

METRO NORTH WDA

QUARTERLY JOB SEEKER REPORT

OCTOBER 2026

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INTRODUCTION

This quarterly report aims to provide insightful analysis of the current labor market trends in the Metro North region. Whether you are a business leader, job seeker, or community member, you'll find valuable information to help you understand and navigate the local employment landscape.

We cover key topics such as unemployment trends, top occupations, job posting data, and the most sought-after skills.

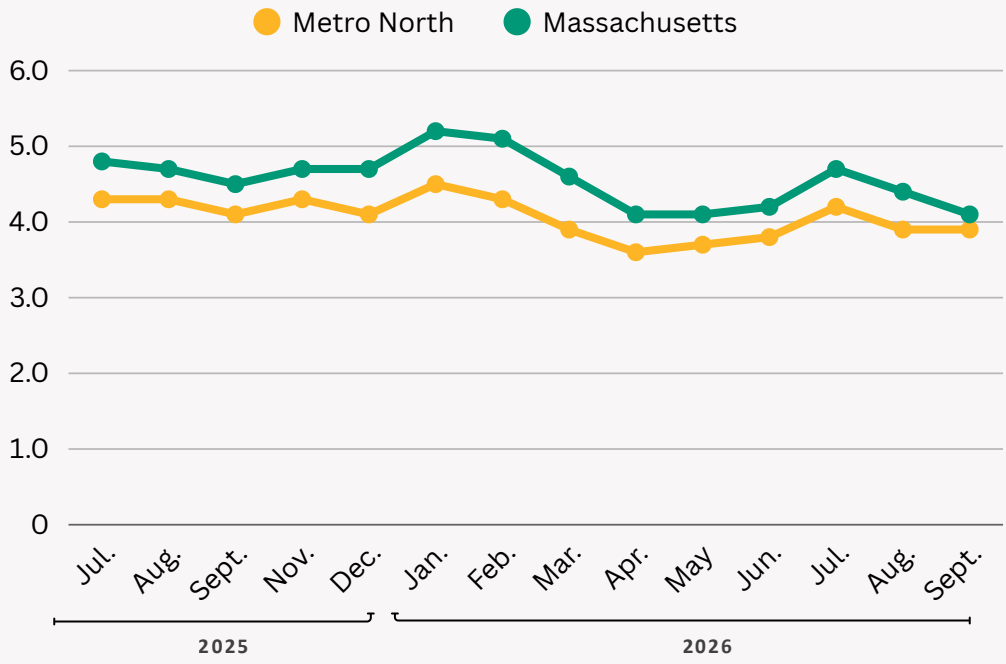
For questions about the data in this report, please reach out to Liana Gracia (lgracia@masshiremetronorth.org) or Kelly Washburn (kwashburn@masshiremetronorth.org)

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UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

General Trend: Unemployment rates decreased from July to September in both Metro North WDA and Massachusetts. Metro North's unemployment rate decreased from 4.2% in July to 3.9% in September. Similarly, Massachusetts' unemployment rate decreased from 4.7% in July to 4.1% in September. **Metro North WDA continues to maintain lower unemployment rates than the statewide average.** Compared to the same time period last year (July-September 2025), unemployment was lower in both Metro North and Massachusetts.



SEASONAL TRENDS

Unemployment rates decreased from July to September in both Metro North and MA.

CONCLUSION

The unemployment rate in Metro North WDA continues to remain below the statewide average.

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LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

SEPTEMBER 2026

ESTIMATED TOTAL LABOR FORCE

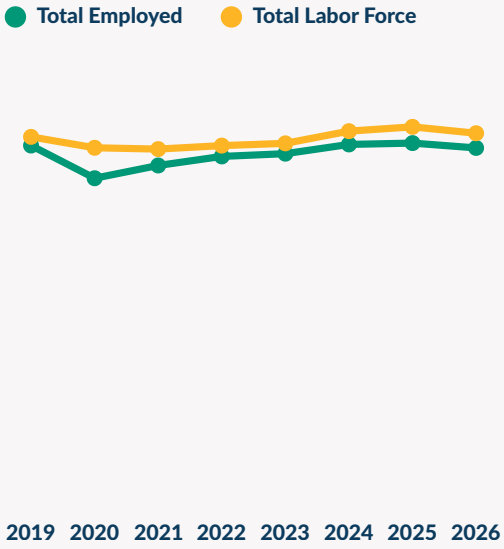
497,882

-4,432 YEAR OVER YEAR

ESTIMATED TOTAL EMPLOYED

478,637

-3,315 YEAR OVER YEAR



There has been a consistent gap between the total labor force and those employed. The gap widened significantly in 2020, peaking at 39,930 due to economic disruption caused by the pandemic.

