Population Projection Methodology Summary

The Virginia Employment Commission uses a baseline cohort-component method as well as historical population data trends to project population by age. A baseline projection assumes people have the right to migrate where they choose and no major natural catastrophes or war will occur. A cohort component method traces people born in a given year through their lives. As each year passes, cohorts change due to the mortality and migration assumptions. Applying fertility assumptions to the women of childbearing age forms new cohorts.

The VEC's numbers depict only one possible course of future population change; one attempting to reflect recent trends in fertility, mortality, and migration. The projections do not necessarily show what is most desirable, rather what can reasonably be expected, if current trends continue for the next 30 years.

The projections are not intended to represent optimal growth trends or goals for any county or city nor are they intended to constrain an area. They are meant to provide insight on what could occur in the absence of any major change. The projections should serve as common reference points in the planning, development, and implementation of state agency programs and facilities.

Like any population projections, the Virginia projections have differing degrees of reliability. Generally speaking, projections for large localities are more reliable than for those areas experiencing rapid growth or decline. With respect to time span, the further into the future the projections are carried—the less accurate they may be.