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ABC NEWS/MONEY CONSUMER INDEX - 12/15/96
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CONSUMER CONFIDENCE:
STANDING TALL

Consumer confidence is steaming toward year's end in fine fettle, up a notch this week to within a shade of its eight-year high in the weekly ABC News/Money magazine consumer survey.

Sixty percent of Americans say their own finances are in good shape, two points short of the record in the decade-old poll. Forty-eight percent rate the economy "excellent" or "good," four points from the top, set two weeks ago.

But ratings of the buying climate, just 39 percent positive, are lagging - a sign the holiday shopping season, however good it is, might end up as less of a triumph than could have been the case.

INDEX - The ABC/Money Consumer Comfort Index, based on these three gauges, stands at -2 on its scale of +100 to -100, up a point this week. It reached -1 two weeks ago, a level last seen (fleetinglly) in September 1988.

This is the year the index clearly broke free of its 1990s doldrums. It started 1996 at -17 and has gained ground since, averaging -11 for the year. That's near its pre-recession average, -9 from 1986-90. From 1990-95, by contrast, it averaged -30.

ABC/Money Index	
Today	-2
1996 average	-11
1990-95	-30
1986-90	-9
Full average	-20

INDICES - Ratings of the economy have been powering the resurgence of confidence; they're seven points better than their pre-recession (1986-90) average. Ratings of personal finances are three points better; ratings of the buying climate are the same. All are far over their average from 1990-93, when recession crippled public faith in the economy.

Positive ratings for...	Today	1990-93	1986-90
National economy	48	15	41
Buying climate	39	26	39
Personal finances	60	49	57

ELECTION - This is the first week since the presidential election that confidence among Republicans has regained parity with Democrats. Usually it's stronger among Republicans, who tend to be better off financially.

Confidence faltered among Republicans - and soared among Democrats - around the election. Now it's recovered among Republicans while remaining high among Democrats, creating the current post-election surge.

	ABC/Money Index		
	Today	Month ago	12-month avg.
Democrats	+7	+6	-13
Republicans	+7	-9	+1

GROUPS - Confidence lags in economically vulnerable groups, including women, blacks, the poor and the less-educated. The index is +6 among men but -10 among women; +2 among whites but -18 among blacks; +34 in higher-income households but -40 in the lowest; and +11 among people who have attended college but -23 among high school dropouts.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY- Fifty-two percent rate the economy negatively, up one point this week. It's averaged 61 percent this year, compared to 85 percent from 1990-93 and 59 percent from 1986-90. The best, 52 percent positive, was Dec. 1, 1996. The worst, 93 percent negative, was in late 1991 and early 1992. The average for the life of the index is 69 percent negative.

PERSONAL FINANCES - Sixty percent rate their finances positively, up two points this week. It's averaged 57 percent this year, compared to 49 percent in the 1990-93 slump and 57 percent before the recession. The worst was 58 percent negative March 14, 1993; the best, 62 percent positive Dec. 20, 1987. The full average is 54 percent positive.

BUYING CLIMATE - Sixty-one percent call this a bad time to buy things, unchanged this week. It's averaged 63 percent this year, compared to 74 percent during the 1990-93 slump and 61 percent before the recession. The worst is 80 percent negative Nov. 2 and Oct. 28, 1990; the best, 52 percent positive May 11, 1986. The full average is 66 percent negative.

	National Economy	Personal Finances	Buying Climate
This week	52% neg	60% pos	61% neg
1996 Average	61% neg	57% pos	63% neg
Recession Average (mid-1990 to 1993)	85% neg	51% neg	74% neg
Pre-Recession Avg. (1986 to mid-1990)	59% neg	57% pos	61% neg
Full Average (1986-1995)	69% neg	54% pos	66% neg
Worst	93% neg	58% neg	80% neg
Best	50% pos	62% pos	52% pos

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. Interviewing by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa. This week's results are based on 1,044 interviews in the month ending Dec. 15 and have an error margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

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 Gary Langer.

For details contact the ABC News Polling Unit, (212) 456-2621. ABC polls are available in the ABC News area of America Online.

12/15/96	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	-2	-3	-7	-11	-14	-1	-21	-11
State of Economy	-4	-2	-8	-16	-30	4	-38	-23
Personal Finances	20	16	14	10	10	22	8	15
Buying Climate	-22	-22	-26	-26	-22	-18	-36	-25

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	6	7	3	4	0	8	-9	0
Women	-10	-11	-15	-25	-27	-8	-33	-21
Age:								
18 - 34	-3	-5	-5	-10	-9	-1	-23	-10
35 - 44	-5	0	-10	-19	-15	0	-23	-13
45 - 54	6	4	-8	-5	-21	12	-36	-12
55 - 64	3	4	7	-22	-12	12	-40	-12
65 +	-3	-8	-10	1	-25	9	-25	-9
Income:								
Under \$15K	-40	-43	-40	-49	-50	-32	-61	-49
\$15K To \$24.9K	-17	-22	-30	-32	-48	-12	-48	-30
\$25K To \$39.9K	2	1	0	-9	-16	2	-26	-12
\$40K To \$49.9K	-4	5	22	5	6	26	-31	4
Over \$50K	34	30	14	22	31	35	12	23
Region:								
Northeast	-5	-10	-11	-10	-17	-5	-34	-18
Midwest	-2	0	3	6	-9	10	-15	-1
South	-1	1	-9	-15	-15	1	-24	-13
West	-1	-4	-10	-23	-15	6	-23	-13
Race:								
White	2	2	-5	-4	-9	4	-15	-7
Black	-18	-24	-14	-48	-49	-10	-56	-36
Politics:								
Republican	7	2	-9	-1	1	11	-12	1
Democrat	7	9	6	-19	-22	10	-28	-12

Independent	-13	-13	-12	-8	-17	-8	-26	-16
Education:								
< High School	-23	-29	-44	-46	-36	-20	-49	-38
High Sch. Grad.	-10	-7	-7	-18	-23	-4	-30	-18
College +	11	11	8	6	1	11	-6	4
Home:								
Own	1	3	0	-2	-6	5	-15	-4
Rent	-11	-15	-19	-33	-35	-11	-37	-27
Marital Status:								
Single	-5	-9	-7	-5	-8	0	-26	-13
Married	3	4	-3	-9	-9	4	-18	-6
Sep/Wid/Div	-16	-18	-16	-26	-42	-9	-43	-28
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	8	11	0	-4	-1	11	-14	-3
Part-Time	-14	-17	-25	-20	-15	-8	-35	-19
Not Employed	-12	-15	-11	-18	-30	-5	-33	-21