



Burgundy Book

A report on economic conditions in the Louisville zone

Second Quarter 2015

The Louisville zone of the Federal Reserve comprises southern Indiana and western Kentucky and a total population of approximately 3.4 million people, including the almost 1.3 million who live in the Louisville MSA.

Labor Market Conditions Remain Exceptionally Healthy in the Louisville Zone

By Kevin L. Kliesen, *Business Economist and Research Officer*

A May survey of business contacts found that about 57 percent of respondents expect local economic conditions in 2015 to be better than they were in 2014, while only about 7 percent expect them to worsen.

Total nonfarm payroll employment in the Louisville MSA increased by 4.2 percent in the first quarter of 2015, outpacing the nation's 2.3 percent gain. Employment growth was also stronger than the nation's growth in Bowling Green, Elizabethtown, and Evansville, but modestly weaker in Owensboro. Nearly two-thirds of hiring managers surveyed reported they were increasing wages this year to retain employees; a smaller percentage reported that they are not raising selling prices in response.

The Louisville zone's unemployment rate averaged 5.2 percent in the first quarter of 2015, down modestly from the previous quarter (5.5 percent). Unemployment rates were below 5 percent in the Louisville (4.7 percent), Bowling Green (4.6 percent), and Owensboro (4.6 percent) MSAs in the first quarter.

Residential real estate activity improved in the first quarter, as house prices and building permits rose in most MSAs. Apartment vacancy rates fell sharply in the first quarter in the Louisville MSA.

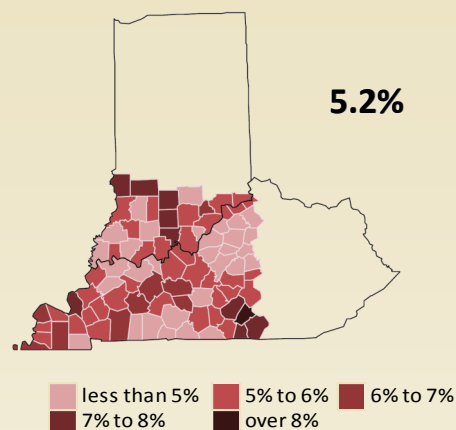
Credit card delinquency rates rose significantly in the first quarter, although the increase modestly lagged the nation's increase. Louisville zone residents continued to reduce their outstanding mortgage debt balances in the first quarter.

Despite continued improvement in asset quality, Indiana and Kentucky commercial banks saw a modest decline in profitability in the first quarter of 2015.

This spring, Indiana and Kentucky farmers planted fewer acres of corn and more acres of soybeans.

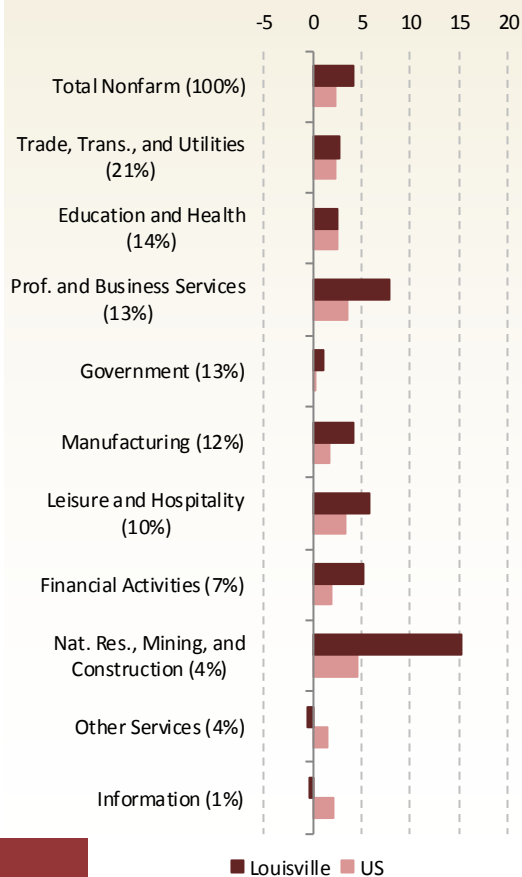
Data Snapshot

County unemployment rates (SA, Q1-15)



Nonfarm payroll employment by industry

Percent change from one year ago (Q1-15)



How to read this report

Unless otherwise noted, **city names** refer to the metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), which are geographic areas that include cities and their surrounding suburbs, as defined by the Census Bureau.

