

= Virginia =

Virginia (/ vʔrʔdʔʔnjʔ / vʔr @-@ JIN @-@ yʔ , UK / vʔrʔdʔʔniʔ / vʔr @-@ JIN @-@ ee @-@ ?) , officially the Commonwealth of Virginia , is a state located in the Mid @-@ Atlantic and / or Southern regions of the United States . Virginia is nicknamed the " Old Dominion " due to its status as the first colonial possession established in mainland British America , and " Mother of Presidents " because eight U.S. presidents were born there , more than any other state . The geography and climate of the Commonwealth are shaped by the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Chesapeake Bay , which provide habitat for much of its flora and fauna . The capital of the Commonwealth is Richmond ; Virginia Beach is the most populous city , and Fairfax County is the most populous political subdivision . The Commonwealth 's estimated population as of 2014 is over 8 @. @ 3 million .

The area 's history begins with several indigenous groups , including the Powhatan . In 1607 the London Company established the Colony of Virginia as the first permanent New World English colony . Slave labor and the land acquired from displaced Native American tribes each played a significant role in the colony 's early politics and plantation economy . Virginia was one of the 13 Colonies in the American Revolution and joined the Confederacy in the American Civil War , during which Richmond was made the Confederate capital and Virginia 's northwestern counties seceded to form the state of West Virginia . Although the Commonwealth was under one @-@ party rule for nearly a century following Reconstruction , both major national parties are competitive in modern Virginia .

The Virginia General Assembly is the oldest continuous law @-@ making body in the New World . The state government was ranked most effective by the Pew Center on the States in both 2005 and 2008 . It is unique in how it treats cities and counties equally , manages local roads , and prohibits its governors from serving consecutive terms . Virginia 's economy has many sectors : agriculture in the Shenandoah Valley ; federal agencies in Northern Virginia , including the headquarters of the Department of Defense and CIA ; and military facilities in Hampton Roads , the site of the region 's main seaport . Virginia 's economy changed from primarily agricultural to industrial during the 1960s and 1970s , and in 2002 computer chips became the state 's leading export .

= = Geography = =

Virginia has a total area of 42 @, @ 774 @. @ 2 square miles (110 @, @ 784 @. @ 7 km²) , including 3 @, @ 180 @. @ 13 square miles (8 @, @ 236 @. @ 5 km²) of water , making it the 35th @-@ largest state by area . Virginia is bordered by Maryland and Washington , D.C. to the north and east ; by the Atlantic Ocean to the east ; by North Carolina and Tennessee to the south ; by Kentucky to the west ; and by West Virginia to the north and west . Virginia 's boundary with Maryland and Washington , D.C. extends to the low @-@ water mark of the south shore of the Potomac River . The southern border is defined as the 36 ° 30 ? parallel north , though surveyor error led to deviations of as much as three arcminutes . The border with Tennessee was not settled until 1893 , when their dispute was brought to the U.S. Supreme Court .

= = = Geology and terrain = = =

The Chesapeake Bay separates the contiguous portion of the Commonwealth from the two @-@ county peninsula of Virginia 's Eastern Shore . The bay was formed from the drowned river valleys of the Susquehanna River and the James River . Many of Virginia 's rivers flow into the Chesapeake Bay , including the Potomac , Rappahannock , York , and James , which create three peninsulas in the bay .

The Tidewater is a coastal plain between the Atlantic coast and the fall line . It includes the Eastern Shore and major estuaries of Chesapeake Bay . The Piedmont is a series of sedimentary and igneous rock @-@ based foothills east of the mountains which were formed in the Mesozoic era . The region , known for its heavy clay soil , includes the Southwest Mountains around Charlottesville . The Blue Ridge Mountains are a physiographic province of the Appalachian Mountains with the

highest points in the state , the tallest being Mount Rogers at 5 ,629 feet (1 ,614 m) . The Ridge and Valley region is west of the mountains and includes the Great Appalachian Valley . The region is carbonate rock based and includes Massanutten Mountain . The Cumberland Plateau and the Cumberland Mountains are in the southwest corner of Virginia , south of the Allegheny Plateau . In this region , rivers flow northwest , with a dendritic drainage system , into the Ohio River basin .

The Virginia Seismic Zone has not had a history of regular earthquake activity . Earthquakes are rarely above 4 .5 in magnitude , because Virginia is located away from the edges of the North American Plate . The largest earthquake , at an estimated 5 .9 magnitude , was in 1897 near Blacksburg . A 5 .8 magnitude earthquake struck central Virginia on August 23 , 2011 , near Mineral . The earthquake was reportedly felt as far away as Toronto , Atlanta and Florida .

Coal mining takes place in the three mountainous regions at 45 distinct coal beds near Mesozoic basins . Over 62 million tons of other non -fuel resources , such as slate , kyanite , sand , or gravel , were also mined in Virginia in 2012 . The state 's carbonate rock is filled with more than 4 ,000 caves , ten of which are open for tourism . 35 million years ago , a bolide impacted what is now eastern Virginia . The resulting crater may explain sinking and earthquakes in the region .

== Climate ==

The climate of Virginia becomes increasingly warmer and more humid farther south and east . Seasonal extremes vary from average lows of 26 ° F (-3 ° C) in January to average highs of 86 ° F (30 ° C) in July . The Atlantic ocean has a strong effect on eastern and southeastern coastal areas of the state . Influenced by the Gulf Stream , coastal weather is subject to hurricanes , most pronouncedly near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay . In spite of its position adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean , even the coastal areas have a significant continental influence with quite large temperature differences between summer and winter , particularly given the state climate 's subtropical classification .

Virginia has an annual average of 35 ? 45 days of thunderstorm activity , particularly in the western part of the state , and an average annual precipitation of 42 @.7 inches (108 cm) . Cold air masses arriving over the mountains in winter can lead to significant snowfalls , such as the Blizzard of 1996 and winter storms of 2009 ? 2010 . The interaction of these elements with the state 's topography creates distinct microclimates in the Shenandoah Valley , the mountainous southwest , and the coastal plains . Virginia averages seven tornadoes annually , most F2 or lower on the Fujita scale .

In recent years , the expansion of the southern suburbs of Washington , D.C. into Northern Virginia has introduced an urban heat island primarily caused by increased absorption of solar radiation in more densely populated areas . In the American Lung Association 's 2011 report , 11 counties received failing grades for air quality , with Fairfax County having the worst in the state , due to automobile pollution . Haze in the mountains is caused in part by coal power plants .

