



Demographics: Trends, Projections, & Potential Impacts

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to review Virginia's historical and projected demographic shifts
 - trends (state, local/regional) in births, deaths, and in- and out-migration
 - demographic characteristics (race and ethnicity, education, employment, income, and age)
 - potential government and revenue impacts of trends
 - topics for future JLARC studies

Commission resolution (November 7, 2024)

Research activities

- Worked with UVA's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to identify most appropriate demographic data & sources
- Analyzed data to identify relevant trends
- Conducted background research and interviewed selected state agencies* about potential impact of major demographic changes on government

*Virginia Tax, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Works, Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services, Department of Medical Assistance Services

In brief

Since 1990, Virginia's population has grown slightly more than the national average.

Population growth has occurred unevenly across Virginia's regions, with Far Southwest and Southside losing population.

In recent years, Virginia's population growth has been driven less by birth rate and more by international immigration and domestic migration.

Virginia's population is aging; more than 600,000 Virginians (7% of total) are projected to be 80+ by 2040.

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Historical demographic trends

Future demographic projections

Potential impacts on state revenues, spending, & programs

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Demographic data describes populations and can be affected by many factors

- Demographics are statistical characteristics of human populations that change over time
 - number of people
 - where they live
 - where they move to and from
 - their characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, and income)
- Many non-demographic factors contribute to demographic changes (e.g., national or state policy decisions, natural disasters, changes in economic conditions, major employer location decisions)

Federal policy changes underway will be reflected in 2025 and subsequent demographic data

- Reductions or shifts in federal spending and staffing currently underway, especially in Northern Virginia
- Changing policies on immigration across multiple fronts
- Federal policy impacts may begin to be reflected in calendar year 2025 demographic data, as it is released next year

Total population trends comprise three components

- Natural changes (i.e., births and deaths)
- International migration (to and from other countries)
- Domestic migration (to and from other states or within a state)

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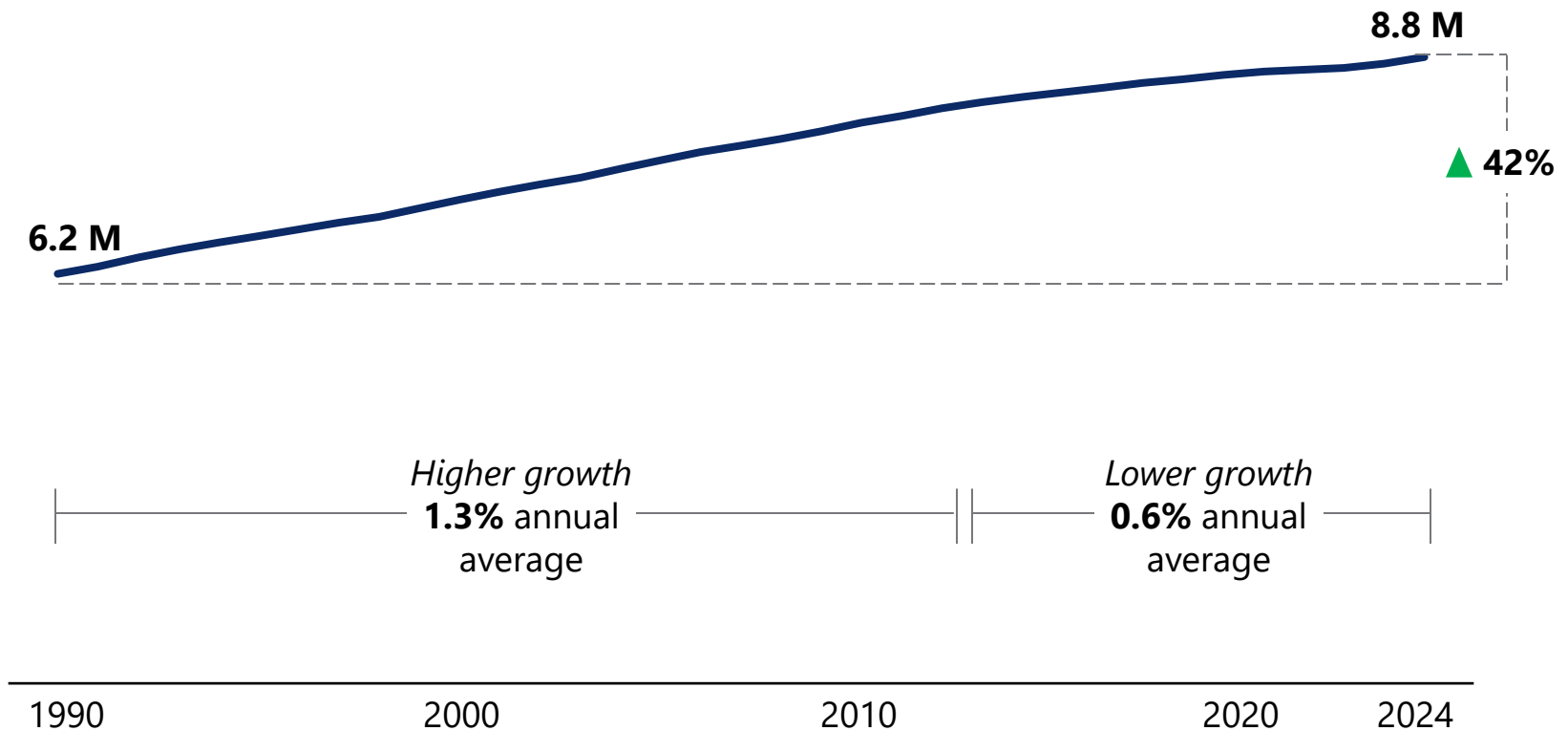
Background

Historical demographic trends – Total population

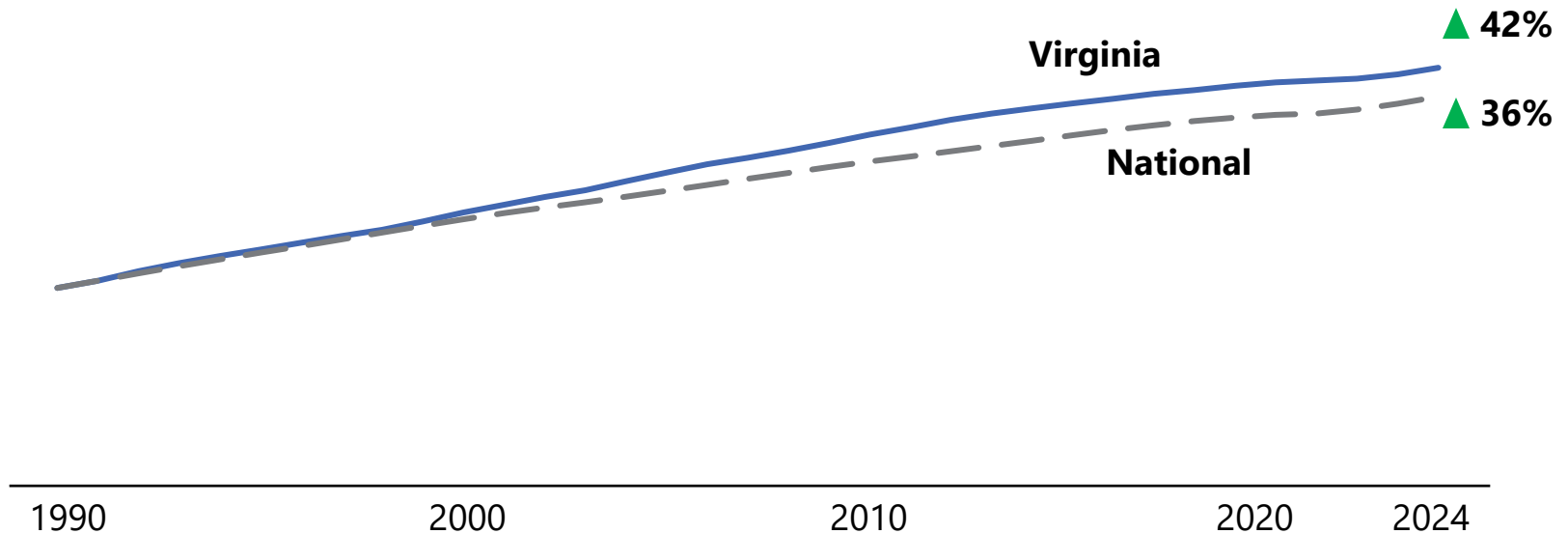
Future demographic projections

Potential impacts on state revenues, spending, & programs

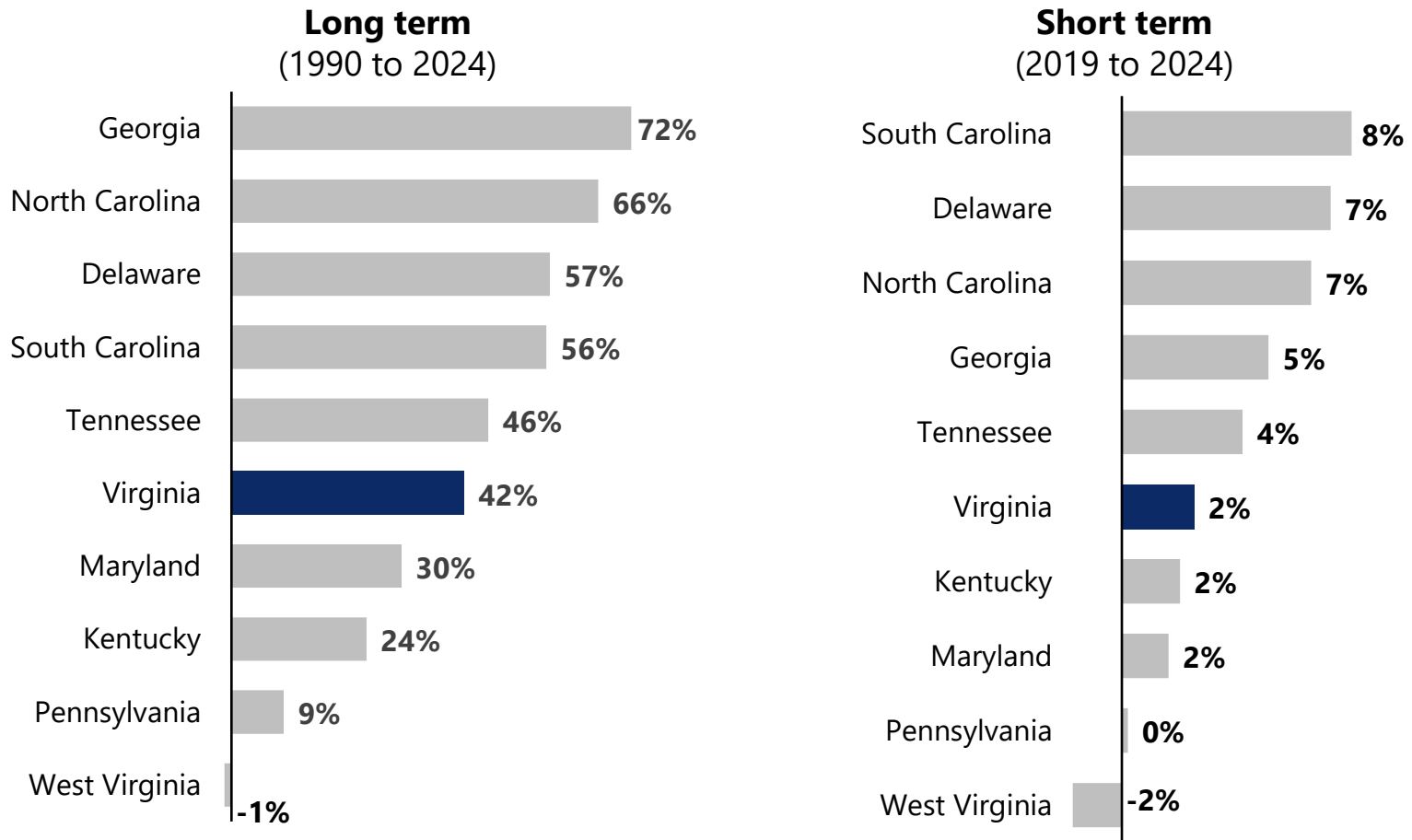
Since 1990, Virginia's total population has increased 42%



