



THE CONFERENCE BOARD

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Thursday, March 17, 2016

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 2016**

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. increased 0.1 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index® (CEI)** increased 0.1 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index® (LAG)** increased 0.4 percent in February.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. edged up in February, driven mostly by large positive contributions from initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted) and the yield spread. In the six-month period ending February 2016, the leading economic index increased by just 0.3 percent (about a 0.7 percent annual rate), much slower than the growth of 2.0 percent (about a 4.0 percent annual rate) during the previous six months. Despite a more modest pace of growth, the strengths among the leading indicators have remained slightly more widespread than the weaknesses.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, increased slightly in February. The coincident economic index increased 0.9 percent (about a 1.8 percent annual rate) between August 2015 and February 2016, the same rate of growth as in the previous six months. In addition, the strengths among the coincident indicators have remained widespread. The lagging economic index increased at a faster rate than the CEI. As a result, the coincident-to-lagging ratio declined slightly. Real GDP expanded 1.0 percent (annual rate) in the last quarter of 2015, after increasing 2.0 percent (annual rate) in the third quarter.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased slightly in February, but the pace of growth has eased compared to six months ago. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. has been rising at a slow and steady pace. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes and their components suggest that the expansion in economic activity should continue in the near term, albeit at a moderate pace.

LEADING INDICATORS. Four 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 average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), the interest rate spread, the Leading Credit Index™ (inverted), and manufacturers' new orders for consumer goods and materials*. The negative contributors – beginning with the largest negative contributor – were building permits, the ISM® new orders index, average consumer expectations for business conditions, stock prices, and manufacturers' new orders for nondefense capital goods excluding aircraft*. Average weekly manufacturing hours held steady in February.

The LEI for the U.S. increased 0.1 percent and now stands at 123.2 (2010=100). Based on revised data, this index decreased 0.2 percent in January and decreased 0.3 percent in December. Over the six-month span through February, the leading economic index increased 0.3 percent, with six out of ten components

The next release is scheduled for April 21, 2016, Thursday at 10 A.M. ET
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advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 60 percent).

COINCIDENT INDICATORS. Three of the four indicators that make up The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. increased in February. 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*. The negative contributor was industrial production.

The CEI increased 0.1 percent and now stands at 113.3 (2010=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.3 percent in January and increased 0.2 percent in December. During the six-month period through February, the coincident economic index increased 0.9 percent, with three out of four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 75 percent).

LAGGING INDICATORS. The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index for the U.S. increased 0.4 percent and stands at 120.4 (2010=100) in February, with three of its seven components advancing. The positive contributors to the index – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were commercial and industrial loans outstanding*, the change in CPI for services and the change in the index of labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing*. The negative contributor was the average duration of unemployment (inverted), while the ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales*, the average prime rate charged by banks and the ratio of consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income* held steady in February. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 0.1 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” 9:15 am ET on March 16, 2016. 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 and 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, the 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	0.2741
2	Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0329
3	Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0822
4	ISM [®] new orders index	0.1594
5	Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	0.0409
6	Building permits, new private housing units	0.0310
7	Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0397
8	<i>Leading Credit Index</i> [™]	0.0824
9	Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1115
10	Avg. consumer expectations for business conditions	0.1459
<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>		
1	Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.5297
2	Personal income less transfer payments	0.2035
3	Industrial production	0.1472
4	Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1197
<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>		
1	Average duration of unemployment	0.0376
2	Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1258
3	Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0502
4	Average prime rate	0.2993
5	Commercial and industrial loans	0.0960
6	Consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income ratio	0.1840
7	Consumer price index for services	0.2071

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 with the release in January 2016, 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 May 1990-December 2014 as the sample period for measuring volatility. A separate set of factors for the February 1959 - December 1977, January 1978 - December 1983 and January 1984 – April 1990 periods are available upon request. The primary sample period for the coincident and lagging economic indexes was February 1959 – December 2014. 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 -0.0771 (over the 1984 – present) and 0.0892 (over the 1959-1983 period), and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S is 0.1503.

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 2016:

Thursday, April 21, 2016	For March 2016 data
Thursday, May 19, 2016	For April 2016 data
Thursday, June 23, 2016	For May 2016 data
Thursday, July 21, 2016	For June 2016 data
Thursday, August 18, 2016	For July 2016 data
Thursday, September 22, 2016	For August 2016 data
Thursday, October 20, 2016	For September 2016 data
Friday, November 18, 2016	For October 2016 data
Thursday, December 22, 2016	For November 2016 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

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AVAILABLE FROM THE CONFERENCE BOARD

U.S. Business Cycle Indicators Internet Subscription

(Includes monthly release, data and charts)

\$ 735 (for TCB members)/\$ 935 (for non-TCB members) per year (1 user)

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\$ 70 per series downloaded

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(Sample available at <http://www.conference-board.org/data/monthlybci.cfm>)

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Understanding Business Cycles: The Indicators Approach to Forecasting for Agility:

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Business Cycle Indicators for Brazil, China, the Euro Area, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Spain, the U.K, and the U.S. are available at \$ 735 (for TCB members)/\$ 935 (for non-TCB members) per country per year (1 user). Discounts are available accredited academic institutions.

