

# US Business Cycle Risk Report

18 June 2023

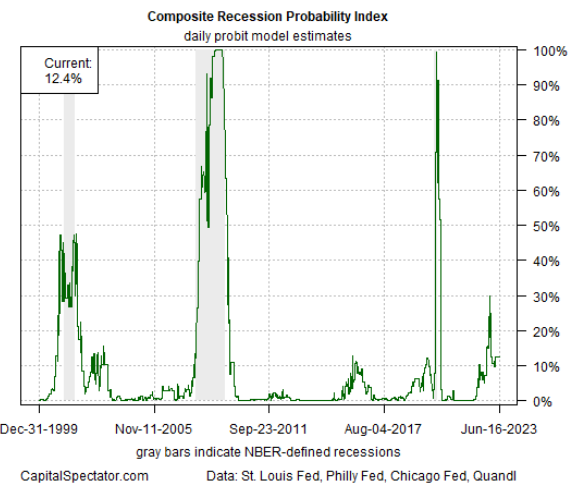
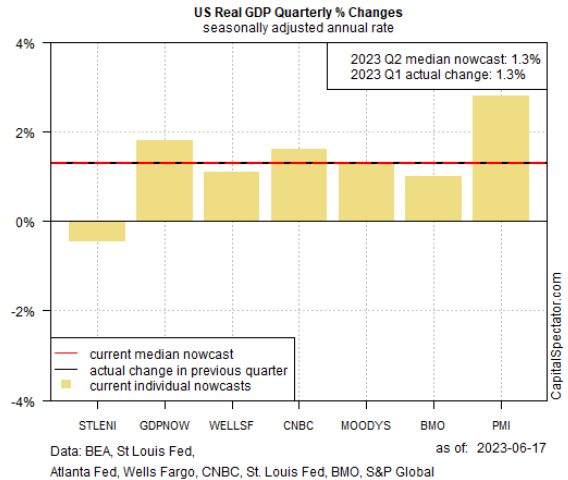
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With a bit more than half of the second-quarter data published (see p. 12), the case is strengthening for expecting that the upcoming second-quarter GDP report will show a modest economic expansion rolls on. BCRR's revised nowcast for Q2 output indicates a 1.3% increase (seasonally adjusted annual rate) via the median of several estimates (see chart at right and p. 10). That's a sluggish pace and it's been revised down recently, but the current nowcast suggests that next month's initial GDP estimate from the government will align with other indicators that point to low recession risk.

BCRR's primary recession indicator still reflects low recession risk. CRPI's current estimate of the probability that the US is in recession is roughly 12% (see chart below and p. 9). Several risk factors are keeping this indicator from falling into the "low risk" zone – weak manufacturing, for instance. But until/if the probability of recession via CRPI rises further it's highly likely that the economy will continue to expand. Note that CRPI spiked in late-2022/early 2023 to nearly 30%, but quickly retreated, implying that the



recession warning was a false alarm. CRPI never got close to/rose above the 50%-plus level, and remains well below that mark – a sign that recession is still nowhere on the immediate horizon.

This week will stress test the case for expecting a slow/sluggish expansion endures. First up is housing starts for May (Tues., June 20). Economists see new residential construction steady at a middling level vs. the past two years. Friday's PMI survey data (June 22) offers an early look at June's economic profile. Economists expect the Composite PMI (a GDP proxy) will ease slightly, but continue to indicate modest growth.

**Mon, Jun 19** Housing Market Index (Jun)

**Tues, Jun 20** Housing starts (May)

**Wed, Jun 21** No major US economic releases scheduled

**Thurs, Jun 22** Jobless claims (wk 6/17), Chicago Fed Nat'l Activity Index (May), existing home sales (May), Leading Economic Index (May)

**Fri, Jun 23** Composite/Mfg/Services PMIs (Jun)

## Primary Business Cycle Indicators

Indicator: Date	Current Data	Recession Probability %	Page
ETI 3mo avg: May	47.60	19.5	2-3
EMI 3mo avg: May	-0.60	17.2	2-3
MMRI: Jun 16	16.50	0.0	4
CFNAI-MA3: Apr	-0.22	12.4	5
ADS: Jun 10	-0.15	2.5	6
CRPI: Jun 16		12.4	9

Indicator: Date	Current Data	Page
GDP: Q2 2023	1.3	10

## Alternative Business Cycle Indicators

Indicator: Date	Current Data	Recession Probability %	Page
ETI monthly: May	57.10	4.7	2-3
EMI monthly: May	0.10	10.9	2-3
CFNAI monthly: Apr	0.07	2.6	5
WEI weekly: Jun 10	0.93	9.1	7
Short CRPI: Jun 16		7.8	8

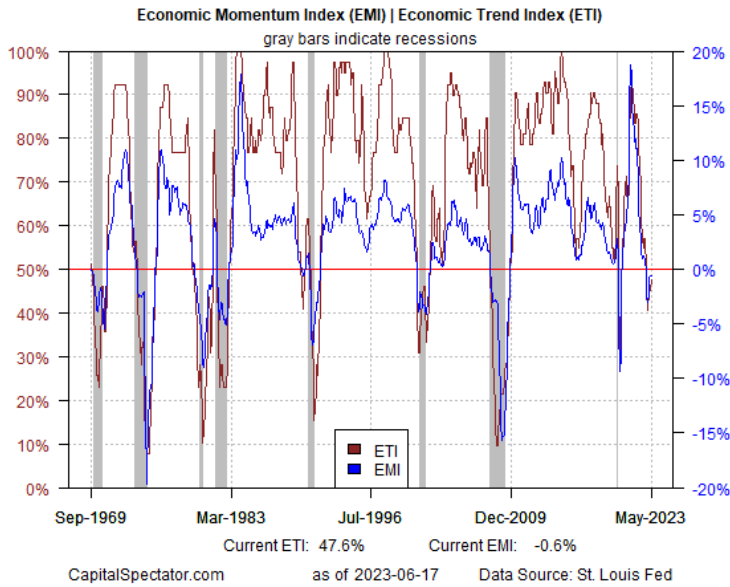
Indicator: Date	Current Data	Page
MTI: Jun 10	0.25	11

color code indicators	
low risk	medium-high risk
medium-low risk	high risk
neutral (MTI only)	

