

2025 PORTRAIT OF

northern virginia's youth

Creating safe, supportive futures for Northern Virginia's youth

Denise Bellows, PhD / March 2025



Since its inception in 1978, the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia has awarded more than \$100 million in grants and scholarships throughout the region and beyond.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is building a region that works for everyone by advancing equity through philanthropy and community leadership. Since 1978, we have united thousands of generous Northern Virginians with the causes they care about through donor-advised funds, permanent funds, giving circles, and charitable endowments. We cultivate enduring partnerships with nonprofits, foundations, government, businesses, and community members, maximizing impact to drive meaningful change.

As a leader throughout the region, the Community Foundation's work is guided by the following strategic pillars:

- Inclusive Economic Growth
- Opportunities for All
- Social and Economic Mobility
- Community Resilience

The Community Foundation proudly serves all Northern Virginians in Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties and the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park. Learn more at cfnova.org.



ABOUT INSIGHT REGION®

Launched in 2020, Insight Region® is a research center at the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia that analyzes local trends, convenes civic leaders, and promotes civic and social action. It is a growing hub for reliable, well-researched, and actionable data and analyses on issues critical to Northern Virginia. Its work is focused within the Community Foundation's four strategic priorities: promoting social and economic mobility, advancing opportunity for all, supporting inclusive systems of economic growth, and strengthening community resilience. By producing actionable insights, Insight Region® empowers decision-makers and stakeholders with the knowledge they need to improve quality of life for all Northern Virginians. Previous reports have examined economic mobility, mental health, and workforce trends, making Insight Region® a trusted source for data-driven solutions.



To view this report online, please scan the QR code, or visit <https://www.cfnova.org/news-and-stories/research-briefs-and-reports>

advocating

FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S YOUTH

There are 631,104 children aged 0-19 living in Northern Virginia—
an increase of 100,000 children since 2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimate, 2022

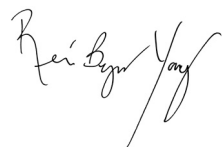
In 2010, the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia (CFNOVA) made a forward-thinking and important decision to collaborate with the community, partners, researchers, donors, and leaders to develop and publish independent, non-partisan research. The first report, "[A Portrait of Children in Northern Virginia: 2010](#)" presented a comprehensive analysis of children in the region.¹ That foundational work informed investments in CFNOVA's Community Investment Funds (CIF) by shaping its grantmaking framework and guiding collaborations with nonprofit and charitable fund partners. In the 15 years since that original report was published, CFNOVA's discretionary funds have granted more than \$1.5 million to nonprofits supporting youth in our region and over \$4 million in youth scholarships.

Since our inaugural report about youth, Northern Virginia has experienced profound demographic, economic, educational and health and safety changes. Today's youth were born in the 2000s, representing Generations Z and Alpha. They have faced unique challenges shaped by social media, mobile technology, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic uncertainty, and the rising influence of artificial intelligence. Recognizing that youth well-being is fundamental to our region's future—shaping public health, workforce stability, and community resilience—CFNOVA has undertaken this updated study to better understand today's youth and provide a data resource to the community.

Our region continues to be a wonderful place for young people to thrive and simultaneously requires attention to ensure that we remain responsive to their needs. The Community Foundation partners across sectors—including educational, government, philanthropic, community and faith-based institutions—to build a Northern Virginia that works for everyone.

We are as proud today as we were in 2010 to release this comprehensive study as a continued trusted resource for knowledge and strategic giving. We look forward to meaningful dialogue with you about the needs of our children and opportunities to continue to support their growth.

Sincerely,



Renée Byng Yancey

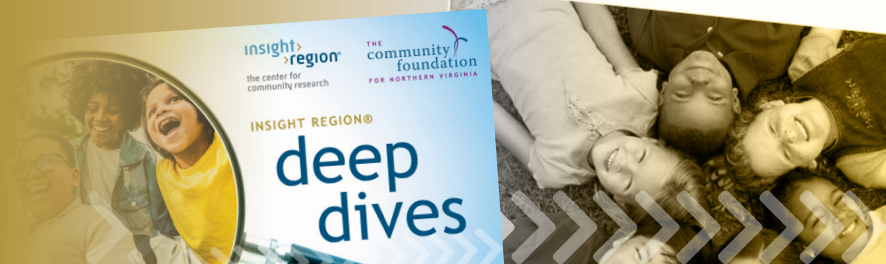
President and CEO
Community Foundation for
Northern Virginia



Robert D. Kipps

Chairperson, Board of Directors
Community Foundation for
Northern Virginia

then and now



KEY FINDINGS

Following a 15-year period of significant societal change, the youngest person from the 2010 study is now a teenager and the oldest is now 30 years old—many are likely in the workforce, and some may be parents of the children in the 2025 study.


