

CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



LABOUR FORCE SURVEY  
2015





## LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

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A Labour Force Survey (LFS) involves the direct survey of a sample of households with a view towards extracting explanatory data from the members in the households who are employed, unemployed and those not in the labour force. The data provides information on labour market trends such as shifts in employment across industrial sectors, hours worked, labour force participation and unemployment rates. This information also serves as a means of educating the public as to the dynamics and trends of the working age population and labour force. This can also enable individuals to make better decisions with respect to career options and business opportunities.

The BVI LFS was conducted between January and March of 2015. It utilized 15 enumerators and covered the 4 major islands. A systematic random sample was used to choose the 703 households that were interviewed. These households housed 2,069 persons. For analytical purposes, persons were classified into 5 main groups; namely the employed, the unemployed, not in the labour force, children and the elderly.

The LFS formed part of a wider regional initiative by the OECS to strengthen the availability of labour market information in the region.

The systematic random sampling method was used due to the absence of formal physical addresses to select the households to be interviewed.

For analytical purposes the members of the households in the sample were classified into five (5) major categories:

- (i) Employed – persons who were of working age and actually had a job;
- (ii) Unemployed – persons who were of working age and not working

but wanted to work, were looking for work and were available to work if the opportunity came;

(iii) Not in the Labour Force – persons who were not working, did not want to work, were not looking for work, and were not available for work (for example students, retirees, disabled persons and discouraged persons);

(iv) Children – persons whose ages were within the age range of 0 to 14 years and therefore were not considered to be of working age;

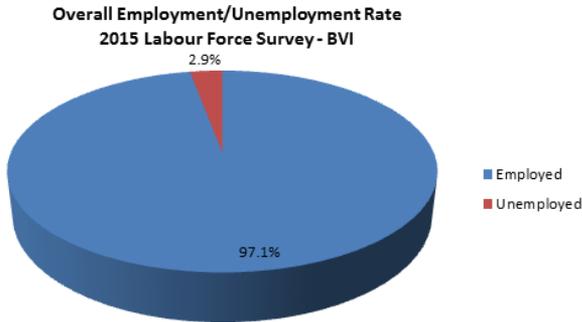
(v) Elderly – persons who were aged 65 and over and therefore not considered to be of working age; and only persons who fell within the Employed and Unemployed categories are considered to be part of the Labour Force. The reference period for which persons were questioned about their employment status was the week of 18th January 2015. In other words, persons were asked whether or not they had worked during the week of 18th January, 2015.

The 703 households that were interviewed yielded a total of 2,069 persons or respondents. Exactly 58.0% of the respondents or 1,201 persons said they had a job ; while 1.7% or 36 persons stated that they were not working. There were 234 persons (11.3%) of working age who were not working and not wanting or seeking work for whatever reason (not in the labour force); and 485 (23%) were children aged 0-14 years. There were 112 (5.4%) elderly persons; and one person who did not respond to the employment-related questions of the survey.

The overall unemployment rate was calculated as being 2.9% and the employment rate as 97.1%. Therefore it can be inferred that during the week of 18th January, 2015, and estimated 2.9% of the total BVI labour force was not working but was actively seeking employment and was available to work if the opportunity arose. By international standards, countries with unemployment rates less than 5% are generally considered as having achieved what is termed “full employment”.

