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# Greater Wheeling Regional Plan

ECONOMIC PROFILE



# Economic Profile

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Bureau of Business and Economic Research  
John Chambers College of Business and Economics  
West Virginia University

(304) 293-7831  
bebureau@mail.wvu.edu  
bber.wvu.edu

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## WRITTEN BY

**Eric Bowen, PhD**

Research Assistant Professor

**Christiadi, PhD**

Research Associate

**Brian Lego**

Research Assistant Professor

**Cody Adams**

Graduate Research Assistant

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## Executive Summary

The Greater Wheeling region, defined in this report as consisting of Brooke, Hancock, Marshall and Ohio counties in West Virginia, and Belmont, Jefferson, and Monroe counties in Ohio, has experienced a volatile economy over the past decade with significant swings in employment across multiple sectors. The region's energy sector has been a major source of instability with coal job declines offset by a booming natural gas industry. The region also gained several thousand construction and engineering jobs due to major pipeline construction projects. However, the completion of pipeline projects and two large hospital closures weighed on area payrolls in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic came and accelerated the job losses. Compared to the same quarter last year, employment in the first quarter of 2020 in the region dropped by around 2,900 jobs.

In this report, we make a detailed examination of the recent economic indicators in the Greater Wheeling region. This report is part of a series from West Virginia University researchers at the Bureau of Business and Economic Research and the WVU Extension Service that evaluate the Wheeling Metropolitan Area' economy with the goal of providing a set of comprehensive action plans to provide direction for the region's policy makers to enhance the area's economic growth.

### EMPLOYMENT, LABOR FORCE, AND INCOME

- After peaking in the second quarter of 2019 at nearly 110 thousand jobs, total employment in the region started to decline and reached around 103 thousand in the first quarter of 2020, about 2,900 or 2.7 percent less than the first quarter of 2019.
- Unemployment rate has continued to decrease since the Great Recession through 2019. It then fluctuated widely in 2020, rising in the first quarter, peaking at 14.8 percent in the second quarter, and declined again to 10.2 percent in the third quarter.
- The region has a labor force participation rate of 54.3 percent in 2019, about one percentage point higher than the state labor force participation rate of 53.2 percent.
- Per capita personal income in the Greater Wheeling region began increasing faster than the state of West Virginia in 2015, reaching more than \$45,000 in 2019, about \$2,800 higher than West Virginia.
- The Greater Wheeling region has a similar employment distribution the West Virginia, with slightly more jobs concentrated in trade, transportation and utilities, natural resources and mining, and manufacturing, and slightly less in government and professional and business services.

### ENERGY INDUSTRIES

- Although the coal industry has long had a sizable presence in the Greater Wheeling region, as of 2019 only three counties in the 9-county Wheeling region still produce significant amount of coal, including Marshall, Ohio, and Monroe.
- Coal production in the Wheeling region in 2019 was at 30.7 million short tons. Production began declining in the later part of 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic only magnified the already declining world's demand for coal, accelerating the decline in the coal production.
- Seven of the eight counties in the Greater Wheeling region experienced a surge in the natural gas production, most notably starting in 2012.

- Natural gas production in the Greater Wheeling region increased from 118.5 billion cubic feet (Bcf) in 2012 to 2,672 Bcf in 2019, an increase of about 56 percent per year.

## **POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

- Population in the Wheeling area decreased at a faster pace than the state as a whole during the last 19 years.
- The Wheeling area population has a higher share of residents over the age of 65 than the state as a whole; however, the region is aging at a slower rate than the rest of the state.
- While the region's over-65 population was growing, prime working-age population (those between the ages of 25-54) fell by about 25 percentage points between 2000 and 2019.
- The proportion of the Greater Wheeling region's population with a bachelor's degree or higher is approximately 18.4 percent in 2018, which is about 2 percentage point higher than the West Virginia's average of 20.3 percent.

## **HOUSING AND COMMUTING**

- The number of housing units in the Wheeling region area fell by a net 1,600 units during the period between 2010 and 2019, a decline of more than a tenth of a percent per year on average.
- Jefferson County had the biggest decline, falling about 400 units, followed by Ohio County at around 300 units during the same period. Brooke, Hancock, and Marshall counties had a decline of about 200 units each.
- Ohio County had the highest median housing value in the Wheeling region at nearly \$120,000 per owner-occupied housing unit—about \$5,000 above the West Virginia's average of \$115,000.
- Commuting patterns indicate that about 86 percent of workers commute within the Greater Wheeling region for their jobs, with about 60 percent working in the same county as their residence.
- The other 14 percent of workers living in the region commute outside of the region for work. Nearly half of them (48.5) percent work in two neighboring counties in Pennsylvania: Allegheny and Washington counties. The rest mostly work in the other surrounding counties in Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

# 1 Introduction

The Greater Wheeling region, defined in this report as consisting of Brooke, Hancock, Marshall and Ohio counties in West Virginia, and Belmont, Jefferson, and Monroe counties in Ohio, has experienced a volatile economy over the past decade with significant swings in employment across multiple sectors. The region's energy sector has been a major source of instability with coal job declines offset by a booming natural gas industry. The region also gained several thousand construction and engineering jobs due to major pipeline construction projects. However, the completion of pipeline projects and two large hospital closures weighed on area payrolls in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic came and accelerated the job losses. Compared to the same quarter last year, employment in the first quarter of 2020 in the region dropped by around 2,900 jobs.

In this report, we make a detailed examination of the recent economic indicators in the Greater Wheeling region. We have defined this region broadly, including Brooke, Hancock, Marshall, Ohio and Wetzell counties in West Virginia; and Belmont, Jefferson, and Monroe counties in Ohio. This report is part of a series from West Virginia University (WVU) researchers at the Bureau of Business and Economic Research and the WVU Extension Service that evaluate the Wheeling Metropolitan Area's economy with the goal of providing a set of comprehensive action plans to provide direction for the region's policy makers to enhance the area's economic growth.

It is important to note that much of the data in this report reflects the Wheeling economy prior to the COVID pandemic and associated shutdown of many businesses in the region. We have provided as much updated data as possible and our forecast reflects our estimates of the impact that COVID will have on the Wheeling economy over the next five years. However, the economic effects of COVID make it difficult to make accurate forecasts.

# 2 Economic Profile

In this section, we examine the broader economic trends of the Greater Wheeling region. Long-term trends show that Wheeling has experienced a consistent decline in population compared with West Virginia as a whole, but its population is aging at a slower rate than the state. The area also has a slightly higher educational attainment than the state. Economic trends indicate that the region has a higher proportion of jobs in the natural resources sector, which is a positive for the region. However, negative factors such as low labor force participation may lead to underperformance over time.

In, we begin in section 2.1 with a discussion of economic indicators, such as employment, labor force participation, and income. demographic data for the region, including population, age, and housing growth., we discuss

## 2.1 Employment, Labor Force, and Income

**EMPLOYMENT:** Employment trends in the Greater Wheeling region, as well as the state of West Virginia, have been volatile for much of the past decade, experiencing significant losses during the Great Recession and the period between 2014 and 2016 (see Figure 1). Surging energy production and increases in pipeline construction activity fueled job gains in the region. Total employment rose again starting in the third quarter of 2017 and peaked at nearly 110 thousand in the first quarter of 2019. By contrast, the completion of pipeline projects and two large hospital closures weighed on area payrolls the rest of 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic that came in early 2020 only accelerated the job losses. In the first quarter of 2020 total employment in the region dropped to around 103 thousand, a job loss of about 2,900 or 2.7 percent from the same quarter of last year.

Ohio County, which has the largest employment base in the region, experienced the largest job losses of more than 1,200 in the first quarter of 2020, followed by Belmont County with more than 1,100 job losses (Figure 2). Hancock and Marshall counties followed, with 475 and 325 job losses, respectively. Jefferson and Monroe counties are an exception as they actually gained about 370 and 100 jobs during the same period, respectively.

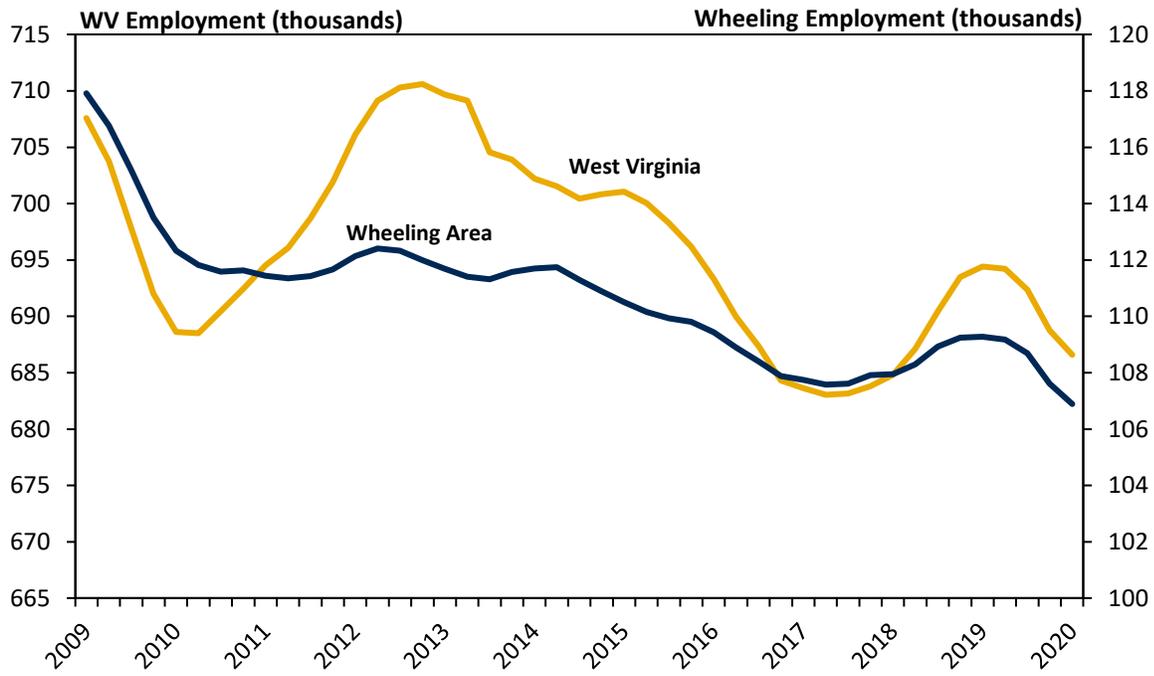
Total employment in the state as a whole has seen similar trends in employment during this period, except with steeper job losses than the Wheeling region, both between 2012 and 2016 period and the first quarter of 2020.

