



THE
**OPPORTUNITY
INDEX**
for Northern Virginia

**Indicators of
Success and
Challenges
in Northern
Virginia**

THE
community
foundation
FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA
celebrating **40** years
1978-2018



THE
COMMONWEALTH
INSTITUTE



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ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is a visionary funder that has directed millions of charitable dollars to people in need since 1978. Its mission is to grow philanthropy to respond to critical need and seed innovation in our region. Serving all of Northern Virginia, including Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park, the Community Foundation connects donors to community and helps meet community needs with community resources. During 2017, the Community Foundation awarded more than \$4.7 million in grants and scholarships and now reports \$50 million in managed philanthropic assets.

WWW.CFNOVA.ORG



ABOUT THE COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities, and Virginia as a whole. Our work is grounded in the fundamental belief that government should work to improve the lives of the people it serves. We maintain a deep commitment to ensuring that public policies and programs effectively respond to the needs and interests of lower-income individuals, families and communities throughout Virginia.

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Northern Virginia is a diverse, growing region with a well-educated population and strong economy. However, with this success comes challenges such as high housing costs and long commutes that hit low-income residents particularly hard. The region--Arlington County, Alexandria City, Falls Church City, Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Loudoun County, Manassas City, Manassas Park City, and Prince William County--also continues to be heavily dependent on federal employment, both directly and through federal contracts. And despite some success in narrowing educational achievement gaps, Black and Hispanic/Latino residents of the region continue to have higher unemployment and poverty rates, lower household incomes, and lower rates of health insurance access than their non-Hispanic White and Asian peers in the region.

In conjunction with the Community Foundation's 40th Anniversary, it commissioned this report from The Commonwealth Institute to gain some perspective on changes and growth in our region over the past 40 years, and to provide insight into current trends that will help guide its future work to make the greatest impact in responding to critical need and seeding innovation. This report takes a deep dive into four key topic areas for Northern Virginia: general demographics; the economy; education; and community health and civic life. We look at the trends in each of these areas over time and break out differences by race and ethnicity, geography, age, and immigration status where available. In some instances, we are able to show trends dating back 40 years to when the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia opened its doors. But the majority of the data is available from 2000-2015. By examining the successes of the region's families and communities, as well as continued challenges, policymakers and community members can better understand the current situation, cast a vision for the future, and plan for the investments needed to build a region where all families can thrive.

about the opportunity index

The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia is an interactive data resource available for free to the public through the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia's website at www.cfnova.org. Comprised of several key indicators reflecting our region's economy, community health, civic life, and educational outcomes, The Opportunity Index will be updated annually by the Community Foundation to track changes and produce trend lines over time, advancing stakeholders' understanding of the true needs of our region. The data is disaggregated by jurisdiction and demographics, including ethnicity and race, to shine a light on the reasons why some areas in Northern Virginia have more opportunity than others. As such, The Opportunity Index will serve as a critical resource for community knowledge and strategic philanthropic giving.

The Opportunity Index is available for free at www.cfnova.org/opportunityindex.



Photo: Virginia Department of Transportation. Source: Flickr.com

general demographics

Northern Virginia has become a more diverse region since the turn of the century, especially with regard to race, ethnicity, and country of origin, while experiencing dramatic overall population growth. While localities often differ in where these changes are seen, the region as a whole is often consistent with the state or the nation in the variety of people that call Northern Virginia home. The region is seeing a slightly older population and fewer veterans as a share of the population, and certain localities such as Prince William and Loudoun counties have seen an increase in the share of children and youth. The growing diversity of the area as a whole is likely to continue.

The population of Northern Virginia has soared from 1.1 million in 1980 to 2.3 million in 2016. The most dramatic growth has occurred in Loudoun County, where the population has soared from under 60,000 residents to over 380,000, followed by Prince William County where the population has increased from about 145,000 to over 450,000 residents. Yet even the slowest-growing locality, Falls Church City, has seen growth over this period.

AGE

Over the last nearly four decades, Northern Virginia's population has slightly aged. In 1980, 28 percent of the population was under the age of 18; today that group makes up 25 percent of the population. On the other end, nearly 10 percent of today's population is over 65 compared to 6 percent in 1980.

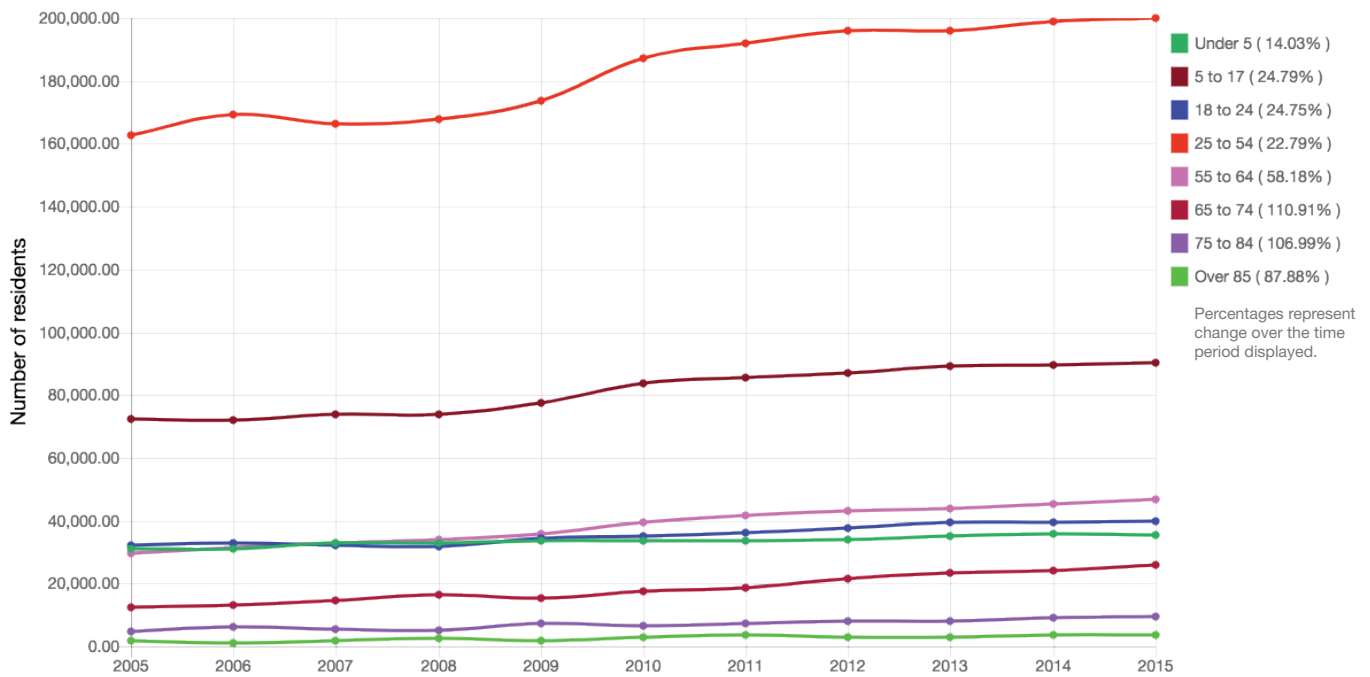
A significant majority of Northern Virginia's population is over 25 years of age, with 47 percent between the ages of 25 and 54. The second largest age range by percentage are 5 to 17 year olds at 17 and a half percent. Young adults, between the ages of 18 and 24 comprise just 8 percent of the population. Older adults, aged 65 and older make up 10 percent of the population, nearly equivalent to those between 55 and 64 at 11 percent.

In Northern Virginia, between 2000 and 2015 there has been little change in the proportion of those under age 5 (about 7 percent of the region's population), those 5 to 17 (about 17.5 percent), and those between the ages of 18 to 24 (about 8 percent), hovering around 7 percent, 17.5, and 8 percent, respectively. Adults age 25 to 54 have seen a slight decrease as a share of the population to 47 percent from 52 percent, while the share of those 55 to 64 have increased to 11 percent from 8 percent. Adults aged 65 and older now comprise 10 percent of the population, compared to 8 percent in 2000. While the share of adults 75 to 84 has remained steady, Northern Virginia appears to have a slightly aging population overall.

Currently, in most age brackets, Alexandria is comparable to the region overall, with the exception of 5 to 17 year olds and 25 to 54 year olds. While 5 to 17 year olds comprise 17 percent of Northern Virginia's population, this age group is only 10 percent of Alexandria's population. Conversely, the city has a larger proportion of 25 to 54 year olds – 56 percent compared to the region's 47 percent. In the last 15 years, Alexandria has seen slight increases in the share of children under 5, rising to 7.5 percent from 6 percent, and those between the ages of 65 to 74, also up 1.5 percent. The greatest increase, up 3 percentage points, is seen in those

A significant majority of Northern Virginia's population is over 25 years of age, with 47% between the ages of 25 and 54.

Age: Prince William County



between 55 and 64 years old, up to 11 percent from 8 percent.

Arlington County is nearly identical to Alexandria in its age composition. As of 2015, children under five are 6 percent of Arlington’s population compared to 7.5 percent in Alexandria and 7 percent in the region as a whole. The share of 18 to 24 year olds in Arlington has decreased to 8 percent from 10 percent in the last 15 years, but is now more in line with the region as a whole which has remained steady at 8 percent. Arlington’s greatest increases in the past 15 years has been in the share of the population between 55 and 64 (an increase of 2 percent) and between 65 to 74 (an increase of nearly 1.5 percent).

Fairfax is nearly identical to the region currently and has mostly tracked fluctuations in shares of the population by age bracket throughout the last 15 years. Prince William County and Loudoun County appear to have an overall

The mix of ages in a community can influence a community feel, the amount of money the local government needs to spend on different priorities, and opportunities for economic growth. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

younger population compared to the region with those under 5 and between 5 and 17 years of age comprising larger shares.

Nearly 40 percent of population of Prince William County’s and Loudoun County’s population is under the age of 25, and the share of residents in those counties who are school-age (5 to 17 years old) is above the regional average. Specifically, the share of the population between 5 and 17 is 3 percent greater than the region in Prince William County and in Loudoun County, this age bracket is 22 percent of the population, nearly 4 and half percent greater than the region.

Both localities have slightly lower rates of older residents (age 55 or older) than elsewhere in Northern Virginia. In Loudoun County, those between 55 and 64 are 9 percent of

the population, and those between 65 and 74 are approximately 4 and half percent of the population. In Prince William County these age brackets comprise 10 and 5 percent of the population, compared to the region’s 11 and 6 percent, respectively.

Prince William County and Loudoun County have had similar rates of change in each age bracket over the last 15 years. Loudoun County has had a greater decrease in those under 5, to 8 percent from 9.5 percent of the county’s population. Prince William has had a similar decrease in those between 5 and 17 years old, to 20 percent from 22 percent. The two localities have also seen similar increases in those between 65 to 74, both up about 2 percent.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Folks in Northern Virginia are also becoming diverse in where they were born. In 1980, 90 percent of the region’s population was born in the United States, and 5 percent were non-citizens. The region’s naturalized citizens as a share of the population was 4 percent, then. In the years since, this share has also almost quadrupled.

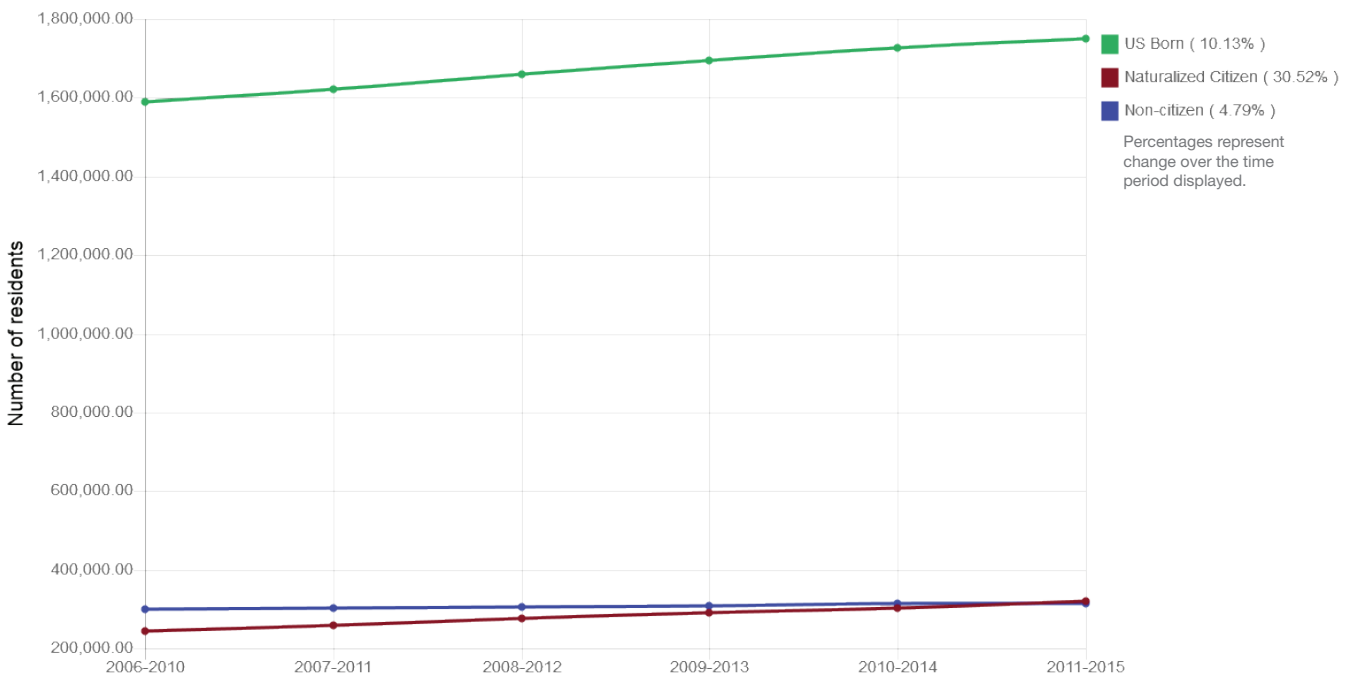
The most recent census data show that 72 percent of Northern Virginia’s population is U.S. born compared to 88 percent throughout the state of Virginia. 15 percent are naturalized citizens, and 13 percent are non-citizens; both are twice that of the share of naturalized and non-citizens in Virginia and the nation. The largest change in Northern Virginia with regard to immigration status has been that of naturalized citizens. While the share of U.S. born and non-citizens in Northern Virginia have each decreased by approximately 1 percent, the share of naturalized citizens has increased by approximately 3 percentage points.

