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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 3/16/97
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CONFIDENCE REBOUNDS

Consumer confidence advanced this week, reversing a monthlong slide from the 10-year peak it reached in February. Ratings of the buying climate, personal finances and the national economy all showed slight gains.

The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these three gauges, gained three points to -5 on its scale of +100 to -100. It hit +1 Feb. 9, its best since August 1986.

These ups and downs notwithstanding, confidence is marking its best year since the ABC/Money index began in 1986. It's averaged -4 so far this year, compared to past bests of -7 at this time in 1986 and 1989.

The index is far above its recession-depressed average of -30 from 1990-95, and even four points better than its pre-recession average, -9 from 1986-90.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-5
Feb. 9	+1
1997 average	-4
1996 average	-11
1990-95	-30
1986-90	-9
Full average	-20

GAUGES - This week 47 percent of Americans rate the national economy positively ("excellent" or "good"; very few ever call it "excellent"), up a point from last week. It hit a record 52 percent positive in December.

Fifty-six percent rate their own finances positively, also up a point; the record was 62 percent positive on Feb. 12 and once in 1987.

Thirty-nine percent rate the buying climate positively, up two points this week; while this gauge has lagged behind the others, it's the only one of the three that's now above its average for the year.

All three measures are far above their average from 1990-93, when faith in the economy was at its recession-inspired low point.

Positive ratings for...	Today	1990-93	1986-90
National economy	47	15	41
Buying climate	39	26	39
Personal finances	56	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence customarily lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +10 among men but -19 among women; 0 among whites but -31 among blacks; +36 in

higher-income households but -50 in the lowest; and +14 among people who have attended college but -35 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Fifty-three percent rate the economy negatively, down one point this week. ItUs averaged 51 percent negative this year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-90. The best, 52 percent positive, was Dec. 1, 1996. The worst, 93 percent negative, was in late 1991 and early 1992. The average for the life of the index is 68 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Fifty-six percent rate their finances positively, up one point this week. ItUs averaged 58 percent this 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 Feb. 12, 1997 and Dec. 20, 1987. The full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty-one percent call this a bad time to buy things, down two points this week. ItUs averaged 63 percent this 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	53% neg	56% pos	61% neg
1997 Average	51% neg	58% 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-now)	68% neg	54% pos	66% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg
Best	52% 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 by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa. This week's results are based on 1,039 interviews in the month ending March 16 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.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621. ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online.

03/16/97	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:								
Overall Index	-5	-8	-3	-2	-17	1	-17	-8
State of Economy	-6	-8	0	-4	-30	4	-30	-15
Personal Finances	12	10	18	20	8	24	8	15
Buying Climate	-22	-26	-26	-22	-28	-18	-30	-24

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	10	6	5	6	-6	10	-7	3
Women	-19	-19	-9	-10	-26	-5	-26	-17
Age:								
18 - 34	-10	-10	-7	-3	-13	-1	-23	-8
35 - 44	0	-8	-4	-5	-18	3	-21	-9
45 - 54	-7	-7	-9	6	-22	12	-27	-8
55 - 64	-4	-3	15	3	-13	17	-36	-7
65 +	0	-1	6	-3	-12	15	-18	-5
Income:								
Under \$15K	-50	-56	-44	-40	-56	-32	-58	-47
\$15K To \$24.9K	-32	-21	-12	-17	-36	-12	-40	-27
\$25K To \$39.9K	0	-5	-8	2	-13	5	-19	-8
\$40K To \$49.9K	3	-3	9	-4	-1	26	-10	7
Over \$50K	36	33	37	34	21	37	12	26
Region:								
Northeast	-12	-16	0	-5	-18	2	-26	-13
Midwest	0	-7	-2	-2	-5	10	-8	0
South	-9	-8	-4	-1	-23	2	-23	-9
West	4	4	-3	-1	-16	6	-23	-10
Race:								
White	0	-3	2	2	-13	7	-14	-4
Black	-31	-27	-16	-18	-27	-10	-51	-32
Politics:								
Republican	2	0	11	7	-1	17	-12	3
Democrat	-4	-4	1	7	-20	10	-22	-7
Independent	-11	-14	-13	-13	-23	-4	-25	-14
Education:								
< High School	-35	-41	-30	-23	-41	-20	-47	-36
High Sch. Grad.	-16	-14	-7	-10	-24	-4	-24	-15
College +	14	11	11	11	-1	16	-1	7
Home:								
Own	4	2	6	1	-11	10	-11	-1
Rent	-27	-27	-22	-11	-29	-11	-36	-25
Marital Status:								
Single	-8	-11	-6	-5	-17	0	-26	-11
Married	2	0	5	3	-9	10	-10	-2

Sep/Wid/Div	-26	-28	-28	-16	-40	-9	-40	-25
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	4	-1	4	8	-9	11	-9	1
Part-Time	-17	-16	-3	-14	-23	5	-29	-16
Not Employed	-13	-12	-10	-12	-24	-5	-29	-17