**UNEMPLOYMENT:** The unemployment rate in the Greater Wheeling region, on an annual basis, peaked at 11.5 percent in 2010 following the Great Recession, then continued to decline through 2019, before rising again in 2020. Due to job losses driven by the completion of pipeline projects, two large hospital closures, and more importantly the COVID-19 pandemic that prompted the economic lockdown, the unemployment rate in the region started rising again in the first quarter of 2020. The rate peaked at 14.8 percent (non-seasonally adjusted) in the second quarter of 2020 before declining to 10.2 percent in the third quarter as the US government eased the lockdown (Figure 3).

The unemployment rate in the state as a whole has seen similar fluctuating trends during the same period, with rates consistently being lower than the Wheeling region.

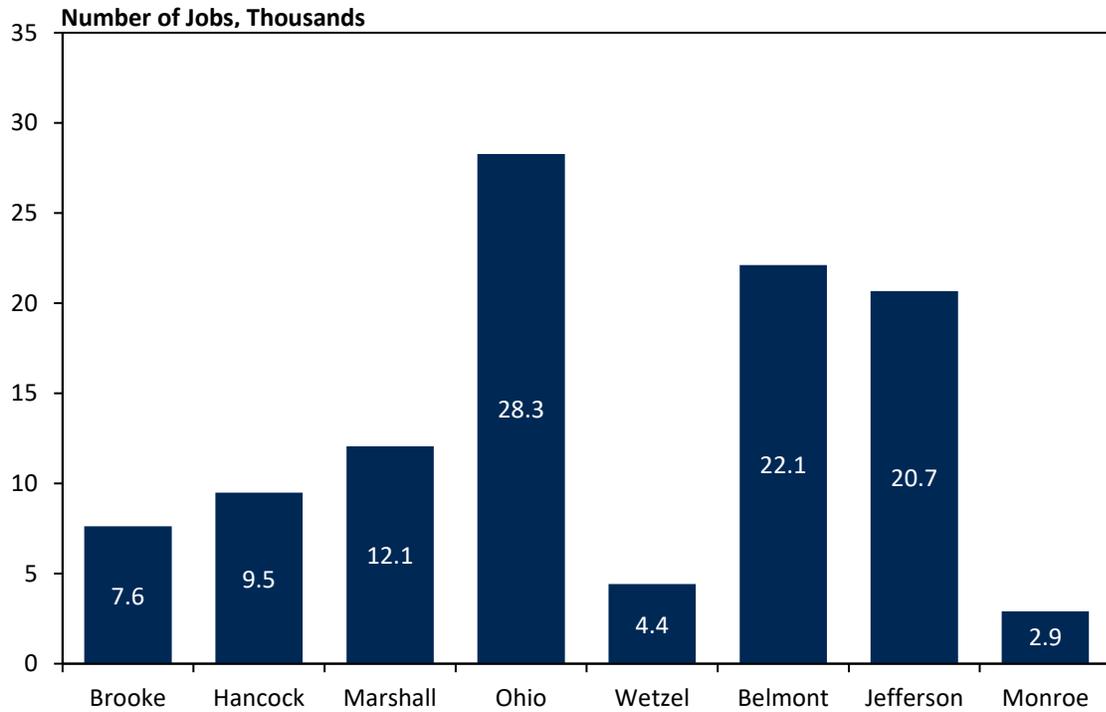
Next, we compare the unemployment rate in one county relative to the other counties in the Greater Wheeling region. For this, we use the annual instead of the quarterly unemployment rate because it is not affected by the seasonal fluctuations (Figure 4). In 2019, the unemployment rate in all counties in the region, except Ohio County, was higher than the state unemployment rate of 4.9 percent. Ohio County had the lowest unemployment rate of 4.5 percent. By contrast, two counties with the smallest employment base, Monroe and Wetzel, had the highest unemployment rates of 8.3 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively. The other five counties had the unemployment rate ranging around 5 to 6 percent. The average unemployment rate for the Greater Wheeling region as a whole was 5.7 percent, nearly one percentage point above the West Virginia average rate.

**Figure 1: Employment**



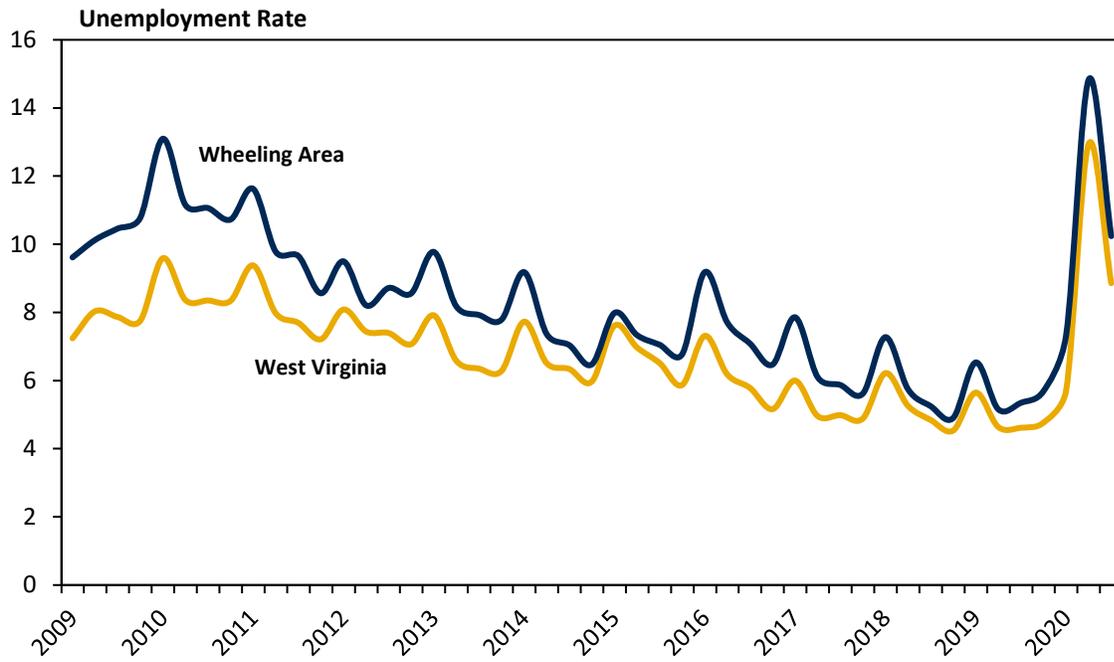
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 Note: Figures are 4-quarter moving averages

**Figure 2: Total Employment by County (2019)**



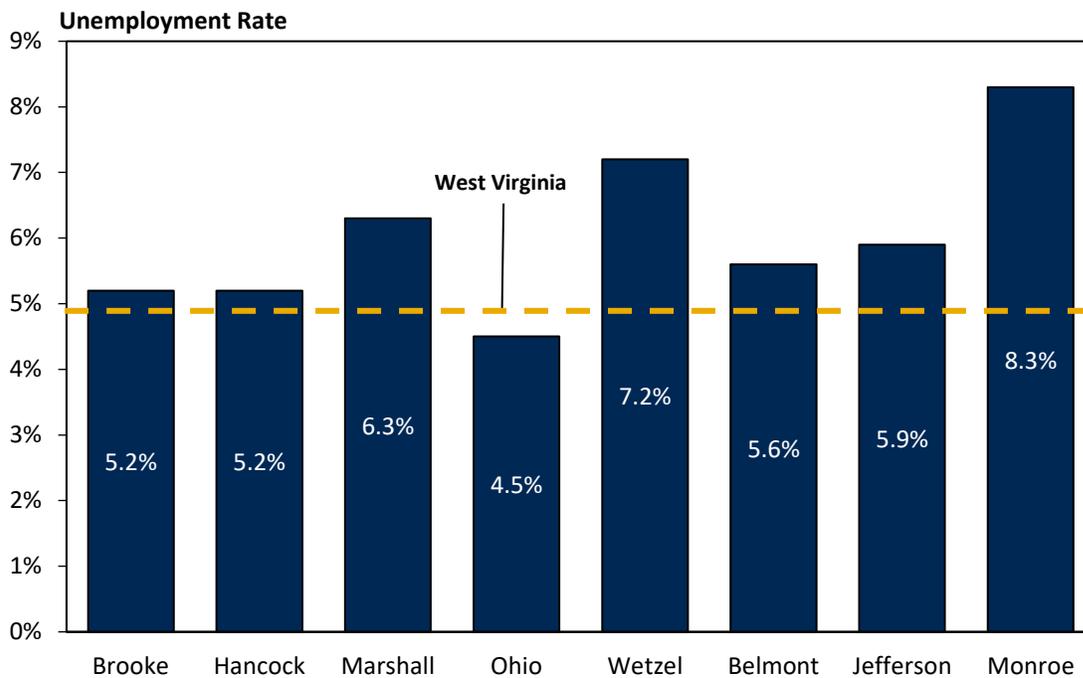
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Figure 3: Unemployment Rate**



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 Note: Lines are smoothed and rates are not seasonally adjusted.

**Figure 4: Unemployment by County (2019)**



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

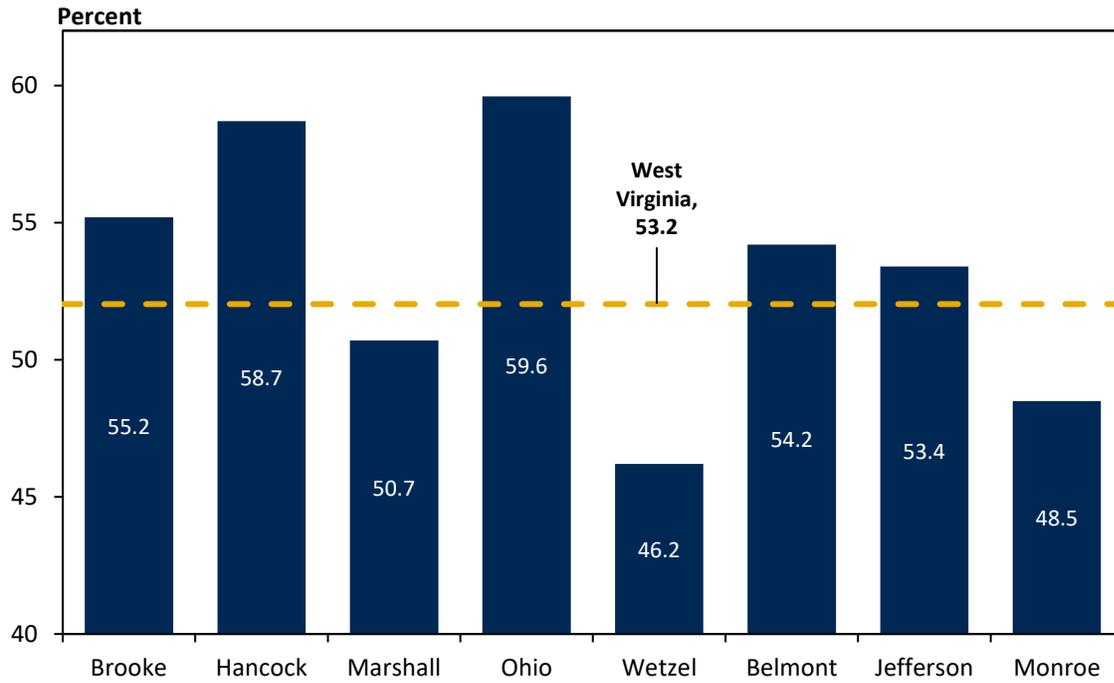
**LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION:** Labor force participation measures the percentage of residents 16 and older who are either employed or actively looking for work (Figure 5). In 2018, Ohio County, which had the largest employment base in the region, also had the highest labor force participation rate of 59.6 percent. Hancock County had the second highest participation rate of 58.7 percent, followed by Brooke, Belmont, and Jefferson counties at 55.2 percent, 54.2 percent, and 53.4 percent, respectively. By contrast, the two counties with the smallest employment based, Monroe and Wetzel counties, had the lowest participation rates in the regions of 48.5 percent and 46.2 percent, respectively.

