

SURVEY#: 507 DATE: 2/06/96 TO 9/09/99 #INT: 1 GEN USA
ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 9/28/97
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 1, 1997

Confidence Down A Bit

Consumer confidence dropped another tad this week to its lowest level since late July and an additional small retreat from its early September record high. Other somewhat daunting results in the weekly ABC/New Money poll suggest the public's expectations for future job opportunities are less than rosy.

The ABC/Money poll continues to show confidence about current conditions sustained at comparatively high levels: 58 percent of Americans rate the economy positively, four points off the record; 61 percent say their own finances are in good shape, just three points below the record; and 46 percent call it a good time to buy things, six points off the high mark..

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these three measures, stands at +10 on its scale of +100 to -100, down a point this week. It reached +14 as September started, its 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	+10
9/7/97	+14 record high
1997 average	+3
1996 average	-11
1991-95	-33
1986-90	-9
1986-present	-19

Confidence was 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.

Positive Ratings

	Today	11-yr avg.
National Economy	58%	33%
Buying Climate	46	35
Personal Finances	61	54

Ratings of the economy are four points short of the record, set Aug. 24 and matched Sept. 7 and Sept. 14. Ratings of personal finances are three points short of their record, set Aug. 3. And ratings of the buying climate are six points from their best, 52 percent positive in May 1986.

FUTURE WORK- Despite this relatively positive news on the economy from the public, another result in this week's poll suggests that the edges of the American dream remain blunted in the minds of many. When asked whether young people will have a more or less difficult time finding good jobs in the next 10 years, seven in 10 reply with a pessimistic "more difficult."

That is a persistent level of low expectations which has existed at least since the last recession. At the height of the last downturn (September 1990), 75 percent were pessimistic about future job opportunities for youth. That the current results are six points lower in relatively good economic times with

low unemployment means Americans are less than confident current conditions will prevail. It is also a signal that many are not as enthusiastic about current conditions as the other results in the ABC/Money poll might indicate.

Those with low education, low income and blacks express higher than average pessimism about the future than other groups in the population. For example, 77 percent of blacks say it will more difficult for young people to find good jobs in the next 10 years.

GROUPS - That these groups are pessimistic on this dimension comes as no surprise to watchers of the ABC/Money index itself. Confidence lags in all economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +19 among men but 1 among women; +16 among whites but -30 among blacks; +41 in higher-income households but -31 in the lowest; and +27 among people who've attended college but -19 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 positively, down four points from the record. 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 again 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, down a point 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	58% pos	61% pos	54% 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 1,037 interviews in the month ending Sept. 28 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.

The question on future work opportunities is based on 522 interviews

completed in the two weeks ending Sept. 28, 1997 and has an error margin of 4.5.

Analysis by Jeff Alderman. 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.

Results follow:

Ten years from now, do you think it will be more difficult or less difficult for young people to find a good job?

	9/28/97	9/9/90	1/16/90
More	69	75	71
Less	19	15	27
Same(vol)	6	7	-
No opin.	5	3	2

09/28/97 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:

Overall Index	10	11	13	8	-6	14	-9	1
State of Economy	16	20	22	12	-16	24	-16	2
Personal Finances	22	22	24	24	20	28	10	20
Buying Climate	-8	-10	-8	-12	-22	-4	-30	-18

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	19	23	28	15	3	28	-5	12
Women	1	0	-1	2	-13	6	-19	-8

Age:

18 - 34	8	8	17	3	-4	17	-11	-1
35 - 44	15	13	-4	1	-12	15	-21	-1
45 - 54	2	7	16	8	-4	19	-12	2
55 - 64	5	12	17	15	3	26	-17	5
65 +	18	18	21	24	-7	35	-10	6

Income:

Under \$15K	-31	-34	-47	-37	-43	-24	-56	-40
\$15K To \$24.9K	-6	-3	-12	-8	-19	7	-35	-18
\$25K To \$39.9K	9	12	20	-1	-10	20	-19	0
\$40K To \$49.9K	21	28	31	10	3	33	-4	10
Over \$50K	41	39	51	45	30	51	12	35

Region:

Northeast	4	9	14	-1	-16	14	-17	-2
Midwest	20	18	15	10	9	20	-8	6
South	3	7	13	8	-6	20	-14	0
West	15	10	8	15	-11	21	-17	1

Race:

White	16	17	18	13	0	19	-10	6
Black	-30	-24	-14	-19	-42	0	-42	-22

Politics:								
Republican	24	24	28	24	7	31	-12	12
Democrat	4	4	11	7	-6	12	-10	1
Independent	9	10	8	2	-11	16	-17	-5
Education:								
< High School	-19	-13	-18	-22	-40	-5	-44	-25
High Sch. Grad.	-1	-1	5	-6	-7	5	-19	-7
College +	27	27	29	28	8	30	2	17
Home:								
Own	16	17	21	18	0	21	-4	8
Rent	-6	-3	-9	-18	-19	2	-27	-16
Marital Status:								
Single	-1	1	6	5	-13	12	-20	-3
Married	17	19	21	13	0	23	-7	8
Sep/Wid/Div	-8	-11	-10	-8	-19	0	-29	-17
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	14	17	22	14	1	25	-5	9
Part-Time	10	10	8	-4	-9	10	-29	-6
Not Employed	2	1	1	4	-13	9	-21	-7