

Recent Population and Job Growth Metropolitan Atlanta

Jim Skinner and Mike Alexander

Media Message(s)



Metro Atlanta Shows Signs Of Cooling Off

Growth magnet logs population decline as residents seek smaller, cheaper cities

By CAMERON McWHIRTER AND KONRAD PUTZNER

ATLANTA—Since the invention of air conditioning, Atlanta has known one constant: growth. The region is finally cooling off.

Census data show more people from within the U.S. left metro Atlanta than moved to it during the 12 months that ended in mid-2024. It was a modest decline, about 1,300 people. But it heralds a significant moment for the longtime growth magnet: This is the first time metro Atlanta lost domestic migrants since the Census Bureau started detailing these numbers three decades ago.

There are other signs the city is losing its edge, including weak hiring among local employers and higher-than-average office vacancies. A 623-unit apartment complex in the city's Buckhead neighborhood—a building once famous for an electronic sign that counted Atlanta's expanding population—went into foreclosure last year.

rent in their Atlanta-area townhouse. Since 1950, the region's population has mushroomed almost 10-fold to 6.3 million and sprawled across 29 counties. The region averaged a net gain of about 33,000 domestic newcomers in the five years before Covid hit.

The latest census metro-area estimates, which cover the 12 months ended June 30, 2024, still show a growing Atlanta region overall. That is because births outnumber deaths there, and because of what had been surging international immigration before President Trump took office.

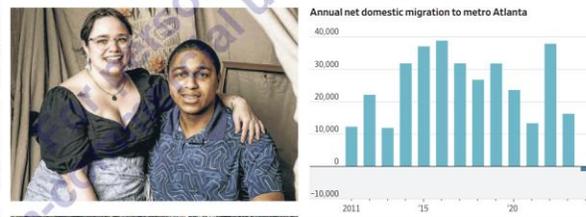
But when it comes to domestic migration, Atlanta is losing a long-running source of economic strength. This risks making the area less appealing for companies seeking big pools of skilled workers, said Mark Seeley, who advises companies on corporate relocation for the real-estate brokerage CBRE.

The last several years have been a dynamic time for migration in Sunbelt metros. Many including Atlanta saw temporary surges in domestic newcomers during the height of Covid. That boom didn't last long, and growth has slowed notably in its wake.

Data from the Bank of Amer-



Rush-hour traffic in downtown Atlanta, above. Adelia Fish says she and her husband, DeJuan McBurnie, below, moved to Chattanooga, Tenn., from Atlanta for a more affordable lifestyle. The Holder family, bottom, left suburban Smyrna, Ga., for their hometown of Greenville, S.C., after feeling priced out of the Atlanta metro area.



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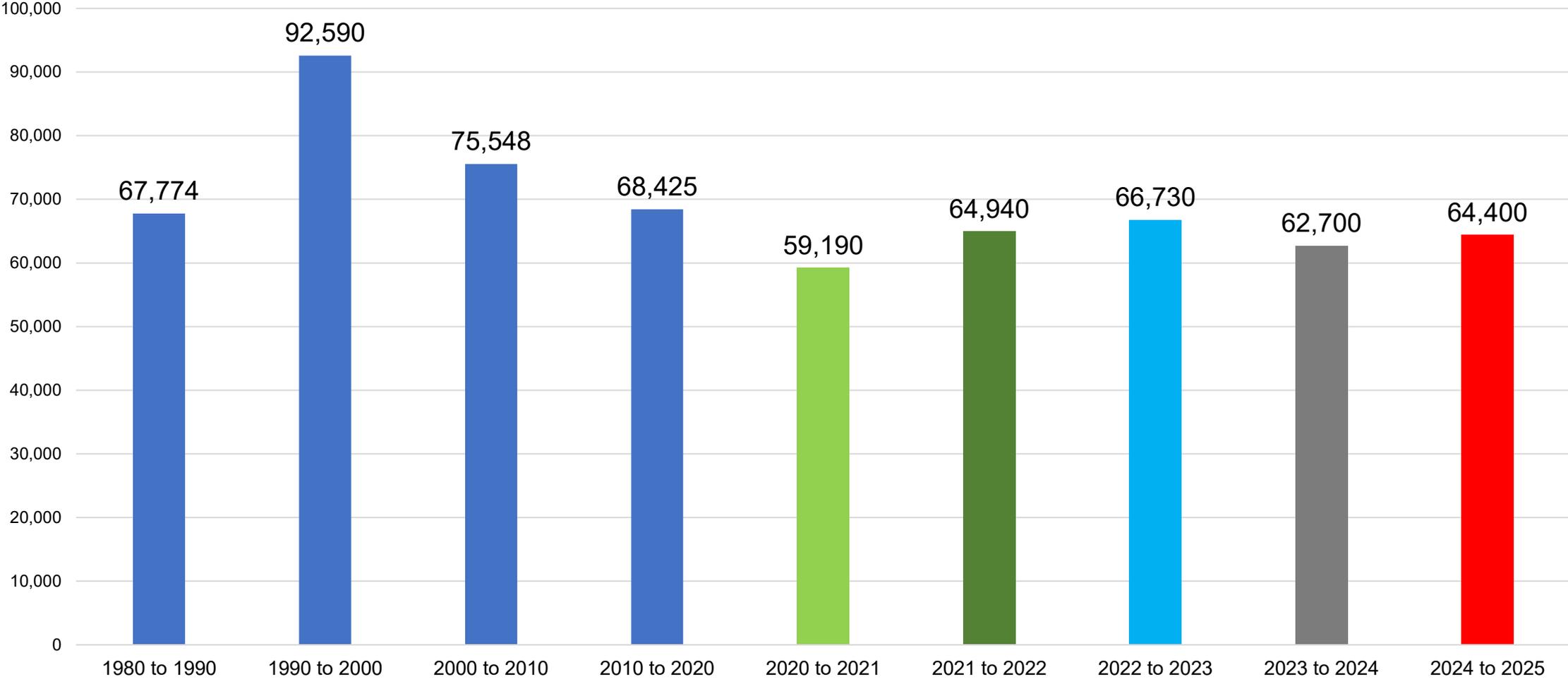
Surging housing costs and endless traffic are pushing people to choose smaller, cheaper cities instead, and this is starting to shift the balance of power in the southern U.S. These movers still include people who are leaving pricey northern cities, but also include people giving up on large southern metros like Atlanta.

A quarter of Atlanta's office space sits vacant, according to brokerage Cushman & Wakefield. That is well above the national average of 20.8%. In 2023, Microsoft indefinitely halted what had been a planned 90-acre, 15,000-employee campus on Atlanta's Westside.

Losing people is unfamiliar territory in Atlanta. Since 1950, the region's population has mushroomed almost 10-fold to 6.3 million and sprawled across 29 counties, creating the nation's eighth-largest metro area. **See less**

