

# VRS 101

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VIRGINIA RETIREMENT SYSTEM

### Helping VRS Members Plan for Tomorrow, Today

The Virginia Retirement System (VRS) serves those who serve others by delivering retirement and other benefits to Virginia public employees. In addition, we help our members plan for tomorrow, today with retirement education, counseling and communications.

Much of our work is described through financial statements, investment returns, actuarial tables and statistics. Yet, our broader story is about delivering benefits to more than 800,000 retirees, and state and local government employees, teachers, law enforcement personnel and judges who serve their communities every day across the commonwealth. Additionally, we work with more than 800 employers, our partners in delivering benefits to VRS members.

We invite you to become better acquainted with our agency through this introduction, which includes a summary of our retirement plans, membership, funding and resources.

### VRS at a Glance

AT JUNE 30, 2024



TOTAL  
RETIREES AND  
BENEFICIARIES  
**240,649**



TOTAL ACTIVE  
MEMBERS  
**367,783**



TRUST FUND  
NET POSITION\*  
**\$114.3  
billion**



EMPLOYERS  
**840**

\* The net position reflects the balance of resources available to pay benefits at the end of the fiscal year.

#### VISION

To be the trusted leader in the delivery of benefits and services to those we serve.

#### MISSION

VRS delivers retirement and other benefits to Virginia public employees through sound financial stewardship and superior customer service.

#### VRS by the Numbers



**14th**  
LARGEST\*

among public and private pension systems in the United States, based on assets



**36th**  
LARGEST\*

among public and private pension systems in the world, based on assets



APPROXIMATELY  
**84%**

of retirees remain in Virginia. Of the \$6.5 billion paid out by VRS in fiscal year 2024, the majority stays in Virginia, where retirees contribute to the local economy.

\*As ranked by Pensions & Investments in 2024



An Independent Agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia

JANUARY 2025

# Investments

## Overview

The VRS managed investment portfolio ended fiscal year 2024 with a total fair value of \$116.5 billion. VRS investment professionals have the unique responsibility for the strategic long-term investment of the trust. The trust supports the future retirements and benefits of active and retired public employees in Virginia.

## VRS Investment Team

VRS manages approximately one-third of assets internally, saving about \$58.1 million in external management fees annually. The Investment team's skilled negotiating of its external investment management costs, as well as effective cost management, results in approximately \$34.8 million a year in savings compared to the cost paid by our peers for similar services.

VRS' investment professionals have provided an average annual added value of \$723 million to the trust fund over the past 10 years that would not have been realized from managing a passive, indexed portfolio.

## Investment Diversification

VRS strategically manages the portfolio, focusing on returns and performance over the long term.

From that long-term perspective, the VRS fund continues to exceed the current 6.75% assumed actuarial rate of return for the 20-year period.

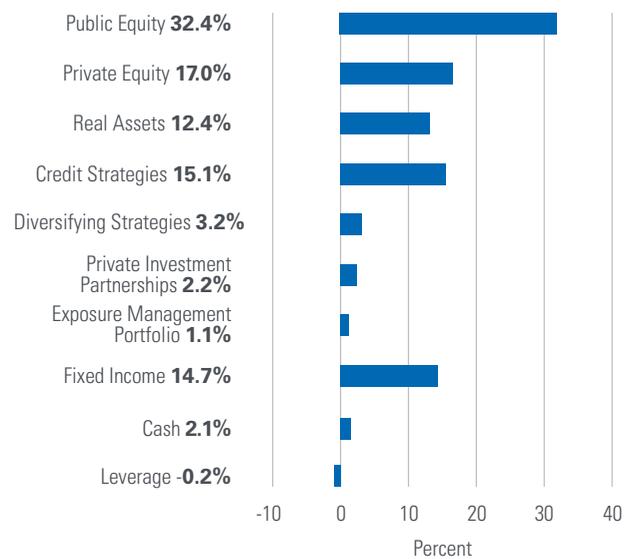
VRS uses stocks, bonds, real estate, cash and other investments to diversify the fund portfolio.

Diversification:

- Combines a variety of investments to limit risk.
- Creates a stable foundation to moderate market volatility.
- Helps prevent frequent shifts in employers' contribution rates.

## Asset Allocation

AT JUNE 30, 2024



## How Benefits Are Funded

### Defined Benefit Plan

- While working, members contribute to their Member Contribution Account, which earns 4% interest annually.
- Employers make contributions to VRS based on actuarial rates.
- The VRS Investment Department invests employee and employer contributions.
- Approximately two-thirds of benefit payments come from investment earnings.

### Defined Contribution Plan

- Based on member and employer contributions (if applicable) and any net investment earnings.



## How Benefits Are Paid

### Defined Benefit Plan Payments

- Members who retire from Plan 1, Plan 2 or the Hybrid Retirement Plan (defined benefit component) will receive a lifetime monthly benefit.
- The monthly retirement benefit is first paid from the Member Contribution Account.
- After this account is exhausted, a member's benefit comes from the VRS Trust Fund.

### Defined Contribution Plan Payments

- Participants can request a distribution from their plan. A variety of distribution options are available.

