

## **Buying Climate Cooler in 2000 Holiday Season**

Public ratings of the buying climate have slipped a bit from their pre-Thanksgiving levels in 1998 and 1999, raising a question about consumer intentions in the holiday shopping season just ahead.

Forty-nine percent of Americans say it's a good time to buy things, down slightly from 54 percent at this time in 1998 and 1999 alike, and eight points below the record high of 57 percent last January. Rising energy prices may be a reason.

But other ratings are stronger: Seventy-seven percent of Americans rate the overall economy positively, three points from the record high in nearly 15 years of weekly polls. And 66 percent say their own finances are in good shape, four points from the record.

Positive ratings:	11/19/00	11/21/99	11/22/98	11/23/97
National economy	77%	71	71	58
Personal finances	66	66	67	61
Buying climate	49	54	54	45

Thanksgiving marks the traditional start of the holiday shopping season, a make-or-break period in which many retailers rack up as much as half their total annual sales.

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +28 on its scale of +100 to -100, down one point from last week.

The index peaked at +38 last January. It's averaged +29 this year, a point above its record 1999 average. Its lifetime average, depressed by recession in the early 1990s, is -10.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+28	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
2000 average	+29	
1999 average	+28	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-10	

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

**GROUPS** - As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +64 in higher-income households compared to -15 in the lowest, +48 among college graduates but -20 among high-school dropouts, +32 among whites but -4 among blacks and +32 among men but +23 among women.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the ABC/Money index:

**NATIONAL ECONOMY**- Seventy-seven percent of Americans rate the nation's economy as excellent or good, unchanged from last week. The best was 80 percent Jan. 16. The worst was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	77	12	65	23	16	7
Avg. since 12/85	41	4	37	59	39	20

**PERSONAL FINANCES** - Sixty-six percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, down one point from last week. The best was 70 percent, set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January. The worst rating was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	66	7	59	34	26	8
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	31	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Forty-nine percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things they want and need, the same as last week. The best was 57 percent Jan. 16. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	49	3	46	51	37	14
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	36	62	41	21

**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 1,040 interviews in the week ending Nov. 19 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications 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 Aaron Frechette.

ABC News polls can be found at [ABCNEWS.com](http://ABCNEWS.com) on the Internet, at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

11/19/00

This Week    Last Week    4 Wks Ago    3 Mo. Ago    1 Yr. Ago    12 Mo High    12 Mo Low    12 Mo Avg

Group

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GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	28	29	29	33	27	38	23	29
State of Economy	54	54	52	54	42	60	40	50
Personal Finances	32	34	36	38	32	40	30	34
Buying Climate	-2	-2	0	8	8	14	-6	3

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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	32	33	35	44	35	45	30	36
Women	23	23	23	24	19	30	13	22

Age:

18 - 34	25	26	25	36	19	37	16	27
35 - 44	18	23	31	21	30	37	15	27
45 - 54	34	34	31	35	30	45	11	32
55 - 64	37	36	30	29	30	51	13	31
65 +	28	24	30	43	26	45	12	29

Income:

Under \$15K	-15	-10	-13	-27	-31	-8	-36	-22
\$15K To \$24.9K	-8	-5	6	-4	8	26	-20	1
\$25K To \$39.9K	12	17	20	32	24	33	12	23
\$40K To \$49.9K	41	37	46	33	34	60	19	39
Over \$50K	64	63	54	65	60	68	54	61

Region:

Northeast	29	27	36	34	29	48	17	32
Midwest	35	33	31	39	37	46	17	32
South	21	23	20	28	27	31	17	23
West	29	32	32	35	15	43	15	31

Race:

White	32	33	32	38	31	43	25	33
Black	-4	-5	7	7	-1	25	-15	1

Politics:

Republican	42	48	46	42	41	55	31	42
Democrat	20	19	30	27	33	38	7	28
Independent	25	25	21	34	16	39	15	23

Education:

< High School	-20	-23	-12	-6	-6	13	-23	-8
High Sch. Grad.	18	16	15	29	17	32	8	19
College +	48	52	50	49	44	53	38	47

Home:

Own	38	38	34	42	37	44	31	36
Rent	2	7	14	11	5	19	2	9

Marital Status:

Single	20	29	32	39	27	42	9	27
Married	33	32	32	36	31	44	30	34
Sep/Wid/Div	18	16	9	13	6	27	-3	9

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	33	35	33	37	36	44	28	36
Part-Time	38	34	16	37	25	40	11	26
Not Employed	16	15	25	26	14	29	10	19

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