

THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL

WEST VIRGINIA and the COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We are hurting, in the throes of a global health pandemic, a recessionary economy, and ongoing police and policy violence, 140 million poor and low-income individuals have been called to sacrifice more than we can afford to give up. This fact sheet provides just a handful of indicators of how people are suffering from these crises in West Virginia and across the nation.

Nationally, the pandemic has worsened conditions for 140 million poor and low-income people already struggling to survive.

Before the pandemic,

- Over [43.5%](#) of the population was poor or low-income. This includes 52.2% of all children (39 million), 45% of women (74.2 million), 60.4% of Black people (26 million), 64.1% of Latinx people (38 million), 40.8% of Asian people (8 million), 58.9% of Native and Indigenous people (2.14 million), and 33.5% of White people (66 million).

As of July 2020,

- [10.6 million](#) more Americans were unemployed than in [February 2020](#). The unemployment rate in July was 9.2% for White workers (11.4 million), 14.6% for Black workers (2.9 million), and 12% for Asian workers (1.2 million).
- Nearly 43 million people were enrolled in [SNAP](#) / food stamps in April 2020, an increase of around 6 million people since April 2019.
- More than half of U.S. adults surveyed by the [Census](#) reported experiencing symptoms of depression or loss of hope.

Meanwhile,

- As of September 6, [police have killed](#) 781 people in 2020. Black victims make up 28% of deaths resulting from police violence this year, more than double their share of the total population.
- More than 17,000 [National Guard Soldiers and Airmen](#) were deployed in 23 states in response to public outrage over police brutality.
- The [top 5 billionaires wealth](#) has increased \$212 billion from March 18 to September 10.

Source note: all figures from the U.S. Census Bureau [Household Pulse Survey](#) are approximate and subject to survey variation



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IN WEST VIRGINIA:

Prior to the pandemic: 40% or 710 thousand people in West Virginia were [poor or low-income](#). This includes 50% of children (187 thousand), 44% of women (402 thousand), 51% of Black people (30 thousand), 55% of Latinx people (13 thousand), and 42% of White people (689 thousand).

- 108,000 people in West Virginia were already [uninsured](#) as of 2018.
- Although a [living wage](#) in West Virginia would be \$23.20 an hour, the minimum wage in the state is \$8.25 in 2019.
- West Virginia law enforcement agencies received \$9.3 million in [surplus Department of Defense equipment](#) to further militarize police activities.

The pandemic has significantly worsened health and economic conditions for poor and low-income West Virginians.

- As of September 15, 12,820 West Virginians have been [infected with Covid-19](#) and 275 have died from the virus. The infection rate in the state was 30th-highest in the nation (1,643 per 100,000).

For current infection and death numbers, visit covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker

As of July 2020,

- 179,000 renters in West Virginia were at [risk of eviction](#), a full 48% of households in the state.
- 317,622 people were enrolled in [SNAP](#) / food stamps in April 2020.

As of September 14, more than 6 months into the pandemic,

- 38.7% of West Virginia's population, or about 530,000 people, have [lost income](#) due to the crisis.
- About 82,000 poor and low-income people in West Virginia reported that they sometimes or often [do not have enough food](#) to eat.
- In the face of the pandemic's severe economic and public health impacts, about four in ten of the state's population, or about 560,000 people, reported [symptoms of depression](#) or loss of hope in the previous week. For poor and low-income households, this rate is much higher at about six in ten.

IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THIS WAY.

While millions of people are struggling to survive in the world's richest country, the [combined wealth of America's billionaires increased](#) by \$845 billion between March 18 and September 18. Likewise, in the midst of a national health crisis, West Virginia taxpayers continue to contribute billions to non-emergency government funds. In 2019, West Virginia [taxpayers contributed](#) \$2.4 billion to the Pentagon and military funds that could have been used to fight poverty. We need to shift the wealth and abundance that exists in the US and West Virginia away from millionaires and military contractors to securing the right to welfare, work, health, and democracy.

In West Virginia, there were 340,000 [low-income eligible voters who did not vote](#) in the 2016 presidential election. If these eligible voters were engaged around a moral policy agenda that reflected their needs and demands, they could bring their issues to the center of the political agenda and influence election outcomes.

This is why the Poor People's Campaign is organizing to unleash the power of the poor in this election year and beyond.

Read more from the Poor People's Jubilee Platform at poorpeoplescampaign.org/about/jubilee-platform/
Everybody has the right to live!