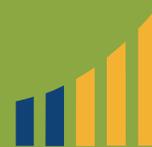


State of Working West Virginia

The State of the Public Sector

2025



WEST VIRGINIA CENTER ON
BUDGET & POLICY

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1

Introduction

The State of Working West Virginia 2025 is the 18th edition of an annual series that examines West Virginia's economy through the lens of its workers—the people whose labor powers the state and our economy.

While each year's report has a different focus, examining data on topics such as employment, income, racial and gender disparities, job quality, and overall economic performance, one consistent theme is answering this simple question: How are the people doing the work faring? This year's report focuses on the state of the public sector of West Virginia's workforce.

West Virginia has had a relatively robust recovery from 2020's pandemic recession, due in large part to the \$12 billion in federal relief funds that flowed into the state, bolstering the state budget and providing some form of financial assistance to nearly every West Virginian.

However, as that federal aid was pulled back, recovery in West Virginia has weakened, and multiple rounds of tax cuts over the past two decades have failed to deliver promised economic growth. West Virginia ranked near the bottom in several important economic indicators in 2024, including job growth and wages.

Approximately 151,000 workers are employed by the public sector in West Virginia, including federal, state, and local governments. While West Virginia's

151,000 workers

are employed by the public sector in West Virginia.

59% of those

public sector jobs in the state are occupied by women.

public sector as a share of the total workforce is larger than in most other states, public employee pay in the Mountain State ranks near the bottom, particularly for teachers.

The public sector is an important source of jobs at the local level, with county boards of education often among the top employers in a given county. Further, the public sector is an important source of jobs for women in the state, with 59 percent of public sector jobs filled by women.

2

West Virginia's Economy in 2024

Job Recovery From the COVID-19 Recession Faltered in 2024

The COVID-19 recession led to deep job losses both in West Virginia and nationwide. The early months of the pandemic took a significant toll on the state's economy, with the state losing 96,200 jobs in the month of April 2020, a drop of over 14 percent. The state's unemployment rate nearly tripled in one month, spiking from 5.3 percent to 15.8 percent.¹

West Virginia experienced a relatively quick recovery after the COVID-19 recession given the depth of the job loss. The state returned to pre-pandemic levels of employment in roughly the same amount of time as it did during the previous two recessions, despite much deeper job losses (Figure 1).

West Virginia's strong initial recovery can be credited in large part to multiple rounds of federal relief, which provided some form of financial assistance to nearly every West Virginian (Table 1). This federal aid amounted to over \$12 billion and helped keep West Virginia afloat during the pandemic and fuel the recovery.

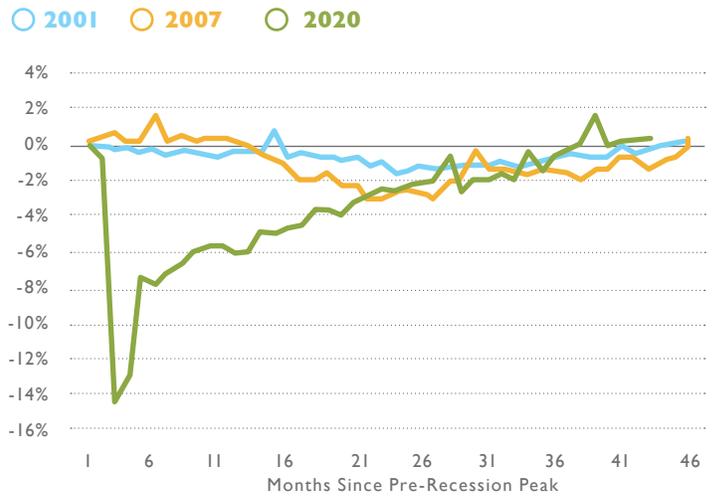
However, as federal aid expired and the pandemic subsided, West Virginia's economy began to falter, with job growth stagnating at its pre-pandemic level while the rest of the nation has continued to grow.

From 2019 to 2024, national job growth has totaled 4.7 percent, with solid growth following the pandemic recovery. However, West Virginia's total job growth during that period has been only 0.3 percent, with little growth beyond the initial recovery (Figure 2). West Virginia's job growth from 2019 to 2024 has ranked 46th among the 50 states (Map 1).

\$12 billion

in federal aid helped keep West Virginia afloat during the pandemic and fuel recovery.

FIGURE 1
COVID-19 RECESSION MORE SEVERE THAN PAST TWO RECESSIONS, BUT RECOVERED AT SAME RATE
NONFARM EMPLOYMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA AS A PERCENT OF PRE-RECESSION PEAK (SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED)



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

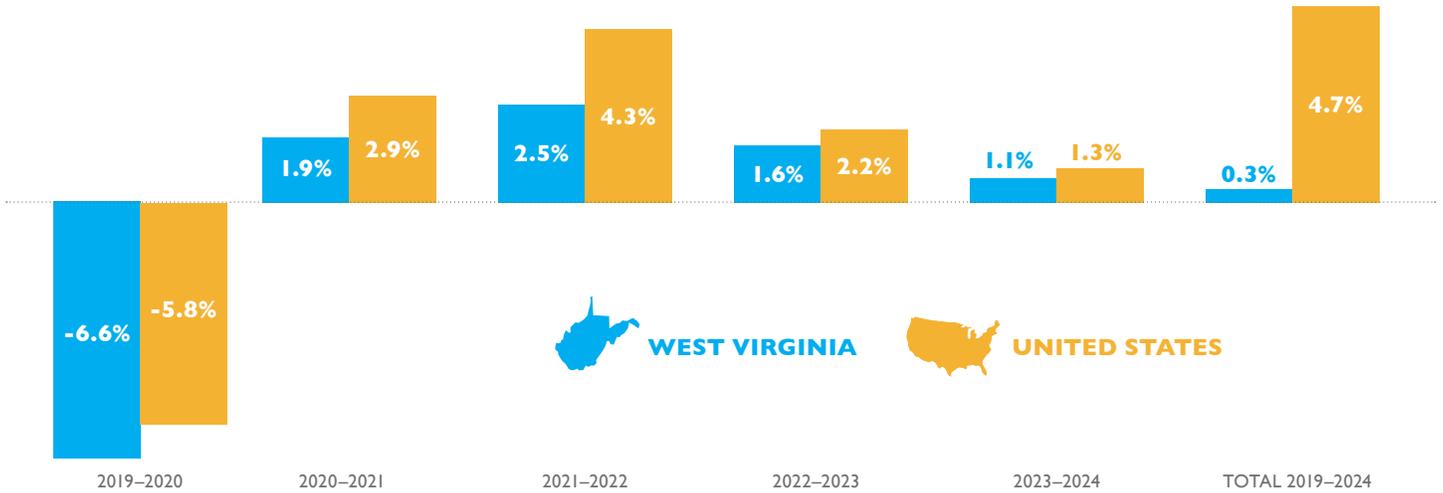
Note: First month corresponds to West Virginia's peak employment after the official national business cycle pre-recession peaks as identified by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

