2025 MEASURES OF GROWTH+

Performance Measures and Benchmarks to Achieve a Vibrant and Sustainable Economy for Maine

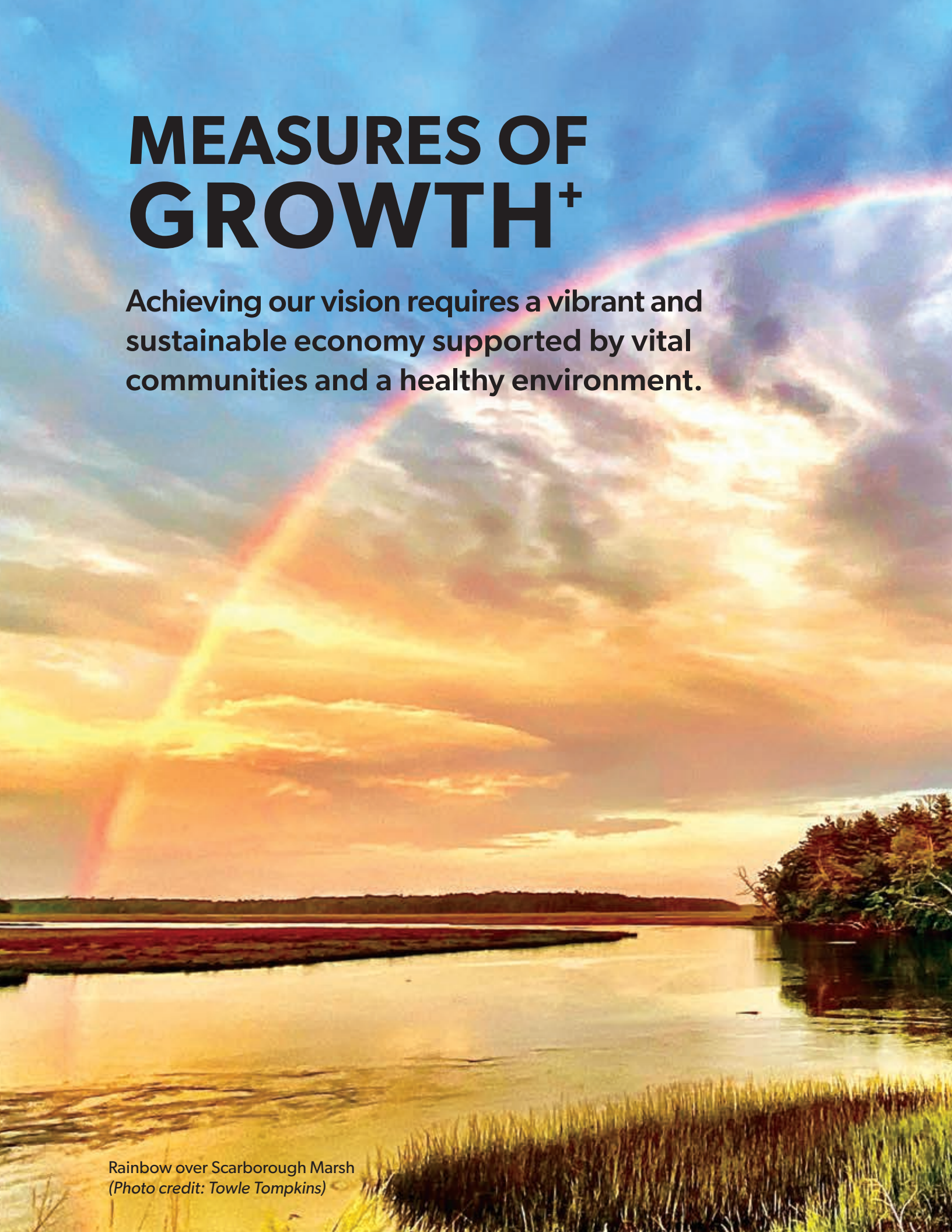
31ST REPORT OF THE MEGC

MEGC
Maine Economic Growth Council

Administered by mdf

MEASURES OF GROWTH+

Achieving our vision requires a vibrant and sustainable economy supported by vital communities and a healthy environment.



Rainbow over Scarborough Marsh
(Photo credit: Towle Tompkins)

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* EPSCoR is the National Science Foundation's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, a program to assist places with historically low levels of funding for research and development. There are 25 states in the program: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

COMMUNITY

INFRASTRUCTURE

HEALTH & SAFETY

ENVIRONMENT

Gold Stars and Red Flags are determined by consensus of the Growth Council based on consideration of the data and the experienced perspective of Council members. The general criteria are:

Exceptional Performance

Very high national standing and/or established trend toward significant improvement.

Needs Attention

Very low national standing and/or established trend toward significant decline. The indicator may show improvement but is still viewed as needing attention.

Progress Symbols reflect movement from year to year and/or recent trends toward or away from the benchmarks established by the Council. The general criteria are:

\+ Movement toward the benchmark since the last available data.

= No significant movement relative to the benchmark since the last available data, or no new data.

– Movement away from the benchmark since the last available data.

At the heart of it all, it's about our people.

VISION: A high quality of life for all Maine people

The Maine Economic Growth Council is pleased to present *Measures of Growth 2025*. This nonpartisan, data-driven report shows where Maine sits relative to other states and the U.S. as a whole. It tracks 31 indicators that capture the health of our economy and our communities, revealing both challenges and enduring assets. It is a resource for policy and decision makers at all levels, helping them to focus their efforts and understand the connections between the major issues facing Maine's businesses and citizens.

Making Maine a Magnet for Workers and Their Families

In recent years, the Council has highlighted a welcome trend: working-age people and their families moving to Maine. While some have roots here, others are coming for the first time. In a recent survey of 2,500 arrivals, top reasons for choosing Maine included access to outdoor recreation, strong social connections, and a sense of community that includes safety, a culture of acceptance, and a commitment to environmental stewardship.* Respondents also identified challenges: a scarcity of affordable housing, high living costs, lack of jobs that match their skills, and low wages.

This report highlights examples of four local initiatives helping Maine communities be vibrant, supportive places for workers and their families. They build on our natural and cultural resources while addressing potential barriers that may prevent people from thriving here. Skowhegan is turning its historic riverfront into a destination for residents and visitors alike. In Aroostook County, a workforce transportation program is connecting more people to work and careers. The blueberry industry is partnering with researchers at the University of Maine to increase crop yield and the sustainability of that heritage industry. And the owners of Glidden Point Oyster Farm are helping to chart a new course for Maine's working waterfront.

Trusted Data Drives Informed Decisions

The Council wishes to recognize the seven federal entities whose data appears in this report (listed below). For over 30 years, their reliable, independent work has been the cornerstone of *Measures of Growth*. This data is indispensable to decision makers across all sectors—public, private, and nonprofit. It sparks new understanding and rigorous debates. It plays a vital role in helping businesses analyze labor markets, local governments plan for growth, state agencies forecast revenues, nonprofits develop effective programs, and much more. Consistent, uninterrupted access to this long-term data creates a framework for communities and policymakers to make informed decisions that have real-world consequences. These seven entities are: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Safeguarding Data Integrity

The Maine Economic Growth Council is, by state statute, independent and nonpartisan. Our integrity is interconnected with the integrity of the data we use and being able to clearly track methodologies used by the agencies upon which we rely. The Council takes this responsibility seriously and will continue to diligently monitor any changes to availability, methodology, and access to data.

*Wallace Economic Advisors, Maine Migration Project, 2025: www.wallaceea.com/memigration

Report Highlights

Taking stock of Maine's economic progress, the Council sees reasons for both celebration and renewed resolve. For 2025, it assigns Gold Stars for progress in Entrepreneurship, Internet Connectivity, Labor Force, and Safety. It also recognizes Poverty and Gross Domestic Product as two areas where Maine has reached the benchmarks set years ago. The Council assigns Red Flags for needed attention to 4th Grade Reading and 8th Grade Math scores, Housing Affordability, and Research & Development.

This report presents the latest data for all 31 metrics. For two metrics (Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Cost of Doing Business), the latest data is that which appeared in last year's report because no new data was released in 2025. The data used in two other metrics (Entrepreneurship and Cost of Energy) has been updated as part of the Council's ongoing practice of reviewing and improving its methodologies to present the most accurate and timely data possible. See the notes on these metric pages for further details.

Supporting Maine's economic strategic goals

Maine has a ten-year economic development strategy to achieve sustainable, equitable growth for all residents.[1] It promotes talent and innovation as drivers of economic opportunity across the state.

The strategy has three goals:

GOAL 1: Increase wages by 10%

Status: Wages are up 11.5%

This goal seeks to increase the value of Maine's annual average wage, adjusted for inflation, from $45,370 in 2018 to $49,907 by 2030. In 2024, inflation-adjusted wages were $50,607, exceeding the goal.[2] The Wages metric on page 9 shows how this growth compares to other states.

GOAL 2: Increase the value of what we sell per worker by 10%

Status: Value added is up 15.5%

Goal 2 seeks to increase value added per Maine worker from $103,403 in 2017 to $113,744 by 2030 (adjusted for inflation). In 2024, value-added was $119,403, an increase of 15.5% compared to 2017. For more information, see the Value-Added metric on page 17.

GOAL 3: Attract 75,000 people to Maine's talent pool, to reach 710,000

Status: Maine's labor force grew by almost 13,000 in 2024, reaching 705,000

In 2019, Maine's labor force was projected to shrink by 65,000 through 2030, mainly due to the aging of the population. This goal aims to reverse that by attracting 75,000 people to Maine's workforce, replacing the 65,000 and adding another 10,000 to reach 710,000. Maine's labor force fell to 672,000 following COVID, but it has grown steadily since then. In 2024, we gained 13,000 participants to hit 705,000. See the Labor Force metric on page 13 for more details.

[1] https://www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan

[2] When tracking progress on this goal, wages are inflation-adjusted to 2018 dollars to measure them against wages in the year the goal was set. For this reason, the number is different from the one reported on the Wages page, which is 2024 dollars.

FUNDAMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Apple cider production is one of the many food-based industries supported by University of Maine System
(Photo credit: University of Maine Cooperative Extension)

Wages

+1.8%

In 2024, wages remained above the EPSCoR average and rose 1.8% after adjusting for inflation.

Benchmark: Maine's annual average wage will exceed the average of EPSCoR* states by 2030.

Wages reflect job quality, worker productivity, and the makeup of our economy; they are a primary driver of economic prosperity and quality of life. In 2024, Maine's average annual wage was $63,220 — below the U.S. average of $75,585 but, for the fifth year, above the average for EPSCoR* states ($61,784). Even adjusting for inflation, wages are now 9.2% above their pre-pandemic 2019 level.

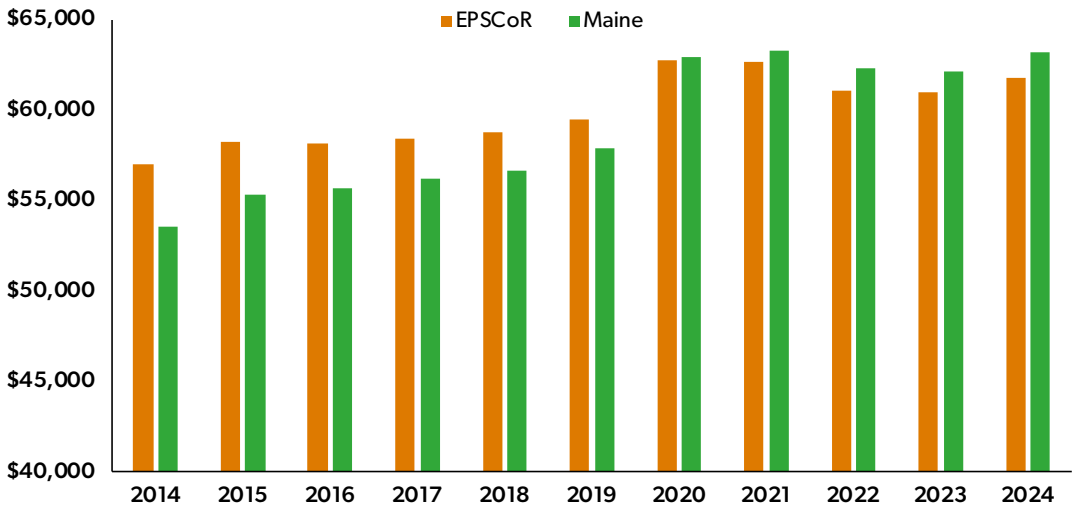
The adequacy of wages to cover workers' basic needs varies by household and region. In 2024, the estimated living wage for a single Mainer was $48,292 before taxes; it was $108,658 for a single person with two children; and for two working adults with two children, it was $119,832. Regionally, wages exceed the state average in Cumberland County, Maine's most populous and urban county, and trail it elsewhere, with rural Franklin and Piscataquis counties having the lowest wages.

* EPSCoR is the National Science Foundation's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, a program to assist places with historically low levels of funding for research and development. There are 25 states in the program. (See the table of contents for a full list of states)

Average Annual Wages By County 2024

Coastal Counties	
Cumberland	$71,351
Sagadahoc	$63,193
York	$61,811
Waldo	$54,674
Knox	$55,720
Hancock	$53,780
Lincoln	$53,238
Central Counties	
Kennebec	$60,846
Androscoggin	$58,507
Penobscot	$55,593
Rim Counties	
Somerset	$55,148
Aroostook	$51,148
Oxford	$50,809
Washington	$50,219
Franklin	$48,419
Piscataquis	$47,151

Average Annual Wages (Inflation-Adjusted)



Source
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Poverty

-0.4%

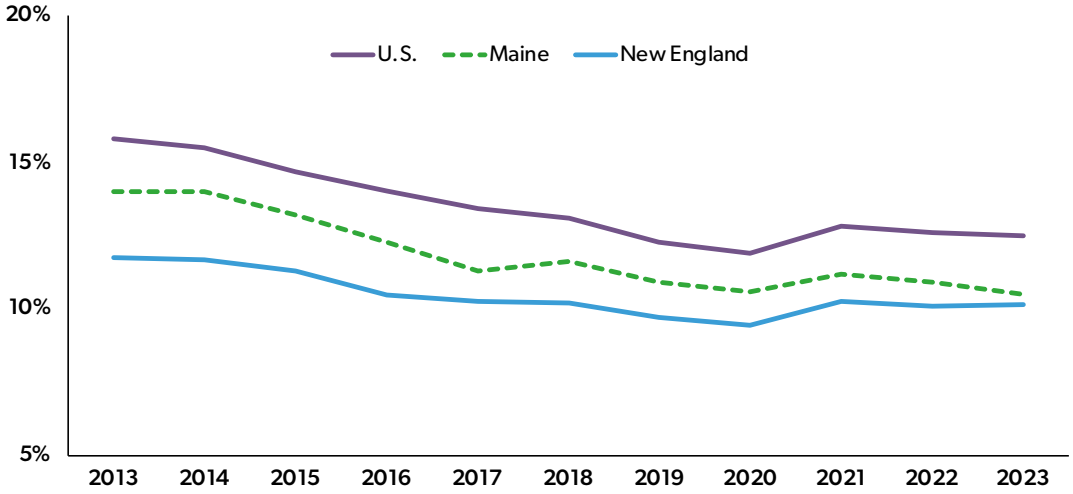
In 2023, poverty fell 0.4 percentage points to 10.5%.

Benchmark: Maine's poverty rate will decline and remain below the U.S. rate through 2030.

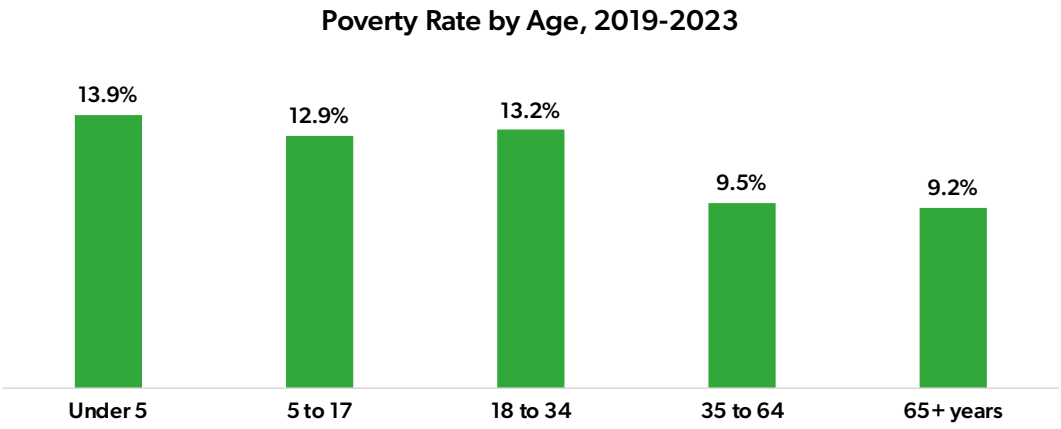
In 2023, the percentage of Mainers in households with incomes below the poverty level was 10.5%. This was below the U.S. rate of 12.5%. While poverty remains a challenge, it is noteworthy that Maine has achieved the benchmark set years ago; poverty has declined and remained below the U.S. average for over a decade. Maine's poverty rate reflects both the overall state of the economy and the experiences of individual residents.

