

The Analyst

ST. TAMMANY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S
ECONOMIC RESEARCH PUBLICATION

*Q4 2025 Economic
Trends Report*

Introduction

Welcome to St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation's publication of our Quarterly Economic Trends Report, a curated collection of economic indicators that help explain dynamics across the local, regional, and national economies and how they interact. This publication is a product of **The AnalyST**, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation's economic research publication suite. Tracking and understanding economic trends is an important exercise for economic developers, public officials, business professionals, and the general citizenry that empowers us to make the best possible decisions to help our community prosper.

This report covers data made available through the fourth quarter of 2025. Some of the government data regularly collected for the report was unavailable due to the government shutdown from October 1, 2025, to November 12, 2025. Despite some gaps in the fall months, updated data was available for most of the indicators measured in this Q4 report.

Data for St. Tammany Parish is compared with the Greater New Orleans region, the state of Louisiana, and the nation. Throughout this report, the Greater New Orleans region is measured using the New Orleans-Metairie-Hammond, LA-MS combined statistical area. This includes the newly created Slidell-Mandeville-Covington, LA metropolitan statistical area (MSA), New Orleans MSA, and Bogalusa micropolitan statistical area. Previous versions of this report used the former New Orleans MSA that included St. Tammany Parish. St. Tammany Parish was removed from this MSA in 2023 to create the Slidell-Mandeville-Covington MSA by the Office of Management and Budget.

Through the publication of this latest version of **The AnalyST** and other economic trends products, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation strives to fulfill our mission of being economic truth-tellers and providing meaningful, thoughtful analysis that lays the groundwork for transformational, results-driven economic development.



Quarterly Key Takeaways

- **St. Tammany Parish** closed the year with one of its **lowest unemployment rates in recent months**, although a **rise in unemployment claims in January suggests some modest softening may occur early in 2026**.
- Labor force participation remains below regional and national benchmarks, indicating that **expanding engagement among working-age residents could meaningfully increase the available talent pool for local employers**.
- **Recent US Census Bureau data shows that poverty levels have improved from last year**, yet long-term trends underscore the importance of steady full-time employment in supporting economic mobility.
- **Entrepreneurial activity** in the parish **continues at a healthy pace** with business incorporation filings exceeding levels from the same quarter of the previous year and **self-employment representing a substantial share of the local workforce**.
- Inflation in the Southern region has moved closer to the Federal Reserve's target. **Housing-related price pressures have eased compared to post-pandemic highs, offering some relief to households. Household energy price increases remained high this past quarter**.
- **Wage growth** appears to have **stabilized across the South**, but **average earnings in St. Tammany Parish remain below regional benchmarks**, which may influence competitiveness.
- National manufacturing indicators strengthened entering 2026, yet **local manufacturing unemployment in St. Tammany rose in the fourth quarter of 2025**.
- Housing construction and home sales activity point to steady demand, while **record retail sales tax collections suggest consumer spending remained resilient through the holiday season**.



Unemployment

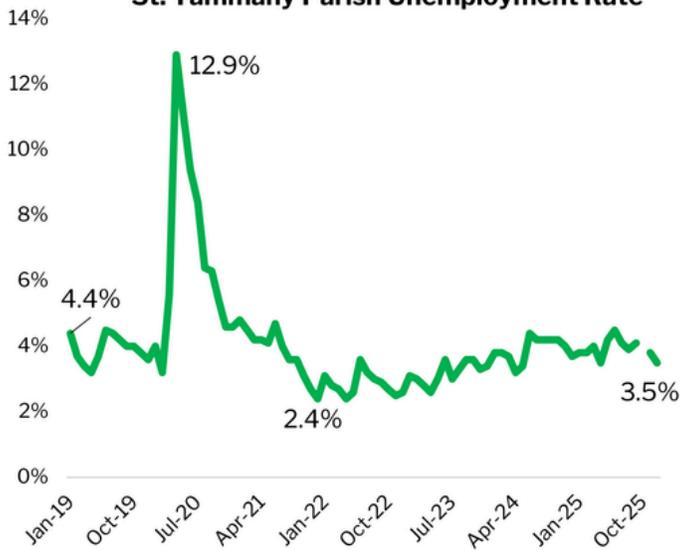
The unemployment rate was **3.5 percent** in St. Tammany Parish in December 2025. **This rate was the lowest in the last seven months.**

Holiday hiring often results in lower unemployment rates in December. Parish level data is not seasonally adjusted. However, **when compared to the December rate from 2024, the most recent rate was 0.2 percentage points lower.**

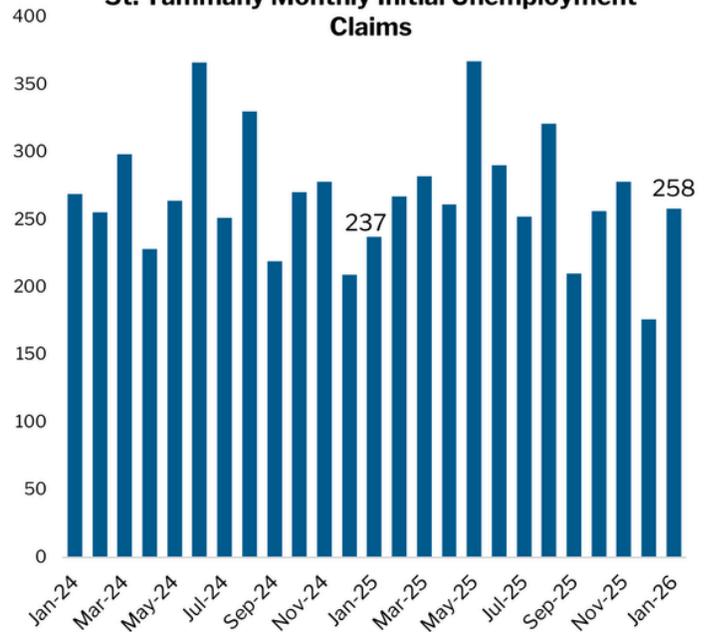
St. Tammany's unemployment rate continues to be the lowest when compared to the Greater New Orleans region, the state, and the national average. In the last year, the unemployment rate has increased nationally.

The data for new unemployment insurance claims for the parish show that December 2025 was the lowest level experienced in recent months. **Claims numbers rose in January 2026 to a level higher than in the previous January. This indicates the unemployment rate may tick upward in the next few data releases.**

