

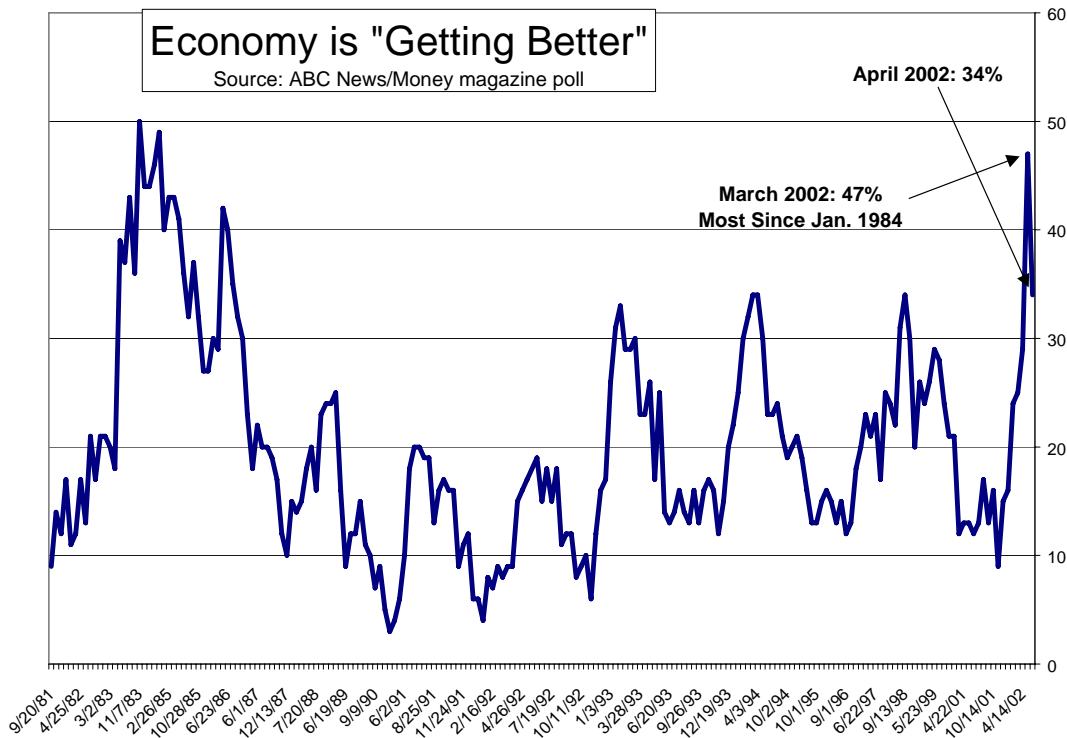
## Seven-Month Advance in Optimism Halts

Consumer optimism has stalled for the first time in the current recovery, with a drop – the first in seven months – in the number of Americans who say the economy’s on the mend.

Views of an improving economy, held by just nine percent last September, had gained through the winter and then surged last month, to 47 percent, the most in 18 years. This month, though, 34 percent say the economy’s getting better, a 13-point decline.

But that retreat does not indicate a return to economic pessimism – 26 percent say the economy’s getting worse, up six points this month but well below its level last fall. Rather, the largest group, 40 percent, says the economy’s holding steady.

And it’s steady at an improved level: Ratings of current economic conditions remain near their best of the year, above their depressed levels early this and late last year. The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index stands at +1 on its scale of +100 to –100, up from –13 at the start of 2002.



Economy is...

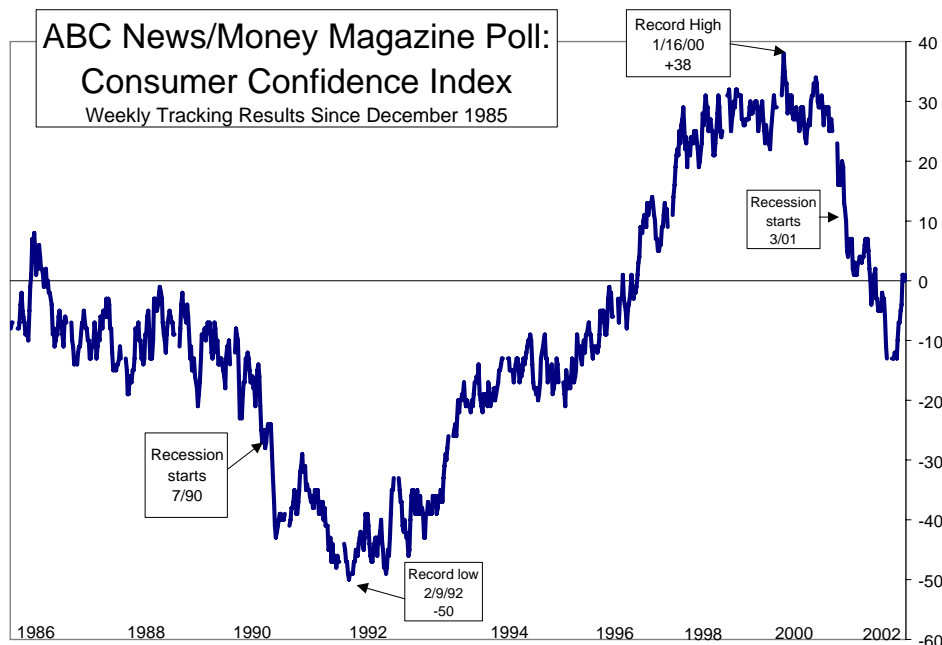
	Getting better	Getting worse	Staying same
4/14/02	34%	26	40
3/17/02	47	20	32
2/17/02	29	27	42
1/20/02	25	36	39
12/9/01	24	37	38
11/11/01	16	48	36
10/14/01	15	46	39
9/16/01	9	44	46

