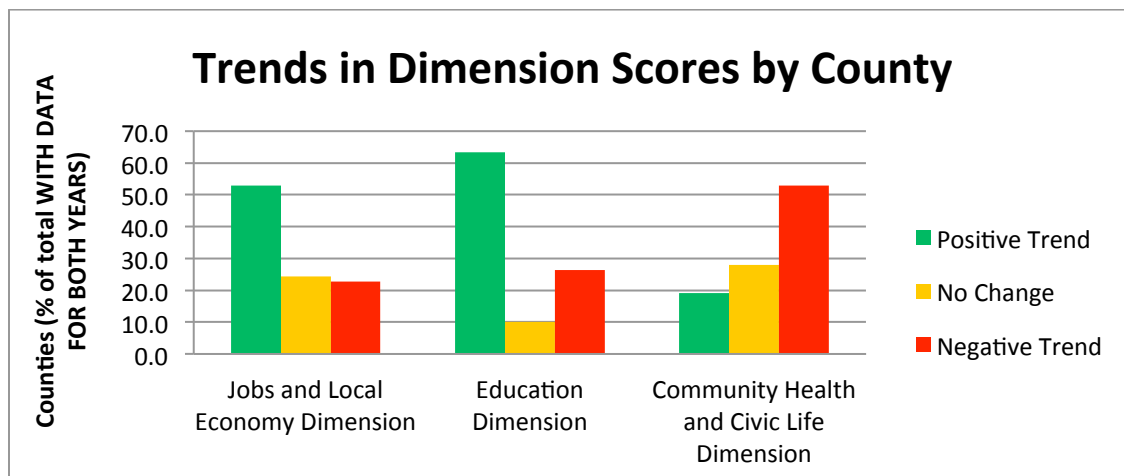
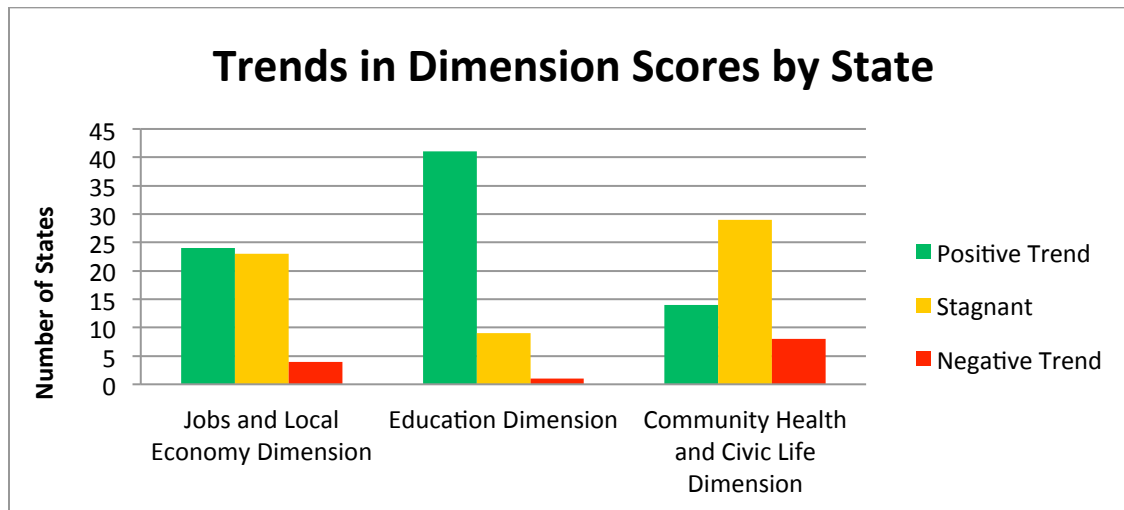


The Opportunity Index 2011-2013 Findings

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FOR STATES AND COUNTIES

The average Opportunity Score in the US has increased from 49.59 in 2011 and 50.00 in 2012 to 50.90 in 2013, a 2.6 percent overall improvement over the three-year period. In addition, between 2011 and 2013, a majority of states and counties improved their Opportunity Scores (states) and Opportunity Grades (counties).

