

Economic Update, November 21, 2025

Submitted by Madison Thorn

Summary:

In August, the U.S. goods and services trade deficit decreased to \$59.6 billion, down from \$78.2 billion in July, as exports rose slightly to \$280.8 billion and imports fell to \$340.4 billion. Manufactured goods orders increased 1.4 percent in August after two months of declines, while shipments fell 0.1 percent and inventories were nearly unchanged. Non-farm payroll employment increased by 119,000 in September, while the unemployment rate stood at 4.4 percent. Real average hourly earnings were unchanged from August to September, and real average weekly earnings declined 0.1 percent. For the week ending November 15, the Weekly Economic Index from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas measured 2.29 percent, and initial unemployment claims declined to 220,000. Mortgage applications for new home purchases decreased 2.6 percent year over year, while existing home sales rose 1.2 percent in October. The National Association of Home Builders Housing Market Index increased slightly in November to 38, reflecting continued uncertainty and high rates of builder price reductions. Construction spending rose 0.2 percent in August but was 1.6 percent lower than a year earlier.

Federal Government Indicators and Reports:

Bureau of Economic Analysis

Wednesday, [International Trade](#): “The goods and services deficit was \$59.6 billion in August, down \$18.6 billion from \$78.2 billion in July, revised. . . . August exports were \$280.8 billion, \$0.2 billion more than July exports. August imports were \$340.4 billion, \$18.4 billion less than July imports.”



Bureau of Labor Statistics

Thursday, [Employment Situation](#): “Total nonfarm payroll employment edged up by 119,000 in September but has shown little change since April. . . . The unemployment rate, at 4.4 percent, changed little in September. Employment continued to trend up in health care, food services and drinking places, and social assistance. Job losses occurred in transportation and warehousing and in federal government.”

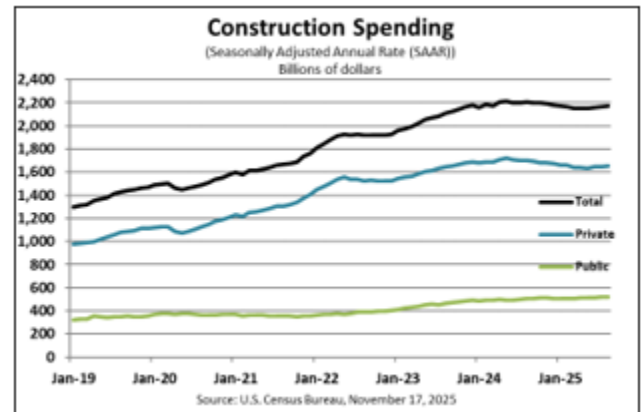
Friday, [Real Earnings](#): “Real average hourly earnings for all employees were unchanged from August to September, seasonally adjusted. . . . This result stems from an increase of 0.2 percent in

average hourly earnings combined with an increase of 0.3 percent in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). . . . Real average weekly earnings decreased 0.1 percent over the month due to no change in real average hourly earnings combined with no change in the average workweek.”

Census Bureau

Monday, [Construction Spending](#): “Construction spending during August 2025 was estimated at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$2,169.5 billion, 0.2 percent above the revised July estimate of \$2,165.0 billion. The August figure is 1.6 percent below the August 2024 estimate of \$2,205.3 billion. During the first eight months of this year, construction spending amounted to \$1,438.0 billion, 1.8 percent below the \$1,463.7 billion for the same period in 2024.”

CONSTRUCTION SPENDING	
AUGUST 2025	\$2,169.5 billion
JULY 2025 (revised)	\$2,165.0 billion
Next release: TBD	
Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR)	
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, November 17, 2025	



Tuesday, [Manufacturers’ Shipments, Inventories, & Orders](#): “New orders for manufactured goods in August, up following two consecutive monthly decreases, increased \$8.4 billion or 1.4 percent to \$612.0 billion. . . . This followed a 1.3 percent July decrease. Shipments, down following three consecutive monthly increases, decreased \$0.8 billion or 0.1 percent to \$607.7 billion. This followed a 0.9 percent July increase. . . . Inventories, up ten of the last eleven months, increased \$0.2 billion or virtually unchanged to \$948.4 billion. This followed a 0.2 percent July increase. The inventories-to-shipments ratio was 1.56, unchanged from July.”

