



THE FUTURE OF VIRGINIA STARTS TODAY

Economic Success
Depends on Children's
Economic Security



The KIDS COUNT Data Center for Virginia is the foundation for the advocacy work of Voices for Virginia's Children, allowing us to speak confidently and persuasively on critical issues that affect the lives of children. Thanks to a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we have tracked and reported multiple indicators on the well-being of Virginia's children for over 20 years. We provide data and analysis on child well-being at the state and local level. We use this information to identify unmet needs and emerging trends, and to inform policy recommendations.

To view our interactive maps, or to learn what data is available, visit: vakids.org/kids-count-data.



The mission of Voices for Virginia's Children is to champion public policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children.

To view our 2017 Election Guide, or learn more about election resources, visit: vakids.org/elections.

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LETTER FROM VOICES' EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



We know that the decisions our leaders make today impact the opportunities our children have tomorrow to be healthy, educated, and financially secure. In other words, for children to grow up and contribute to the economic success of Virginia, it is critical for us to look at the decisions we make today and ask ourselves: is the way we are taking care of our kids preparing us for a competitive future?

The mission of Voices for Virginia's Children is to champion public policies that improve the lives of Virginia's children. We are the Commonwealth's only independent, multi-issue, child policy and advocacy organization. Voices neither supports nor opposes any candidate or political party, but instead aims to support your efforts as advocates for kids.

Virginia is unique in that we hold elections every year, including what is known as the off-cycle, and we have a one-term governor. These circumstances make the time period around elections very important. Conversations with candidates on the campaign trail will shape their focus and priorities after they are elected.

To support your advocacy, we have developed this guide with information and questions to ask Virginia's 2017 candidates for the House of Delegates, attorney general, lieutenant governor, and governor during forums, town halls, and meetings. These questions get to the heart of some of the greatest challenges facing children today.

We hope this resource will help you provide candidates running for office with knowledge and information they need to make decisions that propel the Commonwealth's economy forward, and support the children who make up its future workforce.

Margaret Nimmo Holland

Understanding our diverse child population can help Virginia's future economic prosperity.



Today's children will lead our communities, make decisions about the Commonwealth's future direction, and drive our economic growth. To ensure every child has the chance to realize his or her full potential in the years ahead, we must recognize that children face different challenges and opportunities based on where they live, their race or ethnicity, and their income level. Our policy efforts to assist children in overcoming these challenges and making the most of opportunities often need to be tailored to account for these differences.

All children should have access to opportunities that lead to prosperity for them and the Commonwealth. For Virginia to have a strong economy in each region, every child needs to be healthy, educated, and economically secure. Virginia's families must be able see a path towards success, with opportunities to contribute to the economy, including the opportunity for their children to learn the skills necessary to enter the future workforce. To make the best decisions for our kids, we first need to understand who they are, the opportunities they have, and the barriers they face today.

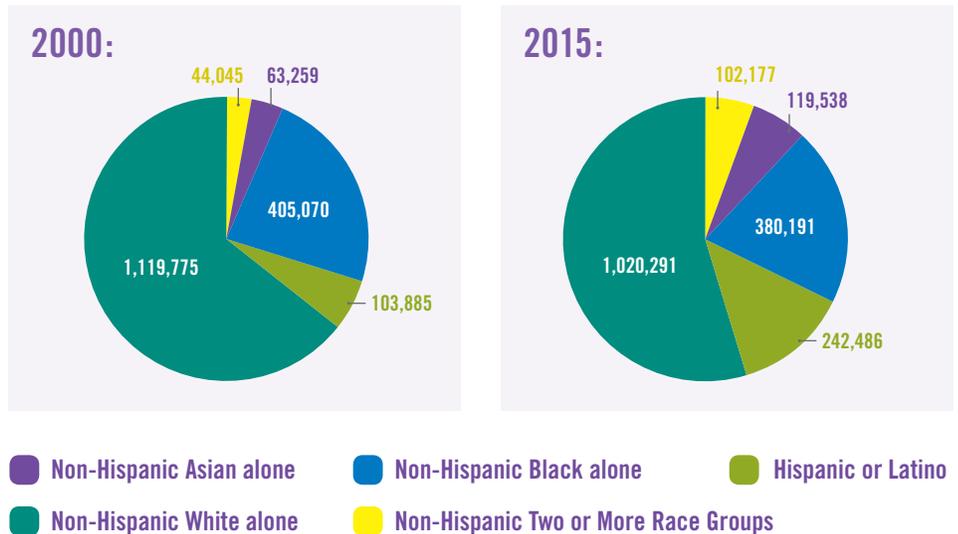
DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN POINT TO INCREASINGLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES ACROSS VIRGINIA

Research shows that areas with the greatest economic growth are those with an increasingly diverse population.ⁱⁱ This is good news for Virginia, as its varied economic opportunities attract families from across the world to work and thrive here.

