Americans' feelings on economy slip

The Conference Board's index of consumer confidence fell 8.3 points in March from February. The survey showed a drop in expectations for the economy over the next six months, though consumers also were more pessimistic about current economic conditions.

The private research group blamed $85 billion in across-the-board government spending cuts that took effect March 1 for stoking economic uncertainty. The reductions came after Congress and the White House failed to resolve a budget impasse.