



MONTHLY ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

May 8, 2026

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

CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: WHAT TO KNOW IN MAY 2026

▲ **Trending Upwards:** Output and employment in the Chicago metro area are up modestly. Job postings continue to be positive, with 2% more postings in April 2026 over March 2026. This is a trend throughout the region, with job postings up over the last month in all suburban collar counties. Housing permits show a promising pattern currently with new residential permits up over 20% when compared to last year.

▼ **Trending Downwards:** As of February 2026, unemployment for the Chicago metro area increased to 5.4%. Unemployment also increased in most counties in the region. The Chicago Business Barometer moved to contractionary territory in April 2026 indicating further slowing in business activity. 58 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions recorded so far is lower compared to 88 at this point last year. Trade value for O'Hare International Airport saw a decrease to \$26.2 billion in February 2026 from \$27 billion in January 2026. YTD 2026, it is now the third largest port by value following JFK Airport and Port Laredo.

U.S. Macroeconomic Update:

- The U.S. economy added 115,000 jobs in April, while the unemployment rate held steady at 4.3%, beating expectations of just 55,000 in the Dow Jones consensus estimate.
- Inflation accelerated sharply in March, with headline CPI jumping to 3.3% year-over-year (from 2.4% in February) — the highest since May 2024 — driven by an 18.9% annual surge in gasoline prices tied to the Iran conflict. The Fed's preferred PCE gauge climbed to 3.5% headline and 3.2% core, both up from February, signaling renewed inflationary pressure that complicates the path for rate cuts.
- Real GDP grew at a 2.0% annualized rate in Q1 2026 — a sharp rebound from 0.5% in Q4 2025 — though it came in below the 2.3% economists expected. Growth was powered by an 8.7% jump in gross private domestic investment, including a 10.4% surge in business spending on equipment and structures driven largely by the AI buildout.

CHICAGOLAND'S ECONOMY: KEY MACROECONOMIC METRICS

▬ **Output:** Chicagoland's output for Q2 2026 was projected by Moody's Analytics to be \$963 billion, up 0.8% from Q1 2026. All four of the comparison metro areas are also projected to experience a modest increase in output over the previous quarter.

▲ **Employment:** According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for the Chicago metro area increased by 0.8% to 4.742M from January 2025. This is on par with limited employment growth in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. Employment increased modestly in most counties between January and February 2026. Projections point to potential positive employment growth in major industries such as tech, life sciences, and professional and business services in 2026.

▼ **Unemployment:** Chicagoland's unemployment rate in February 2026 rose to 5.4%, with similar patterns seen among most GCEP counties. Unemployment in the Chicago metro is now highest among its peers.

▲ **Job Postings:** Chicagoland saw a 2% increase in active job postings between March 2026 and April 2026, to 233,124. Computer and Mathematical, and Business and Finance Operations occupations saw large increases in job postings (15% and 9% respectively), while Healthcare occupations saw a dip of 10% in postings between March and April. 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 58 Pro-Chicagoland decisions, which is on the lower end compared to most previous years tracked year-to-date. This includes 45 expansions and 13 relocations/new market entrants. Of these projects, 32 are regional investments and 26 involve projects within city limits—including 7 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

- ▲ **New Private Residential Permits:** There were 3,665 new residential building permits authorized through March of 2026 – representing a 21.1% increase when compared to the same period last year.
- ▼ **City of Chicago Building Permits:** There were 5,445 new construction or renovation/alteration building permits applied for in the last rolling 12-month period (5/1/25-4/30/26) – representing a -24.7% drop when compared to the prior rolling 12-month period.
- ▼ **Trade:** Trade value for O'Hare International Airport saw a decrease to \$26.2 billion in February 2026 from \$27 billion in January 2026. As of February 2026, it is the third largest port by value following JFK Airport (\$37.5 billion) and Port Laredo (\$29.9 billion).
- ▬ **Chicago Fed Survey:** The Chicago Fed Survey of Economic Conditions Activity Index decreased to +17 in April from +22 in March, suggesting that economic growth softened but remained above trend.
- ▼ **ISM Business Barometer:** The Business Barometer – a survey of supply chain professionals in the Chicagoland area eased 3.6 points to 49.2 in April. The Barometer saw a second consecutive fall and is now back in contractionary territory after three months above the neutral 50 mark. The fall was driven by declines in Order Backlogs, New Orders, Supplier Deliveries and Production. A rise in Employment provided some offset. Read more [here](#).
 - In April, the Business Barometer asked: *“If current geopolitical tensions persist, which one do you expect to have the largest direct cost impact”* Responses were: 55% “Raw material/commodity prices,” 35% “Transport/delivery costs,” 10% “Energy (including petroleum products) costs for production (excluding transport/delivery costs).”

