

Southern California Leading Economic Indicator

February 2010

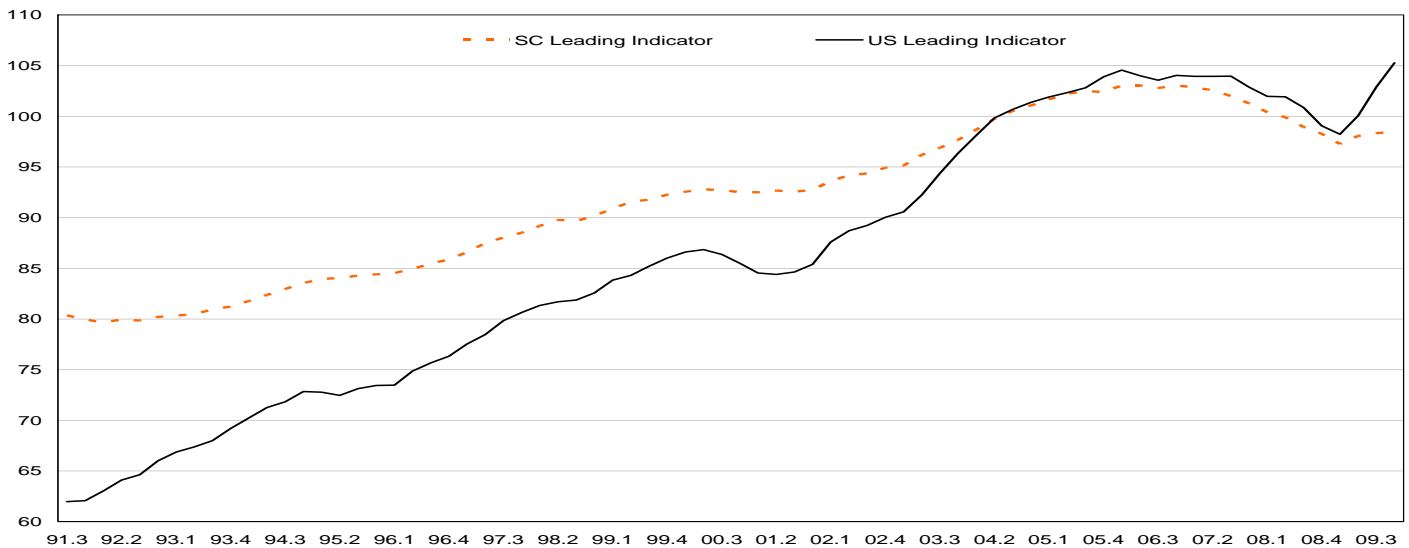
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Summary

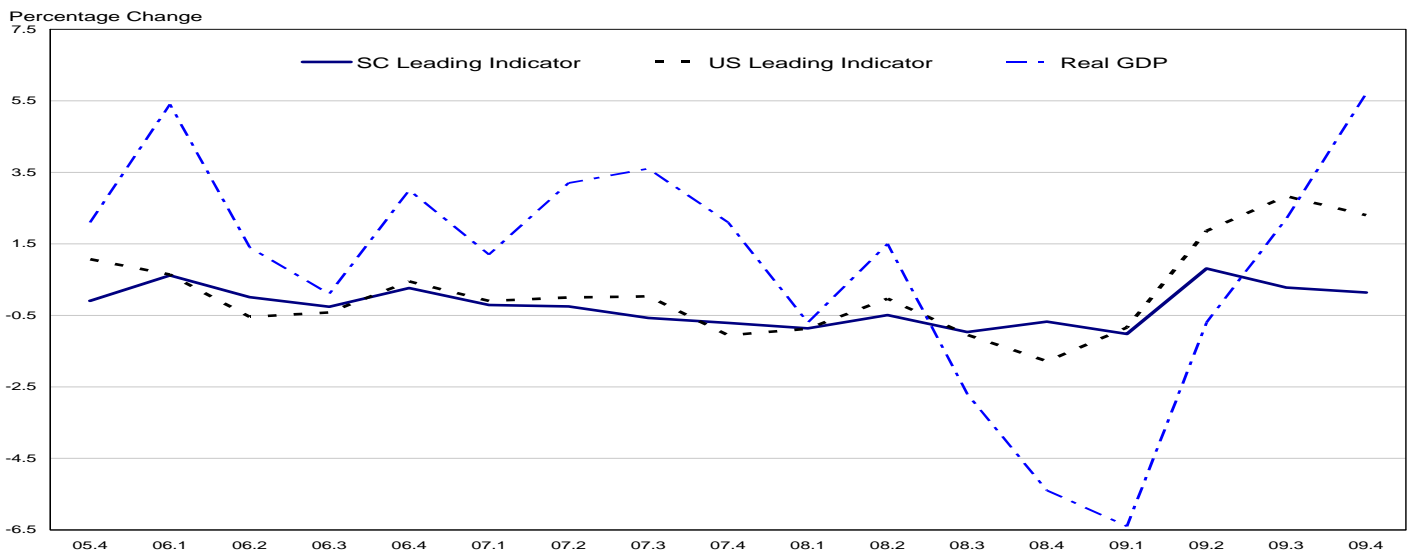
The Southern California Leading Economic Indicator increased by 0.14% in the fourth quarter of 2009 compared to the third quarter of 2009. This increase suggests an increase in economic activity in the Southern California region in the next three to six months. This is the third consecutive increase in the quarterly S.C. Leading Indicator after nine consecutive decreases in the indicator since the second quarter of 2007. The U.S. leading economic indicator increased significantly in the fourth quarter of 2009 and implies an increase in economic activity for the U.S. economy in the next three to six months (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Southern California and US Leading Indicators



