



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Thursday, May 19, 2011

The Conference Board®  
U.S. Business Cycle Indicators<sup>SM</sup>  
**THE CONFERENCE BOARD LEADING ECONOMIC INDEX®**  
**(LEI) FOR THE UNITED STATES**  
**AND RELATED COMPOSITE ECONOMIC INDEXES FOR APRIL 2011**

**The Conference Board Leading Economic Index®** (LEI) for the U.S. decreased 0.3 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index®** (CEI) increased 0.1 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index®** (LAG) increased 0.5 percent in April.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. declined in April, the first decrease since June 2010. A majority of the components contributed negatively to the index this month, led by weekly initial unemployment insurance claims (inverted), supplier deliveries, and building permits. With this month's decline, the six-month change in the index moderated to 3.5 percent (a 7.2 percent annual rate), but it remains above the growth rate of 1.4 percent (a 2.8 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. In addition, the strengths among the leading indicators have been widespread in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, continued to increase in April. The index rose 1.3 percent (a 2.6 percent annual rate) in the six months through April 2011, faster than the growth of 0.7 percent (a 1.4 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. In addition, 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 faster than the CEI, and the coincident-to-lagging ratio fell again, as a result. Meanwhile, real GDP expanded at a 1.7 percent annual rate in the first quarter of the year, slower than the growth of 3.1 percent annual rate in the fourth quarter of 2010.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. decreased in April for the first time since the middle of last year. As a result, its six-month growth rate fell modestly this month, after strengthening since the fourth quarter of 2010. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. has continued to increase, and its six-month growth rate has been fairly stable. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes and their components suggest that economic activity is likely to expand at a moderate pace in the near term.

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

The next release is scheduled for June 17, Friday at 10 A.M. ET.

The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. now stands at 114.0 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.7 percent in March and increased 0.9 percent in February. During the six-month span through April, the leading economic index increased 3.5 percent, with seven out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 70 percent).

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. Three of the four indicators that make up The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. increased in April. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were employees on nonagricultural payrolls, personal income less transfer payments\*, and manufacturing and trade sales\*. Industrial production held steady in April.

The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. now stands at 102.8 (2004=100). This index increased 0.2 percent in March and decreased 0.1 percent in February. During the six-month period through April, the coincident economic index increased 1.3 percent, with all four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 100.0 percent).

LAGGING INDICATORS. The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. stands at 108.8 (2004=100) in April, 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), the change in labor cost per unit of output\* and the change in CPI for services. The negative contributor to the index was the ratio of consumer installment credit to personal income\*. The ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales\* and the average prime rate charged by banks held steady in April. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 0.3 percent in March and increased 0.3 percent in February.

#### DATA AVAILABILITY AND NOTES.

The data series used to compute **The Conference Board Leading Economic Index**<sup>®</sup> (LEI) for the U.S., **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index**<sup>®</sup> (CEI) for the U.S. and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index**<sup>®</sup> (LAG) for the U.S. and reported in the tables in this release are those available “as of” 12 Noon on May 17, 2011. 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 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	0.2737
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0322
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0817
4 Index of supplier deliveries – vendor performance	0.0717
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods	0.0195
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0264
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0370
8 Money supply, M2	0.3230
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1052
10 Index of consumer expectations	0.0296
<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.4881
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.2617
3 Industrial production	0.1375
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1127
<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>	
1 Average duration of unemployment	0.0361
2 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1213
3 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0588
4 Average prime rate	0.2802
5 Commercial and industrial loans	0.0968
6 Consumer installment credit to personal income ratio	0.2117
7 Consumer price index for services	0.1951

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 2011, 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 1984-2009 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 1959-2009. 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 -0.0221, and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S is 0.1590.

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<sup>®</sup>** (LEI) for the U.S. news release schedule for 2011:

Friday, June 17, 2011	For May 2011 data
Thursday, July 21, 2011	For June 2011 data
Thursday, August 18, 2011	For July 2011 data
Thursday, September 22, 2011	For August 2011 data
Thursday, October 20, 2011	For September 2011 data
Friday, November 18, 2011	For October 2011 data
Thursday, December 22, 2011	For November 2011 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

