

The Sound of Rain on a Strange Roof¹

Helping Unaccompanied Children Thrive in Fairfax County, Virginia²

The economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote in his book “The Nature of Mass Poverty” that migration is the most effective poverty reduction mechanism.³ While it is true that the movement of people creates opportunities, it also increases threats. With the arrival of over 325,000 Unaccompanied Children into U.S. communities from the Northern Triangle in the last five years, they are indeed strangers in a strange land.⁴ How we respond to this situation can determine the future, for better or worse, of Fairfax County, Virginia, and other migrant-destination communities. The following is an analysis of migration patterns to identify how to help these children succeed academically and prepare themselves for a better future.

Support is needed to help these children overcome social and economic circumstances that demand a strong focus on survival, provide only limited higher education opportunities, and do little to heal the trauma they have suffered. Like Faulkner’s characters in “As I Lay Dying,” we speak of high ideals but take actions based on self-interest. We must help these children build a better future for themselves – not only because it is the right thing to do but because it will also ensure a better future for our country. This paper identifies public schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, that will most likely need support to help Unaccompanied Children thrive. Please help us support better education outcomes and higher education opportunities for these children.

The objectives of this paper are (1) to determine in which communities and public schools these children are located, (2) to map the potential sources of assistance that are available to them, and (3) to provide material support and higher education scholarships to these Hispanic youth. As indicated in Annex One, approximately 70 percent of the Unaccompanied Children are between the ages of 15 and 17, more than two-thirds are male, and roughly one-third of the children come from each country – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. These characteristics led us to focus on high school students in neighborhoods with a relatively high population of Northern Triangle-origin residents. The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) Five Year 2019 data was used to determine where these communities were located in Fairfax County. Social Explorer (<https://www.socialexplorer.com>) was used to map the communities by country of origin for Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans.

¹ “How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home.” As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner, 1930.

² The Office of Refugee Resettlement defines an unaccompanied child as a minor (less than 18 years of age) that is in the custody of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) without a parent or legal guardian. Current U.S. law requires CBP to transfer custody of an unaccompanied child to the Office of Refugee Resettlement which then seeks to place the child with a parent or relative in the United States until the refugee appeal process can be completed. See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/uc>. These children are in complex family situations and, in many cases, appear to have undergone psychological trauma prior to entering local public schools. See <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2016/06/immigrant-minors>

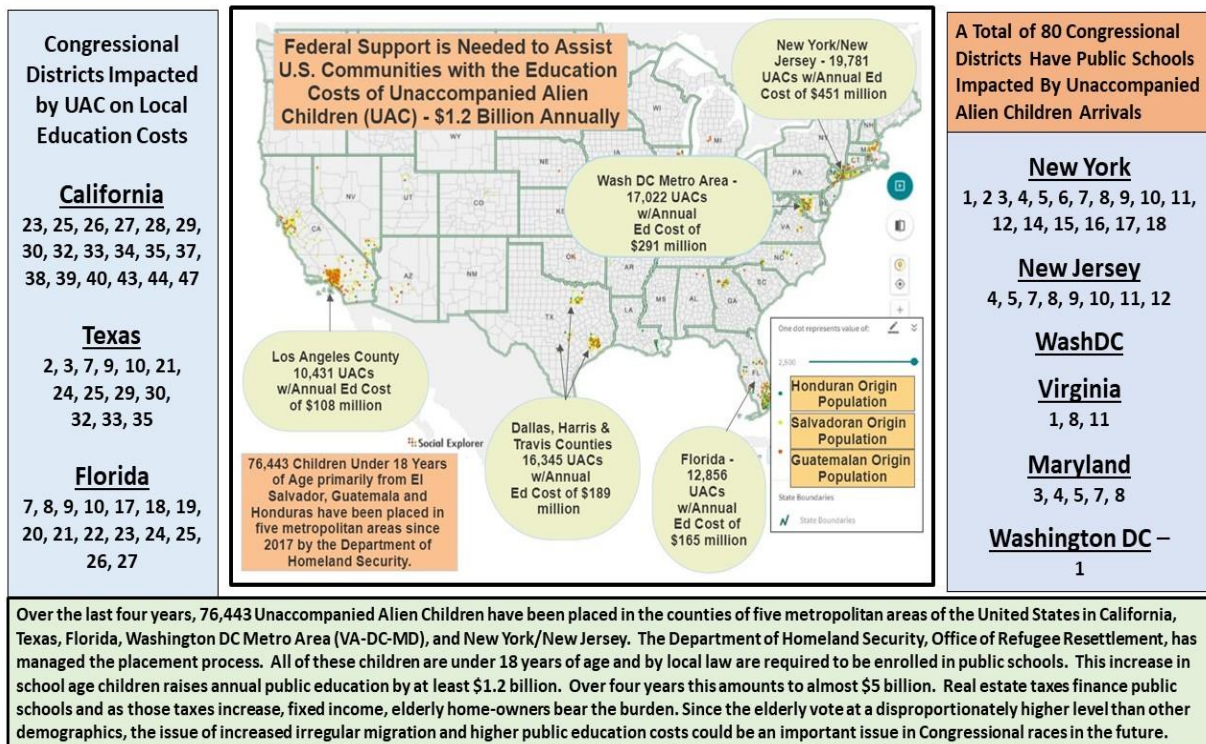
³ The nature of mass poverty Galbraith, J.K. Cambridge, Mass. (USA) Harvard Univ. Press 1979 ISBN 0-674-60533-0 Originally given as lectures at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, University of Geneva and at Radcliffe Institute.

⁴ United States. Office of Refugee Resettlement. Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors by State. See <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-state> Accessed 12/28/2021.

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Background

From October 1, 2016, through October 31, 2021, the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Homeland Security placed 366,498 Unaccompanied Children in communities across the United States. These children migrated to the United States from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala (collectively known as the “Northern Triangle”) and were released to “sponsors” (usually a parent, legal guardian, or family member) while awaiting adjudication of their refugee status. In compliance with state laws, Unaccompanied Children are minors and must enroll in public schools. Since 2017, more than 4,000 children have been placed in Fairfax County.



This map provides an overview of the placement of unaccompanied children in the U.S. from 2016 – 2020. The estimated cost to U.S. public schools – more than \$1 billion per year.

The highest concentrations of Unaccompanied Children are in California, Texas, Florida, Washington DC Metro Area, and New York/New Jersey. This form of irregular migration impacts eighty congressional districts. The additional costs to public schools are estimated at over \$1.2 billion annually. A comprehensive analysis of this migration can be found at <https://www.maxey.info/helping-unaccompanied-children>.

