

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN VIRGINIA: HIGHLIGHTS

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the *Status of Women in Virginia* to inform Virginia residents about the progress of women in Virginia relative to women in other states, to men, and to national trends. In addition to this report, IWPR staff have produced reports on 12 other states and the District of Columbia as well as a national report that summarizes key findings for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In each report, various indicators describe the status of women in four important areas: political participation, employment and earnings, economic autonomy, and reproductive rights. Basic health and demographic data are also provided. On the employment and earnings and on the economic autonomy composite indicators, Virginia ranks in the top third of the nation. However, Virginia ranks in the bottom third of the nation on the political participation composite indicator. Looking at Virginia's regional standing, it does not rank first or second in the South Atlantic region (consisting of Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia in addition to Virginia) on any composite indicator. Thus Virginia still has room for improvement in the status of its women.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Ranks

- The composite political participation rank is based on women's voter registration and turnout, women elected officials at the state and federal levels, and women's institutional resources in the state (such as a state commission for women). The national rank is of a possible 50, because the District of Columbia is not included in this ranking. The regional rank is of a maximum of eight and refers to the states in the South Atlantic region; it does not include the District of Columbia.
- Virginia ranks 39th in the nation and fourth in the South Atlantic region on the political participation composite indicator.
- Virginia ranks 39th in the nation on women's voter registration. There are 636,000 unregistered women who are eligible to vote in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Facts and Figures

- Twenty-one of the 140 seats in Virginia's state legislature were filled by women in 1996, placing Virginia 37th among all states in terms of the percentage of women in the state legislature.
- In 1996, Virginia had no women representing the state in the U.S. Congress and no women in state-wide elected offices.

Chart I. How Virginia Ranks on Key Indicators

	National Rank*	Regional Rank*
COMPOSITE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX	39	4
Women's Voter Registration, 1992-1994	39	6
Women's Voter Turnout, 1992-1994	33	3
Women in Elected Office Composite, 1996	42	6
Women's Institutional Resources, 1996	1	1
COMPOSITE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS INDEX	12	3
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1990	14	4
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1990	20	6
Women's Labor Force Participation, 1994	17	3
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1994	13	3
COMPOSITE ECONOMIC AUTONOMY INDEX	9	3
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 1991-1992	34	5
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	8	3
Women's Business Ownership, 1992	13	3
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1990	15	3
COMPOSITE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS INDEX	20	4
<p><i>See Appendix I of The Status of Women in the States available from IWPR, for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.</i></p> <p>* <i>The national rankings are of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states and the District of Columbia, except for the political participation indicators, which do not include the District of Columbia. The regional rankings are of a maximum of nine and refer to the states in the South Atlantic region (Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia), except for the regional rankings for political participation, which are of eight and exclude the District of Columbia.</i></p>		

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Ranks

The composite employment and earnings rank is based on women's earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women's labor force participation, and the proportion of working women in professional and managerial positions. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The regional rank is of a maximum of nine and refers to the states in the South Atlantic region, and the District of Columbia.

- Virginia ranks 12th in the nation and third in its region on the employment and earnings composite indicator.

- Virginia's worst employment and earnings indicator is the ratio of women's to men's earnings, on which it ranks 20th in the nation and sixth in its region.

Facts and Figures

- Compared with women in the nation as a whole, Virginia women enjoy slightly greater earnings equality with men. In 1990, the ratio of the median annual earnings of women to those of men for full-time, year-round workers aged 18 to 65 was 68.5 percent in the United States and 69.1 percent in Virginia.
- The female unemployment rate in Virginia is the third lowest in the South Atlantic region. In 1994, the unemployment rate for women in Virginia was 5.1 percent compared with the nation's 6.0 percent female unemployment rate.

ECONOMIC AUTONOMY

Ranks

The composite economic autonomy rank is based on women's access to health insurance, women's educational attainment, women's business ownership, and the proportion of women living above poverty.

- Virginia ranks ninth in the nation and third in its region on the economic autonomy composite indicator.
- Virginia ranks 34th in the nation and fifth in its region in terms of the percentage of nonelderly women with access to health insurance.

Facts and Figures

- In general, women in Virginia tend to be more highly educated than the national average. Nearly 47 percent of women in Virginia have more than a high school education compared with 43 percent of women in the United States.
- The business receipts of women-owned businesses in Virginia rose by 63 percent in constant dollars between 1987 and 1992. This is compared with an increase of 87 percent in business receipts for women-owned firms nationally and 35 percent for all firms in the United States during this time, also adjusted for inflation.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Ranks

The composite reproductive rights rank is based on information on legislation relating to access to legal abortions, the availability of public funding for abortions and infertility treatments, the position of the governor and state legislature on reproductive choice, maternity stay laws, and legislation regarding adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

- Virginia ranks 20th in the nation and fourth in its region on the reproductive rights composite indicator.

Facts and Figures

- Mandatory consent laws require that minors notify or gain the consent of one or both parents before a physician can perform an abortion. As of January 1995, Virginia had no mandatory consent law.
- Twenty-five percent of counties in Virginia have abortion providers, which is nine percentage points above the national average.
- Virginia has no legislation regarding the issue of adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

HEALTH AND VITAL STATISTICS

- Virginia has slightly higher infant mortality rates (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births) and lower fertility rates (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44) than the nation as a whole. The percentage of babies with low birth weights is lower in Virginia than in the nation as a whole, which may indicate that women in Virginia have greater access to pre- and postnatal care than women nationally.
- The percentage of the population enrolled in HMOs in Virginia is less than half the rate for the United States as a whole (8.4 percent compared to 19.5 percent). Similarly, Medicare recipients in Virginia are less likely than those nationwide to be enrolled in an HMO. Medicaid recipients in Virginia are, however, more likely than those nationwide to be HMO members (30.6 percent compared to 21.4 percent).

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, Virginia has a slightly smaller proportion of elderly women and a similar proportion of women living in metropolitan areas.
- The distribution of family types in Virginia is similar to that of the nation, although Virginia has a slightly smaller proportion of single person households and a larger proportion of nonfamily households.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is an independent, non-profit, scientific research organization founded in 1987 to meet the need for women-centered, policy-oriented research. This Research-in-Brief is based on the report The Status of Women in Virginia, part of a larger research project funded by the Ford Foundation. The data used in the report come from a variety of sources, primarily government agencies, and individuals and organizations in Virginia assisted in reviewing the report. The Advisory Committee for the report in Virginia was chaired by Gail Johnson, Virginia Women's Network and Emily McCoy, Fairfax County Commission for Women.

This Research-in-Brief was written by Stacey Friedman and prepared by Megan DeBell in March 1997. The full report, The Status of Women in Virginia, is available for \$10.00 from the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Members and affiliates of the Institute's Information Network receive regular reports and information. For a copy of the full Georgia report or more information on membership, contact IWPR at 1400 20th Street N.W., Suite 104, Washington, D.C. 20036, phone 202/785-5100, fax 202/833-4362, or visit our web site at <http://www.iwpr.org>.

In Virginia, for a copy of the report, contact: Women's Entrepreneurial Network, P.O. Box 2984, Reston, VA 24090, phone 703/391-1600, fax 703/391-9441; or National Organization for Women, Virginia, P.O. Box 8390, Alexandria, VA 22306, phone 804/353-3616; or Alexandria Commission for Women, 110 North Royal Street, #201, Alexandria, VA 22314, phone 703/838-5030.