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DAILY ROUNDUP

US consumer confidence shows unexpected gain; Volvo plans more job cuts; Office attendance edges lower

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The Conference Board said recent deals on trade tariffs have helped curb consumer pessimism and heighten plans for spending in some categories. (Getty Images)

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Consumer confidence rises

U.S. consumer confidence posted an unexpected rebound in the latest May survey by the Conference Board, after a surge in pessimism over potential tariff-related inflation in the economic research group's April survey.

Gauging multiple factors related to household finances and the larger business climate, the group's overall consumer confidence index posted at 98 for May, up from 85.7 in April, with researchers using 1985 as a base of 100. Numbers generally reflect the percentage of respondents with favorable views of the economy.

A separate expectations index, based on short-term outlooks for income, business and labor market conditions, rose 17.4 points from the prior month to 72.8. Conference Board officials noted the cut-off date for preliminary results for its latest survey was May 19, and about half of nationwide responses were collected after the May 12 White House announcement of a pause on some tariffs on imports from China.

“Consumer confidence improved in May after five consecutive months of decline,” Conference Board Senior Economist Stephanie Guichard said in a statement Tuesday. “The rebound was already visible before the May 12 U.S.-China trade deal but gained momentum afterwards.”

The last several surveys by the Conference Board, along with closely watched polls by the University of Michigan, have shown consistent declines in consumer sentiment. The Conference Board said its latest survey showed tariffs are still on top of consumers’ minds, though recent trade deals have somewhat curbed their pessimism and heightened plans to spend on big-ticket items like homes, vacations, cars, appliances and electronics.

Volvo plans more job cuts

Automaker Volvo is planning to reduce its global corporate workforce by 3,000, on the heels of last month’s planned move to cut as many as 800 workers at three U.S. factories. The Gothenburg, Sweden-based company cited factors including rising costs and competition in a challenging time for the auto industry, though it did not specifically cite new U.S.-imposed tariffs on imported cars and auto parts.

Owned by Chinese firm Geely Holding, Volvo said this week it is seeking to cut primarily office-based positions in Sweden, representing about 15% of the firm's total office workforce. Plans call for cutting about 1,000 positions held by outside consultants, 1,200 Volvo employees in Sweden and other corporate workers in other global offices not yet specified.

"The automotive industry is in the middle of a challenging period," Volvo Cars CEO Håkan Samuelsson said in a statement this week. "To address this, we must improve our cash flow generation and structurally lower our costs."

Volvo last month said it is seeking to trim annual costs by 18 billion Swedish kronor, or $1.89 billion. Plans include laying off as many as 800 workers over the next three months at U.S. plants in Macungie, Pennsylvania; Dublin, Virginia; and Hagerstown, Maryland.

President Donald Trump said Sunday that he agreed to delay imposing a recently announced 50% tariff on European goods until July 9, pushing back from a prior targeted start of June 1, as talks continue between the White House and the European Union. The Trump administration has already imposed separate 25% tariffs on imported cars and auto parts that took effect in April and early May.

Office attendance edges lower

Office attendance for 10 large U.S. regions averaged 53.1% of its pre-pandemic level for the week ended May 21, down slightly from the 53.4% posting in the prior two weeks. The number stayed close to its early March peak of 54.5% in the latest tracking by Kastle Systems.

Office use declines slightly

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Source: Kastle Systems, May 2025
Chart: Jelena Schulz

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Based on anonymous keycard data from its office property clients, the security technology firm said Texas cities continued to lead for office traffic, with Houston at 61.9%, Austin at 60.9% and Dallas at 60.4%.

They were followed by Chicago at 56%, New York at 53.4% and Washington, D.C., at 53.1%.

The remaining cities studied by Kastle have consistently struggled to crack 50%, even as overall attendance has been increasing nationally in the past year. As in most weeks, San Francisco posted last among tracked regions at 41.9%, edged out by Philadelphia at 44.9%.

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