

US Consumer Confidence Inched Up in February

Latest Press Release

Updated: Tuesday, February 24, 2026

Confidence edged higher but remained well below heights reached in late 2024

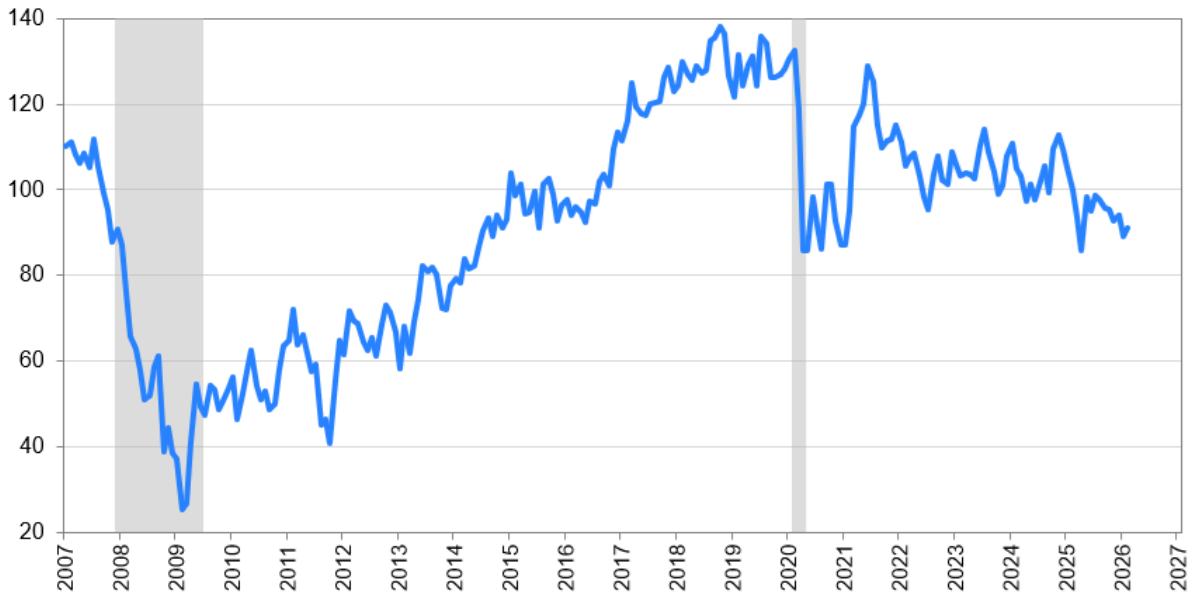
The Conference Board *Consumer Confidence Index*[®] increased by 2.2 points in February to 91.2 (1985=100), from an upwardly revised 89.0 in January.

The *Present Situation Index*—based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions—decreased by 1.8 points to 120.0 in February. The *Expectations Index*—based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—rose by 4.8 points to 72.0. The cutoff for preliminary results was February 17, 2026.

“Confidence ticked up in February after falling in January, as consumers' pessimistic expectations for the future eased somewhat,” said Dana M Peterson, Chief Economist, The Conference Board. “Four of five components of the Index firmed. Nonetheless, the measure remained well below the four-year peak achieved in November 2024 (112.8).”

