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The Conference Board® U.S. Business Cycle IndicatorsSM **U.S. LEADING ECONOMIC INDICATORS** **AND RELATED COMPOSITE INDEXES FOR NOVEMBER 2006**

Next month's release of the U.S. LEADING ECONOMIC INDICATORS AND RELATED COMPOSITE INDEXES will incorporate annual benchmark revisions to the composite indexes which will bring them up-to-date with revisions in the source data. The indexes are updated throughout the year, but only for the previous six months. Data revisions that fall outside of the moving six-month window are not incorporated until the January release of each year when an annual benchmark revision is made and the entire histories of the indexes are recomputed.

For more information, visit our web site at <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/>.

The Conference Board announced today that the U.S. leading index increased 0.1 percent, the coincident index increased 0.2 percent and the lagging index increased 0.5 percent in November.

- The leading index increased for the third consecutive month in November. From May to November, the leading index rose 0.2 percent (a 0.4 percent annual rate). Initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted) and building permits made the largest negative contributions to the leading index in November. In addition, strengths and weaknesses remained roughly balanced among the leading indicators in recent months.
- The coincident index increased again in November. This measure of current economic activity has been growing steadily, although its growth moderated somewhat in recent months. From May to November, the coincident index grew at a 1.1 percent rate (a 2.1 percent annual rate). In addition, the strengths among the coincident indicators have been very widespread in recent months. At the same time, real GDP growth slowed to a 2.2 percent (annual) rate in the third quarter, following a 5.6 percent gain in the first quarter and a 2.6 percent gain in the second quarter.
- The leading index was fluctuating around a slightly downward short-term trend since January, and, despite three consecutive gains, it is still 0.6 percent below its most recent high reached at the beginning of the year. The decline in the growth rate of the leading index since the beginning of the year appears to have moderated in recent months, but the strength among the leading indicators has not been widespread. The recent behavior of the leading index so far still suggests that slow economic growth is likely to continue in the near term.

LEADING INDICATORS. Four of the ten indicators that make up the leading index increased in November. The positive contributors – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were real money supply*, vendor performance, manufacturers' new orders for nondefense capital goods* and stock prices. The negative contributors – beginning with the largest negative contributor – were average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), building permits, interest rate spread, average weekly manufacturing hours and index of consumer expectations. The manufacturers' new orders for consumer goods and materials* held steady in November.

The leading index now stands at 138.2 (1996=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.1 percent in October and increased 0.4 percent in September. During the six-month span through November, the leading index increased 0.2 percent, with six out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals fifty percent).

The next release is scheduled for Thursday, January 18, 2007 at 10 A.M. ET.

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. All four indicators that make up the coincident index increased in November. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were employees on nonagricultural payrolls, industrial production, manufacturing and trade sales* and personal income less transfer payments*.

The coincident index now stands at 124.0 (1996=100). This index increased 0.2 percent in October and increased 0.1 percent in September. During the six-month period through November, the coincident index increased 1.1 percent.

LAGGING INDICATORS. The lagging index stands at 124.9 (1996=100) in November, with five of the seven components advancing. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were commercial and industrial loans outstanding*, change in labor cost per unit of output*, average duration of unemployment (inverted), ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales* and ratio of consumer installment credit to personal income*. The only negative contributor was the change in CPI for services. The average prime rate charged by banks* held steady in November. Based on revised data, the lagging index increased 0.2 percent in October and increased 0.2 percent in September.

DATA AVAILABILITY AND NOTES.

The data series used by The Conference Board to compute the three composite indexes and reported in the tables in this release are those available “as of” 12 Noon on December 21, 2006. Some series are estimated as noted below.

* Series in the leading index that are based on The Conference Board estimates are manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials, manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods, and the personal consumption expenditure used to deflate the money supply. Series in the coincident index that are based on The Conference Board estimates are personal income less transfer payments and manufacturing and trade sales. Series in the lagging index that are based on The Conference Board estimates are inventories to sales ratio, consumer installment credit to income ratio, change in labor cost per unit of output, the consumer price index, and the personal consumption expenditure used to deflate commercial and industrial loans outstanding.

The procedure used to estimate the current month’s personal consumption expenditure deflator (used in the calculation of real money supply and commercial and industrial loans outstanding) now incorporates the current month’s consumer price index when it is available before the release of the U.S. Leading Economic Indicators.

