

RANK 38 RHODE ISLAND

SUMMARY

On the basis of its fiscal solvency in five separate categories, Rhode Island is ranked 38th among the US states for its fiscal health, which is an improvement over the previous fiscal year. On a short-run basis, Rhode Island has between 78 percent and 187 percent of the cash needed to cover short-term liabilities, which is well below the average among the states. Revenues exceed expenses by 6 percent, and net position improved by \$448 per capita in FY 2015. On a long-run basis, Rhode Island has a negative net asset ratio of 0.53, pointing to the use of debt financing and unfunded pension obligations. Long-term liabilities are 89 percent of total assets, or \$5,377 per capita. Total primary government debt is \$2.63 billion, or 5 percent of state personal income. Unfunded pension obligations, on a guaranteed-to-be-paid basis, are \$17.67 billion, or 33 percent of state personal income. OPEB is 1 percent of state personal income.

2015 TOTAL LONG-TERM OBLIGATIONS

STATE DEBT

	General obligation bonds	Total primary government debt	State personal income	Ratio of debt to state personal income	Total primary debt per capita
Rhode Island	\$1.02 billion	\$2.63 billion	\$52.91 billion	5.0%	\$2,485
National average	\$6.09 billion	\$12.71 billion	\$305.43 billion	3.7%	\$1,804

PENSION LIABILITY

	Unfunded pension liability	Funded ratio	Market value of unfunded liability	Market value of funded liability ratio
Rhode Island	\$4.81 billion	62%	\$17.67 billion	31%
National average	\$20.62 billion	74%	\$105.50 billion	36%

OTHER POSTEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB)

	Total unfunded OPEB	Funded ratio
Rhode Island	\$0.71 billion	8%
National average	\$12.97 billion	12%

1. Florida
2. North Dakota
3. South Dakota
4. Utah
5. Wyoming
6. Nebraska
7. Oklahoma
8. Tennessee
9. Idaho
10. Montana
11. Missouri
12. Alabama
13. Ohio
14. Nevada
15. North Carolina
16. Indiana
17. Alaska
18. Virginia
19. South Carolina
20. Arkansas
21. Oregon
22. Georgia
23. Texas
24. Minnesota
25. New Hampshire
26. Washington
27. Hawaii
28. Iowa
29. Wisconsin
30. Colorado
31. Delaware
32. Kansas
33. Arizona
34. Mississippi
35. Maine
36. Michigan
37. Connecticut
- 38. Rhode Island**
39. New York
40. Vermont
41. New Mexico
42. West Virginia
43. California
44. Louisiana
45. Pennsylvania
46. Maryland
47. Kentucky
48. Massachusetts
49. Illinois
50. New Jersey

distance from
US average
(in standard deviations)

UNDERLYING RATIOS

	Cash ratio	Quick ratio	Current ratio	Operating ratio	Surplus (or deficit) per capita	Net asset ratio	Long-term liability ratio	Long-term liability per capita
Rhode Island	0.78	1.46	1.87	1.06	\$448	-0.53	0.89	\$5,377
National average	2.68	3.66	3.93	1.04	\$150	-0.17	0.61	\$4,272

	Tax-to-income ratio	Revenue-to-income ratio	Expenses-to-income ratio	Pension-to-income ratio	OPEB-to-income ratio
Rhode Island	0.06	0.15	0.14	0.33	0.01
National average	0.06	0.13	0.13	0.35	0.04

KEY TERMS

- **Cash solvency** measures whether a state has enough cash to cover its short-term bills, which include accounts payable, vouchers, warrants, and short-term debt. (Rhode Island ranks 42nd.)
- **Budget solvency** measures whether a state can cover its fiscal year spending using current revenues. Did it run a shortfall during the year? (Rhode Island ranks 8th.)
- **Long-run solvency** measures whether a state has a hedge against large long-term liabilities. Are enough assets available to cushion the state from potential shocks or long-term fiscal risks? (Rhode Island ranks 43rd.)
- **Service-level solvency** measures how high taxes, revenues, and spending are when compared to state personal income. Do states have enough “fiscal slack”? If spending commitments demand more revenues, are states in a good position to increase taxes without harming the economy? Is spending high or low relative to the tax base? (Rhode Island ranks 39th.)
- **Trust fund solvency** measures how much debt a state has. How large are unfunded pension liabilities and OPEB liabilities compared to the state personal income? (Rhode Island ranks 28th.)

For a complete explanation of the methodology used to calculate Rhode Island's fiscal health rankings, see Eileen Norcross and Olivia Gonzalez, “Ranking the States by Fiscal Condition,” 2017 ed. (Mercatus Research, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, Arlington, VA, July 2017).