

Data Dictionary & Source List

Introduction to the Data Dictionary

This Data Dictionary serves as a centralized and structured reference for a broad array of data points used to assess, compare, and benchmark U.S. states across key pillars: Business Environment, Infrastructure, Workforce, and Quality of Life. These metrics are sourced from reputable, third-party organizations and are updated annually or as new information becomes available.

The data compiled in this dictionary underpins insights shared throughout reports, dashboards, and economic development collateral. It ensures transparency and consistency by linking back to original, publicly available sources.

Each entry includes the source organization, a brief explanation of methodology, and a hyperlinked reference to the original dataset or report.

Key Categories and Data Sources Overview

Business-Friendly Environment

- Captures state-by-state comparisons on cost of doing business, corporate tax rates, incentive programs, and regulatory friendliness.
- Primary sources include: CNBC, Tax Foundation, C2ER, National Right to Work Foundation, and the Fraser Institute.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- Highlights energy production and costs, renewable energy capacity, logistics assets (ports, rail, highways), and infrastructure quality.
- Sources: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), U.S. News & World Report, YellowLite, NOAA, Federal Highway Administration, and others.

Workforce

- Provides insight into labor force strength through net migration, labor participation in key industries, job growth projections, and education attainment.
- Key contributors: U.S. News & World Report, WalletHub, Lightcast, and Bureau of Labor Statistics (via Lightcast projections).

Quality of Life

- Evaluates resident experience using data on cost of living, housing affordability, commute times, educational access, and well-being benchmarks.
- Sourced from: C2ER, Bankrate, GoBankingRates, World Population Review, Move Buddha, and WalletHub.

Rankings and Metrics

Rankings are generally listed on a scale of 1 to 50, where 1 denotes the most favorable position (e.g., lowest cost, highest net migration, most energy produced).

Descriptions provide context on what each metric measures, how it's calculated, and any caveats or exclusions.

Business-Friendly Environment

Lowest Cost of Doing Business Ranking 2024

CNBC

<https://www.cnbc.com/2024/07/11/americas-top-states-for-business-full-rankings.html>

Measurement includes each state's tax burden, strength of its business tax climate, wage and utility costs, cost of office and industrial space, increases in commercial property and casualty premiums for insurance, considering incentives and tax breaks offered by the state as well as available incentives targeted toward development in disadvantaged communities.

Rankings are listed from lowest (1) to highest (50) cost.

Corporate Tax Rate and Ranking 2025

The Tax Foundation

<https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/state/state-corporate-income-tax-rates-brackets/>

A corporate income tax (CIT) is levied by federal and state governments on business profits. Forty-four states levy a corporate income tax. Four states—Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania—reduced corporate income tax rates on January 1, 2025.

Rankings are listed from lowest (1) to highest (50) rate.

Incentives Packages

The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)

<https://www.stateincentives.org/>

Incentive programs currently offered in each state. Includes programs such as, but not limited to, tax credits, grants, loan or loan participation, and tax exemptions.

Right to Work State 2024

National Right to Work Legal Defense and Education Foundation

<https://www.nrtw.org/right-to-work-states/>

State-level statutes that protect the right of employees to choose whether or not to join or support a labor union.

Energy Sector Competitiveness Policy Perception Index Ranking

Fraser Institute

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/canada-us-energy-sector-competitiveness-survey-2023.pdf>

The report presents the results of the Fraser Institute's 2023 Canada-US Energy Sector Competitiveness Survey regarding barriers to investment in oil and gas exploration and production facilities in each country. The survey responses have been tallied to rank Canadian and American jurisdictions according to the extent of such barriers, however rankings presented exclude Canada. Those barriers, as assessed by the survey respondents, include high tax rates, costly regulatory obligations, uncertainty over environmental regulations, and the interpretation and administration of regulations governing the "upstream" petroleum industry, as well as concerns over political stability and security of personnel and equipment.

Property Tax Percentage Ranking 2025

The Tax Foundation

<https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/state/property-taxes-by-state-county/>

A property tax is primarily levied on immovable property like land and buildings, as well as on tangible personal property that is movable, like vehicles and equipment. Property taxes are the single largest source of state and local revenue in the U.S. and help fund schools, roads, police, and other services.

Rankings are listed from lowest (1) to highest (50) rate.