Statistics for the Louisville zone are based on data availability and are calculated as weighted averages of either the 88 counties in the zone or the five MSAs. As of 2012, approximately 60 percent of the zone’s labor force was located in an MSA. Specifically: 39 percent in Louisville, 11 percent in Evansville, 4 percent in Bowling Green, 4 percent in Owensboro, and 3 percent in Elizabethtown; 40 percent of the zone’s labor force was located in non-metropolitan areas.

Arrows in the tables are used to identify significant trends in the data. The direction of the arrow indicates the sign (up/down) and the color indicates the economic significance (green = good, red = poor). Arrows appear only when the change from previous quarter is greater than 1 standard deviation. For example, the standard deviation of the change in the US unemployment rate is 0.4 percent. If the US unemployment rate declined from 8.4 percent to 8.2 percent, no arrow would appear; but if it declined from 8.4 percent to 7.9 percent, a green down arrow would appear in the table.

Selected **variable definitions** are located in the appendix.

Selected quotes from business contacts are generally verbatim, but some are lightly edited to improve readability.

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Join Our Panel of Business Contacts

The anecdotal information in this report was provided by our panel of business contacts, who were surveyed between May 8 and May 18.

If you’re interested in becoming a member of our panel, follow this link to complete a trial survey:

<http://research.stlouisfed.org/outlooksurvey>

or email us at beigebook@stls.frb.org.

Views expressed do not necessarily reflect official positions of the Federal Reserve System.

Strong Construction Sector Drives Employment Growth Across Zone

By Maria A. Arias, Senior Research Associate

"Bourbon is king and it is growing. Good employees are harder to get as employment picks up."

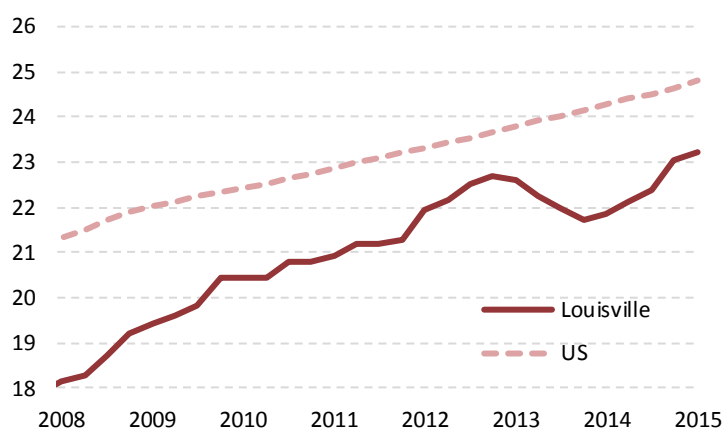
— Louisville area manufacturer

"Because of lower travel costs to go to my clients' locations, I have retained more profit from existing consulting contracts. As a result, I have added one new employee."

— Louisville area builder

Nominal wages growing faster than national rate

Average hourly earnings of private sector employees, SA dollars



Source: BLS.

- Labor market conditions continued to improve during the first quarter throughout the zone as the unemployment rate declined in all MSAs and employment growth accelerated in most MSAs. Strong growth in the goods-producing sector in particular continued to drive private-sector job growth (see table).
- About three in four of the 45 hiring managers surveyed in the Louisville zone reported they are actively seeking employees, particularly for professional, technical, sales, and administrative positions. However, many indicated they did not have enough qualified candidates to fill such positions and reported increasing starting salaries or wages for some or all job categories to attract candidates. Almost two-thirds reported increasing current pay by more than in previous years to retain employees.
- Nominal wage growth in Louisville remains at a healthy pace in 2015. Average hourly wages for private-sector employees in Louisville were at \$23.2, 6.2 percent higher than one year ago, but slightly lower than the \$24.79 national average (see figure).
- About 45 percent of managers reported they are not changing prices in response to higher labor costs, though almost 40 percent reported they are increasing prices to partially or fully pass-on higher compensation costs to consumers.

