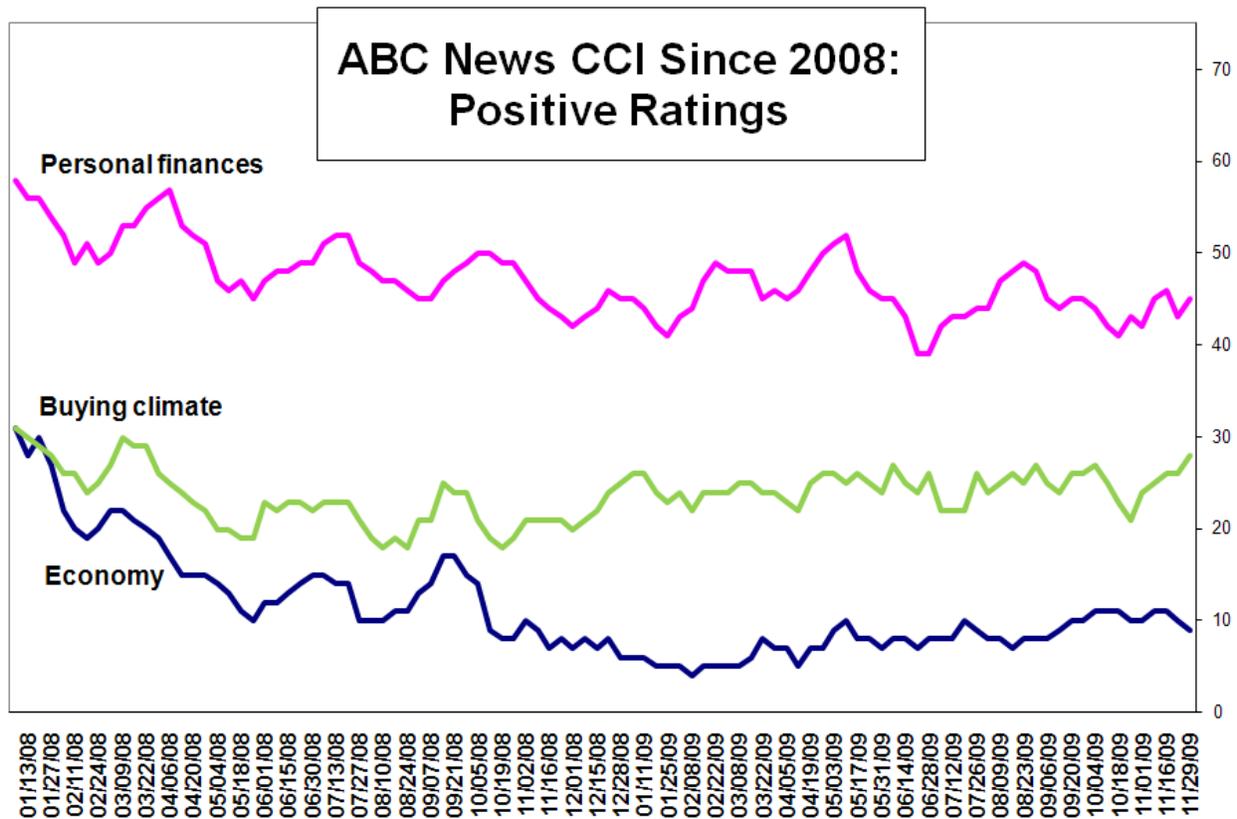


Buying Climate Ratings Pick Up; Is it Enough for Holiday Retailers?

Positive ratings of the buying climate edged up to their best in more than a year and a half this week, holding out a glimmer of hope for holiday retailers. But consumer confidence overall remains so low as to keep the shopping season's outlook deeply clouded.

The ABC News Consumer Comfort Index stands at -45 on its scale of +100 to -100, better than its all-time low last January, but not by a lot. Indeed the CCI, averaging -48 this year, is on pace for its worst year on record in 23 years of weekly polls.



