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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Virgin Islands and National KIDS COUNT Data Show Complicated Mix of Hot Spots and Bright Spots Over a Five-Year Trend

ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) – The Annie E. Casey Foundation released its national **2026 KIDS COUNT® Data Book** on June 8th, 2026. The *2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book* is a 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, analyzing how children and families are faring post-pandemic. (Note that the U.S. Virgin Islands is not part of the scoring in the National *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, as it draws data from the American Community Survey, which is not conducted in the territory. The U.S. Virgin Islands is included in the KIDS COUNT © Data Center (<https://datacenter.aecf.org/>), which houses key data points on child well-being across the nation.)

For the first time this year, states receive a comprehensive score (from 0 to 1,000) in the Data Book, not just a ranking. The scores track 16 indicators in four domains – economic well-being, education, health, and family and community factors – over a five-year period from 2019 to 2024. The new scoring system shows whether policies and public investment are actually improving children's lives, not merely how states compare to each other.

To supplement available national data, each year St. Croix Foundation's KIDS COUNT USVI team publishes a *Data Book* and/or product focused specifically on the U.S. Virgin Islands that reports available data aligned with the four domains of the national *Data Book*. To date, St. Croix Foundation has published five Data Books/Spotlights and, in 2024, released the territory's first online, interactive [KIDS COUNT USVI Data Dashboard](http://www.stxfoundation.org/kids-count-dashboard/) (www.stxfoundation.org/kids-count-dashboard/).

In her introductory letter to the *2026 KIDS COUNT Data Book*, AECF President and Chief Executive Officer Lisa M. Lawson emphasized the importance of having access to current, meaningful data in order to assess progress, set priorities and budgets, plan services, and develop policy solutions. This is a critical issue that the KIDS COUNT USVI Team has highlighted during each of its recent publications, noting challenges such as omission from some national data sets (e.g., American Community Survey); lags in the release of collected data; outdated data collection and tracking systems; and a lack of coordinated systems for sharing and analyzing information across agencies.

St. Croix Foundation's KIDS COUNT USVI data shows that many of the national trends documented by the Annie E. Casey Foundation are visible in the USVI locally – and in some cases more acutely so. Between 2019 and 2024, local data reveal a mixed picture of Bright Spots and Hot Spots:

- In Economic Well-Being, the unemployment rate dropped from 6% to 4%, although average hourly wages remained 24% lower than the national U.S. average.
- Public school graduation rates have increased significantly, from 70.9% to 81%, and there was an encouraging increase in student ELA scores, resulting in the highest percentage of proficient students for tested grade levels since SY 2020-21. In math, however, the overall scores and percentage of students proficient were lower than in SY 2020-21.
- 546 students have dropped out of the public school system between the 2020-21 school year and the 2023-24 school year, resulting in dropout rates between 2.2 and 4 percent per year for those school years.
- In Health, the Virgin Islands Department of Health (VIDOH) reported that, in 2023, the fertility rate had decreased, and the overall number of live births continued to decrease along with the overall USVI population. Also in 2023, the VIDOH reported the percentage of babies born at low birthweight to be 5.3%.
- In Family and Community, the number of households with children living in public housing increased, despite the overall decline in the number of children, signaling a higher percentage of children in economically disadvantaged housing.

In its 37th year of publication, the *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* provides reliable statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made, where greater support is needed, and which strategies are making a difference. "Behind every number in this report is a child who is either hungry or fed, housed or homeless, progressing academically or falling behind. No state is consistently getting this right," said Lisa M. Lawson, President and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "The Data Book challenges us to follow the evidence and do what delivers results." By offering a local road map, the *Data Book* equips policymakers, advocates, and communities with the information they need to make decisions that help children and young people thrive.

The 2026 national *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* can be accessed at www.aecf.org/databook. Virgin Islands KIDS COUNT publications and the Data Dashboard can be found by visiting St. Croix Foundation's website at www.stxfoundation.org/kids-count-usvi/.

For more information about KIDS COUNT USVI, contact St. Croix Foundation at 340-773-9898 or kidscountusvi@stxfoundation.org.

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RELEASE INFORMATION

The *KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available at Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.aecf.org.

ABOUT THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation's young people by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. For more information, visit www.aecf.org. KIDS COUNT is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.