WHERE IS OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA?

02 / PATHS OF OPPORTUNITY
04 / STATE RANKINGS
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2016 OPPORTUNITY INDEX
YOUR ZIP CODE SHOULDN’T DETERMINE WHERE YOU END UP IN LIFE

Meet Jane and John.

Meet Jane and John.

Nassau County, New York
3.7%
$90,634

JOBS
Unemployment rate

WAGES
Median household income

Tarrant County, Texas
3.7%
$53,170

What access to opportunity really looks like
Jane and John were born on the same day, and their families held similar hopes for them. Jane was born in Tarrant County, Texas, near Fort Worth, while John was born in Nassau County, a suburban county on Long Island in New York. Jane’s family has a household income near the $53,170 Tarrant County average, while John’s family’s income is closer to the Nassau County median household income of $90,634. Jane, like nearly two-thirds of her peers, did not go to preschool, while John, like the majority of his peers did. More people live in poverty where Jane lives and her town is much less safe than John’s, with 436.9 violent crimes per 100,000 residents compared to 173.4 per 100,000 residents.

John’s chances in life are significantly better than Jane’s due to chance circumstances—where he was born and currently resides. His county earned an A- on the Opportunity Index, while Jane’s earned a C.
The 2016 Opportunity Index is a composite measure of 16 key indicators in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and 2,763 counties, which contain 99% of the U.S. population.
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Overall Opportunity in America has increased by 8.9% since 2011.

Most of this improvement is due to gains on specific indicators in the economic and educational dimensions. Progress was sluggish for community dimensions.

The indicators that correlate most strongly with the state Opportunity Score are:

- Poverty Rate
- Rate of Youth Disconnection

But in spite of gains, too many people are being left behind in today’s post-recession economy.

Lower median household income now than in 2011 but higher than in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$49,422</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>$48,906</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>$51,050</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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Higher poverty rate now than in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
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Higher income inequality now than in 2011, and the same as 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Income Inequality</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>4.79</td>
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OPPORTUNITY INDEX INDICATORS

ECONOMY
Jobs
Wages
Poverty
Inequality
Assets
Affordable Housing
Internet Access

EDUCATION
Preschool Enrollment
On-time High School Graduation
Postsecondary Completion

COMMUNITY
Group Membership
Volunteerism
Disconnected Youth
Community Safety
Access to Health Care
Access to Healthy Food
The unemployment rate

Wyoming is the only state that had an increase in unemployment since 2011. Youth unemployment drains state and federal resources of $8.9 billion a year.*


BEST
South Dakota 2.5%

WORST
Illinois, Alaska (tie) 6.6%

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX
Colorado 3.1% (8.6% in 2011)

NATIONAL AVERAGE

CHANGE 2011-2016 -45.1%

CHANGE 2015-2016 -2.0%
**WAGES**

Median household income

Falls Church City, VA and Pend Oreille County, WA both have similar populations (~13,000), but Falls Church has a median household income of $110,988 while Pend Oreille’s is $36,907.

71.3% of counties are below the poverty line.

**NATIONAL AVERAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
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<tr>
<td>BEST Maryland</td>
<td>$68,132</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORST Mississippi</td>
<td>$36,548</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX North Dakota</td>
<td>$54,370 ($48,817 in 2011)</td>
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.
Borden County, TX (pop. 641) has the lowest poverty rate of any county.

The poverty rate is one of the most strongly correlated indicators in state Opportunity Scores and county Opportunity Grades.
45 states had greater income inequality in 2016 than they did in 2011.

New York County, NY (Manhattan) has the highest level of income inequality (8.7%).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 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.
No states experienced
an increase in access to
banking from 2015-2016.

Children from lower income
families who have a college
savings account in their
name are at least three times
as likely to attend college.*
Affordable housing provides stability – children change schools less frequently and perform better in school.

North Dakota has seen a decline in rent prices. Housing affordability may attract service workers who are in high demand.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Households spending less than 30% of income on housing

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.
INTERNET ACCESS*

Percentage of households with high-speed Internet for state overall; 5-level categories for counties

*The FCC is no longer collecting this data at the state level, but will continue to collect the data at the county level until further notice.

NATIONAL AVERAGE

311 counties received the highest level (5) for Internet access.

Four counties, all in Georgia, have seen the highest increase in high-speed Internet access.
PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds in school

**47.1%**

NATIONAL AVERAGE

**CHANGE 2011-2016**

-2.28%

**CHANGE 2015-2016**

0.00%

Children who receive high-quality early childhood education are less likely to repeat a grade, require special education, drop out of school or commit a crime.*

Washington, DC has the highest rate of preschool enrollment. They also have universal preschool.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

BEST
Washington, DC 86.4%

WORST
Idaho 30.3%

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX
Washington, DC 86.4% (65.9% in 2011)
ON-TIME HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Percentage of freshmen who graduate in four years

Source: State and school district data are from the U.S. Department of Education: EDFacts Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for the 2013-2014 school year.

