

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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2024

# MEASURES OF GROWTH<sup>+</sup>

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

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MEASURES OF  
GROWTH<sup>+</sup> **30**  
YEARS

 **MEGC**  
Maine Economic  
Growth Council

Administered by  
**mdf**





# MEASURES OF GROWTH

# 30 YEARS

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

*(Photo credit: Chris Turgeon on Unsplash)*


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## ECONOMY

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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.



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<div> <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> </div> <div>  <b>Internet Connectivity</b> 32 </div> <div>  <p>In 2024, 89% of Maine locations have either average or broadband internet, up 3%.</p> </div> <div>  <b>Transportation</b> 33 </div> <div>  <p>In 2023, 72% of Maine roadways were rated good or fair.</p> </div> <div>  <b>Housing Affordability</b> 35 </div> <div>  <p>In 2023, 79% of households were unable to afford the median-priced home, up from 72%.</p> </div>	<div>  <b>ENVIRONMENT</b> </div> <div>  <b>Air Quality</b> 43 </div> <div> <p>In 2023, there were 39 moderate air quality days, 15 more than in 2022.</p> </div> <div>  <b>Water Quality</b> 44 </div> <div> <p>In 2022, Maine maintained its excellent water quality rating.</p> </div> <div>  <b>Sustainable Forestlands</b> 45 </div> <div>  <p>In 2022, the 10-year growth-to-removal ratio fell 4% to 1.51 but remained above the sustainability goal.</p> </div> <div>  <b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b> 46 </div> <div>  <p>From 2020 to 2021, GHG emissions rose 1.4% but still shows major progress toward the long-term goal.</p> </div>
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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

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The Maine Economic Growth Council is pleased to present the 30th anniversary edition of the *Measures of Growth* report. This nonpartisan, data-driven report shows where Maine sits relative to other states and the United States 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.

### **Measures of Growth Turns 30**

When *Measures of Growth* debuted in 1995, the internet was in its infancy, houses were cheap, and Maine was home to numerous paper mills and military bases. The years since have been a time of remarkable change. Economic energy has shifted from manufacturing to services, from physical capital to human capital, and from rural to urban areas. Maine has changed, too. Our population is older and more urban, jobs have become more service oriented, and seismic environmental and industrial shifts impact our forest and marine resources and industries, sharply challenging some of our rural communities. We also face two significant challenges that were little known 30 years ago and have roots in actions taken (or not taken) at that time: climate change and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or "forever chemicals").

In this report, we highlight four communities and businesses that are meeting these changes head on. Bucksport is diversifying its economic base, Bath is expanding affordable housing opportunities, Dover-Foxcroft is addressing climate change, and MEMIC is embracing the talents of an older workforce.

### **Strength in Community**

As we envision a high quality of life for all Maine people, we know progress will require collaboration, disciplined adherence to a long-term strategy, and a renewed commitment to the systemic change necessary for equitable, sustainable, and shared prosperity.

The Council steadfastly believes that Maine has the potential to build a stronger, better connected, more resilient, and more equitable economy than ever before. We look forward to joining all Mainers to realize this vision.

### **Report Highlights**

Taking stock of Maine's economic progress, the Council sees reasons both for celebration and renewed resolve. For 2024, it assigns Gold Stars for progress in Internet Connectivity, Transportation, Sustainable Forests, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. It assigns Red Flags for needed attention to Labor Force, 4th and 8th Grade Test Scores, Cost of Energy, Housing Affordability, and Mental & Behavioral Health.

## Supporting Maine's economic strategic goals

Maine has a ten-year economic development strategy to achieve sustainable, equitable growth for all residents.<sup>1</sup> 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 10%**

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 2023, wages were nearly there (\$49,763) and would have exceeded the goal if not for high inflation. The Wages metric on page 10 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 13.7%**

Goal 2 seeks to increase value added per Maine worker from \$103,403 in 2017 to \$113,744 by 2030 (adjusted for inflation). In 2023, value added was \$117,549, an increase of 13.7% compared to 2017. For more information, see the Value Added metric on page 16.

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

##### **Status: Maine's labor force grew by 6,000 in 2023, reaching 687,000**

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 lost 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 2023, we gained 6,000 participants to hit 687,000. See the Labor Force metric on page 14 for more details.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/decd/strategic-plan>

# FUNDAMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Bustling Main Street on an autumn day in Ellsworth. (Photo credit: No Umbrella Media)

# Measures of Growth at 30: Stories of Change and Resilience

## Labor Force: MEMIC Attracts and Maintains Workers Age 55+

As the oldest state in the country, Maine continues to face a dire shortage of workers in all industries and all regions. One key to overcoming this challenge could be to attract and retain people age 55+.

In 1993, Maine was reeling from a recession and the loss of 35,000 jobs. Today, post-pandemic Maine faces another workforce challenge—and workers aged 55+ are one key to solving it.

Maine's median age is 44.8 years, among the oldest in the nation. This reshapes Maine in diverse ways, from demand for public services such as elder health care and aging-friendly housing to evolving employment practices.

Noël Bonam, Maine State Director for AARP, says the pandemic highlighted these issues and is prompting more employers to rethink hiring and retaining older workers. "Employers would benefit significantly by thinking outside the box. It requires a new way of communicating and engaging. Older employees who return to work often prefer flexible roles, hours, schedules, or projects. They want to contribute meaningfully and work intergenerationally so they can offer mentorship while learning from younger colleagues."

Portland's MEMIC offers a shining example of this approach. The insurance company provides benefits such as long-term care coverage, generous paid time off, and flexible work options ranging from interim and full time to fully remote or hybrid roles. Employees can ease into retirement by gradually reducing their hours, and retirees can return in new contract roles or in a temporary capacity. MEMIC also offers structured and unstructured intergenerational mentorships.



Multigenerational team from MEMIC working together during a United Way volunteer project in Portland. (Photo credit: MEMIC)

*"Age is an important factor that adds to the diversity of our people, our thoughts, our innovations, and the way we do our work every day."*

**Michelle Allen**  
Senior Vice President &  
Chief Human Resources Officer  
MEMIC



Multi-generational team collaborates at MEMIC. (Photo credit: MEMIC)

# Wages

-0.2%

In 2023, Maine’s wages fell 0.2% after adjusting for inflation but remained above the EPSCoR average.

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

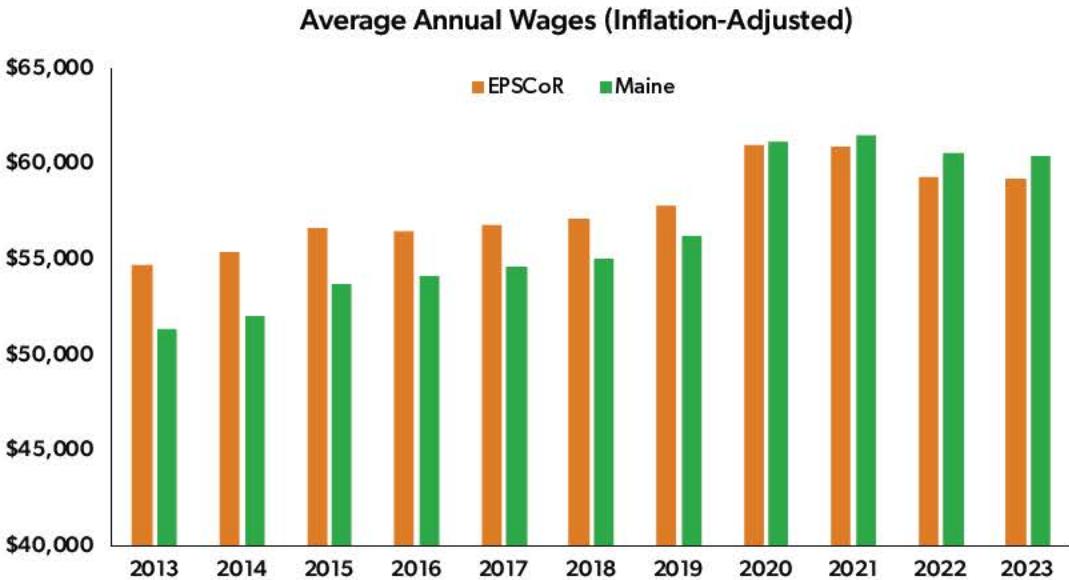
Wages reflect job quality, worker productivity, and the makeup of our economy; they are a primary driver of economic prosperity and quality of life. In 2023, Maine’s average annual wage was \$60,384 — below the U.S. average of \$72,357 but, for the fourth year, above the average for EPSCoR\* states (\$59,254). This 3.9% increase from 2022 shows employers responding to a tight labor market. Unfortunately, 4.1% annual inflation eclipsed these gains, reducing the average earner’s purchasing power by 0.2%. However, even adjusting for inflation, wages are now 7.4% above their pre-pandemic 2019 level.

The adequacy of wages to cover workers’ basic needs varies by household and region. In 2023, the estimated living wage for a single Mainer was \$45,843; it was \$103,875 for a single person with two children; and for two working adults with two children, it was \$114,774. 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 2023

Coastal Counties	
Cumberland	\$68,877
Sagadahoc	\$60,179
York	\$59,050
Waldo	\$53,057
Knox	\$52,633
Hancock	\$51,380
Lincoln	\$49,796
Central Counties	
Kennebec	\$56,940
Androscoggin	\$56,187
Penobscot	\$53,577
Rim Counties	
Somerset	\$51,785
Aroostook	\$49,360
Oxford	\$49,234
Washington	\$48,433
Franklin	\$47,458
Piscataquis	\$46,489



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

Poverty

-0.3%

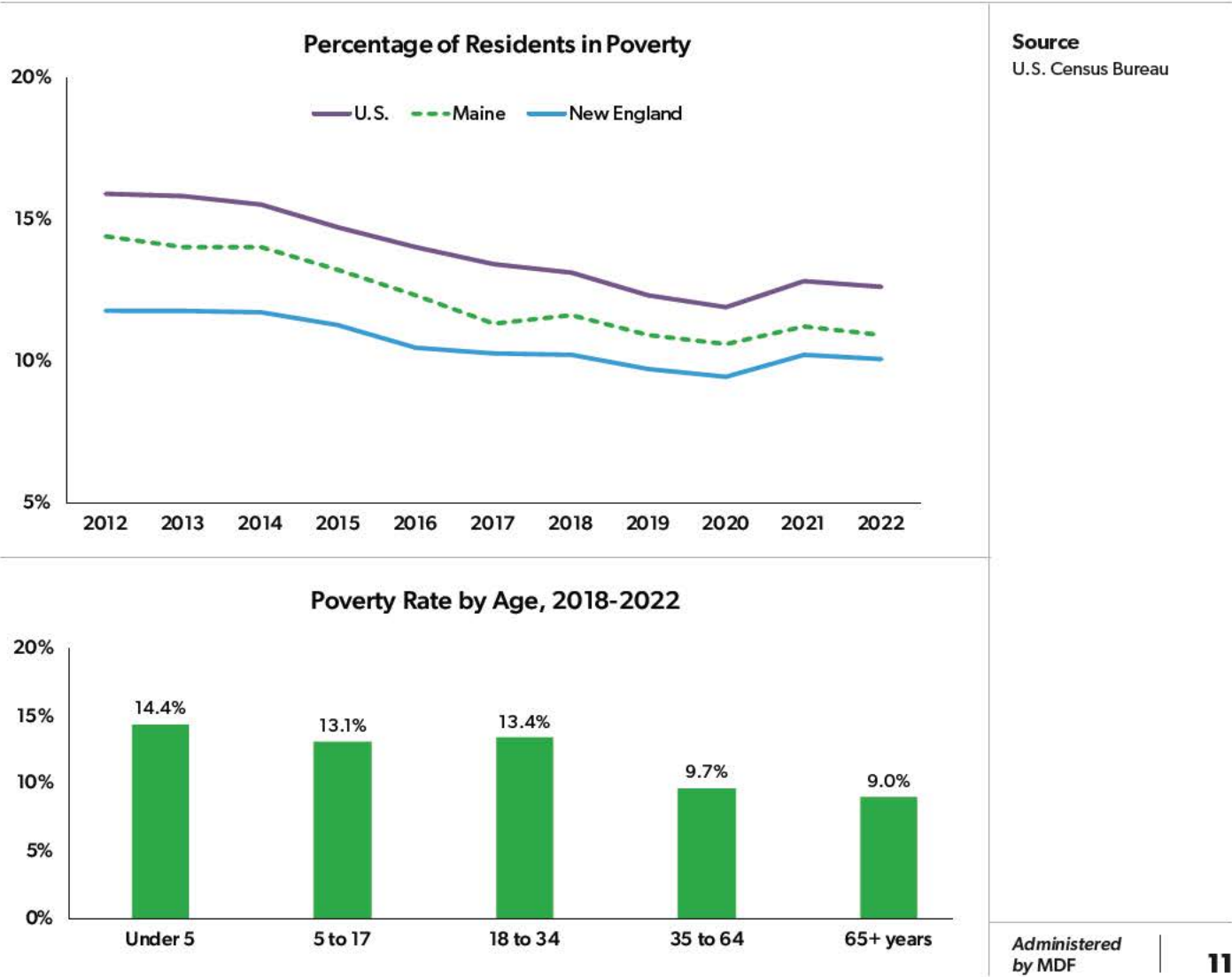
In 2022, poverty fell from 11.2% to 10.9%.

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

In 2022, the percentage of Mainers in households with incomes below the poverty level was 10.9%. That was below the U.S. rate of 12.6%. Poverty varied greatly by region—from 6.6% in Cumberland County to 15.6% in Washington County. Maine’s poverty rate reflects both the overall state of the economy and the experiences of individual residents. While it has generally declined in the past decade, it is now higher than it was during the COVID pandemic, when federal stimulus measures reduced poverty rates.

State-level poverty rates mask stark differences within Maine’s populations. From 2018 to 2022, BIPOC\* and Latino or Hispanic Mainers were 55% more likely to be living in poverty, and 14% of Maine children under age 5 were living in poverty, compared to 9% of Mainers over age 65. Many poor children are in households headed by single females. From 2018 to 2022, almost 1 in 3 single mother households were poor (31%).

