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Employment Positions of Wage Workers in the First Quarter of 2026

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Employment Positions of Wage Workers in the First Quarter of 2026

◆ In the first quarter of 2026, the number of employment positions of wage workers rose by 292 thousand compared to the first quarter of 2025.

◆ As for employment positions by industry, 'Human health and social work activities'* and 'Accommodation and food service activities'** recorded a year-on-year increase.

* 'Social work activities' and 'Human health activities' marked a year-on-year increase.

** 'Food and beverage service activities' and 'Accommodation' marked a year-on-year increase.

Overview

- In the first quarter of 2026, the number of employment positions of wage workers was 20.828 million, which increased by 292 thousand compared to the first quarter of 2025.
- The number of sustainable employment positions, which the same workers occupied in the same quarter of the previous year, was 15.416 million. This figure accounted for 74.0% of the total employment positions. The number of replaced employment positions, which resulted from retirement or job change, was 3.186 million. This figure accounted for 15.3% of the total employment positions.
- The number of new employment positions, which resulted from enterprise foundation or business expansion, marked 2.226 million. This figure occupied 10.7% of the total employment positions. The number of extinct employment positions, which resulted from enterprise closure or business reduction, marked 1.934 million.

< Total employment positions of wage workers >

(Unit: ten thousand, %, year-on-year)

	1Q 2025	Change	4Q 2025	Change	1Q 2026	Change	Percent change
○ Total employment positions	2,053.6	1.5	2,112.3	22.1	2,082.8	29.2	1.4

< Employment positions of wage workers by type >



Note: The figures in parentheses represent the share among the total employment positions.

< Size and change in employment positions of wage workers >

(Unit: ten thousand)

	Employment positions of wage workers					Change (Year-on-year)
	Total	Sustainable employment positions	Replaced employment positions	New employment positions	Extinct employment positions	
1Q 2025	2,053.6	1,507.0	325.4	221.2	219.7	1.5
2Q 2025	2,095.0	1,530.8	332.1	232.0	220.9	11.1
3Q 2025	2,092.7	1,534.9	327.2	230.6	216.7	13.9
4Q 2025	2,112.3	1,549.4	327.2	235.6	213.5	22.1
1Q 2026	2,082.8	1,541.6	318.6	222.6	193.4	29.2

Employment positions by industry

- ☐ As for employment positions by industry section, 'Human health and social work activities', 'Accommodation and food service activities' and 'Professional, scientific and technical activities' rose by 127 thousand, 59 thousand and 37 thousand, respectively, compared to the first quarter of 2025.
- ☐ As for employment positions by industry division of 'Human health and social work activities', 'Social work activities' and 'Human health activities' grew by 88 thousand and 40 thousand, respectively.
- ☐ As for employment positions by industry division of 'Accommodation and food service activities', 'Food and beverage service activities' and 'Accommodation' rose by 56 thousand and 3 thousand, respectively.

- As for employment positions by industry division of 'Professional, scientific and technical activities', 'Professional services' and 'Architectural, engineering and other scientific technical services' rose by 24 thousand and 6 thousand, respectively.

< Employment positions of wage workers by industry section¹⁾ >

(Unit: ten thousand, %, year-on-year)

	1Q 2025		4Q 2025		1Q 2026			
		Change		Change		Compo- sition	Change	Percent change
○ Total employment positions	2,053.6	1.5	2,112.3	22.1	2,082.8	100.0	29.2	1.4
A. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8.3	0.2	9.1	0.2	8.5	0.4	0.2	2.9
B. Mining and quarrying	1.1	-0.1	1.0	-0.1	1.0	0.0	-0.1	-7.4
C. Manufacturing	429.5	-1.2	430.7	-1.4	429.4	20.6	-0.1	0.0
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	8.0	0.0	8.1	0.1	8.1	0.4	0.1	1.6
E. Water supply; sewage, waste management, materials recovery	11.1	0.1	11.3	0.1	11.2	0.5	0.1	1.1
F. Construction	169.0	-15.4	180.5	-8.8	163.8	7.9	-5.2	-3.1
G. Wholesale and retail trade	216.1	-0.8	218.6	1.3	218.6	10.5	2.5	1.1
H. Transportation and storage	77.0	2.1	79.2	2.6	78.6	3.8	1.5	2.0
I. Accommodation and food service activities	94.8	0.5	99.5	4.0	100.7	4.8	5.9	6.2
J. Information and communication	85.8	-1.2	86.7	-0.2	86.1	4.1	0.2	0.3
K. Financial and insurance activities	57.1	0.1	57.9	0.4	57.8	2.8	0.7	1.2
L. Real estate activities	44.1	-0.5	44.3	-0.1	43.9	2.1	-0.1	-0.3
M. Professional, scientific and technical activities	109.0	2.4	112.6	3.3	112.8	5.4	3.7	3.4
N. Business facilities management and business support services; rental and leasing activities	143.2	1.0	147.3	2.3	145.4	7.0	2.2	1.5
O. Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	132.9	-0.1	138.6	0.9	132.9	6.4	0.0	0.0
P. Education	129.3	0.9	135.6	1.7	130.8	6.3	1.5	1.2
Q. Human health and social work activities	266.4	10.9	277.4	12.6	279.2	13.4	12.7	4.8
R. Arts, sports and recreation related services	15.6	0.0	16.3	0.3	16.0	0.8	0.4	2.3
S. Membership organizations, repair and other personal services	53.9	2.5	56.3	3.0	56.7	2.7	2.8	5.2
Others ²⁾	1.3	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.4	0.1	0.0	1.5

Note 1) Refer to the Korean Standard Industrial Classification

2) Including 'T. Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods-and services-producing activities of households for own use' and 'U. Activities of extraterritorial organizations and bodies'

- As for the employment positions by industry group of 'Manufacturing', which occupied the highest share of the total employment positions, 'Dyeing and finishing of textiles and wearing apparel', 'Manufacture of other fabricated metal products; metalworking service activities' and 'Manufacture of communication and broadcasting apparatuses' fell by 3 thousand, 2 thousand and 2 thousand, respectively.

