

OPPORTUNITY INDEX

2016

Summary of
findings for
states & counties



FOREWARD



The data in the 2016 Opportunity Index should compel all of us to work together, support policies and programs that increase opportunity for our future workforce and job creators, and elevate youth voice and leadership.

Highlighting successes AND obstacles connected to upward mobility, the Index measures economic, educational, and civic opportunity at state and county levels for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It uniquely combines multiple indicators to help policymakers and community leaders identify challenges and solutions.

This year's highlights

The overall Opportunity Score for the United States for 2016 is 54 on a 100-point scale; 28 states have scores above the national score and 23 states below.

This year's Index findings show that we've made progress in the Education dimension, with nearly two-thirds of states showing increased scores. We also can see decreases in unemployment rates, violent crime, the number of youth not working nor in school and increases in on-time high school graduation.

There were positive gains in the Economic dimension with 17 states seeing improvement. It is important to note that despite these gains, the economic landscape is decidedly mixed, showing uneven economic recovery from the recession.

Where we can improve

Despite these signs, inequality persists. Forty-five states have greater income inequality in today's Index than they did in 2011 (the first year the Index was released), as measured by the ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile.

We've also lost ground in the Community Health and Civic Life dimension. There is overall progress since our 2011 Index, but four indicators in this dimension have declined since 2015: access to doctors, access to grocery stores, group membership and volunteerism levels. Two indicators in this group have never seen an improvement since the start of the Index: access to grocery stores and volunteerism.

This year's Index shows that the rate of youth disconnection has fallen 4.8 percent since 2011 and slightly since 2015 - roughly 411,000 fewer young people nationwide are disconnected from both school and work

compared to the 2011 Index. Forty-one states made progress in reducing youth disconnection in this six-year time period. However, 5.2 million young people, or 13.2 percent, are considered disconnected youth in this year's Index, which is still above pre-recession levels (12.9 percent in 2007). We must take action to reconnect teens and young adults who are neither working nor in school.

The data reinforces that solutions need to come from all sectors - public, private and nonprofit.

How do we improve scores and close the opportunity gap? In September 2016, our Coalition created a policy plan for the next president and Congress. The plan, Our Opportunity Nation, signed by over 120 Coalition members, lays out six goals to expand opportunity and ensure the success sequence for children and youth.

Opportunity Nation's 2025 Goals:

- 1) No child hungry or homeless
- 2) Double postsecondary degrees, certificates and industry credentials
- 3) Reduce unemployment below five percent for all and cut the child poverty rate in half
- 4) Re-engage one million opportunity youth
- 5) One million Americans in national service
- 6) Achieve a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020

The policy plan also highlights cross-sector success stories in communities across the country and offers policy recommendations to achieve these goals. By striving towards these six goals we can improve opportunity scores and close the opportunity gap in the country.

Bright spots in closing the opportunity gap

Here are a few examples of how our Coalition is collectively closing the opportunity gap and impacting opportunity scores in their communities:

Youth disconnection rates dropped

Organizations like Jobs for the Future, The Corps Network, MENTOR, Urban Alliance, Year Up and YouthBuild USA reconnect Opportunity Youth and first-generation college students to more education and job training. Gap Inc.'s paid internship program, This Way Ahead, helps teens and young adults prepare for and land their first job. The 100,000 Opportunities Initiative, the largest employer-led coalition focused on creating career pathways for Opportunity Youth, met its goal to train and hire 100,000 Opportunity Youth by 2018 two years early, and is now aligning with the cross-sector goal of creating one million opportunities by 2021. Promising practices around action-based civics learning have emerged from organizations such as Generation Citizen, iCivic and Mikva Challenge.

On-time high school graduation rates improved

After 30 years of flatlining - thanks to organizations like America's Promise Alliance, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Center for Supportive Schools, Citizen Schools and many others working diligently to keep youth engaged and connected to school - the nation saw improved high school graduation rates. To continue success in this area, we should enable students who leave school for any variety of reasons to return to high school and obtain their diploma and also facilitate their next level of education.

Violent crime rates dropped

According to a 2012 study, the lifetime economic burden of Opportunity Youth is \$1.6 trillion to taxpayers and \$4.7 trillion to society, including crime costs. The Corps Network's Civic Justice Corps and PowerCorpsPHL have shown promising recidivism rates using national service and comprehensive youth development models to help youth and young adults transition back to the community while learning new skills, gaining credentials, giving them a stake in the community, and developing community trust.

*“We have the resources and ideas in America,
now we have to find the will.”
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

We hope you will explore the Index and share it in the communities where you live and work. And if you aren't already part of Opportunity Nation's Coalition, **[consider joining our network.](#)**

Background

The Opportunity Index is an annual composite measure of key economic, educational and civic indicators. It was launched in September 2011 and has been updated annually since. After five years of progress from the previous year's Index, for the first time, the 2016 Index did not follow this pattern. The U.S. Index remains at its 2015 value of 54 out of 100. However, this break in the positive trend of the past is not a dramatic one and there is no "smoking gun." It is due to small reversals in many indicators, as is described further below.

Taken together, the indicators that make up the Opportunity Index provide a snapshot of what opportunity looks like state-by-state and county-by-county across the country. For six years, it has been a valuable tool to help community-based organizations and state and local leaders identify concrete strategies to make meaningful improvements to opportunity and economic mobility for their residents. This report presents the sixth run of the Opportunity Index—the latest calculations for all 50 states and more than 2,700 counties, which contain 99% of the U.S. population. It also explores changes in Opportunity Index scores since the first release in 2011.

What is opportunity and how is it being measured?

Opportunity can be defined in many ways, but typically the term encompasses the range of circumstances that open the doors for people to increase their economic mobility and improve their life chances.

Opportunity stems from many sources. Some are factors that individuals cannot change; these factors, such as their racial or ethnic heritage, or who their parents are, are entirely beyond their control. Such factors exert significant influence over people's lives. Individuals whose parents did not graduate high school, for example, tend to have far fewer educational and employment opportunities than those born to parents with post-secondary degrees.

