
OPPORTUNITY INDEX

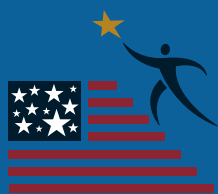
Summary of
findings for
states & counties

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**OPPORTUNITY
NATION**

THE SHARED PLAN TO RESTORE OPPORTUNITY



MEASURE OF AMERICA
of the Social Science Research Council

At the core of America is a shared belief that no matter how humble your origins, with hard work and perseverance, you can improve your prospects in life and give your children a shot at a secure and productive future.

But our American Dream is at risk. Too often it's your zip code that predetermines your destiny.

Commonly used measures to gauge economic well being include gross domestic product and unemployment rates. But these do not provide residents, community leaders or elected officials the complete picture they need to understand the barriers to opportunity where they live – and take steps to overcome these obstacles.

- Do jobs pay family-sustaining wages?
- Are students graduating from high school on time?
- Do I have access to healthy food?
- Is my community safe?

The Opportunity Index measures access to opportunity in communities across the country. From preschool enrollment to income inequality, from volunteerism rates to access to healthy food, expanding opportunity depends on the intersection of multiple economic, educational and civic factors.

We can't pick our ethnicity, the family we are born into, or our IQ. But if you work hard and play by the rules, your zip code should not condemn you to an inescapable economic fate. In a free society, some inequality is unavoidable. But inequality without the chance for mobility is economically inefficient and unjust.

Background:

The Opportunity Index is an annual composite measure of key economic, educational and civic factors that expand or restrict access to upward mobility. Together they provide a snapshot of what opportunity looks like at the state and county levels that can help communities and leaders identify concrete solutions to lagging conditions. The Opportunity Index launched in September 2011 and is updated each fall. This report offers updated calculations for all 50 states and Washington D.C. (which is counted as the 51st state in the Index) and more than 2,600 counties, which contain over 99% of the U.S. population for 2014, as well as a discussion of the changes in opportunity over the four-year period 2011-2014.

What is opportunity and how is it being measured?

Opportunity can be defined in many ways; overall, the term encompasses a range of circumstances that open doors to economic mobility and human progress. Opportunity stems from many sources.

- One important component of opportunity is factors that individuals cannot change, such as their racial or ethnic heritage or their parents' educational level. Those born to parents who did not graduate high school for example generally have fewer opportunities than those born to parents with college degrees.
- A second critical facet of opportunity is an individual's personal characteristics and attributes. Most of us can think of someone whose persistence, hard work, charisma or natural gifts such as intelligence or physical prowess opened doors for them, even allowing them to overcome a disadvantaged start.
- A third source of opportunity is the conditions present in different communities that can expand or constrict upward mobility. Are there decent jobs? Enough doctors? High schools that graduate most students and prepare them for higher education?

The indicators included in the Opportunity Index do not measure the first and second set of factors above, i.e. factors that are beyond a person's control or that reside at the level of the individual, although these areas are undoubtedly highly relevant to opportunity. Instead, the Opportunity Index focuses on the third set of factors, **namely the conditions present in different communities**. These factors are particularly useful because they are amenable to policy change and community actions.

While the traditional way of talking about opportunity often focuses on economic factors, the Opportunity Index takes a more comprehensive approach to measuring access to opportunity by including both non-economic and economic indicators. The result is an interactive, data-rich tool designed to help local communities connect economic, academic, civic and community factors and begin the process of identifying concrete solutions to complex problems.

The indicators that make up the Index are grouped into three main dimensions: Jobs and Local Economy; Education; and Community Health and Civic Life.

Opportunity Index

Dimensions:

Jobs and Local Economy:



The availability of jobs is critical to opportunity, and the Great Recession's prolonged negative impact on employment has put the need for jobs center stage. Nonetheless, jobs are not the only ingredient for a prosperous and sustainable economy that allows for economic security and mobility. An overabundance of low-wage jobs or the absence of jobs that can support a family, for instance, do not create optimal conditions for long-term opportunity. Americans must be prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow, and also be able to accumulate savings to weather unpredictable economic downturns, or make the large expenditures—a house in a good school system, college tuition, etc.—necessary for upward mobility. The economic status of a family has significant repercussions for their children's life chances. The areas measured by the Opportunity Index in this dimension include: employment; wages; poverty; income inequality; access to banking; affordable housing; and high-speed Internet.

Education:



Access to a high quality education is vital to the concept of opportunity, particularly in the 21st century. High school and college graduates earn significantly more every year and over their lifetimes than high school and college dropouts. Many students, particularly low-income youth, live in communities with high schools that graduate fewer than 60 percent of their students every year. The quality of a public school is often tied closely to the socioeconomic status of the families it serves, and subsequently, what neighborhood it is located in. Several studies show positive outcomes for low-income children and teens who live in the same community as more affluent neighbors, including increased childhood IQ and a decrease in leaving school prematurely. The educational indicators measured by the Index include: preschool enrollment; on-time high school graduation; and the percentage of adults with a two-year college (associate) degree or higher.

Community Health and Civic Life:



Evidence shows that community institutions, norms and relationships, together known as social capital, play an important role in expanding people's opportunities, including attending good schools and finding good jobs. Volunteerism and group membership, two indicators of civic engagement that contribute to the accrual of social capital, are closely linked to community trust and solving collective problems. Yet if residents do not feel safe within their own communities, children may struggle in the classroom and adults may be less able to establish the links and connections for a cohesive social network. Health suffers when people do not feel safe enough to exercise outdoors, when the lack of full-service grocery stores makes obtaining fresh produce difficult, and when medical care is inaccessible. The community health and civic life indicators measured by the Opportunity Index include: membership in community groups; volunteerism; community safety; access to health care; access to healthy food; and the percentage of youth ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school.

Opportunity Index

Indicators:



Table 1. Opportunity Index Indicators

Economy

Jobs	Unemployment rate (%)
Wages	Median household income (2010 \$)
Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)
Inequality	80/20 Ratio (ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)
Assets	Banking Institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions per 10,000 residents)
Affordable Housing	Households spending less than 30% of household income on housing costs (%)
Internet Access	High-speed Internet (% of households for states; 5-level categories for counties)

Education





Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)
Postsecondary Completion	Associate degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older)

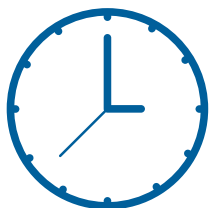
Community

Group Membership	Percentage of adults ages 18 and over involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups
Volunteerism	Percentage of adults ages 18 and older who did volunteer work any time in the previous year
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school and not working (% ages 16-24)
Community Safety	Violent crime (per 100,000 population)
Access to Health Care	Doctors (per 100,000 population)
Access to Healthy Food	Grocery stores and produce vendors (per 10,000 population)

Methodology:

The Opportunity Index is constructed using official statistics from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice (see Methodological Note for complete sources of indicators). The state Opportunity Index is made up of sixteen indicators that combine to yield a score from 1 to 100 in each of the three dimensions; each state and the District of Columbia is also awarded an overall Opportunity Score out of 100. The county Opportunity Index is made up of fourteen indicators; data for two indicators related to community engagement and volunteerism are not available at the county level. Counties are awarded letter grades from A+ to F, Opportunity Grades, for their overall performance (see Methodological Notes for full details on construction of the Index).

