



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Thursday, January 21, 2010

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 DECEMBER 2009**

This month's release incorporates annual benchmark revisions to the composite indexes, which bring them up-to-date with revisions in the source data. These revisions do not change the cyclical properties of the indexes. 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 benchmark revision is made and the entire histories of the indexes are recomputed. As a result, the revised indexes will no longer be directly comparable to those issued prior to the benchmark revision.

In addition to annual benchmark revisions, The Conference Board (TCB) continuously monitors the behavior and performance of the composite indexes and their components and makes changes from time to time (See BCI Handbook 2001 <http://www.conference-board.org/publications/describebook.cfm?id=852>, for a description of the previous comprehensive revision that TCB undertook in 1996.) These occasional comprehensive benchmark revisions are consistent with long-standing TCB policy to make changes to the indexes when research indicates substantial improvements are possible. These changes are the result of research at TCB and regular consultations with its Business Cycle Indicators Advisory Panel and other experts. Details of these changes will be announced in advance in the technical notes and posted on our website when they are available.

For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.conference-board.org/economics/bci/> or contact us at indicators@conference-board.org.

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index™ (LEI) for the U.S. increased 1.1 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index™ (CEI)** increased 0.1 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index™ (LAG)** decreased 0.2 percent in December.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased sharply again in December. The interest rate spread component followed by housing permits made the largest positive contributions to the index this month. The six-month growth rate in the index was 5.2 percent (about a 10.8 percent annual rate) in the period through December, and it remains substantially higher than earlier in the year. In addition, the strengths among the leading indicators have remained very widespread in recent months.

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

- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. also increased in December and it has gained in five of the last six months. Industrial production made a large positive contribution to the index, more than offsetting the decline in employment in December. Between June and December, the index has grown by 0.6 percent (1.2 percent annual rate). In December, the lagging economic index continued to decrease, and with the coincident economic index rising slightly, the coincident-to-lagging ratio increased further. Meanwhile, real GDP expanded at a 2.2 percent annual rate in the third quarter, its first increase since the second quarter of 2008.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. has risen steadily for nine months, and it has now risen above its most recent peak of March 2006. After steep gains earlier in 2009, its six-month growth rate has stabilized somewhat in recent months. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. has begun to improve slightly since July 2009, after a steep decline from December 2007 to June 2009. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes suggests that economic conditions should continue to improve in the near term.

LEADING INDICATORS. Eight of the ten indicators that make up The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in December. The positive contributors – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were interest rate spread, building permits, average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), stock prices, index of consumer expectations, index of supplier deliveries (vendor performance), money supply* and manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods*. The average workweek of production workers and manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials* held steady in December.

The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. now stands at 106.4 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 1.0 percent in November and increased 0.3 percent in October. During the six-month span through December, the leading economic index increased 5.2 percent, with eight out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 80 percent).

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. Three the four indicators that make up The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. increased in December. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were industrial production, personal income less transfer payments* and manufacturing and trade sales*. The negative contributor to the index this month was employees on nonagricultural payrolls.

The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. now stands at 99.9 (2004=100). This index increased 0.1 percent in November and increased 0.1 percent in October. During the six-month period through December, the coincident economic index increased 0.6 percent, with three out of four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 75 percent).

LAGGING INDICATORS. The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. stands at 108.5 (2004=100) in December, with one of the seven components advancing. The only positive contributor to the index this month was change in labor cost per unit of output*. The negative contributors – beginning with the largest negative contributor – were commercial and industrial loans outstanding*, average duration of unemployment (inverted), and ratio of consumer installment credit to personal income*. The ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales*, change in CPI for services and average prime rate charged by banks* held steady in December. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index decreased 0.5 percent in November and decreased 0.2 percent in October.