== Flora and fauna ==

Forests cover 65 % of the state , primarily with deciduous , broad leaf trees in the western part of the state and evergreens and conifers dominant the central and eastern part of Virginia . Lower altitudes are more likely to have small but dense stands of moisture @-@ loving hemlocks and mosses in abundance , with hickory and oak in the Blue Ridge . However , since the early 1990s , Gypsy moth infestations have eroded the dominance of oak forests . In the lowland tidewater and piedmont , yellow pines tend to dominate , with bald cypress wetland forests in the Great Dismal and Nottoway swamps . Other common trees and plants include red bay , wax myrtle , dwarf palmetto , tulip poplar , mountain laurel , milkweed , daisies , and many species of ferns . The largest areas of wilderness are along the Atlantic coast and in the western mountains , where the largest populations of trillium wildflowers in North America are found . The Atlantic coast regions are host to flora commonly associated with the South Atlantic pine forests and lower Southeast Coastal Plain

maritime flora , the latter found primarily in eastern and central Virginia .

Mammals include white @-@ tailed deer , black bear , beaver , bobcat , coyote , raccoon , skunk , groundhog , Virginia opossum , gray fox , red fox , and eastern cottontail rabbit . Other mammals include : nutria , fox squirrel , gray squirrel , flying squirrel , chipmunk , brown bat , and weasel . Birds include cardinals (the state bird) , barred owls , Carolina chickadees , red @-@ tailed hawks , ospreys , brown pelicans , quail , seagulls , bald eagles , and wild turkeys . Virginia is also home to the pileated woodpecker as well as the red @-@ bellied woodpecker . The peregrine falcon was reintroduced into Shenandoah National Park in the mid @-@ 1990s . Walleye , brook trout , Roanoke bass , and blue catfish are among the 210 known species of freshwater fish . Running brooks with rocky bottoms are often inhabited by plentiful amounts of crayfish and salamanders . The Chesapeake Bay is host to many species , including blue crabs , clams , oysters , and rockfish (also known as striped bass) .

Virginia has 30 National Park Service units , such as Great Falls Park and the Appalachian Trail , and one national park , the Shenandoah National Park . Shenandoah was established in 1935 and encompasses the scenic Skyline Drive . Almost 40 % of the park 's area (79 @,@ 579 acres / 322 km2) has been designated as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System . Additionally , there are 34 Virginia state parks and 17 state forests , run by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Forestry . The Chesapeake Bay , while not a national park , is protected by both state and federal legislation , and the jointly run Chesapeake Bay Program which conducts restoration on the bay and its watershed . The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge extends into North Carolina , as does the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge , which marks the beginning of the Outer Banks .

= = History = =

" Jamestown 2007 " marked Virginia 's quadricentennial year , celebrating 400 years since the establishment of the Jamestown Colony . The celebrations highlighted contributions from Native Americans , Africans , and Europeans , each of which had a significant part in shaping Virginia 's history . Warfare , including among these groups , has also had an important role . Virginia was a focal point in conflicts from the French and Indian War , the American Revolution and the Civil War , to the Cold War and the War on Terrorism . Stories about historic figures , such as those surrounding Pocahontas and John Smith , George Washington 's childhood , or the plantation elite in the slave society of the antebellum period , have also created potent myths of state history , and have served as rationales for Virginia 's ideology .

= = = Colony = = =

The first people are estimated to have arrived in Virginia over 12 @,@ 000 years ago . By 5 @,@ 000 years ago more permanent settlements emerged , and farming began by 900 AD . By 1500 , the Algonquian peoples had founded towns such as Werowocomoco in the Tidewater region , which they referred to as Tsenacommacah . The other major language groups in the area were the Siouan to the west , and the Iroquoians , who included the Nottoway and Meherrin , to the north and south . After 1570 , the Algonquians consolidated under Chief Powhatan in response to threats from these other groups on their trade network . Powhatan controlled more than 30 smaller tribes and over 150 settlements , who shared a common Virginia Algonquian language . In 1607 , the native Tidewater population was between 13 @,@ 000 and 14 @,@ 000 .

Several European expeditions , including a group of Spanish Jesuits , explored the Chesapeake Bay during the 16th century . In 1583 , Queen Elizabeth I of England granted Walter Raleigh a charter to plant a colony north of Spanish Florida . In 1584 , Raleigh sent an expedition to the Atlantic coast of North America . The name " Virginia " may have been suggested then by Raleigh or Elizabeth , perhaps noting her status as the " Virgin Queen , " and may also be related to a native phrase , " Wingandacoa , " or name , " Wingina . " Initially the name applied to the entire coastal region from South Carolina to Maine , plus the island of Bermuda . Later , subsequent royal charters

modified the Colony 's boundaries . The London Company was incorporated as a joint stock company by the proprietary Charter of 1606 , which granted land rights to this area . The Company financed the first permanent English settlement in the " New World " , Jamestown . Named for King James I , it was founded in May 1607 by Christopher Newport . In 1619 , colonists took greater control with an elected legislature called the House of Burgesses . With the bankruptcy of the London Company in 1624 , the settlement was taken into royal authority as an English crown colony .

Life in the colony was perilous , and many died during the Starving Time in 1609 and the Anglo-Powhatan Wars , including the Indian massacre of 1622 , which fostered the colonists ' negative view of all tribes . By 1624 , only 3 @, @ 400 of the 6 @, @ 000 early settlers had survived . However , European demand for tobacco fueled the arrival of more settlers and servants . The headright system tried to solve the labor shortage by providing colonists with land for each indentured servant they transported to Virginia . African workers were first imported to Jamestown in 1619 initially under the rules of indentured servitude . The shift to a system of African slavery in Virginia was propelled by the legal cases of John Punch , who was sentenced to lifetime slavery in 1640 for attempting to run away , and of John Casor , who was claimed by Anthony Johnson as his servant for life in 1655 . Slavery first appears in Virginia statutes in 1661 and 1662 , when a law made it hereditary based on the mother 's status .

Tensions and the geographic differences between the working and ruling classes led to Bacon 's Rebellion in 1676 , by which time current and former indentured servants made up as much as 80 % of the population . Rebels , largely from the colony 's frontier , were also opposed to the conciliatory policy towards native tribes , and one result of the rebellion was the signing at Middle Plantation of the Treaty of 1677 , which made the signatory tribes tributary states and was part of a pattern of appropriating tribal land by force and treaty . Middle Plantation saw the founding of The College of William & Mary in 1693 and was renamed Williamsburg as it became the colonial capital in 1699 . In 1747 , a group of Virginian speculators formed the Ohio Company , with the backing of the British crown , to start English settlement and trade in the Ohio Country west of the Appalachian Mountains . France , which claimed this area as part of their colony of New France , viewed this as a threat , and the ensuing French and Indian War became part of the Seven Years ' War (1756 ? 1763) . A militia from several British colonies , called the Virginia Regiment , was led by then @-@ Lieutenant Colonel George Washington .

