

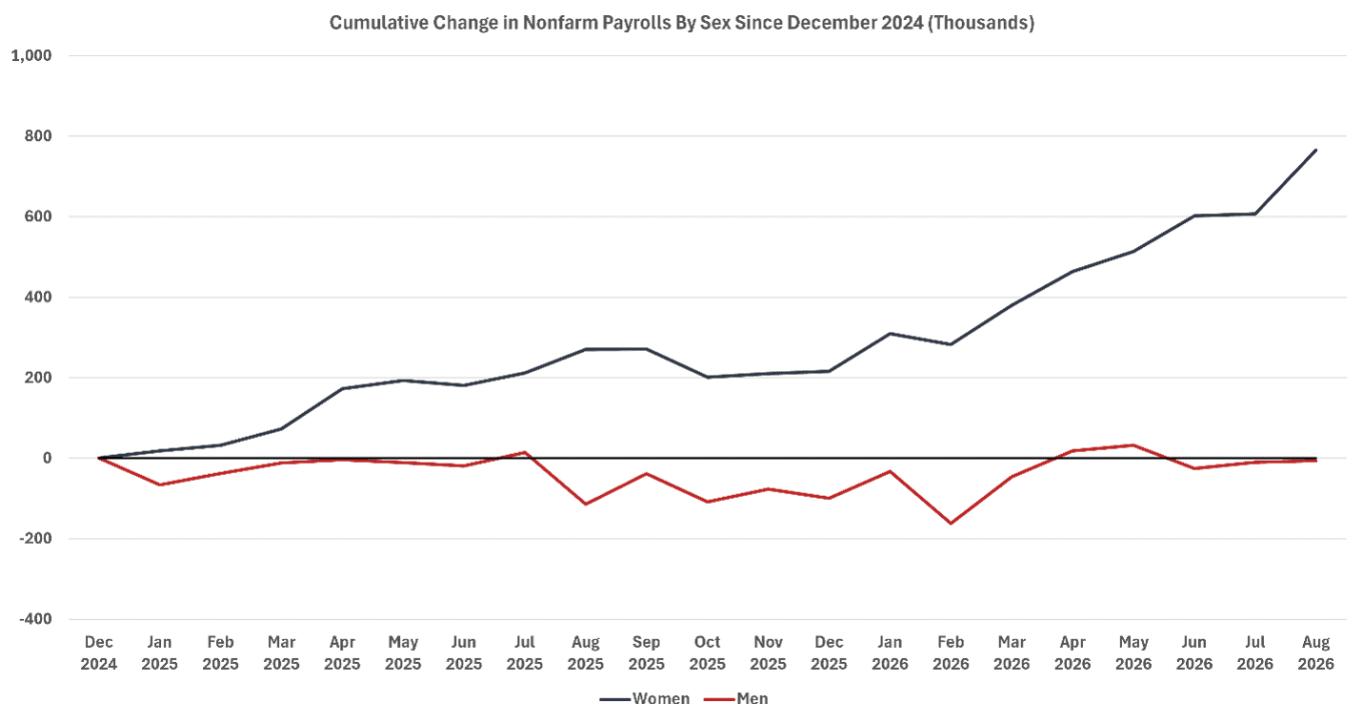


The Daily Dish

Where Are All the Men?

FRED ASHTON | OCTOBER 1, 2026

The U.S. labor force is changing and men are falling behind. Since December 2024, the U.S. economy created 759,000 nonfarm jobs – 765,000 of which went to women. How did the women take more jobs than were created? Men lost 6,000 – despite overall job growth.