TABLE 1
BILLIONS IN FEDERAL AID HELPED BOOST WEST VIRGINIA'S PANDEMIC RECOVERY
FEDERAL RELIEF FUNDING FOR WEST VIRGINIA BY SOURCE

RELIEF FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT
Stimulus Checks	\$4.9 Billion
Enhanced Unemployment Benefits	\$1.3 Billion
Pandemic Unemployment Assistance	\$168 Million
Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation	\$192 Million
Paycheck Protection Program	\$1.8 Billion
State CARES Act Relief Funding	\$1.3 Billion
American Rescue Plan State and Local Funding	\$1.9 Billion
Enhanced Medicaid Match Rate	\$580 Million
Enhanced Child Tax Credit	\$539 Million
Enhanced SNAP Benefits	\$75 Million

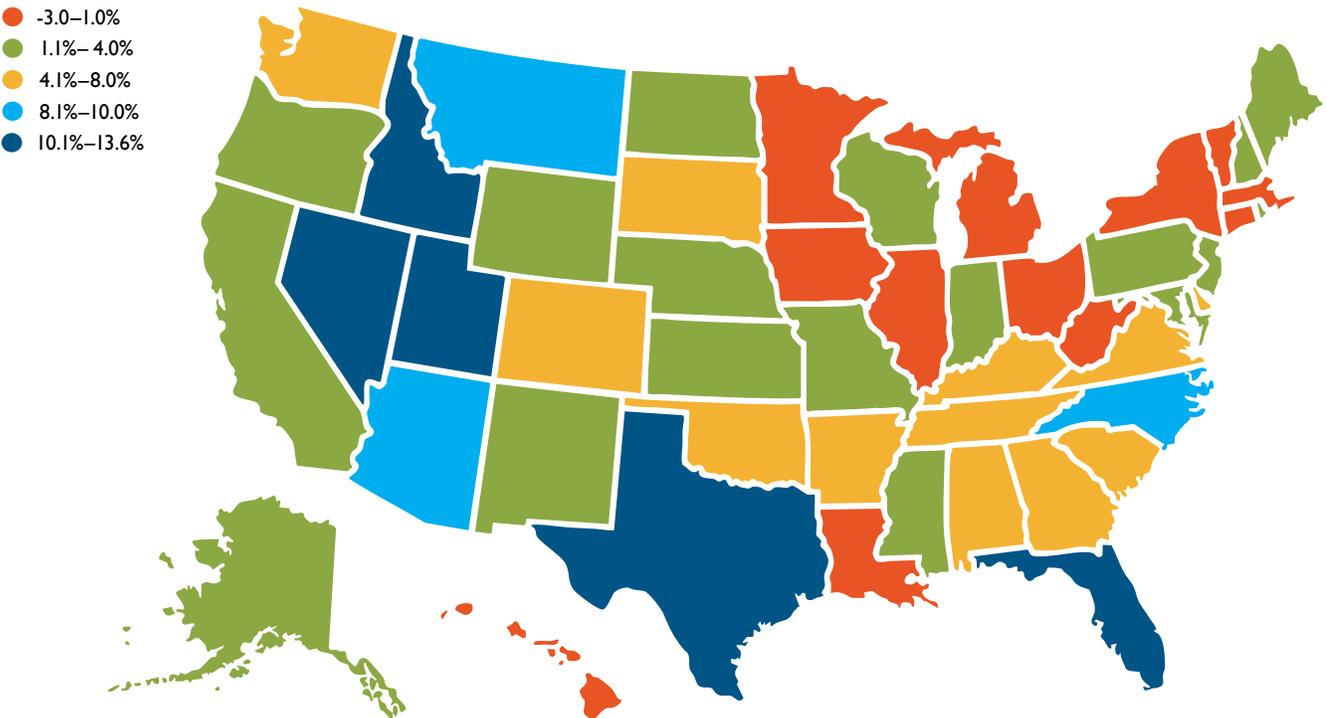
Source: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, US Department of Labor; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, West Virginia Governor's Office, US Small Business Administration, Niskanen Center

FIGURE 2
WEST VIRGINIA'S POST-PANDEMIC JOB GROWTH TRAILS NATION
AVERAGE ANNUAL TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, WEST VIRGINIA AND UNITED STATES, 2019-2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

MAP I
WEST VIRGINIA RANKS 46TH FOR TOTAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH SINCE 2019
TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, 2019-2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

Health Care Leads Job Growth in 2024

Total nonfarm employment growth was relatively flat in West Virginia in 2024, with the state adding just 8,000 jobs, an annual increase of 1.1 percent. However, that growth was not equally distributed throughout the economy. The health care sector led the way, adding 6,600 jobs in 2024, an increase of 5.2 percent, nearly five times greater than the state average. Other industries that grew faster than the state average include wholesale trade, construction, and private educational services (Figure 3).

Public sector employment growth has lagged the state average, in part due to a shrinking state budget despite large surpluses, as the state has prioritized income tax cuts over investments in state needs.²

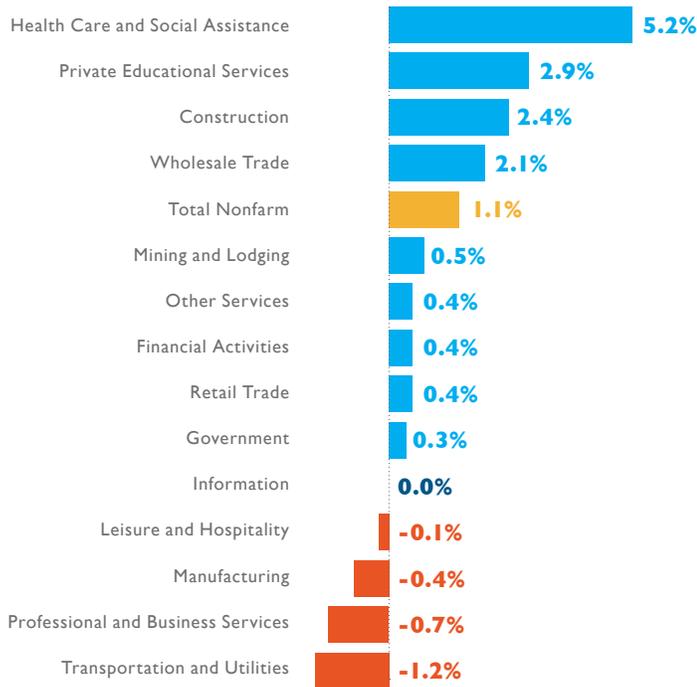
Large Disparities in Job Growth Throughout West Virginia

At the county level, West Virginia saw a large range of job growth and decline. Leading the way were the natural gas producing counties of Wetzel and Doddridge, which both saw employment growth of over 8 percent, with growth in Wetzel County reaching 12 percent. Meanwhile, 16 counties saw job losses in 2024, with Wirt County performing the most poorly with a decline of 8.5 percent in 2024 (Map 2).



