

Ningbo's Economy Shows Resilience in First Half of 2026

By Zhao Yu

Ningbo's economy maintained steady growth in the first half of 2026, with its GDP rising 5.4% year on year, according to figures released on July 23.

While growth eased from earlier in the year, the slowdown was smaller than both the national and Zhejiang provincial averages. "Given the current global geopolitical environment, these results were hard-won," said Xu Haiyan, deputy director of the Ningbo Municipal Statistics Bureau.

The latest figures suggest the city's economy remained resilient in the first half of the year, with growth stabilizing, new sources of momentum gaining strength and economic fundamentals continuing to improve.

Industry Continues to Anchor Growth

Stability in Ningbo's economy was underpinned by continued strength on the supply side, with industry remaining the main engine of growth.

In the first half of 2026, the city's industrial added value rose 7.8% year on year, accounting for 56.4% of GDP growth. Added value from industrial enterprises above designated size increased 8.9%, while the sales-to-output ratio improved to 97.0%.

Strong demand for electric vehicles and electronic products provided major support. Added value in automobile manufacturing surged 32.1%; the computer, communications and other electronic equipment sector expanded 13.4%.

At the Ningbo production base of Joyson Electronics, orders for intelligent cockpit systems and battery management systems for electric vehicle models remained strong throughout the first six months of the year. "Production lines were almost always running at full capacity," a company representative said.

Private businesses also played a key role in sustaining growth. According to Xu, added value from private industrial enterprises above des-



Industry remaining the main engine of growth. [Photo by Sun Jiajun]

ignated size increased 11.6% and contributed more than 80% of total industrial growth.

Newly established and newly upgraded industrial manufacturers were relatively few in number, but together they contributed 17% of industrial growth, indicating that new sources of momentum are beginning to emerge despite their still-limited scale.

Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing Gain Momentum

Emerging industries and technological innovation also gathered momentum in the first half of the year, reflecting Ningbo's continued shift toward advanced manufacturing, digitalization and greener growth, according to Xu.

The city's investment in science and technology continued to increase. Fiscal spending on science and technology rose 15.9% year on year, while its share of total government expenditure increased by 2.7 percentage points. Innovation remained a priority for businesses as well, with 65.3% of industrial enterprises above designated size conducting research and development activities.

"We can't afford to slow down our R&D efforts," said the head of the R&D center at Medicsystem Biotechnology Co., Ltd. The company increased investment in in-vitro diagnostic reagents this year, bringing several new products

to market and achieving strong growth in new product sales during the first half.

Across the city, the output value of new products rose 14.1% year on year. Added value in high-end equipment manufacturing increased 15.9%, while investment in high-tech manufacturing surged 32.1%.

Artificial intelligence is also beginning to reshape Ningbo's manufacturing sector.

At Ningbo Asiaway Automotive components in Fenghua District, four humanoid robots have been deployed on the production line, performing tasks such as parts sorting, precision inspection and flexible assembly that were previously carried out manually. The company is among the first manufacturers in Ningbo to integrate humanoid robots into day-to-day production.

The city's digital economy also continued to expand. Revenue from the software and information technology services sector increased 18.3% in the first half of the year, while key segments of the AI industry—including large language models and computing services—recorded double-digit growth.

Green industries also remained a bright spot. Production of electric vehicles more than doubled, rising 109.7% from a year earlier as major local automakers expanded output.

Exports of the "new

trio"—electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products—surged 134.5% in the first half. Electric vehicle exports jumped 209.8%, while photovoltaic products and lithium-ion batteries recorded growth of 67.8% and 62.8%, respectively.

The shift toward more environmentally conscious spending was equally evident. Electric vehicles accounted for 49.1% of all automobile retail sales in Ningbo during the first six months of the year.

Policy Support Helps Restore Confidence

The latest figures also point to improving market sentiment, with policy support helping to boost investment, spending, and business confidence.

Government incentives continued to drive investment in the first half of the year. Investment in equipment and tool purchases rose 12.9%, supported by China's large-scale equipment renewal program, while infrastructure investment increased 9.4% as major national and provincial projects gathered pace.

At Ningbo Hansheng Drive Power, five-axis CNC machines now perform micron-level machining of robotic joint reducers, while a digital control center monitors machining precision across the production line in real time.

According to the company's technical director, gov-

ernment support under the equipment renewal program enabled a comprehensive upgrade of the company's core production lines in the first half of the year. Following the overhaul, both production capacity and manufacturing yields improved.

Measures aimed at stimulating consumer spending also gathered momentum. Ningbo took the lead in China to pilot a receipt lottery program, offering 150 million yuan in prize money to encourage consumer spending.

