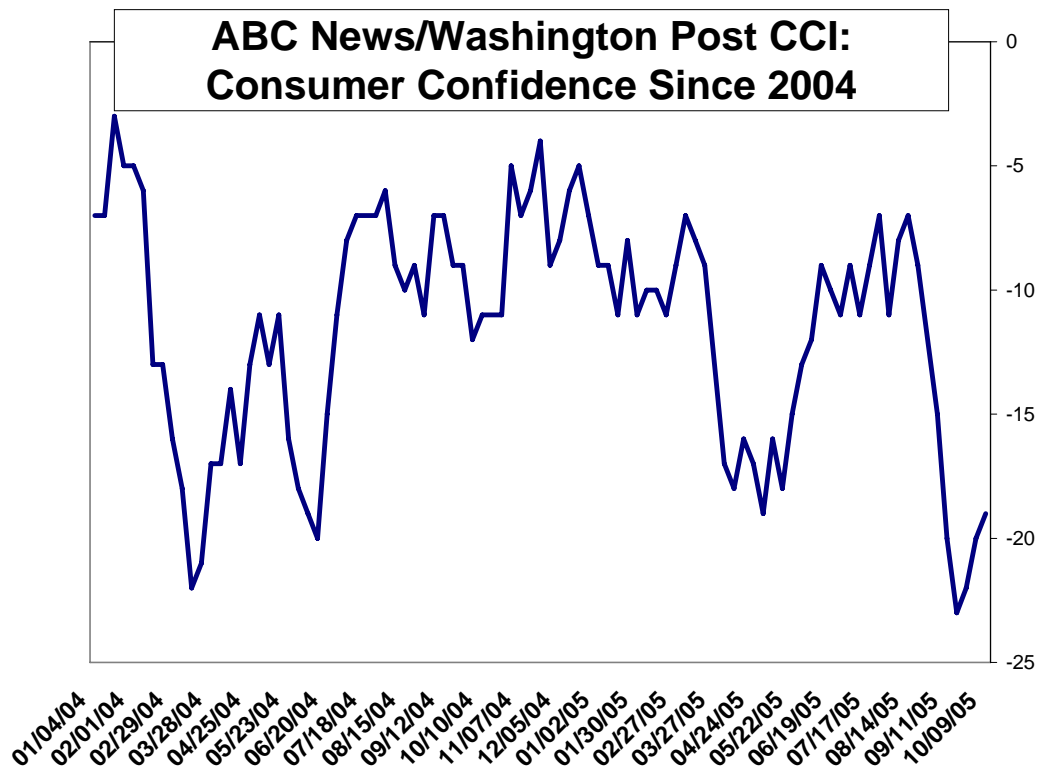


## **Confidence Stable Overall, Regional Differences Grow**

Overall consumer confidence held steady this week, but with changes across regions: Confidence has improved in the South since the Gulf Coast hurricanes, but has slipped to its worst in more than two years in the Northeast.

The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index stands at -19 on its scale of +100 to -100, virtually unchanged from last week, but up from its low of the year, -23 three weeks ago. The modest improvement parallels new federal data finding lower than expected post-hurricane job losses and gas prices that, while still high (\$2.85 a gallon), are down eight cents this week and 22 cents off their Sept. 5 peak, \$3.07.



**REGIONS** – Confidence spiked downward in the South after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, with the index there losing 29 points from mid-August to mid-September, from +2 to -27, its lowest in more than two years. In the past few weeks it's inched back to -19, still worse than its 2005 average, -11.

The index meanwhile has dropped to -32 in the Northeast, much worse than its 2005 average there, -16, and its lowest in the region since June 2003. The index is -15 in the Midwest and -10 in the West, essentially matching its 2005 averages.

	ABC News/Washington Post CCI		
	Now	Sept. 18	2005 average
All	-19	-23	-13
East	-32	-22	-16
South	-19	-27	-11
Midwest	-15	-21	-14
West	-10	-16	-10

INDEX – The index is based on ratings of the economy, the buying climate and personal finances. This week 32 percent nationally rate the economy positively and as many call it a good time to buy things, respectively five and four points below their 2005 averages.