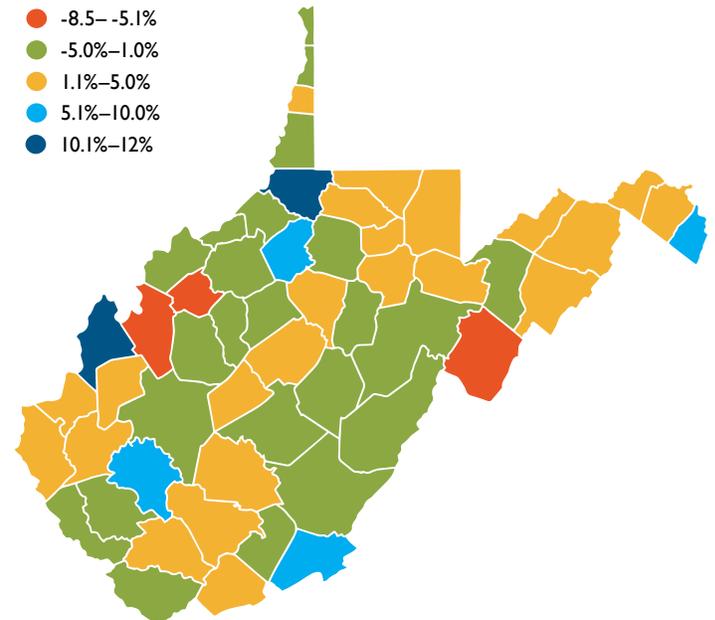
6,600 jobs
were added to the West Virginia economy in the health care sector in 2024

FIGURE 3
HEALTH CARE SECTOR LED JOB GROWTH IN 2024
AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR, WEST VIRGINIA, 2023–2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

MAP 2
LARGE DISPARITIES IN JOB GROWTH AMONG WEST VIRGINIA'S COUNTIES
TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, 2023–2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

Labor Force Participation Rate Remains Low, But Bright Spots Exist

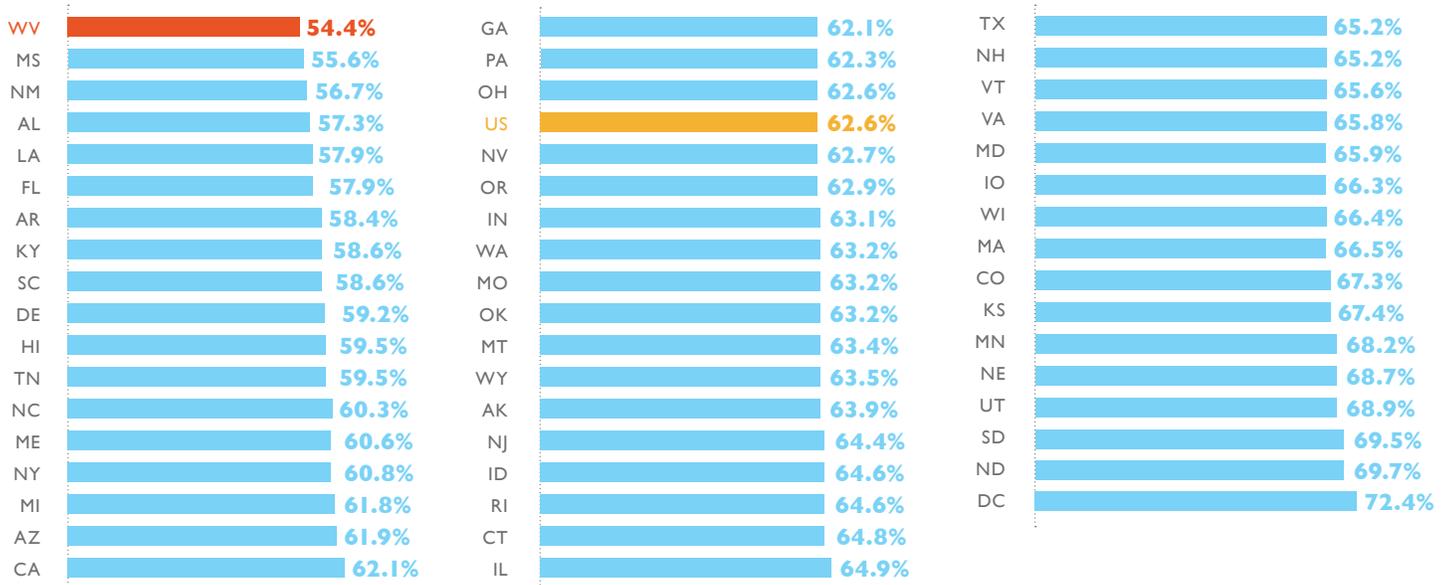
While West Virginia's unemployment rate rose slightly in 2024, from 3.9 percent in 2023 to 4.1 percent in 2024, it remained below its pre-pandemic rate of 4.9 percent in 2019.³ West Virginia's labor force participation rate remained the lowest in the country at 54.4 percent, 8.2 percentage points below the national average of 62.6 percent (Figure 4).

The labor force participation rate is the measure of people 16 years or older either working or seeking work, expressed as a share of the adult population, and is a complementary measure of labor market conditions to the conventional unemployment rate. West Virginia has historically had the nation's lowest labor force participation rate, which can largely be attributed to the state's relatively older population, low levels of educational attainment, and high levels of disability.⁴

Age is a significant factor in labor force participation. Prime-age West Virginians (those ages 25 to 54) have a labor force participation rate of 78.3 percent, nearly 24 percentage points higher than the overall average for the state. In contrast, older workers ages 55 and above have a labor force participation rate of just 29.4 percent, dragging down the state's average.⁵ While still lower than the national average of 83.6 percent, West Virginia's prime-age labor force participation rate has been rising over the past decade (Figure 5).

Disparities across gender lines continue to exist in West Virginia's labor force participation rates. Men in West Virginia have a higher labor force participation rate (58.1 percent) than women (50.7 percent).⁶ However, it's important to note that many of the West Virginia women who are not participating in the formal labor force are still laboring and contributing to the economy. Of the West Virginia women not in the formal labor force (and who are not retired), over half report caring for home and family.⁷

FIGURE 4
WEST VIRGINIA HAS THE LOWEST LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN THE COUNTRY
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY STATE, 2024



Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

While historically, Black West Virginians have had lower labor force participation rates than white West Virginians,⁸ data on labor force participation by race were not available for 2024.



College graduates have the highest labor force participation rate in West Virginia at

69.5%

Those in West Virginia with a college education have the highest labor force participation rate at 69.5 percent. While the state has the lowest overall labor force participation rate, the rate for those with a college education is close to the national average. Labor force participation rates also increase dramatically for those with a high school diploma, jumping from 29.2 percent for those who have not completed high school to 51.9 percent for those who have (Figure 6).

