

Market & Economic Outlook 2021 – July Update: Navigating Peak Growth

	Value	<u>2Q21 (3/31/2021</u>	<u>- 6/30/2021)</u>	<u>2021 YTD (12/31/20</u>	<u> 20 - 6/30/2021)</u>
Major Indices	(6/30/2021)	Price Return	Total Return	Price Return	Total Return
S&P 500	4,297.50	8.2%	8.5%	14.4%	15.3%
Dow Jones Industrial Average	34,502.51	4.6%	5.1%	12.7%	13.8%
NASDAQ Composite	14,503.95	9.5%	9.7%	12.5%	12.9%
Russell 2000	2,310.55	4.1%	4.3%	17.0%	17.5%
MSCI EAFE (USD)	2,304.92	4.0%	5.0%	7.3%	9.2%
MSCI Emerging Markets (USD)	1,374.64	3.2%	3.9%	6.5%	7.6%
Bloomberg Commodity Index	94.54	13.3%	13.3%	21.1%	21.1%
Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond	106.24	1.0%	1.8%	-3.3%	-1.6%

Data Source: Factset through 6/30/21; Further discussion of market indices can be found in the Appendix section.

Outlook Summary:

First half 2021 equity market returns surprised to the upside vs. January expectations, as the year began in the middle of a winter COVID-19 outbreak that threatened to derail the economic recovery and equity market valuations were stretched following strong 2020 gains. These fears quickly receded as U.S. economic growth surged, and corporate earnings and S&P 500 earnings estimates exceeded bullish expectations. The ongoing GDP recovery and earnings growth story, along with low interest rates, provides a continued favorable environment for equity markets, in our opinion. This market optimism does not come without several headwinds that present risks for investors over the balance of the year. These include fears of peaking growth rates, slower-than -expected jobs growth, rising inflation, a possible increase in corporate tax rates, and unknown geopolitical uncertainty. As we did in our April outlook, we increase our S&P 500 fair value estimate primarily due to a favorable GDP growth outlook and earnings that have exceeded expectations. In addition, with the year now half over, we look to earnings estimates for 2022. Our fair value estimate is 4,540, up from 4,300, which is 5.6% above 6/30/21 levels and 20.8% above the index levels on 12/31/20. While cyclical value sectors largely led market gains in the first half of 2021, in June (the most recent month), leadership rotated back to growth sectors. We believe investors should remain mindful of market risks mentioned above by building equity portfolios that are diversified across sectors, identifying companies that are leaders in their industries and can generate revenue growth and strong margins in an environment of positive, but slowing growth.

The S&P 500 gained 8.5% including dividends in Q2, and generated a six-month (through 6/30/21) total return of 15.3% (the Q1 total return increase was 6.2%). Equity markets reacted positively to the aggressive retreat of the global COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the U.S. and global GDP growth that has been fueled by businesses reopening, consumer activity accelerating, and substantial government and central bank support. Although the U.S. economic recovery has led most developed countries, (U.S. Q1 GDP growth was 6.4%, while Q1 GDP growth was negative in the U.K, France, and Germany) growth estimates (according to consensus economist estimates from FactSet) around the globe have accelerated, contributing to a positive environment for equity gains. Much like the S&P 500, equity gains outside the U.S. accelerated in Q2 compared to Q1. The MSCI EAFE (developed markets) index earned a total return of 5.0% in Q2 and 9.2% in the first half of 2021, and the MSCI Emerging Markets index gained 3.9% and 7.6% in Q2 and YTD, respectively. U.S. equity gains YTD were broad-based in nature, as most major indices posted double-digit percentage gains and the Russell 2000's (small caps) 17.5% total return led all major U.S. indices, the Nasdaq Composite (large cap and technology-centric) posted a Q2 return of 9.7% to lead major U.S. indices, while the Russell 2000 Q2 return of 4.3% lagged.



