



**Ranking the States on Population and Private Sector Job Growth
January 2011 to January 2016**

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With the latest population and jobs data from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) and the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), we felt it was important to take a quick look at how each state did over the last five years. In order to conduct an apples-to-apples comparison, we normalized for population differences.

For example, Ohio is the 7th most populous state in America, so comparing its raw private sector job growth to North Dakota is misleading. Using raw numbers, Ohio added 405,500 private sector jobs over the last five years (not surprisingly, the 7th best), as North Dakota “only” added 65,500 (a respectably 36th best despite being the 47th most populous state). By using percentage job growth, we can use a common metric that accounts for population differences. Using that metric, North Dakota’s 21.52% job growth ranked #1, as Ohio’s 9.46% job growth was a more mediocre 24th best. Ohio’s tepid job growth came despite the multi-billion dollar efforts of Governor John Kasich’s privatized economic-development tool, JobsOhio, which [claims to have retained or attracted nearly 400,000](#) jobs per the table below. Ohio likely [won’t recover the jobs lost since it hit a peak in March 2000](#) until January 2020.

Year	Private Sector Jobs Added	JobsOhio Jobs Retained & To Be Added	Net Private Sector Percent Change 50-State Ranking
2010	61,800	N/A	#18
2011	93,400	82,785	#17
2012	75,100	75,612	#28
2013	83,400	88,306	#28
2014	71,600	73,517	#23
2015	90,800	77,835	#24

We also wanted to look at population growth, as that measure is a strong indicator of how a state is really doing. After all, people do vote with their feet. A strong economy producing high-quality jobs combined with a good quality of life will incent people to move from a weaker state to a stronger state or not move elsewhere. Again, adjusting for population differences, we can see which states experienced an influx of people and which states struggled to keep their citizens. North Dakota’s 12.54% increase from 2010-2015

ranked #1, which reflects a booming energy industry married with a very low cost of living. As for Ohio, its population only increased by 0.66%, which was the 44th best during that period of time. But for births exceeding deaths, Ohio would have joined West Virginia as the only state to experience a population decline ([thanks to President Barack Obama's war on coal](#)).

Using raw population growth figures, you can get a sense of how a state is doing. For example, Texas is the 2nd largest state in America, with 27.5 million people. California is the largest state, with 39.1 million people – nearly 12 million more than Texas. Yet, Texas added more people in the last five years than any other state, including besting California by a solid 433,000 people. As for Ohio, even though it is the 7th most populous state, it only added roughly 77,000 people, which was the 31st best across the states. Ohio's underperformance in population growth is consistent with its mediocre private sector job growth. Ohioans are scanning the country and seeing [better opportunities elsewhere and non-Ohioans simply aren't seeing Ohio](#) as a place worth moving to.

Finally, we thought it would be useful to produce an average ranking for each state using the rankings for raw population change, percentage population growth, and private sector percentage job growth to get a broader measure of how the states stack up. We then subtracted each state's average ranking from its 2015 population ranking to see if it under- or over-performed – that score is the second to last column in the table below. We gave each state an overall ranking based on the difference between its population rank and its average ranking. Once again, North Dakota came in #1, with a +37.33 difference between its 47th population rank and its 9.67 average ranking. Ohio, unfortunately, didn't fair very well. Ohio's came in as the 49th state due to its average ranking of 33 being -26 points below its status as the 7th most populous state.

Policymakers inherit a state's population when they take office. The policies they enact on taxes, spending, regulations, and other issues determine how a state's population and businesses grow during their time in office. Their policies can either promote growth or inhibit it. In Ohio, Governor Kasich's [spending increases of over 37%](#), [tax shifting versus tax cutting](#), [pro-union sentiments when surrounding states have adopted right-to-work](#) policies, and [attacks on the energy industry](#) have made Ohio an average place to live and work. Ohio's problems will only get worse as the [cost of Governor Kasich's Medicaid expansion under Obamacare](#) gets shifted from federal deficit spending adding to the national debt to Ohioans, especially given that the enrollment is more than twice as great as Governor Kasich originally promised. Moreover, should a recession occur, the Medicaid population will explode as Ohioans lose their jobs and state revenues plummet, thereby swallowing the rainy day fund and forcing large spending cuts or tax hikes.

