


LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY



| 26 ANNUAL REPORT



ONE VOICE. Amplified.

LABI

OUR MISSION

To champion a vibrant and sustainable business climate in Louisiana by promoting free enterprise to drive economic opportunities, improving the lives of every citizen.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

WILL GREEN LABI President & CEO

The release of the 2026 *LA Driven* Annual Report marks a pivotal moment for Louisiana’s economic future. It’s been two years since *LA Driven* shifted the LA23 Strategic Plan from vision to action and from strategy to results. Progress is no longer theoretical; it is measurable, intentional and reshaping how Louisiana competes.

LA Driven was created to move strategy off the page and into action. It is a coordinated roadmap to revitalize our state, working alongside elected leaders, state agencies, policy experts and nonprofit organizations committed to executing its mission. The recommendations within *LA Driven* are not simply policies to adopt. They represent a sustained movement toward stronger competitiveness and broader opportunity for every Louisianan, one that demands continued coordination, collaboration and accountability to deliver lasting impact.

Stakeholders dissatisfied with the status quo and committed to helping Louisiana reach its full potential have welcomed the plan’s direction. In just two years, 100 *LA Driven*-approved measures have been enacted, targeting the structural barriers that have long constrained Louisiana’s economic performance. These reforms are beginning to produce tangible results, from improved confidence to early indicators of stronger competitiveness.

Policy change is not confined to the halls of the Capitol, however. In 2025, innovative initiatives took shape to confront some of Louisiana’s most persistent challenges, demonstrating that progress requires both legislative action and disciplined execution beyond Baton Rouge.

This Annual Report details the progress achieved in 2025 while placing it within the broader context of two years of sustained effort. The results make it clear: strategy can be converted into measurable progress when the right coalitions of leaders converge around a plan. But the work is not done. Continued advancement will require urgency, discipline and an unwillingness to settle for incremental change.

LABI remains committed to advancing policies that improve competitiveness, attract investment and expand opportunity, keeping Louisiana firmly on a path toward durable economic success.



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**LADRIVEN**

Steering the State to Succeed

**JOIN LABI AS WE
IMPLEMENT OUR
STRATEGIC
PLAN TO MAKE
LOUISIANA AN
ECONOMIC LEADER
IN THE SOUTH**

GET YOUR ROADMAP AT
LADRIVEN.ORG

SUSTAINING THE EFFORT FOR A BETTER

Much can be written about 2025, but few would argue that it was business as usual. Unprecedented shifts in federal trade policies, immigration and energy regulation are reshaping the U.S. and global economy with impacts that will be felt for years. At the same time, tax reforms, regulatory changes, technological advancements and reshoring efforts are redefining how and where companies invest, accelerating competition among states for jobs, talent and capital.

Louisiana's economic competitiveness has long been a concern for business leaders, policymakers and communities across the state. While Louisiana benefits from significant strengths—including its strategic location, abundant natural resources and globally important industries—the state has underperformed many peer states over the past decade on key indicators such as job growth, labor force participation and population trends. These gaps have limited opportunity and constrained long-term economic growth.

In response, **LABI launched LA23 in 2023 to establish a clear, actionable roadmap for improving Louisiana's economic performance.** That work has since evolved into *LA Driven*, a sustained effort focused not only on strategy, but on execution, accountability and measurable outcomes. *LA Driven* outlines 30 targeted actions designed to **position Louisiana as a top-tier economic leader in the South by 2030.** Rather than relying on short-term fixes or isolated initiatives, the approach emphasizes coordinated progress across the business climate, workforce and talent development, education, public safety and economic development.

THE FOUR PILLARS



**Education & Workforce
Development**

LOUISIANA FUTURE



At its core, *LA Driven* is grounded in a realistic and inclusive vision for Louisiana’s future—one shaped by extensive input from business leaders, educators and community stakeholders from every region of the state. Businesses large and small helped identify the barriers to growth and the reforms necessary to improve competitiveness and expand opportunity over the coming decades.

To succeed, **Louisiana must have a fair, predictable and stable tax and legal climate** that encourages investment and job creation. The state must **grow high-quality jobs and sustain a quality of life** that attracts and retains people, supported by **safe communities, accessible healthcare, and affordable housing and childcare**. Education and training programs must prepare students for adulthood and the workforce, while equipping adults with clear pathways to reskill, re-enter and remain in the labor force. At the same time, Louisiana must **support existing industries** as they navigate disruption while fostering the creation and growth of new businesses.

Achieving this vision requires **alignment and collaboration across public and private leaders, across regions and across systems that too often operate in silos**. By leveraging its unique strengths in energy, trade, transportation and technology, Louisiana has the opportunity to compete nationally and ensure that communities across the state share in sustained economic growth.



**Tax & Business
Climate**

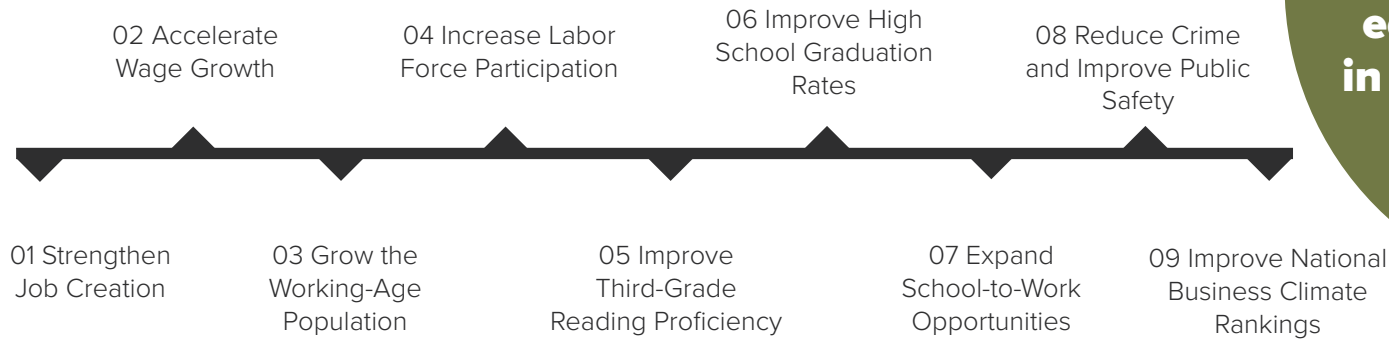


**Economic
Development**



Safety & Resiliency

MAKING GOOD TIME: MILE MARKERS FOR MEASURING SUCCESS



The bottom line is that significant progress is being made, and economic momentum in Louisiana is building.

The following section evaluates Louisiana’s progress against the nine targets for measuring success that reflect the core priorities of *LA Driven*.

Together, these targets provide a clear framework for assessing where the state has made measurable gains and where heightened focus will be required to achieve long-term competitiveness, particularly as other states continue to move the benchmark.



GOAL 01: STRENGTHEN JOB CREATION

Target: Improve the state's ranking for new job creation to the middle third of states by 2030.

Status: Goal Achieved (2025)

Louisiana has made meaningful progress in reversing long-standing job growth challenges. For the ten years before *LA Driven*, Louisiana ranked among the bottom five states for job growth.

