

Educational materials developed through the Baltimore County History Labs Program, a partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and the UMBC Center for History Education.

RS#12: The Rise of Slavery

The expanding tobacco plantation economy in Virginia was based on cheap land and cheap labor. Growing tobacco was labor intensive, and colonial planters soon found that immigration from Europe and natural population increases were unable to supply the numbers of laborers needed to work the tobacco fields. In 1619 the first Africans were brought to the shores of Virginia on a Dutch ship, and were probably sold as indentured servants. By 1700, Virginia was importing huge numbers of slaves to provide the labor required to plant, top (remove flowers to force the leaves), and harvest the tobacco leaves.

Estimates of Enslaved Blacks as a Percentage of the Population by Colony

*Adapted from Table 2 of Slavery by Peter Kolchin
Hill and Wang Publisher/Revised and updated edition September 1, 2003*

	1680	1700	1720	1750	1770
MD	9.0	10.9	18.9	30.8	31.5
VA	6.9	28	30.3	43.9	42