Unlike [Texas Governor Rick Perry or Florida Governor Jeb Bush who had to manage through recessions and major national disasters and still ended their terms with strong records](#), Governor Kasich has had the good fortune of being in office during a national recovery (tepid as it is) where both federal and state revenues and jobs have grown from day one. With more than 2.5 years remaining in his last term, odds are high that a recession will hit turning his already mediocre record into a dismal one. Though unlikely given Governor Kasich's reputation for rarely admitting he was wrong, perhaps he will change course by freezing or reducing spending, abandon tax hikes, push for right-to-work, and repeal Medicaid expansion.

State	Population 2010	Population 2015	2015 Population Rank	Raw Population Change	Raw Population Change Ranking	% Growth 2010-2015	Percentage Population Growth Ranking	Private Sector Jobs December 2010	Private Sector Jobs December 2015	Jobs % Growth	Job % Growth Ranking	Raw Job Growth 2010-2015	Average Ranking (Population Growth & Job Growth)	Difference 2015 Population Rank & Average Ranking	Overall Ranking
North Dakota	672,591	756,927	47	84,336	27	12.54%	1	304,900	370,500	21.52%	1	65,600	9.67	37.33	1
District of Columbia	601,767	672,228	49	70,461	33	11.71%	2	467,200	535,400	14.60%	9	68,200	14.67	34.33	2
Idaho	1,567,652	1,654,930	39	87,278	25	5.57%	11	488,000	567,000	16.19%	6	79,000	14.00	25.00	3
Utah	2,763,888	2,995,919	31	232,031	15	8.40%	5	973,300	1,162,600	19.45%	2	189,300	7.33	23.67	4
Nevada	2,700,691	2,890,845	35	190,154	17	7.04%	7	968,300	1,099,700	13.57%	14	131,400	12.67	22.33	5
South Dakota	814,191	858,469	46	44,278	39	5.44%	12	326,700	355,300	8.75%	27	28,600	26.00	20.00	6
Delaware	897,936	945,934	45	47,998	37	5.35%	14	352,600	384,400	9.02%	26	31,800	25.67	19.33	7
Hawaii	1,360,301	1,431,603	40	71,302	32	5.24%	16	465,200	516,300	10.98%	18	51,100	22.00	18.00	8
Montana	989,417	1,032,949	44	43,532	40	4.40%	20	337,000	368,900	9.47%	23	31,900	27.67	16.33	9
Colorado	5,029,324	5,456,574	22	427,250	8	8.50%	4	1,840,800	2,125,000	15.44%	7	284,200	6.33	15.67	10
Alaska	710,249	738,432	48	28,183	42	3.97%	24	242,100	260,000	7.39%	34	17,900	33.33	14.67	11
Oregon	3,831,073	4,028,977	27	197,904	16	5.17%	17	1,312,700	1,494,100	13.82%	11	181,400	14.67	12.33	12
South Carolina	4,625,401	4,896,146	23	270,745	11	5.85%	10	1,473,100	1,676,200	13.79%	12	203,100	11.00	12.00	13
Wyoming	563,767	586,107	51	22,340	45	3.96%	25	211,200	216,200	2.37%	50	5,000	40.00	11.00	14
Nebraska	1,826,341	1,896,190	37	69,849	34	3.82%	26	778,900	837,500	7.52%	32	58,600	30.67	6.33	15
Arizona	6,392,307	6,828,065	14	435,758	7	6.82%	8	1,985,700	2,260,800	13.85%	10	275,100	8.33	5.67	16
Washington	6,724,543	7,170,351	13	445,808	6	6.63%	9	2,306,000	2,644,600	14.68%	8	338,600	7.67	5.33	17
Oklahoma	3,751,616	3,911,338	28	159,722	20	4.26%	21	1,223,000	1,310,700	7.17%	35	87,700	25.33	2.67	18
Vermont	625,745	626,042	50	297	50	0.05%	50	244,100	257,400	5.45%	44	13,300	48.00	2.00	19
Rhode Island	1,052,931	1,056,298	43	3,367	48	0.32%	47	397,400	428,400	7.80%	30	31,000	41.67	1.33	20
Iowa	3,046,869	3,123,899	30	77,030	30	2.53%	30	1,222,800	1,328,400	8.64%	28	105,600	29.33	0.67	21
Kansas	2,853,132	2,911,641	34	58,509	36	2.05%	34	1,072,800	1,153,600	7.53%	31	80,800	33.67	0.33	22
Tennessee	6,346,275	6,600,299	17	254,024	12	4.00%	23	2,199,200	2,486,700	13.07%	16	287,500	17.00	0.00	23
Texas	25,146,105	27,469,114	2	2,323,009	1	9.24%	3	8,588,500	10,049,500	17.01%	3	1,461,000	2.33	-0.33	24
New Hampshire	1,316,466	1,330,608	41	14,142	47	1.07%	41	532,600	568,600	6.76%	37	36,000	41.67	-0.67	25
Louisiana	4,533,479	4,670,724	25	137,245	21	3.03%	29	1,530,600	1,657,900	8.32%	29	127,300	26.33	-1.33	26
Kentucky	4,339,349	4,425,092	26	85,743	26	1.98%	35	1,456,000	1,594,300	9.50%	21	138,300	27.33	-1.33	27
Florida	18,804,623	20,271,272	3	1,466,649	3	7.80%	6	6,099,900	7,125,300	16.81%	4	1,025,400	4.33	-1.33	28
Georgia	9,688,681	10,214,860	8	526,179	4	5.43%	13	3,186,600	3,624,300	13.74%	13	437,700	10.00	-2.00	29
Arkansas	2,915,958	2,978,204	33	62,246	35	2.13%	32	949,300	1,011,200	6.52%	39	61,900	35.33	-2.33	30