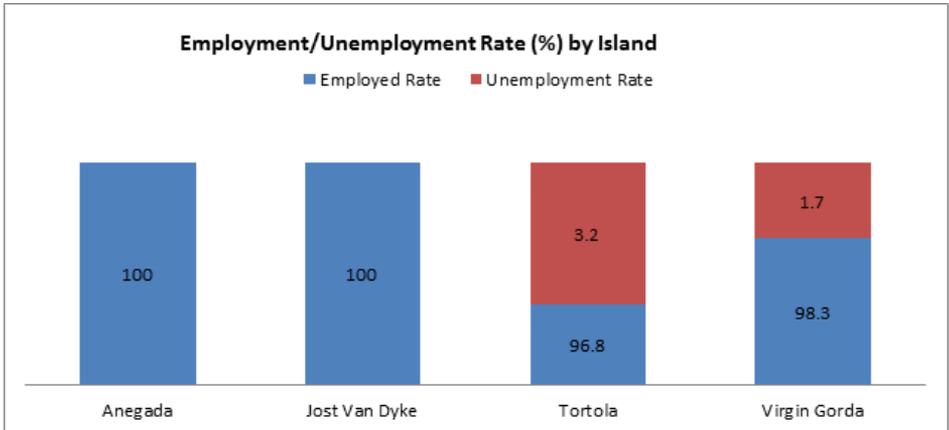


Figure 1: Employment and unemployment rates



The four main islands Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke were covered in the survey. Tortola recorded the highest rate of unemployment. Of the total 1,042 persons that comprised the labour force for this island, 33 (3.2%) persons were unemployed.

Figure 2: Employment/unemployment rate by Island

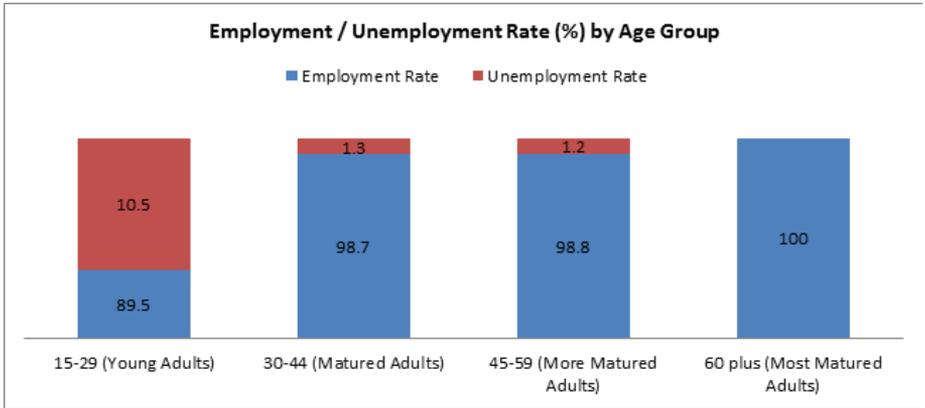


**i. Age**

As it relates to age, the young adult group (age 15 – 29 years) showed the highest rate of unemployment. There were a total of 237 in this age group who indicated that they were a part of the labour force; and of this total, 10.5% or 25 persons indicated that they were unemployed. Therefore employment rate among the young was 89.5%. There was

minimal unemployment among the matured and more matured adults (age 30 – 44 years and 45-59 years) of 1.3% and 1.2% respectively. There was virtually no unemployment among persons aged 60 plus years.

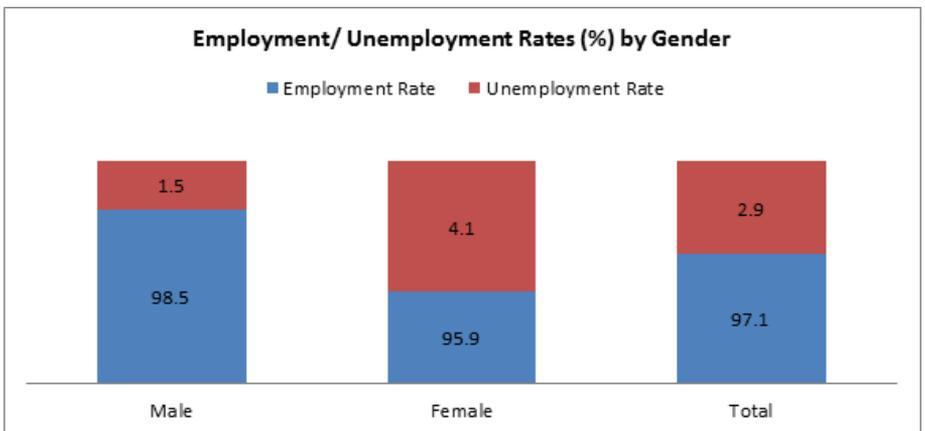
Figure 3: Employment/unemployment rate by Broad Age Groups



## ii. Gender

There were a total of 584 males and 653 females in the labour force. Unemployment was higher among females with 4.1% or 27 of them being unemployed whereas only 1.5% or 9 males were unemployed during the reference period. The total unemployment rate was 2.9%.