Consumer Confidence Index®

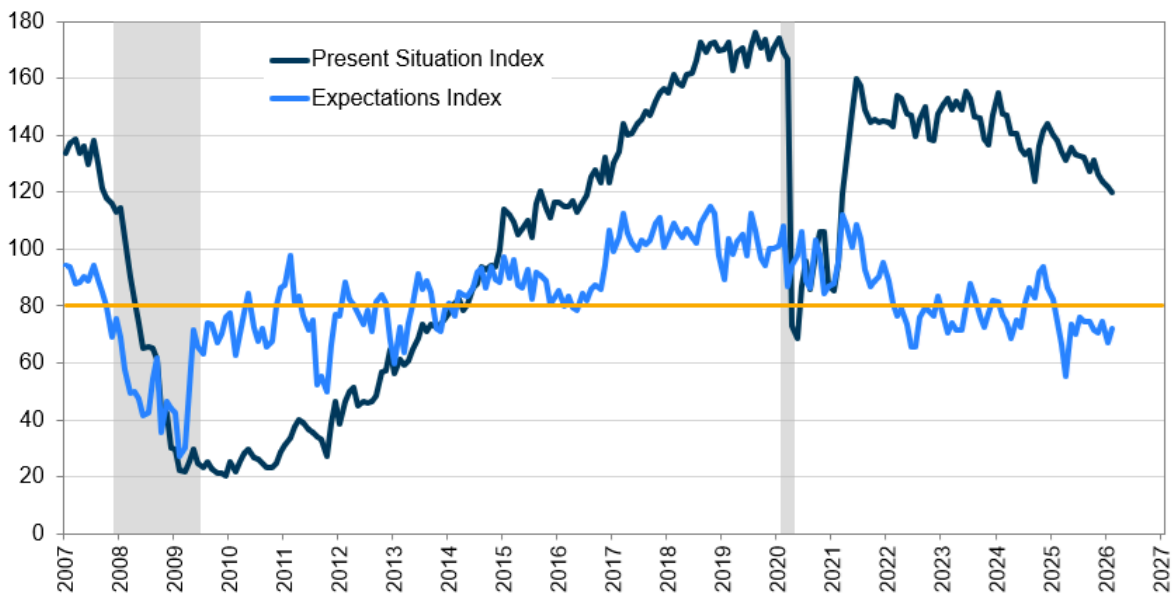
Index, 1985 = 100



*Shaded areas represent periods of recession.
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Present Situation and Expectations Index

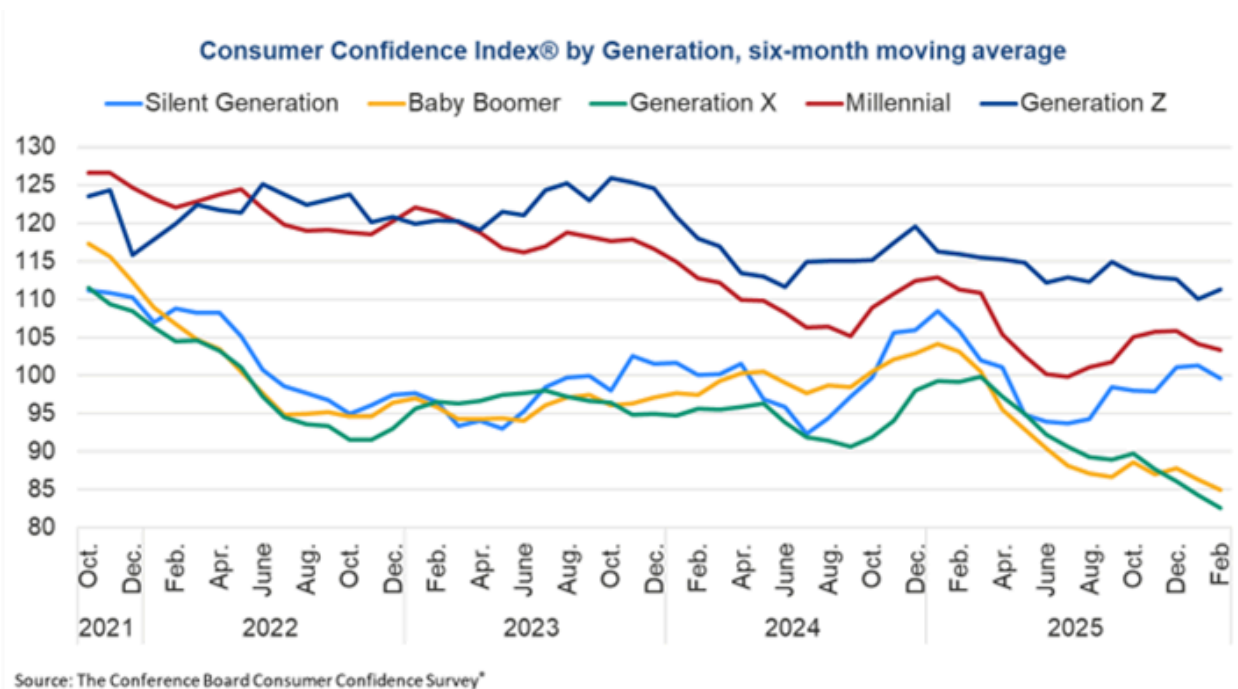
Index, 1985 = 100



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The *Present Situation Index* continued to decline, as net views on current business conditions fell to +0.7%. Perceptions of employment conditions improved slightly, with the labor market differential—the share of consumers saying jobs are “plentiful” minus the share saying jobs are “hard to get”—rising 0.6 ppts to +7.4%. All three *Expectations Index* components advanced slightly in February: expectations for business and labor market conditions six months from now were less negative, while expectations for incomes were more positive.