Of Northern Virginia’s large localities, Prince William County currently has the highest share of US born citizens, despite a 10 percent decrease over the last 15 years. Naturalized citizens and non-citizens each comprise 11 percent of the population; each group increased as a share of the population by 6 and 4 percent, respectively. After a significant increase, the share of non-citizens has dropped slightly in the last few years.

At 77 percent each, Arlington County and Loudoun County are comparable to Prince William with regard to U.S. born citizens as a share of the population. Arlington County has a smaller share of naturalized citizens despite a 2 percent

One in four residents of Northern Virginia are immigrants. Forty years ago, 90% of residents were U.S. born. Today 72% of residents are U.S. born. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Immigration Status: Northern Virginia region



increase, and a larger share of non-citizens despite a 7 percent decrease over since the turn of the century. Currently 10.5 percent of the population of Loudoun County comprises non-citizens. After some fluctuations and a significant increase, that population is now steadily – though slowly – decreasing, resulting in a 4 percent increase overall.

In Fairfax County, the share of U.S. born citizens – the lowest in the region at 70 percent – has decreased by about 5.5 percent, while naturalized citizens now comprise 5.5 more of the population at approximately 16 percent. The share of non-citizens has fluctuated over the years, resulting in no change; currently, 14 percent of Fairfax’s population are non-citizens.

Forty-seven percent of children in Northern Virginia live in immigrant households compared to 23% in Virginia and 26% in the U.S.

CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

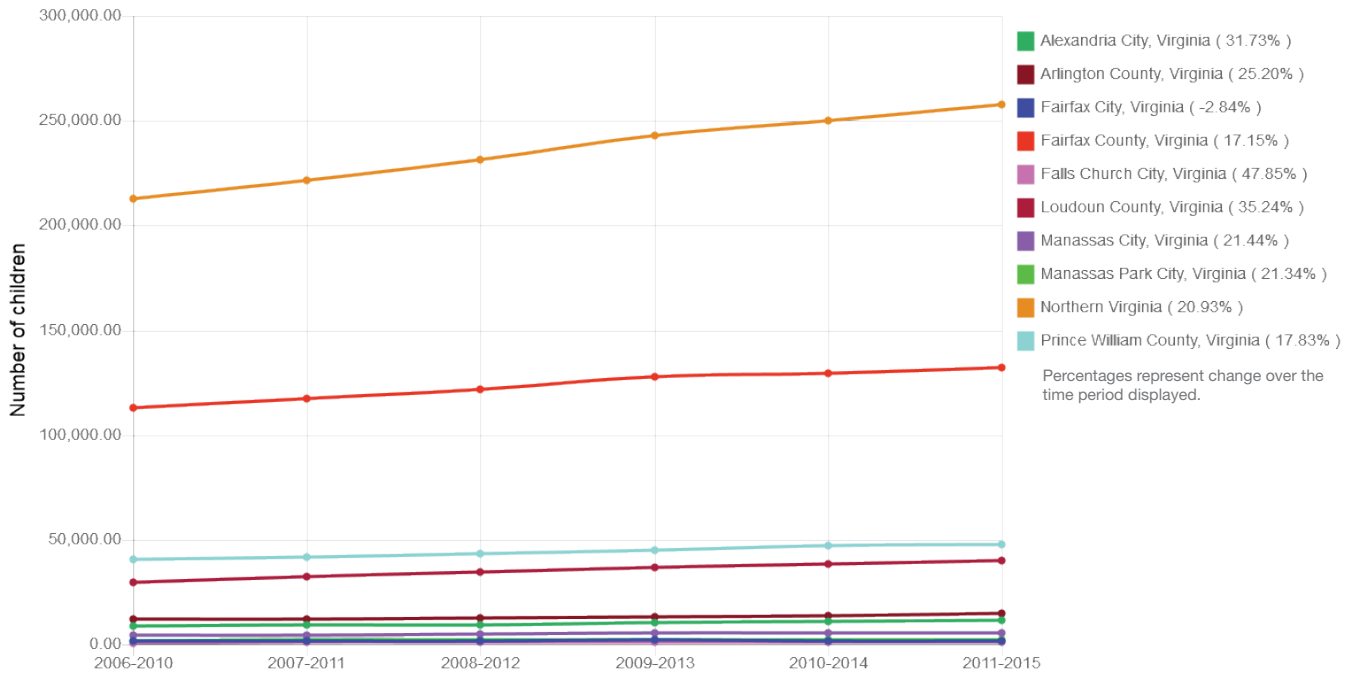
Currently, 47 percent of children in Northern Virginia live in households with a foreign-born parent compared to 23 percent of Virginia children and 26 percent of children nationwide. This is an increase of about 8 percent from 2006, greater than the 6 percent statewide increase in children living with a foreign-born parent .

Of Northern Virginia’s larger localities, Fairfax County has the highest percentage of children living with a foreign-born parent at 52 percent. Approximately 40 percent of children in Arlington County (42 percent), Loudoun County (40 percent), and Prince William County (40 percent) live in a household with a foreign-born parent. Alexandria City is most consistent with the region as a whole, with 45 percent of its children living in an immigrant household.



Of Northern Virginia’s larger localities, Fairfax County has the highest percentage of children living with a foreign-born parent at 52%.

Children Living With At Least One Immigrant Parent: Northern Virginia region and Localities



Almost half of children in Northern Virginia are living with at least one foreign-born parent. That means the region's future depends in part on the ability of the children of immigrants to flourish.

Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Northern Virginia's larger localities have seen varied changes since the turn of the century. Most localities have experienced steady increases, with the exception of Arlington County and Alexandria which saw slight decreases in their average shares before rising again. Prince William County and Arlington County have seen the smallest change, each up 1 percent and 1.5 percent. Alexandria's and Fairfax County's share of immigrant households have increased by 4 percent over the last 15 years, and Loudoun County has seen the greatest change with a 5 percent increase.

The most significant changes, however, have been seen in Northern Virginia's smaller localities. Manassas Park City, which currently has a larger share of immigrant households, experienced an increase of 7 percentage points. The only decrease in the last 15 years has been in Fairfax City which has seen an increase of 5 percentage points in immigrant households in the last 10 years.

Manassas Park City, which currently has a larger share of immigrant households, experienced an increase of 7 percentage points in the last 15 years.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

People of Color comprise nearly half the population in Northern Virginia at 48 percent in 2015. In 2000, minorities were approximately 35 percent of the population. Since then there has been a steady increase, with an increase of about 1 percent every year overall. In the last 15 years, the greatest increases have been seen in Manassas Park City (up 28 percentage points), Manassas City (up 22 points), Loudoun County (up 20 points), and Prince William County (up 18 percentage points). Alexandria City and Arlington County have seen the least amount of change with regard to minority population growth with a 1 percent increase, and a 2 percent decrease, respectively.

Northern Virginia is seeing a greater racial diversity compared to 40 years ago. At that time, 85 percent of the

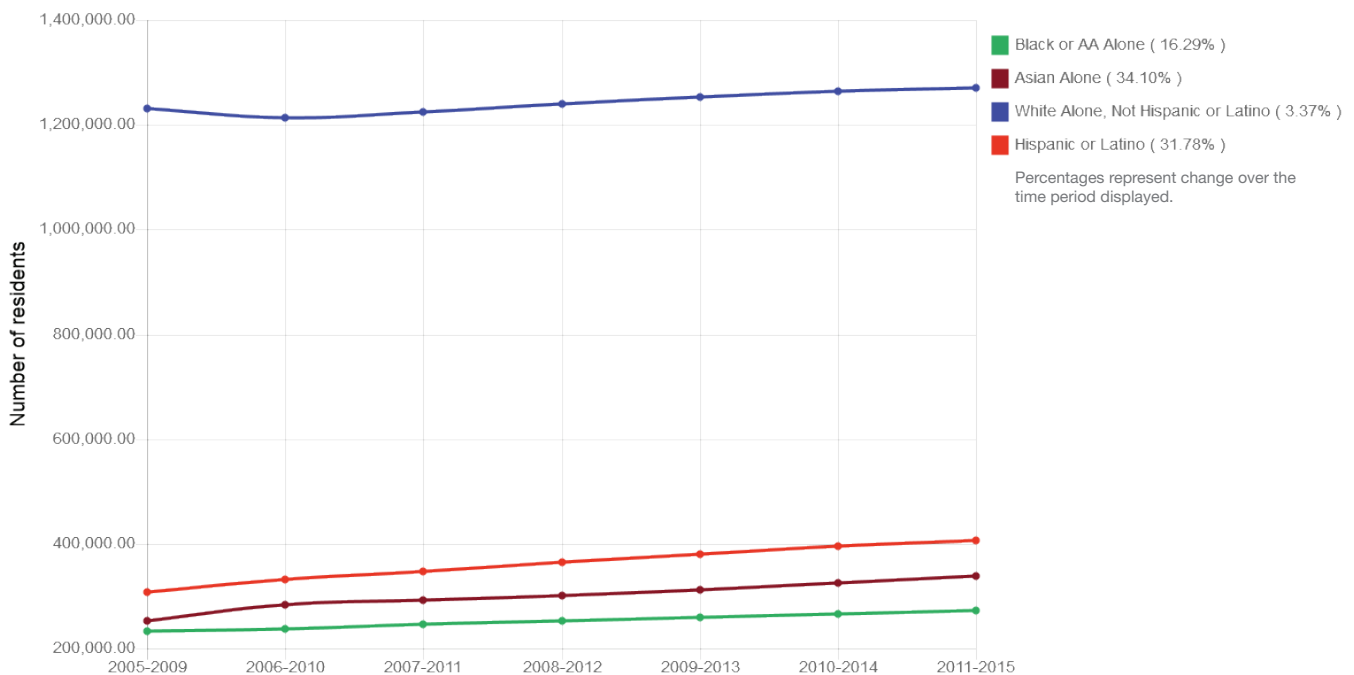
region identified as non-Hispanic White, and 8 percent identified as Black or African-American. While, Hispanic or Latino folks were 4 percent of the region's population in 1980, that share has more than quadrupled today.

The Black population and the Hispanic population of Northern Virginia is nearly consistent with that of the United States as a whole, though both differ from the state of Virginia. African-Americans comprise 12 percent of Northern Virginia's population compared to 19 percent throughout Virginia; Hispanics comprise 17 percent of Northern Virginia's population compared to 9 percent throughout Virginia. Fifteen percent of Northern Virginians identify as Asian-American, over twice the rate throughout the state of

In 2015, 48% of residents are People of Color, compared to 35% in 2000.

A growing share of residents of Northern Virginia are people of color. This data provides a glimpse of that shift over time for the region's largest race and ethnicity groups. Due to data limits, non-Hispanic/Latino individuals who identify as multiracial are not included, and some year-to-year shifts in the smallest localities may be due to sample errors. Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Race and Ethnicity: Northern Virginia region



Virginia and nearly three times the rate throughout the United States. The White non-Hispanic population is just over half of Northern Virginia's population at 52 percent.

Between 2000 and 2015, the minority population has increased steadily with the largest percentage increases in the Asian and Hispanic populations. The share of Northern Virginia's population that identify as Asian has increased to 14 percent from 9 percent of the population. The Hispanic or Latino population has seen a similar share, increasing to 17 percent from 11.5 percent of the region's population. Those who identify as non-Hispanic White has decreased 10 percentage points over the last 15 years.

Alexandria's population is comprised of 21 percent who identify as Black or African-American, 7 percent who identify as Asian, 52 percent as non-Hispanic White, and 17 percent who identify as Hispanic or

Latino. The share of Alexandria's population who identify as Asian alone is consistent with the nation, while the share of the population who identify as Black or African-American and Hispanic or Latino is more consistent with the state's share of these groups.

Prince William County's population is similar to that of Alexandria with regard to race and ethnicity, especially the share of African-American and Asian residents. However, Prince William has a smaller share of those who identify as non-Hispanic White (46 percent), and a larger share of the Hispanic or Latino population (22 percent).

Fairfax County is similar to the region in racial and ethnic diversity, though Black or African-Americans comprise only 9 percent of the population. Those who identify as Asian are a greater share of Fairfax's population at 18 percent.

Loudoun County and Arlington County each have a greater share of their population that identifies

as non-Hispanic White compared to the region, at 59 percent and 63 percent respectively. Both counties have similar shares of those who identify as Black or African American – Loudoun with 7 percent and Arlington with 8 percent. Arlington County's Hispanic or Latino population is relatively consistent with that of the region at 16 percent. Its Asian population is 10 percent, falling between the shares of the region and the state as a whole.

In the last 15 years, each locality has seen similar changes in its racial and ethnic composition, with an increase or decrease in their Black or African American population by about 1 percentage point. Hispanics or Latinos as a share of the population have increased by more than 5 percentage points in Prince William, Loudoun, and Fairfax Counties. In Arlington, the share of Hispanics or Latinos has decreased about 3 percentage points, and has only increased by 2 percentage points in Alexandria.

Between 2000 and 2015, the minority population has increased steadily with the largest percentage increases in the Asian (9-14%) and Hispanic (11.5-17%) populations.



VETERANS

Veterans as a share of the population have decreased in the past 40 years. While 15 percent of the region's population were veterans, that number has decreased by a third.