The average participation rate for the Greater Wheeling region as a whole was 54.3 percent, about one percentage point above the West Virginia average rate of 53.2 percent.

**PERSONAL INCOME:** Per capita personal income (PCPI) levels in the Greater Wheeling region in general have been higher than West Virginia over the last 19 years, except from 2009 through 2012, as shown in Figure 6. Per capita income adjusted for inflation in the region was more than \$35,000 in 2001, which was about \$1,600 higher than the state of West Virginia income level. This differential began to decrease during the recession until 2015 when the personal income of the Greater Wheeling region began to increase faster than the state of West Virginia. In 2019, PCPI in the Wheeling Area was more than \$45,000, which was about \$2,800 higher than the state of West Virginia as a whole.

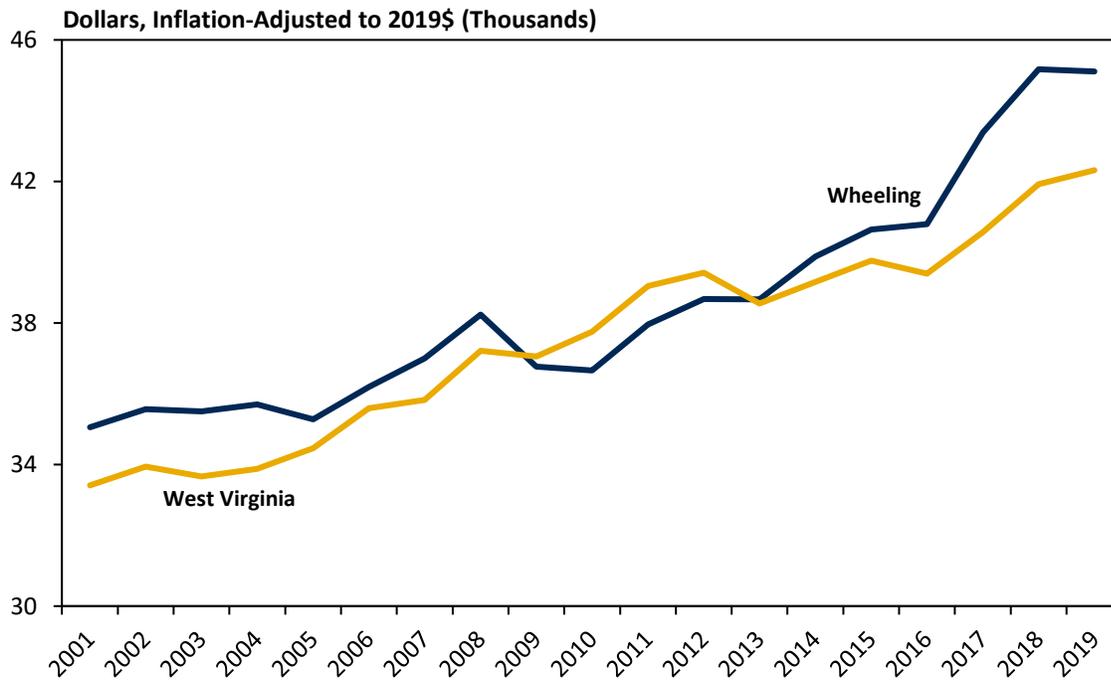
The highest level of PCPI in 2019 of nearly \$65,000 was recorded in Ohio County. This was well above the level in the state of West Virginia and the other counties in the Wheeling region, as shown in Figure 7. On the other end, Monroe and Wetzel counties had the lowest PCPI in the region, each at nearly \$37,000. The level of PCPI in the other five counties in the region hovered around the West Virginia average of around \$42,300.

**Figure 5: Labor Force Participation Rate (2018)**



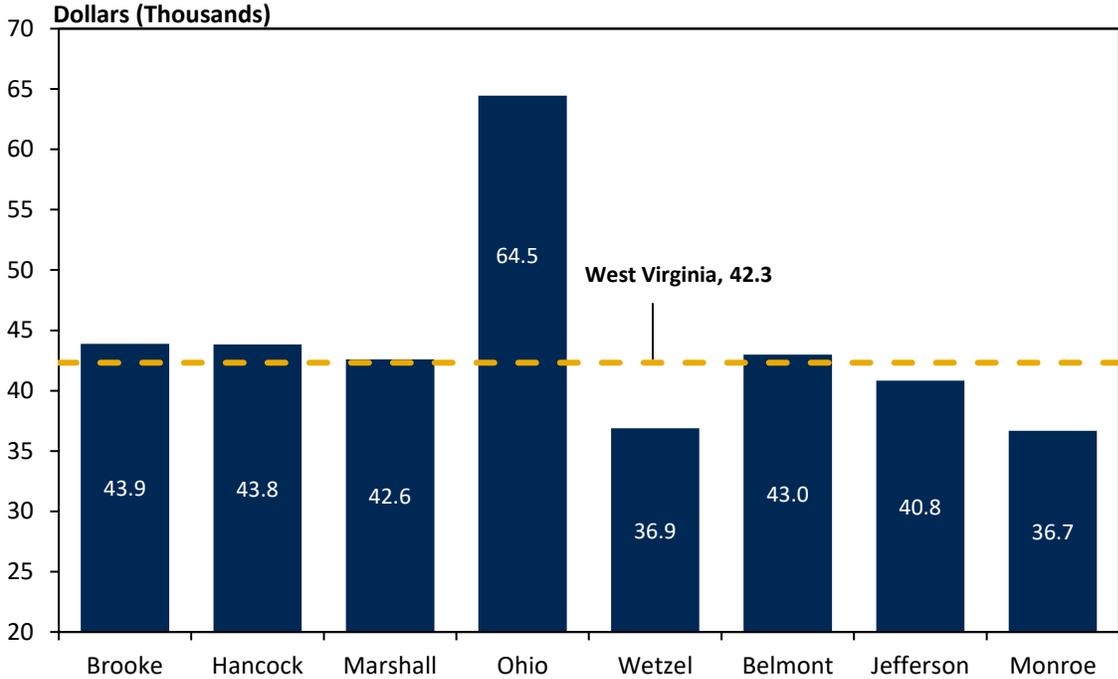
Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

**Figure 6: Real Income Per Capita**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Figure 7: Per Capita Personal Income by County (2019)**



Source: US Census Bureau

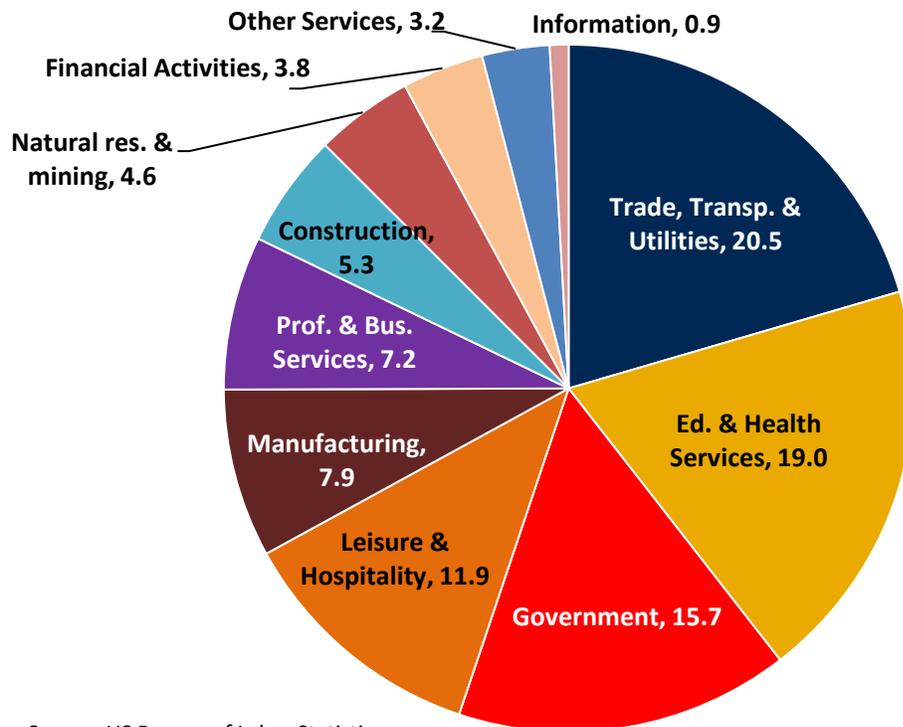
**INDUSTRIAL COMPOSITION:** The Greater Wheeling region has a similar employment distribution as the state of West Virginia, with slightly more jobs concentrated in trade, transportation and utilities, natural resources and mining, and manufacturing and slightly less in government and professional and business services. As shown in Figure 8, trade, transportation, and utilities represented about 20 percent of the region’s employment in 2019, which was comparable to the West Virginia average. Natural resources and mining and manufacturing employed 4.6 percent and 7.9 percent of jobs in the region, respectively, or about 1.2 and 1.1 percentage points more than West Virginia average, respectively. Another big industry was Education and health services, employing 19.0 percent of jobs in the region, which was also comparable to the West Virginia average. On the other end, the government sector employed 19.0 percent jobs, nearly 4 percentage points below the West Virginia average, while professional and business services employed 7.2 percent of the jobs, or nearly 3 percentage points below the West Virginia average.

