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Upward Mobility Remains Strong for Northern Virginia’s Low-Income Families

May 11, 2021 (Oakton, VA) – Thirty years ago, children growing up in a lower-income family in Northern Virginia enjoyed the highest rate of economic mobility in the country; 19 percent were earning in the top quintile for household income as adults, the highest rate of economic mobility across the 50 most populous metro areas. This near universal “prosperity bump” extended across racial-ethnic groups. If history is any indication, that story will remain unchanged.

A new report from the [Community Foundation for Northern Virginia’s Insight Region Center for Research](#) examining economic mobility data in the region also finds that Northern Virginia had the highest rates of economic mobility in nation among Black and Hispanic children who come from low-income families. Compared to the national average, Hispanic children raised in lower-income families were twice as likely to experience economic mobility (14 percent, versus 7 percent) and Black children were four times as likely (10 percent, versus 2.5 percent).

The specific factors that produce these outcomes—including early achievement, high school persistence, college education, social capital, nuclear families, income equality, and residential inclusion—have long been present in the region.

The report titled "[Spreading the Wealth: Sustaining Economic Mobility across Northern Virginia's Neighborhoods](#)" is an analysis of data from [Opportunity Insights](#), a Harvard University think tank that has quantified rates of economic mobility for every census tract in the nation.

"Spreading the wealth of opportunity to all children in the region requires a concentrated investment in the residents of neighborhoods that offer the lowest rates of opportunity," said Elizabeth Hughes, Senior Director, Insight Region. "It means extending the opportunities available to most neighborhoods to all neighborhoods, concentrating on locations where children at or near poverty live."

Other key findings:

- Children raised in poor, immigrant households also had high rates of mobility; compared to the 1,500 counties with an immigrant population, Fairfax County ranked #89, Loudoun #115, Arlington #292, Alexandria #355, and Prince William #452 for highest adult income among children raised in lower income families.
- Not all communities and neighborhoods in Northern Virginia have equal access to the conditions within the neighborhood— "opportunity factors"—that help produce economic mobility. Among the 113,000 children who were living at or near poverty in Northern Virginia in 2015-19, nearly half lived in a neighborhood with "low" levels of college education, and over a third lived in neighborhoods with low levels of nuclear families, early achievement, social capital, and residential inclusion.

This brief report is part 2 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](#).