



MONTHLY ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

April 3, 2026

*All data reflect the Chicago metro area geography, unless otherwise noted.
Sources available upon request.*

CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: WHAT TO KNOW IN APRIL 2026

▲ **Trending Upwards:** The U.S. economy added 178,000 jobs in March and the unemployment rate dropped to 4.3%, indicating a stronger-than-expected labor market after a loss of 133,000 jobs in February. Output in the Chicago metro area is projected to be up 1.2% from the prior quarter. Job postings continue to climb, with 10.7% more postings in March 2026 and 10.5% more postings over March 2025. This is a trend throughout the region, with job postings up over the last month in all suburban collar counties.

▼ **Trending Downwards:** As of December 2025, employment for the Chicago metro area decreased by 0.4% to 4.738M from November 2025. Employment also decreased in all counties and peer metros between November and December 2025. Following a strong 2025, early 2026 business activity has started slower, with 33 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions recorded so far compared to 66 at this point last year. Despite recent growth, The Chicago Business Barometer fell 4.9 points to 58.8 in March, but is still in expansionary territory. Trade value for O'Hare International Airport saw a slight decrease to \$27.0 billion in January 2026 from \$27.1 billion in December of 2025. YTD 2026, it is now the second largest port by value following Port Laredo.

U.S. Macroeconomic Update:

- While MSA and county job data are delayed, overall U.S. job growth is bouncing. The U.S. economy added 178,000 jobs in March, while the unemployment rate fell to 4.3%, signaling a rebound after job losses in February. Hiring was stronger than expected, led by gains in health care, construction and transportation. The data suggests the labor market remains resilient despite new economic uncertainty tied to the conflict in Iran and rising energy prices.
- The Iran war and escalating tensions continue to push global oil prices above \$110 per barrel (+95% between February and April), increasing the risk of higher energy costs and renewed inflationary pressure if disruptions to Middle East supply persist.

CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: KEY MACROECONOMIC METRICS

- ▲ **Output:** Chicagoland's output for Q2 2026 was projected by Moody's Analytics to be \$978 billion, up 1.2% from Q1 2026. All four of the comparison metro areas also experienced an increase in output over the previous quarter.
- ▼ **Employment:** According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for the Chicago metro area decreased by 0.4% to 4.738M from November 2025. This decrease is on par with decreases in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. Employment also decreased in all counties between November and December 2025. However, projections point to potential positive employment growth in major industries such as tech, life sciences, TD&L, food manufacturing, and professional and business services in 2026. *Data for January 2026 will be released April 16th, and included in our May Dashboard.*
- ▬ **Unemployment:** Chicagoland's unemployment rate in December 2025 remained at 4.5% compared to both November 2025 and December 2024. *Data for January 2026 will be released April 16th, and included in our May Dashboard.*
- ▲ **Job Postings:** Chicagoland saw a 10.7% increase in active job postings between February 2026 and March 2026, to 226,013. This is also 11% more postings over March 2025. Legal and Farming, Fishing, and Forestry occupations saw the largest increase in job postings between March and February (36% and 24% respectively). The city of Chicago and all collar counties all experienced an increase in the number of active job postings.
- ▼ **Pro-Chicagoland Decisions:** In 2026 thus far there have been 33 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions. This includes 27 expansions and 6 relocations/new market entrants. Of these projects, 19 are regional investments and 14 involve projects within city limits— including 3 South/West Side investments. *PCDs are confirmed expansions, relocations, or new market entrants with at least 10 jobs or 10K square feet.*

CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: OTHER NOTABLE UPDATES

- ▼ **Business Counts:** There All counties in the GCEP region saw an increase in net business counts between Q2 2025 and Q3 2025. This holds true comparing Q3 2025 to Q3 2024, where across the region counties' net business counts increased between 0.5% and 2.9%. *Note: because of discontinuation of some detail with this data set at the metro area level, we have switched from sharing total business counts for private establishments to total business counts for all covered establishments, including federal, state, and local establishments.*
- ▼ **City of Chicago Building Permits:** There were 5,332 new construction or renovation/alteration building permits applied for in the last rolling 12-month period (4/1/25-3/31/26) – representing a 1.3% drop when compared to the prior rolling 12-month period.
- ▼ **Trade:** Trade value for O'Hare International Airport saw a slight decrease to \$27.0 billion in January 2026 from \$27.1 billion in December of 2025 – the second largest port by value following Port Laredo.
- ▲ **Chicago Fed Survey:** The Chicago Fed Survey of Economic Conditions Activity Index increased to +17 in March from +14 in February, suggesting that economic growth was above trend.
- ▼ **ISM Business Barometer:** The Business Barometer – a survey of supply chain professionals in the Chicagoland area tempered 4.9 points to 52.8 in March. Still, the index has now spent three months in expansionary territory. According to ISM, the decline was driven by Employment, Production and New Orders. Lifts in Order Backlogs and Supplier Deliveries provided some offset. Read more [here](#).
 - In March, the Business Barometer asked: “What are your plans for selling prices in 2026?” Responses were: 32% “2-4% increase,” 18% “4-7% increase,” 18% “Prices expected to remain stable,” 15% “Other,” 9% “Less than 2% increase,” and 3% “Greater than 7% increase.”

PRO-CHICAGOLAND DECISIONS

as of March 5, 2026

Companies making a known pro-Chicagoland decision in 2026

33

27 Expansions
6 Relocations/New Market Entrants

14 city investments, including 3 on the S/W Sides
19 suburban investments

223 PCDs in 2025

140 PCDs in 2024
163 PCDs in 2023
180 PCDs in 2022

SPENDING & ACTIVITY

	CONSUMER PRICE INDEX METRO AREA Feb 2026 12 month % change, all items	TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES METRO AREA 2025	WEEKLY OFFICE OCCUPANCY METRO AREA Week of Mar. 4	PUBLIC TRANSIT Mar. 22 – Mar. 28 Benchmark: Dec. 2019	AVG. DAILY FLIGHTS Feb. 2026
CHI	+2.0%	\$403B (+2.5% from 2024)	57.0%	-32% (CTA) -30% (Metra)	2,216 (ORD) 341 (MDW)
NYC	+3.2%	\$959B (+5.0% from 2024)	58.8%	-1% (MTA) +11% (LIRR)	1,075 (JFK) 962 (LGA)
LA	+2.9%	\$537B (+2.3% from 2024)	49.3%	-13%	1,300
HOU	+1.3%	\$290B (+4.3% from 2024)	63.8%	-9%	1,127

CHICAGO FED SURVEY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

METRO AREA



+17

Mar. 2026
Suggests economic growth was above trend

+3

from Feb. 2026

CHICAGO BUSINESS BAROMETER

METRO AREA



52.8

Mar. 2026

-4.9

from Feb. 2026

HOUSING

NEW PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL PERMITS
METRO AREA
1/1/26 – 1/30/26

889

+8.5%
FROM YTD 2025

#26
METRO RANK

ALL BUILDING PERMITS
CITY ONLY
4/1/25 – 3/31/26

5,332

-1.3%
CHANGE FROM 4/1/24 – 3/31/25

TRADE & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

	TRADE VALUE Jan 2026	HOTEL OCCUPANCY CITY (CBD) ONLY Feb. 2026	OPENTABLE RESERVATIONS CITY ONLY Mar 2026 Benchmark: Mar. 2025	BUSINESS LICENSE APPLICATIONS CITY ONLY 4/1/25-3/31/26
CHI	\$27.0B <i>O'Hare Airport</i>	50.6%	+4%	6,071
NYC	\$26.5B <i>JFK Airport</i>	73.6%	+13%	N/A
LA	\$22.3B <i>Port of LA</i>	72.4%	+11%	N/A
HOU	\$17.8B <i>Part of Houston</i>	N/A	+9%	N/A

