



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Friday, August 17, 2012

The Conference Board®
U.S. Business Cycle IndicatorsSM
THE CONFERENCE BOARD LEADING ECONOMIC INDEX®
(LEI) FOR THE UNITED STATES
AND RELATED COMPOSITE ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR JULY 2012

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. increased 0.4 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index®** (CEI) increased 0.3 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index®** (LAG) increased 0.4 percent in July.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in July after declining in the previous month. Positive contributions from initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), building permits and all of the financial components offset negative contributions from new orders and consumer expectations for business conditions. In the six-month period ending July 2012, the leading economic index increased by 1.2 percent (about a 2.3 percent annual rate), faster than the growth of 0.3 percent (about a 0.6 percent annual rate) during the previous six months. However, the strengths among the leading indicators have become somewhat less widespread in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, edged up in July. The index rose by 1.4 percent (about a 2.7 percent annual rate) between January and July 2012, slightly slower than the increase of 1.8 percent (about a 3.6 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. However, the strengths among the coincident indicators have remained very widespread, with all components advancing over the past six months. The lagging economic index continued to increase, but at a faster pace than the CEI, and as a result the coincident-to-lagging ratio declined marginally. Real GDP expanded at an annual rate of 1.5 percent in the second quarter of 2012, after increasing by 2.0 percent (annual rate) in the first quarter.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. has been flat since May of this year. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. continued to rise through July, with widespread gains in the coincident indicators. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes and their components suggest that while the expansion in economic activity will continue, its pace will remain slow in the near term.

LEADING INDICATORS. Seven of the ten indicators that make up The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in July. The positive contributors – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), building permits, the interest rate spread, stock prices, the Leading Credit Index™ (inverted), manufacturers' new orders for nondefense capital goods excluding aircraft*, and manufacturers' new orders for consumer goods and materials*. The negative contributors – beginning with the largest negative contributor – were ISM® new orders index and average consumer expectations for business conditions. Average weekly manufacturing hours held steady in July.

The LEI for the United States now stands at 95.8 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index decreased 0.4 percent in June and increased 0.3 percent in May. During the six-month span through July,

The next release is scheduled for September 20, Thursday at 10 A.M. ET.

the leading economic index increased 1.2 percent, with six out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 60 percent).

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

The CEI now stands at 105.1 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.2 percent in June and increased 0.5 percent in May. During the six-month period through July, the coincident economic index increased 1.4 percent, with all four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 100 percent).

LAGGING INDICATORS. The lagging economic index stands at 116.0 (2004=100) in July, with four of the seven components advancing. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were commercial and industrial loans outstanding*, average duration of unemployment (inverted), change in index of labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing*, and the ratio of consumer installment credit to personal income*. The negative contributor was the change in CPI for services. The ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales* and average prime rate charged by banks held steady in July. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 0.1 percent in June and increased 0.3 percent in May.

DATA AVAILABILITY AND NOTES.

The data series used to compute **The Conference Board Leading Economic Index**[®] (LEI) for the U.S., **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index**[®] (CEI) for the U.S. and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index**[®] (LAG) for the U.S. and reported in the tables in this release are those available “as of” 8:30 am ET on August 16, 2012. Some series are estimated as noted below.

* Series in The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. based on our estimates are manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials, manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft. Series in The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. that are based on our estimates are personal income less transfer payments and manufacturing and trade sales. Series in The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. that are based on our estimates are manufacturing and trade inventories to sales ratio, change in labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing, consumer installment credit to income ratio, and the personal consumption expenditure deflator 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 commercial and industrial loans outstanding) now incorporates the current month’s consumer price index when it is available before the release of The Conference Board LEI for the U.S.

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THE CYCLICAL INDICATOR APPROACH. The composite economic indexes are the key elements in an analytic system designed to signal peaks and troughs in the business cycle. The leading, coincident, and lagging economic indexes are essentially composite averages of several 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 Conference Board LEI for the U.S. have occurred before those in aggregate economic activity, while the cyclical turning points in The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. have occurred at about the same time as those in aggregate economic activity. The cyclical turning points in The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. generally have occurred after those in aggregate economic activity.

U.S. Composite Economic Indexes: Components and Standardization Factors

<u>Leading Economic Index</u>	<u>Factor</u>
1 Average weekly hours, manufacturing	0.2781
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0334
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0811
4 ISM [®] new orders index	0.1651
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	0.0356
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0272
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0381
8 <i>Leading Credit Index</i> [™]	0.0794
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1069
10 Avg. consumer expectations for business conditions	0.1551

<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.2597
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.1357
3 Industrial production	0.0728
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.5318

<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>	
1 Average duration of unemployment	0.0361
2 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1211
3 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0587
4 Average prime rate	0.2815
5 Commercial and industrial loans	0.0970
6 Consumer installment credit to personal income ratio	0.2101
7 Consumer price index for services	0.1955

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 2012, and all historical values for the three composite economic indexes were revised at this time to reflect the changes. (Under normal circumstances, updates to the leading, coincident, and lagging economic indexes only incorporate revisions to data over the past six months.) The factors for The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. were calculated using 1984-2010 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 economic indexes was 1959-2010. 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: <http://www.conference-board.org/data/bci.cfm>

The trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LEI for the U.S is -0.0321 (over the 1984 – present) and 0.1145 (over the 1959-1983 period), and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S is 0.1786.