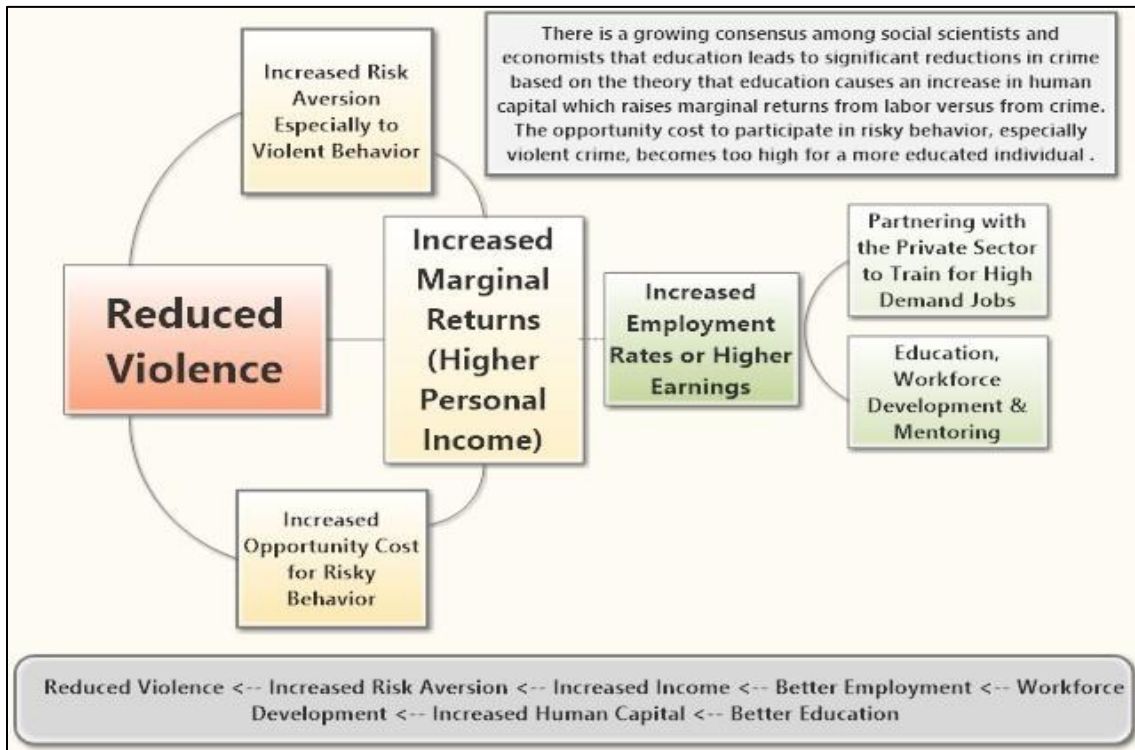
Given the additional cost that public schools have to absorb, help is needed to provide social and economic services to these young people and their families. We want them to be integrated into their communities as educated, productive residents. We also want to prevent increased youth gang activity and criminal behavior. Working together, we can ensure that everyone has an opportunity for a better life and that we move toward a better future. Relatively small investments now can create the conditions needed for prosperous, dynamic communities in the future.

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Irregular migration is complex, making developing and implementing solutions challenging. While debate continues about reforming our immigration system, we must focus on the situation at hand – that is, the young people in our communities and public schools who need help now. We seek to create a model for action in Fairfax County, Virginia, that can be replicated in communities across the United States experiencing the same issue. This effort requires that we (1) determine where the Unaccompanied Children are located in our county, (2) identify neighborhoods where they reside and public schools in which they are most likely enrolled, and (3) provide social and economic support to encourage these young people to stay in school and focus on gaining a higher education.⁵

Hispanic Education in the United States

The 2019 Condition of Education report published by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that while Hispanic student dropout rates have improved over the last ten years, the student dropout rate, at 7.7%, is 88 percent higher than the dropout rate for white students and 38% higher than the rate for black students. Disaggregated data shows that a subset of this population (i.e., foreign-born Hispanic students) have a dropout rate of 16.7%, which is over 300 percent higher than for whites and approximately 200 percent higher than the black dropout rate.⁶ School attendance is critical because research shows a strong correlation between education and reduced violent or criminal behavior risk.



⁵ We provide scholarships to Hispanic youth attending two and four-year colleges or technical schools, connect young people and their families to local support services, and provide analysis and research to local, state and federal policy makers. Our goal is to make people aware of the situation, explain how they can support a child's dream for higher education through our scholarship program, and give hope to Hispanic youth that they can have a better future.

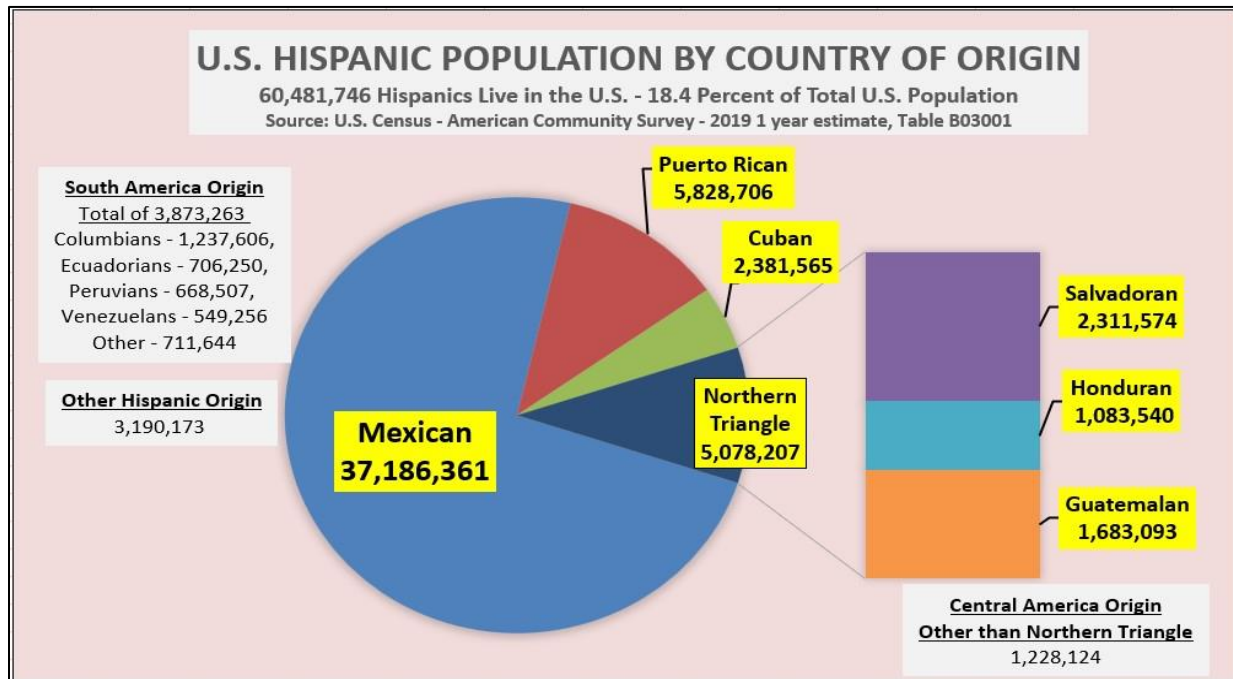
⁶ Condition of Education Report. National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. See <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/coj> Last accessed on 12/31/2021.

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The potential impact of Hispanics leaving school early could be significant as research literature indicates a growing consensus among social scientists and economists that education increases human capital formation and, when combined with private sector development activities (workforce development, enterprise promotion, etc.), increases employment and provides an individual the opportunity for higher wages. Higher wages increase marginal returns from work and create higher opportunity costs for risky behavior. Risk aversion rises as individuals have more to lose from violent behavior. This, in turn, leads to changes in attitudes and decreased crime levels. One major study indicates that each additional year of education could result in an 11 percent reduction in all crime and up to a 30 percent reduction in murder and assault rates.⁷ The importance of education is critical to the future of our communities. Hispanic youth, especially foreign-born youth, have a much higher probability of dropping out of high school, and that could cause adverse outcomes for crime, violence, and social issues.⁸

Hispanic Population in the United States

According to the Census Bureau, there are over 60 million Hispanic-origin residents in the United States. The top four groups of immigrants in this category are Mexico (37.2 million), Puerto Rico (5.8 million), Northern Triangle (5.1 million), Cuba (2.4 million), and South America (3.9 million). There are 3.2 million residents who do not identify with a country of origin other than the United States. 2.3 million Salvadorans, 1.1 million Hondurans, and 1.7 million Guatemalans are from the Northern Triangle. The focus of this paper is on the Northern Triangle origin population.



⁷ Randi Hjalmarsson, Lance Lochner. ["The Impact of Education on Crime: International Evidence."](http://www.economics.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1439/1439011_49-55_research_lochner.pdf) Research Report – CESifo DICE February 2012. Accessed Dec. 6, 2016:
http://www.economics.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1439/1439011_49-55_research_lochner.pdf

⁸ See additional information and a bibliography on the impact of education on reduction of violent behavior --
<https://www.maxey.info/education-violent-behavior>.

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Northern Triangle Origin Residents in the United States

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, migration is a chain event in which migrants tend to go to areas where they have social networks (family, friends, or colleagues) that provide information and support for housing and employment. With Northern Triangle-origin children making up approximately 90 percent of the Unaccompanied Children placed with sponsors, it is essential to understand where they live in the United States, what issues they face in obtaining an education, and how we can help. With this information, we can do a deeper analysis of neighborhoods located in Northern Triangle origin residents at the block level and identify which public schools they most likely attend.