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” 12 Noon on January 20, 2010. 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, and the personal consumption expenditure used to deflate the money supply. 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 inventories to sales ratio, consumer installment credit to income ratio, change in labor cost per unit of output, 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 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 4 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 | 0.2725 |
| 2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance | 0.0322 |
| 3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials | 0.0810 |
| 4 Index of supplier deliveries – vendor performance | 0.0715 |
| 5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods | 0.0191 |
| 6 Building permits, new private housing units | 0.0263 |
| 7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks | 0.0373 |
| 8 Money supply, M2 | 0.3248 |
| 9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds | 0.1058 |
| 10 Index of consumer expectations | 0.0295 |
| <u>Coincident Economic Index</u> | |
| 1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls | 0.4949 |
| 2 Personal income less transfer payments | 0.2615 |
| 3 Industrial production | 0.1346 |
| 4 Manufacturing and trade sales | 0.1090 |
| <u>Lagging Economic Index</u> | |
| 1 Average duration of unemployment | 0.0356 |
| 2 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade | 0.1192 |
| 3 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing | 0.0631 |
| 4 Average prime rate | 0.2731 |
| 5 Commercial and industrial loans | 0.1071 |
| 6 Consumer installment credit to personal income ratio | 0.2117 |
| 7 Consumer price index for services | 0.1902 |

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 2010, 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 1984-2008 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 1959-2008. 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 Conference Board LEI for the U.S is -0.0042, and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S is 0.1524.

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.

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index™ (LEI) for the U.S. news release schedule for 2010:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Thursday, February 18, 2010 | for January 2010 data |
| Thursday, March 18, 2010 | for February 2010 data |
| Monday, April 19, 2010 | for March 2010 data |
| Thursday, May 20, 2010 | for April 2010 data |
| Thursday, June 17, 2010 | for May 2010 data |
| Thursday, July 22, 2010 | for June 2010 data |
| Thursday, August 19, 2010 | for July 2010 data |
| Thursday, September 23, 2010 | for August 2010 data |
| Thursday, October 21, 2010 | for September 2010 data |
| Thursday, November 18, 2010 | for October 2010 data |
| Friday, December 17, 2010 | for November 2010 data |

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

About The Conference Board

The Conference Board is a global, independent business membership and research association working in the public interest. Our mission is unique: To provide the world's leading organizations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance *and* better serve society. The Conference Board is a non-advocacy, not-for-profit entity holding 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status in the United States.

AVAILABLE FROM THE CONFERENCE BOARD

| | |
|--|--|
| U.S. Business Cycle Indicators Internet Subscription <i>(Includes monthly release, data, charts and commentary)</i> | \$ 635 per year (1 user) |
| Individual Data Series | \$ 35 per series downloaded |
| Monthly BCI Report <i>(Sample available at http://www.conference-board.org/publications/describeBCI.cfm)</i> | \$ 275 per year |
| BCI Handbook (published 2001) | \$ 20 |
| Corporate Site License | contact Indicators Program at (212) 339-0330 |

Business Cycle Indicators for France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain and the U.K. are available at \$635 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 U.S. Composite Economic Indexes

| | 2009 | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---|
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | |
| Leading index | 101.1 | 102.1 | 102.7 | 103.9 | 104.2 | 105.2 | 106.4 | p |
| Percent change | .9 | 1.0 | .6 | 1.2 | .3 | 1.0 | 1.1 | p |
| Diffusion index | 70.0 | 70.0 | 55.0 | 90.0 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 90.0 | |
| Coincident index | 99.3 | 99.5 | 99.6 | 99.6 | 99.7 | 99.8 | 99.9 | p |
| Percent change | -.4 | .2 | .1 | .0 | .1 | .1 | .1 | p |
| Diffusion index | 0.0 | 75.0 | 25.0 | 62.5 | 75.0 | 87.5 | 75.0 | |
| Lagging index | 111.2 | 110.6 | 110.2 | 109.5 | 109.3 | 108.7 | 108.5 | p |
| Percent change | -.7 | -.5 | -.4 | -.6 | -.2 | -.5 | -.2 | p |
| Diffusion index | 21.4 | 7.1 | 35.7 | 21.4 | 35.7 | 42.9 | 35.7 | |
| Coincident-lagging ratio | 89.3 | 90.0 | 90.4 | 91.0 | 91.2 | 91.8 | 92.1 | p |
| | Dec to | Jan to | Feb to | Mar to | Apr to | May to | Jun to | |
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | |
| Leading index | | | | | | | | |
| Percent change | 2.3 | 3.7 | 4.7 | 6.2 | 5.4 | 5.0 | 5.2 | |
| Diffusion index | 60.0 | 90.0 | 80.0 | 90.0 | 90.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 | |
| Coincident index | | | | | | | | |
| Percent change | -3.7 | -2.4 | -1.6 | -.8 | -.3 | .1 | .6 | |
| Diffusion index | .0 | .0 | .0 | 25.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 75.0 | |
| Lagging index | | | | | | | | |
| Percent change | -3.2 | -3.8 | -3.7 | -3.6 | -3.2 | -2.9 | -2.4 | |
| Diffusion index | .0 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 14.3 | 21.4 | 21.4 | 21.4 | |