A second source of opportunity is an individual's personal characteristics and attributes. Most of us can think of women and men whose uncommon persistence, charisma, intelligence, good looks, or athleticism opened doors, providing a route out of disadvantage.

A third source of opportunity stems from the conditions present in different communities. These conditions can expand or constrict upward mobility and are often amenable to policy change. Are there decent jobs? Enough doctors? High schools that graduate most students and prepare them for good jobs or higher education? Are the streets safe?

Are young people meaningfully engaged?

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, important though they are. Instead, the Opportunity Index focuses on the third set of factors, namely the conditions present in different communities. These factors are not fixed or beyond our control as a society but rather are responsive to actions that can improve people's lives and strengthen our neighborhoods and networks.

The Opportunity Index takes a comprehensive approach to measuring access to opportunity by including both non-economic and economic indicators. The result is a data-rich tool designed to help local communities connect economic, educational, and civic issues to begin the process of identifying concrete, cross-sector solutions to complex problems.

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

Opportunity Index

Dimensions:

Jobs and Local Economy:



The areas measured by the Opportunity Index in this dimension include: employment; wages; poverty; income inequality; access to banking; and affordable housing. The availability of jobs is critical to opportunity. But jobs are not the only ingredient for a prosperous and sustainable economy, nor are all jobs equally good at creating meaningful opportunity. An overabundance of low-wage jobs, for instance, does 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 families has significant repercussions for the life chances of their children.

Education:



The educational indicators measured by the Opportunity Index include: preschool enrollment; on-time high school graduation; and the percentage of adults with at least a two-year college (associate's) degree. Access to a high-quality education is vital to 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, black and Latino youth, live in communities whose high schools graduate fewer than 60 percent of their students every year. The quality of a public school is, due in large part to the way in which school budgets are tied to local property taxes, often closely linked to the socioeconomic status of the families it serves and the neighborhood it is located in. Several studies show positive outcomes for low-income children and teens that live in communities with more affluent neighbors.

Community Health and Civic Life:



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 teenagers and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school (referred to as disconnected youth). 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 levels of trust in a community and the ability to solve collective problems. 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.

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)
Access to Banking	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's 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, and the U.S. Department of Justice. The Methodological Note provides complete sources for every indicator. The state Opportunity Index is made up of 16 indicators that are combined to yield a score from 1 to 100 in each of the aforementioned three dimensions. Each state and the District of Columbia are then awarded an overall Opportunity Score on a 100-point scale. The county Opportunity Index is made up of 14 indicators because data for two indicators related to community engagement and volunteerism are not available at the county level. Counties are awarded “Opportunity Grades,” letter grades from A+ to F, for their overall performance.

	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS	SCORES	QUANTITY
STATE		16	1-100	All 50 states & the District of Columbia.
COUNTY		14	A+ - F	2,700+



The Opportunity Index measures data from 2011-2016.

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 on the conditions present in different communities. These factors are particularly useful because they are amenable to policy change and community actions.



All the dimensions 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 Statistics
- 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

2016 State Opportunity Scores and Change Since 2011

The overall Opportunity Score for the United States for 2016 is 54.0 on a 100-point scale. Twenty-three U.S. states score below the U.S. average; twenty-eight score above.¹ For the first time over the six-year period of the Opportunity Index, the 2016 Index is in a dead heat with the previous year's Index. Prior to this year, there have been incremental annual improvements in the Index. There has been, however, an increase since the first year of the Index in 2011 of 4.4 points from the 2011 score of 49.6 out of 100.

The figure below shows U.S. trends in the Index both since the first year of the Opportunity Index (top row) and since last year's Index (second row). As will be discussed further, it illustrates two broad trends, one positive and a second that is concerning. The positive trend can be seen in the Jobs and Local Economy Dimension; a successful recovery from the Great Recession is reflected in a recent upswing in four of the six economic measures (the four green arrows in 2015-2016) despite the negative impact of the Recession on wages, inequality, and other basic economic measures shows clearly in the longer trend. Conversely, the Community Health and Civic Life dimension shows evidence of a recent backslide (four red arrows in 2015-2016) though the six-year period overall saw forward progress in this important dimension. This points to a need to focus on reviving investment in an concern for community health and civic life-related activities.

Table 2. Opportunity Index Change Over Time

	Opportunity Index	Unemployment	Median Household Income	Poverty	Income Inequality	Access to Banking	Affordable Housing	On-time High School Grad Rates
2011 - 2016	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑
2015 - 2016	↓	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑
	Associates Degree or Higher	Violent Crime	Youth not in school or work	Health care access	Healthy food access	Group membership	Volunteer rates	
2011 - 2016	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	
2015 - 2016	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	

¹ Washington, DC is included in the list of states as is customary in US Census Bureau statistics.

The Internet measure included in the Index has been updated from last year's Index for counties but not for states. This is because Internet speed is rapidly progressing and new measures are needed to keep up with technological change. The data provider, the Federal Communications Commission, is no longer collecting this data point. Their previous focus on connections with a speed of at least 200 kbps is an increasingly outdated speed for measuring high-speed Internet.

The highest-scoring state on the 2016 Opportunity Index is Vermont with a score of 65.8 out of 100. Vermont has been the first-place state every year of the Index. The lowest-scoring state in 2016 is New Mexico—with a score of 43.4. New Mexico has been in last-place on the Index for the past two years. Prior to New Mexico, Nevada held last place. New England performed well overall on the Opportunity Index, with four of its states maintaining positions in the top five spots (with New Jersey at number five), whereas states from the West (Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada) and the South (Louisiana, and Mississippi) occupied the bottom five spots on the state index.

While for the sixth consecutive year, Vermont clinched the top all-round spot, it was not first in each of the three dimensions that make up the Index. Its first place finish is likely due to its remarkable strength in aspects of opportunity related to the community health and civic life dimension at 73.1 out of 100, which is 17.6 points higher than the national score. On the other hand, that state came in at seventh in the jobs and local economy dimension and fourth in the education dimension.