INNOVATION – METRO AREA

Q4 2025	GROWTH CAPITAL (PRE-VC, VC + PE) RAISED			
	VC	PE	VC + PE	Change from Q4 2024
SF	\$41.43B	\$306M	\$41.74B	-18%▼
NYC	\$21.98B	\$2.82B	\$25.0B	116%▲
BOS	\$4.28B	\$622M	\$5.81B	51%▲
LA	\$3.99B	\$2.93B	\$7.15B	111%▲
SEA	\$1.5B	\$100M	\$1.61B	109%▲
CHI	\$1.08B	\$1.66B	\$2.73B	146%▲

INNOVATION – CITY & COUNTIES

Q4 2025	GROWTH CAPITAL RAISED	
	CAPITAL RAISED	DEAL COUNT
CHICAGO CITY	\$1.14B	89
COOK SUBURBS	\$35.35M	15
DUPAGE	\$39.87M	9
KANE	N/A (undisclosed)	1
KENDALL	\$0	0
LAKE	\$0.63M	3
MCHENRY	\$5.2M	2
WILL	N/A (undisclosed)	2

MACROECONOMIC												WHO'S HIRING (MAR. 2026)	
NOMINAL GDP (PROJECTED)		BUSINESS COUNT		EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT			ACTIVE JOB POSTINGS			COMPANY	UNIQUE JOB POSTINGS
Q2 2026	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Q3 2025	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	CHANGE FROM Dec. 2024	Mar. 2026 As of Apr. 2	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE			
CHI	\$978B	1.2% ▲	254,629	0.8% ▲	4,738,013	0.4% ▼	4.5%	0.0pp =	0.0pp =	226,013	11% ▲	Northwestern Memorial Healthcare	1,731
NYC	\$2,627B	1.2% ▲	676,577	0.3% ▲	9,847,143	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.2pp ▼	0.2pp ▲	389,550	12% ▲	University of Chicago	1,723
LA	\$1,625B	1.3% ▲	771,391	2.3% ▲	6,467,919	0.5% ▼	4.8%	0.5pp ▼	0.4pp ▼	227,165	8% ▲	Advocate Aurora Health	1,365
HOU	\$818B	1.7% ▲	175,297	0.3% ▼	3,741,135	0.3% ▼	4.2%	0.3pp ▼	0.2pp ▲	124,891	6% ▲	Walgreens Boots Alliance	1,248
												Northshore University Health System CDC	1,191
												Walmart	1,103
												Endeavor Health	1,048

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (Q2 2026, PROJECTED)												
TECH	QUARTERLY CHANGE	LIFE SCIENCES	QUARTERLY CHANGE	TD&L	QUARTERLY CHANGE	MFG	QUARTERLY CHANGE	BUS. & PRO. SERVICES	QUARTERLY CHANGE	FOOD MFG	QUARTERLY CHANGE	
CHI	245,686	0.3% ▲	93,599	0.2% ▲	265,473	0.2% ▲	400,917	0.0% =	395,398	0.3% ▲	71,378	0.0% =
NYC	574,931	0.3% ▲	193,824	0.2% ▲	378,282	0.1% ▲	328,390	0.1% ▼	855,539	0.1% ▲	65,095	0.1% ▼
LA	296,055	0.3% ▲	126,215	0.2% ▲	238,962	0.0% =	446,762	0.1% ▼	440,757	0.1% ▲	53,680	0.3% ▲
HOU	126,983	0.5% ▲	63,843	0.4% ▲	173,498	0.4% ▲	237,930	0.2% ▲	281,675	0.5% ▲	17,985	0.2% ▲