| | Louisville | Evansville | Bowling Green | Elizabethtown | Owensboro | US |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-----|
| Unemployment rate (Q1-15) (%) | 4.7 ▼ | 5.0 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 4.6 | 5.5 |
| Nonfarm employment (Q1-15) | 4.2 ▲ | 2.7 | 3.5 ▲ | 2.1 | 0.5 | 2.3 |
| Goods-producing sector | 7.0 ▲ | 8.4 | 5.4 | 7.9 | 3.4 | 2.7 |
| Private service-providing sector | 4.1 | 1.3 | 3.8 ▲ | 3.7 | -0.1 | 2.6 |
| Government sector | 1.2 | 0.6 | 0.5 | -3.9 | -1.4 | 0.4 |

Note: Unless otherwise noted, values are percent change from one year ago. Arrows indicate a significant (± 1 standard deviation) change from the previous quarter. See appendix for notes and sources.

Louisville Transportation Employment Growth Rate Drops Below U.S. Average

By Daniel Eubanks, *Senior Research Associate*

“[The drop in oil prices] has reduced some of our raw material prices, but these are a relatively small portion of our business.”

– Louisville area manufacturer

“Good employees are harder to find as employment picks up.”

– Louisville area manufacturer

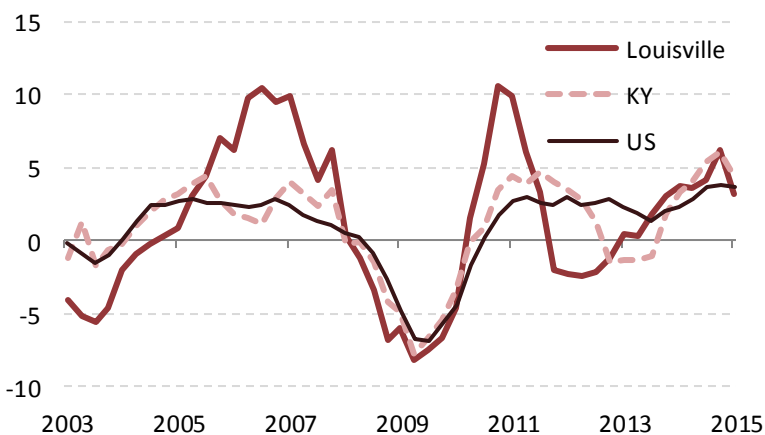
“[The port labor dispute] slowed delivery of packaging material, causing a delay in production.”

– Louisville area manufacturer

- Transportation and warehousing employment growth in the Louisville MSA slowed by over three percentage points and slipped below the national growth rate (see figure).
- Manufacturing employment growth across the Louisville zone continued to exceed the US average in the first quarter, despite a contraction in nondurable goods employment in Kentucky and a significant slowdown in nondurable goods in Indiana.
- The value of exports from Kentucky again grew by double-digits, driven by transportation equipment and chemical products. Exports of chemical products have grown by 50 percent over the past year and now make up one-fifth of exports from the state.
- Contacts reported delays in shipping as a result of the West Coast port labor disputes in the first quarter. Many saw minor impacts from the drop in oil prices. Contacts also continued to report difficulty finding qualified applicants (see quote).

Transportation employment growth slows in Louisville

Percent change from one year ago



Source: BLS

| | Louisville | Kentucky | Indiana | US |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|------|
| Transportation employment (Q1-15) | 3.1 ▼ | 4.4 | 5.4 ▲ | 3.6 |
| Manufacturing employment (Q1-15) | 4.2 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Durable goods | 6.3 | 5.3 | 3.2 | 2.5 |
| Nondurable goods | 0.3 | -3.0 ▼ | 1.8 ▼ | 0.5 |
| Manufacturing exports (Q1-15) | -- | 11.5 | 1.8 | -3.8 |

Note: Values are percent change from one year ago. Arrows indicate a significant (± 1 standard deviation) change from the previous quarter; see appendix for notes and sources.

Louisville's Industrial Construction Market Advances

By Diana Cooke, Senior Research Associate

"New listings are up, but sales are faster."

