

News Release

Embargoed for release:
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time
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What is the National Activity Index?

The index is a weighted average of 85 indicators of national economic activity drawn from four broad categories of data: 1) production and income; 2) employment, unemployment, and hours; 3) personal consumption and housing; and 4) sales, orders, and inventories.

A zero value for the index indicates that the national economy is expanding at its historical trend rate of growth; negative values indicate below-average growth; and positive values indicate above-average growth.

Why are there three index values?

Each month, we provide a monthly index, its three-month moving average, and a diffusion index. Month-to-month movements can be volatile, so the monthly index's three-month moving average, the CFNAI-MA3, provides a more consistent picture of national economic growth. The CFNAI Diffusion Index captures the degree to which a change in the monthly index is spread out among its 85 indicators, averaged over a three-month period.

What do the numbers mean?

When the CFNAI-MA3 value moves below -0.70 following a period of economic expansion, there is an increasing likelihood that a recession has begun. Conversely, when the CFNAI-MA3 value moves above -0.70 following a period of economic contraction, there is an increasing likelihood that a recession has ended.

When the CFNAI-MA3 value moves above $+0.70$ more than two years into an economic expansion, there is an increasing likelihood that a period of sustained increasing inflation has begun.

The next CFNAI will be released:
November 21, 2016
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time

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Chicago Fed National Activity Index

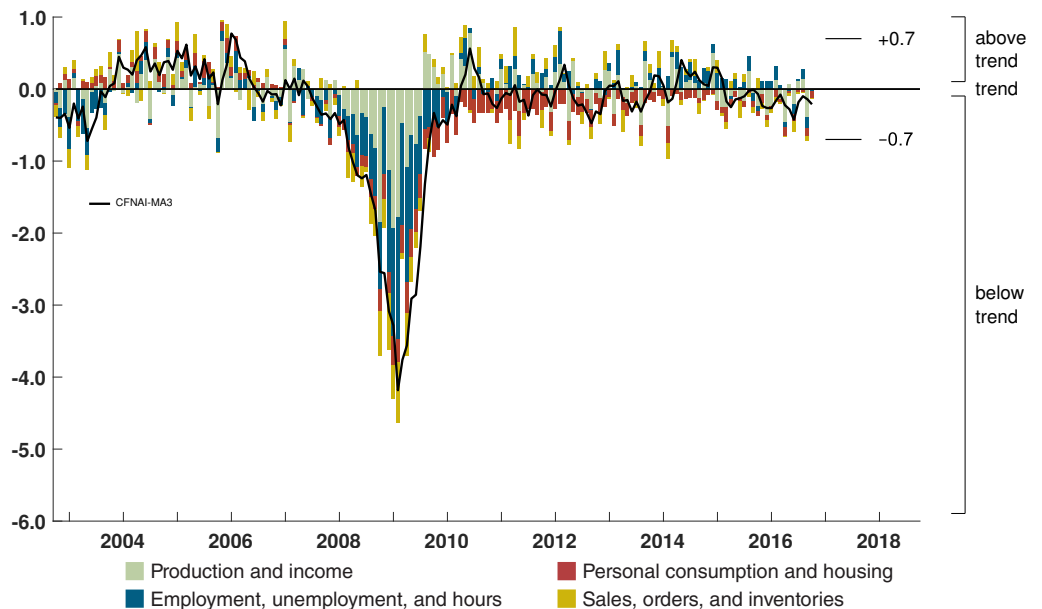
Index shows economic growth picked up in September

Led by improvements in production-related indicators, the Chicago Fed National Activity Index (CFNAI) increased to -0.14 in September from -0.72 in August. All four broad categories of indicators that make up the index increased from August, but in September, all four categories made negative contributions to the index for the second straight month.

The index's three-month moving average, CFNAI-MA3, edged down to -0.21 in September from -0.14 in August. September's CFNAI-MA3 suggests that growth in national economic activity was somewhat below its historical trend. The economic growth reflected in this level of the CFNAI-MA3 suggests subdued inflationary pressure from economic activity over the coming year.

The CFNAI Diffusion Index, which is also a three-month moving average, moved down to -0.12 in September from -0.03 in August. Forty-one of the 85 individual indicators made positive contributions to the CFNAI in September, while 44 made negative contributions. Sixty-seven indicators improved from August to September, while 17 indicators deteriorated and one was unchanged. Of the indicators that improved, 29 made negative contributions.

Chicago Fed National Activity Index, by Categories, and CFNAI-MA3



CFNAI, CFNAI-MA3, and CFNAI Diffusion for the Latest Six Months and Year-Ago Month

	Sep '16	Aug '16	Jul '16	Jun '16	May '16	Apr '16	Sep '15
CFNAI							
Current	-0.14	-0.72	+0.23	+0.07	-0.59	-0.02	-0.22
Previous	N/A	-0.55	+0.24	+0.09	-0.60	+0.02	-0.22
CFNAI-MA3							
Current	-0.21	-0.14	-0.10	-0.18	-0.42	-0.28	-0.07
Previous	N/A	-0.07	-0.09	-0.16	-0.41	-0.27	-0.07
CFNAI Diffusion							
Current	-0.12	-0.03	+0.01	-0.20	-0.44	-0.28	-0.12
Previous	N/A	-0.02	-0.01	-0.17	-0.43	-0.27	-0.12

Current and Previous values reflect index values as of the October 24, 2016, release and September 22, 2016, release, respectively. N/A indicates not applicable.

The contribution from production-related indicators to the CFNAI rose to -0.01 in September from -0.39 in August. Manufacturing industrial production increased 0.2 percent in September after decreasing 0.5 percent in August; and manufacturing capacity utilization ticked up to 74.9 percent in September from 74.8 percent in the previous month. The sales, orders, and inventories category also made a contribution of -0.01 to the CFNAI in September, up from -0.06 in August.

