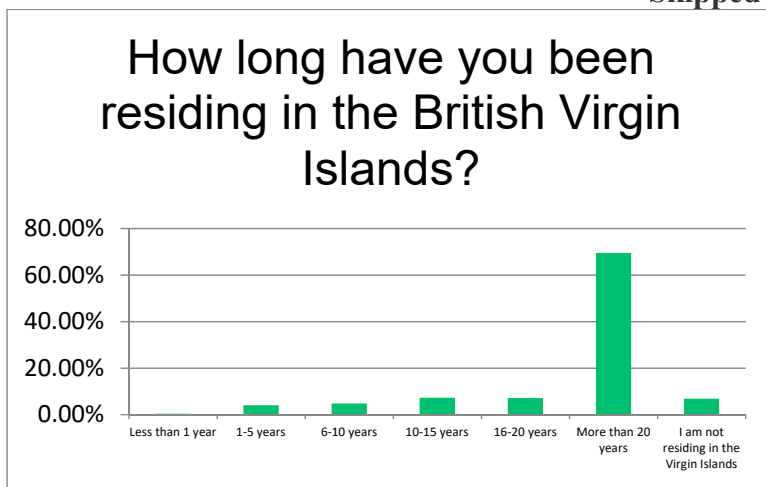
eeee. Those identifying as Mixed Race constitute 9.07% (65 out of 717) of the respondents.

ffff. Smaller percentages are seen in Hispanic or Latino (2.79%), Other (4.88%), Asian or Asian American (1.12%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.42%), and Native American or Alaska Native (0.14%).

gggg. The total number of participants who responded to the ethnicity or race question is 717, with 140 participants opting not to respond.

21. How long have you been residing in the British Virgin Islands?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1 year	0.42%	3
1-5 years	4.06%	29
6-10 years	4.76%	34
10-15 years	7.27%	52
16-20 years	7.13%	51
More than 20 years	69.51%	497
I am not residing in the Virgin Islands	6.85%	49
	Answered	715
	Skipped	142



hhhh. A vast majority of the respondents, 69.51% (497 out of 715), have been residing in the British Virgin Islands for more than 20 years.

iiii. A smaller proportion of respondents have lived in the Virgin Islands for shorter durations, with 7.27% residing for 10-15 years and 7.13% for 16-20 years.

jjjj. Those residing for 1-10 years (1-5 years and 6-10 years combined) make up approximately 8.82% of the respondents.

kkkk. Only a very small number, 0.42%, have been residing in the Virgin Islands for less than a year.

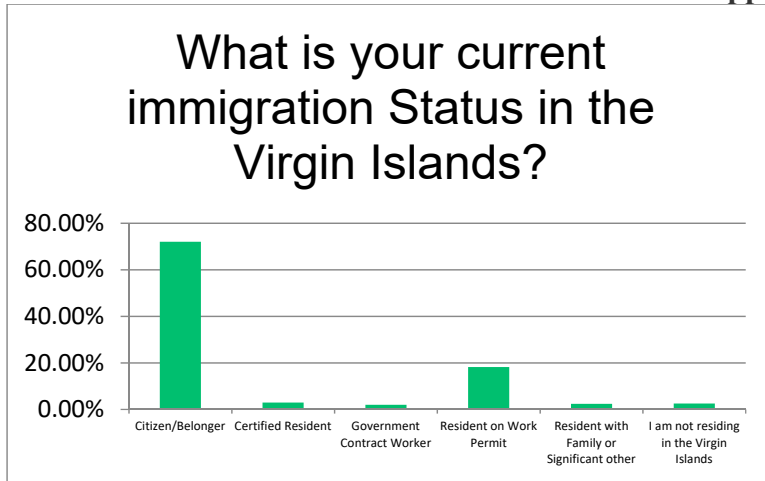
llll. Interestingly, 6.85% of the respondents are not currently residing in the Virgin Islands.

mmmm. The total number of participants who answered the question about their duration of residency is 715, with an additional 142 participants choosing not to respond.

What is your current immigration Status in the Virgin Islands?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Citizen/Belonger	72.04%	518
Certified Resident	2.92%	21

Government Contract Worker	1.95%	14
Resident on Work Permit	18.22%	131
Resident with Family or Significant other	2.36%	17
I am not residing in the Virgin Islands	2.50%	18
	Answered	719
	Skipped	138



nnnn. The majority of respondents, 72.04% (518 out of 719), have the status of Citizen/Belonger in the Virgin Islands.

oooo. A significant minority, 18.22% (131 out of 719), are residents on work permits.

pppp. Smaller percentages of respondents are Certified Residents (2.92%), Residents with Family or Significant Others (2.36%), and Government Contract Workers (1.95%).

qqqq. A small proportion, 2.50% (18 out of 719), report not residing in the Virgin Islands.

rrrr. The total number of participants who responded to the question on their current immigration status in the Virgin Islands is 719, with 138 participants opting not to respond.

Individual Submissions on Residency and Belonger Status

A. The document is a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. Key points include:

1. **Appreciation for the Report:** The person commends the report for being well-written and capturing important aspects of granting status in the territory.
2. **Focus on Virgin Islanders Abroad:** A significant focus is on the Fast-Track Initiative to bring Virgin Islanders home (Section 2.10.12). It stresses the importance of this initiative, especially for descendants of Virgin Islanders who live abroad but consider the Virgin Islands their home. The person suggests that the policy should cover individuals in this category, facilitating their return to the territory to work and manage family estates without restrictions.
3. **Policy for Descendants of Virgin Islanders:** advocates for a policy that allows descendants of Virgin Islanders who have moved abroad for better opportunities to return to the territory without licensing or restrictions. She suggests that no quota should be applied to the current group eligible for status, but a quota system could be considered for future applicants, based on the territory's population growth.

4. **Consistency and Fairness in Immigration Policies:** The email emphasizes the need for the Immigration Department to have clear, fair, and consistent policies. The person expresses concerns about the application of policies, especially in relation to children residing in the Virgin Islands for a long period of time.
5. **Personal Experiences with Immigration Policies:** shares personal experiences regarding the challenges faced by a child, who was not allowed to reside in the territory on the parent's time after turning 18. The person questions the logic behind this policy, especially considering her status as a Virgin Islander and homeowner. The person also notes the lack of written responses to applications for 3rd and 4th Generation Belonger status for children.

In summary, the feedback highlights the need for inclusive and fair immigration policies that consider the unique circumstances of Virgin Islanders and their descendants, especially those living abroad. She advocates for policies that facilitate their return and integration into the territory while ensuring consistency and fairness in the application of these policies.

