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Washington State
Economic Climate Study

Prepared by the
Economic and Revenue Forecast Council

September 2004
Volume IX
Washington State
Economic and Revenue Forecast Council
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Editor’s Note
The 1996 Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 2758 creating the Economic Climate Council (ECC). The ECC is responsible for selecting a series of benchmarks that characterize the competitive environment of the state. The benchmarks are indicators of the quality of life, education and skills of the work force, infrastructure, and the costs of doing business.

To ensure public participation, the ECC established an advisory committee of six members to assist in the selection of the benchmarks. The advisory committee, along with staff of the House of Representatives, Senate, Office of Financial Management and other state agencies, including the staff of the Office of the Forecast Council, assisted in the preparation of the first report. The Economic and Revenue Forecast Council continues to function as the ECC. Each year the Office of the Forecast Council updates and publishes the Climate Study. This is the ninth annual Economic Climate Study.
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Executive Summary

This report updates the State of Washington’s Economic Climate Study, last published September 2002. The study provides information about Washington’s competitive standing in relation to the other U.S. states. It is based on the premise that, while improving productivity is primarily the domain of Washington’s business sector, appropriate state and local policies, particularly those relating to education, public safety, infrastructure, cost of doing business, and the environment, are essential to promote higher standards of living.

The benchmarks considered in this study focus on the four themes specified in the Substitute House Bill 2758, RCW 82.33A: quality of life, education and skills of the workforce, infrastructure, and the cost of doing business. In addition, this study also presents economic performance indicators related to income, employment, population, research and development expenditures, and foreign trade. Overall, forty-one indicators are presented.

Recent Performance

In this year’s climate study, thirty-six of the forty-one benchmarks and indicators were updated. While the state has fared better in past year’s climate studies, its overall performance was positive. Of the thirty-four updated benchmarks and indicators that include ranks relative to the other states, Washington’s rank improved in fifteen cases, regressed in ten, and stayed the same in nine. Of the thirty-five updated benchmarks and indicators that indicate year-to-year performance, the state improved in twenty cases, worsened in twelve and stayed the same in three. Five indicators and benchmarks were not updated due to the unavailability of updated data at the time of publication.

Though the official nation-wide recession of 2001 lasted only nine months, states everywhere have been dealing with the repercussions of slow growth and unemployment ever since. Washington, with its sizeable aerospace and software sectors, was hit a bit harder than most states. The bursting of the “dot-com” bubble affected the software industry even prior to the beginning of the March 2001 downturn, and just as the national recovery began in November of 2001 (according to the National Bureau of Economic Research), layoffs began in aerospace; losing roughly 24,000 jobs between December of 2001 and 2003.

Even with a tightening fiscal budget, Washington tried to make the best of its situation. Indicators improved for the majority of the economic benchmarks though rankings did not always rise with them. Surprisingly, though nearly all of the quality of life indicators worsened, many of Washington’s rankings improved. In addition, educational achievement has progressed, the highway system was improved, and Washington’s environment is still highly ranked, with one of the fewest levels of toxins and the highest number of state parks.

The following report is a snapshot of Washington’s performance and ranking both compared to other states and itself historically. This analysis begins on page six with a description of each indicator and is then followed by an associated table and chart. Each table ranks the states based on its performance and each chart shows how Washington has fared over history. In each case, the ranking is from best to worst with a rank of one being the best.
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Economic Performance
Total Employment Growth Rate

Though the recession of 2001 officially only lasted for nine months, the effects have continued to be seen throughout the following years. Many states continued to display negative growth in employment, unable to overcome the bursting of the “dot-com” bubble. Washington employment, however, managed to bounce back from its two years of contraction in 2003 while the national average employment continued to decline.

Buoyed by growth in the financial activities market, particularly credit intermediation, construction, health services and software production, Washington managed a 0.2 percent gain that ranked 16th among states. While 5,300 jobs were gained, the state is still 51,900 short of its 2000 peak. During the same period, national average employment continued to decline at a rate of -0.3 percent.

The aerospace industry continued the downward decline it has been experiencing since 1998, when it lost nearly 27,000 jobs before an upswing began in 2000. However, with the 9-11 attacks, production and employment both began another decline and the sector has lost another 11,600 jobs in 2002 and 10,200 jobs in 2003 (annual average employment). A July 2004 announcement by Boeing that the company would hire up to 3,000 Washington workers by the end of the year hopefully signals the end of the current industry downturn.
## Table 1
### Economic Performance
#### Total Employment Growth Rate (Percent)

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Median Household Income

A state’s median household income is the level of income (before taxes) at which exactly half of that state’s households earn more than that amount and half earn less. While it is related to average or per capita household income, an increase in average household income does not necessarily mean that median household income will increase and vice versa. Median income measures offer the advantage over average measures that they are not upwardly biased by the income levels of the highest-income households. Typically, the average or per capita household income of a state is higher than the median.

Median household income estimates for the states are produced annually by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and are published in Money Income in the United States. These estimates are derived from the annual Current Population Survey. As this survey’s primary purpose is to arrive at national income and demographic numbers, however, estimates for individual states have substantial margins of error. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau reports and recommends using two or three year moving averages for state median household income estimates. The resulting margins of error are reported by the Census Bureau and should be taken into account when making year-to-year or state-to-state comparisons. The 90 percent confidence interval for Washington’s 2001-2003 median household income estimate is $851, and the interval for 2000-2002 was $1,363.

After losing ground over the past few years, Washington’s median household income once again began to climb. This year’s median income household estimate of $45,960 was 3.8 percent higher than that of last period’s $44,252. The national average also increased, but at only 1.1 percent. Washington’s 5-year average remains well above the national average at $46,431, earning it 18th place. Washington’s median household income has been higher than that of the nation for all of the years that the Current Population Survey has reported state estimates.
### Table 2

#### Economic Performance

**Median Household Income**  
(Current Dollars at End of Period)

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- Washington's Rank:  [7, 12, 18, 19, 16, 18]

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

*Average of yearly estimates in 2003 dollars

**U.S. average includes the District of Columbia
Per Capita Personal Income

The Bureau of Economic Analysis defines personal income as the sum of earnings, dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments. Per capita personal income is derived by dividing the total personal income of a region by its population. In 2003, Washington had a total personal income of $204.0 billion and a population of 6.13 million, for a per capita personal income of $33,264. This level of income ranked 12th among the states and was well above the national average of $31,459. Washington has performed well in this measure for the last five years as well, ranking 11th during that period.

