

News Release

Embargoed for release:
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time
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Contact:
Laura LaBarbera
Media Relations
Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago
312-322-2387

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 23, 2015
8:30 am Eastern Time
7:30 am Central Time

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Chicago Fed National Activity Index

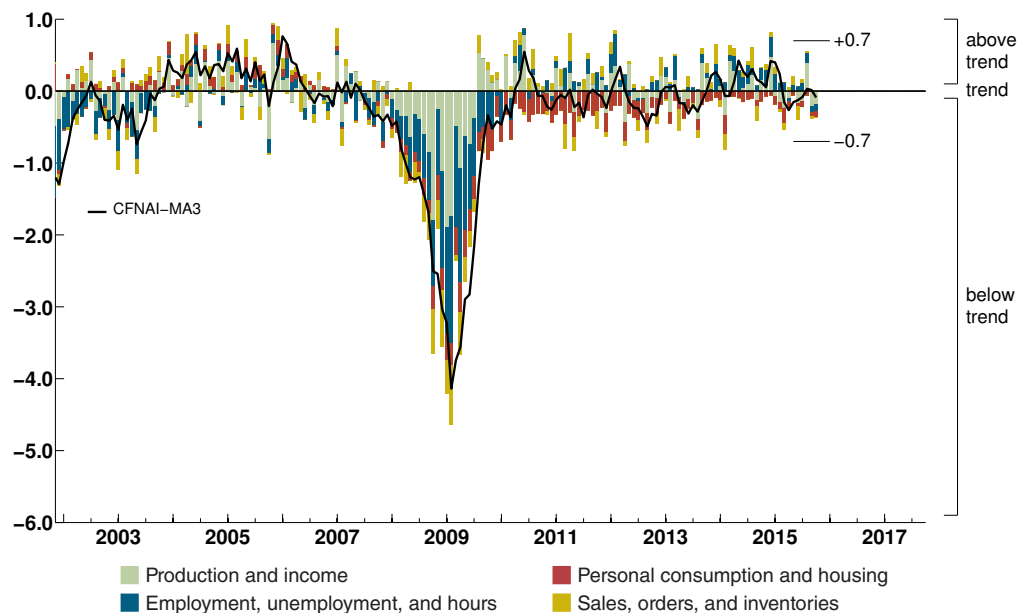
Index shows economic growth below average in September

The Chicago Fed National Activity Index (CFNAI) ticked down to -0.37 in September from -0.39 in August. Two of the four broad categories of indicators that make up the index decreased from August, and all four categories made nonpositive contributions to the index in September.

The index's three-month moving average, CFNAI-MA3, decreased to -0.09 in September from $+0.01$ in August. September's CFNAI-MA3 suggests that growth in national economic activity was slightly 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, decreased to -0.17 in September from -0.04 in August. Twenty-six of the 85 individual indicators made positive contributions to the CFNAI in September, while 59 made negative contributions. Forty-two indicators improved from August to September, while 42 indicators deteriorated and one was unchanged. Of the indicators that improved, 25 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 '15	Aug '15	Jul '15	Jun '15	May '15	Apr '15	Sep '14
CFNAI							
Current	-0.37	-0.39	+0.49	-0.06	-0.33	+0.15	+0.19
Previous	N/A	-0.41	+0.51	-0.07	-0.38	+0.13	+0.19
CFNAI-MA3							
Current	-0.09	+0.01	+0.03	-0.08	-0.13	-0.16	+0.12
Previous	N/A	+0.01	+0.02	-0.10	-0.14	-0.16	+0.12
CFNAI Diffusion							
Current	-0.17	-0.04	+0.07	-0.04	-0.06	-0.11	+0.12
Previous	N/A	-0.09	+0.05	-0.07	-0.08	-0.13	+0.12

Current and Previous values reflect index values as of the October 22, 2015, release and September 24, 2015, release, respectively. N/A indicates not applicable.

The contribution from production-related indicators to the CFNAI ticked up to -0.18 in September from -0.21 in August. Manufacturing production moved down 0.1 percent in September, following a decline of 0.4 percent in August. Similarly, the sales, orders, and inventories category made a neutral contribution to the CFNAI in September, up slightly from -0.03 in August.

