Rhode Island Key Performance Indicators
QUARTERLY BRIEFING
A JOINT PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC STUDIES AT BRYANT UNIVERSITY AND THE RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC EXPENDITURE COUNCIL
RIPEC

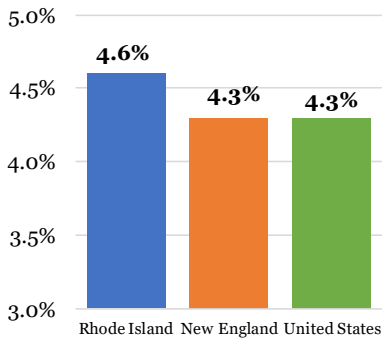
Q1 2026 – Highlights

- Several of Rhode Island's key economic indicators were negative in the first quarter of 2026. Despite an increase in in-state jobs, declines in labor force participation and resident employment, combined with rising unemployment, point to underlying weaknesses in the labor market.
- However, net sales tax receipts, a key indicator of aggregate demand, increased 0.5 percent in Q1 2026, compared to a decrease of 0.6 percent in Q4 2025 (*seasonally adjusted*). Year-over-year net sales tax receipts grew by 4.1 percent
- Rhode Island-based jobs (non-farm employment) totaled 514,500 in Q1 2026, up 800 jobs (0.1 percent) quarter-over-quarter but 1,600 jobs (-0.3 percent) below Q1 2025 levels and 2,600 jobs below the record level of 517,100 set in Q2 2025.
- The number of Rhode Islanders employed fell for a third consecutive quarter, declining by 3,700 jobs (0.6 percent) in Q1 to 561,900. Resident employment was down year-over-year by 6,100 jobs (1.1 percent) and was lower than at any point since Q1 2023.

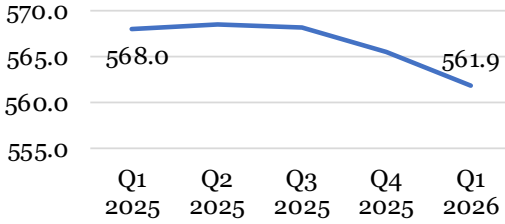
Indicator	Change	
	Year-Over-Year	Quarter-Over-Quarter
Non-Farm Employment	↓	↑
Unemployment Rate	↑	↑
Labor Force Participation Rate	↓	↓
Net Sales Tax Receipts	↑	↑

Note: Quarter-over-quarter change compares Q1 2026 to Q4 2025; Year-over-year change compares Q1 2026 to Q1 2025.

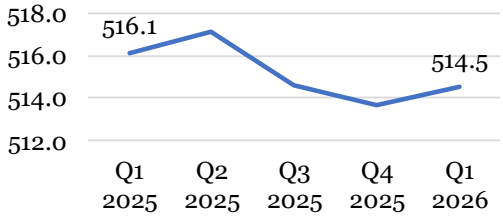
Unemployment Rate Q1 2026



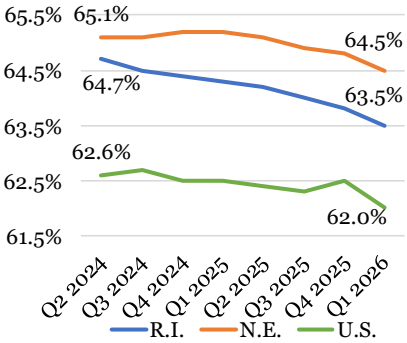
RI Employment (Thousands)



RI-Based/Non-Farm Employment (Thousands)



Labor Force Participation Rate



- Rhode Island's unemployment rate ticked up in Q1 2026 from 4.4 percent to 4.6 percent, reaching its highest level since Q3 2021 and exceeding New England and the U.S. (both 4.3 percent). Rhode Island's rate has been above New England's for ten straight quarters but was slightly below the U.S. in Q4 2025.
- Rhode Island's labor force participation rate fell from 63.8 percent to 63.5 percent in Q1 2026, marking seven consecutive quarters of decline after reaching a peak of 64.7 percent in Q2 2024. Labor force participation also declined at the regional and national level over this period, though less sharply; Rhode Island's rate fell by 1.2 percentage points between Q2 2024 and Q1 2026, compared with declines of 0.6 percentage points in both the U.S. and New England.
- In Q1 2026, unemployed Rhode Islanders totaled 27,100, an increase of 900 quarter-over-quarter and 400 year-over-year.

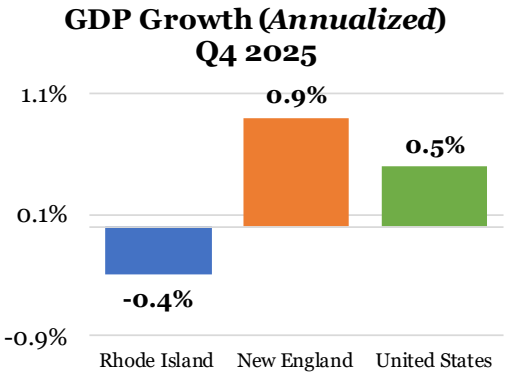
- After two consecutive quarters of growth, Rhode Island's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was negative in Q4 2025, declining at an annualized rate of 0.4 percent. In contrast, New England and the United States experienced increases of 0.9 percent and 0.5 percent, respectively. Data for Q1 2026 are not yet available.

