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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 4/6/97
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CONFIDENCE UNIMPRESSED
BY THE MARKET'S DECLINE

The stock market's decline hasn't fazed consumer confidence: it's up again this week to its best since early February, when public ratings of economic conditions reached their best in more than 10 years.

Sixty-one percent of Americans say their own finances are in good shape, one point from the record in weekly polls since late 1985. That's despite the market's drop of as much as eight percent from its highs early this year

Ratings of the economy and the buying climate also remain stronger than usual, and the ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these gauges, stands at a very healthy -1 on its scale of +100 to -100.

The index has gained seven points in the last month, a strong run up, and now is its highest since it reached +1 on Feb. 9. That, in turn, was its best since August 1986.

Despite some bumps confidence has been on a roll all year, averaging -4, its best so far in any year since the index began. Its current -1 compares to an average of -11 last year and a dismal -30 in recession-depressed 1990-95; it's even eight points better than its pre-recession average, -9 from 1986-90.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-1
March 9	-8
Feb. 9	+1
1997 average	-4
1996 average	-11
1990-95	-30
1986-90	-9
Full average	-20

The current level of consumer confidence reflects the kind of potentially inflationary economic exuberance the Federal Reserve moved to stem by notching up interest rates March 25. So far it seems that the markets have listened, but average Americans not. (Stocks fell sharply last week, though they've recovered some ground in the last few days.)

GAUGES - Forty percent call this a good time to spend money on things they want and need - not a majority, but more than usual; the 1986-97 average is 34 percent. The number who rate their own finances positively, 61 percent, is even farther above its long-term average, 54 percent.

Forty-seven percent rate the national economy positively ("excellent" or "good"; very few ever call it "excellent"), again, better than usual. Unlike the others, though, this gauge is slightly below 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	40	26	39
Personal finances	61	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence customarily lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +11 among men but -13 among women; +1 among whites but -18 among blacks; +32 in higher-income households but -41 in the lowest; and +14 among people who have attended college but -25 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, unchanged this week. ItUs averaged 52 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 - Sixty-one percent rate their finances positively, up one point this week. ItUs averaged 59 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 percent call this a bad time to buy things, down one point this week. ItUs averaged 62 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	61% pos	60% neg
1997 Average	52% neg	59% pos	62% 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 1,038 interviews in the month ending April 6 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.

04/06/97	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	-1	-3	-8	-3	-9	1	-14	-7
State of Economy	-6	-6	-8	-2	-18	4	-28	-14
Personal Finances	22	20	10	16	14	24	10	16
Buying Climate	-20	-22	-26	-24	-22	-18	-30	-24

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	11	11	6	10	4	11	-5	4
Women	-13	-14	-19	-16	-19	-5	-25	-17
Age:								
18 - 34	0	-4	-10	-1	-5	0	-23	-8
35 - 44	-1	1	-8	-4	-5	3	-21	-8
45 - 54	-10	-6	-7	-4	-21	12	-22	-7
55 - 64	1	5	-3	-14	-13	17	-36	-6
65 +	6	2	-1	1	-2	15	-18	-4
Income:								
Under \$15K	-41	-44	-56	-41	-50	-32	-58	-47
\$15K To \$24.9K	-20	-24	-21	-29	-35	-12	-40	-26
\$25K To \$39.9K	-2	1	-5	-6	-5	5	-19	-8
\$40K To \$49.9K	1	9	-3	2	11	26	-10	7
Over \$50K	32	34	33	37	25	37	12	27
Region:								
Northeast	-6	-8	-16	-5	-15	2	-26	-13
Midwest	3	4	-7	-3	8	10	-8	1
South	-9	-9	-8	-8	-12	2	-15	-8
West	10	7	4	3	-13	10	-23	-8
Race:								
White	1	2	-3	2	-4	7	-10	-3
Black	-18	-23	-27	-35	-41	-10	-51	-32
Politics:								
Republican	10	8	0	12	9	17	-12	3
Democrat	-4	-1	-4	-7	-12	10	-19	-6
Independent	-4	-8	-14	-10	-14	-4	-25	-13
Education:								
< High School	-25	-26	-41	-23	-39	-20	-47	-35

High Sch. Grad.	-11	-15	-14	-13	-10	-4	-22	-14
College +	14	15	11	10	5	17	1	8
Home:								
Own	5	7	2	3	-3	10	-7	0
Rent	-19	-24	-27	-17	-22	-11	-36	-24
Marital Status:								
Single	-3	-2	-11	-3	-4	1	-26	-11
Married	5	4	0	1	-3	10	-9	-2
Sep/Wid/Div	-22	-24	-28	-20	-32	-9	-38	-24
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	6	7	-1	6	2	11	-5	1
Part-Time	-8	-16	-16	-15	-19	5	-29	-16
Not Employed	-10	-11	-12	-14	-17	-5	-29	-16