The employment portfolios in the region vary considerably by county, as shown in Figure 9. To compare the industrial distribution among the counties in the region, we can classify the employment portfolio into three major sectors, private goods-producing, private service-providing, and the government. Employment in the government sector typically is usually the smallest compared to the other two major sectors above. However, in the two small counties, Monroe and Wetzel, government sector employed the second largest at 30.3 percent and 27.0 percent in 2019, respectively.

By contrast, of the above three major sectors, the private service-providing sector (in this chart it consists of service, trade, transportation, and utilities, and financial activities and information) is likely the largest sector. For the Greater Wheeling region, employment in the private service-providing sector is nearly four times that in the private goods-producing sector. In Ohio County specifically, nearly 80 percent of the county’s jobs are concentrated in service-providing sector, driven primarily by large employment in the education and health services, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality services.

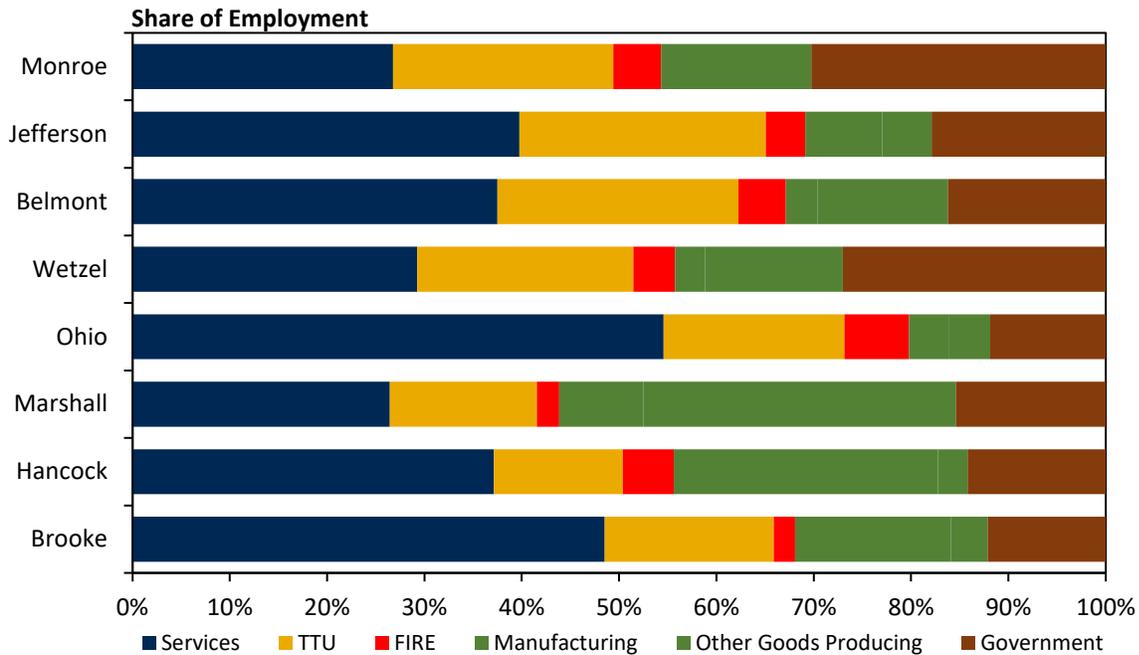
In contrast, Marshall County had the largest concentration of jobs in goods-producing sector (consisting of manufacturing, construction, and natural resources and mining) of more than 40 percent, compared to nearly the region’s average share of 18 percent.

**Figure 8: Industrial Composition of Employment (2018)**



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Figure 9: Employment Distribution by County (2019)**



Source: WorkForce West Virginia

Note: Services includes Professional and Business, Education and Health, Leisure and Hospitality, and Other Services industries. FIRE includes Finance, Information, and Real Estate industries. Other Goods Producing includes Natural Resources and Mining and Construction. TTU is Trade, Transportation and Utilities.

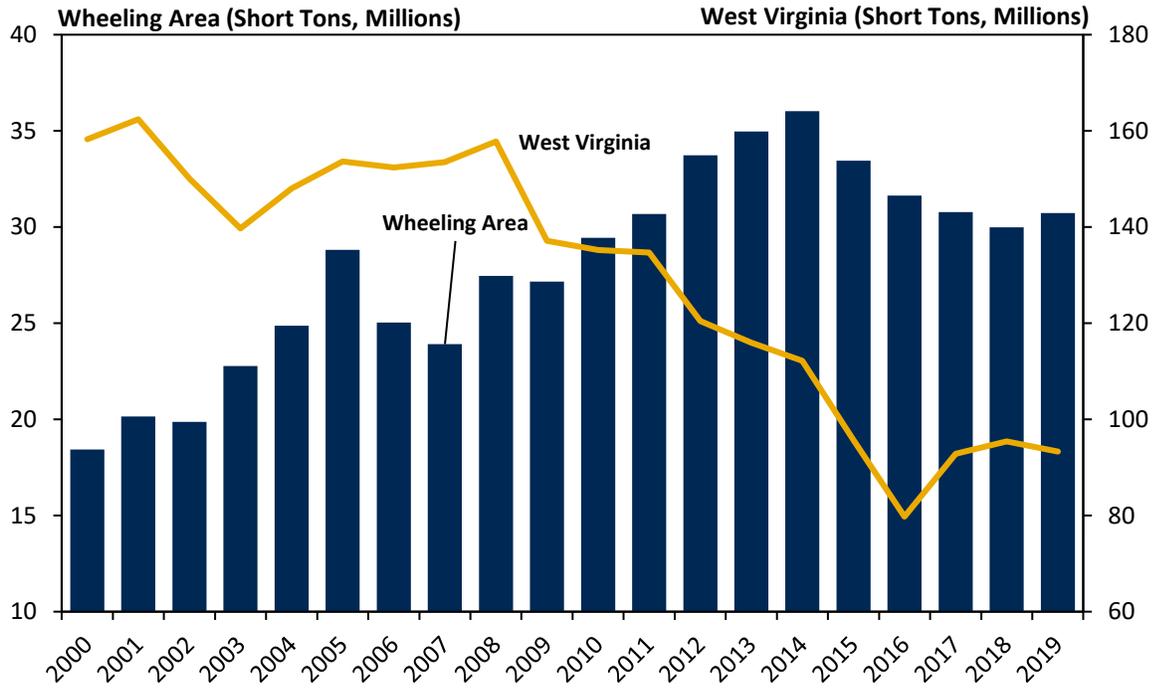
## 2.2 Energy Industries

**COAL:** The coal industry has long had a sizable presence in the Greater Wheeling region, even though as of 2019 only three counties in the region that still produce a sizable amount of coal, including Marshall, Ohio, and Monroe. The other two coal-producing counties, Jefferson and Belmont, had considerably dropped their coal production per year to zero or less than 500 short tons.

As shown in Figure 10, coal producers in the Wheeling region produced more than 18 million tons of coal in 2000, which grew to more than 36 million at its peak in 2014, nearly twice of production in 2000. In contrast, coal production in West Virginia fell from nearly 158 million tons in 2000 to less than 80 million at its low point in 2016, before recovering through 2018. Coal production in the Wheeling region in 2019 was at 30.7 million short tons. Production began declining in the later part of 2019. Data through the third quarter of 2020 (not included in the figure) shows that the COVID-19 pandemic only magnified the already declining world’s demand for coal, accelerating the decline in the coal production.

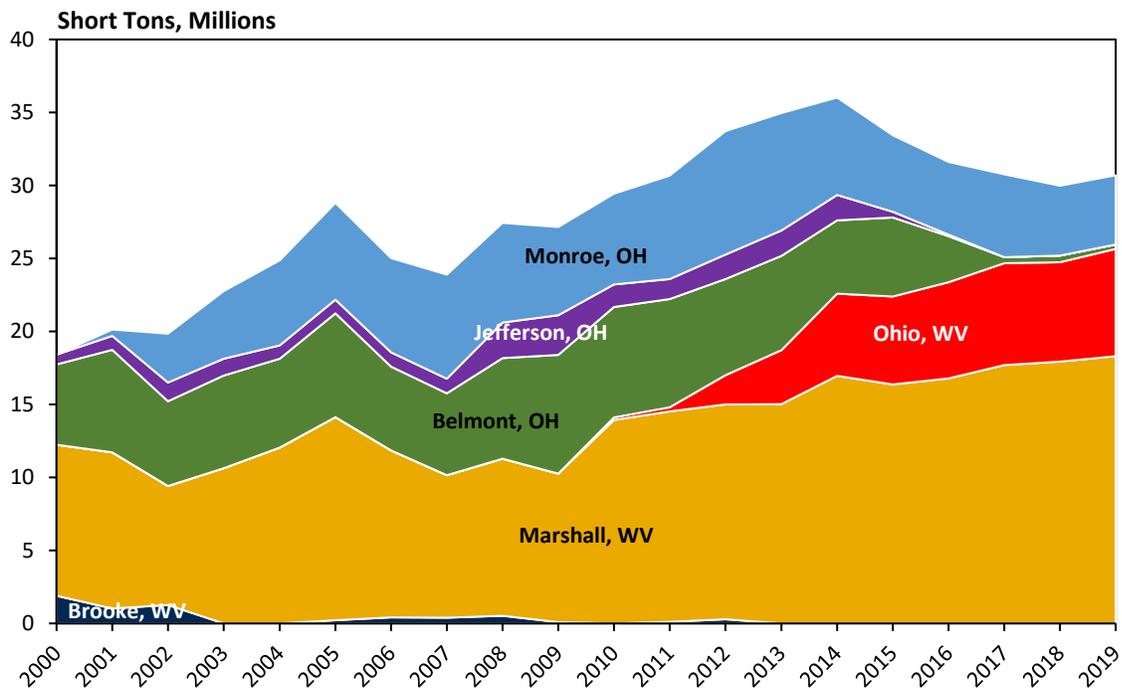
As shown in Figure 11, Marshall County has been the largest producer of coal in the Greater Wheeling region for much of the last two decades. Production in the county grew from about 10 million tons in 2000 to more than 18 million tons in 2019, a gain of nearly 74 percent. Ohio County produced no coal from 2000 through 2009, but has now grown to be a significant coal producing county with more than 7 million tons produced in 2019. Monroe's coal production peaked in 2012 at nearly 8.5 million, before gradually declining to around 4.7 million in 2019. Belmont County was a significant producer of coal in the region for most of this period, with production between 5 million and 10 million tons on an annual basis (see). However, in 2016, Murray Energy closed the Powhatan No. 6 Mine, which was the largest producer in the county and production fell to below half a million tons. Similarly, Jefferson County used to produce nearly 3 million coal at its peak in 2009, before declining and eventually stopped. The county has not produced any coal since 2018.

