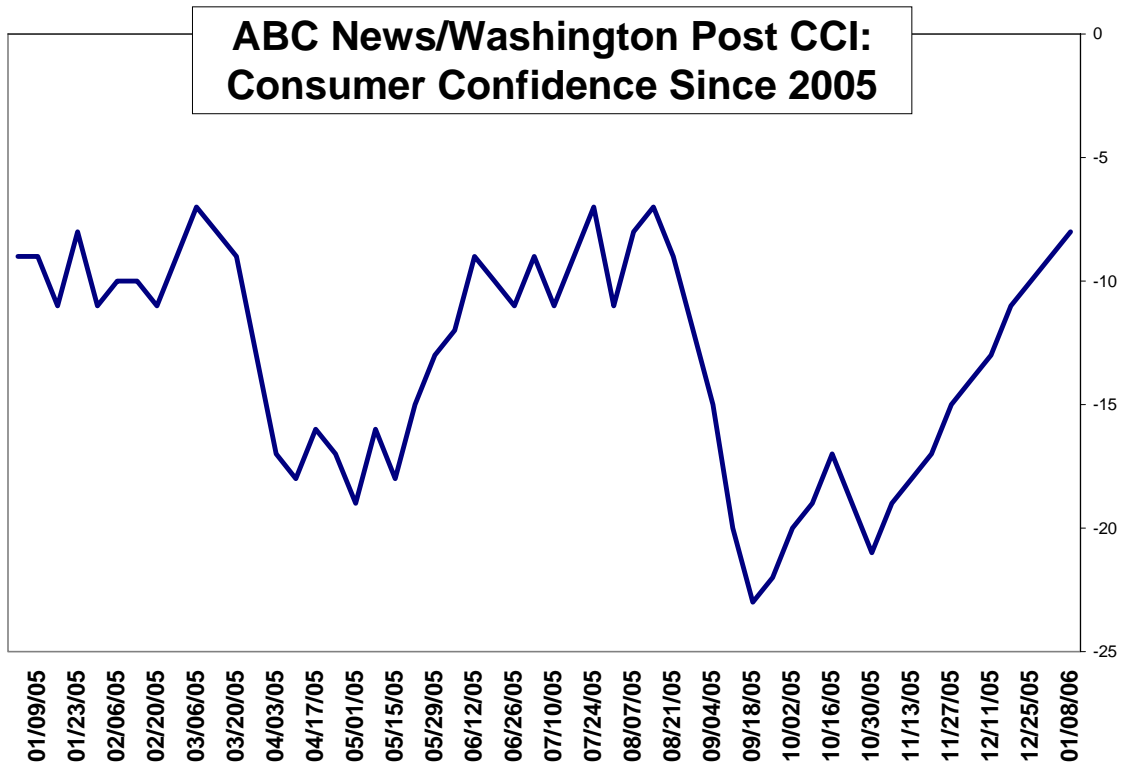


Slowly But Surely Confidence Grows

A near-steady advance in consumer confidence since the tumult of early fall has stretched into the new year, with economic ratings now their best in nearly five months.

The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index stands at -8 on its scale of +100 to -100, up 15 points from its 2005 low of -23 on Sept. 18. It starts the first week of 2006 precisely where it began 2005, beating its 2005 average, -13, and about matching its long-term average, -9, in 20 years of weekly polls.

The index has grown steadily since its mid-September low, apart from a brief dip in late October. It's continued rising despite a recent rebound in gasoline prices, up 13 cents a gallon in the last two weeks to \$2.33 per gallon. Overall, gas prices are 53 cents higher now than they were a year ago – but 74 cents below their hurricane-inspired high in the fall.

