

ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 3/19/00

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 22, 2000

Confidence Down a Touch

Consumer confidence inched down a smidgen this week, and is now 10 points below the all-time high it reached in mid-January.

Nevertheless, historically speaking, confidence remains very strong. Seventy-five percent of Americans say the economy is in good shape and 67 percent rate their own finances positively - each within five points of its record high. Fifty percent also say it's good time to buy things, 12 points over the 14-year average.

Positive ratings:	----- Since 12/85 -----			
	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	75%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	67	70	42	56
Buying Climate	50	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +28 on its scale of +100 to -100, down three points from last week. The index has averaged +32 so far this year, four points above its record 1999 average. Its lifetime average, stunted by dismal levels in the early '90s, is only -11.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+28	
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 booming 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. The Federal Reserve raised interest rates yesterday, the fifth hike since June 1999, in an effort to slow the expansion and keep inflation in check.

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 +61 in higher-income households compared to -24 in the lowest; +48 among college

graduates but -14 among high-school dropouts; +31 among whites but +4 among blacks; and +32 among men compared to +23 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-five percent say excellent or good, down two points 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	75%	17	58	25	19	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-seven percent say excellent or good, down two 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	67%	7	60	33	24	9
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	36	14
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 19 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 Bobbi Jo Fuller.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

03/19/00	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:								
Overall Index	28	31	29	29	31	38	22	28
State of Economy	50	54	50	48	54	60	38	47
Personal Finances	34	38	32	30	32	40	28	34
Buying Climate	0	0	4	8	6	14	-4	4

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	32	36	38	41	44	45	30	37
Women	23	25	18	16	19	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	22	26	27	20	32	37	16	26
35 - 44	20	23	27	37	40	40	13	28
45 - 54	29	30	11	34	29	45	11	28
55 - 64	43	40	29	32	18	48	16	30
65 +	32	40	45	26	26	45	17	29
Income:								
Under \$15K	-24	-14	-22	-29	-19	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-3	-1	-6	6	1	26	-15	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	24	29	27	30	33	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	45	38	40	39	45	56	27	43
Over \$50K	61	62	59	61	65	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	21	21	27	38	34	48	20	32
Midwest	31	33	34	23	35	41	20	31
South	25	30	17	24	20	31	14	24
West	34	36	40	30	40	43	13	29
Race:								
White	31	34	34	34	34	43	26	33
Black	4	15	-5	-2	2	25	-11	2
Politics:								
Republican	41	48	48	52	48	55	32	42
Democrat	26	26	28	23	30	38	15	27
Independent	22	24	16	19	24	29	13	22
Education:								
< High School	-14	-11	4	-13	-7	9	-27	-9
High Sch. Grad.	18	18	8	26	29	32	8	20
College +	48	52	49	43	45	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	35	38	37	36	37	44	28	35
Rent	4	9	7	7	16	22	-3	10
Marital Status:								
Single	24	24	27	21	24	36	8	24
Married	33	37	33	35	40	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	6	8	6	8	-2	18	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	32	35	31	38	42	44	30	36
Part-Time	25	26	18	25	22	38	7	23
Not Employed	20	24	27	14	17	28	8	18