**Figure 10: Coal Production**



Source: US Energy Information Administration

**Figure 11: Coal Production by County**



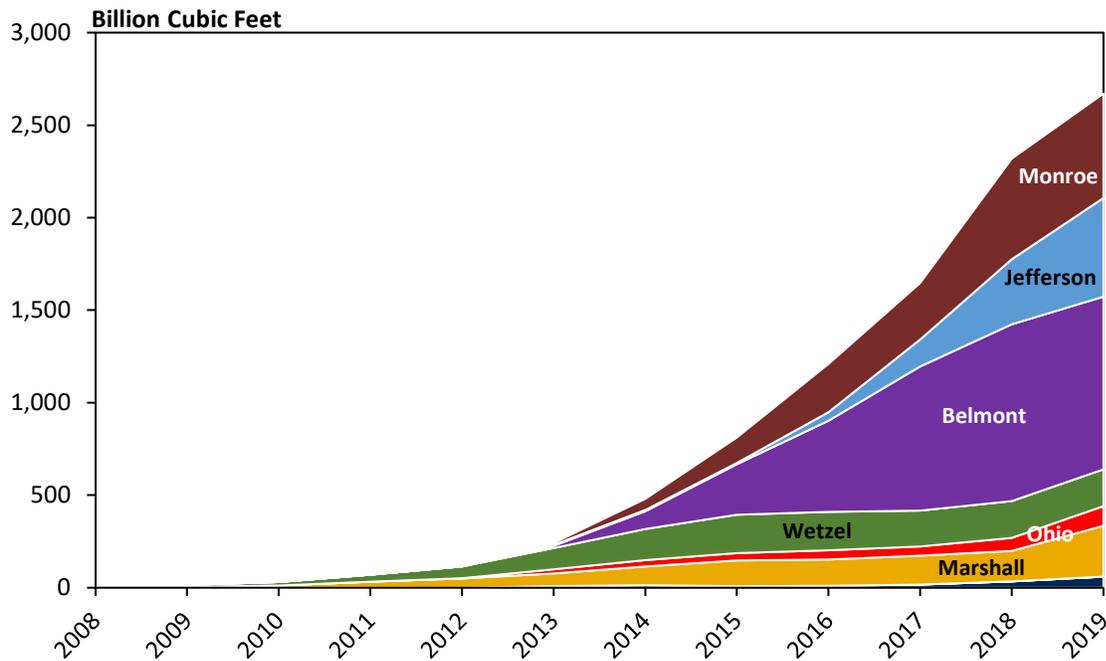
Source: US Energy Information Administration

**NATURAL GAS:** In contrast to the trend in coal production, seven of the eight counties in the Greater Wheeling region experienced a surge in the natural gas production, most notably starting in 2012, as shown in Figure 12. Hancock County is the only county in the region that produces natural gas of only around 200 thousand cubic feet in 2019. Natural gas production in the Greater Wheeling region increased from 118.5 billion cubic feet (Bcf) in 2012 to 2,672 Bcf in 2019, an increase of about 56 percent per year.

While Belmont County’s coal production has largely ceased, the county has become a major producer of natural gas since 2012 as production in the Utica shale region began to rise. As of 2019, the county produced nearly one trillion cubic feet of natural gas, accounting for nearly 35 percent of the natural gas produced in the Greater Wheeling region.

The next counties with the most significant production of natural gas include Monroe and Jefferson counties, each producing more than 500 billion cubic feet (Bcf) in 2019. While Marshall and Ohio do not produce the most significant production of natural gas, they have had significant gains in the last eight years. Marshall County’s production in 2019 was more than 275 Bcf, up from 12 Bcf in 2010, a gain of more than 40 percent per year on average. Production in Ohio County began to ramp up in 2012 and has risen by an average of nearly 70 percent per year since then. Total production in 2019 in Ohio County was about more than 106 Bcf. Lastly, while Wetzel County’s natural gas production has not increased as fast as the other counties in the region, it has reached nearly 200 Bcf in 2019.

**Figure 12: Natural Gas Production**

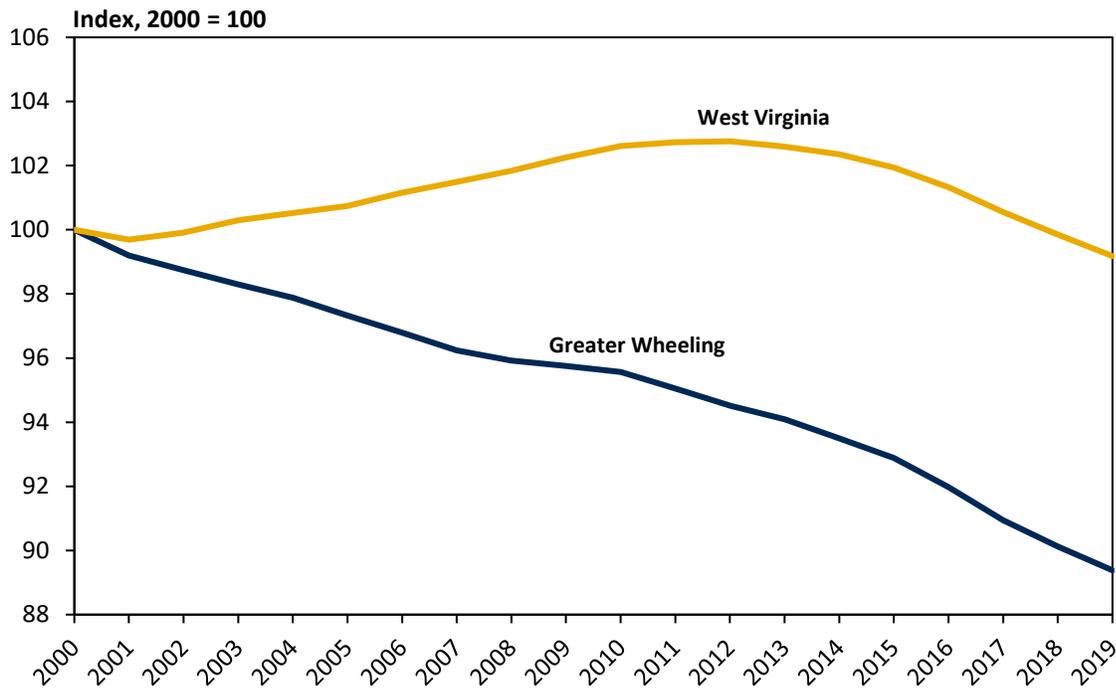


Source: WV Department of Environmental Protection. OH Department of Natural Resources.

## 2.3 Population and Demographics

**POPULATION:** Population in the Greater Wheeling region decreased at a faster pace than the state as a whole during the last 19 years. As shown in Figure 13, the Greater Wheeling’s population decreased 4.4 percent between 2000 and 2010 before falling an additional 6.2 percentage points over the next eight years. During the same period, the West Virginia population rose by nearly 3 percent by 2012, then began to fall, ending 2019 slightly lower than 2000. However, from 2000 through 2019, of the eight counties within the Greater Wheeling region, the five West Virginia counties saw their population declined at the rates from 14.5 percent to 12.8 percent, which are slightly faster than the three counties in Ohio that declined at the rates from 12.3 percent in Jefferson to only 4.5 percent in Belmont.

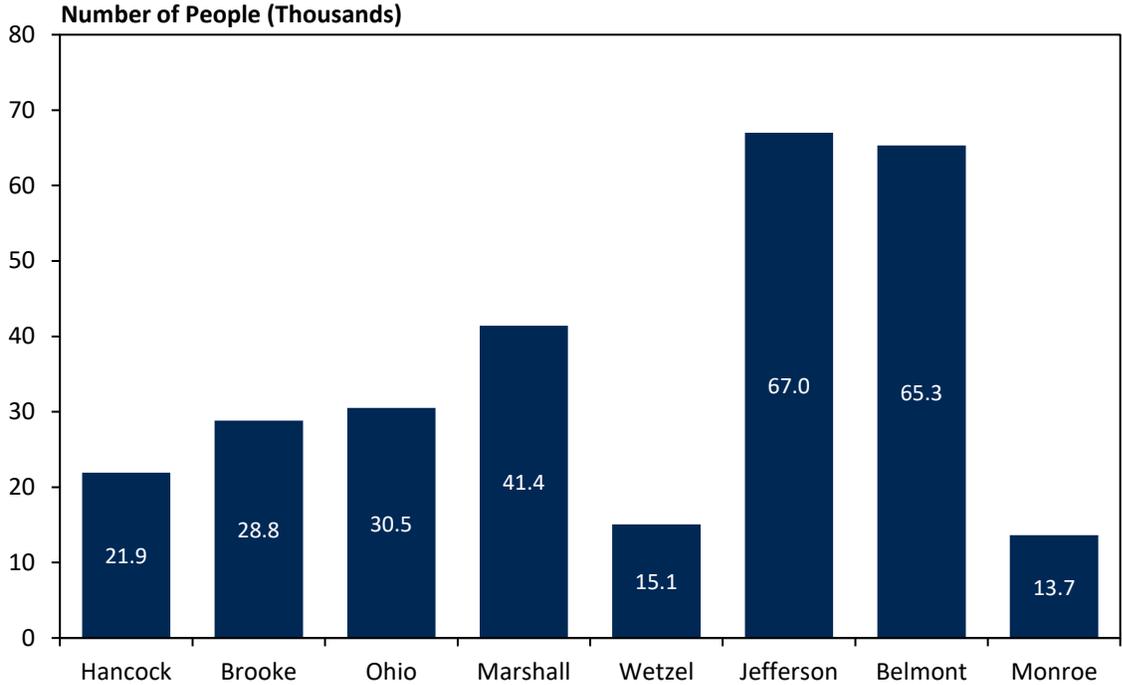
**Figure 13: Total Population Growth**



Source: 2000-2010 Intercensal and 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

The eight counties within the Greater Wheeling region vary considerably in total population (see Figure 14). Belmont and Jefferson counties in Ohio have the largest population in the region at more than 65 thousand residents. The other counties have from 15.1 thousand residents in Wetzel County to 41.4 thousand residents in Marshall County.