AUGUST 2024 → AUGUST 2025

Louisiana added approximately

19,100
nonfarm jobs

This represents a

0.96%
growth rate

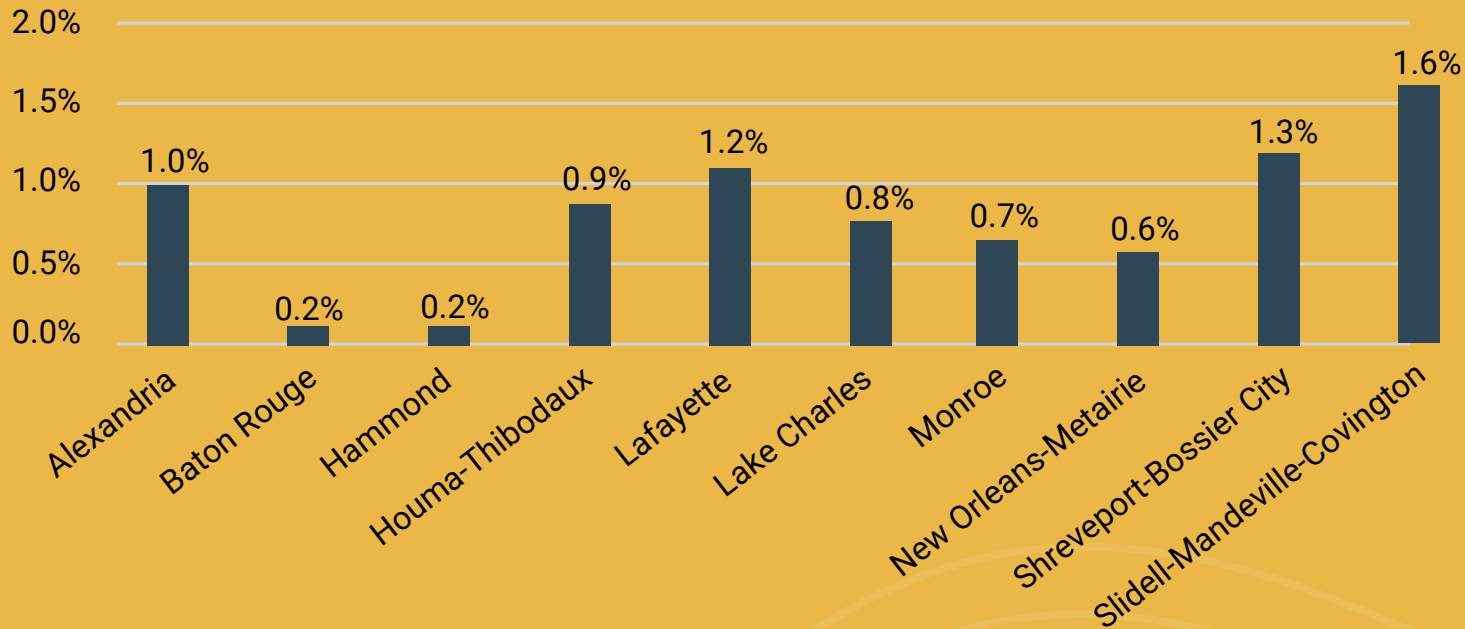
Ranking the state

24th

nationally, placing Louisiana within the middle third of states for job growth.

This reflects a notable improvement from prior years, when Louisiana consistently ranked near the bottom nationally, and indicates that recent economic momentum is translating into measurable employment gains.

JOB GROWTH – AUGUST 2024 TO AUGUST 2025



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Nonfarm Payroll Employment

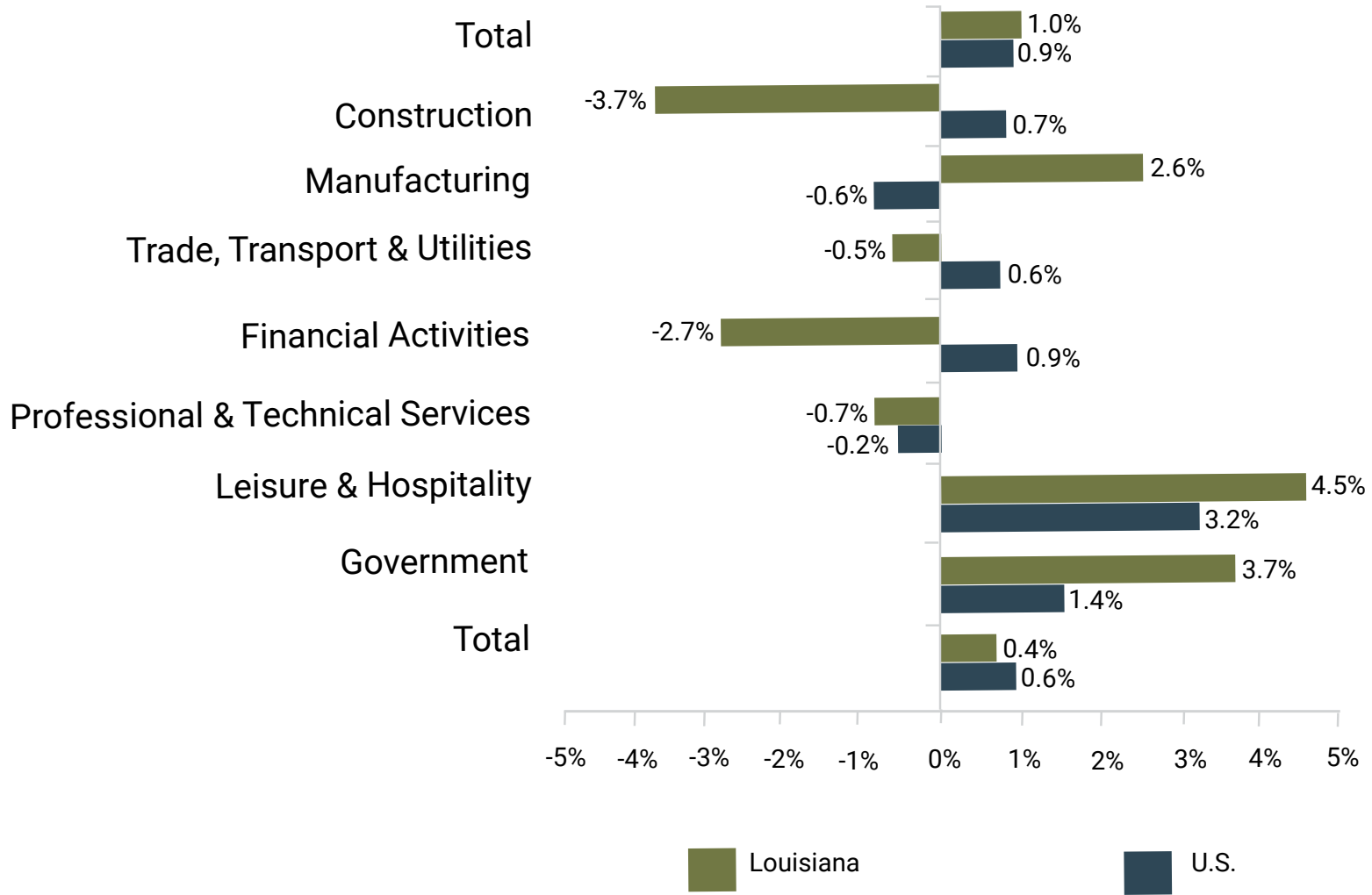
Even as the economy has improved, job growth over the past year was uneven across Louisiana’s regions and industries. **All metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in the state experienced positive growth.** The Slidell-Mandeville-Covington area recorded the strongest metropolitan growth at 1.6 percent.

Statewide employment gains were concentrated in education and health services (4.5 percent), leisure and hospitality (3.7 percent), and manufacturing (2.6 percent). Despite this overall growth, employment declined in construction, financial activities, and professional and technical services, underscoring that challenges remain.

This milestone reflects improved economic momentum and signals to employers that Louisiana is once again competitive for job creation. Sustaining this progress will require continued focus on workforce availability, regulatory stability and investment-friendly policies.



LOUISIANA & U.S. NONFARM EMPLOYMENT CHANGE BY SECTOR AUGUST 2024 – AUGUST 2025



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Nonfarm Payroll Employment

GOAL 02: ACCELERATE WAGE GROWTH

Target: Improve the state’s ranking for wage growth to the middle third of states by 2030.

Status: Goal Achieved (2025)

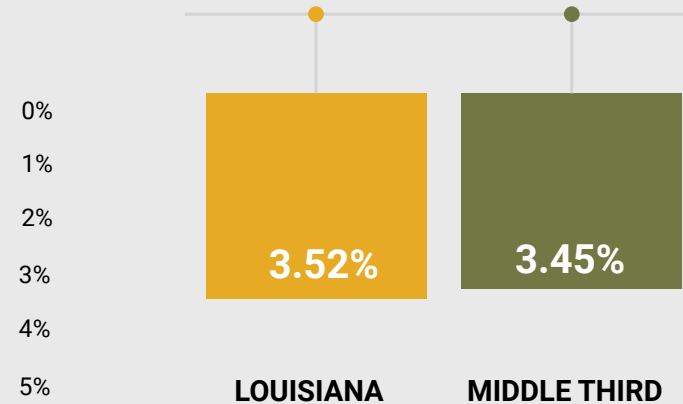
Wage growth has followed Louisiana’s improving employment trends. From August 2024 to August 2025, private-sector wages increased by 3.52 percent, **placing Louisiana 24th nationally and firmly within the middle third of states.**

This marks a significant shift from prior years, when wage growth consistently lagged national benchmarks. Rising wages reflect tighter labor markets, stronger employer demand and growing confidence in Louisiana’s economic direction.