CFNOVA’s primary goal in publishing this study is to advance knowledge and better inform community support and action to meet the needs of Northern Virginia’s youth.

This report provides an updated analysis of the youth in our region, highlighting four key areas of study:




1. Changing demographics
2. Economic and Social Circumstances
3. Education
4. Health and Safety

Here, we provide an overview of key findings from the report. A more detailed analysis is presented for each area of study in the remainder of this report.

The Data at a Glance

KEY AREA		SINCE 2010...
 <p>Changing Demographics</p>	Young Families	The youngest demographic, under age 5, declined 3%; ² this is more than the decline in the regional birth rate (2%).
	Young Workforce	The young workforce, aged 18 to 24, decreased in the City of Alexandria and Arlington County, but increased in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties. ¹
	Immigrant Families	The percentage of youth living in immigrant families increased by 11%. Half of Northern Virginia’s youth live in immigrant families. This remains double the proportion in the Commonwealth of Virginia (25%). ^{3,1}
	Race/Ethnicity	Youth reporting two or more race/ethnicities increased by eight percentage points, making it the biggest shift in youth race/ethnicity. ⁴

¹ Children in immigrant households includes any child in a household with parent. Foreign-born does not include a household member who was born outside of the U.S. as a U.S. citizen. Household members born in U.S. territories are considered U.S. citizens.

KEY AREA		SINCE 2010...
Economic and Social Circumstances 	Child poverty	Child poverty has improved. ⁱⁱ In 2023, there were nearly 12,000 more children living in families with household incomes greater than \$60,000 (i.e., 200% of the Federal Poverty Line) compared to 2014. ⁵
	Low-income	The number of families struggling with low incomes while employed increased by 20% in the post-Covid environment, after years of steady decline. ⁶
	Food Insecurity	Since 2010, food insecurity ⁱⁱⁱ among youth remained relatively steady; however, from 2023 to 2024 the number of children who experience food insecurity increased by 28%.
Education 	Bachelor's degree or higher	The share of Northern Virginians who obtain a bachelor's degree or higher has remained steady at 57%, while it has increased in the Commonwealth and in the United States. However, it still remains nearly double the national rate of 32%. ^{1,8}
	High School degree	The share of youth obtaining at least a high school degree declined by 2% from 2010 to 2023. ⁹
Health and Safety 	Electronic bullying	Electronic bullying increased 28% among Middle School students, ¹⁰ and nearly 20% of teenagers believe they have the right to say hurtful things or violate someone's privacy online. ¹¹
	Death by Suicide	Youth deaths by suicide have increased by 45% in Northern Virginia and most are firearm related. ¹²
	Opioids	The share of opioid overdose deaths among youth in Northern Virginia (15%) ¹³ is double the national average (7%). ^{14, iv} One in four opioid deaths was witnessed by a child under 14 years of age. ¹⁵

ⁱⁱ Child poverty is defined as a household containing at least one child under age 18, where the household income is at or below the 2023 Federal Poverty Line.

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as, “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.”

^{iv} In 2022, of the 81,806 opioid deaths in the US, only 7 percent (5,981) were youth under age 25.

