

FOR RELEASE: 10:00 A.M. ET, Friday, August 17, 2018

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 JULY 2018

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. increased 0.6 percent, **The Conference Board Coincident Economic Index® (CEI)** increased 0.2 percent and **The Conference Board Lagging Economic Index® (LAG)** decreased 0.2 percent in July.

- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased again in July, with positive contributions from all its components, except for weekly manufacturing hours which was unchanged. In the six-month period ending July 2018, the leading economic index increased 2.7 percent (about a 5.5 percent annual rate), slower than the growth of 3.6 percent (about a 7.2 percent annual rate) during the previous six months. In addition, the strengths among the leading indicators have remained widespread, with the majority of components advancing over the past six months.
- The Conference Board CEI for the U.S., a measure of current economic activity, also improved in July. The coincident economic index rose 1.4 percent (about a 2.7 percent annual rate) between January and July 2018, somewhat faster than the growth of 1.0 percent (about a 2.0 percent annual rate) over the previous six months. The strengths among the coincident indicators remain very widespread. The lagging economic index declined, while the CEI continued to improve. As a result, the coincident-to-lagging ratio is up slightly. Real GDP expanded at a 4.1 percent annual rate in the second quarter, after increasing 2.2 percent (annual rate) in the first quarter.
- The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. continues to increase, although its six-month growth rate has slowed compared to earlier this year. Meanwhile, The Conference Board CEI for the U.S. continued on an upward trend through July. Taken together, the improvements in the LEI and CEI, paired with widespread strengths in their underlying components, suggest that the economy will continue expanding at a solid pace in the near-term.

LEADING INDICATORS. Nine of the ten indicators that make up The Conference Board LEI for the U.S. increased in July. The positive contributors – beginning with the largest positive contributor – were average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance (inverted), the Leading Credit IndexTM (inverted), the interest rate spread, the ISM[®] New Orders Index, average consumer expectations for business conditions, stock prices, building permits, manufacturers’ new orders for nondefense capital goods excluding aircraft*, and manufacturers’ new orders for consumer goods and materials*. Average weekly manufacturing hours held steady in July.

The LEI for the U.S. increased 0.6 percent and now stands at 110.7 (2016=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.5 percent in June and increased 0.1 percent in May. Over the six-month span through July, the leading economic index increased 2.7 percent, with nine out of ten components advancing (diffusion index, six-month span equals 90 percent).

The next release is scheduled for September 20, 2018, Thursday at 10 A.M. ET

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

The CEI increased 0.2 percent and now stands at 104.2 (2016=100). Based on revised data, this index increased 0.3 percent in June and increased 0.1 percent in May. During the six-month period through July, the coincident economic index increased 1.4 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. decreased 0.2 percent and stands at 105.2 (2016=100) in July, with two of its seven components advancing. The positive contributors to the index were the average prime rate charged by banks and the ratio of consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income*. The negative contributors were the average duration of unemployment (inverted) and the change in the index of labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing*. The ratio of manufacturing and trade inventories to sales*, commercial and industrial loans outstanding* and the change in CPI for services held steady in July. Based on revised data, the lagging economic index increased 0.2 percent in June and increased 0.5 percent in May.

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 August 16, 2018. 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) 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	0.2778
2 Average weekly initial claims for unemployment insurance	0.0328
3 Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials	0.0830
4 ISM® new orders index	0.1589
5 Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft	0.0410
6 Building permits, new private housing units	0.0295
7 Stock prices, 500 common stocks	0.0393
8 <i>Leading Credit Index</i> TM	0.0812
9 Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	0.1125
10 Avg. consumer expectations for business conditions	0.1440
<u>Coincident Economic Index</u>	
1 Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	0.5302
2 Personal income less transfer payments	0.2042
3 Industrial production	0.1462
4 Manufacturing and trade sales	0.1194
<u>Lagging Economic Index</u>	
1 Inventories to sales ratio, manufacturing and trade	0.1260
2 Average duration of unemployment	0.0371
3 Consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income ratio	0.1821
4 Commercial and industrial loans	0.0960
5 Average prime rate	0.3009
6 Labor cost per unit of output, manufacturing	0.0498
7 Consumer price index for services	0.2081

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 2018, 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 2016 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 2016. 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 -0.0751 (over the 1984 – present) and 0.0914 (over the 1959-1983 period), and the trend adjustment factor for The Conference Board LAG for the U.S. is 0.1441.

