

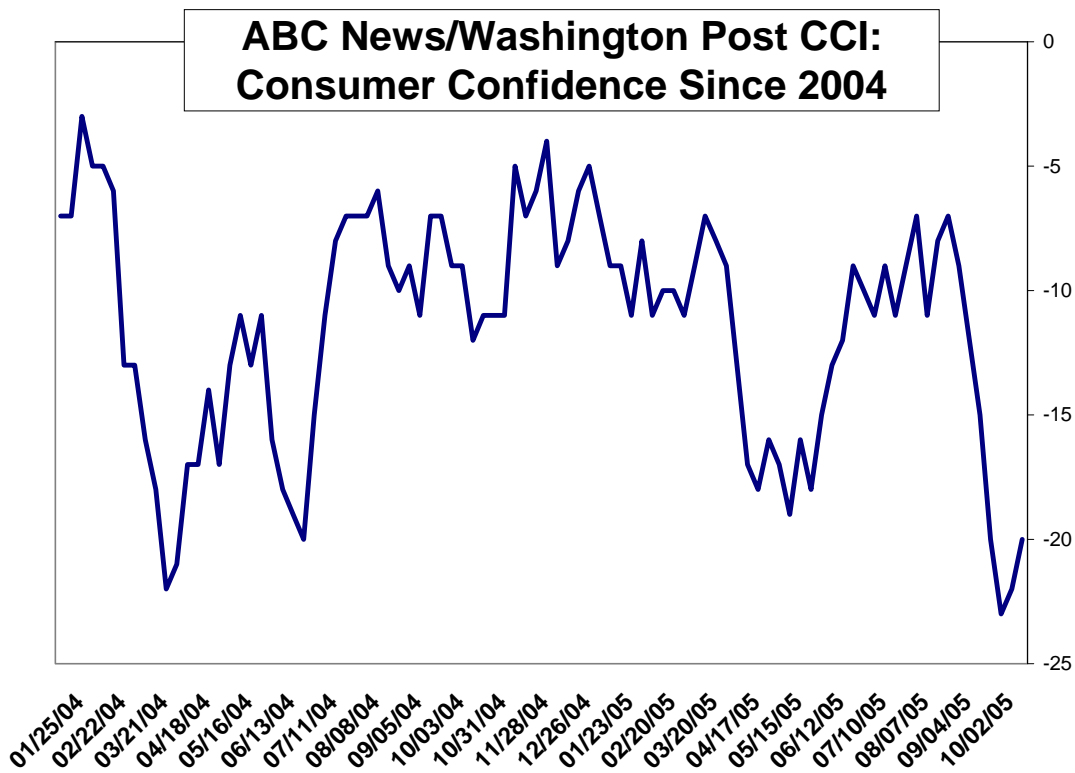
Confidence Lifts an Eyebrow But Gas Prices Still Threaten

Consumer confidence showed some of its trademark resilience this week, holding its own after a recent fall despite a fresh spike in gasoline prices.

The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index stands at -20 on its scale of +100 to -100, compared to -22 last week and -23, its lowest since May 2003, the week before. The index had dived by 16 points from mid-August to mid-September, pushed by the rise in gas prices that accelerated after Hurricane Katrina.

Hurricane Rita delivered more of the same, with gas soaring by 13 cents a gallon in just the last week to \$2.93 in U.S. Department of Energy data, the third-highest nominal price on record. The highest was \$3.07 on Sept. 5.

The new spike threatens to turn confidence sour again: It hit its recent low two weeks after the Sept. 5 record.