Table 3. State Rankings by Opportunity Index Score: 2016

Rank	State	Opportunity Score	Jobs & Local Economy	Education	Community Health & Civic Life
*	United States	54	53.7	52.9	55.5
1	Vermont	65.8	62.8	61.5	73.1
2	Massachusetts	63.1	60.2	64.4	64.8
3	New Hampshire	62.9	67.1	60.2	61.3
4	Connecticut	62.8	59	65.5	64
5	New Jersey	62	60.2	65.8	60
6	Maryland	61.1	62.2	60	61.2
7	North Dakota	60.8	68.7	52.8	60.9
8	Nebraska	60.8	64.1	56.8	61.5
9	Maine	60.2	59.9	57	63.7
10	Minnesota	60.1	61.3	54.1	64.8
11	Iowa	60.1	62	60.2	57.9
12	District of Columbia	59.6	49.8	59.5	69.6
13	Utah	59.6	63.3	53.9	61.5
14	South Dakota	59	63.3	52.8	60.9
15	Wisconsin	58.8	58.5	57.1	60.9
16	Delaware	58.6	62.6	57.7	55.6
17	Virginia	58.4	59.4	58.1	57.6
18	New York	58.3	52.5	55.4	67.1

19	Kansas	57.9	61.1	55.2	57.3
20	Colorado	57.8	61.9	55	56.6
21	Hawaii	56.9	62.9	54.9	53.1
22	Pennsylvania	56.5	56.7	53.9	58.8
23	Illinois	56.3	53.8	59.2	55.8
24	Washington	55.5	57.4	49.9	59.2
25	Montana	55.2	55.6	53.2	56.7
26	Rhode Island	54.7	53.1	52.4	58.7
27	Missouri	54.2	54.4	53.8	54.5
28	Wyoming	54.1	59.8	46.7	55.9
29	Indiana	53.9	55.3	53.2	53.1
30	Ohio	53.5	55.2	50.1	55.3
31	North Carolina	53	52.2	52.7	54.1
32	California	52.3	51	52.8	53.2
33	Oregon	52.3	53.1	43.9	59.8
34	Michigan	52.2	53.7	49.3	53.7
35	Alaska	51.9	59.2	40.5	56
36	Texas	51.4	51.8	53.8	48.6
37	Idaho	50.8	57.3	41.9	53.1
38	South Carolina	50.4	50.4	49.5	51.3
39	Tennessee	50.1	49.3	51	50.1
40	Florida	50.1	53.3	48.7	48.3
41	Oklahoma	50.1	52.4	48.9	48.9
42	Kentucky	49.8	49	50.4	50
43	Arkansas	49.2	49.4	51.7	46.6
44	West Virginia	48.9	50.5	46.1	50.1
45	Georgia	48.1	48.6	45.3	50.3
46	Alabama	47.7	45.6	50.5	46.9
47	Arizona	47.1	50.9	43.5	46.9
48	Louisiana	45.8	45.4	44	48
49	Mississippi	45.5	41.3	46.7	48.5
50	Nevada	43.7	51.7	36.3	43.0
51	New Mexico	43.4	43.1	39.1	48

What are some important changes since the 2011 Index?

From 2011 to 2016, every state's Opportunity Score showed an increase with the exception of Alaska and New Mexico. In both cases, the overall decrease came very recently as a result of slight Index declines in 2016. The top five most improved states on the Index over this six-year period (in order from greatest improvement) are Nevada, South Carolina, Mississippi, Texas, and the District of Columbia. While Southern states have held many positions at the bottom of the Index over the years, this list shows that three of the most-improved states are in fact in the South. South Carolina also shows some of the greatest improvement from last year's Index score, as well as a positive trend across all six years. The five least improved states from 2011 by percent change are Alaska, New Mexico, Wyoming, Minnesota, and Oregon.

Alaska is the only state besides New Mexico that did not improve on the Index over the six years. Whereas the U.S. overall has seen important recent progress in reducing poverty rates, with a roughly 2 percent decrease in the percent of the population living below the poverty line from the 2015 Index to today's, Alaska continues struggles with poverty. From the 2015 Index to today, Alaska's poverty rate increased from 9.3 to 11.2, a change of over 20 percent. Income inequality in the state has also increased much more than in the country as a whole.

Table 4. State Rankings 2011-2016

Most Improved States 2011-2016:



State	2011 Ranking	2016 Ranking	Rank Change
Nevada	51	50	1
South Carolina	48	38	10
Mississippi	50	49	1
Texas	42	36	6
District of Columbia	26	12	14

States That Lost the Most Ground 2011-2016:

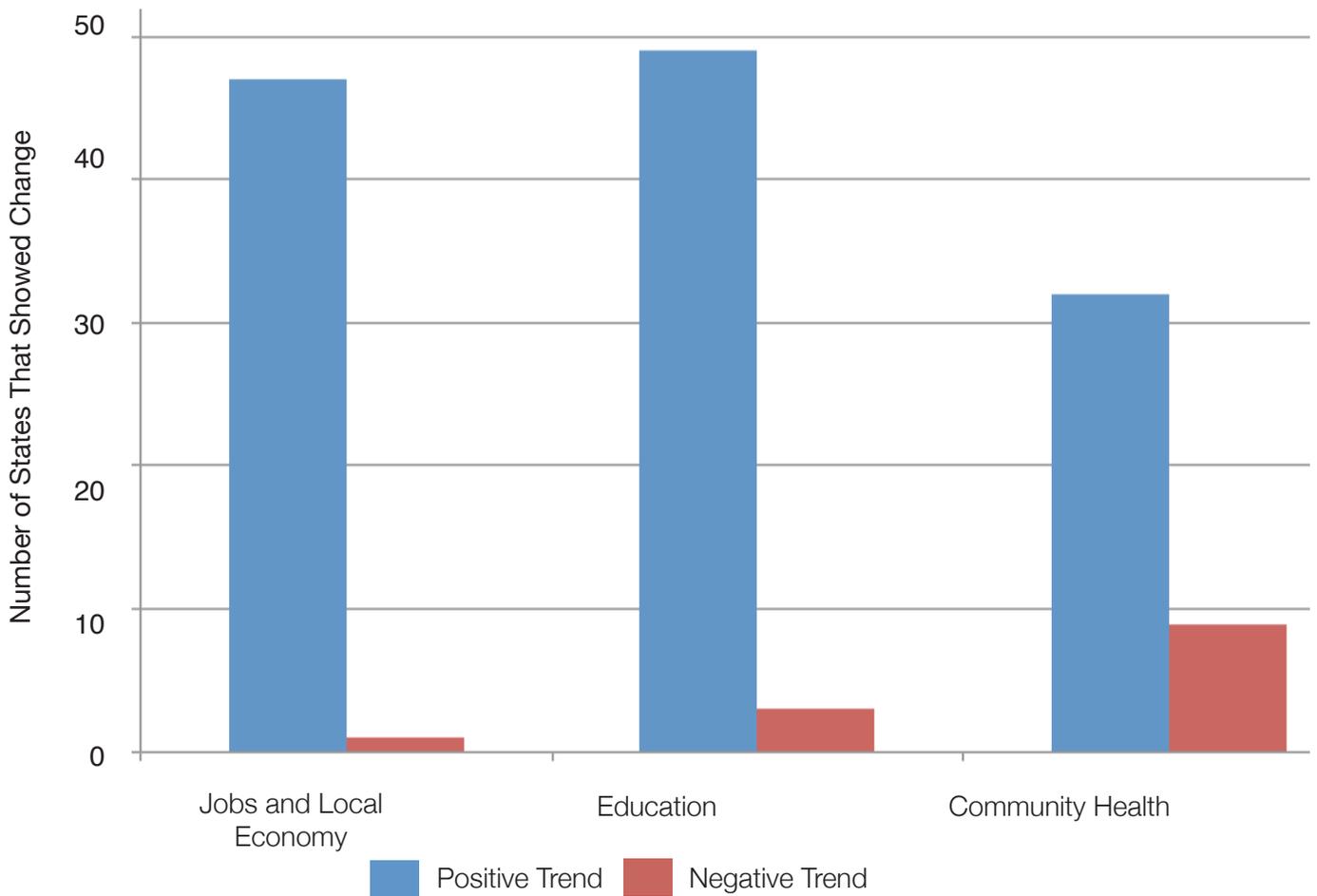


State	2011 Ranking	2016 Ranking	Rank Change
Oregon	29	33	-4
Minnesota	6	10	-4
Wyoming	18	28	-10
New Mexico	46	51	-5
Alaska	24	35	-11

Drilling down to look at the changes in the three dimensions over the six-year period, the overall picture is quite positive. Nearly all states saw improvements over this period in the areas of jobs and education. There has been a minor decline in community health and civic life over the period; 11 states saw a decline in this dimension. But the good news is that these declines were quite minor. This dimension includes six indicators, two related to civic engagement (group membership and volunteerism), two related to health (access to health care and to healthy food), one related to crime and safety, and one related to youth inclusion.

A very important indicator for community opportunity, the percentage of youth not in school and not working, improved. Roughly 411,000 fewer young people nationwide are disconnected from both school and work compared to the rate from the 2011 Index. Forty-one states made progress in reducing youth disconnection since 2011. Likewise, the rate of violent crimes in the U.S. decreased by over 15 percent with forty-one states seeing a decline in the rate of violent crime over this period. The rest of the community health and civic life indicators changed only slightly one way or the other. The one trend that is concerning is that the coverage of doctors is on the decline. The indicator, medical doctors per 100,000 population, focuses on primary care physicians such as those in general practice and internal medicine, family care, pediatrics, and obstetrics/gynecology. This confirms concern among many healthcare experts that some communities are increasingly not being served by primary care doctors.

Figure 1. Changes in Index Dimension Scores for States, 2011-2016



On each of the 16 indicators in the state Opportunity Index, there is a best- and worst-performing state. Washington, DC, with an overall Opportunity Score that puts it in 12th position among the 50 states, takes the lead in three areas: preschool, associate degree, and access to healthcare. It has the highest rate of preschool enrollment and of adults with an associate degrees or higher and the greatest concentration of doctors compared to the 50 states. One important reason for these distinctions is that DC has a very mobile population and is a magnet for highly educated Americans who are attracted to the District for its high-paying jobs. However, DC also has three very troubling areas where it is bottom-ranked in the 2016 Index. It has the highest rate of violent crime and more income inequality than any other state and it holds the distinction of having the lowest on-time high school graduation rate. In the 2016 Index, the data show that only about six in 10 freshmen (61.4 percent) in the District graduated high school four years later.

Utah also leads in three areas. It has the lowest income inequality and the highest rates of civic engagement as measured by both adults who are volunteering and adults who are involved with some form of group membership such as social, sports or religious groups. The large Mormon population in the state likely influences this outcome. Utah does not figure on the list of bottom states for any of the sixteen indicators that make up the Index.

Mississippi falls at the bottom in five areas: it is the worst performer in terms of household income, poverty, Internet access, disconnected youth, and volunteerism. While nearly three in four households in the U.S. have access to high-speed Internet, in Mississippi, just over half do. Arkansas is the only other state with under 60 percent high-speed Internet access.