Working for Low Wages

In addition to low labor force participation, those West Virginians who are working find themselves doing so for some of the lowest wages in the country. West Virginia's median hourly wage in 2024 was \$22.17, \$2.70 below the national median wage of \$24.87. Overall, West Virginia ranks 47th among the 50 states and D.C. for median hourly wage in 2024 (Figure 7).



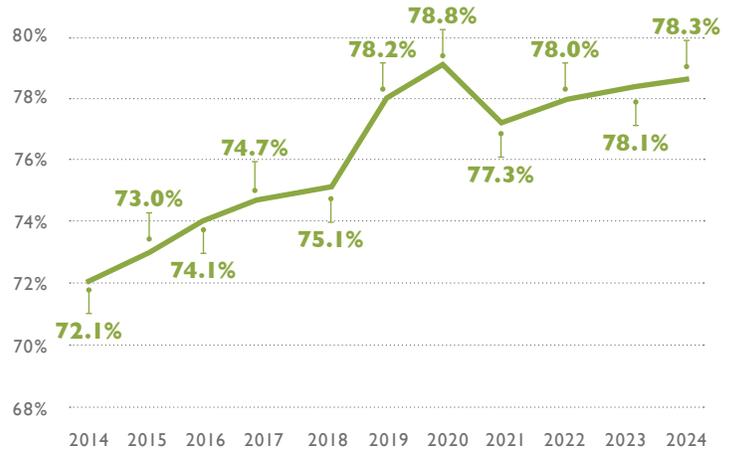
The median hourly wage for men in West Virginia is

\$4 higher

than for women in the state.

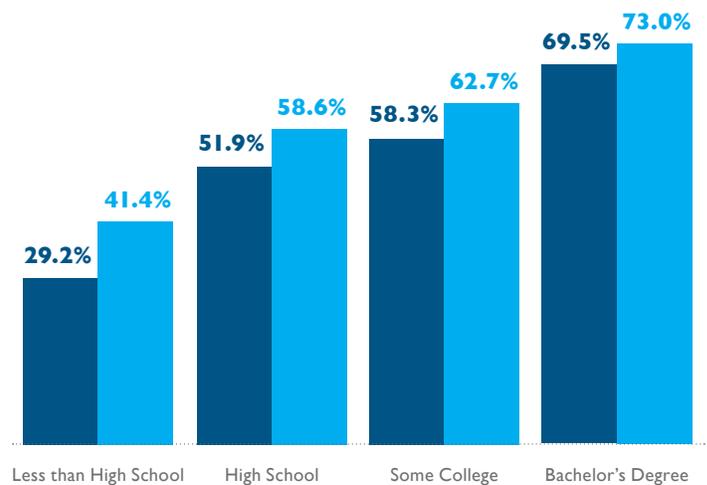
West Virginia's gender wage gap persisted in 2024.⁹ The median hourly wage for men in West Virginia was over \$4.00 higher than for women.

FIGURE 5
PRIME-AGE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE RISING IN WEST VIRGINIA
PRIME-AGE (25-54) LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, WEST VIRGINIA, 2014-2024



Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

FIGURE 6
WEST VIRGINIA'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE HIGHEST FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, WEST VIRGINIA AND UNITED STATES, 2024



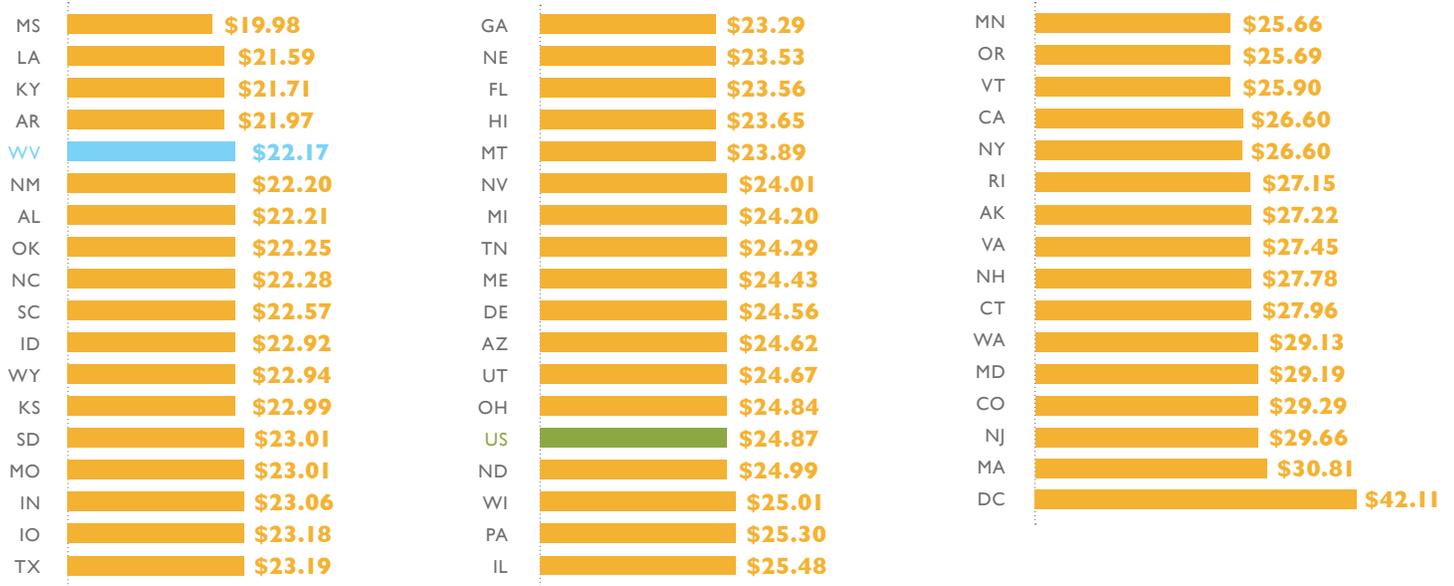
WEST VIRGINIA



UNITED STATES

Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

FIGURE 7
WEST VIRGINIANS WORK FOR SOME OF THE LOWEST WAGES IN THE COUNTRY
MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE BY STATE, 2024



Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

Wages also increased with increases in educational attainment. West Virginia's median hourly wage was highest among those with an advanced degree, at \$32.29, and jumped sharply between those with some college education and those with a Bachelor's degree (Figure 8).

While historically, Black West Virginians have had lower wages than white West Virginians,¹⁰ data on median hourly wages by race were not available for 2024.

