

# The STATUS of CHILDREN in the US VIRGIN ISLANDS

The **USVI KIDS COUNT Data Book 2014** tracks the effects of the national recession on children and families in the US Virgin Islands from 2010-2012.

Note: **USVI Kids Count Data Book 2014** uses latest figures available, ie. 2012 data.

## **Economic health declined for the Territory, and for families.**

- **The Territory's revenues shrank** between 2010 and 2012, due to the national recession's impact on tourism, and the closing in February 2012 of the territory's main manufacturing industry, HOVENSA LLC.
- **Unemployment rose 3+ percentage points to 11.7%** in 2012, from 8.9% in 2010, reflecting many job losses in public and private sectors.
- **The VI population lowered**, due to out-migration of workers and families and a decreasing birth rate.

## **Economic instability tended to accelerate social trends for children and families.**

- **Children's numbers fell by 2,150 -- or 8% --** from 2010 to 2012. There were 24,869 VI children in 2012, compared to 27,026 children in 2010, a large decrease.
- Children's **families headed by married-parents** (ie. two potential earners) **fared far better economically, even during the recession**, than children's families headed by single females. In 2012, 24% of children lived in 2-parent families (32% in 2010).
- The 2012 poverty rate of children's families headed by married couples: 19%...  
**..the poverty rate for children's families headed by single women: 39%.**
- **Increasingly, children's families were headed by single women: 52%** in 2012, up from 48% in 2010.

## **Public support programs helped to stabilize the portion of VI children in poverty.**

- The **VI child poverty rate held steady at 31%** from 2010-2012, and at 35% for VI children birth up to age 5. Essentially, one out of three VI children lived in poverty.\*
- **Two-thirds (67%) of VI children received food assistance** from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2012, up sharply from 51% in 2010.
- **68% of VI infants and children from birth to age 5 received federal nutrition benefits** from the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants &

Children (WIC), up from 58% of young children this age in 2010.

- Reflecting rising job losses, federal **unemployment insurance payments on unemployed workers' claims rose** to \$22 million in 2012, up from \$14 million in 2010.
- Three quarters of all children living with their single mother in 2012 relied on the VI child support system to receive paternal child support income payments .

## **Teen violent crime arrests fell, but the VI teen death rate stayed high.**

- **Arrests in 2012 of juveniles (age 10 up to 18) for violent crimes lowered by half** from 2011 to 295 per 100,000 teens this age, nearing the national rate (202/100,000).  
*Note: The VI rate had been twice the US rate for almost two decades.*
- **The death rate of VI teens (age 15-19) was four times the national rate**, rising to 207/100,000 (the VI rate in 2012) versus 49/100,000 (the US rate in 2012).

## **Too many VI children and youth are not accessing education at crucial times of their life when it can make the most difference.**

- VI early care settings are not preparing many of our 3- to 4-year-olds with necessary skills to be successful learners in kindergarten and beyond. The evidence:  
**One third (34%) of all VI children entering public kindergarten lacked age-expected cognition skills** (ie: counting, pattern recognition, and logic ability).  
**Half (53%) lacked age-expected word skills and comprehension skills for kindergarten readiness.**
- Low educational attainment places children at risk of lifetime poverty. More than 1 in 4 (**27%) VI 18-24 year olds in 2012 had not completed high school.**

## **For children who stay in school, too many have reading and math skills below grade level expectations.**

- Data below shows portions of students with skill-levels below proficiency.*
- for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math: 43% (*2 out every 5 public school students in grade 3*)
- for 5<sup>th</sup> grade math: 44% (*2 out every 5 public school students in grade 5*)

**USVI KIDS COUNT** is an annual project of the **Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI)**. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, **KIDS COUNT** tracks the status of children state by state in the US and in participating US territories.

**CFVI** has compiled and published the **USVI KIDS COUNT Data Book** report annually since 2000. Through **KIDS COUNT**, **CFVI** works with our community partners towards strategies driven by facts, evidence, analysis, results, and heightened standards of political and public accountability for children and families.

Created to serve donors and non-profit organizations of the US Virgin Islands, **CFVI** is committed to building a growing collection of permanent funds, and using the income to enhance the educational, physical, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the islands' people.

Today, **CFVI** manages more than one hundred named funds, administers scholarships and awards programs, and coordinates the establishment of memorial funds. **CFVI** was established in 1990 with a \$500,000 endowment, grown now to \$8 million.

This year more than \$2 million was distributed in grants, awards and scholarships to the people and nonprofit organizations of St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John and Water Island.

**CFVI** is managed by a professional staff and governed by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of Virgin Islands community leaders.

*CFVI is a public charity.*

*Contributions are deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*



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**USVI Kids Count 2014 Data Book** is available online at **[www.cfvi.net](http://www.cfvi.net)**



# Our Commitment Matters



**US VIRGIN ISLANDS KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK 2014**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

