

Humboldt Economic Index

January 2026

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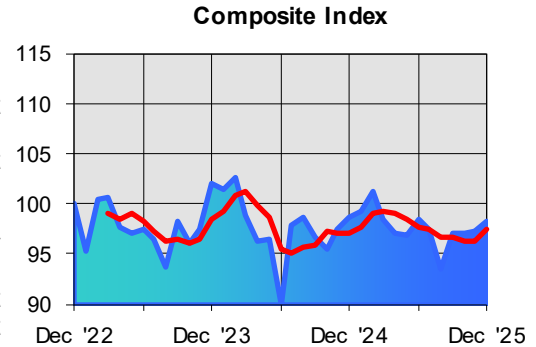
Home Sales Rise as Gas Prices Climb

The Composite Index increased 1.1 percent from last month's value of 97.2 to the current value of 98.2. However, the Composite is also down -0.4 percent from this time last year. Majority of the sectors are down this past month except for the Energy Index, and the Home Index.

The Index of Home Sales rose by 11.4 percent this month. In addition, it is 5.3 percent higher than this time last year. Median home prices in Humboldt County rose from \$410,000 to \$425,000 over the past month. Mortgage rates slightly rose, with the average 30-year fixed rate mortgage at 6.15 percent and the average 15-year fixed rate mortgage at 5.44 percent.

A rise in Unemployment Claims, along with a decline in Help Wanted Ads signal downward turn. Additionally, Building Permits, suggest downward economic conditions ahead. Leading sector indicators are signaling negative for the future economy.

Gas prices across California have rose from their fall from previous months. The statewide average rose by 7 cents, reaching \$4.29. In Northern California, prices saw a 22-cent rise,



averaging \$4.48. However, Eureka experienced a significant increase of 16-cents, bringing it to \$4.89.

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.

Composite & Sectors

Index	Value***	Percent change from			
		Last Month	One Year ago****	Five Years ago****	Ten Years ago****
Composite	98.2	1.1	-0.4	-4.8	-11.2
Home Sales	114.9	11.4	5.3	-22.7	-13.9
Retail Sales	146.9	-0.6	1.0	-5.6	-16.1
Hospitality	92.8	-0.5	1.0	11.1	-5.7
Electricity	91.6	4.2	-3.2	-22.6	-31.8
Employment	104.5	-0.1	-1.9	1.6	-2.2
Lumber*	19.6				
Manufacturing**	142.5				

* 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

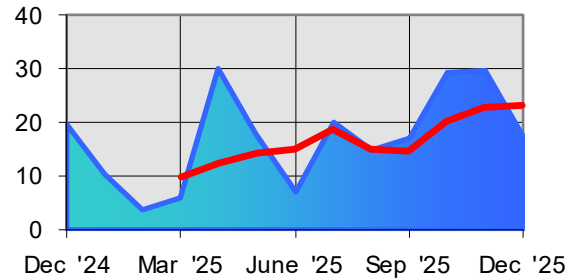
The Index tracks four leading indicators to get a sense of the direction that the county economy may take in the near future. The leading indexes are (1) number of initial claims for unemployment insurance, (2) building permits, and (3) help wanted advertising.

Leading Indicators		
Unemployment Claims	Building Permits	Help Wanted Advertising
-6.5%	-41.7%	42.8%
* Change from prior month. All values are seasonally adjusted.		

Key Statistics			
Median Home Price*	Monthly Rent**	Mortgage Rate†	Unemployment Rate‡
\$425,000	\$2,048	6.50%	5.3%
* 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.			

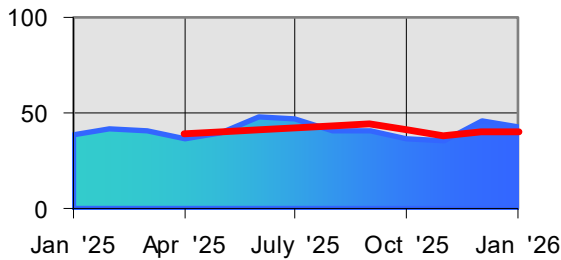
Building Permits fell by 41.7 percent, reaching an index value of 17.3, down from 29.7 last month. Compared to the same month last year, the index fell 12.5 percent. The 4-month moving average increased to 23.3, which is 2.8 percent higher than last month's 22.7.

Index of Building Permits Issued



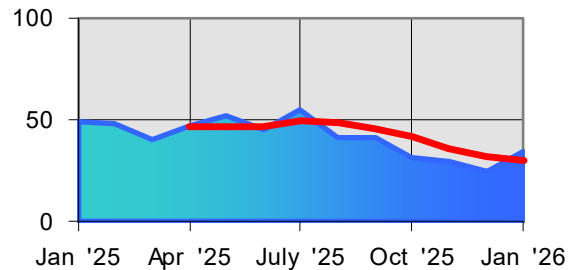
Unemployment Claims decreased by 6.5 percent this month, bringing the index up to 43.4.

Index of Claims for Unemployment Insurance



Help Wanted Advertising increased to 34.7 this month, marking a 42.8 percent rise from last month.

Index of Help Wanted Advertising



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.