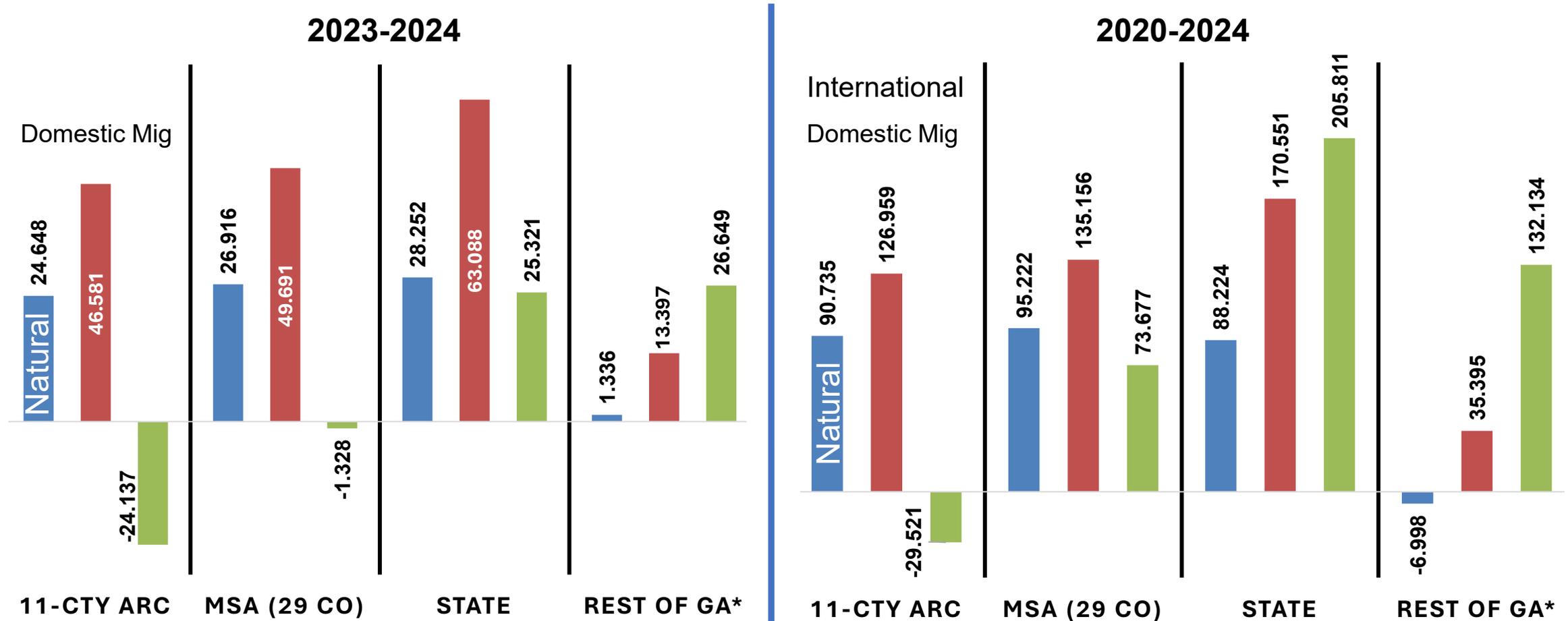
Average Annual Growth by Time Period

11-County ARC Region: Average Annual Population Change by Period

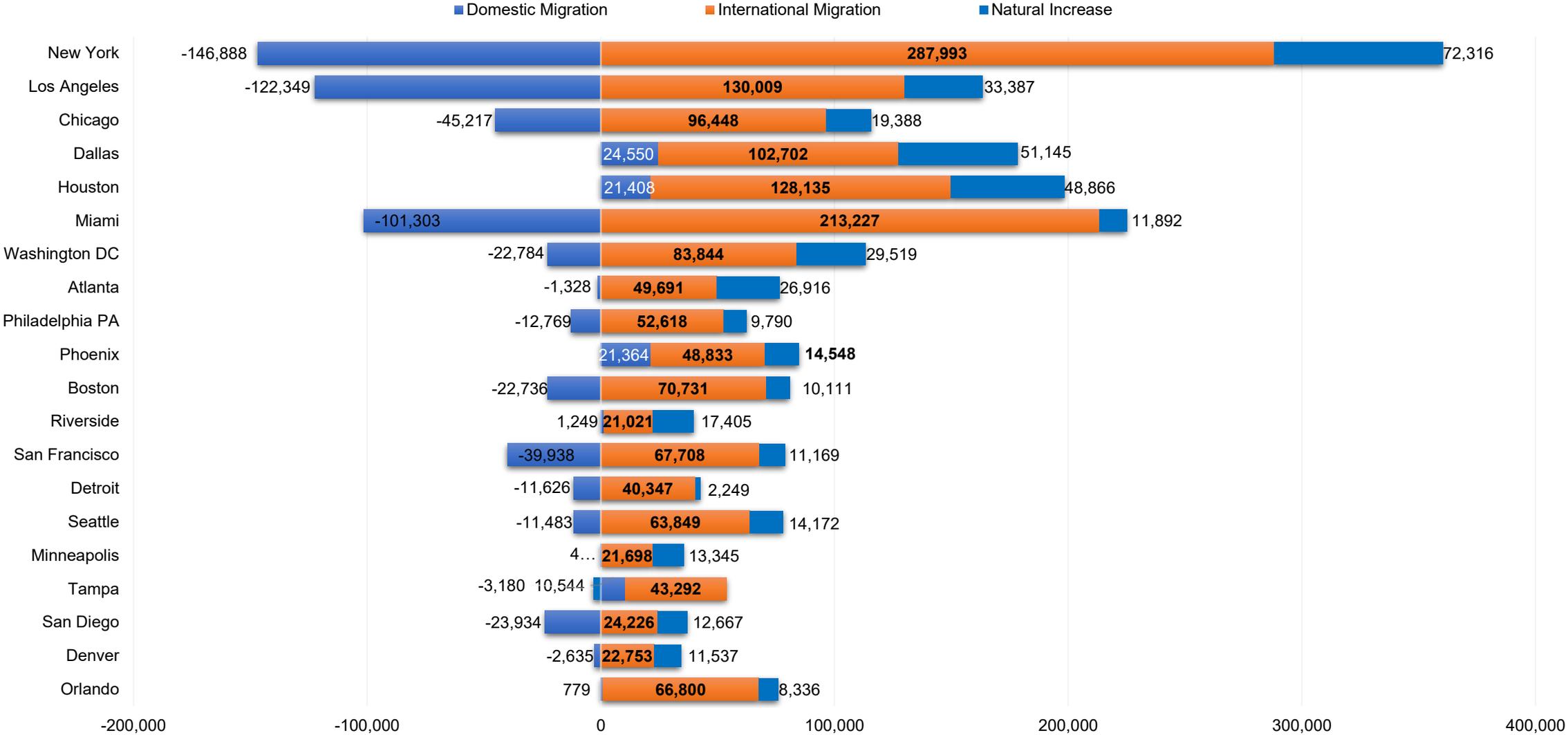


Census Bureau Growth by Components 2020-2024

Yes, net domestic migration is negative (*barely*) for our MSA for 2023-2024 (see below, left); that is *driven entirely by drops in the core 5 counties of the MSA*...net domestic migration is positive 2023-24 for other areas within the MSA, and the total change is +75K. For the period of 2020-2024, net domestic migration is (very) positive for the MSA

