

# Humboldt Economic Index

Our Sponsors:



Professor Erick Eschker, Director  
Jonathan Juarez, Assistant Editor  
Isaiah Oliver, Assistant Analyst

The Humboldt Economic Index is produced by the Economics Department at Cal Poly Humboldt University. It measures changes in the local economy using data from local businesses and organizations. The data are compiled into a seasonally adjusted Index that shows changes relative to the base month (January 1994). The composite Index is a weighted combination of six individual sectors of the local economy. The current Index is based on the most recently available data, which is generally data from the previous month.

May 2025

## Housing Surges as Gasoline Price Fall

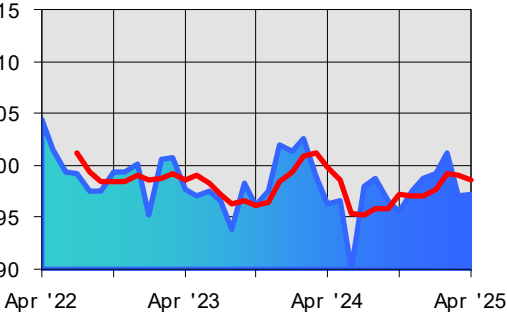
The Composite Index increased 0.1 percent from last month's value of 97.0 to the current value of 97.1. The Composite is also up 0.9 percent from this time last year. Home Sales and Hospitality are both up this month, while Retail Sales, Energy, and Employment saw declines in May.

The Index of Home Sales rose 23.4 percent this month and is 7.0 percent higher than this time last year. Median home prices in Humboldt County rose from \$390,000 to \$436,195 over the past month. Mortgage rates climbed recently, with the average 30-year fixed rate mortgage at 6.89 percent and the average 15-year fixed rate mortgage at 6.03 percent.

Leading indicators are mixed. Unemployment Claims are up, but Help Wanted signs are up alongside Building Permits, which is a good sign for economic outlook.

The unemployment rates remain unchanged for the most part across the board with exception of the County rate. Humboldt County's rate rose 0.1 points to 4.7 percent, while California's rate remained at 5.3 percent. The national seasonally adjusted unemployment rate

Composite Index



also remained unchanged at 4.2 percent.

Average gas prices have begun to cool down from their recent climb, observing price decreases in most regions. Eureka's average gas price fell 25 cents to a new price of \$5.52.

## Composite & Sectors

		Percent change from			
Index	Value***	Last Month	One Year ago****	Five Years ago****	Ten Years ago****
Composite	97.1	0.1	0.9	7.1	-8.6
Home Sales	113.6	23.4	7.0	24.3	7.0
Retail Sales	141.0	-3.9	2.6	-10.6	-18.3
Hospitality	90.1	8.0	-4.5	108.6	0.5
Electricity	84.4	-8.6	-3.5	-17.5	-29.7
Employment	107.3	-1.1	1.7	7.4	-1.5
Lumber*	19.6				
Manufacturing**	175.6				

\* Formerly "manufacturing"

\*\* Niche, non-lumber manufacturing. Not a component of the overall composite.

\*\*\* These values are adjusted to remove seasonal fluctuation. The base month is January 1994 (January 2013 for manufacturing) with an Index value of 100.

\*\*\*\* The percent change from the same month one, five and ten years ago.

# The Index – Leading Indicators

## Leading Indicators

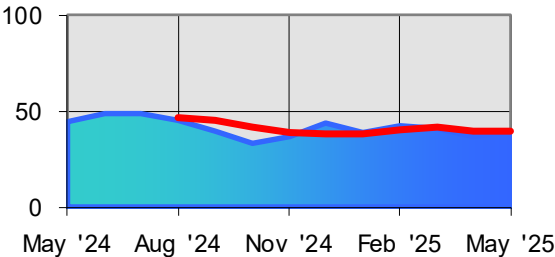
The Index tracks four leading indicators to get a sense of the direction that the county economy may take in the near future. The leading indexes are (1) number of initial claims for unemployment insurance, (2) building permits, and (3) help wanted advertising.

Leading Indicators		
Unemployment Claims	Building Permits	Help Wanted Advertising
6.6%	412.3%	11.0%
* Change from prior month. All values are seasonally adjusted.		