\*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color



# Gender Wage Equity

+1.5%

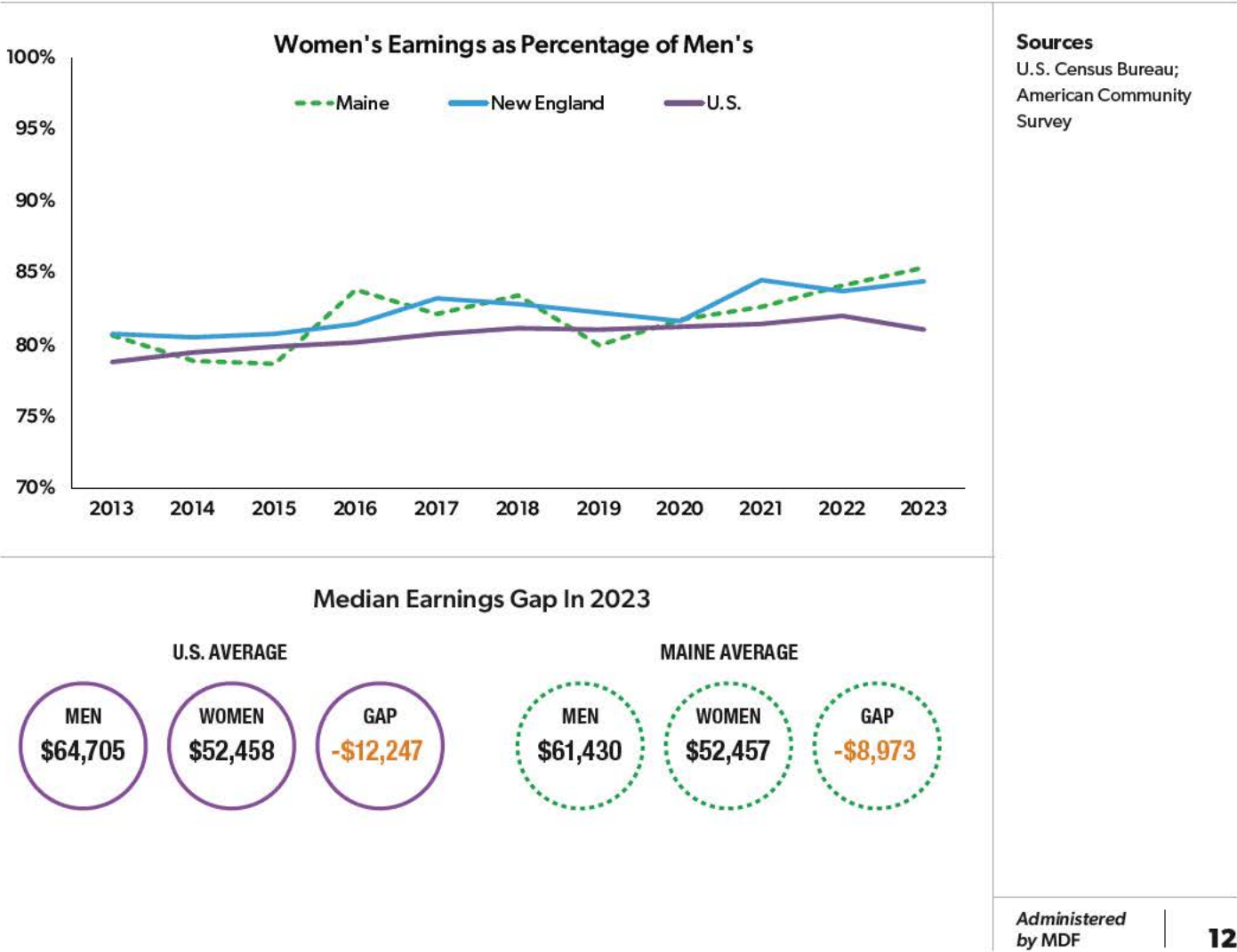
**In 2023, women’s wages rose 1.5% compared to men’s but remained about 85% of men’s earnings.**

**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 2023, the median earnings of Maine females was \$52,457—85% of the \$61,430 median earnings of Maine males. In other words, for every \$6 earned by Maine men, Maine women earned about \$5, even though they were all working full time. 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 2023, Maine’s gender income gap was between the U.S. and New England averages. No U.S. state has eliminated the gender pay gap yet, but in eight states women’s earnings ratio exceeds Maine’s. Rhode Island had the smallest gender wage gap. There, women earned 89% as much as men in 2023.



# Racial/Ethnic Income Equity

+4%

**In 2018-2022, the average incomes of BIPOC\* and Latino or Hispanic Mainers rose 4% but remained 27% below White, non-Hispanic Mainers, 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 2018 to 2022, the average per capita income of BIPOC\* and Latino or Hispanic Maine residents (about 9% of the population) was \$29,588. This is 73% of the \$40,669 average for White, non-Hispanic Mainers. This represents an increase from 69% in 2017-2021, and is high by national standards, but it means that for every \$10 made by White households, all other racial and ethnic groups made about \$7.

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. No U.S. state has

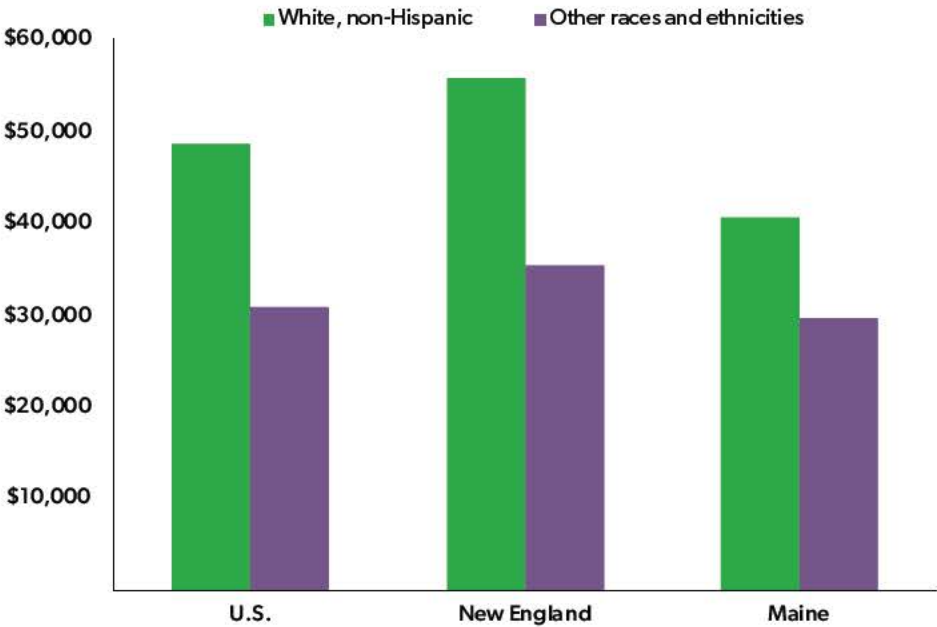
eliminated the racial income gap yet. Households of color earn over 75% as much as White households in New Hampshire and West Virginia, the highest-ranked states.

\*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Maine Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity 2018-2022

Race/Ethnicity	Population	Poverty Rate
White, not Hispanic or Latino	1,218,545	11%
Two or more races	51,495	15%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	24,296	13%
Black or African American	20,199	24%
Asian	13,662	11%
Other race	7,914	12%
American Indian & Alaska Native	6,486	20%
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islanders	265	13%

Average Per Capita Income, 2018-2022



Source  
U.S. Census Bureau

 Labor Force

+1%

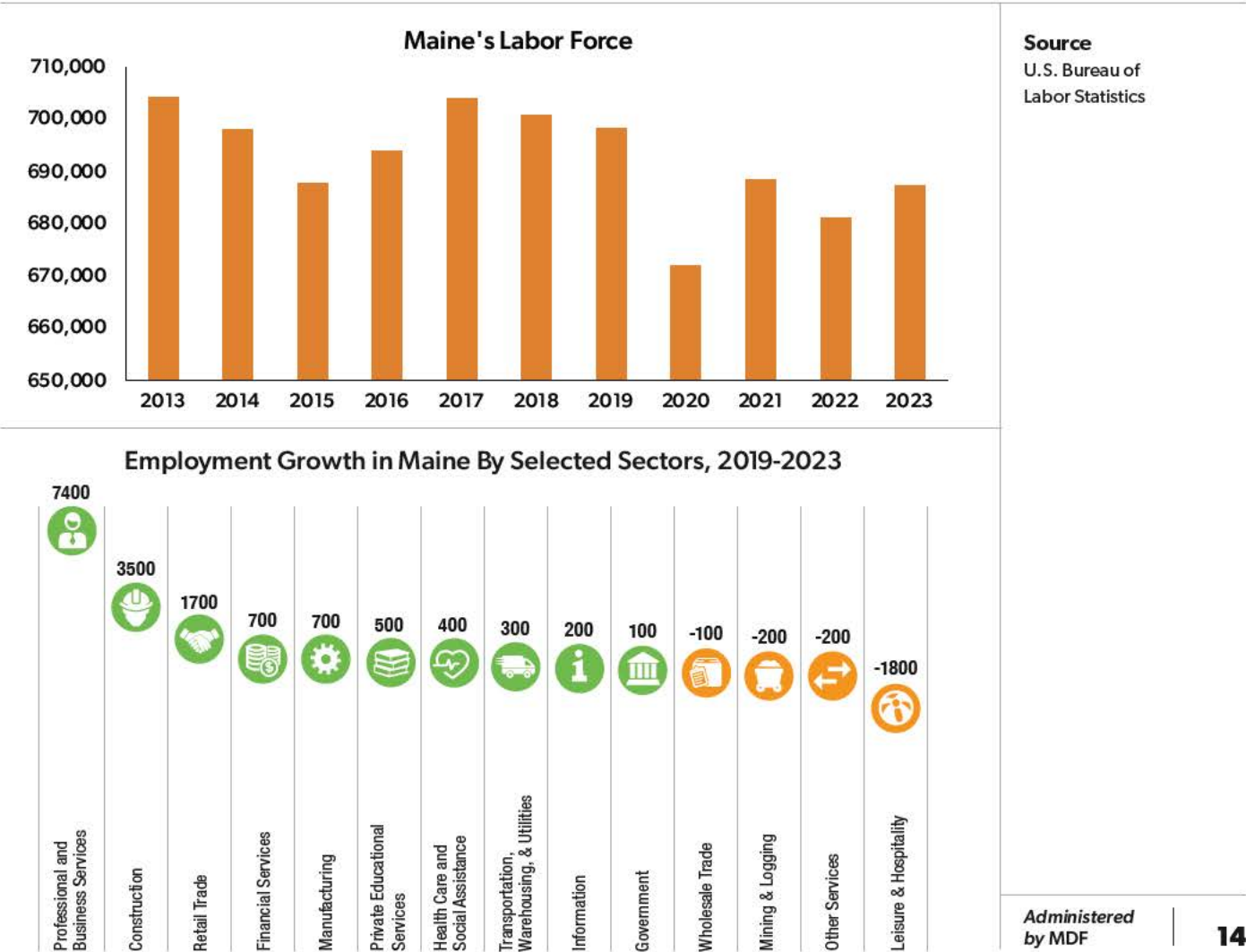
Maine’s labor force grew 1% to 687,000 in 2023 but remains a serious challenge.

**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. It is slowly regaining those workers. In 2023, there were approximately 687,000 in Maine’s labor force. That is an increase of 1% since 2022, but still about 6,000 below pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, the overall number of nonfarm payroll jobs exceeded pre-pandemic levels thanks to gains in professional and business services, construction, and retail trade. Jobs in government and health and social services returned to pre-pandemic levels, while jobs in

leisure and hospitality are still recovering.

A skilled labor force is essential for a healthy economy. 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. This has contributed to a slow decline in Maine’s labor force, which preceded the COVID-19 pandemic. To counter these trends, Maine must attract more working-age people from other states and countries, retain more of the young people born here, and help more Mainers participate in the workforce.



## Labor Force Participation

**+0.2%**

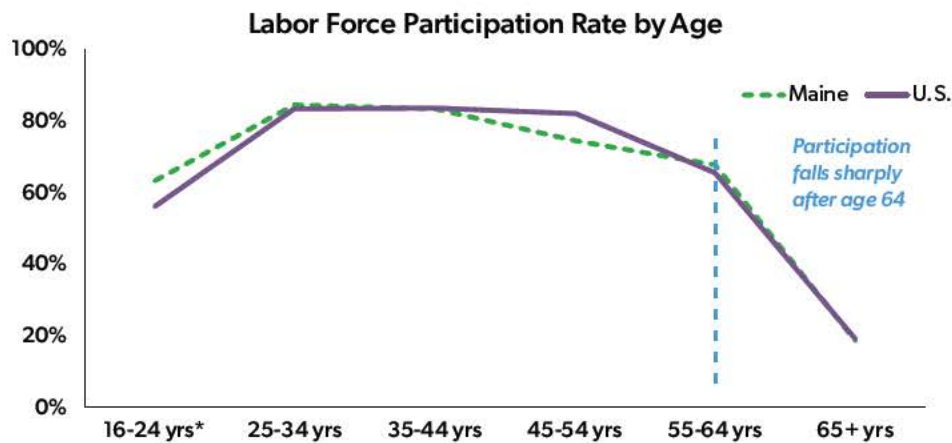
**In 2023, 81% of Maine adults ages 25-54 were in the labor force, nearly the same as in 2022.**

**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. Estimates of Maine's participation rate come from household surveys and are subject to revision, so these numbers should be interpreted with that in mind. In 2023, 81.2% of Maine's "prime working age" adults (ages 25-54) were in this category. 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 the same or higher rates as their peers nationwide. However, we have a higher share of residents aged 65 or older who work at lower rates. In 2022, 23% of Maine's population was 65+ compared to just 17% of the U.S. population.

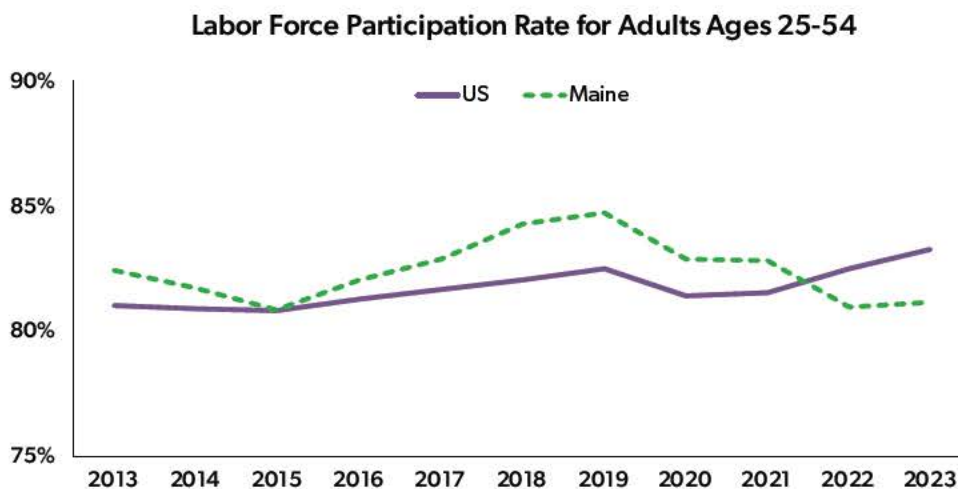
Potential measures to increase Maine's labor force participation rate include higher wages; increased childcare access; reduced schedules for older workers; and outreach to new Mainers, people with disabilities, veterans, disengaged youth, and others.