Overall, most states and counties improved or maintained their scores in the Jobs and Local Economy Dimension and Education Dimension; progress was weakest overall in the Community Health and Civic Life Dimension. Among the states, West Virginia experienced the most significant decline in community health and civic life. See tables below.

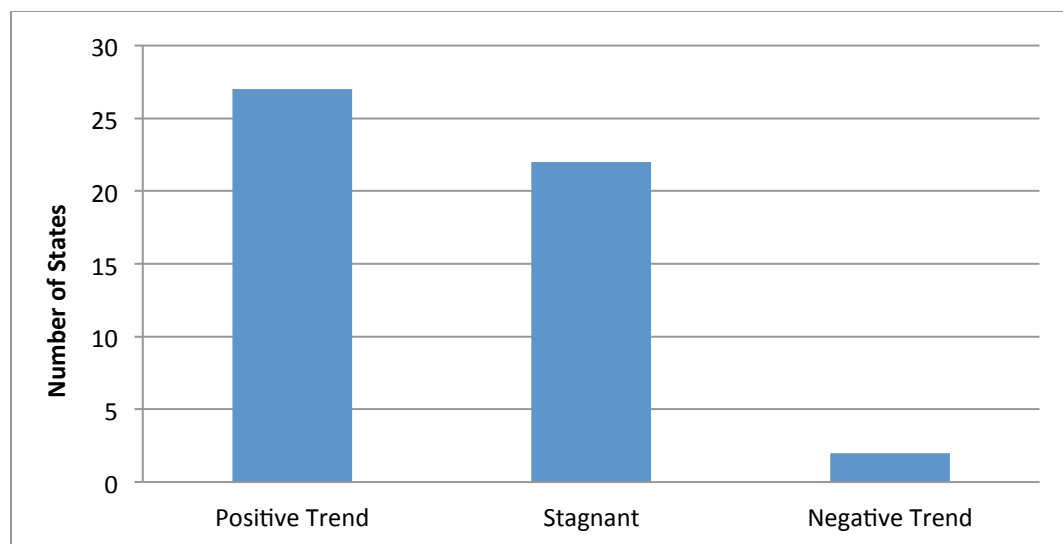


Among both states and counties, the percent of youth not in school and not working (disconnected youth) and the percent of the population living below the federal poverty line (defined as a family of four living on \$23,550 a year or less in 2013) are the two indicators most significantly correlated with changes in the Opportunity Index. **As youth disconnection and poverty climb, the Opportunity Index tumbles.** For both states and counties, the two variables least correlated with Opportunity Index Score changes are the percent of households spending less than 30 percent of income on housing and the percent of young children enrolled in preschool.

STATE PROGRESS AND SETBACKS

Overall, 26 states and Washington DC saw an increase in their scores since 2011. Only two states, Connecticut and New Mexico, saw statistically significant declines in their scores between 2011 and 2013. Twenty-two states had no statistically significant change in their scores over this period (see below).

Change in State Opportunity Scores from 2011 to 2013



Connecticut, Hawaii, West Virginia and the District of Columbia experienced the most dramatic shifts in position. The District of Columbia, with a population of about 660,000, gained the most, improving by seven rankings, from 29 to 22. On the other hand, Connecticut tumbled ten places in the state rankings between 2011 and 2013, from 3 to 13. Hawaii and West Virginia also slipped, both falling seven positions in the rankings (although neither experienced a statistically significant decline in their score from 2011 to 2013; they were simply overtaken by faster-progressing states). Interestingly, Hawaii experienced the least change between 2011 and 2013 in its absolute score. Between 2011 and 2013, the state's Opportunity Score changed by only 0.02 (which is within the margin of error).