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Our S&P 500 fair value estimate of 4,540 represents a P/E of 23.0x the next twelve months (3Q21 to 2Q22) FactSet consensus EPS estimate of \$197 and 21.5x the 2022 EPS estimate of \$211. The market (S&P 500) P/E valuation as of 7/1/21 of 21.6x forward EPS estimates remains elevated and is well-above the average forward P/E of 16.2x since 2000. Contributing to the high valuation, in our view, is that both GDP growth and earnings growth have consistently surprised to the upside since the middle of 2020, as the recovery from a shutdown-induced recession has not only been surprisingly strong but also difficult to model. Another contributor to higher sustained valuations are persistently low long-term interest rates, as low rates increase the present value of future cash flows. The U.S. 10-year Treasury yield was 1.47% as of 7/2/21, significantly below its average yield of 2.1% over the past ten years. While yields have risen quite a bit from the mid-2020 recession lows (the yield twice hit 0.50%, in March 2020 and August 2020), and remain above the year-end (12/31/20) level of 0.92%, in Q2 2021 the 10-year Treasury yield dropped to the current level from 1.74% on 3/31/21. This was surprising given rising inflation numbers and strong expected GDP growth, but bond investors, in our view, are pricing in expectations that spikes in inflation will be temporary, and that the U.S. economy is growing, but not overheating. Low interest rates are good for borrowers, including individuals, businesses, and government entities, which can be positive for sustained economic growth. Low rates, in our view, also reflect a bond market view that GDP growth is likely to slow, which could disappoint investors in future periods. Overall, this creates a fairly positive scenario for equity investors, but challenges remain, and we believe that investors should scale back return expectations coming off this year's strong first half gains.



A global economic rebound has been paced by the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic, as fewer restrictions allow businesses to reopen and consumer activity to normalize. In the U.S., much of the progress is attributed to vaccine penetration and achieving close to herd immunity. According to data from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), as of 7/5/21 more than 157M people in the U.S. (47% of the population) were fully vaccinated and more than 182M (55% of the population) had received at least one dose. And 67% of those 18 years and older had received at least one dose. When considering data of 33.7M confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. (as of 7/6/21 from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center) we estimate that more than 70% of U.S. adults were either fully or partially vaccinated, or had COVID. While COVID-19 variants are likely to remain present and could cause renewed economic disruption, we believe that GDP growth will continue and that U.S. economic activity will normalize as we look toward 2022 and beyond. While the current environment remains favorable in our view, we believe investors should pay attention to market risks we discussed earlier. This includes fears of peaking growth rates, slower than expected jobs growth, rising inflation, a possible increase in corporate tax rates, and geopolitical uncertainty.

Earnings results have consistently exceeded consensus estimates. Contributing to positive investor sentiment has been better than expected earnings results for the past four quarters. The table below shows the year-over-year (Y/Y) change in reported earnings for the S&P 500 index each of the past five quarters. Beginning in Q2 of 2020 the reported earnings (in green) have exceeded the quarter-end FactSet consensus earnings estimates each quarter by a wide margin. During the 2020 recession in Q2 and Q3, the reported earnings decline was not as bad as feared, and earnings turned positive in Q4 2020, when a decline was expected. In Q1 2021, S&P 500 earnings increased 52.2%, significantly above the 23.7% growth estimated at the end of March. Forecasting Y/Y earnings changes during the pandemic has been difficult due to extreme demand volatility caused by forced shutdowns, but estimates surged following each quarterly report and results still surprised to the upside. The better than expected corporate results have validated market bulls, in our opinion.



Data source: FactSet as of 6/30/21, earnings estimates are compiled by FactSet from Wall Street analyst estimates