### Sources

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

\*Maine Labor Force Participation Rate for 16-24 years olds in 2022. All others are 2023.



# Value Added

+0.8%

In 2023, value added per worker rose 0.8% and 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.

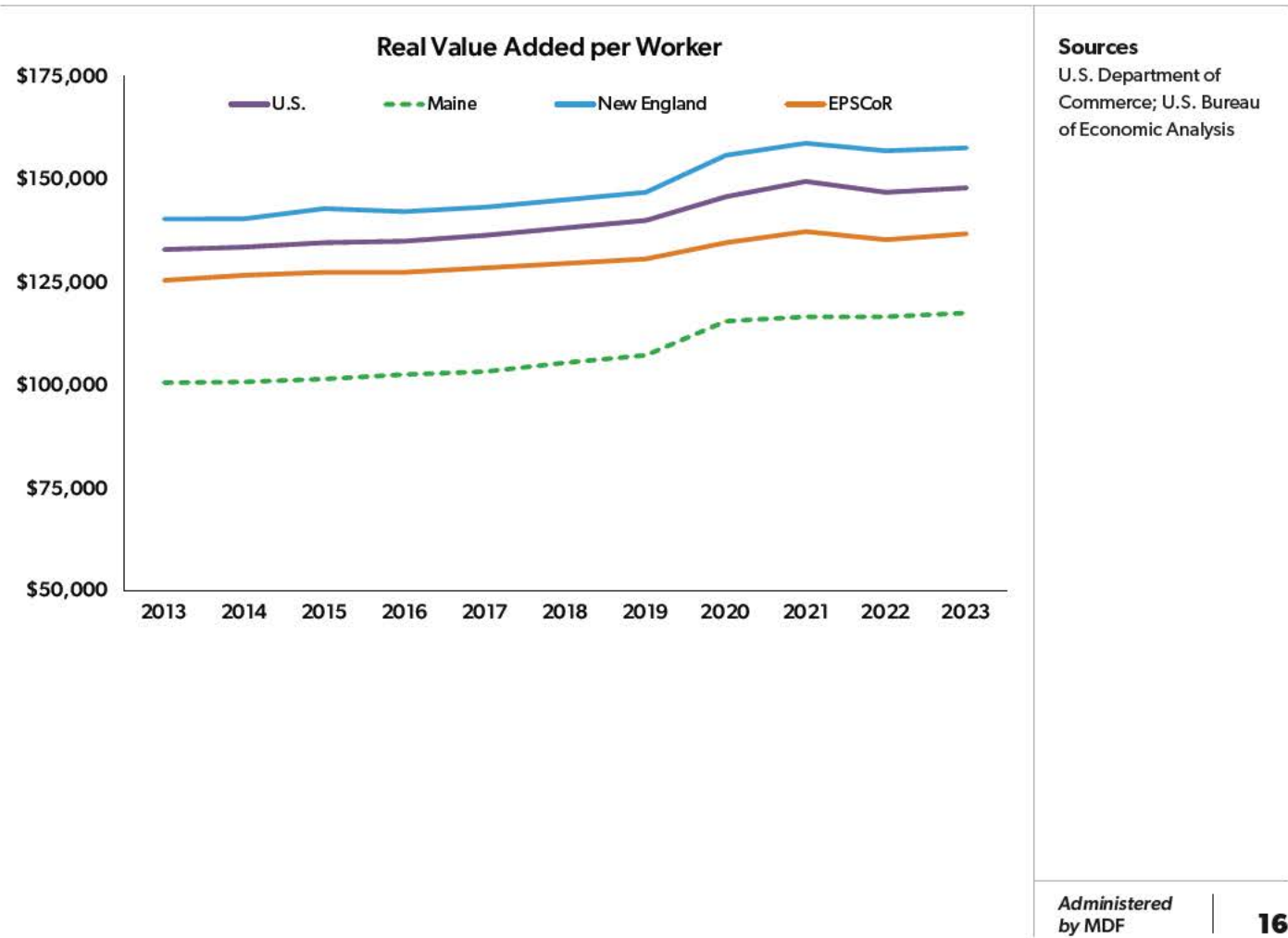
This indicator measures the productivity of workers by dividing gross domestic product by the total number of part- and full-time jobs. Maine has a relatively high share of part-time jobs, which lowers our value added per worker. Productivity also reflects skill levels, business costs, and a region’s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

Worker productivity in Maine is lower than in most other states, but it has been increasing. Maine ranked 43rd among the 50 states in 2023, up from 48th in 2016. Adjusted for inflation, value added rose 0.8% to \$117,549 per worker. The U.S., New England, and EPSCoR states grew 0.8%, 0.4%, 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 25% 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)



# Gross Domestic Product

+3%

In 2023, Maine’s GDP rose 3%, outpacing other New England states.

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

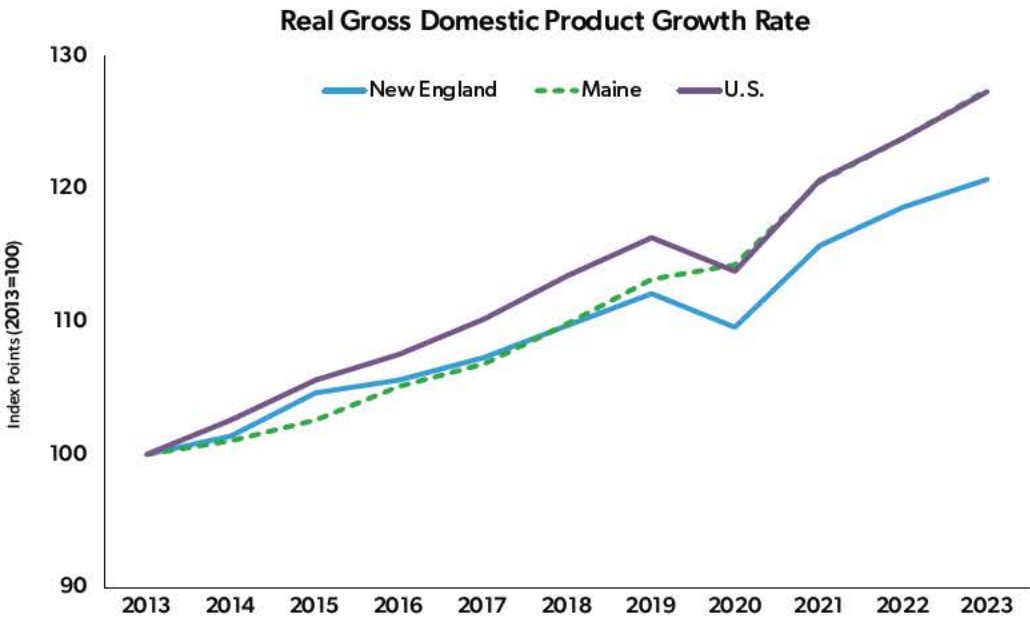
Gross domestic product (GDP) provides a sense of Maine’s overall economic performance. It reflects the market value of all goods and services produced in the state and some nonmarket goods and services provided by government agencies and nonprofit institutions.

In 2023, Maine’s GDP rose 3% adjusted for inflation, despite declines in a few industries such as manufacturing and wholesale trade. By this measure, Maine ranked 21st of the U.S. states, matched the U.S.’s 2.9% growth, and exceeded the New England average of 1.8%. Over the past decade, Maine’s GDP growth has kept pace with the U.S. and exceeded other New England states.

Real estate, professional and business services, government, and health care and social assistance together made up over one-half of Maine’s GDP in 2023.

Maine’s Real Domestic Product by Major Industry Sector 2023

Industry Sector	GDP Millions of Dollars	% of Total	% Change 2022- 2023
Real Estate	\$12,858	17%	7%
Professional and Business Services	\$10,278	14%	4%
Government	\$8,973	12%	2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$8,565	11%	3%
Manufacturing	\$6,806	9%	-2%
Retail Trade	\$6,322	8%	12%
Finance and Insurance	\$4,672	6%	0%
Wholesale Trade	\$3,287	4%	-2%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$3,139	4%	2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$2,685	4%	7%



Source  
U.S. Bureau of  
Economic Analysis

## ECONOMY

In keeping with the  
entrepreneurial spirit



Basketmaker Ange Muhorakeye displays her art during a Maine Crafts Association photo shoot.  
(Photo credit: Maine Crafts Association)

# Research & Development

+0%

In 2021, Maine’s R&D spending increased but was still 1.1% of GDP, unchanged from 2020.

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

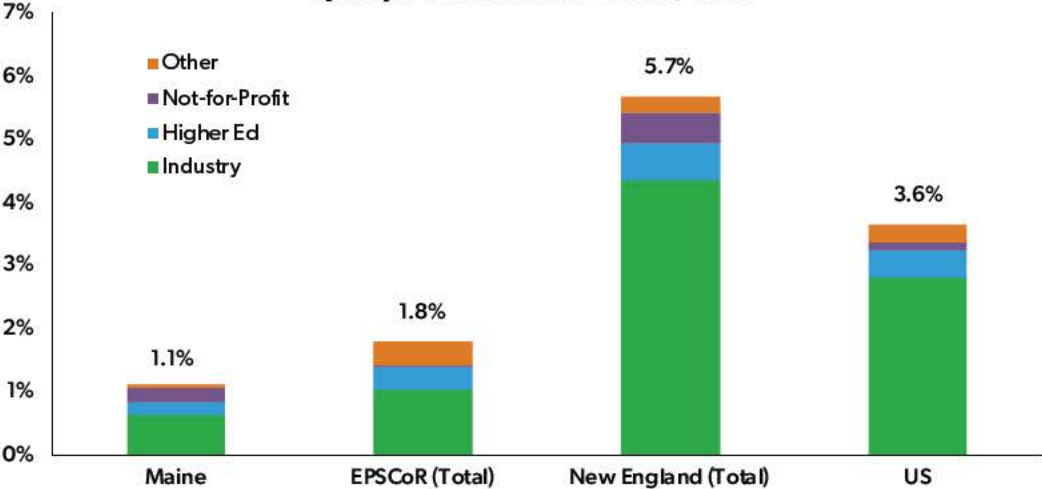
Research and development (R&D) spending is an indicator of the level of innovation in an economy, an important driver of economic growth. In 2021, Maine’s total R&D spending was \$870 million, up 13% from the previous year. This growth was distributed across industry (+15% growth), higher education (+9%), and nonprofit organizations (+4%). In all, Maine’s R&D spending equaled 1.1% of total gross domestic product (GDP), compared to 3.6% nationwide. This ranks Maine 37th of the 50 states and is about two-thirds 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 nonprofit 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 2021, the University of Maine’s R&D expenditures reached \$179 million, a record high, and in 2022 the University of Maine earned an R1\* top-tier research designation. These gains may improve Maine’s overall R&D ranking in future years.

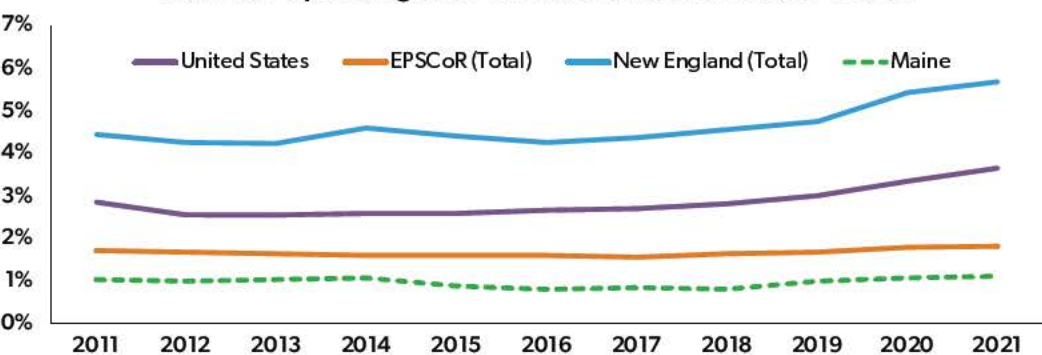
\*\*R1” refers to doctoral universities with “very high research activity,” as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Total Percent of GDP Toward R&D by Major Performance Sector, 2021



**Sources**  
Camoin Associates;  
National Science  
Foundation

Total R&D Spending as a Percent of Gross Domestic Product



Administered  
by MDF

# International Exports

+20%

In 2021-2023, Maine exports rose 20% from the prior three years, slightly slower than the nation.

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

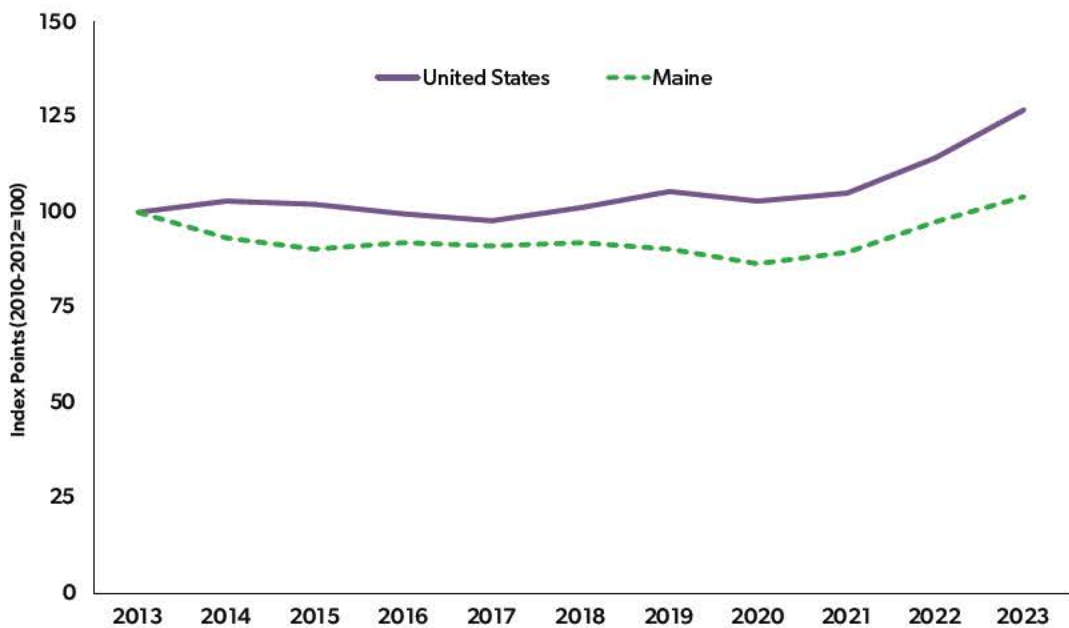
Maine businesses exported \$3 billion worth of goods in 2023. That was a decline from the previous year, but the longer-term trend was positive. This metric looks at exports over three years because in Maine’s small economy, exports in any given year can fluctuate sharply based on the sales of a few companies. From 2018-2020 to 2021-2023, Maine exports rose 20%, on par with the 23% growth of U.S. exports.