By mapping available assets to assist these residents (e.g., local and national non-profits, hometown associations, churches, civic groups, etc.), we seek to help them access community networks to help them with issues they face. Based on lessons learned from our experience in this first, focused effort, we plan to develop similar action plans for the other counties where most Northern Triangle origin residents live in the United States. The goal is to help ensure that these Hispanic youth have the financial and academic support necessary to complete their higher education and that they are encouraged to help build a better future.

Top U.S. Counties for Placement of Unaccompanied Children (2018 – 2021)

Source: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/grant-funding/unaccompanied-children-released-sponsors-county>

State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	
New York	Bronx	186	442	139	552	Maryland	Montgomery	355	1168	214	1230	
New York	Queens	662	1101	459	1541	Maryland	Prince George's	571	1557	263	1678	
New York	Kings	465	847	271	1160				173%	-83%	538%	
New York	Suffolk	451	1478	284	1767							
New York	Nassau	386	1117	172	1234	Washington DC	WashDC	0	0	0	307	
New York	Westchester	212	415	100	671							
		2,362	5,400	1,425	6,925	California	Los Angeles	1825	3513	873	4246	
			129%	-74%	386%				92%	-75%	386%	
State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	
New Jersey	Essex	180	549	180	900	Texas	Dallas	601	1556	317	2671	
New Jersey	Bergen	230	390	78	421	Texas	Travis	263	769	231	1433	
New Jersey	Hudson	211	460	107	555	Texas	Harris	2088	4993	1095	7033	
New Jersey	Union	918	154	790	420				148%	-78%	578%	
New Jersey	Mercer	877	87	562	196							
		2,416	1,640	1,717	2,492							
			-32%	5%	45%							
State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	State	County	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Virginia	Loudoun	82	248	0	285	Florida	Orange	256	484	104	918	
Virginia	Fairfax	470	1318	226	1360	Florida	Palm Beach	910	1528	267	1942	
Virginia	Arlington	53	175	0	154	Florida	Broward	308	618	127	781	
Virginia	Prince William	151	484	76	603	Florida	Dade	2197	293	1702	834	
		756	2,225	302	2,402	Florida	Lee	894	122	636	492	
			194%	-86%	695%				4565	3045	2836	4967
									-33%	-7%	75%	

As indicated in the table above, from 2018 through 2021, 86,325 youth, primarily from the Northern Triangle, were placed in 27 counties. The percentage change in the number of UCs placed in these counties varied and is highlighted. The percentage change increase between 2020 and 2021 in Virginia, Texas, Maryland, California, and New York could indicate a

relatively younger immigrant population that is now focused on bringing their children from the Northern Triangle.

Helping Youth of Northern Triangle Origin in Fairfax County, Virginia

In terms of addressing irregular migration from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to the United States, we analyzed data from Social Explorer (<https://www.socialexplorer.com/>) at the county level for residents who indicated in their US Census response that they were originally from the Northern Triangle. An initial examination of the data on Unaccompanied Children placement shows that Northern Virginia, and especially Fairfax County, is an area with a significant increase in orders. The overall population of Northern Triangle origin residents appears to be relatively young, which means more UCs will probably be placed in the county shortly. Understanding where they are, their needs, and how to help them best is essential to their academic and economic success. Using U.S. Census data, we mapped the neighborhoods in Fairfax County with large concentrations of Northern Triangle-origin residents.

Over 13,000 Unaccompanied Children have been released to sponsors in the Washington D.C. Metro Area from 2018 through 2021, with 5,685 Unaccompanied Children placed in Fairfax County. Support needed by these students includes counseling for trauma, English language training, and additional tutoring to achieve grade-level math and reading comprehension. Some estimates for the education costs of these children indicate an additional charge of \$2,000 over and above the average per-student cost of a school district; for Fairfax County, that would mean a per-student cost of approximately \$18,000.⁹ Over this period, the estimated increased cost to the Fairfax County public school system is more than \$150 million.¹⁰ Local taxpayers primarily bear this additional cost, with most of the resources coming from real estate taxes.

⁹ See Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) website -- <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps>

¹⁰ This estimate is based on a per student cost of \$18,000 multiplied by the number of Unaccompanied Children estimated to be enrolled in FCPS.

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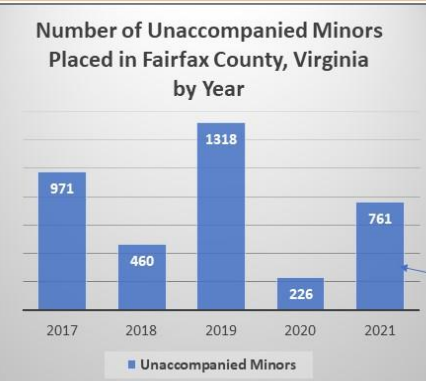
Irregular Migration Impact on Fairfax County, Virginia \$67.2 million per year in increased public education costs



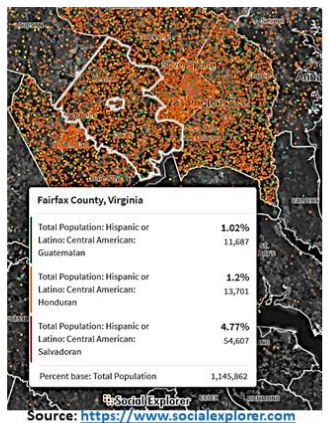
<https://www.fcps.edu/sites/default/files/media/pdf/FY-2022-Approved-Budget.pdf>

2019 US Census Estimate for Northern Triangle Population in Fairfax County was 79,995. Over the last five years 3,736 Unaccompanied Children have been placed in Fairfax County -- October 1, 2016 – June 30, 2021.

Fairfax County Public School Budget for 2021-2022 is \$3.4 billion/\$17,989 per student. The addition of 3,736 Unaccompanied Youth to the school system creates an additional cost of \$67.2 million per year. Note: Calculation based on \$3.4 billion budget for FY2022 & a student body of 189,000. Source: <https://www.fcps.edu/sites/default/files/media/pdf/FY-2022-Approved-Budget.pdf>



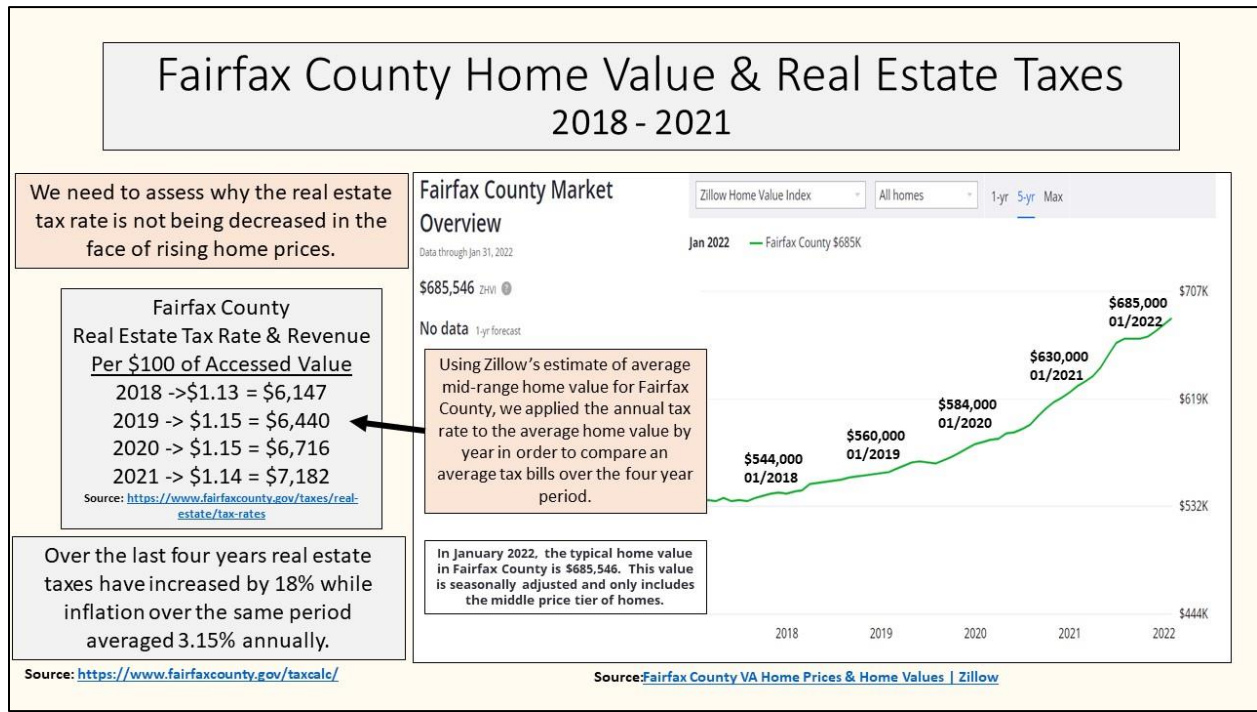
<https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-children-released-to-sponsors-by-county-september-2020.html>



