

# Virginia's Changing DEMOGRAPHIC Landscape

By Lisa A. Sturtevant



## Introduction

In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau released 2010 census data<sup>1</sup> for Virginia and its counties, independent cities, metropolitan areas, and neighborhoods. Census results provide the first official report of population change in the state between 2000 and 2010, and the new figures present an up-to-date demographic portrait of the state's residents. The 2010 census population counts are required by the constitution and are used for redistricting purposes; however, the demographic data from the census also allows us to confirm changes witnessed in the state over the past decade and to see emerging demographic trends that will affect our communities in the years to come.

In some ways, the 2010 census reveals demographic trends in Virginia that mirror changes occurring throughout the United States, but there are some distinct differences in Virginia. The 2010 population of Virginia was just over 8 million, reflecting an increase of 13 percent since 2000 and making Virginia the 16th fastest-growing state in the nation. The state's population growth is a reflection of its relatively strong economy over the past 10 years, as well as the national trend of population migration to southern and western states.

Growth was not evenly distributed across the state, however. The state's urban areas grew substantially faster than its rural areas. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Virginia's metropolitan areas grew by 14.3 percent while the non-metro area population grew by only 6.8 percent. Northern Virginia was the main driver of the state's population growth. More than half (51.4 percent) of the state's net new residents over the past decade live in Northern Virginia. Five of the state's 10 fastest-growing counties and independent cities are located in Northern Virginia: the counties of Loudoun, Prince William, Stafford, and Spotsylvania, and the City of Manassas Park.

The continued growth of Virginia's urban areas at the expense of its rural communities is indicative of the growing urban/rural divide in the state. Northern Virginia, in particular, continues to be a dominant source of growth

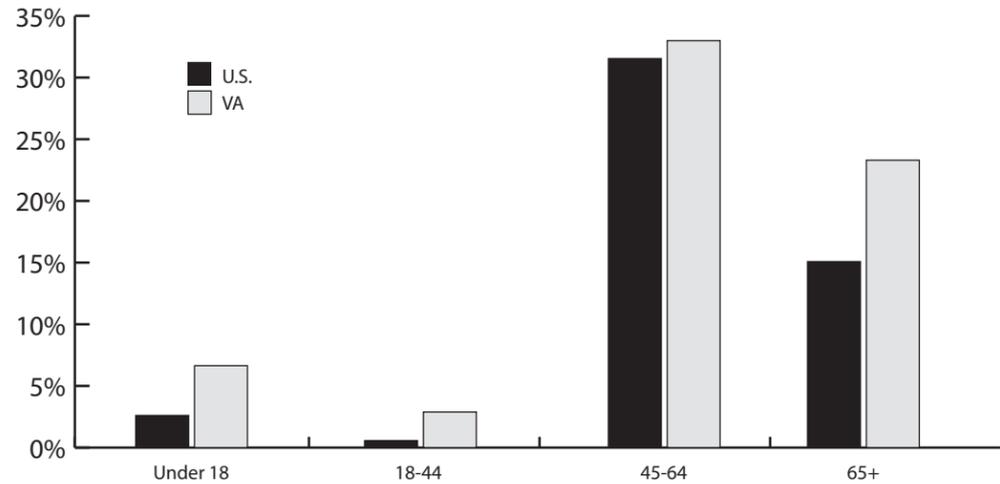
in Virginia and now accounts for nearly a third of the state's population. The geographic realities of the state's population growth will have serious implications for state politics and priorities, in which urban areas generally—and Northern Virginia, in particular—have growth on their sides.

In addition to population redistribution in the state, three main demographic trends emerge from the 2010 census and will shape the state's future policy priorities, occasionally in substantial ways. These trends are the aging of the population, the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the population, and the varied and changing composition of families. To some extent, these trends mirror national trends; however, there are some notable differences in Virginia.

**Lisa A. Sturtevant** is an assistant research professor at the George Mason University School of Public Policy and a researcher at the university's Center for Regional Analysis. Her research focuses primarily on regional economic development, migration and mobility, demographics, and housing, including recent articles and reports on residential mobility in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, the state of the regional housing market, and forecasts of development for the Dulles rail corridor. Sturtevant, who earned a Ph.D. in public policy from George Mason University, also writes periodic reports on the 2010 Census and American Community Survey.

