

Chattanooga MSA Employment and Unemployment Data Release January 16, 2026

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has released its first estimates of metropolitan area employment and unemployment for November 2025. According to the seasonally adjusted estimates, total nonfarm employment in the six-county Chattanooga MSA was 297,400 in November 2025, or 300 more jobs than in October and 2,000 more jobs than a year earlier. For reference, November-to-November job growth was 9,800 and 3,500 in 2023 and 2024, respectively, so 2025 was a relatively weak year for job growth.

Nonfarm Employment, Chattanooga MSA, Nov. 2025

Total Employment	Monthly change	Year/year change	Year/year change (%)
297,400	300	2,000	0.7%

Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 16, 2026.

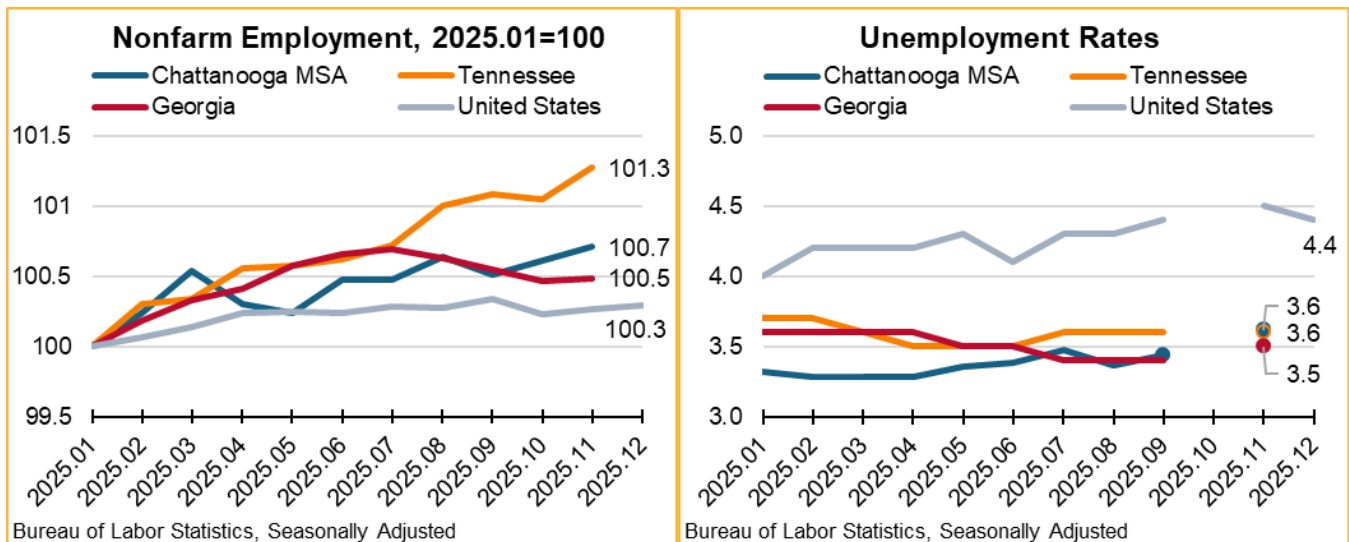
The largest job gains on a year-to-year basis were in private education and health services (1,300), which is mostly health services. State government (1,100), and professional and businesses services (900) were the sources of the second and third largest gains. The increase in state government employment in the local area is notable because it is a nearly 16 percent increase in just one year. Local government, transportation and utilities, and leisure and hospitality saw the largest job losses.

Nonfarm Employment by Industry, Chattanooga MSA, November 2025

	Employment	Year/year change	Year/year change (%)
Private Education and Health Services	46,700	1,300	2.9%
State Government	8,100	1,100	15.7%
Professional and Business Services	31,800	900	2.9%
Other Services	13,900	600	4.5%
Wholesale Trade	9,100	200	2.2%
Retail Trade	29,800	0	0.0%
Information	3,300	-100	-2.9%
Mining, Logging, Construction	14,700	-100	-0.7%
Federal Government	5,900	-400	-6.3%
Manufacturing	40,400	-500	-1.2%
Financial Activities	28,500	-500	-1.7%
Local Government	19,400	-600	-3.0%
Transportation and Utilities	16,700	-700	-4.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	30,900	-700	-2.2%

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment, January 16, 2026.

Job growth in the Chattanooga MSA has been sluggish for about a year and a half. Although, as shown in the next figure, the metro area outperformed the country as a whole. At the state level, Tennessee employment grew at about double the rate in Chattanooga, while Georgia employment grew at a somewhat slower pace.



Because of the government shutdown in the fall, unemployment rate data is somewhat spotty. Household survey data for October could not be collected, so the BLS did not produce any unemployment rates for that month. Nationally, the unemployment rate was creeping up throughout 2025, although the 4.4 percent level for December is still relatively low by historical standards. Unemployment rates for Tennessee and Georgia hovered around or above 3.6 percent throughout the year, which is where they were in November. Chattanooga’s unemployment rate began the year well below those of Tennessee and Georgia, but ended it at 3.6 percent, identical to Tennessee’s. Although low by historical standards, this is the highest it has been since early 2022.

- Howard Wall, Director and Chief Economist, Center for Regional Economic Research, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, January 16, 2026

Estimating Employment and Unemployment

Estimates of the number of jobs in the United States are provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and are based on the BLS’s Current Employment Statistics (CES) program. Each month, about 122,000 nonfarm businesses and government agencies are asked how many employees they have on their payrolls. The CES is often called the “establishment survey” and its output is often called “payroll employment,” “nonfarm employment,” or simply “jobs.” The CES survey is used also to estimate employment for states and metro areas. For the Chattanooga MSA, employment data also are provided for broad supersectors such as manufacturing, retail trade, and financial activities.

The BLS also surveys households with its Current Population Survey (CPS), which asks 60,000 households across the country about the labor market status of household members. The main output of the CPS is the unemployment rate, but it also used to estimate the number of people employed, the number unemployed, and in the number in the labor force (the sum of those employed and unemployed).

Payroll and household employment tend to move together over time, but their levels necessarily differ. The CES surveys nonfarm establishments, so payroll employment does not include farm employees or the self-employed, whereas household employment does. Also, a person who is employed according to the household survey can hold more than one of the jobs counted in the establishment survey.