

Consumer News & Views

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Consumer Confidence Slides Backwards in September. What's going on with the fluctuations in consumer confidence? Just when things were looking up, along comes September and the wild stock market ride! According to the University of Michigan's monthly survey, American consumers are feeling less optimistic than they were in August. No surprise here.

Consumer sentiment was 85.7 in September, down from 91.9 in August, according to a monthly survey by the University of Michigan. That missed expectations for 91.2 from analysts polled by Thomson Reuters.

The reading represented a 6.7 % monthly decline and a 1.3 % increase from this time last year.



The closely-followed barometer of measures U.S. consumers' attitude about the economy, including overall sentiment, feelings on the current economy and future expectations. Feelings about current economic conditions and future expectations also hit the lowest since October 2014.

Consumers were 4.6 percent less confident this month about current economic conditions, which came in at 100.3, below analyst predictions of 103.6. Expectations declined 8.4 percent month-on-month for September to reach 76.4, below analyst expectations of 82.8.

The decline comes as the stock market mounts an uneven recovery from a volatile month, when stocks slid sharply earlier in the month amidst concerns about Chinese economic growth.

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a national consumer advocacy organization, stated, "Consumers realize that America's economic fortunes are more dependent on global matters than ever before. Consumers understand that what happens in China and the Middle East have implications here at home."

Hinton added, "When the stock market loses 500 points in a single day, that gets everybody's attention. Consumers want stability and that isn't happening right now."

The survey's one-year inflation expectation, meanwhile, was 2.9 percent in September, from 2.8 percent in August, while the survey's five-year inflation outlook was 2.8 percent from 2.7 percent in August.

Consumer Reports Picks Four Worst Cars for 2015. Don't get too offended, but *Consumer Reports*, known for its independence when it comes to auto reviews, makes no apologies when it comes to picking the worst car models for 2015. Once again, Consumer Reports has singled out four car models as representing the worst of the lot for 2015. One is a familiar car, two are luxury crossovers and the last is a minivan that's also known as a SUV. They are singled out in the magazine's October issue. If nothing else, the picks show how the auto market has blended genres.

The magazine buys all the cars it tests, as opposed to virtually all other publications and websites, which borrow them from automakers. The goal is to buy the same vehicle that any consumers would get on their own at a dealership.

Here are the four at the bottom of the car barrel:

- **Chrysler 200.** It's now dead last among its midsize car rankings. When it was introduced, the new 200 was considered a vast improvement over the one it replaced. But Consumer Reports disliked its "raspy" four-cylinder engine, balky transmission and "klutzy" handling. The cramped rear seat is something only a submariner could appreciate, the magazine writes.
- **Land Rover Discovery Sport.** The SUV has a "flat footed" engine and a transmission that's unrefined. Handling is "lumbering," and the entertainment system seems to be from another age.
- **Lexus NX 200t/300h.** The new compact SUV edition from the Lexus line seems too much to Consumer Reports like the Toyota RAV4, especially the "jostling" ride. Some components feel cheap, and overall it falls short of German competitors.



Consumer Reports magazine has named its four worst cars of 2015, starting with the Chrysler 200, which it says has a raspy engine, unrefined transmission and bad handling

- **Kia Sedona.** Finally, there's the Kia Sedona. This minivan was made to look like a SUV, but the ride isn't supple and there are squeaks and rattles. Steering is "vague." Hopefully, if you purchased one of these four vehicles, you're still happy with it!

ACC's Friend of the Consumer Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses in 2015.

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council's Friend of the Consumer Award. Now is the time to apply!

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed federally-mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."

Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."



To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.asp>

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2015 Fall Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2015 Fall cycle are now being accepted through December 21, 2015.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