State-level poverty rates mask stark differences within Maine's population. Poverty varied greatly by region—from 6.9% in Cumberland County to 20.1% in Washington County. From 2019 to 2023, BIPOC* and Latino or Hispanic Mainers were 49% more likely to be living in poverty; and 14% of Maine children under age 5 were living in poverty, compared to just over 9% of Mainers age 65+. Many poor children are in households headed by single females. From 2019 to 2023, almost 1 in 3 single-mother households were poor (30%).

*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color



Source
U.S. Census Bureau



Gender Wage Equity

+1.2%

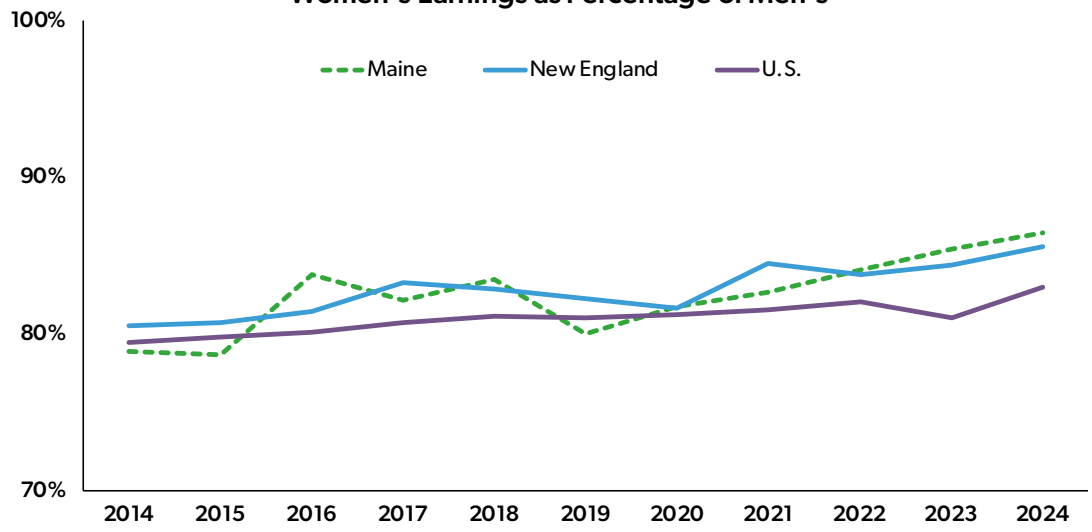
In 2024, women's wages rose 1.2% compared to men's but remained about 86% of men's earnings, significantly short of full equity.

Benchmark: Maine's median annual earnings for women will improve to 100% of men's median annual earnings by 2030.

This measure compares the annual wages of men and women working full time, year-round. In 2024, the median earnings of Maine women was $56,383—86% of the $65,215 median earnings of Maine men. In other words, full-time working women in Maine earned about $6 for every $7 earned by men. Some of the difference is due to the differing wages in occupations disproportionately filled by women, but this does not explain the entire gap.

In recent years, women's earnings as a percentage of men's in Maine have improved, from 76% in the 2000s to 81% in the 2010s.

In 2024, Maine's gender income gap was less than the U.S. and New England averages. No U.S. state has eliminated the gender pay gap yet, but in seven states women's earnings ratio exceeds Maine's. New York had the smallest estimated gender wage gap in 2024. There, women earned 91% as much as men.



Source
U.S. Census Bureau

Median Earnings Gap In 2024

U.S. AVERAGE

MEN	WOMEN	GAP
$67,260	$55,817	$11,443

MAINE AVERAGE

MEN	WOMEN	GAP
$65,215	$56,383	$8,832

Racial/Ethnic Income Equity

+3%

In 2019-2023, the average incomes of BIPOC* and Latino or Hispanic Mainers rose 3 percentage points compared to the statewide average but remained 22% below the state average, dramatically short of full equity.

Benchmark: The average per capita income of BIPOC* and Latino or Hispanic Mainers will improve to the state average by 2030.

The Council strongly believes that Maine needs the contributions of every resident to achieve a vibrant, sustainable economy. Increasing prosperity is not true progress unless it is equitably shared. This will require broad, deep, and long-term systemic change.

From 2019 to 2023, the average per capita income of BIPOC* and Latino or Hispanic Maine residents (about 9% of the population) was $32,676, 78% of the $42,035 statewide average. This is an increase from 75% in 2018-2022 and 59% a decade ago. Still, it means that for every $5 earned by the average Maine household, households of racial and ethnic minority groups earned less than $4.

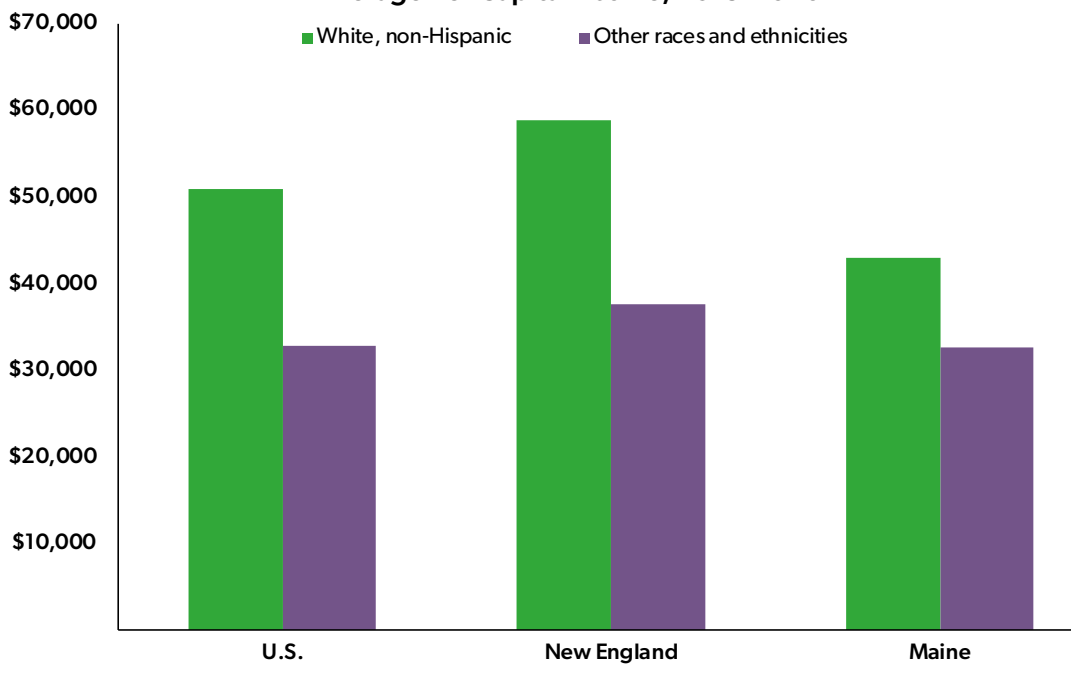
This stark racial/ethnic income disparity is seen across New England and the United States. To counter it, Maine must improve access to training and education for residents of color, better support their communities and businesses, and address cultural biases and systemic disadvantages.

*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Maine Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity 2019-2023

Race/Ethnicity	Population	Poverty Rate
White, not Hispanic or Latino	1,216,238	10.3%
Two or more races	62,023	13.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	26,880	11.0%
Black or African American	21,545	25.2%
Asian	13,736	12.6%
Other race	9,288	12.5%
American Indian & Alaska Native	6,010	17.3%
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islanders	254	31.9%

Average Per Capita Income, 2019-2023



Source
U.S. Census Bureau

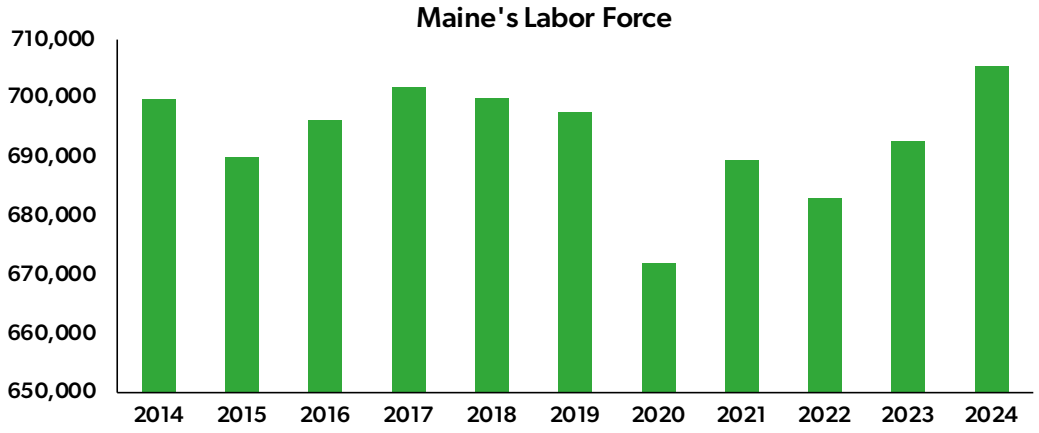
Labor Force

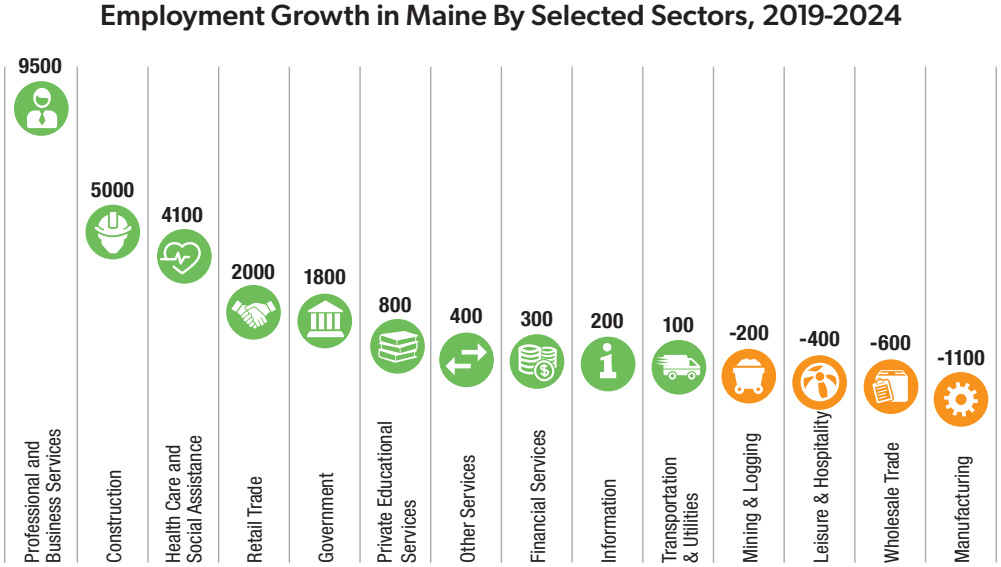
+1.8% **Maine's labor force grew 1.8% to 705,000 in 2024.**

Benchmark: Maine's labor force will increase to 710,000 by 2030.

Estimates of Maine's labor force come from household surveys and are subject to revision, so these numbers should be interpreted with that in mind. In 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maine's labor force shrank by about 26,000. In 2024, there were approximately 705,000 people in Maine's labor force, up 1.8% since 2023 and almost 8,000 above pre-pandemic levels. In 2024, the overall number of nonfarm payroll jobs exceeded pre-pandemic levels thanks to gains in professional and business services, construction, and health care. Jobs in leisure and hospitality nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels, while jobs in wholesale trade and manufacturing were below them.

As baby boomers retire, the ranks of working-age Mainers are shrinking. Furthermore, many young people are delaying entering the labor force to pursue education and training opportunities. Even before the pandemic, this was contributing to a slow decline in Maine's labor force. While it is too soon to say whether the recent gains are permanent, they suggest that Maine may be attracting more working-age people from other states and countries, retaining more of the young people born here, and/or having more individuals participate in the workforce.





Source
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Labor Force Participation

+2%

In 2024, 83% of Maine adults ages 25-54 were in the labor force, up 2 percentage points from 2023.

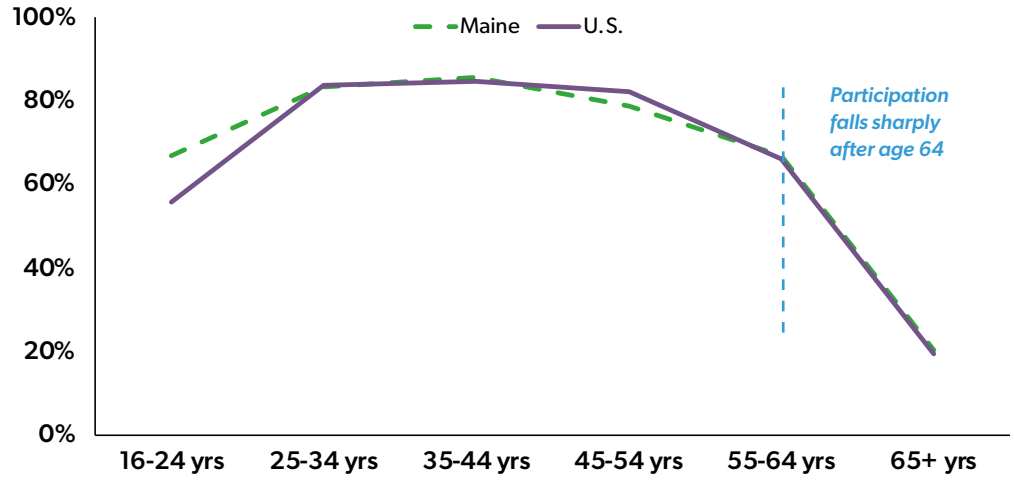
Benchmark: Maine's labor force participation rate for prime-working-age adults will match or exceed the national average.

As Maine's population ages, the economic contribution of every individual becomes even more important. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of residents who are either working or looking for work. In 2024, 83.2% of Maine prime-working-age adults (ages 25-54) were in this category. This estimate comes from household surveys and is subject to revision, so these numbers should be interpreted with that in mind. People of all ages are invaluable to Maine's workforce; this age range is presented here to compare Maine workers with their peers in other states.

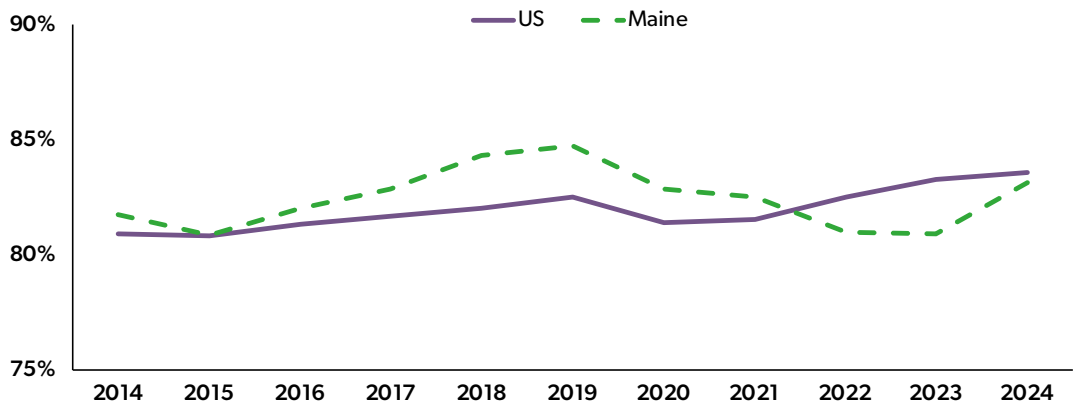
Maine adults at every age are about as likely to be in the labor force as people in other states. The chart below shows that Maine adults of all ages work at about the same rates as their peers nationwide. However, we have a higher share of residents age 65 or older, and fewer people in this age group work. In 2023, 23% of Maine's population was 65+ compared to just 18% of the U.S. population.

Potential measures to increase Maine's labor force participation rate include higher wages, increased childcare access, reduced schedules for older workers, and outreach to new Mainers and people with disabilities, veterans, disengaged youth, and others.

