

Executive Summary
Virginia Tech Community Child Care Needs Survey
November 2023

To gain a better understanding of the Virginia Tech community’s current child care needs, the Office of Strategic Initiatives launched an online survey open to faculty, staff, and students during the 2023 fall semester. The survey, which had an 80% response rate, had a total of 1,495 responses from community members from across Virginia Tech’s campus and outreach locations. Of the total number of responses, 56% were people currently caring for one or more infants, toddlers, children or adolescents between the ages of 0 and 18, 6% are currently expecting or in the process of foster/adoption, with the remaining 38% neither caring for a child or adolescent within those age ranges nor expecting to do so soon. Respondents provided important insights into their current and anticipated child care concerns, demonstrating a need for additional resources to address growing gaps in quality child care that is reliable and affordable.

University and Socioeconomic Demographics

Most respondents report their campus location to be Blacksburg (80.7%), followed by Roanoke (7.0%) and the Greater Washington, D.C., metro area (5.3%). A much smaller percentage of the respondents reported their location to be Richmond (1.0%) and Hampton Roads (1.6%). A sixth group reported their location to be other (4.4%) than those previously mentioned. Regarding their primary role at Virginia Tech, most of them are A/P faculty, followed by staff, and teaching and research faculty (Table 1). We had respondents from all colleges and units, though the distribution was different across groups, the largest being the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (13.5%), followed by the College of Engineering (12.7%), College of Science (8.2%), College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (7.6%), and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (6.4%) (Table 2).

Table 1

Primary Role at Virginia Tech

Role	Percentage
A/P Faculty	35.6
Staff	29.8
Teaching and Research Faculty	27.1
Graduate and/or Professional Student	4.1
Wage Employee/Auxiliary Service	1.8
Other	1.3
Undergraduate Student	0.3

Table 2*College or Unit Affiliation*

College/Unit	Percentage
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	13.5
College of Engineering	12.7
College of Science	8.2
College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences	7.6
Vice President for Research and Innovation	6.4
College of Architecture, Arts and Design	4.4
College of Veterinary Medicine	4.4
Executive Vice President and Provost	4.4
Vice President for Student Affairs	4.1
Pamplin College of Business	3.4
Vice President for Human Resources	3.2
College of Natural Resources and Environment	3.1
Vice President for Finance	2.9
Senior Vice President for Advancement	2.7
Dean of Libraries	2.7
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Office	2.0
Vice President for Auxiliary and Business Services	2.0
Vice President for Information Technology	1.9
Graduate School	1.7
Vice President for Campus Planning, Facilities, and Infrastructure	1.4
Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs	1.3
Office of the President	1.2
Innovation Campus	1.1
Vice President for Health Science and Technology	1.1
Other	1.1
Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine	0.8
Vice President for Audit, Risk and Compliance	0.3
Fralin Biomedical Research Institute	0.2
Honors College	0.1
Vice President for Policy and Governance	0.1

Survey participants were also asked about total household annual income (Figure 1). Most answered that they were a part of the highest total income category, more than \$150,000, and a minority (0.3%) reported being part of the lowest total income category, which was under \$10,000. When asked about their race/ethnicity, the largest group identified as White (76%) while the smallest group (0.1%) identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Total Household Annual Income Distribution

