August 2026

Iowa Labor Force Update - July 2026

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Summary

Iowa shed 3,100 nonfarm jobs in July, with government employment falling by 2,100 and private-sector employment falling by 1,000. The BLS also revised June 2026 nonfarm employment upward by 2,100 jobs. Taken together, Iowa's cumulative job growth so far in 2026 stands at 5,100 jobs since December 2025—well ahead of the 9,800-job loss recorded at this point last year. Iowa has shed 1,800 jobs (-0.1%) over the last twelve months, an improvement from 9,800 reported last month. In July, Iowa ranked 39th nationally in job growth rate, seven spots higher than reported in June but still below the national average of +0.2%. Despite weak annual growth, Iowa has the 9th-lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 3.2% and the 3rd-highest labor force participation rate at 67.1%. At the metro level, Des Moines–West Des Moines led the state in nominal job growth, adding 2,600 jobs from July 2025 to July 2026.

Key Findings

- **Iowa's job growth rate improved over the last year, but continues to rank poorly.** Iowa's -0.1% nonfarm growth rate ranks 39th among all states over the last 12 months, an improvement of seven spots. The national average was 0.2%.
- **Iowa shed 3,100 nonfarm jobs in July.** This was led by losses in government and trade, transportation & utilities.
- **Iowa has gained 5,100 jobs in the first half of 2026.** That is well ahead of the 9,800 jobs lost by this point last year.
- **Only 4 of Iowa's 11 job sectors grew over the last year.** Construction, financial activities, education & health services, and information grew, while the remaining eight sectors were flat or declined.

Sector Leaderboard

Sector	1M Change	12M Change	12M Rate (IA/ US)
Construction	+900	+3,300	+3.9%/ +1.0%
Leisure & Hospitality	+300	-2,100	-1.5%/ +0.5%
Professional & Business Services	+200	-1,600	-1.1%/ +0.5%
Mining & Logging	+0	+0	+0.0%/ -0.5%
Financial Activities	+0	+1,100	+1.1%/ -1.2%
Education & Health Services	+0	+5,400	+2.2%/ +2.0%
Manufacturing	-100	-2,100	-1.0%/ -0.1%
Information	-200	+300	+1.7%/ -2.8%
Other Services	-300	-500	-0.9%/ +0.8%
Trade, transportation & utilities	-1,800	-5,000	-1.6%/ -0.1%
Government	-2,100	-600	-0.2%/ -1.3%
Total private	-1,000	-1,200	-0.1%/ +0.5%
Total nonfarm	-3,100	-1,800	-0.1%/ +0.2%

Job Growth Rate Rank

39th

over the last 12 months

LFPR

67.1% (-0.2 pp) **#3**

12M change: -0.6 pp

Unemployment Rate

3.2% (+0.0 pp) **#9**

12M change: -0.3 pp

Private vs. Public Jobs

-1.0k/ -2.1k

12M change: -1.2k / -600

Total Nonfarm Jobs

1,583.1k (-3.1k)

12M change: -1.8k

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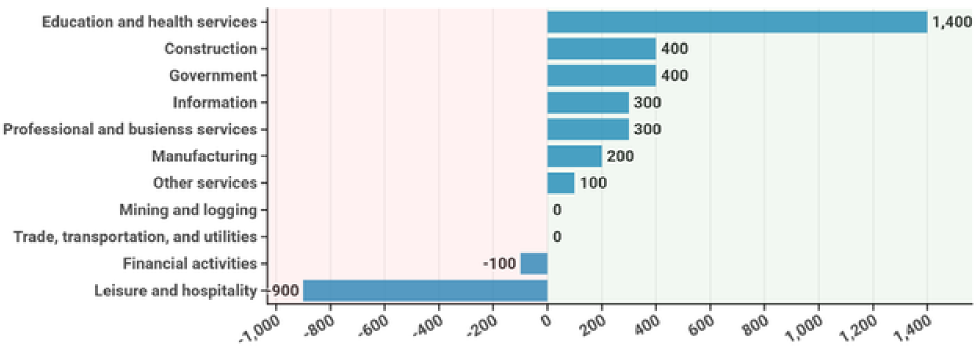
Sector Employment Revisions - June 2026



