



Gulf Coast Workforce Board
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER HIRING WEAKENS ACROSS HOUSTON DESPITE GAINS IN TRADE AND GOVERNMENT

(HOUSTON, Texas, January 30, 2026) Houston-area employers added a very modest 700 jobs in December, a significant drop as compared to the long-term average of 10,400 jobs. Primary drivers included increases in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities; Government; and Manufacturing.

“Overall job growth in December was very weak,” says Mohammad Ahmadizadeh, a principal data analyst at the workforce development agency. “Professional and Business Services continued to weigh heavily on employment, shedding another 2,600 jobs in December and closing 2025 with a total loss of 18,500 jobs. This marks one of the weakest years for the industry and is broadly in line with its performance during past recessionary periods.”

The Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector saw the largest increase of the month, adding 8,700 jobs, or a 1.2 percent increase, just slightly above the long-term average. The largest contributor to the increase was Retail Trade, bringing in 6,300 jobs. This is followed by the Government sector, which saw a gain of 1,800 jobs, or a 0.4 percent increase. The largest gain within the sector in December since recordkeeping began in 1990, these numbers highlight this month’s gains in contrast with the long-term average decline. Manufacturing was the third-largest gaining sector in December, bringing in 900 jobs, or a 0.4 percent increase. This increase is on par with the long-term average.

Construction was the largest declining sector over the month, down 3,500 jobs, or a 1.5 percent decrease. This is substantially larger than the long-term average, which sits at a loss of roughly 1,000 jobs. The second largest declining sector over the month was Leisure and Hospitality, down 3,100, or a 1.8 percent decrease. This is the largest decline since record-keeping began in 1990 for this sector, with Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation as the largest contributor to the decline at 1,800 jobs over the month. The third largest declining sector was Professional and Business Services, down 2,600 jobs. Administrative and Support Waste Management and Remediation Services was the largest contributor to the overall decline, down 1,300 jobs.

Not seasonally adjusted unemployment in the Houston area stood at 4.2 percent, down from November’s 4.5 but up from 4.0 percent a year ago.

Seasonally adjusted employment for November remained at 4.5, unchanged from October and up from last year’s 4.4.

The release date for the January Employment Situation and 2025 annual benchmark revisions has yet to be determined pending an announcement by the Texas Workforce Commission

Additional labor market information, including the detailed December report, can be found online at <https://www.wrksolutions.com/regional-economic-data/houston-area-employment-situation>.

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