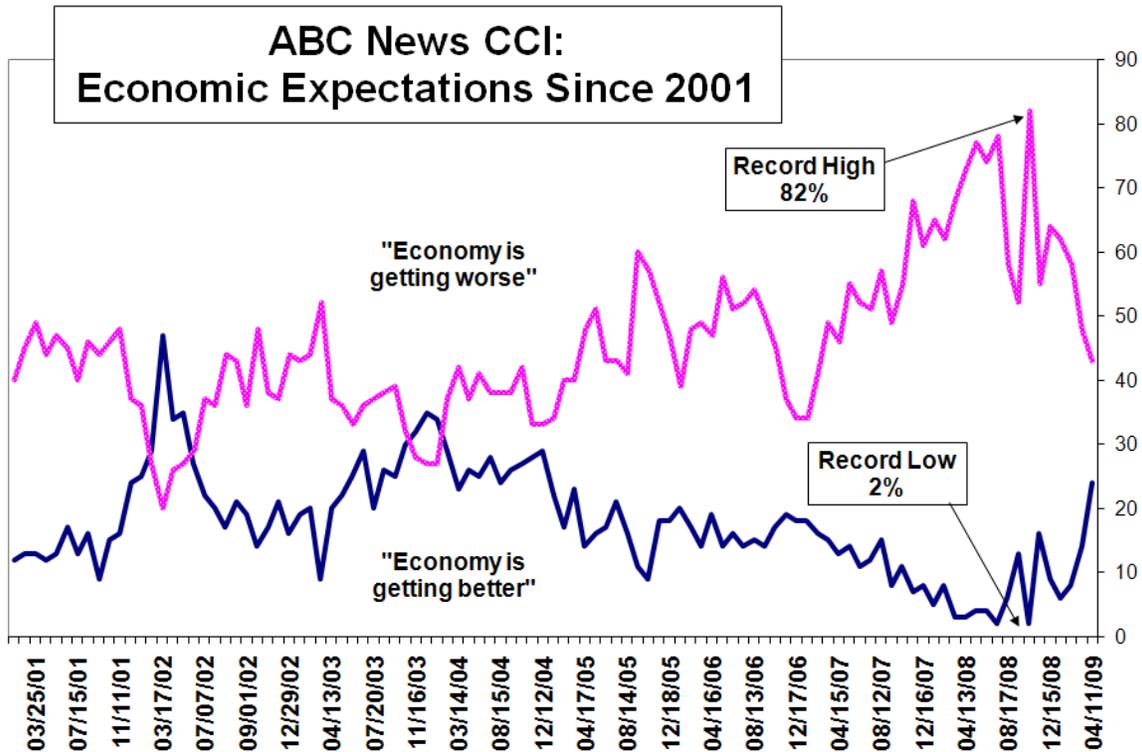


## **Economic Optimism Gains, But Current Ratings, Not So**

Easing pessimism about the economy's direction hasn't done a thing for ratings of current conditions: They're their lowest in two months and very close to their record low in 23 years of weekly polling.

The ABC News Consumer Comfort Index, based on ratings of current conditions, stands at -51 on its scale of +100 to -100, just 3 points from its all-time low of -54 in late January. The index is down 4 points from its 2009 high four weeks ago.

Expectations about the economy – measured separately – have been moving in another direction. Twenty-four percent say the economy's getting better, 10 points higher than last month and 5 points higher than the 28-year average. Still, nearly twice as many are pessimistic – and pessimism in this poll is a bit higher than in an ABC News/Washington Post poll two weeks ago.