In 2023, Maine’s gains and losses occurred across a range of industries. Seafood exports dropped \$88 million (18%), likely due in part to China’s tariff on U.S. lobster. Sales of forest products, aircraft parts, and mineral fuels also fell, while sales

of electrical machinery, chemical products, and prepared food rose. Canada remains Maine’s leading trade partner, with \$1.4 billion in exports in 2023, followed by Malaysia, China, Mexico, and Japan.

Sales to customers in other states and countries provide valuable opportunities for Maine businesses. According to one estimate, exports account for about 1.6% of Maine businesses’ total sales (below the national rate of 3.4%). 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.

International Exports (Rolling Three-Year Average)



**Sources**  
Maine International Trade Center;  
Camoin Associates

# Measures of Growth at 30: Stories of Change and Resilience

## Entrepreneurship: Bucksport Embraces Changing Nature of Work

For communities across Maine who lost a mill or other major employer, embracing the changing nature of work—and business—is a key to revitalization and growth.

When the legislature created the Maine Economic Growth Council in 1993, it referenced the state's "evolving industrial base."<sup>1</sup> Employment in paper mills was declining, military bases were at risk, and the State knew it had to adapt.

The number of jobs in Maine has grown steadily since the 1990s, but the nature of work has changed. Some jobs are in fields that didn't exist 30 years ago: telemedicine, data analytics, search engine optimization, app development. Meanwhile, job losses have been concentrated within certain communities, sometimes with devastating consequences.

Bucksport has felt these changes acutely. For over 80 years, it was defined by its paper mill, which employed as many as 1,000 people. When that closed in 2014, the town found itself with 11 vacant buildings on Main Street and 8 empty lots in its industrial park. Economic Development Director Rich Rotella credits partnerships (with developers, residents, business owners, and nonprofits), a focus on developing key assets (an underutilized waterfront, undeveloped historic buildings, proximity to other service communities), and an enduring sense of community for pulling the town through this difficult time.

Bucksport's job market and economic base has become more diverse than ever, with small processors such as Pemaquid Mussel Farms and Greenhead Lobster, boutique shops like Verona Wine & Bistro, and positions at Maine Maritime Academy's new Center for Professional Mariner Development, which attracts students from around the world.



Verso Papermill, Bucksport. (Photo credit: Rich Rotella)

*"The jobs here have changed, but hard work and pride still reside in this town."*

**Rich Rotella**  
Economic Development Director  
Bucksport



Main Street, Bucksport. (Photo credit: Rich Rotella)

**Source:** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>1</sup> 10 MRSA §929-B(3)(E)

Administered  
by MDF

# Entrepreneurship

-37%

In 2022, the number of business start-ups exceeded closures by 31%, ahead of goal but down from record 2021 levels.

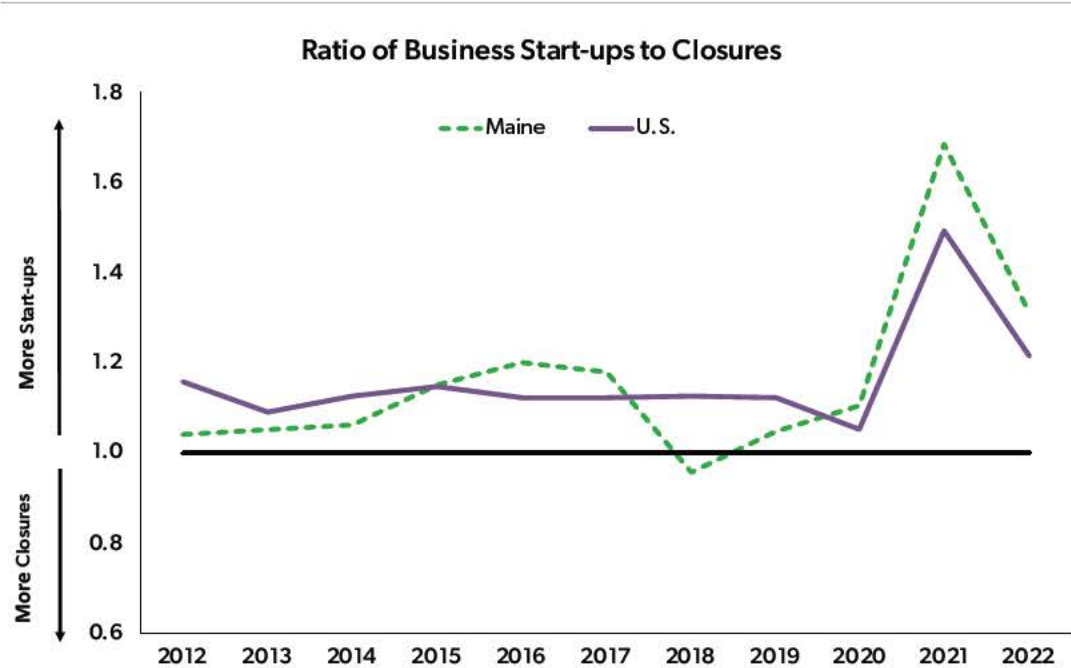
**Benchmark:** Maine’s ratio of business start-ups to closures will be positive and equal to or above the national average.

This entrepreneurship metric compares the number of business establishments that are started in Maine each year with the number that close. It includes any establishment with employees covered by unemployment insurance. A start-up-to-closure ratio greater than 1 means more businesses are being created than closed each year.

In 2022, Maine’s ratio of start-ups to closures was 1.31, meaning 31% more businesses were created (7,716) than closed (5,888). This exceeded the U.S. ratio of 1.21. This was a decline from the

COVID spike of 1.68 in 2021; however, the number of business creations remained high—80% above its 2010-2020 average.

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.



**Sources**  
U.S. Bureau of Labor  
Statistics; Business  
Employment Dynamics

# Prekindergarten Education

+5%

**In 2023, the share of Maine four-year-olds enrolled in public pre-K rose 5%.**

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

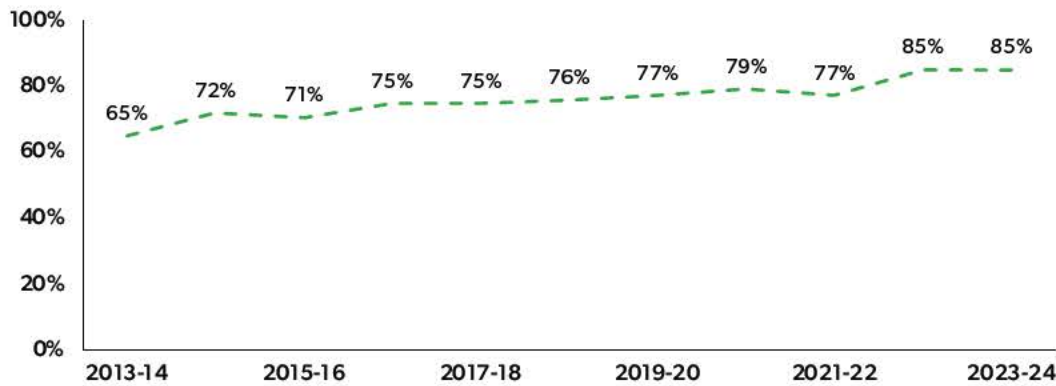
High-quality, affordable early care and education is critical to Maine’s economic development. It prepares young Mainers for success in school and supports their parents’ full participation in the workforce, a fact highlighted during the COVID pandemic.

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.

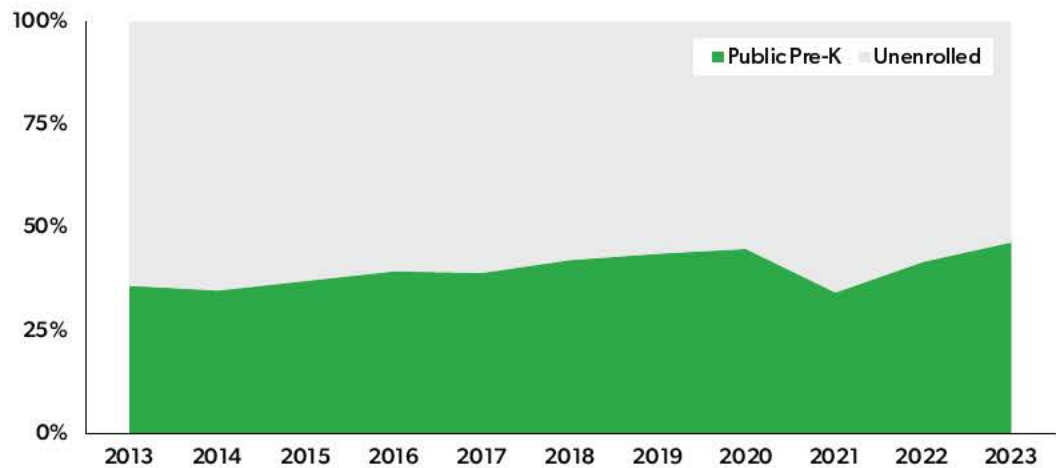
The percentage of Maine school districts with at least one public pre-K classroom has increased dramatically, from 24% in the late 2000s to 85% last year. According to the Maine Department of Education, many districts that do not yet offer public pre-K are either very small and lack enough four-year-olds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

School Districts with Public Pre-K Programs



**Sources**  
Maine Department of Education;  
National Institute for Early Education Research

Maine 4-Year-Olds in Public Pre-K



# Fourth-Grade Reading

-7%

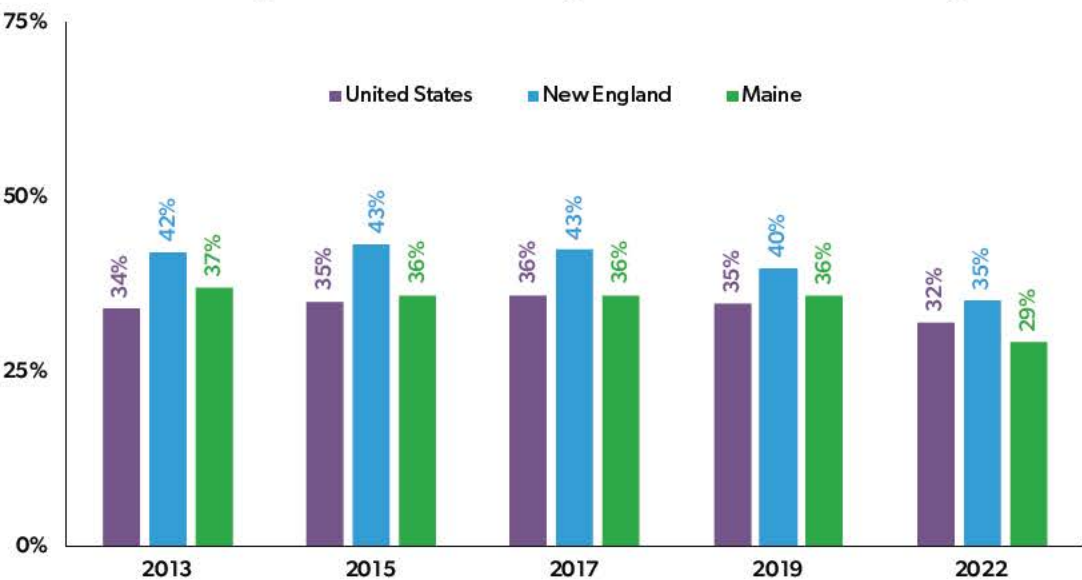
In 2022, 29% of Maine 4th graders were proficient in reading, a sharp drop from pre-COVID levels.

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

From 2019 to 2022, 4th grade reading performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests fell in 45 of the 50 states. In Maine, the share of students meeting the proficiency benchmark dropped from 37% to 29% (three percentage points below the national average). This is a change from previous years, when Maine was at or above the U.S. average. Based on the NAEP sample of 1,700 Maine 4th graders, it appears that proficiency declines were largest among low-income students, those with disabilities, and English

Language Learners. Declines were also larger for Black students than White students (other races were not reported).  
Reading scores are an indicator of future outcomes like educational attainment, employment, and earnings. Reading proficiency for 4th graders 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 4th and 8th graders every other year to allow national and state comparisons.

Percentage of 4th Graders Scoring Proficient 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 2022



# Eighth-Grade Math

**-10%**

**In 2022, 24% of Maine 8th graders were proficient in mathematics, down from 34% before COVID.**

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

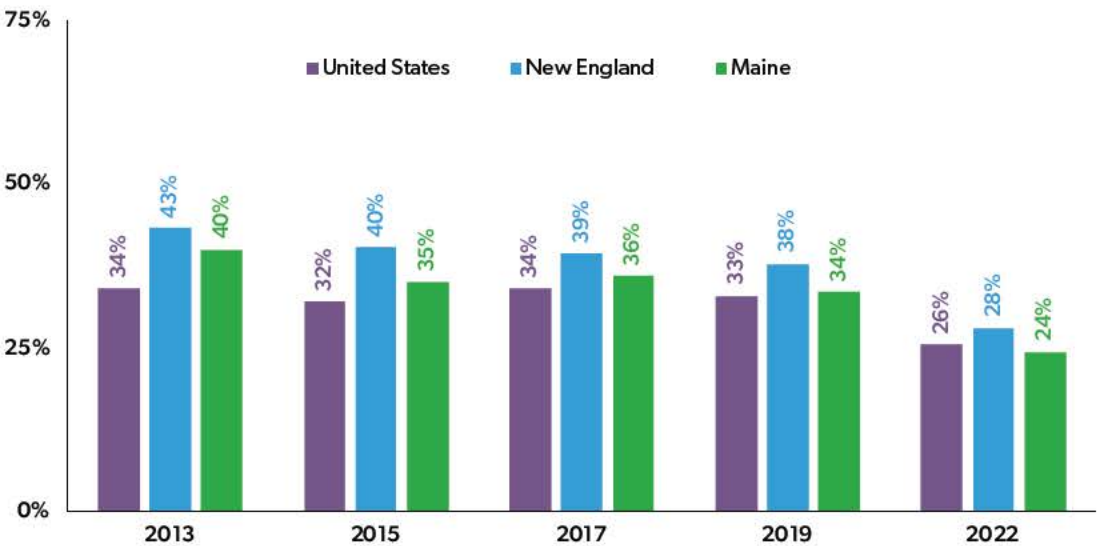
From 2019 to 2022, 8th grade math performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests fell in all 50 states. In Maine, the share of students meeting the proficiency benchmark fell from 34% to 24%, two percentage points below the U.S. average. This is a change from previous years, when Maine was consistently above the U.S. average. Based on the NAEP sample of 1,800 Maine 8th graders, it appears that proficiency declines were largest among low-income students, those with disabilities, and those whose parents had lower levels of education.

