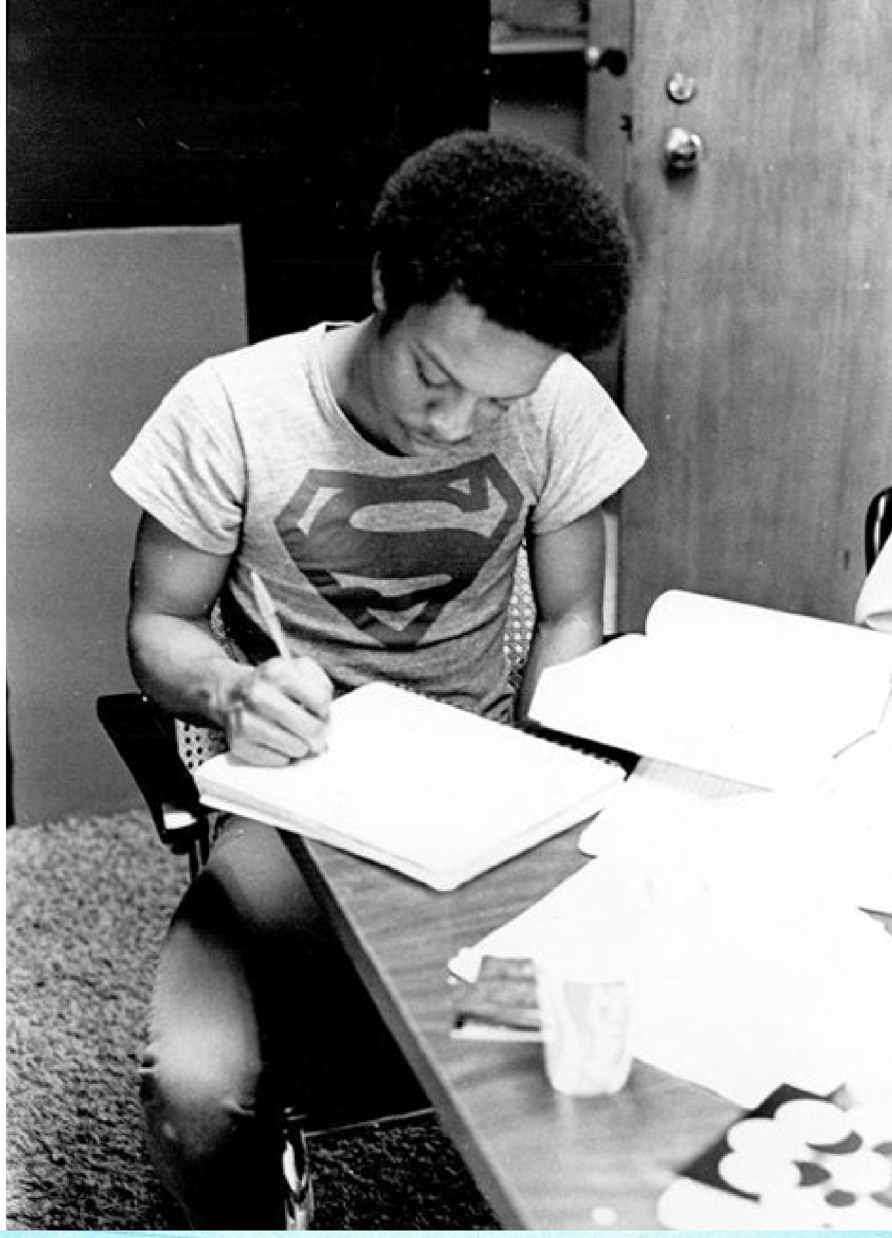


OPPORTUNITY SINCE 1970

A HISTORICAL REPORT

Opportunity Nation
Measure of America

INTRODUCTION:

Central to our identity as Americans is a shared belief that, no matter how humble your origins, with hard work and perseverance, you can improve your prospects and give your children a shot at a secure and productive future. For generations, Americans lived this dream. Social mobility was a reality, and millions were able to climb the ladder to economic security. But today, the American Dream is too often just that—a dream. Increasingly, it's your zip code that predetermines your destiny.

Commonly-used measures of a region's success include business-oriented rankings and unemployment rates. But these do not provide residents, community leaders or elected officials the complete picture they need to understand barriers to opportunity and to take action to improve outcomes. Do jobs pay family-sustaining wages? Are students graduating from high school on time? Are our communities safe?

The Opportunity Index focuses on the conditions present in different communities. It is designed to connect economic, educational and civic factors to help identify concrete solutions to lagging conditions for opportunity and economic mobility. From preschool enrollment to income inequality, from access to doctors to access to a higher education, expanding opportunity depends on the intersection of multiple factors.

Developed by Measure of America and Opportunity Nation, the Opportunity Index gives policymakers and community leaders a powerful tool to advance opportunity-related issues and initiatives, advocate positive change and track progress over time.