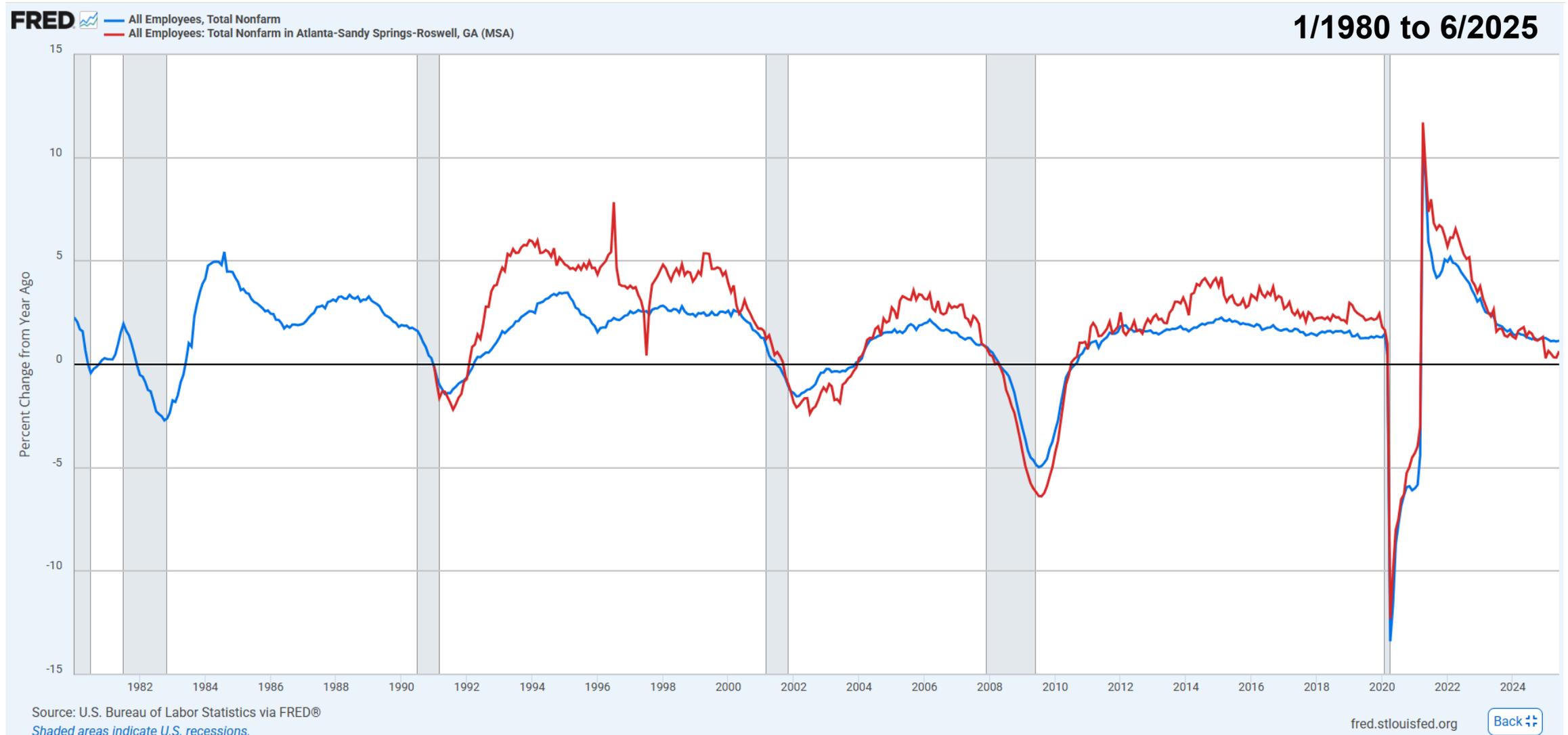


Domestic Migration Down 2023-204



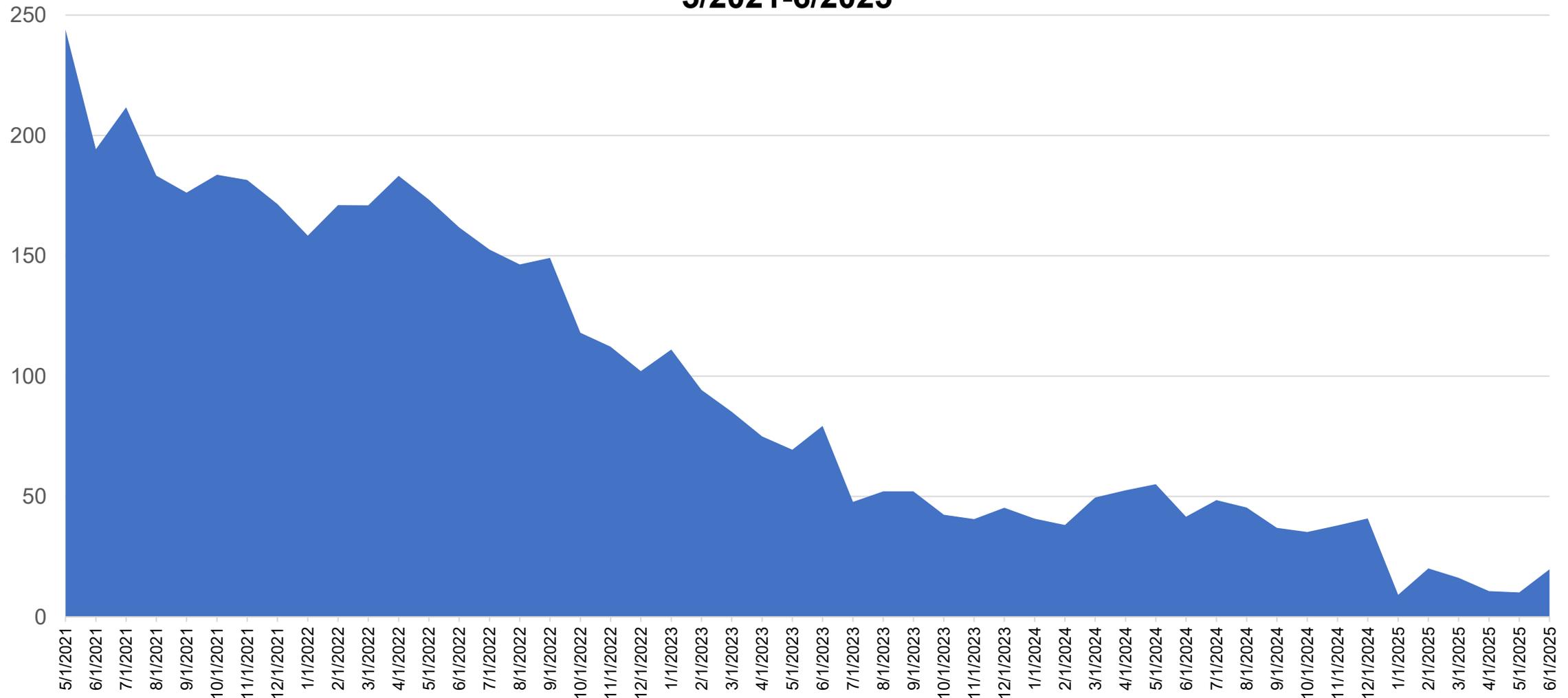
Atlanta MSA & US Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)



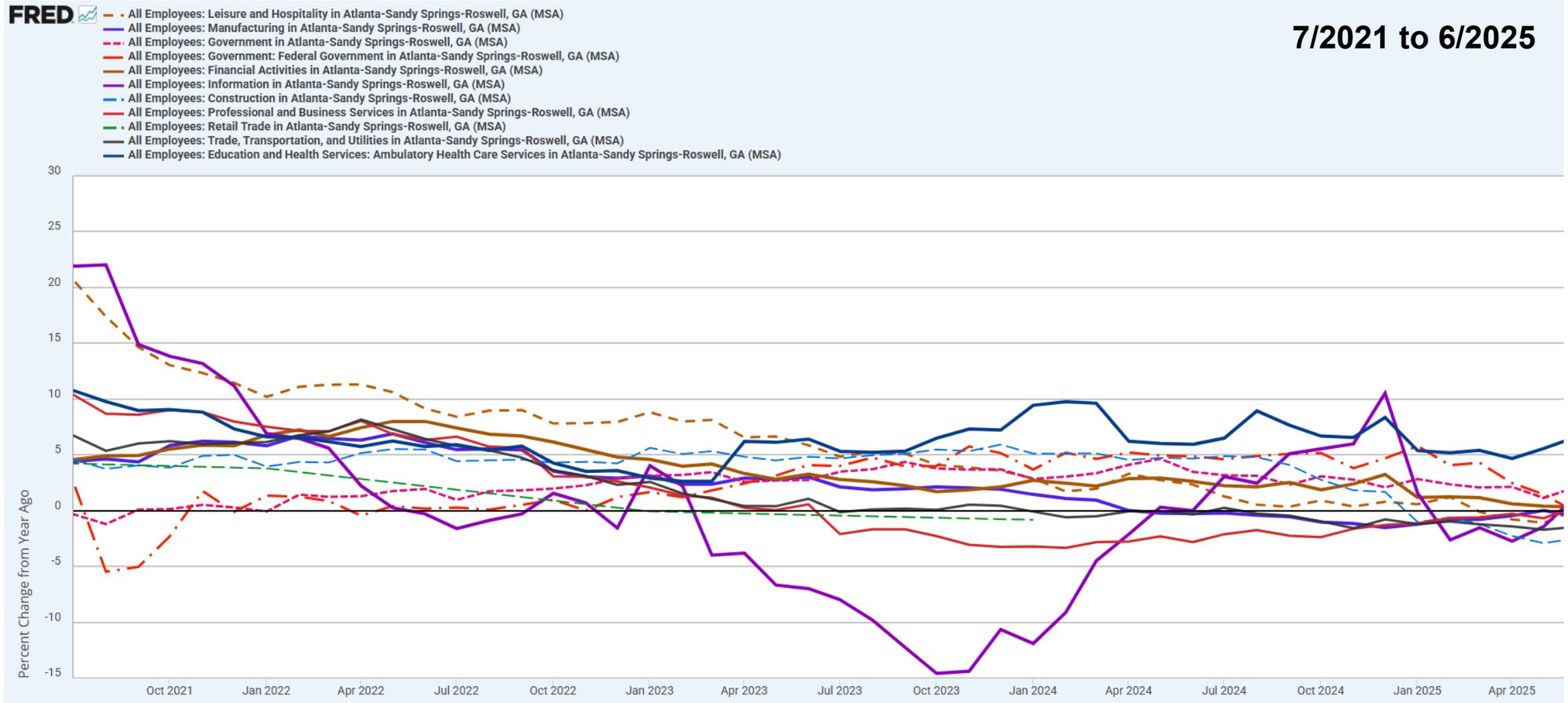
Atlanta MSA Year Over Year Job Change

5/2021-6/2025



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

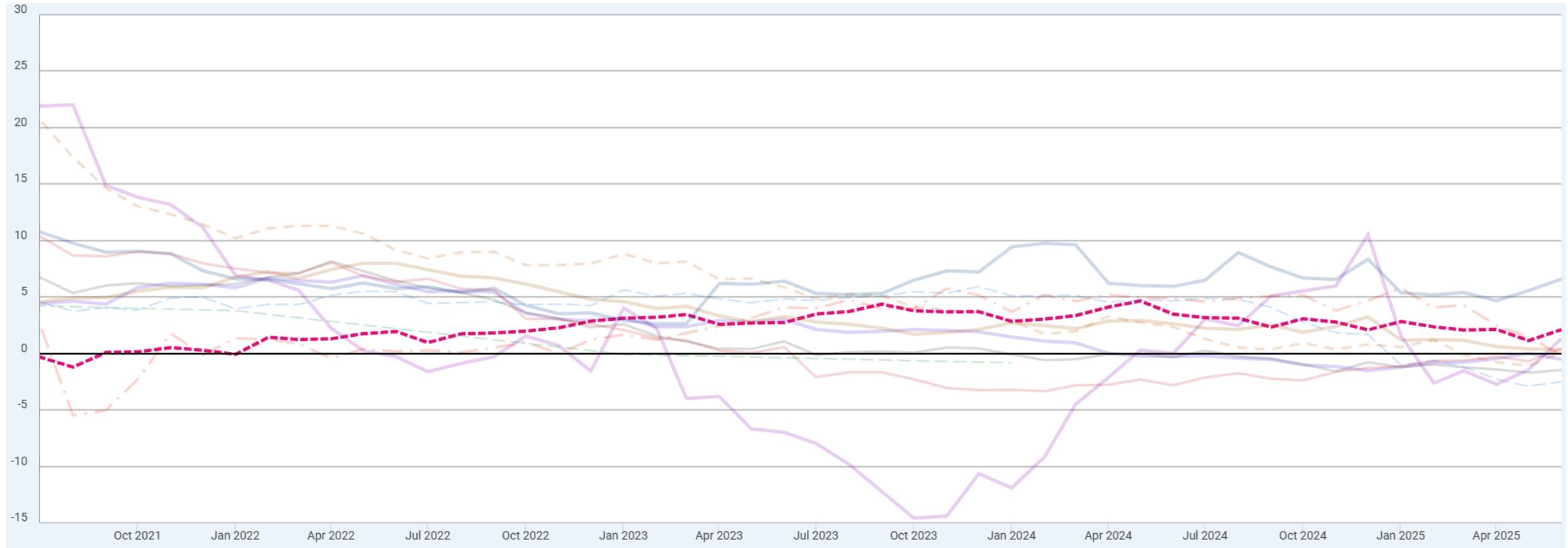
(Year over Year Percentage Change)



