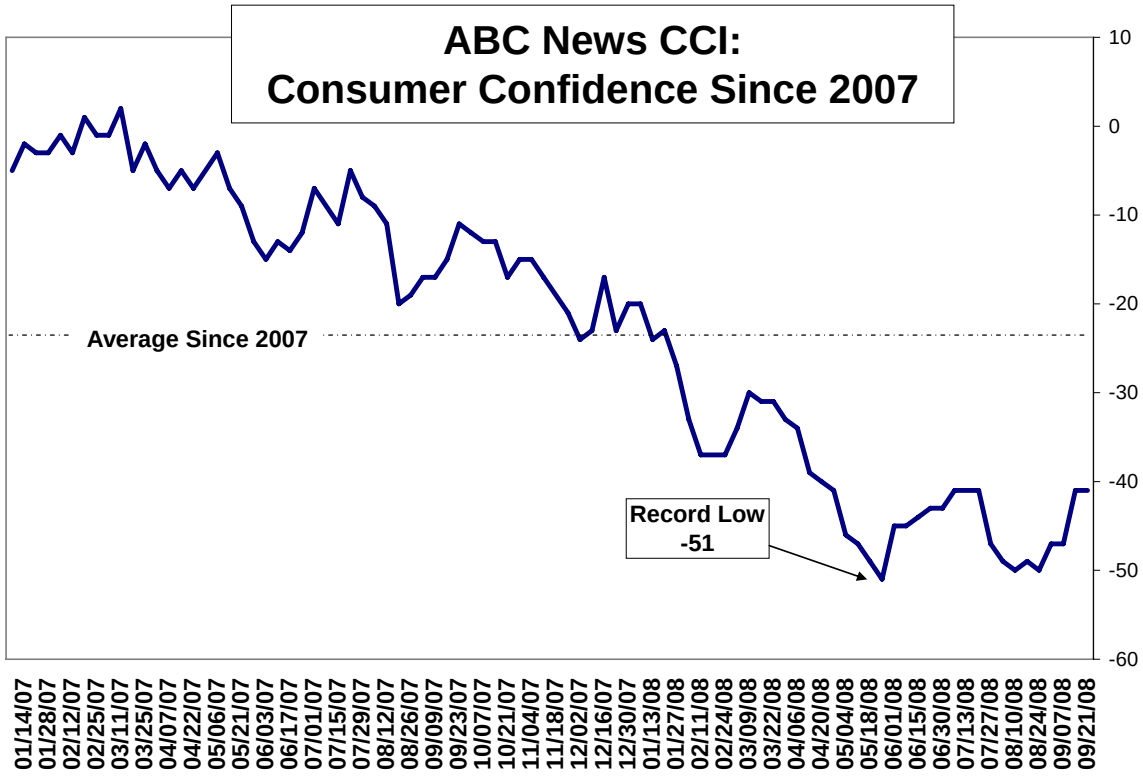
ABC NEWS CONSUMER INDEX – 9/21/08
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008

No Relief for Consumers Amidst Financial Turmoil

Consumers express no relief as the federal government scrambles to get the economy off the ropes: ABC's Consumer Comfort Index stands at -41 on its scale of +100 to -100, the same as last week and the 59th straight week it's been in negative double digits.

While the CCI's no worse than last week's reading, after subsequent market upheaval, neither is it any better. That -41 compares poorly to a 20-year average of -10. And fewer than 20 percent have rated the national economy positively for 26 weeks, the longest such run since 1993.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson today pitched the administration's $700 billion bailout plan to the Senate. But there's public as well as legislative skepticism; in a separate ABC News/Washington Post poll, Americans divide evenly: Forty-four percent approve of the government's efforts, 42 percent disapprove.

