NOVEMBER 2026 · SMB WORKFORCE & WAGES

A Milder November as Goods Outpace Services

An early read on November SMB payrolls shows a smaller-than-usual seasonal decline, with goods and distribution industries offsetting most of a pullback in services.

−0.10%	+1.39%	17 OF 19
WORKFORCE M/M	WORKFORCE Y/Y	SECTORS GROWING Y/Y

Annual Gains and Wage Growth Both Cooled

The SMB workforce slipped 0.10% M/M in November, far less than in a typical November, as goods and distribution industries offset most of a drop in services. Underneath the steadier month, annual growth and wage growth both cooled.

- The SMB workforce slipped 0.10% M/M in November, far less than the typical November decline of about 0.5%, while Y/Y growth eased to 1.39%, largely reflecting last November's unusually firm reading.
- Annual growth eased in eight of nine Census Divisions, and the gap between the fastest and slowest-growing divisions reopened after narrowing in October.
- Goods and distribution industries grew on the month and offset most of a decline in services.
- The services decline was concentrated in Health Care & Social Assistance and Admin & Support, while Arts, Entertainment & Recreation followed its usual seasonal pattern.
- Wage growth eased for a third straight month to 3.08%, and the gap between the fastest and slowest-growing divisions narrowed below half a percentage point.

WORKFORCE

−0.10%

A far smaller decline than a typical November, with annual growth easing to 1.39%.

REGIONS

8 OF 9

Divisions saw annual growth ease, though all nine remain positive year over year.

SECTORS

11 OF 19

Sectors grew on the month; goods and distribution rose 2.0% while services fell 0.7%.

WAGES

3.08%

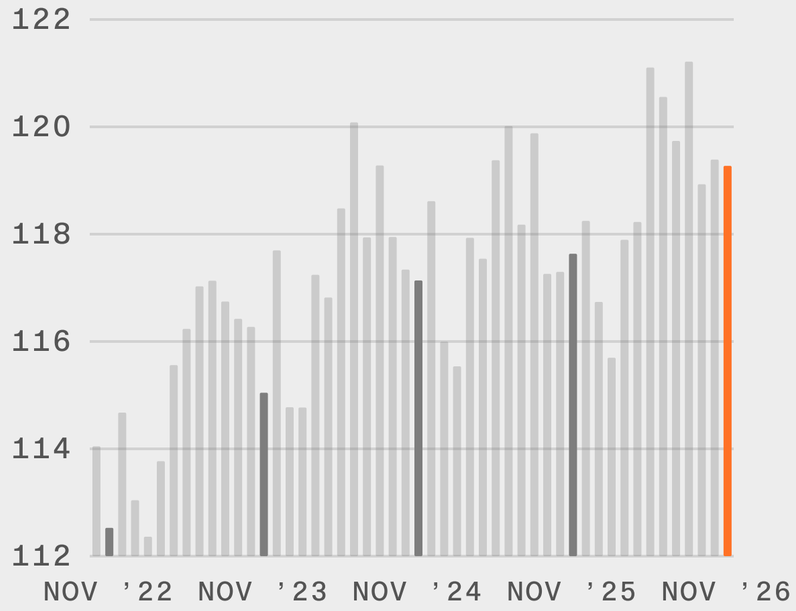
Pay growth eased for a third month as regional differences narrowed.

Source: Carbon Arc SMB Workforce - CA0055
Price: requires row-level Block data access, available on request

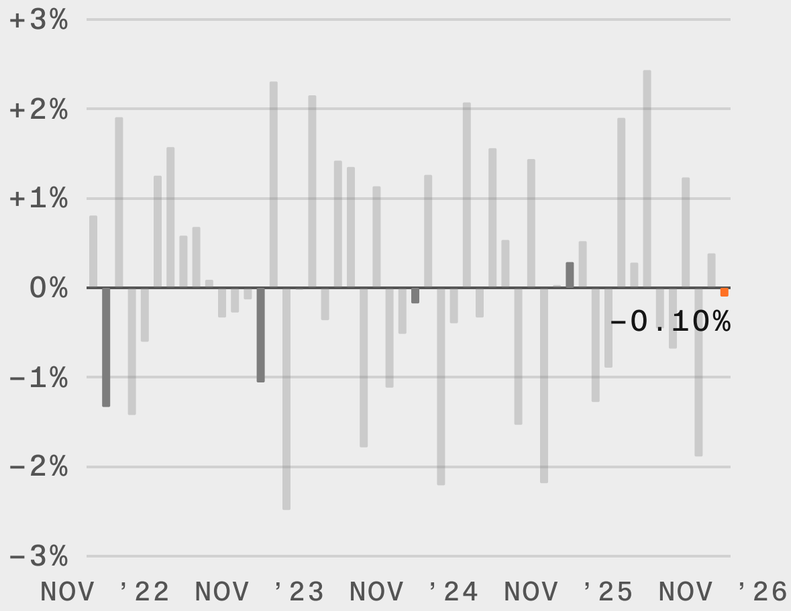
The Workforce Fell Far Less Than in a Typical November

