

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Thursday, May 19, 2022

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 2022**

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

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. decreased in April, following two consecutive months of gains. The decline was primarily driven by weak consumer expectations and a drop in housing permits. In the six-month period ending April 2022, the leading economic index increased 0.9 percent (about a 1.9 percent annual rate), down from its growth of 3.8 percent (about a 7.7 percent annual rate) over the previous six-month period. In addition, the weaknesses among the leading indicators outweighed the strengths in April.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, increased in April. The coincident economic index rose 1.6 percent (about a 3.2 percent annual rate) in the six-month period ending April 2022, slightly faster than the growth of 1.4 percent (about a 2.9 percent annual rate) for the previous six-month period. However, the strengths among the coincident indicators have remained very widespread, with all components advancing over the past six months. Meanwhile, lagging economic index (LAG) increased at the same pace as the CEI. As a result, the coincident-to-lagging ratio remained unchanged. Real GDP contracted by 1.4 percent (annual rate) in Q1, after increasing 6.9 percent (annual rate) in Q4 2021.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. decreased in April and its six-month growth slowed considerably. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. continued rising, and its six-month growth remained fairly stable. Taken together, the current behavior of the composite indexes and their components suggest moderate growth is likely to prevail in the near-term, but risks to the outlook are rising.

**LEADING INDICATORS.** Four of the ten indicators that comprise The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in April. The four positive contributors—listed in order of largest to smallest positive contributor—were the interest rate spread, the Leading Credit Index<sup>TM</sup> (inverted), manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods excluding aircraft\*, and manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials\*. The five negative contributors—beginning with the largest negative contributor—were average consumer expectations for business conditions, building permits, average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), average weekly manufacturing hours, and the ISM® New Orders Index. The S&P 500® Index of Stock Prices was unchanged in April.

The LEI for the U.S. decreased 0.3 percent in April and now stands at 119.2 (2016=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.1 percent in March and increased 0.7 percent in February. Over the six-month span through April, the leading economic index increased 0.9 percent, with six out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 60 percent).

The next release is scheduled for June 17, 2022, Friday at 10 A.M. ET

**COINCIDENT INDICATORS.** All four indicators that comprise The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. increased in April. These positive contributors to the index—beginning with the largest positive contributor—were industrial production, employees on nonagricultural payrolls, personal income less transfer payments\*, and manufacturing and trade sales\*.

The CEI increased 0.4 percent in April and now stands at 108.8 (2016=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.3 percent in both March and February. During the six-month period through April, the coincident economic index increased 1.6 percent, with all four components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 100 percent).

**LAGGING INDICATORS.** The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index for the U.S. increased 0.4 percent in April and now stands at 111.6 (2016=100), with three of its seven components advancing. The three 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 average prime rate charged by banks. The three negative contributors were the average duration of unemployment (inverted), the ratio of consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income\*, and the ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales\*. The change in the index of labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing\* held steady in April. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 0.7 percent in March and increased 0.1 percent in February.

#### 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 May 18, 2022. 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 excluding 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) 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	0.2373
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0140
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0779
4 ISM® new orders index	0.1702
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	0.0459
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0307
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0419
8 <i>Leading Credit Index</i> <sup>TM</sup>	0.0991
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1247
10 Avg. consumer expectations for business conditions	0.1583
<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.3230
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.3146
3 Industrial production	0.1923
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1701
<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>	
1 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1168
2 Average duration of unemployment	0.0270
3 Consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income ratio	0.1595
4 Commercial and industrial loans	0.0861
5 Average prime rate	0.3318
6 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0499
7 Consumer price index for services	0.2289

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 February 2022, 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 2020 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 2020. 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 Website: <http://www.conference-board.org/data/bci.cfm>

The trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. is -0.0735 (over the 1984 – present) and 0.1156 (over the 1959-1983 period), and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. is 0.1628.