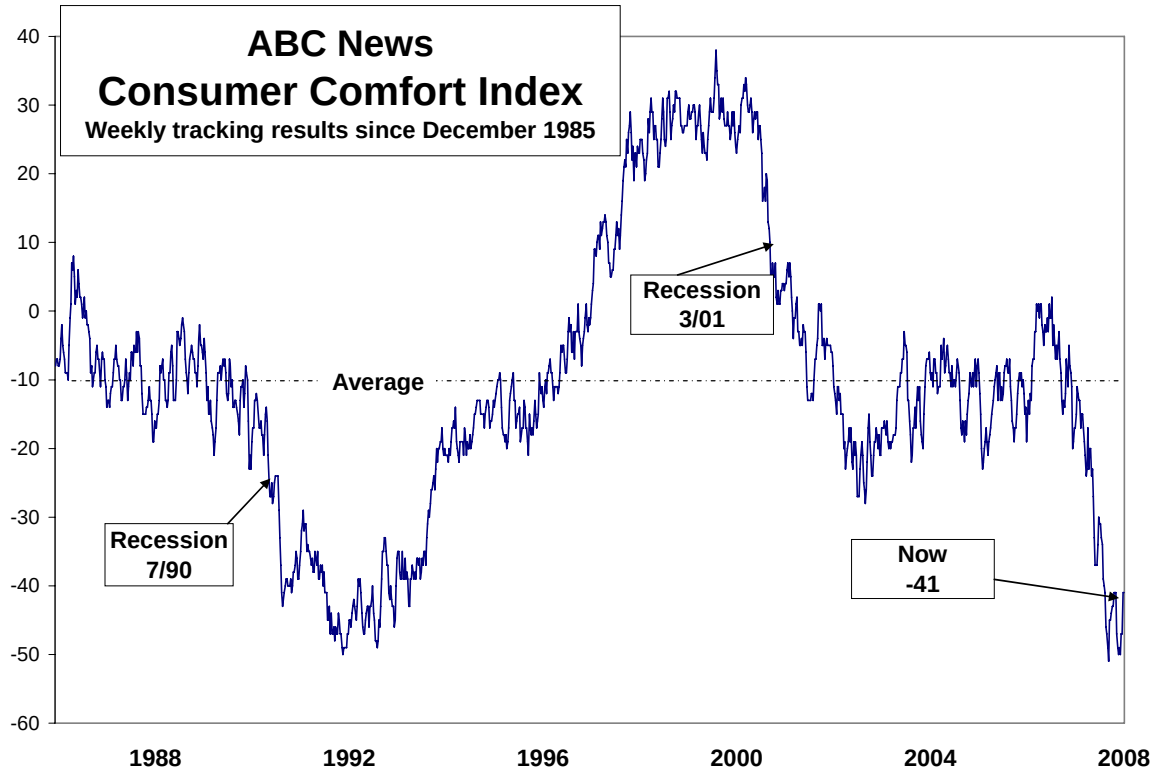


The proposal follows a tumultuous week for financial institutions and global markets. There was better news, though, on the gas-price front, which counts heavily in consumer views: Gas dropped 12 cents last week, though it's still 32 percent higher than a year ago.

INDEX – The CCI is based on Americans' ratings of their finances, the national economy and the buying climate. Less than half, 48 percent, rate their personal finances positively; it's been below 50 percent for nine weeks, equaling a streak earlier this year and the longest since a 15-week stretch in 1993.

Fewer, 24 percent, rate the buying climate positively. That's down 7 points on the year, 14 points off the long-term average and at or below 25 percent for a record 25 weeks.

Fewer still, 17 percent, rate the national economy positively, down 14 points on the year and 22 points off the long-term average.

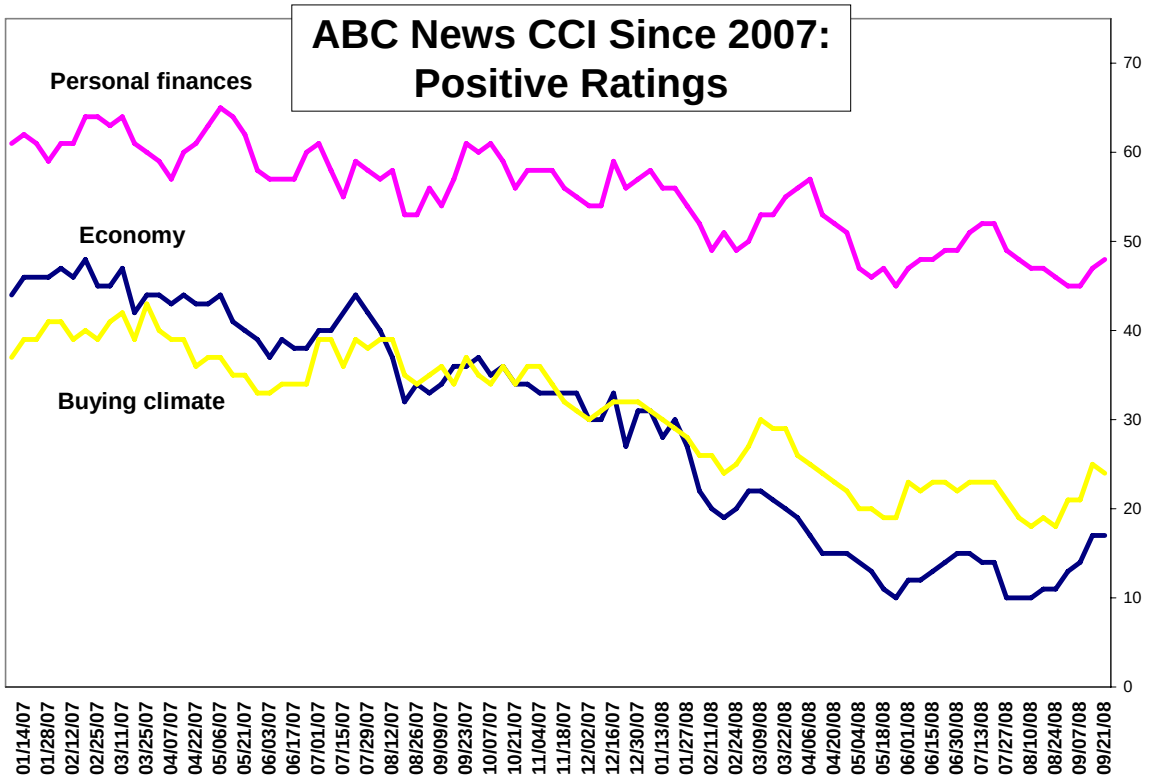


ABC News CCI

Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	Averages 2008	Averages '85-'08
National economy	17%	17	17	39
Buying climate	24	25	24	38
Personal finances	48	47	50	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-41	-41	-40	-10

