

News Release

Embargoed for release:
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time
December 22, 2011

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What is the National Activity Index?

The index is a weighted average of 85 indicators of national economic activity. The indicators are 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 two index values?

Each month, we provide a monthly index number, which reflects economic activity in the latest month for which we have data, and a three-month moving average. Month-to-month movements can be volatile, so the index's three-month moving average, the CFNAI-MA3, provides a more consistent picture of national economic growth.

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:
January 26, 2012
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time

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Chicago Fed National Activity Index

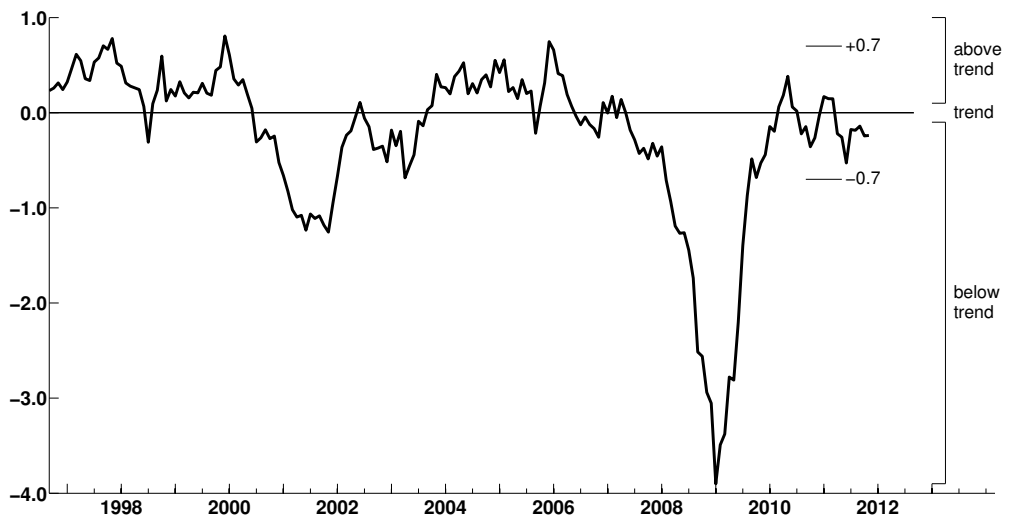
Index shows economic activity decreased in November

Led by declines in production-related indicators, the Chicago Fed National Activity Index decreased to -0.37 in November from -0.11 in October. Two of the four broad categories of indicators that make up the index decreased from October, and only the employment, unemployment, and hours category was positive in November.

The index's three-month moving average, CFNAI-MA3, remained level, at -0.24 , from October to November. November's CFNAI-MA3 suggests that growth in national economic activity was below its historical trend. Likewise, the economic slack reflected in this level of the CFNAI-MA3 suggests subdued inflationary pressure from economic activity over the coming year.

Production-related indicators made a contribution of -0.23 to the index in November—a sharp decrease from $+0.16$ in October and its lowest value since April 2011. Industrial production edged down 0.2 percent in November after increasing 0.7 percent in the previous month. Manufacturing production decreased 0.4 percent in November after increasing 0.5 percent in October. The sales, orders, and inventories category made a neutral contribution to the index in November, down slightly from $+0.01$ in October.

Chicago Fed National Activity Index, Three-Month Moving Average (CFNAI-MA3)



CFNAI and CFNAI-MA3 for the latest six months and year-ago month

	Nov '11	Oct '11	Sep '11	Aug '11	Jul '11	Jun '11	Nov '10
CFNAI							
Current	-0.37	-0.11	-0.24	-0.38	+0.20	-0.37	-0.18
Previous	N/A	-0.13	-0.20	-0.49	+0.21	-0.42	-0.19
CFNAI-MA3							
Current	-0.24	-0.24	-0.14	-0.19	-0.18	-0.53	-0.26
Previous	N/A	-0.27	-0.16	-0.23	-0.19	-0.54	-0.27

Current and Previous values reflect index values as of the December 22, 2011, release and November 21, 2011, release, respectively. N/A indicates not applicable.

The contribution from the consumption and housing category to the index ticked up to -0.29 in November from -0.30 in October. Housing starts rose to 685,000 annualized units in November from 627,000 in October. Similarly, housing permits increased to 681,000 annualized units from 644,000 over the same period.

