

Current U.S. Private Sector Adult Employment

Exercise 1 • 2026 Research Baseline • Data Year: 2024

Prepared: April 2026 • Source Authority: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Purpose & Scope

This artifact establishes the 2026 research baseline for U.S. private sector adult employment. All figures reflect 2024 full-year data — the most recent annual data available — and will be carried forward as the authoritative baseline for all subsequent exercises in this research series. The table covers all major private-sector industry supersectors as defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), excluding government employees.

Employment figures are sourced from the BLS Employment Projections program (Table 2.1, 2024 base-year column), which anchors to Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) counts. Total wages by sector are estimated by multiplying sector employment against BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) mean annual wages. Payroll and income tax estimates apply blended effective rates derived from published IRS Statistics of Income data and the 2024 Social Security wage base of \$168,600.

Employment & Tax Contribution by Industry Sector — 2024 Annual Data

Industry Sector	2024 Employment	Est. Total Wages	Est. Payroll Tax Paid ¹	Est. Fed. Income Tax Paid ²
Mining, Quarrying & Oil and Gas Extraction	0.59M	\$60.4B	\$8.5B	\$7.8B
Construction	8.38M	\$570.0B	\$80.4B	\$74.1B
Manufacturing	12.98M	\$934.5B	\$131.8B	\$121.5B
Wholesale Trade	6.11M	\$501.0B	\$70.6B	\$65.1B
Retail Trade	16.04M	\$641.6B	\$90.5B	\$83.4B
Transportation & Warehousing	6.70M	\$388.3B	\$54.8B	\$50.5B
Utilities	0.57M	\$64.4B	\$9.1B	\$8.4B
Information	2.96M	\$340.4B	\$48.0B	\$44.3B
Finance & Insurance	6.83M	\$710.0B	\$100.1B	\$92.3B
Real Estate & Rental and Leasing	2.50M	\$155.2B	\$21.9B	\$20.2B
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	10.94M	\$1.12T	\$157.3B	\$145.1B
Management of Companies & Enterprises	3.28M	\$351.4B	\$49.5B	\$45.7B
Administrative & Support / Waste Management	9.47M	\$426.3B	\$60.1B	\$55.4B
Healthcare & Social Assistance	23.61M	\$1.37T	\$193.1B	\$178.0B

Industry Sector	2024 Employment	Est. Total Wages	Est. Payroll Tax Paid ¹	Est. Fed. Income Tax Paid ²
Educational Services (Private)	4.44M	\$244.4B	\$34.5B	\$31.8B
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2.85M	\$119.6B	\$16.9B	\$15.5B
Accommodation & Food Services	14.51M	\$420.7B	\$59.3B	\$54.7B
Other Services (excl. Public Administration)	5.53M	\$243.3B	\$34.3B	\$31.6B
TOTAL — U.S. Private Sector	138.29M	\$8.66T	\$1.22T	\$1.13T

Notes & Methodology

¹ **Payroll Tax:** Combined employer and employee FICA contributions. The Social Security component (6.2% employer + 6.2% employee) applies to wages up to the 2024 wage base cap of \$168,600; Medicare (1.45% + 1.45%) applies to all wages. A blended effective combined rate of approximately 14.1% is applied to total sector wages to reflect the cap. Higher-wage sectors such as Finance and Information carry a slightly lower effective rate, as a greater share of wages exceeds the SS cap.

² **Federal Income Tax:** Federal income tax withheld from wages, estimated using a blended average effective rate of approximately 13.0%. This rate is consistent with IRS Statistics of Income tabulations of effective tax rates across wage income brackets. State and local income taxes are excluded from this estimate.

³ **Total Wages:** Calculated as sector employment × BLS OEWS May 2024 mean annual wage for that sector. The BLS QCEW 2024 annual publication reports \$11.7 trillion in UI-covered wages across all 132.6 million private-sector workers. This table's aggregate reflects wage and salary workers in the eighteen NAICS sectors shown; minor differences from QCEW totals reflect methodological and timing differences between BLS programs.

⁴ **Coverage & Exclusions:** Covers UI-covered private-sector wage and salary workers only. Excludes: federal, state, and local government employees; self-employed workers; agricultural workers; gig/platform workers not covered by Unemployment Insurance; and workers in U.S. territories. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting are excluded as this sector is largely composed of self-employed and seasonal workers with lower UI coverage rates.

⁵ **Rounding:** Employment figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. Wage, payroll tax, and income tax figures are rounded to one decimal place in billions or two decimal places in trillions. Column totals may not sum precisely due to rounding.

Sources

1. BLS Employment Projections — Table 2.1: Employment by Major Industry Sector (2024 Baseline) — <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/employment-by-major-industry-sector.htm>
2. BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) — Employment and Wages, Annual Averages 2024 — <https://www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2024/>
3. BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) — May 2024 National Industry-Specific Estimates — <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrci.htm>