changing demographics

OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S YOUTH



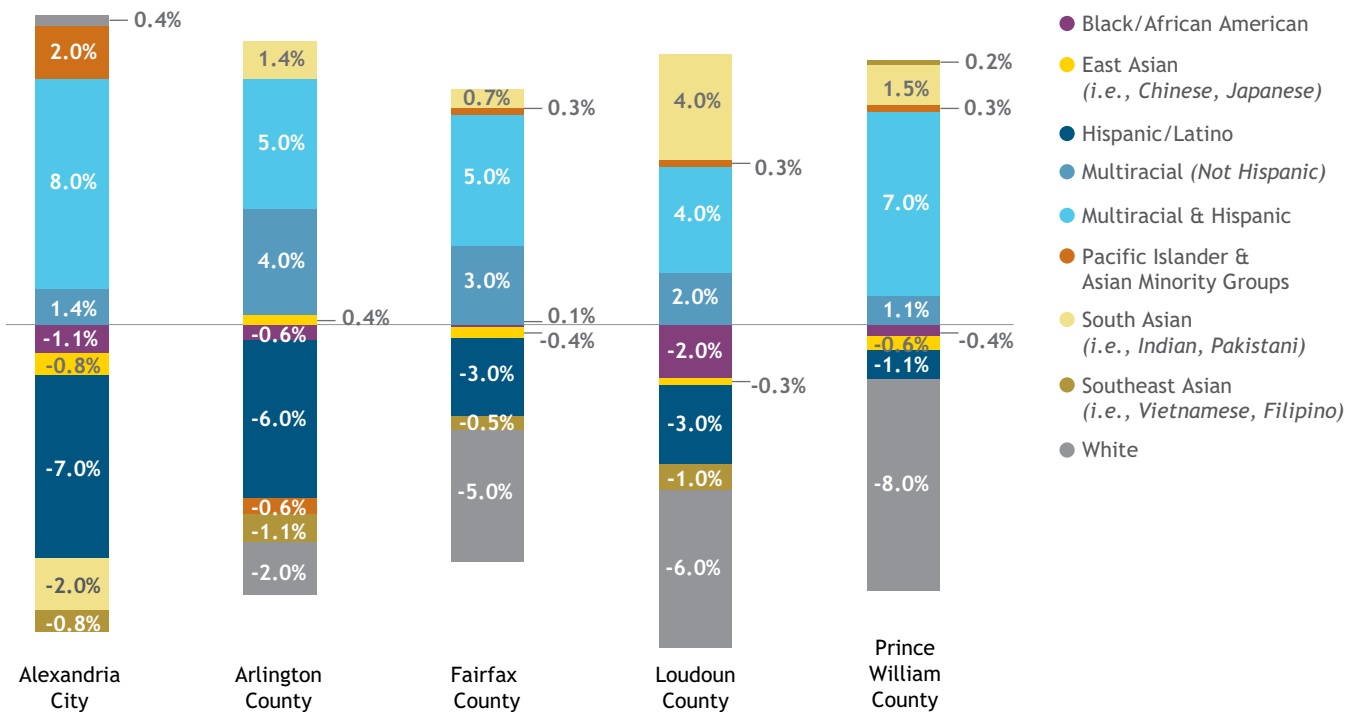
Children in immigrant families now make up nearly half of the region's youth.

Northern Virginia's youth population is evolving. While Northern Virginia is home to one-third of the Commonwealth's population, it has only one-quarter of Virginia's young workforce aged 18-24. Additionally, the number of children under 5 years of age has declined by 2-3 percentage points across the region, outpacing the regional decline in birth rate.

Children in immigrant families now make up nearly half of the region's youth, reinforcing the importance of inclusive services in education, healthcare, and social support. Understanding these shifts will help donors and community leaders respond effectively to the evolving needs of Northern Virginia's youth.

The youth population of Northern Virginia continues to be diverse with significant increases in the Multiracial, Multiethnic, and South Asian populations.³

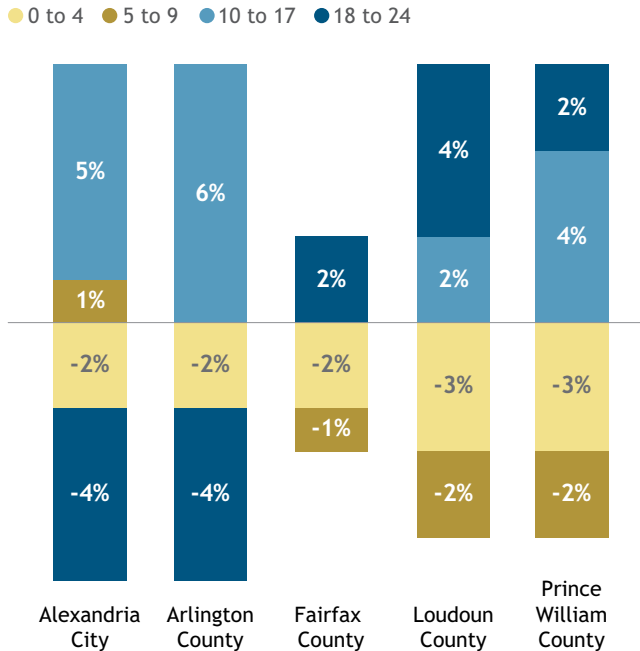
Changes in racial and ethnic identity of youth, 2012 and 2022



Source: Insight Region® analysis of American Communities Survey data (2022), accessed through IPUMS

Northern Virginia has only one-quarter of Virginia's young workforce aged 18-24.