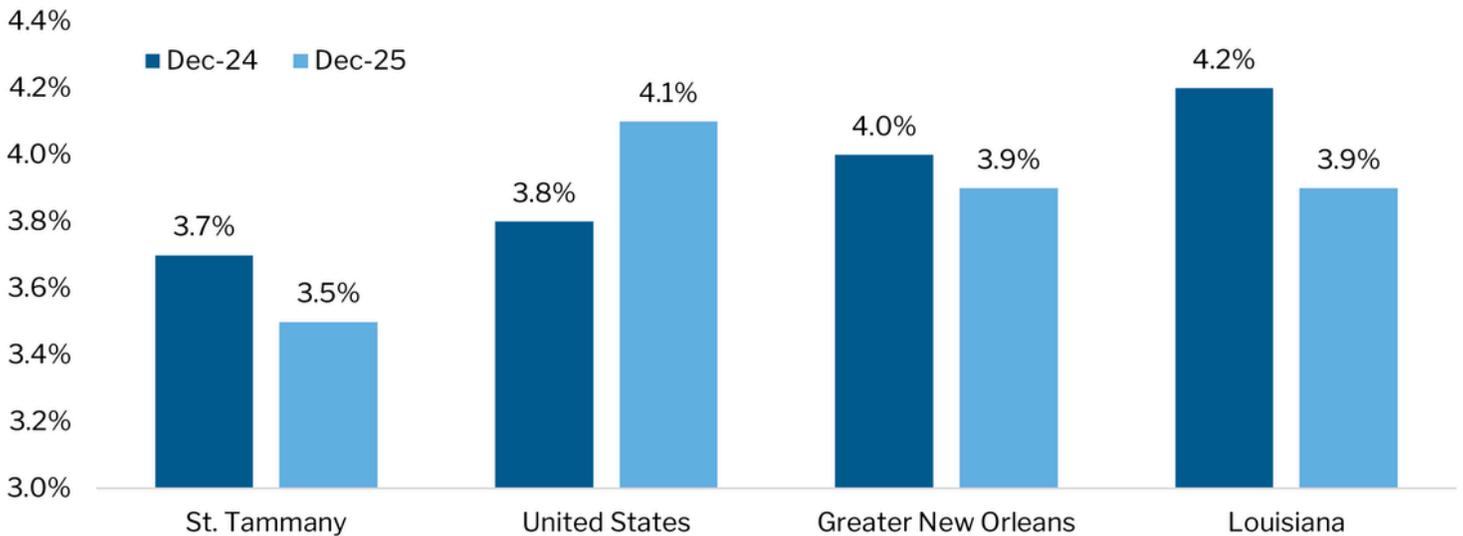
St. Tammany Parish Unemployment Rate



St. Tammany Monthly Initial Unemployment Claims



Unemployment Rates by Area

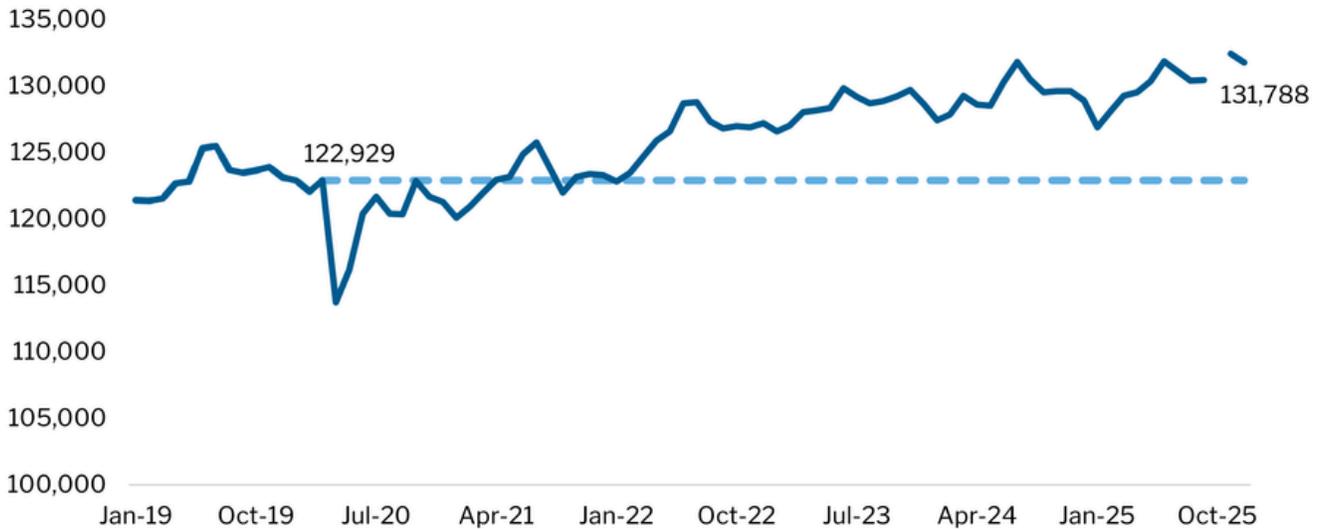


Labor Force

The labor force is defined as the number of working-age people who are either employed or actively seeking employment. In December 2025, the **Bureau of Labor Statistics measured 131,788 St. Tammany residents participating in the labor force.**

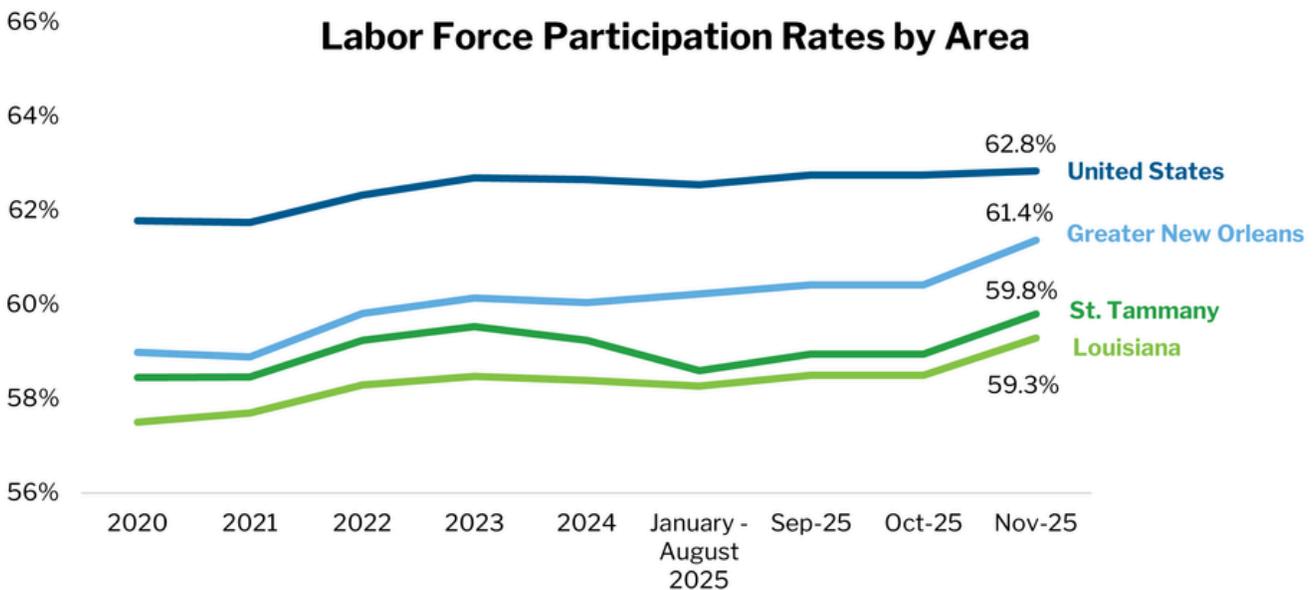
This was a small decline from the level in November 2025 of 132,461. **The November figure was the highest recorded labor force level in the parish.**

St. Tammany Parish Labor Force



Data on labor force participation rates indicate that there are still residents who are neither employed nor seeking work. In November 2025, the rate for St. Tammany Parish was about 60 percent. **Rates for the parish remain lower than the Greater New Orleans area and the national average. Increasing the participation rate of existing residents can help expand the labor pool for local employers.**