Data shows the SMB workforce slipped 0.10% M/M in November 2026, far less than the typical November decline of about 0.5%. Y/Y growth eased to 1.39%, largely reflecting the comparison with an unusually firm November last year.

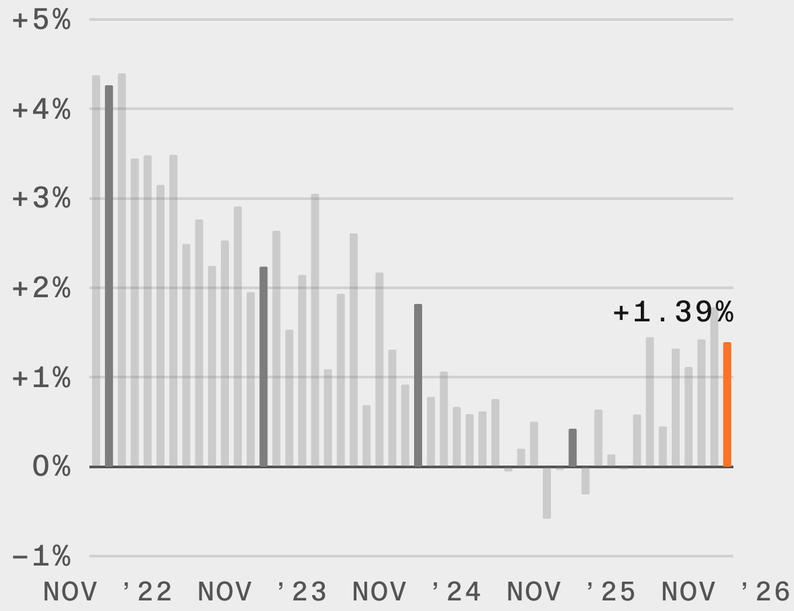
INDEXED UNIQUE WORKERS



M/M CHANGE



Y/Y CHANGE



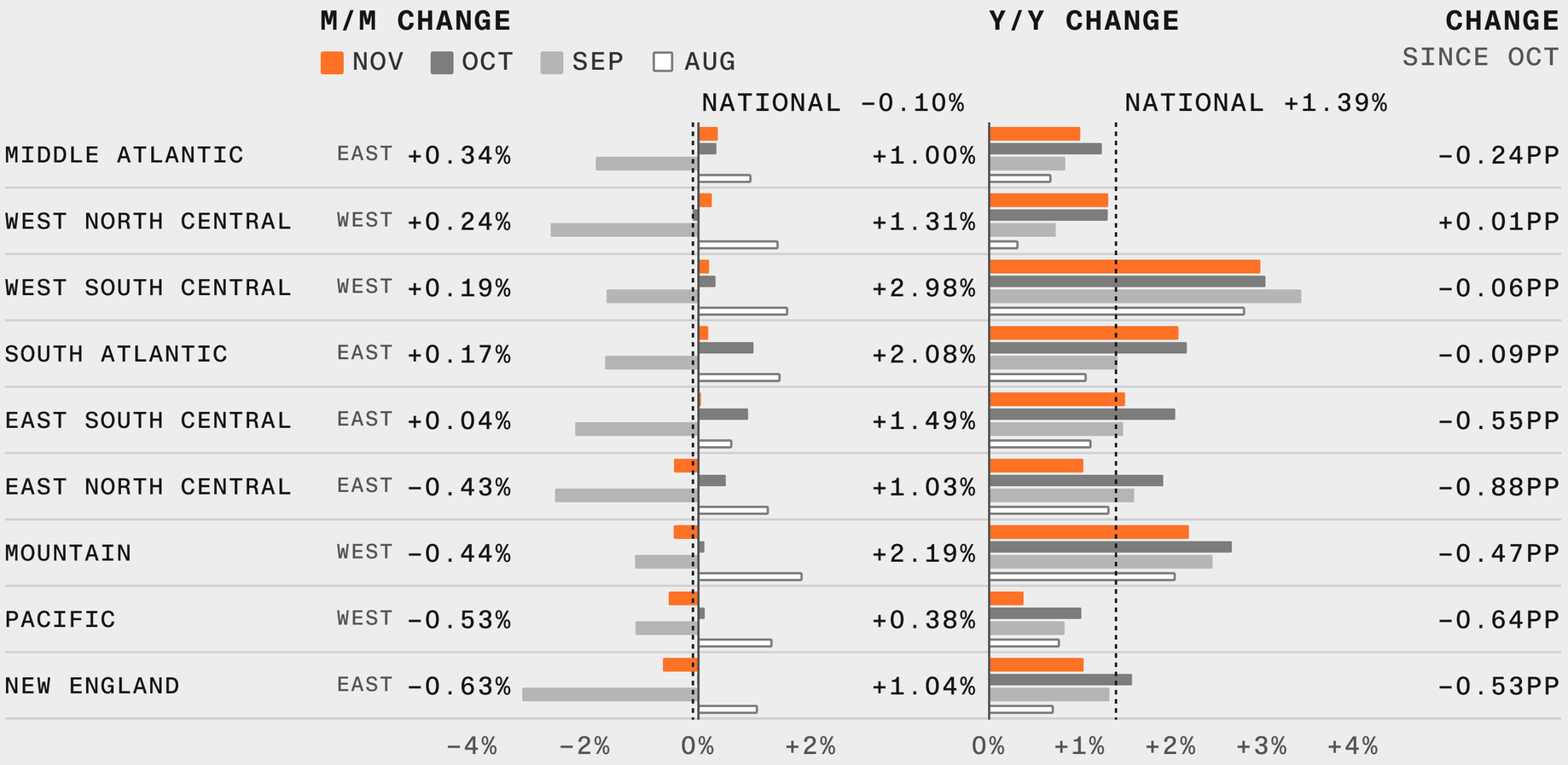
NOVEMBER 2026 PRIOR NOVEMBERS OTHER MONTHS