Virginia's total population growth has outpaced the nation



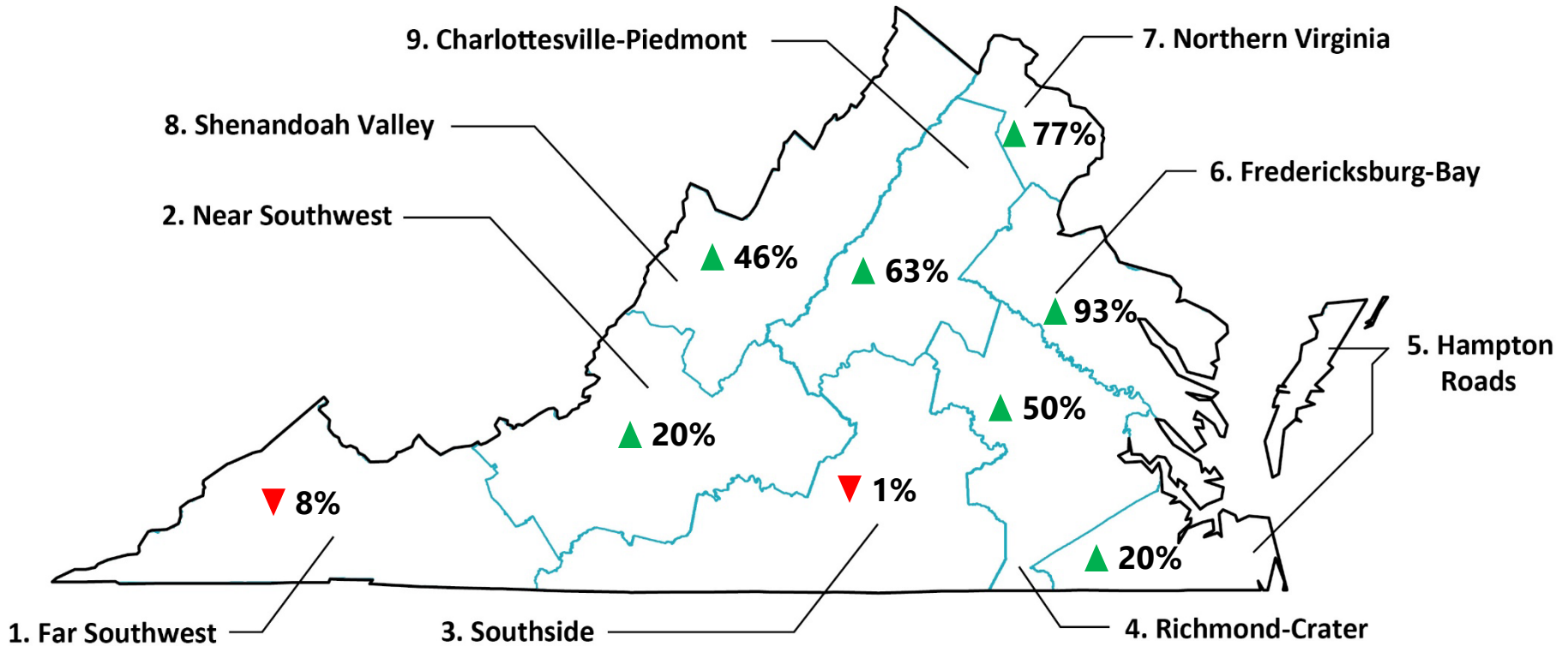
Virginia's total population growth compared to other states in region



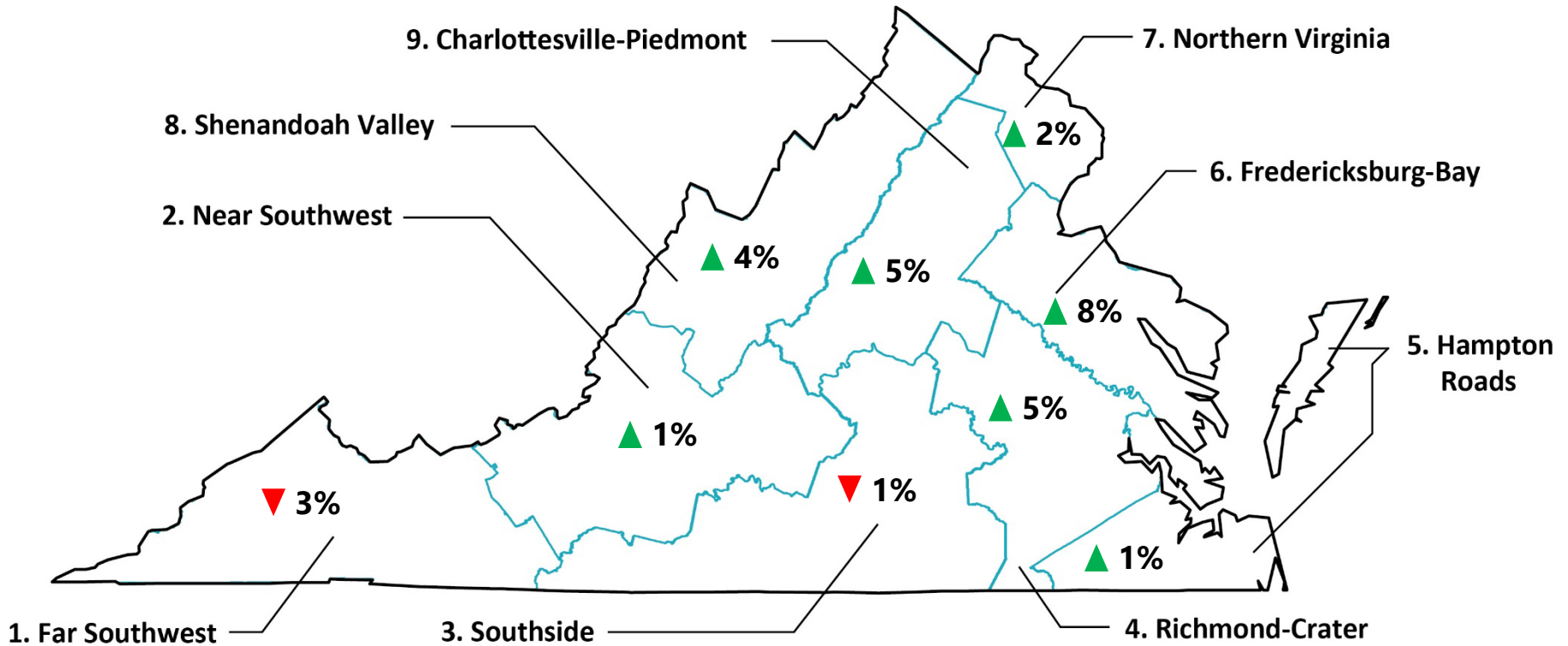
Long-term local population change (1990 to 2024)

- Though Virginia's total population has grown, populations in 31 localities decreased since 1990
- Virginia's rural localities generally had the largest population declines; 43% of rural localities have smaller populations than in 1990
- However, Virginia's rural localities have experienced relatively less population loss than rural localities nationwide

Long-term regional population change (1990 to 2024)



Short-term regional population change (2019 to 2024)



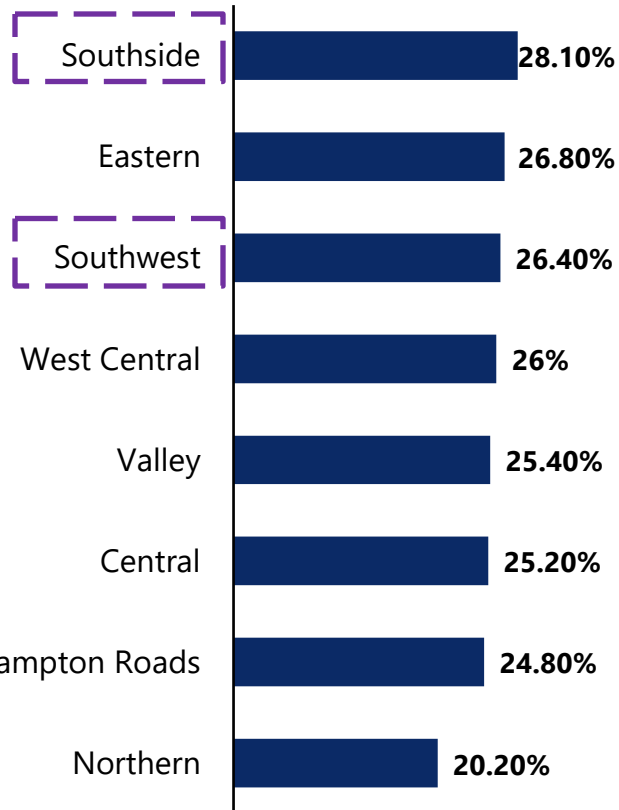
Far Southwest and Southside regions still lost population during the pandemic

- Some localities in Far Southwest and Southside did see modest population gains during the pandemic
- Regionally, though, population still declined each year during the pandemic

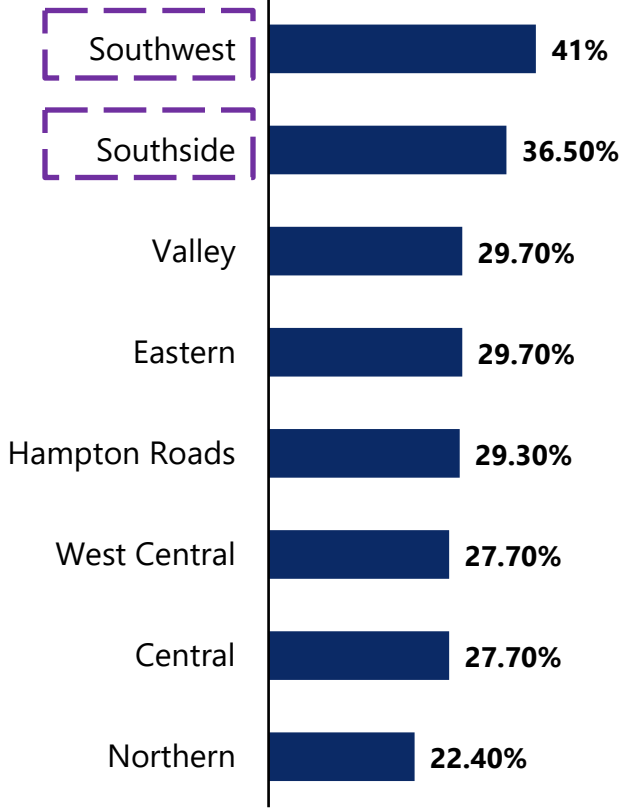
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Far Southwest	370,639	368,014	365,937	364,704
Southside	365,714	364,931	363,951	363,831

Aging & selected characteristics, by region*

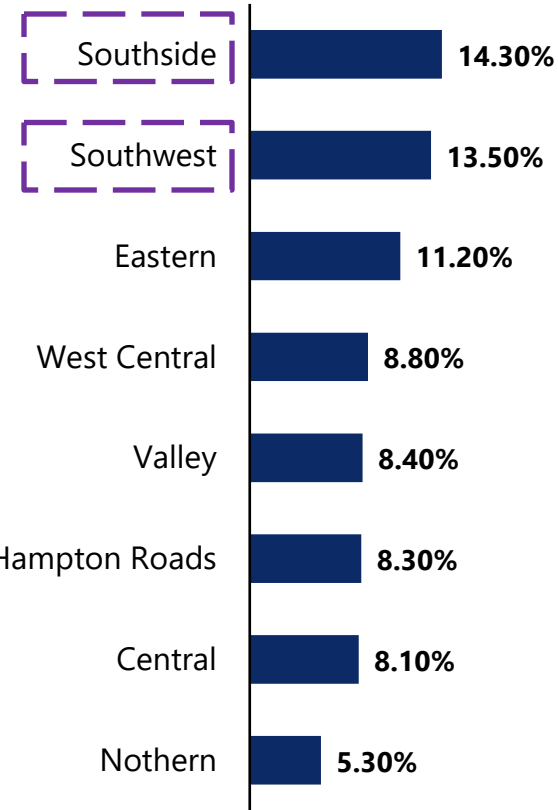
Age 60+ & Living Alone



Age 60+ & Disabled



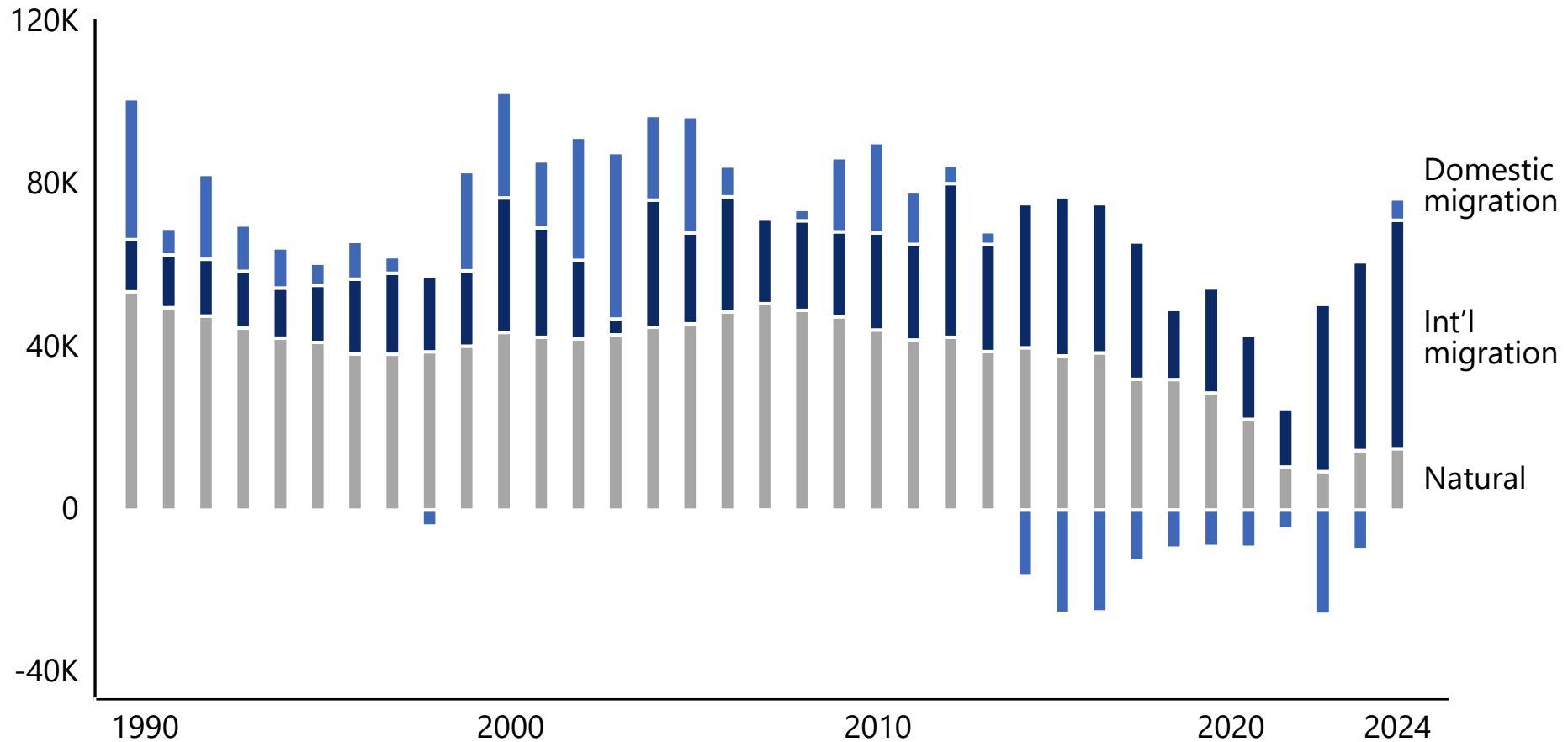
Age 60+ & In Poverty



*Percentage shown is of total population in region who meet both conditions (e.g., 60+ & living alone)

