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**PROSPERITY INDEX**

The United States Prosperity Index  
**Kentucky**  
County report  
**2021**

The Legatum Institute would like to extend their gratitude to The Helmsley Charitable Trust for their support, without which the production of this Index and report would not have been possible. Support for the county Index was also provided in part by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, for which the Institute is also very grateful. The Institute would also like to thank The Walton Family Foundation, in particular for their support towards the county Index during the past year. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the Legatum Institute and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Helmsley Charitable Trust, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, or any of their individual employees.



#### **About the Helmsley Charitable Trust**

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The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional efforts in the U.S. and around the world in health and select place-based initiatives. Since beginning active grant-making in 2008, Helmsley has committed more than \$3 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. Learn more about Helmsley at [helmsleytrust.org](http://helmsleytrust.org).

#### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

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For more than 45 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/RobertWoodJohnsonFoundation>.



#### **About the Walton Family Foundation**

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The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses, work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving K-12 education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta.

The Legatum Institute would like to thank the Legatum Foundation for their sponsorship and for making this report possible. Learn more about the Legatum Foundation at [www.legatum.org](http://www.legatum.org)



# Contents

Foreword .....	2
How to use the United States Prosperity Index.....	4
<i>Using the United States Prosperity Index</i> .....	6
Domain and Pillar definitions.....	10
Kentucky county findings.....	12
<i>The U.S. Prosperity Index, Kentucky county rankings</i> .....	19
Methodology and Acknowledgements .....	22

## Foreword



The United States stands tall on the global stage with much to be confident about and celebrate. It is one of the most prosperous countries in the world, ranking 18<sup>th</sup> out of 167 nations. It can be justifiably proud of its particularly strong and open economy, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> globally. In the decade to 2020, prosperity in the U.S. had been rising consistently, with all states benefiting from the improvement.

However, over the last year, the nation has faced three major challenges that are likely to be reflected upon as significant moments in U.S. history: the handling of a global pandemic and its consequences, a heavily contested presidential election, and increased tensions because of political, social and racial divisions. These all have a direct impact on what it means to have an inclusive society, an open economy, and empowered people – the building blocks of prosperity.

Even before the pandemic, other factors were acting as a brake on progress. Increases in suicides, drug overdose deaths and poor self-reported mental health reflect the deterioration of the Mental Health of Americans, which has fallen 21 places in the global rankings to 149<sup>th</sup> over the last decade, contributing to the nation ranking 59<sup>th</sup> globally for Health. There has been a steady increase in the frequency of mass killings and injuries, the high level of which is a factor in the U.S. ranking 66<sup>th</sup> globally on Safety and Security.

To create a more prosperous America, the new administration, seeking to address these and other challenges, must build on the nation's strengths and mitigate its weaknesses. To do so well, it is critically important to have a clear picture of the America it has inherited. This means understanding the true nature of these strengths and weaknesses at a local, state, and federal level across its institutions, economy, and the wellbeing of the people.

Through the generous support of The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, and with additional support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Walton Family Foundation, the U.S. Prosperity Index provides a detailed and locally-based diagnosis of the underlying characteristics of the nation's prosperity. The Index uses a comprehensive set of indicators grouped into 48 policy-focused elements to present an update on the prosperity of the 50 states of the Union and Washington D.C., and an analysis of the prosperity across 1,196 counties in twelve selected states.\*

By assessing a combination of institutional, economic, and social wellbeing measures, the Index can help frame an agenda through which the nation's interconnected challenges can be better understood and addressed. In particular, the Index reveals that the high levels of prosperity that enable the U.S. to stand tall on the global stage are distributed unevenly across the country, with significant disparities at state and local levels and among different groups in society.

Our analysis in this report shows that the key to unlocking greater prosperity in the U.S. lies in the potential for improvement in every state and county, and not just nationally. The response by state and local governments will be critical to the recovery. As political, social and racial divisions have widened, trust in the federal government is near historic lows. However, trust in local government has been stronger through the pandemic. The essay *Rebuilding U.S. social capital in a polarized era* illustrates how public trust in institutions is highest for those that are local, and that Americans' pride in their local community's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic was twice as strong as at a national level.

The Index has been intentionally designed to be a transformational tool at a local level. Its granular detail enables targeted policy responses that can drive tangible improvements in prosperity. Following the recently announced \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan (ARP), the Index is available for state and county leaders, to support them in their decision making on how and where best to focus these important resources. Combined with additional local insight and demographic data, this will enable a roadmap of targeted interventions to be developed that will benefit all Americans. The essay *Getting recovery right* discusses the need for states and counties to invest in the necessary data infrastructure and systems so they are best placed to utilize resources to address local challenges. It offers some reflections on how the Index can guide this process.

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\* California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma and Texas.

While acknowledging the considerable challenges the nation is facing, there is much to be hopeful about when considering prosperity in the U.S. Its high global ranking and the long-term improvement across many aspects of U.S. society will provide a strong foundation upon which to reset and rebuild as it emerges from these challenging times. Innovation and dynamism will be critical to forging strong economies following the disruption of the pandemic. Hence, it is encouraging to see the entrepreneurial spirit already rising, with the number of new business applications in 2020 being the highest on record, and that this trend has continued into 2021.

We are keen to work with those who wish to play their part in building a more prosperous America. Over the past year, we have been encouraged to hear about the different ways the Index is already being used to effect change across the country, from informing the community needs assessments of rural hospitals in Montana to helping make the case for legislative change to reduce high healthcare costs in Mississippi and by a community foundation to shape their strategic priorities.

Our ambition is that other national, state, and local governments, business leaders, investors, philanthropists, and civil society leaders across the U.S. will use the Index to help set their agendas for growth and development, and that others will use it to hold them to account. If you are interested in discussing how you can use the findings of the U.S. Prosperity Index or want to know more about our work overall please contact us at info@li.com, or visit the dedicated website at [www.usprosperity.net](http://www.usprosperity.net).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Brien".

**Dr. Stephen Brien**  
Director of Policy, Legatum Institute

# How to use the United States Prosperity Index

The United States Prosperity Index has been developed as a practical tool to help identify what specific action needs to be taken to contribute to strengthening the pathways from poverty to prosperity across the 50 states of the Union and Washington D.C., and the 1,196 counties of twelve selected states.

The Index consists of 11 pillars of prosperity, built upon 48 actionable policy areas (elements), and is underpinned by over 200 indicators. The Index has been designed to benefit a wide range of users, including state and county leaders, policymakers, investors, business leaders, philanthropists, journalists, researchers and U.S. citizens.

- State and county leaders can use it to help shape priorities for a policy agenda for their area;
- Federal, state and county leaders can use it to help inform priorities for a policy agenda for their area;

- Policymakers can use it to determine specific areas that require action to help increase prosperity;
- Investors can use it to inform capital allocation;
- Business leaders can use it to identify and communicate the changes that need to be made to improve the business climate and the productive capacity of states and counties;
- Philanthropists can use it to identify the areas where they can have the greatest impact beyond the well-trodden paths, and to sense-check grant applications for funds;
- Journalists and U.S. citizens can use it to hold their state and local governments to account;
- Researchers can use it to complement other datasets to analyze the underlying patterns behind economic and social issues, and inform the broader policy, business, and philanthropic community.





# Using the United States Prosperity Index

## INTERPRETING THE INDEXES

For every U.S. state and Washington D.C., the Index uses the same indicators, and combines them in the same way to create elements and pillars, domains and overall prosperity. Similarly, for the 1,196 counties in the twelve selected states, a consistent set of indicators have been used and combined in the same way to mirror the state-level approach to ensure the state-level and county-level Indexes complement each other and provide a deeper richness of how prosperity is distributed across each state.

By using the Index at a state-and county-level, it is possible to compare the relative performance of each state or county for overall prosperity and for each of the 11 pillars of prosperity, such as health, education, and social capital, and the 48 elements within the pillars. The elements have been established to represent key policy areas, such as early K-12 (primary) education, government integrity, and mental health, to help facilitate more targeted action at the appropriate level.

Making these comparisons will enable the user to explore which aspects of prosperity are more or less well-developed within a state or county, and how these compare with other states and counties. The higher the ranking, the stronger the performance of that state or county for the pillar or element, when compared with another lower down the rankings. Further to this, the index provides data over a 10-year period, making it possible to see whether prosperity, and its underpinning elements, has been improving or deteriorating over time, and what specifically is driving that change. This will enable areas of strength in a state or a county to be built on and areas of weakness to be understood and addressed. The county-level Index enables the performance within a state to be more clearly understood, and it enables comparison with counties in other states, creating an environment in which good practice can be identified and shared across state boundaries.

## APPLYING THE INDEXES

The data in the state-and county-level Indexes and analysis contained in the report can be used for a variety of purposes, for example:

- Benchmarking performance against peers;
- In-depth analysis of prosperity at the state or county level;
- Understanding whether prosperity is improving or weakening over time, and what is driving this;
- Identifying the binding constraints to increased prosperity;
- Informing priorities for setting state and county agendas, for example as part of the budget planning process.

Where a state or county shows a strong or weak performance in a pillar, it is possible to drill down and identify what particular policy-related element is driving this trend. This will help inform the required policy action to strengthen performance.

For example, it may be discovered that a state or county's poor prosperity rankings are driven by a weak performance in education. Upon further investigation, the Index reveals that, although current education policy in the state is weaker in K-12 education, it has been focused on improving tertiary education when contrasted with comparator states. In particular, further investigation of the Index reveals that low graduation rates may be driving the weak performance in K-12 education. This information can help to target specific areas that need improvement and provide a starting point for what can be done to improve education, and thereby increase prosperity.

