

# ECONOMIC PULSE

## UNITED STATES: DAMAGING TARDINESS

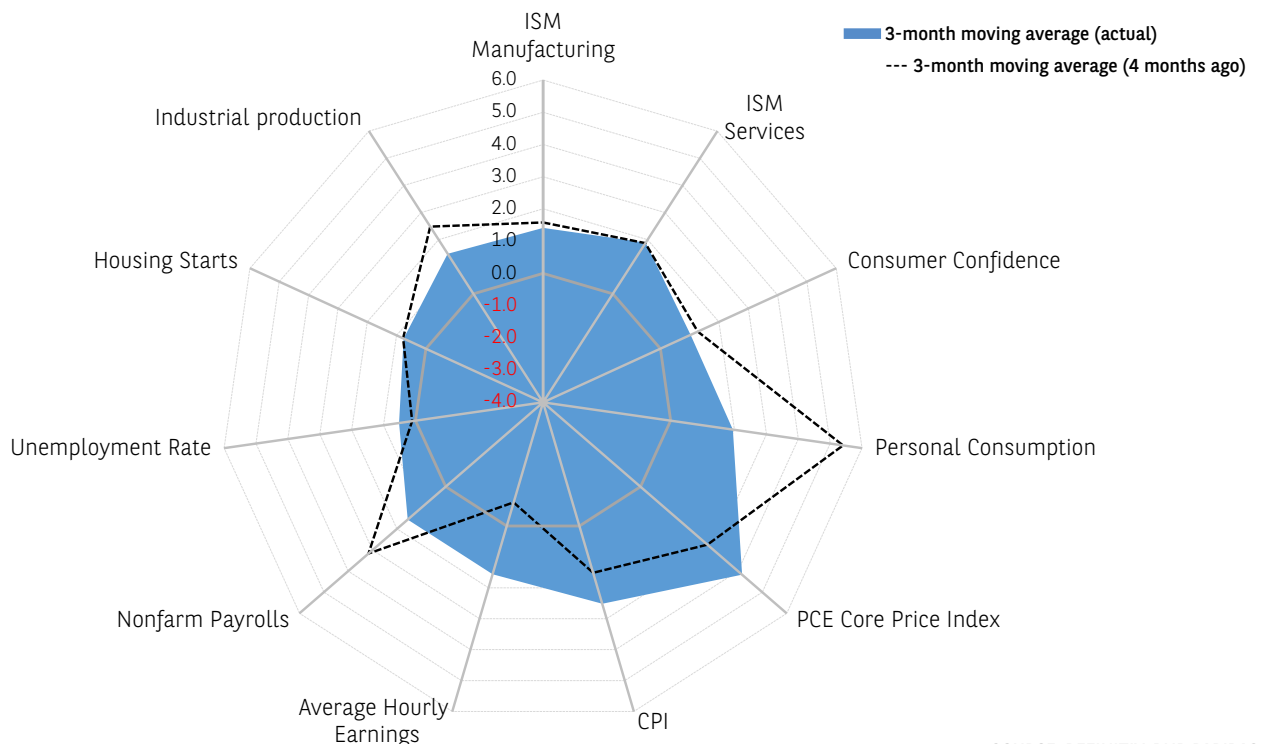
One of the shocking paradoxes of America, cradle of the miracle of vaccines against Covid-19, is that the country is still seeing daily death numbers in the thousands. At the beginning of October, the country passed the sombre milestone of 700,000 deaths, and has the lowest level of vaccination coverage in the G7 (64 people over 100 covered by at least one dose against, for example, 75 people in Italy and France). The spread of the Delta variant over the summer months alone probably accounted for nearly 100,000 deaths. Noting that virtually none of the victims was vaccinated<sup>1</sup>, the White House decided to step things up: on 9 September, President Biden signed a decree obliging anybody operating in the federal area (civil servants, subcontractors, public sector teachers, etc.) to be vaccinated. Major private sectors were enjoined, on pain of penalties, to do the same or, failing that, to test their employees on a weekly basis. At the time of writing, the tightening of federal policy was bearing fruit, with the number of injections rising to around one million per day.

The still-too-deadly wave of the epidemic over the summer may have contributed to the slowing of the recovery in employment. In September, the US economy created only 194,000 nonfarm jobs (against an expected figure of 500,000), which took the total to 1.7 million for the third quarter, slightly less than the second. Unsurprisingly, recruitment focused on sectors exposed to an upturn in travel and gatherings of people—hotels, restaurants, recreation, entertainment—and remained strong in online commerce. At 4.8% the unemployment rate is closing on the figure expected by the Federal Reserve for the year end. It is nevertheless far from a normal situation, with activity rates, in particular, well below their pre-pandemic level. The mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market, as reflected in the high number of vacancies, is still a problem.

Jean-Luc Proutat

1. In a CNBC interview in July, leading immunologist indicated that more than 99% of recent Covid-19 fatalities (those who died in June) were not vaccinated.

### UNITED STATES: QUARTERLY CHANGES



SOURCE: REFINITIV, BNP PARIBAS

The indicators in the radar are all transformed into 'z-scores' (deviations from the long-term average, as standard deviations). These z-scores have mean zero and their values are between -4 and +6. In the radar chart, the blue area shows the actual conditions of economic activity. It is compared with the situation four months earlier (dotted-line). An expansion of the blue area compared to the dotted area signals an increase in the variable.