FIGURE 8
MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES HIGHER FOR MEN, COLLEGE GRADUATES
MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE BY DEMOGRAPHIC, WEST VIRGINIA, 2024

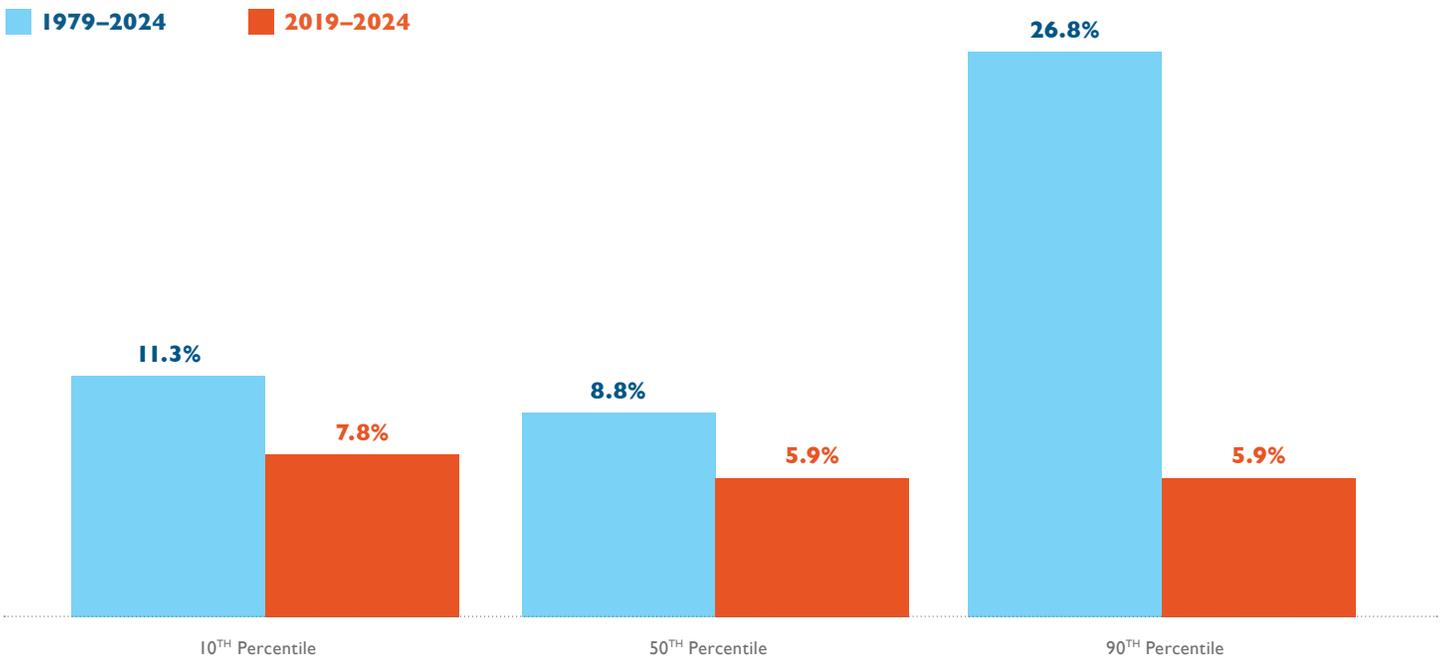


Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

While the state's wages are among the lowest in the country, wages have been growing in recent years. The success of federal pandemic stimulus spurred a fast recovery that tightened the labor market. In response, employers increased wages, particularly at the bottom of the wage distribution where the increase is most needed. Since 2019, real (inflation-adjusted) wages at the bottom 10 percent have grown from \$11.33 to \$12.21, an increase of 7.8 percent. The recent gains among West Virginia's lowest wage workers buck the longer-term trend since 1979 that the strongest wage growth occurs at the top – among managers and higher-paid professionals (Figure 9). However, wage growth at the bottom has been even stronger in states that have recently increased their minimum wage; West Virginia's has not increased since 2016.¹¹

While West Virginia's wages are among the lowest in the United States, wages have been growing in recent years.

FIGURE 9
WAGE GROWTH AT THE BOTTOM AFTER A LONG STAGNATION
GROWTH IN REAL (INFLATION-ADJUSTED) WAGES BY DECILE, WEST VIRGINIA



Source: Economic Policy Institute, State of Working America Data Library

3

The State of the Public Sector

With 151,100 jobs, including 26,600 federal employees, 46,700 state employees, and 77,800 local employees, the public sector is the largest of the major employment sectors in West Virginia's economy (Figure 10).

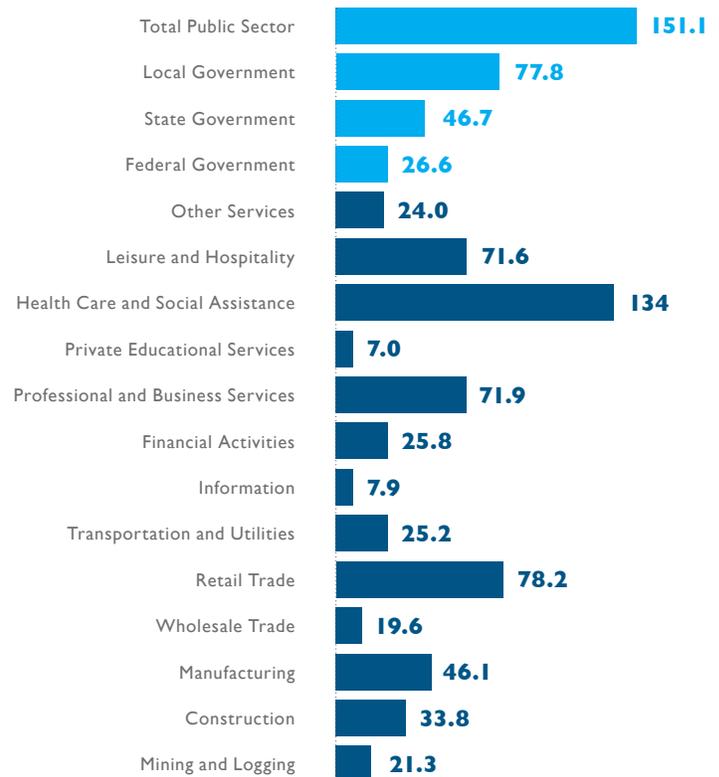
The public sector is a larger employer in West Virginia than in most other states. Accounting for 21.1 percent of jobs in the state, the public sector's share of total employment in West Virginia is fifth highest among the 50 states (Map 3).

Low Public Sector Wages

As the largest employment sector in West Virginia, the public sector has an obligation to lead the way in providing jobs that pay a sustainable middle-class wage. Ensuring that public sector jobs are good jobs allows state and local governments to provide effective and reliable services to all West Virginians, from building roads to educating our children. However, West Virginia falls short of this goal, especially at the local level.

Overall, wages in West Virginia's public sector are roughly equal to those in the private sector. The average weekly wage for the public sector in West Virginia is \$1,166, compared to \$1,108 in the private sector. However, there are several caveats to that data point. First, wages vary greatly by level of government. Wages are highest at the federal level, averaging \$1,874 per week in West Virginia. Wages are significantly lower at the state and local levels, averaging \$1,099 and \$929 per week, respectively (Figure 11).