Most of Washington’s personal income derives from earnings, which consists mainly of wages and salaries but also includes proprietor’s income and other labor income. In 2003, net earnings by place of residence for Washington residents totaled $142.7 billion, which accounted for 70.0 percent of total personal income. Income from transfer payments was $27.8 billion, and income from dividends, interest, and rent was $33.4 billion. These income sources represented 13.6 and 16.4 percent of total personal income respectively.
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**Washington’s Rank**

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*The U.S. Average includes Washington D.C., which makes it higher than the 50 State Average

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, September 28, 2004
Per Capita Personal Income Growth Rate

The growth rate of per capita personal income is affected by the growth rate of the components of total personal income as well as the growth rate of population. From 2002 to 2003, Washington total personal income grew by 2.8 percent while population grew at 1.1 percent. As a result, per capita personal income grew by 1.7 percent, which ranked 39th among the states. During the same period, U.S. total personal income grew by 3.2 percent while its population grew at 1.0 percent, for a per capita personal income growth rate of 2.2 percent.

From 2002 to 2003, Washington incomes rose on the whole, led in particular by increases in the income from real estate and rental leasing (11.6%) and finance and insurance (11.4%) sectors, as well as by the military (11.3%). However, due to continued negative employment growth the manufacturing sector, its income dropped by 3.4 percent.

Washington’s average per capita growth in personal income over the past five years is 3.2 percent, the same as the US average for that period, ranking 33rd among the 50 states.
### Table 4

**Economic Performance**

**Per Capita Personal Income Growth Rate (Percent)**

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*The U.S. Average includes Washington D.C.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, September 28, 2004
High Wage Industries’ Share of Total Employment Growth

Though new jobs are always welcome in an economy, one must also pay attention to the amount of income the new jobs generate. This indicator identifies the industries that have higher wages than the national average wage and then measures the percentage of new jobs each year that are represented by those industries in each state.

While this indicator is easy to interpret when jobs of both wage categories are increasing, years in which employment in one or both of the wage categories experiences a decline produces numbers whose meanings are less clear. For example, values greater than 100 percent indicate that lower wage jobs declined while higher wage jobs increased, making the number of new higher-wage jobs greater than the total change in employment for a given year. When the total change is quite small, the value of the measure can become quite large. In contrast, when the number of higher-wage jobs contract in a given year while total employment increases, the measure acquires a negative value. If both wage categories decrease, however, the measure once again acquires a positive value. Years in which this occurred are designated in the table with an asterisk. It should also be noted that the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) employment statistics that this measure uses are slightly different from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) employment statistics reported elsewhere in this publication.

Beginning in 2001, the BEA began reporting wages classified by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Prior to this time, industries were classified by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. Because of the differences in classification from 2000 to 2001, this measure could not be computed for that period, as some of the change for that period would be the result of reclassification instead of economic growth.

Though the national recession ended in 2001, jobs continued to decline nationwide in 2002. This makes the value of this measure difficult to interpret for that year, with the national value and those of most of the states marked with an asterisk. The period of 2003-2003, however, saw positive overall growth in the BEA employment statistics for Washington and most of the rest of the country, although higher wage employment growth was negative. During this time Washington high wage employment declined less than that of the nation, ranking 29th among the states. Overall, for the last five years of this measure the state has performed close to average, with a value close to that of the U.S. as a whole and a ranking of 29th.

Chart 5

High Wage Industries’ Share of Total Employment Growth
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* Total employment growth rate was negative.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis defines earnings as salary income, other labor income, and proprietors’ income. Historically, Washington has ranked high in annual earnings per job due to the presence in its economy of large firms in both manufacturing and technology sectors. Washington has ranked in the top ten states for annual earnings per job in the last five years of this benchmark and currently ranks 9th in the nation.

Washington’s average annual earnings per job increased to $42,816 in 2002, up $866 from 2001 and $2058 above the national average of $40,758.

### 2002 Annual Earnings Per Job

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**Chart 6**

Annual Earnings Per Job
### Economic Performance

#### Annual Earnings Per Job

*(Dollars)*

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*Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (www.bea.gov)*
Annual Earnings Per Job Growth Rate

From 2001 to 2002 Washington earnings per job grew at a rate of 2.1 percent. While this rate was below the national average, it was an improvement from the state’s performance in the previous year and increased the state’s rank from 47th to 29th. Because of its stellar performance in the late nineties, in which Washington maintained a number 2 ranking for several years, its average growth from 1998-2002 remains above the national average and ranks 9th among the states.

Chart 7
Annual Earnings Per Job Growth Rate
Table 7
Economic Performance
Annual Earnings Per Job Growth Rate
(Dollars)

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Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (www.bea.gov)
Migration Rate

Washington continues to be a popular destination for international and domestic migration, ranking 9\textsuperscript{th} in terms of total migration in 2003. On a per capita basis, the state ranked 19\textsuperscript{th}, with a migration rate of 0.5\% as compared to the national rate of 0.4\%.

2003’s total population growth for Washington was 1.05 percent, just above the national average of 1.0 percent. Natural increase accounted for 49.5 percent of growth while 51.1 percent came from migration. Of the state’s immigrants, 82.7 percent were international and 17.3 percent were domestic. In the U.S. as a whole, 54.6 percent of population growth came from natural increase and 45.4 percent from international migration.

The U.S. Census Bureau did not release migration data for the year 2000.
### Table 8
Economic Performance

#### Migration Rate
(Percent)*

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**U.S. Average***: 0.4  0.3  0.3  0.5  0.5  0.4

**Washington's Rank**: 8    8    13   12   16   19

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* The District of Columbia is included in the U.S. average.
Foreign Exports Inclusive and Exclusive of Transportation Equipment

In 2003, Washington stayed in 1st among the states in foreign exports as a percent of personal income, with exports equivalent to 16.72 percent of total personal income. The state’s average exports as a percent of personal income for the years 1999-2003 was 18.15 percent, ranking 2nd, just behind Vermont, but well above the national average of 7.8 percent.

Washington’s perennially strong performance in this category is due mainly to the presence of Boeing and PACCAR, two of the world’s leading manufacturers of commercial aircraft and trucks respectively. Exports of transportation equipment from these and other Washington manufacturers regularly account for over half of Washington’s exports. Excluding exports of these products, Washington’s exports were equivalent to 6.72 percent of personal income, still above the national average of 5.97 percent and ranking 10th among the states.

It must be noted that the trade data used for this indicator, obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, only includes trade in goods, ignoring trades in service exports which are difficult to track and credit to specific states. Software, one of Washington’s main exports, is classified as a service and is therefore not included in this data. As software giant Microsoft contributes greatly to state personal income while its exports are not included in the trade data, the measure of Washington exports as a percent of personal income understates the contribution of trade to Washington’s economy. This growing understatement is part of the reason that exports excluding transportation products as a percentage of personal income, as shown in Chart 10, begins to decline in 1997, as this year coincides with the period where Microsoft’s contribution to personal income began its greatest growth.


