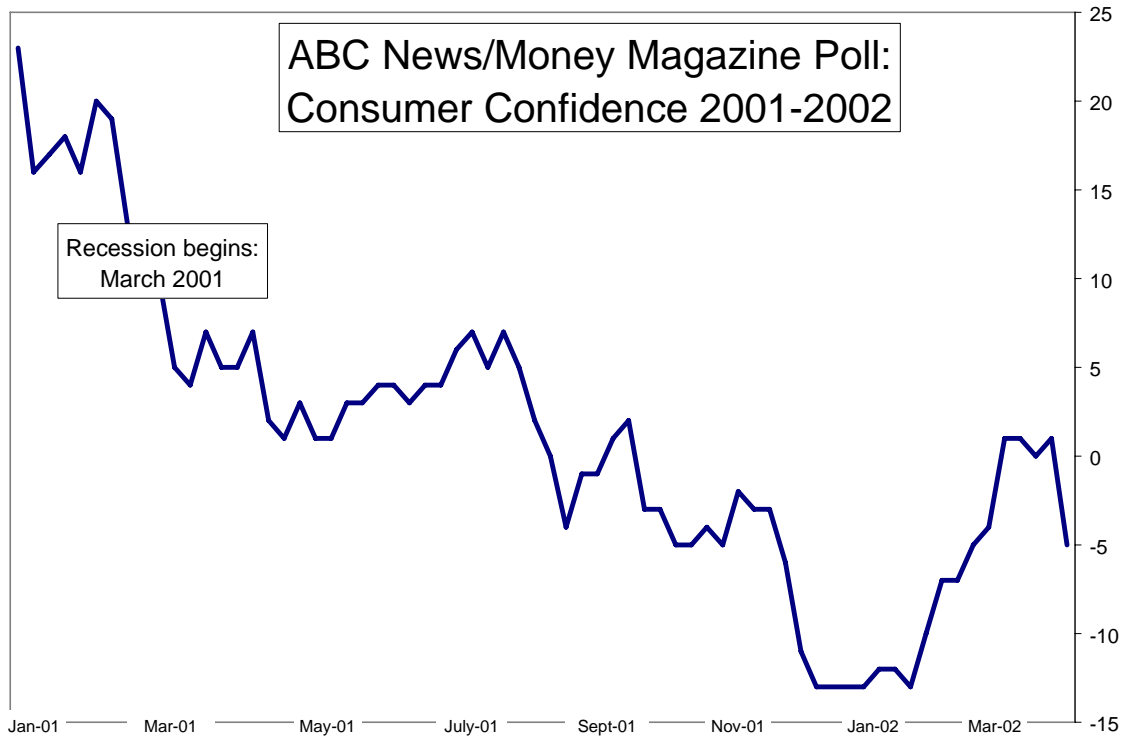


## Confidence Sustains Sharp Hit

Consumer confidence dropped sharply this week, its steepest decline since just before the start of the 2001 recession - and one of its steepest on record in 16 years of weekly polls.

The ABC News/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on public views of current economic conditions, fell by six points - only its fifth drop this big in nearly 850 weeks of polls since December 1985. The last drop of this size was on Feb. 25, 2001; the recession began in March.

The decline comes only a month after a rare five-point rise in the index, indicating some volatility in consumer views. Last month's surge in current sentiment followed a steep improvement in consumer expectations; this week's fall in confidence follows a decline in consumer expectations, reported in last week's ABC/Money poll.



Before this week's fall consumers seemed to be shaking off steadily increasing gasoline prices, which in the past have had a negative impact on confidence. But gas price hikes - up 21 percent this year and 12 percent in just the last month - may have taken their toll.

There's also continuing unrest in the Middle East, Iraq's threat of an oil embargo and the stock market's still-uneven footing.

The Consumer Comfort Index now stands at -5 on its scale of +100 to -100, down from +1 last week. It's back to its level just before the March advance.

The index is composed of ratings of the current economy, buying climate and personal finances. All three declined this week. Forty-one percent of Americans rate the national economy positively, down three points; 60 percent say their own finances are in good shape, also down three points; and 41 percent say it's a good time to buy things, down four points.

	ABC News/Money magazine poll			
Positive ratings of:	4/21/02	4/14/02	1/6/02	16-yr. avg.
National economy	41%	44	31	42
Buying climate	41	45	43	39
Personal finances	60	63	56	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-5	+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 advanced five points the week of March 24, its largest surge since January 1999, and then held steady for a month - until this week's drop.

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

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	- 5	
Last week	+ 1	
Ten 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 +20 in higher-income households compared to -46 in the lowest, +6 among college graduates while -31 among high-school dropouts, 0 among whites but -32 among blacks and +3 among men while -12 among women.