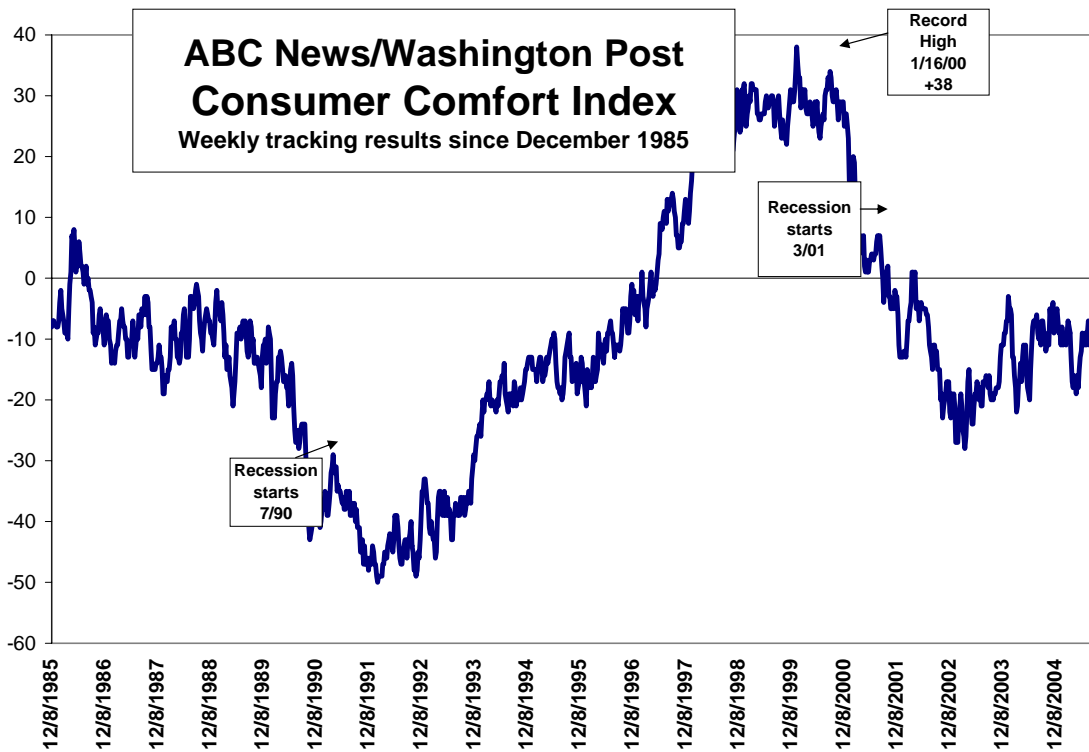
While it's stiffened its spine in the last two weeks, confidence still is not good. At -20 the ABC/Post CCI is eight points below its 2005 average, 11 points below its long-term average in weekly polls since late 1985 and 37 points below its level when George W. Bush was inaugurated in January 2001.

The index is based on ratings of the economy, the buying climate and personal finances. This week 32 percent rate the economy positively and 31 percent call it a good time to buy things, each eight points below its long-term average. Ratings of personal finances are doing better – 57 percent say theirs are OK, matching the nearly 20-year average.

	ABC News/Washington Post CCI			
Positive ratings of:	This week	Sept. 18	2005 avg.	19-yr. avg.
National economy	32%	30	38	40
Buying climate	31	31	36	39
Personal finances	57	55	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-20	-23	-12	-9

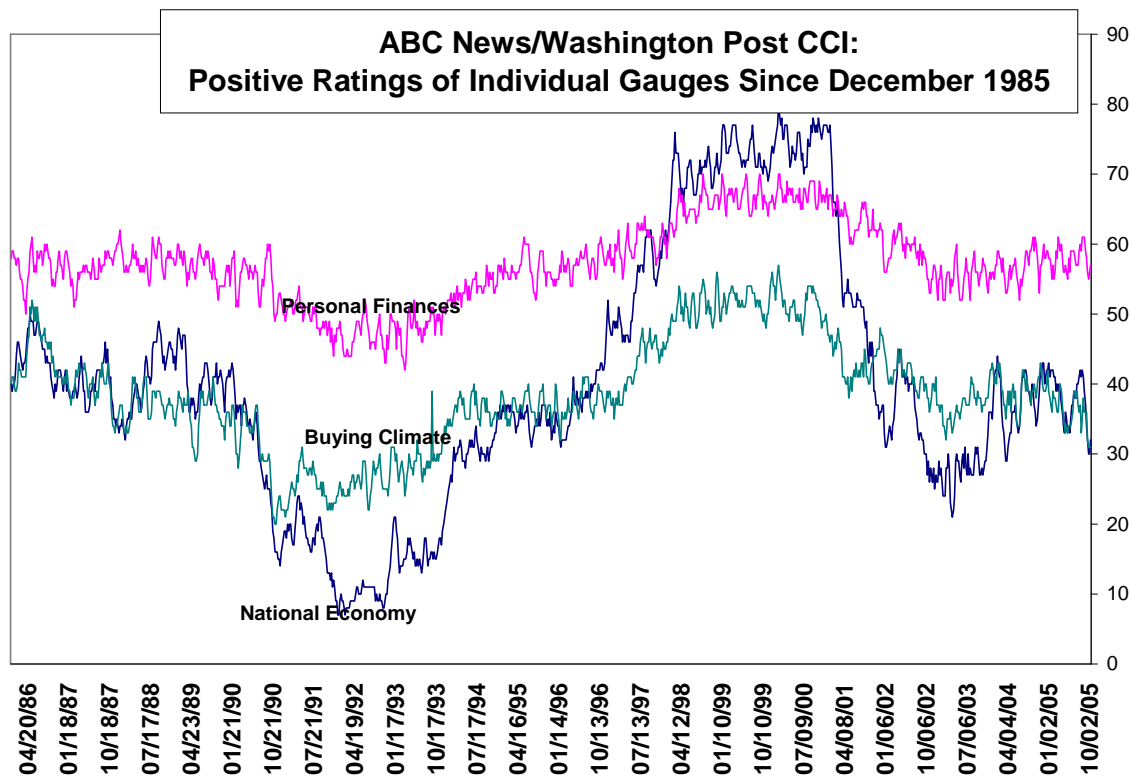
TREND – The CCI started the year at -9 and reached -7 in March but has been battling gas prices ever since. It dipped to -19 in May, fought back to -7 in July and mid-August, then took its latest dive before stabilizing in the last two weeks.

