

22 states add construction jobs in February; ConstructConnect, Dodge differ on January-March starts

Seasonally adjusted **construction employment** rose from January to February in 22 states, fell in 27 states and the District of Columbia, and was flat in South Dakota, according to AGC's [analysis](#) of BLS data [posted](#) on Wednesday. Florida added the most construction jobs (1,100 jobs or 0.2%), followed by 1,000-job gains in Colorado (0.2%), Nevada (0.9%), and Ohio (0.4%). The largest percentage gain occurred in Montana (1.3%, 500 jobs), followed by 0.9% gains in Nevada and Idaho (700 jobs). New Jersey had the most construction job losses (-5,900, -3.5%), followed by New York (-5,300, -1.4%) and Illinois (-4,900, -1.9%). Delaware had the largest percentage loss (-4.4%, -1,100 jobs), followed by New Jersey and Missouri (-2.6%, -4,200). Construction employment rose in 30 states and D.C. year-over-year (y/y), fell in 18 states, and was flat in Arkansas and New Hampshire. Texas added the most construction jobs y/y (24,000 jobs or 2.7%), followed by North Carolina (11,200, 4.1%), and Wisconsin (10,200, 7.1%). Montana had the largest percentage gain (8.8%, 3,100 jobs), followed by West Virginia (7.6%, 2,600) and Wisconsin. California lost the most construction jobs y/y (-10,300, -1.2%), followed by Florida (-9,100, -1.4%) and New York (-5,000, -1.3%), Alaska had the largest percentage loss (-5.6%, -1,100), followed by New Mexico (-3.6%, -2,000) and New Jersey (-1.9%, -3,100). (BLS reports combined mining, logging, and construction data for Hawaii, Maryland, and D.C.; AGC treats all jobs as construction.)

For the first three months of 2026 combined compared to January-March 2025, the **value of construction starts**, not seasonally adjusted, climbed 13% year-to-date (YTD), ConstructConnect [reported](#) on Thursday. **Nonresidential building starts** jumped 47% YTD, with commercial up 103% (led by a 382% leap in combined office and data center starts), institutional up 17%, and industrial (manufacturing) down 27%. **Engineering (civil) starts** rose 11% YTD, with roads up 2.3%, water and sewage treatment up 11%, bridges up 7.2%, electric power infrastructure up 21%, and airports down 37%. **Residential starts** slumped 28% YTD, with single-family down 26% and apartments down 17%.

Total **construction starts** were down 0.5% YTD, despite rising 12.8% at a seasonally adjusted annual rate from February to March, Dodge Construction Network [reported](#) on April 17. "A few strong categories overcame slight weakness in all the others in March," stated Chief Economist Eric Gaus. "The commercial segment shows the most strength with 12-month growth for all subcategories except warehousing." Nonresidential starts were down 0.2% YTD, with commercial and industrial construction up 18% and institutional starts down 18%. Residential starts were down 7.2% YTD, with single-family starts down 14% and multifamily starts up 6%. Nonbuilding starts rose 6.4%, with 69% growth in "electric power/utilities. The remaining public works sectors, however, are seeing deeper year-to-date declines."

The **Architecture Billings Index (ABI)** rose to 49.8 in March, seasonally adjusted, from 49.4 in February, the American Institute of Architects [reported](#) on Wednesday. The index is "a leading economic indicator that leads nonresidential construction activity by approximately 9-12 months." The ABI is derived from the share of responding architecture firms that report a gain in billings from the previous month less the share reporting a decline, on a 0-to-100 scale. Scores below 50 indicate decreasing business conditions. For the first time since July 2022, subindexes for all three practice specializations were above 50 (based on three-month moving averages): institutional, 52.6; commercial/industrial, 52.5, and multifamily, 50.9.

Among 2,000 young adults surveyed by Morning Consult for the National Association of Home Builders, "Of those with a clear sense of career direction, the medical (20%), business (9%), and technology (8%) fields rank as the top three choices," NAHB [reported](#) on April 17. "Construction trades ties in fourth place at 6%, twice the 3% who planned to work in the trades in 2016. The most important benefit of a career in the construction trades is good pay (73%)." The share of men interested in the trades more than doubled to 11% from 5% in 2016. But the share of interested women stayed at 1%.

Highway contractor readers are encouraged to fill out the 2026 AGC/HCSS **Highway Work Zone Awareness Survey** by **May 8**. The survey collects information on the frequency, severity, and impacts of work zone crashes, along with potential solutions. AGC will use the results to support a national media and public education campaign launching ahead of Memorial Day to encourage safer driving during the busy summer travel season. The data will also help strengthen advocacy efforts for tougher work zone safety laws and enforcement. Results will be released the week of May 18.

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