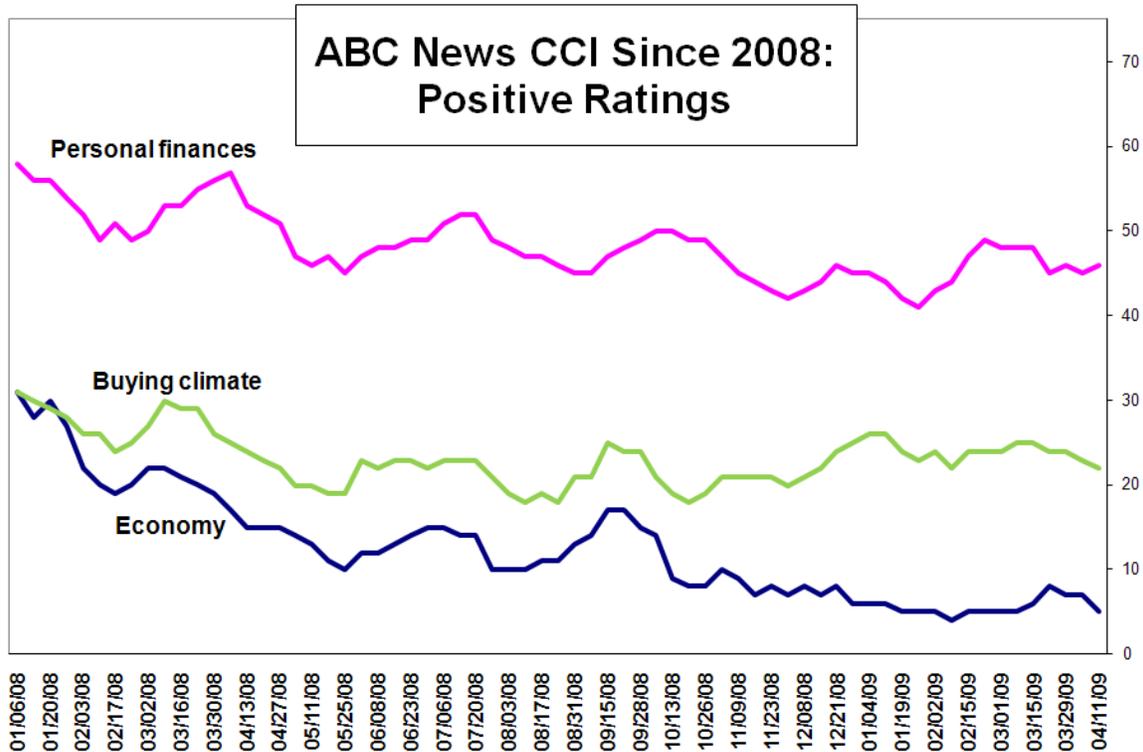
There's a political component to both measures. Ratings of the current economy have sagged among Republicans, while improving among Democrats to their best since July. (However, they remain better among Republicans, who tend to be better-off financially.) There's more partisanship in expectations; 60 percent of Republicans say the economy's getting worse, compared with 32 percent of Democrats and independents alike.

In speeches today Barack Obama and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke both noted some gains but also stressed the difficulties ahead. Those were reinforced by a Commerce Department report showing unexpectedly weak retail sales in March, with their biggest decline in three months.

INDEX – The CCI is based on Americans' ratings of the national economy, their personal finances and the buying climate. Only 5 percent rate the economy positively, in single digits for a record 23 weeks and 34 points below their long-term average.

Twenty-two percent say it's a good time to buy things, matching the low for the year and just 4 points from the all-time low in October and August. A quarter or fewer have rated the buying climate positively for 13 weeks straight.

Ratings of personal finances, typically the best of the three measures, are at 46 percent positive – just 5 points above their low, 41 percent in late January. Fewer than a majority have rated their own finances positively for 38 weeks straight, the worst such run since a 40-week stretch in 1992-93.



ABC News CCI

Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	Averages	
			2009	'85-'09
National economy	5%	7	6	39
Buying climate	22	23	24	37
Personal finances	46	45	45	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-51	-50	-50	-11

