

Better Off Under Clinton?

Americans by a 20-point margin say they've become better off rather than worse off under Bill Clinton's presidency, a level that nearly matches Ronald Reagan's record on prosperity.

Al Gore recycled a version of Reagan's famous question as he kicked off his "Progress and Prosperity Tour" this week, asking voters, "Are you better off than you were eight years ago?" In this poll 34 percent say they are indeed better off than when Clinton took office, while 14 percent say they're worse off.

By contrast, just 12 percent felt better off in early 1994, before the economic recovery took hold.

More Americans felt better off after Reagan's presidency, 42 percent; but a few more, 18 percent, also felt worse off (the positive margin was 24 points). George Bush's rating on this measure was far worse – fatal, in fact, to his re-election effort.

	Better off	Worse off	Same	Better-Worse margin
Clinton 6/00	34%	14	50	+20
Clinton 2/94	12%	17	71	-5
Bush 6/92	19%	32	49	-13
Reagan 1/89	42%	18	39	+24
(Full trend below)				

Gore's hoping the economy will boost his candidacy for president, but so far he hasn't been able to capitalize on it. An ABC News/Washington Post poll this week found that Americans narrowly pick George W. Bush over Gore, 46-41 percent, as the candidate they better trust to handle the nation's economy. Gore hasn't led in this measure since it was first asked last fall.

GROUPS – Younger Americans are more likely to say they've fared better under Clinton. Among 18- to 34-year-olds, four in 10 say they're better off, just eight percent worse. Among people over age 64, however, just two in 10 are better off, and another two in 10 say they're worse off.

Not surprisingly, higher-income Americans are also more apt to say they're better off.

	Better off	Worse off	Same	Better-worse margin
Age 18-34	40%	8	49	+32
65+	21%	21	58	0

CONFIDENCE – Separately, this ABC News/Money magazine poll finds consumer confidence this week slipping further below its January high, but still within the narrow band it's occupied the last several months.

While off its peak, confidence is quite strong by historical standards. Seventy-four percent of Americans say the economy is in good shape, 65 percent rate their own finances positively and 50 percent say it's a good time to buy things.

Positive ratings:	Today	----- Since 12/85 -----		
		Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	74%	80	7	40
Personal Finances	65	70	42	57
Buying Climate	50	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +26 on its scale of +100 to -100, down three points from last week. The index peaked at +38 on Jan.16, but has ranged from +25 to +29 since mid-March. Its lifetime average, depressed by recession in the early 1990s, is just -11.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+26	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
2000 average	+29	
1999 average	+28	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-11	

Call the ABC News Polling Unit, ext. 2621, for a chart tracking the index over time.

GROUPS - As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +58 in higher-income households compared to -27 in the lowest, +45 among college graduates but -19 among high-school dropouts, +31 among whites but +9 among blacks and +30 among men compared to +21 among women.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- The poll asks: Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor? Seventy-four percent say excellent or good, down two points from last week. The record, 80 percent, was set on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst rating was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	74%	14	60	26	19	7
Avg. since 12/85	40	4	36	60	40	20

PERSONAL FINANCES - The poll asks: Would you describe the state of your own personal finances these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor? Sixty-five percent say excellent or good, down three points from last week. The record, 70 percent, was set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	65%	7	58	35	23	12
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	31	13

BUYING CLIMATE - The poll asks: Considering the cost of things today and your own personal finances, would you say now is an excellent time, a good time, a not-so-good time or a poor time to buy the things you want and need? Fifty percent say excellent or good, up one point from last week. The record, 57 percent, was set Jan. 16, 2000. The worst rating, 20 percent, was set in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	50%	4	45	50	34	16
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	41	21

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. This week's results are based on 1,035 interviews in the week ending June 11 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. The question on personal financial status during Clinton's presidency was conducted May 31-June 11 among 516 respondents; that result has a 4.5-point error margin. Fieldwork 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.

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

06/11/00	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	26	29	26	31	29	38	22	28
State of Economy	48	52	46	54	44	60	38	47
Personal Finances	30	36	34	38	40	40	28	34

Buying Climate	0	-2	-2	0	4	14	-4	4

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	30	32	35	36	34	45	30	36
Women	21	25	18	25	24	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	28	30	27	26	27	37	16	26
35 - 44	21	26	22	23	31	37	13	27
45 - 54	38	34	38	30	27	45	11	29
55 - 64	18	24	27	40	39	48	16	30
65 +	19	25	14	40	26	45	14	28
Income:								
Under \$15K	-27	-22	-25	-14	-19	-12	-42	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-2	8	6	-1	3	26	-11	2
\$25K To \$39.9K	26	30	27	29	27	33	8	24
\$40K To \$49.9K	33	34	29	38	43	60	26	41
Over \$50K	58	58	57	62	57	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	34	37	36	21	27	48	20	32
Midwest	18	24	32	33	41	41	18	30
South	22	25	20	30	20	31	14	23
West	32	31	20	36	32	43	13	28
Race:								
White	31	35	33	34	33	43	26	33
Black	9	7	-10	15	10	25	-15	0
Politics:								
Republican	40	41	40	48	39	55	32	42
Democrat	24	30	24	26	28	38	15	27
Independent	22	23	25	24	25	29	13	21
Education:								
< High School	-19	-15	-9	-11	-4	9	-27	-11
High Sch. Grad.	18	21	15	18	23	32	8	19
College +	45	48	45	52	45	53	38	47
Home:								
Own	37	38	32	38	37	44	28	35
Rent	2	4	9	9	5	22	-3	9
Marital Status:								
Single	24	26	25	24	20	36	8	24
Married	33	37	32	37	35	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	2	3	2	8	14	17	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	36	36	32	35	37	44	29	36
Part-Time	20	29	29	26	18	38	7	23
Not Employed	14	19	17	24	20	28	8	18

245. Would you say you, yourself are better off financially than you were when Bill Clinton became president, not as well off, or in about the same shape as then financially?

	Better off	Not as well off	About the same	No opin.
CLINTON				
6/11/00	34	14	50	2
7/19/98	30	15	52	3
3/1/98	32	9	57	1
6/23/96	29	22	49	0
2/27/94	12	17	71	*

BUSH*

8/9/92	22	32	45	1
6/7/92	19	32	49	*
3/11/92	20	33	46	1
2/2/92	19	31	49	*
10/21/91	20	27	53	1
3/4/91	19	18	63	1
REAGAN**				
1/16/89	42	18	39	1
1/18/87	37	23	40	1
9/8/86	41	20	39	1

*"...in 1989 when Bush became..."

** "...in 1981 when Reagan became..."

END