Unaccompanied Minors placement data for FY 2021 is for 9 months -- 10/01/2020 through 06/30/2021.

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As these taxes are increased to cover education and other local costs, the retired, fixed-income homeowner bears a disproportionate burden. This is important politically since older people, with over an 80 percent average turnout, can significantly impact local, state, and federal elections. Aside from tax increases, youth adaptation problems can have economic consequences. For example, as communities experience increased youth gang activity, there is a significant and negative impact on property values, less private investment in the community, and decreased employment opportunities.¹¹ It is in everyone’s interest to proactively address the social and economic problems faced by unaccompanied children and their families in Fairfax County, Virginia.

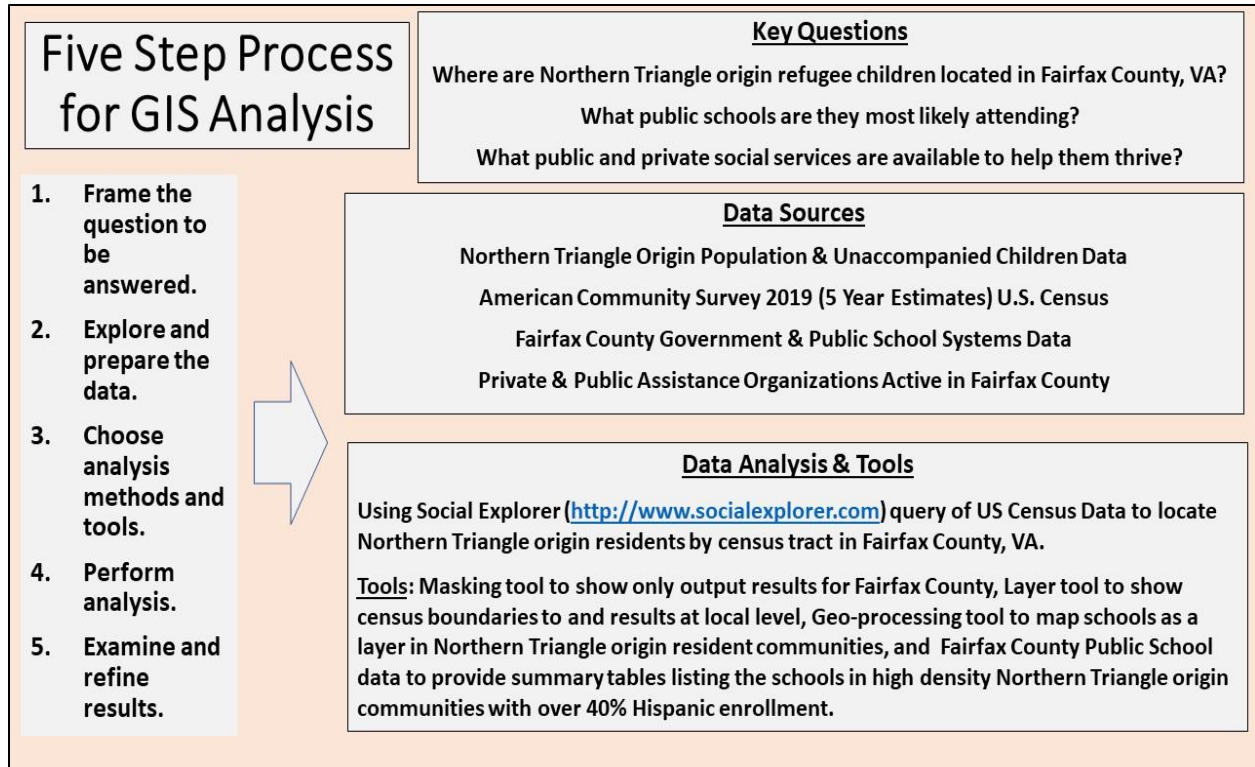


Methodology

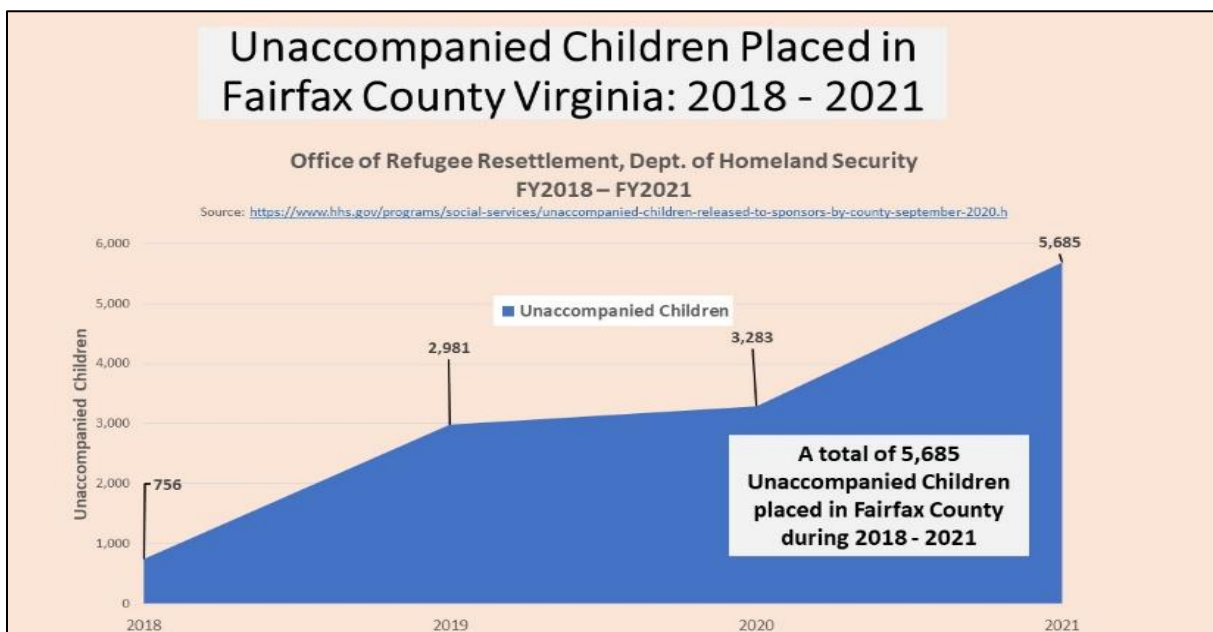
Using Social Explorer (<http://www.socialexplorer.com>), a Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis was conducted to determine where Northern Triangle origin children are probably located in Fairfax County, Virginia. We decided which communities had the highest proportion of Northern Triangle origin residents. Based on that, we mapped the public schools Hispanic youth in those communities would attend. The following illustration provides an overview of the methodology used for this analysis.

¹¹ See <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/preventing-gang-involvement/adverse-effects> -- “Large communities, those with a population over 50,000, are at the greatest risk of significant gang activity, and community members face heightened fear that they, their families, schools, or businesses, will become victims of theft and/or violence. Further, communities with gang activity are disproportionately affected by theft, negative economic impact, vandalism, assault, gun violence, illegal drug trade, and homicide.”