Minnesota	5,303,925	5,489,594	21	185,669	18	3.50%	28	2,241,200	2,451,800	9.40%	25	210,600	23.67	-2.67	31
North Carolina	9,535,692	10,042,802	9	507,110	5	5.32%	15	3,175,400	3,572,800	12.51%	17	397,400	12.33	-3.33	32
Maryland	5,773,785	6,006,401	19	232,616	14	4.03%	22	2,030,300	2,182,600	7.50%	33	152,300	23.00	-4.00	33
Massachusetts	6,547,817	6,794,422	15	246,605	13	3.77%	27	2,791,500	3,056,300	9.49%	22	264,800	20.67	-5.67	34
New Mexico	2,059,192	2,085,109	36	25,917	43	1.26%	40	605,000	637,700	5.40%	45	32,700	42.67	-6.67	35
Maine	1,328,361	1,329,328	42	967	49	0.07%	49	490,200	513,600	4.77%	49	23,400	49.00	-7.00	36
California	37,254,503	39,144,818	1	1,890,315	2	5.07%	18	11,860,300	13,852,900	16.80%	5	1,992,600	8.33	-7.33	37
Indiana	6,484,229	6,619,680	16	135,451	22	2.09%	33	2,383,400	2,633,400	10.49%	20	250,000	25.00	-9.00	38
Alabama	4,780,127	4,858,979	24	78,852	29	1.65%	37	1,486,100	1,583,600	6.56%	38	97,500	34.67	-10.67	39
Virginia	8,001,045	8,382,993	12	381,948	10	4.77%	19	2,961,200	3,148,900	6.34%	41	187,700	23.33	-11.33	40
Mississippi	2,968,103	2,992,333	32	24,230	44	0.82%	42	845,700	889,300	5.16%	48	43,600	44.67	-12.67	41
West Virginia	1,853,011	1,844,128	38	-8,883	51	-0.48%	51	598,400	599,200	0.13%	51	800	51.00	-13.00	42
Wisconsin	5,687,289	5,771,337	20	84,048	28	1.48%	39	2,321,000	2,483,300	6.99%	36	162,300	34.33	-14.33	43
Connecticut	3,574,118	3,590,886	29	16,768	46	0.47%	45	1,376,300	1,463,400	6.33%	42	87,100	44.33	-15.33	44
New York	19,378,087	19,795,791	4	417,704	9	2.16%	31	7,110,300	7,880,000	10.83%	19	769,700	19.67	-15.67	45
Missouri	5,988,927	6,083,672	18	94,745	24	1.58%	38	2,220,600	2,337,200	5.25%	46	116,600	36.00	-18.00	46
New Jersey	8,791,936	8,958,013	11	166,077	19	1.89%	36	3,217,500	3,424,300	6.43%	40	206,800	31.67	-20.67	47
Michigan	9,877,369	9,922,576	10	45,207	38	0.46%	46	3,268,700	3,709,500	13.49%	15	440,800	33.00	-23.00	48
Ohio	11,536,725	11,613,423	7	76,698	31	0.66%	44	4,286,200	4,691,700	9.46%	24	405,500	33.00	-26.00	49
Pennsylvania	12,702,887	12,802,503	6	99,616	23	0.78%	43	4,900,400	5,157,000	5.24%	47	256,600	37.67	-31.67	50
Illinois	12,831,549	12,859,995	5	28,446	41	0.22%	48	4,803,400	5,073,000	5.61%	43	269,600	44.00	-39.00	51