Effective with the September 18, 2003 release, the method for calculating manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials (A0M008) and manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods (A0M027) has been revised. Both series are now constructed by deflating nominal aggregate new orders data instead of aggregating deflated industry level new orders data. Both the new and the old methods utilize appropriate producer price indices. This simplification remedies several issues raised by the recent conversion of industry data to the North American Classification System (NAICS), as well as several other issues, e.g. the treatment of semiconductor orders. While this simplification caused a slight shift in the levels of both new orders series, the growth rates were essentially the same. As a result, this simplification had no significant effect on the leading index.

Effective with the January 22, 2004 release a programming error in the calculation of the leading index -- in place since January 2002 -- has been corrected. The cyclical behavior of the leading index was not affected by either the calculation error or its correction, but the level of the index in the 1959-1996 period is slightly higher.

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THE CYCLICAL INDICATOR APPROACH. The composite indexes are the key elements in an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The leading, coincident, and lagging indexes are essentially composite averages of between four and ten individual leading, coincident, or lagging indicators. (See page 3 for details.) They are constructed to summarize and reveal common turning point patterns in economic data in a clearer and more convincing manner than any individual component—primarily because they smooth out some of the volatility of individual components.

Historically, the cyclical turning points in the leading index have occurred before those in aggregate economic activity, while the cyclical turning points in the coincident index have occurred at about the same time as those in aggregate economic activity. The cyclical turning points in the lagging index generally have occurred after those in aggregate economic activity.

U.S. Composite Indexes: Components and Standardization Factors

<u>Leading Index</u>	<u>Factor</u>
1 Average weekly hours, manufacturing	0.2542
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0333
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0753
4 Vendor performance, slower deliveries diffusion index	0.0698
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods	0.0186
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0266
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0377
8 Money supply, M2	0.3535
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1019
10 Index of consumer expectations	0.0291
 <u>Coincident Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.5293
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.2077
3 Industrial production	0.1469
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1161
 <u>Lagging Index</u>	
1 Average duration of unemployment	0.0373
2 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1221
3 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0623
4 Average prime rate	0.2777
5 Commercial and industrial loans	0.1137
6 Consumer installment credit to personal income ratio	0.1931
7 Consumer price index for services	0.1937

Notes:

The component factors are inversely related to the standard deviation of the month-to-month changes in each component. They are used to equalize the volatility of the contribution from each component and are “normalized” to sum to 1. When one or more components are missing, the other factors are adjusted proportionately to ensure that the total continues to sum to 1.

These factors were revised effective on the release for January 2006, and all historical values for the three composite indexes were revised at this time to reflect the changes. (Under normal circumstances, updates to the leading, coincident, and lagging indexes only incorporate revisions to data over the past six months.) The factors for the leading index were calculated using 1984-2004 as the sample period for measuring volatility. A separate set of factors for the 1959-1983 period is available upon request. The primary sample period for the coincident and lagging indexes was 1959-2004. For additional information on the standardization factors and the index methodology see: “Benchmark Revisions in the Composite Indexes,” *Business Cycle Indicators* December 1997 and “Technical Appendix: Calculating the Composite Indexes” *Business Cycle Indicators* December 1996, or the Web site: www.conference-board.org/economics/bci.

The trend adjustment factor for the leading index is -0.0164, and the trend adjustment factor for the lagging index is 0.1744.

To address the problem of lags in available data, those leading, coincident and lagging indicators that are not available at the time of publication are estimated using statistical imputation. An autoregressive model is used to estimate each unavailable component. The resulting indexes are therefore constructed using real and estimated data, and will be revised as the unavailable data during the time of publication become available. Such revisions are part of the monthly data revisions, now a regular part of the U.S. Business Cycle Indicators program. The main advantage of this procedure is to utilize in the leading index data such as stock prices, interest rate spread, and manufacturing hours that are available sooner than other data on real aspects of the economy such as manufacturers' new orders. Empirical research by The Conference Board suggests that there are real gains in adopting this procedure to make all the indicator series as up-to-date as possible.

