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Panhandle Hiring Index Q3 2026

Quarterly labor market report · Florida Panhandle · November 9, 2026

Quarter	Q3 2026 (July to September 2026)
Compared with	Q3 2025
Areas	Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin, Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent, Panama City-Panar
Source	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
Published by	Alto HR · www.altohr.com/resources/hiring-index

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01 The quarter in brief

Across the three Panhandle metro areas, jobs rose to an average of 431,400 in Q3 2026, a change of +2,400 (+0.6%) from Q3 2025. Leisure and hospitality jobs rose to 71,800, a change of +3,100 (+4.5%), and retail jobs fell to 55,900, a change of -400 (-0.7%). Florida's unemployment rate averaged 4.5%, +0.5 points from a year earlier.

Measure	Q3 2026	Change vs Q3 2025
Jobs in the three metro areas	431,400	+2,400 (+0.6%)
Leisure and hospitality jobs	71,800	+3,100 (+4.5%)
Retail jobs	55,900	-400 (-0.7%)
Florida unemployment rate	4.5%	+0.5 points

02 By metro area

Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin: Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, Crestview, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach.

Measure	Q3 2026	Change vs Q3 2025
All jobs	133,000	+300 (+0.2%)
Leisure and hospitality	26,300	+1,100 (+4.4%)
Retail	17,800	-300 (-1.5%)
Unemployment rate	4.3%	+0.3 points

Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent: Pensacola, Navarre.

Measure	Q3 2026	Change vs Q3 2025
All jobs	203,600	+400 (+0.2%)
Leisure and hospitality	28,100	+500 (+1.9%)
Retail	24,800	-100 (-0.3%)

Measure	Q3 2026	Change vs Q3 2025
Unemployment rate	4.9%	+0.5 points

Panama City-Panama City Beach: Panama City, Panama City Beach.

Measure	Q3 2026	Change vs Q3 2025
All jobs	94,800	+1,700 (+1.8%)
Leisure and hospitality	17,400	+1,500 (+9.2%)
Retail	13,300	0 (-0.2%)
Unemployment rate	4.5%	+0.3 points

03 What it means for employers

Plan the season early

Leisure and hospitality hiring in the Panhandle peaks in late spring and summer. Teams planned before the peak start ready; teams hired during it compete for the same people.

Read the local rate

Each metro area moves on its own. Compare your area with Florida before setting pay, schedules and start dates.

Use the monthly data

The web page refreshes weekly as new monthly figures are published, and the full monthly series is available as a CSV at www.altohr.com/resources/hiring-index.

Talk to us

For a season plan built on these figures, call (850) 805-3774 or email info@altohr.com.

04 Method and sources

Jobs: Current Employment Statistics, all nonfarm, leisure and hospitality, and retail trade employees, not seasonally adjusted, by metropolitan statistical area. Unemployment: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, by metro area and for Florida.

Each figure is the average of July to September 2026, compared with the same months a year earlier. Data published through September 2026. Months the federal government did not publish are left out of the averages.

How to cite: Alto HR, Panhandle Hiring Index, Q3 2026, from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data. www.altohr.com/resources/hiring-index