

JUST THE FACTS: Chicago Business Climate Snapshot

January 2026

#1 IN CORPORATE RELOCATION

Chicago led the nation in 2024 with the highest number of corporate relocations and expansions—nearly 100 more than Dallas.

#2 U.S. PORT BY TRADE VALUE

O'Hare International Airport ranks as the second largest U.S. port as of September 2025, handling \$293.4 billion in trade year to date—marking a 22% increase from this time last year.

FORTUNE 500 MAGNET

Chicago ranks #2 in the U.S. for the number of Fortune 500 headquarters—30 major firms call the region home.

AMERICA'S MOST DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

No single sector accounts for more than 13% of Chicago's GDP, providing resilience across market cycles and access to a broad-base of customers.

A GLOBAL-SCALE ECONOMY

At \$927B in 2024, 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 clean energy, quantum, AI, and life sciences.

EMERGING SECTOR GROWTH (2024-2025)

- Professional Services: \$141B
- Manufacturing: \$99B
- Finance and Insurance: \$79B
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LABOR FORCE STRENGTH

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

TOP PRIVATE EMPLOYER

Amazon is Chicagoland's largest private-sector employer by headcount.

BUSINESS DENSITY

249,612 businesses operate in the metro—4th highest among U.S. regions.

GROWTH CAPITAL MOMENTUM

Chicagoland companies raised \$7.3B in growth capital in 2025. Some of the largest VC deals in 2025 included:

- Pathos, a developer of a drug discovery platform, raised \$365M in a Series D venture funding round in May 2025.
- Paragon Biosciences, a life sciences company, raised \$295M in a later-stage VC deal in July 2025.
- Kin, an online insurance platform, raised \$250M in a Series E venture funding round in September 2025.
- Ocient, a data analytics platform designed for rapid analysis of large datasets, raised \$132M in a Series B2 round in December 2025.

PRO-CHICAGO MOMENTUM

As of 12/15/2025, there have been 190 Pro-Chicagoland Decisions, where 138 are expansions and 52 are new market entrants/relocations. 80 are investments in the city of Chicago, including 9 on the South or West Sides. The other 110 are investments in the surrounding region.

#1 BIG CITY IN THE U.S.

Voted "Best Big City in the U.S." by Condé Nast Traveler readers—8 years running.

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