Key Statistics			
Median Home Price*	Monthly Rent**	Mortgage Rate†	Unemployment Rate‡
\$436,195	\$2,229	6.90%	4.7%
* The Humboldt Association of Realtors provides home price data. MLS is not responsible for accuracy of information. The information published and disseminated by the Service is communicated verbatim, without change by the Service, as filed with the Service by the Participant. The Service does not verify such information provided and disclaims any responsibility for its accuracy. Each Participant agrees to hold the Service harmless against any liability arising from any inaccuracy or inadequacy of the information.			
** Average rent on 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom houses listed in Craigslist.			
† 30-year owner occupied conforming conventional fixed rate provided by Umpqua Bank.			
‡ Seasonally adjusted Humboldt County unemployment rate is based on non-seasonally adjusted preliminary EDD data.			

**Unemployment Claims** dropped 10.5 percent over the month for a new Index value of 36.8. At this time last year, unemployment claims were at an index value of 59.6, 38.2 percent higher than present day. The 4-month moving average fell from 41.5 to 39.7.

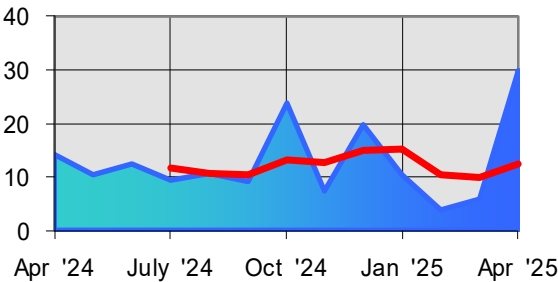
Index of Claims for Unemployment Insurance



**Graphs Explanation:** The blue area represents the seasonally adjusted Index of Unemployment Claims above. The red line shows the four-month moving average which attempts to demonstrate the overall trend in the data with less monthly volatility.

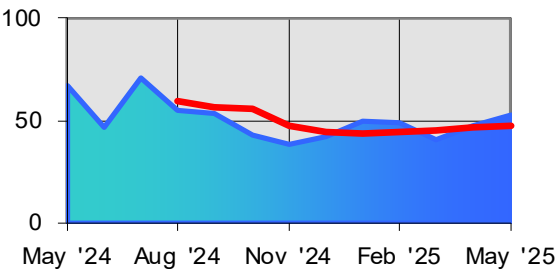
**Building Permits** increased 412.3 percent over the month to an index value of 29.9, this is 110.0 percent higher than the value from last year. The 4-month moving average is now at 12.5, 2.5 percent higher than last month's value of 10.0.

Index of Building Permits Issued



**Help Wanted Advertising** rose to a value of 47.2, an increase of 16.5 percent from last month's value. Year-to-year, the index has fallen 6.6 percent from 50.5. The 4-month moving average rose by 1.2 percent from last month's value of 45.2 to a value of 46.4.

Index of Help Wanted Advertising



## The Index – Individual Sectors

### Home Sales

The Index value of the home sales sector is based on the number of new and existing homes sold in Humboldt County each month as recorded by the Humboldt Association of Realtors.

The Humboldt County Home Sales Index increased 23.4 percent to a value of 113.6, which is 7.0 percent higher than this time last year. The county's median home price for the past month rose to a value of \$436,195, \$46,195 higher than last month's median. The county's median home price at this time last year was \$400,000.