B. The individual provided a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. The feedback was gathered from various contributors through radio programs, text messages, and phone calls. Key points from the feedback include:

1. **Long-Term Vision and Policy Modernization:** A comprehensive approach and a long-term National Growth Management Plan are suggested, focusing on selecting the right mix of skills needed in the country. Modernizing immigration policy is emphasized, as current policies are deemed outdated.
2. **Vetting and Selection Process:** Contributors call for a vetting process before allowing entry into the country and a selection system to choose the best category of immigrants.
3. **Separation of Residence and Belonger Status:** It is suggested that Residence and Belonger Status should not be granted simultaneously. Clarification and stricter criteria for Belonger by tenure are also recommended.
4. **Child Birth and Status:** Issues surrounding children born in the BVI not receiving status at birth are raised. Amendments to the Immigration and Passport Ordinance are proposed to grant instant Belonger Status to children born to expat parents in the BVI.
5. **Cultural and Economic Contributions:** The importance of cultural impact assessments, recognition of significant cultural or economic contributions, and integration tests covering BVI's history and culture are highlighted.
6. **Indigenous and Virgin Islander Rights:** There's a focus on protecting the rights of indigenous Virgin Islanders, including land rights, resource management, representation in decision-making, and cultural preservation.
7. **Criteria for Residency and Belonger Status:** Suggestions include setting a residency duration (10-15 years) with tax payment requirements, and a skills assessment for work permit applicants to ensure they fit the job roles unavailable to current residents.
8. **Moratorium on Grants and Policy Reviews:** A temporary halt on the issuance of Belonger status is proposed, alongside regular reviews of belongingship policies to align with the evolving needs of the BVI community.
9. **Legislation and Capacity Building:** Enactment of laws protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and capacity-building initiatives for them are suggested.
10. **Specific Policies and Restrictions:** Ideas include benefit-sharing agreements for resource use, restrictions on belongingship in culturally or ecologically significant areas, and monitoring mechanisms for policy impacts.
11. **Concerns over Current Policies:** There are concerns about the fast track system used for granting residency and belonging status, with suggestions to revoke privileges for those who did not qualify and to distinguish between different types of residents and work permit holders.

In summary, the feedback reflects a desire for a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and modern approach to immigration policy in the BVI, balancing the protection of indigenous rights with the integration of new residents and belongers. There's a call for clearer criteria, better vetting, and a more strategic approach to managing immigration in the BVI.

C. The feedback is presented by a group of concerned citizens, which advocates for the interests of Virgin Islanders. Key points include:

Input from a Local Community Group

Input from a community group comprised of individuals who trace their ancestry to the Virgin Islands, pre-1900s was received. The following represents their views regarding the exercise of seeking public input and the substance of emergent policy on residence and belonger status.

1. [The group's] ultimate goal is to help create a better Virgin Islands for all while safeguarding the interests of its ancestral population. We call for a comprehensive review of immigration policies and a commitment to protecting the rights and vested interest of ancestral Virgin Islanders, also our unique culture and heritage. When it comes to important issues such as Immigration Reform that affect the interest of the Virgin Islanders, non-Virgin Islanders should not be involved in the discourse. We note other powerful nations prohibit such involvement (perhaps because they recognise the threat to their nationals). Issues of such importance should be discussed only by Virgin Islanders who can tout matters in the best interest of Virgin Islanders. It has been proven that in many aspects, the allegiance of many non-Virgin Islanders is with their home country and not the host country. The group further outlined its position with respect to the following issues appearing in bold lettering below.
 - a. **Belonger Status and Other Benefits:** Issuance of Belonger Status: Means of Granting Belonger Status. Please list the present criteria for belonger status. Please clarify the processes for granting Belonger status, distinguishing between Civil Registry and Immigration Department's procedures? We recommend that you examine the rationale behind granting Belonger status by the Immigration Department. For example, why are persons being given belonger status based on the time period that they have lived in the Virgin Islands. (This seems to be common place in the Virgin Islands.
 - b. **Belonger Card Expiration:** Explain the expiration dates for Belonger cards issued by the Civil Registry (given to ancestral offspring's) and not the Immigration Department (to non-Virgin Islanders). It is our recommendation that the belonger card, already issued by the Immigration Department, should have an expiration date for better monitoring, e.g. an expiration date of 5 or 10 years.
 - c. **Recommendations for Spouse of a Virgin Islander or Belonger:** We recommend that there should be a requirement for couples to live harmoniously for at least five years after which a work permit exemption can be granted to the spouse. It is further recommended that there be a 10-year requirement for the granting of resident status to spouses of Virgin Islanders. All other persons e.g. those who live in the Territory for 20 years or more can also be granted residency ONLY.

- d. **Marriage Duration and status:** It is recommended that a spouse's status be revoked if a marriage ends regardless of the timeframe that they were together. Persons who have already been granted Belonger status and were not of Virgin Islands origin must not be able to pass on this status to someone else to whom they have subsequently married as the status was a privilege and not a right. If re-married to another Virgin Islander, the process of being granted a resident card must start all over again.
- e. **Moratorium on granting of Belonger Status:** Further, it is recommended that the belonger status process through the Immigration Department should be halted until Virgin Islanders once again become the majority – about 65% of the population (with valid proof). It is highly recommended that the Immigration Act be amended to remove the ten-year residency policy. It is too short a period. Granting of belonger status should not have been an automatic right of being in territory of a specific period. Applications should have been vetted (using more than just a time served practice), met the 20 year requirement we used as a policy, and then awarded accordingly.
- f. **Completion of Virgin Islands History and Culture Course:** We firmly advocate for a requirement for individuals renewing a work permit or becoming a Resident to complete a Virgin Islands history and culture course at HLSCC. (Persons living in the Virgin Islands for a period of one year or more must learn the history and culture of where they are.)

The group outlined its position regarding varying factors. The group called Government to take into account the following:

- g. [The group is] strongly against the granting of status based on alien-land holder licenses, citizenship by investment and recommend a moratorium on granting Belonger status.
- h. A collaboration among Government Departments and statutory boards to track and manage immigrants effectively. These include: Social Security Board, National Health Insurance, Inland Revenue, Labour and Workforce Development, Civil Registry and Passport Office, BVI Ports Authority (seaports and airports), Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, His Majesty's Customs, Department of Immigration etc. This would necessitate the sharing of information among all departments in Government in order that departments will be able to track persons in all sectors.
- i. [The group] recommends that the Board of Immigration should consist of Virgin Islanders only and not non-Virgin Islanders. The term Virgin Islander should be strengthened to state: a person with a consistent ancestry (maternal or paternal) dating back to 1900 or prior. [The group] needs a commitment where the laws would protect what a Virgin Islander is and safeguard the status as we move forward. There should also be some way that the persons in the diaspora can come back home and contribute and or be part of the Territory's development.