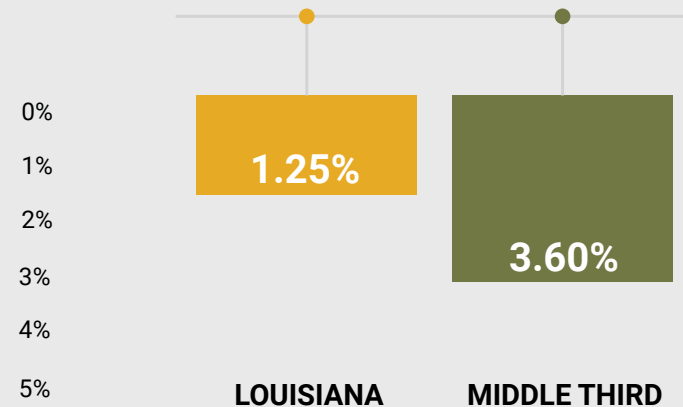
Continued progress will depend on expanding the labor force, strengthening education and training pipelines, and maintaining policies that support business investment and productivity growth.

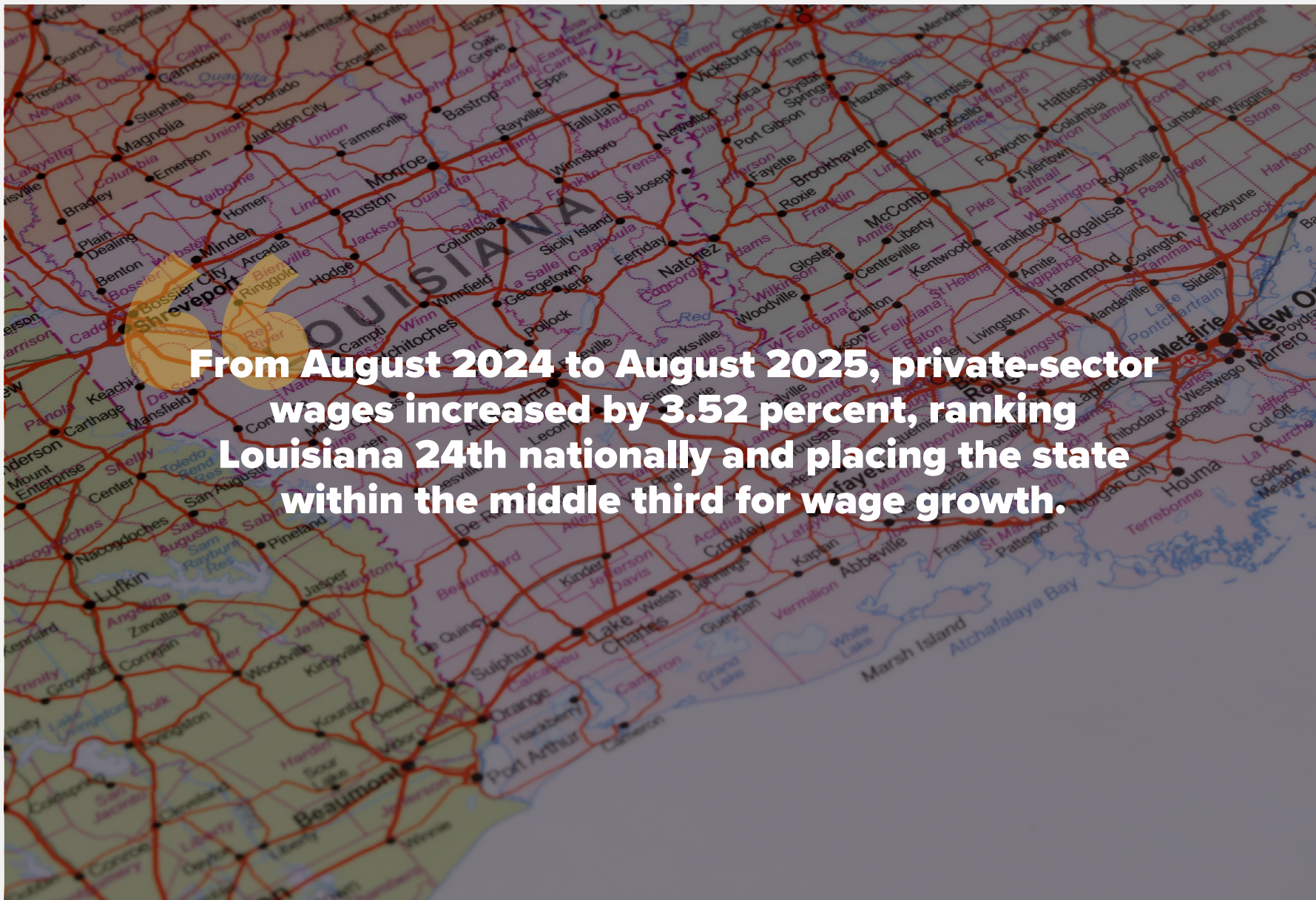
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

WAGE GROWTH AUG 2024 - AUG 2025



WAGE GROWTH 2019 - 2024





From August 2024 to August 2025, private-sector wages increased by 3.52 percent, ranking Louisiana 24th nationally and placing the state within the middle third for wage growth.

GOAL 03:

GROW THE WORKING-AGE POPULATION



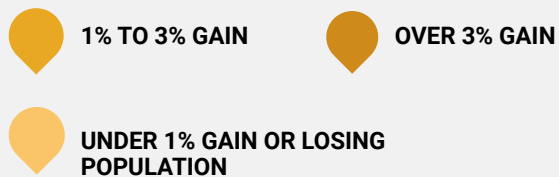
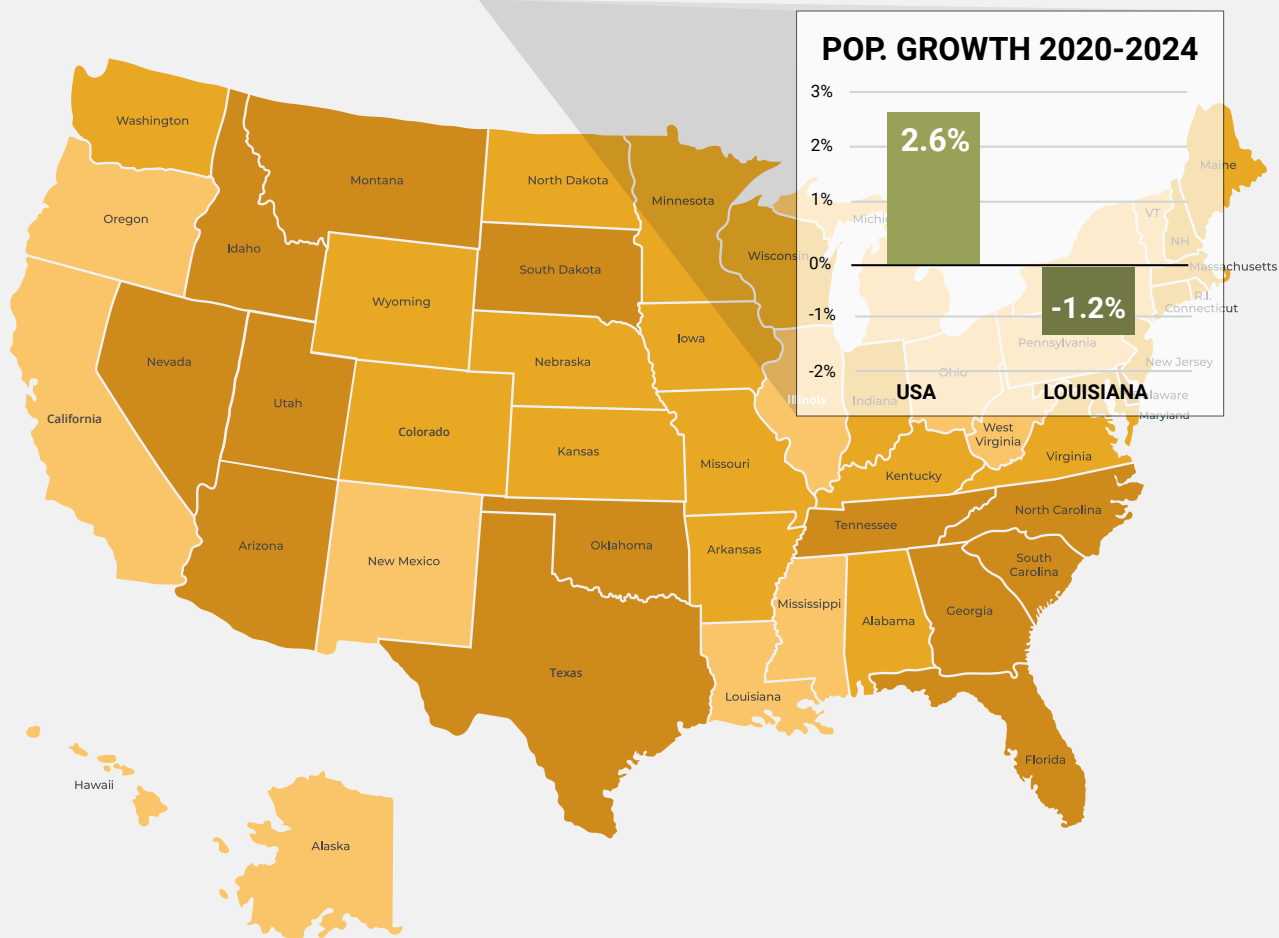
Target: Increase the working-age population (ages 25–64) by one percent over the next ten years.

