

PROSPERITY INDEX



The United States
Prosperity Index
Overview
2020

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About the Helmsley Charitable Trust

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 \$2 billion for a wide range of charitable purposes. Learn more about Helmsley at helmsleytrust.org.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/RRobertWoodJohnsonFoundation>.



About the Walton Family Foundation

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



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Foreword



Our mission at the Legatum Institute is to create a global movement of people committed to creating the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society. We analyze the many complex drivers of prosperity at a local, national, and global level to help understand how it is created and perpetuated.

Genuine prosperity is about far more than a society's economy or an individual's financial wealth; it represents an environment in which everybody is able to reach their full potential. A nation is prosperous when it has effective institutions, an open economy, and empowered people who are healthy and educated.

The measurement of prosperity is an important task for all leaders, and for those who hold them to account. It is the real test of whether a nation, state, or community is truly fulfilling the potential of its people, in terms of both their productive capacity and their collective wellbeing. Our Indexes deliberately combine the wide range of elements that drive prosperity, in order to help policymakers and influencers focus on the broader implications of institutional, economic, and social policies.

The United States is one of the world's economic powerhouses. It is open, with strong infrastructure and competitive markets in which individuals and businesses have easy access to finance, and its productive capacity is higher than almost all similar countries. In the main, its institutions are robust, its education system is one of the best in the world, and the majority of citizens feel connected to each other and engaged in society. However, the U.S. under-performs in areas such as safety and security, health, and living conditions. As a result, the country is ranked just 18th out of 167 countries in the Legatum Prosperity Index™, and has not advanced in the rankings for the last decade.

In 2019, with the generous support of The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, we published the inaugural United States Prosperity Index, seeking to explore why the country's undeniable economic success was not translating fully into social wellbeing. This year's report, with additional support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and The Walton Family Foundation, presents an update on the prosperity of the 50 states and Washington D.C., as well as providing a brand-new, in-depth analysis of prosperity across 829 counties in eight selected states (California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, New York, Oklahoma, and Texas).

These Indexes have been purposefully designed to be transformational tools, that compliment each other. The comprehensive set of indicators provides a rich and policy-focused dataset, allowing the potential of all states (and all counties in the selected states) to be identified and understood. This enables much more targeted policy responses that can drive tangible improvements in prosperity. Our ambition is that 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.

The data in the Index, for the 10 years up to early 2020, reflects a picture of improving prosperity in the U.S., albeit not evenly distributed. The holistic perspective of the Index captures the structural characteristics of all 50 states and the capital city. However, this data reflects the situation before the coronavirus pandemic struck, which has obviously had significant health, social, and economic impacts, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

By providing a comprehensive picture of the situation before the pandemic started, the Index is a helpful lens through which to consider the various dimensions of the coronavirus and its effects — from transmission, susceptibility, and the health response, to governance of the response measures, resilience through digital connectivity, and social capital, as well as fiscal resilience to the economic impacts.

In general, it is the most densely populated, well-connected areas of the U.S. that have been most impacted by the virus. The Index's *Market Access and Infrastructure* pillar recognizes the significant economic benefits that a robust *Transport* system provides, enabling goods, people, and ideas to come into and spread around the country. But this same infrastructure can also be a transmission vehicle for pathogens, as demonstrated in New York City this year. While the virus originated in China, and the first case of COVID-19 in America was actually recorded on the other side of the country, it was in and from NYC that the outbreak grew as

infected people arrived by plane from Europe, packed into local trains and subway cars, and journeyed on to areas such as Ohio, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, Idaho, and the West Coast.

Susceptibility to illness from coronavirus has been shown to be higher for people with underlying health conditions such as *Diabetes*, *High Blood Pressure*, and *Obesity*, three indicators captured in the *Health* pillar of the Index. However, our data shows that areas with poor scores in these health indicators tend not to be those with high density population and transport networks; as of mid-May, none of the 10 states with the highest prevalence of comorbidities appears in the top 10 states for COVID-19 death rates.

The quality of the healthcare system and its ability to respond to the pandemic has been a critical factor in local responses to the virus. The *Preventative Interventions* and *Care Systems* elements of the Index's *Health* pillar capture the pre-existing strength of the public health and hospital networks. The experience of Washington state, which is ranked highly for its *Care Systems*, is instructive — although Seattle was home to the first case of the virus in the country, the Governor was able to dismantle an emergency field hospital that had been set up in the city because it was not needed and sent hundreds of ventilators back to the Strategic National Stockpile. Meanwhile, in Massachusetts, which ranks first for *Preventative Interventions*, the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center has been at the forefront of the race to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

In addition to the health response, the social measures taken to contain the virus, such as stay-at-home orders and distancing guidelines, elicited a wide range of reactions and responses across the U.S. In general, authorities in places where there is a high degree of confidence in institutions find it easier to dial measures up and down as required to protect public health. For example, countries such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and Switzerland had much smoother lockdown entry and exit processes than other nations where society is more suspicious of government, media, and other institutions. Similarly in the U.S., many areas where *Institutional Trust* is low, such as California, Ohio, and Oregon, saw large protests and widespread acts of defiance against lockdown restrictions.

In a time of forced isolation, people become more reliant on a combination of *Social Networks* and (digital) *Connectedness*. However, these do not often coincide — people living in more densely populated cities are much more likely to have strong broadband connections and high rates of smartphone ownership than those living in rural areas, but less likely to have strong connections with neighbors. Furthermore, those states and cities with stronger *Economic Quality*, and in particular *Fiscal Sustainability*, which among other things measures the resilience of states to deal with economic shocks, will be better placed to handle the increasingly important financial consequences of the response to the pandemic.

This year's Index illustrates how and why different areas of the U.S. have been more vulnerable to the spread of the coronavirus and/or more resilient to its health and socio-economic impacts. The ability of different states and cities to bounce back and to emerge even more prosperous in a post-COVID world will be the focus of our analysis over the coming years.

Over the past decade we have seen *Institutional Trust* decline across the U.S. Residents of counties with large minority populations such as El Paso in Texas and Riverside in California in particular have very low levels of trust in institutions such as the government, media, and corporations. At the same time, some counties in states like Georgia and Oklahoma have seen much higher use of racial epithets than other places (as recorded by Google). These trends are indicative of a society coming apart, rather than drawing together. The Index can also provide some context for the social unrest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of the police in May.

The Index helps frame an agenda through which different challenges can be addressed. By explicitly recognizing the interconnectedness of many different elements of prosperity, it allows users to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of states and counties across multiple dimensions. Combined with additional local insight and demographic data, this will enable a roadmap of targeted interventions to be developed that will benefit all Americans.

This is based on our experience that genuine, holistic, well-distributed prosperity is built on strong social foundations, with a robust social contract that is nurtured through high levels of social capital and tolerance, and governed by trustworthy and effective institutions, enabling an open and competitive economy that generates opportunity and wealth for all. This can be used to resource a resilient health system, high quality education, and good living conditions. This is the best way to increase resilience against future pandemics and other social emergencies and provide a bedrock for hope for the future.

Our analysis in this report shows that the key to unlocking greater prosperity in the U.S. lies in the potential for improvement at a state and county level, and not just nationally. For example, Washington D.C.'s prosperity growth over the last decade has been driven mainly by strengthening its education system, whereas economic quality been a big driver of improvement in California and South Carolina. When looking to the future, each area must recognize its distinct strengths and weaknesses and identify its own specific opportunities to improve and where lessons for improvement can be shared with and learned from other states and counties. The Index points to examples of best practice across many dimensions, demonstrating that there is much to be gained from benchmarking against peers, as well as from exploring the connections between development in different areas.