See parameter rule definitions on p. 13

Key economic indicators: p. 12

### ETI and EMI



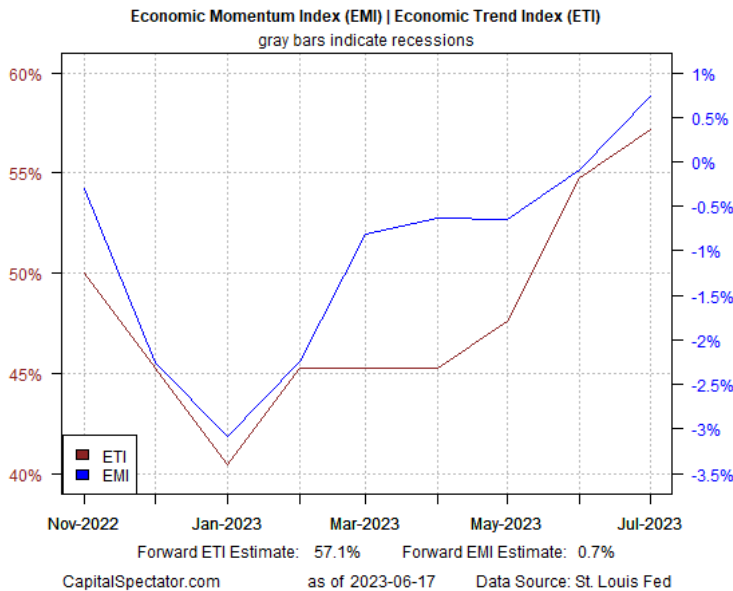
ETI is a diffusion index (i.e., an index that tracks the proportion of components with positive values) for the 14 leading/coincident indicators (see p. 11 ETI values reflect the 3-month average of the transformation rules defined in the table on p. 9. EMI measures the same set of indicators/transformation rules based on the 3-month average of the median monthly percentage change for the 14 indicators.

ETI values above (below) 50% align with growth (recession). EMI values above (below) 0% align with growth (recession).

The methodology for calculating ETI and EMI is detailed in:

Nowcasting The Business Cycle:  
A Practical Guide For Spotting Business  
Cycle Peaks  
(2014, Beta Publishing).

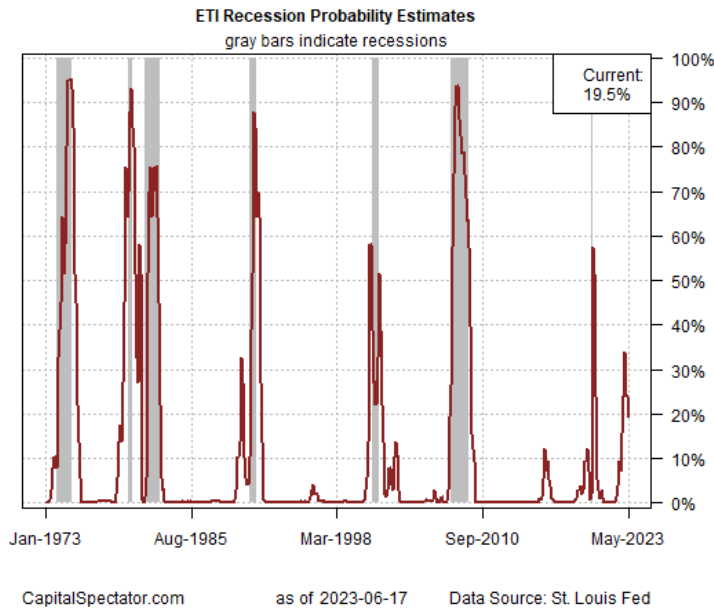
### Near-term projections: ETI and EMI



For near-term projections of ETI and EMI, the missing data points are estimated with an ARIMA model.

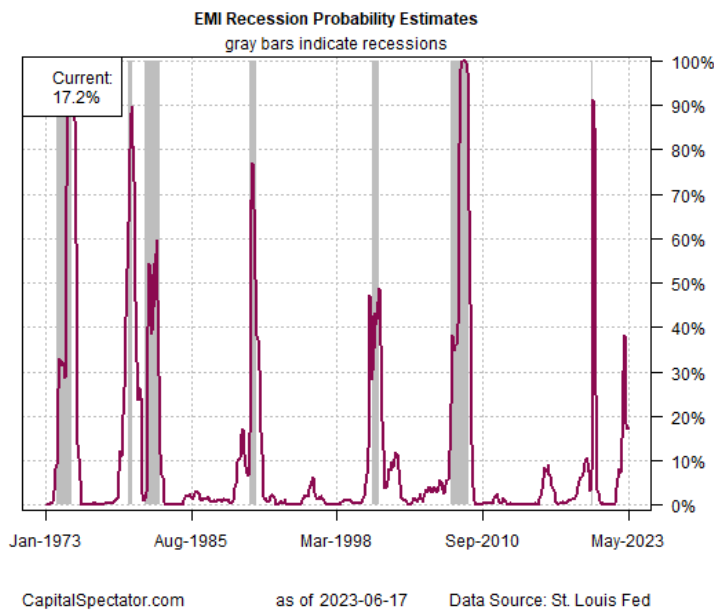
Forecasts are always suspect, of course, but recent projections of ETI & EMI for the near-term future have proven to be relatively reliable guesstimates vs. the full set of published numbers that followed. That's not surprising, given the broadly diversified nature of ETI & EMI. Predicting individual components, by contrast, is prone to far more uncertainty in the short run. The assumption here is that while any one forecast for a given indicator will likely miss the mark, the errors may cancel out to some degree by aggregating a broad set of predictions. That's a reasonable assumption based on the historical record for the forecasts.

