

Virginia and the Census

The U.S. Census Bureau's goal for the federal decennial census is to **count all the people** living in the United States, **count them only once and count them in the right place**. States care about the census because its data are used for the distribution of federal funding and political power, and is used by decision-makers in the private and public sectors at all levels.

The census is a **federal project** conducted with federal funding, although **some states, including Virginia, have allocated funding for census outreach**.

This profile includes: a) what census data means for Virginia in terms of political and economic power, b) key demographic data for Virginia, and c) what Virginia is doing to encourage a full count.

POLITICAL POWER

Every decade, the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are recalculated based on the latest census data. The new apportionment of congressional seats will be released on Dec. 31, 2020. According to Election Data Services, **Virginia is projected to keep the same number of seats**, which is 11 congressional seats. That means Virginia also will keep the same number of electoral college seats.

Census data is also the foundation for **Virginia's General Assembly to draw congressional districts and legislative districts**.

CORE VIRGINIA STATS

Virginia's total population was 8,001,024, according to the 2010 Census. **In 2018, the Census Bureau's estimate for Virginia's population was 8,517,685, a growth of 6.46% in nine years.** Virginia has the 12th largest population in the nation, and its growth rate is 18th.

HARD TO COUNT POPULATIONS AND UNDERCOUNTS

The Census Bureau estimates **19.2% of people in Virginia did not self-respond to the 2010 census**, representing what have come to be known as "hard to count" populations. Generally, the hard-to-count groups tend to be children younger than 5, immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, rural residents, low-income people, homeless and Native Americans.

Nationwide, the Census Bureau estimated an overcount of 0.01% in 2010, though individual states could have either an overcount or an undercount. Both overcounts and undercounts can create inaccuracies and affect states' needs. **In Virginia the undercount was estimated at 44,300.** Undercounts affect a state's federal funding and potentially congressional representation if they are on the cusp of losing or gaining a seat.

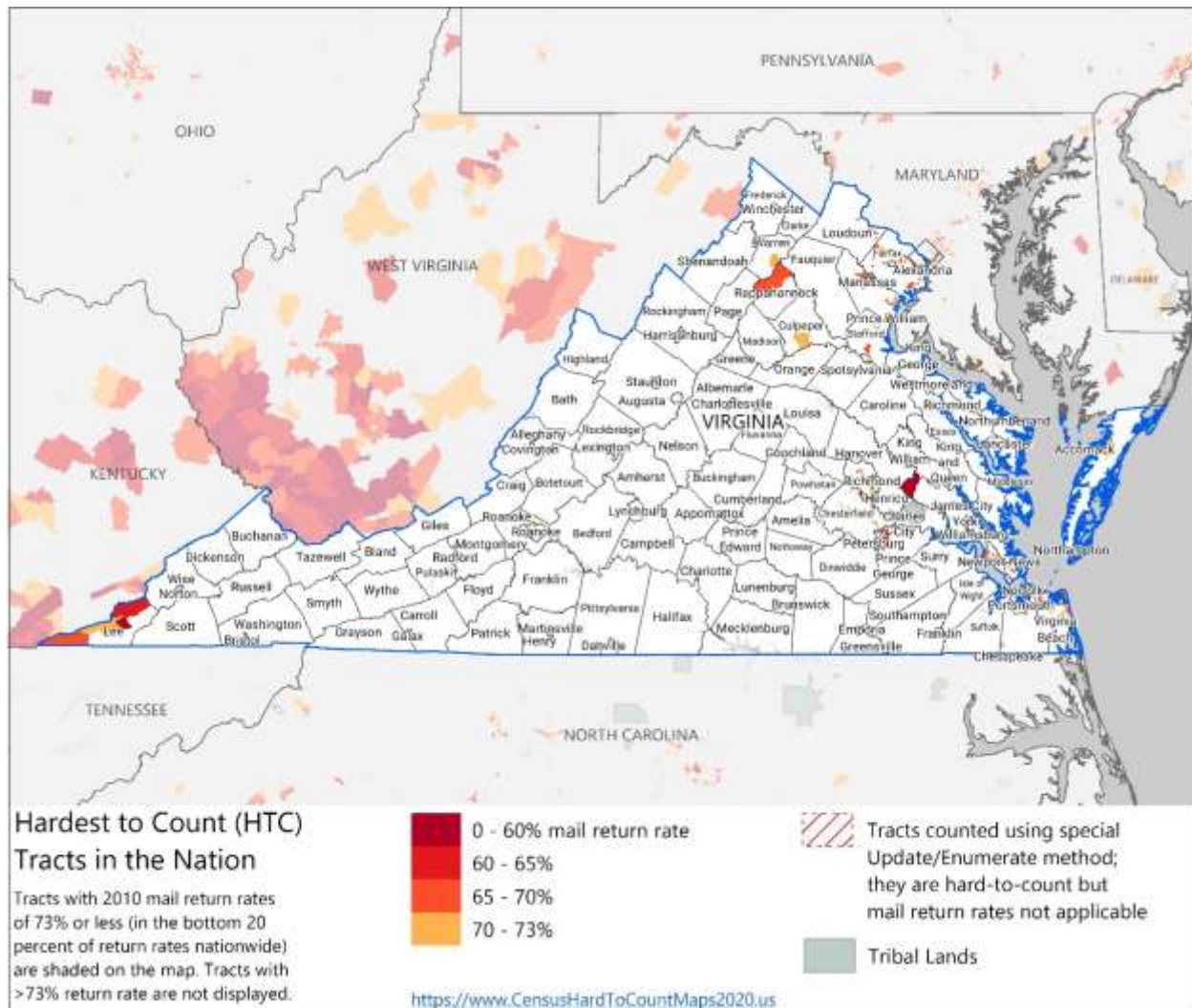
ECONOMIC POWER

Federal funding is distributed to states and localities based on formulas that rely on census data. Based on Counting for Dollars 2020 by Andrew Reamer of George Washington University, **Virginia received \$17,766,199,831 in FY2016** from federal funds distributed through 55 federal spending programs that are guided by data derived from the 2010 census. **That equals \$2,220.49 per Virginia resident**, on average, and every year in this decade.

Private and public sector decisionmakers often rely on census data as well. The Census Bureau has created several tools for public use, including the Economic Census and the Census Business Builder.

ENSURING A COMPLETE COUNT

Virginia has created the **Virginia Complete Count Commission**, and appropriated \$1,500,00 for outreach to ensure that Virginia residents are all counted.



CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- Virginia state census contact: Kelly Thomasson, (804) 786-2441
- [Virginia Complete Count Commission](#)
- [Census Bureau's Regional Offices](#)
- [Census Bureau's 2020 Census Toolkit for State and Local Officials](#)
- POGO Report on how five federal programs affect [Virginia](#) communities.
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [State Efforts to Support the Census](#)
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [What You Need to Know about the Census](#)
- NCSL's LegisBrief, [Everyone Needs to Be Counted, But How?](#)
- NCSL's [2020 Census Talking Points \(for Legislators and Others\)](#)
- NCSL's webpage, [2020 Census Resources and Legislation](#)
- NCSL contacts: Wendy Underhill (Wendy.underhill@ncsl.org) and Christi Zamarripa (Christi.zamarripa@ncsl.org)

Thank you to the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center for providing the map for this profile. An interactive version of the map is online at www.CensusHardtoCountMaps2020.us.