

Fewer new jobs, longer searches, pay barely keeping up.

- Layoffs and new claims are low. With more people retiring and fewer immigrants arriving, economists say fewer new jobs are needed. **Most other measures are worse** than in 2023 and before the pandemic.
- Jobs added in the 12 months to August: 827K as first reported, revised down 34% to 543K. **First reports have been revised down four years in a row, the longest run in records back to 1956.**

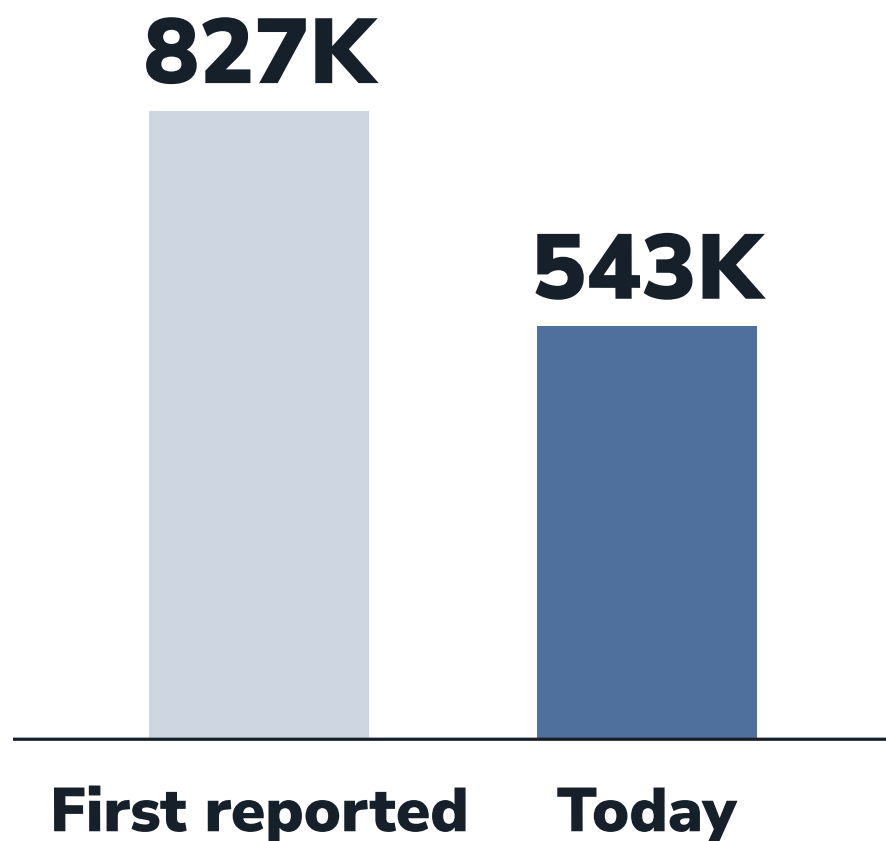
MEASURE	LATEST	STATUS	LAST 3 MONTHS
Jobs added, 3-month average	51K Sep	Weak	▼ Worse
Unemployment rate	4.2% Sep	Weak	▲ Better
Typical time out of work, weeks	11.5 Sep	Weak	► Steady
Unemployed 6 months+, share	27.1% Sep	Weak	▼ Worse
Job openings per person looking	1.01 Aug	Weak	▲ Better
Hiring rate	3.3% Aug	Weak	► Steady
Layoffs rate	1.0% Aug	Strong	▲ Better
New jobless claims, a week	200K Sep	Strong	▲ Better
Hourly pay minus prices	-0.2 pts Aug	Weak	▼ Worse
Weekly pay minus prices	+0.4 pts Aug	Mixed	▼ Worse
Saving rate	4.1% Aug	Weak	▼ Worse

Status compares the latest reading with the 2023 and 2018-19 averages. Weak is worse than both, mixed is worse than one, strong is better than both. Last 3 months is our read of each chart: the last three months against January to March 2026.

SOURCES BLS, Department of Labor and BEA, via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

The past year was smaller than first reported.

Jobs added, 12 months to August



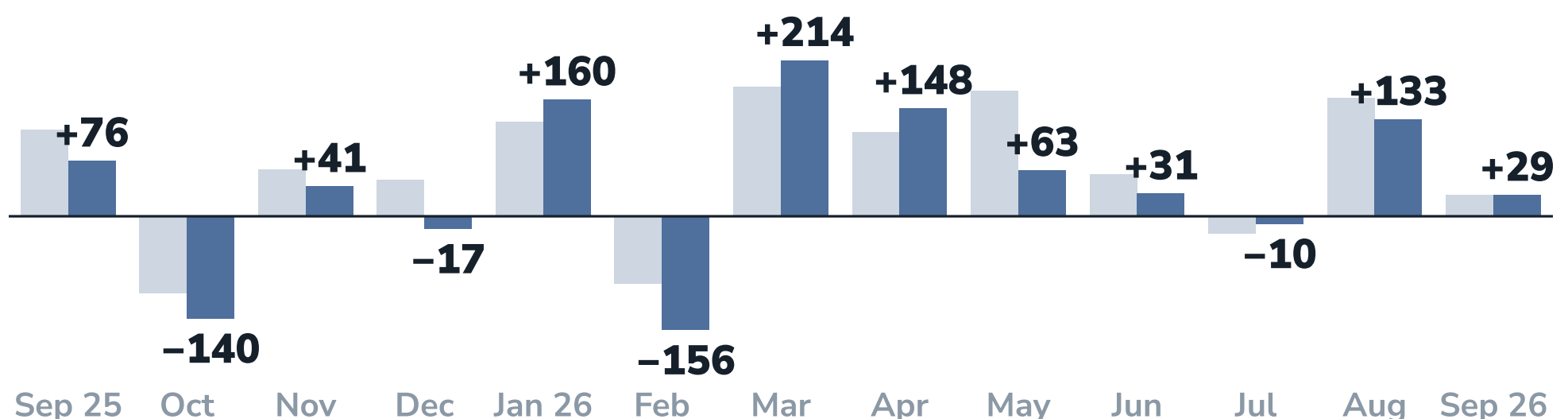
Revised down 34%

Added up month by month as each was first reported, the 12 months to August came to **827K** jobs. Today the same months add up to **543K**. 8 of the 12 were revised down.