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 2018:

Thursday, January 25, 2018	For December 2017 data
Thursday, February 22, 2018	For January 2018 data
Thursday, March 22, 2018	For February 2018 data
Thursday, April 19, 2018	For March 2018 data
Thursday, May 17, 2018	For April 2018 data
Thursday, June 21, 2018	For May 2018 data
Thursday, July 19, 2018	For June 2018 data
Friday, August 17, 2018	For July 2018 data
Thursday, September 20, 2018	For August 2018 data
Thursday, October 18, 2018	For September 2018 data
Wednesday, November 21, 2018	For October 2018 data
Thursday, December 20, 2018	For November 2018 data

All releases are at 10:00 AM ET.

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

	2018							
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	
Leading index	107.8	108.5	108.8	r 109.3	109.4	r 110.0	r 110.7	p
Percent change	0.7	0.6	0.3	r 0.5	r 0.1	r 0.5	0.6	p
Diffusion index	80	75	50	70	60	80	95	
Coincident index	102.8	103.1	103.3	103.6	r 103.7	r 104.0	r 104.2	p
Percent change	-0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	r 0.1	0.3	0.2	p
Diffusion index	37.5	100	100	87.5	75	100	100	
Lagging index	104.1	104.4	r 104.3	r 104.7	r 105.2	r 105.4	105.2	p
Percent change	0.3	0.3	r -0.1	r 0.4	0.5	0.2	r -0.2	p
Diffusion index	64.3	57.1	50	64.3	71.4	57.1	50	
Coincident-lagging ratio	98.8	98.8	r 99.0	r 98.9	98.6	98.7	r 99.0	p
	Jul to	Aug to	Sep to	Oct to	Nov to	Dec to	Jan to	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	
Leading index								
Percent change	3.6	3.8	4.1	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.7	
Diffusion index	90	100	90	100	90	80	90	
Coincident index								
Percent change	1.0	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.4	
Diffusion index	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
Lagging index								
Percent change	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.0	1.5	1.1	
Diffusion index	71.4	71.4	71.4	92.9	85.7	71.4	50	

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 Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for U.S.

Components	2018												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul						
U.S. Leading Economic Index Component Data													
Average work week, production workers, mfg. (hours)	41.9	42.3	42.2	42.3	42.0	42.1	r	42.1					
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance (thousands)*	234.1	224.9	228.5	221.6	225.5	224.8		214.7					
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials (mil. 1982 dol.)	133,110	133,875	134,730	r	135,329	134,690	r	135,498	r	135,625	**		
ISM® New Orders Index (percent)	65.4	64.2	61.9	61.2	63.7	63.5		60.2					
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft (mil. 1982 dol.)	38502	39063	38583	r	39349	39506	r	39483	r	39584	**		
Building permits (thous.)	1,366	1,323	1,377	1,364	1,301	1,292	r	1,311					
Stock prices, 500 common stocks © (index: 1941-43=10)	2,789.80	2,705.16	2,702.77	2,653.63	2,701.49	2,754.35		2,793.64					
Leading Credit Index™ (std. dev.¹)*	-1.05	r	0.01	r	0.36	r	0.15	r	-0.97	r	-0.97	r	-1.46
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	1.17	1.44	1.33	1.18	1.28	1.09		0.98					
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions (std. dev.¹)	0.62	r	0.83	r	0.63	r	0.55	r	0.88	r	0.56	r	0.51
LEADING INDEX (2016=100)	107.8	108.5	108.8	r	109.3	109.4	r	110.0	r	110.7	p		
Percent change from preceding month	0.7	0.6	0.3	r	0.5	r	0.1	r	0.5	0.6	p		
<hr/>													
Average work week, production workers, mfg	....	.26	-.07	.07	-.20	.07	r	.00			
Average weekly initial claims, state unemployment insurance	....	.13	-.05	.10	-.06	.01		.15			
Manufacturers' new orders, consumer goods and materials05	.05	r	.04	r	-.04	r	.05	r	.01	**	
ISM® New Orders Index	....	.18	.13	.12	.17	.16		.10			
Manufacturers' new orders, nondefense capital goods excl. aircraft06	-.05	.08	.02	r	.00	.01	**				
Building permits	....	-.09	.12	-.03	-.14	-.02	r	.04				
Stock prices, 500 common stocks ©	....	-.12	.00	-.07	.07	.08		.06				
Leading Credit Index™00	-.03	-.01	.08	r	.08	r	.12				
Interest rate spread, 10-year Treasury bonds less federal funds	....	.16	.15	.13	.14	.12		.11			
Avg. Consumer Expectations for Business Conditions	....	.12	.09	.08	.13	.08		.07			