Index of unique workers, Sep 2020 = 100, not seasonally adjusted.
Prior months reflect additional data received since initial publication.
Typical November: average November M/M, 2018 to 2025, excluding 2020.

Source: Carbon Arc SMB Workforce - CA0055
Price: requires row-level Block data access, available on request

The Regional Gap Widened Again as the Pacific Lagged

Monthly results were split across Census Divisions in November, but annual growth eased in eight of nine. The spread between the fastest and slowest-growing divisions widened to 2.60 percentage points, reversing October's narrowing, as Pacific growth slowed to 0.38%.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

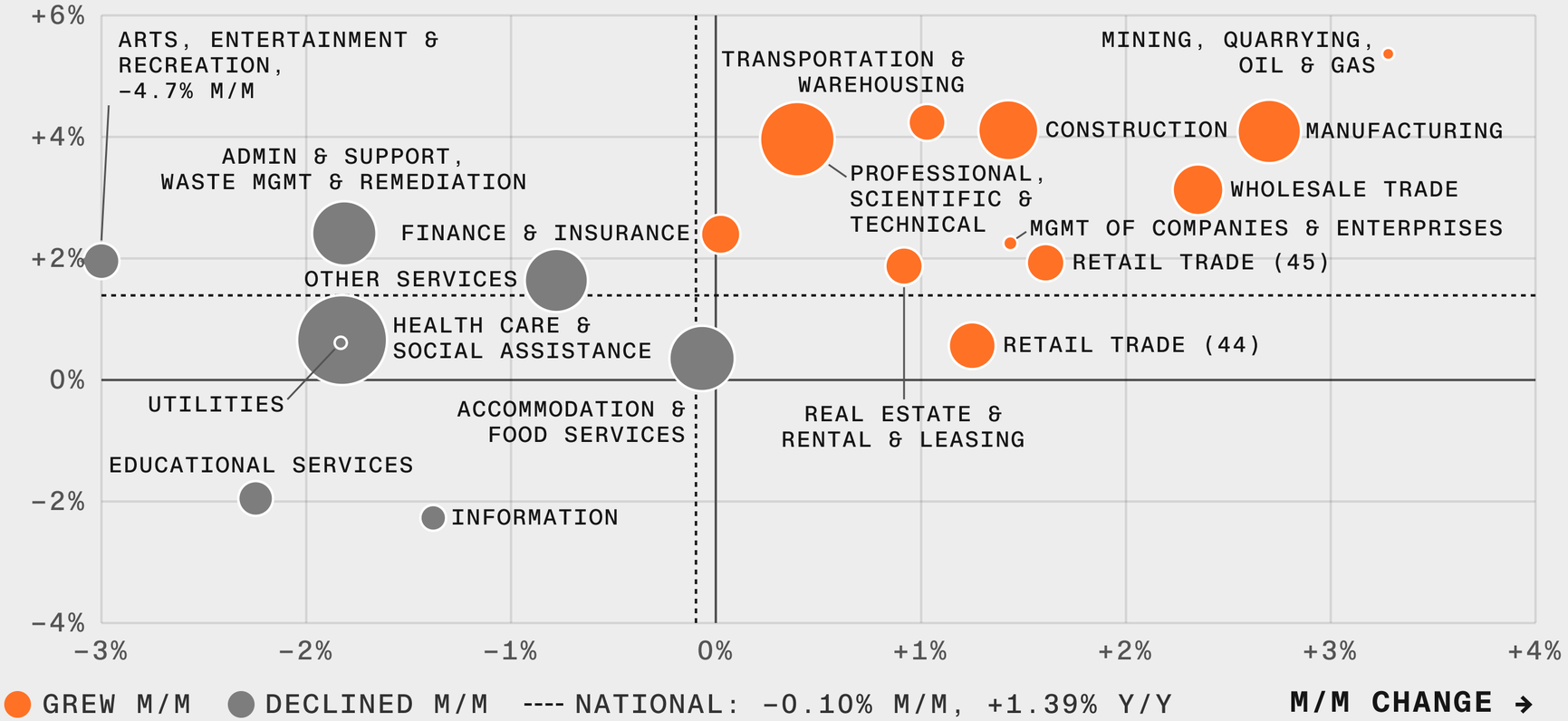
- Middle Atlantic posted the largest monthly gain, while New England and the Pacific posted the largest declines.
- West South Central still leads annual growth at nearly 3.0%, followed by Mountain and South Atlantic, both above 2.0%.
- East North Central and the Pacific saw the sharpest slowdowns in annual growth, and the Pacific now trails every other division.

