

Moving to Texas for more freedom? Not so fast. Study ranks the state 49th in personal liberties

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For a second consecutive year, Texas posted the highest annual population growth among U.S. states, **according to Census figures**, and many of its new residents cite the state's laissez-faire governance as part of the draw.

But if you're searching for greater personal freedoms, a **new study** suggests you'd best look elsewhere.

That analysis, published by self-described libertarian think tank the CATO Institute, found that the Lone Star State — a place where you can open-carry without a mask on — ranks 49th among U.S. states when it comes to personal freedoms.

CATO gave Texas high scores when it comes to economic and fiscal freedom — it ranks No. 10 and No. 12 on those, respectively — and the study ranked the state No. 21 overall when it comes to a variety of freedoms.

But that's not to say Texas is a beacon in the personal freedom category. The state's "generally aggressive" criminal justice record helps explain its finish near the bottom.

More Texas citizens are imprisoned per capita than those of any other democracy on the planet, for example. And although only 12% of the state is African American, that demographic makes up a **majority** of the state's inmates. Drug-related arrests are around the national average, but possession of fewer than two ounces of weed under the state's "harsh" cannabis laws can land violators a **180-day sentence** in the county jail.

The study also cited the Texas' tough stance on gambling as a drag on its personal freedom ranking. Even sports betting remains illegal here, even though the practice is permitted in **30 states** and the District of Columbia.

What may be most surprising to some about the CATO analysis is where the Lone Star State is positioned when it comes to the rights of gun owners. Texas ranked No. 31, while Kansas topped the nation with the leniency of its gun laws.

Texas may be a cheaper place to live, its people friendlier and its climate balmer than most of the country. But if you're looking for more freedom, you may want to consider Nevada, the "freest" state in the country, according to the CATO report.