Among demographic groups, confidence on a six-month moving average basis ticked upward in February for consumers under age 35, which continued to be the most optimistic group. Confidence edged down for respondents 35 and older. Relatedly, on a six-month moving average basis, confidence among Generation Z rose, consistent with soundings from the under-age 35 group, but fell among other generations. By income, confidence on a six-month moving average basis continued to dip for most brackets. Consumer confidence by political affiliation revived among Republican and Independent voters in February after a dip in January, while Democrats were less optimistic.



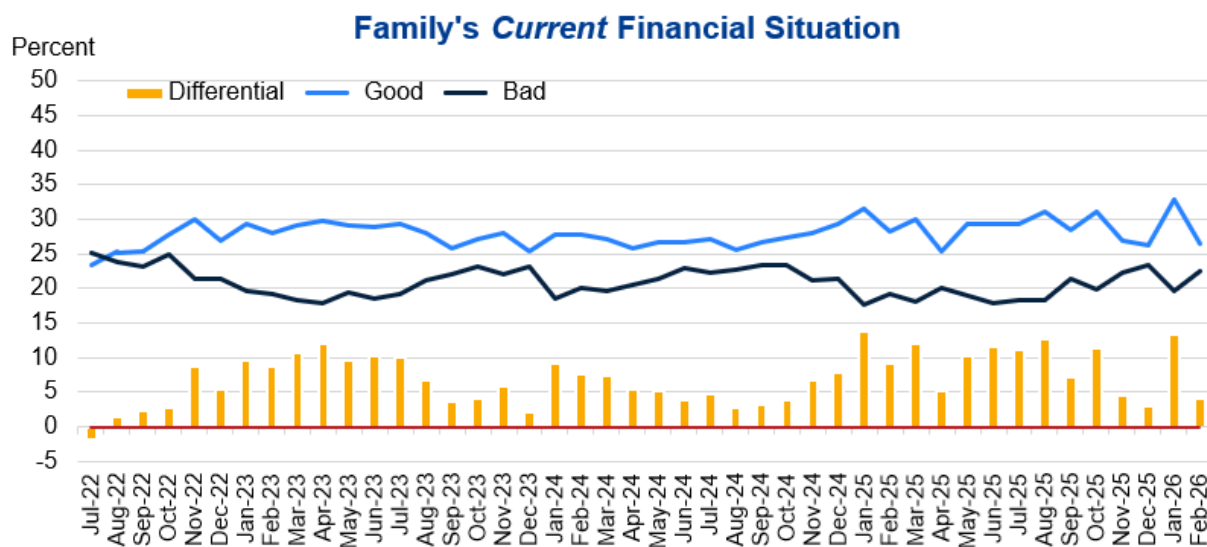
Peterson added: “Consumers’ write-in responses on factors affecting the economy continued to skew towards pessimism. Comments about prices, inflation, and the cost of goods remained at the top of consumer’s minds.

Mentions of trade and politics also increased in February. Labor market mentions eased a bit in February, while observations about immigration increased somewhat."

Consumers' average and median 12-month inflation expectations were little changed but remained elevated. Consumers also believed that interest rates will persist at higher levels over the next 12 months. Most consumers in February continued to expect stock prices to be higher twelve months from now, although the share was slightly smaller than last month.