How many jobs a month does the US need now? Fewer, because retirements and the immigration crackdown mean fewer new workers. Reuters reports economists put this break-even at about 50K a month. RBC puts it at 20K. The last three months averaged 51K.

The same 12 months, plus September, in thousands

■ First reported ■ As published today · September is a first estimate

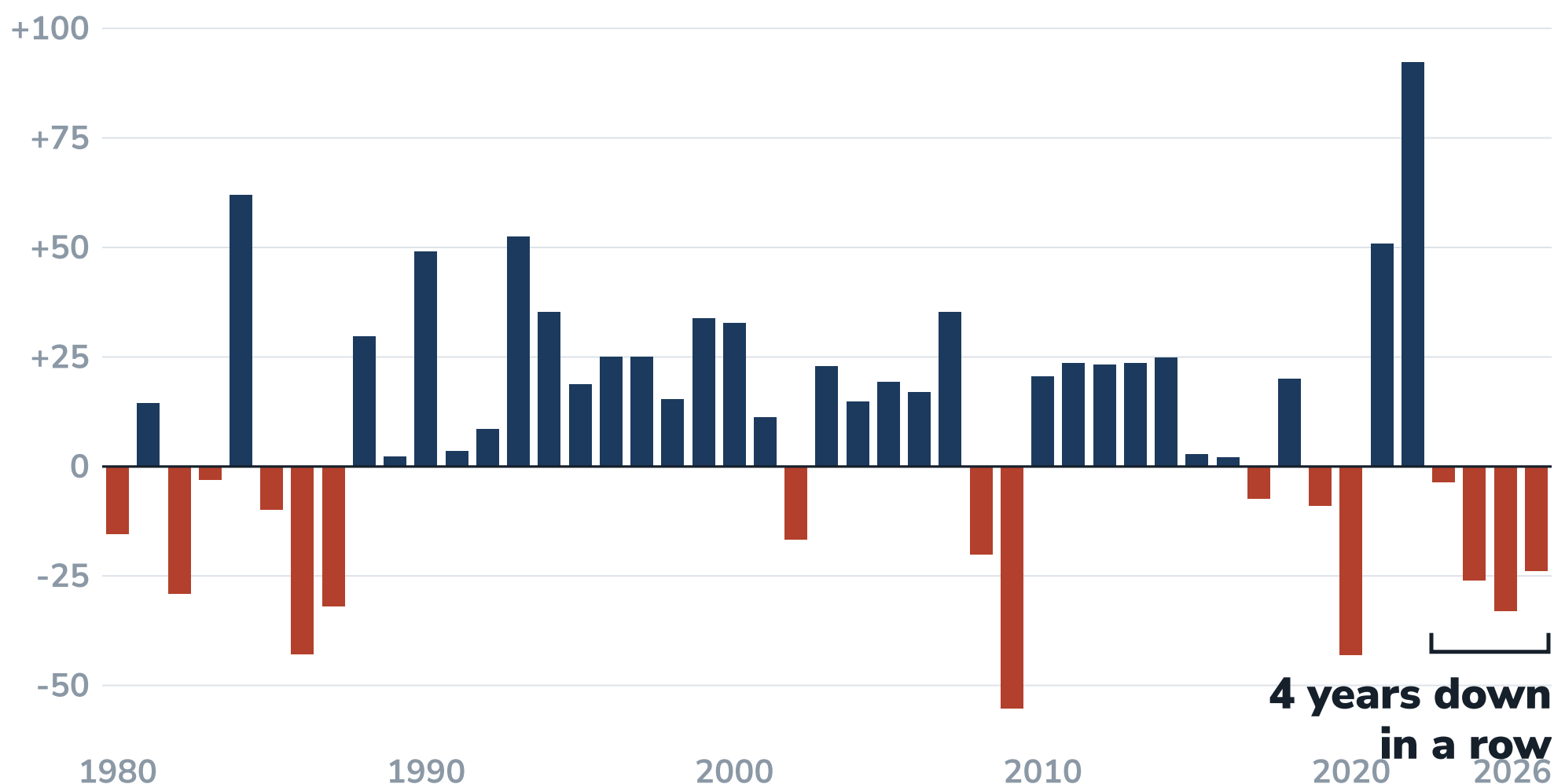


SOURCES [BLS payroll survey](#) via [ALFRED](#) and [FRED](#); break-even, [Reuters](#) and [RBC](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Job growth has been revised down four years in a row. That is the longest run in records back to 1956.