U.S. economic activity, often measured by real GDP growth, is expected to increase in the next three to six months given the increase in the U.S. leading indicator. The increase in the SC Leading Indicator suggests an increase in economic activity in Southern California (Figure 2).

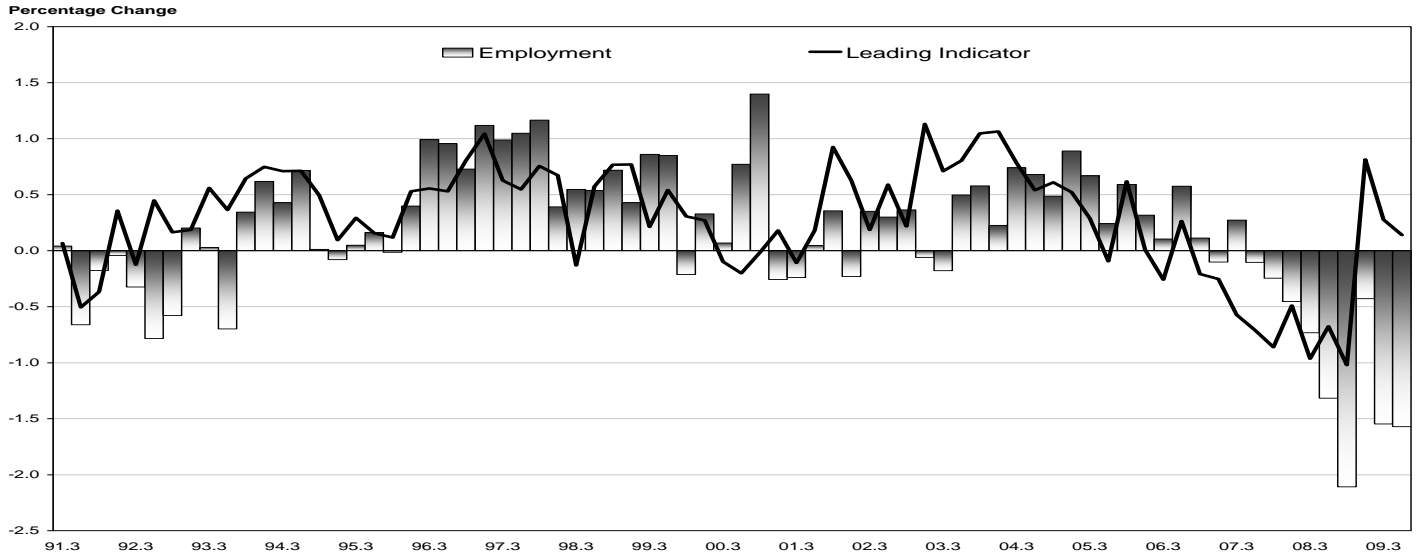
Figure 2
Leading Indicators and Real GDP



Southern California Indicator and Economic Activity

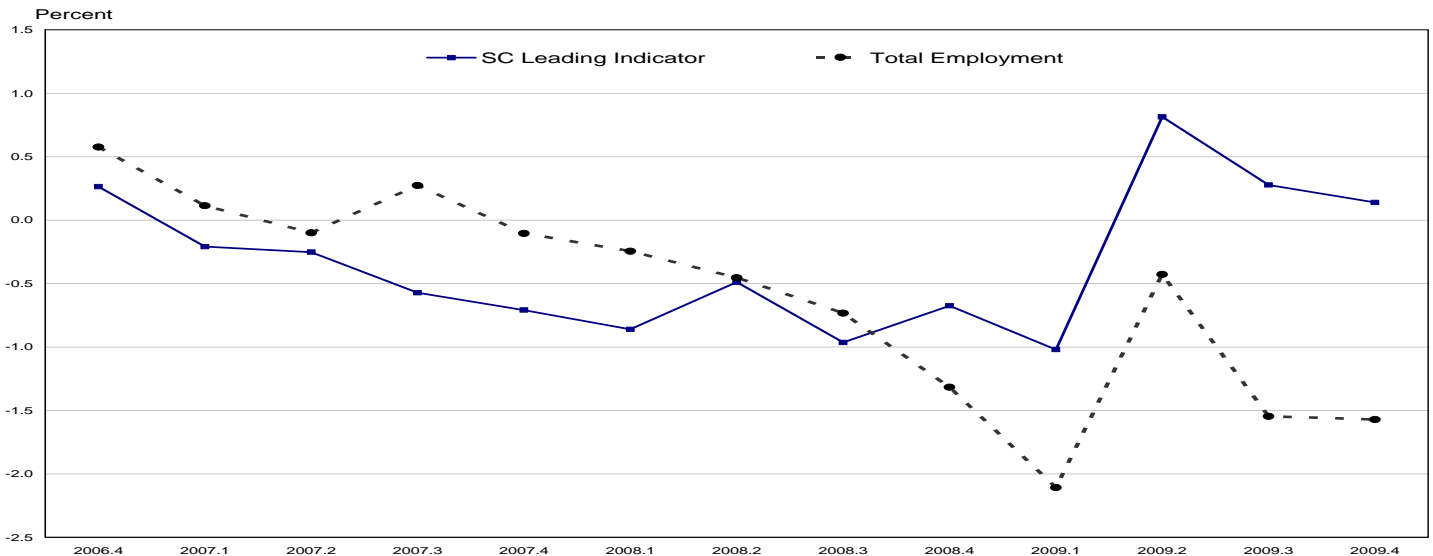
In the absence of up-to-date gross state product data for Southern California, our index is used to analyze trends in total civilian employment. The indicator has been found to be a good predictor of regional economic trends. In general, changes in the index take place prior to the change in regional economic activity. For example, during both recessions of the early 1990s and late 2007 and 2008, the Southern California leading indicator decreased significantly (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Southern California Leading Indicator and Employment



