

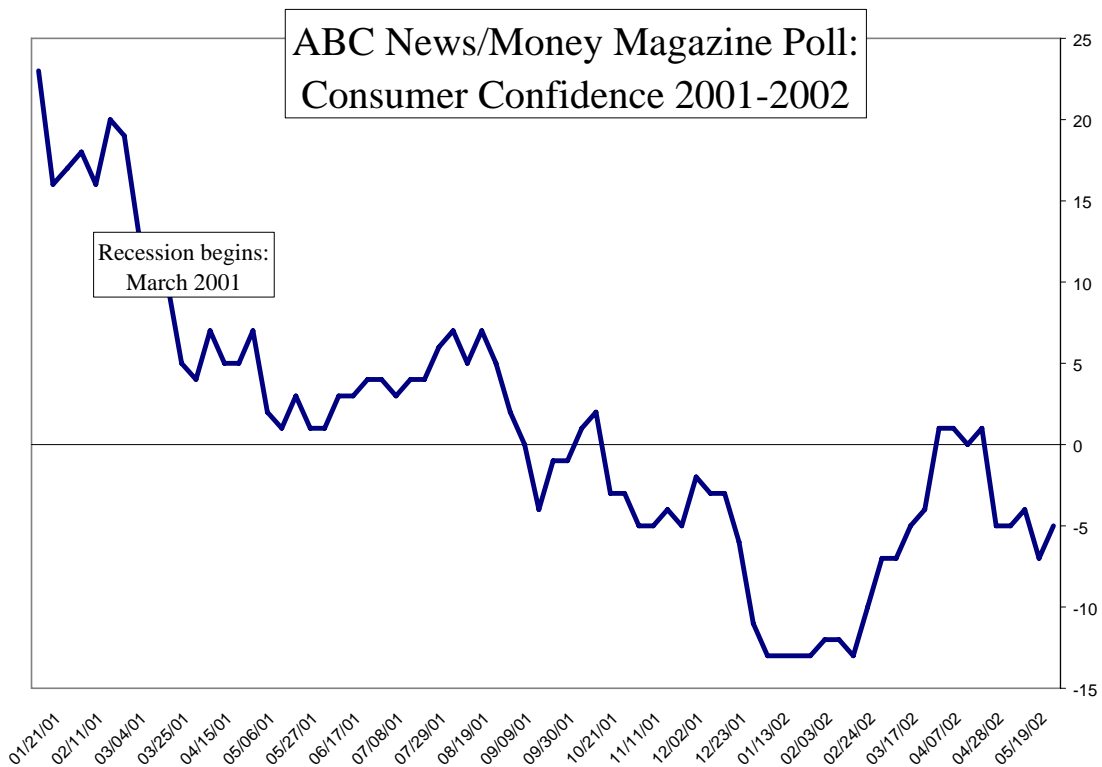
## Consumers Continue to Hold Middle Ground

Consumers remain on the fence this week in their ratings of economic conditions – more positive than this winter’s lows, but still off their early-spring highs.

The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on gauges of current economic conditions, stands at -5 on its scale of +100 to -100, up two points this week. It’s been better this year, but it’s also been worse: The index was as low as -13 early in the year, then rallied to +1 in late March. It fell again late last month.

At -5 this week, it’s also in the midrange of 16 years of weekly polls: 43 points below its peak, but 45 points better than its all-time low. Its 16-year average is -8.

In the index’s individual gauges, 41 percent of Americans say the economy’s in good shape, and as many call it a good time to spend money. Positive ratings of personal finances are far better, at 61 percent.