Percentage point change in age distribution, 2012 to 2022



Source: Insight Region® analysis of American Communities Survey, 2012 and 2022 5-year estimates, accessed through IPUMS

FAST FACTS:

- The population of children under 5 years old is shrinking more than the birth rate. The population of children aged 5-9 is also decreasing or stagnant across the region.¹
- Northern Virginia has about one third of the Commonwealth's population but only one quarter (25.7 percent) of its young workforce, aged 18-24.¹
- The youth population of Northern Virginia continues to be diverse with significant increases in the Multiracial, Multiethnic, and South Asian populations.³
- The proportion of children (aged 0-17) in immigrant families has increased by 11 percent in Northern Virginia.²
- About 50% of our youth live with at least one parent who was born outside the United States. This remains double the proportion in the Commonwealth of Virginia (25%).²

charitable investment

PRO TIP

Strategic Pillar: Opportunities for All

The Community Foundation seeks to provide opportunities for all in Northern Virginia by advancing policies, practices, and messages that ensure everyone in Northern Virginia can thrive.

Understanding changing demographics helps us stay connected to the experiences of organizations providing direct services to Northern Virginians and provides information that helps service organizations understand regional trends. Donors might consider how their charitable investments in areas such as safety net support and workforce development can support the needs of a changing community.

economic and social circumstances

THAT IMPACT YOUTH



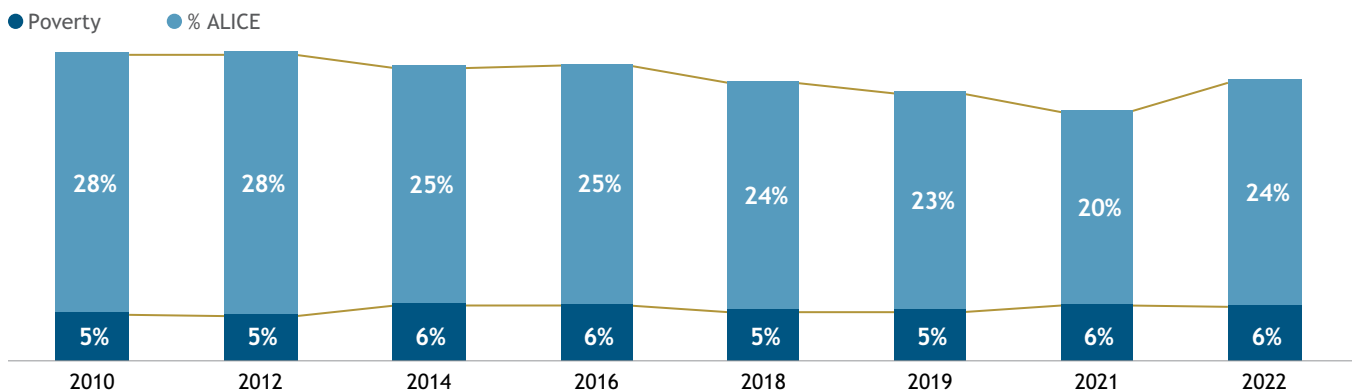
27,000 children in Northern Virginia experience food insecurity.

While poverty rates in Northern Virginia have remained stable over the past decade, economic pressures have intensified. The number of Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)^v households increased by 20% in recent years, following years of decline from 2010 to 2021.⁵ Despite the region's wealth, approximately one in five children live in households earning less than \$60,000 which is 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) for a family of four.⁴ There are currently 660 children experiencing homelessness in Northern Virginia.¹⁶

Additionally, youth food insecurity^{vi} remains a concern, with roughly 27,000 children affected in 2024⁶ and 2.2% of high school students reporting they often went hungry.⁹ Housing instability also presents challenges, with nearly 10% of Black and Hispanic high school students reporting they usually do not sleep in their parent's or guardian's home.⁹ These trends highlight the urgent need for targeted investments that address food security, housing stability, and the economic well-being of Northern Virginia's families.

Nearly 10% of Black and Hispanic high school students report they usually do not sleep in their parent's or guardian's home.

Percentage of Northern Virginia Households in Poverty or Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE), 2010 to 2022



Source: Insight Region® analysis of 2024 United for ALICE Virginia Data Sheet.

^v ALICE is an index that provides a minimum household survival budget, based on average costs in a geographic location (e.g., housing, utilities, childcare, food, transportation, health care, technology, and taxes), number and age of household members, and other factors related to cost of living. www.unitedforALICE.org/Methodology

^{vi} The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as, "the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways."

In 2021, one in five families (20 percent) in Northern Virginia did not earn enough money to meet their basic needs for shelter, food, medical care and other essentials.

