

**2026 Economic Outlook and Trends Forecast**  
**Colorado and the United States**  
Analysis by [cber.co](http://cber.co)  
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# Economic Outlook and Trends

## Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this chartbook is to review the performance and outlook of the U.S. and Colorado economies. Data is from government agencies and available in the public domain.

The forecast prepared by the Conference Board serves as the base for this analysis. TCB has identified the following factors that will impact economic growth in 2026:

- Slower spending caused by increased inflation and higher energy costs.
- Uncertainty caused by the war in the Middle East and when it will be resolved.
- Technology development (AI) will take longer because it will be more comprehensive and have a greater impact on business systems.
- Monetary policy under Kevin Warsh.
- Increased defense spending.
- Stronger nonresidential investment and weaker residential spending.

The Colorado labor market is still unsettled. Finally, the primaries are almost over, and we are a month closer to the midterm elections. The economy is currently dependent on the weather forecast. There has been some rain, but the drought has not gone away. And the wildfire season has arrived in full force.

## Contents

This chartbook focuses on the following topics.

- U.S. and Colorado Economic Outlook and Trends
- U.S. and Colorado Gross Domestic Product, Inflation, and Real Disposable Personal Income Per Capita
- U.S. Employment
- U.S. Indicators
- Colorado Population
- Colorado Employment and Unemployment Rate
- Colorado Indicators
- Summary and 2026 Colorado Economic Outlook

## U.S. and Colorado GDP, Inflation, and Real Disposable Personal Income per Capita

# U.S. Real GDP Growth

The Conference Board (TCB) Forecast (June 11, 2026)

## Real GDP and Economic Growth

The Conference Board Forecast projects the real GDP growth rate will be 1.8% in 2026. Real disposable income will increase by 1.7%, and real personal consumption will increase by 1.9% in 2006. Residential investment will slip to -3.5%, while nonresidential investment will increase by 6.1%.

## Other Economic Factors

In 2026, government spending will increase more slowly than last year, 0.7%. Export growth is expected to be 5.5% in 2026. The unemployment rate is projected to increase to 4.4%. The PCE inflation rate will be 3.5%, with a core rate of 3.2%. The year-end Fed Funds rate will be 3.625%.

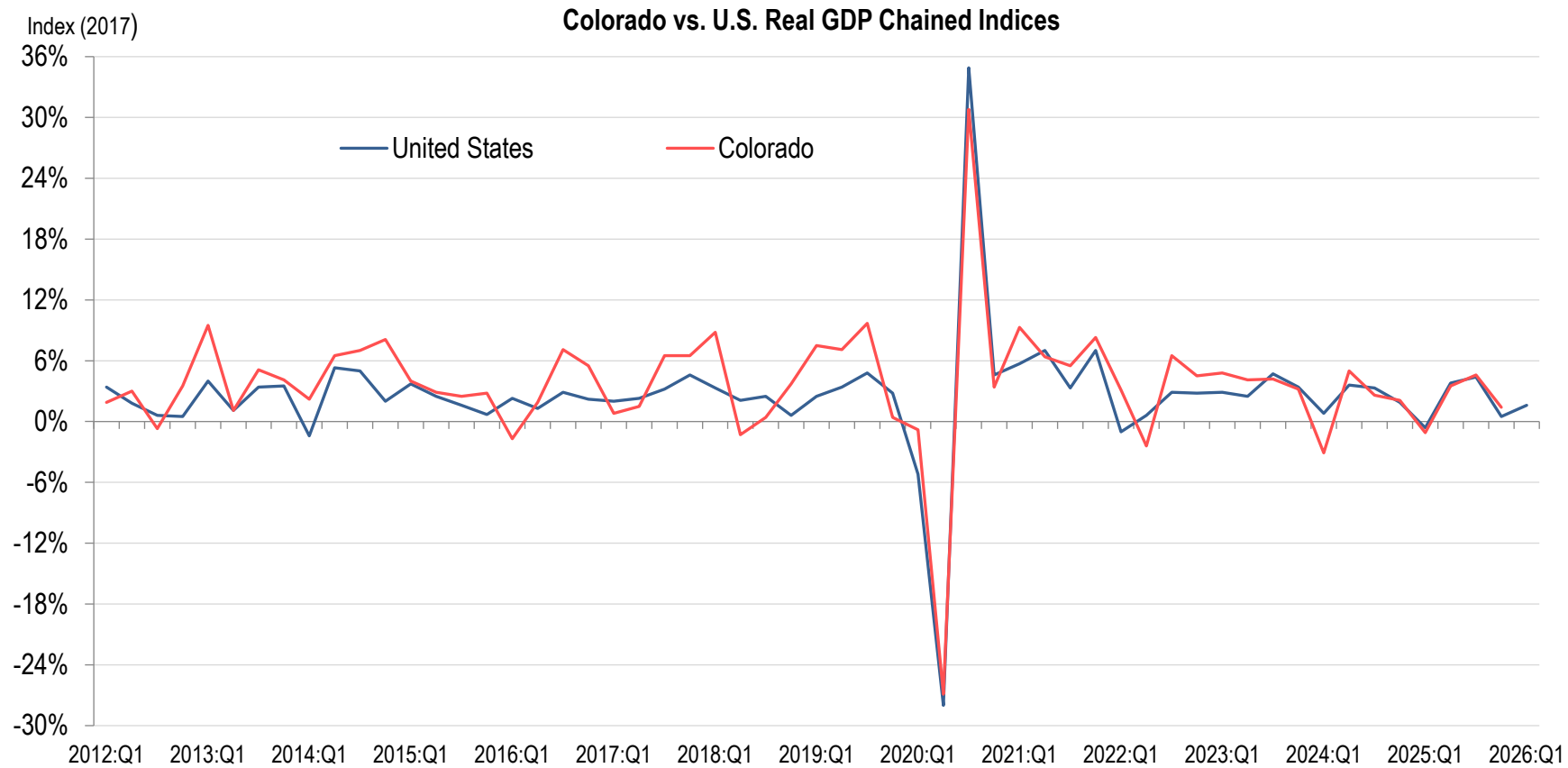
## Conference Board US Real GDP Growth Forecast

	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	Q1 2026	Q2 2026	Q3 2026	Q4 2026	2025	2026	2027
Real GDP	-0.6%	3.8%	4.4%	0.5%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%	1.7%	2.1%	1.8%	1.9%
Real Disposable Income	2.3%	1.8%	1.0%	-0.9%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Real Personal Consumption	0.6%	2.5%	3.5%	1.9%	1.4%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%	2.6%	1.9%	1.7%
Residential Investment	-1.0%	-5.1%	-7.1%	-1.7%	-6.2%	1.0%	-3.0%	-2.0%	-2.2%	-3.5%	-0.4%
Nonresidential Investment	9.5%	7.3%	3.2%	2.4%	10.1%	5.5%	6.3%	7.0%	4.1%	6.1%	4.7%
Total Gov't. Spending	-1.0%	-0.1%	2.2%	-5.6%	4.4%	1.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%
Exports	0.2%	-1.8%	9.6%	-3.2%	13.1%	6.3%	3.6%	3.6%	1.6%	5.5%	2.1%
Unemployment Rate	4.1%	4.2%	4.3%	4.5%	4.3%	4.3%	4.4%	4.4%	4.3%	4.4%	4.4%
PCE Inflation (%Y/Y)	2.6%	2.4%	2.7%	2.8%	3.1%	4.0%	3.6%	3.4%	2.6%	3.5%	2.5%
Core PCE Inflation (%Y/Y)	2.8%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%	3.3%	3.2%	2.8%	3.2%	2.7%

Source: The Conference Board, <https://www.conference-board.org/publications/Economic-Forecast-US>, cber.co.

# Real Gross Domestic Product

## Colorado GDP vs. U.S. GDP Quarterly Growth Rate



### Colorado and U.S. Quarterly GDP Rate of Change

Between Q1 2012 and Q4 2025, the YOY change in the U.S. Real GDP Index (blue) was greater than the Colorado Index (red) in 18 of 55 quarters.

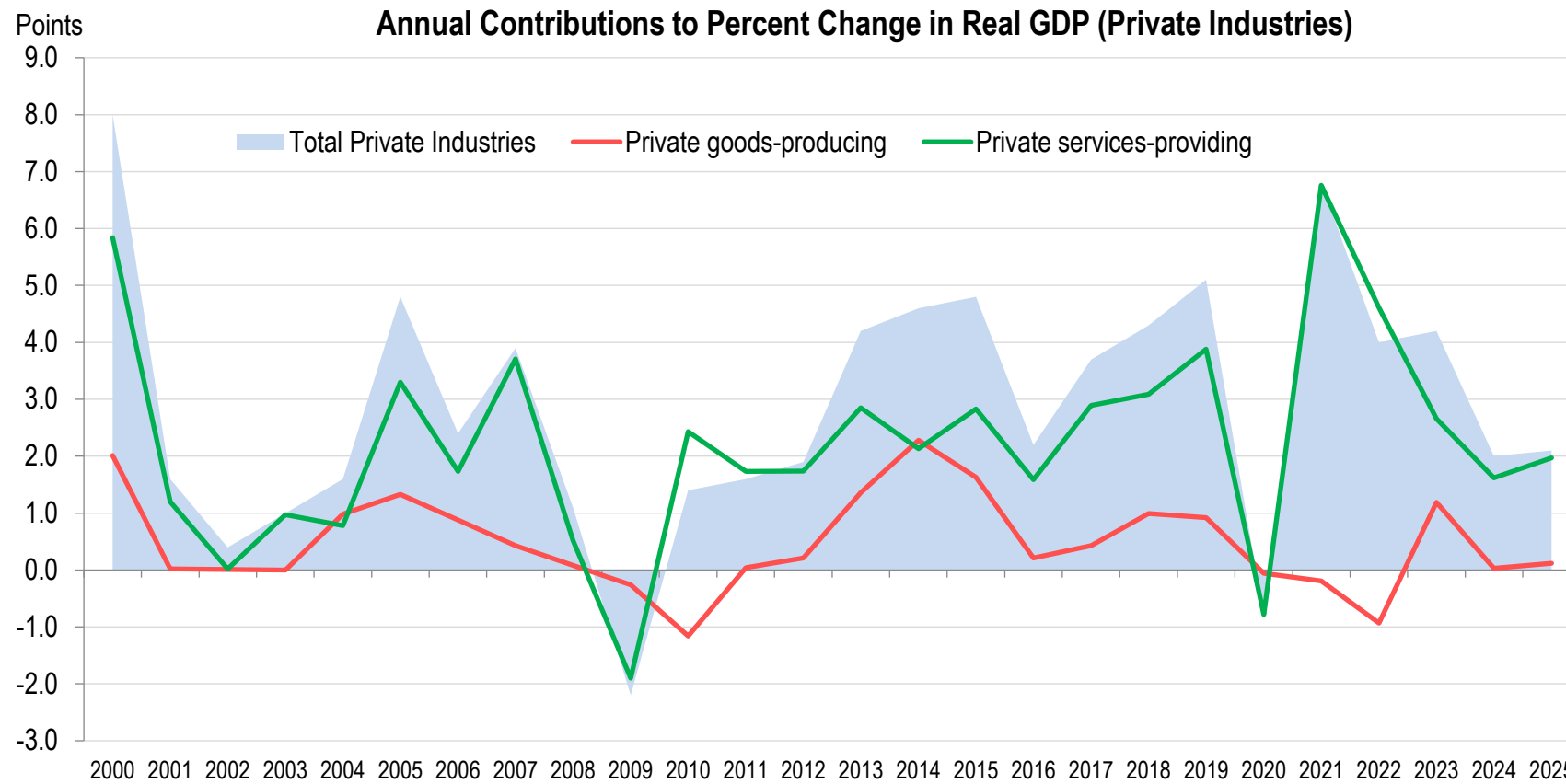
The U.S. real GDP growth rate has been higher than Colorado's rate for six of the last ten quarters.

Source: BEA, cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

# Contributions to Percent Change in Real GDP

Private Industries, Private Goods Producing, Private Services Producing



## Contributions to Percent Change in Real Colorado GDP

The contributions to the percent change in real GDP measure the share of GDP that an industry contributes to the economy.

For example, the blue area chart was 2.10 points for 2025. That means the total real GDP for the private sector was 2.10%. In 2000, the green line was 1.97 points (service-producing), and the red line was .12 points (goods-producing).

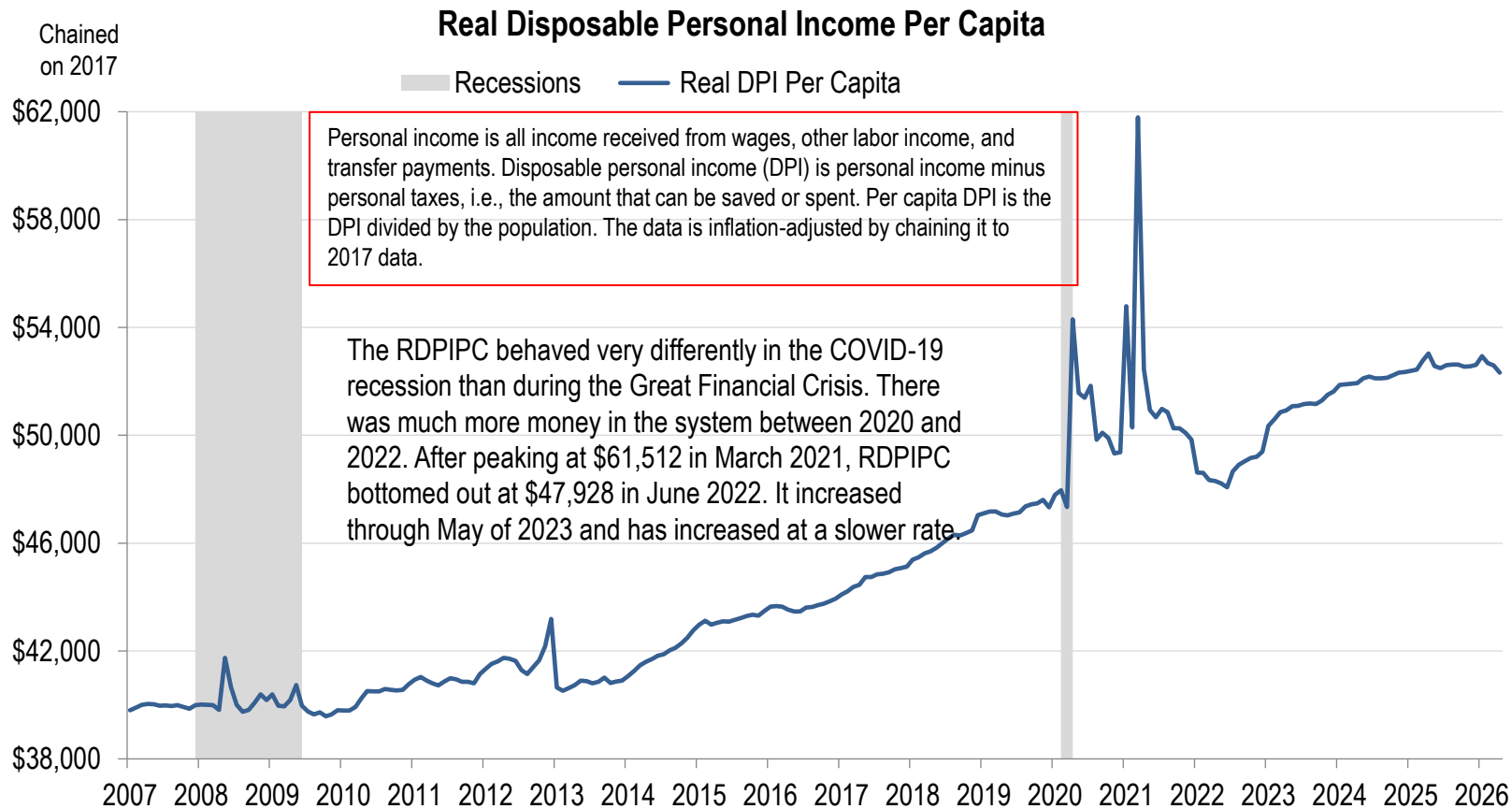
The contribution of service-producing industries was more than the contribution from goods-producing industries in 23 of 26 years. The contributions for the goods-producing industries were greater in the other three years. There were recessions in those years.

Source: BEA, cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

# Real Disposable Personal Income Per Capita

## United States



### Real Disposable Personal Income Per Capita (RDPIPC)

In April 2026, the RDPIPC was \$52,330. It was -1.3% different from the same period in 2025.

