



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Thursday, March 21, 2013

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 FEBRUARY 2013

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. increased 0.5 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index®** (CEI) increased 0.2 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index®** (LAG) increased 0.1 percent in February.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in February for the third consecutive month. Large positive contributions from all the financial components, building permits and average workweek in manufacturing offset the negative contributions from manufacturers' new orders for nondefense capital goods and consumer expectations for business conditions. In the six-month period ending February 2013, the leading economic index increased 2.3 percent (about a 4.6 percent annual rate), an improvement from the contraction of 0.2 percent (about a -0.4 percent annual rate) during the previous six months. In addition, the strengths among the leading indicators have become more widespread in recent months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, rose moderately in February, following a sharp decline in the previous month. The index increased 1.0 percent (about a 1.9 percent annual rate) between August 2012 and February 2013, faster than the growth of 0.4 percent (about a 0.8 percent annual rate) for the previous six months. However, the strengths among the coincident indicators have become somewhat less widespread, with three out of four components advancing over the past six months. The lagging economic index continued to increase almost at the same pace as the CEI, resulting in virtually no change in the coincident-to-lagging ratio. Real GDP expanded at a 0.1 percent annual rate in the fourth quarter of 2012, after increasing 3.1 percent (annual rate) in the third quarter.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. continued to increase, and as a result its six-month growth rate picked up in February. The Conference Board CEI increased slightly following a sharp decline in January and the index appears to have resumed its slow upward trend. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes and their components suggest that the expansion in economic activity should continue, albeit at a slow to moderate pace, in the near term.

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

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

The LEI for the U.S. now stands at 94.8 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.5 percent in January and increased 0.4 percent in December. During the six-month span through February, the leading economic index increased 2.3 percent, with eight out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 80 percent).

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

The CEI now stands at 105.1 (2004=100). Based on revised data, this index decreased 1.0 percent in January and increased 0.9 percent in December. During the six-month period through February, the coincident economic index increased 1.0 percent, with three out of four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 75 percent).

LAGGING INDICATORS. The lagging economic index stands at 118.0 (2004=100) in February, with four of its seven components advancing. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were the change in CPI for services, change in index of labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing*, commercial and industrial loans outstanding*, and the ratio of consumer installment credit to personal income*. The negative contributor was average duration of unemployment (inverted). The ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales* and average prime rate charged by banks held steady in February. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 1.6 percent in January and remained unchanged in December.

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 March 19, 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	0.2747
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0340
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0815
4 ISM [®] new orders index	0.1606
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	0.0390
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0316
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0392
8 <i>Leading Credit Index</i> [™]	0.0829
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1090
10 Avg. consumer expectations for business conditions	0.1475
<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.4956*
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.2525
3 Industrial production	0.1382
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1137
<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>	
1 Average duration of unemployment	0.0364
2 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1228
3 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0589
4 Average prime rate	0.2865
5 Commercial and industrial loans	0.0953
6 Consumer installment credit to personal income ratio	0.2010
7 Consumer price index for services	0.1991

Notes:

* There was a typographical error in one of the standardization factors for the CEI in the January and February 2013 release. The typographical error has been corrected and had no impact on the published figures.

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 2013, 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 1984-2011 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 1959-2011. 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 -0.0676 (over the 1984 – present) and 0.0942 (over the 1959-1983 period), and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S is 0.1576.

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 2013:

Thursday, April 18, 2013	For March 2013 data
Friday, May 17, 2013	For April 2013 data
Thursday, June 20, 2013	For May 2013 data
Thursday, July 18, 2013	For June 2013 data
Thursday, August 22, 2013	For July 2013 data
Thursday, September 19, 2013	For August 2013 data
Friday, October 18, 2013	For September 2013 data
Thursday, November 21, 2013	For October 2013 data
Thursday, December 19, 2013	For November 2013 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

