Altarum

Health Sector Economic Indicators℠

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

September 28, 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

- In August 2026, Wisconsin health care industry employment increased by 800 jobs while non-health care industries gained 3,600 jobs.
- By major subsector, August's health care job growth was led by nursing and residential facilities which added 500 jobs. Hospitals added 300 jobs while ambulatory health care services had no growth for the month.
- The overall Wisconsin unemployment rate was 3.2% in August, down from 3.3% last month.

Cyclical Employment Big Picture

Seasonally Adjusted	Feb 2020	Aug 2025	Jul 2026	Aug 2026
Total Employment (000)	2,951	3,063	3,078	3,082
Non-Health Employment (000)	2,631	2,726	2,736	2,740
Health Employment (000)	320	337	341	342
Health Share of Total Employment	10.8%	11.0%	11.1%	11.1%
Unemployment Rate	3.1%	3.1%	3.3%	3.2%

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.

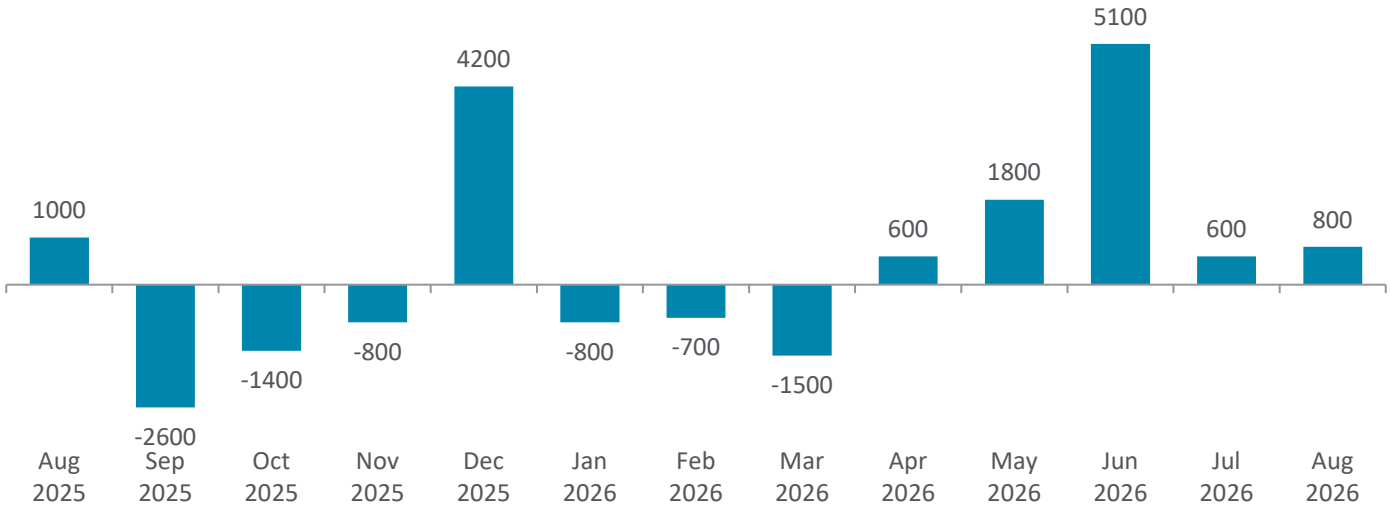
The Health Sector Economic Indicators℠ (HSEI) reports are a monthly publication of Altarum providing analyses of health spending, employment, and prices. For more information, contact George Miller at george.miller@altarum.org. George Miller, PhD, and Matt Daly, PhD (principal author) contributed to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

DISCUSSION

In August 2026, the health care industry added 800 new jobs, as shown in Exhibit 1. This figure is higher than the monthly average of 460 jobs added in the previous twelve months but is well below the 5,100 new jobs seen in June. Non-health-care industries added 3,600 jobs.

In August, the ambulatory health care services job count went unchanged, compared to an average gain of 275 jobs for the past year. Growth of major categories in this subsector was led by offices of physicians at 200 jobs. Outpatient care centers gained 100 jobs for the month, while the remaining categories lost a combined 300 (see Exhibit 5). Nursing and residential care facilities gained 500 jobs, compared to an average loss of 83 jobs per month in the past year. Within this subsector, nursing care facilities gained 100 jobs while other nursing and residential care homes gained 400. Finally, hospitals recorded a gain of 300 jobs, a bit above this subsector's 12-month average gain of 267.

