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Bloomberg® Consumer Comfort Index™ Weekly Analysis

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**Contact: Langer Research Associates, 212 456-2621
info@langerresearch.com**

Americans' ratings of the national economy continue to advance in the weekly Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index, giving consumer sentiment its best New Year's kickoff since 2007.

At 43.6 on its scale of 0 to 100, the CCI is its highest since mid-October 2007 – 7.8 points better than at the start of 2014, and up by 17.6 points from its worst first-of-the-year rating on record, Jan. 4, 2009. It started in the 40s each year from 2002-2008 and not since, until now.

Then again, the index started 1998 in the 50s, and 1999-2001 in the 60s – meaning that, even with the gains now under way, the glory days of consumer sentiment still are well out of sight.

The index is extending what was a strong finish to 2014. It's up by 3.8 points in the last 5 weeks and 8.8 points since the end of September. It's 6.9 points better this week than its 2014 average, which in turn was its best yearly average since 2007. And it's now 2.0 points better than its full average in weekly polls since late 1985.

The index, produced for Bloomberg by [Langer Research Associates](#), is based on Americans' views of the national economy, the buying climate and their own finances. Among them:

- Views of the overall economy – long the black spot in consumer sentiment – are leading the charge, with the economy subindex, at 36.2, its best in more than seven years. While still numerically the worst of the three components, it's been on an impressive climb, gaining 6.5 points in five weeks and a remarkable 13.8 points since late September.
- Though it's paused in the last few weeks, the buying climate index made a good run through the holiday shopping season. At 39.2, it's up 4.1 points in five weeks and 7.3 points since the last week of September.
- At 55.5, the personal finances index is 1.7 points better than last week, breaking a five-week holding pattern. In contrast to the other two subindices, the personal finances subindex has held in a tight 2.3-point range in the past 10 weeks.

The buying climate, economy and personal finances indices are 3.6, 2.2 and 0.3 points better than their long-term averages. Gains in the economy and buying climate scores are especially

evident when comparing their current levels to their 2014 averages – they’re 10.6 and 6.7 points better than their averages last year, vs. 3.4 points for the personal finances subindex.

Consumer sentiment has improved in line with a range of other indicators, including GDP, retail sales, employment and wages. Sharply falling gas prices haven’t hurt.

In addition to its overall level, the CCI is at more than seven-year highs among several groups. It’s its best since early July and early October 2007, respectively, among full- and part-time workers, 50.3 and 47.7, marking just the second time the CCI has passed its 50.0 midpoint among full-time workers since mid-2007. (The first was two weeks ago.) It’s just 34.6, by contrast, among those who aren’t employed for pay.

The index among single adults, and among those who are separated, widowed or divorced, is its best since late July and late October 2007, respectively, at 44.4 and 33.3. It’s 38.1 among high school graduates, its highest in seven years. And the index among men (47.6), 18- to 34-year olds (47.7) and 55- to 64-year olds (42.9), Westerners (45.6) and Southerners (41.6), and political independents (43.8) is at highs dating at least to January 2008.

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