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NEWS RELEASE: October 1, 2025

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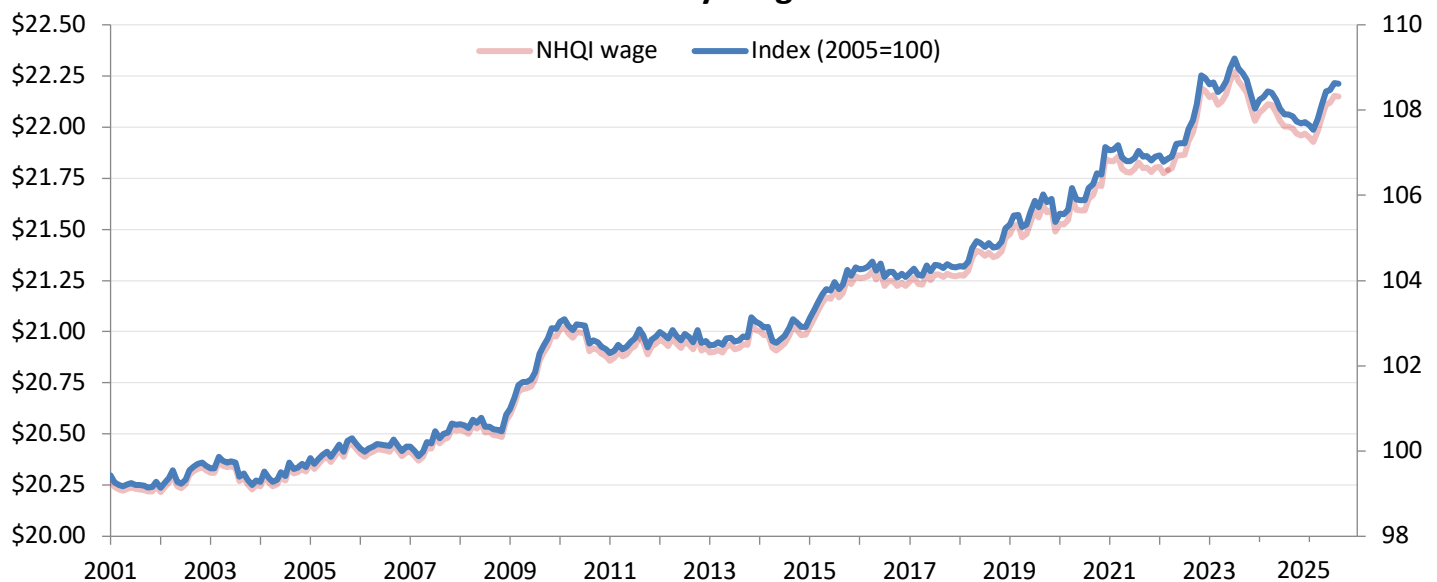
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Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index holds steady between July and August 2025, though volume again dips, even as men experience a rebound

KALAMAZOO, Mich.— The Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index shows inflation-adjusted hourly earnings power of individuals starting a new job held steady between July and August of 2025, at \$22.15. Although this plateau ties for the high mark this year, the index remains 0.5 percent off its all-time peak in July 2023. Hiring volume slipped 0.3 percent to hover just above record lows reached earlier this year; volume is down 2.6 percent over the past 12 months and 6.1 percent from right before the COVID pandemic began. Adjusting for population growth, hiring *rates* have fallen 4.0 percent over the year and 10.5 percent from the pre-COVID baseline, and they are at record lows for the second month in a row. With job growth numbers having [slowed substantially](#) in recent months, and the Federal Reserve beginning to [cut interest rates](#), even as inflation [remains higher](#) than desired and more [tariffs](#) take effect, the labor market looks increasingly precarious.

The index and accompanying [interactive database](#) and [report](#), developed by Upjohn Institute economist Brad Hershbein, fill a key gap in the measurement of hiring activity. The NHQI provides monthly updates on the volume and occupation-based wages of newly hired workers, and is available for different groups based on sex, age, education, and other characteristics.