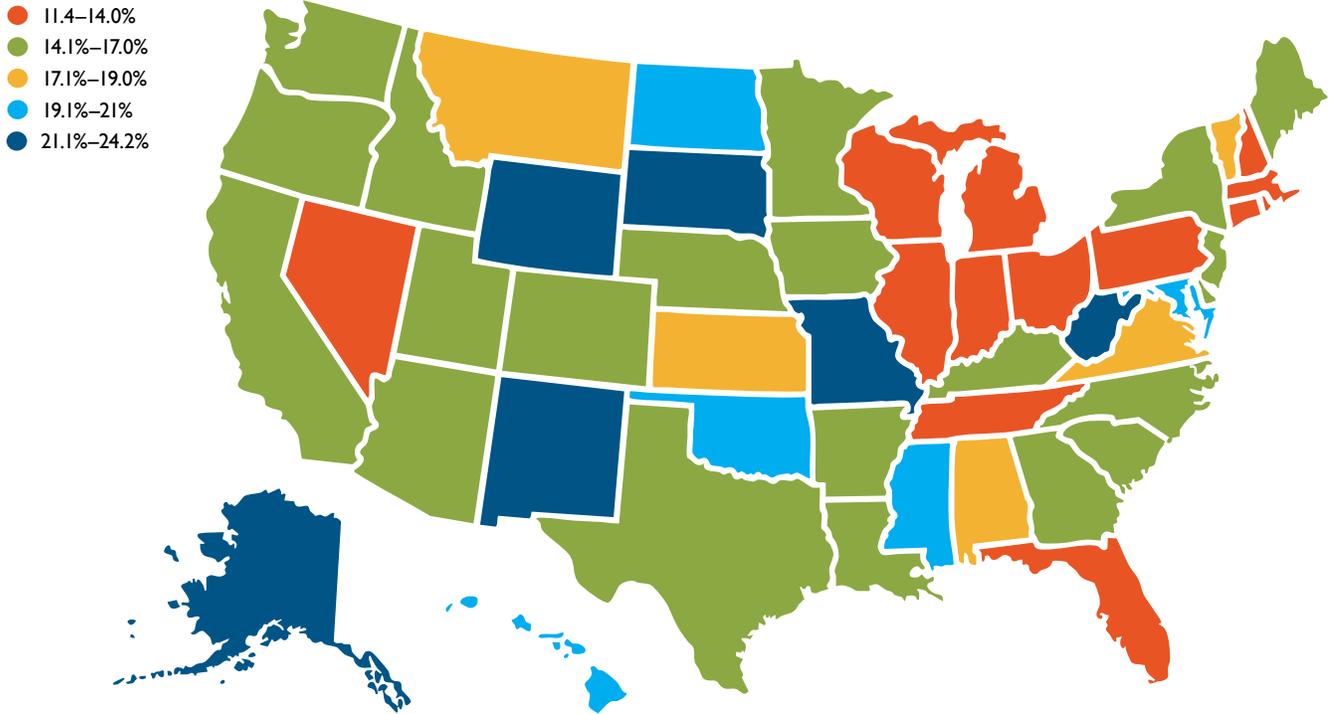
FIGURE 10
THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS THE LARGEST MAJOR EMPLOYMENT SECTOR IN WEST VIRGINIA
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (THOUSANDS), WEST VIRGINIA, 2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

MAP 3

THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS LARGER IN WEST VIRGINIA THAN IN MOST OTHER STATES
PUBLIC SECTOR AS A SHARE OF TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT BY STATE, 2024

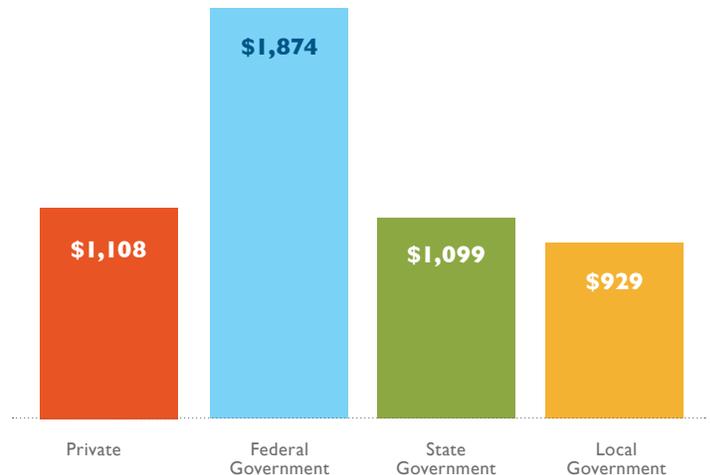


Source: WVCPB analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

Wages for local government jobs in West Virginia are the lowest compared to the private sector. This is in part due to low teacher pay in the state, with teachers making up a significant number of local government jobs. In 2024, average teacher pay was \$55,516, compared to the national average of \$72,030, ranking West Virginia 48th in the country, and worse than all its neighboring states (Table 2).

Overall, public sector wages in West Virginia are below average, and rank near the bottom for state and local government jobs. West Virginia ranks 39th among the 50 states and D.C. for average public sector weekly wages (but again, that is skewed by higher-than-average federal government wages). West Virginia ranks 17th for federal government, 51st for state government, and 47th for local government average weekly wages (Table 3).

FIGURE 11
STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES BELOW PRIVATE SECTOR AVERAGE
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE BY SECTOR,
WEST VIRGINIA, 2024



Source: WVCPB analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

Wages for local government jobs in West Virginia are the lowest compared to the private sector, with teachers making up a significant number of these jobs.

Both public and private sector workers enjoy the college wage premium, where wages are higher for college graduates than those without a college education. And while workers in the public sector have higher levels of educational attainment on average, their wages are lower than workers with a college education in the private sector (Table 4).

The Public Sector at the Local Level

The public sector is an important source of jobs at the county level, particularly with local government jobs and education. While public sector jobs make up 21.1 percent of jobs in the state, at the county level they range from 10.5 percent in Putnam County to over 48 percent in Gilmer County (Map 4).