Labor Force Participation Rate by Age



Labor Force Participation Rate for Adults Ages 25-54



Source
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Maine Department of Labor Center for Workforce Research and Information; U.S. Census Bureau

Gross Domestic Product

+3% **In 2024, Maine's GDP rose 3%, slightly above other New England states.**

Benchmark: The growth of Maine's GDP will outpace that of New England and the U.S.

Gross domestic product (GDP) provides a sense of Maine's overall economic performance. It reflects the market value of all goods and services produced in the state and some nonmarket goods and services provided by government agencies and nonprofit institutions.

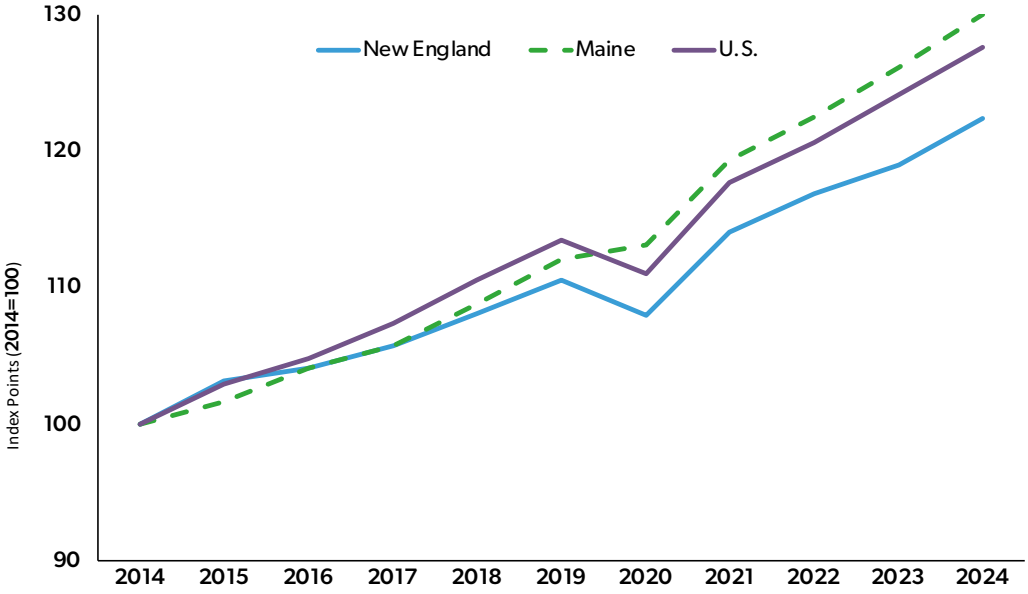
In 2024, Maine's GDP rose 3.0% adjusted for inflation, meeting the benchmark by continuing a five-year trend of growth slightly above the U.S. and New England averages (2.8% and 2.9%, respectively). Growth was spread across many industries, with manufacturing and accommodation and food services being the exceptions. By this measure, Maine ranked 17th of the U.S. states. Over the past decade, growth has exceeded the U.S. and other New England states, mainly because during the 2020 recession Maine's GDP did not decline as sharply as it did elsewhere.

Real estate, professional and business services, government, and health care and social assistance together made up over one-half of Maine's GDP in 2024.

Maine's Real Domestic Product by Major Industry Sector 2024

Industry Sector	GDP Millions of Dollars	% of Total	% Change 2023- 2024
Real Estate	$13,183	17%	3%
Professional and Business Services	$10,469	14%	2%
Government	$9,220	12%	3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	$8,883	11%	4%
Retail Trade	$6,942	9%	10%
Manufacturing	$6,787	9%	0%
Finance and Insurance	$4,871	6%	4%
Wholesale Trade	$3,384	4%	3%
Accommodation and Food Services	$3,108	4%	-1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	$2,871	4%	7%

Real Gross Domestic Product Growth Rate



Source
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Value Added: Glidden Point Brings Innovation to the Working Waterfront

"Value-added" refers to transforming Maine's natural resources into higher-value products and experiences. It builds local wealth, strengthens communities, and creates lasting prosperity across the state.

Bag of 100 oysters ready to be shipped to markets across the country *(Photo: Glidden Point Oysters)*

Glidden Point Oyster Farm is helping to chart a new course for Maine's working waterfront. Although the farm has been around since the 1980s, current owner Ryan McPherson and his team are pioneering a new business model that draws from the state's maritime heritage while advancing a relatively new industry: oyster aquaculture.

Unlike lobsters or clams, oysters were not traditionally a hallmark of Maine's seafood economy. But McPherson thinks that can change. Maine's clean water, strong community of growers, and marine bioscience resources create a foundation for a thriving industry. As a buyer for about 20 small farms, McPherson is helping scale production across the state, while maintaining the high-quality, Maine-grown reputation that keeps chefs and consumers coming back.

Glidden Point doesn't just *grow* oysters. They also run a small retail shop; offer experiential tours that include education about oyster farming, shucking lessons, and/or tasting sessions; operate a wood-fired sauna; and provide direct-to-consumer shipping. While these don't necessarily generate big profits, they deepen engagement and strengthen the brand's relationship with consumers.

By adding cultural and experiential value to a natural resource, Glidden Point is showing how to capture the full value of Maine oysters—not just in dollars, but in community, education, and customer loyalty. In the process, they are helping to build a new kind of waterfront economy—resilient, rooted, and ready to grow.

> *"Getting to meet people and chefs from all over the country and talk about oysters—you can't put a dollar value on that…That's the real magic."*
>
> **Ryan McPherson**
> *Owner*
> Glidden Point Oyster Farms

Farm manager washing oysters, one of the last steps before shipping *(Photo: Glidden Point Oysters)*

Value Added

+1.7%

In 2024, value added per worker rose 1.7% but remained 21% below the U.S. average.

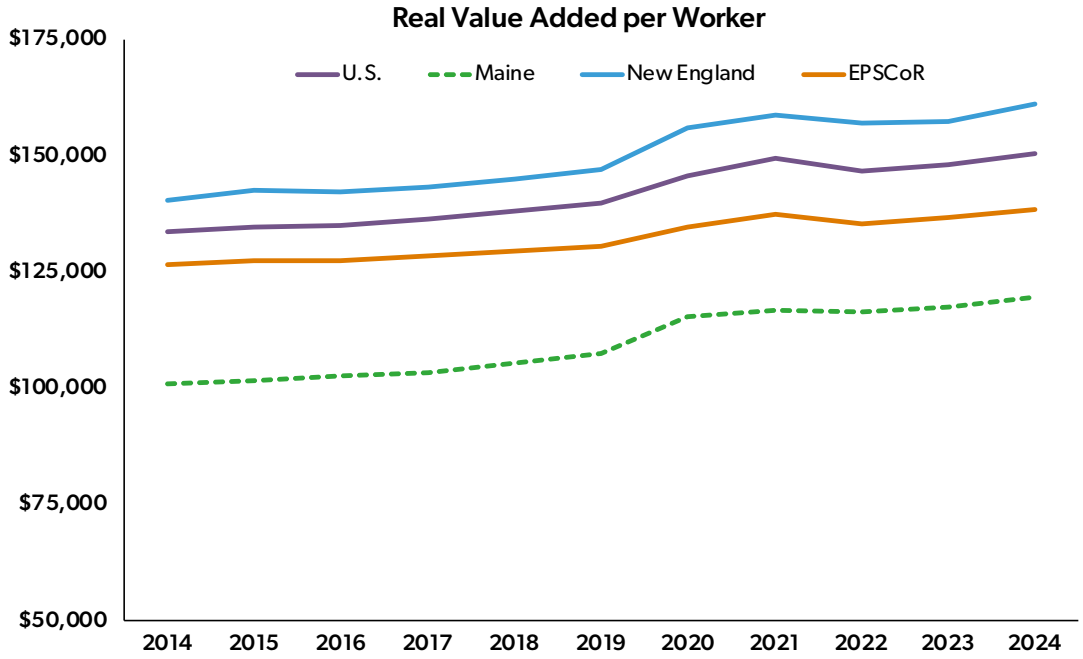
Benchmark: Maine's value added per worker will improve to within 15% of the U.S. average by 2030.

This indicator measures the productivity of workers by dividing gross domestic product by the total number of part- and full-time jobs. Maine has a relatively high share of part-time jobs, which lowers our value added per worker. Productivity also reflects skill levels, business costs, and a region's mix of industries.

Worker productivity in Maine is lower than in most other states, but it has been increasing. It ranked 44th among the 50 states in 2024, up from 48th in 2016. Adjusted for inflation, value added rose 1.7% to $119,597 per worker. The U.S., New England, and EPSCoR* states grew 1.6%, 2.3%, and 1.2%, respectively. By this measure Maine is now 21% behind the nation, an improvement from 2010-2019, when Maine trailed the U.S. by 24% on average.

Both the Council and the State's 10-Year Economic Strategy draw attention to the importance of increasing value added to grow Maine's economy and boost wages. The Council seeks for Maine to be within 15% of the U.S. average by 2030, while the State strives for 10% growth from 2017 levels.

* EPSCoR is the National Science Foundation's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, a program to assist places with historically low levels of funding for research and development. There are 25 states in the program. (See the table of contents for a full list of states)



Source
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

ECONOMY

In keeping with the entrepreneurial spirit

Owners Jocelyne Kamikazi and husband Andre Nzeyimana at the counter of Burundi Star Coffee in Portland
(Photo credit: Tim Greenway/Mainebiz)

International Exports

+16%

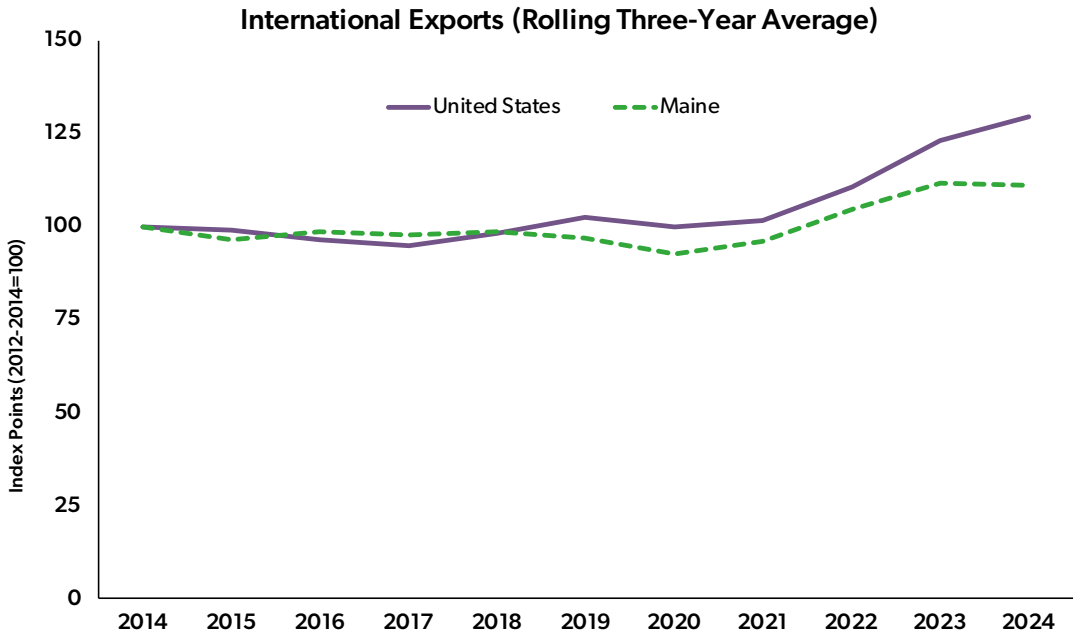
In 2022-2024, Maine exports were 16% higher than the previous three-year period.

Benchmark: Maine's international exports will grow at a pace faster than U.S. international exports.

Maine businesses exported $3.1 billion worth of goods in 2024, up 3% from the previous year. This metric looks at exports over three years because in Maine's small economy, exports in any given year can fluctuate sharply based on the sales of a few companies. From 2019-2021 to 2022-2024, Maine exports rose 16%. That was strong growth, although less than the 27% national growth rate.

In 2024, Maine's gains and losses occurred across a range of industries. Sales of wood pulp, chemical products, and beverages grew, while sales of mineral fuels and oil, wood products, and aircraft parts fell. Seafood exports rose slightly, but are still 33% below their 2021 peak, likely due in part to China's tariff on U.S. lobster. Canada remains Maine's leading trade partner with $1.3 billion in exports in 2024, followed by Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Germany, and China.

Sales to customers in other states and countries provide valuable opportunities for Maine businesses. According to one estimate, international exports account for about 2.0% of Maine businesses' total sales (below the national rate of 3.9%). Sales made within Maine to international customers, such as those to foreign tourists and students, also provide injections into the state's economy, but are not tracked.



Source
Maine International Trade Center; Camoin Associates

Research & Development

+24%

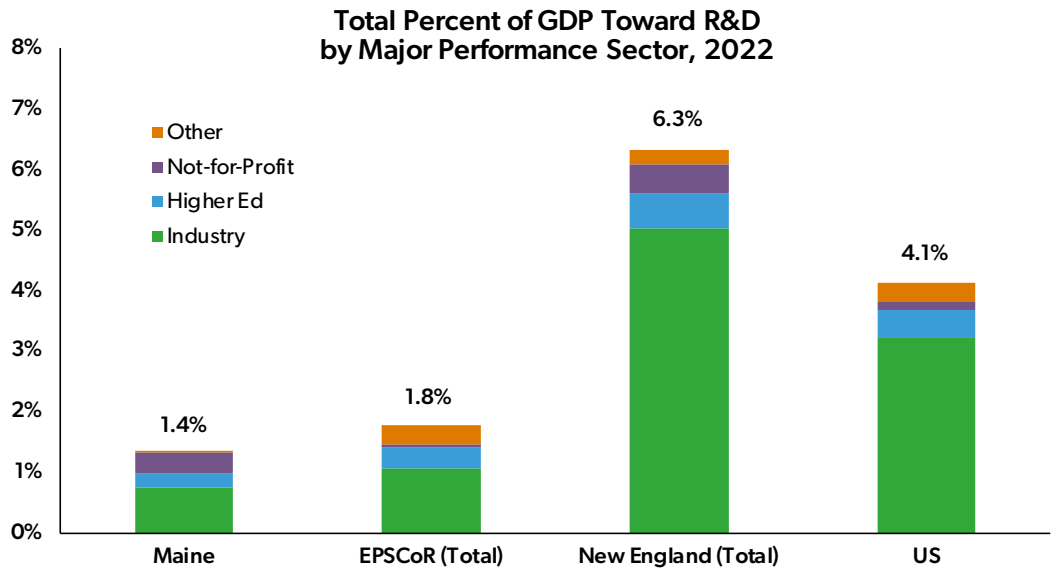
In 2022, R&D spending as a share of GDP rose 24% but remained far below national levels.

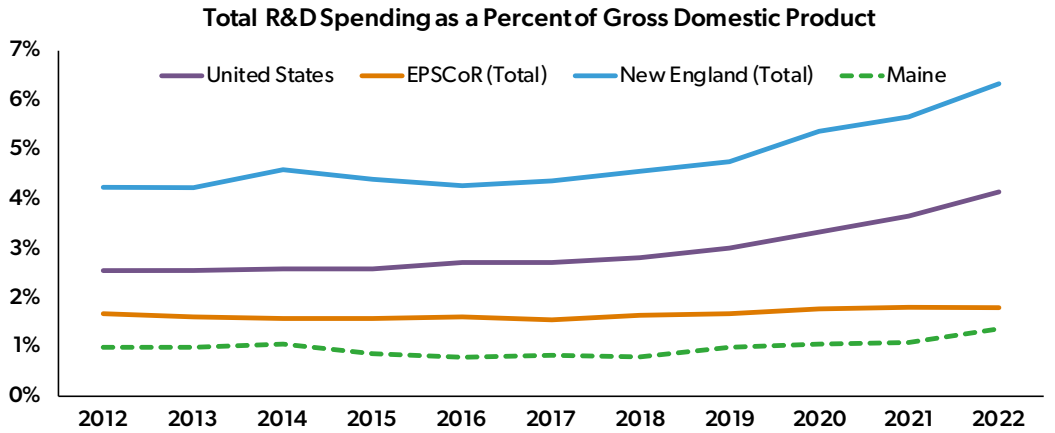
Benchmark: Maine's research and development spending as a proportion of the economy will reach the U.S. average by 2030.

Research and development (R&D) spending is an indicator of the level of innovation in an economy, an important driver of economic growth. In 2022, Maine's total R&D spending was $1.2 billion, up 36% from the previous year. This growth was distributed across industry (+31% growth), higher education (+16%), and non-profit organizations (+73%). In all, Maine's R&D spending equaled 1.4% of total gross domestic product (GDP), compared to 4.1% nationwide. This ranks Maine 42nd of the 50 states and is about three-fourths of the 1.8% average among EPSCoR states. Maine lags other states in private sector and university R&D investments relative to GDP, while our non-profit sector contributes a relatively high proportion of spending.