The monthly YOY change ranged from 0.4% to 2.1% in 2025 and -1.3% to 1.0% in 2026. Essentially, the change has been flat for two years. This is cause for concern.

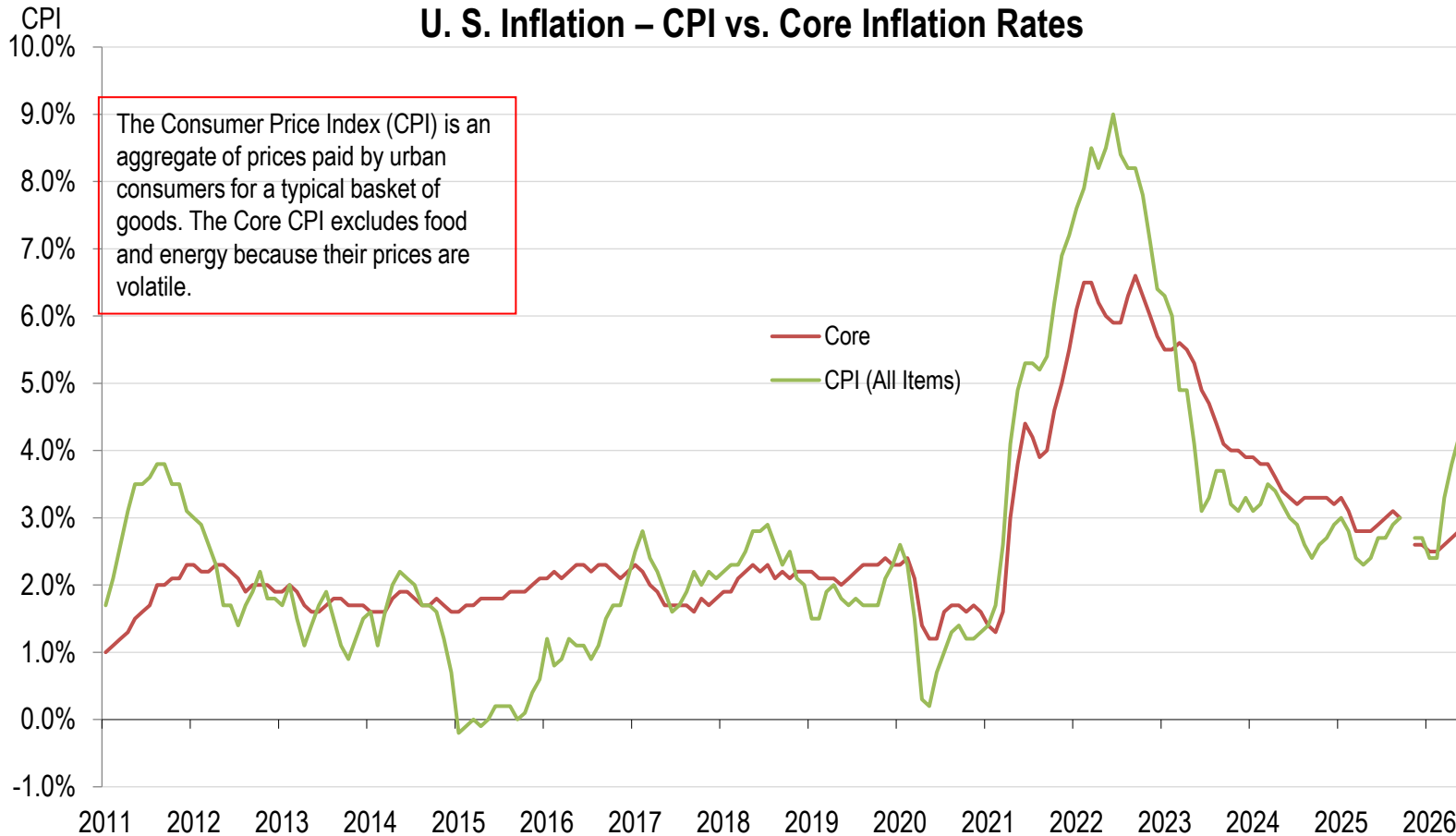
#### RDPIPC (Average)

Year	RDPIPC	% Change
2016	\$43,659	1.1%
2017	\$44,710	2.4%
2018	\$46,057	3.0%
2019	\$47,251	2.6%
2020	\$50,062	5.9%
2021	\$51,936	3.3%
2022	\$48,714	-6.1%
2023	\$51,077	4.2%
2024	\$52,114	1.8%
2025	52,691	1.1%

Source: FRED, BEA, SAAR, chained on 2017 dollars, cber.co. Note that the RDPIPC was previously chained on 2012 data. In October 2024, revisions were made to data after 2019.

# CPI Inflation

## U.S. CPI vs. Core Inflation



### U.S. CPI vs. Core Inflation

The May 2026 CPI rate for the U.S. was 4.2%. The core rate was 2.8%. Higher energy costs are partially responsible for the increase. The values for October 2025 were not reported because of the government shutdown.

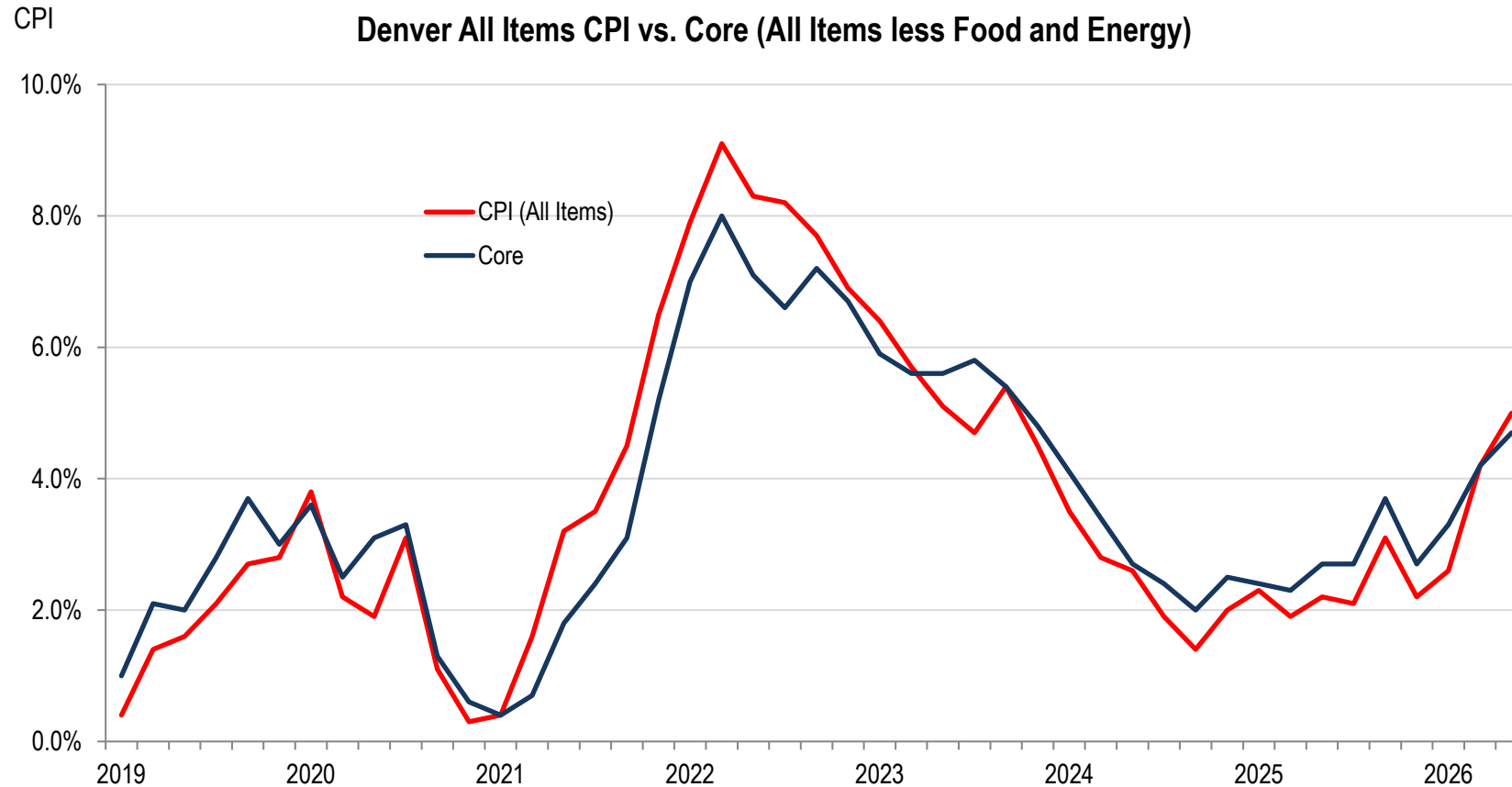
### U.S. and Denver Annual CPI and Core

Year	U.S.	U.S. Core	Denver	Denver Core
2015	0.1%	1.8%	1.2%	3.3%
2016	1.3%	2.2%	2.8%	4.0%
2017	2.1%	1.8%	3.4%	3.1%
2018	2.4%	2.1%	2.7%	2.5%
2019	1.8%	2.2%	1.9%	2.5%
2020	1.2%	1.7%	2.0%	2.3%
2021	4.7%	3.6%	3.5%	2.5%
2022	8.0%	6.2%	8.0%	7.1%
2023	4.1%	4.8%	5.2%	5.4%
2024	2.9%	3.4%	2.3%	2.7%
2025	2.6%	2.7%	2.3%	2.7%

Source: BLS, cber.co

# Bi-Monthly Change in Denver-Aurora-Lakewood CPI

## All Items vs. Core



### Denver-Aurora-Lakewood CPI vs. Core Inflation

The Denver CPI rate for May 2026 (red) was 5.0%, and the core rate was 4.7%. Both have grown at an increasing rate each month in 2026.

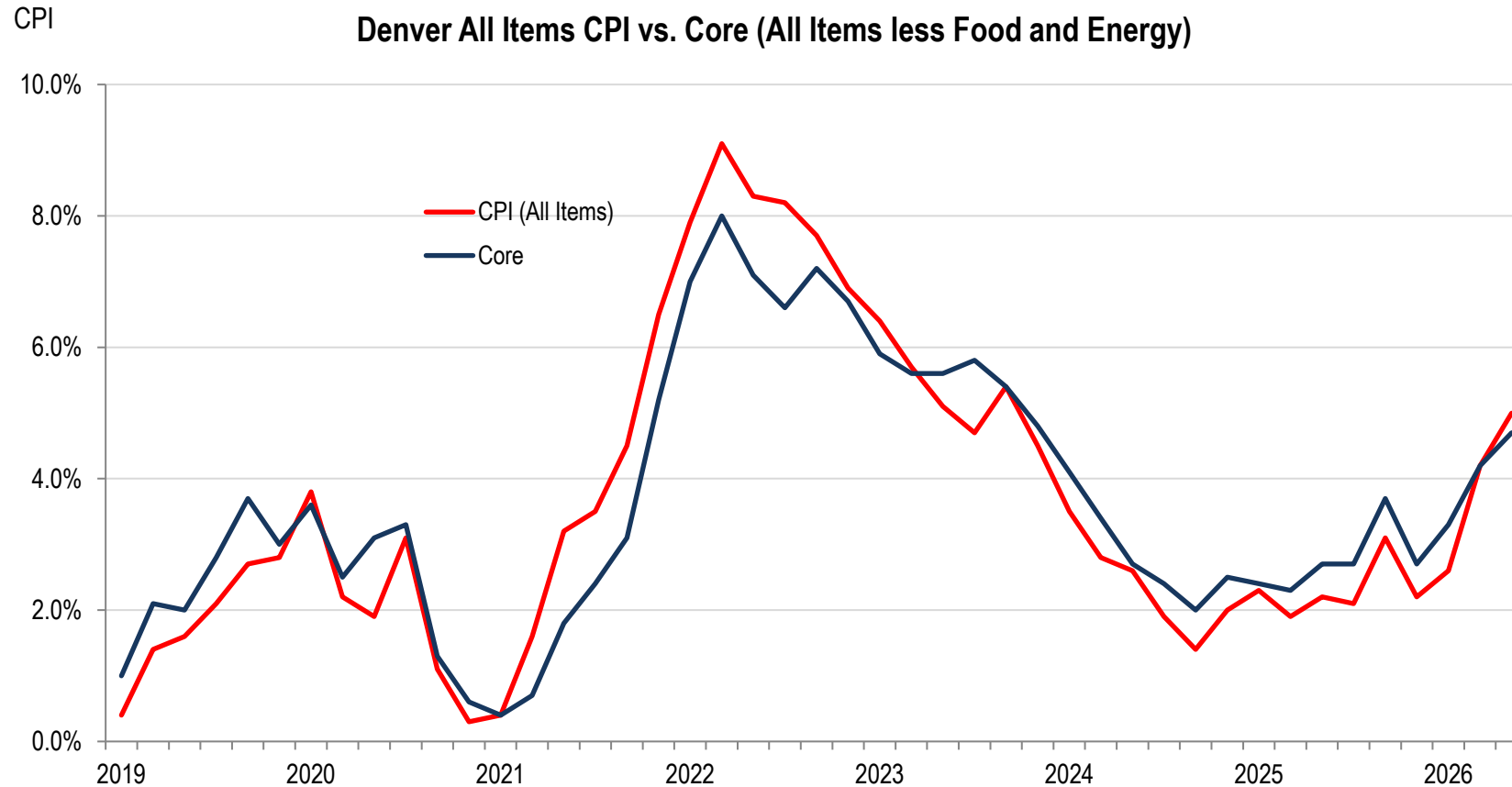
On a positive note, the inflation rate is lower than in 2021 and 2022.

Note that the Denver rate is only published bi-monthly and is NSA.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI All Items, NSA, Note: Colorado NSA data is only available on a bi-monthly basis since 2019, cber.co.

# Bi-Monthly Change in Denver-Aurora-Lakewood CPI

## All Items vs. Core



### Denver-Aurora-Lakewood CPI vs. Core Inflation

The Denver CPI rate for May 2026 was 5.0% with a core rate of 4.7%.

The Denver inflation rate has generally been higher than the U.S. rate, but the trend reversed in 2024 and 2025 (not shown). The Denver CPI was at least as high as the U.S. rate in 8 of 10 years (2015, 2024, and 2025).

Note that the Colorado rate is only published bi-monthly and is NSA.

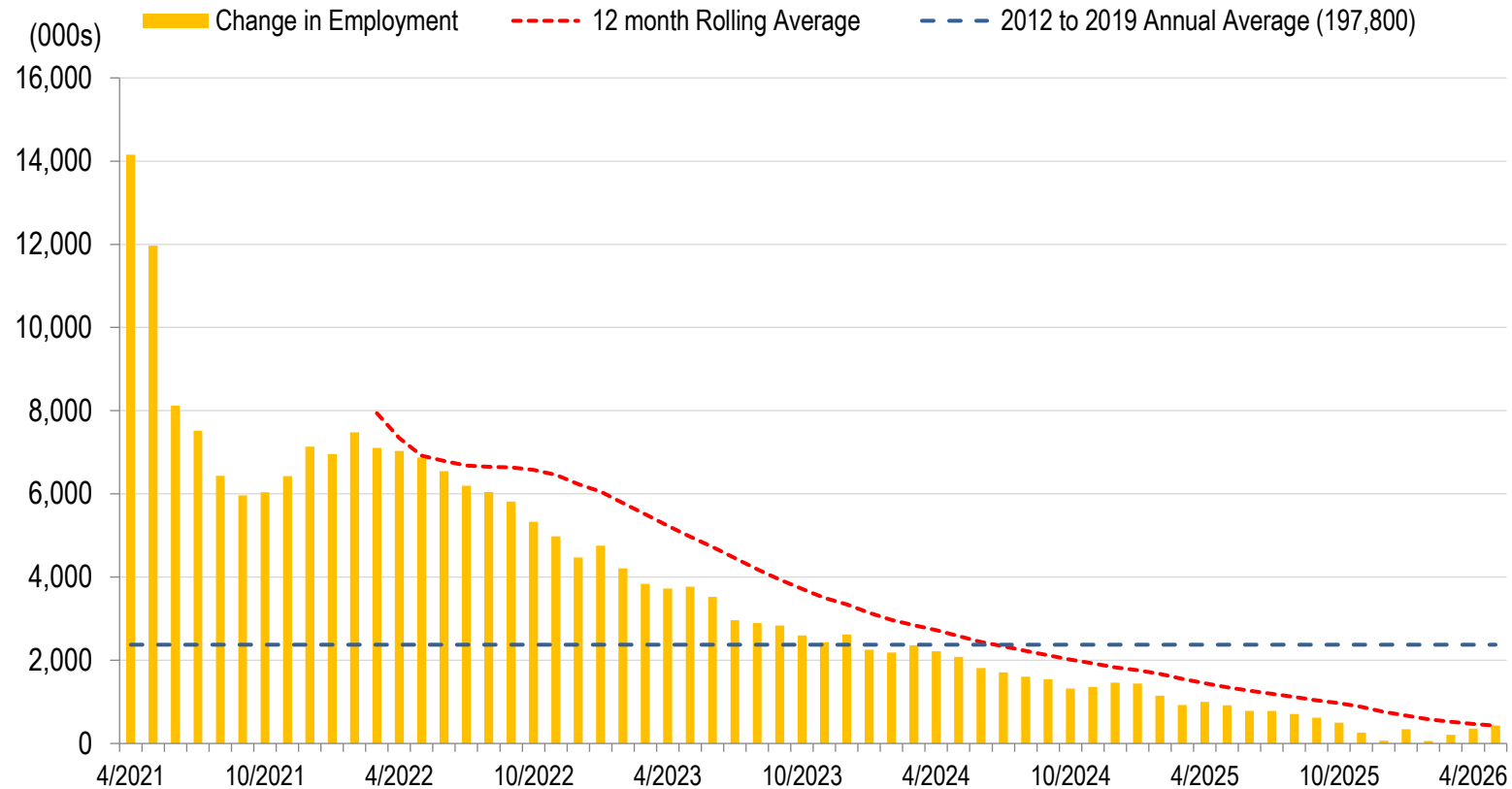
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI All Items, NSA, Note: Colorado NSA data is only available on a bi-monthly basis since 2019, cber.co.