**Figure 14: Total Population by County (2019)**

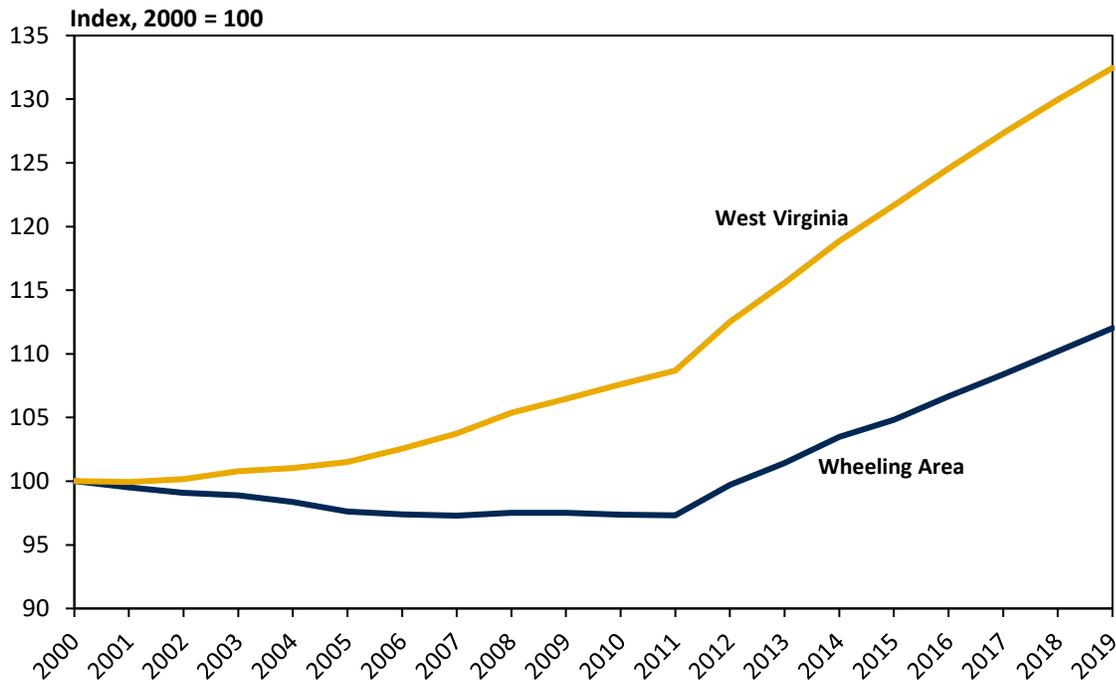


Source: 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

**POPULATION OVER AGE 65:** The Greater Wheeling population is aging at a slower rate than the state as a whole (see Figure 15). The number of residents who were age 65 and older grew more than 11 percent during the previous 19-year period, compared with a 32.5-percent growth rate for the state as a whole. Nonetheless, one particular county within the Greater Wheeling region, Monroe County, had the largest increase in its elderly population of 33.2 percent during the same period. The rest of the counties had its elderly population increased from less than 4 percent in Ohio County to 21.2 percent in Wetzel County.

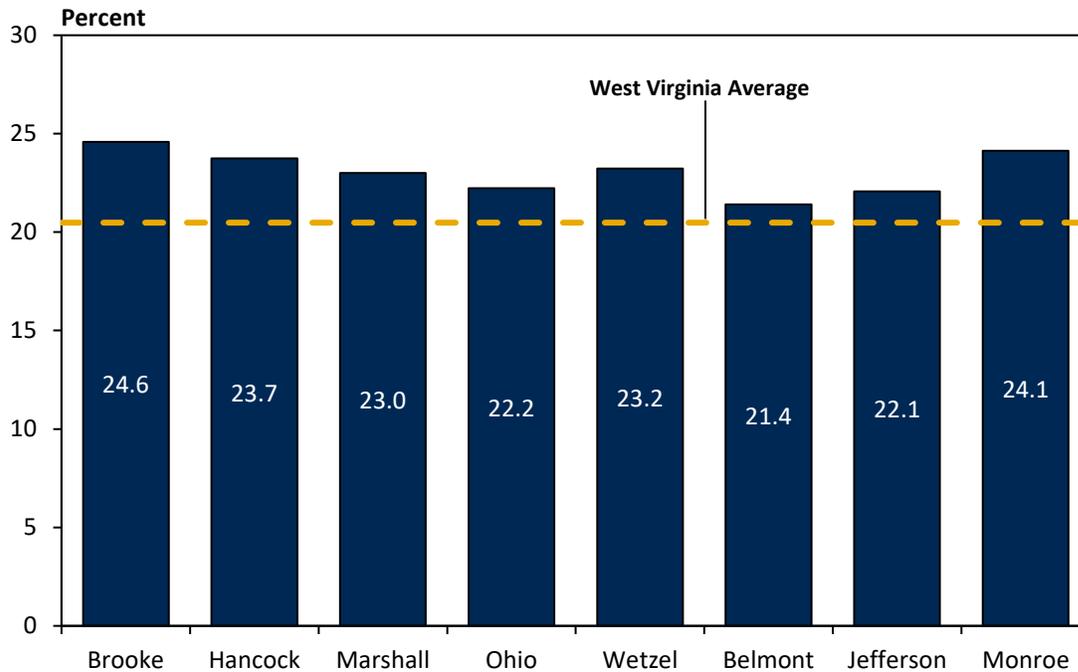
All of the counties in the Greater Wheeling region have relatively higher shares of population 65 years or older than the state of West Virginia’s average share of 20.5 percent (see Figure 16). Brooke and Monroe counties had the largest shares of 65-and-older population in 2019 of 24.6 percent and 24.1 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Belmont, Jefferson, and Ohio counties had relatively the smallest shares of 21.4 percent, 22.1 percent, and 22.2 percent, respectively.

**Figure 15: Population Growth Age 65 and Older**



Source: 2000-2010 Intercensal and 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau.

**Figure 16: Share of Population 65 Years and Older by County (2019)**



Source: 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

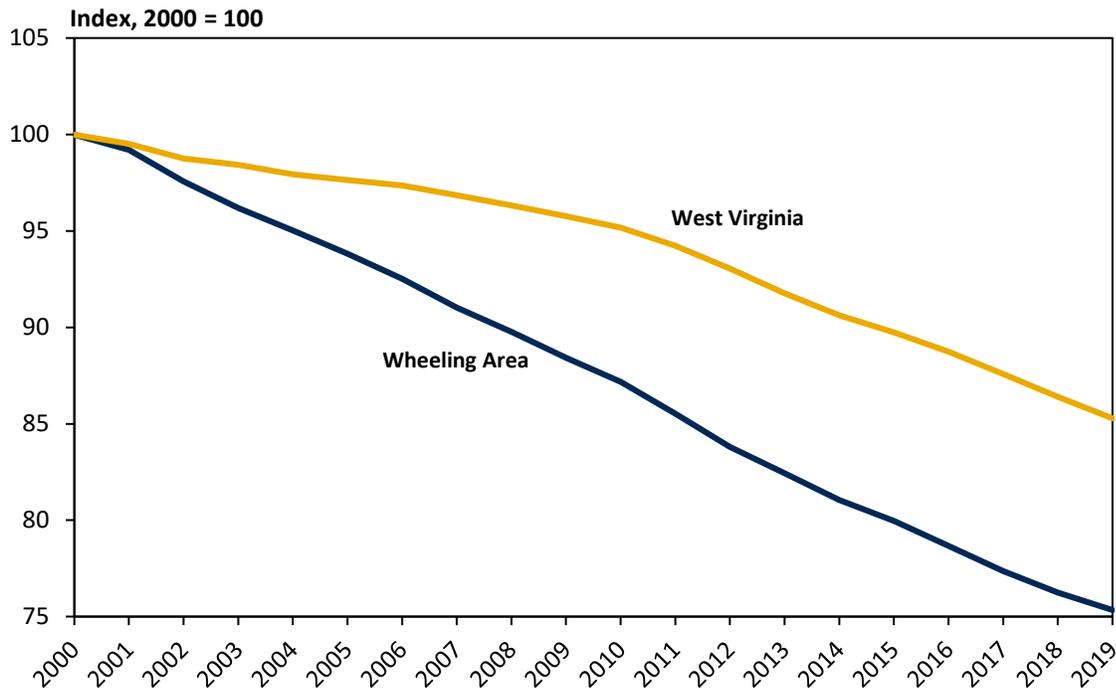
**PRIME WORKING AGE POPULATION:** While the region’s over-65 population was growing, prime working-age population (those between the ages of 25-54) fell by about 25 percentage points between 2000 and 2019 (Figure 17). This decrease followed a similar trend as West Virginia, but with a greater magnitude. The prime working-age population in the Greater Wheeling region declined at a similar rate to that of West Virginia since 2012, with the Greater Wheeling region experiencing a 8.5-percentage point decrease from 2012 to 2019, and West Virginia experiencing a nearly 7.8-percentage point decrease within the same period. West Virginia’s prime working-age population decreased less between 2000 and 2019, ending about 15 percentage points below 2000 level.

The decline in prime working-age population between 2000 and 2019 was uneven across the eight counties that make up the Greater Wheeling region. In general, the counties’ population in West Virginia declined faster than that in Ohio. The working-age population in the five West Virginia counties declined at the rates ranging from 25.1 percent in Ohio County to 29.3 percent in Brooke County, which was faster than the rates in Ohio, which ranged from nearly 17 percent in Belmont County to 26 percent in Jefferson County.

The eight counties within the Greater Wheeling region vary considerably in share of the working-age population in 2019 (Figure 18). All counties except Belmont County had a smaller share of prime-working-age population than the West Virginia’s average share 36.6 percent. Belmont County’s share was the highest at 37.0 percent, followed by Hancock and Marshall counties with shares of 35.1 percent and 35.8 percent, respectively. The other five counties within the region had the prime-working-age population share of around 34 percent.