Source: Carbon Arc SMB Workforce - CA0055
Price: requires row-level Block data access, available on request

Goods and Distribution Offset Most of a Services Decline

Eleven of nineteen sectors grew M/M in November and seventeen remained positive Y/Y. Goods and distribution industries, about a quarter of the panel, rose 2.0% and offset most of a 0.7% decline in services.

Y/Y CHANGE



Bubble size = workforce. Goods and distribution: Mining, Utilities, Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, Transportation & Warehousing.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

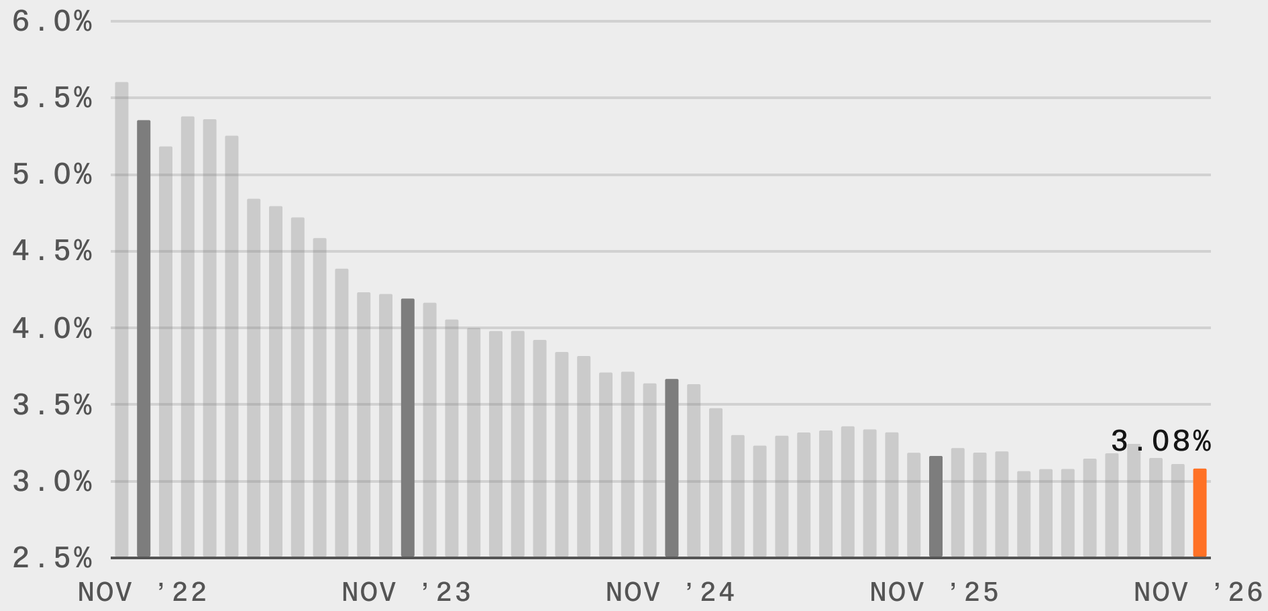
- Five of six goods and distribution sectors grew, led by Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade and Construction, and the group is running nearly 4% Y/Y.
- Health Care & Social Assistance and Admin & Support, Waste Mgmt & Remediation accounted for most of the services decline.
- Retail grew on the month ahead of the holiday season, while Arts, Entertainment & Recreation followed its usual seasonal decline.
- Information and Educational Services remained the only sectors with negative annual growth.

