New Metropolitan and Labor Market Areas for Maine
Now based on counties

Summary

Beginning with publication of 2025 data, labor market and metropolitan areas in Maine are based on individual or groupings of counties rather than the previous groupings of towns and cities. There now are 14 labor market areas in the state, three of which are metropolitan areas. Previously, there had been 30 labor market areas, including three metros. One of the new metro areas – Portland-South Portland – is the combination of York, Cumberland, and Sagadahoc counties; the other two – Lewiston-Auburn and Bangor – are Androscoggin and Penobscot counties, respectively; the 11 labor market areas are the other individual counties.

Details

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Labor Market Area (LMA) jobs, wages, labor force, and unemployment are widely used to evaluate local labor market conditions. Because most people do not work in the town in which they live, it usually is better to examine a commuting area than a single town to assess local conditions.
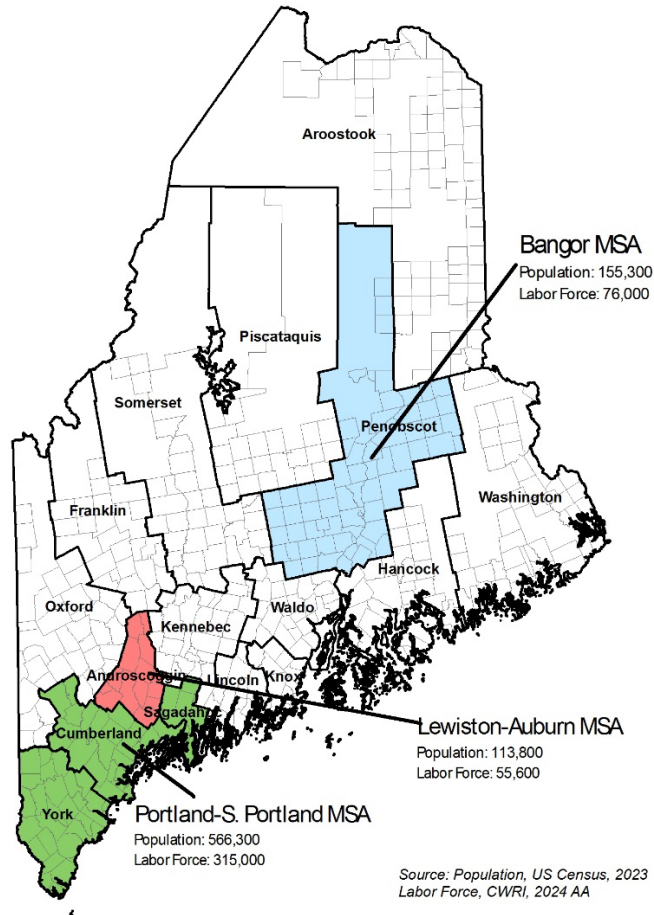
For 44 states, metro and labor market area boundaries have long been based on individual or groupings of contiguous counties. For the six New England states, they have been based on groupings of contiguous towns and cities. In each case these were developed based on commuting patterns of workers from their residence to their place of work, updated following each Decennial Census of Population.

The federal Office of Management and Budget recently directed that data based on [New England City and Town Areas (NECTAs) will be discontinued](). Workforce data for the six states will be "made up of counties or county equivalents" beginning with publication of 2025 data, and that data "for all areas will be carried back to the series beginnings in January 1990."

New Areas

The Portland-South Portland MSA is now comprised of all of York, Cumberland, and Sagadahoc counties. The 2,147 square miles is about 57 percent larger than previously; the population and labor force are about 45 percent larger. The Lewiston-Auburn MSA is 497 square miles, similar in size to the previous boundaries, as are the population and labor force. The Bangor MSA is 3,557 square miles, about 47 percent larger than previously; the population and labor force are about 10 percent larger. Labor market and metro areas now look like this:

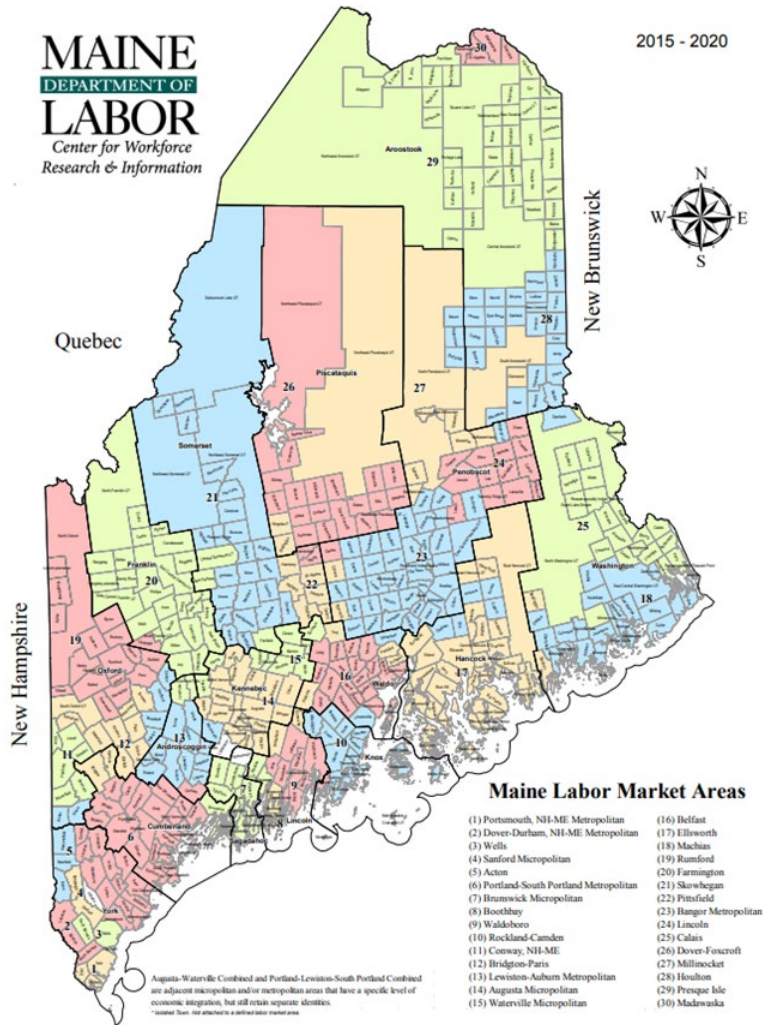Maine Metropolitan Statistical Areas (2025 Designation)

Bangor MSA
Population: 155,300
Labor Force: 76,000

Lewiston-Auburn MSA
Population: 113,800
Labor Force: 55,600

Portland-S. Portland MSA
Population: 566,300
Labor Force: 315,000

Source: Population, US Census, 2023
Labor Force, CWRI, 2024 AA

Combined, the three new metro areas comprise 61 percent of the population (2023) and 63 percent of the labor force in the state (2024).

Former Areas

In the decade through 2024 the Portland-South Portland metropolitan area included 14 towns in York, all but four towns in Cumberland, and one in Androscoggin counties. The Lewiston-Auburn metro included four towns in Oxford, one in Kennebec, all but three towns in Androscoggin counties. The Bangor metro included nearly all towns in southern Penobscot, five in Hancock, and one in Waldo counties.

Other than the metro area changes, the most significant changes were in Aroostook County, which previously included parts or all of four labor market areas; York County, which previously included parts or all of six labor market areas; and Washington County, which previously included parts or all of four labor market areas.

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Maine Labor Market Areas

(1) Portsmouth, NH-ME Metropolitan
(2) Dover-Durham, NH-ME Metropolitan
(3) Wells
(4) Sanford Micropolitan
(5) Acton
(6) Portland-South Portland Metropolitan
(7) Brunswick Micropolitan
(8) Boothbay
(9) Waldoboro
(10) Rockland-Camden
(11) Conway, NH-ME
(12) Bridgton-Paris
(13) Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan
(14) Augusta Micropolitan
(15) Waterville Micropolitan
(16) Belfast
(17) Ellsworth
(18) Machias
(19) Rumford
(20) Farmington
(21) Skowhegan
(22) Pittsfield
(23) Bangor Metropolitan
(24) Lincoln
(25) Calais
(26) Dover-Foxcroft
(27) Millinocket
(28) Houlton
(29) Presque Isle
(30) Madawaska

Augusta-Waterville Combined and Portland-Lewiston-South Portland Combined
are adjacent micropolitan and/or metropolitan areas that have a specific level of
economic integration, but still retain separate identities.
* Isolated Town. Not attached to a defined labor market area.

Combined, the three former metro areas comprised 47 percent of the population (2023) and 47 percent of the labor force in the state (2024).

Effects

Though there are fewer areas under the new standard, an upside is that jobs and other labor market data now use the same metro area boundaries as personal income and gross domestic product data. Using the same standard allows for direct comparison of these metrics and prevents some confusion. A downside is that some counties, especially Aroostook, are so geographically large that people living on one end are not within reasonable commuting distance of jobs on the other end.

Nonfarm wage and salary jobs as well as labor force and unemployment data for metro areas will be restated back to 1990, which maintains a consistent time-series for 35+ years. Jobs and wage data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, which is not a true time-series for a range of reasons, will not be restated for previous years.