

Confidence Continues Near Record Highs

Consumer confidence continued its unprecedented run this week with 73 percent of Americans rating the national economy positively, just a few points below its all-time high in the 13-year-old ABC News Money magazine poll.

Sixty-nine percent also rate their own finances positively, only one point below the record set a year ago and tied earlier this year. Fifty-one percent say it's a good time to buy things, five points below its record high.

Consumers have been celebrating economic good times for over a year and a half, thanks largely to low unemployment, inflation and interest rates and a strong job market. The unemployment rate has been 4.2 or 4.3 percent every month since March, a 29-year low; and median weekly earnings were up 5.4 percent in the second quarter over a year earlier, compared with a 2.1 percent rise in inflation.

	Today	----- Since 12/85 -----		
Positive ratings:		Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	73%	77	7	38
Personal Finances	69	70	42	56
Buying Climate	51	56	20	37

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these gauges, stands at +29 on its scale of -100 to +100, unchanged from last week. This matches its average for the year, which is shaping up as the best since this poll began in late 1985. The record was set last year with an average +24. The lifetime average is -13.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+29	
Last week	+27	
Record high	+32	(1/17, 3/7, 3/14)
1999 average	+29	
1998 average	+24	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-13	

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

GROUPS – As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +64 in higher-income households compared to -18 in the lowest; +49 among college graduates but -6 among high-school dropouts; +32 among whites but +13 among blacks; and +33 among men compared to +24 among women.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the 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-three percent say excellent or good, up two points from last week. The worst rating was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	73%	11	62	27	20	7
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	41	21

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-nine percent say excellent or good, up two points from last week. The record of 70 percent was set Aug. 30, 1998 and tied Jan. 3 and June 13 this year. The worst was 42 percent March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	69%	7	62	31	23	8
Avg. since 12/85	56	4	52	44	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-one percent say excellent or good, the same as last week. The record was 56 percent Nov. 29, 1998; the worst rating, 20 percent, was set in the fall of 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	51%	5	46	49	35	14
Avg. since 12/85	37	3	34	63	41	22

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 1,040 interviews in the month ending Sept. 5 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. 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.

Analysis by Daniel Merkle.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

09/05/99	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	29	27	29	27	29	32	21	28
State of Economy	46	42	46	42	42	54	36	46
Personal Finances	38	34	34	38	36	40	28	33
Buying Climate	2	4	6	2	8	12	-4	4

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	33	36	38	33	40	44	30	35
Women	24	18	19	22	18	31	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	25	26	35	25	25	35	17	27
35 - 44	30	28	30	31	33	40	16	29
45 - 54	35	23	18	27	27	41	13	28
55 - 64	23	22	30	31	33	47	12	27
65 +	28	32	26	27	29	37	17	27
Income:								
Under \$15K	-18	-18	-21	-24	-10	-9	-42	-21
\$15K To \$24.9K	-6	-7	-1	5	6	18	-15	0
\$25K To \$39.9K	25	21	24	24	13	38	5	24
\$40K To \$49.9K	38	39	48	42	60	60	28	43
Over \$50K	64	63	58	55	60	67	52	60
Region:								
Northeast	28	28	32	25	30	35	15	27
Midwest	28	27	29	36	33	41	24	34
South	26	26	28	24	22	31	15	23
West	33	25	24	27	32	43	13	28
Race:								
White	32	29	33	30	32	37	23	31
Black	13	11	0	11	5	22	-9	6
Politics:								
Republican	42	39	35	33	44	49	28	39
Democrat	30	23	27	28	26	34	19	26
Independent	20	23	26	25	16	34	14	24
Education:								
< High School	-6	-16	-20	0	-5	6	-27	-8
High Sch. Grad.	16	16	25	19	22	31	10	20
College +	49	49	46	42	44	52	36	44
Home:								
Own	31	31	34	35	36	40	26	34
Rent	19	14	15	5	12	26	0	11
Marital Status:								
Single	25	35	36	19	24	36	13	24
Married	37	32	30	32	35	41	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	2	-1	12	13	9	18	-3	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	33	35	38	38	36	44	26	36
Part-Time	30	14	9	11	26	37	5	22
Not Employed	21	20	19	18	16	26	6	16