The University of Maine System Board of Trustees has prioritized the expansion of R&D across the system. In 2022 the University of Maine earned an R1* top-tier research designation, and in 2024, its R&D expenditures reached $249 million, a record high.

*"R1" refers to doctoral universities with "very high research activity," as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.





Source
Camoin Associates;
University of Maine

Research & Development: Collaborative Research and Investment Strengthens an Iconic Maine Industry

Research and development fuel the innovations that will shape Maine's future. Bringing together universities, businesses, and entrepreneurs, R&D investments help create new knowledge, products, and services that grow our economy.

Maine's wild blueberry industry is one of the state's most iconic agricultural traditions and its enduring success is deeply tied to a unique partnership with the University of Maine. In 1945, recognizing the need for research to support production, blueberry growers formed the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine. They worked with lawmakers to establish a small tax on every pound of blueberries processed in the state. Those funds (still collected today) directly support research at the University of Maine that benefits the industry.

This investment has paid off many times over—in the past five decades, blueberry production has risen 500%. In recent years, university researchers have developed weather-based monitoring systems that help growers control mummy berry, a fungal disease that can devastate yields. By pinpointing the short window when treatment is most effective, the system reduces both crop losses and unnecessary pesticide use. Another breakthrough has been in managing the invasive spotted wing drosophila, a fruit fly capable of ruining an entire harvest. Research showed that the pest enters fields from the edges, leading growers to adopt targeted perimeter spraying—cutting costs and chemical use while protecting the crop.

Looking ahead, the University and the Commission are collaborating on harvest efficiency, testing new technologies that could dramatically increase crop yield. This work holds promise for helping Maine's wild blueberry industry thrive in an increasingly competitive market.

Together, growers and researchers are safeguarding not just a crop, but a cornerstone of Maine's cultural and economic identity.

Nirav Mehta in front of a wild blueberry harvester *(Photo: Eric Venturini, Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine)*

"These farms and businesses, with support from the University of Maine research team, are working incredibly hard to maintain this critical, iconic industry for Maine in the face of incredible competition."

Eric Venturini
Executive Director
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine

Dr. Seanna Annis in the field *(Photo: University of Maine)*

Entrepreneurship

-12%

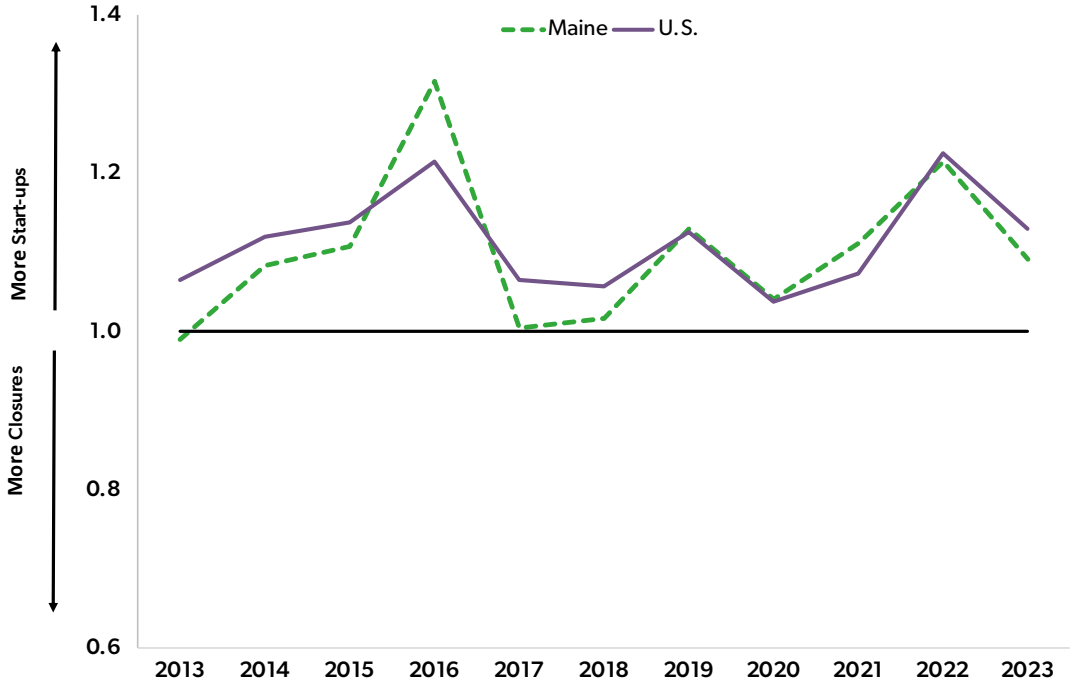
In 2023, the ratio of business starts to closures fell 12 percentage points but remained positive for a tenth year.

Benchmark: Maine's ratio of business start-ups to closures will be positive and equal to or above the national average.

This entrepreneurship metric compares the number of business establishments that are started in Maine each year with the number that close. A start-up-to-closure ratio greater than 1 means more businesses are being created than closed each year.

In 2023, Maine's ratio of start-ups to closures was 1.09, meaning 9% more businesses were created (3,591) than closed (3,289). This was just below to the U.S. ratio of 1.12 but it was the tenth year during which Maine's ratio was positive. The creation of new businesses is a vital economic activity. Entrepreneurship contributes to innovation, creates jobs, and builds wealth. In a vibrant economy, people have the skills to identify and respond to business opportunities, access to capital, supports for starting and scaling businesses, and connections to human capital.

Note: This metric has been updated with a new data source (the U.S. Census Bureau's Business Dynamics Statistics) that captures openings and closures of traditional business establishments. The previous data source captured these plus relocations of remote workers, which made it a less accurate measure of entrepreneurship.



Source
U.S. Census Bureau

Prekindergarten Education

+1%

In 2024, the share of Maine four-year-olds in public pre-K rose 1 percentage point to 49%.

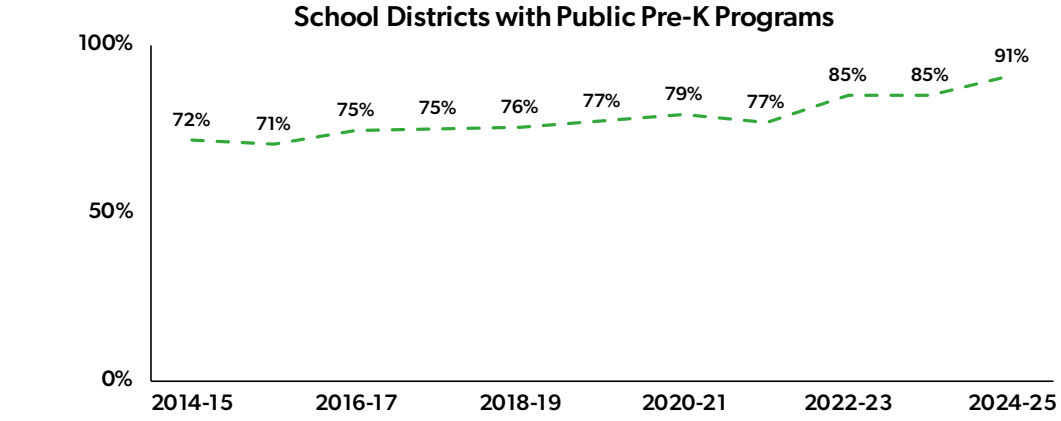
Benchmark: There will be universal preschool access in Maine by the 2026-2027 school year.

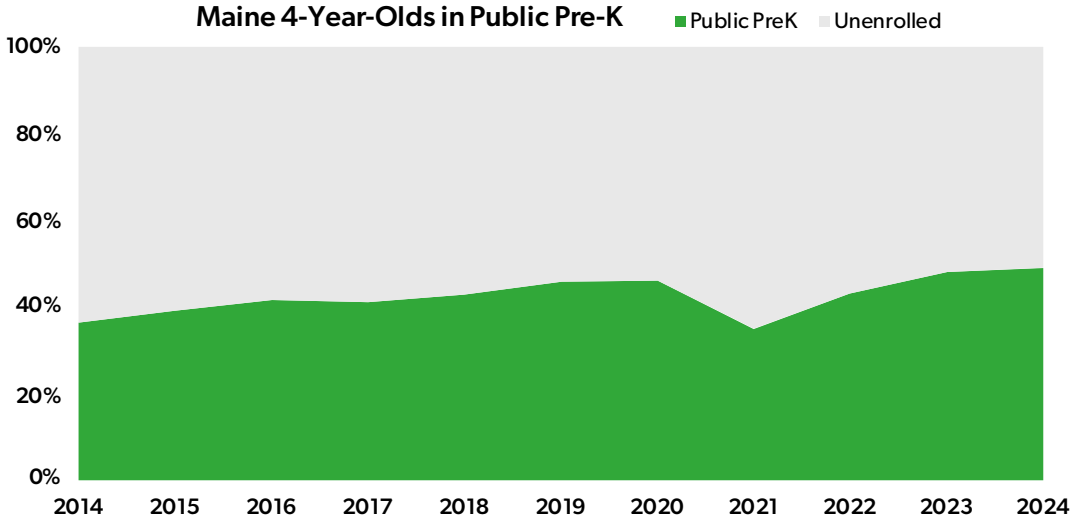
High-quality, affordable early care and education are critical to Maine's economic development. It prepares young Mainers for success in school and supports their parents' full participation in the workforce, a fact highlighted during the COVID pandemic.

In 2023, a new state law established the goal of "universal access" to public preschool for all Maine four-year-olds by the 2026-2027 school year. The National Institute for Early Education Research estimates that 47% of Maine four-year-olds were enrolled in public pre-K in 2022-2023, surpassing pre-COVID levels and exceeding the U.S. average of 35%. The remaining 53% of Maine children were not enrolled.

The extent to which this was due to lack of access or family choice is unknown. A significant number of unenrolled children may be part of the 9% of Maine four-year-olds in Head Start programs. They may also be receiving Special Education services.

The percentage of Maine school districts with at least one public pre-K classroom has increased dramatically, from 24% in the late 2000s to 85% last year. According to the Maine Department of Education, many districts that do not yet offer public pre-K are either very small and lack enough four-year-olds to justify a program, or are larger and may lack the space, capacity, and/or financial means to open and sustain a program.





Source
Maine Department of Education; National Institute for Early Education Research

Fourth-Grade Reading

+4%

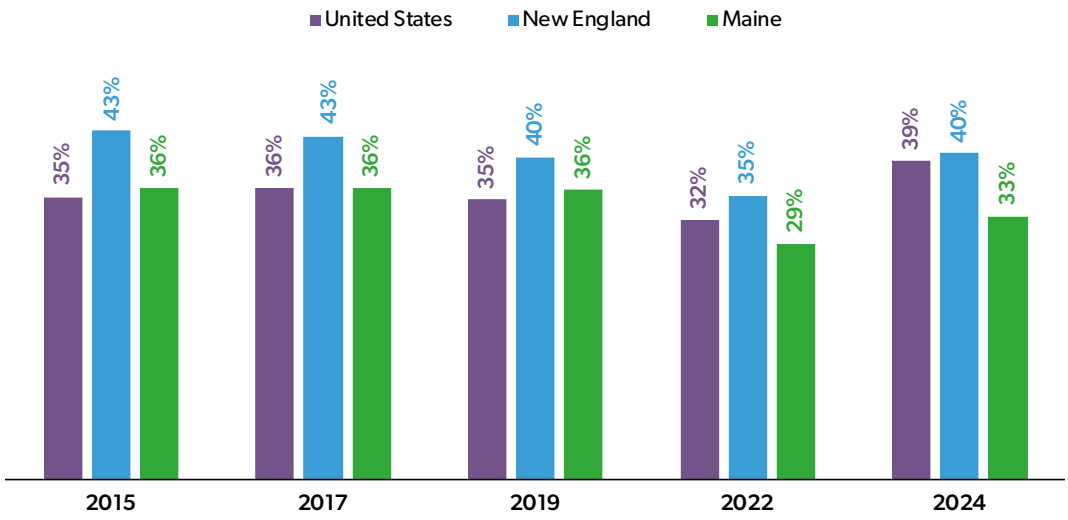
In 2024, the percentage of Maine 4th graders who were proficient in reading rose 4 percentage points to 33% but were below national standards.

Benchmark: The percentage of Maine students scoring proficient or above on NAEP will reach 50% by 2030.

In 2024, 33% of Maine 4th graders met the reading proficiency benchmark of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This was an improvement from 29% in 2022 but below the national average of 39%. By this measure, Maine ranked 44th lowest of the 50 states. Before COVID, Maine ranked at or above the national average. A sample of 1,900 Maine 4th graders took the assessment.

Fourth-grade reading scores are an indicator of future outcomes like educational attainment, employment, and earnings. Fourth-grade reading proficiency is defined as solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter, application to real-world problems, and appropriate analytical skills. The NAEP tests representative samples of fourth and eighth graders every other year to allow national and state comparisons.

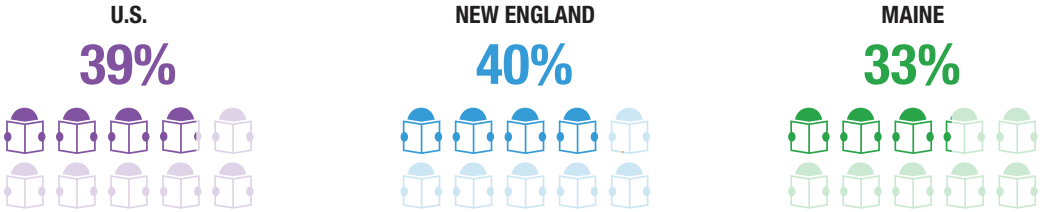
Percentage of 4th Graders Scoring Proficent or Above in Reading



Source
National Center for Education Statistics; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

New England average is unweighted.

4th Graders Scoring Proficient or Above in 2024



Eighth-Grade Math

+1%

In 2024, the share of Maine 8th graders who were proficient in mathematics rose 1 percentage point to 25% but remained below national standards.

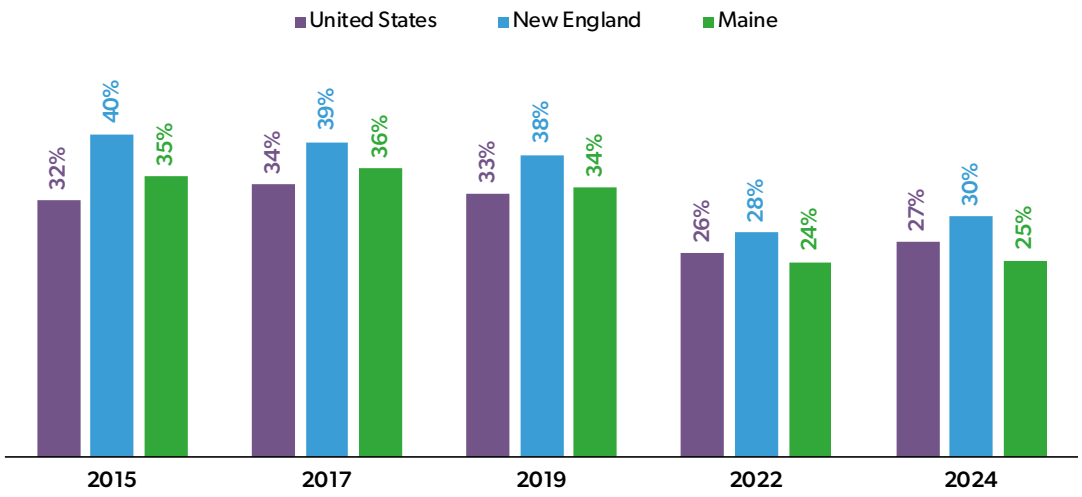
Benchmark: The percentage of Maine students scoring proficient or above on NAEP will reach 50% by 2030.

In 2024, 1 in 4 Maine 8th graders (25%) met the math proficiency benchmark of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This was an increase from 24% in 2022, but below the national average of 27%. By this measure, Maine ranked 31st lowest of the 50 states. Before COVID, Maine ranked at or above the national average. In 2024, 1,900 Maine 8th graders took the NAEP assessment.

Eighth-grade math scores reflect foundational skills and indicate whether students are on track for college and career readiness. Math is a cornerstone of the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines, which can lead to in-demand job skills and well-paid careers in growing fields. Math addresses knowledge and skills to solve problems, make sense of information, and accurately gather and evaluate evidence to make decisions.