Following the development of the Opportunity Index in 2011 and tracking of its progress for two subsequent years, there was interest in looking back at how these important measures have changed over time. What follows is presentation and analysis of a new Historical Report of Opportunity, created in order to understand the story of access to opportunity in the United States over the past forty years.

While the Opportunity Index includes 16 indicators, this Historical Report includes ten indicators and provides state scores for every decade from 1970 to 2010. The reason for the difference between the two measures is that a number of the indicators used in the Opportunity Index are not available for prior years. For some indicators, such as access to the Internet, the reason is obvious: there was no Internet in 1970. In other cases, such as the group membership and volunteerism indicators included in the Opportunity Index, data were not collected on a regular basis until recently. The indicators missing from the Historical Report include the following: access to banking institutions, spending on housing, Internet access, membership in civic and other groups, volunteerism and access to healthy food. The indicators used to measure income inequality and access to doctors have been modified to enable the four-decade comparisons. These changes mean that opportunity scores on this Historical Report are not comparable to those on the standard Opportunity Index.

OPPORTUNITY NATION
THE SHARED PLAN TO RESTORE OPPORTUNITY

MEASURE OF AMERICA
of the Social Science Research Council

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORICAL REPORT:

INDICATORS

ECONOMY

Jobs	Unemployment rate (annual average)
Wages	Median household income
Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)
Inequality	Gini index of income inequality

EDUCATION

Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)
Postsecondary Completion	Associate Degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older)

COMMUNITY

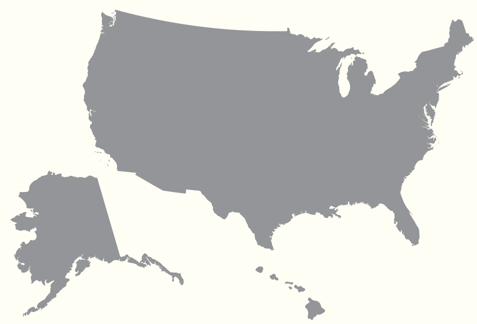
Community Safety	Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school nor working (% ages 16-24)
Access to Health Care	Medical doctors (per 100,000 population)

**For complete methodology and sources, please refer to the Historical Report of Opportunity: Methodological Notes on page 13.*

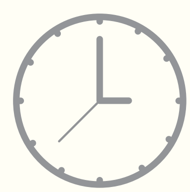
MEASUREMENT

1/3 1/3 1/3

All the indicators are weighted equally. Each of the three dimensions makes up one-third of the final Index value.



Scores are calculated for all 50 states and Washington, D.C.



The report measures opportunity from 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010.

SOURCES

- U.S. Census Bureau
- American Community Survey
- U.S. Bureau of Labor
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

NATIONAL & STATE FINDINGS:

Conditions for opportunity across the nation improved overall across the four decades measured in this Historical Report, but the path has been anything but straight, and does not mean our work is finished. The Historical Report Opportunity Score was about 13 percent higher in 2010 than it was in 1970. The decade that spanned 1990-2000 saw the greatest progress by far—ten times the growth in the report value seen in the second-best decade, that between 1980 and 1990. On the other hand, two decades, 1970 to 1980 and 2000 to 2010, saw declines across a range of measures of opportunity. The chart on the following page shows the trend since 1970 in the overall report (in blue) and the progression for each of the three dimensions that make up the Historical Report.

Turning from national trends to state-level trends, nearly every state saw progress on the overall report from 1970 to 2010. The state with the greatest gains over this four-decade period was Virginia. Virginia's gain was largely on the basis of steady improvement in a host of indicators over the four decades, including not only robust gains in income but also significant reductions in poverty and violent crime and a sizeable improvement in the on-time high school graduation rate of Virginia's young adults.

