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[Virginia’s population growth rate increasing again](#)

According to the latest U.Va. Cooper Center estimates, the rate of population growth in Virginia is increasing again for the first time since the recession began. Here is a news release from the Office of Public Affairs:

The rate of population growth in Virginia is increasing again for the first time since the beginning of the

recession, according to the latest estimates from the Demographics and Workforce Group of the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

The Cooper Center’s population estimates are the official figures for the commonwealth of Virginia. The estimates are based on changes since 2000 in the housing stock, school enrollment, births, exemptions claimed on state income tax returns and drivers’ licenses. They are used by state and local government agencies in revenue sharing, funding allocations, and planning and budgeting.

While economic conditions remain uncertain, the population growth rate has recovered from less than 1 percent in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to 1.12 percent in 2008-09, said U.Va. demographer Mike Spar, who prepared the annual population estimates. While the state’s overall growth rate has not yet returned to previous levels – it was 1.29 percent in 2003-04 - the trend is toward higher rates of growth after the mid-decade slowdown, he said.

Virginia’s population has grown by more than 800,000 since the 2000 census – a growth rate of 11.4 percent over nine years. The provisional state population estimate is 7,882,590, which represents an increase of more than 87,000 since 2008.

Population growth in Virginia occurs through a balance of natural increase (more births than deaths) and net in-migration (more people moving in to Virginia than moving out), he explained. As recently as 2003-04, these two factors contributed in almost equal measure to state population increases; however, the balance between the two has tipped in recent years toward a greater contribution by natural increase.

“It is likely that economic conditions led to a reduction in migration to Virginia,” Spar said. “Mobility is affected by a stagnant housing market and limited job prospects, conditions characterizing most of the nation in the past several years.”

Period (July to July)	Pop. Change (1,000’s)	Net Migration (1,000’s)	Natural Incr. (1,000’s)	Growth Rate (percent)
2008-2009	87.2	38.9	48.3	1.12
2007-2008	75.7	26.5	49.2	0.98
2006-2007	72.8	23.0	49.8	0.95
2005-2006	83.1	35.1	48.0	1.10
2004-2005	95.0	47.8	47.2	1.27
2003-2004	95.2	50.0	45.2	1.29
2002-2003	90.2	47.6	42.6	1.24
2001-2002	92.2	49.7	42.5	1.28
2000-2001	86.8	44.0	42.8	1.22

Virginia’s metropolitan areas account for 93.5 percent of the population growth since 2000; as a result, by July 2009, more than 85.7 percent of Virginians lived in one of the state’s metropolitan areas. Rural and small-town Virginia represents a diminishing share of the state’s population.

The tables below show the state’s 10 largest and smallest localities in 2009, and, since the last census in 2000, localities with the fastest growth rates, and those that have gained the most population.

Largest Localities in 2009

Fairfax County	1,036,473
Virginia Beach City	434,412
Prince William County	386,934
Chesterfield County	307,594
Loudoun County	298,113
Henrico County	296,490
Norfolk City	237,764
Chesapeake City	219,960
Arlington County	212,038
Richmond City	198,102

Smallest Localities in 2009

Galax City	6,798
King and Queen County	6,675
Buena Vista City	6,553
Bedford City	6,083
Covington City	5,957
Emporia City	5,861
Craig County	5,211
Bath County	4,745
Norton City	4,054
Highland County	2,273

Fastest Growing Localities since 2000

Loudoun County	75.8%
King George County	42.2
Culpeper County	39.9
Prince William County	37.8
Manassas Park City	36.3
Stafford County	36.2
Spotsylvania County	34.8
Fluvanna County	32.9
New Kent County	32.6
James City County	32.4

Largest Numerical Increase since 2000

Loudoun County	128,514
Prince William County	106,121
Fairfax County	66,724
Chesterfield County	47,691
Henrico County	34,190
Stafford County	33,446
Spotsylvania County	31,414
Arlington County	22,585
Chesapeake City	20,776
Suffolk City	19,329

“Localities are faced with addressing the needs of their population, large or small. Some face rather dramatic changes in population size from year to year; some have gains, some have losses. All of these changes affect the tax base, demand for services and context for planning,” Spar said.

Detailed estimates for 2009 are available here: <http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/population-estimates>

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