

Consumer confidence ticks up as gas prices fall; Americans remain gloomy about economy

By Christopher Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans' attitudes toward the economy improved slightly this month as gas prices declined, but their outlook is still mostly negative by historical standards.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose 0.6 point to 91.2 in June, a figure that is still below its year-ago reading of 95.2. Consumer attitudes worsened after the Iran war caused oil and gas prices to spike, accelerating inflation and causing Americans' inflation-adjusted incomes to decline. Before the pandemic, the index regularly topped 120.

The report suggests that consumer confidence is recovering only slowly from the hit caused by the Iran war. Even so, Americans have continued to spend despite their dour outlook, which has kept the economy growing even as inflation accelerated. Measures of consumer sentiment have been less predictive of how Americans actually shop since the pandemic.

"Consumer confidence inched up in June as falling oil prices in recent weeks provided some relief to consumer inflation fears," Dana Peterson, the Conference Board's chief economist said in a statement. "Consumer appraisals of current business conditions were slightly more positive com-

pared to last month. However, perceptions of the current labor market softened measurably."

Earlier this month, a government report showed that consumers stepped up their spending in May despite higher gas prices. Analysts expect the steady consumer outlays kept the economy growing at about a 2.5% annual rate in the April-June quarter.

Falling gas prices may also help boost Americans' outlook in the coming months. On average nationwide, gas prices spiked above \$4.50 after the U.S.-Iran conflict began Feb. 28. They have since fallen back to \$3.85 a gallon, according to AAA.

The survey also found that consumers had a dimmer view of hiring and the job market this month. The proportion of Americans who said jobs are "hard to get" rose to 22.5% from 19.8% the previous month, a noticeable increase.

But on Wednesday the government released a report showing that the number of open jobs remained at a solid 7.6 million in May, indicating that companies are showing more interest in recruiting workers.

The Labor Department will release its monthly jobs report for June on Thursday, and economists forecast it will show that employers added 100,000 jobs, a solid gain. The unemployment rate is expected to stay at a low 4.3%, according to data provider FactSet.

May job openings stayed at a surprisingly strong 7.6M

Associated Press

U.S. job openings stayed at a surprisingly strong 7.6 million in May as the American labor market remains resilient in the face of the economic shock from the Iran war.

Forecasters had expected employers to post closer to 7 million openings in May.

The job market is sturdy but not exactly booming. Layoffs rose in May, and the number of people quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence in their prospects — ticked up only slightly. That's according to

data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics released Tuesday.

Employers are advertising openings, but they aren't actually doing much hiring. Gross hiring — before counting people who lost or quit their jobs — dipped to 5.17 million in May from 5.26 million in April. When the job market was booming from mid-2021 to mid-2023 after COVID-19 lockdowns, gross monthly hiring regularly topped 6 million.

"The hiring switch needs to fully turn on for the labor market to feel alive again," ZipRecruiter economist Nicole Bachaud said in a commentary.



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier

Cameron Decker, a cook at The Haul in downtown Grants Pass, places a tempeh Reuben sandwich on the counter. This signature sandwich will be submitted for the Rogue Valley Vegan Chef Challenge.

Vegan chef challenge draws contenders

Local chefs will be showcasing their creativity, and diners will be sampling inventive menu items before voting for their favorites, during the Rogue Valley Vegan Chef Challenge.

The monthlong vegan food competition begins today.

"There is more of a challenge to create vegan dishes, and with our lives rotating around creating interesting and real food, it's a challenge worth taking," said Jon Connor, owner of The Haul, the only Grants Pass restaurant participating in the chef challenge. "It's the reason why we are in kitchens: being creative and providing."

A vegan diet is 100% plant based, without any animal products or byproducts. That means no meat, of course, but also no dairy, no eggs, no honey.

Eight Rogue Valley restaurants are part of the competition, though chef applications will be accepted through Tuesday, so more may be added.

The challenge runs through July 31.

Connor thinks The Haul was asked to participate because his restaurant caters to so many different dietary needs.

"We have what we think is a diverse menu where there is something for everyone," he said.

