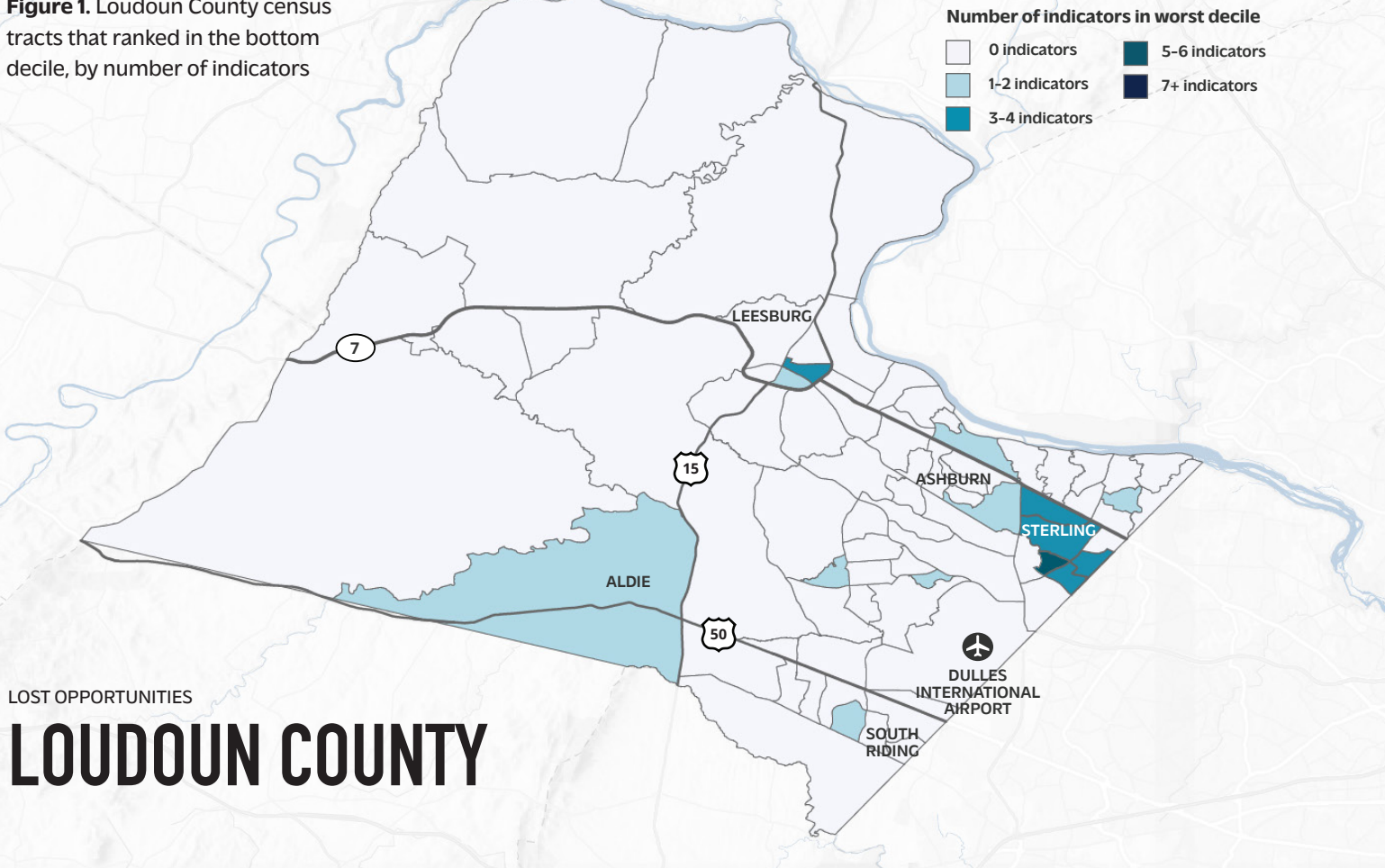


Figure 1. Loudoun County census tracts that ranked in the bottom decile, by number of indicators



THE PERSISTENCE OF DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS IN LOUDOUN COUNTY

Loudoun County is known for its good health, but health statistics at the county level can hide stark disparities. Life expectancy varies by 10 years across the county and premature death rates vary more than 3-fold. These disparities exist largely because of differences in social and environmental conditions that affect health, from education and income to housing and transportation.

