

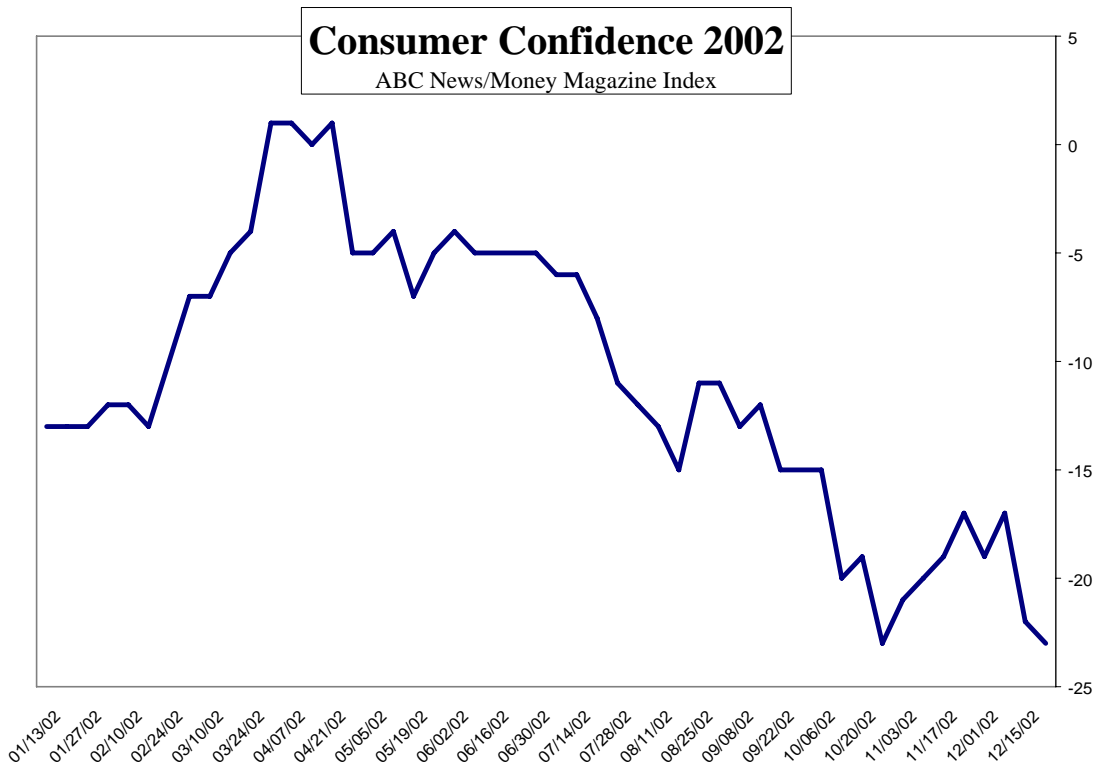
Confidence Matches its Nine-Year Low

A worrisome drop in Americans' ratings of their personal finances is weighing down consumer confidence, which slipped this week to match its lowest level in nearly nine years.

Positive ratings of personal finances, long the strongest and most stable component of the ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, have lost five points in the last three weeks and 11 points since spring. Today 52 percent say their own finances are in good shape, the fewest since August 1995.

Ratings of the national economy and the buying climate are lower: Only 26 percent rate the economy positively and 37 percent say it's a good time to buy things. Each is within a point of its 2002 low.

The ABC/Money index, based on these gauges, stands at -23 on its scale of +100 to -100, matching its lowest of the year, set on Oct. 20 and least seen in January 1994.



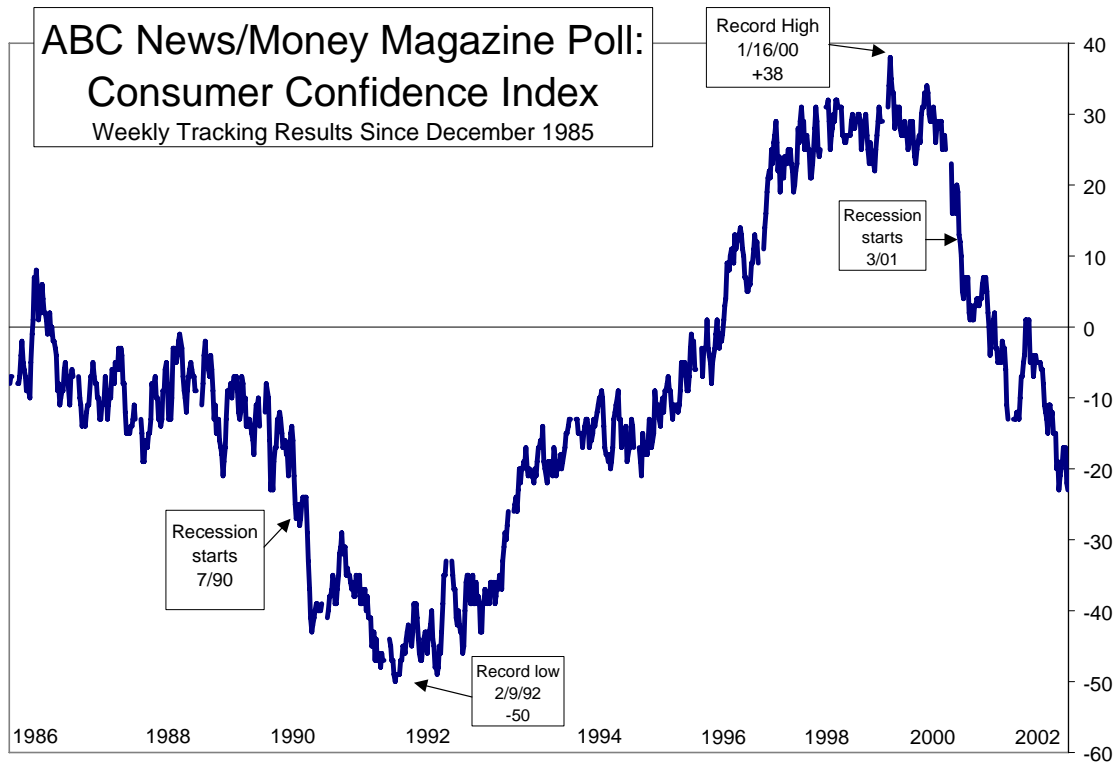
Positive ratings of:	ABC News/Money magazine poll			
	This week	2002 high	2002 low	17-yr. avg.
National economy	26%	45	25	41
Buying climate	37	45	36	39