### Recession risk probability: ETI



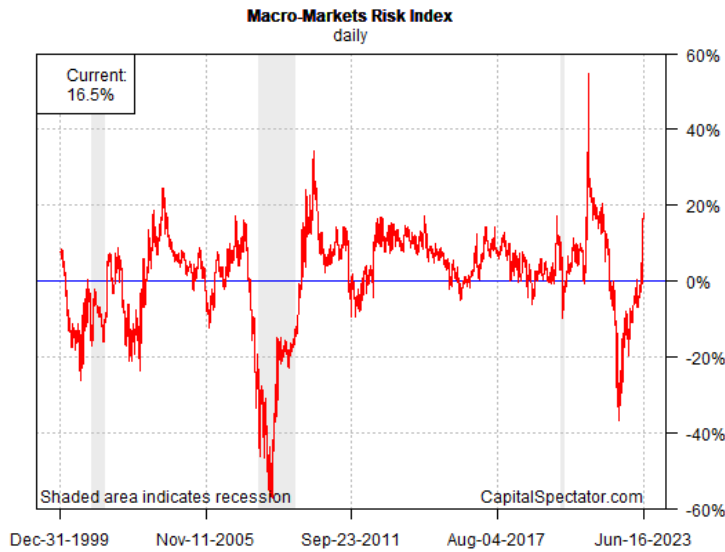
*A probit model translates ETI's values into recession-risk probabilities on a monthly basis by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER's recession dates.*

### Recession risk probability: EMI



*A probit model translates EMI's values into recession-risk probabilities on a monthly basis by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER's recession dates.*

### Macro-Markets Risk Index



Data: Treasury.gov, St. Louis Fed

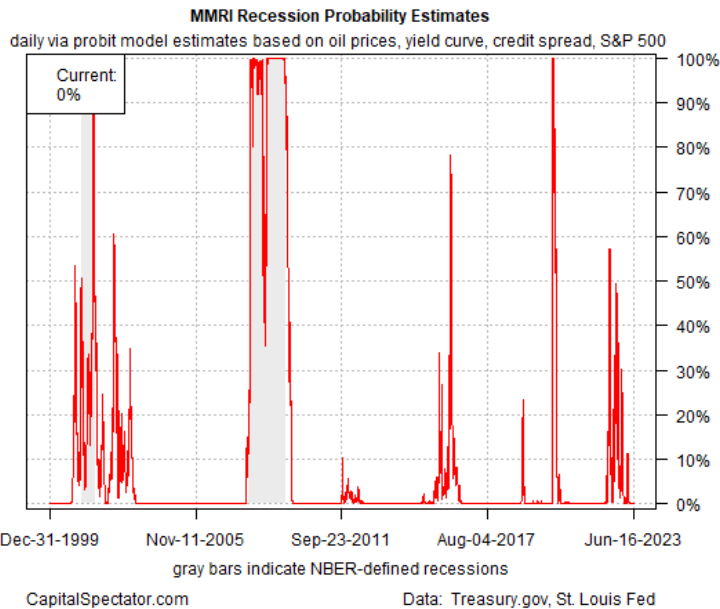
The Macro-Markets Risk Index (MMRI) is designed as a real-time proxy for business-cycle risk based on four data sets:

- **US stocks** (S&P 500), 252-trading day % change
- **High yield credit spread** (BoFA ML US High Yield Master II Option-Adjusted Spread) inverted 252-trading day % change
- **Treasury yield curve** (10-yr Treasury yield less 3-month T-bill yield)
- **Oil prices** (US benchmark: WTI) inverted 252-trading day % change

Analyzing the market-price components of ETI and EMI separately offers a real-time approximation of macro conditions, according to the “wisdom of the crowd.”

Why look to the financial and commodity markets for insight into the economic trend? Timely signals. Conventional economic reports are published with a time lag. This analysis is intended for use as a supplement for developing real-time perspective until a complete data set is published for updating the monthly economic profile.

### Recession risk probability: MMRI



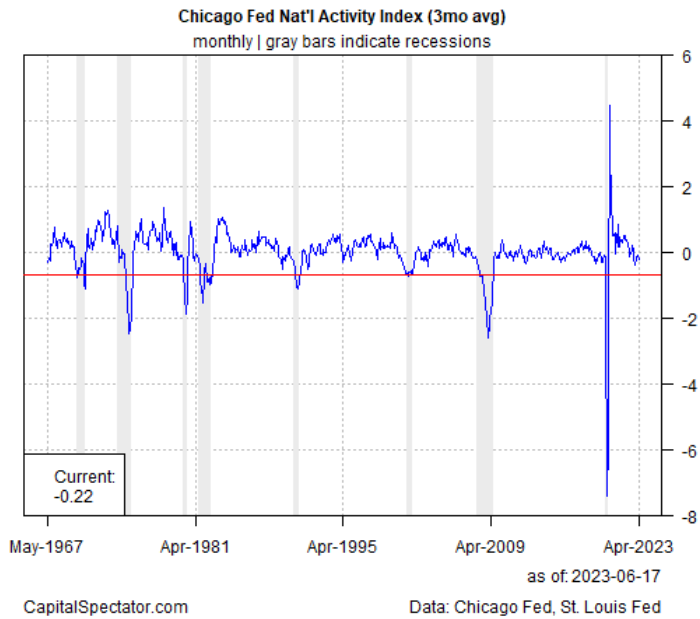
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Data: Treasury.gov, St. Louis Fed

A decline below 0% in MMRI (horizontal blue line in to chart at left) indicates that recession risk is elevated while readings above 0% imply that the economy will expand in the near-term future.

