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Weldon Cooper Center
for Public Service
Demographics Research Group

Press Release: 2019 Virginia Population Projections

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Population Projections show that Virginia is aging and growing more slowly

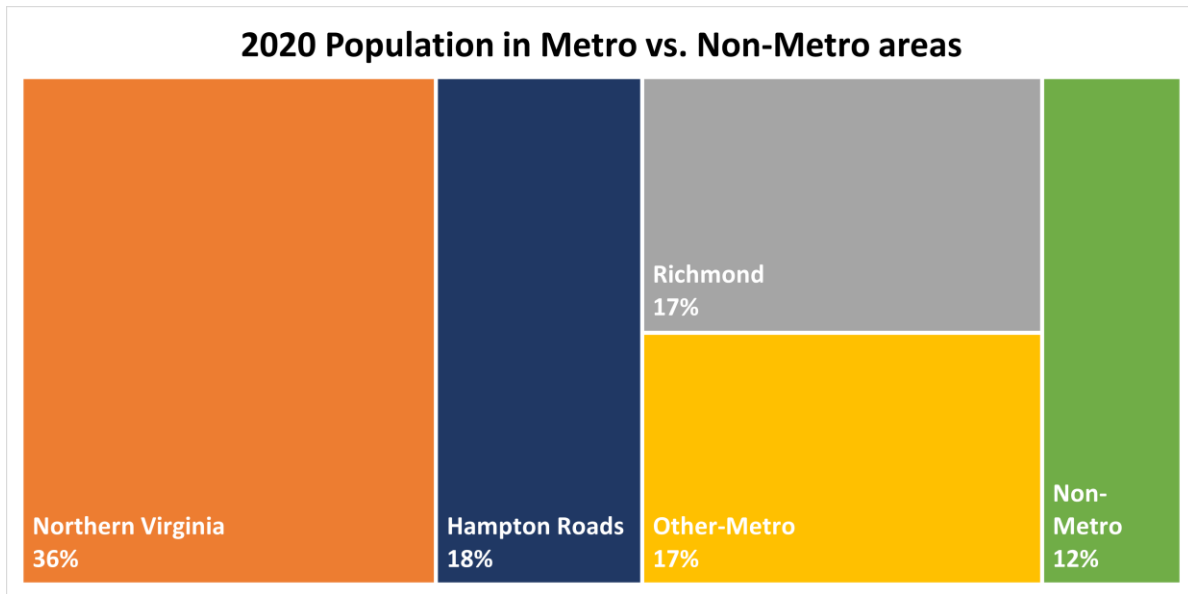
With the 2020 Census fast approaching, the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia released the latest round of 2020-2040 population projections for Virginia and its localities. Virginia is expected to add more than 650,000 residents in this decade, reaching 8.65 million by 2020.

- **Pace of growth is slowing down**

“While Virginia continues to grow in population size, the pace of growth may be a little slower than what was earlier projected,” said Shonel Sen, the demographer at the Weldon Cooper Center who developed the projections for all counties, cities, and large towns across Virginia. According to Sen, the statewide growth rate has decelerated to 8% (from 13% in the previous decade) and is expected to hold steady through 2020-2030, assuming that the Commonwealth continues to experience lower birth rates, higher death rates (result of aging), and fewer people moving into the state. In this decade (2010-2020), more than 60 cities and counties across Virginia are projected to experience a decline in population.

- **Rural-urban divide becomes more prominent**

The growth across the Commonwealth is far from uniform, with a significant rural-urban divide becoming more evident as time progresses. Northern Virginia continues to dominate, with an expected population of over 3 million people by 2020, while Richmond and Hampton Roads each is expected to have over 1.5 million residents. In contrast, many rural communities have witnessed a population decline, which is projected to continue over the future decades. The regional population shares across Virginia (depicted in the graph below) clearly show the rural-urban divide, with 70% of the state’s population residing in the three largest metropolitan areas and only 12% of Virginians living in non-metro areas.



Locally, the City of Charlottesville is expected to have over 50,000 people by 2020, and Albemarle County is expected to continue to grow faster than the state as a whole.

- **By 2020, one in seven Virginians will be over 65**

Over the successive decades, the share of youth (under 19 years of age) and those of working age (20-64) is expected to shrink while the share of older Virginians—ages 65 and over—is expected to increase from 12% in 2010 to 18% in 2030, fueled by an aging baby-boomer generation and declining birth rates.

By 2020, more than 15% of Virginians are expected to be 65 years or older. In rural areas like Lancaster, Northumberland, Middlesex, Highland, and James City more than 30% of their residents are projected to be over the age of 65 by the end of this decade.

“In spite of the future being inherently uncertain, these projections provide a probable population landscape for Virginia, and are valuable for planning,” said Qian Cai, director of the Center’s Demographics Research Group. “The Cooper Center projections are the result of careful and rigorous methodological research,” explained Cai, who is looking forward to comparing the Cooper Center projections to the actual census counts when the 2020 census data is released.

Virginia population projections are available at: <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-projections>