The gap has narrowed since then, falling to 19,245 by September 2026, indicating gradual improvement in employment levels. However, the labor market has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Ongoing factors such as **retirements, softer economic conditions, and reduced labor force participation among foreign-born workers** continue to contribute to an uneven labor market recovery.

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JOB POSTING BREAKDOWN

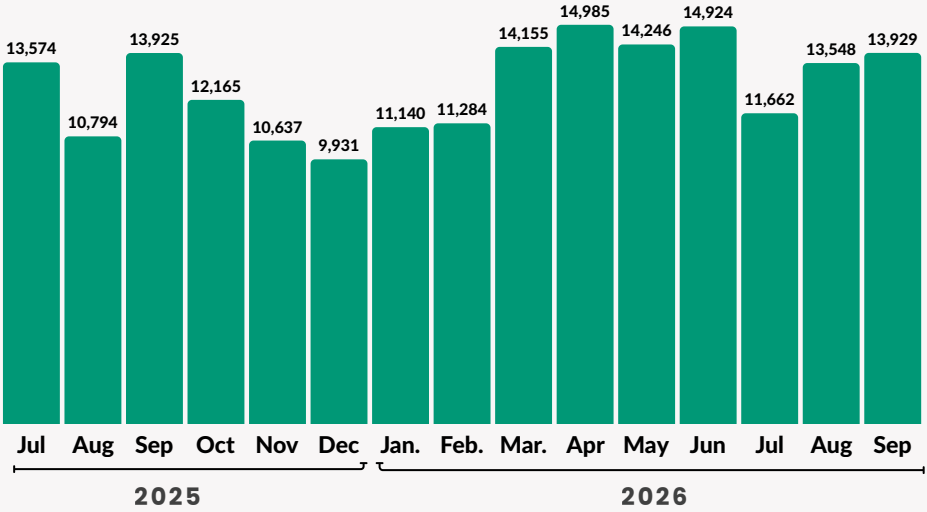
Lightcast provides local job posting data on employer demand based on occupation, industry, and various other details. According to the latest estimates, the total number of job postings in Metro North has decreased compared to the previous quarter.

39,139

Unique Job Postings This Quarter

-5,027

Change in Job Postings Over Previous Quarter



Job posting trends indicate a decrease in postings from July-September 2026, compared to April-June 2026. Compared to the same time period in 2025, postings this quarter were higher by 2,265, with 36,874 during that time period. Unlike the previous quarter, when monthly postings remained above 14,000, this quarter did not exceed 14,000 in any month. **Job postings from this quarter remained above pre-pandemic levels (38,580 postings in July-September 2019)**, suggesting employer demand remains relatively higher despite a recent slowdown.

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TOP POSTED OCCUPATIONS & PROJECTED DEMAND

Occupation	Number of Postings (July-September 2026)	Projected Growth (2026-2028)
Registered Nurses	1,745	-1%
Software Developers	1,011	+1%
Retail Salespersons	764	-1%
Medical and Health Services Managers	691	+4%
Financial Managers	649	+2%
Project Management Specialists	602	0%
General and Operations Managers	593	-1%
Industrial Engineers	586	+1%
Marketing Managers	581	0%
Managers, All Other	538	+1%

From July-September 2026, Metro North's most posted occupations continue to expand Healthcare, Professional Scientific and Technical Services, Administrative Support and Waste Management, and Retail Trade. Registered Nurses and Software Developers led regional hiring demand, while Retail Salesperons, Medical and Health Services Managers, Financial Managers, and Project Management Specialists also ranked among the top posted occupations.