Math scores reflect foundational skills and indicate whether students are on track for college and career readiness.

A cornerstone of the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) disciplines, math proficiency can lead to in-demand job skills and well-paid careers in growing fields. Math addresses the knowledge and skills to solve problems, make sense of information, and accurately gather and evaluate evidence to make decisions.

Math proficiency for 8th graders 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 4th and 8th 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 2022



# Postsecondary Degrees & Credentials

+0%

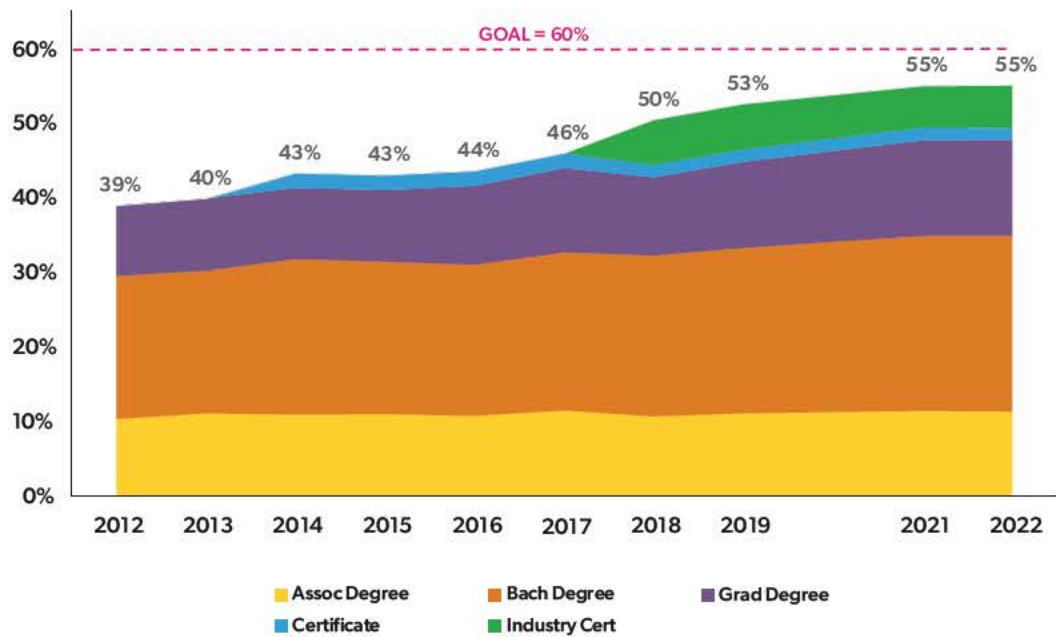
In 2022, 55% of Maine adults had a credential of value, the same as in 2021.

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

In 2022, an estimated 55% of Maine adults ages 25-64 held an associate, bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree, or a non-degree credential of value, the same percentage as in 2021. Maine has made significant progress in this area, with the percentage of adults holding a credential of value rising 5% since 2018. The Council supports Maine's statutory goal of 60% of adults holding a degree or a non-degree credential by 2025—a goal promoted by MaineSpark, a coalition of educational institutions, nonprofits, foundations, government agencies, and businesses.

This metric recognizes the growing importance of non-degree career paths, including professional certifications, licenses, digital badges, and military service. The Lumina Foundation reports that in 2022, 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 6.0% and below the national average of 7.8%.

Postsecondary Attainment of Maine Adults



Source  
Lumina Foundation

Adult Ages 25-64 Degree Attainment Rates, 2022

	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree	Short-term credential only	Total
Maine	11.4%	23.6%	12.9%	7.3%	55.1%
New England	8.1%	26.4%	19.3%	6.0%	59.7%
United States	9.3%	23.2%	14.1%	7.8%	54.3%

# Cost of Doing Business

0%

In 2022, Maine’s cost of doing business was unchanged.

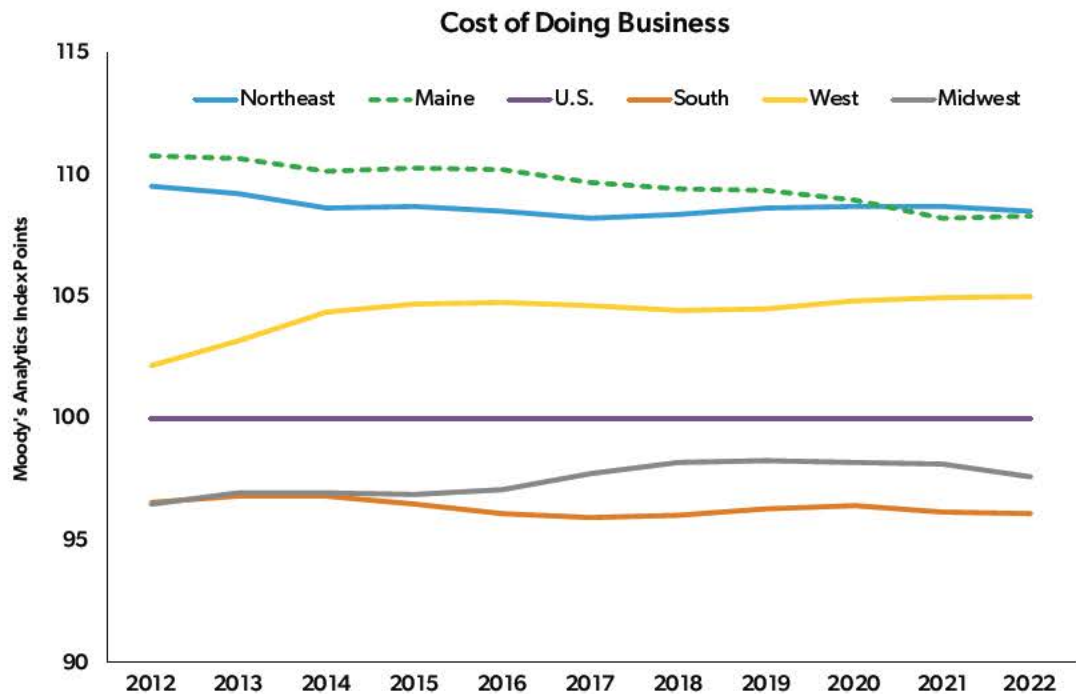
**Benchmark:** Maine’s cost of business will decline to the U.S. average by 2030.

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, and Maine’s costs had exceeded the Northeast average, but in 2022 it was below them 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

+0.1%

Proportional health care expenditures were virtually unchanged in 2023.

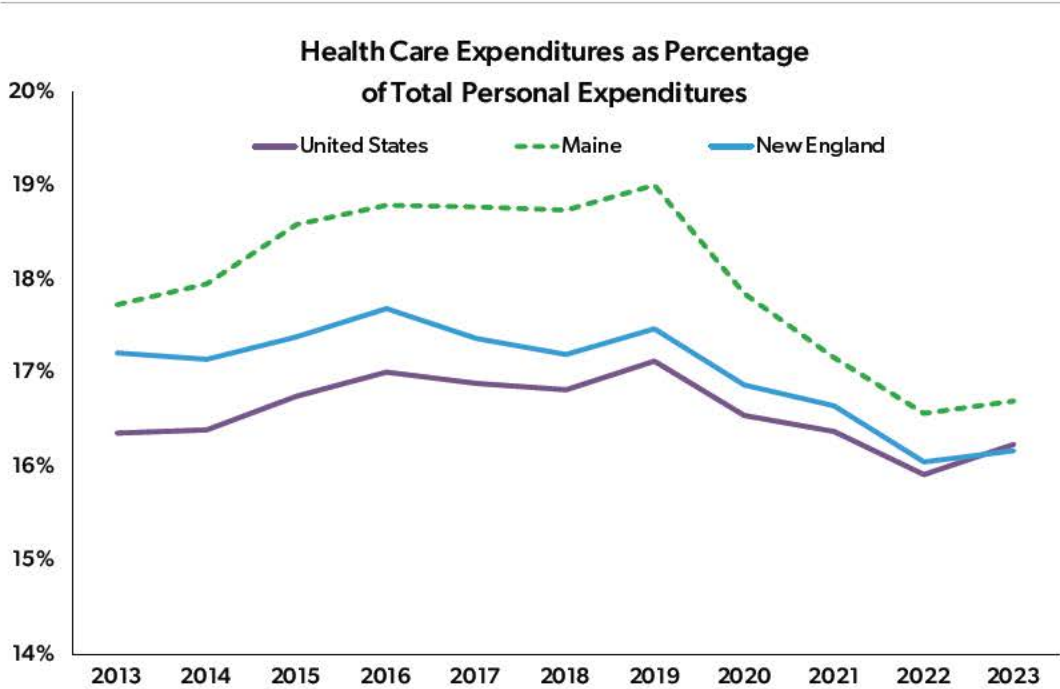
**Benchmark:** Maine’s health care spending as a percentage of total personal expenditures will decline to the New England average by 2030.

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.

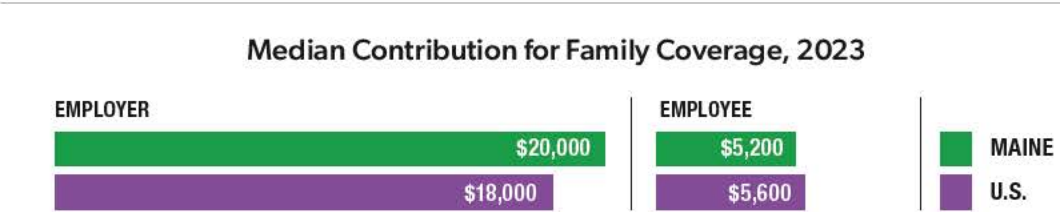
In 2023, health care spending in Maine stood at 16.7% of all personal expenditures, down from its peak of 19.0% in 2019. While health care expenditures in Maine are higher than the U.S. and New England rates, the gap has narrowed. They fell sharply in 2020, largely due to the decline of noncritical services during

COVID. Still, in Maine and across the nation, about 1 in 6 dollars generated in the economy goes to medical expenses.

In 2023, the median contribution for family health insurance coverage of a Maine employee was \$5,200. By this measure, Maine ranked 30th highest of the 50 states. For employers, the median contribution was \$20,000, tied with eight other states for 2nd highest. These rounded estimates come from a relatively small survey and should be interpreted with caution.



**Sources**  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality



# Cost of Energy

+13%

The price of industrial electricity rose 13% in 2023, in contrast to a decline nationwide.

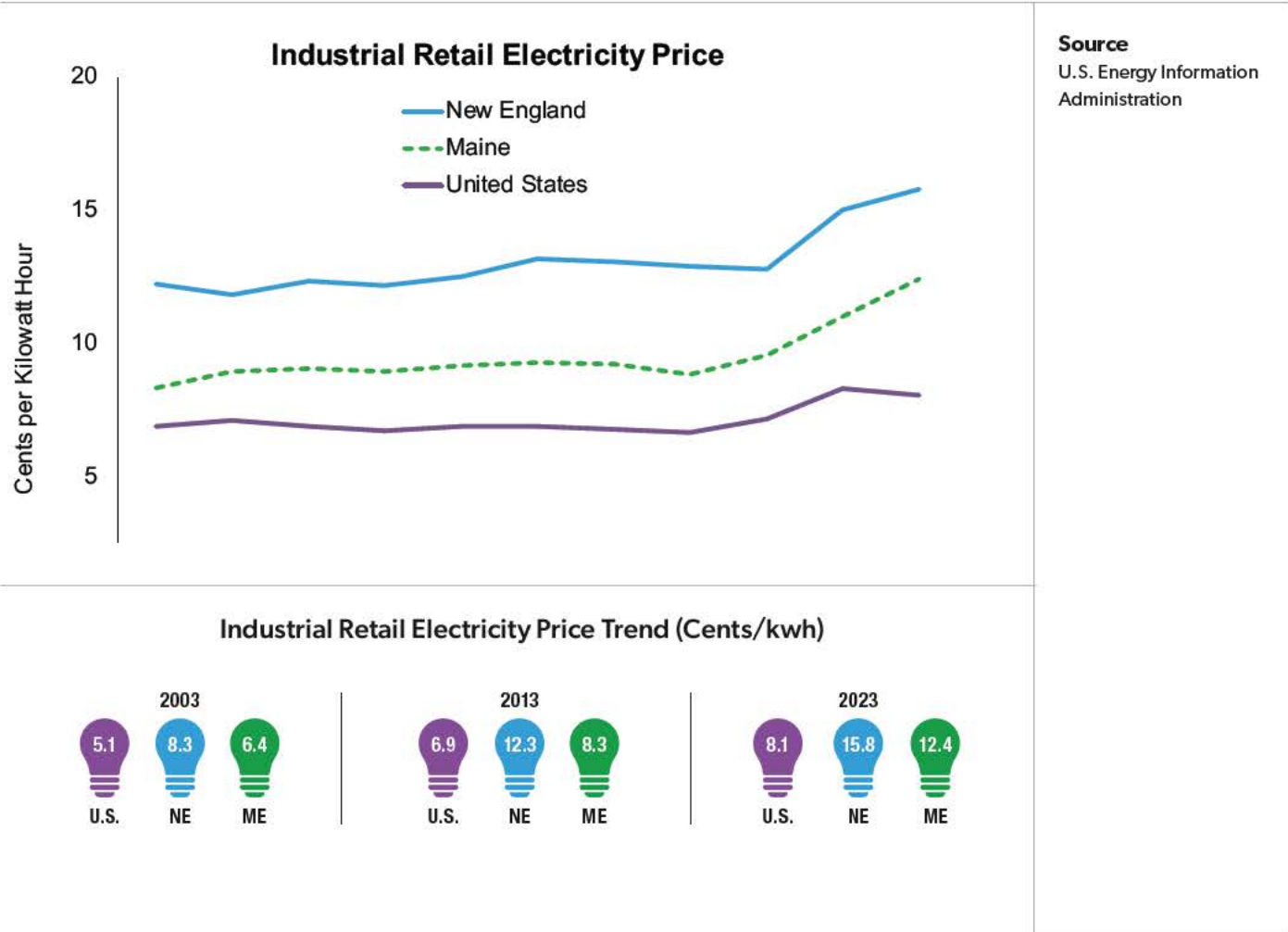
**Benchmark:** The cost of electricity in Maine will decline to the U.S. average by 2030.

