

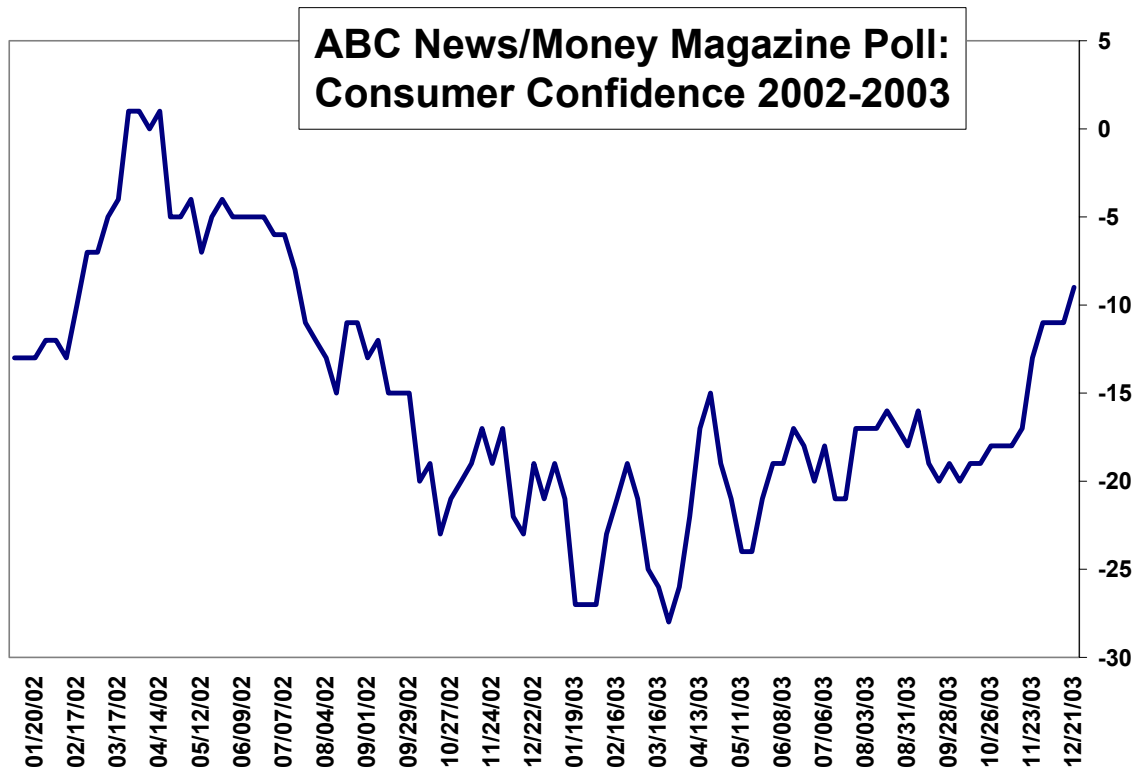
Confidence, Continuing to Improve, Reaches 17-Month High

Consumer confidence continues to edge up, this week reaching its best level in 17 months and matching its career average.

The ABC News/Money magazine Consumer Comfort Index, based on current ratings of the economy, personal finances and the buying climate, is now at -9 on its scale of +100 to -100. It was -11 last week and -18 six weeks ago.

Improving economic ratings are helping to lift the index. Thirty-eight percent now say the economy's in good shape – far from ideal, but up 10 points since mid-October to its best level since July 7, 2002.

This week's index matches its overall average in 18 years of weekly polls. It drifted below average in July 2002, was at -19 at this point last year and bottomed out at -28 in March, as war with Iraq neared.