A 2017 report commissioned by the Northern Virginia Health Foundation identified “islands of disadvantage” across Northern Virginia. That report was based on census data collected over five years in 2009–2013. The foundation’s new report examines data from 2017–2021 to identify areas that have experienced progress and setbacks over the decade. The report divides the region’s tracts into deciles. Deciles were used to group data into ten equally sized groups of census tracts. For each indicator, the bottom decile represented the 10% of tracts in Northern Virginia with the worst outcomes.

The new report found that areas of concentrated disadvantage persist in Loudoun County. **Figure 1** highlights tracts in Loudoun County that ranked among the bottom 10% on multiple indicators in 2017–2021. Tracts with the darkest shading were in the bottom decile on seven or more indicators. For example, census tract 6116.02 in Sterling ranked among the bottom 10% on five

indicators. Less than one quarter (24%) of adults had a Bachelor’s degree, 16% of the population lived in overcrowded housing, and 23% were uninsured. In that Sterling tract, 62% of the population was Hispanic and 13% was Asian.*

During this period, Loudoun County became more racially and ethnically diverse. The maps in Figure 2 show which areas of the county experienced growth in each racial and ethnic group. Socioeconomic progress occurred in areas of Loudoun County that were struggling at the time of the Northern Virginia Health Foundation’s 2017 report. For example, census tract 6106.03 in Leesburg, where 33% of the population was Hispanic and 49% was White, saw its poverty rate fall from 14% to 5%. Median household income increased from \$62,623 to \$74,911. Some of this progress may reflect efforts in Loudoun County to increase investments in marginalized communities and adopt equity-oriented policies.

However, many tracts that were already struggling in 2009–2013 experienced further economic setbacks. For example, in census tract 6115.01 in the Dulles Town Center area, median household income declined from \$83,636 to \$78,787, the poverty rate edged upward from 13% to 14%, and the share of adults with a Bachelor’s degree declined to 47% (**Table 1**). These conditions

disproportionately affected people of color. Almost one third (31%) of the population was Hispanic, 22% was Asian, and 13% was Black.

Setbacks of this sort occurred throughout Loudoun County. Low-income tracts in Ashburn and Sterling experienced increases in poverty between 2009–2013 and 2017–2021.

The period examined in the new report included the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the region experienced devastating health and socioeconomic setbacks. The pandemic also brought Federal, state, and local “COVID relief” programs. Low-income households experienced an increase in benefits through SNAP, Medicaid, and other federal supports that were discontinued in 2023. It is unclear whether the footprint of disadvantage in Loudoun County will shift as these benefits expire.

