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Six states post retail gains, but most still languish after recession

The Business Journals by G. Scott Thomas

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[G. Scott Thomas](#)
[Email](#)

The retail sector, which was badly shaken by the economic downturn, has not yet regained full health.

A few states -- notably New York, North Dakota and Texas -- have recovered all of the retail jobs they lost during the recession. But they're exceptions to the rule.

Just six states and the District of Columbia have more retail positions today than five years ago. The other 44 states are still digging themselves out of an awfully big hole.

The nation had 14.79 million retail jobs as of May 2012, according to the latest seasonally adjusted figures from the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics. That represented a drop of 764,600 positions from 15.55 million in May 2007, just seven months before the recession arrived in December 2007.

[New York](#) and [Texas](#) were the big gainers in absolute numbers, adding 18,500 and 17,700 retail jobs, respectively, during the 2007-2012 span. North Dakota was the leader in percentage terms, boosting its retail employment by 7.4 percent.

The following database has complete breakdowns for all 50 states and D.C. You can re-sort the chart by clicking any column header. A second click will reverse the sort.

California and Rhode Island were the biggest losers during the past half-decade. California was the only state with a six-figure decline in retail employment, losing 141,700 jobs. Rhode Island's drop of 12.0 percent was the worst on that side of the ledger.

Both of those states are saddled with sluggish economies in general, as witnessed by their [double-digit unemployment rates](#).

STATE RETAIL EMPLOYMENT (MAY 2012)

State	Retail jobs (May 2007)	Retail jobs (May 2012)	Raw change	Rank	Percent change	Rank
New York	894,900	913,400	18,500	1	2.07%	4
Texas	1,158,800	1,176,500	17,700	2	1.53%	5
North Dakota	43,000	46,200	3,200	3	7.44%	1
Oklahoma	170,800	172,800	2,000	4	1.17%	6
Massachusetts	349,400	351,000	1,600	5	0.46%	7
South Dakota	50,000	51,500	1,500	6	3.00%	2
District of Columbia	18,300	18,800	500	7	2.73%	3
Alaska	36,000	35,700	-300	8	-0.83%	8
Vermont	39,900	39,300	-600	9	-1.50%	9
Nebraska	107,800	105,400	-2,400	10	-2.23%	11
Wyoming	31,900	29,300	-2,600	11	-8.15%	44
Maine	85,700	82,700	-3,000	12	-3.50%	13
Hawaii	70,500	67,200	-3,300	13	-4.68%	20
Louisiana	224,200	220,300	-3,900	14	-1.74%	10
Delaware	54,300	50,000	-4,300	15	-7.92%	43
Montana	58,100	53,600	-4,500	16	-7.75%	41

West Virginia	91,200	85,700	-5,500	17	-6.03%	29
Arkansas	134,300	128,500	-5,800	18	-4.32%	17
New Mexico	96,100	90,100	-6,000	19	-6.24%	31
Rhode Island	51,800	45,600	-6,200	20	-11.97%	51

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