Following strong expected Q2 2021 earnings results, Y/Y earnings growth is expected to slow beginning in Q3. S&P 500 quarterly Y/Y earnings growth has been volatile over the past five years. Following strong sustained growth in 2017 and 2018, quarterly earnings growth remained relatively flat throughout 2019, then declined for three straight quarters in 2020 due to the COVID-19 recession. The gray bars on the right show the next four quarters of S&P 500 earnings estimates (FactSet consensus for Q2 2021 through Q1 2022). While earnings are expected to increase 52% in Q2 2021 (the quarter has ended but most Q2 earnings reports begin later this month), growth rates are estimated to slow considerably in the second half of the year and turn negative in Q1 2022. If recent positive earnings surprises continue, the results could provide a potential market catalyst (which was the case in the first half of 2021). This is possible given that economic activity remains healthy and many consumer sectors (especially leisure and hospitality) are below peak levels. On the other hand, as earnings growth normalizes at lower levels, equity investors are likely to factor slowing growth into valuations, creating headwinds for future market gains. On a full-year basis (table below) S&P 500 earnings are expected to increase 37.2% in 2021 (which would be 18.1% above 2019 levels, despite the recession) and grow another 11.6% in 2022. With 2022 earnings estimates higher today than in April the outlook for next year remains very positive. But we see some risk to those estimates if cost pressures build, especially wages, or demand falls short of elevated expectations. In addition, estimates do not include the potential impact of higher corporate tax rates in 2022, which President Biden hopes to implement in an infrastructure spending bill. In summary, while we view positive earnings surprises as a key element driving equity market gains in 2021, quarterly earnings growth is volatile over time, and the inevitable trend of slowing growth c



S&P 500 Year Earnings Estimates (Y/Y%) (FactSet consensus 7/6/21)				
2020A	-14.0%			
2021E	37.2%			
2022E	11.6%			
2019 to 2021E	18.1%			

Data source: FactSet as of 7/2/21, earnings estimates are compiled by FactSet from Wall Street analyst estimates

Since our April Market Outlook, Q1 GDP growth exceeded expectations, full-year 2021 GDP consensus (FactSet) growth estimates have trended higher, and the 2022 estimated GDP growth rate is unchanged. Q1 2021 GDP growth of 6.4% was reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in late April. This exceeded the FactSet consensus estimate (from Wall Street economists) of 4.8% and was driven by an 11.4% increase in consumer spending (68% of nominal GDP, not adjusted for inflation), an 11.7% increase in business investment (13% of nominal GDP), and a 13.8% increase in Federal government expenditures (7% of nominal GDP). State and local government spending (comprising 11% of GDP) was close to flat, up 0.8% in Q1. Net exports subtracted 1.5% from Q1 GDP as the U.S. imported more than it exported, and inventories subtracted 2.7% from GDP, indicating that demand was greater than production, as inventory stocks were drawn down. Due to the strength in Q1 GDP, the consensus estimate for full year GDP growth is now 6.5% (vs 5.9% in April). While 2022 GDP growth is estimated to slow to 4.0%, that remains significantly above the four year average annual GDP growth of 2.3% from 2016 to 2019, prior to the 2020 recession (average annual GDP growth over 10-years 2010-2019 was also 2.3%).

We expect less volatility in GDP growth compared to earnings, but GDP growth is expected to peak in Q2 2021 (estimated growth of 9.8%) then decelerate in the second half of 2021 and 2022. Risks to achieving estimates include slower growth than expected due to new COVID outbreaks, lackluster gains in employment, and/or declining levels of government stimulus. We estimate COVID relief bills passed in March, April, and December of 2020 and March 2021 totaled \$5.7 trillion (T), which is 25.8% of Q1 2021 annual U.S. nominal GDP of \$22.1 trillion. Although additional infrastructure bills totaling \$1.0T to \$3.0T are expected this year, those spending programs will likely spread outlays across several years, so markets must navigate sharply lower government spending next year compared to 2020 and 2021.



Data Source: FactSet consensus estimates and Bureau of Economic Analysis, as of 7/2/21 (green are actual reported numbers)

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Purchasing managers' surveys support continued economic growth, but reveal some signs that growth rates are near peak levels in this recovery. The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) publishes its monthly Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) after polling a wide group of company executives at U.S. companies in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing (services) industries. A reading above 50 indicates expectation of expansion compared to the prior Below 50 reflects expectation for a contraction. month. Both manufacturing and services PMIs plunged in 2020 during the COVID-19 shutdown and have exhibited a "V-shaped" recovery in late 2020 and 2021. While both surveys remained above 60 in June, indicating growth is at hand, the manufacturing survey peaked in March and services peaked in May. This bears watching in the second half of 2021; PMIs approaching 50 could suggest that above average GDP growth expected in 2022 could be more difficult to achieve. The recent trend of lower long-term interest rates in the U.S. (the U.S. 10-year Treasury yield was 1.45% on 6/30/21 down from 1.74% on 3/31/21) suggests to us that bond investors see the potential for GDP growth rates to trend lower than expected in future periods.



