

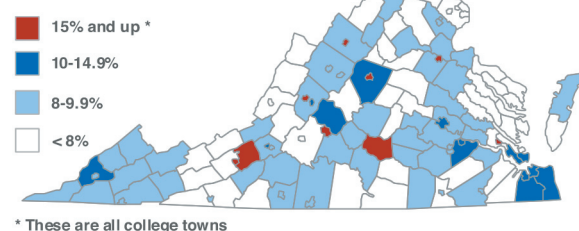
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Age Estimates Show Rural Communities Short of Younger Workers, According to a UVA Weldon Cooper Center For Public Service Study

Providing a competitive workforce will become significantly more difficult in some areas of the Commonwealth, according to 2006 population estimates by age and gender developed by the Demographics and Workforce section of the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The distribution of three population sectors, the "emerging workforce" (ages 18-24), retiring baby boomers, and immigrants, varies widely in communities throughout Virginia and will require workforce development strategies targeted to available human resources in order to meet the needs of employers.

Younger Virginians, ages 18-24, are concentrated in or near college or university towns and, after college graduation, in localities – typically cities – with the largest range of employment opportunities. Communities with fewer attractive job opportunities suffer the loss of the younger population and have a more difficult time convincing younger "natives" to return to their home communities.

Percent of Locality Population Age 18-24



"The young adult population in Virginia is one of the most mobile age groups," says Qian Cai, Director of the Demographics and Workforce Section, who prepared the estimates. "They tend to move to cities to find attractive lifestyles and job opportunities and to establish their first independent households. While small and rural communities may offer certain dimensions of a high quality of life, the absence of employment opportunities presents significant disadvantages to these communities in attracting younger workers."

At the other end of the workforce, the oldest baby boomers (born in 1946) became 60 years old in 2006. During the next 10 years, 825,000 Virginians aged 55-64 will reach retirement age. This represents 11 percent of the current population, compared to less than 9 percent of the population being pre-retirement age only six years ago. This percentage will continue to increase as the full cohort of baby boomers ages into retirement. Eleven localities in Virginia, mostly concentrated in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, are likely to see at least one quarter of the workforce exiting the labor market by 2016.

Percent of working-age population (18-64) age 55-64

Northumberland	38%
Lancaster	32%
Middlesex	31%
Highland	31%
Mathews	31%
Westmoreland	28%
Nelson	27%
Botetourt	26%
King & Queen	26%
Rappahannock	25%
Alleghany	25%

"Communities facing the largest retirement challenge already tend to have a higher proportion of elderly citizens," says Cai, "because the younger population leaves in search of work, the older resident population ages in place, and many who left when young tend to move back for retirement." In Mathews County, for example, 11 out of every 100 people aged 65-69 moved in from elsewhere (as compared to the state average of 3 out of 100).

Finally, recent immigrants to Virginia tend to be younger and of working age. While the legal status of the immigrant population cannot be fully known, trends suggest a strong labor migration, with 20 percent of immigrants between the ages of 18 and 24, compared to less than 10 percent for the state as a whole. According to Cai, "Proper engagement of the immigrant population may be seen in some communities as an effective strategy to counterbalance the Commonwealth's aging labor force."