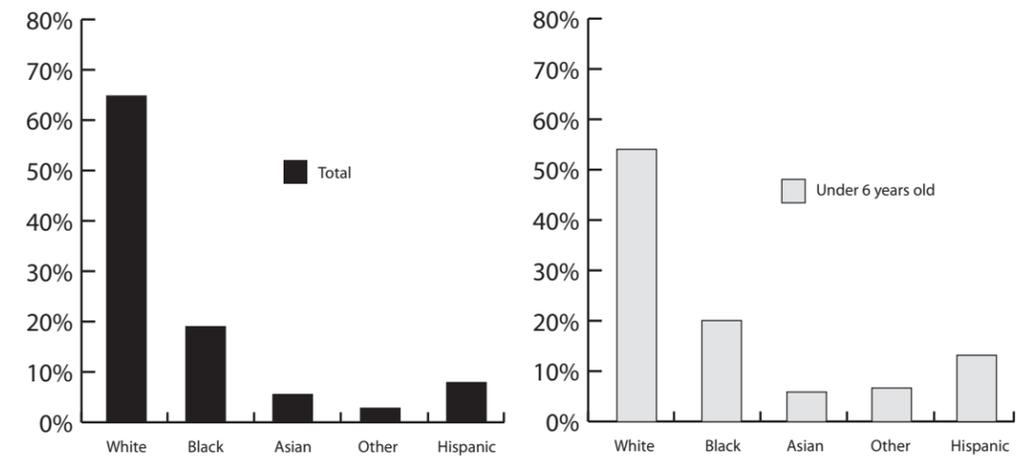


Chart 1: Population change by age group, 2000-10



Source: 2010 Census SF1

Chart 2: Race/ethnicity of Virginia's total population and population under 6 years old, 2010



Source: 2010 Census SF1

### The early rise of the baby boomers

Nationally, the fastest-growing cohort of the population is 45- to 64-year-olds, its ranks swelled by the influx of baby boomers. The 45- to 64-year-old population grew three times faster than the overall U.S. population between 2000 and 2010; and in 2010, the category comprised 29 percent of the U.S. population. At the same time, the 18- to 44-year-old population barely grew nationally, edging up only 0.6 percent between 2000 and 2010, and the under-18-year-old population in the U.S. grew by just 2.6 percent. The age structure of the U.S. portends a dramatic increase in the future retiree population and a concomitant decline in the future working-age population, which has national policy implications for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and workforce development.

The changing age structure of the Virginia population mirrors the U.S. in many ways, but there are some important differences. The fastest-growing age cohort in the state was the population 85 years old and over, which grew by 40.3 percent between 2000 and 2010 (although the age group still comprises less than 2 percent of the state's overall population). The population 65 years old and over grew by 23.3 percent over the decade, compared to a growth rate nationally of 15.1 percent. The 45- to 64-year-old population grew by 33 percent, which was about the

same as the national rate. However, the growth rate of the 18- to 44-year-old population was five times the national rate. This break with national trends is largely due to an influx of immigrants during the decade, attracted to the commonwealth because of its relatively strong economy. The fast growth of the Northern Virginia region, which tends to attract immigrants and younger workers, also explains the relatively stronger growth of the younger cohort in Virginia.

The state's older population will continue to be a growing share of the overall population. While the baby boomers likely will be healthier and stay in the labor force longer than their predecessors, they will eventually retire, and many will rely on government-sponsored health care and other services. At the same time this population is expanding, the federal government will likely shift more financial responsibility to the states for Medicaid and other programs for the poor and elderly.

### The road to a majority-minority state

Virginia became more racially and ethnically diverse over the first decade of the 21st century, driven by growth in the Hispanic and Asian populations resulting from a continuation of the immigration wave of the late 20th century. A more important factor in recent years, however,

has been the relatively higher fertility rates among the foreign-born population and the growth of the second-generation population.

While Virginia is still a majority-white state, the minority share of the population has grown from 29.8 percent in 2000 to 35.2 percent in 2010. The biggest gain in the state was among the Hispanic population, which nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010. The Asian population grew by 68.3 percent while the population of other races (including those of two or more races) grew by 50.8 percent. In contrast, the state's African-American and white populations grew slowly. The African-American population grew by 10.7 percent between 2000 and 2010, while the white population grew by only 4.4 percent.

In 2010, the largest numbers of racial and ethnic minorities were in the state's largest metropolitan areas. In Virginia, 35.2 percent of the population is nonwhite. In many metropolitan areas, however, the white/nonwhite split is closer to 50/50. In the Virginia Beach metropolitan area, 43.7 percent of the population is nonwhite. In Northern Virginia, the nonwhite share is 42.5 percent, and in Richmond, 40 percent. The racial and ethnic makeup of the minority population varies from place to place. In Virginia Beach and Richmond, African Americans comprise the largest numbers of the nonwhite population. In Northern

Virginia, Hispanics are the largest minority group, followed by Asians and then African Americans.

Even though the largest numbers of racial and ethnic minorities are in Virginia's urban areas, the state's rural areas are experiencing the fastest rates of growth in racial and ethnic minority populations. Between 2000 and 2010, the white population grew by 4.4 percent statewide and even more slowly, 4.1 percent, in the state's non-metro areas. Population changes in Virginia's non-metro areas were fueled by growth in the minority populations, particularly Hispanics. The Hispanic population in the state's non-metro areas increased 119.3 percent between 2000 and 2010. The Asian population increased 71.8 percent, and the population of people who identified as "some other race" (including two or more races) increased by 77.8 percent.

The move to majority-minority populations in some metropolitan areas and the rapidly changing racial and ethnic composition of the state's rural areas have important implications for the provision of local services, including voter-registration efforts, public education, and social services, and creates challenges for engaging and incorporating new populations into existing communities.