A probit model translates MMRI’s values into recession-risk probabilities on a daily basis by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER’s recession dates.

### Chicago Fed Nat'l Activity Index



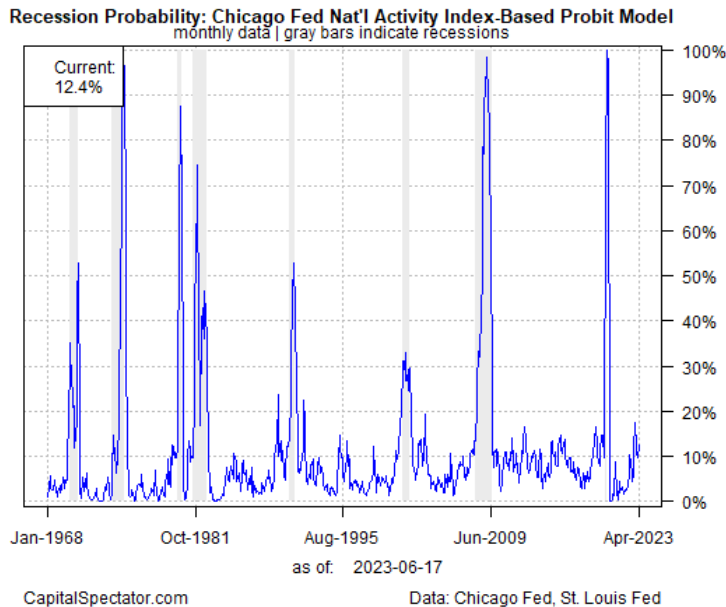
The Chicago Fed National Activity Index is a weighted average of 85 existing monthly indicators of national economic activity. It is constructed to have an average value of zero and a standard deviation of one. Since economic activity tends toward trend growth rate over time, a positive index reading corresponds to growth above trend and a negative index reading corresponds to growth below trend.

When the three-month moving average of the index (CFNAI-MA3) moves below  $-0.70$  (horizontal red line in top chart at left) 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.

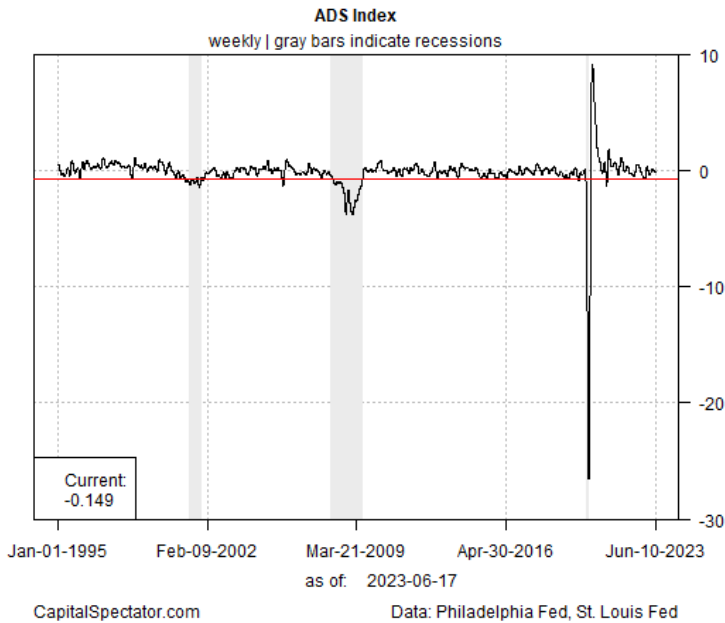
For additional information, see the Chicago Federal Reserve's web site: [www.chicagofed.org](http://www.chicagofed.org)

A probit model translates CFNAI-MA3 values into recession-risk probabilities on a monthly basis by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER's recession dates.

### Recession risk probability: Chicago Fed Nat'l Activity Index



### ADS Business Conditions Index

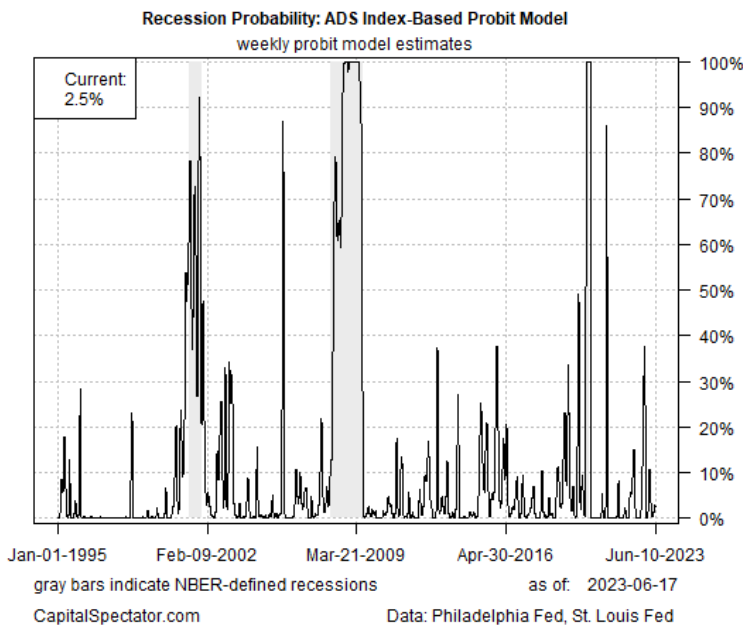


The Aruoba-Diebold-Scotti (ADS) Business Conditions Index is designed to track real business conditions at high frequency. Its underlying (seasonally adjusted) economic indicators (weekly initial jobless claims; monthly payroll employment, industrial production, personal income less transfer payments, manufacturing and trade sales; and quarterly real GDP) blend high- and low-frequency information and stock and flow data. The ADS Index is updated as data on the underlying components are released.

