



FURNITURE INSIGHTS®

Smith Leonard PLLC's Industry Newsletter

April 2026



HIGHLIGHTS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New orders were up 2% compared to the prior month of January 2026 and up 1% compared to February 2025. Year to date, new orders are up 1%

February 2026 shipments were up 4% compared to January 2026 and up 2% from February 2025. Year to date, shipments are down -3%.

February 2026 backlogs were up 2% compared to January 2026 and flat with February 2025.

Receivable levels were down 1% from January 2026, and down 3% compared to February 2025.

Inventories were down 4% from January 2026 and up 7% from February 2025.

Payrolls were down 4% compared to January 2026, but up 1% compared to February 2025.

Employee levels are again materially in line with recent months and the prior year.



**Mark Laferriere (left) with Ben Duckett,
Tax Partner**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

National

Consumer Confidence

The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index**® edged up by 0.6 points to 92.8 (1985=100) in April, from 92.2 in March's upwardly revised reading.

The **Present Situation Index**—based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions—retreated by 0.3 points to 123.8.

The **Expectations Index**—based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—rose by 1.2 points to 72.2.

“Consumer confidence edged up in April but was overall little changed, despite material concern about rising gasoline prices as the war in the Middle East prompted a surge in Brent crude oil prices,” said Dana M Peterson, Chief Economist, The Conference Board. “Consumer appraisals of current and expected business conditions declined moderately compared to last month. This was offset by modest improvements in consumers' perceptions of the labor market, both current and expected, as well as income expectations, which were slightly more optimistic in April.”

Consumers' plans to buy big-ticket items over the next six months continued to shift from “yes” and “maybe” in February, to “no” in April. Nonetheless, the proportion saying “yes” remained well above the other responses. Used cars, furniture, TVs, and smartphones remained the most popular items within their respective categories for future purchases. Among pricy items, furniture remains the top expected purchase.

Buying plans for autos continued rising on a six-month moving average basis in April, with used cars remaining the clear preference over new cars. Homebuying expectations staged a mild recovery on a six-month rolling basis for both existing and new units in the month, with consumers continuing to prefer existing homes to newly built ones. Purchase plans for all types of home furnishings, white goods, and electronics on a six-month moving average basis continued to improve in April.

Housing

Existing-home sales decreased by 3.6% month-over-month in March, according to the National Association of REALTORS® Existing-Home Sales Report. The report provides the real estate ecosystem—including agents, homebuyers and sellers—with data on the level of home sales, price, and inventory.

“March home sales remained sluggish and below last year's pace,” said NAR Chief Economist Dr. Lawrence Yun. “Lower consumer confidence and softer job growth continue to hold back buyers.”

Month-over-month sales fell in all four regions. Year-over-year sales rose in the South and West and fell in the Northeast and Midwest.

NAR also revised its 2026 housing forecast. Due to the upward trajectory of mortgage rates, NAR now expects existing-home sales to increase 4% this year, down from the previous projection. New-home sales are now expected to remain flat, a downward revision from the prior forecast of a 5% gain. The median home price forecast remains unchanged, with prices still projected to rise 4% in 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

Thoughts

It was good to see many of you in High Point for the Spring Market.

While traffic was clearly down overall for a variety of reasons, those in attendance were there to do business and upbeat despite the many outside distractions.

The impact of fuel prices on the overall economy and specifically on the price of materials (poly/cushions/etc.), and how/when to pass along, were widely discussed.

Tariffs were again a hot topic, but this time how and when they would be refunded, a process that most we spoke to had already started.

As to our stats program, new orders and shipments were up in February 2026 over the prior year and month after a slow start. However, certain segments of the industry continue to perform better than others overall, with upholstery generally outperforming case goods, and the high/middle outperforming the low-end.

There continue to be some signs of hope with consumer confidence despite all the “noise” and people continue to buy furniture, so perhaps the industry will finally see the now long-time, pent-up demand realized as the year moves along.

In the meantime, it seems like another season to control what can be controlled, focus on what companies do best, look for opportunities to operate more efficiently, and strengthen relationships with vendors, employees, and customers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONT.

