Consumer confidence index surges in Dec.

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans are gaining faith that the economy is on the upswing.

An improving job outlook helped the Consumer Confidence Index soar to the highest level since April and near a post-recession peak, according to a monthly survey by The Conference Board.

It marked the second straight monthly surge and coincided with what's wrapping up to be decent spending for the holiday shopping season.

The rise in confidence jibes with a better outlook for the overall economy. According to an Associated Press poll of three-dozen private, corporate and academic economists, the U.S. economy will grow faster in 2012 — if isn't derailed by upheavals in Europe.