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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 2/4/96

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CONSUMER CONFIDENCE BACKS OFF  
BUT EMPLOYMENT PICTURE IS GOOD

Consumer confidence retreated slightly this week, but comparatively rosy views of the job market serve as a reminder that public faith in the economy is much stronger now than it was a few years ago.

Most Americans - 53 percent - now say their local job market is in good shape, an ABC News/Money magazine poll has found. That's up from just 36 percent in January 1993, and nearly back where to it was in 1989, before the 1990-91 recession sent confidence tumbling.

	Rating of Local Job Market:	
	Positive	Negative
2/4/96	53	45
1/24/93	36	62
2/9/92	28	70
9/10/89	58	41

These numbers more or less reflect the course of consumer confidence in general. The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, figured on a scale of +100 to -100, today stands at -17. That's worse than its average in the late 1980s, -9, but much better than its average from 1990-93, a dismal -39.

The index is based on public views of the economy, buying climate and personal finances. Last week a rare and powerful surge lifted it by six points, its second-biggest one-week gain ever. This week it lost two of those points.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-17
Last week	-15
2 weeks ago	-21
1995	-15
1994	-19
1990-93	-39
1986-90	-9

Confidence is susceptible both to long-term economic issues and short-term political ones. On the short-term side, recent positive news included an apparent end to the threat of a renewed government shutdown, and Bill Clinton's well-received State of the Union address.

But longer term, issues such as job stagnation and slow growth in income have kept confidence depressed all through the 1990s. Even with last week's gain, confidence is off to its worst start in a new year since 1992.

INDICES - Sixty-eight percent of Americans now give a negative rating to the

national economy, five points higher than it was last June, when the index briefly reached a more than five-year high. Sixty-five percent also call this a bad time to buy things, up a point from last week.

In the one positive gauge in the index, 58 percent say their own finances are in good shape, down a point this week.

	Today	1990-93	1986-90
Negative on national economy	68	85	59
Negative on buying climate	65	74	61
Positive on personal finances	58	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence still lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is -4 among men but -27 among women; +20 in higher-income households but -53 in the lowest; -11 among whites but -44 among blacks; and -4 among people who've attended college but -42 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Sixty-eight percent rate the economy negatively, unchanged this week. It's averaged 68 percent this year and 65 percent last year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-1990. The worst, 93 percent, was in late 1991 and early 1992; the best, 50-50, was April 27, 1986. The average for the life of the index is 70 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Fifty-eight percent rate their finances positively, down a point this week. It's averaged 57 percent this year and 56 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-five percent call this a bad time to buy things, up a point this week. It's averaged 66 percent this year and 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	68% neg	58% pos	65% neg
1995 Average	65% neg	56% 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)	70% neg	54% pos	66% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg



65 +	-13	-15	-18	-27	-3	2	-34	-19
Income:								
Under \$15K	-53	-53	-55	-55	-40	-40	-61	-52
\$15K To \$24.9K	-28	-24	-40	-45	-38	-15	-48	-33
\$25K To \$39.9K	-20	-13	-17	-22	-14	-2	-29	-14
\$40K To \$49.9K	-4	-23	-14	8	-9	11	-31	-3
Over \$50K	20	18	24	28	21	32	12	21
Region:								
Northeast	-31	-24	-22	-20	-19	-13	-32	-22
Midwest	-11	-7	-8	-16	-10	11	-21	-5
South	-14	-17	-20	-15	-14	-9	-25	-17
West	-10	-17	-17	-11	-26	0	-26	-15
Race:								
White	-11	-10	-12	-12	-14	-5	-15	-10
Black	-44	-51	-56	-29	-32	-24	-61	-43
Politics:								
Republican	-1	1	-1	-6	-2	6	-10	-2
Democrat	-26	-27	-24	-23	-17	-11	-28	-20
Independent	-18	-17	-20	-15	-21	-11	-26	-18
Education:								
< High School	-42	-43	-48	-41	-50	-30	-53	-43
High Sch. Grad.	-20	-20	-30	-28	-22	-14	-30	-23
College +	-4	-3	4	5	2	7	-6	2
Home:								
Own	-8	-10	-12	-10	-10	-2	-15	-9
Rent	-34	-29	-32	-31	-30	-19	-38	-30
Marital Status:								
Single	-12	-12	-12	-7	-16	3	-20	-10
Married	-10	-12	-14	-12	-15	-4	-18	-11
Sep/Wid/Div	-41	-32	-38	-37	-24	-21	-45	-36
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-6	-11	-8	-5	-8	3	-14	-5
Part-Time	-35	-22	-10	-9	-19	-4	-35	-21
Not Employed	-31	-31	-33	-33	-26	-18	-35	-27