

The Newest Challenge for the U.S. Economy: The "People Gap"

Here's the situation: Our economy has a "people gap" challenge.

In other words: Labor market data released this month shows that there are fewer workers available than there are job openings, which remain on the rise.

Show me the data:

Let's look at a little thing we like to call the "Workforce Availability Ratio" aka "WAR". Developed by the U.S. Chamber, WAR measures the number of available workers for every job opening. And the latest one (based on August Bureau of Labor Statistics) finds that there are 1.1 workers available for every job opening.

So, what does that mean?

There's almost one job for every person who's looking for one – 7.77 million available workers versus 7.03 million job openings.



What the experts are saying: Long story short, this is the tightest labor market in years. According to U.S. Chamber economist Ronald Bird, "employers looking to fill open positions are experiencing a labor market that's nearly three times tighter than it has been on average over the last two decades and eight times tighter than it was 10 years ago."

Who does this impact? Everyone. But in particular, [small businesses](#), [middle market companies](#), and [construction firms](#) have listed finding workers as one of their biggest challenges.

To break it down even further...

- Leisure and Hospitality: **176,000** more job openings than workers
- Trade, Transportation and Utilities: **200,000** more openings than workers
- Education and Health Services: **532,000** more openings than workers
- Professional and Business Services: **618,000** more openings than workers

Our stance: The U.S. Chamber believes that shrinking the people gap is, and should continue to be, a priority. Bringing more people into the workforce begins with helping those affected by the [opioid crisis](#), helping those [getting out of prison](#) find meaningful work, and [helping veterans and their spouses](#) find job opportunities. The U.S. Chamber is also working on immigration reform. For instance, we're [fighting to help Dreamers](#), undocumented people who have lived in the U.S. almost their entire lives, earn legal status.

So, imagine this: How much more productive could our economy be if we had more workers?

To learn more about how the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is working to close the gaps in the American workforce, visit our [Center for Education and Workforce](#).