< Size and change in employment positions of wage workers by industry >

(Unit: ten thousand)

	Employment positions of wage workers					Change (Year-on-year)
	Total	Sustainable employment positions	Replaced employment positions	New employment positions	Extinct employment positions	
Human health and social work activities	279.2	193.2	55.3	30.7	17.8	12.7
Accommodation and food service activities	100.7	53.1	23.1	24.5	18.7	5.9
Professional, scientific and technical activities	112.8	85.1	14.9	12.8	9.1	3.7
Real estate activities	43.9	32.3	7.5	4.2	4.4	-0.1
Construction	163.8	90.5	39.3	33.9	39.2	-5.2

Employment positions by characteristics of workers and enterprises

- ☐ As for employment positions by sex, the employment positions of males and females grew by 75 thousand and 217 thousand, respectively, compared to the first quarter of 2025.
- The employment positions of males showed a year-on-year increase in 'Human health and social work activities' (29 thousand), 'Accommodation and food service activities' (22 thousand) and 'Professional, scientific and technical activities' (18 thousand).
- The employment positions of females showed a year-on-year increase in 'Human health and social work activities' (98 thousand), 'Accommodation and food service activities' (37 thousand) and 'Professional, scientific and technical activities' (19 thousand).

< Employment positions by sex >

(Unit: ten thousand, %, year-on-year)

		1Q 2025			4Q 2025			1Q 2026			
			Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change	Percent change
○ Total employment positions		2,053.6	100.0	1.5	2,112.3	100.0	22.1	2,082.8	100.0	29.2	1.4
By sex	Males	1,141.5	55.6	-11.5	1,170.3	55.4	1.9	1,149.0	55.2	7.5	0.7
	Females	912.1	44.4	13.0	942.0	44.6	20.2	933.8	44.8	21.7	2.4

- ☐ As for employment positions by age group, 'Workers aged 29 or less' and 'Workers aged 40 ~ 49' fell by 76 thousand and 19 thousand, respectively, year-on-year. Whereas, 'Workers aged 60 or more', 'Workers aged 30 ~ 39' and 'Workers aged 50 ~ 59' grew by 233 thousand, 115 thousand and 40 thousand, respectively, year-on-year.

- The employment positions of 'Workers aged 60 or more' marked a year-on-year increase in 'Human health and social work activities' (93 thousand), 'Manufacturing' (27 thousand) and 'Business facilities management and business support services; rental and leasing activities' (23 thousand).
- The employment positions of 'Workers aged 29 or less' marked a year-on-year decrease in 'Manufacturing' (-26 thousand), 'Public administration and defence; compulsory social security' (-14 thousand) and 'Information and communication' (-14 thousand).

< Employment positions by age group >

(Unit: ten thousand, %, year-on-year)

		1Q 2025			4Q 2025			1Q 2026			
			Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change	Percent change
○ Total employment positions		2,053.6	100.0	1.5	2,112.3	100.0	22.1	2,082.8	100.0	29.2	1.4
By age group	Workers aged 29 or less	291.9	14.2	-16.8	286.7	13.6	-11.1	284.3	13.6	-7.6	-2.6
	Workers aged 30 ~ 39	445.3	21.7	6.4	459.0	21.7	9.9	456.7	21.9	11.5	2.6
	Workers aged 40 ~ 49	463.5	22.6	-10.0	468.0	22.2	-3.7	461.5	22.2	-1.9	-0.4
	Workers aged 50 ~ 59	475.4	23.1	2.1	486.7	23.0	2.4	479.4	23.0	4.0	0.8
	Workers aged 60 or more	377.6	18.4	19.7	411.8	19.5	24.6	400.9	19.2	23.3	6.2

- As for employment positions by type of legal organization, 'Non-business corporations' and 'Incorporated companies' grew by 127 thousand and 92 thousand, respectively, year-on-year. 'Government and unincorporated associations' and 'Sole proprietorship' rose by 38 thousand and 34 thousand, respectively, year-on-year.

< Employment positions by type of legal organization >

(Unit: ten thousand, %, year-on-year)

		1Q 2025			4Q 2025			1Q 2026			
			Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change		Compo- sition	Change	Percent change
○ Total employment positions		2,053.6	100.0	1.5	2,112.3	100.0	22.1	2,082.8	100.0	29.2	1.4
By type of legal organization	Incorporated company	1,149.9	56.0	-7.1	1,175.8	55.7	3.5	1,159.2	55.7	9.2	0.8
	Non-business corporation	287.0	14.0	7.1	301.2	14.3	11.7	299.7	14.4	12.7	4.4
	Government & unincorporated association	295.8	14.4	4.4	307.9	14.6	5.3	299.6	14.4	3.8	1.3
	Sole proprietorship	321.0	15.6	-2.8	327.5	15.5	1.5	324.4	15.6	3.4	1.1