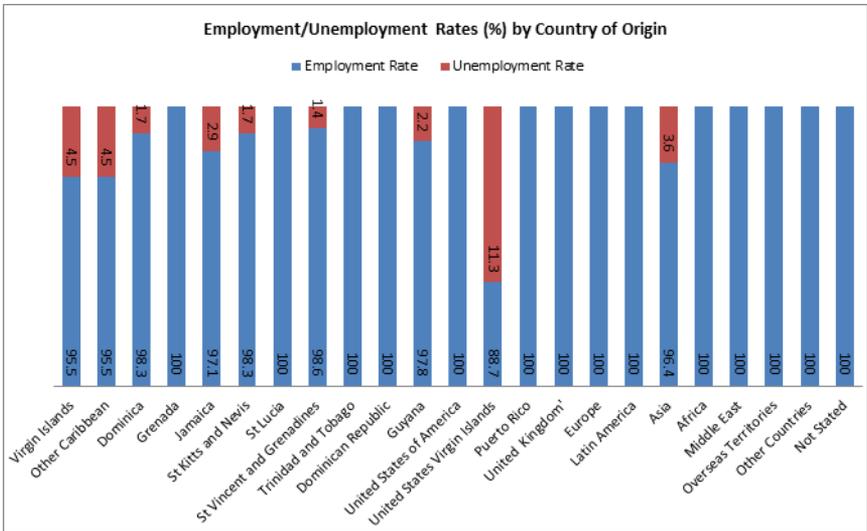
Figure 4: Employment/unemployment rate by Sex



#### iv. Country Of Birth

With respect to employment and unemployment by country of birth, persons from the US Virgin Islands who formed part of the labour force represented the highest level of unemployment. There were 53 persons from this country in the labour force and 6 or 11.3% were unemployed. Outside of the Virgin Islands as a whole, there were varied unemployment rates. Persons from Other Caribbean Countries, Asia, Jamaica and Guyana registered unemployment rates of 4.5%, 3.6%, 2.9%, and 2.2% respectively. Other countries recorded minimal to no unemployment.

Figure 5: Employment/unemployment rate by Selected and Grouped Countries

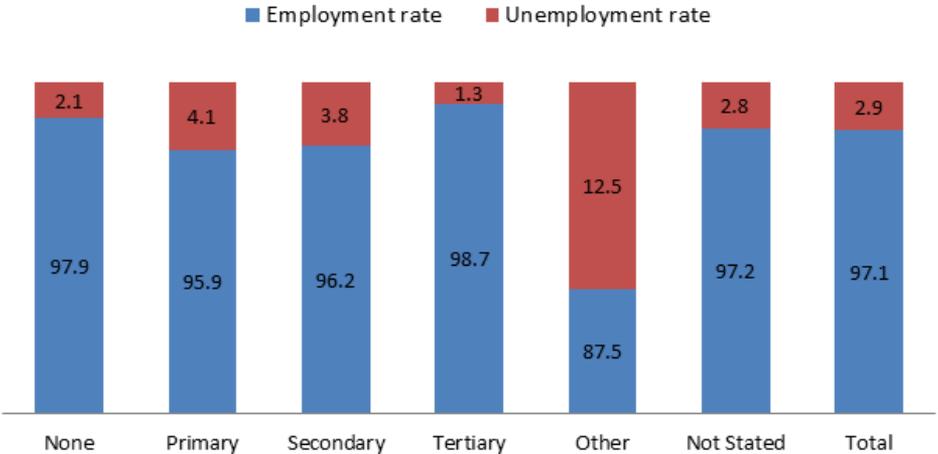


## v. Education Level

As it relates to education level, the rate of unemployment for persons in the labour force who had completed Tertiary level education was just 1.3%. For persons who had attained secondary and primary education, the unemployment rate was relatively higher at 3.8% and 4.1% respectively.