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**Washington's Rank**

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Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Foreign Trade Division, Bureau of Economic Analysis
Trade data prepared by Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, May 2004
Chart 10
Foreign Exports Excluding Transportation

*Trade data from 1997 to 2002 is coded under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).
Prior data is coded under Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).
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**Washington’s Rank**
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- **13**
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- **10**
- **13**

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Foreign Trade Division, Bureau of Economic Analysis
Trade data prepared by Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, May 2003
Per Capita Spending in Research and Development

- Industrial R&D
- University R&D
- Total Per Capita R&D

The amount of research and development activity occurring within a state relative to the size of its population provides a good indication of that state’s capacity for innovation. Industrial research and development brings new products and processes for continued growth. University and government research and development can provide basic research to support local technology hubs and can also attract funding from outside of the state.

The Division of Science Resources Studies (SRS) of the National Science Foundation annually compiles surveys of industries, universities, and other agencies into a report titled *National Patterns of Research and Development Resources*. This report indicates the state in which the research and development activity took place regardless of the state of the sponsoring party. The state spending figures for industrial, university, and total research and development spending can be divided by the state populations to derive per capita spending. The most recent year of state spending available is 2002.

In 2002, Washington ranked 23rd in per capita university research and development with a spending level of $123 per capita, slightly below the U.S. average of $125. For the period 1998-2002 its average rank was 21st. In both industry and total 2002 per capita research and development spending, however, the state ranked much higher. Washington’s 2002 per capita industrial research and development spending, at $1414, was over twice as high as the national average of $633, ranking 4th among the states. The state’s total 2002 per capita research and development spending, of $1732 was also much higher than the national average of $879, ranking 4th.

![Chart 11 University Data](image-url)
Table 11  
University Research and Development  
(Dollars Per Capita)

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Chart 12
Industry Research and Development

Per Capita Spending


Washington □ U.S. average

$0 $200 $400 $600 $800 $1,000 $1,200 $1,400 $1,600

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Unemployment Rate

The national unemployment rate continued to increase in 2003, increasing to 6.0 percent from 5.8 percent, reaching its highest point since 1994. Washington also experienced a rise, growing from 7.3 to 7.5 percent, its highest since 1992, ranking 48th among the states.

Historically, Washington has nearly always maintained an unemployment rate that was higher than the national average. In the late 1980s, this divergence began to narrow with the reduction of the percentage of workers that were employed by seasonal industries such as agriculture, fishing, forest products and food processing. Beginning in 1998, however, the divergence has widened once again, this time largely attributable to the total loss of over 50,000 aerospace jobs in the periods 1998-2000 and 2001-2003 as well as the large drop in “dot-com” associated jobs in 2000. As the effects of these drops diminish and the aerospace market stabilizes, it is hoped that the divergence between the state’s unemployment rate and that of the nation will once again begin to narrow.

Chart 14
Unemployment Rate

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### Economic Performance

**Unemployment Rate**

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Quality of Life
Homicide Rate, Violent Crime Rate, Arrest Rate for Violent Crimes

Because of former discrepancies including variable reporting methods, crime definitions, multiple reports for different arrests, charges and convictions for a crime, International Association of Chiefs of Police established the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. The program’s primary objective is to generate a reliable set of criminal statistics by mandating specific reporting requirements and criterion for gathering data that ensures consistency and comparability among states. The UCR program is a nationwide, statistical effort of over 17,000 city, county, and state law enforcement agencies.

During 2002, law enforcement agencies active in the UCR Program represented 93.4 percent of the total population as established by the Bureau of the Census. The coverage amounted to 94.3 percent of the United States population in Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), 89.9 percent of the population in cities outside metropolitan areas, and 89.5 percent in rural counties.

Using this reliable data, the UCR has become an important social indicator on the fluctuations in the level of crime. Specifically, the homicide rate, the violent crime rate (i.e., offenses of murder, non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, all of which involve the threat or use of force) and the arrest rate for violent crimes are included because of their seriousness and prevalence in media reporting.

In 2002, Washington’s homicide rate, as measured per 100,000 people, stayed at 3.0, but its rank among the states declined one place to 18th. The violent crime rate, also measured per 100,000 people, continued to decline from 355 to 345, and increased its rank to 21st. Finally the arrest rate for violent crime decreased from 158 to 140, helping Washington to increase its rank to 18th. As in all years since UCR statistics began being reported, Washington continues to rank well below the national average in incidences of these categories of crime.

Chart 15
Homicide Rate

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Quality of Life  
Homicide Rate  
(Per 100,000 Population)

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NA: Complete arrest data were not available.
Chart 16
Violent Crime Rate

Chart showing violent crime rate per 100,000 population for Washington and U.S. average from 1991 to 2002.
Table 16

Quality of Life

**Violent Crime Rate**
(Per 100,000 Population)

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**Washington's Rank**

| 25 | 24 | 25 | 24 | 21 | 24 |

Chart 17
Arrest Rates for Violent Crime

Per 100,000 Population

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Washington State U.S. Average

Quality of Life
### Table 17

Quality of Life

#### Arrest Rates for Violent Crime

(Per 100,000 Population)

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**Washington's Rank**

| Rank | 21 | 19 | 27 | 20 | 18 | 20 |

*Violent crimes are offenses of murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

NA: Complete arrest data were not available.

Air Quality

The air quality index measures the percentage of a state’s population living in areas which are deemed to be in “nonattainment” of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). These standards as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cover carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide as “criteria pollutants”, all of which have been shown to have adverse effects on the environment and human health. For an area to be reclassified as an “attainment” area, its air must meet the NAAQS standards for three consecutive years.

Nonattainment areas are defined by metropolitan zones which may cover several states. The population for these areas is based upon 2000 census data and the nonattainment area is wholly designated to the primary state (i.e. the New York metropolitan area nonattainment population is put into New York state, although the city enters parts of New Jersey and Connecticut as well).

In 2004, for the fourth year in a row, 6.6 percent of Washington’s population lived in nonattainment areas. After a large drop between 2000 and 2001 due to improvements made in Kent, Tacoma and Seattle, Washington’s level has remained constant. While improvements in other states caused Washington’s 2004 ranking to fall from 26th to 27th, the percentage of state residents who live in nonattainment areas is far below the national average of 39.3 percent.
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*Due to areas that span more than one state, these states may have more or less non-attainment areas than specified but are not documented to avoid double counting.
Drinking Water

The objective of the Washington State Department of Health Drinking Water Program is to protect the health of the citizens of Washington State by ensuring safe and reliable drinking water. In Washington, 5.2 million residents are served by 4,131 public water systems that must abide by the standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). These standards are designed to prevent microbial, chemical and radiological contaminants in drinking water and to assure the protection of public health if contamination does occur. The number of contaminants regulated by the EPA has risen from 23 in 1986 to 91 in 2002 and is expected to surpass 130 by 2010.