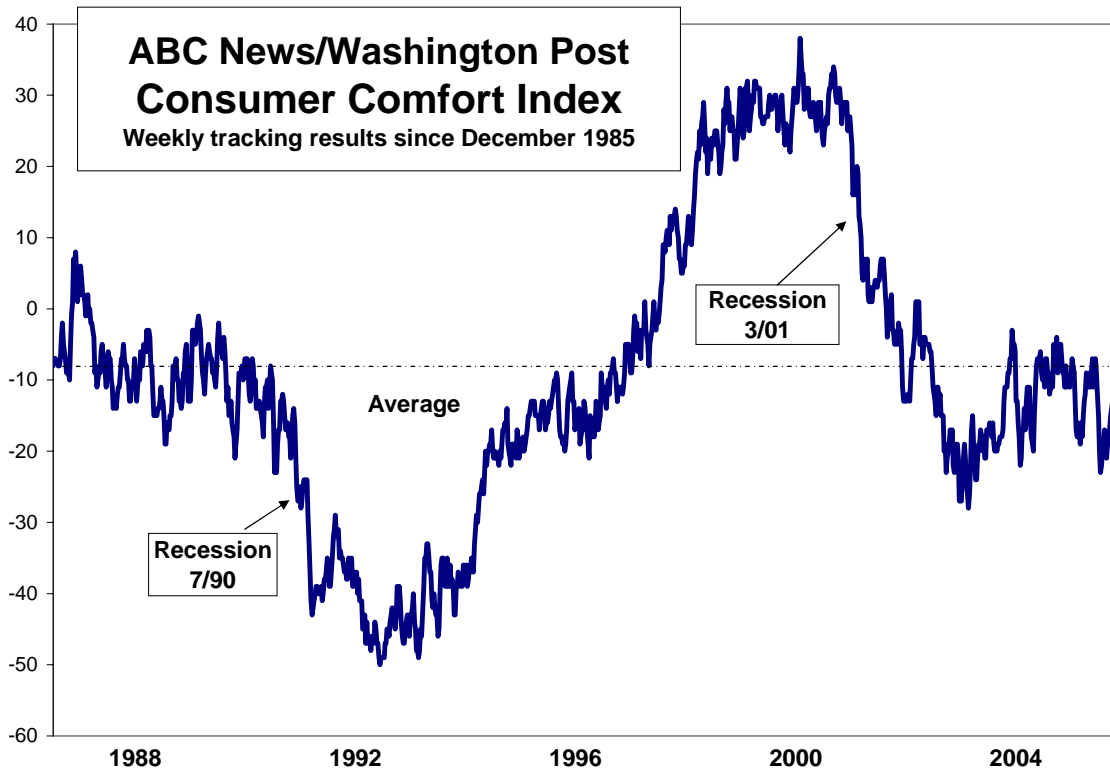


There are other signs of an improved national economy, including a positive jobs report and a boost in stock prices that led the Dow to close above 11,000 yesterday for the first time since June 2001.

INDEX – The ABC/Post index is based on Americans’ ratings of the current national economy, the buying climate and their personal finances. This week, 41 percent rate the economy positively, 41 percent call it a good time to buy things and 56 percent say their personal finances are in good shape. Since the index hit its 2005 low on Sept. 18, ratings of the national economy and buying climate have improved by double digits, while ratings of personal finances are unchanged, albeit still more positive.

	ABC News/Washington Post CCI			
Positive ratings of:	This week	9/18/05	2005 avg.	20-yr.avg.
National economy	41%	30	37	40
Buying climate	41	31	36	38
Personal finances	56	55	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-8	-23	-13	-9

TREND – The index last year ranged from its mid-September low of -23 to a high of -7 in March, July and again in August. It’s been as high as +38 in January 2000, and as low as -50 in February 1992.



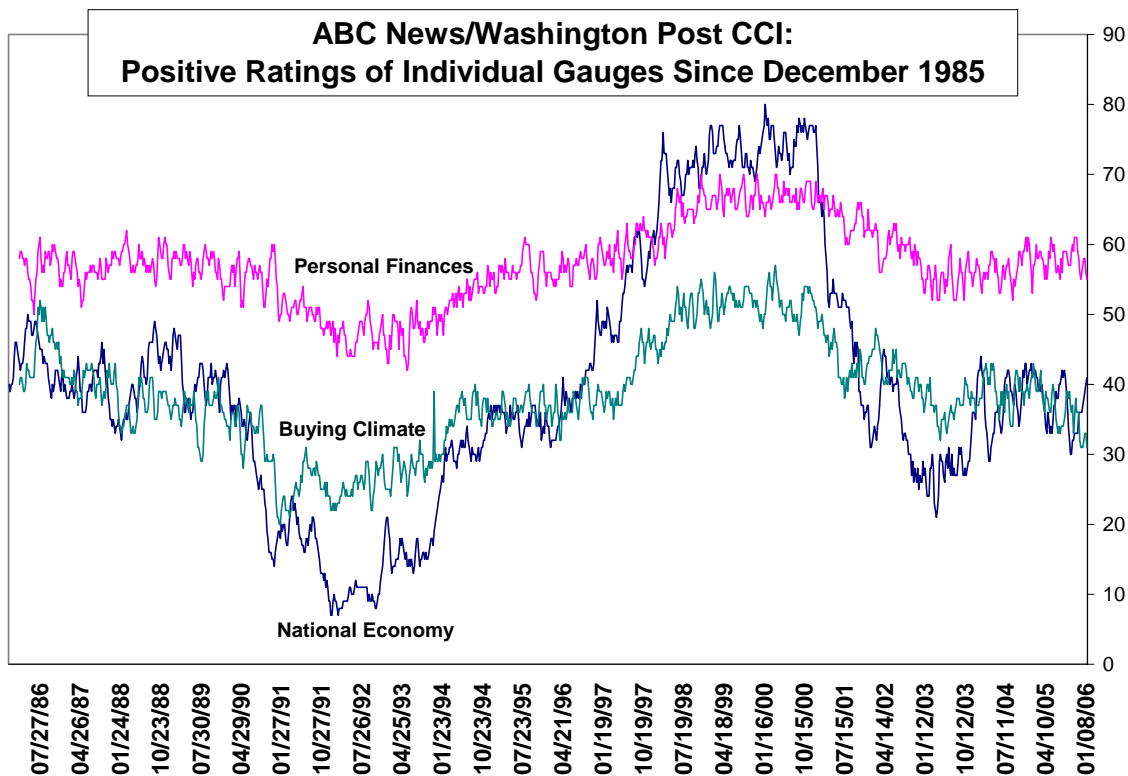
	ABC/Post CCI
Today	-8
Four weeks ago	-13

