

Labor Market and Economy Report:

A Look at Trends in October 2024

Sharp insights for well-rounded people.

Aston Carter's monthly Jobs Report offers insights into current market demand and trends across accounting and finance; human resources and talent acquisition; and supply chain and procurement. The report corresponds with the release of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly data. Specifically, readers can expect to learn about:

- **Job growth**
- **Unemployment trends**
- **Labor categories and industries**
- **Labor force participation rates**
- **Job quits and layoffs**
- **Wages**
- **Other important news impacting the labor market**



Jobs Gained in October

The U.S. employment increased by 12,000 jobs in October. This data is subject to revisions due to disruptions in data collection caused by weather events. Employment continued to trend up in healthcare, government and construction.



Labor Force Participation Rate

The labor force participation rate fell from 62.7% to 62.6%. Thus, the percentage of the population working or looking for work slightly declined.



Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.1% between September and October.



September Layoffs

Layoffs increased to 1.8 million in September from 1.7 million in August (revised up from 1.6 million in last month's report). Quits were little changed at 3.1 million. Note that quits and layoffs data lag one month behind other employment data.

October 2024 Market Trends

A closer look at unemployment by industry and labor category



Overall Unemployment Rate

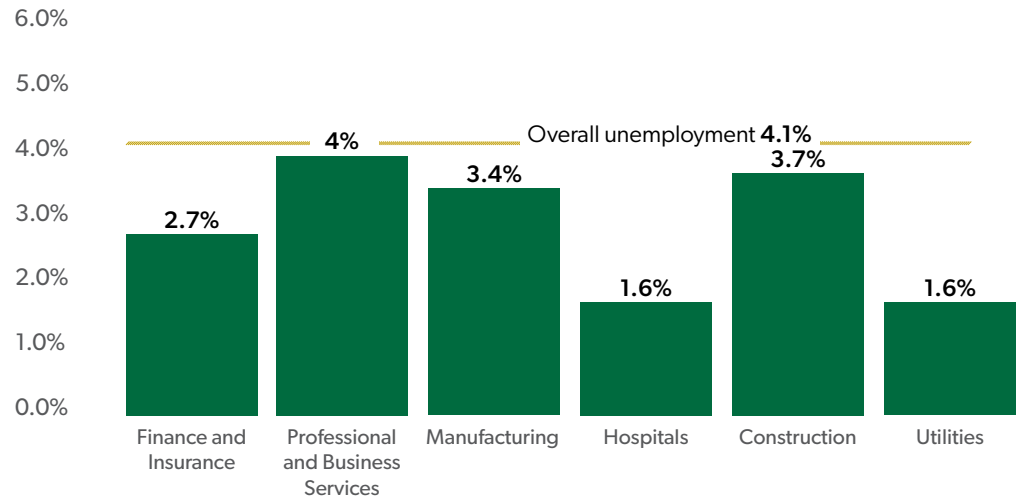


Unemployment Rate for
Degreed Workers

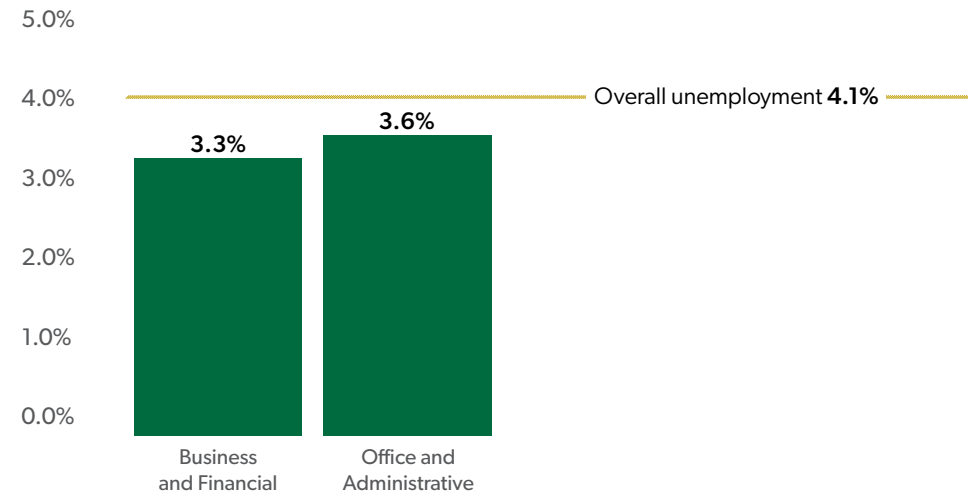


Ratio of unemployed workers
(procurement clerks, AP/
AR, and other core office and
administrative roles) available per
job opening

Unemployment Rates by Industry



Unemployment Rates by Labor Category



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

TRENDS

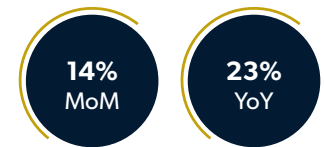
OVERALL ECONOMY

In October, the U.S. economy added 12,000 jobs, with employment gains once again primarily concentrated in healthcare, government and construction. Due to disruptions to the survey data caused by hurricanes last month, there is a high likelihood that October employment data will be revised in the coming months. Still, employment changes were revised down from +159,000 to +78,000 for August and from +254,000 to +223,000 for September, indicating weaker job gains than initially reported.