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 U.S. Leading Economic Index

| Component | 2009 | | | | | | |
|---|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| U.S. Leading Economic Index component data | | | | | | | |
| Average work week, production workers, mfg. (hours)..... | 39.5 | 39.9 | 39.9 | 40.0 | 40.1 | 40.4 | 40.4 |
| Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*. | 616.1 | 556.5 | 573.0 | 540.3 | 524.4 | 480.5 r | 449.8 |
| Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.)..... | 114,703 | 115,763 | 114,962 | 115,148 | 116,081 r | 116,179 r | 116,236 ** |
| Index of supplier deliveries -- vendor performance (percent)..... | 50.6 | 52.0 | 57.1 | 58.0 | 56.9 | 55.7 | 56.6 |
| Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods (mil. 1982 dol.)..... | 33,660 | 36,131 | 33,176 | 34,325 | 34,843 r | 34,280 r | 34,460 ** |
| Building permits (thous.)..... | 570 | 564 | 580 | 575 | 551 | 589 r | 653 |
| Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) (index: 1941-43=10)..... | 926.12 | 935.82 | 1,009.72 | 1,044.55 | 1,067.66 | 1,088.07 | 1,110.38 |
| Money supply, M2 (bil. chn. 2005 dol.)..... | 7,666.8 | 7,650.0 r | 7,578.2 r | 7,596.0 r | 7,601.5 r | 7,611.6 r | 7,617.6 ** |
| Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds..... | 3.51 | 3.40 | 3.43 | 3.25 | 3.27 | 3.28 | 3.47 |
| Index of consumer expectations (c) (1966:1=100)..... | 69.2 | 63.2 | 65.0 | 73.5 | 68.6 | 66.5 | 68.9 |
| LEADING INDEX (2004=100)..... | 101.1 | 102.1 | 102.7 | 103.9 | 104.2 | 105.2 | 106.4 p |
| Percent change from preceding month.. | 0.9 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 1.1 p |
| U.S. Leading Economic Index net contributions | | | | | | | |
| Average work week, production workers, mfg..... | .... | .27 | .00 | .07 | .07 | .20 | .00 |
| Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance..... | .... | .33 | -.09 | .19 | .10 | .28 | .21 |
| Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials..... | .... | .07 | -.06 | .01 | .07 | .01 | .00 ** |
| Index of supplier deliveries -- (vendor performance)..... | .... | .10 | .36 | .06 | -.08 | -.09 | .06 |
| Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods..... | .... | .14 | -.16 | .07 | .03 | -.03 | .01 ** |
| Building permits..... | .... | -.03 | .07 | -.02 | -.11 | .18 | .27 |
| Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) | .... | .04 | .28 | .13 | .08 | .07 | .08 |
| Money supply, M2..... | .... | -.07 | -.31 | .08 | .02 | .04 | .03 ** |
| Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds..... | .... | .36 | .36 | .34 | .35 | .35 | .37 |
| Index of consumer expectations (c) | .... | -.18 | .05 | .25 | -.14 | -.06 | .07 |

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 U.S. Coincident Economic Index and U.S. Lagging Economic Index