Eighth-grade math proficiency is defined as solid academic performance and competency over challenging subject matter, application to real-world problems, and appropriate analytical skills. The NAEP tests representative samples of fourth and eighth graders every other year to allow national and state comparisons.

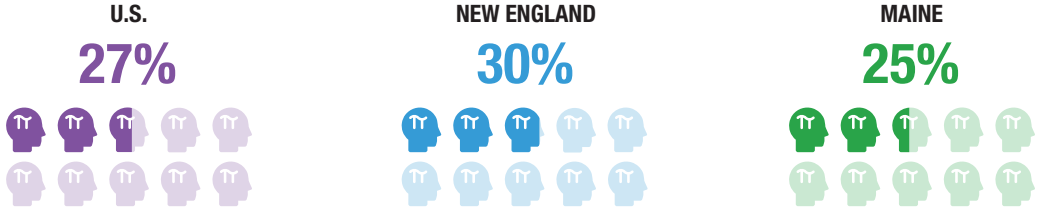
Percentage of 8th Graders Scoring Proficient or Above in Math



Source
National Center for Education Statistics; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

New England average is unweighted.

8th Graders Scoring Proficient or Above in 2024



Postsecondary Degrees & Credentials

+1.5%

In 2023, 56.6% of Maine adults had a degree or credential of value, up 1.5 percentage points.

Benchmark: By 2025, 60% of Maine adults will have a degree or credential of value.

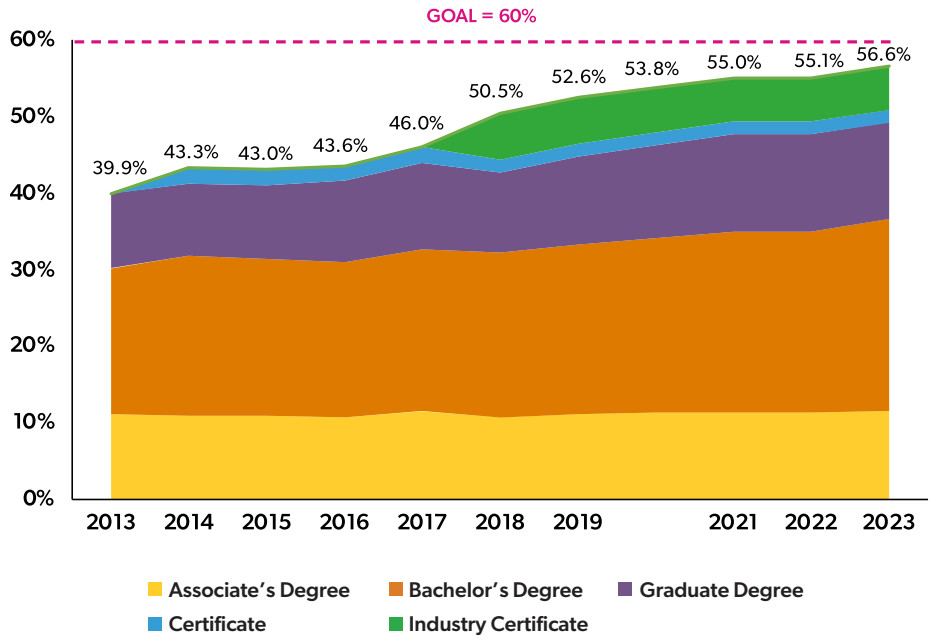
In 2023, an estimated 56.6% of Maine adults ages 25-64 held an associate, bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree, or a credential of value, up from 55.1% in 2022. Most of the recent growth was in bachelor's degrees.

Maine has made significant progress in postsecondary attainment, with the share of adults holding a credential of value rising 6.1 percentage points since 2018. The Council supports Maine's statutory goal of 60% of adults holding a degree or credential by 2025 – a goal promoted by MaineSpark, a coalition of education institutions, nonprofits, foundations, government agencies, and businesses.

This metric recognizes the growing importance of credential career paths, including professional certifications, licenses, digital badges, and military service. The Lumina Foundation reports that in 2023, 7.3% of Maine adults ages 25-64 who lacked postsecondary degrees held one of these occupational credentials. That is above the New England average of 5.9% and below the national average of 7.8%.

Source
Lumina Foundation

Postsecondary Attainment of Maine Adults



Adult Ages 25-64 Degree Attainment Rates, 2023

	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	Credential or Certificate	Total
Maine	11.5%	25.1%	12.6%	7.3%	56.6%
New England	7.8%	26.6%	20.2%	5.9%	60.6%
United States	9.2%	23.4%	14.5%	7.8%	54.9%

Cost of Doing Business

0% **In 2022, Maine's cost of doing business was unchanged.**

Benchmark: Maine's cost of business will decline to the U.S. average by 2030.

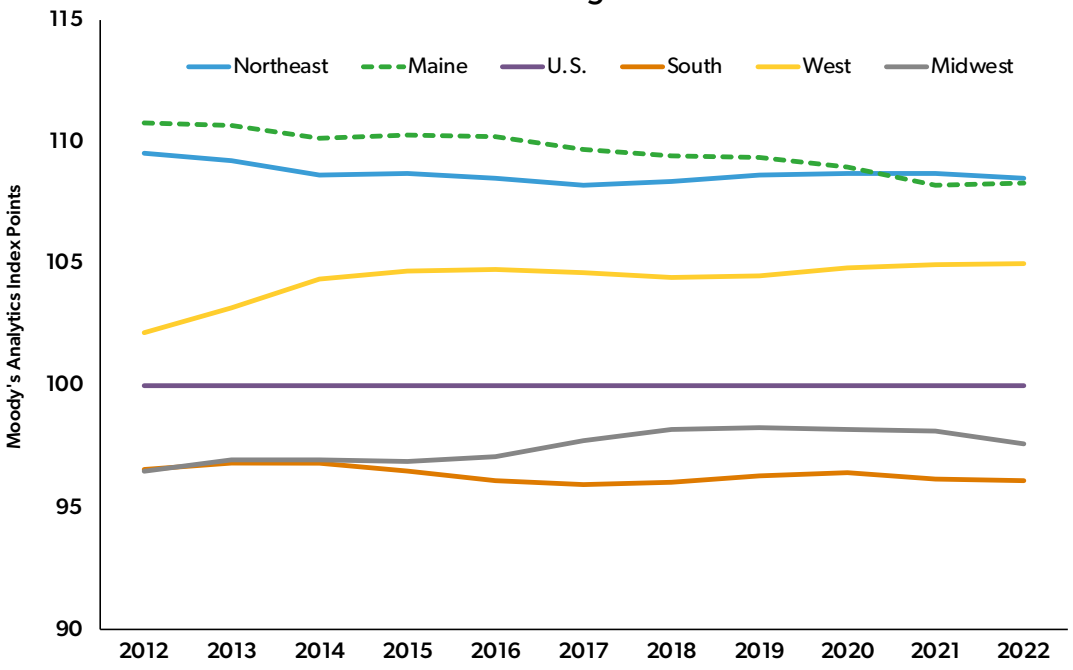
In 2022, Maine's cost of doing business ranked 10th highest in the U.S., but second lowest in New England. The broader Northeast region consistently has higher business costs than other areas of the country. Historically, Maine's costs have exceeded the Northeast average but in 2022 they were below the average for the second year in a row. Maine's labor costs are 19th in the country, while its tax burden ranks 7th.

Moody's Analytics' cost of doing business index is a weighted scale of labor costs (wages, benefits, and productivity), commercial and industrial electricity costs, and state and local tax burden. A value of 100 equals the U.S. average.

2022 New England State Ranks: Business Costs

(1 is highest)

	Overall	Labor	Energy	Tax Burden
MA	2	4	4	13
VT	3	12	8	3
NH	7	7	6	50
RI	8	14	5	11
ME	**10**	**19**	**10**	**7**
CT	11	44	7	5



Source
Moody's Analytics

Cost of Health Care

+0.5%

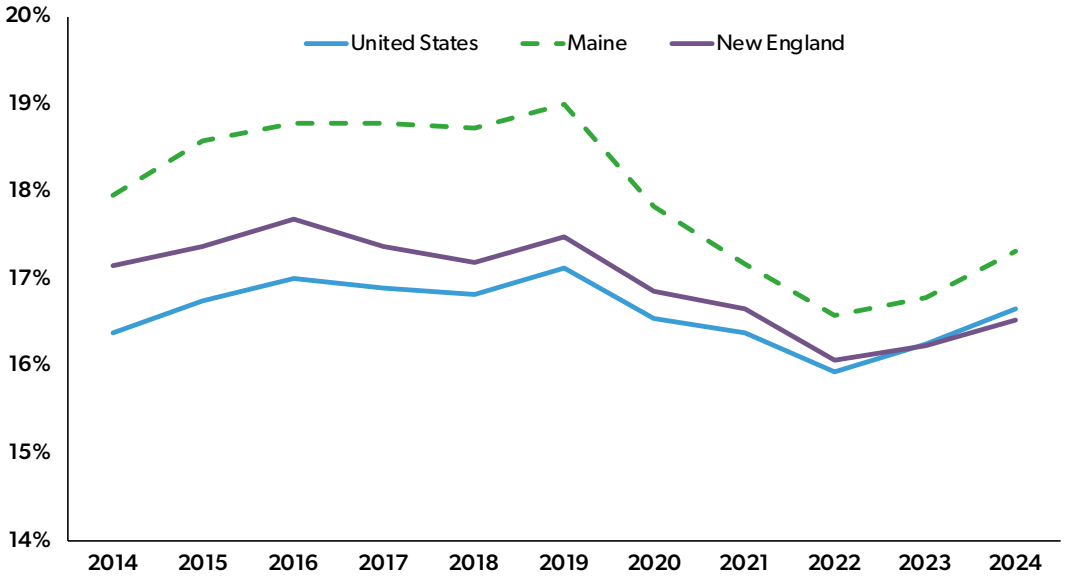
Proportional health care expenditures rose 0.5 percentage points in 2024.

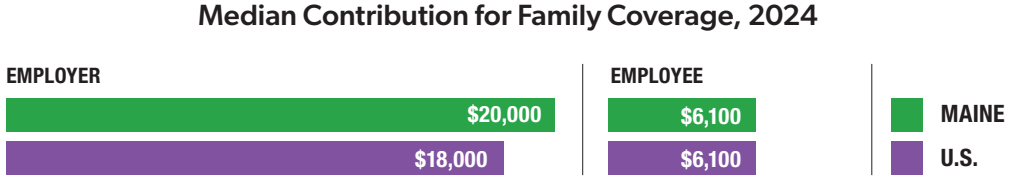
Benchmark: Maine's health care spending as a percentage of total personal expenditures will decline to the New England average by 2030.

Our measure of health care costs tracks the percentage of total personal expenditures that are devoted to health care. Maine people and businesses consistently identify the high cost of health care as a major concern.

In 2024, health care spending in Maine stood at 17.3% of all personal expenditures, down from its peak of 19.0% in 2019. While health care expenditures in Maine are higher than the U.S. and New England rates, the gap has narrowed. They fell sharply in 2020, largely due to the decline of noncritical services during COVID. Still, in Maine and across the nation, about 1 in 6 dollars generated in the economy goes to medical expenses.

In 2024, the median contribution for family health insurance coverage of a Maine employee was $6,100. By this measure, Maine ranked 17th highest of the 50 states. For employers, the median contribution was $20,000 — among the 15 highest. These estimates come from a relatively small survey and should be interpreted with caution.





Source
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Cost of Energy

-6%

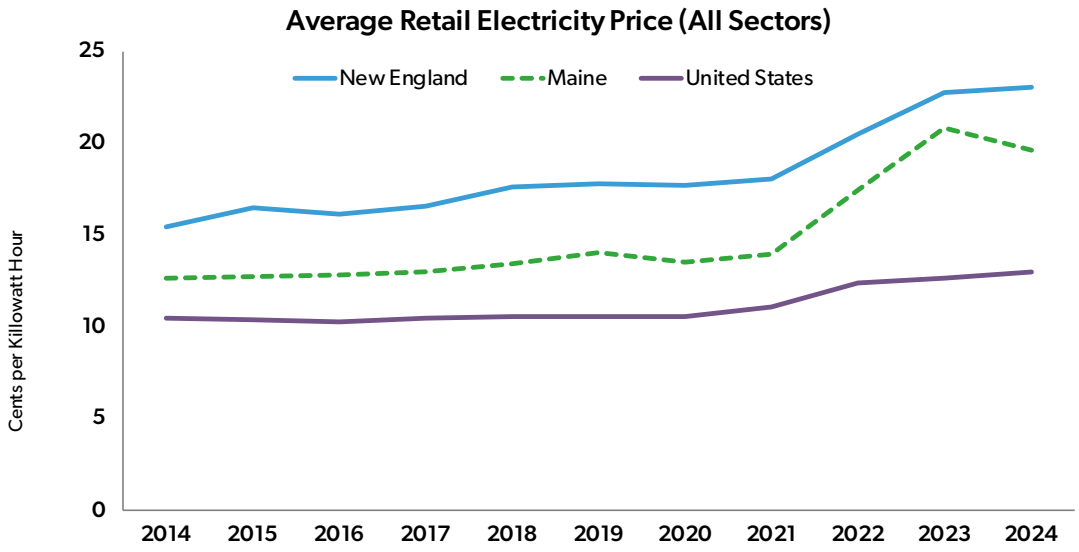
The average price of electricity fell 6% in 2024, although commercial and industrial rates rose slightly.

Benchmark: The cost of electricity in Maine will be the lowest in New England by 2030.

The average retail price of electricity paid by customers across all sectors (residential, industrial, and commercial) fell 6% in 2024, from 20.84 to 19.62 cents per kilowatt hour, coming down from an unusually high year in 2023. Nationwide, prices increased 2%. Maine's electricity rates are the second lowest in New England, and 15% below the regional average, but they exceed the national average by 51%.

Residential energy prices, paid by Maine homeowners and many small businesses, fell 13% in 2024. Industrial rates paid by large production facilities (for manufacturing, agricultural, and construction, etc.) rose 3%. Commercial rates paid by hospitals, large retailers, office and residential facilities, also rose 3%. Electricity is a significant cost for many businesses, especially those in energy-intensive industries such as manufacturing. The energy intensity of Maine's economy is about average for the U.S. (ranking 28th of the 50 states in 2022) but the highest in New England.

Note: This metric has been updated to reflect the average electricity price across all sectors (residential, industrial, and commercial) and reports the movement within each sector in the narrative. Previous editions of Measures of Growth focused exclusively on industrial prices. This new, broader measure reflects the importance of energy costs for all businesses and households.



Source
U.S. Energy Information Administration

Maine Electricity Sectors, 2024

	Number of Accounts	Total Electricity Use (million KWh)	Average Retail Price 2024 (cents)	Change (2023-2024)
Residential	740,817	4,878	23.89	-13%
Commercial	111,007	4,098	18.35	+3%
Industrial	1,927	2,268	12.71	+3%

State & Local Tax Burden

+0.2% **In 2022, Maine's tax burden rose 0.2 percentage points to 11.7%.**

Benchmark: Maine's tax burden will decline and move toward the New England average each year through 2030.

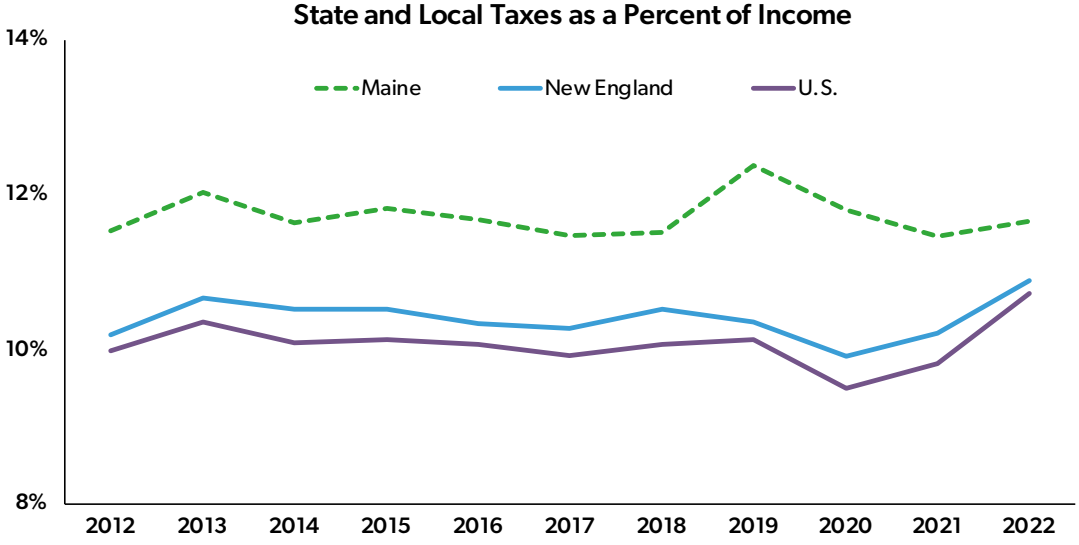
The percentage of total personal income paid in state and local taxes (property, sales, income, corporate, motor vehicle, and other taxes) is our tax burden measure. This measure can be reduced by lowering taxes, increasing incomes, or both. While taxes impose costs on individuals and businesses, they generate revenue for public services and investments.

