Altarum

Health Sector Economic Indicators℠

Insights from Monthly Wisconsin Health Employment Data through Oct. 2026 WI LABOR BRIEF

November 23, 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

- In October 2026, Wisconsin health care industry employment gained 100 jobs while non-health care industries gained 9,700 jobs.
- By major subsector, October's health care job growth was led by hospitals, which gained 600 jobs. Nursing and residential care facilities gained 200 jobs while ambulatory health care services lost 700.
- The overall Wisconsin unemployment rate was 3.3% in October, up from 3.2% last month. (Note: October 2025 unemployment data was not collected due to a federal government shutdown.)

Cyclical Employment Big Picture

Seasonally Adjusted	Feb 2020	Oct 2025	Sep 2026	Oct 2026
Total Employment (000)	2,951	3,038	3,055	3,065
Non-Health Employment (000)	2,631	2,706	2,717	2,727
Health Employment (000)	320	333	338	339
Health Share of Total Employment	10.8%	10.9%	11.1%	11.0%
Unemployment Rate	3.1%	N/A	3.2%	3.3%

Source: Altarum analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. Health care employment is private only.

Altarum is a nonprofit research and consulting organization that creates and implements solutions to advance health among at-risk and disenfranchised populations. Since 2011, Altarum has researched cost growth trends and key drivers of U.S. health spending and formulated policy strategies to help bend the cost growth curve.

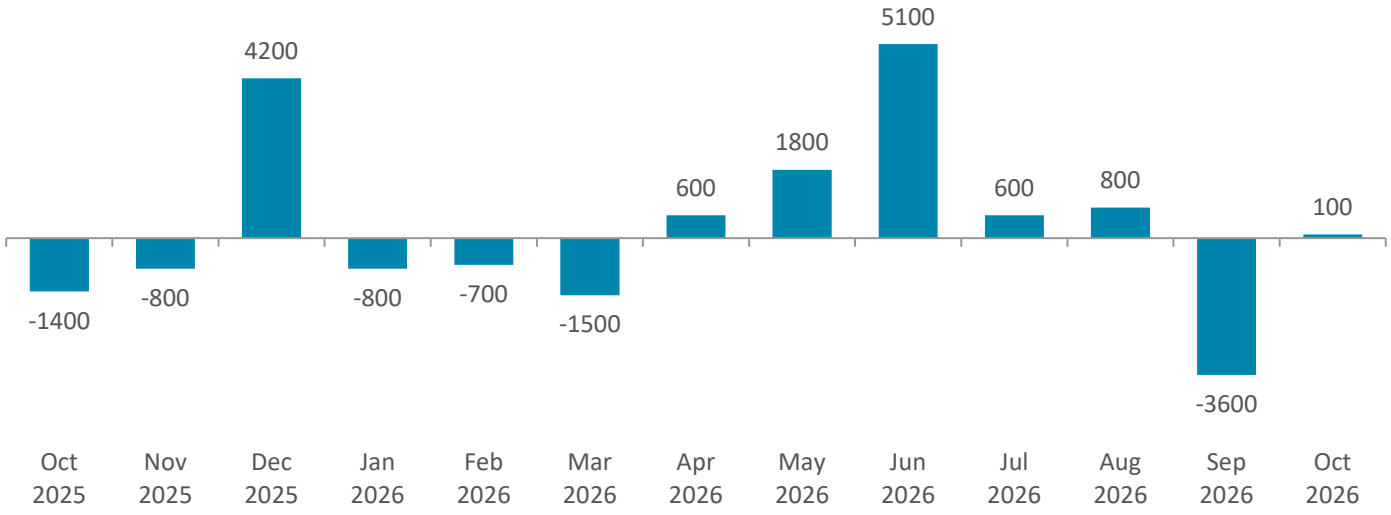
The Health Sector Economic Indicators℠ (HSEI) reports are a monthly publication of Altarum providing analyses of health spending, employment, and prices. For more information, contact George Miller at george.miller@altarum.org. George Miller, PhD, and Matt Daly, PhD (principal author) contributed to this brief. For more information, visit http://altarum.org/solution/health-sector-spending.

DISCUSSION

In October 2026, the Wisconsin health care industry added 100 new jobs, as shown in Exhibit 1. This figure is below the monthly average of 400 jobs added in the previous 12 months and well below the 5,100 new jobs seen in June. Non-health-care industries in Wisconsin grew faster, gaining 9,700 jobs.

