

Should we change the Electoral College?

Lesson Creator: New Jersey Center for Civic Education, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ

Grade Level: Secondary

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Explain how the Electoral College works and why it was designed
- Explain why the Electoral College was included in the U.S. Constitution in 1787
- Identify the problems that have arisen with the Electoral College
- Take and defend a position on whether the Electoral College should be replaced by a national popular vote?

New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies:

- 6.1.8.CivicsPD.3.a: Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.
- 6.3.8.CivicsPD.2: Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate local, state, or national level.
- 6.1.12.CivicsPI.14.a: Draw from multiple perspectives to evaluate the effectiveness and fairness of the processes by which local, state, and national officials are elected.

Historical Background to the Electoral College

Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution establishes how the president is elected: *“Each state shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress”*. This is the Electoral College, the formal body which elects the President and Vice President of the United States. When voters go to the polls in a Presidential election, they actually are voting for the slate of electors vowing to cast their ballots for that ticket in the Electoral College. Each elector casts one electoral vote following the general election; there are a total of 538 electoral votes. The candidate that gets more than half (270) wins the election.

The delegates at the Philadelphia Convention in 1787 were representatives of their states, concerned about maintaining the authority of each state and not granting too much power to the national government in the system of federalism that they fashioned. They were especially distrustful of executive power. The newly-born nation had just fought a war against a tyrannical king and overreaching colonial governors. They wanted to make sure that the president would not become a despot. The delegates considered several methods of electing the President, including selection by Congress, by the governors of the states, by the state legislatures, by a special group of members of Congress chosen by lot and by direct popular election.

At the time of the Philadelphia convention in 1787, no country in the world directly elected its chief executive. Many at the Convention had serious concerns about having the president elected by popular election. They feared that the public would not be well informed enough to be able to select the best candidate. They also were afraid that a “democratic mob” might steer the country astray. And

there was fear that a populist president, appealing directly to the people, could command dangerous amounts of power. The delegates explicitly rejected a popular vote for president because they did not trust voters to make a wise choice.

Having the Congress elect the president had some precedent. For example, under New Jersey's 1776 Constitution, the two houses of the state legislature elected a governor for one year who served as president of the Council as well as chief executive, mixing the legislative and executive functions. However, many of the delegates to the 1787 Convention felt strongly that congress should not be involved in the selecting the president. They wanted to maintain separate legislative and executive functions in order to reduce the potential for abuse of authority.

Late in the convention, the matter was referred to the Committee of Eleven on Postponed Matters, which devised the Electoral College as a system for electing the president. The Electoral College was the compromise between the popular election of the president and congressional selection based on the idea of electoral intermediaries. These intermediaries would not be picked by Congress or elected by the people. Instead, the states would each appoint independent "electors" who would cast the actual ballots for the presidency. Electors were supposed to be wise men who would choose a president without the influence of a popular vote. This plan, which met with widespread approval by the delegates, was incorporated into the final document with only minor changes.

The Electoral College was designed to reconcile differing state and federal interests, provide a degree of popular participation in the election, give the less populous states some additional leverage in the process by providing "senatorial" electors, preserve the presidency as independent of Congress and generally insulate the election process from political manipulation. Small states worried that states such as Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia would dominate the presidency so they devised an institution where each state had Electoral College votes in proportion to the number of its senators (two per state which benefitted small states) and House members (based on population which benefitted large states). The Electoral College made sure that the large states did not dominate small ones in presidential elections, that power between Congress and state legislatures was balanced, and that there would be checks and balances in the constitutional system. The goal was to have a highly-regarded public servant, such as George Washington, emerge as president by a national majority or consensus.

Problems with the Electoral College

Problems with the Electoral College were evident almost immediately. In the election of 1800, there was a tie because the vote for president and vice-president had not been differentiated in the Constitution, only that the person would the most votes became president. Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same number of Electoral College votes and the choice was turned over to the House of Representatives to decide. On the 36th ballot, the House chose Jefferson as the new president. Before the next election, the congress has passed and the states had ratified the 12th Amendment to allow for separate ballots for determining the President and Vice President, as well as for the House of Representatives to choose the president by one vote per state if no candidate had a majority of electoral votes and for the Senate to choose the vice-president if no candidate had a majority of electoral votes.