While the number of children in Virginia has remained fairly steady over the last 15 years, the makeup of children mirrors a national trend of increased diversity. In 2015, children of color, including those who are Hispanic, accounted for 45% of Virginia's child population – an increase of 10% since 2000.ⁱⁱⁱ

The majority of children in Virginia (55%) are White, non-Hispanic. The increase in the number of children of color has led to a near even split between children of color and White children, highlighting the need to consider what opportunities exist for all children to develop into healthy, productive adults who will support and drive our economy.

While the majority of children in Virginia are White, children of color have experienced the greatest population growth

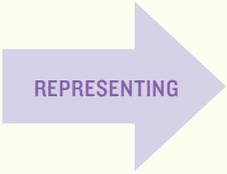


Hispanic and multi-racial kids lead the pack in the shifting child population



NEARLY
2 MILLION

CHILDREN RESIDE IN THE COMMONWEALTH



1 IN EVERY 5

VIRGINIANS¹

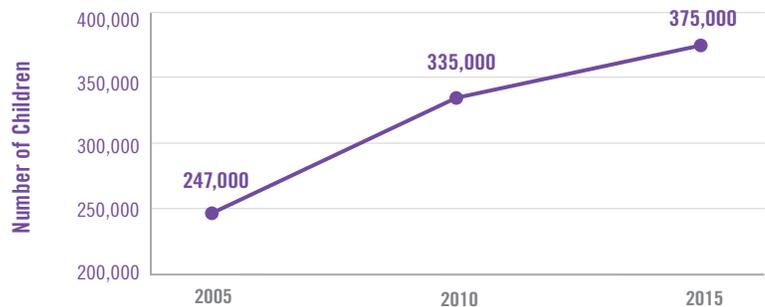


CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS ARE CRITICAL TO VIRGINIA'S FUTURE ECONOMY

Children in immigrant families play an important role in the diverse makeup of Virginia's child population. Research shows that U.S. citizen adults who were raised in immigrant families have higher incomes, educational attainment, and homeownership than their parents.^{iv} U.S. citizen children who live in immigrant families, where at least one parent was born outside the United States, now make up one out of every five kids in the Commonwealth – an increase of 6% in the last decade.

When children in immigrant families are supported, they are likely to experience greater economic prosperity than their parents. As the population of children in immigrant families continues to increase in Virginia, it is important that we consider what resources they need in the greater context of what all children need to succeed.

Children living in immigrant families will have a positive impact on Virginia's economic prosperity^v



For children to contribute to Virginia's economy, they must first be economically secure.

Economic security is more than a family's income. In every county and city in the Commonwealth, whether rural, urban, or suburban, many families have to make difficult decisions about whether the money they have left at the end of the week should go to feeding their child, getting gas to drive to work, or paying the electric bill to keep the heat on.

While families may be above the U.S. Government's official measure of poverty (often referred to as 100% of the federal poverty level, or FPL), they can still face economic hardship. A child is considered economically disadvantaged or insecure when he/she lives in a family that struggles to meet basic needs, such as food, housing, utilities, child care, and transportation.

In this report we focus on children living in economically disadvantaged families, defined as 200% of poverty, because it is widely considered a better measure of economic security than the official measure of poverty, which is often thought of as outdated and unable to reflect the high cost of living in some areas.

How much income does a family make if they are in or near poverty?