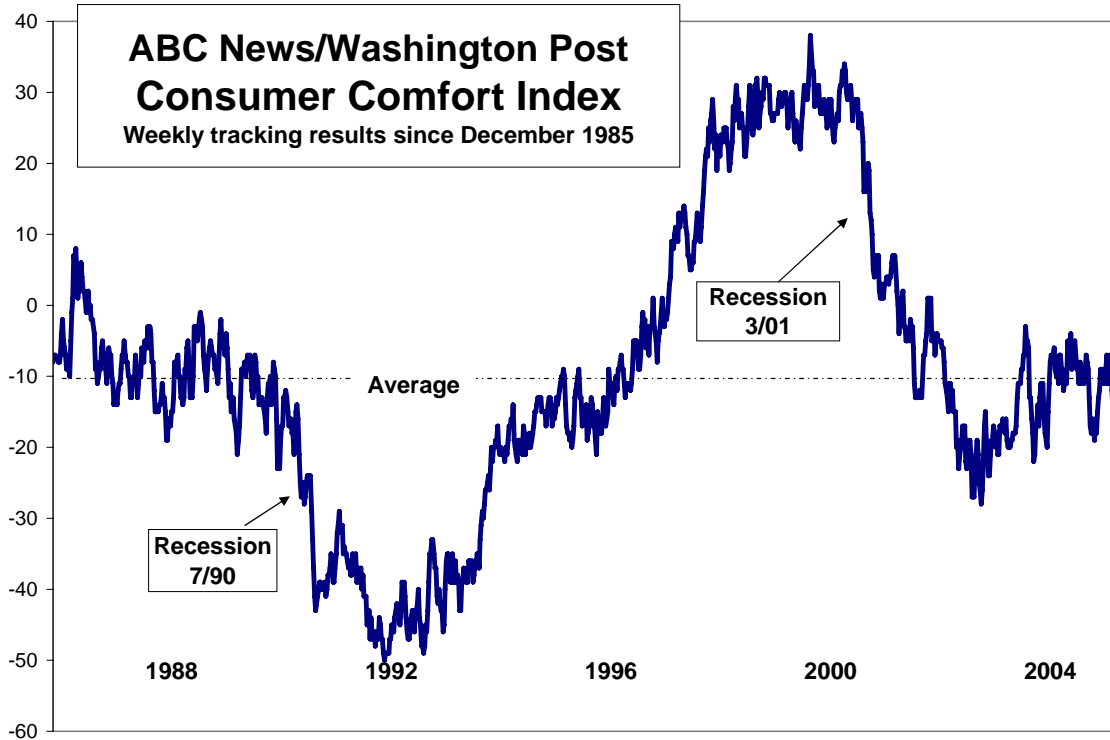
With inflation, consumer interest rates and unemployment still relatively low, personal finances are an important stabilizer in consumer views. Many more people, 58 percent, say their personal finances are OK, matching the 2005 average.

Positive ratings of:	ABC News/Washington Post CCI			
	This week	Sept. 18	2005 avg.	19-yr. avg.
National economy	32%	30	37	40
Buying climate	32	31	36	39
Personal finances	58	55	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-19	-23	-13	-9

TREND – The index fell dramatically, by 16 points from mid-August to mid-September, before leveling off lately. It's still six points off its 2005 average, -13, and 10 points below its long-term average, -9 in weekly polls since 1985.

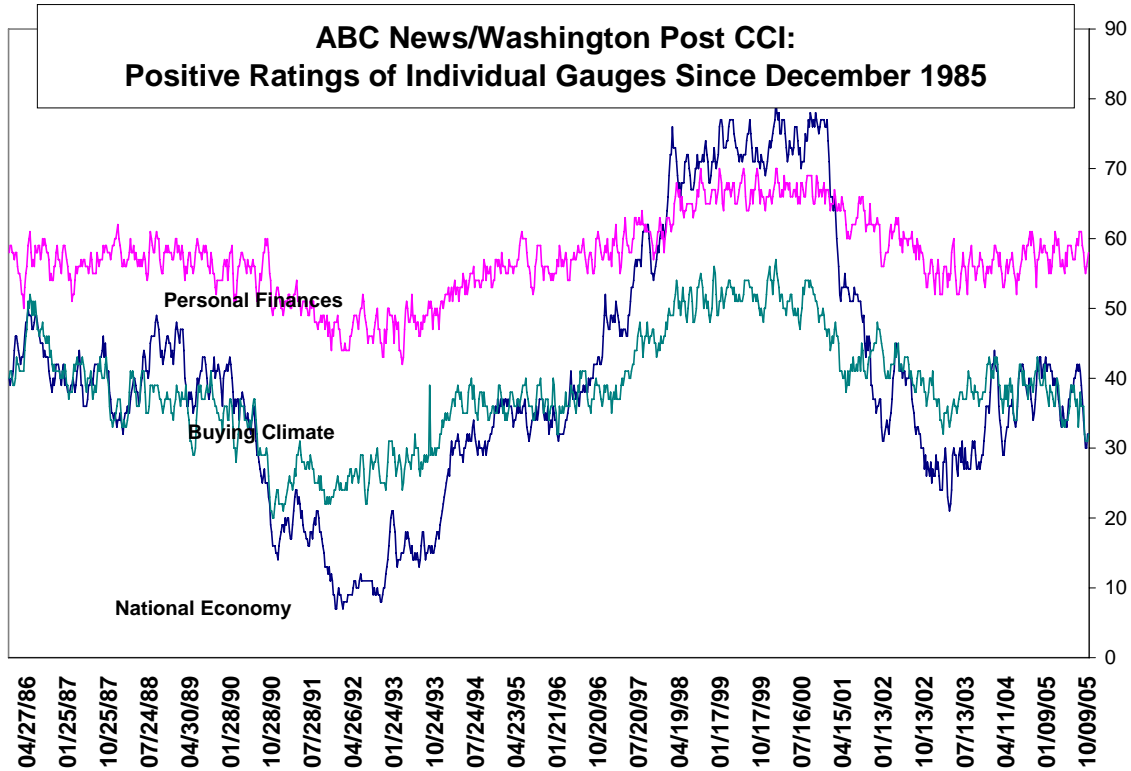
The CCI started the year at -9 and reached -7 in March but has been battling gas prices ever since. It dipped to -19 in May, fought back to -7 in July and mid-August, then took its latest dive before stabilizing in the last three weeks.