By using the historical data provided by the Index for the example above, it may become apparent that K-12 graduation rates have declined rapidly over the past three years. Discussion with local education officials on the decline may reveal that this coincides with the conclusion of a learning difficulties support program, pointing to the particular area where action is needed.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE

There are several tools available to aid analysis and interpretation of the United States Prosperity Index. Alongside this report, which provides a high-level analysis of the findings from states and counties, additional information is available via our website at [www.usprosperity.net](http://www.usprosperity.net).

**State-and county-level profiles.** This 15-page profile, for each of the 50 states and Washington D.C. and the 1,196 counties, provides more detailed pillar, element and indicator information, including rankings and scores, and how these change over time.

**Indicator scores.** This Excel spreadsheet contains the scores for all of the indicators for each year since 2010 at the state or county level. Using these scores, the user can carry out more in-depth analysis. Further information on how the scores for each indicator are calculated can be found in the Methodology section (see page 94).

## USING THE INDEX

### Political leaders

This report provides federal, state and local governments with the ability to explore the performance of the states and counties across 11 pillars of prosperity. The Index and the data on which it is built provide a foundation on which more effective interventions and policies can be designed. It provides an unparalleled overview of how these units have been performing over time and relative to one another.

### Policymakers

The Index and its accompanying resources allow policymakers to benchmark the performance of each state and county against other states and counties across 11 pillars and 48 elements of prosperity, to create a more granular perspective of performance and identify what is holding back their development.



Each of the 48 elements has been designed to be a recognizable, discrete area of domestic policy, each of which is measured using a combination of indicators from a variety of public data sources. The indicators should be interpreted as a set of proxies for the underlying policy concept, and we would encourage policymakers to interpret their score and rank for an element as the trigger for more fundamental analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of its performance.

In addition to helping focus analysis, these materials allow policy-makers to develop diagnostic tools and identify potential options to consider, based on the performance of other states and counties.

### **Philanthropists**

The Index identifies areas where philanthropists might want to contribute to drive levels of prosperity in the U.S., working in partnership with local agencies. This might involve using the Index to identify areas where civil society can make a meaningful difference to people's lives, such as by contributing to the strengthening of social capital in particular local areas where it is fraying, or working in partnership with local governments to try and boost the quality of local investment environments for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

### **Investors and business leaders**

The business community is well positioned to identify barriers to starting, operating, and growing a business, and to demonstrate to local, state and federal governments the economic potential

from reforms such as lifting onerous regulation and reducing other barriers to help improve the investment environment. Furthermore, business leaders and investors can contribute to infrastructure policy development by demonstrating the economic impact of investment in communications, transport, and energy projects, which by implementing can lead to increased prosperity.

### **Academics and researchers**

For academics and researchers, our database of curated indicators is a unique resource, enabling comparison of trends and patterns across the past 10 years for much of the data. By providing a holistic dataset across many disciplines, it provides an opportunity to compare in a straightforward way the impact of disparate factors, such as how living conditions are related to education levels, or how levels of social tolerance are related to social networks.

### **Journalists and civil society**

The United States Prosperity Index is based on publicly available and verifiable data, which means it can be a powerful resource for those who want to hold up a mirror to those in power and society at large. Holding federal, state and local leaders to account is a crucial role for both journalists and civil society. The institutional, economic and social performance of a state or county is critical to its prosperity, and that of the U.S. as a whole, and having non-government actors identifying weaknesses and celebrating successes can help spur on state and county leaders. To do so well requires easy access to reliable data that can be represented in a digestible way.

## THE PATHWAY TO TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is a process, not an event, which can take time. Intermediate benchmarks are most helpful and effective, and the most obvious challenges facing a state or county should be considered in the first instance. Understanding the specifics of each state's and county's circumstances will be critical to determining the sequencing and prioritisation. The Index provides a set of hypotheses to test. The issues of highest priority will likely be the elements that are performing relatively poorly, but are not necessarily the weakest performing elements, as creating the conditions to warrant improving the weakest performing elements may require improving some of the elements that are less weak first.

It is important to identify the most binding constraint to progress and use it to inform the sequencing and prioritisation. To give a simplified example, a state may find itself performing poorly when it comes to its financing ecosystem and low levels of dynamism. In such a situation, seeking to increase investment is unlikely to have much of an impact, as investors will be more attracted to investing in an area where there are already a large number of startups and new entrepreneurs. In such a circumstance, creating an environment that attracts new businesses and startups might make for a more impactful first step.

As every single state or county can improve both the economic and social wellbeing of its residents, clear opportunities therefore exist for states and counties to learn from each other. The Index identifies these opportunities for improvement and where other states and counties have been successful in addressing the same challenges. This can guide supplementary research to inform the ways in which successful strategies from one state or county might be adapted to address weaknesses in another.

## INFORMING THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

In March 2021, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act 2021, providing a package of \$1.9 trillion to address the impact of COVID-19. The ARP offers a significant opportunity to invest in the future prosperity of the United States, especially for those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, who were already the ones that had been left behind. Utilizing the information within the U.S. Prosperity Index can help states and counties decide on where to spend ARP funds.

## EMERGING USER CASE STUDIES

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of producing the U.S. Index and there are a number of user-case stories where the Index is being used to inform different parts of U.S. society.

In particular, the Index is gaining considerable traction within the health community. The health pillar, containing 33 indicators, provides a comprehensive assessment of the overall health of each state and county. The Index captures social determinants of health – for example, those within the Living Conditions and the Natural Environment pillars – which impact health outcomes. To this end, the county-level Index is being used by Montana State University as part of its work in conducting the Community Needs Assessments of rural hospitals within the state. These assessments take into account the 'up-stream' services that contribute to health outcomes. Many of these 'up-stream' services are contained within the Index, providing a rich source of information for these assessments.

The county-level Index is being used by foundations to help identify the particular weaknesses within their state to inform the areas that they wish to give attention to. It is being used to help assess the merits of grant applications made to foundations as part of its application assessment criteria.

Finally, the state-level Index has been used to support legislative changes that will reduce the high prevalence of occupational licensing within a state. The legislation adopts Universal Recognition, which helps ease the overly burdensome and duplicative licensing process that prevents workers from out-of-state gaining employment in their chosen profession, reducing the need for retraining for a number of occupations.



# Domain and Pillar definitions

Prosperity is a multi-dimensional concept, which the United States Prosperity Index seeks to measure, explore, and understand as fully as possible. The framework of the Index captures prosperity through three equally-weighted domains which are the essential foundations of prosperity — Inclusive Societies, Open

Economies, and Empowered People. These domains are made up of 11 pillars, which are themselves underpinned by 48 constituent elements. These are the building blocks and policy areas crucial for achieving true prosperity for all residents across the United States.

**Inclusive Societies** are an essential requirement for prosperity, where social and legal institutions protect the fundamental freedoms of individuals and their ability to flourish. This domain explores the relationship structures that exist within a society, and the degree to which they either enable or obstruct societal cohesion and collective development. Areas within this domain range from the relationship of citizen and state, to the degree to which violence permeates societal norms, to the interaction of freedoms of different groups and individuals, to the way in which individuals interact with one another, their communities and institutions. These issues have been both a practical consideration for the majority of modern human experience, and a subject of academic study.<sup>1,2,3</sup> We examine the fundamental aspects of inclusive societies across four pillars, each with component elements.

**Safety and Security** measures the degree to which individuals and communities are free from terrorism, including mass killings, violent crime, and property crime. The lives of individuals, their freedoms, and the security of their property are at risk in a society where these activities are present, through both their current prevalence and long-lasting effects. In short, a community or society can prosper only in an environment of security and safety for its citizens.

**Personal Freedom** measures basic legal rights (Agency), individual liberties (Freedom of Assembly and Association, Freedom of Speech and Access to Information), the Absence of

Legal Discrimination and the degree of Social Tolerance experienced in a society. Societies that foster strong civil rights and freedoms have been shown to enjoy increased levels of satisfaction among their citizens.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a state benefits from higher levels of national income when its citizens' personal liberties are protected and when it is welcoming of the diversity that stimulates innovation.<sup>5</sup>

**Governance** measures the extent to which there are checks and restraints on power, and whether governments operate effectively and without corruption. The nature of a state's governance has a material impact on its prosperity. The rule of law, strong institutions and regulatory quality contribute significantly to economic growth, as do competent governments that enact policy efficiently and design regulations that deliver policy objectives without being overly burdensome.

**Social Capital** measures Personal and Family Relationships, Social Networks and the cohesion a society experiences when there is high institutional trust and people respect and engage with one another (Civic and Social Participation), both of which have a direct effect on prosperity. A person's wellbeing is best provided for in a society where people trust one another and have the support of their friends and family. Societies with lower levels of trust tend to experience lower levels of economic growth. The word "capital" in "social capital" highlights the contribution of social networks as an asset that produces economic returns and improves wellbeing.

**O**pen Economies encourage innovation and investment, promote business and commerce, and facilitate inclusive growth. This domain captures the extent to which the economies of each state and county embody these ideals. Without an open, competitive economy, it is challenging to create lasting social and economic wellbeing where individuals, communities, and businesses are empowered to reach their full potential. Commerce between states, communities and other nations is fundamental to the advance of innovation, knowledge transfer, and productivity that create economic growth and prosperity.<sup>6</sup> Research shows that open economies are more productive, with a clear correlation between increased openness over time and productivity growth. In contrast, in an uncompetitive market or one that does not maximize welfare, growth stagnates and crony capitalism thrives, with knock-on impacts elsewhere in society. One of the biggest opportunities for policymakers is to resist protectionism and cronyism, and to actively reinvigorate an agenda that embraces open and procompetitive economies both domestically and internationally, which attracts innovation, ideas, capital and talent. While most policymakers focus on the big fiscal and macroeconomic policy tools at their disposal, the microeconomic factors are sometimes overlooked, and their potential to drive openness and growth is underestimated. With a focus on these microeconomic factors, we examine the fundamental aspects of open economies across three pillars, each with component elements.