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

	2012					2013	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Leading index	92.7 r	93.2 r	93.4 r	93.4 r	93.8 r	94.3 r	94.8 p
Percent change	-.4 r	.5 r	.2 r	.0 r	.4 r	.5 r	.5 p
Diffusion index	40	50	55	60	60	50	80
Coincident index	104.1 r	104.2 r	104.2 r	105.1 r	106.0 r	104.9 r	105.1 p
Percent change	-.2 r	.1 r	.0 r	.9 r	.9 r	-1.0 r	.2 p
Diffusion index	25	87.5	37.5	100	100	62.5	87.5
Lagging index	115.9 r	115.8 r	116.3 r	116.1 r	116.1 r	117.9 r	118.0 p
Percent change	.4 r	-.1 r	.4 r	-.2 r	.0 r	1.6 r	.1 p
Diffusion index	78.6	42.9	57.1	50	35.7	78.6	64.3
Coincident-lagging ratio	89.8 r	90.0 r	89.6 r	90.5 r	91.3 r	89.0 r	89.1 p
	Feb to	Mar to	Apr to	May to	Jun to	Jul to	Aug to
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Leading index							
Percent change	-0.2	0.1	0.5	0.1	1.2	1.3	2.3
Diffusion index	40	50	60	55	70	65	80
Coincident index							
Percent change	0.4	0.6	0.4	1.1	1.9	0.6	1.0
Diffusion index	87.5	100	75	100	100	75	75
Lagging index							
Percent change	2.7	2.3	1.9	1.2	0.9	2.2	1.8
Diffusion index	92.9	78.6	78.6	64.3	42.9	64.3	64.3

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					2013	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
U.S. Leading Economic Index component data							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg. (hours).....	41.6 r	41.5	41.5	41.6	41.8 r	41.7 r	41.9
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*.....	371.8	375.7 r	367.2	408.2 r	359.0	351.2	349.2
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.).....	128,335 r	129,111 r	130,146 r	131,638 r	130,042 r	129,773 r	129,948 **
ISM New Orders Index (percent).....	48.9	51.7	52.8	51.1	49.7	53.3	57.8
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft (mil. 1982 dol.).....	36906 r	36728 r	37840 r	39026 r	38720 r	41487 r	40415 **
Building permits (thous.).....	801 r	890 r	868 r	900 r	909 r	904 r	946
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c) (index: 1941-43=10).....	1,403.44	1,443.42	1,437.82	1,394.51	1,422.28	1,480.40	1,512.31
Leading Credit Index™ (std. dev. ¹)*.....	-0.84 r	-1.49 r	-0.83 r	-1.11 r	-1.27 r	-2.05 r	-1.63
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	1.55	1.58	1.59	1.49	1.56	1.77	1.83
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions (std. dev. ¹).....	-0.95 r	-0.47 r	-0.18 r	-0.22 r	-1.03 r	-0.97 r	-0.54
LEADING INDEX (2004=100).....	92.7 r	93.2 r	93.4 r	93.4 r	93.8 r	94.3 r	94.8 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	-0.4 r	0.5 r	0.2 r	0.0 r	0.4 r	0.5 r	0.5 p
U.S. Leading Economic Index net contributions							
Average workweek, production workers, mfg.....	....	-.07 r	.00	.07	.13 r	-.07	.13
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance.....	....	-.04 r	.08	-.36 r	.44	.07	.02
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials.....	....	.05 r	.07 r	.09 r	-.10 r	-.02 r	.01 **
ISM New Orders Index.....	....	-.07 r	-.05 r	-.09 r	-.12 r	-.04	.05
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft.....	....	-.02 r	.12 r	.12 r	-.03 r	.27 r	-.10 **
Building permits.....	....	.33 r	-.08 r	.11 r	.03 r	-.02 r	.14
Stock prices, 500 common stocks (c).....	....	.11	-.02 r	-.12	.08	.16	.08
Leading Credit Index™.....	....	.12 r	.07 r	.09 r	.10 r	.17 r	.14
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds.....	....	.17	.17	.16	.17	.19	.20
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions.....	....	-.07 r	-.03	-.03 r	-.15 r	-.14 r	-.08

