

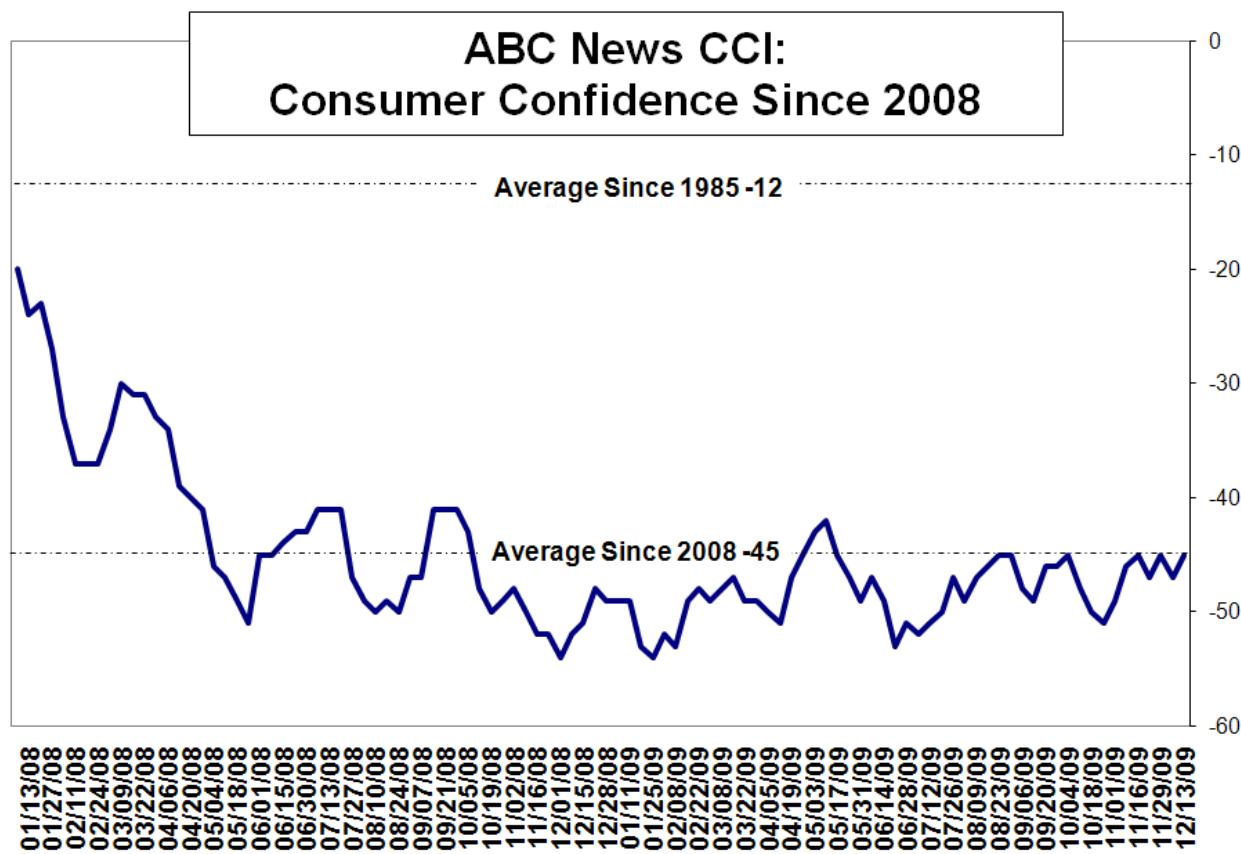
**ABC NEWS CONSUMER INDEX – 12/13/09**

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009

## Buying Climate Ratings Advance, But Confidence Can't Break Through

With just 10 days 'til Christmas, positive ratings of the buying climate are their best since March 2008, suggesting shoppers could throttle up enough to improve the season for some retailers. But it's no sure bet: Consumer confidence overall remains mired in historically dismal territory.

The ABC News Consumer Comfort Index stands at -45 on its scale of +100 to -100; it's been there for three of the last five weeks and hasn't been better since early May. At a 2009 average of -48, the CCI's on pace for its worst year in 24 years of weekly polls.