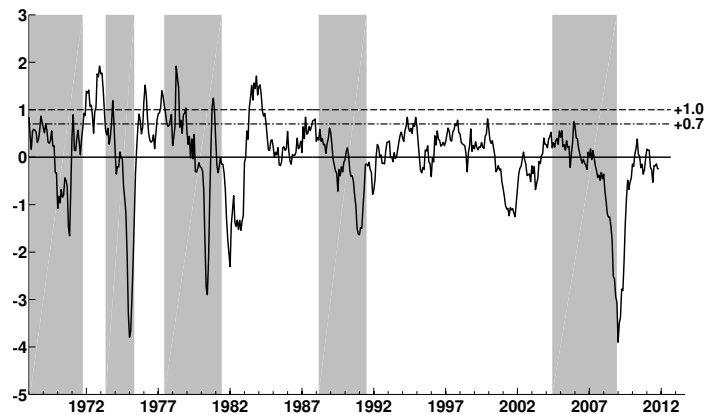
The employment-related indicators' contribution to the index was $+0.14$ in November, up from $+0.01$ in October. Payroll employment increased 120,000 in November after rising 100,000 in the previous month. Likewise, the unemployment rate dropped to 8.6 percent in November from 9.0 percent in October.

Thirty-four of the 85 individual indicators made positive contributions to the index in November, while 51 made negative contributions. Thirty-one indicators improved from October to November, while 54 indicators deteriorated. Of the indicators that improved,

16 made negative contributions. The index was constructed using data available as of December 20, 2011. At that time, November data for 49 of the 85 indicators had been published. For all missing data, estimates were used in constructing the index.

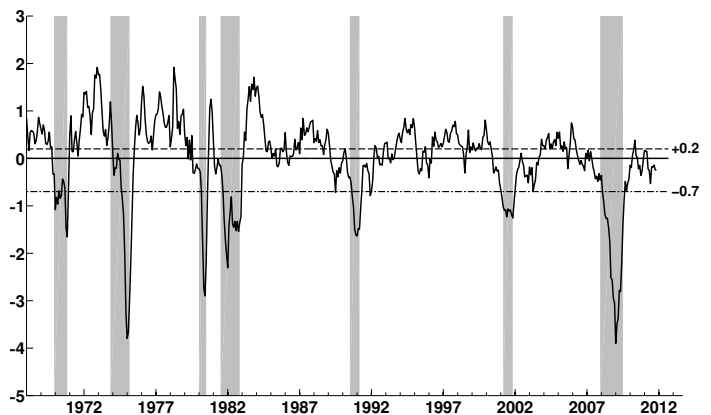
The October monthly index was revised to -0.11 from an initial estimate of -0.13 . Revisions to the monthly index can be attributed to two main factors: revisions in previously published data and differences between the estimates of previously unavailable data and subsequently published data. The revision to the October monthly index was due primarily to the former.

CFNAI-MA3 and Inflation Cycles



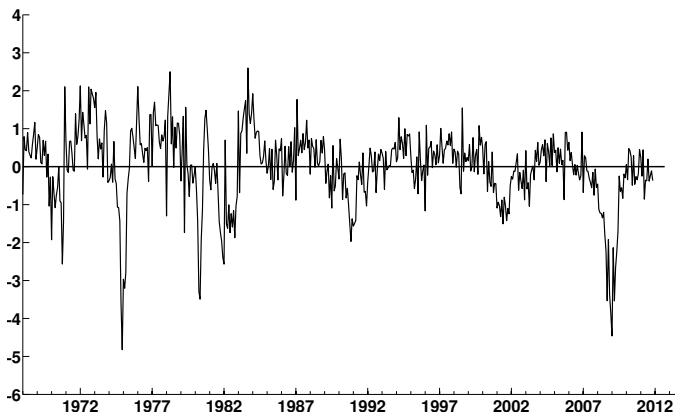
Notes: Shading represents periods of substantial inflation increases. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+0.70$ more than two years into an economic expansion indicates an increasing likelihood that a period of sustained increasing inflation has begun. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+1.00$ more than two years into an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



2012 CFNAI Release Dates

<i>Date of Release</i>	<i>Monthly Data for</i>
January 26, 2012	December 2011
February 21, 2012	January 2012
March 26, 2012	February 2012
April 26, 2012	March 2012
May 21, 2012	April 2012
June 25, 2012	May 2012
July 23, 2012	June 2012
August 20, 2012	July 2012
September 24, 2012	August 2012
October 25, 2012	September 2012
November 26, 2012	October 2012
December 21, 2012	November 2012