The EPA annually reports the number of systems whose water has exceeded the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for any contaminant and the number of people those systems serve. A MCL, according to the EPA, is the highest permissible level for a contaminant to still be safe. In addition, the EPA also calculates the number of systems that have violated a treatment technique, the requirement to have properly operating treatment facilities in order to remove contaminants. The attached table contains EPA data for the years 1999-2003, showing the percentage of each state’s population served by a water system subject to the SDWA that violated either a coliform MCL or a surface water treatment technique.

In 2003, 7.9 percent of Washington residents were served by water systems that exceeded the MCL at some point during the year, compared to the U.S. average of 8.2 percent. This improved Washington’s rank to 29th in the country, up from 35th in 2002. The state’s average for 1999-2003.

Chart 19
Percent of systems violating drinking water standards

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Washington | 50 State Average
### Table 19

Quality of Life

**Drinking Water Index**

(Percent)*

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*Percent of population served by water supply in violation of EPA standards.

**Supplied by the Washington State Department of Health.

***The 50 state average is an average of indicators listed. It may differ from the U.S. average.

Toxins Released

The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) provides the public with information concerning the amounts of toxic chemical releases from industrial facilities. Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA), the inventory was established with the objective of promoting emergency planning, minimizing the effects of chemical accidents, and providing the public with information on the releases of toxic chemicals in their communities. Each year, facilities that meet certain thresholds must report their releases and other waste management activities for listed toxic chemicals to the EPA and to the state or tribal entity in whose jurisdiction the facility is located. The TRI list for 2002 included 667 chemicals in 30 chemical categories. Each facility submits a TRI reporting form for each TRI chemical it has manufactured, processed, or otherwise used during 2002 in amounts exceeding the thresholds.

Before 1998, only facilities in the manufacturing sector were required to report to TRI. Starting in 1994, federal facilities began to report to TRI and in 1998 seven additional industries were added to the required report list. This is the basis for the dramatic increases in the national average for toxins released in 1998 and beyond. States that housed the newly added reporting industries saw a large jump in toxins released beginning in 1998. Washington never saw a noticeable increase in its TRI reports however because many of these added industries, such as metal and coal mining, are not prevalent in Washington.

In 2002, U.S industries reported nearly a 22 percent decrease in the toxic level, from 6.1 to 4.7 billion pounds of toxic releases. This figure includes effluent releases directly into the air, water or land, whether it be in on-site or of-site landfills, surface impoundments, land treatment facilities or underground injection wells.

Washington industries reported 21.8 million pounds of toxic releases in 2002, down 8.4 percent from 2001. As some states experienced even more rapid declines in toxic releases, however, Washington’s ranking slipped slightly from 5th to 9th, but its level of releases per square mile still remains far below that of the U.S. average.
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**Washington's Rank**

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The UnitedHealth Group State Health Rankings provide a composite indicator, by state, that measures the relative healthiness of each state and the general health of the population in the United States. Rankings are based on states’ performance in five components: lifestyle, access to health care, occupational safety and disability, disease, and mortality. These components are in turn divided into a total of seventeen subcomponents, each contributing to the overall score according to different component weights. To prevent an extreme value from excessively influencing the overall score, the maximum value any state can receive for a component is limited to the national average (which becomes a benchmark of zero) plus or minus two standard deviations. These components are then calculated into the state health index, which is simply the percentage a state is above or below the national average.

Washington lost a bit compared to the national average, but stayed steady in rank, holding at 11th, tied with Hawaii. However, it is still among the top ten states in six of the 17 individual measures, including low risk for heart disease, low infant mortality (5.5 per 1,000), and low premature death rate.

Other categories that Washington improved upon were the number of infectious disease cases, which lowered from 20.5 to 18.6 cases per 100,000 and the prevalence of smoking, which decreased from 22.5 to 21.4 percent of the population. Washington has performed very well in the State Health Rankings over the last five years, with an average rank of 12th among the states.
Table 21
Quality of Life

State Health Index

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*Scores reflect the percentage above or below the national average.

State parks provide areas that enrich the quality of life by providing recreational spaces where people exercise, enjoy the natural environment, and maintain their well being. In addition to the numerous social values generated by state parks, several economic benefits exist. Local economies prosper from the increased demand for gas, food and lodging, and state parks provide both full-time and seasonal employment opportunities. The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission reports that state parks employ approximately 500 full time employees and 400 seasonal employees.

Washington lays claim to one of the largest and busiest state park systems in the United States. With 260 parks covering more than 260,000 acres, Washington ranks 12th among all 50 states in the number of areas as well as acreage managed, but is ranked 4th in terms of total number of visitors, with almost 45 million entering last year.

Though this was the lowest number of visitors since 1990, total visits across the U.S. fell, and Washington actually raised its ranking of number of visits per capita to 3rd, breaking its eight-year stretch of being ranked 4th. Since state park visits per capita began being recorded in 1987, Washington has always placed either 4th or 5th, this marking the first year that 3rd has been achieved. Washington also ranked 5th in the number of improved campsites it maintained, 3rd in its use of non-fee areas and 9th in the use of fee areas.
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State Arts

State arts agencies play a major role in making the arts accessible to the public. By supporting special events such as concerts in the park, reduced fares for theaters, operas and orchestras, art festivals, public art programs and the integration of artwork into the renovation and construction of buildings, state arts agencies help to build an educated and cultured community.

Though it is difficult to quantify the exact effectiveness or results of state arts programs and all that goes to create it, this study uses the total revenue collected by state arts agencies to get a sense of how committed a state is to funding the arts. Total state art agency revenue for this study is calculated by using state legislative appropriations, other state funds, federal funds such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and other non-federal funds received. Though arts agencies are the primary source of funding (85% in Washington), some states also fund the arts through other agencies, such as arts education through the Department of Education, and this funding is not included.

After 2003’s spending peak, Washington’s funding is down 16 percent to $0.77, slightly below its long-term average of $0.80. Washington’s decline was accompanied by the rest of the U.S., keeping its ranking at 36th.
Table 23
Quality of Life

### State Arts
Total Per Capita State Arts Agency Revenue*

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**Washington’s Rank**

|         | 45 | 43 | 41 | 36 | 36 | 41 |

*Although state arts agencies are the primary source for state funding, some states also fund the arts through other agencies, such as such as arts education funding through the Department of Education. Source: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, July 2004.*
Public Library Service
(Not Updated Due to Unavailability of Data)

Public libraries contribute to the quality of life by providing a multitude of educational and recreational functions and services. Public libraries serve people of all ages and backgrounds by providing spaces for community meetings and study halls, storing a wealth of information and entertainment in books, and providing computer and Internet access.

The benchmark, total circulation per capita, is used to gauge the quality, magnitude, and availability of public library resources and services. Circulation is the checking out of items (i.e., books, CDs, videos) to the public and is a reliable indicator because most transactions are electronically recorded. This data is collected from every state and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) presents the cumulative form.