Labor Force Participation Rates by Area



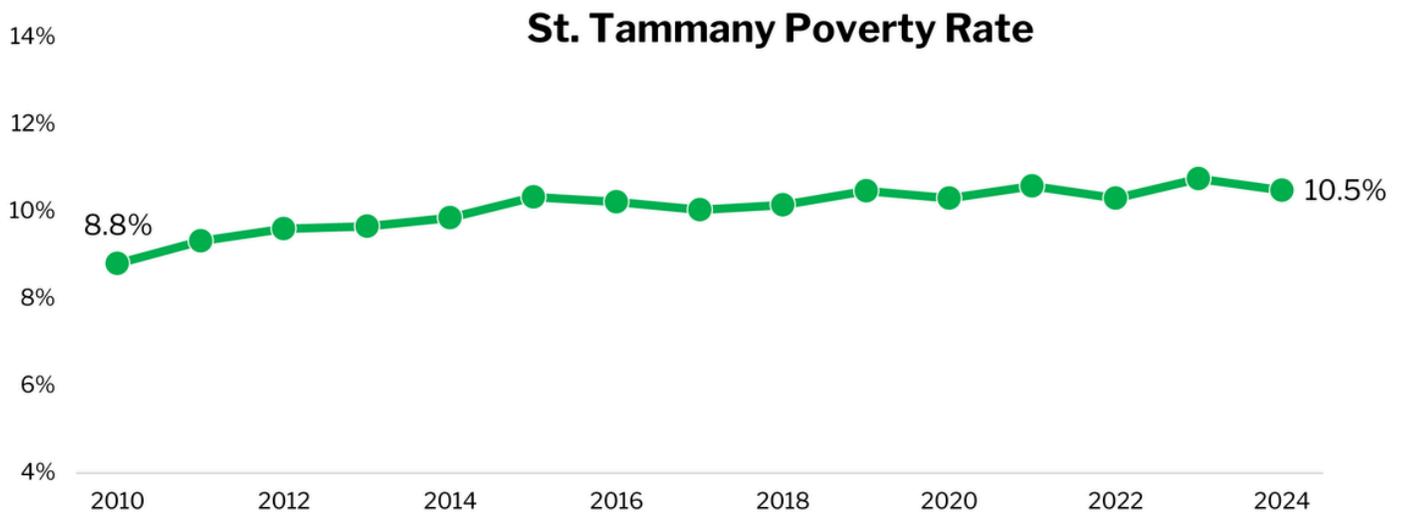
Poverty Rates

The US Census Bureau recently released its data from the American Community Survey in 2024. To better understand economic mobility in the parish, the latest poverty rates were measured.

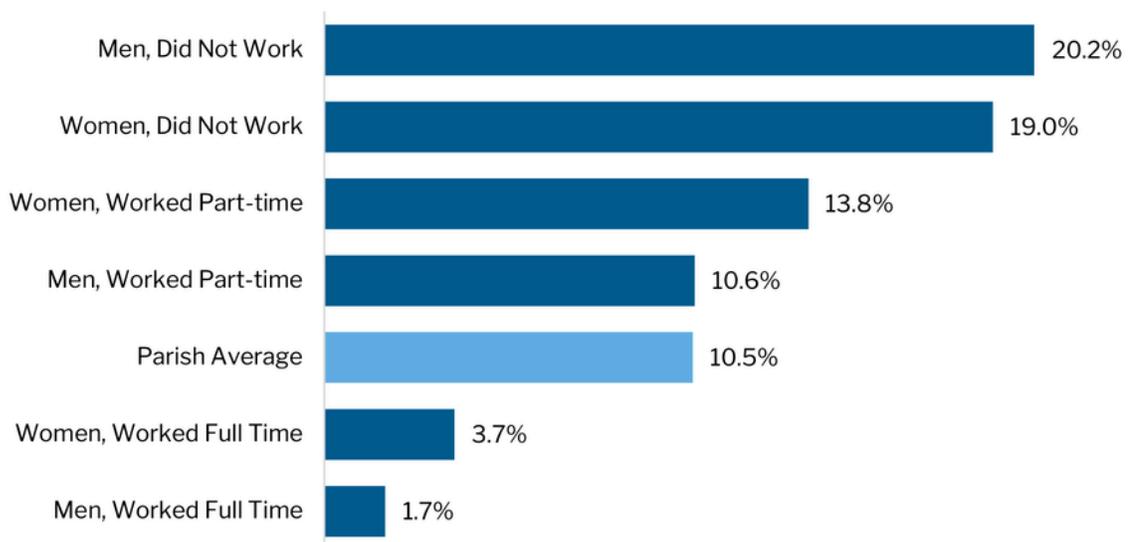
The poverty threshold is determined by examining a household's size and the income required for basic needs. For example, the threshold for a household with two adults and two children was \$31,800 in 2024. The Census updates the poverty threshold each year as costs increase.

In St. Tammany Parish, **the percentage of the population living below the poverty threshold increased by two percentage points from 2010 to 2023**. Most of the increases occurred during the recovery from the Great Recession. **The latest rate for 2024 was lower than the previous year at 10.5 percent.**

The poverty rates were evaluated by gender and working status. This data highlights how access to employment for both men and women can help reduce poverty. **Among those working part-time or full-time, women experienced higher poverty rates than men.**



St. Tammany Poverty Rates by Employment Status and Gender, 2024

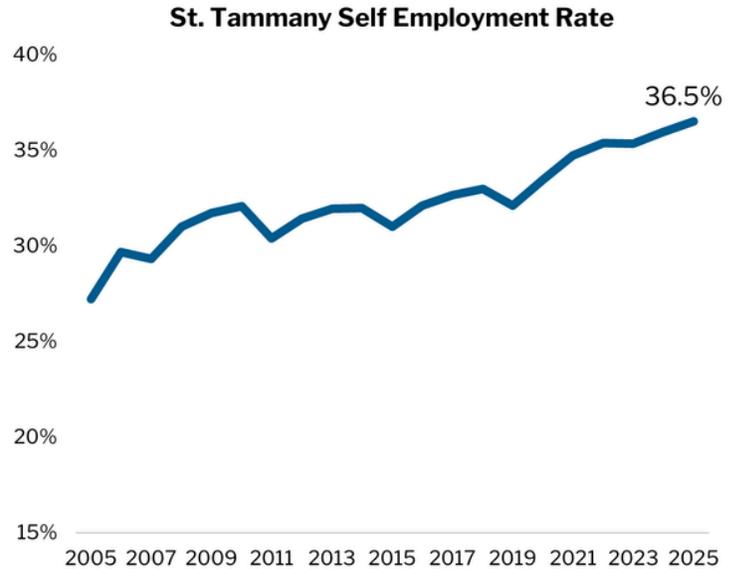
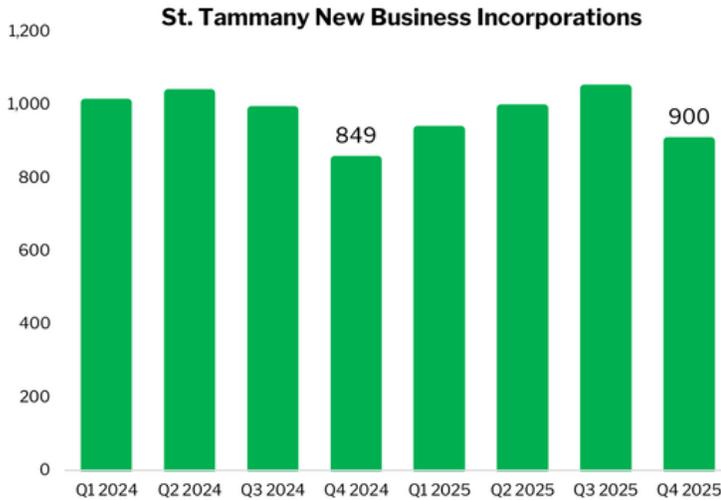