The Constitution left the method of allocating the Electoral votes to each state. After George Washington's unanimous election in 1789, the political party that controlled the state legislature selected the electors for that state. The states experimented with different approaches, including allocating Electoral votes by congressional district ("district"), in proportion to the amount of votes each candidate received in a state ("proportional") and giving all the Electoral votes to the candidate who received the most votes in the state ("winner-takes-all"). By 1828, almost all of the states had settled on allocating all of their Electoral votes to the candidate who received the plurality of votes. This "winner-take-all" approach effectively stripped all influence from political minorities within states.

Five times the winner-take-all approach delivered the presidency to a candidate who did not win the popular vote: Andrew Jackson in 1824 (to John Quincy Adams); Samuel Tilden in 1876 (to Rutherford B. Hayes); Grover Cleveland in 1888 (to Benjamin Harrison); Al Gore in 2000 (to George W. Bush); Hillary Clinton in 2016 (to Donald Trump). Starting with the election of President Polk in 1844, the emergence of third and fourth-party candidates enabled plurality rather than majority candidates to win the presidency. Only 2/3 of the 48 presidential elections between 1828 and 2016 produced majority winners.

America was still recovering from the Civil War when Republican Rutherford Hayes ran against Democrat Samuel Tilden in the 1876 presidential election. The race was so close that the electoral votes of just four states would determine the presidency. Instead of allowing the House to decide the presidential winner, as prescribed by the 12th Amendment, Congress passed a new law creating a bipartisan Electoral Commission, with five members each from the House, Senate, and Supreme Court, to assign the contested electoral votes. Hayes became president when this Electoral Commission ultimately gave the votes of the four contested states to him. The decision would have far-reaching consequences because in return for securing the votes of the Southern states, Hayes agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, thereby paving the way for vigilante violence against African Americans and the denial of their civil rights.

In 1961, the 23rd Amendment was ratified, granting the District of Columbia three presidential electors (equal to the number of Senators and Representatives in Congress it would be entitled to if it were a state).

The 2000 presidential race between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore was so close that it ultimately rested on the fate of Florida's 25 electoral votes, which were challenged because of a confusing ballot. The Florida Supreme Court ordered manual recounts in counties that reported statistically significant numbers of under-votes, but the Bush campaign immediately filed a lawsuit and the U.S. Supreme Court paused manual recounts to hear oral arguments from candidates. In a 7-2 decision, the Supreme Court struck down the Florida Supreme Court's recount decision, ruling that a manual recount would violate the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause because different standards were being applied in the recount. Bush won Florida's Electoral College votes, and thus the presidency, even though Gore had won the popular vote by almost half a million votes.

Congressional resolutions to change to a district system, a proportional system or a direct popular vote have been put forward on a regular basis since 1816. But congress has never been able to

change the way we elect the U.S. president because of partisan politics, sectional differences, fear of "the masses", or reluctance to relinquish perceived advantages that small states had from two Senators or large states had from their large number of Electoral votes. Even during the Progressive Era and the New Deal periods of significant social and political reform, the presidential election was never high on the agenda of reformers.

One Man, One Vote

Only after 1824 did some states allow individual voters to participate in the elector selection process. Although voting in the United States has since been expanded to theoretically be universal, the value of each person's vote is not equal. This is due to greatly varying populations and the compromise that gave each state two senators.

At the time of the 1787 Philadelphia Convention, states' populations varied, but not by nearly as much as they do today. As a result, states with smaller populations have a disproportionately bigger voice in the nation's Congress, as well as in the Electoral College. Political scientist George Edwards III of Texas A&M University points out that California hosts about 68 times more people than Wyoming, yet they have the same number of votes in the Senate. Those living in low-population states get a disproportionately bigger say in congress and in presidential elections. For example, Wyoming has three electoral votes and a population of 586,107, while California has 55 electoral votes and 39,144,818 residents. Distributing the electoral vote evenly among each state's residents suggests that individual votes from Wyoming carry 3.6 times more influence, or weight, than those from California.

Harvard Law School professor Lawrence Lessig questions whether the Electoral College violates the idea of "one person, one vote", which has become one of the most important principles governing our democracy. "One person, one vote" should mean that votes should be equal in their weight or influence.