## U.S. Employment

# YOY Change in Employment

United States

### YOY Change in United States Employment



### Change in U.S. Employment

From 2012 to 2019, the average annual change in employment was 2,373,900 (blue dotted line), and the average monthly change was 197,800.

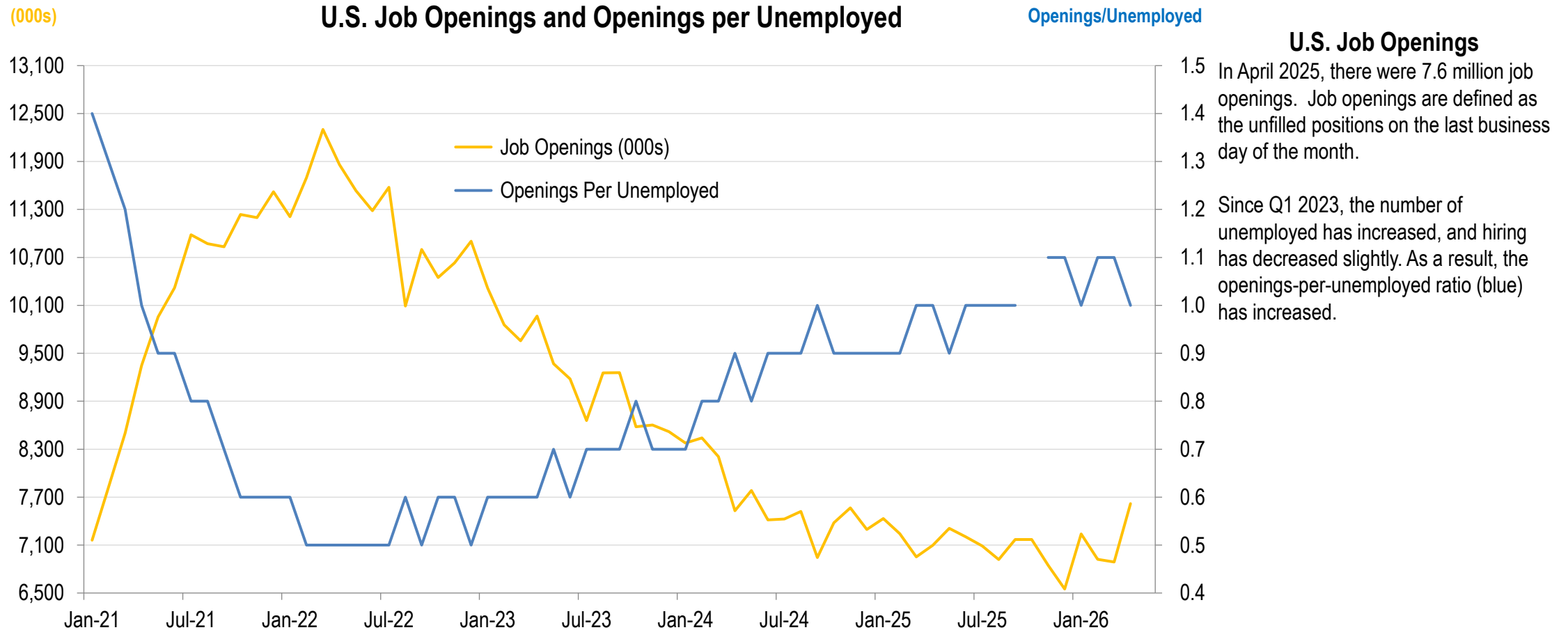
April 2021 was the first month after the pandemic when the YOY employment was positive (yellow bars). It was 14.1 million. It has since trended downward and has been less than 1.0 million since March 2025.

The 12-month rolling average (red dotted line) peaked at 7.9 million in March 2022. It declined and has been below 1.0 million since October 2025. In May 2026, the 12-month rolling average was 428,000 (red line). This is well below the blue dotted line.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, NSA cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

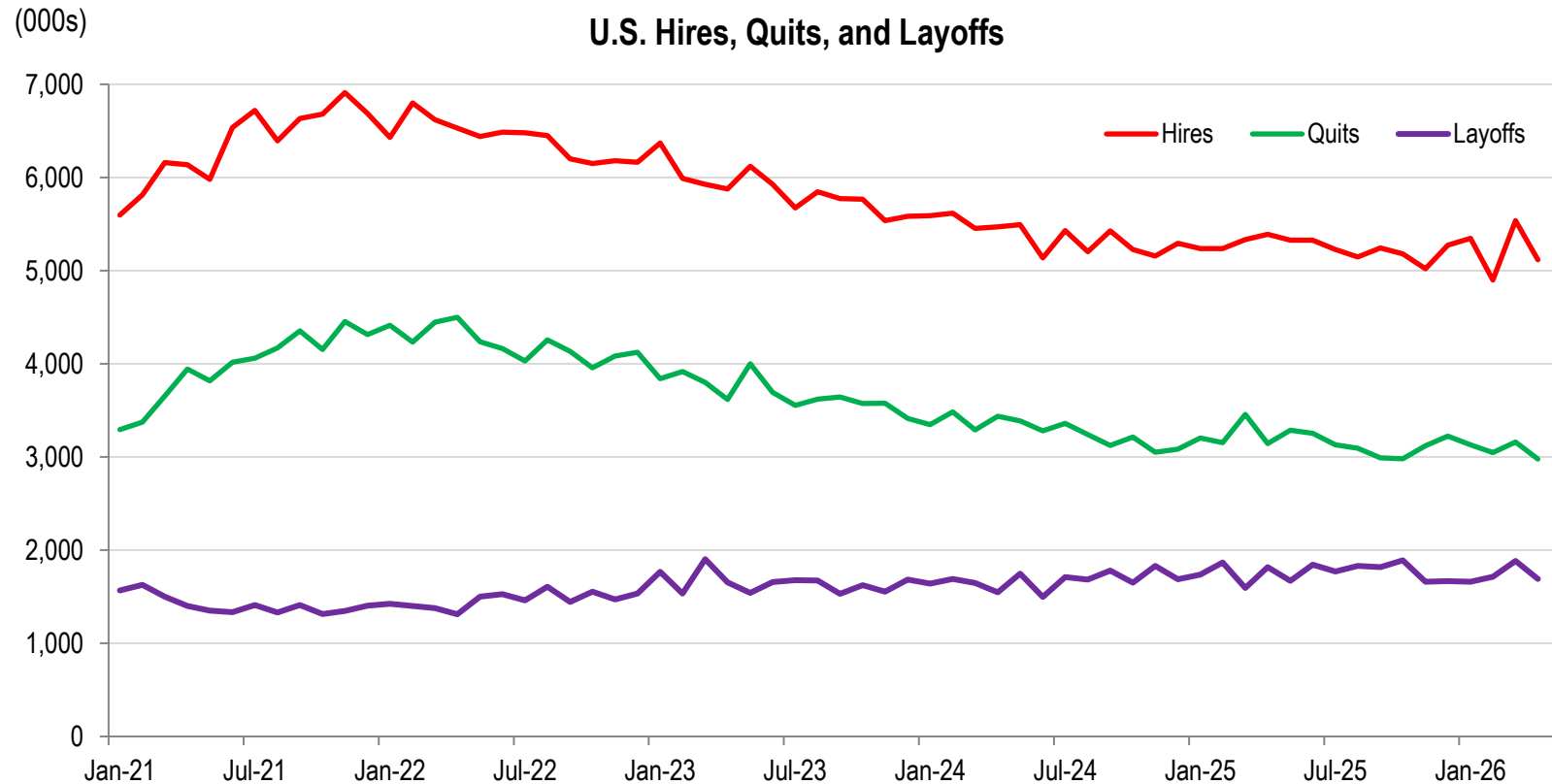
# U.S. Job Openings and Openings per Unemployed



Source: BLS, JOLTS, SA, cber.co. Note: Government shutdown in October 25 affects some data., <https://www.bls.gov/charts/job-openings-and-labor-turnover/unemp-per-job-opening.htm>.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

# Hires, Quits, and Layoffs



Source: BLS, JOLTS, SA, cber.co.

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## U.S. Hires, Quits, and Layoffs

For the past year, the number of hires, quits, and layoffs has been fairly constant. Without significant changes in hiring and separations, the number of employees is changing slowly, and it is difficult to break into the job market.

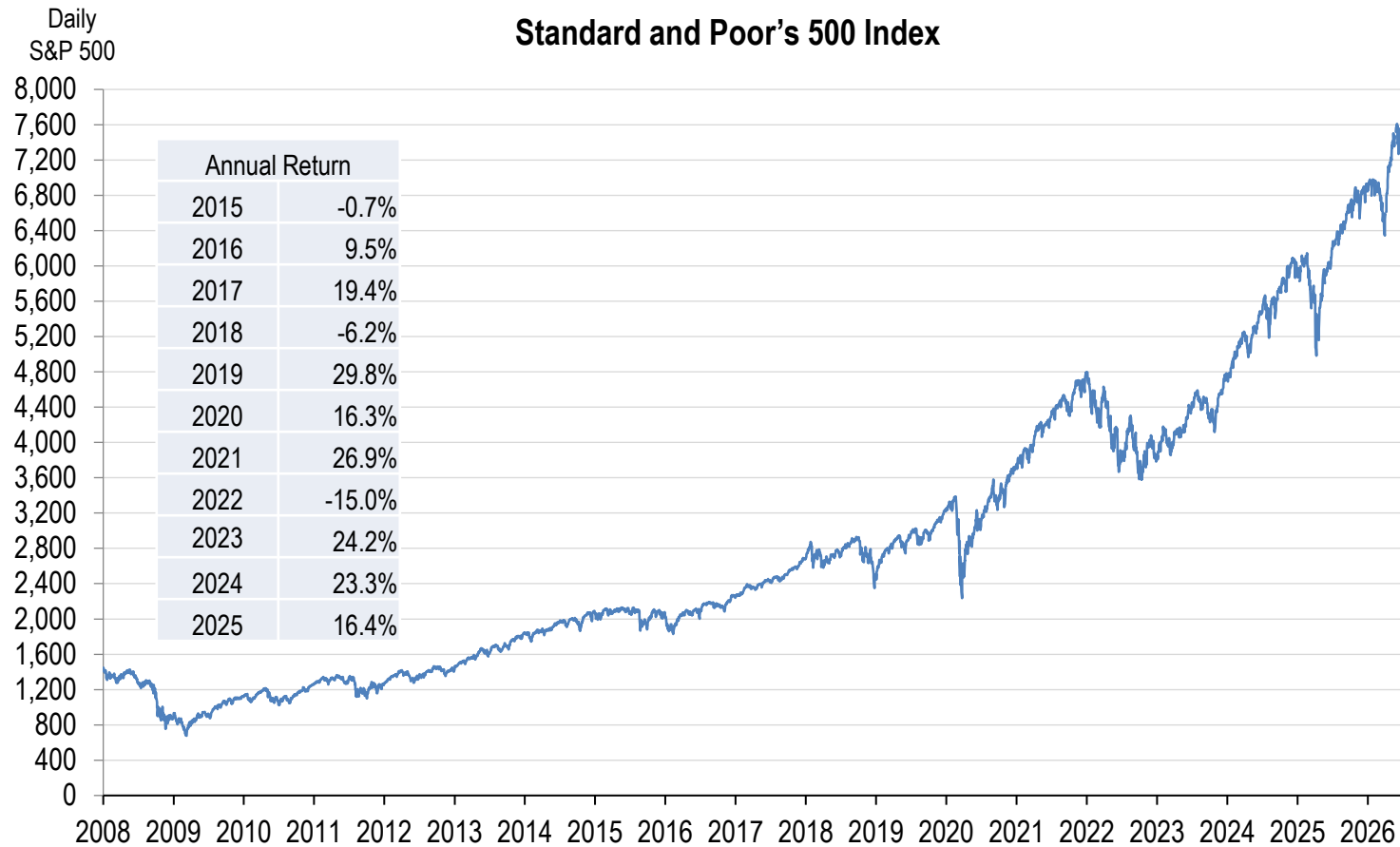
Hires measure the actual additions to a company's payroll during the entire month. The number of hires (red line) trended downward after Q2-2022. The number of hires leveled out in mid-2024. This is a challenge for college graduates entering the market.

Following the pandemic era, there was an increase in the number of quits (green) until April 2022. This period was referred to as the Great Resignation. The quits tapered off until Q2 2024. Since then, the number of quits has been relatively flat.

Between 2021 and April 2026, the total number of layoffs (purple) has remained consistent.

## U.S. Indicators

# Standard and Poor's 500 Index



Source: FRED, S&P 500, cber.co.

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## Market Returns

### 2020 COVID-19 Policies

February 19, 2020 3,386  
 March 23, 2020 2,237 a change of **-34%** to 1,148  
 August 18, 2020 3,386 bear market was 149 days  
 2020 change was **+16.3%**

### 2021 COVID Recovery Bull Market

December 31, 2021 4,766, a change of **+26.9%**

### 2022 Bear Market

December 31, 2022 3,839, a change of **-15.0%**

### 2023 Bull Market

Helped by a Santa Claus rally in December  
 December 29, 2023 4,739, a change of **+24.2%**

### 2024 Bull Market

December 31, 2024 5,882, a change of **+23.3%**.