New Business Incorporations

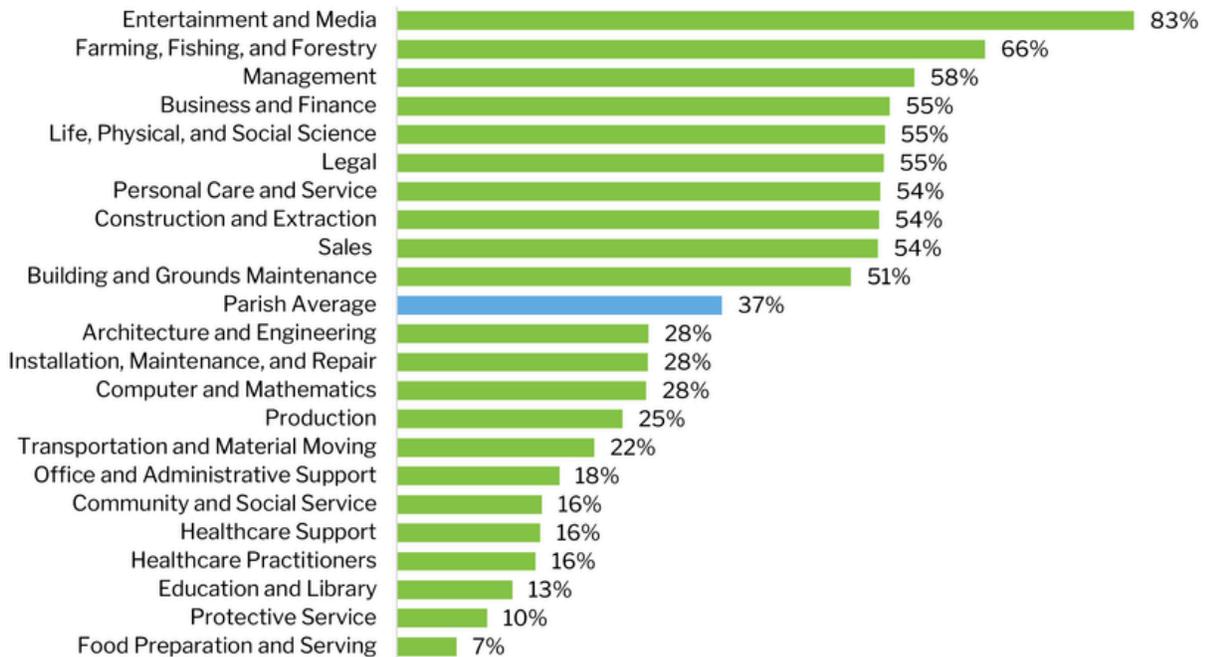
Entrepreneurship plays a key role in St. Tammany’s economy. **In 2025, about 36.5 percent of all jobs in the parish were classified as self-employed. This rate has risen in most years over the past two decades.**

Self-employment was most common in knowledge work positions like management, finance, law, and science careers. The other occupations with high levels of self-employment were in agriculture, construction, personal care services, and sales.

The latest available data on new business starts shows there were **900 new business incorporations in the fourth quarter in St. Tammany Parish**. This was more than 50 filings above the fourth quarter of last year and amounts to an average of **60 new business incorporation filings per week** in the parish.



St. Tammany Self Employment Rate by Occupation, 2025



Inflation

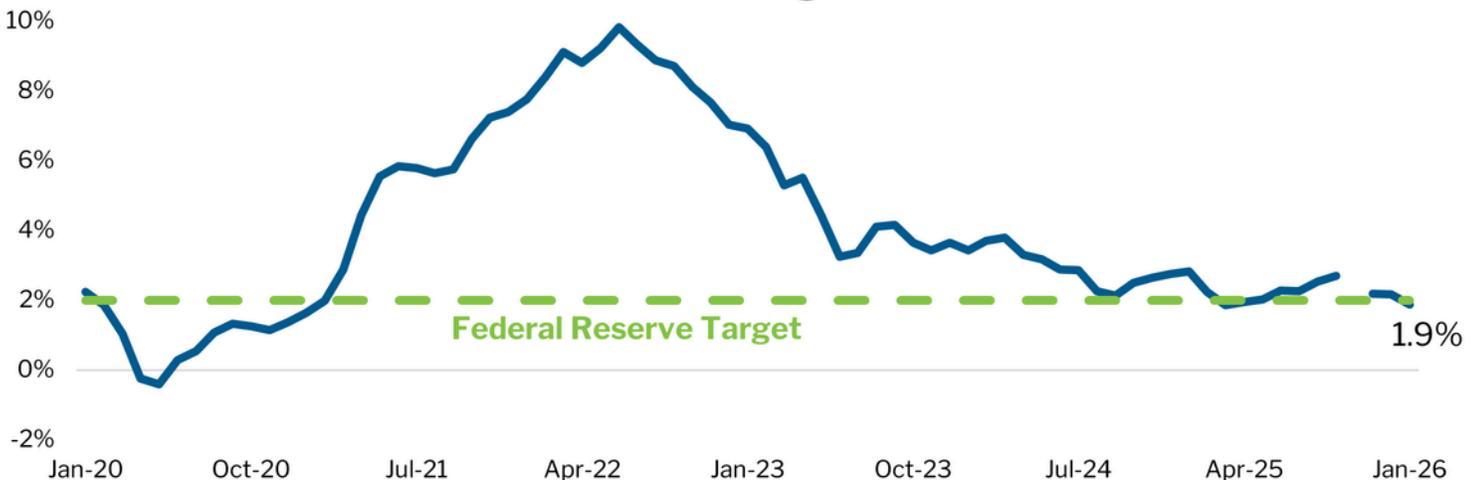
To best understand inflation trends in the region, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is tracked for the Southern US region. The CPI, calculated by the BLS, measures inflation by averaging prices for a basket of consumer goods and services each month. The CPI is measured regionally, and Louisiana is part of the Southern region.

In the fourth quarter of 2025, only data for November and December was available due to the government shutdown. **The inflation rate for both of these months was 2.2 percent, just above the Federal Reserve's target rate of 2 percent. The latest available data for January 2026 was 1.9 percent.**

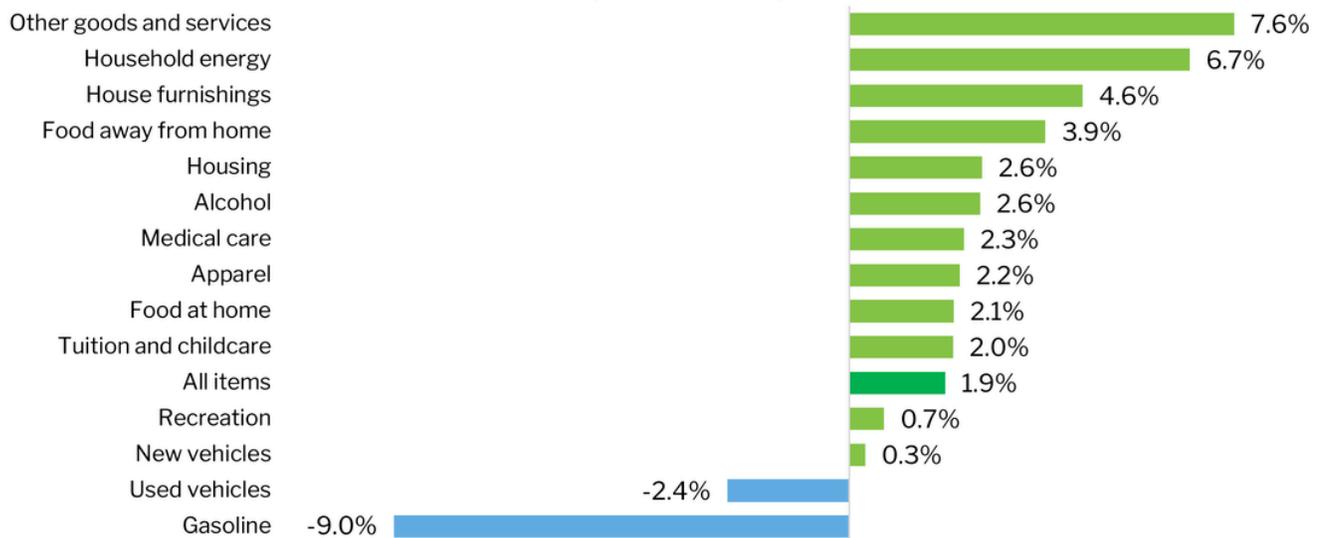
While the overall inflation rate is right around the target metric, many price categories continue to experience rates of inflation above 2 percent. **The recent rise in household energy prices may be partly driven by increased demand from data centers supporting AI-related expansion. The increase in home furnishings, products often produced overseas, may reflect tariffs levied in 2025.**