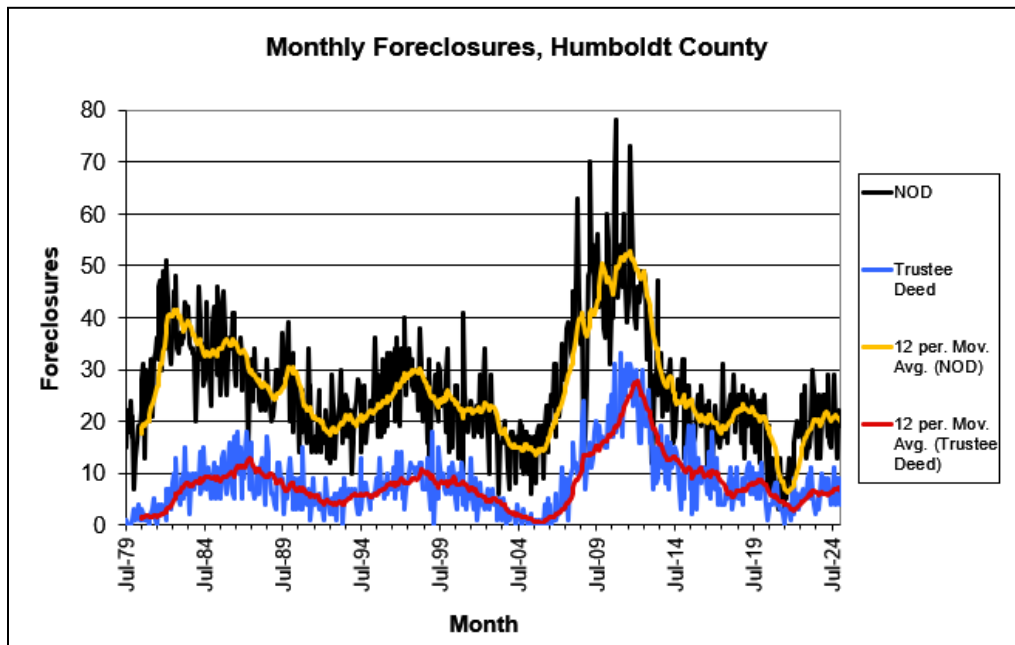
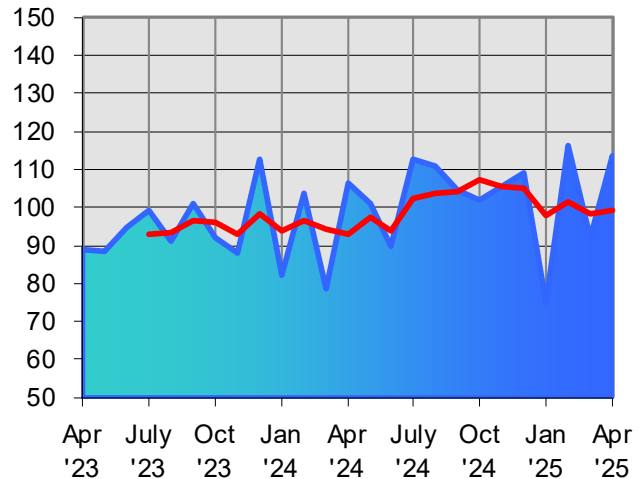
The S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Indices note "Home prices had a slight decrease in February" in their most recent report. National Home Price NSA Index, covering all nine U.S. census divisions, reported a 3.9% annual return for February, down from a 4.1% annual gain in the previous month. The 10-City Composite saw an annual increase of 5.2%, down from a 5.4% annual increase in the previous month. The 20-City Composite posted a year-over-year increase of 4.5%, down from a 4.7% increase in the previous month.

Nicholas Godec, CFA, CAIA, CIPM, Head of Fixed Income Tradables & Commodities at S&P Dow Jones Indices, notes "Even with mortgage rates remaining in the mid-6% range and affordability challenges lingering, home prices have shown notable resilience. Buyer demand has certainly cooled compared to the frenzied pace of prior years, but limited housing

supply continues to underpin prices in most markets. Rather than broad declines, we are seeing a slower, more sustainable pace of price growth". The S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Indices, a national index of housing prices, is calculated monthly using a 3-month moving average, and published with a two-month lag. Within the Case Shiller Index are composites of 10 and 20 cities that the Index considers representative of the national housing market.

Mortgage rates decreased this month. According to Freddie Mac, the average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage is now 6.81 percent, and the average 15 year fixed-rate mortgage is 5.94 percent for the week ending April 24, 2025. The rates for a 30-year and 15-year fixed mortgage last year at this time were 7.17 and 6.44 respectively.

