

Ratings of the National Economy Slip

Americans' ratings of the national economy dropped to an eight-month low this week, amid signs of a slowing economy.

Though overall consumer confidence moved up a notch, one element of confidence – ratings of the national economy – slipped to 70 percent positive. While far better than usual, that's its lowest since November 1999, and 10 points below January's record high.

Ratings of the buying climate, similarly, are eight points below their January high. But, given rising incomes, Americans' ratings of their personal finances remain strong: Sixty-eight percent say their finances are in good shape, just two points off the record.

Positive ratings:	Today	----- Highest	Since 12/85	Lowest	----- Average
National Economy	70%	80		7	40
Personal Finances	68	70		42	57
Buying Climate	49	57		20	38

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +25 on its scale of +100 to -100, up two points from last week. The index rose explosively in 1998 and 1999, but has lost steam since peaking at +38 on Jan.16. Its lifetime average, depressed by recession in the early 1990s, is -11.

	ABC/Money	Index
Today	+25	
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 +56 in higher-income households compared to -30 in the lowest, +41 among college graduates but -12 among high-school dropouts, +27 among whites but +4 among blacks and +35 among men compared to +14 among women.

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

Group

GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	25	23	29	27	28	38	22	28
State of Economy	40	46	52	42	48	60	38	47
Personal Finances	36	30	36	36	28	40	28	33
Buying Climate	-2	-6	-2	2	8	14	-6	3

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	35	33	32	32	37	45	30	36
Women	14	13	25	21	20	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	31	23	30	19	31	37	16	25
35 - 44	20	15	26	28	29	37	13	27
45 - 54	35	41	34	22	35	45	11	30
55 - 64	15	13	24	44	16	48	13	29
65 +	12	20	25	31	20	45	12	28
Income:								
Under \$15K	-30	-36	-22	-22	-31	-12	-42	-25
\$15K To \$24.9K	-8	-6	8	-9	-11	26	-11	1
\$25K To \$39.9K	12	14	30	18	30	33	8	23
\$40K To \$49.9K	41	41	34	60	49	60	26	41
Over \$50K	56	55	58	63	60	68	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	22	17	37	28	29	48	17	32
Midwest	22	23	24	30	35	40	17	29
South	19	24	25	23	22	31	14	23
West	36	26	31	27	29	43	13	28
Race:								
White	27	25	35	32	35	43	25	32
Black	4	6	7	-6	-3	25	-15	0
Politics:								
Republican	31	40	41	37	47	55	31	42
Democrat	17	7	30	32	21	38	7	26
Independent	31	32	23	20	25	32	13	22
Education:								
< High School	-12	-13	-15	-13	-20	9	-27	-11
High Sch. Grad.	15	15	21	13	14	32	8	19
College +	41	38	48	50	52	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	31	31	38	33	31	44	28	35
Rent	7	4	4	8	18	22	-3	9
Marital Status:								
Single	20	9	26	23	29	36	8	24
Married	30	30	37	32	32	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	7	13	3	6	7	17	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	31	28	36	34	39	44	28	35
Part-Time	23	11	29	18	18	38	7	23
Not Employed	15	19	19	17	14	28	8	18

END