**Business Environment** measures the amount and variety of investment finance available (Financing Ecosystems) and how easy it is for businesses to start, compete, and expand (Domestic Market Contestability). Contestable markets with low barriers to entry and adequate pools of funding are important for businesses to innovate and develop new ideas. This is essential for a dynamic and enterprising economy, where the Burden of Regulation and any inhibitors on the flow of goods and services between businesses (Price Distortions) enables rather than hinder business and respond to the changing needs of society and ensure Labor Market Flexibility.

**Infrastructure** captures the quality of the infrastructure that enables trade. Businesses require infrastructure that allows for efficient Communication, adequate provision of water and electricity (Resources) and connects them to transport hubs and economic centers (Transport). This leads to more competitive and efficient markets, allowing new products and ideas to be commercialized and transported within the U.S. and overseas, ultimately benefiting consumers through a greater variety of goods at more competitive prices.

**Economic Quality** measures how robust an economy is (Fiscal Sustainability) and how an economy is equipped to generate wealth (Productivity and Competitiveness, Dynamism). A strong economy is dependent on high labor-force engagement and the production and distribution of a diverse range of valuable goods and services.

**E**mpowered People captures the quality of people's lived experiences and the features present that enable individuals to reach their full potential through autonomy and self-determination. This domain starts with the resources required for a basic level of wellbeing, ranging from levels of material resources to adequate nutrition, to basic health and education outcomes, access, and quality, to a safe and clean environment. Many of these issues are interrelated. The pillars in this domain differentiate states' performances on these fundamental measures of social wellbeing to distinguish where greater numbers of people are disadvantaged and less likely to achieve wellbeing. We examine the fundamental aspects of empowered people across four pillars, each with component elements.

**Living Conditions** measures the set of conditions or circumstances that are necessary for all individuals to attain a basic level of wellbeing. This set of circumstances includes a level of Material Resources, adequate Nutrition and access to Water Services and Shelter. It measures the level of Connectedness of the population and the extent to which they are in a safe living and working environment (Protection from Harm). These enable the individual to be a productive member of society and to pursue prosperity and build a flourishing life.

**Health** measures health service provision and the health outcomes of a population — including the quality of both Mental Health and Physical Health, each of which affects Longevity.

It assesses the set of Behavioral Risk Factors that affect the quality of the population's health and the quality of healthcare provision through the lenses of Care Systems and Preventative Interventions. For a state truly to prosper, its residents must have good health. Those who enjoy good physical and mental health report high levels of wellbeing, while poor health keeps people from fulfilling their potential.

**Education** measures enrollment, outcomes and quality of four stages of education (Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education) and the Adult Skills in the population. Education allows people to lead more fulfilling lives, and a better-educated population can contribute better to society. Over the long term, education can help to drive economic development and growth while improving social and health outcomes, and leading to greater civic engagement.

**Natural Environment** measures the elements of the physical environment that have a direct impact on the ability of residents to flourish in their daily lives. The quality of air is captured through Emissions and Exposure to Air Pollution. The extent to which the ecosystems providing resources for extraction (freshwater and forest, land and soil) are sustainably managed. A well-managed rural environment yields crops, material for construction, wildlife and food, and sources of energy. The extent of preservation efforts is captured, as these are critical to longer-term sustainability.

# Kentucky county findings

Developed in 2020, the county-level Prosperity Index was created to further understand the disparities that exists across the 829 counties within the eight selected states of California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, Oklahoma, New York and Texas. This year we have further expanded the Index to include 367 counties across four additional states: Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota and Nebraska. These 12 states have been carefully selected to capture the full demographic and geographic variety, and also because they exhibit different levels of state prosperity. In the coming years, our ambition is to build out the Index to cover all counties within the United States to enable a more detailed understanding of prosperity at the local level.

This county-level Index has been designed to mirror the state level Index as closely as possible, so they work hand in hand in informing decision-making at the local level. Constructing the Index involved sourcing county-level data for the indicators used within the state-level Index. Of the 215 indicators in the state-level Index, over 130 indicators were available at county or other sub-state levels. For the remaining indicators, including all of those in the Governance pillar and all but three in Personal Freedom, the state value has been used for all counties in the state. Further information is provided in the methodology section (see page 24).

The result is a holistic and comprehensive curated county level dataset, that enables the prosperity of the 1,196

counties within the 12 selected states to be identified and understood and how that has changed over the past decade.

This report provides an overview of the performance of the 120 counties within Kentucky on prosperity and across the 11 pillars.

The 11 maps, and pillar bar chart at the top of page 15, provide an assessment of the performance of the 120 counties in the state relative to the 1,196 counties in the county-level Index. Counties that appear in the 1st quintile represent the strongest performing counties across the Index and those in the 5th quintile are the weakest.

The rankings table, after the pillar maps, assesses the performance of the 120 counties within Kentucky against each other on prosperity and across the 11 pillars. A similar color coding scheme is used in the ranking table to that in county maps - i.e. green represents the strongest counties in the state and red the weakest. This can result in a different color being used for a county in the maps than in the ranking table.

As there is no county variation in the Governance pillar, it is not included as part of the analysis within this report.

At the end of this report is a two-page prosperity summary for Kentucky. A full prosperity profile for Kentucky, together with a comprehensive prosperity DNA profile for each of the 120 counties within the state, can be found via our website, at [www.usprosperity.net](http://www.usprosperity.net).







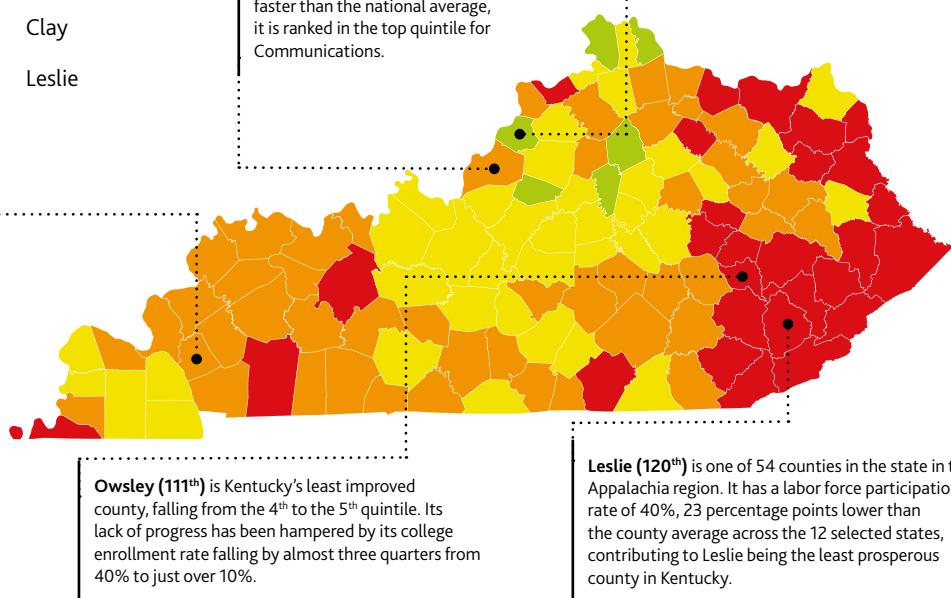
# Counties of Kentucky

## Prosperity of Kentucky's counties 2021

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Oldham	116	Fulton
2	Woodford	117	Mason
3	Campbell	118	Breathitt
4	Spencer	119	Clay
5	Boone	120	Leslie

**Jefferson (56<sup>th</sup>)** is the most populous county in Kentucky and is home to the city of Louisville. With 100% of its residents having access to fast Internet and mean download speeds of over 170mbps, almost 60% faster than the national average, it is ranked in the top quintile for Communications.

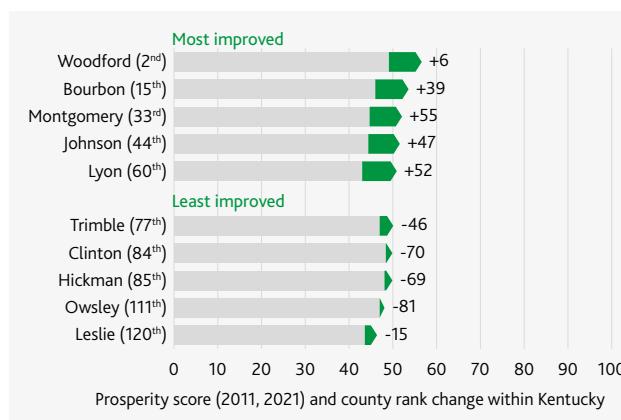
**Oldham (1<sup>st</sup>)**, an affluent suburb of Louisville, has just 9% of households on low incomes and 6% in poverty, both of which are around half the national rate, which contributes to it being the most prosperous county in Kentucky.