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE (Q4 2025, CBRE)					
	ABSORPTION/DEMAND (YTD)	AVAILABILITY	QUARTERLY CHANGE	VACANCY	QUARTERLY CHANGE
OFFICE MARKET (CBD)	(116,797 sqft)	30.9%	▲ 2.9 pp	26.6%	▲ 0.1 pp
OFFICE MARKET (SUBURBAN)	142,389 sqft	31.0%	▼ 2.9 pp	28.2%	▲ 0.9 pp
INDUSTRIAL MARKET (METRO AREA)	5,654,037 sqft	9.0%	▲ 0.5 pp	5.4%	▲ 0.1 pp

MACROECONOMIC – CITY OF CHICAGO AND GCEP COUNTIES

	NOMINAL GDP (ESTIMATE)		BUSINESS COUNT		EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT		ACTIVE JOB POSTINGS		
	2025	CHANGE FROM 2024	Q3 2025	CHANGE FROM Q2 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	Dec. 2025 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Nov. 2025	CHANGE FROM Dec. 2024	Mar. 2026 As of Apr. 2	CHANGE FROM Feb. 2026
CHICAGO CITY					1,400,751	0.3% ▼	4.6%	0.3pp ▼	0.0pp =	66,468	5.6% ▲
COOK SUBURBS	\$560.4B	4.1% ▲	139,343	0.9% ▲	1,215,581	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.1pp ▼	0.0pp =	59,639	10.5% ▲
DUPAGE	\$121.7B	2.7% ▲	34,215	0.7% ▲	496,833	0.3% ▼	3.7%	0.2pp ▼	0.1pp ▲	29,454	9.4% ▲
KANE	\$34.9B	2.1% ▲	13,160	0.9% ▲	253,536	1.2% ▼	5.8%	1.2pp ▲	1.4pp ▲	10,515	9.9% ▲
KENDALL	\$4.9B	1.0% ▲	2,499	0.5% ▲	70,523	1.2% ▼	5.1%	0.9pp ▲	1.3pp ▲	1,698	18.0% ▲
LAKE	\$96.9B	1.8% ▲	20,226	0.8% ▲	340,180	1.2% ▼	5.8%	1.2pp ▲	1.3pp ▲	19,511	8.0% ▲
MCHENRY	\$15.7B	3.5% ▲	8,005	0.7% ▲	171,845	0.3% ▼	4.1%	0.2pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	5,081	6.6% ▲
WILL	\$45.9B	3.0% ▲	16,099	0.8% ▲	372,481	0.3% ▼	4.5%	0.2pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	16,839	27.8% ▲
METRO AREA	\$940.8B	3.4% ▲	254,629	0.8% ▲	4,738,013	0.4% ▼	4.5%	0.0pp =	0.0pp =	226,013	10.7% ▲

