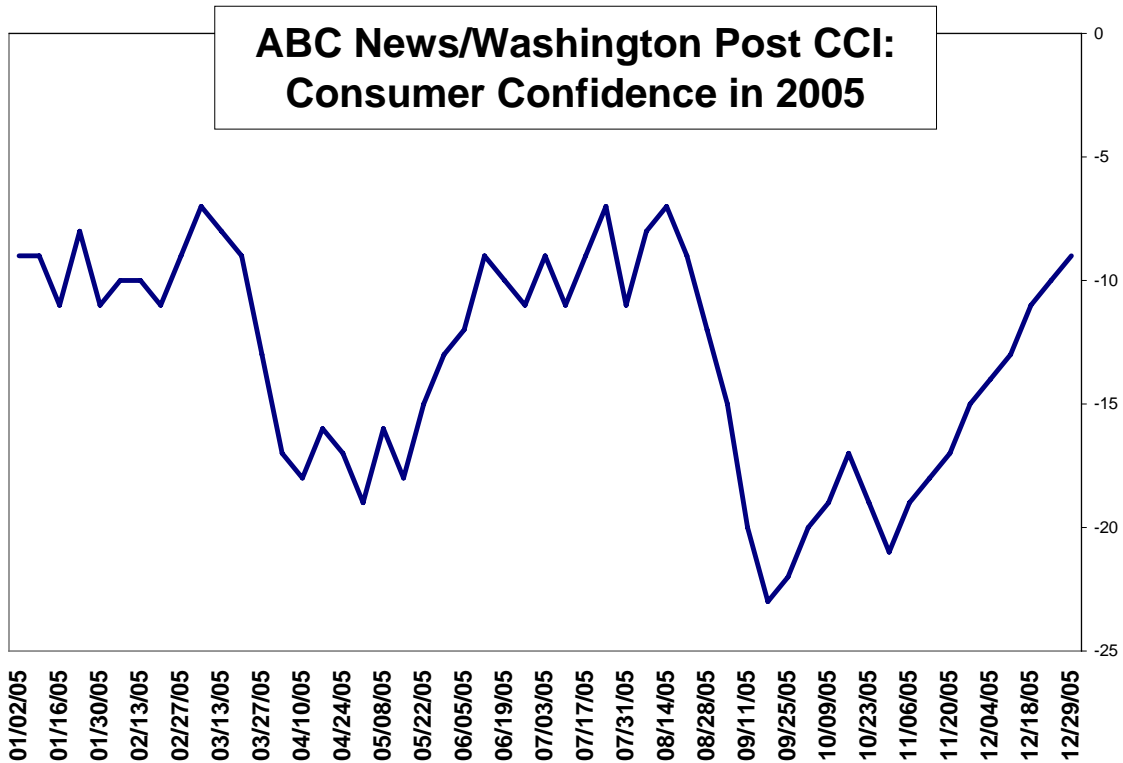


## **Confidence Starts '06 With a Head of Steam**

After closing 2005 with a rally, consumer confidence starts the New Year with a head of steam, stretching a nine-week advance to its best level in more than four months.

The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index stands at -9 on its scale of +100 to -100, up 12 points since its last low on Oct. 30. That's well up from its 2005 low of -23 on Sept. 18, and also beats its 2005 average, -13.

At -9 the index matches its long-term average in weekly polls since late 1985, a level it hasn't seen since Aug. 21. But what the year ahead holds in store is an open question: The index started 2005 at an identical -9, but spent much of the ensuing year below that benchmark average.