Figure 6: Employment/unemployment rate by Highest Level of Education

### Employment/Unemployment Rates (%) by level of Education



## vi. Skill Level

Of those persons who were in the labour force, and who indicated that they had received some type of training for occupational skills development, 13 were unemployed for an unemployment rate of 1.9%. There were 524 persons who indicated that they had not received any training but were employed. There were 22 persons who were untrained and not working, resulting in an unemployment rate of 4.0%.

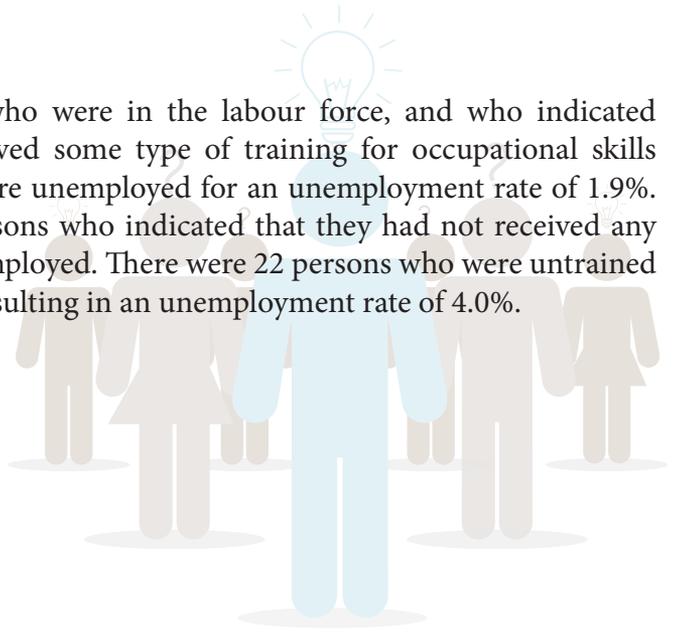
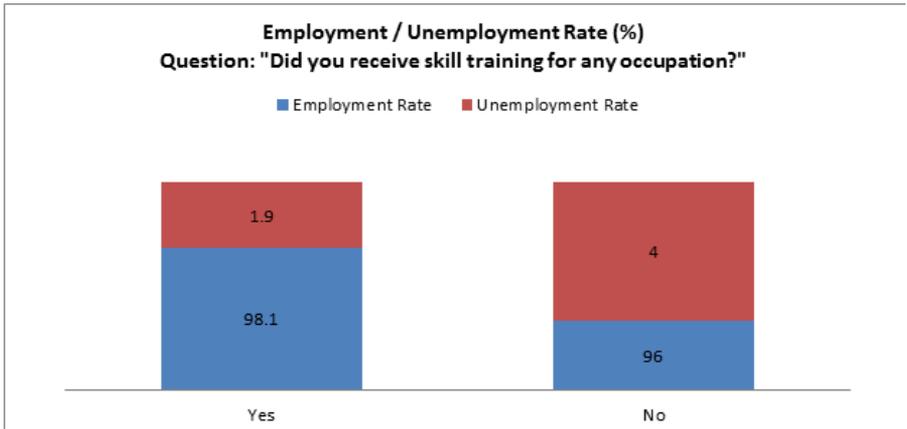


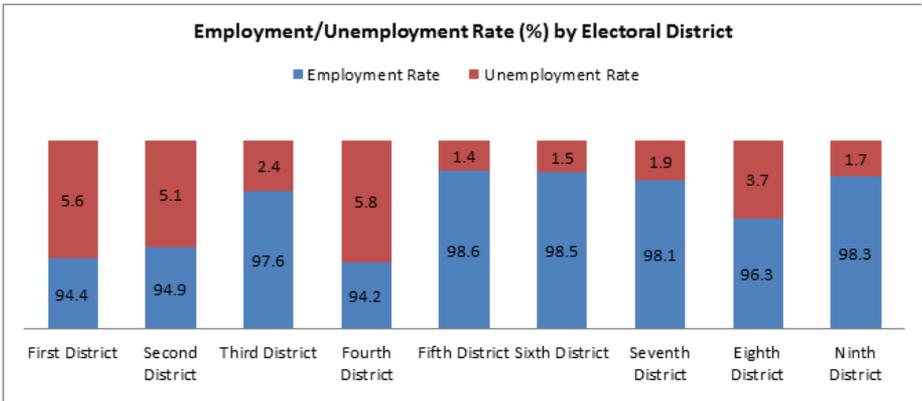
Figure 7: Employment/unemployment rate by Skills Training Received



### vi. Electoral District

When considering unemployment by district, the fifth district had the lowest rate of unemployment with 1.4%. The highest rates of unemployment were observed in the first and fourth districts with 5.6% and 5.8% respectively.