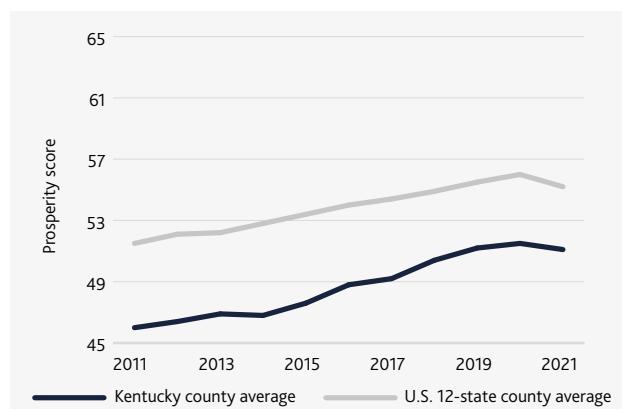
Positioning of counties within the County Index



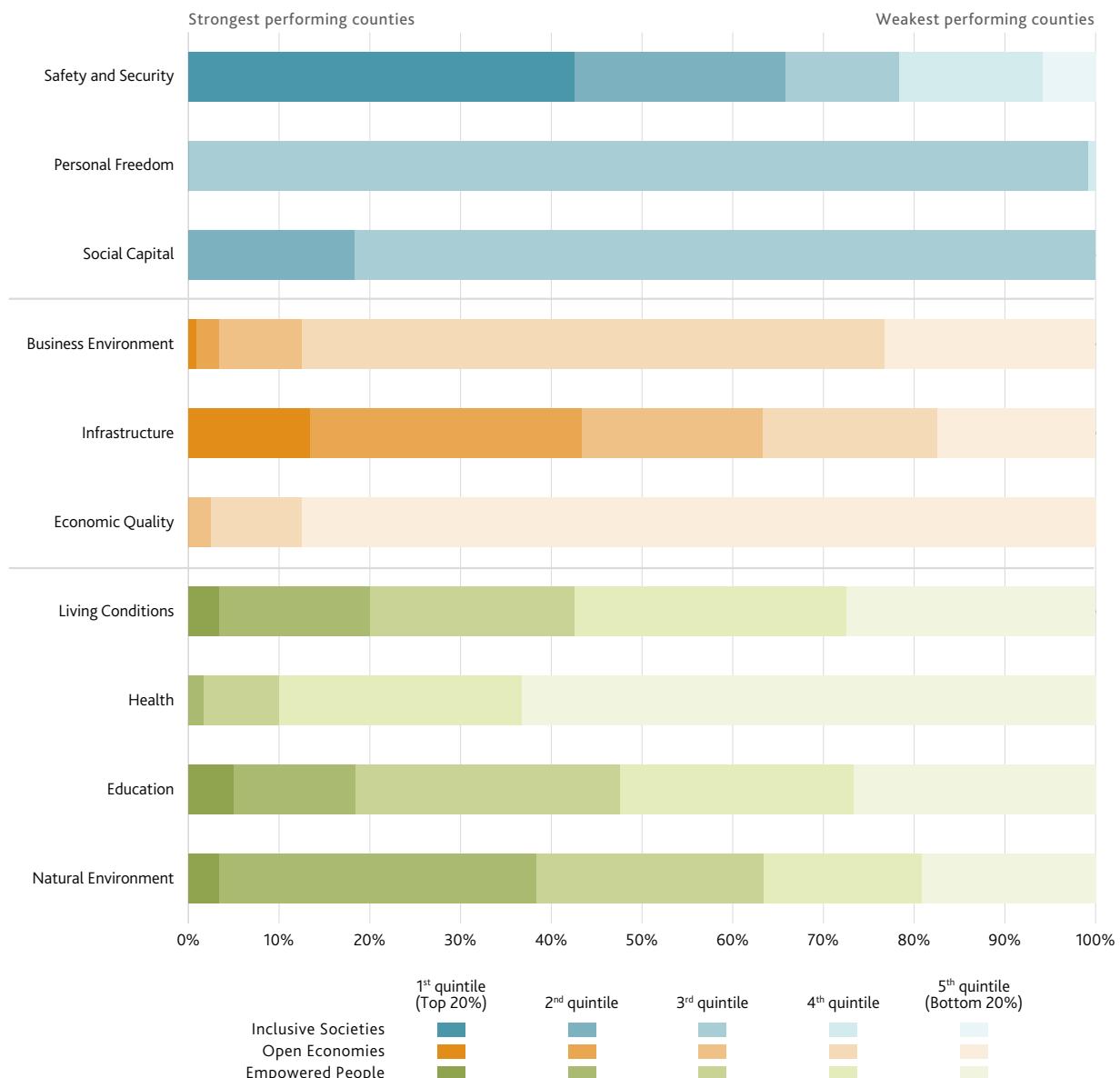
## Most and least improved counties within Kentucky (2021 rank), 2011-2021



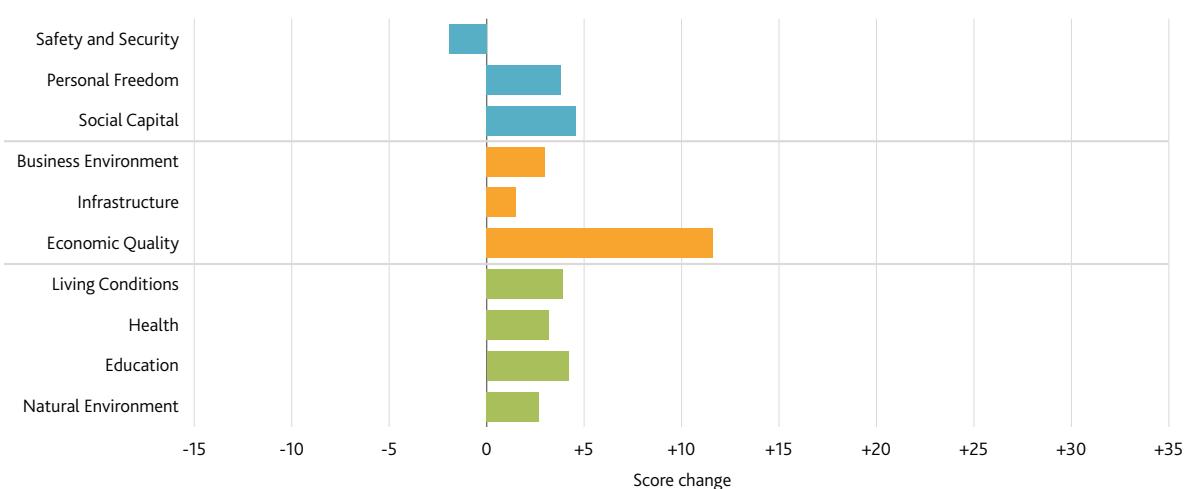
## Prosperity of Kentucky's counties



## Pillars of Prosperity 2021 (Distribution of county performance)<sup>1</sup>



## Kentucky county change, by pillar, 2011-2021



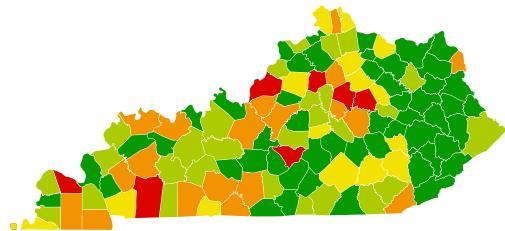
1. There is no county variation in Governance, all counties have been given the state score value. Kentucky is the 33<sup>rd</sup> ranked state for Governance.

## Performance of Kentucky's counties across the three prosperity domains<sup>1</sup>

### INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

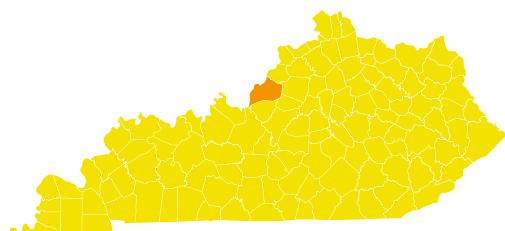
#### Safety and Security

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Robertson	116	Christian
2	Knott	117	Franklin
3	Morgan	118	McCracken
4	Elliott	119	Fayette
5	Henry	120	Jefferson



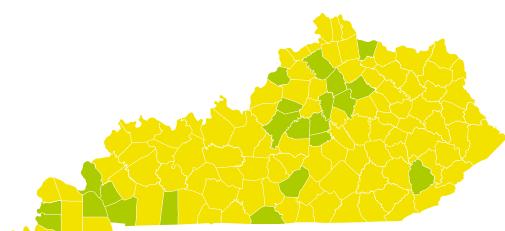
#### Personal Freedom<sup>2</sup>

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Henderson	113	Multiple counties <sup>3</sup>
2	Multiple counties <sup>3</sup>	117	Fayette
		118	Boone
		119	Hopkins
		120	Jefferson



#### Social Capital

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Livingston	116	Henderson
2	Woodford	117	Carroll
3	Oldham	118	Estill
4	Bourbon	119	Magoffin
5	Bracken	120	Perry



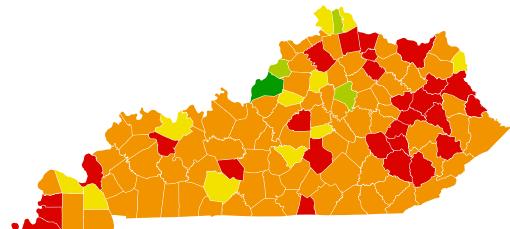
█ 1<sup>st</sup> quintile (Top 20%)  
 █ 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile  
 █ 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile  
 █ 4<sup>th</sup> quintile  
 █ 5<sup>th</sup> quintile (Bottom 20%)

1. There is no county variation in Governance, all counties have been given the state score value. Kentucky is the 33<sup>rd</sup> ranked state for Governance.
2. As only 3 of the 19 indicators within Personal Freedom have county variation, this results in many counties having the same pillar score
3. See ranking table.