Nearly 10 percent of the population in Northern Virginia now are veterans, down from 14 percent in 2000. This change is relatively consistent across all localities. Thirteen percent of Prince William County's population are veterans, the highest in the region. Arlington County has the lowest percentage at 7 percent. Loudoun County and Alexandria City are relatively identical, just above 8 percent. Fairfax County is consistent with the region at 10 percent. The large Northern Virginia localities have seen decreases in veterans as a share of the population between 3 percent — Alexandria City and Arlington County — and 5 percent — Loudoun County and Prince William County.

As with its share, Fairfax County's decrease is comparable to the region as a whole at 4 percent.

Twelve percent of Black residents and 13 percent of those who identify as non-Hispanic White in the Northern Virginia region are veterans. Both of these groups have seen a decrease of about 4 percent since 2000. Of those who identify as Asian and Hispanic or Latino, 2 percent and 4 percent, respectively, are veterans. The rates for these two groups have remained consistent over the last 15 years.

Of those between the ages of 18 and 64 in Northern Virginia, 8 percent are veterans; and 23 percent of those over 65 years of age are veterans. Both groups have seen steady decreases over the past 15 years, down from 12 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

Similarly, U.S. born veterans are slightly decreasing as a share of the population. The most recent Census data show that 9 percent of U.S. born residents in Northern Virginia are veterans. Prince William County is the highest, where 11 percent of its U.S. born residents are veterans, followed by Fairfax County at 9.5 percent. Both localities' share of U.S. born veterans is above that of both the region and the state which is also 9 percent.

Statewide, nearly 3 percent of foreign-born residents are veterans. Northern Virginia's share of foreign-born residents who are veterans is 2 percent. Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun County are consistent with the region at about 1.5 percent. Alexandria falls just behind at 1 percent, while Prince William County is on par with the rest of the state, with 3 percent of its foreign-born population being veterans.

Many residents of Northern Virginia are veterans. These individuals bring valuable skills and experience to their civilian lives, and may also face challenges related to their service. In Prince William County, 13% of the population are veterans, the highest in the region. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Residents Who Are Veterans: Northern Virginia Region, By Age

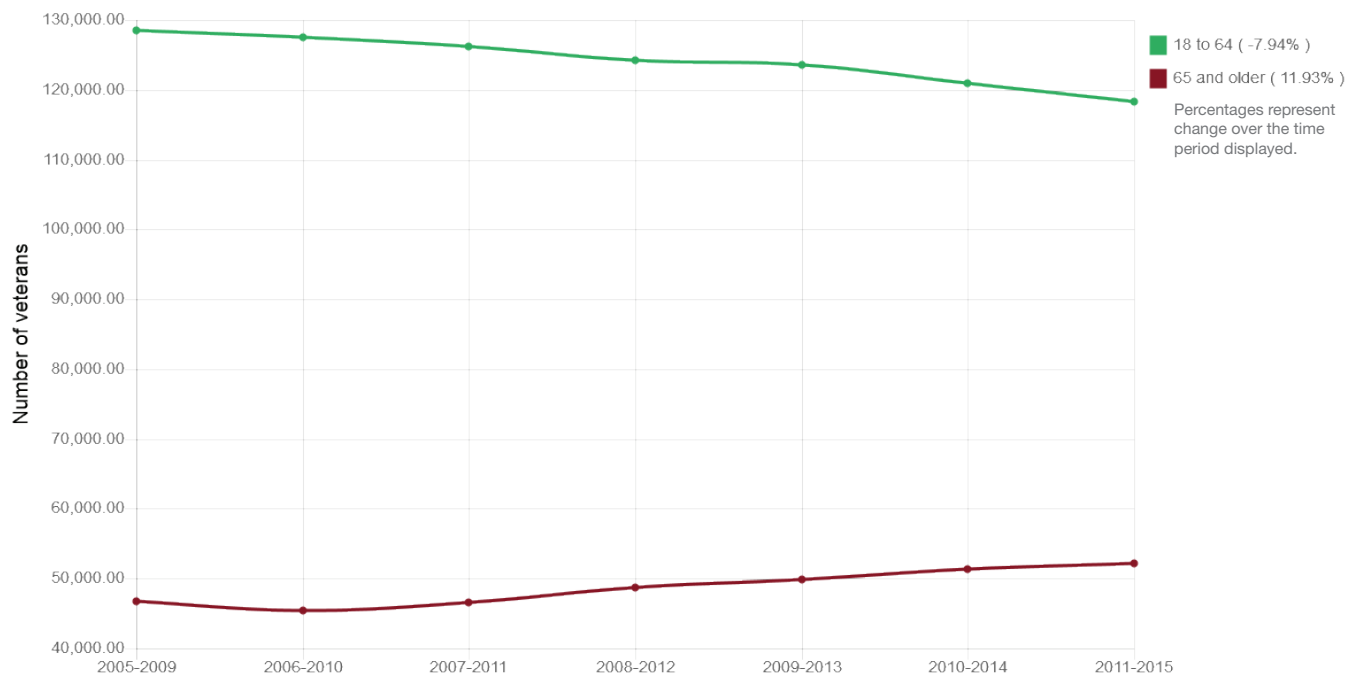




Photo: Anthony Bailey - Source: commons.wikimedia.org

economy

Northern Virginia's economy is strong overall and is improving compared to several years ago. However, some indicators such as median household income still have not completely recovered from the damage of the 2007-2009 recession. In addition, the recovery has not been even for all demographic groups, and poverty rates have increased, suggesting continued challenges ahead. And the region's economy continues to change, with an increasing concentration of jobs in business and professional services and growth in the leisure and hospitality industry, while industries like manufacturing have seen decreases.

Despite high overall household incomes, the number of residents of Northern Virginia who are struggling economically has increased compared to 1980. The unemployment rate has increased to 4.7 percent, up from 3.1 percent in 1980. The share of residents living on less than the poverty limit has grown to 6.3 percent, up from 4.6 percent, and the share of Northern Virginians who are low income has grown to 15.9 percent in 2015, up from 13.8 percent in 1980. And because the region's population has soared at the same time, the overall number of struggling residents in Northern Virginia has grown at a far higher pace.

More recently, the impact of the Great Recession and federal spending reductions has dampened economic growth compared to the strong years of the late 2000s. The region's median household income, adjusted for inflation, increased 5 percent between 1999 and 2015. In 2015 dollars, this was an increase of over \$5,000. However, between 2009 and 2015, median household income, adjusted for inflation, decreased by around \$3,000, or 3 percent.

The unemployment rate has also not fully recovered from the recession and the federal austerity measures that followed. The regional unemployment rate increased from a five-year rate of 3.9 percent in 2009 to 5.2 percent in 2013. As of 2015, the five-year rate has decreased to 4.7 percent.

With rising unemployment, the number of residents of the region living on very low incomes has also increased. Since 1999, poverty rates, as measured by the population under 100 percent of federal poverty limit, increased from 5 percent to 6.3 percent in 2015. Similarly, the percentage of people below 200 percent of the poverty line increased from 13.6 percent in 1999 to 15.9 percent in 2015.

The school-aged child poverty rate increased from 31.1 percent in 2001 to 35.1 percent in 2015, down slightly from a peak of 36.3 percent in 2012.

The high cost of living in the region is a challenge for both low- and moderate-income families in Northern Virginia. The share of households who are cost-burdened (paying 30 percent or more of income toward housing) has decreased slightly in recent years, but remains 28 percent.

The role of federal employment in the region remains significant, despite attempts to diversify the region's economy. As the workforce in Northern Virginia has grown by over 150,000 jobs between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of workers with federal jobs has stayed at approximately 7 percent.

Meanwhile, the share of private-sector jobs in the region categorized as professional and business employment – a high-paying sector that includes many federal contractors – has grown, increasing from 31 percent to 35 percent between 2001 and 2015. As a share, this remains above national and statewide levels. In terms of growth, this change is slightly ahead of national professional and business employment trends during the same time period and slightly behind the trend in Virginia at large.

The unemployment rate has increased to 4.7%, up from 3.1% in 1980.

From 1999-2015 the percentage of Northern Virginia residents who live at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level has increased to 15.9% from 13.6%.

The share of households who are cost-burdened (paying 30% or more of income toward housing) has decreased slightly in recent years, but remains high at 28%.

[In Manassas,] the five-year unemployment rate in 2015 of 7.5% suggests a challenging labor market for residents living there.

The share of jobs in some other sectors has shifted over the past 15 years, with the largest increase in the leisure and hospitality sector and largest declines in construction, information, and manufacturing.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Median household incomes are high in every locality in Northern Virginia. Among localities with one-year estimates, median household incomes in 2015 ranged from \$90,000 in Alexandria to \$125,000 in Loudoun County. Among localities with five-year estimates, median household incomes in 2015 ranged from \$76,000 in Manassas to \$125,000 in Falls Church.

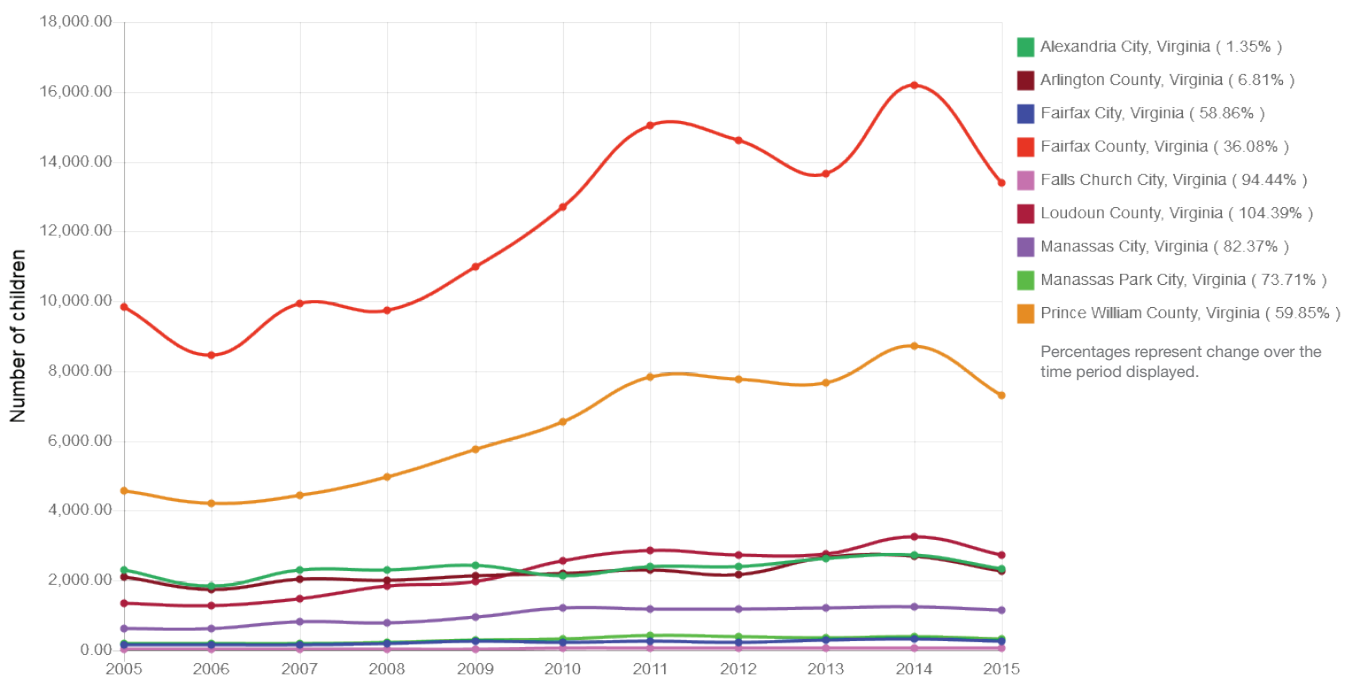
In general, unemployment rates by locality compare favorably to the nation and state as a whole. With that said, the five-year unemployment rate in 2015 of 7.5 percent in Manassas suggests a challenging labor market for residents living in that locality. Alexandria and Loudoun County have the lowest unemployment rates in the region, with one-year unemployment rates in 2015 below 3.5 percent.

Poverty, as measured by the percentage living below 100 percent of the federal poverty limit, increased in many of the localities in the region but decreased in Alexandria and Falls Church. The number of low-income residents of the region, as measured by the percentage living below 200 percent of the federal poverty limit, increased in many of the localities in the region but decreased in Alexandria, Arlington County, and Falls Church.

The poverty rate for school-aged children increased in all localities in the region, with the largest increases occurring in Loudoun County, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

The share of school-age children (age 5-17) whose families have incomes below the poverty line is lower in most parts of Northern Virginia than in the state as a whole, but there is considerable regional variation in the poverty rate for school-age children. When children are living in families that are struggling to make ends meet, it can lead to instability and make it harder for the children to focus on school. By providing extra resources, schools can close a large part of the achievement gap between poor students and other students, but Virginia's extra funding to help local schools with these costs is lower than in many other states. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from SAIPE.

Poor School-aged Children: Northern Virginia cities and counties



Professional and business services employment is over 40% of private sector jobs in Arlington and Fairfax counties.

The share of households considered cost-burdened with regard to housing costs fell in all localities, with the largest drop in Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

Although the share of jobs in Northern Virginia that are direct federal jobs has stayed roughly the same between 2001 and 2015, this share has changed noticeably for some localities. For example, in Alexandria, the percentage of workers with federal jobs increased from 9 percent in 2001 to 15 percent in 2015, while in Falls Church, the percentage of those with federal jobs decreased from 24 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2015. As of 2015, federal jobs represent large shares of overall employment in Alexandria, Arlington County, and Falls Church.

As of 2015, professional and business services employment represents a

large share of private-sector jobs in Arlington County and Fairfax County at over 40 percent. In addition, these jobs increased as a share of total jobs in Northern Virginia as a whole. In particular, the share of jobs in this category increased between 2001 and 2015 in Loudoun County from 15 percent to 23 percent and in Manassas from 13 percent to 25 percent.

