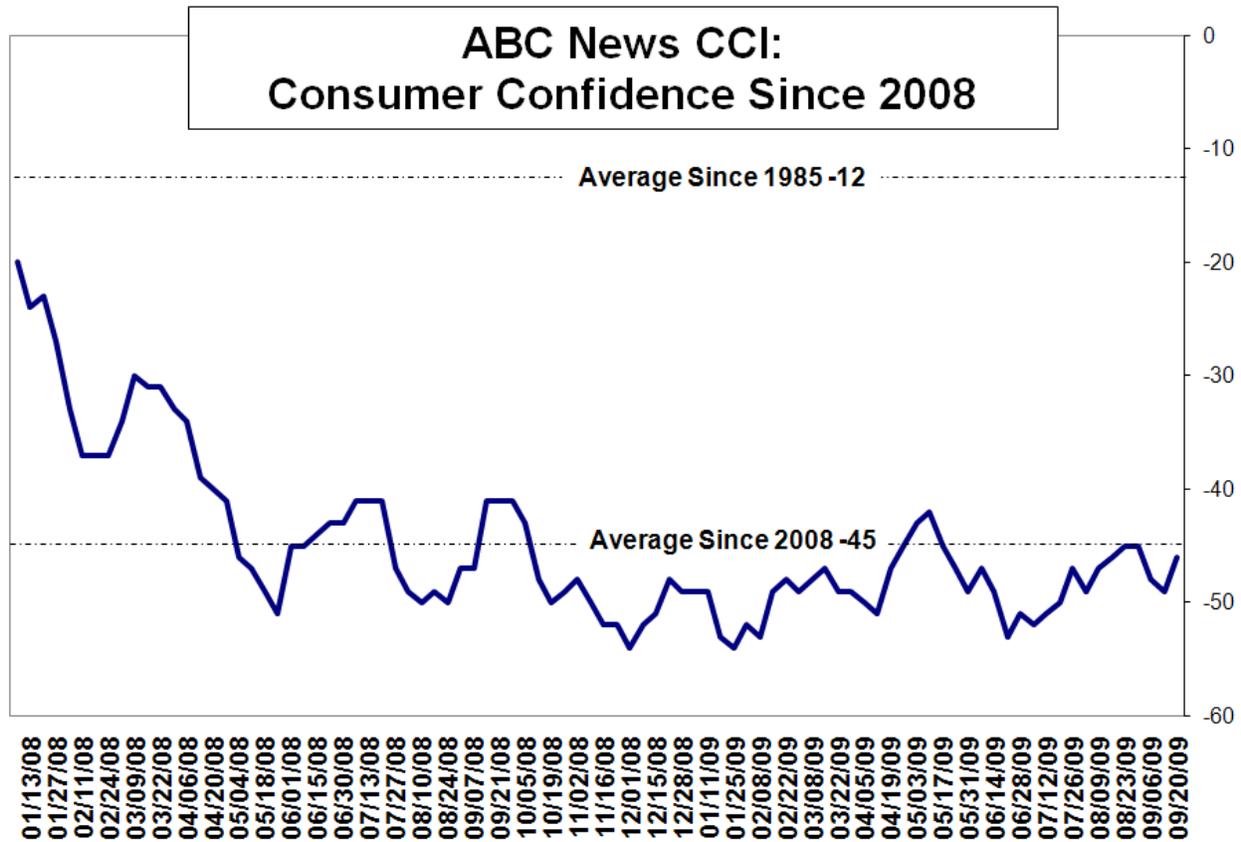


## **Consumer Confidence Mired in Negative Territory**

Consumer confidence held its ground this week after a recent slide – but it’s not shaken loose from its deep funk.

