

SURVEY#: 507 DATE: 2/06/96 TO 9/09/99 #INT: 1 GEN USA
ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 5/11/97
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 p.m. Wednesday , May 14, 1997

Consumers Remain Steady This Week

This is not only the best year for consumer attitudes since the start of the ABC News/Money consumer index, so far it's the steadiest one as well.

Since January, each week's index results have been within two percentage points of each other in all but three of 19 weeks. That's the least annualized flux in week-to-week results since the index began in 1985.

Ratings of the economy, one of three components of the index, are most responsible for this overall stability. Though rarely positive in its history, this year the economy rating has consistently shown just under half the public positive about the nation's fiscal health and just over half, negative. Opinion has ranged in a narrow band of 46 percent positive to 51 percent positive since January. This week 49 percent give the economy a good rating, while 51 percent are nay-sayers.

These numbers compare to the average of 32 percent positive, 68 percent negative over the lifetime of the index, and the 15 percent positive, 85 negative during the last recession.

JOB LOSS FEARS DOWN - These stable and relatively positive views of the economy are reflected in another result this week: Fears of job loss are now half those associated with the last two recessions.

Only 13 percent of working people say it's likely they will lose their jobs in the next year, tying a record low last recorded in December 1990, ironically when the last recession had just finished its fourth month. During the more severe recession of 1982, the number fearing job loss had already reached 24 percent at roughly the same point. And during the hangover period that followed the official end of the 1990-91 recession, the number rose nearly as high, to 22 percent by December 1991.

THIS WEEK'S INDEX - The index, based on views of personal finances, the economy and the buying climate, stands at -2 on its scale of +100 to -100 this week, down a scant point from last week and still within striking distance of the over 10-year high of +1 recorded a month ago.

Its current level, underlined by the aforementioned narrow band of movement so far this year, is a significant seven points above its average -9 in the second half of the 1980s and a distant 28 points from its dismal -30 average from 1990-95.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-2
1997 average	-3
1996 average	-11
1990-95	-30
1986-90	-9
Full average	-20

GAUGES - The economy measure, unchanged this week, has hit 49 percent positive five other times this year and has been as high as 51 percent positive once (Feb. 9).

The other two measures dropped a point this week.

A month ago 63 percent of Americans rated their own finances positively, the most ever in weekly ABC/Money polls since December 1985. This week 58 percent are positive about their pocketbooks, still a healthy majority and a point above its pre-recession average.

This week 40 percent call it a good time to spend money on things they want and need - down a point from the past four weeks, but well above the index's

lifetime average of 34 percent and its recession/aftermath average of just 27 percent.

All three ABC/Money measures are far above their averages 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	49	15	41
Buying climate	40	27	39
Personal finances	58	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence customarily lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +13 among men, but -14 among women; +1 among whites, but -20 among blacks; +36 in higher-income households, but -35 in the lowest; and +14 among people who have attended college, but -33 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Fifty-one percent rate the economy negatively, the same as last week. It's averaged 52 percent 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 - Fifty-eight percent rate their finances positively, down a point. It's 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 full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty percent call this a bad time to buy things, up a point this week. It's averaged 61 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	51% neg.	58% pos	60% neg
1997 Average	52% neg	59% pos	61% 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	63% 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 1,033 interviews in the month ending May 11 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. The results of the question on job loss represent a sub-group from a sample about 500 interviews completed in the two weeks ending May 11 and have an error margin of 4.5 percent 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 Jeff Alderman.

For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621. ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online (the AOL keywords are "ABC Polls") and on ABC News' new internet site, ABCNEWS.COM.

Here are the full results:

124. How likely do you think it is that you will be laid off or lose your job in the next year? (BASE: EMPLOYED PEOPLE)

	NET	LIKELY		NET	UNLIKELY		No Opin.
		Very	Somewhat		Very	Somewhat	
*5/11/97	13	3	10	86	62	24	1
6/27/93	21	6	15	78	60	18	1
3/22/92	17	7	9	81	73	8	2
2/2/92	19	6	13	80	61	19	1
12/15/91	22	7	14	78	55	23	1
10/29/91	18	10	8	81	64	17	1
10/21/91	15	5	10	83	67	16	2
6/2/91	19	9	10	80	62	18	4
12/2/90	13	6	7	86	72	14	2
3/11/90	16	8	8	82	73	9	2
10/26/87	19	6	13	81	65	16	0
2/8/87	19	10	9	79	59	20	3
6/1/82	24	12	11	75	60	15	1

* latest results reflect a wording change in last two response categories.

Instead of "very" or "somewhat unlikely," "not at all likely" and "not very likely" were used in error. This slight change probably did not effect the results relative to previous trend in any measurable way.

05/11/97	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	-2	-1	1	1	-14	1	-14	-6
State of Economy	-2	-2	-6	2	-26	4	-28	-12
Personal Finances	16	18	26	24	14	26	10	17
Buying Climate	-20	-18	-18	-22	-30	-18	-30	-23

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	13	15	14	9	-5	15	-5	5
Women	-14	-15	-11	-5	-20	-5	-25	-16
Age:								
18 - 34	-2	1	5	-8	-11	5	-23	-7
35 - 44	3	5	-1	3	-14	5	-21	-7
45 - 54	0	2	-7	-4	-19	12	-22	-6
55 - 64	-3	-6	-2	17	-12	17	-36	-6
65 +	-8	-10	12	15	-15	15	-15	-3
Income:								
Under \$15K	-35	-44	-50	-40	-48	-32	-58	-46
\$15K To \$24.9K	-22	-20	-8	-16	-33	-8	-40	-25
\$25K To \$39.9K	-6	3	3	3	-15	5	-19	-7
\$40K To \$49.9K	8	15	2	15	-8	26	-10	7
Over \$50K	36	31	29	37	21	37	12	27
Region:								
Northeast	-5	1	-3	2	-26	2	-26	-11
Midwest	5	5	5	2	-8	10	-8	1
South	0	0	-6	2	-7	2	-15	-8
West	-8	-10	11	0	-17	11	-23	-7
Race:								
White	1	3	5	7	-10	7	-10	-2
Black	-20	-17	-24	-24	-27	-10	-48	-30
Politics:								
Republican	9	13	13	17	0	17	-12	4
Democrat	-7	-3	2	1	-10	10	-19	-6
Independent	-6	-9	-3	-7	-25	-3	-25	-12
Education:								
< High School	-33	-31	-13	-25	-42	-13	-47	-34
High Sch. Grad.	-7	-6	-7	-5	-17	-4	-22	-13
College +	14	13	12	15	1	17	1	9
Home:								
Own	2	3	8	10	-4	10	-7	1
Rent	-13	-13	-18	-19	-34	-11	-36	-23
Marital Status:								
Single	3	3	-2	-6	-16	3	-26	-9
Married	3	5	7	10	-8	10	-9	-1
Sep/Wid/Div	-23	-25	-19	-19	-31	-9	-32	-23
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	8	12	7	6	-3	12	-5	2

Part-Time	-10	-6	-2	5	-12	5	-29	-15
Not Employed	-13	-17	-7	-6	-29	-5	-29	-15

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