

Confidence Strong and Steady

Consumer confidence held steady this week, continuing its remarkable run.

Confidence is just slightly below the record highs set last month. Seventy-eight percent of Americans say the national economy is in good shape, 68 percent rate their own finances positively and 53 percent call it a good time to buy things.

Positive ratings:	----- Since 12/85 -----			
	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	78%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	68	70	42	56
Buying Climate	53	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +33 on its scale of +100 to -100, the same as last week. In the first month of 2000 the index averaged +34, six points higher than the full-year record of +28 set 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	+33	
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 very strong 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. A 2.9 percent growth in workers' productivity last year has helped the prosperity - such a rise has not been seen since 1992. And as a further sign of continuing growth, the unemployment rate continues to decline, now standing at a thirty-year low of 4 percent.

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; +50 among college graduates but +9 among high-school dropouts; +38 among whites but -2 among blacks; and +42 among men compared to +22 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-eight percent say excellent or good, up one point from last week. The record, 80 percent, was set on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst rating was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	78%	17	61	22	19	3
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, the same as last week. The record, 70 percent, was originally set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in Jan. 2000. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	68%	8	60	32	22	10
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-three percent say excellent or good, down one point from last week. The record, 57 percent, was set on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst rating, 20 percent, was set in Fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	53%	4	49	47	32	15
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	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 1,040 interviews in the month ending Feb. 6 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:

02/06/00

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:

Group	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
Overall Index	33	33	34	22	27	38	22	29
State of Economy	56	54	54	38	46	60	38	47
Personal Finances	36	36	36	28	34	40	28	34
Buying Climate	6	8	12	0	2	14	-4	5

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	42	42	42	33	31	45	30	37
Women	22	24	26	11	23	30	11	20

Age:

18 - 34	27	26	30	16	27	37	16	26
35 - 44	33	34	34	23	25	40	13	30
45 - 54	25	31	37	26	20	45	13	29
55 - 64	40	47	38	22	42	48	13	29
65 +	41	32	32	20	25	41	17	27

Income:

Under \$15K	-22	-22	-23	-28	-18	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	9	16	14	2	-4	26	-15	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	19	16	30	21	24	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	46	53	54	28	44	56	27	43
Over \$50K	63	63	63	55	61	68	53	60

Region:

Northeast	40	40	39	24	25	48	21	32
Midwest	28	32	40	22	40	41	20	31
South	22	22	23	24	24	31	14	24
West	43	43	40	14	19	43	13	28

Race:

White	38	37	41	26	28	43	26	33
Black	-2	4	0	-3	22	22	-11	3

Politics:

Republican	50	45	53	40	38	55	32	42
Democrat	30	35	34	20	24	38	15	27
Independent	22	21	22	14	24	34	13	23

Education:

< High School	9	-1	-7	-21	-9	9	-27	-9
High Sch. Grad.	14	17	32	16	23	32	12	21
College +	50	53	49	38	43	53	38	45

Home:

Own	39	42	42	32	28	44	28	35
Rent	16	9	11	0	24	24	-3	11

Marital Status:

Single	27	19	26	20	26	36	8	24
Married	39	40	41	27	32	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	8	17	9	-3	5	18	-9	7

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	39	43	43	32	33	44	30	36
Part-Time	19	24	25	17	24	38	7	23
Not Employed	26	22	22	8	19	28	8	18

END