The District of Columbia led the nation in terms of positive growth in two of the three dimensions of the Opportunity Score—jobs and local economy and education. DC experienced consistent improvement in the vast majority of variables within both of these dimensions, including a small but significant increase in wages and a notable improvement of 3.9 percent in preschool attendance. Particularly significant was the finding that DC, which is counted among the states, experienced a decrease in income inequality over the past three years (the only state to do so), and a 4.2 percent increase in the percentage of the population with an associate's degree or higher, almost double the increase of any other state. DC also experienced a small decrease in its score on the community health and civic life dimension, but this decrease was overshadowed by more significant gains in other variables. One notable finding is that in the District of

Columbia, the percentage of 3 and 4-year olds enrolled in preschool is greater than the percentage of students who graduate high school in four years.

What are some factors that have contributed to the decline in conditions for opportunity in Connecticut? Connecticut lost ground between 2011 and 2013 on all three dimensions of the Opportunity Score—jobs and local economy, education, and community health and civic life. In both the economic and social dimensions, Connecticut was among the ten states that saw the greatest declines in these areas between 2011 and 2013. The area in which Connecticut lost the most ground, however, is education. The state's negative change between 2011 and 2013 is more than seven times the decreasing trend evident in any other state. This change can be directly linked to the huge erosion in the on-time high school graduation rate in the state, which declined from 82.2 percent to 75.1

It is important to remember, though, that Connecticut's 2013 education dimension score, while decreasing since 2011, places it 11th in the nation, a strong showing. Connecticut's education score may not be doing as well as it has done in the past, but its students are still doing much better than the majority of Americans nationwide. The Connecticut Dept. of Education changed the way it calculates on-time high school graduation between 2011 and 2013, using a cohort model that tracks with each year's freshman class through all four years of high school. Since there is a two-year lag in the data, this change is reflected for the first time in 2012. The change in methodology makes it difficult to compare 2011 and 2012 data. However, the data for 2012 and 2013 will be comparable moving forward.

While North Dakota ranks as the state with the fourth lowest percentage of preschool attendance in 2013, the state performs very well on all other variables and therefore earns a ranking of third highest in the overall Opportunity Score. It is notable that North Dakota not only performs very well on economic indicators, such as unemployment rate, access to banking institutions, and affordable housing, but also in the education dimension. Preschool attendance levels are, in fact, not highly correlated with other variables relating to education. It is notable that, although North Dakota has a very low percentage of preschool enrollments, the state enjoys the third highest percentage of on-time high school graduation in the nation. North Dakota may be anomalous in some way related to preschool; for instance, perhaps long travel distances make enrolling small children in programs that may only last a couple of hours is something fewer parents are willing to do, or perhaps more parents live near their own parents and thus are able to rely on grandparent care.

Nevada seems to be anomalous when looking at the relationship between Opportunity Score and poverty. While it ranks last in the overall state rankings, it enjoys a much lower poverty level than states with comparative ratings. Mississippi, for example, rank fiftieth in terms of Opportunity Score, one better than Nevada, but claims a poverty level almost 7 percent greater than the Western state. For many of the variables, the data from Nevada reverses the trends apparent in the data from other states. For example, while Opportunity Scores generally decrease as median household income diminishes, the lowest ranking state, Nevada, has a 2013 median household income that is nearly \$12,000 higher than that of the second lowest-ranked state, Mississippi. Nevada fared the worst among all states in four of the sixteen independent indicators in 2013, more than any other state. Nevada's unemployment rate is 9.5 percent. Just 31.9 percent of 3 and 4-year olds are enrolled in preschool enrollment and only 57.8 percent of students graduate from high school on time. Only 28.1 percent of adults are involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups. Nevada trails far behind other states in both education, and community health and civic life dimensions. Higher incomes do not appear to be fostering other aspects of access to opportunity in Nevada.