—Bowling Green realtor

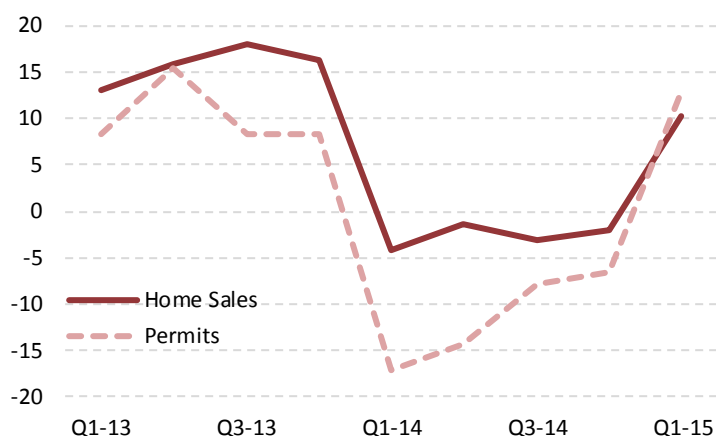
"Apartments, apartments, apartments. It appears the exuberance can't stop."

—Louisville area banker

- The residential real estate market improved in the first quarter (see figure). Year to date home sales are 10 percent higher than the same period one year ago, and home prices increased in all the major MSAs in the District. Contacts from the Louisville area noted that demand is up but the number of listings is down.
- The residential construction market exhibits mixed signs of growth. According to the US Census data, permits increased 12.9 percent (see table). However, industry contacts suggest that single-family building permits is weak and may be lower than one year ago.
- The commercial real estate market was strong in the first quarter. The apartment market continued to boom; vacancy rates fell significantly from the previous quarter and asking rents rose over 3 percent. Contacts noted that many tech-oriented companies are moving their offices downtown, where much of the millennial population resides.
- The industrial construction market is very active; contacts reported that there is currently a little under 3 million square feet of spec space under construction. As a result of the timing of speculative construction completions, vacancy rates are up and rents are down. Contacts anticipate a strong year with more speculative construction projects to satisfy the high demand.

Home sales and permits rebound in Louisville

Percent change from one year ago, year-to-date



Source: See appendix.

| Non-residential market (Louisville, Q1-15) | Apartment | Office | Retail | Industrial |
|--|-----------|--------|--------|------------|
| Vacancy rate (%) | 5.2 ▼ | 15.1 | 10.3 | 6.3 |
| Asking rent | 3.4 | 0.2 | 1.6 ▼ | -9.9 |
| <i>Percent change from one year ago</i> | | | | |

Note: Apartment, office, and retail values are from Reis.com. Industrial values are estimates from Cassidy Turley.

| Residential market (Q1-15) | Louisville | Clarksville | Elizabethtown | Evansville | US |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-------|
| CoreLogic Home Price Index | 4.0 | 3.6 ▲ | 6.4 ▲ | 5.5 | 4.8 |
| Single-family building permits | 12.9 ▲ | -34.8 ▼ | 34.0 | 17.7 | 8.6 |
| New and existing home sales | 10.2 ▲ | -- | -- | -- | 8.4 ▲ |

Note: Sales and permits data are year-to-date percent change. Prices are percent change from one year ago. Arrows indicate a significant (±1 standard deviation) change from previous quarter. See appendix for notes and sources.

Auto Debt Balances on the Rise, Credit Card Delinquency Rate Ticks Up

By Joseph McGillicuddy, *Research Associate*

"[We've been] selling more low MPG cars and trucks."

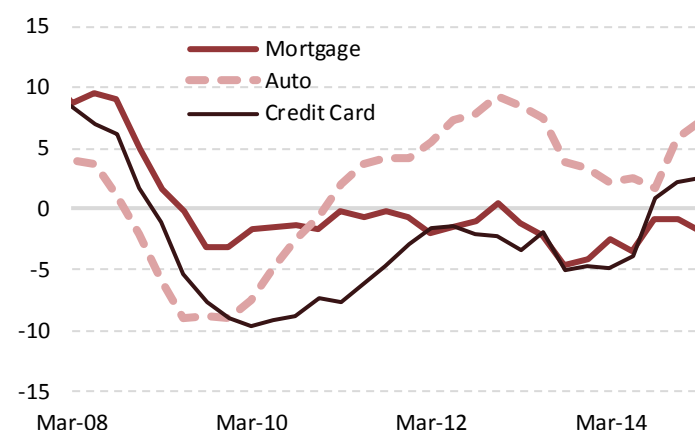
— Evansville area auto dealer

"In 2017 the closing [of the Convention Center] for the entire year will present serious challenges for all downtown properties.... In 2018 the Convention Center will reopen but most conventions will be hesitant to book until they are certain the Center is complete and fully operational."