Figure 8: Employment/unemployment rate by Electoral District

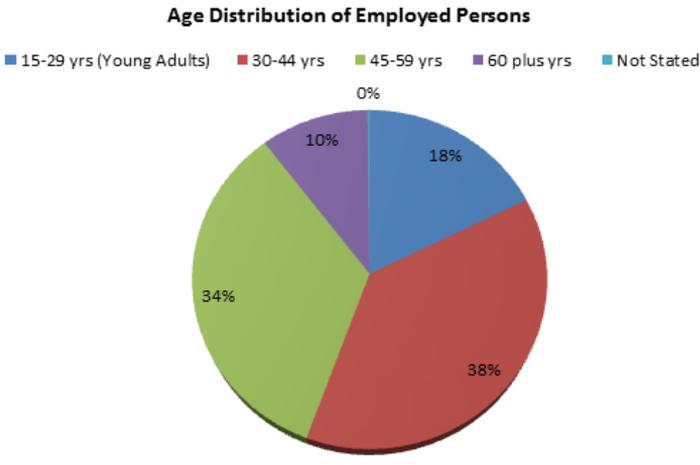


# The Employed

## (i) Industry

With regards to the 1,201 persons who indicated that they were employed, the largest industry of employment was Public Administration/Defense/Compulsory Social Security. This industry accounted for 22% of employed persons. The second largest industry was the Accommodation and Food Services industry which accounted for 15.9% of the employed; and third was the Wholesale and Retail Trade/Repair of Motor vehicles and Motor cycles with 11.8%. When combined these three industries were responsible for almost half (49.7%) of the employed persons. Of those employed, 17.7% were young persons (15 to 29 years). Almost 38% were mature persons (30 to 44 years old). Exactly 34% were more matured adults (45 to 59 years). Expectedly, only 10% of employed persons were aged 60 years or older as many in this age group would have already retired. When combined, adults aged 30 to 59 years accounted for the majority (72%) of employed persons.

Figure 9: Broad Age Distribution of Employed Persons



The data also showed that 92.7% (1,113) of the respondents were employed in the Services sector. Only 4.9% (48) were employed in the Non-Service sector. The Non-Service sector includes those industries where goods are produced instead of a service; for example, fishing, mining, agriculture

and manufacturing. Clearly, the services sector industries dominate in the BVI. As high as 95.8% of the young adults and as low as 89.4% of the most matured adults worked in the Service Sector.

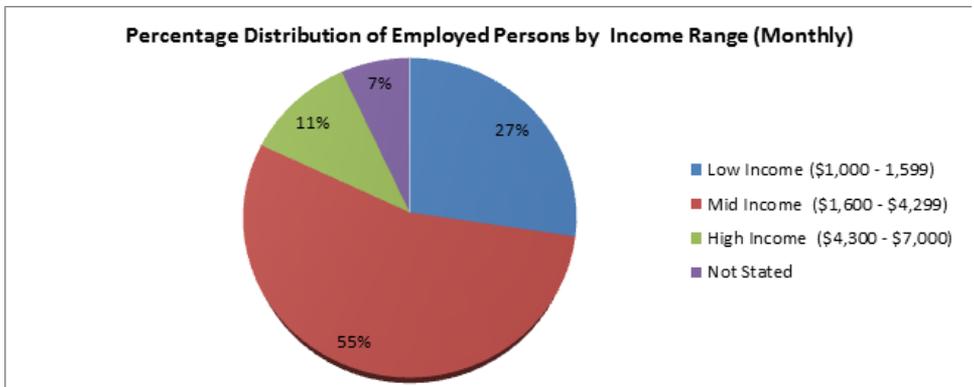
Over 68% of persons employed in the BVI were not born in this country. Additionally, of those persons who were born abroad, 92.9% of these persons were employed in the Services sector and 3.9% in the Non-Services sector. These percentages were somewhat similar for persons who were born in the BVI.