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

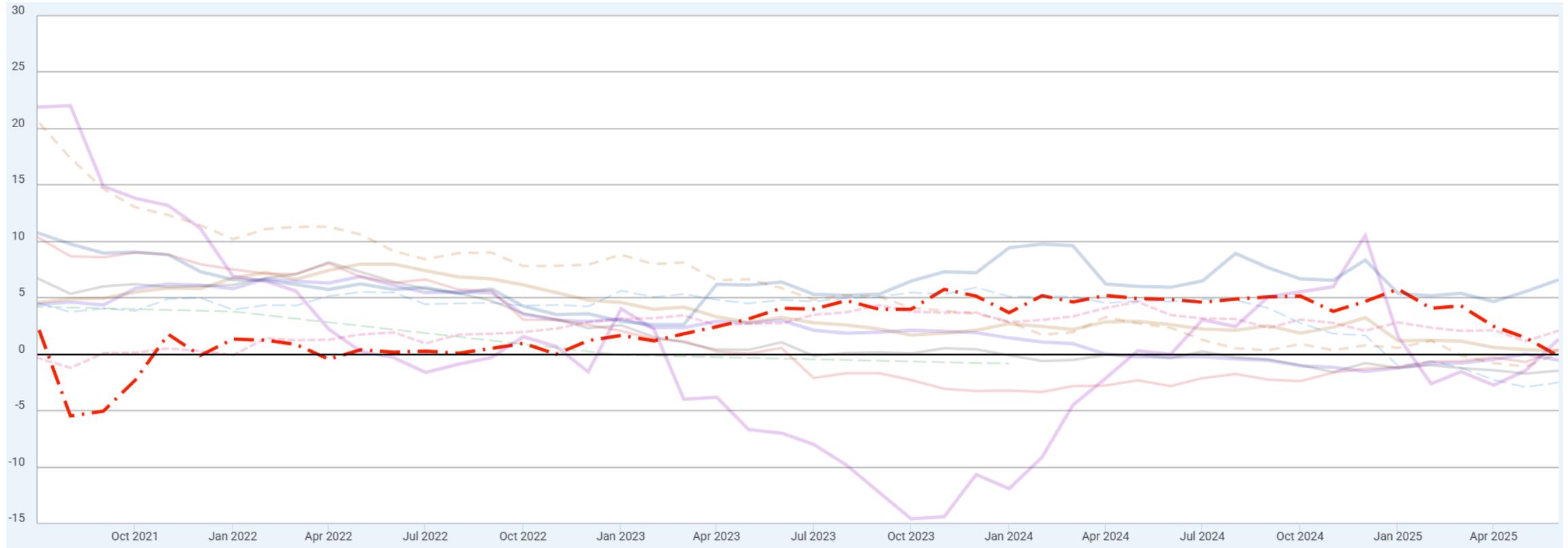
Government



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

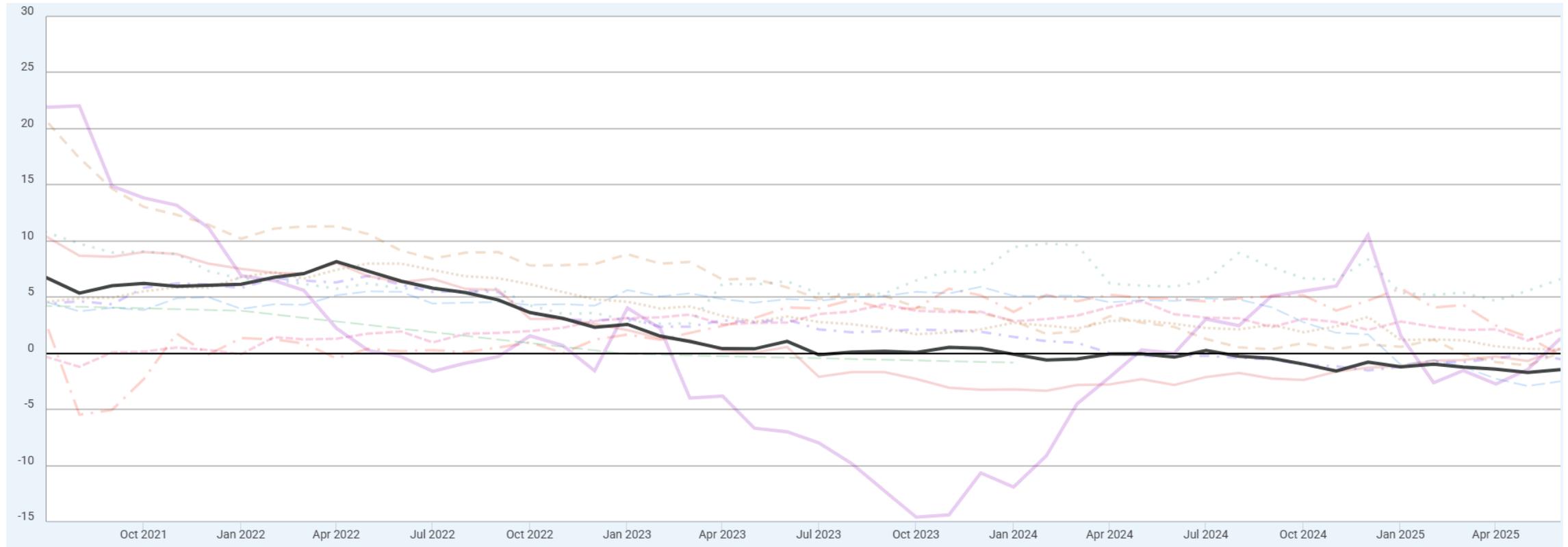
Federal Government



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

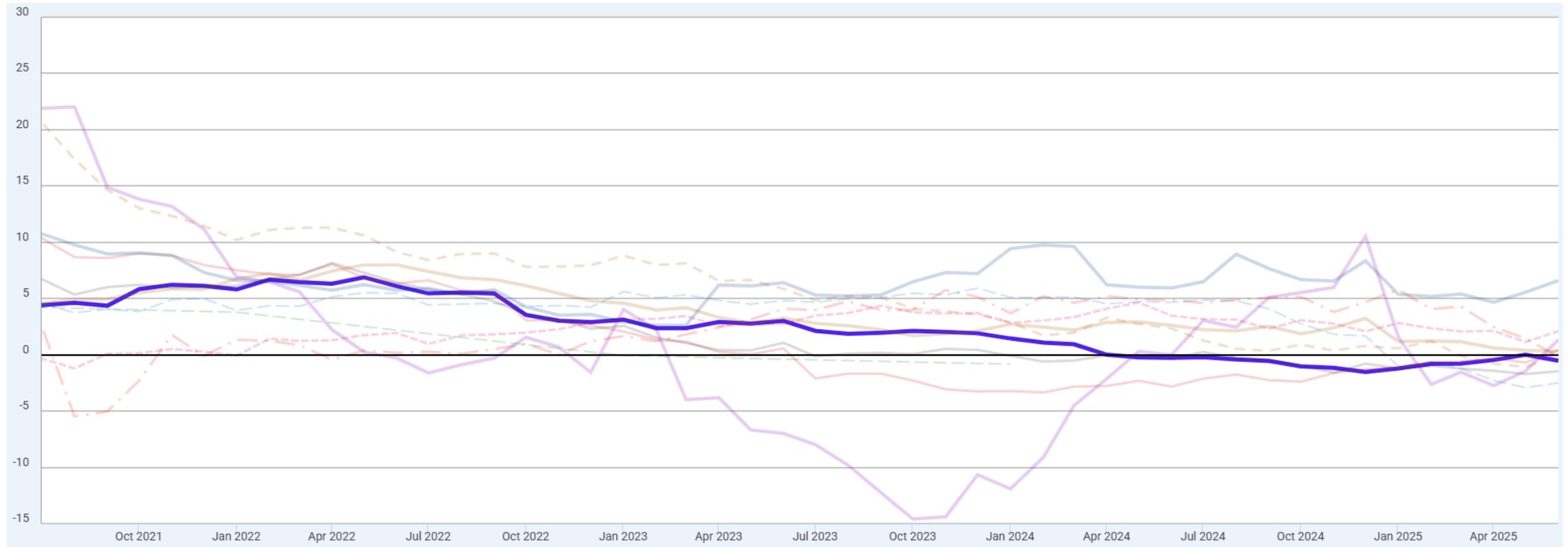
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