An encouraging sign for the region was the drop in year-over-year housing prices to 2.6 percent. This was an improvement from rates that had been higher than 4 percent since the pandemic. Housing costs have been one of the pain points in the rise of unaffordability.

Year over Year Change in Southern CPI



Southern Region Annual Percent Change in Prices by Category January 2025 - January 2026



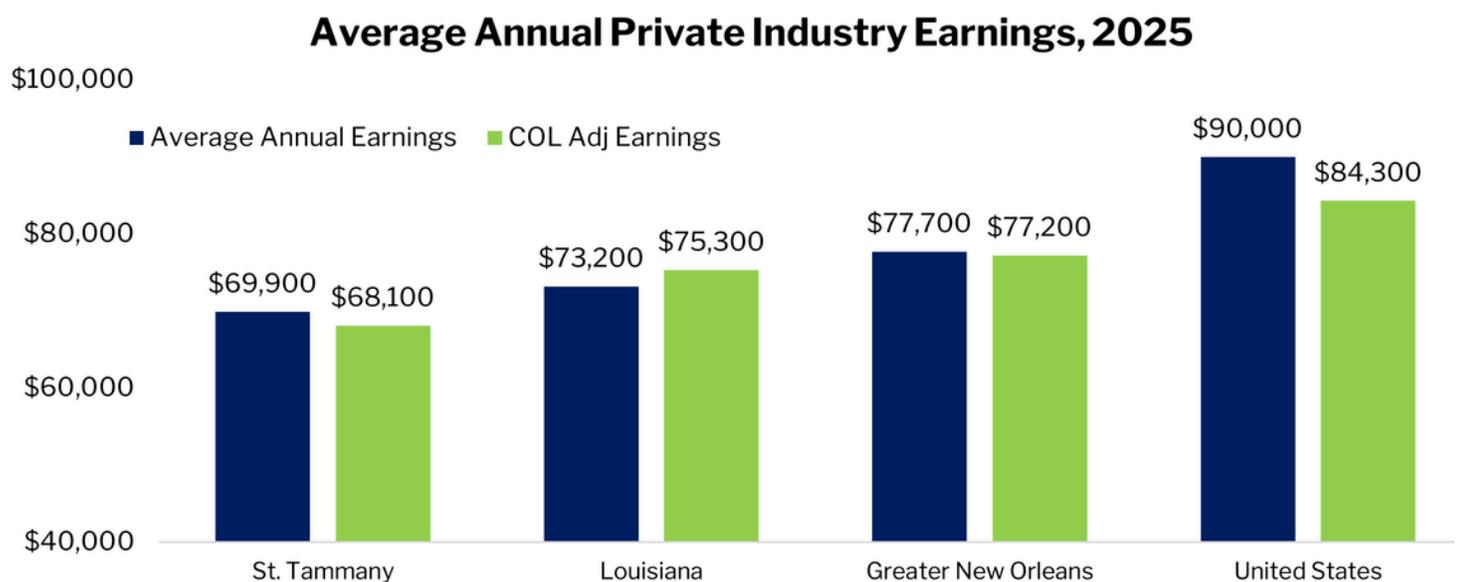
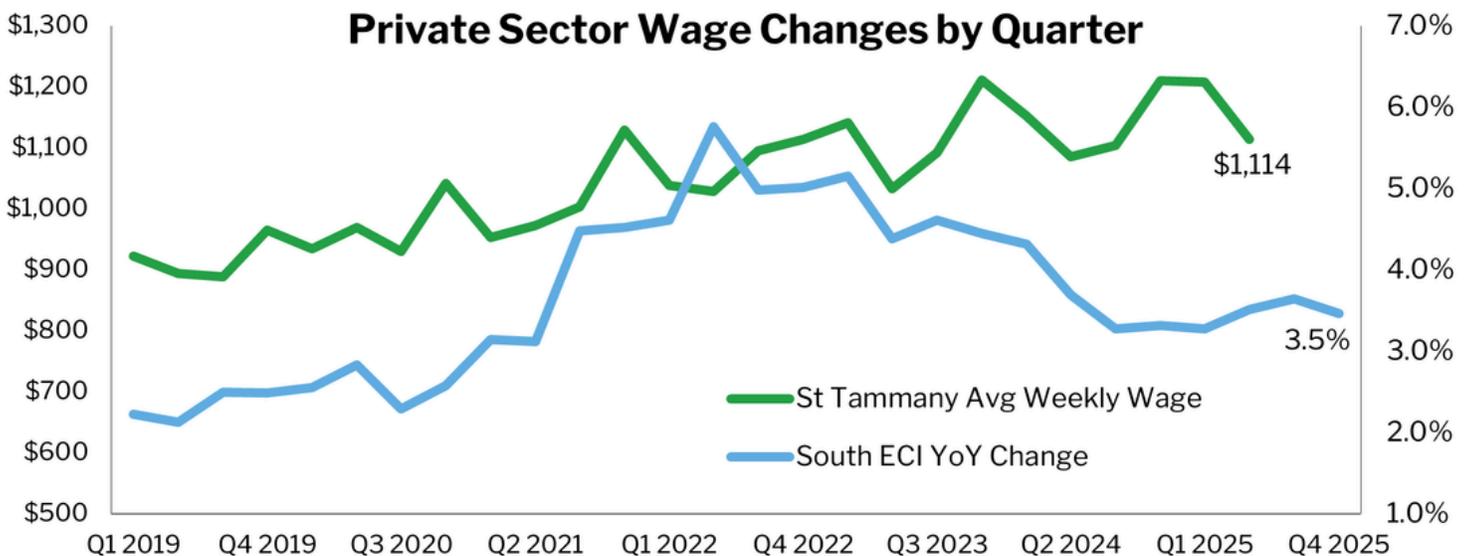
Wages

When wages rise at elevated rates, this can contribute to higher rates of inflation. Workers spend more and drive up demand while employers may have to increase prices to accommodate the rising wages. The BLS measures the change in hourly labor costs to employers over time to account for differences in occupation types and hours worked. This Employer Cost Index (ECI) helps examine changes in compensation over time.