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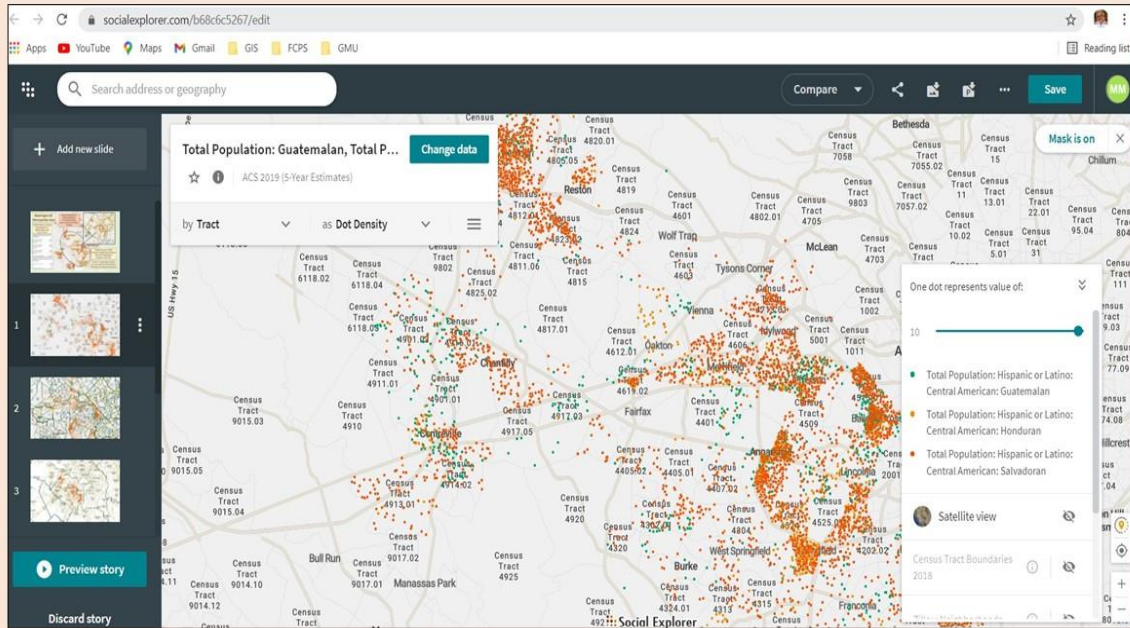
Office of Refugee Resettlement data indicates that approximately 90 percent of Unaccompanied Children are from the Northern Triangle, with the most coming from Guatemala, followed by Honduras. This paper determined the location of Northern Triangle origin residents in Fairfax County to decide which communities Unaccompanied Children may have been placed. There was no differentiation for specific countries of origin – that is, there was no separate analysis for Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran origin residents.



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Social Explorer, a GIS program, was used to map Northern Triangle-origin residents in the United States, focusing on the twenty-seven counties that received the majority of Unaccompanied Children over the last four years. Knowing where these children live and attend school would allow us to target our foundation efforts and scholarship program in the schools in their communities.

Social Explorer – <http://www.socialexplorer.com>



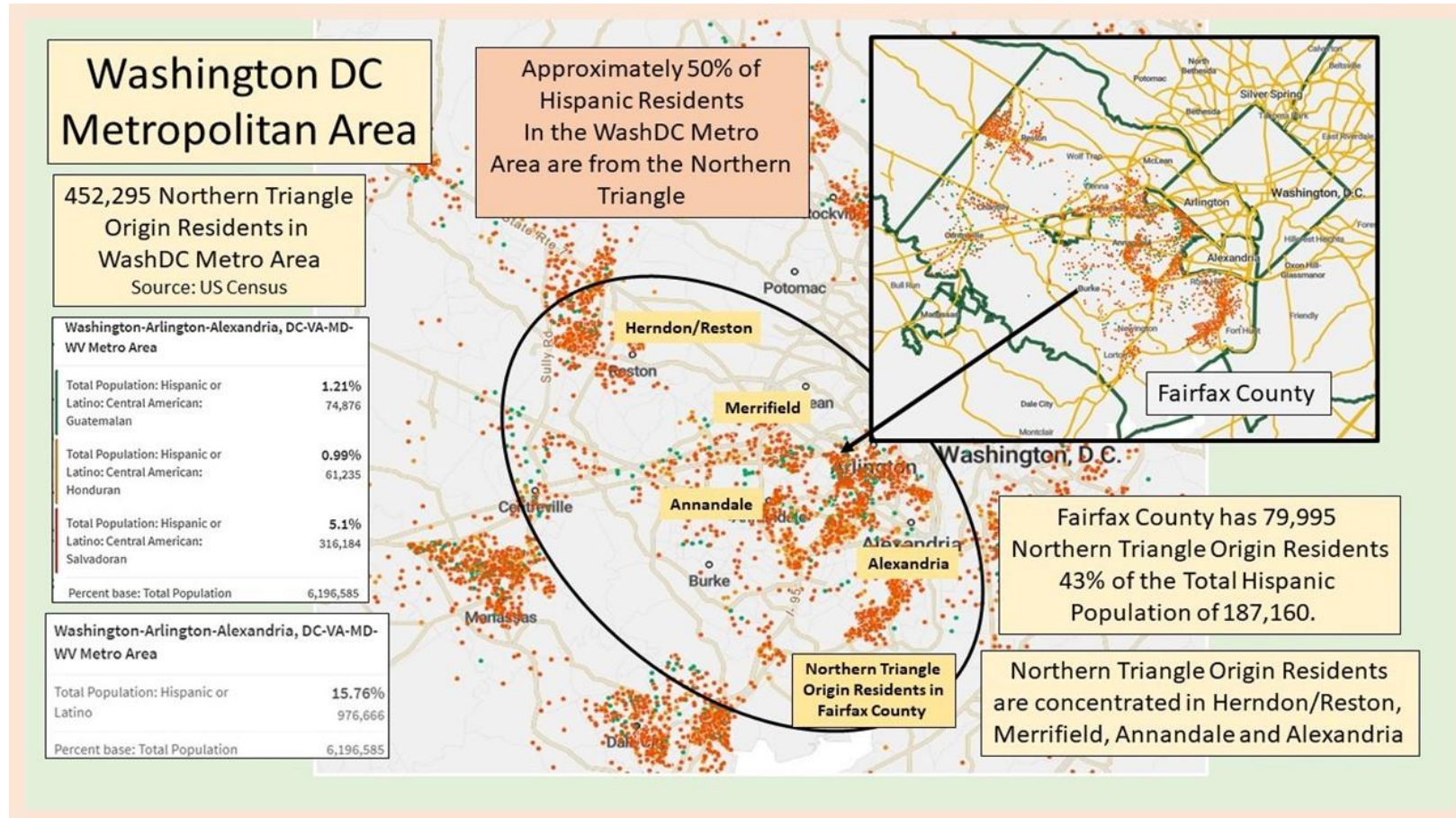
<https://www.socialexplorer.com/explore-maps>

We started with unaccompanied children's placement statistics from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Homeland Security. The most comprehensive information in this area is at the Department of Health and Human Services.¹² Using this information, we identified the top twenty-seven counties that had a significant number of Unaccompanied Children placed there. We identified relatively high-density communities of Northern Triangle origin residents to determine where these children are most likely located. Using the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 Five-Year data, we could map these communities in Fairfax County, Virginia, through Social Explorer.

Country of origin was selected for Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and a search was made on Social Explorer for a map of U.S. residents who reported they were born in one of these countries. Five areas were identified as the primary locations of these residents: California, Texas, Florida, WashDC Metro, and NY/NJ. Our analysis focused on Fairfax County, Virginia, within the WashDC Metro area.

¹² See Health and Human Services -- <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/unaccompanied-children/index.html>.