Personal finances	52	63	52	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-23	+1	-23	-8

TREND – At -23, the ABC/Money index is still well above its all-time low of -50, reached in February 1992, but farther from its all-time high, +38 in January 2000.

The index lost 36 points in 2001, then started to claw its way back up in early 2002, peaking at +1 in March and mid-April. But confidence then slid back, falling to -5 in late April, -15 in early August and mid-September and -23 in October. It advanced modestly through November, to -17, before losing five points last week.

The index's average so far this year is -11, on track to be its worst year since 1996 (also -11). Its best one-year-average was +29 in 2000; its worst, -44 in 1992. Its lifetime average is -8 since the poll began in December 1985.



ABC/Money Index	
Today	-23
Two weeks ago	-17
2002 high	+1 March, April
2002 low	-23 Oct. 20, Today
2002 average	-11
2001 average	+4
2000 average	+29 Best full year
1992 average	-44 Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38 Record high
Feb. 9, 1992	-50 Record low
Average since 12/85	-8

GROUPS – As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans. The index is +5 among people in higher-income households compared to -48 in the lowest, -6 among college graduates while -58 among high-school dropouts, -20 among whites but -49 among blacks and -16 among men while -29 among women.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY – Twenty-six percent of Americans rate the nation's economy as excellent or good, unchanged from last week. The best was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	26	1	25	74	50	24
Avg. since 12/85	41	4	38	59	39	19

PERSONAL FINANCES – Fifty-two percent rate their own finances as excellent or good; it was 54 percent last week. The best was 70 percent, set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January 2000. The worst was 42 percent March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	52	5	47	48	33	15
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	53	43	30	12

BUYING CLIMATE – Thirty-seven 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, 2000. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	37	3	34	63	43	20
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	36	61	41	20

METHODOLOGY - The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index represents a rolling average based on telephone interviews with a random sample of about 1,000 adults nationwide each month. This week's results are based on 1,016 interviews in the month ending Dec. 15, 2002 and have an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points. Field work 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 Dalia Sussman.

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

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12/15/02	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	-22	-17	-15	-6	1	-23	-11
State of Economy	-48	-48	-44	-40	-26	-10	-50	-30
Personal Finances	4	8	14	16	16	26	4	17
Buying Climate	-26	-26	-20	-22	-8	-8	-28	-18

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-16	-17	-7	-14	3	9	-17	-3
Women	-29	-25	-25	-16	-14	-4	-31	-17
Age:								
18 - 34	-16	-10	-5	-5	6	10	-16	-4
35 - 44	-31	-31	-13	-18	-15	3	-31	-12
45 - 54	-22	-16	-23	-24	-12	6	-37	-12
55 - 64	-26	-28	-19	-17	1	20	-30	-11
65 +	-30	-36	-31	-18	-16	-5	-36	-19
Income:								
Under \$15K	-48	-50	-45	-49	-38	-26	-54	-44
\$15K To \$24.9K	-55	-51	-34	-32	-28	-19	-55	-31
\$25K To \$39.9K	-32	-29	-16	-27	-9	1	-34	-16
\$40K To \$49.9K	-28	-30	-7	-18	15	15	-30	-4
Over \$50K	5	6	-1	11	13	33	-15	11
Region:								
Northeast	-22	-29	-27	-19	-2	2	-32	-14
Midwest	-17	-17	-13	-9	-8	4	-27	-10
South	-26	-21	-25	-16	-9	4	-26	-11
West	-24	-19	4	-14	-2	9	-24	-7
Race:								
White	-20	-19	-13	-9	-2	7	-20	-6
Black	-49	-47	-39	-39	-41	-18	-51	-37
Politics:								
Republican	12	7	6	7	13	34	2	13
Democrat	-35	-34	-31	-31	-15	-14	-37	-24
Independent	-33	-25	-15	-15	-12	-2	-33	-13
Education:								
< High School	-58	-59	-39	-58	-23	-12	-59	-35
High Sch. Grad.	-28	-25	-23	-11	-10	-3	-29	-14
College +	-6	-4	-4	-5	1	13	-18	0
Home:								
Own	-15	-14	-16	-10	0	9	-21	-6
Rent	-39	-38	-18	-29	-18	-9	-39	-21
Marital Status:								
Single	-20	-18	-7	-3	-7	10	-20	-8
Married	-18	-17	-15	-15	0	11	-20	-6
Sep/Wid/Div	-40	-38	-30	-27	-25	-14	-42	-28
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-11	-12	-8	-9	3	12	-20	-2
Part-Time	-28	-15	-12	-13	-4	14	-28	-8
Not Employed	-38	-37	-27	-24	-19	-13	-38	-23

END