	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS	SCORES	QUANTITY
STATE		16	1-100	 All 50 states & Washington, D.C.
COUNTY	 	14	A+ - F	2,600+



The Opportunity Index measures data from 2011-2014. The annual report is released each Fall.

The Opportunity Index does not measure factors that are beyond a person's control or that reside at the level of the individual. The Index focuses namely on the conditions present in different communities. These factors are particularly useful because they are amenable to policy change and community actions.



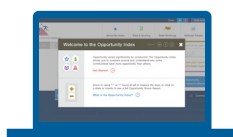
$$\frac{\$}{1/3} = \frac{\text{Book}}{1/3} = \frac{\text{Handshake}}{1/3} = \frac{1}{3}$$

All the indicators are weighted equally. Each of the three dimensions makes up one-third of the final Index value.

Sources:

- American Community Survey
- County Business Patterns and Population Estimates Program
- National Center for Education Statistics
- U.S. Bureau of Labor
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Visit the Opportunity Index to view state rankings, your hometown's score and much more at www.OpportunityIndex.org



National Findings:

State Opportunity Scores and Change Since 2011

The overall Opportunity Score for the United States for 2014 is 52.7 on a scale of 100, a promising increase from the 2011 score of 49.6. In addition, between 2011 and 2014, every state saw an improvement in their Opportunity Score. The highest scoring state in 2014 is Vermont and the lowest scoring state is Nevada, both of which held these same positions in 2011. The District of Columbia's score increased more than any other state between 2011 and 2014 (in the Index, Washington, D.C. is considered a 51st "state"), improving by 15 percent and climbing from 26th place to 11th over the four-year period. Meanwhile, New Mexico recorded the slowest progress in its score, increasing just 1.6 percent and slipping three rankings, from 46th place to 49th over the same time frame.

Table 2. State Rankings 2011-2014

Most Improved States 2011-2014:



Washington, D.C.

State	2011 Ranking	2014 Ranking	Rank Change
District of Columbia	26	11	15
South Carolina	48	42	6
Texas	42	37	5
Nebraska	7	2	5
North Dakota	9	4	5

States That Lost the Most Ground 2011-2014:

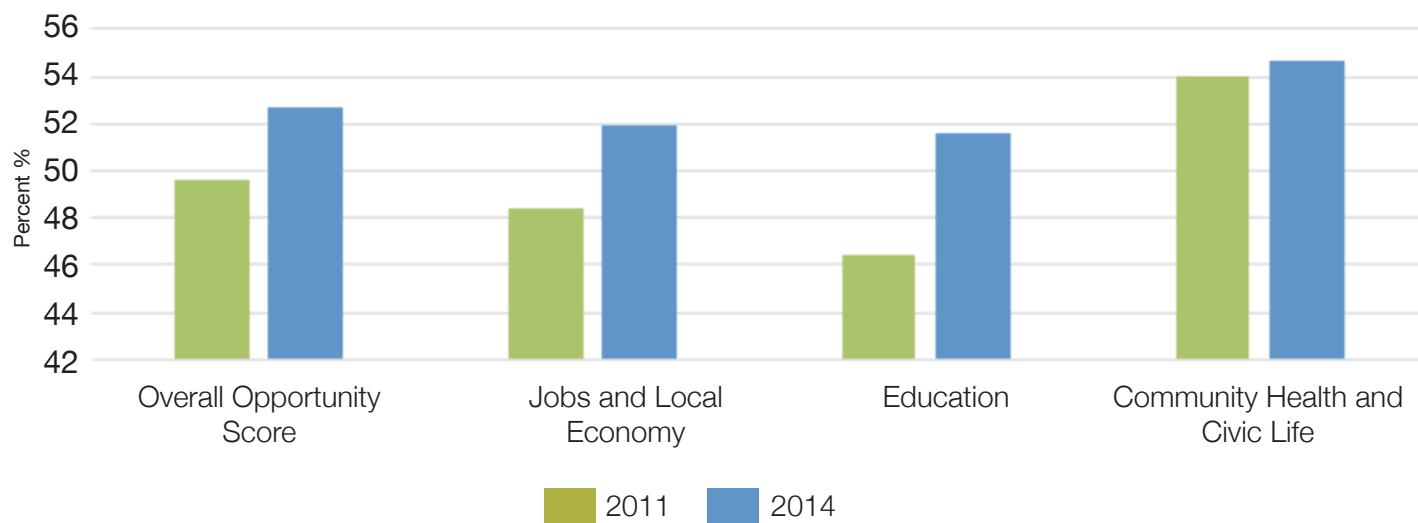


Wyoming

State	2011 Ranking	2014 Ranking	Rank Change
Wyoming	18	24	-6
South Dakota	11	15	-4
Illinois	22	26	-4
Rhode Island	25	29	-4
Oklahoma	36	39	-3

In addition to the overall improvement, there was a positive trend in each of the three dimensions of the Index from 2011 to 2014. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Change in United States Opportunity Index Scores, 2011-2014



A deeper look beneath these overall gains shows that they were not evenly distributed across states. Most states improved their scores on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension and the Education dimension, but four states experienced declines. Alaska and New Mexico lost ground on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension, while Rhode Island and South Dakota showed downward trends on the Education dimension. The Community Health and Civic Life dimension is where the most states lost ground, though a slim majority of the 50 states plus Washington, D.C. did show overall improvements on the dimension. Figure 2 compares the trends from 2011 to 2014 in each dimension for all states. The percentage indicates the percentage of states that experienced the positive or negative trend.