In 2022, Maine's tax burden was 11.7%, a 2% increase from 11.5% in 2021. Meanwhile, the New England and U.S. average tax burdens rose 9% and 7%, respectively. Maine's tax burden was 7% above the New England average, compared to 19% in 2019 and 2020. Maine ranks 10th highest of the 50 states in state and local taxes as a percentage of income and 16th highest in tax collections per capita. This measure does not account for the portion of sales and property taxes paid by out-of-state visitors and second-home owners.

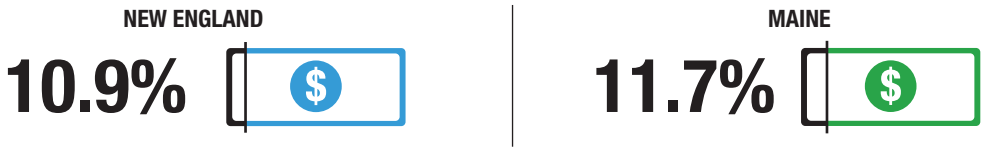
State and Local Tax Burden Rank 2022
(1 is highest)

State	% of Income	Rank	Per Capita	Rank
U.S.	10.7%	-	$7,089	-
NE	10.9%	-	$8,688	-
VT	12.8%	5	$8,152	9
ME	**11.7%**	**10**	**$7,185**	**16**
CT	11.4%	12	$9,703	3
RI	10.9%	14	$6,993	17
MA	10.9%	15	$9,327	6
NH	7.9%	48	$5,930	29

State and Local Taxes as a Percent of Income



State and Local Taxes as a Percent of Income in 2022



Source
U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

COMMUNITY

Living, working, and moving forward together

Family participates in the Annual Spring Roadside Cleanup Day in Belfast
(Photo credit: Maine Department of Transportation & Main Street Maine)

Internet Connectivity

+3%

In 2025, 92% of Maine locations have average or broadband internet, up 3 percentage points.

Benchmark: Anyone in Maine who wants a high-speed internet connection can have one by 2025.

High-speed internet is vital to participation in modern society and critical for communities to attract and retain businesses and residents. The Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) is committed to expanding access to reliable, high-speed, affordable internet service statewide.

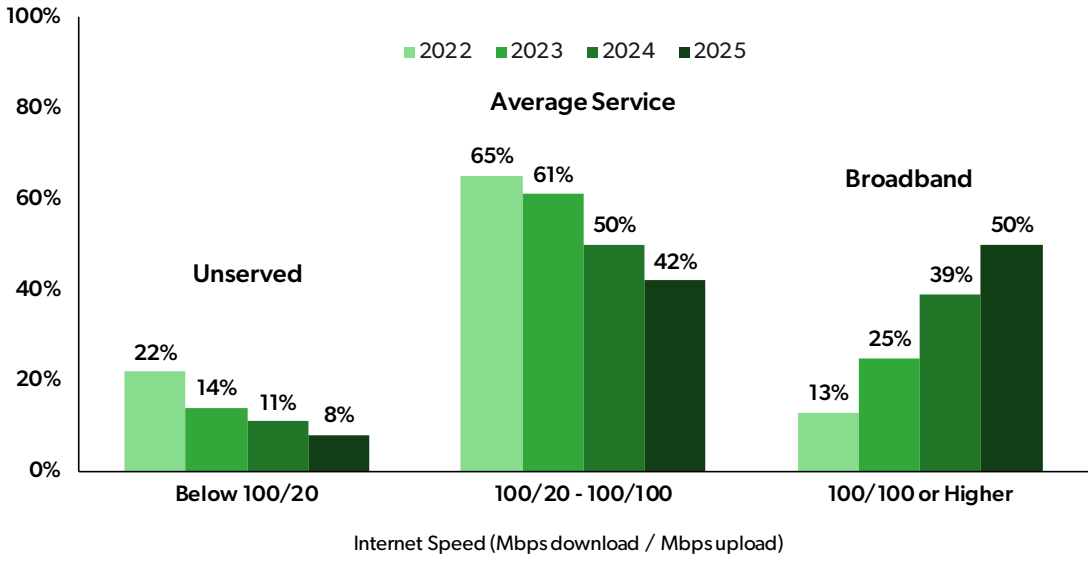
Data from the federal government shows that 50% of Maine locations currently have internet that provides 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload ("100/100" or "broadband internet") or higher. Forty-two percent have access to speeds between 100/20 and 100/100 ("average service"), and 8% have speeds below 100/20 ("unserved").

Since 2022, MCA has allocated over $400 million of state and federal funds to enable connectivity for more than 110,000 locations. At this time, all locations in Maine have an option for working internet. Those in unserved areas have the option for subsidized satellite-based service, ahead of planned wired and wireless solutions that will be deployed in the next few years.

Locations with Broadband Service, 2025
(100 Mbps download/100 Mbps upload)

Coastal Counties	
Knox	58%
Cumberland	53%
Hancock	53%
Sagadahoc	50%
York	42%
Waldo	36%
Lincoln	26%
Central Counties	
Anrdoscoggin	66%
Penobscot	59%
Kennebec	50%
Rim Counties	
Somerset	84%
Franklin	71%
Piscataquis	67%
Aroostook	34%
Washington	32%
Oxford	30%

Percentage of Maine Locations with Internet Access by Service Level



Source
Maine Connectivity Authority

Housing Affordability

+1%

In 2024, the share of households unable to afford the median-priced home worsened 1 percentage point to 64%.

Benchmark: The percentage of households unable to afford the median-priced home will remain below 50%.

Data on homeownership affordability shows a troubling trend. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a surge in homebuying that pushed up sale prices in Maine and nationwide. As a result, the estimated percentage of Maine households that cannot afford the median-priced home has risen from 39% in 2020 to 64% in 2024.* This means the cost of the home's mortgage, taxes, and insurance would exceed 30% of the household's income. This number may be inflated due to an increase in sales of high-priced homes. Nevertheless, the need for affordable housing is a recurring theme across the state.

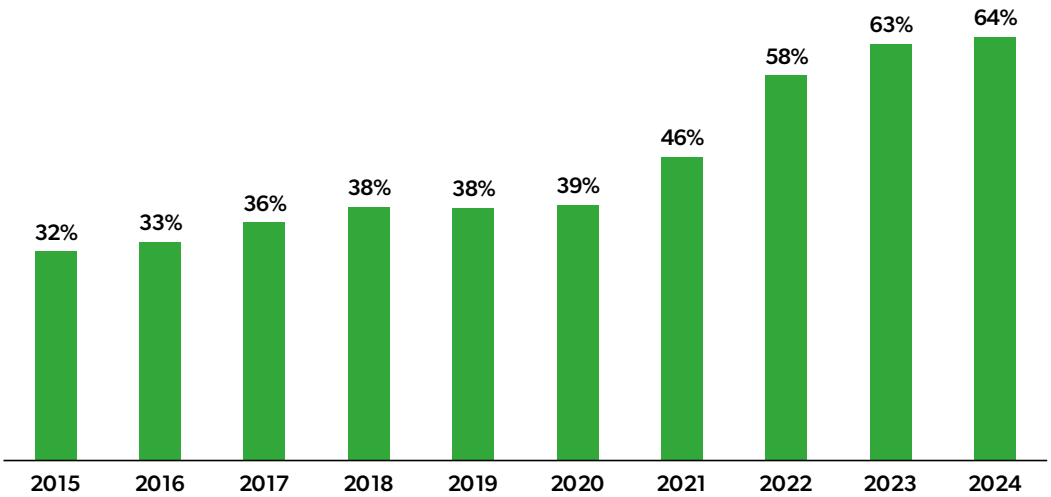
Housing is a significant portion of household budgets, and housing costs reflect everything from the supply of housing stock, to public policies regarding planning and new construction, to lending practices and interest rates. Regions with affordable housing are better able to attract and retain workers. Affordable housing also has broad positive impacts on health and childhood development, which benefit individuals and communities alike.

*This estimate reflects a new methodology adopted by MaineHousing in 2025. The affordability threshold was raised from 28% to 30% to align with industry standards, and updated data cleaning and estimation procedures were adopted as part of MaineHousing's continuous improvements.

Households Unable to Afford Median-Priced Home 2024
(Use no more than 30% of gross income for house payment)

Coastal Counties	
Knox	81%
Sagadahoc	77%
Cumberland	77%
York	75%
Lincoln	74%
Hancock	74%
Waldo	66%
Central Counties	
Androscoggin	67%
Kennebec	66%
Penobscot	55%
Rim Counties	
Oxford	69%
Franklin	64%
Somerset	59%
Washington	56%
Piscataquis	52%
Aroostook	46%
MAINE	**64%**

Maine Households Unable to Afford Median-Priced Home
(Use no more than 30% of gross income for house payment)



Source
MaineHousing

Transportation

0%

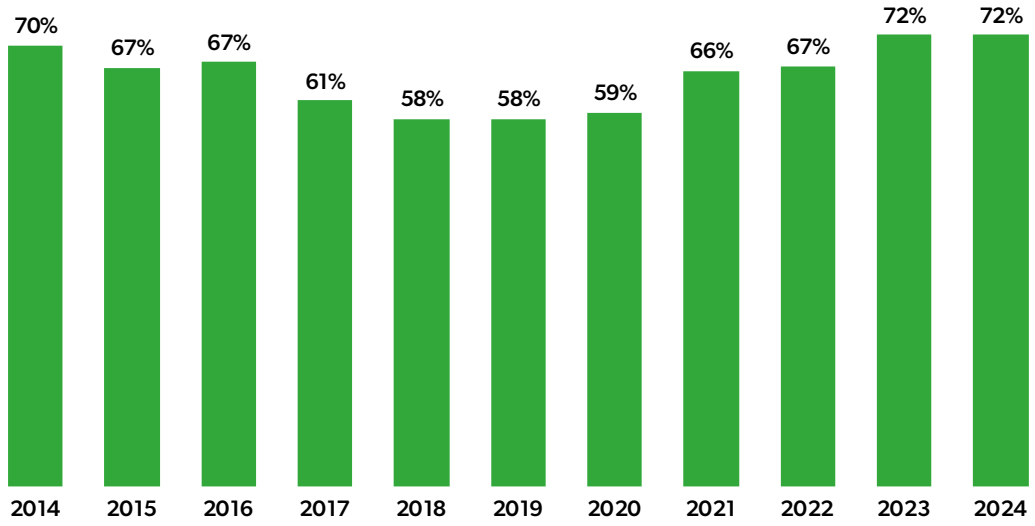
In 2024, 72% of Maine roadways were rated good or fair, unchanged from 2023.

Benchmark: At least 85% of highway corridor Priority 1 miles will be rated Excellent, Good, or Fair.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) grades roadways from A (excellent) to F (unacceptable). In 2024, 1,063 miles (72%) of Maine's most traveled and economically significant ("Priority 1") roadways were graded A, B or C, unchanged from 2023, but up from 58% in 2018-2019. MDOT attributes this to increased state and federal funding. Four hundred eighteen miles (28%) were graded D or F. Our roadways carry the vast majority of passengers and freight. Poor road conditions can lead to personal injury, property damage, and extended commute times.

Transportation plays a crucial role in the functioning of our economy. Together, roads, rails, airports, and seaports promote economic activity by getting goods and people to their destinations efficiently and affordably. Public transportation is a critical component of this system, allowing people to access employment and services without a car, and reducing congestion and pollution. According to research published by the John T. Gorman Foundation, Maine's current public transit operators meet just 11% of estimated need.

Highway Miles Rated Excellent, Good, or Fair



Source
Maine Department of Transportation; John T. Gorman Foundation

Transportation: Driving Opportunity in Aroostook County

From harbors to highways, transportation networks fuel Maine's growth and vitality. Innovative organizations are expanding access so everyone can reach the places and opportunities that move them forward.

Main Street in Presque Isle *(Photo: istock)*

In Aroostook County, reliable transportation can mean the difference between having a job and being cut off from opportunity. The Workforce Connector, operated by Aroostook Regional Transportation System and funded by the Maine Department of Transportation, bridges this gap. The service picks up riders at home and takes them directly to and from work for free. This enables people without a car—or who share one with other household members—to work jobs that would otherwise be out of reach.

The impact can be life-changing. Some now have their first steady job because they can finally get to work on time. Others have taken better-paying positions with employers farther from home. One person who was unhoused says, "After months of using the service and hard work, I was placed into a permanent position and my son and I stepped out of homelessness and into our own apartment."

Riders describe feeling less isolated and more in control of their futures. Matt Bechard eventually purchased a car with the money he saved from no longer taking taxis and working more. "I finally feel independent. I can work extra shifts on the weekends, go where I need to go, when I need to go. It's a huge relief."

In a place where opportunity is often spread across hundreds of square miles, the Workforce Connector is doing more than moving people from point A to point B—it's driving opportunity.

"In our area, if you do not have a car, you can't reach out to get a job because you can't get to an interview and then you can't make it to work."

Lisa Smith
Mobility Manager
Aroostook Regional Transportation System

Aroostook Workforce Connector van with ARTS staff members Hillary Harris, Lisa Smith, Aaron Conroy, and Travis Drost
(Photo: Aroostook Regional Transportation System)

Safety

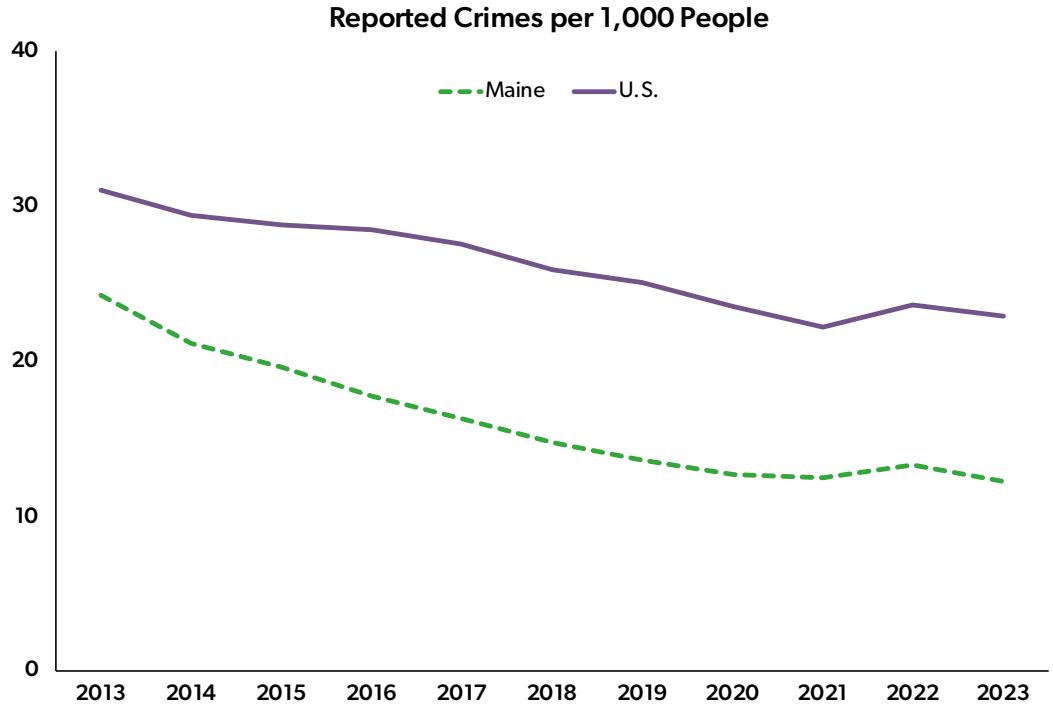
-8%

Maine's crime rate fell 8% in 2023.

Benchmark: Maine's crime rate will remain 33% or more below the U.S. rate through 2030.

Maine's crime rate fell to 12.2 per 1,000 residents in 2023. This was 47% below the national average and third lowest of the 50 states. Violent crimes fell 2.2% despite the mass homicide in Lewiston in October 2023. This is because there were declines in two other categories of crime in that measure—aggravated assault and rape. Property crimes fell 7.6%. Maine's low crime rates are likely due in part to the age of its population since criminal offenses decline with age.