The year-over-year (YoY) change in ECI for private sector workers in the South was 3.5 percent in Q4 2025. **This matches the average for the last seven quarters and suggests wage growth has stabilized at about a percentage point higher than before the pandemic.**

The average weekly wage for St. Tammany's private sector workers was \$1,114 in Q2 2025. **While there is usually a seasonal dip in the second quarter of the year, the average wage was 2.6 percent higher than Q2 of the previous year.**

Average wages in St. Tammany Parish were lower than the regional, state, and national averages in 2025, even when accounting for different costs of living (COL). **This means employers in the region may struggle to recruit workers from other regions where they could earn higher wages.**



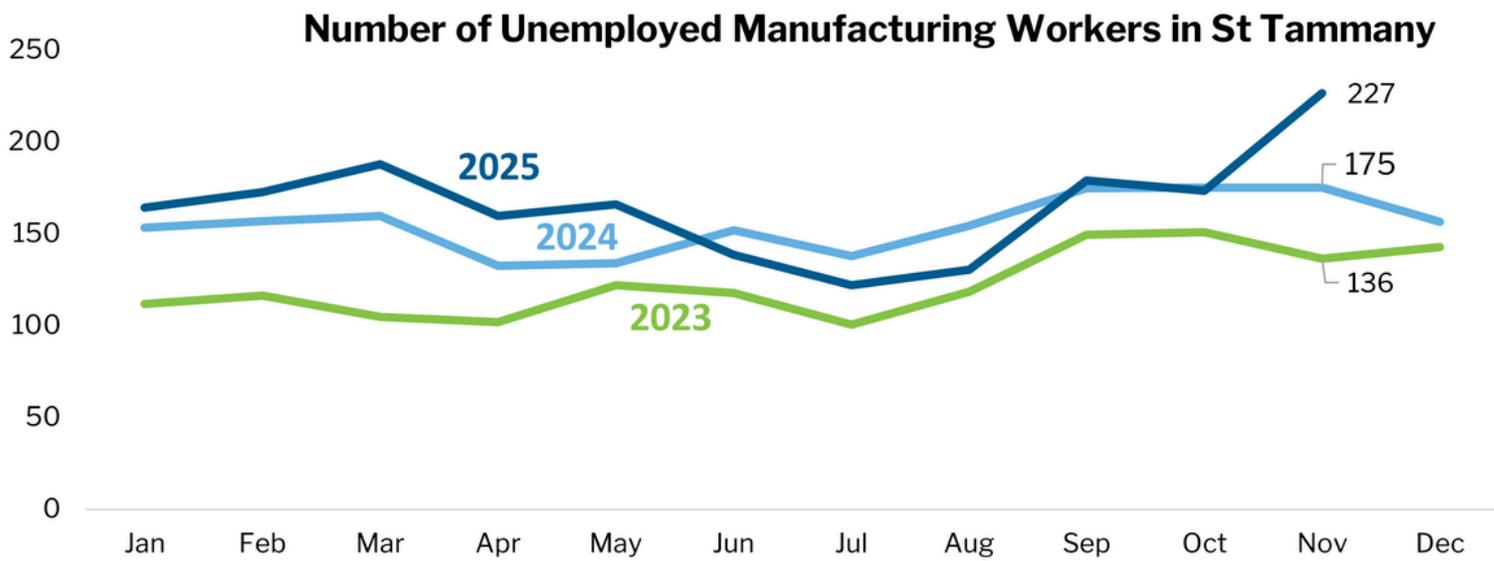
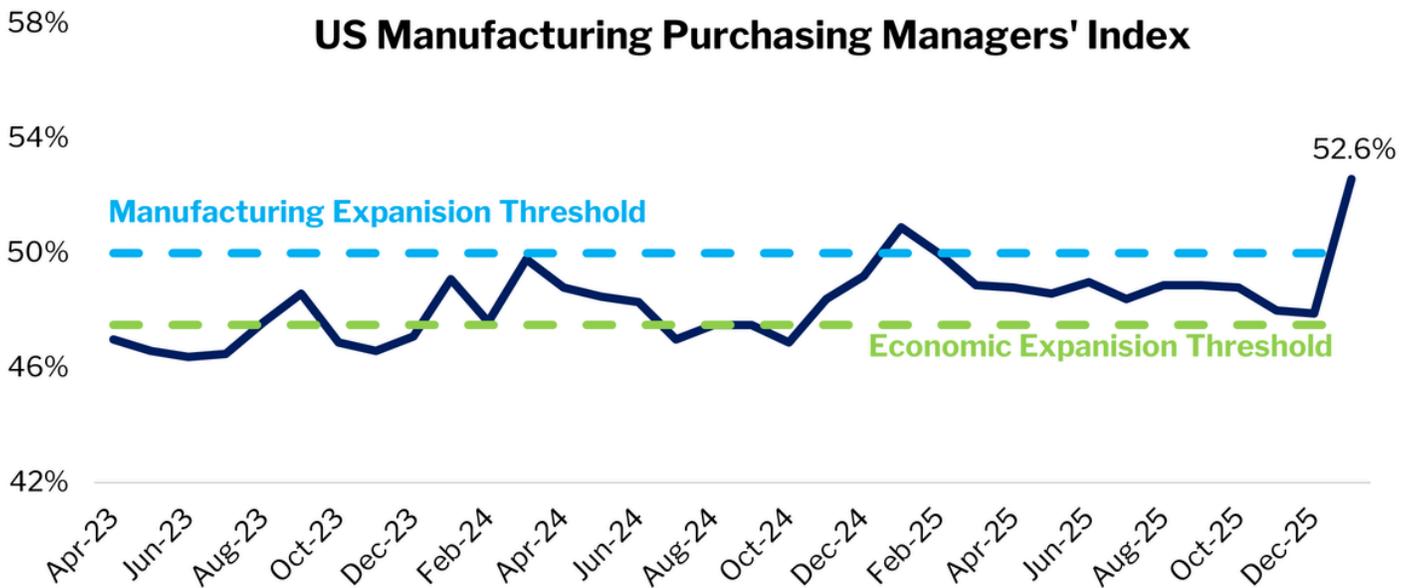
Manufacturing Industry

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) produces an index of manufacturing activity based on a monthly survey of purchasing managers from more than 300 manufacturing firms across the country. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) includes factors like business activity, new orders, employment, inventory, backlogs, international trade, and prices.

The manufacturing PMI score averaged 48.2 in Q4 2025. **The scores from these three months hovered just above the threshold of 47.5 percent associated with overall economic expansions.**

In January 2026, the score shot up to its highest score in years at 52.6 percent. The jump was led predominantly by increases in new orders. Authors of the ISM index suggested that seasonality is playing a role as many companies tend to reorder after the holidays.

In St. Tammany Parish, manufacturing unemployment had dipped to levels lower than those experienced in 2024 in the summer months. **However, since August, the number of unemployed workers with experience in manufacturing has increased. By November it was at its highest level in recent years.**



Services Industry

The ISM also produces a similar index of services industries. The ISM defines the service industry as all industries except manufacturing.

For these service industries, a PMI score above 48.1 percent usually corresponds with expansion in the overall national economy. A score above 50 percent indicates expansion within the service industries. The US economy has mostly remained above these thresholds despite a fair amount of month-to-month variation.

The score has continued to tick upward in recent months. **The year-over-year change rate in Services PMI from January 2025 to January 2026 was a 1.9 percent increase. Managers surveyed had tempered expectations as they continued to be wary of geopolitical and trade policy changes.**

The services industries in St. Tammany Parish also appear to be on a positive trajectory. **The number of unemployed workers in the services industries is slightly lower than it was at the same time a year ago.**

US Services Purchasing Managers' Index



Number of Unemployed Service Workers in St Tammany



Building Permits

Housing affordability continues to be a key piece for recruiting workforce to a region as well as retaining talent. New residential construction can help offset rising housing costs.