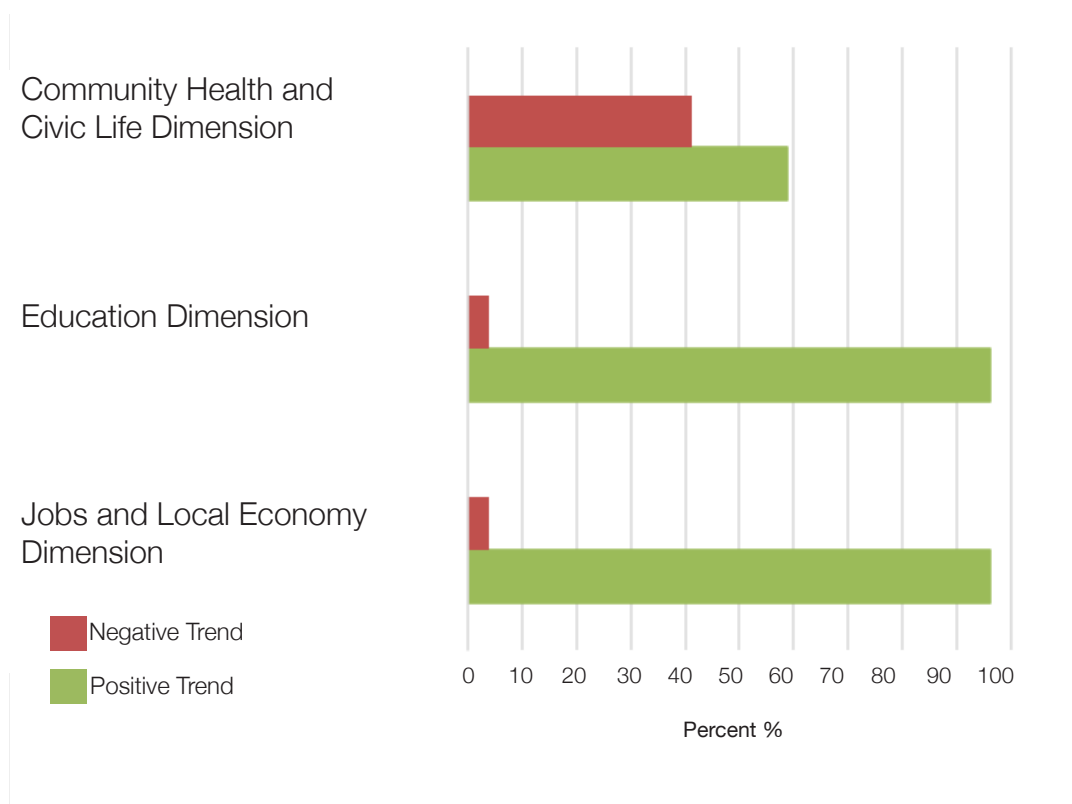


Figure 2.
Summary of
Changes in Index
Dimension Scores
for U.S. States,
2011-2014

Table 3 displays a ranking of the fifty states plus the District of Columbia by their 2014 Opportunity Scores. The top scorer in each dimension is listed in bold. Vermont has the top Opportunity Score, Education dimension and Community Health and Civic Life dimension scores. North Dakota ranks highest on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension.

Table 3. State Rankings by Opportunity Index Score: 2014

Rank	State	Opportunity Score	Jobs & Local Economy	Education	Community Health & Civic Life
	United States	52.7	51.9	51.6	54.7
1	Vermont	66.6	62.7	64.7	72.4
2	Nebraska	62.9	63.3	61.5	64.0
3	Massachusetts	62.7	58.8	63.4	65.9
4	North Dakota	62.4	69.5	56.8	60.9
5	Connecticut	61.9	58.4	64.1	63.4
6	Minnesota	61.6	60.7	59.4	64.8
7	New Hampshire	61.4	64.3	60.9	59.1
8	New Jersey	60.5	58.4	63.6	59.6
9	Maryland	59.9	61.2	57.7	60.9
10	Iowa	59.8	61.9	57.7	59.9
11	D.C.	59.7	50.1	62.1	67.0
12	Kansas	59.3	60.3	57.6	60.1
13	Wisconsin	58.8	56.6	58.7	61.2
14	Maine	58.6	57.9	54.8	63.1
15	South Dakota	58.2	63.5	49.3	61.9
16	Virginia	57.6	58.4	56.6	57.7
17	Utah	57.6	61.8	48.6	62.3
18	Colorado	57.5	57.8	56.9	58.0
19	New York	57.5	51.3	55.0	66.2
20	Pennsylvania	57.3	57.1	56.8	58.1
21	Hawaii	55.6	60.3	52.8	53.7
22	Washington	55.4	56.6	49.9	59.8
23	Delaware	55.2	62.4	49.6	53.6
24	Wyoming	55.0	60.9	48.0	56.0
25	Montana	55.0	55.2	53.3	56.4
26	Illinois	54.6	52.2	55.5	56.2
27	Alaska	54.0	58.2	46.1	57.7
28	Missouri	53.6	51.5	52.8	56.6
29	Rhode Island	53.4	51.2	49.3	59.6
30	Idaho	53.0	55.0	48.7	55.4
31	Ohio	53.0	53.2	51.2	54.6
32	Oregon	52.2	50.4	47.4	58.6

33	California	51.4	47.7	53.6	53.0
34	Indiana	50.9	54.4	46.0	52.2
35	North Carolina	50.6	51.7	47.9	52.2
36	Michigan	50.5	49.7	47.6	54.1
37	Texas	49.6	51.0	49.0	48.8
38	Tennessee	49.1	48.4	48.0	51.0
39	Oklahoma	49.0	51.0	46.1	50.0
40	Florida	48.7	50.5	47.6	48.1
41	Kentucky	48.0	47.6	47.3	49.2
42	South Carolina	47.7	50.5	43.5	49.2
43	West Virginia	47.2	49.9	41.6	50.2
44	Arizona	46.5	49.3	43.6	46.5
45	Georgia	46.3	47.0	43.3	48.7
46	Louisiana	45.8	47.5	41.9	48.1
47	Alabama	45.6	45.9	42.8	48.3
48	Arkansas	45.2	47.1	45.0	43.7
49	New Mexico	44.2	43.4	42.4	46.6
50	Mississippi	42.6	38.8	39.9	49.1
51	Nevada	39.4	48.6	27.7	41.9

As mentioned above, all states saw an increase in their scores from 2011 to 2014 with slightly more than half of U.S. states (28 states) improving by at least 5 percent. The District of Columbia earns the title of “most improved,” largely due to tremendous progress in the education indicators. The District saw a 15 percent increase in preschool enrollment, a 27 percent jump in on-time high school graduation rates, and a 10 percent increase in the proportion of its population with an associate degree or higher over the past four years.

Although Vermont is the number one ranking state on the Index, it did not perform best on any single indicator that makes up the Index, save on-time graduation, where it is tied with Nebraska. In both states, 93 percent of high school freshmen graduate in four years. Vermont comes by its excellence not by surging ahead in a few areas but rather by providing very good across-the-board conditions for opportunity.

Only three states have three or more “best in class” scores on specific indicators. They are the District of Columbia, Utah and North Dakota. The District of Columbia claims the top spot on preschool enrollment, share of adults with an associate degree or higher and number of doctors per 100,000 residents. Utah has the best scores among all states when it comes to rates of volunteering and group membership, and enjoys low levels of income inequality. North Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate, the highest rate of those spending less than 30 percent of income on housing and the most banking institutions per 10,000 residents.

Nevada, the bottom-ranking state on the overall Index for all four years, performs at the bottom on five indicators: preschool enrollment, on-time graduation, grocery stores per 10,000 residents, group membership rates and banking institutions per 10,000 residents (here it ties with Arizona and California). Mississippi is not far behind, earning the lowest score on four indicators: median household income, poverty, high-speed Internet access and youth not in school and not working. Mississippi also ranks last on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension of the Index.

Table 4 provides a detailed look at state performance on each indicator in 2014 including information on the most improved state by indicator. Improvement is measured by the greatest increase, on a percentage basis, between 2011 and 2014.