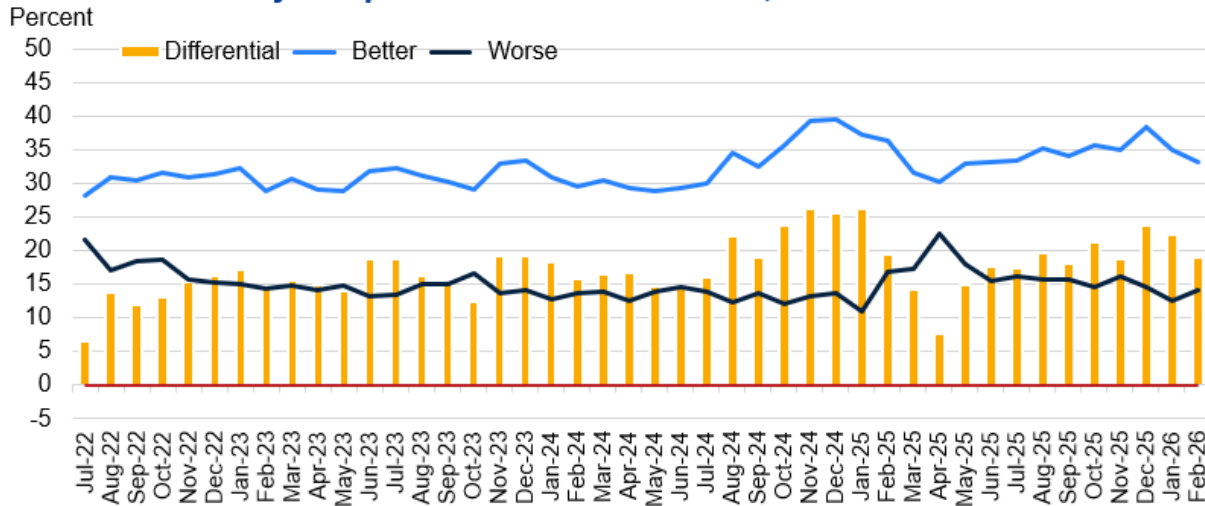
On net, consumers' views of their Family's Current Financial Situation retreated in February, after an unexpected surge in January, based on final data. Expectations for their Family's Future Financial Situation continued to be less optimistic.

Meanwhile, the share of consumers who said a US recession over the next 12 months is "very likely" fell, while those saying "not likely" rose. Respondents who said recession is "somewhat likely" over the next year increased somewhat, and the percent believing we are "already in one" dipped. (These measures are not included in calculating the Consumer Confidence Index®).



Source: The Conference Board, Consumer Confidence Survey®

Family's Expected Financial Situation, Six Months Hence



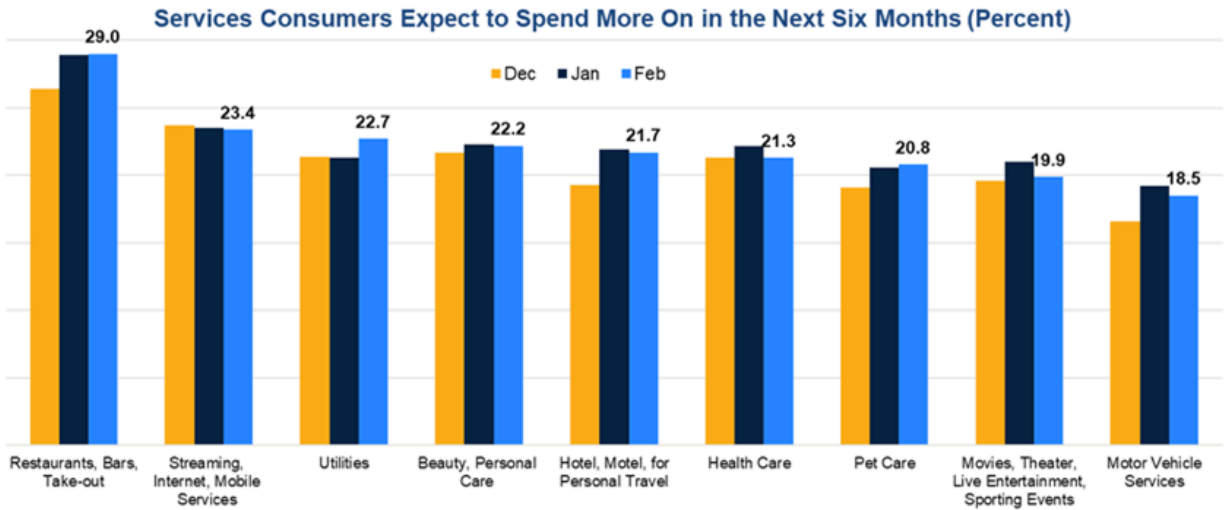
Source: The Conference Board, Consumer Confidence Survey®

Consumers' plans to buy big-ticket items over the next six months rose in February. Those who said "yes" and "maybe" to buying big-ticket items ahead increased, while the number of those saying "no" declined. Used cars, furniture, TVs, and smartphones remained the most popular items within their categories for future purchases.

Buying plans for autos rose on a six-month moving average basis, continuing its uptrend in recent months. Consumers continued to prefer buying used cars. The share of consumers planning to buy a new car was unchanged. Homebuying expectations were little changed in February but continued to retreat on a six-month basis. Still, the share was above levels one year ago.

