

Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI), March 2016

A More-Accurate View of RI's Employment Situation

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Jobs > Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI) > Monthly Snapshot > March 2016 > 1

During the Center's years of analyzing employment reports from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), we have observed that the numbers often do not reflect the real experience of Rhode Islanders and that news reports often exacerbate the disconnect. For example, an unemployment rate that improves when more people give up looking for work than lose their jobs is self-evidently not a useful gauge of employment health.

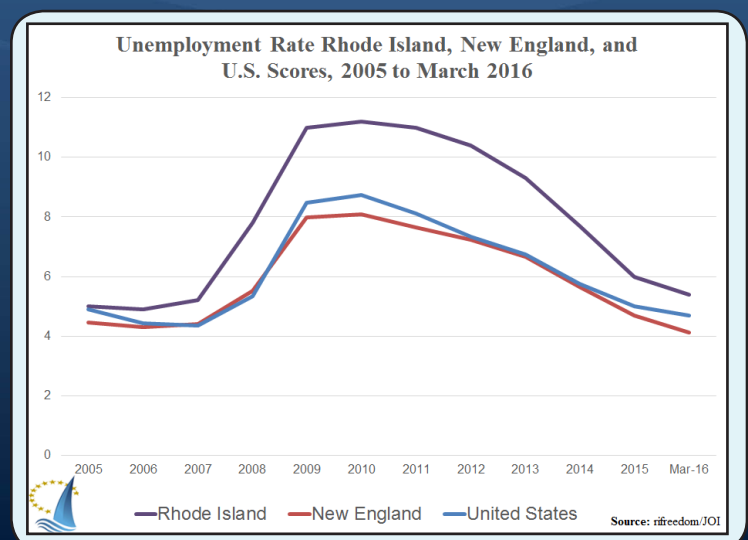
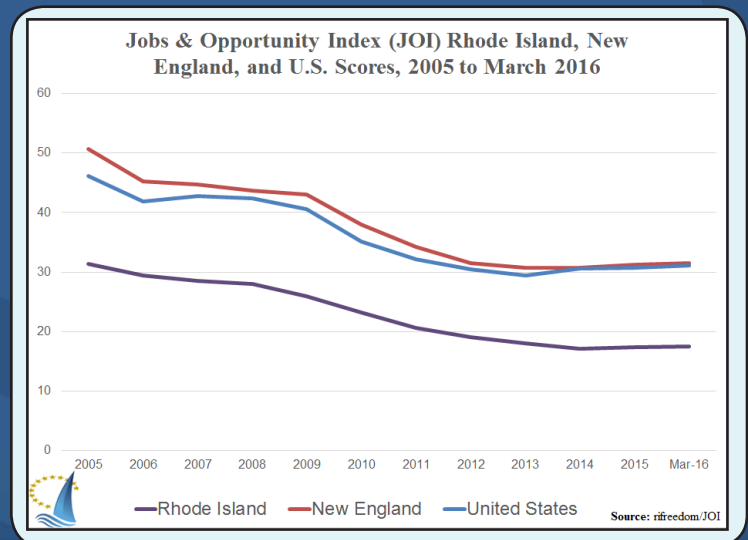
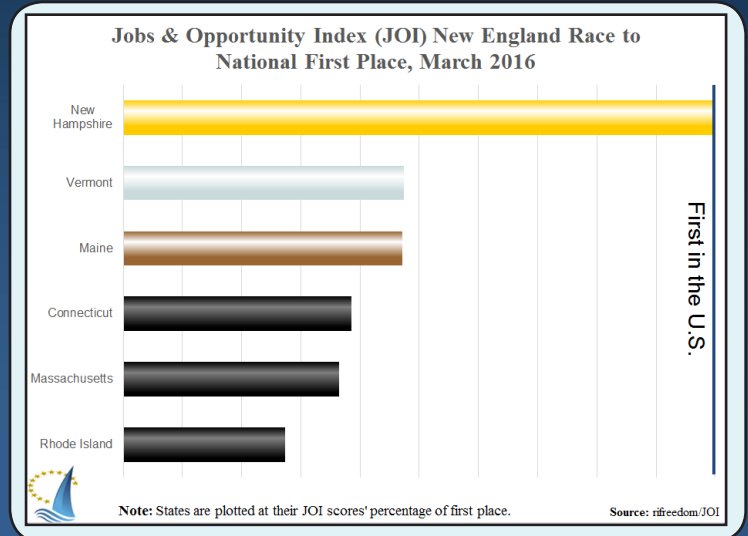
Beginning with March 2016 data, we will be recasting our monthly brief to report results on our new Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI), which takes into account 13 data sets including not only multiple additional employment categories, but also income, taxes, and welfare program enrollment, in an equation ensuring that positive changes improve a state's score and negative ones harm it. For additional information, see www.rifreedom.org/JOI.

The first chart at right shows the six New England states in the national race. For as long as the Center has data (2005), New Hampshire has been in first or second place nationwide. The near tie of Vermont and Maine, ranking 21st and 22nd, respectively, is a recent development, with Vermont sliding and Maine on the upswing. Massachusetts and Connecticut have also been slipping. Rhode Island spent the middle part of the last decade in the low 40s, but fell in 2011 and has been stuck in 48th since 2012.

The second two charts show the difference between the story told by JOI and that told by the unemployment rate. The latter would lead one to believe that RI not only has improved since 2010, but has been gaining ground on the New England and U.S. averages. JOI, by contrast, shows a steady decline, with RI losing comparative ground, which is more in keeping with local evidence and deeper analyses that the Center has performed.

