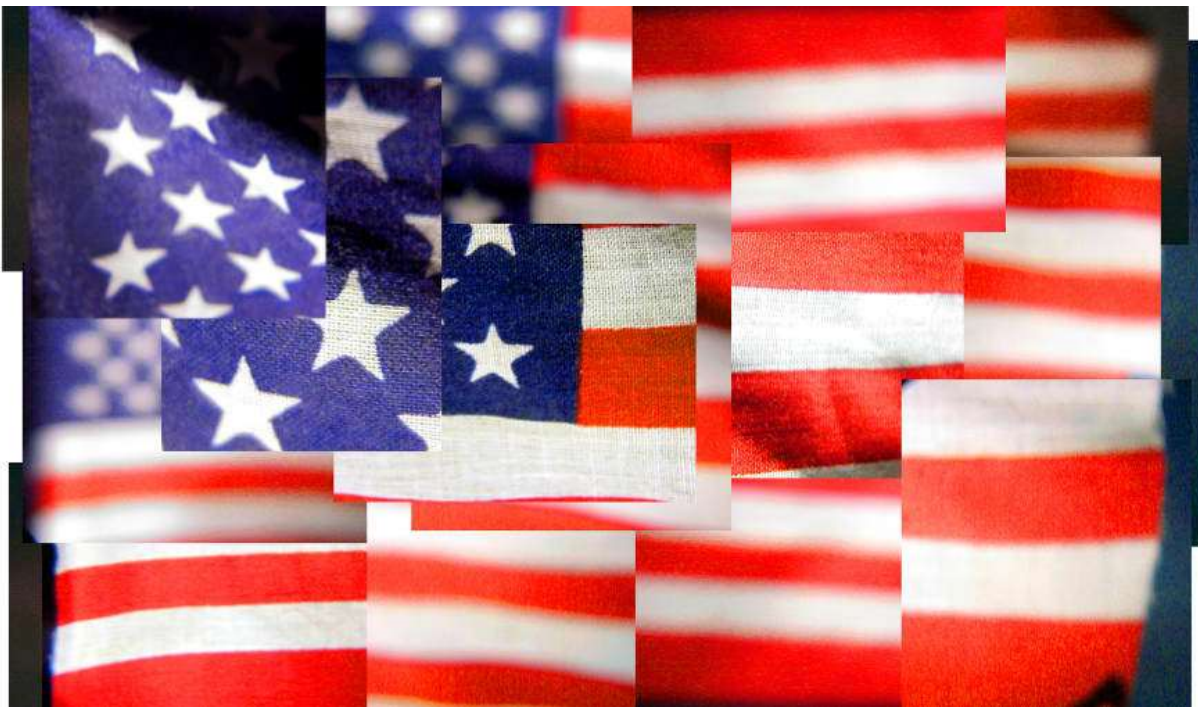




America's Top States for Business are poised to succeed in a post-pandemic world

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- The pandemic — and the recovery — have transformed the decades-old battle between the states for business and jobs.
- Companies have new priorities, like diversity and inclusion, sustainability, and technology.
- CNBC's "America's Top States for Business" study is rating all 50 states on an unprecedented 85 metrics to see which states are poised to win.



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While the pandemic raged and much of the nation was paralyzed, one aspect of America's economic life zoomed into high gear: the battle between the states for business and jobs.

"Crazy as it might seem, we are the busiest we've been in decades," veteran site selection consultant John Boyd told CNBC in the midst of the post-holiday wave of Covid-19 earlier this year.

Companies were recalibrating their plans, workers were rethinking their lives, and states were strategizing about how to handle the greatest upheaval in economic development in modern history.

Now, as the pandemic subsides and America gets back to business, all of those efforts are coming back into play. And our exclusive America's Top States for Business study is back to keep score.

Published every year since 2007 except for last year during the depths of the pandemic, Top States is a comprehensive measure of state competitiveness. Using our methodology, we put the states through their paces to see which are best poised to succeed.

Ranking the states has changed

Our study has always been built to adapt to the changing priorities of business, but the pandemic and a year of social reckoning have altered the landscape like never before.

A recent survey by the Site Selectors Guild, an industry trade group, says that corporate priorities increasingly include factors like diversity, equity and inclusion; also, sustainability, and technology to meet the rapid changes in the workplace including the move to remote work.

To capture these changes, our Top States study evaluates the states on 85 metrics, more than ever before, in our traditional ten categories of competitiveness: Cost of Doing Business, Infrastructure; Life, Health and Inclusion (formerly Quality of Life), Workforce, Economy, Business Friendliness, Access to Capital, Technology and Innovation, Education, and Cost of Living.

In this watershed year, we are looking more closely than ever at inclusiveness. We measure the states on sustainability. The rise of the virtual office has changed the definition of infrastructure, and we have changed ours to reflect that, looking beyond roads and bridges to factors like connectivity and the reliability of the power grid.

And because the coronavirus is not gone just yet, we are looking at how the states are still coping, how their health-care resources stack up, and how they are helping businesses get through the most challenging period in memory.

Which state will win?

Our annual study is not an opinion survey. We measure the states using hard data on actual performance. But Top States is about more than just numbers.

Check back here often for special features on what it takes to compete in a post-pandemic world, what companies are demanding, and how your state is responding.

And coming soon to CNBC and CNBC.com, our countdown of America's Top States for Business.

Of course, we want to hear from you on social media. Use the hashtag #TopStates.