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 23rd of the 50 states in 2021) but the highest in New England.

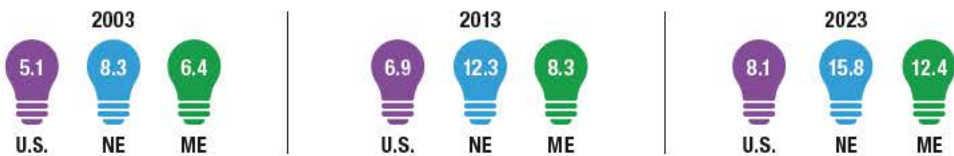
The average industrial retail price of electricity in Maine rose 13% in 2023, from 11.03 to 12.43 cents per kilowatt hour. This contrasted with a national decrease of 3%. Maine’s price jump was caused by high prices and seasonal supply variations for the natural gas used in power generation, as well as the recovery

of costs associated with weather effects to grid infrastructure. Maine and New England are more reliant on natural gas for energy production than the rest of the U.S. Maine’s industrial electricity rates are still the second lowest in New England and 21% below the regional average, but they exceed the national average by 54%.

New renewable energy sources could help reduce costs and lower emissions, but they require increased investment in Maine’s strained transmission system. A coordinated transmission anticipation process could help address this issue.



Industrial Retail Electricity Price Trend (Cents/kwh)



# State & Local Tax Burden

0%

In 2021, Maine’s tax burden remained unchanged at 11.7%.

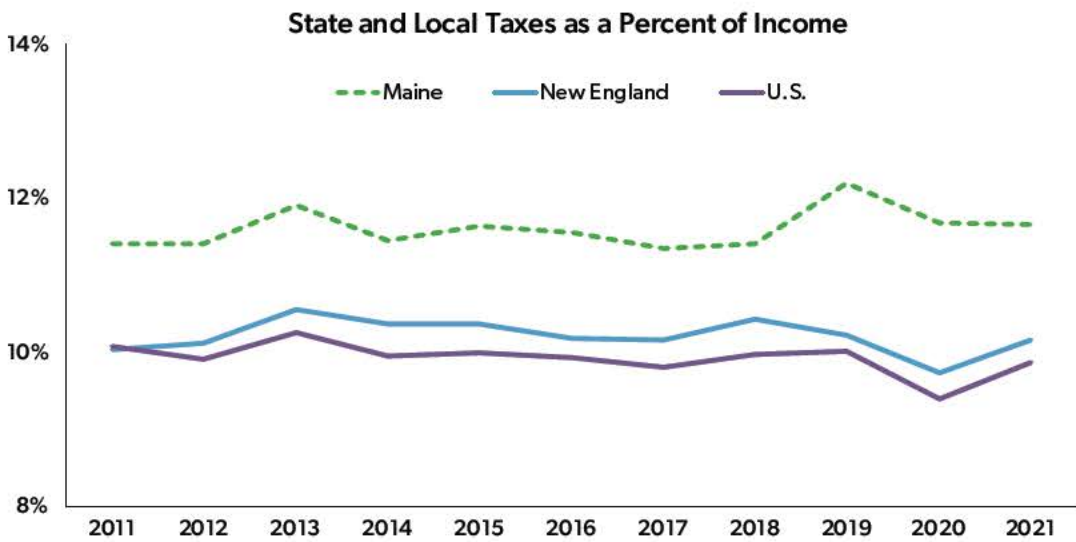
**Benchmark:** Maine’s tax burden will decline and move toward the New England average each year through 2030.

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. While taxes impose costs on individuals and businesses, they generate revenue for public services and investments. This measure compares tax levels and ability to pay; it can be reduced by lowering tax rates and by increasing income.

Since 2010, Maine’s state and local tax burden has remained at or below 12%, above the New England and U.S. averages. This figure does not account for the portion of sales and property taxes paid by out-of-state visitors and second-home owners. In 2021, Maine’s tax burden held steady at 11.7%. Meanwhile, the New England and U.S. averages rose slightly. Maine ranks 5th highest of the 50 states in state and local taxes as a percentage of income and 12th highest in tax collections per capita.

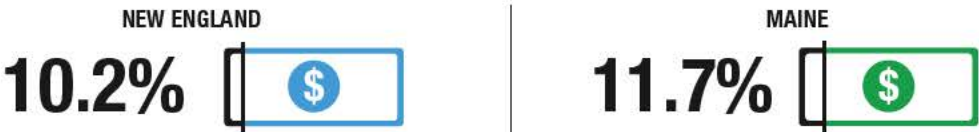
State and Local Tax Burden Rank 2021  
(1 is highest)

State	% of Income	Rank	Per Capita	Rank
U.S.	9.9%	-	\$6,334	-
NE	10.2%	-	\$7,913	-
VT	12.2%	3	\$7,528	7
ME	11.7%	5	\$6,791	12
CT	11.4%	6	\$9,424	2
RI	10.1%	19	\$6,488	15
MA	9.7%	22	\$8,107	5
NH	7.4%	47	\$5,409	25



**Sources**  
U.S. Census Bureau;  
U.S. Bureau of  
Economic Analysis

State and Local Taxes as a Percent of Income in 2021





# COMMUNITY

Living, working, and  
moving forward together



Crowd in Houlton watches full solar eclipse, April 8, 2024. (Photo credit: Kris Bridges for Maine Public)

★ Internet Connectivity

+3%

In 2024, 89% of Maine locations have either average or broadband internet, up 3%.

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

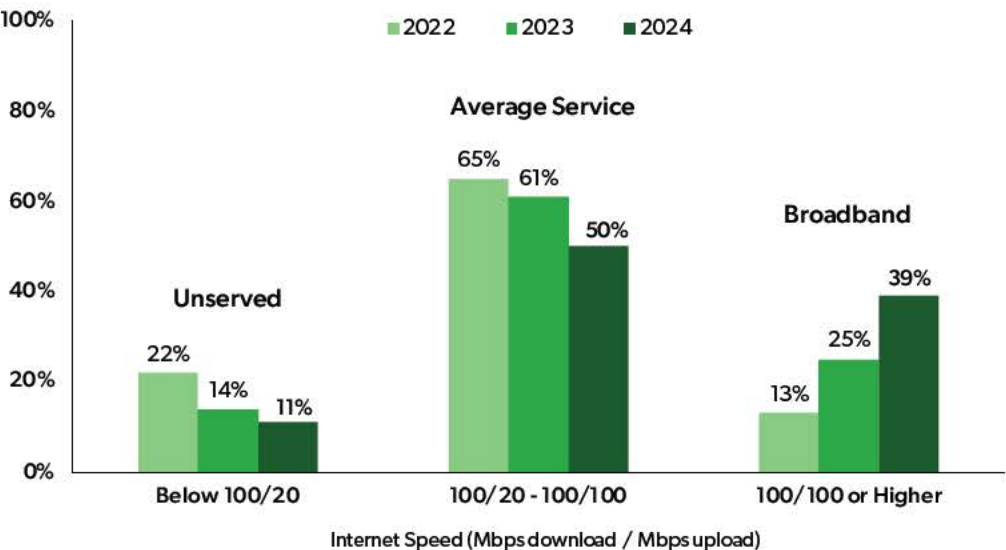
High-speed internet is vital to participation in modern society and critical for communities to attract and retain businesses and residents. The Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) is committed to expanding access to reliable, high-speed, affordable internet service statewide.

Since 2022, MCA has allocated over \$250 million in state and federal funds to enable connectivity for over 80,000 locations. MCA estimates that 39% of locations now have access to internet that provides 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload (“100/100” or “broadband internet”) or higher. Fifty percent have access to speeds of 100/20 or better (“average service”) but less than 100/100, and 11% can only access internet below 100/20 (“unserved”). This represents a positive trend toward increased connections for Mainers. In just the past year, the percentage of locations with broadband access has doubled in Hancock and Oxford counties (from 11% to 53%) and more than tripled in Androscoggin and Somerset (from 14% to 64%).

Broadband Internet Service by County, 2024  
(100 Mbps download/100 Mbps upload or higher)

Coastal Counties	
Knox	53%
Cumberland	47%
Sagadahoc	46%
Hancock	44%
York	31%
Waldo	28%
Lincoln	20%
Central Counties	
Androscoggin	53%
Penobscot	48%
Kennebec	35%
Rim Counties	
Somerset	64%
Franklin	49%
Piscataquis	41%
Washington	20%
Oxford	16%
Aroostook	16%

Percentage of Maine Locations with Internet Access by Service Level



Source  
Maine Connectivity  
Authority

Administered  
by MDF

★ **Transportation**

**+5%**

**In 2023, 72% of Maine roadways were rated good or fair.**

**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 2023, 1,066 miles (72%) of Maine’s most-traveled and economically significant (“Priority 1”) roadways were graded A, B, or C, up five percentage points from 2022. 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.

Maine’s transportation network connects us to each other and to the world. Together, roads, rails, airports, and seaports can support an integrated transportation system that promotes 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.



# Measures of Growth at 30: Stories of Change and Resilience

## Housing: The Uptown, Bath

To ease a housing crisis that stunts workforce, community, and economic development, Maine is increasingly working with community-minded developers and public-private funders to provide affordable apartments and homes.

Maine's lack of affordable housing is a pressing workforce need, preventing businesses from hiring and hurting the economic base and vitality of communities across the state.

Housing production hasn't matched population growth, particularly in certain parts of the state. From 1990 to 2020, coastal counties<sup>1</sup> grew 23% and central counties grew 5% while rim counties shrank 7%.

The City of Bath and the developer The Szanton Company tackled the issue with a project called The Uptown. It includes both historic and new construction, offers 18 market-rate and 42 low-income apartments, and took just six weeks to fill up.

Laura Mitchell, Director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, says, "When it comes to building affordable housing in Maine, the margins are very thin. You need a community-minded developer and many funding partners to break even and keep the housing affordable long term."

The Szanton Company worked with more than a dozen partners to secure stacked funding, including MaineHousing, state historic and low-income tax credits, Maine Preservation and Community Block Development Grants, and nonprofit lenders like Genesis Community Loan Fund, which provided low-interest loans.



The old Bath YMCA building c. 1934 which has been renovated and is now part of The Uptown housing complex. (Photo credit: Bath Area YMCA)

*"The Uptown project just scratches the surface. Every community in Maine needs to embrace new housing models so residents and workers have a home."*

**Amy Cullen**  
Vice President  
The Szanton Company



The Uptown housing complex, Bath. (Photo credit: The Szanton Company)

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>1</sup> Coastal: York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, Hancock; Central: Androscoggin, Kennebec, Penobscot; Rim: Oxford, Franklin, Somerset, Piscataquis, Aroostook, Washington

Administered  
by MDF



# Housing Affordability

**+7%**

**In 2023, 79% of households were unable to afford the median-priced home, up from 72%.**

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

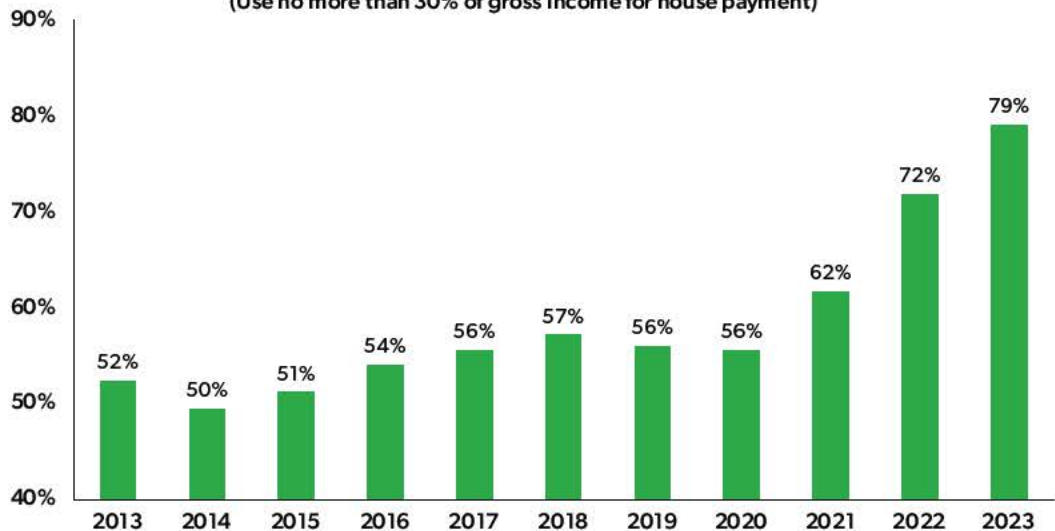
Data on homeownership affordability shows the continuation of a troubling trend. The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a surge in homebuying. That, combined with a lack of housing stock, has increased prices across the state. The estimated percentage of households that cannot afford the median-priced home has risen from 56% in 2020 to 79% in 2023. 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.