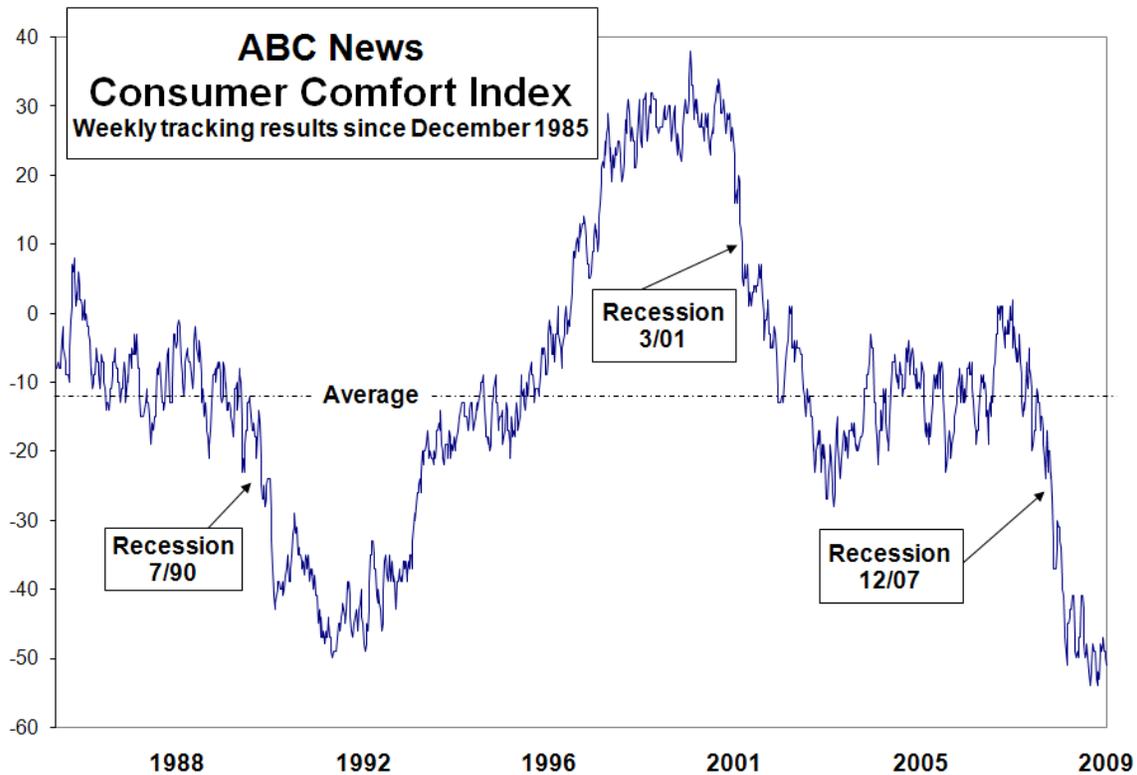
**EXPECTATIONS** – As noted, in a separate, forward-looking measure, 24 percent say the economy’s getting better, up from 14 percent in the middle of last month (and similar to its level in a March 29 ABC/Post poll). Economic optimism now stands slightly above the long-term average, 19 percent in polls since March 1981.

The 43 percent who say the economy is getting worse has eased to under a majority for the second consecutive month (a first in two years) and is down from a highly unusual spike last fall as the financial crisis initially took hold (82 percent in October) and, more recently, 62 percent in January. But it’s up slightly from 36 percent in last month’s ABC/Post measure.

	Economy’s direction		
	Better	Worse	Same
4/11/09	24%	43	32
3/29/09	27	36	36
3/15/09	14	48	36
2/15/09	8	58	31
1/19/09	6	62	31
12/15/08	9	64	25
11/16/08	16	55	28
10/13/08	2	82	13
9/15/08	13	52	34
8/17/08	6	58	36
7/13/08	2	78	18
6/15/08	4	74	21
5/11/08	4	77	18

**TREND** – The CCI’s been stuck inside a narrow 7-point range, from -47 to -54, since mid-October – a record 27-week slump. It’s been below -40 for 51 consecutive weeks, another record, and hasn’t seen positive territory in more than two years.

The index’s average for the year so far is -50, 39 points below its long-term average and 6 points below the worst annual average on record, -44 in 1992. It’s miles away from the record high, +38 in January 2000.



	ABC News CCI	
This week	-51	
Last week	-50	
2009 high	-47	March 15
2009 low	-54	Jan. 25, record low
2009 average	-50	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high
Average since 12/85	-11	

**GROUPS** – The index is negative across the board for the seventh consecutive week, with the smallest partisan gap in eight years.

The index is -40 among Republicans (their worst since early December) vs. -54 among Democrats (their best since early July) and -53 among independents. The 14-point partisan gap this week is the smallest since February 2001, and compares with margins of 33 points in polling since 1990 and 41 points in election-year 2008 alone.