There is much to be hopeful about when considering prosperity in the U.S. While recognizing the challenges the country is currently facing, we can, and should, celebrate its high global ranking and historic improvement, which will provide a strong foundation upon which to build as it emerges from these challenging times.

While the state level Index covers all 50 states of the Union as well as Washington D.C., we are most ambitious about engaging with the eight selected states to use the findings at both county and state level to help them create targeted strategies for future development. Over the coming years we will be progressing our analysis by undertaking further deep dives into the prosperity of individual states, researching additional county-level patterns, and exploring the drivers of prosperity between and within different areas in more detail.

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 more broadly, please do contact us at info@li.com, or visit the dedicated United States Prosperity Index website at www.usprosperity.net.



Dr. Stephen Brien
Director of Policy, Legatum Institute

A photograph of the Statue of Liberty standing tall against a clear blue sky. She holds a torch in her right arm and a tablet in her left hand, which displays a graph showing economic prosperity over time. The New York City skyline is visible in the background across the water.

Prior to the pandemic, all states but Alaska were more prosperous than they were in 2010.

Using 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 D.C., and the 829 counties of the eight 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;
- 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 they need 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;
- Journalists and U.S. citizens can use it to hold their state and local government 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.

INTERPRETING THE INDEXES

For every U.S. state and D.C., the Index uses the same indicators, and combines them in the same way to create elements and pillars. Similarly, for the 829 counties in the eight selected states, a consistent set of indicators have been used and combined in the same way to create elements and pillars, mirroring the state level approach.

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, as well as the 48 elements within the pillars. The elements have been established to represent key policy areas, such as K-12 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 a 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 also provides data over a 10-year period, making it possible to see whether prosperity 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 addressed. The county level Index enables the performance within a state to be more clearly understood, and it also enables comparison with counties in other states, thus 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 why;
- Identifying the binding constraints to increased prosperity;
- Informing priorities for setting state and county agendas.

Where a state or a county is showing 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 a 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 completion 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 completion 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, thus pointing to the particular area where action is needed.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE

There are several tools available to aid analysis and interpretation of, and elicit insight from, the United States Prosperity Index. Alongside this report, which provides a high-level analysis of the findings from the state and county Indexes, the following additional information is available for download via our website at www.usprosperity.net:

State profiles. This 15-page profile, for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, provides more detailed pillar, element and indicator information, including rankings and scores, and how these have changed over time.

County profiles. This 15-page profile, for each of the 829 counties in the 8 selected states, provides more detailed pillar, element and indicator information, including rankings and scores, and how these have changed over time.

Indicator scores. An Excel spreadsheet which contains the scores for all of the indicators for each year since 2007 at both the state and 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 92).

Team members at the Legatum Institute are also available to engage and provide support to those interested in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by these materials. Please contact us at info@li.com.

USING THE INDEX

Political leaders

This report provides leaders at a state and local level with an overview of the performance of their state or county across the 11 pillars of prosperity and provides the foundation for setting an agenda to create pathways from poverty to prosperity. These can be developed and refined using the more in-depth accompanying resources outlined above.

Policymakers

The Index and its accompanying resources allow policymakers to benchmark the performance of their state or county against peers across 11 pillars and 48 elements of prosperity to create a much more granular perspective of performance and the potential binding constraints to development.

Each of the 48 elements of prosperity have been designed to be recognizable, discrete areas of domestic policy, and are 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. Benchmarking against the basket of indicators within the indexes must be complemented by in-depth context-sensitive analysis, which itself can lead to more balanced agendas across a range of policy areas.

In addition to helping focus analysis, these materials, together with the database of performance, also allow policymakers to develop diagnostic tools and to identify potential options to consider, based on the performance of other states and counties, and the case studies provided.

Philanthropists

There are many opportunities to invest in building stronger social, political, and economic outcomes across the United States. For example: on Social Capital. Reversing the decline seen in social capital across the United States will help further increase the prosperity of U.S. citizens. There is a unique role for philanthropists to identify and champion what it takes to build social capital across the counties and states of the U.S.

Investors and business leaders

The business community is well positioned to identify barriers to starting, operating, and growing business, and to demonstrate to government 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, where they can be the binding constraint on further increasing 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 13 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 levels of institutional trust.

Journalists and civil society

The United States Prosperity Index, at a state and county level, 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 leaders to account is a crucial role for both journalists and civil society. The institutional, economic and social performance of a state and county is critical to its prosperity, and that of the United States as a whole, and having non-government actors calling out weaknesses, as well as 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. Intermediate benchmarks are most helpful and effective, and the most obvious challenges facing a state, or a county, should be considered in the first instance. Understanding the specifics of each state and county's circumstances will be critical to determining the sequencing and prioritization. The Indexes provide a set of hypotheses to test. The areas 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 prioritization. To give a rather simplified example, a state may

find itself with a weak environment for investment and also low levels of dynamism. In such a situation, simply 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 is already a high number of start-ups and new entrepreneurs. In such a circumstance, creating an environment that attracts new businesses and start-ups would likely be a more impactful first step.

As no single state has yet succeeded in fully securing both economic and social wellbeing for its residents, clear opportunities therefore exist for states and counties to learn from each other. The Indexes identify these opportunities for improvement, and also 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 region might be adapted to address weaknesses in another region.



Executive Summary

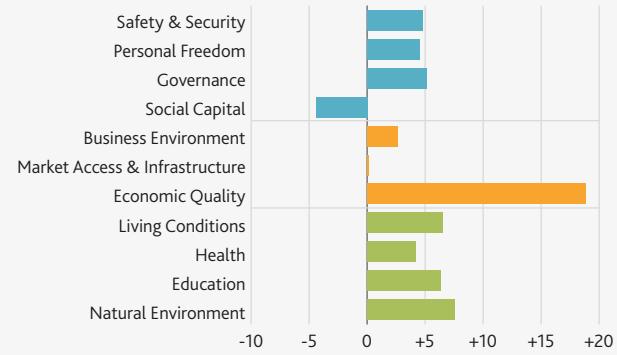
INTRODUCING THE UNITED STATES PROSPERITY INDEXES

This report marks the second publication of the Legatum Institute's United States Prosperity Index and the inaugural publication of the county level Index, for eight selected states of the Union (California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, New York, Oklahoma, and Texas). The state and county level information works together to assess the development, growth, and extent of prosperity of the 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the 829 counties within the eight selected states. It comprehensively measures state and county performance across 11 pillars of prosperity, using a collection of over 200 state-level indicators, grouped into 48 policy-focused elements. Using the United States Prosperity Index framework, leaders can assess the strengths and weaknesses of different areas of the country in order to determine the economic and strategic choices that need to be made to further develop inclusive societies, open economies, and empowered people to drive greater levels of prosperity for all Americans. These transformational tools will prove invaluable as local and state leaders look to create a roadmap as they emerge from COVID-19 and address the underlying issues that led to the social unrest following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THIS YEAR'S REPORT:

- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, prosperity in the U.S. had been rising for a decade and was at its highest ever level, with all states apart from Alaska improving since 2010;
- Prosperity was not universally shared across the U.S., with Northern states outperforming those in the South, and further disparities existing within states at a county level;
- The improvement in U.S. prosperity has been due mostly to increasingly open economies, driven by strengthening Economic Quality as a result of the longest period of economic growth in the country's history. States became more productive and competitive, with increased workforce engagement and state Government's financial reserves increasing;
- The U.S. also saw a significant improvement in the Empowered People domain over the last decade, due to Living Conditions, Health, Education, and Natural Environment all improving.
- The Inclusive Societies domain improved due to strengthening Governance, despite a deterioration in Social Capital.