### (iii) Income Earned (Monthly)

As it relates to income, 3 categories were considered: Low (\$1,000 to \$1,599 per month), Mid Income (\$1,600 to \$4,299 per month), and High Income (\$4,300 to \$7,000 per month). About 55% of employed persons' salaries fell within in the Mid Income range, 27.4% were in the Low Income and 11.1% were in the High Income range. (Table 16) The overall average monthly income for workers who stated their incomes was \$2,215.30; this translates into an average annual income of \$26,583.

The average monthly income for employed persons who were born in the BVI was \$2,513.00 or \$30,156 per year. The average monthly income for persons who were born abroad is \$2,078.42 or approximately \$24,941 per year.

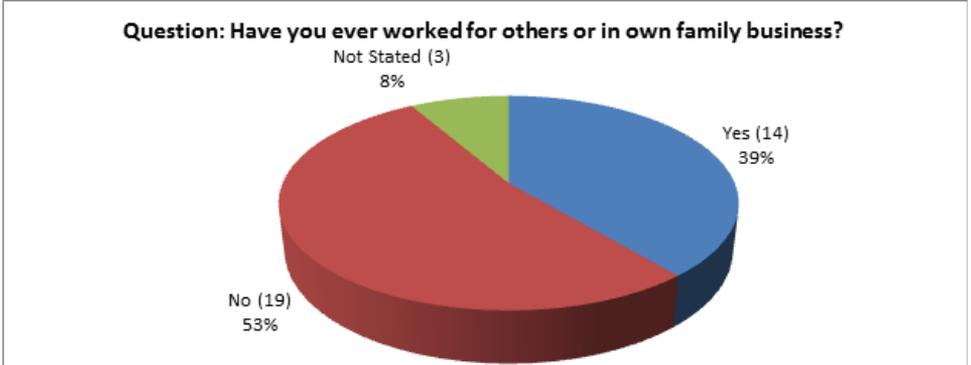
*Figure 10: Income Range (Monthly) Distribution of Employed Persons*



## The Unemployed

Concerning the unemployed, a total of 36 persons or 1.7% of total survey respondents indicated that they were not working. Just fewer than 39% (14 people) said that they previously worked for others, or within in their own family business while 52.8% (19 people) indicated that they never worked.

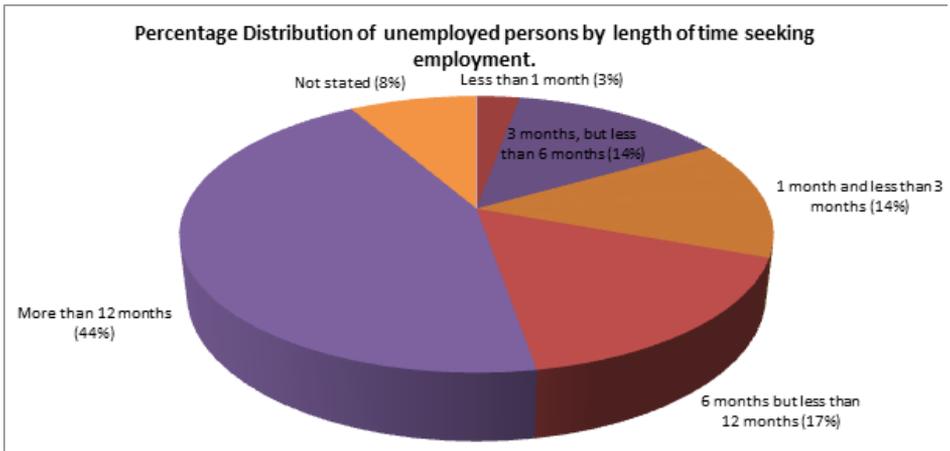
Figure 11: Ever Worked Distribution of Unemployed Persons



Of the 36 persons who indicated that they were unemployed, exactly 50% were born in the Virgin Islands and 50% had been born abroad. While persons born in this country were unemployed at a rate of 4.5%, persons born abroad had a 2.1% unemployment rate.

