

# Global Macro Insight

31 August 2026

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## US Pulse: Warsh hawkish, signals inflation fight not over

### What we're watching

- Fed Chair Warsh's address to the Jackson Hole symposium gave greater clarity into his thinking on inflation, communication policy and the economy. He confirmed the 2.0% inflation target is fixed and firmly in place.
- Warsh gave an upbeat assessment of the economy, including capital expenditure and consumption, and he views the labour market as stable. If higher interest rates are needed, the health of the economy is not a barrier to tightening.
- It was ambiguous whether more data is needed in the Fed's decision-making process on whether rates need to rise or not. Warsh said the Fed must be confident inflation is moving to 2.0%, otherwise "we have more work to do". He said there was not enough information from the improved summer data to tell him that underlying trends have meaningfully improved.
- Warsh reiterated that the Fed is fully responsible for maximum employment and is committed to both sides of its dual mandate. He affirmed that short-term interest rates are the main policy tool. Unconventional monetary policies are suitable for genuine crises, he said, but otherwise should be used sparingly, if at all.
- On the data front this week, the August nonfarm payrolls report is expected to show that the labour market is in an unusually weak equilibrium. Hiring is expected to recover after the sharp decline in July, while the unemployment rate is expected to remain steady at 4.1%.

| Date * | Event                             | Period | Survey     | Prior      |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|------------|
| 1 Sept | Dallas Fed Manufacturing Activity | Aug    | 1.3        | 1.3        |
| 2 Sept | ISM Manufacturing                 | Aug    | 55.2       | 55.6       |
| 2 Sept | Construction Spending m/m         | Jul    | 0.0%       | -0.1%      |
| 2 Sept | JOLTS Job Openings                | Jul    | 7,313k     | 7,359k     |
| 2 Sept | Dallas Fed Services Activity      | Aug    | --         | 6.6        |
| 2 Sept | MBA Mortgage Applications         | 28 Aug | --         | -1.0%      |
| 3 Sept | ADP Employment Change             | Aug    | 47k        | 44k        |
| 3 Sept | Fed Releases Beige Book           | --     | --         | --         |
| 3 Sept | Trade Balance                     | Jul    | -USD90.0bn | -USD73.3bn |
| 3 Sept | Unit Labor Costs                  | 2Q F   | 1.3%       | 1.3%       |
| 3 Sept | Initial Jobless Claims            | 29 Aug | 205k       | 203k       |
| 3 Sept | Continuing Claims                 | 22 Aug | 1,787k     | 1,778k     |
| 4 Sept | ISM Services Index                | Aug    | 54.1       | 54.1       |
| 4 Sept | Change in Nonfarm Payrolls        | Aug    | 55k        | -23k       |
| 4 Sept | Change in Private Payrolls        | Aug    | 53k        | 30k        |
| 4 Sept | Change in Manufacturing Payrolls  | Aug    | 5k         | 5k         |
| 4 Sept | Average Hourly Earnings m/m       | Aug    | 0.3%       | 0.1%       |
| 4 Sept | Average Hourly Earnings y/y       | Aug    | 3.0%       | 3.2%       |
| 4 Sept | Unemployment Rate                 | Aug    | 4.1%       | 4.1%       |
| 4 Sept | Labor Force Participation Rate    | Aug    | 61.4%      | 61.4%      |
| 4 Sept | Underemployment Rate              | Aug    | --         | 7.9%       |

\*In Australia; F =Final; Source: Bloomberg, ANZ Research

## Warsh's speech leaves door open for a September hike

In his opening [speech](#) to the Jackson Hole symposium, Fed Chair Warsh addressed market concerns about his determination to return inflation to target. He emphasised that the Fed must prioritise getting inflation down and confirmed that the 2.0% target remains firmly in place. He gave some insights into how he views the economy, and it seemed that Warsh took on board market concerns about his opaque communication at the July FOMC press conference. He did not reveal the Fed's reaction function and remains committed to ending forward guidance.