South Dakota stands out in terms of high-speed Internet access because this indicator has increased more rapidly between 2011 and 2013 in this state than in those states with comparable Opportunity Scores. Internet access is the only variable that increased in all 51 state and regions between 2011 and 2013. This is likely due to a policy change or simply providers responding to ever-growing demand for high-speed access.

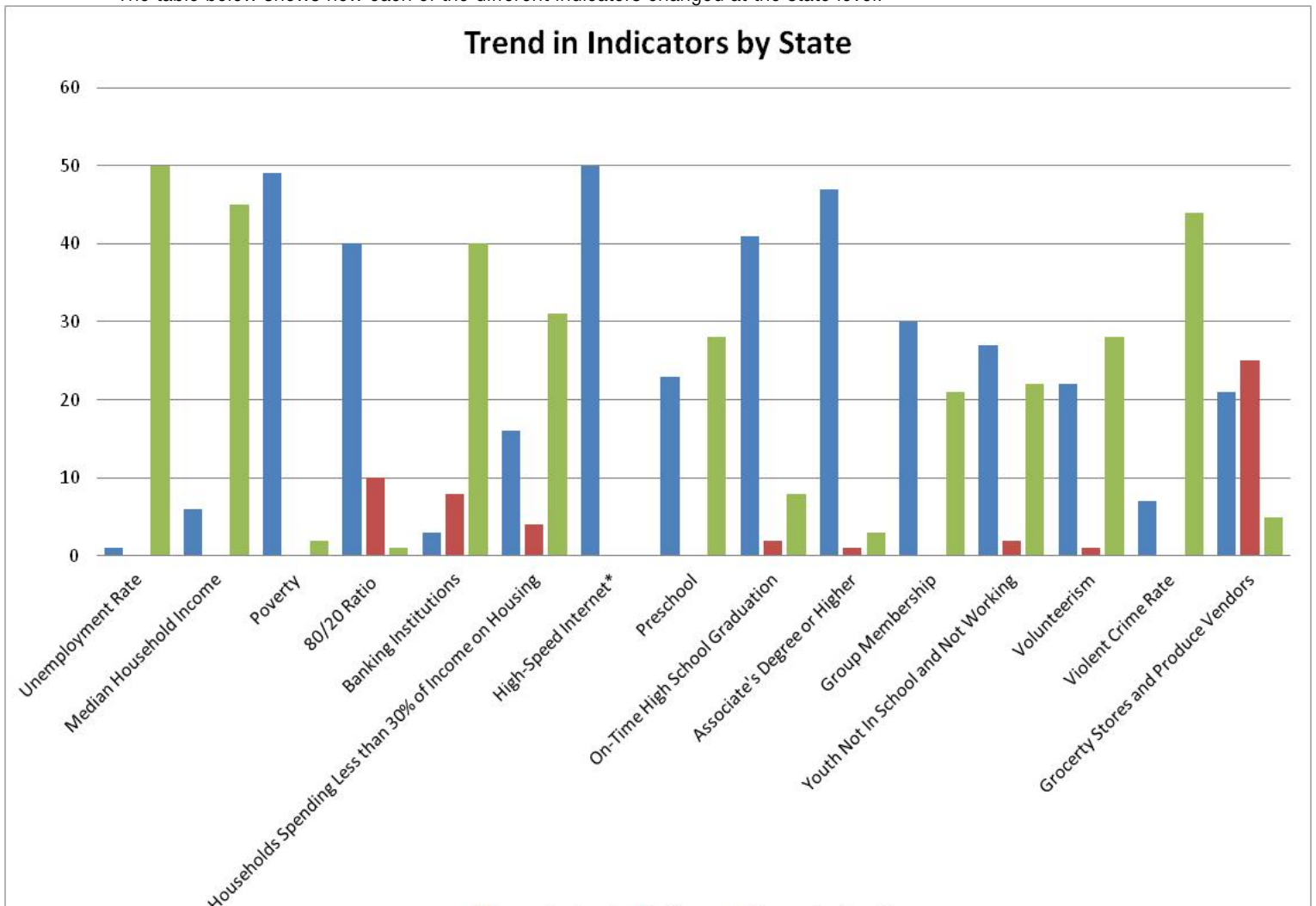
Although top-ranked state Vermont ranks high in all three categories—jobs and local economy, education and community health and civic life—it particularly stands out regarding community health and civic life. Its score of 77.88 out of 100 is almost a full eight points ahead of its nearest competitor in this dimension—Minnesota. Compare this with the difference between the scores of the first and second ranked state in the other two categories; for jobs and local economy, North Dakota leads New Hampshire by roughly 2 points, and, in education, New Jersey leads Vermont by just over one point.