Status: Demographic Headwinds Persist

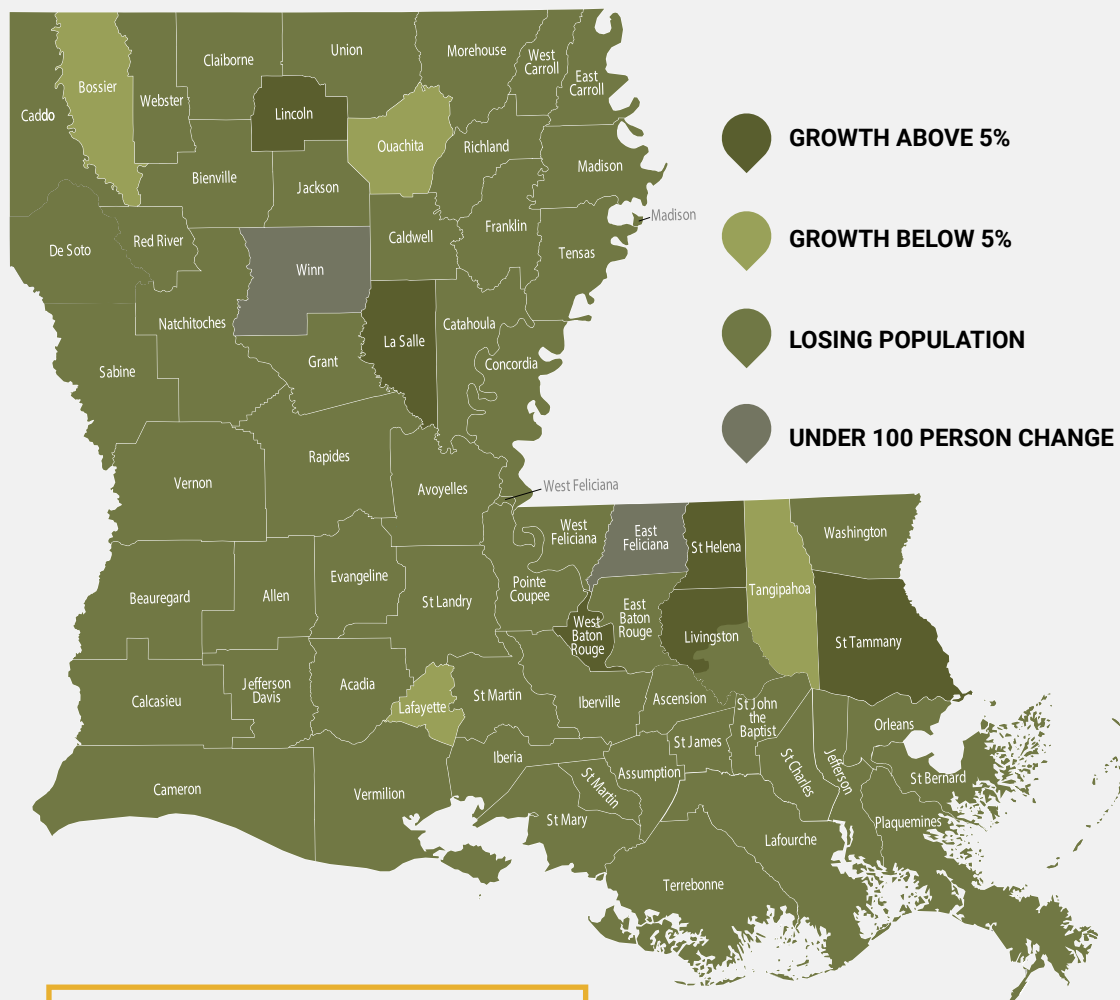
Louisiana faces a significant demographic challenge. Current projections indicate that Louisiana’s working-age population is expected to decline by more than five percent between 2024 and 2034, while the U.S. working-age population is projected to grow by 5.7 percent over the same period.

To achieve the goal of one percent growth, **Louisiana would need to increase its working-age population by 22,733 people more than in 2024 and by approximately 168,000 more than current projections over the next decade.**

PERCENTAGE POPULATION CHANGE 2020 - 2024



PROJECTED WORKING-AGE (25-64) POPULATION GROWTH 2024 - 2034



LOUISIANA AVERAGE: -5.3%
US AVERAGE: 5.7%

Growth is expected to be uneven geographically, with only eight parishes projected to experience working-age population growth exceeding five percent from 2024 to 2034. National research underscores the importance of affordability in relocation decisions. According to DCI’s Talent Wars, cost of living and housing costs rank as the top two factors influencing where people choose to move, suggesting that **Louisiana’s relative affordability represents an important asset the state can continue to leverage in efforts to retain and attract working-age residents.**

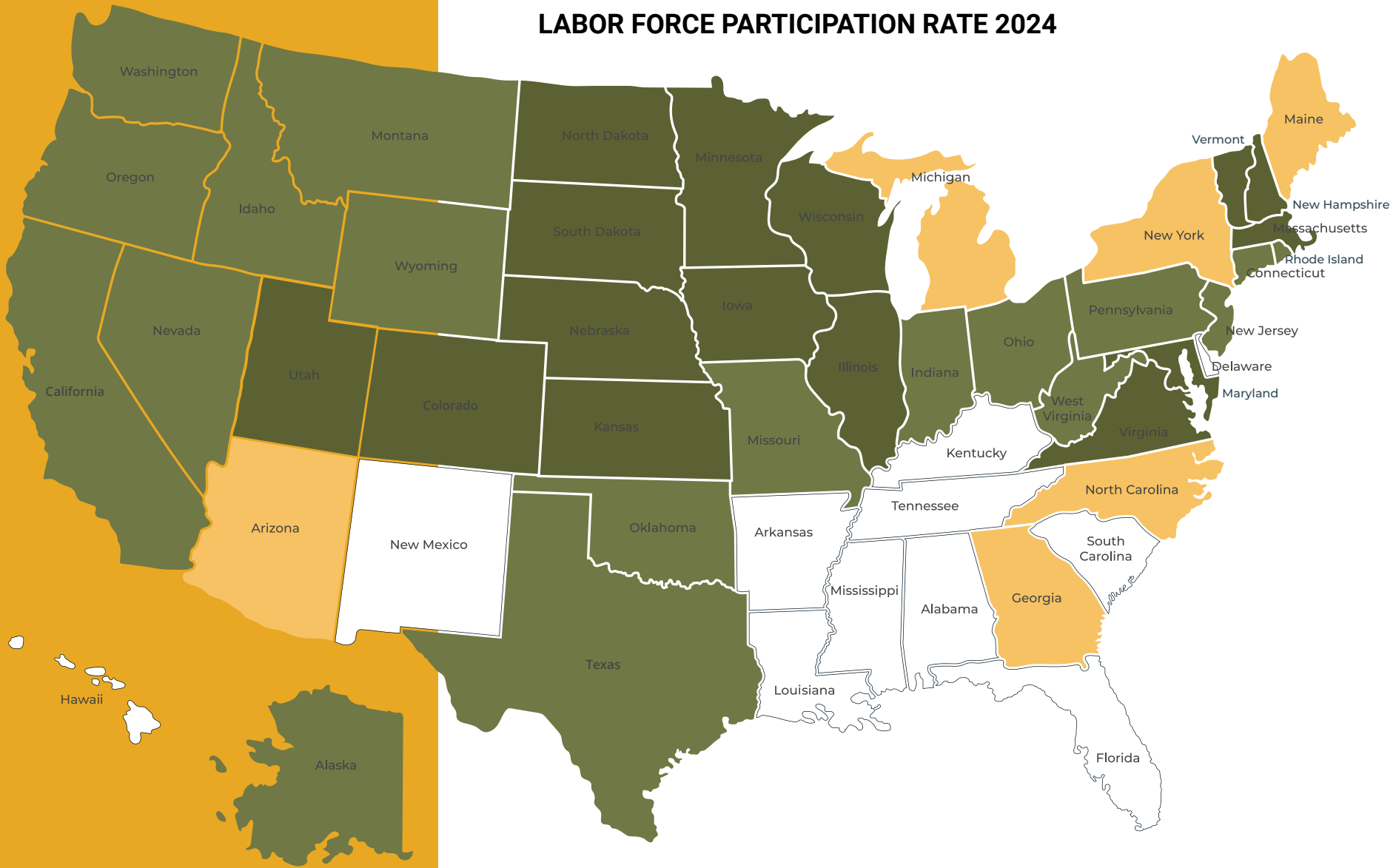
To continue to grow jobs in the state, increasing the available labor force will be the key. The 2024 labor force currently remains below the 2019 level. Addressing this challenge will require coordinated action across housing, workforce, infrastructure, and affordability policies to retain current residents and attract new talent.

