NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE

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*For Immediate Release:* November 20, 2026
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# North Carolina's October Employment Figures Released

**RALEIGH —** The state's seasonally adjusted October 2026 unemployment rate was 3.4 percent, unchanged from September's revised rate. The national rate decreased 0.1 of a percentage point to 4.1 percent.

The number of people employed in North Carolina increased 9,221 over the month to 5,063,140. The number of people unemployed in North Carolina decreased 1,254 over the month to 178,559. Year-ago comparisons cannot be made for October 2026 because October 2025 data were not collected due to the federal government shutdown.

Seasonally adjusted Total Nonfarm employment, as gathered through the monthly establishment survey, increased 8,900 to 5,141,000 in October. Major industries experiencing increases were Professional & Business Services, 3,400; Trade, Transportation & Utilities, 3,000; Leisure and Hospitality Services, 2,000; Manufacturing, 1,900; Financial Activities, 1,300; Government, 400; Private Education & Health Services, 200; and Mining & Logging, 100. Major industries experiencing decreases were Construction, 2,600; Other Services, 700; and Information, 100.

**Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates since October 2025**

| | Oct 2025 | Nov 2025 | Dec 2025 | Jan 2026 | Feb 2026 | Mar 2026 | Apr 2026 | May 2026 | Jun 2026 | Jul 2026 | Aug 2026 | Sep 2026 | Oct 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N.C. | * | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| U.S. | * | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.1 |

*Estimates are subject to monthly and annual revisions*
**October 2025 data are unavailable due to the lapse in appropriations**

Since October 2025, Total Nonfarm jobs increased 83,800 with the Total Private sector increasing by 77,700 and Government increasing by 6,100. Major industries experiencing increases were Professional & Business Services, 29,900; Private Education & Health Services, 18,700; Leisure & Hospitality Services, 16,200; Construction, 12,200; Trade, Transportation & Utilities, 8,000; Government, 6,100; Financial Activities, 1,400; and Other Services, 1,100. Major industries experiencing decreases over the year were Manufacturing, 5,200; and Information, 4,600. Mining & Logging employment was unchanged over the year.

The next unemployment update is scheduled for Wednesday, December 2, 2026 when the county unemployment rates for October 2026 will be released.

**These data can be accessed on the Commerce website at https://d4.nccommerce.com/**

# North Carolina Department of Commerce
# Labor and Economic Analysis Division
## NORTH CAROLINA and U.S. LABOR FORCE DATA

***North Carolina data is embargoed until 10:00 A.M. Friday, November 20, 2026***

| | October 2026 | September 2026 | October 2025 | Month Ago Numeric Change | Month Ago Percent Change | Year Ago Numeric Change | Year Ago Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***North Carolina*** | | | | | | | |
| ***(Local Area Unemployment Statistics)*** | | | | | | | |
| ***Smoothed Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Labor Force** | 5,241,699 | 5,233,732 | * | 7,967 | 0.2 | * | * |
| **Employed** | 5,063,140 | 5,053,919 | * | 9,221 | 0.2 | * | * |
| **Unemployed** | 178,559 | 179,813 | * | -1,254 | -0.7 | * | * |
| **Unemployment Rate** | 3.4 | 3.4 | * | 0.0 | xxx | * | * |
| ***Not Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Labor Force** | 5,287,071 | 5,286,218 | * | 853 | 0.0 | * | * |
| **Employed** | 5,111,464 | 5,121,362 | * | -9,898 | -0.2 | * | * |
| **Unemployed** | 175,607 | 164,856 | * | 10,751 | 6.5 | * | * |
| **Unemployment Rate** | 3.3 | 3.1 | * | 0.2 | xxx | * | * |
| ***United States*** | | | | | | | |
| ***(Current Population Survey)*** | | | | | | | |
| ***Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Labor Force** | 170,683,000 | 170,262,000 | * | 421,000 | 0.2 | xxx | xxx |
| **Employed** | 163,615,000 | 163,152,000 | * | 463,000 | 0.3 | xxx | xxx |
| **Unemployed** | 7,068,000 | 7,109,000 | * | -41,000 | -0.6 | xxx | xxx |
| **Unemployment Rate** | 4.1 | 4.2 | * | -0.1 | xxx | xxx | xxx |
| ***Not Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Labor Force** | 170,906,000 | 170,298,000 | * | 608,000 | 0.4 | xxx | xxx |
| **Employed** | 164,183,000 | 163,439,000 | * | 744,000 | 0.5 | xxx | xxx |
| **Unemployed** | 6,724,000 | 6,859,000 | * | -135,000 | -2.0 | xxx | xxx |
| **Unemployment Rate** | 3.9 | 4.0 | * | -0.1 | xxx | xxx | xxx |

Annual population adjustments affect the comparability of national labor force estimates over time.
Estimates are subject to monthly and annual revisions.
***Data unavailable due to the 2025 lapse in appropriations.**