Washington has had excellent performance in this arena, with an average state ranking of 5th from the years 1997 to 2001. During that period, the state had an average per capita circulation of 9.7 compared to the national average of 6.5. Washington’s 2001 state ranking was 6th, with per capita circulation of 9.6 compared to the national average of 6.5.
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**Washington's Rank**

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*U.S. Average includes Washington D.C.
The Housing Opportunity Index (HOI), created by the National Association of Home Builders, is a measure of the percentage of new and existing homes sold in an area that a family earning the median income in that area can afford to buy. The index for the first quarter of 2002 was based on an analysis of more than 580,000 completed home sales in 191 metropolitan area markets nationwide. The average HOI for this period was 64.8, up from 56.9 in the first quarter of 2001, indicating that 64.8 percent of the homes sold in these metropolitan areas would be affordable to someone earning the median income for all of the areas.

Seven Washington metropolitan areas are included in the index: Bellingham, Bremerton, Olympia, Spokane, Tacoma, the Tri-Cities, and the Seattle-Bellevue-Everett area. Of these areas, two, Olympia and Spokane, had HOIs above the national average with index values of 64.9 and 66.1, respectively. Spokane had the highest HOI among the included Washington areas while the Tri-Cities had the lowest with a HOI of 54.6. Spokane’s HOI ranked 126th among the 191 metropolitan areas included in the index, while the Tri-Cities’ ranked 155th.
### Table 25

**Quality of Life**

**Housing Opportunity Index**

(First Quarter 2002)

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<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Share of Homes Affordable for Median Income</th>
<th>Family Income (000s)</th>
<th>Median Sales Price (000s)</th>
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*Denotes population below 250,000; + Denotes population of 250,000 to 1 million;

# Denotes population over 1 million.

“MSA” Metropolitan Statistical Area

“PMSA” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area

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<th>Median Sales Price (000s)</th>
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*Denotes population below 250,000; + Denotes population of 250,000 to 1 million; # Denotes population over 1 million.

“MSA” Metropolitan Statistical Area
“PMSA” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area
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<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
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<th>Family Income (000s)</th>
<th>Median Sales Price (000s)</th>
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“MSA” Metropolitan Statistical Area

“PMSA” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area

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<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
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<th>Family Income (000s)</th>
<th>Median Sales Price (000s)</th>
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“PMSA” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area
### Housing Opportunity Index (cont.)

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<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
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*Denotes population below 250,000; + Denotes population of 250,000 to 1 million;  
# Denotes population over 1 million. 
“MSA” Metropolitan Statistical Area 
“PMSA” Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area 
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Education and Skills of the Workforce
Fourth Grade Reading and Mathematics

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, is the only testing program that provides valid uniform educational achievement indicators allowing for state comparisons. The NAEP assesses students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in various academic subjects. These subjects include the arts, geography, reading, science, civics, mathematics, U.S. History, and writing. The Washington State Economic Climate Study tracks the average scale score of fourth grade reading and mathematics by state.

Prior to the 2002-03 school year, participation in the NAEP tests was voluntary, with single-subject tests held every two years, alternating subjects every two years. As such, states that either declined to participate or had an insufficient number of participating schools to create a valid average state score are excluded from the state rankings. Washington did not participate in the inaugural 1992 mathematics and reading tests, and had insufficient voluntary participation in the 2000 mathematics test. As of the 2002-03 school year, however, participation in the NAEP test is mandatory due to the provisions of the “No Child Left Behind Act”, which was passed by the Federal Government in 2001. Under the act, the NAEP tests in both reading and mathematics will be given to students in the 4th and 8th grades every two years, starting in the 2002-03 school year.

NAEP scores can be interpreted using the achievement level thresholds and their corresponding definitions outlined below. Reading achievement is measured with exercises that require students to read material for two different purposes, literary experience and knowledge retention. Last year Washington slipped from 7th to 19th after reading scores fell three points to 221. Washington’s average since the inception of the test is also 19th, with a point total of 219 slightly above the national average of 215.

In the mathematics exam, the skills and content covered include spatial sense, data analysis, statistics, probability, algebra and functions. Washington participated in the mathematics assessment in 1996* and ranked 17th out of 43 participants with a score of 225 and last year improved to 11th by gaining 13 points. Washington’s average score for the years it participated is 232, ranking 13th among the states.

Chart 26

Reading Level Proficiency: Grade 4

[Chart showing reading level proficiency scores for Washington and U.S. average from 1992 to 2003]
Table 26  
Education and Skills of the Workforce  
**Grade 4 Public School Students:**  
Average Reading Scale Scores

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NA: State did not participate in the NAEP assessment during this year.

Grade 4 Mathematics Achievement Levels

Basic
Fourth graders performing at the basic level should be able to estimate and use basic facts to perform simple computations with whole numbers; show some understanding of fractions and decimals; and solve some simple real-world problems in all NAEP content areas. Students at this level should be able to use—though not always accurately—four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes. Their written responses are often minimal and presented without supporting information.

Proficient
Fourth graders performing at the proficient level should be able to use whole numbers to estimate, compute, and determine whether results are reasonable. They should have a conceptual understanding of fractions and decimals; be able to solve real-world problems in all NAEP content areas; and use four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes appropriately. Students performing at the proficient level should employ problem-solving strategies such as identifying and using appropriate information. Their written solutions should be organized and presented both with supporting information and explanations of how they were achieved.

Advanced
Fourth graders performing at the advanced level should be able to solve complex and nonroutine real-world problems in all NAEP content areas. They should display mastery in the use of four-function calculators, rulers, and geometric shapes. They are expected to draw logical conclusions and justify answers and solution processes by explaining why, as well as how, they were achieved. They should go beyond the obvious in their interpretations and be able to communicate their thoughts clearly and concisely.

Grade 4 Reading Achievement Levels

Basic
Fourth-grade students performing at the Basic level should demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for fourth graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.

Proficient
Fourth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences. The connection between the text and what the student infers should be clear.

Advanced
Fourth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should be able to generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to judge text critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.

Chart 27
Mathematics Proficiency: Grade 4

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<td>2003</td>
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## Table 27

### Education and Skills of the Workforce

#### Grade 4 Public School Students:
**Average Mathematics Scale Scores**

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</table>

NA: State did not participate in the NAEP assessment during this year.

Tenth Grade WASL Scores

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is a statewide assessment designed to measure critical thinking skills and how well students can apply knowledge. Unlike traditional standardized tests, takers are required to answer a variety of types of questions— including multiple choice, short-answer and essay.

The test is designed to measure achievement in meeting the state’s Essential Academic Learning Requirements in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 4, 7 and 10 and science in grades 5, 8 and 10. The listening test was removed this year. The WASL is administered each spring. Beginning in 2008, high school students will be required to meet the standards it sets in order to graduate.