### **About The Conference Board**

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

	2010				2011			
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
Leading index	110.1	111.4 r	112.3	112.5	113.5 r	114.3 r	114.0 p	
Percent change	.2	1.2 r	.8 r	.2	.9 r	.7 r	-.3 p	
Diffusion index	50.0	85.0	80.0	50.0	80.0	70.0	35.0	
Coincident index	101.5	101.7	102.1	102.6	102.5 r	102.7 p	102.8 p	
Percent change	.1	.2	.4	.5	-.1 r	.2 p	.1 p	
Diffusion index	75.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	37.5	87.5	87.5	
Lagging index	108.2	107.9 r	108.0	107.7 r	108.0 r	108.3 p	108.8 p	
Percent change	-.1	-.3 r	.1 r	-.3 r	.3	.3 p	.5 p	
Diffusion index	14.3	21.4	35.7	28.6	50.0	35.7	71.4	
Coincident-lagging ratio	93.8	94.3	94.5	95.3 r	94.9 r	94.8 p	94.5 p	
	Apr to	May to	Jun to	Jul to	Aug to	Sep to	Oct to	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
Leading index								
Percent change	1.4	2.2	3.2	3.2	4.0	4.0	3.5	
Diffusion index	45.0	60.0	70.0	75.0	80.0	80.0	70.0	
Coincident index								
Percent change	.7	.6	.9	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	
Diffusion index	100.0	87.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Lagging index								
Percent change	1.2	.8	.9	.1	.3	.0	.6	
Diffusion index	64.3	64.3	78.6	35.7	35.7	35.7	35.7	

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 <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	2010			2011			
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
U.S. Leading Economic Index component data							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg. (hours).....	41.2	41.2	41.3	41.1	41.3 r	41.5	41.4
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*.	451.2	432.9	417.9	429.6	392.3	390.1	432.4
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.).....	115,377 r	118,169 r	118,910 r	118,373 r	116,438 r	118,679 r	118,469 **
Index of supplier deliveries -- vendor performance (percent).....	52.3	58.1	56.7	58.6	59.4	63.1	60.2
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods (mil. 1982 dol.).....	45017 r	41219 r	39441 r	41899 r	43874 r	45608 r	44836 **
Building permits (thous.).....	555 r	564 r	630 r	568 r	534	574 r	551
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) (index: 1941-43=10).....	1,171.58	1,198.89	1,241.53	1,282.62	1,321.12	1,304.49	1,331.51
Money supply, M2 (bil. chn. 2005 dol.)....	7,852.5	7,880.4 r	7,887.0 r	7,878.4 r	7,894.3 r	7,881.9 r	7,883.7 **
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	2.35	2.57	3.11	3.22	3.42	3.27	3.36
Index of consumer expectations (c) (1966:1=100).....	61.9	64.8	67.5	69.3	71.6	57.9	61.6
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	110.1	111.4 r	112.3	112.5	113.5 r	114.3 r	114.0 p
Percent change from preceding month..	0.2	1.2 r	0.8 r	0.2	0.9 r	0.7 r	-0.3 p
U.S. Leading Economic Index net contributions							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg.....	....	.00	.07	-.13	.13 r	.13 r	-.07
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance.....	....	.13	.11	-.09	.29	.02	-.33
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials.....	....	.20 r	.05 r	-.04 r	-.13 r	.16 r	-.01 **
Index of supplier deliveries -- (vendor performance).....	....	.42	-.10	.14	.06	.27	-.21
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods.....	....	-.17 r	-.09 r	.12	.09 r	.08 r	-.03 **
Building permits.....	....	.04 r	.29 r	-.27 r	-.16 r	.19 r	-.11
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c)	....	.09	.13	.12	.11	-.05	.08
Money supply, M2.....	....	.11	.03	-.04 r	.07	-.05 r	.01 **
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	....	.27	.33	.34	.36	.34	.35
Index of consumer expectations (c)	....	.09	.08	.05	.07	-.41	.11