## OPEN ECONOMIES

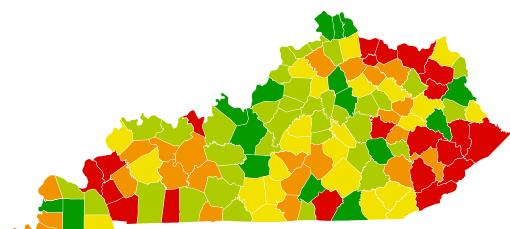
### Business Environment

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Jefferson	<b>116</b>	Hickman
2	Fayette	<b>117</b>	Edmonson
3	Kenton	<b>118</b>	Owen
4	Oldham	<b>119</b>	Owsley
5	Boone	<b>120</b>	Menifee



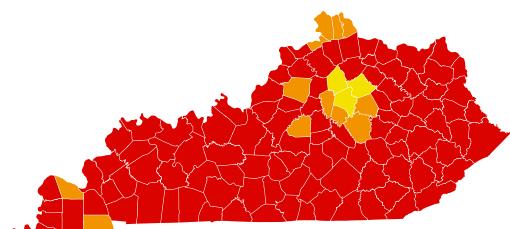
### Infrastructure

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Jefferson	<b>116</b>	Breathitt
2	Campbell	<b>117</b>	Wayne
3	Hardin	<b>118</b>	Pike
4	McCreary	<b>119</b>	Elliott
5	Meade	<b>120</b>	Leslie



### Economic Quality

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Scott	<b>116</b>	Estill
2	Bourbon	<b>117</b>	Floyd
3	Fayette	<b>118</b>	Lawrence
4	Woodford	<b>119</b>	Clay
5	Boone	<b>120</b>	Harlan

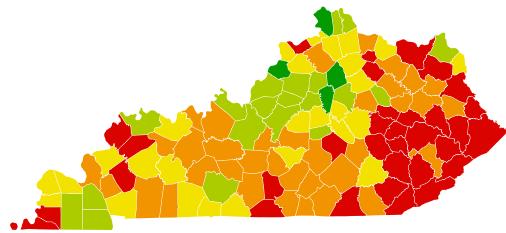


■ 1<sup>st</sup> quintile (Top 20%) ■ 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile ■ 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile ■ 4<sup>th</sup> quintile ■ 5<sup>th</sup> quintile (Bottom 20%)

## EMPOWERED PEOPLE

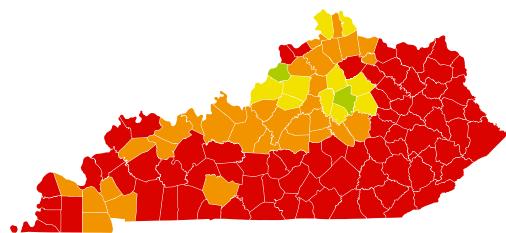
### Living Conditions

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Oldham	116	Harlan
2	Boone	117	Nicholas
3	Scott	118	Leslie
4	Woodford	119	Lee
5	Spencer	120	Breathitt



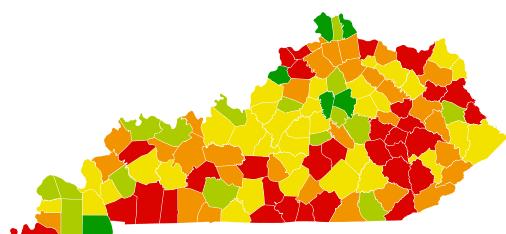
### Health

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Oldham	116	Floyd
2	Fayette	117	Breathitt
3	Woodford	118	Magoffin
4	Scott	119	Perry
5	Jessamine	120	Letcher



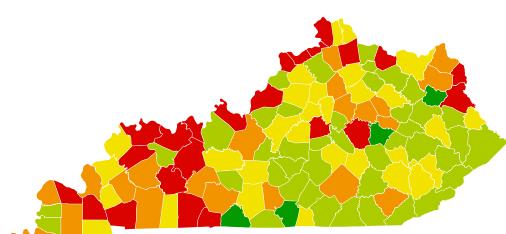
### Education

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Oldham	116	Trimble
2	Campbell	117	Todd
3	Calloway	118	Menifee
4	Fayette	119	Clay
5	Boone	120	Lawrence



### Natural Environment

Strongest		Weakest	
1	Elliott	116	Mason
2	Estill	117	Hancock
3	Cumberland	118	Trimble
4	Allen	119	Muhlenberg
5	Menifee	120	Carroll



■ 1<sup>st</sup> quintile  
 (Top 20%)     
 ■ 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile  
                  
 ■ 3<sup>rd</sup> quintile     
 ■ 4<sup>th</sup> quintile     
 ■ 5<sup>th</sup> quintile  
 (Bottom 20%)

# The U.S. Prosperity Index, Kentucky county rankings<sup>1,2</sup> ranks 1–48



2011 Rank	2020 Rank	2021 Rank	County	Safety and Security	Personal Freedom	Social Capital	Business Environment	Infrastructure	Economic Quality	Living Conditions	Health	Education	Natural Environment
1	1	1	Oldham	77	2	3	4	17	53	1	1	1	7
8	4	2	Woodford	78	2	2	28	21	4	4	3	6	50
4	5	3	Campbell	88	2	37	9	2	8	11	9	2	68
5	2	4	Spencer	25	2	15	14	20	93	5	7	10	8
2	3	5	Boone	92	118	24	5	9	5	2	8	5	109
9	6	6	Scott	95	2	6	53	16	1	3	4	18	93
7	7	7	Kenton	104	2	55	3	6	14	7	20	9	55
11	8	8	Fayette	119	117	10	2	8	3	8	2	4	90
19	9	9	Boyle	83	2	22	11	19	60	14	22	7	46
13	12	10	Meade	46	2	29	84	5	89	10	28	20	101
29	19	11	Jessamine	101	2	23	30	27	6	36	5	17	17
6	14	12	Carlisle	32	2	17	103	11	44	33	58	26	28
3	10	13	Anderson	59	2	76	60	25	68	12	30	24	49
12	11	14	Shelby	87	2	26	17	31	10	9	6	60	66
54	18	15	Bourbon	85	2	4	20	62	2	39	10	46	67
10	13	16	Larue	26	2	41	41	33	52	82	43	53	36
15	20	17	Hardin	98	2	63	18	3	20	16	34	27	82
26	15	18	Hart	16	2	33	87	10	32	71	59	112	64
17	16	19	Henry	5	2	80	68	61	50	35	18	93	70
32	17	20	Warren	111	113	42	10	24	23	19	13	8	88
27	25	21	Calloway	113	2	28	21	54	9	18	19	3	60
21	23	22	Russell	45	2	72	37	14	63	64	62	78	23
28	27	23	Washington	39	2	13	108	67	15	50	31	30	69
50	37	24	Nelson	96	2	14	33	40	29	17	17	56	47
33	28	25	Green	18	2	34	72	63	64	52	79	82	15
51	33	26	Adair	6	2	12	26	89	86	68	54	49	12
56	31	27	Gallatin	48	2	64	91	38	7	44	37	81	104
37	26	28	Marshall	79	2	11	13	30	26	15	23	39	113
20	22	29	Bullitt	100	2	52	51	23	67	6	15	51	44
38	30	30	Grant	56	2	103	88	26	48	37	38	86	80
18	21	31	Monroe	9	2	21	32	57	34	102	98	102	13
52	29	32	Marion	72	2	90	49	60	46	78	42	37	20
88	34	33	Montgomery	90	2	107	19	28	25	22	61	47	81
71	35	34	Mercer	65	2	19	65	32	39	30	26	50	111
42	32	35	Madison	103	2	36	40	35	11	45	25	12	99
24	42	36	Graves	99	2	66	45	15	54	24	57	22	97
44	56	37	Greenup	29	2	75	64	72	96	20	87	33	84
64	46	38	Ballard	68	2	102	82	77	33	40	45	15	95
83	66	39	McCreary	23	2	92	31	4	115	106	92	88	33
48	53	40	Grayson	62	2	53	44	36	49	70	88	73	62
55	52	41	Garrard	57	2	85	89	76	83	27	16	84	43
35	41	42	Breckinridge	60	2	48	69	39	108	72	40	44	26
22	38	43	Rowan	71	2	69	24	43	87	85	51	29	35
91	47	44	Johnson	44	2	25	59	34	113	80	107	16	19
74	60	45	Whitley	69	2	89	66	56	79	56	99	21	34
40	59	46	Daviess	112	2	71	8	18	27	26	27	19	110
62	40	47	Fleming	40	2	49	46	93	56	67	76	43	32
25	48	48	Owen	15	2	16	118	83	81	65	33	80	9

- There is no county variation in Governance, all counties have been given the state score value. Kentucky is the 33<sup>rd</sup> ranked state for Governance.
- As only 3 of the 19 indicators within Personal Freedom have county variation, this results in many counties having the same pillar score.