While it's been much better – an all-time high of +38 in January 2000 – the CCI also has been far worse, averaging -44 across 1992, including a record low -50 that February.



Today	-20	
Two weeks ago	-23	(2005 low)
2005 high	-7	Aug. 14, July 24, March 6
2005 average	-12	
2004 average	-11	
2003 average	-19	
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, the CCI is higher in better-off groups. It's +18 among higher-income Americans while -67 among those with the lowest incomes, -4 among college graduates while -40 among those who haven't finished high school, -13 among whites but -53 among blacks and -9 among men while -29 among women.



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

NATIONAL ECONOMY – Thirty-two percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 30 percent last week. The highest was 80 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The lowest was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	32	3	29	68	46	22
Avg. since 12/85	40	3	37	60	40	20

PERSONAL FINANCES – Fifty-seven percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 56 percent from last week. The best was 70 percent on Aug. 30, 1998, matched in January 2000. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	57	7	50	43	29	14
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	30	13

BUYING CLIMATE – Thirty-one percent say it’s an excellent or good time to buy things, the same as last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	31	2	29	69	45	24
Avg. since 12/85	39	3	36	61	41	20

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for the ABC News/Washington Post 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 Oct. 2, 2005. The results have a three-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.

The Washington Post replaced Money magazine as cosponsor of this index at the start of this year. The survey methodology remains the same.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

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

10/02/05	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	-20	-22	-15	-9	-12	-4	-23	-11
State of Economy	-36	-40	-32	-20	-32	-14	-40	-24
Personal Finances	14	12	16	14	20	22	6	16
Buying Climate	-38	-38	-28	-22	-24	-14	-38	-26

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	-9	-11	-7	-2	-2	9	-16	-2
Women	-29	-32	-21	-16	-20	-13	-32	-19
Age:								
18 - 34	-14	-22	-14	-12	-11	3	-28	-9
35 - 44	-13	-12	-2	-7	-14	6	-27	-9
45 - 54	-29	-31	-23	-6	-11	10	-34	-13
55 - 64	-26	-20	-18	-13	-14	-2	-26	-13
65+	-20	-24	-20	-6	-7	-1	-32	-14
Income:								
Under \$15K	-67	-62	-54	-52	-45	-35	-75	-53
\$15K To \$24.9K	-62	-65	-37	-45	-37	-13	-65	-41
\$25K To \$39.9K	-33	-33	-28	-23	-27	-8	-37	-23
\$40K To \$49.9K	-12	-16	-24	2	-20	17	-37	-11
Over \$50K	15	12	18	22	11	35	10	19
\$50K To \$74.9K	12	6	9	5	-2	28	-9	6
\$75K To \$99.9K	18	13	8	37	19	37	4	22
Over \$100K	18	18	35	32	24	51	18	37
Region:								
Northeast	-26	-20	-20	-5	-10	2	-28	-14
Midwest	-17	-20	-14	-17	-10	-3	-26	-13
South	-20	-25	-13	-5	-12	4	-27	-9
West	-14	-19	-12	-11	-13	5	-21	-9
Race:								
White	-13	-17	-9	-2	-9	2	-17	-6
Black	-53	-47	-38	-51	-28	-20	-56	-41
Politics:								
Republican	16	9	25	30	37	42	9	28
Democrat	-46	-44	-36	-33	-40	-27	-46	-37
Independent	-15	-19	-21	-15	-22	-7	-30	-17
Education:								
< High School	-40	-45	-25	-50	-40	-21	-55	-38
High Sch. Grad.	-34	-35	-31	-13	-17	-2	-35	-20
College +	-4	-7	0	6	2	10	-7	3
Home:								
Own	-12	-16	-8	2	-6	7	-16	-3
Rent	-39	-39	-34	-35	-29	-20	-49	-33
Marital Status:								
Single	-12	-18	-16	-19	-12	-11	-31	-20
Married	-12	-14	-5	2	-5	15	-14	2
Sep/Wid/Div	-45	-49	-39	-27	-31	-22	-49	-33
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-3	-9	-5	1	1	12	-13	0
Part-Time	-14	-22	-29	-11	-20	-1	-35	-16
Not Employed	-43	-39	-22	-21	-23	-15	-43	-23

END