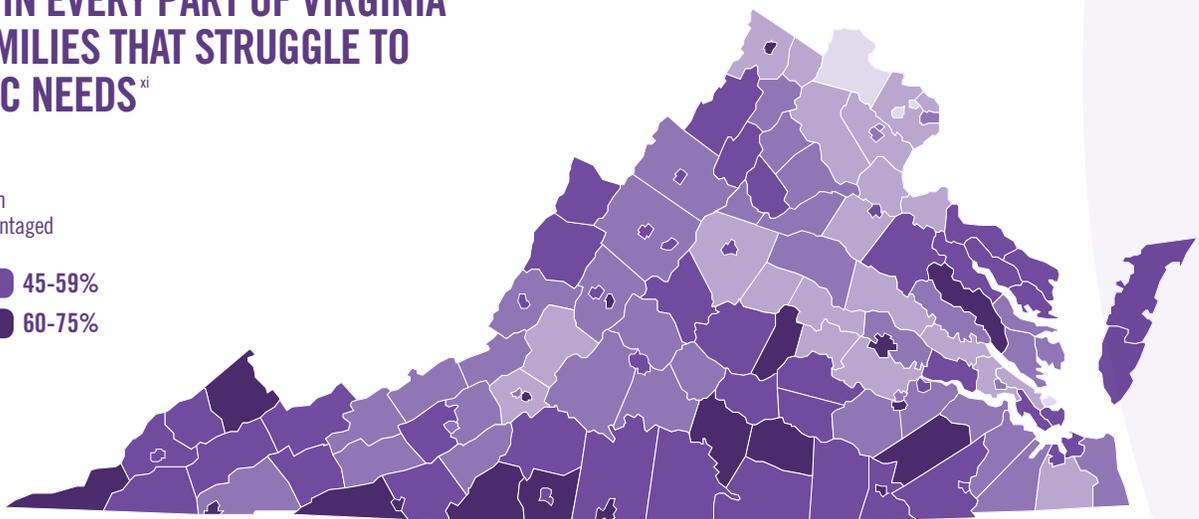
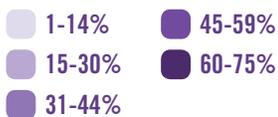
FAMILY SIZE	100% FPL POVERTY	200% FPL ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
1 - 1 adult	\$11,770	\$23,540
2 - 1 adult + 1 child	\$15,930	\$31,860
3 - 2 adults + 1 child	\$20,090	\$40,180
4 - 2 adults + 2 children	\$24,250	\$48,500

2015 Federal Poverty Thresholds ^{vii}

Children who experience economic security have better physical and mental health,^{vii} which then leads to improved school performance and higher workplace productivity as adults.^{viii} Children who grow up economically disadvantaged, on the other hand, have an increased chance of struggling in school and dropping out, becoming involved in the juvenile justice system, and having poor health.^{ix}

CHILDREN IN EVERY PART OF VIRGINIA LIVE IN FAMILIES THAT STRUGGLE TO MEET BASIC NEEDS ^{xi}

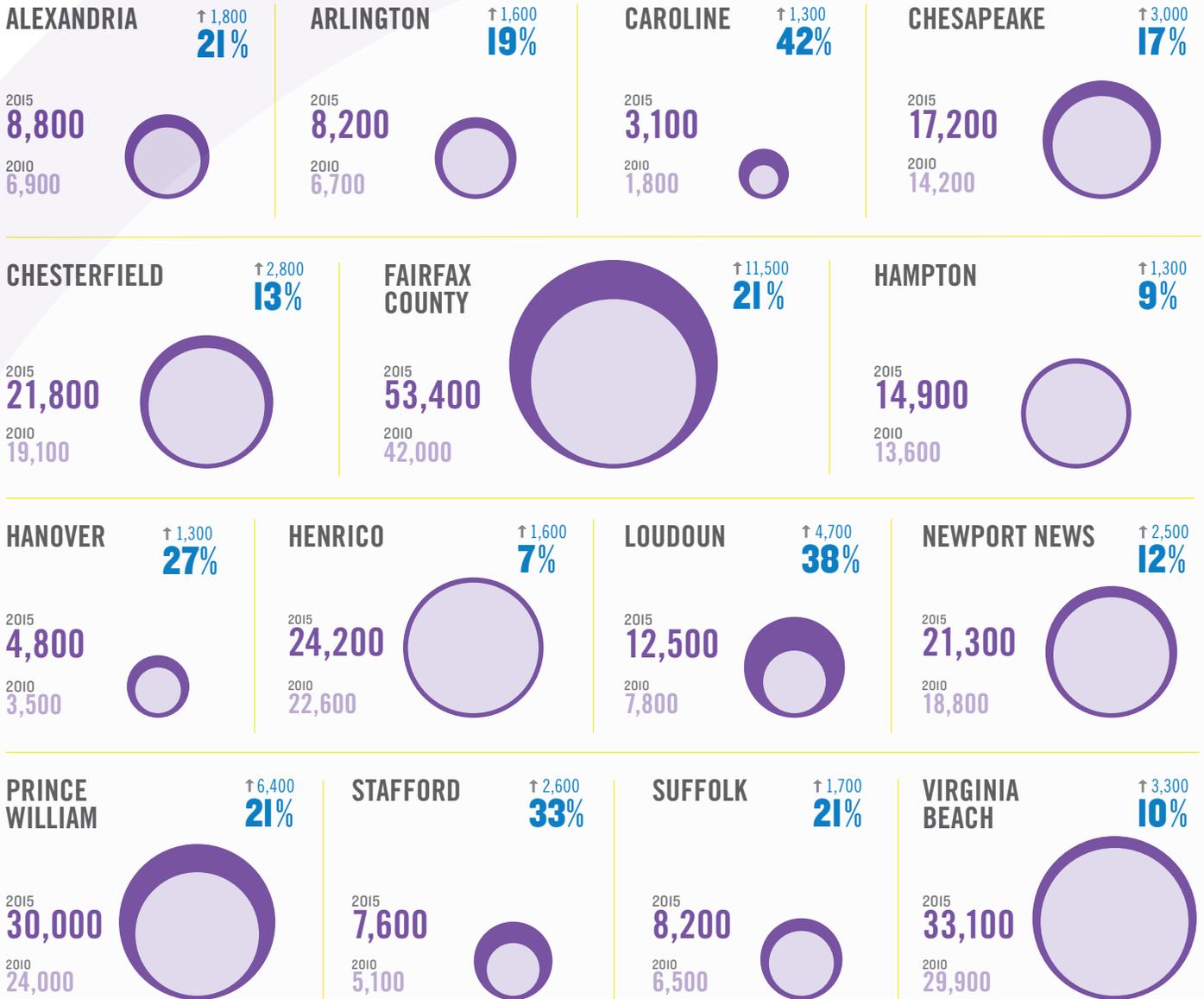
Percentage of Children Economically Disadvantaged



