

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Child Poverty Increases To 35 Percent In USVI; Nearly Half Of 11th-Graders Struggle With Math

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The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands released its annual KIDS COUNT report on Monday at a forum on St. Thomas, which was streamed live and broadcast via radio. The latest numbers are worse than last year's data, showing an increase in child poverty as well as households being led by unmarried mothers.

According to the latest data, which represents 2013 stats, children living in poverty in the territory rose to 35 percent, compared to 31 percent in 2012, according to [last year's report](#). The territory's children population continues to decrease; almost half of third-graders were reading below grade level in 2013 (about the same as last year's data, which represented 2012 stats); over 40 percent of eleventh-graders struggled with math;

and for students making the transition from 8th to 9th grade, dropout rates rose, according to Kids Count Co-Director Judi Richardson.

“When annual income is less than \$22,000 for a family of four, that’s poverty,” Ms. Richardson said. “Over 35 percent of the children in the territory are in poverty.”

In a press release accompanying last year's data, C.F.V.I. said the local trends were consistent with the overall picture for children in the US as a nation, according to last year's National KIDS COUNT Data Book, released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The annual National KIDS COUNT report (which does not include VI data in its state-by-state overview of mainland children's trends, and represented 2012 data) showed that since 2008, the number of US children living in poverty had risen by almost 3 million, from 13.2 million children in 2008 (child poverty rate: 18%) to 16.1 million in 2013 (reflecting a rise in child poverty to 22%).

C.F.V.I. said last year that the local numbers indicated that without effective social and educational investments in today's Virgin Islands children, and a dwindling population of future VI workers — many with lower academic achievement skills — there will be a smaller and far less robust workforce to support the territory's aging population.

A forum will be held on St. Croix today.