— Louisville area hospitality contact

Auto debt growth continues to accelerate

Percent change in debt balances from one year ago, Louisville zone



Source: FRBNY Consumer Credit Panel and Equifax.

- Personal income growth in Indiana continued to accelerate during the fourth quarter of 2014, while in Kentucky personal income grew faster than the nation for a fifth consecutive quarter.
- The credit card delinquency rate increased within the Louisville zone during the first quarter of 2015 but remained below the national rate, which also rose (see table).
- Auto loan debt growth continued to climb during the first quarter of 2015. Credit card debt growth was stable at 2.5 percent year-over-year (see figure).
- Despite improvements in the housing market, households further reduced their mortgage debt at a relatively modest rate (see figure).
- Business contacts noted that low oil prices were still affecting household spending. Multiple auto dealer contacts reported an increased demand for less-fuel-efficient vehicles.
- Several downtown businesses heavily dependent on tourists have expressed concerns over how the temporary closure of the Kentucky International Convention Center will impact them.

| | Louisville Zone | Indiana | Kentucky | US |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Per capita personal income (Q4-14) | -- | 3.8 | 5.0 | 3.8 |
| Per capita debt balances (Q1-15) | | | | |
| Mortgage | -1.8 | -1.5 | -1.7 | -1.4 |
| Credit card | 2.5 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Auto loan | 7.1 | 7.7 | 6.4 | 8.7 |
| 90+ day delinquency rates (Q1-15) (%) | | | | |
| Mortgage | 1.7 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 2.5 |
| Credit card | 6.5 ▲ | 6.6 ▲ | 7.0 ▲ | 8.2 ▲ |
| Auto loan | 2.9 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.2 |

Note: Unless otherwise noted, values are percent change from one year ago. Arrows indicate a significant (± 1 standard deviation) change from the previous quarter. See appendix for notes and sources.

Margins Decline, Competition Increases for Business Loans in Louisville Zone

By Michelle Neely, *Economist*, and Hannah Shell, *Research Associate*

“Depressed revenues for clients in the oil business have caused a reduction in lending and deposit opportunities.”

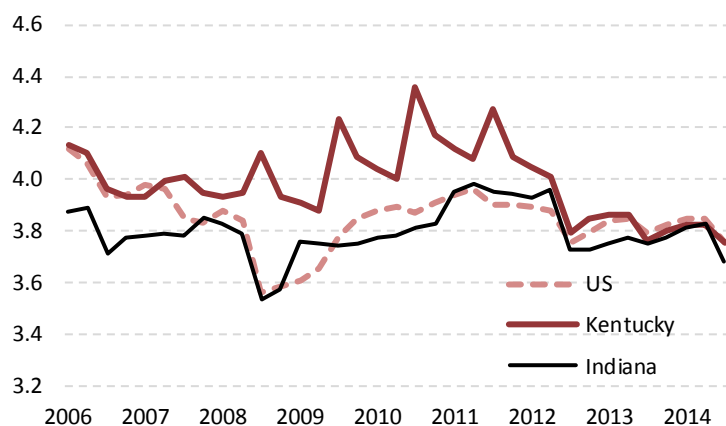
—Southern Indiana banker

“On the commercial side of our banking business, most new business has come from acquiring new accounts.”

—Louisville banker

Net interest margins decline at area banks

Net interest margin at commercial banks, percent



Source: FRED.

