



Labor Market & Economy Report

November 2025

Sharp insights for well-rounded people.

Actalent's monthly Labor Market and Economy Report connects important dots between data and trends in engineering and sciences. The report corresponds with the monthly release of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Situation, though lends further insight into specific employment trends in engineering and sciences. Specifically, readers can expect to learn about:

- + Job growth in engineering and sciences by industry
- + Unemployment trends in engineering and sciences labor categories and industries
- + Labor force participation
- + Job quits and layoffs
- + Engineering and sciences employment trends by industry
- + Wages
- + Other important news stories impacting the labor market overall and engineering and sciences specifically

 **64K**

Jobs Gained in November

U.S. employment increased by 64,000 jobs in November. Employment has shown little net change since April.

 **62.5%**

Labor Force Participation Rate

The labor force participation rate (LFPR) was 62.5% in November, unchanged from a year ago. In other words, the share of the population that is employed or looking for work has not changed compared to November 2024.

 **4.6%**

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate was 4.6% in November, the highest rate since September 2021. However, unemployment rates among the labor categories Actalent sources talent for remain near or below 4.0%, suggesting that the pool of available job seekers in these areas is still limited.

 **1.9M**

October Layoffs

Layoffs increased to 1.9 million in October, the highest since January 2023, while quits fell to 2.9 million, the lowest since March 2016 (excluding 2020 during COVID-19). Note that quits and layoffs data lag one month behind other employment data.