### 2025 Bull Market

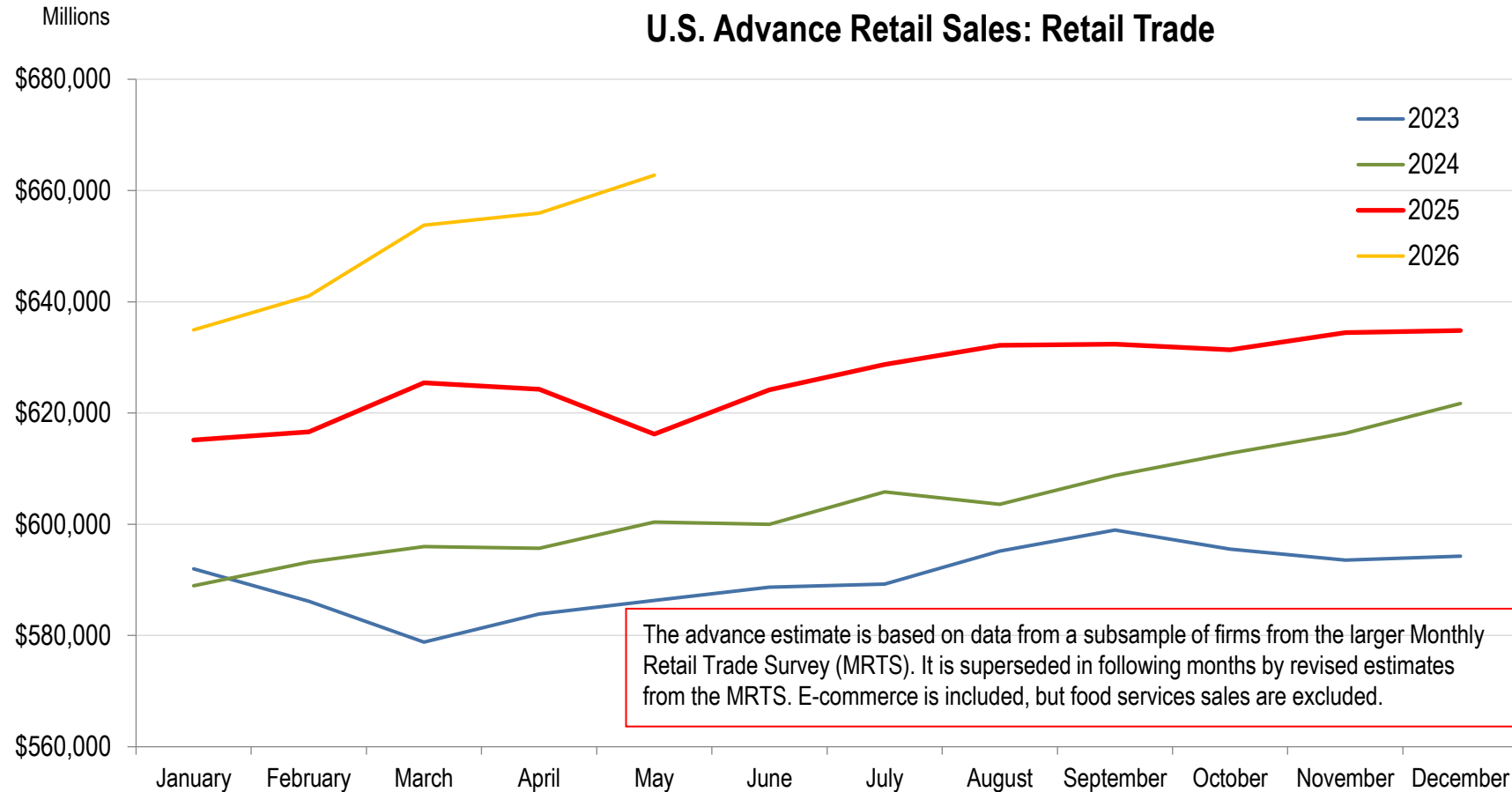
December 31, 2025 6,845, a change of **+16.4%**

### 2026 Bull Market

June 26, 2026 7,357, a change of **7.5%**

# U.S. Advance Retail Sales: Retail Trade

## Monthly



### Advance Retail Sales

Retail sales were weak in 2023 and 2024. They were much stronger in 2005.

Increased sales suggest the economy may be improving in 2026.

Annual Retail Sales (Trillions)		
2017	\$4.13	4.5%
2018	\$4.30	4.2%
2019	\$4.42	2.8%
2020	\$4.55	3.0%
2021	\$5.33	17.0%
2022	\$5.76	8.2%
2023	\$5.90	2.4%
2024	\$6.04	2.3%
2025	\$6.26	3.8%

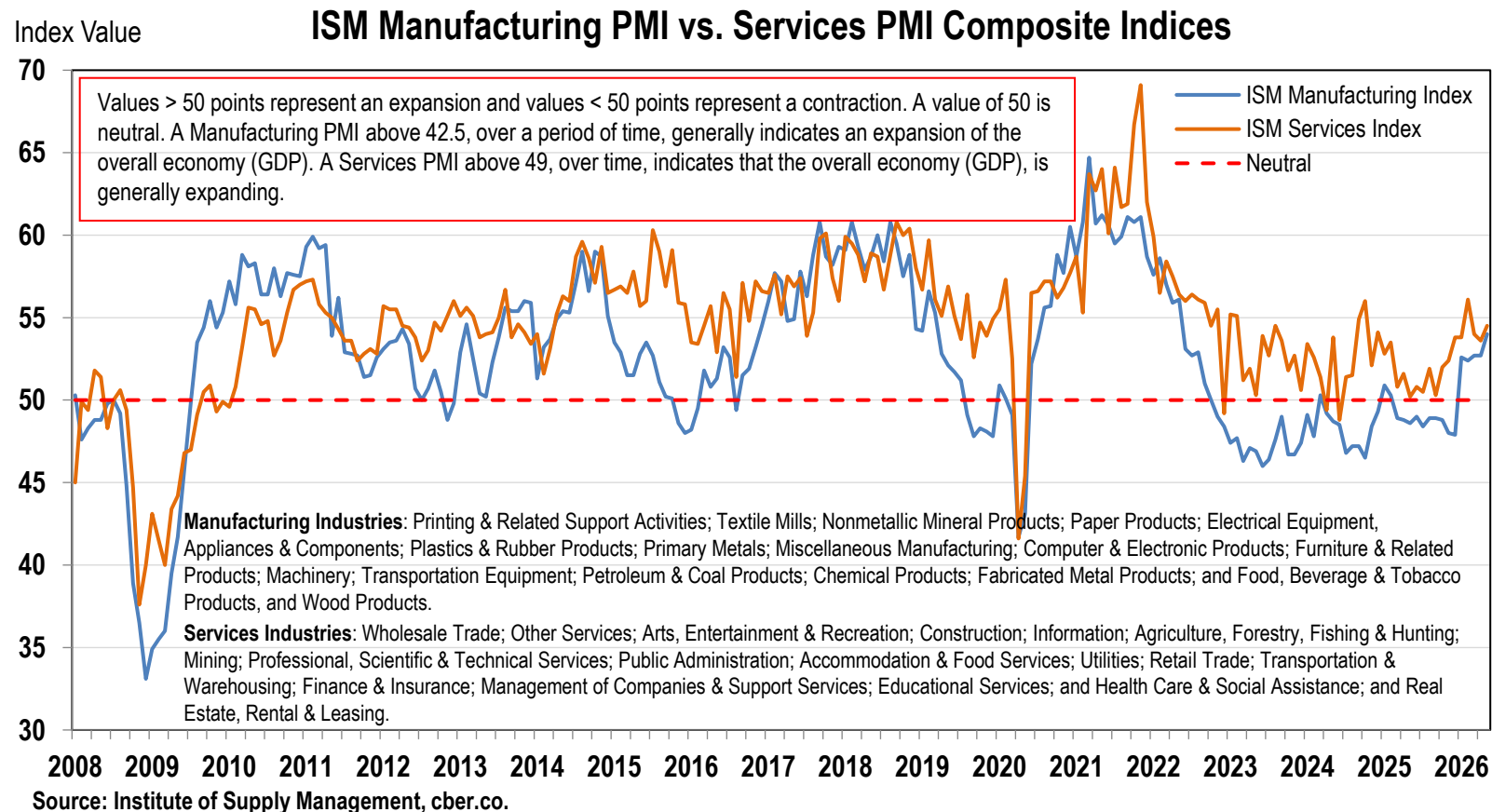
Source: Census, cber.co

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, RXSFS, FRED, cber.co. Note: Not adjusted for inflation.

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# ISM Purchasing Managers Composite Indices

## Manufacturing vs. Services



### Manufacturing and Services PMI

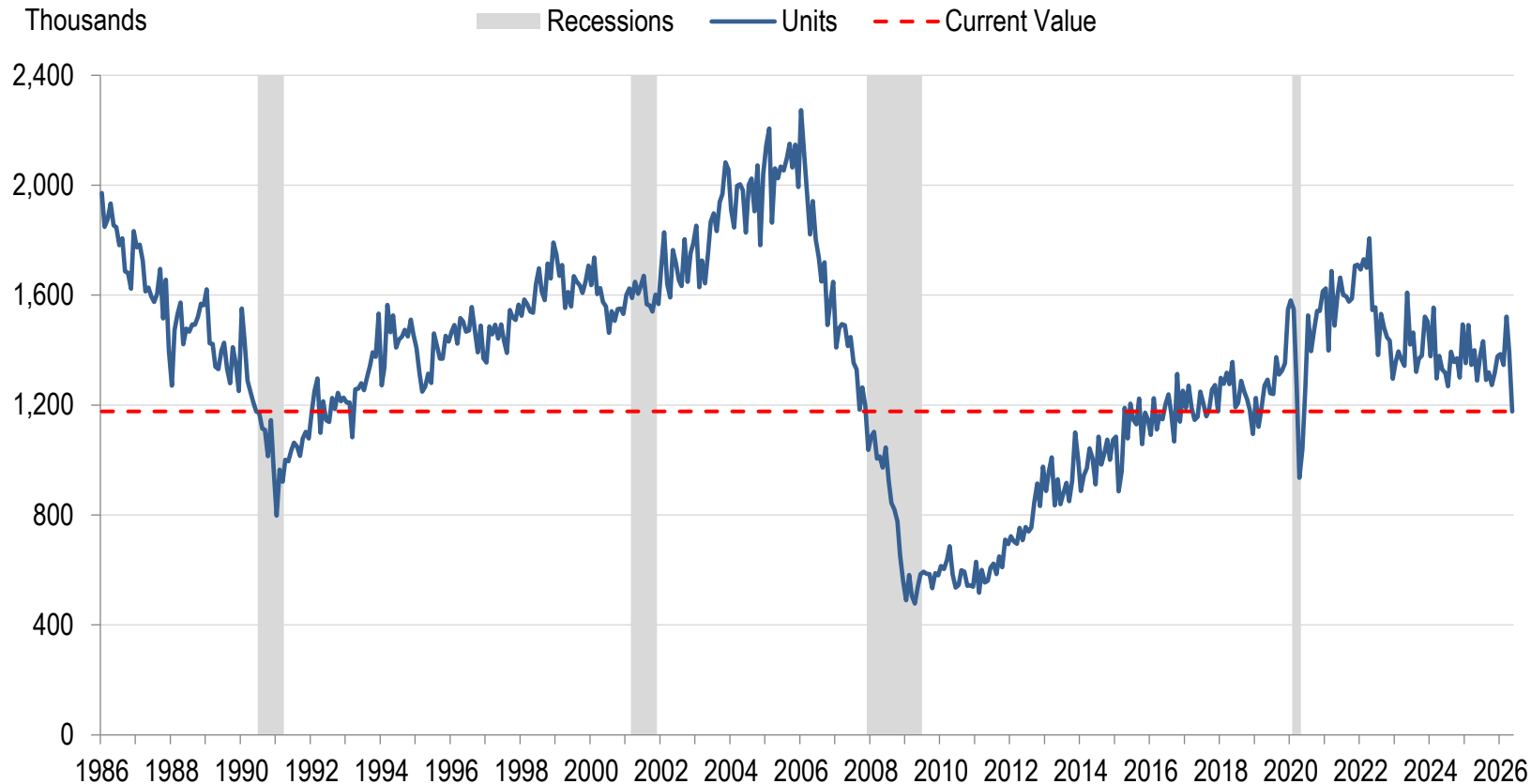
The ISM manufacturing index (blue) has been above 50 for five consecutive months, January through May 2026. ISM officials reported “Looking at the manufacturing economy, only 2 percent of the sector’s gross domestic product (GDP) contracted in May, compared to 19 percent in April. All of the six largest manufacturing industries expanded in May, in the following order: Computer & Electronic Products; Machinery; Transportation Equipment; Petroleum & Coal Products; Chemical Products; and Food, Beverage & Tobacco Products.”

The Services index (orange) has been above 50 since July 2024. ISM officials reported the strength of the index, “Sixteen of the 17 service industries posted gains. Real Estate, Rental & Leasing was the only one that declined. The series for New Orders and Business Activity posted solid gains. Employment slipped slightly and was not favorable.”

# New Privately-Owned Housing Units Started

## United States

**New Privately Owned Housing Units Started**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, FRED, SAAR, cber.co.

**New Privately Owned Housing Units Started, SAAR**

The demand for housing is high; however, there were only 1.2 million starts in May 2026 (red line).

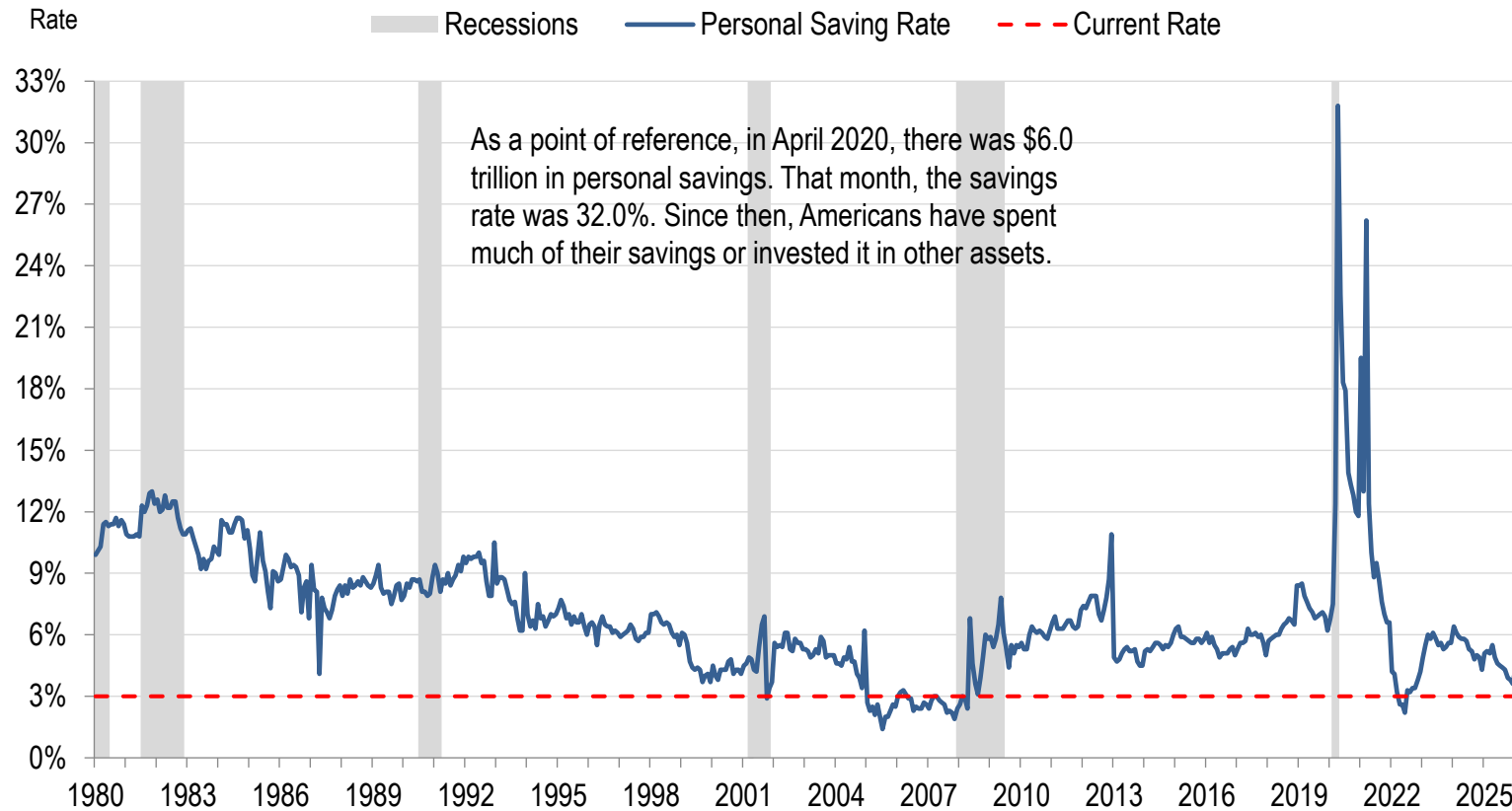
In April 2009, housing starts dropped to 478,000. They trended upward until April 2022, when housing starts reached 1.8 million. Since then, they have declined.

Units Started (Average)			
Year	Units	Year	Units
2005	2,073	2016	1,177
2006	1,812	2017	1,205
2007	1,342	2018	1,247
2008	900	2019	1,292
2009	554	2020	1,394
2010	586	2021	1,603
2011	612	2022	1,552
2012	784	2023	1,421
2013	928	2024	1,370
2014	1,000	2025	1,356
2015	1,107		

# U.S. Personal Saving Amount and Rate

## Percentage of Disposable Personal Income (DPI)

### Personal Saving Rate



### Personal Saving Rate

In May 2026, the saving rate was 3.0%. Savings were \$704.2 billion.

The saving rate peaked in April 2020 at 32.0%. By June 2022, Americans had drained their savings account as the rate dropped to 2.0%. The rate has trended downward since it was 6.4% in January 2024.