The average value of the ADS index is zero. Progressively bigger positive values indicate progressively better-than-average conditions, whereas progressively more negative values indicate progressively worse-than-average conditions. A value of -3.0, for example, would indicate business conditions significantly worse than at any time in either the 1990-91 or the 2001 recession, during which the ADS index never dropped below -2.0.

Analysis by the San Francisco Fed advises that the “optimal recession threshold” for the ADS Index is -0.80, indicated by the horizontal red line in the top chart at left. For details on this analysis, see: “Diagnosing Recessions” by Oscar Jordà in the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Economic Letter (Feb. 10, 2010) at: [www.frbsf.org](http://www.frbsf.org)

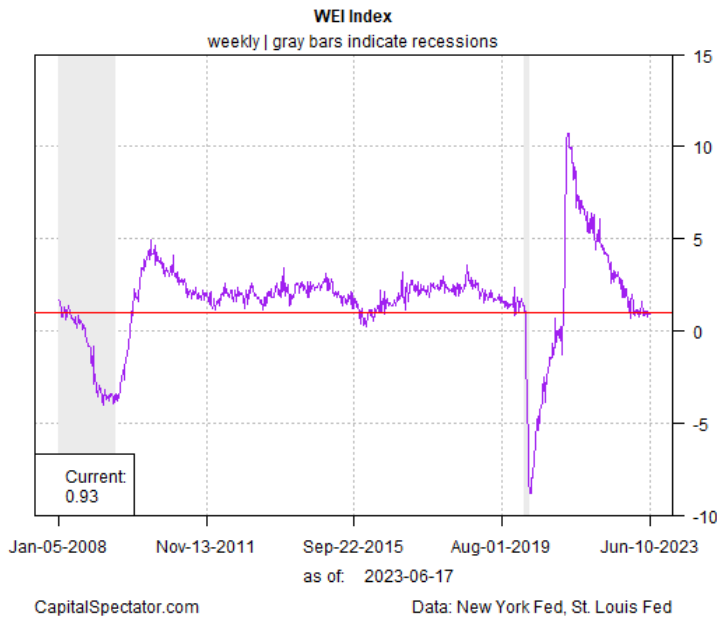
### Recession risk probability: ADS Business Conditions Index



For additional information about the ADS Index, see the Philadelphia Federal Reserve’s web site: [www.philadelphiafed.org](http://www.philadelphiafed.org)

A probit model translates ADS Index values into recession-risk probabilities on a daily basis by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER’s recession dates.

### Weekly Economic Index



The Weekly Economic Index (WEI) tracks real economic activity at a relatively high frequency. It's comprised of ten daily and weekly series covering consumer behavior, the labor market, and production.

The index's design was inspired by research published in 2013 by the Council of Economic Advisers: [bit.ly/2VD05Oc](https://bit.ly/2VD05Oc)

The New York Federal Reserve, which developed and maintains WEI, advises: "The WEI is scaled to the four-quarter GDP growth rate; for example, if the WEI reads -2 percent and the current level of the WEI persists for an entire quarter, we would expect, on average, GDP that quarter to be 2 percent lower than a year previously."

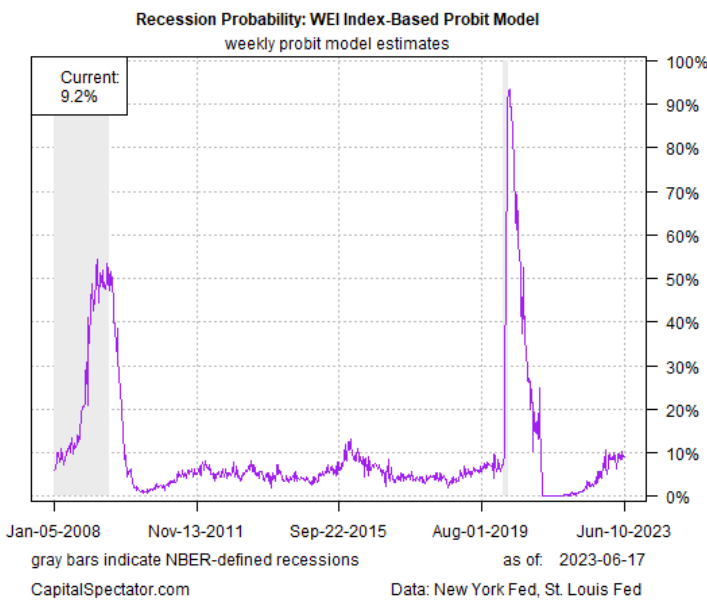
By that standard, WEI values below 1 (red line in top chart) suggest that a recession has started, based on reviewing the benchmark's history since 2008.

For additional information about the ADS Index, see the New York Reserve's web site:

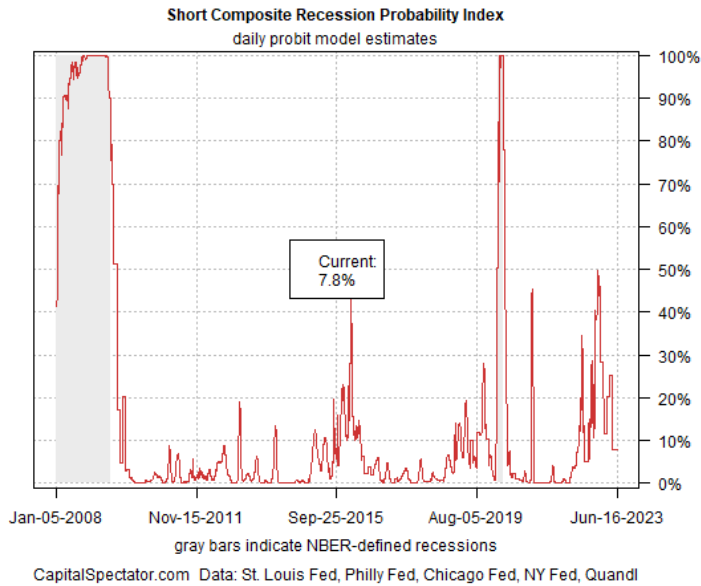
[nyfed.org/35gnb0I](https://nyfed.org/35gnb0I)

A probit model translates WEI values into recession-risk probabilities by comparing the index with the historical record of NBER's recession dates.