| Component | 2009 | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| U.S. Coincident Economic Index component data | | | | | | | |
| Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands)..... | 131,715 | 131,411 | 131,257 | 131,118 | 130,991 r | 130,995 r | 130,910 |
| Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2005 dol.)..... | 9,075.6 | 9,087.8 r | 9,079.7 r | 9,080.3 r | 9,085.5 r | 9,097.8 r | 9,111.1 ** |
| Industrial production (index: 2002=100)..... | 95.754 | 96.949 r | 98.252 r | 98.880 r | 99.091 r | 99.669 r | 100.304 |
| Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2005 dol.)..... | 915,616 | 925,715 r | 922,752 r | 924,859 r | 928,882 r | 929,479 ** | 930,502 ** |
| COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100)..... | 99.3 | 99.5 | 99.6 | 99.6 | 99.7 | 99.8 p | 99.9 p |
| Percent change from preceding month..... | -0.4 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.1 p | 0.1 p |
| U.S. Coincident Economic Index net contributions | | | | | | | |
| Employees on nonagricultural payrolls..... | .... | -.11 | -.06 | -.05 | -.05 | .00 | -.03 |
| Personal income less transfer payments..... | .... | .04 | -.02 | .00 | .01 | .04 | .04 ** |
| Industrial production..... | .... | .17 | .18 | .09 | .03 | .08 | .09 |
| Manufacturing and trade sales..... | .... | .12 | -.03 | .02 | .05 | .01 ** | .01 ** |
| U.S. Lagging Economic Index component data | | | | | | | |
| Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*..... | 24.4 | 25.3 | 25.2 | 26.5 | 27.2 | 28.6 | 29.1 |
| Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2005 dol.)..... | 1.448 | 1.420 r | 1.409 r | 1.398 r | 1.391 r | 1.391 ** | 1.391 ** |
| Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate)..... | -2.4 r | -2.8 r | -3.8 r | -6.30 r | -5.8 ** | -5.0 ** | -4.3 ** |
| 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.)..... | 800,176 r | 783,277 r | 762,718 r | 745,057 r | 727,871 r | 707,151 r | 691,732 ** |
| Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income (percent)..... | 20.84 r | 20.73 r | 20.65 r | 20.52 r | 20.43 r | 20.20 r | 20.15 ** |
| Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate)..... | .5 | .3 | .5 | .8 | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| LAGGING INDEX (2004=100)..... | 111.2 | 110.6 | 110.2 | 109.5 | 109.3 | 108.7 p | 108.5 p |
| Percent change from preceding month..... | -.7 | -.5 | -.4 | -.6 | -.2 | -.5 p | -.2 p |
| U.S. Lagging Economic Index net contributions | | | | | | | |
| Average duration of unemployment..... | .... | -.13 | .01 | -.18 | -.09 | -.18 | -.06 |
| Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales..... | .... | -.23 | -.09 | -.09 | -.06 | .00 ** | .00 ** |
| Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg..... | .... | -.03 | -.06 | -.16 | .03 ** | .05 ** | .04 ** |
| Average prime rate charged by banks..... | .... | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 |
| Commercial and industrial loans outstanding..... | .... | -.23 | -.28 | -.25 | -.25 | -.31 | -.24 ** |
| Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income..... | .... | -.11 | -.08 | -.13 | -.09 | -.24 | -.05 ** |
| Change in CPI for services..... | .... | -.04 | .04 | .06 | .06 | .02 | .00 |

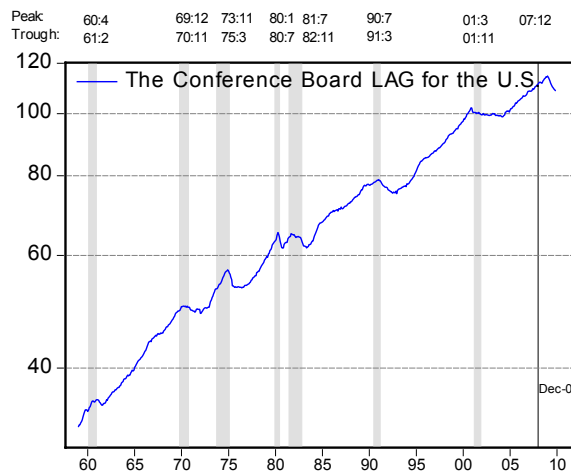
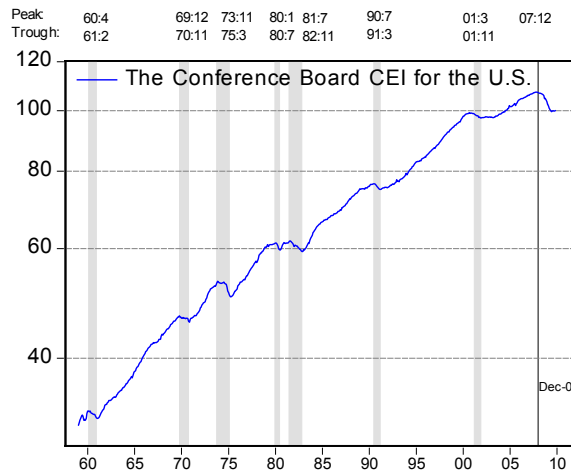
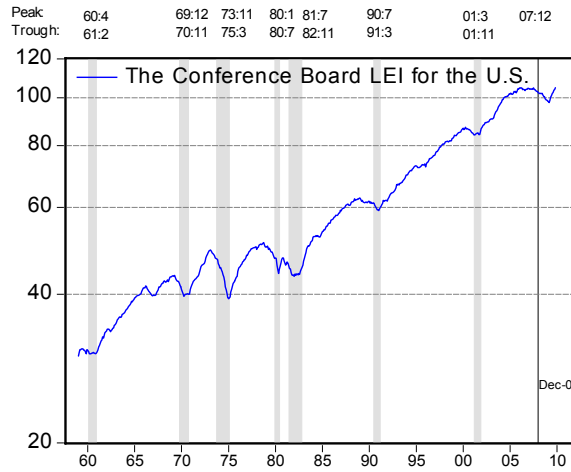
CPI Consumer Price Index. For additional notes see table 2.