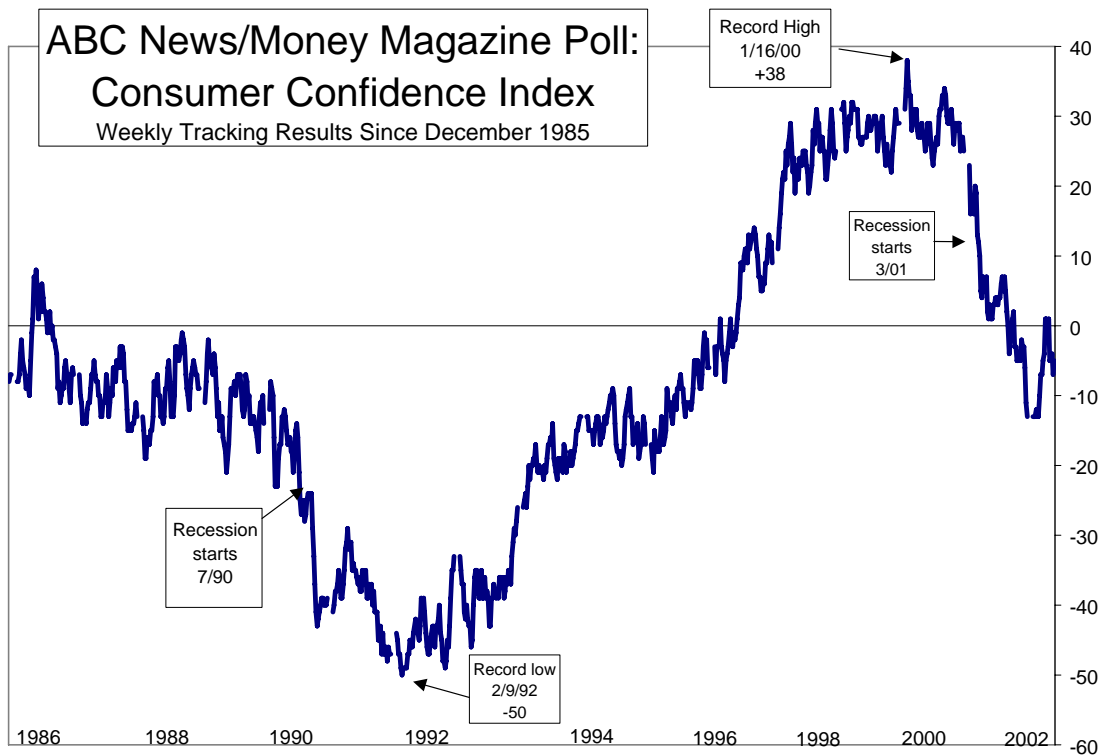


ABC News/Money magazine poll				
Positive ratings of:	5/19	4/14	2/10	16-yr. avg.
National economy	41%	44	32	42
Buying climate	41	45	40	39
Personal finances	61	63	59	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-5	+1	-13	-8

**TREND** – The weekly ABC/Money 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, held steady for a month, and then dropped six points the week of April 21 – its steepest decline since just before the start of the recession.

The index peaked at +38 on Jan. 16, 2000; its lowest was -50 on Feb. 9, 1992. It's averaged -7 this year.

ABC/Money Index		
Today	- 5	
Last week	- 7	
2002 high	+ 1	
2002 low	-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 +22 in higher-income households compared to -43 in the lowest, +5 among college graduates while -33 among high-school dropouts, +1 among whites but -38 among blacks and +1 among men while -9 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, up one point from last week. The best was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