### Recession risk probability: WEI Index



## Recession risk probability: Short CRPI



The Short Composite Recession Probability Index (CRPI) reflects the median recession probability via probit modeling of the following indexes:

1. ADS Index: (p. 6)
2. CFNAI (monthly) (p. 5)
3. Weekly Economic Index (p. 8)
4. MMRI (p. 4)
5. ETI (monthly) (pp 2-3)
6. EMI (monthly) (pp 2-3)

Short CRPI is designed as robust measure of US recession risk that's expected to benefit from the advantages of combining forecasts/nowcasts. The literature is long and deep in this niche, starting with "The combination of forecasts" by J. Bates and C.W.J. Granger in *Operations Research Quarterly*, 20:451-468, 1969.

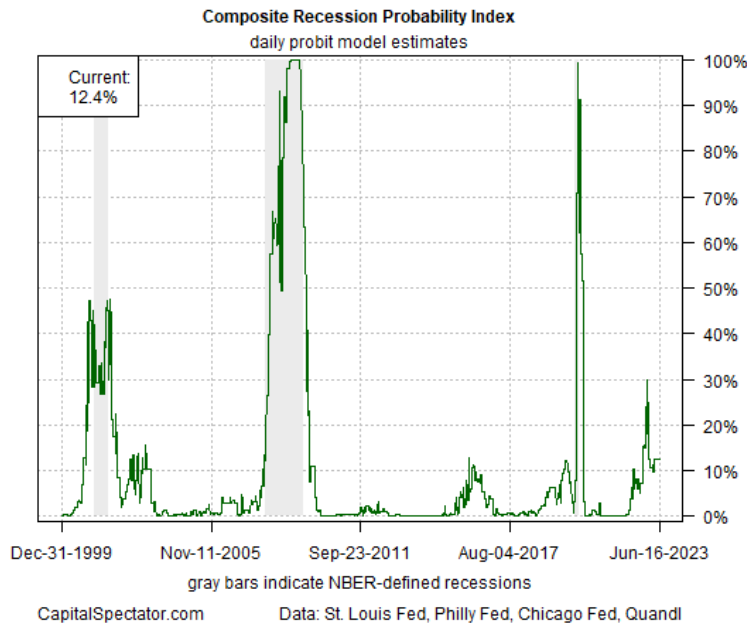
In contrast with the standard CRPI (p. 9), which is designed to estimate recession risk probability during the onset of a "normal" business cycle (in contrast with the sharp, sudden arrival of the Covid-19 triggered recession of 2020), the Short CRPI react quickly to shifting economic conditions.

Overall, combining forecasts/nowcasts typically delivers more reliable signals by reducing dependence on any one model. That's because every model is flawed in some degree. Combining the forecasts/nowcasts based on models with different assumptions, parameters, and inputs is a reasonably reliable methodology for improving output accuracy relative to any one forecast/nowcast from a single model.

For details on the literature, see "Combining forecasts: A review and annotated bibliography" by Robert T. Clemen (*Journal of Forecasting*, 5(4):559-583, 1989) and "Forecast combinations" by Allan Timmermann (*Handbook of Economic Forecasting*, 1:135-196, 2006).



## Recession risk probability: CRPI



The Composite Recession Probability Index (CRPI) reflects the median recession probability via probit modeling of the following indexes:

1. ETI (pp. 2-3)
2. EMI (pp. 2-3)
3. MMRI (p. 4)
4. CFNAI (p. 5)
5. ADS Index (p. 6)

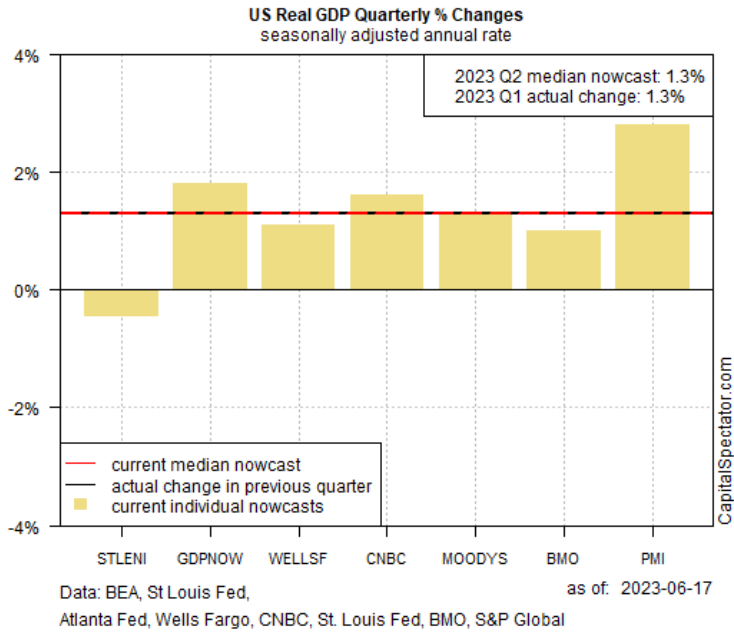
CRPI is designed as robust measure of US recession risk that's expected to benefit from the advantages of combining forecasts/nowcasts. The literature is long and deep in this niche, starting with "The combination of forecasts" by J. Bates and C.W.J. Granger in *Operations Research Quarterly*, 20:451-468, 1969.