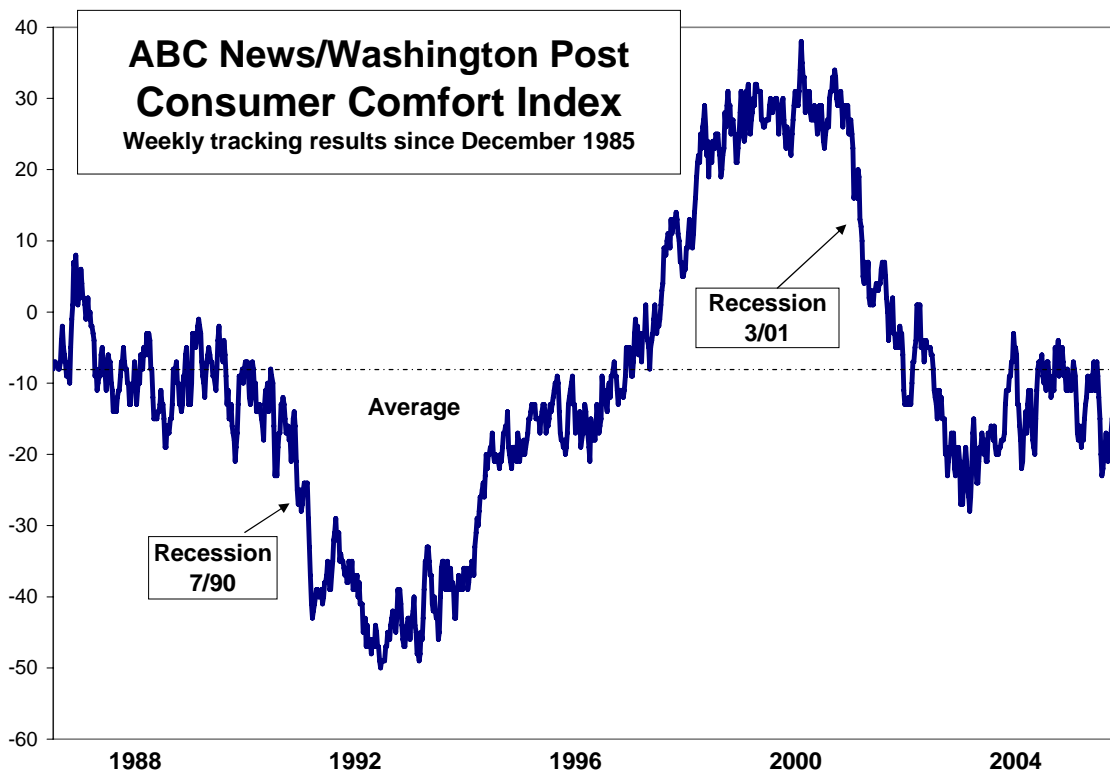
Indeed it's remarkable that the index today has regained its level at the start of 2005, since the price of gasoline – while well down from its peak – is 46 cents per gallon higher now than it was a year ago.

INDEX – The ABC/Post index is based on Americans’ ratings of the current national economy, the buying climate and their personal finances. This week 40 percent rate the economy positively, 38 call it a good time to buy things and 58 percent say their personal finances are in good shape. Each is at or near its level at the start of 2005, as well as its long-term average.

ABC News/Washington Post CCI				
Positive ratings of:	This week	Oct. 30	2005 avg.	20-yr.avg.
National economy	40%	33	37	40
Buying climate	38	31	35	38
Personal finances	58	55	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-9	-21	-13	-9

TREND – The index’s 2005 average of -13 compares with -11 in 2004 and a weaker -19 across 2003. It was a bumpy ride: 2005 measurements ranged from a high of -7 in March, July and August to the -23 in mid-September.

The CCI has had far better years, averaging +24 or higher in 1998, 1999 and 2000, with a record high of +38 in January 2000. But it’s also been much worse, averaging -44 in 1992 and -37 in 1991 and 1993, with a low of -50 in February 1992.



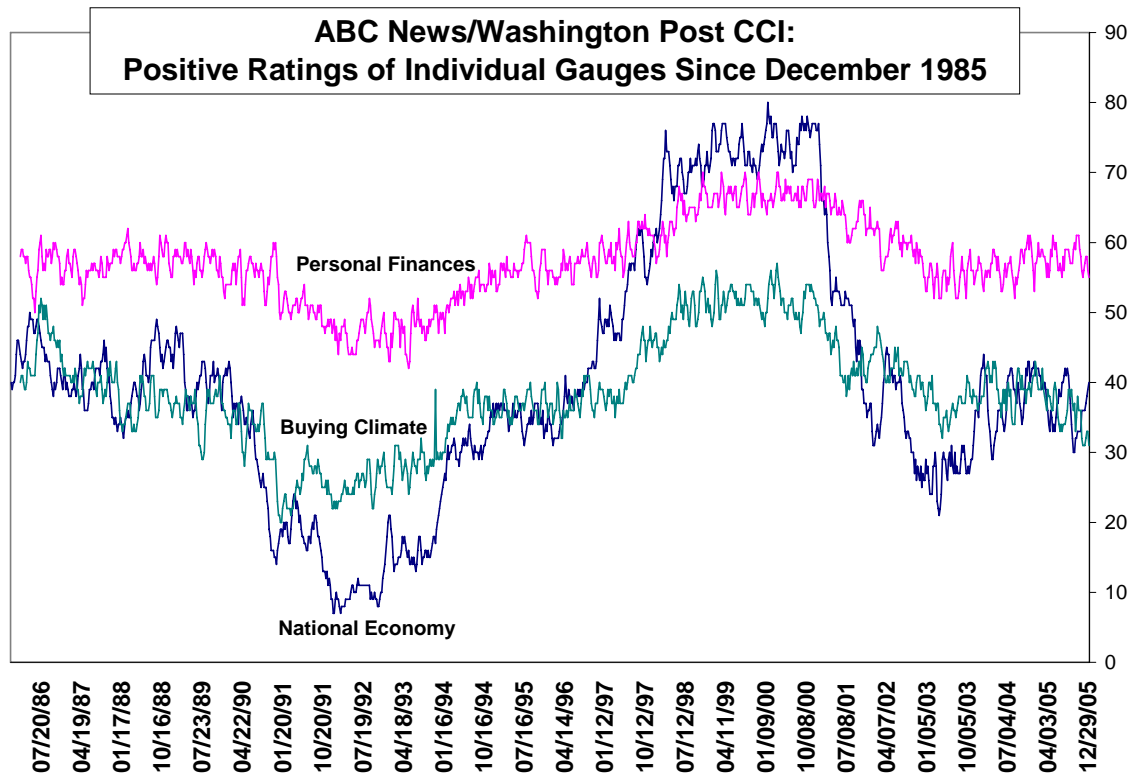
ABC/Post CCI	
Today	-9
2005 high	-7 Aug. 14, July 24, March 6
2005 low	-23 Sept. 18