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

	2015					2016					
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb				
Leading index	122.8	122.6	123.2	123.7	r	123.3	r	123.1	r	123.2	p
Percent change	0.0	-0.2	0.5	0.4	r	-0.3	-0.2	0.1	p		
Diffusion index	55	60	75	60	35	40	45				
Coincident index	112.3	112.6	112.7	r	112.7	r	112.9	113.2	113.3	p	
Percent change	0.2	0.3	0.1	r	0.0	0.2	r	0.3	0.1	p	
Diffusion index	87.5	87.5	50	50	75	100	75				
Lagging index	118.5	119.0	119.2	119.8	r	119.8	r	119.9	r	120.4	p
Percent change	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.5	r	0.0	r	0.1	0.4	p	
Diffusion index	71.4	64.3	57.1	92.9	28.6	71.4	64.3				
Coincident-lagging ratio	94.8	94.6	94.5	r	94.1	r	94.2	94.4	r	94.1	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	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.2	0.3	0.2	0.3				
Diffusion index	70	70	70	70	40	60	60				
Coincident index											
Percent change	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9				
Diffusion index	100	100	100	75	75	75	75				
Lagging index											
Percent change	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.4	1.6	1.4	1.6				
Diffusion index	78.6	92.9	92.9	92.9	71.4	71.4	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	2015					2016	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
U.S. Leading Economic Index component data							
Average work week, production workers, mfg. (hours)	41.8	41.7	41.7	41.7	41.7	41.9 r	41.9
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*	275.5	267.4	262.8	269.4	275.6	284.8	270.0
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.)	137,979	139,544	138,690 r	139,141	141,675 r	140,180 r	140,554 **
ISM® New Orders Index (percent)	51.7	49.8	50.8	49.0	48.8	51.5	51.5
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft (mil. 1982 dol.)	40796	40963	41272	40860	39369 r	40722 r	40532 **
Building permits (thous.)	1,161	1,105	1,161	1,282	1,204	1,204 r	1,167
Stock prices, 500 common stocks © (index: 1941-43=10)	2,039.87	1,944.40	2,024.81	2,080.62	2,054.08	1,918.60	1,904.42
Leading Credit Index™ (std. dev. ¹)*	-0.25 r	-0.27 r	-0.86 r	-0.78 r	-0.13 r	0.07 r	-0.52
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	2.03	2.03	1.95	2.14	2.00	1.75	1.40
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions (std. dev. ¹)	0.30 r	0.06 r	0.08 r	0.02 r	-0.13 r	0.04 r	-0.33
LEADING INDEX (2010=100)	122.8	122.6	123.2	123.7 r	123.3 r	123.1 r	123.2 p
Percent change from preceding month	0.0	-0.2	0.5	0.4 r	-0.3	-0.2	0.1 p
U.S. Leading Economic Index net contributions							
Average work week, production workers, mfg	....	-.07	.00	.00	.00	.13 r	.00
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance	....	.10	.06	-.08	-.07	-.11	.18
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	....	.09	-.05 r	.03 r	.15	-.09 r	.02 **
ISM® New Orders Index	....	-.11	-.09	-.13	-.14	-.08	-.08
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	....	.02	.03	-.04	-.15 r	.14 r	-.02 **
Building permits	....	-.15	.15	.31	-.19	.00 r	-.10
Stock prices, 500 common stocks ©	....	-.19	.16	.11	-.05	-.27	-.03
Leading Credit Index™	....	.02 r	.07 r	.06 r	.01 r	-.01 r	.04
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	....	.23	.22	.24	.22	.20	.16
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions	....	.01	.01	.00	-.02	.01	-.05