For the last two years the Southern California Leading indicator usually changed one to two quarters before SC employment changes (Figure 4). The SC indicator currently projects an increase in Southern California economic activity in the next three to six months.

Figure 4
SC Leading Indicator and Total Civilian Employment



Changes in the IEES Leading Indicator and its Components

The Southern California Leading Indicator increased from a value of 98.34 in the third quarter of 2009 to 98.48 in the fourth quarter of 2009. The 0.14% increase in the fourth quarter of 2009 suggests an increase in economic activity in the Southern California region in the next 3 to 6 months. Civilian employment in Southern California, which is notoriously erratic, subject to measurement errors and continually revised, showed a decrease in the fourth quarter of 2009 of -1.57%.

For the quarterly data, four out of the seven components had a positive impact on the Southern California leading indicator. The positive impacts were from the increase in the Standard & Poor's 500 stock index, Pacific region consumer confidence index, regional building permits, and the change in the interest rate spread. There were negative effects on the SC Leading Indicator from the decline in the money supply adjusted for inflation, regional nonfarm employment and increase in regional unemployment.

Leading Economic Indicators and Total Civilian Employment

Variable	2008.4	2009.1	2009.2	2009.3	2009.4
SC Indicator	98.28	97.28	98.07	98.34	98.48
% Change	-0.67	-1.02	0.81	0.28	0.14
US Indicator	99.07	98.23	100.07	102.9	105.27
% Change	-1.78	-0.84	1.87	2.83	2.30
Civilian Employment	8,137,778	7,966,224	7,932,140	7,809,490	7,686,772
% Change	-1.32	-2.11	-0.43	-1.55	-1.57

Economic Conditions

For the U.S. economy, real gross domestic product increased at an annualized growth rate of 5.7% during the fourth quarter of 2009, following the 2.2% increase in the third quarter of 2009. U.S. inflation, measured by the consumer price index, increased by 0.1% in December 2009 and follows the 0.4% increase in the index in November 2009. For California, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2009 was 12.4%, which is unchanged compared to the unemployment rate in November 2009, and is higher than the U.S. unemployment rate of 10.0% in December 2009. Payroll employment in California decreased in December 2009 compared to the previous month. There were jobs gains in the three categories of information; financial activities; and educational and health services. There were job losses in the remaining eight categories of mining and logging; construction; manufacturing; trade, transportation and utilities; professional and business services; leisure and hospitality; other services; and government.

Technical Notes

The IEES Southern California Leading Economic Indicator includes Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Bernardino County, Riverside County, Ventura County and Imperial County. The index consists of both national and regional data. The national variables used are the real money supply, interest rates and Standard & Poor's 500 stock index. Nonfarm employment, unemployment rate, building permits and Pacific region consumer confidence index make up the regional data. The employment and unemployment data are from the new North American Industry Classification System.

The value of the IEES Southern California Leading Indicator provides information about future economic activity in Southern California and is not a prediction of the level of employment. Interpreting changes in a leading economic indicator requires analyzing the size and duration of changes in the direction of the index. As stated by the Conference Board, three consecutive downward movements in the leading index do not necessarily signal a recession. The Southern California leading economic indicator was initially constructed in May 2000 and is revised each quarter using the most recent and often revised data available. Historical labor data include the recent updates. The Conference Board data includes the 2000 benchmark revisions and 2005 methodology changes. The SC Leading Indicator (2004=100), following the procedure of the U.S. indicator, has been revised and equals 100 in year 2004.



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Additional copies of the report are available at <http://business.fullerton.edu/centers/iees/> or from the IEES by calling (657) 278-3816.