### Home Sales Index



# The Index – Individual Sectors

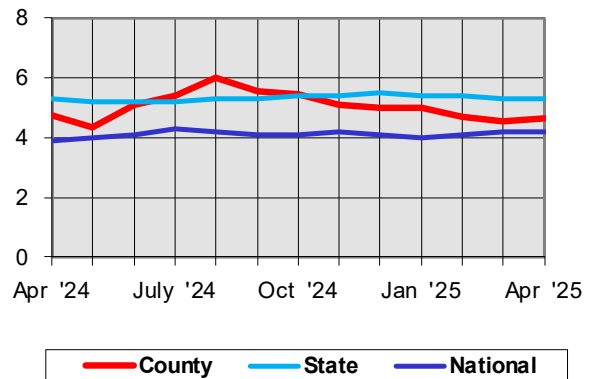
## Total County Employment

The Index value of the employment sector is based on seasonally adjusted total employment as reported by the Employment Development Department.

Total County Employment fell 1.1 percent this month to an index value of 107.3. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Humboldt County rose 0.1 points to 4.7 percent. The seasonally adjusted national unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.2 percent. The Labor Department's April statistics state that national employment added 177,000 nonfarm payroll jobs, and the unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.2 percent. National employment rose in health care, transportation and warehousing, financial activities, and social assistance. Employment declined in the federal government. Health care added 51,000 jobs in April, transportation and warehousing added over 29,000 jobs, financial activities added 14,000 jobs and social assistance added 8,000

jobs, while government employment fell by 9,000 jobs. Employment showed little change over the month in other major industries, including mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; construction; manufacturing; wholesale trade; retail; information; professional and business services; leisure and hospitality; and other services.

Unemployment Percentage Rates



## Hospitality

The Index value of the hospitality sector is based on seasonally adjusted average occupancy each month at a cross section of local hotels, motels and inns.

Hospitality increased 8.0 percent this month to a current value of 90.1. April's index value also represents a 4.5 percent decrease over this time last year. The 4-month moving average is also down 0.4 percent over last month with a current value of 91.4.

## Gasoline Prices

California's gas price are beginning to fall from a consecutive month to month climb at the start of the year. California saw a fall of 7 cents to \$4.73 in May. Northern California's average decreased by 9 cents to \$5.05. While Eureka's average gas price per gallon fell 25 cents to a new price of \$5.52.

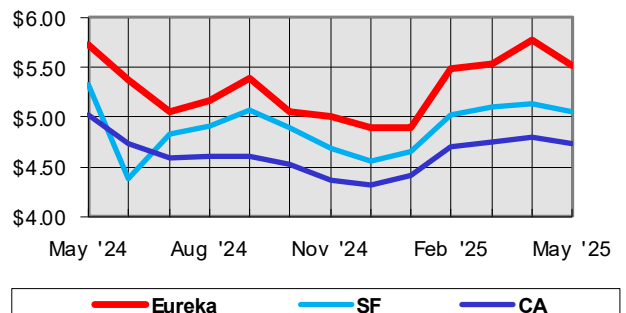
NBC News reports "California gas prices predicted to rise amid refinery closures" A key factor driving this anticipated surge is the planned shutdown of two major oil refineries: Phillips 66 in Los Angeles and Valero in Benicia. A permanent reduction of the state's refining capacity by 21%. "We have very special gas here in California. Our blend is completely different than anywhere else in the country, so the gas we make and sell here is very specific to California," said University of Southern California Professor Michael Mische. This means the supply shock will drive higher demand with higher cost.

Gas Prices

Prices as of 5/ 31/ 2025	Average price*	Change from previous month
Eureka	\$5.52	-\$0.25
Northern California	\$5.05	-\$0.09
California	\$4.73	-\$0.07

\* Current average price per gallon of self-serve regular unleaded gasoline as reported by the American Automobile Association monthly gas survey ([www.csaa.com](http://www.csaa.com)).

Gasoline Prices



# The Index – Individual Sectors

---

## Manufacturing

The index value of this sector is based on a combination of production and employment for a variety of niche manufacturers and is adjusted to account for normal seasonal variations.

Overall Humboldt County manufacturing employment remained constant at 2,100 according to the Employment Development Department.

The Institute for Supply Management reported that economic activity in the manufacturing sector contracted in April after 2 consecutive months of expansion preceded by 26 straight months of contraction. The PMI registered at 48.7 percent in April, a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from March's 49 percent. Only five of the eighteen manufacturing industries reporting growth in April were Apparel, Leather & Allied Products; Petroleum & Coal Products; Nonmetallic Mineral Products; Transportation Equipment; and Computer & Electronic Products. New export orders were down 6.5 percentage points in April, for a new index value of 43.1 percent, it now registered as the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of contraction after two consecutive months of expansion in new export orders. New export orders contracted sharply due to the combination of slow overseas growth as well as the application of counter tariffs applied to a multitude of U.S. manufactured products. No industry reported growth in new export orders in April. The PMI (Producing Managers Index) is based on the number of manufacturing supply managers who expect business conditions to improve in the near future.