As the WASL is unique to Washington, test results cannot be compared to those in other states. The results are included here, however, as they provide an indication of Washington’s progress in maximizing the number of students who are able to pass the WASL by the tenth grade.

As can be seen in Table 28, 2004 tenth-grade WASL scores showed an improvement in all categories. Of the tenth-graders that took the test, 64.4 percent met the standard in reading, 39.4 percent met the standard in mathematics, 65.2 percent met the standard in writing and 32.2 percent met the standard in science. Participation also improved over last year, with the state meeting participation goals for every grade and student group (defined by ethnicity and income).
Table 28

Education and Skills of the Workforce

Tenth Grade WASL Test Scores

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Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, September 2004 (http://www.k12.wa.us)
Student to Teacher Ratios

Over the last decade, there has been a nationwide movement to lower the student to teacher ratios in public schools. The success of this movement to date is evident in the steady decline of the national ratio from 17.4 students per teacher in the 1992-93 school year to 15.9 in 2001-02.

To keep pace, Washington has also taken steps to lower its ratio. Passed in November of 2000, Initiatives 728 and 732 sought to reduce class sizes and give teachers an annual cost of living pay increase. Funded by lottery and property tax revenues, over $400 million dollars flowed into the school system for the purpose of hiring new teachers and expanding school facilities. As a result, class sizes have dropped and Washington’s ranking has improved to 46th.

Due to state budget difficulties, the governor and legislature suspended the cost of living increases for teachers during the 2003 fiscal year and delayed the increase in property tax revenue diversion to the Student Achievement Account called for by I-728. Though spending did not increase as much as called for by the initiative, the money that the initiative continues to provide to education should help Washington further its improvement in this measure.
Table 29
Education and Skills of the Workforce
Pupil to Teacher Ratios in Elementary
and Secondary Public Schools

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Education Attainment: Completed Four Years of High School or More

The educational attainment level of a population has significant importance on both the individual and societal levels. Individuals who achieve higher levels of education enjoy higher levels of productivity, higher pay, greater job satisfaction and increased leisure time. For a population, education helps with socialization, communication, as well as increased production and tax benefits.

The 2003 Current Population Survey of the U.S. Bureau of the Census found that the average annual wage for a person who did not graduate from high school in the year 2002 was only $22,463 while that of a person with a high school diploma was $29,195.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, last year, the unemployment rate for someone in the workforce who had not graduated from high school was 3 percent higher than someone who had obtained a diploma. In 2003, Washington’s high school attainment level fell by 1.3 percent, knocking it down to 10th in the nation. By the five year average however, Washington still maintains a 90.5 percent attainment rate, ranked 4th in the U.S.

Chart 30
Percent Complete Four Years of High School or More
### Table 30

**Education and Skills of the Workforce**

**Educational Attainment:**

**Completed Four Years of High School or More**

(Percent)*

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**Washington’s Rank**

|         | 2 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 4 |

*Percent of persons 25 years or older who have completed 4 years of high school or more.

**Education Attainment: Completed Bachelors Degree or More**

The 2003 Current Population Survey of the U.S. Bureau of the Census found that while the average annual wage for a person with a high school diploma in the year 2002 was $29,185, that of a person who held a Bachelor's Degree was $53,103. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in 2003, the unemployment rate for someone in the workforce with at least a bachelors degree was 2.4 percent below that of someone with a high school diploma and a third that of someone without one.

In 2003, the percentage of Washington residents of age 25 or older who had achieved a bachelor's degree or more increased from 28.3 percent to 28.8 percent, higher than the U.S. average in both level and rate of growth. This increase resulted in an improvement in rank from 14th to 13th, the same rank as the state's 1999-2003 average.
Table 31
Education and Skills of the Workforce

**Educational Attainment: Completed Bachelor’s Degree or More**
(Percent)*

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**Washington’s Rank**

|         | 8     | 11    | 18    | 14    | 13    | 13        |


* Percent of persons 25 years old and over who have obtained a Bachelor’s degree or higher.
Public Two and Four Year College Combined Participation Rate
(Not updated due to unavailability of data)

Washington, more than most states, relies heavily on the community college system to provide the first two years of a college education. As a result of this, Washington and states with a similar policy have higher than average two-year participation rates and lower than average four-year participation rates. Since two- and four-year participation rates presented separately give a skewed view of Washington’s overall participation rate, this report combines the two statistics to produce a participation rate inclusive of two and four-year participants. With this adjustment, states that are more reliant on the community college system can be better compared to other states. Due to the lag of data available on this subject, the most recent study for participation rates is from 1998.

In 1998, Washington had a public two and four year college participation rate of 6.2 percent, which was a decline from 1997 when Washington’s rate was at 6.6. Washington’s rank also declined in this period from 10th in the country, to 15th. Even with this decline, Washington’s rate remained above the U.S. average of 5.7. Washington’s rate of 6.5 percent for the years 1994 through 1998 was also above the national average of 5.8 percent, ranking Washington 12th among the states for that period. It is important to note that the data from 1993 to present included students enrolled in five technical colleges. This accounts for the increase from 6.1 to 6.7 percent and improvement in rank from 23rd to 14th from 1992 to 1993.
**Table 32**

Education and Skills of the Workforce

Total Public Two and Four Year College Combined Participation Rate

(Participation Rate)*

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**Washington’s Rank**

13 12 11 10 15 12

*Participation rate: Headcount compared to population aged 17 & above.
Value Added Per Hour of Labor in Manufacturing

(Not Updated Due to Unavailability of Data)

“Value added” in manufacturing is a measure of the difference between the value of a finished object and the value of the raw materials that went into its production. The total value added of an industry represents the amount of revenue available for payment of wages, rent, taxes, interest, profit, and all other business costs aside from raw materials.

The Annual Survey of Manufactures (ASM), published by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides estimates of worker hours and value added for all manufacturing establishments with one or more paid employee. As it is a sample survey, its estimates possess varying margins of error. To minimize the effects of these errors, the ASM estimates are presented in Table 32 as three-year moving averages. Due to ASM reclassification from the Standard Industrial Code (SIC) to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) in 1997, survey estimates prior to that date are not included due to non-comparability.

The amount of value added per hour of labor varies greatly among different industries. Highly automated industries such as semiconductors have very high value added per hour since one person can operate a machine that puts out a large volume of high-value product, while less automated industries such as furniture manufacturing require more labor per dollar of added value. (Highly automated industries, however, also have much higher equipment costs, so high value added does not necessarily imply high profit.) Within a specific industry, however, interstate differences in value added per worker hour may be interpreted as differences in worker productivity between states.

The differences in value-added across industries makes a state’s average value added per worker hour highly dependent upon its particular industry mix. States with a large percentage of high value added industries (such as semiconductors in New Mexico and Arizona) perform very well in this measure, reported as “Non-Weighted” in Table 32. Washington also performs well in this measure, indicating an industry mix of higher-than-average labor productivity.