How much each year's jobs were revised, thousands a month

■ Revised up ■ Revised down · 12 months from September to August

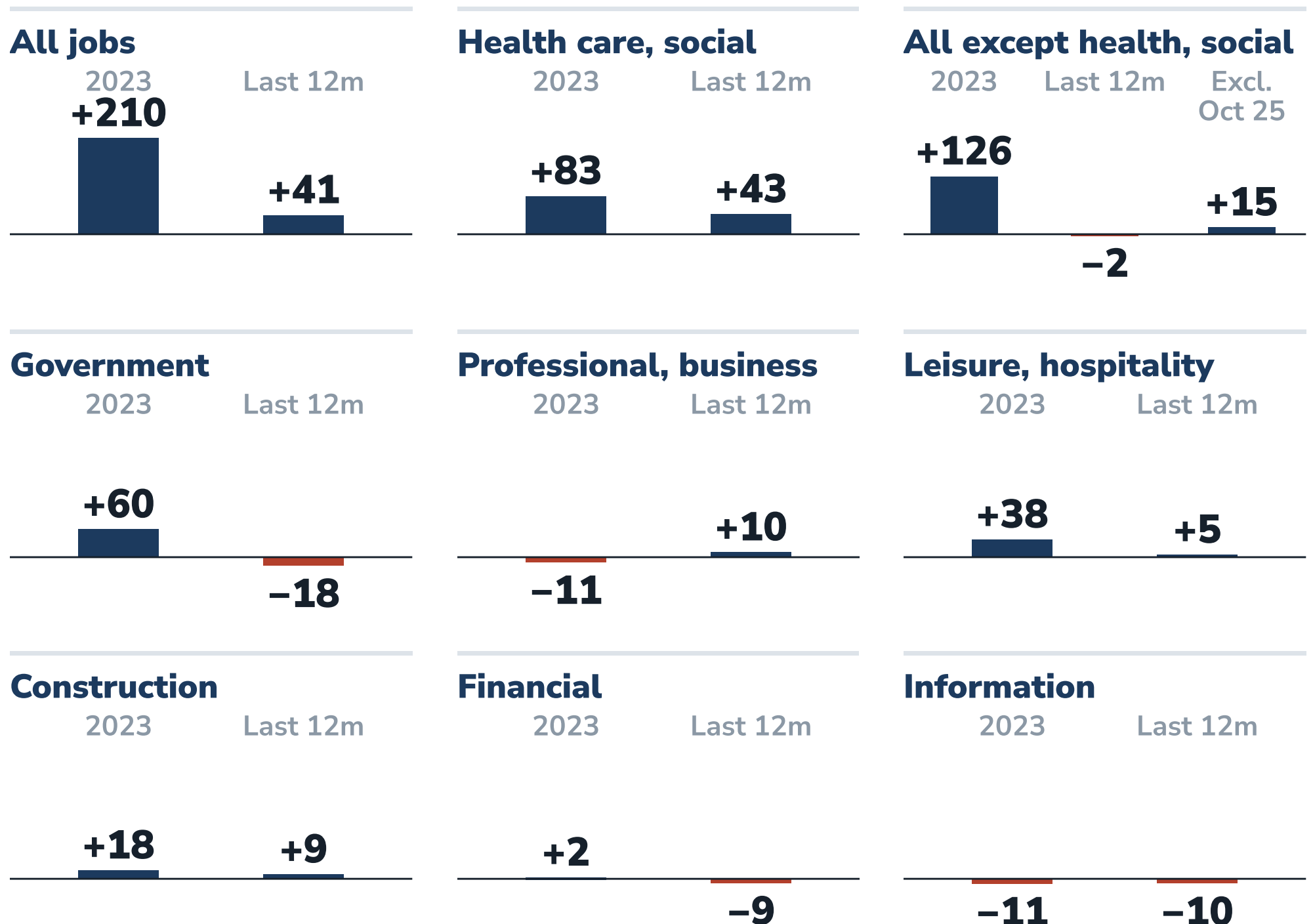


The cuts usually grow later. Each bar compares first reports with that October's jobs report. Every February, BLS checks the past year against tax records. That took 2024 and 2025 to cuts of about 100K a month, the second and fourth largest since 1980. This year's comes in February 2027, and the early estimate is a small cut of 79K.

METHOD Each bar is the 12-month change in that year's October report, minus the sum of the months as first reported, divided by 12. [ALFRED](#), every vintage of PAYEMS, which go back to 1956; before 1980 no run was longer than one year. The September 2025 report, normally out in early October, came on 20 November after the shutdown.

Job gains fell from 210K a month in 2023 to 41K. Outside health care, from 126K to near zero.

Average jobs added a month, in thousands



One month pulls this down. Federal payrolls fell about 166K in October 2025, as staff who took a 2025 offer to resign came off the payroll. Without October, jobs outside health care grew 15K a month and all jobs 58K. In the last six months, about 32K outside health care.

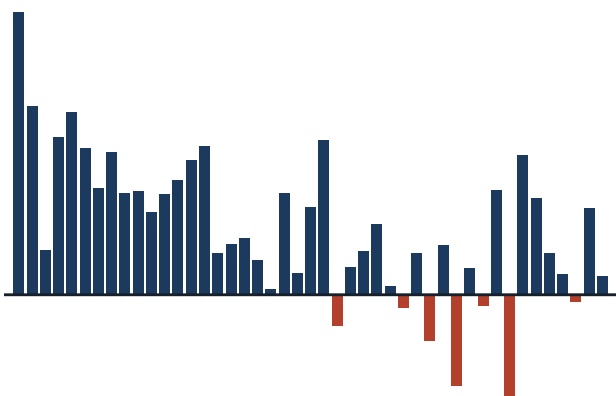
SOURCES [BLS payroll survey](#) via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Health care added jobs in 23 of the last 24 months. Jobs outside it fell in 14 of them.

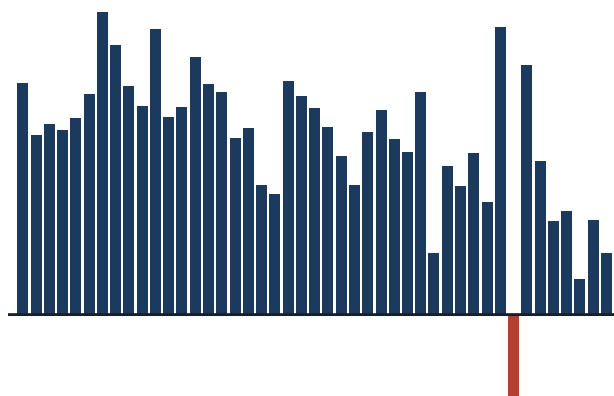
The same nine sectors, month by month. Each chart has its own scale, to show its trend.

Jobs added each month, in thousands, January 2023 to September 2026. The October 2025 drop is the federal one-off on the page before. In February 2026 a strike kept more than 30,000 health care workers off payrolls.

