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NEWS RELEASE: November 18, 2026

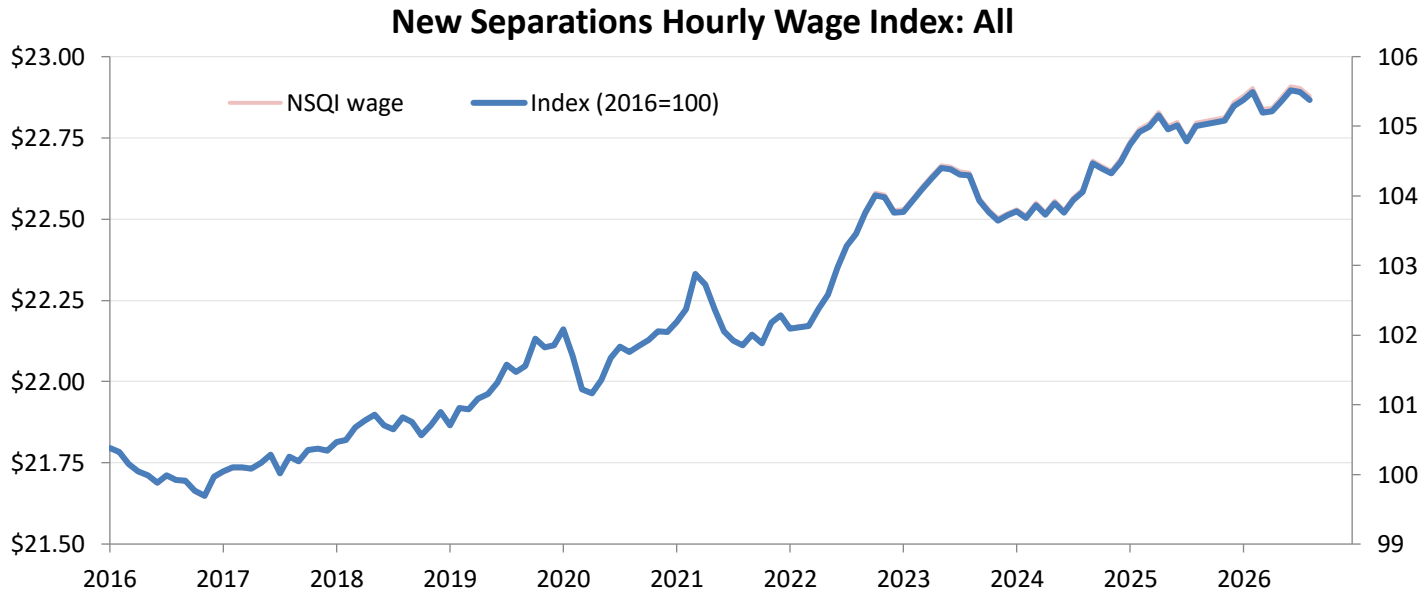
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Upjohn Institute New Separations Quality Index dips 0.1 percent in August 2026, but is up 0.4 percent over the year as separations volume slows for second month

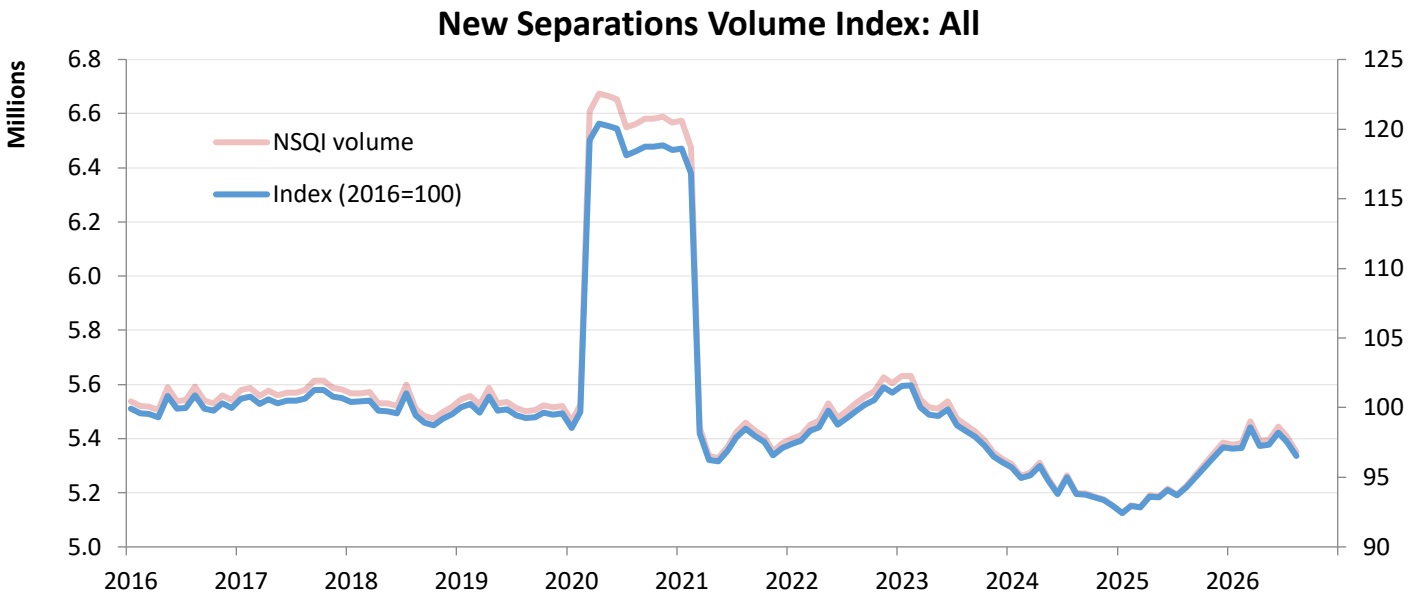
NOTE: This is the second release of the NSQI, the analogue to the NHQI and covering newly separated, rather than newly hired, workers. NSQI releases will present changes and trends in the overall wage and volume indices but will not feature additional analysis of selected demographic groups. Full demographic breakdowns are available through the interactive database at www.upjohn.org/nsqi.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.— The Upjohn Institute New Separations Quality Index (NSQI) shows inflation-adjusted hourly earnings power of individuals leaving their jobs in August 2026 slipped 0.1 percent from the previous month, to $22.88. The index is up 0.4 percent from August 2025 and remains just below its record high over the last decade. Separations volume, in contrast, has edged down over the past two months but remains little changed in 2026. It is up 2.4 percent since last August, however, when it was near record lows. Indeed, separations volume has remained below historical (prepandemic) levels. Separations thus remain rare, although they are climbing higher up the earnings distribution.