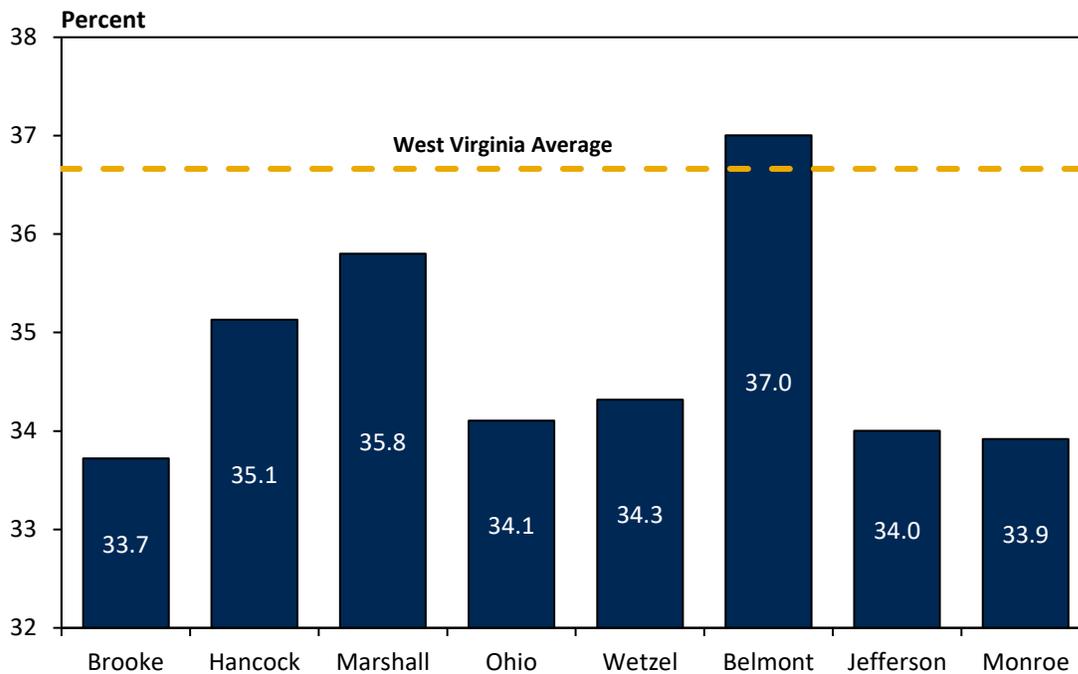
The increase in older population and the decline in the younger population have pushed the median age in the region well above the West Virginia’s median age, as shown in Figure 19. Ohio County had the lowest median age at 43.2 years, which was 0.3 years older than the state median of 42.9. The rest of the counties had a higher median age, ranging from 44.5 years in Belmont County to 47.2 years in Brooke County.

**Figure 17: Prime Working Age (25-54) Population Growth**



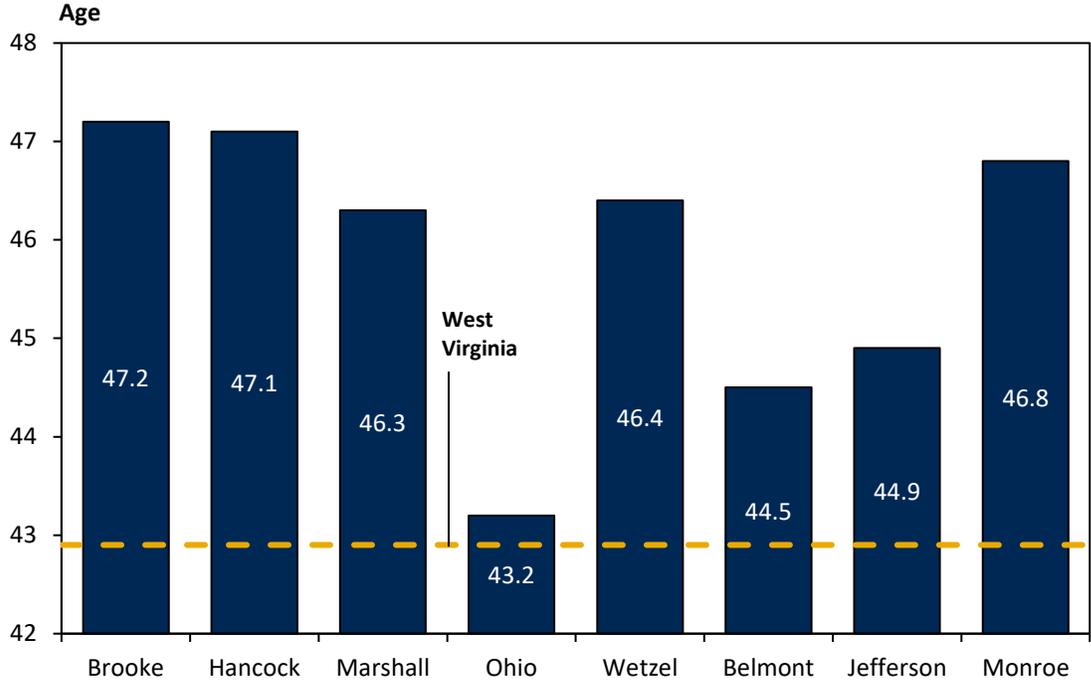
Source: 2000-2010 Intercensal and 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

**Figure 18: Prime Working Age (25-54) Share of Population by County (2019)**



Source: 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

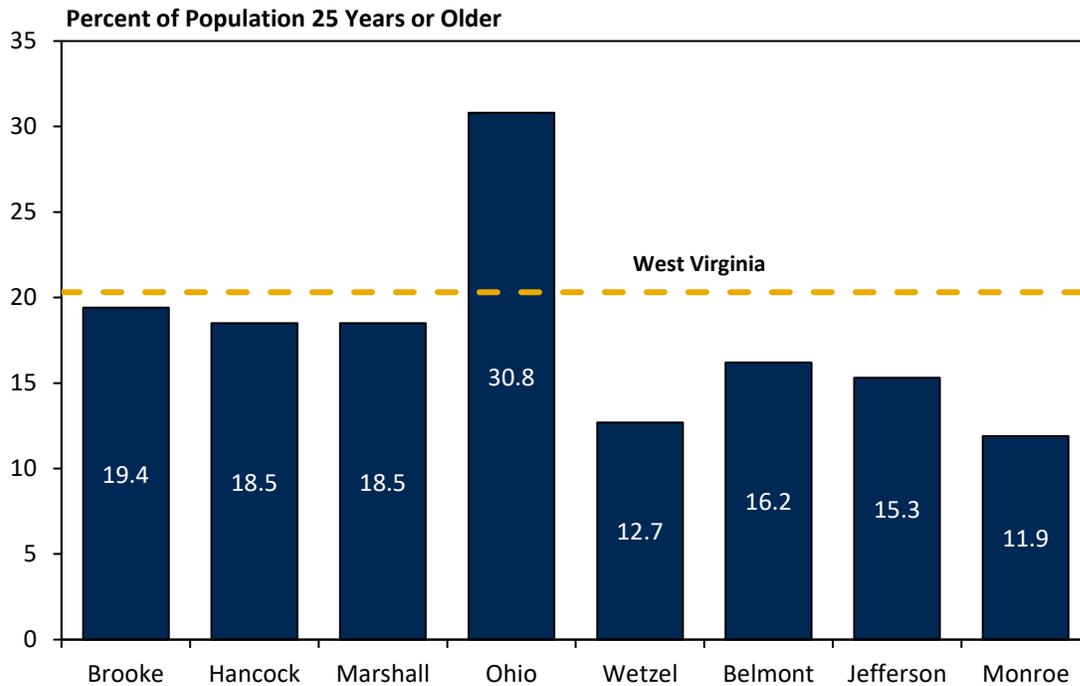
Figure 19: Median Age (2019)



Source: 2019 Population Estimates, US Census Bureau

**HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:** Higher educational attainment in 2018 in the Greater Wheeling region also varies considerably, as shown in Figure 20. The share of the region’s population with a bachelor’s degree or higher was approximately 18.4 percent, or about 2 percentage point below the West Virginia’s average of 20.3 percent. Ohio County, West Virginia was an exception. With a 30.8 percent share, it was the only county within the region whose share of population with at least a bachelor’s degree was higher than the state of West Virginia. The other three counties in West Virginia including Marshall, Hancock, and Brooke, had the shares ranging from 18.5 percent to 19.4 percent, which were higher than the shares in the three Ohio counties, which ranged from 11.9 percent in Monroe County to 15.2 percent in Belmont County.

**Figure 20: Share of Population with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (2018)**



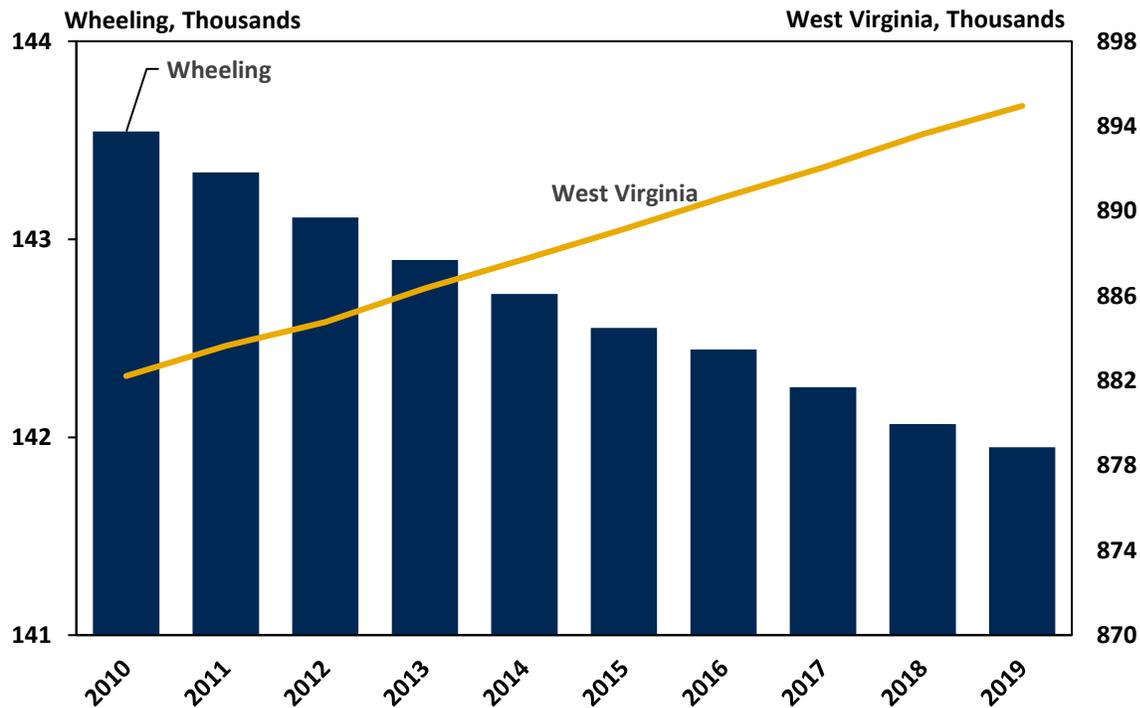
Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

## 2.4 Housing and Commuting

The Greater Wheeling region experienced a slow decline in housing stock over the period between 2010 and 2019, as shown in Figure 21. The number of housing units in the region fell by a net 1,600 units during this period, a decline of more than a tenth of a percent per year on average. In comparison, West Virginia as a whole had a gain of nearly 13 thousand housing units over this same period, a rise of nearly 0.2 percent per year on average. Jefferson County had the biggest decline, falling about 400 units, followed by Ohio County at around 300 units during the same period. Brooke, Hancock, and Marshall counties had a decline of about 200 units each.