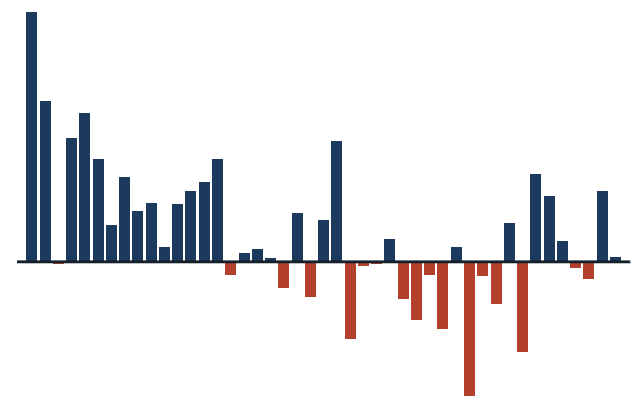
All jobs



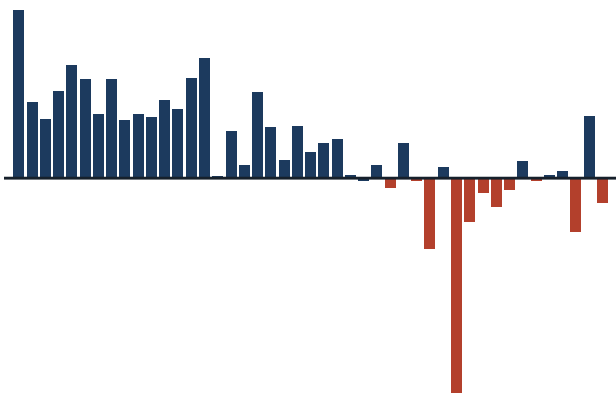
Health care, social



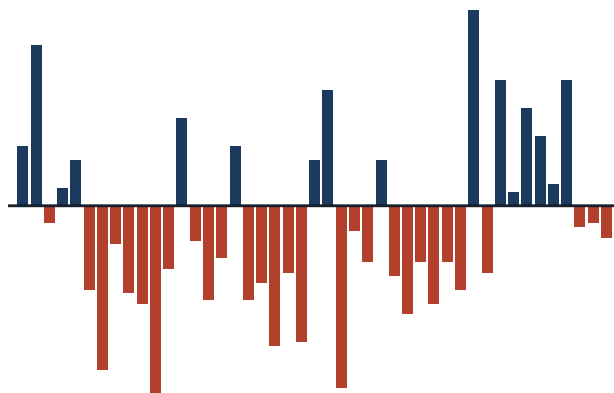
All except health, social



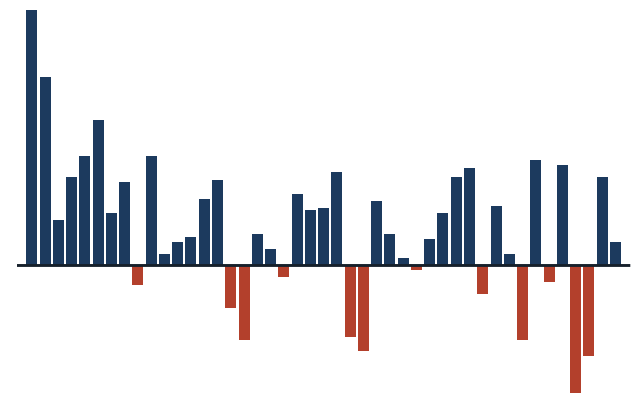
Government



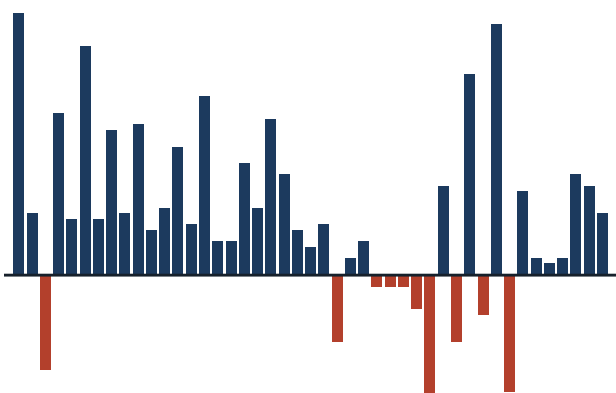
Professional, business



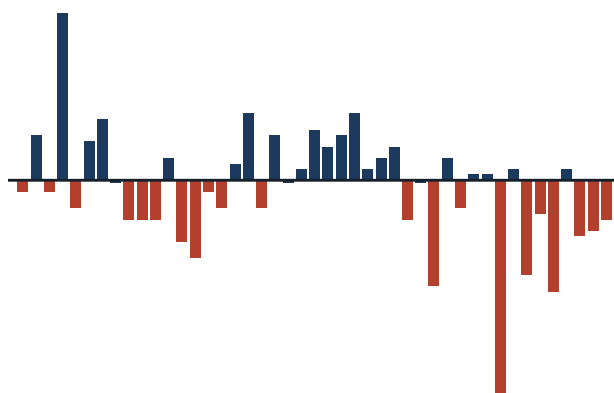
Leisure, hospitality



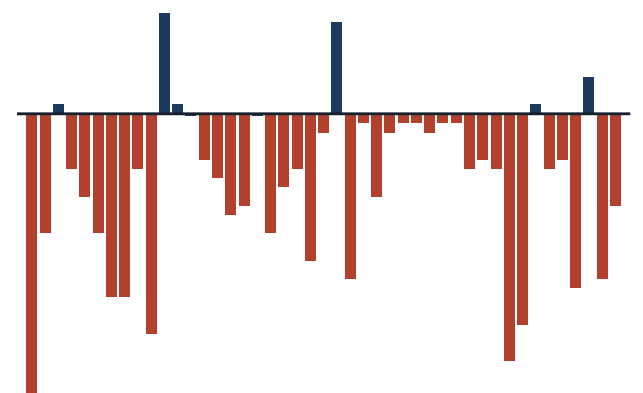
Construction



Financial



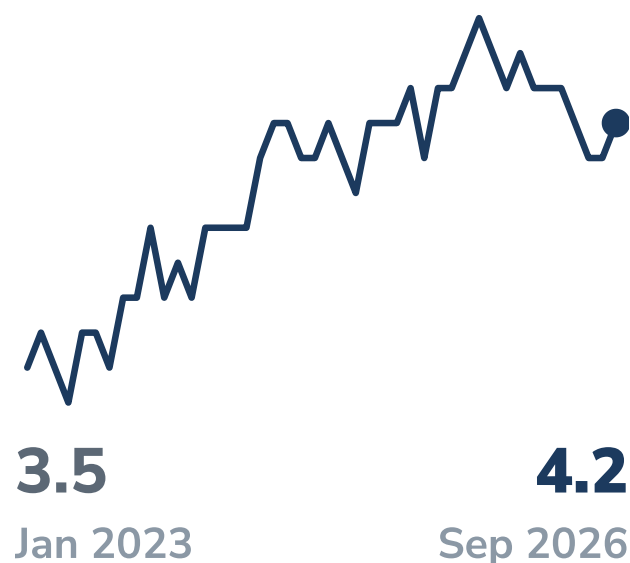
Information



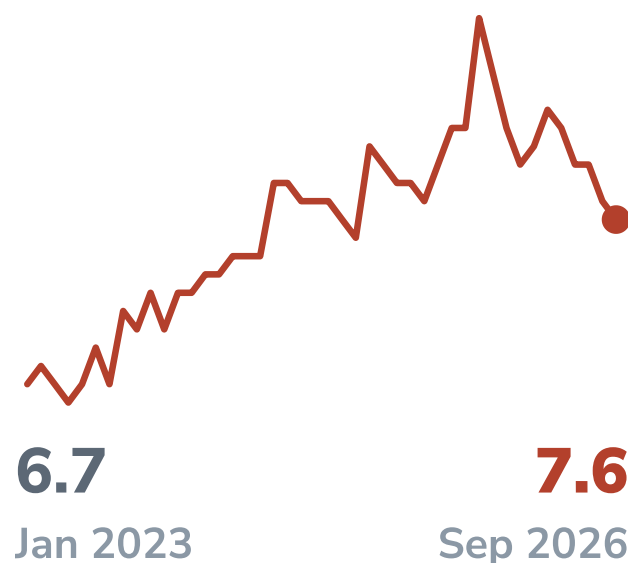
SOURCES [BLS payroll survey](#) via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Unemployment is higher than in 2023 and people stay out of work longer. This year unemployment eased because fewer people are in the labour force.

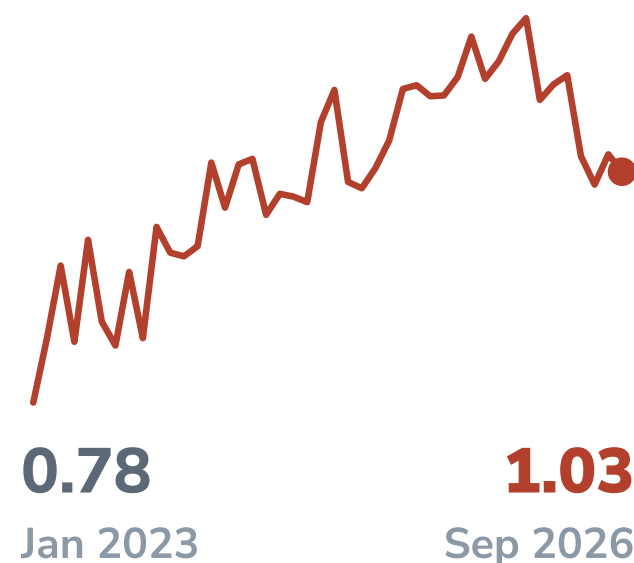
Unemployment rate
per cent



Broad rate, U-6
adds involuntary part-time



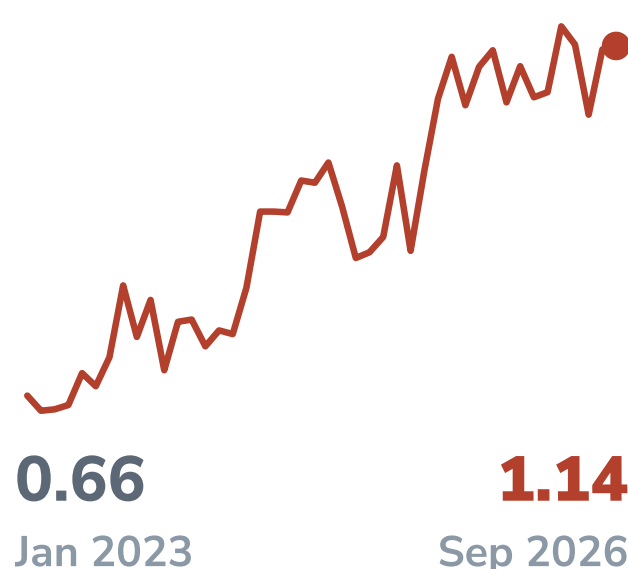
Laid off for good
per cent of the labour force



Out of work 15 weeks+
per cent of the labour force



