

## **Americans Split Over Who Gets Credit for the Economy**

Americans are split over whether President Clinton or the Republicans in Congress should get credit for the current economic boom.

Though Clinton has presided over the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, the public is just as likely to give credit to the Republicans in Congress. Thirty-seven percent say Clinton deserves more credit for current economic conditions; a similar number, 36 percent, say the Republicans do.

Responsible for Economic Conditions:	
Bill Clinton	37%
Republicans	36
Both	7
Neither	9

This split helps explain why Al Gore, who's in a tight race with George W. Bush for the presidency, is not being helped all that much by the soaring economy. An ABC News/Washington Post poll released over the weekend found Gore and Bush running about even in public trust to handle the economy. And previous ABC News polls have found that the public's ratings of the economy have little impact on who they support in the Gore-Bush race.

**GROUPS** – Partisan predispositions have a big impact on who gets credit for the economy. Democrats are more likely to credit Clinton; Republicans are more likely to say the Republicans in Congress. Independents are more evenly split, giving a slight nod to Clinton.

	Responsible for Economic Conditions:	
	Clinton	Republicans
Democrats	51%	34
Republicans	19	53
Independents	37	30

**CONFIDENCE** - Consumer confidence remained strong this week. Sixty-nine percent of Americans rate their own finances positively – just one-point off the record last reached in the beginning of the year. Even more, seventy-seven percent, say the national economy is in good shape, and 50 percent call it a good time to buy things.

Positive ratings:	----- Since 12/85 -----			
	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	77%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	69	70	42	56
Buying Climate	50	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +31 on its scale of +100 to -100, up 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	+31	
Last week	+29	
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	

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 +62 in higher-income households compared to -14 in the lowest; +52 among college graduates but -11 among high-school dropouts; +34 among whites but +15 among blacks; and +36 among men compared to +25 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	18	5
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-nine percent say excellent or good, up three points 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	69%	7	62	31	25	6
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, the same as 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%	4	46	50	38	12
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 1,047 interviews in the month ending March 12 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. The wildcard question on responsibility for the economy was conducted March 1-12 among 528 respondents; that result has a 4.5-point error margin. 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 Daniel Merkle.

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

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

03/12/00	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	-----							
GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	31	29	28	29	32	38	22	29
State of Economy	54	54	50	46	54	60	38	47
Personal Finances	38	32	32	32	34	40	28	34
Buying Climate	0	0	2	8	8	14	-4	5
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	36	32	35	41	41	45	30	37
Women	25	24	20	17	21	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	26	29	21	20	33	37	16	26
35 - 44	23	21	28	35	38	40	13	29
45 - 54	30	21	14	35	35	45	11	28
55 - 64	40	35	37	34	13	48	13	30

65 +	40	39	44	29	24	45	17	29
Income:								
Under \$15K	-14	-12	-21	-32	-13	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-1	-9	-1	4	2	26	-15	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	29	31	17	33	30	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	38	34	41	31	47	56	27	43
Over \$50K	62	60	59	64	67	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	21	20	33	41	33	48	20	32
Midwest	33	32	27	28	33	41	20	31
South	30	26	19	26	22	31	14	24
West	36	33	37	23	41	43	13	29
Race:								
White	34	30	33	35	36	43	26	33
Black	15	25	-4	-11	-2	25	-11	2
Politics:								
Republican	48	43	49	49	46	55	32	43
Democrat	26	25	28	25	29	38	15	27
Independent	24	22	17	21	28	29	13	22
Education:								
< High School	-11	-7	-1	-15	-4	9	-27	-9
High Sch. Grad.	18	15	11	23	27	32	8	20
College +	52	49	48	47	45	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	38	36	36	38	38	44	28	35
Rent	9	6	7	6	14	22	-3	10
Marital Status:								
Single	24	26	25	21	24	36	8	24
Married	37	33	34	36	41	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	8	10	5	9	-2	18	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	35	30	31	37	38	44	30	36
Part-Time	26	30	20	24	32	38	7	23
Not Employed	24	25	25	17	19	28	8	18

242. Who do you think is more responsible for current economic conditions - Bill Clinton or the Republicans in Congress?

3/12/00	Clinton	Republicans	Both	Neither	No opin.
	37	36	7	9	11

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