National, Cont.

Housing, Cont.

Total Existing-Home Sales for March

- 3.6% decrease in existing-home sales¹ month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.98 million.
- 1.0% decrease in sales year-over-year.

Single-Family-Homes Sales in March

- 3.5% decrease in sales month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.63 million, down 0.3% from March 2025.
- \$412,400: Median home price, up 1.3% from last year.

Condominiums and Co-ops Sales in March

- 5.4% decrease in sales month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 350,000, down 7.9% from last year.
- \$371,500: Median price, up 2.3% from March 2025.

Mortgage Rates

- 6.18%: The average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage in March, according to Freddie Mac, up from 6.05% in February and down from 6.65% one year ago.

Sales of new single-family houses in January 2026 (February-March 2026 release delayed to May) were at a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of 587,000, according to estimates released jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is 17.6 percent below the December 2025 rate of 712,000, and is 11.3 percent below the January 2025 rate of 662,000.

Compared to January 2025 on a seasonally-adjusted basis, sales were down 11.3% overall with sales also down 8.8% in the South and down 28.7% in the West, but up 18.0% in the Midwest and flat (0.0%) in the Northeast.

Other

Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025 (October, November, and December), according to the second estimate released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. In the third quarter, real GDP increased 4.4 percent. The contributors to the increase in real GDP in the fourth quarter were increases in consumer spending and investment. These movements were partly offset by decreases in government spending and exports. Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, decreased. Real GDP was revised down 0.7 percentage point from the advance estimate, reflecting downward revisions to exports, consumer spending, government spending, and investment. Imports decreased less than previously estimated. Compared to the third quarter, the deceleration in real GDP in the fourth quarter reflected downturns in government spending and exports and a deceleration in consumer spending that were partly offset by an acceleration in investment. The decrease in imports was smaller than in the previous quarter.

Gross Domestic Product

Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 2.0 percent in the first quarter of 2026 (January, February, and March), according to the advance estimate released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. In the fourth quarter of 2025, real GDP increased 0.5 percent.

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2025, the acceleration in real GDP in the first quarter of 2026 reflected upturns in government spending and exports, and an acceleration in investment that were partly offset by a deceleration in consumer spending. Imports turned up.

HIGHLIGHTS – MONTHLY RESULTS

New Orders

According to our latest survey of residential furniture manufacturers and distributors, new orders were up 1% in February 2026 compared to February 2025. Approximately one-half of participants reported increases versus decreases in February compared to a year ago.

New orders were up 2% compared to the prior month of January 2026.

Year to date, new orders are up 1% compared to the same period last year.

Shipments and Backlogs

February 2026 shipments were up 2% compared to February 2025. Shipments in February were up for approximately two-thirds of the participants compared to the prior year.

Shipments were up 4% from January 2026.

Year to date, shipments are down 3% compared to the same period last year.

February 2026 backlogs were flat compared to February 2025, but up 2% from the prior month.

Receivables and Inventories

Receivable levels were down 1% from January 2026 and down 3% from February 2025.

Inventories were down 4% over January 2026, but up 7% from February 2025 continuing a trend from recent months.

Factory and Warehouse Employees and Payroll

The number of factory and warehouse employees was down 3% from February a year ago, and down 2% with the prior month.

Payroll expense was down 4% in February 2026 compared to January 2026, but up 1% compared to February 2025. Year to date, payroll expense is down 1% compared to the same period last year.