ECONOMIC INSECURITY IS NOT JUST AN URBAN OR RURAL PROBLEM

The top 15 areas with the highest rates of growth of economically disadvantaged families are mostly in what are considered to be suburban communities. Statewide, the number of children who are economically disadvantaged increased nearly 10% in just five years. But some communities have outpaced the state in growth.ⁱⁱⁱ

● Number of Economically Disadvantaged Kids in 2010 ● Number of Economically Disadvantaged Kids in 2015 ● Increase of Economically Disadvantaged Kids & Percent Change



VIRGINIA

In 2010

562,100

Kids were Economically Disadvantaged

In 2015

621,800

Kids were Economically Disadvantaged

THAT'S

59,800 more kids and a 10% increase

Numbers have been rounded to the hundred.

LIVING IN CONCENTRATED POVERTY LEADS TO MORE CHALLENGES FOR KIDS

Between 2010 and 2015, Virginia experienced a nearly 10% increase in the number of children who are economically disadvantaged. During that same time period, children living in areas of concentrated poverty increased by more than twice that amount (22%).^{xiii} Families who live in areas of concentrated poverty, where 30% of the neighborhood lives below 100% of the federal poverty level, are even more likely to struggle to meet their children's basic needs.

Geographic concentrations of poverty lead to an increased likelihood of food hardship, lack of health insurance, difficulty paying for housing, and challenged schools. Children who grow up in these environments are more likely to experience harmful levels of stress and emotional and behavioral problems than children overall, or children in similar household incomes who are not living in areas of concentrated poverty. The higher rate of crime and violence, physical and mental health issues, and unemployment in high poverty areas are some of the reasons children experience higher levels of stress and behavior problems. This in turn

affects a child's ability to succeed in school, and undermines his/her chances of adult economic success. On average, living in a high poverty area reduces ones chance of economic mobility (moving to a higher income bracket) as an adult by 52%.^{xiv}

