

# PA Job Gains Revised Down by Half



## Independent Fiscal Office | Research Brief | September 2025

On September 9, 2025, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released 2025 Q1 state-level data for the **Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)** database. The data include all employers that are part of the state unemployment insurance system and reflect jobs and wage data reported in monthly and quarterly administrative filings. These data will be used eventually to “benchmark” more timely jobs data published monthly by the BLS in the **Current Employment Survey (CES)** data series (often referred to as the establishment survey), which is based on voluntary surveys sent to a sample of employers and estimates for jobs created by new firms. (Both series exclude the self-employed.) These [preliminary benchmark revisions](#) will not be reflected in the monthly CES data until they are finalized in February 2026. However, the preliminary data can be used to estimate the revisions that will eventually occur for March 2025.

### Annual PA Job Gains - March 2025

	YOY Change		Diff
	QCEW	CES	
All Employers	33.0	70.0	-37.0
Retail Trade	-5.7	-0.6	-5.1
Professional Services	-4.6	2.8	-7.4
Healthcare	20.5	26.8	-6.3
Social Assistance	12.8	18.2	-5.4
Food Service	0.0	4.1	-4.1
Non-Profits	0.5	7.6	-7.1
All Other	9.5	11.1	-1.6

Note: Thousands of payroll jobs; not seasonally adjusted. YOY is year-over-year. Excludes self-employed.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The table displays the year-over-year (YOY) change in payroll jobs for March 2025 based on the 2025 Q1 QCEW data and the monthly CES survey that is tracked closely by analysts and media outlets. The QCEW data for March 2025 show YOY jobs creation of 33,000, a reduction of 37,000 (-53%) compared to the monthly CES data. The underlying detail show large downward revisions for retail trade (-5,100), professional business services (-7,400), healthcare (-6,300), social assistance (-5,400), food service (-4,100) and non-profits (-7,100).

The revisions to the smaller social assistance and non-profit subsectors are notable. The CES data do not include sufficient detail to identify the specific industries within those subsectors that will be impacted by revisions, but QCEW data do provide detail. For the social assistance subsector, the QCEW data

show that recent job gains were due to various services provided to elderly and disabled residents. For the non-profit subsector, recent job gains were largely attributable to firms that engaged in social advocacy or civic-social activities.

Two factors might have caused the CES jobs data to be overstated for those subsectors and industries. First, it could be related to policies, or anticipated policies, of the new federal administration and the availability of federal funding. For example, Executive Order 14169 (signed on January 20, 2025) implemented a 90-day pause on all U.S. development assistance programs (i.e., foreign aid programs) to allow review. Per the BLS [news release](#), overstatement errors are partly attributable to “non-response error” where survey responders are more likely to report employment gains than non-responders, so data are not representative of all employers. This factor may be pertinent for certain social assistance and non-profit employers who may have been under financial duress (or anticipated duress) and neglected to respond to the survey. Second, both industries recorded significant recent job gains. From 2022 to 2024 (annual average), the job gains were as follows: social assistance: elderly-disabled services (+27,440, +20%) and non-profits: social advocacy and civic-social (+4,240, +12%). The voluntary CES survey may not capture employment turning points (i.e., contractions), especially for industries undergoing a rapid reversion to more typical employment levels.