

How Free Is Your State?

Which state is the freest? Which state the least free? Which one has the most lightly taxed and regulated economy? Which states protect personal freedoms the best and the worst? How does your state fare?

The Cato Institute's newly published 2016 edition of *Freedom in the 50 States* presents a completely revised and updated ranking of the American states based on how their policies promote freedom in the fiscal, regulatory and personal realms. Authors William P. Ruger and Jason Sorens have gathered data on more than 230 variables to measure freedom now and in the past.

Based on those rankings, in terms of general freedom, these are the top five “free-est” states:

- 1. New Hampshire
- 2. Alaska
- 3. Oklahoma
- 4. Indiana
- 5. South Dakota

And these are the five “least free” states:

- 50. New York
- 49. California
- 48. Hawaii
- 47. New Jersey
- 46. Maryland

The rankings can be adjusted to be based on a specific criteria, such as taxes or regulation. It also can be adjusted for other factors, like educational and occupational freedom. Religious freedom falls under the “personal freedom” category.