Approximately 44.4% of the unemployed (16 persons) indicated that they were available and had sought work unsuccessfully for over a year. Approximately 16.7% (6 persons) indicated that they were available and had been seeking employment for less than six months. Three (3) persons (8.3%) did not answer the question; and around 31% (11 persons) said that they had been available and seeking work unsuccessfully for less than six months. Incidentally, half (8 of 16) of the respondents who had been seeking work for more than 12 months, were young adults (15 – 29 years old).

Figure 12: Duration Out of Work Distribution of Unemployed Persons

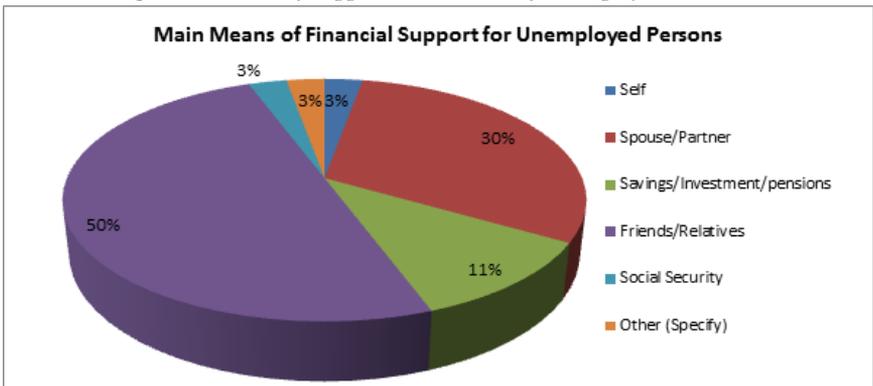


Of the 36 unemployed persons, there were 14 persons who had previously worked, but at the time of the survey, were unemployed. The two main reasons given for their unemployment were job dismissal and resignation for educational purposes.

Just about 11% of total unemployed (4 persons) said that they had lost their jobs due to dismissal. Approximately 8.3% or 3 persons indicated that they had resigned to further their studies. Some of the other reasons specified were, resignation for child care (2.8%) (1 person), business failure (2.8%)(1 person) and retirement (2.8%) (1 person).

Exactly half (50%) of the total unemployed persons said that they were supported (financially) by friends and relatives while 30.6% depended on their spouses and partners.

Figure 13: Means of Support Distribution of Unemployed Persons



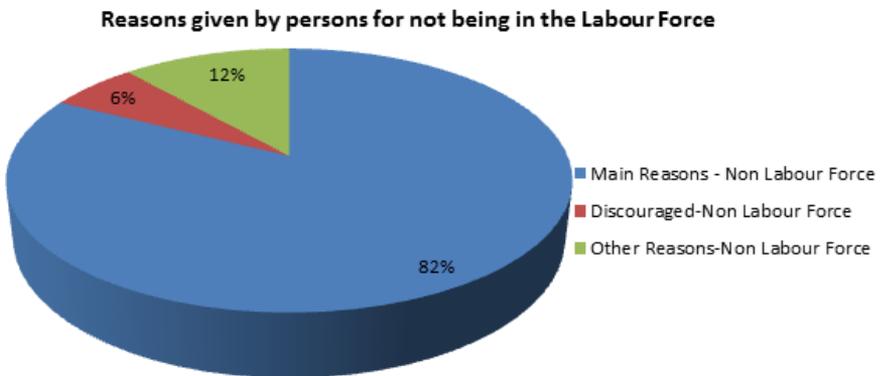
Incidentally, the majority (64%) of the unemployed young adults were supported primarily by friends and relatives. However, the unemployed mature and more matured adults were mainly supported by their spouses or partners (66% and 60% respectively).

A very small percentage (2.8%) of the unemployed said they benefitted from remittances from abroad.

