

The State

South Carolina has more freedom, study says

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South Carolinians have more freedom than the residents of most other states, at least according to one study.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian-leaning think tank, has published its rankings of all 50 states according to their freedom levels, whether it's economic restrictions or the freedom to marry, own firearms and consume marijuana.

South Carolina ranks 15th on the list, five points higher than in 2012. Cato gives the state high marks for its tax and regulatory policy, and notes the legalization of same-sex marriage has improved the state's rankings on personal freedom.

The most free state in the union is New Hampshire, according to the rankings, while its near-neighbor New York is the least free.

New York has apparently been taking the least free state title for a while due to its economic policies, including a local tax burden twice the state average. Cato predicts it will remain there for "many years to come."

New Hampshire, at the opposite end of the list, has the lowest government tax rate of all states except Alaska, the number two state on the list.

Other states rounding out the five freest states are Alaska, Oklahoma, Indiana and South Dakota. The top five least free states also include California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Maryland.