# The U.S. Prosperity Index, Kentucky county rankings<sup>1,2</sup> ranks 49–96



2011 Rank	2020 Rank	2021 Rank	County	Safety and Security	Personal Freedom	Social Capital	Business Environment	Infrastructure	Economic Quality	Living Conditions	Health	Education	Natural Environment
68	24	49	Edmonson	19	113	78	117	42	105	55	70	68	22
69	39	50	Clark	114	2	74	27	29	13	58	11	32	86
77	69	51	Morgan	3	2	59	107	73	78	77	69	75	29
36	54	52	Franklin	117	2	93	7	64	21	21	24	25	74
63	45	53	Cumberland	20	2	40	56	84	75	63	86	109	3
66	44	54	Rockcastle	42	2	56	83	51	109	54	74	52	73
75	61	55	Robertson	1	2	95	112	112	17	91	41	48	21
23	36	56	Jefferson	120	120	62	1	1	22	13	12	31	112
72	64	57	Pendleton	54	2	47	105	66	43	42	29	61	107
34	43	58	Allen	102	113	88	75	37	65	48	67	38	4
43	73	59	McLean	38	2	35	101	97	76	61	39	66	41
112	51	60	Lyon	43	2	18	86	109	92	73	14	23	72
39	55	61	Laurel	94	2	96	22	52	73	43	81	35	42
60	67	62	Bath	17	2	57	92	68	102	76	96	77	65
49	50	63	Henderson	110	1	116	38	49	38	23	49	13	106
45	65	64	Jackson	49	2	86	99	7	98	97	105	106	18
41	57	65	Barren	97	2	61	25	55	41	86	66	41	59
89	62	66	Harrison	86	2	50	81	92	18	28	48	72	63
103	89	67	Pulaski	91	2	82	16	53	59	62	71	40	96
86	63	68	Casey	13	2	38	106	85	77	79	84	96	14
58	72	69	Union	76	2	65	39	69	42	104	65	65	71
76	71	70	Livingston	47	2	1	100	100	84	53	60	57	79
80	77	71	Bracken	41	2	5	93	111	51	69	35	94	40
79	74	72	Lincoln	30	2	31	80	75	88	93	80	113	57
47	68	73	Webster	21	2	100	54	88	40	108	44	90	105
96	75	74	Hopkins	107	119	111	34	71	37	29	64	28	85
59	78	75	Simpson	89	2	30	43	86	16	47	46	69	98
57	70	76	McCracken	118	2	54	6	46	12	25	36	11	114
31	58	77	Trimble	11	2	46	63	41	99	38	47	116	118
82	80	78	Crittenden	73	2	51	67	107	62	49	72	64	52
81	79	79	Logan	109	2	83	58	45	31	41	52	67	103
92	84	80	Menifee	28	2	58	120	80	71	66	94	118	5
67	76	81	Taylor	115	2	43	15	82	47	32	68	34	30
73	49	82	Metcalfe	74	2	73	79	59	57	90	82	103	78
65	81	83	Magoffin	8	2	119	110	13	104	105	118	83	75
14	93	84	Clinton	75	2	60	104	44	35	83	91	104	76
16	88	85	Hickman	67	2	7	116	95	30	96	75	58	45
61	85	86	Hancock	24	2	45	50	113	28	60	32	63	117
46	86	87	Todd	63	2	9	61	101	55	84	56	117	53
102	101	88	Wolfe	22	2	114	98	65	112	101	104	99	37
78	82	89	Trigg	80	2	8	71	106	66	31	21	101	100
99	94	90	Caldwell	105	2	87	42	91	45	88	50	14	89
87	104	91	Muhlenberg	64	2	44	57	78	82	34	63	45	119
53	83	92	Butler	52	113	81	76	96	74	74	78	110	91
94	96	93	Boyd	108	2	104	12	48	70	46	83	42	108
70	87	94	Nicholas	31	2	79	96	99	69	117	89	85	39
98	90	95	Perry	50	2	120	35	98	101	81	119	54	61
117	92	96	Powell	55	2	109	74	94	80	100	85	76	94

1. There is no county variation in Governance, all counties have been given the state score value. Kentucky is the 33<sup>rd</sup> ranked state for Governance.
2. As only 3 of the 19 indicators within Personal Freedom have county variation, this results in many counties having the same pillar score.

# The U.S. Prosperity Index, Kentucky county rankings<sup>1,2</sup> ranks 97–120

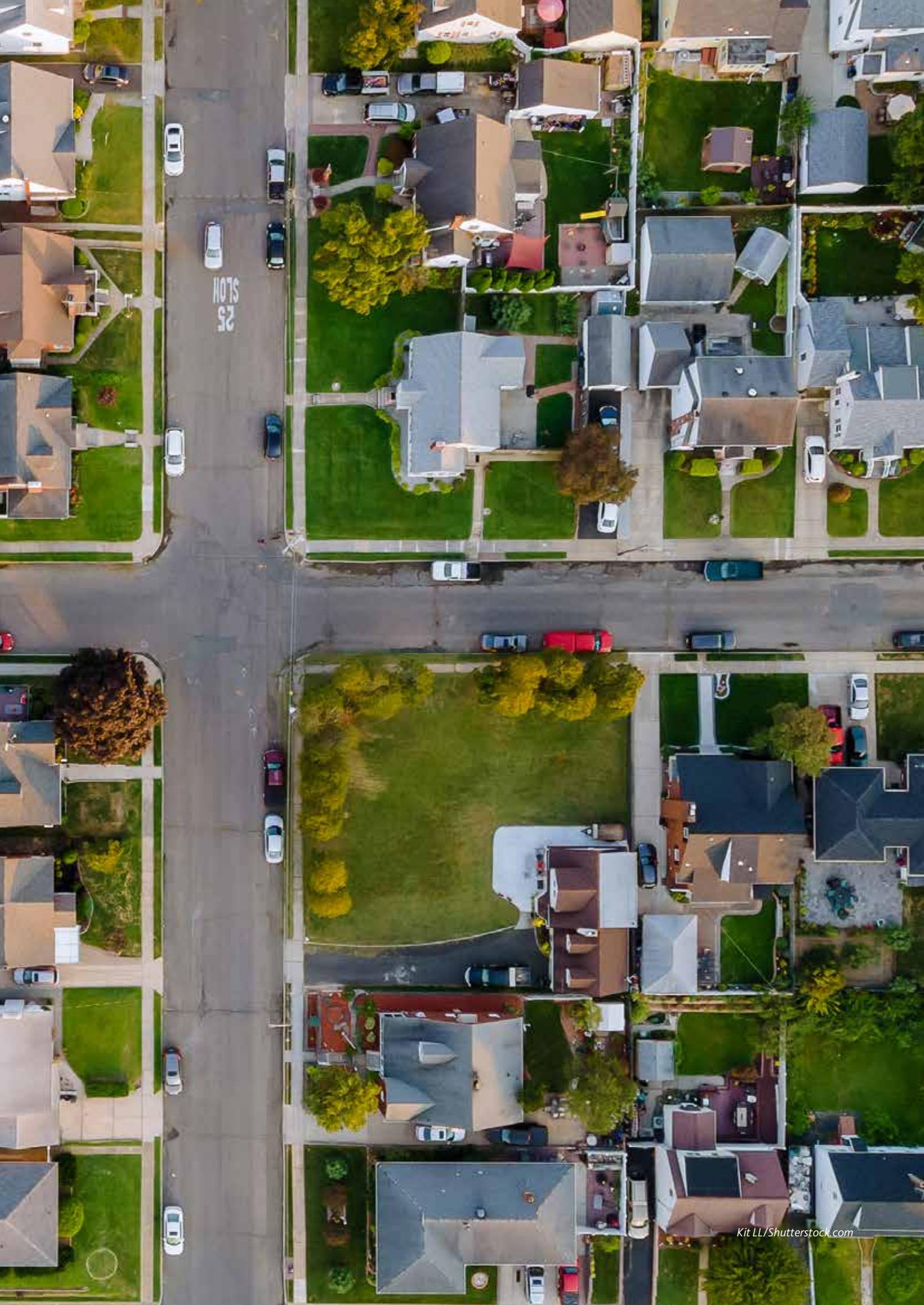


2011 Rank	2020 Rank	2021 Rank	County	Safety and Security	Personal Freedom	Social Capital	Business Environment	Infrastructure	Economic Quality	Living Conditions	Health	Education	Natural Environment
115	97	97	Knox	61	2	99	70	70	106	95	101	79	77
95	99	98	Ohio	66	2	106	78	87	61	57	55	70	115
84	91	99	Carroll	53	2	117	47	50	24	92	90	107	120
90	105	100	Carter	33	2	98	52	104	95	111	100	59	87
109	95	101	Lee	7	2	108	95	81	103	119	112	91	27
85	114	102	Knott	2	2	91	115	105	97	103	114	74	38
93	100	103	Lawrence	51	2	27	94	12	118	98	106	120	102
101	107	104	Martin	34	2	39	109	74	114	89	103	115	51
104	103	105	Wayne	58	2	84	62	117	72	75	77	111	6
113	98	106	Christian	116	2	113	36	47	36	59	97	95	92
114	102	107	Floyd	27	2	94	73	103	117	112	116	55	24
111	106	108	Estill	14	2	118	85	108	116	114	95	97	2
108	115	109	Elliott	4	2	110	114	119	100	87	73	114	1
97	110	110	Letcher	37	2	112	90	114	91	110	120	62	25
30	112	111	Owsley	82	2	70	119	22	107	99	111	108	48
110	108	112	Lewis	35	2	68	111	110	94	107	93	92	54
118	111	113	Hartlan	36	2	67	77	102	120	116	115	71	16
100	113	114	Pike	70	2	77	29	118	90	113	110	36	10
106	117	115	Bell	106	2	101	48	58	85	115	113	105	11
107	109	116	Fulton	84	2	105	102	90	58	94	102	100	83
120	116	117	Mason	93	2	32	23	115	19	51	53	87	116
119	118	118	Breathitt	10	2	115	55	116	111	120	117	98	31
116	119	119	Clay	81	2	97	97	79	119	109	108	119	58
105	120	120	Leslie	12	2	20	113	120	110	118	109	89	56

- There is no county variation in Governance, all counties have been given the state score value. Kentucky is the 33<sup>rd</sup> ranked state for Governance.
- As only 3 of the 19 indicators within Personal Freedom have county variation, this results in many counties having the same pillar score.

# Methodology and Acknowledgements





# Methodology

The United States Prosperity Index has been developed as a practical tool to help identify what specific action needs to be taken to contribute to strengthening the pathways from poverty to prosperity across the 50 states of the U.S. and the District of Columbia, and the 1,196 counties within the 12 selected states, on the promotion of their citizens' flourishing, reflecting both wealth and wellbeing at a state and local level.