New Hires Hourly Wage Index: All



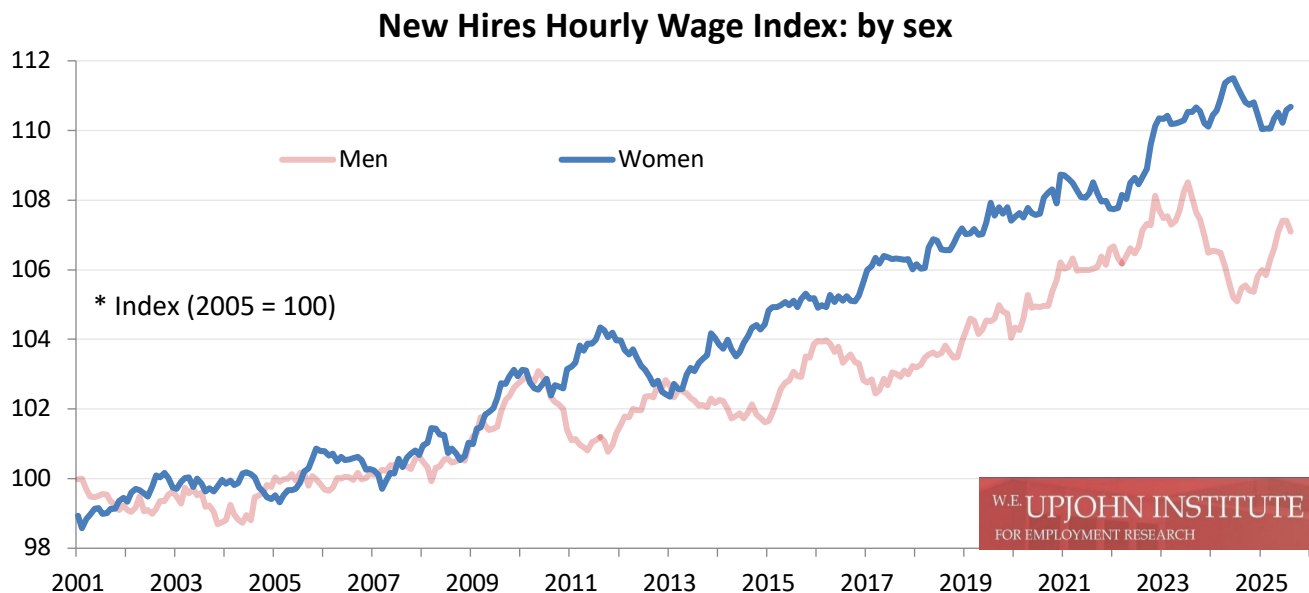
SOURCE: Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index

NOTE: The lighter line uses the left axis and shows the inflation-adjusted hourly wage of new hires. The darker line uses the right axis and shows the relative change since the base year of 2005.