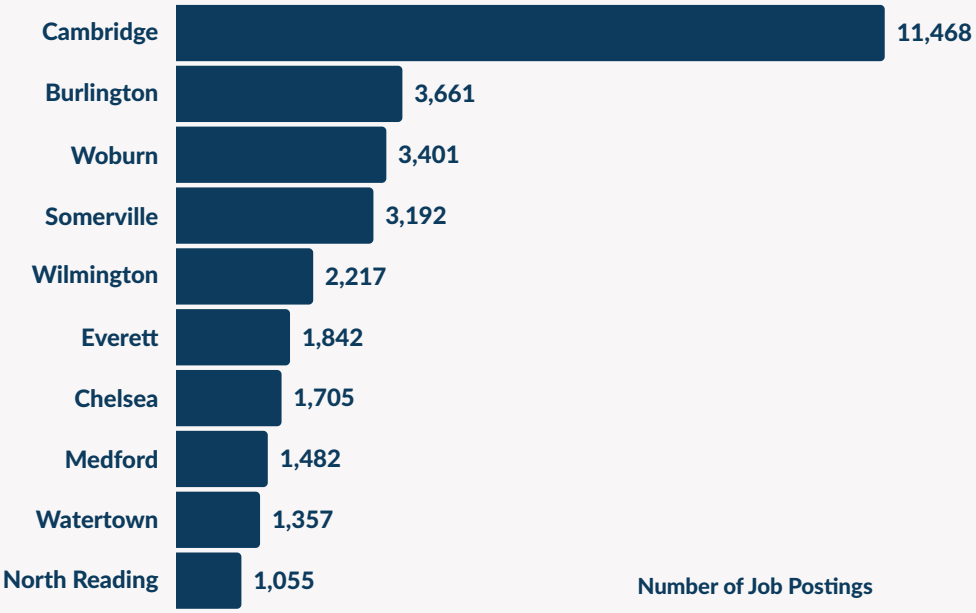
Projected demand varies across occupations, with several management and engineering roles expected to grow while some high-posting occupations remain flat or decline.

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TOP CITIES

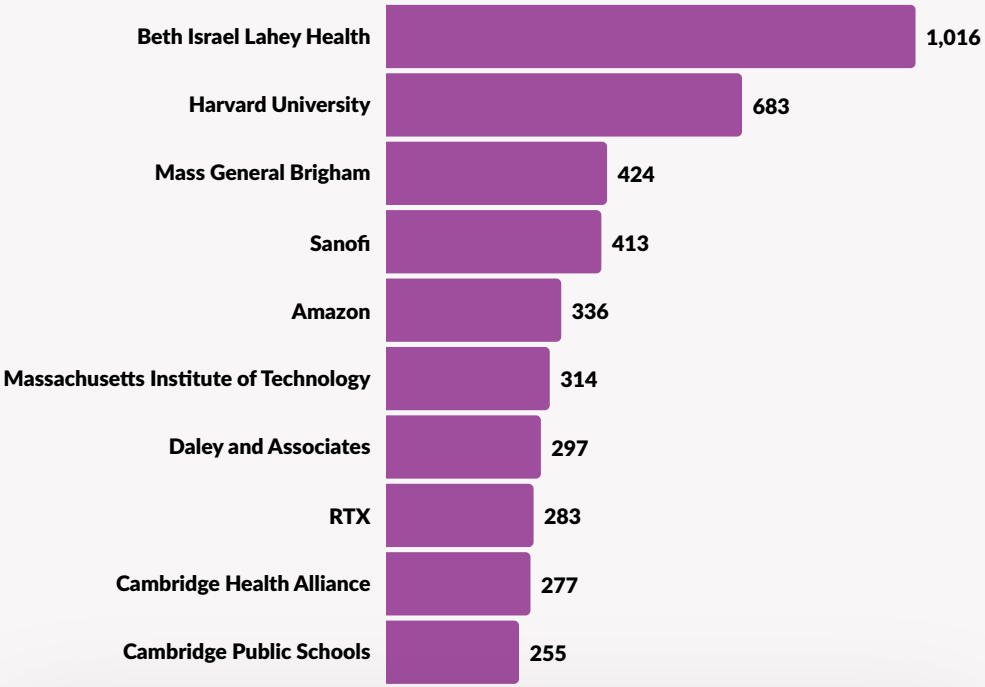
Cambridge

Job postings remain **highly concentrated in Cambridge**, which continues to serve as Metro North's primary employment hub, followed by Burlington, Woburn, and Somerville.