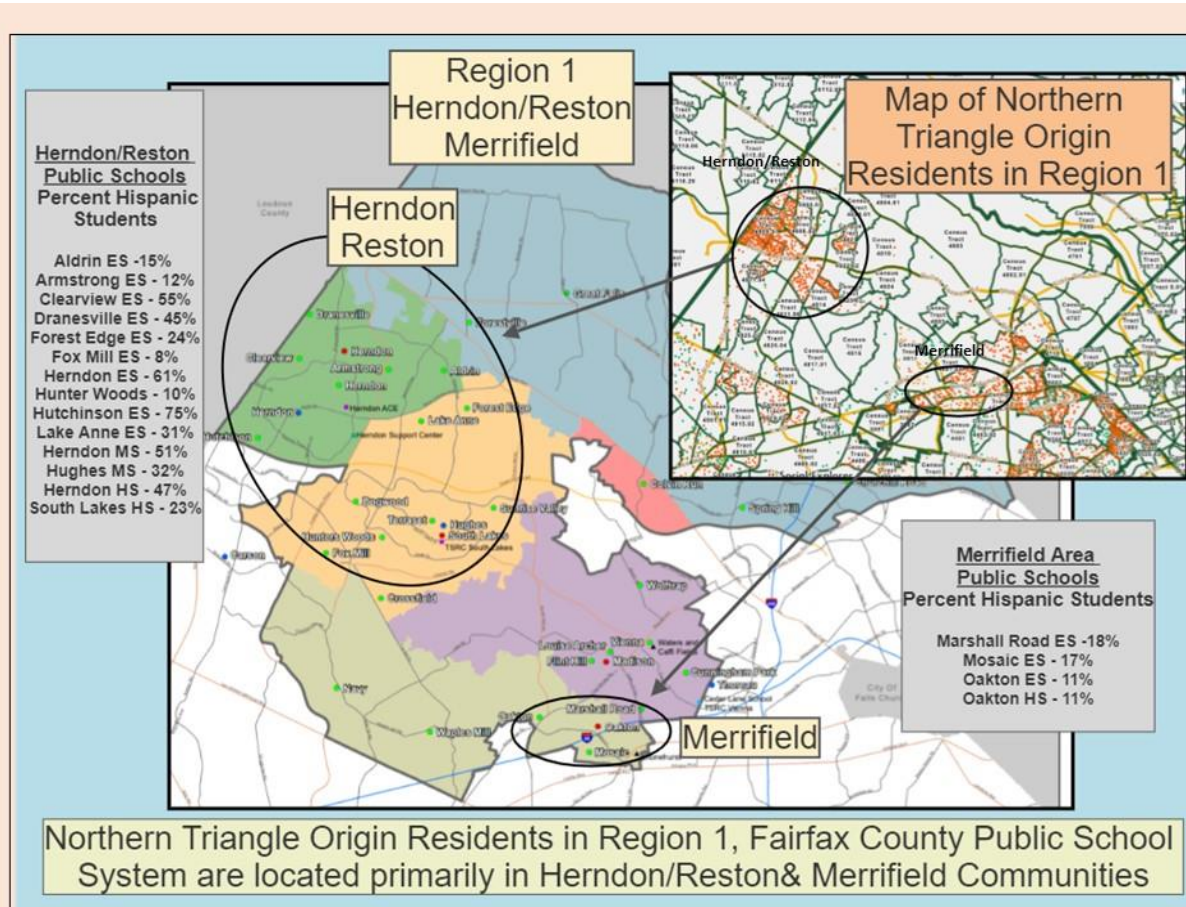
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In Fairfax County, we identified eight communities with a relatively high percentage of Northern Triangle origin residents: (1) Herndon; (2) Reston; (3) Merrifield; (4) Falls Church; (5) Bailey’s Crossroads; (6) Annandale; (7) Alexandria and (8) Lorton. These communities are located in three of the county's five Fairfax County Public Schools education regions: Region One – Herndon-Reston; Region Two – Merrifield, Falls Church, and Annandale; and Region Three – Alexandria. With an overlay of the communities and the school system, we wanted to identify which public schools would most likely have Unaccompanied Children attending.

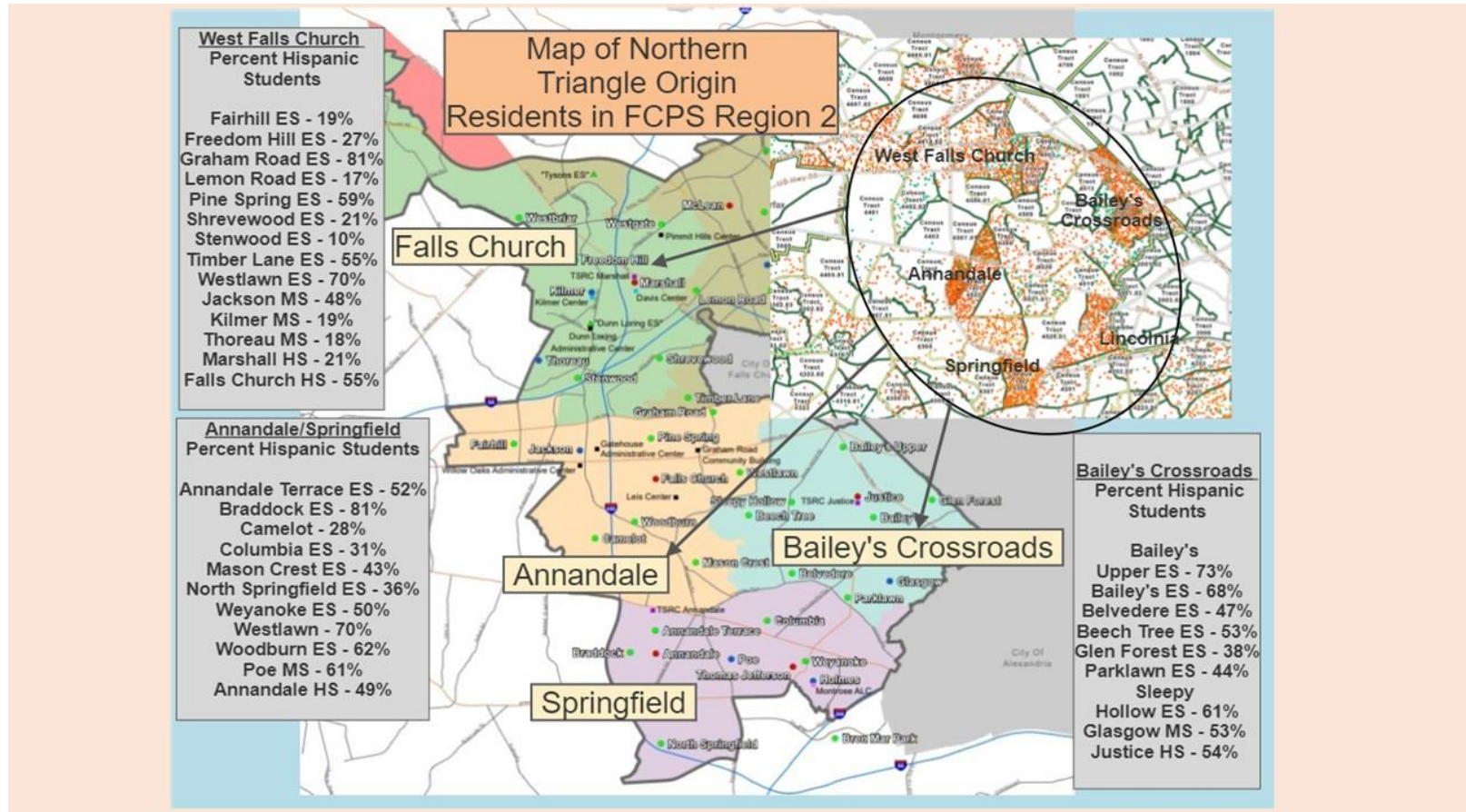
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Herndon/Reston/Merrifield



