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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 9/15/96
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THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MINUS ELEVEN

Consumer confidence, enjoying its best year since 1989, seems to have found a fairly comfortable resting place not far from where it was before the last recession.

The ABC News /Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index was up one point to -11 on its scale of +100 to -100 this week. It has been at -11 for six out of the last eight weeks and has hovered between -13 and -7 (a nearly seven-year high) since late May.

The index has averaged -13 this year, not far from its pre-recession average of -9 in the second half of the 1980s. From 1990-93, depressed by the recession and its aftermath, it averaged a dismal -39.

ABC/Money Index

9/22/96	-11
1996 average	-13
1995	-15
1994	-19
1993	-37
1992	-44
1991	-37
1990	-24
1989	-11

INDICES - The ABC/Money index is based on ratings of personal finances, the national economy and the buying climate. In the only positive gauge, 55 percent say their finances are in good shape, same as last week.

As usual, the other gauges are much more negative, albeit far better than in the early 1990s. Fifty-eight percent (down two points this week) rate the national economy negatively and 63 percent (unchanged) call it a bad time to buy things.

That's the lowest negative rating the economy's gotten all year long - a year that started with two-thirds saying it was in bad shape. In fact you have to go back to January 1990 to find the last time negativity was this low. This week's rating is even one point below its pre-recession average of 59 percent.

	Today	1990-93	1986-90
Negative on national economy	58	85	59
Negative on buying climate	63	74	61
Positive on personal finances	55	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +4 among men but -25 among women; +22 in higher-income households but -49 in the lowest; -4 among whites but -48 among blacks; and +6 among people who have attended college but -46 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Fifty-eight percent rate the economy negatively, down two points this week. It's averaged 63 percent this year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-1990. The worst, 93 percent, was in late 1991 and early 1992; the best, 50-50, was April 27, 1986. The average for the life of the index is 69 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Fifty-five percent rate their finances positively, same as last week. It's averaged 57 percent this year, compared to 49 percent in the 1990-93 slump and 57 percent before the recession. The worst was 58 percent negative March 14, 1993; the best, 62 percent positive Dec. 20, 1987. The full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty-three percent call this a bad time to buy things, unchanged. It's averaged 63 percent this year, compared to 74 percent during the 1990-93 slump and 61 percent before the recession. The worst is 80 percent negative Nov. 2 and Oct. 28, 1990; the best, 52 percent positive May 11, 1986. The full average is 66 percent negative.

	National Economy	Personal Finances	Buying Climate
This week	58% neg	55% pos	63% neg
1996 Average	64% neg	57% pos	63% neg
Recession Average (mid-1990 to 1993)	85% neg	51% neg	74% neg
Pre-Recession Avg. (1986 to mid-1990)	59% neg	57% pos	61% neg
Full Average (1986-1996)	69% neg	54% pos	66% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg
Best	50% pos	62% 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 is done by ICR/AUS Consultants of Media, Pa. This week's results are based on 1,045 interviews in the month ending Sept. 15 and have an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 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.

For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621.

ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online.

09/15/96

	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	-11	-12	-11	-9	-9	-7	-21	-14
State of Economy	-16	-20	-22	-24	-26	-16	-38	-28
Personal Finances	10	10	16	16	18	20	8	13
Buying Climate	-26	-26	-28	-18	-20	-18	-36	-26

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	4	2	-2	5	2	7	-11	-2
Women	-25	-24	-20	-20	-20	-18	-33	-24

Age:

18 - 34	-10	-6	-12	-7	-10	-3	-23	-11
35 - 44	-19	-20	-11	-14	4	-3	-23	-13
45 - 54	-5	-6	-9	-11	-12	-4	-36	-16
55 - 64	-22	-30	-15	-10	-5	-2	-40	-17
65 +	1	-3	-12	-2	-24	9	-34	-14

Income:

Under \$15K	-49	-50	-46	-57	-54	-43	-61	-51
\$15K To \$24.9K	-32	-32	-28	-15	-35	-12	-48	-33
\$25K To \$39.9K	-9	-9	-12	-11	-2	-2	-26	-14
\$40K To \$49.9K	5	11	16	9	-1	21	-31	1
Over \$50K	22	21	17	20	28	32	12	22

Region:

Northeast	-10	-15	-26	-15	-24	-10	-34	-20
Midwest	6	4	2	0	11	8	-21	-5
South	-15	-14	-9	-11	-16	-5	-24	-15
West	-23	-21	-17	-5	-6	6	-23	-14

Race:

White	-4	-7	-8	-2	-5	-2	-15	-9
Black	-48	-44	-31	-43	-43	-23	-56	-40

Politics:

Republican	-1	-4	-2	10	4	11	-8	0
Democrat	-19	-17	-10	-13	-20	-6	-28	-18
Independent	-8	-11	-16	-11	-13	-8	-26	-18

Education:

< High School	-46	-44	-34	-35	-35	-28	-51	-41
High Sch. Grad.	-18	-20	-19	-17	-15	-10	-30	-21
College +	6	6	2	9	4	11	-6	3

Home:

Own	-2	-4	-3	1	-5	1	-15	-7
Rent	-33	-32	-32	-29	-23	-20	-37	-30

Marital Status:

Single	-5	-7	-17	-14	-7	-1	-26	-13
Married	-9	-8	-4	-1	-4	-1	-18	-8
Sep/Wid/Div	-26	-28	-29	-28	-36	-18	-45	-34

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	-4	-5	-5	2	3	7	-14	-5
Part-Time	-20	-19	-18	-25	-12	-4	-35	-18
Not Employed	-18	-19	-19	-19	-26	-16	-34	-25