

## **Buying Mood Stays Tepid As Holidays Approach**

With the holidays just around the corner, news for retailers has not improved. Positive ratings of the buying climate remain at a six-month low heading into the homestretch of the holiday shopping season.

Forty-seven percent of Americans say it's a good time to buy things – fewer than at this time in either 1998 or 1999, two strong retail seasons.

However, views of the buying climate are higher than at this point in any year from 1985 to 1997. And other ratings remain strong: Seventy-six percent rate the national economy positively, four points from the high set in January; and 67 percent say their own finances are in good shape, three from the peak.

	Today	----- Since 12/85 -----		----
Positive ratings:		Highest	Lowest	Average
National Economy	76%	80	7	41
Personal Finances	67	70	42	57
Buying Climate	47	57	20	38

INDEX – The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on these ratings, stands at +27 on its scale of +100 to –100, up two points from last week, though well below its peak of +38 last January.

The index has averaged +29 this year, a point above its record 1999 average. Its lifetime average, depressed by recession in the early 1990s, is -9.

	ABC/Money Index	
Today	+27	
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
2000 average	+29	
1999 average	+28	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	- 9	

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

GROUPS - As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans: The index is +58 in higher-income households compared to -13 in the lowest, +39 among college

graduates but -4 among high-school dropouts, +29 among whites but +14 among blacks and +30 among men but +23 among women.

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

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

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	76	9	67	24	18	6
Avg. since 12/85	41	4	37	59	39	20

**PERSONAL FINANCES** - Sixty-seven percent rate their own finances as excellent or good, up two points from last week. The best was 70 percent, set Aug. 30, 1998 and last matched in January. The worst rating was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	67	7	60	33	26	7
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	31	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Forty-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. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	47	4	43	53	40	13
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	36	62	41	21

**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 1,023 interviews in the month ending Dec. 17 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 Dalia Sussman.

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

12/17/00

This Last 4 Wks 3 Mo. 1 Yr. 12 Mo 12 Mo 12 Mo  
 Week Week Ago Ago Ago High Low Avg

Group

GENERAL POPULATION:

Group	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
Overall Index	27	25	28	30	29	38	23	29
State of Economy	52	52	54	52	48	60	40	50
Personal Finances	34	30	32	32	30	40	30	34
Buying Climate	-6	-6	-2	6	8	14	-6	2

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	30	28	32	34	41	45	28	36
Women	23	22	23	26	16	30	13	22

Age:

18 - 34	28	27	25	33	20	37	16	27
35 - 44	30	26	18	29	37	37	15	26
45 - 54	29	27	34	27	34	45	11	32
55 - 64	12	18	37	24	32	51	12	30
65 +	25	24	28	30	26	45	12	29

Income:

Under \$15K	-13	-15	-15	-16	-29	-8	-36	-20
\$15K To \$24.9K	4	-8	-8	-20	6	26	-20	0
\$25K To \$39.9K	22	17	12	21	30	32	12	22
\$40K To \$49.9K	15	28	41	42	39	60	15	39
Over \$50K	58	60	64	66	61	68	54	61

Region:

Northeast	34	35	29	31	38	48	17	33
Midwest	22	25	35	38	23	46	17	32
South	27	23	21	22	24	30	16	22
West	24	21	29	32	30	43	17	32

Race:

White	29	29	32	32	34	43	25	33
Black	14	10	-4	11	-2	25	-15	2

Politics:

Republican	37	36	42	38	52	55	31	42
Democrat	26	22	20	29	23	38	7	27
Independent	25	26	25	26	19	39	16	24

Education:

< High School	-4	-15	-20	-18	-13	13	-23	-9
High Sch. Grad.	22	23	18	22	26	32	8	19
College +	39	38	48	49	43	53	38	47

Home:

Own	31	31	38	35	36	44	31	36
Rent	17	13	2	15	7	19	2	10

Marital Status:

Single	33	21	20	29	21	42	9	27
Married	29	30	33	32	35	44	29	34
Sep/Wid/Div	5	6	18	21	8	27	-3	9

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	36	35	33	39	38	44	28	35
Part-Time	17	19	38	27	25	40	11	26
Not Employed	16	14	16	17	14	29	10	20

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