

**Raw Data - Q1 2026**  
**The Compass Report**

**Fort Smith Metro**  
**Northwest Arkansas**  
**Central Arkansas**  
**Jonesboro Metro**  
**Arkansas**

**Fort Smith Metro - Q1 2026**  
**Overall Grade: C-**

**CURRENT INDICATORS**

**Change in non-farm employment: D**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 101,200     | 100,700     |
| Feb | 101,800     | 101,000     |
| Mar | 102,200     | 101,300     |

**Change in metro area unemployment rate: F**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 4.0         | 5.0         |
| Feb | 4.2         | 4.5         |
| Mar | 3.7         | 4.2         |

**Change in gross sales and use tax collections: C+**

(Crawford, Franklin, Logan, & Sebastian Counties)

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$4,622,084 | \$4,829,596 |
| Feb | \$4,886,379 | \$4,960,178 |
| Mar | \$5,508,272 | \$5,678,287 |

City of Fort Smith:

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$4,409,782 | \$4,627,097 |
| Feb | \$4,534,701 | \$4,825,473 |
| Mar | \$5,292,841 | \$5,333,739 |

**Concentration of Employment in goods-producing sectors**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 22.4%       | 22.2%       |
| Feb | 22.3%       | 22.3%       |
| Mar | 22.3%       | 22.2%       |

## Leading Indicators

### Change in building permit (housing) valuation: C-

Amounts shown in millions

|     | 2025     | 2026     |
|-----|----------|----------|
| Jan | \$16.566 | \$5.803  |
| Feb | \$8.120  | \$14.313 |
| Mar | \$14.176 | \$9.730  |

### Change in manufacturing employment: D

|     | 2025   | 2026   |
|-----|--------|--------|
| Jan | 17,900 | 17,600 |
| Feb | 17,900 | 17,700 |
| Mar | 17,900 | 17,700 |

### Change in construction (includes natural resources and mining) employment: C-

|     | 2025  | 2026  |
|-----|-------|-------|
| Jan | 4,800 | 4,800 |
| Feb | 4,800 | 4,800 |
| Mar | 4,900 | 4,800 |

### Change in hospitality employment: A

|     | 2025  | 2026  |
|-----|-------|-------|
| Jan | 8,800 | 9,000 |
| Feb | 8,900 | 9,100 |
| Mar | 9,000 | 9,300 |

## Historical Trends

### Unemployment Rate (Fort Smith MSA)

March Data

|      |     |
|------|-----|
| 2015 | 5.5 |
| 2016 | 4.2 |
| 2017 | 3.7 |
| 2018 | 3.7 |
| 2019 | 3.2 |
| 2020 | 4.6 |
| 2021 | 4.3 |
| 2022 | 3.0 |
| 2023 | 2.8 |
| 2024 | 3.5 |
| 2025 | 3.7 |
| 2026 | 4.2 |

**Number of unemployed (Fort Smith MSA)**

March Data

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| <b>2015</b> | 5,550 |
| <b>2016</b> | 4,330 |
| <b>2017</b> | 3,744 |
| <b>2018</b> | 3,805 |
| <b>2019</b> | 3,222 |
| <b>2020</b> | 4,701 |
| <b>2021</b> | 4,292 |
| <b>2022</b> | 3,000 |
| <b>2023</b> | 2,798 |
| <b>2024</b> | 3,518 |
| <b>2025</b> | 3,812 |
| <b>2026</b> | 4,291 |

**Average monthly gross sales tax collections, with percentage increase**

(Crawford, Franklin, Logan, and Sebastian counties)

Q1 Average Data

|             |    |           |
|-------------|----|-----------|
| <b>2025</b> | \$ | 5,005,578 |
| <b>2026</b> | \$ | 5,156,020 |

3.01%

**Northwest Arkansas - Q1 2026**

**Overall Grade: B-**

**CURRENT INDICATORS**

**Change in non-farm employment: B-**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 296,200     | 303,200     |
| Feb | 298,400     | 304,400     |
| Mar | 299,500     | 306,400     |

**Change in metro area unemployment rate: D**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 3.3         | 4.0         |
| Feb | 3.5         | 3.5         |
| Mar | 3.1         | 3.3         |

