

Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI), April 2016

Slight Improvement, but Slipping Versus Neighbors

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

Although the narrow official unemployment rate that Rhode Island politicians prefer to tout puts the state at 35th in the nation, up from 36th, the broader Jobs & Opportunity (JOI) ranking of Rhode Island remained unchanged at 48 among states. With eight of its 13 data-points' being updated, including quarterly alternate measures of unemployment, the index did see improvement on the Job Opportunity factor for April, largely because of a reduction of the number of Rhode Islanders at the edges of the labor force, including long-term unemployed, marginally attached, and involuntary part-time.

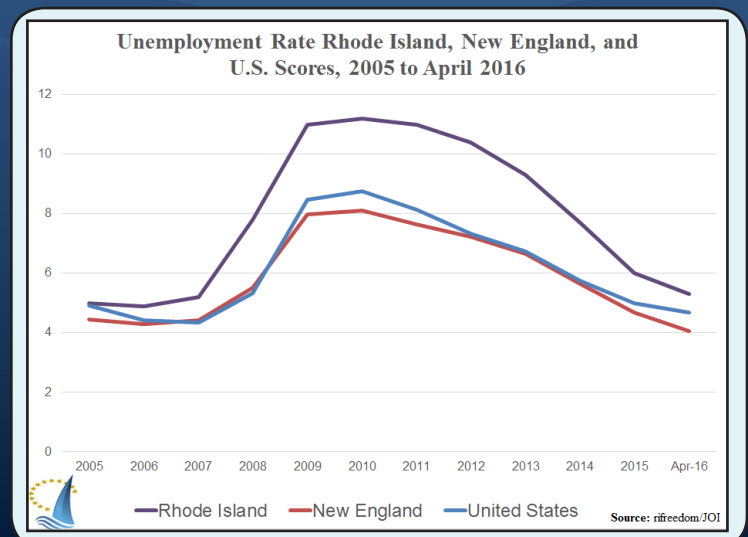
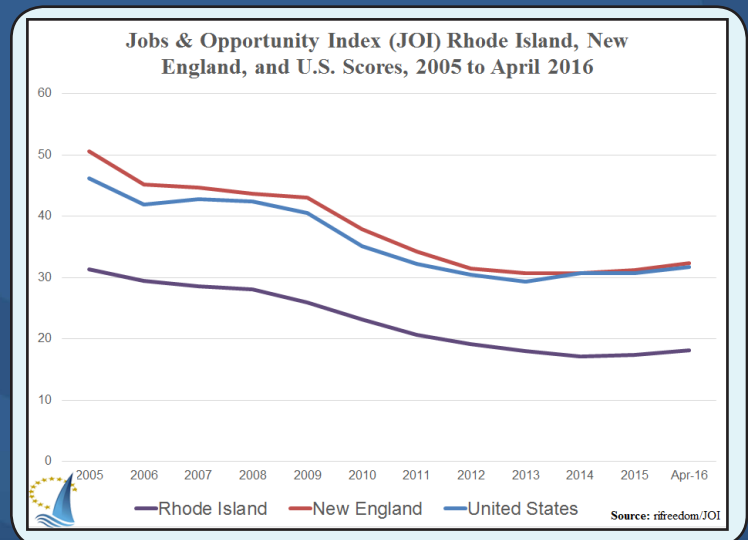
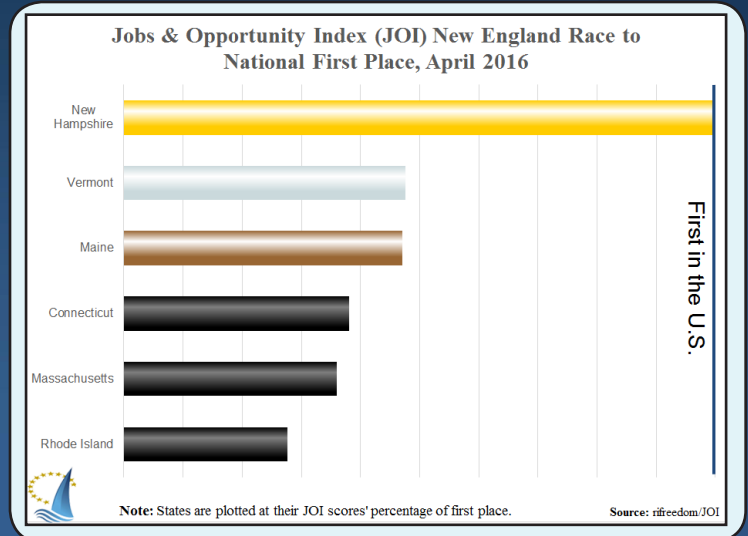
However, with employment in the Ocean State largely stagnant for the past year, this result may very well be an indicator of the final exit of people who've decided that they just can't make RI work for them. Improvements in the two welfare metrics that were updated, Medicaid and SNAP, could also be otherwise positive developments indicating a trend that is arguably negative. (Note that these metrics lag by three and two months, respectively.)

As one would expect from an index with so many values, changes from month to month are not dramatic, as seen in the first chart at right, which shows the six New England states in the national race. Even so, Connecticut slipped a rank, to 34, and Vermont advanced one, to 20. New Hampshire held its place at the lead of the nation; Maine kept 22nd; and Massachusetts remained at 37.

Overall, the gap between Rhode Island's JOI score and the New England average grew in April (see the second chart). That result contrasts with the unemployment rate, with which Rhode Island gained ground within New England (third chart), illustrating the problem with using that common metric as an indicator of economic health.