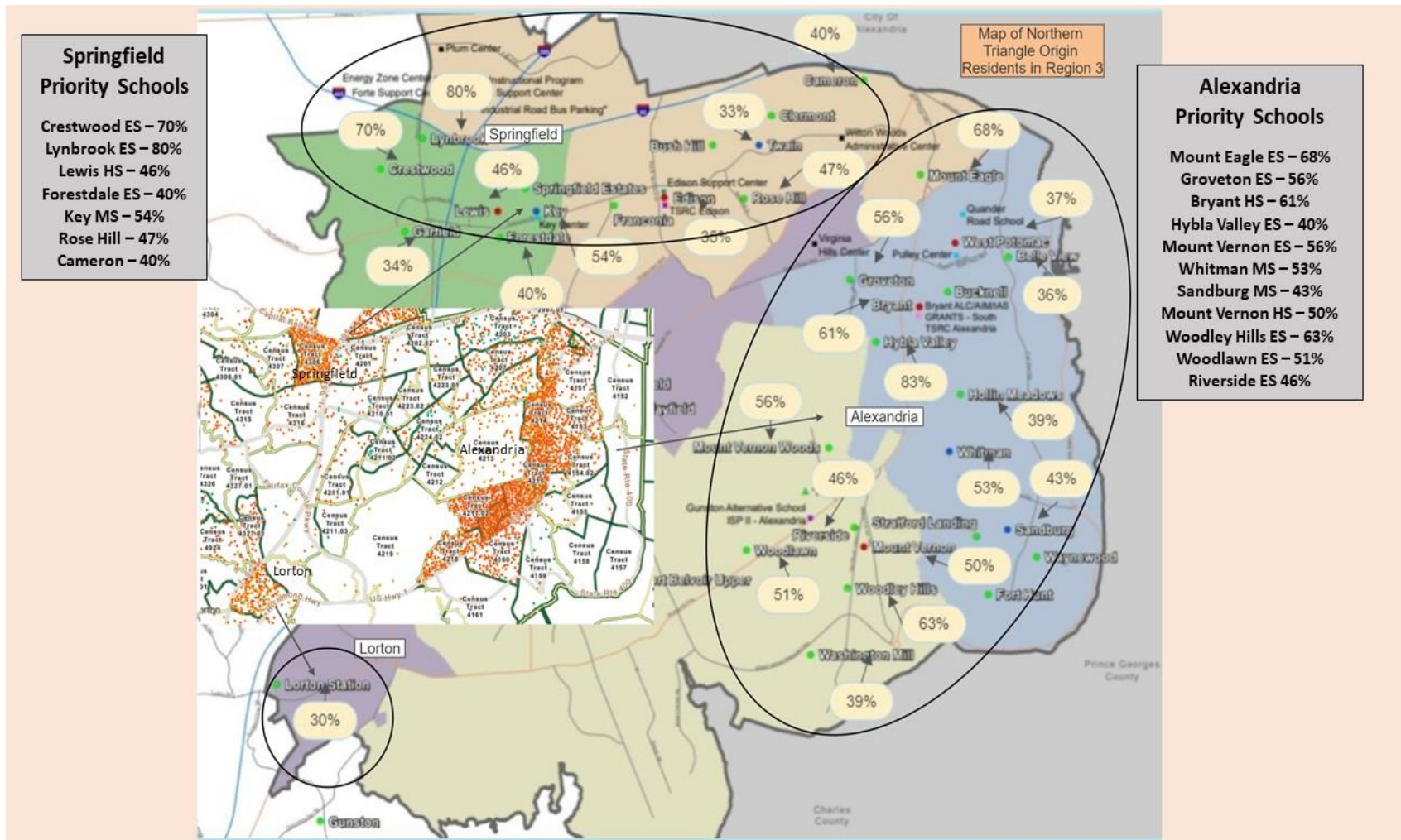
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Annandale



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Alexandria



High-Priority Schools by Region

Priority Schools for Public & Private Support
 to Address the Needs of Unaccompanied Children

Region 1

**Herndon/Reston
 Priority Schools**

Clearview ES – 55%
 Dranesville ES – 45%
 Herndon ES – 61%
 Herndon MS – 51%
 Herndon HS – 47%
 Hutchinson ES – 75%

Region 2

**West Falls Church
 Priority Schools**

Graham Road ES – 81%
 Pine Spring ES – 59%
 Timber Lane ES – 55%
 Westlawn -70%
 Woodburn ES – 62%
 Falls Church HS – 55%

**Annandale-
 Springfield
 Priority Schools**

Annandale
 Terrace ES – 52%
 Braddock ES – 81%
 Mason Crest ES – 43%
 Weyanoke ES – 51%
 Poe MS -61%
 Annandale HS – 49%

**Bailey's
 Crossroads
 Priority Schools**

Bailey's Upper ES – 73%
 Bailey's ES – 68%
 Belvedere ES – 47%
 Beech Tree ES – 53%
 Parklawn ES – 44%
 Sleepy Hollow ES – 61%
 Glasgow MS – 53%
 Justice HS – 54%

Region 3

**Springfield
 Priority Schools**

Crestwood ES – 70%
 Lynbrook ES – 80%
 Lewis HS – 46%
 Forestdale ES – 40%
 Key MS – 54%
 Rose Hill – 47%
 Cameron – 40%

**Alexandria
 Priority Schools**

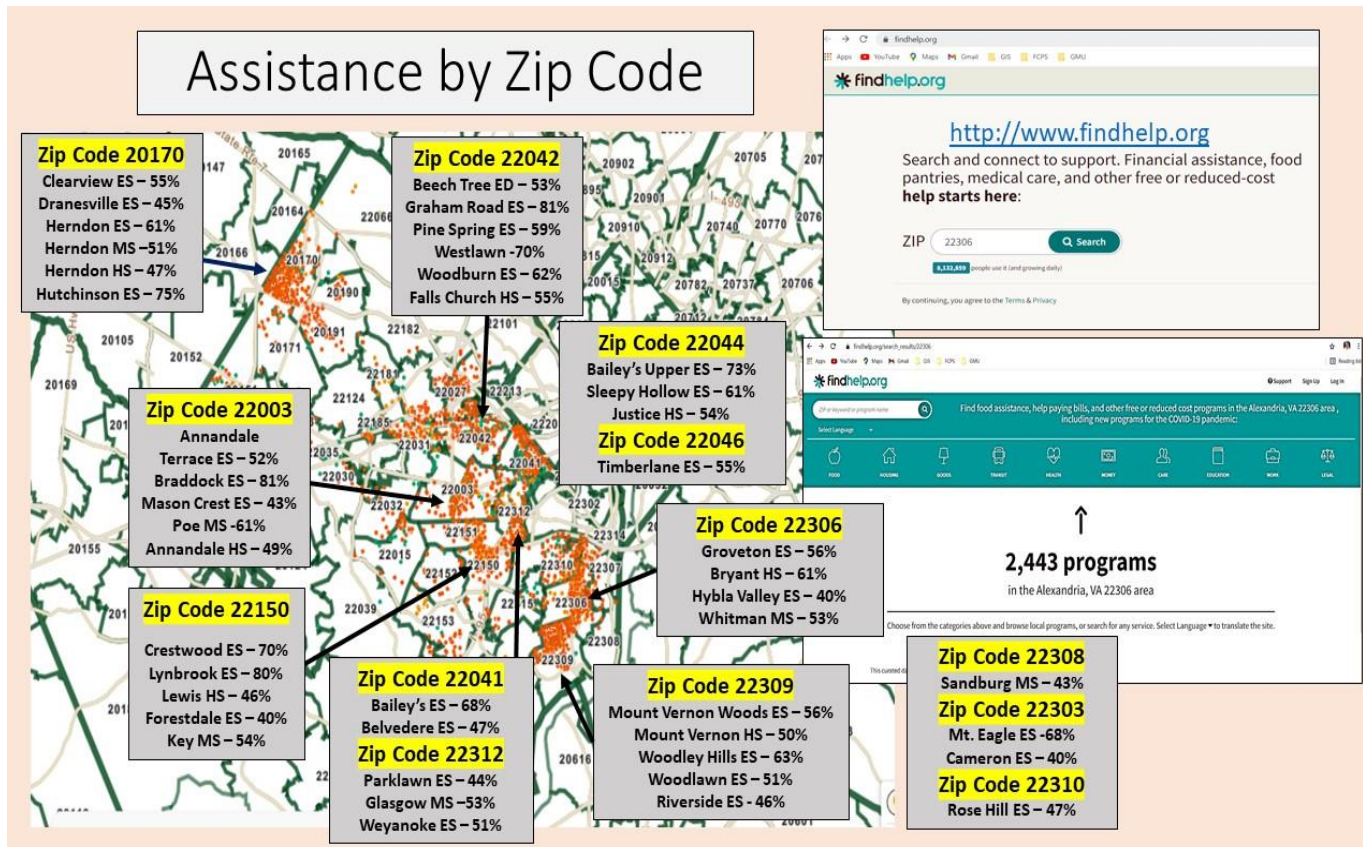
Mount Eagle ES – 68%
 Groveton ES – 56%
 Bryant HS – 61%
 Hybla Valley ES – 40%
 Mount Vernon Woods ES –
 56%
 Whitman MS – 53%
 Sandburg MS – 43%
 Mount Vernon HS – 50%
 Woodley Hills ES – 63%
 Woodlawn ES – 51%
 Riverside ES 46%