Because the leading edge of the change is already evident in Virginia, it is important to face potential chal-

allenges and policy needs associated with a diversifying population now. While more than one in three people in Virginia is nonwhite, nearly one-half (45.9 percent) of Virginia's children under the age of 6 years old are nonwhite. In fact, in the Virginia Beach and Northern Virginia metropolitan areas, the under-6-years-old population is already majority-minority. In Virginia Beach, 53.9 percent of children under age 6 are nonwhite; and in Northern Virginia, 53.1 percent of the under-6 population is nonwhite.

### A departure from the 'traditional' family

As the state's population is aging and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, the way in which people form families is also changing. The overall number of households in Virginia grew 13.2 percent between 2000 and 2010, from 2.7 million to 3.1 million. A sharp difference in the growth rates of family and non-family households is evident, and the composition of family households is notably shifting away from married couples with children.

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of non-family households in Virginia grew faster than family households<sup>2</sup>—18.5 percent versus 10.8 percent. Non-family households can include unrelated people living together (e.g., roommates or co-habiting couples), but the largest share of non-families is individuals living alone. The population of people living alone grew by 17.5 percent, with the fastest growth among people 65 years old and over (20.4 percent). In 2010, a senior living alone constituted one of every 12 households in Virginia.

Increasingly, the growing population of seniors likely will want to live independently. While younger seniors may continue to participate in the labor force and remain relatively healthy, older seniors living alone will be in particular need of health services, sometimes received through Medicaid. In addition to an increase in overall Medicaid costs to the state, different types of services, such as home-based care, will be more in demand. But many such services may not be covered by the current Medicaid program.

While more young and older people are living alone,

there is also substantial growth in the number of people who are marrying and either not having children or delaying childbearing. In 2000, 36.8 percent of all of Virginia's families were married couples with children. In 2010, the share had dropped to 33.6 percent. In fact, between 2000 and 2010, the number of married couples with children grew by only 9,103 families—a 1.3 percent growth rate.

Two other groups drove the increase in the number of families in Virginia: married couples with no children (13.3 percent growth rate) and single-mother households (12.3 percent growth rate). The shift away from a "traditional" family composition is very different depending on race or ethnicity, a fact that has intensified a family divide across racial and ethnic groups. Nearly half of Asian families in Virginia are married couples with children, while 35.7 percent are married couples without children. Hispanic families are also likely to include married couples with children. While only two-thirds of Hispanic families are married couples, 45.5 percent are married couples with children. Among white families, there is a large share of married couples (81.6 percent), but only 31.5 percent are married couples with children. Half of white families in Virginia are married couples without children. African-American families have the lowest share of married-couple families, and only 21.7 percent of all families headed by an African American are married couples with



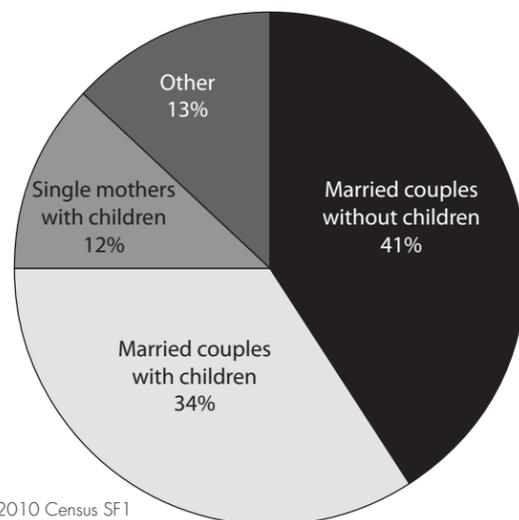
children. Nearly one-quarter of African-American families are single mothers, compared to 13.7 percent of Hispanic families, 6.6 percent of white families, and 4.9 percent of Asian families.

The changing composition of Virginia's families mirrors national change and is a result of economic and cultural factors. A rise in the number of single-parent families suggests the risk of economic hardship among some groups. More families with no children could create tension in communities wherein conflicting priorities with respect to funding for schools and local amenities might arise.

### Where from here?

As revealed by the 2010 census, the demographic landscape of Virginia is changing. The state's residents are aging, becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (particularly the children), and are living alone or in nontraditional families. The challenge for state and local policymakers is to recognize these changing demographics and to consider how these changes will shape policymaking processes and priorities. **VIA**

Chart 3: Family Households, 2010



Source: 2010 Census SF1

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> All 2010 census data referenced in this article can be found at the Census Bureau's website, <http://2010.census.gov/>.
- <sup>2</sup> The Census Bureau defines a family household as a household with two or more people who are related by marriage, adoption, or birth.
- <sup>3</sup> Additional resources on census data include the Brookings Institution (<http://www.brookings.edu/topics/u-s-census.aspx>), which focuses on metropolitan areas, and the Population Resource Center ([www.prdc.org/2010/Status\\_of\\_the\\_2010\\_Census](http://www.prdc.org/2010/Status_of_the_2010_Census)).