As usual, CCI is higher among better-off groups: It's -21 among those with the highest incomes (their worst since mid-January) but -72 among those with the lowest, -39 among those who've attended college (the same as last week, matching their best since early November) vs. -73 among high school dropouts, -47 among men (their worst since late January) while -53 among women (the 6-point margin matches the narrowest since early

September), -47 among homeowners compared with -60 among renters and -49 among whites vs. -61 among blacks.

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

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Five percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 7 percent last week. The highest was 80 percent Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 4 percent Feb. 8.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	5	1	4	95	39	56
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	35	61	40	22

**PERSONAL FINANCES** – Forty-six percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 45 percent last week. The best was 70 percent, last reached in January 2000. The worst was 41 percent Jan. 25.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	46	5	41	54	39	15
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	30	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Twenty-two percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 23 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 18 percent Oct. 19, Aug. 10 and Aug. 24, 2008.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	22	2	20	78	46	32
Avg. since 12/85	37	3	35	63	41	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 April 11, 2009. The results have a 3-point error margin. The expectations question was asked of 500 respondents April 1-11, 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 Patrick J. Moynihan.

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

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

04/11/09	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	-51	-50	-47	-49	-39	-39	-54	-47
State of Economy	-90	-86	-88	-88	-70	-66	-92	-80
Personal Finances	-8	-10	-4	-12	6	6	-18	-6
Buying Climate	-56	-54	-50	-48	-52	-48	-64	-56
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-47	-44	-41	-44	-32	-32	-49	-42
Women	-53	-54	-51	-53	-44	-39	-59	-51
Age:								
18 - 34	-44	-43	-40	-47	-33	-33	-60	-46
35 - 44	-62	-61	-48	-52	-36	-27	-62	-46
45 - 54	-46	-45	-46	-51	-44	-31	-61	-48
55 - 64	-55	-51	-52	-54	-34	-34	-64	-49
65+	-50	-51	-51	-45	-45	-31	-55	-45
Income:								
Under \$15K	-72	-74	-66	-77	-73	-51	-87	-74
\$15K To \$24.9K	-67	-72	-74	-66	-65	-44	-83	-68
\$25K To \$39.9K	-67	-63	-61	-63	-45	-43	-71	-58
\$40K To \$49.9K	-55	-52	-46	-55	-56	-16	-62	-49
Over \$50K	-30	-31	-31	-32	-25	-17	-41	-29
\$50K To \$74.9K	-46	-45	-43	-31	-39	-28	-57	-42
\$75K To \$99.9K	-23	-28	-31	-36	-29	-17	-52	-31
Over \$100K	-21	-20	-14	-31	-5	5	-34	-12
Region:								
Northeast	-49	-48	-56	-42	-46	-42	-62	-52
Midwest	-47	-43	-46	-57	-52	-31	-58	-46
South	-51	-54	-44	-52	-34	-33	-59	-47
West	-54	-48	-43	-42	-25	-25	-56	-43
Race:								
White	-49	-46	-45	-46	-37	-35	-50	-44
Black	-61	-68	-61	-62	-57	-47	-81	-64
Politics:								
Republican	-40	-37	-32	-33	-10	-10	-40	-25
Democrat	-54	-59	-58	-60	-51	-51	-70	-60
Independent	-53	-49	-43	-51	-38	-36	-55	-47
Education:								
< High School	-73	-74	-51	-71	-45	-45	-77	-63
High Sch. Grad.	-61	-56	-46	-50	-49	-38	-62	-52
College +	-39	-39	-45	-43	-29	-29	-50	-40
Home:								
Own	-47	-44	-43	-43	-33	-33	-49	-42
Rent	-60	-64	-56	-67	-53	-49	-80	-62
Marital Status:								
Single	-56	-48	-34	-51	-34	-34	-69	-51
Married	-43	-43	-45	-41	-31	-26	-46	-39
Sep/Wid/Div	-65	-68	-68	-64	-62	-52	-70	-63
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-45	-42	-39	-40	-29	-29	-47	-38

Part-Time	-50	-37	-38	-53	-28	-26	-66	-48
Not Employed	-57	-61	-57	-58	-51	-47	-66	-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
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
11/16/08	16	55	28	1
10/13/08	2	82	13	2
9/15/08	13	52	34	2
8/17/08	6	58	36	*
7/13/08	2	78	18	2
6/15/08	4	74	21	1
5/11/08	4	77	18	1

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

\*\*\*END\*\*\*