The Rogue Valley restaurants participating in the challenge are:

- The Haul, 121 S.W. H St., Grants Pass.
- Elements Tapas, 101 E. Main St., Medford.
- Rooted: Eat More Plants, 1325 Center Drive, Medford.
- Slice Pizza, 1600 N. Riverside Ave., Medford.
- Tap & Vine, 559, 559 Medford Center, Medford.
- Toasted Cheese, a Medford-based food truck.
- Moxie Brew, 106 E. First St., Phoenix.
- Zi Spice, 376 E. Main St., Ashland.

In addition to being The Haul's owner, Connor is also the chef who developed the



Business Buzz

Kathleen Alaks

of the Daily Courier

recipes for the challenge. The Haul is offering a tempeh Reuben sandwich, a crunch wrap and a veggie pie.

"Honestly, everything that we are putting out on this vegan menu is totally delicious and healthy," Connor said.

Menu items from the other participants range from watermelon poke bowl, garlic mushroom pizza and grilled cauliflower to desserts like caramel brownie sundae and vegan cheesecake parfait.

Throughout July, diners can sample as many vegan dishes at as many participating restaurants as they like, then go online to rate and review each menu to share their feedback with the chefs, then cast their vote for their favorites.

The full list of participating restaurants and their challenge menus, along with voting forms, can be found at veganchefchallenge.org/Rogue-Valley.

Winning dishes will be announced in early August.

WINE TRAIL OPENS. A new tourism initiative designed to

encourage visitors to explore the Illinois Valley while supporting the region's wineries and businesses launches today.

The Illinois Valley Wine Trail is the brainchild of Mercy Bordeaux, a 1990 Illinois Valley High School graduate who grew up in Selma and who is living there again after 27 years away.

When she moved back, she

saw that Southern Oregon had the Applegate Wine Trail, the Bear Creek Wine Trail and the Upper Rogue Wine Trail. But there was no wine trail in the Illinois Valley.

She set out to remedy that.

"I was curious about tourism and how money flows through our valley: agriculture, tourism, pot. It seems to me that tourism is the most sustainable," she said. "So, I wanted to do something to bring tourism back to our valley."

The Illinois Valley Wine Trail invites visitors to the area's four wineries throughout the year by purchasing a passport, which gives exclusive winery privileges, special promotions, experiences and seasonal events.

"Each winery offers some kind of perk or discount. They're all different," Bordeaux said.

The passports go on sale today. They are \$25 on the wine trail website, illinoisvalleywinetrail.com. The passport is good for one year from the date of purchase.

The four participating wineries are: Deer Creek Vineyards in Selma, Augustino Estate & Vineyard in O'Brien, and Bridgeview Winery and Foris Vineyards and Winery, both in Cave Junction.

The wineries, Bordeaux said, were happy to come on board.

"They are very jazzed, and very supportive," she said, "The wine industry is struggling right now. Less people are drinking wine, drinking alcohol in general. I think this is something that will help these wineries."

FIVE-YEAR MILESTONE. An ice cream and dessert shop in Grants Pass is celebrating its five-year anniversary with a ceremonial ribbon cutting this week.

Los Postres Ice Cream & More specializes in ice cream and ice cream treats, such as milkshakes, sundaes, smoothies and banana splits, as well as a host of Mexican sweet treats. Los Postres means desserts in Spanish.

The anniversary celebration is at 10:30 a.m. Friday at 202 Redwood Highway, Suite B.

RIBBON CUTTING. Las Margaritas is celebrating its grand opening in Grants Pass with a ribbon cutting at 11:30 a.m. on Friday.

The Mexican restaurant is at 1305 N.E. Sixth St., cross of Savage Street, the site of the former Malecon Grill & Cantina.

POLLS ARE OPEN. For the second year in a row, the Rogue Valley has been nominated for USA Today's 10Best Readers' Choice Award for Best Wine Region.

Voting, which is free, is open through July 20. Voters can vote once every day until ballots close at noon.

Go to the website 10best.usatoday.com/awards and scroll down to Best Wine Region.

According to the awards website, the Rogue Valley is currently ranked No. 3 of 20 for Best Wine Region.

The USA Today Readers' Choice Awards recognize top travel destinations and experiences around the country and nominations are made by a panel of experts and editors.

