
Note on Data Availability

October 2025

At the time this report was prepared, the U.S. federal government was in a shutdown, with only essential operations continuing in unfunded departments and agencies. Consequently, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) had paused updates to its website and suspended data releases.

Although government operations have since resumed, the data typically referenced in this report was not available at the time of publication. Thus, this month's report focuses solely on industry trends.

The following metrics have not been updated by the BLS and are therefore not included in this report: employment levels, labor force participation rate, unemployment rate, layoffs, quits, average hourly earnings, consumer price index and real average hourly earnings. Job postings data is included, as it is sourced from Lightcast, which is not a government entity.



Labor Market & Economy Report

October 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

Jobs Gained in October, Labor Force Participation Rate, Unemployment Rate, Layoffs, and Quits not available.

Industry Trends

OVERALL ECONOMY

October employment data was not published as scheduled due to the government shutdown, making labor conditions hard to assess without official BLS figures. Over the past three months (August–October), job postings from non-staffing companies have increased for two occupation categories Actalent supports: computer and mathematical (+6%) and architecture and engineering (+11%), according to Lightcast. Postings for life, physical and social sciences jobs were flat. The Federal Reserve cut interest rates in September and October (the first of 2025). While these reductions offer potential relief for businesses, the reasons behind them (slower job growth) reveal labor market weakness.

UTILITIES

Morningstar DBRS expects a “super cycle” of utility capital expenditures over the next decade, driven by unprecedented power demand from data centers. Deloitte and the Edison Electric Institute estimate electric utilities could invest more than \$1 trillion in the next five years. AEP has raised its five-year capital plan from \$54 billion to \$72 billion, citing demand from “large load customers” such as data centers and industrials. Rising power demand is also boosting gas turbine orders, and manufacturers GE Vernova and Siemens Energy are among those increasing turbine production. However, uncertainty about future data center demand has raised concerns about overproduction, prompting many utilities to favor cautious, incremental investments over riskier ‘big bets.’

CONSTRUCTION

Both September and October employment data from the BLS have been delayed due to the government shutdown, leaving contractors uncertain about labor market conditions. Construction investment appears to be holding steady in data centers, infrastructure and hospitals, even as other sectors show signs of weakness, based on the Dodge Momentum Index, ABC’s Construction Backlog Indicator and insights from the chief economist at the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC). The U.S. government is partnering with Westinghouse Electric, Cameco and Brookfield Asset Management to deploy at least \$80 billion in nuclear reactors, creating over 100,000 construction jobs and supporting thousands of manufacturing and engineering roles nationwide.

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING

According to the latest AIA Architectural Billings Index, most architecture firms saw declines in billings, fewer project inquiries and lower values for new design contracts in September. Job postings in architectural services have dropped in recent months, while most other industries within the architectural, engineering and related services sector saw increases. Energy Northwest is negotiating with Cascade Nuclear Partners, a joint venture of Kiewit Nuclear Solutions, Black & Veatch and Acon, for planning, design and construction of the first four of 12 Xe-100 SMRs in Washington State. Honeywell and LS Electric will co-develop integrated hardware and software solutions, including power management and modular battery energy storage systems (BESS), to help data centers and large buildings improve energy efficiency and reliability.

Industry Trends, continued

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE

The federal government shutdown, which lasted throughout October, is affecting federal agencies and defense companies to varying degrees. Per the DoD, contractors may continue work using pre-awarded funds, but new contracts are limited to “excepted activities,” such as those protecting life or property. CEOs from Northrop Grumman, Leonardo DRS and General Dynamics expect minimal short-term financial impact, though many warned that a prolonged shutdown could delay awards or affect cash flow. Meanwhile, Boeing is reportedly planning to increase its manufacturing output through 2026, and the company’s job postings have surged across cities like St. Louis, Seattle and Los Angeles since the beginning of the year, indicating higher demand for workers.

HEALTHCARE

With the aging population expected to contribute to a shortage of 100,000 healthcare workers by 2028, many healthcare-focused high school programs are emerging to help build local talent pipelines. Programs such as Ballad Health Academy, Baystate Springfield Educational Partnership (BSEP), Health Education and Learning (HEAL) High School, and the Northwell School of Health Sciences (NSHS) offer students exposure to healthcare careers and hands-on training for roles ranging from sterile processing technicians to nurses, depending on the program. These initiatives often lead to employment with partnering or nearby hospitals and health systems.