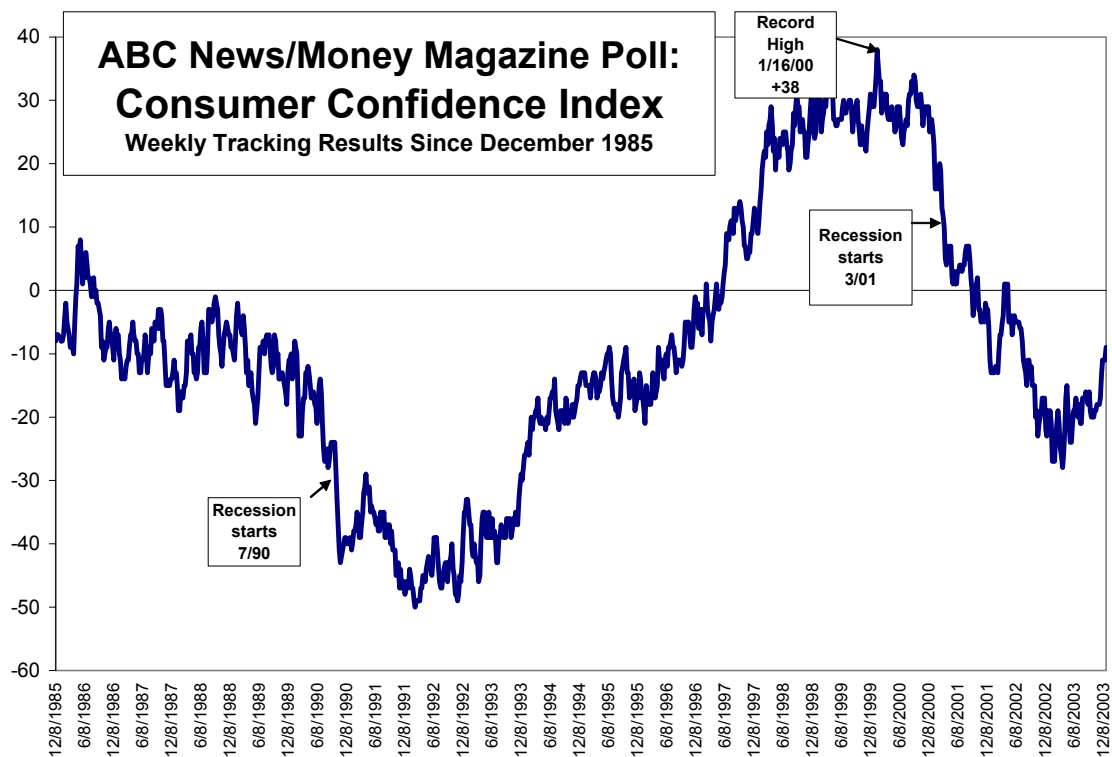


In the index's other measures, 42 percent call it a good time to buy things, three points above average, and 56 percent say their own finances are OK, about average.

ABC News/Money magazine poll					
Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	2003 high	2003 low	18-yr. avg.
National economy	38%	35	38	21	40
Buying climate	42	43	43	32	39
Personal finances	56	56	60	52	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-9	-11	-9	-28	-9

The boost in confidence coincides with a recent improvement in George W. Bush's economic ratings. In an ABC News/Washington Post poll this week, more Americans approved than disapproved of his work on the economy – a first since April. And while 40 percent still said most Americans are worse off now than they were before Bush took office, that's down from a high of 52 percent three months ago.

TREND – The ABC/Money index has averaged just -19 so far this year, on pace for its worst annual performance since 1994. Its best one-year average was +29 in 2000; its worst, -44 in 1992. The index has been as low as -50 in February 1992, and as high as +38 in 2000.



ABC/Money Index	
Today	-9
Last week	-11
Six weeks ago	-18
Recent low	-28

March 2003

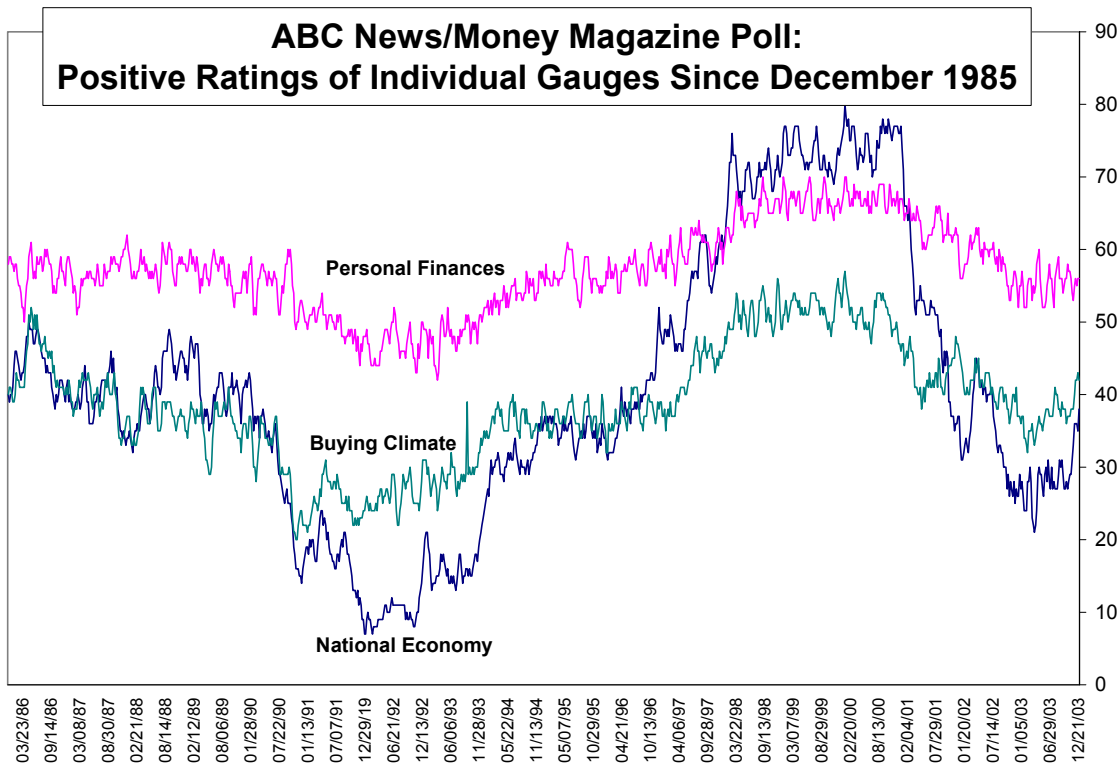
Recent high	+1	March, April 2002
2003 average to date	-19	
2002 average	-11	
2001 average	+4	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
Feb. 9, 1992	-50	Record low
Average since 12/85	-9	