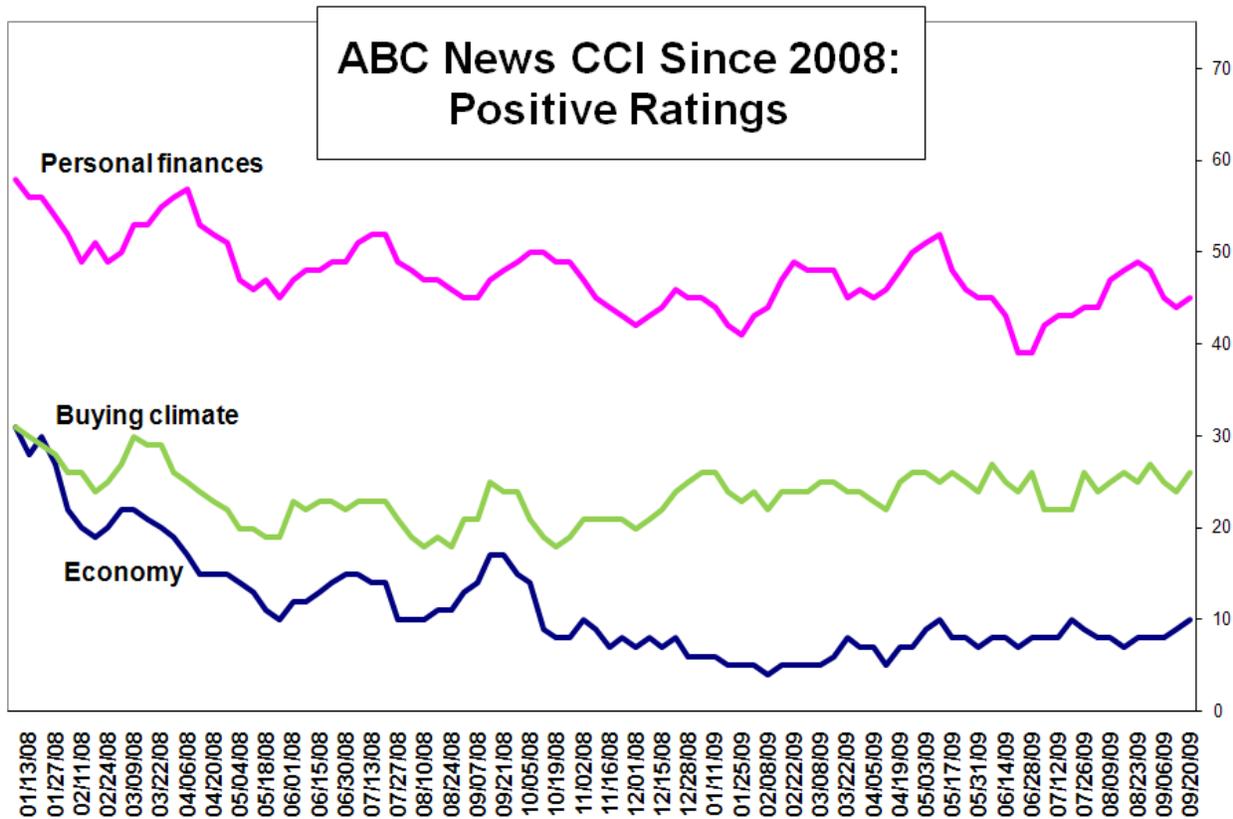
The ABC News Consumer Comfort Index stands at -46 on its scale of +100 to -100, still in a 4-point range the last nine weeks and near its record low, -54 in January. That compares to a long-term average of -12 in 23 years of weekly polls.



The public’s grim outlook runs counter to some economic assessments, including Federal Reserve reports of stabilization and a slower pace of layoffs. Americans more likely are focused on unemployment, now at a 26-year high 9.7 percent and expected to worsen before it gets better. In an ABC News/Washington Post poll last week, one in four Americans reported a job loss or layoff in their home in the past year, with predictably negative consequences.

INDEX – The CCI is based on Americans’ ratings of the national economy, their personal finances and the buying climate. Just 10 percent rate the national economy positively; on one hand that’s in double digits for only the fourth time in the last 50 weeks, but on the other it’s still 28 points below the long-term average.

Twenty-six percent say it’s a good time to buy things, a point from the year’s best, but hardly reason to celebrate; it’s been below 30 percent for a record 80 weeks and stands 11 points below average. Ratings of personal finances, at 45 percent positive, are below a majority for the 19<sup>th</sup> straight week and 12 points below their average since late 1985.

