



Harry's Take

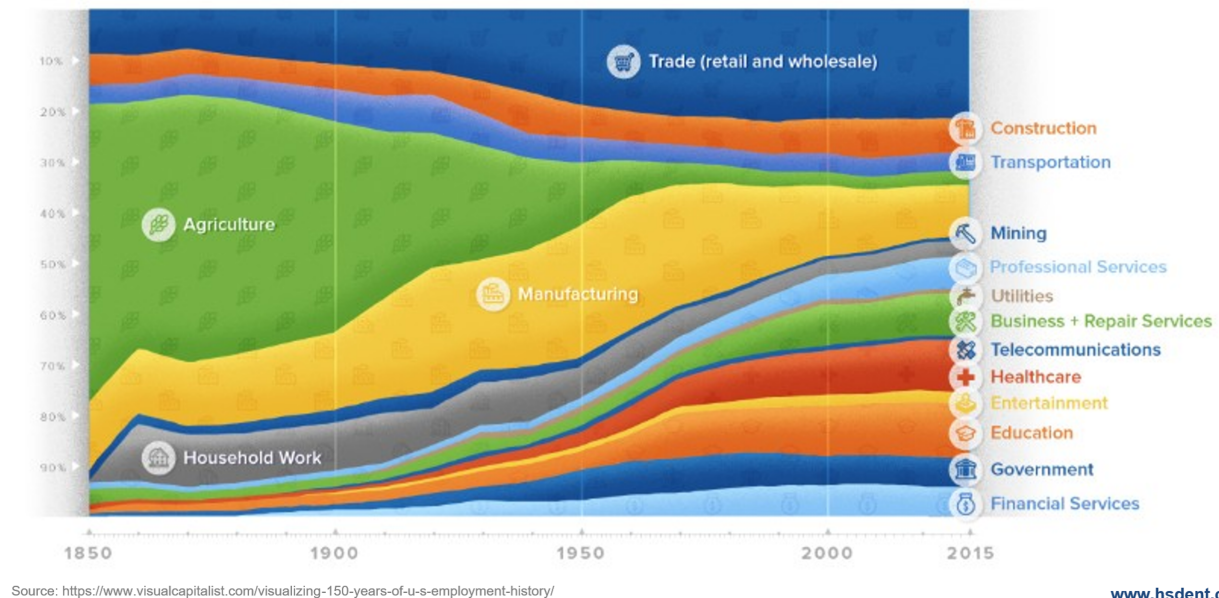
November 11, 2025

“Non-Material” Services Now Majority (52%) of Jobs: Ag and Mfg Combined Below 20%

I’m not going to have to say a lot about this topic. This chart does most of the talking. First, I don’t like lumping so many things into the now giant category of “services.” There are simple minimum wage ones and very expensive financial and professional services. A cashier and a nurse don’t have a lot in common, nor are they paid anywhere near the same. But what I also like to differentiate is the difference between material and intangible services. Health care and financial advice are two examples of how expensive and complex services can be, while high quality TV and movies are very cheap and widely available.

These “nonmaterial” sectors from financial services at the bottom of this chart up to professional services are the new majority around 52%, and they will continue to grow and be higher paid. If you add household work, which is increasingly seeing higher wages due to rising demand and falling supply, this services sector would be more like 57%.

Visualizing 150 Years of U.S. Employment: Ag and Mfg Are Big Losers



The first thing to note in this chart is that agriculture is By Far the biggest loser since 1850. It's gone from about 58% of jobs down to less than 2%, a 97% loss of share of jobs! Manufacturing is second, going from about 28% in 1950 to about 11% in 2015, near 60% loss of share.

In 1870 those two most material sectors, agriculture and manufacturing, were 65% combined, now they are just under 20%.

The biggest sector today is retail and wholesale trade around 22%. It has roughly doubled in share since 1920. Sectors like transportation and construction have not changed that much. They are obviously better (airplane vs. steam locomotive), but we don't spend more on them as a percent of our much higher pay today.

The biggest two gainers are education and health care. In 1950 they were combined around 10%, now they are just over 20%. These are obviously higher paid, higher impact and require higher education than the cashier or shelf stocker at the store, or the street sweeper, etc. Government and financial services are both only around 5% each, less than most would presume, but like health care and education, these workers are generally paid more for their education and higher expertise.

There's much more to glean from this chart, but it should be obvious that the areas most ripe now for automation are the largest sectors of jobs today: retail/wholesale trade, education and health care. Workers in these sectors should fear automation the most ahead!

Harry

Got a question or comment? You can reach us at info@hsdent.com.

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