The number of new private sector housing units permitted in St. Tammany Parish was 321 for Q4 2025. These permitting levels were higher than the previous quarter and Q4 2024.

The **average value of the new units** was about **\$316,065 in the fourth quarter.**

All new units permitted this quarter were single-family permits. Multifamily housing unit permits remain a very small piece of new housing in St. Tammany Parish.

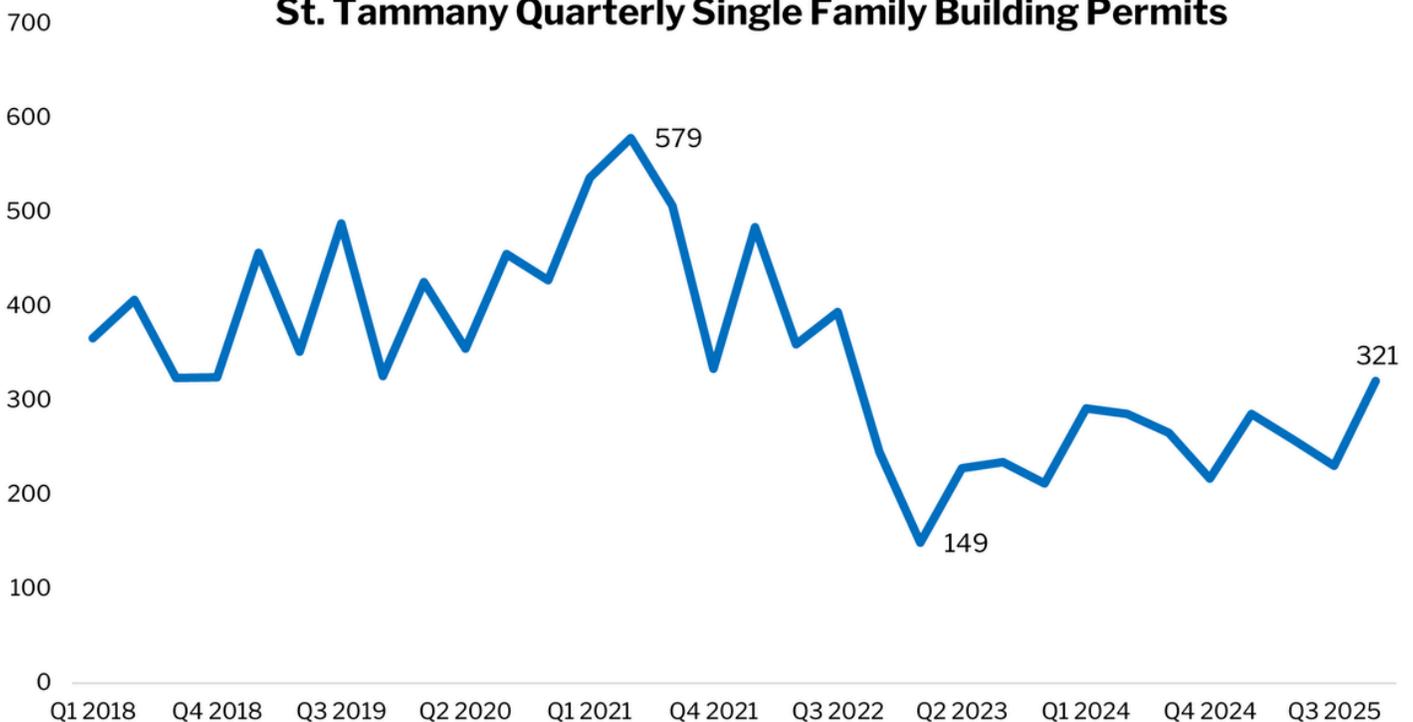
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The Federal Reserve reduced interest rates again in October and December of 2025. Lower rates tend to spur more housing construction, and this could lead to an increase in permits in the coming months.

St. Tammany Parish New Private Sector Housing Permits

Month	Value	Units	Average
Oct-25	\$38,089,000	112	\$340,080
Nov-25	\$37,996,000	140	\$271,400
Dec-25	\$25,372,000	69	\$367,710
Q4 2025 Totals	\$101,457,000	321	\$316,065

St. Tammany Quarterly Single Family Building Permits



Residential Real Estate Market

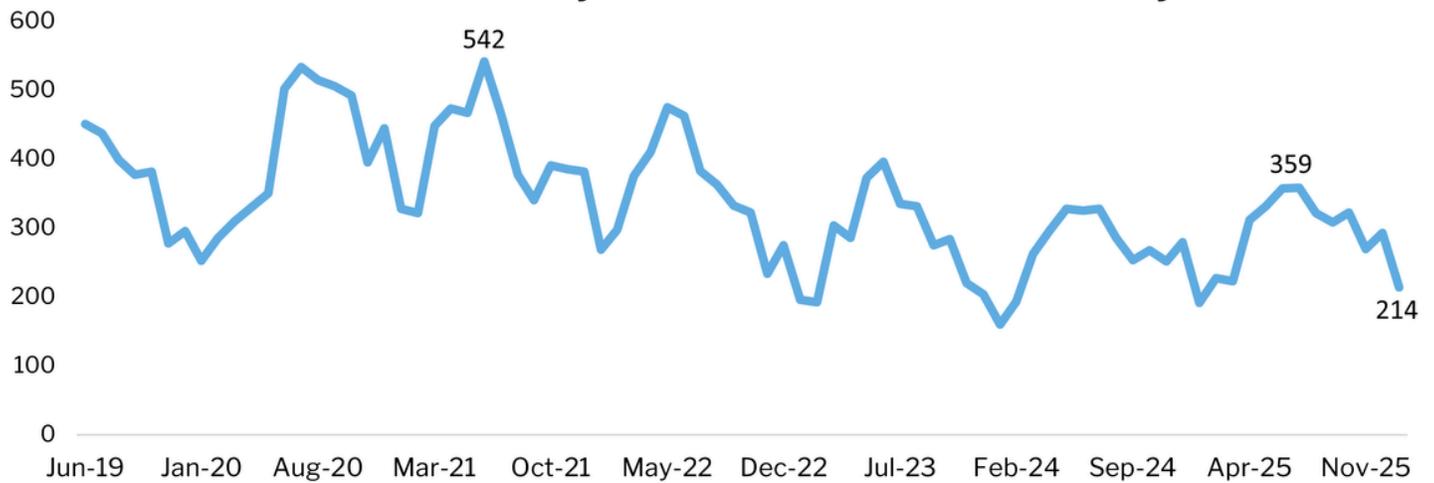
Meanwhile, in the existing home market, home sales fell during the winter months, typical for this time of year. However, sales in recent months are still above their levels in the previous year. **In January 2026, 214 sales closed on residential properties in the parish. This was an 11.5 percent increase from the previous year. The year-over-year change has been positive for 14 of the past 15 months.**

The inventory of homes for sale decreased slightly in the last year from 1,458 properties to 1,329, a decrease of 8.8 percent.

The average number of days on the market in the parish rose from 68 days in January 2025 to 73 days in January 2026.