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TOP EMPLOYERS



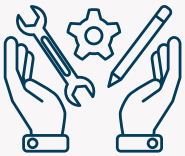
Healthcare & Education Lead Regional Hiring

Six of the top 10 employers are in healthcare, higher education, or public education.

Healthcare and education organizations continued to dominate job postings in Metro North from July-September 2026. Beth Israel Lahey Health led the region with 1,016 unique job postings, followed by Harvard University with 683. The top employers also reflect the diversity of the region, with hiring activity spanning healthcare, life sciences, technology, education, and advanced manufacturing. RTX entered the top 10 this quarter, with demand across engineering and technical occupations.

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SKILLS BREAKDOWN
TIME PERIOD: *JULY-SEPTEMBER 2026*



Top Specialized Skills

Skills that are primarily required within a subset of occupations to equip one to perform a specific task.

Specialized Skill	*Number of Postings*	*% Of Postings*	*Projected Skill Growth (2 years)*
Workflow Management	4,000	10%	16%
Project Management	3,713	9%	20%
Finance	2,726	7%	22%
Auditing	2,699	7%	21%
Lifting Ability	2,618	7%	10%
Continuous Improvement Process	2,526	6%	20%
Automation	2,400	6%	30%

Top Common Skills

Skills that are prevalent across many different occupations, including interpersonal, transferable, and learned skills.

Common Skill	*Number of Postings*	*% Of Postings*	*Projected Skill Growth (2 years)*
Communication	19,120	49%	9%
Leadership	9,600	25%	10%
Operations	9,565	24%	9%
Management	8,399	22%	6%
Customer Service	8,389	21%	5%
Detail Oriented	7,229	18%	8%
Problem Solving	6,229	16%	11%

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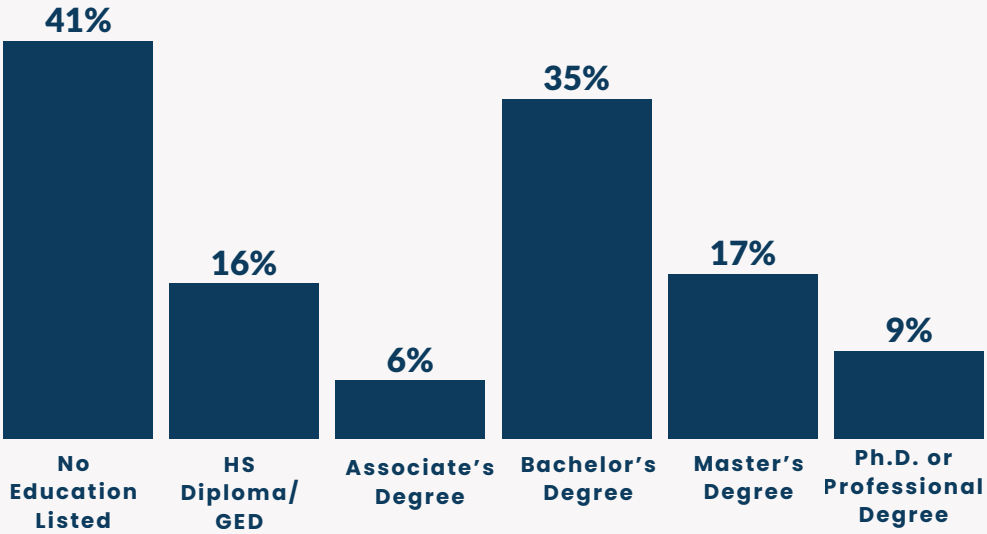
TOP QUALIFICATIONS

Qualification	Number of Postings with Qualification
Valid Driver's License	3,214
Registered Nurse (RN)	1,625
Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification	1,428
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification	1,042
Security Clearance	1,040
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	820
First Aid Certification	527
Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) Certification	470
Teaching Certificate	400
Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)	393

Healthcare-related certifications continue to dominate employer demand, with credentials such as Registered Nurses (RN), Basic Life Support (BLS), and CPR among the most requested. Qualifications such as a valid driver's license, security clearance, and an MBA (Master of Business Administration), highlight the need for both **foundational** and **specialized** skills across industries.