U.S. Leading Economic Indicators news release schedule for 2007:

Thursday, January 18, 2007	for December 2006 data
Wednesday, February 21, 2007	for January 2007 data
Thursday, March 22, 2007	for February 2007 data
Thursday, April 19, 2007	for March 2007 data
Monday May 21, 2007	for April 2007 data
Thursday June 21, 2007	for May 2007 data
Thursday July 19, 2007	for June 2007 data
Monday, August 20, 2007	for July 2007 data
Thursday, September 20, 2007	for August 2007 data
Thursday October 18, 2007	for September 2007 data
Monday November 19, 2007	for October 2007 data
Thursday December 20, 2007	for November 2007 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE BOARD. The Conference Board is the premier business membership and research network founded in 1916. It has become a global leader in helping executives build strong professional relationships, expand their business knowledge and find solutions to a wide range of business challenges. Its Economics Program, under the direction of Chief Economist Gail Fosler, is a recognized source of forecasts, analysis and objective indicators such as Leading Economic Indicators and Consumer Confidence.

This role is part of a long tradition of research and education that stretches back to the compilation of the first continuous measure of the cost of living in the United States in 1919. In 1995, The Conference Board assumed responsibility for computing the composite indexes from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Conference Board now produces business cycle indexes for the U.S., Australia, France, Germany, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Spain and the U.K. To subscribe to any of these indexes, please visit www.conference-board.org/economics/bci or contact the customer service department at 212-339-0345 or email indicators@conference-board.org.

AVAILABLE FROM THE CONFERENCE BOARD

U.S. Business Cycle Indicators Internet Subscription <i>(Includes monthly release, data, charts and commentary)</i>	\$ 535 per year (1 user)
Individual Data Series	\$ 25 per series downloaded
Monthly BCI Report <i>(Sample available on request)</i>	\$ 235 per year
Monthly News Release (fax or email)	\$ 55 per year
BCI Handbook (published 2001)	\$ 20
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Business Cycle Indicators for Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain and the UK are available at \$535 per country per year (1 user). Discounts are available to Associates of The Conference Board and accredited academic institutions.

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Table 1.--Summary of Composites Indexes

	2006							
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	
Leading index	137.9	138.2	137.8	137.4	138.0	138.1	r	138.2 p
Percent change	-.5	.2	-.3	-.3	.4	.1	r	.1 p
Diffusion index	25.0	65.0	45.0	30.0	50.0	60.0		40.0
Coincident index	122.7	122.9	r	123.1	123.4	123.5	r	123.8 p
Percent change	.2	.2	.2	r	.2	.1	r	.2 p
Diffusion index	50.0	75.0	100.0	100.0	50.0	87.5		100.0
Lagging index	123.3	124.1	123.7	r	123.8	r	124.1	p
Percent change	.4	.6	-.3	r	.1	r	.2	p
Diffusion index	57.1	85.7	28.6		50.0	42.9	35.7	57.1
Coincident-lagging ratio	99.4	99.0	r	99.5	r	99.6	r	99.5 p
	Nov to	Dec to	Jan to	Feb to	Mar to	Apr to	May to	
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	
Leading index								
Percent change	-.2	-.2	-.9	-.7	-.6	-.4		.2
Diffusion index	60.0	50.0	45.0	50.0	55.0	55.0		50.0
Coincident index								
Percent change	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0		1.1
Diffusion index	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0
Lagging index								
Percent change	1.1	1.8	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2		1.0
Diffusion index	57.1	71.4	57.1	71.4	57.1	78.6		57.1

p Preliminary. r Revised (noted only for index levels and one-month percent changes). c Corrected.

CALCULATION NOTE: The diffusion indexes measure the proportion of the components that are rising. Components that rise more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 1.0, components that change less than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.5, and components that fall more than 0.05 percent are given a value of 0.0.

The full history of composite and diffusion indexes is available by subscription on our web site at www.conference-board.org/economics/bci

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Table 2.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Leading Index