Figure 1. U.S. score change 2010-2020, by pillar

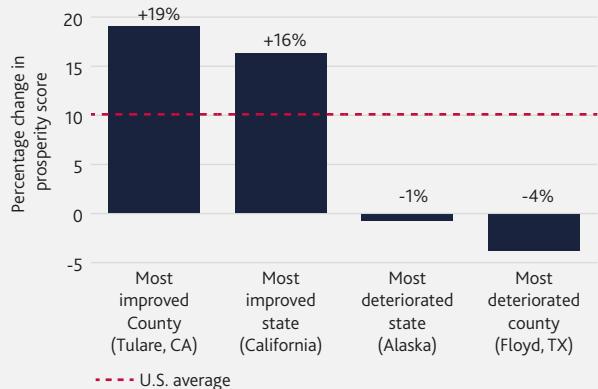


PRE COVID-19, U.S. PROSPERITY AT HIGHEST EVER LEVEL

At the time of publishing this 2nd annual report, we find that the United States, alongside many other parts of the world, is in the grip of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, U.S. prosperity had been rising over the past decade, reaching its highest ever level in 2020. Overall, 49 states and the District of Columbia had improved their prosperity, with California seeing the greatest increase, followed by D.C. and Arizona. Alaska was the only state to experience a decline in prosperity over the past decade.

Figure 2. Selected state and county prosperity score change, 2010-2020



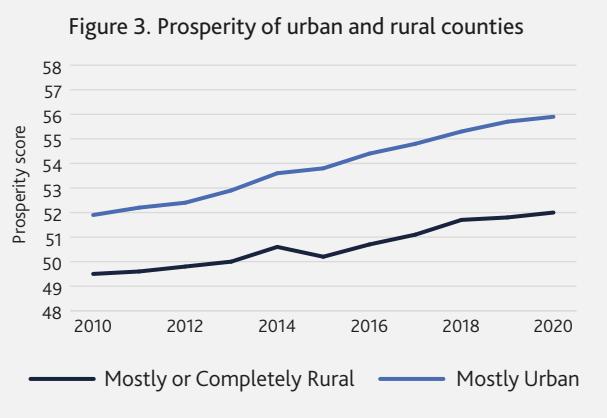
The strong improvement seen across the individual states is also mirrored across counties in the eight selected states. Of the 829 counties in the County Index, 813 (98%) had improved their prosperity since 2010. This means that, in these states, only 16 counties have seen a deterioration although four rank in the bottom 100 counties and are in danger of being left behind. In California and New York, all counties improved, whereas the other six selected

states all have at least one county that deteriorated, with Montana and Colorado both having four counties seeing a deterioration.

PROSPERITY WAS NOT UNIVERSALLY SHARED ACROSS THE U.S.

Going into the COVID-19 pandemic, prosperity was not universally shared across the U.S., with significant disparities existing between states. Massachusetts continues to top the rankings as the strongest performing state, and Mississippi continues to be the weakest performing state. These two states are representative of the general North/South prosperity divide seen in the U.S., with eight of the ten weakest performing states clustered in the South. The most prosperous states are generally located in the North East, although Washington State (5th), Utah (6th), Colorado (10th), and Minnesota (3rd) buck this trend and also rank in the top 10. At the time of writing, the states with the highest rates of confirmed COVID-19 cases and associated deaths are mainly located in the North East and, given their higher levels of prosperity, are better prepared to respond to the pandemic than other less prosperous states. However, Louisiana (49th), which also appears in the top 10 states with the highest infection rates of COVID-19, ranks in the bottom three states for prosperity, which is a concern.

While our state-level Prosperity Index reveals that prosperity is not universally shared across the states of the Union, our inaugural county level Index also reveals that prosperity is not equally spread within the eight selected states. Within some of these states, prosperity is distributed more uniformly but there is a more distinct divide across other states. For example, most counties in Iowa, which ranks 14th in the state level Index, share very similar levels of prosperity — 84 of the 99 counties in the state rank in the top quartile of the county Index, and the remainder are in the 2nd quartile. However, the counties of California, which ranks 26th for state prosperity, exhibit a much greater degree of variation in their prosperity — with nearly a quarter of counties in the top quartile, just under two-thirds in the middle quartiles, and 12% in the 4th quartile.



Overall, while we find that metropolitan counties are more prosperous than rural counties (see Figure 3), this is not universally the case. In Texas for example, although the five strongest performing counties in the state are located in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Austin, or San Antonio metro areas, Gillespie, a rural county about 100km north of San Antonio, also performs well and sits just outside the top quartile of the 829 counties featured, outperforming some of the more urban counties in the state, including Dallas county.

Gillespie has a high number of patent applications, high labor productivity, and low unemployment, and its performance is reflective of Texas overall. The state's regulations are business-friendly, transport and communications infrastructure is sound, and the labor force is engaged and productive, resulting in a state ranking of 3rd for the Open Economies domain. However, high rates of crime and poverty, poor education outcomes, and weak community bonds mean Texas has an overall ranking of 36th.

Similarly, in Colorado, some rural counties in the Rocky Mountains are more prosperous than some of the 9 counties that lie in the Front Range Urban Corridor, where 80% of the state population resides. For example, Eagle, Summit, and Pitkin counties, containing the towns Vail, Breckenridge, and Aspen, all rank in the ten most prosperous counties in Colorado, whereas El Paso County, home to Colorado Springs and with a population of over 250,000, ranks 37th out of 64 counties. We also see a juxtaposition in the performance of these rural counties with the rural counties in the south-east, which are the least prosperous in the state.

THE IMPROVEMENT IN U.S. PROSPERITY HAS BEEN DRIVEN PRINCIPALLY BY MORE OPEN ECONOMIES

The growth in U.S. prosperity over the last decade was mainly driven by the improvement seen in the Open Economies domain, as a result of Economic Quality strengthening. States became more productive and competitive, with full engagement of the workforce. Over this period, state Governments also strengthened their fiscal positioning so that in 2020 a state could, on average, survive 40 days on their financial reserves, more than twice as long as in 2010. These increased reserves will be invaluable as lockdown and other measures will have impacted state tax revenues from businesses and employees.

THE U.S. ALSO SAW A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE EMPOWERED PEOPLE DOMAIN

In addition to Open Economies improving, the Empowered People domain also saw considerable improvement over the last decade, due to Living Conditions, Health, Education, and Natural Environment all strengthening. Education, however, saw a slight downturn in the latest year due to a decline in test scores at both grade 4 and grade 8 level. Lockdown measures have varied state to state, but since the start of the pandemic many U.S. schools and universities have experienced closure, which is very likely to have resulted in a lower standard of education being provided.