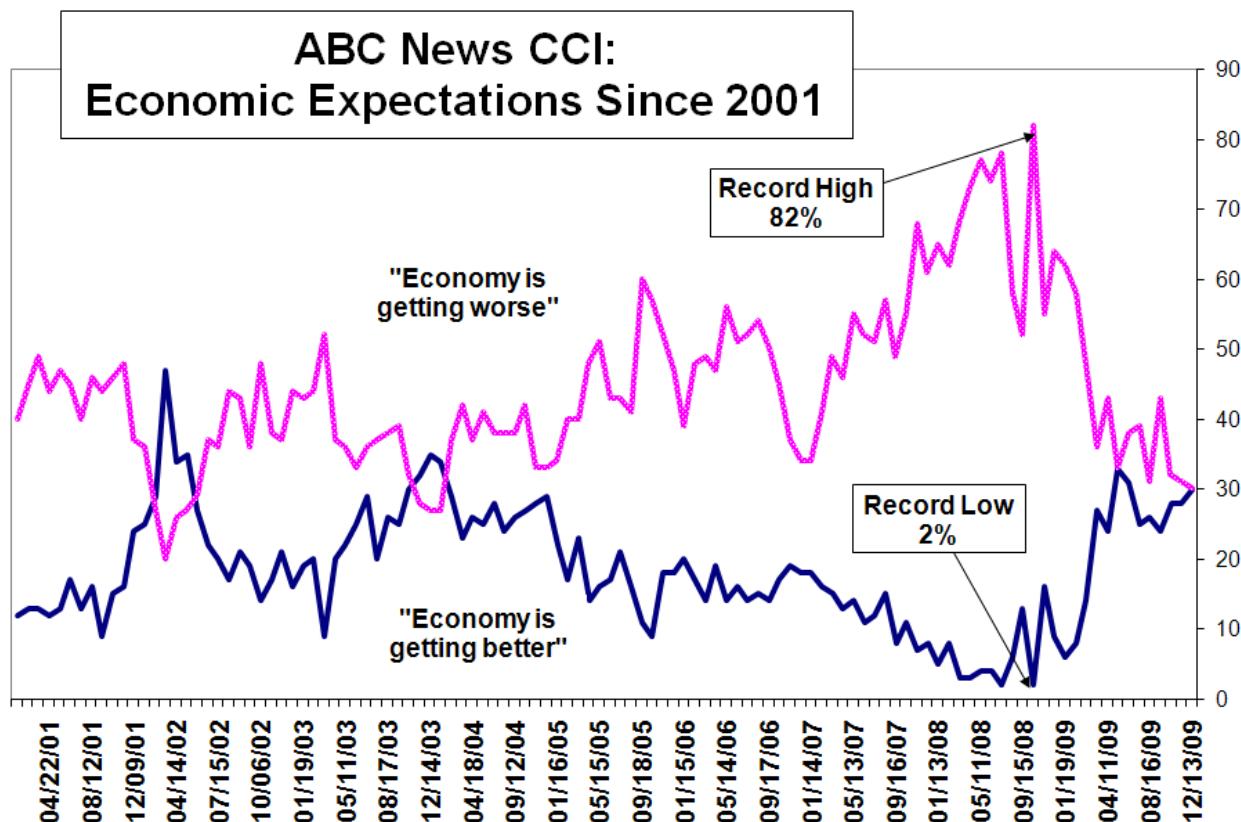


While just 29 percent of Americans call it a good time to buy things they want and need, that's up 8 points since October. But it's still 8 points below its long-term average and 28 points from its high in January 2000.

The current number leaves 71 percent who say it isn't a good time to shop, and while Commerce Department data show a modest gain in retail sales in November, that was mostly cars, gasoline and building supplies – hardly stocking stuffers. Clothing and furniture sales were down month-to-month, and department and electronic stores saw significant dips from a year earlier.

**BETTER/WORSE** – In a separate, forward looking measure, 30 percent say the economy is getting better, up very gradually from 25 percent in July. It now matches the number who say things are getting worse, itself down 13 points since September and below a majority for 11 months, the best run since 2005.

