



PRESS RELEASE

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Arkansas at record high employment as unemployment drops to 4.2% in May

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (June 23, 2026) Today, the Arkansas Department of Commerce, in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, announced Arkansas' seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined one-tenth of a percentage point, from 4.3% in April to 4.2% in May. The United States' jobless rate remained stable at 4.3% between April and May.

Arkansas Civilian Labor Force Summary:

- The civilian labor force in Arkansas rose 1,167 in May, as employment increased by 2,452. Both are currently at record high levels. The number of unemployed actively seeking work declined for a 4th consecutive month, pushing down the unemployment rate to 4.2% in May.
- Compared to May 2025, there are now 21,532 more employed residents in Arkansas. The civilian labor force and the labor force participation rate are also up over the year. There are 3,942 more unemployed actively seeking work, with the unemployment rate up two-tenths of a percentage point over the year.

Arkansas Nonfarm Payroll Job Summary:

- Nonfarm payroll jobs in Arkansas rose by 2,900 in May to reach a record high level of 1,351,700 jobs. Eight major industry sectors posted monthly gains. The largest increase was in Leisure and Hospitality (+2,100), which set a new record high level this month. Jobs in Professional and Business Services also hit a new high, adding 200 jobs. Modest seasonal gains were seen in Trade-Transportation-Utilities (+900) and in Construction (+500).
- Compared to May 2025, Arkansas' nonfarm payroll jobs are up 5,700. The largest growth occurred in Trade-Transportation-Utilities (+3,600), Leisure and Hospitality (+3,400), Private Education and Health Services (+1,400), and Professional and Business Services (+1,300). The greatest annual decline was in Government, down 1,800 jobs.

Arkansas Civilian Labor Force (Seasonally Adjusted)

	May 2026	April 2026	May 2025	Change from April 2026	Change from May 2025
Civilian Labor Force	1,455,735	1,454,568	1,430,261	1,167	25,474
Employment	1,395,175	1,392,723	1,373,643	2,452	21,532
Unemployment	60,560	61,845	56,618	-1,285	3,942
Unemployment Rate	4.2%	4.3%	4.0%	-0.1%	0.2%
Labor Force Participation Rate	59.1%	59.1%	58.5%	0.0%	0.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. More information about the data is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm>

Arkansas Nonfarm Payroll Jobs (Not Seasonally Adjusted, In Thousands)

Industry Sector based on 2022 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	May 2026	April 2026	May 2025	Change from April 2026	Change from May 2025
Total Nonfarm Payroll Jobs	1351.7	1348.8	1346.0	2.9	5.7
Goods Producing	230.2	229.5	230.9	0.7	-0.7
Mining, Logging, & Construction	71.1	70.6	71.4	0.5	-0.3
Mining & Logging	4.7	4.7	4.8	0.0	-0.1
Construction	66.4	65.9	66.6	0.5	-0.2
Specialty Trade Contractors	41.7	41.2	41.9	0.5	-0.2
Manufacturing	159.1	158.9	159.5	0.2	-0.4
Durable Goods	75.1	74.5	75.2	0.6	-0.1
Nondurable Goods	84.0	84.4	84.3	-0.4	-0.3
Service Providing	1121.5	1119.3	1115.1	2.2	6.4
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	273.3	272.4	269.7	0.9	3.6
Wholesale Trade	54.5	54.1	54.0	0.4	0.5
Retail Trade	145.0	144.4	142.6	0.6	2.4
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	73.8	73.9	73.1	-0.1	0.7
Information	12.0	11.8	11.9	0.2	0.1
Financial Activities	58.8	58.7	60.1	0.1	-1.3
Finance & Insurance	43.5	43.3	44.5	0.2	-1.0
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	15.3	15.4	15.6	-0.1	-0.3
Professional & Business Services	167.0	166.8	165.7	0.2	1.3
Professional, Scientific, & Technical	53.8	53.8	52.2	0.0	1.6
Management of Companies	42.9	43.0	42.0	-0.1	0.9
Administrative & Support Services	70.3	70.0	71.5	0.3	-1.2
Private Education & Health Services	211.9	213.0	210.5	-1.1	1.4
Educational Services	20.3	21.1	20.0	-0.8	0.3
Health Care & Social Assistance	191.6	191.9	190.5	-0.3	1.1
Ambulatory Health Care	69.9	70.1	69.2	-0.2	0.7
Social Assistance	40.7	40.7	40.9	0.0	-0.2
Leisure & Hospitality	138.1	136.0	134.7	2.1	3.4
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	16.4	15.4	15.6	1.0	0.8
Accommodation & Food Services	121.7	120.6	119.1	1.1	2.6
Accommodation Services	11.0	10.8	11.0	0.2	0.0
Food Services	110.7	109.8	108.1	0.9	2.6
Other Services	52.4	52.9	52.7	-0.5	-0.3
Government	208.0	207.7	209.8	0.3	-1.8
Federal Government	20.2	20.2	21.4	0.0	-1.2
State Government	71.0	71.2	72.1	-0.2	-1.1
State Government, Educational Services	26.8	27.0	27.4	-0.2	-0.6
State Government, Excluding Education	44.2	44.2	44.7	0.0	-0.5
Local Government	116.8	116.3	116.3	0.5	0.5
Local Government, Educational Services	70.3	70.4	70.3	-0.1	0.0
Local Government, Excluding Education	46.5	45.9	46.0	0.6	0.5

