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▼ S&P 500	3,573.97	-38.42 -1.06%
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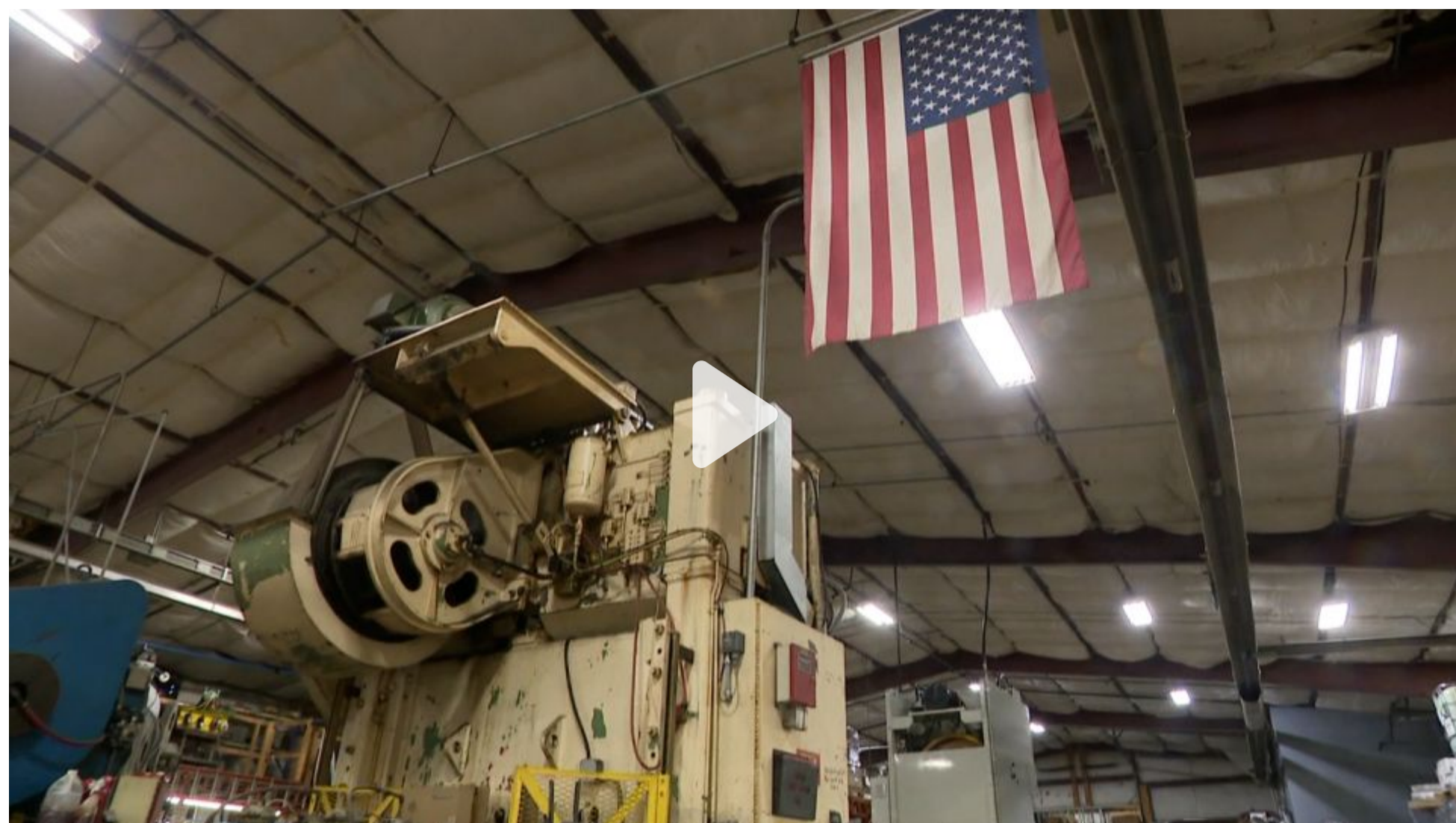
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Made in America is back, leaving US factories scrambling to find workers

By [Chris Isidore](#) and [Christine Romans](#), CNN
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New York (CNN Business) — US factories are humming, and manufacturers are scrambling to find workers as the pace of hiring hits levels not seen in decades.

Friday's [September jobs report](#) showed US manufacturers added another 22,000 workers in September, increasing employment in the sector by nearly 500,000 over the course of the last 12 months.

The nearly 13 million workers employed in US factories make up the industry's largest workforce since the Great Recession caused employment in the sector to plunge more than a dozen years ago. Since April, manufacturing employment has been growing at about a 4% annual rate, the fastest sustained pace of growth since 1984, when the sector had more than twice as large a share of US jobs.

And employers say they now are scrambling to fill even more jobs. The sector has had about 800,000 [openings](#) for most of the last year, despite the hiring binge, according to the Labor Department's report.

With [supply chains](#) causing problems throughout the global economy, many US companies that depended on overseas suppliers have been shifting their focus to sources of parts and goods much closer to home.

"It was taking months for parts to not only get manufactured but come across and they decided they were willing to pay US manufacturing pricing to get that much faster," said Hayden Jennison, production manager for Jennison Corporation, a Carnegie, Pennsylvania, company that makes everything from fire fighting equipment to construction machinery. He said there's enough demand for his goods to staff an entire additional shift at the factory. But even though he's paying \$20 to \$30 an hour he can't find the workers he needs.

"Hiring has been a problem since 2020," Jennison said. "Hiring experienced candidates that understand the industry, and understand what they're doing, has been very difficult."

Typically factory jobs and output take a hit during economic downturns, as they did during the Great Recession. But even with [fears of a recession rising](#) now, industry experts don't expect factory jobs to default to their familiar boom-to-bust cycle this time.

"I think we're in uncharted territory," said Jay Timmons, CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers. "For every 100 jobs openings in the sector we only have 60 people who are looking. I think it'll take quite a while to fill that pipeline."

Timmons said that pay in the sector is up 5% over the course of the last year, and he expects it to keep rising as manufacturers scramble for skilled labor.

Experts say one of the biggest problems manufacturers face in attracting workers is their perception of the nature of the job.

"We often take a look at the images of manufacturing and we see the sparks flying and a welding environment and perhaps it's a little bit dingy, dark. But by and large our manufacturing jobs today are high tech," said Eric Esoda, CEO of a not-for-profit providing consulting and training services to small- and mid-size manufacturers in Northeast Pennsylvania.



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One group employers are looking to for more help: women. Manufacturing remains a male-dominated industry, with only 30% of hourly factory jobs held by women, according to NAM. But that's up from 27% only two years ago, and the Manufacturing Institute, an education and workforce development arm of NAM, has various programs aimed at raising the share of women workers on factory floors to 35% by 2030.

Today less than 10% of private sector jobs are in manufacturing, compared to more than 40% at the end of World War II. But it is still a key sector of the economy, one that pays much better than many others. The Labor Department reports the average weekly wage for manufacturing jobs is \$1,250, or \$65,000 annually — 11% more than private sector jobs overall, and 81% more than retail jobs.

Correction: An earlier version of this story misstated Hayden Jennison's job title.

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