## Persons Not In The Labour Force

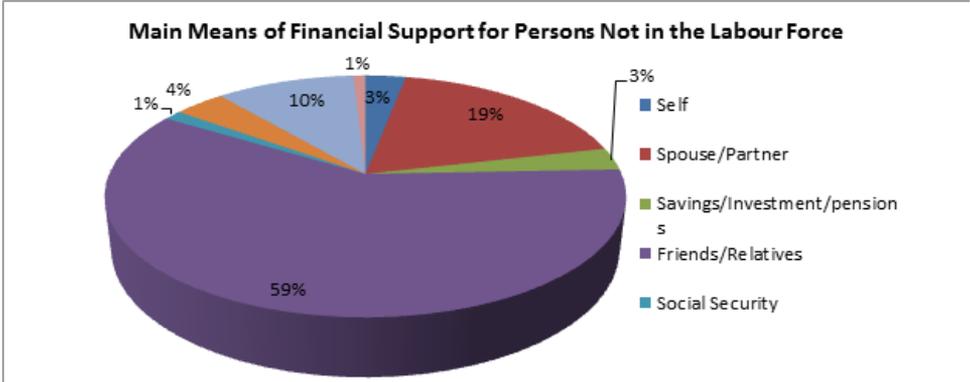
There were 234 persons who indicated that they were not in the labour force. Over 82% (193 persons) of these persons were not looking for work and not available work for a number of reasons. The main reasons were that they were either attending school, retired, disabled, ill or occupied with domestic duties. Exactly 6.0 % (14 persons) said that they were not in the labour force because they were discouraged.

Figure 14. Reasons Not in Labour Force Distribution of Persons Not in Labour Force



With respect to financial support for said persons, 59% (139 persons) were supported by friends and relatives. While just over 18.4% were supported by their spouses and partners. As in the case of the unemployed, the majority of the young adults who were not in the labour force were supported by friends and relatives (76.2%). Whereas the matured, and more matured adults who were not in the labour force were mainly supported by their spouses or partners; to the tune of 67.6% and 41.7% proportionately and respectively. Just over 46% of the most matured adults (those aged 60 and over) who were not in the labour force were also supported mainly by friends and relatives.

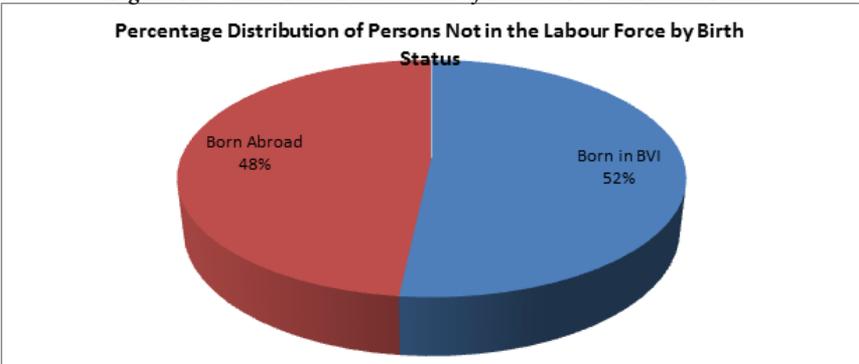
Figure 15: Means of Financial Support Distribution of Persons Not in Labour Force



Exactly 6% of persons who were not in the Labour force (14 persons) benefitted from remittances from abroad. With regards to those who indicated that they did receive remittances, the group with the highest percentage was the matured adults group (aged 30 to 44 years) with 11.8%.

Of the 234 persons who were not in the labour force, there were 121 persons (51.7%) who were born in the BVI and 113 (48.3%) who were born abroad.

Figure 16. Where Born Distribution of Persons Not in Labour Force



For those born in the BVI, 86% cited the main reasons (students, retirees, disabled, ill or occupied with domestic duties) for not being in the labour force. Only 7.4% of persons born in the BVI cited discouragement as being the main reason for not being a part of the labour force. For those persons born abroad, 77.9% gave the main reasons (listed above) as to why they were not part of the labour force. Only 6% of said persons, stated that the reason why they were not in the labour force was because they were discouraged.

## Acknowledgements

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) would like to thank the European Development Fund and their partnership with the OECS for the assistance provided in this first survey. Appreciation is also extended to enumerators, survey respondents, and to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Government of the Virgin Islands – Premier's Office for their support as well. The CSO looks forward to continued collaboration with all its development partners, both locally and abroad as it endeavors to provide timely and accurate statistical information for development planning.