*"The job for policymakers is to capture underlying trend inflation—that is, the generalized change in prices in the economy, unaffected by idiosyncratic factors. We want to gauge whether underlying inflation is rising, falling, or stuck in place. We also want to understand not just the direction of travel, but also the speed..."*

Warsh stressed that what matters is trends in the data and not a single data point. He de-emphasised the better-than-expected inflation data over June and July, saying they have not told him underlying inflation pressures have meaningfully improved.

*"Here is my standard. We must be confident that underlying inflation is moving to our objective, clearly and at sufficient speed. Otherwise, we have work to do."*

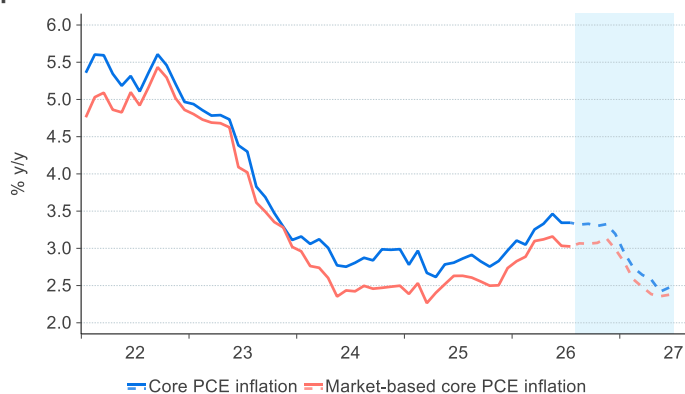
The use of the word "speed" is new, although Warsh did not indicate the speed limit. Is it the FOMC's forecast horizon or shorter? "Speed" is also aimed at maintaining stable inflation expectations. He said there is good news in that medium term inflation expectations look stable and that there is a strong and similar message coming from the [inflation] swaps market.

He said he was impressed with the performance of the economy and that both Main Street and Wall Street have held up well in the face of shocks. Business investment is strong, consumer spending is healthy and the jobs market is stable. On forward guidance, he explained:

*"In normal times, the role of forward guidance should be limited and circumscribed. Otherwise, it risks creating ambiguity in the name of clarity. Oversharing policy deliberations and overcommitting to future decisions can lead markets, businesses, and households astray. And I believe when policymakers make quasi-commitments on interest rates through the cycle, we inhibit our own freedom to make the right calls when it's time to decide..."*

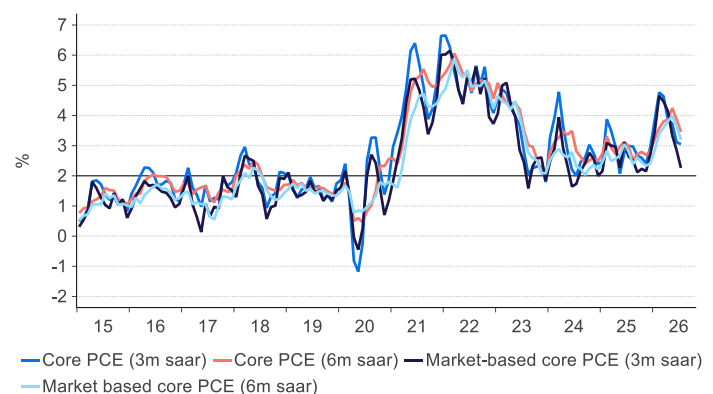
Our assessment is that Warsh addressed concerns that had emerged in markets over his determination to return inflation to target. He did not give explicit guidance on a rise in September, but building his credibility may mean that he has to follow his words with action. Market pricing for a September rate hike firmed. Bond yields failed to fall. Whether the sharp falls in the 3m annualised pace of core PCE and market-based core PCE inflation in recent months represents sufficient speedy improvement can be debated. It is clear that Warsh and his FOMC colleagues have no tolerance for any future slippage on inflation. Data remain central to decision making, and all FOMC meetings over the remainder of this year are live. Warsh said the task force reviews will not get in the way of the Fed's work.