One mechanism to bolster the labor force is improving veteran retention in Louisiana. LABI is a proud partner of The Boot, a non-profit dedicated to attracting and resettling transitioning military members into Louisiana after their term of service. Marketing Louisiana’s rich culture, low cost of living and vibrant communities while connecting veterans with post-military career opportunities, The Boot has successfully placed 100 veterans into Louisiana careers during its first year of operation. Scaling this model to make Louisiana the top destination for attracting and retaining military talent will be a key element of expanding the state’s workforce.

Source: Lightcast 2025.4

GOAL 04:
INCREASE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE 2024



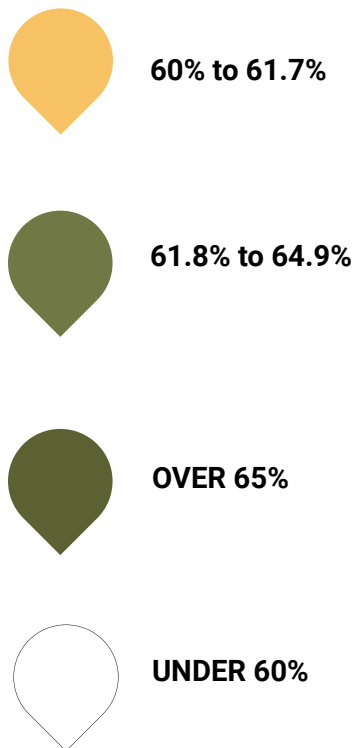
Target: Increase the Louisiana labor force participation rate to exceed the national average by 2030.

Status: Significant Gap Remains

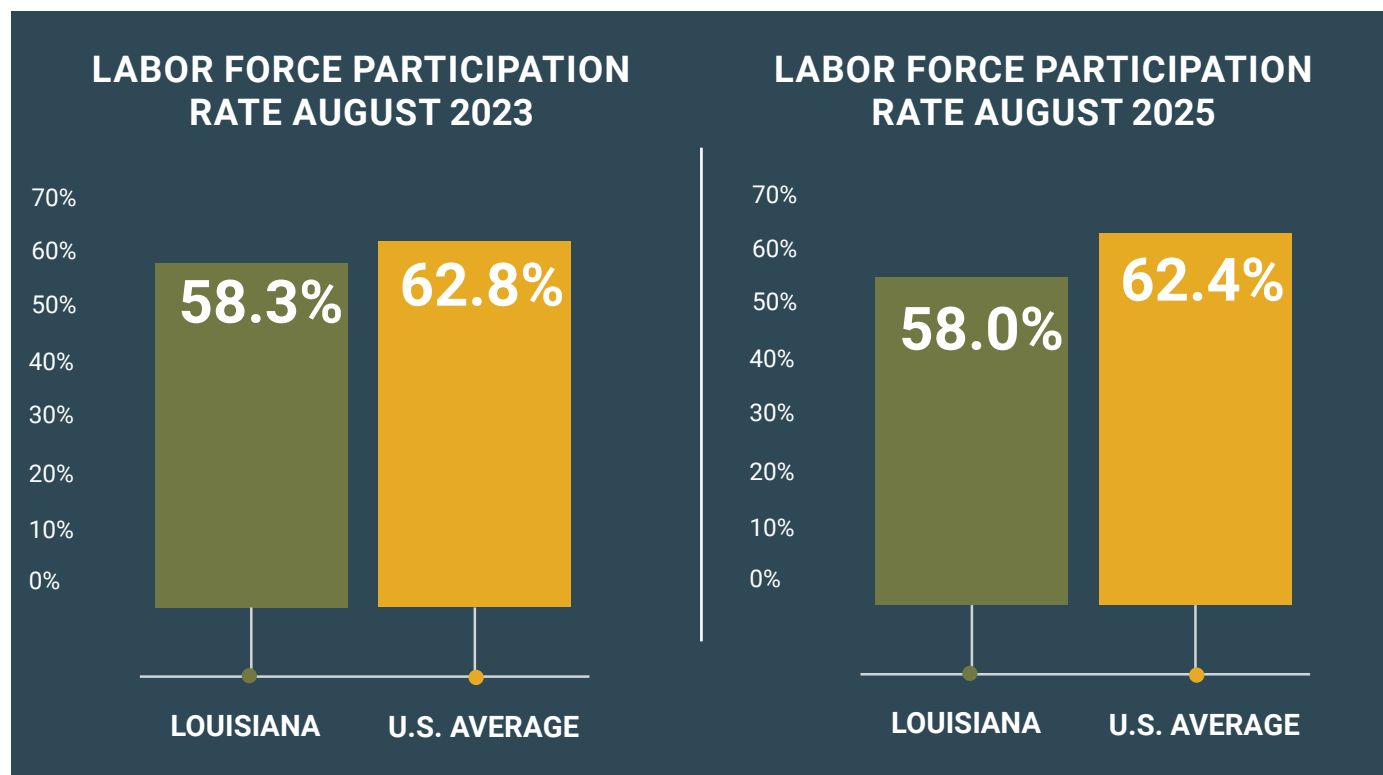
Louisiana’s labor force participation remains a significant challenge. As of August 2025, Louisiana’s labor force participation rate was approximately 58 percent, well below the national average of 62.4 percent and softening further from 2023 and 2024 numbers.

Low participation limits economic growth even when jobs are available. **To close this gap, Louisiana would need approximately 157,491 additional workforce participants to match the national average.**

Increasing participation will require removing barriers to work, expanding childcare access, supporting workforce re-entry, and aligning education and training programs with employer needs.



UNITED STATES	62.6%
LOUISIANA	58.3%



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics LAUS



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Sustained investment in early childhood education and research-based literacy solutions remain essential.

GOAL 05:

IMPROVE THIRD-GRADE READING PROFICIENCY

Target: Increase the share of third graders reading at or above grade level to 66 percent by 2030.

Status: 93% of Goal Achieved

Investments in evidence-based literacy solutions and targeted reading interventions continue to yield significant growth for Louisiana students. **Results from the 2025 end-of-year literacy screener show that 62 percent of Louisiana third graders read at or above grade level, moving the state closer to its 66 percent target.**

Reading proficiency by third grade is a critical predictor of long-term academic success and workforce readiness. Reaching this goal will require approximately 8,800 additional third graders achieving grade-level reading proficiency.



State lawmakers have committed \$70 million over the last two years to expand high-dosage tutoring, a research-backed instructional model to accelerate student growth through intensive, small group learning.



Louisiana has been nationally lauded for its comprehensive literacy strategy and sustained legislative investment in improving reading outcomes for students. LABI has championed efforts to identify and address literacy gaps early—including literacy screeners for K-3 students, high-dosage tutoring and expanded instructional support for teachers.

This marks the third year of implementation of the statewide literacy screener. The end-of-year literacy assessment for the 2024-2025 school year showed 17 points of growth in reading proficiency for students in grades K-3.



2024-2025: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS READING ON OR ABOVE LEVEL

GRADE	BEGINNING OF YEAR	END OF YEAR	GROWTH
K-3	47%	64%	+17
K	28%	61%	+33
1	50%	69%	+19
2	54%	65%	+11
3	54%	62%	+8

GOAL 06:
IMPROVE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

Target: Improve the state’s high school graduation rate to 88 percent by 2030.

