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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 10/6/96
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Confidence Continues at High Level

Consumer confidence remained near its best level in seven years this week.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index rose an unusually large four points to -5 on its scale of +100 to -100 last week, the highest since Feb. 5, 1989. This week it's virtually unchanged at -6.

The recent improvement has pushed the index average for the year from -13 to -12, which, if that were the average for the full year, would make 1996 the fifth best year in the 10-year life of the index.

More important, the index's 1996 average is now only just three points from its pre-recession average of -9. It's been a lot further away through most of the '90s:

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-6
1996 average	-12
1995	-15
1994	-19
1993	-37
1992	-44
1991	-37
1990	-24
1989	-11
1988	-9
1987	-10
1985-6	-3

ELECTION - The index remains 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 GOP took over both houses of Congress.

	ABC/Money Index
10/6/96	- 6
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, same as last week when it was 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 61 percent call it a bad time to buy things (up 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	61	74	61
Positive on personal finances	60	49	57

GROUPS - A further improvement in confidence among women (from -19 two weeks ago up to -13 now) helped maintain last 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 +3 among men but -13 among women; +30 in higher-income households but -43 in the lowest; 0 among whites but -42 among blacks; and +8 among people who have attended college but -40 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, the 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-one percent call this a bad time to buy things, up 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	61% 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 1,044 interviews in the month ending Oct. 6 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.

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.

10/06/96	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	-6	-5	-12	-7	-17	-5	-21	-13
State of Economy	-16	-16	-20	-22	-30	-16	-38	-27
Personal Finances	20	20	10	20	8	20	8	13
Buying Climate	-22	-20	-26	-18	-30	-18	-36	-26

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	3	4	2	7	-1	7	-11	-1
Women	-13	-14	-24	-18	-31	-13	-33	-24
Age:								
18 - 34	-4	-3	-6	-3	-12	-3	-23	-11
35 - 44	-12	-12	-20	-4	-10	-3	-23	-14
45 - 54	-4	-2	-6	-22	-23	-2	-36	-15
55 - 64	3	-5	-30	-6	-15	3	-40	-16
65 +	-7	-3	-3	-7	-30	9	-34	-13
Income:								
Under \$15K	-43	-45	-50	-48	-59	-43	-61	-51
\$15K To \$24.9K	-19	-30	-32	-33	-35	-12	-48	-33
\$25K To \$39.9K	-10	-9	-9	-4	-18	-2	-26	-14
\$40K To \$49.9K	3	6	11	13	-5	21	-31	2
Over \$50K	30	33	21	31	27	33	12	22
Region:								
Northeast	-16	-9	-15	-11	-26	-9	-34	-20
Midwest	9	10	4	-4	-3	10	-21	-5
South	-6	-6	-14	-14	-17	-5	-24	-15
West	-11	-16	-21	6	-22	6	-23	-14
Race:								
White	0	1	-7	-2	-13	1	-15	-9
Black	-42	-36	-44	-39	-40	-23	-56	-40
Politics:								
Republican	7	10	-4	2	-5	11	-8	1

Democrat	-6	-8	-17	-6	-24	-6	-28	-17
Independent	-11	-10	-11	-10	-19	-8	-26	-17
Education:								
< High School	-40	-42	-44	-36	-49	-28	-51	-41
High Sch. Grad.	-7	-10	-20	-20	-28	-7	-30	-21
College +	8	10	6	11	3	11	-6	3
Home:								
Own	0	2	-4	-3	-14	2	-15	-7
Rent	-19	-24	-32	-20	-24	-19	-37	-30
Marital Status:								
Single	-13	0	-7	-11	-18	0	-26	-12
Married	0	-3	-8	-2	-12	0	-18	-8
Sep/Wid/Div	-19	-18	-28	-19	-32	-18	-45	-33
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	1	0	-5	7	-4	7	-14	-4
Part-Time	-9	-15	-19	-26	-22	-4	-35	-18
Not Employed	-13	-10	-19	-21	-34	-10	-34	-24