

West 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 have allocated funding for census outreach**.

This profile includes: a) what census data means for West Virginia in terms of political and economic power, b) key demographic data for West Virginia, and c) what West 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, **West Virginia is projected to lose a seat**, going from 3 to 2 congressional seats. That means West Virginia also will lose an electoral college seat.

Census data is also the foundation for West Virginia's Legislature to draw congressional districts and legislative districts.

CORE WEST VIRGINIA STATS

West Virginia's total population was 1,852,994, according to the 2010 Census. **In 2018, the Census Bureau's estimate for West Virginia's population was 1,805,832, a growth of -2.55% in nine years.** West Virginia has the 38th largest population in the nation, and its growth rate is 50th.

HARD TO COUNT POPULATIONS AND UNDERCOUNTS

The Census Bureau estimates **24.4% of people in West 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 West Virginia the overcount was estimated at 25,500.** Undercounts affect a state's federal funding and potentially congressional representation if they are on the cusp of losing or gaining a seat.

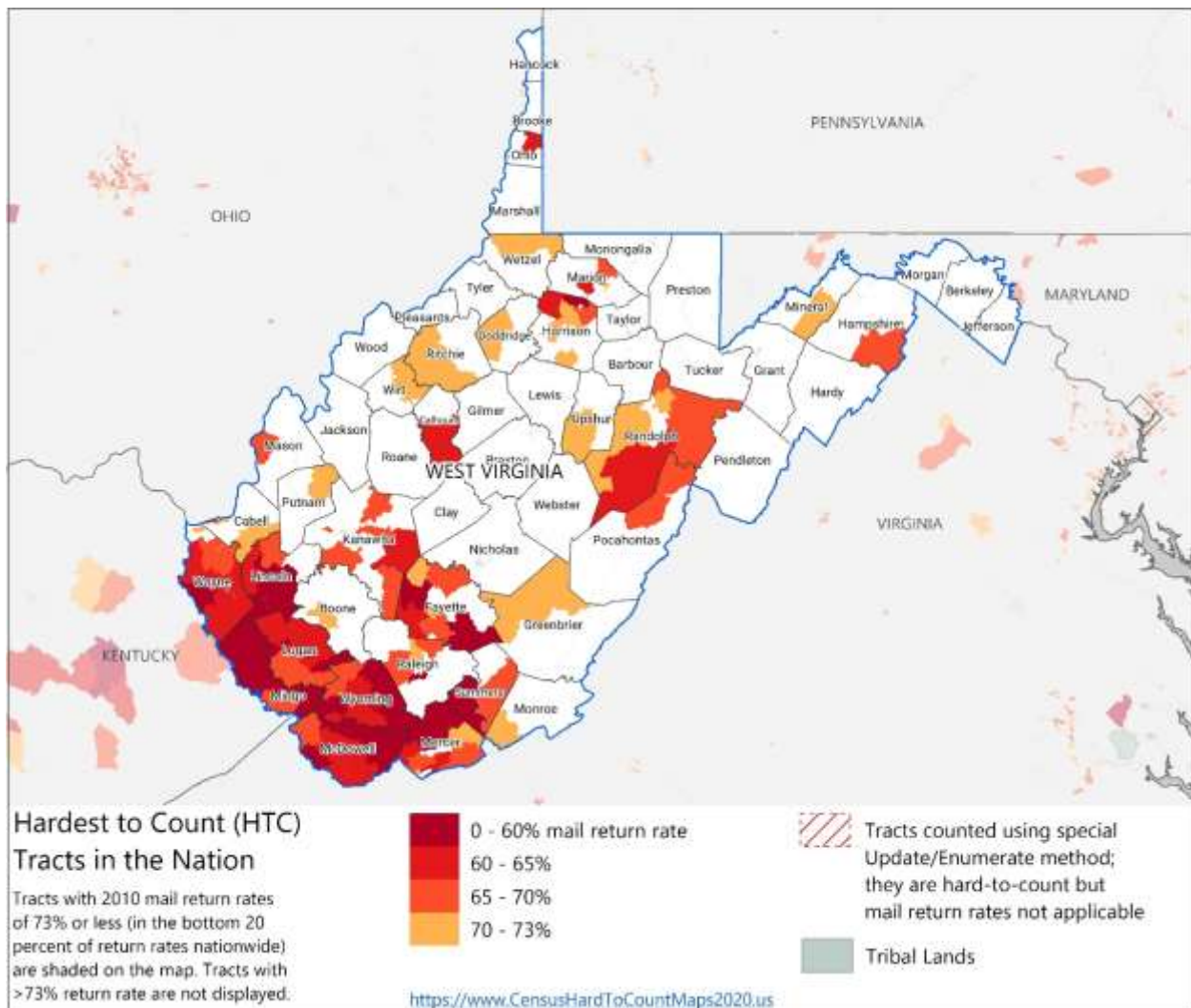
ECONOMIC POWER

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, **West Virginia received \$6,760,055,573 in FY2016** from federal funds distributed through 55 federal spending programs that are guided by data derived from the 2010 census. **That equals \$3,648.18 per West 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

ENSURING A COMPLETE COUNT

West Virginia has created the **West Virginia Complete Count Commission**. While some states are providing additional funds, other have decided not to do. Their reasoning stems from the fact that the census is a federal action and there are already many local committees and philanthropic and nonprofit agencies working to support it.



CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- West Virginia state census contact: Rebecca D. Blaine, (304) 558-2000, rebecca.d.blaine@wv.gov
- [Census Bureau's Regional Offices](#)
- [Census Bureau's 2020 Census Toolkit for State and Local Officials](#)
- POGO Report on how five federal programs affect [West 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.