In contrast with the Short CRPI (p. 9), which is designed to react quickly to shifting economic conditions, the standard CRPI presented here is expected to provide a more reliable estimate of recession risk during "normal" business cycles, i.e., the onset of recessions that arise organically from standard macro and financial factors that prevailed prior to the Covid-19 triggered recession in 2020.

The main takeaway: combining forecasts/nowcasts typically delivers more reliable signals by reducing dependence on any one model. That's because every model is flawed in some degree. Combining the forecasts/nowcasts based on models with different assumptions, parameters, and inputs is a reasonably reliable methodology for improving output accuracy relative to any one forecast/nowcast from a single model.

For details on the literature, see "Combining forecasts: A review and annotated bibliography" by Robert T. Clemen (*Journal of Forecasting*, 5(4):559/583, 1989) and "Forecast combinations" by Allan Timmermann (*Handbook of Economic Forecasting*, 1:135-196, 2006).

### Gross Domestic Product Nowcasts



The chart at left summarizes several estimates of the quarterly % change for the next GDP report. For context, the current reported GDP % change for the previous quarter is shown, as calculated by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (solid black line).

The GDP data doesn't formally factor into the econometric recession-risk estimates for BCRR; rather, the GDP profiling is presented for additional context for assessing the near-term outlook for economic activity.

The current projection reflects the median estimate of the following eight models based on the latest revisions:

*STLENI*: A nowcast model developed by St. Louis Fed. For details, see: [stlouisfed.org](http://stlouisfed.org)

*GDPNOW*: a nowcast model developed by the Atlanta Fed. For details, see: [frbatlanta.org](http://frbatlanta.org)

*WELLSF*: The current quarter's estimate from economists at Wells Fargo. For details, see: [www.wellsfargo.com/com/insights/](http://www.wellsfargo.com/com/insights/)

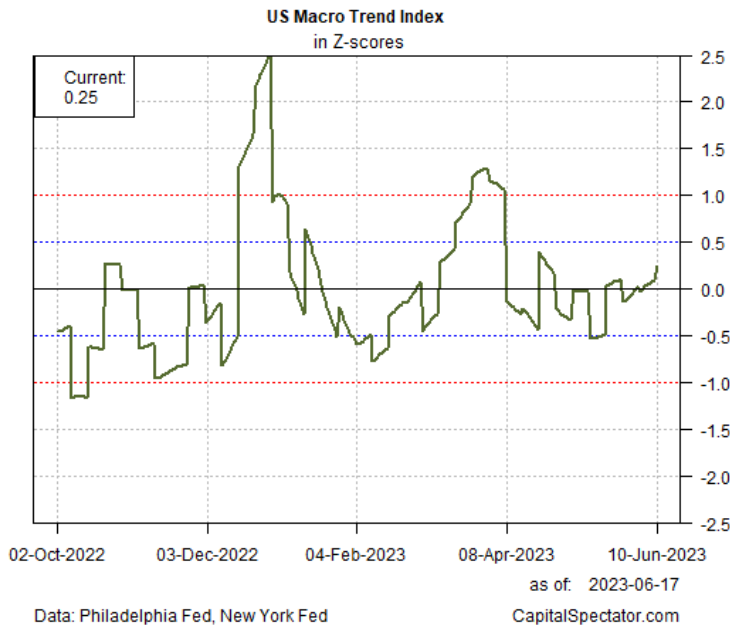
*CNBC*: The median estimate of Wall Street analysts via CNBC. For details, see: [cnbc.com](http://cnbc.com)

*MOODYS*: Current quarter's estimate based on econometric model run by Moody's Analytics. For details, see: [economy.com](http://economy.com)

*BMO*: Current quarter's estimate from economists at BMO. For details, see: [economics.bmo.com](http://economics.bmo.com)

*PMI*: Current US Composite PMI, a survey-based GDP proxy that's updated monthly, published by S&P Global. For details, see: [pmi.spglobal.com](http://pmi.spglobal.com)

## US Macro Trend Index



The US Macro Trend Index (MTI) measures the strength of the directional bias of US economic activity. MTI reflects analysis of two business cycle indexes: ADS Index, published by the Philly Fed, and the Weekly Economic Index (WEI) via the New York Fed. Each index takes a different approach to monitoring US economic activity in real time, using a variety of indicators, some of which are published at daily and weekly frequencies. The goal with MTI is to quantify the degree of deceleration and acceleration in the overall macro trend via ADS and WEI. As such, MTI is not a measure of growth or contraction per se; rather, MTI is an index quantifying the strength or weakness of the overall trend.

MTI is a tool for developing context for assessing the overall strength or weakness of the current economic trend and quantifying the trend's evolution.

MTI is designed as follows:

1. Calculate the mean of the 1-, 2-, 5- and 10-period differences for ADS.
2. Calculate the mean of the 1- and 2-period differences for WEI.
3. Calculate the mean for 1 and 2; transform to Z-scores on a rolling 1-year basis.

Note: MTI is not used for any any other business-cycle calculations in US-BCRR.

For details on the underlying ADS and WEI indices, see:

[tinyurl.com/yu4ncyav](https://tinyurl.com/yu4ncyav)

[tinyurl.com/dbtp8djx](https://tinyurl.com/dbtp8djx)