**CURRENT VIEWS** – The index is composed of ratings of the current economy, buying climate and personal finances. Today 45 percent say it’s a good time to buy things, and more, 63 percent, say their own finances are in good shape – both matching their highs of the year. Forty-four percent rate the national economy positively, up 13 points since January, albeit still vastly below the all-time high, 80 percent in January 2000.

	ABC News/Money magazine poll		
Positive ratings of:	4/14/02	1/6/02	16-yr. avg.
National economy	44%	31	42
Buying climate	45	43	39
Personal finances	63	56	57
Consumer Comfort Index	+1	-13	-7

**TREND** – The weekly index dropped throughout 2001, starting the year at +23 and finishing it at –13, then began recovering in mid-February this year. It’s been stable since a rare five-point advance the week of March 24, its largest surge since January 1999.

The index peaked at +38 on Jan. 16, 2000; its lowest was –50 on Feb. 9, 1992.

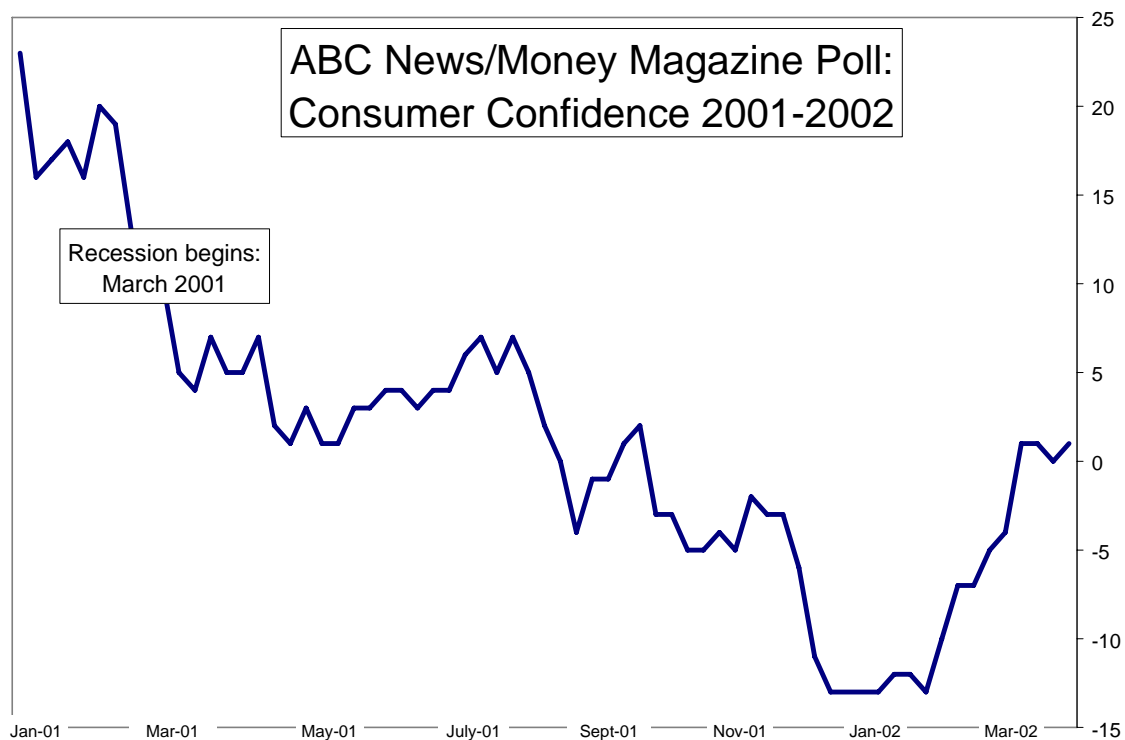


ABC/Money Index

Today	+ 1	
Last week	0	
Five weeks ago	- 5	
Nine weeks ago	-13	
2002 average	- 7	
2001 average	+ 4	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	- 8	

**GROUPS** – As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans. The index is +29 in higher-income households compared to -47 in the lowest, +9 among college graduates while -12 among high-school dropouts, +5 among whites but -18 among blacks and +9 among men while -6 among women.