Gentrification

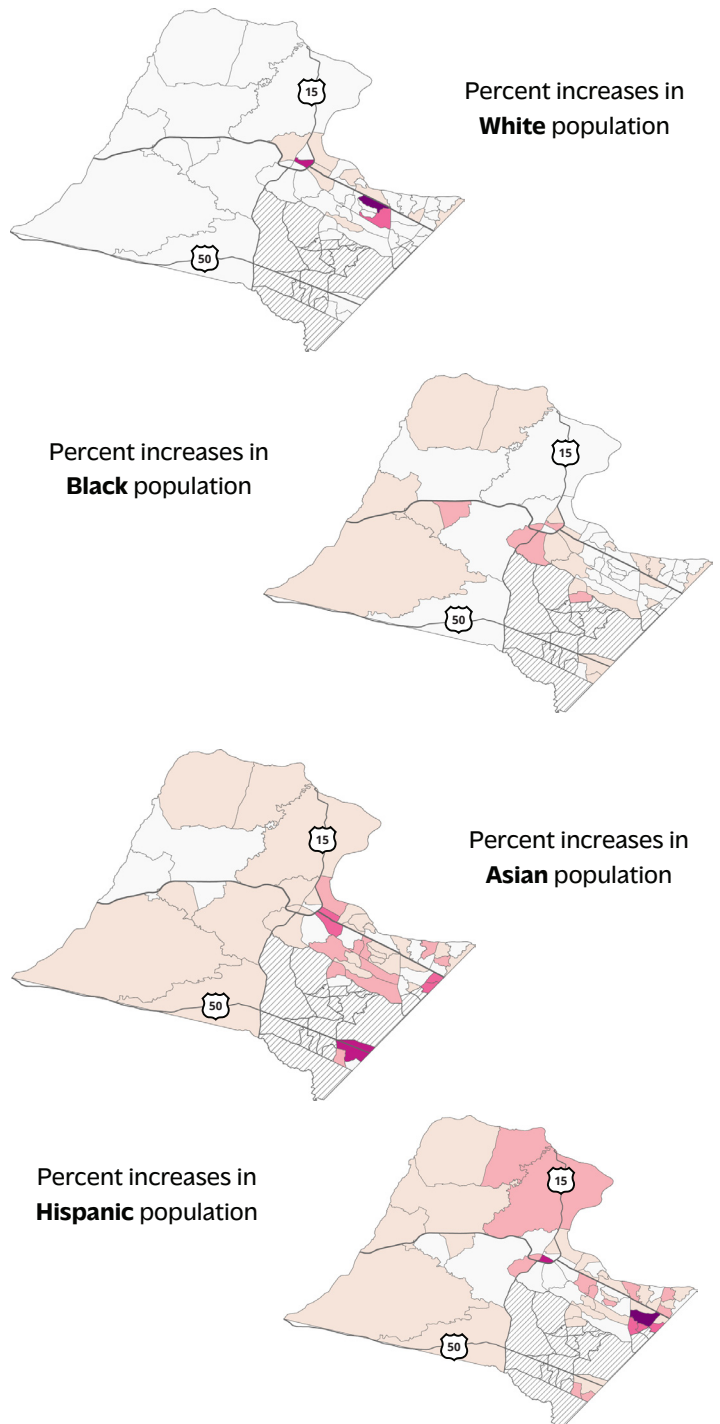
Progress in some areas likely reflected gentrification. For example, in tract **6105.05** in Leesburg, the poverty rate fell from 11% to 4% and median household income climbed from \$46,139 to \$69,281. However, the share of the population that was White grew from 25% to 41%, while the Hispanic and Asian populations declined.

The persistence of concentrated areas of disadvantage in Loudoun County underscores the need for targeted investment in marginalized neighborhoods. Key priorities to expand opportunity and health across Northern Virginia include investments in education, food security, employment opportunity and benefits, affordable housing, access to health care, environmental justice, and attention to systemic racism and inclusive policies. Loudoun County government and local organizations have launched a variety of initiatives in pursuit of these goals, but more must be done. All residents of Loudoun County deserve the opportunity to pursue a better life and good health.

Table 1. Socioeconomic conditions in census tract 6115.01 (Dulles Town Center)		
	2009-2013	2017-2021
High school diploma	94%	88% ↓
Bachelor’s degree	56%	47% ↓
Limited English	4%	5% ↑
Median household income	\$83,636	\$78,787 ↓
Poverty (all ages)	13%	14% ↑
Child poverty	25%	29% ↑
Reliance on public assistance	1%	9% ↑

Figure 2. Census tracts that experienced an increase in racial-ethnic composition between 2009–2013 and 2017–2021

Percent increase in share of population



* All references to Asian, Black, and White populations refer to those who do not identify as Hispanic.