- Nine of the twelve area bankers surveyed reported no change in loan demand during the second quarter of 2015 relative to one year ago. Slightly more than one-quarter of respondents expect demand to increase in the third quarter, although the majority say demand will be about the same.
- Competition has intensified for commercial and industrial loans. A majority of area bankers surveyed report demand has been and will remain unchanged to slightly lower in the second quarter relative to last year; most new business has been gained by competing for existing accounts. Almost all bankers expect demand to be about the same or slightly higher in the third quarter.
- Average net interest margins (NIMs) declined in Indiana and Kentucky as well as the District and the nation in the first quarter. The average NIM at Indiana banks fell the most, dropping 15 basis points to its fourth-quarter level. Despite its decline, the average NIM at Kentucky banks remains above the District average and on par with the U.S. average.
- Asset quality continues to improve at area banks as the ratios of nonperforming loans to total loans decreased at Kentucky and Indiana banks in the first quarter. Bankers surveyed report that delinquencies have been unchanged to slightly lower in the second quarter relative to one year ago. Bankers expect delinquencies to be about the same in the third quarter as they were last year.

| Banking performance (Q1-15) | Kentucky | Indiana | 8th District | US Peer Banks |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|--------------|---------------|
| Return on average assets | 1.05 | 0.99 | 0.89 | 1.03 |
| Net interest margin | 3.75 | 3.68 | 3.69 | 3.75 |
| Nonperforming loans / total loans | 1.36 | 1.12 | 1.23 | 1.29 |
| Loan loss reserve coverage ratio | 102.94 | 116.96 | 113.01 | 110.08 |

Note: Values are percentage points. Arrows indicate a significant (± 1 standard deviation) change from the previous quarter. See appendix for notes and sources.

Row-Crop Farmers Grapple with Anemic Commodity Prices; Farm Income Falls

By Lowell R. Ricketts, *Senior Research Associate*

“The farmer today is out planting corn but he’s gotta [sic] figure out what to do with all of last year’s crop!”

—Western Kentucky farmer

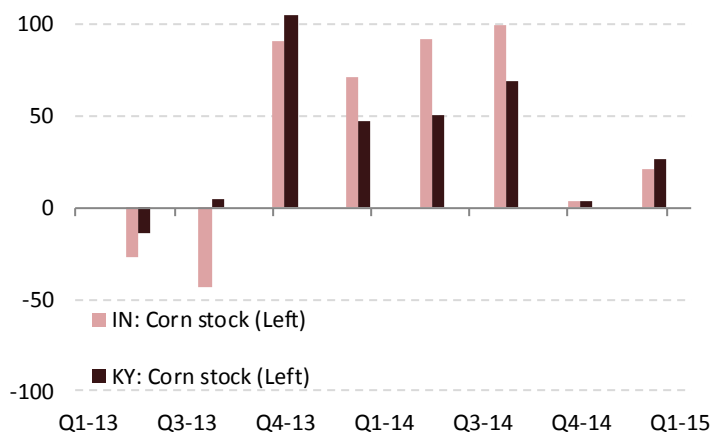
“Equipment contracts were negotiated a year ago on the basis of prices that no longer exist. The lower commodity prices and the drop in farm income make these terms burdensome.”

—Western Kentucky farmer

- Row-crop farmers in Indiana and Kentucky finished their plantings this spring with considerable uncertainty on their minds. Corn prices continue to be depressed after falling close to 50 percent over the past two years. In response, farmers have stored a great deal of their production in hopes that prices will turn around (see figure). Diminished farm income is putting farmers in a tough position as they reconcile previous financial agreements.
- Corn plantings declined modestly in both Indiana and Kentucky, although by a greater margin than the nation as a whole. Because of cost and unusually wet weather during the planting season, farmers have switched from corn to soybeans.
- Coal production declined in both Indiana and Kentucky, as well as the nation, in the first quarter as compared with the same time last year. As of the latest release of production data, Kentucky coal production has continually declined for the past three and a half years. Employment in Kentucky’s mining and logging industry has had a similar continual decline over the past three years.

Corn in storage continues to climb given low prices

Percent change from one year ago



Source: USDA/NASS.

| | Indiana | Kentucky | US |
|-------------------------------------|---------|----------|--------|
| Natural resources (Q1-15) | | | |
| Mining and logging employment | -0.9 | -5.4 | 1.7 ▼ |
| Coal production | -4.8 | -5.6 | -3.5 ▼ |
| Prospective plantings (2015) | | | |
| Corn | -1.7 | -2.6 | -1.5 |
| Cotton | -- | -- | -13.5 |
| Rice | -- | -- | -0.8 ▼ |
| Sorghum | -- | -- | 10.7 |
| Soybeans | 1.8 | 1.1 | 1.1 |

Note: Values are percent change from one year ago. Arrows indicate a significant (± 1 standard deviation) change from the previous quarter. See appendix for notes and sources.

