

## **Public in Less of a Buying Mood**

Public ratings of the buying climate slid this week to their lowest level in four months.

Fifty percent of Americans now call it a good time to buy things, down from its all-time high of 57 percent in January. This decline coincides with rising gasoline prices, putting this gauge at its lowest point since last November. The Energy Department this week predicted even higher gasoline prices this summer.

Nevertheless, consumer confidence is still strong overall. Seventy-seven percent of Americans say the national economy is in good shape, and 66 percent rate their own finances positively, both a few points off of their record highs set last month.

	----- Since 12/85 ----			
Positive ratings:	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	77%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	66	70	42	56
Buying Climate	50	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +29 on its scale of +100 to -100, down two points from last week. The index has averaged +32 so far this year (four points above its 1999 average) and -11 since late 1985, stunted by dismal levels in the early '90s.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+29	
Last week	+31	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record High
2000 average	+32	
1999 average	+28	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-11	

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.

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 +60 in higher-income households compared to -12 in the lowest; +49 among college graduates but -7 among high-school dropouts and +32 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, the same as 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	77%	17	60	23	17	6
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-six percent say excellent or good, down one point since 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	66%	6	60	34	26	8
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 percent say excellent or good, down two points 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	50%	5	45	50	37	13
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 1,035 interviews in the month ending March 5 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.

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ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

03/05/00	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
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Group								
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GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	29	31	33	31	32	38	22	29
State of Economy	54	54	56	48	52	60	38	47
Personal Finances	32	34	36	34	36	40	28	34
Buying Climate	0	4	6	12	8	14	-4	5
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	32	36	42	39	40	45	30	37
Women	24	24	22	22	24	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	29	34	27	19	32	37	16	26
35 - 44	21	22	33	32	40	40	13	29
45 - 54	21	17	25	41	27	45	11	28
55 - 64	35	32	40	36	17	48	13	29
65 +	39	44	41	34	32	45	17	29
Income:								
Under \$15K	-12	-14	-22	-29	-21	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-9	-2	9	2	6	26	-15	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	31	29	19	29	28	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	34	41	46	41	47	56	27	43
Over \$50K	60	62	63	66	66	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	20	27	40	33	35	48	20	32
Midwest	32	35	28	34	35	41	20	31
South	26	21	22	31	20	31	14	24
West	33	39	43	21	43	43	13	29
Race:								
White	30	35	38	35	36	43	26	33
Black	25	9	-2	2	4	25	-11	2
Politics:								
Republican	43	46	50	47	44	55	32	42
Democrat	25	25	30	33	29	38	15	27
Independent	22	26	22	16	30	30	13	22
Education:								
< High School	-7	-5	9	0	-7	9	-27	-9
High Sch. Grad.	15	15	14	20	25	32	8	20
College +	49	51	50	48	49	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	36	37	39	40	38	44	28	35
Rent	6	13	16	4	14	22	-3	10
Marital Status:								
Single	26	32	27	21	29	36	8	24
Married	33	35	39	38	39	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	10	7	8	9	1	18	-9	7
Employ. Status:								

Full-Time	30	34	39	38	38	44	30	36
Part-Time	30	26	19	27	29	38	7	23
Not Employed	25	25	26	18	23	28	8	18

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