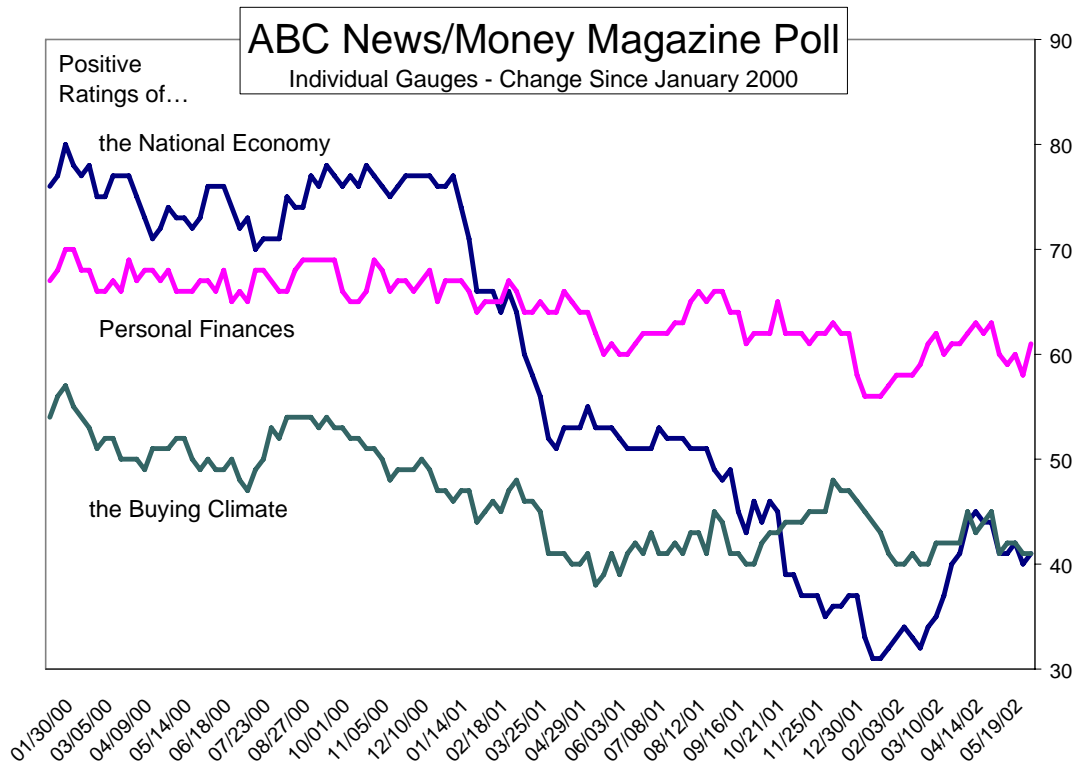
	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	41	2	39	59	46	13
Avg. since 12/85	42	4	38	58	39	19

**PERSONAL FINANCES** – Sixty-one percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, up 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	61	6	55	39	28	11
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, the same as 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	3	38	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 1,024 interviews in the month ending May 19, 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>

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05/19/02	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	-----							
GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	-5	-7	-5	-10	1	7	-13	-3
State of Economy	-18	-20	-18	-32	4	6	-38	-16
Personal Finances	22	16	20	22	20	32	12	23
Buying Climate	-18	-18	-18	-20	-22	-4	-22	-15
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	1	-3	3	1	9	13	-6	4
Women	-9	-11	-12	-19	-6	6	-21	-8
Age:								
18 - 34	5	1	7	0	2	21	-8	4
35 - 44	-2	-7	-17	-16	7	9	-17	-3
45 - 54	-9	-8	-9	-12	-5	4	-22	-6
55 - 64	-1	-6	1	-10	6	20	-30	-3
65 +	-22	-23	-11	-17	-4	9	-23	-9
Income:								
Under \$15K	-43	-47	-46	-54	-40	-23	-54	-42
\$15K To \$24.9K	-31	-37	-29	-31	-34	-14	-37	-25
\$25K To \$39.9K	-13	-16	-8	-4	-8	11	-24	-9
\$40K To \$49.9K	4	9	5	-2	6	15	-14	3
Over \$50K	22	19	20	10	25	39	3	22
Region:								
Northeast	-16	-10	2	-9	-9	9	-17	-4
Midwest	3	-2	-9	-9	6	13	-15	-2
South	-4	-9	-4	-5	2	8	-13	-2
West	-3	-7	-9	-17	4	9	-21	-4
Race:								

White	1	-1	0	-5	6	12	-8	2
Black	-38	-48	-32	-43	-27	-8	-51	-31
Politics:								
Republican	19	18	27	9	24	34	5	21
Democrat	-18	-20	-18	-23	-5	2	-29	-14
Independent	-9	-11	-9	-7	-8	4	-19	-7
Education:								
< High School	-33	-41	-31	-34	-34	-12	-49	-32
High Sch. Grad.	-5	-9	-8	-4	-6	6	-18	-8
College +	5	5	6	-5	18	26	-5	10
Home:								
Own	2	0	3	-5	9	16	-10	3
Rent	-20	-24	-26	-19	-17	-6	-28	-18
Marital Status:								
Single	0	-7	-4	-9	-6	15	-19	-2
Married	-1	-4	-2	-1	8	12	-7	3
Sep/Wid/Div	-21	-20	-17	-38	-19	-10	-42	-24
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	6	4	4	0	9	19	-4	7
Part-Time	7	-9	-5	-6	3	11	-15	-3
Not Employed	-22	-22	-18	-22	-11	-5	-28	-15

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