

## September consumer confidence falls more than nation expected

By Annie D'Innocenzio  
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NEW YORK — Dragged down by a still-sluggish job market, consumer confidence in the economy dropped more sharply than expected in September.

The sour report and a disappointing reading on business activity in the Midwest helped send stocks lower on Wall Street. The Dow Jones industrial average was down nearly 70 points in afternoon trading.

The Consumer Confidence Index fell to 76.8, down nearly five points from the revised 81.7 registered in August, the Conference Board reported Tuesday.

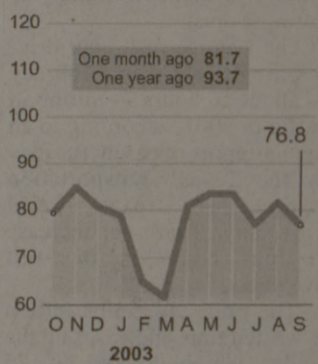
The decrease was steeper than expected — analysts were looking for a reading of 80.5. It was the biggest decline since July, when consumer sentiment fell 6.5 points to 77. The index had bounced back in August.

"The lack of improvement in labor market conditions continues to dampen consumers' spirits," said Lynn Franco, director of the board's consumer research center. "Despite September's retreat, consumers remain cautiously optimistic about the outlook for the next six months. Consumer spending is likely to continue at or near current levels."

### Consumer confidence

Here is a look at the Consumer Confidence Index from a survey of 5,000 U.S. households.

Seasonally adjusted, 1985=100



SOURCE: The Conference Board AP

Economists closely track consumer confidence because consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of U.S. economic activity.

"We have enjoyed a period of optimism over the summer," said Gary Thayer, chief economist at A. G. Edwards & Sons Inc., referring to the tax cuts, victory in Iraq and gains in the stock market. "But now we are seeing a more sober view of things, primarily because of jobs."

The nation's unemployment rate dipped to 6.1 percent in August, but businesses cut 93,000 jobs, the seventh month

in a row of job losses. Robust productivity gains, meanwhile, have allowed companies to produce more with fewer workers.

Still, consumer spending has continued to grow moderately, increasing by 0.8 percent last month on top of a 0.9 percent advance in July. Larger paychecks and other incentives from President Bush's third tax cut has helped prop up spending.

Consumers anticipating that business conditions will improve over the next six months slipped to 21.4 percent from 22.6 percent in August. Those anticipating business conditions to deteriorate rose to 11.9 percent from 10.6 percent.

Those anticipating the job market to improve in the next six months decreased to 16.7 percent from 18.0 percent. Those expecting fewer jobs to become available increased to 21.0 percent from 18.6 percent.

Meanwhile, the Purchasing Management Association of Chicago said that its index of area business activity fell to 51.2 in September on a seasonally adjusted basis from 58.9 in August. Economists were anticipating a much smaller decline to 57.0.

Still, a reading above 50 indicates that business is expanding and September marked the fifth straight month that the Midwestern business barometer indicated growth.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Hormones may raise risk of ovarian cancer, study says

CHICAGO (AP) — Estrogen-progestin pills do not reduce the risk of ovarian cancer and might even increase it, according to a study that raises more red flags about a once widely accepted treatment for women going through menopause.

The findings came from the federally funded Women's Health Initiative study, part of which was abruptly halted in 2002 because of evidence that estrogen-progestin pills raise the risk

of breast cancer, heart attacks and strokes.

The new analysis found that 32 of the 16,608 participants developed ovarian cancer during about 5 1/2 years of follow-up. There were 20 cases in women who took hormones and 12 in those on dummy pills.

The difference is not statistically significant because the cancer was so rare, but the trend is worrisome, said lead author Garnet Anderson of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. The analysis appears in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

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### Lawsuit

On the night of a 14-year-old girl's shooting to death in Tennessee, and opened a 19-year-old girl's riding in her boyfriend's car with eight bullet wounds. Hamel, a 45-year-old man, shot in the head of his cousin, who was with him, according to the two boys, scenes from the vigil to reckless and reckless endangerment. Hamel's family filed a lawsuit against Take2Interstate, for \$100 million. The pain the Hamel family has after this tragic loss. However, they are wrong people accountable. The game's responsible for what the retailers and, responsible for these games getting into everyone who has a "Theft Auto" game. In truth, some "Vice City" gamers take them to secluded areas, "pedestrian" tire trails and game launchers and flamethrowers or the police. According to the in one of the "Vice City" as possible in clearly, "Grand children." Craig A. Anderson

### Skyrock

This year, the Aggies have decided to launch a new yell called "Skyrocket." Unfortunately, a group of Aggies were unprepared for its lift-off. Worse still, those who have heard the yell want to go along for the ride.

The yell leaders commended for trying to induce change to the Skyrocket yell may be accomplished this year.

Tim Bailey, head of cultural development, said he does not know if the yell was formed as an Aggie yell.

In explaining why he wants to revive the yell, Bailey said he was a Memorial Student Council member and a yell leader adviser. "Skyrocket yell was a tradition and the new."

Trying to unite "Old Aggie" traditions is indeed a tall order for three reasons why the

### Horse laugh same thing

In response to Sep

I don't understand what bothers Klepac. "This behavior exists in Aggies?" It's not like the beer at the refs' benches in the stands. The horse laugh is exactly the same as a booby sign of displeasure in the game.

Trying to convince us we are somehow better than his instead of identical.

No one was booing even the other team. We were booing because of a touchdown. They deserved it. It happened once. "Sometimes the horse doesn't effectively communicate."