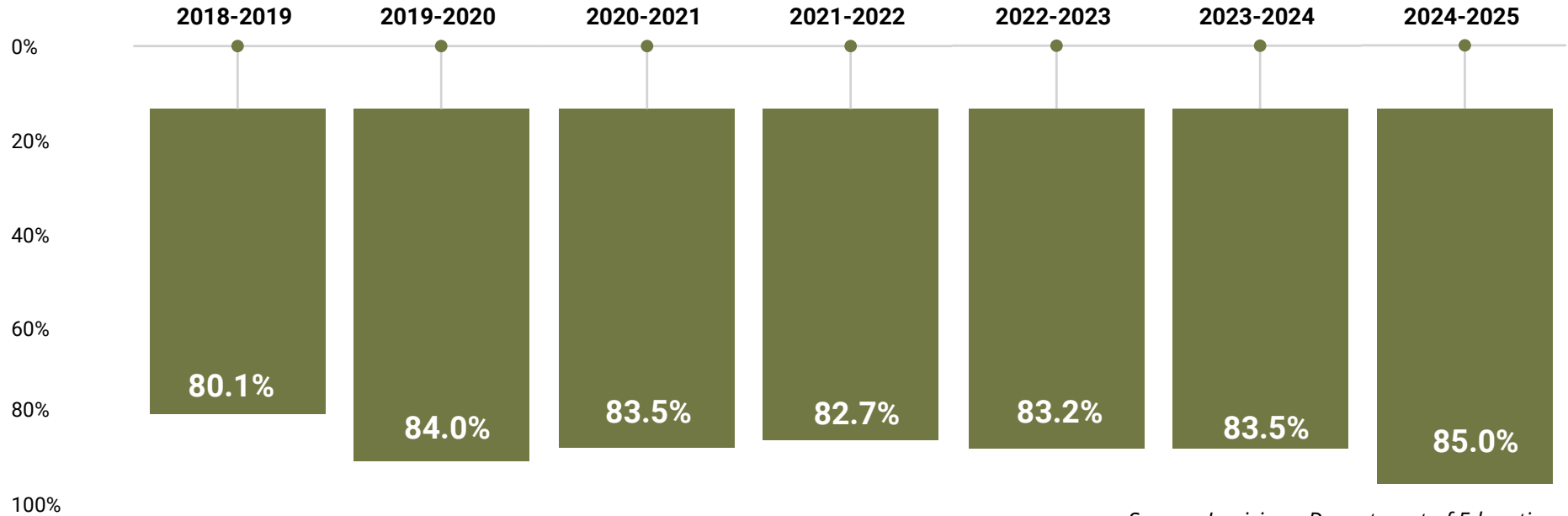
Status: 96% of Goal Achieved

Louisiana’s high school graduation rate reached approximately 85 percent in 2025, reflecting steady and sustained improvement over the past six years.

Graduation gains strengthen Louisiana’s future workforce pipeline and reduce long-term workforce shortages. To achieve the 2030 goal, approximately 1,338 additional students statewide must graduate each year.

Continued progress will require holding firm accountability measures implemented in 2024, sustained support for educators and expanding pathways that connect education to real-world career opportunities.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Target: Ensure that 50 percent of high school students participate in school-to-work initiatives—such as paid internships, pre-apprenticeships, or apprenticeships—by 2030, with the goal rising to 100 percent in subsequent years.

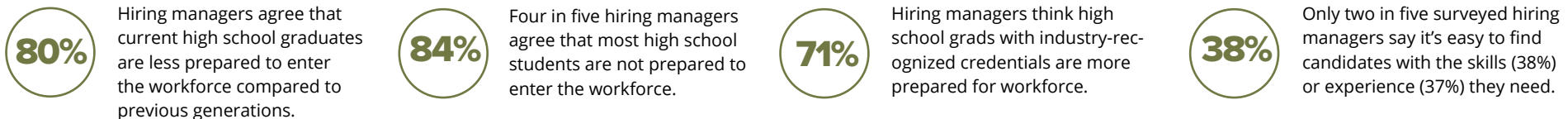
Status: Early-Stage Progress

GOAL 07: EXPAND SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES

This goal represents one of Louisiana’s most ambitious workforce objectives. **Meeting it would require more than 22,000 internships, apprenticeships or paid work experiences annually.**

Work-based learning is a proven pathway to employment, higher wages and workforce retention. Achieving this target will require deep collaboration among schools, employers, workforce agencies and regional partners. LABI continues to advocate for policies that reduce barriers and incentivize employer participation in work-based learning programs.

INSIGHTS FROM HIRING MANAGERS ON ENTRY-LEVEL WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS



Source: 2025 New Hire Readiness Report, US Chamber of Commerce

GOAL 08: REDUCE CRIME AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY

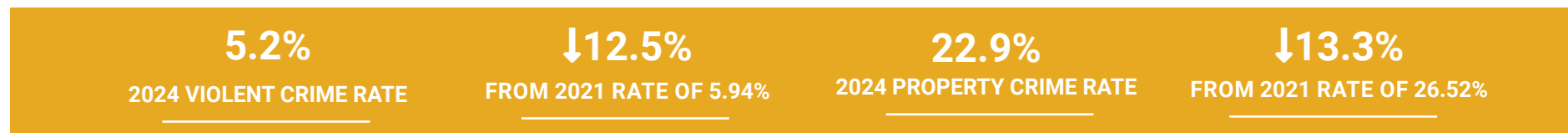
Public safety is a foundational element of economic competitiveness. **Since 2021, Louisiana has reduced violent crime by approximately 12.5 percent and property crime by 13.3 percent.**

These gains represent meaningful progress but highlight the need for continued focus. Safe communities are essential for attracting workers, retaining families and supporting business investment.

Sustaining progress will require continued investment in law enforcement, judicial effectiveness, community-based prevention strategies and reentry initiatives to reduce recidivism.

Target: Reduce the violent crime rate by 15 percent and the property crime rate by 20 percent by 2030.

