**ABC NEWS CONSUMER INDEX – 9/15/08**
**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008**

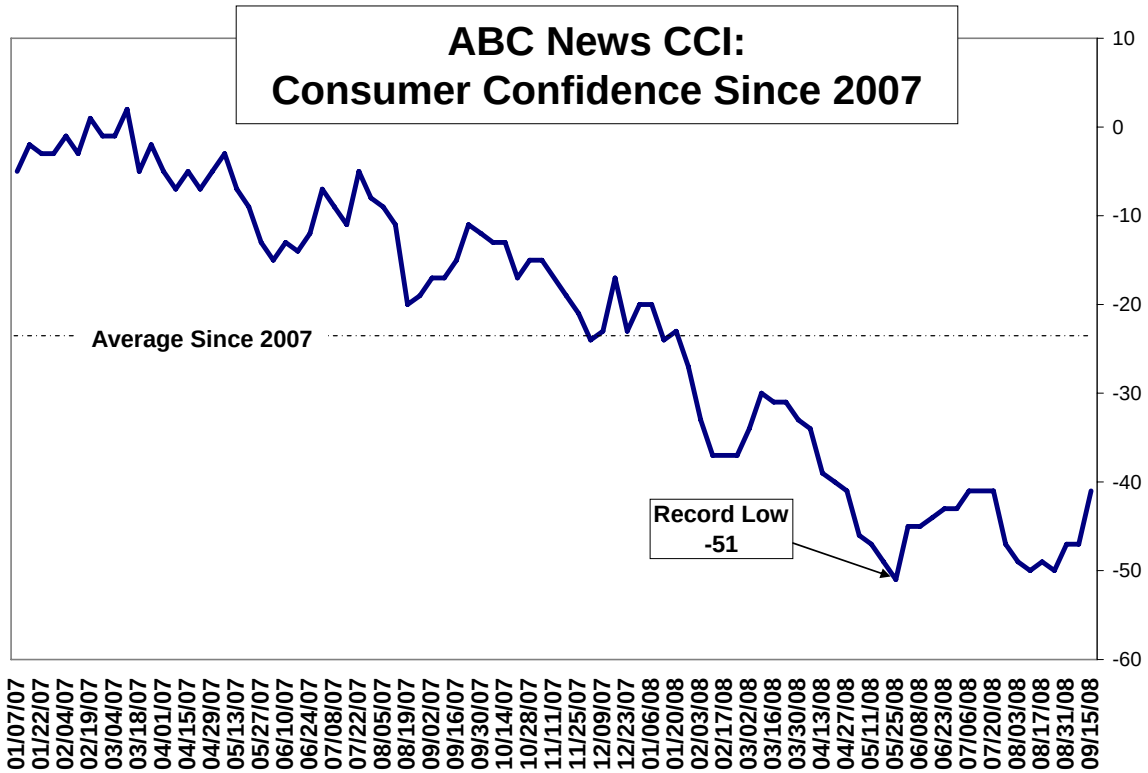
# Confidence Gains; Ahead of the Woe?

Consumer confidence advanced this week, in polling completed before both Wall Street's latest turmoil and the latest hurricane-inspired gas price shock.

ABC's Consumer Comfort Index gained 6 points this week to stand at -41 on its scale of +100 to -100; it's increased this far in a week only nine times before. That may have reflected easing energy prices and a drop in inflation in August.

How it holds up remains to be seen, given the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy filing, the Merrill Lynch sale, concerns about the stability of other institutions and the stock market's 504-point skid on Monday.