ESTIMATED BUSINESS ACTIVITY (MILLIONS)

	2026		
	FEB	JAN	2 MO
New Orders	2,099	2,052	4,151
Shipments	2,179	2,066	4,245
Backlog	2,384	2,347	

	2025		
	FEB	JAN	2 MO
New Orders	2,083	2,050	4,133
Shipments	2,147	2,227	4,374
Backlog	2,373	2,324	

MONTHLY RESULTS – APRIL 2026

KEY MONTHLY INDICATORS (PERCENT CHANGE)

	Feb 2026 from Jan 2026	Feb 2026 from Feb 2025	2 Mos 2026 vs 2 Mos 2025
New Orders	+2	+1	+1
Shipments	+4	+2	-3
Backlog	+2	-	
Payrolls	-4	+1	-1
Employees	-2	-5	
Receivables	-1	-3	
Inventories	-4	+7	

PERCENT INCREASE/DECREASE COMPARED TO PRIOR YEAR

New Orders Shipments Backlog Employment

2025

February	-5	-5	-6	-3
March	+1	+1	-6	-4
April	-9	-2	-10	-4
May	-1	-2	-10	-4
June	+3	-4	-8	-4
July	+13	+3	-4	-3
August	-3	-6	-	-3
September	+7	+6	+2	-2
October	-1	+4	-2	-2
November	-2	-6	-1	-3
December	+1	-	-2	-3

2026

January	-	-7	-	-4
February	+1	+2	-	-5

A DEEPER DIVE – NATIONAL

Consumer Confidence

The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index** edged up by 0.6 points to 92.8 (1985=100) in April, from 92.2 in March's upwardly revised reading.

The **Present Situation Index**—based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions—retreated by 0.3 points to 123.8.

The **Expectations Index**—based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—rose by 1.2 points to 72.2. The survey period for this month's preliminary results was April 1–22, a period that included the temporary two-week ceasefire in the Middle East conflict beginning April 8 and the subsequent rebound in US equities.

“Consumer confidence edged up in April but was overall little changed, despite material concern about rising gasoline prices as the war in the Middle East prompted a surge in Brent crude oil prices,” said Dana M Peterson, Chief Economist, The Conference Board. “Consumer appraisals of current and expected business conditions declined moderately compared to last month. This was offset by modest improvements in consumers' perceptions of the labor market, both current and expected, as well as income expectations, which were slightly more optimistic in April.”

The Present Situation Index cooled slightly in April, as net views of current business conditions (the share saying conditions are “good” versus “bad”) fell by 1.8 pts to +4.1%. Perceptions of employment conditions improved slightly, with the labor market differential—the share of consumers saying jobs are “plentiful” minus the share saying jobs are “hard to get”—ticking up by 1.4 pts to +7.5%. The Expectations Index increased by 1.2 points in April, as two of its three components—net perceptions of labor market and household income conditions six months from now—edged up. Expected business conditions were slightly more pessimistic.

Among demographic groups, confidence continued to trend downward on a six-month moving average basis for consumers aged 35 and up while younger consumers were a tad more confident in April. Respondents under 35 remained the most optimistic and those 55 and over the least.

On a six-month moving average basis, confidence improved among Millennials and Gen Z but declined among older generations. By income, confidence on a six-month moving average basis varied, but most income groups expressed less optimism. By political affiliation, Republicans remained the most optimistic, while confidence fell for Independents and improved slightly for Democrats.

Consumers' write-in responses on factors affecting the economy continued to skew towards pessimism in April. Comments about prices, oil and gas, and war increased in frequency compared to March—a likely signal of consumers' underlying worries about how the war in the Middle East will impact their pockets.

A two-week ceasefire and a rebound in stock market indices within the survey-sample period (April 1–22) likely helped ease concerns about financial indicators somewhat in April after spiking in March. Still, consumers remained wary. Consumers' average and median

NATIONAL UPDATE

Leading Economic Indicators

The **Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI)** declined by 0.6% in March 2026 to 97.3 (2016=100), more than reversing its 0.3% increase in February to 97.9, up from 97.6 in January. Overall, the LEI fell by 1.0% over the six months between September 2025 and March 2026, more than halving the rate of decline of its 2.1% contraction over the previous six-month period (March to September 2025).

“After rising in February, the US LEI pulled back sharply in March, as building permits declined and consumer expectations and stock prices weakened,” said Justyna Zabinska-La Monica, Senior Manager, Business Cycle Indicators, at The Conference Board. “The LEI continues to signal a slowdown in the economy over the coming months, as higher oil prices and supply chain tensions will likely place additional upward pressure on inflation and further reduce consumers' purchasing power. The labor market, while currently stable, may soften with hiring slowing and unemployment edging higher. Growth will likely remain modest, as weaker consumer spending offsets some strength in business investment and defense-related activity. The Conference Board revised its US GDP growth forecast to well below 2%, down to 1.6% y/y for 2026.”