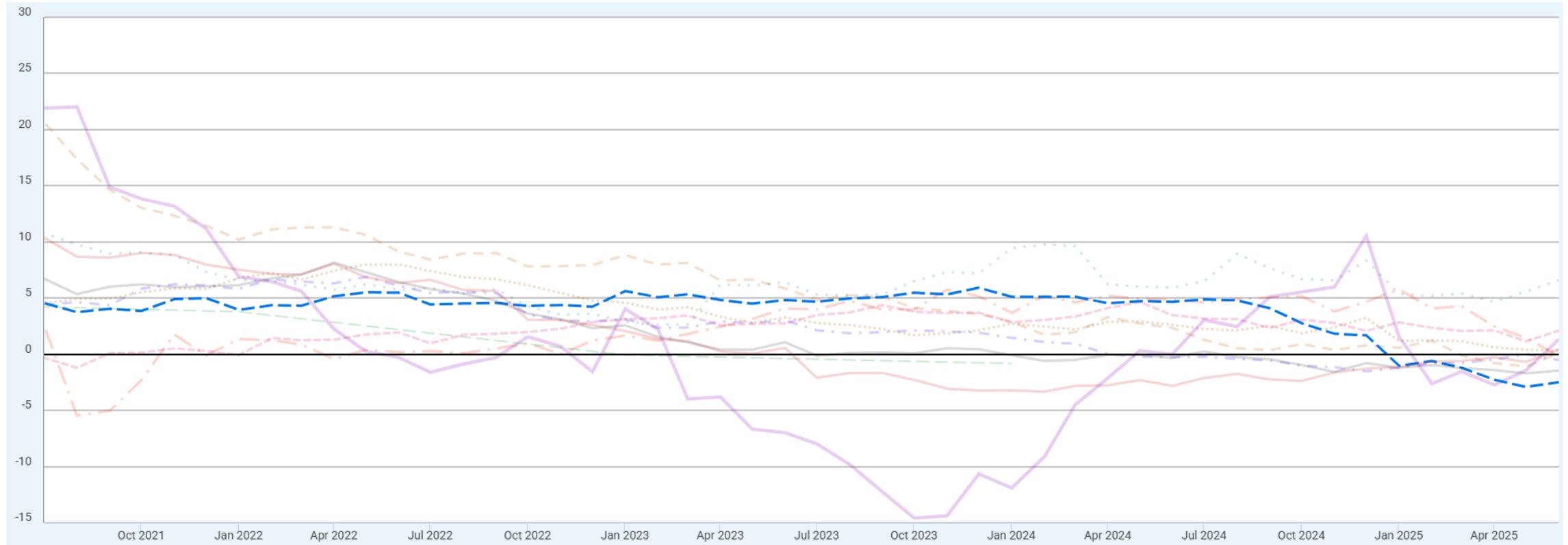
Manufacturing



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

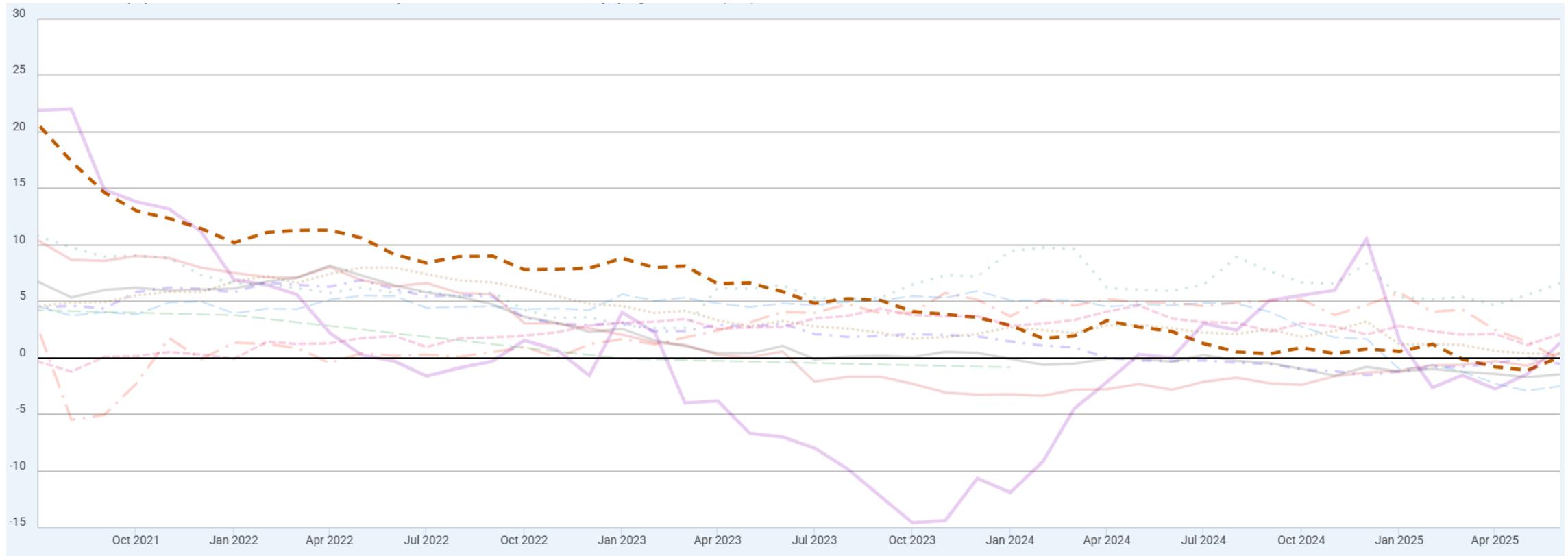
Construction



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

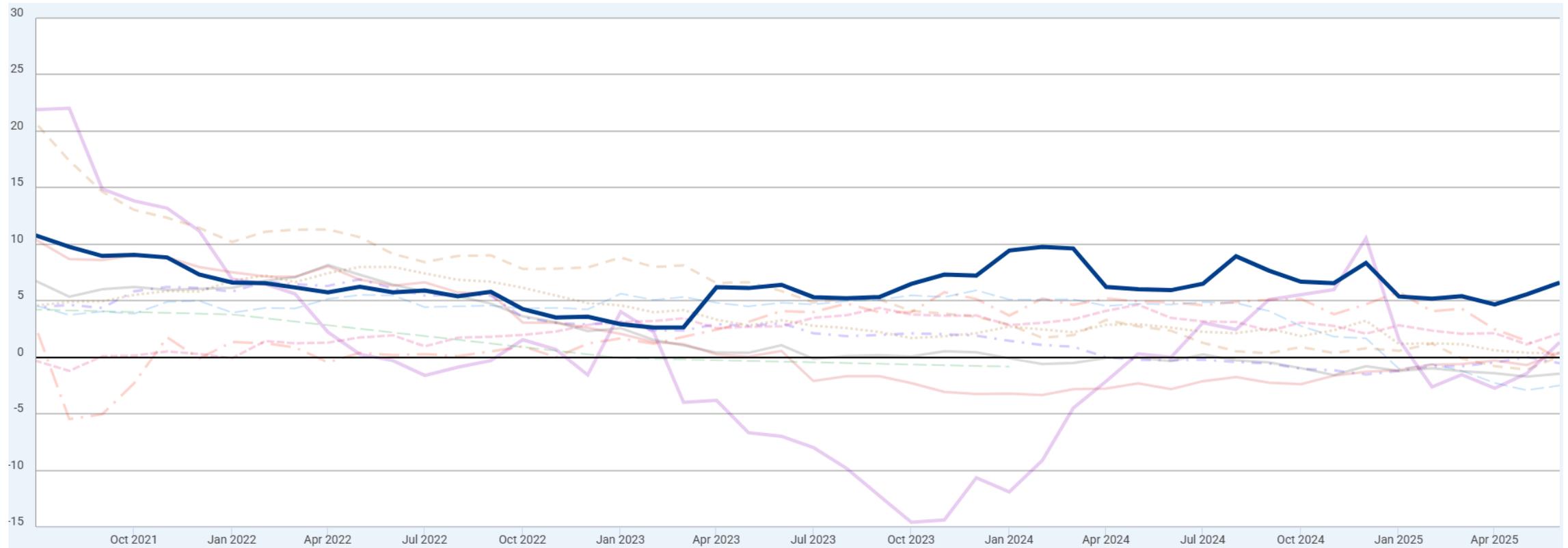
Leisure and Hospitality



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

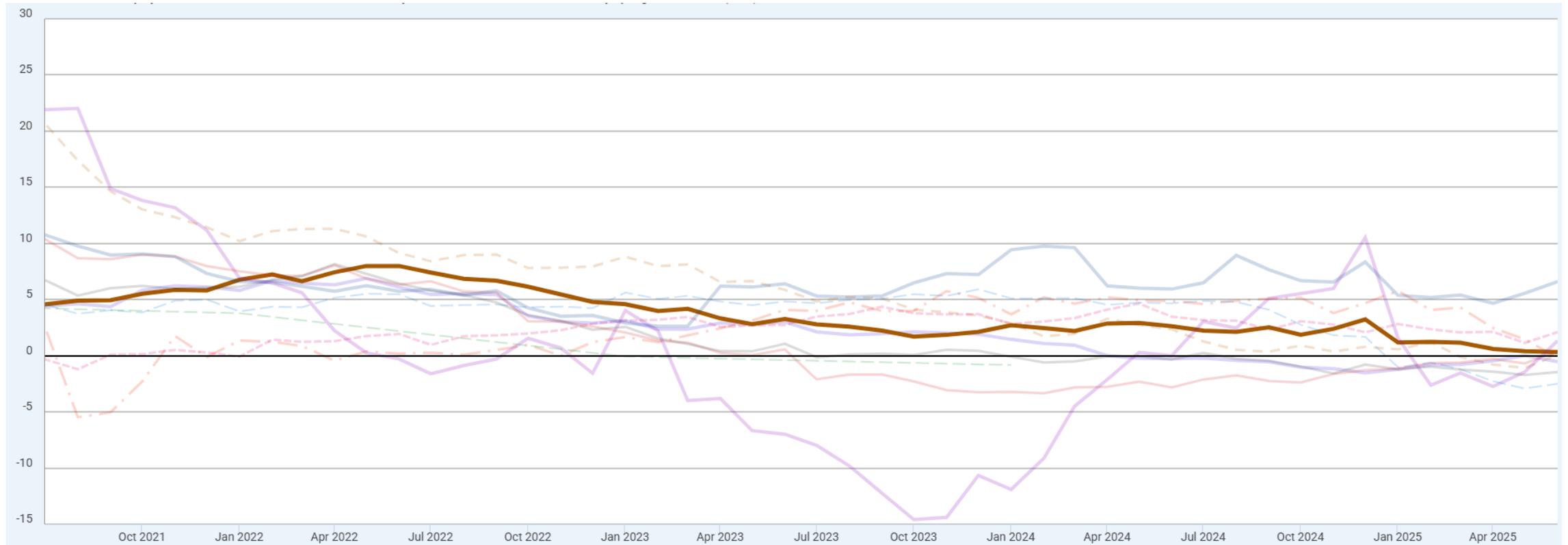