SCIENTIFIC R&D

In October, Galapagos, Novo Nordisk and Takeda exited cell therapy efforts, reflecting broader challenges in gene and cell therapy despite heavy investment in recent years. While many companies are discontinuing efforts because of the complex and costly manufacturing process, others continue to invest; for instance, Eli Lilly acquired Adverum Biotechnologies and its Phase 3 gene therapy last month. AstraZeneca began construction on its Virginia facility and boosted investment by \$500 million to \$4.5 billion. With the increased investment, the facility is now expected to create 600 jobs including engineers, scientists and process facilitators and another 3,000 jobs in engineering, skilled trades and construction. Merck also broke ground on its \$3 billion Virginia facility, projected to add 500 full-time jobs and 8,000 construction jobs.

AUTOMOTIVE

Stellantis will invest \$13 billion in its U.S. footprint over the next four years, creating over 5,000 jobs across Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana. In contrast, GM announced several rounds of job cuts in October: 200 salaried workers, primarily at the Warren Tech Center, were laid off due to business conditions; 900 employees will be affected by the Roswell, GA IT center closure as part of streamlining efforts; and about 3,300 workers face temporary or indefinite layoffs at EV and battery plants in Detroit, Ohio and Tennessee, as GM realigns EV production amid slower near-term EV adoption and shifting regulations. Job postings in the motor vehicle and parts manufacturing industry reveal rising competition for AI/ML talent, with mentions of AI and machine learning skills up 137% and 160%, respectively, over the past three months.

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

Financial performance is increasingly split between companies tied to AI, data centers and aerospace, and the broader industrial economy. Electrical equipment and aerospace manufacturers are benefiting from demand tied to data infrastructure and aerospace growth, while many others face sluggish conditions amid volatile tariff policies and broader industry and economic headwinds. In October, Nestlé announced plans to accelerate its “Fuel for Growth” program, focusing on operational efficiency through shared services and automation, which includes a global workforce reduction of 16,000 roles. Meta is reducing its AI unit by 600 positions to improve agility, while encouraging affected employees to pursue other opportunities within the company. Meta’s TBD Labs team, which houses many of its top AI hires, will not be affected.

References

Read more about trends in Engineering & Sciences

OVERALL: [Lightcast Job Posting Analytics](#); [FOMC September 2025 Meeting](#); [FOMC October 2025 Meeting](#)

UTILITIES: [Power Hungry Data Centers Raise Capex Forecasts for North American Utilities](#); [US Utilities: 2025 Q3](#); [Funding the growth in the US power sector](#); [AEP Reports Third-Quarter 2025 Operating Earnings, Updated Capital Plan...](#); [AEP Q3 2025 Presentation](#); [Gas Turbine Makers Are Riding the AI Power Boom](#); [PG&E avoids 'big bets' as data center demand softens](#)

CONSTRUCTION: [With shutdown, contractors 'in the dark' on labor data](#); [Dodge Momentum Index Falls Back 7% in October](#); [ABC: Construction Backlog Stable...](#); [United States Government, Brookfield and Cameco Announce...](#)

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING: [ABI September 2025](#); [Lightcast Job Posting Analytics](#); [Energy Northwest Selects Design Builder for Cascade Advanced Energy Facility...](#); [Honeywell and LS ELECTRIC Announce Global Partnership...](#)

AEROSPACE & DEFENSE: [How Does the Government Shutdown Impact the U.S. Industrial Base?](#); [Contingency Plan Guidance for Continuation of Operations in the Absence of Available Appropriations](#); [Government shutdown delaying contracts, but no major financial impact yet, defense CEOs say](#); [Boeing Said to Prepare to Hike 737 Output as Soon as October](#)

HEALTHCARE: [To Find Workers, Hospitals Are Training Teenagers](#); [Ballad Health Academy](#); [BSEP](#); [HEAL High School](#); [NSHS](#)

SCIENTIFIC R&D: [Galapagos Announces Intention to Wind Down Cell Therapy Business...](#); [Novo shuts cell therapy unit...](#); [Takeda Provides Update on Cell Therapy Research](#); [Why Do So Few Cell Therapies Make The Leap From Lab To GMP?](#); [Lilly to Acquire Adverum Biotechnologies](#); [AstraZeneca plans to increase investment...](#); [Merck Breaks Ground on \\$3 Billion Center...](#)

AUTOMOTIVE: [Stellantis to Invest \\$13 Billion to Grow in the United States](#); [GM cuts hundreds of salaried jobs as part of profit push](#); [GM closing Georgia IT center that employs 900](#); [GM to lay off 3,300 workers building EVs and batteries as demand slows](#); [GM will cut thousands of jobs in Michigan, Tennessee and Ohio](#); [Lightcast Job Posting Analytics](#)

C&IP: [Location, Location, Location](#); [AI Haves and Have-Nots](#); [Nine-month sales 2025: Positive trends; focus on driving growth](#); [Meta's Alexandr Wang on why the AI team just laid off 600 workers](#); [Meta lays off 600 from 'bloated' AI unit as Wang cements leadership](#)

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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