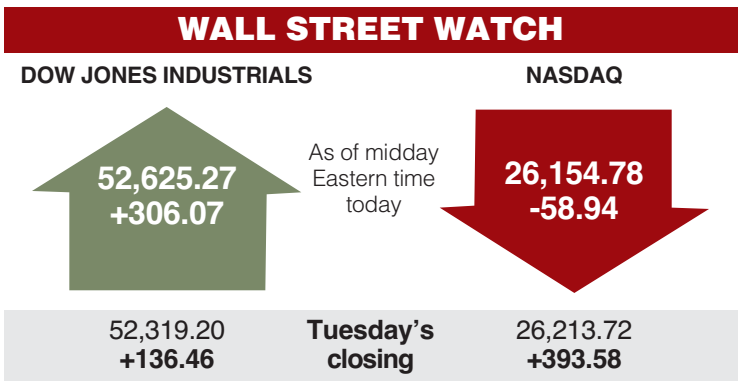
DEADLINE APPROACHING. The nomination deadline for the Medford Chamber of Commerce 2026 Excellence in Business Awards is Monday.

Awards will be given in 10 categories: first citizen, retailer of the year, member of the year, new member of the year, outstanding corporate citizen (for-profit and nonprofit); business excellence (small, medium and large); and rising star.

Fill out a nomination form at medfordchamber.com.

Awards will be presented at the 2026 Excellence in Business Awards on Sept. 10.

Reach reporter Kathleen Alaks at 541-474-3815 or kalaks@thedailycourier.com. To submit business news online, go to thedailycourier.com, click at lower left on "online forms" and then click on "Business Buzz."



New York Stock Exchange

New York Stock Exchange select prices:	ColgPalm 91.68 -0.72	Hallibrtn 33.95 -0.14	PG&E Cp 16.82 -0.37
Stock Last Ch	ConocoPhil 103.96 -0.24	HeciaM 15.43 +0.03	Pfizer 24.08 -0.29
AT&T Inc 20.70 -1.12	ConEd 110.63 -1.66	Idacorp 151.30 -0.88	ProctiGam 146.64 -1.81
Altria 71.95 -2.10	CurtisWrt 757.76+20.37	IBM 281.21 +3.21	PuristAtr 55.97 +1.37
AmlnItGrp 74.53 -0.59	Deere 634.33 +9.32	IntPap 38.10 -0.13	RockwAut 495.08+12.75
ApplIndT 338.15 +3.99	Disney 96.25 -1.63	JohnJn 253.97 -4.54	Sempra 92.71 -1.20
BP PLC 36.95 -0.40	DuPont 135.64 -0.10	Loews 113.21 -0.48	SouthCo 95.71 -1.04
BkofAm 56.98 -0.90	Eaton 426.12+17.86	LaPac 78.66 -1.88	Tegna 0.00 ...
Barrick 36.73 -0.20	EdisonInt 74.45 -1.01	MDU Res 21.21 -0.24	Textron 91.73 +1.58
Boeing 216.47 +1.78	ExxonMbl 136.72 +0.66	McDnlds 270.31 +3.13	3M Co 161.91 -0.52
BrMySq 57.62 -0.94	FMC Corp 11.50 +0.04	McKesson 755.60 +8.07	Timken 145.32 +1.82
Brunswick 84.24 -1.47	FordM 13.90 -0.12	Merck 128.50 -0.88	Tricontl 34.42 -0.57
Caterpillar1,064.90+31.71	GE Aero 373.73 +0.02	NCR Voyix 8.17 +0.18	UnionPac 272.00 -0.70
Chevron 165.76 -2.71	GenDynam354.24 +6.17	NorfolkSo 314.59 -2.06	Unisys 3.66 -0.13
Citigroup 139.96 -2.53	GenMills 34.80 -1.58	NorthropG 509.31+13.29	VerizonCm 42.34 -1.76
CocaCola 81.27 -1.38	GenMotors 77.08 -0.26	OcciPet 48.57 -0.52	WalMart 113.26 -1.34
	HP Inc 21.94 -0.70	Olin 19.82 -1.00	WellsFargo 82.64 -0.87