Crime rates measure physical safety, an important aspect of quality of life. Crime is costly to individuals and impacts communities by depressing property values, discouraging investment, and increasing insurance premiums. The crime rate includes data on larceny, burglary, aggravated assault, motor vehicle theft, rape, robbery, arson, and murder.



Source
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Physical Wellness

-0.6%

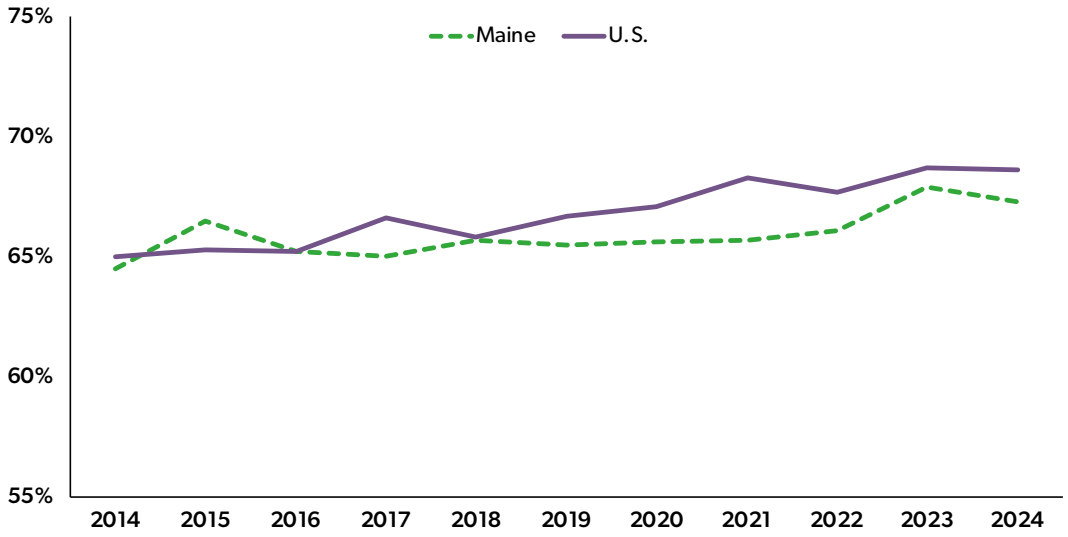
In 2024, 67% of adult Mainers were overweight or obese, down 0.6 percentage points. This rate has been consistent for over a decade.

Benchmark: The combined percentage of overweight and obese adults in Maine will decline to 50% by 2030.

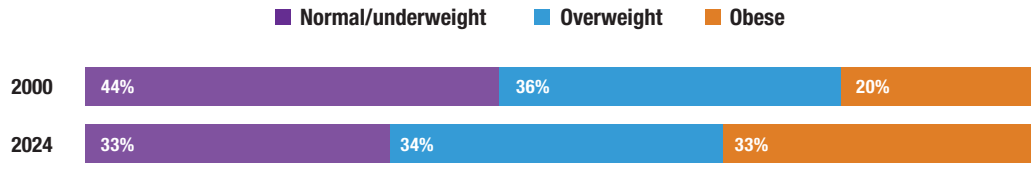
In 2024, 2 out of 3 Maine adults (67%) were overweight (body mass index of 25 to 29.9) or obese (body mass index of 30 or greater), just below the national average. Maine's rate has steadily risen, up from 56% in 2000. Excess body weight increases the risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, stroke, asthma, arthritis, and some cancers. These conditions negatively affect quality of life and workplace productivity, and increase medical expenses.

In 2022-2023, almost 1 in 3 Maine youth ages 6-17 (32.5%) was overweight or obese, equal to the national rate. Childhood obesity is a serious, widespread problem that can cause long-term health challenges.

Percentage of Overweight and Obese Adults



Comparing Maine Adults: 2000 & 2024



Source
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Center for Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative

Mental & Behavioral Health

+2%

In 2022-2023, the percentage of children with a mental and/or behavioral condition rose 2 percentage points.

Benchmark: The share of Maine children with a diagnosed mental and/or behavioral condition will decline over time.

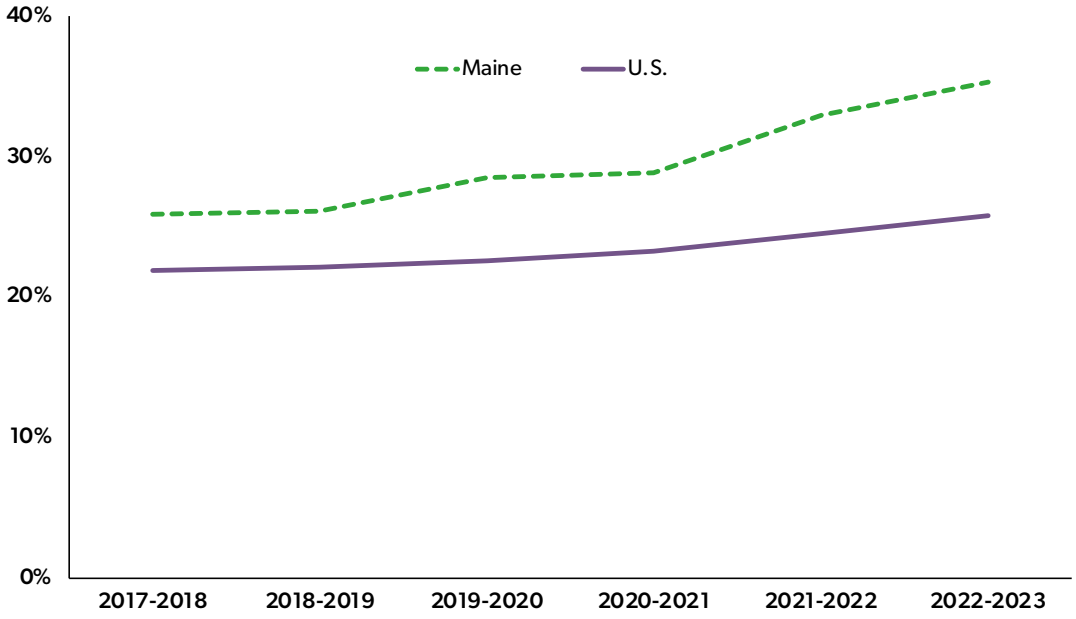
Mental and behavioral health plays an important role in how children learn, grow, form relationships, and handle stress. It influences their overall health and well-being, and their future conduct as employees, parents, and community members.

In 2022-2023, an estimated 35% of Maine children had a diagnosed mental, emotional, and/or behavioral condition such as anxiety, depression, a learning disability, or autism.* This was up from 26% in 2017-2018 and significantly higher than the U.S. average of 26%. In 2023, 35% of Maine high schoolers reported feeling sad or hopeless every day for two weeks or more. According to the Maine Children's Alliance, "teen mental health is a growing crisis in the state and the nation."

Many older Mainers are also experiencing challenges. Mental wellness impacts individuals' quality of life and their activities at home, at work, and within their communities. In one recent survey, 18% of Maine adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. An equal percentage of adults nationwide reported these symptoms — up from just 11% in 2019. Maine saw record drug-related deaths in recent years. Although the numbers are declining, the impacts of substance use ripple through households, schools, and communities.

* Diagnoses are reported by parents and include anxiety, depression, behavior and conduct problems, developmental delay, intellectual disability, speech or language disorder, learning disability, Autism, Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Tourette Syndrome.

Children with a Mental and/or Behavioral Condition



Source
National Children's Health Survey, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey; U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey

Health Insurance Coverage

+0.7%

In 2023, the percentage of Mainers with health insurance coverage rose 0.7 percentage points and remains above the U.S. average.

Benchmark: The percentage of Maine's population with health insurance coverage will rise and remain above the U.S. rate.

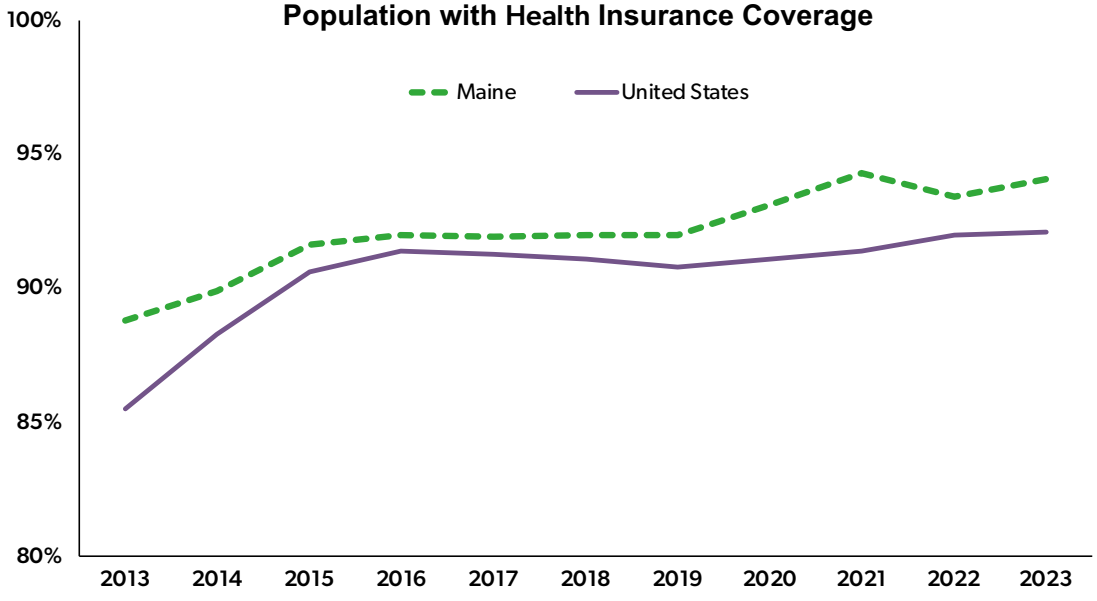
This measure tracks the proportion of the population with health insurance coverage. Higher health insurance coverage rates improve access to health care services, support local health care systems, and boost families' ability to pay for necessities.

The proportion of Maine residents with health insurance coverage has exceeded 90% since 2015. In 2023, it was 94%, which exceeds the national average of 92%. An estimated 81,000 people in Maine do not have health insurance coverage. Regionally, health insurance coverage rates for people under age 65 range from 89% in Washington County to 94% in Cumberland County.

The Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates offer data on racial differences in health insurance coverage in Maine. In 2023, 92-93% of White and Asian Mainers under age 65 had health insurance coverage, compared with 90% of Black Mainers, 88% of American Indian Mainers, and 83% of Hispanic Mainers.

Population Under Age 65 with Health Insurance Coverage, 2023

Coastal Counties	Rate
Cumberland County	94%
York County	93%
Sagadahoc County	93%
Waldo County	92%
Lincoln County	91%
Knox County	90%
Hancock County	90%
Central Counties	
Kennebec	93%
Androscoggin	92%
Penobscot	92%
Rim Counties	
Piscataquis County	91%
Aroostook County	91%
Franklin County	91%
Somerset County	91%
Oxford County	90%
Washington County	89%



Source
U.S. Census Bureau

Food Security

+1%

In 2021-2023, the share of Mainers experiencing food insecurity rose almost 1 percentage point to 10.9%.

Benchmark: Maine's percentage of food insecure households will decline to the U.S. average by 2030.

Food insecurity has broad negative impacts on health, child development, education outcomes, and productivity. Food-insecure households have disrupted eating patterns, reduced food intake, and reduced quality or variety of diet.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about 1 in 9 Maine households (10.9%) was food insecure in 2021-2023, up from 9.5% in 2019-2021.* This increase may reflect the cessation of pandemic-era federal supports for low-income households, such as the expanded Child Tax Credit, and new restrictions to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Maine's rate of food insecurity was below the national average of 12.2% and above the New England unweighted average of 9.5%.

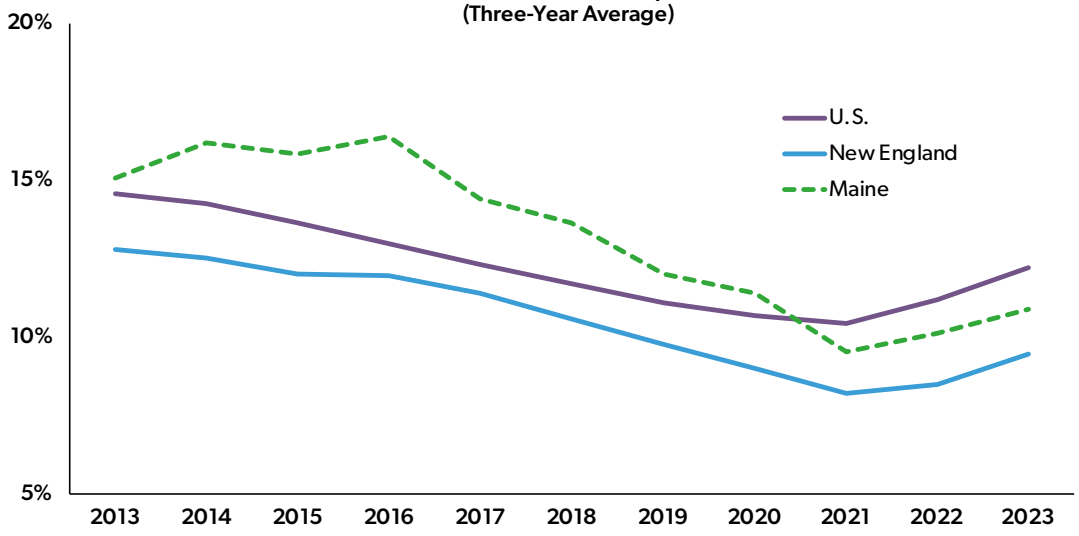
County-level data are from a different source with a slightly higher estimate of food insecurity (14% for Maine in 2023). According to Feeding America, 2023 food insecurity ranged from 11.6% in Cumberland County to over 16% in Aroostook, Piscataquis, Somerset, and Washington counties.

*** In September 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture terminated the annual Household Food Security Reports that generate these estimates. It has not identified a replacement for this long-standing national benchmark.**

Food Insecurity Rates by County, 2023

Coastal Counties	Rate
Cumberland	11.6%
York	12.3%
Knox	12.3%
Lincoln	12.5%
Sagadahoc	12.9%
Hancock	13.1%
Waldo	14.4%
Central Counties	
Kennebec	14.5%
Androscoggin	15.0%
Penobscot	15.3%
Rim Counties	
Franklin	14.5%
Oxford	15.3%
Somerset	16.5%
Aroostook	16.7%
Piscataquis	17.3%
Washington	18.1%

Food Insecure Households, 2013-2023
(Three-Year Average)



Source
U.S. Department of Agriculture; Feeding America

ENVIRONMENT

By land, lake, sea, and stream

Friends of Baxter State Park looking toward Mt. Katahdin from Millinocket Lake at New England Outdoor Center
(Photo credit: New England Outdoor Center (NEOC))

Air Quality

-12 days

In 2024, there were 27 moderately unhealthy days, 12 fewer than in 2023.

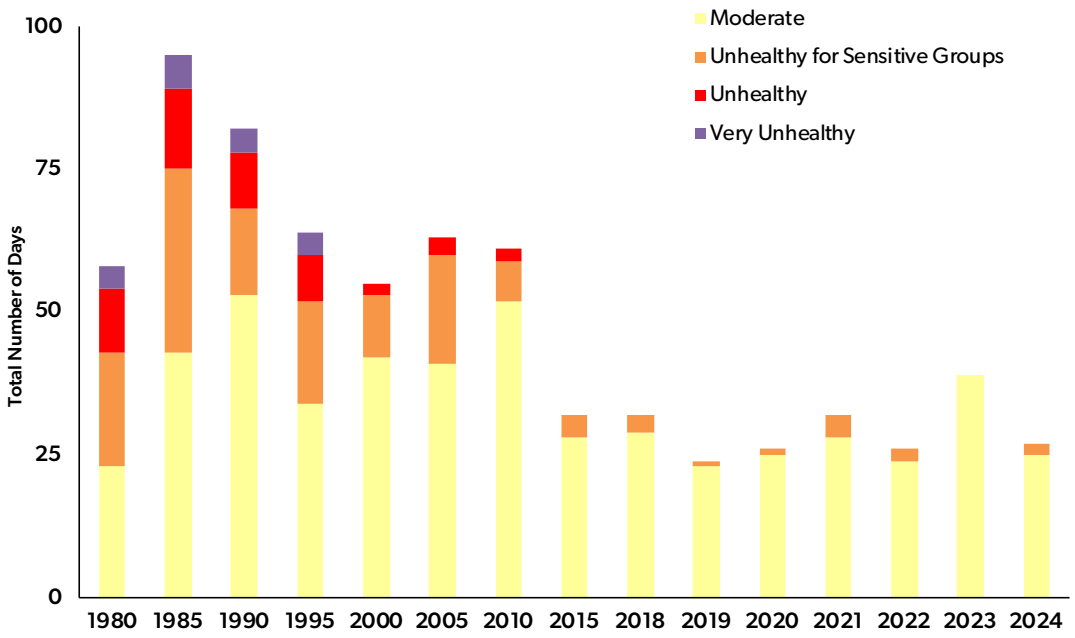
Benchmark: The overall number of days classified as a health risk and the severity of risks will be maintained through 2030.

