

Iowa Labor Force Update - February 2026

AUTHOR: Andrzej Wieciorkowski

Summary

Iowa lost 4,400 nonfarm jobs in February, with government employment falling by 1,100 and private-sector employment declining by 3,300. The BLS also revised January 2026 nonfarm employment downward by 3,600 jobs. Taken together, Iowa's cumulative job growth so far in 2026 marks the weakest February print of the post-pandemic period. Over the past year, Iowa has shed 17,700 jobs (-1.3%), ranking 45th nationally in job growth rate—well below the national average of +0.2%. The state's unemployment rate held steady at 3.4% (10th-lowest nationally), while labor force participation slipped to 67.8% (4th-highest).

Key Findings

- **Iowa's job growth rate ranks poorly over the last year.** Iowa's -1.3% nonfarm growth rate ranks 45th among all states over the last 12 months. The national average was 0.2%.
- **Job growth was weak in February.** Iowa lost 4,400 total nonfarm jobs, led by private education & health services, trade, transportation & utilities, and government.
- Iowa has lost 1,600 jobs in the first two months of 2026, marking the weakest January–February performance of the post-pandemic period and a reversal from the 900-job gain over the same stretch in 2025.
- **Only 3 of Iowa's 11 job sectors grew over the last year.** Education & health services, mining & logging, and construction grew, while all other sectors saw declines.

Sector Leaderboard

Sector	1M Change	12M Change	12M Rate (IA/ US)
Construction	+700	+2,100	+2.5%/ +0.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	+600	-4,800	+3.3%/ +1.0%
Mining and Logging	+100	+200	+9.1%/ -2.7%
Financial Activities	+100	-1,300	-1.2%/ -0.7%
Information	+0	-900	-4.9%/ -2.7%
Manufacturing	-500	-3,800	-1.7%/ -0.6%
Other Services	-500	-1,100	-2.0%/ +0.6%
Trade, transportation, & utilities	-1,000	-8,400	-2.7%/ -0.5%
Government	-1,100	-1,500	-0.6%/ -1.0%
Professional & business services	-1,400	-1,400	-1.0%/ -0.2%
Education & Health Services	-1,400	+1,700	+0.7%/ +2.4%
Total private	-3,300	-17,700	-1.3%/ +0.4%
Total nonfarm	-4,400	-19,200	-1.2%/ +0.2%

Job Growth Rate Rank

45th

over the last 12 months

LFPR

67.8% (-0.1 pp)

12M change: +0.1 pp

#4

Unemployment Rate

3.4% (+0 pp)

12M change: -0.1 pp

#10

Private vs. Public Jobs

-3.3k / -1.1k

12M change: -17.7k / -1.5k

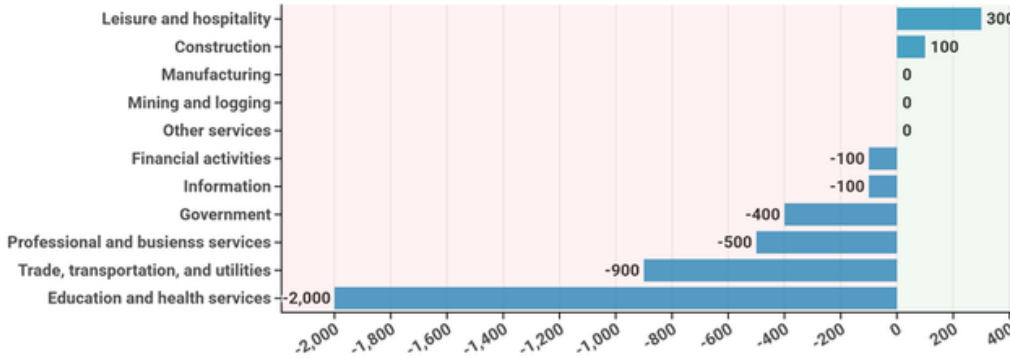
Total Nonfarm Jobs

1,576.4k (-4.4k)

12M change: -19.2k

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Sector Employment Revisions - January 2026



Iowa Nonfarm Revisions

-3,600 (-0.2%)