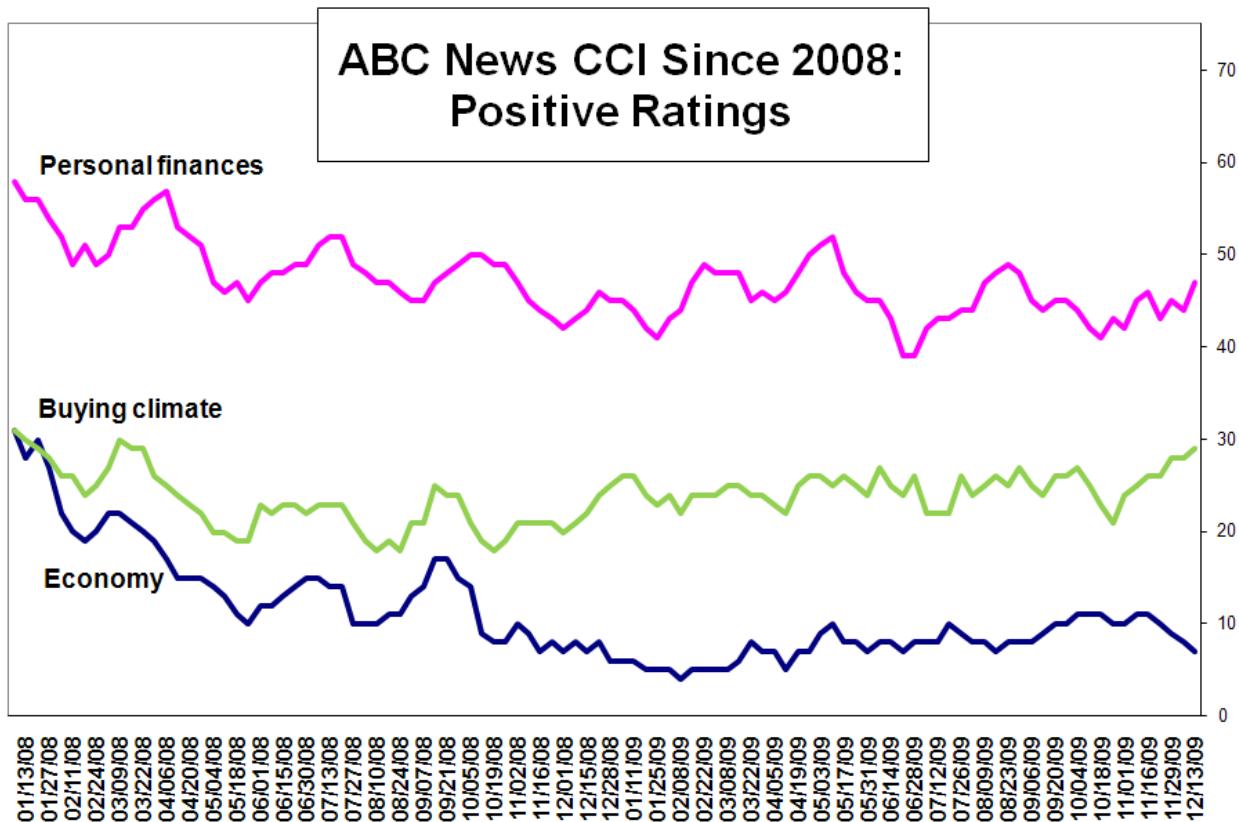
That hardly makes it champagne time. Two-thirds either say the economy's getting worse (30 percent) or staying the same (37 percent) – not good given its condition. In another measure, in a separate new ABC News/Washington Post poll, a vast 86 percent say that from their perspective the recession is not over.



Economy's direction		
	Better	Worse
12/13/09	30%	30
11/16/09	28	31
10/11/09	28	32
9/13/09	24	43
8/16/09	26	31
7/12/09	25	39
6/14/09	31	38
5/17/09	33	33

**INDEX** – Of the three components of the current sentiment index, 47 percent of Americans rate their personal finances positively, the best since late August but still 10 points below average. It's been less than a majority for 31 weeks straight and all but two weeks this year.