### Year End Personal Savings (Billions) and Savings Rate

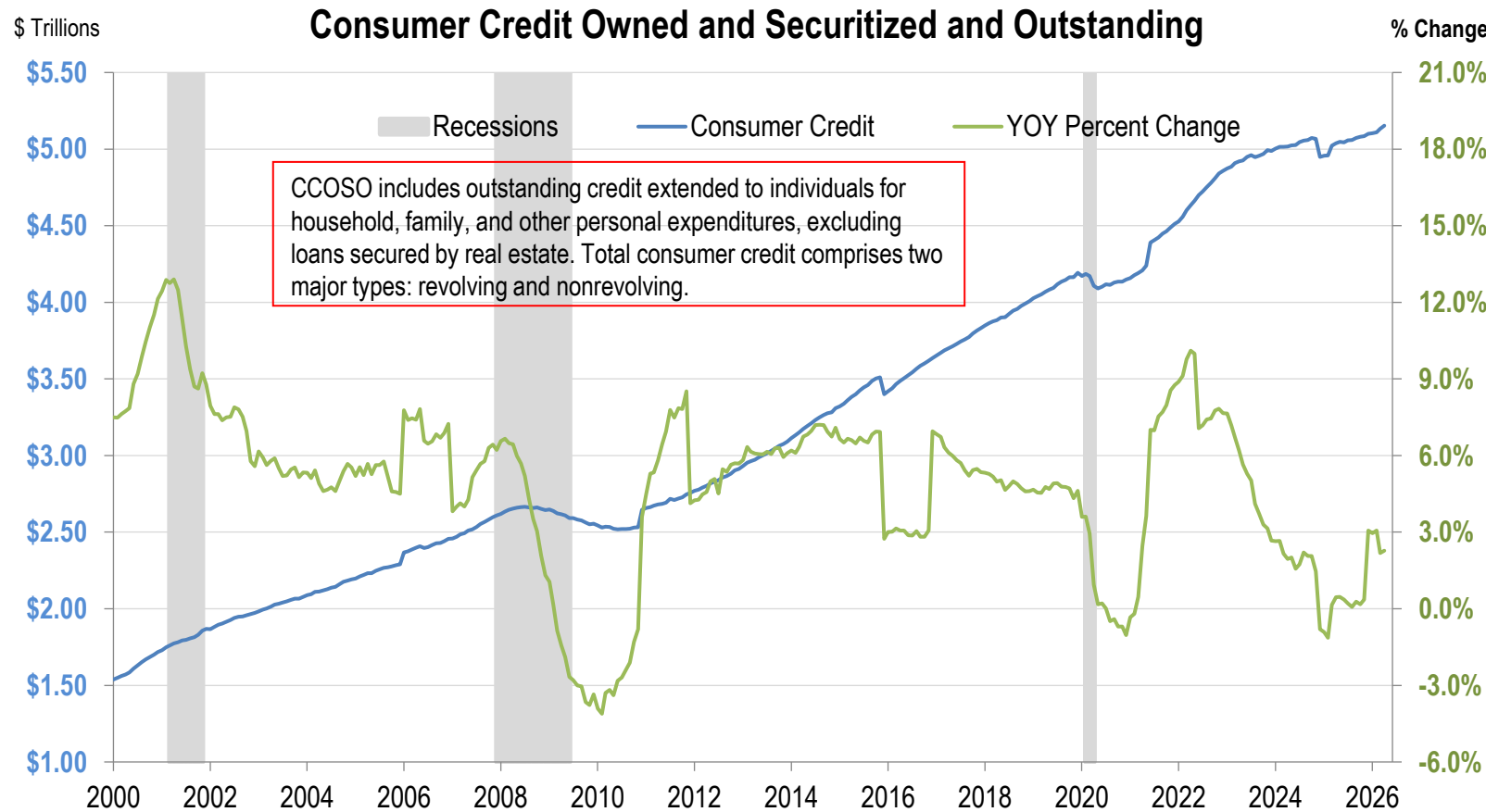
2017	\$748.0	5.0%
2018	\$1,338.9	8.4%
2019	\$1,020.1	6.2%
2020	\$2,051.8	11.8%
2021	\$1,224.7	6.6%
2022	\$826.3	4.2%
2023	\$1,194.4	5.6%
2024	\$970.5	4.3%
2025	\$843.4	3.6%

Source: BEA, cber.co

Source: Federal Reserve, FRED, cber.co. Note: In October 2024 the data was updated, going back to 2019. It was revised again in December 2025.

# U.S. Consumer Credit Outstanding

## United States



Source: FRED, Federal Reserve, G.19, SA.

### Consumer Credit

In April 2026, the securitized credit was slightly above \$5.1 trillion (blue), and the YOY rate of outstanding consumer credit (including consumer loan defaults) changed by 2.3% (green). The value declined from December 2024 through February 2025 but has risen slightly since then. From Q3 2008 to Q4 2010, consumers deleveraged and decreased their consumer debt. The amount of credit authorized increased in 2018 and 2019. It decreased in 2020 as consumers reduced expenditures and paid off debt during the pandemic. It also declined in late 2024.

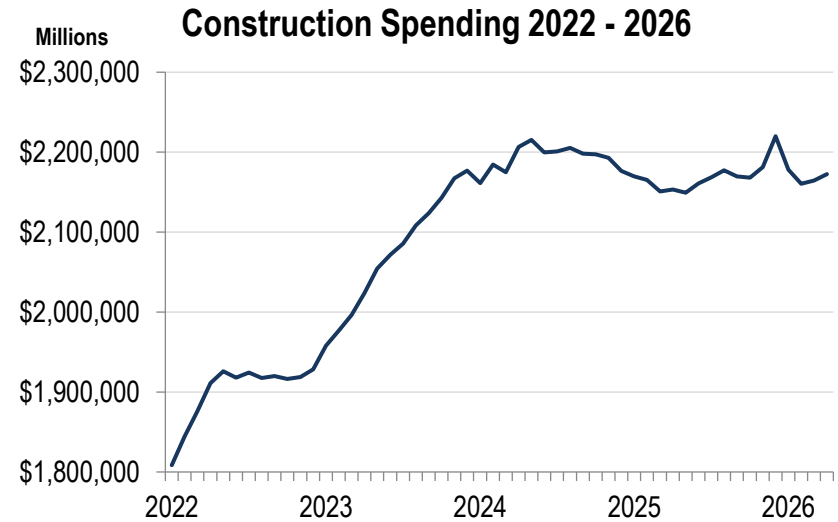
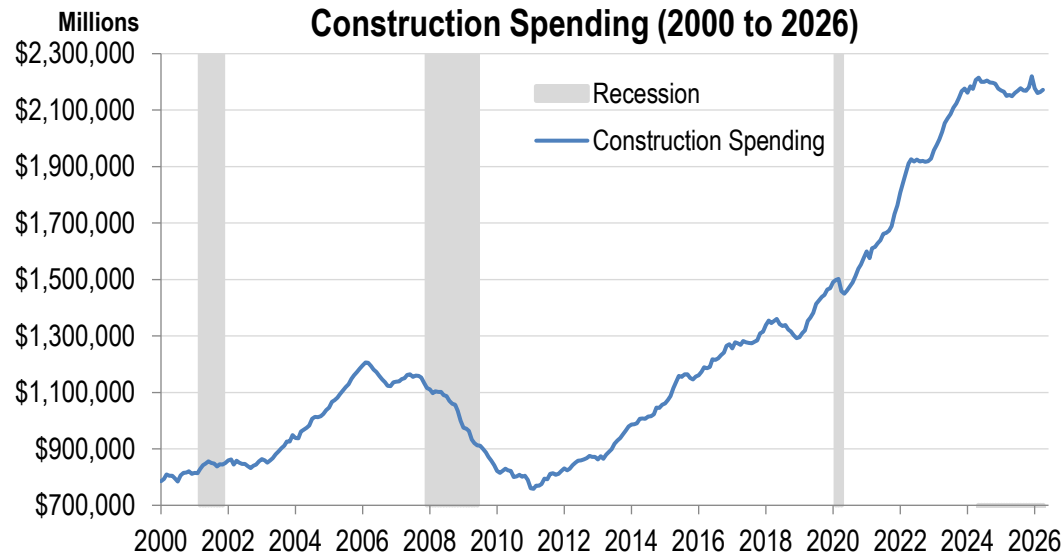
#### Outstanding Credit (Billions) and Percent Change

Year	Outstanding Credit (Billions)	Percent Change
2017	\$3,830.8	5.3%
2018	\$4,007.0	4.6%
2019	\$4,192.2	4.6%
2020	\$4,149.0	-1.0%
2021	\$4,512.3	8.8%
2022	\$4,858.3	7.7%
2023	\$4,988.2	2.7%
2024	\$4,948.1	-0.8%
2025	\$5,106.6	3.2%

Source: FRED, G-19, Year-end, cber.co

# Construction Spending

## United States



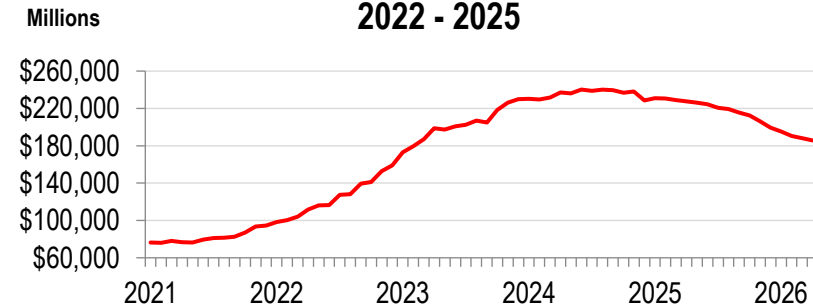
### Construction Spending

**Upper Left:** Between 2006 and 2011, construction spending declined. It then trended upward through early 2024. Since then, it has trended downward.

**Upper Right:** This chart shows construction spending beginning in May 2022. Spending peaked in May 2024 and has since trended downward.

**Lower Right:** Federal funds (CHIPS and Science Act) supported the construction of manufacturing facilities between 2022 and 2024. Funding has declined since then.

### Construction Spending – Manufacturing 2022 - 2025



Source: FRED, U.S. Census Bureau, cber.co.

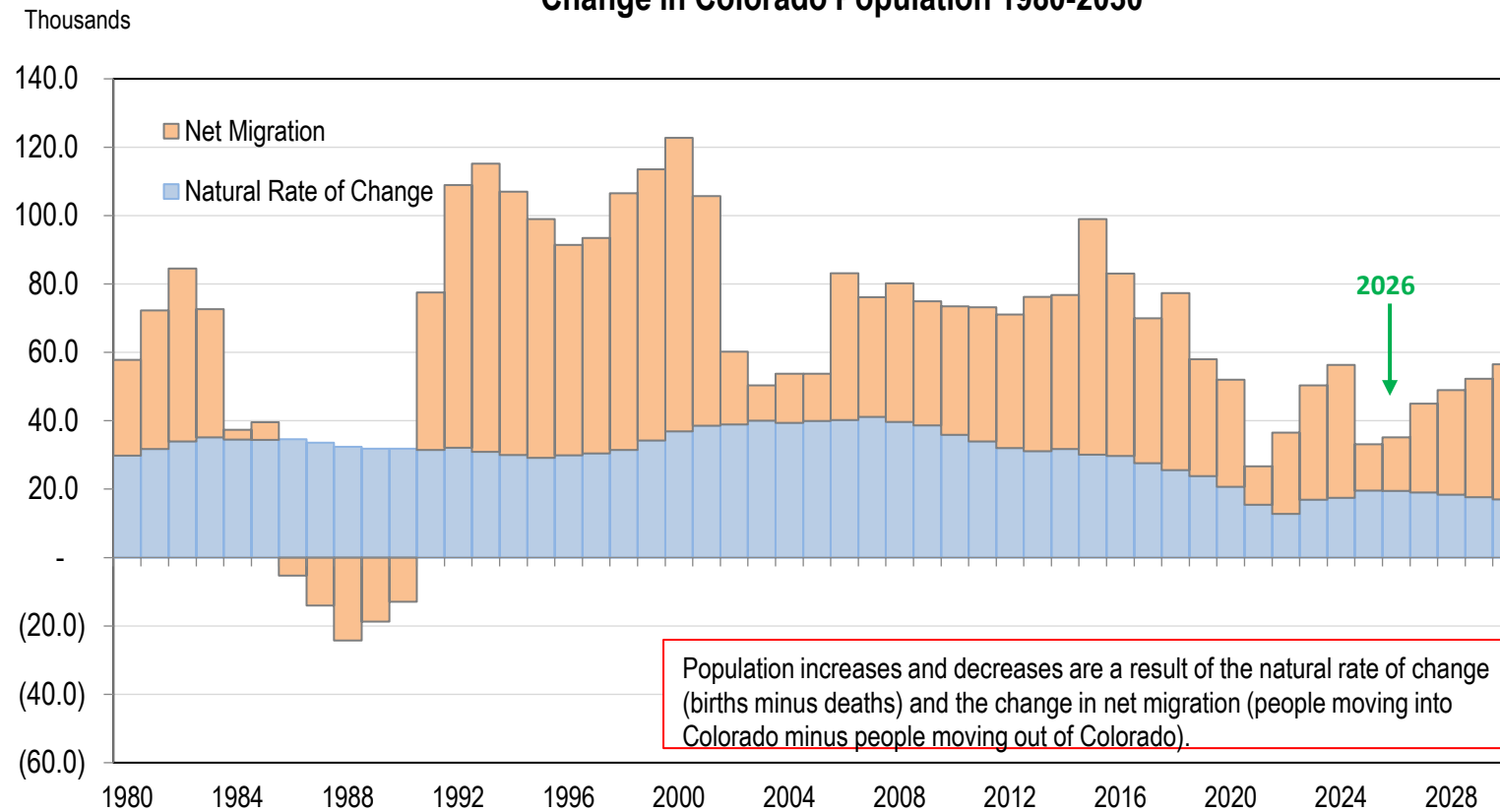
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## Colorado Population – The Economy Begins with a Job and a Person for the Job

# Colorado Population

## Components of Change

Change in Colorado Population 1980-2030



### Components of Change

Since 2000, the Colorado population has increased at a decreasing rate. Changes have occurred because of higher death rates, lower fertility rates, altered migration patterns, pandemic-related policies, and the aging of the baby boomers.

Significant declines occurred in 2020 and 2021. International immigration decreased in 2025. It will likely decrease in 2026. In 2026, there will be increases in net migration (15,654) and the natural rate of change (19,458). The total gain will be 35,112 to 6,024,996.

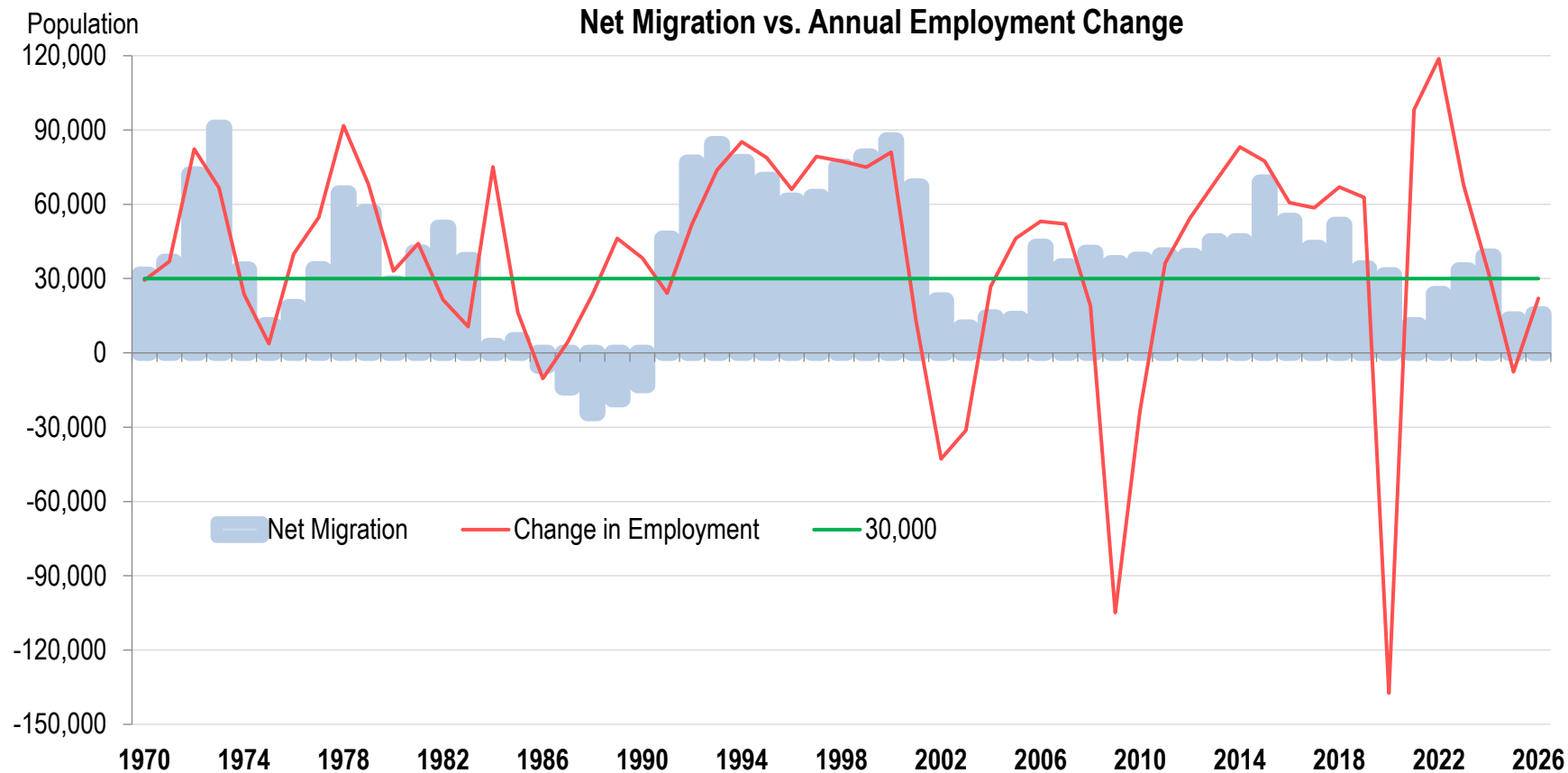
Even though the natural rate of change and immigration have decreased, the population growth between 2021 and 2024 is positive. Between 1985 and 1990, there were five years of negative net migration.