State and Local Tax Burden Ranking 2025

The Tax Foundation

<https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/state/state-local-tax-collections-per-capita/>

Rankings are listed from lowest (1) to highest (50) rate.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Behind the Meter as of 2025

YellowLite

<https://www.yellowlite.com/blogs/net-metering-explained-states-that-offer-it-in-2023/>

Net meters are a method of billing that credits solar system owners for the power they generate for the grid. For example, if your solar panels generate more power than your home uses during the daytime, the excess energy is transferred to the grid, and you are credited with credits.

Energy Production Rate Compared to Consumption 2023

U.S. Energy Information Administration

<https://www.eia.gov/beta/states/overview>

This beta project integrates information from EIA's [State Energy Profiles](#) and other existing products. See [State Energy Profiles](#) to view data, analysis, maps, and rankings in EIA's previous format.

Utility-scale Wind Electricity Generation 2023

U.S. Energy Information Administration

<https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/wind/where-wind-power-is-harnessed.php>

Where wind power is harnessed in the United States.

Average Price of Electricity - Industrial & Commercial 2024

U.S. Energy Information Administration

<https://www.eia.gov/electricity/data/browser/#/topic/7?agg=0.1&geo=vvvvvvvvvvvvo&endsec=vg&linechart=ELEC.PRICE.US-ALL.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-RES.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-COM.A&columnchart=ELEC.PRICE.US-ALL.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-RES.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-COM.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-IND.A&map=ELEC.PRICE.US-ALL.A&freq=A&start=2001&end=2024&ctype=linechart<ype=pin&rtype=s&pin=ELEC.PRICE.US-ALL.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-RES.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-COM.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-IND.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-TRA.A~ELEC.PRICE.US-OTH.A&rse=0&maptype=0>

Values are preliminary estimates based on a cutoff model sample. See Technical Notes for a discussion of the sample design for the Form EIA-826. Utilities and energy service providers may classify commercial and industrial customers based on either NAICS codes or demands or usage falling within specified limits by rate schedule. Changes from year to year in consumer counts, sales and revenues, particularly involving the commercial and industrial consumer sectors, may result from respondent implementation of changes in the definitions of consumers, and reclassifications. Totals may not equal sum of components because of independent rounding.

Total Energy Production Ranking (2023)

U.S. Energy Information Administration

<https://www.eia.gov/state/rankings/?sid=US#/series/101>

Note: Rankings are based on the full source data values. Excludes federal offshore production.

Rankings are listed from most (1) to least (50) production.

Best States for Infrastructure Overall Rank

U.S. News and World Report

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/infrastructure>

The status of a state's infrastructure is key to evaluating the quality of life for its citizens. The infrastructure category is one of eight categories driving the overall Best States rankings, and takes into account metrics such as a state's use of renewable energy, the quality of its roads and bridges, and its residents' access to high-speed internet.

Rankings are listed from best (1) to worst (50) for infrastructure.

Interstate Highways

National Highway System

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national_highway_system/interstate_highway_system/routefinder/table03.cfm

Updated: 2/18/2025

Major U.S. Ports

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

https://www.ngs.noaa.gov/RSD/coastal/projects/coastal/ports_list.html

Freight Rail Mileage

Association of American Railroads

<https://www.aar.org/states/#!>

Spanning 49 states and D.C., railroads operate expansive national networks, while Class II and III railroads provide essential regional and local connections. Together, they form a nearly 140,000-mile system that also supports Amtrak's operations, with around 70% of its train-miles running on freight-owned tracks.

Airports

Global Air

<https://www.globalair.com/airport/state.aspx>

Includes JETA, 100LL, SAF, Unleaded and MOGAS fuel types, as well as public and private airports.

Workforce

Net Domestic Migration

Voronoi by Visual Capitalist

<https://www.voronoiapp.com/migration/Texas-Gained-The-Most-New-Residents-From-Other-States--3229>

Net migration figures for each U.S. state and Puerto Rico in 2023. Net migration refers to the difference between people moving into and out of each state from other states and Puerto Rico. Figures do not include those moving to or from other countries. State-by-state migration flow data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau and is updated as of August 2024. Only residents one years and older were included.

Rankings are listed from least migration (50) to most (1).

Hardest Working States 2025

WalletHub

<https://wallethub.com/edu/hardest-working-states-in-america/52400>

To determine where Americans work the hardest, WalletHub compared the 50 states across 10 key indicators. They range from average workweek hours to the share of workers with multiple jobs to the average leisure time spent per day.