Ten weeks ago	-21	
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 – Confidence as usual is stronger among better-off groups. The index is +41 among higher-income Americans but -53 among those with the lowest incomes, +5 among college graduates while -31 among those who haven't finished high school, -4 among whites but -36 among blacks and +5 among men while -21 among women.

As usual, the index is higher among Republicans (+34) than among independents (-10) and Democrats (-43). Indeed the Democrat-Republican gap, 77 points, is the greatest it's been in nearly a year.

Regionally, at +7 the index is best in the West, compared with -19 in the Northeast, -15 in the South and -4 in the Midwest. The index in the West is the best it's been in two years. (One possible factor is that the rise in gas prices the last two years has been a little less pronounced in the West than in the rest of the country.)



Group

GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	-8	-9	-13	-19	-9	-7	-23	-13
State of Economy	-18	-20	-26	-36	-16	-16	-40	-26
Personal Finances	12	16	14	16	14	22	10	15
Buying Climate	-18	-24	-28	-36	-26	-18	-38	-29

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	5	6	-2	-10	-1	9	-16	-3
Women	-21	-24	-23	-26	-16	-14	-36	-22
Age:								
18 - 34	-7	-1	-21	-12	1	2	-28	-10
35 - 44	-3	-12	-15	-12	-15	5	-27	-12
45 - 54	-12	-13	-6	-24	-11	-5	-34	-15
55 - 64	-11	-19	-6	-35	-9	-2	-36	-16
65+	-9	-9	-13	-20	-19	-1	-32	-15
Income:								
Under \$15K	-53	-54	-63	-71	-42	-41	-75	-56
\$15K To \$24.9K	-48	-46	-35	-65	-52	-13	-65	-42
\$25K To \$39.9K	-23	-29	-43	-29	-16	-8	-44	-26
\$40K To \$49.9K	26	24	-15	-7	-3	26	-37	-11
Over \$50K	20	15	22	14	19	24	4	17
\$50K To \$74.9K	8	0	2	1	4	13	-14	3
\$75K To \$99.9K	16	10	21	19	21	37	-1	18
Over \$100K	41	38	50	25	38	50	18	35
Region:								
Northeast	-19	-19	-19	-32	-26	2	-41	-18
Midwest	-4	-11	-20	-15	-5	-3	-27	-15
South	-15	-12	-11	-19	-7	3	-27	-12
West	7	4	-3	-10	-1	7	-20	-8
Race:								
White	-4	-6	-9	-15	-5	-1	-18	-9
Black	-36	-30	-39	-44	-37	-24	-56	-42
Politics:								
Republican	34	34	32	13	28	42	9	26
Democrat	-43	-39	-35	-40	-32	-27	-46	-37
Independent	-10	-18	-24	-18	-17	-9	-31	-19
Education:								
< High School	-31	-35	-58	-40	-36	-24	-63	-41
High Sch. Grad.	-18	-16	-17	-33	-19	-12	-35	-22
College +	5	1	2	-3	6	10	-9	2
Home:								
Own	1	-1	-1	-12	-1	4	-17	-5
Rent	-31	-30	-43	-38	-33	-20	-49	-34
Marital Status:								
Single	-19	-9	-19	-17	-16	-8	-31	-19
Married	5	-2	-2	-9	6	7	-14	-2
Sep/Wid/Div	-25	-25	-34	-43	-41	-22	-49	-35
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	2	3	-4	-3	2	4	-13	-3
Part-Time	-7	-11	-24	-22	-10	-1	-35	-18
Not Employed	-23	-26	-24	-39	-23	-15	-43	-24

END