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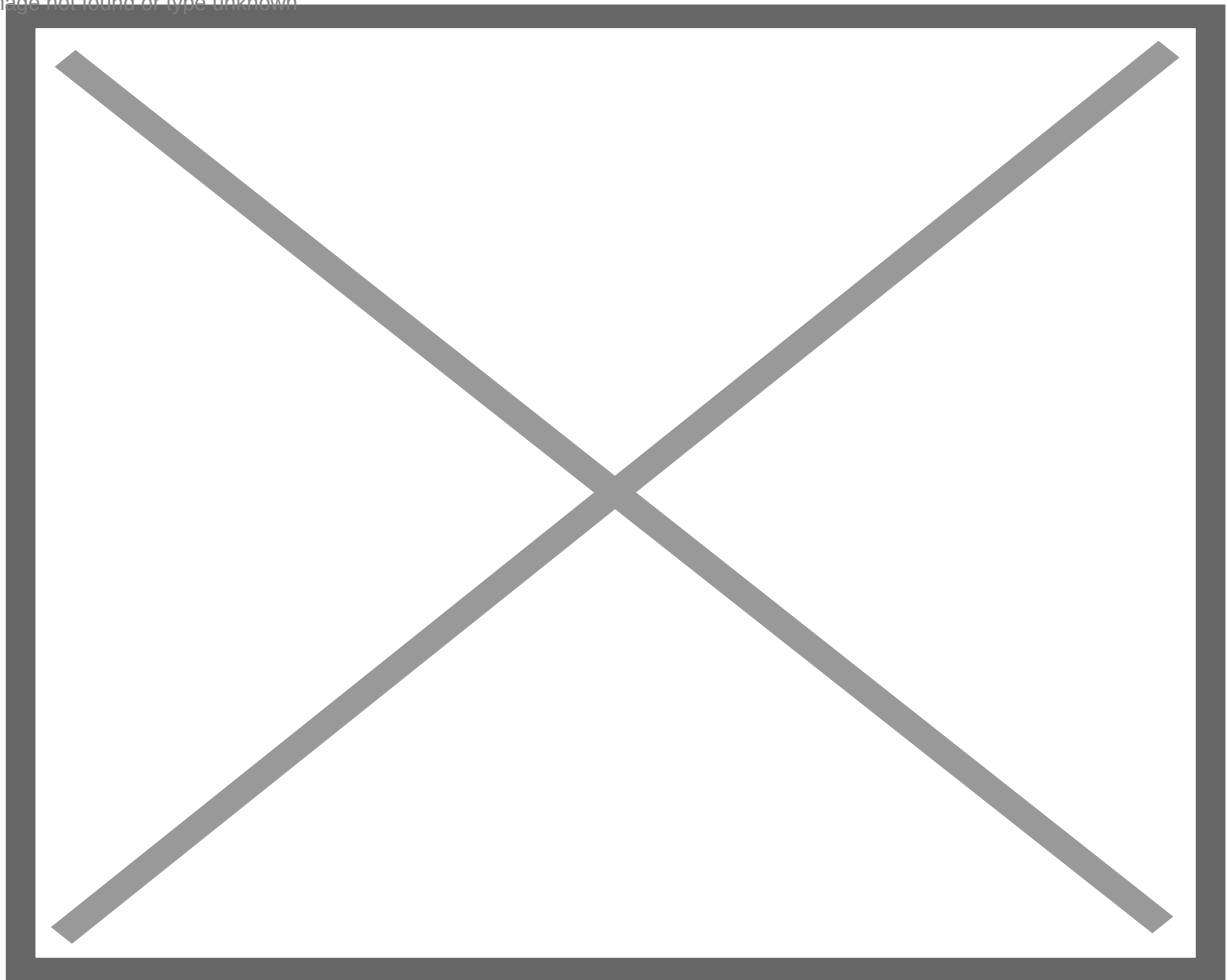
FCC Finds High-Speed 5G Available to Just 12.9% of St. John, 56.9% Territory-Wide

The FCC's new broadband report finds high-speed 5G available to 56.9% of the USVI population and just 12.9% on St. John, compared with 97.1% in Puerto Rico, even as carriers continue fiber and wireless upgrades not fully reflected in the federal data.

