

June 12, 2024

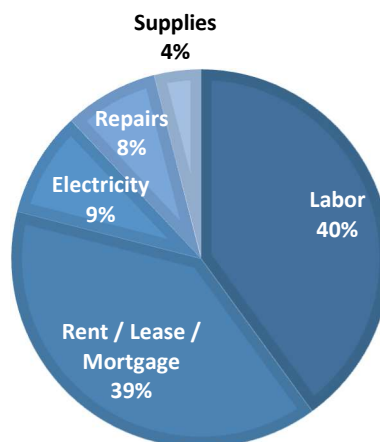
Cold Chain Index: 2024 Quarter 1

In order to improve the economic information available to industry participants, the Global Cold Chain Alliance has commissioned a Cold Chain Index (CCI), reported since the end of 2018. The CCI tracks the growth rates of costs associated with cold storage using predominantly official sources of economic data. The CCI can be customized to the region, state, and metro area where a warehouse facility operates.

The CCI includes five classes of expenses: labor, electric power, supplies, repairs, and rent; the cost shares typical of a North American refrigerated warehouse are shown in Figure 1. Labor was the largest share of expenses, at 40% of the total. Rent/Lease represented 39% of total expenses. Electric power accounted for 9% of total expenses. The cost shares used in this year's release of the CCI are based on the 2022 IARW Productivity and Benchmarking Survey results (FY2022). Member companies may enter customized cost shares that reflect the situation of the facility instead of using these cost shares.

In the current release, the CCI reports the growth rate in expenses in the first quarter of 2024 compared with the first quarter of 2023. Members of the Global Cold Chain Alliance and their customers may access a template to better understand the index and customize cost shares to the experience of their business, and to account for variation across geographic regions.¹

Figure 1. Cost Shares of North American Refrigerated Warehouses, based on FY2022 IARW Productivity & Benchmarking Survey



¹ The regions in the CCI are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics geographic information: **Mid-Atlantic** = New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania. **New England** = Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont. **South** = Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia. **Midwest** = Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin. **Pacific** = Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington. **Mountain** = Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming.

Results

Expenses for refrigerated warehouses rose by 6.47% in the first quarter of 2024 relative to the same period in 2023 (Figure 2). Rents continued to rise but at a slower pace than in the past two years. Labor costs rose by 7.2% in Q1 2024 compared with the first quarter of 2023. Electricity costs declined by 2.96% on average nationwide.

In Q1 2024, national occupancy costs for warehouses and distribution properties exhibited a year-over-year growth of 9.08%. Nationally, occupancy cost growth had not dipped below 10% in the last two years. There was a continuation of rent expense pressure in parts of the nation. For 12 metropolitan markets, asking rents for warehouse and distribution property increased by more than 20%. Asking rents in Southeastern cities, Los Angeles, and Phoenix actually declined in the current quarter compared with first quarter in 2023. The data on occupancy cost growth is based on Cushman & Wakefield report on Quarterly Net Asking Warehouse Rents across 80 different metropolitan markets in the United States.

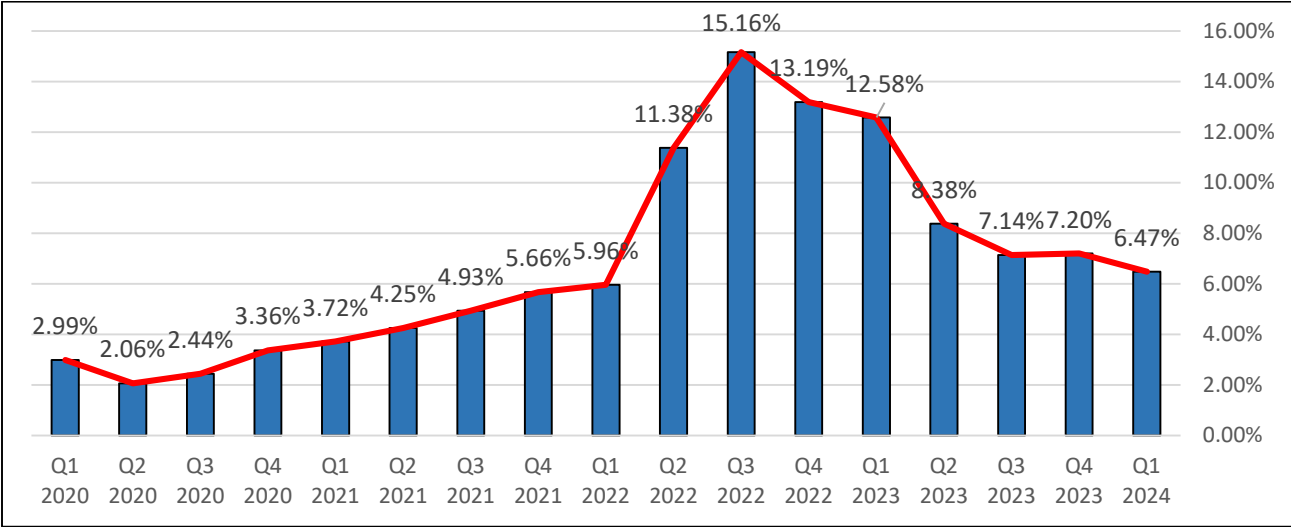
In Q1 2024, the national average cost of labor for the transportation and warehousing industry accelerated by 7.2% (Figure 3). Regional differences in employment costs were based on the employment cost index for all workers, while national trends were specific to the transportation and warehousing industry. In Q1 2024, the South had the highest premium in labor costs at 0.25 percentage points faster growth than the national average. Labor cost growth in the Pacific region was nearly the same as the national average, which is unusual as the Pacific has typically experienced the greatest escalation in labor cost.