Popular Opinion

For many years, a majority of Americans have opposed the Electoral College. For example, in 1967, 58 percent favored abolishing it. This grew to 75 percent in a 1981 poll. In Gallup Polls in 2004 and 2011, public support for a constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College hovered around 60%. Weeks after the 2016 election, 47% of Americans said they wanted to keep the Electoral College, while 49% said they wanted to amend the Constitution to allow for a popular vote for president. POLITICO and Morning Consult conducted a poll in March 2019 that found that 50 percent of respondents wanted a direct popular vote, 34 percent did not, and 16 percent did not demonstrate a preference. Two months later, NBC News and the *Wall Street Journal* reported polling that 53 percent of Americans wanted a direct popular vote, while 43 percent wanted to keep the status quo.

Americans, by and large, still want to do away with the Electoral College, however, more recent polling has highlighted a growing partisan divide with Republicans favoring the Electoral College and Democrats opposing it. The reason for this shift in opinion is clear: In the aftermath of the 2016 election, the percentage of Republicans wanting to replace the Electoral College with the popular vote has fallen significantly. In a Gallup Poll conducted in September 2020 with a random sample of 1,019 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (70% cellphone and 30% landline,

number selected using random-digit dial methods), three in five (61%) favored amending the U.S. Constitution to replace the Electoral College with a popular vote system, a six-percentage point increase since April 2019. However, the preference for electing the president based on who receives the most votes nationwide was supported by 89% of Democrats and 68% of independents but only 23% of Republicans. Seventy-seven percent of Republicans supported keeping the current system in which the candidate with the most votes in the Electoral College wins the election. (See <https://news.gallup.com/poll/320744/americans-support-abolishing-electoral-college.aspx>)

Pros and Cons of the Electoral College

For maintaining the Electoral College:

1. The Founding Fathers enshrined the Electoral College in the US Constitution because they thought it was the best method to choose the president. Using electors instead of the popular vote was intended to safeguard against uninformed or uneducated voters by putting the final decision in the hands of electors most likely to possess the information necessary to make the best decision; to prevent states with larger populations from having undue influence; and to compromise between electing the president by popular vote and letting Congress choose the president. The Founders wanted to balance the will of the populace against the risk of “tyranny of the majority,” in which the voices of the masses can drown out minority interests.
2. The Electoral College ensures that all parts of the country are involved in selecting the President of the United States. If the election depended solely on the popular vote, then candidates could limit campaigning to heavily-populated areas or specific regions. Without the Electoral College, groups such as Iowa farmers and Ohio factory workers would be ignored in favor of metropolitan areas with higher population densities, leaving rural areas and small towns marginalized.
3. The Electoral College guarantees certainty to the outcome of the presidential election, avoiding the possibility of a need for a run-off. If the election were based on popular vote, it would be possible for a candidate to receive the highest number of popular votes without actually obtaining a majority. This happened with President Nixon in 1968 and President Clinton in 1992, when both men won the most electoral votes while receiving just 43% of the popular vote due to third party candidates. The existence of the Electoral College precluded calls for recounts or demands for run-off elections.
4. The electoral process can also create a larger mandate to give the president more credibility. For example, President Obama received 51.3% of the popular vote in 2012 but 61.7% of the electoral votes. In 227 years, the winner of the popular vote has lost the electoral vote only five times.

For abolishing the Electoral College:

1. The reasons the Founding Fathers created the Electoral College are no longer relevant. Modern technology and political parties enable voters to get necessary information to make informed decisions in a way that could not have been foreseen in 1787. As a result of Constitutional amendments, women and former slaves were given the right to vote, and Senators, once appointed by state legislatures, are now elected directly by popular vote. The vice presidency was once

awarded to the runner up in electoral votes, but the procedure was changed over time to reflect the reality of elections. Just as several voting laws that limited direct democracy in the Constitution have been modified or discarded throughout history, so should the Electoral College.