Table 4. Top, Bottom and Most Improved States by Indicator: 2011-2014

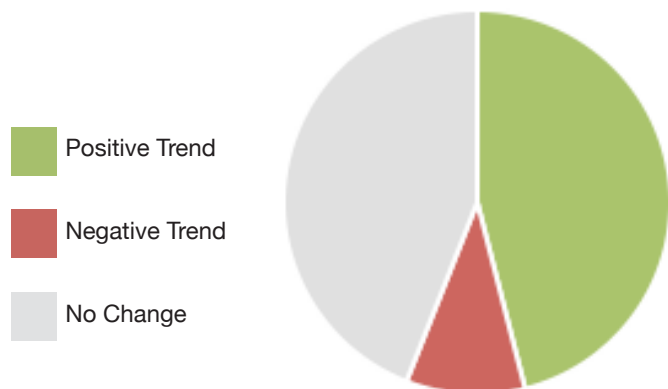
Indicator	Top State	Bottom State	Most Improved
Opportunity Index	Vermont	Nevada	District of Columbia
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	North Dakota	Mississippi	District of Columbia
Education Dimension	Vermont	Nevada	District of Columbia
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	Vermont	Nevada	Missouri
Unemployment Rate	North Dakota	Rhode Island	Utah
Median Household Income	Maryland	Mississippi	District of Columbia
Poverty	New Hampshire	Mississippi	South Dakota
80/20 Ratio	Utah	District of Columbia	North Dakota
Banking Institutions	North Dakota	Nevada	Vermont
Affordable Housing	North Dakota	California	Nevada
High-Speed Internet	New Hampshire	Mississippi	West Virginia
Preschool	District of Columbia	Nevada	District of Columbia
On-Time High School Graduation	Nebraska; Vermont	Nevada	District of Columbia
Associate degree or Higher	District of Columbia	West Virginia	District of Columbia
Violent Crime	Maine	District of Columbia	Louisiana
Youth Not in School and Not Working	Nebraska	Mississippi	West Virginia
Doctors	District of Columbia	Idaho	Alaska
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	New York	Nevada	New York
Group Membership	Utah	Nevada	Kansas
Volunteerism	Utah	Louisiana	Delaware

County Opportunity Grades and Changes Since 2011

In 2014, Opportunity Index grades are provided for 2,670 of the 3,142 U.S. counties or county equivalents.¹ This covers a very comprehensive 99.2 percent of Americans. In 2014, almost half of the 2,670 counties graded saw an increase in their Opportunity Grades and nearly half remained unchanged in this four-year period. Only a small minority (10 percent) of counties had a lower Opportunity Grade in 2014 than in 2011. See Figure 3.

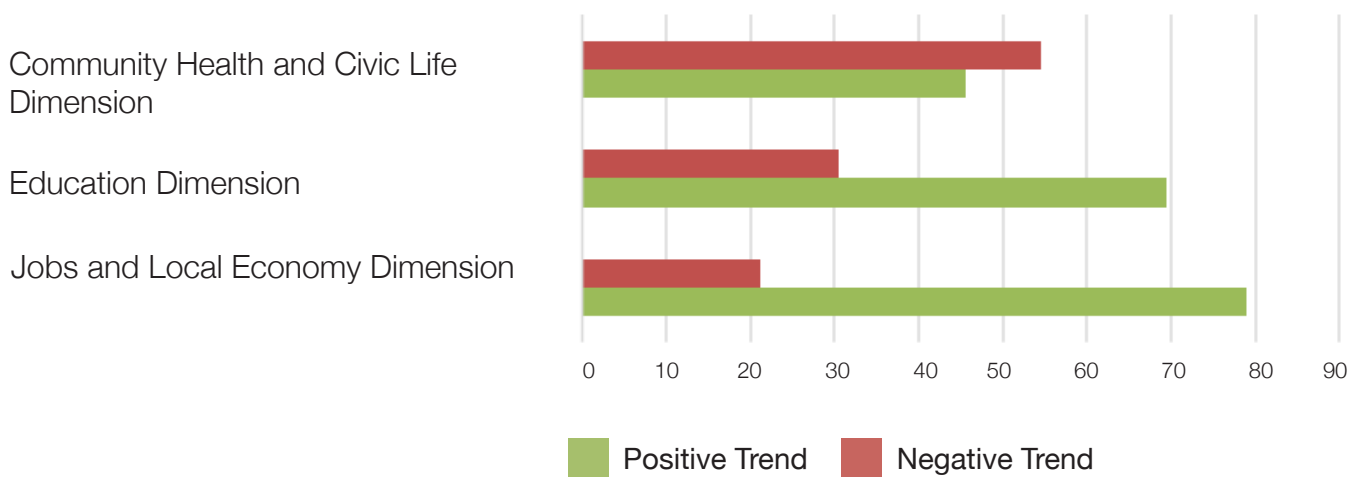
The top-scoring county in 2014 is Falls Church, Virginia which received the only A+, and the lowest scoring counties, all of which received F grades, are: Dooly County (Georgia), Apache County (Arizona), Twiggs County (Georgia), Todd County (South Dakota), Tallahatchie County (Mississippi) and Gadsden County (Florida). The most improved county from 2011 to 2014 is Dimmit County, Texas (pop. 10,897); its grade jumped from a D- in 2011 to a C in 2014. On the other hand, Burnett County, Wisconsin (pop. 15,333) experienced the largest drop of any county, with a decline from a C+ to a C- between 2011 and 2014.

Figure 3. County Opportunity Grade Trends, 2011-2014



Taking a closer look at the dimensions that presented the most challenges, while most counties improved since 2011 on the Education and Jobs and Local Economy dimension, the majority of counties experienced declines in the Community Health and Civic Life dimension of the Index. Figure 4 charts the positive, or negative, trend in each of the Index's three dimensions since 2011. The vast majority of counties, 79 percent, saw an uptick on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension, whereas just 46 percent of U.S. counties made headway on the Community Health and Civic Life dimension.

Figure 4. Trends in Dimension Scores by County, 2011-2014



¹ Some states use county equivalents, such as Louisiana (parishes) and Alaska (boroughs). These county equivalents are included in the Index. Due to unreliable data or small sample sizes, particularly in the case of the youth not in school and not working indicator, the remaining 472 counties cannot be included in the Index.

At the county level, Virginia counties dominate in 2014. Falls Church City (pop. 12,332) earns the highest Opportunity Grade of any county (A+) as well as the highest score on the Education dimension. Charlottesville City (pop. 44,349) has the highest Community Health and Civic Life dimension score and Fairfax City (pop. 23,973) sweeps the Jobs and Local Economy dimension.

More counties in Texas than in any other state earn the most improved title. Texas' McMullen County (pop. 764) made tremendous progress in reducing unemployment, with a near 80 percent decline between 2011 and 2014. Cochran County (pop. 3,016) achieved a near 50 percent reduction in the poverty rate, and income inequality in Motley County (pop. 1,196) was reduced by almost 35 percent between 2011 and 2014. The county with the most improved Opportunity Grade is also in Texas: Dimmit County jumped from a D- to C. The indicators driving this impressive gain for Dimmit County include a 66 percent decline in unemployment, a 27 percent gain in median household income, a 27 percent reduction in the poverty rate and a 46 percent jump of the on-time high school graduation rate.

