

Maine's Labor Market Recovery: Far From Complete

Executive Summary

Maine's recovery from the Great Recession is lagging other states and has been virtually nonexistent for rural Maine and for people between age 25 and 54 who are most likely to be raising children and saving for their families' future. Maine consistently ranks near the bottom in job growth:

- Maine has recovered half the jobs lost due to the recession and ranks 47th among states and the District of Columbia in its return to pre-recession levels of employment.
- Maine ranks 49th among the 50 states and District of Columbia in total job growth since January 2011.
- Maine ranks 42nd among the 50 states and the District of Columbia in private-sector job growth since January 2011.
- Maine has lost 4,600 state and local government jobs since the beginning of the recession in December 2007.

Despite this, Maine's unemployment rate is declining and remains slightly lower than the nation as a whole. The seemingly contradictory data of limited job growth and falling unemployment masks a complex story of the economic realities that far too many Mainers face.

- The disparity in employment prospects for rural Mainers compared to their urban counterparts is one of the largest in the nation.
- Older Mainers are driving overall improvements in employment while the unemployment rate for Mainers age 25 to 54 was 6.5 percent in 2013 compared to 6.3 percent nationally.
- Nearly 100,000 Mainers want more work but can't find it or have given up looking for work altogether.
- Maine has the 6th highest percentage in the nation of part-time workers who want more work but can't find it.
- Approximately 30 percent of Maine's unemployed workers have been looking for work for more than six months compared to 14.2 percent of unemployed workers before the recession began.

Mainers are struggling to find jobs and many of the policy choices in recent years have exacerbated existing disparities and are making it harder for Maine workers, particularly those most likely to be raising families and saving for the future, to find jobs and provide for their families. For now, a more robust recovery – one that grows the economy and creates better opportunities for workers of all ages in Maine and from other states and countries – remains elusive.

By assessing current labor market conditions more thoroughly, the Maine Center for Economic Policy hopes to improve understanding of recent trends and highlight areas of concern and opportunity. The full report *Maine's Labor Market Recovery: Far From Complete* by Joel Johnson and Garrett Martin is available online and depicts labor market conditions in greater detail based on the most recent jobs and employment data available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).