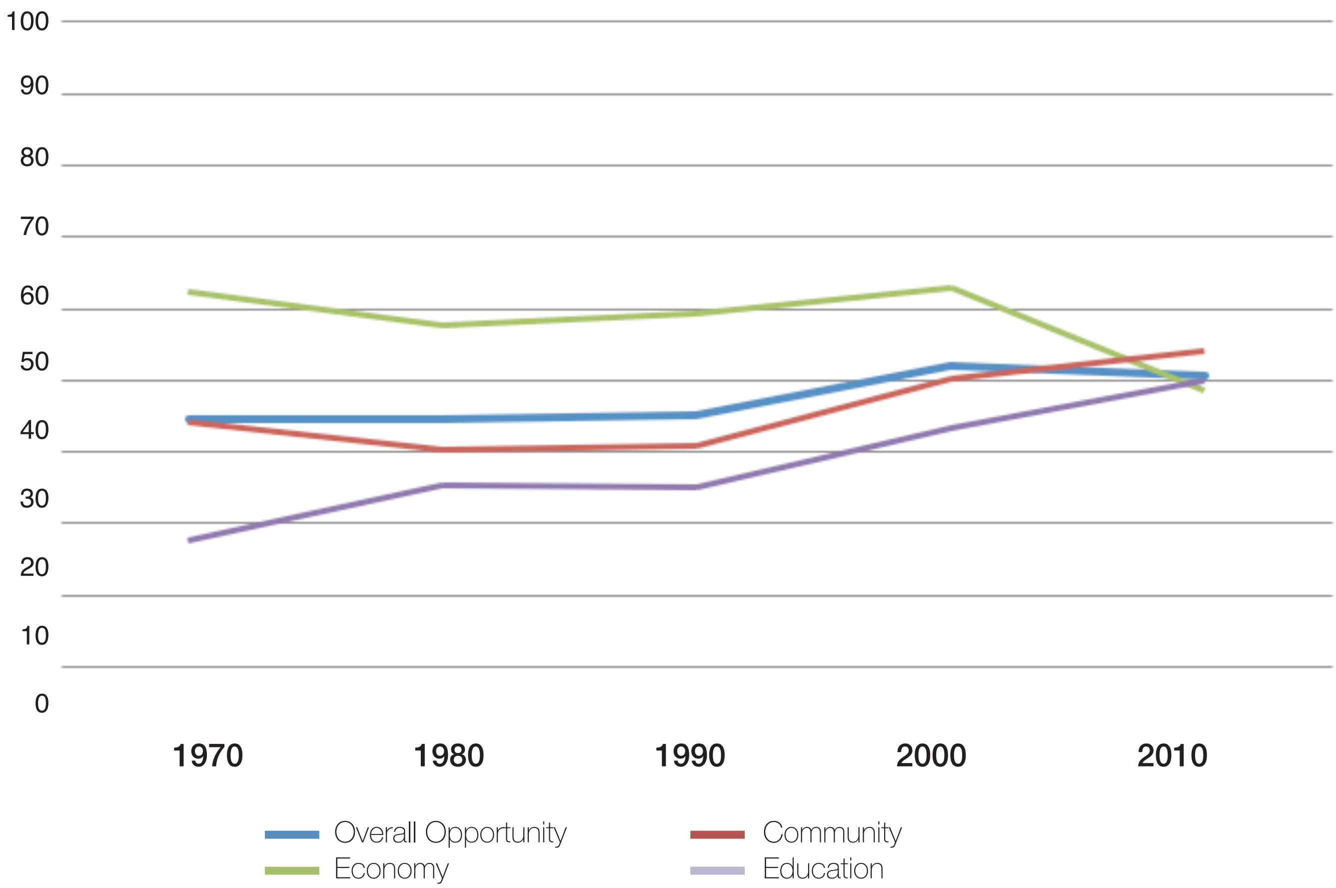
Only two states—Nevada and Michigan—saw a decline in their Historical Report score between 1970 and 2010. Michigan's biggest challenges were, unsurprisingly, in the economic realm, with sharply increasing income inequality and unemployment coupled with the greatest increase in poverty and steepest decline in income of any state. The worst decades for Michigan on these indicators were the 1970s and the 2000s, which, of course, encompassed the Great Recession.

Nevada's decline is linked in particular to one decade. From 2000, when Nevada ranked fortieth among the 50 states plus Washington, DC, to 2010, when it was at the very bottom of the Opportunity Scale, the state faced steep struggles across all three areas of the report. In the area of Jobs and Local Economy, every state saw negative impacts on economic opportunity during this decade due to the Great Recession, but Nevada and Michigan experienced the worst declines. In education, important gains have been made across the nation in meeting the new requirements of today's knowledge economy, but Nevada saw the slowest progress. And in the area of Community Life, the decline in Nevada was extreme. In fact, Nevada was the only state with a decline in this set of indicators from 1970 to 2010, mostly in the last decade of this period due to a rise in youth disconnection—one in five young people in Nevada ages 16 to 24 were neither in school nor working in 2010—and a dramatic increase in violent crimes.

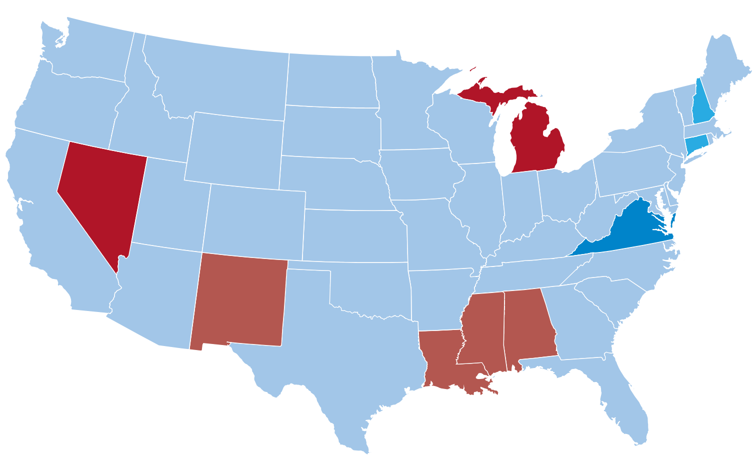
Two states that have consistently high Opportunity Scores in the Historical Report are New Hampshire and Connecticut. New Hampshire has been the top-scoring state in the report since 1990, taking over from Hawaii, which topped the list in 1970 and 1980. Connecticut ranked in the top three states overall in every decade up until 2010, when it dropped to seventh. While in some areas, Connecticut continued to expand opportunity, these positives were outweighed by Connecticut's exposure to the Great Recession. Connecticut suffered very high increases in unemployment and reductions in household income during this decade.

