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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 10/27/96
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Confidence Continues at High Level

Consumer confidence, retreating just a tad this week, continues to mark its best month of the year.

The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index dropped two points to -7 this week. It had been at -5 in three of the four previous weekly reports, a high point last seen over seven years ago. The index is two points better than its pre-recession average of -9 and five points below its average for this year.

The index has been at or below its pre-recession average since mid-September and well under it for most of October.

The ABC survey continues to show relatively healthy consumer sentiment, especially when compared to most of the '90s:

	ABC/Money Index
Today	-7
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 relatively high and steady level of consumer confidence as the election campaign heads into its final two weeks bodes well for President Clinton. The index remains about 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	- 7 Clinton?
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. Fifty-nine percent now say their own finances are in good shape, down a point from last week. It's just three points from its record, 62 percent in December 1987.

The other two gauges are unchanged this week and are, as usual, much more negative. Fifty-eight percent rate the national economy negatively and 62 percent call it a bad time to buy things, but up one 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	62	74	61
Positive on personal finances	59	49	57

GROUPS - Confidence still lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated.

The index is -5 among men and -9 among women; +21 in higher-income households but -40 in the lowest; -5 among whites but -22 among blacks; and +3 among people who have attended college but -32 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, up one from last 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 - Fifty-nine percent rate their finances positively, down a point. 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-two percent call this a bad time to buy things, up one from last week. 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	59% pos	62% 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 1,029 interviews in the month ending Oct. 27 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.

NOTE: Unless there is a major change in consumer sentiment, ABC Polling will not issue a full report next week because of presidential election duties. We will make next week's overall index number available, however.

10/20/96	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	-7	-5	-5	-11	-15	-5	-21	-13
State of Economy	-16	-14	-16	-24	-32	-14	-38	-26
Personal Finances	18	20	20	12	12	22	8	14
Buying Climate	-24	-22	-20	-22	-26	-18	-36	-26

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-5	-1	4	-2	-3	7	-11	-1
Women	-9	-8	-14	-20	-26	-8	-33	-23
Age:								
18 - 34	-11	-7	-3	-19	-13	-3	-23	-11
35 - 44	-19	-18	-12	-4	-11	-3	-23	-14
45 - 54	6	12	-2	-11	-8	12	-36	-13
55 - 64	8	5	-5	-18	-24	8	-40	-15
65 +	-5	-6	-3	0	-27	9	-34	-12
Income:								
Under \$15K	-40	-42	-45	-54	-55	-40	-61	-50
\$15K To \$24.9K	-30	-22	-30	-40	-45	-12	-48	-32
\$25K To \$39.9K	-19	-18	-9	-11	-22	-2	-26	-14
\$40K To \$49.9K	8	4	6	9	8	21	-31	2
Over \$50K	21	31	33	23	28	35	12	22
Region:								
Northeast	-17	-14	-9	-16	-20	-9	-34	-19
Midwest	5	9	10	1	-16	10	-21	-4
South	-8	-2	-6	-12	-15	-2	-24	-14
West	-10	-16	-16	-20	-11	6	-23	-13

Race:								
White	-5	-3	1	-8	-12	1	-15	-8
Black	-22	-24	-36	-36	-29	-22	-56	-40
Politics:								
Republican	-5	-2	10	11	-6	11	-7	1
Democrat	-7	-6	-8	-18	-23	-3	-28	-16
Independent	-9	-11	-10	-18	-15	-8	-26	-17
Education:								
< High School	-32	-28	-42	-41	-41	-28	-50	-40
High Sch. Grad.	-9	-7	-10	-19	-28	-7	-30	-20
College +	3	5	10	5	5	11	-6	3
Home:								
Own	-1	2	2	-7	-10	2	-15	-6
Rent	-20	-18	-24	-24	-31	-13	-37	-29
Marital Status:								
Single	-20	-16	0	-23	-7	0	-26	-12
Married	0	2	-3	-5	-12	2	-18	-7
Sep/Wid/Div	-20	-18	-18	-22	-37	-15	-45	-32
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-1	1	0	-3	-5	7	-14	-4
Part-Time	-22	-15	-15	-21	-9	-4	-35	-18
Not Employed	-9	-9	-10	-20	-33	-9	-33	-23