Furthermore, as the U.S. headed into this uncertain period, the educational performance of states and counties already varied considerably. Some states such as Massachusetts (1st) performed consistently well across the board, ranking in the top 6 on all the different stages of schooling and also 4th on the education level of the adult population. Pupils in this state experience a good quality education throughout their years of schooling. Other states have a strong tertiary educational sector, such as California and New York, but perform poorly in earlier stages, such as primary and secondary education, and will therefore continue to rely on attracting students from outside their borders, unless improvements are made to the earlier stages of education. Other states, such as Nevada, rank below 40 on all educational stages and require a wholesale review

of education within the state to determine the most immediate priorities upon which to focus.

Overall, health across America had also improved over the decade leading up to the pandemic. Increased healthcare coverage, improved hospital ratings, and a greater proportion of people receiving routine medical and dental care have led to improved Preventative Interventions and Care Systems, placing the U.S. in a stronger position than it was a decade ago to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Similarly, reductions in smoking and excessive alcohol use over the past decade led to an improvement in Behavioral Risk Factors, but further improvement was held back by obesity levels increasing by over 10 percent. This is concerning given that obesity is a comorbidity increasing the risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19. Reductions in mortality rates across most age groups led to an improvement in Longevity.

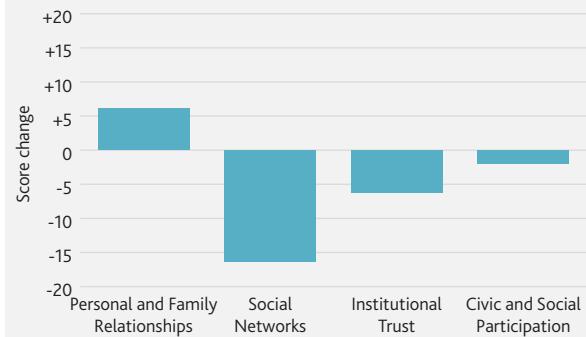
In contrast to these improvements, an increase in mortality rates in the 16–64 age group is due to an increase in the number of 'deaths of despair' — suicides and drug overdose deaths — which now claim tens of thousands of American lives each year and have led to the deterioration seen in mental health.¹ West Virginia and Utah had the lowest levels of mental health heading into the pandemic. Montana, one of the featured states, ranks 25th for health, but 40th for mental health. Eight of its counties rank in the bottom 10 for mental health, which have seen some of the highest suicide rates in the country. Cascade, Ravilla, and Lewis & Clarke counties have nearly three times the national suicide rate. The deterioration seen in mental health across the U.S. is likely to be further exacerbated by COVID-19. Physical health may also be affected, as patients have not been able to access normal health-care services during this time.

INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES IMPROVED, AS GOVERNANCE STRENGTHENED, BUT SOCIAL CAPITAL DECLINES

Prior to the pandemic, the Inclusive Societies domain had also improved since 2010, but not as strongly as the other domains due to a mixed performance across the different pillars.

On the one hand, Governance strengthened between 2010 and 2020, due mainly to Political Accountability improving. This was the result of state legislatures being more gender-balanced and also improving transparency around state campaigning. Where there is effective and efficient governance, states will be best placed to respond to the pandemic.

Figure 4. Social Capital Score change 2010–2020, by element



While Governance has improved, Social Capital has deteriorated over the last 10 years — the only pillar across the Index to have declined, with all but 5 states experiencing a deterioration. Social networks, trust in institutions, and civic and social participation all weakened. It is encouraging to see that personal and family relationships strengthened prior to the lockdown measures imposed by some states, but the deterioration across the other elements provides a warning sign for future prosperity, as strong and inclusive communities and institutions are cornerstones of society.

Safety and security in the U.S. presents a mixed picture; while there were improvements between 2010 and 2015, it deteriorated until 2019. It is therefore encouraging to see an improvement in the latest year, which was mainly due to violent crime rates reducing after an increase over the previous three years. Over the past year, 41 states saw a drop in their levels of violent crime, with Iowa (10th), West Virginia (13th), and South Dakota (16th) seeing the biggest improvements. Terror related crime, however, increased for the 7th year in a row.

¹ Case, Anne, and Angus Deaton. Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism. Princeton University Press, 2020.



Personal Freedom also improved over the past decade, with 45 states and D.C. seeing an improvement. Mississippi (38th), West Virginia (40th) and Kansas (24th) saw the biggest improvement, while Hawaii (19th) saw the greatest deterioration. Minnesota (22nd), where George Floyd lived, is the same rank as it was a decade ago, although its performance across the Personal Freedom pillar is varied. The state ranking 51st for Freedom to Assemble and Associate is due to a relatively high use of invasive cell phone surveillance and a high number of incidences where the press was subject to restrictions. While the state has a high ranking for Agency (7th), it has one of the highest rates of fatal police shootings of unarmed civilians of any state, one-and-a-half times the national rate.

Personal Freedom is also dependent on all forms of discrimination, including racial, being absent from society. Local measures of racial discrimination are not readily available in the U.S. We have therefore constructed a proxy measure using the frequency of derogatory racial terms searched for using Google during 2019. This reveals clear disparities across the country. States in the south, such as Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri have much higher rates of searches for these terms than the states in the North-East.

CONCLUSION

As the United States charts its way out of the COVID-19 pandemic and grapples with the civil unrest that threatens the fabric of society, the country should take confidence in the improvement seen in its prosperity over the past decade. The U.S. significantly strengthened its economy, and the lived experience of U.S. citizens also improved, with living conditions, education, and health all stronger than a decade previously. The U.S. has a solid foundation upon which to build and address the considerable challenges that present themselves at the national, state, and local level.

Community bonds across nearly all U.S. states have weakened over the past decade. Increasing the extent to which neighbors speak to and help one another, as well as encouraging and assisting people to become more engaged and active in their local community, will help rebuild and strengthen these communities. Rebuilding trust in

public institutions, including the media, is also important if the U.S. is to strengthen the bonds of society. Implementing the necessary solutions to address these weaknesses will require all stakeholders from across society working together.

Some challenges require specific action at a state and local level. For example, both California and New York state have outstanding universities and attract some of the best talent to their campuses from across America and beyond. Primary and secondary education within these states, however, is weak. If these important stages of education remain neglected, pupils from within these states will continue to be disadvantaged in competing for university places within their state with more educated students from outside.

The deterioration seen in mental and physical health prior to the pandemic is also a concern, as these are at risk of deteriorating further as the impact of the pandemic on U.S. citizens unfolds. While this is a national crisis, some states are more at risk than others. Montana is of particular concern, with eight of the ten weakest performing counties for mental health and suicide rates almost double the national average.

The state and county Indexes help frame an agenda through which these and other challenges can be identified and addressed. These Indexes stand ready, for use by state and county leaders and others, to learn from and build upon each other's strengths and develop tailored responses that will address weaknesses. This data-driven and insight approach will strengthen institutions, create more open economies, and improve the lived experience of U.S. citizens, resulting in even greater prosperity for all Americans.

Boston, Massachusetts.

Massachusetts continues to top the rankings as the most prosperous state.

Marcio Jose Bastos Silva/Shutterstock.com



State level findings

The United States Prosperity Index has been developed as a practical tool to help identify what specific action needs to be taken to strengthen the pathways from poverty to prosperity across the United States.