# North Carolina Department of Commerce
# Labor and Economic Analysis Division
## NORTH CAROLINA EMPLOYMENT DATA

***North Carolina data is embargoed until 10:00 A.M. Friday, November 20, 2026***

| | | | | Month Ago | | Year Ago | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *October 2026* | *September 2026* | *October 2025* | *Numeric Change* | *Percent Change* | *Numeric Change* | *Percent Change* |
| ***North Carolina (Current Employment Statistics)*** | | | | | | | |
| ***Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Total Nonfarm** | 5,141,000 | 5,132,100 | 5,057,200 | 8,900 | 0.2 | 83,800 | 1.7 |
| **Total Private** | 4,360,400 | 4,351,900 | 4,282,700 | 8,500 | 0.2 | 77,700 | 1.8 |
| **Mining & Logging** | 6,200 | 6,100 | 6,200 | 100 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 |
| **Construction** | 293,200 | 295,800 | 281,000 | -2,600 | -0.9 | 12,200 | 4.3 |
| **Manufacturing** | 451,100 | 449,200 | 456,300 | 1,900 | 0.4 | -5,200 | -1.1 |
| **Trade, Transportation & Utilities** | 945,200 | 942,200 | 937,200 | 3,000 | 0.3 | 8,000 | 0.9 |
| **Information** | 81,100 | 81,200 | 85,700 | -100 | -0.1 | -4,600 | -5.4 |
| **Financial Activities** | 313,000 | 311,700 | 311,600 | 1,300 | 0.4 | 1,400 | 0.4 |
| **Professional & Business Services** | 770,300 | 766,900 | 740,400 | 3,400 | 0.4 | 29,900 | 4.0 |
| **Private Education & Health Services** | 747,500 | 747,300 | 728,800 | 200 | 0.0 | 18,700 | 2.6 |
| **Leisure & Hospitality Services** | 559,100 | 557,100 | 542,900 | 2,000 | 0.4 | 16,200 | 3.0 |
| **Other Services** | 193,700 | 194,400 | 192,600 | -700 | -0.4 | 1,100 | 0.6 |
| **Government** | 780,600 | 780,200 | 774,500 | 400 | 0.1 | 6,100 | 0.8 |
| ***North Carolina (Current Employment Statistics)*** | | | | | | | |
| ***Not Seasonally Adjusted*** | | | | | | | |
| **Total Nonfarm** | 5,168,000 | 5,133,000 | 5,084,300 | 35,000 | 0.7 | 83,700 | 1.6 |
| **Total Private** | 4,375,100 | 4,347,100 | 4,297,700 | 28,000 | 0.6 | 77,400 | 1.8 |
| **Mining & Logging** | 6,200 | 6,100 | 6,200 | 100 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 |
| **Construction** | 293,500 | 296,900 | 282,000 | -3,400 | -1.1 | 11,500 | 4.1 |
| **Manufacturing** | 451,200 | 450,000 | 456,000 | 1,200 | 0.3 | -4,800 | -1.1 |
| **Trade, Transportation & Utilities** | 947,900 | 936,600 | 939,500 | 11,300 | 1.2 | 8,400 | 0.9 |
| **Information** | 80,900 | 81,300 | 85,600 | -400 | -0.5 | -4,700 | -5.5 |
| **Financial Activities** | 313,700 | 311,800 | 312,400 | 1,900 | 0.6 | 1,300 | 0.4 |
| **Professional & Business Services** | 776,500 | 767,900 | 746,600 | 8,600 | 1.1 | 29,900 | 4.0 |
| **Private Education & Health Services** | 752,900 | 745,700 | 734,100 | 7,200 | 1.0 | 18,800 | 2.6 |
| **Leisure & Hospitality Services** | 558,400 | 557,700 | 542,000 | 700 | 0.1 | 16,400 | 3.0 |
| **Other Services** | 193,900 | 193,100 | 193,300 | 800 | 0.4 | 600 | 0.3 |
| **Government** | 792,900 | 785,900 | 786,600 | 7,000 | 0.9 | 6,300 | 0.8 |

Estimates are subject to monthly and annual revisions.
Estimates may not add to totals due to rounding.

## Accessing Data

The data presented in this press release, as well as historical data, can be accessed from NC Commerce's Demand Driven Data Delivery ("D4") system:
https://d4.nccommerce.com/LausSelection.aspx
https://d4.nccommerce.com/CesSelection.aspx

## Technical Notes

This release presents labor force and unemployment estimates from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program. Also presented are nonfarm payroll employment estimates from the Current Employment Statistics (CES) program. The LAUS and CES programs are both federal-state cooperative endeavors.

Labor force and unemployment--from the LAUS program

Definitions. The labor force and unemployment estimates are based on the same concepts and definitions as those used for the official national estimates obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a sample survey of households that is conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by the U.S. Census Bureau. The LAUS program measures employment and unemployment on a place-of-residence basis. The universe for each is the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over. Employed persons are those who did any work at all for pay or profit in the reference week (the week including the 12th of the month) or worked 15 hours or more without pay in a family business or farm, plus those not working who had a job from which they were temporarily absent, whether or not paid, for such reasons as bad weather, labor-management dispute, illness, or vacation. Unemployed persons are those who were not employed during the reference week (based on the definition above), had actively looked for a job sometime in the 4-week period ending with the reference week, and were currently available for work; persons on lay-off expecting recall need not be looking for work to be counted as unemployed. The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percent of the labor force.

