

Shoppers look for merchandise in Boston. After seeing improvement last month, consumer confidence unexpectedly fell in August to the lowest level since November 2011, The Conference Board said. AP

Consumers less confident in August despite job growth

By Anne D'Innocenzio
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Americans are feeling worse about the economy than they have in a long time.

Despite an improving U.S. job and housing markets, consumer confidence fell to the lowest level it's been since November 2011.

The New York-based Conference Board said Tuesday that its Consumer Confidence Index fell to 60.6, down from a revised 65.4 in July. In November 2011, the reading was 55.2.

Last month's results are the latest swing in the index, which has been on a rollercoaster. This year, it declined in January, rose in February and then posted four months of declines before registering an increase in July.

The Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller home price index, released Tuesday, showed that home prices rose in June from the same month last year. That is the first year-over-year increase since summer of 2010.

The job market also is slowly improving. Employers added 163,000 jobs in July, the most since February.

Most economists say stronger growth is needed to produce enough jobs to lower unemployment — and make Americans feel better.

The economy grew at an annual rate of 1.5 percent from April through June, down from 2 percent in the first quarter and 4.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011.

"Consumers were more apprehensive about business and employment prospects," said Lynn Franco, director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board.

The Consumer Confidence index, which is based on a survey conducted Aug. 1-16, underscored that anxiety. The board also found the percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months declined to 16.5 percent from 19.