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

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

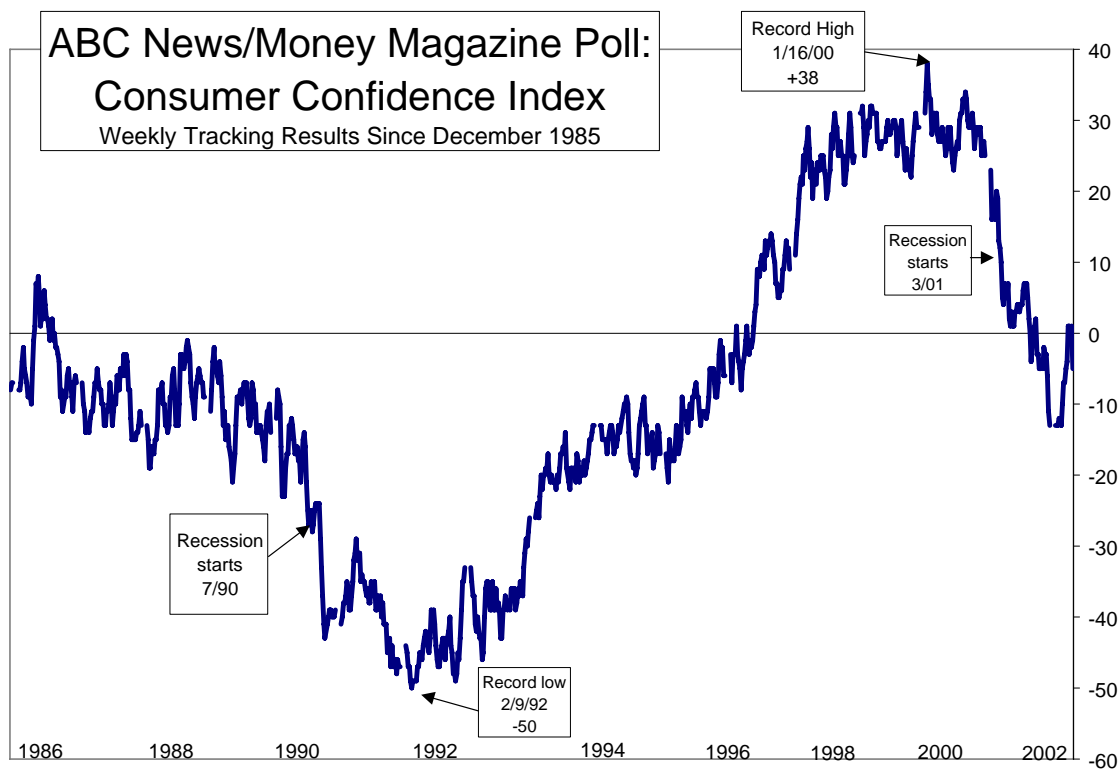
	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	41	1	40	59	44	15
Avg. since 12/85	42	4	38	58	39	19

**PERSONAL FINANCES** - Sixty percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, down three points 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	60	6	54	40	30	10
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	53	43	30	12

**BUYING CLIMATE** - Forty-one percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things they want and need, down four points 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	41	2	39	59	41	18
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 1,000 interviews in the month ending April 21, 2002 and have an error margin of plus or minus

three percentage points. 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

04/21/02	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	-5	1	1	-13	7	7	-13	-2
State of Economy	-18	-12	-12	-34	10	10	-38	-14
Personal Finances	20	26	24	16	28	32	12	23
Buying Climate	-18	-10	-10	-20	-18	-4	-24	-15
-----								
OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	3	9	6	-6	12	13	-6	5
Women	-12	-6	-5	-17	2	6	-21	-8
Age:								
18 - 34	7	10	-4	-5	14	21	-8	4
35 - 44	-17	-8	3	-8	6	9	-17	-3
45 - 54	-9	-3	3	-10	10	10	-22	-5
55 - 64	1	8	20	-29	-7	20	-30	-3
65 +	-11	-5	-11	-20	-2	9	-22	-8
Income:								
Under \$15K	-46	-47	-43	-47	-26	-22	-54	-40
\$15K To \$24.9K	-29	-26	-23	-37	-35	-14	-40	-26
\$25K To \$39.9K	-8	1	-6	-18	-2	11	-24	-8
\$40K To \$49.9K	5	4	2	-3	17	18	-14	3
Over \$50K	20	29	29	16	36	39	3	23
Region:								
Northeast	2	2	-6	-10	-6	9	-17	-4
Midwest	-9	-5	3	-14	12	13	-15	-1
South	-4	1	-2	-12	4	8	-13	-1
West	-9	7	8	-13	17	17	-21	-3
Race:								
White	0	5	7	-7	12	12	-8	3
Black	-32	-18	-42	-36	-29	-8	-51	-30
Politics:								
Republican	27	34	28	17	24	34	5	21
Democrat	-18	-14	-15	-25	-2	2	-29	-13

Independent	-9	-5	-3	-15	-1	4	-19	-6
Education:								
< High School	-31	-12	-20	-48	-26	-12	-49	-31
High Sch. Grad.	-8	-4	-7	-15	3	6	-18	-7
College +	6	9	13	2	19	26	-5	11
Home:								
Own	3	9	8	-9	10	16	-10	4
Rent	-26	-20	-20	-21	-3	-3	-27	-17
Marital Status:								
Single	-4	-2	-10	-6	4	15	-19	-2
Married	-2	7	9	-6	17	17	-7	4
Sep/Wid/Div	-17	-16	-23	-41	-26	-10	-42	-25
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	4	10	12	-2	15	19	-4	8
Part-Time	-5	7	7	-8	2	11	-15	-3
Not Employed	-18	-13	-18	-28	-5	-5	-28	-15

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