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EDUCATION BREAKDOWN

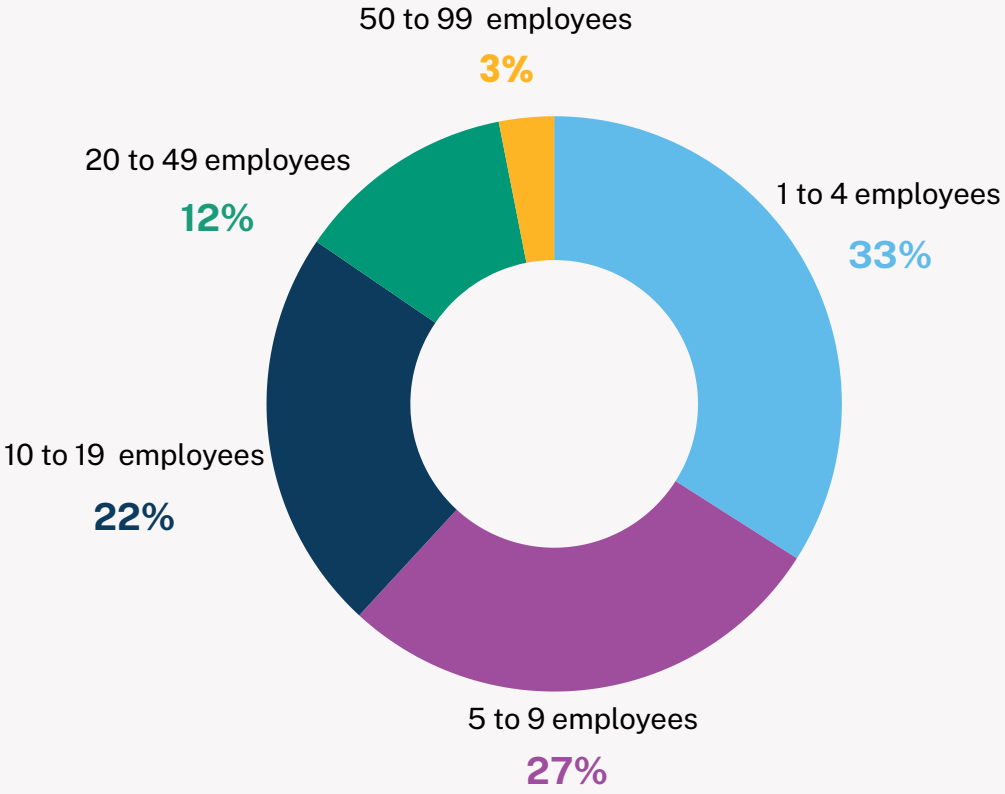


The education breakdown of job postings in Metro North WDA varies widely. Nearly half of postings (41%) do not specify a required level of education. Among postings that list education requirements, 16% require a high school diploma or GED, 6% seek candidates with an Associate's degree, and 35% require a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, 17% of job postings require a Master's degree, while 9% require a Ph.D. or professional degree. This data indicates a diverse range of educational requirements, with a **significant emphasis on higher education**.

*Percentages may exceed 100% as postings can include multiple education requirements.

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BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS



Small businesses, especially those with fewer than 20 employees, represent the largest portion of businesses in the region. Specifically, **33%** of businesses have 1 to 4 employees, **27%** have 5 to 9 employees, and **22%** have 10 to 19 employees. This shows that many businesses in the Metro North region are classified as small businesses with fewer than 20 employees.

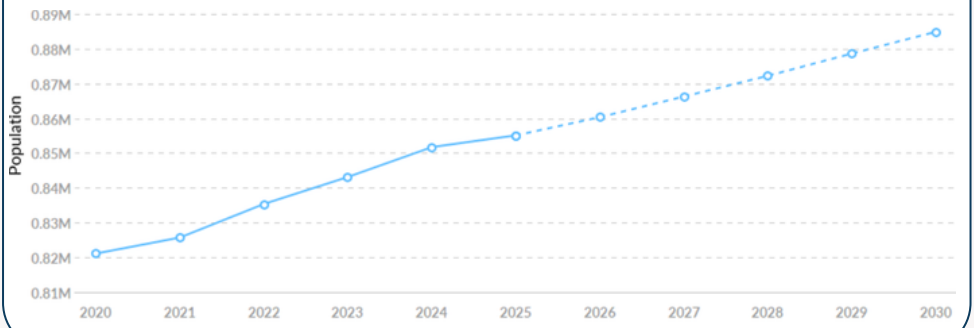
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HISTORIC & PROJECTED TRENDS

Population Trends

As of 2025, the region's population increased by 4.1% since 2020, growing by 33,985. Population is expected to increase by 3.5% between 2025 and 2030, adding 29,797.