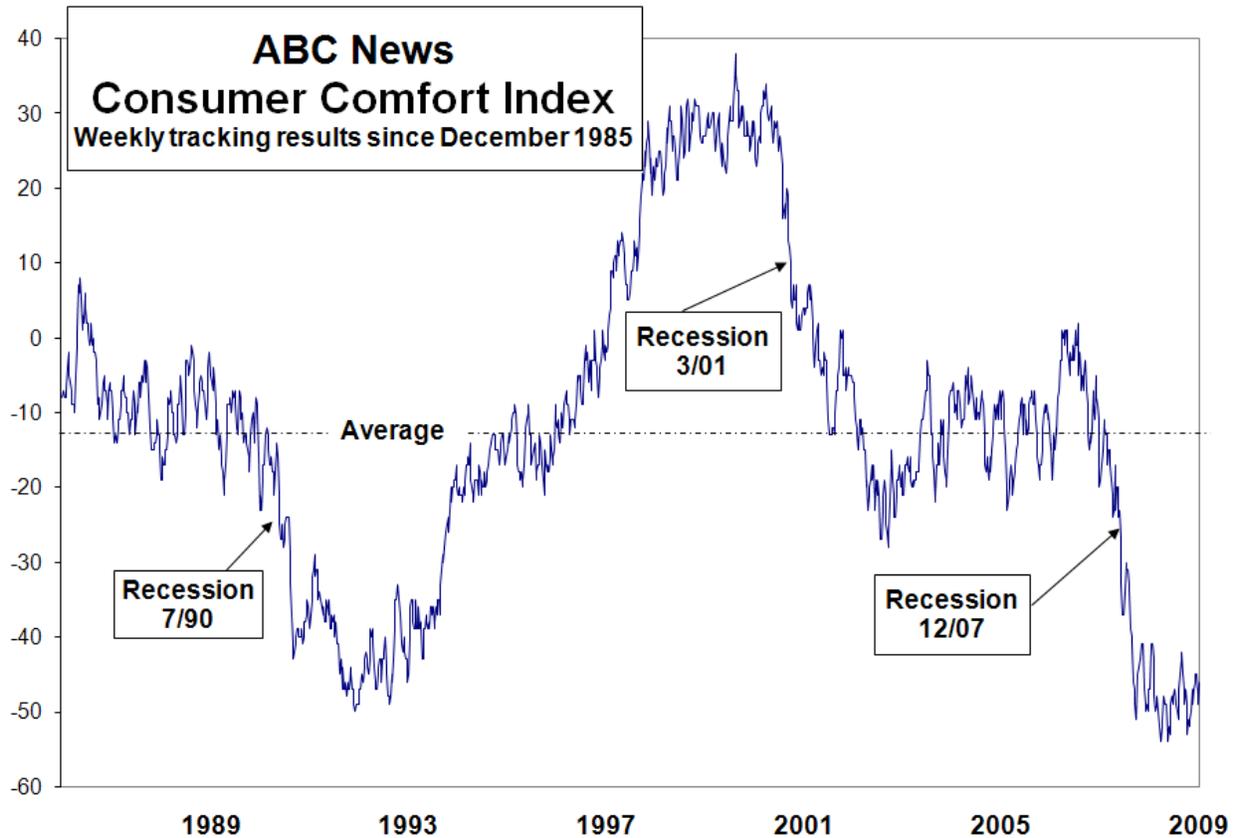


Positive ratings of:	ABC News CCI		Averages	
	This week	Last week	2009	'85-'09
National economy	10%	9	7	38
Buying climate	26	24	25	37
Personal finances	45	44	46	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-46	-49	-49	-12

TREND – As noted, the CCI has moved in a narrow 4-point range since late July, teetering twice on the edge of the bleak -50 mark, including last week. The only glimmer is that it’s been above -50 for nine weeks straight, matching the best such run since last summer.

At -46, the CCI is 3 points above its average for the year so far and 2 points below its worst annual average, -44 in 1992. It's been below -40 for a record 74 weeks and hasn't seen positive territory since March 2007.

Its best yearlong average was +29 in 2000; its best week, +38 in January 2000.



	ABC News CCI	
This week	-46	
Last week	-49	
2009 high	-42	May 10
2009 low	-54	Jan. 25, record low
2009 average	-49	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
Average since 12/85	-12	

**GROUPS** – The index is higher as usual among better-off Americans, but has been negative across the board for 30 weeks straight and all but two weeks this year.

It's -7 among those with the highest incomes while -73 among those with the lowest, -35 among those who've attended college vs. -81 among high school dropouts (a new low), -37 among

homeowners (the best since last September) compared with -67 among renters (the worst since July), and -45 among whites vs. -60 among blacks (the worst since May). The 15-point racial gap is narrower than usual – it’s averaged 28 points in data since 1990.

Most unusual is the absence of a gender gap this week: The CCI is the same among men, 4 points from their low, as among women – -45 in both groups. That’s occurred just once before, in February 1992. The average gap has been 16 points.

Partisan differences remain, but are smaller than usual with the CCI at -42 among Republicans (matching the low), compared with -43 among independents and -54 among Democrats. The 12-point partisan gap is far smaller than the long-term gap, 32 points.

