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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 3/10/96

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CONFIDENCE RISES  
TO ITS BEST OF 1996

Consumer confidence moved up this week to its best level in three months, erasing the winter blahs that had made for its worst start of a new year since 1992.

The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index jumped three points to -13 on its scale of +100 to -100, after rising two points last week. It's averaged -17 this year, and fell as low as -21 in late January.

The index is based on public ratings of the economy, the buying climate and personal finances. It remains worse than its average in the late 1980s, -9, but much better than its average from 1990-93, a dismal -39.

ABC/Money Index	
Today	-13
Last week	-16
2 weeks ago	-18
1996 average	-17
1995	-15
1994	-19
1990-93	-39
1986-90	-9

INDICES - All three components of the index improved this week: Ratings of the buying climate rose to their best since Dec. 24; the economy, their best since Jan. 7; and personal finances, their best since Feb. 4.

Sixty-six percent of Americans now rate the economy negatively and 62 percent call it bad time to buy things - ratings that may seem gloomy, but are far better than their lows during the last recession and its hangover.

In the one positive gauge, 58 percent say their own finances are in good shape - one point better than its pre-recession average.

	Today	1990-93	1986-90
Negative on national economy	66	85	59
Negative on buying climate	62	74	61
Positive on personal finances	58	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is -3 among men but -22 among women; +18 in higher-income households but -44 in the lowest; -10 among whites but -23 among blacks; and +4 among people who have attended college but -36 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Sixty-six percent rate the economy negatively, down a point 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, up 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-two percent call this a bad time to buy things, down two points this week. It's averaged 65 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	66% neg	58% Pos	62% neg
1996 Average	68% neg	57% pos	65% 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
Best	50% 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 is done by ICR/AUS Consultants of Media, Pa. This week's results are based on 1,058 interviews in the month ending March 10 and have an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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.

ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online.

Analysis by Gary Langer. For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621.

03/10/96                      This    Last    4 Wks   3 Mo.   1 Yr.   12 Mo   12 Mo   12 Mo  
    Week   Week   Ago   Ago   Ago   High   Low   Avg

Group

GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	-13	-16	-18	-17	-14	-9	-21	-15
State of Economy	-32	-34	-36	-34	-30	-26	-38	-32
Personal Finances	16	14	12	10	12	22	4	13
Buying Climate	-24	-28	-30	-28	-24	-20	-36	-27

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	-3	-3	-7	-5	-4	4	-13	-3
Women	-22	-27	-27	-28	-23	-19	-33	-26

Age:

18 - 34	-10	-10	-15	-11	-13	-4	-19	-12
35 - 44	-17	-18	-21	-22	-12	4	-26	-15
45 - 54	-9	-13	-8	-18	-19	-3	-36	-17
55 - 64	-12	-20	-38	-7	-10	0	-40	-17
65 +	-15	-22	-12	-28	-17	2	-34	-19

Income:

Under \$15K	-44	-46	-50	-51	-58	-41	-61	-52
\$15K To \$24.9K	-30	-29	-31	-40	-29	-15	-48	-33
\$25K To \$39.9K	-14	-22	-24	-13	-8	-2	-29	-15
\$40K To \$49.9K	2	-4	-8	-4	11	11	-31	-3
Over \$50K	18	18	19	21	17	32	12	21

Region:

Northeast	-18	-21	-34	-25	-22	-13	-34	-23
Midwest	-3	-5	-14	-13	-1	11	-21	-6
South	-21	-24	-16	-12	-19	-9	-25	-17
West	-3	-7	-8	-21	-13	0	-23	-14

Race:

White	-10	-12	-13	-12	-7	-5	-15	-10
Black	-23	-37	-46	-45	-61	-23	-61	-43

Politics:

Republican	-2	-3	0	-1	-2	6	-10	-2
Democrat	-16	-23	-25	-19	-17	-11	-28	-20
Independent	-15	-15	-19	-24	-15	-11	-26	-18

Education:

< High School	-36	-39	-47	-41	-48	-30	-53	-43
High Sch. Grad.	-22	-24	-22	-25	-20	-15	-30	-23
College +	4	0	-3	-1	4	7	-6	2

Home:

Own	-6	-9	-11	-9	-8	-2	-15	-9
Rent	-30	-28	-32	-36	-30	-19	-38	-30

Marital Status:

Single	-17	-10	-12	-6	-18	3	-20	-10
Married	-6	-11	-10	-13	-5	-4	-18	-10
Sep/Wid/Div	-31	-35	-43	-43	-42	-21	-45	-37

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	-8	-8	-7	-10	-3	3	-14	-6
Part-Time	-8	-12	-35	-21	-30	-4	-35	-20
Not Employed	-20	-26	-33	-26	-24	-18	-35	-27