**Figure 1. PCE inflation projection at 0.2% m/m sequential pace**



Source: BEA, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 2. Recent trends in underlying inflation**



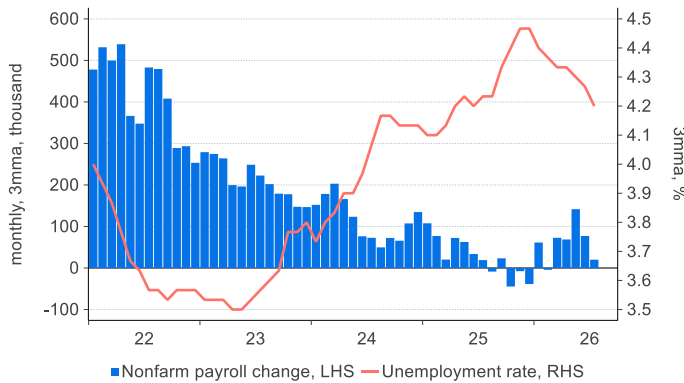
Source: BEA, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

## Data pulse: the week ahead

Nonfarm payrolls are forecast to rise 55k in August following a 23k decline in July, according to the median Bloomberg estimate. The unemployment rate is expected to hold at 4.1%. Demand for labour is weak, but the sharp fall in the supply of labour is keeping unemployment low. The weekly initial claims data highlight an undynamic low hire/low fire jobs environment. Initial jobless claims fell to 203k in the latest week, continuing a sideways trend for this year (26-week average 210k). The Conference Board's survey of consumer expectations for the labour market six months ahead are also pointing to an uneasy equilibrium.

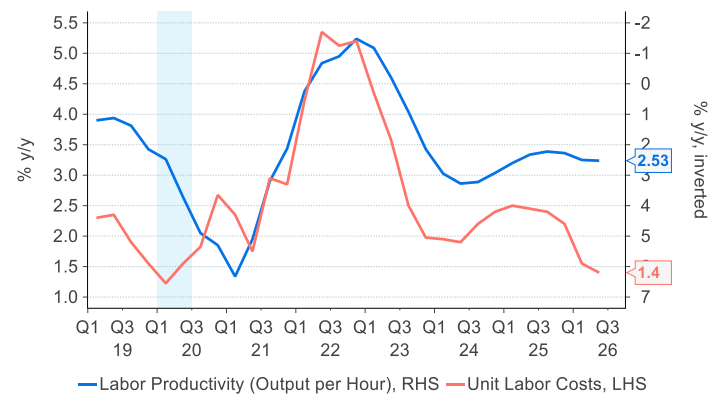
In other data, the August ISM manufacturing index is forecast to ease slightly to 55.2 (55.6 in July) The ISM services index is expected to be steady at 54.1 in August, suggesting that underlying service sector activity is supportive of growth.

**Figure 3. Labour market remains soft but stable**



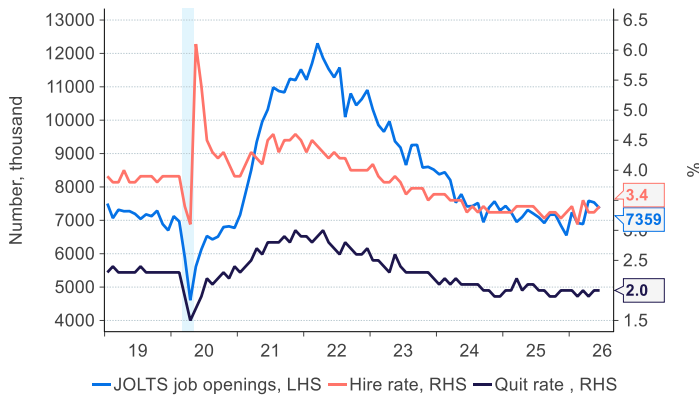
Source: BLS, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 4. Productivity to keep labour costs in check**



