The Deloitte Consumer Tracker shows that UK consumers have shrugged off the turmoil in the global financial markets, with consumer confidence back to a record high in Q3 2015. Consumer confidence rose by two percentage points returning to a four-year high during the same period that saw the FTSE100 index fall by 700 points. All six measures of consumer confidence were up quarter-on-quarter, with the strongest gains seen in consumer confidence regarding their level of debt, job opportunities and career progression.

The regional breakdown shows a strong recovery in confidence among consumers living in London and the South East. This comes after a fall in the previous quarter, when concerns about the weakness of the London property market and the affordability of housing weighed on consumers’ minds. Those living in the capital are now once again displaying the highest levels of confidence compared to the rest of the UK, with their sentiment on job security and debt level showing the greatest improvement.

Looking at the national picture, rising real wages have contributed to increasing confidence in job security. Our data shows there has been an increase in the proportion of consumers who have received a pay rise or bonus, while the number of consumers who have suffered a loss of income or lost their job remained static.

In Q3 2015, the gap between defensive and expansionary spending behaviours increased once again, as the proportion of consumers displaying defensive behaviour fell to its lowest level since our survey began. In particular, the proportion of consumers bargain-hunting declined and we also saw a drop in the number of consumers spending less through buying fewer items. At the same time the proportion of consumers buying more items due to sales or special offers increased, highlighting the role that promotional activity is playing in driving more expansive behaviour. The outlook for Q4 2015 is positive for the leisure sector which is likely to benefit from continued gains in real earnings. The outlook for grocery retailing appears more challenging with consumers expecting to continue reducing their spending on groceries.
UK consumers have shrugged off the turmoil in the global financial markets, with consumer confidence back to a record high in Q3 2015. Consumer confidence rose by two percentage points returning to a four-year high over a period that saw the FTSE100 index fall by 700 points.

In contrast, the latest edition of the Deloitte CFO Survey has shown that corporate risk appetite and sentiment have faded in the face of weakness in emerging economies and global equity markets.

All six measures of consumer confidence were up quarter-on-quarter, with the strongest gains seen in consumer confidence regarding their level of debt, job opportunities and career progression. For example, consumer sentiment on disposable income rose, continuing the upward trend that has seen this measure record the strongest increase since our survey began.
Consumer confidence
London sees strong recovery in confidence

The regional breakdown shows a strong recovery in confidence among consumers living in London and the South East. This comes after a fall in the previous quarter, when concerns about the weakness of the London property market and the affordability of housing weighed on consumers’ minds.

Those living in the capital are now once again displaying the highest levels of confidence, with their sentiment on job security and debt level showing the greatest improvement.

Our data shows that the younger demographic have consistently proved to be the most confident, and this is reflected across all of our key measures of confidence.
Consumer spending
Costs fall as wages continue to rise

Mortgage rates have continued to fall during 2015. This is likely to have a positive impact on consumer confidence by reducing mortgage costs and enabling them to spend more in other areas.

Rising real wages have contributed to increasing confidence in job security. Our data shows there has been an increase in the proportion of consumers who have received a pay rise or bonus, while the number of consumers who have suffered a loss of income or lost their job remained static.

The falling cost of goods and services has allowed consumers to save money on essential items such as utility bills, housing costs and fuel, and allowed them to spend more on discretionary items.
Consumer spending growth slowed in Q2 2015 but remains robust at above three per cent. Increasing confidence is now clearly translating into increased spending.

The falling cost of many essentials has enabled consumers to spend more on discretionary, big ticket items.

The core leisure category continues to see good growth, with spending in areas such as eating out and going out increasing in the third quarter.
The value of spending across a range of essentials slowed in Q3 2015 compared to a year ago as lower inflation in key categories including food, utilities and transport reduced pressure on consumer budgets. The most pronounced weakening in spending came in the grocery category where competition among the big four grocers and the discounters continues to drive prices down.

The savings ratio rose in Q2 2015. In September 2015, the Office of National Statistics published a series of revisions, with Q1 2015 revised down from 4.9 to 4.0 per cent.

Not only have consumers been saving more, but they have also been borrowing more. The rate of growth in unsecured lending has risen throughout 2015. Increased borrowing, along with lower inflation and growth in real wages, has helped support spending in Q3 2015.
Consumers are planning to increase their spending on discretionary categories in the fourth quarter of 2015. This is good news for UK consumer businesses, particularly the leisure sector which is likely to see the strongest gains.

In Q3 2015, the gap between defensive and expansionary spending behaviours increased once again, as the proportion of consumers displaying defensive behaviour fell to its lowest level since our survey began.

More than a quarter of consumers are now more positive about their finances than they were a year ago. One in five has more money to spend at the end of the month or is better able to treat themselves at the end of the month.
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About this research
The Deloitte Consumer Tracker is based on a consumer survey carried out by independent market research agency, YouGov, on our behalf. This survey was conducted online with a nationally representative sample of over 3,000 UK adults aged 18+ between 18 and 20 September 2015.

A note on the methodology
Some of the figures in this research show the results in the form of a net balance. This means that in a survey of 100 respondents, assume that 30 reported they are spending more, 50 reported no change and 20 reported they are spending less. The net balance is calculated by subtracting the number that reported they spent less from the number that reported they spent more, i.e. 30 – 20 = 10. This means 10 per cent of consumers reported that they spent more rather than less.