# Online Service Solutions

## myVRS

VRS is delivering innovative solutions through myVRS to help members prepare for the future throughout their careers. In addition to providing a comprehensive account overview, the secure online system offers a variety of self-service features:



- Online retirement
- Beneficiary management
- Direct deposit management
- Survivor access
- Goal-based Retirement Planner
- Benefit Estimator
- Purchase of prior service
- Refunds
- Optional Retirement Plan election
- myVRS Financial Wellness

When members transition to retirement, they can use myVRS to monitor their benefits, change tax withholdings, download income verification statements and more.

## Focus on Financial Wellness

myVRS Financial Wellness helps members and retirees become more knowledgeable about financial matters, building their skill and confidence at every stage of their career or during retirement.



After signing up, members and retirees have free access to a host of articles, videos and courses to increase financial knowledge and reduce anxiety about money matters. Popular topics include planning for retirement and tackling personal debt. The recently launched Money Mindfulness Program helps users become more thoughtful and comfortable with their financial decisions.

Find all these features and more at [varetire.org/financial-wellness](http://varetire.org/financial-wellness).

## Defined Contribution Plan Savings

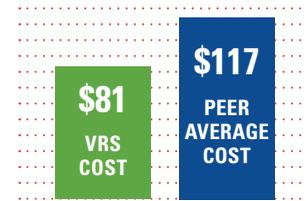
Participants can manage their defined contribution plans through their online DCP Account. In addition to secure access and easy management, they can view account balances, add beneficiaries and update investment options.

For more information, visit [dcp.varetire.org](http://dcp.varetire.org).



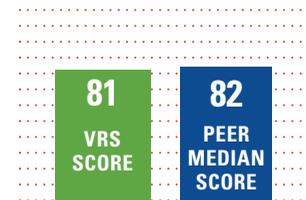
## Higher Service and Lower Cost Compared to Peers

### Pension Administration Cost Per Active Member and Annuitant



VRS' pension administration costs per active member and retiree are below the peer average.

### Total Service Score



VRS' total service score is in line with the peer median.

*Defined Benefit Administration Benchmarking Analysis Fiscal Year 2023 – © 2024 CEM Benchmarking Inc.*

## Board of Trustees



The nine-member VRS Board of Trustees sets the retirement plan funding policy and adopts contribution rates based on recommendations from the plan actuary.

The Board also sets investment policy with the objective of maximizing returns while managing risk within an acceptable range.

- Governor appoints five members, including the chair
- Joint Rules Committee appoints four members
- General Assembly confirms all appointments
- The Board includes:
  - Four investment experts
  - One experienced in employee benefit plans
  - One local government employee
  - One higher education employee
  - One state employee
  - One teacher

# Who We Serve

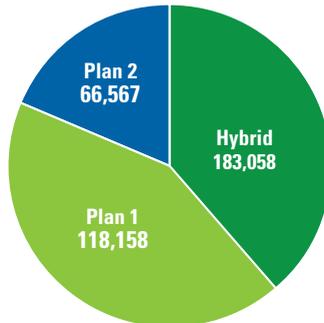
AT JUNE 30, 2024

## VRS Population



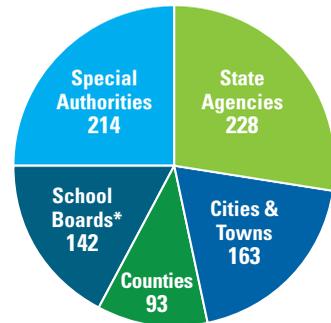
Total **832,614**

## VRS Active Members



Total **367,783**

## VRS-Participating Employers



Total **840**

\* Of the 142 school boards, 131 also provide coverage for non-professional employees and are treated as political subdivisions.

## Learn More About the Virginia Retirement System

The 2024 VRS *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (Annual Report)* provides complete, audited financial statements.



Visit [varetire.org/publications](http://varetire.org/publications) to view or download a copy.

## VRS Retirement Plans and Benefits

### VRS administers three retirement plans:



Membership date and position type determine a member's plan.

### Connect with VRS



**Call**  
888-827-3847  
Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.



**Visit Online**  
[varetire.org](http://varetire.org)

### Join the Conversation



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Connect with us on LinkedIn  
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Watch us on YouTube  
[youtube.com/@VARetirementSystem](https://youtube.com/@VARetirementSystem)

### Defined Contribution Plans

- Hybrid Retirement Plan (defined contribution component)
- Commonwealth of Virginia 457 Deferred Compensation Plan
- Virginia Cash Match Plan 401(a)
- Virginia Supplemental Retirement Plan
- Optional Retirement Plan for Higher Education
- Optional Retirement Plan for Political Appointees
- Optional Retirement Plan for School Superintendents

### Other VRS Benefits

- Basic Group Life Insurance
- Optional Group Life Insurance
- Health Insurance Credit
- Long-Term Care Programs
- Virginia Local Disability Program
- Virginia Sickness and Disability Program



- ▶ A **deferred member** has left covered employment but has not withdrawn funds and has service credit in VRS or an account balance in a Virginia optional retirement plan.
  - ▶ A **defined benefit plan** provides a monthly benefit during retirement based on age, total service credit and average final compensation.
  - ▶ A **defined contribution plan** provides a benefit based on contributions and any net investment returns on contributions.
- For more detailed information on VRS **active members**, please refer to the *2024 Annual Report*.

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