

# Consumer Confidence Survey® Technical Note – May 2021

# **Introduction and Background**

The Conference Board® Consumer Confidence Index® (CCI) is a barometer of the health of the U.S. economy from the perspective of the consumer. The index is based on consumers' perceptions of current business and employment conditions, as well as their expectations for six months hence regarding business conditions, employment, and income. The Consumer Confidence Index and its related series are among the earliest sets of economic indicators available each month and are closely watched as leading indicators for the U.S. economy.

# Overview of Changes to the Consumer Confidence Survey®

In 1967, The Conference Board began the Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS) as a mail survey conducted every two months; in June 1977, the CCS began monthly collection and publication. The CCS has maintained consistent concepts, definitions, and questions.

As of May 2021, The Conference Board® Consumer Confidence Survey® will be conducted online and has changed survey providers from The Nielsen Company to Toluna, a technology company that delivers real-time consumer insights and market research through its innovative technology, expertise, and panel of over 36 million consumers. Prior to November 2010, the survey was conducted by TNS via mail.

The improved quality of online surveys over the past several years coupled with declining mail survey response rates made this a good time to transition the Consumer Confidence Survey online. From November 2020 to April 2021, a six-month pilot test of the new sample design was conducted in parallel with the existing mail survey design. During this period, The Conference Board tested the comparability of the two surveys and found that in terms of measuring changes in consumer confidence over time, these two surveys were very similar [See chart on Page 3]. At the same time, there were found to be consistent differences between the two surveys. To correct for the positive sentiment biases commonly exhibited in online panels, adjustment factors based on age, gender, income and geography were calculated and applied. As a result, the online survey produces measures of confidence levels consistent with the longstanding mail survey. As internet penetration rates continue to increase, The Conference Board will continue to evaluate these weighting schemes.

The transition from a mail survey to an online survey has resulted in an increase in the number of respondents to 3,000 per month and extended the time in field for the preliminary data. These enhancements are expected to result in a more effective sample as well as more robust estimates.

#### Sample Design

## Coverage

The Consumer Confidence Survey is scheduled so that there are approximately 4 weekly waves conducted throughout a given month. Responses flow in throughout the collection period, with the sample close-out for preliminary estimates occurring about one week before preliminary results are released. Reponses received after the cutoff date through the end of the month are used to produce the final estimates for the month, which are published with the release of the following month's data.



The number of complete responses has been increased to 3,000 per month. In addition, the closing date for the preliminary findings has been extended and thus provides for broader coverage in a given month.

#### Estimation

For the CCI, The Conference Board publishes U.S. totals and breakouts by census geography and demographic categories that include census division, age, and income. To improve the accuracy of the estimates and ensure the proportionate representation of these categories in the estimates, the CCS uses a post-stratification structure covering the following categories:

- Census Division (9 Census divisions)
- Age of Head of Household (<30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+)
- Gender of Head of Household (Male/Female)
- Income of Household (<\$15,000; \$15,000-\$24,999; \$25,000-\$34,999; \$35,000-\$49,999; \$50,000-\$74,999; \$75,000-\$99,999; \$100,000-\$124,999; \$125,000+)

# Calculation of the Consumer Confidence Index®

The CCS concepts and questions used to compute the Consumer Confidence Index, Present Situation Index, and Expectations Index remain the same.

The indexes are based on responses to five questions in the survey:

#### Consumer Confidence Index

# **Present Situation Index**

- 1. Respondents' appraisal of current business conditions.
- 2. Respondents' appraisal of current employment conditions.

#### **Expectations Index**

- 3. Respondents' expectations regarding business conditions six months hence.
- 4. Respondents' expectations regarding employment conditions six months hence.
- 5. Respondents' expectations regarding their total family income six months hence.

Each of the five CCS survey questions has three response options: positive, negative, or neutral. The response proportions to each question are seasonally adjusted. For each question, the positive figure is divided by the sum of the positive and negative to yield a proportion, which we call the "relative" value.

For each question, the average relative value for the calendar year 1985 is then used as a benchmark to yield the index value for that question. The indexes are then averaged together as follows:

- Consumer Confidence Index: Average of all five indexes
- Present Situation Index: Average of indexes for questions 1 and 2
- Expectations Index: Average of indexes for questions 3, 4, and 5

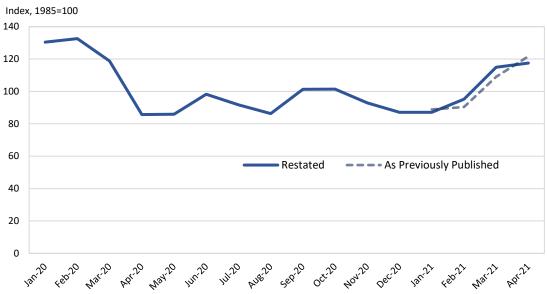


# **Historical Comparability**

The CCS has used the same concepts and questions since the start of the series in 1967. Accounting for differences in sample design and weighting, the resulting levels and over-the-month changes had a limited effect on most series.

