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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 9/29/96
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Confidence its Best in Seven Years

Consumer confidence spiked up to its best level in seven years this week, adding further fuel to Bill Clinton's re-election drive.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index rose an unusually large four points to points, to -5 on its scale of +100 to -100. That's its highest since Feb. 5, 1989, and eight points higher than its average for all of 1996.

The index was as low as -21 early this year, and from 1990-93, depressed by the recession and its aftermath, it averaged a dismal -39. Today it's even higher than its pre-recession average, -9 in the second half of the 1980s.

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-5
1996 average	-13
1995	-15
1994	-19
1993	-37
1992	-44
1991	-37
1990	-24
1989	-11

ELECTION - Public opinion of the economy is a powerful force in presidential politics; in 1992 no other single issue cut as strongly to vote.

The index today is as high now as it was in November 1988, when the incumbent party retained control of the White House. And it's much better than it was in 1992, when the incumbent lost, or 1994, when the newly incumbent party took a beating.

	ABC/Money Index
9/29/96	-5
11/94	-20 Dem loss
11/92	-49 Bush loss
11/88	-6 Bush win

INDICES - The index is based on ratings of personal finances, the economy and the buying climate. Sixty percent now say their own finances are in good shape, up four points this week and the prime mover in the overall gain. It's two points from its record, 62 percent in December 1987.

The other two gauges hardly changed this week and are, as usual, much more negative. Fifty-eight percent rate the national economy negatively (unchanged) and 60 percent call it a bad time to buy things (down a point).

While those numbers include some built-in skepticism, they're much better than they've been. At the start of this year 66 percent of Americans said the economy was in bad shape; in January 1993 it was a record 93 percent; and the 1990-93

average was 85 percent negative.

	Today	1990-93	1986-90
Negative on national economy	58	85	59
Negative on buying climate	60	74	61
Positive on personal finances	60	49	57

DIRECTION - In another, separate measure, views on the direction of the economy also are getting more positive. Most Americans (52 percent) call it stable, and 20 percent - the most in more than a year - say it's getting better.

Is the nation's economy..

	Getting Better	Getting Worse	Staying the Same	No Opinion
9/29/96	20	28	52	0
9/1/96	18	36	46	1
7/7/96	13	40	48	0
6/9/96	12	43	44	0
5/12/96	15	45	40	0
4/14/96	13	38	48	0
10/1/95	16	39	44	0
8/6/95	15	36	50	0
7/9/95	13	39	47	1
6/11/95	13	35	51	0
5/14/95	16	41	42	0
3/19/95	19	38	43	0

GROUPS - A further improvement in confidence among women (from -19 up to -14) led this week's advance in the index. Nonetheless, confidence still lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated.

The index is +4 among men but -14 among women; +33 in higher-income households but -45 in the lowest; +1 among whites but -36 among blacks; and +10 among people who have attended college but -42 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, unchanged 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 - Sixty percent rate their finances positively, up four. 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 percent call this a bad time to buy things, down one point. 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	60% pos	60% neg
1996 Average	63% 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 (1986-1995)	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 1,043 interviews in the month ending Sept. 29 and have an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. The economic direction question was asked of 523 people over the last two weeks and has a five-point error margin.

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 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.

09/29/96	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	-5	-9	-11	-8	-13	-5	-21	-13
State of Economy	-16	-16	-20	-24	-26	-16	-38	-27
Personal Finances	20	12	14	18	12	20	8	13
Buying Climate	-20	-22	-26	-18	-26	-18	-36	-26
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	OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS							
Sex:								
Men	4	2	3	4	2	7	-11	-1
Women	-14	-19	-24	-19	-29	-14	-33	-24

Age:									
18 - 34	-3	-8	-3	-6	-10	-3	-23	-11	
35 - 44	-12	-18	-20	-7	-5	-3	-23	-14	
45 - 54	-2	-7	-4	-22	-17	-2	-36	-15	
55 - 64	-5	-15	-36	-3	-14	-2	-40	-17	
65 +	-3	4	-8	-6	-28	9	-34	-13	
Income:									
Under \$15K	-45	-47	-52	-50	-55	-43	-61	-51	
\$15K To \$24.9K	-30	-32	-26	-28	-31	-12	-48	-33	
\$25K To \$39.9K	-9	-13	-9	-6	-12	-2	-26	-14	
\$40K To \$49.9K	6	3	12	10	-11	21	-31	1	
Over \$50K	33	26	18	25	32	33	12	23	
Region:									
Northeast	-9	-12	-17	-12	-26	-9	-34	-20	
Midwest	10	10	2	-6	0	10	-21	-5	
South	-6	-15	-14	-14	-13	-5	-24	-15	
West	-16	-16	-14	4	-20	6	-23	-14	
Race:									
White	1	-1	-6	-3	-9	1	-15	-9	
Black	-36	-41	-43	-45	-44	-23	-56	-40	
Politics:									
Republican	10	2	-6	3	0	11	-8	1	
Democrat	-8	-13	-12	-12	-22	-6	-28	-17	
Independent	-10	-9	-12	-11	-17	-8	-26	-18	
Education:									
< High School	-42	-47	-38	-34	-47	-28	-51	-41	
High Sch. Grad.	-10	-13	-18	-20	-19	-10	-30	-21	
College +	10	8	4	9	2	11	-6	3	
Home:									
Own	2	0	-5	-3	-11	2	-15	-7	
Rent	-24	-31	-28	-23	-22	-20	-37	-30	
Marital Status:									
Single	0	0	-7	-12	-17	0	-26	-12	
Married	-3	-8	-7	-3	-7	-1	-18	-8	
Sep/Wid/Div	-18	-20	-32	-20	-36	-18	-45	-33	
Employ. Status:									
Full-Time	0	-4	-3	3	1	7	-14	-4	
Part-Time	-15	-13	-18	-23	-21	-4	-35	-18	
Not Employed	-10	-14	-21	-21	-31	-10	-34	-25	