The index and accompanying interactive database, and the original NHQI methodology report, developed by Upjohn Institute economist Brad Hershbein, fill a key gap in the measurement of job separations activity. The NSQI provides monthly updates on the volume and occupation-based wages of newly separated workers, and is available for different groups based on sex, age, education, and other characteristics.



SOURCE: Upjohn Institute New Separations Quality Index
NOTE: The lighter line uses the left axis and shows the inflation-adjusted hourly wage of separated workers. The darker line uses the right axis and shows the relative change since the base year of 2016.



SOURCE: Upjohn Institute New Separations Quality Index
NOTE: The lighter line uses the left axis and shows the number of newly separated workers. The darker line uses the right axis and shows the relative change since the base year of 2016.

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

A full report, including methodology, of the analogue New Hires Quality Index can be found here: https://www.upjohn.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/NHQI_report_0.pdf. The methodology for the NSQI accords closely, focusing on matched individuals who exit a job rather than start a new one.

All data will be regularly updated during approximately the third week of the third month following the reference of the data release month. For example, data for individuals whose final month in their job was September 2026 (and thus were *not* in that job in October 2026) is scheduled to be released during the third week of December 2026. (Due to the federal government shutdown, no data were collected for the month of October 2025, so data are unavailable for this month or the preceding month, as NSQI construction requires data from adjacent months.)

To sign up to regularly receive monthly press releases for the Upjohn Institute New Separations Quality Index, visit: www.upjohn.org/nsqi/signup.

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FAQ

1. What is the New Separations Quality Index?

The New Separations Quality Index (NSQI) is a consistent way of measuring the earnings power of people who separated from their jobs in the past month, allowing comparisons over time. It is the analogue to the New Hires Quality Index, which examines the earnings power of people taking new jobs each month.

2. How is the Index constructed?

The Index is based on the occupations of workers leaving their jobs 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 separated workers in the Current Population Survey. These hourly wages are then statistically adjusted to account for differences in the demographic composition of newly separated workers (sex, race and ethnicity, education, and age) before being averaged.

3. Does the Index measure actual, reported wages of workers leaving their jobs?

No. The data used to create the Separations Index do not provide actual wages for individuals in the last month of their previous job. (In contrast, actual wage information is reported for a subset of newly hired workers in their new job.)

The Index captures changes in the wages of newly separated workers due to both changes in the mix of occupations workers leave and the demographic characteristics of those individual workers. It does not capture change in the wages of newly separated workers due to other factors, such as individual aptitude, geography, or employer characteristics.

4. Does the NSQI count self-employed workers?

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

5. How often is the NSQI updated?

Every month, with the release by the Census Bureau of the Current Population Survey microdata. Updates will be posted on the NSQI website during the third week of the month, covering data from three months ago. Data are currently available from January 2016 through September 2026, except September and October 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 NSQI website?

The NSQI website contains monthly data for all components of the NSQI. The four main components are: the hourly wage index, the separations volume index, the wage bill index (the product of hourly wages and separations volume), and the separations per capita index. Each component is available at its actual level or normalized to the base year 2016. In addition to providing data for all newly separated workers, the NSQI 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 separations (the newly nonemployed and those having changed employers). All data can be charted interactively or downloaded for separate analysis.