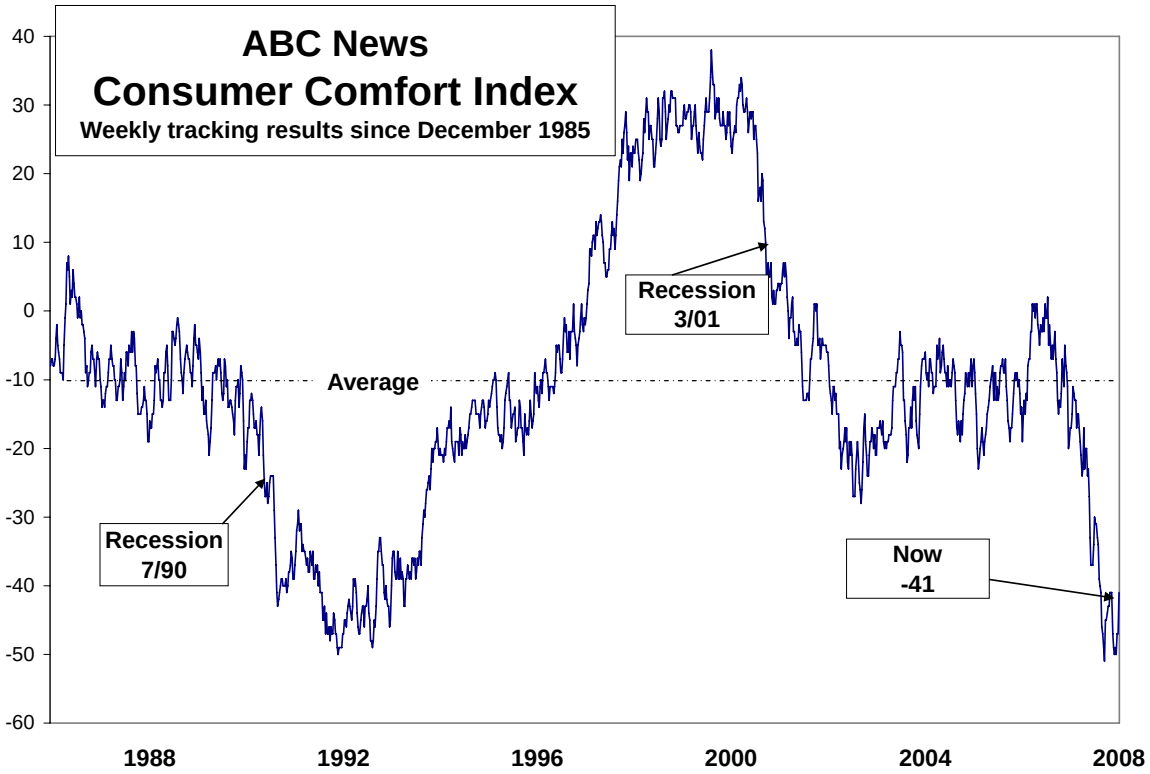
The market, though, recovered by about 140 points today. And while gasoline prices spiked 19 cents this week, that could pull back as refineries recover from Hurricane Ike, which slammed into Texas on Saturday. Gas had been easing the past two months.



The CCI is hardly good – still 10 points from its lowest, -51 in May. Just 17 percent rate the national economy positively, a quarter say it's a good time to buy things and 47 percent – still under half – say that their own finances are good.

EXPECTATIONS – In a separate monthly measure, just 13 percent say the economy is improving; 52 percent say it's getting worse and 34 percent think it's staying the same. While negative overall, that level of pessimism is its lowest since a year ago. At the same time, a net of 86 percent say the economy's either staying the same or getting worse – a bleak outlook, since so few say it's good to begin with.

| | Economy's direction | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Better | Worse | Same |
| 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 |
| 4/13/08 | 3 | 73 | 22 |
| 3/16/08 | 3 | 68 | 28 |
| 2/17/08 | 8 | 62 | 29 |
| 1/13/08 | 5 | 65 | 29 |
| 12/16/07 | 8 | 61 | 28 |
| 11/18/07 | 7 | 68 | 25 |
| 10/14/07 | 11 | 55 | 30 |
| 9/16/07 | 8 | 49 | 41 |



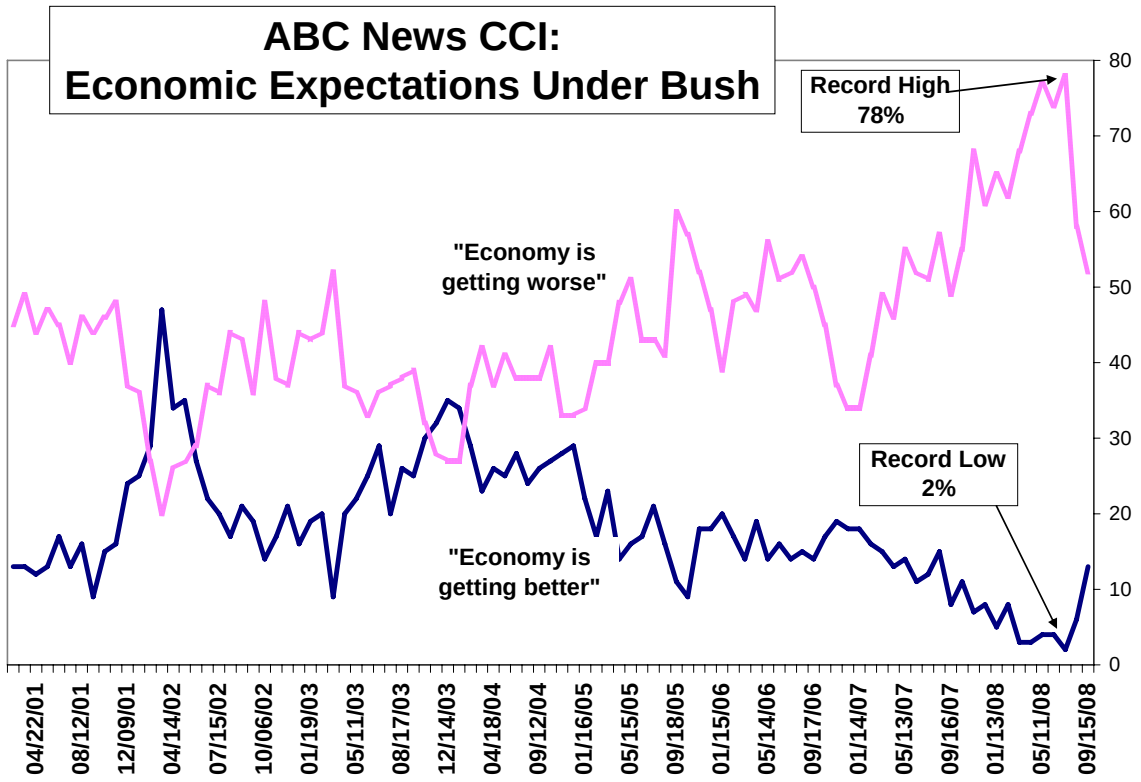
INDEX – The CCI is based on Americans' ratings of their current finances, the national economy and the buying climate. It's the eighth straight week that fewer than half have rated their own finances positively; at 47 percent this measure is 5 points from its record low in March 1993.