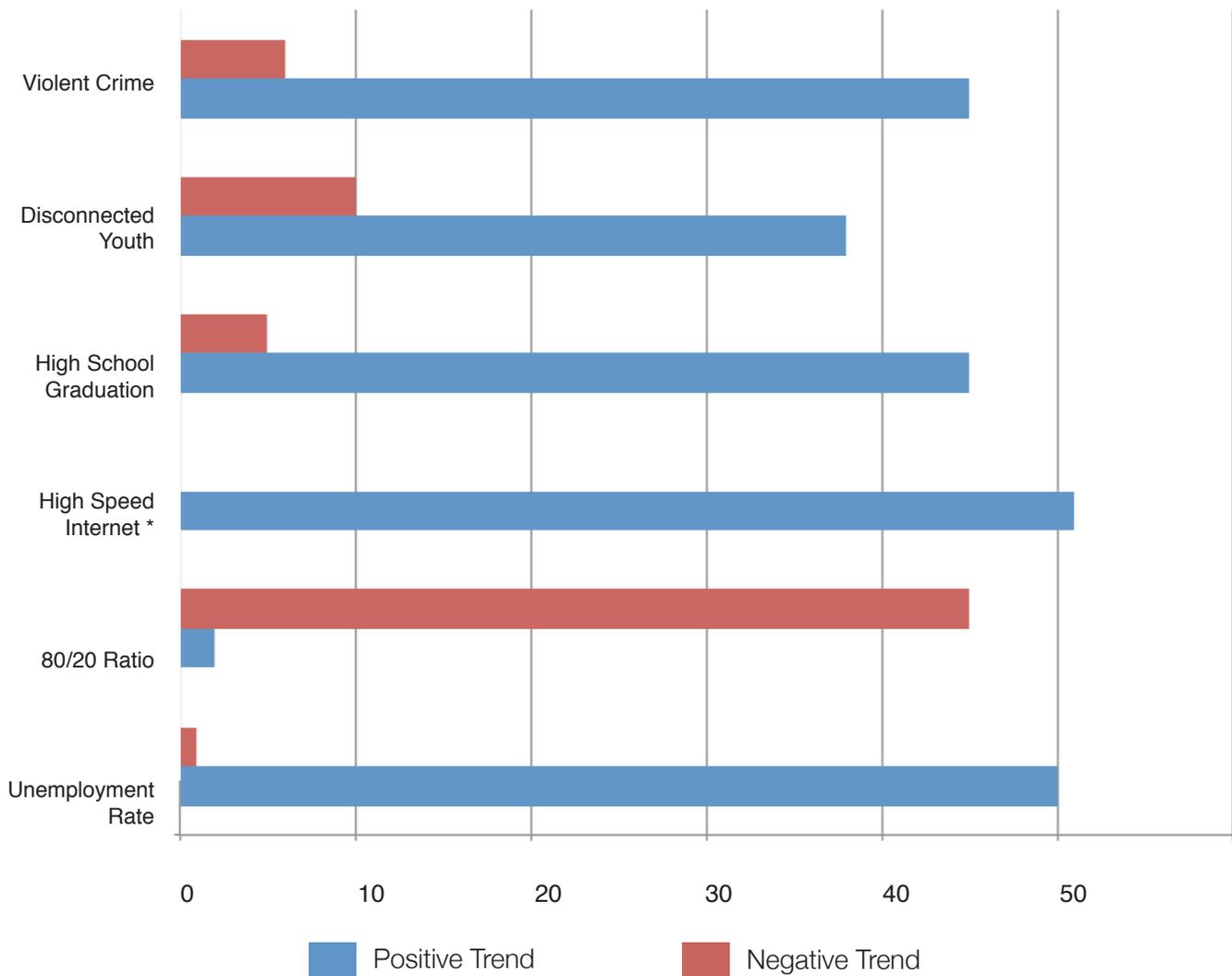
These rankings are summarized in the table below, which provides a detailed look at state performance on each indicator in 2016, including information on the most improved state measured by the greatest improvement, on a percentage basis, between 2011 and 2016.

Table 5. Top, Bottom and Most Improved States by Indicator: 2011-2016

Indicator	Top State	Bottom State	Most Improved Since the 2011 Index
Opportunity Index	Vermont	New Mexico	Nevada
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	North Dakota	Mississippi	Michigan
Education Dimension	New Jersey	Nevada	Nevada
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	Vermont	Nevada	Delaware
Unemployment Rate	South Dakota	Illinois	Colorado
Median Household Income	Maryland	Mississippi	North Dakota
Poverty	New Hampshire	Mississippi	Colorado
80/20 Ratio	Utah	District of Columbia	South Carolina
Banking Institutions	North Dakota	Nevada	Nebraska
Affordable Housing	North Dakota	California	Nevada
High-Speed Internet	Hawaii, New Hampshire, New Jersey	Mississippi	West Virginia
Preschool	District of Columbia	Idaho	District of Columbia
On-Time High School Graduation	Iowa	District of Columbia	South Carolina
Associate's degree or Higher	District of Columbia	West Virginia	District of Columbia
Violent Crime	Vermont	District of Columbia	South Carolina
Youth Not in School and Not Working	Minnesota	Mississippi	Wyoming
Doctors	District of Columbia	Idaho	Ohio
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	New York	Nevada	New York
Group Membership	Utah	Louisiana	Utah
Volunteerism	Utah	Mississippi	New Hampshire

The table below shows some trends for all fifty states plus Washington, DC since the first Opportunity Index in 2011. The good news is that as the Great Recession’s effects continue to fade, economic indicators are on the upswing. Forty-nine states saw their unemployment rate go down; only Wyoming had an increase in unemployment and North Dakota’s rate remained unchanged over this period. Both of these states have likely been affected by the severe drop in oil prices and its impact on their natural resource extraction industries over this time. A focus of much debate today is the increase in income inequality, a trend that is confirmed over the six years of the Opportunity Index. As the figure below illustrates, the great majority of states (forty-five) have greater income inequality in today’s Index than they did in 2011 as measured by the ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile. High speed Internet is, unsurprisingly, more prevalent in every state, on-time high school graduation is up in the majority of states, and the rates of both youth disconnection and violent crime have dropped.

Figure 2. Trends in Selected Indicators By State: 2011-2016



The high speed internet indicator excludes Hawaii for which new data are not available from the Federal Communications Commission.

State Opportunity Scores and Changes Since 2015

While the national Opportunity Index from 2015 to 2016 was unchanged, at the state level, there was some movement. Nineteen states saw Index improvements, 15 remained unchanged, and 17 states lost ground over the year (see Table below). Delaware, at the winning end, saw a 4.5 percent boost in its Index score. Opportunity for Delaware’s residents expanded in a number of areas. At a time when overall unemployment went down by two percent, Delaware’s rate decreased by nearly seven percent. On-time high school graduation is up by over eight percent, in marked contrast to the US rate, which inched up by one percent between 2015 and 2016.. And a third area to celebrate is in terms of youth disconnection. The rate dropped by roughly 25 percent (15.4 percent to 11.5 percent) in one year. When translated into young lives, this represents over 3,700 teenagers and young adults in Delaware year on year that are finding their foothold in the adult world.