FAST FACTS:

- The average median household income in Northern Virginia is \$140,511; nearly double the median income for the United States (i.e., \$75,000) and \$50,000 more than the median household income in the Commonwealth.¹⁷
- The cost of living in this area requires a family of four to earn between \$100,000 to \$130,000 to afford basic needs (i.e., housing, utilities, childcare, transportation, healthcare, technology, and taxes).¹⁸
- The number of households meeting the United Way's definition of Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)^v households has increased by 20% in recent years.⁵
- Over the past decade, poverty has lingered between 5% and 6% of the population^{vii} of Northern Virginia.⁵
- Young adults in the region with household incomes less than \$150,000 have been leaving the area for more affordable housing options and a lower cost of living.¹⁹
- Nearly 10 percent of Black and Latino high school students report that they usually do not sleep in their parent's or guardian's home.⁹
- 27,000 children in Northern Virginia experience food insecurity.⁶

^{vii} Poverty is defined as a household income of less than \$30,900 for a family of four, based on the 2024 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC).

charitable investment

PRO TIP

Strategic Pillar: Social and Economic Mobility

The Community Foundation seeks to expand access to employment and skill-building opportunities so all Northern Virginia residents can achieve financial independence and build long-term wealth.

Understanding the economic constraints of families in Northern Virginia presents an opportunity for donors to invest strategically in basic needs, as well as investing in financial literacy and education programs that support the viability of the region and individuals' long-term financial success.



educational attainment

AND PERFORMANCE

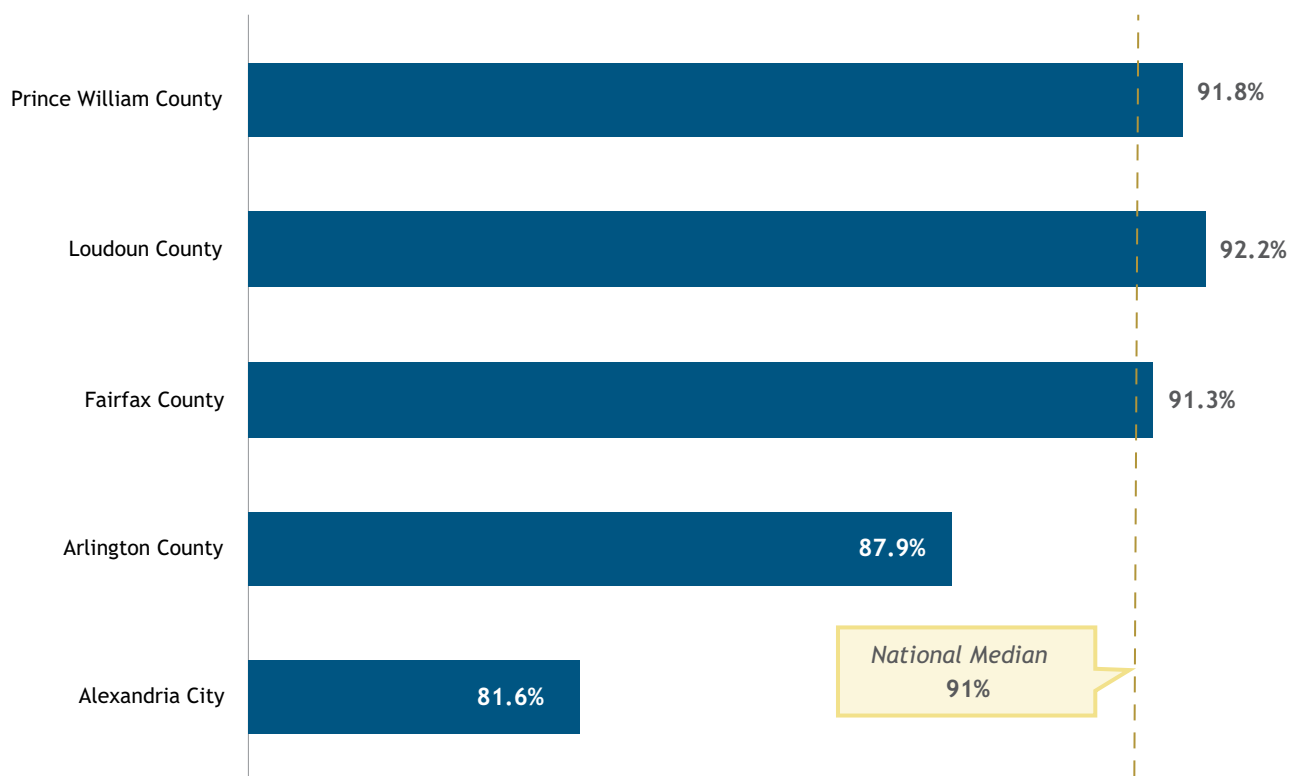
Northern Virginia leads the Commonwealth and the nation in educational attainment.