The **Conference Board Coincident Economic Index® (CEI)** for the US was unchanged in both March and February 2026 at 115.2 (2016=100), after a very slight downward revision in January. Overall, the CEI expanded by 0.3% over the six-month period from September 2025 and March 2026, well above its 0.1% growth over the previous six months. The CEI's four component indicators—payroll employment, personal income less transfer payments, manufacturing and trade sales, and industrial production—are included among the data used to determine recessions in the US. Payroll employment and personal income contributed negatively to the coincident index in February. In March, the positive contribution from employment with estimated positive contributions from personal income and manufacturing and trade sales were offset by weakness in industrial production, resulting in no change in the measure.

The **Conference Board Lagging Economic Index® (LAG)** for the US increased by 0.3% to 120.4 (2016=100) in March 2026, after increasing by 0.2% in February. As a result, the LAG's six-month change was positive for the third month in the row, registering 0.7% growth in March.

12-month inflation expectations ticked downward but continued to be elevated. The percentage of consumers saying interest rates over the next 12 months will be higher on net rose to nearly 50%. Expectations for higher stock prices a year from now ticked up.

Consumers' net views of their Family's Current Financial Situation and Family's Future Financial Situation were both slightly less optimistic in April. Meanwhile, the share of consumers who said a US recession over the next 12 months is "very likely" rose again, while those saying "somewhat likely" or "not likely" fell. The cohort believing the US is already in a recession inched up.

Consumers' plans to buy big-ticket items over the next six months continued to shift from "yes" and "maybe" in February, to "no" in April. Nonetheless, the proportion saying "yes" remained well above the other responses. Used cars, furniture, TVs, and smartphones remained the most popular items within their respective categories for future purchases. Among pricy items, furniture remains the top expected purchase.

Buying plans for autos continued rising on a six-month moving average basis in April, with used cars remaining the clear preference over new cars. Homebuying expectations staged a mild recovery on a six-month rolling basis for both existing and new units in the month, with consumers continuing to prefer existing homes to newly built ones. Purchase plans for all types of home furnishings, white goods, and electronics on a six-month moving average basis continued to improve in April.

Consumers planning more spending on services over the next six months also shifted from "yes" and "maybe" to "no" in April. Consumer spending trends in 2026 remain focused on "cheap thrills" and necessary services, and away from expensive and highly discretionary activities.

Among services, anticipated spending over the next six months fell for every category in April, except for pet care, which despite the increase was still below its January 2026 all-time peak. Notwithstanding the broad-based month-over-month downshift in future services spending, restaurants/bars/take-out remained the top category for expected purchases. Beauty and personal care and streaming/internet/mobile services followed. Utilities and healthcare continued to rank above hotel/motel for personal travel among the top five future spending categories. This displacement is consistent with the general downtrend in overall future vacation plans over the past six months. In April, travel intentions for six months ahead continued to favor domestic destinations over international travel. However, while foreign travel plans partially recovered in April after collapsing in Q1 2026, domestic travel edged lower in April and has largely moved sideways through the first four months of the year. Overall expected spending on airfare/trains for personal travel fell again in April.

A DEEPER DIVE – NATIONAL, CONT.

Consumer Confidence, Cont.

Present Situation

Consumers' assessments of **current business conditions** eroded in April.

- 22.0% of consumers said business conditions were "good," up from 21.7% in March.
- However, 17.9% said business conditions were "bad," up from 15.8%.

On net, consumers' views of the labor market improved moderately in April.

- 27.3% of consumers said jobs were "plentiful," virtually unchanged from 27.4% in March.
- 19.8% of consumers said jobs were "hard to get," down from 21.3%.

Expectations Six Months Hence

Overall, consumers were slightly more pessimistic about future business conditions in April.