The JOI combines three factors addressing different aspects of the job market's true condition:

- **The Job Outlook Factor** (measuring people's optimism that adequate work is available): RI ranks 48th.
- **The Freedom Factor** (measuring the level of work against reliance on welfare programs): RI ranks 39th.
- **The Prosperity Factor** (measuring the financial motivation of income versus taxes): RI ranks 46th.



Jobs > Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI) > Monthly Snapshot > March 2016 > 2

	JOI			Job Outlook Factor			Freedom Factor			Prosperity Factor		
	Rank	Trend	Score	Rank	Trend	Score	Rank	Trend	Score	Rank	Trend	Score
New Hampshire	1	👍	63.7	17	👎	5.5	5	👏	8.0	2	👏	8.9
Wyoming	2	👎	62.4	7	👎	6.2	2	👎	9.9	12	👏	7.3
Utah	3	👏	59.2	5	👏	6.8	3	👏	9.2	14	👏	7.1
North Dakota	4	👏	56.5	1	👏	10.0	1	👍	10.0	35	👏	5.7
Alaska	5	👏	49.0	35	👎	4.1	16	👎	5.3	1	👏	10.0
South Dakota	6	👏	47.0	2	👏	8.2	8	👏	6.8	21	👏	6.4
Virginia	7	👏	45.9	29	👎	4.4	6	👏	7.5	13	👏	7.2
Kansas	8	👏	42.2	10	👏	5.9	7	👏	7.3	27	👏	6.2
Colorado	9	👏	42.1	6	👍	6.3	18	👏	5.1	7	👏	7.7
Montana	10	👏	41.2	19	👏	5.2	12	👎	5.5	8	👏	7.6
Iowa	11	👏	40.0	3	👏	7.5	13	👏	5.5	20	👏	6.5
Nebraska	12	👏	38.7	4	👏	7.3	4	👏	8.2	44	👏	4.9
Idaho	13	👏	37.5	13	👏	5.7	15	👍	5.3	17	👏	6.9
Wisconsin	14	👏	34.4	9	👏	6.1	10	👏	5.6	31	👏	6.0
Texas	15	👏	33.5	12	👏	5.9	19	👏	5.0	24	👏	6.3
Maryland	16	👏	33.1	20	👏	4.9	17	👏	5.1	19	👏	6.6
South Carolina	17	👍	33.0	41	👏	4.0	30	👍	4.2	3	👏	8.0
Hawaii	18	👎	32.0	28	👍	4.4	27	👍	4.3	10	👏	7.4
Alabama	19	👎	31.7	33	👍	4.2	38	👏	3.9	4	👏	8.0
Oklahoma	20	👏	31.0	8	👏	6.2	28	👎	4.2	23	👏	6.3
Vermont	21	👏	30.2	15	👏	5.6	35	👎	4.0	18	👏	6.6
Maine	22	👏	30.0	24	👎	4.5	32	👎	4.1	16	👏	7.1
Missouri	23	👍	28.8	14	👏	5.7	14	👍	5.4	42	👏	5.2
Nevada	24	👎	28.7	50	👏	3.2	26	👎	4.3	11	👏	7.3
Indiana	25	👏	28.2	16	👍	5.5	21	👏	4.9	38	👏	5.5
Mississippi	26	👏	26.7	37	👎	4.1	48	👏	3.1	6	👏	7.7
Arizona	27	👏	26.2	47	👍	3.7	40	👏	3.7	15	👏	7.1
Washington	28	👏	25.7	30	👏	4.3	36	👎	4.0	25	👏	6.3
Florida	29	👏	25.4	44	👏	3.8	31	👎	4.2	22	👏	6.3
North Carolina	30	👏	25.4	39	👏	4.1	25	👍	4.3	28	👏	6.0
Georgia	31	👏	25.3	43	👏	3.9	23	👍	4.4	29	👏	6.0
Pennsylvania	32	👏	24.6	34	👍	4.1	24	👎	4.4	34	👏	5.7
Connecticut	33	👏	24.6	40	👏	4.0	20	👏	5.0	39	👏	5.3
New Jersey	34	👏	24.1	32	👎	4.2	11	👍	5.5	45	👏	4.8
Michigan	35	👍	23.7	42	👏	3.9	34	👎	4.0	32	👏	5.9
West Virginia	36	👎	23.5	45	👏	3.7	49	👏	2.8	9	👏	7.5
Massachusetts	37	👏	23.2	25	👎	4.5	22	👏	4.6	43	👏	5.0
Louisiana	38	👏	23.0	26	👏	4.5	42	👏	3.5	33	👏	5.9
Oregon	39	👏	22.5	38	👏	4.1	45	👍	3.3	26	👏	6.3
Illinois	40	👍	22.1	36	👍	4.1	29	👏	4.2	40	👏	5.3
Tennessee	41	👍	22.1	27	👏	4.5	41	👏	3.7	36	👏	5.5
New Mexico	42	👎	22.0	46	👏	3.7	50	👏	2.4	5	👏	7.8
Kentucky	43	👏	21.4	21	👏	4.8	43	👏	3.4	37	👏	5.5
Minnesota	44	👏	20.8	11	👏	5.9	9	👏	6.4	49	👏	3.3
California	45	👏	20.2	49	👏	3.5	46	👎	3.3	30	👏	6.0
Ohio	46	👏	19.2	23	👍	4.6	33	👎	4.1	47	👏	4.5
New York	47	👏	18.7	31	👍	4.2	47	👏	3.2	41	👏	5.2
Rhode Island	48	👏	17.4	48	👎	3.7	39	👏	3.8	46	👏	4.7
Arkansas	49	👏	16.1	18	👏	5.3	44	👏	3.4	48	👏	4.0
Delaware	50	👏	11.1	22	👏	4.7	37	👎	4.0	50	👏	2.6