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					2013	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
U.S. Coincident Economic Index component data							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands).....	133,927 r	134,065 r	134,225 r	134,472 r	134,691 r	134,810 r	135,046
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	9,496 r	9,497 r	9,494 r	9,623 r	9,911 r	9,468 r	9,471 **
Industrial production (index: 2007=100).....	97.007 r	97.215 r	97.021 r	98.484 r	98.746 r	98.791 r	99.497
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2005 dol.).....	1,023,136 r	1,024,575 r	1,022,423 r	1,041,264 r	1,044,672 r	1,048,303 **	1,050,717 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2004=100).....	104.1 r	104.2 r	104.2 r	105.1 r	106.0 r	104.9 r	105.1 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	-0.2 r	0.1 r	0.0 r	0.9 r	0.9 r	-1.0 r	0.2 p
U.S. Coincident Economic Index net contributions							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls.....	....	.05 r	.06 r	.09 r	.08 r	.04 r	.09
Personal income less transfer payments.....	....	.00 r	-.01 r	.34 r	.74 r	-1.15 r	.01 **
Industrial production.....	....	.03 r	-.03 r	.21 r	.04 r	.01 r	.10
Manufacturing and trade sales.....	....	.02 r	-.02 r	.21 r	.04 r	.04 **	.03 **
U.S. Lagging Economic Index component data							
Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*.....	39.3 r	39.6 r	39.9 r	39.7 r	38.1	35.3	36.9
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2005 dol.).....	1.351 r	1.353 r	1.357 r	1.335 r	1.333 r	1.332 **	1.332 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	6.8 r	3.8 r	3.6 r	-0.4 r	-2.6 r	-2.5 **	-2.0 **
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.).....	842,677 r	838,225 r	847,524 r	860,946 r	887,153 r	901,930 r	903,569 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income (percent).....	20.32 r	20.33 r	20.43 r	20.34 r	19.93 r	20.80 r	20.81 **
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate).....	2.1 r	2.2 r	2.2	2.3 r	2.2 r	2.7 r	2.9
LAGGING INDEX (2004=100).....	115.9 r	115.8 r	116.3 r	116.1 r	116.1 r	117.9 r	118.0 p
Percent change from preceding month.....	.4 r	-.1 r	.4 r	-.2 r	.0 r	1.6 r	.1 p
U.S. Lagging Economic Index net contributions							
Average duration of unemployment.....	....	-.03 r	-.03 r	.02 r	.15	.28	-.16
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales.....	....	.02 r	.04 r	-.20 r	-.02 r	-.01 **	.00 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg.....	....	-.18 r	-.01 r	-.24 r	-.13 r	.01 **	.03 **
Average prime rate charged by banks.....	....	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding.....	....	-.05 r	.11 r	.15 r	.29 r	.16 r	.02 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income.....	....	.01 r	.10 r	-.09 r	-.41 r	.86 r	.01 **
Change in CPI for services.....	....	.02 r	.00	.02 r	-.02 r	.10 r	.04

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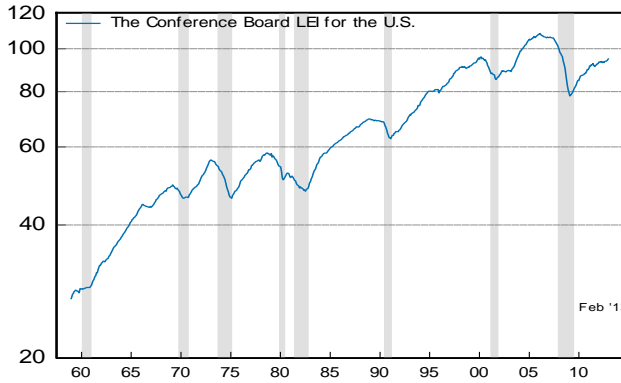
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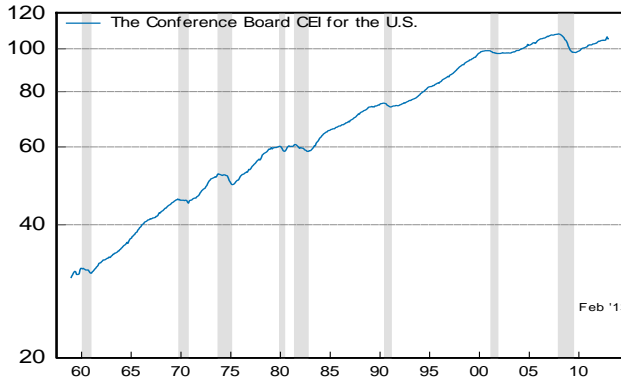
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U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2004=100)

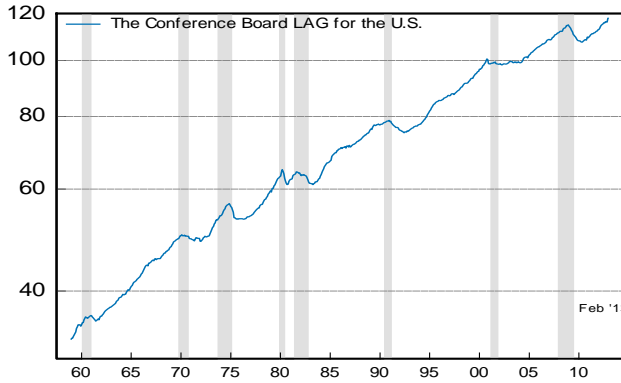
Peak: 60:4 69:12 73:11 80:1 81:7 90:7 01:3 07:12
 Trough: 61:2 70:11 75:3 80:7 82:11 91:3 01:11 09:6



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

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