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.

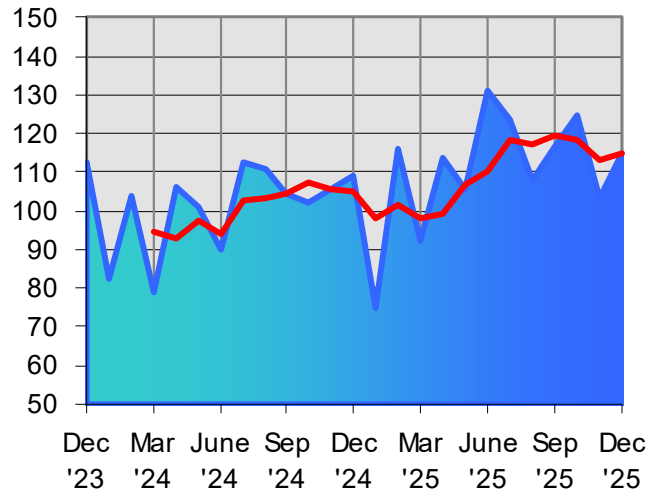
The Humboldt County Home Sales Index increased 11.4 percent to a value of 114.9, which is also 5.3 percent higher than this time last year. The county's median home price for the past month rose to a value of \$425,000, \$15,000 higher than last month's median. The county's median home price at this time last year was \$428,675.

The latest report from the S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Indices highlights modest year-over-year gains in December, with the 20-City Composite, 10-City Composite, and National Index rising 1.4%, 1.9%, and 1.3%, respectively. However, real home values declined, as 2.7% inflation outpaced national price growth by 1.4 percentage points. Regional divergence widened, with Chicago (+5.3%) and New York (+5.1%) leading gains, while Tampa (-2.9%), Phoenix (-1.5%), Dallas (-1.5%), and Miami (-1.5%) posted annual declines.

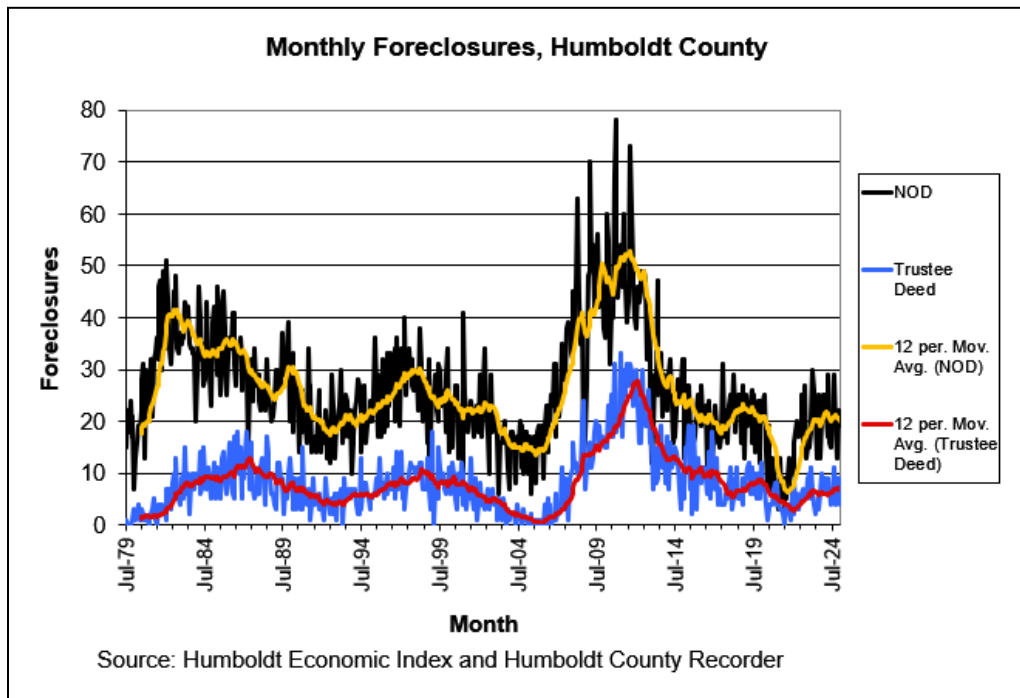
Nicholas Godec, CFA, CAIA, CIPM, Head of Fixed Income Tradables & Commodities at S&P Dow Jones Indices, said 2025 marked one of the weakest annual performances in over a decade, as elevated mortgage rates near 6.2% continued to constrain affordability and weigh on price momentum, leaving real returns negative through year-end.

Mortgage rates increased this month. According to Freddie Mac, the average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage is now 6.18 percent, and the average 15-year fixed-rate mortgage is 5.50 percent for the week ending December 31, 2025. The rates for a 30-year and 15-year fixed mortgage last year at this time were 6.85 and 6.00 respectively.

