

## Healthcare Workplace Economy August 2011

### Jobs Report Summary for the Healthcare Industry Based on the BLS Report with July 2011 data

Throughout 2011, one phrase has regularly been expressed by nationwide economists while describing the United States' current economic status – “cautiously optimistic.”

As the nation's unemployment rate has lingered near its highest point in three decades, economists' recent predictions, that 75,000 jobs would be created throughout the month of July, were perceived as overly optimistic, to say the least.

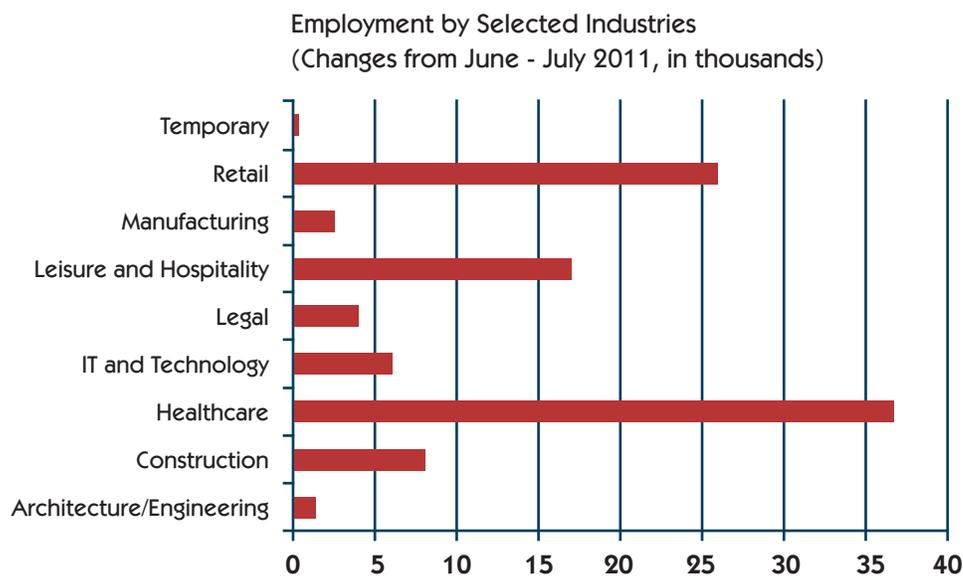
Yet, surprisingly, such predictions were actually lower than the Bureau of Labor Statistics' latest “The Employment Situation” findings, as a total of 117,000 jobs were generated throughout the nation in July alone – a vast improvement in comparison

to June's staggering employment findings, which included the addition of only 18,000 jobs to the national economy.

Additionally, the unemployment rate dropped from 9.2% to 9.1%, as the nation's total labor force of 153.2 million workers remained nearly unchanged. Although the job market appears to be gradually improving, economists have projected that 150,000 jobs must be created each month in order to maintain pace with the country's population growth rates and to significantly decrease unemployment levels.

Another sign that job creation progress has only just begun is noted by the country's present complement to the unemployment rate, the percentage of the population with a job, which is 58.1%, the lowest rate in 28 years. Furthermore, there are currently 8.4 million involuntary part-time employees, 2.8 million individuals marginally

### Sector Changes Observed in July



Source: BLS

attached to the labor force, and 1.1 million discouraged workers who have ended their job searches for the time being, believing no opportunities are available for them at this time.

As the Obama Administration continually strives to increase the civilian workforce population and income levels, further optimistic findings from this month's BLS jobs report remain. First, average hourly earnings for all employees increased by 0.4 percent to \$23.13, as earnings have increased by 2.3 percent throughout the last year. Second, the average hourly earnings of private-sector production and nonsupervisory employees also increased by 0.4 percent – up to \$19.52.

Undoubtedly, the road towards economic recovery remains long and arduous. Economists, employers, and job seekers ought to remain “cautiously optimistic” as the economy continues to gain momentum throughout the coming months.

During the month of July, private employers hired 154,000 professionals throughout the United States, according to the BLS' August 5th release of “The Employment Situation.” A variety of industries, including healthcare, manufacturing, and mining, hired thousands of employees throughout July – a sign the economy is slowly recovering from the recession.