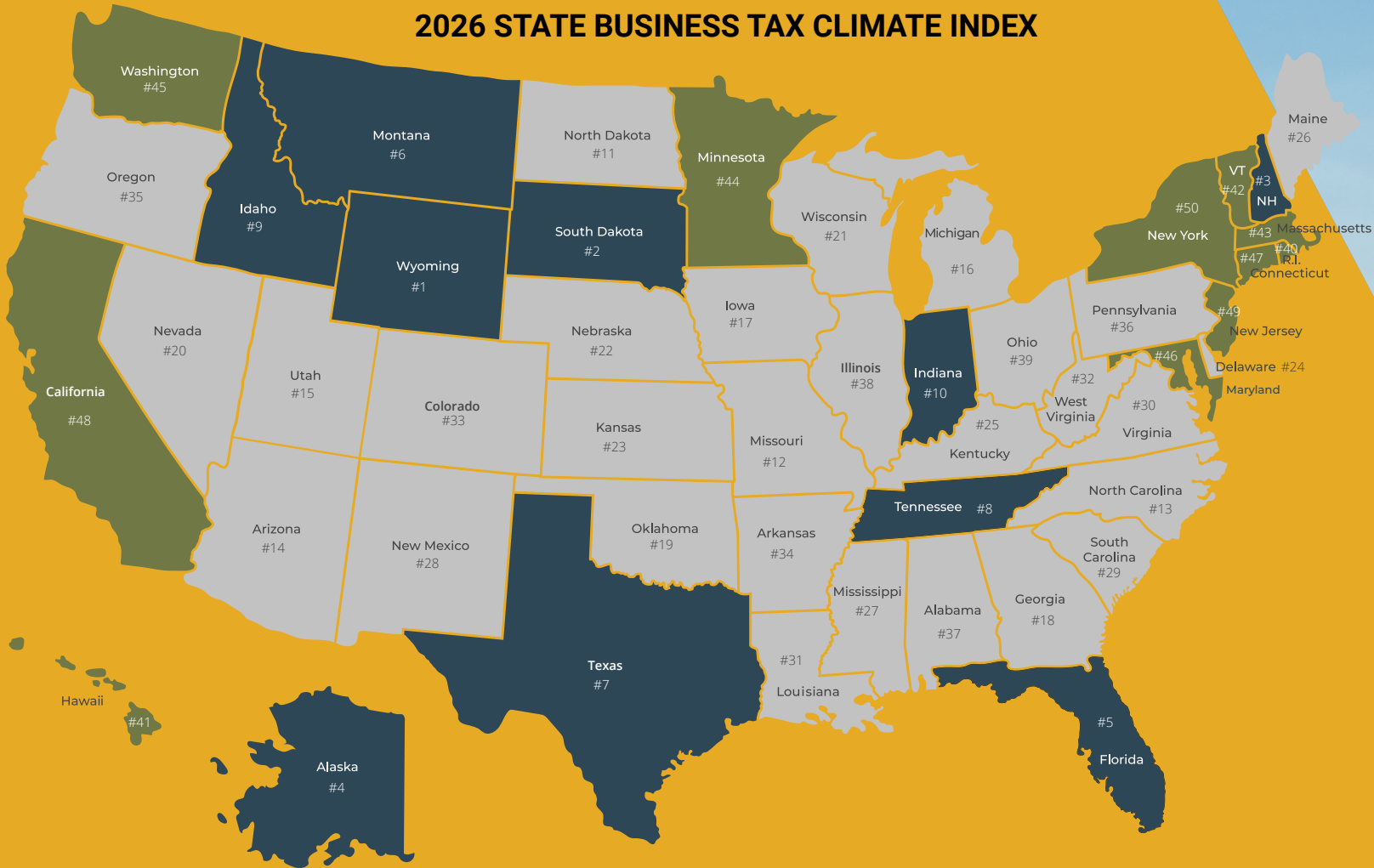
Status: Strong Progress Toward 2030



Target: Secure multiple, consistent top 20 rankings among the best states for business by 2030.



Status: Positive Momentum

2026 STATE BUSINESS TAX CLIMATE INDEX



GOAL 09:

IMPROVE NATIONAL BUSINESS CLIMATE RANKINGS

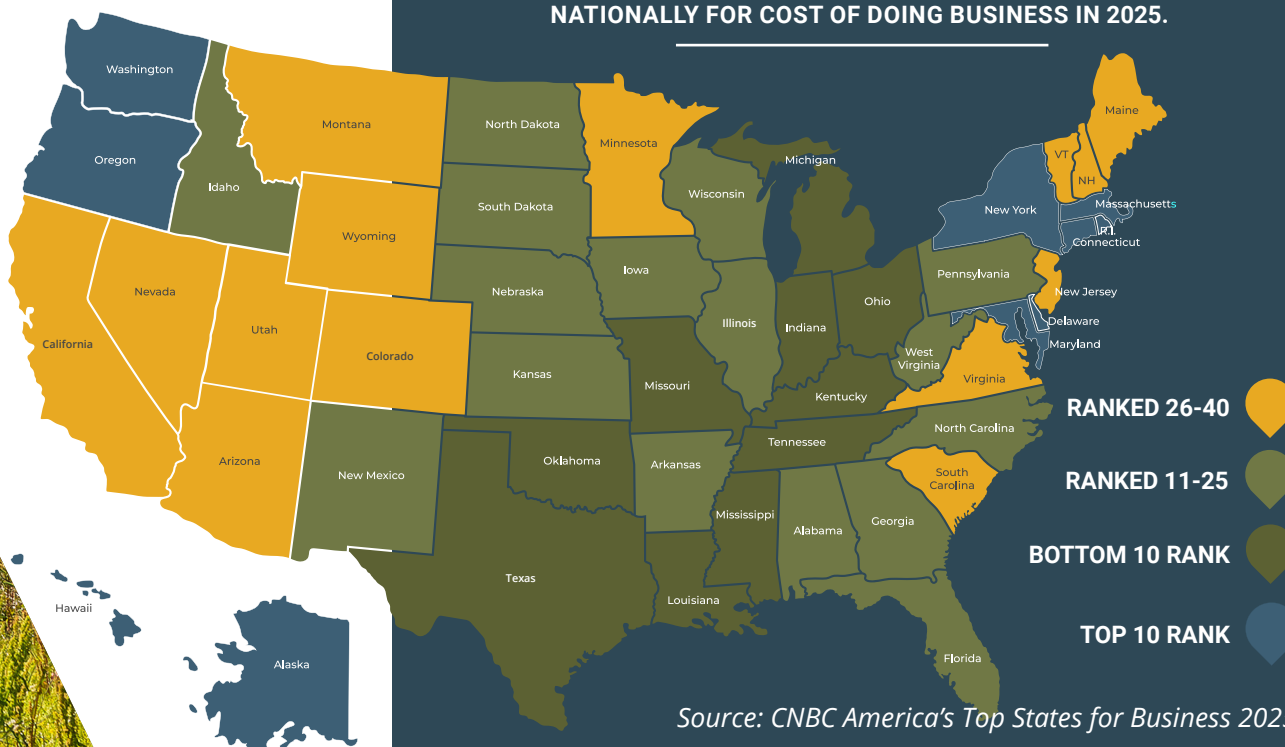
-  10 BEST BUSINESS TAX CLIMATES
-  10 WORST BUSINESS TAX CLIMATES

Source: 2026 State Tax Competitiveness Index, the Tax Foundation

Louisiana's business climate rankings show clear upward movement, particularly in tax competitiveness. **The state now ranks 31st overall in the State Tax Competitiveness Index, a substantial improvement from its position in the mid-40s just a few years ago, with its corporate tax structure ranked 10th nationally.**

While Louisiana has not yet achieved consistent top-20 placement, the trend direction is positive. Maintaining momentum will require continued reform, predictability in policymaking and alignment between economic development and workforce strategies.

COST OF BUSINESS RANKING 2025



Additional national rankings show improvement across multiple measures, including cost of doing business and startup climate:



TOP STATES FOR BUSINESS RANKING IMPROVED FROM 49TH IN 2023 TO 46TH IN 2025.



BEST STATES TO START A BUSINESS RANKING IMPROVED FROM 29TH IN 2023 TO 14TH IN 2026, PLACING LOUISIANA IN THE TOP 20.



BEST STATES TO START A BUSINESS RANKING ROSE FROM 37TH IN 2022 TO 27TH IN 2024.

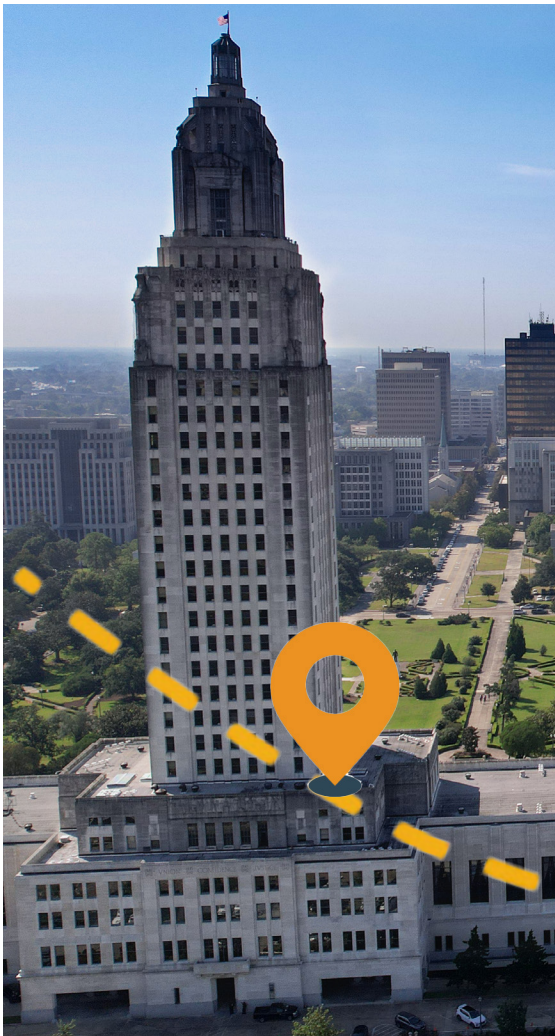


BEST STATES TO START A BUSINESS RANKING IMPROVED FROM 32ND IN 2023 TO 21ST IN 2024.

IN ADDITION, RANKED LOUISIANA 7TH NATIONALLY FOR COST OF DOING BUSINESS IN 2025.

Source: CNBC America's Top States for Business 2025

DRIVING CHANGE: LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS FOR A MORE COMPETITIVE LOUISIANA



During the 2025 legislative session, LABI drove a targeted slate of reforms aimed at strengthening Louisiana’s economic position. Foremost among these were **legal and insurance market reforms designed to restore balance, transparency and predictability to the civil justice system**, a necessary step toward reducing costs and improving the state’s overall competitiveness.

While these are not yet reflected in the data contained in this report, they represent critical momentum toward improving Louisiana’s competitiveness and business climate.