November 2025 Market Trends

A closer look at
unemployment by industry
and labor category



Overall unemployment rate

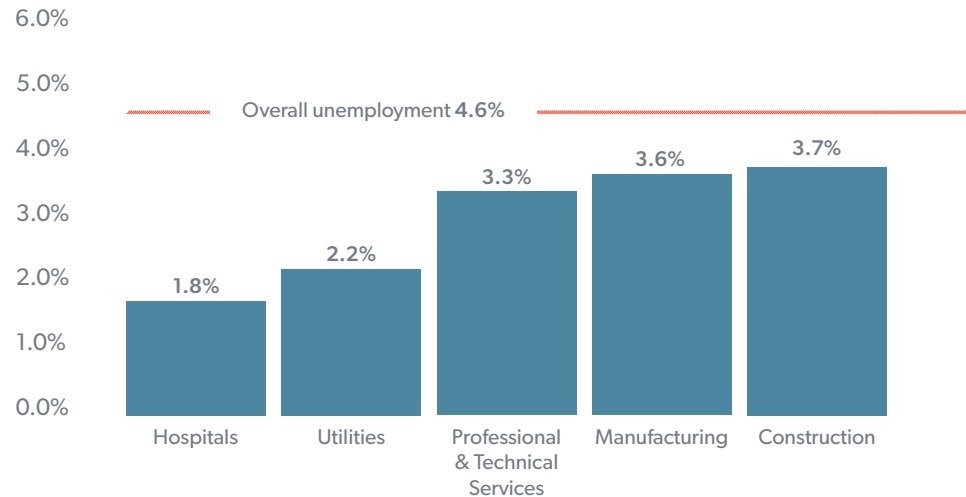


Unemployment rate for
degreed workers

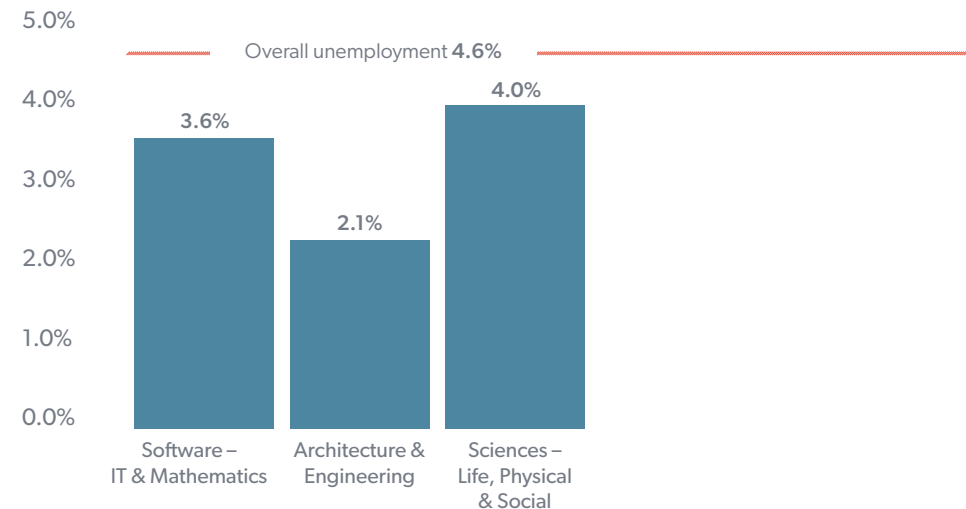


Ratio of unemployed workers
(Software-IT & Mathematics,
Architecture & Engineering, Sciences)
available per job opening

Unemployment rates by industry



Unemployment rates by labor category



Due to frequent data revisions and statistical noise on a month-to-month basis, Actalent employs a rolling 3-month average to best represent unemployment by labor category or industry.

Industry Trends

OVERALL ECONOMY

U.S. employment increased by a net 64,000 jobs in November. It is estimated that employment fell by 105,000 jobs in October, largely due to declines in federal government amid the shutdown. In October (latest data available), quits fell to 2.9 million, the lowest since March 2016 (excluding 2020 during COVID-19). The decline in quits indicates that workers are prioritizing job security over seeking new opportunities, or that new opportunities are becoming harder to find. As of December 10, the Federal Reserve has cut interest rates three times in 2025, which may provide some relief to companies that have held off on investment and hiring due to higher interest rates over the last couple years.

+64K
MoM

+0.6%
YoY

UTILITIES

Companies such as Exelon and Entergy are expanding power infrastructure to support their growing data center pipelines. However, Grid Strategies warns that some load forecasts may be overstated, citing unrealistic load factors and speculative site selections. Georgia Power's large-load pipeline fell by 6 GW in Q3 due to "lower materialization rates, project cancellations and delays," underscoring volatility in the data center segment. Southwest Power Pool's board approved \$8.6 billion for 50 transmission projects under its 2025 Integrated Transmission Plan. Wind and solar projects could gain momentum ahead of the accelerated phase-out of tax credits under the OBBBA. Duke Energy Florida plans to add four new solar energy sites by early 2027, creating an estimated 150 jobs per site during construction.

+1K
MoM

+0.9%
YoY

CONSTRUCTION

Total construction spending in August (latest data available; reporting delayed by the shutdown) fell 1.6% year-over-year (YOY), and industry job openings are down by 14.5% YOY as of October. As the sector faces ongoing headwinds, data centers remain a key area of investment. AGC reports construction spending on data centers is up 26% YOY, and an ABC survey found that approximately 1 in 7 contractors are under contract for data center projects, with significantly higher backlogs than those who are not (10.9 months vs. 8.0 months, respectively). Recent developments reinforce this trend: CleanArc broke ground on a new Virginia campus in November, expected to create hundreds of jobs during construction, while Meta broke ground on its 30th data center in Wisconsin, which will support over 1,000 jobs during peak construction.

+28K
MoM

+0.7%
YoY

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING

The AIA Architectural Billings Index for October (latest data available) indicates that most architecture firms saw further declines in billings. While firms reported a notable increase in inquiries for new projects, the value of newly signed design contracts fell again, driven by smaller projects and client hesitancy. Meanwhile, companies like WSP Global and Leidos have highlighted strong demand in their power and energy segments. Across the architecture, engineering and related services sector, job postings have risen over the past three months (September–November) for jobs including transmission line engineers (+55%), electrical designers (+18%) and substation engineers (+3%).