Kentucky, at the bottom end, saw a 5.3 percent negative move in terms of opportunity from the 2015 Index to 2016. In Kentucky, the decline in this one-year period happened in a number of areas but the area with the greatest backslide is in the Community Health and Civic Life dimension. In both indicators of civic engagement, group membership and volunteerism, Kentucky saw some of the biggest declines of any state—over 20 percent—putting it among the bottom five on change in these indicators. We did see a reduction in violent crime nationally of nearly 6 percent during this period, while Kentucky conversely saw a six percent increase in violent crimes per 100,000 residents.

Table 6. Change in Index State Dimension Scores: from 2015 to 2016

	Positive Trend	No Change	Negative Trend
Opportunity Index	19	15	17
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	17	23	11
Education Dimension	34	6	11
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	15	7	29

While the overall picture was about half and half, the economic picture was more hopeful, with 17 states seeing positive economic and jobs movement and 11 not. Education is a good story, with nearly two-thirds of states having an overall positive change. And as is discussed above, the community health and civic life dimension did not positive improvement in the majority of states.

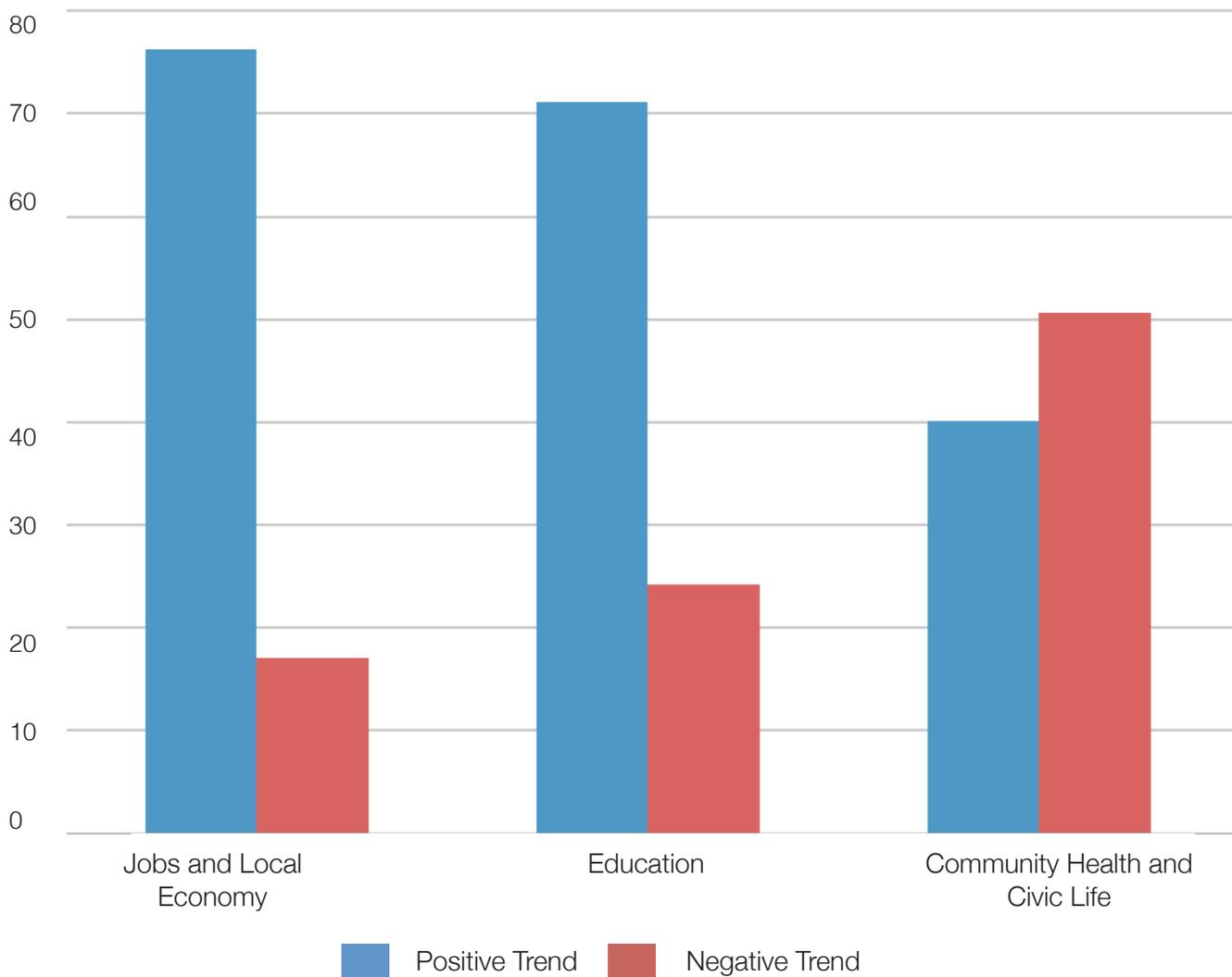
County Opportunity Grades and Changes Since 2011

Opportunity Index grades are provided for 2,763 U.S. counties or county equivalents. This group of counties is home to 99 percent of Americans. Over three-quarters of counties saw their Opportunity Grade increase between the 2011 and 2016 Indexes, and nearly eight percent remained unchanged over this six-year period. Roughly 16 percent of counties had lower Opportunity Grades in 2016 than they had in 2011.

Only 122 of the over 2,700 counties saw a decline of five percent or more in their Opportunity Grades over the six years. Nearly half (47.5 percent) of these counties were in the South and one-third were in the Midwest (32 percent). The West (with 16.4 percent) and Northeast (4.1 percent) had few counties that saw a backward trend in the Index.