- However, consumers were less negative about the labor market outlook in April.
- 16.1% of consumers expected more jobs to be available, up from 15.4% in March.
- Conversely, 26.9% anticipated fewer jobs, down from 27.8%.

On net, consumers' outlook for their income prospects was also slightly more optimistic in April.

- 18.6% of consumers expected their incomes to increase, down from 19.2% in March.
- But only 12.3% expected their incomes to decline, also down from 13.6%.

A DEEPER DIVE – NATIONAL, CONT.

Gross Domestic Product

Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 2.0 percent in the first quarter of 2026 (January, February, and March), according to the advance estimate released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. In the fourth quarter of 2025, real GDP increased 0.5 percent.

The contributors to the increase in real GDP in the first quarter were investment, exports, consumer spending, and government spending. Imports, which are a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, also increased.

Compared to the fourth quarter of 2025, the acceleration in real GDP in the first quarter of 2026 reflected upturns in government spending and exports, and an acceleration in investment that were partly offset by a deceleration in consumer spending. Imports turned up.

Real final sales to private domestic purchasers, the sum of consumer spending and gross private fixed investment, increased 2.5 percent in the first quarter, compared with an increase of 1.8 percent in the fourth quarter.

The price index for gross domestic purchases increased 3.6 percent in the first quarter, compared with an increase of 3.7 percent in the fourth quarter. The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index increased 4.5 percent, compared with an increase of 2.9 percent, and the PCE price index excluding food and energy increased 4.3 percent, compared with an increase of 2.7 percent.

A DEEPER DIVE – HOUSING

Existing-Home Sales

Existing-home sales decreased by 3.6% month-over-month in March, according to the National Association of REALTORS® Existing-Home Sales Report. The report provides the real estate ecosystem—including agents, homebuyers and sellers—with data on the level of home sales, price, and inventory.

“March home sales remained sluggish and below last year’s pace,” said NAR Chief Economist Dr. Lawrence Yun. “Lower consumer confidence and softer job growth continue to hold back buyers.”

Month-over-month sales fell in all four regions. Year-over-year sales rose in the South and West and fell in the Northeast and Midwest.

“Inventory remains a major constraint on the market,” Yun said. “The inventory-to-sales ratio, or supply-to-demand ratio, is below historical norms. An additional 300,000 to 500,000 homes for sale would help bring the market closer to normal conditions and allow consumers to make purchase decisions without feeling rushed.”

“Because inventory remains limited, the median home price rose to a new record high for the month of March,” Yun added. “That price growth has helped the typical homeowner accumulate \$128,100 in housing wealth over the past six years.”

NAR also revised its 2026 housing forecast. Due to the upward trajectory of mortgage rates, NAR now expects existing-home sales to increase 4% this year, down from the previous projection. New-home sales are now expected to remain flat, a downward revision from the prior forecast of a 5% gain. The median home price forecast remains unchanged, with prices still projected to rise 4% in 2026.

“Mortgage rates have been rising, and that has led us to trim our home sales outlook for the year,” said Yun. “Even with a more modest pace of sales growth, home prices continue to steadily increase due to minimal inventory growth.”



A DEEPER DIVE – HOUSING, CONT.

National Snapshot

Total Existing-Home Sales for March

- 3.6% decrease in existing-home sales month over month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.98 million.
- 1.0% decrease in sales year over year.

Inventory in March

- 1.36 million units: Total housing inventory, up 3.0% from February and 2.3% from March 2025.
- 4.1-month supply of unsold inventory, up from 3.8 months last month and up from 4.0 months one year ago.

Median Sales Price in March

- \$408,800: Median existing-home price for all housing types, up 1.4% from one year ago (\$403,100) – the 33rd consecutive month of year-over-year price increases.

Housing Affordability in March

- The Housing Affordability Index fell slightly 113.7 in March, down from 117.5 in February 2025 and up from 104.2 a year ago.
- Year-over-year, affordability improved across all regions.
 - Northeast +4.1%
 - Midwest +5.3%
 - South +10.0%
 - West +12.7%

Single-Family-Homes Sales in March

- 3.5% decrease in sales month over month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.63 million, down 0.3% from March 2025.
- \$412,400: Median home price, up 1.3% from last year.