= = = Statehood = = =

The British Parliament 's efforts to levy new taxes following the French and Indian War were deeply unpopular in the colonies . In the House of Burgesses , opposition to taxation without representation was led by Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee , among others . Virginians began to coordinate their actions with other colonies in 1773 , and sent delegates to the Continental Congress the following year . After the House of Burgesses was dissolved by the royal governor in 1774 , Virginia 's revolutionary leaders continued to govern via the Virginia Conventions . On May 15 , 1776 , the Convention declared Virginia 's independence from the British Empire and adopted George Mason 's Virginia Declaration of Rights , which was then included in a new constitution . Another Virginian , Thomas Jefferson , drew upon Mason 's work in drafting the national Declaration of Independence .

When the American Revolutionary War began , George Washington was selected to head the colonial army . During the war , the capital was moved to Richmond at the urging of Governor Thomas Jefferson , who feared that Williamsburg 's coastal location would make it vulnerable to British attack . In 1781 , the combined action of Continental and French land and naval forces trapped the British army on the Virginia Peninsula , where troops under George Washington and Comte de Rochambeau defeated British General Cornwallis in the Siege of Yorktown . His surrender on October 19 , 1781 led to peace negotiations in Paris and secured the independence of the colonies .

Virginians were instrumental in writing the United States Constitution . James Madison drafted the Virginia Plan in 1787 and the Bill of Rights in 1789 . Virginia ratified the Constitution on June 25 ,

1788 . The three @-@ fifths compromise ensured that Virginia , with its large number of slaves , initially had the largest bloc in the House of Representatives . Together with the Virginia dynasty of presidents , this gave the Commonwealth national importance . In 1790 , both Virginia and Maryland ceded territory to form the new District of Columbia , though the Virginian area was retroceded in 1846 . Virginia is called " Mother of States " because of its role in being carved into states like Kentucky , which became the 15th state in 1792 , and for the numbers of American pioneers born in Virginia .

= = = Civil War and aftermath = = =

In addition to agriculture , slave labor was increasingly used in mining , shipbuilding and other industries . The execution of Gabriel Prosser in 1800 , Nat Turner 's slave rebellion in 1831 and John Brown 's Raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 marked the growing social discontent over slavery and its role in the plantation economy . By 1860 , almost half a million people , roughly 31 % of the total population of Virginia , were enslaved . This division contributed to the start of the American Civil War .

Virginia voted to secede from the United States on April 17 , 1861 , after the Battle of Fort Sumter and Abraham Lincoln 's call for volunteers . On April 24 , Virginia joined the Confederate States of America , which chose Richmond as its capital . After the 1861 Wheeling Convention , 48 counties in the northwest separated to form a new state of West Virginia , which chose to remain loyal to the Union . Virginian general Robert E. Lee took command of the Army of Northern Virginia in 1862 , and led invasions into Union territory , ultimately becoming commander of all Confederate forces . During the war , more battles were fought in Virginia than anywhere else , including Bull Run , the Seven Days Battles , Chancellorsville , and the concluding Battle of Appomattox Court House . After the capture of Richmond in April 1865 , the state capital was briefly moved to Lynchburg , while the Confederate leadership fled to Danville . Virginia was formally restored to the United States in 1870 , due to the work of the Committee of Nine .

During the post @-@ war Reconstruction era , Virginia adopted a constitution which provided for free public schools , and guaranteed political , civil , and voting rights . The populist Readjuster Party ran an inclusive coalition until the conservative white Democratic Party gained power after 1883 . It passed segregationist Jim Crow laws and in 1902 rewrote the Constitution of Virginia to include a poll tax and other voter registration measures that effectively disfranchised most African Americans and many poor whites . Though their schools and public services were segregated and underfunded due to a lack of political representation , African Americans were able to unite in communities and take a greater role in Virginia society .

= = = Modern era = = =

New economic forces also changed the Commonwealth . Virginian James Albert Bonsack invented the tobacco cigarette rolling machine in 1880 leading to new industrial scale production centered on Richmond . In 1886 , railroad magnate Collis Potter Huntington founded Newport News Shipbuilding , which was responsible for building six major World War I @-@ era battleships for the U.S. Navy from 1907 ? 1923 . During the war , German submarines like U @-@ 151 attacked ships outside the port . In 1926 , Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin , rector of Williamsburg 's Bruton Parish Church , began restoration of colonial @-@ era buildings in the historic district with financial backing of John D. Rockefeller , Jr . Though their project , like others in the state , had to contend with the Great Depression and World War II , work continued as Colonial Williamsburg became a major tourist attraction .

Protests started by Barbara Rose Johns in 1951 in Farmville against segregated schools led to the lawsuit Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County . This case , filed by Richmond natives Spottswood Robinson and Oliver Hill , was decided in 1954 with Brown v. Board of Education , which rejected the segregationist doctrine of " separate but equal " . But , in 1958 , under the policy of " massive resistance " led by the influential segregationist Senator Harry F. Byrd

and his Byrd Organization , the Commonwealth prohibited desegregated local schools from receiving state funding .

The Civil Rights Movement gained many participants in the 1960s . It achieved the moral force and support to gain passage of national legislation with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 . In 1964 the United States Supreme Court ordered Prince Edward County and others to integrate schools . In 1967 , the Court also struck down the state 's ban on interracial marriage with *Loving v. Virginia* . From 1969 to 1971 , state legislators under Governor Mills Godwin rewrote the constitution , after goals such as the repeal of Jim Crow laws had been achieved . In 1989 , Douglas Wilder became the first African American elected as governor in the United States .

The Cold War led to the expansion of national defense government programs housed in offices in Northern Virginia near Washington , D.C. , and correlative population growth . The Central Intelligence Agency in Langley was involved in various Cold War events , including as the target of Soviet espionage activities . Also among the federal developments was the Pentagon , built during World War II as the headquarters for the Department of Defense . It was one of the targets of the September 11 attacks ; 189 people died at the site when a jet passenger plane was crashed into the building .