Northern Virginia leads the Commonwealth and the nation in educational attainment, with 57% of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. However, this figure has remained steady over the past decade, while national and statewide rates have increased.⁷ Most local youth perform above average on Standards of Learning (SOL) exams in reading and math, though areas such as Manassas

City, Manassas Park City, and Alexandria City report lower scores.²⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted academic performance.

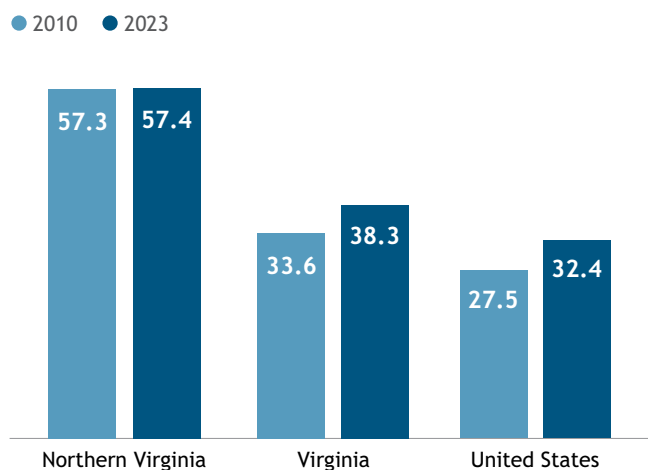
Despite strong educational outcomes, disparities exist across demographics, and continued investment in education and support services is essential to ensure all youth in Northern Virginia can thrive.

Share of 19- and 20-year-olds with a high school degree, 2022



Source: Insight Region® analysis of Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Dashboard

Percent of Northern Virginians with a bachelor's degree or higher, 2010 and 2023



Sources: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501, 2023

FAST FACTS:

- While youth in Northern Virginia are still demonstrating growth and achievement above peers in the state, their academic performance has also been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹
- The number of students enrolled in Northern Virginia schools increased by 6 percent in the past decade.²²
- The ratios of students-to-teachers and students-to-counselors have improved significantly over the past decade, creating greater student access to academic supports.²¹
- Educational attainment and academic performance are positively correlated with social and economic status, health status, and community well-being.²³

charitable investment

PRO TIP

Strategic Pillar: Social and Economic Mobility

The Community Foundation seeks to expand access to employment and skill-building opportunities so all Northern Virginia residents can achieve financial independence and build long-term wealth.

To support positive outcomes for our region's youth, more investments are needed in nonprofit organizations that provide services for youth and their families at different life stages. Areas include early childhood education, academic achievement both in-school and after-school, career and technical training programs, and social-emotional services.



health and safety

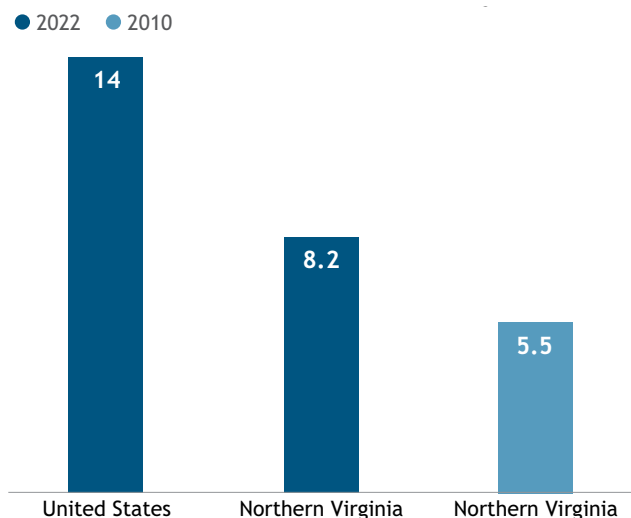
OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S YOUTH

Nearly 15% of middle school students feel insecure in their surroundings and this fear is reported more by students identify as Hispanic/Latino.

Health and safety concerns are growing among youth in Northern Virginia, with a significant number of students reporting feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods and at school. Nearly 15% of middle school students feel unsafe in their surroundings, with Hispanic/Latino students reporting higher levels of fear.⁹ The rise of electronic bullying, which has grown by 30% from 2013 to 2023, highlights the increasing challenges faced by youth.⁹ The impact of bullying is further reflected in the mental health crisis, with youth deaths by suicide increasing by 45% since the last report.¹¹ Additionally, the opioid crisis has disproportionately affected youth, with 15% of opioid overdose deaths in Northern Virginia occurring in individuals under twenty-five.¹²

These trends underline the urgent need for continued focus on mental health, safety, and prevention programs in our communities. Charitable investments in awareness, prevention, and wellness programs—such as bullying reduction, mentoring, and youth enrichment—can help provide the support necessary to improve safety and well-being for youth in Northern Virginia.