Expectations show similar differences. Optimism is higher among better-educated and higher-income people. It also peaks among Republicans, and is lowest in the Northeast.



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

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Forty-four percent of Americans rate the nation's economy as excellent or good, unchanged from last week. The best was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

Pos. NET    Excel.    Good    Neg. NET    Not good    Poor

This week	44	1	43	56	42	14
Avg. since 12/85	42	4	38	58	39	19

**PERSONAL FINANCES** – Sixty-three percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, up one point from last week. The best was 70 percent, set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January 2000. The worst rating was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	63	6	57	37	27	10
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	53	43	30	12

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Forty-five percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things they want and need, up one point from last week. The best was 57 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	45	3	42	55	39	16
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	36	61	41	21

**METHODOLOGY** - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index represents a rolling average based on telephone interviews with a random sample of about 1,000 adults nationwide each month. This week's results are based on 1,009 interviews in the month ending April 14, 2002 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. The question on expectations was conducted among 506 respondents April 3-14, 2002; that result has a 4.5-point error margin. Field work 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 Dalia Sussman.

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

Media contact: Todd Polkes, (212) 456-4586

04/14/02	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	0	-4	-13	5	7	-13	-2
State of Economy	-12	-12	-18	-36	6	10	-38	-13
Personal Finances	26	24	22	14	28	32	12	23
Buying Climate	-10	-12	-16	-18	-20	-4	-24	-15
	-----							

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	9	6	6	-5	11	13	-6	5
Women	-6	-5	-12	-21	0	6	-21	-8
Age:								
18 - 34	10	7	-5	-8	14	21	-8	4
35 - 44	-8	-3	-1	-10	6	9	-16	-2
45 - 54	-3	-5	-3	-7	3	10	-22	-5
55 - 64	8	7	3	-30	-12	20	-30	-3
65 +	-5	-5	-9	-20	3	9	-22	-8
Income:								
Under \$15K	-47	-43	-41	-50	-28	-22	-54	-40
\$15K To \$24.9K	-26	-31	-19	-28	-25	-14	-40	-26
\$25K To \$39.9K	1	1	-17	-16	-9	11	-24	-8
\$40K To \$49.9K	4	3	5	-8	18	18	-14	4
Over \$50K	29	27	25	13	32	39	3	23
Region:								
Northeast	2	-3	-9	-17	-9	9	-17	-4
Midwest	-5	-4	-5	-9	10	13	-15	0
South	1	1	-1	-9	3	8	-13	-1
West	7	7	-2	-20	17	17	-21	-3
Race:								
White	5	5	4	-7	11	12	-8	3
Black	-18	-26	-51	-42	-31	-8	-51	-30
Politics:								
Republican	34	31	17	23	26	34	5	21
Democrat	-14	-15	-19	-29	-2	2	-29	-13
Independent	-5	-4	-2	-18	-2	4	-19	-6
Education:								
< High School	-12	-15	-31	-49	-29	-12	-49	-31
High Sch. Grad.	-4	-9	-11	-17	-2	6	-18	-7
College +	9	12	10	2	20	26	-5	11
Home:								
Own	9	7	4	-8	8	16	-10	4
Rent	-20	-18	-23	-27	-1	-1	-27	-16
Marital Status:								
Single	-2	-5	-8	-14	2	15	-19	-2
Married	7	7	3	-6	13	17	-7	4
Sep/Wid/Div	-16	-19	-29	-40	-18	-10	-42	-25
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	10	12	6	-2	10	19	-4	8
Part-Time	7	0	9	-15	1	11	-15	-3
Not Employed	-13	-15	-21	-27	-1	-1	-28	-14

1. Do you think the nation's economy is getting better, getting worse or staying the same?

	Getting Better	Getting Worse	Staying the Same	No Opinion
4/14/02	34	26	40	0
3/17/02	47	20	32	1
2/17/02	29	27	42	2
1/20/02	25	36	39	1
12/9/01	24	37	38	1
11/11/01	16	48	36	1
10/14/01	15	46	39	0
9/16/01	9	44	46	1
8/12/01	16	46	38	0
7/15/01	13	40	46	0

6/17/01	17	45	38	1
5/20/01	13	47	39	0
4/22/01	12	44	44	0
3/25/01	13	49	37	1
2/11/01	13	45	41	1
1/14/01	12	40	47	1
7/09/00	21	28	50	0
9/12/99	21	23	56	1
5/23/99	24	26	49	1
1/31/99	28	21	50	0
1/03/99	29	21	47	2

Call for full trend.

\*\*\*END\*\*\*