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 Conference Board Coincident and Lagging Economic Index® (CEI) and (LAG) for U.S.

Components	2018						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
U.S. Coincident Economic Index Component Data							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls (thousands)	147,801	148,125	148,280	148,455	148,723 r	148,971 r	149,128
Personal income less transfer payments (ann. rate, bil. chn. 2012 dol.)	13,343 r	13,374 r	13,417 r	13,424 r	13,455 r	13,500 r	13,533 **
Industrial production (index: 2012=100)	105.437	105.917 r	106.463 r	107.734 r	106.843 r	107.878 r	107.999
Manufacturing and trade sales (mil. chn. 2012 dol.)	1,469,000 r	1,471,413 r	1,478,892 r	1,480,158 r	1,486,910 r	1,490,471 **	1,494,562 **
COINCIDENT INDEX (2016=100)	102.8	103.1	103.3	103.6 r	103.7 r	104.0 r	104.2 p
Percent change from preceding month	-0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3 r	0.1	0.3	0.2 p
U.S. Coincident Economic Index Component Contributions							
Employees on nonagricultural payrolls	....	.12	.06	.06	.10 r	.09 r	.06
Personal income less transfer payments	....	.05 r	.07 r	.01 r	.05 r	.07 r	.05 **
Industrial production	....	.07 r	.08 r	.17 r	-.12 r	.14 r	.02
Manufacturing and trade sales	....	.02	.06 r	.01 r	.05 r	.03 **	.03 **
U.S. Lagging Economic Index Component Data							
Average duration of unemployment (weeks)*	24.1	22.9	24.1	23.1	21.3	21.2	23.2
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales (chain 2012 dol.)	1.436 r	1.440 r	1.428 r	1.427 r	1.420 r	1.421 **	1.421 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg. (6-month percent, ann. rate)	3.5 r	1.6 r	1.6	4.1 r	4.8 r	4.1 r	3.4 **
Average prime rate charged by banks (percent)	4.50	4.50	4.58	4.75	4.75	4.89	5.00
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding (mil. chn. 2012 dol.)	1,345,444 r	1,346,312 r	1,349,275 r	1,353,077 r	1,360,742 r	1,370,957 r	1,371,541 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income (percent)	22.27 r	22.26 r	22.22 r	22.21 r	22.27 r	22.24 r	22.26 **
Change in CPI for services (6-month percent, ann. rate)	3.2	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.6
LAGGING INDEX (2016=100)	104.1	104.4 r	104.3 r	104.7 r	105.2 r	105.4	105.2 p
Percent change from preceding month	0.3	0.3 r	-0.1 r	0.4	0.5	0.2 r	-0.2 p
U.S. Lagging Economic Index Component Contributions							
Average duration of unemployment	....	.19	-.19	.16	.30	.02	-.33
Ratio, manufacturing and trade inventories to sales	....	.04 r	-.11 r	-.01 r	-.06 r	.01 **	.00 **
Change in index of labor cost per unit of output, mfg	....	-.09 r	.00 r	.12 r	.03 r	-.03 r	-.03 **
Average prime rate charged by banks	....	.00	.02	.05	.00	.04	.03
Commercial and industrial loans outstanding	....	.01	.02	.03	.05	.07	.00 **
Ratio, consumer installment credit outstanding to personal income	....	-.01	-.03 r	-.01 r	.05	-.02 r	.02 **
Change in CPI for services	....	-.02	.02	-.06	.00	-.06	.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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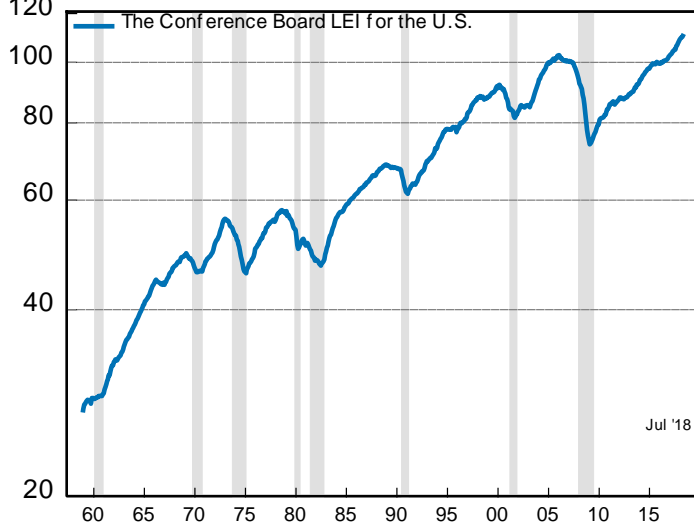
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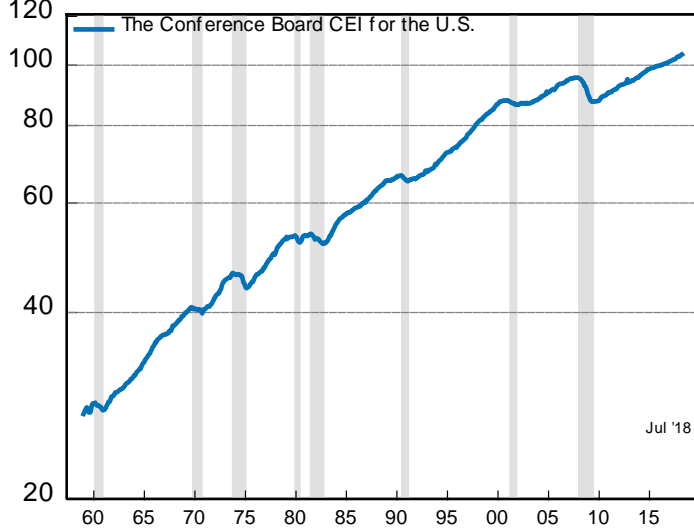
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U.S. Composite Economic Indexes (2016=100)