Focusing on the counties that receive an F grade for 2014, two of them, Dooly (pop. 14,304) and Twiggs (pop. 8,481) Counties, are in Georgia. While both counties have similar overall levels of opportunity as measured by the Index, their performances on specific indicators vary considerably. The Dooly County unemployment rate is almost 12 percent, just shy of twice the rate in Twiggs (7 percent). Dooly County also has a significantly higher rate of violent crime, at 432 per 100,000 residents, more than triple the rate of Twiggs County (128 per 100,000 residents).

Table 5 details the top, bottom and most improved county for each indicator that makes up the Index. For indicators with multiple counties with the same value, the number of counties and the state with the most counties with that value are listed, e.g. twenty-seven counties tie for bottom score on the banking institutions per 10,000 residents metric, eight of which are in Texas.

Table 5. Top, Bottom and Most Improved Counties by Indicator: 2011-2014

Indicator	Top County	Bottom County	Most Improved County
Opportunity Grade	Falls Church City, Virginia	Dooly County, Georgia	Dimmit County, Texas
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	Fairfax City, Virginia	Hancock County, Georgia	Macon County, Georgia
Education Dimension	Falls Church City, Virginia	Coosa County, Alabama; Northwest Arctic Borough, Alaska; Marion County, Ohio	Polk County, Tennessee
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	Charlottesville City, Virginia	Red River Parish, Louisiana	Linn County, Missouri
Unemployment Rate	Williams County, North Dakota	Yuma County, Arizona	McMullen County, Texas
Median Household Income	Falls Church City, Virginia	Owsley County, Kentucky	Gilmer County, West Virginia
Poverty	Loudoun County, Virginia	Shannon County, South Dakota	Cochran County, Texas

80/20 Ratio	Clark County, Idaho	New York County, New York	Motley County, Texas
Banking Institutions	Jones County, South Dakota	27 counties. Texas has 8	Warren County, Pennsylvania
Affordable Housing	Borden County, Texas	San Juan County, Colorado	Gilmer County, West Virginia
High-Speed Internet	264 Counties	14 counties. Virginia has 4	Rabun County and Towns County, Georgia
Preschool	Perquimans County, North Carolina	Adams County, Idaho; McIntosh County, North Dakota; Donley County, Texas; Pendleton County, West Virginia	Mahaska County, Iowa
On-Time High School Graduation	Madison County, Idaho; Cimarron, Dewey, and McClain Counties, Oklahoma	Sedgwick County, Colorado	Carroll County, Mississippi
Associate Degree or Higher	Falls Church City, Virginia	McDowell County, West Virginia	Pawnee County, Kansas
Violent Crime	31 Counties. North Dakota has 8	St. Louis City, Missouri	Menominee County, Wisconsin
Youth Not in School and Not Working	13 Counties. Nebraska has 4	Wheeler County, Georgia	Powhatan County, Virginia
Doctors	Montour County, Pennsylvania	178 Counties. Texas has 25	Chatham County, North Carolina
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	Yakutat City and Borough, Alaska	64 Counties. Texas has 9	Brookings County, South Dakota
Group Membership	n/a	n/a	n/a
Volunteerism	n/a	n/a	n/a

Indicator Correlations

Analysis of the relationship between the various indicators as well as between indicators and the overall Index for states and counties shows that some of the factors measured are more closely associated with higher scores on the Opportunity Index than others.

Among states, the two indicators that are most closely associated with the overall Opportunity Index score are youth not in school and not working (% ages 16-24) and poverty (% of population below poverty line). This has been the case with all four years of the Opportunity Index. In both cases, this is a strong negative correlation, meaning that the higher the rates of youth not in school and not working or of poverty, the lower the Opportunity Index in that state. On the other hand, four of the indicators that make up the Index have a very strong, positive relationship with the state-level Opportunity Index: on-time high school graduation (% of freshmen who graduate in four years); associate degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older); median household income (2010 \$); and high-speed Internet are all strongly positively correlated with the overall Opportunity Index score for states.

Indicators that are associated most closely with overall county Opportunity Grades are: youth not in school and not working and poverty in the negative direction; associate degree or higher and median household income in the positive direction.

What are some associations between various indicators that make up the overall Opportunity Index? At the state level, the rate of youth disconnection is strongly and positively correlated with the state poverty level, suggesting that disconnected youth may disproportionately live in poorer communities. At the county level, the rate of youth disconnection is strongly and negatively correlated with the percentage of adults with an associate degree or higher. This correlation suggests that disconnected youth may be more likely to come from communities where neither parent earned at least an associate degree.

It's important to note that while the youth disconnection rate dropped from 2011 to 2014, it remains above pre-recession levels. In 2014, 14 percent of teens and young adults ages 16-24 were "disconnected," compared with 12.9 percent in 2007.² Also, while overall unemployment rates dropped 30% between 2011 and 2014, this improvement masks the fact that youth unemployment for Americans ages 16-24 remains unacceptably high at more than twice the national average. While the Index does not measure youth unemployment as its own indicator, unemployed youth are counted as part of the total unemployment rate. In addition, all young people who are not in school and not working, either because they can't find a job or because they've given up looking, are counted in the youth disconnection rate. It is clear that much work remains to be done to help an estimated 5.6 million teens and young adults get on track to meaningful education and career pathways.

Given the strong association with youth disconnection and overall Index scores, it is interesting to look more closely at youth disconnection at the state and county levels to see how strongly it is associated with each of the other indicators that make up the Index.

Table 6 offers a detailed look at the correlations of each indicator with the state Opportunity Index score, the state disconnected youth rate, the county Opportunity Grade and the county disconnected youth rate. The green boxes indicate a strong, significant correlation. The pink boxes indicate that the correlations are not statistically significant.

² Measure of America. Halve the Gap by 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities, pg. 11.

Table 6. Correlations by State and County: 2014

Indicator	State Opportunity Index	State Disconnected Youth	County Opportunity Grade	County Disconnected Youth
Unemployment Rate	-0.4	0.5	-0.5	0.4
Median Household Income	0.7	-0.4	0.7	-0.5
Poverty	-0.8	0.8	-0.7	0.6
80/20 Ratio	-0.2	0.4	-0.4	0.3
Banking Institutions	0.5	-0.5	0.4	-0.2
Affordable Housing	-0.1	-0.2	0	0.2
High-Speed Internet	0.7	-0.5	0.6	-0.5
Preschool	0.4	-0.1	0.2	0
On-Time High School Graduation	0.8	-0.8	0.5	-0.3
Associate Degree or Higher	0.8	-0.5	0.7	-0.7
Violent Crime	-0.3	0.5	-0.3	0.1
Youth Not in School and Not Working	-0.8	--	-0.7	--
Doctors	0.5	-0.1	0.4	-0.4
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	0.5	-0.2	0.2	0.1
Group Membership	0.5	-0.5	n/a	n/a
Volunteerism	0.6	-0.5	n/a	n/a
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	0.8	-0.8	0.8	-0.6
Education Dimension	0.9	-0.7	0.8	-0.5
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	0.9	-0.7	0.8	-0.7
Youth Unemployment Rate	-0.5	0.6	n/a	n/a

Conclusion:

While an improvement in the nation's overall Opportunity Score is promising, the Opportunity Index shows that more progress is urgently needed on multiple economic, educational and civic indicators to expand upward mobility more broadly, particularly to low-income youth.