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 economic 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.

NOTICES

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. news release schedule for 2012:

Thursday, September 20, 2012	For August 2012 data
Thursday, October 18, 2012	For September 2012 data
Wednesday, November 21, 2012	For October 2012 data
Thursday, December 20, 2012	For November 2012 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

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Table 1. Summary of U.S. Composite Economic Indexes

	2012						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Leading index	94.7	95.4	95.6	95.5	95.8 r	95.4 r	95.8 p
Percent change	.0	.7	.2	-.1	.3 r	-.4 r	.4 p
Diffusion index	60	80	50	50	60	30	75
Coincident index	103.7	104.0 r	103.8 r	104.1	104.6 r	104.8 r	105.1 p
Percent change	.0	.3 r	-.2	.3 r	.5 r	.2	.3 p
Diffusion index	100	100	50	100	100	87.5	100
Lagging index	113.8	113.9	114.4 r	115.0 r	115.4 r	115.5	116.0 p
Percent change	.5	.1	.4 r	.5 r	.3	.1 r	.4 p
Diffusion index	71.4	50	71.4	78.6	50	42.9	71.4
Coincident-lagging ratio	91.1	91.3 r	90.7 r	90.5 r	90.6 r	90.7 r	90.6 p
	Jul to	Aug to	Sep to	Oct to	Nov to	Dec to	Jan to
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Leading index							
Percent change	0.3	1.8	2.6	1.8	1.8	0.7	1.2
Diffusion index	40	80	70	80	90	60	60
Coincident index							
Percent change	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.4
Diffusion index	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Lagging index							
Percent change	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.9
Diffusion index	64.3	57.1	78.6	78.6	64.3	64.3	78.6

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 contributing positively. 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 <https://www.conference-board.org/data/bcicountry.cfm?cid=1>

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Table 2. Data and Net Contributions for Components of the U.S. Leading Economic Index

Component	2012						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
U.S. Leading Economic Index component data							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg. (hours).....	41.8	41.9	41.6	41.7	41.6	41.7	41.7
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*.....	376.9	367.3	363.3	384.3	378.7	386.4	366.1
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.).....	128,153	128,968	128,693	129,437	129,823	128,247	128,559 **
ISM New Orders Index (percent).....	57.6	54.9	54.5	58.2	60.1	47.8	48.0
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft (mil. 1982 dol.).....	39935	41006	40004	39367	40211	39437	39754 **
Building permits (thous.).....	684	707	769	723	784	760	812
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) (index: 1941-43=10).....	1,300.58	1,352.49	1,389.24	1,386.43	1,341.27	1,323.48	1,359.78
Leading Credit Index™ (std. dev. ¹)*.....	-0.73	-1.12	-1.07	-0.60	0.22	-0.47	-0.67
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	1.89	1.87	2.04	1.91	1.64	1.46	1.37
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions (std. dev. ¹).....	-0.64	-0.33	-0.49	-0.43	-0.37	-0.80	-0.66
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	94.7	95.4	95.6	95.5	95.8	95.4	95.8 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	0.0	0.7	0.2	-0.1	0.3	-0.4	0.4 p
U.S. Leading Economic Index net contributions							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg.....	....	.07	-.20	.07	-.07	.07	.00
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance.....	....	.09	.04	-.19	.05	-.07	.18
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials.....	....	.05	-.02	.05	.02	-.10	.02 **
ISM New Orders Index.....	....	-.01	-.02	.06	.10	-.16	-.15
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft.....	....	.09	-.09	-.06	.08	-.07	.03 **
Building permits.....	....	.09	.23	-.17	.22	-.08	.18
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c).....	....	.15	.10	-.01	-.13	-.05	.10
Leading Credit Index™.....	....	.09	.09	.05	-.02	.04	.05
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	....	.20	.22	.20	.18	.16	.15
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions.....	....	-.05	-.08	-.07	-.06	-.12	-.10

p Preliminary. r Revised. c Corrected.

