



WEEKLY ECONOMIC DIGEST

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES CONGRESS

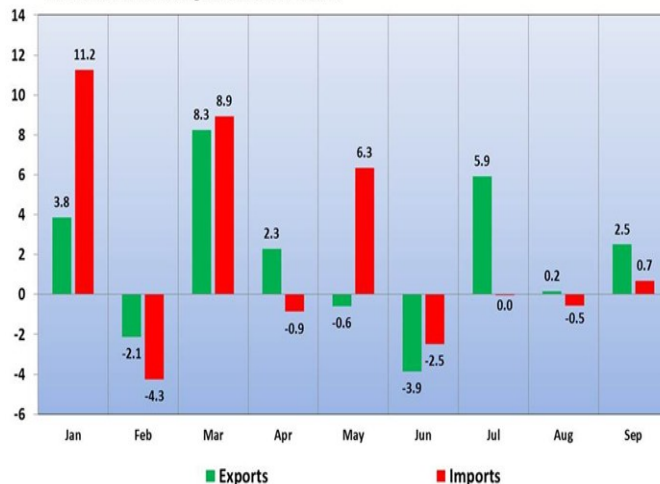
SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., CHAIRMAN

November 15, 2011

The Trade Gap Narrowed and Job Openings Picked Up in September

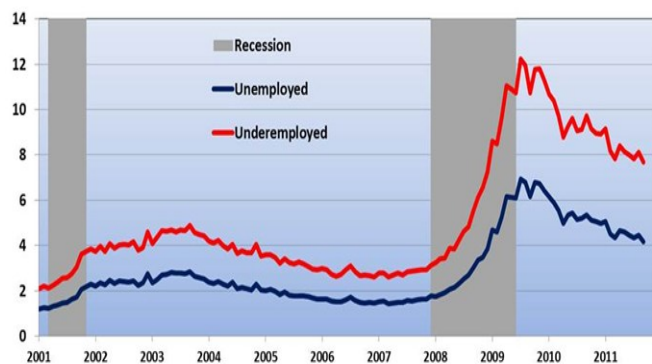
- The U.S. trade gap narrowed in September. Exports of goods and services increased by \$2.5 billion in September while imports increased by only \$0.7 billion (see chart). As a result, the U.S. trade deficit for goods and services (imports minus exports) declined by \$1.8 billion to \$43.1 billion. U.S. exports of goods increased by \$2.6 billion in September, largely reflecting increases in industrial supplies and materials (up \$1.4 billion), consumer goods (up \$0.8 billion), automotive goods (up \$0.2 billion) and other capital goods (up \$0.1 billion). Imports of goods rose by \$0.6 billion in September, reflecting increases in industrial supplies and materials (up \$0.9 billion), automotive goods (up \$0.5 billion) and foods, feeds and beverages (up \$0.2 billion) that were only partly offset by declines in imports of capital goods (down \$0.4 billion), consumer goods (down \$0.2 billion) and other goods (down \$0.6 billion).
- Job openings and hires increased in September. There were 3.4 million job openings in the private and public sectors on the last business day of September, up from 3.1 million openings at the end of August. Hires were also up, totaling 4.2 million jobs at the end of September. The private-sector job vacancy rate was 2.7 percent of total private-sector jobs, filled or unfilled (up 0.2 percentage point from August). The private-sector hiring rate was 3.6 percent of total private-sector employment at the end of September; that's up 0.1 percentage point from August. Even so, both the vacancy and hiring rates remain below the levels that prevailed at the start of the recession. On average, there were 4.2 unemployed workers and 7.7 underemployed workers for every job opening in September (see chart).

U.S. Exports and Imports of Goods and Services, 2011
Month-to-month change in billions of dollars



SOURCE: Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Number of People Unemployed or Underemployed per Job Opening
Monthly through September 2011



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor; and National Bureau of Economic Research.

NOTE: People are underemployed if they are either officially unemployed; are working part-jobs for economic reasons (slack conditions or couldn't find full-time work); or are marginally attached to the labor force in the sense that, while they are not in the labor force (and are thus excluded from the official unemployment rate), they are able and willing to take a job and have searched for work in the past year.

WEEKLY ECONOMIC DIGEST

THE WEEK AHEAD

DAY	SELECTED UPCOMING DATA RELEASES
Tuesday, Nov 15	Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services (October) Producer Price Indexes (October) Manufacturing and Trade Inventories and Sales (September)
Wednesday, Nov 16	Consumer Price Index (October) Industrial Production and Capacity Utilization (October)
Thursday, Nov 17	New Residential Construction (October)

THE ECONOMY AT A GLANCE

KEY INDICATORS	MONTH			QUARTER			YEAR	
	Oct	Sep	Aug	2011 Q3	2011 Q2	2011 Q1	2010	2009
<u>Economic Activity</u>								
Real gross domestic product	—	—	—	2.5	1.3	0.4	3.0	-3.5
Manufacturing production	n.a.	0.4	0.3	4.3	-0.1	7.2	5.4	-13.5
Factory utilization rate (percent of capacity)	n.a.	75.1	74.9	74.9	74.3	74.5	71.7	66.2
Civilian unemployment rate (percent of labor force)	9.0	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	8.9	9.6	9.3
Housing starts (thousands of units, annual rates)	n.a.	658	572	615	572	582	585	554
Light vehicle sales, domestic (millions of units, annual rates)	10.293	10.181	9.522	9.777	9.406	9.907	8.812	7.680
Retail & food service sales	n.a.	1.1	0.3	4.5	4.7	10.5	6.4	-7.0
Real disposable personal income	n.a.	-0.1	-0.4	-1.7	0.6	1.2	1.8	-2.3
Personal saving rate (percent of disposable income)	n.a.	3.6	4.1	4.1	5.1	5.0	5.3	5.1
<u>Inflation & Productivity</u>								
CPI-U inflation	n.a.	0.3	0.4	3.1	4.1	5.2	1.6	-0.3
Core CPI-U inflation	n.a.	0.1	0.2	2.7	2.5	1.7	1.0	1.7
Output per hour, nonfarm bus.	—	—	—	3.1	-0.1	-0.6	4.1	2.3
Unit labor costs, nonfarm bus.	—	—	—	-2.4	2.8	6.2	-2.0	-0.7
Employment Cost Index	—	—	—	1.2	2.8	2.4	1.9	1.7

Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce; and Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Notes: Except where otherwise noted, values in the table represent simple percent changes for monthly data and percent changes at annual rates for quarterly data. Core CPI-U inflation is the percentage change in the CPI-U excluding food and energy prices as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Employment Cost Index covers all civilian workers and the quarterly change is measured from the last month of the previous quarter to the last month of the indicated quarter. 'n.a.' denotes that data are not yet available. '—' denotes that data are not available monthly.