= = Cities and towns = =

Virginia is divided into 95 counties and 38 independent cities , the latter acting in many ways as county @-@ equivalents . This general method of treating cities and counties on par with each other is unique to Virginia , with only three other independent cities in the United States outside Virginia , in three different states . Virginia limits the authority of cities and counties to countermand laws expressly allowed by the Virginia General Assembly under what is known as Dillon 's Rule . In addition to independent cities , there are also incorporated towns which operate under their own governments , but are part of a county . Finally there are hundreds of unincorporated communities within the counties . Virginia does not have any further political subdivisions , such as villages or townships .

Virginia has 11 Metropolitan Statistical Areas ; Northern Virginia , Hampton Roads , and Richmond @-@ Petersburg are the three most populous . Richmond is the capital of Virginia , and its metropolitan area has a population of over 1 @.@ 2 million . As of 2010 , Virginia Beach is the most populous city in the Commonwealth , with Norfolk and Chesapeake second and third , respectively . Norfolk forms the urban core of the Hampton Roads metropolitan area , which has a population over 1 @.@ 6 million people and is the site of the world 's largest naval base , Naval Station Norfolk . Suffolk , which includes a portion of the Great Dismal Swamp , is the largest city by area at 429 @.@ 1 square miles (1 @,@ 111 km2) .

Fairfax County is the most populous locality in Virginia , with over one million residents , although that does not include its county seat Fairfax , which is one of the independent cities . Fairfax County has a major urban business and shopping center in Tysons Corner , Virginia 's largest office market . Neighboring Loudoun County , with the county seat at Leesburg , is both the fastest @-@ growing county in Virginia and has the highest median household income (\$ 114 @,@ 204) in the country as of 2010 . Arlington County , the smallest self @-@ governing county in the United States by land area , is an urban community organized as a county . The Roanoke area , with an estimated population of 300 @,@ 399 , is the largest Metropolitan Statistical Area in western Virginia .

= = Demographics = =

The United States Census Bureau estimates that the state population was 8 @,@ 382 @,@ 993 on July 1 , 2015 , a 4 @.@ 77 % increase since the 2010 United States Census . This includes an increase from net migration of 381 @,@ 969 people into the Commonwealth since the 2010 census . Immigration from outside the United States resulted in a net increase of 159 @,@ 627 people , and migration within the country produced a net increase of 155 @,@ 205 people . Outside of Virginia , the top birth state for Virginians was New York , with the Northeast accounting for the largest

number of migrants into the state by region . The center of population is located in Louisa County outside of Richmond .

== Ethnicity ==

The state 's most populous ethnic group , Non - Hispanic White , has declined from 76 % in 1990 to 62 . 7 % in 2015 . In 2011 , non - Hispanic Whites were involved in 50 . 9 % of all the births . People of English heritage settled throughout the Commonwealth during the colonial period , and others of British and Irish heritage have since immigrated . Those who self - identify as having " American ethnicity " are predominantly of English descent , but have ancestry that has been in North America for so long that they choose to identify simply as American . Of the English immigrants to Virginia in the 17th century , 75 % came as indentured servants . The western mountains have many settlements that were founded by Scots - Irish immigrants before the American Revolution . There are also sizable numbers of people of German descent in the northwestern mountains and Shenandoah Valley , and German ancestry was the most popular response on the 2010 American Community Survey , with 11 . 2 % of Virginians also describe themselves as biracial .

The largest minority group in Virginia is African American , at 19 . 7 % as of 2015 . Most African American Virginians have been descendants of enslaved Africans who worked on tobacco , cotton , and hemp plantations . These men , women and children were brought from West and West Central Africa , primarily from Angola and the Bight of Biafra . The Igbo ethnic group of what is now southern Nigeria were the single largest African group among slaves in Virginia . Though the black population was reduced by the Great Migration , since 1965 there has been a reverse migration of blacks returning south . According to the Pew Research Center , the state has the highest concentration of black and white interracial marriages .

More recent immigration in the late 20th century and early 21st century has fueled new communities of Hispanics and Asians . As of 2015 , 9 . 0 % of Virginians are Hispanic or Latino (of any race) , and 6 . 5 % are Asian . The state 's Hispanic population rose by 92 % from 2000 to 2010 , with two thirds of Hispanics living in Northern Virginia . Hispanic citizens in Virginia have higher median household incomes and educational attainment than the general Virginia population . As far as Hispanic groups , there is a large Salvadoran population in the DC suburbs of Northern Virginia , and a large Puerto Rican population in the Hampton Roads region of Southeast Virginia . Northern Virginia also has a significant population of Vietnamese Americans , whose major wave of immigration followed the Vietnam War , and Korean Americans , whose migration has been more recent and was induced in part by the quality school system . The Filipino American community has about 45 , 000 in the Hampton Roads area , many of whom have ties to the U.S. Navy and armed forces .

Additionally , 0 . 5 % of Virginians are American Indian or Alaska Native , and 0 . 1 % are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander . Virginia has extended state recognition to eight Native American tribes resident in the state , though some lack federal recognition status . Most Native American groups are located in the Tidewater region .

As of 2011 , 49 . 1 % of Virginia 's population younger than age 1 were minorities (meaning that they had at least one parent who was not non - Hispanic white) .

== Languages ==

The Piedmont region is known for its dialect 's strong influence on Southern American English . While a more homogenized American English is found in urban areas , various accents are also used , including the Tidewater accent , the Old Virginia accent , and the anachronistic Elizabethan of Tangier Island .

As of 2010 , 85 . 87 % (6 , 299 , 127) of Virginia residents age 5 and older spoke English at home as a primary language , while 6 . 41 % (470 , 058) spoke Spanish , 0 . 77 % (56 , 518) Korean , 0 . 63 % (45 , 881) Vietnamese , 0 . 57 % (42

@, @ 418) Chinese (which includes Mandarin) , and Tagalog was spoken as a main language by 0 @. @ 56 % (40 @, @ 724) of the population over the age of five . In total , 14 @. @ 13 % (1 @, @ 036 @, @ 442) of Virginia 's population age 5 and older spoke a mother language other than English . English was passed as the Commonwealth 's official language by statutes in 1981 and again in 1996 , though the status is not mandated by the Constitution of Virginia .

= = = Religion = = =

Virginia is predominantly Christian and Protestant ; Baptists are the largest single group with 27 % of the population as of 2008 . Baptist congregations in Virginia have 763 @, @ 655 members . Baptist denominational groups in Virginia include the Baptist General Association of Virginia , with about 1 @, @ 400 member churches , which supports both the Southern Baptist Convention and the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ; and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia with more than 500 affiliated churches , which supports the Southern Baptist Convention . Roman Catholics are the second @-@ largest religious group with 673 @, @ 853 members . The Roman Catholic Diocese of Arlington includes most of Northern Virginia 's Catholic churches , while the Diocese of Richmond covers the rest .

