Index 1: Voter Registration - Confidence level - MEDIUM
West Virginia closes voter registration 21 days before Election Day. The state offers automatic and online voter registration, but not same-day. Youth can preregister to vote beginning at age 17. Felony disenfranchisement continues until the terms of parole or probation are complete. The state will send a notice to voters after four years of nonvoting; removal from voting list begins if there is failure to vote for an additional four years. West Virginia had a moderate number of purges conducted in 2020.

Index 2: Voter Identification - Confidence level - HIGH
West Virginia requires no photo ID to vote. The state is a member of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) which seeks to help states improve accuracy of voter rolls.

Index 3: Early Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
West Virginia offers early in-person voting beginning 13 days before Election Day, ending three days before. There is Saturday voting. Excuse required absentee voting is available.

Index 4: Safe Voting - Confidence level - LOW
West Virginia reverted back to excuse-only absentee ballot options after making no-excuse temporary in 2020 in response to the pandemic. There is no proactive mailing of ballots applications to voters without request. Ballot drop-off options are restrictive. The state offers an online portal for absentee ballot applications, places no restrictions who can return an absentee ballot for a voter in need, and provides prepaid postage. 2022 law allows first responders deployed outside of the county and prevented from in-person or absentee voting the right to utilize electronic absentee ballots as military members are authorized to do.

Learn more about how to vote and voting rights in West Virginia: VOTE411
Learn about voting laws recently passed or enacted in West Virginia: State Voting Rights Tracker by Voting Rights Lab
If you or anyone you know encounters problems while voting, call the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE or 866-687-8683
Learn how to take action to protect voting rights in West Virginia: DemocracyMovement.us
Index 5: Ballot Acceptance - Confidence level - MEDIUM
West Virginia had a high percentage of mail-in ballots returned in 2020, with a low rejection rate. There is a statewide ballot tracking program, but it is not strong nor statutorily required. The state does not allow election administrators to preprocess returned ballots nor provides a codified process for voters to correct ballot discrepancies. It does have a signature verification program. Absentee ballots are accepted 5 days after an election if postmarked on or before Election Day.

Index 6: Logistical Barriers in Voting - Confidence level - MEDIUM
Election Day in West Virginia is a state holiday, and state law allows employees to take up to 3 hours paid leave to vote. The state provides low quality accessible voting machine options and allows curbside voting, but has few other laws if any above federal mandates to assist disabled voters. There were a few reports by voters in 2020 with concerns about mishandling of polling sites ballots and voting equipment. The state had a moderate ratio of poll workers to polling sites in 2020. West Virginia ranked in the bottom third of all states on how well they invested in the 2020 elections to improve processes while being cost effective. 2022 law allows first responders deployed to an emergency outside their county of residence to utilize electronic absentee ballots, and addresses poll workers recruitment challenges, including hiring and compensation for half-day shifts.

Index 7: Equipment, Security, and Auditing - Confidence level - MEDIUM
West Virginia has a statewide verified paper audit trail. Most counties use Ballot Marking Devices to meet voter accessibility needs, while others use hand marked paper ballots or electronic voting machines. West Virginia tests the equipment according to federal standards. Its election security systems received fair overall ratings in 2018. The state uses traditional audit methods to double-check for machine recording errors before certification and during the statutorily required post-election period.
Although West Virginia has established the constitutional right to a secret ballot, it does not prohibit election interference by the legislature. Legislation pending in 2022 sought to shift election authority and penalize election officials for their decisions. New 2022 law prohibits election officials from accepting gifts, donations, or private funding for election administration unless specifically approved by the state, and creates new election crimes related to attempts to vote more than once or when ineligible.

Public opinion surveys showed that West Virginia had no trust in the 2020 election news coverage. There were a few reports from voters with concerns about political intimidation in-person, disinformation, and poll worker misconduct. State law requires all poll workers be trained and authorizes law enforcement to be present only by request or on official business. 2022 law now prohibits physically obstructing, delaying, harassing or intimidating a voter traveling to or from the polls.

West Virginia is one of 19 states that has a Republican trifecta, as well as a triplex - the governor, attorney general, and secretary of state are from the same political party. Based on the last two presidential elections, West Virginia is the 2nd most Republican state, with an average GOP voting margin of 40.5% compared to the national average Democratic voting margin of 3%. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the state’s population decreased by –3.2% (one of only three states with a negative population growth along with Illinois and Mississippi) compared to the national average of 7.4%. West Virginia ranked last in population growth in the past 10 years. West Virginia is tied with Vermont for being the 2nd least racially diverse state in the country (Maine is the least racially diverse state). During the past decade, the white population dropped from 93% to 89%. With the U.S. Census results, West Virginia is one of seven states to lose a representative in Congress.