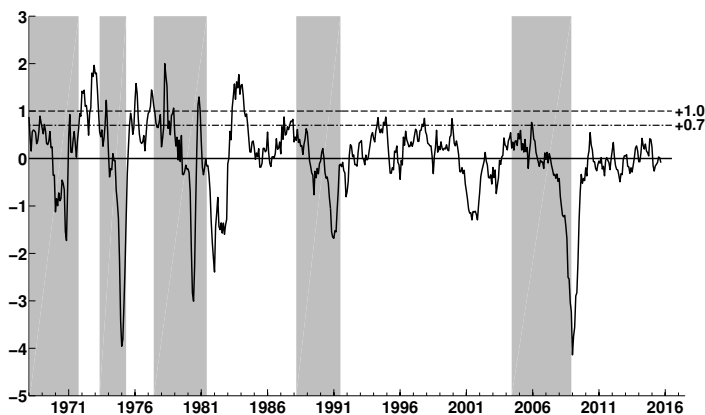
Employment-related indicators contributed -0.11 to the CFNAI in September, down slightly from -0.08 in August. Civilian employment declined by 0.2 percent in September, following an increase of 0.1 percent in August; however, the unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.1 percent in September.

The contribution of the personal consumption and housing category to the CFNAI ticked down to -0.08 in September from -0.06 in August. Housing permits declined to 1,103,000 annualized units

in September from 1,161,000 in the previous month. However, housing starts moved up to 1,206,000 annualized units in September from 1,132,000 in August.

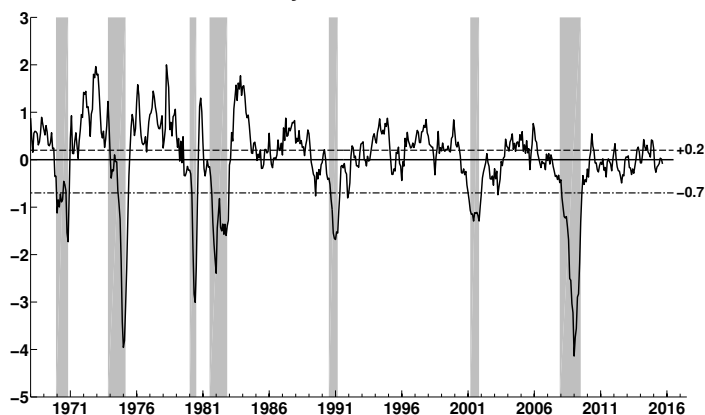
The CFNAI was constructed using data available as of October 20, 2015. At that time, September data for 49 of the 85 indicators had been published. For all missing data, estimates were used in constructing the index. The August monthly index was revised to -0.39 from an initial estimate of -0.41 . Revisions 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 August monthly index was due primarily to the former.

CFNAI-MA3 and Inflation Cycles



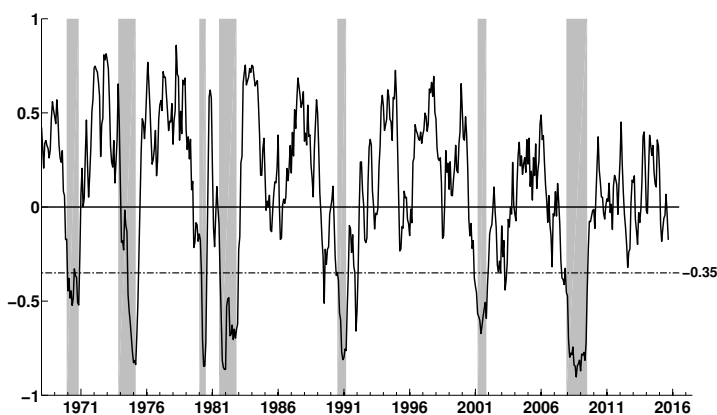
Notes: Shading represents periods of substantial inflation increases. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+0.70$ more than two years into an economic expansion indicates an increasing likelihood that a period of sustained increasing inflation has begun. A CFNAI-MA3 value above $+1.00$ more than two years into an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



Notes: Shading indicates official periods of recession as identified by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The CFNAI Diffusion Index represents 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 three-month moving average of the CFNAI Diffusion Index above -0.35 .

CFNAI, Monthly Index