Changes in the three dimensions by county show a more nuanced pattern than the very positive progress over that in state scores. There has been more downward movement in Education indicators and a surprising backslide in the Community Health and Civic Life Indicators, where more than half of counties saw a reversal. The main indicator where there was a reversal in progress over this six year period in education is preschool enrollment. In community health and civic life, the primary indicator with the most setbacks is disconnected youth.

Figure 3. Trends in Dimension Scores by County: 2011-2016



The distinction of county with the greatest opportunity is Falls Church City, Virginia, in the DC metro area. (While it has the word “city” in its name, Falls Church City is a county according to the U.S. Census Bureau.) It is the only county that received an opportunity grade of A+. Falls Church City was also at the top of the county list the previous two years of the Index.

At the bottom of the county rankings, three counties received an F: Willacy County, Texas; Yazoo County Mississippi; and Warren County, Georgia. In Willacy County, the unemployment rate is 12.4 percent, more than double the national rate. In Yazoo County, only 62 percent of high school freshmen graduate within four years. Finally, in Warren County, the percent of youth ages 16 to 24 neither enrolled in school nor working is almost 48 percent. This rate of nearly half of disconnected youth is unacceptably high when compared to the U.S. average of 13.2 percent.

The most improved county from 2011 to 2016 is Dooly County, Georgia (population 14,188). Though it has consistently been among the lowest ranked counties, taking the bottom spot last year, there has nonetheless been progress from an F to a D+ over this period.

Falls Church City, VA (population of 13,601) not only earned the highest Opportunity Grade in the 2016 Index of any county (A+) but it also holds the distinction of having the highest overall Education and Community Health and Civic Life dimension scores. Falls Church City also comes out on top in terms of adults with an associate degree or higher. In this county, just over 78 percent of adults 25 and older have completed at least an associate degree; the U.S. average is less than half this rate (38.2 percent). Bowman County, North Dakota (pop. 3,247) has the highest score on the Jobs and Local Economy dimension.

As the table below notes, 424 counties scored the highest on the 5-level high-speed Internet indicator, meaning that in each of these counties, more than 800 households per 1,000 have a high-speed Internet connection in their homes. These counties are scattered throughout the map, but California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington have sizeable contingencies of such counties. The majority of these counties (about 55 percent) have populations over 100,000 residents.

These trends are summarized below. In the case where multiple counties have the same value, the number of counties is listed.

Table 6. Top, Bottom and Most Improved Counties by Indicator: 2011-2016

Indicator	Top County	Bottom County	Most Improved County
Opportunity Grade	Falls Church City, Virginia	Willacy County, Texas	Dooly County, Georgia
Jobs and Local Economy Dimension	Bowman County, North Dakota	Willacy County, Texas	Bullock County, Alabama
Education Dimension	Falls Church City, Virginia	Boundary County, Idaho	Lee County, Arkansas
Community Health and Civic Life Dimension	Falls Church City, Virginia	Red River Parish, Louisiana	Saguache County, Colorado
Unemployment Rate	McCone County, Montana	Lake and Peninsula Borough, Alaska	Shannon County, Texas
Median Household Income	Loudoun County, Virginia	Owsley County, Kentucky	Loup County, Nebraska
Poverty	Borden County, Texas	Shannon County, South Dakota	Foard County, Texas

Income Inequality	Clark County, Idaho	New York County, New York	Terry County, Texas
Banking Institutions	Kalawao County, Hawaii	24 counties without a banking institution	Calhoun County, Florida
Affordable Housing	Roberts County, Texas	Bronx County, New York	Lake County, Colorado
High-Speed Internet	424 counties	9 counties	6 counties in Georgia, North Carolina
Preschool	Dukes County, Massachusetts	Broadwater County, Montana and Bath County, Virginia both 0	Mahaska County, Iowa
On-Time High School Graduation	5 counties with 98 in Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky	San Miguel County, Colorado	Talbot County, Georgia
Associate Degree or Higher	Falls Church City, Virginia	Wade Hampton Census Area, Alaska	Wilkinson County, Mississippi
Violent Crime	Knox County, Nebraska	St. Louis City, Missouri	Menominee County, Wisconsin
Youth Not in School and Not Working	10 counties with 0 in Kansas, Nebraska, Dakotas	Wheeler County, Georgia	Buckingham County, Virginia
Doctors	Montour County, Pennsylvania	175 counties with 0	Newton County, Missouri
Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors	Loving County, Texas	Los Angeles County, California	Bee County, Texas

Indicator Correlations

Which individual parts of the Index have the closest relationship with high scores on the overall Opportunity Index? In the case of both the county and state Indexes, the two indicators that are most closely associated with the overall Index are: youth not in school and not working and poverty. There is a strong negative correlation between both youth not in school and not working and poverty and the overall Index. What this tells us is that efforts to improve opportunity at both the state and local levels must focus on strategies and actions to reduce household poverty and must take action to reconnect teens and young adults who are neither working nor in school.

While the correlation between the Index and youth disconnection is very strong, Washington, DC is a notable outlier. As previously mentioned, DC is a place where working adults have some of the highest levels of education and excellent access to health care. It also has the third highest household income, after only Maryland and New Jersey. Yet in terms of youth disconnection, DC does not achieve these stellar outcomes. In fact, the rate of young people who are disconnected (13.9 percent) is above the national average of 13.2 percent. The Opportunity Index provides a lot of information that can be used by local advocates and social service providers. Improved outcomes in high schools and expanded opportunity for young adults are urgent pre-requisites for a safer, fairer, and more vibrant future for the District.

What are some associations between various indicators that make up the overall Opportunity Index? At both the state and county levels, the rate of youth disconnection is strongly and positively correlated with the level of poverty. This finding is very much in line with research commissioned by Opportunity Nation on this population, which shows that disconnected youth are nearly twice as likely to live in poverty than connected youth.³

Another notable correlation at both the state and county levels, also related to youth disconnection, is the strong, negative correlation with the percentage of adults with an associate degree or higher. This correlation suggests that teens and young adults who are neither working nor in school tend to come from communities where adults have low rates of educational attainment at the associate degree level or higher. Recent research has confirmed that young people's struggles with education and employment often mirror those of their parents and neighbors.

