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With the World Series in full swing, is the economic playing field shifting? We've got our eye on the ball with this week's lineup full of heavy hitters: small business health, pressure on utility bills, AI's impact on jobs, and a swing at quantum computing.

Small businesses are still in the game, but how much stamina is left? While profitability held steady in September, signs of strain are emerging. Our indicator of hiring activity dropped 7% from the 2024 average, and business applications with planned wages fell below pre-pandemic norms. Credit card balances were rising faster than utilization rates, hinting at potential stress. Yet, overall, the data suggests resilience as small businesses adjust to inflation, labor costs, and evolving credit conditions in Bank of America Institute's latest Small Business Checkpoint.

Some consumers may feel like they're striking out as relief from rising utility bills remains elusive. Bank of America data shows average electricity and gas payments rose 3.6% year-over-year (YoY) in Q3 2025. The build-out of data centers and increasing electricity demand from other sources are driving up capacity costs, which utility companies ultimately pass on to customers. Regional disparities are wide, and lower-income households are feeling the most pinched. If utility bills keep climbing, they could become a curveball for discretionary spending. Read the Institute's analysis: Is the AI revolution raising consumers' utility bills?

Meanwhile, AI is stepping up to the plate, and it's swinging for the fences. In the first half of 2025, AI-related investment hit a home run, contributing up to 1.3 percentage points to overall gross domestic product (GDP) growth. And it's not just large firms driving this investment – according to Bank of America data, small business payments to technology services were up 6.9% YoY in September. While the labor market impact shows mixed signals, the trend suggests AI is more of a productivity all-star than a job taker. Think of it as a utility player – boosting capex, reshaping hiring strategies, and changing how businesses play the game. Read publication: Economic shifts in the age of AI.

Finally, it's only the top of the first for quantum computing, and the potential is already game-changing. While quantum supremacy has made headlines, true quantum advantage – solving real-world problems faster than classical computers – is still on deck. But the early innings show promise: hybrid quantum-classical systems could cut energy use by up to 12.5%, a big win as global electricity demand surges. Quantum's partnership with AI is also a power duo, with potential to supercharge model training and accelerate quantum development. From encryption to optimization, quantum's playbook is expanding fast. Read publication: Quantum leaps and bounds.

Contributors

Liz Everett Krisberg

Head of Bank of America Institute

David Michael Tinsley

Senior Economist, Bank of America Institute

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