+5.4K
MoM

+2.3%
YoY

MoM = Month over month
YoY = Year over year

Industry Trends, continued

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE

The 43-day federal government shutdown ended on November 12, when Congress passed a funding package including a continuing resolution extending operations through January 30 and three full-year FY 2026 appropriations bills. The legislation provides nearly \$200 million for the Air Force's Boeing-built E-7 Wedgetail and about \$1.1 billion for 14 Navy shipbuilding programs. The Pentagon also disclosed almost \$9 billion in contracts across more than 80 deals issued during the shutdown, including significant awards to BAE Systems, Blue Origin and MTSI. About 3,200 IAM union members at Boeing ratified a five-year contract on November 13, ending a three-month strike.

+4.9K
OCTOBER

+3.7%
OCTOBER

HEALTHCARE

Regulatory pressures, tariffs and shifts in clinical supply and demand could further squeeze margins for payers and health systems, according to McKinsey. Kaiser Permanente leadership has noted, "like others in health care, we face inflation, rising care acuity, high pharmaceutical costs, and increasing labor expenses, all of which continue to narrow our operating margin." At the same time, cybersecurity risks are escalating, but Ernst & Young and KLAS Research report that challenges such as budget constraints and cyber talent shortages hinder security investments. Still, healthcare industry job postings for talent with cybersecurity skills have surged by more than 300% year-over-year.

+46.3K
MoM

+2.5%
YoY

SCIENTIFIC R&D

AstraZeneca will invest \$2 billion in Maryland as part of its \$50 billion U.S. commitment by 2030. The funding will expand its biologics facility in Frederick, creating 200 highly skilled jobs and 900 construction jobs, and build a new Gaithersburg site, adding 100 jobs, retaining 400 jobs and supporting 1,000 construction jobs. Both facilities will integrate AI, automation and data analytics, underscoring the increasing demand for engineering and tech expertise in biopharma. Intuition Labs predicts that growing U.S. investments by drugmakers will drive demand for advanced manufacturing and engineering talent. Drug pricing policies remain a challenge for drugmakers. CMS has finalized prices for the second round of 15 drugs under the Inflation Reduction Act and plans to announce another 15 for the next round by February 2026.

+700
MoM

-2.2%
YoY

AUTOMOTIVE

In November, Toyota began production at its new battery plant in North Carolina, expected to create up to 5,100 jobs. The company also announced a \$10 billion U.S. investment over five years, including \$912 million to expand hybrid capacity and add 252 jobs across five plants in West Virginia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee and Missouri. Avancez, a GM supplier, will lay off 143 workers in Michigan due to production cuts at GM's Factory Zero. As mentioned in Actalent's last report, demand for AI and machine learning skills in the auto industry is rising sharply as automakers invest billions in AI-driven manufacturing systems. Many experts are urging the industry to upskill and reskill workers so the technologies can be implemented and managed effectively.

-4.9K
MoM

-2.8%
YoY

C&IP *Manufacturing of Durable Goods, Technology, Chemicals, Food Products, etc.*

Manufacturing conditions remained mixed in November, resulting in varied hiring plans across firms. Applied Materials, Google, HP and IBM joined the list of companies announcing workforce reductions or offering voluntary buyouts as part of restructuring efforts. Applied Materials attributed its cuts to "automation, digitalization and geographic shifts," while others emphasized redirecting resources toward artificial intelligence and related technologies. Overall, job postings from the manufacturing sector for engineering and software roles declined from September to November, yet companies like Cisco, Eaton Corporation and even IBM increased postings. Cisco and IBM have cited strong demand for AI products, while Eaton reported 70% growth in data center orders in Q3.

-5K
MoM

-0.6%
YoY

MoM = Month over month
YoY = Year over year

Wages in the United States

How they've changed

+2.7%



Consumer Price Index

The consumer price index, a measure of inflation, increased by 2.7% for the 12 months ending November, below the 3.0% increase in September. The Bureau of Labor Statistics will not publish an October 2025 CPI because survey data could not be collected during the government shutdown.

At its December meeting, the Federal Reserve cut rates by 25 basis points, citing rising downside risks to employment. The Federal Reserve has cut interest rates three times in 2025, which may provide some relief to companies that have held off on investment and hiring due to higher interest rates over the last couple years.