Out of work 6 months+
per cent of the labour force



Median time out of work
weeks



In September the unemployment rate rose from 4.14 to 4.18 per cent, within the survey's margin of error. More people joined the labour force and most of them found work. Since January, participation fell from 62.1 to 61.8 per cent and the share of adults in work from 59.4 to 59.2. Both comparisons start after the annual population update in January, so they are like for like.

SOURCES [BLS household survey](#) via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Hiring has slowed since 2023 and workers quit less. Layoffs are low, but finding work takes longer.

Job openings

per person looking



1.79

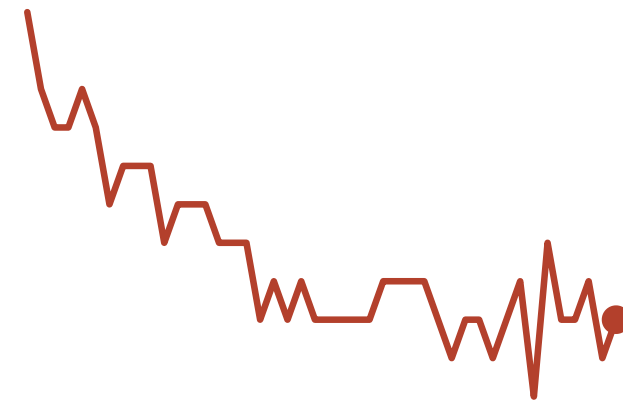
Jan 2023

1.01

Aug 2026

Hiring rate

per cent of employment



4.1

Jan 2023

3.3

Aug 2026

Quits rate

per cent of employment



2.5

Jan 2023

1.9

Aug 2026

Layoffs rate

per cent of employment



1.1

Jan 2023

1.0

Aug 2026

If layoffs are this low, why is “laid off for good” on page six higher than in 2023?