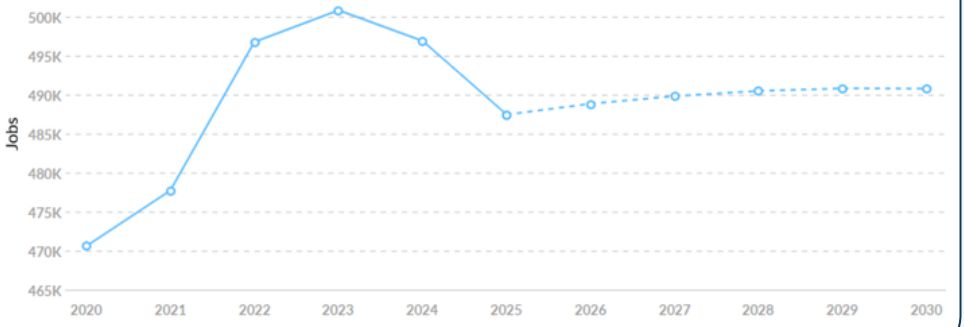
+4.1%
Since 2020



Job Trends

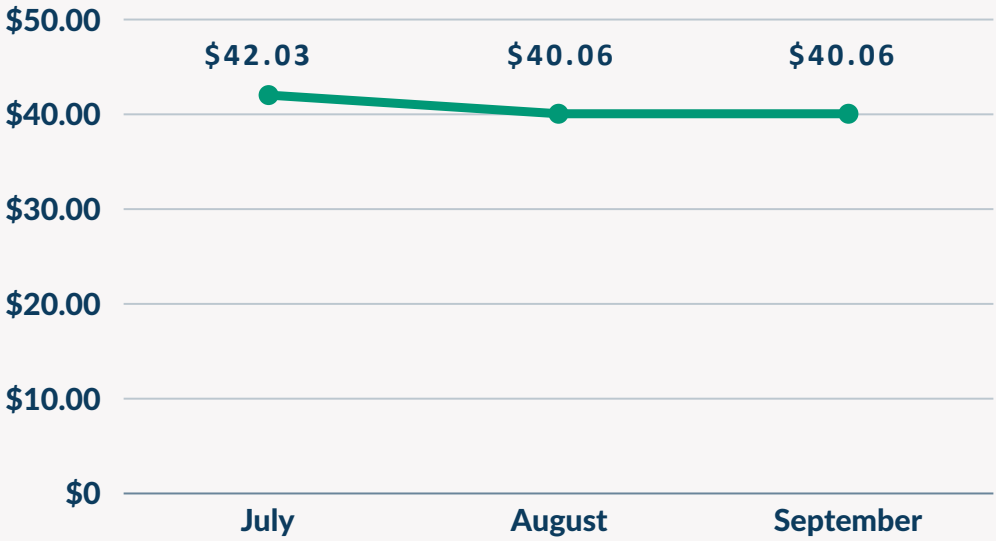
From 2020 to 2025, jobs increased by 3.6% in Metro North WDA from 470,617 to 487,454. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 10.7% by 7.1 percentage points.

+3.6%
Jobs since 2020



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MEDIAN ADVERTISED HOURLY WAGE





From July to September 2026, the median advertised hourly wage was $40.71. This reflects a **decrease of $1.80 per hour** compared to the previous quarter (April-June).

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LARGEST PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT CHANGE 2026-2028

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2028 Projected Jobs	Employment Change (2026-2028)	Median Hourly Wage
Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	5,296	6,176	880	$63.60
Fast Food and Counter Workers	8,294	9,036	742	$18.29
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	14,863	15,514	651	$20.03
Postsecondary Teachers	18,023	18,409	386	$63.19
Software Developers	9,865	10,094	229	$57.54
Cooks, Restaurant	2,951	3,106	155	$22.58
Medical and Health Services Managers	2,434	2,562	128	$78.54
Natural Sciences Managers	3,564	3,691	127	$112.78
Data Scientists	1,971	2,088	117	$69.72
Biochemists and Biophysicists	5,566	5,672	106	$61.20
Financial Managers	3,471	3,569	98	$100.38
Waiters and Waitresses	6,043	6,139	96	$22.25
Management Analysts	5,050	5,142	92	$73.17
Biological Technicians	3,184	3,275	91	$33.64