Source: Weldon Cooper Center analysis of 2018 to 2022 U.S. Census data.

Components of population change in Virginia



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Historical demographic trends – Natural (births & deaths)

Future demographic projections

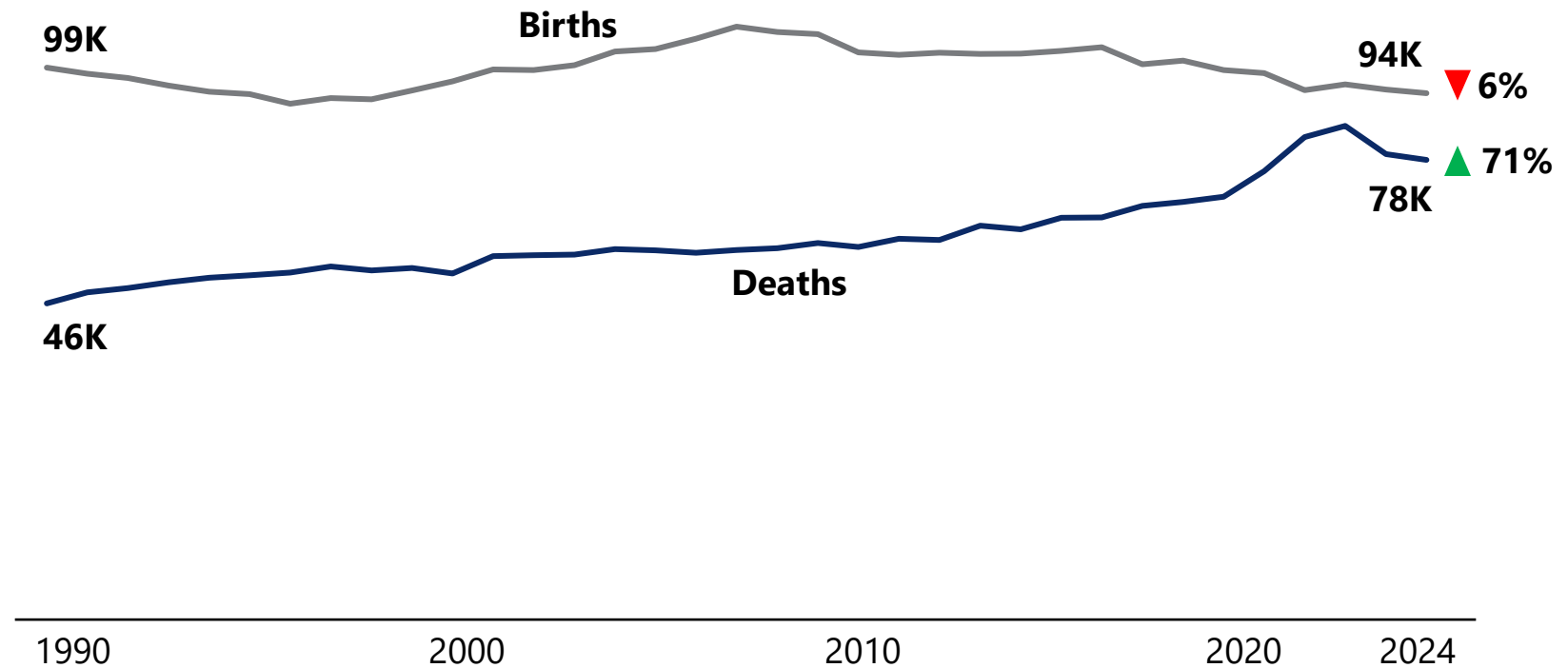
Potential impacts on state revenues, spending, & programs

Appendix

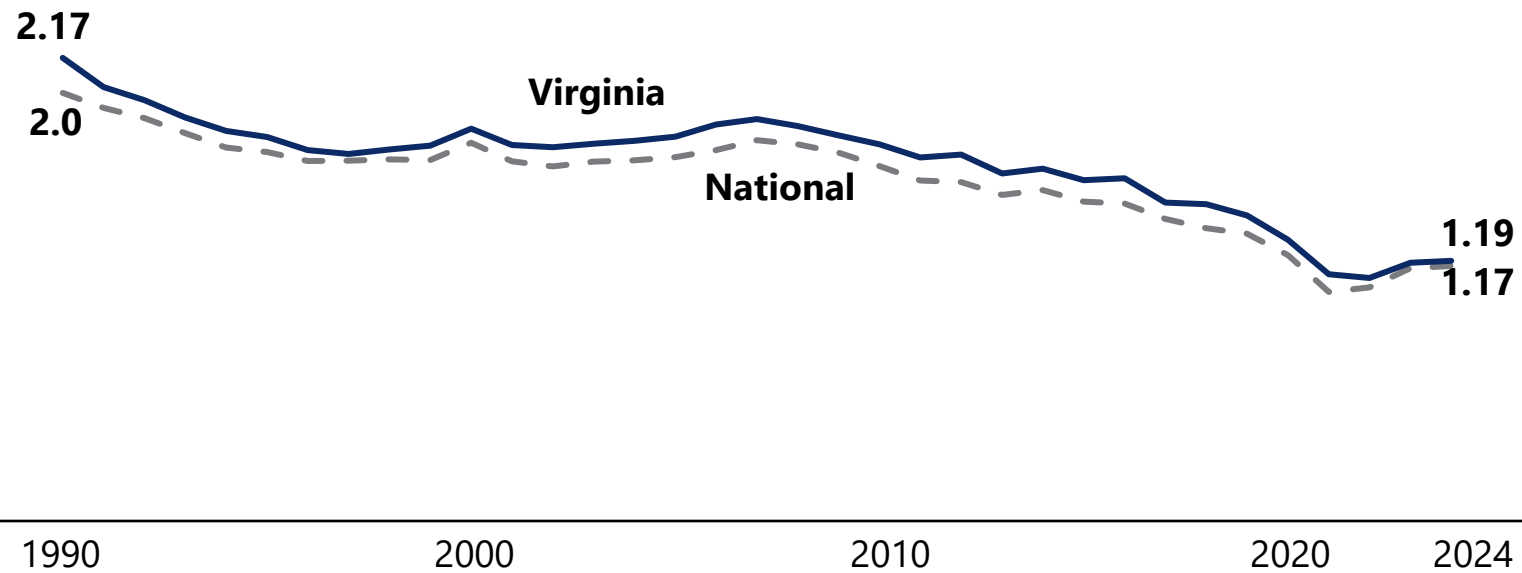
Natural population is one of three components of population change

- Births and deaths within a given jurisdiction (e.g., state or locality)
- “Net-natural” population trends
 - up when there are more births than deaths
 - down when there are more deaths than births
- Natural population’s share of population growth is decreasing

Number of deaths each year is approaching the number of births

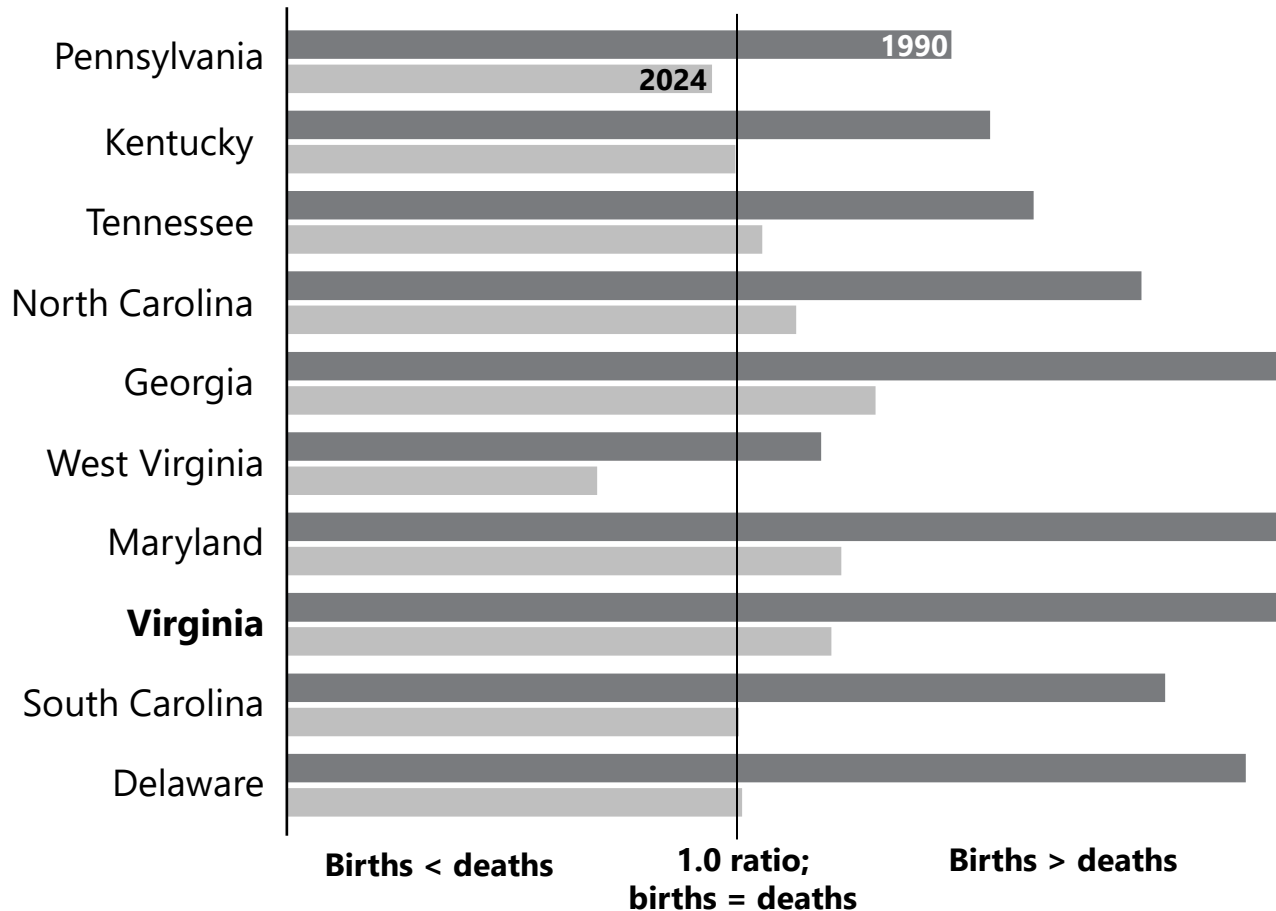


Virginia's net natural ratio (births compared to deaths) is now very similar to the national ratio

