

Bank of America

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Once upon a cycle, the story of the economy took yet another turn. This week, Bank of America Institute narrates how consumer spending is developing; the return of golf; who is paying for AI subscriptions; and a glimpse into agriculture's AI evolution.

As the consumer tale unfolds, spending growth was up 4.3% year-over-year (YoY) in March, the biggest gain since early 2023. But not all is as it seems, as rising gas prices feed into some of this strength. Plus, a fork in the road has emerged in the labor market: higher-income households saw wage growth of 5.6% YoY, versus just 1.0% and 2.0% for lower- and middle-income groups, respectively – the widest gap in growth rates since 2015. With gasoline accounting for 8% of lower-income households' total card spending, they are most at risk of pulling back on dining out and other discretionary services if gas prices remain elevated for a prolonged period. However, higher tax refunds could serve as a knight in shining armor, with the extra cash helping to offset these pressures. Read publications: [Consumer Checkpoint: The madness of March](#) and [The Institute Employment Report: March 2026](#).

Has golf cast a spell on younger generations? After three years of declining golf participation from its 2021 peak, Bank of America payments data shows it climbing out of the rough in 2025. At the same time, average annual spend per golfer has increased for four consecutive years, suggesting a smaller but more enthusiastic group of participants. Gen Z has continued to gain share in golf participation, likely driven by lower-cost, more accessible formats like driving ranges and simulators. Across the land, the West recorded the strongest golf spending growth by region in 2025. Why? A combination of domestic migration and destination-style “stay-to-play” courses. Read publication: [Golf spending is slightly above par](#).

Perhaps not quite a fairy godmother, but AI is turning back the clock for a few consumers by enhancing productivity and saving time. Though only 3% of Bank of America households pay for AI services today, adoption and spending are rising as AI expands beyond higher-income, early adopters. Participation has risen sharply since mid-2025, with the number of households making AI payments up 38% versus the 2024 average. Plus, the share of households paying \$21-\$40 for AI services has increased 50% since 2024, meaning more people are moving up the pricing ladder. As AI becomes embedded across productivity, search, entertainment and shopping, BofA Global Research expects the US market could scale to \$75 billion annually. Read publication: [Not quite mAIstream: A consumer AI profile](#).

Forget about magic beans and green giants – agriculture is undergoing its biggest shift in decades as AI becomes entrenched across soil management, irrigation, fertilization and crop monitoring. Digital AI has transformed how farmers understand their fields, but climate volatility, geopolitical instability along critical fertilizer supply corridors, and labor shortages can uproot progress. The gap between planning and real-world results is pushing agriculture toward systems that can make decisions on the ground in real time. And that shift has a direct impact on profits, costs and risk curves in an industry where margins are thin and outcomes depend heavily on nature. Read publication: [Feeding the world with AI](#).

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