2. The Electoral College gives too much power to "swing states" and allows the presidential election to be decided by a handful of states. The two main political parties can count on winning the electoral votes in certain states, such as California for the Democratic Party and Indiana for the Republican Party, without worrying about the actual popular vote totals. Because of the Electoral College, presidential candidates only need to pay attention to a limited number of states that can swing one way or the other. A Nov. 6, 2016 episode of *PBS NewsHour* revealed that "Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have made more than 90% of their campaign stops in just 11 so-called battleground states. Of those visits, nearly two-thirds took place in the four battlegrounds with the most electoral votes — Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and North Carolina."
3. The Electoral College ignores the will of the people. There are over 300 million people in the United States, but just 538 people decide who will be president. In 2016, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by more than 2.87 million votes, yet still lost the election on electoral votes. The U.S. is the only democracy in the world where a presidential candidate can get the most popular votes and still lose the election. If the president were elected by popular vote, every voter's ballot would be given equal weight, or influence, over the outcome and we will have majority rule. Why should "one person, one vote" be required for state legislative districts (See *Baker v. Carr*), but not in presidential elections?
4. Having a president who loses the popular vote undermines electoral legitimacy. Putting an election into the House of Representatives where each state delegation has one vote increases the odds of insider dealings and corrupt decisions. Allegations of balloting irregularities that require an Electoral Commission to decide the votes of contested states do not make the general public feel very confident about the integrity of the process. And faithless electors could render the popular vote moot in particular states.
5. At a time of high income inequality and substantial geographical disparities across states, there is a risk that the Electoral College will systematically over-represent the views of relatively small numbers of people due to the structure of the Electoral College. Most of the country's economic activity is on the East Coast, West Coast, and a few metropolitan areas in between (15 percent of American counties generate 64 percent of America's gross national product). The prosperous parts of America include about 15 states having 30 senators while the less prosperous areas encapsulate 35 states having 70 senators. (See Brookings [Metropolitan Policy Program study](#)). The 35 states with smaller economic activity have disproportionate power to choose presidents and dictate public policy.

Is a Constitutional Amendment Possible?

A constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College would require significant consensus—first a two-third vote from both the House and Senate, and then approval from at least three-quarters of the states (38 out of 50 states). But Congress has nearly reached this threshold in the past. The House voted to amend the Constitution to eliminate the Electoral College in 1934 but the proposal lost in the Senate

by two votes. In 1969, Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey and Republican candidate Richard Nixon both endorsed eliminating the Electoral College. The House voted overwhelmingly in favor but the proposal died in the Senate. In 1979, another Senate vote to establish a direct popular vote failed, this time by just three votes. In total, over the last two centuries, there have been over 700 proposals to either eradicate or seriously modify the Electoral College.

Currently, more than a third of the states benefit from the Electoral College and would probably not want to change it. However, populations shift and this is reflected in the changing number of members allocated to each state in the House of Representatives, which then changes the number of presidential electors from the states.

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

Some argue that the problem with the Electoral College is the “winner take all” laws that have been enacted by state legislatures in 48 states. These laws award all of a state’s electoral votes to the candidate receiving the most popular votes in each state. The U.S. Constitution created the Electoral College but did not spell out how the votes should be awarded to presidential candidates. This vagueness has allowed Maine and Nebraska to reject “winner-take-all” at the state level and instead allocate votes at the congressional district level. However, the Constitution’s lack of specificity also may present the opportunity for states to allocate their Electoral College votes through some other means.

An alternative to abolishing the Electoral College is the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC), an agreement among a group of U.S. states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate wins the overall popular vote in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, even if that candidate loses the popular vote within their state. The NPVIC would become effective only if enough states ratify it to reach an electoral majority of 270 votes. The compact is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected president. As of July 2020, it has been adopted by fifteen states and the District of Columbia (all leaning Democratic), although it has been suspended in Colorado. Including Colorado, these states have 196 electoral votes, which is 36% of the Electoral College and 73% of the 270 votes needed to give the compact legal force. It would require an additional 74 electoral votes to take effect.

It also faces several challenges. First, it is unclear how voters would respond if their state electors collectively voted against the popular vote of their state. Second, there are no binding legal repercussions if a state elector decided to defect from the national popular vote. Third, the NPVIC is almost certain to face constitutional challenges should it gain enough electoral votes to go into effect. Proponents argue that “winner-take-all” statutes may be repealed in the same way they were enacted—namely, through each state’s process for enacting and repealing state laws. Therefore, a federal constitutional amendment is not necessary to change the state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes. However, others believe that the compact will require congressional consent under the Constitution’s Compact Clause (Art. I, Sec. 10, para. 3: *“No state shall, without the Consent of Congress...enter into any Agreement or Compact with another state...”*) or that the presidential election process cannot be altered except by a constitutional amendment.