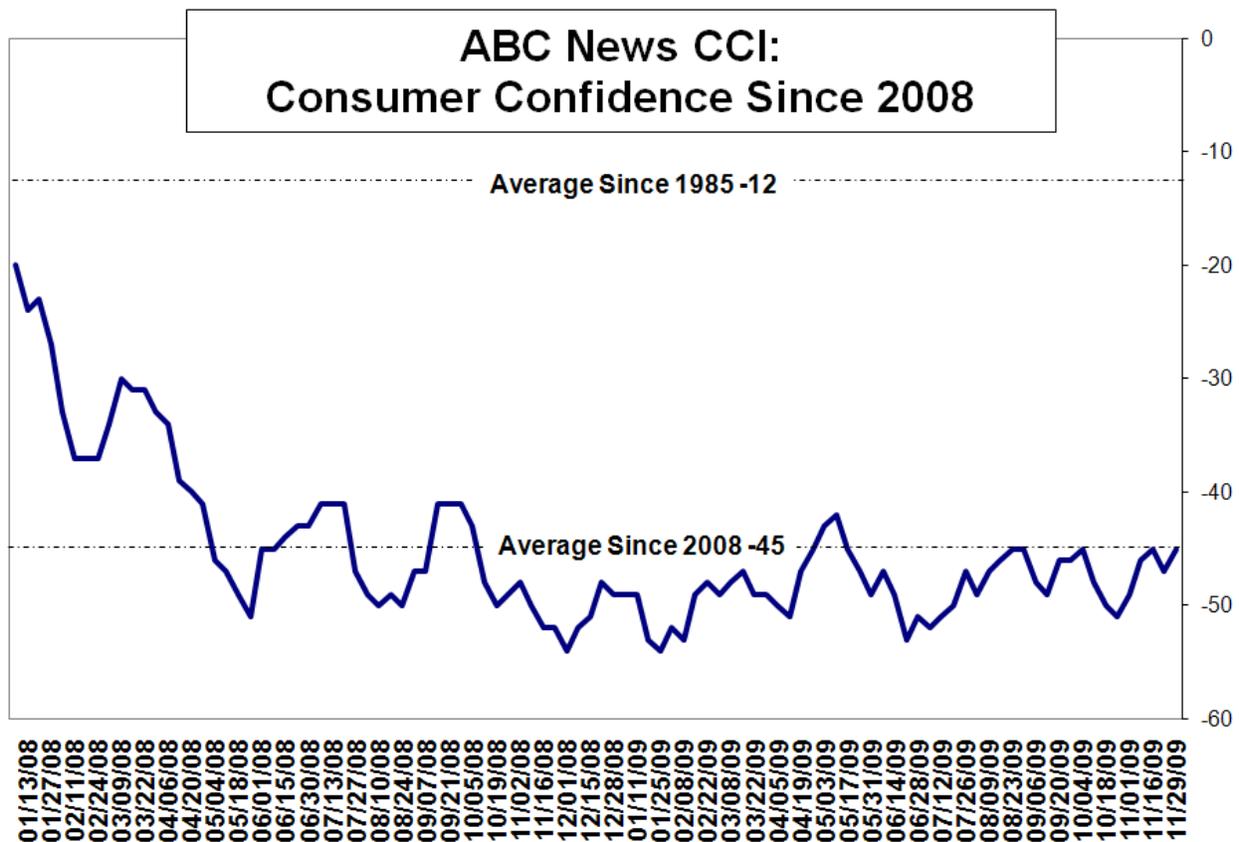
Just 28 percent call this a good time to buy things they want and need, hardly an ebullient rating (the long-term average is 37 percent, the high 57 percent in 2000) but up 7 points since the end of October, 8 points better than at this time last year and its best since March 2008.

The other two components of the index – ratings of personal finances and the economy – haven't moved much since late October, and remain below their best of the year, as well as dismal in historical terms.

The CCI, based on these three gauges, has been mired at roughly its current level since April 2008; dipping as low as -54 in January, inching as high as -41 in September 2008, but never breaking out of the grim zone. Compare its level now to its long-term average, -12 since late 1985.

Actual spending in the crucial holiday season won't be entirely clear until federal retail sales data are available in January. In a positive sign, the government last week reported month-to-month and year-to-year increases in personal consumption expenditures and real disposable income. But the climate isn't good: In a separate ABC News poll last week, 50 percent said they intend to cut back on holiday spending – not quite so bad as a year ago, but still among the broadest levels of intended cutbacks in data back a quarter century.

INDEX – Just 45 percent of Americans now rate their own finances positively, 12 points below average and 6 points from the record low in June. It's been below a majority for 29 weeks straight and all but two weeks this year.