Cover Page

Sources

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment rate, nonfarm payroll employment.

Labor Markets

Table Sources

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment rate. Nonfarm employment and contributions by sector.

Notes

Goods-producing sector comprises the manufacturing and natural resources, mining, and construction sectors.

Private service-providing sector includes the following sectors: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities; Information; Financial Activities; Professional and Business Services; Education and Health Services; Leisure and Hospitality; and Other Services.

Unemployment rate data are seasonally adjusted.

Average hourly earnings are in current dollars.

Manufacturing and Transportation

Table Sources

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Transportation employment: includes transportation and warehousing industries.

Manufacturing employment: total, durable, and nondurable goods.

World Institute for Strategic Economic Research

Manufacturing exports: dollar value.

Notes

Transportation employment in Louisville covers transportation, warehousing, and utility industries. About 90 percent of the reported jobs are contributed by transportation and warehousing industries.

Manufacturing exports are defined as the total dollar amount of exports by the manufacturing industries.

Durable goods manufacturing sector is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as industries with a NAICS classification code of 321 (Wood Product Manufacturing); 327 (Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing); 331 (Primary Metal Manufacturing); 332 (Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing); 333 (Machinery Manufacturing); 334 (Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing); 335 (Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing); 336 (Transportation Equipment Manufacturing); 337 (Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing); and 339 (Misc. Manufacturing).

Nondurable goods manufacturing sector is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as industries with a NAICS classification code of 311 (Food Manufacturing); 312 (Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufac-

turing); 313 (Textile Mills); 314 (Textile Product Mills); 315 (Apparel Manufacturing); 316 (Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing); 322 (Paper Manufacturing); 323 (Printing and Related Support Activities); 324 (Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing); 325 (Chemical Manufacturing); and 326 (Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing).

Real Estate and Construction

Table Sources

CoreLogic

Home price index, including distressed sales.

Census Bureau

Year-to-date single-family building permits.

Greater Louisville Association of Realtors

Year-to-date new and existing home sales.

Notes

Asking rent is the publicized asking rent price. Data are in current dollars.

Vacancy rate is the percentage of total inventory physically vacant as of the survey date, including direct vacant and sublease space.

New and existing home sales consists of single-family home sales.

Household Sector

Table Sources

Equifax based on authors' calculations

All figures are based on a 5 percent sample of individual credit reports. Balances are geographic averages of various debt categories. The mortgage category includes first mortgages and home equity installment loans, but home equity lines of credit are omitted. Auto loans include those financed by finance company or bank loans. Credit cards are revolving accounts at banks, bankcard companies, national credit card companies, credit unions, and savings and loan associations.

Haver Analytics

Per capita income.

SNAP participation.

Notes

Delinquency rates are calculated as the percentage of payments past due by more than 90 days, weighted by the dollar value of the loan.

Banking and Finance

Table Sources

Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council

Return on average assets: USL15ROA. Net interest margin: USL15NIM. Nonperforming loans: USL15NPTL. Loan loss reserve/Total loans: USL15LLRTL. Net loan losses/Average total loans: USL15LSTL.

Note: The data available in the table can be found in FRED.

Notes

Loan loss provisions are expenses banks set aside as an allowance for bad loans.

Nonperforming loans are those loans managers classify as 90 days or more past due or nonaccrual, which means they are more likely to default.

Loan loss coverage ratio is loan loss reserves divided by nonperforming loans.

US peer banks are those commercial banks with assets of less than \$15 billion.

Due to the seasonal nature of bank return on average assets and net interest margin, the **arrows** in the table denote significant changes from one year ago.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Sources

Energy Information Administration (EIA)

Coal production. Note: Production trends identified in report may be inconsistent with previous reports due to data revisions.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

Mining and logging employment.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Prospective plantings (March 2015), corn prices, corn stocks.

Notes

The results of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis *Agricultural Finance Monitor* are not reported due to a low response rate for the Louisville zone.