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Bloomberg ® Consumer Comfort Index™ Weekly Analysis

Embargoed for Release after 9:45 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015

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Economic optimism hit a long-term high in this week's Bloomberg consumer survey, with the number of Americans who say the national economy is improving exceeding those who say it's getting worse by the largest margin in four years.

Thirty-six percent now say the economy is getting better, up 7 percentage points from late fall to the most since November 2012. Twenty-nine percent say it's getting worse, the fewest in four years, and the resulting 7-point positive gap is its largest in four years. (The rest say the economy's staying the same.)

Expectations for the economy's future join views of present conditions on a decided upswing. The weekly Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index, measuring public ratings of current economic conditions, stands at 44.7 on its scale of 0 to 100, its second best since shortly before the Great Recession began. Last week's 45.4 was its highest since July 2007.

The overall CCI has rallied impressively, improving at least numerically in all but three of the past 12 weeks. It's within sight of its pre-recession average, 45.3, which it exceeded for the first time last week, and better than its long-term average (41.6) for the sixth week straight.

The CCI, produced by [Langer Research Associates](#), is based on Americans' ratings of the national economy, the buying climate and their personal finances.

- The national economy subindex, at 38.9, is just shy of last week's 39.1, which was its highest since early August 2007. It's better than its 29-year average by 4.9 points, and just 1.2 points off its pre-recession average.
- Views of the buying climate, with a subindex of 38.5, have backed off from last week's more than seven-and-a-half year high, 39.9. Nonetheless, this is 2.9 points better than its long-term average, and numerically just ahead of its pre-recession average (38.3).
- At 56.6, the personal finances subindex remains the strongest of the three components, though off last week's 57.4, a seven-year high, when it matched its pre-recession average. It's ahead of its long-term average by 1.4 points.

There are political impacts of these views; an ABC News/Washington Post poll this week found sharply better ratings for Barack Obama and the nation's direction overall, both closely linked to economic attitudes.

The Bloomberg survey measures consumer expectations monthly, independent of the weekly Consumer Comfort Index. Economic optimism has increased disproportionately, by more than 10 percentage points since November, among women, Westerners, married adults, 18- to 34-year-olds, full-time workers, those with at least some college education and Democrats.

The overall CCI, for its part, is just off its recent highs in many groups, given its pause this week. But there are notable results: The index is its best in nearly 14 years among blacks, now 46.8 (far higher than its long-term average in this group, 30.9, in available data since mid-1990). It's its highest since at least fall 2007 among Westerners (50.3, vs. the 40s in other regions), 55- to 64-year-olds (44.5) and those who are not employed for pay (36.6, although that compares with 51.6 among full-time workers).

Further, the CCI reached 44.0 among Republicans this week, its best since late September 2008, up 7.9 points since early November and close to its level among both Democrats (46.5) and independents (45.4). The index has been numerically higher among Democrats than Republicans for all but one of the past 65 weeks, with the margin now its smallest since early October. That compares with a long-term average of 49.7 among Republicans vs. 37.3 among Democrats.

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