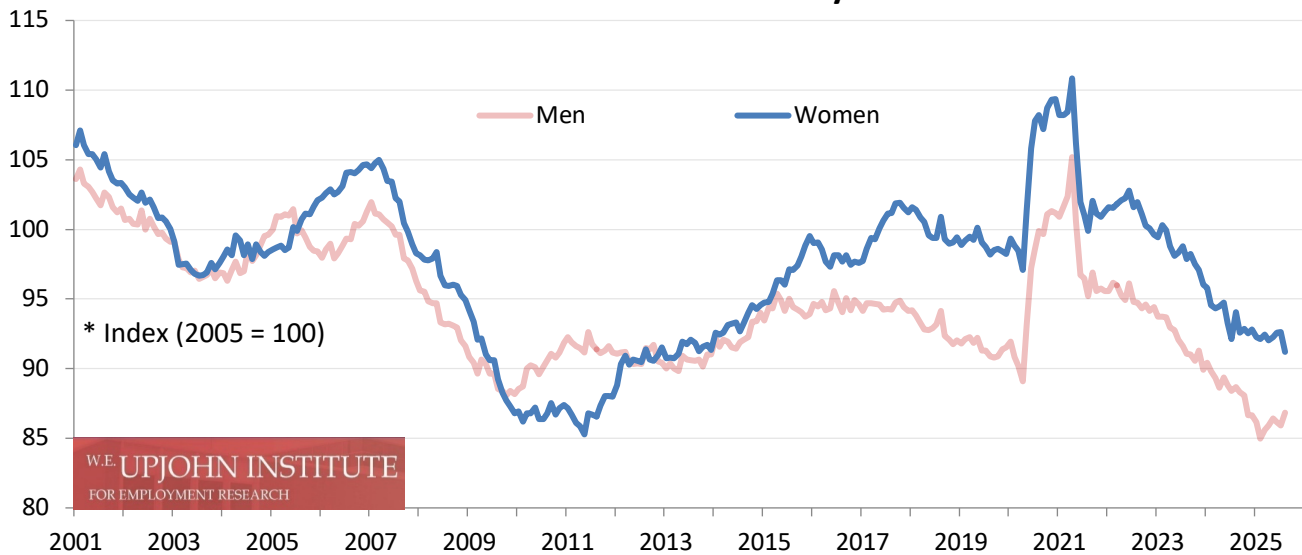
In the years after the pandemic, the labor force participation rate of prime-working-age women—especially mothers—[reached](#) an all-time peak. Moreover, last year the [NHQI](#) showed that women were getting hired into higher-paying jobs, even as the earnings power of newly hired men was ebbing. Some [analysts credited](#) the rise of [remote work](#). The past 12 months, however, have seen women’s labor force participation [begin to dip](#), even with the mixed success of businesses’ [return-to-office efforts](#). Has women’s relative resilience in the labor market persisted or has the past year brought a change in fortune? We revisit the relative hiring dynamics of women and men in this month’s NHQI release.

The graph below shows the hourly wage index separately for male (salmon) and female (blue) newly hired workers. Each index is normalized to the respective group’s own level in 2005 to better show relative changes. Although both indices grew at roughly similar rates between 2017 and 2022, in the summer of 2023, the index for men began falling, declining 3.1 percent by the summer of 2024, even as women’s index edged up another 0.7 percent. Indeed, just over a year ago, the gap in the indices between the sexes was the largest it had ever been. However, the past 12 months have brought something of a reversal, with the wage index for men rising by 1.5 percent as the women’s wage index has slipped 0.3 percent. Since 2005, newly hired women have still seen their earnings power rise faster than that of men, 10.7 percent vs 7.1 percent, but this gap has narrowed by nearly 2 percentage points in just the last year.



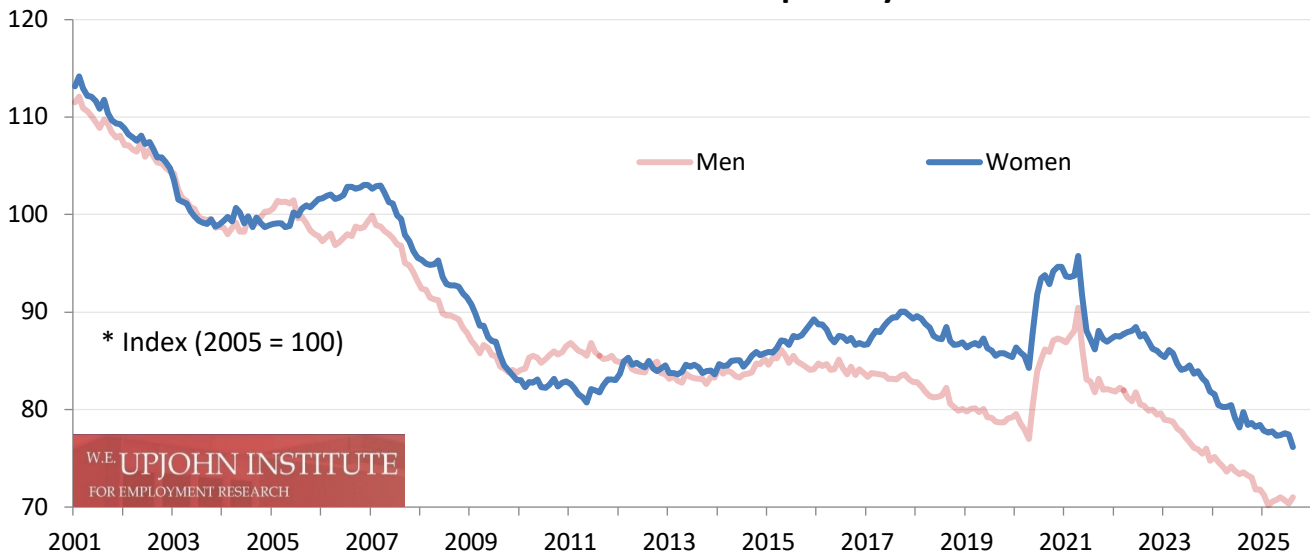
Although the gap in the *wage* index has narrowed, the next graph shows that the gap in the index for hiring *volume* has persisted more recently. Hiring volume has continued to fall for both men and women, as it has since the middle of 2022. Over the past 12 months, hiring volume has fallen 3.0 percent for women and 2.0 percent for men. But even this difference is driven just by the most recent month of August, a negative blip for women—the year-over-year comparison in July, for example, a 2.8 percent drop for men and 0.5 percent increase for women. Neither is reason for optimism, however; since the start of the pandemic, hiring volume is down 4.4 percent for men and 7.7 percent for women. Relative to 2005, in contrast, the drop in hiring volume has been greater for men, 14.2 percent versus 8.8 percent for women. Put differently, women’s hiring volume is at 2013 levels; men’s hiring volume is only slightly above the record low of February of this year.