Youth deaths by suicide rate per 100,000

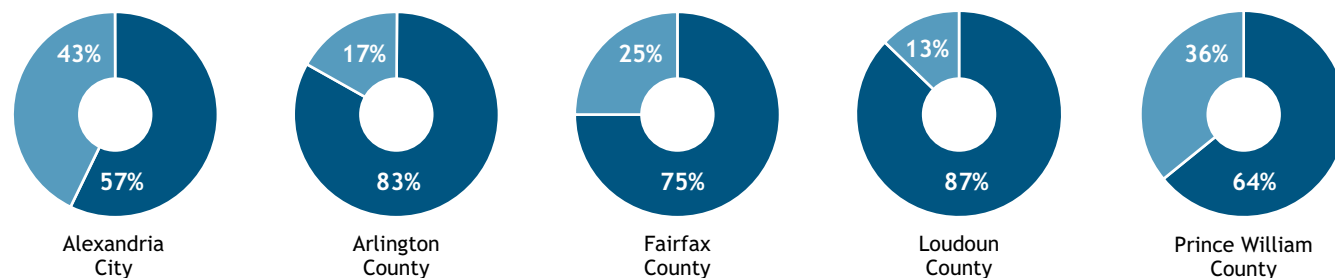


Source: Insight Region® analysis of Virginia Department of Health, Injury and Violent Death Data and CDC WONDER.

Youth deaths by suicide increased by 45% since 2010.

Firearm deaths per 100k population in Northern Virginia, by intent, 2020-2023

● Homicide ● Suicide



Source: Insight Region® analysis of VDH Public Use Data, Firearm Deaths by Intent, 2020-2023

20% teenagers believe, “I have the right to say anything I want online, even if what I say hurts someone or violates someone’s privacy.”

FAST FACTS

- Youth deaths by suicide have increased 45% since our 2010 report. Most of these deaths are reported to be firearm related.¹¹
- Firearm injury spiked during the Covid-19 pandemic and has not returned to pre-pandemic lows.¹¹
- Electronic bullying (i.e., bullying through text message or social media) has increased and is more than in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Bullying in person remains much lower in Northern Virginia than in the Commonwealth.^{9, 24}
- In 2023, there were sixty-three drug overdose deaths among 0-24-year-olds in Northern Virginia, a 43% increase from 2022.¹² Most deaths involved Fentanyl. Parts of Northern Virginia lack sufficient resources to adequately address drug overdose and related outcomes.²⁵
- In 2023, 10% of Northern Virginia High School students and 15% of Middle School students did not go to school because they felt unsafe. However, among Hispanic/Latino youth, more than one third report feeling unsafe at school.⁹
- School Resource Officers (SRO) are present in 68% of schools. The presence of an SRO would increase feelings of safety for 25% of students and 50% of teachers who do not have an SRO at their school.²⁶

Youth drug overdose deaths in Northern Virginia increased 43% from 2022 to 2023.

charitable investment

PRO TIP

Strategic Pillar: Community Resilience

The Community Foundation supports programs and strategies that help Northern Virginia adapt, grow, and thrive in the face of change, uncertainty, and hardship.

Connecting our donors to youth-related causes remains vital. Charitable investments in programs that support the physical and mental health of youth are critical to ensuring that Northern Virginia remains a community where young people thrive.





conclusion

Northern Virginia's future depends on how well we support the next generation.

These findings underscore the critical challenges and opportunities facing Northern Virginia's youth. While some indicators show progress, others reveal alarming trends in mental health, economic stability, and education. The shifting demographics and social conditions of our region demand a renewed focus on policies and investments that uplift young people, ensuring they have the foundation to thrive.

Northern Virginia's future depends on how well we support the next generation. Families, schools, policymakers, and community leaders can work together to create a region where every young person—regardless of background—has the resources, stability, and opportunities needed to succeed.

There are ways all sectors—including education, government, nonprofit, philanthropy and private—can come together around solutions.

- Community Leaders can monitor trends and ensure that data are made available for public consumption. Data can be used to advocate for actions that meet the needs of young people in our region.
- Philanthropy can strategically invest within youth-focused organizations to be responsive to what was learned with these data.
- Individuals and companies can support organizations and fields of interest that provide opportunities for youth to succeed.