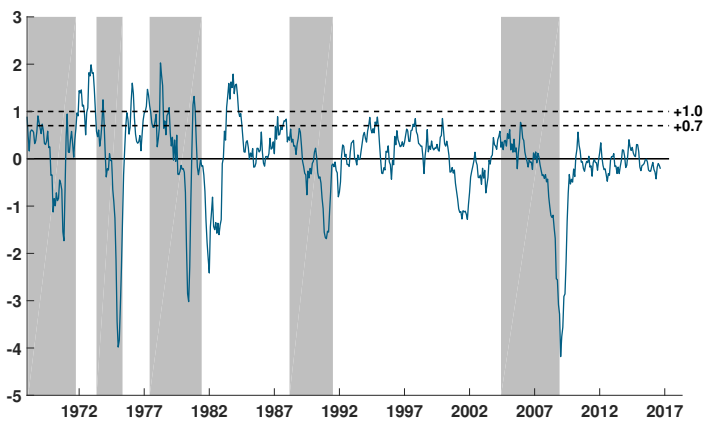
Employment-related indicators contributed -0.03 to the CFNAI in September, up from -0.15 in August. Civilian nonagricultural employment increased by 442,000 in September after decreasing by 37,000 in August; but the civilian unemployment rate ticked up to 5.0 percent in September from 4.9 percent in the previous month.

The contribution of the personal consumption and housing category to the CFNAI edged up to -0.09 in September from -0.12 in

August. Housing permits increased to 1,225,000 annualized units in September from 1,152,000 in August. However, housing starts decreased to 1,047,000 annualized units in September from 1,150,000 in the previous month.

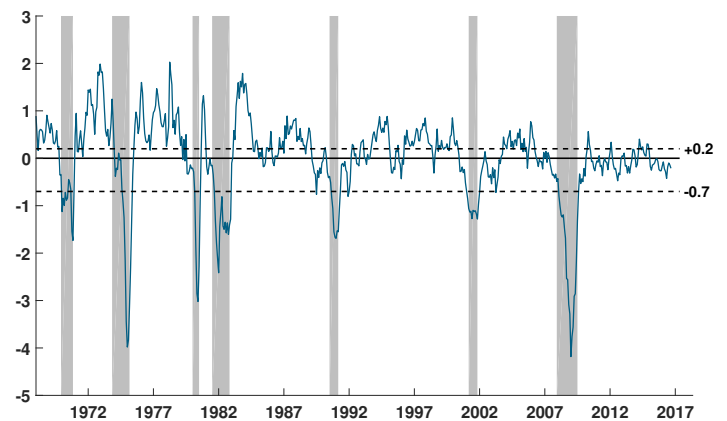
The CFNAI was constructed using data available as of October 20, 2016. At that time, September data for 51 of the 85 indicators had been published. For all missing data, estimates were used in constructing the index. The August monthly index value was revised to -0.72 from an initial estimate of -0.55 , and the July monthly index value was revised to $+0.23$ from last month's estimate of $+0.24$. Revisions to the monthly index value can be attributed to two main factors: revisions in previously published data and differences between the estimates of previously unavailable data and subsequently published data. The revision to the August monthly index value was primarily due to the latter, while the revision to the July monthly index value was primarily due to the former.

CFNAI-MA3 and Inflation Cycles



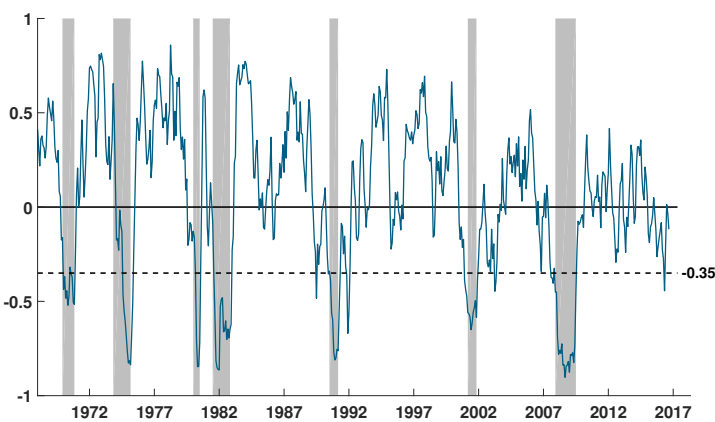
Notes: Shading represents periods of substantial inflation increases. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+0.70$ more than two years into an economic expansion indicates an increasing likelihood that a period of sustained increasing inflation has begun. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+1.00$ more than two years into an economic expansion indicates a substantial likelihood that a period of sustained increasing inflation has begun.

CFNAI-MA3 and Business Cycles



Notes: Shading indicates official periods of recession as identified by the National Bureau of Economic Research. A CFNAI-MA3 value below -0.70 following a period of economic expansion indicates an increasing likelihood that a recession has begun. A CFNAI-MA3 value above -0.70 following a period of economic contraction indicates an increasing likelihood that a recession has ended. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+0.20$ following a period of economic contraction indicates a significant likelihood that a recession has ended.

CFNAI Diffusion Index



Notes: Shading indicates official periods of recession as identified by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The CFNAI Diffusion Index represents the three-month moving average of the sum of the absolute values of the weights for the underlying indicators whose contribution to the CFNAI is positive in a given month less the sum of the absolute values of the weights for those indicators whose contribution is negative or neutral in a given month. Periods of economic expansion have historically been associated with values of the CFNAI Diffusion Index above -0.35 .

CFNAI, Monthly Index