Reduced job growth is often a function of slower population growth.

Sources: State Demography Office, January 2026, and cber.co. Note: The data reflects changes released at the 2025 Demography Summit.

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# Net Migration and Annual Employment Change



## Net Migration vs. Annual Employment Change

Every job starts with a person!

The population varies because of changes in net migration and the natural rate of change (births minus deaths). Net migration is more volatile.

When net migration (blue line) is less than 30,000 (green dotted line), there is usually a decline in employment (red line).

The most notable decline in net migration occurred during the second half of the 1980s. In 1982, Exxon abruptly shut down its Colony oil shale project in Parachute, laying off over 2,000 workers. It was followed by the failure of Silverado Savings and the S&L debacle.

Source: BLS, State Demography Office, cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

## Colorado Employment and Unemployment Rate

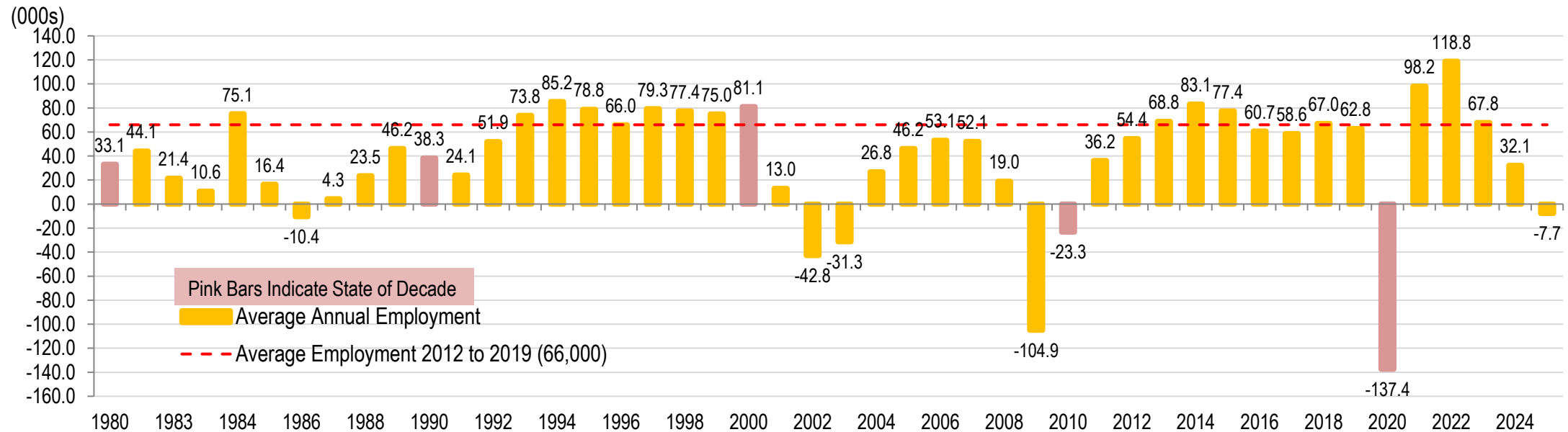
# Change in Colorado Employment

## Colorado 1980 to 2025

Average Annual Change by Decade (Thousands) – Booms and Busts					
1980 to 1989	Recessions/weak growth	26.4	2010 to 2019	After a Slow Start ...2012 to 2019 Boom	54.6
1990 to 1999	The Go-Go 1990s	65.0	2020 to 2025	COVID-19 Related Policies – Now What?	28.6
2000 to 2009	Colorado's Lost Decade	11.2	<b>1980 to 2025</b>	<b>The Average Growth from 1980 to 2025</b>	<b>37.9</b>

**Change in Colorado Employment – Booms and Busts – 2020 to 2025**  
 Colorado has a boom-and-bust economy. Between 1980 and 2025, the average annual employment is 37,900. During these 46 years, the employment change has been negative seven times. Four of those times were between 2002 and 2010. Between 2012 and 2019, average annual employment increased by 66,600. The average annual growth for 2020 to 2025 (current period) was 28,600.

**Change in Colorado Employment (Annual)**

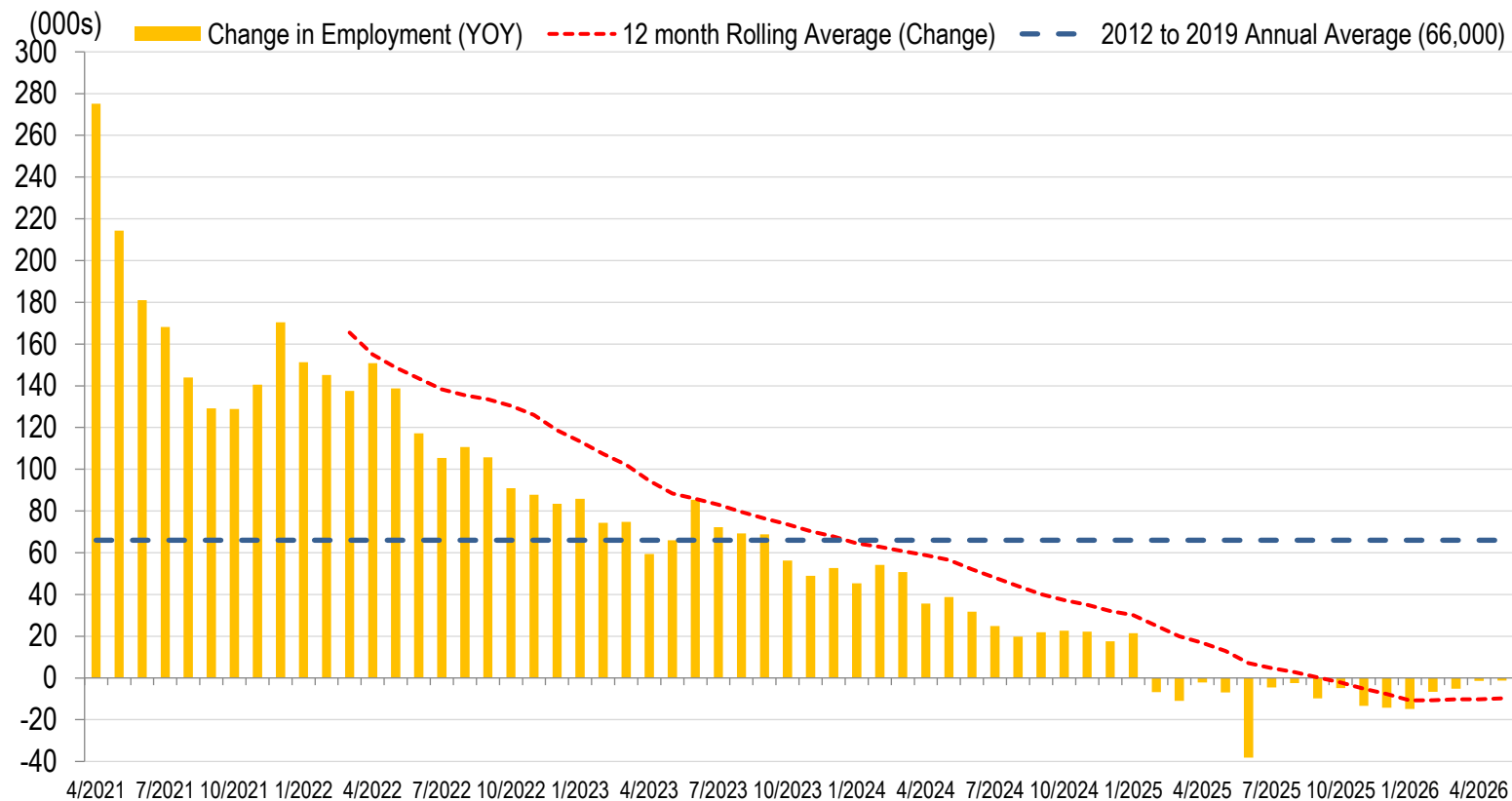


Source: BLS, NSA, cber.co.

# YOY Change in Employment

Colorado

## YOY Change in Colorado Employment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, NSA cber.co.

### Change in Colorado Employment

The blue dotted line represents the average annual NSA employment from 2012 to 2019 (66,000). The average monthly change was 5,500.

April 2021 was the first month after the pandemic for a positive YOY employment change (yellow bars). The change was 275,200. Since then, the YOY monthly employment has trended downward. In May 2026, the YOY NSA employment was -1,200.

The 12-month rolling average (red dashed line) peaked in March 2022 at 165,500. It has since trended downwards and was -9,700 in May 2026.

The Colorado labor market has a slower growth rate than the United States labor market. Weak growth has continued in 2026.

# Colorado Employment and Change in Employment

## Sectors with more than 140,000 Employees

Colorado Employment YOY Change (000s)					
Industry Sector	Employment and Change				
	Dec.2019	May 2025	May 2026 (sorted)	Dec. 2019 vs. May 2026	May 2025 vs. May 2026
Sectors with more than 140,000 employees					
Healthcare and Social Assistance (HSA)	306.3	347.0	362.7	56.4	15.7
Prof., Scientific, and Tech, Services (PST)	240.3	291.7	292.0	51.7	0.3
Local Government	273.7	292.8	291.1	17.4	(1.7)
Accommodation and Food (AFS)	287.7	287.2	289.1	1.4	1.9
Retail Trade	271.6	270.2	269.2	(2.4)	(1.0)
Construction	180.5	184.4	187.8	7.3	3.4
Financial Activities	175.7	180.5	175.1	(0.6)	(5.4)
Administrative Services	162.2	151.9	150.5	(11.7)	(1.4)
State Government	131.4	141.8	145.4	14.0	3.6
Manufacturing	151.3	146.4	143.6	(7.7)	(2.8)
Total Sectors >140,000 Employees	2,180.7	2,293.9	2,306.5	125.8	12.6

### Highlights

#### Sectors with > 140,000 Employment (Sorted by Size)

About 77.8% of employees are in the ten largest sectors. In the recovery from the 2020 recession, employment increased by 125,800.

From Dec. 2019 to April 2026, the primary source of job creation was healthcare and PST. Employment in these two areas increased by 108,100 jobs. State and local government, and construction were secondary contributors. Employment in these three sectors increased by 38,700. AFS gained 1,400 jobs.

On a YOY basis (2025 vs. 2026), HSA created 15,700 jobs. State government and construction added a total of 7,000 jobs. Major employment sectors PST and AFS increased by a combined total of 2,200. The other five sectors changed by -12,300. The total May YOY difference for the large sectors was 12,600.

Source: BLS, SA, cber.co.

# Colorado Employment and Change in Employment

## Sectors with less than 140,000 Employees

Colorado Employment YOY Change (000s)					
Industry Sector	Employment and Change				
	Dec.2019	May 2025	May 2026 (sorted)	Dec. 2019 vs. May 2026	May 2025 vs. 2026
Sectors with more than 140,000 employees					
Other Services (Personal)	115.8	131.5	127.8	12.0	(3.7)
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (TWU)	98.3	119.0	121.0	22.7	2.0
Wholesale Trade	111.6	114.8	113.0	1.4	(1.8)
Information	78.2	70.3	66.9	(11.3)	(3.4)
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation (AER)	59.7	64.4	62.8	3.1	(1.6)
Education (Private)	44.5	48.9	50.3	5.8	1.4
Federal Government	53.1	55.7	50.3	(2.8)	(5.4)
Management of Corporations and Enterprises (MCE)	43.0	46.7	47.7	4.7	1.0
Extractive Industries	26.6	21.2	20.2	(6.4)	(1.0)
<b>Total Sectors &lt;140,000 Employees</b>	<b>630.8</b>	<b>672.5</b>	<b>660.0</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>(12.5)</b>

### Highlights

#### Sectors with < 140,000 Employment (Sorted by Size)

Since 2019, employment has increased in six of the nine sectors. The primary small-sector contributors to job growth were TWU and other services. Employment increased in these sectors by 34,700. The combined increase in employment for private education and MCE was 10,500. Wholesale trade and AER employment increased by 4,500. Unfortunately, employment decreased by 20,500 in the federal government, information, and the extractive industries. Policy changes in the latter two sectors were responsible for reductions.

The April YOY (2026 vs. 2025) data show that TWU, private education, and MCE were the only contributors. Employment increased by 4,500 in these three areas. It decreased by a total of 18,200 in the other six sectors. Overall, employment for the smaller sectors decreased by 12,500.

Source: BLS, SA, cber.co.

# Colorado Employment and Change in Employment

## Private vs. Government Employment

Colorado Employment YOY Change (000s)					
Industry Sector	Employment and Change				
	Dec.2019	May 2025	May 2026	Dec. 2019 vs. May 2026	May 2025 vs. May 2026
Private and Government Sectors					
Total Employment	2,811.5	2,966.4	2,966.5	155.0	0.1
Private Employment	2,353.3	2,476.1	2,479.7	126.4	3.6
Government Employment	458.2	490.3	486.8	28.6	(3.5)

### Highlights

#### Private vs. Government

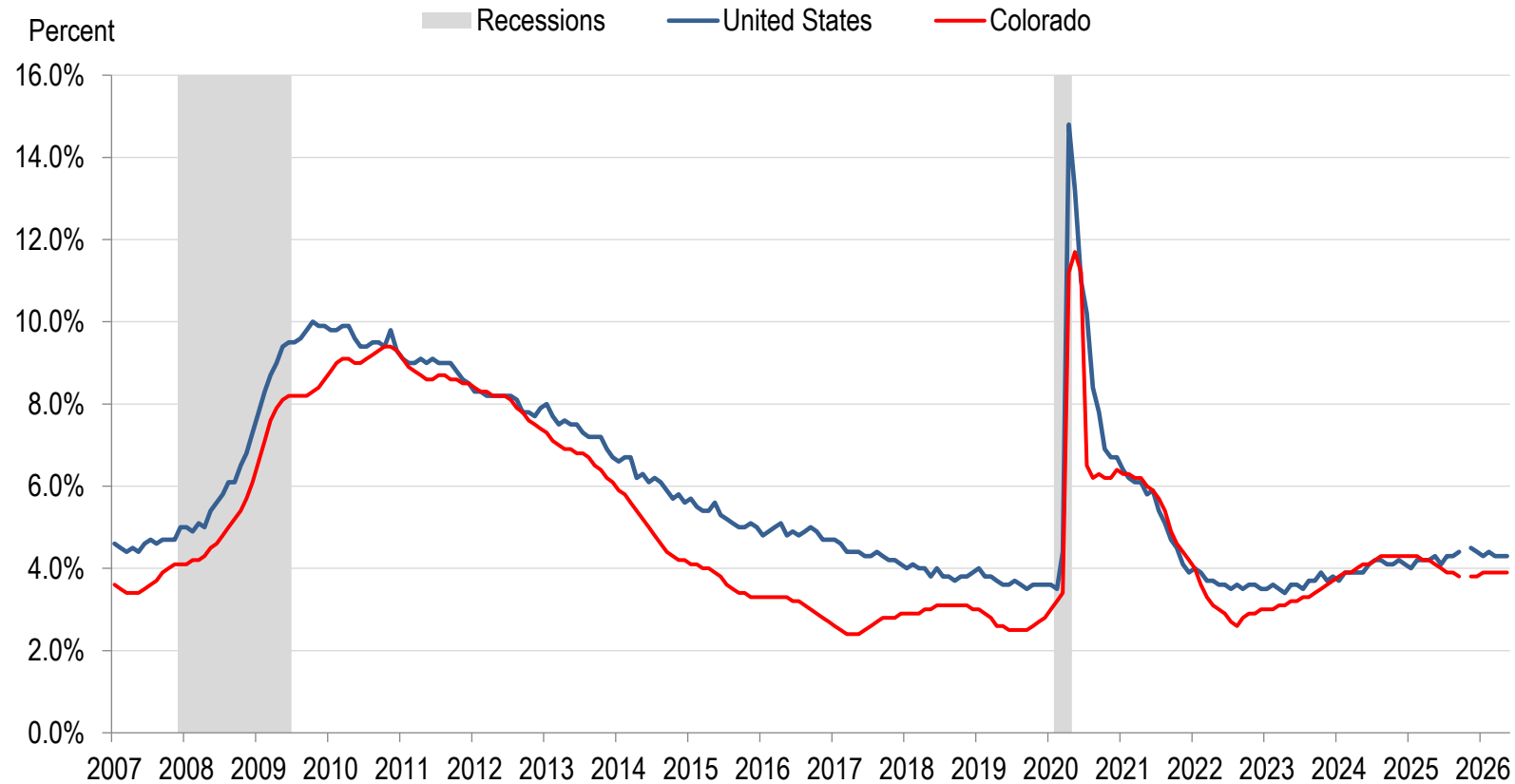
In 2019, 16.3% of employment was in the government sector. It increased to 16.4% in May 2026. From December 2019 to May 2026, 18.4% of the jobs added have been in the government sector. This raises the question, “Is the government sector growing too fast, or is the private sector job growth stagnant?”