Four years of data have consistently shown that the rate of youth disconnection and poverty are the two indicators that correlate most closely with state Opportunity Scores and county Opportunity Grades. This evidence serves as a call to action to tackle these two pressing issues. Poverty in the United States has increased nationwide by 11 percent since 2011, and the rate of disconnected youth remains significantly above pre-recession levels. In order to increase access to opportunity on a dramatic scale, our country must do more to help low-income teens and young adults embark on meaningful education and career pathways that lead to economic security and stability.

***The Opportunity Index was jointly developed by Measure of America and Opportunity Nation.
For more information, visit www.opportunityindex.org and www.measureofamerica.org***

Methodological Notes

The Opportunity Index is designed to provide a snapshot of what opportunity looks like at the state and county levels. The Index focuses on **the conditions present in different communities** and is designed to help local communities connect economic, educational, civic and community factors that support increased opportunity and economic mobility.

The 2014 Opportunity Index provides Opportunity Scores for all 50 U.S. states and Washington, DC, and Opportunity Grades for 2,670 counties and county equivalents,¹ comprising 99.2 percent of the nation's population. These notes provide the methodology for calculating the 2014 Opportunity Index.

Several changes have been put in place to improve the Opportunity Index since it was first published in November 2011. The 2014 Index is not comparable to previous years, primarily because the data for access to health care changed this year. However, Opportunity Indices for 2011–2013 have however been recalculated using the methods of the 2014 Index in order to allow for comparisons and tracking progress over this four-year period. Changes are described in detail below.

The following table summarizes the themes and indicators that make up the 2014 Opportunity Index.

Economy

Jobs	Unemployment Rate (%)
Wages	Median household income
Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)
Inequality	80/20 ratio (ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)
Assets	Banking institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions per 10,000 residents)
Affordable Housing	Households spending less than 30% of household income on housing
Internet Access	High-speed Internet (% of households for states; 5-level categories for counties)

Education

Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)
Postsecondary Completion	Associate degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older)

¹ County equivalents refer to several places that use alternate names to describe counties: boroughs and census areas in Alaska, parishes in Louisiana, and cities with county-level status in several states. There are 3,143 counties and county equivalents in the United States. The 2014 Opportunity Index for counties includes 85 percent of the 3,142 counties and county-equivalents in the U.S., or 99.2 percent of the U.S. population.

Community

Group Membership	Percentage of adults ages 18 and over involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups (States only)
Volunteerism	Percentage of adults ages 18 and older who did volunteer work any time in the previous year (States Only)
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school and not working (% ages 16-24)
Community Safety	Violent crime (per 100,000 population)
Access to Health Care	Doctors (per 100,000 population)
Access to Healthy Food	Grocery stores and produce vendors (per 10,000 population)

Methodology

The Opportunity Index is made up of a set of indicators grouped into three broad dimensions: Jobs and Local Economy; Education; and Community Health and Civic Life. The state Index is made up of 16 indicators; the county Index includes only 14 indicators. This is due to the unavailability of reliable, stable data for two indicators related to civic participation at the county level: group membership and volunteerism. The indicators that make up the Opportunity Index are taken from official national datasets (see sources below).

The methodology for calculating the Opportunity Index requires three steps: normalizing the indicators in order to put them all on a common scale; averaging rescaled scores together within each of the three dimensions of the Index; and averaging the three dimension scores together to calculate the Opportunity Index. All of the indicators in the Opportunity Index are weighted equally within each dimension, and each of the three dimensions makes up one-third of the final Index value.

Normalizing Indicators

Data for the indicators used in the Opportunity Index come in many different forms, ranging from percentages to ratios, rates or dollar values. In order to include them in a composite index, it is necessary to rescale the data so that they are all expressed in a common form. The Opportunity Index uses a simple rescaling procedure that compares the performance of a state or county on a given indicator to the highest and lowest outcomes observed anywhere on the same indicator. The numerical values of the highest and lowest outcomes have been set to allow for extreme outliers and to anticipate changes in these indicators in the future. The natural log of median household income and the violent crime rate have been used in the process of rescaling these two indicators to normalize the highly skewed distributions of data on these indicators. The rescaling process results in a value that ranges from 0 to 100, where 0 represents the worst possible outcome and 100 represents the best possible outcome.²

The general formula for rescaling indicators using this method is given below:

$$\text{Observed Outcome Rescaled} = \left(\frac{\text{Observed Outcome} - \text{Lowest Outcome}}{\text{Highest Outcome} - \text{Lowest Outcome}} \right) \times 100$$

For some indicators, higher values do not represent positive or desirable outcomes. This is the case with the unemployment rate, poverty rate, the 80/20 ratio, youth not in school and not working and the violent crime rate. In order to bring these indicators in line with the others, one final rescaling step has been done by sub-

² Any rescaled values greater than 1 are capped at 100 and any negative rescaled values are capped at 0.

³ The natural log of median household income, the lowest outcome figure, and the highest outcome figure should all be used in the rescaling equation for this indicator.

$$\text{Observed Outcome Rescaled} = \left\{ 1 - \left(\frac{\text{Observed Outcome} - \text{Lowest Outcome}}{\text{Highest Outcome} - \text{Lowest Outcome}} \right) \right\} \times 100$$

tracting the outcome of the rescaling formula from 1 before multiplying by 100, as shown below:
The exact lowest and highest outcome values used in the calculation of the Opportunity Index are summarized in the table below.

Economy

THEME	INDICATOR	LOWEST OUTCOME	HIGHEST OUTCOME
Jobs	Unemployment rate	0.0	16.0
Wages	Median household income ³	\$19,000	\$95,000
Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)	2.0	30.0
Inequality	80/20 ratio (ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)	2.0	7.0
Assets	Banking institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions per 10,000 residents)	0.0	10.5
Affordable Housing	Households spending less than 30% of household income on housing	40.0	95.0
Internet Access	High-speed Internet (% of households for states; 5-level categories for counties)	1.0	5.0

Education

Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)	0.0	100.0
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)	55.0	100.0
Postsecondary Completion	Associate degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older)	0.0	75.0

Community

Group Membership	Percentage of adults ages 18 and over involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups (States only)	0.0	70.0
Volunteerism	Percentage of adults ages 18 and older who did volunteer work any time in the previous year (States Only)	0.0	65.0
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school and not working (% ages 16-24)	0.0	30.0

Community Safety	Violent crime (per 100,000 population)	0.0 ⁴	12.0 ⁵
Access to Health Care	Doctors (per 100,000 population)	0.0	600.0
Access to Healthy Food	Grocery stores and produce vendors (per 10,000 population)	0.0	6.25

Calculating Dimension Scores

Once all the indicators are on a scale of 0 to 100 where 100 represents the most desirable possible outcome, scores are calculated for each of the three dimensions of the Index. Scores are the average (arithmetic mean) of the rescaled values for all the indicators in the dimension. For example, the Education Score for a state is the average of rescaled scores for that state on preschool enrollment, on-time high school graduation and associate degree or higher. The resulting dimension scores also range from 0 to 100.