The state level Index assesses the 50 states of the U.S., and the District of Columbia, on the promotion of their citizens' flourishing, reflecting both wealth and wellbeing. We worked with around 40 U.S. academic and policy experts (see page 25 for a full listing) with particular expertise in different aspects of prosperity in a U.S. context. This helped us to develop an appropriate prosperity taxonomy that identified the different characteristics of prosperity

for each of the 50 states of the Union and D.C. The state-level Index was first published in 2019, and since last year we have made some minor improvements and modifications to the Index (See our website for more detail of the changes, at: www.usprosperity.net.)

This next section provides the high-level insights from this year's Prosperity Index at a state level, which includes a map showing how prosperity is shared across the U.S. at a state level, the overall U.S. performance on the 11 pillars over time and the rankings of the 50 states and D.C. for prosperity and the 11 pillars.

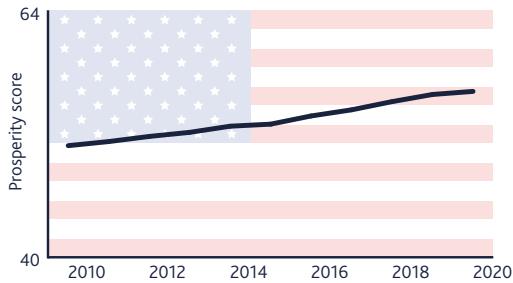




Key findings

Prosperity was rising

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, prosperity in the U.S. had been rising for a decade and was at its highest ever level, with all states apart from Alaska, and all but 16 counties in the 8 selected states improving.



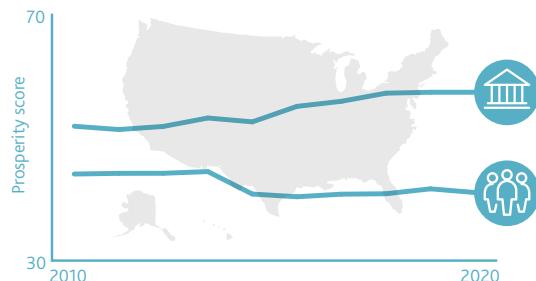
Prosperity was not universally shared

Prosperity was not universally shared across the U.S., with Northern states outperforming those in the South, and further disparities existing within states at a county level. Eight of the ten weakest performing states are in the South.



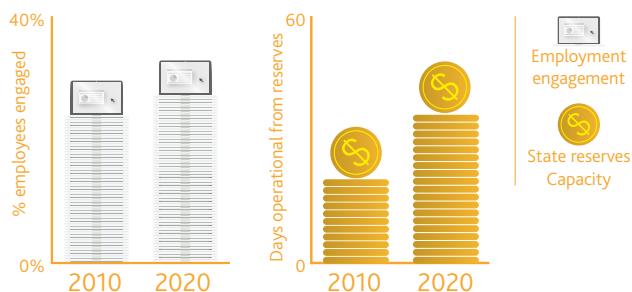
Inclusive Societies

The Inclusive Societies domain improved, due to Governance strengthening. While Personal and Family relationships improved over the past decade, Social Networks, Institutional Trust, and Civic and Social Participation all deteriorated, leading to an overall decline in Social Capital.



Open Economies

The domain in which the U.S. saw the biggest improvement over the last decade was Open Economies. This was due to Economic Quality strengthening, as states became more productive and competitive, with increased workforce engagement and state Governments' financial reserves increasing.



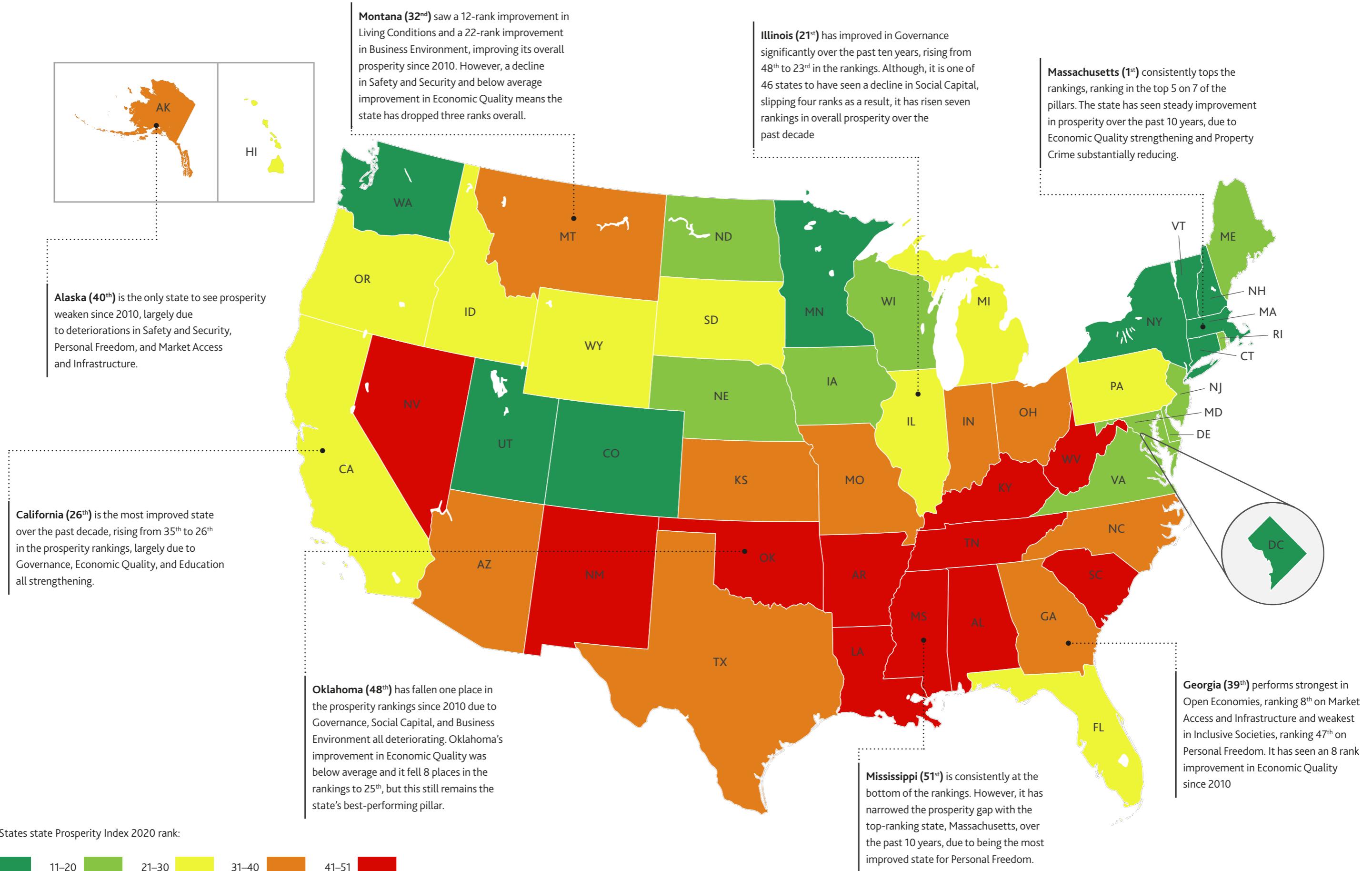
Empowered People

The U.S. also saw a significant improvement in the Empowered People domain over the last decade, due to Living Conditions, Health, Education, and Natural Environment all improving, although mental health has declined over the last year.





