

# Researchers find faster population growth in Virginia cities

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Population growth in Virginia outpaced the nation, with highly varied growth across localities, according to the most recent official annual population estimates for the state developed by demographers from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

Virginia's population grew by 2.3 percent, to nearly 8.2 million residents, between the 2010 census and July 1, 2012, according to the center's estimates. During this period, the nation's population grew by 1.7 percent.

Compared to other states, Virginia posted the 13th-highest growth rate and the sixth-largest numerical population gain.

Within Virginia, the largest population gains were concentrated in the urban centers of Northern Virginia, Richmond and Hampton Roads.

"Nearly all of the commonwealth's population growth in the past two years occurred in [metropolitan areas](#), with more than half of the growth between 2010 and 2012 occurring in Northern Virginia," said demographer Rebecca Tippett, who prepared the estimates.

"Between 2000 and 2010, Virginia's counties grew much faster than its cities," Tippett said. "For the past two years, the average [population growth](#) in Virginia's independent cities has matched the county growth rate, with many independent cities among the fastest-growing localities."

Covington, Lexington, Harrisonburg, Winchester, Charlottesville and Staunton were among the independent cities growing at a rate faster than the state since 2010.

Due to population aging and lower [birth rates](#), 64 of Virginia's localities experienced natural decrease (more deaths than births) between 2010 and 2012. While most localities gained sufficient population through migration to compensate for losses through natural decrease, 26 localities in Virginia had a net overall loss in population between 2010 and 2012. Eleven of these experienced both natural decrease and net out-migration. The largest [population losses](#) were in counties in the Southwest and Southside regions of the state.

The Cooper Center's [population estimates](#) are the official figures for the commonwealth of Virginia. 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, planning and budgeting.

Provided by University of Virginia

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