The Virginia Conference is the regional body of the United Methodist Church in most of the Commonwealth , while the Holston Conference represents much of extreme Southwest Virginia . The Virginia Synod is responsible for the congregations of the Lutheran Church . Presbyterian , Pentecostal , Congregationalist , and Episcopalian adherents each composed less than 2 % of the population as of 2010 . The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia , Southern Virginia , and Southwestern Virginia support the various Episcopal churches .

In November 2006 , 15 conservative Episcopal churches voted to split from the Diocese of Virginia over the ordination of openly gay bishops and clergy in other dioceses of the Episcopal Church ; these churches continue to claim affiliation with the larger Anglican Communion through other bodies outside the United States . Though Virginia law allows parishioners to determine their church 's affiliation , the diocese claimed the secessionist churches ' buildings and properties . The resulting property law case , ultimately decided in favor of the mainline diocese , was a test for Episcopal churches nationwide .

Among other religions , adherents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter @-@ day Saints constitute 1 % of the population , with 197 congregations in Virginia as of March 2014 . Fairfax Station is the site of the Ekoji Buddhist Temple , of the Jodo Shinshu school , and the Hindu Durga Temple . While the state 's Jewish population is small , organized Jewish sites date to 1789 with Congregation Beth Ahabah . Muslims are a growing religious group throughout the Commonwealth through immigration . Megachurches in the Commonwealth include Thomas Road Baptist Church , Immanuel Bible Church , and McLean Bible Church . Several Christian universities are also based in the state , including Regent University , Liberty University , and Lynchburg College .

= = Economy = =

Virginia is an employment @-@ at @-@ will state ; its economy has diverse sources of income , including local and federal government , military , farming and business . Virginia has 4 @. @ 1 million civilian workers , and one @-@ third of the jobs are in the service sector . The unemployment rate in Virginia is among the lowest in the nation , at 4 @. @ 8 % , as of December 2014 . The second fastest job growth town in the nation is Leesburg , as of 2011 . The Gross Domestic Product of Virginia was \$ 452 billion in 2013 . According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis , Virginia had the most counties in the top 100 wealthiest in the United States based upon median income in 2007 . Northern Virginia is the highest @-@ income region in Virginia , having six of the twenty highest @-@ income counties in the United States , including the three highest as of 2011 . According to CNN Money Magazine the highest @-@ income town in the nation is Great Falls , as of 2011 . According to a 2013 study by Phoenix Marketing International , Virginia had the seventh @-@ largest number of millionaires per capita in the United States , with a ratio of 6 @. @ 64 % .

== = Government = = =

Virginia has the highest defense spending of any state per capita , providing the Commonwealth with around 900 @, @ 000 jobs . 12 % of all U.S. federal procurement money is spent in Virginia , the second @-@ highest amount after California . Many Virginians work for federal agencies in Northern Virginia , which include the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense , as well as the National Science Foundation , the United States Geological Survey and the United States Patent and Trademark Office . Many others work for government contractors , including defense and security firms , which hold more than 15 @, @ 000 federal contracts .

Virginia has one of the highest concentrations of veterans of any state , and is second to California in total Department of Defense employees . The Hampton Roads area has the largest concentration of military personnel and assets of any metropolitan area in the world , including the largest naval base in the world , Naval Station Norfolk . In its state government , Virginia employs 106 @, @ 143 public employees , who combined have a median income of \$ 44 @, @ 656 as of 2013 .

== = Business = = =

Virginia has the highest concentration of technology workers of any state , and the fourth @-@ highest number of technology workers after California , Texas , and New York . Computer chips became the state 's highest @-@ grossing export in 2006 , surpassing its traditional top exports of coal and tobacco combined , reaching a total export value of \$ 717 million in 2015 . Northern Virginia , once considered the state 's dairy capital , now hosts software , communication technology , defense contracting companies , particularly in the Dulles Technology Corridor .

The state has the highest average and peak Internet speeds in the United States , with the third @-@ highest worldwide . Northern Virginia 's data centers can carry up to 70 % of the nation 's internet traffic , with Loudoun County alone home to as much data center space as northern California .

Virginia companies received the fourth @-@ highest amount of venture capital funding in the first half of 2011 after California , Massachusetts , and New York . In 2009 , Forbes magazine named Virginia the best state in the nation for business for the fourth year in a row , while CNBC named it the top state for business in 2007 , 2009 , and 2011 . Additionally , in 2014 a survey of 12 @, @ 000 small business owners found Virginia to be one of the most friendly states for small businesses . Virginia has 20 Fortune 500 companies , ranking the state eighth nationwide . Tysons Corner is one of the largest business districts in the nation .

Tourism in Virginia supported an estimated 210 @, @ 000 jobs and generated \$ 21 @. @ 2 billion in 2012 . Arlington County is the top tourist destination in the state by domestic spending , followed by Fairfax County , Loudoun County , and Virginia Beach .

== = Agriculture = = =

Agriculture occupies 32 % of the land in Virginia . As of 2012 , about 357 @, @ 000 Virginian jobs were in agriculture , with over 47 @, @ 000 farms , averaging 171 acres (0 @. @ 27 sq mi ; 0 @. @ 69 km²) , in a total farmland area of 8 @. @ 1 million acres (12 @, @ 656 sq mi ; 32 @, @ 780 km²) . Though agriculture has declined significantly since 1960 when there were twice as many farms , it remains the largest single industry in Virginia . Tomatoes surpassed soy as the most profitable crop in Virginia in 2006 , with peanuts and hay as other agricultural products . Although it is no longer the primary crop , Virginia is still the fifth @-@ largest producer of tobacco nationwide . Virginia is the largest producer of seafood on the East Coast , with scallops , oysters , blue crabs , and clams as the largest seafood harvests by value , and France , Canada , and Hong Kong as the top export destinations . Eastern oyster harvests have increased from 23 @, @ 000 bushels in 2001 to over 500 @, @ 000 in 2013 . Wineries and vineyards in the Northern Neck and along the Blue Ridge Mountains also have begun to generate income and attract tourists . Virginia has the fifth @-@

highest number of wineries in the nation .

== Taxes ==

Virginia collects personal income tax in five income brackets , ranging from 3 % to 5 % . The state sales and use tax rate is 4 % , while the tax rate on food is 1 % . There is an additional 1 % local tax , for a total of a 5 % combined sales tax on most Virginia purchases and 2 % on most food . Virginia 's property tax is set and collected at the local government level and varies throughout the Commonwealth . Real estate is also taxed at the local level based on 100 % of fair market value . Tangible personal property also is taxed at the local level and is based on a percentage or percentages of original cost .

