

## **Confidence Hits Four-Month Low**

Consumer confidence dropped this week to its lowest in four months, pushed by lower ratings of the buying climate and the overall economy alike. But Americans' ratings of their personal finances remain strong – near record levels.

While confidence is still high by historical standards, ratings of the buying climate have declined steadily in the last two months, coinciding with rising oil prices. Forty-nine percent now say it's a good time to buy things, down eight points from the record high in January and the fewest since October.

Positive ratings of the national economy also are their lowest of the year: Seventy-three percent say the economy is in good shape, down seven points from the record in January. But ratings of personal finances have held steady; 68 percent say their own finances are in good shape – near its record high, and close to where it's been all year.

	----- Since 12/85 -----			
Positive ratings:	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	73%	80	7	39
Personal Finances	68	70	42	56
Buying Climate	49	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +27 on its scale of +100 to -100, its lowest since November. Nonetheless, the index has averaged a stunning +31 so far this year, three points above its record 1999 average. Its lifetime average, stunted by dismal levels in the early '90s, is only -11.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+27	
Last week	+28	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record High
2000 average	+31	
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 +59 in higher-income households compared to -23 in the lowest; +49 among college

graduates but -13 among high-school dropouts; +30 among whites but -1 among blacks; and +30 among men compared to +22 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-three 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	73%	17	56	27	19	8
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-eight percent say excellent or good, up 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	68%	6	62	32	23	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? Forty-nine percent say excellent or good, down one point 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	49%	4	45	51	35	16
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 1,051 interviews in the month ending March 26 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>

03/26/00	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	27	28	31	29	31	38	22	28
State of Economy	46	50	54	50	54	60	38	47
Personal Finances	36	34	34	32	34	40	28	34
Buying Climate	-2	0	4	4	6	14	-4	4
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	30	32	36	41	40	45	30	36
Women	22	23	24	17	23	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	16	22	34	22	31	37	16	26
35 - 44	26	20	22	31	33	37	13	28
45 - 54	26	29	17	36	30	45	11	28
55 - 64	40	43	32	26	30	48	16	31
65 +	35	32	44	29	30	45	17	29
Income:								
Under \$15K	-23	-24	-14	-28	-13	-11	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-9	-3	-2	5	0	26	-15	1
\$25K To \$39.9K	22	24	29	32	33	38	8	25
\$40K To \$49.9K	51	45	41	37	56	56	27	43
Over \$50K	59	61	62	59	61	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	20	21	27	39	35	48	20	31
Midwest	31	31	35	25	34	41	20	31
South	22	25	21	20	21	31	14	24
West	32	34	39	37	40	43	13	29
Race:								
White	30	31	35	35	34	43	26	33
Black	-1	4	9	-8	10	25	-11	2
Politics:								
Republican	42	41	46	55	49	55	32	42
Democrat	28	26	25	25	34	38	15	27
Independent	16	22	26	20	22	29	13	22
Education:								
< High School	-13	-14	-5	-14	-5	9	-27	-9
High Sch. Grad.	13	18	15	26	28	32	8	20
College +	49	48	51	43	45	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	35	35	37	36	38	44	28	35
Rent	2	4	13	10	16	22	-3	10
Marital Status:								
Single	21	24	32	17	23	36	8	24
Married	32	33	35	36	38	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	7	6	7	10	10	18	-9	8
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	29	32	34	37	39	44	29	36
Part-Time	20	25	26	19	25	38	7	23
Not Employed	23	20	25	20	21	28	8	18

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