

News Release

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Slow U.S. Economic Growth Forecasted for 2012, According to Chicago Fed Economic Outlook Symposium Participants

The twenty-fifth annual Economic Outlook Symposium, held in Chicago on December 2, drew participants from the manufacturing, banking, and auto industries, as well as academia and consulting and service firms. One session of the symposium presented the results from the consensus economic outlook. This year, 27 individuals provided a consensus outlook—forecasts for major components of real gross domestic product (GDP), as well as several key statistics for the U.S. economy. The median forecast results are presented in the table. According to the median forecast of symposium participants, the nation's economic growth in 2012 is expected to increase at a pace below its historical average, inflation is predicted to moderate next year, and the unemployment rate is forecasted to decrease slightly in 2012. The consensus outlook shows that the rate of real GDP growth is expected to be 1.6% this year and then 2.0% in 2012. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, is predicted to average 3.8% this year and then 2.4% in 2012. The unemployment rate is forecasted to edge down to a still quite high 8.8% by the end of next year.

Consumer spending is predicted to rise at a moderate pace next year, according to the consensus economic outlook. Business spending is expected to increase at a solid pace in 2012. The housing sector is forecasted to continue to improve. In particular, the consensus outlook shows housing starts are expected to edge higher to 0.60 million units this year and then rise slightly further to 0.66 million units in 2012. Car and light truck sales are predicted to increase to 13.4 million units in 2012—above this year's anticipated sales of 12.6 million units. Oil prices are expected to rise to \$88.88 per barrel in the final quarter of this year and then increase to \$92 per barrel by the end of 2012. The rate of industrial production growth is forecasted to be 3.2% in 2011 and then 2.3% next year. The short-term interest rate (one-year Treasury rate) is expected to edge up 10 basis points during 2012, and the long-term interest rate (ten-year Treasury rate) is predicted

to increase 51 basis points over the same period. The trade-weighted U.S. dollar is expected to rise 0.6% in 2012.

A summary of the twenty-fifth annual Economic Outlook Symposium will be published in an upcoming issue of *Chicago Fed Letter*.

—William A. Strauss • *Senior Economist and Economic Advisor* • 312-322-8151

Forecasts from Twenty-Fifth Annual Economic Outlook Symposium

	2010 (Actual)	2011 (Forecast)	2012 (Forecast)
Real gross domestic product ^a	3.1	1.6	2.0
Real personal consumption expenditures ^a	3.0	1.8	2.0
Real business fixed investment ^a	11.1	8.8	4.7
Real residential investment ^a	-6.3	1.6	3.4
Change in private inventories ^b	38.3	12.4	30.0
Net exports of goods and services ^b	-414.2	-409.4	-414.6
Real government consumption expenditures and gross investment ^a	0.1	-1.8	-0.9
Industrial production ^a	6.3	3.2	2.3
Car and light truck sales (millions of units)	11.6	12.6	13.4
Housing starts (millions of units)	0.58	0.60	0.66
Unemployment rate ^c	9.6	9.1	8.8
Consumer Price Index ^a	1.2	3.8	2.4
One-year Treasury rate (constant maturity) ^c	0.26	0.15	0.25
Ten-year Treasury rate (constant maturity) ^c	2.86	2.09	2.60
J. P. Morgan Trade-Weighted Dollar Index ^a	-2.0	-3.4	0.6
Oil price (dollars per barrel of West Texas Intermediate) ^c	85.03	88.88	92.00

^aPercent change, fourth quarter over fourth quarter.

^bBillions of chained (2005) dollars in the fourth quarter at a seasonally adjusted annual rate.

^cFourth quarter average.