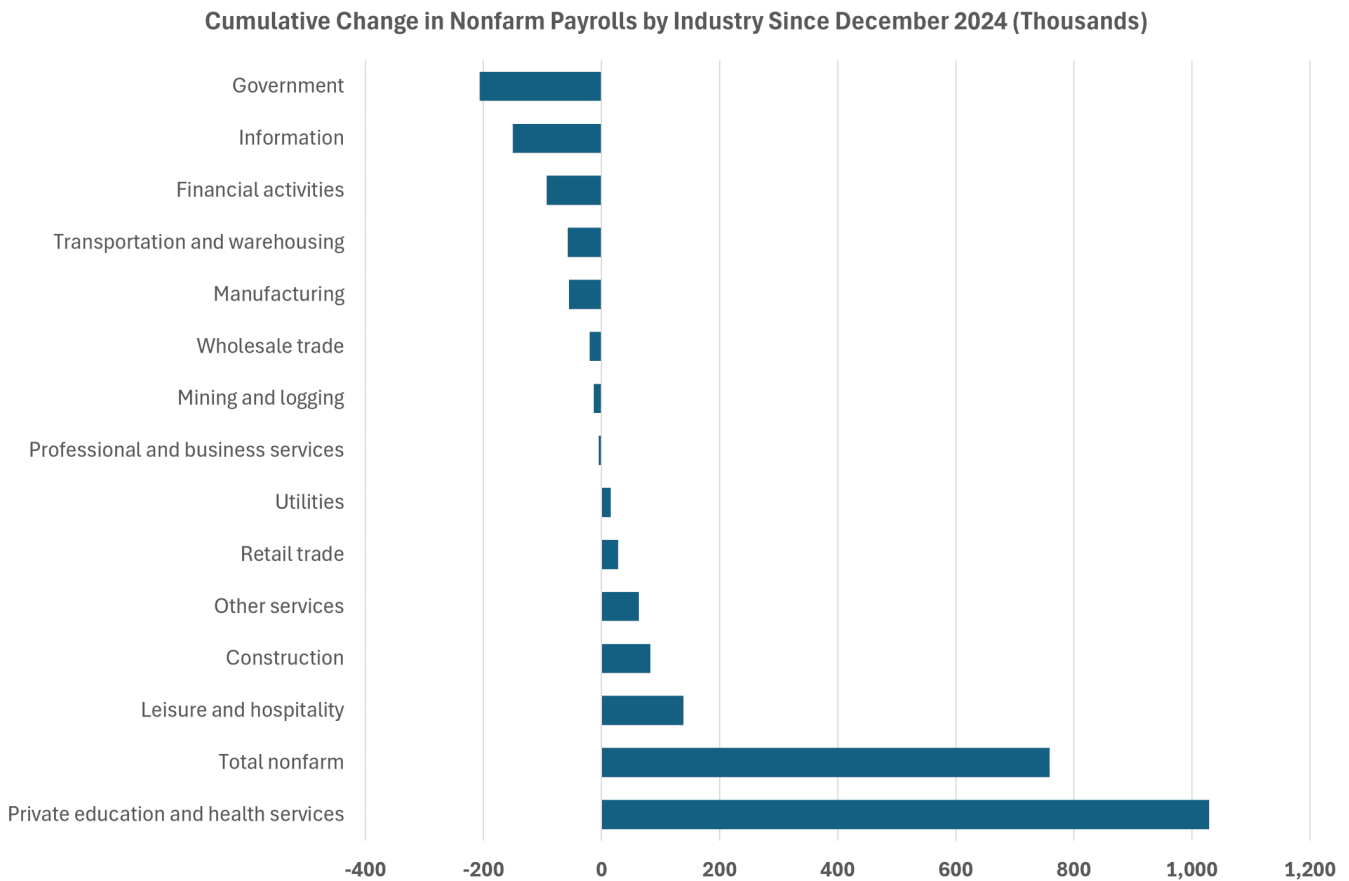


*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The primary driver of this dynamic is the source of labor demand.

- Women-dominated industries: Education and health care – where women outnumber men three to one – are among the fastest growing sectors, adding more than one million jobs over this period.

- Male-dominated industries: Mining, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing - the three industries hardest hit by tariff policy - are growing at a slower pace. They have shed 125,000 since December 2024.
- Construction: This is the one bright spot in male-dominated industries, adding 83,000 jobs. The increase in demand for construction workers stems almost entirely from the artificial intelligence infrastructure buildout.



*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



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This structural trend poses long-term challenges for male labor force participation, particularly as demographic shifts continue to fuel demand for health care workers.

Analyzing monthly employment data and long-term projections from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Action Forum Health Care Policy Director Michael Baker [recently discussed](#) the counterintuitive health care jobs boom amid a continued labor shortage (you should [sign up](#) for the Weekly Checkup if you haven't already).

Baker noted: "Private health care and social assistance will add 2.2 million jobs between 2025 and 2035, more than any other major industry and roughly 37 percent of all projected U.S. job growth." Drilling down to the occupation level, Baker highlights the ever-increasing demand for home health and personal care aides, two roles where [women currently make up](#) 86 percent and 80 percent of the workforce, respectively.

Because this gap is rooted in structural norms and biological preferences, simple policy fixes are unlikely. Challenging traditional workforce expectations to ensure men do not fall further behind is worth addressing.

FREDDY'S FORECAST: SEPTEMBER JOBS

Payroll employment grew much more than expected in August, with 162,000 jobs added. The gains were broad-based, with the leisure and hospitality industry leading the way. The manufacturing and construction sector also added workers. The data for June and July were revised up by a combined 55,000, with the July revisions showing job gains rather than losses as first estimated. The unemployment rate held steady at 4.1 percent. Average hourly earnings inched up 0.3 percent for the month and 3.1 percent for the year, failing to keep up with inflation on an annual basis.

Since that last report, [data from ADP](#) showed the pace of private-sector hiring accelerated in September to 90,000 from 36,000 in the prior month. Small businesses added 23,000 workers while medium-sized businesses (+54,000) and large firms (+14,000) also added jobs. Job gains were broad-based as construction (+15,000) and manufacturing (+17,000) gained. Education and health services (+55,000) and leisure and hospitality (+22,000) offset weakness in the financial activities (-16,000) and professional and business services (-11,000) industries.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey [data](#) showed that job openings slipped to just under 7.1 million in August following the upwardly revised July level of 7.34 million. The hiring rate ticked up to 3.3 percent, a level that suggests it is still incredibly difficult to find a job.

Initial jobless claims remained historically low during the week ending September 26 at 197,000. The four-week moving average, which smooths out weekly volatility, trended lower during the month, dropping to 200,000. Continuing claims moved sharply lower during the month, falling by 64,000 to 1.701 million.

The Institute for Supply Management reported that [manufacturing](#) activity expanded in September, albeit at a slower pace than in August as the overall index dipped 0.1-percentage point to 54.5. An increase in the new orders and employment indexes helped buoy weakness in production. Survey respondents noted new tariffs against Canada as a headwind that has increased costs and created uncertainty.

For September, expect payroll gains of 90,000 and the unemployment rate to remain at 4.1 percent. Growth in average hourly earnings remains low at 0.2 percent for a 3.0-percent annual gain.