"I asked for a receipt after dinner and ended up winning 200 yuan," said local resident Zhang, who scanned the QR code on the receipt to enter the lottery after dining at a local restaurant. "It definitely makes me more willing to spend."

Policies supporting home purchases, including housing trade-in programs and consumption voucher incentives, also showed signs of lifting the property market. The decline in commercial housing sales narrowed for a third consecutive month in the first half of the year, suggesting confidence in the sector is gradually recovering.

Business and consumer sentiment also continued to improve. Ningbo's consumer confidence index rose to 125.2 in the second quarter, up 4.5 points from the previous quarter, while the business climate index for industrial enterprises above designated size reached 128.3, remaining in expansion-
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Ningbo- Made Robots Expand Their Global Reach

By Lu Xinyan

Robotics is emerging as one of Ningbo's fastest-growing export sectors, as local manufacturers accelerate shipments of industrial and service robots to overseas markets.

According to Ningbo Customs, the city's robot exports reached 720 million yuan in the first half of 2026, up 160% year on year.

Exports included industrial robots, commercial cleaning robots, surgical robots and intelligent bionic robots. Industrial robot exports totaled 340 million yuan, an increase of 22.4%, while commercial cleaning robot exports surged to 380 million yuan.

Inside Zhejiang Ounitech Robotics' 4,000-square-meter production facility, automated assembly lines install laser navigation sensor modules with millimeter-level ranging accuracy into the control systems of robotic vacuum cleaners.

"The robots are equipped with 3D SLAM navigation technology and can build maps of their surroundings in real time and adapt to different operating environments," said Shi Mengjia, general manager of Ounitech Robotics. "They are already being used in supermarkets and industrial warehouses, and have been exported to more than 40 countries and regions, including the United States and Russia." The company expects its output value to quadruple in 2026 as demand continues to grow.

Ningbo has established one of China's most complete humanoid robot supply chains, covering key components such as precision reducers, controllers and servo motors, as well as complete robot assembly and systems integration.

Local companies are increasingly exporting not only robot hardware but also integrated embodied AI solutions. At the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference, Pia Automation, a subsidiary of Joyson Electronics, demonstrated a production line in which three wheeled embodied AI robots worked together to complete parts feeding, assembly, packaging and pallet handling without human intervention.

The system, designed for precision assembly of automotive battery management systems, has completed trials in multiple industrial settings and has secured tentative deals from Chinese and overseas clients.

Earlier this year, the Zhejiang Humanoid Robot Innovation Center partnered with Schneider Electric to showcase an embodied AI solution for chemical laboratories at the Hannover Messe in Germany. The system attracted industry attention for its ability to coordinate multiple robots for high-precision laboratory tasks, while allowing for digital twinning.

To support growing robot exports, Ningbo Customs has expanded its appointment-based customs clearance service and introduced a dedicated green channel for robot shipments. The measures provide priority inspection and end-to-end customs support to help time-sensitive export orders clear more efficiently.

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Ningbo Cultural Heritage Showcased at Vancouver Festival

By Jin Lu

Ningbo's traditional crafts and cultural products were showcased at the Chinese Traditional Culture Festival in Vancouver, Canada, offering visitors a glimpse into the city's intangible cultural heritage and local traditions.

Mike Hurley, mayor of Burnaby, and several city councilors visited the Ningbo exhibition, where they explored the displays and learned about the cultural heritage behind them. Hurley praised the

quality of the works and said he hoped more cultural programs from Ningbo would be introduced in Canada in the future.

Organized by the Ningbo Chamber of Commerce of Canada Society, the exhibition featured handcrafted fans, mother-of-pearl inlay works, jigsaw puzzles depicting Ningbo landmarks and other items inspired by the city's cultural heritage. Interactive activities such as traditional ink-rubbing demonstrations also gave visitors a chance to create their own commemorative prints.

Among the visitors was Laura Morgan, a board member of the Burnaby Hospital Foundation, who was particularly interested in a badge featuring Tianyi Pavilion, Ningbo's renowned ancient private library. She said the exhibit had given her a new appreciation of the city and its history.

The Chinese Traditional Culture Festival has become one of North America's largest annual celebrations of Chinese culture, featuring performances, food, handicrafts and interactive cultural experiences.



Visitors explore intangible cultural heritage products from Ningbo at the Chinese Traditional Culture Festival in Vancouver, Canada. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

This year's event attracted around 5,000 visitors, providing a platform for cultural

exchange and introducing local audiences to a wide range of Chinese traditions.