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

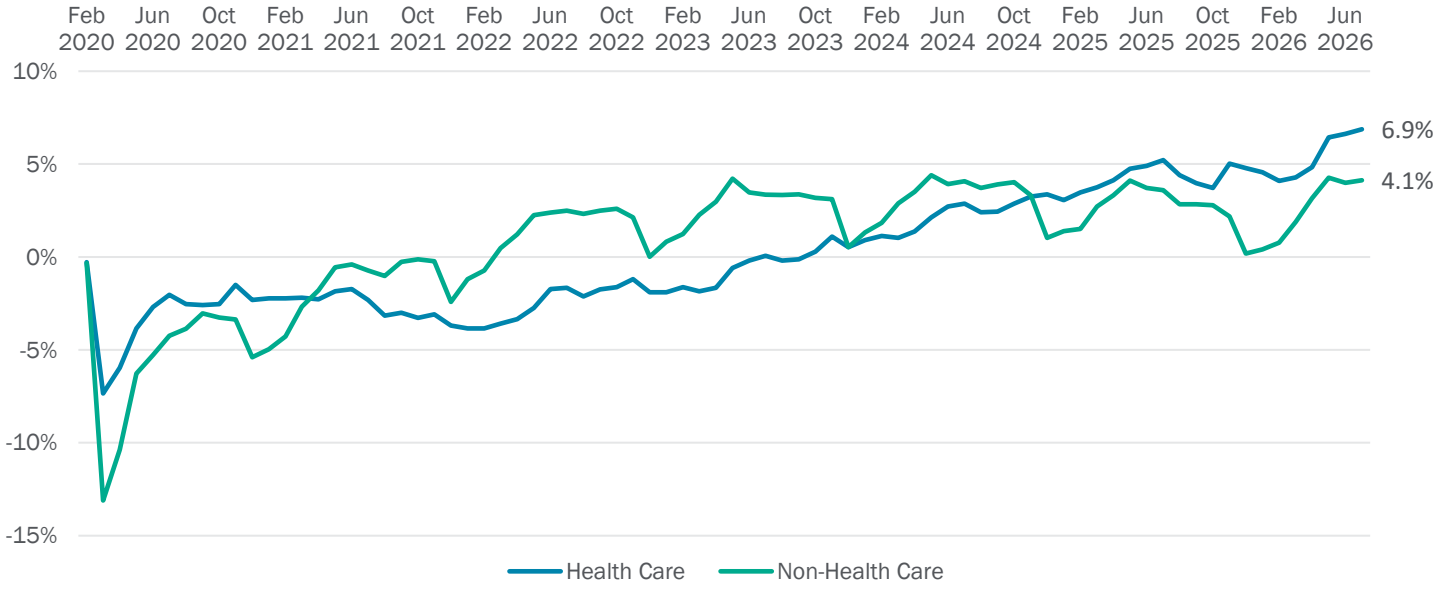


Source: Altarum analysis of monthly BLS Current Employment Statistics data.

Since February 2020, before the COVID-19 recession began, health care employment has grown by 22,000 jobs, or 6.9%—2.8 percentage points above the 4.1% 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.