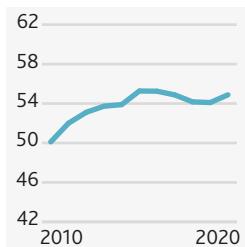
Mapping state prosperity in 2020



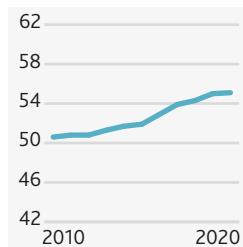
The pillars of U.S. prosperity at a glance



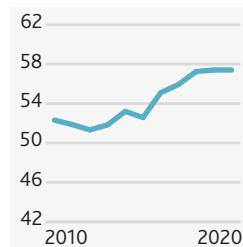
The **Safety and Security** pillar measures the degree to which terror, violent crime, and property crime destabilize the security of individuals, both immediately and through longer lasting effects.



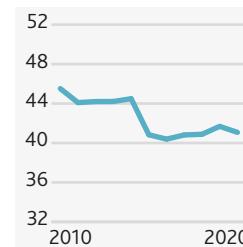
The **Personal Freedom** pillar measures progress towards basic legal rights, individual liberties, and social tolerance.



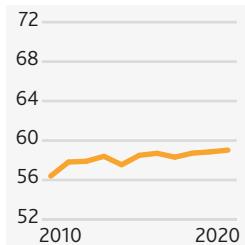
The **Governance** pillar measures the extent to which there are checks and restraints on power and whether the government operates effectively and without corruption.



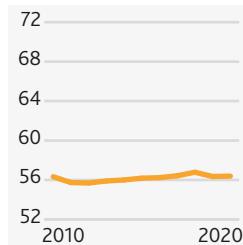
The **Social Capital** pillar measures the strength of personal and social relationships, institutional trust, social networks and civic participation.



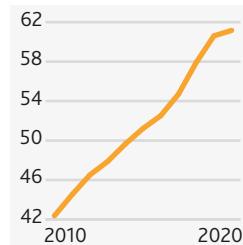
The **Business Environment** pillar measures the entrepreneurial environment, business infrastructure, access to credit, labor market flexibility and price distortions for goods and services.



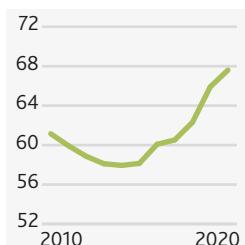
The **Market Access and Infrastructure** pillar measures the quality of the infrastructure that facilitates trade — from telecommunications and transport to the availability of resources.



The **Economic Quality** pillar measures how well the economy is equipped to generate wealth sustainably and with the full engagement of its workforce.



The **Living Conditions** pillar measures the degree to which a reasonable quality of life is experienced by all, including material resources, shelter, basic services, and connectivity.



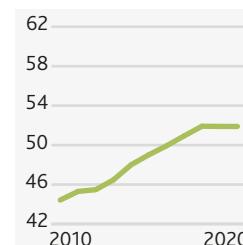
The **Health** pillar measures the health of the population, their illness and risk factors, and access to the services to maintain good health, including health outcomes, health systems, and mortality rates.



The **Education** pillar measures access to, and the quality of, the four stages of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary), as well as the education level of the adult population.



The **Natural Environment** pillar measures the aspects of the physical environment that have an immediate impact on people in their daily lives and also those that impact the prosperity of future generations.



The U.S. state Prosperity Index



2010 Rank	2019 Rank	2020 Rank	State	Safety and Security	Personal Freedom	Governance	Social Capital	Business Environment	Market Access & Infrastructure	Economic Quality	Living Conditions	Health	Education	Natural Environment
1	1	1	Massachusetts	9	2	4	19	3	11	12	2	4	1	4
2	2	2	Connecticut	6	1	2	28	13	4	31	4	2	6	2
3	3	3	Minnesota	14	22	15	2	16	22	17	3	3	7	19
4	4	4	New Hampshire	2	7	30	9	9	30	28	5	13	5	5
10	5	5	Washington	29	11	3	17	14	21	4	12	9	11	7
7	6	6	Utah	17	6	25	1	8	33	8	10	19	15	23
16	9	7	District of Columbia	51	3	1	24	4	1	7	38	23	4	22
8	8	8	Vermont	3	8	29	3	27	41	26	14	15	3	1
9	7	9	New York	11	16	40	40	2	12	10	11	5	21	6
6	11	10	Colorado	35	12	5	15	5	36	21	18	10	9	10
11	10	11	New Jersey	5	13	41	33	28	2	39	1	12	2	12
12	12	12	Wisconsin	15	29	7	5	10	29	29	17	14	16	24
5	13	13	North Dakota	18	17	31	6	34	3	3	9	21	24	35
13	15	14	Iowa	10	14	13	11	41	10	9	13	11	14	41
14	14	15	Maryland	34	18	9	34	25	9	27	6	18	10	17
15	16	16	Nebraska	19	30	10	7	19	31	14	24	7	13	42
22	17	17	Rhode Island	7	4	21	30	39	27	44	19	8	25	3
19	18	18	Maine	1	10	8	8	31	51	43	21	27	22	8
24	19	19	Virginia	12	35	22	22	18	32	36	8	20	8	25
20	20	20	Delaware	27	34	18	31	24	6	6	7	31	31	26
28	22	21	Illinois	32	9	23	35	7	5	48	16	17	19	39
17	23	22	Pennsylvania	21	23	48	25	1	7	47	15	24	12	29
25	24	23	Oregon	24	20	16	20	45	18	18	37	22	30	16
18	21	24	Hawaii	20	19	6	21	51	39	42	22	1	34	9
21	25	25	Wyoming	8	15	46	16	40	48	1	31	29	17	21
35	26	26	California	38	25	24	44	35	28	5	34	6	40	14
26	29	27	Idaho	4	33	32	12	29	37	16	29	28	38	28
23	34	28	South Dakota	16	42	42	4	32	34	15	32	16	26	27
32	28	29	Michigan	31	27	11	27	26	38	33	20	34	18	30
34	30	30	Florida	36	21	34	48	38	8	19	28	33	29	15
31	27	31	North Carolina	33	44	17	38	17	17	23	26	32	32	33
29	32	32	Montana	23	28	27	10	20	42	41	33	25	28	31
37	33	33	Indiana	28	31	37	18	11	14	20	30	42	23	51
30	31	34	Kansas	37	24	43	14	12	23	24	36	30	27	40
33	36	35	Ohio	25	46	20	32	21	13	35	27	40	20	45
36	35	36	Texas	39	45	38	43	15	19	2	40	36	41	37
38	37	37	Missouri	43	49	36	23	6	20	34	25	41	33	38
39	39	38	Georgia	30	51	45	45	23	15	11	23	38	35	32
41	38	39	Arizona	40	32	12	49	42	40	38	44	26	43	18
27	41	40	Alaska	47	26	26	13	48	50	13	41	35	44	13
40	40	41	Tennessee	44	48	19	42	22	24	22	39	45	36	34
42	42	42	South Carolina	46	43	44	29	37	25	32	35	43	37	36
45	43	43	Kentucky	22	37	33	39	30	26	50	43	47	39	46
43	46	44	New Mexico	49	5	14	50	43	49	45	51	37	51	20
49	44	45	Alabama	42	47	47	36	33	16	40	42	48	47	47
46	45	46	Nevada	50	39	35	51	49	35	30	45	39	50	11
48	47	47	West Virginia	13	40	28	26	50	44	46	47	51	49	44
47	48	48	Oklahoma	41	41	50	41	36	47	25	48	46	42	48
44	49	49	Louisiana	48	36	49	47	46	43	37	49	44	48	50
51	50	50	Arkansas	45	50	39	46	47	45	49	46	49	45	49
50	51	51	Mississippi	26	38	51	37	44	46	51	50	50	46	43

County level findings

Developed over the past year, the U.S. Prosperity Index at a county level has been created to further understand the disparities that exists in prosperity across the U.S., in particular within the eight selected states: California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Montana, Oklahoma, New York and Texas, 829 counties in all. These states were 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.