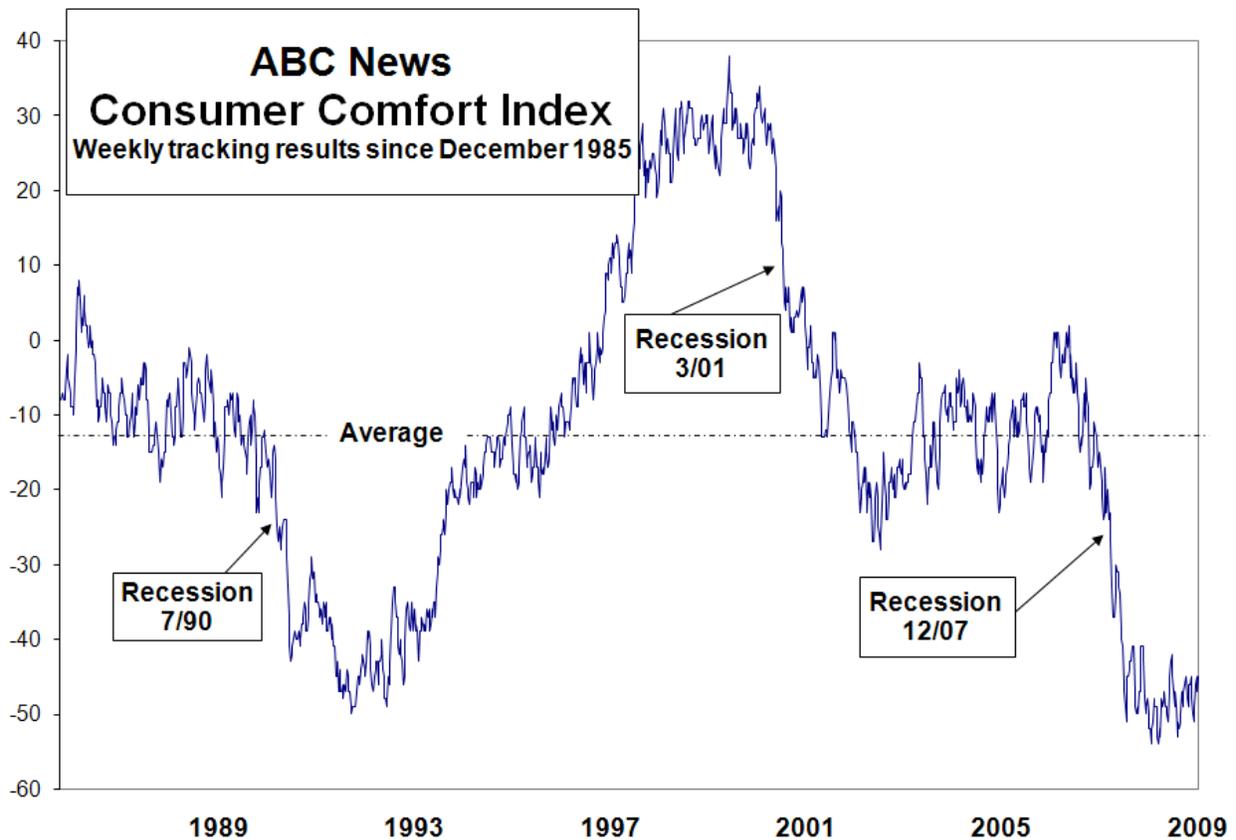


Positive ratings of the buying climate, at 28 percent positive, are still 9 points below average; they've been under 30 percent for a record 90 weeks.

Positive ratings of the national economy are by far the worst of the three measures; at 9 percent they're back in single digits after 10 weeks just over that mark, and a whopping 29 points below their long-term average.

ABC News CCI				
Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	Averages	
			2009	'85-'09
National economy	9%	10	8	38
Buying climate	28	26	25	37
Personal finances	45	43	45	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-45	-47	-48	-12

TREND – At -45, the index matches its best since reaching its 2009 high, -42 May 10. But it is having trouble pushing above that point: Since May the CCI's been at -45 five times – most recently two weeks ago – without improving further.



Historically, as noted, the CCI's suffering. It's been below -40 for a record 84 weeks and hasn't seen positive territory since March 2007. It's miles away from its best yearlong average, +29 in 2000, much less its best week, +38 in January 2000.

	ABC News	CCI
This week	-45	
Last week	-47	
2009 high	-42	May 10
2009 low	-54	Jan. 25, record low
2009 average	-48	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
Average since 12/85	-12	

GROUPS – The index is negative across the board for the 40th week straight, the longest such run in data since 1990, with – unusually – almost no partisan gap. The index is -38 among Republicans, only 4 points from their worst, and -40 among Democrats, their best since January 2008. (It’s -53 among independents.) The average Democratic-Republican gap is 32 points; it was 41 points last year, but just 2 points now.