Home Sales Index



Monthly Foreclosures, Humboldt County



Source: Humboldt Economic Index and Humboldt County Recorder

The Index – Individual Sectors

Total County Employment

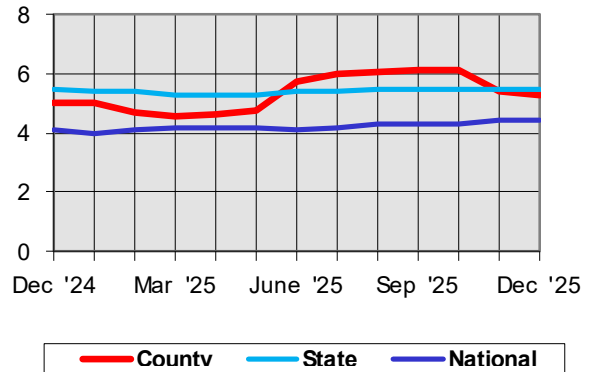
The Index value of the employment sector is based on seasonally adjusted total employment as reported by the Employment Development Department.

Total employment in the county fell this month by 0.1 percent, bringing the index to 104.5. Humboldt County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased to 5.3 percent. Nationally, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.4 percent, and the state unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.5 percent.

The Labor Department's December statistics state that national employment added 50,000 nonfarm payroll jobs, and the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.4 percent. National employment rose in food services and drinking places, health care, and social assistance. Employment declined in retail trade. Food services and drinking places added 27,000 jobs, health care grew by 21,000

jobs, social assistance grew by 17,000 jobs and government jobs grew by 2,000 jobs. In December, Retail trade fell by 25,000 jobs. Employment showed little change over the month in other major industries, including mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; construction; manufacturing; wholesale trade; transportation and warehousing; information; financial activities; professional and business services; 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 fell 0.5 percent this month to a current value of 92.8. December's index value also represents a 1.0 percent increase over this time last year. The 4-month moving average is also up 2.4 percent over last month with a current value of 92.8.

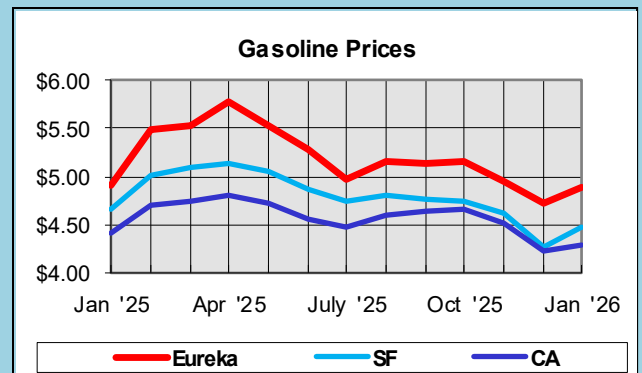
Gasoline Prices

California's gas prices are starting to see increases from their seasonal decrease, increasing by 7 cents to an average of \$4.29. In Northern California, prices went up by 22 cents, averaging \$4.48. In Eureka, gas prices rose by 16 cents during the month, bringing the 2026 average to \$4.89.

The San Jose Mercury News reports that gas prices helped drive January's cooler inflation reading, falling 3.2% for the month, the third decline in four months, and dropping 7.5% compared with a year earlier. The pullback in energy costs contributed to the overall inflation rate easing to 2.4%. Lower gas prices have provided some relief to consumers, though economists caution that broader price pressures and potential tariff-related costs could still influence energy and transportation expenses in the months ahead.

Gas Prices		
Prices as of 1/ 31/ 2026	Average price*	Change from previous month
Eureka	\$4.89	\$0.16
Northern California	\$4.48	\$0.22
California	\$4.29	\$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).



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 U.S. manufacturing activity contracted in December for the tenth consecutive month, with the PMI decreasing to 47.9%, down from 48.2% in December. This is the lowest reading of 2025. In December, five of the 18 manufacturing industries, Wood Products; Primary Metals; Plastics & Rubber Products; Electrical Equipment, Appliances & Components; and Computer & Electronic Products saw growth in new export orders.

“Despite a slight improvement in the New Export Orders Index, trade frictions continue to weigh on demand. Many panelists still report softer international orders tied to tariffs and ongoing uncertainty around U.S. economic policy, with a ratio of 1.5 negative comments for every positive one,” says Susan Spence, MBA, Chair of the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Manufacturing Business Survey Committee.

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 December, the Electricity Index rose 4.2 percent to a new value of 91.6. The current value is 3.2 percent lower than the value for this time last year. The 4-month moving average went up, rising 4.5 percent from 83.6 to 87.4.

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 0.6 percent to a current value of 146.9, a 1.0 percent increase when compared to this time last year. The 4-month moving average for this index increased by 1.0 percent to a current value of 145.4.

Nationally, consumer confidence declined by 3.8 points in December to 89.1, down from 92.9 in November. The Present Situation Index, reflecting views on current business and labor conditions, fell by 9.5 points to 116.8. Meanwhile, the Expectations Index, tracking short-term outlooks for income, business, and jobs, increased by 7.5 points to 70.7, staying below the recession-warning threshold of 80 for the eleventh consecutive month. Preliminary data was collected through December 16, 2025. According to The Conference Board's Dana M Peterson, consumer confidence declined again in December, staying well below its January peak. Four of the index's five components weakened, with one signaling particularly notable weakness.

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 consumer.

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.

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

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