At the other end of the spectrum is a set of states that have consistently struggled with the opportunities available to their residents. Most prominent among them are Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and New Mexico, four states that have been among the bottom-ranked five states throughout most of the four-decade period. As is discussed above, Nevada only joined this group of opportunity-poor states in 2010.

HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY TRENDS, 1970–2010



HISTORICAL OPPORTUNITY STATE TRENDS, 1970-2010



GREATEST GAIN IN OPPORTUNITY
Virginia

HIGH FLYERS
New Hampshire and Connecticut

SAW DECLINE IN OPPORTUNITY
Nevada and Michigan

SLOW PROGRESS
Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico

HOW HAVE JOBS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY CHANGED OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES?

The Jobs and Local Economy Dimension is the only dimension of the Historical Report with a lower score in 2010 than in 1970. While the Jobs and Local Economy Dimension score was 62.4 out of 100 in 1970, this figure had fallen to 48.5 forty years later, a reduction of 22 percent. Although this set of indicators overall saw progress during the 1980s and 1990s, the economic declines of the 1970s and 2000s ultimately eroded any long-lasting positive effect of this growth. The national decline post-2000 was almost three times as large in percentage terms as the decline of the 1970s, while the positive change between 1990 and 2000 was more than double the positive change between 1980 and 1990.

Ohio, Nevada and Michigan saw the greatest setbacks in the Jobs and Local Economy Dimension of the Historical Report. Between 1970 and 2010, these three states saw their scores in this dimension fall by more than 35 percent from their original 1970 values. Only five states—Arkansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Louisiana and Mississippi—managed to improve their scores during this same period. The Great Recession late in the last decade can be blamed for part but not all of this poor performance. Between 1970 and 2000, for example, the Jobs and Local Economy scores of more than half of the states increased. But income inequality was also on the rise in every state and the District of Columbia between 1970 and 2000, evidence of one of the structural changes in the American economy over the past several decades that has slowly eroded economic opportunity across the nation.

All of the bottom five states for the decades between 1970 and 2010 are located in the Southeast, with the sole exception of New Mexico. The differences between low- and high-scoring states are vast; the 2010 Jobs and Local Economy Dimension figure for New Hampshire is, for example, more than double the value for Mississippi. In 2010, New York was the median state in terms of this indicator.

Taking a deeper look at changes in each of the indicators that make up the Jobs and Local Economy grouping, having a job is of course critical for embarking on the path to social mobility and economic stability. The unemployment rate is defined as the total number of people who do not have jobs but who have looked for work within the last month and are available to work as a percentage of the total number of people in the labor force. Sadly, in this measure, the trend has been a backward one.

Unemployment tends to vary along with the business cycle, although it falls more during expansions and increases more in recessions in some states than in others. The overall national unemployment rate in 2010, 9.6 percent, was almost twice what it was in 1970. This reflects in large part the slow recovery from the Great Recession. As with the overall dimension, the unemployment rate improved between 1980 and 2000, but worsened during the 1970s and again after the Millennium. Only one state—North Dakota—managed to escape rising unemployment over the forty years, albeit by less than one percent. In 2010, only North Dakota and Nebraska had unemployment rates below 5 percent, a grim reversal from the 1990s, when unemployment rates were above 5 percent in only eight states.

The second indicator in the economic dimension is median household income, or the wages and salaries of all workers over age 16 in a household. At the national level, the United States experienced a decline in median household income only between 2000 and 2010 among the four decades since 1970. During these ten years, all 50 states and the District of Columbia saw a real decrease except for North Dakota, Wyoming and DC. The increase in the District of Columbia was, in fact, greater in magnitude than the decrease in all but eight states. These overall losses, however, do not negate the gains of the previous 30 years. The typical American household of 2010 made $6,885 more, in 2012 dollars, than the typical American household of 1970. Only Michigan, Ohio and Indiana experienced real declines in income between 1970 and 2010.

