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## 62 Percent of Virgin Islanders Have Been Fully Vaccinated Against Covid-19, Governor Bryan Will Say During Address

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Governor Albert Bryan will say tonight during his State of the Territory Address that 62 percent of Virgin Islanders have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19, a result of [the 2020 Census](#) that revealed the territory's total population had dropped to 87,146, representing a decrease of 18.1 percent from the 2010 Census of 106,405.

Before the 2020 USVI Census was released, the territory's Covid-19 vaccination rate was calculated using 2010 Census data that showed the territory's population at 106,405. This resulted in a vaccination rate that was stalled below half of the eligible USVI population.

"As of January 1, 54,175 Virgin Islanders had been fully vaccinated. According to the 2020 census data, that is approximately 62 percent of our total population," Mr. Bryan will say tonight, according to a copy of the address obtained by the Consortium. "There is no question that our incentive programs worked. Perhaps of greater significance, more than 88.5 percent of the population over the age of 65, the most vulnerable amongst us, have been vaccinated in the Virgin Islands. We have not yet achieved our target for local herd immunity; however, the vaccines have helped us achieve our mission to not overwhelm our limited healthcare capacity."

In the address, the governor commends healthcare workers on the frontlines who he says continue to make sacrifices to help mitigate the virus's spread and the pandemic's impact on the territory. "...We are only managing this crisis as well as we are because of the tireless effort and dedication of the many Covid warriors who have done the heavy lifting to keep us all safe," reads the SOTA document.

Mr. Bryan will highlight vaccination as the best tool to win the fight against Covid-19. "The numbers don't lie. Yes, we have experienced "breakthrough" cases in which fully vaccinated individuals have contracted the virus. However, of the Virgin Islanders who have died due to complications from the virus, only two were fully vaccinated. We do not believe this is a coincidence. We have verified locally through our own observations what the medical professionals and scientists have been telling us. Virgin Islanders who have taken the vaccine have been less likely to become seriously ill, less likely to require hospitalization, and less likely to die as a result of Covid infection," Mr. Bryan will say tonight, according to the SOTA document. The Consortium will carry the event live on its website and [Facebook page](#) beginning at 7:00 p.m. tonight.

### **Omicron Surge Receding**

The Omicron wave of Covid-19 that affected the U.S. Virgin Islands earlier this month when active cases neared 4,000, has been subsiding in recent weeks, with cases dropping to 1,162 territory-wide as of Saturday as residents continue to recover from the variant. Omicron has proven to be much weaker than Covid-19 strains before it, including Delta.

According to data provided by the V.I. Dept of Health, St. Croix accounted for 661 of total active infections, followed by St. Thomas with 414, and St. John with 87. The positivity rate fell to 9.45 percent from a high of 24.30 percent at the peak of the Omicron surge.

Government offices are expected to return to regular in-person operation beginning today, and all public schools for the first time since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, will be open for in-person learning starting on various dates throughout this week. See full schedule [here](#).

Additionally, the restriction the Bryan administration placed on travel that requires both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals to provide a negative Covid-19 test taken within 72 hours when traveling to the USVI, will expire at the end of January barring an extension from the Bryan administration.

### **Immunity From Prior Infection Gave Better Protection Than Vaccination During Delta Wave, CDC Says**

A previous infection from Covid-19 provided better protection than vaccination against the virus during the Delta wave, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Wednesday, citing data showing those who received immunity through prior infection or vaccination fared way better compared to those who were unvaccinated.

The data came from 1.1 million people and included testing, actual cases and immunization. It was collected in New York and California, the federal health authority said, spanning the months of May through November of 2021, the period in which the Delta variant became the dominant strain of Covid-19 in the U.S., before the Omicron variant started circulating in December last year.

“Before the Delta variant, Covid-19 vaccination resulted in better protection against a subsequent infection than surviving a previous infection,” CDC epidemiologist Benjamin Silk said. “When looking at the summer and fall of 2021, when Delta became predominant in this country, however, surviving a previous infection now provided greater protection.” According to the CDC, data from hospitalizations came from more than 50,000 people just in California.

The timeframe of the research coincided with when vaccinated people were experiencing waning immunity from vaccine-induced inoculation before the wider rollout of booster shots, Dr. Silk said.

Many have contended that the U.S., like many parts of Europe, should count immunity gained through prior Covid-19 infection as providing enough protection to work, enter restaurants and participate in other activities that some jurisdictions only allow for the vaccinated.

The CDC, however, is still advocating vaccination, stating that it continues to be the surest way to gain immunity. And Dr. Silk also pointed to recent data that found people who got vaccinated several months after being infected with Covid-19 had more protection against symptomatic disease than a prior infection alone.

It is not yet clear how symptomatic infection from the Omicron variant defer from those who received natural immunity compared to those who took vaccines. However, reports suggest that the infections are milder in people with natural immunity.