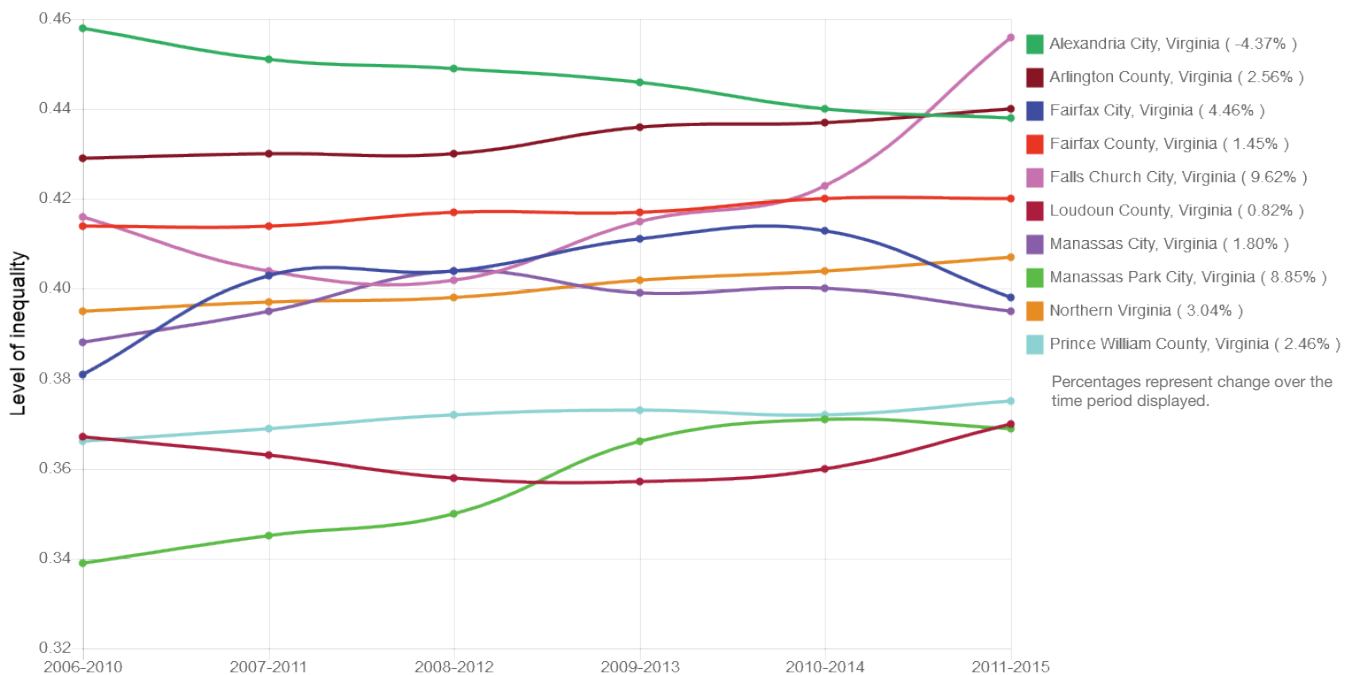
The relative importance of some sectors shifted in certain localities during this time. For example, the share of employment represented by Public Administration in Alexandria and Manassas, Education and health

services in Fairfax City and Loudoun County, and Leisure and Hospitality in Falls Church experienced relatively large increases. Decreases occurred in Construction in Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax City and County, and Falls Church; in Information in Alexandria, Fairfax County, and Loudoun County, in Manufacturing in Fairfax County and Prince William County; and in Public Administration in Falls Church.

The Gini index is a measure of income inequality that ranges from 0 (income equally spread across all households) to 1 (one person holds all the income). Although localities in Northern Virginia appear to have less inequality by this measure than Virginia or the U.S. as a whole, inequality appears to have increased in Falls Church and Manassas Park while decreasing in Arlington County. Inequality is generally lower when measured at smaller geographic areas, so it is not surprising that the GINI index is lower for Northern Virginia localities than for the state and country as a whole.

The GINI coefficient is a common measure of income dispersion used as a proxy for inequality. A score of 0 suggests that incomes are the same for all households in a locality, and a score of 1 means that a single person has all of the income in the locality. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

GINI Coefficient: Northern Virginia region and Localities



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Despite the overall strong economy in Northern Virginia, stark differences remain due to barriers faced by Black and Latino residents of the region. Median household incomes in 2015 were approximately \$67,000 for Hispanic or Latino households, \$78,000 for Black households, \$98,000 for Asian households, and \$102,000 for non-Hispanic White households. Although overall median household incomes decreased between 2005 and 2015, this decrease was not uniform across race and ethnicity. The largest decreases, at 10 percent were experienced

by Hispanic or Latino households. Median household incomes decreased by 4 percent for Asian households and by 1 percent for non-Hispanic White households. Median household incomes increased slightly, by 2 percent, for Black households.

Since 1980, unemployment rates have increased among all race/ethnicity groups—Asian and Pacific Islander workers, Black workers, non-Hispanic White workers, and Hispanic workers. More recently, mirroring the overall regional data, the five-year unemployment rates

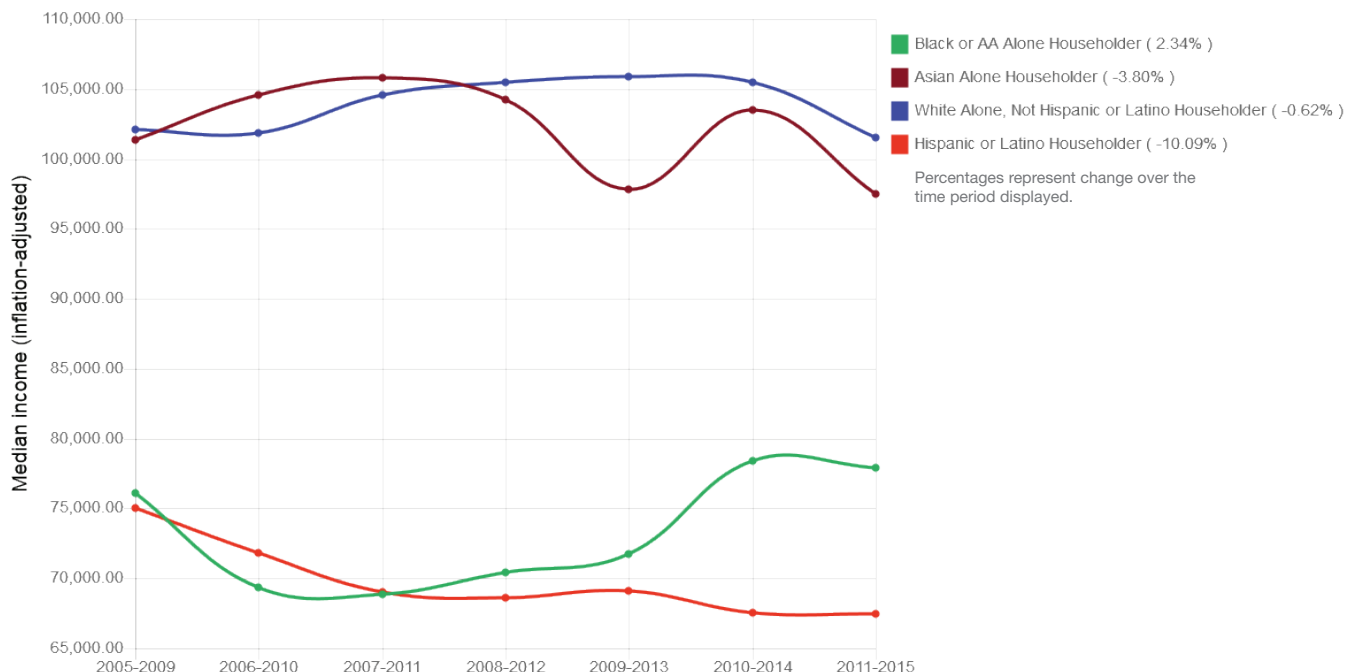
since 2009 by race and ethnicity remain elevated relative to their per-recession lows with the exception of Asian alone workers. The five-year unemployment rate for this group was 5.5 percent in 2015, the highest rate during this time period. Unemployment for other groups has decreased in recent years. The Black five-year unemployment rate peaked at 8.2 percent in 2013 and was 7.5 percent in 2015. The non-Hispanic White five-year unemployment rate had a per-recession low of 3.0 percent in 2009, a peak of 4.2 percent in 2011, and was 3.6

Median household income in Northern Virginia has increased in inflation adjusted dollars over the past two decades, but growth has been inconsistent and some groups still lag behind others. The recession of the late 2000s and federal sequestration of 2013 took a toll on median household income growth

throughout the region. Black and Hispanic households in Northern Virginia still have median incomes approximately 20 to 30 percent below Asian and White households in the region. Immigrant households also still lag U.S.-born in terms of income within Northern Virginia. While all groups in Northern Virginia have household

incomes above statewide averages, the high cost of living in the region make income disparities by race and nativity more poignant and significant. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Median Household Income: Northern Virginia region, By Race



percent in 2015. The five-year unemployment rate for Hispanic or Latino workers increased from 6.1 percent in 2009 to 6.8 percent in 2013 and was 5.7 percent in 2015.

Since 1999, poverty rates increased for Black households to 11 percent from 9 percent and for Hispanic or Latino households to 12 percent from 11 percent. The rate for non-Hispanic White households stayed stable at 3 percent. The rate for Asian alone households declined to 6 percent from 8 percent. Since 2005, the share of households who are low-income—those with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty limit—increased for Black households (23 percent to 24 percent), non-Hispanic White households (7 percent to 8

The Black five-year unemployment rate peaked at 8.2% in 2013.

percent), and Hispanic or Latino households (28 percent to 31 percent). This rate declined for Asian households to 14 percent from 20 percent.

The share of households considered housing cost-burdened increased between 2005 and 2015 for all racial and ethnic groups, and continues to be very high for Black and Latino households. The share of non-Hispanic White households considered cost-burdened increased to 24 percent from 23 percent.

The share of Asian households considered cost-burdened increased to 32 percent from 27 percent. The share of Black households considered cost-burdened increased to 39 percent from 35 percent. The share of Hispanic or Latino households considered cost-burdened increased to 47 percent from 46 percent.



Photo: Anissa Thompson. Source: freeimages.com



Photo: Kelly Sikkema. Source: unsplash.com



Photo: Ray LAC. Source: flickr.com

AGE

Changes in the five-year unemployment rate by age group suggest an uneven labor market. As of 2015, workers ages 16 to 19 and workers ages 20 to 24 had five-year unemployment rates of 17.5 percent and 11.0 percent, respectively, higher than the five-year unemployment rates for those groups in 2009. Workers ages 25 to 64 had far lower unemployment rates, just 3.8 percent in the 2011-2015 five-year period, slightly higher than the rate of 3.6 percent in 2009. The five-year unemployment

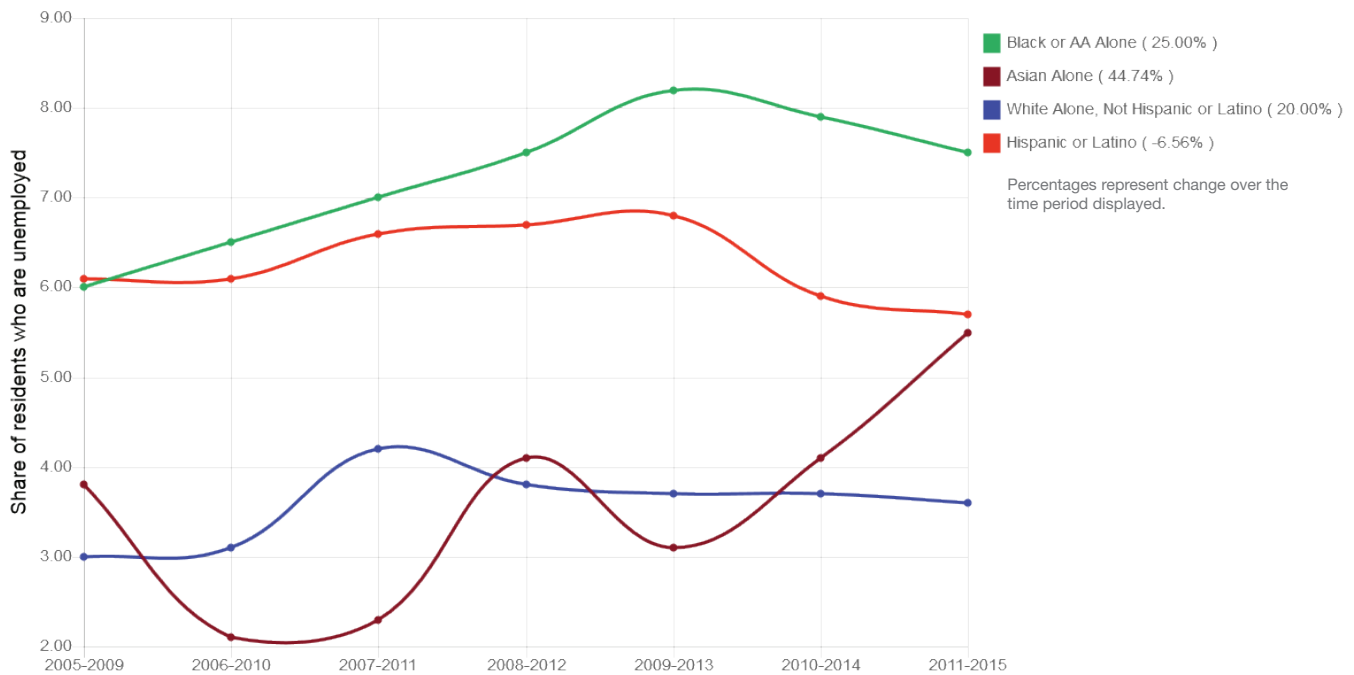
rate for workers 65 or older was 5.7 percent in 2015, lower than the rate of 6.1 percent in 2009.