TREND – The index began the year at -20 and headed down quickly, reaching a record low -51 on May 25. It's failed to climb above -40 for 23 weeks, matching a run from June-November 1992 and surpassed only by 37-week rut from September 1991 to May 1992.

Averaging -40 for 2008, the CCI is on pace for its second-worst year on record, only surpassed by -44 in 1992. As noted, at -41 the index is much worse than the long-term average, -10, and miles from the record high, +38 in January 2000.



	ABC News CCI	
This week	-41	
Last week	-41	
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 in better-off groups but negative across the board for the 13th straight week: -8 among people with the highest incomes vs. -78 among those with the lowest, -33 among people who've been to college vs. -69 among high-school

dropouts, -65 among blacks vs. -35 among whites and -50 among renters vs. -36 among homeowners. There is a gender gap at -32 for men and -47 for women.

Sharp partisan differences remain: The index is -58 among Democrats and -43 among independents, but -10 among Republicans – the best in that group since April.

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 17 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	33	50
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	36	61	40	21

PERSONAL FINANCES – Forty-eight percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 47 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	48	7	41	52	35	17
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	30	13

BUYING CLIMATE –Twenty-four percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 25 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 18 percent, Aug. 8 and 24.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	24	2	22	76	48	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. 21, 2008. The results have a 3-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 Scott F. Clement.

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

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

09/21/08	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	-41	-50	-43	-11	-11	-51	-33
State of Economy	-66	-66	-78	-72	-28	-26	-80	-57
Personal Finances	-4	-6	-8	-2	22	22	-10	5
Buying Climate	-52	-50	-64	-54	-26	-26	-64	-47
OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-32	-34	-48	-45	-2	0	-49	-27
Women	-47	-46	-51	-39	-19	-16	-53	-38
Age:								
18 - 34	-39	-43	-55	-37	-11	-2	-58	-29
35 - 44	-41	-49	-54	-38	3	3	-58	-32
45 - 54	-39	-31	-50	-45	-16	-12	-54	-35
55 - 64	-43	-42	-44	-64	-10	-7	-64	-37
65+	-39	-34	-39	-31	-19	-18	-53	-37
Income:								
Under $15K	-78	-80	-71	-71	-56	-34	-87	-67
$15K To $24.9K	-56	-54	-77	-75	-36	-36	-83	-56
$25K To $39.9K	-49	-47	-59	-67	-18	-16	-67	-45
$40K To $49.9K	-34	-34	-49	-17	-18	1	-59	-33
Over $50K	-23	-22	-30	-22	11	13	-34	-14
$50K To $74.9K	-30	-31	-52	-44	-2	-2	-57	-30
$75K To $99.9K	-28	-25	-27	-24	2	25	-35	-15
Over $100K	-8	-6	-9	5	30	41	-19	4
Region:								
Northeast	-46	-44	-58	-48	-23	-17	-61	-39
Midwest	-33	-31	-45	-39	-17	-11	-53	-33
South	-48	-49	-52	-44	-3	-2	-53	-34
West	-29	-32	-42	-36	-5	5	-54	-26
Race:								
White	-35	-38	-46	-39	-5	-5	-47	-30
Black	-65	-55	-69	-56	-48	-20	-80	-53
Politics:								
Republican	-10	-14	-28	-17	30	30	-28	-4
Democrat	-58	-58	-63	-58	-35	-28	-66	-49
Independent	-43	-42	-50	-39	-21	-16	-55	-37
Education:								
< High School	-69	-66	-60	-73	-35	-24	-77	-52
High Sch. Grad.	-38	-42	-60	-46	-18	-16	-61	-39
College +	-33	-32	-41	-31	3	3	-43	-23
Home:								
Own	-36	-36	-44	-37	-3	-3	-45	-28
Rent	-50	-49	-65	-57	-34	-25	-67	-48
Marital Status:								
Single	-44	-46	-65	-36	-16	-13	-65	-35
Married	-33	-32	-41	-38	0	0	-43	-24
Sep/Wid/Div	-56	-57	-58	-62	-30	-30	-67	-55

Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-29	-34	-44	-38	-4	-3	-47	-26
Part-Time	-33	-33	-66	-33	-6	-4	-66	-32
Not Employed	-55	-50	-51	-49	-21	-21	-58	-42

END