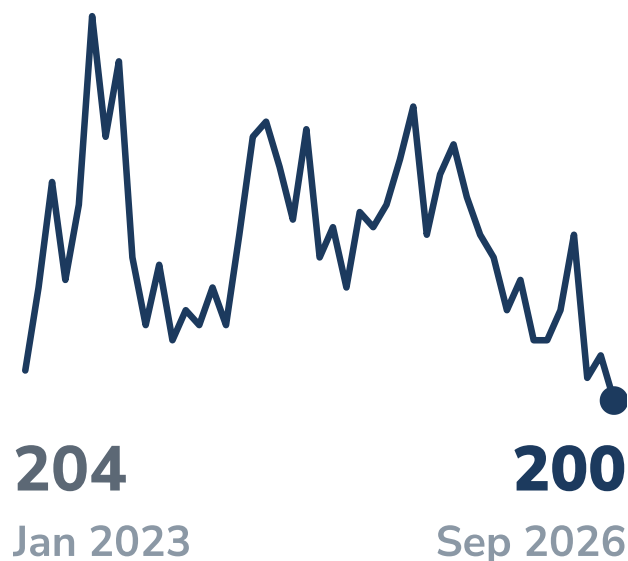
Layoffs count people let go in a month, and that stays low. Laid off for good counts people who lost a job for good and are still out of work. Few are let go, but those who are take longer to find a new job, so the count built up. It peaked early in 2026 and at 1.03 per cent of the labour force is still above the 0.78 of January 2023.

The news is full of layoffs. Why is the rate low? About 1.6 million people were laid off or let go in August. That happens every month: in 2018 and 2019 it was 1.8 million a month. Headlines report the big announcements. As a share of all jobs, layoffs are below where they were before the pandemic. These figures come from JOLTS, which is published a month later.

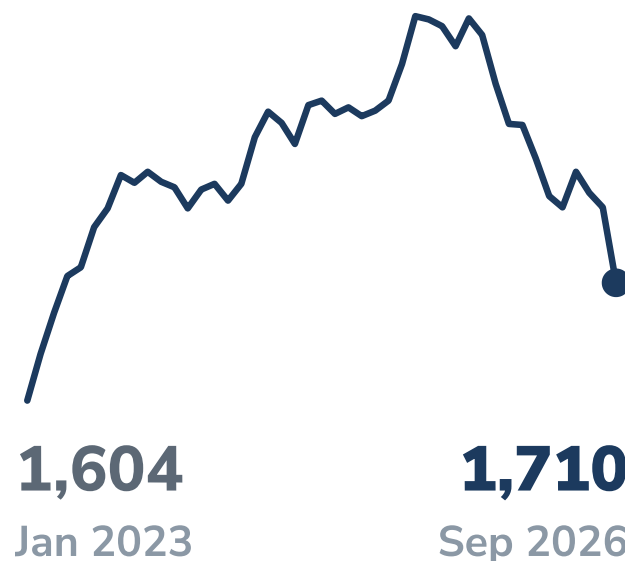
SOURCES [BLS JOLTS](#) via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Fewer people are being let go than a year ago, so fewer claim benefit. More of those who claim now reach the end of it than in 2023.

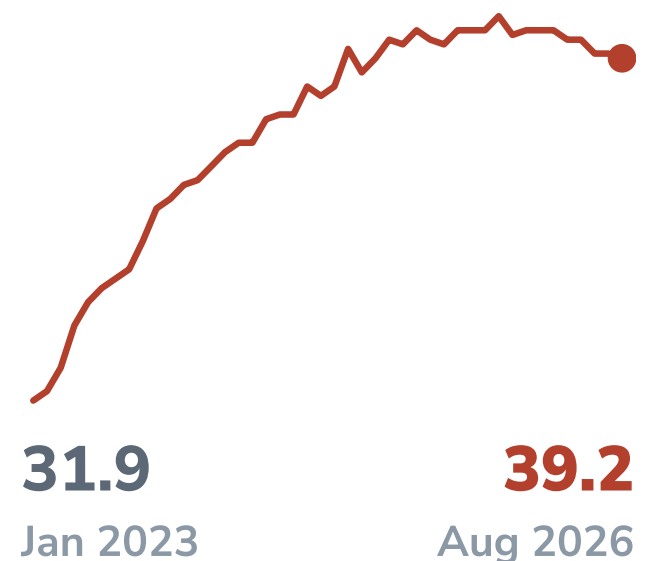
New jobless claims
thousands a week



Continuing claims
thousands, monthly average



Reach end of benefit
per cent of claimants



Unemployment is higher than in 2023. Why are new claims not?

New claims count people let go each week, and that has not risen. Those let go stay out of work longer, so the number of unemployed who lost a job is up 24 per cent since January 2023 while new claims are flat.

Why are continuing claims lower than a year ago? A new claim becomes a continuing claim, and fewer people are starting one: first payments in the three months to August were down 7 per cent on a year earlier. The share reaching the end of their benefit is about the same as a year ago, 39.2 per cent against 39.8, and well above the 31.9 of January 2023.

SOURCES Department of Labor and BLS, via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Hourly pay beat prices from May 2023 to March 2026. Since April it has been behind.