Source: BLS, SA, cber.co.

# Unemployment Rate

## United States and Colorado

**U.S. and Colorado Unemployment**



Source: BLS, SA, cber.co.

### Unemployment Rate

The Colorado unemployment rate (red line) was 3.9% in May 2026. The U.S. rate (blue line) was 4.3%.

In about 90% of the months, the Colorado unemployment rate was less than the U.S. rate. That was not the case in 2024 and the first seven months of 2025.

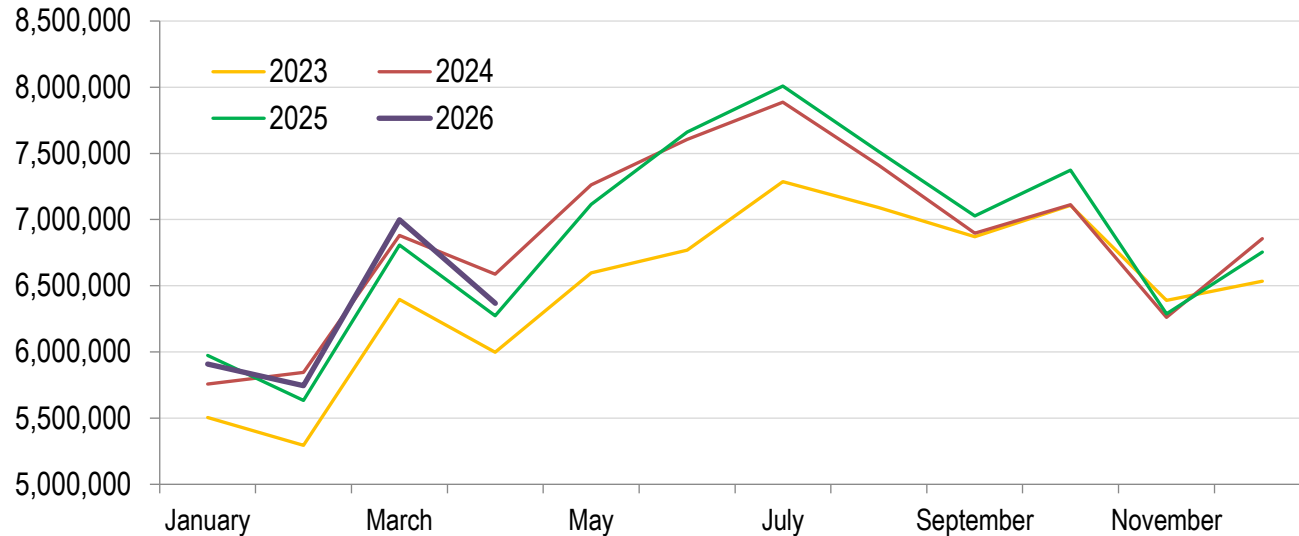
**Annual Unemployment Rate**

Year	United States	Colorado
2016	4.9%	3.1%
2017	4.4%	2.6%
2018	3.9%	3.0%
2019	3.7%	2.7%
2020	8.1%	6.8%
2021	5.3%	5.5%
2022	3.6%	3.1%
2023	3.6%	3.3%
2024	4.0%	4.1%
2025	4.3%	4.0%

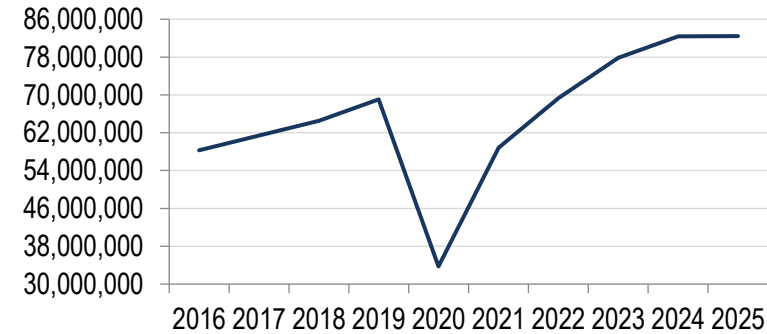
## Colorado Indicators

# DIA and Colorado Springs Passengers

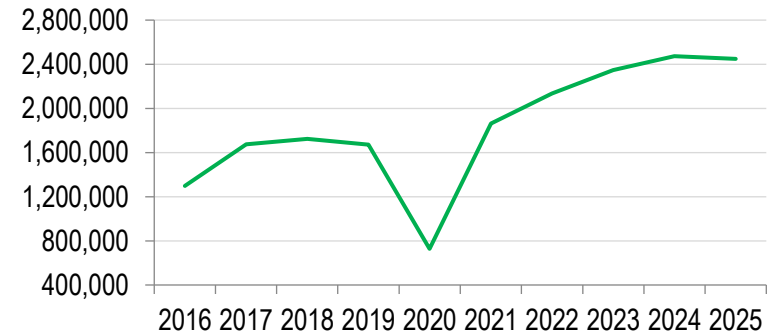
**DIA Passengers (Monthly)**



**DIA Annual Passengers 2016 - 2025**



**COS Annual Passengers 2016 - 2025**



**Denver and Colorado Springs Passengers**

**Above:** Through April 2026, the number of DIA passengers (purple line) was 25.0 million, 1.3% greater than in 2025. Through April, the number of COS passengers was 683,483, 1.2% fewer than in 2025.

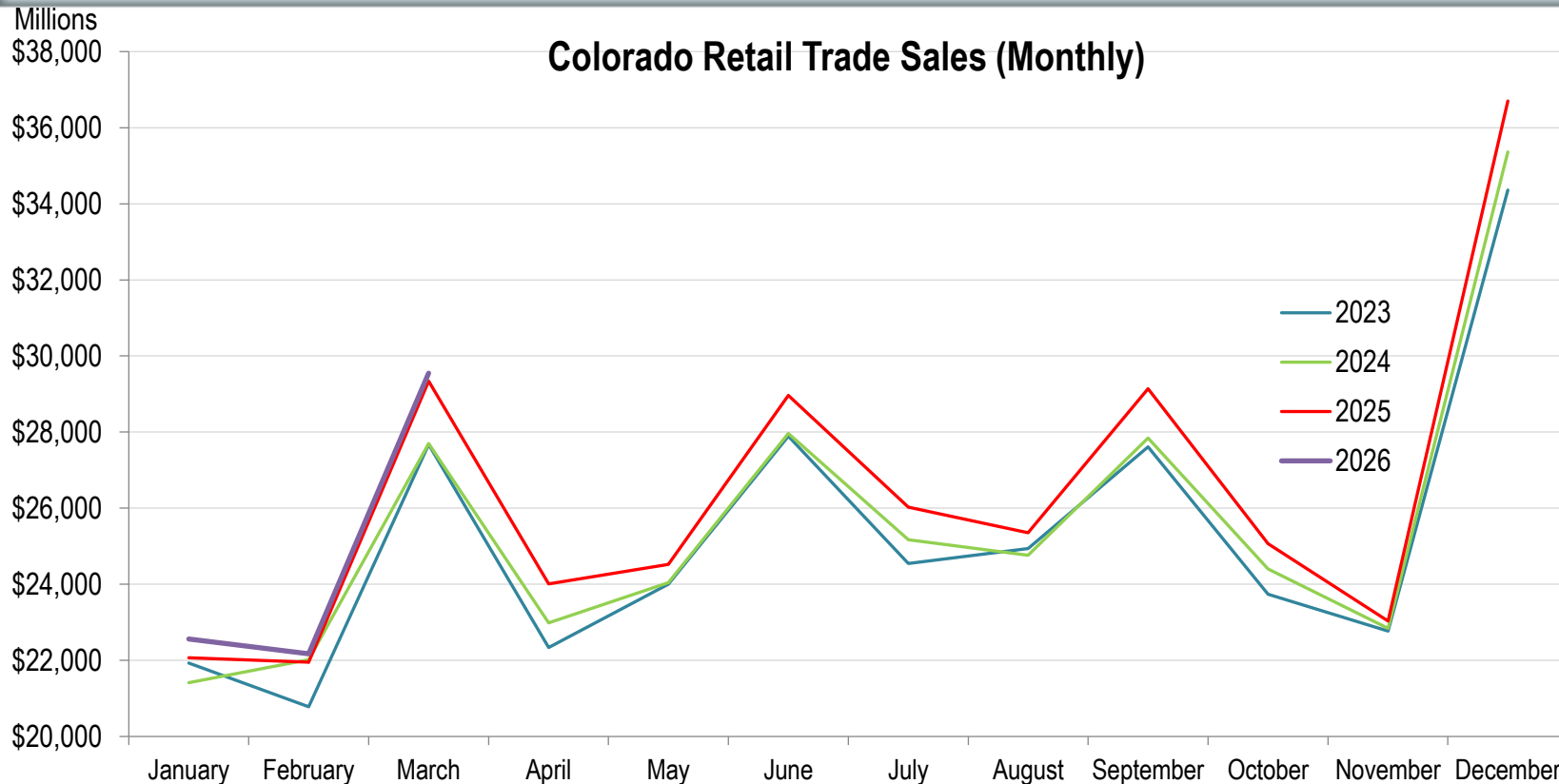
**Upper Right:** There were 69,218 more DEN passengers in 2025 than in 2024 (+0.1%).

**Lower Right:** There were 25,374 fewer COS passengers in 2025 than in 2024 (-1.0%).

Source: flydenver.com, <https://www.flydenver.com/about-den/governance/reports-and-financials/administration/governance>, COS airport, <https://coloradosprings.gov/flycos/monthly-traffic-reports>, cber.co.

# Colorado Retail Trade Sales

## Monthly



### Colorado Retail Trade Sales

Retail sales growth was weak in 2023 and 2024. In 2025 (red), sales increased by 3.2% compared to 2024.

Sales through Q1 2026 were 1.26% more than in Q1 2025 (purple).

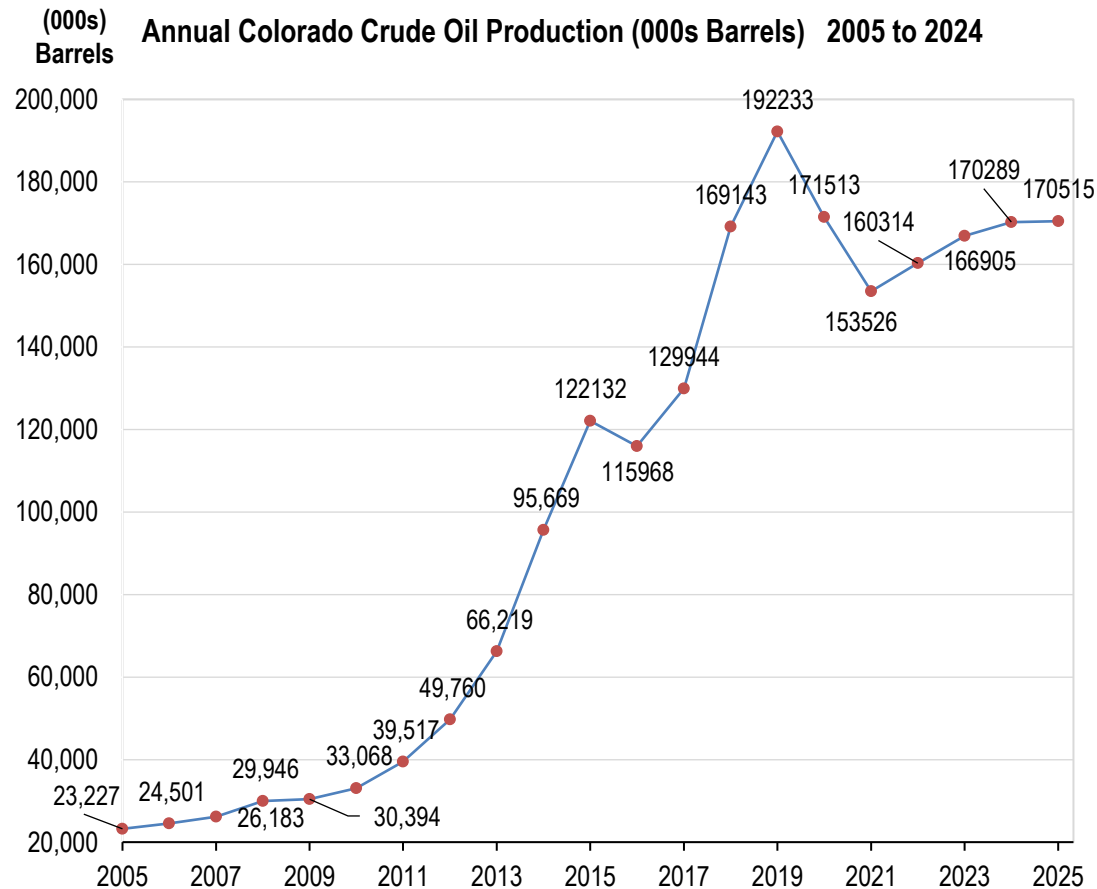
### Annual Retail Sales (Billions)

2017	\$194.6	5.4%
2018	\$206.2	5.9%
2019	\$224.6	9.0%
2020	\$228.8	1.9%
2021	\$268.3	17.3%
2022	\$299.9	11.8%
2023	\$302.6	0.9%
2024	\$306.5	1.3%
2025	\$316.2	3.2%

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue, <https://cdor.colorado.gov/retail-sales-reports>, cber.co. Note: Not adjusted for inflation.