**Households Unable to Afford Median-Priced Home 2023**  
(Use no more than 30% of gross income for house payment)

<b>Coastal Counties</b>	
Lincoln	88%
Knox	88%
York	87%
Cumberland	83%
Sagadahoc	83%
Hancock	81%
Waldo	76%
<b>Central Counties</b>	
Androscoggin	73%
Kennebec	73%
Penobscot	69%
<b>Rim Counties</b>	
Oxford	77%
Franklin	69%
Washington	69%
Somerset	68%
Piscataquis	67%
Aroostook	61%
<b>MAINE</b>	<b>79%</b>

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



**Sources**  
MaineHousing;  
U.S. Census Bureau

Safety

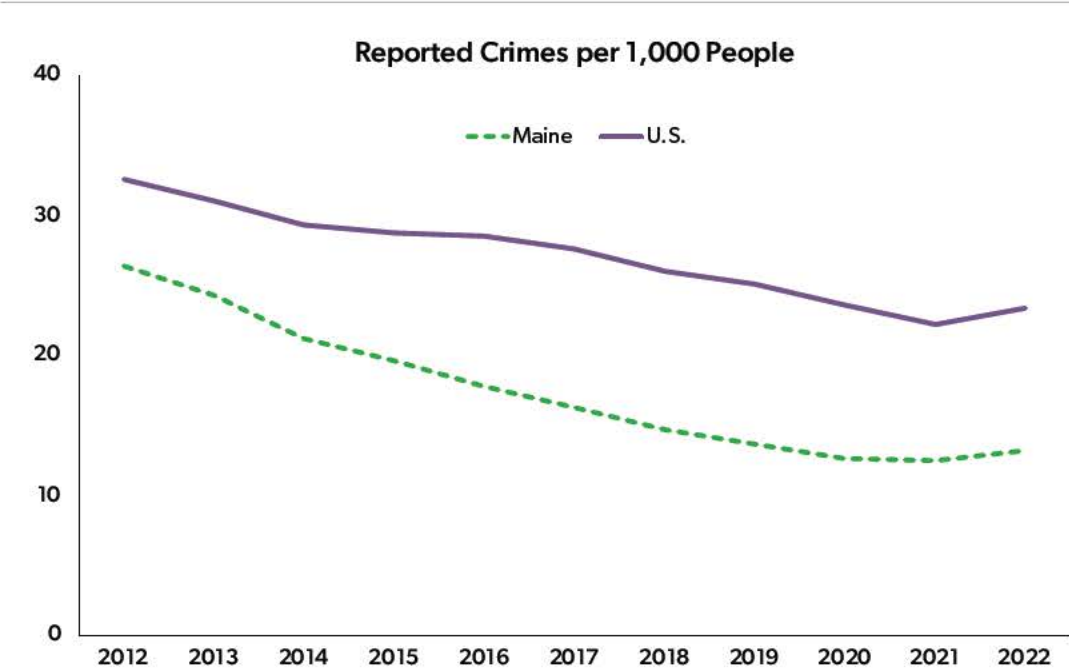
+6%

Maine’s crime rate rose 6% in 2022 but remains one of the very lowest in the nation.

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

Maine’s crime rate in 2022, 13.2 per 1,000 residents, was 44% below the national average and third lowest of the 50 states. This is likely due in part to the age of Maine’s population, since criminal offenses decline with age. There was a 7.6% increase in property crimes in 2022, but Maine’s property crime rate was still about 1/3 below the national average (12.1 per 1,000 residents compared to 19.5 nationally). Violent crimes continued to fall and were 73% below the U.S. average.

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.



**Sources**  
Maine Department of Public Safety; Maine State Police; Federal Bureau of Investigation

# Physical Wellness

+1.8%

About 2/3 of Maine adults are overweight or obese.

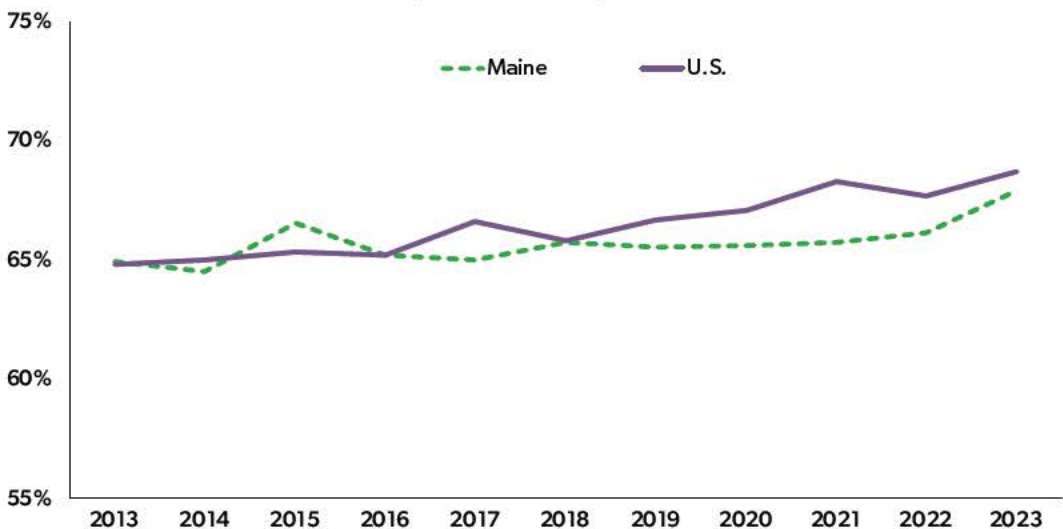
**Benchmark:** The combined percentage of overweight and obese adults in Maine will decline to 50% by 2030.

In 2023, two out of three Maine adults (68%) 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 2021-2022, almost one in three Maine youth ages 6-17 (31%) was overweight or obese, somewhat below the national rate (34%). Childhood obesity is a serious, widespread problem that can cause long-term health challenges.

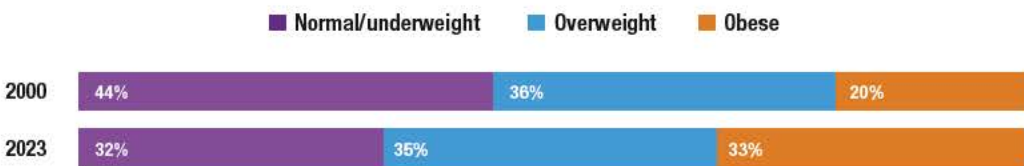
Percentage of Overweight and Obese Adults



Sources

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

Comparing Maine Adults: 2000 & 2023



# Mental & Behavioral Health

+4%

In 2021-2022, the percentage of children with a mental and/or behavioral condition rose 4%.

**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.

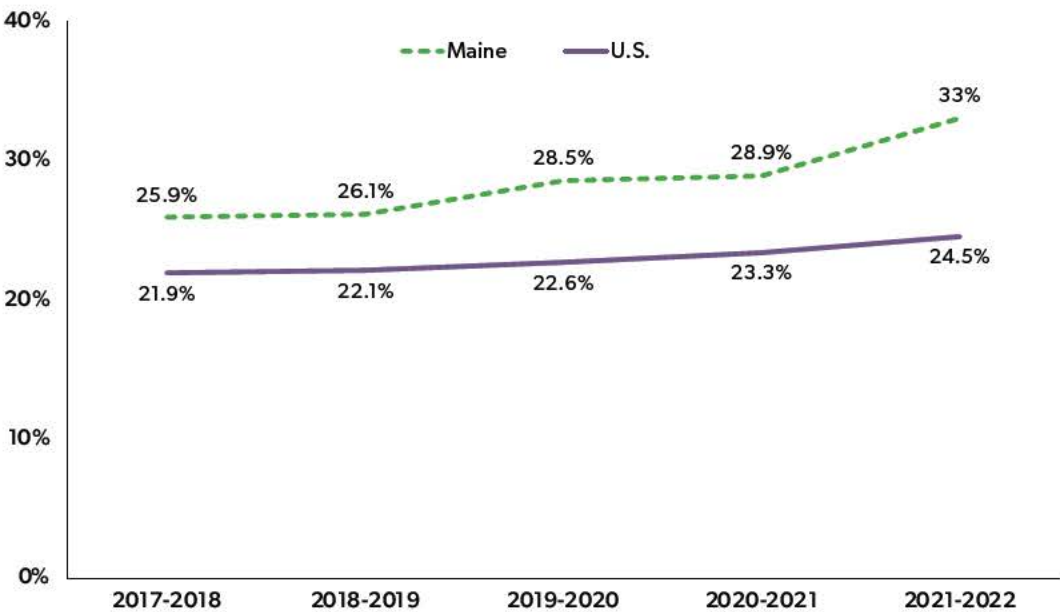
In 2021-2022, an estimated 33% of Maine children had a diagnosed mental, emotional, and/or behavioral condition such as anxiety, depression, a learning disability, or autism.\* This was up from 28.9% in 2020-2021 and significantly higher than the U.S. average of 24.5%. In 2023, 35% of Maine high schoolers 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 July/August 2024, approximately 18% of Maine adults had symptoms of anxiety or depression. An equal percentage of adults nationwide reported these symptoms—up from just 11% in 2019. Maine has seen record high drug-related deaths in recent years, and 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



**Sources**  
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

-1%

Maine’s health insurance coverage 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.

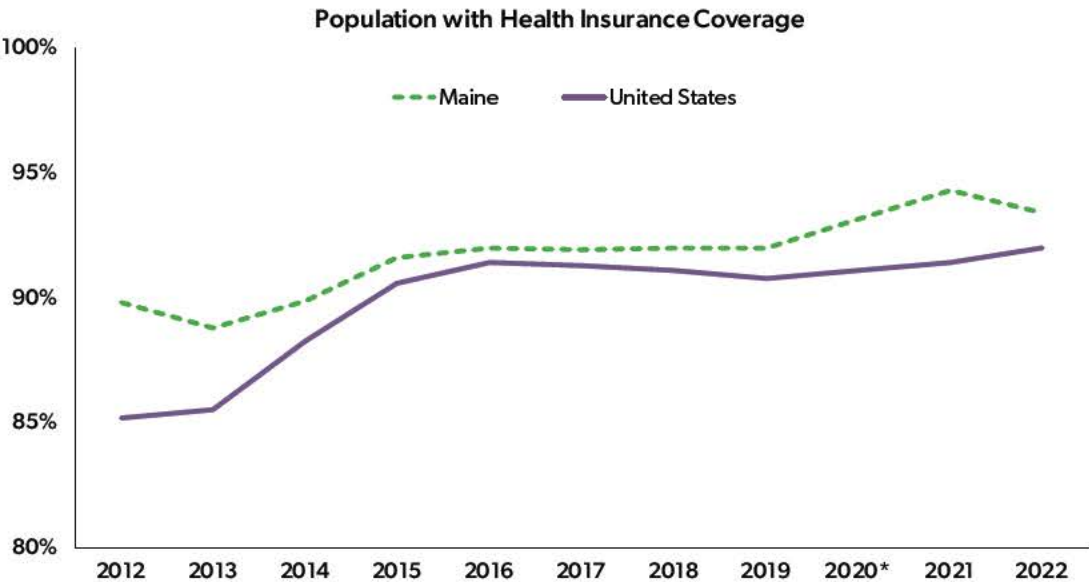
This measure tracks the proportion of the population with health insurance coverage. Higher health insurance coverage rates improve access to health care services, support local health care systems, and boost families’ ability to pay for necessities.

The proportion of Maine residents with health insurance coverage has exceeded 90% since 2015. In 2022, it was 93%, just above the national average of 92%. An estimated 88,000 people in Maine do not have health insurance coverage. Regionally, health insurance coverage rates for people under age 65 range from 88% in Washington County to 93% in Cumberland County.

The Census Bureau’s Small Area Health Insurance Estimates offer data on racial differences in health insurance coverage in Maine. In 2022, 92% of White and Asian Mainers under age 65 had health insurance coverage, compared with 91% of Black Mainers, 88% of American Indian Mainers, and 85% of Hispanic Mainers.

Population Under Age 65 with Health Insurance Coverage, 2022

Coastal Counties	Rate
Cumberland County	93.3%
York County	92.9%
Sagadahoc County	92.2%
Lincoln County	89.9%
Knox County	89.7%
Waldo County	89.6%
Hancock County	88.5%
Central Counties	
Androscoggin County	91.9%
Kennebec County	91.9%
Penobscot County	91.2%
Rim Counties	
Franklin County	91.1%
Piscataquis County	90.9%
Somerset County	90.3%
Aroostook County	89.6%
Oxford County	89.0%
Washington County	88.4%



**Sources**  
U.S. Census Bureau;  
Small Area Health  
Insurance Estimates

# Food Security

+1%

In 2021-2023, the share of Mainers experiencing food insecurity rose by almost one percentage point.

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

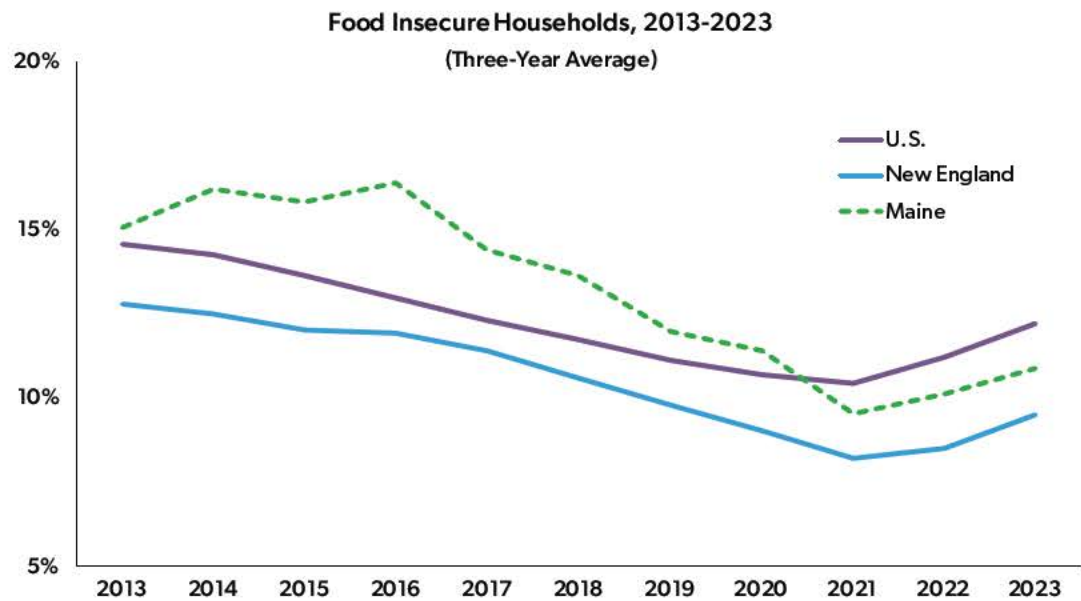
Food insecurity has broad negative impacts on health, child development, education outcomes, and productivity. Food-insecure households have disrupted eating patterns, reduced food intake, and reduced quality or variety of diet.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, about one in nine 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 (13% for Maine in 2022). According to Feeding America, 2022 food insecurity ranged from 10.6% in Cumberland County to over 16% in Aroostook, Piscataquis, Somerset, and Washington counties.