== Culture ==

Virginia 's culture was popularized and spread across America and the South by figures such as George Washington , Thomas Jefferson , and Robert E. Lee . Their homes in Virginia represent the birthplace of America and the South . Modern Virginia culture has many sources , and is part of the culture of the Southern United States . The Smithsonian Institution divides Virginia into nine cultural regions .

Besides the general cuisine of the Southern United States , Virginia maintains its own particular traditions . Virginia wine is made in many parts of the state . Smithfield ham , sometimes called " Virginia ham " , is a type of country ham which is protected by state law , and can only be produced in the town of Smithfield . Virginia furniture and architecture are typical of American colonial architecture . Thomas Jefferson and many of the state 's early leaders favored the Neoclassical architecture style , leading to its use for important state buildings . The Pennsylvania Dutch and their style can also be found in parts of the state .

Literature in Virginia often deals with the state 's extensive and sometimes troubled past . The works of Pulitzer Prize winner Ellen Glasgow often dealt with social inequalities and the role of women in her culture . Glasgow 's peer and close friend James Branch Cabell wrote extensively about the changing position of gentry in the Reconstruction era , and challenged its moral code with *Jurgen* , *A Comedy of Justice* . William Styron approached history in works such as *The Confessions of Nat Turner* and *Sophie 's Choice* . Tom Wolfe has occasionally dealt with his southern heritage in bestsellers like *I Am Charlotte Simmons* . Mount Vernon native Matt Bondurant received critical acclaim for his historic novel *The Wettest County in the World* about moonshiners in Franklin County during prohibition . Virginia also names a state Poet Laureate , currently Ron Smith of Richmond , who will serve until mid 2016 .

== Fine and performing arts ==

Rich in cultural heritage , Virginia however ranks near the bottom of U.S. states in terms of public spending on the arts , at nearly half of the national average . The state government does fund some institutions , including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Science Museum of Virginia . Other museums include the popular Steven F. Udvar Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum and the Chrysler Museum of Art . Besides these sites , many open air museums are located in the Commonwealth , such as Colonial Williamsburg , the Frontier Culture Museum , and various historic battlefields . The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities works to improve the Commonwealth 's civic , cultural , and intellectual life .

Theaters and venues in the Commonwealth are found both in the cities and suburbs . The Harrison Opera House , in Norfolk , is home of the Virginia Opera . The Virginia Symphony Orchestra operates in and around Hampton Roads . Resident and touring theater troupes operate from the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton . The Barter Theatre , designated the State Theatre of Virginia , in Abingdon won the first ever Regional Theatre Tony Award in 1948 , while the Signature Theatre in Arlington won it in 2009 . There 's also a Children 's Theater of Virginia , Theatre IV ,

which is the second largest touring troupe nationwide .

Virginia has launched many award @-@ winning traditional musical artists and internationally successful popular music acts , as well as Hollywood actors . Virginia is known for its tradition in the music genres of old @-@ time string and bluegrass , with groups such as the Carter Family and Stanley Brothers , as well as gospel , blues , and shout bands . Contemporary Virginia is also known for folk rock artists like Dave Matthews and Jason Mraz , hip hop stars like Pharrell Williams and Missy Elliott , as well as thrash metal groups like GWAR and Lamb of God . Notable performance venues include The Birchmere , the Landmark Theater , and Jiffy Lube Live . Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts is located in Vienna and is the only national park intended for use as a performing arts center .

= = = Festivals = = =

Many counties and localities host county fairs and festivals . The Virginia State Fair is held at the Meadow Event Park every September . Also in September is the Neptune Festival in Virginia Beach , which celebrates the city , the waterfront , and regional artists . Norfolk 's Harborfest , in June , features boat racing and air shows . Fairfax County also sponsors Celebrate Fairfax ! with popular and traditional music performances . The Virginia Lake Festival is held during the third weekend in July in Clarksville . Wolf Trap hosts the Wolf Trap Opera Company , which produces an opera festival every summer . Each September , Bay Days celebrates the Chesapeake Bay as well as Hampton 's 400 @-@ year history since 1610 , and Isle of Wight County holds a County Fair on the second week of September as well . Both feature live music performances , and other unique events .

On the Eastern Shore island of Chincoteague the annual Pony Swim & Auction of feral Chincoteague ponies at the end of July is a unique local tradition expanded into a week @-@ long carnival . The Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival is a six @-@ day festival held annually in Winchester that includes parades and bluegrass concerts . The Old Time Fiddlers ' Convention in Galax , begun in 1935 , is one of the oldest and largest such events worldwide . Two important film festivals , the Virginia Film Festival and the VCU French Film Festival , are held annually in Charlottesville and Richmond , respectively .

= = Media = =

The Hampton Roads area is the 45th @-@ largest media market in the United States as ranked by Nielsen Media Research , while the Richmond @-@ Petersburg area is 57th and Roanoke @-@ Lynchburg is 66th as of 2013 . Northern Virginia is part of the much larger Washington , D.C. media market .

There are 36 television stations in Virginia , representing each major U.S. network , part of 42 stations which serve Virginia viewers . More than 720 FCC @-@ licensed FM radio stations broadcast in Virginia , with about 300 such AM stations . The nationally available Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) is headquartered in Arlington . Independent PBS affiliates exist throughout Virginia , and the Arlington PBS member station WETA @-@ TV produces programs such as the PBS NewsHour and Washington Week .

The most circulated native newspapers in the Commonwealth are Norfolk 's The Virginian @-@ Pilot (142 @,@ 476 daily subscribers) , the Richmond Times @-@ Dispatch (108 @,@ 559) , and The Roanoke Times (78 @,@ 663) , as of 2014 . Several Washington , D.C. papers are based in Northern Virginia , such as The Washington Examiner and Politico . The paper with the nation 's widest circulation , USA Today , with 1 @.@ 83 million daily subscriptions , is headquartered in McLean . Besides traditional forms of media , Virginia is the home base for telecommunication companies such as Voxant and XO Communications . In Northern Virginia , The Washington Post is the dominant newspaper , since Northern VA is located in the Washington , DC metropolitan area .

= = Education = =

Virginia's educational system consistently ranks in the top ten states on the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress, with Virginia students outperforming the average in all subject areas and grade levels tested. The 2011 Quality Counts report ranked Virginia's K-12 education fourth best in the country. All school divisions must adhere to educational standards set forth by the Virginia Department of Education, which maintains an assessment and accreditation regime known as the Standards of Learning to ensure accountability. In 2010, 85% of high school students graduated on-time after four years. Between 2000 and 2008, school enrollment increased 5%, the number of teachers 21%.

