

Job outlook hits worst-ever level

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Employers' hiring plans at lowest point in Manpower survey's history

By [Andrea Coombes](#), MarketWatch

SAN FRANCISCO (MarketWatch) -- Employers' hiring plans for the upcoming fourth quarter dropped to their lowest level in the history of Manpower's Employment Outlook Survey, which started in 1962.

A net -3% of employers said they'll hire in the fourth quarter, down from -2% in the third quarter, on a seasonally adjusted basis, according to the Milwaukee-based firm's survey of more than 28,000 employers. Before this year, the survey's previous low point was a net 1% hiring outlook for the third quarter of 1982.

A year ago, a seasonally adjusted net 9% of firms said they would hire in the fourth quarter. The Manpower survey measures the percentage of firms planning to hire minus those intending layoffs. Manpower doesn't measure the number of jobs. The survey's margin of error is +/- 0.49%.

There was one positive sign in the survey: 69% of employers said they planned no change in their hiring plans, up from 67% in the third quarter and 59% in the fourth quarter a year ago (those figures are not seasonally adjusted).

That's "a very high number for our outlook survey," said Jonas Prising, president of the Americas for Manpower. That figure generally hovers at 55% or 56% in a strong economy, he said, noting that the higher figure currently signifies a high degree of stability, and "that is a precursor to growth, he said.

"Employers really want to hold onto the work forces that they have if at all possible," Prising said. Still, "there will clearly be challenges for job seekers and employers into the fourth quarter."

Separately, the U.S. Labor Department said the economy lost 216,000 jobs in August, the 20th consecutive monthly decline. The unemployment rate jumped to a 26-year high of 9.7%. Since the recession began in December 2007, unemployment has increased by 7.4 million to a total of 14.9 million. [See full story.](#)

Industry outlook

Looked at by industry, eight sectors showed a negative hiring outlook for the fourth quarter. In January, Manpower changed its industry classifications; because of that change, it currently can't provide seasonally adjusted figures by industry.

Only one of the 13 industry categories surveyed showed an improvement from the third quarter: A net 2% of employers in the education and health-services category planned to hire, up from -4% in the previous quarter. Firms in the wholesale and retail trade category were the most optimistic, with a net 7% planning to hire. Still, that was a decline from a 9% outlook for that sector in the third quarter. [See where there are jobs in this economy.](#)

And hiring plans for all of the industries are at much lower levels than are normal in a strong economy. "For any of these sectors in a good economy a net employment outlook would be around the low 20s," Prising said.

For each industry, here are the figures for the net employment outlook for the fourth quarter, not seasonally adjusted, in order of most negative outlook first.

- Construction, -10%, down from 2% for the third quarter
- Mining, -9%, flat from -9%
- Transportation and utilities, -9%, down from -3%
- Government, -8%, down from -4%
- Manufacturing, durable goods, -8%, down from -6%
- Information, -5%, down from -4%

- Manufacturing, nondurable goods, -3%, down from 0%
- Other services, -1%, down from 0%
- Financial activities, 1%, down from 2%
- Education and health services, 2%, up from -4%
- Leisure and hospitality, 2%, down from 18%
- Professional and business services, 3%, down from 8%
- Wholesale and retail trade, 7%, down from 9%

By region

For its regional analysis, Manpower divides the U.S. into four areas. For each region, here is the seasonally adjusted net employment outlook for the fourth quarter:

Northeast, -5%, down from 0% in the third quarter. Manpower counts the following states in this region: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont.

Midwest, -3%, down from -2% in the third quarter. Manpower counts the following states in this region: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

West, -3%, flat from -3% in the third quarter. Manpower counts the following states in this region: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

South, 0%, up from -2% in the third quarter. Manpower counts the following as part of this region: Puerto Rico and Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia.

Industry breakdown

Here's a breakdown of what types of jobs fall into which industry category (industries are in alphabetical order):

- **Construction.** Residential and commercial builders; heavy construction (i.e. highways, pipelines); general and specialty trade contractors (plumbing/painting/electrical, etc.).
- **Education and health services.** Elementary and secondary schools; colleges and universities; vocational-technical schools; libraries; hospitals, clinics, home health care.
- **Financial activities.** Savings, lending institutions (banks, savings & loans, credit unions); insurance companies; investment firms; financial planners; credit agencies; real estate.
- **Government.** City and county government; court systems; correctional institutions; police and fire departments.
- **Information.** Internet service providers; television/radio broadcasters; newspaper publishers; book publishers; software publishers; motion picture production; sound recording; cable television.
- **Leisure and hospitality.** Hotels, motels; casinos; entertainment facilities; amusement and recreational facilities.
- **Manufacturing -- durable goods.** Stone, clay and concrete products; motor vehicles and machinery; electrical products and appliances; iron, steel and metal products; furniture and wood products.
- **Manufacturing -- nondurable goods.** Food and beverage producers; textile mill products; clothing; leather products; paper and paper products; commercial printers; plastics, rubber, drug and chemical products; petroleum refining.
- **Mining.** Metals mining; coal mining; petroleum and natural gas extraction; stone, sand and gravel quarries.
- **Other services.** Equipment/machinery repair; dry cleaning, laundry; personal care (hair, massage, nails); pet care; photofinishing; funeral homes/mortuaries; social services; membership organizations.
- **Professional and business services.** Business services (accountants, lawyers, engineers, computer and data processing); permanent employment agencies; car and truck rental agencies.
- **Transportation and utilities.** Passenger transport (air, bus, rail); freight transport (air, truck, rail); warehousing; telephone; electric, gas,

water, sewer utilities; postal service.

- **Wholesale and retail trade.** Wholesale dealers and distributors; department stores, warehouse clubs; catalog and mail-order houses; auto and truck dealers; building materials retailers; fuel oil dealers and gasoline stations; grocery stores; restaurants.
- <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/story/print?guid=F014B933-B25C-44B9-9973-CE0426E80E25>