

In the fall of 2015, we introduced the [Opportunity Washington Scorecard](#) — a 50-state ranking of performance on three priorities vital to fostering a culture of opportunity and prosperity: **ACHIEVE** (education quality and outcomes), **CONNECT** (transportation reliability and efficiency), and **EMPLOY** (economic vitality).

To develop the Scorecard, we examine 17 variables across the three categories. The dials are set so the score of the 10th best state is 100, and the median is 75. From there, the analysis produces a weighted average or “Opportunity Score” for each state. Achieve and Employ data each make up 40 percent of the Opportunity Score; Connect makes up 20 percent. (Access the [data sources and FAQ](#) for detail on the methodology).

Changes in the rankings are dynamic. Even with improved performance, Washington can fall behind if other states demonstrate more rapid progress. Our goal is to make Washington a top 10 state overall and in each category.



## Washington’s Overall Performance

### 50-State Ranking: **31** • Opportunity Score: **69**

(Previous Ranking: **27** • Previous Score: **74**)

**Washington:** Our state falls four spots to 31st in the 50-state ranking, with an overall Opportunity Score of 69. Our goal is to rank among the top 10 states overall and in each of the three priority categories. We have significant distance to make up in reaching both goals as Washington hovers near the median of states in ACHIEVE and falls deep into the bottom half of states in CONNECT and EMPLOY.

**Top Performer:** Utah leads the nation with an Opportunity Score of 158. That state pulls in top 10 rankings in ACHIEVE (ranking 5th) and EMPLOY (ranking 1st) and finishes just outside the top 10 in CONNECT (ranking 11th).



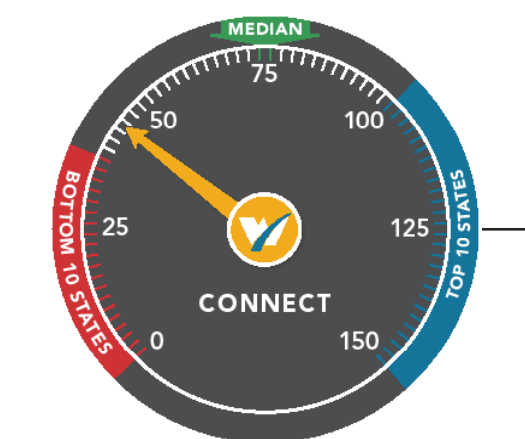
## ACHIEVE 50-State Ranking: **22** • Score: **78**

(Previous Ranking: **21** • Previous Score: **78**)

**Washington:** Our state drops one spot to 22 in the ACHIEVE rankings after accounting for updated high school graduation rate data. Washington’s graduation rate has increased consistently in recent years, rising to 78.2 percent in 2015, however, it still ranked among the 10 worst states in that category. To crack the top 10, Washington would have needed a graduation rate of 87.8 percent or higher.

**Top Performer:** Massachusetts leads the nation with an ACHIEVE score of 149. That state awards nearly double the number of bachelor’s degrees and STEM bachelor’s degrees per capita as Washington, and more than three times the number of advanced degrees. That state also had a high school graduation rate of 87.3 percent.

[Data Sources](#)



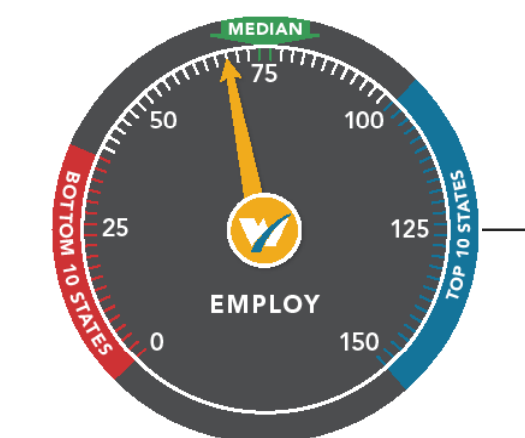
## CONNECT 50-State Ranking: **38** • Score: **42**

(Previous Ranking: **38** • Previous Score: **41**)

**Washington:** After accounting updated data for highway quality and commute times, our state maintains its ranks of 38th among all states, despite a slightly lower CONNECT score of 41. Washington’s statewide commute time inched up to 27.1 minutes. Nearly half of state highways (47.3 percent) are rated in poor condition or worse.

**Top Performer:** Kansas ranks 1st for CONNECT, with a score of 127. The average commute time in that state is 19 minutes and only 14.2 percent of highways are rated in poor condition or worse.

[Data Sources](#)



## EMPLOY 50-State Ranking: **30** • Score: **68**

(Previous Ranking: **26** • Previous Score: **74**)

**Washington:** Our state drops four places, ranking 30th with an EMPLOY score of 68. The drop comes after accounting for new data on private R&D spending, unemployment insurance taxes, business taxes per employee, and an update to the Tax Foundation’s State Business Tax Climate Index.

**Top Performer:** Utah ranks 1st for EMPLOY, with a score of 149. Unemployment insurance taxes in that state are less than half that of Washington. Business taxes per employee are also much lower (\$4,000 in Utah versus \$7,600 in Washington). Washington outperforms Utah by far in private R&D spending per capita (\$2,225 in Washington compared to \$955 in Utah).

[Data Sources](#)

## Opportunity Scores by State

STATE	SCORE	RANK
UT	158	1
NH	133	2
MA	133	3
VA	127	4
IN	115	5
KS	106	6
MN	106	7
MO	105	8
NE	104	9
DE	100	10
AZ	98	11
IA	96	12
NC	94	13
CO	90	14
MD	90	15
TN	88	16
OH	88	17
WI	86	18
MT	86	19
TX	85	20
ID	82	21
SD	82	22
FL	81	23
MI	80	24
GA	75	25
AL	75	26
IL	74	27
OR	73	28
PA	71	29
CT	71	30
<b>WA</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>31</b>
OK	68	32
KY	64	33
ND	62	34
VT	58	35
ME	57	36
WY	56	37
SC	56	38
CA	54	39
AR	51	40
NV	46	41
MS	43	42
LA	40	43
RI	39	44
NJ	39	45
WV	30	46
NM	20	47
AK	18	48
NY	12	49
HI	7	50