In 2024, there were 25 moderate air quality days, and 2 days rated unhealthy for sensitive groups (e.g., people with heart and lung disease, older adults, children). This was a return to recent levels after a spike in 2023 due to smoke from wildfires beyond Maine's borders.

After declining in the 1980s and 1990s, air quality in Maine has improved substantially, and is better than most other states.

Maine's air quality index is based on ozone levels and reflects the number of days each year when the maximum ozone level recorded in the state reaches moderate or unhealthy levels. Maine's air quality contributes to health and wellness, and makes it an attractive place to live, do business, and visit. Air quality is subject to factors both within and beyond our borders.

Maine Air Quality Index, 1980-2024



Source
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Sustainable Forestlands

+3%

In 2023, the ten-year growth-to-removal ratio rose 3% to 1.55 and remained above the sustainability goal.

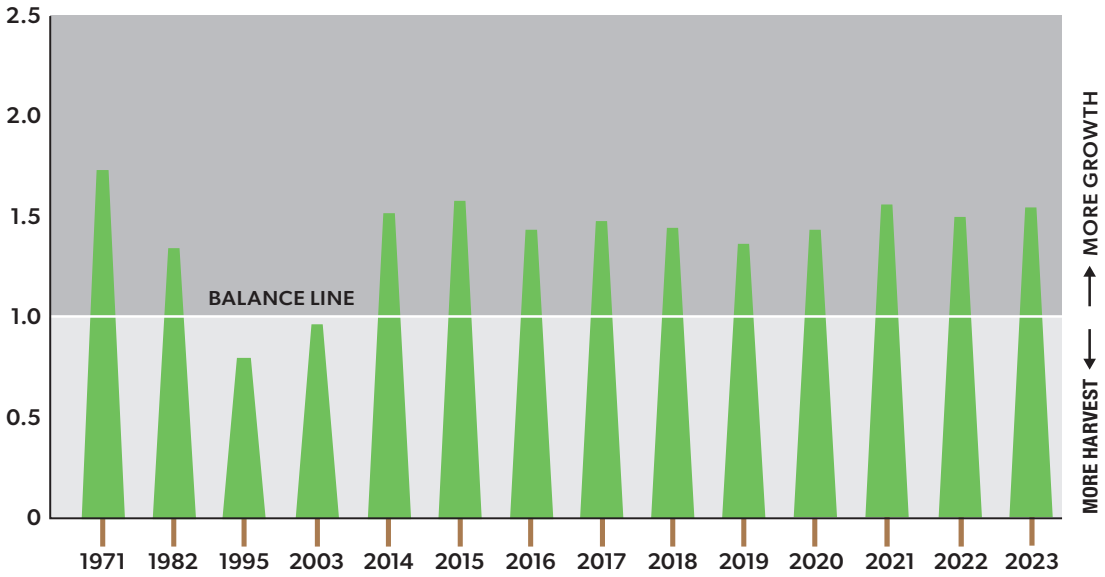
Benchmark: A net growth-to-removal ratio of approximately 1:1 will be maintained over time.

Sustainable forestry supports Maine's economy, environment, and quality of life, and well-planned forest management activities can help address issues related to forest health, climate change, and other factors affecting forest conditions.

The sustainable management of Maine's forests is measured by the ten-year growth-to-removal ratio of timber by volume (not acreage). A net growth value above one means growth exceeded removals, and a value below one means removals exceeded growth. In 2023, the ten-year growth-to-removal ratio rose 3% to 1.55 and remained sustainable. Net timber volume growth has exceeded removals over the past decade. In other words, Maine has been growing more wood volume than it has been harvesting. That was not the case in the previous two decades.

Forests cover nearly 90% of Maine's land area. Private entities and individuals own 92% of forested acreage, with much of it accessible to the public. Forests provide habitat for wildlife, help protect air and water quality, offer recreational opportunities, and supply raw materials for products ranging from paper to building materials to alternative fuels.

Timberland Growth-to-Removal Ratio



Source
Maine Forest Service

Water Quality: Skowhegan—Where the Past Flows into the Future

Maine's environment is a treasured asset and central to our cultural identity. It can also be a foundation for sustainable economic growth and strong communities.

Sunset over the Kennebec in downtown Skowhegan
(Photo: Capshore & Kennebec Valley Tourism Council)

Skowhegan has always drawn opportunity from the Kennebec River and surrounding land. Long before industry arrived, the Wabanaki people used the river for transportation and planted crops along its banks. Later, it fueled log drives and powered mills. Today, the town is reimagining its natural assets as engines of an economy rooted in outdoor recreation, local food, and quality of life.

This transformation is the result of decades of planning and engagement. A recent survey showed $34 million in current or planned investment in Skowhegan's downtown, including a $24 million redevelopment of the former Spinning Mill that will bring a boutique hotel and market-rate housing to the riverfront. Since 2015, every $1 invested in Main Street Skowhegan, the Town's community revitalization organization, has generated over $20 in grants and sponsorships.

The planned Skowhegan River Park and promenade aim to draw on the town's greatest natural asset. Paddlers will ride a newly designed whitewater wave. People will gather on a riverfront boardwalk with fire pits, games, and views of the gorge.

Revitalization in Skowhegan also creates opportunities for residents. Main Street Skowhegan provides free outdoor gear and teaches residents how to navigate the trails and rivers that define the region. A new shared-use commercial kitchen will give food entrepreneurs a space to grow. In every project, the past and future move forward together as residents return to the river, honor the land, and put old resources to work in powerful new ways.

> *"If we make Skowhegan a great place to live, then it's also a great place to visit, to move, to start a business, to invest."*
>
> **Kristina Cannon**
> *President and CEO*
> Main Street Skowhegan

Skowhegan Craft Brew Festival
(Photo: Jonathan Wheaton Photography)

Water Quality

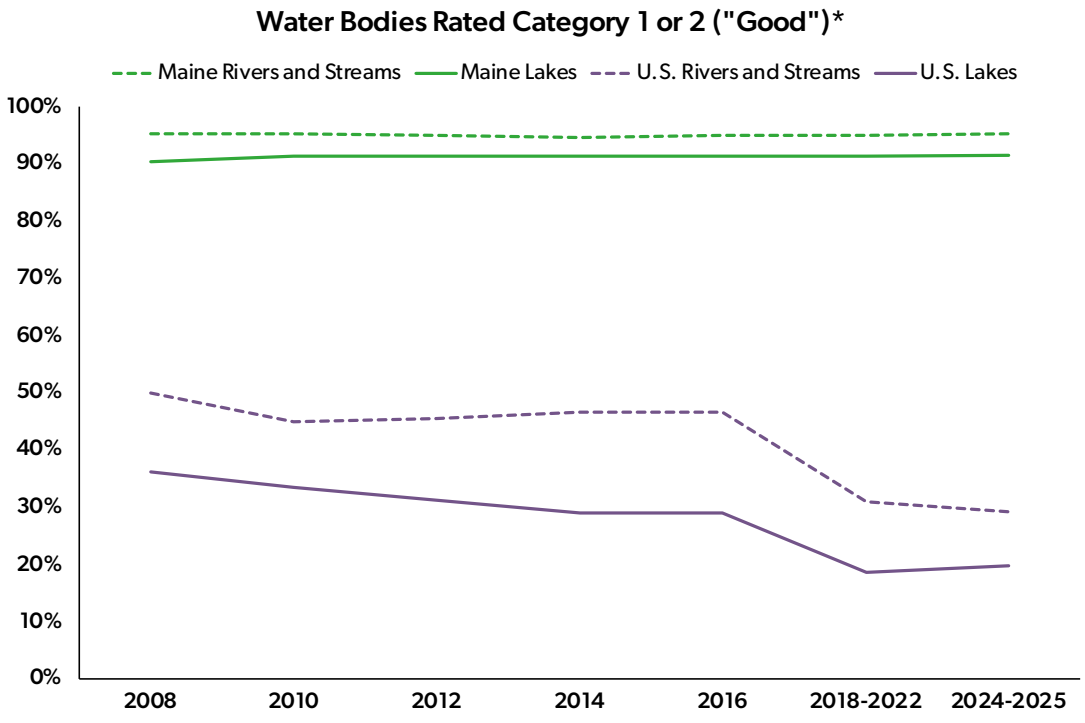
0%

In 2024, Maine maintained its excellent water quality rating.

Benchmark: The percentage of Maine's assessed water bodies classified as Category 1 or 2 will be maintained over time.

This measure is based on reports by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the water quality of Maine rivers, streams, and lakes. The proportion of water bodies achieving Category 1 and 2 ("good") classifications are compared to the rest of the U.S. Maine's rivers, lakes, and streams provide drinking water and support ecosystems. They are part of the natural environment that supports tourism.

Since 2008, Maine's water quality has been very high, with 95% of rivers and streams and 91% of lakes achieving Category 1 or 2 in 2024. Nationally, just 29% of U.S. rivers and streams, and 20% of the lakes, were rated "good" in 2025. The drop in U.S. quality has many causes, including a significant increase in the number of assessed water bodies, differing assessment methods across states, and actual declines in water quality.



Source
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

**U.S. ratings for 2016 reflect multiple years between 2014 and 2022. 2018-2022 includes reporting for 2018, 2020, and 2022. The chart shows 2024 for Maine and 2025 for the U.S. As of the release of this report, Maine's 2024 ratings have not yet been verified by the EPA.*

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

+1.4% **From 2020 to 2021, GHG emissions rose 1.4%.**

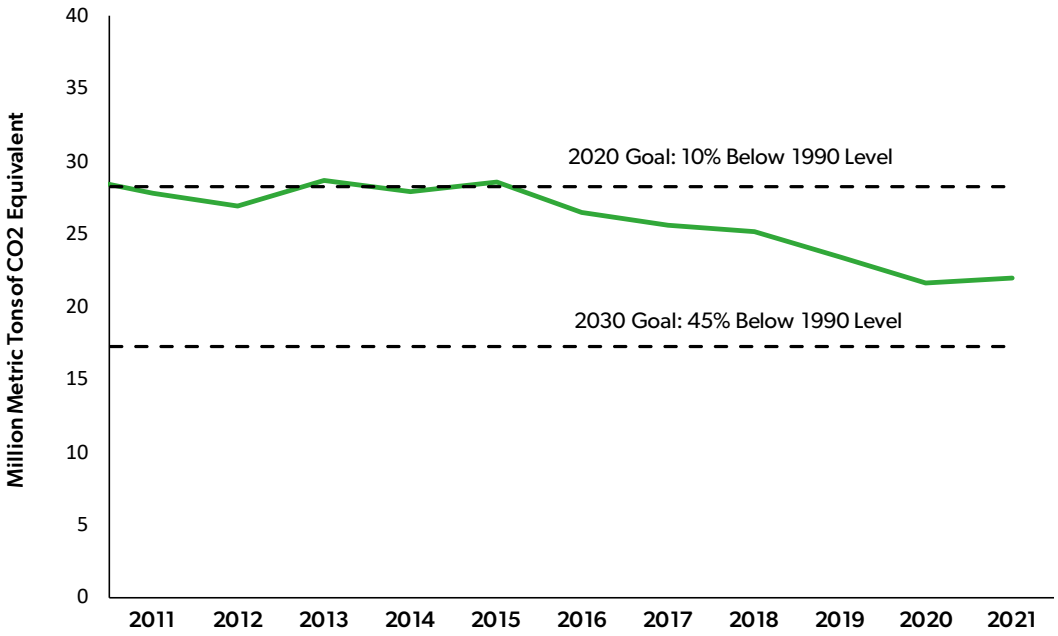
Benchmark: Greenhouse gas emissions will fall 45% below 1990 levels by 2030.

In 2020, Maine's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions fell when the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted daily activities. In 2021, they rose slightly, from 21.6 to 21.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide. However, emissions were still 30% below 1990 levels, meaning Maine is continuing to progress toward its goal of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030.

In 2003, Maine became the first U.S. state to enact a statutory GHG target. The original goal was for emissions to be 10% below 1990 levels by 2020. Maine has been consistently below this target since 2016. In 2019, further legislation set the goal of reducing emissions 45% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

According to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, 94% of Maine's emissions are from energy consumption, mostly from the combustion of petroleum products. The other 6% is from agriculture, industrial processes, and waste management. Movement toward renewable energy sources and lower carbon fuels such as natural gas have contributed to reduced emissions.

Maine Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Source
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Background

The Maine Economic Growth Council was established by statute in 1993 to develop, maintain, and evaluate a long-term economic plan for Maine. Its members represent a broad cross-section of Maine's key constituencies. Members are jointly appointed by the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House. The Council is co-chaired by Steve Von Vogt, President and CEO of Maine Marine Composites, and State Representative James Dill (D-Old Town). The annual Measures of Growth report is a widely used and respected report on Maine's economy. The report is revised from time to time to provide the most current and meaningful assessment of Maine's progress toward long-term economic growth and a high quality of life for all Maine people.

The Council is administered by Maine Development Foundation (MDF), a public-private, non-partisan membership organization created in statute in 1978 that drives equitable, sustainable, long-term economic growth for Maine. The work of the Growth Council is financed by a state appropriation through the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, with additional support provided by the membership of MDF.

The Nature of Data

The Growth Council strives to provide the most accurate, timely, and consistent data available. Some source data are regularly revised as methodologies improve and more information becomes available. As a result, the data presented here may differ slightly from that of past reports. The Council accounts for these limitations in identifying overall trends and policy implications.

Acknowledgements

The Maine Economic Growth Council and MDF extend their sincere appreciation to the individuals and organizations that generously provided data and guidance in the development of this report. Special thanks to Meghan Grabill of the Maine Connectivity Authority, Andrew Bickmore of the Maine Department of Transportation, Jim Damicis of Camoin Associates, Wade Merritt of the Maine International Trade Center, Jonathan Kurzfeld of MaineHousing, Morten Moesswilde and Jereme Frank of the Maine Forest Service, and Stacy Knapp, Meagan Sims, and Martha Webster of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. This year's report was written by Catherine Reilly with contributions by MDF's Kathleen Shannon Nichols. The print version was designed by Cassidy Parmley of Pica and printed by Edison Press. The web version was designed by Josh Emerson of VONT.

Maine Economic Growth Council Members 2025

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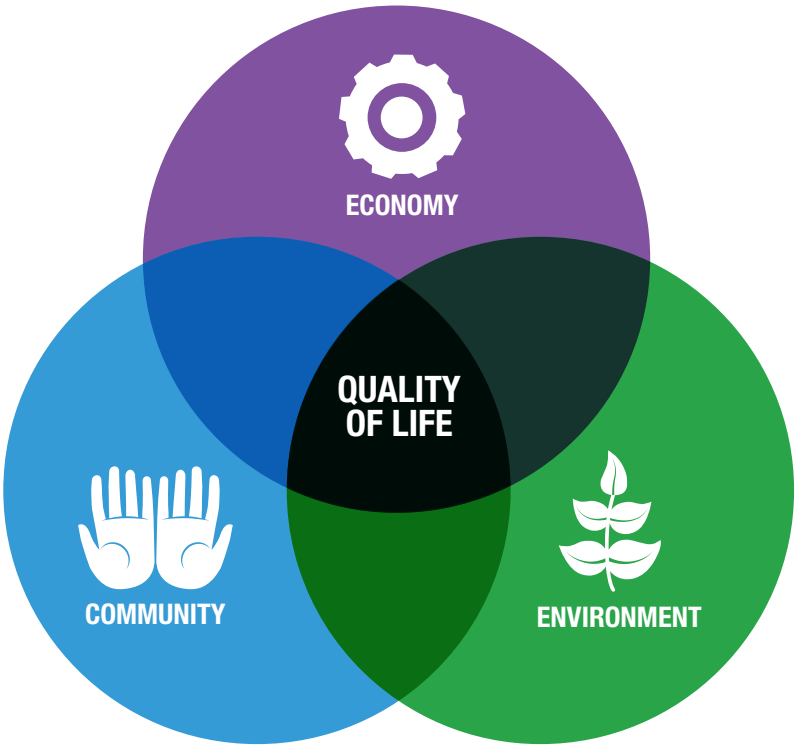
VISION

A high quality of life for all Maine people



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