### ETI and EMI Component Indicators

US Economic Profile						
June 18, 2023						
	Indicator	Transformation	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
1	Labor Market Index <sup>1</sup>	1 yr % change	-0.6%	0.5%	-1.1%	NA
1a	Private non-farm payrolls	1 yr % change	2.7%	2.8%	2.7%	NA
1b	Initial Jobless Claims <sup>2</sup>	1 yr % chg (inverted)	-11.0%	-9.9%	-8.2%	-20.9%
1c	Employ.-to-Unemploy. Ratio	1 yr % change	3.9%	7.5%	-0.4%	NA
1d	Index of Agg. Weekly Hours <sup>3</sup>	1 yr % change	2.1%	1.7%	1.7%	NA
2	US Stock Market (S&P 500) <sup>2</sup>	1 yr % change	-9.6%	-6.1%	2.6%	10.8%
3	Real personal income ex current transfer receipts	1 yr % change	1.1%	1.2%	NA	NA
4	ISM Manufacturing Index	% +/- neutral: 50 <sup>5</sup>	-7.4%	-5.8%	-6.2%	NA
5	Spot Oil (W. Tex. Intermed.) <sup>2</sup>	1 yr % chg (inverted)	32.5%	21.9%	34.7%	38.3%
6	Consumer Spending Index <sup>6</sup>	1 yr % change	-0.4%	-0.6%	-2.4%	NA
6a	Real Pers. Cons. Expend.	1 yr % change	2.0%	2.3%	NA	NA
6b	Real Retail Sales	1 yr % change	-2.7%	-3.6%	-2.4%	NA
7	Treasury Yield Curve (10 yr Note less 3 mo T-bill) <sup>2</sup>	current monthly spread <sup>7</sup>	-10.3%	-14.6%	-15.7%	NA
8	High-Yield Bond Spread (BofA ML US HY Option-Adjusted Spread) <sup>9</sup>	1 yr % chg (inverted)	-23.8%	-25.0%	-4.5%	10.9%
9	Real Monetary Base (M0) University of Michigan	1 yr % change	-13.5%	-9.5%	NA	NA
10	Consumer Sentiment Index	1 yr % change	4.4%	-2.6%	1.4%	27.8%
11	Industrial Production	1 yr % change	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	NA
12	New Residential Bldg. Permits	1 yr % change	-23.4%	-21.1%	NA	NA
13	Real Mfg. & Trade Sales <sup>8</sup>	1 yr % change	0.4%	NA	NA	NA
14	ISM Non-Mfg. Index <sup>4</sup>	% +/- neutral: 50 <sup>5</sup>	10.8%	4.0%	3.0%	NA

1. Average 1-year % changes of payrolls, jobless claims, employed-to-unemployed ratio, and weekly hours index.  
 2. Average monthly data based on daily closes.  
 3. Production and Nonsupervisory Employees: Total Private Industries.  
 4. Data series begins Jan. 2008.  
 5. A neutral reading is assumed to be 50. The transformation is calculated as the % deviation for each monthly reading relative to 50.  
 6. Average of 1-year % changes for real personal consumption expenditures & real retail sales.  
 7. Monthly difference: 10yr less 3mo % rates, multiplied by 10.  
 8. Manufacturing & wholesale sales via BEA. Note: retail sales excluded.  
 9. Average monthly data. Moody's BAA-AAA spread through Nov-1997, HY spread data thereafter.

Note: The Labor Market Index is considered as 1 indicator, comprised of the four indicators in green cells. The same applies to the Consumer Spending Index, which is comprised of 2 indicators.

NA = data not yet available from source

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The Economic Trend & Momentum indexes are aggregates of 14 economic and financial indicators, as shown in the table at left. A complete data set for each month tends to lag by one to three months, depending on the indicator. Manufacturing and trade sales suffer the longest lag. By contrast, the market figures are available in real time.

To calculate ETI and EMI in the graphs and analysis above, missing data points must be estimated. To fill in the missing data points, an ARIMA model is used.

**Standard Methodology Parameter Rules for Summary Table on Page 1:**

<i>Business Cycle Index Values</i>							<b>GDP Nowcast</b>
		<b>ETI</b>	<b>EMI</b>	<b>MMRI</b>	<b>CFNAI</b>	<b>ADS</b>	
	low risk	>80%:100%	> 5%	> 5%	> 0.2	> 0.2	> +3.5%
	medium-low risk	55%:80%	1%:5%	0%:5%	-0.2:+0.2	-0.2:+0.2	+1.5%:+3.5%
	medium-high risk	45%: < 55%	-1%: < 1%	-5%: < 0%	-0.7: < -0.2	-0.8: < -0.2	0%:<+1.5%
	high risk	< 45%	< -1%	< -5%	< -0.7	< -0.8	<0%

<i>Recession Risk Probability Estimates</i>							
		<b>ETI</b>	<b>EMI</b>	<b>MMRI</b>	<b>CFNAI</b>	<b>ADS</b>	<b>CRPI</b>
	low risk	0%:10%					
	medium-low risk	> 10%:30%					
	medium-high risk	> 30%:50%					
	high risk	> 50%					

**Short-Focus Methodology Parameter Rules for Summary Table on Page 1:**

<i>Business Cycle Index Values</i>							
		<b>WEI weekly</b>	<b>ETI monthly</b>	<b>EMI monthly</b>	<b>MMRI</b>	<b>CFNAI monthly</b>	<b>ADS</b>
	low risk	>3	>80%:100%	> 5%	> 5%	> 0.2	> 0.2
	medium-low risk	2:3	55%:80%	1%:5%	0%:5%	-0.2:+0.2	-0.2:+0.2
	medium-high risk	1:2	45%: < 55%	-1%: < 1%	-5%: < 0%	-0.7: < -0.2	-0.8: < -0.2
	high risk	<1	< 45%	< -1%	< -5%	< -0.7	< -0.8

<i>Recession Risk Probability Estimates</i>								
		<b>WEI weekly</b>	<b>ETI</b>	<b>EMI</b>	<b>MMRI</b>	<b>CFNAI</b>	<b>ADS</b>	<b>CRPI</b>
	low risk	0%:10%						
	medium-low risk	> 10%:30%						
	medium-high risk	> 30%:50%						
	high risk	> 50%						

<b>MTI Risk Probability Estimates</b>		
	low risk	> +1.0
	medium-low risk	> +0.5: +1.0
	neutral	+0.5: -0.5
	medium-high risk	< -0.5: -1.0
	high risk	< -1.0