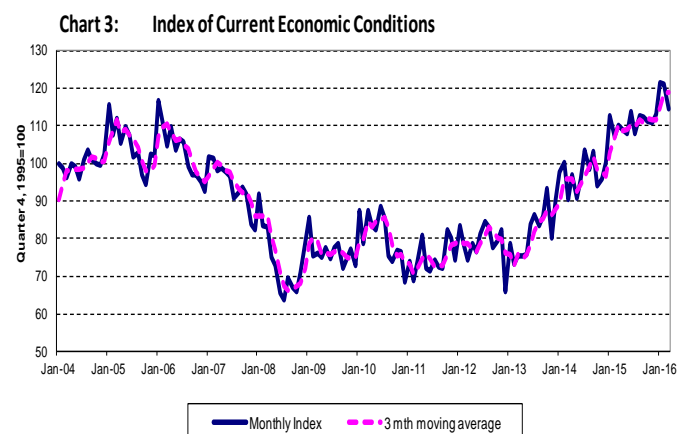
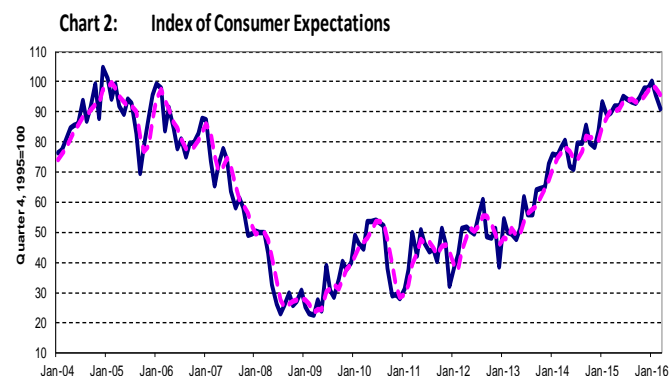
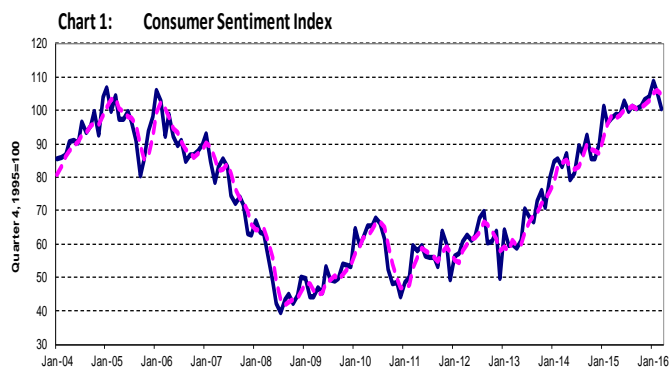


The Consumer Sentiment Index in March fell to 100.6 from 105.8 in February. The Index of Consumer Expectations declined to 91.2 in March from 95.5 in February. The Index of Current Economic Conditions which focuses on consumers' views of the present situation fell by 6.5 index points to 114.5 in March, back towards levels observed at the end of 2015. The 3 month moving averages, which smooth out some of the monthly volatilities, also fell in March with the exception of the index of Current Economic Conditions which rose marginally.

## General Economic Situation

Consumers appear to have a more negative view of the general economic situation in March. This is being driven by a combination of an increase in the proportion of people reporting feeling both negative and neutral and a decrease in the proportion of people feeling positive about future economic conditions. The result was a net decline of 2.0 index points in this component. There was a further decrease of 0.7 index points this month in how consumers perceive future employment prospects. While the number of positive responses stayed the same as last month, there appeared to be an increase in those moving from a neutral view to a more negative view of future employment prospects in March. There was a decrease in the component asking if it was a good time to make large household purchases of 10.2 points in March. In the past, consumers have become more positive about purchasing major household items every January, reflecting, at least in part, the winter sales, followed by a more subdued figure in February. This pattern seems to have continued into March with the index returning to December levels.



## Personal Financial Situation

Consumers have a more negative view about their past and future personal financial situation this month. The Component asking how people feel about their personal financial situation compared to 12 months ago decreased in March to 100.6 from 102.6 in February.

Consumers are also feeling more negative about their financial situation 12 months from now, with the proportion of respondents feeling positive decreasing to 28 per cent from 31 per cent in February. While the majority of respondents maintain a neutral outlook, there has also been a decrease in the amount of respondents giving negative responses resulting in a net fall of 1.9 index points in this component of the survey.

**Table 1: Survey Index Results**

Measure <sup>1</sup>	Long-Run average <sup>2</sup>	Δ month-on-month	Mar 2015	Feb 2016	Mar 2016
Overall Consumer Sentiment Index	76.5	↓5.2	97.8	105.8	100.6
Index of Current Conditions	90.7	↓6.5	110.0	121.0	114.5
Index of Consumer Expectations	66.9	↓4.3	89.6	95.5	91.2
Personal Financial Situation over last 12 months	59.2	↓2.0	80.1	102.6	100.6
Personal Financial Situation over next 12 months	79.7	↓1.9	105.6	120.8	118.9
General Economic Outlook	54.3	↓8.5	76.2	75.5	67.0
Outlook for Unemployment	69.7	↓0.7	89.6	93.2	92.5
Major Purchases	116.8	↓10.2	134.6	136.1	125.9

Index values: Quarter 4, 1995 = 100.  
Average value between March 2010 and March 2016.

## Notes

The Index of Consumer Expectations is based on consumers' perceptions of their future financial situation, their economic outlook for the country as a whole and employment expectations. The Index of Current Economic Conditions is based on how consumers feel about their current financial circumstance compared to 12 months ago, as well as their perception of the current buying environment for large household purchases.

The data are obtained from telephone interviews during the first two weeks of the month with around 800 completed questionnaires. The data are re-weighted in line with gender, age and level of educational attainment to ensure the data was fully representative of the national population of adults. Each index is calculated by computing the relative scores (the percent giving favourable replies minus the percent giving unfavourable replies (the balance), plus 100) for each question used in the different indices. Those who reply "Don't Know", "Remain the same" are excluded from the index calculations. Each relative score is rounded to the nearest whole number. The sum of the relative scores is then divided by the base period total for each index. More details on [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie).

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Historic data from February 1996 are available on the ESRI website, [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie) and on the KBC Bank Ireland website, [www.kbc.ie](http://www.kbc.ie). A detailed methodology note outlining how the indices are constructed and the most recent release are also available on the websites.