



Our partners: [NewsAdvance](#) | [WSLS](#)
Thursday, January 29, 2009 |
[Madison, NC](#) 23° Feels Like: 23° Clear

Danville, Pittsylvania county population up — but don't celebrate yet

Text size: [small](#) | [medium](#) | [large](#)

BY SUSAN ELZEY
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER & BEE
Published: January 28, 2009

Both the city of Danville and Pittsylvania County seem to have gained some population between 2007 and 2008, but the researcher who collected the data warns that the municipalities should not become too excited.

The provisional numbers released by the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center show that Danville gained 174 people from 2007 to 2008 to a population of 45,152 residents, and Pittsylvania County gained 925 residents and has a population of 62,253.

"Danville's population, overall, is declining since the last census," Mike Spar, research associate with the Cooper Center, said Wednesday. "I wouldn't put too much weight on the slight increase shown from 07-08. Our provisional estimates are often lowered a year later when we make the final estimate."

Spar said Danville has lost population due to both the outward migration of people and the fact that deaths have exceeded births since the 2000 census, which estimated the city's population at 48,411 residents.

"I attribute this to persistent economic problems in the city," he said, noting that the major factors in determining population increase or decrease are long-term economic conditions and the age of the population.

The county has fared better with population since the 2000 census, which estimated its population at 61,745 residents.

“Its population is up about 500 since the 2000 census,” Spar said. “Almost of all of that increase is due to the natural increase of the number of births exceeding the number of deaths.”

Although its population growth has slowed since 2000, the commonwealth of Virginia continues to grow, adding about 40,000 people per year due to natural increase, he said.

Between 2000 and 2005, the average annual growth in Virginia was 1.2 percent, but that has dropped to less than 1 percent the last two years.

“But migration, especially domestic as opposed to international, has slowed down considerably in the last two years due to the recession and problems in the housing sector,” Spar said.

Danville turned out to be one of only 35 counties and cities in Virginia that are smaller now than in 2000. Other cities include Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond and Roanoke, as well as rural localities in Southside and Southwest Virginia, according to a news release from the Cooper Center.

“We can expect a continued slowing of the state’s growth through 2009 and probably into 2010 as well,” Spar said in a written statement.

The population estimates of the Cooper Center are the official figures for the commonwealth of Virginia, the release states.