Plans to purchase furniture, TVs, dishwashers, and ranges on a six-month moving average basis ticked up, while buying plans for refrigerators and washing machines edged down. Plans to buy electronics were little changed in February, except for smartphones, which continued to trend upward on a six-month moving average basis.

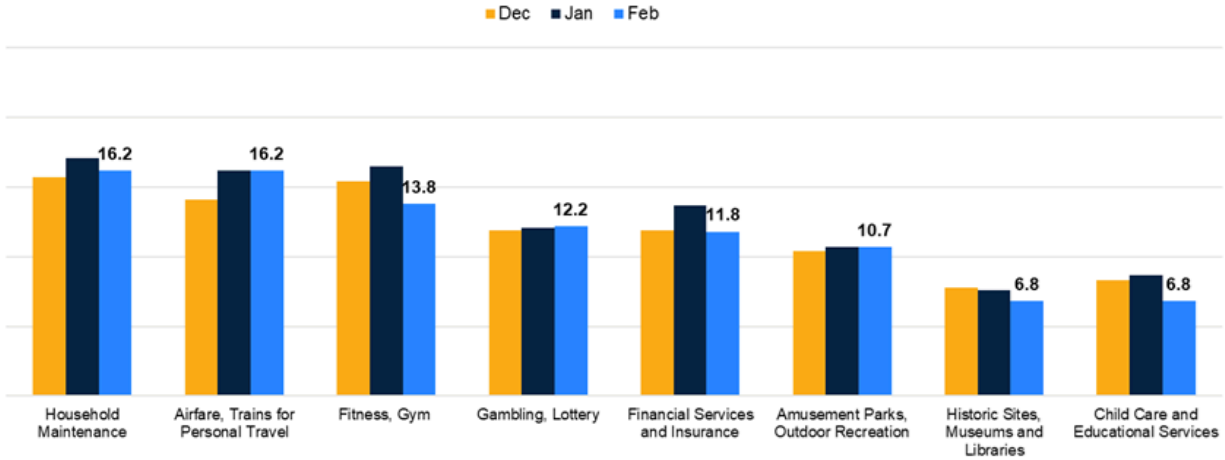
Consumers' planned spending on services over the next six months softened somewhat in February but remained healthy. The share who said "yes" fell, while those who said "maybe" and "no" increased. Consumer spending trends in 2026 remain focused on cheap thrills and necessary services, and away from expensive and highly discretionary activities.



Source: The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Survey*

Among services categories, anticipated spending over the next six months on *utilities*, *pet care*, and *gambling/lotto services* increased, but most other categories dipped or were unchanged. *Restaurants, bars, and take-out* remained the top category for expected spending ahead and edged 0.1% higher in February. While streaming, internet, mobile services; beauty and personal care; and hotel/motel for personal travel remained among the top five categories, intentions for each of them eased. Overall vacation plans over the next six months dipped in February, with small declines in both domestic and international travel. Expected spending on *airfare, trains for personal travel* was unchanged.

Services Consumers Expect to Spend More On in the Next Six Months (Percent)



Source: The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Survey*

Present Situation

Consumers' views of current business conditions deteriorated on net in February.

- 19.7% of consumers said business conditions were "good," a small uptick from 19.6% in January.
- 19.0% said business conditions were "bad," up from 17.3%.

On net, consumers' views of the labor market improved slightly in February.

- 28.0% of consumers said jobs were "plentiful," up from 25.8% in January.
- 20.6% of consumers said jobs were "hard to get," up from 19.0%.

Expectations Six Months Hence

Consumers were less pessimistic about future business conditions in February.

- 17.6% of consumers expected business conditions to improve, up from 16.5% in January.
- 21.0% expected business conditions to worsen, down from 23.7%.

Consumers were also less negative about the labor market outlook in February.

- 15.7% of consumers expected more jobs to be available, up from 14.8% in January.
- 26.1% anticipated fewer jobs, down from 28.7%.

Consumers' outlook for their income prospects was slightly more optimistic in February.

- 17.3% of consumers expected their incomes to increase, up slightly from 17.2% in January.
- 12.3% expected their incomes to decline, down from 12.7%.

The monthly Consumer Confidence Survey®, based on an online sample, is conducted for The Conference Board by 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. The cutoff date for the preliminary results was February 17.