Calculating the Opportunity Score and Assigning Opportunity Grades

Once dimension scores have been calculated for all three dimensions, the final Opportunity Score for states is the average (arithmetic mean) of the three dimension scores, again expressed as a value between 0 and 100. This is the final Opportunity Score used to rank the 50 states and Washington, DC on the Opportunity Index.

Because the range of outcomes is generally more extreme for counties than for states, and in order to offer a different scale for a slightly different index (the county Opportunity Index includes only 14 indicators rather than the 16 of the state Index), counties receive a final Opportunity Grade, ranging from A+ to F, instead of a numerical score from 0 to 100.

Determination of the Opportunity Grade was based on analysis of the distribution of final, raw numerical outcomes of the first, 2011 Opportunity Index for counties and county-equivalents. Counties with similar outcomes were grouped together based on how far their final scores were from the average, measured in standard deviations above or below the mean. These groups were then assigned letter grades ranging from A, for the counties with the very best

overall outcomes, to F, for the counties with the worst outcomes. Raw final scores in the 2011 Opportunity Index revealed that a large number of counties had final outcomes close to the national average and relatively fewer had outcomes that were either very good or very poor. As a result, more counties received final Opportunity Grades of C-, C or C+ than received Opportunity Grades of B or better or of D or worse. This same method used to assign Opportunity Grades to counties based on their raw final score, has been used to score counties in the subsequent Indexes in order to ensure that Opportunity Grades represent a consistent range of achievement over time and that county grades are comparable from one year to the next. Should the general trend observed between the 2011 and 2012 installments of the Opportunity Index continue, as most counties make progress on the indicators over time, that progress will be reflected by an increase in counties earning higher grades, and fewer receiving Ds or Fs.

The table of numerical scores and how they relate to county-level Opportunity Grades is summarized below.

⁴ Should be used in the rescaling equation with the natural log of the violent crime rate; in other words, these highest and lowest outcome values have already been subjected to a log transformation.

⁵ See footnote 4 above.

Opportunity Grade	Minimum Numerical Score (rounded)	Maximum Numerical Score (rounded)
A+	75.2	100.0
A	70.8	75.1
A-	66.4	70.7
B+	62.0	66.3
B	57.6	61.9
B-	53.3	57.5
C+	48.9	53.2
C	44.5	48.8
C-	40.1	44.4
D+	35.7	40.0
D	31.3	35.6
D-	26.9	31.2
F	0.0	26.8

Data Notes

All data used to calculate Opportunity Grades for a county should ideally reflect data only for that county. However, in a limited number of cases where county-level data are missing, state-level data are used to fill gaps at the county level in order to avoid having to exclude a large number of counties from the Index due to missing data. If a county is missing data for more than two indicators or for two indicators in the same dimension, then a final Opportunity Grade is not calculated for that county. If a county is missing data for two or fewer indicators, neither of which are in the same dimension of the Opportunity Index, then the rescaled average for the state within which that county is located is imputed in place of the missing data point. Out of a total of 3,142 counties and county-equivalents, 472 counties are excluded from the Opportunity Index due to missing or unreliable data.

Most of the indicators used in the Index are estimates based on an analysis of survey data and are, therefore, subject to both sampling and non-sampling error. Where possible, data used to calculate the Opportunity Index were first analyzed in order to remove any extremely unreliable estimates. Different dimension scores and overall Opportunity Scores and Opportunity Grades do not imply that differences between states or between counties or differences within a state or county over time are in every case statistically significant.

Data Definitions and Sources

Jobs and Local Economy Dimension

Indicator: Unemployment Rate (%)

Definition: The total number of people who do not have jobs but who have actively looked for work within the preceding four weeks and are available to work as a percentage of the total number of people in the labor force.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics tables and news releases (<http://www.bls.gov/lau/>).

Note: Unemployment rates in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for April 2014. Data are provisional and not seasonally adjusted.

Indicator: Median Household Income (2010 \$)

Definition: The income of the household exactly in the middle of the distribution of households by income, ranked from wealthiest to poorest. Household income includes earnings from work and other income from interest, dividends, Social Security, pension payments, unemployment compensation and other regularly received forms of money for all members of the household.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: Because income is not distributed equally across individuals or households, the average (mean) household income is much higher than the median. Median household income data in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties. All median household income figures in the Opportunity Index are expressed in inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars.

Indicator: Poverty (% of population below poverty line)

Definition: Percentage of people of all ages living on incomes below the federal poverty line.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: Poverty rate data in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties.

Indicator: 80/20 Ratio (ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)

Definition: The 80/20 ratio describes the disparity in the size of the income of the household at the 80th percentile relative to that of the income of the household at the 20th percentile. The 80/20 ratio for the United States is 4.9, meaning that the income of the household at the 80th percentile is 4.9 times that of the household at the 20th percentile.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: 80/20 Ratio data in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties.

Indicator: Banking Institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions per 10,000 residents)
Definition: Total number of commercial banks, credit unions and savings institutions (NAICS 522110, 522120, and 522130) per 10,000 residents.

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns and Population Estimates Program (<http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/index.html> and <http://www.census.gov/popest/>).

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012.

Indicator: Households Spending Less than 30% of Household Income on Housing Costs (%)

Definition: The percentage of households spending less than 30% of their household income on rent and utilities for households who rent or on mortgage payments and other housing costs for those who own their homes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: Thirty percent of household income going to housing costs is a widely accepted cut-off for housing affordability. This figure excludes housing units for which housing costs and/or household income could not be determined. Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008–2012 for counties.

Indicator: High-Speed Internet (% of households for states; 5-level categories for counties)

Definition: Ratio of the number of residential fixed Internet connections with a speed of at least 200 kbps in at least one direction to the total estimated number of households in that geographic area.

Source: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Internet Access Services (<http://transition.fcc.gov/wcb/iatd/comp.html>).

Note: The state and county scales are different for this indicator due to confidentiality concerns. The FCC does not make the ratio of residential fixed connections to total households available at the county-level but rather provides ranges of the number of fixed residential connections per 1,000 households. Thus the county-level score for this indicator falls on a scale of one to five, with five representing the most comprehensive Internet coverage. The categories are as follows:

Category	Range of number of households per 1,000 with a high-speed internet connection in their homes in each category
1	Greater than 0 and as many as 200 households per 1,000
2	Greater than 200 and as many as 400 households per 1,000
3	Greater than 400 and as many as 600 households per 1,000
4	Greater than 600 and as many as 800 households per 1,000
5	Greater than 800 households per 1,000

The actual ratio is available for the nation as a whole and for all states. All data on this indicator for the 2014 Opportunity Index are from the FCC and correspond to June 30, 2013.