The national average cost of electric power for industrial users decreased by 2.96% in Q1 2024 compared with Q1 2023. In three of the last 4 quarters, electricity rates declined.

In the first quarter of 2024, the maintenance and repair cost index for non-residential buildings grew by 2.79%, continuing to moderate since the peak in early 2022.

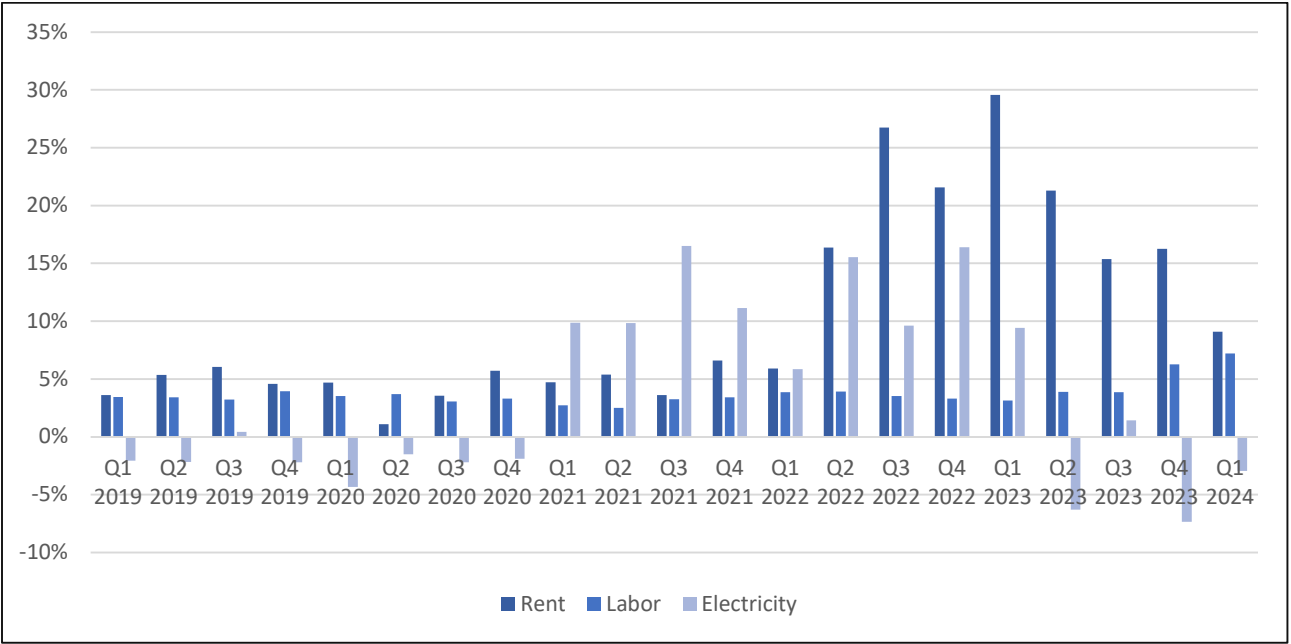
The cost of supplies is proxied by the producer price index (PPI) for final demand finished goods, excluding food and energy. This cost item grew by 2.30% in Q1 2024, marking the seventh instance of lower inflation in supply costs.

Figure 2. Cold Chain Index, by Quarter during 2020-2024



Note: The percentages in Figure 2 are growth rates in the quarter, relative to the same quarter in the previous year.

Figure 3. Main Drivers of the Cold Chain Index, by Quarter during 2019-2024



Note: The percentages in Figure 3 are growth rates in the quarter, relative to the same quarter in the previous year.

Data References and Methods

The following data sources were used to track changes in costs:

- National Labor: The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Cost Index (ECI) was used; specifically, the ECI for the private industry workers in the “Transportation and Warehousing” industry (Series ID CIU2014300000000I). The labor metric includes all worker classifications and includes both wages and benefits. Accessed at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/> using Series ID.
- Regional Labor: The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Employment Cost Index (ECI) was used; specifically, the ECI for the private industry workers in all industries and occupations (Series IDs CIU2010000000230I, CIU2010000000249I, CIU2010000000220I, CIU2010000000212I, CIU2010000000248I, CIU2010000000211I). The labor metric includes all worker classifications and includes both wages and benefits. Index is used to determine premium for each region relative to national baseline. Accessed at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/> using Series ID.
- National and State Energy: The U.S. Energy Information Administration Electric Power Prices, by state, were used. The series is the Average Price of Electricity to Ultimate Customers. (Industrial) found in Table 5.6.b. Beginning in 2022, EIA provided a quarterly estimate for each state. Accessed at <https://www.eia.gov/electricity/monthly/>.
- National and Metro Rent/Lease/Mortgage: Cushman & Wakefield Quarterly Warehouse Net Asking Rents, were used. Overall U.S. rent is based on the average asking rents weighted by vacancy by market. In addition, a surcharge for rental rate growth in 80 selected metro markets was based on the same quarterly data provided by Cushman & Wakefield. Warehouse / Distribution category within Industrial Rents. Accessed at <https://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/united-states/insights/us-marketbeats/us-industrial-marketbeat>
- National Supplies and “Other”: To represent the growth in supplies and also “other” warehouse expenses, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Producer Price Index (PPI) was used; specifically Final Demand: finished goods less foods and energy (Series ID WPUFD4131). Accessed at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/> using Series ID.
- National Maintenance: To represent the growth in repair and maintenance cost, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Producer Price Index (PPI) by Industry was used; specifically Nonresidential building maintenance and repair (Series ID PCU2381MR2381MR). Accessed at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/> using Series ID.