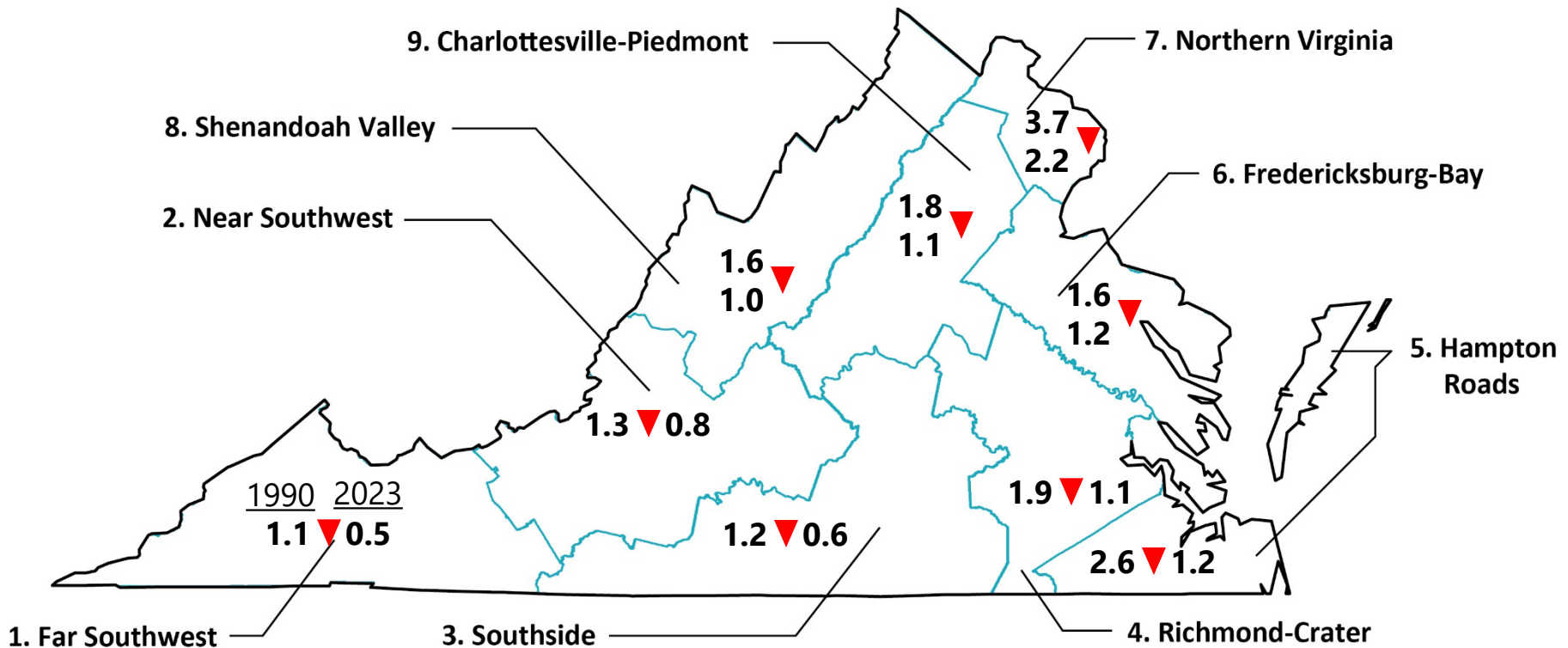


Shown as ratio of births / deaths.

Virginia's net natural ratio compared to other states in the region



Net natural ratio is declining to varying degrees in all regions



Notes: Net natural ratio calculated as births / deaths. First ratio = 1990; second ratio = 2023. Ratio of more than 1 = more births than deaths; ratio of less than 1 = fewer births than deaths.

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U.S. Census Bureau uses several definitions when reporting international migration statistics

- Native-born U.S. Citizen – Born in the U.S. or born abroad to American parents (includes military)
- Naturalized U.S. Citizen – Not born in the U.S. but completed the legal process to become a U.S. citizen
- Not a U.S. Citizen – Not born in the U.S. and has not completed naturalization process but may or may not live here legally
- Immigration data in this section is likely an undercount because of underrepresentation of unauthorized migrant population in data

*Measuring the extent of Virginia's unauthorized migrant population is outside the scope of this project.

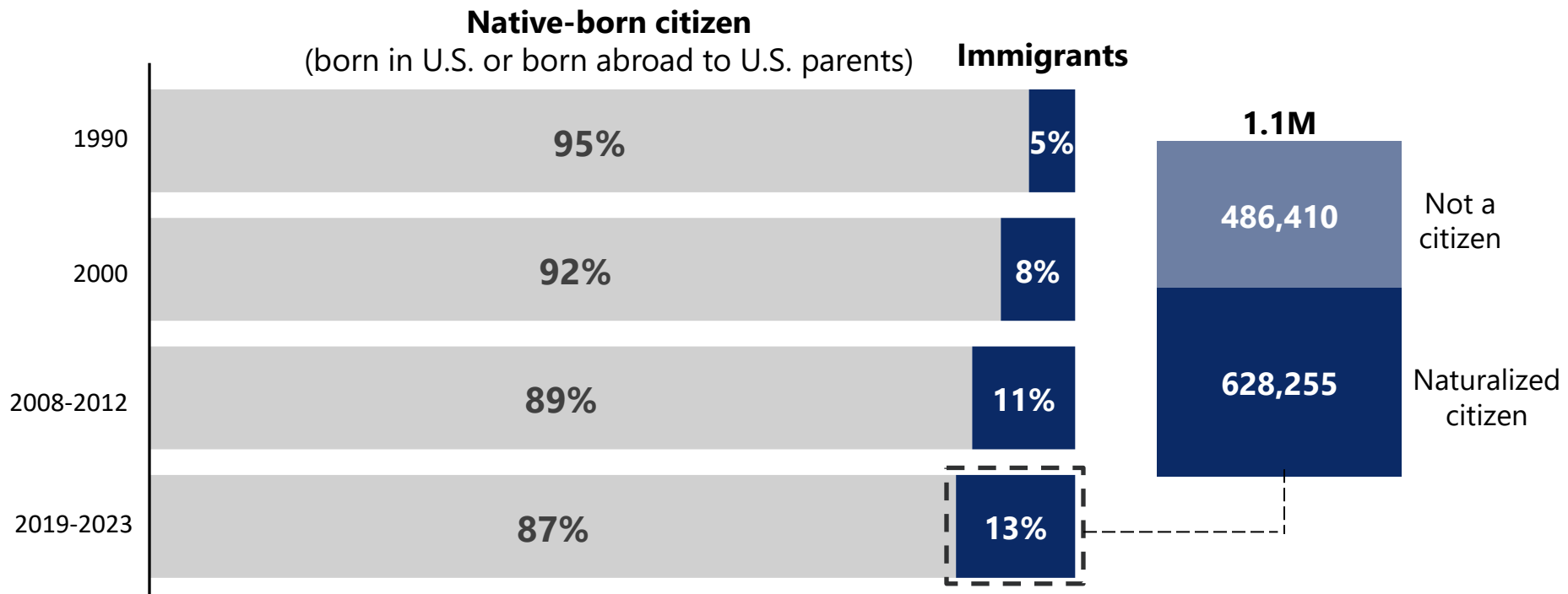
International migration to Virginia: 1990 to 2024



Note: Includes movement of native-born and foreign-born populations.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Immigrants' proportion of the total population has more than doubled



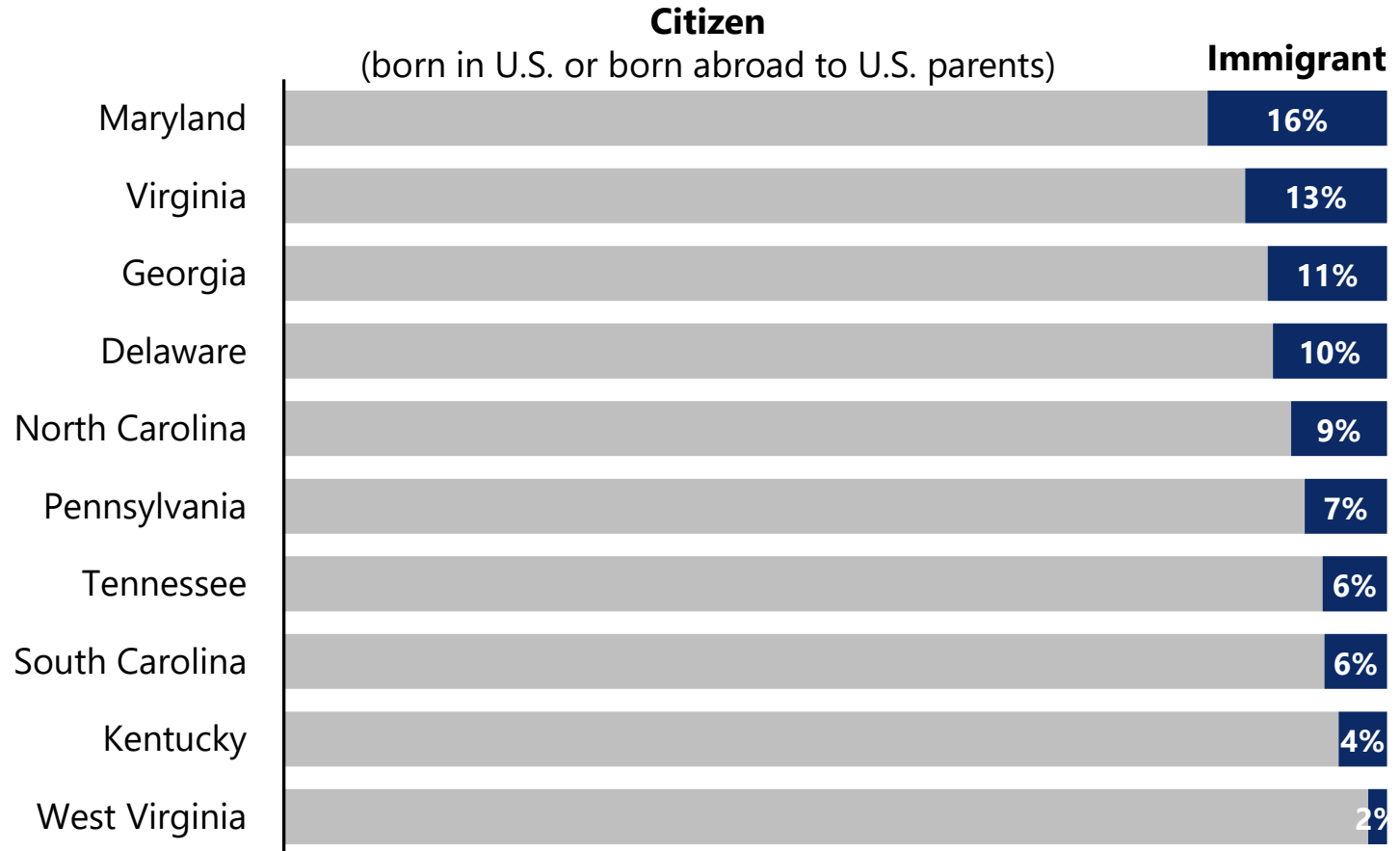
Virginia immigrants' race, poverty, education, and employment levels

- More than 2/3 of immigrants identify as either Asian (35.2%) or Hispanic (33.5%)*
- Immigrants are more likely than native-born citizens to have an advanced degree (20.1% vs. 15.4%), yet also more likely to have less than a GED/high school equivalent degree (14.8% vs. 5.9%)
- Immigrants are more likely to participate in the labor force (72.6% vs. 65.7%) but have lower annual median personal income (\$37.4K vs. \$40.8K) than native-born citizens

*Asian immigrants: 29.4% advanced degree, \$32.8K median personal income.

Hispanic immigrants: 7.2% advanced degree, \$26.4K median personal income.

Virginia immigrant population, compared to other states in region



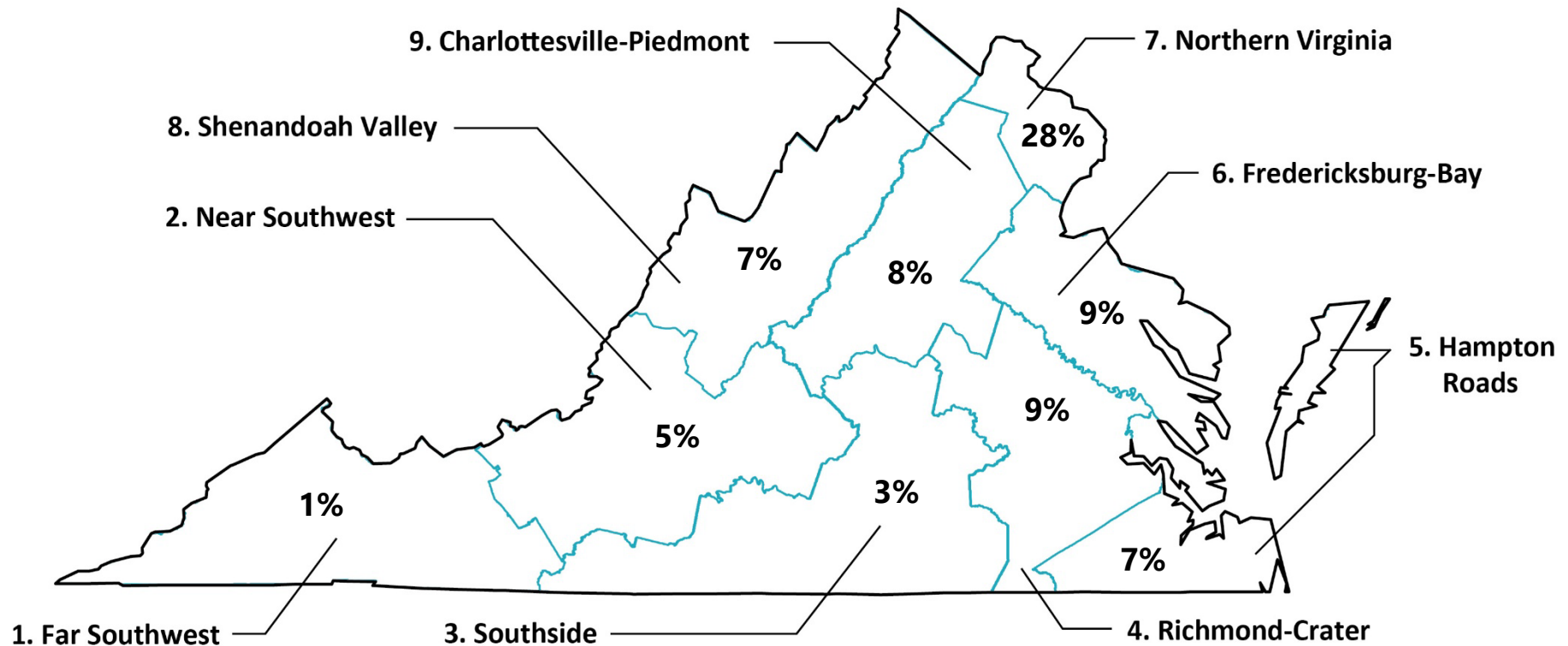
Immigrant education and poverty, compared to other states in region