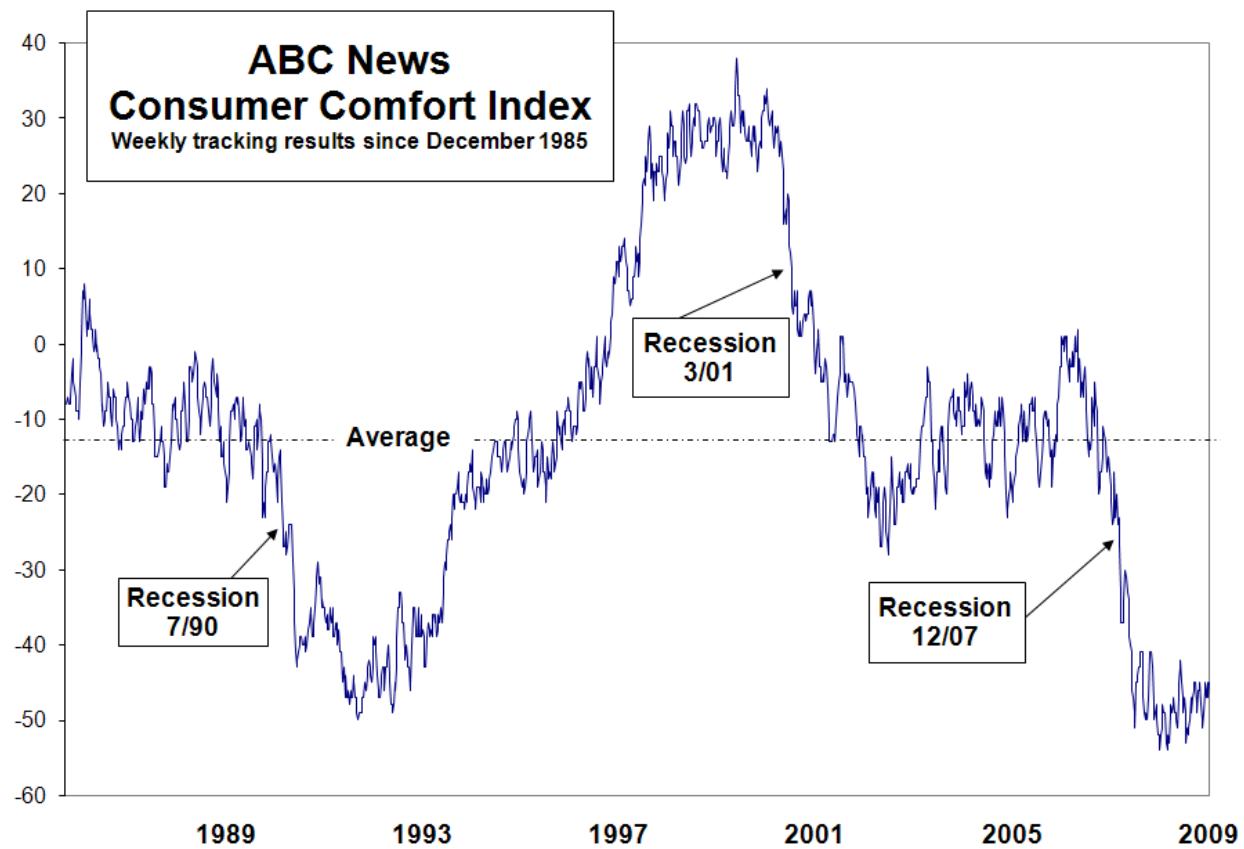
As noted, 29 percent rate the buying climate positively; that's been below 30 percent for a record 92 weeks. And at just 7 percent, positive ratings of the national economy are by far the worst of the three measures – 31 points below their long-term average.



Positive ratings of:	ABC News CCI				
	This week	Last week	2009	'85-'09	
National economy	7%	8	8	38	
Buying climate	29	28	25	37	
Personal finances	47	44	45	57	
Consumer Comfort Index	-45	-47	-48	-12	

**INDEX TREND** – The index has bumped up against -45 seven times since early May, when it peaked at -42 for the year. It's up 6 points from its recent low, -51 on Oct. 25, but still is only 9 points from its all-time low, -54 in late January.

The CCI's been below -40 for 86 consecutive weeks, a record, and hasn't seen positive territory since March 2007. Its best yearlong average was +29 in 2000; its best week, +38 that January.



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

**GROUPS** – The index, as usual, is higher among better-off Americans, but has been negative across the board for 42 weeks straight, the longest such run in data since 1990.

It's -8 among those with the highest incomes but -73 among those with the lowest, -35 among people who've attended college vs. -55 among high school dropouts, -36 among men (the best since May) while -51 among women, and -41 among homeowners compared with -47 among renters (the best since April 2008).

The most striking difference this week is the narrow racial gap, with an index of -44 among whites vs. -43 among blacks (the best since September). Only six other times in data since 1990

has the index been numerically higher among blacks than whites. This gap has been unusually narrow this year, averaging just 9 points, compared with a long-term average of 28 points.

Partisan differences also are unusually narrow, with the CCI at -42 among Republicans compared with -41 among Democrats and -47 among independents – the first time it's been numerically higher among Democrats than Republicans since 1996 and only the 10<sup>th</sup> time the gap has been in the Democrats' favor. The partisan gap has been narrower than usual this year, averaging 19 points, compared with 41 points last year and 32 points long-term.