To minimize the effects of industry mix on estimates of state productivity, the “Weighted” values in Table 32 represent value added per worker hour as if each state had an identical mix of industries. In this case, state worker hours in each of the 21 major NAICS manufacturing groups were adjusted to be identical in proportion to the national average. When measured in this way, Washington’s average value added per worker hour moves to slightly below the national average. This method, however, is still susceptible to error for two main reasons. The first reason is that most states are either totally lacking in several industries or have only one representative of an industry, which makes the data unreportable by the Census due to disclosure laws (though the data is included in the totals). These omissions are treated as an undifferentiated “remainder” industry that can skew a state’s average greatly depending upon what the productivity of the hidden industry is and the proportion of total hours the remainder represents. Alaska is a prime example, with all industries except food products hidden by disclosure laws. The second reason is that there is still a large degree of productivity variation within major NAICS categories. For example, NAICS group 334 includes semiconductor manufacturing along with computer, electronic instrument, and other electronics manufacturing industries with much lower labor productivity than semiconductors. When each state is given the same number of hours in group 334, therefore, those states who have a large percentage of semiconductor worker hours in that group will still record higher-than-average productivity in that group. For this reason, both Arizona and New Mexico still perform above average in the weighted results. Nevertheless, by accounting for most of the industry mix variation, the weighted results can still provide a general idea of where each state lies in the labor productivity spectrum.
Chart 33
Value Added Per Labor in Manufacturing

Value Added Per Hour


US Average
Washington - Weighted
Washington - Non-Weighted

1st 21st
21st 22nd
16th 22nd
22nd 21st

Value Added Per Hour

$0 $10 $20 $30 $40 $50 $60 $70 $80 $90 $100
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Office of the Forecast Council (calculations)
Infrastructure
Since 1990, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has required states to report on road roughness according to the International Roughness Index (IRI), a set of standard codes dictated by the Highway Performance Monitoring System Field Manual for the Continuing Analytical and Statistical Database. This information is then collected and published in a consistent format in the FHWA’s Highway Statistics. On a state level, this information is used as an aid to highway planning, programming, budgeting, forecasting and fiscal management. Maintaining interstate and highway conditions is crucial for ensuring safety, improving efficiency, and allowing fluid movement of people and goods throughout the state.

In 2001, Washington’s percentage of interstate miles in poor condition lowered dramatically from 2.0 to 0.6 percent, bettering its ranking to 13th in the nation. This also helped to improve its five year average to 1.4 percent, well below the national average of 4.1 and ranked 17th in the U.S.
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**Washington's Rank**

| Rank | 18 | 20 | 23 | 29 | 13 | 17 |

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*The FHWA has recently found that between 1993 and 2000, the state of Hawaii did not use the International Roughness Index as an indicator of pavement conditions and instead used a system of measurement not up to FHWA standards. Their source was also unable to be verified and as a result, the FHWA has recalled the figures for Hawaii between 1993 and 2000.  
**Illinois has chosen to withhold their 1998 figures.  
FAA Air Traffic Delays

The FAA’s annual Air Traffic Activity and Delay Report provides air traffic information for the 55 largest airports. Air traffic delays can occur at any phase of the flight and are characterized as delays that exceed 15 minutes. For comparison purposes, the report states the number of delays per 1000 operations.

In 2003, the Seattle-Tacoma airport ranked 28th among the 55 largest airports with 5.6 delays per 1000 operations, below the national average of 11.3 delays. However, because of large numbers of delays around 2000, the five year airport average is still high at 12.2, below the national average of 15.9 but still ranking it 37th in the nation.
## Table 35
Infrastructure

### FAA Air Traffic Delays

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* Out of the 55 largest airports

The Urban Roadway Congestion Index (RCI) is a traffic density indicator calculated as a ratio of daily traffic volume to the optimum volume for a given road system. The index is calculated by the Texas Transportation Institute. It includes a sample of 85 urban areas selected to represent the major metropolitan areas within each state (previous releases contained 49 areas with historical data back to 1982; historical data for the 85 cities is only available back to 1998). Ultimately, the RCI measures both the intensity and duration of congestion. An RCI greater than or equal to 1 indicates that congestion exists throughout the area.

Congestion is economically inefficient; it results in increased fuel use and pollution and imposes an opportunity cost: travelers could be more productive if they were not sitting in traffic. The Texas Transportation Institute reports that the average annual delay per person was only 16 hours in 1982 but this increased to an average of more than 46 hours in 2002. The cost of the delays in time and fuel for 2002 was estimated to be 63.2 billion dollars.

In 2002, the Seattle-Everett-Tacoma region had an RCI of 1.24, a number that has steadily been increasing over the years. Its five-year average is 1.22, higher than the national average, ranking it the 16th most congested city of those studied. Spokane, the only other Washington city in the survey, fared better with an RCI of only 0.84 and a five-year average of the same value. This ranked the city as the 28th least congested of the 85 cities studied.
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**Table 36**

**Infrastructure**

**Urban Roadway Congestion Index**  
(Values greater than 1 indicate congestion)

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**Rank: Seattle-Everett-Tacoma**

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David Shrank and Tim Lomax, 2004 Urban Mobility Study, Texas Transportation Institute.  (http://mobility.tamu.edu)
Cost of Doing Business
State and Local Tax Collections
Per $1000 Personal Income

The relative tax position of Washington is of considerable interest to taxpayers and government officials alike. The Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce annually collects data in order to compare tax burdens across states. Using this figure, tax burdens are then calculated using several different methods; this report compares tax collections per $1000 personal income. This measure is computed by dividing the total state and local taxes by total state personal income.

As the Census Bureau did not compile state and local tax data for fiscal year 2001, data for that year is unavailable for this report. For fiscal year 2002, Washington collected $19.5 billion in state and local tax revenues. This corresponds to a state and local tax burden of $100.90 for each $1,000 of personal income. This amount is the 19th lowest in the nation and is $3.08 below the national average. In addition, it is the second lowest tax burden in Washington since this measure first began being recorded in the 1960s, the lowest being $100.45 per $1,000 personal income in 1981. A large part of this decline can be attributed to the elimination of the state motor vehicle excise tax in January of 2000. While the elimination of this tax only affected tax receipts for half of fiscal 2000, its full impact can be seen in fiscal 2002.

Initial Incidence of State and local Taxes

The “initial incidence” of a tax refers to the party from whom the tax is collected. Initial incidence does not always indicate who actually bears the tax burden, because taxes initially paid by business may sometimes be recovered in the form of higher prices or lower wages, shifting the tax burden to consumers or workers.

The Washington Department of Revenue estimates that in fiscal year 2003, businesses directly paid 45.1 percent of major state and local taxes, governments paid 4.5 percent and households paid 50.4 percent.

