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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 2/2/97
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CONFIDENCE
IS MOTORING

Consumer confidence continues to cruise in 1997, maintaining its best level of any new year since the weekly ABC News/Money magazine poll began more than a decade ago.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index today remains at -3 on its scale of +100 to -100, a level it's maintained in four out of the last five weeks. That compares to an average of -11 last year, and -30 from 1990-95.

The index is very near its recent high of -1 on Dec. 1, which it last reached, briefly, in September 1988. It peaked at +6 in 1986, and averaged -9 in pre-recession 1986-90. The poll began in late 1985.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-3
1996 average	-11
1990-95	-30
1986-90	-9
Full average	-20

COMPONENTS - The index is based on Americans' views of their finances, the economy and the buying climate. Sixty percent now rate their finances positively, two points short of the record, set in late 1987.

At the same time, just 37 percent call this a good time to buy things - a sign of continued consumer hesitation that may be helping to keep inflation in check. Views of the buying climate have lagged throughout this recovery.

In the third gauge, 48 percent rate the national economy positively - not a majority, but more than usual; in fact, four points short of the record. Views of the economy have powered the recent resurgence of confidence; they're seven points better than their pre-recession average.

Ratings of personal finances are three points better than their pre-recession average, but views of the buying climate are two points worse. All three are far above their average from 1990-93, when faith in the economy was at its recession-inspired nadir.

Positive ratings for...	Today	1990-93	1986-90
National economy	48	15	41
Buying climate	37	26	39
Personal finances	60	49	57

EXPECTATIONS - A separate question measuring views of the economy's direction remains strong. Just 27 percent of Americans say the economy is getting worse, compared to 40 percent last summer and a record 77 percent in the midst of the

1990-91 recession.

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +6 among men but -11 among women; +2 among whites but -31 among blacks; +28 in higher-income households but -45 in the lowest; and +14 among people who have attended college but -33 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Fifty-two percent rate the economy negatively, up one point this week. It averaged 61 percent last year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-90. The best, 52 percent positive, was Dec. 1, 1996. The worst, 93 percent negative, was in late 1991 and early 1992. The average for the life of the index is 69 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Sixty percent rate their finances positively, up one point this week. It averaged 57 percent last year, compared to 49 percent in the 1990-93 slump and 57 percent before the recession. The worst was 58 percent negative March 14, 1993; the best, 62 percent positive Dec. 20, 1987. The full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty-three percent call this a bad time to buy things, up one point this week. It averaged 63 percent last year, compared to 74 percent during the 1990-93 slump and 61 percent before the recession. The worst is 80 percent negative Nov. 2 and Oct. 28, 1990; the best, 52 percent positive May 11, 1986. The full average is 66 percent negative.

	National Economy	Personal Finances	Buying Climate
This week	52% neg	60% pos	63% neg
1996 Average	61% neg	57% pos	63% neg
Recession Average (mid-1990 to 1993)	85% neg	51% neg	74% neg
Pre-Recession Avg. (1986 to mid-1990)	59% neg	57% pos	61% neg
Full Average (1986-1995)	69% neg	54% pos	66% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg
Best	52% pos	62% pos	52% pos

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. Interviewing by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa. This week's results are based on 1,032 interviews in the month ending Feb. 2 and have an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. The question on expectations was conducted among 516 respondents Jan. 22-Feb. 2; that result has a five-point error margin.

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 Gary Langer.

For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621. ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online.

02/02/97	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	-3	-3	-3	-9	-18	-1	-18	-9
State of Economy	-4	-2	-2	-16	-36	4	-36	-19
Personal Finances	20	18	16	16	12	22	8	15
Buying Climate	-26	-24	-24	-26	-30	-18	-30	-25

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	6	9	10	-4	-7	10	-9	1
Women	-11	-13	-16	-14	-27	-8	-31	-19
Age:								
18 - 34	-8	-7	-1	-11	-15	-1	-23	-9
35 - 44	-8	-5	-4	-21	-21	0	-22	-11
45 - 54	-1	3	-4	-1	-8	12	-27	-8
55 - 64	12	-2	-14	5	-38	12	-40	-11
65 +	2	3	1	-5	-12	9	-22	-7
Income:								
Under \$15K	-45	-46	-41	-41	-50	-32	-58	-47
\$15K To \$24.9K	-16	-19	-29	-35	-31	-12	-40	-29
\$25K To \$39.9K	-1	-2	-6	-15	-24	5	-26	-10
\$40K To \$49.9K	12	10	2	11	-8	26	-10	6
Over \$50K	28	30	37	18	19	37	12	24
Region:								
Northeast	-2	-1	-5	-13	-34	-1	-34	-15
Midwest	-2	-2	-3	2	-14	10	-15	-1
South	0	-3	-8	-12	-16	1	-24	-11
West	-8	-4	3	-13	-8	6	-23	-11
Race:								
White	2	2	2	-10	-13	4	-14	-5
Black	-31	-37	-35	-10	-46	-10	-51	-34
Politics:								
Republican	9	11	12	-8	0	12	-12	2
Democrat	-4	-8	-7	0	-25	10	-27	-10
Independent	-8	-5	-10	-17	-19	-4	-25	-14
Education:								
< High School	-33	-27	-23	-35	-47	-20	-47	-37
High Sch. Grad.	-12	-16	-13	-11	-22	-4	-26	-16
College +	14	16	10	2	-3	16	-3	6
Home:								
Own	6	6	3	-4	-11	6	-11	-3
Rent	-24	-25	-17	-21	-32	-11	-37	-25

Marital Status:								
Single	-16	-13	-3	-17	-12	0	-26	-12
Married	6	5	1	-4	-10	6	-11	-4
Sep/Wid/Div	-21	-20	-20	-20	-43	-9	-43	-26
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	3	5	6	-4	-7	11	-11	-1
Part-Time	1	1	-15	-29	-35	3	-35	-17
Not Employed	-11	-13	-14	-9	-33	-5	-33	-19