Ratings of the economy are down 14 points from the start of the year and a far cry from the long-term average of 39 percent, although up from their recent low, 10 percent in early August. Twenty-five percent call it a good time to buy things, 13 points below the average in weekly polls since late 1985.

ABC News CCI

| | | | Averages | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Positive ratings of: | This week | Last week | 2008 | '85-'08 |
| National economy | 17% | 14 | 17 | 39 |
| Buying climate | 25 | 21 | 24 | 38 |
| Personal finances | 47 | 45 | 50 | 57 |
| Consumer Comfort Index | -41 | -47 | -40 | -10 |

TREND – After a worsening 2007, the CCI started the year at -20 and dropped to its all-time low of -51, then struggled on through the summer, pulling up to -41 in mid-July, dropping back to -50 in August, now back to -41. It's averaged -40 this year, just 4 points from its worst-ever year, 1992. It's far from its long-term average of -10 and many miles from its record high, +38 in January 2000.



| | ABC News CCI | |
|---|---|---|
| This week | -41 | |
| Last week | -47 | |
| 2008 low | -51 | May 25 |
| 2008 high | -20 | Jan. 6 |
| 2008 average | -40 | |
| 2000 average | +29 | Best full year |
| 1992 average | -44 | Worst full year |
| Jan. 16, 2000 | +38 | Record high |
| May 25, 2008 | -51 | Record low |
| Average since 12/85 | -10 | |

GROUPS – The index is higher as usual in better-off groups but remains negative across the board for the twelfth straight week. It's -6 among people with the highest incomes compared with -80 among those with the lowest, -32 among college graduates vs. -66 among high-school dropouts, -55 among blacks vs. -38 among whites and -49 among renters vs. -36 among homeowners. The gender gap reappeared this week, -34 and -46 among men and women, respectively.

Acute partisan differences remain; the index ranges from -14 among Republicans to -42 among independents and -58 among Democrats.

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

NATIONAL ECONOMY – Seventeen percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 14 percent last week. The highest was 80 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The lowest was 7 percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

| | Pos. NET | Excel. | Good | Neg. NET | Not good | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| This week | 17 | 2 | 15 | 83 | 36 | 47 |
| Avg. since 12/85 | 39 | 3 | 36 | 61 | 40 | 21 |

PERSONAL FINANCES – Forty-seven 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 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

| | Pos. NET | Excel. | Good | Neg. NET | Not good | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| This week | 47 | 7 | 40 | 53 | 36 | 17 |
| Avg. since 12/85 | 57 | 5 | 52 | 43 | 30 | 13 |

BUYING CLIMATE –Twenty-five percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 21 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000.

| | Pos. NET | Excel. | Good | Neg. NET | Not good | Poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| This week | 25 | 2 | 23 | 75 | 47 | 28 |
| Avg. since 12/85 | 38 | 3 | 35 | 62 | 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 Sept. 15, 2008. The results have a 3-point error margin. The expectations question was asked of 500 respondents Aug. 3-17, 2008; 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 Emily B. Guskin.

