

IOWA Department of REVENUE

Iowa Leading Indicators Index November 2008 Report

Tax Research and Program Analysis Section

The Iowa Leading Indicators Index (ILII) fell to 104.6 (100=1999) in November 2008 from 105.6 in October. The Iowa non-farm employment coincident index again inched up 0.02 percent for the month.

The ILII's value in November decreased 0.9 percent, the largest drop since the ILII has been calculated. The index has decreased for the last eight months from its peak value of 108.4 in March. During the six-month span through November, the ILII dropped 3.2 percent (a -6.4 percent annual rate). The six-month diffusion index (value of 25.0) reflects two of eight components, the agricultural futures price index and the yield spread, experiencing a 0.5 percent or greater increase over the last half year, while the remaining six components experienced a 0.5 percent or greater decrease.

In November, one of the eight Iowa Leading Indicators components increased. The positive contributor was the yield spread. The negative contributors were unemployment insurance claims (inverted), average weekly manufacturing hours, diesel fuel consumption, the Iowa stock market index, new residential building permits, the new orders index, and the agricultural futures price index.

Figure 1. Iowa Leading Indicators Index and Iowa Non-Farm Employment Coincident Index: January 1999-November 2008

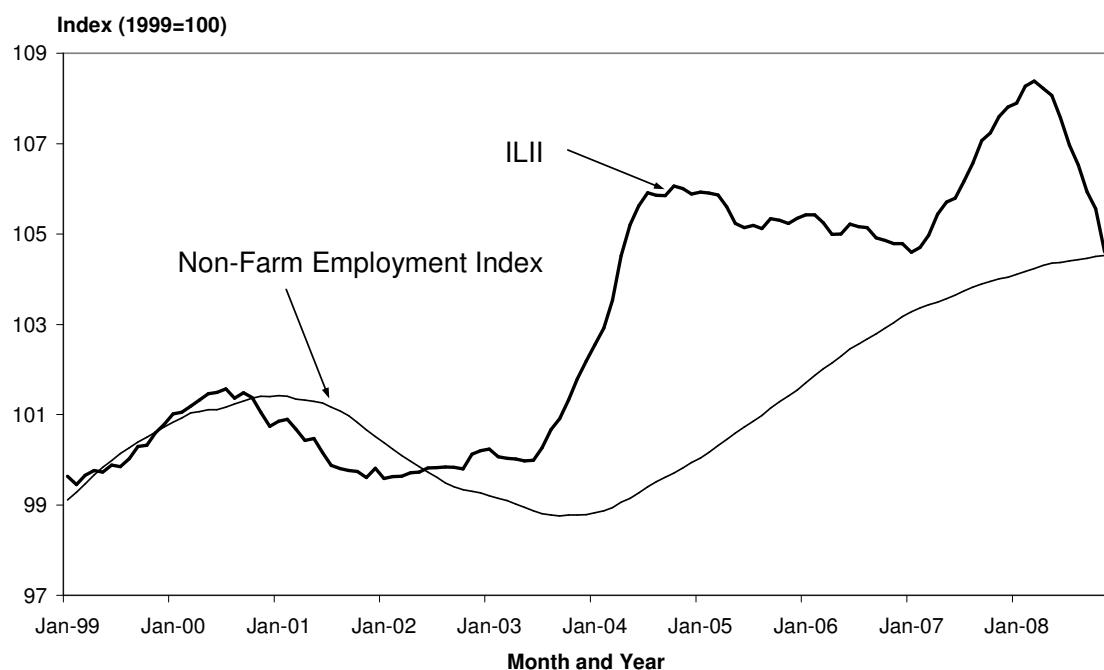


Table 1. Iowa Leading Indicators Index: Six Month Overview

Monthly Values	2008					
	June	July	August	September	October	November
ILII	107.6	107.0	106.5	105.9	105.6	104.6
Percentage Change ^a	-0.5%	-0.6%	-0.4%	-0.6%	-0.4%	-0.9%
Diffusion Index ^b	25.0	25.0	12.5	25.0	31.3	12.5

Six-Month Values	Dec to	Jan to	Feb to	Mar to	Apr to	May to
	June	July	August	September	October	November
ILII						
Percentage Change	-0.2%	-0.9%	-1.6%	-2.3%	-2.5%	-3.2%
Annualized Percentage Change	-0.4%	-1.7%	-3.2%	-4.5%	-4.9%	-6.4%
Diffusion Index	43.8	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0

Source: Tax Research and Program Analysis Section, Iowa Department of Revenue, produced January 2, 2009.

a. Percentage changes in the ILII do not always equal changes in the level of the ILII due to rounding.

b. A diffusion index measures the proportion of components that are rising based on the actual changes (not the standardized contributions to the ILII). Components experiencing increases greater than 0.05 percent are assigned a value of 1.0, components that experience changes less than an absolute value of 0.05 percent are assigned a value of 0.5, and components experiencing decreases greater than 0.05 percent are assigned a value of 0.0.