New Hires Volume Index: by sex



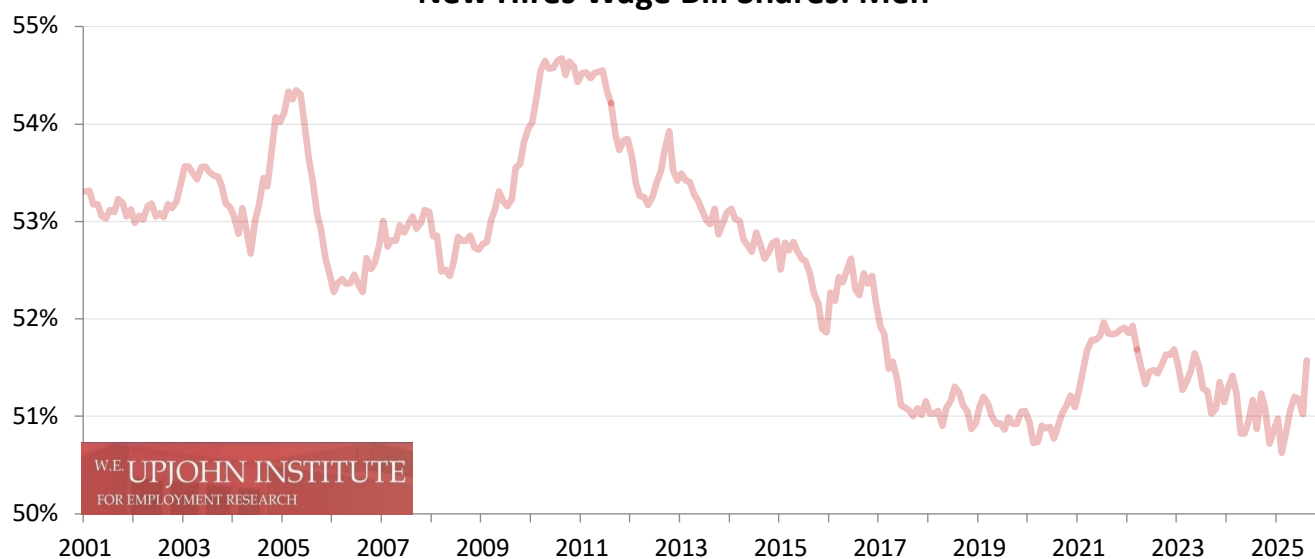
Unsurprisingly, a similar pattern holds for hiring *rates*, the number of hires per (1000) people. In this case, both men and women are essentially at record low hiring rates. These have declined just over the past 12 months by 4.0 percent for men and 4.5 percent for women. Since the pandemic, each rates has declined by 10 percent or more. In past recoveries from recessions, hiring rates held steady or increased slightly; hiring rates over the past three years have instead been almost as steep a decline as during the Great Recession.