January 2021 was chosen as the transition month to minimize any impact from noneconomic causes. The transition effect of changing the survey provider for the national CCI series is a decrease of 1.8 points for the aggregate index for that month. There were some level differences in the sub-national data, but The Conference Board could not determine if they were attributable to the inherent volatility in the series and/or due to the new sample frame. The graph and tables on the following pages show the comparisons between the originally published levels from the mail survey in January-April(preliminary) 2021 and restated values using the online survey for January-April(revised) 2021. The historical series before January 2021 remains unchanged.

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index®



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	As restated				As previously published				
All series seasonally adjusted	Jan.(r)	2021 Feb.(r)	Mar.(r)	Apr.(r)	Jan.	2021 Feb.	Mar.	Apr (p)	
All selles seasonally adjusted	•	,,						Apr.(p)	
			Numbers, 1985=1		•		lumbers, 1985=		
Consumer Confidence Index®	87.1	95.2	114.9	117.5	88.9	90.4	109.0	121.7	
Present Situation	85.5	95.0	119.4	131.9	85.5	89.6	110.1	139.6	
Expectations	88.1	95.4	111.9	107.9	91.2	90.9	108.3	109.8	
	Appraisa	al of Present Si	tuation: Percent		Appraisal of Present Situation: Percent				
Business Conditions									
Good	15.0	17.3	20.5	19.4	15.8	16.1	18.3	23.3	
Bad	42.9	37.5	25.3	24.5	42.4	39.7	30.1	24.8	
Normal	42.1	45.2	54.2	56.1	41.8	44.2	51.6	51.9	
Employment									
Jobs plentiful	21.0	23.1	27.5	36.3	20.0	21.6	26.5	37.9	
Jobs not so plentiful	56.2	55.2	55.2	49.0	57.5	56.0	55.0	48.9	
Jobs hard to get	22.8	21.7	17.3	14.7	22.5	22.4	18.5	13.2	
	Expectatio	ns for Six Mont	hs Hence: Perce	Expectation	s for Six Month	ns Hence: Perce	ent		
Business Conditions									
Better	31.8	33.6	39.1	33.1	34.1	30.7	40.3	40.5	
Worse	18.5	16.4	11.1	12.1	19.0	17.7	11.8	11.9	
Same	49.7	50.0	49.8	54.8	46.9	51.6	47.9	47.6	
Employment									
More jobs	28.8	29.0	35.4	31.7	30.4	27.4	35.9	34.5	
Fewer jobs	23.3	19.9	14.8	14.4	22.1	21.3	14.4	15.5	
Same	47.9	51.1	49.8	53.9	47.5	51.3	49.7	50.0	
Income									
Increase	14.3	16.0	18.0	17.4	15.8	14.8	15.4	17.9	
Decrease	15.0	13.0	10.1	10.5	15.5	12.9	12.6	10.9	
Same	70.7	71.0	71.9	72.1	68.7	72.3	72.0	71.2	
	Plans to	Buy Within Six	Months: Percent	Plans to Buy Within Six Months: Percent					
Automobile		•							
Yes	10.8	11.3	12.2	11.1	11.0	10.2	12.7	14.0	
New	3.6	3.8	4.2	3.1	4.1	3.9	5.0	4.8	
Used	5.3	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.8	5.2	6.0	6.5	
Uncertain	1.9	1.9	2.5	2.4	1.1	1.1	1.7	2.7	
Home									
Yes	6.7	7.5	7.1	7.1	7.4	6.0	8.1	8.9	
New	0.8	1.2	1.2	0.7	1.2	1.0	2.4	2.4	
Lived in	3.1	4.7	3.8	2.8	3.6	3.8	4.7	4.3	
Uncertain	2.8	1.6	2.1	3.6	2.6	1.2	1.0	2.2	
Major appliances									
Total plans	48.8	52.9	52.0	51.3	48.7	49.6	53.6	49.8	
Refrigerator	7.7	8.9	9.0	9.3	7.8	9.4	8.3	8.2	
Washing machine	6.6	7.0	7.4	6.3	7.3	6.0	7.8	7.7	
TV Set	11.4	12.2	11.0	11.6	11.1	10.4	11.4	10.0	
Vacuum Cleaner	8.6	9.7	8.7	8.9	8.2	8.2	9.7	8.3	
Range	4.2	4.8	4.7	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.6	5.0	
Clothes dryer	5.9	5.8	6.5	6.4	5.8	6.3	7.0	6.2	
Air conditioner	4.4	4.5	4.7	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.8	4.4	
Carpet	10.6	11.2	10.6	12.6	9.6	10.1	10.4	12.6	
	Vacation Int	tended Within S	Six Months: Perc	ent	Vacation Intended Within Six Months: Percent				
Vacation Intended		34.6		36.4		34.0		43.3	
Destination									
U.S.		35.8		38.7		32.8		39.1	
Foreign country		7.9		10.0		7.1		7.1	
Means of Travel				70.0					
Automobile		25.1		25.3		23.6		24.9	
Airplane		16.9		19.8		15.7		20.4	
Other		1.1		2.3		1.2		1.3	