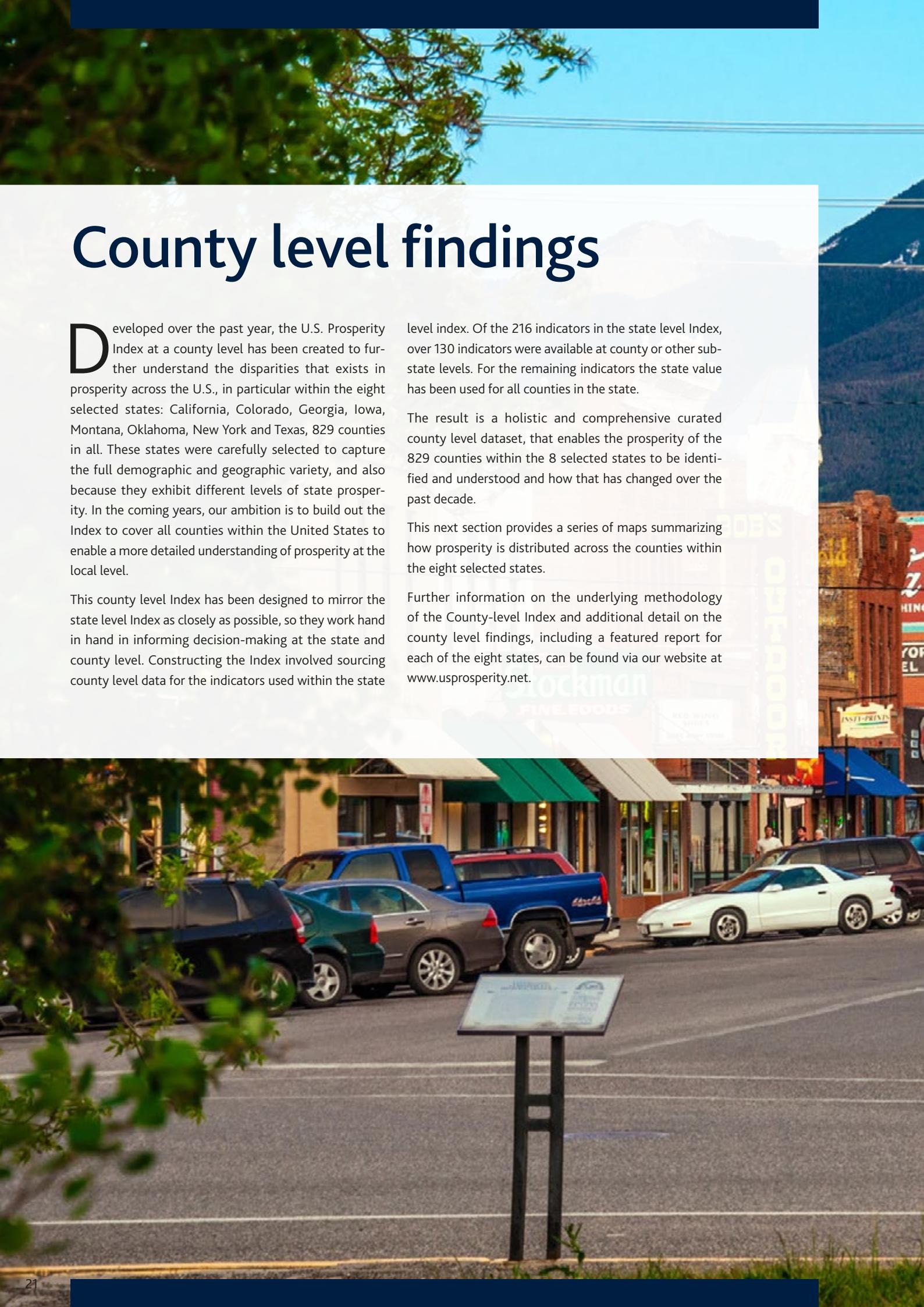
This county level Index has been designed to mirror the state level Index as closely as possible, so they work hand in hand in informing decision-making at the state and county level. Constructing the Index involved sourcing county level data for the indicators used within the state

level index. Of the 216 indicators in the state level Index, over 130 indicators were available at county or other sub-state levels. For the remaining indicators the state value has been used for all counties in the state.

The result is a holistic and comprehensive curated county level dataset, that enables the prosperity of the 829 counties within the 8 selected states to be identified and understood and how that has changed over the past decade.

This next section provides a series of maps summarizing how prosperity is distributed across the counties within the eight selected states.

Further information on the underlying methodology of the County-level Index and additional detail on the county level findings, including a featured report for each of the eight states, can be found via our website at www.usprosperity.net.





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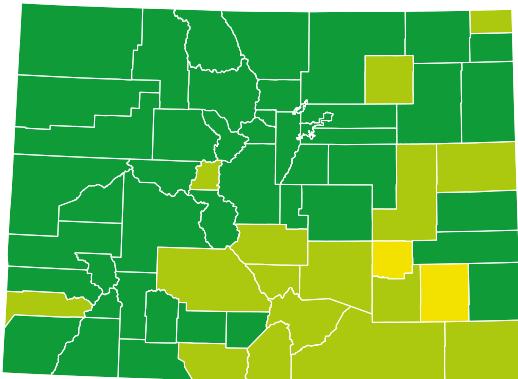
Selected states

CALIFORNIA



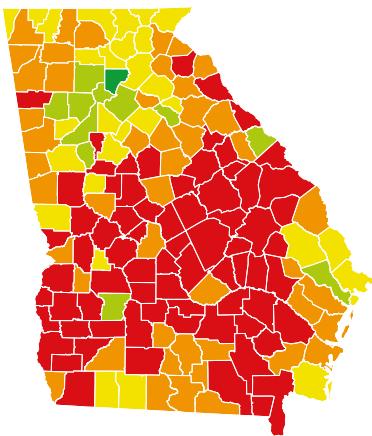
California (26th) is the most improved state over the past decade. It has increased the amount of its financial reserves and has a more balanced budget, leading to a 27-rank rise in Economic Quality. California's counties exhibit the highest degree of variation in prosperity of the eight selected states, and one of the largest disparities between its most prosperous county, San Mateo, and its least prosperous, Trinity.