Condominiums and Co-ops Sales in March

- 5.4% decrease in sales month over month and year over year to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 350,000, down 7.9% from last year.
- \$371,500: Median price, up 2.3% from March 2025.

Regional Snapshot for Existing-Home Sales in March

Northeast

- 8.5% decrease in sales month over month to an annual rate of 430,000, down 12.2% year over year.
- \$494,500: Median price, up 5.7% from March 2025.

Midwest

- 4.2% decrease in sales month over month to an annual rate of 920,000, down 3.2% year over year.
- \$315,500: Median price, up 4.9% from March 2025.

South

- 3.1% decrease in sales month over month to an annual rate of 1.86 million, up 2.2% year over year.
- \$362,600: Median price, up 0.8% from March 2025.

West

- 1.3% decrease in sales month over month for an annual rate of 770,000, up 1.3% year over year.
- \$613,400: Median price, down 1.3% from March 2025.

REALTORS® Confidence Index for March

- 41 days: Median time on market for properties, down from 47 days last month and up from 36 days in March 2025.
- 32% of sales were first-time homebuyers, down from 34% in February and unchanged from one year ago.
- 27% of transactions were cash sales, down from 31% a month ago and up slightly from 26% in March 2025.
- 18% of transactions were individual investors or second-home buyers, up from 16% last month and 15% one year ago.
- 2% of sales were distressed sales (foreclosures and short sales), down from 3% last month and March 2025.

Mortgage Rates

- 6.18%: The average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage in March, according to Freddie Mac, up from 6.05% in February and 6.65% one year ago.

A DEEPER DIVE – HOUSING, CONT.

New Residential Sales

*** February and March information to be released in May***

Sales of new single-family houses in January 2026 were at a seasonally-adjusted annual rate of 587,000, according to estimates released jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is 17.6 percent below the December 2025 rate of 712,000, and is 11.3 percent below the January 2025 rate of 662,000.

The median sales price of new houses sold in January 2026 was \$400,500. This is 4.5 percent below the December 2025 price of \$419,200, and is 6.8 percent below the January 2025 price of \$429,600. The average sales price of new houses sold in January 2026 was \$499,500. This is 5.9 percent below the December 2025 price of \$530,900, and is 3.6 percent below the January 2025 price of \$518,200.

The seasonally-adjusted estimate of new houses for sale at the end of January 2026 was 476,000. This is 0.4 percent above the December 2025 estimate of 474,000, and is 4.0 percent below the January 2025 estimate of 496,000.

This represents a supply of 9.7 months at the current sales rate. The months' supply is 21.3 percent above the December 2025 estimate of 8.0 months, and is 7.8 percent above the January 2025 estimate of 9.0 months.

Compared to January 2025 on a seasonally-adjusted basis, sales were down 11.3% overall with sales also down 8.8% in the South and down 28.7% in the West, but up 18.0% in the Midwest and flat (0.0%) in the Northeast.

Housing Starts

Privately-owned housing starts in March were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1,502,000. This is 10.8 percent above the revised February estimate of 1,356,000 and is 10.8 percent above the March 2025 rate of 1,355,000.

Single-family housing starts in March were at a rate of 1,032,000; this is 9.7 percent above the revised February figure of 941,000.

The March rate for units in buildings with five units or more was 446,000.

Single-family starts compared to March 2025, on a seasonally-adjusted basis, were up 8.9% in total, as well as up 6.0% in the South, up 6.1% in the Northeast, up 11.2% in the West, and up 17.85% in the Midwest.

Housing Completions

Privately-owned housing completions in March were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1,366,000. This is 0.1 percent above the revised February estimate of 1,364,000, but is 12.8 percent below the March 2025 rate of 1,566,000.

Single-family housing completions in March were at a rate of 896,000; this is 4.8 percent below the revised February rate of 941,000.

The March rate for units in buildings with five units or more was 452,000.