Table 2. Iowa Leading Indicators Index Components: Six Month Overview

Component Series Monthly Values^a	2008					
	June	July	August	September	October	November
AFPI ^b	↓ ^c					
Corn (cents per bushel)	481.4	508.3	526.7	542.3	546.9	546.2
Hog Profits (cents per pound)	10.3	10.6	11.2	11.4	11.5	11.8
Soybeans (cents per bushel)	1176.2	1227.1	1262.6	1281.1	1276.7	1267.0
Cattle Profits (cents per pound)	-3.6	-3.6	-3.8	-4.4	-5.4	-6.3
Iowa Stock Market Index (10=1984-86)	↓	63.49	62.80	62.49	62.03	60.57
Yield Spread (10-year less 3-month)	↑	2.21	2.35	2.14	2.54	3.12
Building Permits	↓	747	702	686	659	652
Average Weekly Unemployment Claims ^d	↓	3,791	3,921	4,051	4,213	4,307
Average Weekly Manufacturing Hours	↓	41.3	41.1	40.9	40.6	40.4
New Orders Index (percent)	↓	56.0	53.4	51.0	48.2	46.1
Diesel Fuel Consumption (mil gallons)	↓	57.17	56.88	56.80	56.47	56.30

Source: Tax Research and Program Analysis Section, Iowa Department of Revenue, produced January 2, 2009.

a. For all component series except for the yield spread (the only national series) the values represent 12-month backward moving averages.

b. The agricultural futures price index is computed as the sum of the standardized symmetric percent changes in the four series, each weighted by the commodity's annual share of Iowa cash farm income (updated August 15, 2008).

c. Arrows indicate the direction of the series' contribution to the ILII for the latest month.

d. Changes in unemployment claims are inverted when added to the ILII, thus a negative change in the series contributes positively to the index.

ILII Components

- **Yield spread:** Difference between the yield on 10-year Treasury bonds and 3-month Treasury notes. During November, the yield spread increased as the long-term rate fell 28 basis points while the short-term rate sank 50 basis points. This component contributed 0.05 to the ILII.
- **Agricultural futures price index:** Composite measure of cattle, hogs, corn and soybeans futures prices weighted by the respective share of annual Iowa cash farm income. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average of the futures price series, where the cattle and hogs series also incorporate estimates of break-even costs. During November 2008 this component contributed -0.02 to the ILII value as the 12-month moving average of expected hog profits increased while cattle profits, soybean future prices, and corn futures prices dropped, the latter showing a price decline for the first time in over two years.
- **New orders index:** Diffusion index measuring the share of purchasing managers in Iowa reporting increases in orders received for manufacturing output. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average. The monthly new orders index value rose in November to 28.8 from October's 27.8, but remained far below the November 2007 value of 43.3. As a result of weak business conditions for both durable and nondurable manufacturing, particularly for those companies tied to exports, this component contributed -0.07 to the November 2008 ILII value.
- **Building permits:** Number of total permits issued in Iowa for the construction of residential housing units. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average. During November 2008 this component contributed -0.08 to the ILII value. November permits fell 28.6 percent below the number reported in November 2007, pushing the 12-month moving average down by 2.7 percent. November 2008 permits were 51.6 percent below the historical average for November, based on reports from 1998 through 2007.
- **Iowa stock market index:** Capitalization-weighted index of 36 Iowa-based or Iowa-concentrated publicly-traded companies. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average. In November 2008 eight of the 36 companies gained value and eight companies lost more than 25 percent of their value. The index contributed -0.16 to the ILII value.
- **Diesel fuel consumption:** Number of taxable gallons of diesel fuel sold in Iowa. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average. During November 2008 this component's contribution to the ILII value was -0.17 as diesel fuel consumption for the month decreased 10.2 percent relative to the prior year.
- **Average weekly manufacturing hours:** Weekly average of hours worked in the manufacturing sector in Iowa. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average. During November 2008 this component contributed -0.21 to the ILII value as November hours were 8.0 percent below the November 2007 report, pushing the 12-month moving average down by 0.7 percent. October hours were revised downward which led to a change in the ILII percentage change for October.
- **Average weekly unemployment claims:** Weekly average of initial claims for unemployment insurance in Iowa. Changes are calculated based on a 12-month moving average and are inverted when added to the ILII. During November 2008 this component contributed -0.26 to the ILII value with unemployment claims 98.5 percent above November 2007 claims. The large increase was due to layoffs in the manufacturing sector during the week of Thanksgiving.

Table 3. ILII Components and Standardization Factors for FY 2009

Iowa Leading Indicator Components	Standardization Factor
Agricultural Futures Price Index	0.117
Iowa Stock Market Index	0.060
Yield Spread	0.239
Building Permits	0.028
Unemployment Claims	0.032
Average Weekly Hours	0.300
New Orders Index	0.055
Diesel Fuel Consumption	0.168

Source: Tax Research and Program Analysis Section, Iowa Department of Revenue, produced August 15, 2008.

The standardization factors are the inverse of the standard deviation of the month-to-month changes in each component over the January 1999 to June 2008 period. These factors equalize the volatility of the contribution from each component and are normalized to one. The month-to-month changes are based on 12-month moving averages for all components except the yield spread, which is the only national series. The yield spread and new orders index changes are simple arithmetic changes; month-to-month changes for the rest of the components are computed as symmetric percentage changes. The factors are updated annually during the summer.

Comments

The Iowa Leading Indicators Index is designed to forecast the likely future direction of economic activity in the State of Iowa. The techniques used to build the ILII follow those used by The Conference Board to construct the national leading indicators index. A movement in the ILII for only one month does not produce a clear signal, rather it is necessary to consider the direction of the index over several consecutive months. The Conference Board considers a contraction signal in the national leading indicators index reliable when two conditions are met: 1. the index declines by at least two percent over a six month period (using an annual rate); and, 2. a majority of the individual components also decline over those six months (six-month diffusion index less than 50.0).

The Iowa Non-Farm Employment Coincident Index measures the change in non-farm employment of all workers in the State of Iowa. Changes are based on a 12-month moving average of employment and are computed as symmetric percentage changes. The index is designed to represent the current state of economic activity in Iowa.

The Employment Index and the ILII are constructed to have a value of 100 in the year 1999.