

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.**

Opportunity Scores by State

STATE	SCORE	RANK
UT	211	1
MA	171	2
NH	151	3
VA	136	4
IN	132	5
MN	129	6
KS	122	7
MO	115	8
DE	113	9
WY	100	10
NE	100	11
MT	93	12
IA	93	13
AZ	91	14
NC	90	15
SD	89	16
OH	88	17
WI	85	18
TX	84	19
MD	82	20
CO	81	21
MI	81	22
FL	80	23
TN	80	24
WA	76	25
GA	74	26
ID	73	27
OR	72	28
ND	70	29
IL	62	30
AL	60	31
CT	53	32
OK	48	33
KY	47	34
CA	43	35
PA	41	36
AR	31	37
ME	28	38
SC	24	39
NJ	18	40
VT	9	41
NV	5	42
MS	-1	43
RI	-3	44
WV	-5	45
LA	-14	46
HI	-17	47
NM	-18	48
NY	-35	49
AK	-52	50

Washington's Overall Performance

50-State Ranking: **25** • Opportunity Score: **76**

(Previous Ranking: **31** • Previous Score: **69**)

Based on the most recent data available, Washington now ranks 25th (or at the median of all states), with an Opportunity Score of 76. In the two years that Opportunity Washington has tracked Opportunity Scores for the 50 states, Washington's performance has ranged from a high ranking of 24 (Fall 2015) to a low of 31 (Spring 2017). Our goal is to rank among the top 10 states overall and in each of the three priority categories – Achieve, Connect, and Employ. This recent improvement, particularly in the Employ indicator, is encouraging. Our state must continue working to build on this progress.

Top Performer: Utah continues to lead the nation with an off-the-chart Opportunity Score of 210. That state pulls in top 10 rankings in Achieve (ranking 4th) and Employ (ranking 1st). It finishes just outside the top 10 in Connect (ranking 11th). Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Indiana round out the top five.

ACHIEVE 50-State Ranking: **18** • Score: **84**

(Previous Ranking: **22** • Previous Score: **78**)

Washington's Performance: Our state jumps four spots to 18 in the Achieve rankings. Washington made gains across four postsecondary metrics tracked – associate's, bachelor's, STEM bachelor's, and master's degrees awarded per capita. Continued improvement along this trajectory will be essential as Washington works to increase postsecondary credential attainment among its students and residents.

Top Performer: Massachusetts leads the nation with an Achieve score of 149. That state far outperforms Washington on production of bachelor's and advanced degrees; however, its production of associate's degrees is less than half that of our state. Iowa and New Hampshire round out the top three performing states with Achieve scores of 119.

[Data Sources](#)

CONNECT 50-State Ranking: **39** • Score: **39**

(Previous Ranking: **38** • Previous Score: **42**)

Washington's Performance: Washington's Connect ranking drops one spot to 39, after accounting for updated commute time data. Our state's average commute time increased to 27.8 minutes in 2016, likely a byproduct of robust population and economic growth. With implementation of the 2015 Connecting Washington package, Washington is making significant investments in its statewide road and bridge networks, ferries, and public transportation systems, which will help improve system performance over time. Fifty-state comparison data on road and bridge quality has not been updated since our last reporting.

Top Performer: Kansas again ranks 1st for Connect, with a score of 125. That state saw a slight increase in its average statewide commute time, coming in at 19.4 minutes. Montana and North Dakota round out the top three performers in this category.

[Data Sources](#)

EMPLOY 50-State Ranking: **21** • Score: **84**

(Previous Ranking: **30** • Previous Score: **68**)

Washington's Performance: Our state rises nine spots on the Employ rankings, coming in 21st among the states with a score of 84. The jump is attributed to lower unemployment insurance taxes, higher levels of private sector R&D investment, and improved performance on both the Tax Climate Index and the Kauffman Growth Entrepreneurship Index.

Top Performer: Utah again pulls in the top ranking for Employ, with a score of 114. Business taxes per Employee are about half as much in Utah (\$4,000/employee) as in Washington (\$8,000/employee). Massachusetts ranks just behind Utah, and Virginia rounds out the top three.

[Data Sources](#)