Education Dimension

Indicator: Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)

Definition: The percentage of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in public or private nursery school, preschool or kindergarten.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: Data on preschool enrollment in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2010-2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties.

Indicator: On-Time High School Graduation (% of freshmen who graduate in four years)

Definition: The percentage of high school freshmen that graduate after four years of high school.

Source: State data are from the U.S. Department of Education, Nation Center for Education Statistics, Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010–11 and 2011–12, Table 4. County data are County Health Rankings analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics and Departments of Education of various states. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings. Available at <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/>.

Note: State and county data for this indicator come from different sources. Data for states come from the National Center for Education Statistics and are averaged freshman graduation rates from public secondary schools for each state. State data in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for the 2011-2012 school year. County data for the 2014 Opportunity Index are newly available “cohort” graduation rates for counties in most states, which actually track students from freshman year to graduation and account for students who transfer to other schools or who graduate early. These county data are for the 2010-2011 school year. Due to the differences in methodology and years of the data used for this indicator, county-level On Time High-School Graduation comparisons between counties and for counties over time should be made with caution.

Indicator: Associate Degree or Higher (% of adults 25 and older)

Definition: The percentage of adults ages 25 and older who have completed an associate degree or higher.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties.

Community Health and Civic Life Dimension

Indicator: Group Membership (% of adults 18 and older involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups)

Definition: The percentage of adults 18 and over who report being members of social, civic, service, recreational, or religious groups in the previous year.

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, DataFerrett, Current Population Survey, Civic Engagement Supplement. Due to limitations of the survey data, this indicator is only calculated at the state level.

Note: Membership in a religious group includes those actively involved in activities in their place of worship and does not include those who attend religious services only. Two years worth of survey responses were pooled to increase the sample size available for analysis. This pooling makes estimates of the percentage of the adult population who are members of groups more stable. As a result of the discontinuation of the Civic Engagement Supplement of the Current Population Survey, data for this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are from 2010 and 2011, the same as the 2013 Opportunity Index.

Indicator: Volunteerism (% of adults ages 18 and older)

Definition: The percentage of adults 18 and older who did volunteer work through or for an organization at any time in the previous year.

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, DataFerrett, Current Population Survey, Volunteering Supplement. Due to limitations of the survey data, this indicator is only calculated at the state level.

Note: Two years-worth of survey responses were pooled to increase the sample size available for analysis. This helps make estimates of the percentage of the adult population that engage in volunteer activities more stable. Data for this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012-2013.

Indicator: Youth Not in School and Not Working (% ages 16-24)

Definition: The percentage of the population ages 16 to 24 who are not enrolled in school and not working.

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS Microdata (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>) and custom tabulations for county and county equivalents provided by special arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau.

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2008-2012 for counties.

Indicator: Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)

Definition: Total number of violent crimes per 100,000 people. Violent crimes include homicide, rape, robbery and assault.

Source: State data from the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics (www.ucrdatatool.gov); county data from the County Health Rankings analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Justice Information Services. County Health Rankings are from the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings. Available at <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/>.

Note: Data for this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012 for states and 2009-2011 for counties.

Indicator: Doctors (per 100,000 population)

Definition: The number of active, non-federal medical doctors per 100,000 residents.

Source: Measure of America calculations using medical workforce data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Area Health Resources Files and population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (<http://www.census.gov/popest/>).

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012.

Indicator: Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors (per 10,000 population)

Definition: The rate of supermarkets, grocery stores and produce stands (NAICS codes 445110 and 445230) per 10,000 residents.

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns and Population Estimates Program (<http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/index.html> and <http://www.census.gov/popest/>).

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2011 Opportunity Index are for 2009; data in the 2012 Opportunity Index are for 2010; data in the 2013 Opportunity Index are for 2011; data in the 2014 Opportunity Index are for 2012.

Indicator: Population Estimates

Definition: Estimate of the mid-year (July 1st) resident population of each state and county in 2012.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (<http://www.census.gov/popest/>)

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2014 Opportunity Index are 2013 vintage population estimates for 2012.

Changes to the Opportunity Index Since 2013

The 2014 Opportunity Index includes modifications to two indicators:

Youth Not in School and Not Working (% ages 16-24) – The definition and method of calculating this indicator remain unchanged and there are no changes whatsoever to Measure of America’s past procedures for calculating state data on this indicator. However, estimates at the county and county-equivalent level were obtained through special arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau rather than being calculated from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey PUMS microdata by Measure of America. As a result, the Index includes unique estimates for counties. Previously, due to the limitations of the Census Bureau’s PUMS microdata, this was only possible for a small subset of the most populous counties. For the remaining counties, many with youth populations so small that this indicator could not be calculated for them individually, neighboring counties were grouped together and pooled estimates of the percentage of youth not in school and not working were calculated for these groups of counties. Each county in the group then shared the group estimate. In the 2014 Opportunity Index, estimates specific to each county are available for the majority of counties and county equivalents and no estimates are shared across groups of counties.

Doctors (per 100,000 population) – In the 2014 Opportunity Index, “Doctors per 100,000 residents” replaces “Primary Care Physicians per 100,000”. This indicator was previously obtained from County Health Rankings produced by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. However, due to double-counting of some types of physicians, this indicator has been replaced with a closely related indicator, the number of active non-federal doctors per 100,000 residents. This indicator is calculated by Measure of America using medical workforce data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Area Health Resources Files and population data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Because of these refinements, the 2014 Opportunity Index is not comparable to earlier versions of the Index launched in previous years. However, these two refinements have now been made to all four years of the Opportunity Index and thus comparisons are now fully possible between 2011 and 2014 and years in between.

References

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About The Opportunity Index:

The Opportunity Index is an annual composite measure at the state and county levels of 16 economic, educational and civic factors that expand or restrict upward mobility. The Opportunity Index ranks all 50 states plus Washington DC and grades more than 2,600 counties A-F, and is designed to help identify concrete solutions that expand opportunity to more Americans. The Index was jointly developed by Opportunity Nation and Measure of America.

About Opportunity Nation:

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national coalition of more than 300 businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and community leaders working to expand economic opportunity. Opportunity Nation seeks to close the opportunity gap by amplifying the work of its coalition members, advocating policy and private sector actions and releasing the annual Opportunity Index. Visit OpportunityNation.org.

About Measure of America:

Measure of a America, a Project of the Social Science Research Council, provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being, opportunity, and inequality in America and for stimulating fact-based conversations about issues we all care about: health, education and living standards. Visit MeasureofAmerica.org.

Visit www.opportunityindex.org to explore the complete dataset.

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