Local government jobs in particular are important in many counties. These jobs make up 9.7 percent of jobs statewide, but account for over 20 percent of jobs in 12 counties (Wirt, Doddridge, Boone, Lincoln, Clay, Taylor, Tyler, Monroe, Pendleton, McDowell, Webster, and Summers). County boards of education are often among the top employers in a given county.¹²

TABLE 2
LOW TEACHER PAY IN WEST VIRGINIA
AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY BY STATE, 2023–2024

STATE	AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY	AMOUNT
Kentucky	\$58,325	42 ND
Maryland	\$84,338	7 TH
Ohio	\$68,236	22 ND
Pennsylvania	\$76,961	12 TH
Virginia	\$66,327	26 TH
West Virginia	\$55,516	48 TH
National Average	\$72,030	—

Source: National Education Association Rankings and Estimates, April 2025

TABLE 3
BELOW AVERAGE PUBLIC SECTOR PAY
IN WEST VIRGINIA
AVERAGE PUBLIC SECTOR WEEKLY WAGE
BY GOVERNMENT LEVEL, 2024

GOVERNMENT LEVEL	NATIONAL AVERAGE	WEST VIRGINIA	WV RANK
Total Public Sector	\$1,423	\$1,166	39 TH
Federal	\$1,961	\$1,874	17 TH
State	\$1,550	\$1,099	51 ST
Local	\$1,270	\$929	47 TH

Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

TABLE 4
WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAVE MORE
EDUCATION, BUT LOWER WAGES
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE AND SHARE OF
WORKFORCE WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR
HIGHER, WEST VIRGINIA, 2021–2023

	PUBLIC SECTOR	PRIVATE SECTOR
Average Weekly Wage with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	\$1,245	\$1,692
Share of Workforce with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	57.1%	19.3%

Source: WVCBP analysis of 2021–2023 American Community Survey microdata

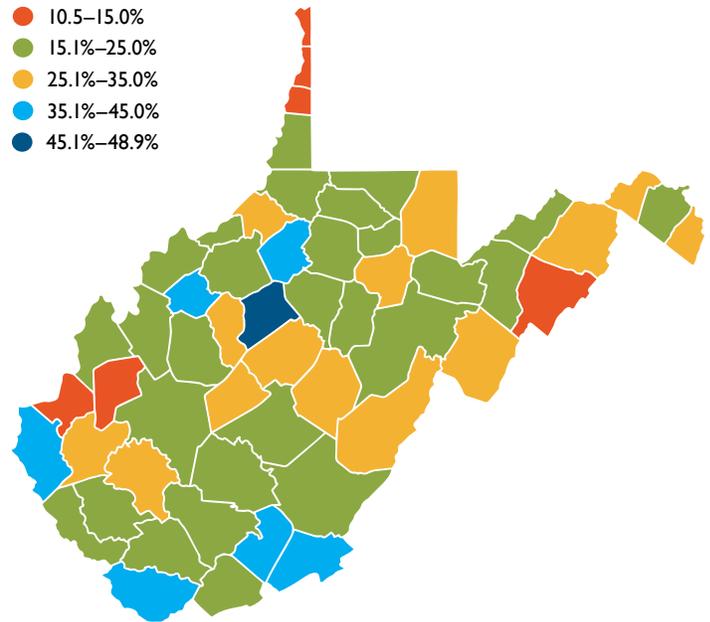
Demographics of the Public Sector

Many of the demographics of the public sector are like those of the private sector. Public sector employees are slightly older, with an average age of 47, compared to the average age in the private sector of 44. Demographics are also similar along racial lines. The public sector is 91.8 percent white, 2.7 percent Black, and 5.5 percent other race, while the private sector is 91.4 percent white, 2.7 percent Black, and 6.0 percent other race.¹³

One major difference between the public and private sectors pertains to gender. The public sector is an important source of jobs for women in West Virginia, employing over 89,000 women. Women make up over 58 percent of public sector jobs, compared to just 34 percent of private sector jobs (Figure 12).

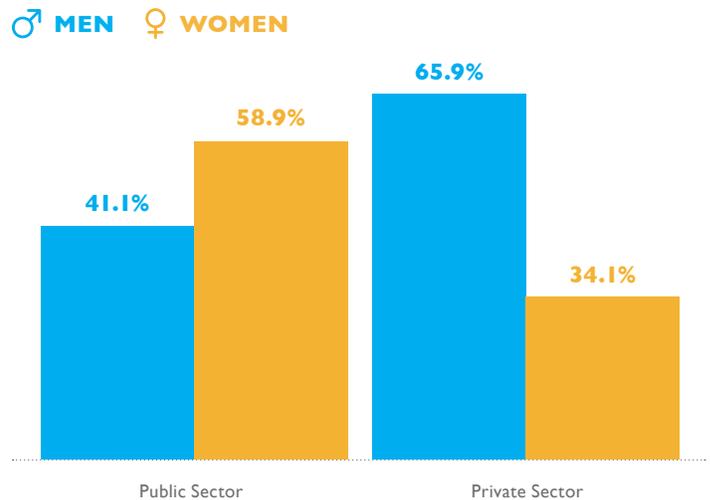
Other demographic groups are similar or less prevalent in the public sector. Just under 10,000 veterans are employed in the public sector, accounting for 6.4 percent of total public sector jobs, slightly under veterans' share of private sector jobs of 6.7 percent. Around 15,000 workers with a disability work in the public sector, accounting for 9.7 percent of public sector jobs; this is less than the 12.5 percent of private sector jobs made up of workers with a disability, suggesting stronger paths to employment in the public sector would benefit disabled workers.¹⁴

MAP 4
PUBLIC SECTOR IMPORTANT SOURCE OF LOCAL JOBS
PUBLIC SECTOR AS A SHARE OF TOTAL NONFARM EMPLOYMENT, 2024



Source: WVCBP analysis of US Bureau of Labor Statistics data

FIGURE 12
PUBLIC SECTOR AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF JOBS FOR WOMEN IN WEST VIRGINIA
SHARE OF JOBS BY GENDER, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR, WEST VIRGINIA, 2021-2023



Source: WVCBP analysis of 2021-2023 American Community Survey microdata

4

The Public Sector in 2025

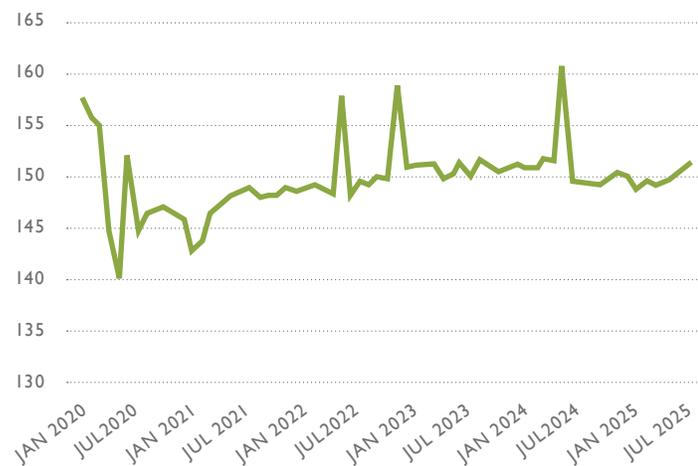
Public sector employment has experienced different rates of growth in 2025 at the federal, state, and local levels.

Compared to pre-pandemic levels (January 2020), total public sector employment in West Virginia was down 6,300 jobs, or 4.0 percent, in July of 2025 (Figure 13). The public sector job losses were mostly at the state level, which has seen employment decline by 4,600 jobs, while the local level experienced a decline of 3,400 jobs. In contrast, federal jobs in West Virginia have increased by 1,700 since January 2020.

The federal trend changed in 2025, as the newly formed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) began to make its impact felt at the federal level. Since December 2024, federal employment has fallen by 400 jobs (Figure 14).