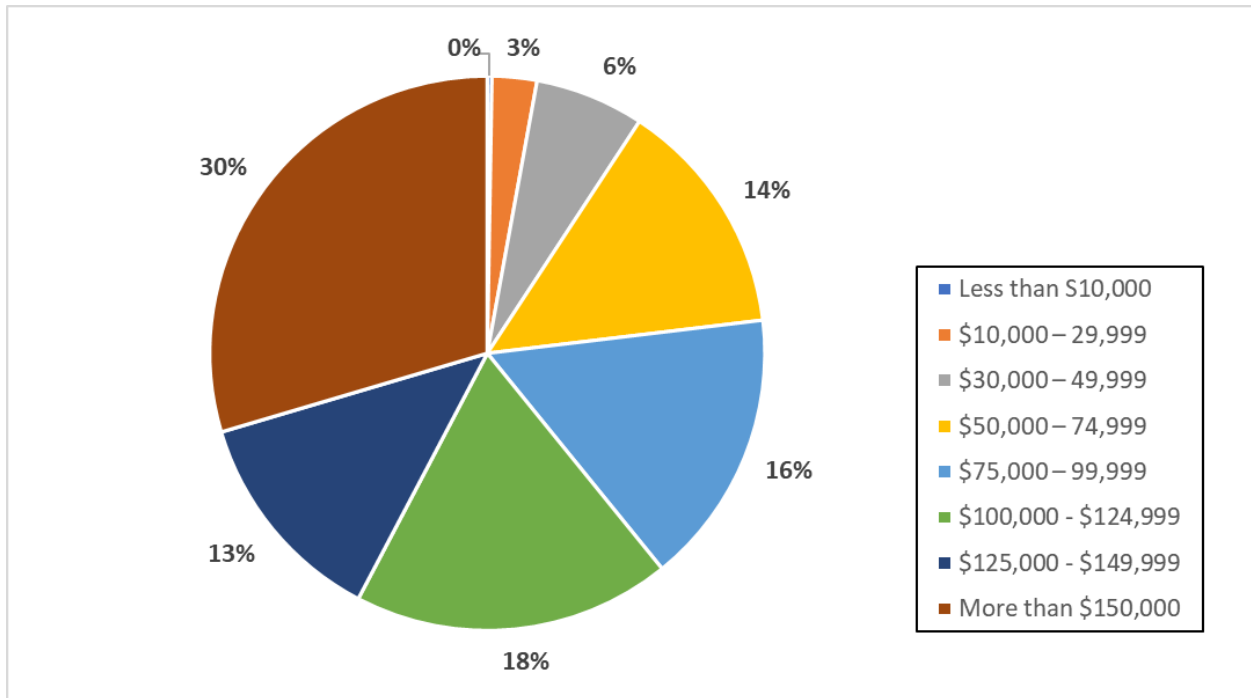
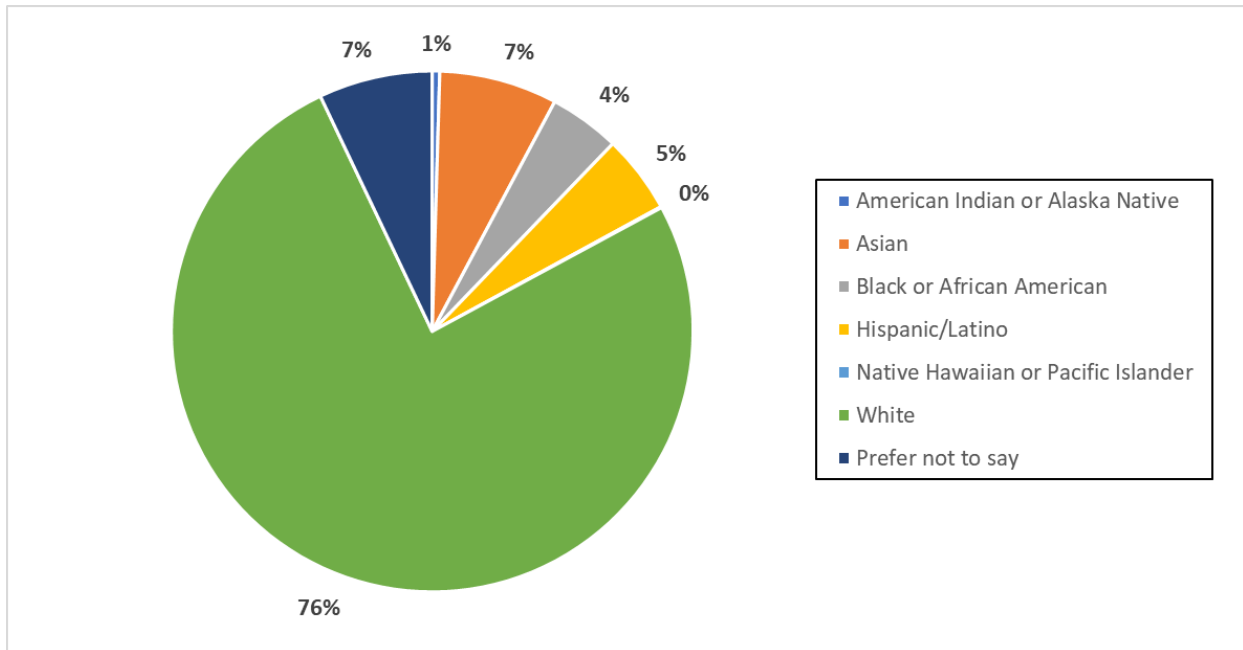