- Immigrants in Virginia are more highly educated than in all other states in the region—42.8% have a bachelor's degree or higher
- Immigrants are less likely to be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level in Virginia (26.1%) than all other states in the region, which range from 26.3% to 42.4%

Virginia immigrant population, by locality

- Virginia localities vary widely in the percentage of their population that are immigrants (0.4% to 37%)
- Immigrants are at least 10% of the population in 17 localities—all of which are in metropolitan areas
- Larger localities have more immigrants: Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun have the most immigrants
- Northern Virginia is home to nearly 2/3 of the state's immigrant population

Percentage of population who are immigrants, by region



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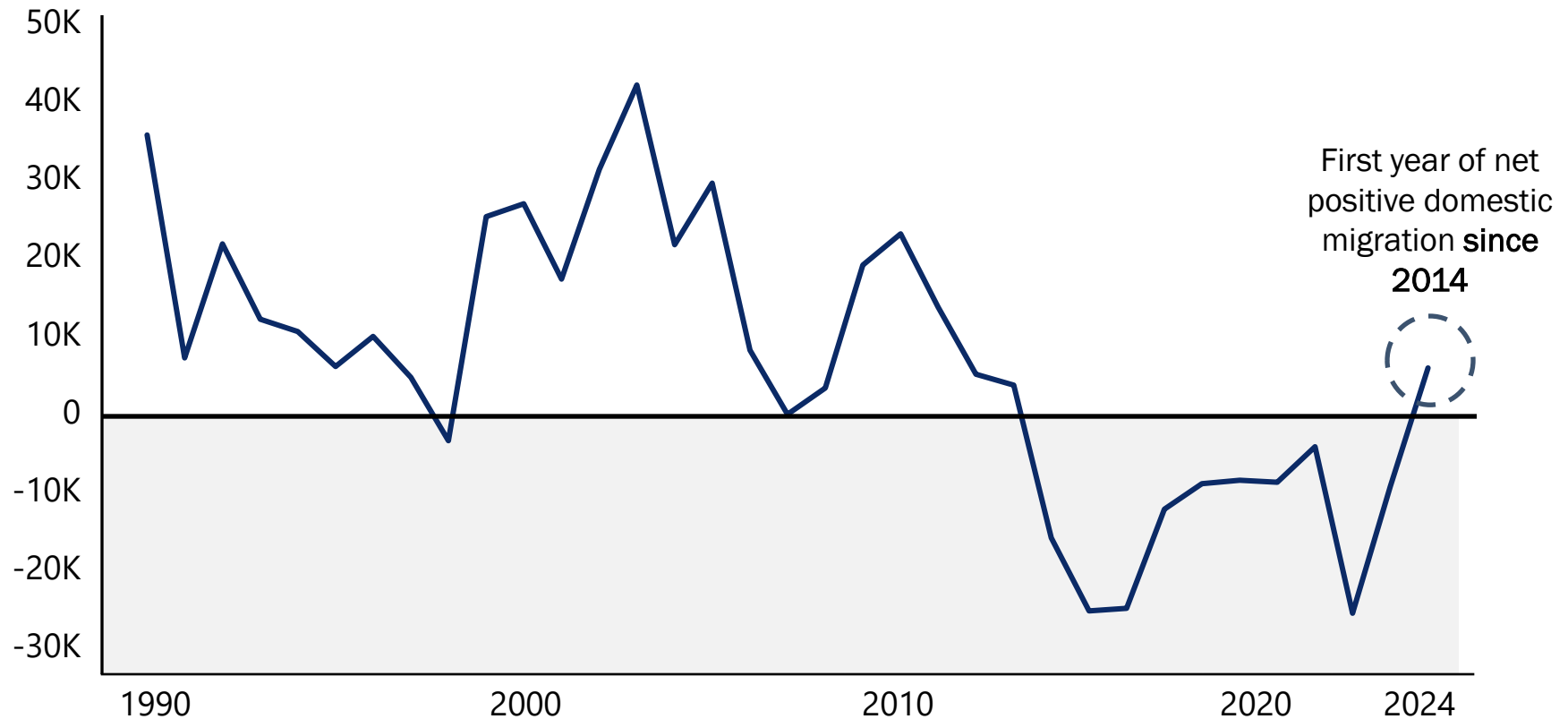
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Domestic migration is movement across states and localities, but within the U.S.

- U.S. Census Bureau estimates “state-to-state” migration by analyzing
 - Survey data asking whether respondents lived in the same residence 1 year ago
 - IRS, Medicare, and Social Security data
- Separate and distinct from a person’s international immigration status

Virginia's domestic migration was positive in 2024 for the first time since 2014



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program (increase in 2000 partially due to data adjustments made by U.S. Census Bureau).

Domestic migration into and out of Virginia: Top 5 states

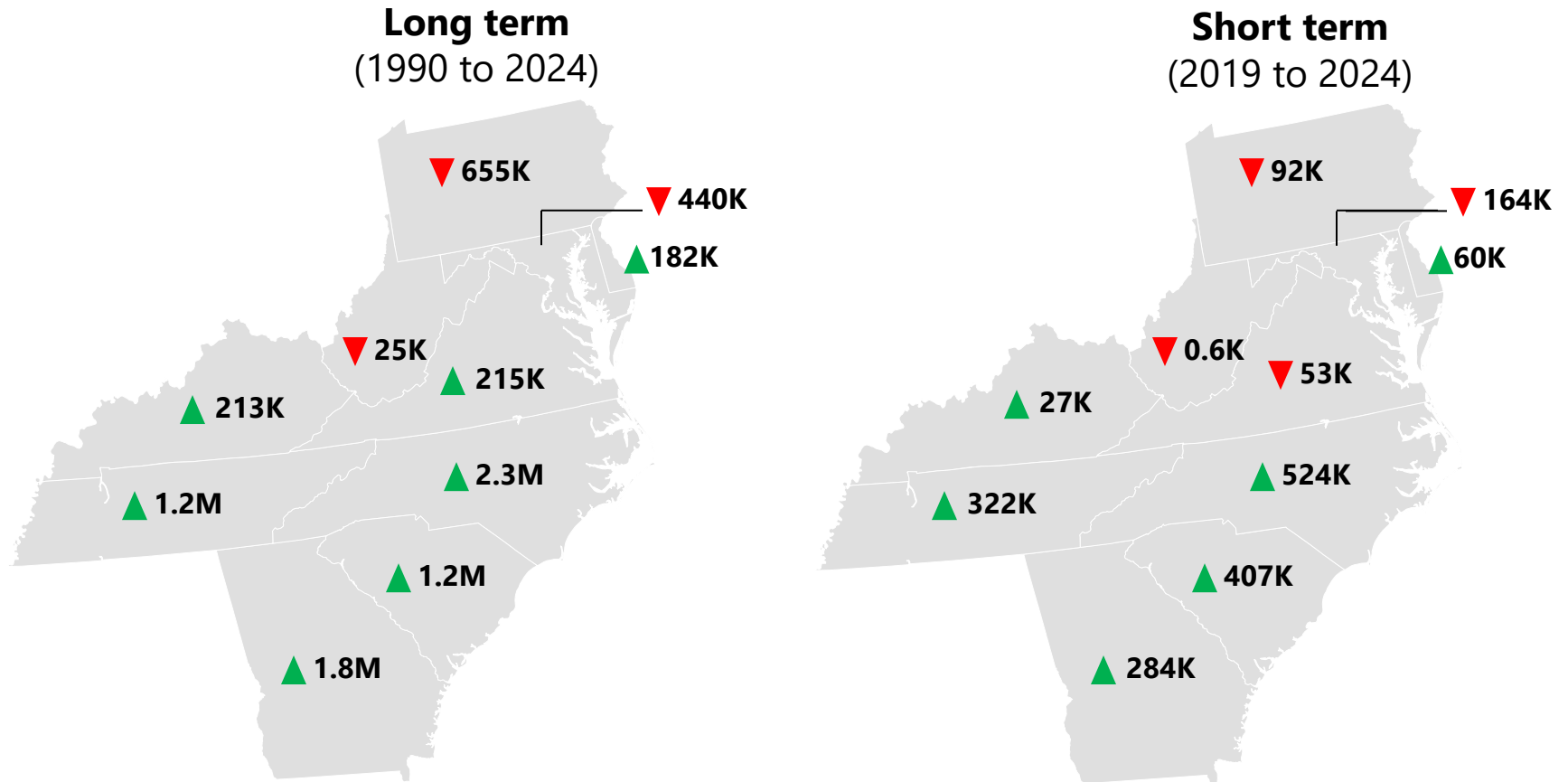
	Moving <u>into</u> Virginia from ...	Moving <u>out of</u> Virginia to ...
1.	Maryland	North Carolina
2.	North Carolina	Florida
3.	Florida	Maryland
4.	California	California
5.	New York	Texas

Virginia's population characteristics compared with those moving to and from the state

	Existing Virginia population	Moving <u>into</u> Virginia	Moving <u>out of</u> Virginia
Average age	39	31	32
Married	50%	35%	38%
Education – Bachelor's	22%	29%	29%
Education – Advanced	16%	16%	20%
<=200% FPL	24%	33%	31%
Median personal income	\$40.2K	\$37.1K	\$37.4K
Employed	67%	73%	72%
Employed by federal gov't*	10%	29%	21%

*Includes members of the military (roughly half)

Virginia is the only state in region with positive long term, but negative short term, net migration



Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program

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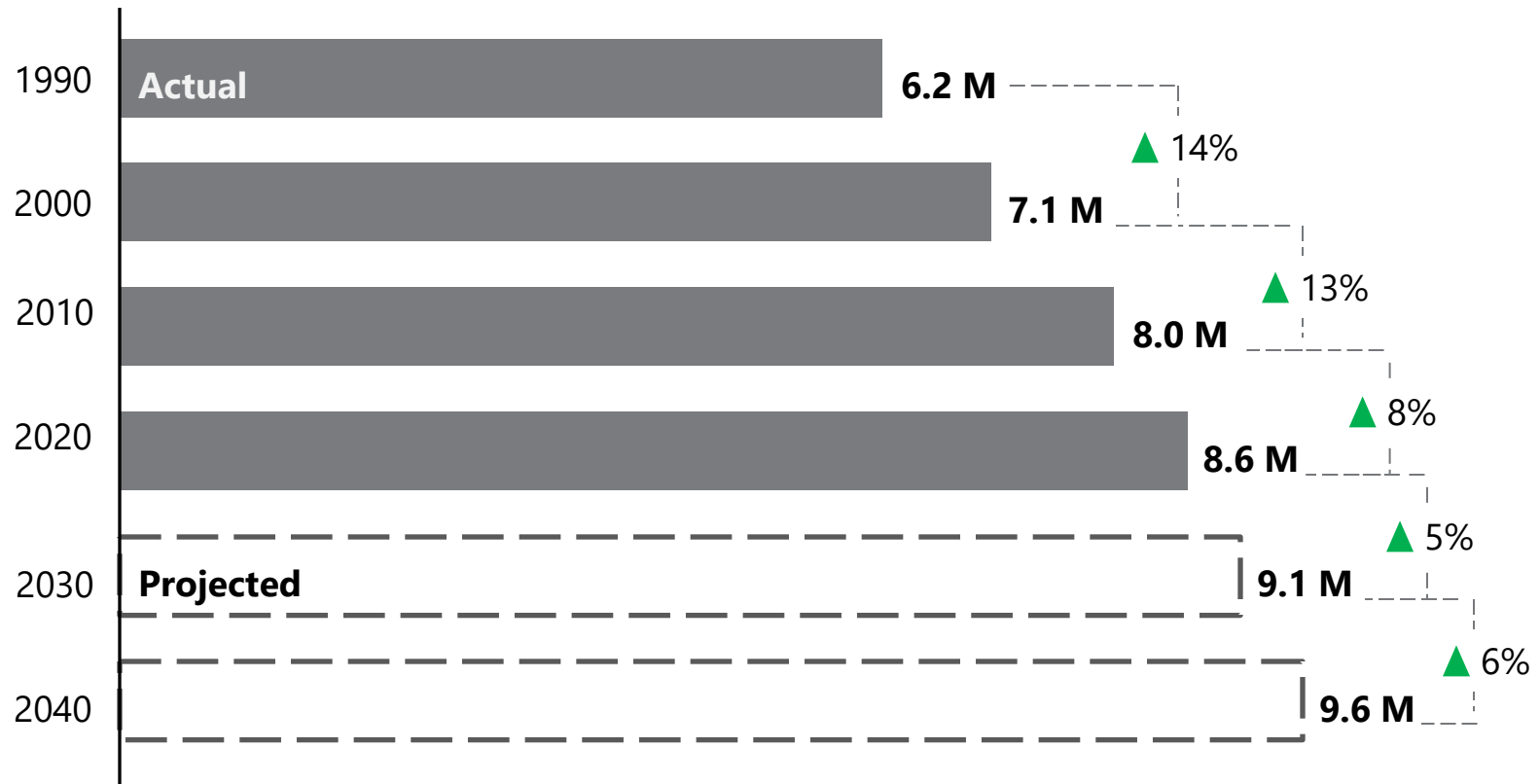
Demographic projections

