



UNDER EMBARGO Until Monday, June 17 at 12:01 a.m. ET

Contact: Christina Feerick, Communications Director, christina@vakids.org, 804-649-0184

Virginia's Child Population Is Changing and Seeing Significant Growth

New Data Show Virginia ranks 10th in Overall Child Well-Being, But Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist

RICHMOND, Virginia — According to the 30th edition of the *KIDS COUNT[®] Data Book* released today by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, children in the United States have a better chance of thriving now than in 1990, but there is still room for improvement. Virginia's child population has increased by nearly half a million (348,506 or 23 percent) — from 1.5 million in 1990 to more than 1.8 million in 2017. In addition, the child population of Virginia has become even more diverse:

- The Latinx child population increased dramatically from 3 percent in 1990 to 14 percent in 2017.
- The percentage of Asian children has increased from 3 percent in 1990, to 8 percent in 2017.
- The Black child population has decreased slightly from 23 percent of total children in 1990, to 22 percent in 2017.
- The percentage of White children has declined dramatically from 71 percent of total children in 1990, to 56 percent in 2017.

The most comprehensive annual report on child well-being in the United States notes measurable progress since the first *Data Book*, which was published in 1990. Nevertheless, more than 13 million U.S. children live in poverty. In Virginia, the percent of children living in poverty has remained the same over the past decade. Over 258,000 children (14 percent) lived below the Federal Poverty Level (family of four) in 2017, despite economic growth and significant improvements in other economic indicators.

The Data Book contains information based on 16 indicators that rank each state across four domains — Health, Education, Economic well-being, and Family and Community — as an assessment of child well-being. Virginia showed positive change in 10 of the 16 KIDS COUNT index measures since 2010.

- **Economic well-being:** Virginia ranks thirteenth in Economic well-being this year. Despite the stagnant child poverty rate, Virginia families have experienced major

progress in economic security over the last decade with a 12 percent increase in children living in households where a parent has full-time employment.

- **Education:** Virginia ranks sixth overall and has made significant improvements in high schoolers graduating on time with a 28 percent change since 2010.
- **Family and Community:** Virginia ranked fourteenth overall. For all four Family and Community indicators in this domain, Virginia's children and families show outcomes better than the U.S. average. The percentage of children living in single-parent families decreased slightly since 2010 to 31 percent, compared to the U.S. average of 34 percent. The percent of children living in a high poverty area has remained consistent with the poverty rate over the last decade, but remains lower than the national average of 12 percent.
- **Health:** Virginia ranks seventeenth in Health. Despite low uninsured rates for children (5 percent), Virginia lags behind the rest of the nation with regard to low birth-weight babies and child deaths.

"Understanding these trends is important for all policymakers as they make decisions that impact the lives of Virginia's children for years to come. In particular, they need to examine how children of color are faring because the population is growing," said Voices for Virginia's Children Executive Director Margaret Nimmo Holland.

The Casey Foundation points to areas of tremendous improvement in children's lives — including access to health care, decreased rates of teen childbearing, and increased rates of high school graduation — and draws a direct line to policies that support this success. As the child population is expanding, there are steps that policymakers should take to help all children thrive. Voices for Virginia's Children calls on elected officials and representatives to:

- Promote healthy development and prevent exposure to childhood trauma by adopting trauma-informed policies and practices. Leading the Campaign for a Trauma-Informed Virginia, Voices promotes investments in the prevention of abuse and neglect and evidence-based practices to mitigate exposure to trauma and adversity.
- Provide equitable access to opportunities. Children of color and children from economically disadvantaged families should be provided the opportunity to attend high-quality early education and fully resourced schools.
- Support policies that keep parents and their children healthy. Medicaid expansion has been providing health insurance coverage to nearly 100,000 Virginia parents. When parents have health insurance, their children are more likely to be insured and to receive medical care.
- Count all kids. Virginia should leverage the Complete Count Commission to ensure the 2020 Census counts all children, including those under the age of five and those in hard-to-count areas.

The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* shows how essential accurate data are to sound policymaking. The 2010 Census missed 2.2 million kids, and the upcoming count may miss even more if young children are not a priority. The stakes are high: 55 major federal programs, including Head Start and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), allocate more than \$880 billion

each year based on census data. Nationally, children under the age of five are the group most likely to be missed.

“This is a game-changing moment for Virginia policymakers to make more than incremental change. It’s an opportunity for our representatives to make decisions about how much we invest in education, how much economic support will be provided for families, for mental health and for foster care,” said Nimmo Holland.

Release Information

The *2019 KIDS COUNT® Data Book* will be available June 17 at 12:01 a.m. EDT at www.aecf.org. Additional information is available at www.aecf.org/databook. Journalists interested in creating maps, graphs and rankings in stories about the *Data Book* can use the KIDS COUNT Data Center at datacenter.kidscount.org.

About Voices for Virginia’s Children

Voices for Virginia’s Children champions public policies that improve the lives of Virginia’s children. We are the only multi-issue, statewide child advocacy organization in the Commonwealth. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, we serve as the go-to resource for data on child well-being in Virginia and release annual reports and snapshots to highlight important, timely issues that impact children. To learn more about Voices and our KIDS COUNT work, visit vakids.org.

About the Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation creates a brighter future for the nation’s children 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.

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