NASDAQ

NASDAQ selected prices:	ASMLHldng1,989.44+106.33	Microsoft 373.02 +4.45
Stock Last Ch	Broadcom 377.75 +5.30	Netflix 71.40 -2.38
AdvMicDev580.91+41.42	Cisco 117.46 -0.24	Nvidia 200.09 +5.12
Alphabet 357.37 +3.72	Costco 935.47 -11.21	Palantir 116.67 +0.97
Amazon 238.34 -1.80	Meta 563.29 +0.69	Tesla Inc 420.60 +8.76
Apple 289.36 +7.62	Micron 1,154.29 +9.01	Walmart 113.26 -1.34

Commodities

Gold

Selected world gold prices, Tuesday
London morning fix: \$4016.70
London afternoon fix: \$4026.05
HSBC Bank USA: \$4014.20
NY Engelhard: \$4051.00
NY Engelhard fabricated: \$4331.18
NY Merc. gold: \$4017.80

Nonferrous metals

Spot prices Tuesday
Gold - \$4017.20 troy oz., HSBC Bank USA

Northwest stocks

PORTLAND — Closing quotations from the New York Stock Exchange. They do not include markup, markdown or commissions.

Name	High	Low	Last Change	Ratio
Banner Cp	66.76	65.98	66.30	+0.14 -0.21
ColBnk	32.26	31.72	31.92	+0.06 +0.19
DutchBros	73.03	70.50	71.49	+0.12 +0.17
Intel	142.34	131.52	132.19	+7.91 +5.65
Keycorp	23.20	22.92	23.16	-0.10 -0.43

Gold - \$4018.60 troy oz., NY Merc
Silver - \$58.325 troy oz., NY Merc
Copper - \$6.1080 (pound) NY Merc
Aluminum - \$1.4421 per lb., London Metal Exch.
Platinum - \$1578.80 troy oz., NY Merc
Palladium - \$1202.50 troy oz., NY Merc
Lead - \$1903.50 (metric ton) Cash Price
Zinc - \$1.5748, HG (pound) Cash Price

Lumber

Chicago Mercantile
Open High Low Settle Chg.
26 617.00 619.00 615.00 617.00+1.00
Sep 26 624.50 624.50 620.00 621.50 -1.00
Nov 26 - 626.50 -1.00
Est. sales - Tue's sales 1,098

Kroger	55.97	54.97	55.58	-0.38 -0.69
LithiaMot	291.00	283.36	288.83	-0.87 -0.30
Nike	41.64	40.89	41.38	-0.43 -1.05
NuScale Power10	34	9.72	10.18	-0.23 -2.31
OrasSure	4.51	4.31	4.51	-0.04 -0.89
Starbucks	104.58	102.13	104.10	-1.87 -1.83
US Bancorp	60.87	60.22	60.49	-0.36 -0.60
WellsFargo	83.80	82.53	83.70	-0.87 -1.05
Weyerhr	24.59	23.72	24.48	-0.68 -2.86

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Red or Green LETTUCE \$1.99 each Romaine Lettuce \$3.59 each	Red or Green GRAPES \$3.09 per lb. Pineapples \$3.99 each	RED BEETS \$1.39 per lb. Yellow Onions 99¢ per lb.
ORGANIC PRODUCE Organic GALIA MELONS \$1.79 per lb. Mini Watermelons \$6.99 each	Organic AVOCADOS \$2.99 each Carrot Bunches \$2.99 each	Organic BLUEBERRIES \$6.99 pint Grapefruit \$1.99 each
Organic ITALIAN KALE \$3.09 each Vine Tomatoes \$4.99 per lb.	GROCERY BOLGA BASKETS 15% OFF	
Santa Cruz LEMONADE \$3.99 32 oz. Barbara's Cheese Puffs \$3.99 each	Dr. Brew KOMBUCHA \$2.99 +dep Gimme Roasted Seaweed Snacks \$2.59 .35 oz.	Trace Assorted Power Pak Flavor Essential Nutrient Support and Electrolyte 1,200 mg Vitamin C \$16.99 30 packets
Mt. Angel Vitamins NMN + NR with Resveratrol and TMC Supports Cellular Energy and Healthy NAD+ levels \$36.99 60 capsules	Oregon Made Wellgenix Balanced Essentials Liquid Multi Vitamin 138 Vital Nutrients 62 Macro and Trace Minerals 21 Amino Acids Omega 3, 6, 9 27 Phytolnutrients and more \$28.99 32 oz.	ZUM PRODUCTS New Scents Just In! 15% OFF