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Construction employment rises in November; DMI slips; job openings, hires, layoffs plunge in October

Construction employment, seasonally adjusted, totaled 8,313,000 in November, a gain of 10,000 from October and 211,000 (2.6%) year-over-year (y/y), according to AGC's [analysis](#) of data the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) posted today. The y/y growth rate was nearly double the 1.4% increase in total nonfarm payroll employment. Residential construction employment rose by 3,100 in November (up 1,400 at residential building firms and 1,700 at specialty contractors) and by 52,400 (1.6%) y/y. Nonresidential construction employment increased by 6,800 for the month (down 1,700 at building firms, up 7,000 at specialty trade contractors, and up 1,500 at heavy and civil engineering construction firms) and by 158,900 (3.3%) y/y. The industry unemployment rate in November, not seasonally adjusted, was 4.6%, down from 4.8% in November 2023, and the number of unemployed jobseekers with construction experience totaled 482,000, down by 14,000 (2.8%) y/y.

The Dodge Momentum Index (DMI) decreased 2.3% in November from the revised October reading but increased 12% y/y, Dodge Construction Network [reported](#) today. The subindex for commercial planning fell 4.6% for the month but rose 13% y/y. Institutional planning rose 2.5% and 8%, respectively. "The DMI is a monthly measure of the value of nonresidential building projects going into planning, shown to lead construction spending for nonresidential buildings by a full year....On the commercial side, slower data center, office, warehouse and retail planning drove much of this month's decline, while strong growth in education planning informed much of the growth on the institutional side....The influence of data centers on the DMI this year has been substantial. If we remove all data center projects in 2023 and 2024, commercial planning would be down 6% from year-ago levels, and the entire DMI would be down 1%."

There were 249,000 **job openings in construction**, seasonally adjusted, at the end of October, a decrease of 164,000 (-40%) y/y, BLS [reported](#) on Tuesday. **Hires** for the full month totaled 293,000, a decrease of 88,000 (-23%). **Layoffs** declined by 70,000 (-42%) y/y to 97,000, the lowest since the series began in December 2000. **Quits** fell by 22,000 (-13%) y/y. The steep drop in layoffs suggests that firms still expect to need workers in the near future, even though current hires and job openings also fell sharply. These series do not distinguish between residential and nonresidential construction.

"**Economic activity** rose slightly in most" of the 12 regional Federal Reserve districts, the Fed [reported](#) on Wednesday in its latest Beige Book, which "characterizes regional economic conditions and prospects based on a variety of mostly qualitative information, gathered directly from each district's sources." Each district is referenced by the name of its headquarters city but comments may come from anywhere in the district. AGC [posted](#) a compilation of construction-related comments. Comments were gathered between early October and Nov. 22 and varied as to whether **nonresidential construction activity** "decreased slightly" (New York district), "remained steady...at lower levels" (Philadelphia), or "remained mixed" (Atlanta and San Francisco). There were few mentions of **prices for construction inputs** aside from: "Contacts in the construction sector reported mixed input cost dynamics, with labor costs rising and some input costs, like drywall, still increasing. However, other material inputs like windows and framing materials are falling alongside moderating lumber prices" (Kansas City). There were fewer references than in recent reports to **construction labor** aside from: "Finding skilled workers continued to be a challenge. A construction company reported plenty of work but not enough staff despite advertising for open positions" (Richmond).

"**Immigrants** accounted for 34% of those who worked **in construction trades** in 2023, far higher than their 18% share of the overall workforce," Riordan Frost of Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies [posted](#) on October 29, citing data from the Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey. "This share was highest in the West and the South, where immigrants accounted for 40% of all workers in construction trades. The states with the highest shares of immigrants in construction trades included California (52%), New Jersey (52%), Texas (51%), Maryland (50%), and Nevada (48%). The occupations with the highest shares of immigrant workers included plasterers (61% foreign born), drywall installers (61%), roofers (52%), painters (51%), and carpet/floor/tile installers (45%)." An analysis by Sahana Mukherjee and Jens Manuel Krogstad of the Pew Research Center [posted](#) on October 21 stated that 26% of workers in the construction industry [all occupations] in 2022 were immigrants, including 13% who were unauthorized. "Unauthorized immigrant workers accounted for the largest shares in occupations such as drywall/ceiling tile installers and tapers (33%), roofers (32%), painters and paperhangers (28%), [and] construction laborers (24%)."

Contractors are invited to complete the 2025 AGC/Sage National Construction Hiring and Business **Outlook survey**. The survey will close on Friday, December 13 and results will be released on January 8.

Data DIGest is a weekly summary of economic news. Sign up [here](#). Editor: Ken.Simonson@agc.org, Chief Economist, AGC. Go here for [Ken's PPT](#) or more [construction data](#).

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