- Projections are always subject to error, especially when unexpected or unforeseen events occur
 - Major economic disruptions
 - Social or government policy changes
 - Natural disasters
- Certain projections tend to be more subject to error
 - Long-term projections typically more subject to error than short-term projections
 - Locality-specific projections typically more subject to error than statewide projections
- Projections are typically less detailed than historical or current information

Virginia demographic projections

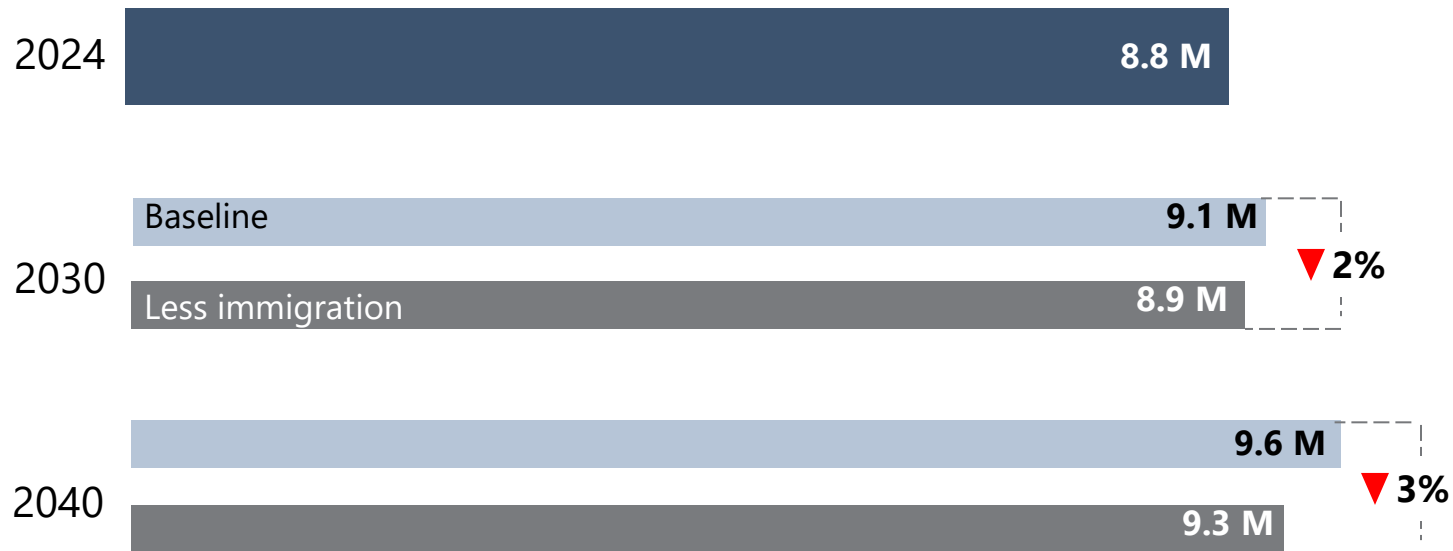
- Projections shown produced by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; released in July 2025
- In August 2025, JLARC asked Weldon Cooper to develop alternative projections assuming less international immigration
 - International immigration has been the largest contributor to Virginia population growth in recent years
 - Changes in federal immigration policy could reduce immigration in the future
- Federal workforce reductions & shifts—especially those impacting Northern Virginia—not yet reflected in projections

Virginia's population is projected to grow more slowly



Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

Alternative population growth projections, assuming 50% less immigration*



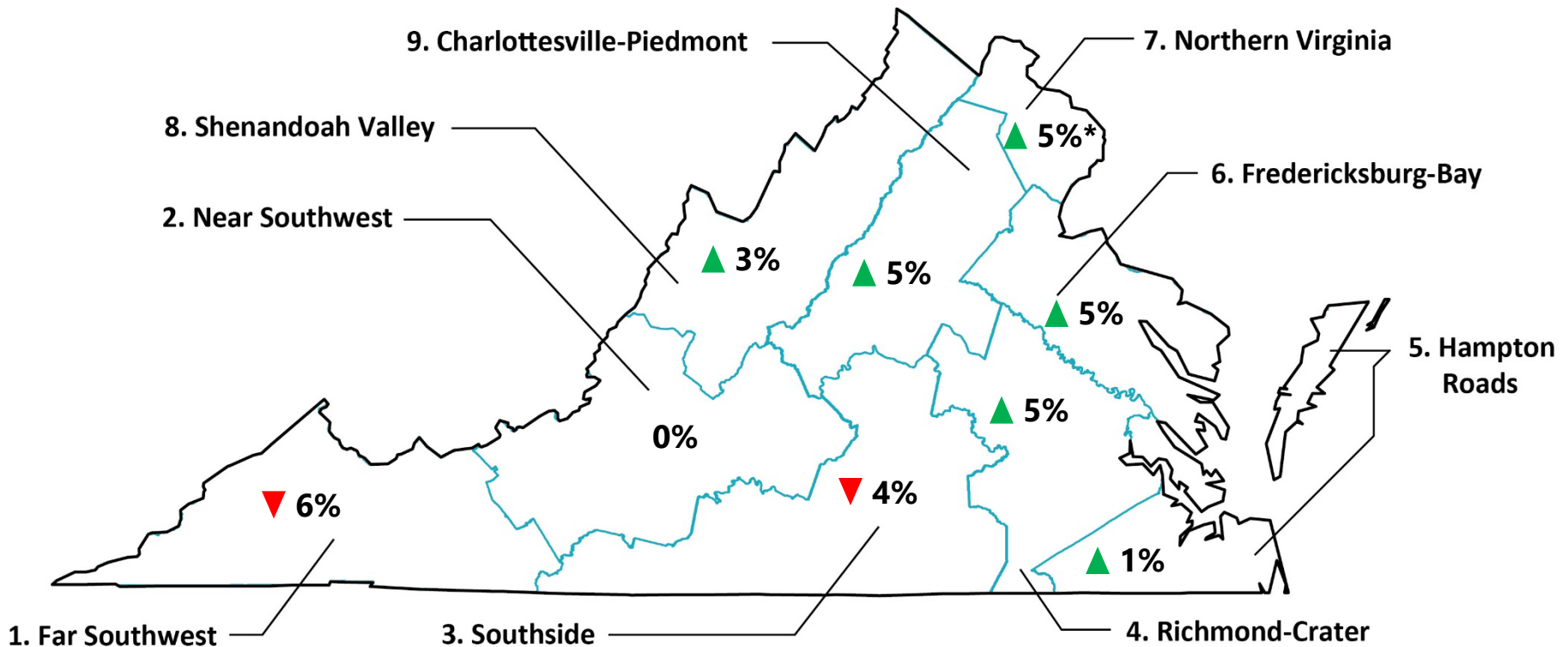
*Unofficial projection, requested by JLARC staff, using assumption of immigration reduced by 50% to illustrate role substantially lower immigration could play in population projections.

Many localities are projected to see population decline over the next two decades

- Though Virginia's total population is projected to grow, roughly half of localities are projected to have lower populations
- Population is projected to decline in 15 localities by at least 5% by 2030
- Population is projected to decline in seven localities by at least 20% by 2040

Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

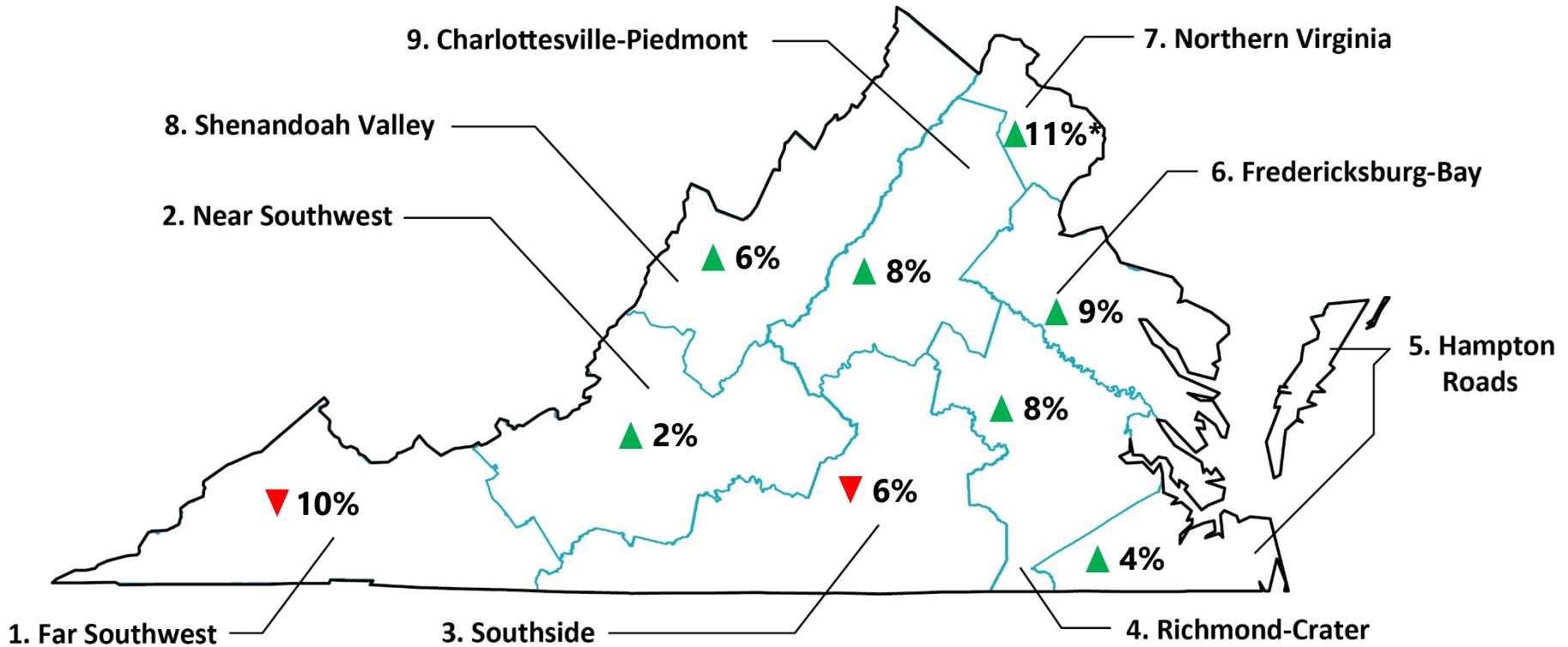
Near-term projected regional population change (2024 to 2030)



*Projection does not yet account for 2025 federal shifts and reductions.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

