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Bloomberg ® Consumer Comfort Index™ Weekly Analysis

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The Bloomberg Consumer Comfort Index kept its foot on the brakes this week, extending what's now a two-month pause, while the gap between negative and positive economic expectations reached its largest since May.

The CCI now stands at 36.6 on its scale of 0 to 100, remaining within a narrow 1.4-point band (36.2 to 37.6) since mid-June. The index has been essentially stable over the past four weeks, stalling in an even narrower 0.6-point range after reaching one of its best values since the Great Recession in July.

Its average so far this year, 35.7, is better than last year's 34.3 and 2012's 30.9, and well beyond annual averages in the 20s from 2008 to 2011. But it's still behind its pre-recession 2007 average, 44.8.

In a separate, monthly measure of economic expectations, 38 percent of Americans say the economy is getting worse, while 28 percent say it's getting better. (The rest, 34 percent, say it's staying the same.) That 10-point gap is the third worst of the year, and headed in the wrong direction after 2- and 8-point gaps in June and July, respectively.

Recent economic signals have been a mixed bag. In line with economists' expectations, the Consumer Price Index showed slow growth in the costs of goods in July. And housing starts were up sharply last month. Concerns continue, however, with improved but still-lagging wages and employment and weak retail sales.

The overall CCI, produced by [Langer Research Associates](#), is based on a national survey that has measured Americans' ratings of their personal finances, the buying climate and the national economy each week since late 1985.

- The personal finances subindex, the strongest of the three, at 51.5, is clear of its 50.0 midpoint for 12 weeks straight. It's been below the midpoint only three times this year and is now 3.7 points off its long-term average.
- By contrast, the buying climate subindex, at 31.8, is its lowest in seven weeks, and 3.9 points off its 28-year average.

- The national economy subindex, at 26.4, is the weakest of the three components and now stands 7.7 points off its historical average.

The CCI overall, for its part, is 5.1 points off its long-term average, 41.7. However, it's been better than 35.0 for 12 consecutive weeks, the longest it's held above that mark since late 2007/early 2008.

Among groups, the index among blacks, 38.9, is its best since early March 2013, and exceeds its level among whites, 36.1, for the first time in eight weeks. Historically, the long-term average is 11.7 points higher among whites than blacks.

The CCI among those with household incomes less than \$50,000 is 28.1, its best since late April, vs. 49.6 among those who are better off, the smallest gap between the two since late June. The CCI's at 58.2 among \$100,000-plus earners, much better than it is among any other group.

In partisan terms, the index among Democrats, 43.5, is its best in two months, and substantially better than its level among Republicans and independents alike (34.5 and 33.6, respectively).

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