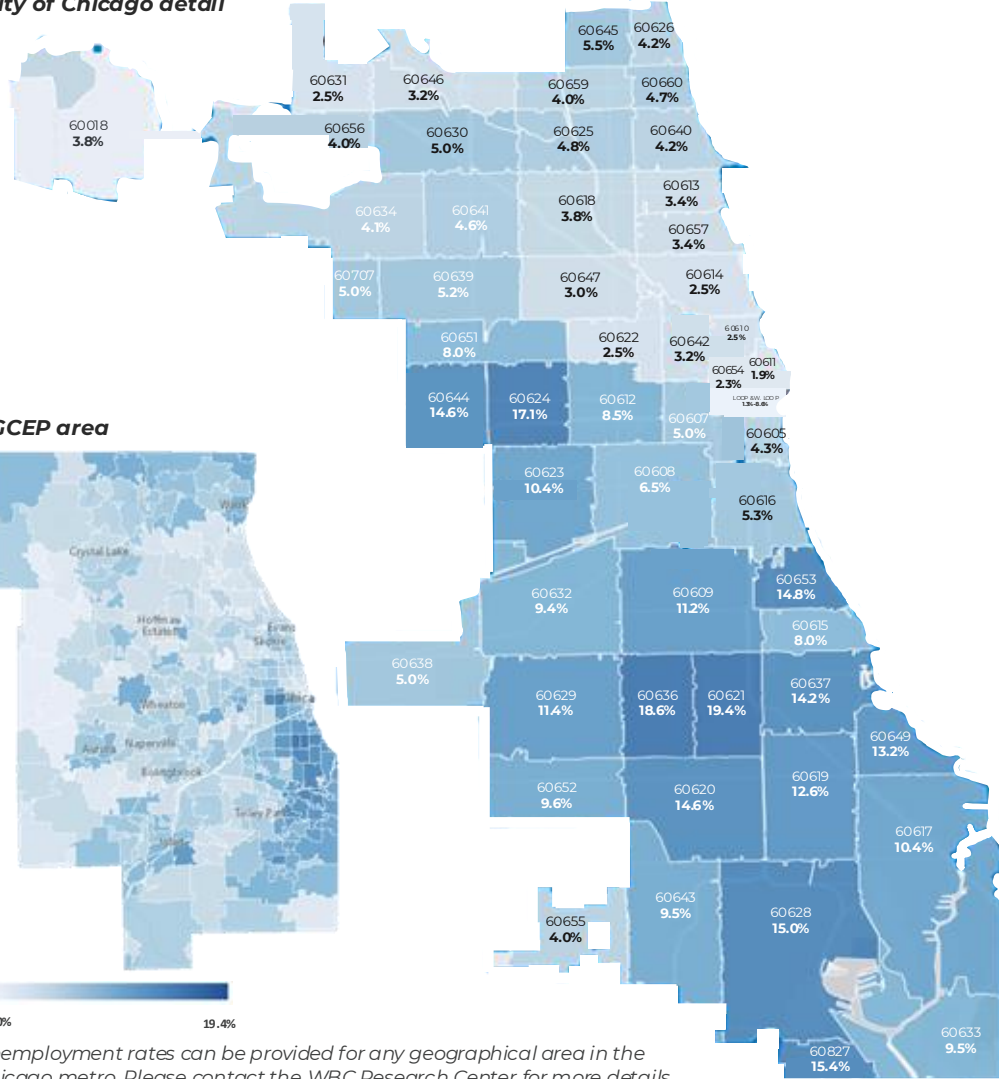
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (2026, PROJECTED) – CITY OF CHICAGO AND GCEP COUNTIES

	TECH	CHANGE FROM 2025	LIFE SCIENCES	CHANGE FROM 2025	TDL	CHANGE FROM 2025	MFG	CHANGE FROM 2025	BUS. & PRO. SERVICES	CHANGE FROM 2025	FOOD MFG	CHANGE FROM 2025
CHICAGO CITY	49,143	1.0% ▲	12,563	0.1% ▲	59,395	1.2% ▲	69,777	1.0% ▼	183,859	0.5% ▲	26,857	1.3% ▲
COOK SUBURBS	15,227	0.2% ▼	20,887	2.0% ▲	113,042	0.7% ▲	111,284	1.1% ▼	77,157	0.0% =	15,077	2.1% ▲
DUPAGE	25,018	1.4% ▼	13,961	0.5% ▲	39,050	2.3% ▲	61,804	1.1% ▲	58,437	0.5% ▼	8,743	4.8% ▲
KANE	3,756	2.7% ▲	4,143	4.3% ▲	8,031	3.4% ▲	33,979	1.6% ▲	11,409	0.7% ▲	5,973	7.6% ▲
KENDALL	302	3.8% ▲	116	6.4% ▲	2,720	0.0% =	3,087	1.4% ▲	1,420	1.4% ▲	716	3.8% ▲
LAKE	4,345	3.7% ▼	27,973	0.0% =	10,621	2.9% ▲	51,446	0.4% ▲	21,705	1.2% ▼	2,429	3.7% ▲
MCHENRY	566	0.9% ▼	616	1.1% ▼	2,330	0.3% ▼	12,174	1.1% ▼	4,983	0.9% ▲	1,195	2.1% ▲
WILL	3,251	4.7% ▲	3,108	1.5% ▲	43,662	4.0% ▲	25,439	2.7% ▲	12,016	1.2% ▲	5,858	6.5% ▲