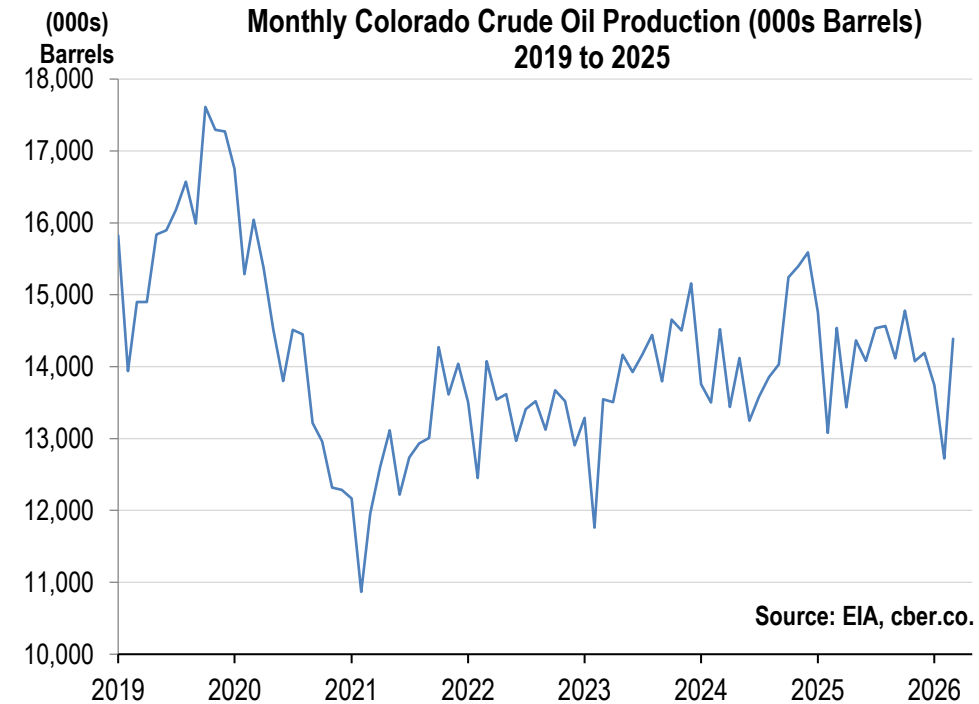
# Colorado Field Production of Crude Oil

## 2005 to 2025 (Thousand Barrels)



Source: EIA, cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>

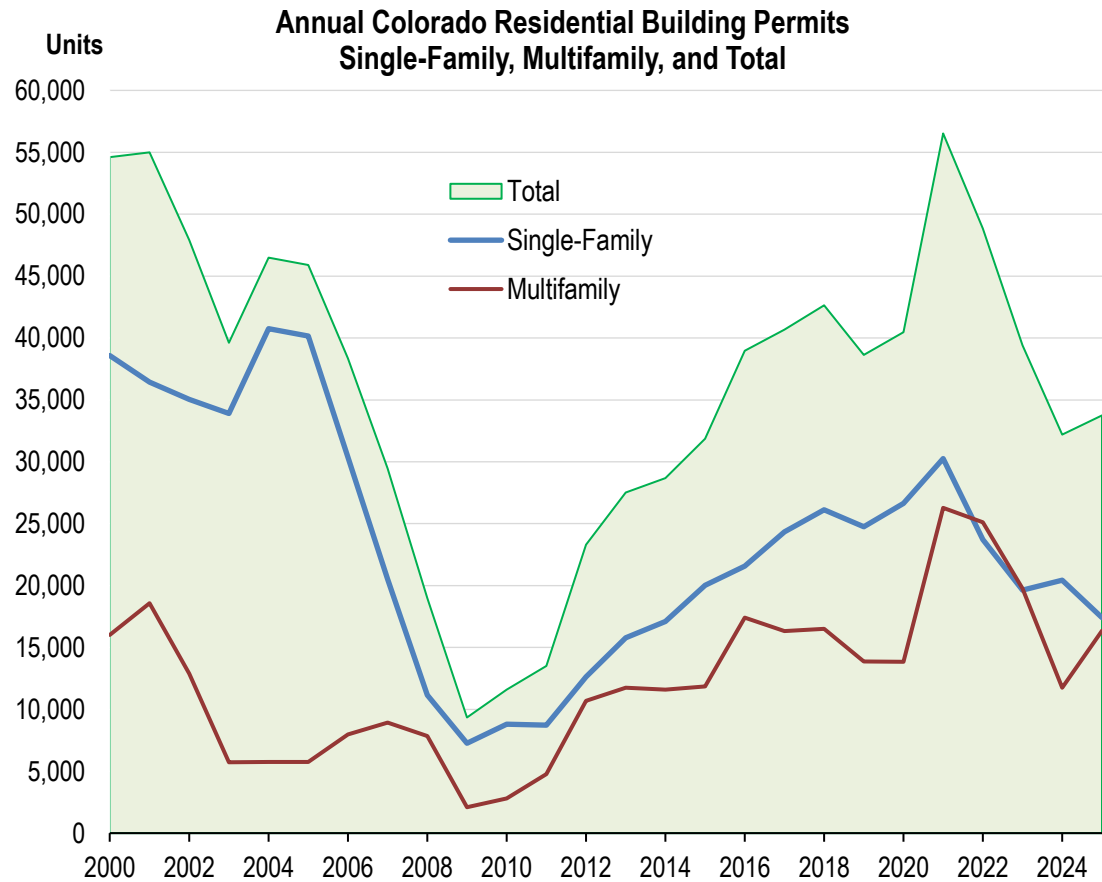


**Above (Monthly):** Production dropped in 2020 and increased at a steady rate between 2021 and 2024. In 2025, monthly production ranged from 12,700 to 14,800 thousand barrels. The number of barrels produced in 2025 was 0.1% more than in 2024.

**Left (Annual):** Over the past 20 years, oil production has become a critical part of the Colorado economy. The downturn in 2020 was caused by state energy regulations and reduced demand from COVID-related policies. In 2021, the annual monthly production hit a low point. There was steady growth from 2022 through 2025, although the 2025 production was about the same as in 2024.

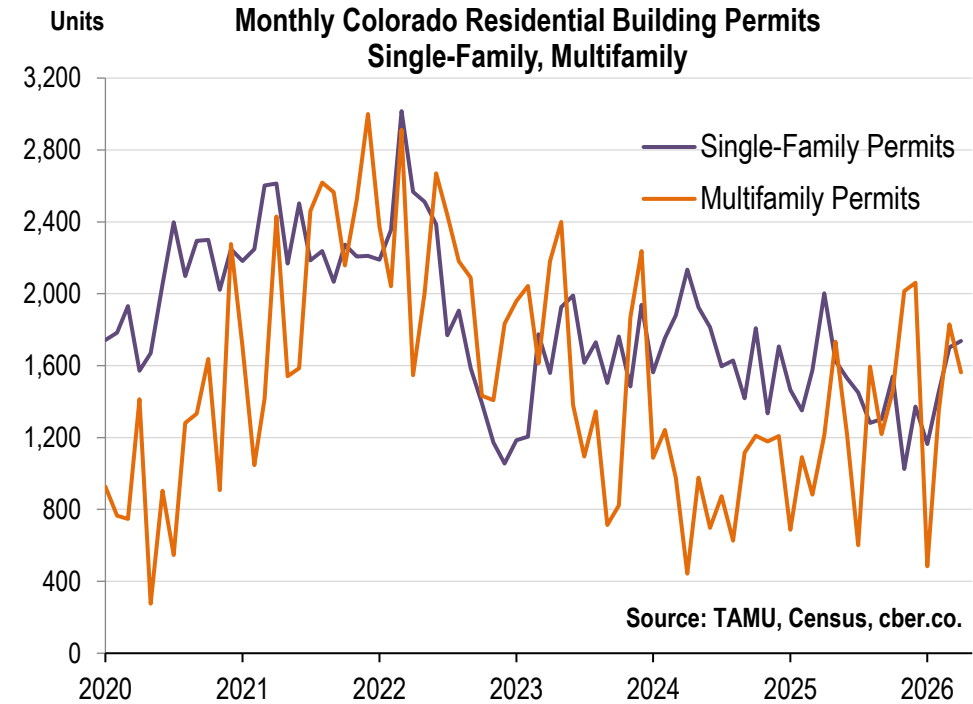
# Colorado Residential Building Permits

## Single Family and Multifamily Units



Source: TAMU, Census Bureau, cber.co.

Colorado-based Business and Economic Research <https://cber.co>



Source: TAMU, Census, cber.co.

**Above (Monthly):** The total number of single-family permits for the first 4 months of 2026 changed by -5.3% (purple) compared to the same period in 2024, and multifamily permits changed by +34.9% (orange).

**Left (Annual):** Over the past 25 years, the total number of permits (green) has ranged from 9,355 units in 2009 to 56,524 in 2021. There is currently a shortage of affordable housing, but the demand is not being met.

## Colorado Economic Forecast Summary

# Forecasts

## Office of State Planning and Budgeting Quarterly Forecast

The forecast summaries for the cber.co and the OSPB (<https://governorsoffice.colorado.gov/governor/economics>) are provided on the next two pages. The OSPB forecast is prepared for the Governor. It is more optimistic than last quarter. The cber.co forecast is less optimistic than earlier updates. The following comments provide things to look for in both forecasts. Many of the issues highlighted in the OSPB forecast are shared by cber.co and other economists.

### Income

General fund revenue was revised up by about \$380 million. The state budget is \$46.8 billion. The General Fund is \$17.8 billion.

### Population and Employment

Weak population growth sets the stage for weak job growth. The labor market is projected to be weak for three years.

### Construction and Real Estate

The number of residential permits is comparatively robust. It is likely not enough to meet the shortage of affordable housing. The office real estate market remains weak.

### U.S. Concerns

OSPB reduced its U.S. GDP growth forecast for 2025 from 2.5% to 2.1%. Economic growth is expected to slow through 2027 and 2028.

Consumer spending is solid; however, some households are relying on credit cards and savings to maintain their current spending.

### Prices and Concerns

Inflation will remain below 2022 and 2023 levels. It has recently risen because of oil prices. Household stress and a weak Denver real estate market are concerns.

# Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting Economic Forecast June 18, 2026

## Table 1: Colorado Economic Variables – History and Forecast

	Income	Actual 2020	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Actual 2024	Actual 2025	Forecast 2026	Forecast 2027	Forecast 2028
1	Personal Income (Billions) /A	\$374.4	\$418.2	\$448.7	\$473.1	\$494.8	\$518.2	\$538.9	\$558.8	\$580.1
2	Change	6.5%	11.7%	7.3%	5.4%	4.6%	4.7%	4.0%	3.7%	3.8%
3	Wage and Salary Income (Billions)	\$187.8	\$205.5	\$225.4	\$239.0	\$250.1	\$261.6	\$272.6	\$282.6	\$292.5
4	Change	2.6%	9.5%	9.7%	6.0%	4.7%	4.6%	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%
5	Per-Capita Income (\$/person) /A	\$64,707.0	\$71,925.0	\$76,658.0	\$80,028.0	\$82,636.0	\$86,198.0	\$89,400.0	\$92,195.0	\$95,034.0
6	Change	5.6%	11.2%	6.6%	4.4%	3.3%	4.3%	3.7%	3.1%	3.1%
<b>Population &amp; Employment</b>		<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
7	Population (Thousands)	5,788.9	5,814.2	5,853.0	5,911.8	5,987.7	6,011.4	6,027.9	6,061.4	6,103.8
8	Change	0.9%	0.5%	0.7%	1.0%	1.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%
9	Net Migration (Thousands)	31.3	11.4	26.0	41.9	58.5	3.5	(\$2.0)	15.0	25.0
10	Unemployment Rate	6.8%	5.5%	3.1%	3.3%	4.1%	4.0%	4.0%	4.5%	4.7%
11	Total Nonagricultural Employment (Thousands)	2,652.7	2,750.9	2,889.7	2,937.5	2,989.6	2,961.9	2,964.9	2,967.8	2,972.3
12	Change	-4.9%	3.7%	4.3%	2.4%	1.1%	-0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
<b>Construction Variables</b>		<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
13	Total Housing Permits Issued (Thousands)	40.5	56.5	48.8	39.4	32.2	33.8	36.0	37.2	38.7
14	Change	4.8%	39.7%	-13.6%	-19.3%	-18.3%	4.5%	7.1%	3.3%	4.0%
15	Nonresidential Construction Value (Millions) /B	\$5,607.5	\$5,681.0	\$6,610.9	\$6,553.4	\$4,935.8	\$6,880.7	\$5,580.2	\$5,329.1	\$5,926.0
16	Change	8.6%	1.3%	16.4%	-0.9%	-24.7%	39.4%	-18.9%	-4.5%	11.2%
<b>Price Variables</b>		<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
17	Retail Trade (Billions) /C	\$228.8	\$268.3	\$299.9	\$302.6	\$306.5	\$316.2	\$326.3	\$331.8	\$342.8
18	Change	1.9%	17.3%	11.8%	0.9%	1.3%	3.2%	3.2%	1.7%	3.3%
19	Denver-Aurora-Lakewood Consumer Price Index (1982-84=100)	272.2	281.8	304.4	320.3	327.6	335.3	350.0	358.1	366.3
20	Change	2.0%	3.5%	8.0%	5.2%	2.3%	2.4%	4.4%	2.3%	2.3%

/A Personal Income as reported by the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis includes: wage and salary disbursements, supplements to wages and salaries, proprietors' income with inventory and capital consumption adjustments, rental income of persons with capital consumption adjustments, personal dividend income, personal interest income, and personal current transfer receipts, less contributions from government social insurance.

/B Nonresidential Construction Value is reported by Dodge Analytics (McGraw-Hill Construction) and includes new construction, additions, and major remodeling projects predominately at commercial and manufacturing facilities, educational institutions, medical and government buildings. Nonresidential does not include non-building projects (such as streets, highways)

/C Retail Trade includes motor vehicles and automobile parts, furniture and home furnishings, electronics and appliances, building materials, sales at food and beverage stores, health and personal care, sales at convenience stores and service stations, clothing, sporting goods / books / music, and general merchandise found at warehouse stores and internet purchases.

# Colorado Economic Forecast 2025 Summary

## Colorado Economic Forecast

		2023	2024	2025	2026
Real GDP growth (Colorado) has been reduced to account for uncertainty in the economy.	Real GDP Value (billions) (chained 2017)	\$440.2	\$448.8	\$458.1	\$467.2
	% Change Real GDP	4.0%	2.0%	2.1	2.0%
The population (Colorado) will increase by 35,200 people in 2026. About 16,000 will be a result of net migration.	Colorado Population	5,900.4	5,956.7	5,989.8	6,025.0
	Annual Change (thousands)	50.3	56.3	33.2	35.2
Colorado employment is expected to increase by 20,100 in 2025 and remain weak through 2027. Colorado's unemployment rate will remain fairly stable.	CES Employment (thousands)	2,937.5	2,969.6	2,961.9	2,982.0
	Annual Change (thousands)	67.8	32.1	-7.7	20.1
	% Change	2.4%	1.1%	-0.3%	0.7%
	Unemployment Rate	3.3%	4.1%	4.0%	4.0%
	Retail Sales (billions)	\$302.6	\$306.5	\$316.6	\$327.0
	% Change	0.9%	1.3%	3.2%	3.4%
Consumers will be resilient, but careful. Retail sales improved in 2025. That level of sales will continue in 2026.	Consumer Price Index (CPI)	320.3	327.6	335.1	344.1
	% Change	5.2%	2.3%	2.3%	2.7%
The inflation rate has declined from the high point between 2021 and 2023. The accumulated effect of those high rates can still be felt. Colorado inflation is projected to be 2.7% in 2026.	DIA Passengers (millions)	77.8	82.3	82.3	85.0
	Single Family (SF) Permits	19,641	20,534	17,406	17,500
	Multi-family (MF) Permits	19,763	11,751	16,352	17,500
	Oil Production (thousands) barrels	166,905	170,289	170,515	172,000

In 2024 and 2025, 82.3 million passengers flew through DIA. The number will increase in 2026. Passenger traffic at the Colorado Springs (COS) airport was slightly lower than in 2025. The number of passengers will be flat in 2026. The traffic at both airports was strong.

There were 33,758 permits issued in 2025, of which 52% were SF permits. Colorado will continue to have demand for housing, particularly affordable housing. There will be a total of 35,000 SF and MF permits issued in 2026.

The annual production of Colorado crude oil has increased since 2021. Fossil fuels will play an integral role in our economy in the future.

Ready or not, election season has arrived! The midterms will impact the economy for the next two years.

cber.co  
Economic Outlook and Trends, June Update, May 2026 Data  
Colorado and the United States

This analysis is for informational purposes only. Any opinions or interpretations of data are those of the presenter. As such, they do not represent the viewpoints of any group or particular organization.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Horvath has produced annual employment forecasts of the state economy for over 30 years. They have been supplemented by monthly economic updates and indices that track economic performance over the short term. In addition, he has directed three statewide analyses that included reviews of all 64 county economies.

Horvath was the principal investigator for a state and federally funded project to prepare a nanotechnology roadmap for Colorado. As well, he was a co-founder of the Colorado Photonics Industry Association, a trade group for Colorado's photonics cluster. Horvath has been an active board member of the group since its inception.

Horvath has also served on the Board of Directors for the Economic Development Council of Colorado, Northwest Denver Business Partnership, Adams County Regional Economic Partnership, and Broomfield Economic Development Corporation. Horvath has also been the chair of the electronics committee in the Governor's Office of Economic Development and International Trade early stage and proof of concept Advanced Industries grant program, and he served on the 2021 Colorado Legislative Redistricting Commission.