State government employment in 2025 has also declined by 400 jobs, while local government employment has increased by 1,800 jobs, breaking the previous trend (Figure 15).

FIGURE 13
PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS
TOTAL PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT (THOUSANDS), JANUARY 2020–JULY 2025, WEST VIRGINIA (SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED)



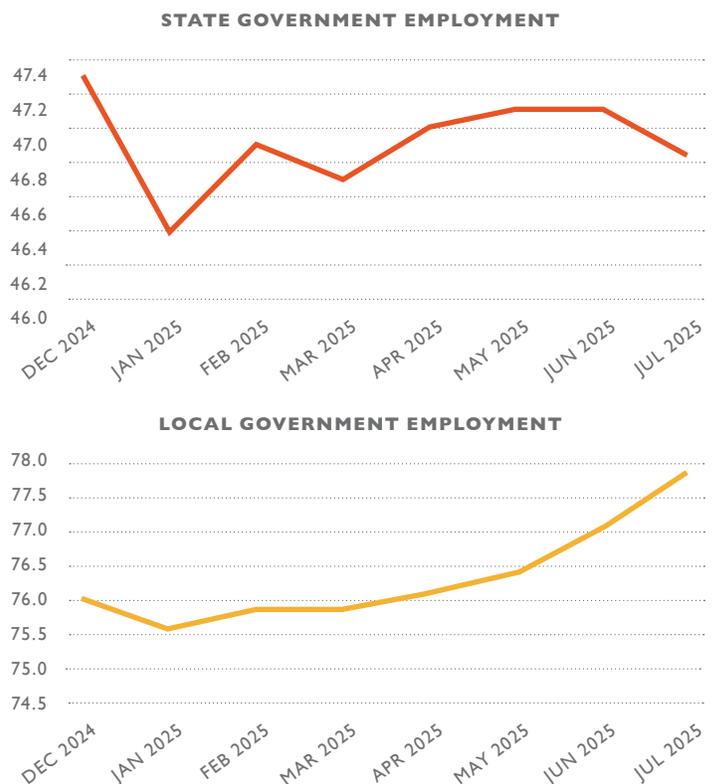
Source: WVCBP analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

FIGURE 14
DOGE CUTS FELT IN WEST VIRGINIA
TOTAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA (THOUSANDS), DECEMBER 2024–JULY 2025 (SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED)



Source: WVCBP analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

FIGURE 15
STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH DIVERGED IN 2025
TOTAL STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT (THOUSANDS), DECEMBER 2024–JULY 2025, WEST VIRGINIA (SEASONALLY-ADJUSTED).



Source: WVCBP analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data

5

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The State of Working West Virginia presents a mixed picture of West Virginia's economy.

While a strong recovery post-pandemic saw jobs quickly return, that growth stagnated in 2024. Instead of building on this robust recovery, West Virginia saw its growth lag the rest of the country, with most of the state's growth occurring within the health care sector.

While wages for low wage workers saw gains, laborers in the Mountain State work for some of the lowest wages in the country. A similar pattern is applicable to the other economic indicators, like the state's labor force participation rate, which has bright spots for prime-age workers and workers with a college education but remains overall the lowest in the nation.

Public sector employees face relatively low wages, particularly for college graduates and teachers.

The public sector in West Virginia, employing 151,000 workers, is the largest of the state's major employment sectors, and is a particularly important source of employment for women and local communities. But as in the private sector, public sector employees face relatively low wages, particularly for college graduates and teachers, compared to workers in other states.

Policies that give workers more power, put more money in the pockets of working families, promote public health, and strengthen the public sector will benefit all West Virginians. Here are some policy recommendations that address weaknesses in the state's economy and can improve the lives of families and workers more broadly.

The State of Working West Virginia policy recommendations:

- ✔ **Raise public employee and teacher pay.**
West Virginia's public employees are paid some of the lowest wages in the country, far below the national average and those of our neighboring states. Raising public employee pay can help address the teacher shortages being experienced in school districts throughout West Virginia,¹⁵ as well as help the state lead the way in providing jobs that pay a sustainable middle-class wage.
- ✔ **Fully fund PEIA and reverse recent premium hikes.**
The Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) provides health insurance coverage for teachers, state employees, and other public sector workers and retirees. This past year sweeping premium hikes went into effect, raising costs for public employees and retirees.¹⁶ Policymakers should fully fund PEIA, stabilize costs, and stop further premium hikes impacting already financially squeezed public employees. An estimated \$10 million would reverse the recent premium hikes for retirees.¹⁷
- ✔ **Repeal West Virginia's income tax cut trigger and ensure budget stability and investments in public employees.**
West Virginia's recent income tax cuts have grown increasingly expensive, placing tremendous pressure on the state budget and making investments in public employees nearly impossible. The current income tax cut trigger should be repealed and further expensive and ineffective tax cuts should be avoided to allow for the necessary financial resources to raise public employee pay and fully fund PEIA.

✔ **Raise the minimum wage.**

While low wage workers have seen strong wage growth during the pandemic recession recovery, gains have been stronger in states that raised their minimum wages. West Virginia's minimum wage was last raised on January 1, 2016 to \$8.75 per hour. Raising the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour, with mechanisms to adjust automatically with the cost of living and do away with the two-tiered system of the tipped minimum wage, would continue that progress and give thousands of working West Virginians a raise.

✔ **Ensure all West Virginia workers have access to paid family and medical leave and paid sick days.**

Having access to earned paid sick days and family and medical leave is crucial to reducing the spread of illness, keeping communities healthy, avoiding productivity loss, reducing workplace turnover, and supporting parents and caregivers so they can balance work and family.

✔ **Repeal right-to-work.**

Right-to-work laws prohibit unions and employers from including a provision in contracts that requires employees who benefit from union representation to pay for their fair share toward those costs. Repealing West Virginia's right-to-work law, which has failed to provide its promised job growth, would guarantee the rights of all private employees to engage in collective bargaining to improve workplaces and ensure all workers are treated equitably.

✔ **Increase funding for child care subsidies.**

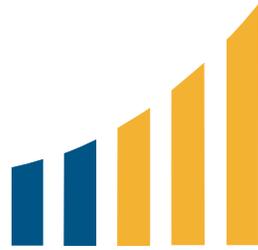
Increasing funding for child care subsidies will expand access to child care for families by making it more affordable, as well as raise the wages of providers, who play an all too important role in the state's economy and whose labor deserves to be more highly valued.

✔ **Expand access to higher education and job training programs.**

Labor force participation and wages are largely determined by educational attainment. West Virginia currently has one of the lowest levels of educational attainment in the country. It is imperative that the state moves toward increasing the share of people who complete high school and go on to two- or four-year colleges. This could include boosting support to the state's two- and four-year colleges (which has been reduced in recent years) and expanding the Promise Scholarship to cover more of the cost of higher education and serve more students. The state should also partner with unions and other entities that provide job training and apprenticeship programs in highly sought-after industries.

Endnotes

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