



PRESS RELEASE

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Virginia still growing, but more slowly than the nation

Virginia's population has grown by 6.5 percent since the 2010 Census, passing 8.5 million residents in 2018, according to new official state population estimates released by the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

While Virginia added over 50,000 new residents last year, annual population growth in Virginia this decade is the lowest since the 1920s. During the past five years, Virginia's population has grown at a slower rate than the U.S. overall.

Out-migration drives decline in growth rate

Much of the slowdown in Virginia's population growth is a result of domestic out-migration—more people moving out of Virginia than into the state, said Hamilton Lombard, a demographer at the center who prepared the annual estimates.

"Over the last five years, 80,000 more Virginians moved out than residents from other states moved in," Lombard said. "Many were young families, which helped cause Virginia's public school enrollment to decline last fall for the first time since 1984".

Urban and suburban areas grow

Northern Virginia accounted for two-thirds of Virginia's total population growth last year, helping drive the population in that region above three million residents. Northern Virginia's population is now larger than the combined population of the Richmond and Hampton Roads' metro areas.

Since 2010, the Hampton Roads and Richmond metro areas have also grown, with rates of 3.8 and 7.5 percent, respectively.

Virginia's independent cities also have been experiencing their largest population gains in decades, accounting for ten of Virginia's twenty fastest growing counties and cities since 2010. In 2018, Roanoke City's population passed 100,000 residents.

The populations of a number of suburban counties have also continued to grow. Since 2010, Loudoun and New Kent were the fastest growing counties in Virginia.

As population ages, death rate increases

As Virginia's population ages, the number of deaths has increased, suppressing population growth in much of the commonwealth. Fifty-one of Virginia's ninety-five counties lost population since 2010. Population decline has been most common in rural counties, but also in some metro areas. Every Virginia county bordering North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky lost population this decade.

The Cooper Center's population estimates are the state's official figures. The estimates are based on changes since 2010 in housing stock, school enrollment, births, deaths and driver's licenses. They are used by state and local government agencies in revenue-sharing, funding allocations, and planning and budgeting.