

Confidence Pulls Back

Consumer confidence slipped for the third week in a row this week after approaching record levels earlier this month.

The dip has been modest, and confidence remains very high by historical standards. Seventy-seven percent of Americans say the economy's in good shape, three points from its record high. Sixty-five percent rate their own finances positively and 52 percent call it a good time to buy things, both five points from their respective highs.

The cause of the dip isn't clear, though it could reflect concern about rising prices for heating oil and gasoline. Confidence dropped earlier this year as oil prices rose, then rebounded as prices ebbed. Friday, Bill Clinton announced the release of 30 million barrels of oil from the country's emergency reserve supply.

	Today	Highest	Lowest	Average
Positive ratings:				
National Economy	77%	80	7	40
Personal Finances	65	70	42	57
Buying Climate	52	57	20	38

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +29 on its scale of +100 to -100, down five points in the last three weeks. The index has averaged +29 this year, a point above its record 1999 average. Its lifetime average is -10, depressed by recession in the early 1990s.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+29	
Sept. 3, 2000	+34	
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	-10	

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 +65 in higher-income households compared to -23 in the lowest, +50 among college graduates but -23 among high-school dropouts, +33 among whites but +7 among blacks and +32 among men but +27 among women.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the ABC/Money 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-seven percent of Americans rate the nation's economy as excellent or good, up one point from last week. The best was 80 percent Jan. 16. The worst was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	77	13	64	23	17	6
Avg. since 12/85	40	4	37	60	39	20

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-five percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, down one point from last week. The best was 70 percent, set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	65	8	57	35	24	11
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	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-two percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things they want and need, down one point from last week. The best was 57 percent Jan. 16. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	52	3	49	48	33	15
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	41	21

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 1,027 interviews in the week ending Sept. 24 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 Dalia Sussman.

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

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

09/24/00

This Last 4 Wks 3 Mo. 1 Yr. 12 Mo 12 Mo 12 Mo
 Week Week Ago Ago Ago High Low Avg

Group

GENERAL POPULATION:

Group	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
Overall Index	29	30	32	23	25	38	22	28
State of Economy	54	52	52	46	42	60	38	48
Personal Finances	30	32	38	30	34	40	28	34
Buying Climate	4	6	6	-6	0	14	-6	3

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Group	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
Sex:								
Men	32	34	43	33	37	45	30	36
Women	27	26	22	13	14	30	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	32	33	36	23	25	37	16	26
35 - 44	26	29	17	15	28	37	13	26
45 - 54	31	27	33	41	25	45	11	31
55 - 64	25	24	39	13	23	51	13	30
65 +	28	30	39	20	20	45	12	28
Income:								
Under \$15K	-23	-16	-18	-36	-25	-12	-36	-24
\$15K To \$24.9K	-11	-20	-9	-6	-6	26	-20	1
\$25K To \$39.9K	18	21	26	14	17	33	8	23
\$40K To \$49.9K	48	42	33	41	46	60	19	38
Over \$50K	65	66	63	55	59	68	53	61
Region:								
Northeast	32	31	32	17	34	48	17	33
Midwest	40	38	37	23	20	46	17	31
South	19	22	28	24	17	31	14	22
West	33	32	35	26	33	43	13	29
Race:								
White	33	32	37	25	29	43	25	33
Black	7	11	3	6	-3	25	-15	0
Politics:								
Republican	39	38	38	40	35	55	31	41
Democrat	31	29	30	7	21	38	7	27
Independent	22	26	31	32	25	39	13	23
Education:								
< High School	-23	-18	1	-13	-20	13	-24	-9
High Sch. Grad.	24	22	24	15	24	32	8	19
College +	50	49	47	38	42	53	38	46
Home:								
Own	35	35	39	31	30	44	28	36
Rent	16	15	14	4	10	19	-3	8
Marital Status:								
Single	27	29	42	9	20	42	8	25
Married	33	32	33	30	30	44	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	17	21	16	13	7	27	-9	7
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	40	39	34	28	32	44	28	35
Part-Time	26	27	40	11	27	40	11	26
Not Employed	17	17	27	19	14	28	8	18

END