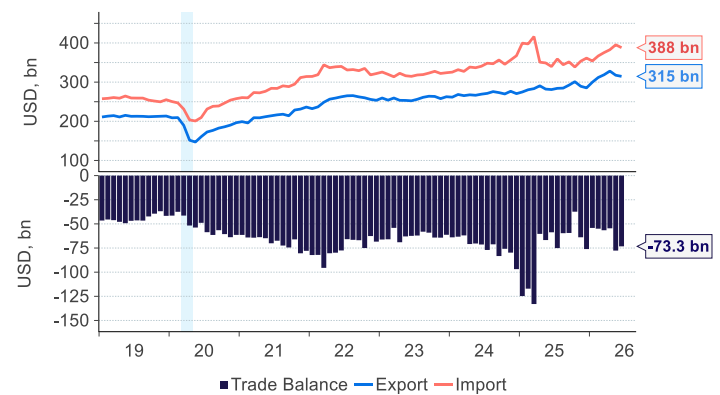
Source: BLS, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 5. Job openings reflect low hiring**



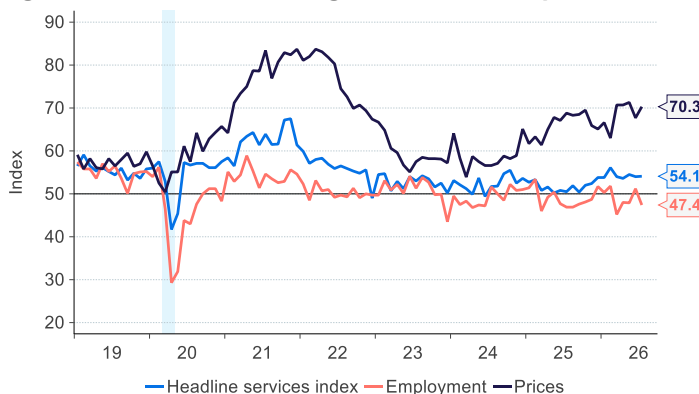
Source: Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 6. Trade deficit likely to widen slightly**



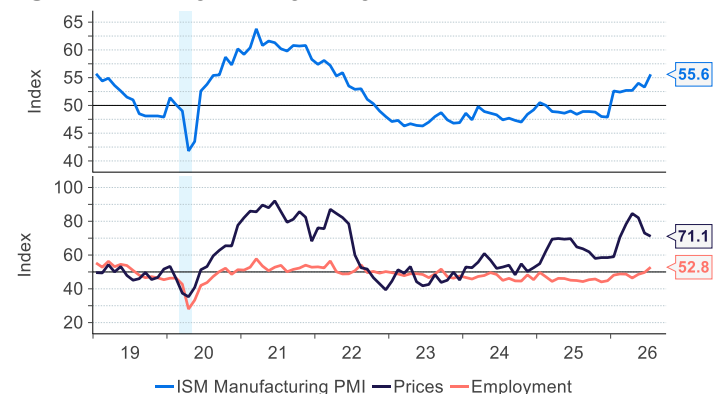
Source: BEA, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 7. Services ISM to signal continued expansion**



Source: ISM, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 8. Factory activity likely to show some moderation**



Source: ISM, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

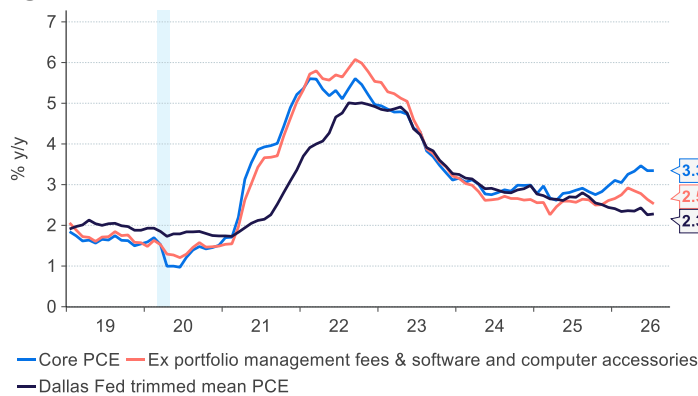
## Data pulse: the week that was

Headline PCE inflation rose 0.16% m/m (3.7% y/y), while core prices increased 0.25% m/m (3.3% y/y). Portfolio management fees accounted for nearly half of the monthly increase in core inflation. The market-based measure of core PCE, which excludes imputed prices like portfolio fees, rose 0.15% m/m. The Dallas Fed's trimmed mean measure was 2.3% y/y.