In 1970, Senator Howard Baker, Republican from Tennessee, stressed, “The paramount issue is the fundamental right of every citizen to cast a vote that has no more weight nor no less weight than that of any other citizen.”

Critical Thinking Activity

1. Compare Handout One: The Electoral College Map with the Handout Two: The Population of U.S. States and Territories and draw conclusions about the fairness of the Electoral College.
2. Divide your class in half. Have half of your class research and prepare arguments for maintaining the Electoral College. Have the other half of your class research and prepare arguments for abolishing or modifying the Electoral College. Have students make oral arguments in defense of the Electoral College or for the abolition of the Electoral College.
3. Have a class discussion identifying the strongest and weakest arguments for keeping the Electoral College, abolishing it and instituting a direct popular vote, and other voting reforms, such as rank choice voting, voter ID laws, and other reforms that might make our voting system more democratic. Also consider which system might be better for New Jersey.
4. Have each student write a short essay taking a position about the Electoral College and making a persuasive argument about its continuation or need for reform.

Background Resources

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed68.asp

<https://history.house.gov/Institution/Electoral-College/Electoral-College/>

<https://www.history.com/news/electoral-college-founding-fathers-constitutional-convention>

<https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/electoral-college>

<https://www.procon.org/headlines/the-electoral-college-top-3-pros-and-cons/>

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/198917/americans-support-electoral-college-rises-sharply.aspx>

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/320744/americans-support-abolishing-electoral-college.aspx>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Popular_Vote_Interstate_Compact#:~:text=The%20National%20Popular%20Vote%20Interstate,and%20the%20District%20of%20Columbia.

<https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/its-time-to-abolish-the-electoral-college/>

<https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/publications/youraba/2019/october-2019/q--the-electoral-college--is-it-open-for-interpretation-by-the-c/>

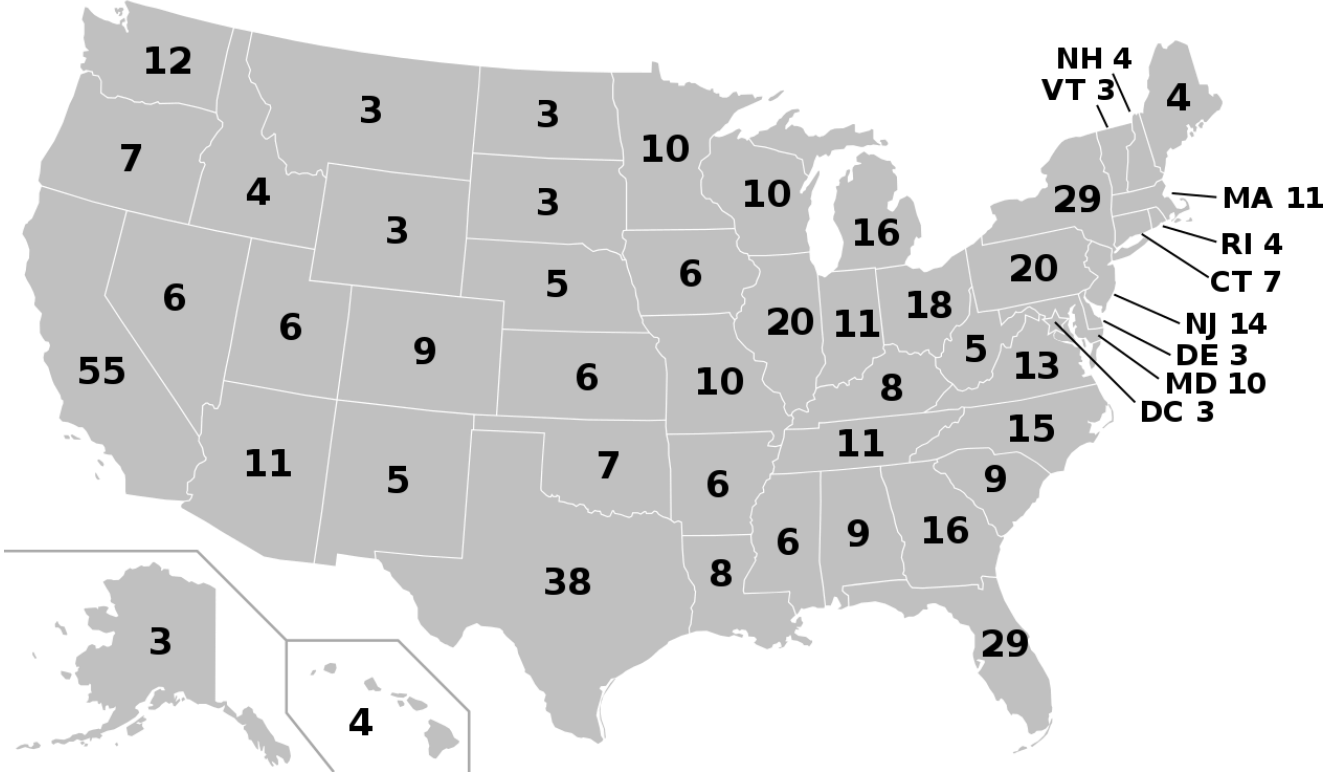
<https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/july-august-2020/can-anything-dislodge-the-electoral-college/>