Their research has led to specific examples where wide, non-native participation in the formulation of immigration policy has not been the practice. The group argues that

expatriates often have limited or no influence on the immigration policies of their host countries. Their ability to participate in immigration reform is typically limited to their home country, where they may be able to vote in federal elections and participate in advocacy efforts from abroad

The Bahamas	Generally restricts non-citizens' involvement in national policy-making. Expats, especially those with work permits or residence permits, may not have the right to participate in immigration reform discussions that directly impact their status or residency requirements.
Trinidad and Tobago	Allows foreign residents to have input on certain local issues, including city planning, it can be challenging for expats to engage in immigration reform discussions. Citizenship and residency requirements may limit their involvement.
Jamaica	Has a National Partnership Council (NPC) that provides a platform for various stakeholders to discuss national issues, but the participation of expats in immigration reform discussions can be limited. To engage effectively, they may need to meet specific requirements.
Barbados	Expats living in Barbados, even those holding permanent residency, may not have the right to participate in national policy decisions, including immigration reform. While there is potential for involvement in community initiatives, national-level discussions may be restricted to citizens
Dominican Republic	Like many countries, requires citizenship for full participation in political and policy matters. Expats, even those with legal residency, may not be eligible to engage in immigration reform discussions at a national level.
United States	Immigration policies and laws are primarily decided by elected officials in the U.S. Congress. Expatriate U.S. citizens have the right to vote in federal elections, but they typically have limited influence over immigration policy discussions, especially if they have been living abroad for an extended period.
European Union	Made up of member states, and immigration policies vary between these countries. EU expatriates may vote in local and European Parliament elections in their host country, but they typically do not have a say in the immigration policies of other EU member states
Canadian	Can vote in federal elections but have limited influence over the development of immigration policies, which are primarily decided by the Canadian government.
Australia	Expatriates can participate in federal elections and referendums, but immigration policies are determined by the Australian government without substantial input from expatriates living abroad.
Most Middle Eastern Countries	Expatriate workers, especially those on temporary work permits, have limited rights and are not typically included in immigration reform discussions. Immigration policies are typically decided by the governments of these host countries.

Many Asian Countries	Countries, such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, do not grant political participation or voting rights to expatriates. Immigration policies in these countries are generally not influenced by expatriate residents.
Non-European Countries	In some European countries, non-EU expatriates often have limited rights to participate in immigration discussions. This is especially true in countries where non-citizens face restrictions on political participation

The feedback can therefore be summarized as follows:

1. Belonger Status and Benefits:
 - i) Clarification on the criteria and processes for granting Belonger status.
 - ii) Suggestion to re-examine the rationale behind granting Belonger status based on residency duration.
 - iii) Recommendations for setting expiration dates on Belonger cards for better monitoring.
 - iv) Special requirements for spouses of Virgin Islanders, including a minimum harmonious living period and residency status criteria.
 - v) Moratorium on granting Belonger status until Virgin Islanders become the majority.
2. Work Permit Issuance:
 - vi) Proposals for maximum work permit durations and exit requirements after the second permit.
 - vii) Special work permit categories for highly skilled workers with specific career development and training programs.
 - viii) Restricting work permits for entry-level jobs and advocating apprenticeships alongside work permit holders for Virgin Islanders.
3. Other Residency Requirements:
 - ix) Mandatory completion of a Virgin Islands history and culture course for individuals renewing work permits or becoming residents.
4. General Concerns and Recommendations:
 - x) Opposition to status grants based on alien-land holder licenses and citizenship by investment.
 - xi) Suggestions for government collaboration in tracking and managing immigrants.
 - xii) Proposing a quota system for work permits.
 - xiii) Recommendation for a land bank governed by Virgin Islanders and restricting non-Virgin Islanders to lease-hold land ownership.
 - xiv) Advocacy for a Virgin Islanders-only Board of Immigration.
 - xv) Strengthening the definition of a Virgin Islander and facilitating contributions from the diaspora.
5. Conclusion:

The document concludes with a call for a comprehensive review of immigration policies and a commitment to protecting the rights and interests of ancestral Virgin Islanders, as well as preserving their unique culture and heritage. The document reflects the group's strong emphasis on safeguarding the interests of Virgin Islanders, particularly in terms of cultural preservation, rights protection, and strategic management of immigration and residency policies.

D. The document is a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. Key points include:

1. Definitions and Distinctions:
 - i) A clear distinction and definition should be outlined in the Constitution and Immigration and Passport Ordinance between a Virgin Islander and a Belonger.
 - ii) An Indigenous Virgin Islander should be defined, and the rights given to each category should bear varying weights.

2. Work Permit Holders:
 - iii) Individuals entering the Virgin Islands on a work permit should not be eligible for status simply due to time spent in the country.
 - iv) Specific conditions are suggested for work permit holders, including skill assessments, limited terms, restrictions on business licenses and property purchases, and requirements for exiting the territory after the permit term.
3. Granting of Residency:
 - v) Potential residents should state their intention to apply for residency before entering the Virgin Islands and meet a rigid set of criteria.
 - vi) A minimum of 15 years of residency is proposed before eligibility for residency, along with annual requirements such as participation in cultural events and volunteering.
4. Belonger Status:
 - vii) Criteria for eligibility for Belonger status include a minimum of 15 years of consistent community participation and passing a Virgin Islands history test.
 - viii) Belonger status should be independent and non-transferable, with specific stipulations for spouses and children.
5. Immediate Actions Proposed:
 - ix) A freeze on the issuance of Belonger and Residency statuses for the next five years.
 - x) Stopping births of babies to mothers on work permits in the Virgin Islands.
 - xi) Halting the issuance of permits for entry-level jobs and imposing an annual quota for the issuance of permits.

Overall, the submission emphasizes criteria for both residency and Belonger status, focusing on protecting the cultural and societal norms of the Virgin Islands. The suggestions aim to ensure that those seeking to become residents or Belongers contribute meaningfully to the community and understand the heritage and history of the Virgin Islands.

E. The document is a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, contains a detailed personal perspective regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. Key points include:

1. Personal Background and Connection to BVI: The respondent has been in the BVI since 1958 and represents the fourth generation of a family settled in the BVI since 1919. This background underscores their deep connection to and concern for the BVI.
2. Observations on Belonger Status Granting Trends: The respondent notes a significant number of Belonger statuses granted to individuals from St. Vincent and the Grenadines compared to other islands, expressing concern about the displacement of Virgin Islanders and the potential cultural impact.
3. Challenges in Hiring Local BVI Islanders: In the hospitality business, there is difficulty in hiring local BVI Islanders, often leading to reliance on overseas workers. The respondent suggests that when a good foreign employee is found, there is a desire to retain them.
4. Recommendations on Work Permits and Residency:
 - i) Work permits should be issued for a specific amount of time with only one renewal option, limiting the stay to 7-8 years unless the person has a specific skill and contributes to society.
 - ii) Residency should be granted after living in BVI for ten years, subject to a clean police record and good character. Residents should not require a work permit and might receive reduced stamp duty for property purchases.
5. Criteria for Belonger Status:
 - iii) Belonger status should be considered only after obtaining residency.
 - iv) The applicant or their family should demonstrate contributions to the BVI, such as land ownership, business ownership, community involvement, and loyalty to the BVI.
6. Serious Crime and Status Rescission:

- v) Both Residency and Belonger status should be revoked if the individual commits a serious crime in the BVI.
- vi) There is a suggestion to consider revoking the status of a criminal's immediate family as a deterrent and a measure to encourage parental responsibility.