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		As restate	d		А	s previously pu	blished			
Not seasonally		2021			2021					
adjusted	Jan.(r)	Feb.(r)	Mar.(r)	Apr.(r)	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.(p)		
	Expectations	for Twelve Mo	nths Hence: Per	cent	Expectations	for Twelve Mon	ths Hence: Pe	rcent		
Inflation Rate	•				•					
Average	6.1	6.5	6.4	6.2	6.0	6.5	6.7	6.7		
Interest Rates										
Higher	49.4	54.4	57.3	55.2	51.2	52.3	61.0	65.2		
Same	35.0	31.8	30.0	32.9	34.0	32.9	27.4	26.9		
Lower	15.6	13.8	12.7	11.9	14.8	14.8	11.6	7.9		
Stock Prices										
Increase	35.3	35.9	39.8	38.0	35.2	36.4	36.8	41.6		
Same	31.7	31.9	30.2	33.4	31.0	29.9	33.0	33.0		
Decrease	33.0	32.2	30.0	28.6	33.8	33.7	30.2	25.4		

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		As restate	d		As previously published				
All series seasonally adjusted	2021				2021				
	Jan.(r)	Feb.(r)	Mar.(r)	Apr.(r)	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.(p)	
	Consumer Confidence Index®, 1985 = 100				Consumer Confidence Index®, 1985 = 100				
AGE OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD	Consume	oomidence m	dexe, 1303 = 10	~	Oonsume	oomidence m	uexe, 1303 = 10		
Under 35	100.1	107.5	128.1	121.0	96.2	100.5	120.6	135.0	
35-54	95.1	107.5	119.9	119.5	91.2	92.7	112.1	125.6	
55 and over	74.9	79.3	104.0	112.5	82.7	85.2	103.6	113.2	
HOUSEHOLD INCOME									
Under \$15,000	67.3	54.3	80.5	80.5	57.4	63.2	59.6	84.0	
\$15,000-24,999	64.6	71.2	85.4	96.0	65.5	57.1	87.7	76.4	
\$25,000-34,999	70.0	84.3	103.7	97.8	69.6	75.6	93.8	122.2	
\$35,000-49,999	73.3	80.4	107.4	117.6	78.8	75.8	114.0	122.1	
\$50,000 and over	100.3	110.8	129.7	131.6	100.0	103.5	121.4	133.6	
\$50,000-74,999	80.3	91.7	115.2	116.3	90.7	94.3	110.2	113.3	
\$75,000-99,999	97.4	96.6	125.9	131.1	92.9	101.3	112.8	132.6	
\$100,000-124,999	101.0	116.0	129.0	135.5	93.2	100.2	123.2	141.6	
\$125,000 and over	116.7	130.1	142.7	141.2	112.2	112.1	131.6	142.4	