In October, the ambulatory health care services job count fell 700, compared to an average gain of 290 jobs for the past year. Within this subsector, offices of physicians gained 200 jobs, outpatient care centers gained 100, while the remaining categories lost 1,000 (see Exhibit 5). Nursing and residential care facilities gained 200 jobs, compared to an average loss of 80 jobs per month in the past year. Within this subsector, nursing care facilities gained 200 jobs, while other nursing and residential care homes was flat. Finally, hospitals recorded a gain of 600 jobs, above this subsector's previous 12-month average gain of 150 jobs.

Exhibit 1. Month-Over-Month Change in Health Care Employment, Seasonally Adjusted

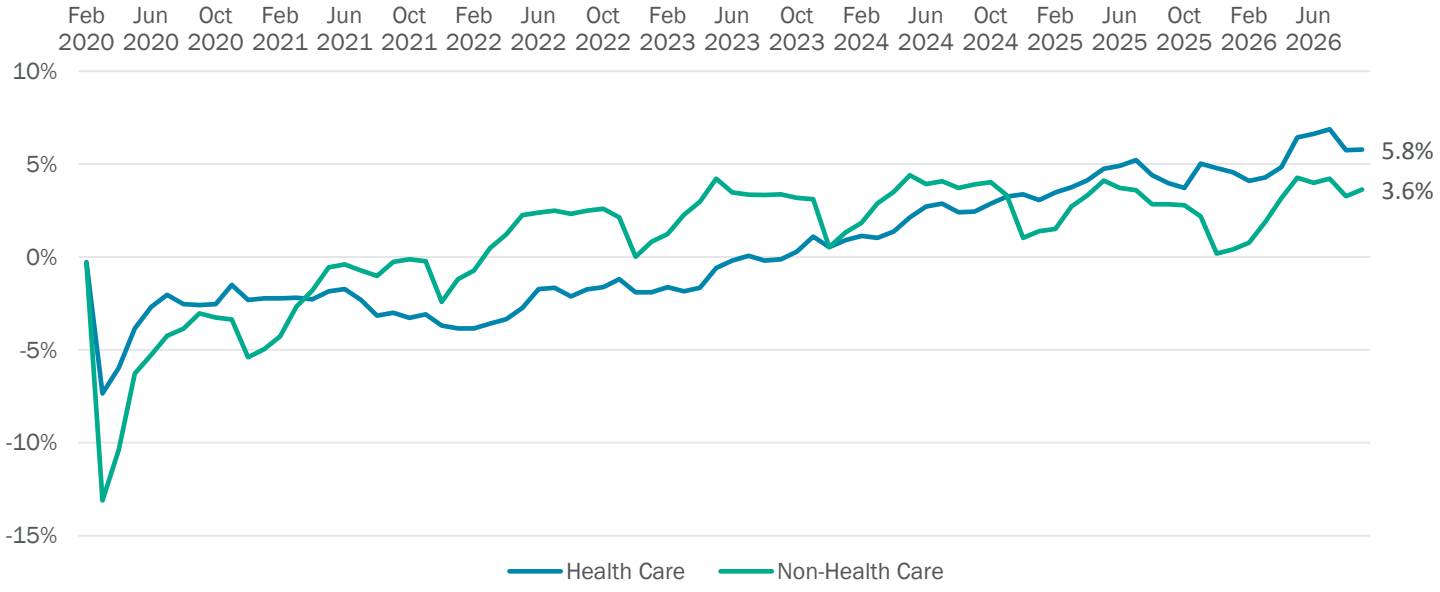


Source: Altarum analysis of monthly BLS Current Employment Statistics data.

Since February 2020, before the COVID-19 recession began, health care employment has grown by 18,500 jobs, or 5.8%—2.2 percentage points above the 3.6% increase in non-health care employment over the same period (see Exhibit 2). Health care growth has exceeded non-health-care growth since December 2024.