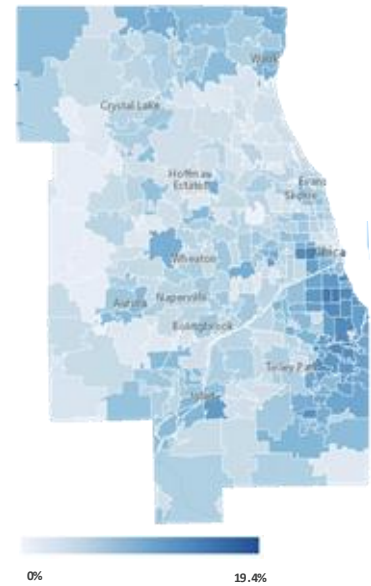
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE MAP

Estimated unemployment rates by zip code, 2025 (updated yearly)

City of Chicago detail



GCEP area



Unemployment rates can be provided for any geographical area in the Chicago metro. Please contact the WBC Research Center for more details.

JOB POSTINGS & OPPORTUNITY ZIP CODES

HIGH DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

UNIQUE JOB POSTINGS METRO AREA

HIGH OPPORTUNITY ZIP CODES IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Occupations with the most unique job postings	Mar. 2026	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE	TOP ZIP CODES FOR RECRUITMENT Zip codes in Chicago with the highest concentrations of residents in high demand occupations				
Management	28,170	9%▲	Downtown Station	Fort Dearborn	Main Post Office	Edge-Brook	Norwood Park
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	26,860	8%▲	North Loop	Chestnut Street	Main Post Office	Fort Dearborn	South Loop
Sales and Related	26,379	15%▲	Chestnut Street	South Inner Loop	Lincoln Park	South Loop	Main Post Office
Business and Financial Operations	17,978	7%▲	Main Post Office	Main Post Office	Chestnut Street	Lincoln Park	Chestnut Street
Transportation and Material Moving	16,859	13%▲	Riverdale	South Shore	Roseland	Hegewisch	Grand Crossing

HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT ZIP CODES (PROJECTED 2025 RATES)

Zip	City of Chicago Neighborhood	2025	Change from 2024	Zip	Chicagoland Suburb	2025	Change from 2024
60621	Englewood	19.4%	▲0.3pp	60419	Dolton	14.3%	▲0.2pp
60636	West Englewood	18.6%	▲0.2pp	60428	Markham	13.7%	▲0.2pp
60624	West Garfield Park	17.1%	▲0.2pp	60433	Joliet	12.6%	▲0.5pp
60827	Riverdale	15.4%	▲0.2pp	60471	Richton Park	12.5%	▲0.2pp
60628	Pullman, Roseland	15.0%	▲0.2pp	60472	Robbins	12.4%	▲0.8pp
60653	Bronzeville	14.8%	▲0.4pp	60473	South Holland	11.4%	▼0.1pp
60620	Auburn Gresham	14.6%	▲0.2pp	60426	Harvey	11.3%	▲0.1pp
60644	Austin	14.6%	▲0.2pp	60409	Calumet City	10.6%	▲0.1pp
60637	Woodlawn	14.2%	▲0.2pp	60429	Hazel Crest	10.5%	=0.0pp
60649	South Shore	13.2%	▲0.2pp	60155	Broadview	10.4%	▲0.1pp
60619	Chatham, Grand Crossing	12.6%	▲0.2pp	60406	Blue Island	10.2%	▲0.1pp
60629	West Lawn, Chicago Lawn	11.4%	▲0.3pp	60141	Hines	10.1%	▲1.6pp