

Navigating the Mechanics of State Employment Data

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State Labor Market Information Offices

State Labor Market Information (LMI) offices work in collaboration with the Bureau of Labor Statistics to produce data on jobs and wages by industry and occupation, unemployment and labor force, employment projections, demographics, and more.

We strive to inform a variety of constituents:

- Employers, industry leaders and organizations
- Job seekers and students
- Policymakers and public officials

[State LMI offices](#) are an exceptional source of information and expertise.

Reliability and Trustworthiness of Jobs Data

Jobs estimates for the Nation, States, and Areas are developed in a system that has both ***centralized*** and ***decentralized*** characteristics.

- Centralized: responsibilities within the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Decentralized: responsibilities within State Workforce Agencies and State LMI Offices

These characteristics mutually reinforce the integrity and trustworthiness of the data.

At the same time, the federal–state partnership continually strives for improvement.

- We share objectives to improve data products in the areas of data quality, timeliness and development of new products to support the constituents we serve in making informed decisions

BLS / State Partnership

The monthly Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey is nationally representative. Employers in the sample are representative across all states, areas, and industries within those states.

- State data users benefit from and leverage centralized data collection.
- A consistent methodology is applied across states and areas so data are comparable from state to state.
- State analysts collaborate with BLS: contributing knowledge of local economic conditions (major investments, business closures, strikes, and other local events) to improve estimate quality for the areas they represent.

Frequency versus Completeness

Jobs data face a fundamental tradeoff between *frequency* and *completeness*

- While CES survey responses allow jobs data to be produced frequently, the complete jobs dataset or benchmark (Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages or QCEW which includes employers not in the monthly CES sample) takes more time for state and federal analysts to collect, clean, and classify.
- The more complete jobs data reflect a census rather than a sample-based survey of employers (those covered by state unemployment insurance programs).

QCEW: The Gold Standard

Compared to the CES survey, the QCEW is more ***decentralized***: each state/territory operates an unemployment insurance system and collects employer reports (primarily from quarterly tax filings).

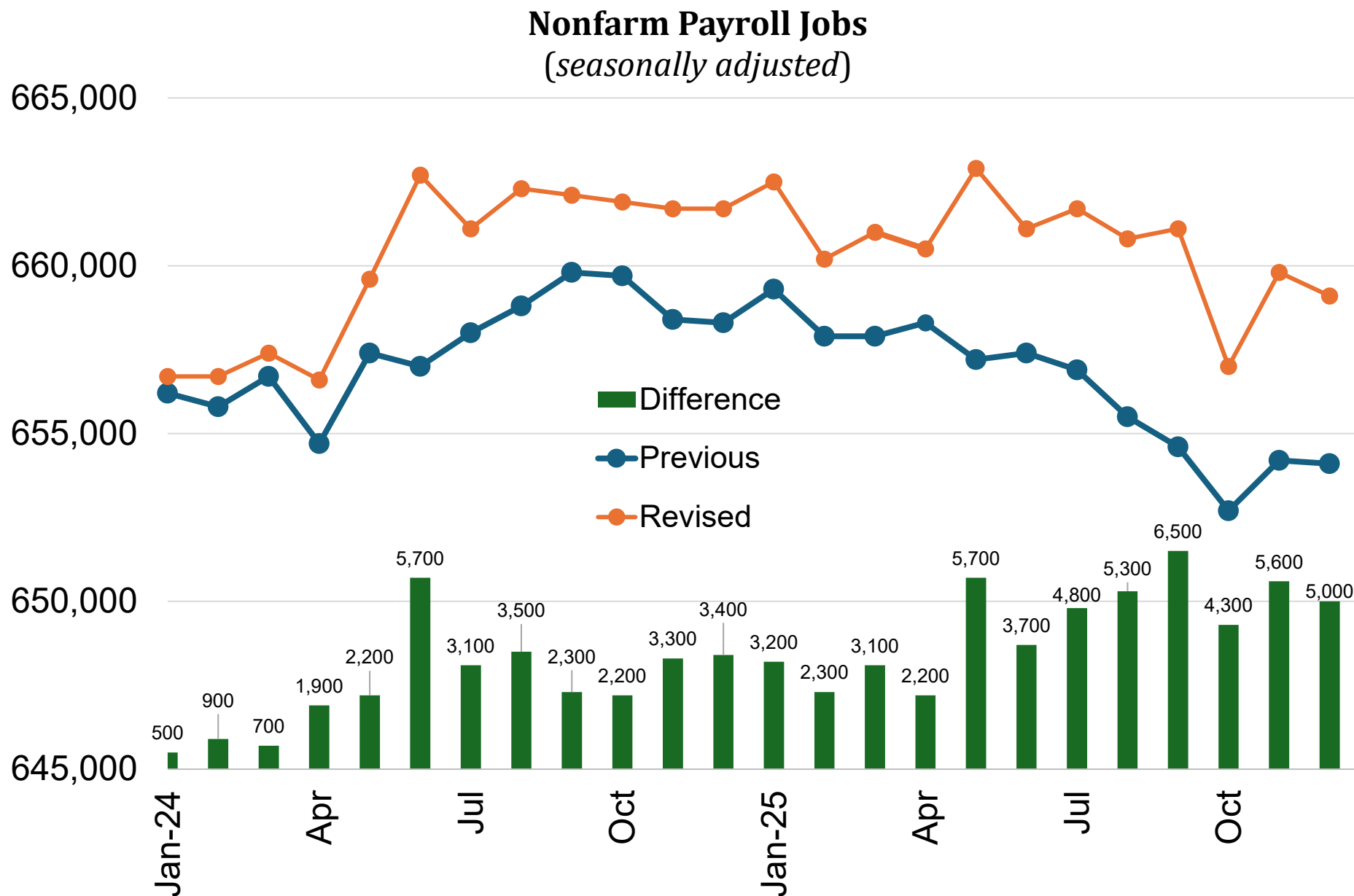
The mission of each state QCEW program is to collect, clean, classify, and publish data of the highest possible quality for local data users, in collaboration with and guidance from BLS.

The information is derived from employer reports, each with an incentive to report accurately because the information is used for benefit eligibility and tax purposes.

QCEW serves as both the benchmark to the CES survey and the sample frame:

- helping us determine whether employers responding to the monthly CES are truly representative of other employers with similar characteristics (location, industry, size), or whether some show higher or lower rates of job change than other similar employers
- if a new business opens and may be surveyed later on
- or of a business closure

Revisions improve data quality and tend to be quite small, representing a small portion of total employment.



Takeaways

U.S., state and area jobs data are accurate and trustworthy.

They are developed using a transparent methodology in a federal-state cooperative data system.

Federal and state analysts work collaboratively toward a common goal: producing estimates of the highest possible quality.

Benchmark revisions improve data quality and tend to represent a very small share of total employment.

Revisions leverage a decentralized and complete administrative data from the QCEW program, though the more complete QCEW dataset takes more time to collect and compile relative to the preliminary monthly data.

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