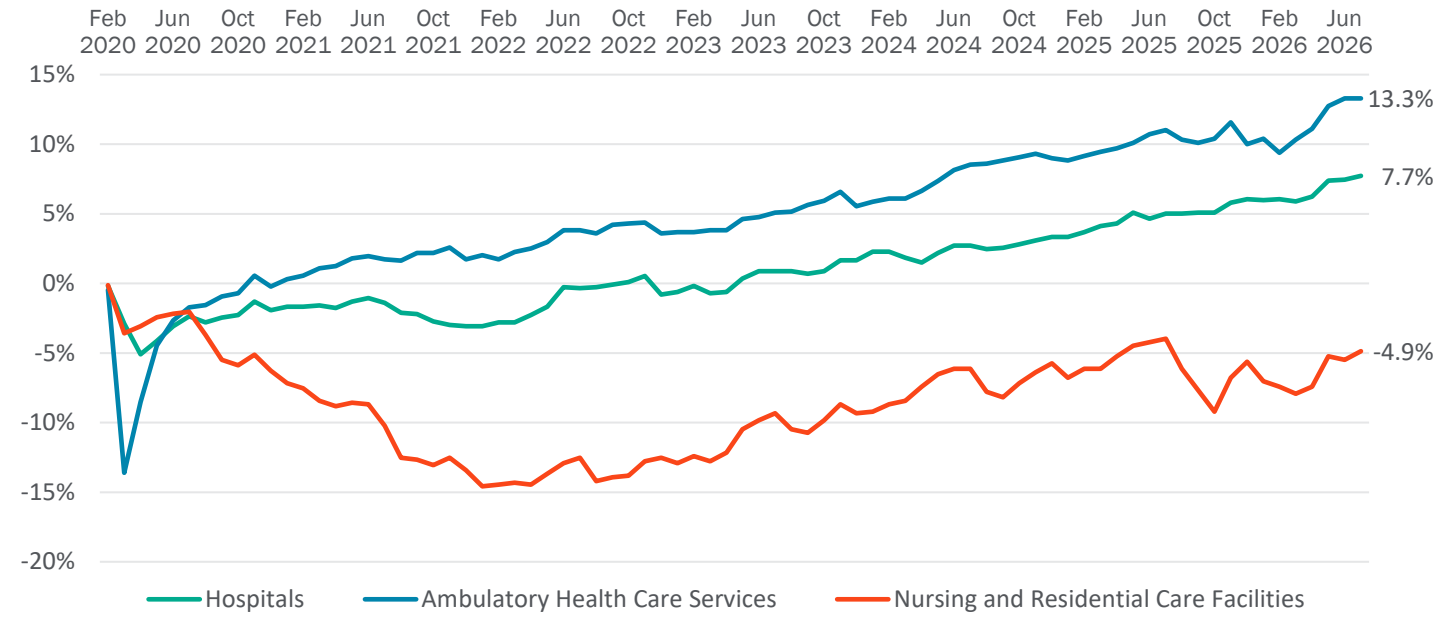
Since February 2020, employment in ambulatory health care services has increased by 17,000 jobs, or 13.3%, while hospital employment has grown by 8,800 jobs, or 7.7% (see Exhibit 3). Employment in nursing and residential care facilities remained is still below pre-pandemic levels, down 3,800 jobs (-4.9%) 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)	Aug 2026	Jul 2026	Aug 2025	Aug 2024	Feb 2020
Non-Health Care	2,740	2,736	2,726	2,739	2,631
Health Care	342	341	337	329	320
Ambulatory Health Care Services	145	145	142	139	128
Offices of Physicians	59	58	57	56	52
Outpatient Care Centers	16	16	15	16	15
Other Ambulatory[a]	71	71	70	67	60
Hospitals	123	122	120	117	114
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	74	74	75	73	78
Nursing Care Facilities	26	26	26	25	28
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	49	48	49	48	50
Health Share of Employment	11.10%	11.09%	10.99%	10.73%	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.

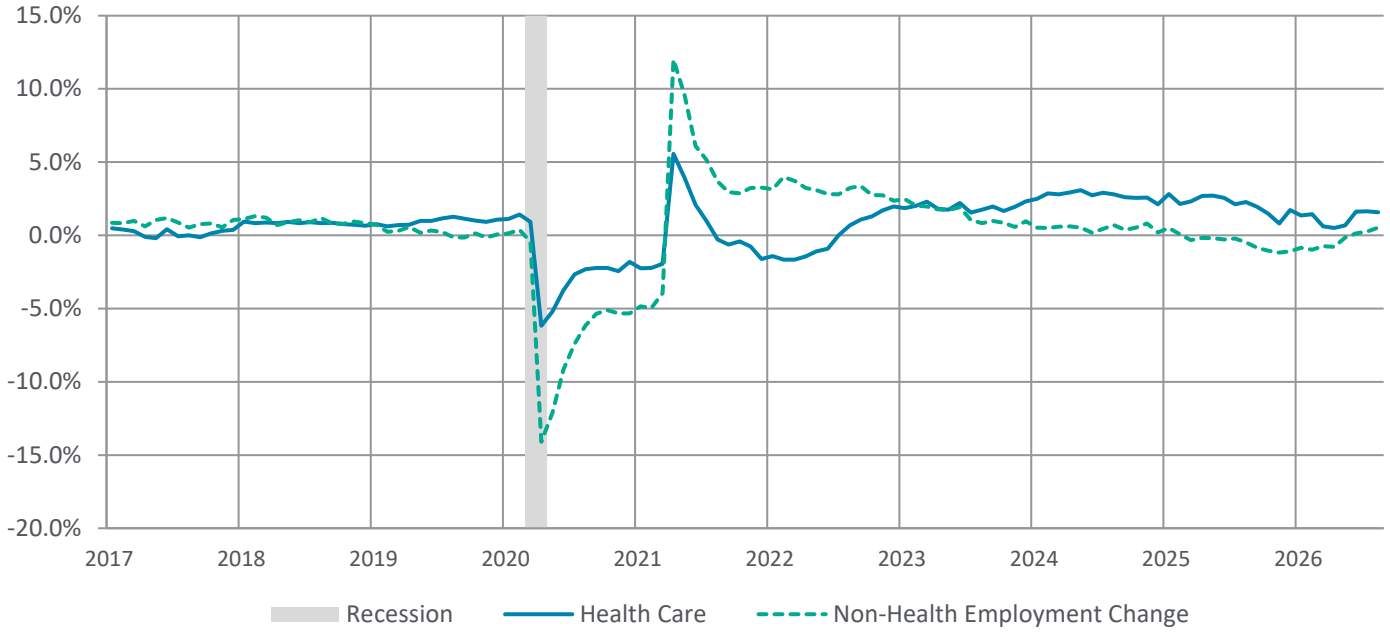
Exhibit 5. Change in Employment by Sector and Subsector, Seasonally Adjusted