Rankings are listed from most (1) to least (50) hard-working.

Talent Attraction Scorecard 2023

Lightcast

<https://lightcast.io/resources/research/talent-scorecard#state-rankings>

Each year, Lightcast takes a deep dive into our data and examines the talent attraction landscape across the US. To do this, we pull data from our Lightcast data platform on job growth, education attainment, regional competitiveness, and more to build our Talent Attraction Scorecard.

Labor Force Data – Manufacturing (2024) | Finance (2024) | Tech and Innovation (2024) | Life Sciences (2024)

Lightcast

Projected Job Growth and Percentage (2024-2029)

Lightcast

Projected labor force through 2028 using several datasets from The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections.

Percentage of Population With an Associate's Degree +

Lightcast

The percentage of residents aged 25 and older with an Associate's, Bachelors, Masters, or Postdoctoral degree.

Percentage of Population With a Bachelor's Degree +

Lightcast

The percentage of residents aged 25 and older with a Bachelors, Masters or Postdoctoral degree.

Quality of Life

Cost of Living Index | Quarter 2: 2025

Council for Community & Economic Research (C2ER)

<https://meric.mo.gov/data/cost-living-data-series>

The C2ER Cost of Living Index is designed to provide the best possible means to compare cost of living differences among urban areas based on the price of consumer goods and services appropriate for professional and managerial households in the top income quintile.

Median Home Price | April 2025

Bankrate

<https://www.bankrate.com/real-estate/median-home-price/>

Break down of the nationwide median home price by state, looking specifically at single-family residences.

Best States for First-Time Homebuyers Ranking | 2024

Go Banking Rates

<https://www.gobankingrates.com/investing/real-estate/worst-best-states-first-time-home-buyers/>

To see which states offer the **best financing options** for first-time homebuyers, GOBankingRates ranked the 50 states based on three factors: the yearly mortgage for a **typical single-family home**, as determined by Zillow in June 2023 and assuming a 6% down payment; the current interest rate on a **30-year, fixed loan** as sourced from the St. Louis Federal Reserve; and estimated property taxes, as sourced from the Tax Foundation.

Rankings are listed from best (1) to worst (50) state for first-time homebuyers.

The Top 10 Stickiest States | 2024

Move Buddha

<https://www.movebuddha.com/blog/stickiest-states/>

Over 175,000 searches analyzed from the moveBuddha Moving Cost Calculator for insights on where relocating Americans plan to move in 2024. By comparing user interest in moving assistance for out-of-state vs. in-state moves, we ranked all 50 states by their stickiness – their ability to keep relocating residents within state lines. Alignment was then made with rankings and statewide economic data and quality-of-life indicators to see which factors correlate with a state being sticky.

Rankings are listed from most (1) to least (10) sticky.

Salary Required for Emotional Well-Being or Life Evaluation | 2025

Go Banking Rates

<https://www.gobankingrates.com/money/wealth/minimum-salary-to-be-happy-state/>

To estimate how much money you might need to be happy in every U.S. state, GOBankingRates factored in each state's cost-of-living index and used \$105,000 – which the Purdue study found was the ideal income for life satisfaction in North America – as the “benchmark.”

Average Rent | 2025

World Population Review

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/average-rent-by-state>

All data on average apartment rent is for the year 2025. The Cost of Living Index measures the relative price levels of goods and services, including housing, transportation, healthcare, and other expenses, across different locations. A higher index indicates a higher cost of living. The Housing Index is a component of the Cost of Living Index that specifically reflects variations in housing costs, including rent and home prices. Data and values for prices of apartments with specific bedroom counts and the average rent price come from different sources (RentCafe and Rent Data). As a result, the average rent price may not always align precisely with the listed prices.

Average Commute Time (Minutes) | 2025

World Population Review

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/commute-time-by-state>

States with the Best & Worst Early Education Systems | 2025

WalletHub

<https://wallethub.com/edu/e/states-with-the-best-and-worst-early-education-systems/62668>

To help parents find the states with the best early education systems, WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 12 key metrics, including share of school districts that offer a state pre-K program, number of pre-K quality benchmarks met and total reported spending per child enrolled in pre-K.

Rankings are listed from best (1) to worst (10) for early education systems.