Unsurprisingly, another strong relationship between two indicators in the Index, both for states and counties, is between poverty and household income; poverty by definition is a lack of income. Finally, a very strong relationship exists between poverty and Internet access. At both the state and county levels, places where poverty is relatively lower tend to be places where high-speed Internet access is high.

Conclusion

The Opportunity Index was created for state and local actors to advocate for, and take action to, expand opportunity in America's communities. The rich collection of data discussed above provides strong signals on communities that are advancing in areas that are vital for this expansion and communities where opportunity is lagging and action is imperative. The most exciting thing about improvements over years and from one year to the next is that it gives us hope that progress is possible and shows us where to examine closely for programs and policies that are working. Important progress has occurred in many of the economic and education measures included in the Index. The lagging area is related to community health and civic life. In addition to the overall trends are the state and county changes that can help decision makers and others monitor change and refocus energy on the geographic and thematic areas with the greatest need.

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

³ Lewis, Kristen and Sarah Burd-Sharps. Zeroing In on Place and Race: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities. 2015. Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council.

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, academic, civic, and other factors together to support increased opportunity and economic mobility.

The 2016 Opportunity Index provides Opportunity Scores for all 50 states and Washington, DC, and Opportunity Grades for 2,788 counties and county equivalents¹, comprising 99 percent of the nation's population. These notes provide the methodology for calculating the 2016 Opportunity Index.

The following table summarizes the themes and indicators that make up the 2016 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)
Access to Banking	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 3,140 counties and county equivalents in the United States. The 2016 Opportunity Index for counties includes 88 percent of the 3,140 counties and county-equivalents in the U.S., or 99 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 dimensions in the Opportunity Index are weighted equally, 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 zero to 100, where zero 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, disconnected youth (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

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.

been done by subtracting 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.

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

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
Access to Banking	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; five-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 zero 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 zero to 100.

Calculating the Opportunity Score and Assigning Opportunity Grades

Once 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 differentiate between these two different scales (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, while states receive 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 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 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 annual 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 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 on the next page.

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 overall 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 3,140 counties and county-equivalents, 352 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 2016 Opportunity Index are for April 2016. 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 for the United States is about \$49,000. Median household income data in the 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 for counties. All median household income figures in the Opportunity Index are expressed in inflation-adjusted 2010 dollars. 2010 dollars are used in order to facilitate comparability between the 2016 Opportunity Index and previous years.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 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 5, meaning that the income of the household at the 80th percentile is 5 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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010–2014 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. Data on this indicator for the State 2016 Opportunity Index are from the FCC 2013 and for the counties is from 2014. Due to rapidly-changing technology, the FCC is no longer collecting this data at the state level partly because the previous focus on connections with a speed of at least 200 kbps is an increasingly outdated speed for measuring high-speed Internet. The FCC continues to collect this data at the county level until further notice.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 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 and school district data are from the U.S. Department of Education: ED Facts Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) for the 2013-14 school year. Measure of America mapped School Districts to estimate the counties and recalculated the ACGR.

Note: State and county data for this indicator come from the ACGR. EdFacts defines this measure as “the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade (or the earliest high school grade), students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is “adjusted” by adding any students who subsequently transfer into the cohort and subtracting any students who subsequently transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die.”

From 2011-2014, the Opportunity Index used the Average Freshmen Graduation Rate (AFGR) 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. County data were from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings analysis of data from the National Center for Education Statistics and Departments of Education of various states.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 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 2016 Opportunity Index are from 2013-2014.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2013-2014.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2014 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. This data is produced from nearly 17,000 law enforcement agencies across the U.S., due to the volume of reporting agencies there is a reporting lag.

Note: Data for this indicator in the 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014 for states and 2010-2012 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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014-2015.

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 2016 Opportunity Index are for 2014.

Indicator: Population Estimates

Definition: Estimate of the mid-year (July 1st) resident population of each state and county in 2014.

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

Note: Data on this indicator in the 2016 Opportunity Index are 2014 vintage population estimates.

Recent Changes to the Opportunity Index

The 2016 Opportunity Index includes modifications to one indicator: *On-Time High School Graduation (% of freshmen who graduate in four years)*. In previous years, the Opportunity Index has used an indicator that is technically called Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR) for on-time high school graduation. Over the past few years, there has been a shift away from collection of the AFGR by states towards a new indicator for on-time high school graduation called the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). While both indicators are about the percentage of freshmen who graduate high school in four years, the ACGR is thought to be a more precise indicator because it accounts for the transfer of high school students into and out of the school during the year.

As a result, the Department of Education has not updated AFGR since 2012 and so it is impossible to continue to use this indicator. It is widely accepted that the ACGR will be replacing the AFGR. Measure of America studied the difference between the AFGR and the ACGR at the national level and found a one percentage point difference between these two indicators. There is more variation when you drill-down to the state and county level. For example, in 2012, the District of Columbia's AFGR was 71 percent compared with a 2012 ACGR of 59 percent. Detailed comparisons and a full explanation of the two measurements can be found in this report "[Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic. Annual Update 2016.](#)" Please note that Idaho did not report a 2012-13 ACGR at the state level. In this instance we used the 2012 AFGR from the 2014 Opportunity Index.

Although both the AFGR and ACGR estimate on-time high school graduation rates, they use different methodologies. This technically means that the 2016 Opportunity Index is not strictly comparable to that of earlier years. But given the difference in this one indicator is relatively small, and it comprises only one of 14 (for states) or 16 (for counties) indicators that make up the Index, overall Index comparisons can be made but must be made with caution. Comparisons on this one indicator from 2016 to earlier years should also be made with caution.

Violent Crime. The data for county-level violent crime in the 2016 Opportunity Index is the same as it is in the 2015 Index. County level estimates from the County Health Rankings have not been updated.

High-Speed Internet. The data for the state-level high speed internet in the 2016 Opportunity Index is the same as the 2015 Index. The FFC is no longer updating this measurement at the state level.

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 the District of Columbia and grades more than 2,700 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 350 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.