

JUST THE FACTS:

Chicago Business Climate Snapshot

July 2026

LABOR FORCE STRENGTH

With approximately 5 million workers, Chicago's labor force is larger than that of 41 U.S. states.

#1 FOR CORPORATE EXPANSION & RELOCATION

In 2025, Chicagoland was named the top U.S. metro for corporate relocation and site selection by Site Selection Magazine for the 13th consecutive year.

#1 U.S. PORT BY TRADE VALUE

O'Hare International Airport was the #1 U.S. port in 2025, handling \$423 billion in trade—marking a 28% increase from 2024. Not only is O'Hare the #1 port by trade value, Chicagoland is home to CenterPoint Intermodal Center, the nation's #1 inland port by size.

FORTUNE 500 MAGNET

Chicago ranks #2 in the U.S. for the number of Fortune 500 headquarters – 27 F500 companies call the region home.

AMERICA'S MOST DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

Of approximately 250,000 businesses in Chicagoland, no single sector accounts for more than 13% of the region's GDP, providing resilience across market cycles and access to a broad-base of customers.

A GLOBAL-SCALE ECONOMY

At an estimated \$929B as of 2025, Chicagoland's Gross Regional Product ranks between the world's 21st and 22nd largest economies, behind Switzerland, and ahead of Taiwan, Belgium, and Argentina.

TALENT PIPELINE

With 151,473 post-secondary graduates annually, Chicago ranks as the 3rd largest talent producer in the U.S.

EDUCATED & SKILLED

Over 3.2 million Chicago-area residents hold an associate's degree or higher, and 35% of Chicago-area residents hold a college degree, outpacing the national average of 31%.

RESEARCH POWERHOUSE

Home to four R1 research universities and two national labs (Argonne and Fermilab), Chicago leads on innovation in industries like clean energy, quantum, AI, and life sciences.

KEY GROWTH SECTORS (OUTPUT AS OF 2025)

- Manufacturing: \$100.1B
- Professional Services: \$91.2B
- Finance and Insurance: \$80.3B

TOP PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Amazon is Chicagoland's largest private-sector employer by local headcount, followed by Advocate Health Care, Northwestern Medicine, and the University of Chicago.

GROWTH CAPITAL MOMENTUM

Chicagoland companies raised \$6.0B in growth capital in 2025, with top investment verticals being SaaS, AI & Machine Learning, Climate Tech & CleanTech, HealthTech, and FinTech.

PRO-CHICAGOLAND MOMENTUM

In 2025, we tracked a record 223 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions, where 170 were corporate expansions and 53 were new market entrants or relocations. Of these projects, 139 projects were suburban investments and 10 projects were on Chicago's South or West Sides.

#1 BIG CITY IN THE U.S.

Voted "Best Big City in the U.S." by Condé Nast Traveler readers — 9 years running.

BUILT FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Chicago's inland location reduces exposure to hurricanes, coastal storm surge, and sea-level rise. Its comparatively predictable operating environment supports business continuity and insurability through seasonal extremes—an increasingly important advantage as companies assess climate-related location risks.

*The industries listed are priorities identified in Chicago 2050 | A Plan for Economic Growth & Jobs. Scan the QR code to download a copy of the plan.