PRO-CHICAGOLAND DECISIONS

as of May 7, 2026

Companies making a known pro-Chicagoland decision in 2026

58

45 Expansions
13 Relocations/New Market Entrants

26 city investments, including 7 on the S/W Sides
32 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 Mar 2026 12 month % change, all items	TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES METRO AREA 2025	WEEKLY OFFICE OCCUPANCY METRO AREA Week of Apr. 1	PUBLIC TRANSIT Apr. 26 – May. 2 Benchmark: Dec. 2019		AVG. DAILY FLIGHTS Mar. 2026	
CHI	+2.3%	\$403B (+2.5% from 2024)	53.2%	-33% (CTA)	-33% (Metra)	2,449 (ORD)	443 (MDW)
NYC	+4.0%	\$959B (+5.0% from 2024)	56.2%	+2% (MTA)	-8% (LIRR)	1,108 (JFK)	991 (LGA)
LA	+3.4%	\$537B (+2.3% from 2024)	47.4%	-15%		1,361	
HOU	+1.3% (Feb)	\$290B (+4.3% from 2024)	61.8%	-6%		1,200	

CHICAGO FED SURVEY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

METRO AREA



+17

Apr. 2026
Suggests economic growth was above trend

-5
from Mar. 2026

CHICAGO BUSINESS BAROMETER

METRO AREA



49.2

Apr. 2026

-3.6
from Mar. 2026

HOUSING

NEW PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL PERMITS

METRO AREA
1/1/26 – 3/31/26

3,665

+21.2%
FROM YTD 2025

#16
METRO RANK

ALL BUILDING PERMITS

CITY ONLY
5/1/25 – 4/30/26

5,445

-24.7%
CHANGE FROM 5/1/24 – 4/30/25

TRADE & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

	TRADE VALUE Feb 2026	HOTEL OCCUPANCY CITY (CBD) ONLY Mar. 2026	OPENTABLE RESERVATIONS CITY ONLY Apr. 2026 Benchmark: Apr. 2025	BUSINESS LICENSE APPLICATIONS CITY ONLY 5/1/25-4/30/26
CHI	\$26.2B <i>O'Hare Airport</i>	63.5%	+7%	6,084
NYC	\$37.5B <i>JFK Airport</i>	80.3%	+14%	N/A
LA	\$20.5B <i>Port of LA</i>	70.6%	+13%	N/A
HOU	\$15.9B <i>Part of Houston</i>	N/A	+11%	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											
	NOMINAL GDP (PROJECTED)		BUSINESS COUNT		EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT			ACTIVE JOB POSTINGS	
	Q2 2026	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Q3 2025	PRIOR QUARTER CHANGE	Feb. 2026 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Jan. 2026	Feb. 2026 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Jan. 2026	CHANGE FROM Feb. 2025	Apr. 2026 As of May 8.	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE
CHI	\$963B	0.8% ▲	254,629	0.8% ▲	4,742,972	0.8% ▲	5.4%	0.1pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	233,124	2% ▲
NYC	\$2,595B	0.8% ▲	676,577	0.3% ▲	9,846,600	0.0% =	5.3%	0.5pp ▲	0.9pp ▲	401,155	2% ▲
LA	\$1,586B	0.8% ▲	771,391	2.3% ▲	6,367,631	0.0% =	5.2%	0.1pp ▲	0.2pp ▼	227,502	0% =
HOU	\$787B	1.3% ▲	175,297	0.3% ▼	3,721,528	0.5% ▲	4.7%	0.2pp ▼	0.2pp ▲	126,387	0% =

WHO'S HIRING (APR. 2026)	
COMPANY	UNIQUE JOB POSTINGS
University of Chicago	1,719
Northwestern Memorial Healthcare	1,647
Walgreens Boots Alliance	1,365
Advocate Aurora Health	1,278
Walmart	1,244
Northshore University Health Systems CDC	1,088
AbbVie	1,011