Department of Labor

Thursday, [Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims](#): “In the week ending November 15, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 220,000, a decrease of 8,000 from the previous week's level. The 4-week moving average was 224,250, a decrease of 3,000 from the previous week's average. . . . The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 1.3 percent for the week ending November 8, unchanged from the previous week's rate. The advance number for seasonally adjusted insured unemployment during the week ending November 8 was 1,974,000, an increase of 28,000 from the previous week's level. This is the highest level for insured unemployment since November 6, 2021 when it was 2,041,000.”

Economic Indicators and Confidence:

Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

Thursday, [Weekly Economic Index](#): “The WEI is currently 2.29 percent, scaled to four-quarter GDP growth, for the week ended Nov. 15 and 1.94 percent for Nov. 8. The 13-week moving average is 2.27 percent. This is compared with 2.08 percent four-quarter GDP growth through second quarter 2025.”

University of Michigan

Friday, [Index of Consumer Sentiment](#): “Consumer sentiment was little changed this month with a 2.6 index point decrease from October that is within the margin of error. After the federal shutdown ended, sentiment lifted slightly from its mid-month reading. However, consumers remain frustrated about the persistence of high prices and weakening incomes. . . . Year-ahead inflation expectations inched down from 4.6 percent last month to 4.5 percent this month. This marks three consecutive months of declines, but short-run inflation expectations still remain above the 3.3 percent seen in January. Long-run inflation expectations softened from 3.9 percent last month to 3.4 percent in November. These expectations are now modestly above the 3.2 percent January 2025 reading. Despite these improvements in the future trajectory of inflation, consumers continue to report that their personal finances now are weighed down by the present state of high prices.”

Mortgages and Housing Markets:

Freddie Mac

Thursday, [Primary Mortgage Market Survey](#): “The 30-year FRM averaged 6.26 percent as of November 20, 2025, up from last week when it averaged 6.24 percent. A year ago at this time, the 30-year FRM averaged 6.84 percent. . . . The 15-year FRM averaged 5.54 percent, up from last week when it averaged 5.49 percent. A year ago at this time, the 15-year FRM averaged 6.02 percent.”

Mortgage Bankers Association

Monday, [Mortgage Applications](#): “The Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) Builder Application Survey (BAS) data for October 2025 shows mortgage applications for new home purchases decreased 2.6 percent compared from a year ago. Compared to September 2025, applications decreased by 1 percent. This change does not include any adjustment for typical seasonal patterns.” Joel Kan, MBA’s vice president and deputy chief economist, said: “Lower mortgage rates, ongoing usage of builder concessions, and growing levels of for-sale inventory drove an increase in new home sales for October. The annual sales pace, at 771,000 units, was the strongest in over a year.”

National Association of Realtors

Thursday, [Existing Home Sales](#): “Existing-home sales increased by 1.2 percent in October. . . . Month-over-month sales increased in the Midwest and South, showed no change in the Northeast, and fell in the West. Year-over-year sales rose in the Northeast, Midwest and South, and decreased in the West.” The South saw a “0.5 percent increase in sales month over month to an annual rate of 1.86 million, up 2.8 percent year over year,” and a median price of \$362,300, “up 0.3 percent from October 2024.”

National Association of Home Builders

Tuesday, [Housing Market Index \(HMI\)](#): “Market uncertainty exacerbated by the government shutdown along with economic uncertainty stemming from tariffs and rising construction costs kept builder confidence firmly in negative territory in November. . . . Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes rose one point to 38 in November. . . . In a further sign of ongoing challenges for the housing market, the latest HMI survey also revealed that 41 percent of builders reported cutting prices in November, a record high in the post-Covid period and the first time this measure has passed 40 percent. Meanwhile, the average price reduction was 6 percent in November, the same rate as the previous month. The use of sales incentives was 65 percent in November, tying the share in September and October. . . . The HMI index gauging current sales conditions increased two points to 41, the index measuring future sales fell three points to 51 and the gauge charting traffic of

prospective buyers posted a one-point gain to 26.” Lower index scores indicate poorer sentiment about market conditions. “Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Northeast rose two points to 48, the Midwest fell one point to 41, the South increased three points to 34 and the West gained two points to 30.”