North Dakota is the only state that saw an increase in unemployment between 2013 and 2011. This is likely because its employment rate is already the lowest in the country at 3.5 percent, which is half the national average. It is unlikely that a rate already so much lower than that of the rest of the country would fall further. In addition, North Dakota’s low unemployment rate may have attracted new job seekers from elsewhere, and their arrival could have increased the jobless rate.

South Dakota and New Hampshire experienced significant increases in the number of grocery stores and produce vendors. South Dakota’s figure grew by almost three times the value of the third-ranked New York, and New Hampshire’s figure is more than double this base figure.

Between 2011 and 2013, a few of the indicators used to calculate the Opportunity Score shifted dramatically. The national unemployment rate, for example, shrank by over 20 percent of its 2011 value over this time period. Violent crime was reduced by about a tenth during this period. Not all significant shifts were for the better though; the percentage of Americans below the poverty line increased by almost 12 percent of its 2011 value, from 14.3 percent to 15.9 percent.

The table below shows how each of the different indicators changed at the state level.



Occasionally, questions come up with regard to region. Below is a table that shows the number of states in each region that went up, went down, or stayed the same on each of the indicators. Due to the differences in state population size, creating an average for each range would not be accurate.

		Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Nationwide
Opportunity Score	Increasing	8	15	8	12	43
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	1	2	5	0	8
Unemployment	Increasing	0	0	0	1	1
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	9	17	13	11	51
Median Household Income	Increasing	0	1	1	4	6
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	9	16	12	8	45
Poverty	Increasing	9	17	12	11	49
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	0	0	1	1	2
80/20 Ratio	Increasing	8	14	10	7	39
	No Change	1	2	3	5	11
	Decreasing	0	1	0	0	1
Banking Institutions	Increasing	1	0	0	1	2
	No Change	4	1	0	3	8
	Decreasing	4	16	13	8	41
Households Spending Less than 30% of Income	Increasing	1	5	6	4	16
	No Change	2	0	1	1	4
	Decreasing	6	12	6	7	31
Jobs and Local Economy	Increasing	2	15	10	11	38
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	7	2	3	1	13
High-Speed Internet*	Increasing	9	17	13	12	51
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	0	0	0	0	0
Preschool	Increasing	3	5	8	6	22
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	6	12	5	6	29
On-Time High School Graduation	Increasing	7	15	10	9	41
	No Change	1	0	0	1	2
	Decreasing	1	2	3	2	8
Associate's Degree or Higher	Increasing	9	15	11	12	47
	No Change	0	1	0	0	1
	Decreasing	0	1	2	0	3
Education Dimension	Increasing	7	16	11	11	45
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	2	1	2	1	6
Group Membership	Increasing	6	10	7	7	30
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	3	7	6	5	21
Youth Not In School and Not Working	Increasing	5	10	5	7	27
	No Change	0	2	0	0	2
	Decreasing	4	5	8	5	22
Volunteerism	Increasing	3	8	8	3	22
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	6	9	5	9	29
Violent Crime Rate	Increasing	4	1	1	1	7
	No Change	0	0	0	0	0
	Decreasing	5	16	12	11	44
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	Increasing	3	1	0	1	5
	No Change	5	6	6	7	24
	Decreasing	1	10	7	4	22
Community Health and Civic Life	Increasing	5	11	9	4	29
	No Change	1	1	0	0	2
	Decreasing	3	5	4	8	20