Education and Health Services: Ambulatory Health Care Services



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

(Year over Year Percentage Change)

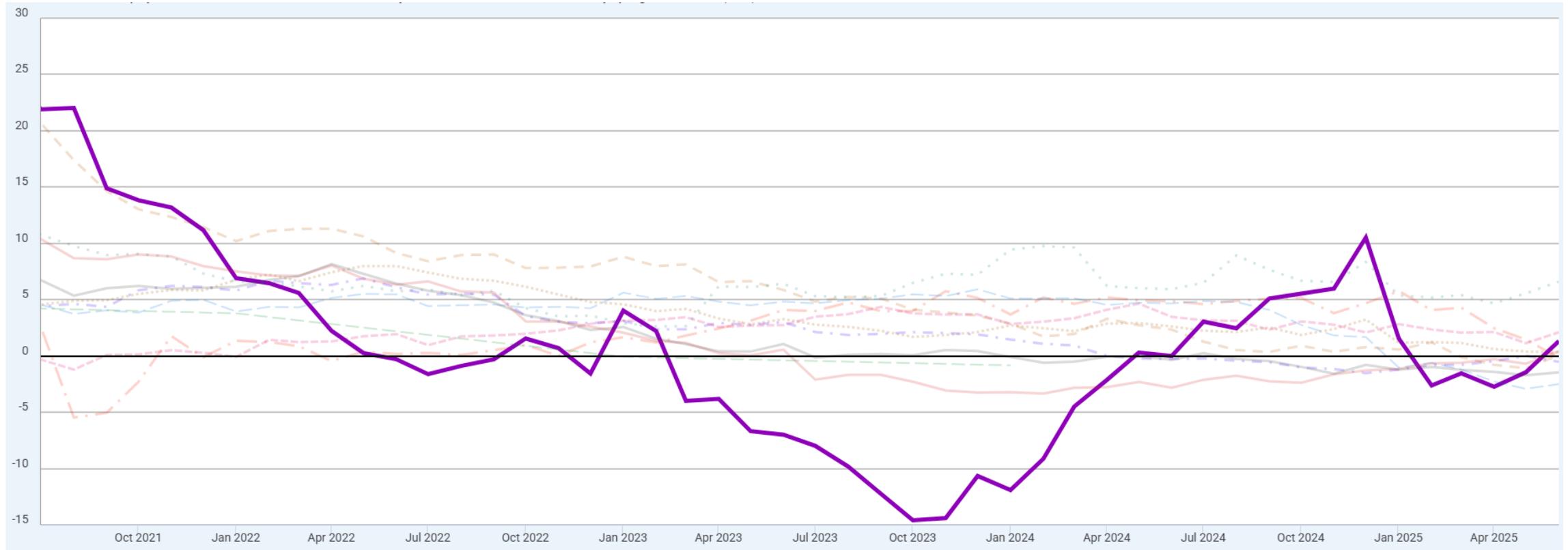
Financial Activities



Atlanta MSA Select Sector Employment Change

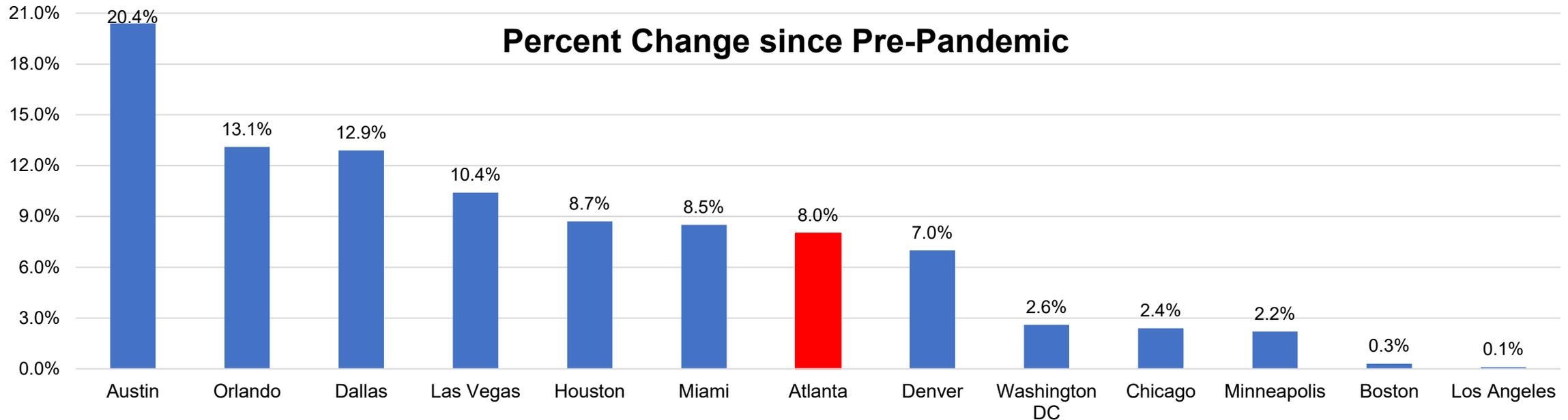
(Year over Year Percentage Change)

Information

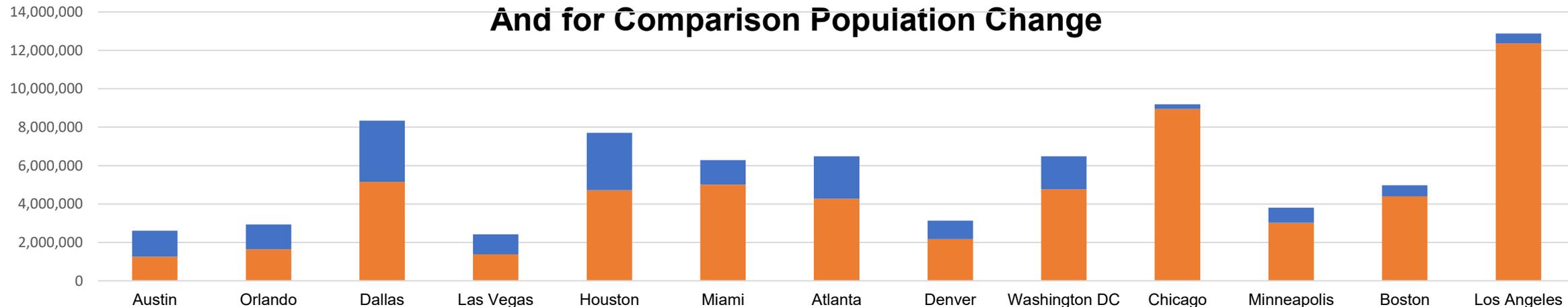


Job Recovery from Pandemic (Feb 2020 – May 2025)