GROUPS – As usual, confidence is higher among better-off Americans. The index is +20 among higher-income people while -46 among those with the lowest incomes, +6 among college graduates while -34 among high-school dropouts, and -4 among whites but -37 among blacks.

The recent gap between men and women – it was 18 points a month ago and 16 points last week – is closing. This week’s index is -7 among men and -12 among women. That’s a 12-month high for women, and 15 points better than their 12-month average. Men are three points below their 12-month average.

Partisan and regional differences persist. The index is +34 among Republicans, -11 among independents and -37 among Democrats. It’s better in the West (-2) and the South (-7) than in the Northeast (-12) and Midwest (-18).

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



GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	-9	-11	-13	-20	-19	-9	-28	-19
State of Economy	-24	-30	-28	-46	-42	-24	-58	-43
Personal Finances	12	12	10	10	10	20	4	11
Buying Climate	-16	-14	-20	-24	-26	-14	-36	-26
OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-7	-3	-3	-10	-15	-1	-19	-10
Women	-12	-19	-21	-28	-23	-12	-38	-27
Age:								
18 - 34	-7	-10	-13	-18	-7	-4	-25	-15
35 - 44	-14	-14	-14	-21	-28	-8	-28	-18
45 - 54	-4	-5	-14	-16	-25	-4	-41	-22
55 - 64	-8	-13	-8	-27	-20	-8	-39	-21
65+	-14	-14	-12	-18	-29	-9	-33	-23
Income:								
Under \$15K	-46	-47	-51	-53	-48	-42	-67	-52
\$15K To \$24.9K	-28	-41	-49	-35	-49	-28	-57	-43
\$25K To \$39.9K	-26	-26	-11	-43	-39	-11	-49	-32
\$40K To \$49.9K	-2	0	-7	-14	-18	20	-32	-12
Over \$50K	20	25	17	8	10	25	-8	7
Region:								
Northeast	-12	-12	-19	-12	-21	-12	-38	-24
Midwest	-18	-18	-8	-26	-16	-7	-34	-19
South	-7	-11	-19	-17	-22	-6	-29	-17
West	-2	-3	-1	-23	-17	-1	-34	-18
Race:								
White	-4	-5	-7	-17	-17	-4	-23	-15
Black	-37	-40	-44	-44	-46	-23	-68	-45
Politics:								
Republican	34	31	17	10	14	34	-3	11
Democrat	-37	-39	-30	-42	-35	-25	-46	-38
Independent	-11	-12	-19	-21	-29	-11	-38	-24
Education:								
< High School	-34	-36	-40	-35	-53	-23	-56	-42
High Sch. Grad.	-19	-23	-25	-28	-24	-13	-40	-25
College +	6	6	6	-9	-4	6	-17	-7
Home:								
Own	-4	-3	-2	-12	-13	0	-24	-13
Rent	-25	-30	-37	-40	-35	-25	-43	-35
Marital Status:								
Single	-22	-21	-25	-26	-13	-11	-37	-23
Married	7	5	3	-11	-15	7	-27	-11
Sep/Wid/Div	-35	-38	-41	-38	-41	-21	-52	-39
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	0	-5	-6	-12	-10	0	-20	-11
Part-Time	2	0	-21	-19	-21	2	-40	-23
Not Employed	-26	-23	-19	-30	-32	-17	-40	-29

END