Construction employment decreased or stagnated in 119, or one-third, of 358 metro areas between July 2015 and July 2016 despite a strong overall increase in demand for construction, according to a new analysis of federal employment data released today by the Associated General Contractors of America. The report coincides with the association’s release of its latest construction workforce survey, which showed many firms are struggling to find qualified craft workers.

“Together, the metro employment report and the survey indicate that more contractors would be adding to their headcount if they could find the workers they need,” said Ken Simonson, the association’s chief economist. “In recent months, job openings have been at a 10-year high but hiring has stalled in many parts of the country. That mismatch is consistent with our survey, in which two-thirds of the respondents said their firms were having a hard time filling hourly craft positions and more than one-third were having trouble filling salaried positions.”

In two-thirds of the metro areas for which the government publishes construction employment data, contractors added to their headcount, although they may still have struggled to find enough workers with the right skills. Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, Colo. added the most construction jobs during the past year (11,700 jobs, 12 percent), followed by Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale (10,700 jobs, 11 percent); Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, Fla. (10,400 jobs, 17 percent); Anaheim-Santa Ana-Irvine, Calif. (9,900 jobs, 11 percent); and Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, Ga. (7,800 jobs, 7 percent). The largest percentage gains occurred in Boise City, Idaho (22 percent, 4,100 jobs); Monroe, Mich. (17 percent, 400 jobs); and Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford. Employment in 37 metro areas set or tied the highest July level since the series began in 1990.