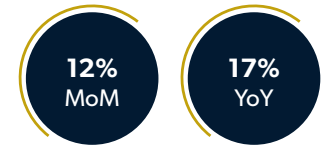
ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

The Center for Audit Quality's Pulse Survey of audit partners found recession, changes in regulations and geopolitical instability as the biggest economic risk factors over the next 12 months. It also found that the most popular way respondents plan to prepare their workforce for those risk factors — and more challenges — is upskilling. Several years of lower-than-expected turnover in white-collar roles led to a Big 4 accounting firm laying off 4% of its audit workforce, a rare large job cut in accounting and finance, which has largely been spared the restructurings seen in some companies' marketing, HR-TA and other corporate departments. On the other hand, auditor roles outside of the Big 4 have seen a pickup in demand (21% YoY) and strong demand for tax manager roles (48% higher since before the pandemic) has continued. These labor market demand insights are via Lightcast job posting intelligence.



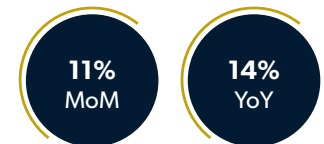
HR AND TALENT ACQUISITION

Employer health insurance costs have doubled at twice the rate of inflation, adding another challenge for employers to address alongside moderate to higher planned Global consulting firm Mercer finds U.S. employers initially project comp planning to be 3.3% for merit increases and 3.6% overall, a further sign abnormally high wage increases from pandemic hiring markets have trended closer to normal. After a year of lower hiring levels and less promotions, the same employer survey from Mercer suggests a slightly higher promotion rate is planned (10% projected for 2025 versus 8% in 2024). Workers seeking new jobs will soon see considerably more pay transparency in job postings with Maryland enacting pay transparency requirements effective this October and five more states adding or enhancing pay transparency laws for 2025 (Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey and Vermont). With upskilling on the rise as employers seek to maximize the potential of in-house talent, training and development managers have seen a robust jump in demand YoY (40%) and compared to pre-pandemic (27%) as have training and development specialists (22%) YoY.



SUPPLY CHAIN AND PROCUREMENT

In October, manufacturing continued to show signs of a sluggish, limited growth trajectory for 2024 even as headwinds in aerospace and chemicals appeared to worsen. Election uncertainty, higher interest rates and lingering inflation have been commonly blamed for recent slowing of activity like investment and hiring and with those hurdles having cleared recently, growth could pick up in late Q4 into 2025. After another round of seaport and major industry strikes, alongside massive hurricane damage and rising geopolitical turmoil, supply chain risk management has only grown in importance to companies building out supply chains for resilience and flexibility. The importance of planning has proven out with a new survey by consulting firm Oliver Wyman which highlights higher growth from 2018-2023 on average for companies who had made supply chain resilience investments (23% average versus 15% average for companies that didn't) while research from FTI Consulting revealed nearly 40% of companies have no contingency plan for supply chain breakdowns. Schedulers/operations coordinator roles have seen robust new job demand growth in October 2024 compared to YoY (14%) alongside buyer/purchasing agents (9%). Supply chain and procurement demand has increased YoY the most in New Jersey (34%), Oregon (32%), Minnesota (31%), Georgia (31%), New York (30%) and Ohio (30%).



Wages in the United States

How they've changed

+2.6%



Consumer Price Index

The consumer price index, a measure of inflation, increased by 2.6% for the 12 months ending October, slightly above September's reading of 2.4%. The Federal Reserve lowered interest rates by 25 basis points at their November meeting, addressing that inflation is moving in the right direction but remains somewhat elevated. The Fed noted that they are not on a preset course with interest rates, and they will determine future adjustments by carefully assessing "incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

+4%



Wage Increases

Average hourly earnings increased by 4% for the 12 months ending October, the same increase recorded in September.

+1.4%



"Real" Earnings

Real average hourly earnings increased 1.4% from October 2023 to October 2024. In other words, despite average hourly earnings increasing by 4% year-over-year, workers may only feel as if they're making about 1.4% more, on average, due to the effects of inflation.

References

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE:

[2024 Audit Partner Pulse Survey](#)

[KPMG to Lay Off 4% of U.S. Audit Workforce to Counter Fewer Voluntary Exits](#)

HR / TALENT ACQUISITION:

[Will 2025 increase budgets be lower than last year?](#)

[2024 State-By-State Pay Transparency Laws: Key Insights For Employers](#)

SUPPLY CHAIN / PROCUREMENT:

[Rolling Manufacturing Recession Collides With US Election Angst](#)

[Supply Chain Woes Carry High Risks, Big Rewards for Some Companies](#)

JOB POSTING DEMAND INTELLIGENCE (%'S GROWTH AND CHANGE)

[Lightcast, 2024](#)

About Aston Carter

Aston Carter provides world-class corporate talent solutions to thousands of clients across the globe. Specialized in accounting, finance, human resources, talent acquisition, supply chain, procurement and select administrative professions, we extend the capabilities of industry-leading companies. We draw on our deep recruiting expertise and expansive network to meet the evolving needs of our clients and talent community with agility and excellence. With offices across the U.S., Canada, Asia Pacific and Europe, Aston Carter serves many of the Fortune 500.

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