

Demographics & Workforce

Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

2009-2010 Annual Research Highlights



Demographics & Workforce Group Staff

Maximizing investment of state funds by providing accurate and practical data to state and local governments was the primary goal of Demographics & Workforce professionals during the past year's economic contraction and budget reductions. Research projects included:

- Improving accuracy of decennial census counts for Virginia. Decennial census results set federal funding levels for numerous programs in the commonwealth and determine the number of Virginia seats in the United States House of Representatives;
- Saving the commonwealth millions by accurately counting the school-aged population;
- Estimating the rate of adult illiteracy in Virginia and the needs for services, to efficiently allocate literacy program funds.

These projects, together with our population estimates, school enrollment projections, and workforce education analysis express our continuing commitment to understanding Virginians, serving government, and helping communities.

The United States Census Bureau selected the Demographics & Workforce Group to conduct two projects

(out of eight nationwide) to research population estimate methodologies. Each year, the Bureau produces population estimates at the national, state, county and sub-county level. These estimates are used annually to allocate hundreds of billions of federal funds to each community throughout the country. Cooper Center research will guide the Bureau as it re-engineers its approach to these important estimates.

Understanding Virginians

Estimating Adult Literacy

Twelve percent of adult Virginians are estimated to lack basic reading skills, yet not enough is known about their characteristics and needs, which determine the programs most likely to help them overcome illiteracy. The Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Literacy contracted the Demographics and Workforce Group to provide current estimates of the adult illiteracy rate for Virginia and its counties, and to examine needs for adult literacy services. This research, conducted over a two-year period, will help Virginia allocate adult education funds fairly and address needs efficiently.

Illiteracy in Virginia is decreasing from two decades ago, but many parts of the commonwealth continue to face



New adult literacy estimates will help efficiently distribute funds

challenges including the recent large influx of individuals with limited English proficiency, and families with deep generational illiteracy; In some Virginia localities, one in five adults are considered illiterate.

Assessing Education Outcomes

In 2009 over 40,000 students completed Career and Technical Education high school programs in subjects such as accounting, nursing, computer networking, and firefighting. The Demographics & Workforce Group was contracted this year to manage an annual follow-up survey to identify employment outcomes or postsecondary enrollment by students one year after high school graduation. This work helps school divisions evaluate programs and improve the curriculum to increase high school graduates' opportunities.

Serving Government

Improving the 2010 Census

Over the past two years, Demographics & Workforce professionals conducted research on behalf of the commonwealth through two United States Census Bureau programs in preparation for the 2010 decennial census. In 2008, through the Local Update of Census Addresses program, Cooper Center demographers identified more than 1,500 addresses to be corrected or added to Census records of people living in the commonwealth.

In early 2010, Demographics & Workforce research identified 4,100 housing unit addresses missing from the Census address list – which would have been left out of the 2010 census. Findings from both of these studies improved the count accuracy and representation of Virginians in the decennial census, which determines Virginia's share of funds from many federal programs and apportionment of seats in Congress.



Our research improved Virginia's Census address lists

2010 Census A Success in Virginia

The 2010 Census was a success in Virginia. Virginia's mail participation rate was 76%, exceeding the national participation rate of 72%. The highest mail participation rates were found in Bland County, King and Queen County, and the towns of Madison and Hallwood.

The Census Bureau continued data collection efforts through July, when Census takers visited households that did not return a form by mail.

By December 31st, 2010, the Census Bureau will deliver the population counts to the President for apportionment of congressional seats. Beginning in February 2011, states will receive census data for use in redistricting.



New method for estimating school-age population will save millions

Helping Communities

Estimating the School Population

In 2008, the Demographics & Workforce Group conducted a study of Virginia's Triennial Census of School-Age Children, which Virginia public school divisions were required to conduct every three years. These counts were used for the allocation of selected funds. The study found that school divisions' lack of resources and expertise, as well as different approaches to the census, resulted in inaccurate counts and a misallocation of as much as \$17 million in 2007.

On April 11, 2010, Governor McDonnell signed into law VA House Bill 669, which eliminates the requirement for school divisions to conduct a triennial census, and commissions the Demographics & Workforce Group to produce annual estimates of the school-age population. This change will save millions of dollars for Virginia school divisions.

Preparing Students for Employment

Virginia employers look for workers who bring professionalism, people skills, and technology skills to the workplace, as well as the academic knowledge that is part of a traditional education. In order to remain current with employers' needs, Virginia's Office of Career and Technical Education Services commissioned Demographics & Workforce professionals to revisit Cooper Center research on workplace readiness skills conducted in the 1990s and 1980s. Working with a group of state and regional experts, researchers reviewed recent studies on this topic, engaged over 300 Virginia employers in a comment process, and developed a new list of 21 skills for the 21st century. These skills have been embedded in career and technical courses throughout Virginia.

Outreach

Presentations

Demographics & Workforce staff made presentations to numerous clients in 2009-10, including:

- Delegation of China Population and Development Research Center
- Leadership Charlottesville Conference
- Richmond Association for Business Economics
- Virginia Career Coach Academy
- Virginia Commission on Youth
- Virginia Joint Subcommittee on Public Primary and Secondary Education Funding

Contract Research

- United States Census Bureau
- Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education & Literacy
- Virginia Department of Education, Office of Career & Technical Education Services

Publication Series

- *Numbers Count*: Online articles on population, education, and the workforce in Virginia
- *Stat Chat*: Research snapshots on topics of current interest

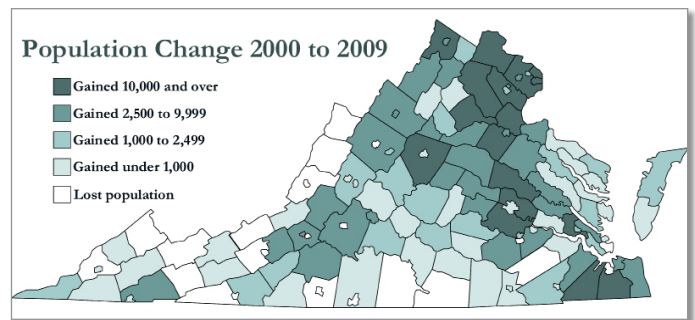
Website

www.coopercenter.org/demographics/

Contact Us

Dr. Qian Cai, Director
Dustin Cable
Achsah Carrier
Susan Clapp
Meredith Strohm Gunter
Rebecca Tippet
Michael Spar

Email: demographics@virginia.edu,
Phone: 434-982-5582



*Virginia's population is growing rapidly in some localities.
In others it is growing slowly or even declining.*

Better data, better decisions

University of Virginia
Weldon Cooper Center
PO Box 400206
Charlottesville, VA 22904