Iowa Nonfarm Revisions

+2.1k (+0.13%)

for June 2026

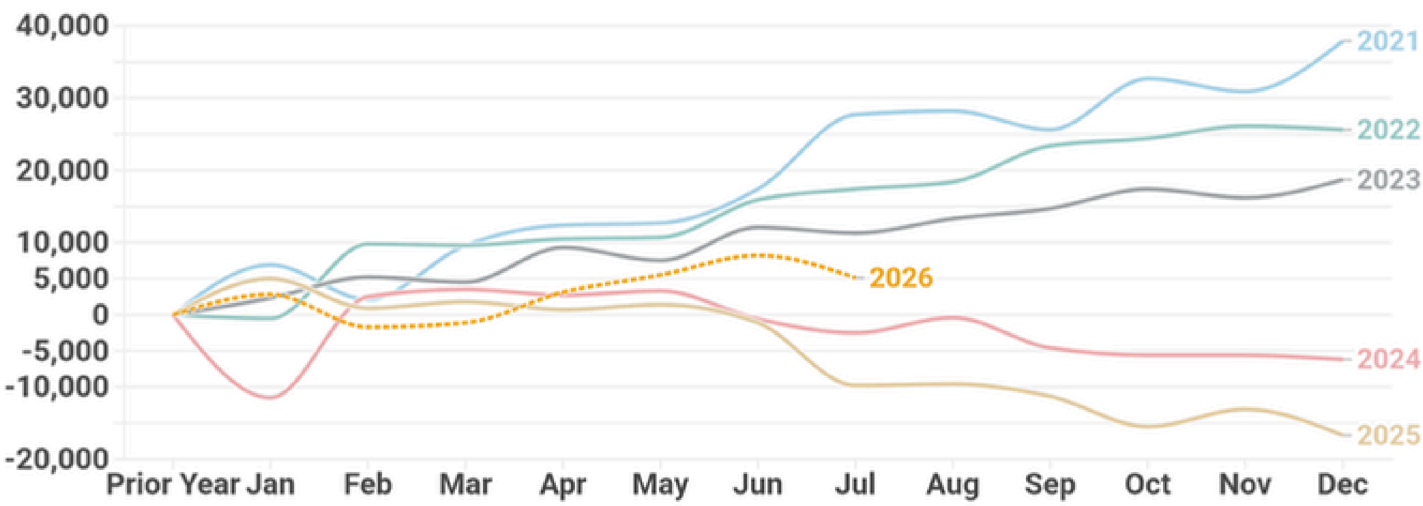
U.S. Nonfarm Revisions

-26.4k (-0.02%)

for June 2026

Cumulative Jobs Added by Year - Iowa

From December 2025 to July 2026, employment has grown by 5,100 jobs, versus a loss of 9,800 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.

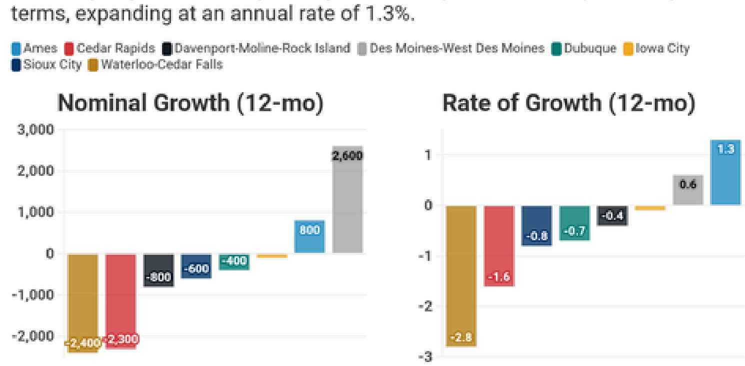
Average hourly earnings — **$30.56** (+$0.19)
12M change: +$0.28

Average weekly earnings — **$1,048** (+$9.56)
12M change: +$15.66

Average weekly hours — **34.3** +0.10
12M change: +0.20

Annual Jobs Added by Iowa Metro, July 2026

From July 2025 to July 2026, Des Moines–West Des Moines led the state in nominal job growth, adding 2,600 jobs. Ames grew fastest in percentage terms, expanding at an annual rate of 1.3%.



APPENDIX A

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.