



**WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL**  
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## **Wisconsin Holds Steady with #17 Ranking for Family Prosperity** *Staying in top half is good, but real and serious problems persist*

**Madison, WI** – The Family Prosperity Initiative today publicly released the 2018 version of its hallmark work, The Family Prosperity Index. Wisconsin Family Council is a state partner with The Family Prosperity Initiative.

This ground-breaking and game-changing project clearly shows the interrelationship of economic and social issues, in particular as they impact a state's most important natural resource—her married dad and mom families. The Index ranks all 50 states on six broad categories, each supported by numerous sub data points: Economics, Demographics, Family Self-Sufficiency, Family Structure, Family Culture, and Family Health. Using all this data, an overall ranking is determined.

The first year of the project, 2016, Wisconsin ranked 20<sup>th</sup> on the overall ranking and in both 2017 and 2018 ranks 17<sup>th</sup>. While the project was officially launched in 2016, the stellar economists behind this project, J. Scott Moody and Wendy Warcholik, have provided data back to 2012. In 2012, Wisconsin ranked 23<sup>rd</sup>. Moving six places in six years is definitely noteworthy and is very likely attributable, at least in part, to better economic and pro-family policies that began around that time.

This year, The Badger State ranks 31<sup>st</sup> in Economics, 33<sup>rd</sup> in Demographics, 23<sup>rd</sup> in Family Self-Sufficiency, 23<sup>rd</sup> in Family Structure, 15<sup>th</sup> in Family Culture and 12<sup>th</sup> in Family Health.

“Overall, Wisconsin is doing quite a bit right, which is great news,” said Wisconsin Family Council president Julaine Appling. “I believe some of the policy initiatives enacted during the Walker administration have helped us hold steady in the bottom of the top third of states. However, I think we can do better. There are some core areas that definitely need shoring up—and basically the same areas where we have been quite low the past two years we are low again this year.

“Policy can't fix everything. In fact, in most areas all policy can do is at least not reward bad behavior and try to reward and incentivize good behavior. Much of the work needs to be done at the individual, family and community level, where people begin taking personal responsibility and making changes in their own lives and their family life.”

Persistently dragging Wisconsin down in Economics is our very low ranking in Entrepreneurship, which refers to the number of businesses started and the number of jobs created. In 2018, we rank 47<sup>th</sup>, a position we have held since 2016. Our highest ranking in Economics is in Private Sector Share of Personal Income, where we rank 10<sup>th</sup>.

In the Family area, low rankings continue in Marriage Rate, where we rank 46<sup>th</sup>. While we rank 7<sup>th</sup> in Divorce Rate, that is largely a reflection of our disastrous Marriage Rate. The combination of lower than the national average in fertility and a serious out-migration issue has put various areas of the state in a Demographic Winter, a condition that has very real consequences.

“Governor Walker recently asked the state legislature for and received about \$7 million to advertise Wisconsin jobs in other states, seeking to woo workers to our state. Part of the reality we have is we don't have enough workers. You can't be below replacement birth rate for over forty years and have more people moving out of the state than moving into the state since 2006 and think we can have an adequate workforce. Bringing new business to Wisconsin is great, but it won't be great for long if we can't staff the jobs these businesses bring, we have work to do. I'm hoping in the not-too-distant-future that we bump ahead of our neighbors Iowa (11<sup>th</sup>) and Minnesota (8<sup>th</sup>). It will take work, but I'm convinced with the excellent information we have from The Family Prosperity Index and with discipline and commitment, we can do it,” added Appling.

The 2018 Family Prosperity Index is available [here](#), along with a Wisconsin-specific report. [The Family Prosperity Initiative website](#) has interactive data.

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Wisconsin Family Council is a statewide, not-for-profit organization engaged in strengthening, preserving and promoting marriage, family, life and religious liberty in Wisconsin.