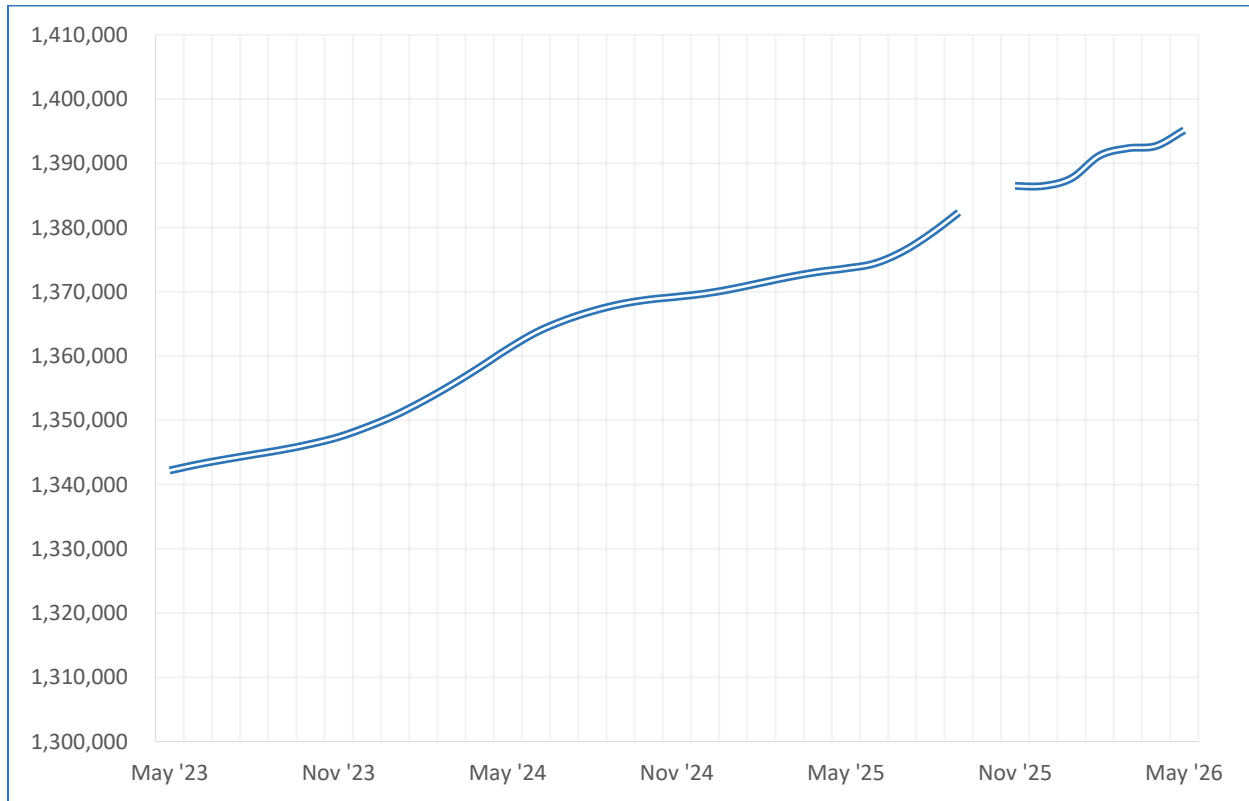
Source: Monthly Survey of Employers, based on 1st Quarter 2025 benchmark.