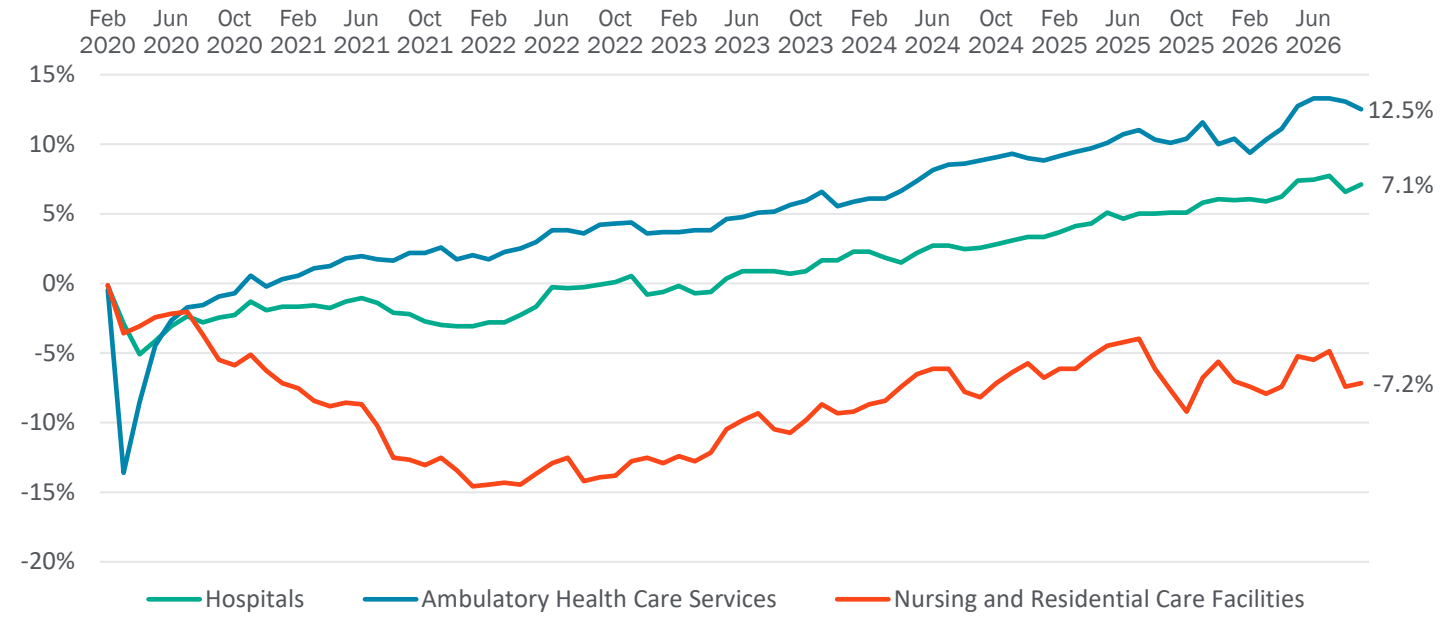
Since February 2020, employment in ambulatory health care services has increased by 16,000 jobs, or 12.5%, while hospital employment has grown by 8,100 jobs, or 7.1% (see Exhibit 3). Employment in nursing and residential is still below pre-pandemic levels, down 5,600 jobs (-7.2%) over the February 2020 baseline. (As described in an Altarum analysis, this contraction in employment was likely due to skilled nursing facility closures, lower resident censuses, and staffing shortages. All three health care subsectors have generally increased since February 2022.)

Exhibit 2. Change in Health and Non-Health Employment Compared to February 2020



Source: Altarum analysis of monthly BLS Current Employment Statistics data.

Exhibit 3. Change in Health Employment Compared to February 2020 by Major Setting of Care



Source: Altarum analysis of monthly BLS Current Employment Statistics data.

DETAILED HEALTH CARE EMPLOYMENT

Exhibit 4. Employment by Sector and Subsector, Seasonally Adjusted

Employment (in Thousands)	Oct 2026	Sep 2026	Oct 2025	Oct 2024	Feb 2020
Non-Health Care	2,727	2,717	2,706	2,734	2,631
Health Care	339	338	333	328	320
Ambulatory Health Care Services	144	145	141	139	128
Offices of Physicians	58	58	57	56	52
Outpatient Care Centers	16	15	15	16	15
Other Ambulatory[a]	70	71	69	67	60
Hospitals	122	121	120	117	114
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	73	72	72	72	78
Nursing Care Facilities	26	25	25	25	28
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	47	47	47	47	50
Health Share of Employment	11.04%	11.08%	10.95%	10.71%	10.84%

Source: Altarum analysis of BLS Current Employment Statistics data. February 2020 is displayed as the month of pre-pandemic peak employment.
[a] "Other Ambulatory" care settings include ambulance services, blood and organ banks, and all other non-classifiable ambulatory health care service providers.
[b] "Other Nursing and Residential" includes assisted living communities, continuing care retirement communities, residential intellectual and developmental disability facilities, residential mental health and substance abuse facilities, and all other non-classifiable residential care providers.

