



## **Which States Interfere with Your Life the Most and Least?**

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A great many of today's doctors are unhappy with the state of the medical profession. Many of them say it's due to a lack of freedom (although my father was complaining to me about government interference with doctors way back in the 1970s). But if they can't give up being a physician, perhaps they can find some more freedom.

Now there's some help for those doctors who are ready, willing, and able to "make a move." The Cato Institute is out with a new project, the 2016 Freedom in the 50 States, which ranks America's states based on how their policies respect and promote freedom in the fiscal, regulatory, and personal realms. Feed up doctors considering professional relocation to a "freer state" might want to pay heed to the findings.

To determine the rankings, authors William Ruger, PhD and Jason Sorens, PhD have examined state and local government intervention across a range of over 230 policy variables – from taxation to debt, from eminent domain laws to occupational licensing, from drug policy to educational choice, and from health insurance mandates to financial incentives to health providers.

According to the report, conservative states tend to do better on economic freedom overall, although not always by a huge margin. On personal freedom, the results are less clear cut. Progressive states have done better on marriage freedom, cannabis laws, and incarceration. But conservative states gain points on personal freedom too when it comes to gun rights, educational freedom, and smoking on private property.

States with lower freedom rankings tend to be less economically prosperous, explains Drs. Ruger and Sorens. They tend to have higher rates of corruption and more lobbyists seeking government rents. Lower labor-market and regulatory freedom typically discourages business investment and raises the cost of living, which then can scare off Americans from other states looking to relocate for work.

There is strong evidence that states with more freedom attract more residents, the authors explain. They found a solid relationship between a lighter fiscal impact of government and net immigration, though evidence also suggests that regulatory and personal freedom play a role in attracting residents. For example, New York, the least free state, suffered the second-worst net out-migration of any state, 7.5% of its 2001 population. Conversely, Texas, Florida, and North Carolina, who rank among the top 20 in overall fiscal policy, have drawn nearly four million residents from the rest of the country from 2001 to 2014.

Clearly, some states are doing things better than others. “While the federal government has become more intrusive and inefficient over the last two decades, individual states are providing Americans with a little-recognized renaissance of policy innovation,” argue Drs. Ruger and Sorens. “If we want to save our freedom and restore good government, it is to the states that we must look and not to the federal government.”

Here are the 10 top and bottom ranked states overall:

#### Most Free

1. New Hampshire
2. Alaska
3. Oklahoma
4. Indiana
5. South Dakota
6. Tennessee
7. Idaho
8. Florida
9. Iowa
10. Arizona

#### Least Free

50. New York
49. California
48. Hawaii

47. New Jersey

46. Maryland

45. Connecticut

44. Illinois

43. Rhode Island

42. Maine

41. Kentucky

Note: This print version of the report goes into greater detail on the matter and meaning of “freedom.”