* 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 Economic Indexes (2004=100)

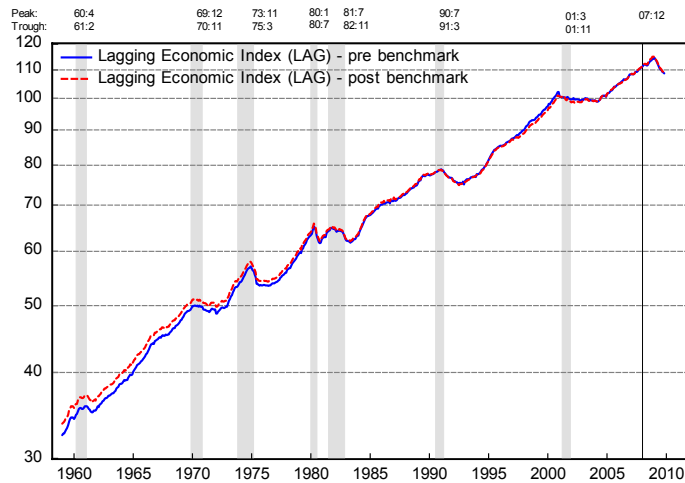
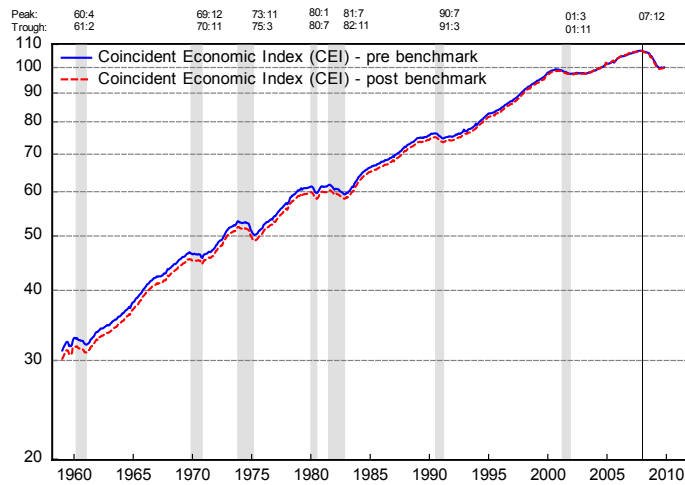
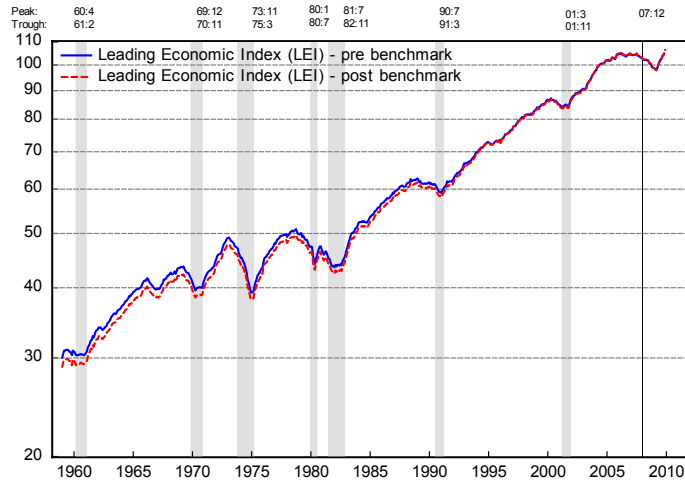


Shaded areas represent recessions.

Source: The Conference Board

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



Shaded areas represent recessions.

Source: The Conference Board