LABI also championed **structural changes to state government** intended to deliver long-term returns. The legislature enacted a unified ‘One Door to Work’ system, replacing fragmentation with coordination and laying the groundwork for a more efficient and effective workforce delivery system for Louisianans.

In addition, Louisiana’s Department of Transportation and Development underwent a significant overhaul to streamline operations and accelerate project delivery. While these reforms will take time to fully materialize, they signal a decisive shift toward **greater accountability and performance** in one of the state’s most consequential agencies.

Together, these reforms reflect the core purpose of *LA Driven*: moving Louisiana from isolated policy actions to a sustained, coordinated strategy for competitiveness. **By holistically addressing legal, workforce and infrastructure systems, the state is beginning to dismantle long-standing barriers to growth.** These actions strengthen confidence, improve performance and position Louisiana to compete more effectively for jobs, talent and investment.

Continued progress will depend on maintaining the discipline and urgency that *LA Driven* demands.



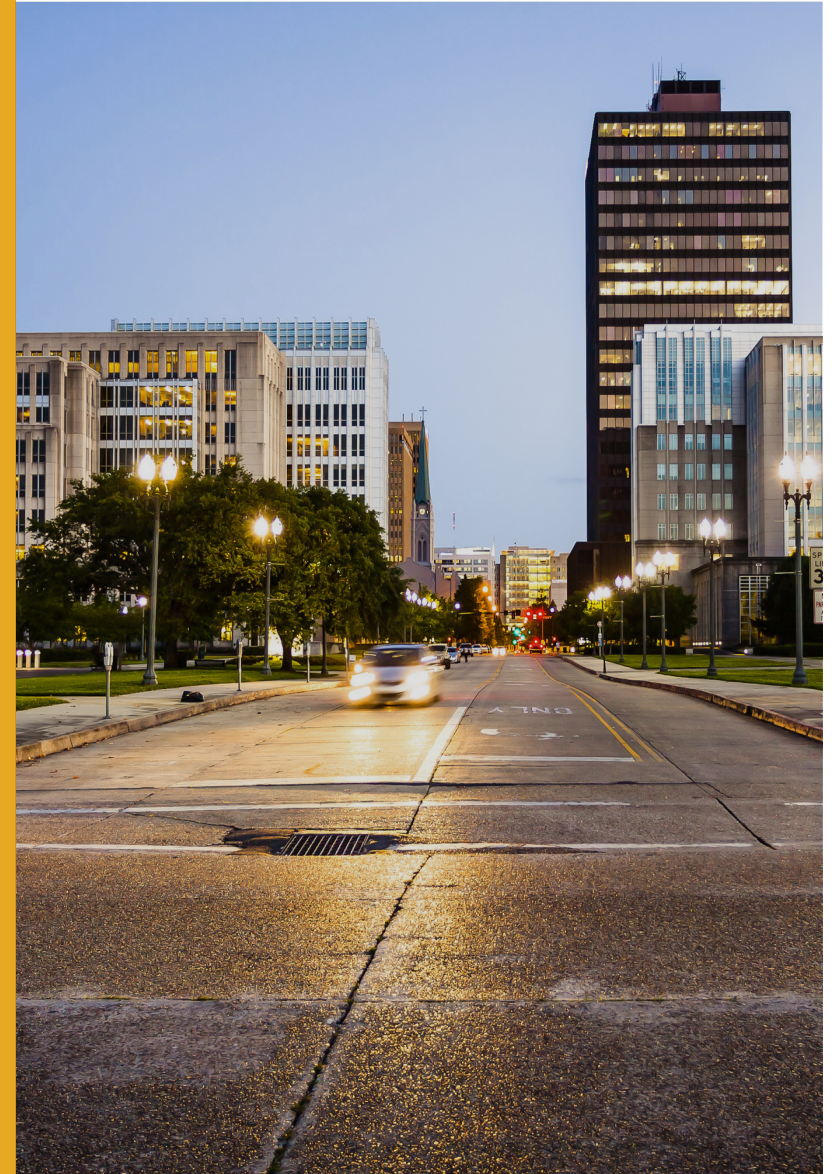
“ Together, these reforms reflect the core purpose of *LA Driven*: moving Louisiana from isolated policy actions to a sustained, coordinated strategy for competitiveness.

> NO DETOURS: IMPROVEMENTS AND AREAS OF CONCERN

Louisiana's recent economic performance shows measurable gains in key indicators, while also pointing to the ongoing structural challenges that must be addressed. Across the nine targets used to assess progress, the data shows meaningful improvement in several near-term indicators, while longer-term trends continue to shape the state's overall competitive position.

Progress is most evident in job creation and wage growth. Based on the most recent data, Louisiana has reached the middle third of states on both measures, marking a significant shift from prior years when the state consistently ranked near the bottom nationally. These gains point to improved economic momentum and stronger alignment with national labor market trends. **Education outcomes are also moving in a positive direction,** with steady increases in high school graduation rates and continued improvement in third grade reading proficiency, both critical to strengthening the future workforce pipeline.

Quality-of-life and business climate indicators show additional forward movement. Violent and property crime rates have declined since 2021, supporting improvements in community stability and workforce retention. At the same time, Louisiana's business climate rankings reflect progress in tax competitiveness, with improvements across several national indices signaling a more attractive environment for investment and expansion.



Despite this momentum, several indicators remain areas of concern. **Louisiana’s labor force participation rate** continues to trail behind the national average, limiting the size of the available workforce at a time of sustained employer demand. Population trends, including projected declines in the working-age population, pose longer-term challenges to growth and raise questions for businesses evaluating future workforce availability.

Workforce pipeline goals further illustrate the scale of effort still required. **Expanding participation in school-to-work initiatives**, such as internships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs, will require substantial growth in opportunities across regions and industries to meet long-term targets.

Taken together, the data indicates **Louisiana has made meaningful progress on several foundational measures while still facing structural challenges that will influence its long-term competitiveness.** Ongoing tracking of these metrics remains essential to evaluating recent improvements and determining how remaining gaps are addressed.

Converting competitiveness strategies into lasting outcomes will require alignment among policymakers, employers, educators and community leaders, supported by the necessary resources and ongoing evaluation. This work must remain adaptive as economic conditions evolve.

Compounding these challenges, a new force accelerated rapidly in 2025: **artificial intelligence.** AI is reshaping productivity, accelerating innovation and driving significant occupational and industry disruption. Combined with broader economic uncertainty, technological change has intensified the pace of transformation. At the same time, emerging opportunities in energy, logistics, and data-driven infrastructure—including data centers—present powerful tailwinds for Louisiana.

Looking ahead, 2026 represents a critical opportunity for Louisiana’s leaders to build on recent gains, address persistent weaknesses and invest strategically in emerging opportunities that will define the state’s next phase of growth.



WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

LOUISIANA CAN BE AN ECONOMIC LEADER IN THE SOUTH BY 2030.

CONCLUSION: GOING THE DISTANCE



Louisiana has made measurable progress toward becoming a more competitive, opportunity-rich state. The *LA Driven* data outlined in this report confirm that **recent policy alignment, economic reforms and targeted investments are delivering real results**. Improvements in job creation, wage growth, education outcomes, workforce participation and crime reduction demonstrate that Louisiana is no longer standing still.

These gains validate the direction outlined in LABI's *LA Driven* strategic plan and reinforce that focused, pro-growth policies can move the needle.

At the same time, this report makes clear that **progress is not the same as completion**. Several goals remain unfinished, and others require sustained effort to ensure today's momentum

translates into long-term success. National competitiveness is not static. Other states are advancing aggressively and Louisiana must continue to modernize, innovate and execute if it is to secure its place as a top destination for investment, talent and economic opportunity.

The coming years present a pivotal window. Boardrooms across the nation are taking notice as Louisiana finally aligns its abundant natural resources with a stronger business climate, strategic workforce reforms and targeted infrastructure investments. Maintaining that interest will require policymakers to stay the course, resist calls to return to outdated approaches and continue advancing policies that support job creators, workers and families alike.



We encourage stakeholders to share the original LA23 strategic plan with elected officials and remain engaged as *LA Driven* moves from recommendations to measurable results.

LABI REMAINS COMMITTED TO LEADING THIS WORK.

Through bold, data-driven advocacy, coalition building, and continued engagement with policymakers and employers across the state, LABI will press forward to ensure Louisiana builds on its gains and achieves the full promise of the *LA Driven* vision. The progress documented here is proof of what is possible.

The power to transform possibility into progress is in our hands and Louisiana's future depends on it.

THANK YOU TO OUR ORIGINAL INVESTORS:



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