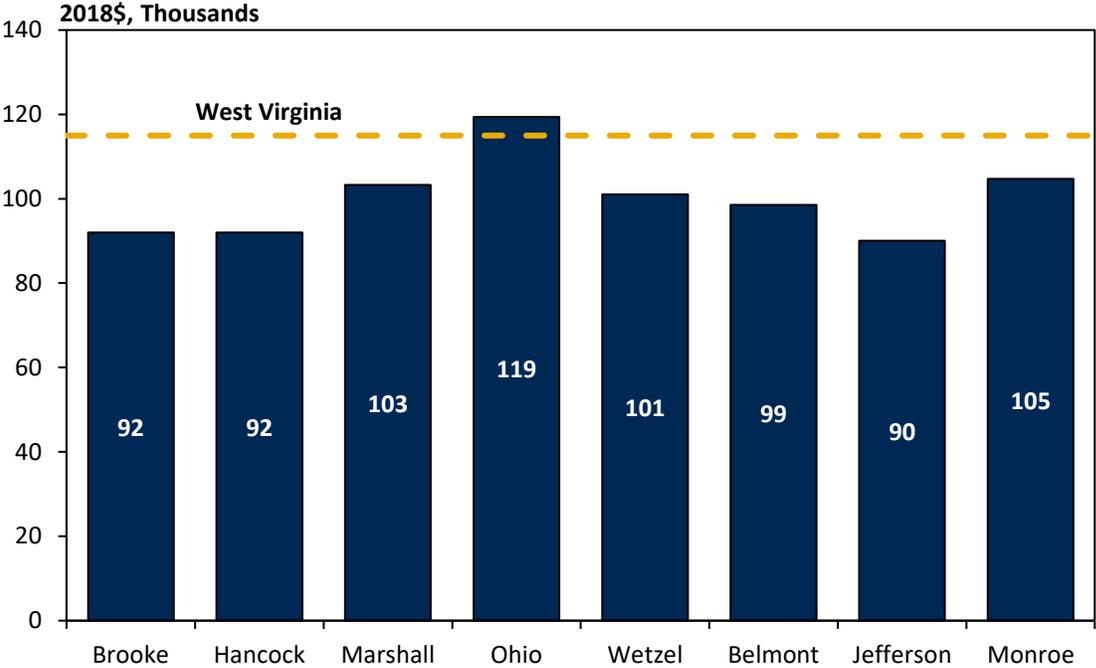
**HOUSING VALUE:** Ohio County had the highest median housing value in the Greater Wheeling region (see Figure 22) in 2018 at nearly \$120,000 per owner-occupied housing unit. This total was about \$5,000 above the state average of \$115,000. The other seven counties had median housing values below the West Virginia average, ranging from \$90,000 in Jefferson County, Ohio to \$104 thousand in Monroe County, Ohio.

**Figure 21: Total Housing Units**



Source: 2019 Population and Housing Unit Estimates, US Census Bureau

**Figure 22: Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units (2018)**



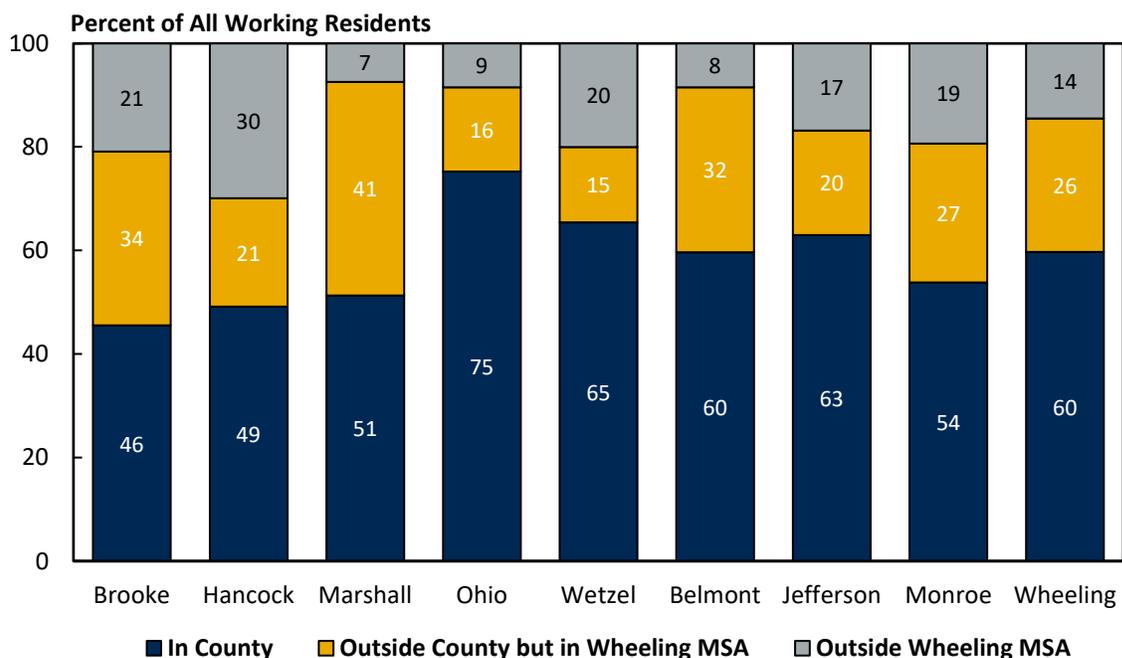
Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

**COMMUTING:** Commuting patterns indicate that the large majority of the Greater Wheeling’s working residents commute within the region to their jobs. As shown in Figure 23, about 86 percent of the residents stay within the Greater Wheeling region for their jobs, with about 60 percent working in the same county as their residence and 26 percent working outside the county but within the Wheeling region. The rest, about 14 percent, live in the Greater Wheeling region but commute outside it.

All counties, except Hancock, have the same commuting pattern in that the largest share of their residents work within the county of residence, and then the second largest share work outside the county but within the Greater Wheeling region, and the rest work outside the Greater Wheeling region. Ohio County residents are far more likely to work within the same county as their residence, with nearly 75 percent of workers living and working in the same county. This is not surprising, considering that the City of Wheeling, which is the central business district for the Greater Wheeling region, is located within Ohio County. Belmont, Jefferson, and Monroe counties, each has about 60 to 65 percent of its residents working within their own county of residence.

Brooke and Hancock counties residents are more likely than the other counties in the region to commute outside of county of residence for their jobs. More than 50 percent of workers living in the two counties commute to a different county for work, well above the region’s average of 40 percent. Moreover, about 30 percent of Hancock County’s working resident commute to outside of the Greater Wheeling region for work, significantly higher than the region’s average of 14 percent.

**Figure 23: Employee Place of Work**

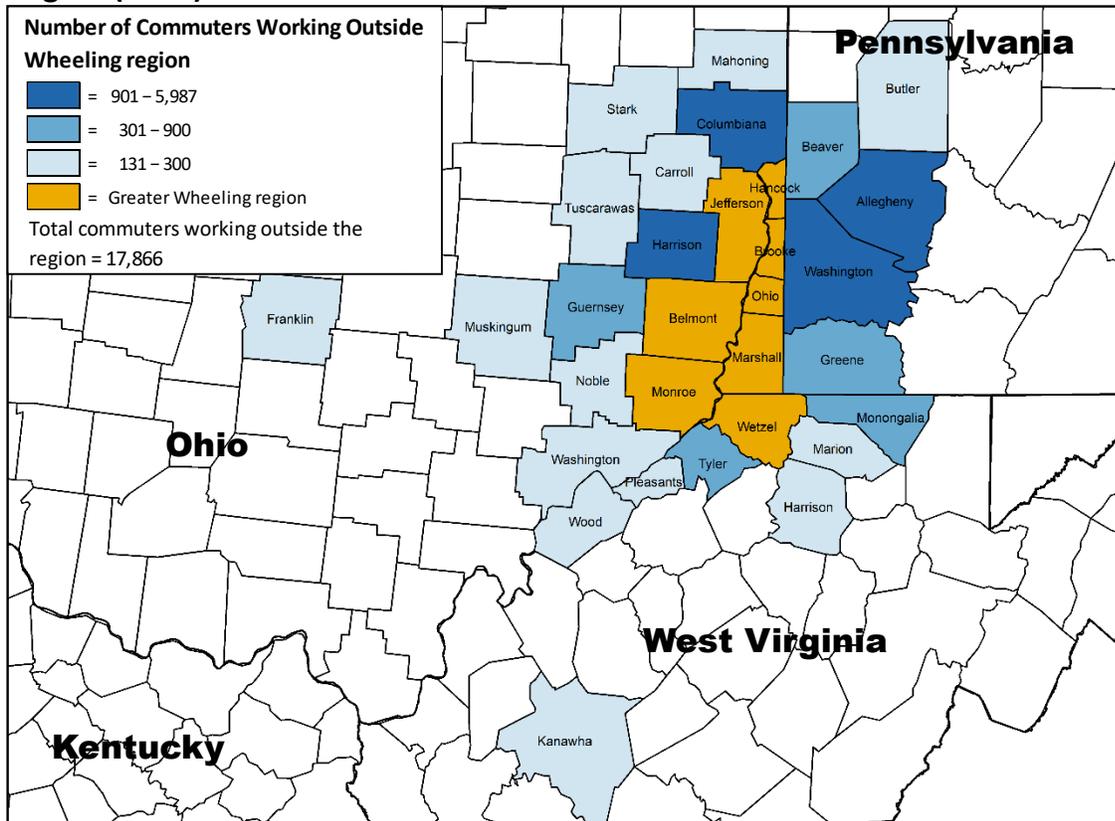


Source: 2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding.

Of more than 123,000 workers living in the Greater Wheeling region, nearly 18,000 or about 14 percent commute outside of the region for work. Figure 24 shows the commuting destinations for these workers. Nearly half of them (48.5 percent) work in the two neighboring counties in Pennsylvania. Nearly 6,000 workers or 33.5 percent work in Allegheny County and nearly 2,700 workers or 15.0 percent work in Washington County. The other workers commute to other surrounding counties including Columbia, Harrison, Guernsey counties in the state of Ohio, Beaver, and Greene counties in Pennsylvania, and Tyler, Monongalia, and Kanawha counties in West Virginia.

**Figure 24: Place of Work for Employees Commuting Outside the Greater Wheeling Region (2015)**



Source: 2015 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. Note: Figure only includes commuting flows of 130 or bigger.

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