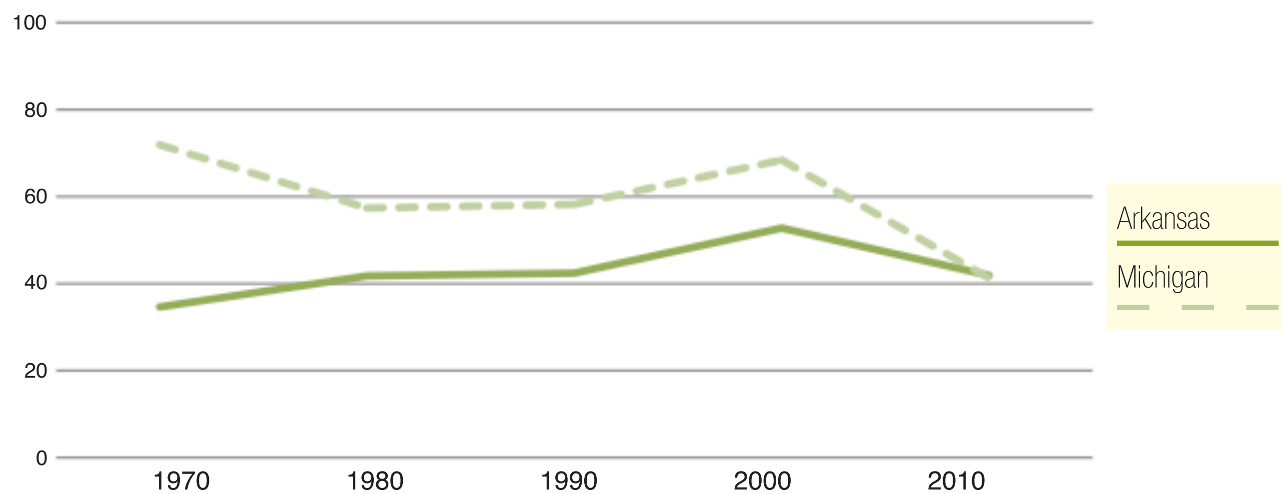
Of the four variables that compose the Jobs and Local Economy Dimension of the Historical Report, the poverty rate tells perhaps the most complex story.

Overall, the poverty rate, or the percentage of people of all ages living on incomes below the federal poverty line, increased by nearly 12 percent between 1970 and 2010, from 13.7 percent to 15.3 percent, but these periodic national averages obscure great variation year-on-year and place-by-place.

The five states with the highest rates of poverty in both 1970 and 2010 are located in the Southern United States, with the exception of New Mexico. Even though Mississippi has been home to the sharpest decline in poverty—13 percentage points, from 35.4 percent in 1970 to 22.4 percent in 2010 —the state still retains its 1970 place as the state with the highest poverty rate nationwide.

Inequality is a buzzword in contemporary American society, and our data indicate that this hype is largely defensible. In no state did the Gini Index of Income Inequality, the fourth indicator in this dimension, decrease during the decades between 1970 and 2010. Out of a possible range from 0 to 1, income inequality in the United States increased by 0.108 over the course of these forty years, an increase of nearly thirty percent. Connecticut and Massachusetts, however, saw increases in this figure that were 30 percent greater than the national average. In 2010, the District of Columbia, New York and Connecticut had the highest degree of inequality, while Wyoming, Utah and Alaska had the lowest.

JOBS AND LOCAL ECONOMY: MOST AND LEAST IMPROVED STATES



TOP AND BOTTOM FIVE STATES IN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1970–2010

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
1.	Alaska	Alaska	Connecticut	New Jersey	Maryland
2.	Connecticut	Hawaii	Alaska	Connecticut	New Jersey
3.	Hawaii	Maryland	New Jersey	Maryland	Alaska
4.	New Jersey	Connecticut	Mayland	Alaska	Connecticut
5.	Maryland	Wyoming	Hawaii	Massachusetts	Hawaii

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
47.	West Virginia	Maine	South Dakota	Montana	Alabama
48.	South Dakota	Alabama	Louisiana	Louisiana	Kentucky
49.	Alabama	South Dakota	Arkansas	Arkansas	Arkansas
50.	Arkansas	Arkansas	West Virginia	Mississippi	West Virginia
51.	Mississippi	Mississippi	Mississippi	West Virginia	Mississippi

HOW HAS EDUCATION CHANGED OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES?

The overall US score on the Education Dimension improved significantly between 1970 and 2010, by nearly 80 percent. This considerable increase, however, was not an even progression nor was it fueled equally by all three indicators that make up the Education Dimension of the Historical Report. The overall Education Dimension score rose nearly 8 percentage points from 1970 to 1980, remained basically unchanged between 1980 and 1990, rose again by about 8 percentage points between 1990 and 2000, and rose by 6.5 percentage points between 2000 and 2010. In aggregate, the 1980s were essentially a lost decade in terms of the expansion of educational opportunity.

