

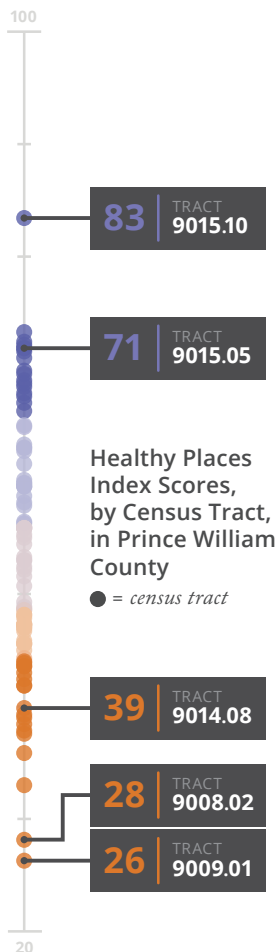
PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

At first glance, Prince William County is a healthy place to live. It ranks among the healthiest counties in the nation, but closer examination reveals wide variation in health across neighborhoods and census tracts. For example, life expectancy—how long a newborn is expected to live—varies by 17 years, depending on where in Prince William County a child is born. Other health measures also vary greatly.

Health itself, and the inequities in health we see across Prince William County, are about more than health care. Health is shaped by education, economic and other household resources, housing, transportation, and our environment—both physical (e.g., parks) and social (e.g., racial discrimination).

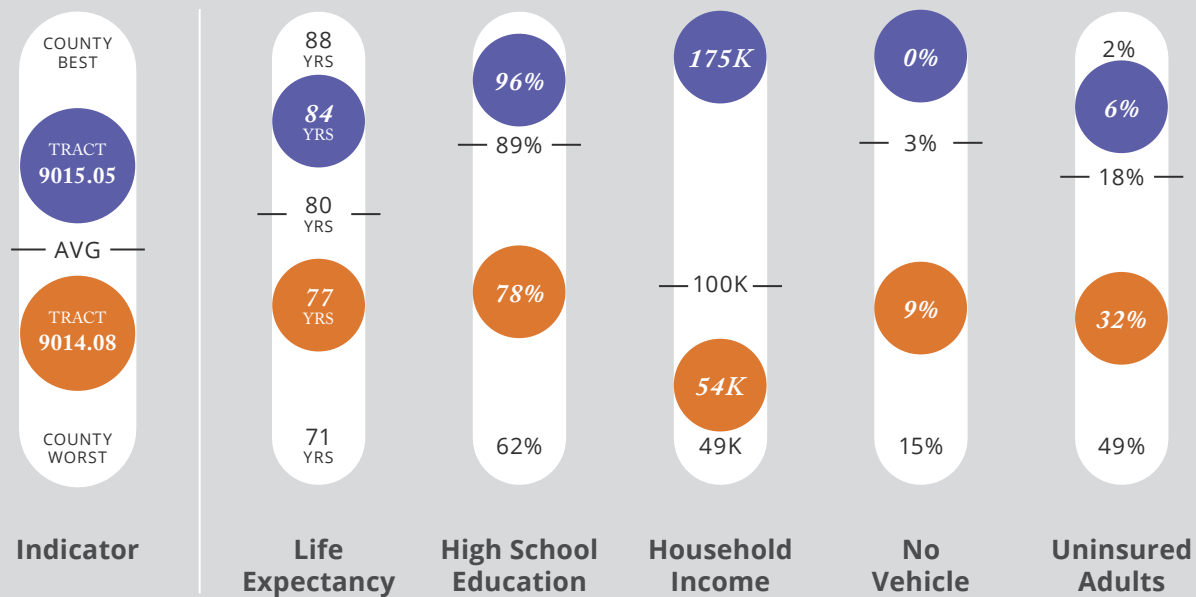
At the request of the Northern Virginia Health Foundation and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the Center on Society and Health at Virginia Commonwealth University developed a new tool, called the Healthy Places Index (HPI), to provide the public a convenient way to measure the health of neighborhoods in Northern Virginia. The HPI uses data on dozens of indicators, taken from each of the census tracts, to predict the health of communities. The advanced statistical computations used to produce the HPI yielded a stunning finding—education and economic resources accounted for 60% of the variation in life expectancy we see across the region. Housing and transportation explained 26%, and health care accounted for only 6%.

The HPI measures the health of every census tract on a scale of 0–100; high numbers represent the best conditions. As with life expectancy,



Gaps in Opportunity in Prince William County

Indicators depict how greatly living conditions vary across Prince William County. Residents of tract 9015.05 (HPI 72) enjoy more favorable conditions for health than those living in tract 9014.08 (HPI 40).



Above: Outcomes in tracts 9015.05 (in Haymarket) and 9014.08 (in Bull Run) compared to the top, bottom, and average results for Prince William County

HPI scores vary greatly across Prince William County, from a low of 26 in census tract 9009.01 in Dumfries to a high of 83 in tract 9015.10 in Haymarket.

The differences in living conditions in places with high versus low HPI scores can be stark and often exist only a few miles apart. For example, in census tract 9015.05 in Haymarket, where the HPI is 71, residents have more education, income, and other resources for good health than do residents just six miles away in tract 9014.08 in Bull Run, where the HPI is 39. In that Bull Run tract, only 54% of adults have attended college and 25% of children live in poverty.

People of color are often disproportionately exposed to poor living conditions that affect their health. For example, in census tract 9008.02 near Dumfries, where the HPI is only 28, 49% of residents are African American, 21% are Hispanic, and 34% are recent immigrants (2000 or later).

Closing the gaps in Prince William County—in health and opportunity—requires policies and investments to improve education, income, and the economic vitality of communities. It will also require a recognition of the institutional inequities that created many of these conditions—and that persist today. These investments will improve health while also strengthening the local economy, civic wellbeing, and regional growth. Access to health care is also important, but meaningful improvements in health require attention to living conditions.

Policymakers in local government, the business community, real estate developers, and community leaders are among the stakeholders who can change these conditions. The benefits extend beyond those most in need. Everyone in Prince William County gains from improvements in health and economic wellbeing.



To see data for all census tracts in Prince William County, please visit our interactive map at <https://novahealthfdn.org/interactive-map-opportunity>