

Stepping Stones 2026 Report

A Report on the Community Well-Being of Children and Families in
Charlottesville and Albemarle

May 2026

Executive Summary

The Stepping Stones Report provides trend data for over 30 measures on the well-being of children and families in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Youth and family development is shaped by multiple interrelated domains. This report brings together data across these domains to describe the experiences and environments shaping young people in our community. The goal is to create a data-informed understanding of our collective trajectory, encourage dialogue, and promote action to improve the lives of all who reside in our community.

Measures in the Stepping Stones Report are presented in four sections: **Education**; **Economic and Family Stability**; **Health**; and **School and Community Disciplinary Actions**. Each measure features a narrative overview of the measure's impact on youth and community well-being, a figure showing the data by year, key trends, and the source and limitations of the data.

Access to **Education** and related opportunities is high for youth in Charlottesville and Albemarle. Both local school districts have a high percentage of graduates enrolling in post-secondary education—more than Virginia overall for the past few years. Recent data shows that in Charlottesville City Schools, 2 out of every 3 graduating seniors (66%) enrolled in post-secondary education, including 4-year and 2-year colleges. In Albemarle County Public Schools, 72% of seniors enrolled in post-secondary education following their high school graduation.

In **Economic and Family Stability** measures, the percent of children in poverty in Charlottesville was the lowest it has been in the last decade at 15% but remained higher than in Virginia overall. The child poverty rate in Albemarle has remained near its lowest rate in recent years at 7%. Although the percentage in the county is lower, it represents a greater number of children due to the higher total population of the county. In 2024 the estimated number of children living in poverty was 1,576 in Albemarle and 1,103 Charlottesville.

For youth and family **Health** measures, individuals receiving prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy—an important factor in reducing the risk of pregnancy complications—is higher in Charlottesville and Albemarle than in Virginia overall. This number has increased over the past decade, with the most recent data showing that over 80% of pregnant individuals received prenatal care beginning in the first trimester in both the city and county.

The report section on **School and Community Disciplinary Actions** shows trend data for

measures that can lead to negative outcomes for young people, like risk of dropping out of school and involvement in the criminal justice system. The rate of youth arrests for violent crimes in both the city and county have seen a mostly downward trend since 2010, remaining below state-wide levels. In both Charlottesville and Albemarle, the youth arrest rate for violent crimes was around 1 per 1,000 youth in recent years.

Over 30 measures are included in the 2026 Stepping Stones Report. The report is focused on local data for the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and Charlottesville and Albemarle Public Schools. State-level data is also provided, allowing for comparison of the trend data in Charlottesville and Albemarle against overall trends in Virginia. Data is sourced from multiple public agencies, including the Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Courts and State Police, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The 2026 Stepping Stones Report was produced through a collaboration between the Center for Community Partnerships at UVA and the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County's respective Departments of Human Services.

The full Stepping Stones Report is available as an interactive online report and to download as a PDF: <https://communitypartnerships.virginia.edu/stepping-stones>