Between 1970 and 2010, the state with the greatest absolute increase in the Education Dimension was Massachusetts, and the state with the smallest increase was Nevada. Both states improved their education indicators between 1970 and 1980, but then diverged, with Massachusetts making strong gains from the 1990s onwards while Nevada's score fell or stagnated in every decade after 1980.

The story is also one of uneven progress, and even some setbacks, in each the Education Dimension's three components—preschool, on-time high school graduation and the share of adults with at least an associate's degree.

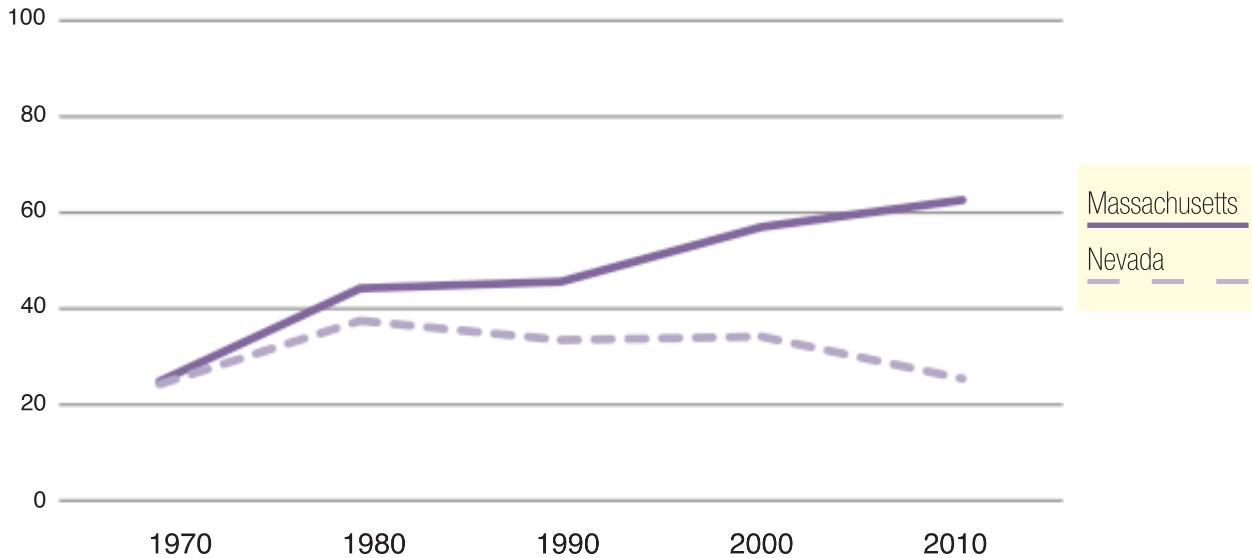
The value of having young children attend a high-quality preschool has been much discussed lately. There is strong evidence to support the benefits of preschool for low-income children to lay a solid foundation for their development, not only in terms of academic achievement, but also socially and emotionally. On this first indicator of three within the Education Dimension, the percentage of children ages 3 and 4 enrolled in preschool, both public and private combined, increased almost four-fold nationwide between 1970 and 2010. But progress was uneven. The 1970s and 1990s saw large increases in preschool enrollment, whereas both the 1980s and the period between 2000 and 2010 witnessed declines, though smaller than the advances. Changes in preschool enrollment rates over time appear to be influenced by federal policy and spending. Head Start expanded in the 1970s, for instance, and in 1990, the federal government established a major childcare program for poor and low-income children called the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

Success in today's economy requires an educated and flexible workforce. Completing high school is the barebones minimum requirement in our globally interconnected world. The indicator increasingly used for measuring high school attainment is on-time high school graduation, or the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate after four years of high school. The second indicator in the Education Dimension, on-time high school graduation is the Historical Report's most stubborn indicator; 78 percent of students graduated high school on time in 1970, and 78.2 percent graduated on time in 2010. The rate rose and fell only slightly from decade to decade.

Looking more closely at recent state-level trends, between 2000 and 2010, the trend was mostly positive with only four states experiencing a decrease in the rate of on-time high school graduation rates—Nevada, Utah, Connecticut and the District of Columbia. While the US average for students completing high school four years after they enter ninth grade is about 78 percent, Nevada, the state with the lowest rate, has a rate that is just under 58 percent. This is in marked contrast to with states like Vermont and Wisconsin, where over 90 percent of students finish high school on time.

The final indicator in the Education Dimension of the Historical Report is a measure of postsecondary education— the proportion of adults age 25 and older who have earned at least an associate degree. Nationally, this higher education indicator tells a very positive story, with an increase of 105 percent, 1970-2010. There were no states for which the percent of the population who had acquired an associate's degree or higher decreased between 1970 and 2010, and only one state—Nevada—where this positive gain was less than 10 percentage points.