The document reflects a nuanced view of immigration and status granting in the BVI, emphasizing the need for balanced policies that consider the local workforce, cultural integration, and contribution to society. The respondent advocates for stringent criteria for residency and Belonger status and suggests punitive measures for those involved in serious crimes.

F. The document is a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. Key points provide feedback and personal opinions on the policies for granting residency and Belonger's rights in the Virgin Islands. They include:

1. Residency and Belonger Status Criteria:
 - i) Suggests that 20 years is sufficient for consideration for residency.
 - ii) Belonger's right can be granted after 5 years of receiving a certificate of residence.
 - iii) Opposes fast-tracked applications for wealthy individuals, advocating for equal consideration for all.
2. Concerns About Policy Requirements:
 - iv) Raises concerns about requirements for involvement in civic organizations, suggesting that this favors legal and financial professionals over minimum wage earners. Proposes considering membership in religious organizations, PTAs, festival committees, and sports organizations with a lower percentage in a point system for qualification.
3. Review of Police Records in Applications:
 - v) Supports reviewing police records in residency applications, arguing that individuals involved in cases like vehicular manslaughter without intent to kill should still be eligible for residency, based on a review of the entire matter.
4. Fast-Track Initiative to Bring Virgin Islanders Home:
 - vi) Expresses support for policies to attract Virgin Islanders back to the territory but raises concerns about the descendants of Virgin Islanders who are already in the territory and face immigration restrictions.
5. Rights of Spouses and Children:
 - vii) Concerns about spouses gaining rights faster than the children of a Belonger.
 - viii) Advocates for automatic Belonger rights for persons who can show a clear line of descent and have been living in the territory since birth.
6. Policy for Descendants of Virgin Islanders Abroad:
 - ix) Suggests that descendants of Virgin Islanders who moved abroad should be able to return home to work and manage family estates without restrictions.
7. Quota System for Eligibility:
 - x) Proposes no quota for current groups eligible for status but suggests a quota system going forward, based on the territory's population growth and needs.
8. Consistency and Fairness in Immigration Policies:
 - xi) Emphasizes the need for clear, fair, and consistent policies from the Immigration Department, particularly concerning the respondent's children.
9. Personal Experiences with Immigration Policies:
 - xii) Shares personal experiences about challenges faced by their children in terms of residency and education, as well as issues with the lack of written responses to applications for 3rd and 4th Generation Belonger status for their children.

In summary, the document emphasizes the need for fair, consistent, and inclusive immigration policies that consider the unique circumstances of Virgin Islanders and their descendants, especially those living abroad. It advocates for policies that facilitate the return and integration of these individuals into the territory, while ensuring the rights of current residents and Belongers are respected.

G. The Respondent provides feedback on the policies related to residency and Belonger status in the Virgin Islands, particularly focusing on the situation of non-belonger students at the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College (HLSCC). Key points from the document include:

1. Residency for HLSCC Students:
 - i) The respondent suggests that children of non-belongers, once enrolled full-time at HLSCC, should be allowed to remain on their parents' time until they complete their degree program. This proposal is based on the recognition that these young people, especially those who have attained the age of majority, have no means to support themselves independently.
2. Personal Experience with Immigration Policies:
 - ii) The respondent shares a personal experience where their son, a minor until turning 18, was removed from their status by Immigration immediately after graduating from HLSCC in June 2022. This situation highlights the challenges faced under the current policy, particularly for minors who are not self-sufficient.
3. Work Permit Restrictions for Students:
 - iii) The document points out the restriction in the Immigration law that does not permit a student to work without a work permit. It questions the logic behind deeming a student as a self-sufficient adult when they are fully dependent on their parents.
4. Inconsistencies in Policy Application:
 - iv) The respondent expresses concern over the disparity in policy application, where the spouse of a non-belonger contract officer is allowed to remain on the spouse's time, but the child of a Belonger public officer is not. This is particularly concerning for a child who has lived in the territory for 19 years.
5. Proposed Criteria for Student Residency:
 - v) The document suggests that students who meet criteria such as long-term residency (15 years or more), having one parent as a Belonger, both parents possessing certificates of residence, or one parent being a public officer, should be granted residency, barring any underlying disqualifying reasons.
6. Role of the Chief Immigration Officer and Immigration Board:
 - vi) It is proposed that these issues should be managed by the Chief Immigration Officer at their discretion and should be presented to the Immigration Board via a quarterly update report.

In summary, the feedback emphasizes the need for more flexible and compassionate immigration policies for students, especially those who have grown up in the Virgin Islands and are pursuing education at HLSCC. The document calls for adjustments to the existing immigration laws to better accommodate the unique circumstances of these young individuals and their families.

H. A respondent commented on the Report on Residency and Belongership and on-line survey and provides feedback on the residency and Belongership policy in the Virgin Islands. Key points from the feedback include:

1. Distinguishing Between Residency and Belongership:
 - i) The respondent emphasizes the need to distinguish between residency, which removes the need to be subject to immigration control, and Belongership, which confers additional rights like voting, reduced tax burdens, and the potential for British Overseas Territory Citizenship. They advocate for treating these statuses as separate entities in both discussion and legislation.
2. Challenges of Current Policies:

- ii) The respondent, who has lived in the BVI for 18 years, owns property, and a business, discusses the bureaucratic challenges and workload created by the requirement to renew work permits and immigration stamps annually.
- 3. Contribution to Society:
 - iii) The report suggests placing more emphasis on individual contributions to society when considering applications for residency and Belongership. The respondent agrees with this but highlights a conflict between residing under immigration control and the ability to undertake voluntary work, which is often restricted by immigration status.
- 4. Personal Experience and Recommendations:
 - iv) The respondent shares their personal experience, including their involvement in voluntary roles such as being a board member of a non-profit organization. They had to seek special permission for this role due to immigration restrictions on work, including voluntary work.
- 5. Need for Law Review:
 - v) The respondent suggests a review of laws governing immigration status and voluntary work to ensure that contributions to society can be legally made by those under different immigration statuses.

In summary, the feedback reflects a need for clearer distinction and understanding of residency and Belongership statuses in the BVI. It highlights the bureaucratic challenges faced by long-term residents, especially those contributing to society, and calls for a review of laws to better align immigration policies with the realities of societal contributions and voluntary work.

