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Data Visualizations Tell the Stories within Virginia Demographics

The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service released today [Visualizing Virginia](#), a series of easily accessible data portraits depicting population size and growth, age, education, unemployment, income, and poverty for Virginia's diverse regions and localities. Developed in part in response to the leadership of the Virginia General Assembly House Appropriations Committee, the visualizations may inform policy makers, engaged citizens, and the media of important trends in the population of the Commonwealth.

"These data pictures tell essential stories about the population in the Commonwealth," said Delegate Chris Jones, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "Our committee's view of the future was enriched by the Cooper Center's presentation to us, and we continue to use these visualizations as references in policy-making."

Using the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Cooper Center, these innovative data images, color-coded by region, present the vast differences across Virginia's regions and localities. Because each of the seven visualizations simultaneously reflects local, regional, and statewide data, readers can see the contours of a demographic dynamic in a locality, compare that dynamic to nearby localities and the region, and the regions overall to the state.

Several comparisons are striking:

- Since 2010, most localities have experienced slow growth or decline. Overall state growth was predominantly concentrated in the Northern region.
- Population aging is highly uneven across the state. Localities in the Southwest, Southside, and Eastern regions are predominantly "top-heavy," meaning that the older population makes up a greater proportion of the total population than the working- and school-age populations, which can be easily seen and understood when age groups are stacked up from youngest to oldest.
- Median household income varies significantly among localities and regions. The gap between the highest and the lowest median household income among Virginia's 133 localities is nearly \$100,000. Moreover, the highest median household income among Southside or Southwest's localities is still below the lowest median household income among the Northern region's localities.

"The goal of effective data visualization is to allow patterns to emerge visually that are difficult to describe with text, or to identify by modeling," said Stephen Holzman, creator of the data visualization series. "Ultimately, I hope these visualizations help people understand where their communities fit in with the bigger picture."

The seven visualizations and access to related data will remain free and open to all on the Weldon Cooper Center website as part of the University of Virginia's commitment to public service through informed policy and governance. View our [Visualizing Virginia](#) website.

For more information, please contact Qian Cai, at 434-982-5581 or qian.cai@virginia.edu