



# Virginia Population Projections Data Users Survey

*April 2018*

The Demographics Research Group at the Weldon Cooper Center conducted a statewide data user online survey among state agencies, regional and local governments, non-profits, and businesses to better understand the uses of population projections across the Commonwealth. The survey was disseminated among a large variety of data users, and ran from February 27 to March 26, 2018.

## AFFILIATION

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Among a total of 52 respondents, the majority (92%) represent different government agencies at the local, regional, and state levels. The largest share belongs to individuals working for state agencies at 39%, followed by 33% from Planning District Commissions, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, as well as Regional Councils across Virginia, and 20% from local government agencies. Non-profits and the private sector accounted for 8% of the responses.

## USES OF PROJECTIONS

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Projections are used for a wide range of purposes, including:

- **Transportation and Travel Demand Modeling**
  - Travel Demand Modeling
  - Transportation Planning and Traffic Zone Analysis
- **Land Use Planning**
  - GIS mapping and other technical applications.
  - Hazard Mitigation Planning and updates to existing plans
  - Comprehensive Plans
- **Needs and Impact Analyses**
  - Evaluation of regional weaknesses and basic need analysis, including water
  - Economic development
  - Community development

- **Market Planning**
  - Gaining insight of future labor market
  - Identifying viable store fronts
  - Recruiting
- **Health Social Planning**
  - Using projections to anticipate changes in labor availability, local health assessments, and future program eligibility
  - Assessing health services and staffing needs
- **Grant Applications**

## ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

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43 percent of respondents cited that other sources of population projections were used to supplement those produced by the Cooper Center, or as an alternative. The alternative sources include the U.S. Census, Woods & Poole, Moody's Analytics, ESRI, EMSI, regional or local governments, and private contractors. Those who cited U.S. Census as an alternative source typically used the census estimates, not projections.

23 percent of respondents reported that their organizations produced projections of their own. Only three organizations (two Planning District Commissions and one city) provided their own 2020 projection figures.

## COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

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The majority of survey takers praised and affirmed the need for the Weldon Cooper Center's services, specifically the data accuracy, comparability, independence, and transparency.

- Multiple respondents stated that
  - the Center's projections are valuable for their work, especially after the U.S. Census Bureau ceased producing population projections.
  - the information provided by the Weldon Cooper Center is "reputable" and "vetted."
- One respondent noted that her county's growth trends are reflected in the Cooper Center projections and are, therefore, "reasonable."
- One organization expressed gratitude for the availability of the Center's projections and its willingness to provide detailed information about the methodology.
- One respondent noted his appreciation of the Center's nonpartisan work.