Since 1999, poverty rates (those under the federal poverty level) increased in the region for those under 18 (up to 8 percent from 6 percent) and those between 18 and 64 (up to 6 percent from 5 percent). The poverty rate remained flat at 4 percent for those 65 to 74 and declined to 6 percent from 7 percent for those 75 or older. Similarly, since 2009, poverty rates

(those under the federal poverty level) increased in the region for those under 18 (up to 21 percent from 17 percent) and those between 18 and 64 (up to 15 percent from 12 percent). However, these rates remained flat for older groups at 11 percent for those 65 to 74, and 18 percent for those 75 or older.

The share of households who are cost burdened decreased for households headed by someone aged 19 to 64 and for households headed by someone 65 or older.

Unemployment Rate: Northern Virginia region, By Age



Residents of Northern Virginia are less likely to be unemployed than residents in other parts of Virginia across all racial groups and ages.

Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Foreign-born residents of Northern Virginia are an integral part of the region's economy and are doing well by national standards, yet have lower incomes and more economic challenges than their U.S.-born neighbors. In 2015, median household income in Northern Virginia for U.S.-born households was \$124,000. For foreign-born households, it was \$86,000. Median household incomes for both groups had declined since 2005.

One-year unemployment rates differ for the U.S. born population and the foreign born population. The unemployment rates for the U.S. born population ranged from 1.7 percent in Alexandria to 6.1 percent in Prince William County, Manassas, and Manassas Park. The unemployment rates for the foreign born population ranged from 2.8 percent in Loudoun County to 4.9 percent in Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and Falls Church.

Poverty, as measured by those living below 100 percent of the federal poverty limit, increased for the U.S.-born population from 3.6 percent in 1999 to 5.1 percent in 2015 and decreased for the foreign-born population from 10.2 percent in 1999 to 9.7 percent in 2015. The number of low-income households, as measured by those living below 200 percent of the federal poverty limit, increased for the U.S.-born population from 10.7 percent in 2005 to 12.1 percent in 2015 and decreased for the foreign-born population from 23.8 percent in 2005 to 22.6 percent in 2015.

Using five-year estimates between 2012 and 2015, the share of households considered housing cost-burdened decreased for U.S.-born households to 24 percent from 26 percent and for foreign-born households to 41 percent from 44 percent.

The five-year unemployment rate for Hispanic or Latino workers increased from 6.1% in 2009 to 6.8% in 2013 and was 5.7% in 2015.



Photo: Danzon. Source: flickr.com



education

Growing numbers and percentages of Northern Virginia residents are achieving higher levels of academic attainment – graduating from high school and receiving at least some college experience – than they did 40 years ago. In 1980, less than two-thirds (58 percent) of adults in Northern Virginia had at least some college experience. This percentage increased to more than three-quarters (77 percent) of adults with at least some college by 2011-2015. This progress is essential as employment opportunities increasingly require a postsecondary credential or degree, which is particularly true for Northern Virginia.

The number of children enrolled in public schools in Northern Virginia increased to 319,000 students in 2015 from 211,000 40 years ago, a growth of 50%.

Public schools in Northern Virginia have successfully adapted to the tremendous growth in the number of students they serve over this time period. The number of children enrolled in public schools in Northern Virginia increased from 211,000 in 1980 to 319,000 students in 2015 – that’s a growth of 50 percent. Meanwhile, the overall population of the region has grown even faster, including large-scale in-migration of well-educated adults.

The overall long-term trend for academic achievement is positive for the region. Yet, it’s also important to track short-term growth to make sure the region continues on the right track and progress for particular groups of Northern Virginians, such as people of color and foreign born residents, to make sure gains are shared across all communities.

The Northern Virginia region continues to see modest growth in terms of educational attainment since the mid-to-late 2000s. On time high school graduation rates increased modestly from 91 percent of students in 2008 to 93 percent of students graduating on time in 2016. During that same time, the dropout rate decreased to 6 percent from 7 percent of students. Both the graduation rate and dropout rate for Northern Virginia are fairly similar to the statewide rates. Meanwhile, participation in early education has remained fairly flat at about half (53 percent) of three and four year-olds in Northern Virginia attending preschool or a nursery since 2005-2009. These numbers are fairly similar to Virginia statewide (48 percent) and the nation as a whole (47 percent).

Similarly, the percentage of adults 25 or older with at least some college education in Northern Virginia remained fairly stable since 2007 at about three quarters (77 percent) of adults. This rate is well above statewide and national rates for educational attainment for adults. Yet, other areas of the state are starting to close the gap with Northern Virginia. The percentage of adults with some college rose 15 percent statewide since 2000, while only increasing 5 percent in Northern Virginia.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

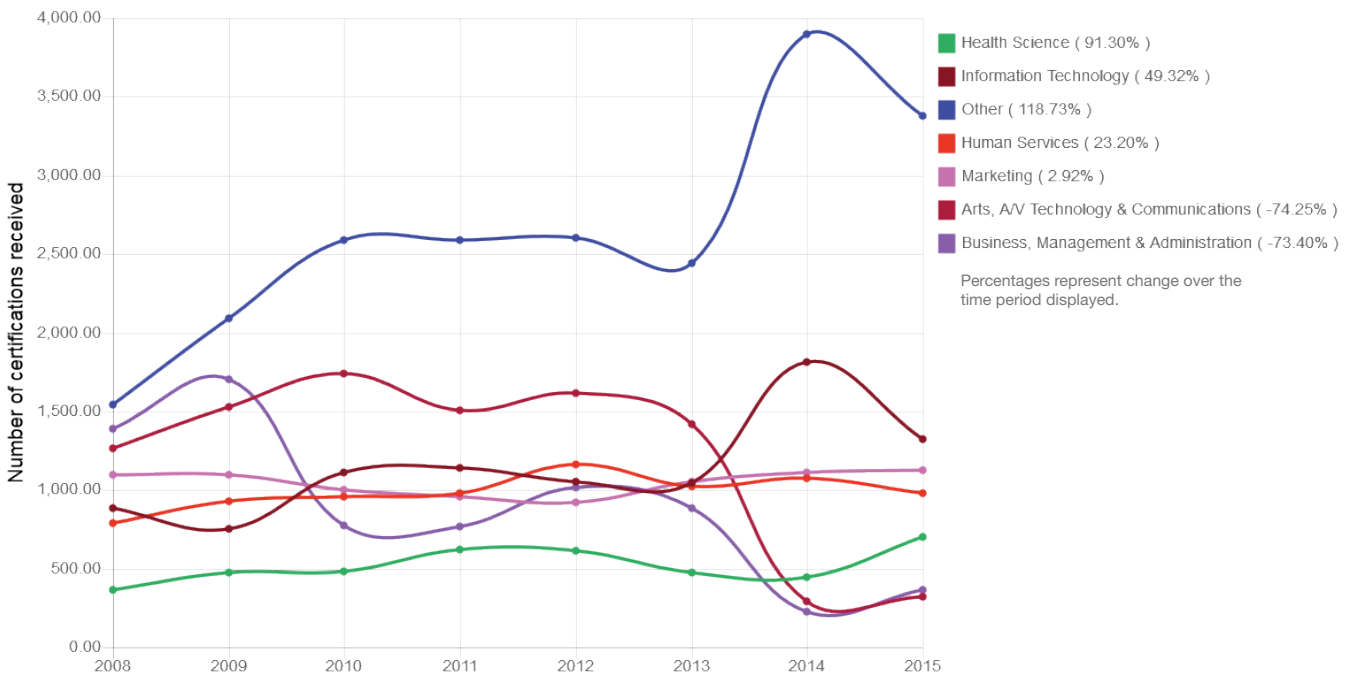
Career and technical education provided by Virginia’s high schools prepares students with marketable skills in areas like information technology, manufacturing, and the health sciences that can be used by high-school graduates to find immediate employment or gain entry into community and technical colleges. These courses offer students a career pathway that allows them to sidestep the rising cost of tuition at four-year colleges and enter the job market with sought-after skills and expertise.

Students in Northern Virginia graduated from or earned a certificate in over 8,200 CTE programs in 2015. Students learned a wide-range of skills in very different career fields in completing these studies. The most popular types of CTE programs were marketing management, information support and services, engineering and technology, early childhood development, and restaurant and food/beverage services. Students completing or earning certificates in these fields represented 35 percent of the total completions awarded. Though health care fields were not among the five most popular areas, therapeutic services and health informatics were among the top 10 most popular.

Educational certifications typically require less time and money than traditional 2- or 4-year postsecondary programs; therefore, they may be more accessible. Obtaining certificates can increase an employee’s pay beyond those with only a high school diploma. These benefits may be contingent upon industry demand – currently, allied health and IT certificates yield high results. Additionally, long-term certificates tend to result in greater returns. Explanations of the categories are available on the Opportunity Index website.

Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the Virginia Department of Education.

Educational Certifications Completed in High Schools: Northern Virginia region



REGIONAL VARIATION

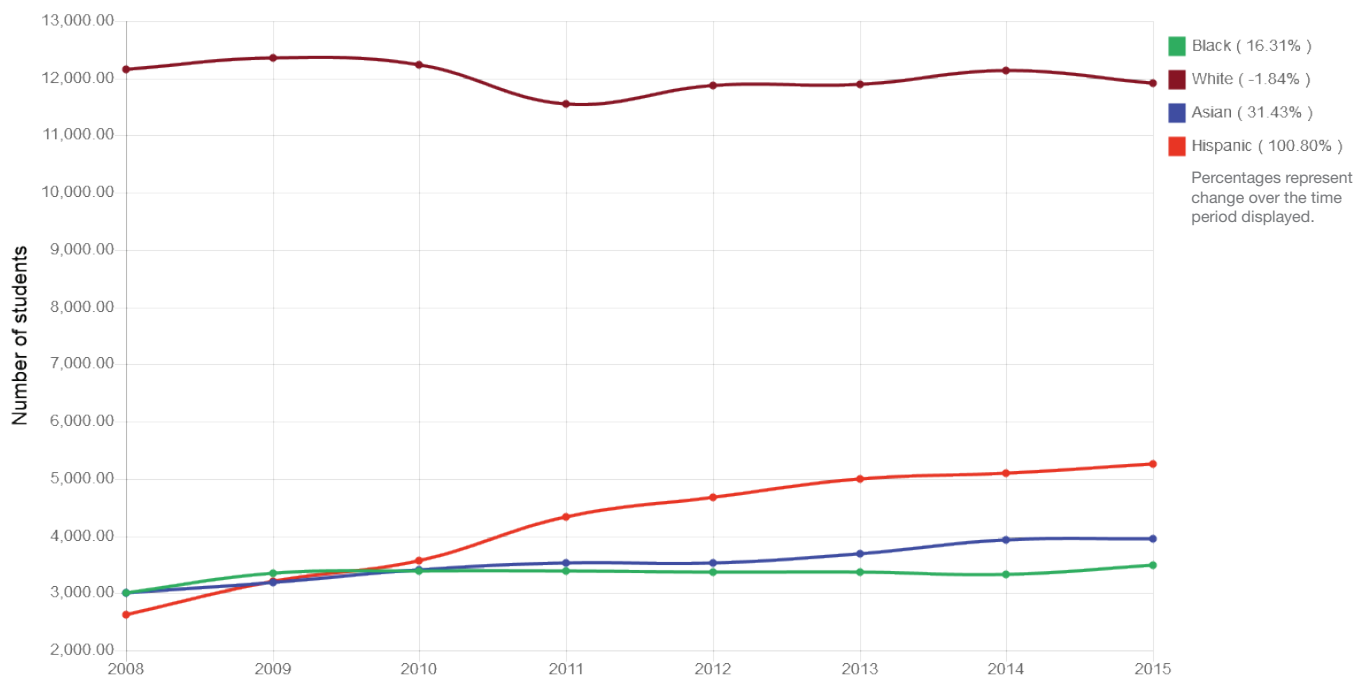
Northern Virginia as a region is often above statewide averages in terms of educational achievement and participation. Yet, not all areas of the region perform at high levels. Cities such as Manassas, Manassas Park, and to a less extent Alexandria have noticeably lower high school graduation rates and rates of adults with a postsecondary education compared to other areas of Northern Virginia. For example, all students (100 percent) graduated high school on time in Falls Church in 2016 and 96 percent did in Loudoun County, while only 80 percent of high school students graduated on time in Manassas. This puts Manassas well below the statewide on-time graduation rate. Similarly, 90 percent of adults in Falls Church and 85 percent in Arlington have at least some higher education, whereas only 55 percent of adults in Manassas and 56 percent in Manassas Park have that experience. This again, puts these areas below statewide higher education levels.

All localities in Northern Virginia made at least modest progress for increasing levels of educational achievement, and some had pronounced progress for students of a certain race or ethnicity. For example, the rate of Hispanic students graduating on time increased by 63 percent in Manassas, 27 percent in Prince William, and 22 percent in Alexandria, whereas this progress was more gradual for the overall region at 10 percent. Similarly, the rate of Black students graduating on-time increased by 24 percent in Arlington and 17 percent in Manassas above the 10 percent increase for the region. The rate of Black students graduated on time actually decreased in Manassas Park City by 11 percent. These findings show that in some areas of Northern Virginia there has been significant progress for students of different racial groups, but that some areas continue to lag.

Progress is being made regarding graduation rates for students in Manassas (up 63%), Prince William (27%), and Alexandria (22%) more than the progress of the rest of the state.

Since 2008, the on-time graduation rate in the Northern Virginia region has grown slightly from 91 to 93 percent in 2016. Students that graduate on-time are more likely to attend college and have higher earnings in the future. Black students in the region have closed their on-time graduation gap since 2008, with the on-time graduation rate of Black students growing to equal the regional average of 93 percent by 2016, up from 84 percent in 2016. Hispanic on-time graduation rates have gone up since 2008, but still lag the other groups. Language and cultural barriers may play a role this on-time graduation gap for Hispanic students. Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the Virginia Department of Education Cohort Reports.