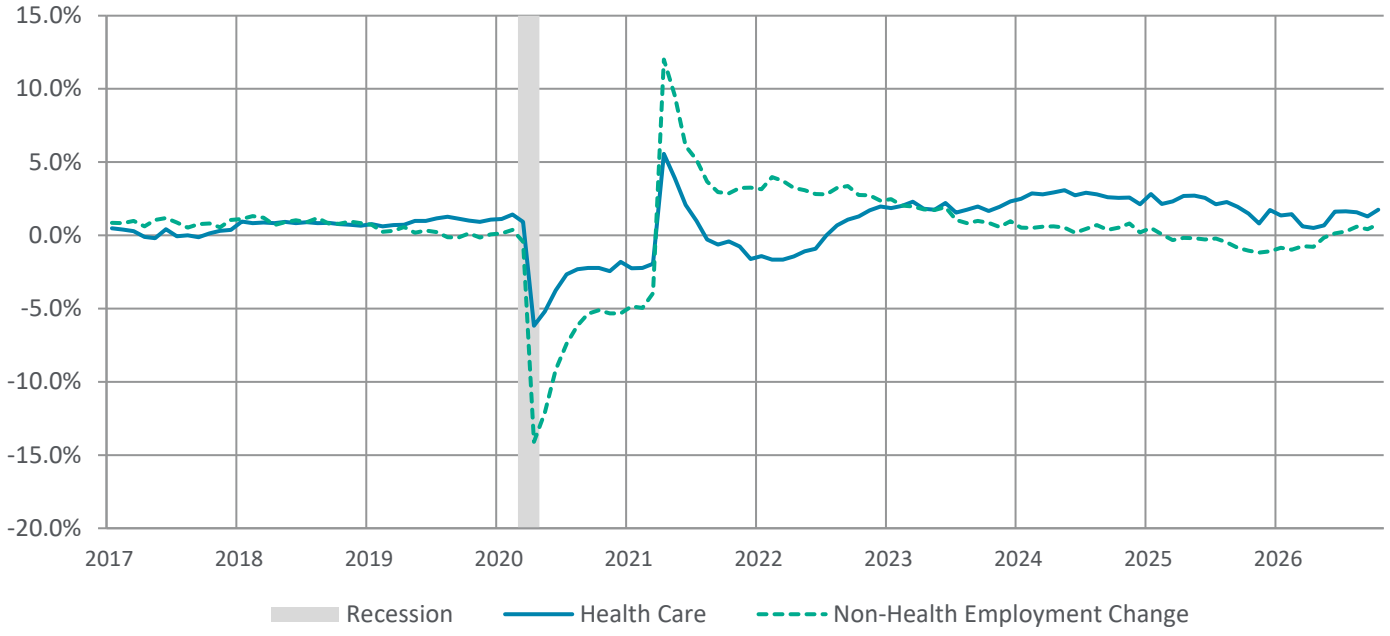
Exhibit 5. Change in Employment by Sector and Subsector, Seasonally Adjusted

Employment Change	One Month	12 Months	24 Months	Since Feb 2020
Non-Health Care	9,700	21,000	-7,300	95,500
Health Care	100	5,800	10,700	18,500
Ambulatory Health Care Services	-700	3,100	4,700	16,000
Offices of Physicians	200	1,500	2,000	6,100
Outpatient Care Centers	100	200	0	100
Other Ambulatory[a]	-1,000	1,400	2,700	9,800
Hospitals	600	2,300	5,200	8,100
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	200	400	800	-5,600
Nursing Care Facilities	200	500	1,000	-2,400
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	0	-100	-200	-3,200
Annualized Percent Change	**One Month**	**12 Months**	**24 Months**	**Since Feb 2020**
Non-Health Care	4.4%	0.8%	-0.1%	0.5%
Health Care	0.4%	1.7%	1.6%	0.8%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	-5.7%	2.2%	1.7%	1.8%
Offices of Physicians	4.2%	2.6%	1.8%	1.7%
Outpatient Care Centers	8.1%	1.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Other Ambulatory[a]	-15.7%	2.0%	2.0%	2.3%
Hospitals	6.1%	1.9%	2.2%	1.0%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	3.4%	0.6%	0.6%	-1.1%
Nursing Care Facilities	9.9%	2.0%	2.0%	-1.3%
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	0.0%	-0.2%	-0.2%	-1.0%