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (Q1 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	241,250	0.2% ▲	91,649	0.1% ▲	275,047	0.0% =	404,871	0.1% ▼	390,888	0.2% ▲	73,701	0.1% ▼
NYC	578,255	0.2% ▲	193,293	0.1% ▲	377,871	0.0% =	321,225	0.2% ▼	858,017	0.1% ▲	63,561	0.2% ▼
LA	294,902	0.0% =	125,005	1.3% ▲	235,223	0.3% ▼	445,268	0.3% ▼	466,583	0.1% ▼	54,188	0.0% =
HOU	126,545	0.4% ▲	63,290	0.3% ▲	177,951	0.3% ▲	238,602	0.1% ▲	283,341	0.4% ▲	17,856	0.1% ▲

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE (Q1 2026, CBRE)					
	ABSORPTION/DEMAND (YTD)	AVAILABILITY	QUARTERLY CHANGE	VACANCY	QUARTERLY CHANGE
OFFICE MARKET (CBD)	(515,176 sqft)	31.1%	▼ 0.2 pp	27.0%	▲ 0.4 pp
OFFICE MARKET (SUBURBAN)	(430,887) sqft	30.7%	▼ 0.3 pp	28.7%	▲ 0.5 pp
INDUSTRIAL MARKET (METRO AREA)	1,613,042 sqft	8.6%	▼ 0.4pp	5.8%	▲ 0.4 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	Feb. 2026 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Jan. 2026	Feb. 2026 (Prelim.)	CHANGE FROM Jan. 2026	CHANGE FROM Feb. 2025	Apr. 2026 As of May 5	CHANGE FROM Mar. 2026
CHICAGO CITY					1,409,531	1.2% ▲	5.5%	0.1pp ▲	0.0pp =	70,563	3.9% ▲
COOK SUBURBS	\$560.4B	4.1% ▲	139,343	0.9% ▲	1,216,609	1.2% ▲	5.5%	0.2pp ▲	0.0pp =	61,317	0.1% ▲
DUPAGE	\$121.7B	2.7% ▲	34,215	0.7% ▲	497,409	1.1% ▲	4.5%	0.3pp ▲	0.2pp ▲	31,041	2.4% ▲
KANE	\$34.9B	2.1% ▲	13,160	0.9% ▲	255,053	1.2% ▲	6.2%	0.1pp ▼	1.0pp ▲	10,982	1.7% ▲
KENDALL	\$4.9B	1.0% ▲	2,499	0.5% ▲	71,708	0.3% ▲	5.3%	0.0pp =	0.9pp ▲	1,823	4.8% ▲
LAKE	\$96.9B	1.8% ▲	20,226	0.8% ▲	339,480	0.1% ▼	6.2%	0.0pp =	0.9pp ▲	19,974	0.4% ▲
MCHENRY	\$15.7B	3.5% ▲	8,005	0.7% ▲	170,716	1.1% ▲	5.2%	0.3pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	5,260	0.3% ▲
WILL	\$45.9B	3.0% ▲	16,099	0.8% ▲	370,472	1.0% ▲	5.5%	0.1pp ▲	0.0pp =	17,987	4.6% ▲
METRO AREA	\$940.8B	3.4% ▲	254,629	0.8% ▲	4,742,972	0.8% ▲	5.4%	0.1pp ▲	0.1pp ▲	233,124	2.1% ▲