I. The document is a feedback email sent to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development, regarding the report on the review of policy and process for granting residency and Belonger's rights. Key points provide feedback and personal opinions on the policies for granting residency and Belonger's rights in the Virgin Islands.:

- 1. Virgin Islanders and Belongers Defined:
 - i) Emphasizes the need for clear definitions in the Constitution and Immigration and Passport Ordinance, differentiating between an Indigenous Virgin Islander, a Virgin Islander, and a Belonger, with distinct rights for each category.
- 2. Work Permit Holders:
 - ii) Crabbe proposes stringent rules for work permit holders, including a skill assessment test, a maximum of two terms not exceeding five years, and a requirement to leave the territory after the second term.
 - iii) She suggests that pregnant work permit holders should return to their home country for childbirth.
 - iv) Renewal of work permits should be based on a comprehensive eligibility test, and children of work permit holders should enroll in private schools.
- 3. Granting of Residency:
 - v) Prospective residents should declare their intention before entering the Virgin Islands and maintain a list of annual requirements like participation in cultural events.
 - vi) Restrictions are suggested for trade licenses, employment offers, property purchases, and land ownership for those seeking residency.
- 4. Belonger Status:
 - vii) Criteria for Belonger status include 15 years of community participation and completion of Virgin Islands history courses. A test on this subject matter would be part of the qualification process.
 - viii) Belonger status is described as independent and non-transferable, even in marriage or to children.
- 5. Immediate Actions Proposed:
 - ix) Recommends a five-year freeze on issuing Belonger and Residency statuses, stopping births of babies to mothers on permits, halting certain work permits, and imposing an annual quota for work permits.

In summary, the submission outlines stringent and detailed criteria for residency and Belonger status, focusing on protecting Virgin Islands culture and norms. The proposals include rigorous assessment processes, specific restrictions for work permit holders, and a strong emphasis on cultural integration for those seeking residency and Belonger status.

J. A respondent addresses several critical concerns regarding the criteria for granting Residency and Belonger status in the Virgin Islands. The key points include:

1. **Review of the Commission of Inquiry Report:** The document begins with a review of the Virgin Islands Commission of Inquiry Report released in April 2022, which opined on the 1977 Immigration and Passport Act, specifically Sections 16 and 18, related to Residency and Belonger Status. The report concluded that the minimum residency period in the Virgin Islands before applying for permanent residency and Belonger status is ten years, contrary to the undocumented 20-year policy used by the government.
2. **Government's Response to the Inquiry:** The document notes efforts to seek clarity on the issues raised by the Commission of Inquiry from various government departments, but these queries were largely unfruitful.
3. **General Issues with the CoI Report:** There are concerns about certain statements in the CoI report concerning the grant of residency and Belonger status that are not supported by existing legislation, particularly regarding the rights and privileges associated with Belonger status.
4. **Legal Interpretation of Residency and Belonger Status:** The document discusses the legal interpretation of the term ordinarily resident and its significance in the application process for Belonger status. It emphasizes that the 10-year residency period referenced in Section 16(3)(c) of the Act is the mandatory evaluation period ending with the application date.
5. **Prerequisites for Belonger Status:** It notes that permanent residency, as evidenced by a certificate of residence, is a prerequisite for Belonger status. The document also discusses the ambiguity and redundancy within Section 16(3) of the Act regarding the residency process and the criteria for Belonger status.
6. **Section 18 - Residency/Permanent Residence:** The document details that the grant of a certificate of residence only requires good character and a statement of intent to reside permanently in the Virgin Islands. The time before applying for residency can vary on a case-by-case basis, and the discretion for the minimum time for the grant of residence is left to the Cabinet, advised by the Immigration Board.

In conclusion, the examination of Section 16 of the Act indicates that the 10-year reference in Section 16(3)(c) cannot be a minimum threshold for a Belonger certificate application. Instead, it is the ten-year time span that ends with the date of application, regardless of the entry date into the territory of the Virgin Islands. The minimum time before an application for Belongership varies for each applicant, depending on when they apply for permanent residency and the Cabinet's discretion.

APPENDIX A.1

Statement By The Premier And Minister Of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley At The Third Sitting Of The First Session Of The Fifth House Of Assembly Of The Virgin Islands, 7th September 2023: Building A Strong And Inclusive British Virgin Islands Through Immigration Reform

Madam Speaker, today, we stand at a pivotal moment in the history of our beloved British Virgin Islands. It is a moment that holds the promise of shaping the very foundations of our society – the future of our immigration policies and the profound impact they have on our future.

We have released the Commission of Inquiry’s Independent Reviewer’s Report on Belongership and Residency in our territory. The recommendations of this review have now been presented to us, and I wish to emphasize that this presents us with a unique opportunity. An opportunity to shape the future of our beloved British Virgin Islands in a manner that is firmly grounded in respect for the law and recognition of the privilege granted to individuals who wish to make these beautiful Virgin Islands their home.

The Independent Reviewer’s recommendations underscore the importance of addressing long-standing issues surrounding immigration, and we are committed to doing so in a manner that is transparent, consultative, and inclusive. We are guided by the principle that every voice matters, whether you are a resident or a believer. Our commitment to your input is unwavering, and we will ensure that your perspectives are heard and valued in this process.

The independent reviewer's report will serve as the bedrock upon which we will base our proposals and recommendations for the necessary amendments to our legislation and the creation of relevant policies. We understand that these changes must reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of our people and the challenges we face as a society.

In the coming weeks, we will embark on a comprehensive and inclusive consultative process. We will engage with stakeholders from all walks of life, from Belongers to Residents, seeking your insights, ideas, and feedback. Together, we will forge a path forward that preserves our heritage, strengthens our society, and ensures that we remain a welcoming and thriving community.

In closing, I want to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of justice, fairness, and inclusivity as we navigate the intricate path of immigration reform. This journey may have its challenges, but I am confident that, united as one people, we will emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Together, we will build a future that reflects the true spirit and values of our beloved territory.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the Virgin Islands.

Appendix A.2

Statement given by the Premier at the consultative meetings related to the formulation of the immigration policy – 10th – 20th October 2023

Ladies and gentlemen,

We gather here today to engage in a crucial dialogue regarding a critical aspect of our development as a Virgin Islands people. The subject of immigration and how it should be managed deserves the full attention of our society because it is a key component of assisting us in achieving our national development goals.

When my parents were born, there were under 7000 people in the Virgin Islands. Our economy was not well developed, and it was much more common for people to leave the Virgin Islands than it was for persons to move to the Virgin Islands. And many of our ancestors left in search of a better life, ending up in the United States Virgin Islands, known before as the Danish West Indies, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other places.

Our prospects in the Virgin Islands changed when democracy was established with the restoration of our legislative council in 1950. Our locally elected representatives created legislation; they established relationships with investors; and they laid the foundation for the growth and expansion of our economy. The success of their efforts led to our prosperity and the rapid development of our society, which in turn necessitated the recruitment of individuals willing and able to fill our vast labour needs.