Source: Altarum analysis of BLS Current Employment Statistics data. Change since February 2020 represents a comparison to pre-pandemic peak employment.
[a] "Other Ambulatory" care settings include ambulance services, blood and organ banks, and all other non-classifiable ambulatory health care service providers.
[b] "Other Nursing and Residential" includes assisted living communities, continuing care retirement communities, residential intellectual and developmental disability facilities, residential mental health and substance abuse facilities, and all other non-classifiable residential care providers.

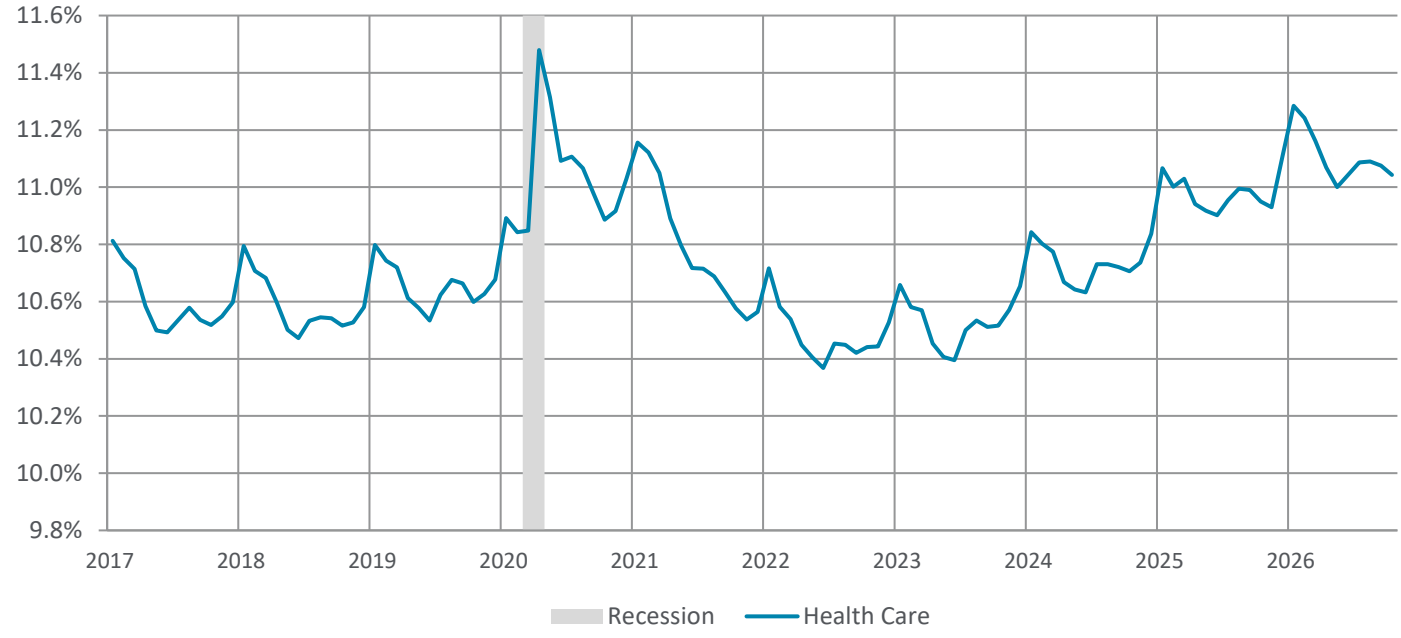
TIME SERIES TRACKER

Exhibit 6. Twelve-Month Percent Change in Employment



Source: Altarum analysis of BLS data.
Note: Lightly shaded bars denote recession periods.

Exhibit 7. Health Care Share of Total Employment



Source: Altarum analysis of BLS data.
Note: Lightly shaded bars denote recession periods.