

Novoresume Releases 2026 U.S. Job Search Difficulty Rankings: Analysis of 49 Metro Areas

New analysis of 49 major U.S. metros finds Bay Area job seekers face searches more than three times longer than those in Birmingham, Alabama

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, May 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Novorésumé, the recruiter-approved resume builder, released a [new](#)

“

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Andrei Kurtuy

[analysis](#) ranking the 49 largest U.S. metropolitan areas by job-search difficulty, revealing that California is home to all six of the nation's toughest job markets, while Birmingham ranks as the easiest place in the country to find work.

The findings arrive as Americans face the longest job searches in years. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the number of long-term unemployed - those jobless for 27 weeks or more - stood at 1.8 million in March

2026, accounting for 25.4 percent of all unemployed Americans. The share of Americans hunting for work for six months or more has climbed by more than 50 percent over the past two years (The Wall Street Journal), making local market knowledge an increasingly important factor in financial planning for a search.

“If the data says your city averages a 37-week search, budget for that, not for the five-month timeline your friend in Nashville had,” said Andrei Kurtuy, CMO at Novorésumé, also a Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW). “Cut your burn rate early, not when you're already stressed at month six.”

The national average to find a job in the U.S. is 23.9 weeks, but the gap between states is vast. The study estimates that a job seeker in San Francisco can expect a 40-week search, which is 28 weeks longer than they can expect in Birmingham.

While California can make the outlook for metro areas seem dire, two out of every three metros in the study scored less than the national average, suggesting that metros are generally stronger markets for finding employment.

The data shown includes the level of difficulty in finding a job versus the national average, as well as the estimated number of weeks it takes to find a job in each metropolitan area.

Top 10 Hardest Metros for Job Seekers

- San Francisco (1.69x, 40.3 Weeks)
- Los Angeles (1.65x, 39.4 Weeks)
- San Jose (1.61x, 38.5 Weeks)
- San Diego (1.59x, 38 Weeks)
- Sacramento (1.55x, 37.1 Weeks)
- Riverside (1.54x, 36.8 Weeks)
- Seattle (1.54x, 38 Weeks)
- Portland (1.44x, 34.4 Weeks)
- Las Vegas (1.28x, 30.7 Weeks)
- Boston (1.28x, 30.5 Weeks)

Top 10 Easiest Metros for Job Seekers

- Birmingham (0.49x, 11.7 Weeks)
- Oklahoma City (0.51x, 12.3 Weeks)
- Atlanta (0.59x, 14 Weeks)
- Milwaukee (0.65x, 15.6 Weeks)
- Richmond (0.66x, 15.8 Weeks)
- Virginia Beach (0.66x, 15.9 Weeks)
- Indianapolis (0.67x, 16 Weeks)
- Nashville (0.69x, 16.5 Weeks)
- Kansas City (0.7x, 16.8 Weeks)

What this Means for Job Seekers

- For job seekers, location can be just as important as skills and experience
- Job seekers in areas with a high level of difficulty may consider relocating to an area with better job prospects and shorter wait times
- Job seekers in areas with a high level of difficulty may consider looking for remote work in one of the markets with better job prospects and shorter wait times

Other Factors that Determine How Long it May Take to Find a Job

- Economic conditions
- Flexibility
- Experience
- Employment length
- Application and interview strength

Job seekers can find ways to decrease how long it takes to find a job in Novorésumé's companion analysis, [How Long Does It Take to Find a Job? Timeline & Tips](#), and by using tools and templates to improve their resumes and cover letters, such as those found at [Novoresume.com](#).

Methodology

This analysis used publicly available data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. For the full ranking, methodology, and metro-level data, visit <https://novoresume.com/career-blog/hardest-us-cities-to-find-a-job>.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which U.S. cities are the hardest to find a job in 2026?

California metros claim all six of the hardest spots: San Francisco (40.3 weeks), Los Angeles (39.4 weeks), San Jose (38.5 weeks), San Diego (38.0 weeks), Sacramento (37.1 weeks), and Riverside (36.8 weeks). Seattle and Portland complete a West Coast sweep of the top eight.

Where is it easiest to find a job in the U.S. in 2026?

Birmingham, Alabama, leads the nation at an estimated 11.7 weeks - roughly 3.4 times faster than San Francisco. Oklahoma City (12.3 weeks), Atlanta (14.0 weeks), Milwaukee (15.6 weeks), and Richmond (15.8 weeks) round out the easiest metros, with the Southeast dominating the top of the list.

How long does the average job search take in the U.S. in 2026?

Federal data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the average American spent 23.9 weeks unemployed in early 2026. The Wall Street Journal has reported that the share of job seekers hunting for six months or longer has increased by more than 50 percent over the past two years.

Why is California's job market so difficult?

California has 1.57 unemployed workers competing for every job opening, well above the national average of 1.1. Combined with Bay Area costs of living roughly 18 percent above the national average, this produces a job-search environment 69 percent more challenging than the rest of the country.

How can job seekers in tough markets shorten their search?

Kurtuy recommends planning financially for the local average rather than a national one, treating each application as a tailored pitch, and considering either physical or virtual relocation from a slack market like Los Angeles to a tighter one like Atlanta.

About Novorésumé

Novorésumé is a recruiter-approved resume builder designed to help job seekers around the world find career success. With its [ATS-compatible resume templates](#), real-time resume optimizer, and innovative AI-supported tech, Novorésumé currently helps its 18 million users and counting land roles at top-tier companies like Apple, Tesla, and Google. Founded by job seekers and built for job seekers, Novorésumé is proud to be a resume builder for every career stage. Their platform is also a trusted source for job industry updates, expert advice on LinkedIn profile optimization, and other topics, and also offers a "Career Blog" to support website users in their job search.

For those interested in exploring Novorésumé's vast collection of resume templates and career support resources, please visit the official website to get started for free:

<https://novoresume.com/resume-templates>

External data sources referenced in this release include:

- Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey." April 2010.
- U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. "Regional Price Parities." 2023.
- The Wall Street Journal. "Unemployed Office Workers Are Having a Harder Time Finding New Jobs." January 2025.

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