82.3%

National Average

Change 2011-2016: +10.2%
Change 2015-2016: +1.1%

BEST
Iowa 90.5%

WORST
Washington, DC 61.4%

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX
South Carolina 80% (62.2% in 2011)

Since the 2011 Index, zero states have reported on-time high school graduation rates at 90% or above.

Individuals who received a high school diploma make $500K more in lifetime earnings than their peers who fail to graduate.
POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION

Percentage of adults 25 and older with an associate’s degree or higher

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

38.2%

NATIONAL AVERAGE

CHANGE 2011-2016
+8.0%

CHANGE 2015-2016
+2.0%

BEST
Washington, DC
58.4%

WORST
West Virginia
25.7%

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX
Washington, DC
58.4% (51.1% in 2011)

Unless the United States rapidly increases the number of adults with post-secondary degrees, the country will fall short by 5 million skilled workers by 2020.

By 2020, two-thirds of all U.S. jobs will require some form of post-secondary degree or credential.
GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Percentage of adults 18 and older involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups

36.2%  
NATIONAL AVERAGE

CHANGE 2011-2016  
+3.21%

CHANGE 2015-2016  
-8.98%

BEST  
Utah 55.6%

WORST  
Louisiana 28.2%

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX  
Utah 55.6% (42.6% in 2011)

Group membership contributes to the accrual of social capital and is closely linked to levels of trust in a community.

Civic engagement may help youth, particularly low-income teens and young adults, build valuable skills that can help them find meaningful education and career pathways.

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.
The likelihood that a young person is disconnected from school and work drops nearly in half if he or she volunteers. Volunteerism is one of the two community indicators that has seen no improvement since 2011.

Percentage of adults aged 18 and older who volunteer

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.
DISCONNECTED YOUTH

Percentage of young adults ages 16-24 neither in school nor working

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS Microdata.

13.2%

NATIONAL AVERAGE

CHANGE 2011-2016
-9.11%

CHANGE 2015-2016
-4.5%

5.3 MILLION

Most Improved Since 2011 Index
Wyoming
9.1% (12.3% in 2011)

BEST
Minnesota
8.3%

WORST
Mississippi
17.6%

Delaware's rate of youth disconnection dropped roughly 25% since 2015. This translates into 3,700 young adults finding their path to careers and education.

Young adults are not in school or working.
41 states saw a decline in violent crime rates since 2011.

Since the 2011 Index, Alaska, New York, North Dakota and Utah have seen no change in the rate of violent crime.
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Medical doctors per 100,000 population

NATIONAL AVERAGE

270.5

CHANGE 2011-2016
+4.0%

CHANGE 2015-2016
-5.59%

Statistically, 175 counties did not have a doctor in their community in 2016.

Montour County, PA (pop. 18,267) has the highest number of doctors per 100,000 residents.

BEST
Washington, DC 736.5

WORST
Idaho 161.4

MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX
Ohio 283 (260 in 2011)

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.
23.5 million Americans live in “food deserts”—neighborhoods that are located more than one mile from a supermarket in urban areas and more than 10 miles in rural areas.

Missouri saw the biggest decrease in grocery stores and produce vendors.

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Grocery stores and produce vendors per 10,000 population

**BEST**
- New York 5.5

**WORST**
- Nevada 1.2

**MOST IMPROVED SINCE 2011 INDEX**
- New York 5.5 (4.9 in 2011)

Source: Measure of America analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns and Population Estimates Program.
The Opportunity Index was jointly developed by Opportunity Nation and Measure of America.

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national campaign comprised of more than 350 cross-sector organizations working together to expand economic mobility and close the opportunity gap in America. Our mission is to restore the promise of the American Dream by ensuring that all Americans—regardless of where they were born—have the opportunity to thrive. Opportunity Nation:

• Measures access to opportunity via our Opportunity Index, which measures economic, educational, and civic factors that foster economic mobility at both the county and state levels;
• Advances bipartisan legislation by promoting common-sense, bipartisan approaches to increase access to education, tackle the skills gap and expand opportunity for young adults;
• Convenes cross-sector groups through our Coalition, National Opportunity Summits, the Opportunity Index briefings and other events across the country that lead to innovative collaborations and partnerships.

We believe that expanding economic mobility is the defining issue of our time. Closing the opportunity gap will take innovative, bipartisan, cross-sector solutions grounded in data and collaboration. For more information, visit www.opportunitynation.org.

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an independent, not-for-profit research organization founded in 1923. Based in Brooklyn, New York, it mobilizes researchers, policy makers, professionals, activists, and other experts from the private and public sectors to develop innovative approaches to issues of critical social importance.

Measure of America is a nonpartisan program whose mission is to stimulate fact-based public debate about and political attention to issues of well-being and access to opportunity in the United States. The hallmark of this work is the American Human Development Index, a composite measure that reflects what most people believe are the basic ingredients of a fulfilling life of choice and dignity: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Recent MOA projects include DATA2GO.NYC and a series of reports on disconnected youth that anchor the national dialogue on the issue. Measure of America breathes life into numbers, working with partners to create reports, online apps, and advocacy campaigns that tell the story of well-being and opportunity in America’s communities.

For more information, and to learn how much opportunity is in YOUR community, please visit www.opportunityindex.org.