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Not Seasonally Adjusted		As restate	d		As previously published				
Index Numbers	2021				2021				
U.S. Average, 1985 = 100	Jan.(r)	Feb.(r)	Mar.(r)	Apr.(r)	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.(p)	
NEW ENGLAND									
Consumer Confidence Index®	77.1	90.4	110.2	107.8	101.4	108.8	107.5	113.5	
Present Situation	68.3	75.4	101.0	106.6	90.1	101.6	89.5	128.8	
Expectations	83.0	100.5	116.4	108.7	109.0	113.6	119.6	103.3	
MIDDLE ATLANTIC									
Consumer Confidence Index®	93.9	102.1	113.1	116.3	86.8	92.2	88.5	118.0	
Present Situation	79.9	90.3	104.7	120.8	75.9	76.7	61.9	104.4	
Expectations	103.3	110.0	118.7	113.2	94.0	102.6	106.2	127.1	
EAST NORTH CENTRAL									
Consumer Confidence Index®	96.0	97.7	106.7	116.5	97.0	106.7	113.8	113.3	
Present Situation	95.3	101.1	113.7	138.5	101.7	105.0	126.9	137.9	
Expectations	96.5	95.4	102.1	101.8	93.9	107.9	105.0	96.9	
WEST NORTH CENTRAL									
Consumer Confidence Index®	101.2	104.1	113.8	107.8	108.9	111.1	122.1	118.6	
Present Situation	108.5	117.8	135.4	131.3	111.4	130.5	137.6	147.3	
Expectations	96.4	95.0	99.5	92.2	107.2	98.1	111.9	99.5	
SOUTH ATLANTIC									
Consumer Confidence Index®	94.1	96.3	121.6	122.4	93.6	91.9	116.1	121.5	
Present Situation	96.3	97.1	130.0	138.0	97.5	91.3	123.0	142.5	
Expectations	92.6	95.8	116.0	111.9	91.0	92.3	111.5	107.5	
EAST SOUTH CENTRAL									
Consumer Confidence Index®	88.1	96.1	105.5	99.9	109.4	85.4	106.5	115.1	
Present Situation	97.5	111.0	119.4	120.9	140.1	119.2	126.7	144.3	
Expectations	81.8	86.2	96.3	85.9	88.9	62.9	93.1	95.7	
WEST SOUTH CENTRAL									
Consumer Confidence Index®	94.0	97.5	119.1	118.2	92.8	72.0	106.1	122.7	
Present Situation	92.3	103.3	130.8	130.3	88.9	82.6	104.3	146.7	
Expectations	95.2	93.7	111.3	110.2	95.4	64.9	107.4	106.7	
MOUNTAIN									
Consumer Confidence Index®	82.7	101.0	121.5	124.6	105.6	94.1	99.6	132.6	
Present Situation	83.9	97.9	122.2	139.3	98.5	109.6	102.9	147.1	
Expectations	82.0	103.0	121.1	114.8	110.3	83.7	97.3	123.0	
PACIFIC									
Consumer Confidence Index®	85.8	106.1	107.2	114.2	72.0	97.3	99.2	124.4	
Present Situation	72.9	90.8	80.9	104.9	37.0	61.9	68.2	121.8	
Expectations  Copyright © 2021 by The Conference Board	94.4	116.3	124.7	120.4	95.3	120.9	119.8	126.1	

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Not Seasonally Adjusted		As restate	d		As previously published 2021				
Index Numbers		2021							
U.S. Average, 1985 = 100	Jan.(r)	Feb.(r)	Mar.(r)	Apr.(r)	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.(p)	
CALIFORNIA									
Consumer Confidence Index®	88.0	110.3	110.2	118.0	69.7	96.1	104.6	132.1	
Present Situation	75.6	94.0	84.3	111.9	30.0	58.1	66.6	137.8	
Expectations	96.3	121.2	127.5	122.1	96.1	121.5	129.9	128.3	
TEXAS									
Consumer Confidence Index®	100.7	98.9	125.5	127.5	96.7	84.9	117.1	127.4	
Present Situation	94.9	107.4	135.9	142.5	91.3	89.7	114.9	156.2	
Expectations	104.5	93.2	118.6	117.6	100.2	81.7	118.6	108.2	
NEW YORK									
Consumer Confidence Index®	103.0	111.9	116.2	121.3	74.1	76.2	89.2	98.5	
Present Situation	86.7	100.8	96.5	122.0	52.8	47.7	50.8	72.6	
Expectations	113.9	119.4	129.2	120.7	88.3	95.2	114.8	115.8	
FLORIDA									
Consumer Confidence Index®	89.7	102.6	126.7	127.3	87.8	96.2	127.9	133.5	
Present Situation	80.9	106.3	134.7	145.4	95.0	103.7	144.3	155.0	
Expectations	95.6	100.2	121.3	115.2	83.0	91.2	117.0	119.3	
ILLINOIS									
Consumer Confidence Index®	90.9	93.2	115.2	122.1	84.6	83.1	115.1	119.0	
Present Situation	76.0	83.1	96.4	132.5	53.4	46.5	115.6	105.1	
Expectations	100.9	99.9	127.7	115.2	105.4	107.5	114.8	128.2	
PENNSYLVANIA									
Consumer Confidence Index®	84.7	77.2	110.1	115.5	94.4	105.2	85.0	132.0	
Present Situation	79.2	73.1	114.8	131.9	94.8	110.2	70.1	125.2	
Expectations	88.3	79.9	106.9	104.5	94.0	101.8	94.9	136.5	
ОНЮ									
Consumer Confidence Index®	101.5	101.1	101.5	114.9	102.7	106.2	115.0	107.4	
Present Situation	104.3	113.2	114.0	138.8	108.0	121.1	141.7	141.9	
Expectations	99.7	93.1	93.2	98.9	99.1	96.3	97.2	84.4	
MICHIGAN									
Consumer Confidence Index®	106.8	96.7	103.6	106.0	103.8	101.9	122.4	101.0	
Present Situation	102.4	98.5	121.4	133.3	117.7	96.1	124.4	118.3	
Expectations	109.8	95.4	91.8	87.8	94.5	105.8	121.1	89.4	

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