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, confidence is higher among better-off groups. It's +38 among higher-income Americans but -54 among those with the lowest incomes, +1 among college graduates while -35 among those who haven't finished high school, -6 among whites but -30 among blacks and +6 among men while -24 among women. While the overall index is the same now as at the start of 2005, the gap between men and women is somewhat larger.

As had been the case all last year, the index is far higher among Republicans (+34) than among independents (-18) or Democrats (-39).

Regionally, the index starts the year best in the West, now +4, compared with -19 in the Northeast, -12 in the South and -11 in the Midwest. After suffering through a rough hurricane season this past year, the index in the South is seven points lower than at the start of 2005.





Group

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GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	-9	-10	-14	-20	-9	-7	-23	-13
State of Economy	-20	-22	-28	-36	-18	-16	-40	-26
Personal Finances	16	18	12	14	16	22	10	15
Buying Climate	-24	-26	-26	-38	-24	-20	-38	-29

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OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:

Men	6	3	-2	-9	0	9	-16	-3
Women	-24	-21	-23	-29	-17	-14	-36	-22

Age:

18 - 34	-1	-5	-18	-14	-3	2	-28	-10
35 - 44	-12	-9	-11	-13	-12	5	-27	-12
45 - 54	-13	-16	-8	-29	-9	-5	-34	-15
55 - 64	-19	-9	-10	-26	-11	-2	-36	-16
65+	-9	-11	-18	-20	-14	-1	-32	-15

Income:

Under \$15K	-54	-53	-64	-67	-50	-41	-75	-56
\$15K To \$24.9K	-46	-42	-30	-62	-49	-13	-65	-42
\$25K To \$39.9K	-29	-34	-43	-33	-22	-8	-44	-26
\$40K To \$49.9K	24	25	-3	-12	-1	25	-37	-11
Over \$50K	15	19	24	15	22	24	4	17
\$50K To \$74.9K	0	6	5	12	10	13	-14	3
\$75K To \$99.9K	10	18	18	18	21	37	-1	18
Over \$100K	38	38	50	18	41	50	18	35

Region:

Northeast	-19	-16	-19	-26	-19	2	-41	-18
Midwest	-11	-18	-15	-17	-7	-3	-27	-15
South	-12	-6	-14	-20	-5	3	-27	-12
West	4	-2	-5	-14	-8	5	-20	-9

Race:

White	-6	-7	-10	-13	-4	-1	-18	-9
Black	-30	-29	-40	-53	-35	-24	-56	-42

Politics:

Republican	34	34	34	16	30	42	9	26
Democrat	-39	-37	-36	-46	-31	-27	-46	-37
Independent	-18	-23	-24	-15	-18	-9	-31	-19

Education:

< High School	-35	-48	-63	-40	-37	-24	-63	-41
High Sch. Grad.	-16	-14	-21	-34	-17	-12	-35	-22
College +	1	3	6	-4	5	10	-9	2

Home:

Own	-1	-1	-1	-12	1	4	-17	-5
Rent	-30	-33	-43	-39	-34	-20	-49	-34

Marital Status:

Single	-9	-8	-17	-12	-15	-8	-31	-19
Married	-2	-2	-3	-12	4	7	-14	-2
Sep/Wid/Div	-25	-28	-36	-45	-33	-22	-49	-35

Employ. Status:

Full-Time	3	1	-5	-3	5	5	-13	-3
Part-Time	-11	-9	-25	-14	-15	-1	-35	-18
Not Employed	-26	-26	-21	-43	-24	-15	-43	-24

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