Hourly pay

growth on a year, per cent



4.5

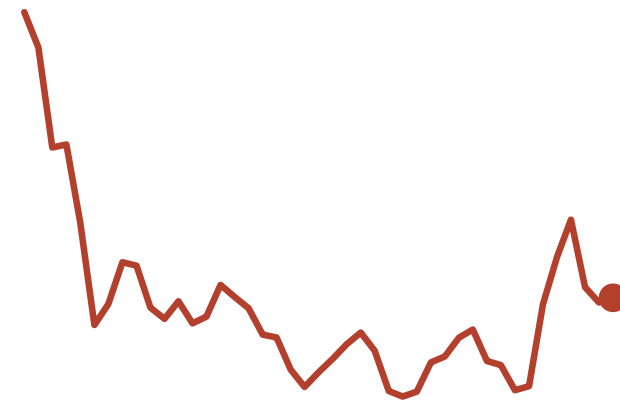
Jan 2023

3.1

Aug 2026

Prices, CPI

growth on a year, per cent



6.3

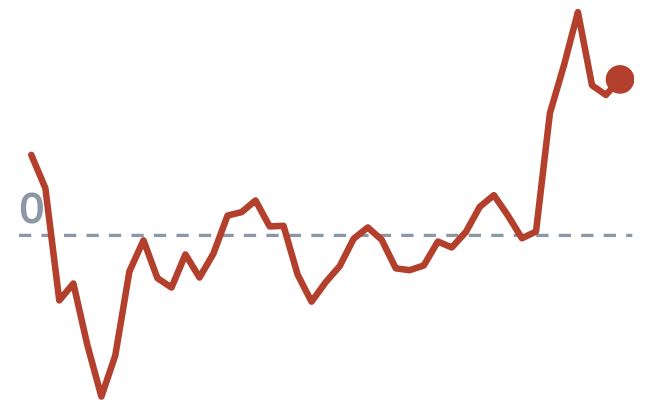
Jan 2023

3.4

Aug 2026

Energy prices

growth on a year, per cent



8.3

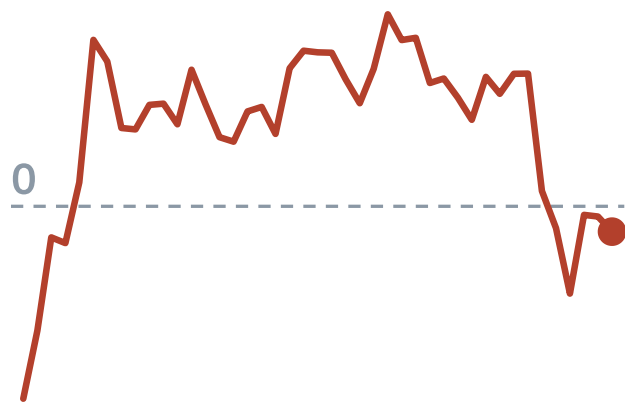
Jan 2023

16.0

Aug 2026

Hourly pay minus prices

points



-1.83

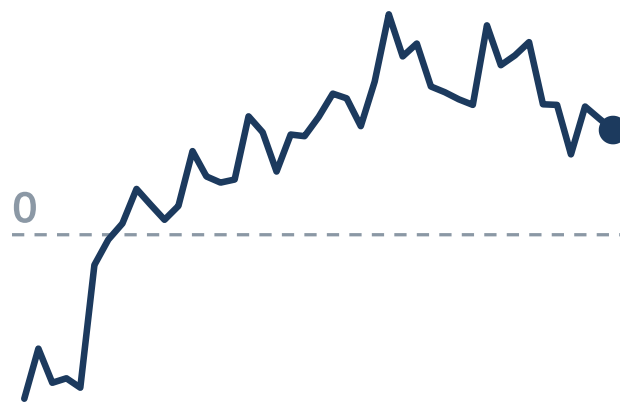
Jan 2023

-0.24

Aug 2026

Pay minus core prices

points, no food or energy



-1.05

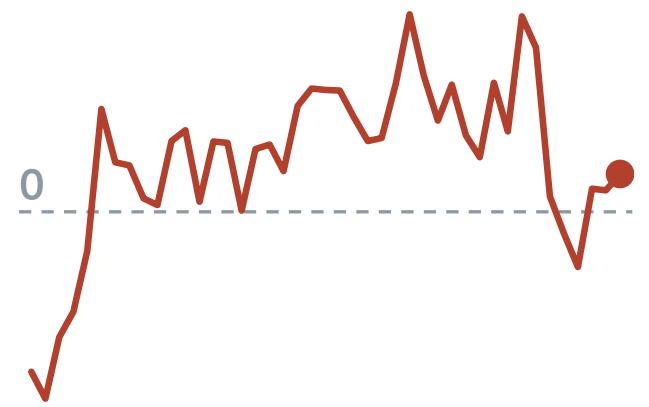
Jan 2023

0.67

Aug 2026

Weekly pay minus prices

points, hours included



-1.53

Jan 2023

0.36

Aug 2026

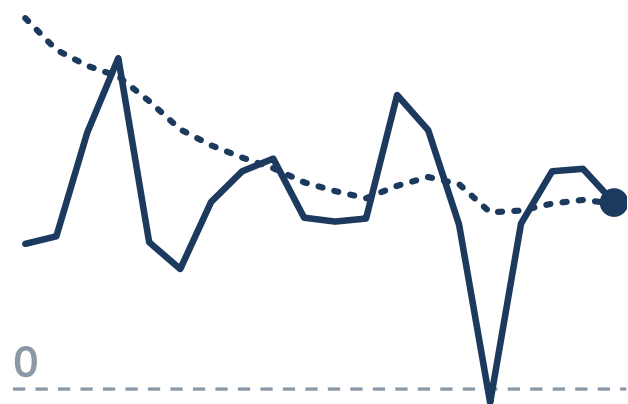
Why it moved. In January 2023, after the 2021-22 inflation surge, prices rose 6.3% a year and pay 4.5%. By June 2023 prices had slowed to 3.1% and pay at 4.7% was well ahead. In March 2026 energy prices jumped to 12.6% a year. By April prices rose 3.8%, above pay at 3.6%.

SOURCES BLS, via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Spending per person is growing faster than income, so people are saving less of their income.