On-Time (Four Year) Graduation: Northern Virginia region, by Race



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Hispanic and black students in Northern Virginia have substantially less access to educational resources at all levels compared to White and Asian students. In particular, Hispanic students have lower enrollment rates in early education, on-time high school graduation rates, and rates of adults with some postsecondary education. Only about a third of Hispanic three and four year olds (35 percent) in Northern Virginia enrolled in early education compared to almost two thirds (63 percent) of non-Hispanic White three and four year olds. Similarly, only 81 percent of Hispanic students completed high school on time, while almost all (98 percent) of White students graduated on time. Black students in Northern Virginia typically fell in between Hispanic and White students in terms of access and completion. About half of Black three or four year olds (47 percent) attended preschool or a nursery and 93 percent of Black students graduated high school on time.

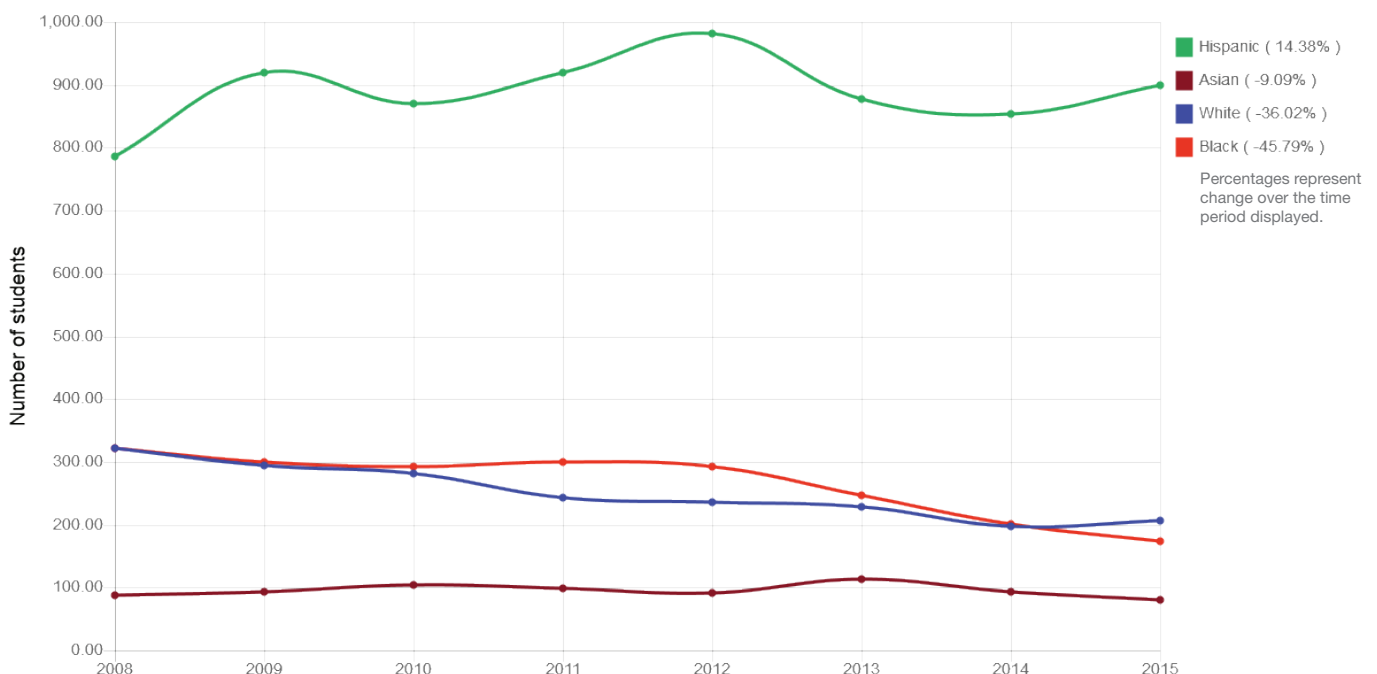
The gap in access for Black and Hispanic students has started to decline since 2008, although it remains sizable. Black and Hispanic students in Northern Virginia have seen larger gains for on-time high school graduation rates than White and Asian students. The percent of Hispanic students graduating on time increased from 74 percent in 2008 up to 81 percent in 2016. On time graduation also increased for Black students in Northern Virginia rising from 84 percent in 2008 to 93 percent in 2016. Since almost all White and Asian students graduated high school on time, they have not made nearly as much growth. This positive trend shows the gap in graduation rates between racial groups is declining. Similarly, the percentage of Black and Hispanic adults with at least some college increased more than the percentage of White and Asian adults with higher education since 2008.

Only 81% of Hispanic students graduated on time compared to 98% of White students.

The dropout rate is the share of students who should have graduated and instead left without a diploma or GED. The dropout rate in Northern Virginia has gone down slightly from 7 percent in 2008 to 6 percent in 2016, but hundreds of students--particularly Hispanic students--still drop out each year. Among other challenges, not completing high school increases the likelihood of being unemployed or being employed in low-wage jobs, and high dropout rates are likely to negatively impact the community's prosperity.

Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the Virginia Department of Education Cohort Reports.

School Dropouts: Northern Virginia region, by Race



IMMIGRATION STATUS

Native born and foreign born adults have differing levels of academic achievement in Northern Virginia. Native born adults are much more likely to have some college education and much less likely to have less than a high school education compared to foreign-born residents for the region. Specifically, 85 percent of native born adults in the region have at least some college compared to just 63 percent of foreign born residents and just 3 percent of native-born adults have less than a high school education compared to 18 percent of foreign born residents. This trend also exists statewide, yet the differences are not nearly as stark as they are in Northern Virginia. The reason for this difference is that foreign born residents

have similar levels of academic achievement across the state, while native born residents in Northern Virginia have much higher levels of academic achievement than the other areas of the state.

The gap in academic achievement may be different for foreign born residents that come to the U.S. as children compared to adults. Foreign born children participate in early education programs at similar rates as native born residents. This early access to educational resources will help lead to positive educational outcomes down the line.

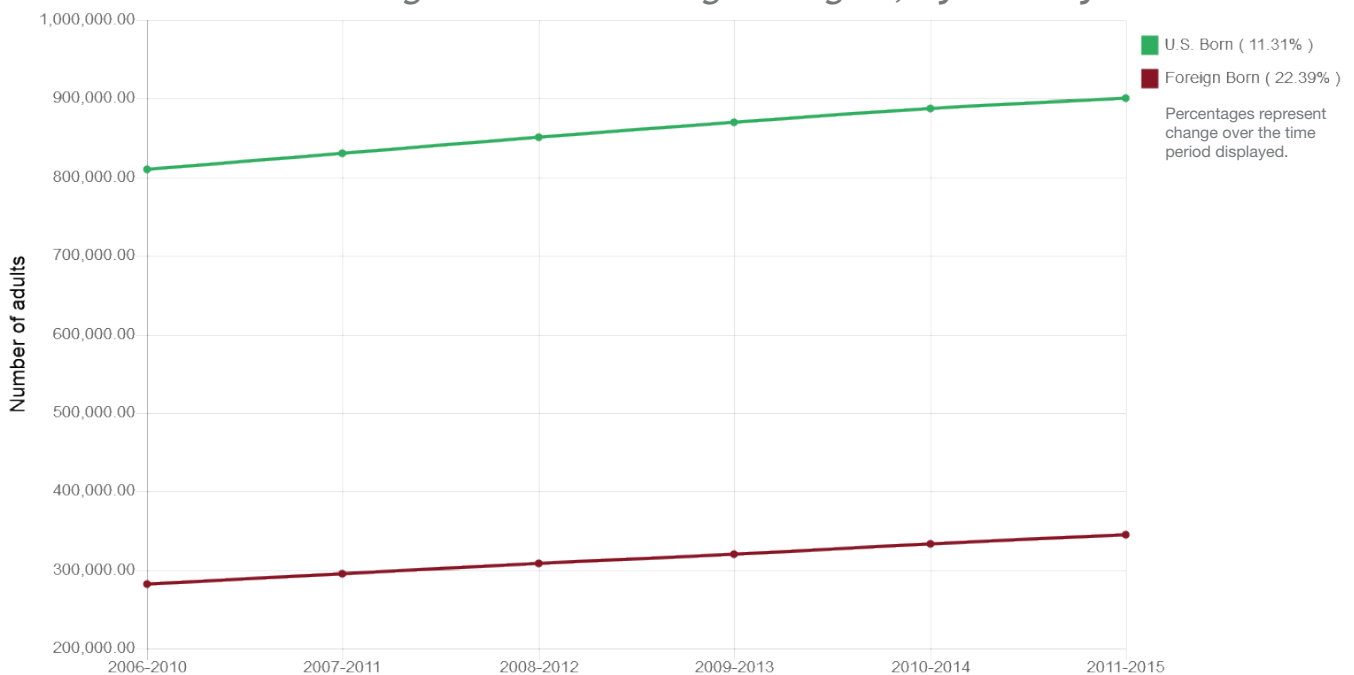
Foreign born residents continue to have lower levels of education in Northern Virginia compared to native born residents and progress has not


been made in closing that gap. Since the late 2000s, the percentage of both foreign born and native born adults with at least some college increased by 2 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of native born residents with less than a high school degree decreased by a slightly larger percent than those of foreign born residents. These trends indicate that educational achievement of foreign born residents is not improving relative to the overall population in Northern Virginia.

This indicator shows how many residents of the area have completed at least some college, including those who have more advanced educations. Postsecondary education is often correlated with higher income and other more positive social outcomes. Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the American Community Survey.

Just 3% of U.S. born adults have less than a high school education compared to 18% of foreign born residents.

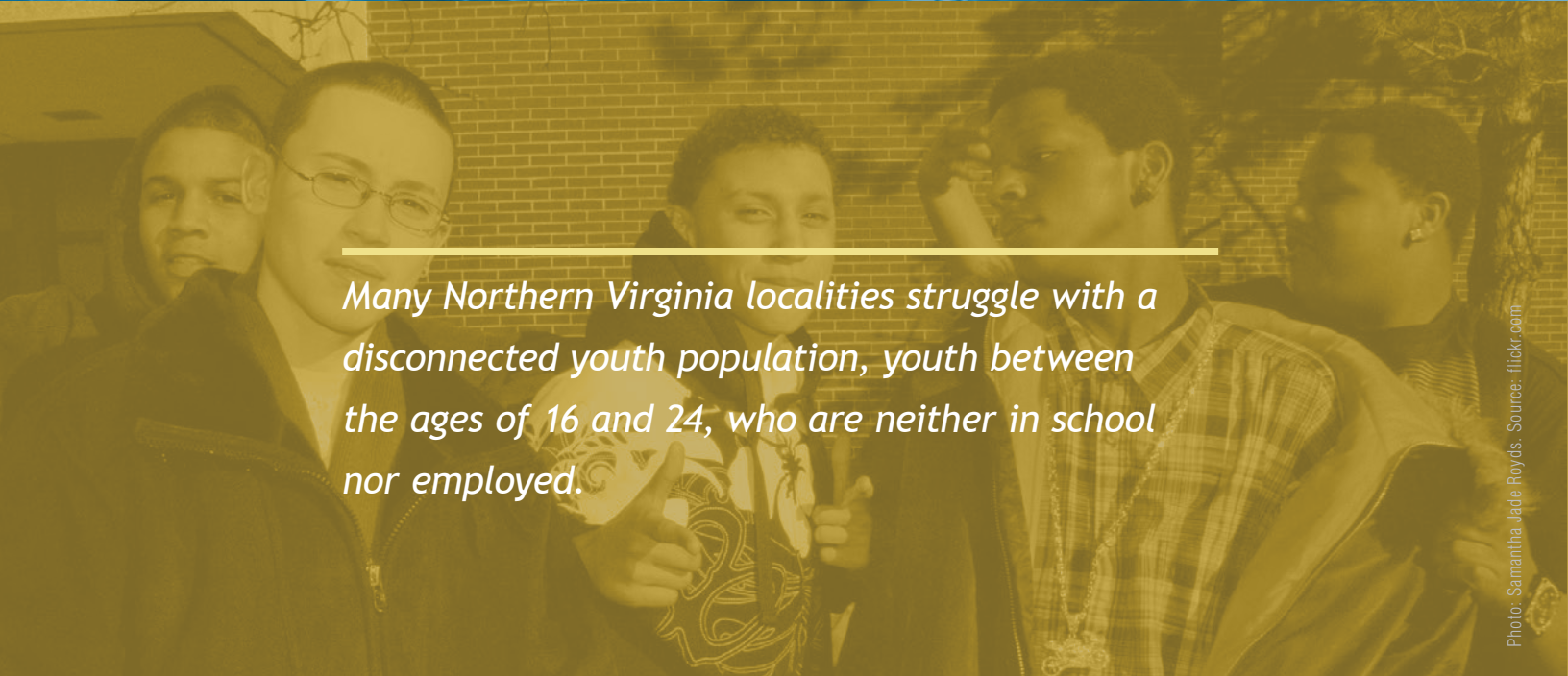
Residents with Some College, Associate’s Degree, Bachelor’s Degree, or Advanced Degree: Northern Virginia region, by Nativity






Traffic congestion and struggling or inadequate public transportation systems ... contribute to a multitude of economic inefficiencies that degrade overall community wellbeing.

Photo: Elvert Barnes. Source: flickr.com



Many Northern Virginia localities struggle with a disconnected youth population, youth between the ages of 16 and 24, who are neither in school nor employed.

Photo: Samantha Jade Foyds. Source: flickr.com



[Many] residents of Northern Virginia under age 65 still have no health insurance...

Photo: Ken Stigler. Source: flickr.com

community health & civic life

Quality of life in Northern Virginia is affected by a diverse array of indicators. Health and wellbeing, opportunity from a young age, and mobility all impact Northern Virginians' desire to work and live in the region.

Access to health insurance impacts many facets of resident's lives. Lack of insurance, especially during critical moments in life like pregnancy or birth can have long term impacts on a family's life. Infant mortality and low birth weight outcomes are both made worse when people lack health coverage. Quality health coverage can also greatly improve the quality of life for those that live with disabilities.

