

Confidence Rebounding in Time for the Holidays

Consumer confidence rebounded to its highest level in two months this week – just in time for the holiday shopping season.

Fifty-four percent of Americans now say it's a good time to buy things, matching this year's high and just two points shy of its all-time record a year ago. Seventy-one percent rate the economy positively, and 66 percent say their own finances are in good shape.

These are strong readings in advance of the holiday shopping season, a make-or-break time for many retailers.

Positive ratings:	Today	----- Since 12/85 ----- Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	71%	77	7	38
Personal Finances	66	70	42	56
Buying Climate	54	56	20	37

INDEX - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these gauges, stands at +27 on its scale of +100 to -100, its best since slipping into a slump in mid-September. The index dropped to its lowest point in a year, +22, two weeks ago.

Soaring on the wings of the nation's long-running economic expansion, the index has averaged +28 so far this year and is well on its way to breaking the full-year record of +24 last year. Its lifetime average in this 13-year-old poll is a paltry -12.

	ABC/Money	Index
Today	+27	
Last week	+25	
Record high	+32	(1/17, 3/7, 3/14)
1999 average	+28	
1998 average	+24	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-12	

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

GROUPS – As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +60 in higher-income households compared to -31 in the lowest; +44 among college

graduates but -6 among high-school dropouts; +31 among whites but -1 among blacks; and +35 among men compared to +19 among women.

Here's a closer look at the three components of the 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? Seventy-one percent say excellent or good, up one point last week. The record, 77 percent, was set Jan. 10 and tied in March, April and July. The worst rating was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	71%	10	61	29	21	8
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	35	62	41	21

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, the same as last week. The record, 70 percent, was set Aug. 30, 1998, and tied this January, June and September. The worst was 42 percent March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	66%	5	61	34	24	10
Avg. since 12/85	56	4	52	44	31	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? Fifty-four percent say excellent or good, up two points from last week. The record was 56 percent Nov. 29, 1998; the worst rating, 20 percent, was set in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	54%	4	50	46	31	15
Avg. since 12/85	37	3	35	63	41	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 1,036 interviews in the month ending Nov. 21 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 Daniel Merkle.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet, at:
<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/PollVault/PollVault.html>

11/21/99	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	27	25	23	27	28	32	22	28
State of Economy	42	40	42	42	42	54	38	46
Personal Finances	32	32	32	34	34	40	28	33
Buying Climate	8	4	-4	4	8	12	-4	4

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	35	34	31	41	40	44	30	35
Women	19	16	15	12	16	31	11	20
Age:								
18 - 34	19	17	19	27	23	35	16	27
35 - 44	30	23	13	31	30	40	13	28
45 - 54	30	33	31	19	29	41	13	28
55 - 64	30	28	31	30	23	47	13	27
65 +	26	25	28	26	36	37	17	27
Income:								
Under \$15K	-31	-27	-34	-21	-16	-11	-42	-23
\$15K To \$24.9K	8	12	5	-5	6	12	-15	-1
\$25K To \$39.9K	24	20	9	18	21	38	8	24
\$40K To \$49.9K	34	35	31	50	35	56	27	42
Over \$50K	60	54	59	60	61	67	53	60
Region:								
Northeast	29	23	31	26	25	42	16	29
Midwest	37	25	28	27	36	41	20	32
South	27	29	20	27	16	31	14	23
West	15	18	13	24	39	43	13	27
Race:								
White	31	28	27	31	33	37	26	31
Black	-1	1	-1	1	-9	22	-10	5
Politics:								
Republican	41	41	41	36	38	49	32	39
Democrat	33	30	20	20	26	35	15	26
Independent	16	13	15	28	28	34	13	24
Education:								
< High School	-6	-10	-20	-23	-1	6	-27	-10
High Sch. Grad.	17	15	14	19	17	31	12	20
College +	44	42	42	47	46	52	38	45
Home:								
Own	37	34	34	32	35	40	26	34
Rent	5	5	-3	11	6	26	-3	11
Marital Status:								
Single	27	23	8	31	21	36	8	24
Married	31	28	33	31	35	41	27	34
Sep/Wid/Div	6	7	-3	4	-1	18	-9	6
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	36	33	34	36	39	44	30	36
Part-Time	25	29	22	7	7	38	5	22
Not Employed	14	11	9	18	18	26	6	16

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