This is the first new sector of the Index and was created after listening to local economic development agencies. For a detailed description please visit our [Special Projects page](#).

Since the manufacturing index is so new, and since we do not have much data to create precise seasonal indices, we do not include manufacturing in the overall composite Index. As the amount of data collected grows, we will feel more confident in our monthly seasonal estimates and add niche manufacturing. Lumber-based manufacturing, which was one of the original sectors of the Index, continues to be part of the overall composite Index.

## Electricity Consumption

The Index value of this sector is based on seasonally adjusted kilowatt-hours of electricity consumed each month in Humboldt County. Electricity consumption is a somewhat mixed or ambiguous indicator that usually correlates with economic activity. However, increases in energy efficiency and conservation reduce the sector's index value, while not necessarily indicating a decline in economic activity.

In April, the Electricity Index fell 8.6 percent to a new value of 84.4. The current value is 3.5 percent lower than the value for this time last year.

## Retail Sales

The Index value for the retail sales sector is based on the seasonally adjusted dollar value of sales each month from a cross section of local retail businesses.

The Retail Sales Index decreased by 3.9 percent to a current value of 141.0, a 2.6 percent increase when compared to this time last year. The 4-month moving average for this index fell 1.1 percent to a current value of 151.6.

On the national scale, Consumer Confidence plunged in the month of April, down 7.9 points for a current index value of 86. The Expectations Index fell 2.5 points to a value of 54.4, while the Present Situation Index fell 0.9 points to a current value of 133.5. Stephanie Guichard, Senior Economist, Global Indicators at The Conference Board, says "Consumer confidence declined for a fifth consecutive month in April, falling to levels not seen since the onset of the COVID pandemic. The decline was largely driven by consumers' expectations. The three expectation components — business conditions, employment prospects and future income — all deteriorated sharply, reflecting pervasive pessimism about the future."

The Consumer Confidence Index is the average of The Present Situation and The Expectations Index and is a barometer of the health of the U.S. economy from the perspective of the

## Lumber Manufacturing

Lumber Manufacturing is suspended from the Index until we can obtain a sufficient number of data providers. This sector is 12% of the overall Composite Index. The Lumber Index averaged 19.6 in 2014, the last full year of data. The Index value of this sector is based on a combination of major county lumber companies and is adjusted to account for normal seasonal variations.



# The Index

---

**Explanatory Note:** We have been tracking economic activity since January 1994. The Composite Index at the beginning of this report is a weighted average of each of the six sectors described above. Each sectoral index, and the composite index, started at a value of 100 in 1994. Thus, if the retail sectoral index value is currently 150, that means that (inflation-adjusted) retail sales among the firms that report data to us are 50 percent higher than in January 1994. We also seasonally adjust each sector, and the composite index, to correct for "normal" seasonal variation in the data, such as wet season vs. dry season, and so trends in the seasonally adjusted composite index provide a better indication of underlying growth and fundamental change in the economy. Each month's report reflects the most recent data available, which is usually from the previous month. For example, the "August 2006" report reflects mostly data from July 2006. As is common, our initial report is preliminary, and as we receive final data we revise our reports accordingly.

Cal Poly  
**Humboldt.**

C O L L E G E   O F   P R O F E S S I O N A L   S T U D I E S  
■ ■ ■ *realize human potential*

## Cited References:

Bureau of Labor Statistics - Case-Shiller Home Price Indices  
The Conference Board - Employment Development Department (CA)  
Freddie Mac - Humboldt Association of Realtors  
Institute for Supply Management – NBC News  
The Eureka Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Layout & Design: Matt Hawk

**Contact Info:** Erick Eschker can be contacted at [ee3@humboldt.edu](mailto:ee3@humboldt.edu)

<https://www.humboldt.edu/economic-index>

Copyright © 2025 [Erick Eschker](#)