Rich professional opportunities are what have attracted many people to relocate to the Northern Virginia region over the years. All communities do better when young adults have good opportunities around the critical juncture when they are entering the workforce. Unfortunately, many Northern Virginia localities struggle with a disconnected youth population (those between the ages of 16 and 24 that are neither in school nor employed). This group is at a higher risk of entering the criminal justice system or having trouble finding work in the future. When localities have higher shares of disconnected youth, they are at risk of jeopardizing their future workforce prospects.

Perhaps a challenge to wellbeing that all Northern Virginia residents can relate to is traffic congestion and struggling or inadequate public transportation systems. This problem has been getting worse over the decades, and not only leads to increased frustration for residents that face arduous daily commutes to work, but also contributes to a multitude of economic inefficiencies that degrade overall community wellbeing.

Although more people have gained health insurance in recent years, many residents of Northern Virginia under age 65 still have no health insurance. Numerous studies show that having health insurance leads to better financial health, lower costs, and reduced death rates. Overall, uninsured rates for individuals under 65 years of age in the region is slightly lower than the statewide average – 9 compared to 10 percent. Since 2006, almost all Northern Virginia localities have seen sharp declines in their uninsured rates, with the exception of Manassas Park. In 2006, Northern Virginia as a region had a higher uninsured rate than the statewide average, which means the region has improved faster than the rest of the state since then.

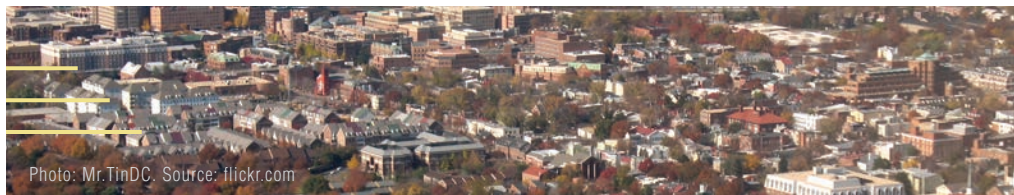


Photo: Mr.TinDC. Source: flickr.com

Infant mortality rates is one indicator for a population's access to health care and quality of health services. Northern Virginia has lower rates of infant mortality than the state average, likely reflecting the region's stronger access to health care and high quality services.

Low birth weights are also associated with access to health care, along with lower survival rates for infants, and developmental and cognitive disorders in life. Access to quality prenatal care is important for preventing low birth weights. Northern Virginia has a lower share of low birth weights than the state as a whole. Since 2000, low birth weight rates have remained mostly static in Northern Virginia.

Like low birth weights, having a disability can have long term impacts on a person's life, impacting one's ability get around their community, find and maintain a job, and support their family. Self-reported disability rates are lower in Northern Virginia than elsewhere in Virginia and are relatively similar

across localities. Since 2008, the share of Virginians self-reporting a disability has remained the same, around 11 percent. The Northern Virginia regional rate has remained the same over this period as well, at around 6 percent.

And this rate has not changed much since 1980. The rate of adults 16 and over with a disability in Northern Virginia in 1980 was 8 percent. This is the same reported rate as adults (18 and over) in the region today.

One barrier to employment facing many residents is long commute times to work. Travel time to work can

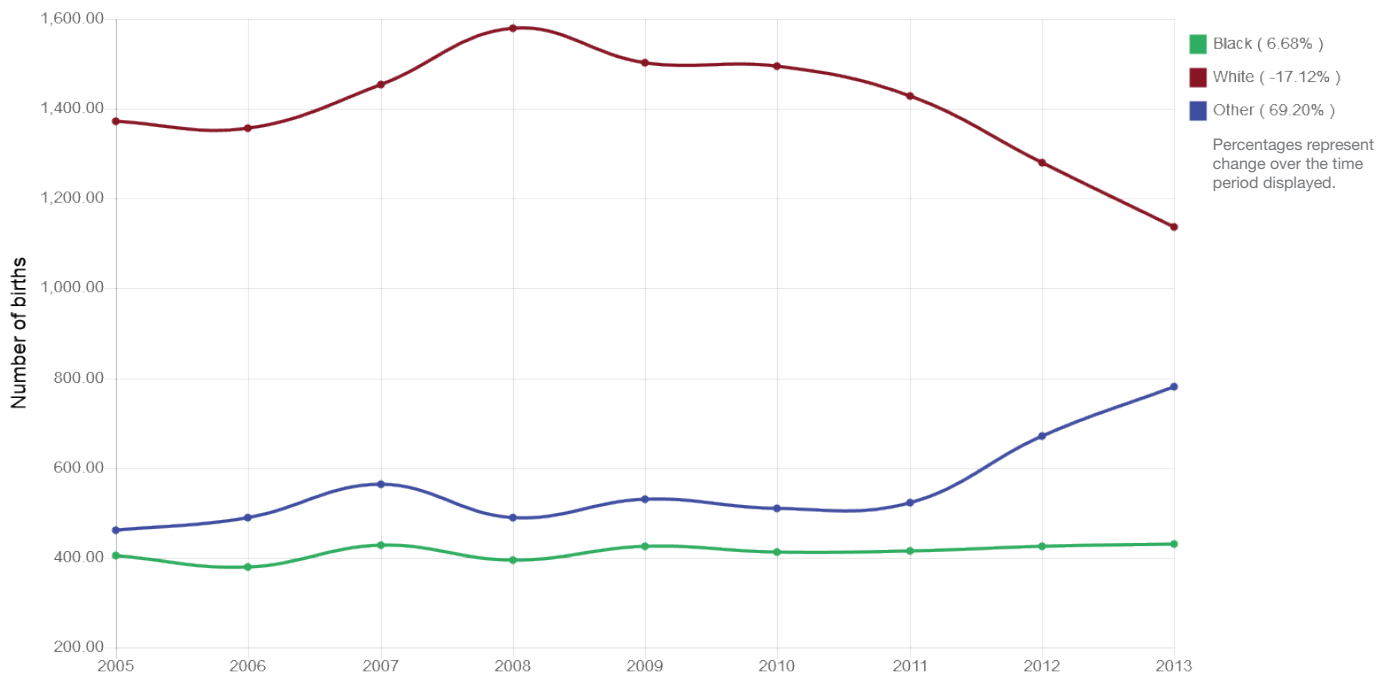
affect local economies and quality of life. Between 2011 and 2015, the average share of workers 16 and over who did not work at home and traveled over 45 minutes to work was 29 percent in the Northern Virginia region – compared to 19 percent for the state average. In 1980, only 22 percent of Northern Virginia workers had commutes 45 minutes or over. That means that more people today are spending more time commuting to work in Northern Virginia.

Northern Virginia has a lower share of workers that transport themselves to work by driving alone than the rest of the state (70 in Northern Virginia compared to 76 percent for the statewide average). This difference is likely a reflection of the strong public transportation options that are found around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. In 1980, around 83 percent of the workers in Northern Virginia drove themselves to work. This decline in individuals driving themselves to work could be a result of improved public transportation, financial incentives to carpool such as free access to express lanes, or a response to the increased congestion and overall travel time to work in the region. Either way, long commute times pose barrier to workers and make local economies less efficient.

Northern Virginia has a lower share of low birth weights than the state as a whole.

[M]ore people today are spending more time commuting to work in Northern Virginia.

Low Birth Weight: Northern Virginia region, by Race



Low birth weights are associated with lower survival rates for infants, and developmental and cognitive disorders in life. Access to quality prenatal care is important for preventing low birth weights. Black children in Northern

Virginia have a much higher risk of being born with a low birth weight than white children in the region. This likely reflects relatively lower access to health care for Black families during pregnancy. (Note: Race is classified by maternal self-

reporting, and categories are limited to white, black, and other.)
 Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the Virginia Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

DISCONNECTED YOUTH

The older teen and young adult years are a critical time for young people that can have lasting consequences for their lives. Youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who do not have jobs and are not in school are referred to as disconnected youth. This group is often overlooked, but is at a high risk of getting involved in the criminal justice system or hurting their future employment prospects. The Northern Virginia region has a similar share of disconnected youth to the rest of the state, around 10 percent in 2015. This rate has fluctuated

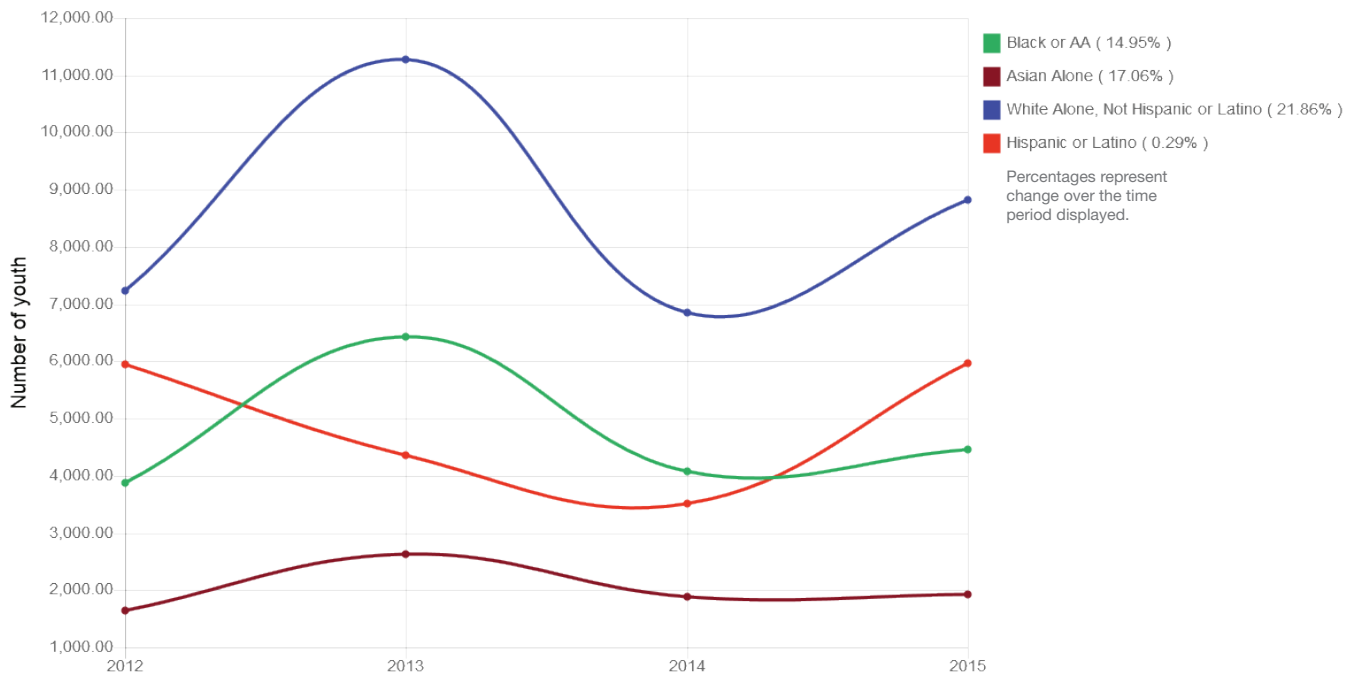
marginally over the years, but in 1980, the share of disconnected youth in Northern Virginia was also at 10 percent.

Looking within Northern Virginia, the lower-income outer suburban localities of Prince William County, Manassas City, and Manassas Park City had the highest share of disconnected youth in the region in 2015, 17 percent, while Arlington had the lowest share, 7 percent. These high rates of young people without connection to school or job may be the result of high transportation challenges for young

people in these localities, as well as other challenges facing young people from families that are struggling economically.

Around 14 percent of Black youth in Northern Virginia are disconnected from both school and jobs, much higher than the regional average for Asian and non-Hispanic White youth (rates for Hispanic youth fall between these). The problem is particularly acute for young Black residents of Arlington, although there is substantial year-to-year variation due to small sample sizes.

Youth Disconnected from Both Work and School: Northern Virginia region, by Race



Youth in the age range of 16 to 24 who do not have jobs and are not in school are referred to as disconnected youth. This group is often overlooked, but is at a high risk of getting involved in the criminal justice system or hurting their future

employment prospects. The Northern Virginia region has a similar share of disconnected youth to the rest of the state, around 10 percent in 2015. This rate has fluctuated marginally over the years. Prince William, Manassas and Manassas Park had

the highest share of disconnected youth in the region in 2015, 17 percent, while Arlington had the lowest share, 7 percent. Chart from *The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia*. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

For most racial groups, young people in Northern Virginia are less likely to be disconnected than in the rest of the state. However, Asian youth in the region are just as likely to be disconnected as their same-race peers statewide.

U.S.-born youth in the Northern Virginia region are slightly less likely to be disconnected than their foreign-born peers. Immigrant youth may have unique challenges such as language barriers and discrimination when seeking employment.

Around 14 percent of Black youth in Northern Virginia are disconnected from both school and jobs, much higher than the regional average for Asian and non-Hispanic White youth.



REGIONAL VARIATION

Manassas City and Manassas Park stand out in Northern Virginia as having much higher uninsured rates than the rest of the region – 16 and 19 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, some wealthier localities such as Falls Church and Loudoun have very low uninsured rates – 5 to 7 percent.

Similar to health insurance, infant mortality rates vary widely from year to year across Northern Virginia localities. This is especially true in smaller localities that typically have total infant mortalities in the single digits – an additional death one year can make a significant difference in the locality’s mortality rate.

Low birth weight rates also see large variations across regional localities. Since 2000, there has been more variation in low birth weight rates for children born to Black mothers in Northern Virginia than for children born to White mothers. This variation

may be due to inconsistency in access to health insurance or could be related to the smaller sample size of the Black population in the region.

Unlike low birth weight or infant mortality, there is very little variance over time and across localities for disability rates. Northern Virginia localities range in disability rates from a low of 5 percent in Loudoun to 8 percent in Manassas Park. These rates are far below the statewide average of 11 percent.