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 4 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	2010				2011			
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
U.S. Coincident Economic Index component data								
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands).....	130,015	130,108	130,260	130,328	130,563 r	130,784 r	131,028	
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	9,288.0	9,305.7	9,331.8	9,432.2 r	9,435.0 r	9,434.7 r	9,447.6 **	
Industrial production (index: 2007=100).....	91.139 r	91.404 r	92.577 r	92.682 r	92.441 r	93.108 r	93.097	
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	985,111	991,647	997,076	1,006,114 r	994,593 r	997,380 **	998,392 **	
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	101.5	101.7	102.1	102.6	102.5 r	102.7 p	102.8 p	
Percent change from preceding month.....	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	-0.1 r	0.2 p	0.1 p	
U.S. Coincident Economic Index net contributions								
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls.....	....	.03	.06	.03	.09 r	.08	.09	
Personal income less transfer payments.....	....	.05	.07	.28	.01 r	.00	.04 **	
Industrial production.....	....	.04	.18	.02	-.04 r	.10 r	.00	
Manufacturing and trade sales.....	....	.07	.06	.10 r	-.13 r	.03 **	.01 **	
U.S. Lagging Economic Index component data								
Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*.....	33.9	33.9	34.2	36.9	37.1	39.0	38.3	
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2005 dol.).....	1.351	1.336	1.332	1.326 r	1.341 r	1.340 **	1.340 **	
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	.7	-.9 r	-1.3	-.4 r	-1.1 r	-1.3 r	-1.0 **	
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.).....	670,581	658,895 r	667,706 r	666,046 r	670,139 r	691,851 r	705,760 **	
Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income (percent).....	18.94	18.90	18.84	18.67 r	18.65 r	18.60 r	18.59 **	
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.9	
LAGGING INDEX (2004=100).....	108.2	107.9 r	108.0	107.7 r	108.0 r	108.3 p	108.8 p	
Percent change from preceding month.....	-.1	-.3 r	.1 r	-.3 r	.3	.3 p	.5 p	
U.S. Lagging Economic Index net contributions								
Average duration of unemployment.....	....	.00	-.03	-.27	-.02	-.18	.07	
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales.....	....	-.14	-.04	-.05 r	.14 r	-.01 **	.00 **	
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg.....	....	-.09 r	-.02 r	.05 r	-.04 r	-.01 r	.02 **	
Average prime rate charged by banks.....	....	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding.....	....	-.17	.13	-.02	.06	.31	.19 **	
Ratio, consumer installment credit out- standing to personal income.....	....	-.04	-.07	-.19 r	-.02 r	-.06 r	-.01 **	
Change in CPI for services.....	....	.00	.04	.00	.08	.04	.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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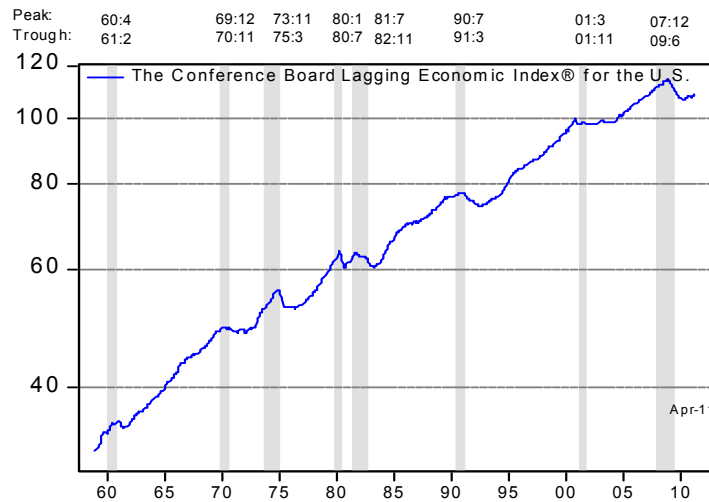
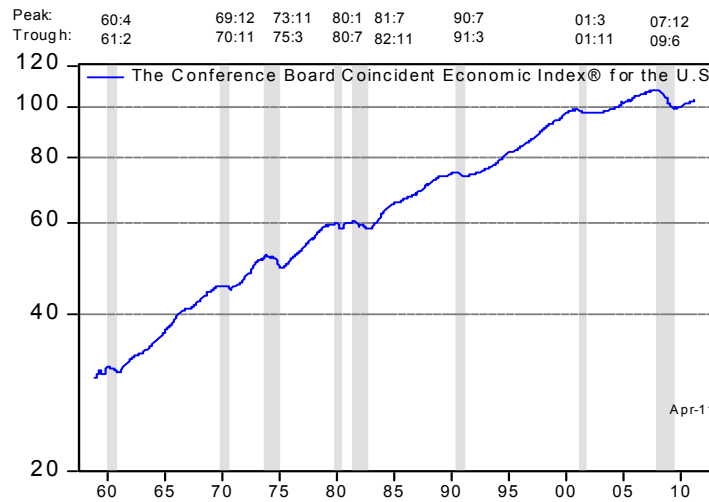
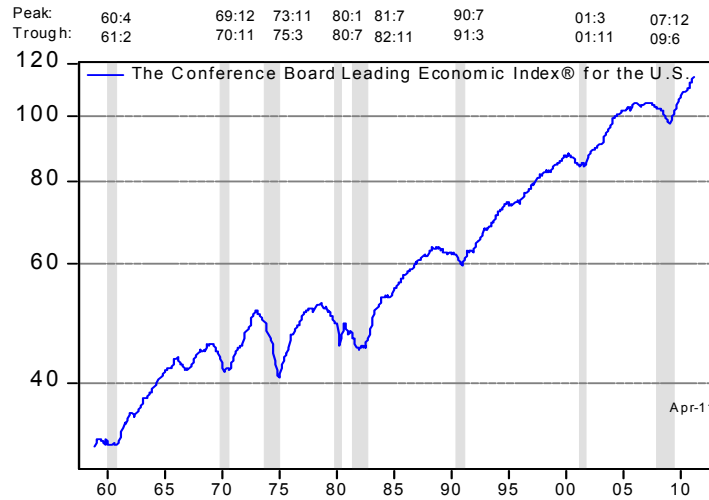
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## U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2004=100)



Shaded areas represent recessions.

Source: The Conference Board