To cover both economic and social wellbeing and not just one or the other, the U.S. Prosperity Index faces the challenge of finding a meaningful measure of success at state and county level. We endeavor to create an Index that is methodologically sound. This is something that the Legatum Institute has sought to achieve with academic and analytical rigor over the past decade in its work on The Legatum Prosperity Index™.

Building upon the structure of the global Prosperity Index in 2019, we worked with around 40 U.S. academic and policy experts (see page 100 for a full listing) with particular expertise on the different aspects of prosperity in a U.S. context to develop an appropriate taxonomy that accurately defines prosperity in the U.S. Over multiple iterations, through many meetings and subsequent correspondence, we discussed these concepts and developed a taxonomy that captured the characteristics across the three domains of prosperity: Inclusive Societies; Open Economies; and Empowered People. Through this engagement we constructed a U.S.-focused Prosperity taxonomy that contained 11 pillars and 48 policy-focused elements (see page 28).

Creating the state-level Prosperity Index required the identification and application of datasets that captured the different characteristics of prosperity for each of the 50 states of the Union and D.C., for which our expert panel provided invaluable guidance on the most appropriate datasets. The state-level Index was first published in 2019 and a county-level Index added in 2020. Since last year we have made some minor improvements and modifications to both Indexes. These include using several new and alternative data sources, equally weighting the domains of the Index and adjusting the approach used for a few indicators. Full details of these changes can be found in the methodology report, available at [www.usprosperity.net](http://www.usprosperity.net).

We have applied the U.S. prosperity taxonomy at a county level to construct a county-level Index for twelve selected states: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, and Texas, covering the 1,196 counties within them. The county-level Index has been designed to mirror the state-level Index as closely as possible, so they can work hand in hand in informing decision-making at the different geographical levels.

The state-and county-level Indexes aim to capture the richness of a truly prosperous life, moving beyond traditional macroeconomic measurements of the prosperity of a state or county, which rely solely on indicators of wealth such as average income per person (GDP per capita). It seeks to redefine the way we measure success, changing the conversation from what we are getting to who we are becoming. This makes it an authoritative measure of human progress, offering a unique insight into how prosperity is forming and changing across the United States.



# Step by Step

1

## Selecting the indicators

Having established the taxonomy for measuring prosperity across the U.S., the next stage was to identify and capture the data variables that best measure the different characteristics of prosperity in the U.S. at a state and county level.

In constructing the state-level Index, we identified the most relevant indicators within each of the 48 elements, driven by a set of selection criteria and advice from external experts on U.S. data and research around each pillar. We used an extensive variety of publicly available data sources that gave comprehensive coverage of all 50 states and D.C. This list was refined based on input from the academic and policy experts in each pillar area, who advised on the reliability of data sources, alternative measures, and the credibility of indicators' measurement. This resulted in 215 indicators from over 80 different sources, grouped into 48 discrete policy-focused elements and 11 pillars of prosperity. Each of the 11 pillars captures a fundamental theme of prosperity, and each element helps to capture discrete policy areas measured by the indicators. Each pillar has between three and six elements, and each element has between one and nine indicators.

In constructing the county-level Index, we wanted to mirror as closely as possible the state-level Index. This involved sourcing county-level data for the indicators used for state-level index. Of the 215 indicators in the state level Index, we sourced over 120 indicators at county or other sub-state levels (e.g. Metropolitan Statistical Areas — MSAs). For certain indicators, the state value for the indicator is relevant for all counties within a state (e.g. whether anti-discrimination laws have been enacted within a state). However, for approximately 60 indicators, while we expect there to be underlying county variation, county-level data was not publicly available. For these 60 indicators, we used the state figure for each county in the state, as an indicative proxy. This approach has the advantage that it provides some variation when comparing the performance of individual counties across the different states but does not impact the effectiveness of the Index when making comparisons among counties within each state. Over time, these indicators will hopefully become available at a county level and we can replace the state average with more relevant county data.

2

## Standardization

The indicators in each Index are based on many different units of measurement, including numbers of events, years, percentages and ordinal scales. These different units need to be normalized for comparison between indicators and geographic entities to be meaningful. We employ a distance to frontier approach for this task. In the state-level Index, a state's performance in an indicator is compared with the value of the observed or logical best case, and that of the observed or logical worst case, to create a normalised score between 0 and 1. The same approach is used in the county-level Index, with a wider set of best and worst values where the range of the observed or logical data is wider than that at state level. As a result, the distance to frontier score captures a state's relative position in the state index and a county's relative position in the county index. (Where state values are applied at the county level, the state set of best and worst values are applied). This approach enables us to compare Index scores over time in each of the respective indexes, to understand whether a states or a county's performance is improving or weakening.

## Indicator weights

3

Each indicator is assigned a weight, reflecting the level of importance it has in affecting prosperity. Weights fall into four buckets: 0.5, 1, 1.5, and 2. Each indicator is weighted as 1 by default, but based on its significance to prosperity this may be adjusted downwards or upwards accordingly. For example, an indicator with a weight of 2 means that it is twice as important in affecting the element as another indicator in that element with a weight of 1. Weights in the state-level Index were determined and the same weighting was applied to the county-Index, with several exceptions. (Please see our separate methodology report for full details.) Two factors were used in determining weights, ordered by priority: (1) the relevance and significance of the indicator to prosperity, as informed by the academic literature and our experts' opinions, and, to a lesser degree, (2) the statistical significance of the indicator to the productive capacity and well-being of a state, as measured by Cantril's Ladder.

# 4

## Element, pillar, domain and index scores

Within each of the 11 pillars, indicators' distance to frontier scores are multiplied by their weights and then summed to generate element scores and subsequently pillar scores for each state in the state-level Index and each county in the county-level Index. Element weighting was determined in the same manner and applied using percentages. While indicator weights represent their relative significance within the corresponding element only, element weights are comparable across the Index. Once pillar scores are established, these are aggregated into domains with an equal weight applied to each pillar to determine a domain score.

Subsequently, the Index score is determined by assigning an equal weight to each of the domains, the mean of which yields an overall score on which the overall prosperity rankings are based.

While the Index score provides an overall assessment of a state's or county's prosperity, each element, pillar and domain score serve as a reliable guide to how that state or county is performing with respect to a particular foundation of prosperity.



## **NOTE ON AVERAGES**

When calculating scores for the U.S., we take a population-weighted average score to capture the effect on individuals. For example, if two states improve their score, then the more populous state will have a greater effect on the national score than the less populous state.

## **COMPARABILITY OF THE U.S. INDEX WITH THE GLOBAL INDEX FOR THE U.S.**

In the Global Prosperity Index, we calculate element, pillar and prosperity scores for the United States. The global taxonomy for prosperity is slightly different to the U.S. taxonomy for prosperity. For example, there are 66 policy-focused elements and 12 pillars of prosperity in the global Index, whereas there are 48 policy-focused elements and 11 pillars of prosperity in

the U.S. Index. Furthermore, the indicators used in each Index, while trying to capture the same aspects where the elements are the same, may be slightly different. The global Index will use sources that cover the countries of the globe, while the sources used for the U.S. Index will cover the states and counties of the U.S.

The aggregation approach in producing each Index is the same, although the distance to frontiers and weights are applied in a manner appropriate to each Index. Combined with using different data sources and a slightly different taxonomy, caution should be exercised in comparing the results from each Index. While there should be, and indeed is, some similarity in the overall findings between the two indexes, there are also some differences.



# Table of sources

Source abbreviation	Source description	Data availability at state and/or county level
AAR	Association of American Railroads	State
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union	State
ANES	American National Election Studies	State
ATRF	American Tort Reform Association	State
BallotP	Ballotpedia	State
BBN	BroadbandNow	State and county
BIEM	Brookings Institution Export Monitor	County
BRFSS	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System	State and county
Cato	Cato — Freedom in the 50 States	State
CAWP	Center for American Women and Politics	State
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	State and county
CHR	County Health Rankings	County
CJRP	Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement	State
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services	State
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service, Volunteering & Civil Life in America	County
CPI	Center for Public Integrity	State
CPS	Current Population Survey	County
Cuil.	Dave Cuillier	State
FA	Feeding America	County
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics	State
FCC	Federal Communications Commission	State and county
FDIC	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	State and county
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration	State and county
FI	Fraser Institute	State
FR	Federal Reserve	State
FTC	Federal Trade Commission, Consumer Sentinel Network	State and county
Gallup	Gallup Dailies	State
GT	Google Trends	State and county
GTD	Global Terrorism Database	State and county
GVA	Gun Violence Archive	State and county
HCAHPS	Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems	State and county
HJK	Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation	State
ICS	Institute for Corruption Studies	State
IJ	Institute for Justice	State
IMHE	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation	State and county
JBEN	Bennett et al. 2019. "Particulate matter air pollution and national and county life expectancy loss in the USA: A spatiotemporal analysis".	County
Kauf	Kauffman Foundation	State and county
MAP	Movement Advancement Project	State
MIT	MIT Election and Data Science Lab coding of state policies	State
Mukh.	Mukherjee et al.	State and county
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	State
NACJD	National Archive Of Criminal Justice Data	County
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress	State