Income per person

growth on a year, after prices



0.8

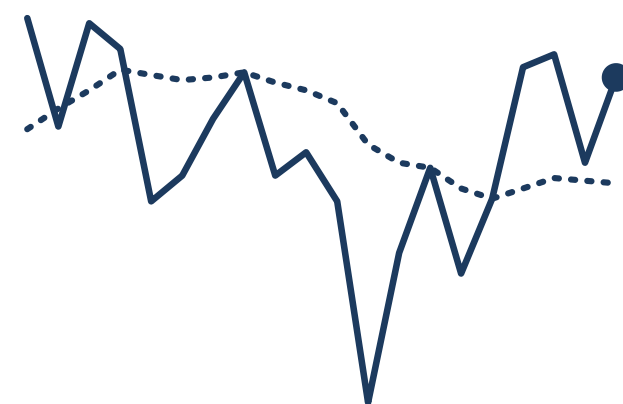
Jan 2025

1.1

Aug 2026

Spending per person

growth on a year, after prices



2.6

Jan 2025

2.3

Aug 2026

Saving rate

per cent of after-tax income



5.7

Jan 2025

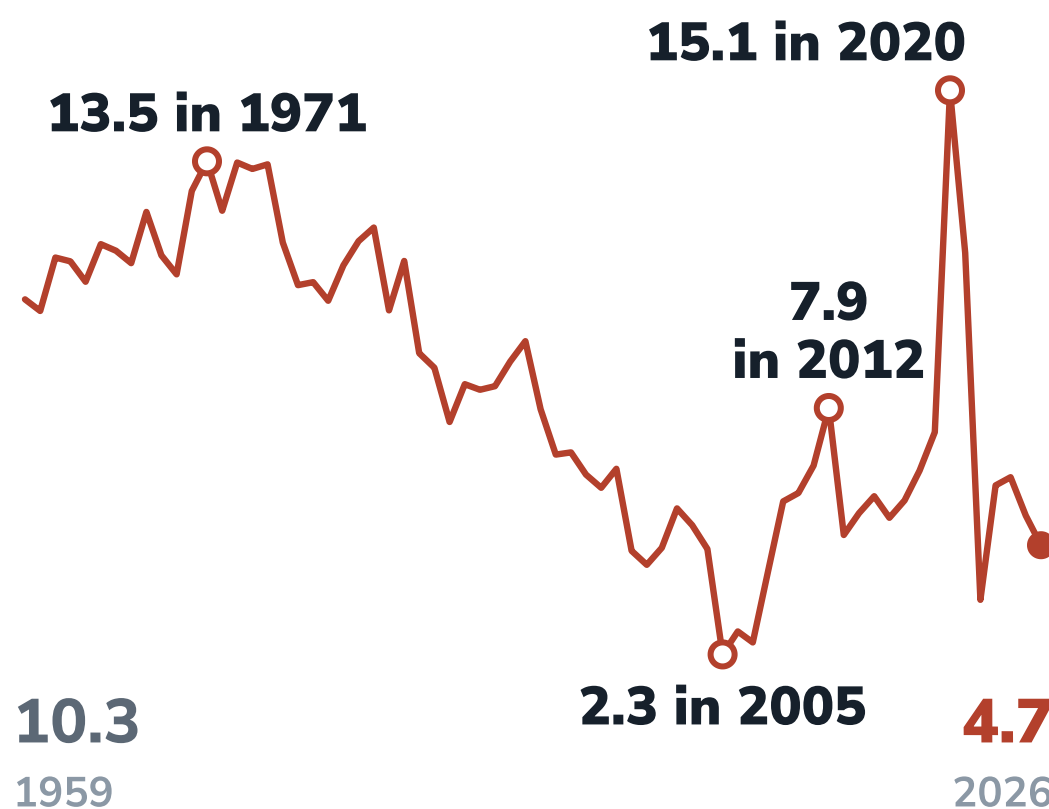
4.1

Aug 2026

The dotted line is growth over the last 12 months against the 12 months before.

Saving rate since 1959

per cent of after-tax income, yearly average



10.3

1959

13.5 in 1971

15.1 in 2020

7.9 in 2012

2.3 in 2005

4.7

2026

Over the last 12 months, spending per person grew 1.9 per cent and income per person 1.1 per cent. Those are the dotted lines.

Saving averaged 8.5 per cent of after-tax income from 1959 to 2019. It is 4.7 in 2026 so far.

SOURCES [BEA](#), revised 30 September 2026, via [FRED](#). Full sources and method on the last page.

Sources and method

Updates my analysis of 24 September 2026: On the headline numbers the US job market looks fine. The story changes when you dig deeper.

SOURCE	WHAT WE USE	SERIES
<u>BLS payroll survey</u>	Jobs by month and sector, hourly and weekly pay, hours	PAYEMS, CES0500000003 and ten more
<u>ALFRED</u>	Each month's jobs number as first reported	PAYEMS, every vintage
<u>BLS household survey</u>	Unemployment, U-6, time out of work, laid off for good, participation	UNRATE, U6RATE, UEMPMED, LNS13025703, CIVPART, EMRATIO and seven more
<u>BLS JOLTS</u>	Job openings, hires, quits, layoffs	JTSJOL, JTSHIR, JTSQUR, JTSLDR, JTSLDL
<u>Department of Labor weekly claims</u>	New and continuing claims, weekly figures averaged by month	ICSA, CCSA
<u>Department of Labor ETA 5159</u>	Share of claimants who reach the end of their benefit, first payments	ETA 5159, c51 and c56
<u>BLS consumer prices</u>	Prices, core and energy	CPIAUCSL, CPILFESL, CPIENGSL
<u>BEA</u>	Saving rate, income and spending per person	PSAVERT, A229RX0, PCEC96, POPTHM
<u>Reuters, RBC</u>	Break-even job growth, page 2	2 October 2026

Unrounded unemployment rate. The unemployed over the labour force, before BLS rounds it.

Openings per person looking. JOLTS openings over the unemployed, same month.

Pay minus prices. Yearly pay growth less yearly price growth, in points.

Reach the end of benefit. Final payments over the twelve months to date, divided by first payments over the twelve months ending six months earlier.

October 2025. The household survey and CPI have no reading for it, because of the shutdown.

Data. [FRED](#) and [ALFRED](#) pulled 4 October 2026; DOL ETA 5159 pulled 2 October 2026.

Use of AI. Parts of this work were prepared with AI and steered by me. I reviewed, edited and approved every page. Every data series is pulled from the sources above. The analysis and conclusions are mine.