Resources Map

Public & Private Resources to Support Refugee Communities in Fairfax County, Virginia

- Foundations – Educate Fairfax Foundation
- Non-Profits – Lutheran Immigration & Resettlement Services, Honduras Mission Committee, Project Honduras Child, Immigrant Outreach & Refugee Center, U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants, Refugee Empowerment & Support Taskforce.
- Religious Denominations – Churches
- Federal Programs – Office of Refugee Resettlement
- State Programs – Virginia Department of Social Services
- Northern Triangle Embassies – Honduras, El Salvador & Guatemala
- Fortune 500 Companies (Philanthropic Programs) – Freddie Mac, General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Capital One Financial, DXC Technology, Leidos Holdings, Reston, information technology; #338. Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Tysons, hospitality; #417. NVR, Beacon Roofing, Booz Allen Hamilton, SAIC.

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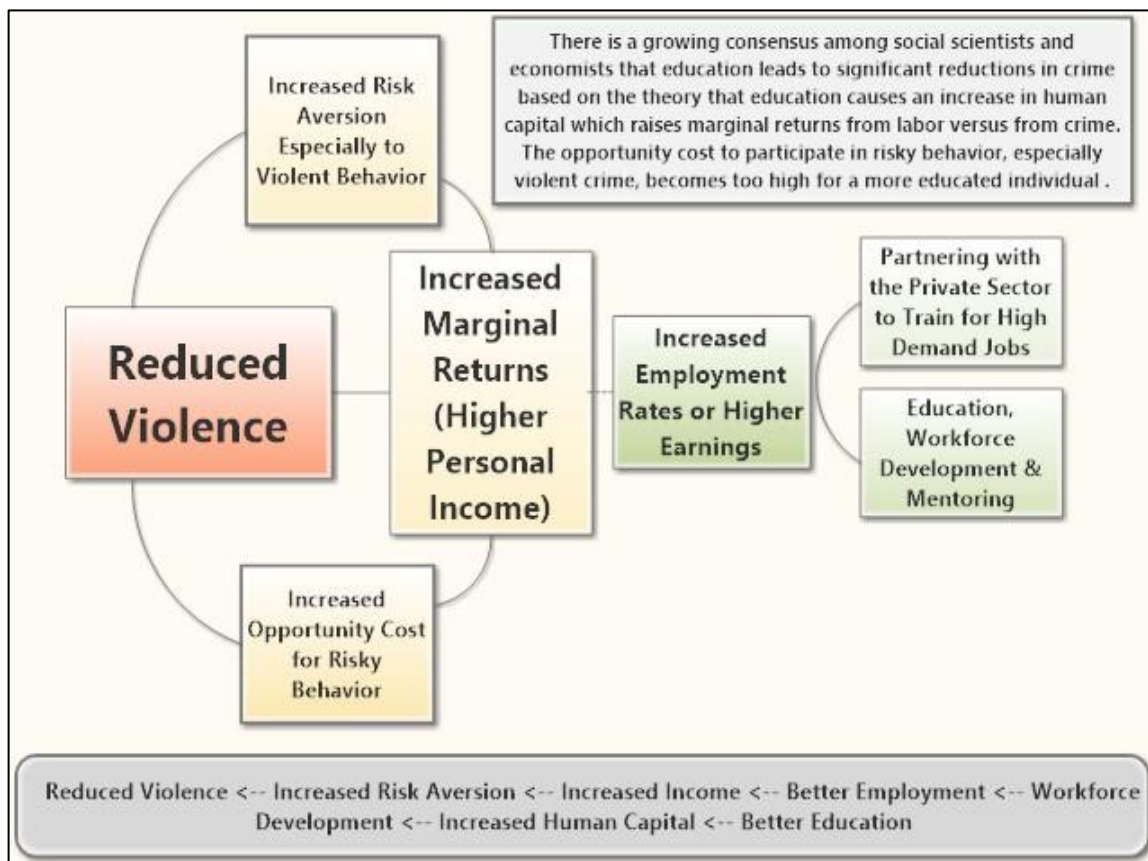
Assistance by Zip Code

Sources for Assistance:

- (1) Virginia Refugee Coordinator – Seyoum Berhe, Email: seyoum.berhe@dss.virginia.gov; Tel. 804.726.7927; (2) Virginia Refugee Health Coordinator – Jill Grumbine, Email: jill.grumbine@vdh.virginia.gov Tel. 804.864.7911; and (3) Virginia Refugee Services – Department of Social Services - https://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/ona/refugee_services.cgi; and (4) Lutheran Social Services – Unaccompanied Children Foster Care - <https://lssnca.org/programs/urm-fostercare.html>

Impact of Education on Violence

- Research literature indicates a growing consensus among social scientists and economists that education increases human capital formation and, when combined with private sector development activities (workforce development, enterprise promotion, etc.), increases employment and provides an individual the opportunity for higher wages.
- Higher wages increase marginal returns from work and create higher opportunity costs for risky behavior. Risk aversion rises as individuals have more to lose from violent behavior. This, in turn, leads to changes in attitudes and decreased crime levels. One major study indicates that each additional year of education results in an 11 percent reduction in all crime and up to a 30 percent reduction in violent crime.
- The dream of a better life through education changes behavior, promotes positive social outcomes and provides the impetus for violence reduction as measured by decreased crime levels (especially violent crimes, which are seen to fall three times more than overall crime rate reductions).



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HELPING UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN FROM THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE
MARIE MAXEY FOUNDATION

Annex One

Breakdown by Gender

YEAR	MALES	FEMALES
FY2021	66%	34%
FY2020	68%	32%
FY2019	66%	34%
FY2018	71%	29%
FY2017	68%	32%
FY2016	67%	33%
FY2015	68%	32%
FY2014	66%	34%
FY2013	73%	27%
FY2012	77%	23%

Breakdown by Country of Origin

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015	FY2014	FY2013	FY2012
HONDURAS	32%	25%	30%	26%	23%	21%	17%	34%	30%	27%
GUATEMALA	47%	48%	45%	54%	45%	40%	45%	32%	37%	34%
EL SALVADOR	13%	14%	18%	12%	27%	34%	29%	29%	26%	27%
MEXICO	1%	6%	2%	3%	<3%	3%	6%	<2%	3%	8%
ALL OTHER COUNTRIES	7%	8%	5%	<5%	3%	2%	3%	<3%	5%	4%

Breakdown by Age

AGE	FY2021	FY2020	FY2019	FY2018	FY2017	FY2016	FY2015	FY2014	FY2013	FY2012
0-12	16%	16%	16%	15%	17%	18%	17%	21%	14%	11%
13-14	13%	12%	12%	12%	13%	14%	14%	16%	13%	11%
15-16	39%	37%	37%	37%	37%	37%	38%	36%	40%	39%
17	33%	35%	35%	35%	32%	31%	30%	27%	34%	38%