Results for the three underlying JOI factors were:

- **Job Outlook Factor** (measuring optimism adequate work is available): RI moved up five steps to 43rd.
- **Freedom Factor** (measuring the level of work against reliance on welfare programs): RI still ranks 39th, with reductions in welfare rolls being canceled out by lost jobs based in the state.
- **Prosperity Factor** (measuring the financial motivation of income versus taxes): RI still ranks 46th, because no underlying data has been updated.



Jobs > Jobs & Opportunity Index (JOI) > Monthly Snapshot > April 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	👉	65.6	13	👈	6.0	5	👉	8.1	2	👉	8.9
Wyoming	2	👉	62.3	10	👎	6.1	2	👉	9.9	12	👉	7.3
Utah	3	👉	58.9	5	👉	6.6	3	👉	9.3	14	👉	7.1
North Dakota	4	👉	56.5	1	👉	10.0	1	👉	10.0	35	👉	5.7
South Dakota	5	👈	50.9	2	👉	9.8	8	👉	6.9	21	👉	6.4
Alaska	6	👎	48.3	38	👎	4.2	15	👈	5.2	1	👉	10.0
Virginia	7	👉	46.5	31	👎	4.6	6	👉	7.5	13	👉	7.2
Kansas	8	👉	43.1	8	👈	6.2	7	👉	7.4	27	👉	6.2
Colorado	9	👉	42.9	6	👉	6.5	17	👈	5.1	7	👉	7.7
Iowa	10	👈	41.7	3	👉	8.1	12	👈	5.5	20	👉	6.5
Nebraska	11	👈	39.4	4	👉	7.6	4	👉	8.3	44	👉	4.9
Montana	12	👎	39.0	20	👎	5.2	18	👎	5.1	8	👉	7.6
Idaho	13	👉	38.6	14	👎	6.0	14	👈	5.4	17	👉	6.9
Texas	14	👈	34.4	9	👈	6.2	19	👉	5.1	24	👉	6.3
Maryland	15	👈	34.3	19	👈	5.4	16	👈	5.1	19	👉	6.6
Wisconsin	16	👎	34.2	16	👎	5.9	10	👉	5.6	31	👉	6.0
South Carolina	17	👉	33.5	42	👎	4.1	31	👎	4.2	3	👉	8.0
Hawaii	18	👉	32.9	25	👈	4.8	28	👎	4.2	10	👉	7.4
Alabama	19	👉	32.7	32	👈	4.5	38	👉	3.9	4	👉	8.0
Vermont	20	👈	31.2	15	👉	6.0	34	👈	4.1	18	👉	6.6
Oklahoma	21	👎	30.9	12	👎	6.1	30	👎	4.2	23	👉	6.3
Maine	22	👉	30.8	23	👈	4.8	33	👎	4.1	16	👉	7.1
Missouri	23	👉	29.8	11	👈	6.1	13	👈	5.5	42	👉	5.2
Nevada	24	👉	29.3	50	👉	3.4	26	👉	4.3	11	👉	7.3
Indiana	25	👉	28.6	17	👎	5.7	21	👉	4.9	38	👉	5.5
Arizona	26	👈	28.1	37	👈	4.3	40	👉	3.8	15	👉	7.1
Mississippi	27	👎	27.0	41	👎	4.2	48	👉	3.1	6	👉	7.7
Washington	28	👉	26.5	30	👉	4.6	36	👉	4.0	25	👉	6.3
Florida	29	👉	26.3	45	👎	4.0	29	👈	4.2	22	👉	6.3
North Carolina	30	👉	26.0	36	👈	4.3	25	👉	4.3	28	👉	6.0
Georgia	31	👉	25.6	47	👎	4.0	23	👉	4.4	29	👉	6.0
New Jersey	32	👈	25.1	28	👈	4.7	11	👉	5.6	45	👉	4.8
Pennsylvania	33	👎	25.1	35	👎	4.4	24	👉	4.4	34	👉	5.7
Connecticut	34	👎	25.0	39	👈	4.2	20	👉	5.0	39	👉	5.3
West Virginia	35	👈	24.1	46	👎	4.0	49	👉	2.8	9	👉	7.5
Michigan	36	👎	23.9	44	👎	4.0	35	👎	4.0	32	👉	5.9
Massachusetts	37	👉	23.6	29	👎	4.7	22	👉	4.7	43	👉	5.0
Oregon	38	👈	23.5	33	👈	4.5	44	👈	3.4	26	👉	6.3
Louisiana	39	👎	23.5	27	👎	4.7	42	👉	3.6	33	👉	5.9
Tennessee	40	👈	22.6	26	👈	4.7	41	👉	3.7	36	👉	5.5
New Mexico	41	👈	22.5	48	👎	3.8	50	👉	2.4	5	👉	7.8
Illinois	42	👎	22.5	40	👎	4.2	27	👈	4.3	40	👉	5.3
Kentucky	43	👉	21.6	24	👎	4.8	43	👉	3.4	37	👉	5.5
Minnesota	44	👉	21.2	7	👈	6.3	9	👉	6.4	49	👉	3.3
California	45	👉	20.6	49	👉	3.8	47	👎	3.2	30	👉	6.0
Ohio	46	👉	19.7	22	👈	4.9	32	👈	4.1	47	👉	4.5
New York	47	👉	19.4	34	👎	4.5	46	👈	3.3	41	👉	5.2
Rhode Island	48	👉	18.2	43	👈	4.0	39	👉	3.8	46	👉	4.7
Arkansas	49	👉	16.3	18	👉	5.5	45	👎	3.4	48	👉	4.0
Delaware	50	👉	11.4	21	👈	5.0	37	👉	4.0	50	👉	2.6