Chart 37
State and Local Tax Collections per $1,000 Personal Income
Table 37
Cost of Doing Business
State and Local Tax Collections Per $1,000 Personal Income (Dollars)

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Unemployment Insurance Costs

Unemployment insurance programs are designed to provide economic security against the effects of unemployment by providing temporary compensation to workers who are out of work at no fault of their own.

Unemployment insurance is provided by a combined Federal-State system, primarily financed through a payroll tax on employers. Under this system, the Federal Government sets minimum standards of eligibility and benefits that the states are free to exceed. As a result, there is a wide degree of variation in the eligibility for and benefits paid under the unemployment insurance programs of different states, as well as variation in the number of employers that pay into the programs.

In 2003, Washington again had the second highest unemployment insurance cost as a percent of total wages in the country with an average rate of 1.40 percent, up 15.7 percent from the previous year. The national average rate for 2003 was 0.64 percent. Washington in the past has had one of the most generous unemployment insurance programs in the country in terms of benefits, eligibility and duration. However, during the 2003 legislative session, Second Engrossed Senate Bill 6097 was passed, reforming Washington’s Unemployment Compensation system. The reform was enacted to help reduce Unemployment Insurance costs but was also seen as a key component in the legislative package designed to draw the final assembly plant of Boeing’s new 7E7 jet to the state.

On the side of employers, 6097 introduced a new approach that aligns taxes with an employer’s lay-off history and benefit ratio. Therefore employers who lay off more workers will be in higher brackets. This tax is combined with a separate graduated tax that, though it will follow those same brackets, will vary year to year based upon costs that costs that need to be covered. Both of these taxes will be capped.

For workers, compensation benefits will be reduced from 30 to 26 weeks, at a capped rate of $496 per week. This rate will not increase until it becomes less than 63 percent of the statewide weekly average wage for the previous year. Before 2004, the rate was set at 70 percent of the weekly average wage and was based upon the two highest paid quarters instead of a year-long average.

Chart 38

Unemployment Insurance Costs

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Washington State - - - U.S. Average
Table 38
Cost of Doing Business
Unemployment Insurance Costs
(Contributions collected as percent of total wages)

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**Washington’s Rank**

| 46 | 45 | 48 | 49 | 49 | 49 |

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration
Workers’ Compensation Premium Costs
(Not updated due to unavailability of data)

The Oregon Department of Consumer & Business Services produces the workers’ compensation premium index every two years in order to make a state-by-state comparison of workers’ compensation premiums. The premium index is calculated by selecting Oregon’s fifty largest business classes as defined by the workers’ compensation costs and computing what those compensation claims would cost in other states.

In 2002, Washington’s premium costs for the industries examined by the study were $1.65 per $100 of payroll, ranking 7th among the states. This is the sixth consecutive decline in this measure of Washington’s premium costs and is less than half of its level in 1994. Washington’s average rate of $2.30 per $100 of payroll for the period from 1994 through 2002 ranked 11th among the states and was well below that national average of $3.07.

Washington’s compensation system is atypical of other states’ systems as employees pay a portion of their industrial premiums into a state fund and the Department of Labor and Industries acts as both the insurer and administrator of the workers’ compensation system. Washington’s results over the past decade suggest an effective and successful workers’ compensation system.

Chart 39
Workers’ Compensation Premium Cost Index

Cost of Doing Business  September 2004
### Table 39
Cost of Doing Business

**Workers’ Compensation Premium Costs**

(Dollar amount per $100 of payroll)

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**Washington’s Rank**

| 11 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 7 | 11 |

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Electricity Prices

While many large industrial and commercial operations make extensive use of other energy sources such as oil and natural gas, electrical power represents the main energy cost for most businesses. This indicator presents the average price of the commercial and industrial electricity purchases made annually in each state, expressed in cents per Kilowatts hour (kW-hr). To facilitate comparisons between states, in each year, each state is assumed to have had the same ratio of commercial to industrial sales as the U.S.

Due to the state’s abundant hydrological resources, Washington long enjoyed some of the lowest electricity prices in the country, ranking either 1st or 2nd in lowest electricity prices among the states in the years 1990 though 1999. Drought and problems related to California’s energy market, however, caused electricity prices to soar from late 2000 through 2002. Though prices across the nation increased by 10.9 percent on average over that time span, prices on the West Coast increased dramatically more than that, 62.9 percent in California, 34.5 percent in Oregon and 26.5 percent in Washington. As the effects of the disruptions diminished around 2003, however, prices on the West Coast began to drop even as national prices rose. After sinking to a ranking of 22nd in 2001, in 2003 Washington rose back up to reach 12th, with a 5-year average price still ranking 7th overall.

Chart 40
Electricity Prices

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Table 40  
Cost of Doing Business  
Electricity Prices  
(Weighted Average of Industrial and Commercial Rates, Cents per Kilowatt Hour)  

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**Washington's Rank**  
2  5  22  21  12  7

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (http://www.eia.doe.gov), June 2004
Average Wage by Sector

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program, produced by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, conducts a yearly mail survey designed to produce estimates of employment and wages for specific occupations in states and metropolitan areas. The OES program collects data on wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in order to produce employment and wage estimates for over 800 occupations. Data from self-employed persons are not collected and are not included in the estimates.

Under the OES program, occupations are classified under the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. This system includes twenty-two major occupational groups, which can be broken down into 821 specific occupations. State wages for the major groups are presented in Table 41, while wages for the 821 specific occupations can be found at the BLS web site (www.bls.gov).

In eighteen of the twenty-two categories, Washington is ranked within the top ten of national wages, peaking in categories such as “Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media” and “Protective Services”, but also having high ranks for “Management” and “Architecture and Engineering”. While information on average state wage levels alone can be useful in some business decisions, care must be taken in using them to analyze actual business costs. This is because the OES survey does not attempt to account for differences in productivity or industry mix between the states. A higher-than-average wage level may simply indicate a larger concentration of high-productivity jobs within an occupational group, or higher productivity levels in the same occupation due to differences in average state levels of capital or training. For example, Washington’s relatively high average wage in Healthcare Practitioners and Technical may be due to a higher-than-average number of higher-paid workers in biotechnology labs rather than having higher paid doctors and nurses. There are also considerable differences in wage levels between different parts of the state, with the highly populated areas affecting the average wage more than more sparsely populated areas that may have lower wages. The specific occupational and metropolitan area data available from the BLS can present a clearer picture of the range of labor costs in the states.

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### Table 41

**Cost of Doing Business**

**Average Wages, 2003**

(Dollars)

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Table 41 (cont.)
Cost of Doing Business

Average Wages, 2003

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(Dollars)

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Table 41 (cont.)
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**Washington's Rank**

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   Bret Bertolin
   Chuck Gusak
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