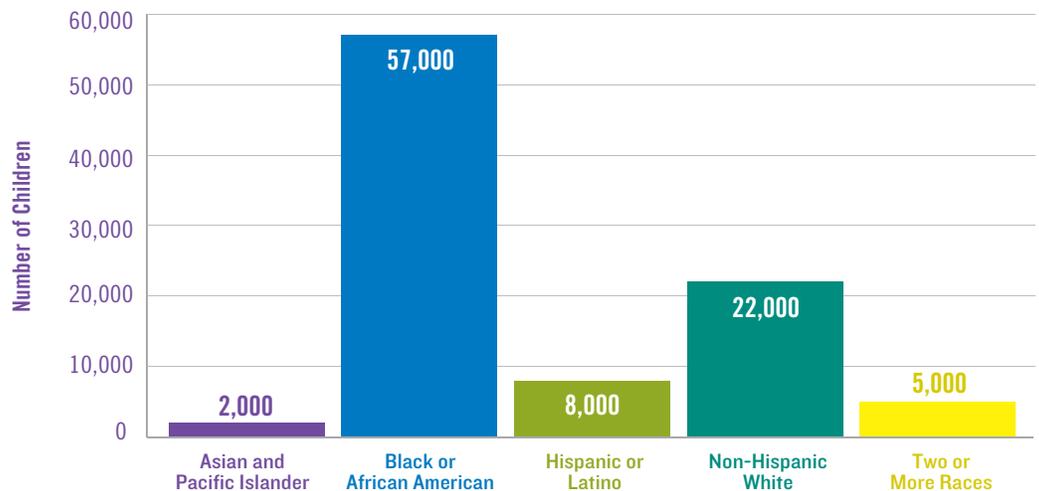
Not all races or ethnicities of children live in areas of concentrated poverty in equal proportion. Black children in Virginia are 2.5 times more likely to live in areas of concentrated poverty than White or Hispanic children. This is a double whammy – to be more likely to live in poverty and to grow up in an environment of concentrated poverty means that for Black children, the negative effects of growing up in struggling families is compounded. This reality makes it even more difficult for these children to have the supports and resources they need to become adults who can reach their full potential and contribute to the economic growth of the Commonwealth.

An Additional
↑ 17,000
 children lived in areas of concentrated poverty in 2015 than 2010.

———— THAT'S ————

An Additional
↑ 3,400 kids
 each year who grew up in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

Children Living In Areas Of Concentrated Poverty By Race And Ethnicity^{vi} 2015



HALF OF ALL CHILDREN IN RURAL VIRGINIA ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED^{xvi}

While it is common to associate poverty and economic disadvantage with urban environments, it is only part of the story. Nearly 120,000 economically disadvantaged children live in rural regions of the Commonwealth.^{xvi}

Rural areas of the Commonwealth have fewer children, both overall and who are economically disadvantaged, than their urban counterparts. A higher proportion of economically disadvantaged children, however, live within Virginia's more rural regions – Eastern, Southside, and Southwest.

In rural areas, one in every two children live in families that struggle to meet basic needs. In urban areas – Richmond and Hampton Roads, for example – the number of economically disadvantaged children is closer to two in five.

Limited job opportunities, fewer incoming economic investments, less funding for education, and lack of community resources, present unique challenges for rural Virginia and make it difficult for these communities to provide opportunities for children and families.



1 IN 2

KIDS ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED IN RURAL VIRGINIA^{xvi}



2 IN 5

KIDS ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED IN URBAN VIRGINIA^{xvi}

FAMILY TYPE AFFECTS THE LIKELIHOOD OF ACHIEVING FINANCIAL SECURITY

Holding constant race, ethnicity, and region of the state in which a child lives, children living in families with one income have access to fewer economic resources than children in two-income households.^{xvii}

Nearly 600,000 children across Virginia live in single-parent families.^{xviii} Single parents often make less than two parent households. For households

headed by single females, it's even harder to maintain financial stability, as women are more likely to be in lower paying jobs than men.^{xix}

Often, it takes one incidence of a car breaking down or a health-related emergency to destabilize a family already living on the edge of poverty. When only one income is available to provide groceries for the week, rent, gas money, child care, and other

expenses, the likelihood of falling into economic hardship increases. Single parent families that have access to a support system, such as reliable and affordable child care, are better able to provide financial security for their children. Since we know a child's economic security foreshadows his or her future prosperity, we must ensure that all children, regardless of family type, have economic security.

1 IN 3



Single parents make less than two parent families

CHILDREN IN VIRGINIA LIVE IN SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

\$28,446

Median Household Income for a Single Female Head of Household in 2015 in Virginia^{xxiii}

By paying close attention to children's diverse needs today, we are better positioned to maintain and enhance Virginia's reputation as a place where people want to live, work, and play.

IN CONCLUSION

We know investments in health, education, and security for all children produce returns into adulthood in the form of productivity and contributions to society. Children whose daily lives are disrupted by the negative outcomes associated with economic instability are less likely to grow into the adults the Commonwealth will come to rely on. This is true regardless of where in Virginia they live, their family structure, their race and ethnicity, or whether their parents are immigrants.

It is critical that as our child population shifts to an increasingly diverse one, we strive to develop policies that reduce the number of children who are economically disadvantaged. We must recognize that while children have different starting points, all children should have access to opportunities that lead to prosperity for themselves and the Commonwealth.





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