Percent Change since Pre-Pandemic

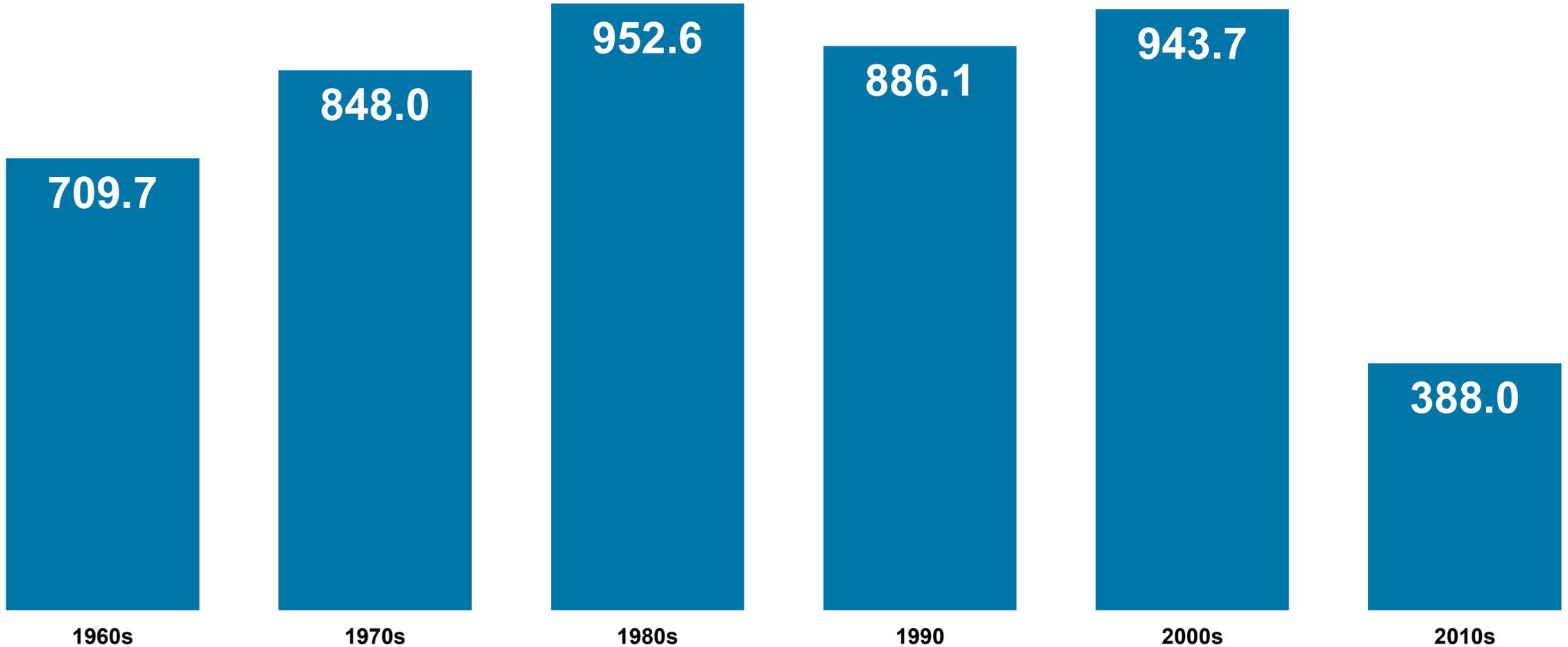


And for Comparison Population Change

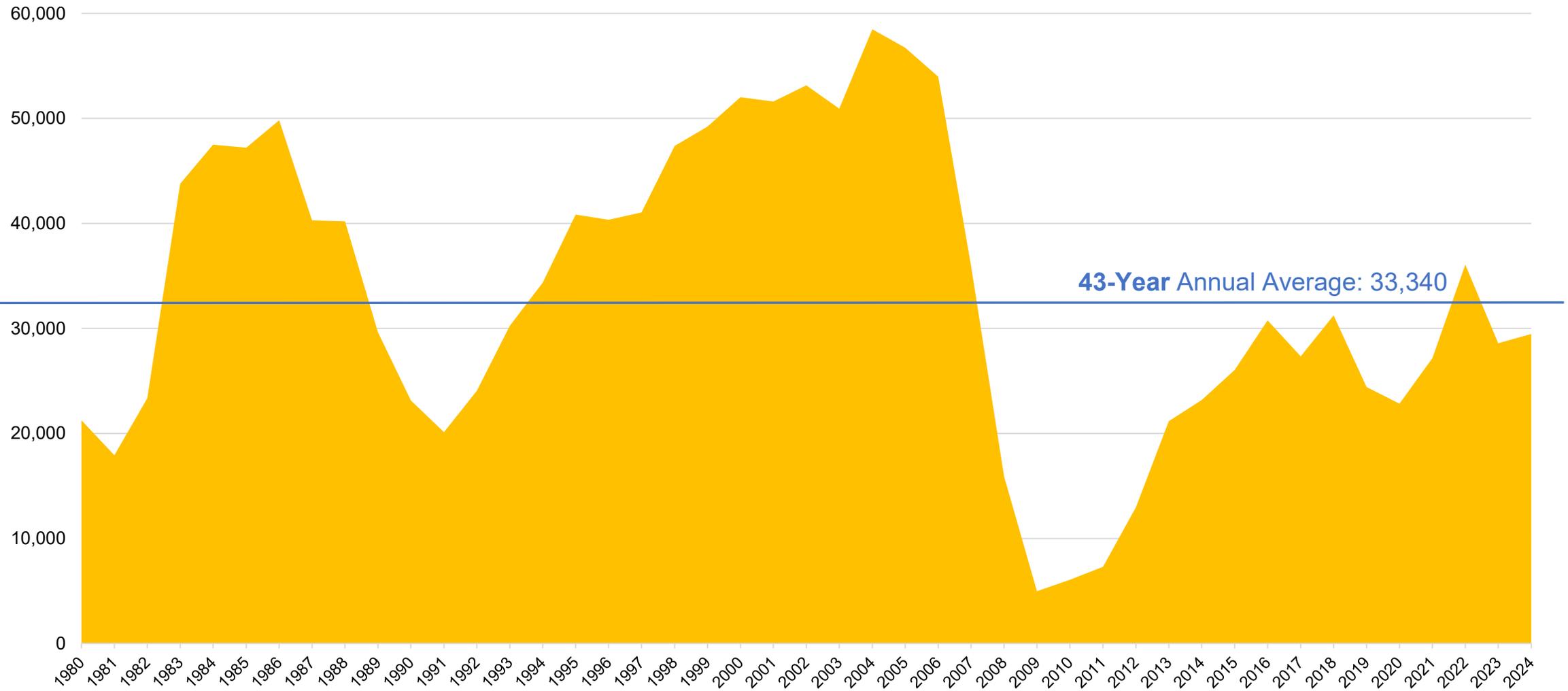


■ Pop 2000 ■ Pop Change 2000-25

Average Annual Residential Permits per 100K Population (Georgia)