for January 2026

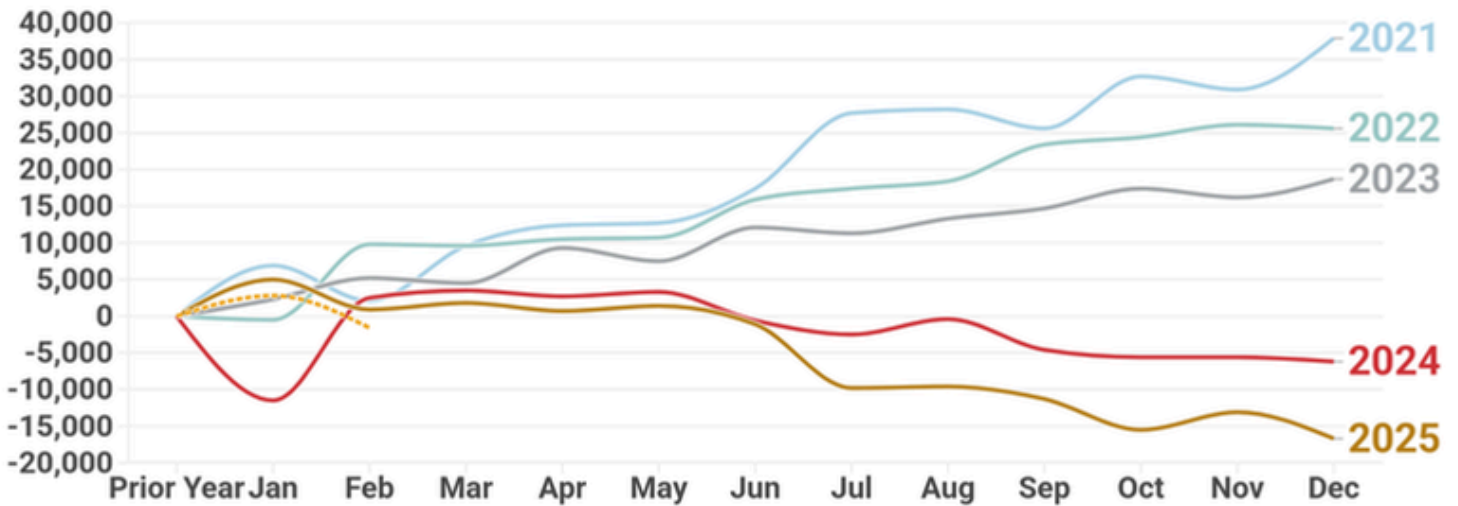
U.S. Nonfarm Revisions

-113,400 (-0.7%)

for January 2026

Cumulative Jobs Added by Year - Iowa

From December 2025 to February 2026, employment has fallen by 1,600 jobs, versus a gain of 900 this time last year.



Note: The dotted yellow line indicates 2026 YTD.

Private Employment Wages & Hours - Iowa

Not-seasonally adjusted earnings and hours measures for the private payroll side of the labor market.

Average hourly earnings **\$30.89** (+\$0.02)
12M change: +\$0.28

Average weekly earnings **\$1,056** (+\$13.03)
12M change: +\$31.00

Average weekly hours **34.2** (+0.4)
12M change: +0.7

Demand / Turnover (December 2025)

Labor demand and turnover measures.

Openings

65k (+0)
12M average: 70.5k

Hires

53k (+7k)
12M average: 53.8k

Total Separations

64k (+11k)
12M average: 54.8k

Unemp. Per Opening

0.9 (-0.1)
12M change: +0.1

Definitions and methodology notes

Definitions of the report's labor-market terms

Payroll employment terms

BLS CES

Total nonfarm jobs

Employment reported by the Current Employment Statistics program for workers on non-farm payrolls. It reflects payroll jobs, not unique people, so a person with more than one job can be counted more than once.

Private jobs

The private-sector portion of nonfarm payroll employment. It excludes government payroll employment.

Government jobs

The government portion of nonfarm payroll employment, including federal, state, and local government payrolls.

Average hourly earnings

Gross payrolls divided by total hours worked during the pay period that includes the 12th of the month. This is an earnings measure, not a posted wage-rate measure.

Average weekly hours

Average paid hours during the pay period that includes the 12th of the month. Paid time can include holidays, sick leave, and other paid leave.

Average weekly earnings

A weekly earnings measure derived from average hourly earnings and average weekly hours.

Labor force terms

BLS CPS/LAUS

Labor force

All people age 16 and older who are classified as either employed or unemployed. In plain terms, it is the number of people working or actively looking for work.

Employed

People are classified as employed if, during the reference week, they did any paid work, worked in their own business or farm, worked at least 15 unpaid hours in a family business, or were temporarily absent from a job.

Unemployed

People are classified as unemployed if they were not employed, were available for work, and had actively looked for work in the last 4 weeks, or were on temporary layoff.

Labor force participation rate

The labor force as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population.

Unemployment rate

The number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force.

Labor demand and turnover terms

BLS JOLTS

Job openings

Open positions employers are actively recruiting to fill.

Hires

All additions to payroll during the month, whether they are new hires, recalls, or other additions.

Quits

Voluntary separations initiated by employees, except retirements and transfers to other locations.

Layoffs and discharges

Involuntary separations initiated by the employer, including layoffs with no intent to rehire, discharges, and certain terminations of temporary or seasonal workers.

Total separations

The sum of quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations.

Report notes

Seasonally adjusted

A BLS statistical adjustment that removes recurring seasonal influences so underlying month-to-month changes are isolated.

1-month change

Report convention: current month minus prior month.

12-month change

Report convention: current month minus the same month one year earlier.