Component	2006						
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Leading index component data							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg. (hours).....	41.2	41.3	41.4	41.3	41.1	41.2	41.1
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*.	333.5	308.8	312.4	315.7	313.9	311.4	328.5
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.).....	143,834	143,859 r	141,491	142,100	137,787 r	138,681 r	138,603 **
Vendor performance--slower deliveries diffusion index (percent).....	57.6	55.0	55.4	55.0	54.1	50.2	52.8
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods (mil. 1982 dol.).....	47,980	48,710 r	48,317	47,487	58,811 r	50,112 r	53,340 **
Building permits (thous.).....	1,946	1,869	1,763	1,727	1,638	1,553 r	1,506
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) (index: 1941-43=10).....	1,290.00	1,253.12	1,260.24	1,278.72	1,317.81	1,363.38	1,388.63
Money supply, M2 (bil. chn. 2000 dol.)....	5,920.5	5,937.7	5,937.5 r	5,942.1 r	5,975.5 r	6,041.2 r	6,073.4 **
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	0.17	0.12	-0.15	-0.37	-0.53	-0.52	-0.65
Index of consumer expectations (c) (1966:1=100).....	68.2	72.0	72.5	68.0	78.2	84.8	83.2
LEADING INDEX (1996=100).....	137.9	138.2	137.8	137.4	138.0	138.1 r	138.2 p
Percent change from preceding month..	-0.5	0.2	-0.3	-0.3	0.4	0.1 r	0.1 p
Leading index net contributions							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg.....	....	.06	.06	-.06	-.12	.06	-.06
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance.....	....	.26	-.04	-.03	.02	.03	-.18
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials.....	....	.00	-.12	.03	-.23	.05	.00 **
Vendor performance--slower deliveries diffusion index.....	....	-.18	.03	-.03	-.06	-.27	.18
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods.....	....	.03	-.02	-.03	.40	-.30	.12 **
Building permits.....	....	-.11	-.16	-.05	-.14	-.14	-.08
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c)	....	-.11	.02	.05	.11	.13	.07
Money supply, M2.....	....	.10	.00	.03	.20	.39	.19 **
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	....	.01	-.02	-.04	-.05	-.05	-.07
Index of consumer expectations (c)	....	.11	.01	-.13	.30	.19	-.05

p Preliminary. r Revised. c Corrected.

* Inverted series; a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution to the index.

** Statistical Imputation (See page 3 for more details)

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CALCULATION NOTE--The percent change in the index does not always equal the sum of the net contributions of the individual components (because of rounding effects and base value differences).

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Table 3.--Data and Net Contributions for Components of the Coincident and Lagging Indexes

Component	2006						
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Coincident index component data							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands).....	135,117	135,251	135,374	135,604	135,807 r	135,886 r	136,018
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2000 dol.).....	8,028.1 r	8,051.6 r	8,066.2 r	8,080.9 r	8,151.1 r	8,211.7 r	8,216.0 **
Industrial production (index: 2002=100).....	110.875	111.859	112.307	112.521 r	112.102 r	112.123 r	112.323
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2000 dol.).....	951,920	946,268	948,916 r	953,712 r	948,973 r	952,437 r	954,122 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (1996=100).....	122.7	122.9 r	123.1	123.4	123.5 r	123.8 p	124.0 p
Percent change from preceding month....	0.2	0.2	0.2 r	0.2	0.1 r	0.2 p	0.2 p
Coincident index net contributions							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls.....	....	.05	.05	.09	.08	.03	.05
Personal income less transfer payments...	....	.06	.04	.04	.18	.15	.01 **
Industrial production.....	....	.13	.06	.03	-.05	.00	.03
Manufacturing and trade sales.....	....	-.07	.03	.06	-.06	.04 **	.02 **
Lagging index component data							
Average duration of unemployment (w eeks)*.....	17.1	16.2	17.3	17.4	17.4	16.5	16.4
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2000 dol.).....	1.310	1.321	1.320	1.318 r	1.329 r	1.328 r	1.329 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate)	1.4 r	.2 r	-3.4 r	-6.00 r	-6.2 r	-5.5 r	-4.8 **
Average prime rate charged by banks (percent).....	7.93	8.02	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding (mil. chn. 2000 dol.).....	602,827 r	607,402 r	603,805 r	609,309 r	608,380 r	602,573 r	617,681 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income (percent).....	21.60 r	21.63 r	21.67 r	21.69 r	21.62 r	21.51 r	21.52 **
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.4	3.3
LAGGING INDEX (1996=100).....	123.3	124.1	123.7 r	123.8 r	124.1 r	124.3 p	124.9 p
Percent change from preceding month....	.4	.6	-.3 r	.1 r	.2	.2 p	.5 p
Lagging index net contributions							
Average duration of unemployment.....	....	.20	-.24	-.02	.00	.20	.02
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales.....	....	.10	-.01	-.02	.10	-.01 **	.01 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg.....	....	-.07	-.22	-.16	-.01	.04	.04 **
Average prime rate charged by banks.....	....	.02	.06	.00	.00	.00	.00
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding.....	....	.09	-.07	.10	-.02	-.11	.28 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income.....	....	.03	.04	.02	-.06	-.10	.01 **
Change in CPI for services.....	....	.06	-.06	.02	.08	-.06	-.02