COUNTY PROGRESS AND SETBACKS

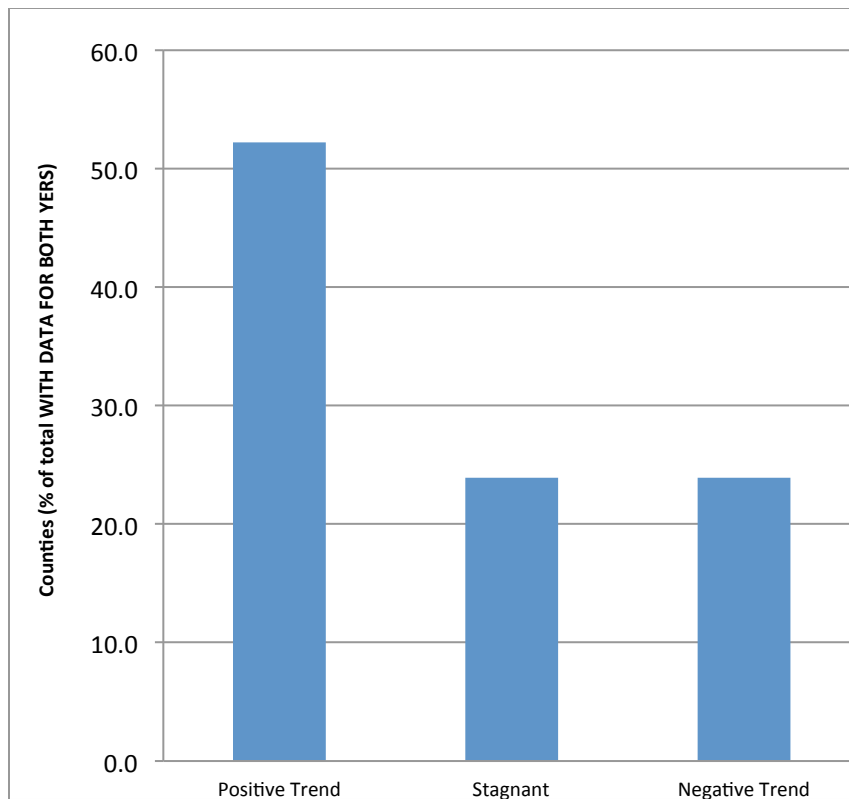
Overall, 52.2 percent of counties experienced positive growth in their Opportunity Grades between 2011 and 2013. Nationwide, 23.9 percent of counties have experienced no significant change, and 23.9 percent have suffered a decline in Opportunity Grade (see Chart 1). A C grade, which represents average or typical performance, was the most common Index score for counties in all three years. Also, 21.20 percent of counties had a rating of C in 2013, 20.93 percent in 2012, and 19.44 percent in 2011.

Interestingly, a sharp decline in any one of the three dimensions of the Index is not strongly correlated with a decline in another. None of the ten counties that experienced the most drastic decrease in one of these three dimensions did so in another.

The highest scoring county once again was Falls Church City, VA, the only A+ out of over 3,000 counties given Opportunity Scores. Lowest marks went to Lowndes County, Alabama, one of only four counties to receive an F in 2013. The differences between these two counties are stark. The median household income differs by more than \$85,000. Nearly 40 percent more students graduate high school on time and there are nearly 400 fewer violent crimes per 100,000 people in Falls Church City.

Roosevelt County, Montana and Polk County, Tennessee bookend America's counties regarding changes in opportunity between 2011 and 2013. Roosevelt County saw the greatest decline of any county nationwide, losing a full 11.6 points and falling from a score of B- in 2011 to C- in 2013. Polk County, Tennessee experienced a very different kind of transformation. Between these two years, the county improved 15.0 points, from a D to a C+.