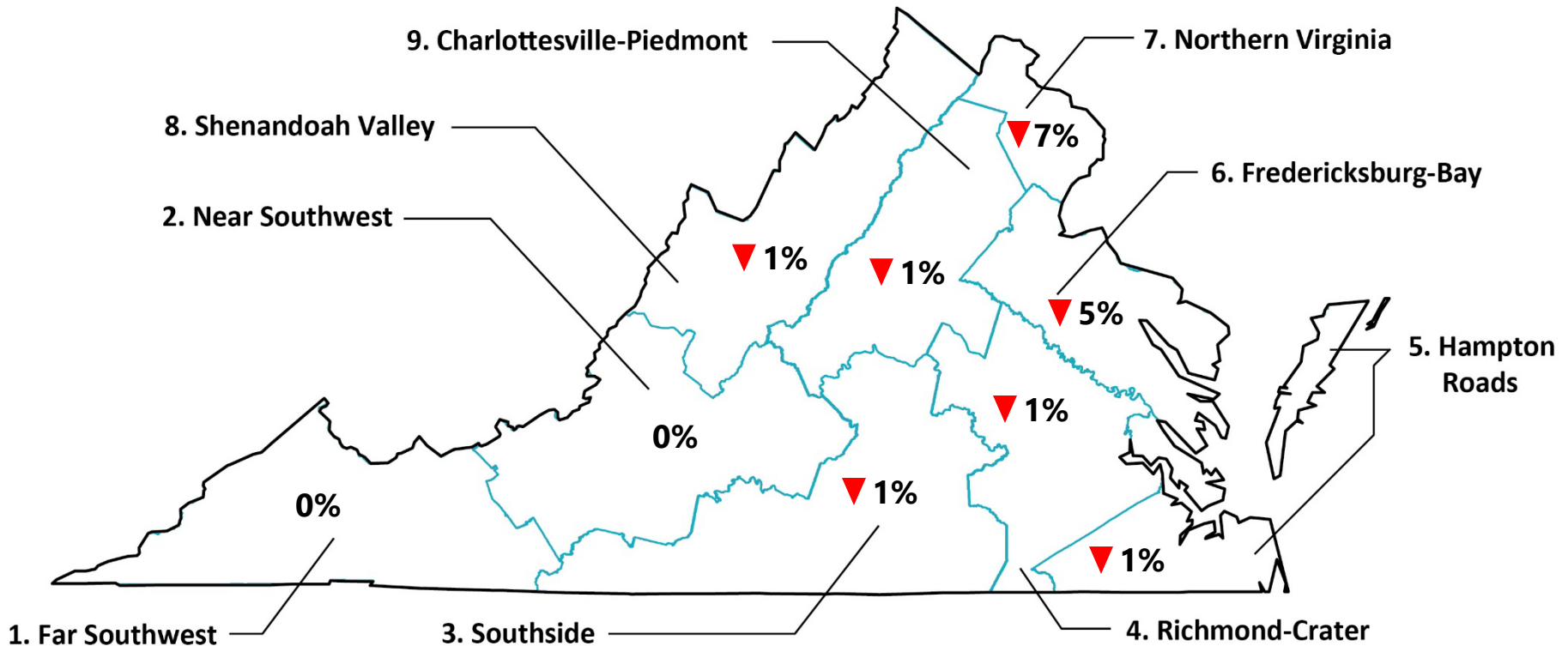
Longer term projected regional population (2030 to 2040)



*Projection does not yet account for 2025 federal shifts and reductions.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

Alternative projected regional population change, assuming less immigration*, compared to baseline



*Percentage shown is difference between 2040 (1) baseline Weldon Cooper Center projections and (2) alternative projection assuming 50% lower immigration.

Proportion of Virginians ages 20 to 64 is projected to decline

	Current	2030	2040
19 & under	25%	23%	23%
20 to 64	59%	57%	56%
More than 64	16%	20%	20%

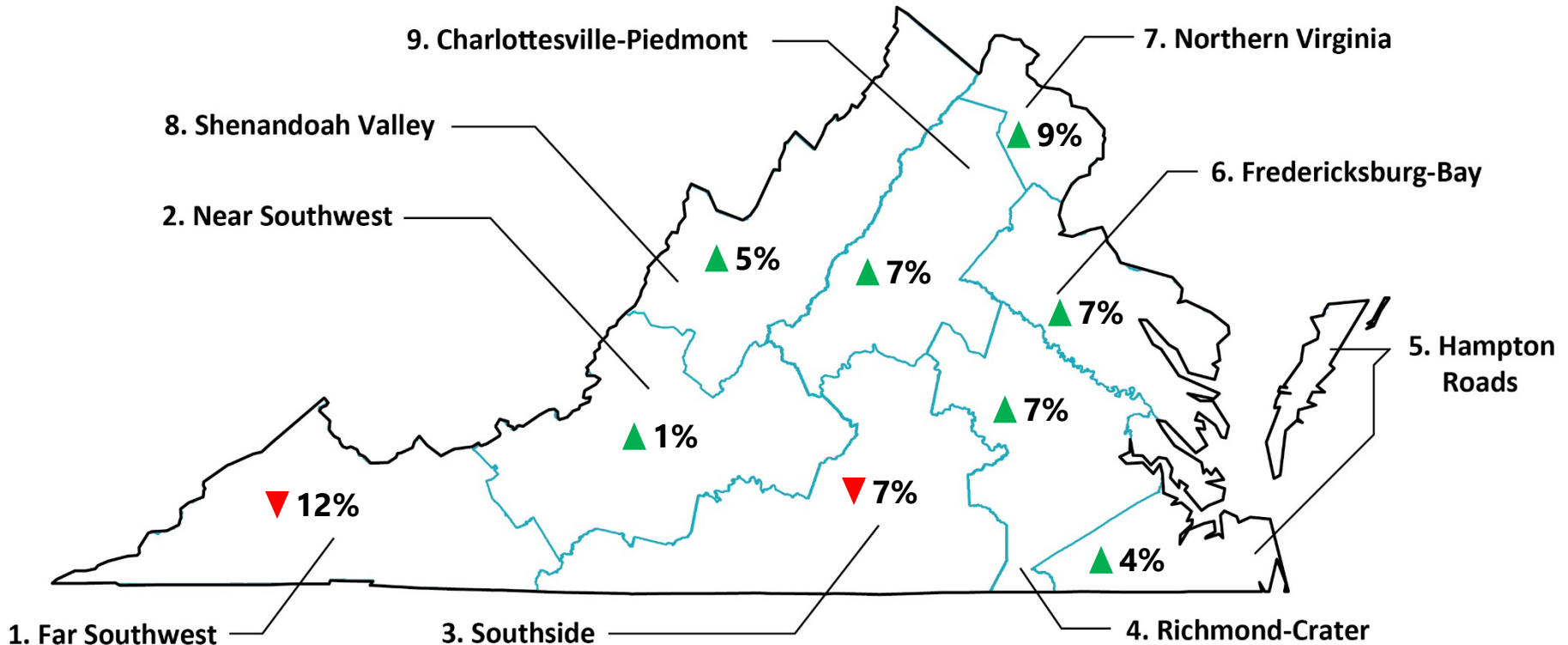
Sources: American Community Survey 2019–2023 & Weldon Cooper Center projections.

Proportion of Virginians age 80+ will increase 38% to comprise 7% of the total population by 2040

	2030	2040	Change
Age 80 to 84	262K	333K	+27%
Aged 85+	201K	304K	+51%
Totals	463K	638K	+38%

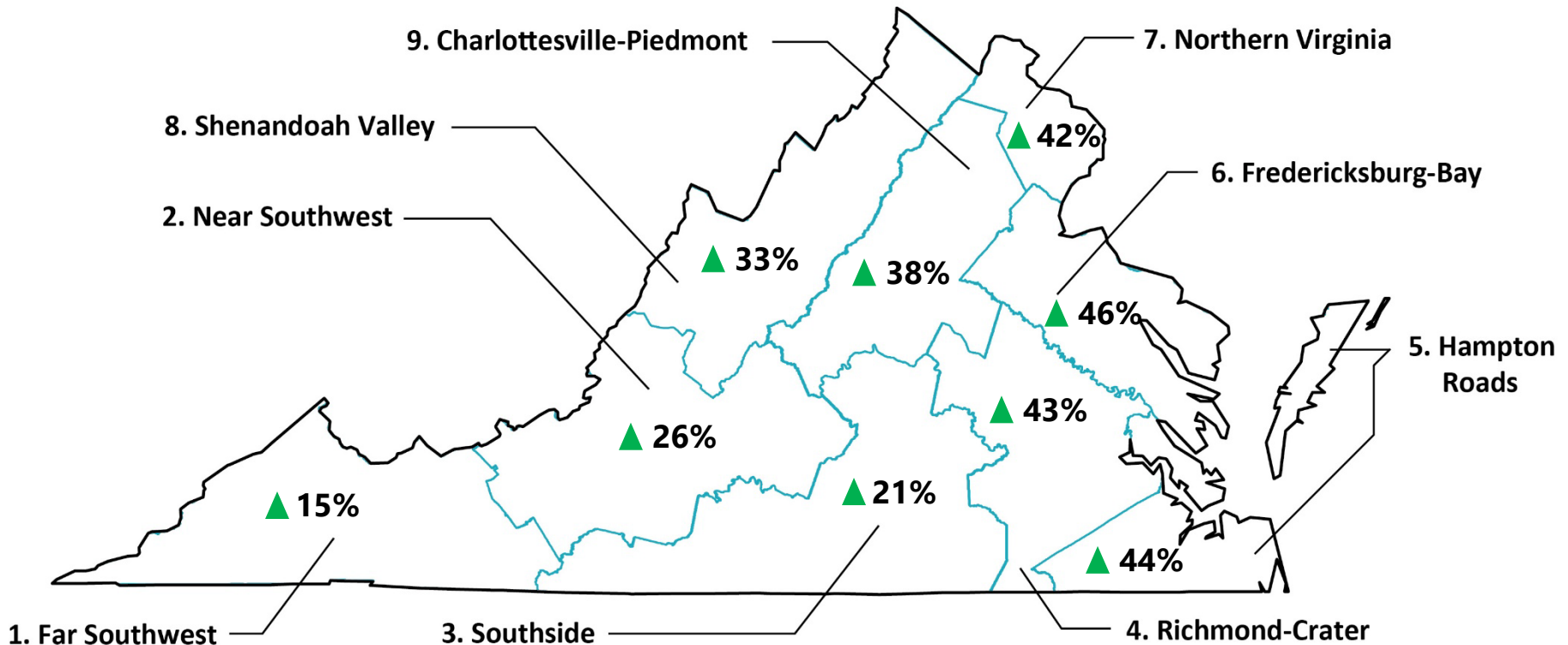
Sources: American Community Survey 2019–2023 & Weldon Cooper Center projections.

From 2030 to 2040, projected change in working age Virginians (age 20-64) will vary among regions



Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

All regions projected to see increase in people aged 80+ (2030 to 2040)



Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

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Demographic trend: Declining birth rate

- Will lead to population stagnation or decline, without commensurate increases in
 - Immigration
 - Domestic migration
- Can reduce growth or level of need in services for children (e.g., child care or K-12)
- Places strain on programs affected by ratio of age groups or generations (e.g., children caring for aging parents, fiscal sustainability of social insurance programs)
- Difficult to reverse (e.g., Japan)

Demographic trend: Continued aging of population

- Potential slowing of economic activity (e.g., state domestic product)
 - Increase in older citizens is linked to lower GDP and labor productivity
 - Impact may be mitigated by people working later in life and/or technological innovation
- Less income and assets subject to taxation
 - More taxpayers with Social Security income that is exempt from state income taxes
 - More taxpayers using age deduction (up to \$12,000), and other related tax reductions (e.g., local property tax relief)

Demographic trend: Continued aging of population (continued)

- Large impacts on health-care industry
 - Worsening healthcare workforce shortages
 - Increased need for assisted living and nursing home care
 - Higher Medicaid spending through long-term care waiver

Demographic trend: More older adults living alone or disabled, particularly in Southside & Southwest

- Greater need for community-based and in-home care services (direct care, chore assistance, etc.) that allow people to age in place
- Greater need for social services, and housing, food, or transportation assistance
- Greater risk of social isolation, mental health issues, or elder abuse
 - Adult Protective Services
 - Community Services Boards
 - Guardianship and conservatorship

Demographic trend: Fewer young and working age adults

- Potential to create new or worsen existing worker shortages (degree will depend on immigration, domestic migration, and automation)
- Lower proportion of tax base subject to payroll withholding, making revenue forecasting less certain
- Potential reduction in consumption levels, which could reduce sales tax revenues
- Potential reduced demand for family-related services (e.g., child care)
- Greater competition within higher education for students

Demographic trend: Continued population growth in higher population regions

- Continued population growth and density in these areas will make it even more challenging to
 - Meet transportation demand and address traffic congestion
 - Address housing supply and affordability

Demographic trend: Continued population decline in rural localities

- Declining population/workforce creates significant economic development challenges
 - Insufficient number of employees for existing companies
 - Inadequate revenue to fund essential services (e.g., school, infrastructure) due to shrinking tax base
 - Financial struggles for private service providers (especially hospitals)
- Recruitment of new businesses is challenging because of declining population, services, and providers
- Requires effective economic development efforts (e.g., programs, incentives) and regional initiatives

Demographic trend: Greater reliance on domestic migration or international immigration to grow population

- Competition among regions and localities for businesses and workers from other states
 - Potentially places a greater premium on higher education system recruiting out-of-state students, and encouraging them to stay in Virginia (e.g., Virginia Talent Opportunity Partnership)
- Potential higher need for English language services in schools, courts, and other customer-facing government agencies; greater need for workforce assistance services