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Ernice Gilbert **August 24, 2026**

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High-speed 5G service meeting a federal benchmark is available to just 56.9 percent of the U.S. Virgin Islands population and only 12.9 percent on St. John, according to a newly released Federal Communications Commission report that shows a sharp contrast between the territory's mobile and fixed broadband networks.

The FCC's 2026 Section 706 Report, adopted Aug. 13 and released the following day, places 5G availability at the agency's benchmark of at least 35 megabits per second for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads at 53 percent on St. Croix, 64.7 percent on St. Thomas and 12.9 percent on St. John.

Puerto Rico fares considerably better under the same measurement. The FCC reports 97.1 percent availability there, compared with 56.9 percent territory-wide in the USVI.

The picture changes dramatically for fixed internet service.

At speeds of at least 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up, fixed terrestrial broadband is listed as available to 99.8 percent of the evaluated USVI population. The figure is 99.9 percent on St. Croix, 100 percent on St. John and 99.7 percent on St. Thomas. Fixed wireline service at that speed reaches 99.3 percent territory-wide.

That makes St. John the most striking example of the divide: the FCC reports essentially universal availability of fixed high-speed broadband there, but only 12.9 percent availability for 5G meeting the 35/3 Mbps mobile benchmark.

The numbers require an important distinction. The FCC is not saying that only 12.9 percent of St. John has mobile phone service or any form of 5G. Its measurement specifically concerns 5G-NR coverage expected to deliver at least 35/3 Mbps under standardized federal modeling requirements.

Mobile carriers submit coverage maps to the FCC using prescribed propagation models. The figures therefore measure modeled service availability, not how many people subscribe to a carrier, whether service is affordable or whether every customer actually experiences those speeds at all times.

The underlying coverage data are also older than the report's August 2026 release date. The FCC's analysis relies on provider Broadband Data Collection information as of June 30, 2025, with revisions received through Dec. 30, 2025. The figures should therefore not be read as a real-time measurement of network conditions in August 2026.

Still, the results offer the latest comprehensive federal comparison of high-speed broadband deployment across the territory and come after years of federal and private investment in Virgin Islands telecommunications infrastructure.

In 2021, the Consortium reported that Broadband VI secured \$84.5 million through the FCC's Connect USVI Fund to build a resilient fixed broadband network capable of delivering speeds of up to 1 gigabit per second. Liberty Latin America later acquired Broadband VI, and by August 2022 its fixed-internet services had been unified under Liberty alongside the company's mobile operation. The FCC says Connect USVI Stage 2 support is intended to produce 1 Gbps download and 500 Mbps upload service at funded locations.

Network investment has continued since then. Liberty has expanded both its fiber-to-the-home infrastructure and wireless network, including additional spectrum and cell sites, with new fiber projects reported on St. Thomas and St. Croix in 2026. One Communications, formerly Viya, has likewise reported upgrades to its mobile and high-speed fiber networks. Because the FCC coverage data end in June 2025, improvements completed after that date are not reflected in the new report.

The federal government has separately invested heavily in mobile networks. In 2020, the FCC authorized a combined \$258.8 million to wireless carriers in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands under the Bringing Puerto Rico Together and Connect USVI programs to restore, harden and expand networks capable of providing 4G LTE and 5G service. USVI recipients included AT&T Mobility, whose local operations were later acquired by Liberty, and Viya, now One Communications.

The FCC continued that effort in 2024 when it included eligible areas of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in the first phase of its 5G Fund, creating another mechanism aimed at supporting long-term expansion of next-generation wireless service in the territories.

A separate territory-wide signal study covering 2023 and 2024, presented to Virgin Islands lawmakers earlier this year, also found uneven mobile performance across the islands. One Communications performed strongest overall in that study, while Liberty ranked lowest, though both companies told lawmakers that their networks had undergone substantial improvements since the period measured and that additional upgrades were continuing.

The new FCC report does not identify why St. John's high-speed 5G availability is substantially lower than St. Croix, St. Thomas or Puerto Rico, nor does it assign responsibility to any particular carrier.