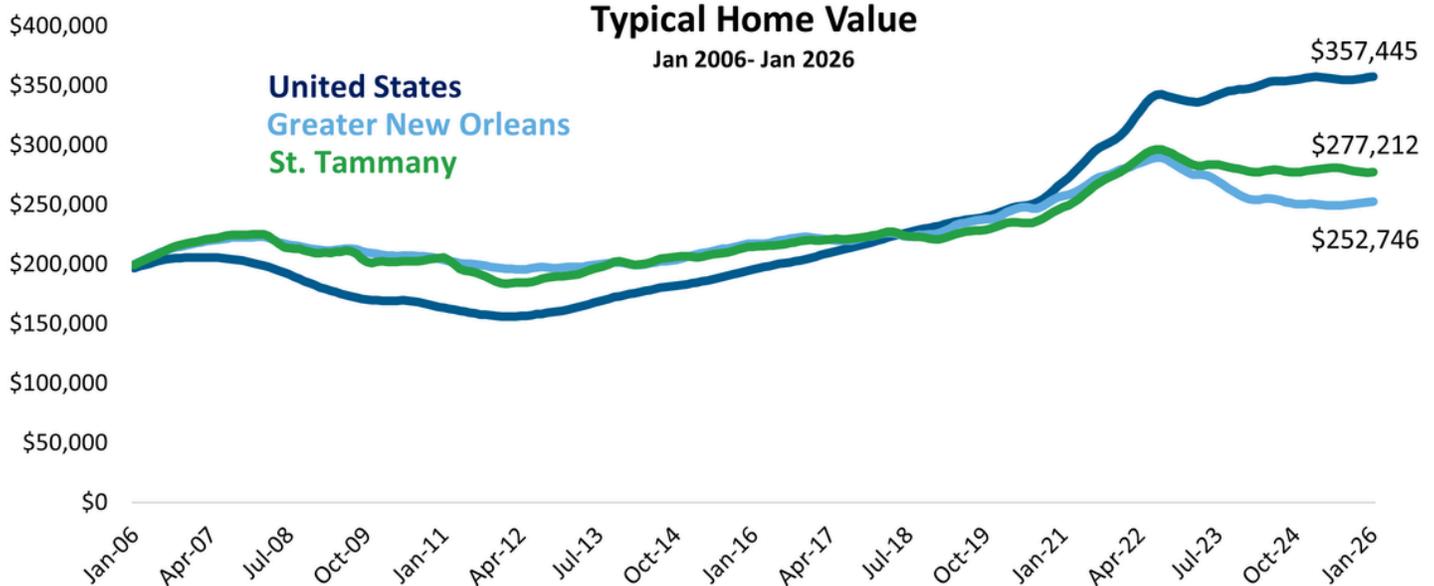
Zillow creates its own typical home value data based on all homes in a region, not just recent sales. Their metric provides the typical value for a home within the 65th and 95th percentile range in each region. **This value for St. Tammany was \$277,200 in January 2026.** Parish home values tend to be higher than regional averages but remain below the national average. **This provides a relative affordability advantage compared to many other areas of the country.**

St. Tammany Number of Houses Sold Monthly



Typical Home Value

Jan 2006- Jan 2026



Retail Sales Tax

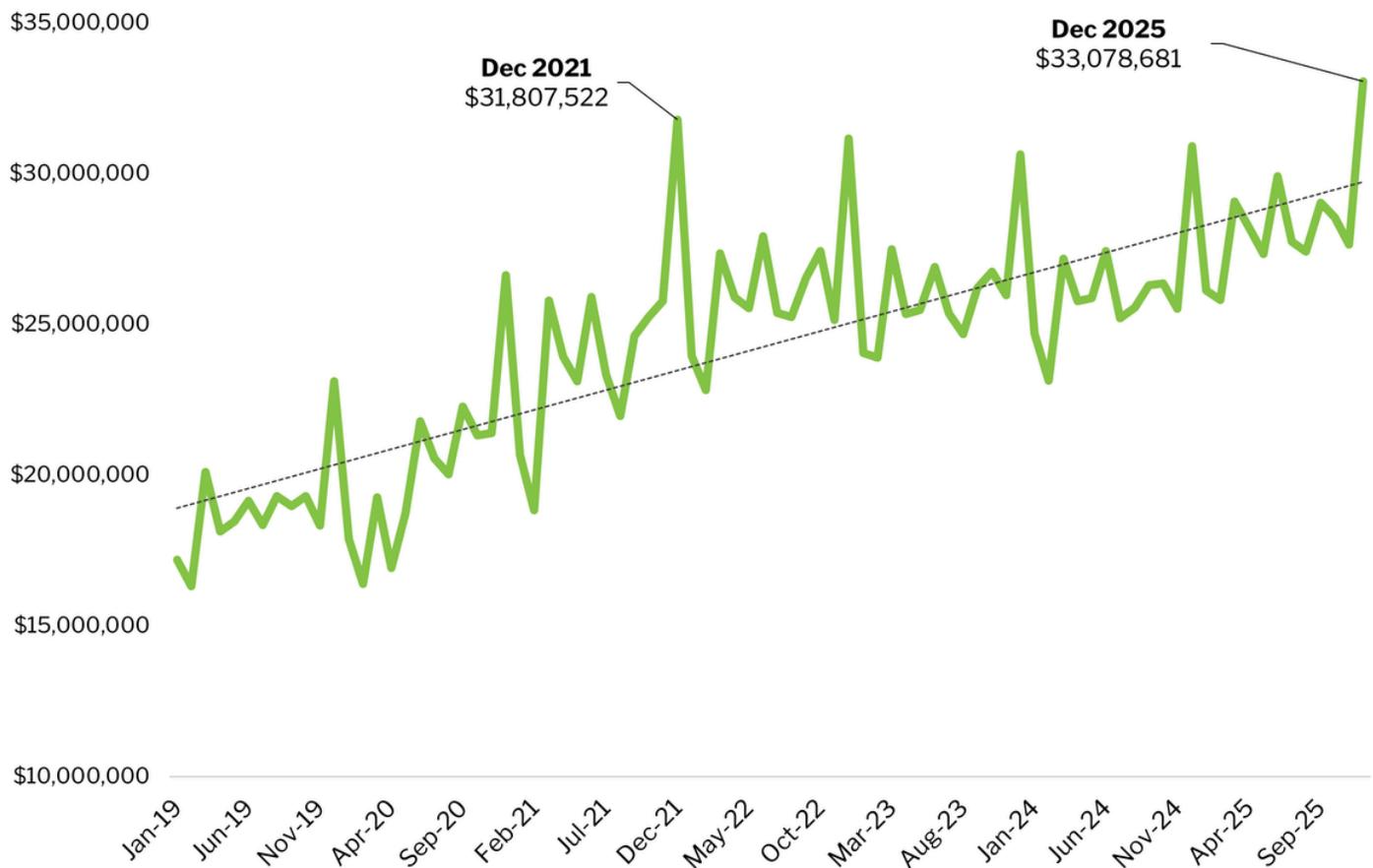
The graph below shows the total amount of sales tax collected within the parish from January 2019 through the end of December 2025. This provides insight into consumer spending in the parish and the amount of sales tax revenue that will be available for the local government. St. Tammany Parish retains roughly half of these revenues, while the remaining portion flows to the state and local municipalities.

In December 2025, over \$33 million in sales tax was collected. This indicates that holiday spending in the parish was strong. This was the highest monthly revenue ever recorded.

Tax revenue has been higher than the year before for every month in 2025. **This increase in revenue is likely due to an increase in the state sales tax level from 4 to 5 percent that took effect at the beginning of the year. Higher prices may also be contributing to the elevated collections.**

Research at the national level suggests that higher-income groups continue to spend and fuel the economy, while lower-income groups have started to cut back on their spending in recent months. This is referred to as a “K-shaped” economy. The national economy is increasingly dependent on the consumer spending of these higher-income brackets.

St. Tammany Parish Monthly Retail Sales Tax Collections



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