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	2015					2016	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
U.S. Coincident Economic Index component data							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands)	142,151	142,300	142,595	142,875	143,146 r	143,318 r	143,560
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2009 dol.)	11,639 r	11,659 r	11,692 r	11,709 r	11,742 r	11,793 r	11,821 **
Industrial production (index: 2007=100)	107.497	107.489 r	107.337 r	106.541 r	106.034 r	106.856 r	106.328
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2009 dol.)	1,214,198	1,229,777	1,227,007 r	1,225,090 r	1,229,795 r	1,232,255 **	1,235,446 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2010=100)	112.3	112.6	112.7 r	112.7 r	112.9	113.2	113.3
Percent change from preceding month	0.2	0.3	0.1 r	0.0	0.2 r	0.3	0.1
U.S. Coincident Economic Index net contributions							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	....	.06	.11	.10	.10	.06	.09
Personal income less transfer payments	....	.03 r	.06	.03 r	.06	.09 r	.05 **
Industrial production	....	.00	-.02	-.11	-.07 r	.11 r	-.07
Manufacturing and trade sales	....	.15	-.03	-.02 r	.05 r	.02 **	.03 **
U.S. Lagging Economic Index component data							
Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*	28.3	26.3	28.0	27.9	27.6	28.9	29.0
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2009 dol.)	1.427	1.416	1.423	1.427 r	1.426 r	1.427 **	1.427 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate)	1.2 r	1.4 r	0.8 r	1.9 r	-0.2 r	0.1 **	0.3 **
Average prime rate charged by banks (percent)	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.37	3.50	3.50
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding (mil. chn. 2009 dol.)	1,144,842 r	1,142,025 r	1,166,146 r	1,181,741 r	1,176,582 r	1,181,324 r	1,208,500 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income (percent)	22.44 r	22.60 r	22.63 r	22.66 r	22.63 r	22.58 r	22.58 **
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate)	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.9
LAGGING INDEX (2010=100)	118.5	119.0	119.2	119.8 r	119.8 r	119.9 r	120.4
Percent change from preceding month	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.5 r	0.0 r	0.1	0.4
U.S. Lagging Economic Index net contributions							
Average duration of unemployment	....	.28	-.24	.01	.04	-.17	-.01
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales	....	-.10	.06	.04 r	-.01 r	.01 **	.00 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg	....	.01 r	-.03 r	.06 r	-.11 r	.02 **	.01 **
Average prime rate charged by banks	....	.00	.00	.00	.04	.04	.00
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding	....	-.02	.20 r	.13	-.04	.04 r	.22 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income	....	.13 r	.02	.02	-.02 r	-.04 r	.00 **
Change in CPI for services	....	.02	.00	.06	-.04	.02	.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)

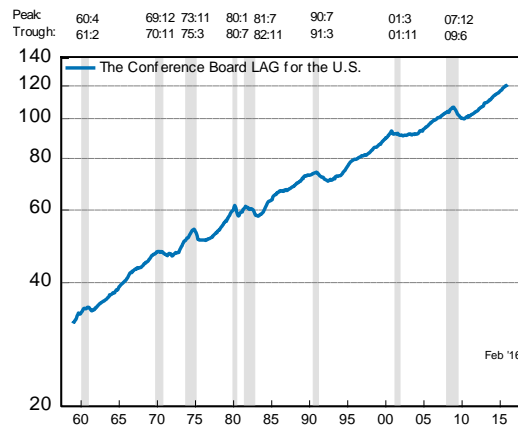
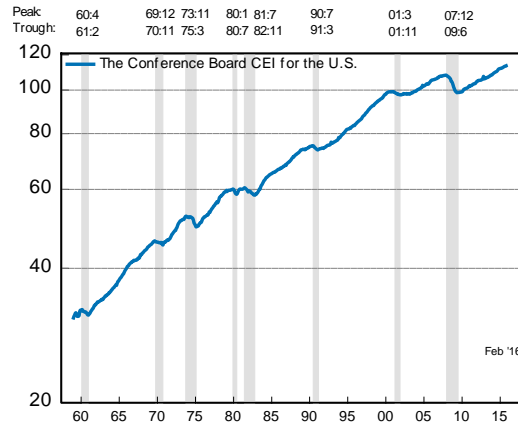
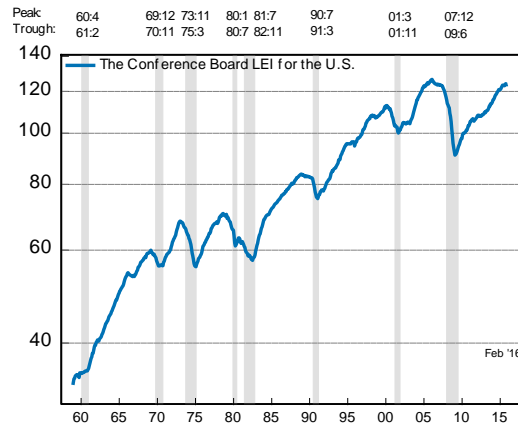
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U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2010=100)



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

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