Notes: Current month's data are preliminary; previous month's data are revised.

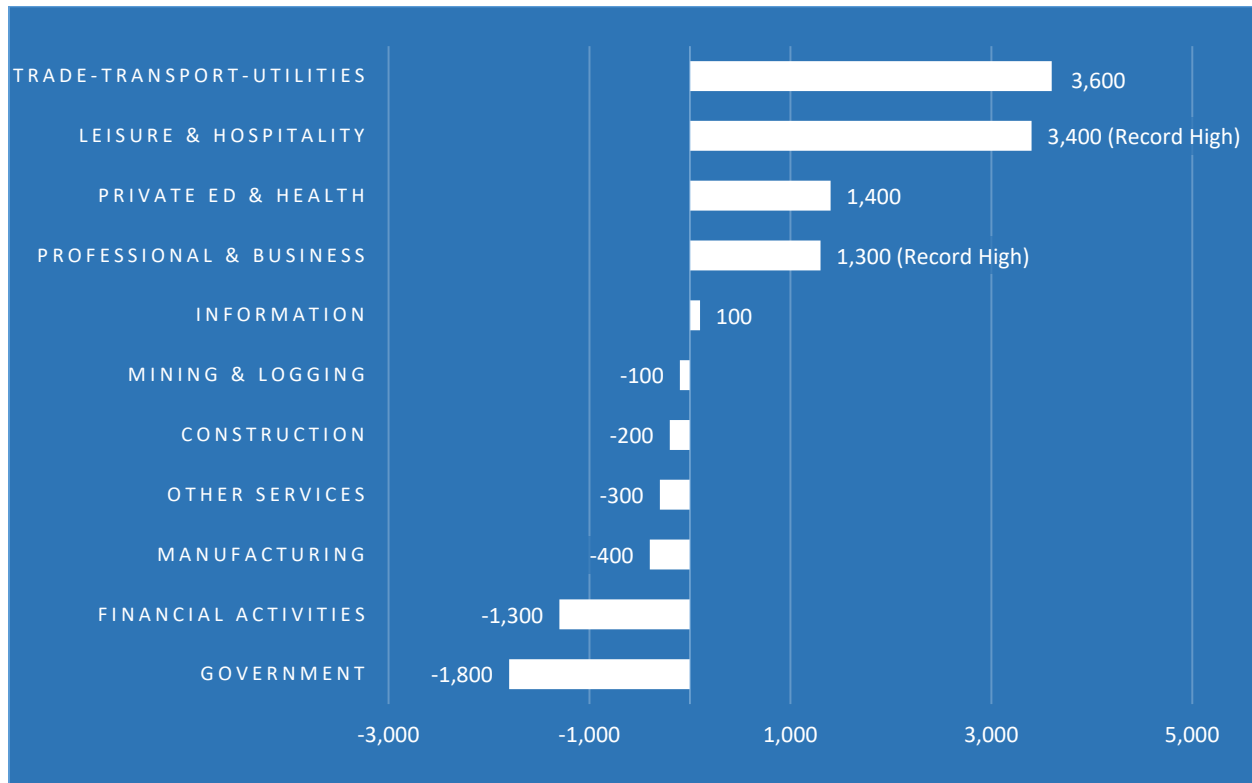
Employment in Arkansas (Seasonally Adjusted)

May 2023 – May 2026

Data for October 2025 is not available due to a lapse in Federal appropriations



Job Gains/Losses by Major Industry Sectors May 2025 to May 2026 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



For more Labor Market Data, visit our website at www.discover.arkansas.gov



About the Arkansas Department of Commerce

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Commerce is to champion the economic health of every Arkansas citizen and business. Its divisions and regulatory boards include the Waterways Commission, Economic Development Commission, Division of Aeronautics, Workforce Connections, Division of Reemployment, State Bank Department, Insurance Department, Securities Department, and Development Finance Authority.



U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

About Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics measures labor market activity, working conditions, price changes, and productivity in the U.S. economy to support public and private decision making.

About Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

The LAUS program produces monthly and annual employment, unemployment, and labor force data for Census regions and divisions, States, counties, metropolitan areas, and many cities, by place of residence.

About Current Employment Statistics (CES)

The CES program produces detailed industry estimates of employment, hours, and earnings of workers on nonfarm payrolls. CES State and Metro Area produces data for all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and about 450 metropolitan areas and divisions.