Virginia Energy Burden

Energy burden equals the percentage of income spent on energy costs.

The size of the energy burden can be due to: the type of home and its condition; local economic opportunity; physical and mental health; increasing energy costs; and access to available assistance.

The average energy burden in Virginia for people living at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level is about 21 percent. For people living at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, it is 14 percent. For people living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, it is 10 percent. And for people living above 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, it is 2 percent.[1]

Over 922,930 families live at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level in Virginia. About half of these families are income eligible for energy assistance programs, but only 23 percent of those received assistance in Fiscal Year 2021.[2]

Twenty-five percent of Virginians are energy insecure. They may reduce or forego food or medicine to pay their energy costs. They may leave their home at an unhealthy temperature. They may receive a disconnect or stop delivery notice. And/or they may be unable to use heating and/or air conditioning equipment.[3]

In 2021, thirty-three percent of low-income Virginians had to choose between groceries, medication, or paying heating and cooling expenses.[2]

Energy insecurity can lead to utility shutoffs.

Utility shutoffs can lead to physical and mental health impacts, evictions, job loss, trips to the ER, and death.

Virginia is one out of seven states in the country without hot and cold weather protections from shutoffs. A map shows the seven states in the United States, including Virginia, without hot and cold weather protections. The other six states are Tennessee, Florida, Colorado, North Dakota, Alaska, and Hawaii.[4]

[1] U.S. Dept. of Energy Low-income Energy Affordability Tool, available at https://www.energy.gov/eere/slsc/maps/lead-tool
[2] Dept. of Social Services Biennial Report on the Effectiveness of Low-Income Energy Assistance Programs, October 2021, available at https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2021/RD548/PDF
[3] U.S. Energy Information Administration, Office of Energy Demand and Integrated Statistics, Form EIA-457A of the 2020 Residential Energy Consumption Survey.
[4] Map Courtesy of J. Davidson, Appalachian Voices; Source: Energy Justice Lab, Indiana University