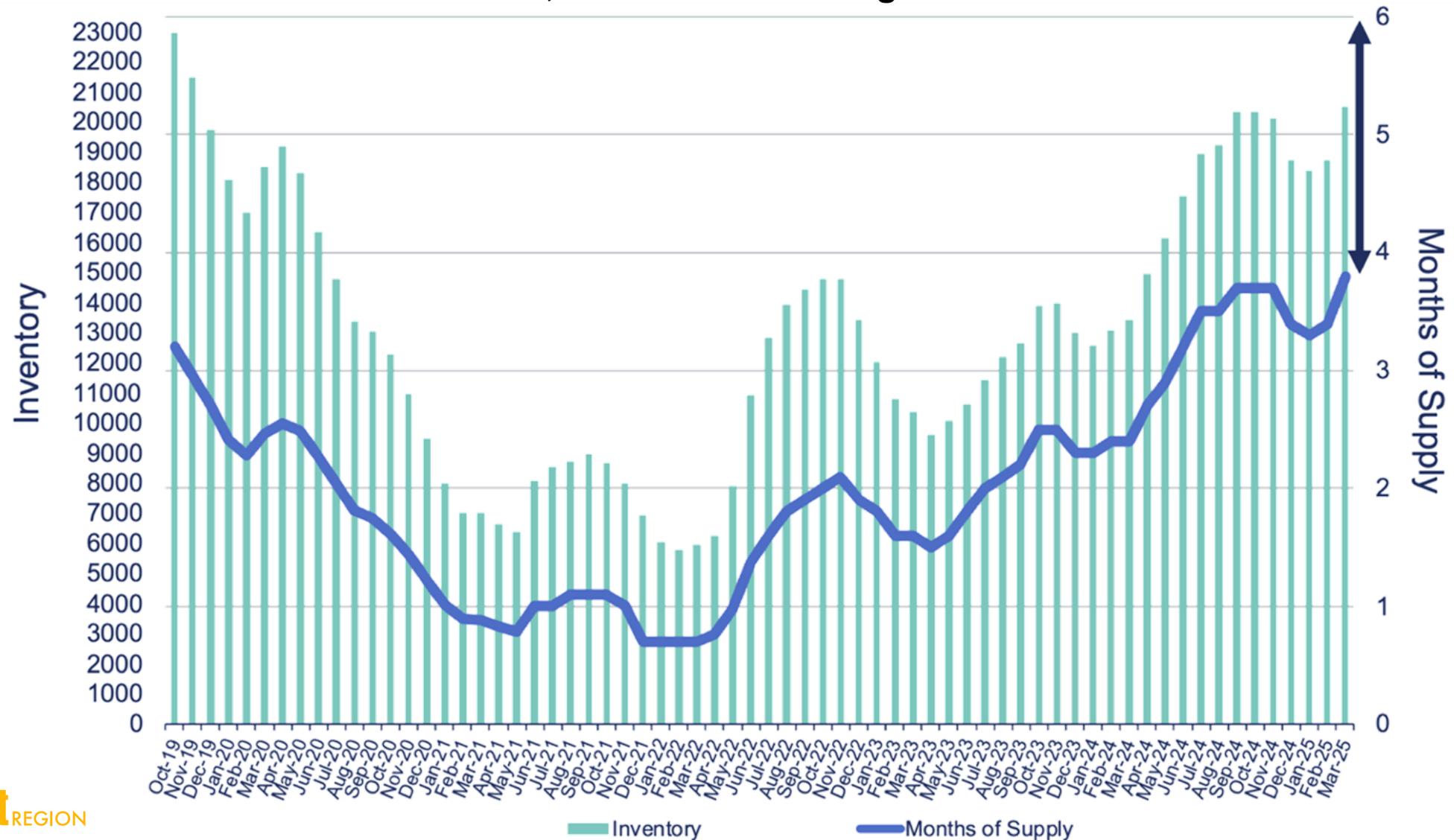


Supporting Facts: Building Permits – Long View



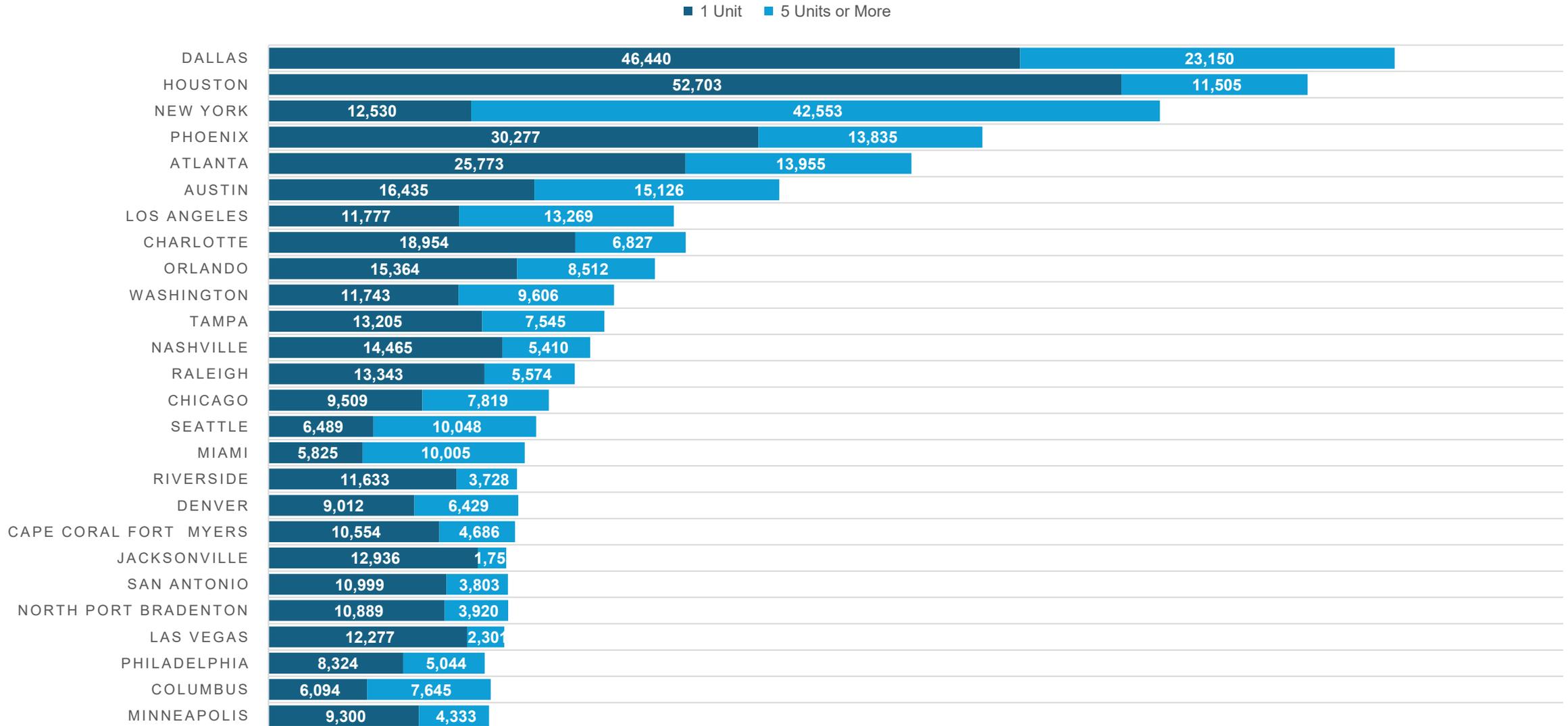
Inventory and Months of Supply Trending (Atlanta)

30,000 Annual Housing Deficit



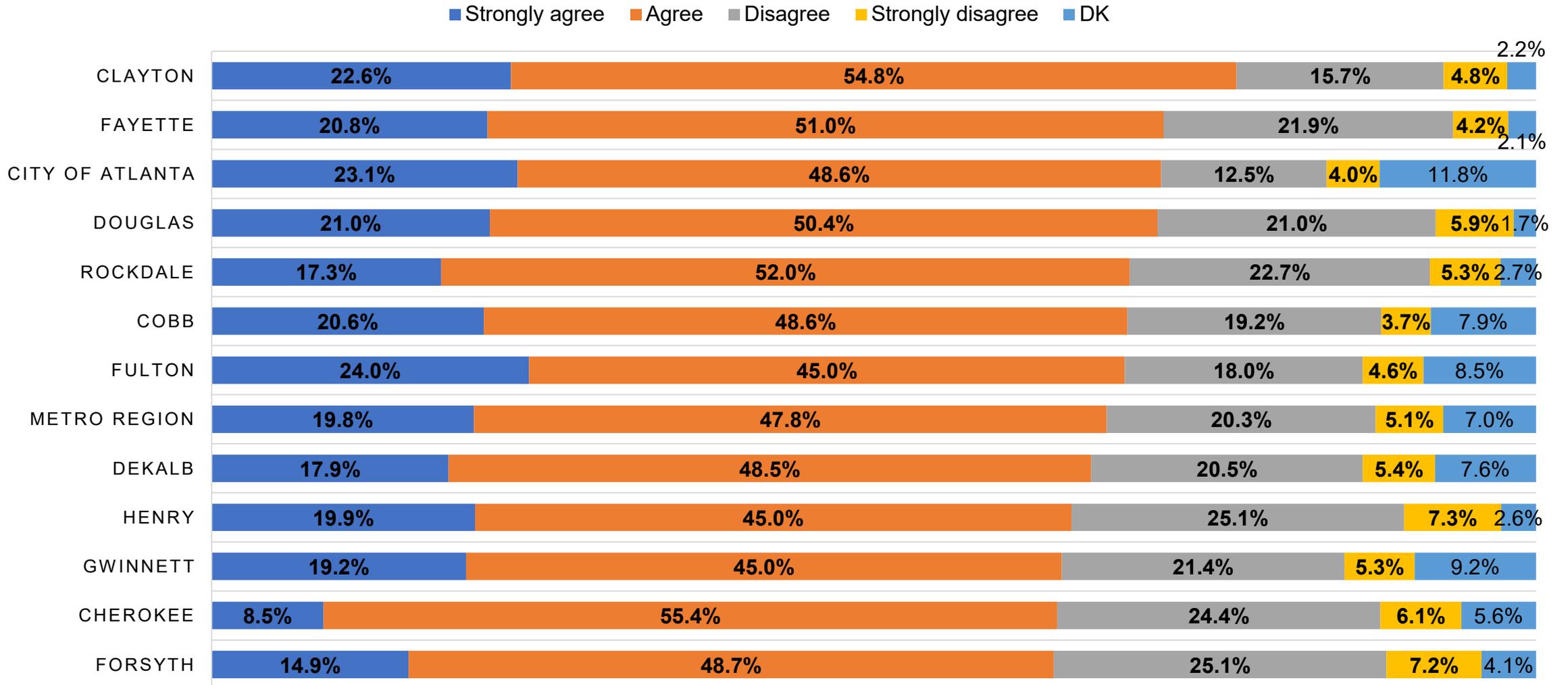
2024 Metropolitan Area Building Permits

(1 Unit & 5 or More)



Population Growth's Importance

“Being a leading area for population growth is critical for our region’s economy”



Summing Up (for population & for jobs)

- We're still growing
- We are facing challenges to growth
 - Like, well, everyone everywhere
- We are very well positioned, relative to other “peer” areas, for growth
- We have to plan more, now (than we have before), to get the growth that we want

Discussion / Thought Questions

- How important do you think “maintaining leadership in”/ accelerating population growth is, to the region and/or to your jurisdiction(s)?
- What are the major things getting in the way of “good growth” in your jurisdiction(s)?
- What has been most successful in mitigating these obstacles at local level?
- “How is ARC helping” (or hurting?) What are other roles for ARC?
- What other data and/or research (from ARC or others) do you believe that you’d need to make efforts in your jurisdiction(s) more successful?