Public K-12 schools in Virginia are generally operated by the counties and cities, and not by the state. As of 2011, a total of 1,267,063 students were enrolled in 1,873 local and regional schools in the Commonwealth, including three charter schools, and an additional 109 alternative and special education centers across 132 school divisions. Besides the general public schools in Virginia, there are Governor's Schools and selective magnet schools. The Governor's Schools are a collection of more than 40 regional high schools and summer programs intended for gifted students. The Virginia Council for Private Education oversees the regulation of 320 state accredited and 130 non-accredited private schools. An additional 24,682 students receive homeschooling.

As of 2011, there are 176 colleges and universities in Virginia. In the U.S. News & World Report ranking of public colleges, the University of Virginia is second, The College of William & Mary is sixth, and Virginia Tech is 25th. Virginia Commonwealth University is ranked the top public graduate school in fine arts, while James Madison University has been recognized as the top regional public master's program in The South since 1993. The Virginia Military Institute is the oldest state military college and a top ranked public liberal arts college. George Mason University is the largest university in Virginia with over 32,000 students. Virginia Tech and Virginia State University are the state's land-grant universities. Virginia also operates 23 community colleges on 40 campuses serving over 260,000 students. There are 129 private institutions, including Hampton University, Washington and Lee University, Randolph College, Hampden-Sydney College, Emory & Henry College, Roanoke College, the University of Richmond, and Randolph-Macon College.

== Health ==

Virginia has a mixed health record, and is ranked as the 26th overall healthiest state according to the 2013 United Health Foundation's Health Rankings. Virginia also ranks 21st among the states in the rate of premature deaths, 6,816 per 100,000. In 2008, Virginia reached its lowest ever rate of infant mortality, at 6.7 deaths per 1,000. There are however racial and social health disparities, in 2010 African Americans experienced 28% more premature deaths than whites, while 13% of Virginians lack any health insurance. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2009 survey, 26% of Virginians are obese and another 35% are overweight. 78% of residents claim to have exercised at least once in the past three months. About 30% of Virginia's 10- to 17-year-olds are overweight or obese. Virginia banned smoking in bars and restaurants in January 2010. 19% of Virginians smoke tobacco. Residents of Virginia's 8th congressional district share the longest average life expectancy rate in the nation, over 83 years.

There are 89 hospitals in Virginia listed with the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Notable examples include Inova Fairfax Hospital, the largest hospital in the Washington Metropolitan Area, and the VCU Medical Center, located on the medical campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. The University of Virginia Medical Center, part of the University of Virginia Health System, is highly ranked in endocrinology according to U.S. News & World Report. Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, part of the Hampton Roads based Sentara Health System and a teaching institution of Eastern Virginia Medical School, was the site of the first successful in-vitro fertilization birth. Virginia has a ratio of 127 primary care physicians per 10,000 residents.

, which is the 16th highest nationally . Virginia was one of five states to receive a perfect score in disaster preparedness according to a 2008 report by the Trust for America 's Health , based on criteria such as detecting pathogens and distributing vaccines and medical supplies .

= = Transportation = =

Because of the 1932 Byrd Road Act , the state government controls most of Virginia 's roads , instead of a local county authority as is usual in other states . As of 2011 , the Virginia Department of Transportation owns and operates 57 @, @ 867 miles (93 @, @ 128 km) of the total 70 @, @ 105 miles (112 @, @ 823 km) of roads in the state , making it the third largest state highway system in the United States . Although the Washington Metropolitan Area , which includes Northern Virginia , has the second worst traffic in the nation , Virginia as a whole has the 21st @-@ lowest congestion and the average commute time is 26 @. @ 9 minutes . Virginia hit peak car usage before the year 2000 , making it one of the first such states .

Virginia has Amtrak passenger rail service along several corridors , and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) maintains two commuter lines into Washington , D.C. from Fredericksburg and Manassas . VRE is one of the nation 's fastest growing commuter rail services , handling nearly 20 @, @ 000 passengers a day . The Washington Metro rapid transit system serves Northern Virginia as far west as communities along I @-@ 66 in Fairfax County , with expansion plans to reach Loudoun County by 2017 . Major freight railroads in Virginia include Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation . Commuter buses include the Fairfax Connector and the Shenandoah Valley Commuter Bus . The Virginia Department of Transportation operates several free ferries throughout Virginia , the most notable being the Jamestown @-@ Scotland ferry which crosses the James River in Surry County .

Virginia has five major airports : Washington Dulles International and Reagan Washington National in Northern Virginia , both of which handle over 20 million passengers a year ; Richmond International ; and Newport News / Williamsburg International Airport and Norfolk International serving the Hampton Roads area . Several other airports offer limited commercial passenger service , and sixty @-@ six public airports serve the state 's aviation needs . The Virginia Port Authority 's main seaports are those in Hampton Roads , which carried 17 @, @ 726 @, @ 251 short tons (16 @, @ 080 @, @ 984 t) of bulk cargo in 2007 , the sixth most of United States ports . The Eastern Shore of Virginia is the site of Wallops Flight Facility , a rocket testing center owned by NASA , and the Mid @-@ Atlantic Regional Spaceport , a commercial spaceport . Space tourism is also offered through Vienna @-@ based Space Adventures .

= = Law and government = =

In colonial Virginia , free men elected the lower house of the legislature , called the House of Burgesses , which together with the Governor 's Council , made the " General Assembly " . Founded in 1619 , the Virginia General Assembly is still in existence as the oldest legislature in the Western Hemisphere . In 2008 , the government was ranked by the Pew Center on the States with an A ? in terms of its efficiency , effectiveness , and infrastructure , tied with Utah and Washington . This was the second consecutive time that Virginia received the highest grade in the nation .

Since 1971 , the government has functioned under the seventh Constitution of Virginia , which provides for a strong legislature and a unified judicial system . Similar to the federal structure , the government is divided in three branches : legislative , executive , and judicial . The legislature is the General Assembly , a bicameral body whose 100 @-@ member House of Delegates and 40 @-@ member Senate write the laws for the Commonwealth . The Assembly is stronger than the executive , as it selects judges and justices . The Governor and Lieutenant Governor are elected every four years in separate elections . Incumbent governors cannot run for re @-@ election , however the Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General can , and governors may serve non @-@ consecutive terms . The judicial system , the oldest in America , consists of a hierarchy from the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Court of Appeals of Virginia to the Circuit Courts , the trial courts of general jurisdiction , and the lower General District Courts and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District

Courts .