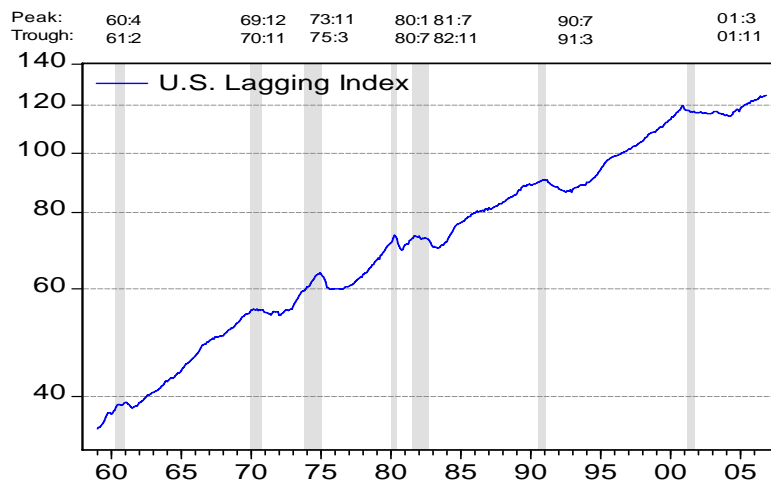
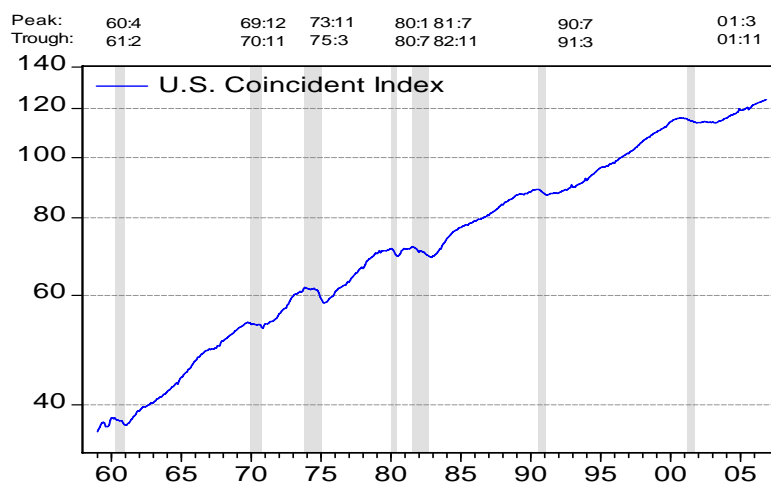
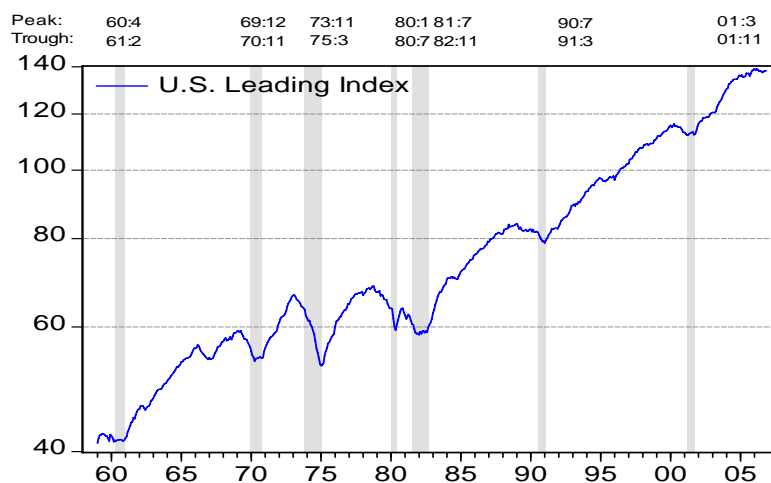
CPI Consumer Price Index. For additional notes see table 2.

* Inverted series; a negative change in this component makes a positive contribution to the index.

** Statistical Imputation (See page 3 for more details)

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U.S. Composite Indexes (1996=100)



Shaded areas represent recessions.

Source: The Conference Board