The following BLS findings were recently issued to the American public, according to the various sectors which have reported job growth as of late:

- **Healthcare:** The healthcare industry, as a whole, hired 31,000 individuals throughout July. Ambulatory health care services and hospitals continued to hire thousands of medical professionals, just as they have in recent months; each added 14,000 jobs, respectively.
- **Manufacturing:** The manufacturing industry created 24,000 new job opportunities. A majority of these positions had an emphasis in durable goods manufacturing. Of interest, manufacturing has hired 289,000 professionals since December 2009.
- **Mining:** In recent months, the mining industry has hired very few employees within the field; however, the industry created 9,000 positions in July. Mining employment has increased by 14,000 since October 2009.
- **Professional and technical services:** While the industry developed 18,000 new positions in July, employment in temporary help services has not improved in recent months. As a whole, the industry has hired 246,000 professionals since March 2010.
- **Retail trade:** The retail trade industry continued to hire new employees, especially during the months of June and July. The industry added 26,000 jobs in July alone and has hired 228,000 since December 2009.

### Soliant insights:

Overall, July's job report findings were more positive than many economic analysts had predicted. Job growth was nearly seven times as high in July as it was in June, as the nation's unemployment rate decreased.

Yet, only 1.9 million of 8.7 million jobs lost since 2008 have actually been recovered. In the meantime, 13.9 million Americans are currently unemployed – more than 40 percent of such individuals have been without work for more than six months.

Still, for the first time in months, economists, employers, and governmental officials received positive news regarding job growth. But, will such growth endure after the conclusion of the summer season? Will industries, such as healthcare and professional services, continue to hire professionals at as a high of a rate as they did in July?

Such questions will linger throughout the remainder of 2011, as governmental officials and businesses strive to develop new job opportunities and benefits for the nation's unemployed.

## Of interest

### Palms scanned to cut medical errors at NYC hospital

Source: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)

New York University's Langone Medical Center has stopped asking many of their patients for their insurance cards or requiring them to complete endless forms; instead they are identifying them by using a biometric technology to scan the unique veins in their palm. The hospital employed this new technology primarily to eliminate medical errors as well to accelerate patient check-ins.

Technology services company Fujitsu contends that as with fingerprints and iris patterns, no two individuals' palm-vein configurations are quite the same. The initial registration process takes about a minute, and includes near-infrared waves taking an image of an individual's palm veins. Subsequent scans take only seconds.

In early June, the hospital installed 250 scanners at a cost of \$200,000 and in a few short months, they now have more than 25,000 patients who have registered their unique palm-vein patterns in the system. The registration process is optional, but hospital officials have found that less than 1% of patients refuse. The palm scans are not stored in the patient's medical records, nor are the scans stored as images but instead are converted into a unique numeric code.

### Social media can 'buoy' disaster preparedness and response

Source: [www.healthcareitnews.com](http://www.healthcareitnews.com)

Social media such as Facebook and Twitter may be vital keys to strengthening the public health system's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. To date, there are more than 40 million Americans using social media websites multiple times a day; therefore, there is an unprecedented two-way exchange between the public and public health officials.

Public health officials can "push" information to the public while simultaneously "pulling" in data from

the public. Harnessing crowd-sourcing technologies and electronic communications tools may help officials be better prepared to handle emergencies in a quicker, more coordinated, more effective way.

Examples of recent successful healthcare disaster response experiments in social media, occurred during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched "Mommystream" on outlets such as YouTube and iTunes to help keep roughly one million viewers abreast of the disease. These communications provided tips on what to expect and how to prevent the flu's spread. Regional health departments drew people to various vaccination sites within minutes of texting and tweeting about shot availability.

The public is now a part of a larger response network created by sharing images, texting and tweeting and they are no longer bystanders or casualties. The extensive reach of social networks allows people who are recovering from disasters to rapidly connect with resources to obtain help. Combined, the information obtained through social media provides a historical record of how events unfold, serving as a cohesive story about a recovering community's capabilities and vulnerabilities in real time.

### New robot in Japan can lift patients off floor into wheelchair

Source: [www.cio.com](http://www.cio.com)

A research center in Japan recently revealed a robot that can ease caretakers back-breaking work of lifting patients off the floor and onto a wheelchair – something they have to do at least 40 times per day. The robot, nicknamed RIBA 2 (Robot for Interactive Body Assistance), was developed for use in nursing homes and assisted care facilities, which are rapidly expanding as the number of elderly increase. The wheeled robot has sheets of a specially designed rubber sensor mesh along its arms and chest to provide feedback while carrying patients. The machine can lift a patient weighing up to 176 pounds from ground level, wheelchairs and beds. Developers plan to put the robot in facilities for testing next year and begin sales in 2015 with a current target price of \$78,000.