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2000/00-949>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/questioning-the-electoral-college-and-one-person-one-vote/2016/11/28/feb5b586-b355-11e6-bc2d-19b3d759cfe7_story.html































<https://theconversation.com/whose-votes-count-the-least-in-the-electoral-college-74280>






















Handout One: Number of Votes by State in the Electoral College (2020)



By Original: Cg-realmsDerivative work: Ali Zifan - USCB, Public Domain,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25123395>

Handout Two: State and Territory Populations

| Rank in 2020 | Rank in 2010 | State | Census Population April 1, 2020 | Census population, April 1, 2010 | Percent change, 2010–2020 | Est. percent of total U.S. population, 2020 | # Members House of Representatives | Pop. per electoral vote 2020 |
|--------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |  California | 39,538,223 | 37,253,956 | 6.1% | 11.80% | 52 | 715,783 |
| 2 | 2 |  Texas | 29,145,505 | 25,145,561 | 15.9% | 8.70% | 38 | 698,488 |
| 3 | 4 |  Florida | 21,477,737 | 18,801,310 | 14.6% | 6.43% | 28 | 749,425 |
| 4 | 3 |  New York | 20,201,249 | 19,378,102 | 4.2% | 6.03% | 26 | 666,785 |
| 5 | 6 |  Pennsylvania | 13,002,700 | 12,702,379 | 2.4% | 3.88% | 17 | 639,163 |
| 6 | 5 |  Illinois | 12,812,508 | 12,830,632 | -0.1% | 3.82% | 17 | 629,377 |
| 7 | 7 |  Ohio | 11,799,448 | 11,536,504 | 2.3% | 3.52% | 15 | 649,623 |
| 8 | 9 |  Georgia | 10,711,908 | 9,687,653 | 10.6% | 3.20% | 14 | 669,376 |
| 9 | 10 |  North Carolina | 10,439,388 | 9,535,483 | 9.5% | 3.12% | 14 | 706,722 |
| 10 | 8 |  Michigan | 10,077,331 | 9,883,640 | 2.0% | 3.01% | 13 | 622,910 |
| 11 | 11 |  New Jersey | 9,288,994 | 8,791,894 | 5.7% | 2.77% | 12 | 634,455 |
| 12 | 12 |  Virginia | 8,631,393 | 8,001,024 | 7.9% | 2.58% | 11 | 660,813 |
| 13 | 13 |  Washington | 7,705,281 | 6,724,540 | 14.6% | 2.30% | 10 | 641,134 |
| 14 | 16 |  Arizona | 7,151,502 | 6,392,017 | 11.9% | 2.13% | 9 | 674,673 |
| 15 | 14 |  Massachusetts | 7,029,917 | 6,547,629 | 7.4% | 2.10% | 9 | 626,689 |
| 16 | 17 |  Tennessee | 6,910,840 | 6,346,105 | 8.9% | 2.06% | 9 | 626,076 |
| 17 | 15 |  Indiana | 6,785,528 | 6,483,802 | 4.7% | 2.02% | 9 | 614,087 |
| 19 | 18 |  Missouri | 6,154,913 | 5,988,927 | 2.8% | 1.84% | 8 | 605,580 |
| 18 | 19 |  Maryland | 6,177,224 | 5,773,552 | 7.0% | 1.84% | 8 | 615,155 |
| 20 | 20 |  Wisconsin | 5,893,718 | 5,686,986 | 3.6% | 1.84% | 8 | 583,266 |
| 21 | 22 |  Colorado | 5,773,714 | 5,029,196 | 14.8% | 1.72% | 8 | 645,302 |
| 22 | 21 |  Minnesota | 5,706,494 | 5,303,925 | 7.6% | 1.70% | 8 | 565,734s |
| 23 | 24 |  South Carolina | 5,148,714 | 4,625,364 | 11.3% | 1.54% | | |
| 24 | 23 |  Alabama | 4,903,185 | 4,779,736 | 2.6% | 1.48% | | |
| 25 | 25 |  Louisiana | 4,648,794 | 4,533,372 | 2.5% | 1.41% | | |
| 26 | 26 |  Kentucky | 4,467,673 | 4,339,367 | 3.0% | 1.35% | | |
| 27 | 27 |  Oregon | 4,217,737 | 3,831,074 | 10.1% | 1.27% | | |
| 28 | 28 |  Oklahoma | 3,956,971 | 3,751,351 | 5.5% | 1.19% | | |
| 29 | 30 |  Connecticut | 3,565,287 | 3,574,097 | -0.2% | 1.08% | | |
| 30 | 35 |  Utah | 3,205,958 | 2,763,885 | 16.0% | 0.96% | | |