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.



	ABC/Post CCI	
Today	-19	
Three weeks ago	-23	(2005 low)
2005 high	-7	Aug. 14, July 24, March 6
2005 average	-13	
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 +25 among higher-income Americans while -71 among those with the lowest incomes, -3 among college graduates while -40 among those who haven't finished high school, -15 among whites but -44 among blacks and -10 among men while -26 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, unchanged from 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-eight percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 57 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	58	7	51	42	27	15
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	30	13

**BUYING CLIMATE** – Thirty-two percent say it's an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 31 percent a week ago. 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	32	3	29	68	42	26
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. 9, 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 Jon Cohen.

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

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

10/09/05	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	-19	-20	-20	-11	-11	-4	-23	-11
State of Economy	-36	-36	-36	-20	-30	-14	-40	-24
Personal Finances	16	14	12	14	16	22	6	16
Buying Climate	-36	-38	-36	-26	-20	-14	-38	-26
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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS								
Sex:								
Men	-10	-9	-14	3	-1	9	-16	-2
Women	-26	-29	-27	-25	-22	-13	-32	-20
Age:								
18 - 34	-12	-14	-22	-23	-12	3	-28	-9
35 - 44	-12	-13	-12	-5	-17	6	-27	-9
45 - 54	-24	-29	-27	-5	-5	10	-34	-13
55 - 64	-35	-26	-19	-15	-13	-2	-35	-14
65+	-20	-20	-23	-1	-9	-1	-32	-15
Income:								
Under \$15K	-71	-67	-56	-56	-45	-35	-75	-54
\$15K To \$24.9K	-65	-62	-47	-48	-39	-13	-65	-41
\$25K To \$39.9K	-29	-33	-28	-23	-31	-8	-37	-23
\$40K To \$49.9K	-7	-12	-29	-4	-21	17	-37	-11
Over \$50K	14	15	16	23	16	35	10	19
\$50K To \$74.9K	1	12	13	10	-2	28	-9	6
\$75K To \$99.9K	19	18	10	23	23	37	4	22
Over \$100K	25	18	25	38	38	51	18	37
Region:								

Northeast	-32	-26	-18	-11	-8	2	-32	-15
Midwest	-15	-17	-20	-6	-11	-3	-26	-13
South	-19	-20	-24	-12	-16	4	-27	-9
West	-10	-14	-17	-16	-9	5	-21	-9
Race:								
White	-15	-13	-15	-6	-8	2	-17	-6
Black	-44	-53	-45	-55	-31	-20	-56	-41
Politics:								
Republican	13	16	17	31	38	42	9	28
Democrat	-40	-46	-41	-36	-45	-27	-46	-37
Independent	-18	-15	-26	-20	-23	-7	-30	-17
Education:								
< High School	-40	-40	-43	-47	-51	-21	-55	-38
High Sch. Grad.	-33	-34	-33	-21	-12	-2	-35	-20
College +	-3	-4	-6	7	1	10	-7	3
Home:								
Own	-12	-12	-11	-1	-6	7	-16	-3
Rent	-38	-39	-49	-38	-30	-20	-49	-33
Marital Status:								
Single	-17	-12	-24	-29	-15	-11	-31	-20
Married	-9	-12	-10	5	-2	15	-14	2
Sep/Wid/Div	-43	-45	-47	-28	-34	-22	-49	-33
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-3	-3	-13	3	1	12	-13	-1
Part-Time	-22	-14	-24	-27	-22	-1	-35	-16
Not Employed	-39	-43	-30	-24	-25	-15	-43	-23

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