Method of estimation. Statewide estimates are produced using an estimation algorithm administered by the BLS. This method, which underwent substantial enhancement at the beginning of 2021, utilizes data from several sources, including the CPS, the CES, and state unemployment insurance (UI) programs. Each month, census division estimates are controlled to national totals, and state estimates are then controlled to their respective division totals. Substate estimates are controlled to their respective state totals. For more information about LAUS estimation procedures, see the BLS website at https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/lau/calculation.htm

Revisions. Labor force and unemployment data for the previous month reflect adjustments made in each subsequent month, while data for prior years reflect adjustments made at the end of each year. The monthly revisions incorporate updated model inputs, while the annually revised estimates reflect updated population data from the U.S. Census Bureau, any revisions in the other data sources, and model reestimation. In most years, historical data for the most recent five years (both seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted) are revised near the beginning of each calendar year, prior to the release of January estimates.

Seasonal adjustment. The LAUS program seasonally adjusts statewide estimates using an X-11 type of seasonal adjustment filter. These estimates are then smoothed using a filtering procedure to remove irregular fluctuations from the seasonally-adjusted series. For more information about seasonal adjustment and smoothing procedures, see the BLS website at https://www.bls.gov/lau/lauseas.htm.

Area definitions. The substate area data published in this release reflect the delineations that were issued by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget on July 21, 2023. A detailed list of the geographic definitions is available online at https://www.bls.gov/lau/lausmsa.htm.

Employment--from the CES program

Definitions. Employment data refer to persons on establishment payrolls who receive pay for any part of the pay period that includes the 12th of the month. Persons are counted at their place of work rather than at their place of residence; those appearing on more than one payroll are counted on each payroll. Industries are classified on the basis of their principal activity in accordance with the 2017 version of the North American Industry Classification System.

Method of estimation. CES State and Area employment data are produced using several estimation procedures. Where possible these data are produced using a "weighted link relative" estimation technique in which a ratio of current-month weighted employment to that of the previous-month weighted employment is computed from a sample of establishments reporting for both months. The estimates of employment for the current month are then obtained by multiplying these ratios by the previous month's employment estimates. The weighted link relative technique is utilized for data series where the sample size meets certain statistical criteria.

For some employment series, relatively small sample sizes limit the reliability of the weighted link-relative estimates. In these cases, BLS uses the CES small domain model (SDM) to generate employment estimates. The SDM combines the direct sample estimates (described above) and forecasts of historical (benchmarked) data to decrease the volatility of the estimates. For more detailed information about the CES small domain model, refer to the BLS Handbook of Methods.

Annual revisions. Employment estimates are adjusted annually to a complete count of jobs, called benchmarks, derived principally from tax reports that are submitted by employers who are covered under state unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The benchmark information is used to adjust the monthly estimates between the new benchmark and the preceding one and also to establish the level of employment for the new benchmark month. Thus, the benchmarking process establishes the level of employment, and the sample is used to measure the month-to-month changes in the level for the subsequent months. Information on recent benchmark revisions is available online at www.bls.gov/web/laus/benchmark.pdf.

Seasonal adjustment. Payroll employment data are seasonally adjusted at the statewide supersector level. In some cases, the seasonally adjusted payroll employment total is computed by aggregating the independently adjusted supersector series. In other cases, the seasonally adjusted payroll employment total is independently adjusted. Payroll employment data are seasonally adjusted concurrently, using all available estimates, including those for the current month, to develop sample-based seasonal factors. Concurrent sample-based factors are created every month for the current month's preliminary estimate as well as the previous month's final estimate.

Reliability of the estimates

The estimates presented in this release are based on sample surveys, administrative data, and modeling and, thus, are subject to sampling and other types of errors. Sampling error is a measure of sampling variability—that is, variation that occurs by chance because a sample rather than the entire population is surveyed. Survey data also are subject to nonsampling errors, such as those which can be introduced into the data collection and processing operations. Estimates not directly derived from sample surveys are subject to additional errors resulting from the specific estimation processes used.

Model-based error measures for seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted data and for over-the-month and over-the-year changes to LAUS estimates are available online at www.bls.gov/lau/lastderr.htm.

Measures of sampling error for state CES data at the total nonfarm and supersector levels are available online at https://www.bls.gov/sae/additional-resources/reliability-of-state-and-area-estimates.htm.

## Release Dates

The next unemployment update is scheduled for Wednesday, December 2, 2026 when the county unemployment rates for October 2026 will be released.

The complete data release schedule through 2026 can be accessed here:
https://www.commerce.nc.gov/release-dates-unemployment-rates/open