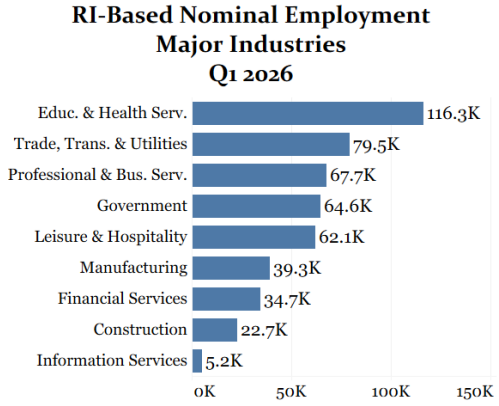
- In Q1 2026, Rhode Island lost jobs in five of nine major industry sectors. Declines were modest in manufacturing, financial services, government, and information services, which each shed 200 jobs, and more pronounced in trade, transportation, and utilities—Rhode Island's second-largest industry sector—which lost 500 jobs.

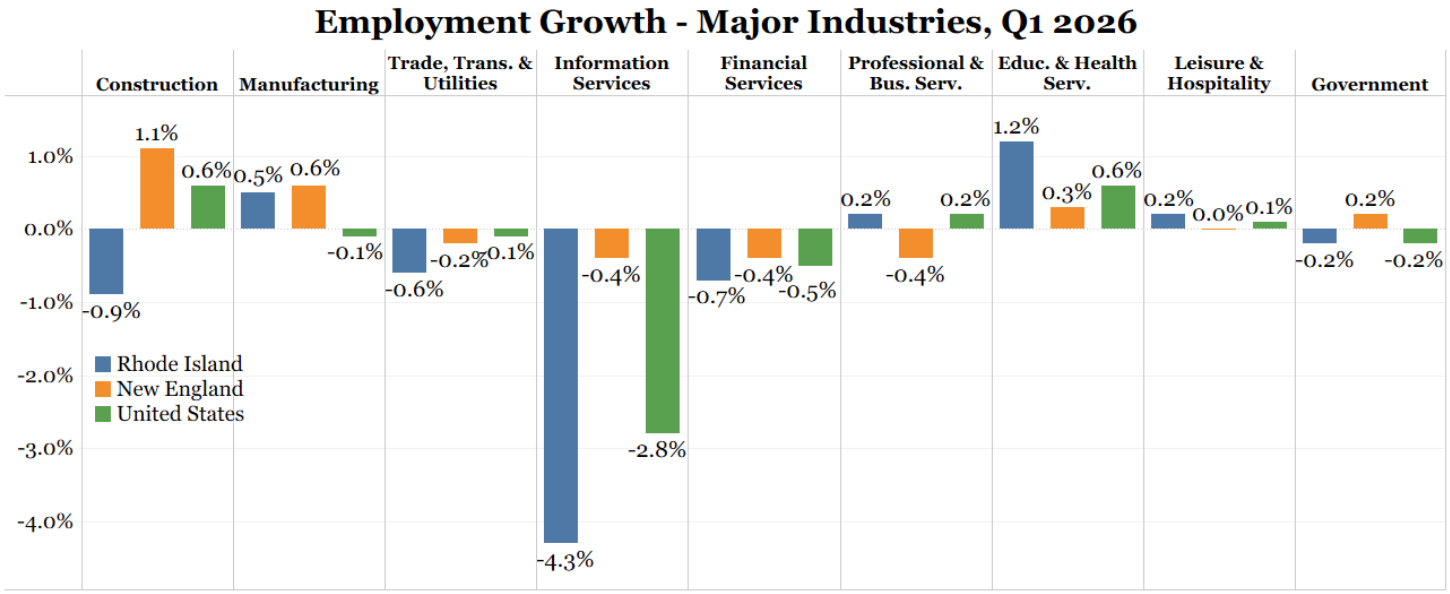
- Education and health services—Rhode Island's largest sector—posted the largest nominal gains, adding 1,400 positions, while manufacturing picked up 200 jobs.

- Job growth was virtually flat in professional and business services and leisure and hospitality in Q1 2026, with each sector adding 100 jobs.

- Year-over-year, employment rose in two major industry sectors: leisure and hospitality (+1,100) and education and health services (+800). Construction was essentially unchanged (+100), and manufacturing was flat. The remaining five sectors saw declines, led by government (-1,600) and professional and business services (-700).







About the RI KPI
The Rhode Island Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Quarterly Briefing was developed by the Center for Global and Regional Economic Studies at Bryant University and the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council to highlight key measures that gauge economic activity in the Ocean State on a quarterly basis. The KPI makes use of the most current available data.

Data revisions and corrections
The Quarterly Briefing incorporates revisions to employment data by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and to quarterly GDP data by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Click here for the data used to create the RI KPI