For the last five decades, we have seen the rapid expansion of our population, primarily through the phenomenon of immigration. Persons have come from many places in the world and have become teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, masons, carpenters, mechanics, corporate administrators. They have become our tenants, our neighbors, our pastors, our classmates, our churchmates, our friends, and our spouses. Many have made the transition from strangers to well integrated residents, belongers, citizens, and patriots of the Virgin Islands. Many feel more at home in the Virgin Islands than in their country of birth.

The story of immigration in our society, however, is not without its challenges. Over the years our society would have grappled with cultural and social tensions between natives and immigrants, labour competition between natives and immigrants, national security risks due to immigration, and infrastructural capacity challenges due to immigration.

It has become clear to many that immigration has well established benefits in our society, providing us with talent, skills, expanded consumption, and much needed investment, but it also has the potential to impact us negatively in a number of ways. Therefore, immigration is a phenomenon that must be managed effectively to ensure that we meet our national development objectives. It is imperative that our immigration policies appropriately reflect the unique demographic and immigration trends in our Territory, ensuring they align seamlessly to safeguard the best interests of the Virgin Islands while mitigating against potential and ongoing threats to our sustainable development.

In addition to the concerns many have over how immigration has been managed, the Commission of Inquiry focused on our systems for awarding residence and belonger status. As a result of the

findings of the report, Sir Gary Hickenbottom recommended that a review be conducted on the length of residence required for belonger status among other things. The Governor and myself agreed on Mr. Kedrick Malone, who has completed this independent report, and it was subsequently accepted by Cabinet and laid on the Table of the House of Assembly. He has made recommendations based on the best information available and an analysis of the historical context and socioeconomic conditions prevailing in the Territory. The report has been widely circulated, and persons are welcome to comment on the recommendations of the report. We encourage everyone to read the report. We have extracted key recommendations made, which will serve as discussion points that will inform the new immigration policy and amendments to the legislation.

The report recognizes that Residency and Belonger Status are integral components of our overall immigration framework, and should symbolize the commitment to and integration within our dynamic BVI community. Therefore, it is essential that our immigration policy enables a comprehensive evaluation of individuals, assessing their character, contributions, skills, qualifications, and overall integration before extending long-term Residency or the possibility of Belonger Status.

Our Immigration Policy, which includes how we award residence and belonger status, must be a well-balanced and considerate document that takes into account several critical factors.

Firstly, it must account for our economic needs: The BVI must attract foreign workers to meet labour shortages and promote economic growth. Our immigration policies should prioritize attracting skilled workers who can make substantial contributions to our economy.

However, it must address the social and cultural impact that the unregulated and unlimited influx of immigrants may have on our society. We must recognize that immigration can significantly affect our social and cultural fabric. Therefore, our policies should consider how immigration influences community cohesion and relations, and cultural diversity.

The policy must further assess and address security concerns. National security is paramount. Our immigration policies must ensure rigorous screening and vetting of applicants to safeguard public safety. Violators of our immigration policies should face swift and decisive consequences.

The emergent legal framework must comply with international human rights standards and other domestic laws. We must uphold our international commitments and obligations. Paramount in our dialogue, the issue of capacity and the resources required to sustain further influxes of individuals must feature in our discourse. The BVI has limited capacity and resources to manage immigration effectively. Our policies should be designed to ensure that we can manage the influx of immigrants while providing necessary services. There must be a recognition that while immigration can be a contentious political issue, we must approach it transparently and inclusively, engaging in open and respectful dialogue. Our immigration policies can impact our relations with other countries. As a small nation, we should consider how our policies affect diplomatic relations and regional cooperation.

As we delve further into the development of our immigration policy, it is essential that we address longstanding issues that have been at the heart of our community's concerns for years. Our commitment to shaping a more equitable and inclusive policy extends to a range of critical issues that demand our attention.

We must have a discussion on whether we should award Belonger Status to children born overseas to parents who were Belongers-by-descent. Additionally, we recognize the need to reconsider our approach towards the children of Non-Belongers born in the BVI, who, over time, have become an integral part of our community. These matters are not just legal or administrative but profoundly affect the sense of belonging and identity within our society.

We anticipate the formulation of policies that cater to various specific groups within our community. This includes persons with current Residency status, who have made a commitment to the BVI and have established roots here. It also encompasses persons born in the BVI but who, for various reasons, currently have no official status, individuals not born in the BVI but who have lived and been schooled in the BVI from a very young age, and long-term residents of the BVI without any formal status.

Furthermore, we must tackle the vexing issues surrounding third and fourth generation Virgin Islanders. These individuals are deeply vested in the Territory, have contributed significantly to our social fabric, and are an integral part of our community, our history and culture. However, their status has not been legislatively defined to the extent that consistency and fairness can be applied to their long-term residency and eventual Belonger Status. This is a complex issue that requires careful consideration and thoughtful solutions to ensure that justice prevails and that the rights of these individuals are protected.

We must also consider the use of tools such as quotas for the annual issuing of grants of Residence and Belonger Status. These quotas will be designed to carefully manage the rate of population growth, taking into account our limited resources and capacity. This approach will help us strike a balance between welcoming new members to our community and maintaining the high quality of life that defines the Virgin Islands.

Additionally, consideration must be given to formally establishing a point system which will be used to evaluate candidate's qualifications to become a Resident or Belonger.

In all these matters, we are guided by the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and respect for human rights. We acknowledge that crafting a comprehensive immigration policy is not just about legal documents; it is about recognizing the humanity of those who call the Virgin Islands home and ensuring that our policies reflect the values and aspirations of our community.

As we embark on this journey to shape our immigration policy, let us remember that our decisions today will shape the future of the Virgin Islands. We must strive for a policy that balances economic development with cultural preservation, prioritizes national security, aligns with our international commitments, and actively promotes the growth and development of our local workforce. As we continue this important journey to shape our immigration policy, let us remain committed to the values that define us as a nation. Let us seek solutions that bridge divides, foster unity, and promote a stronger, more inclusive Virgin Islands. Thank you for your dedication to this essential task, and may our collective efforts result in a policy that reflects the values and aspirations of the Virgin Islands.

Background to the Comprehensive Immigration Policy of the Virgin Islands

The Comprehensive Immigration Policy of the Virgin Islands is framed within a context that recognizes the unique cultural heritage, geographic location, and economic potential of the Territory. As a focal point for migration historically, the Virgin Islands require a policy that effectively manages this phenomenon in alignment with the Territory's development goals and socio-cultural dynamics. This need has been informed by a series of drivers, each leading to the formulation of specific policy statements.

Central to this policy is the recognition that immigration decisions should be intrinsically linked to national development priorities. The policy, therefore, aims to ensure that the granting of residence and Belonger status aligns with and supports the socio-economic growth and cultural enrichment of the Territory. A key aspect of this approach is the establishment of a clear and consistent framework for both temporary and permanent residence. This framework is designed to provide clarity and consistency in the application process, ensuring transparency and fairness in how immigration rules and criteria are applied.

