

SURVEY#: 507 DATE: 2/06/96 TO 9/09/99 #INT: 1 GEN USA
ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 9/14/97
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 17, 1997

Confidence Off its Peak
But Still Very High

Consumer confidence slipped a point from its record high but remained far above its average for the last decade, the latest ABC News/Money magazine poll has found.

Sixty-two percent of Americans rate the economy positively and 61 percent say their own finances are in good shape, same as last week; 46 percent call it a good time to buy things, down two points.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these three measures, stands at +13 on its scale of +100 to -100, down a point from last week's +14, the highest since this weekly poll began in December 1985. Its average for the year so far is +3, also a record.

ABC/Money Index

Today	+13
Last week	+14 record high
1997 average	+3
1996 average	-11
1991-95	-33
1986-90	-9
1986-present	-19

Confidence has been extraordinarily high all summer, boosted by the growing economy, low unemployment, low inflation and higher per-capita income. The index jumped from -1 in mid-May to +13 by early August; it had never before exceeded +8, and that was in 1986.

Over its lifetime, by contrast, the index has averaged just -19, ranging from -9 in the second half of the 1980s to -33 in the first half of the '90s.

GAUGES - Positive ratings of the economy are leading the index; they're 29 points better than their 11-year average. Ratings of the buying climate are 11 points better than average; ratings of personal finances, seven points better.

	Positive Ratings	
	Today	11-yr avg.
National Economy	62%	33%
Buying Climate	46	35
Personal Finances	61	54

Today's rating of the economy ties the record, set Aug. 24 and matched last week. Ratings of personal finances are three points short of their record, set Aug. 3. And ratings of the buying climate are their best since August 1986.

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +25 among men but 0 among women; +18 among whites but -22 among blacks; +42 in higher-income households

but -40 in the lowest; and +30 among people who've attended college but -7 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Sixty-two percent rate the economy positively, unchanged this week and tying the record set Aug. 24. It's averaged 53 percent this year; the average for the life of the index is 33 percent. The worst was 93 percent negative in late 1991 and early 1992.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Sixty-one percent rate their finances positively, unchanged this week. It's averaged 60 percent this year; the average for the life of the index is 54 percent. The best was 64 percent positive Aug. 3; the worst, 58 percent negative March 14, 1993.

BUYING CLIMATE - Fifty-four percent call this a bad time to buy things, up two points this week. It's averaged 58 percent negative this year; the average for the life of the index is 65 percent. The worst was 80 percent negative Nov. 2 and Oct. 28, 1990; the best, 52 percent positive May 11, 1986.

	National Economy	Personal Finances	Buying Climate
This week	62% pos	61% pos	46% neg
1997 Average	53% pos	60% pos	58% neg
Full Average	67% neg	54% pos	65% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg
Best	62% pos	64% 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 1,035 interviews in the month ending Sept. 14 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage 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 Gary Langer.

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

09/14/97	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	13	14	12	9	-9	14	-9	0
State of Economy	24	24	22	12	-16	24	-16	1
Personal Finances	22	22	24	26	12	28	10	19
Buying Climate	-8	-4	-10	-12	-22	-4	-30	-19

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	25	27	24	21	2	28	-5	11
Women	0	2	1	-3	-19	6	-19	-9
Age:								
18 - 34	11	14	11	-1	-8	17	-11	-1
35 - 44	9	8	6	7	-18	9	-21	-2
45 - 54	10	12	16	18	-7	19	-12	2
55 - 64	16	26	15	21	-15	26	-17	4
65 +	17	14	14	13	4	35	-10	5
Income:								
Under \$15K	-40	-43	-33	-45	-47	-24	-56	-41
\$15K To \$24.9K	7	3	-34	-15	-32	7	-35	-20
\$25K To \$39.9K	10	19	15	11	-13	20	-19	-1
\$40K To \$49.9K	33	31	30	1	3	33	-4	10
Over \$50K	42	46	45	48	26	51	12	35
Region:								
Northeast	6	10	14	3	-12	14	-17	-3
Midwest	13	12	15	18	10	18	-8	6
South	13	20	14	8	-15	20	-15	0
West	16	9	3	4	-16	21	-17	0
Race:								
White	18	19	19	13	-1	19	-10	5
Black	-22	-10	-11	-25	-41	0	-42	-23
Politics:								
Republican	27	26	31	25	2	31	-12	12
Democrat	1	7	8	12	-13	12	-13	1
Independent	15	16	3	-3	-9	16	-17	-5
Education:								
< High School	-7	-5	-13	-16	-47	-5	-47	-26
High Sch. Grad.	-4	1	4	-6	-13	5	-19	-8
College +	30	28	26	26	8	30	2	16
Home:								
Own	19	21	19	20	0	21	-4	7
Rent	-4	-4	-10	-19	-31	2	-31	-16
Marital Status:								
Single	2	8	7	-5	0	12	-20	-3
Married	21	23	19	18	-8	23	-8	7
Sep/Wid/Div	-10	-13	-9	-17	-20	0	-29	-17
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	22	25	19	17	-4	25	-5	8
Part-Time	5	9	10	-2	-13	10	-29	-7
Not Employed	0	0	3	-3	-14	9	-21	-8