

West Virginia

Introduction

Until the late 1800s, the state was primarily an agricultural economy. At this time mining and manufacturing grew in their importance. The primary non-agricultural industries today are bituminous coal mining, chemicals, and primary metal refining. The state is largely forested, at 75% of its area. Even today, only 36% of the WV population is considered urban. West Virginia has coal, natural gas, oil, petroleum, salt and other natural resources.

Due to non-US importing of coal, and mining technology advances, the coal mining industry estimates 40% of its jobs have been lost. This has created less opportunities due to the isolated nature of the mines in rural, or small towns. There are less opportunities for retraining.

Few medically related companies of any size or volume were found in the directories consulted. An organization similar to the Pittsburgh High Technology Council does not exist. Several years ago a National Technology Transfer Center was located at Wheeling-Jesuit College. Additionally, an undergraduate and graduate programs were developed in technology transfer. NASA and Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh) were instrumental in the curriculum development.

The rural nature of the state and its industrial base have not been conducive to high technology development. The following demographics section will provide necessary detail.

Demographics/Employment/Education

Due to the rural nature of the state, all figures are on a statewide basis, unless otherwise noted. The 1990 census placed West Virginia's population at 1,793,477. This is an 8% decline from 1980. As a comparison, Allegheny County in Pennsylvania has a population of 1,334,396. This would mirror the decline of the mining and basic industries economy. As of 1992, the population has risen to 1,808,860 persons. This is less than a 1% increase. This represents a density of 75 people/square mile or 29 people/square km. Caucasians comprise 95.3% of the population. African Americans comprise 3.1% of the population. The remaining 1.6% is comprised of American and Asian Indians, Filipino, and Hispanics. As may be expected, non-whites are located in the urban and university areas.

Population characteristics reveal a dumbbell shaped curve. The 1992 population has 18.8% of the state aged 5-17 years, and 15% of the state over 65 years of age. The 18-24 year age group represent only 10.1% of the population. The 25-44 year age group comprise 29.7% of the state population. Only 9.9% of the population is comprised of 55-64 year olds. Males make up 47% of the population. Only 0.9% are foreign born. English speaking homes represent 97.4% of all households. West Virginia shows the same pattern of movement as Pennsylvania. Intrastate movers represent 28% of the movers.