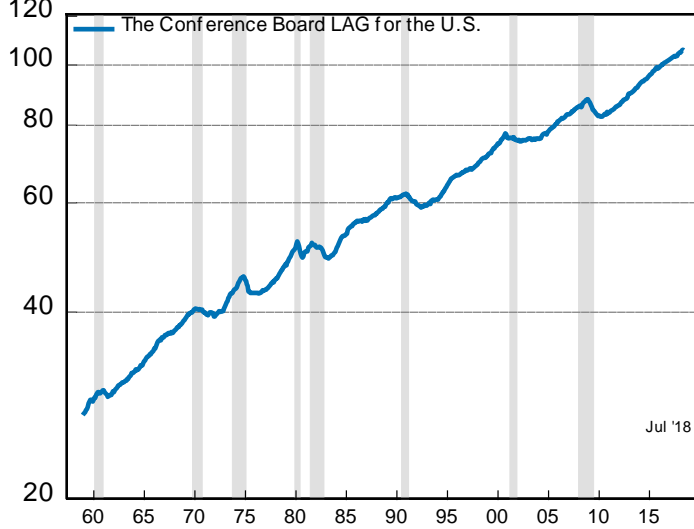
Peak:	60:4	69:12	73:11	80:1	81:7	90:7	01:3	07:12
Trough:	61:2	70:11	75:3	80:7	82:11	91:3	01:11	09:6



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

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