Employment Change	One Month	12 Months	24 Months	Since Feb 2020
Non-Health Care	3,600	14,200	1,300	108,800
Health Care	800	5,300	12,800	22,000
Ambulatory Health Care Services	0	2,900	6,100	17,000
Offices of Physicians	200	1,700	2,600	6,300
Outpatient Care Centers	100	200	0	200
Other Ambulatory[a]	-300	1,000	3,500	10,500
Hospitals	300	3,100	5,700	8,800
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	500	-700	1,000	-3,800
Nursing Care Facilities	100	-100	700	-2,100
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	400	-600	300	-1,700
Annualized Percent Change	**One Month**	**12 Months**	**24 Months**	**Since Feb 2020**
Non-Health Care	1.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%
Health Care	2.9%	1.6%	1.9%	1.0%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	0.0%	2.0%	2.2%	1.9%
Offices of Physicians	4.2%	3.0%	2.3%	1.8%
Outpatient Care Centers	8.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Other Ambulatory[a]	-5.0%	1.4%	2.6%	2.5%
Hospitals	3.0%	2.6%	2.4%	1.2%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	8.4%	-0.9%	0.7%	-0.8%
Nursing Care Facilities	4.8%	-0.4%	1.4%	-1.2%
Other Nursing and Residential[b]	10.4%	-1.2%	0.3%	-0.5%

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.

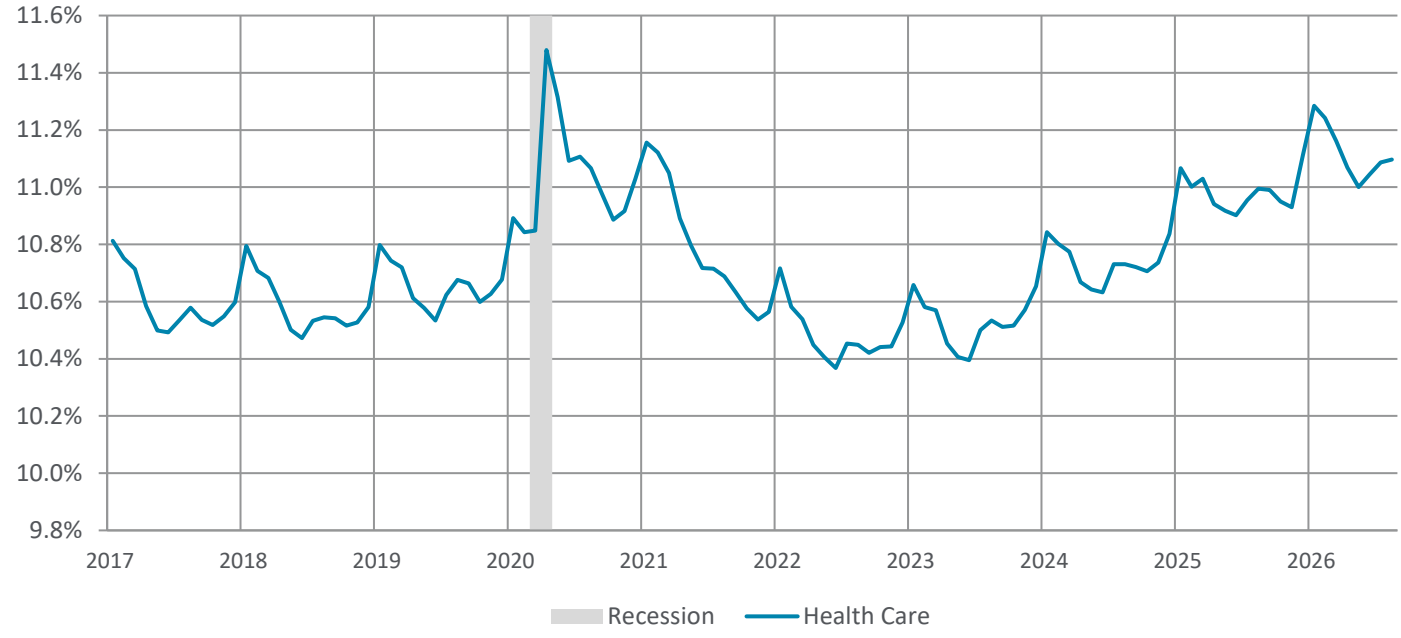
TIME SERIES TRACKER

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.