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

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

| 09/15/08 | 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 | -41 | -47 | -49 | -44 | -15 | -11 | -51 | -33 |
| State of Economy | -66 | -72 | -78 | -74 | -28 | -26 | -80 | -57 |
| Personal Finances | -6 | -10 | -6 | -4 | 14 | 22 | -10 | 5 |
| Buying Climate | -50 | -58 | -62 | -54 | -32 | -26 | -64 | -47 |
| OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS | | | | | | | | |
| Sex: | | | | | | | | |
| Men | -34 | -44 | -49 | -44 | -5 | 0 | -49 | -27 |
| Women | -46 | -48 | -48 | -42 | -24 | -16 | -53 | -38 |
| Age: | | | | | | | | |
| 18 - 34 | -43 | -55 | -52 | -41 | -24 | -2 | -58 | -28 |
| 35 - 44 | -49 | -50 | -49 | -39 | -3 | 3 | -58 | -32 |
| 45 - 54 | -31 | -37 | -49 | -46 | -13 | -12 | -54 | -34 |
| 55 - 64 | -42 | -41 | -46 | -58 | -7 | -7 | -64 | -36 |
| 65+ | -34 | -41 | -45 | -36 | -21 | -18 | -53 | -36 |
| Income: | | | | | | | | |
| Under $15K | -80 | -72 | -66 | -73 | -64 | -34 | -87 | -67 |
| $15K To $24.9K | -54 | -73 | -76 | -83 | -27 | -27 | -83 | -56 |
| $25K To $39.9K | -47 | -65 | -59 | -66 | -30 | -16 | -67 | -44 |
| $40K To $49.9K | -34 | -44 | -45 | -16 | -11 | 1 | -59 | -32 |
| Over $50K | -22 | -24 | -30 | -29 | 9 | 13 | -34 | -13 |
| $50K To $74.9K | -31 | -41 | -45 | -46 | -1 | -1 | -57 | -30 |
| $75K To $99.9K | -25 | -24 | -29 | -19 | 9 | 25 | -35 | -14 |
| Over $100K | -6 | -1 | -15 | -15 | 17 | 41 | -19 | 5 |
| Region: | | | | | | | | |
| Northeast | -44 | -50 | -55 | -54 | -22 | -17 | -61 | -38 |
| Midwest | -31 | -39 | -37 | -40 | -17 | -11 | -53 | -32 |
| South | -49 | -52 | -51 | -40 | -11 | -2 | -53 | -33 |
| West | -32 | -42 | -49 | -41 | -12 | 5 | -54 | -26 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Race: | | | | | | | | |
| White | -38 | -43 | -44 | -40 | -9 | -5 | -47 | -30 |
| Black | -55 | -58 | -80 | -63 | -47 | -20 | -80 | -53 |
| Politics: | | | | | | | | |
| Republican | -14 | -22 | -23 | -13 | 34 | 34 | -28 | -3 |
| Democrat | -58 | -60 | -63 | -63 | -38 | -28 | -66 | -49 |
| Independent | -42 | -51 | -50 | -41 | -23 | -16 | -55 | -37 |
| Education: | | | | | | | | |
| < High School | -66 | -60 | -65 | -58 | -40 | -24 | -77 | -52 |
| High Sch. Grad. | -42 | -56 | -57 | -47 | -26 | -16 | -61 | -39 |
| College + | -32 | -38 | -40 | -36 | 0 | 3 | -43 | -22 |
| Home: | | | | | | | | |
| Own | -36 | -41 | -43 | -36 | -7 | -3 | -45 | -27 |
| Rent | -49 | -59 | -67 | -60 | -35 | -25 | -67 | -48 |
| Marital Status: | | | | | | | | |
| Single | -46 | -65 | -63 | -42 | -26 | -13 | -65 | -35 |
| Married | -32 | -36 | -38 | -37 | -1 | 0 | -43 | -23 |
| Sep/Wid/Div | -57 | -55 | -61 | -62 | -34 | -30 | -67 | -54 |
| Employ. Status: | | | | | | | | |
| Full-Time | -34 | -39 | -43 | -39 | -4 | -3 | -47 | -25 |
| Part-Time | -33 | -53 | -57 | -30 | -11 | -4 | -66 | -32 |
| Not Employed | -50 | -52 | -52 | -51 | -31 | -21 | -58 | -42 |

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 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 |
| 4/13/08 | 3 | 73 | 22 | 1 |
| 3/16/08 | 3 | 68 | 28 | 2 |
| 2/17/08 | 8 | 62 | 29 | 1 |
| 1/13/08 | 5 | 65 | 29 | 1 |
| 12/16/07 | 8 | 61 | 28 | 3 |
| 11/18/07 | 7 | 68 | 25 | 1 |
| 10/14/07 | 11 | 55 | 30 | 4 |
| 9/16/07 | 8 | 49 | 41 | 1 |

Call for full trend.

***END***