

# STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE STATES



IWPR #R466

[www.statusofwomendata.org](http://www.statusofwomendata.org)

## The Best and Worst States Overall for Women in 2015

This Fact Sheet is based on findings from *The Status of Women in the States: 2015*, a comprehensive national report that presents and analyzes data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The full report provides critical data to identify areas of progress for women in states across the nation and pinpoint where additional improvements are still needed. It presents hundreds of data points for each state across seven areas that affect women’s lives: Political Participation, Employment & Earnings, Work & Family, Poverty & Opportunity, Reproductive Rights, Health & Well-Being, and Violence & Safety. For each of these topic areas except Violence & Safety, the report calculates a composite index, ranks the states from best to worst, and assigns a letter grade. The report also tracks progress over time, covers basic demographic statistics on women, and presents additional data on a range of topics related to women’s status. In addition, it gives an overview of how women from various population groups fare, including women of color, young women, older women, women in labor unions, immigrant women, and women living with a same-sex partner. The data come from a variety of sources, primarily government agencies, although other organizations also provided data. For a complete discussion of data sources and methodology, please see the full report, available at [statusofwomendata.org](http://statusofwomendata.org).

### The Best and Worst States Overall

Women’s status varies widely not only by contextual factors such as race/ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation but also by state. IWPR used two criteria to select the best and worst states. The best states must: 1) rank in the top ten on at least one composite index of women’s status, and 2) never rank in the bottom half of all states. Twelve states qualified under these criteria. Honorable mention is given to states that rank in the top half on all the composite indices, although no state received honorable mention. The worst states: 1) rank in the bottom ten on at least one composite index of women’s status, and 2) never rank in the top half of all states. Six states met these criteria.

Dishonorable mention is given to states that rank in the bottom half on all composite indices; one state received a dishonorable mention.

Overall, the best state for women in 2015 is Minnesota, which ranks in the top ten on five of the six composite indices. Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont— which all rank in the top ten on four indices—tied for second place. California, Hawaii, Maryland, and Oregon tied for fifth place; each ranks in the top ten on three of the six composite indices. Colorado and Rhode Island both rank in the top ten on two indices and tie for ninth place, and Maine and Washington rank in the top ten on one index and tie for 11th place. None of these states rank in the bottom half on any composite index. No state receives an honorable mention.

Best and Worst States for Women in 2015	
Best States	Worst States
1. Minnesota	51. Alabama (tied)
2. Connecticut (tied)	51. Mississippi (tied)
2. Massachusetts (tied)	49. Kentucky (tied)
2. Vermont (tied)	49. Tennessee (tied)
5. California (tied)	47. Florida (tied)
5. Hawaii (tied)	47. Texas (tied)
5. Maryland (tied)	
5. Oregon (tied)	
9. Colorado (tied)	
9. Rhode Island (tied)	
11. Maine (tied)	
11. Washington (tied)	
	<b>Dishonorable Mention</b>
	Ohio

The worst states for women are Alabama and Mississippi, which rank in the bottom ten on four of the six composite indices. Kentucky and Tennessee rank in the bottom ten on three indices and tie for 49th place. Florida and Texas both rank in the bottom ten on one index; they tie for 47th place. None of these states rank in the top half on any composite index. Ohio receives a dishonorable mention for ranking in the bottom half on all six composite indices, without ever ranking in the bottom 10.

The rankings for each of the composite indices presented were calculated by combining data on several indicators of women’s status in each of the six areas. These data were used to compare women in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Best & Worst States for Women in 2015, by Topic Area					
	Best States	Worst States		Best States	Worst States
<b>Political Participation (Excludes the District of Columbia)</b>	1. New Hampshire 2. Minnesota 3. Maine 4. Washington 5. Massachusetts	50. Utah 49. Texas 48. West Virginia 47. Arkansas 46. Louisiana	<b>Poverty &amp; Opportunity</b>	1. District of Columbia 2. Maryland 3. Massachusetts 4. Connecticut 5. Hawaii	51. Mississippi 50. Arkansas 49. West Virginia 48. Kentucky 47. Louisiana
<b>Employment &amp; Earnings</b>	1. District of Columbia 2. Maryland 3. Massachusetts 4. New Jersey 5. Connecticut	51. West Virginia 50. Idaho 49. Louisiana 48. Mississippi 47. Arkansas	<b>Reproductive Rights</b>	1. Oregon 2. Vermont 3. Maryland 4. New Jersey 5. Hawaii	51. South Dakota 50. Nebraska 49. Kansas 48. Idaho 47. Tennessee
<b>Work &amp; Family</b>	1. New York 2. California 3. District of Columbia 4. New Jersey 5. Rhode Island	51. Indiana 50. Utah 49. Montana 48. Mississippi 47. Wyoming	<b>Health &amp; Well-Being</b>	1. Minnesota 2. Hawaii 3. North Dakota 4. Utah 5. Nebraska	51. Mississippi 50. Alabama 49. Louisiana 48. District of Columbia 47. Arkansas

## About the Institute for Women’s Policy Research



The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women’s studies and public policy and public administration programs at The George Washington University.

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