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The best states to live in for 2026: Colorado drops in annual rankings

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A new report by [U.S. News and World Report](#) ranked all 50 states, weighing several factors, to determine how well states perform for their residents.

The 2026 list shows Utah, South Dakota and Minnesota in the top three spots. Utah has held the No.1 spot for four consecutive years. While Utah has held the top spot, other states have seen boosts in the rankings.

Colorado was ranked at No. 17, falling from No. 11 in 2025.

South Dakota soared from No. 8 in 2025 to No. 2 this year. Minnesota moved up one spot from No. 4 to No. 3 this year. According to the U.S. News report, improvements in the economy, healthcare and natural environment fueled the surge for the Midwest states.

"We have a very diversified economy ... that gives us some kind of resilience," Phil Dean, the chief economist at the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah, [told U.S. News](#) in a news release.

Best states 2026: U.S. News & World Report

1. Utah
2. South Dakota
3. Minnesota
4. North Dakota
5. Nebraska
6. New Hampshire
7. Idaho
8. Florida
9. Washington
10. Vermont
11. Massachusetts
12. Iowa
13. North Carolina
14. Delaware
15. Wisconsin
16. Wyoming
17. **Colorado**
18. Connecticut

19. Virginia
20. New Jersey
21. Maryland
22. Georgia
23. New York
24. Kansas
25. Tennessee
26. Texas
27. Maine
28. Hawaii
29. Montana
30. Indiana
31. Missouri
32. South Carolina
33. Rhode Island
34. Arizona
35. California
36. Oklahoma
37. Illinois
38. Nevada
39. Oregon
40. Pennsylvania
41. Kentucky
42. Ohio
43. Alabama
44. West Virginia
45. Arkansas
46. Michigan
47. New Mexico
48. Mississippi
49. Alaska
50. Louisiana

While the top of the list saw some shuffling, the bottom of the rankings remained largely unchanged, with Louisiana holding the "worst state" spot. Alaska, Mississippi and New Mexico round out the rankings at No. 49, No. 48 and No. 47, respectively.

U.S. News has published an annual rankings list based on how well states perform across eight categories that Americans care about most since 2017. The categories were assigned weights on the average of three years of data from recent national surveys that asked tens of thousands of people to prioritize various issues in their state, according to the [methodology page](#).