Figure 2

Race/Ethnicity Distribution



The age distribution of children or adolescents being cared for by respondents is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Age Distribution of Children and Adolescents Cared for by Respondents

Age Range	Percentage
Infant – (6 weeks to 16 months)	12.8
Young Toddler – (16 months to 2 years old)	7.5
Toddler – (2 to 3 years old)	13.3
Preschool – (3 to 4 years old)	14.0
School-aged – (grades K to 3)	23.2
School-aged – (grades 4 to 5)	10.9
School-aged – (grades 6 to 12)	18.3

Care Needs

Of the respondents who indicated that they have child care needs, the majority expressed the desire to have child care options in a Blacksburg zip code (n = 718), followed by zip codes in or surrounding Christiansburg (n = 215), with the rest spread throughout locations close to Roanoke and the Greater Washington, D.C., metro area. Among those with child care needs, almost a quarter (22%) expressed that they care for a child that has a disability, chronic health conditions, learning differences, and/or ongoing mental health concerns. This shows a desire for quality child care that is not only reliable but can address these needs.

Among the respondents, 1,139 (76%) indicated they currently need and/or use some form of child care, a sharp increase compared to spring 2022. Of those currently using care, 14% report being the sole custodial caregiver for their child(ren), the rest receiving household help with caregiving responsibilities from another adult.

Current child care arrangements were diverse, as shown in Table 4, with most having children that are in school (33.9%), followed by children attending a child care program (32.4%). Of those who report using a child care program, the vast majority use a standalone child care center (74.4%). During breaks and closures when day-to-day arrangements are not available, almost a third of caregivers (29.6%) report having to stay at home to care for their child(ren), and another large group (27.2%) report having to come up with different arrangements when these situations happen. This last piece of information speaks to the need to count on alternative child care options when the main one is not available, which is supported by caregivers reporting that their greatest need is for backup care.

Table 4*Characterization of Children's Current Child Care Arrangements*

Child Care Arrangement Type	Percentage
Home and cared for by someone other than me	9.8
Relative's home and cared for by someone other than me	4.0
In-home child care provider shared with other colleagues' child(ren)	1.3
At home, and I am caring from them during my work hours	3.8
Arrangements vary from day-to-day	10.4
Attending school (K-12) during my work hours	33.9
Attending a child care program during my work hours	32.4
Other	4.3

Most striking, almost half of the respondents needing or using child care (47.1%) report that their current care arrangements do not meet their needs in terms of reliability, flexibility, or accessibility, a similar number to the one reported by Virginia Tech parents in spring 2022 (52.2%). The reasons for their unmet needs are described in Table 5.

Table 5*Reasons Behind Unmet Child Care Needs*

Reasons	Percentage
Lack of available child care options in my area	17.1
Care is too expensive for my budget	16.9
Impact of medical concerns or need for specialty care	1.4
Public health-related issues or closures (e.g., COVID-19)	3.3
Concerns over the quality of available care	12.8
Location of available child care is not where I need it to be	6.2
I work hours or days outside of the typical work schedule	5.9
Lack of available backup or on-call child care options	17.2
Lack of flexibility in child care options	13.2
Lack of flexibility in my own work arrangements	5.4
Other	0.6

Regarding backup care, it was reported that it is needed 1 to 2 times a month by 21.2% of the households, with most of the people (57.5) stating they need it a few times a year or less than monthly.