Data for ISM PMI Manufacturing, Non-Manufacturing surveys through 6/30/21.

The U.S. economy created more jobs than expected in June, a welcome improvement following disappointing employment data the prior few months, but significant progress remains to return to full employment. While jobs growth above expectations in future periods could serve as a market catalyst, a weaker potential recovery should be viewed as a market risk. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) U.S. nonfarm payrolls increased 850 thousand (K) in June, better than the 700K expected. Over the first six months of 2021 monthly jobs gains averaged 540K. The table below shows the unemployment rate (green line) of 5.9% in June, down from the recession high, but still above the pre-pandemic unemployment rate of 3.5% in February 2020. The gray area shows the BLS household data of the number of unemployed persons at 9.5 million (M) as of 6/30/21. This compares to 5.7M unemployed in February 2020. To reduce the number of unemployed to the February 2020 level, the U.S. must create 3.8M net new jobs. Using the first half monthly rate of 540K jobs, it will take seven months (January 2022) to return to full employment. In addition, not shown in the chart are an additional 3.2M people who have left the labor force since early 2020, indicating that unemployment is higher than reported as some of them are likely to return to the labor force over time.

According to the BLS' Jobs Opening and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) report, there were 9.2M open jobs at the end of May (just below the 9.3M record high in April). Jobs are available, but several factors have slowed the jobs recovery, including supplemental employment benefits, child care concerns, and lingering COVID fears. The June improvement suggests to us that some recent labor constraints are easing. In our view, Jobs growth averaging above 700K monthly over the second half of 2021 would be a potential catalyst for equity markets, while monthly gains below 500K would be viewed negatively



Data source: FactSet and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment rate as of 6/30/21, unemployed persons as of 6/30/21.

Inflation became a hot topic in Q2 as inflation data surged, causing a pause in equity market gains in May, but the Federal Reserve Bank (Fed) held to its view that many inflationary pressures will prove to be transitory, and in recent weeks that has calmed markets. Evidence of inflation has emerged across the economy as the CPI (consumer price index, see chart below) and PCE price index (personal consumption expenditures) have trended significantly higher in 2021. Given last year's dramatic pandemic-driven economic shutdown, followed by several rounds of equally dramatic government-supplied fiscal stimulus, and businesses reopening this year, it was widely expected that prices for goods and services and commodities would rise as supply chains adjust to surging demand. In recent weeks, despite rising inflation data, U.S. 10-year Treasury bond prices have rallied driving yields lower. This in turn has contributed to a recent equity rally led by the Technology sector that helped drive new all-time highs for the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite indices. We believe that inflation uncertainty is likely to remain in place over the remainder of 2021 and into 2022, as global GDP growth recovers, government-spending remains elevated, and workers demand higher wages. In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank's (Fed) current policy stance is to "achieve inflation moderately above 2 percent for some time," which suggests it will tolerate elevated inflation for several months without raising the fed funds target (current target range is 0% to 0.25%). The Fed is also active in the Treasury and Mortgage market, following a targeted monthly purchase of \$120B.

This adds liquidity to those markets and helps to keep interest rates lower than they would be without the bond purchases. The reduction of those monthly purchases, often referred to as "tapering," has not started, but Fed Chair Jerome Powell says that tapering discussions are underway. This is a potential tool to address persistent inflation, and is likely to begin sooner than an increase in the fed funds target. We agree with the Fed that much of the inflation pressure in recent months appears transitory; a result of temporary demand vs. supply imbalances that will correct over several quarters. A transitory period of inflation would be consistent with the recent low inflation experience since the financial crisis despite Fed efforts to raise price levels



Source: FactSet, Bureau of Labor Statistics as of 5/28/21. The consumer price index (CPI) is a measure of average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of goods and services.