Source: Carbon Arc SMB Workforce - CA0055
Price: requires row-level Block data access, available on request

Regional Pay Growth Kept Moving Closer Together

Y/Y wage growth for consistently employed full-time workers eased for a third straight month to 3.08% in November, its lowest since May. The spread between the fastest and slowest-growing divisions narrowed for a third month to 0.49 percentage points, as West North Central, the fastest-growing division, eased while the slowest-growing held at 3.0%.

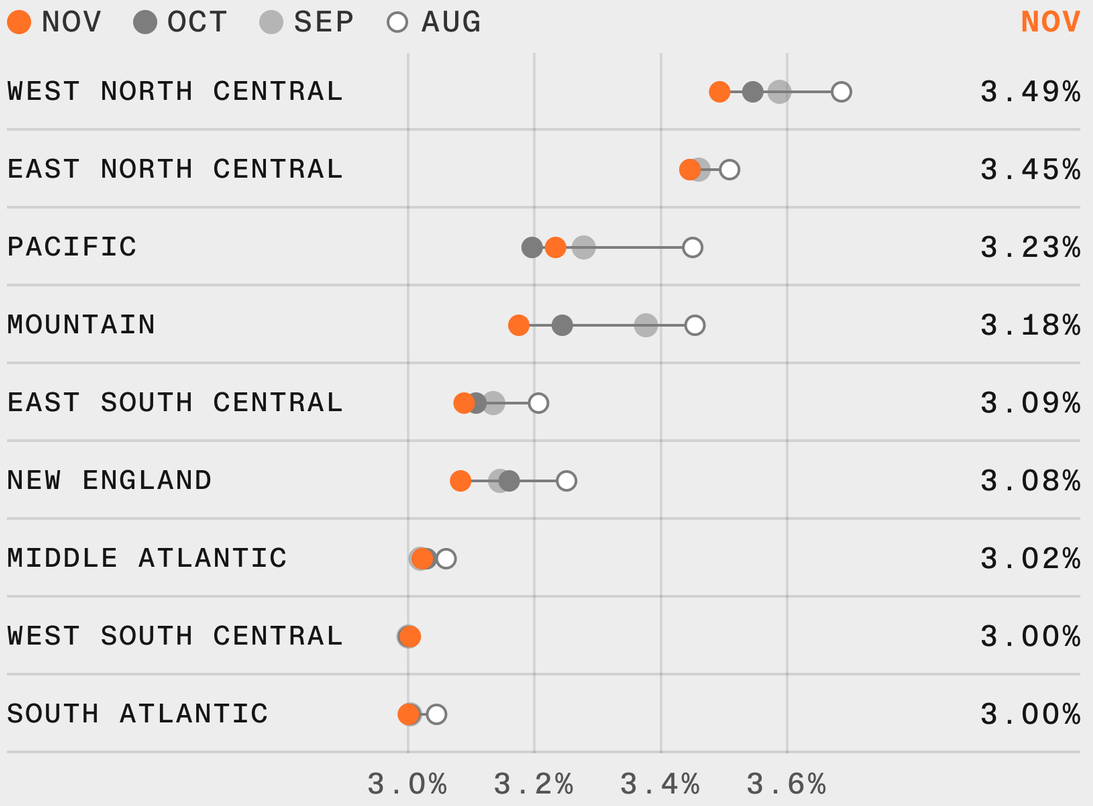
NATIONAL · ROLLING 3-MONTH Y/Y MEDIAN WAGE GROWTH



Prior months reflect additional data received since initial publication.

BY CENSUS DIVISION

SPREAD 0.49PP



Source: Carbon Arc SMB Workforce - CA0055
Price: requires row-level Block data access, available on request