The Code of Virginia is the statutory law , and consists of the codified legislation of the General Assembly . The Virginia State Police is the largest law enforcement agency in Virginia . The Virginia Capitol Police is the oldest police department in the United States . The Virginia National Guard consists of 7 @, @ 500 soldiers in the Virginia Army National Guard and 1 @, @ 200 airmen in the Virginia Air National Guard . Since the resumption of capital punishment in Virginia in 1982 , 107 people have been executed , the second highest number in the nation . The " total crime risk " is 28 % lower than the national average . Since Virginia ended prisoner parole in 1995 , the rate of recidivism has fallen to 28 @. @ 3 % , among the lowest nationwide . Virginia is an open @-@ carry state .

= = Politics = =

Over the 20th century , Virginia shifted from a largely rural , politically Southern and conservative state to a more urbanized , pluralistic , and politically moderate environment . Up until the 1970s , Virginia was a racially divided one @-@ party state dominated by the Byrd Organization . The legacy of slavery in the state effectively disfranchised African Americans until after passage of civil rights legislation in the mid @-@ 1960s . Enfranchisement and immigration of other groups , especially Hispanics , have placed growing importance on minority voting , while voters that identify as " white working @-@ class " declined by three percent between 2008 and 2012 . Regional differences play a large part in Virginia politics . Rural southern and western areas moved to support the Republican Party in response to its " southern strategy " , while urban and growing suburban areas , including much of Northern Virginia , form the Democratic Party base . Democratic support also persists in union @-@ influenced Roanoke in Southwest Virginia , college towns such as Charlottesville and Blacksburg , and the southeastern Black Belt Region .

Political party strength in Virginia has likewise been in flux . In the 2007 state elections , Democrats regained control of the State Senate , and narrowed the Republican majority in the House of Delegates to eight seats . Yet elections in 2009 resulted in the election of Republican Bob McDonnell as Governor by a seventeen @-@ point margin , the election of a Republican Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General , as well as Republican gains of six seats in the House of Delegates . In 2011 , the Republican caucus took over two @-@ thirds (68 ? 32) of the seats in the House of Delegates , and a majority of the Senate based on the Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling as the tie @-@ breaker . Following the 2013 elections , Democrat Terry McAuliffe was elected Governor by two percentage points , and Democrat Ralph Northam was elected Lieutenant Governor by double digits . Republicans , however , maintained their super @-@ majority (68 ? 32) in the House of Delegates . State election seasons traditionally start with the annual Shad Planking event in Wakefield .

In federal elections since 2006 , both parties have seen successes . Republican Senator George Allen lost close races in 2006 , to Democratic newcomer Jim Webb , and again in 2012 , to Webb 's replacement , former Governor Tim Kaine . In 2008 , Democrats won both United States Senate seats ; former Governor Mark Warner was elected to replace retiring Republican John Warner . The state went Republican in 11 out of 12 presidential elections from 1948 to 2004 , including 10 in a row from 1968 to 2004 . However , Democrat Barack Obama carried Virginia 's 13 electoral votes in both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections . In the 2010 elections , Republicans won three United States House of Representatives seats from the Democrats . Of the state 's eleven seats in the House of Representatives , Republicans hold eight and Democrats hold three . Virginia is considered a " swing state " in future presidential elections .

= = Sports = =

Virginia is the most populous U.S. state without a major professional sports league franchise . The reasons for this include the lack of any dominant city or market within the state , the proximity of teams in Washington , D.C. and North Carolina , and a reluctance to publicly finance stadiums .

However , in recent years , the city of Virginia Beach has proposed a new arena designed to lure a major league franchise . Norfolk is host to two minor league teams : The AAA Norfolk Tides and the ECHL 's Norfolk Admirals . The San Francisco Giants ' AA team , the Richmond Flying Squirrels , began play at The Diamond in 2010 , replacing the AAA Richmond Braves , who relocated after 2008 . Additionally , the Washington Nationals , Boston Red Sox , Seattle Mariners , Chicago White Sox , and Atlanta Braves also have Single @-@ A and Rookie @-@ level farm teams in Virginia .

The Washington Redskins have Redskins Park , their headquarters , in Ashburn and their training facility is in Richmond , and the Washington Capitals train at Kettler Capitals Iceplex in Ballston . Virginia has many professional caliber golf courses including the Greg Norman course at Lansdowne Resort and Kingsmill Resort , home of the Kingsmill Championship , an LPGA Tour tournament . NASCAR currently schedules Sprint Cup races on two tracks in Virginia : Martinsville Speedway and Richmond International Raceway . Virginia natives currently competing in the series include Denny Hamlin and Elliott Sadler .

Virginia does not allow state appropriated funds to be used for either operational or capital expenses for intercollegiate athletics . Despite this , both the Virginia Cavaliers and Virginia Tech Hokies have been able to field competitive teams in the Atlantic Coast Conference and maintain modern facilities . Their rivalry is followed statewide . Twelve other universities compete in NCAA Division I , particularly in the Atlantic 10 Conference , Big South Conference , and Colonial Athletic Association . Three historically black schools compete in the Division II Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association , and two others compete in the Division I Mid @-@ Eastern Athletic Conference . Several smaller schools compete in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and the USA South Athletic Conference of NCAA Division III . The NCAA currently holds its Division III championships in football , men 's basketball , volleyball and softball in Salem .

= = State symbols = =

The state nickname is its oldest symbol , though it has never been made official by law . Virginia was given the title " Dominion " by King Charles II of England at the time of The Restoration , because it had remained loyal to the crown during the English Civil War , and the present moniker , " Old Dominion " is a reference to that title . Charles ' supporters were called Cavaliers , and " The Cavalier State " nickname was popularized after the American Civil War to romanticize the antebellum period . Sports teams from the University of Virginia are called the Cavaliers . The other nickname , " Mother of Presidents " , is also historic , as eight Virginians have served as President of the United States , including four of the first five .

The state 's motto , Sic Semper Tyrannis , translates from Latin as " Thus Always to Tyrants " , and is used on the state seal , which is then used on the flag . While the seal was designed in 1776 , and the flag was first used in the 1830s , both were made official in 1930 . The majority of the other symbols were made official in the late 20th century . The Virginia reel is among the square dances classified as the state dance . In March 2015 , after 20 years without a state song , Virginia received two : " Our Great Virginia " (official traditional state song) and " Sweet Virginia Breeze " (official popular state song) . In 1940 , Virginia made " Carry Me Back to Old Virginny " the state song , but it was retired in 1997 and reclassified as the state song emeritus .