New Hires Volume Per-Capita: by sex



The recent narrowing of the wage index and the similar declines for men and women in hiring volume have affected men's share of the new hires wage bill—the aggregate earnings power among all newly hired workers. A year ago, this share was nearly at parity, with men accounting for just under 51 percent of the new hires wage bill, and women for the remaining 49 percent and change. Men's share has increased slightly, to 51.6 percent. But this share is still below where it was in 2022, just under 52 percent, and even further below its value of roughly 53 percent before the Great Recession. While that gains in the share for women—and the fall in share for men—are unlikely to fully reverse, if current trends continue, the wage bill share will move farther away from parity.

New Hires Wage Bill Shares: Men



These statistics and many more, as well as interactive charts and data downloads, can be found at the website for the Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index: www.upjohn.org/nhqi.

The full report, including methodology, can be found here: https://www.upjohn.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/NHqi_report_0.pdf.

All data will be regularly updated during approximately the first week of the second month following the reference of the data release month. For example, data for September 2025 will be released during the first week of November 2025. To sign up to regularly receive monthly press releases for the Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index, visit: www.upjohn.org/nhqi/signup.

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FAQ

1. What is the New Hires Quality Index?

The New Hires Quality Index (NHQI) is a consistent way of measuring the earnings power of people taking new jobs each month, allowing comparisons over time.

2. How is the Index constructed?

The Index is based on the occupations of newly hired workers as documented in the [Current Population Survey](#), the same source used to produce the national unemployment rate each month. Separate data on the hourly wages for each occupation from another government survey, [Occupational Employment Statistics](#), are connected to the newly hired workers in the Current Population Survey. These hourly wages are then statistically adjusted to account for differences in the demographic composition of new hires (sex, race and ethnicity, education, and age) before being averaged.

3. Does the Index measure actual, reported wages of newly hired workers?

No. Although the data used to create the Index do have some information on self-reported wages (or those reported by another household member), many economists consider these self-reported wages [increasingly unreliable](#), as a growing fraction of workers refuse to answer the wage questions, and the government's attempts to impute (make an "educated guess") for these workers are [problematic](#). Moreover, because relatively few workers are even asked the wage questions, and only a small subset of these are newly hired, use of the self-reported wage data would lead to very small samples.

The Index captures changes in the wages of new hires due to both changes in the mix of occupations hired and the demographic characteristics of individuals taking new jobs. It will not capture change in the wages of new hires due to other factors, such as individual aptitude, geography, or employer characteristics.

A comparison of the Index with a series derived from the actual self-reported wages in the Current Population Survey can be found in the [technical report](#). An analysis of self-reported wages can also be found in press releases for [July 2018](#), [July 2019](#), [July 2020](#), [July 2021](#), [July 2022](#), [July 2023](#), [July 2024](#), and [July 2025](#).

4. Does the NHQI count self-employed workers?

No, the NHQI excludes the self-employed (including those who report bring independent contractors).

5. How often is the NHQI updated?

Every month, with the release by the Census Bureau of the Current Population Survey microdata. Updates will be posted on the [NHQI website](#) during the first week of the month, covering data from two months ago. Data are currently available from January 2001 through August 2025. To receive updates through email or social media, [visit the signup page](#).

6. What data are available on the NHQI website?

The [NHQI website](#) contains monthly data for all components of the NHQI. The four main components are: the hourly wage index, the hiring volume index, the wage bill index (the product of hourly wages and hiring volume), and the hires per capita index. Each component is available at its actual level or normalized to the base year 2005. In addition to providing data for all new workers, the NHQI exists for men, women, different age groups, different education groups, different races/ethnicities, different industry sectors, different regions, native and foreign-born, full- and part-time workers, and different types of new hires (the newly employed and employer changers). All data can be charted interactively or downloaded for separate analysis.