This report is a call to action: to engage youth in conversations, to leverage data-driven insights, to strengthen support systems, and to build a future where all youth feel safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

NOTES ABOUT THE DATA

Data informing this report are the most recently available from public data sources, which was typically 2023 or 2024, but in some cases earlier. Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau's American Communities Survey, the Virginia Youth Survey, the Fairfax County Youth Survey, CDC WONDER, United for ALICE, KidsCount by Annie E. Casey, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, and the Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Dashboard. We also obtained data through special requests to Virginia's Department of Health.

The specific age range included as "youth" varies by topic to provide the most relevant information. While most data include children (minors under age 18) or school-aged youth (aged 5-17), we also include the young workforce (aged 18-24) since this aspect of our local economy has been a central concern for many in our region at this time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Insight Region® with generous support from individuals who contributed time for review and advice, specifically, Rachael Deane, CEO of Voices for Virginia's Children, and Jill Kaneff, demographer at the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. CFNOVA's graduate student intern, Katharyn Loweth, made helpful contributions to the figures in the demographics section of the report.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A Portrait of Children in Northern Virginia, 2010. The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia and Voices for Virginia's Children. Available online: <https://www.cfnova.org/images/communityreports/ChildandYouth.pdf>
2. American Communities Survey, 2012 and 2022 5-year estimates, accessed through IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota www.ipums.org
3. American Communities Survey 5-year estimates for 2012, 2017, and 2022
4. American Communities Survey data (2022), accessed through IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota www.ipums.org
5. American Communities Survey 5 year estimate, 2023. Table B17024, via KIDS COUNT Data Center, <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/9181-children-living-in-families-below-200-poverty#detailed/2/any/false/2606,2543,2454,2026,1983,1692,1691,1607,1572,1522/any/18202,18203>
6. 2024 United for ALICE Virginia Data.
7. Capital Area Food Bank 2024 Hunger Report data.
8. U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Educational Attainment." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501, 2023
9. Urban Institute's Upward Mobility Dashboard, using US Census Bureau's 2021 5-Year American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (via IPUMS); Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2022: Geographic Correspondence Engine. (Time period: 2017-2021)
10. 2023 Virginia Department of Health Virginia Youth Survey, special data request for Northern Region
11. 2023 Fairfax County Youth Survey, Data Explorer. Available at: <https://www.fairfaxcountyouthsurvey.com/graphs.php?ds=8to12&year=2023&q1=CB6&cat1=2>
12. Virginia Department of Health Injury and Violence Death Data, 2022 and 2010.
13. Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Office of Family Health Services, Injury and Violence Epidemiology Team, special data request, August 2024.
14. Opioid Overdose Deaths by Age Group | KFF
15. Prince William Health District, July 2024. Opioid Needs Assessment: Understanding Community Factors for Opioid Use Disorder. Available at: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/24/2024/08/PWHD-ONA.pdf>
16. Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness, 2024
17. Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Communities Survey 5-year estimates. Available online: <https://www.novaregion.org/DocumentCenter/View/13586/NOVA-Demog-and-Econ-Fact-Sheet>
18. ALICE Household Survival Budget, 2022, <https://unitedforalice.org/household-budgets/virginia>
19. Kaneff, J. (January 2025). *Shifting migration patterns of Northern Virginia: Affordable housing needs*. Northern Virginia Regional Commission.
20. Virginia Department of Education statistics via VAAS interactive graphing tool. Copyright (c) 2024 SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA. All Rights Reserved.
21. Education Recovery Scorecard, Virginia Data and press Release, February 2025. Available online: <https://educationrecoverycard.org/states/virginia/>
22. U.S. Department of Education Office for [Civil Rights Data Collection](#), 2011 and 2021
23. American Psychological Association. Education and Socioeconomic Status Factsheet. Available online: <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education>
24. 2023 Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results, Virginia High School Survey, 10-year Trend Analysis Report
25. Virginia Department of Health Drug Overdose Needs Assessment Tool, 2023. Available online: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/data/need-assessment-tool-for-drug-overdose-and-related-outcomes/>
26. Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and Virginia Department of Education. 2022 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions, Executive Summary. Available online: [2022-virginia_school_survey-climate-workingsummary.pdf](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/data/2022-virginia-school-survey-climate-workingsummary.pdf)

THE
community
foundation
FOR NORTHERN VIRGINIA



@communityfoundationfornova



@cfnova



communityfoundationfornova

3201 Jermantown Road, Suite 660 | Fairfax, VA 22030 | 703.879.7640 | www.cfnova.org