Consumer prices, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI), rose to the highest levels in nearly 13 years in May 2021, not only recovering from the multi-year low prices in 2020 during the pandemic-driven shutdowns, but also rising significantly above prepandemic levels. The CPI chart above shows the monthly Y/Y price change from 2000 to 2021 for both the CPI and the core CPI (which excludes the impact of food and energy). The May CPI increase of 5.0% was the highest since 2008, and followed a 4.2% increase in April. Core CPI of 3.8% was the highest since June 1992, after remaining relatively close to 2.0% over the past several years. We expect inflation to remain elevated throughout 2021, but April and May could represent the peak levels in this cycle. In recent weeks, we have seen lower commodities prices for lumber, copper, corn, and soybeans, among others. The Fed concluded its June 2021 FOMC (Open Market Committee) meeting on 6/16/21 and its Summary of Economic Projections (also called the "dot-plot") showed 2021 estimated PCE inflation of 3.4%, but policymakers see inflation pulling back to 2.1% in 2022. While the 2021 estimate of 3.4% was higher than the Fed's average estimate of 2.4% in March 2021, the 2022 estimate of 2.1% was consistent with the 2.0% projection in March.



S&P 500 Sector Performance – Year-to-Date (price returns)

Cyclical sectors led broad sector gains in the first half 2021, as all 11 macro sectors were higher from year-end 2020. Gains were broad-based in Q2 as well, but leadership rotated away from the value cyclical groups and back to Real Estate and growth. The chart above shows the Q2 and year-to-date (YTD, includes Q1 and Q2) price performance of the 11 macro sectors within the S&P 500 index. For the 6-month YTD period (gray bars) market gains were led by Energy and Financials, two sectors positioned to benefit from a broad based cyclical recovery that lifts economic activity and investment across the economy. Real Estate also performed well as the REIT sector is positioned to benefit from the economic reopening and demand for real estate in many industries. Industrials, another cyclical sector, also outperformed the S&P 500. Growth stocks by their nature invest in new technologies and pursue emerging opportunities that often can drive revenue growth even in a slow economy. Investors often pay higher multiples for that growth, but that can create more volatility if results miss expectations, or investors decide to reduce the multiples they are willing to pay. Two of the largest growth sectors, Technology and Consumer Discretionary, lagged the S&P 500 in the first half. In Q2, some growth stocks and growth sectors resumed outperformance (growth stocks outperformed in 2020 during the COVID shutdown). We attribute this to a calming of inflation fears and lower long-term interest rates in the quarter (lower interest rates increase the present value of future cash flows), and concerns that peak growth rates (for GDP and earnings) estimated in Q2 mean that growth will slow in future periods.

We have moved our Real Estate sector recommendation to overweight from market weight, as we believe the sector is positioned to benefit from both the economic recovery and investor appetite for yield. Our Health Care outlook is now market weight from overweight. While we see attractive valuations in the sector, we also see ongoing political pressure to regulate drug pricing and cost of care, and we caution against becoming overly defensive. For the S&P 500 we do not expect P/E multiple expansion from current elevated levels and believe equity market gains ahead will be tied to earnings growth. We believe that companies with market leading products that can gain market share and hold or expand margins can do well in the current environment. Diversification is important to help minimize risk, and we suggest balancing exposure across both cyclical and growth sectors.

Our S&P sector recommendations are updated below.

S&P 500 Sector Recommendations - July 2021

	S&P 500 Weight	WM Research		
GICS Sector	by Market Cap	2021 Outlook	Notes (reflect current expectations and are subject to change)	Change
Technology	27.3%	marketweight	valuation are elevated, but many Tech leaders continue to post strong growth	
Health Care	13.0%	marketweight	political pressure remains, defensive sectors out of favor, valuations attractive	was overweight
Consumer Discretionary	12.3%	marketweight	consumer helped by stimulus, now job growth is key, recovery upside	
Financials	11.3%	overweight	stress Tests positive, expect new buybacks/dividends; positive yield curve	
Communications Services	11.2%	marketweight	look to market leaders, ad spending to improve with GDP	
Industrials	8.5%	overweight	attractive valuations, global recovery and infrastructure spending a plus	
Consumer Staples	5.8%	underweight	safe haven in down market, but will lag the recovery, some good values	
Energy	2.9%	marketweight	supply-demand equation favors suppliers as global GDP growth resumes	
Materials	2.6%	marketweight	benefits from global recovery and infrastructure spending	
Real Estate (REITs)	2.6%	overweight	can benefit from economic recovery, able to handle inflation and higher taxes	was marketweight
Utilities	2.5%	underweight	valuations high, some can benefit from renewable energy	

