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Community Foundation’s New Research Center Discovers Startling Statistic: Low-Income Northern Virginians Face Nation’s Most Severe Housing Cost Burden

January 13, 2021 (Oakton, VA) – A new report by the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia finds that 67% of Northern Virginians with low incomes (less than \$50,000 per year for a family of four) are “severely burdened” by the cost of housing, spending over half of their income on rent, mortgage, taxes, fees, and basic utilities. Individuals and families with moderate incomes (\$50,000 to \$100,000 for a family of four) fare slightly better, but still over half (59 percent) cannot afford their homes and 19% spend over half of their income on housing. When compared to other large metropolitan areas, Northern Virginia has the highest rate of severe housing burden among low-income households and the sixth highest rate among moderate-income households in the country.

“These findings will not come as a surprise to the individuals and families who cannot afford to live here without ‘cutting corners’ or to the policy experts and advocates who have fought for affordable housing and for living-wage jobs for decades,” said Elizabeth Hughes, Senior Director of the Community Foundation’s new research center, Insight Region, and the report’s author. “But we hope it surprises the majority of residents who do not struggle regularly with housing costs, who may know that housing prices and rents are high but not the extent to which they burden so many of our low- and moderate-income neighbors. This is a problem that requires a community response, and the first step is to build community knowledge.”

The report titled “**Unequal Burden: Low-Income Northern Virginians face the country’s most severe housing cost burden**” is an analysis of data from U.S. Census data and the American Community Survey. The full report is available online [here](#). Other key findings outlined include:

- Severe housing burden is not spread evenly throughout the region: In Leesburg-Western Loudoun County, 58% of low-income households spent over half of their income on housing, the lowest rate of severe housing burden observed throughout the region (2015-19, five-year average). The highest rates in excess of 75% were observed in North Arlington, Lorton-SE Centreville, and McLean-Idylwood.
- Racial and ethnic minorities and immigrant communities experience severe housing burden at higher rates nationally and in Northern Virginia. Over half (57%) of severely housing burdened households were non-white, and 47% were born in a different country.
- Occupations that experienced severe housing burden at the highest rates are predominantly in roles deemed “essential” during Covid-19, including teachers, construction workers, retail salespersons, drivers, and restaurant staff.
- Seniors account for 23 percent of severely housing burdened households in Northern Virginia.

This brief report is part 1 of a new series on inclusive prosperity in Northern Virginia.

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About Insight Region

The [Insight Region™ Center for Community Research](#) is a growing hub for reliable, well-researched, and actionable data and analyses on issues critical to Northern Virginia. Through this work, we seek to inform charitable giving, inspire civic and social action, and foster a more inclusive, prosperous region.

About Community Foundation for Northern Virginia

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia grows philanthropy to respond to critical need, seed innovation and lead and convene the community. Comprised of donor advised funds, permanent funds, giving circles, and other charitable endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors to community and promotes a more equitable and inclusive prosperity that marries our economic strength with the full breadth of our diverse community. In 2020 the Community Foundation awarded more than \$13 million in grants and scholarships. For more information please visit us at www.cfnova.org, follow up on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).