Food Insecurity Rates by County, 2022

Coastal Counties	Rate
Cumberland	10.6%
York	11.6%
Sagadahoc	11.7%
Lincoln	11.8%
Knox	11.9%
Hancock	12.7%
Waldo	13.9%
Central Counties	
Kennebec	13.6%
Androscoggin	13.8%
Penobscot	14.3%
Rim Counties	
Franklin	13.6%
Oxford	14.6%
Aroostook	16.2%
Piscataquis	16.2%
Somerset	16.2%
Washington	17.1%



**Sources**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture;  
Feeding America



# ENVIRONMENT

By land, lake,  
sea, and stream



Portland Headlight, Cape Elizabeth. (Photo credit: Michael Denning on Unsplash)

# Measures of Growth at 30: Stories of Change and Resilience

## Environment: Dover-Foxcroft Incorporates Climate Resiliency into Long-Term Planning

In the face of increasing extreme weather, rising sea levels, and other climate change impacts, some Maine industries and communities are adopting proactive strategies aimed at long-term economic and cultural resilience.

The years from 2020 to 2023 were among the 10 warmest on record, according to the Maine Climate Council.<sup>1</sup> While this warming trend was underway in 1994, it was a topic of marginal interest to most communities and businesses. However, today's extreme weather events and rising sea levels are directly impacting Maine's people, properties, and infrastructure.

In Dover-Foxcroft, a group of passionate volunteers sparked a movement to make climate change a central consideration in the town's long-term plans. Inspired by the state's *Maine Won't Wait* plan, they urged the select board to prepare for extreme weather, lower emissions, and reduce residents' reliance on motor vehicles. The town now has a Climate Action Advisory Committee that monitors these goals and looks for opportunities to adopt more climate-friendly practices.

Town Manager Jack Clukey points out that resiliency isn't a new concept. Towns have always prepared for extreme events and wanted their investments, such as roads, bridges, and buildings, to last as long as possible. But, he says, the changing climate context is new. He urges other local officials to engage in the discussion, embrace the energy of local volunteers, and take advantage of the resources available to them. "There is a lot of funding out there to support these efforts right now."



Exterior of The Mill apartment complex, Dover-Foxcroft  
(Photo credit: Maine Preservation)

*"The resilience idea isn't new, it's just a new context. When they built a road 100 years ago, they wanted it to last as long as possible. That's all we're doing today."*

Jack Clukey  
Town Manager  
Dover-Foxcroft



Municipal Building, Dover-Foxcroft.  
(Photo credit: Town of Dover-Foxcroft)

**Sources:** Maine Climate Council and Maine Climate Office, Climate Change Institute, University of Maine

<sup>1</sup> "Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and its impact on Maine," by Maine Climate Council Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

Administered  
by MDF

# Air Quality

**+15 days**

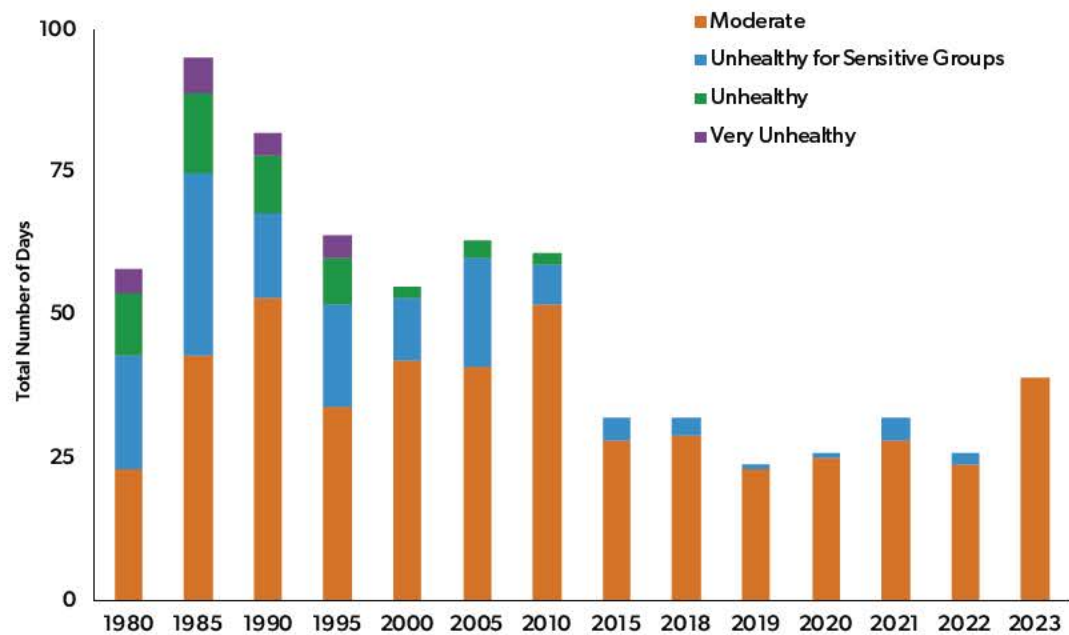
**In 2023, there were 39 moderate air quality days, 15 more than in 2022.**

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

Preliminary data for 2023 show there were 39 moderate air quality days, up from 24 in 2022. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection attributes this increase to smoke from wildfires beyond Maine’s borders. There were no days that were unhealthy for sensitive groups (e.g., people with heart and lung disease, older adults, children). 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 - 2023



**Source**  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection

# Water Quality

0%

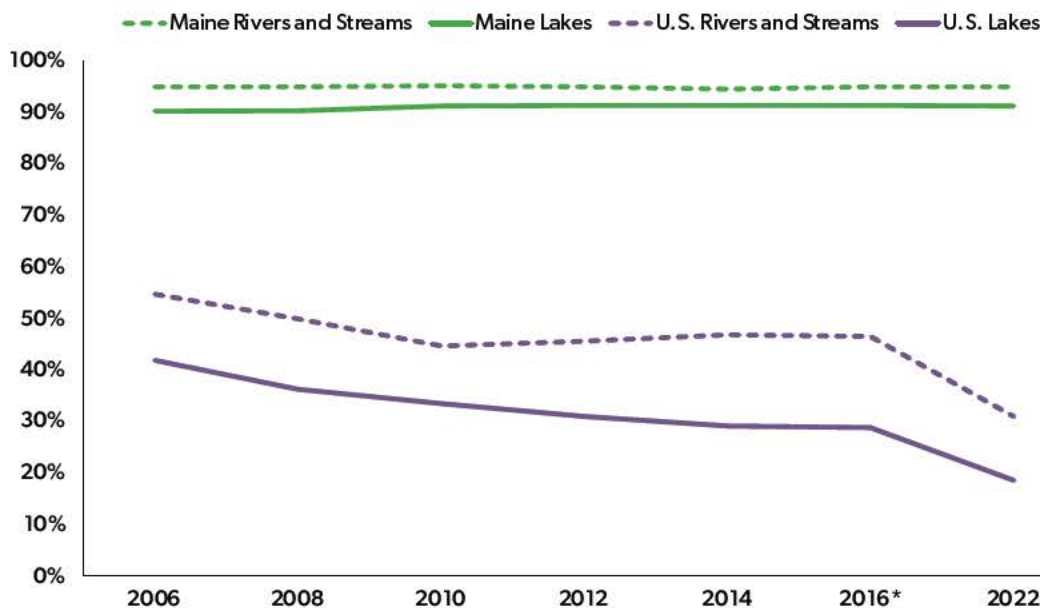
In 2022, Maine maintained its excellent water quality rating.

**Benchmark:** The percentage of Maine’s assessed water bodies classified as Categories 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 and are part of the natural environment that supports tourism.

Since 2006, Maine’s water quality has been very high, with 95% of rivers and streams and 91% of lakes achieving Category 1 or 2 in 2022. Nationally, just 31% of U.S. rivers and streams and 19% of the lakes were rated “good.” The sharp recent 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.

Water Bodies Rated Category 1 or 2 ("Good"), 2006-2022



Sources

Maine Department of Environmental Protection; Bureau of Water Quality; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

*\*U.S. ratings for 2016 reflect multiple years between 2014 and 2022*

★ Sustainable Forestlands

-4%

In 2022, the 10-year growth-to-removal ratio fell 4% to 1.51 but remained above the sustainability goal.

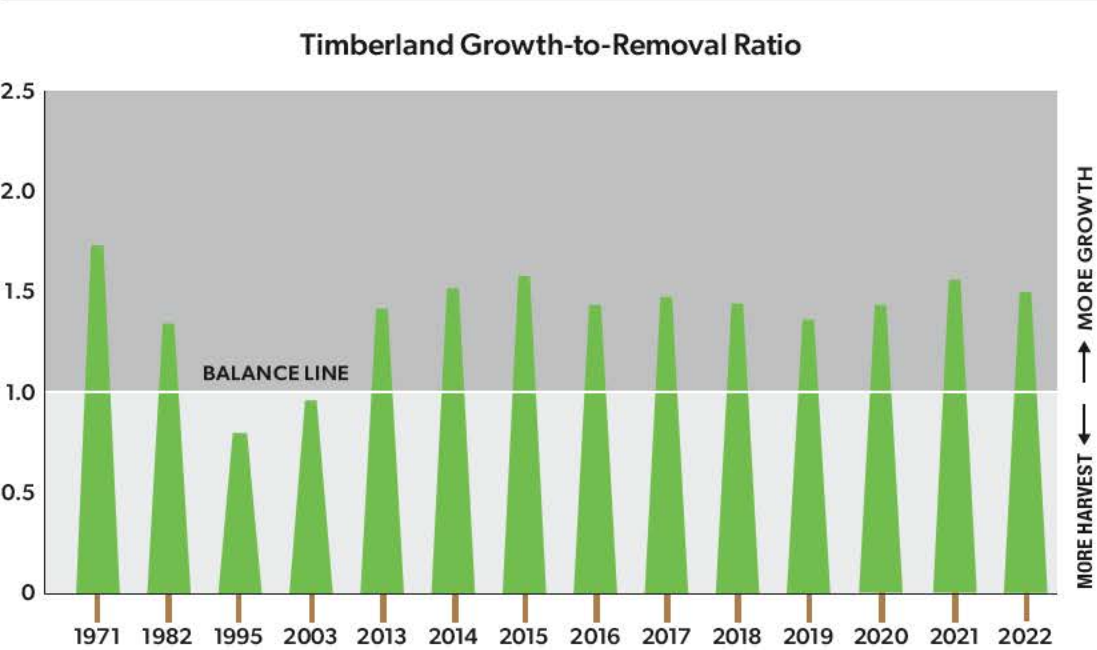
**Benchmark:** A net growth-to-removal ratio of approximately 1:1 will be maintained over time.

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 10-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 2022, the ten-year growth-to-removal ratio fell 4% to 1.51 but 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.



**Sources**  
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry; Maine Forest Service  
  
(Historical estimates revised in 2024)

# ★ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

+1.4%

From 2020 to 2021, GHG emissions rose 1.4% but still shows major progress toward the long-term goal.

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

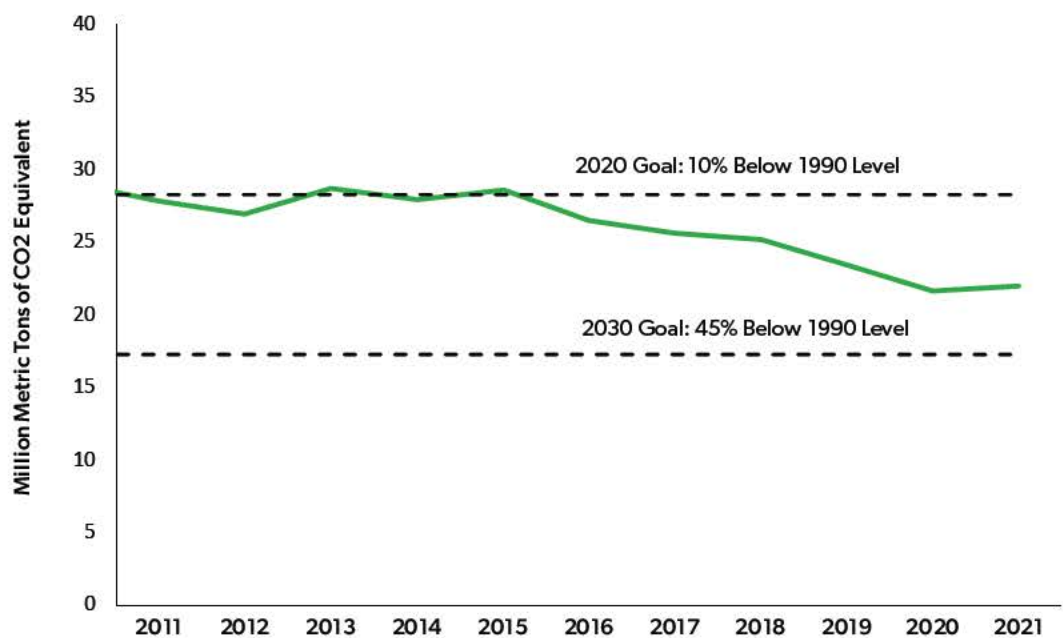
In 2020, Maine’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions fell when the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted daily activities. In 2021, they rose slightly, from 21.6 to 21.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide. However, emissions were still 30% below 1990 levels, meaning Maine is continuing to progress toward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

### 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 Andrew Butcher and 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, Morten Moesswilde of the Maine Forest Service, and Stacy Knapp, Megan Sims, and Martha Webster of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. This year's report was written by Catherine Reilly deLutio with contributions by MDF's Kathleen Shannon Nichols and Anne Schlitt. 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.

### 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.

## Maine Economic Growth Council Members 2024

### **Stephen Von Vogt, Co-Chair**

*President and CEO*  
Maine Marine Composites

### **Hon. James Dill, Co-Chair**

*State Representative*  
House District 26

### **LuAnn Ballesteros**

*Vice President, External and Government Affairs*  
The Jackson Laboratory

### **Keith Bisson**

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Coastal Enterprises Inc.

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### **Donna Cassese**

*Government Relations Consultant*  
Sappi North America

### **James Erwin**

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Pierce Atwood LLP & Former Chair,  
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Senate District 2

### **Tim Walton**

*Founder and President*  
Walton External Affairs

### **Phoenix McLaughlin**

*(Commissioner's Designee)*  
Director of Strategy Implementation,  
Maine Department of Economic and  
Community Development

# VISION

A high quality of life  
for all Maine people



**MEASURES OF  
GROWTH** **30  
YEARS**

 **MEGC**  
Maine Economic  
Growth Council

*Administered by*  
**mdf**