Percent Change in County Opportunity Grade from 2011 to 2013



County trends related to change since 2011 within states:

- Connecticut is the only state that experienced a decrease in median earnings across all counties. No state gained in every county.
- Virginia was the state with the greatest difference in the 2013 Opportunity Scores between two counties— Falls Church City and Brunswick County (81.70 and 34.25 respectively). Delaware was home to the smallest difference between its top-ranked and bottom-ranked counties—Kent County and New Castle County (44.90 and 53.20 respectively).
- Counties in only eight states—South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Georgia, Mississippi and Kansas—make up all 50 locales that lost the most ground in terms of disconnected youth who are neither employed nor in school over the years. Texas saw the most significant setbacks in this indicator accounting for 50 percent of these counties.
- In eight states—Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and South Carolina—the unemployment rate increased in every single county between 2011 and 2013. There was no state in which the unemployment rate decreased across the board.

The counties with the top and bottom scores on each of the indicators are listed in the table on the next page.

Top and Bottom County Scorecard:

INDICATOR	UNITED STATES	TOP COUNTY	BOTTOM COUNTY
Unemployment Rate (percent)	7.1 percent	0.9 percent, Williams County, North Dakota	30.3 percent, Yuma County, Arizona
Median Household Income (\$)	\$48,958	\$116,652, Falls Church City, Virginia	\$18,752, Owsley County, Kentucky
Poverty (percent of population below poverty line)	15.9 percent	3.4 percent, Loudoun County, Virginia	53.5 percent, Shannon County, South Dakota
80/20 Ratio (ratio of household income of 80th percentile to that of 20th percentile)	4.9	2.3, Logan County, Nebraska; 2.3 Blaine County, Nebraska	8.5, New York County, New York
Banking Institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions and credit unions per 1,000 residents)	4.0 per 1,000 residents	32.8, Loup County, Nebraska	0.0, 35 counties nationwide
Households Spending Less than 30 percent of Income on Housing (percent)	62.2 percent	43.7, Miami-Dade County, Florida	90.6, Eureka County, Nevada
High-Speed Internet (5-level categories)	N/A	Category 5, 152 counties nationwide	Category 1, 36 counties nationwide
Preschool Enrollment (percent ages 3 and 4 in school)	47.4 percent	100.0 percent, Ouray County, Colorado; Worth County, Missouri; Mineral County, Nevada; Galax City, Virginia, Bedford City, Virginia; Stonewall County, Texas; Hinsdale County, Colorado, Haines Borough, Alaska; Skagway Municipality, Alaska; San Juan County, Colorado	3.2 percent, Logan County, North Dakota
On-Time High School Graduation (percent of freshmen who graduate in four years)	78.2 percent	100 percent, 47 counties nationwide	17.0 percent, Sedgewick County, Colorado
Associate's Degree or Higher (percent of adults 25 and older)	36.3 percent	74.9 percent Falls Church City, Virginia	8.7 percent, Lake County, Tennessee
Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)	386.3 per 100,000 population	4.7, Keokuk County, Iowa; 4.7 percent Bon Homme County, South Dakota	2061.7, St. Louis City, Missouri
Youth Not in School and Not Working (percent ages 16–24)	14.6 percent	2.1 percent Story County, Iowa; 2.1 percent Boone County, Iowa; 2.1 percent Dallas County, Iowa	34.8 percent, Navajo County, Arizona; 34.8 percent, Apache County, Arizona
Primary Care Provider (per 100,000 population)	117.9 per 100,000 population	2013 data incomplete due to definitional change	
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors (per 10,000 population)	2.2 per 10,000 population	31.0, Yakutat City and Borough, Alaska	0.0, 65 counties nationwide

The Opportunity Index was jointly developed by Measure of America and Opportunity Nation

For more information, visit www.opportunityindex.org