Region: Metro North WDA

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OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

No Formal Educational Credential Required

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2030 Projected Jobs	Projected Job Change 2026-2030 %	Avg. Annual Openings	Average Annual Salary
Janitors & Cleaners, Except Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	9,358	9,198	-2%	1,551	$47,307
Fast Food & Counter Workers	8,924	9,090	2%	2,132	$38,107
Retail Salespersons	8,641	8,386	-3%	1,248	$41,980
Cashiers	7,097	6,782	-4%	1,340	$37,030
Waiters and Waitresses	6,043	6,186	2%	1,293	$46,277
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers, Hand	4,142	4,172	1%	556	$48,317
Cooks, Restaurant	3,951	4,220	7%	677	$46,968
Maids & Housekeeping Cleaners	4,018	4,029	0%	587	$44,578
Construction Laborers	2,621	2,674	2%	237	$70,203
Bartenders	2,138	2,227	4%	386	$45,124

Region: Metro North WDA

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OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

High School Diploma Required

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2030 Projected Jobs	Projected Job Change 2026-2030 %	Avg. Annual Openings	Average Annual Salary
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	14,864	15,990	8%	2,552	$43,373
Office Clerks, General	6,558	6,352	-3%	802	$54,715
Stockers and Order Fillers	5,772	5,889	2%	990	$41,264
Customer Service Representatives	5,996	5,784	-4%	782	$53,815
Secretaries & Admin Assistants, Except Legal, Medical & Executive	5,238	5,284	1%	590	$59,476
First Line Supervisors of Office & Admin Support Workers	4,696	4,600	-2%	440	$81,564
Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services & Travel	4,718	4,540	-4%	446	$104,381
Maintenance & General Repair Workers, General	3,577	3,690	3%	355	$60,252
Childcare Workers	3,605	3,633	1%	642	$40,357
Security Guards	3,280	3,397	4%	457	$45,438

Region: Metro North WDA

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OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

Associate's Degree Required

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2030 Projected Jobs	Projected Job Change 2026-2030 %	Avg. Annual Openings	Average Annual Salary
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	1,996	2,068	4%	240	$49,792
Dental Hygienists	1,257	1,330	6%	101	$102,189
Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	712	713	0%	68	$84,912
Veterinary Technologists & Technicians	561	607	8%	66	$54,215
Chemical Technicians	544	562	3%	70	$75,081
Paralegals & Legal Assistants	537	523	-3%	55	$71,713
Architectural & Civil Drafters	479	464	-3%	40	$77,464
Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	420	421	0%	23	$97,491
Life, Physical, & Social Science Technicians, All Other	376	416	11%	59	$81,365
Computer Network Support Specialists	371	371	0%	25	$98,833

Region: Metro North WDA

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OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

Bachelor's Degree Required

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2030 Projected Jobs	Projected Job Change 2026-2030 %	Avg. Annual Openings	Average Annual Salary
General & Operations Managers	11,471	11,394	-1%	1,098	$158,217
Software Developers	9,865	10,259	4%	616	$161,280
Registered Nurses	7,597	7,628	0%	411	$114,844
Accountants & Auditors	5,810	5,890	1%	469	$105,292
Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	5,432	5,485	1%	489	$102,956
Management Analysts	5,050	5,205	3%	444	$152,187
Computer & Information Systems Managers	4,257	4,393	3%	320	$214,493
Natural Sciences Managers	3,563	3,762	6%	316	$234,590
Human Resources Specialists	3,592	3,678	2%	317	$97,008
Financial Managers	3,471	3,645	5%	285	$200,794

Region: Metro North WDA

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OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

Master's Degree Required

Occupation	2026 Jobs	2030 Projected Jobs	Projected Job Change 2026-2030 %	Avg. Annual Openings	Average Annual Salary
Education Administrators, Postsecondary	3,037	3,104	2%	219	$152,279
Educational, Guidance, & Career Counselors, & Advisors	2,049	2,134	4%	179	$91,716
Nurse Practitioners	1,033	1,136	11%	179	$149,117
Instructional Coordinators	917	935	2%	86	$96,159
Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	818	818	0%	57	$130,222
Librarians and Media Collection Specialists	774	795	3%	75	$84,257
Healthcare Social Workers	723	736	2%	65	$77,414
Mental Health & Substance Abuse Social Workers	704	726	3%	60	$74,218
Computer & Information Research Scientists	605	674	11%	55	$180,648
Occupational Therapists	589	602	2%	34	$100,778

Region: Metro North WDA

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STEM SPOTLIGHT

Exploring STEM and STEM-related career opportunities in Metro North







WHAT IS STEM?