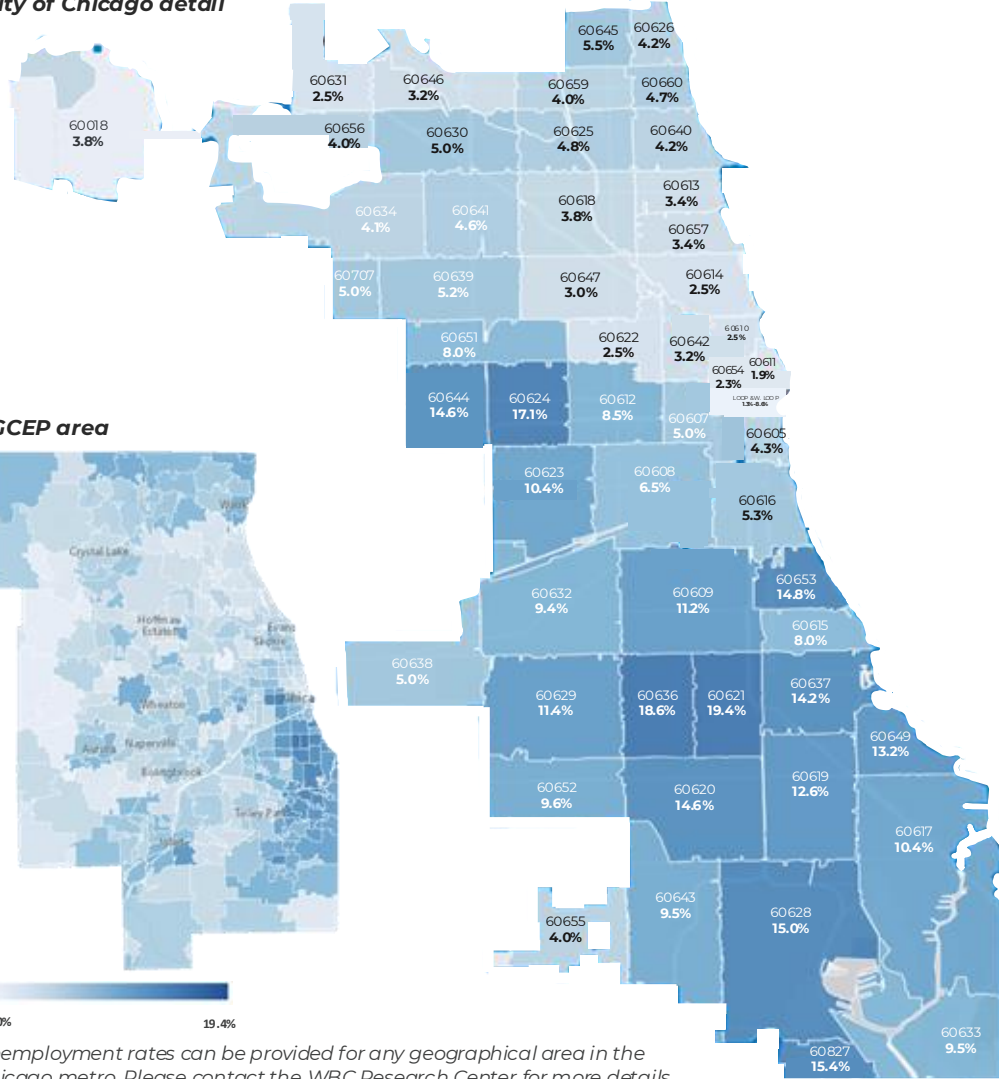
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (2026, PROJECTED) – CITY OF CHICAGO AND GCEP COUNTIES

	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% ▲

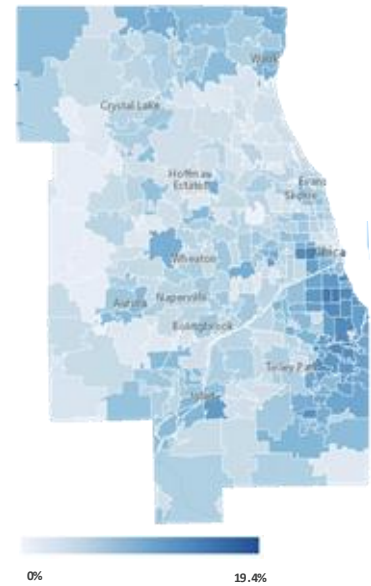
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE MAP

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

Apr. 2026

PRIOR MONTH CHANGE

TOP ZIP CODES FOR RECRUITMENT
Zip codes in Chicago with the highest concentrations of residents in high demand occupations

Occupations with the most unique job postings	Apr. 2026	PRIOR MONTH CHANGE	TOP ZIP CODES FOR RECRUITMENT Zip codes in Chicago with the highest concentrations of residents in high demand occupations				
Management	28,562	5%▲	Downtown Station	Fort Dearborn	Main Post Office	Edge-Brook	Norwood Park
Sales and Related	26,991	2%▲	North Loop	Chestnut Street	Main Post Office	Fort Dearborn	South Loop
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	24,269	10%▼	Chestnut Street	South Inner Loop	Lincoln Park	South Loop	Main Post Office
Business and Financial Operations	19,698	9%▲	Main Post Office	Main Post Office	Chestnut Street	Lincoln Park	Chestnut Street
Transportation and Material Moving	17,236	1%▲	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