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 2022:**

Friday, January 21, 2022	For December 2021 data
Friday, February 18, 2022	For January 2022 data
Friday, March 18, 2022	For February 2022 data
Thursday April 21, 2022	For March 2022 data
Thursday, May 19, 2022	For April 2022 data
Friday, June 17, 2022	For May 2022 data
Thursday, July 21, 2022	For June 2022 data
Thursday, August 18, 2022	For July 2022 data
Thursday, September 22, 2022	For August 2022 data
Thursday, October 20, 2022	For September 2022 data
Friday, November 18, 2022	For October 2022 data
Thursday, December 22, 2022	For November 2022 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)*

\$ 995 per year

#### **Monthly BCI Report (PDF)**

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

\$ 400 per year

**BCI Handbook (published 2001)**      PDF only – website download

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

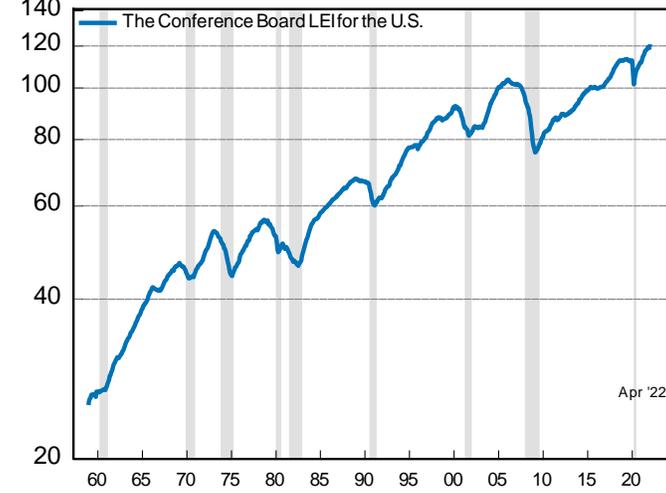
<https://www.conference-board.org/publications/publicationdetail.cfm?publicationid=2510>

Business Cycle Indicators for Brazil, China, the Euro Area, France, Germany, India, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Spain, the U.K, and the U.S. are available at \$ 995 per country per year.

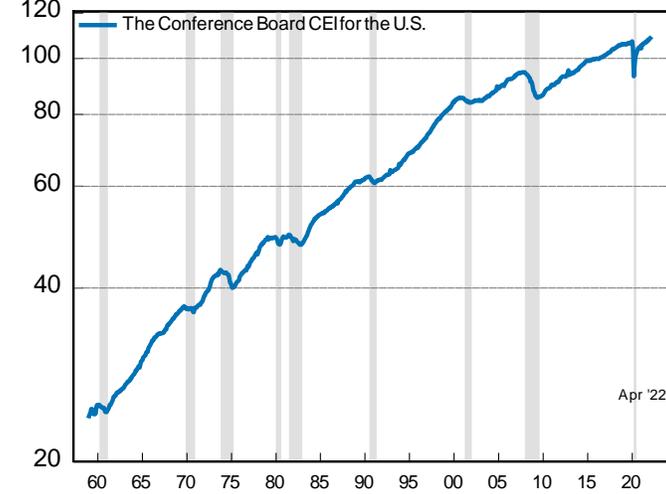
TO VIEW DATA PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE IN TABLES, PLEASE VISIT:  
<https://data-central.conference-board.org/>

## U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2016=100)

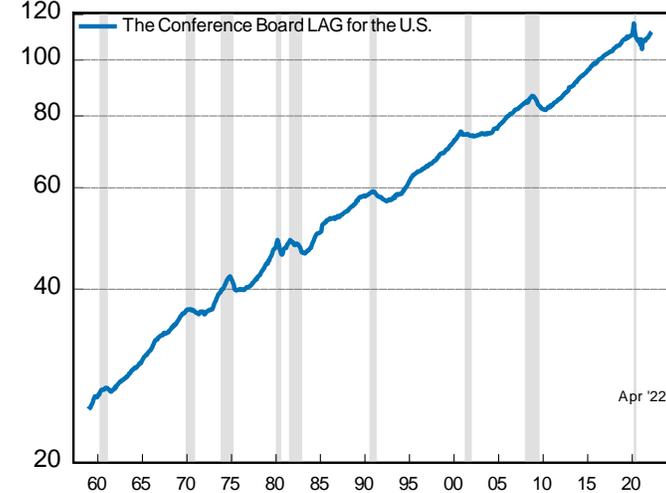
Peak:	60:4	69:12	73:11	80:1	81:7	90:7	01:3	07:12	20:2
Trough:	61:2	70:11	75:3	80:7	82:11	91:3	01:11	09:6	20:4



Peak:	60:4	69:12	73:11	80:1	81:7	90:7	01:3	07:12	20:2
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Trough:	61:2	70:11	75:3	80:7	82:11	91:3	01:11	09:6	20:4



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

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