¹ Standard deviation above or below the mean

* Inverted series; a negative change or value 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 U.S. Coincident Economic Index and U.S. Lagging Economic Index

Component	2012						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
U.S. Coincident Economic Index component data							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands).....	132,461	132,720	132,863	132,931	133,018	133,082	133,245
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	9,394	9,432	9,455	9,477	9,528	9,569	9,601 **
Industrial production (index: 2007=100).....	96.593	97.051	96.411	97.177	97.284	97.410	98.040
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	1,016,416	1,019,658	1,015,160	1,018,435	1,027,110	1,029,052 **	1,031,960 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	103.7	104.0	103.8	104.1	104.6	104.8	105.1 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	0.0	0.3	-0.2	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.3 p
U.S. Coincident Economic Index net contributions							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls.....	....	.05	.03	.01	.02	.01	.03
Personal income less transfer payments.....	....	.05	.03	.03	.07	.06	.05 **
Industrial production.....	....	.03	-.05	.06	.01	.01	.05
Manufacturing and trade sales.....	....	.17	-.24	.17	.45	.10 **	.15 **
U.S. Lagging Economic Index component data							
Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*.....	40.1	40.0	39.4	39.1	39.7	39.9	38.8
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2005 dol.).....	1.327	1.328	1.335	1.334	1.328	1.329 **	1.329 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	-6.2	-5.4	-1.9	-1.7	-1.4 **	-1.1 **	-0.8 **
Average prime rate charged by banks (percent).....	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding (mil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	797,819	796,690	790,349	813,416	827,695	822,662	837,980 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income (percent).....	19.21	19.15	19.16	19.19	19.26	19.22	19.24 **
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	2.4	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.7
LAGGING INDEX (2004=100).....	113.8	113.9	114.4	115.0	115.4	115.5	116.0 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	.5	.1	.4	.5	.3	.1	.4 p
U.S. Lagging Economic Index net contributions							
Average duration of unemployment.....	....	.01	.05	.03	-.05	-.02	.10
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales.....	....	.01	.06	-.01	-.05	.01 **	.00 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg.....	....	.05	.21	.01	.02 **	.02 **	.02 **
Average prime rate charged by banks.....	....	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding.....	....	-.01	-.08	.28	.17	-.06	.18 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income.....	....	-.07	.01	.03	.08	-.04	.02 **
Change in CPI for services.....	....	-.08	.00	.02	-.02	.00	-.06

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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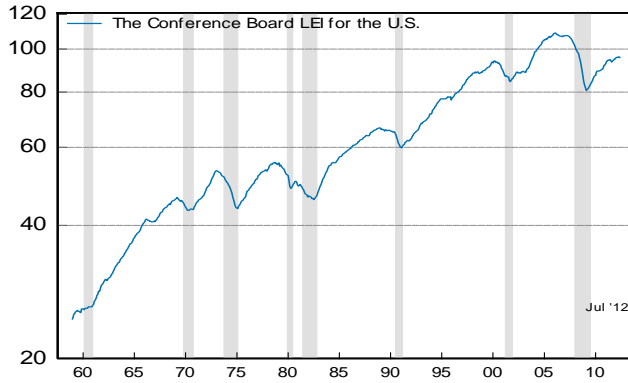
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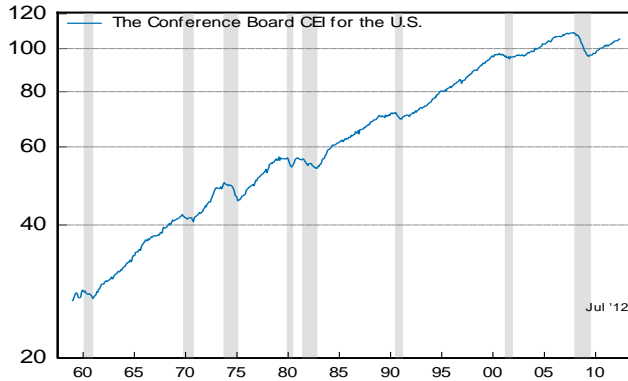
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U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2004=100)

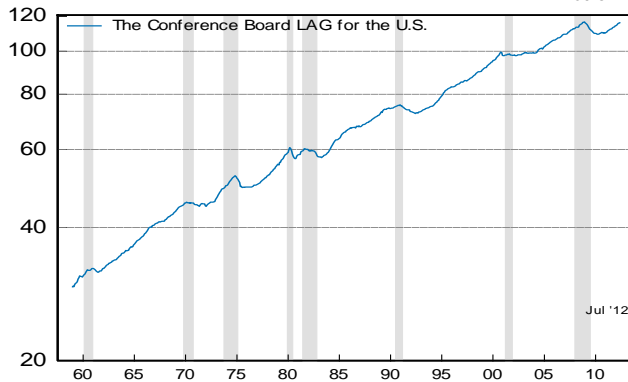
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 Trough: 61:2 70:11 75:3 80:7 82:11 91:3 01:11 09:6



Peak: 60:4 69:12 73:11 80:1 81:7 90:7 01:3 07:12
 Trough: 61:2 70:11 75:3 80:7 82:11 91:3 01:11 09:6



Peak: 60:4 69:12 73:11 80:1 81:7 90:7 01:3 07:12
 Trough: 61:2 70:11 75:3 80:7 82:11 91:3 01:11 09:6



Shaded areas represent recessions as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

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