COLORADO



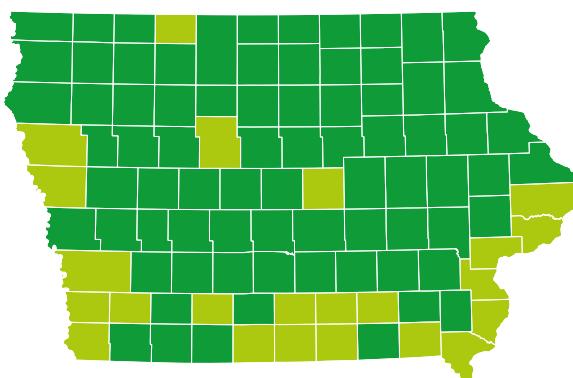
Colorado ranks 10th in overall prosperity. The state attracts high amounts of investment, has limited regulation and consequently ranks 5th on Business Environment. There is strong political accountability and the state also ranks 5th on Governance. Over 80% of Colorado's 64 counties rank in the top quartile. The counties in the southern region are weaker than those around the Denver metropolitan area and the resort towns in the state's west-central area.

GEORGIA



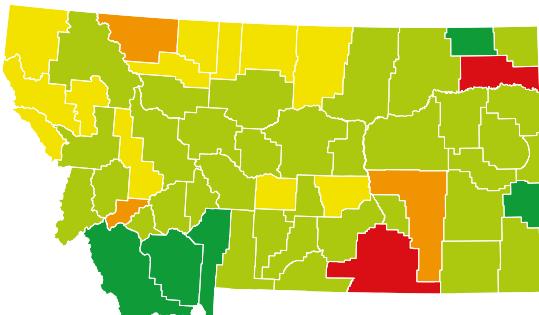
Georgia's (38th) strength lies in its economy, ranking 11th for Open Economies, but it has a weak performance on Empowered People (35th) and Inclusive Societies (48th). It has some of the highest rates of business start-ups and new entrepreneurs in the country and consequently ranks 11th in Economic Quality. With good communication and transport infrastructure, it ranks 15th on Market Access and Infrastructure, and 36% of its counties rank in the top quartile for this pillar.

IOWA



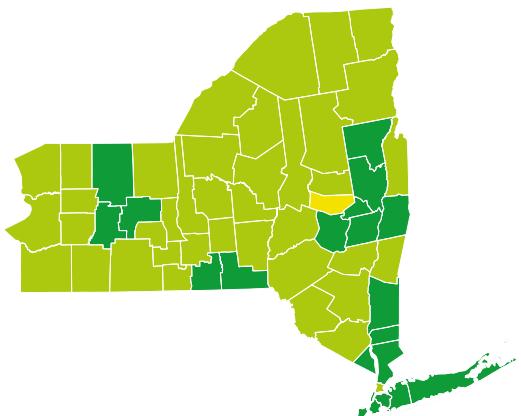
Iowa (14th) performs well across all pillars apart from Business Environment (41st), due to high regulation and lack of investment, and Natural Environment (41st), due to high levels of emissions and poor-quality forest, land, and soil. The state has low levels of crime and ranks 10th for Safety and Security and 11th for Social Capital. Iowa's prosperity is relatively homogeneous across its counties and nearly 85% of Iowa's 99 counties rank in the top quartile.

MONTANA



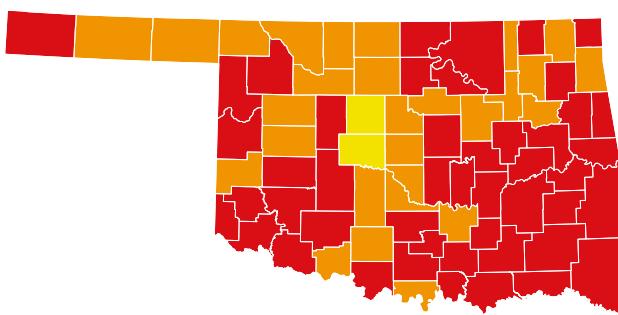
Montana ranks 32nd for prosperity. Trust in institutions is weak, but residents are actively involved in society, and relationships with family, friends, and others are strong. This results in the state ranking 10th for Social Capital and 55 counties in the state rank in the top quartile of the County Index for Social Capital. This strength is not shared elsewhere — the state has poor communications and transport infrastructure, and just 9% of Montana's counties rank in the top quartile for Market Access and Infrastructure.

NEW YORK



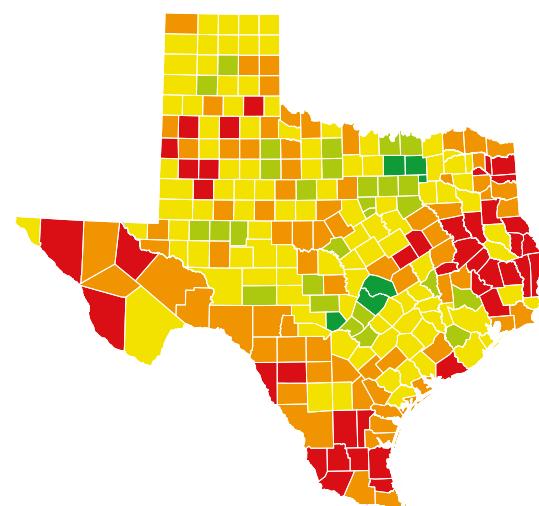
New York's (9th) strong performance, with nearly 60% of counties in the 1st quartile for prosperity, is driven by its economy. It attracts the highest amount of venture capital and FDI of any state and ranks 1st on Financing Ecosystems. Internet accessibility and speed are also good, providing support to the significant number of business start-ups in the state. The stagnation in Governance (40th) and weak Social Capital (40th) is holding back increased prosperity.

OKLAHOMA



Oklahoma (48th) ranks poorly across Empowered People (47th) and Inclusive Societies (49th). The state ranks 25th for Economic Quality, its strongest pillar, due principally to high rates of business start-ups and entrepreneurship. Prosperity within Oklahoma is clustered around the metropolitan areas of Oklahoma City and Tulsa as well as the Panhandle. The state's weakest pillar is Natural Environment, for which 92% of its counties rank in the bottom quartile.

TEXAS



Texas (36th) exhibits a stark contrast between the levels of economic wellbeing compared with institutional and social wellbeing. Its high-value exports and ability to attract new business start-ups into the state mean it ranks 2nd for Economic Quality. However, education outcomes are weak at most stages of the education system; pre-K enrollment rates are low at just 42%, test scores at grade 8 have declined since 2010, and only 84% of adults have a high-school diploma — higher than only California.

Acknowledgements

The United States Prosperity Index Team

The following team has worked tirelessly, and with huge passion and rigor, in producing the United States Prosperity Index. We are incredibly grateful for their dedication and hard work.

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Unless otherwise stated, all data is from the 2020 United States Prosperity Index.

All original data sources can be found in the methodology report and online at 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 2020 United States Prosperity Index.

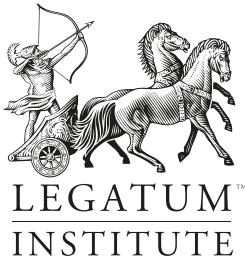
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The Legatum Institute is a London-based think-tank with a bold vision to create a global movement of people committed to creating the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society. We seek to fulfil our mission by raising up leaders of character, restoring an ethical vitality to all sectors of society, and developing the practical solutions and data tools that will help build inclusive and peaceful societies with open economies and empowered people. Our Centre for Metrics creates indexes and datasets to measure and explain how poverty and prosperity are changing. Our Research Programmes analyse the many complex drivers of poverty and prosperity at the local, national and global level. Our Practical Programmes identify the actions required to enable transformational change. For more information about the United States Prosperity Index or to speak to one of the Legatum Institute's experts, please email info@li.com.



CREATING THE PATHWAYS FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

PROSPERITY INDEX

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