The policy also emphasizes the importance of balanced and fair decision-making processes in immigration matters. This approach is pivotal in maintaining the integrity of the immigration system and ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the Territory and its people. In tandem with this, the introduction of an annual quota system for permanent status grants reflects a controlled and sustainable approach to immigration, crucial for preserving the Territory's resources and social fabric.

Addressing the entry of individuals into the Territory for work, the policy outlines a framework that is both clear and responsive. This framework is designed to ensure that the labor market needs of the Territory are met, without compromising the employment opportunities of local residents. Alongside this, the policy underscores the importance of robust enforcement and border control measures to safeguard the Territory's security and uphold its immigration laws.

Family unity is a significant consideration in the policy, with provisions for family reunification ensuring that immigration practices do not unnecessarily separate families. Moreover, the policy reflects the Territory's commitment to international human rights standards by outlining the humane treatment for refugees and asylum seekers. Additionally, integration and settlement programs are mandated, focusing on promoting knowledge and sensitivity towards Virgin Islands history and culture, which is vital for the assimilation of newcomers into the Territory's social and cultural milieu.

The policy also acknowledges the role of volunteerism and community engagement in residency and Belonger status applications, encouraging a sense of community and civic responsibility among immigrants. For investors and entrepreneurs, programs are designed to ensure that their contributions meaningfully align with the Territory's development. This reinforces the link between immigration and economic growth.

Furthermore, the policy emphasizes the need for collaboration in international agreements, reflecting the Territory's commitment to being a responsible global player. It also deals with the complexities of international labor migration, ensuring that such migration benefits both the Territory and the migrants.

Finally, the establishment of an appeals process provides a mechanism for redress for persons aggrieved by immigration decisions, enhancing the fairness and transparency of the immigration system.

Each policy statement within this comprehensive framework is a response to specific needs, challenges, and opportunities identified through extensive stakeholder engagement. Rooted in the values of Virgin Islanders, the policy is designed to preserve the Territory's integrity while embracing change and progress, setting the stage for a transformative approach to immigration management that is balanced, fair, and in line with the Virgin Islands' aspirations for the future.

Recommendation B33 of the Commission of Inquiry's Report

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sustainable Development has been tasked, in tandem with the Department of Immigration to address Recommendation B33 of the Commission of Inquiry's Report. Recommendation B33 of the Commission of Inquiry's Report (COIR) required the following:

...there should be a review of processes for the grant of residency and belonger status, and in particular the open discretion currently held by Cabinet to make grants. Any such powers should only be maintained where necessary; and, where any such powers are maintained, then they should be subject to clearly expressed and published guidance. As part of that review, the position with regard to the length of residence required for belongership applications based on tenure should be clarified and confirmed by statute.

Preamble to the Constitution of the Virgin Islands, 2007

It is critical to consider, in a holistic manner, the Preamble to the Constitution of the Virgin Islands, 2007, as it provides the context for the guidance to be applied in the grant of residence and Belonger Status. The preamble states that:

Whereas the people of the territory of the Virgin Islands have over centuries evolved with a distinct cultural identity which is the essence of a Virgin Islander;

Acknowledging that the society of the Virgin Islands is based upon certain moral, spiritual and democratic values including a belief in God, the dignity of the human person, the freedom of the individual and respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and the rule of law;

Mindful that the people of the Virgin Islands have expressed a desire for their Constitution to reflect who they are as a people and a country and their quest for social justice, economic empowerment and political advancement;

Recognising that the people of the Virgin Islands have a free and independent spirit, and have developed themselves and their country based on qualities of honesty, integrity, mutual respect, self-reliance and the ownership of the land engendering a strong sense of belonging to and kinship with those Islands;

Recalling that because of historical, economic and other reasons many of the people of the Virgin Islands reside elsewhere but have and continue to have an ancestral connection and bond with those Islands;

Accepting that the Virgin Islands should be governed based on adherence to well-established democratic principles and institutions;

Affirming that the people of the Virgin Islands have generally expressed their desire to become a self-governing people and to exercise the highest degree of control over the affairs of their country at this stage of its development; and

Noting that the United Kingdom, the administering power for the time being, has articulated a desire to enter into a modern partnership with the Virgin Islands based on the principles of mutual respect and self-determination.

The preamble alludes to a distinct cultural identity which is the essence of a Virgin Islander. For the purposes of determining the manner in which discretion is to be exercised by Cabinet and other principal stakeholders in the process of the grant of Residence and Belonger Status, it is important to define some characteristics which may be applicable – **values** – which can be referred when considering the precious award of permanent status of any kind in the Territory.

Values of a Virgin Islander

The expression of the constitutional preamble can be further characterized by the definition of the values that Virgin Islanders share. These values involve considering the unique cultural, historical, and social context of the Virgin Islands. They have been shaped by the Territory's own history, culture, and experiences. Key values often associated with Virgin Islanders may include, but are not limited to:

1. **Community and Family Ties:** Strong family bonds and a sense of community are central. The importance of extended family and communal support is evident in daily life.
2. **Resilience and Adaptability:** Given their history and geographical challenges, such as hurricanes, Virgin Islanders are known for their resilience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.
3. **Hospitality and Friendliness:** Warmth and hospitality are deeply ingrained, with a welcoming attitude towards visitors and a strong sense of camaraderie among locals.
4. **Cultural Pride and Heritage:** A deep sense of pride in their cultural heritage, including music, dance, food, and festivals, is a cornerstone of Virgin Islander identity.

5. **Connection to Nature and the Sea:** With a strong maritime history and a close relationship with the natural environment, there is a deep appreciation and respect for the sea and natural beauty of the islands.
6. **Respect for Elders and Tradition:** High regard for elders and traditional customs, reflecting a respect for history and the wisdom of previous generations.
7. **Entrepreneurship and Hard Work:** A spirit of entrepreneurship and a strong work ethic are prominent, reflecting the islands' economic history and the importance of self-reliance.
8. **Education and Lifelong Learning:** Education is highly valued as a means to personal and community advancement.
9. **Spiritual Faith and Religious Underpinning:** Religion and spiritual beliefs often play a significant role in daily life, with religious practices guiding mores and values.
10. **Environmental Stewardship:** Recognizing the fragility of their natural environment, there is a growing emphasis on sustainable development and environmental protection.
11. **Inclusivity and Tolerance:** Embracing a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs is integral to the Virgin Islands' community, reflecting its diverse population and history as a melting pot of different cultures.
12. **Independence and Self-Determination:** There's a strong sense of pride in their ability to govern themselves and make decisions that best serve their community, reflecting their history and ongoing political development.
13. **Innovation and Creativity:** This is evident in various aspects of life, from unique solutions to island-specific challenges to creativity in arts, music, and cuisine.
14. **Respect for Law and Order:** A stable and well-functioning society in the Virgin Islands is underpinned by respect for laws and social norms, which contributes to the overall sense of community and safety.
15. **Balance Between Tradition and Modernity:** While there is a strong connection to traditions and cultural heritage, there is also an openness to modern ideas and technologies, striking a balance that respects the past while embracing the future.
16. **Community Engagement and Participation:** Active participation in community life, whether through local governance, festivals, or other communal activities, is a significant aspect of life in the Virgin Islands.