JLARC staff for this report

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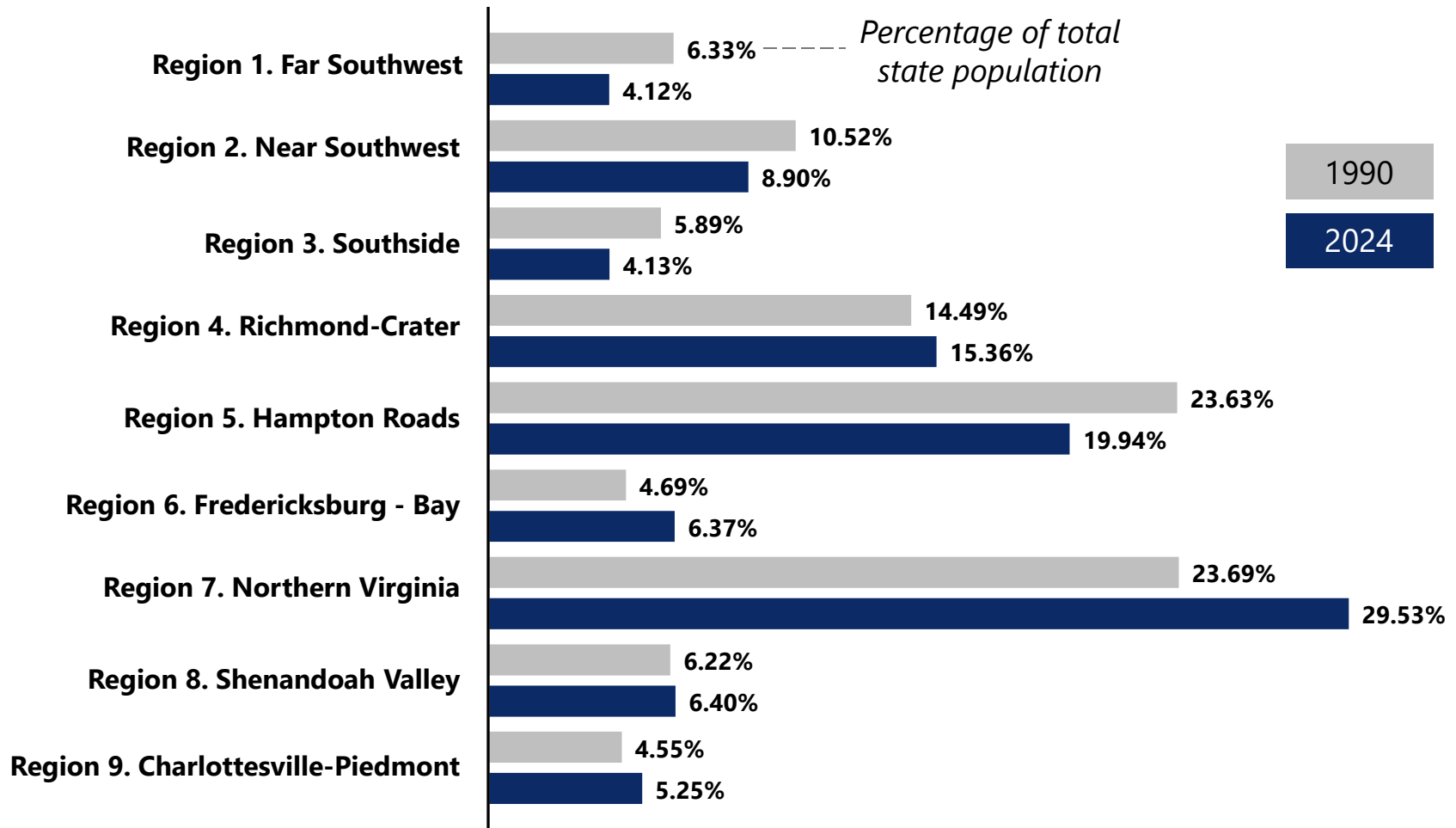
Data Sources

- U.S. Census Population Estimates Program (PEP), 1990 to 2024
- U.S. Decennial Census and American Community Survey (5-year)
 - *Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, Steven Manson, Katherine Knowles, Tracy Kugler, Finn Roberts, and Steven Ruggles. IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 20.0 [2023]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. 2025. <http://doi.org/10.18128/D050.V20.0>*
 - *Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rogers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [1990, 2000, 2008-2012, 2019-2023]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>*
- Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

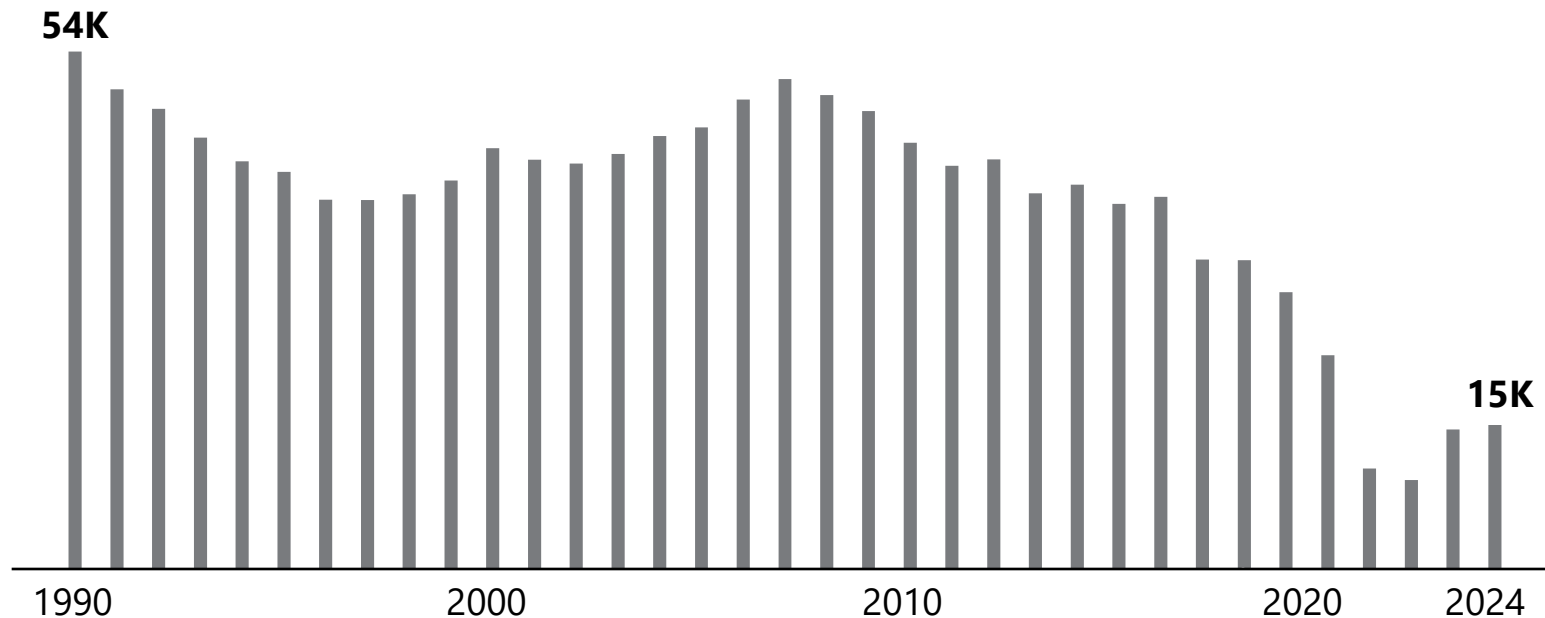
Virginia's population changes: age, race/ethnicity, education, and marriage status

Proportion of Virginians ...	Long-term change (1990 to 2023)
Ages 45 to 64	+6.7%
Over age 64	+5.6%
Identifying as white	-15.7%
Identifying as Hispanic	+8.2%
With undergraduate degree	+7.7%
With advanced degree	+8.3%
Who are married	-7.9%

Regional distribution of total Virginia population



Virginia net natural (births – deaths) population change



Shown as births minus deaths.

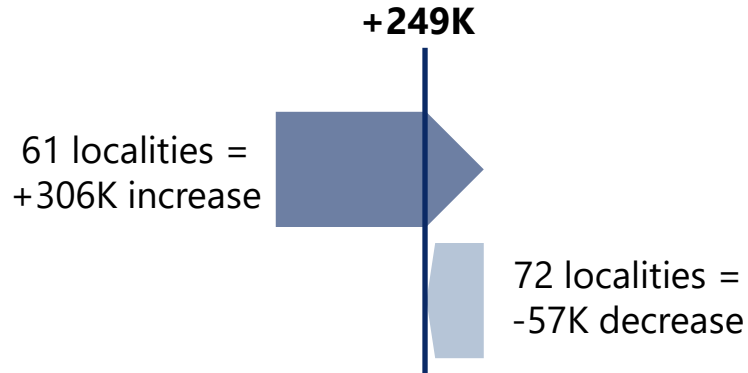
Migration into Virginia from other states*, by locality

- Domestic migrants generally comprise a modest percentage of each Virginia locality's population (median = 7%)
- Domestic migrants comprise 15% or more of the local population in 10 localities
 - Williamsburg, Fredericksburg, Radford, Prince George, Buena Vista, Petersburg, Lexington, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, & Falls Church
- Two GO Virginia regions are destinations for more than half of domestic migrants: Northern Virginia (34%) and Hampton Roads (27%)

*Based on survey data; asked if they moved to Virginia from another state during the last year.

Less than half of Virginia's localities are projected to be responsible for state's growth

Net statewide population change: 2024 to 2030

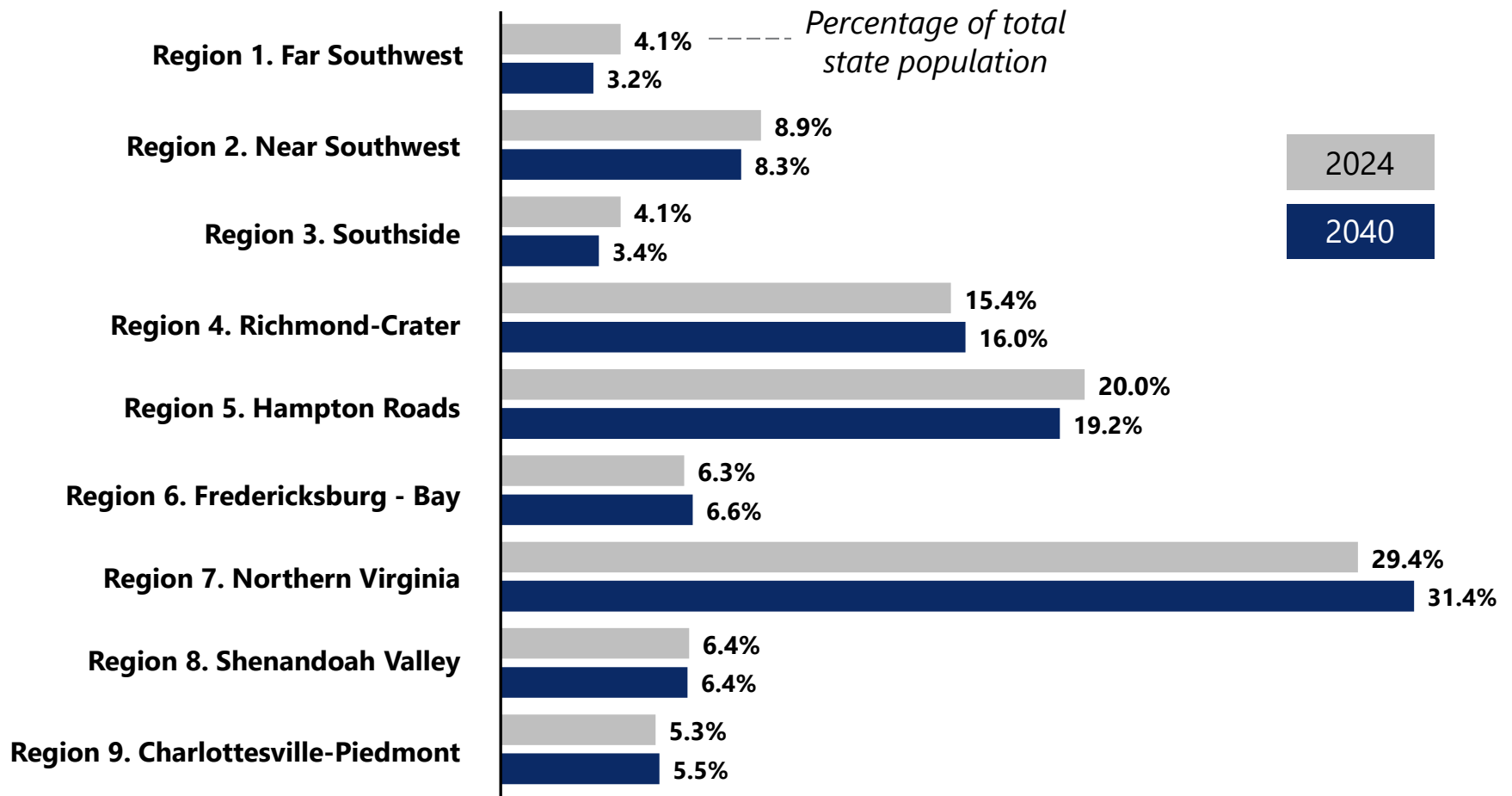


Net statewide population change 2024 to 2040



Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

Projected regional distribution of Virginia population



*Projection does not yet account for 2025 federal shifts and reductions.

Source: Weldon Cooper Center population estimates and projections.

Aging projections, localities

- By 2030, proportion of local population aged 80+ will be above the statewide level (5%) in 106 localities
 - Above 9% in 8 localities
- By 2040, the proportion of the local population aged 80+ will be above the statewide level (7%) in 94 localities
 - Above 10% in 20 localities