The index also is much closer than usual between men and women (nearly equal, -43 among men and -46 among women, compared with an average 16-point gap); and between blacks and whites (again nearly equal, -44 among whites and -46 among blacks, compared with an average 28-point gap).

Other gaps remain, with the index, as usual, higher among better-off groups. It’s -4 among those with the highest incomes but -73 among those with the lowest, -37 among people who’ve attended college vs. -58 among high school dropouts and -40 among homeowners compared with -56 among renters.

Here’s a closer look at the three components of the ABC News CCI:

NATIONAL ECONOMY – Nine percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 10 percent last week. The highest was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 4 percent Feb. 8, 2009.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	9	1	8	91	44	47
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	34	62	40	22

PERSONAL FINANCES – Forty-five percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 43 percent last week. The best was 70 percent, last reached in January 2000. The worst was 39 percent June 28 and 21, 2009.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	45	5	40	55	35	20
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	51	43	30	13

BUYING CLIMATE – Twenty-eight percent say it’s an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 26 percent last week. The best was 57 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 18 percent, last reached Oct. 19, 2008.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	28	3	25	72	45	27
Avg. since 12/85	37	3	34	63	42	21

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for the ABC News Consumer Comfort Index are reported in a four-week rolling average. This week’s results are based on telephone interviews among a random national sample of 1,000 adults in the four weeks ending Nov. 29, 2009. The results have a 3-point error margin. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

The index is derived by subtracting the negative response to each index question from the positive response to that question. The three resulting numbers are 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 Chong Xu.

ABC News polls can be found online at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

11/29/09	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	-45	-47	-49	-45	-54	-42	-54	-48
State of Economy	-82	-80	-80	-84	-86	-78	-92	-84
Personal Finances	-10	-14	-16	-4	-16	4	-22	-10
Buying Climate	-44	-48	-52	-46	-60	-44	-60	-51

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-43	-43	-44	-43	-49	-28	-49	-42
Women	-46	-49	-55	-46	-56	-45	-60	-53
Age:								
18 - 34	-45	-46	-41	-37	-58	-31	-61	-45
35 - 44	-50	-48	-55	-42	-40	-35	-62	-49
45 - 54	-36	-42	-54	-57	-59	-36	-65	-49
55 - 64	-48	-53	-51	-45	-52	-39	-65	-52
65+	-45	-44	-48	-46	-53	-40	-56	-48
Income:								
Under \$15K	-73	-75	-79	-78	-80	-51	-84	-72
\$15K To \$24.9K	-70	-49	-62	-45	-56	-40	-81	-65
\$25K To \$39.9K	-54	-51	-57	-51	-53	-49	-73	-60
\$40K To \$49.9K	-41	-36	-47	-49	-62	-27	-68	-49
Over \$50K	-25	-30	-32	-24	-38	-19	-41	-29

\$50K To \$74.9K	-37	-31	-38	-30	-42	-24	-54	-39
\$75K To \$99.9K	-33	-37	-30	-20	-45	-12	-52	-30
Over \$100K	-4	-21	-25	-26	-27	5	-34	-17
Region:								
Northeast	-38	-40	-55	-39	-59	-38	-62	-50
Midwest	-47	-45	-46	-46	-55	-41	-58	-49
South	-47	-50	-53	-48	-52	-39	-59	-50
West	-44	-46	-41	-40	-47	-19	-58	-42
Race:								
White	-44	-44	-50	-44	-48	-39	-52	-47
Black	-46	-56	-56	-53	-72	-41	-72	-56
Politics:								
Republican	-38	-34	-38	-34	-40	-28	-42	-36
Democrat	-40	-46	-49	-56	-59	-40	-65	-55
Independent	-53	-48	-51	-45	-54	-39	-59	-49
Education:								
< High School	-58	-60	-77	-74	-67	-51	-82	-66
High Sch. Grad.	-51	-49	-58	-49	-51	-46	-65	-55
College +	-37	-41	-37	-33	-50	-30	-50	-40
Home:								
Own	-40	-41	-46	-38	-46	-35	-49	-43
Rent	-56	-55	-57	-58	-74	-48	-74	-61
Marital Status:								
Single	-49	-47	-50	-55	-69	-34	-69	-51
Married	-36	-42	-47	-34	-44	-33	-47	-41
Sep/Wid/Div	-59	-56	-56	-57	-56	-53	-70	-61
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-33	-36	-39	-32	-42	-31	-45	-39
Part-Time	-44	-56	-47	-51	-60	-31	-67	-50
Not Employed	-55	-53	-60	-55	-64	-49	-65	-57

END