

W.E. UPJOHN INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

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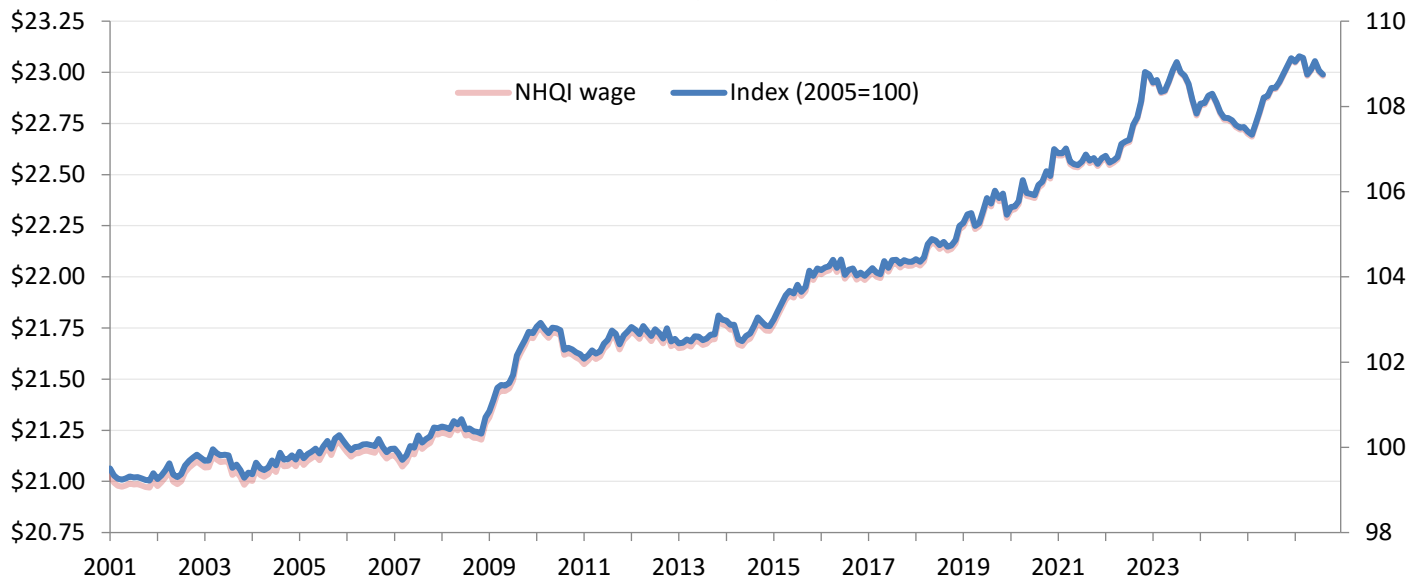
Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index slips just 0.1 percent in August 2026, but hiring volume plunges 1.4 percent over the month

NOTE: Starting this month, the NHQI release will be shortened and streamlined, presenting changes and trends in the overall wage and volume indices but not featuring additional analysis of selected demographic groups. Full demographic breakdowns will continue to be available through the interactive database.

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — The Upjohn Institute New Hires Quality Index shows inflation-adjusted hourly earnings power of individuals starting a new job dipped 0.1 percent in August 2026, to \$22.98. The index is up a scant 0.3 percent from one year ago but remains below its peak this past February. After rising earlier in the summer, hiring volume dropped sharply in August, down 1.4 percent from July. Nonetheless, hiring volume remains 3.3 percent higher than in August 2025. Adjusting for population growth, hiring *rates* are still up 2.1 percent from last year's record low but fall short of the pre-COVID baseline by 8.6 percent. Although hiring may not be deteriorating much (yet), it is not picking up, either.

The index and accompanying [interactive database](#) and [report](#), developed by Upjohn Institute Senior Economist and Deputy Director of Research 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.

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/NHQR_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 2026 is scheduled to be released during the first week of November 2026. (Due to the federal government shutdown, no data were collected for the month of October 2025, so there will be no release for this month or the following month, as NHQR construction requires data from adjacent months.)

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](#), [July 2025](#), and [July 2026](#).

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 2026, except October and November 2025, for which there are no data. 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.