| Rank in 2020 | Rank in 2010 | State | Census Population April 1, 2020 | Census population, April 1, 2010 | Percent change, 2010–2020 | Est. percent of total U.S. population, 2020 | # Members House of Representatives | Pop. per electoral vote 2020 |
|--------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 31 | 29 |  Puerto Rico | 3,193,694 | 3,725,789 | -14.3% | 0.97% | | |
| 32 | 31 |  Iowa | 3,155,070 | 3,046,355 | 3.6% | 0.95% | | |
| 33 | 36 |  Nevada | 3,080,156 | 2,700,551 | 14.1% | 0.92% | | |
| 34 | 33 |  Arkansas | 3,017,825 | 2,915,918 | 3.5% | 0.91% | | |
| 35 | 32 | Mississippi | 2,976,149 | 2,967,297 | 0.3% | 0.90% | | |
| 36 | 34 |  Kansas | 2,913,314 | 2,853,118 | 2.1% | 0.88% | | |
| 37 | 37 |  New Mexico | 2,096,829 | 2,059,179 | 1.8% | 0.63% | | |
| 38 | 39 |  Nebraska | 1,934,408 | 1,826,341 | 5.9% | 0.58% | | |
| 39 | 40 |  Idaho | 1,787,065 | 1,567,582 | 14.0% | 0.53% | | |
| 40 | 38 |  West Virginia | 1,792,147 | 1,852,994 | -3.3% | 0.55% | | |
| 41 | 41 |  Hawaii | 1,415,872 | 1,360,301 | 4.1% | 0.43% | | |
| 42 | 43 |  New Hampshire | 1,359,711 | 1,316,470 | 3.3% | 0.41% | | |
| 43 | 42 |  Maine | 1,344,212 | 1,328,361 | 1.2% | 0.40% | | |
| 44 | 45 |  Montana | 1,068,778 | 989,415 | 8.0% | 0.32% | | |
| 45 | 44 |  Rhode Island | 1,059,361 | 1,052,567 | 0.6% | 0.32% | | |
| 46 | 46 |  Delaware | 973,764 | 897,934 | 8.4% | 0.29% | | |
| 47 | 47 |  South Dakota | 884,659 | 814,180 | 8.7% | 0.27% | | |
| 48 | 49 |  North Dakota | 762,062 | 672,591 | 13.3% | 0.23% | | |
| 49 | 48 |  Alaska | 731,545 | 710,231 | 3.0% | 0.22% | | |
| 50 | 51 |  District of Columbia | 705,749 | 601,723 | 17.3% | 0.21% | | |
| 51 | 50 |  Vermont | 623,989 | 625,741 | -0.3% | 0.19% | | |
| 52 | 52 |  Wyoming | 578,759 | 563,626 | 2.7% | 0.17% | | |

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_by_population

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_and_territories_by_population