Data source: D.A. Davidson Wealth Management Research as of 7/8/21.

Wealth Management Research Investment Cycle Gauge







Source data: D.A. Davidson & Co. as of 7/8/21

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Market Indices: The information on indices is presented for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply the potential performance of any fund or investment. Indices provide a general source of information on how various market segments and types of investments have performed in the past. Index performance assumes the reinvestment of all distributions, but does not assume any transaction costs, taxes, management fees, or other expenses. You may not invest directly in an index. Past performance is not an indicator of future results. The S&P 500 Index is a market cap weighted index that is designed to measure the US large-cap equity performance. The index is composed of the 500 leading publically traded US companies based on size, liquidity, industry, and profitability criteria. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price weighted index that tracks 30 large, publicly-owned companies trading on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and the NASDAQ. The NASDAQ Composite Index measures all NASDAQ domestic and international based common type stocks listed on The NASDAQ Stock Market. Today the NASDAQ Composite includes over 3,000 companies. The Russell 2000® Index is a market cap weighted index that measures the performance of the 2,000 smallest companies in the Russell 3000® Index. The MSCI EAFE® Index (Europe, Austral, Asia, Far East) is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure developed market equity performance, excluding the US and Canada. The MSCI Emerging Markets Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure equity market performance in the global emerging markets. Bloomberg Commodity Index (BCOM) is calculated on an excess return basis and reflects commodity futures price movements. The index rebalances annually weighted 2/3 by trading volume and 1/3 by world production and weight-caps are applied at the commodity, sector and group level for diversification. The Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond Index is a broad-based flagship benchmark that measures the investment grade, U.S. dollar-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market.

Other Disclosures:

The forward S&P 500 price-to-earnings ratio (P/E) is a valuation measure, calculated by dividing the price of the S&P 500 index over the weighted average earnings per share (EPS) estimate of each company in the index. Earnings are based on "forward" consensus estimates expected over the next 12 months (NTM).

The yield of the 10-year U.S. Treasury bond is a widely followed barometer of the current U.S. interest rate environment.

S&P 500 earnings growth reflect the year over year change in operating earnings on a per share basis. Earnings data are aggregated for all S&P 500 constituents and are measured according to the relative market capitalization weights for each company. Estimated earnings are the combined FactSet estimates of analysts covering each company included in the index.

Non-residential fixed investment is an indicator of U.S. corporate capital expenditures (capex), measured by the amount spent on structures, equipment, and software. Seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) is used to normalize data by adjusting for seasonal changes in business and economic data for a more accurate comparison between different time periods

The ISM Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of the outlook for the manufacturing (PMI – Manufacturing) and services (PMI – Services) sectors of the economy. The index is based on a wide survey of company executives in these sectors. A reading above 50 indicates expectation for expansion compared to the previous month; a reading below 50 suggests contraction. Seasonally adjusted (SA) is used to normalize data by adjusting for seasonal changes in business and economic data for a more accurate comparison between different time periods. United States and Euro Zone data is provided by IHS Markit, Japan data is provided by Nikkei, United Kingdom data is provided by the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply, and China data is provided by Caixin.

The Treasury yield curve displays the market interest rate across different contract lengths for U.S. Treasury bonds, indicating the relationship between the interest rate and the time ("term") to maturity.

The yields of the 10-year and 3-Month U.S. Treasury bonds are widely followed barometers of the current U.S. interest rate environment. The spread is the difference in interest rates between the two securities.

U.S. Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) is an indicator of the growth in consumer spending.