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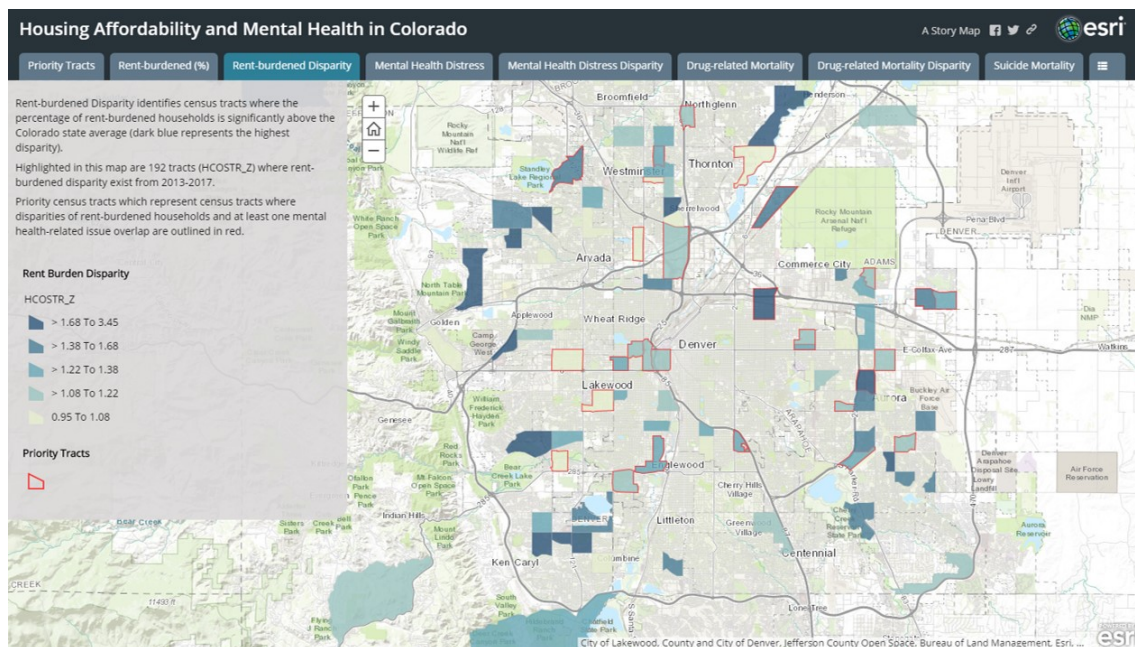*For more information contact:*
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New On-line Mapping Tool Targets Link Between Housing, Mental Health
6% of Colorado census tracts identified as high-risk

(Denver, CO) A study released today maps the places in Colorado where people's access to affordable housing and their challenges related to mental health overlap, giving policymakers the ability to target state resources to help those most in need.

Displayed via interactive online maps, the study identifies 71 census tracts (6% of Colorado's total) that have a significantly higher prevalence of both rent-burdened households and people experiencing mental health concerns than the state average. These tracts are most concentrated in the state's five metropolitan regions: Pueblo, Denver, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, and Grand Junction.

The online tool also shows that 16% of all census tracts (192) have a higher prevalence of rent-burdened households, and 35% (432) have a higher prevalence of mental health-related issues. Among mental health-related issues, significantly higher rates of suicide mortality were most concerning along with drug-related mortality associated with poisoning or drug overdose.

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Mapping Tool, Continued

Dr. Jieun Lee from the University of Northern Colorado and Dr. Ivan Ramirez from the University of Colorado Denver conducted the study and developed the mapping tool, through funding from the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab at the University of Denver. The tool and the full study are available through: **https://coloradolab.org/2019/11/04/the-intersection-of-housing-and-mental-health-in-colorado/**

The researchers see their findings as pointing the way for policymakers who have limited resources, seeking to address two persistent issues. "There's an urgent need to strengthen these communities through policies and programs that address both the housing and mental health systems in Colorado, such as permanent supportive housing," says Dr. Elysia Clemens, Deputy Director of the Colorado Lab. "Drs. Lee and Ramirez have given us a tool that will help improve policymakers to address these key social determinants of health."

The mapping tool also shares information about access to affordable housing and concerns related to mental health separately. Sixteen percent of Colorado census tracts have a higher prevalence of rent-burdened households than the state average and thirty-five percent of census tracts have a higher prevalence of key mental health issues.

More about the mapping tool and Dr. Lee's research is available on the University of Northern Colorado website: **https://www.unco.edu/news/articles/affordable-housing-affects-mental-physical-health-gis.aspx**

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About the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab: The Colorado Lab is a strategic research partner for government agencies and a bridge to the research community. The Lab's mission is improving the lives of Colorado residents by partnering with state and local governments to strengthen coordinated and efficient person-centered services. For more information, visit https://coloradolab.org.