

# U.S. Data Review

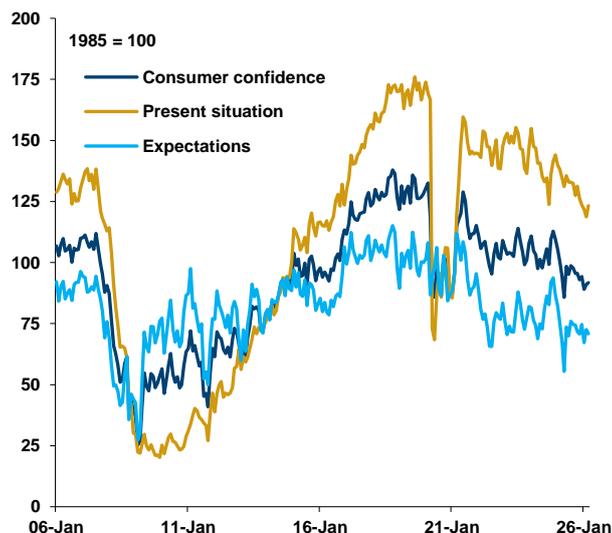
- Consumer confidence: slight uptick influenced by improvement in views on current conditions; inflation expectations jump

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## Consumer Confidence

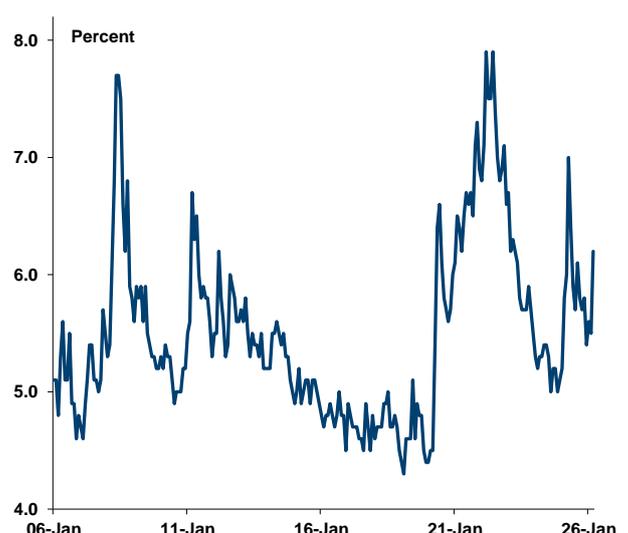
- The Conference Board's index of consumer confidence surprised to the upside in March, rising 0.8 point (+0.9 percent) to 91.8 – a result above all estimates submitted to the Bloomberg economist survey (median expectation of a downtick to 87.9). Nonetheless, despite the slight improvement in household attitudes, the latest shift still leaves this metric in the low end of the post-pandemic range and only moderately above the five-year low of 85.7 recorded in April 2025 – indicative of ongoing pessimism amongst survey respondents. Looking at the internals of the report, a slight increase in views on current conditions offset a modest decrease in expectations. Namely, the present situation index rose 4.6 points (+3.9 percent) to 123.3 in March – a reading still only modestly higher than the five-year low recorded in the prior month. Factoring into that increase, net assessments on present business and labor market conditions both improved (see below). The consumer expectations metric, meanwhile, eased 1.7 points (-2.3 percent) to 70.9 – reflective of deterioration in anticipated employment and household income conditions (chart, below left).
- While concerns regarding tariff policy and potential pass-through to the prices of essential goods had previously weighed heavy on households, the nascent conflict in the Middle East and its associated energy shock has apparently moved to the forefront. On the point, as mentioned by Dana M Peterson, Chief Economist at the Conference Board, in the official release: “Comments about prices and the cost of goods suggest that the cost of living remained at the top of consumers’ minds. As the war in Iran overlapped significantly with the survey sample period, comments about oil/gas and war/conflict spiked, while specific mentions of trade and tariffs decreased notably.” Consequently, expectations for inflation 12 months hence surged 0.7 percentage point to 6.2 percent, its highest read since the post-Liberation Day observation of 7.0 percent in April 2025 (chart, below right).

### Consumer Confidence



Source: The Conference Board via Haver Analytics

### Consumer Inflation Expectations\*



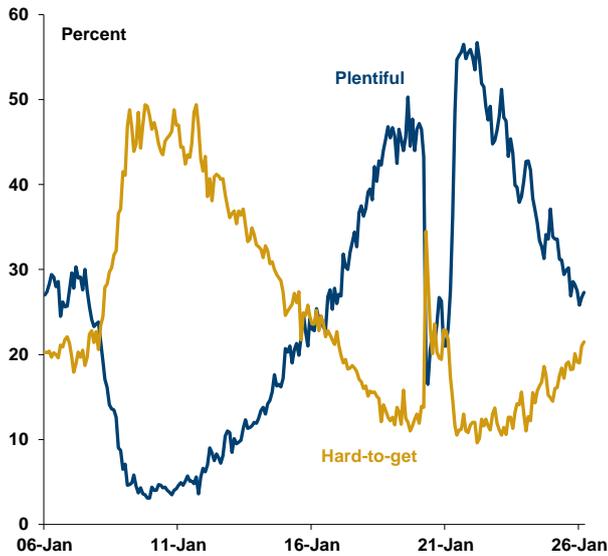
\* 12 months hence

Source: The Conference Board via Haver Analytics

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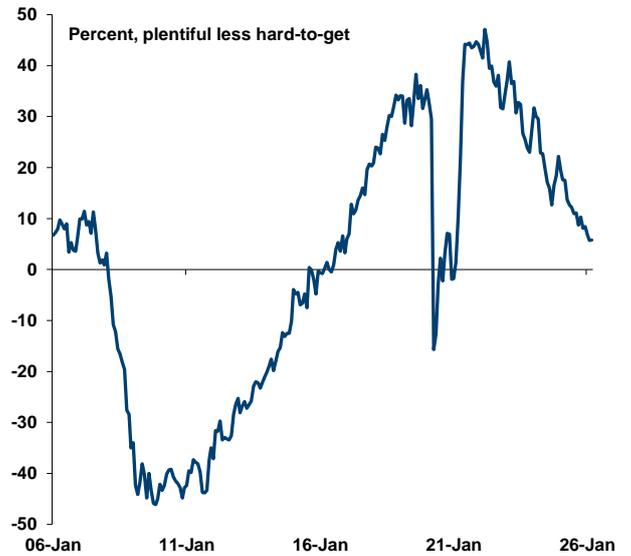
- Circling back to the labor market, present views on jobs, on balance, improved in March, though not meaningfully in context with the prevailing sharp downward trend. The share of survey respondents indicating that jobs were plentiful advanced 0.6 percentage point to 27.3 percent while those indicating that they were hard to get rose 0.5 percentage point to 21.5 percent (the highest read since February 2021). Resultantly, the net labor market differential (plentiful less hard-to-get) increased 0.1 percentage point to 5.8 percent, a result only marginally above last month's five-year low (charts, below). In context, the employment situation has softened significantly over the past several months, a development which prompted Fed Chair Powell to characterize the current job market as a “zero employment growth equilibrium” in his post-FOMC remarks two weeks ago – an uncomfortable balance that seemingly faces downside risk.

**Consumers' Views on Jobs**



Source: The Conference Board via Haver Analytics

**Labor Market Differential\***



\* The share of survey respondents who reported that jobs were "plentiful" less those who said they were "hard-to-get."  
Source: The Conference Board via Haver Analytics