

Consumer Confidence Picks Up Slightly

Consumer confidence picked up slightly this week, with Americans' views of the national economy and their own finances holding strong heading into the holiday retail season.

Sixty-nine percent of consumers say the economy is doing well, 33 points higher than average since the ABC News/Money magazine poll began in December 1985. Sixty-six percent say their own personal finances are in good shape, 11 points above the average; and nearly half call it a good time to purchase goods, 13 points above the average.

	Today	Positive Ratings		12-year avg.
		Record high	Record low	
National Economy	69%	76	7	36
Personal Finances	66	70	42	55
Buying Climate	49	55	20	36

GREATER OPTIMISM – Consumers also are less pessimistic about the direction of the economy than a month ago. In this poll, 26 percent say the economy is getting better, while 27 percent say it is getting worse. In early October, 31 percent were negative and 24 percent positive, a seven-point gap.

	Economy is...		
	Getting better	Getting worse	Staying the same
11/08/98	26%	27	47
10/11/98	24	31	44

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on ratings of the current economy, buying climate and personal finances, stands at +23 on its scale of -100 to +100, up two points this week, and eight points below its record high Aug. 30. This score is on par with the average for the year, compared to a previous best year of +5 and a lifetime average of -15.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+23	
Last week	+21	
Aug. 30	+31	Record high
1998 average (to date)	+23	
1997 average	+5	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-15	

Call the ABC News Polling Unit, ext. 2621, for a chart tracking the ABC/Money index over time.

GROUPS - The index advanced this week in several economically vulnerable groups among which confidence usually lags. The index rose three points among women to +15, four points in under-\$15,000 households to -30, and four points among those who did not finish high school to -6. Part-time workers' scores jumped five points to +27, and the index increased three points among unemployed consumers to +12.

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? Sixty-nine percent say excellent or good, up one point this week. The best was 76 percent Feb. 22; the worst, seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	69	7	62	31	23	8
Avg. since 12/85	36	2	33	64	42	22

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-six percent say excellent or good, one point higher than last week. The record was 70 percent Aug. 30; the worst, 42 percent March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	66	7	59	34	24	10
Avg. since 12/85	55	4	51	45	32	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? Forty-nine percent say excellent or good, up one point. The record was 55 percent Aug. 30; the worst, 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	49	3	46	51	35	16
Avg. since 12/85	36	2	34	64	42	22

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 1,023 interviews in the month ending Nov. 8 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. Field work by ICR Survey 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 Ben Fitzpatrick.

ABC News polls are available at ABCNews.com on the internet.

11/08/98	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	23	21	25	28	6	31	6	21
State of Economy	38	36	44	44	14	52	14	36
Personal Finances	32	30	30	34	18	40	16	28
Buying Climate	-2	-4	0	6	-14	10	-14	-1

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	30	31	34	39	13	40	13	30
Women	15	12	16	17	0	21	-4	12
Age:								
18 - 34	18	18	19	24	-2	29	-2	16
35 - 44	22	27	30	21	8	37	5	22
45 - 54	31	26	29	24	9	38	9	23
55 - 64	19	12	31	40	11	47	11	27
65 +	22	18	24	35	12	35	-2	22
Income:								
Under \$15K	-30	-34	-10	-11	-44	-6	-44	-27
\$15K To \$24.9K	1	3	1	6	-20	18	-27	-1
\$25K To \$39.9K	19	22	14	16	2	25	2	16
\$40K To \$49.9K	32	32	44	35	26	60	15	38
Over \$50K	55	53	57	60	37	66	33	56
Region:								
Northeast	25	20	19	37	-1	37	-1	20
Midwest	24	25	38	30	6	40	6	28
South	17	15	21	16	9	29	3	19
West	27	27	22	34	8	40	2	19
Race:								
White	27	25	27	28	12	33	12	25
Black	-5	1	5	15	-29	15	-29	-6
Politics:								
Republican	34	32	33	34	21	46	17	34
Democrat	24	26	28	35	2	35	2	20
Independent	19	15	20	18	4	30	0	16
Education:								
< High School	-2	-6	-2	14	-29	14	-38	-12
High Sch. Grad.	11	10	20	15	2	27	1	14
College +	39	37	37	40	22	48	22	38
Home:								
Own	31	30	34	33	16	39	16	29
Rent	1	0	3	12	-18	15	-18	3
Marital Status:								
Single	18	14	13	23	-7	34	-7	17
Married	30	29	32	34	16	36	15	28

Sep/Wid/Div	0	-1	13	8	-18	18	-22	1
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	28	27	30	31	15	37	14	29
Part-Time	27	22	25	23	-3	31	-5	14
Not Employed	12	9	16	23	-3	25	-6	12