"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality." - Reverend Martin Luther King

West Virginia has one of the **highest rates of poverty** in America, but the situation **Labor Force Partici** 55% West Virginia has the lowest labor force participation rate in America. As with other 49%

Race Affects Child Well-Being and Economic Growth in West Virginia. And That Must Change.

is even more dire for **African-Americans.** More than 16% of West Virginia whites live in poverty, but 29% of African-Americans here are poor.

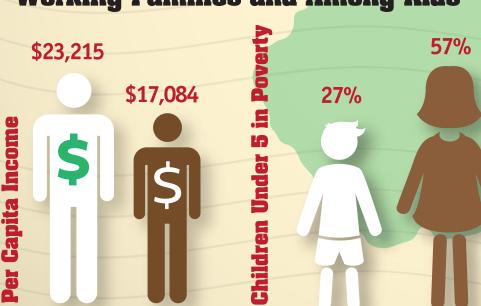
> This disparity is a **net loss for the state** as a whole by undermining the ability of some of our citizens to develop their full potential.

indicators, African-Americans fare even **more** poorly than their white counterparts. For whites, labor force participation is 55% and for African-Americans it is only 49%.

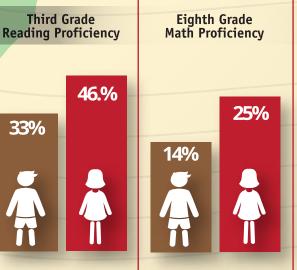
Low Birth-Weight Babies

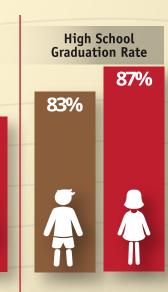


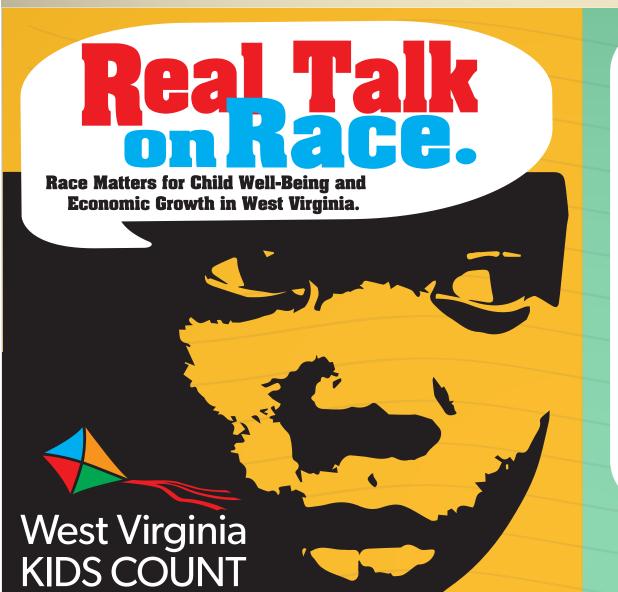
The Race Gap in West Virginia Working Families and Among Kids



Achievement in School









West Virginia KIDS COUNT Fund 1206 Virginia Street, East, Suite 104, Charleston, WV 25301 • 304.345.2101 • wvkidscount.org

Sources/Notes

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How West Virginia is Addressing Childhood Racial Disparities

Policymakers have a pivotal role to play in shaping public policy to close the race gap and give every child a fair start in life, regardless of their race. West Virginia has addressed the gap by demanding improved professional development for teachers in counties with high minority and poor populations. The state of West Virginia has also passed legislation aimed at increasing economic development in minority communities.

There is Much More We Can Do To Give African-American Children a Fair Start



In 2016 a coalition including West Virginia KIDS COUNT, the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, West Virginia Free, the West Virginia Perinatal Coalition and the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free West Virginia launched a 5-year policy campaign called "Race2Great" with the goal of making the state a top 20 place in America to be a kid.

The campaign has four policy goals: an Earned Income Tax Credit to lift thousands of families out of poverty; pre-school for every three-year-old; a significant increase in the tobacco tax to reduce WV's highest-in-the-nation pregnancy smoking rate; and mandatory, statewide implementation of the state's health and **sex education curriculum** to reduce the teen birth rate.

In addition to these four policies, which can significantly improve child well-being for all children, the following policies would specifically assist the state's African-American kids and families and help close the achievement and economic gap:

- Support economic development projects in heavily populated African-American communities.
- Use Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Funds to create a subsidized employment program that specifically targets low-income communities.
- Extend Unemployment Insurance to workers who are presently excluded.
- Fund a "Demonstration Re-Entry Project" to help ex-offenders successfully transition back to the community.
- Improve data collection about the state's African-American population.
- Continue to invest in the State Office of Minority Affairs, which reviews information and coordinates agency level programs across state government to eliminate the racial disparities.