EDUCATION: MOST AND LEAST IMPROVED STATES



TOP AND BOTTOM FIVE STATES IN PRE-SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, 1970–2010

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
1.	Hawaii	D.C.	D.C.	D.C.	D.C.
2.	D.C.	Connecticut	Connecticut	New Jersey	New Jersey
3.	California	Florida	New Jersey	Connecticut	Connecticut
4.	Connecticut	Maryland	Maryland	Massachusetts	Massachusetts
5.	Florida	Massachusetts	Massachusets	Maryland	New York

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
47.	Kentucky	Wyoming	Idaho	Indiana	Idaho
48.	Wyoming	Idaho	Montana	Idaho	Alaska
49.	West Virginia	West Virginia	South Dakota	West Virginia	North Dakota
50.	North Dakota	South Dakota	West Virginia	Nevada	Arizona
51.	Idaho	North Dakota	North Dakota	North Dakota	Nevada

NATIONAL EDUCATION INDICATOR SCORES

INDICATOR	MEASURE	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)	12.2	32.7	28.9	49.3	47.8
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)	78.0	72.2	73.7	71.7	78.2
Postsecondary Completion	Associate Degree or higher (% of adults 25 and older)	17.5	26.3	26.8	30.7	35.8

HOW HAS COMMUNITY LIFE CHANGED OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES?

The Community Life Dimension comprises three indicators that probe different aspects of a person's ability to participate in the decisions that affect his or her life, to live in a safe neighborhood and to create or seize opportunities. For the Historical Report, these three areas are: the proportion of youth not in school and not working; the rate of violent crime; and access to medical doctors. In the Community Life Dimension, there was an increase nationwide of over 20 percent between 1970 and 2010. The only decade within this period that did not benefit from the upward trend was the 1970s, mostly due to a tragic increase in the rate of violent crimes. Since that time, however, even in light of the recent Recession, the average American has benefitted from increasingly healthier, safer and more connected neighborhoods.

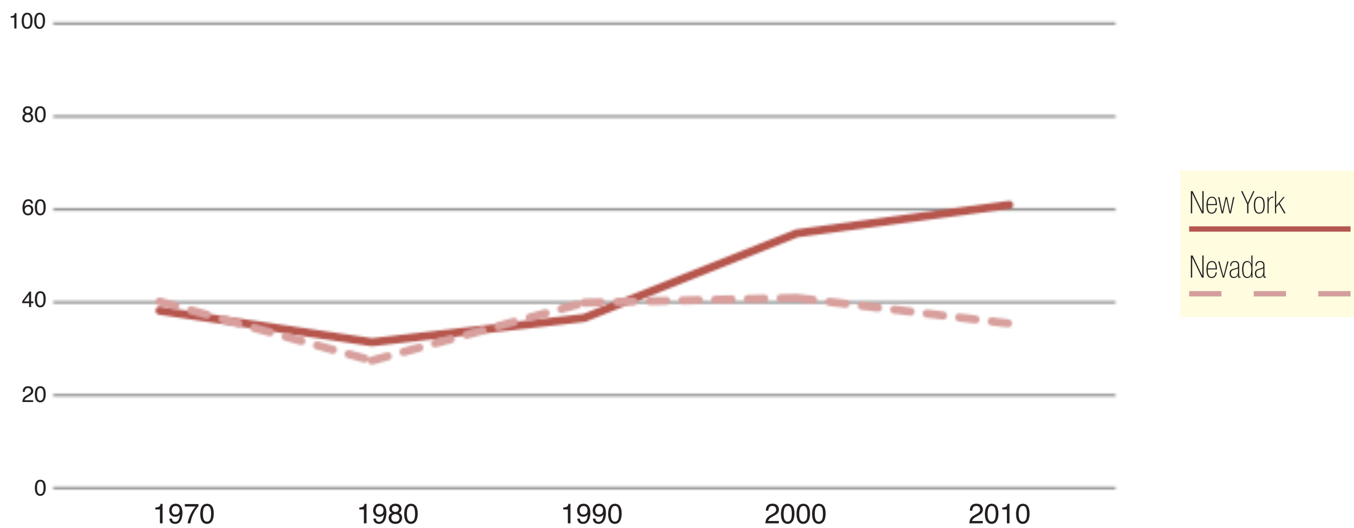
New York was home to the most significant increase in the Community Life Dimension over these forty years. The state's gain in this dimension of the report was more than two times the gain made by the nation overall and about 24 percent greater than the positive change of second-most-improved state, Maryland. New York's success can be seen across all of the indicators: a decrease in the percentage of disconnected youth; 290 fewer violent crimes per 100,000 residents in 2010 than in 1970; and a steady increase in the number of medical doctors per 100,000 people. In terms of crime, New York went from having the second highest violent crime rate in 1970 (after Washington, DC) to 13th highest in 2000. By 2010, the state's violent crime rate had sunk below the national average.