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. STEM and STEM-related career fields span healthcare, life sciences, information technology, advanced manufacturing, engineering, data, and more.



S

SCIENCE

Explores the natural world, from living organisms and the environment to laboratory research and medical innovation.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Life sciences and biotechnology
- Environmental science
- Laboratory and research work
- Healthcare and medical research



T

TECHNOLOGY

Uses computers, data, and digital systems to solve problems and improve the way we live and work.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Software development
- IT support and systems administration
- Data management and analysis
- Artificial intelligence



E

ENGINEERING

Applies science and mathematics to design, build, and improve products, systems, and infrastructure.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering
- Industrial and manufacturing engineering
- Biomedical and environmental engineering
- Engineering technicians



M

MATHEMATICS

Uses numbers, data, and quantitative analysis to help solve complex problems and guide decision-making.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Data science and analytics
- Statistics and modeling
- Operations research
- Financial and risk analysis



STEM IS BROADER THAN YOU MAY THINK

STEM and STEM-related careers are not limited to scientists, engineers, or software developers. Technicians, laboratory workers, healthcare technologists, manufacturing specialists, drafters, repairers, and support professionals all use STEM skills in their work.

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STEM & STEM-RELATED CAREERS HIRING NOW

The occupations below represent a sample of high-demand STEM and STEM-related careers in Metro North based on job postings from July-September 2026.

Occupation	# Of Job Postings (July-Sept)	Average Annual Earnings	Avg. Annual Openings	Typical Entry Level Education
Software Developers	1,011	$171K	498	Bachelor's
Industrial Engineers	586	$125K	128	Bachelor's
Data Scientists	327	$144K	133	Bachelor's
Computer User Support Specialists	186	$81K	170	Some college, no degree
Radiologic Technologists & Technicians	139	$105K	25	Associate's
Clinical Laboratory Technologists & Technicians	134	$79K	97	Bachelor's
Computer Systems Analysts	129	$135K	178	Bachelor's
Civil Engineers	123	$128K	106	Bachelor's
Machinists	77	$72K	53	HS Diploma/GED
Occupational Health & Safety Technicians	66	$76K	6	HS Diploma/GED
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	59	$120K	12	Associate's
Surgical Technologists	54	$86K	10	Postsecondary nondegree award
Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technologists & Technicians	36	$84K	66	Associate's



STEM careers offer opportunities at a range of education levels.

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SKILLS THAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

These are the most common skills, specialized skills, and qualifications that appear in job postings for the STEM and STEM-related occupations on the previous page in Metro North (July-September 2026)



COMMON SKILLS

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Operations
- Leadership
- Management
- Detail Oriented
- Research
- Planning



SPECIALIZED SKILLS

- Computer Science
- Python
- Scalability
- Software Engineering
- Workflow Management
- Automation
- Software Development
- Artificial Intelligence



QUALIFICATIONS

- Security Clearance
- BLS Certificate
- Valid Driver's License
- Secret Clearance
- ARRT Certificate
- TS/SCI Clearance
- Microsoft Certified Professional
- CompTIA A+

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR JOB SEEKERS

1. **Build transferable skills.**
   Communication, problem solving, planning, and leadership are in demand across many STEM and STEM-related occupations.

2. **Develop in-demand specialized skills.**
   Programming, software development, data analysis, automation, and AI-related skills are increasingly important across technology, engineering, and data-focused occupations.

3. **Consider relevant qualifications**
   Qualifications such as security clearance, BLS certificate, and valid driver's license are among the top qualifications.

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CAREER RESOURCES

Looking to strengthen your job search and skills? The MassHire Metro North Career Centers offer free workshops and resources to help job seekers with resume development, interviewing skills, career exploration and more. View upcoming workshops and register using the link or by scanning the QR code below:

masshiremncareers.com/events-calendar/category/workshops/



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