**Change in gross sales and use tax collections: B-**

(Benton, Madison, and Washington counties)

|     | <b>2025</b>  | <b>2026</b>  |
|-----|--------------|--------------|
| Jan | \$15,829,930 | \$14,991,724 |
| Feb | \$13,679,828 | \$15,182,998 |
| Mar | \$15,029,659 | \$17,362,056 |

City of Bentonville

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$6,407,946 | \$5,071,065 |
| Feb | \$3,942,628 | \$4,146,181 |
| Mar | \$1,312,491 | \$5,396,300 |

City of Fayetteville

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$4,962,890 | \$5,215,840 |
| Feb | \$5,085,532 | \$5,458,887 |
| Mar | \$5,973,014 | \$5,976,147 |

City of Rogers

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$4,728,667 | \$4,441,420 |
| Feb | \$4,162,528 | \$4,798,405 |
| Mar | \$5,529,264 | \$5,560,209 |

City of Springdale

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$4,239,431 | \$3,885,957 |
| Feb | \$4,100,153 | \$4,044,232 |
| Mar | \$4,522,925 | \$4,494,887 |

**Concentration of Employment in goods-producing sectors**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 15.5%       | 15.0%       |
| Feb | 15.4%       | 15.0%       |
| Mar | 15.4%       | 15.0%       |

**Leading Indicators**

**Change in building permit (housing) valuation: A-**

Amounts shown in millions

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$146.046   | \$218.199   |
| Feb | \$171.166   | \$170.418   |
| Mar | \$224.407   | \$363.580   |

**Change in manufacturing employment: F**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 27,700      | 27,200      |
| Feb | 27,900      | 27,200      |
| Mar | 27,700      | 27,200      |

**Change in construction (includes natural resources and mining) employment: A+**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 18,100      | 18,400      |
| Feb | 18,200      | 18,600      |
| Mar | 18,300      | 18,700      |

**Change in hospitality employment: A+**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 32,400      | 34,300      |
| Feb | 32,600      | 34,200      |
| Mar | 32,100      | 33,800      |

**Historical Trends**

**Unemployment Rate (Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers MSA)**

March Data

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| <b>2015</b> | 4.0 |
| <b>2016</b> | 3.0 |
| <b>2017</b> | 2.7 |
| <b>2018</b> | 2.8 |
| <b>2019</b> | 2.5 |
| <b>2020</b> | 3.7 |
| <b>2021</b> | 3.6 |
| <b>2022</b> | 2.4 |
| <b>2023</b> | 2.3 |
| <b>2024</b> | 2.7 |
| <b>2025</b> | 3.1 |
| <b>2026</b> | 3.3 |

**Number of unemployed (Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers MSA)**

March Data

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| <b>2015</b> | 9,586  |
| <b>2016</b> | 7,396  |
| <b>2017</b> | 6,805  |
| <b>2018</b> | 7,402  |
| <b>2019</b> | 6,726  |
| <b>2020</b> | 10,258 |
| <b>2021</b> | 9,701  |
| <b>2022</b> | 6,793  |
| <b>2023</b> | 6,804  |
| <b>2024</b> | 8,144  |
| <b>2025</b> | 9,722  |
| <b>2026</b> | 10,608 |

**Average monthly gross sales tax collections, with percentage increase**

(Benton, Madison, and Washington counties)

Q1 Average Data

|             |              |       |
|-------------|--------------|-------|
| <b>2025</b> | \$14,846,472 |       |
| <b>2026</b> | \$15,845,593 | 6.73% |

**Central Arkansas - Q1 2026**

**Overall Grade: D**

**CURRENT INDICATORS**

**Change in non-farm employment: C**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 390,500     | 391,300     |
| Feb | 392,200     | 392,500     |
| Mar | 394,200     | 393,800     |

**Change in metro area unemployment rate: F**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 3.8         | 4.7         |
| Feb | 4.0         | 4.2         |
| Mar | 3.6         | 4.0         |

**Change in gross sales and use tax collections: C+**

(Faulkner, Grant, Lonoke, Perry, and Pulaski counties)

|     | <b>2025</b>  | <b>2026</b>  |
|-----|--------------|--------------|
| Jan | \$12,358,266 | \$12,231,462 |
| Feb | \$12,275,958 | \$13,495,543 |
| Mar | \$14,388,251 | \$14,936,632 |