Source abbreviation	Source description	Data availability at state and/or county level
NCAJ	National Center for Access to Justice	State
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics	State and county
NCIRD	National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases	State
NCSL	National Conference of State Legislatures	State
NIEER	National Institute for Early Education Research	State
NIMP	National Institute on Money in Politics	State
NLCD	National Land Cover Database	State and county
NLIHC	National Low Income Housing Coalition	State
NSCH	National Survey of Children's Health	State
NTIA	National Telecommunications and Information Administration	State
NVCA	National Venture Capital Association	State and county
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	State and county
Oreg.	State of Oregon	State and county
Pew	Pew Research Center	State
PNS	Prosperity Now Scorecard	State and county
Pol. Proj.	Polaris Project	State
PRRI	Public Religion Research Institute	State
QG	QuantGov	State
QS	QS World University Rankings	State
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, The National Survey on Drug Use and Health	State and county
SEDA	Stanford Education Data Archive	County
SPLC	Southern Poverty Law Center	State and county
TF	Tax Foundation	State
TP	Talk Poverty	State
UI	Urban Institute	County
USACS	United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey	State and county
USBEA	United States Bureau of Economic Analysis	State and county
USBJS	United States Bureau of Justice Statistics	State
USBLS	United States Bureau of Labor Statistics	State and county
USBTS	United States Bureau of Transportation Statistics	State and county
USCB	United States Census Bureau	State and county
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture	State
USDE	United States Department of Education	State
USDOL	United States Department of Labor	State
USEIA	United States Energy Information Administration	State and county
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency	State and county
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service	State and county
USGS	United States Geological Survey	State and county
USHUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development	State and county
USPFT	United States Press Freedom Tracker	State
USPIRG	United States Public Interest Research Group	State
USPTO	United States Patent and Trademark Office	State and county
USRC	United States Religious Census	State and county
Wash. Post.	Washington Post	State and county

# Acknowledgements

## The United States Prosperity Index Team

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Unless otherwise stated, all data is from the 2021 United States Prosperity Index.

All original data sources can be found in the methodology report and online at [www.usprosperity.net](http://www.usprosperity.net).

We encourage you to share the contents of this document. In so doing, we request that all data, findings, and analysis be attributed to the 2021 United States Prosperity Index.

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# Endnotes

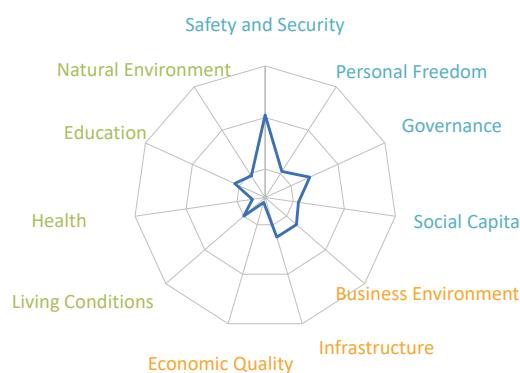
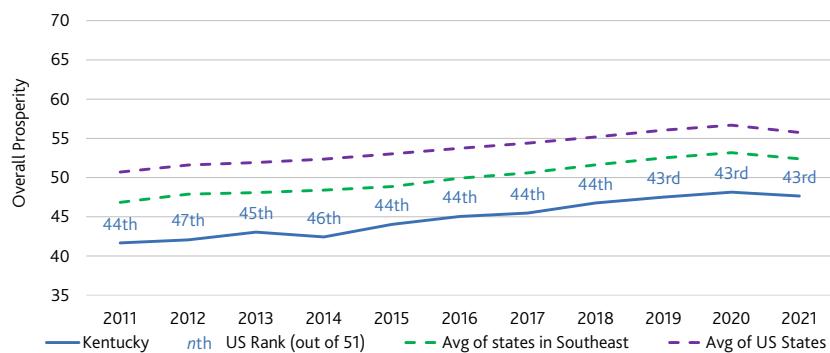
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# Kentucky: Overall Prosperity 47.7 (43rd)



## Prosperity over time



## Breakdown of performance

	Score 10-year trend	2021	Rank - US States (1 to 51) 2021	10-year rank change	Rank - Southeast (1 to 15) 2021
<strong>Overall Prosperity</strong>	<strong>41.7</strong>	<strong>47.7</strong>	<strong>43</strong>	<strong>▲ 1</strong>	<strong>10</strong>
<strong>Inclusive Societies</strong>	<strong>45.4</strong>	<strong>51.3</strong>	<strong>39</strong>	<strong>▲ 3</strong>	<strong>7</strong>
Safety and Security	60.6	62.8	20	▲ 2	3
Personal Freedom	43.5	47.7	40	▼ 4	10
Governance	36.4	55.6	33	▲ 14	8
Social Capital	41.3	39.1	39	▲ 1	10
<strong>Open Economies</strong>	<strong>38.7</strong>	<strong>43.2</strong>	<strong>46</strong>	<strong>▼ 2</strong>	<strong>12</strong>
Business Environment	45.6	47.5	36	▼ 1	9
Infrastructure	47.9	47.1	36	▼ 1	10
Economic Quality	22.8	35.2	50	▲ 1	15
<strong>Empowered People</strong>	<strong>40.8</strong>	<strong>48.4</strong>	<strong>44</strong>	<strong>▲ 1</strong>	<strong>10</strong>
Living Conditions	51.1	62.2	41	▲ 1	10
Health	37.7	40.8	47	▲ 1	11
Education	40.3	46.4	39	▼ 4	9
Natural Environment	34.2	44.4	42	▲ 6	12

### Kentucky (43rd): Pillar and element scores

Category		Overall Prosperity		US States Rank		Southeast Rank		Personal Freedom		Overall Prosperity		US States Rank		Southeast Rank	
		2011	2021	2021	10-yr rank change	2021	2021			2011	2021	2021	10-yr rank change	2021	2021
 Safety and Security		60.6	62.8	20	▲ 2	3			Personal Freedom	43.5	47.7	40	▼ 4	10	
Mass Killings and Injuries	15%	86.7	76.5	29	▼ 2	4		Agency	30%	64.7	57.8	38	▼ 7	9	
Violent Crime	50%	57.8	61.5	14	▲ 6	2		Freedom of Association and Speech	15%	40.0	40.0	16	▲ 2	8	
Property Crime	35%	53.5	58.8	21	▼ 1	3		Absence of Legal Discrimination	25%	27.6	47.6	24	▲ 8	5	
								Social Tolerance	30%	37.2	41.4	50	▼ 5	14	
 Governance		36.4	55.6	33	▲ 14	8			Social Capital	41.3	39.1	39	▲ 1	10	
Political Accountability	30%	36.3	51.9	43	▼ 2	11		Personal and Family Relationships	25%	45.5	63.3	36	▲ 4	5	
Rule of Law	35%	26.5	64.0	21	▲ 26	7		Social Networks	25%	54.3	39.1	32	▼ 3	3	
Government Integrity	35%	46.4	50.4	35	▲ 10	8		Institutional Trust	20%	47.2	31.8	42	▼ 10	12	
								Civic and Social Participation	30%	23.0	23.6	48	▲ 2	14	
 Business Environment		45.6	47.5	36	▼ 1	9			Infrastructure	47.9	47.1	36	▼ 1	10	
Financing Ecosystems	40%	40.7	41.1	34	▼ 3	9		Communications	40%	44.4	39.7	42	▼ 6	11	
Domestic Market Contestability	30%	48.6	47.2	33	▼ 2	7		Resources	25%	50.7	52.0	38	▲ 2	10	
Burden of Regulation	10%	14.6	18.4	49	▲ 1	15		Transport	35%	49.8	52.1	19	▲ 1	10	
Labor Market Flexibility	10%	70.9	67.6	17	▲ 1	9									
Price Distortions	10%	61.5	82.9	12	▲ 11	6									
 Economic Quality		22.8	35.2	50	▲ 1	15									
Fiscal Sustainability	25%	11.5	15.3	49	▼ 2	15									
Productivity and Competitiveness	25%	27.3	39.6	36	▲ 2	11									
Dynamism	20%	35.7	42.3	43	▼ 2	13									
Labor Force Engagement	30%	19.7	43.3	22	▲ 19	5									
 Living Conditions		51.1	62.2	41	▲ 1	10			Health	37.7	40.8	47	▲ 1	11	
Material Resources	25%	40.3	44.1	46	▼ 2	11		Behavioral Risk Factors	15%	34.9	38.0	51	▼ 1	15	
Nutrition	15%	47.8	52.9	43	▼ 3	10		Preventative Interventions	15%	39.7	52.6	30	▲ 9	8	
Water Services	15%	64.3	75.1	26	▲ 8	10		Care Systems	15%	36.9	57.1	33	▲ 6	4	
Shelter	15%	86.9	83.4	6	▼ 4	3		Mental Health	15%	43.1	35.7	48	▼ 1	14	
Connectedness	15%	28.3	81.5	28	▲ 16	8		Physical Health	20%	32.1	26.7	47	▲ 1	11	
Protection from Harm	15%	46.2	48.2	36	▲ 9	10		Longevity	20%	40.3	39.9	44	▬ ▬	9	
 Education		40.3	46.4	39	▼ 4	9			Natural Environment	34.2	44.4	42	▲ 6	12	
Pre-Primary Education	5%	50.2	39.7	38	▼ 15	14		Emissions	25%	37.8	55.2	40	▲ 5	11	
Primary Education	20%	66.4	56.9	26	▼ 17	5		Exposure to Air Pollution	25%	37.7	57.5	38	▲ 7	8	
Secondary Education	25%	58.8	57.8	27	▼ 4	4		Forest, Land and Soil	20%	26.7	28.0	44	▲ 2	15	
Tertiary Education	25%	29.5	39.6	34	▲ 8	8		Freshwater	20%	47.5	50.7	25	▲ 7	6	
Adult Skills	25%	9.9	34.6	44	▲ 6	11		Preservation Efforts	10%	5.0	5.0	45	▬ ▬	14	



CREATING THE PATHWAYS FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

## PROSPERITY INDEX

The Legatum Institute is a London-based think-tank with a bold vision to create a global movement of people committed to creating the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society.

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