The Conference Board's measure of consumer confidence slipped to 89.4 in August from 90.2 as the expectations index fell to 68.2 from 74.0. The present situation index rose to 121.2 from 114.4. Expectations for business conditions, employment prospects and income growth weakened further.

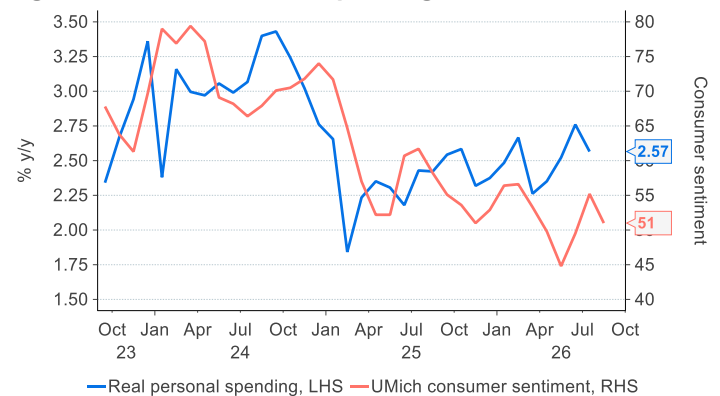
The advance goods trade deficit widened USD118.8bn in July, the largest monthly deficit since March 2025. Imports rose 3.7% m/m and exports fell 2.9% m/m. A surge in capital goods imports (USD140.1bn versus USD125.9bn) continues to point to a powerful AI-driven investment cycle. Capital goods imports, which includes semiconductors, computers and accessories, and telecommunications equipment rose 11.3% m/m and nearly 46.9% y/y.

**Figure 9. Portfolio fees drive core PCE inflation**



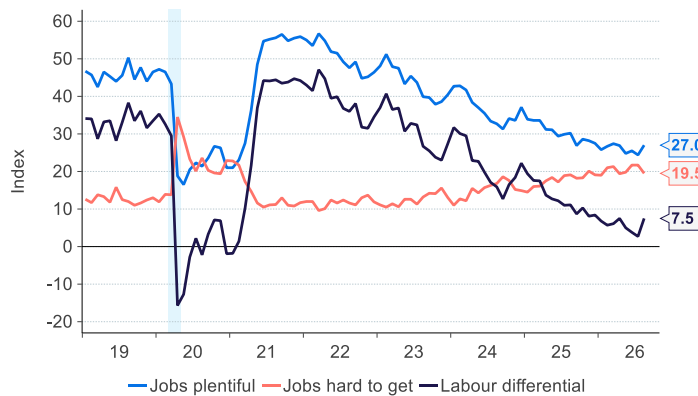
Source: BEA, Dallas Fed, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 10. Real consumer spending remains soft**



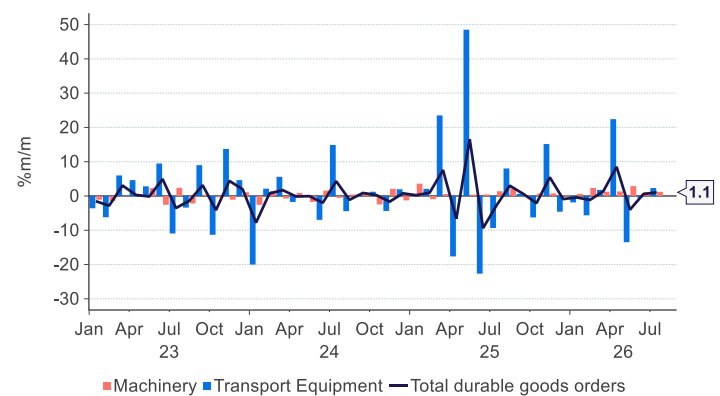
Source: BEA, University of Michigan, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 11. Perceptions of the labour market improve**



Source: TCB, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 12. Capex-led strength drives durable goods orders**



Source: USCB, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 13. Elevated mortgage rates weigh on home sales**



Source: USCB, NAR, S&P Global, Freddie Mac, Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

**Figure 14. Capital goods imports drive wider trade deficit**



Source: Bloomberg, Macrobond, ANZ Research

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Last updated: 17 June 2025

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