Here’s a closer look at the three components of the ABC News CCI:

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Ten percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 9 percent last week. The highest was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 4 percent Feb. 8, 2009.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	10	1	9	90	41	49
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	40	22

**PERSONAL FINANCES** – Forty-five percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 44 percent last week. The best was 70 percent, last reached in January 2000. The worst was 39 percent June 28 and 21, 2009.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	45	5	40	55	34	21
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	51	43	30	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Twenty-six percent say it’s an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 24 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 18 percent, last reached Oct. 19, 2008.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	26	2	24	74	44	30
Avg. since 12/85	37	3	35	63	42	21

**METHODOLOGY** – Interviews for the ABC News Consumer Comfort Index are reported in a four-week rolling average. This week’s results are based on telephone interviews among a random national sample of 1,000 adults in the four weeks ending Sept. 20, 2009. The results have a 3-point error margin. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

The index is derived by subtracting the negative response to each index question from the positive response to that question. The three resulting numbers are 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.

ERRATA – A software problem at ICR created errors in crosstabulated results by income group and marital status in data Aug. 30 to Oct. 18. The CCI overall and in other crosstabulations was not affected. This report has been updated with corrected results by income group and marital status.

Analysis by Peyton M. Craighill.

ABC News polls can be found online at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

09/20/09	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	-46	-49	-45	-53	-41	-41	-54	-49
State of Economy	-80	-82	-84	-86	-66	-66	-92	-84
Personal Finances	-10	-12	-2	-22	-4	4	-22	-9
Buying Climate	-48	-52	-50	-52	-52	-46	-64	-53
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-45	-44	-40	-47	-32	-28	-49	-42
Women	-45	-51	-49	-58	-47	-45	-60	-54
Age:								
18 - 34	-31	-37	-38	-61	-39	-31	-61	-45
35 - 44	-45	-40	-46	-54	-41	-35	-62	-48
45 - 54	-65	-62	-51	-42	-39	-36	-65	-50
55 - 64	-49	-58	-39	-52	-43	-39	-65	-52
65+	-46	-49	-52	-48	-39	-39	-56	-48
Income:								
Under \$15K	-73	-77	-79	-76	-78	-51	-84	-72
\$15K To \$24.9K	-79	-53	-40	-71	-56	-40	-83	-67
\$25K To \$39.9K	-53	-53	-49	-63	-49	-48	-73	-60
\$40K To \$49.9K	-27	-34	-48	-38	-34	-27	-68	-50
Over \$50K	-21	-30	-30	-35	-23	-21	-41	-29
\$50K To \$74.9K	-29	-47	-35	-43	-30	-24	-54	-39
\$75K To \$99.9K	-20	-28	-25	-42	-28	-14	-52	-32
Over \$100K	-7	-17	-31	-19	-8	5	-34	-17
Region:								
Northeast	-48	-44	-41	-49	-46	-39	-62	-51
Midwest	-49	-55	-45	-57	-33	-33	-58	-49
South	-49	-49	-49	-54	-48	-39	-59	-48
West	-31	-40	-40	-48	-29	-19	-58	-43
Race:								
White	-45	-48	-45	-52	-35	-35	-52	-46
Black	-60	-52	-49	-59	-65	-41	-81	-58
Politics:								
Republican	-42	-39	-37	-40	-10	-10	-42	-33

Democrat	-54	-62	-52	-58	-58	-43	-70	-57
Independent	-43	-44	-45	-52	-43	-39	-56	-49
Education:								
< High School	-81	-80	-69	-71	-69	-51	-81	-66
High Sch. Grad.	-46	-54	-53	-61	-38	-38	-65	-54
College +	-35	-35	-33	-44	-33	-30	-50	-40
Home:								
Own	-37	-43	-39	-44	-36	-36	-49	-43
Rent	-67	-58	-57	-69	-50	-48	-80	-62
Marital Status:								
Single	-42	-62	-53	-62	-44	-34	-69	-52
Married	-42	-36	-35	-47	-33	-33	-47	-41
Sep/Wid/Div	-56	-60	-59	-54	-56	-52	-70	-61
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-34	-31	-34	-45	-29	-29	-45	-38
Part-Time	-53	-66	-47	-59	-33	-31	-67	-50
Not Employed	-52	-56	-55	-57	-55	-49	-66	-58

\*\*\*END\*\*\*