+3.5%



Wage Increases

Average hourly earnings increased by 3.5% for the 12 months ending November. Since January 2025, the year-over-year change in average hourly earnings has stayed between 3.7% and 3.9% each month.

+0.8%



"Real" Earnings

Real average hourly earnings increased by 0.8% between November 2024 and November 2025. In other words, despite average hourly earnings increasing by 3.5% year-over-year, workers may only feel as if they're making about 0.7% more, on average, due to inflation.

References

Read more about trends in Engineering & Sciences

UTILITIES: [Exelon's advanced data center pipeline grows to 18 GW; Gas continues to dominate Entergy plans as data center pipeline grows; Some load forecasts using 'unrealistically high load factors' ...; Georgia Power's large load pipeline shrinks by 6 GW; SPP Fact Sheet: 2025 Integrated Transmission Plan \(ITP\); Storage, hybrid projects emerging as renewable energy...; Duke Energy Florida to add nearly 300 megawatts of solar energy...](#)

CONSTRUCTION: [Total Construction Spending in the U.S.; Job Openings: Construction; Construction Spending Rises 0.2 Percent in August...; ABC Contractor Backlog and Confidence Slip in October; CleanArc Data Centers Breaks Ground...; Meta's 30th Data Center...](#)

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING: [ABI October 2025: Billings continue to decline at architecture firms; WSP Global Inc. \(WSP:CA\) Q3 2025 Earnings Call Transcript; Leidos Holdings, Inc. \(LDOS\) Q3 FY2025 earnings call transcript; Lightcast Job Posting Analytics](#)

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE: [Continuing Resolution to Reopen Government, FY 2026 Appropriations Bills...; Congress votes to reopen the government, with extra money for Wedgetail, Navy shipbuilding; Pentagon announces nearly \\$9 billion in contracts...; Contracts for Oct. 1, 2025, Through Nov. 12, 2025; Boeing defense workers ratify new contract...](#)

HEALTHCARE: [Gathering storm 2.0: Succeeding in healthcare despite the turbulence; Kaiser Permanente and Riant Health Q3 2025 financial update; US Healthcare Cyber Resilience Survey; Lightcast Job Posting Analytics](#)

SCIENTIFIC R&D: [AstraZeneca plans \\$2 billion manufacturing investment in Maryland...; In-Demand Pharma Roles: AI, Manufacturing & Clinical Jobs; CMS sets 2027 Medicare prices for Wegovy, Trelegy and 13 other drugs; Second round of drug prices negotiated under the IRA revealed](#)

AUTOMOTIVE: [Toyota to Invest Up to \\$10 Billion Additional in Its U.S. Operations Over the Next Five Years; Toyota Boosts Hybrid Production with \\$912 Million Investment...; GM supplier to lay off 143 workers due to weak EV production; Automakers invest billions in AI manufacturing, but results remain unclear; After a year of hype, AI started leaving its mark on carmaking and sales in 2025](#)

C&IP: [November 2025 ISM® Manufacturing PMI® Report; S&P Global US Manufacturing PMI®; Applied Materials to Cut 4% of Global Workforce; 7,500 Google and YouTube employees offered buyouts; HP to cut about 6,000 jobs by 2028, ramps up AI efforts; IBM to Cut Thousands of Workers Amid A.I. Boom; Lightcast Job Posting Analytics; Cisco Reports First Quarter Earnings; IBM Releases Third-Quarter Results; Eaton Third Quarter 2025 Earnings Release](#)

About Actalent

Actalent is a global leader in engineering and sciences services and talent solutions. We help visionary companies advance their engineering and science initiatives through access to specialized experts who drive scale, innovation and speed to market. With a network of almost 30,000 consultants and 6,100 clients across the U.S., Canada, Asia and Europe, Actalent serves many of the Fortune 500. We are proud to be an Engineering News-Record (ENR) Top 500 Design Firm for our engineering design services and a ClearlyRated Best of Staffing® winner for both client and talent service.

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