

Confidence Still is Booming As Expansion Hits 107th Month

Consumer confidence - one of the underlying strengths of the now longest-running economic expansion in U.S. history - is continuing its mighty roll.

Confidence already this year has posted two record highs in the 14-year-old ABC News/Money magazine poll. It's down a tad this week, but still very strong: Seventy-seven percent of Americans say the national economy is in good shape, 54 percent call it a good time to buy things and 68 percent rate their own finances positively.

Positive ratings:	----- Since 12/85 -----			Average
	Today	Highest	Lowest	
National Economy	77%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	68	70	42	56
Buying Climate	54	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +33 on its scale of +100 to -100, down two points from last week. In the first month of 2000 the index has averaged +34, six points higher than the full-year record of +28 last year. The index has averaged -12 since late 1985, stunted by dismal levels in the early '90s.

	ABC/Money	Index
Today	+33	
Last week	+35	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record High
1999 average	+28	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-12	

Confidence has been soaring for two years, lifted by rising incomes, low inflation, low interest rates and the strong job market. Strong confidence in turn has boosted consumer spending, fueling the economy through its long growth cycle. This month marks the country's 107th month of sustained economic expansion - the longest ever recorded. At the same time, the unemployment level is at its lowest in three decades (4.1 percent).

The economy's growth cycle began almost nine years ago, in March 1991. But the recovery did not hit Main Street until years later; consumer confidence hit its stride only in 1995, and then turned sharply upward in early 1998.

Call the ABC News Polling Unit, ext. 2621, for a chart tracking the ABC/Money index over time.

GROUPS - As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +63 in higher-income households compared to -22 in the lowest; +53 among college graduates but -1 among high-school dropouts; +37 among whites but +4 among blacks; and +42 among men compared to +24 among women.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the ABC/Money index:

NATIONAL ECONOMY- The poll asks: Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor? Seventy-seven percent say excellent or good, down one point from last week. The worst rating was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	77%	17	60	23	19	4
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	36	61	40	21

PERSONAL FINANCES - The poll asks: Would you describe the state of your own personal finances these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor? Sixty-eight percent say excellent or good, down two points from last week's record high. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	68%	7	61	32	23	9
Avg. since 12/85	56	5	52	44	31	13

BUYING CLIMATE - The poll asks: Considering the cost of things today and your own personal finances, would you say now is an excellent time, a good time, a not so good time or a poor time to buy the things you want and need? Fifty-four percent say excellent or good, down one point from last week. The worst rating, 20 percent, was set in Fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	54%	4	50	46	33	13
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	63	41	21

METHODOLOGY - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index represents a rolling average based on telephone interviews with about 1,000 adults nationwide each month. This week's results are based on 1,041 interviews in the month ending Jan. 30 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

The ABC/Money index is derived as follows: The negative response to each index question is subtracted from the positive response to that question. The three resulting

numbers are then added and divided by three. The index can range from +100 (everyone positive on all three measures) to -100 (all negative on all three measures). The survey began in December 1985.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

01/30/00	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg

Group								

GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	33	35	31	23	25	38	22	28
State of Economy	54	56	52	40	46	60	38	47
Personal Finances	36	40	34	30	28	40	28	34
Buying Climate	8	10	8	0	0	14	-4	5

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	42	42	43	30	31	45	30	36
Women	24	29	21	15	20	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	26	32	27	18	30	37	16	26
35 - 44	34	36	35	19	16	40	13	29
45 - 54	31	37	34	30	21	45	13	29
55 - 64	47	48	31	22	37	48	13	29
65 +	32	28	32	26	23	37	17	27
Income:								
Under \$15K	-22	-19	-25	-30	-23	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	16	26	14	11	-12	26	-15	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	16	16	32	17	20	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	53	55	44	27	43	56	27	43
Over \$50K	63	66	60	54	63	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	40	48	42	21	23	48	21	32
Midwest	32	32	30	27	40	41	20	31
South	22	28	24	24	19	31	14	24
West	43	38	34	15	20	43	13	28
Race:								
White	37	40	38	27	27	43	26	32
Black	4	6	-10	2	17	22	-11	3
Politics:								
Republican	45	47	53	39	36	55	32	42
Democrat	35	37	29	21	23	38	15	27
Independent	21	24	24	19	23	34	13	23
Education:								
< High School	-1	-2	-10	-17	-17	6	-27	-10
High Sch. Grad.	17	27	32	12	20	32	12	21
College +	53	52	45	41	44	53	38	45
Home:								
Own	42	42	38	34	26	44	26	35
Rent	9	16	15	-1	24	24	-3	11
Marital Status:								
Single	19	32	30	13	28	36	8	24
Married	40	41	38	30	30	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	17	13	5	0	3	18	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	43	43	39	32	32	44	30	36
Part-Time	24	33	24	20	35	38	7	23
Not Employed	22	24	22	11	12	28	8	17

END