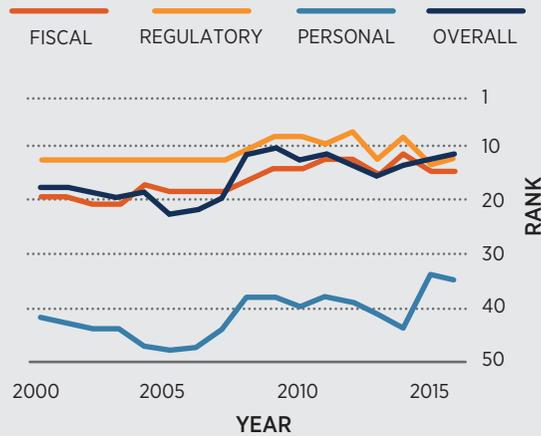


# GEORGIA

2016 RANK  
**12th**



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Fiscal:** Phase out state-level business subsidies and prohibit them at the local level.
- **Regulatory:** Liberalize health care professions: permit independent nurse practitioner practice with prescription authority, join the Nurse Licensure Compact, allow dental hygienists to clean teeth independently of dentist supervision, and allow physician assistants to prescribe on all schedules.
- **Personal:** Reform civil asset forfeiture by putting the burden of proof on the government, requiring evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that the property was the product of criminal activity, sending forfeiture proceeds to the general fund, and requiring all equitable sharing revenues to meet state standards.



Population, 2017  
**10,429,379**

Net Migration Rate  
**8.7%**



State Taxes, Percent  
of Personal Income, FY 2017  
**4.80%**

Local Taxes, Percent  
of Personal Income, FY 2015  
**4.13%**

Partisan Lean, 2016  
**R +3.5**



Real Per Capita Personal  
Income, 2016, in 2009 \$  
**\$41,407**

Real Personal Income  
Growth, CAGR, 2000-15  
**2.5%**

## ANALYSIS

Georgia has been one of the fastest-growing southern states, likely because of its strong performance on economic freedom. Economic freedom also drove the state's high overall freedom ranking. However, the state performs poorly on personal freedom despite some consistent absolute improvements since 2006 (even without considering the post-*Obergefell* bump because of the federalization of marriage policy).

State and local taxes were 8.9 percent of adjusted personal income, well below the national average. At 4.8 percent of personal income, state tax collections are significantly below the national average, while local taxes—4.1 percent of income—are above average. Like most southern states, Georgia has fewer than one effective competing local government per 100 square miles, which reduces the benefit from its fiscal decentralization. Government consumption and debt are substantially lower than average. Government employment used to be around the national average, but Georgia has brought it down from 13.2 percent of private employment in 2010 to 11.1 percent in 2016, a full standard deviation better than average.

Like other conservative southern states, Georgia does well on labor and land-use policy. It has a right-to-work law, no minimum wage, relaxed workers' compensation regulations, and moderate zoning. It has partially deregulated telecommunications and enacted statewide video franchising. Unlike some

other states in its neighborhood, however, Georgia also enjoys a relatively good civil liability system. In 2007-8 the state relaxed the approval process for automobile insurance rates, but it regressed in 2015. The one regulatory policy area where Georgia does poorly is occupational freedom. The extent of licensing is a bit less broad than the national average, and health care professions face generally tight scope-of-practice rules. The state also maintains certificate-of-need laws for hospitals and moving companies.

On personal freedom, Georgia is about what one would expect from a conservative southern state. Its incarceration rates are very high, even adjusted for crime rates, although victimless crime arrests have fallen and are better than average. Georgia reformed civil asset forfeiture modestly in 2015, but it still performs quite poorly in this category, participating much more than average in federal equitable sharing. The burden of proof remains on innocent owners, all proceeds go to law enforcement, and some actions require only probable cause to show that the property is subject to forfeiture. It is one of the worst states for cannabis and gambling. On the other hand, it is one of the best states for educational freedom, scores well on gun rights, and lightly regulates tobacco use compared with most other states. As of 2018, Georgia has the second lowest cigarette taxes in the country. It was one of the worst states for marriage freedom, but the state has benefited since the fourth edition from the *Obergefell* decision.