City of Conway

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$2,974,765 | \$2,955,633 |
| Feb | \$2,949,783 | \$3,077,307 |
| Mar | \$3,377,091 | \$3,491,952 |

City of North Little Rock

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$3,504,215 | \$3,600,847 |
| Feb | \$3,418,604 | \$3,809,064 |
| Mar | \$4,184,239 | \$4,409,126 |

City of Little Rock

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$6,197,851 | \$5,944,093 |
| Feb | \$6,123,173 | \$6,664,348 |
| Mar | \$7,163,487 | \$7,495,626 |

**Concentration of Employment in goods-producing sectors**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 10.8%       | 10.7%       |
| Feb | 10.8%       | 10.6%       |
| Mar | 10.8%       | 10.6%       |

**Leading Indicators****Change in building permit (housing) valuation: D**

Amounts shown in millions

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$73.319    | \$49.507    |
| Feb | \$60.405    | \$68.089    |
| Mar | \$68.431    | \$58.319    |

**Change in manufacturing employment: F**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 21,000      | 20,700      |
| Feb | 21,100      | 20,700      |
| Mar | 21,100      | 20,700      |

**Change in construction (includes natural resources and mining) employment: D**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 21,200      | 21,000      |
| Feb | 21,200      | 21,100      |
| Mar | 21,400      | 21,200      |

**Change in hospitality employment: C-**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 34,400      | 33,700      |
| Feb | 35,000      | 34,300      |
| Mar | 35,500      | 35,300      |

**Historical Trends****Unemployment Rate (Little Rock, North Little Rock, Conway MSA)**

March Data

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| <b>2015</b> | 4.8 |
| <b>2016</b> | 3.6 |
| <b>2017</b> | 3.3 |
| <b>2018</b> | 3.5 |
| <b>2019</b> | 3.1 |
| <b>2020</b> | 5.0 |
| <b>2021</b> | 4.9 |
| <b>2022</b> | 3.0 |
| <b>2023</b> | 2.7 |
| <b>2024</b> | 3.2 |
| <b>2025</b> | 3.6 |
| <b>2026</b> | 4.0 |

**Number of unemployed (Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway MSA)**

March Data

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| <b>2015</b> | 16,661 |
| <b>2016</b> | 12,738 |
| <b>2017</b> | 11,580 |
| <b>2018</b> | 12,397 |
| <b>2019</b> | 11,219 |
| <b>2020</b> | 17,999 |
| <b>2021</b> | 17,145 |
| <b>2022</b> | 10,994 |
| <b>2023</b> | 9,952  |
| <b>2024</b> | 12,191 |
| <b>2025</b> | 13,969 |
| <b>2026</b> | 15,956 |

**Average monthly gross sales tax collections, with percentage increase**

(Faulkner, Grant, Lonoke, Perry, and Pulaski Counties)

Q1 Average Data

|             |               |       |
|-------------|---------------|-------|
| <b>2025</b> | \$ 13,007,492 |       |
| <b>2026</b> | \$ 13,554,546 | 4.21% |

**Jonesboro Metro - Q1 2026**

**Overall Grade: C**

**CURRENT INDICATORS**

**Change in non-farm employment: B+**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 63,600      | 64,300      |
| Feb | 64,000      | 64,500      |
| Mar | 64,300      | 64,600      |

**Change in metro area unemployment rate: D**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 4.1         | 4.8         |
| Feb | 4.2         | 4.2         |
| Mar | 3.8         | 3.9         |

**Change in gross sales and use tax collections: C+**

(Craighead and Poinsett counties)

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$2,802,143 | \$2,914,194 |
| Feb | \$2,847,057 | \$3,055,293 |
| Mar | \$3,292,044 | \$3,287,049 |

City of Jonesboro

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$2,029,819 | \$2,107,905 |
| Feb | \$2,023,600 | \$2,260,283 |
| Mar | \$2,374,010 | \$2,354,979 |

**Leading Indicators**

**Change in building permit (housing) valuation: C-**

Amounts shown in millions

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$10.020    | \$9.961     |
| Feb | \$10.346    | \$10.520    |
| Mar | \$13.764    | \$11.731    |