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

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Seven percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 8 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	7	1	6	93	44	49
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	34	62	40	23

**PERSONAL FINANCES** – Forty-seven percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 44 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	47	5	42	53	33	20
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	51	43	30	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Twenty-nine percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 28 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 18 percent, last reached Oct. 19, 2008.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	29	4	25	71	44	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 Dec. 13, 2009. The results have a 3-point error margin. The expectations question was asked of 500 respondents Dec. 2-13, 2009; that result has a 4.5-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 Peyton M. Craighill.

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

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

12/13/09	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
<hr/>								
<b>Group</b>								
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<b>GENERAL POPULATION:</b>								
Overall Index	-45	-47	-45	-49	-51	-42	-54	-48
State of Economy	-86	-84	-78	-82	-86	-78	-92	-84
Personal Finances	-6	-12	-8	-12	-12	4	-22	-10
Buying Climate	-42	-44	-48	-52	-56	-42	-58	-50
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<b>OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS</b>								
<b>Sex:</b>								
Men	-36	-41	-39	-44	-41	-28	-49	-42
Women	-51	-50	-48	-51	-59	-45	-60	-53
<b>Age:</b>								
18 - 34	-37	-43	-40	-37	-48	-31	-61	-44
35 - 44	-53	-56	-49	-40	-49	-35	-62	-49
45 - 54	-41	-40	-41	-62	-56	-36	-65	-49
55 - 64	-46	-49	-51	-58	-55	-39	-65	-52
65+	-45	-44	-41	-49	-46	-40	-56	-48
<b>Income:</b>								
Under \$15K	-73	-72	-74	-77	-58	-54	-84	-73
\$15K To \$24.9K	-67	-68	-42	-53	-69	-40	-81	-66
\$25K To \$39.9K	-52	-53	-50	-53	-58	-49	-73	-60
\$40K To \$49.9K	-34	-42	-47	-34	-62	-27	-68	-48
Over \$50K	-33	-29	-27	-30	-39	-19	-39	-29
\$50K To \$74.9K	-38	-46	-32	-47	-51	-24	-54	-39
\$75K To \$99.9K	-43	-38	-27	-28	-36	-12	-52	-30
Over \$100K	-8	-3	-24	-17	-24	5	-34	-16
<b>Region:</b>								
Northeast	-41	-40	-38	-44	-51	-38	-62	-49
Midwest	-49	-49	-44	-55	-53	-41	-58	-49
South	-42	-47	-48	-49	-57	-39	-59	-49
West	-42	-45	-42	-40	-37	-19	-58	-42
<b>Race:</b>								
White	-44	-45	-41	-48	-48	-39	-52	-47
Black	-43	-49	-56	-52	-55	-41	-68	-55
<b>Politics:</b>								
Republican	-42	-41	-30	-39	-39	-28	-42	-36
Democrat	-41	-41	-47	-62	-58	-40	-65	-54
Independent	-47	-51	-42	-44	-49	-39	-59	-49
<b>Education:</b>								
< High School	-55	-56	-53	-80	-53	-51	-82	-66
High Sch. Grad.	-52	-51	-50	-54	-53	-46	-65	-55
College +	-35	-39	-37	-35	-48	-30	-48	-39
<b>Home:</b>								
Own	-41	-42	-40	-43	-46	-35	-49	-43

Rent	-47	-52	-52	-58	-66	-47	-71	-60
<b>Marital Status:</b>								
Single	-44	-46	-41	-62	-53	-34	-66	-50
Married	-39	-42	-42	-36	-43	-33	-47	-41
Sep/Wid/Div	-52	-55	-54	-60	-68	-52	-70	-61
<b>Employ. Status:</b>								
Full-Time	-32	-37	-36	-31	-43	-31	-45	-38
Part-Time	-54	-48	-49	-66	-53	-31	-67	-50
Not Employed	-50	-52	-49	-56	-61	-49	-64	-57

1. Do you think the nation's economy is getting better, getting worse or staying the same?

	Getting better	Getting worse	Staying the same	No opinion
12/13/09	30	30	37	3
11/16/09	28	31	38	3
10/11/09	28	32	38	2
9/13/09	24	43	31	2
8/16/09	26	31	41	2
7/12/09	25	39	35	1
6/14/09	31	38	29	1
5/17/09	33	33	33	1
4/11/09	24	43	32	2
3/29/09*	27	36	36	1
3/15/09	14	48	36	2
2/15/09	8	58	31	3
1/19/09	6	62	31	1
12/15/08	9	64	25	1

\*ABC News/Washington Post poll  
Call for full trend.

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