These values have shaped the Virgin Islands. However, just as with any society, there is diversity in how these values are expressed and prioritized among different individuals and communities within the islands. The application of the values defining Virgin Islanders, which can inform guidelines for considering applications for the grant of residence and Belonger Status include, but may not be limited to:

1. **Community Integration and Solidarity:** Emphasizing strong community bonds, where individuals look out for each other, fostering a sense of solidarity, cooperation and mutual support.
2. **Cultural Pride and Heritage Preservation:** A deep respect and pride in the rich cultural heritage of the Virgin Islands, which includes preserving and promoting local traditions, history, and cultural practices.

3. **Respect for Law and Order:** A strong emphasis on respecting law and order, which is crucial for the stability and safety of the community.
4. **Work Ethic and Contribution to Society:** Valuing hard work and the contribution of individuals to the society's welfare and development.
5. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** While deeply rooted in their own culture, Virgin Islanders also value inclusivity and the richness that diversity brings to their community.
6. **Hospitality and Openness:** Demonstrating a welcoming attitude towards visitors and new members of the community, balanced with a desire to maintain the unique identity of the Virgin Islands.
7. **Environmental Stewardship:** A profound connection to and respect for the natural environment, recognizing the importance of sustainable practices and environmental conservation.

1. The presence of a refined framework for temporary and permanent residence

The goal is to establish a residency framework that balances the need for economic growth and cultural integration with the protection of the rights and interests of both the existing community and prospective residents.

1. Temporary residence permits will be granted based on clearly defined criteria, including the purpose of stay, duration, and the applicant's ability to sustain themselves economically during their stay without undue burden on local resources.
2. Applicants for permanent residence must demonstrate a commitment to the Virgin Islands through active participation in community life, cultural understanding, and contributions to local society and economy over a significant period.
3. Permanent residence applicants should contribute positively to the Virgin Islands' economy, either through employment, entrepreneurship, or investment, and demonstrate financial self-sufficiency to ensure they do not rely on public funds.
4. Both temporary and permanent residence applications will be subject to thorough security and background checks to safeguard the security, social harmony, and wellbeing of the Virgin Islands community.
5. The process for obtaining permanent residence will be distinct and separate from the process for obtaining Belonger status. Applicants must fulfill specific residency requirements before being eligible to apply for Belonger status.
6. Our residency policies will take into account humanitarian considerations, including family reunification and protection of vulnerable individuals, while ensuring these considerations are balanced with national security and community interests.
7. We will ensure a clear, transparent, and efficient application process for both temporary and permanent residence, providing applicants with understandable guidelines and timely decision-making.
8. Residence policies will be regularly reviewed and adapted to reflect changing global circumstances, demographic trends, and the evolving needs of the Virgin Islands.
9. Our residence policies will adhere to international standards and best practices, ensuring that they are fair, respect human rights, and align with our international obligations.

10. We commit to engaging with our community in the ongoing development and refinement of our residency policies, ensuring that they reflect the diverse needs and opinions of our society.

2. Residence and Belonger Status Decision-Making Processes are balanced and fair

The goal is to ensure that the decision-making process for Residence and Belonger Status is fair, transparent, and responsive to the needs and realities of the Virgin Islands, balancing individual aspirations with the collective interests of the community.

1. The decision-making process for Residence and Belonger Status will be transparent, with clear guidelines available to all applicants. This transparency will ensure fairness and consistency in how decisions are made.
2. Decisions on Residence and Belonger Status will be based on a comprehensive evaluation of each application, including an assessment of the applicant's contribution to the Virgin Islands' community, economy, and adherence to our laws and cultural values.
3. We will incorporate community feedback and input into the decision-making process, ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of Virgin Islanders are considered in evaluating Residence and Belonger Status applications.
4. Applications for Residence and Belonger Status will be processed in a timely and efficient manner, with established timeframes for decision-making to provide applicants with certainty and reduce unnecessary delays.
5. We will establish clear mechanisms for appeal and review of decisions, allowing applicants to seek reconsideration in a fair and structured manner.
6. Our decision-making process will balance the national interests of the Virgin Islands with the rights and aspirations of individuals seeking Residence and Belonger Status, ensuring decisions contribute positively to our society as a whole.
7. We will regularly update our policies and provide training to decision-makers to ensure they are equipped with the latest information and understanding of our evolving immigration landscape.
8. Decisions will be informed by relevant data and research, ensuring they are aligned with national development goals, demographic trends, and the economic needs of the Virgin Islands.
9. All decisions will be made in adherence to legal and ethical standards, respecting the rule of law and the principles of equity and fairness.
10. The decision-making process will remain adaptable and responsive to changing global and local circumstances, ensuring that our policies remain relevant and effective in addressing both current and future challenges.

3. The grants of Permanent status will be based on an annual quota

The goal is to establish a Belonger status quota system that is dynamic, fair, and aligned with the long-term interests and sustainable development of the Virgin Islands community.

1. We will implement a sustainable quota system for the grant of Belonger status, designed to maintain demographic balance, protect local culture and resources, and ensure the economic and social well-being of the Virgin Islands.
2. The Belonger status quota will be subject to an annual review and adjustment based on current population data, economic conditions, infrastructural capacity, and national development goals to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.
3. The process for determining the Belonger status quota will be transparent, involving consultation with key stakeholders, including community leaders, economic experts, and public representatives, to reflect a broad spectrum of interests and perspectives.
4. In setting the quota, priority will be given to applicants who bring essential skills, make significant economic contributions, or have demonstrated a long-term commitment to the community and culture of the Virgin Islands.
5. Information about the Belonger status quota, including any changes to its size or criteria, will be communicated clearly and effectively to the public, ensuring awareness and understanding of our immigration policies.
6. The quota system will be managed to ensure fair and equitable access for all eligible applicants, avoiding any form of discrimination and ensuring that decisions are made based on transparent and justifiable criteria.
7. The Belonger status quota will be aligned with national development strategies, ensuring that immigration contributes positively to the strategic goals of the Virgin Islands, including economic growth, cultural preservation, and social cohesion.
8. Regular monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to assess the impact of the Belonger status quota on the community and national development, with adjustments made as necessary to meet evolving needs and challenges.
9. The establishment and management of the Belonger status quota will comply with local laws and ethical standards, upholding the principles of fairness, human rights, and respect for the dignity of all individuals.
10. The quota system will be adaptable to changing global contexts, including shifts in migration patterns, international relations, and economic trends, ensuring that our immigration policies remain responsive and effective.