New York's experience is not shared by all states, however. Many states saw negligible improvement in these indicators over this period and, as mentioned above, Nevada saw its score on the Community Life Dimension decrease, experiencing a loss of almost 12 percent. The period of most drastic decline in Nevada was from 1970 and 1980; the violent crime rate increased by nearly 130 percent over the course of this decade. Between 1980 and 2000, Nevada regained ground on its Community Life score only to see some of these gains reversed between 2000 and 2010 when the violent crime rate jumped, breaking a nationwide pattern of decline.

Looking more closely at the three indicators that make up the Community Life Dimension, the first is the proportion of young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working. This indicator, referred to as the "youth disconnection rate," is a vitally important measure of community health. Rather than laying the foundation for a productive life by gaining skills, identity and purpose through school and work, disconnected youth find themselves adrift at society's margins, with long-term consequences for young people and for society. At the national level, the youth disconnection rate dropped by four percentage points, from nearly one in five young people neither in school nor working (18.8 percent) in 1970 to 14.7 percent in 2010. Although the figure decreased between 1970 and 1990, the rate of disconnected youth has increased since 1990. North Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming experienced the most significant improvements on this indicator during this 40 year period, although, despite its improvement, West Virginia still had an unsatisfactorily high youth disconnection rate in 2010.

The second measure included in this dimension is the rate of violent crime per 100,000 people, comprised of the rates of homicide, rape, robbery and assault. Violent crime rates increased by just over 10 percent nationwide between 1970 and 2010, from 363 violent crimes per 100,000 people to just over 400 at the end of the four-decade period. However, beneath this average lies tremendous volatility both across time and within states. The rate of violent crime doubled nationwide between 1970 and 1990, but fell between 1990 and 2010. The District of Columbia is a notable outlier. Although DC retains the highest rate of violent crime when compared to the 50 states, this figure has dropped over 40 percent during the past 40 years. Nine hundred fewer city residents of every 100,000 were victims of violent crime in 2010 than in 1970.

COMMUNITY LIFE: MOST AND LEAST IMPROVED STATES



TOP AND BOTTOM FIVE STATES IN VIOLENT CRIME, 1970–2010

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
1.	North Dakota	North Dakota	North Dakota	North Dakota	Maine
2.	New Hampshire	South Dakota	Vermont	Maine	Vermont
3.	Vermont	Vermont	New Hampshire	Vermont	New Hampshite
4.	Iowa	New Hampshire	Maine	South Dakota	Wyoming
5.	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Montanta	New Hampshire	Utah

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
47.	Florida	California	South Carolina	New Mexico	Tennessee
48.	Michigan	Nevada	California	Maryland	Delaware
49.	Maryland	Florida	New York	Florida	Alaska
50.	New York	New York	Florida	South Carolina	Nevada
51.	D.C.	D.C.	D.C.	D.C.	D.C.

NATIONAL COMMUNITY INDICATOR SCORES

INDICATOR	MEASURE	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Community Safety	Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)	363.5	596.6	729.6	506.5	404.5
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school nor working (% ages 16-24)	18.8	17.3	14.0	14.3	14.7
Access to Health Care	Medical doctors (per 100,000 population)	137.2	182.6	213.4	251.1	265.9

CONCLUSION

Many factors affect the ability of an individual to seize opportunity. Personal traits, behaviors and decisions can expand or constrict opportunity. Research shows that certain characteristics of a person's parents, such as their education level, their marital status and their racial or ethnic heritage are associated with different sets of life chances. But the conditions of the communities in which people are born, grow up, go to school, work and become parents themselves are also fundamental to the economic, social and civic opportunities available to them.

This Historical Report of Opportunity tells a generally positive story at the national level and highlights opportunity bright spots, such as increased preschool enrollment, greater post-secondary educational attainment and higher household incomes. But it also shines a spotlight on some worrisome trends at the national level and in some states, such as increased unemployment, the number of disconnected youth and rising inequality. Expanding opportunity requires creating conditions for success in communities. The Historical Report indicates that some states may have set priorities and made investments over the past 40 years that have created opportunity rich environments in 2014. Other states find themselves opportunity-poor in 2014. While external economic shocks like the decline in manufacturing and the Great Recession may have had an impact on the opportunity landscape in such places, the policy decisions of the last four decades likely have also played an important role and deserve further exploration.

OPPORTUNITY NATION
THE SHARED PLAN TO RESTORE OPPORTUNITY

Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national campaign comprised of more than 300 businesses, educational institutions, nonprofits and civic organizations working together to expand economic mobility and close the opportunity gap in America. We advocate policy change that expands opportunity and catalyzes private sector and community actions to help more Americans, particularly young people, get their fair shot at the American Dream.

MEASURE OF AMERICA
of the Social Science Research Council

Measure of America, a Project of the Social Science Research Council, provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of social well-being and mobility in America and for stimulating fact-based conversations about issues we all care about: health, education and living standards.