Single-family completions compared to March 2025, on a seasonally-adjusted basis, were down 14.5% in total, as well as down 18.8% in the South and down 28.9% in the West, but up 6.9% in the Midwest and up 43.5% in the Northeast.

A DEEPER DIVE – OTHER NATIONAL

Retail Sales

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March 2026, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$752.1 billion, up 1.7 percent from the previous month, and up 4.0 percent from March 2025. Total sales for the January 2026 through March 2026 period were up 3.7 percent from the same period a year ago. The January 2026 to February 2026 percent change was revised from up 0.6 percent to up 0.7 percent.

Retail trade sales were up 1.9 percent from February 2026, and up 4.2 percent from last year. Nonstore retailers were up 10.1 percent from last year, while food services and drinking places were up 2.4 percent from March 2025.

Sales at furniture and home furnishings stores in March 2026 were up 2.2% compared to February 2026 on a seasonally-adjusted basis, but down 0.8% from March 2025. Year to date on a non-adjusted basis, sales were down 2.8% (4.8% last month).

A DEEPER DIVE – OTHER NATIONAL, CONT.

Consumer Prices

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased 0.9 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis in March, after rising 0.3 percent in February, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. Over the last 12 months, the all-items index increased 3.3 percent before seasonal adjustment.

The index for energy rose 10.9 percent in March, led by a 21.2-percent increase in the index for gasoline which accounted for nearly three quarters of the monthly all-items increase. The shelter index also increased in March, rising 0.3 percent. The index for food was unchanged over the month as the index for food away from home rose 0.2 percent, while the index for food at home fell 0.2 percent.

The index for all-items less food and energy rose 0.2 percent in March. Indexes that increased over the month include airline fares, apparel, household furnishings and operations, education, and new vehicles. Conversely, the indexes for medical care, personal care, and used cars and trucks were among the major indexes that decreased in March.

The all-items index rose 3.3 percent for the 12 months ending March, after rising 2.4 percent for the 12 months ending February. The all-items less food and energy index rose 2.6 percent over the year, following a 2.5-percent increase over the 12 months ending February. The energy index increased 12.5 percent for the 12 months ending March. The food index increased 2.7 percent over the last year.

Employment

Total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 178,000 in March, and the unemployment rate changed little at 4.3 percent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. Job gains occurred in health care, in construction, and in transportation and warehousing. Federal government employment continued to decline.

The average workweek for all employees on private nonfarm payrolls edged down by 0.1 hour to 34.2 hours in March. In manufacturing, the average workweek was unchanged at 40.2 hours, and overtime was also unchanged at 3.0 hours. The average workweek for production and nonsupervisory employees on private nonfarm payrolls remained at 33.8 hours.

Durable Goods Orders and Factory Shipments

New orders for manufactured durable goods in March, up following three consecutive monthly decreases, increased \$2.7 billion or 0.8 percent to \$318.9 billion, unchanged from the previously published increase. This followed a 1.2 percent February decrease. Computers and electronic products, up eleven of the last twelve months, led the increase, \$1.0 billion or 3.6 percent to \$29.6 billion. New orders for manufactured nondurable goods increased \$6.5 billion or 2.1 percent to \$311.5 billion.

Shipments of manufactured durable goods in March, up six of the last seven months, increased \$2.4 billion or 0.7 percent to \$322.4 billion, unchanged from the previously published increase. This followed a 1.6 percent February increase. Machinery, up four of the last five months, led the increase, \$0.9 billion or 2.3 percent to \$41.6 billion. Shipments of manufactured nondurable goods, up four consecutive months, increased \$6.5 billion or 2.1 percent to \$311.5 billion. This followed a 1.9 percent February increase. Petroleum and coal products, up three consecutive months, led the increase, \$5.6 billion or 9.9 percent to \$62.1 billion.

On a seasonally-adjusted basis, March shipments for furniture and related products were down 1.2% compared to the prior month, while new orders were down 0.2%. On a non-adjusted basis, March 2026 year to date shipments for furniture and related products were up 2.5% compared to the prior year, while year to date new orders were up 2.0%.