**Historical Trends**

**Unemployment Rate (Jonesboro MSA)**

March Data

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| <b>2015</b> | 5.0 |
| <b>2016</b> | 3.7 |
| <b>2017</b> | 3.3 |
| <b>2018</b> | 3.4 |
| <b>2019</b> | 3.0 |
| <b>2020</b> | 4.6 |
| <b>2021</b> | 4.2 |
| <b>2022</b> | 2.8 |
| <b>2023</b> | 2.6 |
| <b>2024</b> | 3.1 |
| <b>2025</b> | 3.8 |
| <b>2026</b> | 3.9 |

**Number of unemployed (Jonesboro MSA)**

March Data

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| <b>2015</b> | 3,018 |
| <b>2016</b> | 2,205 |
| <b>2017</b> | 1,956 |
| <b>2018</b> | 2,085 |
| <b>2019</b> | 1,835 |
| <b>2020</b> | 2,921 |
| <b>2021</b> | 2,628 |
| <b>2022</b> | 1,779 |
| <b>2023</b> | 1,653 |
| <b>2024</b> | 2,040 |
| <b>2025</b> | 2,540 |
| <b>2026</b> | 2,630 |

**Average monthly gross sales tax collections, with percentage increase**

(Craighead and Poinsett Counties)

Q1 Average Data

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| <b>2025</b> | \$2,980,415 |
| <b>2026</b> | \$3,085,512 |

3.53%

**Arkansas - Q1 2026**

**Overall Grade: C**

**CURRENT INDICATORS**

**Change in non-farm employment: A+**

1st Quarter Comparison

Employment reported in thousands

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 1,335       | 1,346       |
| Feb | 1,337       | 1,345       |
| Mar | 1,337       | 1,344       |

**Change in Arkansas unemployment rate: F**

1st Quarter Comparison

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 3.8         | 4.4         |
| Feb | 3.8         | 4.4         |
| Mar | 3.9         | 4.3         |

**Change in gross sales and use tax collections: C**

|     | <b>2025</b>   | <b>2026</b>   |
|-----|---------------|---------------|
| Jan | \$343,071,844 | \$300,650,593 |
| Feb | \$335,613,696 | \$367,998,807 |
| Mar | \$376,390,073 | \$397,218,817 |

**Leading Indicators**

**Change in building permit (housing) valuation: B**

Amounts shown in millions

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | \$268.436   | \$302.891   |
| Feb | \$268.984   | \$283.511   |
| Mar | \$351.501   | \$471.554   |

**Change in manufacturing employment: F**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 160,800     | 159,000     |
| Feb | 160,800     | 158,700     |
| Mar | 160,400     | 158,700     |

**Change in construction (Excludes natural resources and mining) employment: F**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 66,900      | 66,100      |
| Feb | 66,500      | 66,600      |
| Mar | 66,900      | 66,400      |

\* Note: The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics separated "Mining and Logging" from "Construction" data beginning in 2025 for Arkansas. It should be noted that it remains combined in the 4 metros in Arkansas. If the US BLS changes the metro information, that will be reflected on individual MSAs.

**Change in hospitality employment: A+**

|     | <b>2025</b> | <b>2026</b> |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| Jan | 130,900     | 134,600     |
| Feb | 131,000     | 135,100     |
| Mar | 130,800     | 135,000     |

**Historical Trends**

**Arkansas Unemployment Rate**

March Data

|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| <b>2015</b> | 5.4 |
| <b>2016</b> | 4.0 |
| <b>2017</b> | 3.7 |
| <b>2018</b> | 3.7 |
| <b>2019</b> | 3.5 |
| <b>2020</b> | 4.8 |
| <b>2021</b> | 4.7 |
| <b>2022</b> | 3.2 |
| <b>2023</b> | 2.9 |
| <b>2024</b> | 3.4 |
| <b>2025</b> | 3.9 |
| <b>2026</b> | 4.3 |

**Number of unemployed**

March Data

|             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| <b>2015</b> | 72,042 |
| <b>2016</b> | 54,032 |
| <b>2017</b> | 49,377 |
| <b>2018</b> | 50,058 |
| <b>2019</b> | 47,245 |
| <b>2020</b> | 66,223 |
| <b>2021</b> | 62,225 |
| <b>2022</b> | 43,095 |
| <b>2023</b> | 39,353 |
| <b>2024</b> | 47,777 |
| <b>2025</b> | 55,426 |
| <b>2026</b> | 63,047 |