Commute times are less prone to vary over years, but a large divergence can be seen across localities. Prince William has the highest share of

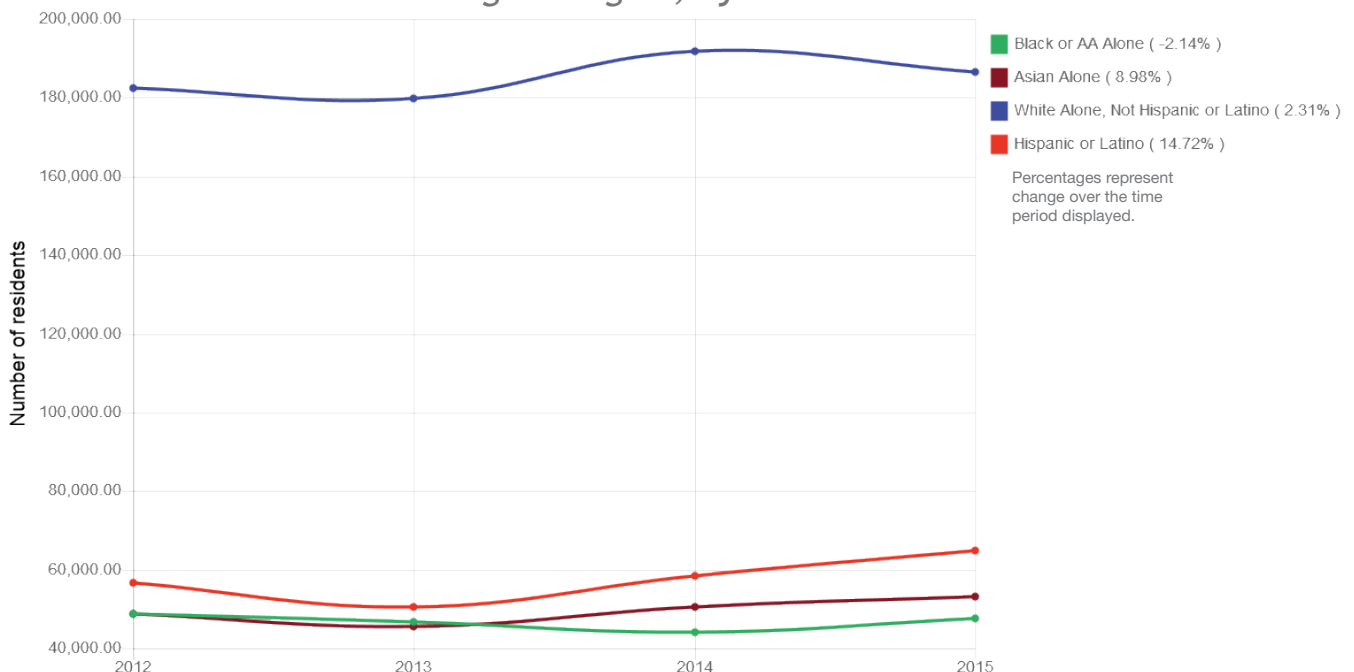
workers commuting 45 minutes or more in the region – around 42 percent – while Arlington has the lowest share – around 17 percent. More densely populated localities located closer to Washington D.C. tend to have more public transportation options for commuting to work, which likely help reduce commute times.

Cities with more access to public transportation tend to have a lower share of residents that drive alone to work, while larger counties such as Fairfax and Loudoun have a higher share. Reducing the share of workers who drive alone to work can reduce congestion.

Travel time to work can affect local economies and quality of life. In areas of congestion, travel times vary widely by locality. Between 2011 and 2015, the average share of workers 16 and over who did not work at home and traveled 45 minutes or longer to work was 29 percent in the Northern Virginia region--compared to 19 percent statewide.

Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Residents who did not work at home and traveled over 45 minutes to work: Northern Virginia region, by Race



RACE AND ETHNICITY

The share of residents who lack health insurance varies widely by race and ethnicity. Hispanic residents in Northern Virginia are more than twice as likely to be uninsured as any other racial group. Non-Hispanic White residents are by far the least likely to be uninsured in the region, followed by Black and Asian residents.

Lack of access to health insurance may partially explain why Black residents in the region have higher rates of infant mortality than White residents. This division by race could also occur because of differences in income between White and Black residents in the region. (Note: In the infant mortality and birth weight data, race is classified by maternal self-reporting, and categories are limited to White, Black, and other for infant mortality and low birth weight.)

Black children in Northern Virginia also have a much higher risk of being born with a low birth weight than White children in the region. This likely reflects relatively lower access to health care for Black families during pregnancy.

Self-reported disability rates seem to be less related to access to health care than infant mortality and low birth weights. All racial groups with the exception of Asians have a lower self-reported disability rate in the Northern Virginia region compared to the rest of the state. Asians have the same rate as the statewide average, 5 percent. Hispanics have the lowest rate in the Northern Virginia region, at 4 percent. Non-Hispanic White and Black residents in the region are tied with similar disability rates, around 7 percent. For each group, with the exception of Hispanics, there are specific Northern Virginia localities with much higher disability rates. For example, the disability rate for non-Hispanic White individuals in Manassas Park is 12 percent, the same as the

Black children in Northern Virginia also have a much higher risk of being born with a low birth weight than White children in the region.



statewide average. Asians have a disability rate of 12 percent in Falls Church, 7 percentage points above the statewide average. Black residents have a disability rate of 16 percent in Fairfax City, which is more than twice the regional average for this group. For all racial groups in Virginia and the Northern Virginia region, disability rates have remained mostly static since 2008.

Black residents in Northern Virginia are most likely to commute 45 minutes or more to work, although, this rate is not much higher than other groups. All race groups in Northern Virginia have

longer commute times than their peers in the rest of the state. And therefore, all groups could stand to gain from improvements to transportation infrastructure throughout the region.

Black, Asian, and non-Hispanic White commuters tend to have fairly similar rates of driving alone to work in Northern Virginia, while Hispanics are slightly less likely to do so. All racial groups in Northern Virginia are less likely to drive alone to work than their peers in other parts of the state.



Photo: Deling. Source: commons.wikimedia.org

AGE

Children under 18 are slightly more likely to have health insurance in Northern Virginia than the state as a whole — 4 percent compared to 5 percent. Some localities however, such as Manassas City and Manassas Park, have uninsured rates for children that are more than twice as high as the regional average. Adults (18 to 64 years of age) similarly are slightly less likely to be uninsured in Northern Virginia compared to the rest of the state. Like children, adults in Manassas City and Manassas Park are much more likely to be uninsured than the rest of the region.

Health insurance access does not seem to have a large impact on self-reporting of disability. Across the age spectrum (children, adults and seniors), individuals in Northern Virginia have lower rates of disability compared to state as a whole. Both children and adults in Northern Virginia have disability rates that are around half of what the statewide averages are. The spread is smaller for seniors, but this group still fares better than the state average. Most Northern Virginia localities have maintained similar and fairly static disability rates since 2008.

Having a disability may make it additionally challenging to commute to work. So long commute times, particularly for seniors who are most likely to be disabled is a unique challenge in the Northern Virginia region. Workers 65 and over are only slightly less likely than younger workers to have long commute times. All age groups in Northern Virginia face longer commute times compared to their peers in other parts of the state.

At the same time, each age group in Northern Virginia is less likely to drive alone to work than the state average. Workers between the ages of 16 and 24 are least likely to drive alone to work. In some localities, such as Arlington and Falls Church, less than half of workers in the 16 to 24 age bracket get to work by driving alone. Those 65 and over in this region are much less likely to drive themselves to work compared to the state average.

Disability rates by race are lower in Northern Virginia compared to the rest of the state. But there are significant exceptions in specific localities. Asians, at 12%, are 7 percentage points above the state average in Falls Church; Black, at 16% in Fairfax City, have a disability rate more than twice the regional average.



IMMIGRATION STATUS

Immigrants in Northern Virginia are more than 5 times as likely to be uninsured compared to U.S.-born residents in the region. While U.S.-born residents in Northern Virginia are only about half as likely to be uninsured compared to the statewide average, immigrants in the region fare no better than their peers across the state. Language and market barriers may make it more difficult for immigrants to access health insurance. Also, immigrants are less likely to be employed in workplaces that offer insurance and face barriers obtaining public health insurance.

Lack of insurance does not seem to have a big impact on self-reported disability rates. Immigrants in Virginia have much lower self-reported disability rates than U.S.-born residents. Immigrants also tend to be younger than U.S.-born residents and therefore may be less likely to have a disability due to age. In Northern Virginia, immigrants are only slightly less likely to have a disability compared to U.S.-born residents. Both U.S.-born and immigrant residents in Northern Virginia have lower disability rates than their peers statewide.

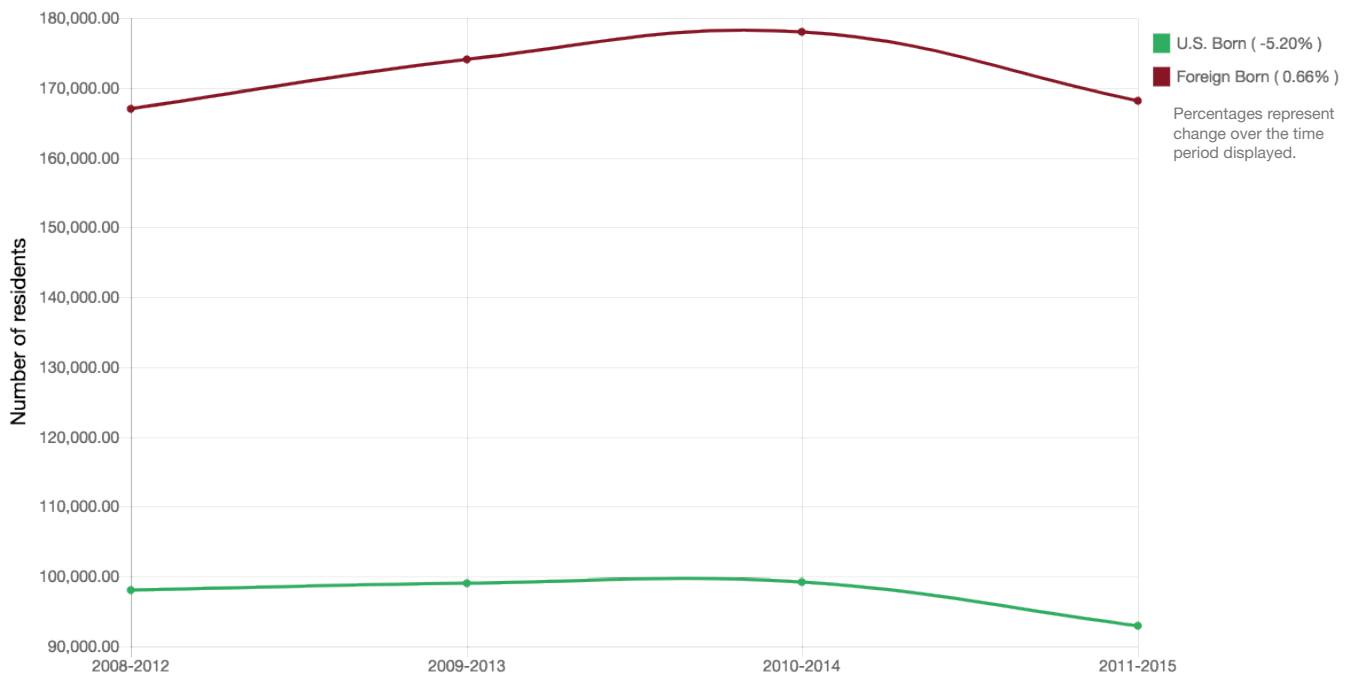
Immigrants in Northern Virginia face fewer barriers when it comes to commute times, being slightly less likely than U.S.-born residents to have a commute

Language and market barriers may make it more difficult for immigrants to access health insurance.

Although more people have gained health insurance in recent years, many non-elderly residents of Northern Virginia still have no health insurance.

Chart from The Opportunity Index for Northern Virginia. Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Non-Elderly Residents Who Do Not Have Health Insurance: Northern Virginia region, by Nativity



time to work of 45 minutes or more. Immigrant groups across all Northern Virginia localities have fairly similar rates to U.S.-born residents of commuting 45 minutes or more to work.

Immigrants in Northern Virginia drive themselves to work at similar rates compared to the national and state average – around 67 percent. This is slightly lower than U.S.-born residents in the region, who drive themselves to work at a rate of 72 percent. U.S.-born residents in the region, however, are far less likely to drive themselves to work compared to their peers at the state and national level.



moving forward

Northern Virginia is home to thriving, diverse families and communities. And yet, too many of our neighbors continue to face daily hardships and entrenched barriers to success, and the rapid growth of the region has brought challenges as well as benefits. Moving forward into the next 40 years, addressing these challenges and barriers, as well as building on the region's strengths, will be critical.

Monitoring trends within the region and learning about the situations of different communities can help ground leaders from business, government, community, and nonprofit organizations when considering how best to invest in the region's future. The Opportunity Index is meant to be a living gauge and will be updated annually to provide residents and stakeholders in the region with an easy, accessible way to identify emerging trends and track progress.

With this information also comes a great responsibility to act. For different people and stakeholders, this will take different shapes. For some, it will mean mentoring young people so they have a better chance at success in school, thereby reducing the region's stubbornly high dropout rates for Black and Latino students. For others, it will mean getting involved in public policy discussions to address tough problems upstream, like housing affordability and economic dependence on the federal government. Going upstream to focus on policy can have the broadest impact on some of the most stubborn challenges we face. And for others, it will be investing in the direct service organizations that help families get back on their feet and flourish.

The last 40 years of change in Northern Virginia have transformed the region into an economic powerhouse that draws highly skilled workers from around the world while supporting high-quality schools and thriving communities. Building on the region's successes and becoming even stronger will require as much attention to social and racial equity as to financial equity. And it will require coming together to do what's right for the region as a whole. With courage, work, and cooperation, Northern Virginia will be well positioned for the next 40 years.

The Opportunity Index is meant to be a living gauge and will be updated annually to provide residents and stakeholders in the region with an easy, accessible way to identify emerging trends and track progress.



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